



# Remembering Our Heritage



## 30 April - 6 May

**5 May 1923:** Major General Eli A. Helmick, Inspector General for the Army, following an inspection of the 3rd Attack Group, commended Major Lewis H. Brereton, 3rd Attack Group Commander, "for achieving a very high degree of training and discipline," in his group.



**30 Apr 1940:** General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, testified before the Senate Committee on Appropriations on the need to restore funding for an air base near Anchorage. He stated that the Army's General Staff had, for many years, considered Alaska's strategic importance and its lack of defense. He noted the trips made by Army Air Corps personnel and others to gain additional knowledge of the territory. General Marshall went on to say that as a result of the studies and fact-finding trips, the War Department had decided that Alaska, because of its limited population and vast size, was an air theater of operation. He pointed need for an operational base near Anchorage, as recommended by Col John C. Lee and his party after their 1939 summer trip to Alaska. The Anchorage location offered the best terrain, climate and accessibility for an operational airfield. It did not have the disadvantages of extreme cold weather that Fairbanks had and it was closer to seaports. He noted that Fairbanks offered a more favorable location for cold weather testing. (Transcript, testimony, Gen George C. Marshall before the Committee on Appropriations, US Senate, April 30, May 1, May 17, 1940 on HR 9209, in Marshall Papers, George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington VA.)



**1 May 1942:** The Eleventh Air Force activated the 42nd Transport Squadron under the command of Capt Phillip T. Durfee. The squadron, the first flying unit to be activated in Alaska, was equipped with five C-53s that had deployed to Alaska with the 11th Fighter Squadron to Alaska. Personnel were drawn from various Eleventh Air Force organizations including the Tow Target Detachment. The designation of 42nd Transport Squadron was changed to 42nd Troop Carrier Squadron on 5 July 1942. Prior to its activation, the Eleventh Air Force

had used B-18s and the B-10 that had belonged to Colonel Davis to transport cargo and personnel. The 10<sup>th</sup> Tow Target Detachment flew the B-10. The Eleventh Air Force also relied on commercial aircraft. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Troop Carrier, later joined by the 54<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, transported cargo and personnel in the Aleutians and mainland Alaska. (HQ 11AF GO 8, 23 Apr 1942; Hist, 42<sup>nd</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, 1 May 1942-30 Jun 1943, p. 1; Fleischer, Hist, Elmendorf Field, p. 41.)



**3 May 1942:** The 3rd Bombardment Group began flying patrols from Charters Tower over the Coral Sea and Solomon Islands looking for an expected Japanese invasion fleet headed for Port Moresby. The Japanese operational plans called for six large aircraft carriers to sail into the Coral Sea to support and protect the invasion fleet headed for Port Moresby. They were scheduled to attack Port Moresby in the first week in May 1942. (*Grim Reapers*, p. 29)



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**1 May 1943:** Lieutenant Billy Wheeler, in describing the movement of the 36th Bombardment Squadron from Adak to Amchitka, noted in his diary: First aircraft departed Adak at 0700 hours. "Buzzed tent area as wondering dogfaces gaped wide-eyed and lack-jawed below." After landing, made their way to tent area. "No roads to this area existed; the most direct way to tents led through numerous small lakes, and so did most of the indirect routes." The 36th Bomb Squadron flew its first mission from Amchitka to attack Attu. Target photos given first priority, canceled because of broken overcast, bombed instead. Anti-aircraft fire fairly accurate.



Brown found five inch hole in his rudder. "Apparently some of the Kiska varsity had been transferred to Attu." (Wheeler Diary.)



**1 May 1943:** Major Edward L. Larner, Commander, 90th Bombardment Squadron, and seven others were killed when their B-25 crashed on takeoff for a mission against a Japanese encampment near Salamaua. The B-25C, *Spook II*, Serial # 41-12969, never got off the strip, instead one engine sputtered, the plane jerked, and spun off the runway, flipped to one side, then burst into flames. Every man aboard was apparently killed instantly. The others included 2Lt Frederick H. Ensminger, co-pilot from Osgood, IN on his first mission; Capt Ray Hewitt, Australian

intelligence officer; 2Lt John J. Clark, navigator from Chicago, IL; SSgt Columbus G. Pelham, radio man and gunner from Savannah, GA; Sgt Vernon Moore, a gunner from Alphalfa, GA; Sgt Robert L. Fecitt, crew chief from Revere, MA; and Sgt Bern Manuellan from Boston, MA. The crew chiefs flew on the mission to observe the high G stress on the aircraft encountered from the sudden pull up and away following a bomb run. The news of Major Larner's death electrified American military leaders as far away as Washington DC. General Hap Arnold expressed regret, "He was a flyer who never heard the word quit." (*Grim Reapers*, p. 52)

**4 May 1945:** Major General Davenport Johnson, who had assumed command of the Eleventh Air Force on 13 September 1943, relinquished command to his deputy Brig. Gen. Isaiah Davis, for medical reasons and returned to the lower states for hospitalization and later retirement. He had been for establishing the Eleventh Air Force Instrument Training School, and for organizing and leading the Eleventh Air Force during the Kurile operations. His confidence in instrument flying seldom permitted the weather to delay his many trips in the Aleutians. He received the Legion of Merit and the Distinguished Flying Cross. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 390.)



**1 May 1946:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers established the Alaska District on Fort Richardson (later Elmendorf AFB) under the North Pacific Division. By 1952, the district had grown to be one of the largest in the Corps of Engineers' 44 districts. By the end of 1955, it had overseen \$800 million in construction projects with another \$100 million scheduled in 1956. (Hist, ALCOM, Jan 1952-Jun 1956, p. 9.)

**30 Apr 1951:** The B-26 named "Uncle," from the 13th Bombardment Squadron set a new record for longest flying hours in a one-month period. The aircraft flew for 250 hours and 5 minutes during the month of April, shattering the pervious record of 249 hours and 45 minutes set by another squadron crew. The crew chiefs, Technical Sergeant Ray Holly and Sergeants Robert Millan and Guy Gaines, orchestrated the



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record attempt without letting the pilots know. They did not want any bias treatment from the crews to spoil their record attempt. The new record meant they had to keep the aircraft in the air on average of eight hours a day all month long, while flying combat missions. (Hist, 13BS, May 1951, p. 5; *The Invader*, 11 May 51)

**1 May 1951:** The Alaskan Command established the office of Inspector General on the headquarters staff. (Hist., ALCOM, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, p. 204.)



**1 May 1954:** The Theater Communications Study Group submitted a detailed report which consolidated the future communications requirements of all Alaska agencies. The Secretary of the Air Force approved the report and submitted it to American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) for an extensive field survey. AT&T established a goal of providing a fixed, multi-channel communications system that would be completely reliable, free from jamming and capable of being expanded. It became known as the White Alice Communications System. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1954, p. 199.)

**1 May 1955:** The extended tour length for accompanied Air Force personnel went from the long standing two years to three years. Unaccompanied tours remained at 18 to 24 months. Remote tours also remained at 12 to 18 months depending on the size of the installation. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1955, pp. 63-64.)

**1 May 1956:** The Alaska District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers marked its tenth anniversary. Established on 1 May 1946 with a small staff on Elmendorf AFB, it had grown to be one of the largest of the 44 districts. It had overseen a massive one billion dollar construction project, involving the expenditure of \$800,000,000 by 1956 with another \$100,000,000 appropriated. (Hist, ALCOM, Jan 1952-Jun 1956, p. 75.)

**30 Apr 1959:** General Necrason officially opened Ice Station Alpha II by raising the American flag there. He stated, speaking about the drifting ice island's mission: "Our nation's future well-being may someday depend to a large degree upon the undertaking of this nature." Areas of scientific study planned included weather, oceanography, underwater sound propagation, seismology and marine biology. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul 1958-Jun 1959, pp. 249-250.)

**1 May 1959:** General Necrason presided over the official dedication of the Aleutian DEW Line Segment in a live TV program originating in Anchorage. The Western Electric Company had actually turned over the system to the Air Force a month earlier with the 714th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron and its five detachments assuming operational responsibility. Officials from the Western Electric Company and the Air Material Command took part in the ceremony. The system had been extensively checked and evaluated, first during static test and later by flight test. One flight test involved the commitment of 50 SAC bombers in a simulated nuclear strike. As part of the ceremony, General Necrason conducted a communications check with each station commander and General Armstrong spoke with Headquarters NORAD, reporting that the Aleutian DEW Line Segment (Project Stretch Out) was fully operational and ready to assume its role as part of the North American air defense system. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul 1958-Jun 1959, pp. 196-198.)

**30 Apr 1960:** The Alaskan Air Command closed the bread bakery at Eielson AFB. The one at Elmendorf AFB was programmed to close on 1 September 1960. The bakeries furnished bread for sale at the Army and Air Force commissaries to troop dining facilities. The Bureau of Budget and Department of Defense had ordered the closing. The Command estimated that the annual increase in cost of obtaining bread from commercial sources would be around \$88,824. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1960, pp. 464-465.)



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**5 May 1960:** The Air Force cancelled the AAC F-101B conversion program and announced that the 449<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron would be inactivated. The Alaskan Air Command has spent a considerable amount of time and effort since the late 1958 Air Force decision to replace the F-89Js in Alaska with the F-101B. The AAC historian at the time noted that “all of this tremendous effort and energy expended on this particular project went for naught with the last-minute decision not to send the F-101Bs to the Alaskan theater which also forced the eventual inactivation of the 449 FIS.” (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1960, pp. 232, 248 and 254.)

**4 May 1971:** An F-4E crew, Capt, David M. Warren and 1/Lt. Larry Hoffman, from the 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron made three firing passes two within 1,000 feet of the glacial area 10 to 20 miles south of Portage on the Alaska Railroad to trigger an avalanche and minimize danger at the request of the Alaska Railroad. (AAC Public Information Release 71E-5-71, 4 May 1971.)



**3 May 1975:** The Elmendorf Golf opened for the season and extended its privileges to civilians. Prior to that, only military, DOD civilians and civilians designated by the Commander-in-Chief, Alaskan Command could use the facilities. General Hill made the decisions after 1974 statistics showed that 18,000 rounds of golf had been played on the 32,000 capacity course. The course was also opened to military reservist, regardless of status, Federal employees, members of the Anchorage Golf Association and other civilians determined eligible by the base commander. Their decision was based on the need to general more morale and welfare

funds. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, pp. 83-84.)

**1 May 1993:** The Air Force reassigned the 962nd Airborne Warning and Control Squadron from the Air Combat Command to the Pacific Air Forces and further reassigned the squadron to the 3rd Operations Group. (HQ PACAF SO GA-35, 14 May 1993)

**1 May 2001:** President George W. Bush, in a speech at the National Defense University, announced plans to reduce the nuclear arsenal and increase missile defense by building a land base system that could intercept missiles in mid-course. Alaska's location made it a good candidate for basing anti-ballistic missiles. (Liz Ruskin, “Bush Calls for Nuclear Arms Cuts, Missile Defense,” *Anchorage Daily News*, 2 May 2001.)

**3-18 May 2001:** Cope Thunder 01-2 was conducted with approximately 440 French forces participating. This marked the first time the French Air Force participated in Cope Thunder. The French Air Force brought eight Mirage F-1s, eight Mirage 2000s, and an E-3 aircraft. Other aircraft included 34 F-16s, 6 F-15s, 1 E-3, 4 KC-135s, 3 EA-6s, and an HH-60. Overall, units flew 725 sorties, totaling 1,377 hours during the exercise. (Hist, 11 AF, 2001, p. 106.)



**4 May 2005:** (U) In a ceremony at Fort Polk, LA, the 3rd Air Operations Support Squadron (3 ASOS) obtained five of the Army's high-tech armored vehicles. This first-ever joint effort between the Air Force and Army will aid the Army to better protect the people who guide reconnaissance and attack aircraft during combat operations. During the next month, the 3 ASOS would train with the Army to prepare for a deployment to Southwest Asia in August 2005. (Hist, 11 AF 2005)