

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

It really was a “dark and stormy night:” on Jan. 11, 1961 at H-2, way out there on that windswept and Godforsaken piece of Icelandic real estate that has become to be know by an elite group of Air Force veterans as a place and a night to remember.

This group of Iceland survivors that was stationed at H-2 is called “Bubble Busters” because they were there when the radome blew away.

When this group gets together, there is still that question that is asked, “Where were you when the bubble blew off?”

There are those who have those moments embedded in their memories, while there are others who remember the event, but can't recall exactly where they were.

One thing is certain among this group of H-2 Bubble Busters, “It was one hell of a blow.”

“I remember the wind blowing all the time on the Rock, but I never heard it blow like it did that night,” remarked Joe Ferraro, one of the Bubble Busters during the session last year in Nashville as he was talking with Ed Vitatoe, Mike Bonjo, Richard Sessoms, Gene Nezat, Bill Coggin and Matz Malone, all Bubble Busters.

Gene Nezat was on duty in Radar Ops that night. Radar Maintenance was down the hall from Ops. That was where the wind speed indicator was.

“I can still remember watching the wind speed indicator the night we lost the bubble and hearing the noise when it fell off,” Nezat was quoted in a previous article published in “Reunion History” by Jerry Tonnell.

When guys get together at reunions, Don Hunnicutt and Nezat share a chilling memory of that night. “During the height of the storm, Gene Nezat held the ladder and I climbed close to the top and held the glue bucked for the guy above me who tried to glue a patch into place but it was a futile effort with the foot-long hole in the bubble flapping uncontrollably in the gale-force winds.

“While we were up there, the bubble suddenly began to rip open all the way to the base. We quickly climbed down the ladder and everyone exited the bubble area.

“The next day, much of the equipment in the bubble area, the bubble itself and the screens covering the antenna had been blown over the cliff,” Hunnicutt told Tonnell during the Colorado Springs Reunion.

More stories are sure to abound as those who attended the Colorado Springs and Nashville reunions get together with more of the H-2 Bubble Busters get together this year in Branson.

If you are a Bubble Buster who was at H-2 on Jan, 11, 1961, you may not remember where you were that night, but, it's a sure bet you do remember the wind and the noise.

And, next morning getting ready to go to work in Ops and someone saying, “Don't bother. The bubble blew off last night.”

But...”It was a dark and stormy night.”

Ask a Bubble Buster about it when you seen him in Branson.

Of course, the next story a Bubble Buster will be quick to tell is about the move to H-3.

Sam Hilling among the first to leave H-2, go to Kef and then on to H-3.

“That Gooney Bird was so loaded with equipment and troops from H-2 I never thought it would get off the ground,” Hilling said when the Bubble Busters got together last year in Nashville.

Anyone on that flight will attest that there were certainly some short prayers uttered until the bird got airborne and began to climb out.