

US RADAR SITES of ICELAND

NEWSLETTER, June 2015

NEWSLETTER #28. EDITOR: JERRY TONNELL, H-2, 1959.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN. William Chick, H-2, 1959-60. The reunion at Dayton is over. We had over 60 veterans and 40 guests in attendance. Outside of a couple glitches, everything went according to plan. We re-dedicated our plaque at the USAF Memorial Gardens, toured the AF Museum, saw an I-MAX-type film, and visited several Presidential aircraft. We topped off the day with a pizza party at the hotel. The food and service were great. On our second day, because of construction work on the Wright Brothers' museum and the Huffman Field Interpretive Center, our buses were not allowed to enter the complex -- so the drivers took us on an interesting trip to downtown Dayton. We saw some Wright Brothers' childhood homes and a flight display. We then went on to the Carillon Historical Park for our picnic lunch and a walk through the history of Dayton. The cash register was invented there along with the carnival carousel. That night at our banquet, Lt Col (Ret) Joe Richardson -- the last commander of the 932nd --



served as our guest speaker. An Honor Guard was furnished by Wright-Patterson AFB. Then, we had some more great food. Our local on-the-site chairman was Andy Holzinger and our hospitality chairman was Bill Greenawalt. Both men did outstanding work. Larry Robin and Jerry Tonnell served as the MCs for the program. The banner (at left) was provided by the Green Co. Visitors' Bureau.

Now on to the 2017 reunion. Four great places were nominated: Green Bay, WI; Reno, NV; Salt Lake City, UT; and Tucson, AZ. These places are listed below in this newsletter (which you will not receive until late July since our reunion was in June and because of summer vacations), so, vote for your choice. In addition, since no one volunteered, you are stuck with me being your chairman for another two years. William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707, littlechick@msn.com 1-(803) 422-9486

2017 Reunion Site Selection Vote. During the reunion at Dayton, the location for the 2017 reunion was a topic of discussion. Several sites were suggested by members and four surfaced for our consideration. In alphabetical order, they are: Green Bay, WI; Reno, NV; Salt Lake City, UT; and Tucson, AZ. Members are asked to vote their preference by the **31st of October, 2015**. Also, indicate the month of the year you prefer for our gathering (however, a Green Bay reunion would have to be scheduled in late-July 2017 to coincide with the week-long EAA world-class air show in nearby Oshkosh, WI.) We will track the votes and the results will be published in the Dec 2015 newsletter. All votes should be sent to Jerry May via email at: majjw60@gmail.com

SCRAPBOOK CHAIRMAN. WC Chilton, H-1, 1961-62. In preparation for our 2017 reunion, I will be putting together a scrapbook of our 2015 reunion; those with 2015 Dayton photos please mail your 4X6" prints to me at: WC Chilton, 210 Parish Lane, McMinnville, TN 37110.

FROM THE HISTORIAN. Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959. We have some Iceland Radar History books in stock (over 1,150 have already been distributed.) Even if you already have a copy, buy one for each of your kids or even grandkids -- the book shows "your" contribution to the defense of our nation during a dangerous time in our country's history. The price is \$10 including postage (our cost.) Order by mailing a check payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" to: William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707.



WEBSITE DIRECTOR. Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59. If you haven't checked out our Radar Website, please do so. Our web address is <http://usradarsitesiceland.com/> Reed's email is: reedt934@gmail.com

!!! OUR NEW WEBSITE PHOTO CHAIRMAN. Joe Pyrdek, H-3, 1967-68. Joe has graciously volunteered to be our new Website Photo Chairman. He asks that, if possible, when sending photos, you provide a caption, including date taken, so the photos can be properly labeled. Send both Iceland radar photos as well as any Iceland reunion photos you wish to pass on. E-mail photos to Joe at: ipyrdek@zoominternet.net Mailing address: Joe Pyrdek, 13654 Foust Road, Conneaut Lake, PA 16316

TREASURER. William Chick, H-2, 1959-60. Our annual voluntary membership dues run \$15 per year. Make checks payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" and mail it to William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707. His email is: littlechick@msn.com

WHAT ELSE HAPPENED IN DAYTON?

By Jerry Tonnell, Newsletter Editor

After being bused to the USAF Memorial Gardens for the re-dedication of the Radar



Sites of Iceland Plaque, an Episcopal Priest led the gathering in prayer. Jerry Tonnell read a Citation to accompany the plaque presentation. Then, two of our loyal former Executive Committee members were honored -- CMSgt David Hawk (long-time Treasurer) who passed away in May 2015, and Fred Schulte (long-time Hospitality director) who passed away in 2014. After comments by Chick and Larry Robin, a trumpeter from the USAF Band at Wright-Patterson played a stirring rendition of Taps. Next, during our tour of the USAF Museum, Maj General Cooper gave a talk on the EC-121 -- he was then presented a copy of the latest edition (12th printing) of our Iceland Radar History. He assured us that the book will be entered in the historical archives of the USAF Museum. This will insure that "our story" and contribution to the defense of our nation will long be remembered. We then assembled in the gigantic I-MAX theater for a thrilling



production of a "Red Flag Fighter" training exercise – we felt like we were in the cockpit of an F-15C. Another bus ride took us to a secure area where we were allowed to board



several of the Presidential aircraft – all are there except the current Air Force One. In the same complex were several experimental USAF aircraft including one that closely resembles a **flying saucer**. The following day we traveled to the Carillon Historical Park which included several separate buildings which housed extremely interesting displays and dramatizations.

This included the original first operational aircraft – the 1905 Wright Flyer (*see photo at bottom of page.*) Upon return, we gathered for our banquet. Radar vet Chip Norton led us in an opening prayer. This was followed by the singing of the National Anthem – it



appeared that almost everybody joined in the a cappella singing of our nation's song. It was a goose-bump moment. The evening was capped off by the comments of our guest speaker – the last commander of the last radar site of Iceland – **Joe Richardson, Lt Col USAF (Ret.)** He gave us a most interesting talk speaking of the closing and the final chapter of radar in Iceland -- his aim was right on, the content was one in which we all had an interest, and it was delivered with a sincerity that touched the hearts of all in

attendance. He and his mates closed down the 932nd with style. We were fortunate to have him as the last commander of the last radar site in Iceland. Finally, we were serenaded by the Gem City Band as they played our favorite Glenn Miller numbers.

Interesting Sidelights: Here are a few observations noted in the hallways and at the various tables in and around the Hospitality Room. Did you know that member **Robert Somos**, H-3, 1960-61, while as a teenager, was captured and then finally escaped from Communist Hungary in the 1950s – the authorities did not want him to leave his native



land in his quest to find freedom? Did you know that, in his post-radar site days, **Chip Norton** served as a Methodist minister for over 40 years? Did you know that two **H-2, US Navy vets – Gary Beck and Neal Peacock** -- clarified some of what was going on at H-2 in the years following the removal of the USAF radar personnel from that site in 1961? Did you know that **Jack Hamilton**, H-1, 1952-53, made a cameo appearance near the end of the reunion?

Did you know that 4 members of the 656th AC&W squadron joined us for our reunion? Did you know that CMSgt (Ret) **William Sheppard** also joined us – he served at the isolated northern installation to the west of Iceland on Resolution Island in 1959? Did you know that **David Pressler**, H-1, 1966-67, took videos of much of the reunion and posted three of them on the internet? Just go to YouTube and type in "David Pressler Dayton Museum" to view those videos of our activities.

In sum, to quote an old 'saw', "a good time was had by all."

William A. Chick
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ICELAND REUNION
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US RADAR SITES of ICELAND

NEWSLETTER, December 2015

NEWSLETTER #29. EDITOR: JERRY TONNELL, H-2, 1959.

WE ARE TUCSON BOUND in 2017.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN. William Chick, H-2, 1959-60. Yes, the votes were cast and Tucson, Arizona – home of Davis-Monthan AFB -- is the winner. See the vote count below. We will start working on things to do and determine what month we want to have the reunion – probably somewhere around either April/May or Oct of 2017, during favorable weather conditions. William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707, littlechick@msn.com 1-(803) 422-9486



2017 Reunion Site Selection Vote RESULTS. The vote tallies are as follows: Tucson – 29 votes, Reno – 17 votes, Green Bay – 16 votes, Salt Lake /city – 15 votes. Tucson, AZ, is the winner. Many thanks to **Jerry May, H-1, 1962-63**, for, once again, being our official and proficient keeper of the ballots.

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A Glimpse of Life at H-4, the 934th ACWRON at Latrar AFS, Iceland

By Jerry Tonnell, Editor

I took it for granted while I was at H-2 in 1959, that my room, bath, and office would be heated, that the dining hall would have the refrigeration and working ovens to feed us and that our communications systems and radar operations would be sufficiently powered for our day-to-day mission. What I took for granted was that there would be a steady supply of fuel continuously delivered to power the site. However, let's take a look at what the men of the 934th ACWRON at H-4, Latrar AFS went through to provide that vital service – and the consequences to all site personnel when that supply was interrupted. Let's retrace some of the words of H-4 member, **Bill Boulineau, H-4, 1956-57**, so we can comprehend and fully appreciate what was done on our behalf by the men who supplied the fuel to the sites. Bill (*pictured at left*), a radar maintenance repairman by training, found himself at a radar site that did not yet have a radar dome. Therefore, he and several others from technical fields were required to perform the heavy lifting type duties, totally unrelated to their specialties, to insure the survival of the site as they awaited the arrival and installation of the radar system which did not occur until January 1958.



"The work was pretty routine, the Gyllir [wooden supply boat] would show up with about 250+ barrels of oil ... we would row out to the barge [a Rhino Ferry barge], tied up at the buoy. We would off-load the Gyllir [onto the barge] and wait for high tide. At high tide, Chris [Eydal] and Benny [Benediktsson] would start up the 'stinger', a GMC diesel marine engine, which is one very large outboard motor. At the peak of high tide, they would steer the barge at the beach at full speed, about 2 knots, and run it aground as far up on the beach as possible. Highpockets [Einar Jonsson] would have the D-8 Cat on the beach waiting for us to ram ashore, and one of us would take the cable bridle and attach it to the drawbar of the Cat. Highpockets would tighten the bridle, and we would all repair to lower camp to wait for low tide. At low tide, we (6-8 people) would all go back to the beach and start unloading the barrels. The crane would move up close to the beach, and with barrel-hooks we would start the process of unloading the barrels on the beach. The barge was unloaded first, so it could go back out at high tide. We would then load the barrels from the beach on the trucks. The crane would pick two barrels at a time, and swing them over to the truck. We had to manhandle the barrels upright on their ends, to get 21 barrels on the truck. Each barrel weighed 401 pounds, so we carried over 4 tons of oil on each trip.



"My job ... was truck driving, stevedore, and seaman extraordinaire. I drove my 2 1/2 ton cargo truck over 7,000 miles in my stay in Iceland. The road up to hilltop was about 7 miles, so I made over 500 round trips up the mountain. My truck would hold 21 barrels of fuel oil; that works out to about 10,500 barrels of fuel. That works out to over 500,000 gallons of fuel oil. And we had three trucks running most of the time. The trip up the mountain usually took about 45 minutes, most of the time climbing up the mountain. It was not unusual to have to stop for a while at one of the switchbacks to let the engine cool down a little, I have seen the exhaust manifold turn almost white hot during the climb. When we reached top camp, the storage tank,

(my guess was that it held 250,000 gallons), was to the left (west) of the main gate, and the pumping station was just west of that. After many different tries of ways to unload the trucks, we finally settled on the one where you



would back up as fast as you could, slam on the brakes and all the barrels would slide out the rear. There was some danger here, if your brakes failed, you could crash through the pump station and wind up 1,500 feet below. This never happened, but some guys did forget to open the tailgate.

"A disaster occurred during a severe winter storm ... in January of 1957. We had worked our butts off trying to get enough fuel oil in the storage tank... we stacked the empty barrels west of the storage tank, on the edge of the mountain. The storm, with winds over 100 mph,

blew the empty oil barrels around like match boxes. Some of the flying oil barrels struck the storage tank feed line, shattering it and all the oil was drained out and blown over the mountain and on the buildings at top camp. I would guess this was almost 100,000 gallons of oil. The Orderly room building, on the west side of top camp, was soaked with diesel fuel, the buildings, being of slab concrete, soaked up the oil, and it came right through the walls. I don't know if they ever got the odor out of that building or not, but it was literally running down the



inside walls of the rooms ... then the real trouble began, we didn't have enough fuel oil to run top camp. The commander shut down all but one boiler and one diesel generator, and everyone was put in one dorm. The road was still open some at this point and every day, enough oil was pumped in the generator day tank to keep it going. Rumors abounded that they were going to pull us out for the winter, and everyone had their fingers crossed. The heads at Keflavik got together and came up with the idea that we could use sleds to haul oil through the winter. So, they brought us two sleds up on the Gyllir so we could stay on site and haul oil all winter. The sled

would hold 11 barrels of oil. It took about eight hours to make the trip with two Cats, one plowing, the other pulling the sled. Two Icelandic employees and two GIs would accompany the sleds. This was a tough way to haul oil. Thankfully, it was only done for a few weeks, and the road was finally opened enough to go back to trucks. The problem with the road was drifting. The flats -- the road to start the climb up the mountain -- would get drifts over 5 feet deep. We managed to get enough oil to top camp that winter that they didn't have to evacuate us, but it was a pretty rough winter for those of us that hauled the oil. Almost everyone got a chance on the sleds, and those days were pretty long. A shower always felt good when we got to top camp, and a warm meal was a



welcome sight."

In May of 1957, British **Chaplain Robert Jack** was making a visit to H-4, and saw the toil involved in the delivery of fuel to the site. He recorded the following comments:



"All through the terrible winter the men have done this job. Friend Gus [the high winds] has shown them no mercy. The biting blast and the snow blizzards have seldom abated. These men have worked under primitive conditions, wet to the skin on many occasions ... The story of these men is an epic one. They are the pioneers of the North... I came to the conclusion while staying with the men that many of them, on this lonely spot, had found themselves; reached down to the depths of their souls and found more than they had ever expected. In the rigors around them they have found peace with, - or if you like it better, Peace with God. What a blessing of infinite joy it was to find that some

of these young men on the High Edge of the world had sought and at last found."

As you can see, the job of supplying the sites with sufficient fuel was not easy. Whether working at bottom camp to provide fuel and other needed supplies, or at top camp where the majority of site personnel resided and where they were exposed to the year-round extremely harsh mountain-top weather, life at H-4 was a daily fight for survival. It took the right kind of men with the right kind of resolve to keep the radar site operating.

-- In memory of those who gave their lives at H-4: A3/C Wayne A. Buettner and Icelander Jon Albertsson. --

Our hats are off to the men of the 934th!

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