



Nebraska History posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: The Strategic Air Command Memorial Chapel

Full Citation: "The Strategic Air Command Memorial Chapel," *Nebraska History* 77 (1996): 30-32

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1996Chapel.pdf>

Date: 4/10/2013

Article Summary: Striking stained glass windows in the Offutt Air Force Base chapel memorialize those who participated in SAC missions during the cold war. Today the chapel serves US STRATCOM personnel of all faiths.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Leo A Daly, Thomas Power, George S Wilson

Nebraska Place Names: Bellevue

Keywords: Strategic Air Command (SAC), United States Strategic Command (US STRATCOM), Offutt Air Force Base, Leo A Daly

Photographs / Images: exterior view of Strategic Air Command Memorial Chapel; east window depicting events or duties related to the Second, Eighth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Air Forces; detail from Sixteenth Air Force window showing the red telephone, a symbol of SAC readiness; north window with words from the Air Force hymn and seals of the Department of the Air Force and SAC; windows related to the cold war missions of the 389th Strategic Missile Wing, the 72nd Bombardment Wing, the 451st Strategic Missile Wing, and the 99th Bombardment Wing

The Strategic Air Command Memorial Chapel



Robert L. Hurst photo, NPS Contract 1443-CX-1200-94-006

The Strategic Air Command Memorial Chapel at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, was built in 1956. Omaha architect Leo A. Daly designed the concrete block, brick veneer building, which includes a 360-seat nave and education/administrative center. Total cost of the complex was \$296,293. The 7,684-square-foot chapel is distinguished by its unique stained glass windows memorializing the personnel and the mission of the Strategic Air Command during the cold war. The most striking window is the twelve-by-fifteen-foot SAC Memorial Window located on the west wall.

The idea for a memorial window originated with SAC Commander in Chief Gen. Thomas Power in November of 1958. It was part of a program to honor SAC combat personnel who had lost their lives in the line of duty. Chaplain George S. Wilson was designated project officer. A committee of officers and chaplains was appointed to raise funds for the window and select its design.

The fund raising goal of \$15,000 was soon surpassed from offerings received at base chapels throughout the Strategic Air Command. The committee requested designs and bids from eight studios, and selected the Wallis-Wiley Studio of Pasadena, California, to create the SAC Memorial Window at a cost of \$6,250. The firm also produced the other stained glass windows in the chapel. The additional windows represent the Second, Eighth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Air Forces and seventy-two divisions and wings in the Strategic Air Command. On May 29, 1960, the windows were dedicated and the chapel was designated the SAC Memorial Chapel.

The mission of the Strategic Air Command provides the themes for the stained glass windows. The imagery for the

Memorial Window was inspired by Isaiah 6:8, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us? . . . Here am I! Send me." In the foreground is an alert and courageous crewman who stands ready to preserve the peace through the deterrence of aggression. Behind him is a woman and two children, symbolic of all the families he is dedicated to protect.

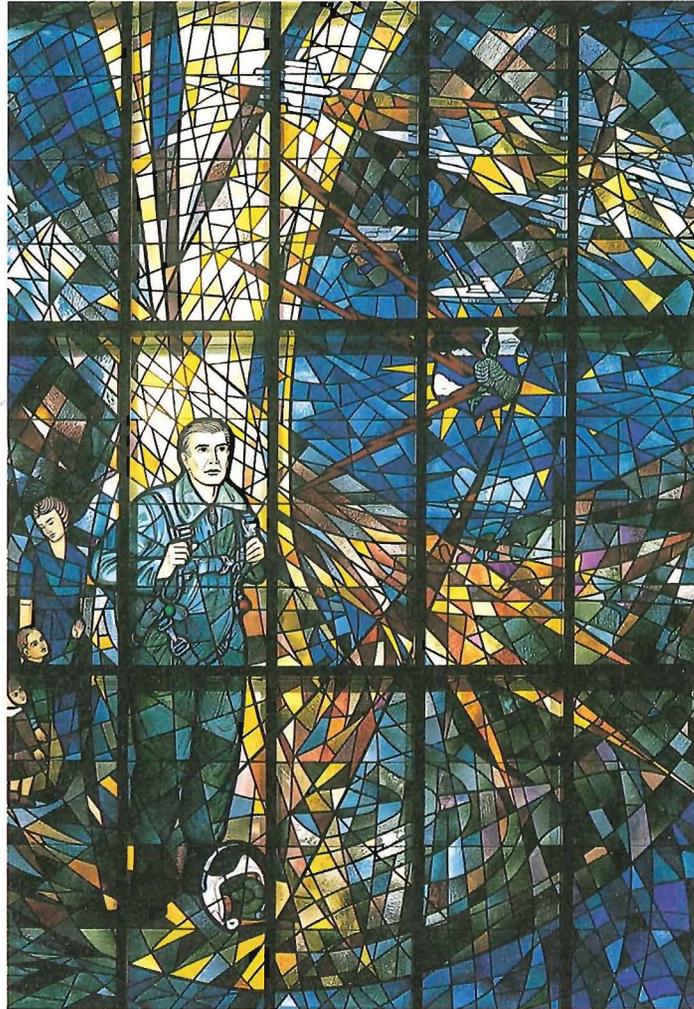
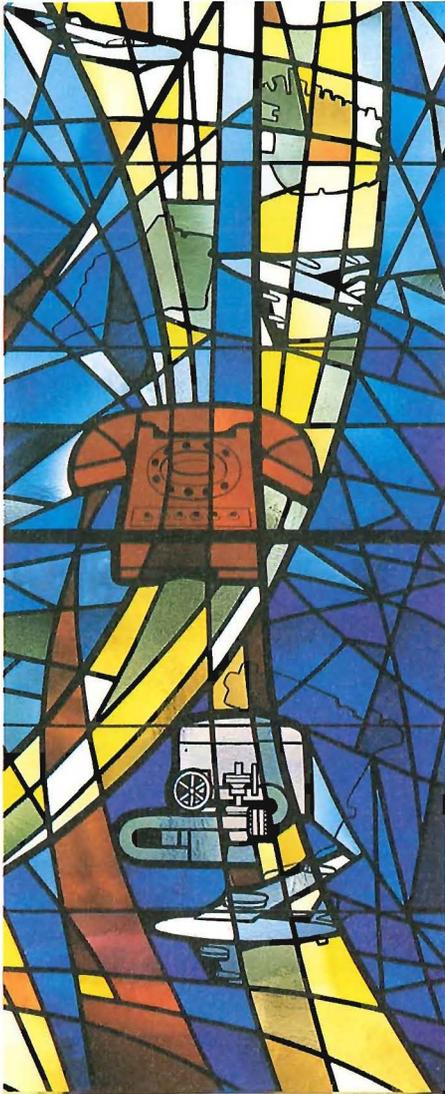
Around and above the crewman are the means God gave him to carry out his mission. To the right are isobars, indicative of weather services. Above are the planes he flies, one of which is being refueled. The main flight of aircraft is bathed in a golden light depicting God's presence and suggestive of the SAC motto, "Peace is our Profession." Striking across the window in an upward curve is the path of power, inspired by the trail of a jet or rocket. The SAC shield, a mailed fist clutching lightning bolts and an olive branch, is prominently featured.

During the operational period of the Strategic Air Command from 1948 to 1992, the names of 2,583 crew members who lost their lives in the line of duty were recorded in the chapel's memorial register. In June 1992 the United States Strategic Command (US STRATCOM) took over Offutt Air Force Base. The SAC Memorial Chapel now serves the religious needs of US STRATCOM personnel of all faiths. The chapel is being evaluated for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Acknowledgments

Lt. Col. Thomas J. Land, director of staff, 55th Wing, U.S. Air Force; Anthony Godfrey, president, U.S. West Research Inc.

SAC Chapel



Clockwise, upper left:
Windows on the east wall depict significant events or duties associated with the Second, Eighth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Air Forces. A detail from the Sixteenth Air Force window shows the famous Red Telephone, symbolic of the Strategic Air Command's global alert readiness.
NSHS-R. Bruhn Photo

The SAC Memorial Window.
NSHS-R. Bruhn Photo

The stained glass window on the north wall of the narthex, or vestibule, features words from the Air Force Hymn, and the seals of the Department of the Air Force and the Strategic Air Command.
NSHS-R. Bruhn Photo



The windows shown here reflect the cold war missions of the 389th Strategic Missile Wing, the 72d Bombardment Wing, the 451st Strategic Missile Wing, and the 99th Bombardment Wing. NSHS-R. Bruhn Photos

Small windows near the chapel's main entrance and on the west wall represent specific air divisions and wings within the Strategic Air Command.

