

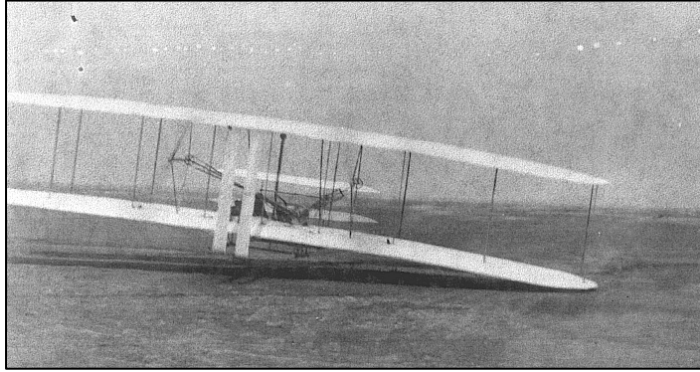


Remembering Our Heritage



17-23 December

17 Dec 1903: Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first successful heavier-than-air powered flight at Kitty Hawk, NC. Orville won the coin toss and completed the first of four flights, covering a distance of 120 feet in 12 seconds. Wilbur made the longest flight of the day, 852 feet in 59 seconds. The brothers used a monorail track to launch the plane against a wind blowing slightly more than 20 miles per hour. (Daniel L. Haulman, *One Hundred Years of Flight, USAF Chronology of Significant Air and Space Events, 1903-2002*, Air Force History and Museums Program, Air University Press.)



22 Dec 1941: The evacuation of military dependents and civilian workers from Alaska began on the orders of Brig Gen Simon Buckner. Both government and commercial transportation was used for the evacuation. Two exceptions were made: dependents who could prove permanent Alaska residency and those who were employed by the government whose duties deemed them essential to national defense. The latter had to sign an agreement that they would remain on their jobs in the event their military spouses were ordered elsewhere. William Gilman in his book, *Our Hidden Front*, noted that General Buckner had also extended the evacuation orders to include prostitutes. The evacuation conformed to the policy of removing nonessential civilians from a potential war zone. Plus it had the added benefit of reducing the number of personnel that the Army had to support.

General Buckner further stated: "In a raid, I want the men to think of their posts, not their families." Eventually, some of the women returned to Alaska to rejoin their husbands under the guise as war workers using their maiden names. (Fleischer, Hist, Elmendorf Field, p. 30; Gilman, *Our Hidden Front*, pp. 55-56.)

20 Dec 1942: The 3rd Bomb Group used six A-20s to bomb and strafe Gripi Point, striking gasoline drums and starting small fires. 1Lt William C. Hellregel, 13th Bombardment Squadron, and his B-25D, 41-29709, crew crashed into the sea about 25 miles south and slight east of Cooktown, Australia, while en route to Port Moresby. He had to feather the left engine when oil pressure failed, resulting in loss of altitude. Of the 12 crewmen aboard, seven were injured. All crew members made it safely ashore. Ten remained behind while two went for help, reaching Cooktown on 23 December. A rescue boat picked up the others the following day. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 33)



17 Dec 1942: Col Benjamin Talley and his party, consisting of Lt Col Leon DeLong, engineer, Lt Col William J. Vebeck, Eleventh Air Force intelligence officer, three others and seven Alaska Scouts for protection, went ashore at Amchitka Island from a PBY after experiencing transportation difficulties and indecision on the part of his superiors. The Navy had been reluctant to provide airlift for the reconnaissance party, but finally provided a PBY. The party paddled ashore in rubber rafts. A Japanese scout plane flew over the island while they



Remembering Our Heritage



17-23 December

were on it. The party managed to avoid detection by spreading out and blending in with the terrain. On the way back, their PBY was forced to land in the open sea about 75 miles from Kodiak. The party was picked up nine hours later after bailing to keep the plane afloat. It sank under tow on 19 December. Colonel Talley determined that an airfield could be built within two to three weeks.

20 Dec 1942: The 77th Bombardment Squadron flew the first B-25 mission in the North Pacific area when four of the medium bombers along with four B-26s from the 73rd Bombardment Squadron, five B-24D and nine P-38s from the 54th Fighter Squadron flew a low-level bombing and strafing mission against the Japanese main camp and submarine base in Kiska Harbor. With the exception of a direct hit on an ammunition dump, the mission was uneventful. (Howard, Hist, 77th Bomb Sq, p. 11; Intel Summary, Prov XI Bomb Comd, 20 Dec 1942.)



20 Dec 1944: Lt Col Jack T. Loney, 404th Bombardment Group Commander, took off at 0261 in B-24D, 41-11924 "Duchess" on a weather reconnaissance mission of the Kuriles with a weather observer aboard. The bomber carried six 300-pound general purpose bombs. Two cloud layers were encountered en-route to the Kuriles which merged on the return flight. The Kuriles were overcast. Lt Col Loney flew a course of 257 degrees at an average altitude of 10,000 feet. On reaching the Kuriles, he reported that the weather prevented the taking of photographs and advised caution about a planned bombing mission. After he jettisoned his bombs, he landed at

1824 hours. (Memo, Comdr, 28th Bomb Group to Comdr, 11AF, Operational Summary for 20 December 1944, 21 Dec 1944.)

21 Dec 1945: The Alaskan Department redesignated the Eleventh Air Force as the Alaskan Air Command with headquarters on Adak. Brig Gen Edmund C. Lynch assumed command of the Alaskan Air Command on Adak. (HQ Alaskan Department GO 240, 21 Dec 1945; HQ AAC GO 3, 21 Dec 1945; Hist, AAC, 1945-47, pp. 32-33.)

20 Dec 1947: Lt Gen Nathan Twining, AAC Commander, expressed his concerns to Gen Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Vice Chief of Staff, USAF, about the unsatisfactory condition of military construction in Alaska. At the time the Seattle District, US Army Corps of Engineers, administered military construction in Alaska. The Corps maintained a district engineer office in Alaska and often communicated without coordinating with Alaskan Command and Alaskan projects often received lower priority. This relationship resulted in delays in getting projects approved and implemented. General Twining's predecessor, Maj Gen Howard Craig, expressed a need for a separate Alaska Division, US Army Corps of Engineers to Gen Carl A. Spaatz, Commanding General, Army Air Forces during his September 1947 tour of Alaska.



General Twining, on 9 January 1948, readdressed the issue with General Spaatz, who had become the first Air Force Chief of Staff, stating: "It stands to reason that communications regarding engineer projects do not receive the same attention now that they would receive if Alaska had its own division engineer." General Spaatz in turn discussed the matter with Lt Gen. R. A. Wheeler, Chief of Engineers, who stated that the support provided to the district engineer office in Alaska by the North Pacific Division in Portland, OR, in the way of procurement services, port services and technical engineering services could not be handled by a separate district in Alaska. He promised that Alaska would receive a top priority. (Hist, Alaskan Command, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, pp. 6-9.)



Remembering Our Heritage



17-23 December

18-19 Dec 1961: The Alaskan Air Command conducted an air defense exercise, FORWARD PASS, to test and evaluate the King Salmon NORAD Control Center (705th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron) sector that included Bethel (713th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron) and Cape Romanzof (795th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron). Target aircraft included three B-57s and 18 T-33s which flew penetration missions. The 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron provided the interceptor force. The exercise participants faced extreme low temperatures with wind chill factors ranging down to a low of -40 degrees. The sector was rated unsatisfactory due to poor communications, unsatisfactory surveillance display, late arrival of F-102A support personnel and equipment, unsatisfactory identification procedures, lack of F-102 maintenance spare parts and insufficient ground power equipment, slow F-102 turn around times and extreme cold weather. (Miller, Hist, AAC, 1961, pp. 437-448.)



19 Dec 1967: Two F-102s from the 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron were scrambled from Galena AS to intercept an IL-14 Crate off the west coast of Alaska. Three days later, two F-102s from the 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron were scrambled from Galena AS to intercept another IL-14 Crate off the west coast of Alaska. Throughout the Cold War, the US intercepted an IL-14 Crate on 33 different occasions. (Hist, 317FIS, 1 Jul-31 Dec 1967, p. 4.)

21 Dec 1967: The first two trailer loads of AUTODIN equipment destined for Wildwood Air Force Station left Philadelphia, PA by road. The Air Force had acquired Wildwood from the Army in 1966 with the plans to install an automatic digital message switching center (AUTODIN) there. Plans included installation of a ground satellite terminal. The planned acceptance date of 8 November 1968 was established. The project also involved providing housing for the Air Force military members who would man the communications facility. (Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1967, pp.30-32.)

20 Dec 1971: Installation began on Elmendorf AFB for the ground-based ice fog abatement system, a network of 18 1,000 gallon propane tanks equipped with radio actuated solenoid control valves, a flexible hose running up a 20-foot mast and a dispensing vaporizing nozzle. The base weather station had the capability of turning parts or all of the system on by radio. The injection of the cooling propane into the air resulted turning ice fog into snow crystals, clearing a landing path to the runways. The system replaced the WC-130E Cold Cowl airborne fog seeding operation that had been used successfully on Elmendorf AFB since 1967 to dispense fog from the runways. The propane system cost about \$35,000 to install and around \$9,000 in annual operating costs, or about \$500,000 less to operate the WC-130 and its dry ice dispensing system during the normal 15 November to 15 February season. The propane system was designed to dispense fog in about 45 to 60 minutes, the same time it took the WC-130 crew to prepare for a flight. (SSgt. David Roth, "Propane Gas Clouds to Disperse Cold Ice Fog," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 24 Dec 1971.)





Remembering Our Heritage



17-23 December



20 Dec 1974: The Joint Chiefs of Staff Services Plan for disestablishing ALCOM was submitted to the Secretary of Defense in a JCS Memo, *Unified, Specified and Subordinate Command Structures (ALCOM)* for Presidential approval. The memo contained the *JCS Implementation Plan (ALCOM)*; command relationships, manpower requirements, implementation milestones, summary of DOD units, Air Force and Army Chiefs of Staffs' plans for Alaskan Air Command and the 172nd Infantry Brigade (AK). The memo expected Presidential approval by 31 December 1974, transfer of ALCOM functions the first half of 1975, and disestablishment actions to be completed by 30 September 1975. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, p. 26.)

17 Dec 1975: The 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing designation was reassigned from Korat RTAFB, Thailand to Clark AFB, Philippines. (3 TFW History, 1 Oct-31 Dec 75, pp.3-5)

17 Dec 1975: President Ford declared Bethel, a community of 2,921 on the Kuskokwim River 400 miles west of Anchorage, a disaster area following a 2 December fire that destroyed its power generator. Governor Jay Hammond requested the declaration on 13 December. Subsequent low temperatures of -40 degrees Fahrenheit damaged or destroyed the water and sanitation systems. The Alaska Disaster Office had initially responded by borrowing two 900-kilowatt solar generators from Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. They proved unequal to the tasks. With the Presidential declaration, the Federal Disaster Assistant Administration (FDAA) Region 10 in Bothal, WA, requested Alaskan Air Command arrange for alternate generators until Bethel could obtain its own. As a result two 750-kilowatt solar generators with personnel to operate them were flown to Bethel on 20 December and were providing power on 25 December. Personnel from the 4449th Mobile Operational Base Squadron, Holloman AFB, NM, operated both sets of generators. The Alaskan Air Command experienced coordination problems due to the fact that Region 10, (FDAA) in Bethel, did not have a representative in Alaska. When asked for guidance, Mr. William Mayer, the regional administrator, stated that "he could not dictate to any one agency on how they were to handle or process requests." As a result, the Alaska District, US Army Corps of Engineers, assumed responsibility for disaster coordination. The State of Alaska and the Alaska National Guard also became involved. The results were a lack of coordination and duplication of effort. Funding became an issue with the need to reimburse the Military Airlift Command. Finally, an agreement was reached where all concerned would bill Alaskan Air Command who in turn would bill FDAA. When Capt. Richard E. Dyrud, the AAC Disaster Preparedness Officer and Air Force point of contact, and Mr Phillip Williams, the Alaska District, US Army Corps of Engineers, disaster manger, briefed General Hill, the General asked why the Army had not provided the generators. Mr. Williams responded that the Air Force had proven more responsive, and had the generators in place within 24 hours versus the 72 hours it would have taken the Army. It was not until 1 June 1976, that the Bethel Utility Corporation, who appeared unwilling to expedite replacement generators, was able to assume responsibility for providing power at Bethel. They had done so at the prompting of the Air Force. When the solar generators were returned to Holloman AFB, the 4449th Mobile Operational Base Squadron stated they were in a state of disrepair and needed inspection and overhaul at the factory at a cost of \$300,000. Region 10, FDAA, was unwilling to fund it. A meeting was held at McChord AFB, WA, to resolve the issue. The participants reached an agreement where Region 10 would fund the spare parts it and the squadron would make the repairs. (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1975, pp. 101-103.)



Remembering Our Heritage



17-23 December

18 Dec 1981: First A-10As assigned to Alaska, 80-0221 and 80-0222, arrived at Eielson AFB from the Fairchild-Republic factory at Hagerstown, MD. Lt Col Charles W. Parker, who was scheduled to assume command of the 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron, flew one and Capt. Robert W. Lane, the other. (Cloe, Hist. AAC, 1981, p. 231.)

22 Dec 1987: Capt Larry D. Jones and Lt Steven S. Worchester, 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron, made the farthest west intercept to date when they were scrambled from King Salmon AS to intercept two TU-95 Bear Hs 1,110 nautical miles from King Salmon AS. Throughout the Cold War, Alaskan based fighters intercepted 216 Tupolev TU-95 Bears. (Cloe, Hist. AAC, 1987, p. 74.)



19 Dec 1991: The 21st Wing was inactivated at Elmendorf AFB and the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing transferred from Clark AB, Philippines to Elmendorf AFB without personnel and equipment and redesignated the 3rd Wing. (HQ PACAF SO GA-21, 19 Dec1991: Hist, 11AF, 1991, p. 25.)

20 Dec 2001: The 3rd Wing celebrated the 10th anniversary of its 19 December 1991 reassignment from Clark AB, Philippines to Elmendorf AFB with a banquet held in the Susitna Club. Maj Gen Rodney P. Kelly, who was the wing commander at the time of the 3rd Wing's reassignment, was the guest speaker. (Program, 3 WG, "10 Years in Alaska.")