



Remembering Our Heritage



5-11 November

9 Nov 1929: Following an enforced period on idleness at Teller, AK due to weather, Frank Dorbandt took off in marginal weather for the *Nanuk* against the wishes of Carl Ben Eielson. Carl Ben Eielson and Earl Borland followed shortly afterwards. Dorbandt, encountering bad weather, returned to Teller. Eielson and Borland failed to return. Initially, there was no concern since there were villages along the route and the two had sufficient gas to reach the stranded schooner and return. In addition to 30 days of emergency rations and a stove, the Hamilton carried a cargo of food for the *Nanuk* plus rations to replace those consumed during the enforced layover at the Eskimo village. Both men were experienced in survival techniques in the Arctic. On 25 January 1930, Joe Crosson sighted the wreckage of Eielson's Hamilton ten miles inland from the coast and 90 miles southeast of the *Nanuk*. Joe Crosson, accompanied by Harold Gillam, landed at the site located approximately six miles from the cabin used by the trapper Brokhanov. The trapper had reported hearing the plane overhead on 9 November, which had led Crosson and Gillam to search the area. They had flown to the *Nanuk* in late December and began searching the area while rest of the search operations was getting organized. The Canadians did not arrive in their two Fairchild 71s until 28 January. Two Russian Junkers F-13s arrived on 29 January, one of which was damaged on landing. Crosson and Gilliam found the altimeter of the Hamilton was frozen at 1,000 feet and the throttle bent over to the wide-open position. The point of impact was about 50 feet above sea level. The plane had apparently hit a small knoll at high speed leading Crosson to believe that the altimeter had been off and Eielson had not seen the knoll until the last minute due to poor visibility, applied full power and crashed into it. The Canadian and Russian search parties arrived at the *Nanuk* shortly afterwards. The Russians after much digging through the deep, harden snow located Earl Borland's body on 13 February and Carl Ben Eielson's body five days later. Both had been thrown some distance from the impact of the crash. The bodies were flown back to Fairbanks. Carl Ben Eielson was buried in Hatton, North Dakota on 27 March. The Air Force renamed and dedicated its base near Fairbanks, Eielson AFB, on 20 July 1956. The Russians returned the remains of the Hamilton to Fairbanks on 5 March 1991, where it went on display at the Pioneer Aviation Museum. (Stevens, *Alaskan Aviation History*, p. 728; Page, *Polar Pilot*, pp. 346-347.)



5 Nov 1934: Lt Col Horace M. Hickam, 3rd Attack Group Commander, died during a night landing at Fort Crockett, TX. Lt Col Hickam was killed when his Curtiss A-12 Shrike hit an embankment and flipped over. His body was flown to Washington for the funeral at Arlington National Cemetery on 10 November 1934. On 21 May 1935, the War Department issued orders designating the new flying field in Hawaii as Hickam Field. Lt Col Earl L Naiden assumed command of the 3rd Attack Group. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), Activation to 31 December 1941, p. 18, *The Grim Reapers*, p. 7)

8 Nov 1940: *The Anchorage Daily Times* recorded the first landing of an aircraft on Elmendorf Field, a twin-engine Douglas YOA-5 Pelican (33-17). The one of a kind Douglas YOA-5, 33-17, had originally been intended as an amphibious bomber version of the Douglas OA-4 Dolphin amphibian with



Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB



Remembering Our Heritage



5-11 November

the designation of B-11. The idea did not work out and the Army Air Corps re-designated it as the YOA-5. The Y stood for prototype, O for observation and A for amphibious. It had a load capacity of 1,500 pounds and a passenger capacity of 10 passengers. The amphibian had been assigned to the 1st Air Base Squadron, Langley Field, VA, and was referred to as the Pelican. It was assigned to Alaska in June 1940. General Buckner intended to use it for surveillance work, but the aircraft did not operate well in cold weather and he referred to it as "that no good tropical bird." It was scrapped on Elmendorf Field in December 1943. (*The Anchorage Daily Times*, 8 Nov 1940; Hutchison, *World War II in the North Pacific*, p. 3; *The Anchorage Daily Times*, 8 Nov 1940, p. 1; Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, pp.17-18.)



9 Nov 1940: A letter dated 9 November 1940 from the War Department Adjutant General Office stated "The Army Post near Anchorage, Alaska, now known as Elmendorf Field, is designated Fort Richardson and the airfield thereat is designated Elmendorf Field." The first set of barracks was turned over to the troops who had been living in tents. Work had started earlier in October on permanent officer quarters. (Fleischer, Hist, Elmendorf Field, 1940-1944, p. 21.)

8 Nov 1942: Lieutenant Major McWilliams, and his B-17E weather reconnaissance crew from the 36th Bombardment Squadron spotted eight Japanese "Rufe" float fighter aircraft off a small creek on the west arm of Holtz Bay. They had apparently been washed up on the shoreline by a storm and two appeared damaged. The Japanese had brought them to Attu by ship from the northern Kuriles and planned to fly them the rest of the way to Kiska and avoid exposing their ship to air attacks. (Wheeler Diary.)

9 Nov 1942: The P-38 pilots in the words of 54th Fighter Squadron historian, Capt Leo Nocenti, "hit the jackpot today." Captains Arthur E. Husted and Francis J. Pope and Lts Ralph D. Matthews and Harly S. Tawlks approached the target from the northwest, flying just off the water at 240-miles per hour. They swept in over the east arm across the waters and commenced a circling strafing attack on the beached "Rufes" and tents ashore. They claimed eight destroyed in their post strike report. The Eleventh Air Force dispatched two B-26 crews from the 73rd Bombardment Squadron accompanied by four P-38s from the 54th Fighter Squadron on a mission



to bomb the beached *Borneo Maru* in Gertrude Cove. The bomber crews failed to hit the freighter and two P-38 pilots strafed Japanese positions in Kiska Harbor. Weather prevented any further successful missions from being flown until 27 November. (Nocenti, Hist, 54FS, Jan 1941-Dec 1943, p. 143.)



Remembering Our Heritage



5-11 November

11 Nov 1944: The 3rd Bombardment Group departed Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, for their new station, Leyte Island, in the Philippines. Their convoys landed at their new beach-side base on 16 November. The 3rd Bomb Group was flying the North America B-25 Mitchell bomber and earned the nickname "The Grim Reapers" for their effective bombing missions against the Japanese. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 Apr 1944 to 31 Dec 1944, Unit History for November, pp. 2, 4)



Nov 1945, pp. 1-3.)

6 Nov 1945: The ground echelon of the 18th Fighter Squadron arrived from Attu at the Port of Whittier aboard the U.S. Army Transport *Thompson* and moved by the Alaska Railroad to Elmendorf Field. Their equipment arrived several days later from Whittier. The squadron established operations along with the 54th Fighter Squadron in one of the large hangars, formally occupied by the instrument school. The squadron personnel enjoyed their new location because of the amenities and the closeness of Anchorage. Rumors began circulating that the squadron would convert to the P-51. (Couglin, Hist, 18th Fighter Sq,

5 Nov 1947: The Air Force assumed responsibilities from the Army for base level support in all its overseas locations including Alaska. The transfer of responsibilities had already occurred in the Zone of the Interior (the lower 48 states). The transfer of responsibilities in Alaska proved unique in the case of Fort Richardson and Elmendorf AFB. Unlike post and bases elsewhere, the Army and Air Force shared common facilities. Each had a separate mission. The status quo would have required the Air Force to provide base support for Army units stationed on Elmendorf AFB. General Twining recommended to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that two separate installations be created. At the time, the existing Fort Richardson which encompassed Elmendorf AFB did not have the capacity to support both the Army and Air Force. A new, separate Army post was needed. (Hist, ALCOM, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, pp. 110-114.)



9 Nov 1950: The 13th Bombardment Squadron began flying 12-15 sorties a night; these included medium level bomb runs, low-level attack, and night intruder missions. Due to assigned targets, the crew flew the maximum range for the B-26. This caused numerous mechanical as well as human problems. Mechanically the aircraft often had to land at Taegu (K-2) Korea for refuel on the return mission. They also experienced a high rate of spark plug failure due to the low RPM range used to extend the fuel range enroute to the target. The winter weather caused icing problems, which also severely hampered mission effectiveness, and flight crews began suffering mild cases of frostbite. Additional cold weather gear solved this problem. (Hist, 13BS, Nov 50, p. 2)



Remembering Our Heritage



5-11 November

10 Nov 1964: A fire destroyed the roof to Building 6-900, now Bldg 10471, and killed two civilians, McVeigh Whitson, a civil service steamfitter, and John Wyscong, a welder employed by J.B. Warrack Construction Company. Two other men were hospitalized as a result of the fire. The men were making repairs that had been sustained during the Good Friday Earthquake. The fire broke out during welding operations and the two men died in a flash flame that filled the attic area. The fire damages were estimated at \$400,000. Fire fighters from Elmendorf AFB and Fort Richardson battled the blaze during the night of 10-11 November using cheery pickers to reach the roof. (Weidman and Ravenstein, Hist, AAC, 1964, p. 774.)



5 Nov 1966: The first of five Douglas C-47A Skytrains, 43-48098, was transferred to the Alaskan Air Command. The last of the six C-47s was transferred on 7 December 1966. The first arrived on Elmendorf AFB on 9 November and last on 11 December. (Weidman, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1966, pp. 37-40.)

6 Nov 1971: The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) detonated its most powerful underground nuclear device, a warhead for a Spartan missile, 5,800 feet below the surface of Amchitka Island. The Alaska Communications Region (ACR) arranged communications support to the Cannikin underground nuclear the 3rd Mobile Communications Group, Tinker AFB, OK established a mobile microwave link between Amchitka and Adak in late August 1970 and ACR assumed operational control of the system in December 1971 that connected AEC with the Defense Communications System's worldwide communications network. A fierce storm had struck the island on the day before the test with 70 miles per hour winds. Conditions improved, and the test was conducted as planned with the blast measured 7.0 on the Richter Scale as predicted by AEC officials. Despite dire predictions from environmentalist, no earthquake, radiation leaks or tidal waves occurred. The underground explosion rocked the ground near ground zero and gave the surrounding Bering Sea and North Pacific a frothy appearance to aircraft crews flying photographic missions above. The AEC control center 23 miles away experienced a gentle swaying motion and a slight tremor was experience by the microwave communications van 35 miles away on the northwest corner of the island. Staff Sergeant Peter Spires, who had been on island for 60 days with the communications team, recalled that it resembled similar natural earthquake tremors had occurred on the island during his stay. (Capt. Bill Dils, "Air Force Communications Aid to Cannikan Test," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 19 Nov 1971.)

10 Nov 1972: Senator William Proxmire (D-WI), Chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, released to the news media a report by the General Accounting Office on the Alaskan Chateau on Elmendorf AFB. Senator Proxmire stated that "while \$170,000 of the taxpayer's money is being used to pay the salaries 24 military servants at the Chateau and the Health Club, the Chateau's luxury services are available to only lieutenant colonels and above and bureaucrats who earn \$22,000 or more a year." The *Anchorage Daily News* offered its comment, in which it quoted Lt Col Herbert E. Ray, Director of Information for Alaskan Air Command as stated that the Chateau was needed to house distinguished visitors due to a lack of security in Anchorage. The *Anchorage Daily Times* reported





Remembering Our Heritage



5-11 November

that because of the GAO report, the manning at the Chateau would be reduced to five employees by closing the dining facility. It noted that the Chateau had only 14 rooms with only five having private baths. It went on to say that "instead of closing the place, the federal government should be taking steps to insure its perpetuation as a landmark on the Arctic frontier." (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, pp. 435-437.)

6 Nov 1974: The 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron began using the Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range. The squadron flew dry runs for the first ten days and then began using training ordnance on the range. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, p. 190.)

5 Nov 1982: The Anchorage Telephone Utility began providing telephone services to family housing and the dormitories. The Alaskan Air Command had initiated the requirement in 1968, but the city owned and operated system had experienced problems providing services to its own customers. As a result, the base telephone system had provided the services. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, pp. 137-139.)



8 Nov 1983: President Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan and his party, which included Secretary of State, George Shultz, stopped at Elmendorf AFB en route to Japan and South Korea. General Brown, Governor William Sheffield, Senator Frank Murkowski (R-AK), Congressman Don Young (R-AK) and Col. Evan J. "Joe" Griffith, Jr., Commander, 43rd Tactical Fighter Wing greeted them. The Presidential party traveled to Hangar Two where a crowd of 7,500 were on hand. A reception was held in the maintenance conference room. About 200 national news media accompanied the President. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1983, pp. 465.)



7 Nov 1990: The Eleventh Air Force Public Affairs released the information that the 90th Tactical Fighter Squadron would be re-assigned from Clark AB to Elmendorf AFB and at the same time convert from the F-4G to the F-15E. The same news release also stated that the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing would also move from Clark AFB and replace the 21st Tactical Fighter Wing. The Alaska print media reported the decision the next day, noting that 24 F-15Es were being assigned to Elmendorf AFB. Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) noted that Alaska's support of the

military had contributed to the decision. Senator Frank Murkowski (R-AK) stated, "The U.S. defense forces from the Philippines, as well as their likely phase out from Japan and South Korea, means an ever increasing role for our state." (Cloe, Hist, 11AF, pp. 209-210.)

9 Nov 2005: SSgt Joseph Harder and SSgt William Young, both assigned to the 3rd Equipment Maintenance Squadron, assisted local police in the apprehension of a car thief. A man jumped into a delivery truck and the NCOs noticed the driver running after his truck. The driver requested assistance from the Airmen, who followed the truck. Once the thief realized the men were following him, he began to drive erratically. He finally pulled into an apartment complex and jumped out. SSgt Harder chased him on foot, while SSgt Young tried to cut him off. The man jumped the fence to Clark Elementary and gained entrance into the school, followed by SSgt Harder. Once the two were in the school, the bell rang and the hall filled with children. It was at this point that SSgt Harder grabbed the man and school security arrived to take him into custody. At the same time, SSgt Young arrived with local police. The Anchorage Police Department called the NCOs' actions heroic. (Miller, *3 WG Hist 2005*, 2006.)