



Remembering Our Heritage



18-24 February

21 Feb 1924: Carl Ben Eielson pioneered the delivery of airmail in Alaska when he delivered 164-pounds of mail in a Farthest-North Airplane Company DeHavilland DH-4BM, on loan from the US Mail Service, from Weeks Field, Fairbanks to McGrath. Alaska Delegate to Congress, Dan Sutherland, obtained a Post Office agreement to establish the route between Nenana and McGrath on a trial basis. The Post Office contracted with the Farthest-North Airplane Company to make 10 trips beginning in February 1924 at two dollars a pound, which was considerably less than a dog team. The 315-mile trip took 2 hours and 50 minutes to complete. Carl Ben Eielson flew seven more trips to McGrath, the last being 7 May 1924, before the Post Office superintendent in Seattle, WA, declared the operation unsafe due to the five crashes sustained by Eielson. He remained in Fairbanks during the summer, and then left for Washington DC for enrollment in Georgetown University to study law. Eielson stayed only a short while before enlisting in the Air Service. He resumed his military career 24 September 1924, flying DeHavilland DH-4Bs with the 2nd Bombardment Group at Langley Field, VA.



18 Feb 1927: A 75 mile per hour gale force storm destroyed all but four aircraft in the 3rd Attack Group, stationed at Fort Crockett, TX. This included three of the new Curtiss O-1 Falcon just received by the group. Some of the aircraft were repaired, the balance were shipped to Duncan Field, San Antonio, TX.

22 Feb 1929: The US Navy announced in Washington DC that it was resuming its aerial mapping survey of southeastern Alaska since the Alaskan Aerial Survey Expedition of 1926 under the command of Lt Ben H. Wyatt had been unable to complete its work. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior pressed for resumption of the mapping project and transferred \$15,000 to the Navy to help defray costs. The regions selected for survey included Baranof, Chichagof and Kuiu Islands, portions of the mainland bordered by Icy Strait, Lynn Canal, Stephans Passage and Fredericks Sound, and sections of the Tongass National Forest that had not been photographed during the 1926 survey. The Navy assigned the San Diego, CA, minesweeper *Gannet* (AM-41) and the covered barge YF-88 to the project. Both had been used in the 1926 survey. The 150-foot, 900-ton displacement *Gannet* towed the 110 by 40 foot barge, which came equipped with a photographic laboratory, a motor overhaul shop, dispensary, quarters for aviation personnel, galley, mess room, and office. The small seaplane tender, converted from a minesweeper, provided support to four Loening OL-8A amphibian aircraft powered by a 450-horsepower Pratt and Whitney Wasp engines. All four had been delivered from the factory between 8 March and 4 April 1929 and were named after the principal towns in southeastern Alaska. Aircraft No. 1 was the Juneau, No. 2, Ketchikan; No. 3, Petersburg; and No. 4, Sitka.

20 Feb 1935: Alaskan Delegate Anthony J. Dimond spoke in support of the House Resolution 4130 before the House of Representatives and introduced House Resolution 5064 calling for the construction of a military base and airfield near Fairbanks, AK and an appropriation of \$10,479,500 to pay for it. Delegate Dimond encountered opposition from Representative Wesley Lloyd, (D-WA), who championed his state over Alaska for an airbase because of its "infinitely great cities and rich territory." Representative Lloyd pointed out that an enemy entrenched in Alaska would still be far removed from the rest of the United States. Delegate Dimond retorted the enemy would still be within 750 miles of Seattle.





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18-24 February

19 Feb 1936: Brig Gen William "Billy" Mitchell died in New York City. He was buried in Milwaukee, WI.

23 Feb 1940: Gen George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, US Army, testified before the Sub-Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, on the need for a second air base in Alaska. The War Department had requested \$29,461,748 to improve and enlarge military posts, \$18,535,560 of which was for improving defenses the Panama Canal Zone, Hawaii and building an airbase near Anchorage. Gen Marshall cited the findings of Col John C.V. Lee, US Army Corps of Engineers, and his party who had visited Alaska the previous year. Col Lee had recommended two bases, one near Fairbanks for cold weather testing and an operational base near Anchorage for the basing of a composite group of aircraft. Col Lee and his party believed that the climate and location of Anchorage was better suited for air operations. Gen Marshall requested an appropriation of \$12,734,060 to build the Anchorage base and another \$85,000 to acquire the land. The committee members questioned him a length on the need for two Army Air Corps bases in Alaska and asked why the Army and Navy could not combine operations at Kodiak. The site selected for Elmendorf Field and Fort Richardson fulfilled a need for a permanent airbase, supply depot and ground garrison for the defense of southern Alaska. Additionally, it was located near Cook Inlet, which was navigable to ocean going vessels during approximately six months of the year and on the Alaska Railroad. The proposed military budget for fiscal year 1941 (July 1940-June 1941) came to \$906,137,254 including the \$12,734,000 for air base near Anchorage. Speaking in support of the base, Gen Marshall stated: "The establishment of an operating air base in Alaska is a project of major importance."



Transport *Chirikof* at Fort Mason, CA, on 12 February and arrived at Seward on 20 February. It then traveled by the Alaska Railroad to Elmendorf Field. It was assigned to the 28th Composite Group on 24 February. The P-36s were assembled in the partially completed Hangar Four. The maintenance personnel experienced difficulties due to minus 20 degree temperatures and the first three were flown on 31 March 1941.

18 Feb 1943: Maj Clayton J. Larson and Lt Elmer J. Stone scored the 18th Fighter Squadron's only aerial victories of World War II when they shot down two Japanese "Rufe" fighters over Makarius Bay on the southeast shore of Amchitka Island during a combat air patrol. The engagement ended any further attempts by the Japanese to send aircraft over Amchitka. The two "Rufe" float fighter pilots apparently did not believe the fighter strip was operational when they arrived at around 1900 believing that the P-38 patrol that was normally over the island had departed. The P-38 pilots had usually departed before dusk in order not





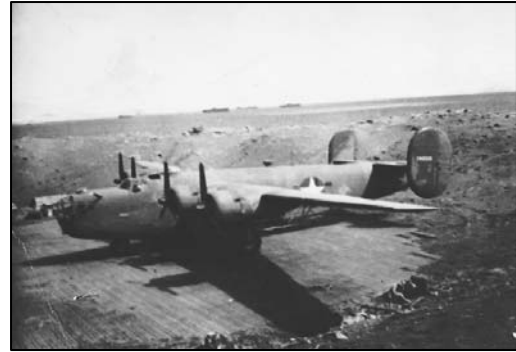
Remembering Our Heritage



18-24 February

to have to make a night landing at Adak. A flight of eight P-40s from the 18th Fighter Squadron were flying combat air patrol over the island when the Japanese arrived. The American pilots were alerted to the presence of the Japanese by puffs of anti-aircraft fire. Two flights dropped down 9,000 feet to 5,000 feet and attacked the two "Rufes," which were over St. Mararius Bay, in full sight of the garrison below. Their speed and altitude gave them the advantage. One "Rufe" starting spraying gas and burst into flames. The other flight caught the second "Rufe" as the pilot turned towards Kiska, twisting and turning to avoid the P-40. He was shot down over Bird Cape.

19 Feb 1945: The 404th Bombardment Squadron launched six B-24s on a bombing and photo-reconnaissance mission against the Kurabu Cape Airfield on Paramushiru. Each bomber carried thirty 100-pound general purpose bombs. The weather en-route consisted of scatter to broken clouds with tops at 8,000 feet and local squalls. The weather over the target area was scattered to broken clouds with tops at 7,000 feet.



21 Feb 1951: Lt Col Walter King, 13th Bombardment Squadron commander, assigned to the 3rd Bombardment Wing, led a daylight attack by four Martin B-26 Marauders against targets in the port city of Wonsan on the east coast of North Korea. Flying a B-26B, he made a second pass, dropping a 1,000-pound bomb at low altitude. The explosion killed him and his crew: Capt Charles W. Woolam and SSgt Voorhess S. Root, Jr. Col King had flown with the 3rd Bombardment Group during World War II.

18 Feb 1952: A M-46, 100-pound incendiary bomb exploded on the ramp. Two 3rd Bombardment Wing maintenance personnel received second-degree burns, but no aircraft were damaged in the mishap. The bomb had been unloaded from an aircraft, which came home with it still in the bomb bay. Personnel testified that the safety pins had been installed but the fuses were not removed. As a result of this incident all fuses were removed prior to an aircraft departing the de-arming area.



18-19 Feb 1952: The B-26, "Pintail 0317," assigned to the 8th Bombardment Squadron, failed to return after a bombing mission. The aircraft was last observed attacking a road in the Green 8 area using flares. Shortly after that observation, radio communications indicated the crew was bailing out. The crew consisted of: Capt Byron A. Dobbs Jr., pilot; 2Lt Raymond C. Wilk, navigator; 1Lt James L. Stanley, observer; and Corporal Richard J. Abbot, engineer. Capt Dobbs, Lt Stanley and Corporal Abbott were taken prisoner and released in August 1953. Lt Wilk was declared killed in action on 23 November 1953.

19 Feb 1968: Two F-100s, 90th Tactical Fighter Squadron, attacked three key Viet Cong targets. The first was an enemy base camp 8 miles west of Tay Ninh. The fighters, as directed by Forward Air Controllers, destroyed 45 bunkers, killing three enemy soldiers. The second target was an enemy concentration along the canal line on the southern tip of Vietnam. The pilots bombed and strafed targets, damaging and destroying numerous structures and transports. The third target was the village of Phan Thiet, where Vietnamese forces surrounded a defensive Viet Cong position. Air support broke the resistance, allowing the Vietnamese to clear the village.

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



Remembering Our Heritage



18-24 February

19 Feb 1971: The *Sourdough Sentinel* reported that MSgt Emmet F. Heidemann, member of the combat control team assigned to the 17th Tactical Airlift Squadron, would be the first man to parachute onto the Polar Ice Cap when he jumped from a squadron C-130. Three others were scheduled to jump from the same plane immediately behind MSgt Heidemann. They were TSgt John D. Norsworthy and TSgt Connie M. Hahn followed by SSgt Allen L. Hooper. Once on the ice, the men would select a drop zone and set up radios and radar and radio-navigation equipment in preparation for the mass airdrop of 140 men (actual 123) from Company O (Arctic Rangers), 75th Infantry Regiment to next day from four of the squadron's C-130s. The squadron would also achieve another first by making the first heavy equipment drop on the ice cap. The troops would then remain on the ice cap overnight. The combat control team, in addition to being the first to parachute unto the ice cap, would be the last to leave. They had to remain to guide the helicopters in. Capt James McBride, the project officer from the 17th Tactical Airlift Squadron for the exercise stated, "There are many potential problems to be faced by both the flight crews and the combat controllers." They included "finding a suitable drop zone because of the pressure ridges, open ice leads and other terrain irregularities, the harsh weather conditions found on the polar ice cap and the lack of any kind of landmarks or permanent navigational aids to guide the pilots."



22 Feb 1981: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) reduced the Federal General Service (GS) employee cost of living allowance (COLA) in the Anchorage area from 20 to 17.5 percent of base pay. COLA had been reduced from 25 to 20 percent in 1980. The change resulted from a Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) survey in the Fall of 1980, that compared the cost of living in the Washington DC against Alaska locations. Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Civil Service asked OPM to reconsider its action. He noted that the survey, conducted by a part-time BLS employee from Portland, OR, had been flawed. His completed survey had been compared in Washington DC with a survey conducted in the DC area by another employee and the methodology differed. An Anchorage COLA Defense Committee was formed, which hired attorneys to begin the process of a class lawsuit on behalf of the affected Anchorage Federal employees. The reduction in Alaska Federal Employee COLA prompted a class action law suit by a number of Anchorage Federal employees with the Federal District Court in Anchorage, stating the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) used faulty methodology in computing the COLA. The Anchorage District Court ruled in favor to the Federal employees in early 1984, requiring those who had been affected since 1980 receive back pay COLA. Approximately 1,350 Department of Defense employees in Alaska were affected. The COLA had been raised to 22.5 percent in 1982 and 25 percent in 1983.

20 Feb 1996: The 90th Fighter Squadron received the Alaska Governor's Safety Award conferred through the Alaska Department of Labor. The 90th Fighter Squadron was the first military organization to win the state award which began in 1980.



23 Feb 2001: The 962nd Airborne Air Control Squadron deployed 39 personnel and an E-3B to Incirlik AB, Turkey. The squadron was the first wave of 300 of personnel from the 19th and 90th Fighter Squadrons scheduled to participate in the 90-day AEF 3 deployment in support of Operation NORTHERN WATCH. This was the 3rd Wing's first true Air Expeditionary Force deployment.



Remembering Our Heritage



18-24 February

19 Feb 2003: The Commander, Pacific Command inactivated Joint Rear Area Coordinator-Alaska (JRAC-AK). It had been activated shortly after the 11 September 2001 terrorists attack to coordinate homeland defense in Alaska. On the same day, US Northern Command established the Joint Task Force-Alaska (JTF-AK). USNORTHCOM charged JTF-AK with the oversight of homeland security matters in Alaska Joint Operating Area without any increase in manpower.

