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Contents

1	2012	5
1.1	January	5
	January 2012 Roadrunner News (2012-01-02 09:33)	5
1.2	April	7
	50-Year Anniversary First Flight of CIA A-12 at Groom Lake (2012-04-25 21:16) .	7

1. 2012

1.1 January

January 2012 Roadrunner News (2012-01-02 09:33)

Archer 1944

Harold Archer The Roadrunners of Groom Lake are saddened to report that Lt Col Harold Leslie Archer, Sr. USAF (Ret) of Murrieta, CA passed away at his residence on Friday, December 30, 2011.

Lt Col Archer served as a KC-135 pilot before his assignment to the CIA Project Oxcart at Groom Lake to serve as the Executive Officer of the 1129th SAS under Colonel Holbury. Archer participated in Operation Black Shield at Kadena, the operational phase of Project Oxcart at Groom Lake flying A-12 reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam and North Korea during the Vietnam War.

He is survived by his two children, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Services are pending at this time but will take place at St. Martha Catholic Church in Murrieta, CA with a Military Graveside service to follow at Riverside National Cemetery where he will be laid to rest next to his wife Beverly Archer who passed away in 2003.

[1]More about Lt. Col. Harold Archer

1. <http://roadrunnersinternationale.com/archer.html>

TD Barnes, President Roadrunners Internationale (2012-01-24 09:51:23)

Byrnes It is my sad duty to report the final flight of Col. Donn A. Byrnes, USAF Ret. The loss of Colonel Byrnes leaves a void in the aviation community that will be impossible to fill. He was a corner post to all our aviation reunions and events as well as in the aviation literary world where he published books about aviation. Colonel Byrnes was a mustang who chose to remain in the Air Force rather than pursue the medical field that was his heritage. He advanced from being a PFC aircraft mechanic to Aviation Cadet and Air Force pilot. He flew F-84s and F-86Ds in the U.S., Japan, and Guam before attending an Air Force Institute of Technology-sponsored program in electrical engineering at the University of Texas where he earned his BSEE. This led to his being a SR-71 Sensor Test Engineer and Flight Test Engineer. Colonel Byrnes served as Base Commander at Ascension Island in the South Atlantic Ocean. Following that assignment, he served as Airframe Projects Manager, Deputy Chief Engineer and, finally, Director of Projects. with the F-15 System Program Office (SPO). He retired from the Air Force from the position of Director of Engineering at the Air Force Contract Management Division, Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Colonel Byrnes retired in November 1978 after accumulating more than 3,200 pilot hours, most of which was single engine jet time. Returning to engineering, he worked for DynCorp, Raytheon, BDM, and other technical services companies until 1987, when he and his oldest

daughter, Kathleen, formed an engineering consulting and database management company. Colonel Byrnes was a member of Roadrunners Internationale and the published author of two books: Blackbird Rising and Air Superiority Blue, an F-15 story. Since 1977 Donn and his wife Sparks have made their home on a small patch of desert mesa near Los Lunas, New Mexico. Donn leaves a legacy of being a gentleman with compassion for his fellow man. He will be long remembered by his many friends. Our condolences to Sparks and Donn's family and friends. Funeral services will be posted at they become available. Thornton D. "TD" Barnes President Roadrunners Internationale

BYRNES, COL. DONN A. (RET.) Donn Byrnes 1931 - 2012 Donn Byrnes left us to be with the Lord on Monday, January 23, 2012. The eldest son of Gen. Victor Byrnes, M.D. and Ethel Seebach, he embraced early the joy of learning and understanding how things worked. Fascinated with airplanes and flight, Donn joined the Air Force at 19 and became a pilot. He later graduated from the University of Texas with a degree in Electrical Engineering and enjoyed a challenging career as an aeronautical engineer and technical program manager. Donn found life incredibly interesting and devoured "how to" books on any topic that transformed one thing into another. He taught himself to weld, cast jewelry and machine with a lathe. He designed and fabricated a one man submarine, a boat, water skis, computers, a glider, and a house (with his second wife, Sparks), just to name a few projects. He loved putting together cars, trucks and motorcycles that were terribly fun to drive but not particularly safe. Everything and anything could be (and should be) transformed into something new. Junk yards, pawn shops, a welder and a shop provided the makings for New Things. He also loved photography and developing his own photographs, reloading his own bullets, locksmithing, surveying and repairing anything that was broken. After retiring, he took a correspondence course in writing. At 68, he published Blackbird Rising - Birth of an Aviation Legend, a book about the SR-71. At 76, he published Air Superiority Blue - The F-15 Story and at 79, his autobiography, A Boy Who Loved Airplanes. He loved hearing other people's stories, interviewing people on various topics and was at work on a mystery novel. He would have loved Storage Wars and Dirty Money but he didn't have much time for TV. The cancer took him quickly - so quickly he missed his first appointment with the oncologist. He passed away peacefully and pain free surrounded by loved ones. And he would want you to know, he was grateful for you and your friendship. Donn is survived by his wife, Sylvia "Sparks" Byrnes; his four daughters and their spouses, Kathleen and Dan Johns, Kim and Barry Syra, Connie and Mark Knauss and Karen Allen; step-children and their spouses, Phyllis and Claude Tarbell, Peggy and Bob Robey, and Arthur Tennyson; his step-brother, Frank Presson and wife, Jackie; and, of course, everyone who was fortunate enough to know him. Please join us to celebrate Donn's life on Monday, January 30, 2012, 10:00 a.m., at French-Lomas Chapel., with visitation one hour prior to the service from 9:00-10:00 a.m. Burial with military honors will follow at 2:15 p.m. at the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

Don Stein (2012-01-24 11:32:32)

Thank you for writing this fine tribute to our friend. Donn was always inquisitive about everything. I think he was amazed that he was able to help solve tough problems associated with the SR-71 and F-15 programs. He loved to fly airplanes and be around folks who shared this interest. He was even curious about his newfound digital camera. He had to know exactly how it worked and was excited about exploring it. I'm privileged to have been in the loop with our dear friend Ken Hurley who refreshed his relationship with Donn after some 30 years and together they wrote Blackbird Rising. How wonderful it was to observe this from a conversation to publication. Many stories. Donn was a relatively private man except when he had an audience and a microphone in front of one of our symposiums. Then he became animated, had a broad smile, and told the story of the sensor suite with accuracy and vigor. I've seen him go from audience member to loud presenter within 10 seconds! He would answer all questions, some from pilots, RSOs, and other program members. He loved it. Sparks is his life long partner and accompanied him around the country. She is always warm and has a wonderful way with

painting with watercolors. There was no complaining, just enjoying it all. What a fine team. We shall always remember the good times. Don

Jeannette Remak (2012-01-25 10:16:35)

I got to know Donn a lot later than the rest of you Roadrunners, but that doesn't change the deep respect and love I held for the man. He was really someone out of the HERO book of Fame. From all that he had accomplished in his professional life serving this country, to the love he had for his family and most of all his beloved Sparks, his passing has deeply grieved me. I wish I would have had more time to get to know more about him. He was and is a gentleman, and a dear friend to me. Donn was helping to edit my book on the Shuttle program. I don't know how I will finish it without him, but I am pressing on so that I can dedicate it to him. Donn is my hero, I will miss him so very much. Jeannette

Jane Welsh (2012-01-25 13:54:44)

I was shocked to hear of Donn Byrnes death. They had moved from their place way out to a place in Albuquerque over a year ago. We always hear from them at Christmas along with a nice note. I thought they moved because Sparky has MS , but I had no idea that Donn perhaps had health problems too. Bill and I met them (his first wife) at Edwards when Bill went there in 1966. I have met Sparky a couple of times, but didn't know her too well. What a great person Donn was; I had a lot of respect for him. It's all so sad. Jane

1.2 April

50-Year Anniversary First Flight of CIA A-12 at Groom Lake (2012-04-25 21:16)

A-12 Members of Roadrunners Internationale celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first official flight of the CIA-A-12. Half a century ago today, on April 26, 1962, Lockheed Test Pilot Lou Schalk eased Article 121 into the cool crisp air of Groom Lake, Nevada. The flight duration was only forty minutes, fifty years ago, but aviation history made a great leap that day. Under the direction of Kelly Johnson, Lockheed's famous Skunk Works first A-12 flight set the stage for the revolutionary high speed, high altitude records that followed. The OXCART Program was a joint operation of the CIA, USAF and Lockheed Corporation along with a host of corporations that developed special equipment and programs for the A-12 and YF-12. It took three more years to overcome the problems encountered in developing an aircraft that could consistently fly above 80,000 feet at 3.2 Mach.

From its inception in the spring of 1957 to June 26, 1968, OXCART lasted just over 10 years. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson were well aware of the intelligence gathering capability of this unique aircraft and its importance to our nation and the world political scene. It was preceded by the U-2 program AQUATONE at the same location and succeeded by the USAF SR-71 program. The A-12 was America's first stealth plane. It flew faster than Mach 3 and at altitudes exceeding 80,000 feet.

The A-12 flew 29 missions during Operation Blackshield, 26 over Vietnam and 3 over North Korea. For these missions, six A-12 Agency pilots earned the CIA Intelligence Star for Valor. The OXCART program lost two A-12 pilots and 2 Air

Force chase pilots piloting the F-101 VooDoo.
Thornton D. "TD" Barnes
RI President
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Harold F Mills (2012-04-26 10:08:05)

This also is the 50th anniv. of my reporting for duty. I was riding with Sgt Dodge Trader and we were approaching the area gate from the test site when we saw, in the distance, the bird climbing out on what I learned later was its first flight. It sure don't seem like fifty years. Harold Mills (Former flight planner)



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