



Remembering Our Heritage



2-8 July

3 Jul 1913: James V. Martin made the first aircraft flight in Alaska from the Fairbanks Fairground in a Gage-Martin biplane powered by an eight cylinder Hall-Scott motor. It was the first of five flights between 3 and 5 July. Two Fairbanks businessmen, Arthur Williams and R.S. McDonald, had formed the Fairbanks Amusement Company and contracted with Martin to bring his aircraft to Fairbanks. Martin shipped the plane from Seattle, WA, to Skagway by ship and then to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, on the White Pass Railroad. From there it went down the Yukon River, then up the Tanana River to Chena and then to Fairbanks via the Chena Slough on steamboats. While not a financial success, it did create an awareness of aviation in Alaska. The next flight over Alaska did not occur until 1920 when the Army Air Service Black Wolf Squadron arrived. (Robert W. Stevens, *Alaskan Aviation History*, Polynyas Press, Des Moines, WA, 1990, pp. 17-22.)



3 Jul 1923: Carl Ben Eielson test flew the JN-4D that had been painted olive-drab with large lettering of "Fairbanks" painted on its side from the lands that had been set aside for Weeks Field in March 1923. He then departed for Nanana where he had been scheduled for an air show. (Stevens, *Alaskan Aviation History*, pp. 122-123)

4 Jul 1940: The 4th Infantry Regiment participated in Anchorage's 4th of July parade. The parade was interrupted by a fire in a downtown building. Lieutenant Colonel Earl Landreth, who was on the reviewing platform, quickly organized detail of soldiers to help direct traffic and provide crowd control while the local fire department put out the blaze. (Fleischer, *Hist, Elmendorf Field, 1940-1944*, p. 17.)



6 Jul 1941: The War Department proposed that in addition to the air units already in Alaska sending two light and two heavy bombardment squadrons and two pursuit squadrons to the territory along with more modern aircraft to replace the obsolete ones. General Simon Buckner responded that even more air units were needed and proposed a force of a heavy bombardment group, two fighter squadrons a heavy reconnaissance squadron and a transport squadron to augment the forces in Alaska. He wanted six squadrons based on Elmendorf Field, one at Ladd Field, two at Kodiak, one at Yakutat and possible one at Nome, and reconnaissance squadron at Cold Bay. (Ransohoff, *Hist, 11AF*, pp. 43-45.)

2 Jul 1942: The 27th and 38th Provisional Bombardment Squadrons, 30th Bombardment Group and a B-17E from the 36th Bombardment Squadron flew the first bombing mission against the Japanese on Attu Island, 778 miles from Cape Field. The B-17 weather bomber arrived first. The crew spotted the Japanese on the island and then flew to Aggatu Island, when they observed a fleet of Japanese ships in McDonald Bay. The seven B-24 crews arrived over Attu Island, but could not locate the Japanese positions. They then flew to McDonald Bay where they dropped their bombs on the Japanese ships, inflicting damage on the seaplane tenders *Kamikawa Maru* and *Kimikawa Maru* and the oil tanker *Fijisan Maru* with near misses. The six destroyers in McDonald Bay escaped harm. Bomb blast killed several persons on the bridge of the *Kimikawa Maru* and wounded a number of others. (Herold, *Hist, 28BG*, Feb 1940-Mar 1944, p. 34.)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



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6 Jul 1945: The Douglas A-26 "Invader" inaugural 3rd Bomb Group combat mission was flown with devastating results, striking targets at Taito, Formosa. Coming in at only a matter of feet about the rooftops, the Invaders bombed and strafed the railroad yards. The bombing was so accurate and the coverage so complete that the entire target seemed to literally disintegrate. Lt Col Charles W. Howe, 3rd Bomb Group Commander, led the flight and upon his return he said, "Boy! What an airplane! I can't wait 'till we hit the home islands. Never again do I want to fly any airplane other than the Invader." (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 July 1945 to 31 December 1945, Unit History for July, p. 2)



5 Jul 1949: The tour lengths were changed in Alaska from 24 months to 18 months for unaccompanied personnel assigned to main bases in Alaska. Accompanied personnel were required to spend 24 months. Those assigned to remote, unaccompanied tours spent one year. The change resulted from an Alaskan Air Command study that determined that there was insufficient housing to accommodate more lengthy tours of duty. (Thomblison, Hist, AAC, 1949, pp. 5 and 46)



6 Jul 1950: The 3rd Bomb Group began a series of low-level attacks against North Korean tank and vehicle column that was advancing south from Osan towards Pyongyang. Six B-26s led by Captain Robert Davies attacked a North Korean tank column, destroying at least six tanks. Two B-26Bs were lost during the mission. The first received small arms fire and crashed and burned ten miles north of Taejon after being abandoned by the crew. The second from the 8th Bomb Squadron was destroyed by the blast of its own bomb, killing its two crewmembers. The group returned on the 7 and 9 July to hit more

enemy columns. (Summary of Events, 3BG, Jun 50-Mar 51; Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, pp.85-86; Cortesi, *The Grim Reapers*, p. 102)

7 Jul 1950: Although the B-26 had proved highly effective in low-level operations, the crews found it difficult to maneuver at low-level in the mountainous terrain of Korea. Additionally, small-arms fire took a heavy toll. Those responsible decided that the light bomber should operate at medium altitude. The 3rd Bombardment Group possessed seven or eight glass nose B-26Cs at the time capable of bombing from medium altitude. Various options were tried, including having the B-26B crews bomb on command from a B-26C bombardier. Lieutenant General Stratemeyer, at this junction, ordered the 3rd Bombardment Group to focus on destroying rail and road bridges south of the Han River to slow down the steadily advancing North Koreans. The B-26B pilots devised new tactics, which required them to execute the attack in a shallow dive and align the bomber with the target allowing for drift and angle. The tactics proved successful. (Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea*, p. 87)



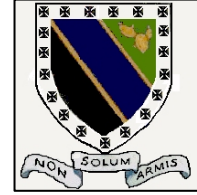


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8 Jul 1951: The 3rd Bomb Group received its second Distinguished Unit Citation of the Korean War for the period 22 April-8 July 1951. The 3rd Bombardment Wing received credit for the Chinese Communist Spring Offensive, covering the same period. The group also received credit. (Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units of WWII*, p. 32; Ravenstein, *Air Force Combat Wings*, p.12)



2 Jul 1960: Senator Earnest Gruening, D-AK, entered his concerns into the Congressional Record about the decision of the Air Force to transfer Ladd AFB to the Army. He termed the current Administration's defense policy inadequate and expressed great concerns over how they were being applied to Alaska, referring to the decision as a "tragic error." He quoted Generals Mitchell's and Arnold's statements about the strategic importance of Alaska. He then reviewed the military history of the state, noting that the military's neglect prior to World War II had led to the Aleutian Campaign. Senator Gruening noted that every Chief of Staff had adhered to the need to provide adequate defenses for Alaska. He spoke of the "heartland concept," in which an artificial line, also referred to as the Eisenhower Line had been established across Alaska from north to south. He went on to say that these defenses had been minimal, pointing out Lt Gen Frank Armstrong's efforts to call attention to the need for missile sites in Alaska. He went on to say that about three months prior, the military had notified Governor William Egan and the Congressional Delegation that Alaska would be receiving the F-101B, only to learn later that the Air Force had cancelled the program. He stated that he and Senator E.L. Bartlett had been invited to a Pentagon briefing in which they were told that the planned reorganization in Alaska would have no major impacts, only to learn later that Ladd AFB would be "totally abolished." Senator Gruening went on to say that the Director of Legislative Liaison for the Air Force had informed him by letter on 29 June 1960 that the Air Force would lose 3,170 military and 755 military positions with the transfer of Ladd AFB to the Army, but would gain 350 military and 100 civilians at Elmendorf AFB and 400 military and 200 civilians at Eielson AFB. He referred to it as a "shocking weakening of our national defense." He pointed out that while the military was basing its defenses on the uncertain cooperation of other nations, it was degrading its home defenses by removing its northern most base in Alaska. He noted that Alaska was the closest state to a potential enemy. He stated that the Soviet Union was strengthening its military presence near Alaska. He referred to the "abandonment of Ladd Field as colossal folly and as a tragic blunder." Senator Gruening went on to discuss the various reasons given for transferring Ladd AFB to the Army. These included budgetary considerations, a change in the Soviet threat and the ability to rush forces to Alaska in the event it was threatened, none of which were convincing to the Congressional delegation. He spoke of President Eisenhower's insistence that as part of statehood, the north western half of Alaska would have to be set aside as a defense buffer. Senator Gruening had opposed this. He now looked upon the decision to reduce forces in Alaska as a reversal of President Eisenhower's guidance. Senator Gruening complained that the military never kept him fully informed and reneged on promises. He referred to the decision to reduce forces in Alaska as "folly." (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1960, pp. 184-193.)

6 Jul 1966: A Congressional Committee held a hearing in Juneau and later in Anchorage to discuss Air Force use of public domain lands. At the time, Elmendorf AFB had 7,513 acres of land that had been withdrawn from the public domain and another 5,769 that had been purchased from owners. The size of acres purchased at other locations was small in comparison. Galena had the largest amount, 70 acres. Most of the Air Force's lands in Alaska were in the public domain. The committee wanted to know how the Air Force managed its lands in regards to the conservation of wildlife, mineral resources and pollution. Elmendorf AFB, at the time, dumped raw sewage in Cook Inlet and Eielson AFB had polluted nearby sloughs. The committee recommended Elmendorf AFB cooperate with Anchorage in establishing an abatement system for its sewage. The Command pointed out its positive efforts to manage its lands. It had turned over to the Bureau of Land Management 239.75 acres for use as a new town site for the village of Galena. (Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1966, pp. 96-98.)



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5 July 1970: Ptarmigan Hall on Eielson AFB was renamed Amber Hall in honor of 19 crew members of a Strategic Air Command Amber Rivet RC-135 that disappeared the previous year. Colonel Owen A. Weddle, Commander, 5010th Composite Group and Col Leslie W. Brockwell, Commander, 6th Strategic Wing, officiated at the ceremonies. A marker in the foyer with the names of the missing crewmembers was dedicated in early 1973. ("Monument in Place: Amber Crew Remembered, *Eielson Times*, 15 Mar 1973.)

8 Jul 1980: President Jimmy Carter stopped at Elmendorf AFB, while en-route to Japan to attend the memorial service for the late Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira. He stopped again on 9 July and departed the following day after accepting an invitation from Governor Jay Hammond to spend the day fishing with him. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1980, pp. 442-445.)



4 Jul 1985: Fifteen U.S. Navy ships visited the following Alaskan ports for the Fourth of July activities: Anchorage, Seward, Kodiak, Juneau and Ketchikan. The nuclear-powered, guided-missile cruiser *Truxton* accompanied by the fast frigates *Brewton* and *Holt* and four mine-sweepers, *Enhance*, *Excell*, *Implicit* and *Galant* docked at the Port of Anchorage. The fleet was under the command of RADM Jonathan T. Howe. Admiral Howe visited Elmendorf AFB on 3 July where he received a series of briefings and toured facilities. A 35-man marching unit from the *Truxton* marched in the Anchorage Fourth of July parade. General Brown and Admiral Howe met on 5 July in General Brown's office and then adjourned the conference room for a series of briefings with the senior staff. Secretary of State George Shultz also paid a surprise visit to Admiral Howe while his plane was being re-fueled on 5 July. Admiral Howe had been assigned to Secretary Shultz's office. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1985, pp. 304-305.)



7 Jul 1989: Headquarters Pacific Command Permanent Orders 89-1, 5 July 1989 activated the Alaskan Command as a subordinated unified command under Pacific Command effective 7 July 1989. The JCS approved a headquarters authorization of 90, of which 55 were new positions, 13 existing (mostly JTF-AK) and 22 dual hat (from AAC). Its components included: U.S. Army Forces Alaska drawn from the 6th Infantry Division (Light); USAF Alaska drawn from Alaskan Air Command; and U.S. Navy Force Alaska furnished by the 17th Coast Guard District. ALCOM's assigned mission read: "Conduct the unified defense (less aerospace defense) of the land and territorial waters (12 nautical miles) of the State of Alaska (including the Aleutian Islands) and other missions as directed by USCINCPAC." (PACAF Permanent Orders 89-1, 5 Jul 89.)



3 Jul 1999: Senator Ted Stevens and Brig Gen. Jonathan S. Gration dedicated the Heritage Park in front of the wing headquarters. General Gration conceived the park to serve as a lasting memory and as a focal point for ceremonies and future events marking the 3rd Wing's heritage. The park contained seven aircraft, which had been restored by the wing's maintenance personnel. They were: McDonald-Douglas F-15A, Lockheed T-33A Shooting Star, Northrop F-89D Scorpion, Corvair F-102A Delta Dagger, and McDonald F-4C Phantom II. They were restored in the markings of aircraft flown by the 3rd Wing and by Alaska based units. (Hist, 3WG, 1999, pp. 11-15)



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5 Jul 2005: The Moose Crossing housing area opened to Elmendorf families, which was part of the Private Sector Financed (PSF) Housing Phase II program at Elmendorf AFB. The program originated with the Military Housing Privatization Initiative enacted by Congress in 1996. The renovation and construction of new housing on military bases progressed at a slow rate prior to privatization because of budget constraints. Aurora Military Housing LLC contracted to demolish, build and renovate base housing in two phases (beginning in March 2001). The company owned the houses but leased the ground on which they were located. Aurora also agreed to manage the neighborhoods for the next fifty years. By the beginning of July some 60 Moose Crossing units became available for families to relocate and the demolition of older neighborhoods began. Several hundred personnel were forced to move from one house to another due to this construction. In order to assist airmen with these moves, General Carlisle authorized up to four days as duty time. At the completion of the program, Elmendorf expected to move from 1,814 housing units to a total of 2,022 housing units, which would make up for the current 208 unit deficit. (Miller, 3 *WG Hist 2005, 2006.*)

