

Members of 12th Tactical Fighter Wing re-dedicate Memorial

by Charlotte Burrous, Reporter and Editor-in-Chief, *Fremont County Crusader*

They came from various parts of the country, backgrounds and experiences. But they all have a common bond, their service in the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing of the Air Force during the Vietnam War.

In 2001, members first arrived to dedicate their 12th's portion of the wall at the Col. Leo S. Boston War Memorial Park in the Fremont County Airport in a formal ceremony and an informal ceremony ever since then.

The first ceremony was scheduled after one of their members saw the F-4 Fighter Wing aircraft on display in the park. At the time, they decided the airport would be a good place to remember members of their own. So they contacted the Fremont County Veterans Service Officer, the Fremont County Commissioners and the War Memorial Park Commission to find out if they could have a panel set aside for inscription of the names of all known 12th casualties.

After completing that part, they agreed to set aside Sept. 16, 2001, for the dedication ceremony with Gen. Peter Sutton slated to provide the dedication speech; however after 911, he sent his written remarks, which were read by one of the association members in attendance then.

“The 12th Tactical Fighter Wing has a long and distinguished history of selfless commitment to defending our great nation, beginning with the wing’s activation in 1962. Through the Cuban Missile Crisis and the war in Vietnam, the 12th was home to hundreds of real American heroes --- true patriots who risked their lives to protect freedom and democracy,” Sutton wrote. “The memorial you are dedicating today honors those courageous airmen who gave their lives while serving in the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing. To the families of those airmen, thank you for their service and your commitment to preserving their memory and the honorable lineage of the 12th.”

Those attending the reunion this year were Claude “Skip” and Diane Blanchard, of Metairie, La., Bill and Kay Cathey, of Kerrville, Texas, Ron Doughty, of Cape Girardeau, Mo., John Komara, of Ruidoso, N.M., Sherif Lepi, of Albuquerque, N.M., Ev Sherwood, of Mesa, Ariz., and Larry “The Senator” Taylor, of Brooks, Ga.

During the reunion, the members participated in various activities, which included a tour of Skyline Drive, a day in Florence, a catered affair at the Winery at Holy Cross Abbey and visits each night in the Quality Inn lounge.

