



The Airlifter

Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association
Promoting and preserving the troop carrier/tactical airlift heritage
www.troopcarrier.org

February 3, 2017

Volume XXX

Chairman's Corner:

Chatter from the Chairman:

Greetings all you trash haulers and TCTAA members; hope your holiday season was a good one and may 2017 exceed all your expectations. Hope your new year started better than mine, my wife Marilyn fell just before Christmas and fractured two bones in her leg just below the knee-cap. She is quite immobile and in a wheelchair (maybe for a total of 90 days) and my AFSC and primary duty has changed from nine-level couch potato to chief cook and bottle washer. I am probably fully qualified in all my daily duties except the laundry and that is driving me bonkers!

I thought 2016 was generally a banner year for the Association except for the passing of some members who were great Americans and patriots and will be sorely missed. But that's life; let's not let Bill Kehler carry all the recruitment load for growing our group, grab your best voice and sign up your friends and comrades.

I thought our get-together in Little Rock was super and thanks and kudos to all the gang that made it happen. If you were unable to attend, we missed you; chisel in the October 2018 date in your calendar (or whatever you use to substitute for your missing memory!) and come join the group in Dayton. In that regard, the Memorial Committee and Association leadership have done yeoman work in pursuing the Memorial at the Air Force Museum in honor of the Troop Carrier mission; thanks to all of you who have already contributed financially to the project and now is the time to bring home the rest of the bacon. Reach back and give it your best shot! The Memorial will be dedicated during our assembly in October 2018.

On September 21st last year I was honored and privileged to represent the Association at the unveiling of a bronze plaque at the Air Force Academy honoring the C-130 and Tactical Airlift involvement in the war in SEA from 1965-1975. As a result, the ultimate sacrifice made by 134 aircrew members who lost their lives (including 5 USAFA graduates) during missions involving the loss of 56 C-130s is memorialized along side other combat operations. I highly recommend that if you are ever at the Air Force Academy, make the effort to visit the Plaza of Heroes and tour the SEA Pavilion. It is in the close proximity of the Association of Graduates (AOG) headquarters building, Doolittle Hall.

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It is my pleasure to serve as the Chairman of your Association, you guys and girls keep me young! Remember that you only get out of your Association what you invest in it; there are many opportunities to serve. Ask the new officers and Board members how and where you can assist to make the Association what you want it to be.

George Dockery

President's Address:

Howdy Troop Carrier and Tactical Airlifters from Southern California. If you did not attend the 2016 Little Rock, AR Reunion – you missed an Arkansas Hoot. Bill Kehler did a fantastic job and he had a great team helping him with the event – and all joined the Association while he was working them hard. We are starting to lose some of the older members – people like Bobby Gassiott, Jay Gerding and Dean Robnett will be missed. Bobby was one of the original charter members with Jay and had a lot to do early on with shaping this organization as a Board Member for a number of years. We have lost 12 members since we started TC/TAA. But, membership continues to grow – now at 343.

Ray Snedegar, Jack Brankamp and I are putting some of the final touches on our 2018 Reunion in Fairborn, OH 11 – 14 October. It will be held at the Holiday Inn in Fairborn and cost you \$109 a night, but the highlight of the week will be when we dedicate our Troop Carrier Tactical Airlift Memorial to the U.S. Air Force Museum on 13 October. You surely will not want to miss this historic event. Sam McGowan will be covering this more in detail later. Some of you are thinking how I can help this endeavor, “**Send money is the theme.**” We are over ½ of having enough funds to install this Memorial. Check the web page for all the specifics on how to donate and remember it is tax deductible.

In May 2017, I have been asked to be a Keynote Speaker at a Memorial dedication in Coates, England. The Memorial will be situated at the Holy Trinity Church in Coates in which several C-47 crew members in the 316th Troop Carrier Group, 36th and 44th Troop Carrier Squadron are buried there in the cemetery. This happened May 12, 1944 so this will celebrate 73 years since the accident. Our TC/TAA donated \$200 to help fund the Memorial and if you have any other extra monies, this Eagle Exercise Project can use a donation too. See their web page for specifics - www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/TheEagleProject.

Remember, y'all come to the 2018 Reunion – only 21 months until we see each other again in Ohio or if you are counting days – 618. Start running your 20 minute checklist.

Load Clear, Mike Welch, President

Treasurer's Report:

Total = \$30,041.35 Memorial Fund = \$15,595. General Fund = \$14,446.35. (Additional funds are coming in – two members have contributed \$1,000 each. We have now raised roughly \$18,000. A deposit for half of the cost of the memorial plus the walkway is on the way to builder.)

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Special from President Mike Welch:

Hello! Veterans, family members and friends of the Eagle Project. I hope this finds you well.

For those new to this email I have formed this group email to keep in contact with everyone to share news and progress with research and the memorial.

I just wanted to give everyone a quick update on a few things that has happened over the last few weeks. So the donations have been coming in thick and fast, with some very generous donations which I am so very grateful for. Every Dollar / Pound donated has meant the memorial is one step nearer getting made. I am currently waiting on a cheque from the US and a few other payments. But after has been cashed I don't think we will be to far off the mark. Which is great news, as you can never really tell how much luck you will have fund raising.

Last Friday I had a meeting with the local mayor of Coates, and the vicar of the church. In which a date was set of the 13th of May 2017 at 13:00. This was the date I was hoping for as it is just after the 73rd anniversary of the crash. The 12th being the day of the crash. Many ideas has be passed around for the unveiling. But I am hoping the current Commanding Officer of Alconbury will be attending with a US USAF honour guard, a display of the research of the crash, a historical display of WW2 flying and paratrooper equipment. I have just sent of an application to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight to see if I can request a fly past by their C47 so fingers crossed. We also hope to have a service in the church. Lots of bits to confirm and work on but day is starting to take shape and I am hopeful thing will work out.

I also had a meeting with the stonemason to get the ball rolling with that and since the meeting he has confirmed the stone has been ordered so should be on route to the UK as we speak.

I have spoke with John Diffins carer a few weeks back after the funeral and he told me it was a packed church and a great send off for him. One thing I wanted was to make sure that he had a proper Airborne send off, so very glad that was the case.

With 5 months to go I am more then ever keen to trace more to the victims families so I can share this project with them also. If anyone that could help with trying to trace the remaining men's family members. Any help you can offer would be gratefully received. I can provide the names and the information I have found out so far. I.e. place or birth or other family members names. . I feel its import to share this project and the research with them If we can.

I am pleased to say that the detective work has paid off 3 times over in the last few weeks. I would to welcome Magan, and her mum Marliyn who are the niece and the great niece of Flight Officer Hubert Bayless. Co pilot to Joseph Sharber. I would also like to welcome Joan and Joan is a decent family member to Lt Glenn Still, the navigator on James Farris C47. Two weeks ago after lots of hunting and emails I spoke with the nephew of Major James Farris. He doesn't do computers so I am waiting on his nephew to make contact via email. Fingers crossed he does soon.

To date contact has been made with the family members of

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Major James R Farris, 36th TCS CO Pilot
Lt Glenn R Still, 36th TCS , Navigator
S/Sgt Thaddous T Tomchek, 36th TCS, Flight Engineer
Lt Col Burton R Fleet, the 316TCG CO, Observer
Capt Floyd N Richert, 316th TCG Chaplin, Observer
Capt John D Rice, CO B/Com 505th PIR, Observer
Lt Joseph L Sharber Jr, Pilot 44th TCS
Flight Officer Hubert M Bayless, Co Pilot 44th TCS
S/Sgt Harlan Sandlin , Radio Operator 44th TCS

I have now broken the name into the C47 there were on at the time of the crash. Thought it may help.

I would also like to say a HI to Mike Welsh, Mike is ex USAF and is on the committee of the Troop Carrier and Tactual Airlift association. Mike and the Association have been very supportive of the project. Mike is hoping to come over for the unveiling in May, I believe Sandy and Gary are hoping to come over for the unveiling. If anyone else is hoping too over please let me know and I will help where I can.

Some people may have seen on Facebook I have been doing personal write ups of the men killed. I wanted to make people more aware of the real men that were killed and not just names of headstones. If anyone has any more information, pictures or documents they would be willing to share please let me know. These would be to include in a future project I have been asked to take part in.... Watch this space on that.

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/TheEagleProject>

The link above is for the JustGiving page if anyone would like to make a donation to the memorial.

My friend Gary is still offering Eagle Project T shirts, The funds after costs will be donated to the memorial, Please see the link attached if you fancy buying one. But numbers are limited at the moment. Sizes run from S - XXL. I got mine a few weeks back and they are great. If anyone ordered one I would love to see a picture of you in them.

<http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=122271655126>

Thank you for your on going support, I hope we speak soon. If we don't then I hope you all have a lovely holiday. I am excited to see what 2017 will bring... I am hoping for a lovely new ready for May.

Kind Regards,

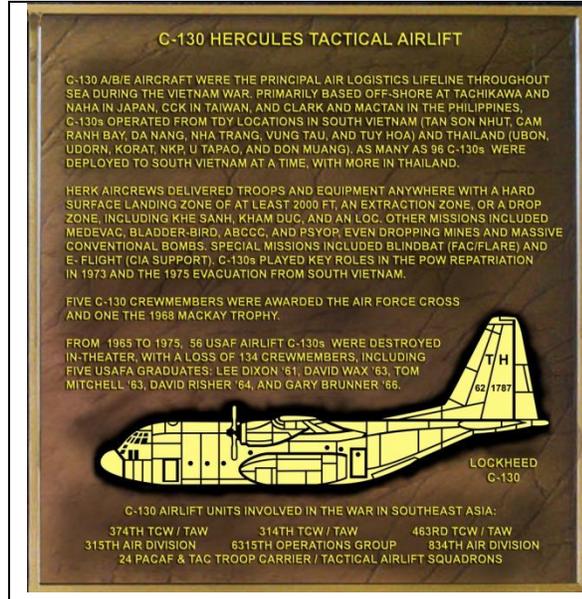
Darren

DRWBOND1984@hotmail.co.uk

Editor's Note – This is not a TC/TAA project. Mr. Bond was allowed to join the TC/TAA Facebook group, where he made a post about his project and how he was having trouble locating family members of some of the victims. President Welch wanted to make the project known to our membership. He

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recommended to the board that the Association make a contribution, as noted in the President's Address above.



Air Force Academy C-130 Plaque Presentation

A number of our members were in Colorado Springs in September for the presentation of a plaque commemorating the role of the C-130 Hercules in Southeast Asia to the US Air Force Academy. The event was organized by members of the USAF Academy Graduates Association, particularly Tony Mras, who became a TC/TAA 10-year member before the ceremony. Former USAF Chief of Staff and TC/TAA member Norton Schwartz was the keynote speaker. Our chairman, George Dockery, made a presentation. Although health concerns prevented me from attending, I submitted a video presentation. (It's available for viewing online at <http://www.sammcgowan.com/AFAAddress.html>.) Member and successful author Dick Herman was one of our members who was present, as was Garry Arndt.

TAC Airlift Memorial

The design for the memorial we will be placing at the USAF Museum in October 2018 has been finalized. Dodd's Monuments, the monument company who is doing the work, has submitted a proposal and it has been accepted. Their proposed memorial will be 84 inches tall, counting the base, and 48 inches wide. The base will be made of black granite while the memorial itself will be made of gray granite with the overlays made of Blue Granite, a highly-coveted stone that is imported from Norway. The total price for the memorial itself will be \$23,500. We will be paying \$7,000 for the walkway to and around the memorial. In addition, we will be required to pay a one-time maintenance fee of 10% of the cost of the memorial to the museum. This brings us to a total of \$32,850. We presently have over \$17,000 in the fund which means we are over half way there. Ralph Bemis and I have been chatting while I've been working on this newsletter and he has come up with a terrific idea – he plans to start contributing \$100.00 a month to the fund, up to \$500.00. I plan to also contribute at least \$500.00, although I'm not sure if it will be in installments as Ralph plans to do. Ralph advises that he will accept post-dated checks and hold them until the date. To clarify, contributors can do as Ralph is going to do but send all of the checks for the amount they wish to contribute at once as an option. Another option is to use a credit/debit card. During our recent officer's telecon, President Welch authorized us to set up a PayPal account. Roger Greuel has issued a challenge for each member who can to contribute \$100 for every number in their highest pay grade, for example an E-5 would contribute \$500.00. We also need to solicit contributions from other organizations, such as the Air Commando Association, C-7 Caribou Association and airlift unit organizations.

Please send donations to Ralph Bemis, 248 Valley View Drive, Kerrville, TX 78028. Remember that we

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are a 501c (19) Wartime Veterans organization and all contributions are fully tax deductible. Those who wish may contribute through PayPal using either your PayPal account or your credit/debit card. A donation link has been added to the Memorial fund web page –

<http://www.troopcarrier.org/memorialfund.html>.

Be advised PayPal charges 2.9% + \$.30 per transaction so we'd appreciate greatly if you add a few bucks to make up for the fee if you elect to contribute using the PayPal site.

(The design is shown below in the reunion flyer.)

Losing Members/Illnesses

As President Welch commented, quite a few of our members have passed away since we organized in 2006, with several this past year. They were not, however, due to age. In nearly every case, those we've lost have been due to illness, particularly cancer. We lost four of our "older" members, older in the sense that they'd been with the organization the longest, this past year, including Tony Girtman, who was a founder and one of the original board members, Bobby Gassiott, who was member #1, and Dean Robnett, who had been with us since the beginning and, along with Bobby, was present at all of our member meetings through Tucson. We've also lost others, such as Bill Nichols, who passed about a year ago. All were Vietnam veterans, which brings us to something else – many of our members suffer from various illnesses, mostly associated with "Agent Orange," or actually herbicides used as defoliants/week killers. A number of our members suffer from Type II diabetes, including yours truly, while others have ischemic heart disease and some have or have had prostate cancer. Some are cancer survivors. Part is due to age but we're also a sick generation.

Those of us who flew airlift in Southeast Asia were the closest to the ground war of any Air Force aircrews; some aerial port personnel and CCT were even closer. We flew daily missions into forward airfields where herbicides were widely used to deprive the enemy of cover. Loadmasters came home each night covered with dust; dust undoubtedly polluted with chemicals no one suspected of having long-term health effects. Pilots, engineers and navigators may have been up front (except navigators, who often came down to help with the offload) but they breathed the re-circulated air from the air cycle machines. It's no wonder so many of us are sick and some are dying. Sadly, we can expect to lose more of us in the future.

Upcoming Election:

In March, we will be having an election to chose officers and board members. Most of the current group wish to continue in their role but we have a number of openings. The current vice-chairman and secretary are not running for reelection and those positions are definitely open. (I understand there is someone who wants to be secretary.) Terms for officers and board members are: Chairman, President, Secretary and three board members – 3 years; Vice Chairman, Vice President, Treasurer and three board members – 2

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years. Terms for all 12 positions expire on April 1. We are currently accepting nominations for all positions. If you wish to make a nomination, or would like to submit yourself to the nominating committee for consideration, please Email secretary@tacairliftassoc.org.

Recruiting:

The strength of any organization is in its membership, and successful organizations are those that are growing. The TC/TAA has enjoyed growth, particularly over the past three years or so since Bill Kehler became our unofficial recruiter. We've not kept count of the number of new members Bill has recruited, but it wouldn't be surprising if they are close to a hundred. The potential for membership is practically unlimited; there are literally thousands of tactical airlift veterans we have yet to reach. Please make note of the following statement from the Membership page of our web site, then go out and tell someone about us!

The Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association is a 501C(19) not-for-profit veterans organization, therefore membership must be at least 75% active and former members of the United States military services and spouses of active duty or veterans. Due to the membership makeup consisting of mostly veterans of World War II, Vietnam and Korea, the Internal Revenue Service has also granted the Association wartime veterans status, which makes the TCTAA a recognized charity. ALL contributions are thus fully deductible. Regular membership is open to veterans of the troop carrier mission of World War II, Korea and the Vietnam Era prior to July 1967 when the mission was redesignated as "tactical airlift"; veterans of the tactical airlift mission and their successors. Associate members include spouses and family members of veterans, living or deceased, and other interested parties, as long as the 90% ratio is maintained.

Per our bylaws, membership is as follows:

Article II – Membership

Section I – Active Members

Eligibility as an active member will be open to:

1. Any and all persons who served on active or reserve duty in a troop carrier unit of the United States Army Air Forces or United States Air Force or a tactical airlift unit of the United States Air Force. This includes veterans of units identified as “combat cargo” and Service Command air transportation units, special operations transport units and units identified as “airlift” but with a combat airlift role.
2. Any and all persons who have supported the mission(s) of the troop carrier/tactical airlift aircraft flown by any active duty, reserve or National Guard unit of the Armed Forces of the United States, such as but not limited to, operational control, aircraft maintenance, aerial port, combat control team and industry technical representative;

Section II – Associate Members

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Eligibility as an associate member will be open to:

1. Spouses, children and surviving widows of those persons eligible for active membership.
2. Veterans of air transportation and/or airlift units other than those associated with the troop carrier/tactical airlift mission.
3. Veterans of non-transport missions involving the use of transport aircraft. This shall include but is not limited to – air/sea rescue and recovery, weather reconnaissance, electronics intelligence gathering, fixed-wing gunships, ABCCC, photo-mapping and any other mission utilizing transport aircraft.
4. Other interested persons with an interest in the troop carrier/tactical airlift mission.

Our Dayton Meeting:

Our next meeting will be in Dayton, Ohio, an appropriate place for us because Wright Field at Dayton is the birthplace of the mission that became troop carrier during World War II. The 1st Transport Group organized at Wright Field on October 1, 1933. On May 20, 1937 it was combined with the 10th Observation Group and activated as the 10th Transport Group. Most important, however, is that Dayton is the home of the United States Air Force Museum and thus should be of interest to Air Force veterans. The museum is the final home for dozens of historic US Air Force and US Army Air Service and Air Corps aircraft, including the SPARE 617 airplane that took heavy fire over An Loc in 1972 and led to the award of two Air Force Crosses to crewmembers. There are literally dozens of exhibits, including one of most of the airplanes used in World War II. Several are troop carrier types.

The museum is excited because it plans to place the famous MEMPHIS BELLE airplane on display in May. This particular airplane is famous mainly because it was featured in a movie directed by Hollywood producer William Wyler, who at the time was serving as an Air Corps major. By chance, the airplane had appeared in several shots made on a mission, and then some shots were made of the airplane flying around its base. Wyler represented the airplane as the first Eighth Air Force bomber to complete 25 missions. It wasn't; a number of airplanes and crews had flown 25 missions and one, a B-24 named HOT STUFF, had started for the United States with Lt. General Frank Andrews and several dignitaries on board but crashed while attempting to land in Greenland in snow and fog, with the loss of all aboard but the tail gunner. At least one B-17 had returned from the Southwest Pacific. After the war, the MEMPHIS BELLE was saved from destruction when the city of Memphis bought it for \$350.00. The airplane was placed on display at the National Guard armory (I remember seeing it as a boy.) In 1980 it was restored and placed on display on Mud Island (where I saw it again, after having seen it numerous times on the Memphis airport where it was displayed by a national restaurant associated with a military-oriented chain.) At some point, the city of Memphis donated the relic to the Air Force. In 2004, the USAF Museum decided it wanted the airplane – even though the Museum already has two B-17s on display and another in restoration.

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The museum now has four buildings housing exhibits, which will give attendees plenty to look at. Below is the flyer, with the schedule of events:

Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association

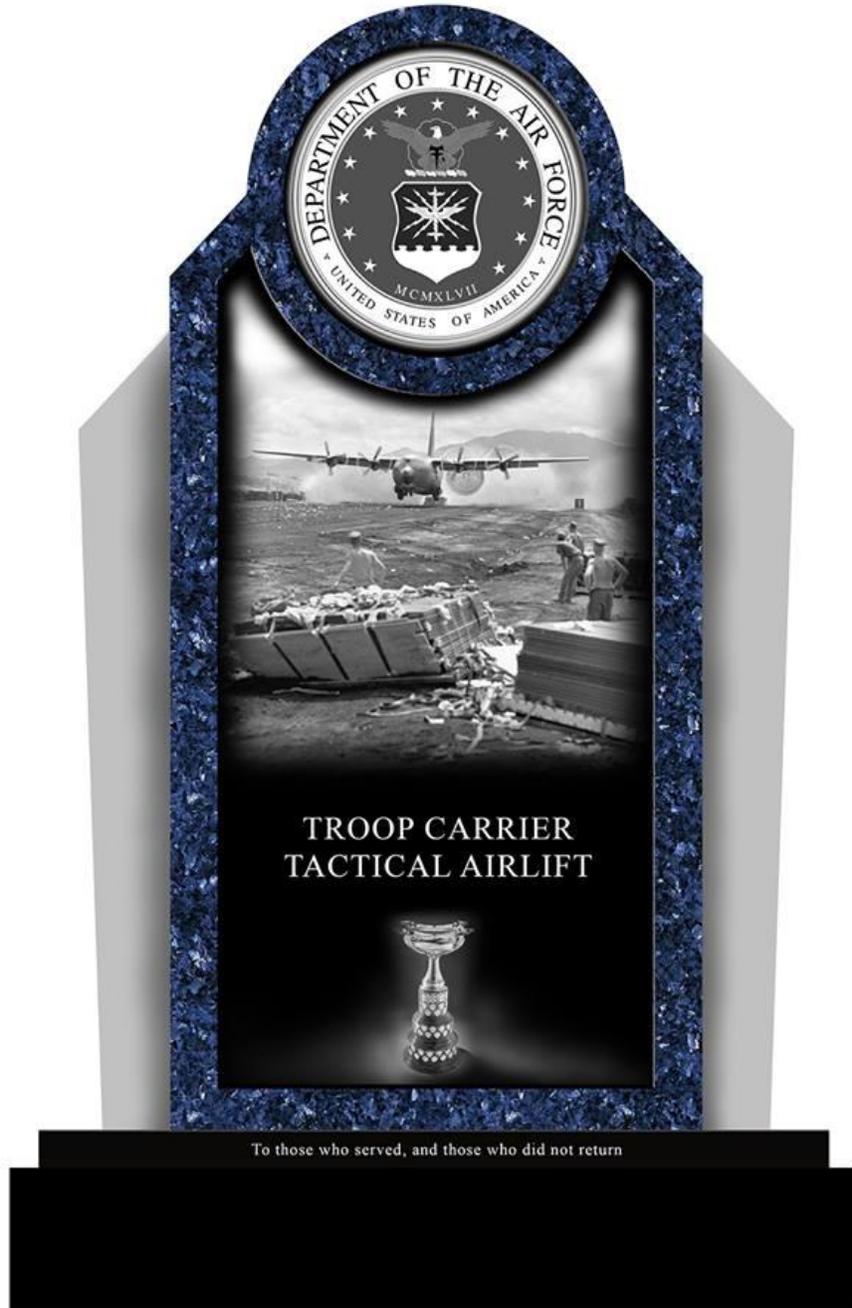
Promoting and Preserving the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Heritage



October 2018, the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association (TC/TAA) will hold their 8th Reunion in Fairborn, Ohio. Location will be at the Holiday Inn Dayton Fairborn. Dates will be October 11 – 14, 2018. This will be a special Reunion as the Association will be donating a Memorial to the U.S. Air Force Museum on October 12.

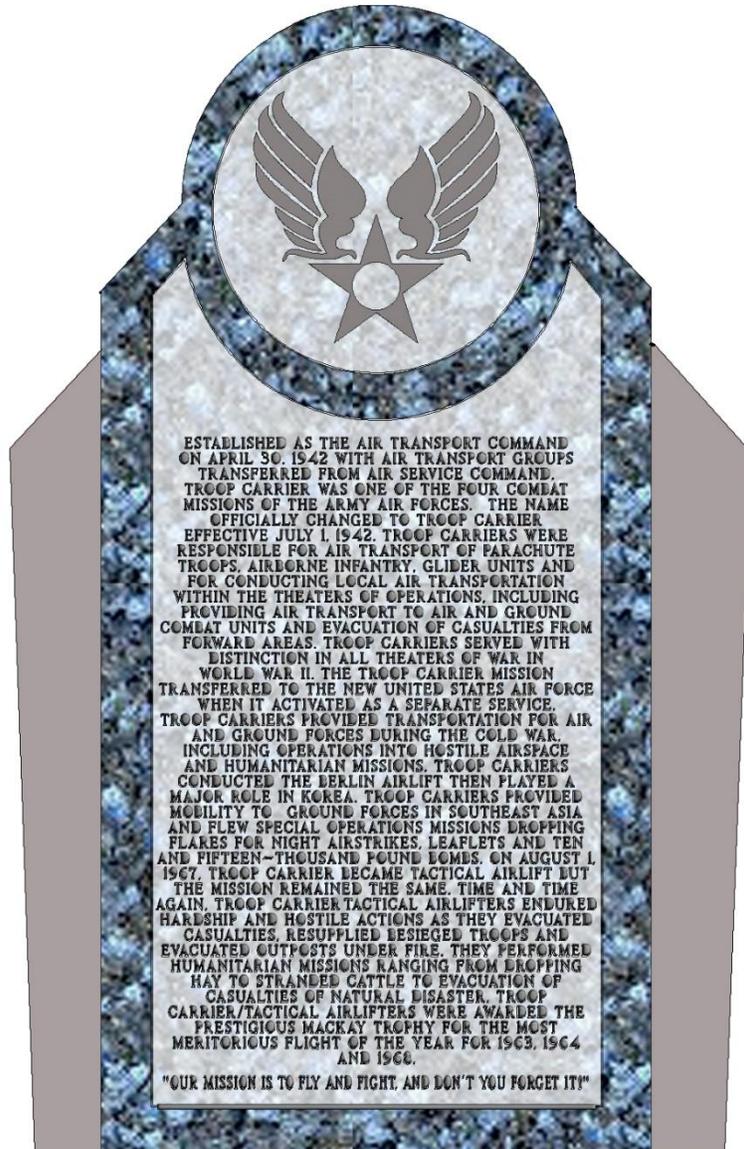
The memorial presents an opportunity for everyone who has been involved with Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift to remember those we have lost and honoring those who've served in a setting where hundreds of thousands will see the memorial each year at the Air Force Museum. We all, whether we served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam or the Cold War and the present time knew people who gave their all in the line of duty. We can memorialize them with this special monument. Presently we are at 51% with our fund raising for this \$32,850 Memorial. **Donations can be made the Memorial Fund, please contact: Treasurer – Ralph “Bullwinkle” Bemis, 248 Valley View Drive, Kerrville, TX 78028, or email: rtbullwinkle@yahoo.com. Ralph is also on Facebook.**

Troop Carrier Tactical Airlift Memorial
FRONT



Troop Carrier Tactical Airlift Memorial

BACK



Holiday Inn Dayton Fairborn
2800 Presidential Drive
Fairborn, Ohio, 45324
Phone 937-426-7800
\$109 @ Night with Free Breakfast



AGENDA

Thursday – 11 October

- **Registration Begins 1300**
- **Hospitality Suite Open 1300 - Midnight**
- **Board Meeting 1500 - 1800**
- **Reception Hosted by Holiday Inn 1900**

Friday – 12 October

- **Free Breakfast 0700**
- **Hospitality Suite Open 0800 - Midnight**
- **AF Museum Visit & Lunch on your own 0900 – 1230**
- **Memorial Dedication 1300 - 1400**
- **AF Museum Visit 1400 – 1700**
- **Buffet Dinner at Holiday Inn 1800 - 2000**

Saturday – 13 October

- **Free Breakfast 0800**
- **Hospitality Suite Open 0800 – Midnight**
- **General Membership Meeting & Auction 0900 – 1130**
- **On Your On 1130 – 1800**
- **Banquet at Holiday Inn 1800 – 2100**

Sunday – 14 October

- **Free Breakfast & Good Byes 0800**