

Target: Shreveport

461st Bomb Group Reunion 2000

Preparations for the 461st Reunion 2000 started with the Holidome Marquee welcome of the "461ST BOMB GROUP REUNION 2000". The Shreveport-Bossier Convention Bureau placed their "Smart Cart" near the hotel entrance with Louisiana and area brochures. A 15th Air Force banner was placed over the Hospitality Room door.

Registration was to start at 12:00 noon October 19, 2000, but everything was set up and ready to start about 9:00 am, and many eager beavers were registering and having a good time talking before noon. The hotel had given us a fairly large Hospitality Room which was set up with registration table, refreshment table, display tables, TV with VCR, and chairs. Everyone seemed to enjoy this time together. Refreshments were available at all times, Coffee, Cookies, Cokes, and Tea. The hotel staff was very helpful in setting up everything we ask for.

October 20, 2000, was a very busy day. At 9:00 am three busses loaded for Barksdale AFB, and at 9:30 am one bus loaded for the Norton Art Gallery. I think the people that went to Norton's got the best deal. At Barksdale a Readiness Inspection and Alert was in progress which was not known when our schedule was made; that meant we were not allowed to go on the Flight Line. All we were able to do on Barksdale AFB was visit the 8th Air Force Museum. The museum had a lot of Air Force memorabilia and quite a few aircraft on display. We finished touring the 8th Air Force museum by about 10:00 am and would have loaded the busses for a tour of downtown Shreveport but the bus drivers had left the Base. After waiting around until 11:30 am, the bus drivers returned and we loaded for the trip to Louisiana Downs. Meanwhile, the people who went to Norton Art Gallery enjoyed a very fine Art Gallery including American and European paintings, sculptures and decorative arts spanning more than four centuries.

The Gallery has an impressive collection of Western art by Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell. At 11:30 am this group also reloaded the bus for Louisiana Downs.

With the entire group now at La. Downs, we were escorted to the upper deck Sky Room. La. Downs had prepared a lovely buffet including two cakes decorated with the 461st Bomb Group name and logo. The buffet line was a little long but after the first wave of diners, anyone could return as many times as they liked. La. Downs is a thoroughbred horse race track. The second race of the day was dedicated to the 461st Bomb Group and for the Trophy Presentation of that race, General and Mrs. Burke, Bob and Peggy Hayes and Ed and Faye Stevenson, went down to the Trophy Presentation area and had their picture taken along with the winning Jockey and Trainer. We left La. Downs about 3:30 PM returning to the hotel for a little rest before a very busy night.

A Board of Directors meeting was held from 4:30 to 5:30 PM. Major Carl Peter gave a presentation of "ICEBIRD" -the recovery of damaged aircraft from remote regions of Antarctic Plateaus.

At 6:30 PM the Squadrons began assembling in the hotel Banquet room for a Squadron Dinner consisting of a Cajun Buffet. Many of the Cajun dishes were toned down a little, at our request, because Cajun cooking is sometimes too hot (with pepper) for diners not used to it. Most thought the Cajun Buffet was very good. Although it was not the time of the year of Mardi Gras, some of our friends that belonged to the Krewe of Centaur, agreed to bring in about twenty of their group for a Mardi Gras Parade. For the parade there was marching, dancing, bead throwing, and Cajun Music by our Master of Ceremonies Mr. Robert Trudeau. The tables had been decorated with a Mardi Gras motif. A decorated Mardi Gras Hat was the center piece on each table and under one chair at each table a number was placed. The person sitting in that numbered chair got the hat. A fun time was had by everyone. Hopefully everyone received Mardi Gras beads and cups. For some this was their first exposure to Mardi Gras.

Saturday October 21, at 9:00 AM the busses were loaded for the trip to the American Rose Center. Although the summer months had been extremely dry, the roses were blooming very well. The American Rose Center was moved to Shreveport several years ago to a donated site of about 100 acres. About 40 of those acres have been developed into the Rose Gardens. Many of these gardens are sponsored and maintained by different cities and states from all over the U. S. The Rose Center were very helpful in providing Golf Cart transportation for the handicapped. The ladies enjoyed the Rose Center gift shop. We returned to the hotel about 11:30 AM to give everyone time to have lunch on their own and a short rest.

The Annual Meeting began at 1:30 PM with a short presentation from Professor William Oldson, Director of World War II Experience at Florida State University; on the importance of preserving WWII memorabilia.

Our annual Group Dinner and Dance started at 6:30 PM with music provided by the Bill Causey, Jr. Band. Although we had engaged only 11 members of his band, Bill gave us a very good big band sound. The only complaint we received was that the music ended too early, at 9:30 PM. Last year the dance floor was almost vacant by 9:30 PM, and we thought that would be late enough for us old codgers. Sunday morning October 22 our Memorial Breakfast began at 8:00 AM with a piano prelude, a Posting of the Colors by a Barksdale AFB Honor Guard, Invocation by Chaplain Lt. Col. Dennis Kitterman, Litany, Scripture Reading, and a Memorial Meditation titled "Remembering Our Heroes" by Chaplain Kitterman, after which President Bob Hayes read the names of our comrades who had passed away since the last reunion. The service was concluded with a moment of silent reflection, a hymn, benediction, and a country breakfast. It was a very memorable and touching service.

For myself my wife Faye and all of our friends that helped with the arrangements, we considered it an honor and privilege to be allowed to host Reunion 2000. Although we were very busy most of the time, it was a real joy to see all of you again.

Ed Stevenson
Reunion Host - 2000