

50th anniversary of Air Force mission remembered

by Sarah Parke
National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

11/30/2007 - **DAYTON, Ohio (AFPN)** -- On Nov. 27, 1957, at 6:59 a.m., six USAF pilots took off from Los Angeles and began what would be called Operation Sun Run. On that day, three new transcontinental speed records were established, and the speed and range of the McDonnell RF-101C was showcased. Years later, this mission would be remembered not as a significant contribution to war, but as a significant peacetime achievement for a growing Air Force.

Almost to the exact minute, 50 years later, one of the pilots and several family members of those involved in Operation Sun Run gathered at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force to present a painting commemorating the anniversary of this historic event. The painting, titled "Schrek's CIN MIN on the SUN-RUN" by noted aviation artist William S. Phillips, depicts then Capt. Ray Schrecengost's RF-101C, nicknamed CIN MIN, flying above the clouds.

The painting brought back many memories for Lt. Col. (Ret.) Robert Burkhart, one of the pilots during the mission. "I was keyed up the night before the flight," said Burkhart who was a captain at the time. "I probably got less sleep than most nights."

Burkhart said he was only doing his duty and he didn't realize how significant Operation Sun Run would be. "I never thought it would be remembered 50 years later."

Schrecengost's RF-101C CIN MIN was named for his two daughters: Cindy and Mindy. "I didn't know I would be a part of history," said Schrecengost's daughter, Cindy Miller, during the unveiling ceremony. "I just thought I was the 'CIN' part of the name."

Miller, who was only 5 years old at the time, remembers the day very well. "Mom told me to look to the left because my father would be flying in soon. I remember dad landing and my sister, who was only 2 years old, being lifted up to the cockpit to say hi to him. I was so awestruck."

Miller's father, who retired from the Air Force as a colonel, was selected as lead pilot during Operation Sun Run. He established three new transcontinental speed records from Los Angeles to New York (beating John Glenn's record), from New York to Los Angeles and round trip. His



Cindy Miller (left), daughter of Col. Ray Schrecengost, the pilot of the RF-101C CIN MIN, and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Robert Burkhart, a pilot during Operation Sun Run, stand near the RF-101C CIN MIN in the Modern Flight Gallery at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Dayton, Ohio, Nov. 27. (U.S. Air Force photo)

record fell shortly thereafter when his time was bettered by other pilots on the Sun Run.

Schrecengost's brother, Sam, also in attendance at the ceremony, said it was very difficult to get anything out of Ray about the mission before he passed away. "My brother wasn't about awards or records," he said. "He was a team person. Getting everyone involved was his way of passing credit back."

The original RF-101C CIN MIN, piloted by Schrecengost, is on display in the Modern Flight Gallery at the museum. A giclee print of the painting will now be placed in front of the aircraft and next to the group's speed trophy.

"With this year being the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force, we believe this donation is truly fitting as it depicts a significant event in Air Force history," said museum senior curator Terry Aitken during the unveiling ceremony. "It's also fitting to be displayed in the museum. Our mission is to be 'the keeper of their stories' and this painting truly enhances the story, the history and the significance of the people who were a part of Operation Sun Run."