

Chapter Contacts

Please forward to your members!



With his message forwarding this newsletter, editor Rob Morales mentioned that he had finished his newsletter while airborne on a Delta flight, en route back to Atlanta Int'l from "Charles De Gaulle". No further details and I suppose it was a business trip, but color me jealous!

That's probably because one of the conundrums of getting old is that with kids long gone and even GRANDKIDS finishing college and with nearly all the other obligations in the rear view mirror, a person finally has the time and where-\$\$\$-withal to do all that travelling he once wanted to do. But now what is lacking is the energy and/or "get-up-and-go" to do it! But I guess I should feel lucky. Most of my aerial views of the world were from the best seat in the house ...through the windshield up front.

Besides, I keep telling myself that the Riviera was much better as a bachelor of twenty-five, instead of an old coot of seventy-five. Actually, seventy-five, plus.

But let's move on to Rob's report his chapter's activities ...especially their results and impressions of the recent National Convention ...with the distractions of being out of the country in the few days since the convention! Reported were club members' winnings at The Big Show.

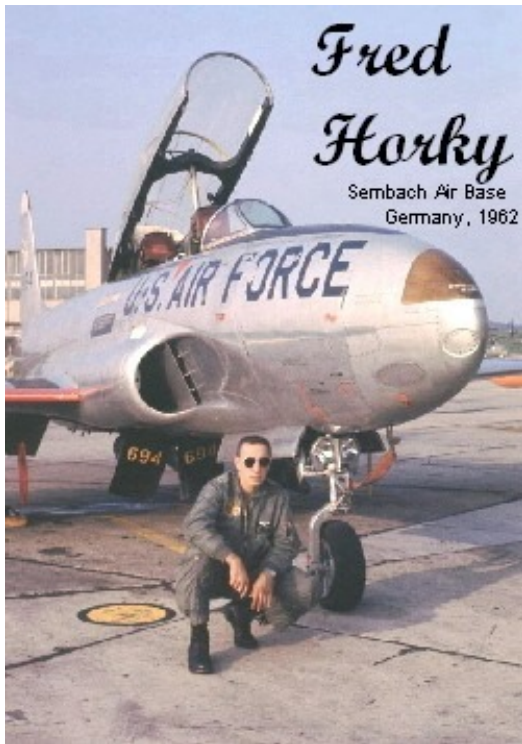
Scrolling through his newsletter too fast, I had misread Rob's "show 'n tell" list to understand that chapter president Dave Lockhart had won at Columbia with a with a 1/48th ICM Po-2 biplane of the Soviet Air Force's "Night Witches" all-women squadron. I should learn to read more closely! I scrolled through page after page of aircraft models entered at Columbia ...some six hundred aircraft pictures (<http://svsm.org/gallery/columbia2016>) looking for that little biplane, which I never found because it wasn't there! It wasn't even completed. If I'd been more careful, I would have learned that his Po-2 is an "in-progress" project at show 'n tell! But I sure did see a lot of pretty models in scrolling through that gallery, though!

At the conven=on I did attend Dave's seminar on methods and ideas on making an IPMS chapter successful and growing. Good stuff!

Among many other interesting items in his regular "new products and books stuff" report, Jim Pernifoff men=ons #106 in Guideline Publica=ons series, on *Sikorsky S- 55/H-19 Chickasaw and Westland Whirlwind*. It reminded me of my first-ever helicopter flight, back at Sembach where the H-19 pictured below was based as a launch site support type for the Mace missiles of the 38th Tactical Missile Wing .



But all those remarks belong in my optional, read-it-if-you-want B.S. section, so I'll close this forward by urging you to check out the attached newsletter closely: there is a lot of good stuff here!



*Fred
Horky*
Sembach Air Base
Germany, 1962

**Warning:
my “Random Stream of
Lost Thought” went out
of control early
againcontinue reading
at your own risk....**

At Sembach, my missile duty schedule o^en had me at loose ends during the week, and o^en when not scheduled to fly I would just kind of “show up” at opera=ons, There I was available when, for example, somebody else (usually of higher rank) cancelled out at the last minute.

This day it didn’t happened, but I did manage to talk my friends



Jay Strayer (seated below, completing flight forms) and Wayne Arvo (in cockpit) into letting me ride in the cargo compartment of their infuriated palm tree , so I could take pictures out the wide-open cargo door of the base as they flew a local training sortie.

(Post Script: Years later I reestablished e-mail contact with Jay, learning that he had been one of the HH-3 pilots who flown on the famous Son Tay rescue mission attempt. It was spectacularly well planned and executed, but was unsuccessfulonly because the prisoners had recently been moved from that prison.

The attempt was especially personal for Jay, because one of those POW's NOT rescued at Son Tay was our mutual friend Tom Curtis, who we had both known at Sembach. Tom was shot down while himself making a 1965 rescue attempt "up north" in an HH- 43 Huskie ...a helicopter totally unsuited for the task. He wound up spending over seven long years as a guest of the North Vietnamese: you can read his full story at <http://www.taskforceomegainc.org/c103.htm>.

The experience of Tom and his crew was a pretty brutal affair: they didn't all survive.)



The "dollar ride" that Jay and Wayne gave me that nice day back at Sembach resulted in some really nice aerial pictures of the base. They emphasize Sembach's unusual configuration, with the flight line (which had been built first) separated from base proper, which was on a hill top a mile away. That separation is emphasized by the above picture taken from directly over the runwayour "sim missile" T-birds are in the foreground.

My research into the base's history showed that temporary grass airfields had existed without permanent buildings on the site in both World War I and World War II. When the cold war began it was chosen for a permanent field and construction began in 1951, but the local farmers were more than a bit resentful with much of their prime lands SOUTH of the village taken by eminent domain for construction of the flight line.

Then the West German government came back in 1952 to seize more farm land for the barracks, offices, supply warehouse, housing area, etc. The locals then REALLY became upset to the point of were lying down in front of bulldozers.

A compromise was reached which put the cantonment area a mile away on top of a partially wooded hill named Heuberg (Hay Mountain). It worked out well for everybody, with the two parts of the base surrounding Sembach village.



Note all the base buildings are painted pastel colors. It later became very dull looking in camo colors...



My picture below was taken from the flight line, looking over Sembach village in a little cove and beyond the fields had been so contested by the farmers, to the base cantonment beyond on its hill.

About ten miles further in both these photos a mountain named Donnersberg, (Thunder Mountain), is seen. Of really old volcanic origin, it is the highest terrain in this part of Germanyhigh enough to earn the nickname "Bust-yer-butte" among American pilots. (In today's search I learned that when the Romans came two millennia ago, they had named it Mons Jovis after their god of thunder, Jupiter. Learn something every day!) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donnersberg>)



The village itself includes in its historical origins being an Imperial stage coach stop on Napoleon's Paris to Vienna royal route. (In my last "forward", I mentioned that the Sembach village Rathaus was where my wife and I had our civiland only official ... marriage.)

The compromise putting the cantonment area on top of the then-wooded hill worked out well for everybody for nearly fifty years, with the two parts of the base surrounding Sembach village. The flight line and runway were never adequate for major Air Force units, so Sembach was always sort of a minor base, as bases went in Europe. Most of us considered it the best kept secret in the Air Force.

This configuration lasted for fifty years. This aerial shows the flight line and Sembach village in 1989.

Here's what the place looked like from nearly seven miles up.



With the end of the cold war the base closure commission closed the flight line completely and reverted back to German control.

Today what's left of the flight line is an industrial park. While the runway outline can still be seen, most of it has been plowed up and carted away, The village remains where it has always been, at right. Today a high-tech foundry sits on the east end of the former runway.....this view being about what we saw from our sim-missile T- birds at "pitch out" for an overhead landing pattern.



The engineers among my readers might be interested in learning about what they're doing at that odd shaped foundry at the end of the old runway. Click here for an interesting video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nD63mdMvUi8>. While the narration is in German, the pictures are in "engineering", and even without the sound track will be fascinating, as will be the product.

After BRAC closed Sembach Air Base, the cantonment area the U.S. Army sort of assumed control (evidently without telling Congress!), and made it a Military Police headquarters base along with other support functions, and called it "Sembach Kaserne". The Army had evidently learned what we Air Force guys had known all along: for fifty and more years we had called Sembach the best kept secret in the Air Force.....

Where when I was there when the Matador missile "gate guard" had been replaced by the Mace, one of the former was installed on the same plinth (fancy name for a post) to continue the recognition of the missileers' efforts in the Cold War.



After the missiles were removed from Sembach, the base became Sembach Annex to Ramstein Air Base. The mostly fight jock headquarters (17th Air Force) at Ramstein, was transferred to Sembach.

My guess is that a fighter-pilot general said "...get that missile off that plinth; I want a FIGHTER plane there!".

So Shazam!, Shazam!, the missile disappeared, and a fighter appeared on that same plinth. (It was such a late addition, that they had to scrounge up a former *Spanish Air Force Canadair Mark 6*, the Canadian-built Sabre variant never flown by the USAF. But they substituted it in USAF Korean-war F-86 markings anyway: Sembach had NEVER had F-86's based there; USAF, Spanish, Canadian, or otherwise.)

Then after more years went by, the Air Force left, the Army arrived, and of course an Army general probably said “.that AIR FORCE airplane has to go.”

It was replaced by the something green and ugly, seen below.



Sigh....

This next link contains the impressions of a latter-day civilian visiting “abandoned Sembach Air Base”, referring of course to the Flight Line portion, not today’s Army installation a mile away. But it’s still pre&y interesting reading.

<https://abandonedkansai.com/2011/11/17/sembach-air-base/>

P.S. On a really nice day (which happened so infrequently that a person learned quickly to really appreciate it), we could see Donnersberg clearly from our Grunstadt missile launch site, twenty-five miles away...

