

# US RADAR SITES of ICELAND NEWSLETTER

**JUNE 2012**

NEWSLETTER #22. EDITOR: JERRY TONNELL, H-2, 1959.

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN. William Chick,** H-2, 1959-60. The results of the voting are in – our next reunion will be in 2013 in OKLAHOMA CITY! (See voting results on next page.) While we haven't set the exact date, we are looking at a late September or early October time-frame for the event. I will travel to Oklahoma to scout out the place and select a hotel that will both meet our needs, and yet be as kind as possible to our wallets. I have assembled some info about our host city -- so circle your calendars and start making plans to enjoy one of the jewels of the southwest (see below.)



## ***OKLAHOMA CITY, HERE WE COME IN 2013!***

Oklahoma City is the capital and the largest city in the state of Oklahoma. The city's population was 579,999 (2010) with a metro-area population of 1,252,987. It ranks as the eighth-largest city in the United States by land area. It is situated in the middle of an active oil field and oil derricks dot the capitol grounds. The federal government employs large numbers of workers at nearby Tinker AFB (*home of the AWACS aircraft and the Tinker Air Park*) and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center (*where our air traffic controllers are trained.*) The city was founded during the Land Run of 1889, and grew to a population of over 10,000 within hours of its founding. The city was the scene of the April 19, 1995 bombing attack of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, in which 168 people died (*visit their awe-inspiring memorial grounds.*) It was the worst terror attack in the history of the United States before the attacks of Sep 11.

Oklahoma City features one of the largest livestock markets in the world. Oil, natural gas, petroleum products and related industries are the largest sector of the local economy. Oklahoma City lies along one of the primary travel corridors into Texas and Mexico, and is about three hours by highway to the Dallas metropolitan area.



**2013 Reunion Site Selection Vote Results.** Jerry May, H-1. The voting was tallied and Oklahoma City was the winner. St Louis, MO and Ogden, UT tied for second. Laughlin, NV came in third.

**TREASURER.** David Hawk, H-1, 1985-86. Special thanks to those who have paid their annual voluntary dues of \$15 per year-- due each June 1<sup>st</sup>. Listings of Life Members & Annual Contributors are found on our website under "Library", and then to "Documents." Make checks payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" and mail to David Hawk, 500 N Ash Street, Pauls Valley, OK, 73075. Phone:405- 238- 0151. My email address is: [davidhawk511@gmail.com](mailto:davidhawk511@gmail.com).

**WEBSITE PHOTO CHAIRMAN.** Jerry May, H-1, 1962-63. We are still in need of new photos for our website. If possible, E-mail the photos - please provide a caption, with date taken, if known, so we can properly label the picture. [majjw60@gmail.com](mailto:majjw60@gmail.com)

**FROM THE HISTORIAN:** Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959. [jtonnell@mindspring.com](mailto:jtonnell@mindspring.com)  
Books are still available for sale (*just over 825 have already been distributed.*) We have recently received the 9<sup>th</sup> and, possibly last, printing of the book. It has been continually updated since the first edition – therefore, it contains some newer info about the final closing of the Iceland Radar Sites. So, if you have one of the original 2003 books, consider buying the 2012 edition as well. It would make a good Christmas or birthday gift for your kids or grandchildren. They can be purchased for **\$10** including postage (our cost.) Order by writing a check payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" and mail to: **William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036**

**MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN.** Jerry Blackwell, H-2, 1960-61. If you have any old orders with names or if you recall a name please pass it on to me at: 2300 E. Silverado Ranch Blvd #1047, Las Vegas, NV, 89183. email [BlckJerr@aol.com](mailto:BlckJerr@aol.com)

**ADMINISTRATOR and WEBSITE DIRECTOR.** Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59.

**WANTED: Interesting Stories About Life at the Radar Sites.** We are trying to expand the Library portion of our Website. We number over 2,000 – surely there are a lot of interesting stories out there about our days in Iceland. Please share them with the rest of us and mail them to Reed Thomas at: 9001 Sweetbrook Lane #104, Raleigh, NC 27615, or email your story to: [reedt934@gmail.com](mailto:reedt934@gmail.com)

## **HAPPY 12<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY TO THE US RADAR**

### **SITES OF ICELAND VETERANS' GROUP.**

It has been 12 years since the genesis of our Iceland Radar Veteran's Group. It just so happens that in 2010, our organization was recognized in **THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD** of the U.S.A. Below is the official entry of the Honorable Joe Wilson, Congressman of South Carolina, US House of Representatives, July 30, 2010. (*NOTE: Mr. Wilson requested a copy of our history as justification of the below entry – he also asked for a copy for his own records.*)

William A. Chick  
Reunion Chairman  
104 Summit Point Court  
Chapin, SC, 29036  
803-422-9486

**ICELAND REUNION**  
**932-933-934-667**



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 156

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, JULY 30, 2010

No. 114

## House of Representatives

### HISTORY OF THE RADAR SITES OF ICELAND

(Extension of Remarks – JuLY 30, 2010)

[Page: E1520]

SPEECH OF  
**HON. JOE WILSON**  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
MONDAY, JULY 30, 2010

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**Mr. WILSON** of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, during the Cold War, Iceland served as a listening station with four radar sites that were manned by America's brave men and women in uniform to deter a Soviet bomber nuclear attack on America. An organization in Chapin, South Carolina, called the Iceland Reunion at [www.usradarsitesiceland.org](http://www.usradarsitesiceland.org), is dedicated to the memory of all of the men and women who served on these U.S. radar sites. The mission of this organization, chaired by Retired Air Force Master Sergeant William A. Chick, is to preserve and document the history of the air defense of Iceland and the North Atlantic passage to the United States and the Free World.

Mr. Chick encourages those interested in preserving Cold War history to visit their informational website and also read, "The History of the radar sites of Iceland" by Gerald H. Tonnell which is the unofficial history of fifty years of the strategic radar sites which successfully preserved peace and promoted freedom in the struggle between democracy and communism with the ultimate victory over communism.

I thank Mr. Chick and other members who are working hard to preserve the memory and the mission of those military surveillance operators who served our great nation. America will always cherish the service of these patriots and the hosting by the people of our longtime NATO ally Iceland.

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# US RADAR SITES of ICELAND NEWSLETTER

## DECEMBER 2012

NEWSLETTER #23. EDITOR: JERRY TONNELL, H-2, 1959.

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN, William Chick,** H-2, 1959-60. The search for the exact dates and accommodations for our 2013 Oklahoma City Reunion has been completed. Our reunion will be from 7 - 11 October, 2013. Larry Robin and I have checked out hotels with the help of Peter Holland, Doug Harper, and David Hawk. We hope to be able to satisfy your housing tastes by offering a choice between two different hotels with differing levels of rates. Members can either register at the two-story, Magnuson Hotel, or at its next door neighbor, the multi-storied, Hilton Garden Inn. The airport is about six

**OKLAHOMA CITY, OK, 7 – 11 OCTOBER, 2013!**



miles away and the hotels have a free shuttle, but check for their schedules first to make sure they have vans available. We were impressed with all that Oklahoma City has to offer and expect to propose an event-full activity schedule that we will publish in our June 2013 Newsletter. Hope to see you in OK City next year. See rate details below:

You can register at one of two hotels -- both agreed to offer convention rates:

1. **The MAGNUSON HOTEL** at 737 S. Meridian Ave provides room rates for two at a very affordable cost of \$78.57. This price includes a free breakfast. The Magnuson is an old, but clean, 2-story, hotel, but it has no elevators. They have just 80 rooms on the 1st floor – so if you want a room downstairs, make



your plans soon to secure one. The hotel's telephone number is **1-405-942-8511**. Ask for Jennifer Dennis. Tell her you are with the "Iceland Reunion, 2013."



2. **The HILTON GARDEN INN** at 801 S. Meridian Ave is a fairly new hotel and has room rates for two at \$132.10, including tax. Each room also comes with 2 breakfasts per day. This six-story hotel has elevators. Their telephone number is **1-405-942-1400**. Ask for Paula Marshall. Tell her you are with the "Iceland Reunion, 2013."



3. **Advance Payment for Registration and the Breakfast Meeting.** We will have a breakfast meeting in the Magnuson Hotel Convention Center just outside our hotels -- it is only a 150-foot walk away. The Breakfast Meeting buffet cost will be \$18.86 each, all inclusive. They promise seasonal fruit, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, pancakes, biscuits and gravy, coffee, tea or orange juice. For the Hospitality Room, we have a very large area where we can renew old friendships -- by my calculations, a \$15 registration fee for individuals and \$25 per couple will cover costs. If you pay for the registration fee, plus the breakfast meeting now, it would help with our planning. William Chick is our Acting Treasurer – **make checks payable to “Iceland Reunion” and mail them to William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036.**

4. **Activities and Tours.** We have checked on a Cowboy Rodeo, an Indian Reservation program, and a tour of Tinker AF Base for those interested in the airborne radar. We also checked on the Cowboy Museum, Old Town OK City, a theater show, and a live cowboy comedy music show. We will have the final selections published in our **June 2013 Newsletter** -- you will be given a choice including costs plus gratuity.

**WEBSITE PHOTO CHAIRMAN.** Jerry May, H-1, 1962-63. We are still in need of new photos for our website. If possible, E-mail the photos - please provide a caption, including date taken, if known, so we can properly label the picture. [mayjw60@gmail.com](mailto:mayjw60@gmail.com)

**MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN -- an Earnest Plea.** Jerry Blackwell, H-2, 1960-61. I can't search for new members unless the general membership takes the time to look through old military orders. I know there are a couple thousand radar site vets out there, especially from the 1980s, 90s, and the first 6 years of this century. Even if you just recall a name, please pass it on to me at: 2300 E. Silverado Ranch Blvd #1047, Las Vegas, NV, 89183. My email address: [blckjerr@aol.com](mailto:blckjerr@aol.com)



**WEBSITE DIRECTOR.** Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59.

If you haven't checked out our brand new radar Website, please do so - see image at left. Our web address is <http://usradarsitesiceland.com/>

Reed's email is: [reedt934@gmail.com](mailto:reedt934@gmail.com)

**TREASURER.** William Chick, H-2, 1959-60. I just wrote a check for over \$4,000 for our new Iceland Radar Website. That made a big dent in our treasury. As you recall, our annual voluntary membership dues run \$15 per year. Make checks payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" and mail to William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036. [littlechick@msn.com](mailto:littlechick@msn.com)

**FROM THE HISTORIAN:** Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959. [jtonnell@mindspring.com](mailto:jtonnell@mindspring.com)

Books are still available for sale (*just over 850 have already been distributed.*) We have received the 9th and, possibly last, printing of the book – however, only 23 remain. It would make a good Christmas or birthday gift for your kids or grandchildren. They can be purchased for **\$10** including postage (our cost.) Order by writing a check payable to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" and mail to: **William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036**

**A BIG THANK YOU** to our long-time Treasurer, **David Hawk**. He recently passed the keys of our organization's strong box on to William Chick. David has been a great treasurer – and, an honest and diligent man.

# The FORMIDABLE TEAM: Fighter-Interceptors, Airborne Radar, & the US Radar Sites of Iceland

By Jerry Tonnell

While our organization highlights the lives and activities of the personnel who operated the radar sites of Iceland, we must give great credit to the aircrews, ground crews, and aircraft that flew the missions that kept the Russian Bear at bay from the early 1950s into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The types of aircraft flown in Iceland ranged from the F-51D WW II prop job, to the F-15C Eagle jet, to the Navy and Air Force airborne radar aircraft.

During the **Cold War**, the threat of an air attack by the Soviet Union on the Continental US resulted in the establishment of an array of radar sites stretching across the USA, to Alaska, to Canada, and finally, to the shores of Iceland. The path from many Soviet airfields to the US mainland passed directly over the island. Because of that, **F-51D's** fighters were dispatched to Keflavik Air Base in 1952. They were replaced by **F-94B** Starfires in 1953, the same year that the 932<sup>nd</sup> AC&W Sq became operational at their new H-1 location. By 1954, a newer interceptor and a different fighter squadron arrived in Iceland – namely, the heavily-armored **F-89** Scorpion along with their warriors -- the Black Knights of the



**57<sup>th</sup> FIS**. The volcanic rocks surrounding the airfield at Keflavik played havoc with the low-slung engines of the F-89 which tended to suck up the gravel blown onto the runways – extreme corrosion, constant icing on the



tarmac, and arrested landings also played a key role in aircraft maintenance and availability. The high winds, cold weather, and constant rain made missions a real challenge for all units. By 1962, the F-89 was phased out and replaced by the **F-102** Delta Dagger supersonic jet. It was during this time that the intercepts of Soviet bombers flying into Iceland air space were first recorded – the exact number has never been precisely tallied; however, the eye witness accounts of various radar controllers confirms the early 1960's activity. The beginning incursions of enemy aircraft coincided with the



1962 Cuban Missile Crisis as the Russians flew sorties to Cuba and back, skirting both the western and eastern shores of Iceland. The USN aided with their radar coverage of flying picket lines using their **P-2** Neptunes, **P-3** Orions, and **WV-2** Super Constellations. Air Force **EC-121s** (later followed by the **E-3A**) -- elements of the



**551<sup>st</sup> AEW&C Wing** -- were deployed for continuous air surveillance and ranged far out to detect Soviet aircraft approaching the MADIZ. The remaining two radar sites – **932<sup>nd</sup>** and **667<sup>th</sup>** -- were busy since Russia was sending many more sorties over Iceland than over any other part of the world.



The number of intercepts of enemy bombers climbed rapidly and by 1972, a milestone was reached – **1,000 bombers had been intercepted** and turned away. Some of the intercepts required fighters to go far out to sea – when aircraft attempting to return found that Keflavik was weathered in, the jets were then rerouted to Scotland. By 1966, the 57<sup>th</sup> had received its second **Hughes Trophy** and was presented the third of its **Outstanding Unit Awards** (they

eventually received 17 of these as part of their parent organization – the 85<sup>th</sup> Group.) In 1973, the squadron received the first of its **F-4C** Phantom aircraft – they were equipped with Sparrow and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. In 1983, the 57<sup>th</sup> won the **USAF Safety Plaque** -- for the 7<sup>th</sup> year in row. This, despite the difficult flying conditions on the island. When 1985 rolled around, the Phantoms were replaced by the most awesome aircraft the USAF ever produced to that time – the **F-15C** Eagle. During their years in Iceland, the 57<sup>th</sup> intercepted three generations of the Soviet's top bombers – the Bear, Badger, and Bison (the last two were jet powered.) By 1991, the



number of Soviet overflights dropped dramatically as the Cold War came to a close. In 1995, the 57<sup>th</sup> was deactivated and the **85<sup>th</sup> Group** replaced them with a contingent of aircraft that rotated in from the 48<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing from Lakenheath, England, and various Air National Guard units. Still, Russia would occasionally send a few bombers our way to see if we were keeping up the watch – all were intercepted. By 2006, the demise of Russia as a threat to the US had diminished to the point that the probability of airborne nuclear attack had all but disappeared. As a result, we removed our military presence from Iceland. During our stay on the island, **more intercepts of Soviet and Russian bombers were made in Iceland - over 3,000 - than all other US radar sites in the world combined.** The veterans of the radar sites, the aircrews of the 57<sup>th</sup> FIS and 85<sup>th</sup> Group, and the Air Force and Navy airborne radar forces, were truly the "Bear Eaters." In sum, they were the Paul Revere's of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Silent Sentinels of modern warfare, and the point men and women who braved the elements and served on the far edges of the defensive front. They helped insure that our nation, our families, and the entire world could live in peace and safety.

