

**456th FIS 2003 Reunion Report – Newsletter #6 – August 16, 2003**  
**by Pat Perry**

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Hi folks!! After resting up for three months after the reunion, I thought it would be a good idea to follow up with a report from my travel diary. To all who missed the event, we thought about you and hope to see you in 2005 at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio in the USAF Museum. More later...

**The Report:**

I arrived in Merced Saturday May 24, 2003 at 11:00 PM. The place looked just like it did 35 years ago, only much bigger.

**Sunday morning the 26th** I met John and Ginnie Marcotte at their traditional after-church location – the IHOP on Olive street. After dropping Ginnie off at home, John and I drove out to the Castle Air Museum for their annual Open Cockpit Day – along with 3000 other people.

After meeting with Jean Astorino, CAM Executive Director, and making sure the gift shop items had arrived, John and I walked out to the F-106 display pad. B.A. Hansen was decked out in his original orange flight suit talking with visitors. Talk about de-ja-vu all over again!! B.A. hasn't changed a bit in over 35 years! Museum restoration specialist Ralph Robledo and his wife and sons were escorting people up the B-1 stand to look into the cockpit – later visitors convinced him to let them sit in the seat for pictures. I haven't seen grins that wide in years.

The temperature was nice but the sun was already showing no mercy. The F-106 looked brand new. I had only seen pictures up to this point and it was amazing how stunning she looked in person. I could almost hear someone yell "CLEAR" followed by the high pitch rush of air and turbine wheels turning over. I thought if Arnie and Bruce were here, there would be "crocodile tears" flowing. Thanks to many donations from 456th alumni, local folks and museum visitors, we finally had a F-106 at Castle Air Museum – what a proud moment for all 456ers and F-106 fans.

I took lots of pictures and talked to scores of people admiring 57-2456 looking just as she did in August 1968 when she left Castle for Oxnard. Every detail down to the three names on the nose wheel door was precisely duplicated. Also, there was Snoopy on his flying dog house yelling "Curse you Red Baron"! What a magnificent job Ralph Robledo and the entire restoration crew have done. And Bill Emery had sprayed the finest F-106 paint job I'd ever seen – even better than those Larry Hudec and I did back in 1966-67. This F-106 came back to Castle as 58-0793. This '58 model has vertical instruments and was briefly assigned to the 84th FIS at Castle in '78-'79. Ralph kept a complete photo scrapbook documenting entire restoration process and many visitors had the opportunity to review it as they waited their turn to sit in the cockpit.

John Marcotte traded-off with Ralph on conducting cockpit tours during the heat of the day. I could see the twinkle in John's eyes as he answered even the most mundane questions, often with an adlibbed joke. After several hours the sun got the best of us and we headed off to John's house for my favorite – steak dinner and Crown Royal over ice. We talked and looked at pictures for hours. It's simply amazing how the memories start flooding back when you have a chance to talk with friends from so many years ago. You get a feeling of renewal and the long gap in years seems to shrink as old stories are retold and people remembered. Many reunion attendees would later state that the 456th FIS was the best unit they ever served with.

**On Memorial Day the 27th** I headed back to the museum alone to arrange a gift item display with gift shop manager Sandi Weathers. After strolling around the grounds and taking 140 more

pictures I headed back to John and Ginnie's for burgers with the Marcotte's son Terry and neighbor Barbara. What a delightful way to spend the holiday.

**Wednesday the 28th** found me back at the museum taking care of last minute Dedication Day and Reunion arrangements with Jean and the museum staff. What fine friends they have become. Without all the great volunteers, the museum would never have lasted this long! After spending time in a Merced Internet coffee shop checking e-mail and stopping by the Branding Iron I met Jean Astorino and her husband, Loring, for dinner. Loring is a retired Air Force General and had lots of cool war stories to share. What a neat couple they are. Jean, you are my hero!

**Thursday the 29th** I drove to the Fresno airport to pick up my wife, Judy. Low and behold she strolled up with Bob Justus and Polly who had been on the same flight from Columbus, Ohio via Dallas. We convoyed back to the Days Inn at Merced and immediately ran into Arnie and Sheri Arnold and Bruce and Gail Gookin. After a few "adult beverages" we saw Keith and Rosemary Kell and we all headed for the new Hunan Restaurant on 18th street where John Marcotte had given us an order to be treated for dinner. We always follow orders!

Terry Marcotte and his girl friend joined us and we had a quiet dinner for 14. Later a few of us sneaked out to the front porch of the old house to have a smoke. Suddenly, six loud pops rang out from the rear alley of the restaurant – thinking it must be fireworks, John looked up and nonchalantly said, "I hope you guys enjoyed the entertainment I arranged." A few minutes later, Merced's finest were scrambling all over the place. The next day's newspaper reported that a gang shooting had indeed taken place with a fatality and one wounded. It seems that Merced's growth has also invited increasing violence like most other U.S. cities. Despite the unscheduled activity the evening was a memory maker we won't soon forget.

**Friday the 30th**, it was the Alumni Committee's turn to hit the CAM gift shop. After stocking up on neat stuff we headed out to the F-106 to let Arnie and Bruce have some time alone with her. Yes, there was choking back tears and frequent comments about "having something in my eyes".

Then, it was back to the hotel for naps and onward to the Branding Iron for the reception. It was wonderful to see almost 100 people arrive. Some had been to the last reunion and many others were seeing each other for the first time in 35-45 years. While some of us have put on a few pounds since the old days, everyone was recognizable and very glad to be there. Several guys had brought memorabilia and pictures to donate to the museum. There were tearful but joyful hugs and when the pilots, crew chiefs and MA-1 guys got together the BS, I mean war stories, began to get deep.

**Saturday morning the 31st** everyone arrived at the museum for the continental breakfast sponsored by CAM. At exactly 10:45, former 456th pilots Turk Turley and Russ Greenberg flew over the museum and performed some smoke trailing maneuvers in their vintage Stearman aircraft. What a show! These guys perform frequently for air shows and have a web site at <http://free.yosemite.net/~turk/>.

At 11:30 I kicked off the Dedication Day Program. The Merced Honor Guard fired a 21-gun salute and played Taps to honor all the fallen 456th members and the heroes lost in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The alumni then joined Jim Southerland in singing the National Anthem. I led the group in a special Dedication Prayer and CAM Foundation Chairman Ken Devoe welcomed everyone to the event. By then Turk and Russ had parked their Stearmans and we welcomed and thanked them for their splendid flying performance.

Then it was time for the Bruce and Arnie show. Who'd ever thought that two sentimental, former crew chiefs would have started all this reunion and F-106 stuff back in 1999 with Arnie's first

donation of \$106 to the museum to get a Delta Dart? They went on to recognize everyone who has been involved in making the F-106 Dedication Day a reality.

At 11:50 to the second, a two-ship formation of F-16s from the 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing in Fresno performed a slow fly over to salute the members of the 456th FIS.

Following a group picture of former 456ers in front of the F-106 and numerous individual cockpit photos the group checked out through the gift shop and headed to the hotel for naps. At 7:00 PM the Branding Iron seated 150 people for dinner. Bob Justus made pictures of couples that can be seen at <http://www.456fis.org>.

I did the MC routine again and the Bruce and Arnie show continued with more recognition and words from the heart. The group congratulated Mike and Jan Murry who were married in the Castle Chapel exactly 35 years ago that night - many in the room were in attendance at their wedding ceremony. Bruce Gookin presented a personalized scale model F-106 to Keith Kell who was crew chief of the best performing F-106 in the squadron. Bruce also made CAM Board member Joe Pruzzo and honorary member of the 456th FIS for spearheading the F-106 project. I presented mounted F-106 prints to Ralph Robledo who led the restoration effort. We also recognized Carl Jameson and his sons for hauling the F-106 from Tucson to Castle. And to James Macefield, who was the first commander of the 456th FIS when it was reorganized in 1954 at Truax field in Wisconsin, Bob Justus presented a special one of a kind trivet with Luther proudly displayed.

**On Sunday morning June 1st** about 16 couples showed up at the IHOP for a farewell breakfast. See pictures of all the reunion events at <http://community.webshots.com/user/popperry>

Like Yogi says, "It's not over til it's over":

The five of us on the 456th Alumni Committee donated about \$5000 in gift items to CAM in 2003. The idea is that 100% of the proceeds from sales of these items would completely pay off the F-106 and build a \$10,000 fund for its future care and maintenance. While many of the 2003 Reunion attendees spent heavily on gift items and even wrote donation checks to the F-106 fund we still have a lot of items left to sell. So check out the items on the CAM web site and order a bunch for yourself and your Grandchildren!

<http://www.elite.net/castle-air/>

By the way, Bruce Gookin says this is the best deal on wooden custom painted F-106 model airplanes:

Richard Frisenda

Handcrafted models

PO Box 203

Greenvale, New York 11548-0203

516/626-9338 tel/fax

516/660-9018 cell

[Sales@HandCraftedModels.com](mailto:Sales@HandCraftedModels.com)

[http://www.handcraftedmodels.com/product\\_info.php?cPath=21&products\\_id=65](http://www.handcraftedmodels.com/product_info.php?cPath=21&products_id=65)

### **Wrap Up:**

Thanks to all of you who attended the 2003 Reunion. This one was three times bigger than the 2001 Reunion and hopefully the next one will be even bigger.

Below is a list of reunion attendees. Just about everyone said they wanted to have another reunion within two years. Since none of us is getting any younger we're thinking maybe the Air

Force Museum at Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio might be a good place to meet in 2005 – what do you think? Please go to our 456th FIS web site and voice your opinion in the guest book.

It has been a true pleasure working with Bruce Gookin, Jim Arnie Arnold, Bob Justus and John Marcotte to host this reunion. We look forward to the next time we meet as a Squadron and wish you all God's blessings until then. Thanks! Pat Perry

**Note from Bruce Gookin:** Thank you all for joining in the 2003 reunion. The hard work of all the alumni committee members was acknowledged by all the hand shakes, hugs and smiles that seemed to dominate the Castle Air Museum and the Branding Iron. A Special Thanks to all the fine people at CAM who made this such a great day. To Turk Turley and Russ Greenburg for the opening show in their Stearmans and the Fresno Air Guard for the flyby. To Jean, Joe, Dale, Ralph and Charlie - bless you all for being so patient and understanding and giving 100 percent. It has been and will always be an honor and privilege to be in the company of 456ers.

**Here's a list of our favorite web sites:**

The official 456th FIS web site – Bob Justus is webmaster. Pictures of reunion couples are here <http://www.456fis.org/>

Pat Perry's pictures of the 456th Reunions:  
<http://community.webshots.com/user/popperry>

Castle Air Museum web site (check out the Gift Shop items for 456th stuff):  
<http://www.elite.net/castle-air/>

Erv Smalley's F-106 site with progress photos of the restoration process  
<http://convairf106deltadart.homestead.com/index.html>

Pat McGee's World of F-106 web site:  
<http://www.f-106deltadart.com/index1.htm>

Chris Slack's AMARC Experience web site:  
<http://www.amarcexperience.com/Default.asp>

**456th FIS 2003 Reunion Attendees:**

First Name	Last Name	Spouse / Guest	E-mail Address	City	St	Job
Jim	+ Arnold	Sheri	<a href="mailto:arnie@dpc.net">arnie@dpc.net</a>	Morton	IL	Crew Chief
Jean	+ Astorino	Loring	<a href="mailto:cam@elite.net">cam@elite.net</a>	Atwater	CA	CEO CAM
Donald	+ Baker	Pauline	<a href="mailto:scoot@bigvalley.net">scoot@bigvalley.net</a>	Turlock	CA	F-86/F-102
Dale	+ Barton	Marion	<a href="mailto:mariondale@charter.net">mariondale@charter.net</a>	Coos Bay	OR	Weapons
Marvin	+ Bessinger	Aiko	<a href="mailto:marvusafcsret@access4less.net">marvusafcsret@access4less.net</a>	Warner Robins	GA	AWCS
Karl	+ Bossi		<a href="mailto:karloone@comcast.net">karloone@comcast.net</a>	Venice	FL	OIC Weps
James	+ Caloway	Frieda	<a href="mailto:jimcaloway@aol.com">jimcaloway@aol.com</a>	Brighton	CO	AWCS
Don	+ Carr	Bonni		Glendora	CA	Chutes
Thomas	+ Chittenden	Tom Jr	<a href="mailto:tdc1@cableone.net">tdc1@cableone.net</a>	Prescott Valley	AZ	Jet Engine
Pat	+ Clark	Robyn	+3 <a href="mailto:pclark78@attbi.com">pclark78@attbi.com</a>	Visalia	CA	Crew Chief
Ervin	+ Decker		<a href="mailto:ervd@aol.com">ervd@aol.com</a>	Atwater	CA	MA-1
Everett	+ Dencklau	Betty	<a href="mailto:Denck@aol.com">Denck@aol.com</a>	Lakewood	WA	Pilot
Virgil	+ Deshong	Georgia		Tampa	FL	Crew Chief
Tom	+ Dwelle	Peggy	<a href="mailto:dwelle@inreach.com">dwelle@inreach.com</a>	Auburn	CA	Pilot
Bill	Emery	Carl	<a href="mailto:billemary5@aol.com">billemary5@aol.com</a>	Fresno	CA	FANG
Ted	+ Feasel	Frankie	<a href="mailto:tfeasel@hotmail.com">tfeasel@hotmail.com</a>	Fresno	CA	Pilot
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