

## 12th Tactical group always enjoys time in Cañon City

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One of the highlights of the year happens in September when the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing Association members attend their annual re-dedication ceremony at the Fremont County Airport.

The first day (Sept. 11), Sherif Lepi and Mike West showed up at the El Caporal, which is one of their favorite restaurants in the area. We joined them and had a blast, catching up with each other. It was a pleasure to be included.

The next day, several more members arrived and visited the sites in the area, dining at another one of their favorites, Royal Gorge Brewing Company, where they laughed and joked and enjoyed being with each other.

This year was a little strange because of the weather, but it worked out well for the ceremony. There were seven members, along with their families attending. At the completion, many of them visited Florence, where they dined at 2 Sisters and the downtown businesses. That night, they participated in the wine tasting and catered dinner at the Winery for several hours before some of them stopped by the Cañon City Elks Lodge No. 610, where they were greeted and welcomed.

This year, the members discovered names of people who are not 12th Tactical Fighter Wing group on their Memorial Wall so they are working to find out what happened. I've been in touch with several of them, trying to discover if it could be resolved.

Their involvement began when the 12th TFW History Project, Inc. being formed in 1996 after years of searching for an F-4 Phantom fighter jet as the center of a memorial for the unit.

Along the way, member Gene Rust, who lives in Arvada, saw the jet plane on display at the airport and contacted County Commissioners Jim Schauer and Keith McNew and other community members.

Because Ron Packard, a native of Cañon City, died in Vietnam and was a member of the 12th Wing, the commissioners agreed it was a good idea. Since then, the members also honored Col. Leo S. Boston, who also died in Vietnam.

At one point, the members made plans to host their first dedication Sept. 16, 2001. Events of 9/11 caused them problems in arriving because of the airlines being shut down. But many of the members made other plans and arrived in time for the ceremony. Although the flyover and General Sutton's appearance were cancelled, the USAF Band of The Rockies, the USAF High Frontier Honor Guard/Color guard and Chaplain of the Air Force Falcons Major Steve Sheik made the dedication a success.

Major Ron Doughty has been a driving force to keep the memorial rededication alive and well. On his way out here one year, he had to have heart surgery, but he checked himself out of the hospital the next day and drove to Cañon City in time for the festivities. The rest of us were a little concerned, but he said he was doing fine.

We missed him this year, but Sherif did a fine job planning the site seeing around the area and meals in the restaurants. The 12th Tact members all agreed that they looked forward to the wine tasting and catered dinner at the Winery every year and said this one was an exceptional year.

I think the members should be welcomed by some kind of a veterans group. I really enjoy being a part of it which happened several years ago when they made us honorary members. How I have appreciated it.

We thank the members and all veterans for their service and their dedication to our country. Hopefully, the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing will be back next year in full force.