

History of the Strategic Air Command Memorial Chapel



STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND MEMORIAL CHAPEL

In November of 1958, at the suggestion of General Thomas S. Power, Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command, a program was initiated to memorialize Strategic Air Command combat crew personnel who were killed in the performance of their flying mission.

Two projects were started. First, the establishment of Strategic Air Command Memorial Sunday which would be an annual occurrence taking place on the Sunday preceding the Anniversary of the Strategic Air Command.

Second, the installation of the stained glass memorial window in the Command Chapel, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. Chaplain, George S. Wilson was designated as project officer.

A Committee for the Memorial Window was formed consisting of the following officers:

Commander, Second Air Force, Commander, Eighth Air Force, Commander, Fifteenth Air Force, Major General Edwin B. Broadhurst, Brigadier General James B. Knapp, Brigadier General Allen W. Rigsby, Colonel Timothy J. Dacey, Jr., Chaplain, Col George S. Wilson, Base Commander, Offutt Air Force Base, Staff Chaplain, Second Air Force, Staff Chaplain, Eighth Air Force, Staff Chaplain, Fifteenth Air Force, Base Chaplain, Offutt Air Force Base.

The cost of the memorial window would be supported by designated offerings at base chapels throughout the command. The offerings were taken during May and June 1959. A goal of \$15,000.00 was established for the project.

Letters were sent to eight stained glass studios giving the necessary information for the theme of the proposed window. The studios were asked to submit sketches for consideration by the Committee. In July 1959, the Committee met, viewed the sketches and selected the Memorial Window designed by the Wallis-Wiley Studio, Pasadena, California.

The generous contributions from the base chapels in the Command made it possible to install stained glass in the remaining windows of the chapel identifying the four air forces and seventy-two divisions and wings in the Strategic Air Command.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God, our Father, Thou who has created all universe they inhabit, who art the author of and physical laws by which all men live, we give thanks for the favors we enjoy. Thou hast little less than angels and crowned us with honor.

We thank thee for our liberties, for the freedom given us as individuals and the high concern Thou has for us – that not one of us can fall without Thy notice and the fact that each of us is infinitely precious in Thy sight. As we enjoy our liberties and our freedom, may we also rejoice in our responsibility to Thee and to our fellow men.

Today we praise men of his purpose who took up the burden of service, answering the challenge of God and country that peace might be preserved. We remember the example of the Strategic Air Command crewmembers who took it upon themselves to serve their country – not for pay, not for security nor adventure, nor the glory – but because they understood the true meaning of duty. Born with the heritage of freedom secured for them by their forbearers, they accepted the challenge as good stewards to serve the cause of peace. They have helped build a better world under Thy direction and with Thy help.

We dedicate these windows to their memory and ourselves to the ideals which they represented. Like them, we stand in the light of God and like them we pray that we may have resoluteness of purpose and courage of conviction to answer the challenge by saying, "Here am I! Send me."

May these beautiful windows illumine this Thy house of prayer and the souls of all those who worship here. As Thy light is interpreted through the beautiful colored panes, may the message of sacrificial service, duty and loyalty written by our comrades be a source of continual inspiration. Amen.



SECOND AIR FORCE WINDOW

The shield of the Second Air Force is placed on the left side of this window. Above the emblem, extending across the top portion of the window is a range of mountains with planes flying above. This represents the Northwest Air District, the primary function of which was the air defense of the Northwestern and Western mountain areas of the United States. The Northwest Air District was re-designated the Second Air Force on April 9, 1941. Directly below this on the right is an outline of Korea which is symbolic of the achievements of one of the Second Air Force units during the Korean War. Beneath the shield, in the left corner is a B-47 signifying the assignment of these planes to the Second Air Force in the fall of 1951. The Second Air Force thus became the First Air Force to have B-47's assigned to it as a tactical unit. In the lower right corner is a representation of Operation "**FOX PETER ONE**" – the first mass jet fighter flight over the Pacific using in-flight refueling. This accomplishment attested to the effective Second Air Force training.



EIGHTH AIR FORCE WINDOW

The Eighth Air Force shield is on the right side of this window. Beneath it is an outline of Korea, illustrative of mobility of the Eighth Air Force shown by its example of rapid deployment to the Far East during the Korean conflict. The top portion of the left side of this window contains an outline of France, commemorating the first mission of the Eighth Air Force flown against Rouen on August 17, 1942, and is illustrative of the start of the tremendous World War II record compiled by that Air Force in the European Theatre. Sometimes called "**THE ATOMIC AIR FORCE**", the Eighth Air Force had the first unit in the new Strategic Air Command capable of delivering and Atomic bomb. Its participation in "**OPERATION SANDSTONE**", an atomic test on Eniwetok in 1948, is the basis for the presentation in the center portion on the left. In the lower portion on the left is illustrated the first non-stop around-the-world flight completed by the famous B-50, "**LUCKY LADY II**", in March 1949. This feat proved that effectiveness of air refueling squadrons which had been introduced less than one year previous to this history making flight.



FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE WINDOW

In the center of the right portion of this window is the shield of the Fifteenth Air Force. This Air Force was activated on November 1, 1943, as a result of a decision to establish a strategic bombing force in the Mediterranean. Less than 24 hours after activation, 300 tons of bombs were dropped on the Messerschmitt factory at Wiener Neustadt, Germany. Their objective—the destruction of the German Air Force—was the choice for representation in the right top corner, since their assignment literally broke the back of the Luftwaffe and all industry directly related to it. To illustrate the swiftness of the Fifteenth in 1948, when the 301st Bomb Group deployed from Kansas to Germany in 45 hours, represented in the upper left portion of the window the outline of both Kansas and Germany with the planes in route overhead. The shape of North and South Korea shown in the left center section is symbolic of the three units of the Fifteenth Air Force which saw service in the “**KOREAN POLICE ACTION**”. These units, in conjunction with other Air Forces, destroyed all strategic targets in that battle area. In the bottom left section is shown a Fifteenth Air Force B-47 which set a new non-stop record to the United Kingdom of 4 hours and 34 minutes.



SIXTEENTH AIR FORCE WINDOW

The shield of the Sixteenth Air Force occupies the top portion of the right side of this window. Because the primary mission of the Sixteenth Air Force was support of SAC units on alert or schedule for emergency operations during the first year of its existence, it is placed in the center of the left portion the “**FAMOUS RED TELEPHONE**” at SAC Headquarters – symbol of instant global alert—readiness. Illustrative of the Sixteenth Air Force becoming SAC’s first overseas air force is the outline shapes of Iceland and French Morocco in the upper left portion. The portrayal in the bottom left section, superimposed upon the outline Spain, is an abstract of the 480 mile pipeline which bisects that nation especially to fuel SAC aircraft. The radar screen and radarscope, together with the B-47 represented in the lower right portion, illustrate the 4310th Air Division, which is responsible for monitoring the reflex operations of SAC units in North Africa.



THE NORTH WINDOW

This window features the words of the Air Force Hymn. On either side there is an angel, divine guardians, and above are the seals of the Air Force and of the Strategic Air Command, human guardians. Starting at the bottom of the window and carrying upward are the stylized forms of tree trunks, growing and stretching always toward the light, as man looks ever toward the light of God for guidance and protection. The upper portion of this window has been kept quite simple, with only the continuation of the tree forms, and with the waters of life flowing across the window suggesting the continuity of God's Word which Moses is shown delivering to the people.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

- Deuteronomy 6:5

THE AIR FORCE HYMN

Lord, guard and guide the men who fly through the great spaces of the sky;

Be with them traversing the air

In darkening storms or sunshine fair.