



Remembering Our Heritage



15-21 October

18 Oct 1867: Brigadier General Lowell H. Rousseau, representing the United States, took possession of Alaska from Russia in a ceremony at Sitka. (Lyman Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest, the U.S. Army in Alaska and Western Canada, 1867-1987*, Vol I, Alaska Historical Society, 1996, pp. 20-26.)



20 Oct 1897: Fort St. Michael was established 60 miles northeast of the mouth of the Yukon River to monitor people and cargo heading upriver as far as Dawson City, 1,800 miles away. The Army garrisoned the post with 200 men. St. Michael became a busy port during the Gold Rush with a hotel capable of accommodating 500 guests.

The United States Customs maintained an inspection office there and the U.S. Steamboat Inspection Service supervised river freight operations. The Russian American Company had established a fur trading post at St. Michael in 1833. Following U.S. purchase in 1867, the Alaska Commercial Company and several fur trading and transportation companies maintained businesses there. Yupik Eskimos populated the area throughout the various ventures. The completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1923 shortens the supply route to interior Alaska by linking the port of Seward with the Yukon River system by way of the Nenana River at Tanana. St. Michael went into a decline. The Army decommissioned Fort St. Michael in 1925. Today, St. Michael is a village of around 400, mostly Yupik. (Dr. Steve Haycox and Alexandra J. McClanahan, "Alaska Scrapbook, This Week in Alaska History," *Anchorage Daily News*, 23 Oct 2005.)



20 Oct 1920: The Black Wolf Squadron returned to Mitchell Field by the same route after covering 9,329 miles in 119.41 flying hours at an average speed of 81.83 miles per hour without serious mishap and with the same planes and engines intact. The War Department later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross to the pilots and mechanics making the flight. General Mitchell, who had pioneered air routes across the United States, wrote: "Having demonstrated that we could get across the United States, we wanted to demonstrate that we could establish an airway to Alaska and Asia." The flight demonstrated the feasibility of

deploying military aircraft over great distances with minimum preparation, providing a precedent for future military and commercial operations, and testing engines and equipment in a cold weather climate. In addition, the participating personnel gained valuable experience and collected information and meteorological data. From a training standpoint, the flight ranked at the time as one of the most important peacetime air maneuvers yet undertaken. (Streett, "The First Alaska Air Expedition," Flight Log, Black Wolf Squadron; Report in Air Force Historical Research Agency archives at Maxwell AFB, No. 168, 3952-155; 1920-29-1914-19. not dated.)

15 Oct 1941: The Army Air Forces strength at Elmendorf Field stood at 78 officers and 746 enlisted men assigned to the 28th Composite Group and 60 officers and 1,261 enlisted men assigned to the 23rd Air Base Group. There were 22 officers and 96 enlisted men assigned to Ladd Field. Another one officer and eleven enlisted men were assigned to Annette Island. A similar number were assigned to Yakutat. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 72.)





Remembering Our Heritage



15-21 October

17 Oct 1941: The Alaska Defense Command established Air Force, Alaska Defense Command. The ground support units were placed under it. Prior to its establishment, there had been no central air commander and command in Alaska for coordinating air base and air force activities. Shortly afterwards Maj Everett S. Davis was promoted to lieutenant colonel. In subsequent personnel changes, Lt Col Donald W. Titus replaced him as Chief of Aviation, Alaska Defense Command. Lt Col John L. Davison, former Commander, 23rd Air Base Group became his executive officer. Maj William O. Eareckson assumed command of the 23rd Air Base Group and Maj Norman D. Sillin assumed command of the 28th Composite Group from Major Eareckson. As commander, he was responsible for training and preparing it for combat and for its supply and administration. Colonel Davis' command had grown to 2,169 officers and men. Ladd Field and its Cold Weather Detachment continued to report to Headquarters, Army Air Forces. Colonel Davis was not satisfied with the condition of the Air Force, Alaska Defense Command since it remained under the jurisdiction of ground forces. He noted that the situation was "unsatisfactory and has lost us a year to date." His ability to train personnel was hampered by a lack of aircraft and shortage of pilots. Those pilots that were assigned were becoming more experienced and ready to move into leadership roles. The one obvious problem was the aircraft shortage. He noted that a third were in maintenance primarily due unsatisfactory work rendered at the Sacramento Air Depot. Two B-18s lacked engines and several P-36s were grounded due to the lack of spark plugs. There was also a shortage of propellers. Annette Island and Yakutat lacked storage facilities for fuel and bombs. There was a general lack of housing. Of the 14 B-18s on hand, six were combat ready. Five had been damaged in accidents and four were in maintenance. In a letter to a friend, stating: "Don't figure on getting any serviceable B-18s back from us. We have been hard on them." (HQ ADC GO 51, 17 Oct 1941; Ferguson, AAF Study No. 4, p. 43, Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, pp. 72-73, 75.)



16 Oct 1942: Capt Richard Salter led six B-26 crews on a deck level attack against the Japanese destroyers *Hatsuharu* and *Oboro*. The Japanese had dispatched the latter with supplies for the Kiska garrison under the escort of the former. A PB4Y crew had spotted the two northwest of Kiska, made an unsuccessful attack and reported their position. When Captain Salter and his B-26 crews reached the target area and began their attacks at 5:40 PM, the Japanese had reached a point 20 miles northeast of Kiska. The crews dropped twenty 300-pound general purpose bombs with four-second delay fuses, sinking the *Oboro* with the loss of all but 17 aboard and

severely damaging the *Hatsuharu* with the loss of four men. In return, the Japanese shot down the B-26, 40-1387, flown by Lt Jack Penworth killing him and his crew consisting of: Lt Dean W. Mendenhall, Sgt Morris A. Hancock and Sgt Dick Tyron. Lieutenant James D. Matthews, the navigator aboard Captain Salter's B-26, was mortally wounded, dying several days later, while Captain Salter received wounds that required hospitalization in the states. (Intel Summary No. 25, Prov XI Bomb Comd, 16 Oct 1942; Hist, 73rd Bomb Sq, 26 Oct 1927-1 Jul 1943, p. 18; Howard, Hist, 77th Bomb Sq, p. 18; *Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 93; and Carson and Brodsky, *No Mean Victory*, p. 283.)



Remembering Our Heritage



15-21 October

18 Oct 1943: In response to the Japanese raid on Attu, the Eleventh Air Force ordered the 54th Fighter Squadron to move to Shemya from Amchitka. The personnel were moved by C-47s and equipment by ship. The pilots flew their P-38s to Shemya. (Capt Leo Nocenti, Hist., 54th Fighter Squadron, 15 Jan 1941-Dec 1943, pp. 60-61; Hist, Shemya, 28 May 1943-Apr 1944, p. 22.)



20 Oct 1945: The 28th Bombardment Group was inactivated at Shemya. It had received the Distinguished Unit Citation for the period of April 1944 to August 1945 for its support of the Kurile Operations. Lt Col John C. Larson, its last wartime commander,

became the Commander, 404th Bombardment Squadron, relieving Maj William H. Beale, Jr., who had filled in as the interim commander following the departure of Lt Col Jack T. Loney. (Mauer Mauer, *Air Force Combat Units of World War II*, p. 80; Capt Rhodes F. Arnold Jr., Hist, 404th Bombardment Squadron, Oct 1945, p. 2.)



15 Oct 1950: The Army activated new Fort Richardson. The name of the old post, formally located on Elmendorf AFB was retained. Colonel G.H. Wilson became the first post commander on 10 November. The Army and Air Force divided the original reservation between them, with the Air Force retaining the land to the southwest and the Army the bulk of the reservation which included the land on both sides of the Glenn Highway to the northeast. The Army built a new post in north and adjacent to Elmendorf AFB. At the time, the new post contained the warehouse loop, one permanent warehouse, one 500-man barracks, a rifle range, a World War II hospital, a bachelor officers' quarters and dispersal cantonments. Construction was also underway on the first family quarters and telephone lines and communications facilities were being installed. Headquarters, Fort Richardson was initially housed in Quonset Huts. Later, it moved into the 500-man barracks and still later, in 1954, into the center wing of Building One, the headquarters of United States Army, Alaska. (Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest*, p. 65; "Activate Army Post Here," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 13 Oct 1950.)



14-15 Oct 1951: The 13th Bombardment Squadron, assigned to the 3rd Bomb Group, lost a B-26 on a night mission. A rescue helicopter recovered Capt William F. Brown. The other crewmembers, Lt Ray W. Olcott, pilot, and Lt Earnest M. Adler, navigator, were reported missing in action. They were declared killed in action on 28 February 1954. Capt Robert B. Andrews, bombardier, was taken prisoner, but failed to show up in the prisoner exchange at the end of hostilities. The Secretary of the Air Force declared him dead on 28 February 1954. (Hist, 3BG, Oct 51, Ops Section, p. 4; List, "Personnel Missing-Korea")



Remembering Our Heritage



15-21 October

15-21 Oct 1950: Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Chairman, Preparedness Subcommittee, Senate Committee on Armed Services, appointed and sent to Alaska a task force of his associates in investigated concerns that Alaska lacked adequate defenses. Its charter was "to determine whether or not everything was being done that should be done to provide for the defenses of Alaska." The task force, during a course of a week, held hearing and conducted various surveys at Anchorage, Fairbanks, Eielson AFB, Whittier, Seward, Juneau and Ketchikan. The task force submitted its report in February 1951. It recognized that the military could not defend every part of Alaska and should concentrate on those critical areas concentrated around Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kodiak. It noted a lack of service troops and the fact that infantrymen had to handle those functions. The "greatest single obstacle in preparing a proper defense for Alaska has been the lack of adequate housing and facilities to meet the military requirements," the report went on to say. It found evidence of rent gouging with in some cases \$80.00 a month being charged for a one room shack. It noted the high cost of construction in Alaska as being a major hindrance. The task force found that Alaskan National Guard and Organized Reserve programs lacked effective development. The report also stated that military readiness was good. (Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest*, Vol. III, pp. 72- 74.)



17 Oct 1951: Col John W. Mitchell, Commander, 57th Fighter Interceptor Group, wrote General Old with the request that no radar operator be assigned to the group who was taller than 5'6" feet and weighed more that 140 pounds. The rear cockpit of the F-94 was not big enough to allow a radar operator above those parameters to wear Arctic issue clothing and survival gear and still operate the equipment. The Alaskan Air Command agreed to limit the size of radar operators. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1951, pp. 87-88.)

15 Oct 1953: The North American F-82H Twin Mustang completed its last training mission in Alaska after serving for five years with Alaskan Air Command. They were the last Twin Mustangs in the Air Force inventory and had been assigned to the 449th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Ladd AFB. The flying hours had been steadily reduced from 194 in July to 36 hours in October when the last training sortie was flown. The remaining F-82Hs were placed in flyable storage. The original plan had called for them to be phased out by the end of the year, but because severely corroded condition, AAC requested an earlier phase out. Only three qualified pilots were on hand when the phase out was completed in mid-October. (Ravenstein, Hist., AAC, Jul-Dec 1953, pp. 164-165.)





Remembering Our Heritage



15-21 October

20 Oct 1955: The eight-story Elmendorf Hospital, the largest in Alaska, dedicated on 4 September 1955, and became operational. (Chart, Hist, AAC, Jul-Dec 1955, p. 6.)



21 Oct 1971: A fire partially destroyed the wooden Adak Building on Eielson AFB, causing \$39,000 in damages to the building and destroying \$1,500 worth of equipment stored in it. Fire fighters contained the fire so that \$700,000 worth of equipment could be removed. Senior Master Sergeant Allan E. Rice, Deputy Fire Chief, Eielson AFB Fire Department, reported that the fire fighters were on the scene at 0413 and had the fire under control by 0749. The Adak Building had been erected on Adak Island during World War II as a warehouse and dismantled and moved to Eielson AFB in 1953. ("Fire Damage," *Eielson Times*, 28 Oct 1971.)

16 Oct 1972: The largest search and rescue operations in Alaska began with the disappearance of Congressmen Hale Boggs (D-LA) and Nicholas Begich (D-AK), Russell Brown, aid to Congressman Begich, and their pilot, Don Jonz. They had taken off from Anchorage International Airport in a Cessna 310 for Juneau during the morning after being guest of honor at a fund raiser in Anchorage the evening before. They were heading for a similar event in Juneau. The Juneau Rescue Coordination Center reported them overdue at 1415. The Alaskan Air Command launched a mission 30 minutes later by diverting an HC-130 crew from a search from an overdue boating party on the Kenai Peninsula to conduct a visual and electronic search for the white and orange Cessna 310. The search route was flown along the flight plan filed by Don Jonz, which passed through Portage Pass, across Prince William Sound to Cape Suckling to Juneau. Weather along the route was overcast with clouds and winds. ("Alaskans Search, Pray: Begich and Boggs Lost on Flight," *Anchorage Daily Times*, 17 Oct 1972.)

19 Oct 1973: The date announcing the closure of the MOGAS stations also marked the beginning of the oil embargo by Arab producers. The embargo did not end until 18 March 1974, but not until they doubled the price of oil. It resulted in an energy crisis. The Alaskan Air Command reduced its flying hour program to the minimum needed to sustain readiness and speed limits on base were reduced and thermostats lowered to 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Various committees were formed to deal with the crisis. (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jun 1972-Jul 1974, pp. 385-386) (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, pp. 283-284.)

17 Oct 1974: Flight operations for the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing were cancelled due to the proximity of Typhoon Carmen to Clark AB. (3 TFW History, 1 Oct-31 Sep 74)



16 Oct 1976: A fire broke out at the Campion (F-8) Aircraft Control and Warning station, forcing the evacuation of all but fire fighting and security personnel to nearby Galena. The fire was contained by bulldozing a fire break in the connecting hallway where the fire had occurred. It broke water lines and electrical cables. The fire was brought under control and repairs were made. The station resumed operations on 18 October and by 26 October, all personnel had returned from Galena. (Hales, Hist, AAC, 1976, p. 327.)



Remembering Our Heritage



15-21 October

16 Oct 1985: General Nichols wrote Lt Gen Merrill A. McPeak, Deputy Chief of Staff, Programs and Resources, Headquarters, USAF, stating that Alaskan Air Command's fighter force structure was inadequate, and AAC needed an additional F-15 squadron at Elmendorf AFB and an A-10 squadron at Eielson AFB. The Tactical Air Command had resisted all attempts by AAC to acquire more F-15s, claiming it would cause its units to be "non robust." General Nichols



pointed out that the lack of F-15s was creating difficulties. He wanted an additional squadron. He continued to press the issue during a conference at Langley AFB, VA. The Tactical Air Command still remained opposed to AAC receiving additional F-15s. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1985, pp. 157-.)



15 Oct 2002: SrA Theodore Winnen, a 22-year old crew member of the 18th Fighter Squadron at Eielson AFB shot a 12-foot, 6-inch, 1000 to 1,200 pound Brown Bear while hunting on Hinchinbrook Island, Prince William Sound. The kill received considerable media and internet attention due to the large size of the bear. It had a skull score of $28 \frac{8}{16}$ inches with the record being $30 \frac{12}{16}$ inches. (Natalie Philips, "Legend Brewin, Alaska's Enormous Brown Bear Continues to Grow on the Internet," *Anchorage Daily News*, 16 Dec 2002.)

17-22 Oct 2002 – Airmen Leadership School: Former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Sam E. Parish visited Elmendorf AFB with former Chief Master of the Air Force Eric Benken. Chief Parish was the keynote speaker at Airman Leadership School. Both met with enlisted personnel during their visits. Chief Master Sergeant Leo Semmler, 3rd Wing Command Chief Master Sergeant hosted the visit. It was the first time that two Air Force Chief Master Sergeants visited the base together. (E-Mail, Ms Toni Hill, 3 WG/CCP to John Cloe, 3 WG/HO, "Former CMSAF's Visit," 25 Oct 2002; SSgt Ryan Mattox, "Two Former CMSAF's Reflect on Today's Air Force," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 25 Oct 2002.)

