

5/6/2025 edited final

Reunion 2002 San Antonio Reunion September 19-21, 2002 Summary

LaRue and I arrived early on September 18th, checked in at the Fairfield Inn, and headed downtown. We enjoyed walking on the River Walk, the boat tour, the Alamo, and a nice lunch that afternoon. San Antonio is a beautiful city and caters to the tourist.

Day 1, September 19 saw us on the “Silver Arrow” bus headed for Fredricksburg (about an hour and half ride through the scenic hill country). Our tour guide kept us informed with area information and entertained with jokes. It poured down rain for a while but stopped before we arrived. The destination was the Admiral Nimitz Museum and the Pacific War Museum, which are adjacent. It was so informative and well done that it was hard to believe. A person could easily spend a day or two looking at and reading all of the information on the displays. We had about three hours and time for lunch at one of many excellent German restaurants. Then it was back on the “Silver Arrow” for the ride back to the hotel. About 50 people were on the tour.

That evening was registration and reception at the hotel with great snack foods and beverages. There were lots of old pictures passed around and reminiscing about the “good old days” at Kirknewton. Many old friends were there and new friends made.

Day 2, Friday morning, September 20 and it was off bright and early to Lackland AFB for the parade and graduation ceremonies. We had reserved seats in front of the grand stands and to our surprise we were introduced and asked to stand up and be recognized. The moment was outstanding. The ceremony was very impressive and it kind of brought a tear to the eye, especially to those that graduated, almost to the day, 50 years earlier. After the ceremony we walked around and viewed the aircraft displays, then went to the base museum which was very nostalgic. The museum curator met with us and gave us an insight as to what had been done and plans for the future. Following that we had a nice sit down lunch at the Officer/NCO club before returning to the hotel to get ready for the evening.

Friday evening we were on two busses headed for the 7A Ranch about 1 hour away. We had a superb Texas BBQ and entertainment complete with a hay ride. The trick roper, gun slinging, and western swing band was as good as you can find. The evening was perfect with a full moon and even the mosquitos behaved. The ranch owners were most gracious and took time to answer all questions and make you feel at home. It was a very nice evening. After returning to the hotel a bunch of us sat up swapping stories, most of which were true.

Day 3, September 19th, what a wind up! It began with a briefing at 10 AM by by the Air Intelligence Agency. While walking down the driveway to the meeting room we could hear a bagpipe playing and thought what a coincidence. Upon rounding the corner we were greeted by Colonel (Cook?) and an Air Force Captain playing he bagpipe. What a

surprise and such thoughtfulness. We all enjoyed it with the Scottish ladies leading the singing and requests for special songs. This could have gone on all day. The briefing was superb and gave us an insight into the mission and what the AIA is all about. It was special in that they led off with the history of Kirknewton and showed pictures taken during our era at Kirknewton. There were people in the pictures that were actually in the audience. The wife and I came away duly impressed. I believe most of us we were thinking if we could just get back in and be a part of it. It made you proud that we played a role in the past.

At 5:30 we were on the busses again bound for the dinner/dance at Lackland. We were at our tables socializing when we heard bagpipes again. To our amazement the San Antonio Pipe Band marched in dressed in full regalia with bagpipes and drums going full blast. It was a stand up ovation with clapping and cheering. They proceeded to entertain us royally with everyone joining in. There were a lot of moist eyes at times.

The dinner was very well done and the music was our era. and at the right decibel level. What a nice night. As a result of a vote the 4th Reunion will be held in Biloxi, Mississippi in 2004. The last bus left Lackland around 11 PM and we enjoyed an impromptu and entertaining ride back. I understand the riders on one of the busses coming back from the 7A ranch enjoyed the same spontaneous fun. The bus driver said he would never forget that ride!

Many of us sat up and talked into the night and Sunday morning it was still going on with reluctant farewells and "see ya in Biloxi".

Enough cannot be said about the hospitality and staff of the Fairfield Inn. They were great and the coffee was always on. The tour organizers did a great job in that everything came off as planned and access to Lackland was as simple as riding the bus through the gate.

Throughout the reunion Charles Jenkins was doing a professional job videotaping everything. He plans to produce an edited videotape that we will be available for purchase in the future. I can't wait to see it.

The end