



## **ROADRUNNERS INTERNATIONALE MONTHLY HOUSE SIX NEWS AND GOSSIP**

(Not to be confused with the Stars and Stripes)  
1 June 2009 - 32d Edition

A veteran is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The United States of America' for an amount of "up to and including his or her life." That is an honor that far too many people no longer understand. To them Memorial Day means a day at the lake or watching the auto races on TV. The Roadrunner staff salutes each of our veteran Roadrunners this past Memorial Day.

The Roadrunners and the entire Blackbird community are saddened by the loss of Colonel Vern Henderson who lost a brave battle against lung cancer. Vern was the original member and commander of the air defense unit based at Edwards AFB. This unit was part of the Joint Task Force that maintained and flew the three YF-12s. Along with the Lockheed personnel over 100 air defense men provided the maintenance of the aircraft and also helped man the pressure suit cadre. Vern was the leader. As you can read in Vern's bio on the Roadrunner website, he was involved in Oxcart well before President Johnson revealed the existence of the black bird. While living at Edwards he earned the nick-named "The Roadrunner" because he was always buzzing around in that little sports car of his. Rest in peace, Vern.



### **NEW MEMBERS**

The Roadrunners welcome aboard Angus Batey from the UK. Many of you remember Angus from our last reunion. Angus is a feature writer on aviation.

The Roadrunners also welcome aboard William Schlechtweg, Jr., one of the early USAF members of the Oxcart Team. Bill worked in supply at the Ranch from July 1961 to September 1965. Bill has posted a great piece of information about the Ranch further in this newsletter. [You're off to a good start, Bill. We need your stories to fill in the gaps.](#)

My name is Russ Buyse and our president, TD has asked me to head up the Election Committee again this year. I would like to ask the membership for help. As is the custom, during the membership meeting at our reunion at the Gold Coast in October, we will be voting on a slate of officers for the next two years. If you have an interest in either the President, Vice-President or



Secretary/Treasurer position please let me know at [rbuyse@aol.com](mailto:rbuyse@aol.com) or contact TD at [tdbarnes@area51specialprojects.com](mailto:tdbarnes@area51specialprojects.com). I want to thank you for your interest in supporting the Roadrunners. Russ



Well it comes as no surprise to the current Roadrunner officers that Russ selected this particular newsletter edition to recruit replacements for us poor old worn out officers. He knew this was the month we would be updating the membership on all the work that is going on to prepare for the reunion in October, and that would drive away any serious and dedicated candidates wishing to relieve us of our labors. As the saying goes, "It's a tough job, but someone has to do it."

As we've been mentioning each month, we have some ambitious plans for our members during the reunion this October. Normally our esteemed Reunion Committee Chairman, Harry Martin would have been at the meeting taking place on the 20th at the Atomic Testing Museum depicted above, but was unable to make this one. Next October you will be seeing and meeting the above museum staff, so we will introduce them now. L-R Karen Green, Museum Curator, Chuck Costa, Museum Director, Dawn Barlow-Ham, Director of Marketing and Development, Ellen Leigh, xx, and RI President, T.D. Barnes.



On Thursday, May 21, Harry and TD met with Nicki (left) at the Gold Coast Hotel & Casino to confirm the menus for the reunion banquet. They then conducted a lunch meeting with Susan to lock in the room rates, command post, and banquet room. Details to follow. How about it, Russ? You should have half of the membership signing up for our offices by now!!! You would for sure if we could expose what

Jim, Roger and Frank have been doing to prepare for the reunion.

Yo, Sam Ursini, you have mail:



Sam, I was a young lieutenant who came to 28th AD shortly before your selection to the YF-12 program. I still remember the party at Hamilton Officers club. I still communicate with Donn Spegal who I worked for at Hamilton. I enjoyed your web site / Gerry Burgess.  
Come on, Colonel. We want to hear about this party.

I was trying to find out information about my Father who recently passed away. I found paperwork (transfer orders) to the 1129 USAF Special Activities Squadron. He was involved in this unit from Late 1962 through March of 1967. Name-Byron E. Robinson. He was sent invitations to the blackbird reunions but he never attended. He never discussed his work there and any information we could get would be greatly appreciated.  
Thanks Kim (Robinson) Smith-daughter

Note: Kim sent us several documents that included transfer orders, instructions on whom to contact when arriving in Las Vegas, etc. First Shirt Dodge Trader was specifically named. Let's help Kim out with stories about her father back then.

#### FEATURED ROADRUNNER

CIA A-12 pilot/Air Force YF-12/SR-71 pilot  
Colonel William L. "Bill" Skliar

Colonel Skliar, a native of New York, was born on February 22, 1926. He enlisted in the Air Corp in 1944 along with many others hoping to go through cadets. His group of hopefuls didn't make it as



the war was coming to an end and he was out of the service in 1945. He went to UCLA for two years and then back into the Air Force in 1948 to go through the cadet program. He graduated at Las Vegas Air Force Base (now Nellis) on July 1, 1949. He went to Korea in January of 1951 and was stationed at K-2 where he flew 100 missions in an F-84 with one probable kill on a MIG. While in Korea, he spent two months as a Forward Air Controller with the Army. He graduated in the first class to receive diplomas at the Institute of Technology United States Air Force (Wright-Patterson) with a BA of Science in Aeronautical Engineering August 1956. In April 1970 he went to Vietnam where he served at Tuy Hoa for five months and then transferred to Saigon for the next seven months. He flew 98 missions in



F-100s.

While at Eglin Air Force Base, FL, Skliar was picked for a special assignment which turned out to be testing the Blackbird for the CIA. He

joined them in the summer of 1962, and checked out in the A-12 in April 1963. He was the first military man to fly the Blackbird after the Lockheed test pilots and Air Force IPs. He was one of the original CIA/Lockheed selectees taken out of the Air Force and employed by the CIA for the A-12 Oxcart Program at Groom Lake, Nevada. He flew the A-12 trainer early on with the J-75 engines. While at Groom Lake, Sklair switched from A-12 testing to the YF-12. When he requested return to the Air Force he was awarded the rank of Lt. Col. He always thought he should have been made a full colonel and, also, that he should have been the Operations Officer when he arrived at Edward to fly the SR-71 Blackbird. On 11 April 1969, Sklair and his RSO Major Noel Warner had to eject from a Blackbird that had blown out its wheels on takeoff.



Sklair didn't have to fly the 98 missions in Vietnam because of his rank and job, but he volunteered to do so. Colonel Skliar received honors at the CIA and the Air Force Flight Test Center, CA, retiring from the Air Force as a Colonel in 1975 and moved to Reno, NV where he continued flying. Flying was Sklair's life. He was a member of the Air Force Association, the Quiet Birdmen, the professional Race Pilots Association, and the Nevada Air Museum.

He opened a glider school at Stead Airport in 1977, and flew Formula Ones in the Reno Air Races. On 18 August 1988, our fellow Roadrunner was killed when his racing plane lost a wing and crashed nose-first into the desert about eight miles north of Stead Airport.

Comments by Jane "Skliar" Welsh:

Bill always felt privileged to be able to fly the Blackbird, and said he was with the finest group of people he ever worked with - all of them. We were married 3 July 1949. We have 3 daughters one of whom became a pilot in her teens. She is my oldest, Janis, who has been a pilot with Federal Express for over 20 years. She is a Captain on MD-11s. Her base is Anchorage, Alaska, and she flies the Asian route. Her husband, John Clark, is a pilot with American Airlines, and he flies out of Los Angeles; they have homes in both cities. Our middle daughter, Kathy, lives on a 400 acre ranch in San Andreas, CA with her husband, Gary Arentz. Kathy is an animal person and has taken care of animals and birds that have been injured; then returns them to the wild. Her husband is a retired Optometrist and former car racer. Our youngest, Patti, lives with her husband, Steve Aguirre, and our grandson in Lake Arrowhead, CA. They owned and ran a lumber, hardware, and garden nursery, but recently sold it. Steve is a fireman in Lake Arrowhead.

Comment by RI President: Bill and Jane have a diversified family that Bill would be very proud of. Jane is married to Charley Welsh, as fine a gentleman as one would ever want to meet. The two of them continue to fully support the Roadrunners more than most of the rest of our members. The Roadrunners commend and thank you Charley and Jane for your steadfast support of the legacy of Colonel Skliar and the Roadrunners. You inspire the rest of us, make us proud and prove that

our efforts to keep the association together are worthwhile.

Hello Mr. Barnes. I am David Garner and my Dad worked at the NTS for years, He worked in Special Projects as a Photographer for Pan Am. He passed away on Sept 13, 1982 at the N tunnel. Dalton Leon Garner. He worked with Mr. Ray Poole-EGG, Frank Tyner-EGG, Mr. Frank Garcia, Joe Conway, Mr. Reed. I looked up your site after watching George Knapp and giving your web site. I like it, ARE THERE ALIENS, AND SPACE VEHICLES. My Dad said to me before he died, believe what you hear son. Thank You. David



David, we take all such inquires serious so the Roadrunner staff conferred with our former President, Roger Andersen, our esteemed bachelor at large, and his reply was, "Nope, no aliens at the Area." Roger is also the one who came up with the Las Vegas slogan, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." (Looks happy, doesn't he? I think he --- no, that would be gossip.)

#### FEEDBACK FROM THE WEB SITE

Hello Folks, I've not seen this site before although I have heard about some of Bill Park's renowned flying experiences. Bill was a classmate of mine in Cadet Class 49B and we were in the same outfit in Korea. (I guess it was the 9th Fighter Group), I was in the 9th Sqdn. We were rotated home after we had flown 125 missions at the time. At my rotation I had flown 120 missions. Thanks for organizing this site, it's fun to read about guys like Bill Park from our 49B era. Robert Logan, (49Ber)



Really, really early Air Force presence at the Ranch by: William Schlechtweg, Jr (our new Roadrunner member) I was assigned to supply at the Ranch from July 1962 to September 1965. On the day of my arrival there were only 3 military in supply, one in medical (Doc Brumer) and the aircraft controllers. Only one controller worked at the ranch at a time, working one week and then rotating to Nellis AFB for two weeks. Those assigned to the Ranch while I was there will remember my car, an Edsel Bermuda station wagon, the only Edsel during that time. I still have one patch, my lighter, and my coffee cup. All of them depict the Roadrunner. Security would not allow the organization to be identified on the patch, however the lighter did have "Det 1" and the cup had the full identity on it.

#### FEEDBACK FROM THE LAST NEWSLETTER

Hi Bob Klinger. Maybe a paragraph from you about the people you assigned to the area and their job functions would be appreciated by all (Mich Yoshii, Henry Oda, Don Kershnik, etc.) Henry Oda did go on the deployment. Does someone have a list of Lockheed Flight Test

Engineers that were assigned to the area? You mention that Slip kept his eye on things, which I am positive is true, however no where in that area was mentioned that it was Doug Nelson who, along with his total staff, who set up all that Slip inherited, which by the way was a smooth running outfit. I remember no changes to our daily tasks after Nelson departed and Slip took over Operations. If I recall correctly, all section heads laid out how they would conduct their daily tasks, ran it by Nelson for approval or change, and once approved, it was put into operation. He let us do our thing, once he approved our procedures. Thanks for this bit about the Area though it probably wasn't meant to be published, thus the reason for omitting the identity of the author. We agree with the intent of the message and would appreciate a write up from all you Lockheed guys and gals on the Oxcart Team. This need applies throughout the Oxcart Team.



ROADRUNNER REUNION #21 5-8 OCTOBER 2009: As most of the Roadrunners know, since the 19 September 2007 declassification of Project OXCART by the CIA the Roadrunner staff and advisors have organized symposium panels and interviews with historians, the UNLV Oral History project, and various media interviews with the objective of obtaining and recording the human aspects of the A-12 Oxcart program. Modeling after the Jack Weeks event in Mobile, Alabama on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, the Roadrunners and the Atomic Testing Museum have organized a two-day schedule of events designed to entertain both the Roadrunners and to afford our group an opportunity to share our legacy with the local public for the first time as some of us did in Mobile a year ago. The Roadrunner staff strongly emphasizes that the events at the museum are optional activities to be enjoyed by those members wishing to participate. Those seeking other entertainment will be obliged as much as possible in whatever they wish to do. The theme this year is social with no organized golf tournaments or similarly scheduled activities that in the past have split the Roadrunners attending into two groups, participants and non-participants. Besides the membership meeting and banquet we have only two scheduled events, a symposium panel Wednesday evening of the reunion and one scheduled the afternoon of the last day while we are locked out of the Command Post while the hotel staff prepares for our banquet.

We are attaching the reunion schedule and registration form, however neither go into detail of what we have in the works at the museum. Starting very shortly the museum is going to start advertising the two-day public meets the Roadrunners event. Brochures will be printed and circulated containing the scheduled events along with short bios of the Roadrunners participating. It's not firm yet, but it is



expected that the History Channel will be present doing interviews and covering the panel discussions. We have had a number of meetings with the museum staff and have already supplied the museum with photos and material for them to use to publish posters and displays in the building. There will be an area that we'll probably call the Command Post where Roadrunners can hang out to sign books, posters, etc. for the public and the media. The two panels will be well attended by the public and media. The Roadrunners will be on their own to mingle as much as they want to. The public is expected to start gathering around noon. Those wishing to tour the museum exhibits may do so as a reduced rate of \$7. George Knapp and a Roadrunner member will moderate a 4-member panel on the evening of October 7<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 8 pm. At Your Service will caterer the event with wine and cheese. On October 8 the panel moderated by Author Annie Jacobsen and a Roadrunner member will be from 2 to 4 pm with other scheduled events throughout the day. The museum will provide soft drinks, water, and food from Costco for that event. The museum staff is considering setting up a sound system so more people can hear the panel. They expect the attendance may be such that they may have to take reservations. We are gathering up everything we can to display at the museum for these two days. If any of you have anything to contribute please let us know ASAP.



You will note on the attached reunion schedule where on the last two days of the reunion the CIA EAA store will move most of its merchandise from the Command Post in the hotel to the Atomic Testing Museum where it can cater to the public as well as to those Roadrunners who haven't gambled away the farm. (Note we didn't say "Ranch.") With our membership attendance being half of what it has been we feared the store would not sell enough to justify coming back for our next reunion. Realizing that the museum store markets Roadrunner merchandise, the EAA store will be offering mostly CIA related merchandise. (You know - daggers, invisible ink, shoes with radio transceivers in the heel, false passports, fake beards and mustaches for the guys and boobs for the babes, etc.)

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**MORE CIA STUFF by: Joe Donoghue**

Recently the CIA expanded its Freedom of Information site to include on-line search of the CREST database of declassified documents. This is the same database that I trolled through during about 30 trips to DC in search of U-2 (and a bit of OXCART) history. Unfortunately, one cannot access the documents online but searches can be made by title and by date and the results used in formulating FOIA requests. The database includes many thousands of documents declassified between

1998 and 2007 and will be updated as new releases occur. The search page is at: [http://www.foia.cia.gov/search\\_archive.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/search_archive.asp). A search for oxcart returns 1079 documents with "OXCART" in their titles. A-12 returns 146



docs. bx6847 gets 14 hits. alien gets 148 hits (Joe, Rog just said there were no aliens.) but I didn't check to see if the ones buried at the area are listed. "Area 51" of course gets no hits as it is still a big secret at Langley. 1079 is not the total of all OXCART documents as only those docs with OXCART in the title will be found. I am currently working my way through the whole database a week at a time through the whole of the 20 year Agency U-2 program. By doing a date search, I should not miss anything (except due to bleary-eyedness). Perhaps you and some of the members would be interested in knowing that this search facility exists. The CIA site has a sample FOIA letter and the process is pretty simple if you find anything in the database that you'd like to have

a look at. Joe (Seriously, we owe Joe many, many thank you's and kudos for his years of researching for our website and authors writing about the CIA U-2 and A-12 projects.)

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Hate to be a naysayer but this particular "revelation" is well over 25 years behind the times. There is a far better and more accurate description of the program in "Aerofax Minigraph 1, Lockheed SR-71 (A-12, YF-12, D-21)" published by Aerofax, Inc, Autin Texas. Publication date is 1983 and I got my copy in 1985 but the program was well known long before 1983. Book has lots of pictures and a concise history including disposition [at that time] of all of the different serial #'s of all of the aircraft variants. For some reason the news program missed the D-21, a long-range supersonic drone of considerable interest. As recently as 2000 there were a couple of them sitting in a Northrop hanger at Mojave - some one wanted to modify them for further flight but never happened - sort of wierd looking things. The "51" in Area 51 refers to part of the number of a restricted area shown on aeronautical charts - I'd have to look at an old chart to get the original numbers as there have been changes over the years.

I originally got involved with the project in the fall of 1960 when Hughes was selected to build an advanced radar and missile system for the YF-12 variant. At that time we were testing an earlier version of the radar in a supersonic B-58. It was intended for the North American F-108 Mach 3 interceptor, the companion to the B-70 bomber. The airplane program got so screwed up that the AF cancelled it and decided to build the YF-12 variant of the A-12. It was a highly classified project then and when we had to go to the Skunk Works in Burbank we took a very circuitous route through South Los Angeles as a result of "security's" belief that would conceal our relationship with Lockheed. In spite of that within a few months of the start of the project all of the local parts vendors started calling us about "the new program" we'd won. I ran the department which developed a significant portion of the radar including "signal processing" [my specialty from then to now],

power supplies, and displays. The ASG-18 radar and the GAR-9 missile [~100 miles range] which we developed was very successful as were the three YF-12A aircraft which were built. One of the early missions involved flying from Edward to Eglin AFB, shooting down a supersonic Bomarc target drone, and returning to base in just over 2 hours. The Air Force wanted congress to build a fleet of YF-12A's to serve as a long-range interceptor force over northern Canada and Alaska - idea was to launch from th US but be on station before any Soviet bombers penetrated into important territory. Would have worked fine but the Congress never funded the program. After completion of the original radars the AF kept us under contract for more advanced long-range radar development in the hopes the program would be revived. It wasn't but the advanced radar we developed because the AWG-9 which was in all of the F-14's, along with the Phoenix missile. Built about 700 as I recall but all are out of service now.

Those of us working on the project got a chance to go out one night and look at the original plane before it was crated [supposed to look like a house being moved but as you can see by the photograph with the article didn't quite accomplish that] before being trucked to "the site". Over the years we worked on a number of programs with the Skunk Works and I got to know Kelly Johnson and Ben Rich, his hyperactive assistant at the time. One of the projects we worked on was to develop a radar for what became the F-117. It never made it into the airplane but got us started in a long lone of successful systems including the radar in the B-2. Used to go out to the Skunk Works fairly frequently working various unsuccessful proposals to really put a radar in the F-117. Last time I was there was not long before I retired from Hughes and the two of us who went were given a small office to work in. This was after both Johnson and Rich were retired but this office had their desks in it for their use if they ever came in. Kind of interesting to sit in the chairs of such "great men"! I've run on too long, Edward Phillips Great stuff, Ed. Keep right on writing and we'll keep right on posting what you have to say. We sincerely thank you for this useful information. A bit of clarification for our readers: President Johnson first exposed the existence of the Blackbirds in 1964, and it is true that Lockheed published information about the Blackbirds in the 1980's, and that the planes were released to various museums in 1991. Mr. Phillips is talking about knowledge of the EXISTENCE of the Blackbirds, but the recent article to which he is referring addresses the ACTIVITIES of Project Oxcart and Operation BLACK SHIELD which were first partially declassified by the CIA on 14 December 1998. In September 2007 considerable additional declassification by the CIA occurred, declassifying for the first time some of the names of the Groom Lake participants in the project and operations. Much of what occurred during Operation BLACKSHIELD will never be declassified.

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ARTICLE 132 NEWS

Battleship Memorial Park - Mobile, Alabama

<http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/article132.html>

Mike, the Battleship's Crocodile Dundee has turned 60 again. Lee and Owen treated him to a Wal-Mart cookie Cake decorated with the inscription "Marine Mike." Excuse the pun, but the Battleship crew reportedly had a blast. Missing the gala event was Roadrunner Maj. Gen. Pat Halloran who flew his Lancair down to Lakeland, FL last month for the annual air show and camaraderie with a number of old AF buddies including some U-2 and SR guys. Slowly making his way home and enjoying unplanned stops along the way he took in a short Carnival cruise ship trip, and then stopped at the Battleship Museum to see the A-12 and the fine memorial to Jack Weeks. Pat reported that it is drawing big crowds and a lot of respect and admiration for the Oxcart program. Well done, Sir. We appreciate your taking the time to visit the plane and report it's great success to us. The Battleship crew was disappointed that they didn't know the General were there.



IT MAKES ME PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN by Connie Pardew

Last week a sailor from Lovelock, Nevada was killed when his helicopter went down off the coast of San Diego during a training mission. All five crewmembers lost their lives. His remains were brought back on one of our Southwest Airline flights from San Diego. What a moving and emotional experience it was to see the procedure from the gate area up above. When the plane landed the sailors in their dress whites along with officers and the family stood planeside as the sailor's casket was offloaded. (This is done before passengers and baggage) As it was coming off the belt, the sailors all stood at attention, saluting. It looked like a prayer was said before the sailors loaded the casket in the funeral home car. All this time the entire gate area was silent as we all watched this happen.

Before the plane came in I had made an announcement about what was about to happen. Asked people to pray for the family. I am so proud that our servicemen and women are taken care of properly. It gives us reason to be even more thankful for their service. If you ever get an opportunity, watch the HBO movie "Taking Chance" it is about this very thing. Connie



We're proud to say Connie is one of our Roadrunner members who works for Southwest Airlines in Reno. Connie's son, Michael is stationed on the USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74)

