



Remembering Our Heritage



8-14 October

Oct 1924: Second Lieutenant Hoyt S. Vandenberg, following completion of advance flight school, reported to his first assignment as Transportation Officer, 3rd Attack Group, Kelly Field, TX. He became the Transportation and Supply Officer on January 1925 and held that assignment until January 1926, when he became Commanding Officer, 90th Attack Squadron on 1 January 1926. He held that position until December 1926 when he departed to become an instructor at the Primary Flying School, March Field, California. General Vandenberg became the second Chief of Staff, USAF April 1948 and held that position until June 1953. (George M. Watson, *Secretary and Chiefs of Staff of the United States Air Force*, GPO, Washington DC, 2001, pp. 205-206.)



9 Oct 1940: General Buckner, in a memo to General DeWitt, recommended that an Army air base be built in the vicinity of Dutch Harbor to protect the Navy base and project airpower into the Aleutians. He observed, based on the limited reconnaissance that had been made, that there were no suitable locations in the immediate vicinity of Dutch Harbor due to the mountainous terrain. A suitable place existed at Chernofski on the western end of Unalaska Island where there was a sheltered bay and sufficient flat area for an emergency landing field. The Navy, however, objected to the fact that it was exposed to an attack from the sea and too costly to build. The

War Department had expressed reservations about building an airfield on Unalaska in early January 1941, stating the Navy PBYS were sufficient for its defense. (Conn, Fairchild and Engelman, *The Western Hemisphere, Guarding the United States and Its Outposts*, p. 242.)

10 Oct 1940: The first snow of the season fell on Elmendorf Field, slowing down construction and covering the tents where the troops were housed. (Fleischer, Hist, Elmendorf Field, 1940-1944, p. 21.)

8 Oct 1941: The cable ship *Restorer*, leased from the Commercial Pacific Cable Co. by the U.S. Army Signal Corps, departed Victoria, British Columbia, and began laying cable to connect Alaska with the rest of the United States. The original under seas cable system that had provided the connectivity had been shut down in favor of a less expensive and easier to maintain radio system. The *Restorer* completed its work in November, linking General Buckner's headquarters with that of General DeWitt. A telephone line ran from Fort Richardson to Seward where it hooked into the cable. Another cable took it from Victoria to Seattle. The system provided a secure line over which to discuss military matters. General Buckner had stated the need during late summer of 1941 for long line communications to connect the airfields that were being built. It had become apparent to everyone then that the Alaska Communication System needed to be expanded. The Army Signal Corps obtained \$116,655 for the effort and surveys were made of Alaska and western Canada. Due to the limited time available to set up the tactical and administrative communication links and establish a system for flight control, the Signal Corp also examined the possibility of integrating private, commercial and government systems. (Terrett, *The Signal Corps: The Emergency*, 277-278.)





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14 Oct 1942: The Eleventh Air Force committed the B-26s in a raid against Kiska for the first time. The raid included nine B-24Ds, six torpedo equipped B-26s from the 73rd Bombardment Squadron, a camera equipped B-17E from the 36th Bombardment Squadron and twelve P-38s from the 54th Fighter Squadron. The heavy bomber crews dropped incendiary bombs on the main camp and 500-pound general-purpose bombs on the submarine base while the B-26 crews sent against suspected shipping in Gertrude Cove. Each B-26 carried an M-13 torpedo, set for



a 12-foot depth run. The first three crews made a low-level torpedo run against the crippled *Borneo Maru* southwest, releasing them at 600 yards from the beached freighter. One hit the water and tumbled head over end, another passed under its target and exploded on the beach and the third disappeared, apparently stuck in the mud at the bottom of the shallow cove. The second flight of three B-26s arrived several hours later and launched their torpedoes against the *Borneo Maru*. All appeared to run hot and true after release, but then disappeared, apparently stuck in the mud of the shallow cove. The Eleventh Air Force stopped trying to use torpedoes after the failure of the mission. (Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 230.)

12 Oct 1943: Maj "Jocko" Henebry, Commander, 90th Squadron, led the Group in its first low level bombing and strafing mission against the Japanese Rabaul stronghold. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 71, *Grim Reapers*, pp.67-69)



13 Oct 1943: Radar on Attu picked up two unidentified blips 140 miles out on a course of 240 degrees from Alexai Point Army Air Base. An estimated eight Japanese Navy Mitsubishi G4M1 twin-engine medium "Betty" bombers arrived over Attu at approximately 1955, flying at around 15,000 feet over Temnac Valley. The bombers dropped nine bombs in the Massacre Bay area. Two fell into the water near the west end of the east-west runway at Alexia Point. A train of four landed in Massacre Bay near a cargo vessel. One landed on the road between Casco Cove and Alexia Point severing communications cables. Another landed in the 66th

Seabee Battalion area and another in the 1st Battalion, 159th Infantry area. One bomb landed, but failed to explode and had to be disposed of later. Three men were slightly wounded, two aboard the cargo vessel and one in the Seabee area. The 344th Fighter Squadron scrambled eleven P-40s in three elements. While others reported sighting the bombers flying in V formation, only 1/Lt. Robert Vavra in the first element, scrambled at 1937, managed to make contact with the bombers at the 16,000 to 18,000 foot level. He followed the bombers for 80 miles and attempted to make head on passes without success, but observed tracers from his guns striking a bomber. The 54th Fighter Squadron scrambled six P-38s from Shemya, but failed to make contact. Anti-aircraft damaged the tail of a P-40 flown by Captain Newbauer, who landed safely. The other fighter pilots landed safely in the dark. (Mission Report, 344th Fighter Sq, subj: Interception by Eleven P-40s, 344th Fighter Squadron, Attu Detachment, 13 Oct 1943; Ransohoff, Hist, 11AF, p. 323; 1/Lt. Clair E. Ewing, Hist., 344th Fighter Squadron, 10 Oct 1942-1 Jan 1944, pp. 36-37.)

Source: Office of History, Elmendorf AFB

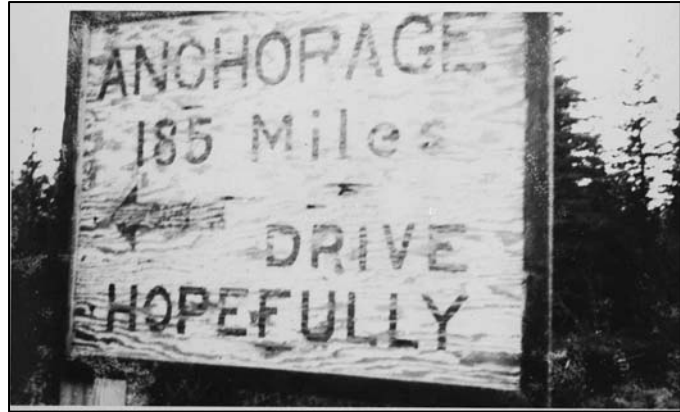


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10 Oct 1947: The Department of Interior asked for comments from Department of Defense on the feasibility of connecting Alaska by a railroad with the rest of the U.S. The Joint Chiefs of Staff directed a study based on the fact that during World War II the major share of supplies had moved by sea to Alaska ports and then overland by railroad or motor road and that the existing transportation infrastructure was inadequate. Additional study revealed that the existing infrastructure was adequate for peacetime needs and during war time could be used if the Alaskan Highway was upgraded. (Hist., ALCOM, Jan 1947-Dec 1951, pp. 160-161.)



8 Oct 1958: Headquarters Alaskan Air Command inactivated the 31st Fighter Interceptor Squadron, leaving the 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron as the only F-102A squadron on Elmendorf AFB. Personnel and equipment from the 31st Fighter Interceptor Squadron were in part transferred to the 317th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, allowing it to organize two more flights. The 449th Fighter Interceptor Squadron remained at Ladd AFB, flying the F-89J. It left two (HQ AAC GO 55, 23 Sep 1958; Miller, Hist, AAC, Jul 1958-Jun 1959, p. 32.)

14 Oct 1968: Col Homer Hansen, 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing Commander, logs the wing's 100,000th combat sortie over Vietnam. This feat was accomplished in a little less than three years of service in Vietnam. (3 TFW History, Oct-Dec 68, chronology p. x)



8 Oct 1971: The Elmendorf AFB base newspaper, the *Sourdough Sentinel*, reported that the Department of Defense was planning to close Wildwood Air Force Station near Kenai on 1 July 1972. The station served as an automatic digital network (AUTODIN) switching center serving Alaskan tributary terminals as part of the worldwide AUTODIN Communications System. A realignment of the AUTODIN network configuration in Alaska allowed for direct connection with AUTODIN switching centers in the continental U.S. The action saved the Air Force approximately \$4.3 million in annual operating cost, and affected 300 military and 65 civilian employees at Wildwood AFS. ("Wildwood to Close," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 8 Oct 1971.)

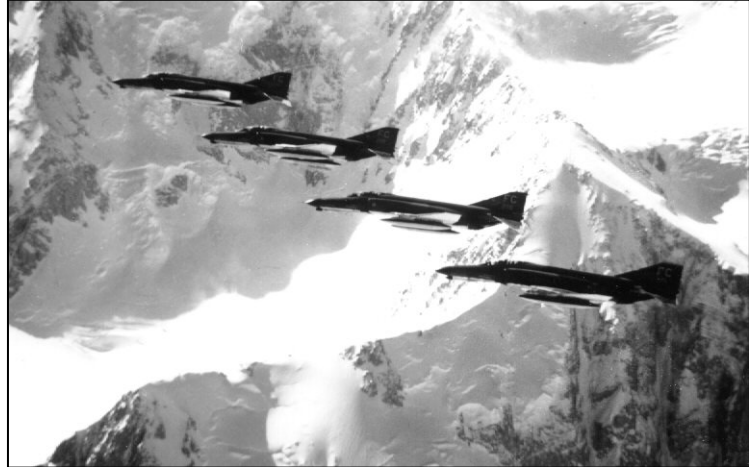


14 Oct 1974: The Alaskan Air Command Office of Information issued a news release announcing the U.S. District Court's decision in favor of the Air Force use of the Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range and that the Air Force AAC planned to begin using the range on 15 October. The office had already begun receiving queries, some unfavorable on 11 October following the court's decision. A



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43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron training mission scheduled for the opening day (15 October) was cancelled with the reason given as weather. The Alaskan Air Command emphasized that the F-4E crews would not drop live ordnance. Instead, practice bombs, weighing about twenty and six pounds with a marking charge would be used. They produced the same trajectory as large bombs. General Hill received a telegram from Governor William E. Eagan asking that activities on the Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range be delayed until all merits of the court litigations could be resolved. In response, General Hill suspended the use of the range until a Headquarters, USAF reply could be made. Gordon Wear, Co-chairman of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee, telegraphed Governor Eagan urging him to not to oppose AAC's plans to use the range. "Hearings and briefings were held over a period of almost one year on the Blair Lakes bombing range. This land was withdrawn in 1941 for the purpose of a bombing and gunnery range and has been used almost continuously since that time as a range in some form or another. In March and April 1972, the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce, the North Star Borough Assembly, the Association of the U.S. Army, the Air Force Association, the North Pole mayor and Bill Wauguman, a big game guide with a camp across Wood River from Blair Lakes, supported the renovation of the range. I urge you not to oppose the use of this range as we feel it is in the best interest of national defense and this community. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, Jul 1974-Jun 1975, p. 190.)



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10 Oct 1984: The Indian Mountain AN/FPS-117 Minimally Attended Radar (MAR) achieved initial operational capability. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1984, p. 249.)

14 Oct 2005: The last six boilers in the Elmendorf AFB Power Plant shut down. The central heat and power facility powered by natural gas came on line in 1954, replacing a World War II coal fired facility. The Air Force switched to the City of Anchorage's Municipal Light and Power to provide electricity under a \$48.7 million energy savings performance contract. The project included installations on new boilers, coordination of new natural

gas lines, electricity points of service and demolition of existing 50-year old cogeneration plant and steam pits. The project would eliminate a 58-mile network of severely deteriorated steam lines providing heat to buildings. The contract was expected to save the Air Force \$123 million over the 22-year performance period compared to having to revitalize and operate the existing system. (Miller, *3 WG Hist 2005*, 2006.)