

# US RADAR SITES of ICELAND

## NEWSLETTER, APRIL 2016

Newsletter #30. Editor: Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959.

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN. William Chick, H-2, 1959-60.** The 2017 reunion will be in **Tucson, AZ** - the dates will be **11 - 14 April of 2017** at the **Hilton El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort** just north of **Tucson**. Golf and tennis facilities are on the hotel grounds. **COSTS:** \$109 per room plus tax, w/breakfast for two. \$160 per person for all tours, bus fees, plus one banquet & one pizza meal. **Tours to:** Desert Museum, Pima Air Museum, Air Force Boneyard, Tucson Presidio, & Old Town Tucson. Start making your plans to attend. The tour package and the weather should be pleasant and to everyone's liking. More details will be coming in the next newsletter. **NOTE:** If you pay for the total \$160 fee per person in **advance**, it would help with our planning - make checks payable to "Iceland Reunion" and mail them to **William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707**.

For a peek at the resort, go to the following link: <http://youtu.be/zrP28DdjLSI>



**HILTON EL CONQUISTADOR GOLF AND TENNIS RESORT AT ORO VALLEY, AZ.**

**11- 14 April 2017**

For reservations, call - 1 (800) 325-7832. Tell them you are with the "Iceland Radar Reunion."

**SCRAPBOOK CHAIRMAN. WC Chilton, H-1, 1961-62.** In preparation for our 2017 reunion, I will be putting together a scrapbook of our 2015 reunion. Folks with 2015 Dayton photos please snail-mail your 4X6" prints to me at: WC Chilton, 210 Parish Lane, McMinnville, TN 37110.

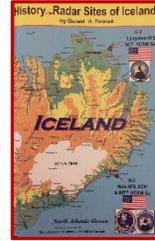
**WEBSITE DIRECTOR. Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59.** Please check out our Radar Website for any announcements or updates: <http://usradarsitesiceland.com/> Reed's email is: [reedt934@gmail.com](mailto:reedt934@gmail.com)

**WEBSITE PHOTO CHAIRMAN. Joe Pyrdek, H-3, 1967-68.** Joe asks that, if possible, when sending photos, you provide a caption, including date taken, so the photos can be properly labeled. Send E-mail photos of Iceland radar pictures, as well as any Iceland reunion photos that you wish to have included in our Website, to Joe at: [jpyrdek@zoominternet.net](mailto:jpyrdek@zoominternet.net) Mailing address: Joe Pyrdek, 13654 Foust Road, Conneaut Lake, PA 16316

**TREASURER. William Chick, H-2, 1959-60.** Our annual voluntary membership dues run \$15 per year. Make checks payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" and mail it to William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707. His email is: [littlechick@msn.com](mailto:littlechick@msn.com)

**WE ARE IN NEED OF BUILDING UP OUR TREASURY. WE ONLY HAVE ENOUGH FUNDS ON HAND TO PAY FOR 2 TO 3 MORE YEARS OF ANNUAL WEBSITE FEES AND NEWSLETTERS. MANY THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY CONTRIBUTED.**

**FROM THE HISTORIAN. Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959.** How many of your tours of duty in the military or civilian job experiences have a written history of their own? Not many I would guess. Sadly, as we go through life, most of our life's encounters are never recorded - they just pass us by. On those rare occasions when your children, grandchildren, or even great grandchildren ask you about what you did when you were younger, you may only have a few moments to share those events - often leaving out many interesting stories.



On the other hand, if you had a written document describing a part of your lifetime that you could actually GIVE to those who inquire, you would be, in essence, leaving part of your legacy. There is such a document and it is literally at your fingertips. You see, the *History of the Radar Sites of Iceland* book describes where you lived and what you did for your country during the 12 months you spent during that remote tour.

At this stage of your life you most likely are the patriarch or matriarch of your family. Why not consider buying a copy of the *History of the Radar Sites of Iceland* for each of your children, *grandchildren*, and *great grandchildren*. It would make a wonderful Christmas or birthday gift while at the same time giving them a peek into a part of your life spent at a remote, somewhat inhospitable (weather-wise) location. It would describe how you, as a veteran of the Radar Sites of Iceland, were one of the Paul Revere's of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a Silent Sentinel of modern warfare, and one of the point men or women who braved the elements and served on the far edges of the defensive front as you helped to provide security for your nation.

**We have ordered and just received, in all probability, the last of the supply of these books - the 13<sup>th</sup> printing.** The price is \$10 including postage (our cost.) Order by mailing a check payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" to: William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707.

## Uncertain Times for the Radar Sites of Iceland

By Jerry Tonnell, Editor

Many of us were stationed in Iceland during periods when U.S. military forces were subjected to unwelcome overtures by the Icelandic Communist Party and the nationalistic fervor that took place during several time periods. The Soviet Union had long ago identified the strategic importance of Iceland and had begun to discredit American presence there. However, the problems started many years before with the advent of WW II.

**1. The May 1940 "Peaceful" Invasion of Iceland.** In 1940, with Great Britain locked in war with Nazi Germany, the British realized that Iceland was positioned in a strategic location - control of the island in the hands of the enemy would be disastrous to England's survival. The solution was to orchestrate a "friendly" invasion of Iceland - unfortunately, without Iceland's approval. This took place in May of 1940, less than a month after Germany invaded & conquered neutral Denmark and Norway. Initially, the Icelanders resented this intrusion, but were in no position to resist, not having a military of their own. Nonetheless, this incursion was a serious irritant to the citizens and government of Iceland since they were also a neutral nation.



**2. The July 1941 Arrival of Military Forces of the USA.** The British could not sustain their presence in Iceland at the force level desired - they had suffered major setbacks against the Nazis and Italians in North Africa and they needed many more forces to stop Hitler's war machine. Therefore, the US was asked to occupy the island,



relieve most of the British troops, protect ship convoys, and defend Iceland in the event the Nazi war plan for the invasion - codenamed *Fall Ikarus* - was implemented. The problem was that at one time, upwards of 45,000 allied troops were on the island. Mostly single male servicemen, their number equaled the entire adult male population of Iceland. Because of the sheer number, many problems were encountered as the occupation force was a threat to the Icelandic way of life -- and serviceman/Icelandic female relationships were greatly resented. Imagine, if you will, how male Americans would react to having **50 million** Frenchmen occupy the USA.

**3. The 1946 Refusal to Allow Post-World War II American Troops to be Stationed in Iceland.** Once the war was over, the US asked for Iceland's approval to keep a small force in Iceland to operate an airfield and radar facility - we needed a base to allow aircraft to refuel on trips to Europe to aid in the recovery and occupation of that continent. The Icelanders were tired of the turmoil of having foreign forces stationed on their soil, but saw

the need to support the recovery effort. So instead, they graciously allowed the airfield at Keflavik to remain open, but under civilian control. All the other remaining US facilities and radar sites were closed.

**4. The 1949 Resistance to Membership in NATO.** With the formation of NATO, Iceland was asked to join the alliance. *A History of the Iceland Defense Force* publication explained it this way: *"The people of Iceland wanted to join hands with people of like minds, yet not lose sovereignty or have a new culture imposed upon the nation. The solution was to compromise. Iceland became a charter member of NATO, but with the understanding that this commitment would neither require the establishment of its own armed forces... nor the basing of foreign forces on its soil in peacetime."*

**5. The May 1951 US and Iceland Defense Agreement.** This was in response to the 1950 North Korean invasion of South Korea and the Soviet and Chinese support of that incursion. It allowed US military forces to be stationed in Keflavik and for plans to be made for the construction of four radar sites. Under the agreement, the US assumed the defense of Iceland and the areas around the country on behalf of NATO, while Iceland was committed to providing the land necessary to carry this out. In essence, the Defense Agreement established the Iceland Defense Force on the condition that the impact of the force be limited and not impose any adverse effect on the local population as it did during World War II. As a result, contact with the local Icelandic people by US military forces was designed to be extremely limited -- this was to include the radar sites.

**6. The 1952 Iceland Unilateral Extension of its Offshore Fishing Limit from 3 to 4 miles.** About the time the 932<sup>nd</sup> AC&W Sq started operation at their temporary site, the first, but unofficial, "Cod War" developed between Iceland and Great Britain. This new rule reduced the area in which the British could fish for Cod -- the primary ingredient in their popular "fish and chips." It also endangered their fishing fleet because when 4 miles out from shore, fishing trawlers were more at risk from rough seas. In retaliation, the British closed their ports to Icelandic fish products causing an economic setback for their industry. Ever looking for ways to extend their influence over the world, the Soviet Union began buying large amounts of Icelandic fish products formerly destined for England. The local Icelandic Communist Party was bolstered and stepped up their antagonism towards the US military presence on the island, hoping for Iceland to ask the US to withdraw all our forces. Although the US was not asked to do so at that time, the Communist influence regarding our troop presence was to remain for many years.

**7. The March 1956 vote by the Icelandic Althing (Parliament) to Expel US Troops.** The reality of this mostly local socialist/communist politically-inspired vote caused dissension in Icelandic government circles and was not fully supported by the citizenry. Nonetheless, the US was making plans for a withdrawal which caused disruption for the troops on the island, including our radar sites. We announced in the 12 May 1956 edition of the *White Falcon* that all construction was to be stopped. This would bring a halt to the partly-manned radar units of H-2, H-3, and H-4. In addition, in July 1956, 250 feet of communications cable at H-1 were cut and removed by persons unknown, and they lost contact with the Base control tower. However, in Nov of 1956 everything changed, as the Soviet Union, showing its true colors, ruthlessly invaded Hungary when she attempted to



bring about a more democratic government. This sober move caused the vote to expel US troops to lapse.

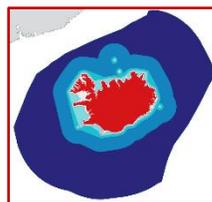
**8. The 1958 - 1961 "Cod War" as Iceland Extends Her Fishing Limit from 4 to 12 miles.** This move was seen as a violation of international seafaring laws. Wikipedia reported that, *"There was a political angle to all this. Iceland, at the height of the cold war, had a considerable U.N. presence, including American bases on their territory. Because their efforts to prevent fishing within their waters were to no avail and their unilaterally declared exclusion zone seemed doomed to failure, Iceland threatened to expel all U.S. personnel... The threat... carried a good deal of weight and the Americans rapidly applied pressure against the British Government, which quickly capitulated."* Raymond Self, H-2, 1957-58, recalled, *"An H-2 SOP required that the radar maintenance crew chief take binoculars onto the catwalk around the base of the radome and observe the sea. One morning the British [trawlers] were spotted within yards of the Langanes Peninsula. The Ops Officer called for support from Keflavik and a camera aircraft (a C-47 with a cameraman on board) was dispatched and vectored low through the valley out of sight of the boats. When the plane broke out over the sea, it was within 4 miles of the fleet and certainly caused great excitement with the boats scattering in all directions."*

**9. The 1972 - 73 "Cod War" as Iceland Extends Her Fishing Limit from 12 to 50 Miles.** This extension of the limit was designed to prevent overfishing by foreign seafaring nations. While the cod supply was of "vital" interest to the Icelanders, it was also an important "limited" interest to the British. As a result, the Royal Navy was dispatched to protect their fishing trawlers from being boarded by Icelandic Coast Guard cutters. Both the Western European governments and the Warsaw Pact nations opposed the 50 mile limit, and the International Court ruled in England's favor. A temporary agreement was signed in 1973 to end the stalemate.

**10. The 1975-76 "Cod War" as Iceland Extends Her Fishing Limit from 50 to 200 miles.** National economic survival was at stake for Iceland. Fishing is key to her national prosperity. Icelandic Coast Guard cutters began cutting British trawler fishing nets when they violated the 200 mile limit and there were many ramming incidents between the cutters or trawlers and Royal Navy war ships. On one occasion shots were fired. Many Icelanders believed the US should have taken Iceland's side in this conflict. Once again, Iceland threatened to order US troops off the island.



**Impact on the Radar Sites:** An Icelandic nation-wide general strike reduced the availability of some food items and prevented 12 Icelandic cooks from reporting to work at H-1. Gasoline became totally unavailable for private purchase on base. Local fishermen blockaded the access road leading from H-1 to the Receiver Site. In addition, in Jan 1976, there was a denial of the use of all airspace for US intercept training missions by the Icelandic air traffic controllers at the Reykjavik Area Control Center -- the USSR just happened to fly an unusually high number of bombers into Icelandic air space at that time. Fortunately, all 20 Soviet TU-95 Bears were intercepted and turned away. At H-3, because of the US non-involvement in the Icelandic/British Cod War, the site was instructed to erect a barricade on the road near the pump house to control traffic headed toward the site. A detachment of 7 US Marines was deployed from Keflavik to alleviate the manning stress incurred by the extra duty of guarding the Hofn AFS radar site.



**In sum,** Iceland was able to use her membership in NATO along with the presence of US troops within her borders to force a final **200 nautical mile fishing limit** which is now generally honored. In the process, thousands of British fishermen and their fishing villages were ruined. Finally, in 2012, a few thousand English fishermen received an apology from the British government as well as partial economic restitution for their losses. This was a case of one nation's economic survival (Iceland) versus another nation's economic interest (Great Britain.)

**In conclusion,** many of our Iceland veterans were stationed at radar sites during the chaotic times previously mentioned and must have felt the uncertainty surrounding these less than ideal conditions. Questions arose, such as -- would tours be curtailed? Future assignments be affected? Leave plans be upset? Inbound airmen be rerouted? Food supplies be interrupted? DEROS flights be on hold? Or promotions be delayed? During these periods of anxiety, some of those questions would weigh heavily on the hearts & minds of the men & women who served at the radar sites of Iceland. For sure, the site commanders & senior NCOs were soberly affected with all the problems generated by the uncertainty of the status of all the airmen and sailors under their supervision.

# US RADAR SITES of ICELAND

## NEWSLETTER, October 2016

Newsletter #31. Editor: Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959.

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN. William Chick, H-2, 1959-60.** The 2017 reunion will be in **Tucson, AZ** – the dates will be **11–14 April of 2017** at the *Hilton El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort* just north of Tucson. This will be our 8th reunion. We will hold the 2019 reunion east of the Mississippi River. **NOTE: Please pay the total fee of \$160 per person in advance -- it would help with our planning -- make checks payable to "Iceland Reunion" and mail them to William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707. As before, you must make your own hotel room reservations. If possible, make an extra effort to come a day early or stay a day late to enjoy this most luxurious hotel complex – and still at the convention rate including breakfasts.**

**SUSPENSE DATES: Let us know if you're coming by 1 Dec. Deadline for paying in advance is 1 Jan. No refunds granted after 1 Feb. \*\*Special circumstances may waive these dates!**

Our next newsletter will be in June 2017, and will provide highlights of the Tucson Reunion. In the past, we have tried to send either an email or a snail mail copy of the newsletter to each member, but we are having many problems. Our email list is not complete as we have many members who have not sent us updates. Our snail mail list is not complete either. Many have moved and not given us their new address. Each time we mail or email we get about 10% bounces, and have no idea who they are. Again some of you may get both email and snail mail newsletters. If you do not get both, please update your membership by sending us a correct mailing address or email.



**Hilton El Conquistador Golf and Tennis Resort at Oro Valley, AZ. 11- 14 April 2017**

For reservations, call – 1 (800) 325-7832 or 1 (520) 544-5500. You can also register on line at:

[https://secure.hilton.com/en/hi/res/choose\\_dates.jhtml?](https://secure.hilton.com/en/hi/res/choose_dates.jhtml?) Use code, **USR** to get the convention rate.

**\*\*If possible, make an extra effort to come a day early or stay a day late to enjoy this most luxurious hotel complex – and still at the convention rate.\*\***

### Proposed Schedule for April 2017

- April 11. Hospitably room opens at 12 noon.
- April 12. Buses leave hotel 9 am for tour of the Sonora Desert Museum.  
<http://desertmuseum.org/jbright@desertmuseum.org>
- April 12. Arrive noon at Davis-Monthan Bone Yard. [jlundquist@pimaair.org](mailto:jlundquist@pimaair.org) Dutch treat lunch.  
Tour from 1 pm to 4 pm and back on our buses. Bus arrives hotel by 5 pm.
- April 12. 6:30 pm pizza party at hotel. [terisa.felix@hilton.com](mailto:terisa.felix@hilton.com)
- April 13. Bus leaves hotel 9 am for the tour of the Tucson Presidio.  
for <http://www.tucsonpresidio.com> [aprilb@tucsonpresidio.com](mailto:aprilb@tucsonpresidio.com)
- April 13. 12 Noon to 4 pm, tour of Old Town Tucson. [jcamarillo@oldtucson.com](http://jcamarillo@oldtucson.com) Dutch treat lunch. They have shows and sites to see. Bus arrives back to hotel by 5 pm.
- April 13. 6:30 pm Banquet. [terisa.felix@hilton.com](mailto:terisa.felix@hilton.com)  
7 pm speech by local historian, Jim Turner. [jimturnerhistorian@gmail.com](mailto:jimturnerhistorian@gmail.com)
- April 14. Hospitably room closes by 12 noon.

**Transportation to the hotel and back from the Tucson Airport.** From the Tucson Airport to the hotel is about a 45 minute ride – a round trip costs \$84. However, it is only \$8 more for each additional passenger on the same shuttle. **HOWEVER**, consider using a **UBER ride** – one way cost \$25 for all hands with up to 4 in the car.

**SCRAPBOOK CHAIRMAN. WC Chilton, H-1, 1961-62.** In preparation for our 2017 reunion, I will be putting together a scrapbook of our 2015 reunion. Folks with 2015 Dayton photos please snail-mail your 4X6" prints to me at: WC Chilton, 210 Parish Lane, McMinnville, TN 37110.

**WEBSITE DIRECTOR. Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59.** We have added about 100 new names to our data bank since our last newsletter mostly coming from research of past *White Falcon* newspapers. Check out our Radar Website for updates: <http://usradarsitesiceland.com/> Reed's email is: [reedt934@gmail.com](mailto:reedt934@gmail.com)

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**WEBSITE PHOTO CHAIRMAN. Joe Pyrdek, H-3, 1967-68.** The Photo Gallery has received several new pictures in recent days. These pictures are available in a new Gallery titled New Additions July-Sept. Any pictures received in this time period will be available both in this new gallery AND in the permanent gallery appropriate to the picture (i.e. if it relates to H-1, it will also be in the proper H-1 gallery). The New Additions gallery will be updated for the next time period about every three months if any additions are received in that time slot. The older "New Additions July-September" gallery will be removed sometime after a New Additions gallery is set up for pictures received in October to December. This process will continue during the entire year so that you can more easily locate pictures which have been added in recent months.

If you have any pictures you would like to provide to the gallery, please send them on to me, Joe Pyrdek, either by e-mail attachments to [jpyrdek@zoominternet.net](mailto:jpyrdek@zoominternet.net) for electronic images. Or you can mail them via USPS as listed below. All picture formats (.jpg, .tiff, .png, etc.) can be accommodated. Please provide the original full size image and not a compressed or resized smaller image. If you scan them for sending them to me, please use a minimum of 300 DPI resolution to obtain the higher quality.

You can also send, preferably a copy and not the original, pictures to me at 13654 Foust Road, Conneaut Lake, PA 16316. A copy is preferred to prevent the original from being damaged or destroyed in the mail. All pictures received will be returned to you after they have been processed for use in the photo gallery. I am especially in need of some photos from the Oklahoma City 2013 Reunion since there currently are not any pictures available to me for that reunion. Please include information about where and when the picture was taken, along with a brief description so that info can be used as a caption for the image.

## The Final Days for US Radar in Iceland

From the Editor. Joe Richardson was the last commander of the last radar site in Iceland. Joe arrived in Iceland in 2005 and took command of the 932<sup>nd</sup> ACS. His 2-year tour was cut short in September of 2006 when the United States withdrew the last of our permanent military forces from the island. Joe was our guest speaker for the Radar Sites of Iceland reunion in 2015 in Dayton. Below is the text of his address -- I believe you will find it a most enlightening story of just how the closing of our military presence in Iceland came about.

By Lt Col Joe Richardson, USAF (Ret)

*"It's a special honor to be here with this group of veterans. You were all a unique collection of airmen. You were on the front line of the Cold War. You were the eyes.....the early warning of the Soviet threat. It was a very different world then, wasn't it? We knew the enemy and trained for that enemy. Readiness was more than just a word for you...it was a daily requirement. You were always on alert. The threat today is very different. There*

will probably never again be the requirement for Airmen like yourselves....being stationed at remote outposts, mountain tops, etc. So this is a very special group. And I'm very appreciative to all of you for keeping this history alive.

I've been looking forward to this since 2006. My first awareness of the Radar Sites Reunion was in 2005 as I was taking command of the 932d. The previous commander, G-Bear Vaughn told me about the 2005 Reunion he just came back from in Colorado Springs. He gave me a description of what you guys were all about. I was very interested and impressed.

During my assignment, as I learned all the details and history of the Iceland Air Defense, I came to appreciate this very unique mission. And then there was a visit in July of 2006 by a few of you. There was William Chick,



Reed Thomas, Ira Majo, Mike Magone, and Larry Robin. And a few family members. That visit in 2006 impressed me. And I thought of it often, especially since I was the last Commander and oversaw the shutdown of the unit and departure of Air Force Personnel. (PHOTO: Lt Col Richardson is on the far right.)

I'd like to highlight for you now some of the details of the deactivation of the 932d and closure of NAS Keflavik. I took command in early Sept 2005. About one month later I found out in a secret meeting with the base commander that there were serious plans to close the base very soon. I thought...."this really sucks." I was really looking forward to two full years of command and time in Iceland.



The SECDEF was Donald Rumsfeld and the Secretary of State was Condoleezza Rice. The Defense Department wanted to close the base, the State Department wanted to keep it open. There were continuing discussions with the US Ambassador to Iceland and the Keflavik base leadership. I was closely involved because the 932d was at the center of the Air Defense.

There was a semi-official announcement made in March of 2006, but the Navy base commander only stated that there would be a different footprint [in the defense of Iceland.] There was

no official word from the State Department until July. This happened after our unit was deactivated in June, and hundreds of airmen and Navy personnel had moved out.

The Icelandic government seemed to have been left in the dark and confused. I told my boss that I was going to tell the Icelandic Radar System personnel the truth. Which I did, a couple of months before it was official. But they still didn't believe me.

The Air Force personnel departed in June-July. The Group Commander left me behind to oversee the remainder of US personnel departing. The final four F-15s and the Rescue Helo Squadron departed on 30 Sept. Then the Navy locked the gate.

Our squadron scoured the squadron collecting historical artifacts. We wrapped and shipped many of them to the Cold War Museum, and to USAFE HQ in Germany. I also discovered another problem...I had a huge illegal slush fund in my desk drawer that had accumulated after fundraisers. Yikes! After the unit deactivated I organized a couple deep sea fishing trips, bowling tournaments, and conducted weekly Hail and Farewells. Everyone departing got a very nice framed certificate. I was able to use all the money without going to jail.

I felt terrible about how the base closure was handled. It could have been negotiated, announced and planned over a 1-2 year period. Instead, the US caused a great deal of hardship to hundreds of military members and their families, and about 500 Icelandic personnel lost their jobs. This all happened with only 90 days' notice.



However, there is some good news. NATO has been conducting exercises the last couple of years. And the Russians are apparently flying again, so there is a renewed interest in Iceland. So you guys better get ready to be called back!

As I reviewed your bios, the website and newsletter articles, I was reminded of just how rough you guys had it. I also imagined what kind of shenanigans might have occurred with a large group of lonely young guys living at a remote radar site.

Why does this Reunion matter? Why does it work? Why the continued interest? Because

you were unique. You worked in rugged, austere conditions. It was dangerous, it was hard work, and the weather was unbelievably extreme at times. But those are the things that draw young people close. And the significance of your mission further galvanized you. You've all experienced something that many military personnel never have. There are very few, truly isolated assignments anymore.

Being the last commander of the 932 ACS was been a distinct honor and privilege. And it has been an honor being here with you tonight. Thank you again for your service, and thank you for keeping this Reunion and the memories alive..... I can't wait for the 2017 Reunion!"