

This email was sent to the Griffins for Life to inform them that one of their (yours, our) own passed away the other day. It's good to be well remembered by your brothers.

Another valuable history lesson for the current generation...

Original email from Col (Ret) Joe Corey: Dec 9, 9:29 am:

I was just notified that Ltc. Thomas A. Bennett passed away peacefully in his sleep this morning (12/09/2014) at 4:30 am, in Memphis, Tennessee. Tom was diagnosed with cancer in May. Please pass along. Joe Corey, Griffin for Life

Forwarded email from Siko to GFL: Dec 9, 11:53 am:

Fellas,

Col Joe Corey asked me to pass along to the rest of you that Lt Col Thomas Bennett passed away this morning. He passed peacefully in his sleep at 0430 in Memphis, TN. Tom was diagnosed with cancer in May.

Siko

Reply from Broker: Dec 9, 12:18 pm:

Thanks Siko. Tom was a good guy.

Reply from Sparky: Dec 9, 2:07 pm:

Thanks Siko,  
I remember Nibs telling me that "you cant run into Tom Bennett without it costing you time or money" True words.  
Like the rest of us still ticking, flawed, but still a Griffin for life.

Sparky

Reply from B.O.B., Dec 9, 7:50 pm:

Well said, Sparky.

Tom was one of a kind. He seemed to be in full afterburner whenever and wherever he was going. One thing you never wanted to be was just in front of him on a Squadron flush. He would literally run over you by foot, bicycle, or in the airplane if you were the unlucky soul just in front of him

and in his way. He was an aggressive pilot.

Tom was one of very few pilots to achieve the Master of Air Defense (MAD) rating in the Air Defense Command. It was pretty easy to progress up through the first three ratings in ADC (Qualified; Skilled; and Expert). However, it took a lot of studying, training, and expertise to gain the highest rating of Master of Air Defense (MAD). I am pretty sure Tom Bennett was the only member of the 194th FIS to achieve a rating of MAD.

Sparky said it best... Tom had his flaws, but he is a Griffin for life.

B.O.B.

Reply from Buffy: Dec 9, 8:54 pm:

Even as a flight doc, I knew Tom as a great guy. Hearing all the stories about the older "cone heads", he was quite a guy. I actually wish I could have flown with him. I am just at peace that I had the opportunity to know him.

William Carveth

Reply from Stinky: Dec 9, 9:18 pm:

We had another MAD in the squadron, Fred Sattler. He had to quit flying way too early, with a hiatal hernia. All he wanted to do was fly so he never considered a ground job which was almost always offered. Tom had a photographic memory. I remember him telling me that he just skimmed the books and pretty much everything stuck. I never had that curse.

Stinky

Reply from Nibes: Dec 9, 11:04 pm:

I first met Tom about 1977 when I flew an F-106 out from ACY when I was still trying to transfer out here. It was a drill weekend and Arizona Pete was down that day so I got assigned to fly with Tom - just go fly approaches somewhere. As we were about to go fly Corey pulled me aside and said "Don't let him kill you." Good advice.

My last experience with Tom was when he retired and I took over his flight. He left with 13 exit OER's undone. My first job as flight commander was to write 13 OER's (pilots and WSOs) and sign his name to them.

Notice I've not said anything bad about Tom. Just sayin.

Nibes

Reply from Cuda: Dec 9, 11:45 pm:

My best memories of Tom Tom were when I first joined the squadron, and when I first started working the command post during exercises. He was always there, with good advice, a big smile, and a ton of enthusiasm. He was bigger than life back then. I had forgotten how much I enjoyed being around him in those early days. May he rest in peace.

Cuda

Reply from 2-Dogs: Dec 10, 11:40 am:

You guys talked about Tom Bennett running people over during a Flush. Wasn't it Buddly that knocked Snort cold when he was running out for a scramble. Snort was bent over putting his key in the door when the horn went off, we all stood back, except for Snort and Buddly came flying out. The door whacks Snort right on top of the head, with all of Buddly's full weight behind it and down goes Snort. We reach down and drag Snort out of the way as the Scramblers come pouring out! We all thought it was hilarious, well, all but Snort.

'Dogs

Forwarded from Mork to Fred Sattler, Dec 10:

That was the first I heard about you earning the MAD level... you never cease to amaze me!  
Good on ya pal...

Reply from Fred: Dec 10, 8:34 am:

Yeah, I was the first, but it really put the spurs to Tom. He was a kick to know and fly with. Whenever he made a particularly smooth landing he would stand up on the seat and take a bow as he taxied past me in the RCU.

Reply from Warf: Dec 10, 1:55 pm:

U all are killing me! Love it !!! There are still fighter pilots in this world!!

Reply from B.O.B.: Dec 10, 4:22 pm:

I saw Bill Lucido once 'attempt' to duplicate Tom-Tom's stand-up-and-

take-a-bow routine. He crossed 29R and by the last chance area. Then, Guido stood up, turned to the right a bit, and bowed. About that time, the airplane rolled over a little bump, which threw numbnuts off balance, and he almost fell out of the airplane. After thrashing around for a couple seconds, Guido regained his balance and sat back down in the seat. I sat there shaking my head, wondering how the Safety Officer (Lucido) would have explained in an Accident Report how one of the unit pilots (Lucido)'fell out of the airplane while taxiing, then was run over by the airplane as it proceeded on a beeline towards the ramp, only to collide with several other F-106s parked there'.

I think the only incident that outperformed that was when the Safety Officer cocked the nosewheel in the T-33 in last chance. While unsuccessfully trying to un-cock the nosewheel, the Safety Officer did a full-power 360 turn almost hitting Bill Neville in the F-106 next to him. The ensuing spin sent the Crew Chief's 600 lb, roll-away tool cart flying, and the crew chiefs in the last chance area ran for their lives.

Well, I lied... I DO remember another encore performance. It was the time the Safety Officer blew up a T-33 on start. However, I am running out of ink, so I will finish this in another email.

B.O.B.

Reply from Aileron: Dec 10, 6:25 pm:

When I got back from Tyndall and F-106 school at the end of 1981, I remember having to fly with the senior guys for a period. They wanted to check you out and see if you be safe in fingertip or a guy they'd just as soon be 3 miles back in trail all the time. I got to fly with Tom in the B-model a couple of times and he would always question me afterward about why I was always checking the fuel system feeding and balance. (Remember there was a lot of automatic transferring for CG). I really didn't have a good reason other than I liked to know how much I had and where it was... He just told me not to worry about it - "Either it'll work or it won't."

A little later, still as the new guy in the sq. I was #4 one afternoon with Tom leading. I guess I got Blue-4 as that's where the new guy could do the least damage :) Tom said he'd meet us up in the coffee shop for lunch before we all headed out, but he didn't show. The rest of us ate and wandered out to preflight then sat under our jets 'till lead (Tom) showed up. A beautiful day, nice and lazy. Next thing we know Tom is in his jet cranking up. By the time the rest of us got going he was waiting for us out at Last Chance. Tom was one of the guys (amongst others in those days) that thought it was an insult to the crew chief to do a walk-around.

Aileron

Reply from Nibes: Dec 10, 9:48 pm:

Just got this from an airline friend - for those who may not know, Tom was one of the lucky Pan Am guys that got to come across to United in the deal where Pan Am sold it's Pacific Division to United. I could start a whole new thread of airline stories about Tom, but I'm sure you can guess. And the Pan Am guys know a whole lot more anyway.

<http://www.memorialparkfuneralandcemetery.com/obituaries/Thomas-Bennett-4/#%21/Obituary>

Reply from Brig Gen Link: Dec 11, 11:23 am:

Siko,

Thanks for keeping me in the loop. Tom was definitely a larger than life character, as were and are the rest of the PAN AM dynasty guys.

Link