

Illustrious Classmates, this is a raw compilation of inputs I received for the Winter 2022-23 Checkpoints Class News column. I just have not had time to clean it all up. If anyone has formatting and editing experience and would like to help, I'll gladly accept.

Mike

Illustrious Classmate and Loose Hawg Dr. Bob Munson (Col, USAF, Ret.) was recently recognized by the Academy for his unending volunteer contributions to USAFA since his retirement from active duty. In reality, he is not retired, he's just getting paid in non-tangible ways. Let's express our gratitude to Bob for all his contributions to our alma mater and to our class! The full story is at

[https://www.usafa.org/News/MunsonDistinguishedServiceAward?fbclid=IwAR3Os9qBHttIEg-WFo2E3mFaxfNW8NvY0b7n8Klg\\_cTZWRj4M1oEytOPs8](https://www.usafa.org/News/MunsonDistinguishedServiceAward?fbclid=IwAR3Os9qBHttIEg-WFo2E3mFaxfNW8NvY0b7n8Klg_cTZWRj4M1oEytOPs8).



Ron [Scott]—Thought you may find this interesting. My guys are finally getting some well-deserved recognition after 32 years!

Jay Beard

# VETERANS OF OPERATION SECRET SQUIRREL TO BE HONORED WITH 2022 OMAR N. BRADLEY SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE AWARD



*Twenty-five years after Operation Senior Surprise, aka "Secret Squirrel", the aircrew members that kicked off Operation Desert Storm reunited on Barksdale Air Force Base, La. on Jan. 15, 2016. One of the B-52 Stratofortress bombers stationed at Barksdale is displaying the "Secret Squirrel" patch to commemorate the anniversary. This 35 hour mission was the first combat use of the Conventional Air Launched Cruise Missile (CALCM). (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Dachele Melville/Released)*



**SHREVEPORT, La. (Nov. 9, 2022)** – The Radiance Technologies Independence Bowl presents the Omar N. Bradley Spirit of Independence Award to some of the nation’s most outstanding and decorated citizens or groups, and that tradition continues in 2022, as the veterans of Operation Senior Surprise – better known as Secret Squirrel – will be honored at the 46th Radiance Technologies Independence Bowl on Friday, December 23 with the Omar N. Bradley Spirit of Independence Award.

“Standing in awe of past honorees, the veterans of Senior Surprise – better known as Secret Squirrel – are humbled to represent all the Airmen who made possible our record-breaking flight which opened Operation Desert Storm in 1991,” said Warren Ward (Colonel, USAF, ret.) on behalf of the Senior Surprise veterans.

Operation Secret Squirrel was a long-range B-52G Stratofortress cruise missile strike against Iraqi targets that initiated the bombing campaign during the Gulf War in 1991. The mission took place on January 16, 1991 and was led by mission commander Lt. Col John Beard – who was also the

commanding officer of Barksdale Air Force Base's 596th Bomb Squadron. The operation is officially dubbed Operation Senior Surprise, but it was given the unofficial nickname of Operation Secret Squirrel by the B-52 crews because "we couldn't say the real code name ["Senior Surprise"] out loud, and it had the same initials," noted Maj. Steve Hess, chief weapon system officer for the unit. Through the six months of August 1990 into January 1991, Operation DESERT SHIELD was put in motion as U.S. and coalition forces deployed to forward locations and prepared for the potential of military action to compel Iraqi forces to leave Kuwait. Through those six months, Airmen from the 596th Bomb Squadron at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana prepared for a top-secret mission. On a rainy morning, Wednesday January 16, 1991, seven B-52Gs from that unit thundered down runway 15 and climbed eastward destined for targets deep inside Iraq. The Air Force Core values of Integrity, Service and Excellence melded with six months of intensive training enabling the Airmen to meet United States' national direction and set these aviators on a course to make combat aviation history by opening Operation DESERT STORM.

Senior Surprise was executed January 16-17, 1991. The Airmen flew non-stop from Barksdale to the Middle East and back launching 35 top secret Conventional Air Launched Cruise Missiles in their first-ever combat use. Supported by 38 tanker sorties, the team traversed more than 14,000 nautical miles in 35 hours, successfully destroyed critical targets, and returned home safely. Iraq's electrical grid and communications nodes were among the targets, and the raid was ultimately pegged as having achieved between eighty-five and ninety-one percent of its objectives – making Iraq "blind and deaf." CJCS Gen Colin Powell stated in an early press conference, "first we will make them blind and deaf, and then make them lose the will to fight," so the Senior Surprise veterans view themselves as that all-important part of the opening hours of the campaign.

The crews were under strict orders not to discuss the mission, which would not be officially acknowledged until exactly a year later. Only then could they discuss the mission and show off the Air Medals awarded for their historic and “unprecedented demonstration of Global Reach, Global Power.”

“Approaching the 32nd anniversary of this historic mission, the Senior Surprise veterans are proud to have had the opportunity to execute this strategic mission and stand in the gap to protect freedom for all Americans while liberating our ally Kuwait from Iraqi oppression,” said Ward.

“Today, the United States Air Force wields the free world’s only arsenal of long-range strike capabilities which are foundational to America’s national security, and we are strong proponents for maintaining credible global strike capability.

“We are honored to receive the 2022 General Omar N. Bradley Spirit of Independence award. We salute all American warriors who have sacrificed since the birth of the nation to secure 246 years of freedom. We pray God’s protection for American warriors from all branches of service currently serving ensuring our sovereignty for the future.”

There were 57 airmen that manned the seven bombers during the 35-hour, 14,000-nautical mile flight. It was the longest combat mission in aviation history at the time – surpassing the previous record set by the Vulcan bombers of the Royal Air Force during the 1982 Falkland’s War in the South Atlantic. The record stood until 2003 when it was broken by B-2s flying to Afghanistan.

Four of the 57 airmen have passed away since the mission, and during annual reunions, the Senior Surprise veterans conduct a solemn toast to remember their brothers. Of the seven B-52Gs flown in the mission, two survive to this day. “Valkyrie” is located at the Pima Air Museum in Arizona, and “El Lobo” is located at the Armament Museum outside of Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

The Omar N. Bradley Spirit of Independence Award was established during the bowl's second year in 1977 to annually honor an outstanding American citizen or organization which symbolizes the spirit of freedom upon which the United States of America was founded. General Omar N. Bradley, at the time the nation's only living 5-star general, was the first recipient of the Spirit of Independence Award in 1977.

Since the award's inception, this honor has been bestowed upon outstanding American citizens and organizations. Some past recipients include John Wayne, Bob Hope, Ronald Reagan, and more recently – the Tuskegee Airmen, Berlin Airlift Veterans, Veterans of the Battle of Chosin Reservoir, retired Marine Corporal Jacob P. Schick, Brigadier General Jeannie M. Leavitt, retired Air Force Lieutenant General James M. Kowalski and retired Army Lieutenant General Joseph M. Cosumano.



Five campus radicals, four of their better halves, one nephew, a daughter, son-in-law and grandson convened in Dallas to watch Air Force clinch the CinC trophy. Pictured in the celebratory post game tailgate are Craig MacPherson, Graham Lakin ('23, Terry Lakin's great nephew). Terrence D. Lakin, Paul Motley, Bob Decker, and Kelly McCullar



While RVing in FL we watched the USAFA-Army game with Don McMillan. He had a better USAFA shirt. Great seeing my firstie summer and Kincheloe AFB roommate. Dennis Boyce





Fran & June Love and James Buckley CS-03 at the Armed Forces AOG Tailgate and ready to face the minus 13 F wind chill. (Coldest Bowl game ever with wind chill as announced by ESPN). Good catchup on memories and great game with the Falcons win! Fran Love.



Dave Ellis

Hello Mike Arnett,

I noticed A.J. Ranft attended the Armed Forces Bowl.

My Roadrunner roommate Mike Reynolds and I effected a rendezvous in Ft. Worth and enjoyed all the festivities and the game. We didn't run into A.J. or any other classmates, but it was well worth the trip regardless. We made a couple signs for the game, here is one of them.



We stayed in the frigid stands until the end of the game !

Walking around once a quarter helped keep the blood flowing to the extremities.

Mike Reynold's quote of the day was "I don't remember ever intentionally putting myself through that much misery."

Sitting on a wool '73 blanket helped.

I was at the last game AF played Baylor, Oct 1977 in Waco, when Baylor won 38 - 7. My H-53 squadron's chartered bus ride back to Bergstrom AFB in Austin after that game wasn't much fun. So 2022's game was sweet revenge.

Have a happy New Year !

Dave Ellis



This morning was COLD (colder than a witch's . . . . sound familiar?), but the sun was shining brightly, and four members of the Illustrious Class positioned class pennants and wreaths at 41 of our brothers' resting places. Dale Birch, our fearless leader, flawlessly guided his three seasoned wingmen (Steve Lorenz, Charlie Felton, and me) on this important mission.

A bonus was the special tour of Air Force founders by Steve Lorenz--fabulous history.

It was also gratifying to see the Class of 1974 emulating our concept/tradition.

The opening ceremony was extremely well-done--and the speakers were awesome, delivering a meaningful tribute to those who have gone before us. A large crowd assembled--cars parked all the way back to Stadium Blvd.

A great experience all around as we ease into the Christmas/Holiday season and New Year.

2023 is a big year for us--good things to come.

Cheers,

Ron







Here's my winter update for the 31<sup>st</sup> Sq Grim Reapers. Not much, but once again, it's the best I can do.

The Grim Reapers were saddened to learn of the passing of **Bud (Hugh) Gammon** on 21 Dec 2022. Bud loved the Academy and had been a long time airline captain; among other things he was an accomplished scuba diver. A few years ago, he moved to Orlando to be nearer his daughter and beloved grandson, Logan Webner. Bud will be laid to rest in the Academy cemetery in Feb 2023.

**Mitch and Tami Mitchell** continue to be busy with Howie's activities and visiting National Parks. While **Larry Kolar** did not graduate, he was with us for 2 years and remains in contact. The same for **Tony Klessert** who left after our Doolie year. **Richard and Connie Hayes** continue to be very active in the Charleston SC area including Richard's birdwatching hobby. **Phil Yavorsky's** younger brother, Joe (West Point '78) joined **Phil and Tom Kennedy** for a week of golf in the Augusta GA area. Found a great Christmas photo of **Fil and Kim Thorn** with their grandkids as well as a 49<sup>th</sup> Anniversary one. Finally, **Tom and Betty Kennedy** followed Mitch's lead of a year earlier, and headed down to the Antarctica. While I don't have any photos, **Bob Smith** wrote, "Lin <Smith> and I continue in good health. I am still volunteering as a Guardian ad Litem for Cleveland County DSS Court to be the voice for kids in foster care whose parents have been charged with neglect and/or abuse. I've been doing this for about 9 years now. This is a rewarding experience. I am able to impact the lives of these children and help insure they are in a safe and healthy situation. I highly recommend this program to anyone looking for a way to remain active during retirement. I remain active in our church, Elizabeth Baptist, in Shelby, NC as a Bible study teacher. We are at a point in our lives where we do some looking back but we still need to have a focus on what the future can bring. I occasionally check online for how some of my student pilots did during their flying career. It is amazing the things they went on to do in the Air Force. I saw them at the beginning of their career and each was mostly possibilities at that point. They took the opportunities offered and made the most of them. I hope you have a similar sense of satisfaction for the impact you had on others during your career."



Bud Gammon & Logan



Mitch Mitchell's family



Larry Kolar & mother



Fil & Kim Thorn



Phil & Joe Yavorsky, Tom Kennedy



Tony & Claudia Klessert



Tom & Betty Kennedy



in the Club House at Fort Gordon GA



Richard & Connie Hayes



Tom Kennedy – camping in Antarctica



Fil & Kim Thorn & grandkids

Jack Hudson

Here are a few inputs:

- Made my 10K miles cycling goal (third year in a row)
- Made my 73K exercise rep goal (2nd time in 3 years)
- Rode outside with a group of friends on 1 Jan 2023 .... in the attached photo, there are 4 USAFA grads: 2nd from right is Dick Reynolds '71; third from right is me; 5th from right is Beck Andersen '22; 6th from right is Dave Glade '80 .... not a bad day outside for 1 Jan .... we rode to Young's Dairy, had lunch, and back .... 33 miles RT .... my son John (Ohio State '02) took the photo and rode with us!



- on 5 Nov, we attended the American Veterans Center Annual Conference in DC .... I was recognized for the support over the years that I gave to the Doolittle Raider events at the National Museum of the USAF





- Lastly, I went to Columbus AFB in Nov for the UPT graduation of a Lt who I've mentored by 7-8 years; he is 1Lt Tyler Johnson, on the way to C-5s at Dover .... so proud of how well he has done .... I gave him some of my 1Lt insignia and a set of my "slick wing" miniature wings that he now wears on his mess dress ....





John Barry

This may be too old but we celebrated the USAF 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the Wings Over the Rockies Blue Sky Gallery at Centennial Airport on Sep 17<sup>th</sup> (one day short of Sep 18<sup>th</sup>, the USAF birthday). We have a “Falcon Wings” program where we adopt a Cadet Squadron each year to keep the legacy alive between Lowry AFB and the beginnings of the AFA from 1955-1958. We also had 10 Cadets from our Legacy Class of 2023 attending. The guest speaker was Gen Speedy Martin, Class 1970.

Here’s a link to some more photos

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/cm8ayp0i4j5k6y2p7bpbl/h?dl=0&rlkey=ssydsi7fcmjkr4kyq8o7dyf6>





Rich Fazio

'73 Demon Squadronmates (13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Flights), those who live locally, those who were based or resided in Colorado post-graduation, and those who were visiting on Epiphany Sunday, Jan 8, in addition to our First Beast squadron commander, were invited to the Second Annual Demon Squadron Open House. Attendees were: Dave Gaw, 1st BCT Demon Squadron commander; Dennis Haugh, CS-13 Bulldogs, and Ginny Gallagher; and the following CS-16 Chickenhawks: Rich and Teresa Fazio, Tom and Sally Mayberry, Don and Joan Sutula. Sending their regrets were: Mike, CS-13, and Laury Edwards; Gene, CS-16, and Barbara Ogilvie; Gregg, CS-16, and Djena Reinecke; Johnny, CS-16, and Nancy Whitaker. The theme of food served this year was Appetizers and Desserts—Beginnings and Endings. Topics of conversation were wide-ranging but, as last year, Dave Gaw was able to put names, places, and dates to what were long-thought by our wives to be "urban Terrazzo legends."

Sadly—or purposely—pictures were not taken to incriminate the guilty,

Greyson Morrow

Dear Classmates,

Hope you and your families are all well. As we get a little long in the tooth we do not take our health for granted.

For the most part, I have been excellent. I recently went over the handle bars of my mountain bike chasing my girlfriend who is a much faster rider. Unaided flight over rough terrain is not recommended. I augered in pretty good. May have to look for a slower girlfriend. She is two years older than me and can pack a pack over the roughest portages. I think I will stick with her.

Could have been much worse, I only broke my right wrist and lost a little skin and tore up a helmet.

But, it did remind me I have never sent you guys a note of thanks. I have always thought of you all as the best classmates a guy could have. Thanks for helping me graduate. I know it is an understatement and I obvious but I would never have made it without you guys.

Would be nice to catch up. I may toss the bike, canoe and dolly in and on the jeep and travel. Let me know if you are open for visit or wish to visit me in the Upper Penninsula of Michigan.

I have stayed busy in retirement. Just finished my 237th newspaper climate column for a little old fashioned weekly newspaper.

Again, thanks. Sorry to take so long to tell you. Especially you, Vince.

Warm regards, Cool planet,

Greyson [Morrow]

blog: [climatelynx.com](http://climatelynx.com)

Chris Flynn

I was stationed at the Academy from 1982 to 1986, primarily in the Airmanship Division and spent most of my time working with the soaring program. I was the Soaring Flight Commander in the 94<sup>th</sup> Airmanship Training Squadron from late in 1982 until mid-year in 1985. I was responsible for implementing the Air Force Academy's "Soar-For-All" program, a motivational program where we provided the opportunity (weather permitting) to allow all 3 degree cadets to solo a glider during their third class year. We used a combination of dual TG-7A motorglider training combined with Schweizer SGS-33 dual glider training to decrease the number of typical glider sorties required to solo. The average number of glider only sorties to solo was around 21 to 22. With three one-hour motorglider sorties prior to their glider sorties, the average cadet could solo after only 10 to 12 glider sorties. The motorglider sorties focused on showing the cadet basic glider maneuvers in the area for about half the flight, with another half hour in the pattern demonstrating and practicing landing approaches. Our approaches were always to a go-around on short final once we had demonstrated the ability to land out of the approach.

Guess where those practice approaches were flown? To the mysterious runway just east of Jacks Valley. The strip was built in late 1983 or early 1984 as an auxiliary for our practice motorglider approaches since the volume of traffic at the Academy airstrip did not allow for us to practice those approaches with all the normal soaring, parachuting, and T-41 traffic that was operating there on a daily basis. We located the auxiliary just north of the North Gate between Jacks Valley and I-25 on Academy grounds to keep it relatively close in, but not interfere with normal Academy airfield operations.

History shows that the "Soar-For-All" program did not achieve its goal of providing each third degree cadet the opportunity to solo a glider, primary because of the issues presented by front range weather throughout the year. We did, however, give close to 95% of the third classmen an opportunity to fly during the years that the program ran and hopefully motivated them to remain at the Academy and graduate with their class.

I am delighted to provide background information about the mysterious runway just east of Jacks Valley.

Charles C. "Chris" Flynn

The Illustrious Class of 1973

Ray Yagher lost his long battle with cancer on 7 Oct 22. He was in CS-34 until firstie year and then transferred to CS-40 to help restore its ranks after the 1972 honor scandal. Tim Cooper reported he had visited Ray and wife Tess in their home about a year ago. Ray seemed in good spirits then but knew that his prognosis was poor and the cancer was not survivable, and seemed ready for the inevitable outcome. Tim continued to stay in touch over the subsequent months.

Ray's memorial service was at Eglin AFB, FL on 25 October. Tim and Larry Balash, both from Ali Baba '40) were able to attend. Tim sent the pictures below.

**Date:** October 13, 2022 at 10:17:48 AM EDT

**Subject:** Ray Yagher

**Reply-To:** [timcooper@aol.com](mailto:timcooper@aol.com)

Dear 40 Thieve friends,

I am saddened to say that I just received word this morning from Tess Yagher that Ray passed away on 7 October. I had last seen him about a year ago when I visited his house in Ft. Walton Beach. At that time, he was largely housebound on oxygen therapy. He got out only to doctors' appointments for his stromal cell cancer for which he continued to receive chemotherapy. He seemed in good spirits then but knew that his prognosis was poor and the cancer was not survivable. He seemed ready for the inevitable outcome. I continued to email and text message him periodically to check in with him.

I do not know if there will be any funeral or burial services but I will try to find out.

Here is their address if you wish to send a card or something.

Teresita Yagher

822 Laurel Drive

Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32547

Tess's Facebook account is Teresita Yagher (Facebook messenger is how I got the word from her)

I'm so sorry to bear this news.

Tim

Ali Baba

Forty Thieves







Mike Arnett, Scribe

I took my grandkids to the Edwards AFB Air Show on 14 Oct, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Chuck Yeager first breaking the sound barrier. In honor of the feat, NASA's Armstrong Flight Test Center had two of their test aircraft, an F-15 and an FA-18, go supersonic at 30,000 feet, several minutes apart to highlight the difference between "hard" and "soft" booms. The announcer said they call the latter "sonic thumps." I didn't even know there were such things, and I was an Aero major! You mean technology has advanced in the last 50 years? As we left, my 5-year-old grandson repeated what he said after we visited the March Field Air Museum in April: he wants to be a pilot like his grandpa. Yes! Finally, check out my new license plate and customized frame!

