

7/3/2000  
3313 N. Glenhaven Dr.  
Midwest City, OK 73110-3709

Dear 579 Missileers,

The reunion was an exciting, wonderful and smashing success! I expected it to be successful, but it exceeded my wildest expectations. The camaraderie that permeated the whole weekend was truly astonishing and satisfying to us all.

The reunion came about because in 1998, ten former 579<sup>th</sup> SMS members met in Las Vegas to see if there was interest in having a "real" reunion. The members unanimously agreed that we should go for it since we had such a rapid bonding and great fun. The "practice" reunion group established three objectives for the "Official" reunion; hold it in Roswell, visit a site and visit the MAMS building.

At the recent reunion on the big tour day, we first visited the Alien Museum then we bussed to Site 4 with its graffiti that started at the LCC entry and meandered into the darkness below. A string of lights powered by a portable power unit eerily lit the entryway staircase and the LCC. If we had had two power units, we would have asked one of the EPPTs to parallel them. After the LCC visit we spent time talking on the cap and standing on the silo doors. In my view, the essence changed standing there. It was an unexpected experience. With no irreverence intended, I liken it to almost a sacred experience. At the very least, it was emotional. Visiting the site was completing a circle for some and for others perhaps closing a door. We could have stayed at the site longer I feel certain, but as Robert Frost wrote, we had "miles to go" to the MAMS building. We met our three objectives.

After the tour, I heard several comments about needing the closure regarding the 579<sup>th</sup> experience. The comments referred to the intense and constant training, the exceptional people and the difficult environment in which we served at a very critical time in our nation's history. Only lately have we found out how critical. That experience had a significant influence on our lives, more than many of us realized until the tour.

We were able to visit the site through the generosity and hard work of its owners, a very neat couple, SiloMan and wife who in real life are Karen and Gary Baker of Roswell. Gary hosts the "Silo World" web site located at [www.siloworld.com](http://www.siloworld.com). I was amazed at their knowledge of the silos, the history and the systems. The web site features 579<sup>th</sup> pictures, including recent site aerial shots, as well as other missile systems and comments by members. Les Hayles and Alan Kane attended the reunion and previously posted articles they wrote regarding their respective recollections as a maintenance man and a crewmember.

Professor Terry Isaacs from South Plains College in Levelland, Texas gave us an interesting pictorial history from digging the silos to deactivation. It was interesting how

he tied the pictures of certain points in the building phase to where we might have been relative to the picture he showed. He pointed out that some of us may have received our orders to report or entered our specialty schools. We are grateful to Terry for the presentation, the research and writing he has done about our squadron.

The Association of Air Force Missileers (AAFAM) Newsletter will include an article about our reunion in the September issue. Joe Conrad has graciously agreed to write the article. However, Joe needs your comments to compile for an article. Joe's e-mail is [joseph.conrad@worldnet.att.net](mailto:joseph.conrad@worldnet.att.net). His snail mail address is 51 Kendall Hill Rd., Mt. Vernon, NH 03057-1908.

Jerry Nelson stopped by for a visit on his way home to Florida after spending a few days in Las Vegas following the reunion. While there, he visited with Don England. While Jerry was here, we went to the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial, which is a stirring experience.

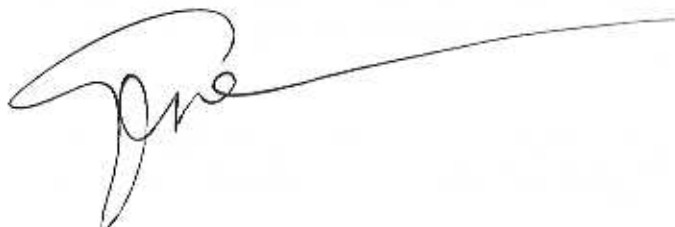
Please return the enclosed postcard with your votes quickly. We asked **The Reunion BRAT**, AKA Linda Irvine, to coordinate our next reunion and to send us Angie Yetter again. Linda's organization did an excellent job setting things up with the facility, arranging for our dinners, the hospitality room, the busses for the tours to name a few. Angie was very responsive, handled last minute changes professionally and in our best interest. The morning we left, she did have a rather blank stare, but she had earned it. We now include Karen and Gary Baker and Angie as 579 members along with Terry.

I sat for a while after coming home still awed by the reunion success, uttered those Gomer Pyle words of wisdom, "GOH-LEEEEE!" and went to work on the next one.

Several of you have volunteered to help which I appreciate and I will call on you as needs arise. I received several comments about establishing a permanent 579<sup>th</sup> recognition located in Roswell. I would appreciate help on that issue. Our main thrust for now is to continue looking for people. We especially want to put emphasis on locating maintenance people. If anyone has experience setting up web sites please tell me. If you have never set up a site, but are interested in learning to do so, why not go to school on us and set up a 579<sup>th</sup> web site?

Thanks for your support and your kind words you sent after the reunion about our efforts. The beautiful roses you gave to Sue at the Saturday night banquet thrills me when I think about it. Glen Wegworth was a charmer when he gave them to her for all of you.

Gene

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.