

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY ICELAND ASSIGNMENTS

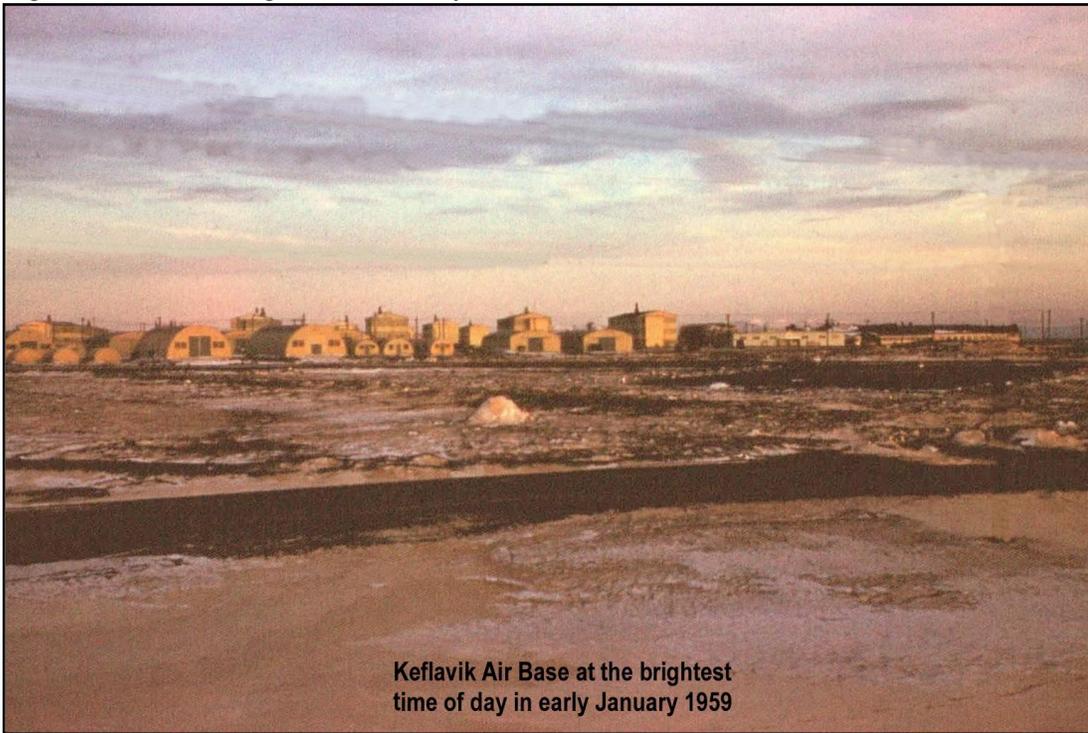
A) Jan to 1 Sep 1959: The 667th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron, H-2, Langanes Air Force Station.

B) 1 Sept thru Dec 1959: Headquarters, Iceland Defense Force (IDF) NATO Hq, Keflavik Air Base.

By Jerry Tonnell

A. JAN 1959 TO THE END OF AUG 1959, H-2 RADAR SITE ASSIGNMENT: SOURCES: LETTERS HOME, AND RECALLED MEMORIES.

The Trip From McGuire AFB to Keflavik. After finishing Personnel Officer School at Lackland AFB in December 1958, I reported to McGuire AFB, NJ for an early Saturday evening flight to Iceland on 10 Jan 1959. I had been in the Air Force for just over 4 ½ months. Our flight lasted 17 hours aboard a four-engine USAF Douglas C-54 Skymaster (DC-4) aircraft which cruised at about 180 MPH. We sat in



Keflavik Air Base at the brightest time of day in early January 1959

airline style seats, but we faced the rear of the plane. Sometime during the dark of night we landed in Labrador at Goose Bay Air Base. We got off the plane for a brief break at the Goose Bay flight line snack shop. The snow was piled up higher than our heads -- so high that we could not see any of the buildings. We followed a snow-walled corridor through the drifts to a small snack bar inside a rehabbed Quonset hut where we

bought some refreshments. After it was refueled, we re-boarded the airplane, took off, and headed for Iceland. Early in the morning in the dim light we could see the coast and mountains of Greenland out of the port (north) windows. We arrived at **Keflavik Air Base** mid-morning, Sunday, on the 11th of January 1959. It was about 10 AM and it had been light for less than an hour. There was a four hour time difference between Iceland and New York. Keflavik was a Military Air Transport Service (MATS) base – which included all four radar sites.

A day or so after my arrival, I found that my assignment had been changed from the 1400th Air Operations Sq at Keflavik to the 667th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron at Langanes Air Force Station, Iceland, commonly called H-2. No one that I talked to had been to that radar site and they suspected I may be living on a mountain top. My seatmate on the flight over had been 1st Lt Rufus DeHart, an F-89 pilot who was to be assigned to the 57th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. I saw Lt DeHart at the VOQ and told him about my change of assignment. He said the first time he overflies the Langanes radar site, he would dip

his wings to say “Hi.” Since there were no passable roads to the radar site, I had to travel by air. My Iceland mailing address would be: Lt Tonnell, 667th ACW Sq, APO 81, New York, New York.

First Impressions of Keflavik, Iceland.

There were no trees anywhere to be seen. However, I was informed that there was a small pine tree on the base which was protected from the high winds by a wooden cover made in the shape of a Christmas tree. I never did see the tree and was told that the following December, the enclosure would be removed and the tree decorated for Christmas. (*Eleven months later, in Dec 1959, the wooden cover was removed from the tree, however, they found that someone had secretly cut it down.*) The weather was cloudy most of the time and the winds brisk. It rained and sometimes snowed a lot, but the accumulation was not too great. It seemed to rain some almost every day in a driving-rain type experience --because of the high winds. I don't recall being in a thunderstorm or ever seeing lightning. During early January, the sun rose about



10:00 AM and set around 3:10 PM. Keflavik Air Base was very large USAF installation with a big contingent of US Army people stationed there -- and a NATO Hq as well. There was also a sizeable US Navy air unit at the base that flew and maintained some Navy reconnaissance aircraft. The buildings on the base were bleak. The barracks were painted a drab light olive green and many of the office buildings were housed in

Nissen and Quonset Huts – there were several one and two story concrete block buildings as well. All my money was exchanged for MPC (Military Payment Certificates) called, “military script.” Once I got to the site, I would be paid in script – this was done to reduce the local black-market effort to gather dollars.

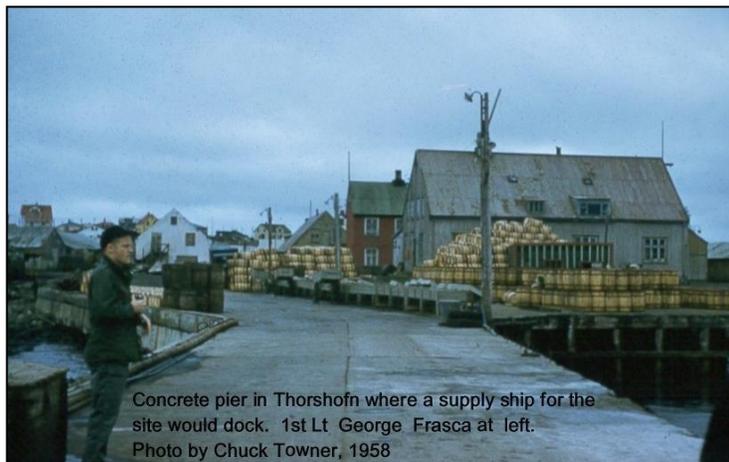


C-47 landing at the H-2 airstrip near Thorshofn, Iceland in 1959. Note the grass landing field and radar site in the right center background. Photo by Chuck Towner

Arrival at the 667th AC&W Squadron, Langanes AFS, Iceland.

I spent a few days in-processing which included checkups by the doctor and dentist. I learned there were no doctors at the radar site. I reported to the Keflavik terminal, got on an Air Force Douglas C-47 (DC-3) Skytrain, strapped on a parachute, sat down sideways on a metal sling, and took off for the two-hour, 280 mile flight across Iceland. The flight was a bit rough and the pilot was reporting constant 40 MPH winds. He said that was not uncommon for Iceland. Keflavik was located on the extreme SW corner of the island, whereas the H-2 radar site was on the extreme NE corner of Iceland. We landed at an Icelandic Flugfelag Airlines (Icelandic Air) landing strip located on a grass pasture sprinkled with little patches of gravel. The terminal and control tower consisted of a single 20' x 15' shack heated by a pot-bellied stove. It was manned by a part-time airport manager who lived in the local fishing village of Thorshofn (Þórshöfn). There were no hangars or any other buildings at the airport. In fact, the airport manager had to jump in his car and run off a few sheep from the runway before we could land. The airport was normally

uncommon for Iceland. Keflavik was located on the extreme SW corner of the island, whereas the H-2



Concrete pier in Thorshofn where a supply ship for the site would dock. 1st Lt George Frasca at left. Photo by Chuck Towner, 1958

abandoned except for two or three times a week when an Icelandic Air DC-3 or Air Force C-47 landed. Often the weather prevented any type of aircraft from landing. If we went over 8 or 10 days with no airlift because of bad weather, the Air Force tried to send in a small, single engine, DeHavilland L-20 (U6-A Beaver) aircraft to deliver our mail and supplies. That plane had a limited range and had to be refueled before the return trip. In all, the airstrip looked like a pasture with a large shack sitting off to the side. Since H-2 is farther north, the sun rose about 10:15 AM and set around 2:10 PM – about an hour less daylight than in Keflavik.

We then drove the nine miles up the mountain from the Thorshofn **airstrip terminal** to the radar site in a 2 ½ ton Air Force truck commonly called a 6 X 6 (*it had a six wheel drive, with six forward gears, and 10*



Note the Sq Comdr's car called the "Green Machine", a 6X6, and Weapons Carrier vehicles. Thorshofn Air Terminal, Baggage Claim, & Ticket Office in June 1959. Photo by Chuck Towner

tires). My first thought was that I was in a land of barren hills and tumultuous snow. I saw no trees whatsoever. The radar site was located on top of an 811 foot high mountain named *Heidarfjall* which overlooked the Norwegian Sea. On top, at the very peak, was our radar dome which was about 40 feet tall. The site was named H-2. The "H" stood for "Remote Radar Head" or RRH. "H" was simply an abbreviation and the "2" indicated the site was the second of four remote radar heads in Iceland. The site had about 107 personnel assigned -- 10 officers, 97 enlisted men, plus three civilian tech reps from the RCA and Bendix Corporations. I say "men" here because

there were no WAF (*Women in the Air Force*) at the site. In fact, I did not even see a uniformed woman stationed at the main base at Keflavik. Another curiosity was that there were no African-Americans stationed at the site or anywhere in Iceland. I later learned that the government of Iceland, in laying the ground rules for the Status of Forces Agreement with the United States, had dictated that no minorities could be assigned to the island. How long that policy remained in effect I never knew.

I met the commander, Major Joe W. Beighley. He was an outstanding officer and ran a tight ship. He assigned me to a room in the **BOQ** (*Bachelor Officers' Quarters*.) The room was fairly large (about



Typical BOQ at H-2, with each room sharing a bath--1959.

16'X16') with a single bed, side table, desk and chair, a metal chest of drawers, and a sizeable closet. There were two side-by-side windows with Venetian blinds. I shared a bathroom with the officer next door. I met the other officers assigned to the site: Captains Frank Miley and Joe Croft, and 1st Lieutenants Frem Nielsen, David Moore, George Frasca, Richard K. Whitney, Charles Towner, and Willie "Bung Chow" Hee. Another officer, Capt Joe W. Bosworth, III, arrived the same time as I did. Joe Reed and George Casano were two of the three civilian tech reps that also lived in the BOQ. Other officers were later assigned during my tour

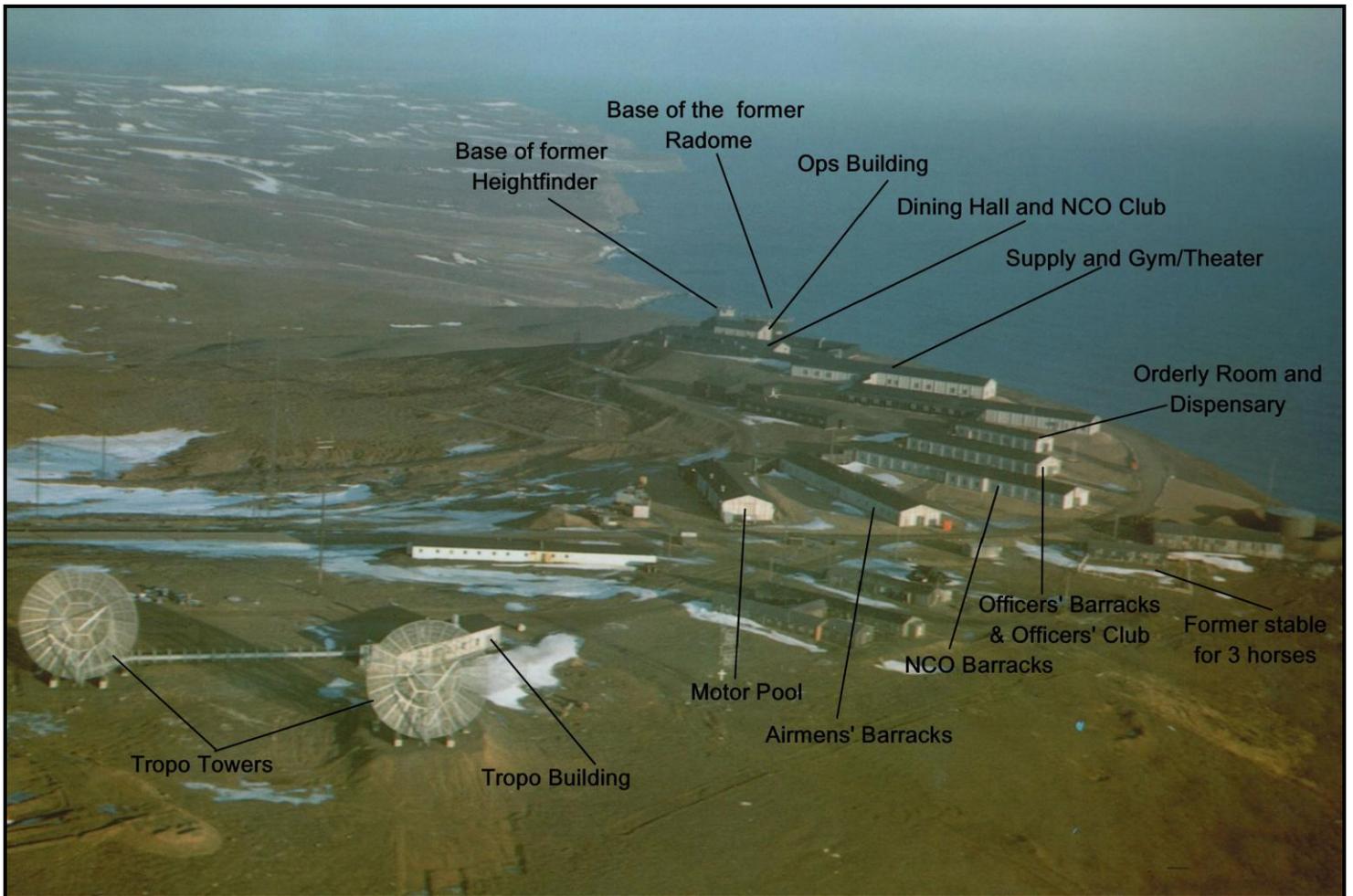
including 2nd Lt Robert E. Fitzgerald, Jr., 1st Lt Jerry Boudreaux, Capt Phil Jensen, and a couple others I cannot recall – they were to replace those who were near the end of their tours. I was given a small supply of **stationery** with envelopes that bore the name of the radar site in blue script:

*667th Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron
APO 81, New York, New York*

I was assigned as Chief of Administration and Personnel Officer (site Adjutant.) Captain Frank Miley was acting Adjutant and he spent a couple of days briefing me on my duties. He then headed back

to his job as the site Communications Officer. I had my own office which was located next to the Commander's office. Just outside my office was the orderly room. The NCOIC of the orderly room was also the 1st Sergeant. His name was MSgt Francis D. Hawthorne. He had two clerks. We initially had the personnel field records of all the men at the site, but a couple months later we sent them to Keflavik where they had formed a consolidated central personnel office for the whole island. MSgt Hawthorne reported to me on admin and personnel matters and to the Commander for morale, welfare, and disciplinary concerns. I never met a sharper NCO in my entire military career. He helped me learn the ropes and steered me through my first seven months at the site. To tell the truth, Sgt Hawthorne ran the show the first couple of months until I had enough knowledge to do it on my own. All the while he made me feel like I was in charge. I was also given about 15 additional duties including, Training (OJT) Officer, Theater Officer, Records Custodian, Disaster Control Officer, Chapel Officer, BOQ Officer, Unit Fund Officer, Paymaster, and Special Services Officer.

(Note: When MSgt Hawthorne was about to end his tour in July 1959, we nominated him for NCO of the Year for the entire Iceland Air Defense Force [IADF]. Lo and behold, he was selected over all other NCOs on the island – quite a feat for someone assigned to a remote site. He then became IADF's nominee for NCO of the Year for all of MATS worldwide – he won that too.)



Radar Site Layout. At the top of the mountain were two radar domes and an operations building where the radar operators, controllers, and some of the communications and crypto people worked. The large dome housed the search AN/FPS 3 search radar antenna and the much smaller dome next to it housed the AN/FPS 6 height finding radar antenna. The two domes were connected by a short weather tunnel. It was the most important part of the site for it was there that we watched the skies for unidentified aircraft -- there was a chance that some might be incoming Russian bombers. When we “painted” an unidentified

aircraft, we would inform H-1, our headquarters at Rockville AFS near Keflavik. They would then dispatch some F-89s to meet them somewhere in the vicinity of our site. Our radar operators would track each aircraft and the radar controllers (*several were pilots themselves*) would direct the F-89 pilots to the intercept. All the while, the communications people were relaying this back to the main radar facility at Rockville AFS (H-1). Next to the larger radome was the nearly windowless operation's building. These structures were secure areas and only authorized personnel were permitted through the doors.

Descending the mountain from the radar dome were several other concrete buildings – most of which were imbedded into the mountain by a foot or two. Each of these buildings was connected by a wide, unheated concrete corridor. The buildings were somewhat parallel but formed a slight semi-circle from building to building. Near the top was the supply and installation engineer facility. At the same level was the gymnasium which was used for sports during the day (*it had a low ceiling, so basketball was difficult, but an almost normal game of volleyball could be played.*) At night the gym became the site movie theater and on Sundays, when a military Chaplain was visiting, a chapel. Just below that was the Dining Hall and NCO Club.



Next was a smaller building that housed the Commander's office and the orderly room. The site dispensary was also located in this building and was manned by a medic-type SSgt. Below the orderly room were three barracks. The first one was the officers' and civilian

tech rep quarters. It housed a small officers' club. The next two larger barracks were the NCO and airmen's quarters. The last building in the line was the motor pool where we maintained our 27 vehicles. Most of the vehicles remained outside since the motor pool building was not nearly large enough to garage all the vehicles. The drop was about 75 feet from the top of the site near the bubble to the Motor Pool building. This required some personnel to climb over 110 steps to get to operations and almost as many to get to the Mess Hall. Looking back, it helped to keep our legs in shape.

Across the compound and separated from the rest of the site by some 300 feet was the Tropo building and RX (receiver) building. Two large troposcatter discs were adjacent to the Tropo building and were used for intra-island communications.



Thorshofn dock with residents' homes in the background. 1958
Photo by Chuck Towner

LIFE ON THE SITE

Activities.

Trips to Town. On Saturday, 30 Jan 1959, I went with a few NCOs on a trip to the only village for miles and miles. The town was named Thorshofn (Þórshöfn) and was a fishing village of about 300 residents. The Icelanders all looked fair and hardy. The NCOs had to go to town to purchase some supplies and food for their NCO club. The only reason I was along was because that was another of the Icelanders' rules regarding American servicemen. They required that an officer accompany any enlisted

men when they ventured off site to town – even when on official business as was the case in this instance. In fact, there were a lot of rules and regulations that applied to servicemen that you didn't find in other countries where we had forces stationed. I received my military driver's license as well as an Icelandic

license. I was authorized to drive everything from a 2 ½ ton truck on down. The guys in the motor pool gave me lessons on each vehicle I was licensed to drive. I was able to learn to drive all the vehicles except the Weasel -- the motor Pool guys took me on the side of the mountain and then asked if I wanted to take the controls. At that point the Weasel (now called Snow Cats) was listing at about a 30° angle on its side -- I could not figure out why we didn't tip over. I was not about to take control of the machine in that situation -- we agreed to skip that qualification.

Mail. The biggest morale builder was mail. Flights were usually scheduled twice a week. However, we rarely got flights in on the days we expected. In fact we often went for many days without a supply aircraft -- in February we went for 12 days without a plane. In 1959, a First Class mail stamp cost 7¢.



Promotion Board. I spent three hours one day serving on a promotion board. Of the 20 deserving airmen whom we interviewed, we were only allowed to recommend 5 for promotion. That was not an easy or very satisfying job. The men in the Dining Hall -- mostly the cooks -- were very experienced and had been in the grade of SSgt for a long time. However, they didn't stand a chance because of the low promotion quotas versus the high number of experienced men in that field Air Force wide.

Religious Activities. We periodically got visits from the Chaplains stationed at Keflavik. One Chaplain was supposed to visit each month. They stayed a few days, did some counseling, and conducted church services. One of them, Father John G. Borkowski, was a hit with all station personnel. He was fairly young and associated with officers and men of all ages -- he seemed to understand us quite well. We looked forward to his return trips. Each Sunday morning I showed a film in the base theater which was part of a series called, "Chapel of the Air." We then had an afternoon Radio Protestant Hour. On

Monday nights we showed religious movies and we had a Bible Study on Wednesday evening. One Sunday the local Icelandic Lutheran minister came to the site and conducted a service in English. He did a good job. Nearly half of those on site came to the service. We took up a collection and offered it to his small church in Thorshofn.

Official Visitors. We had a very senior USAF full Colonel visit us who was the Deputy Commander for Civil Engineering for all of MATS Hq at Scott AFB, IL. He conducted an inspection of our facilities and disaster preparedness. His first night at the site he criticized the DEROS Chain we had erected in the



Officers' Club thinking it put too much emphasis on looking forward to the end of our tours. Lo and behold, the next morning the aircraft scheduled to take him to Keflavik was cancelled due to bad weather. He was forced to stay with us two or three days longer than he expected. When a plane finally was able to get through, he was very eager to leave – hopefully that experience changed his mind about our DEROS chain. *(Two years later, while I was assigned to Scott AFB, I married his secretary. She was the reigning Centennial Queen of the nearby city of O'Fallon, IL. I never did remind the Colonel of the fact that I had briefly*

met him in Iceland at H-2 a couple years earlier.)

Another time, we had a US Navy Captain, a four stripper (equivalent to an Air Force full colonel), visit our site. He got the full briefing and looked around quite a bit. Little did we know that the Navy would take over this site within two years and use it to track Soviet Missile submarines. When the Captain was touring the site, Major Beighley had me come along. I would volunteer information as we passed from area to area, especially in the job sites where I was responsible (the gym, orderly room, library, theater, etc.) However, the Navy Captain just plain ignored me and would sometimes ask Major Beighley a

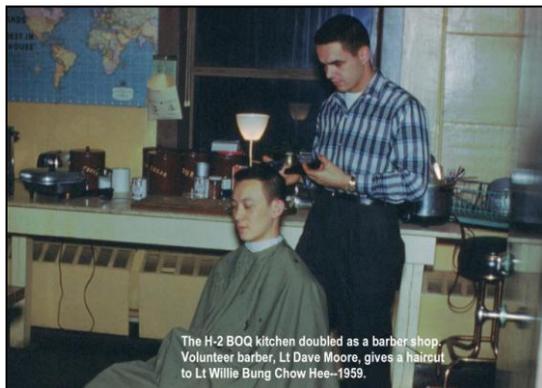


question about an area I had just explained to the Captain. I found out later that in the Navy, junior officers in the grade of Ensign (2nd Lt in the Air Force) are to be seen and not heard and are not supposed to speak directly to a Navy officer in the grade of Captain or Admiral unless asked to do so. I determined at that point that I was glad I was in the Air Force and not in the Navy.

Mess Hall Food. The cooks in the mess hall did an excellent job preparing food – of course we all complained after a while because that's the GI way. We had a varied menu including Swiss steak, roast beef, ham, pork chops, liver, fish, salad, peas, corn, carrots, etc. A couple times when I went fishing I got lucky and caught a bundle of trout. I took them to the cooks in the mess hall and they prepared them for the evening meal. A number of other guys did the same thing – there's nothing like fresh trout on your plate.

In early April of 1959, the normal semi-annual sea-shipped provisions arrived late. Worse, the shipment was missing some key foodstuffs including meat, seafood, flour, and canned milk. Corrective action was initiated, but by late May, before the replacement food could be delivered, the mess hall ran out of most of the basis staples. The only meat remaining was chicken. The cooks did their best to serve chicken in a variety of disguises. I think we even had SOS with a chicken base. After 30 days, all site personnel were sick and tired of fowl. Finally, a shipment arrived in late June and the first order of business was to serve a steak dinner. In fact we had several steak dinners in the next couple of weeks as we tried to catch up with the normal menu.

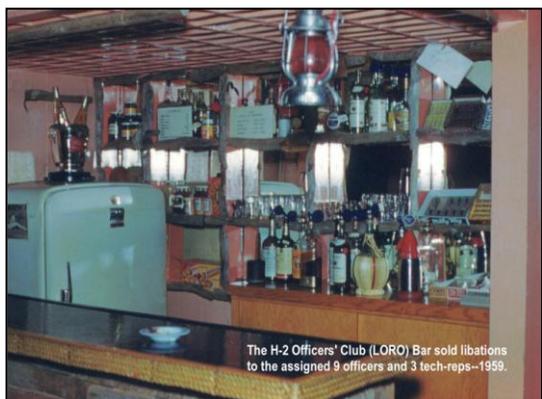
The Officer's Club. At the close of duties each day, we all retreated to our barracks. At the end of our BOQ, near the entrance to the connecting tunnel, was our Officers' Club. It consisted of two rooms – one



16'x24' with a sofa and three or four easy chairs, a bar with about four stools, and a refrigerator. The adjoining room was smaller, about 10' X 15', where we prepared snacks and coffee. We also used this room to wash our laundry and give each other hair cuts. We called the Club "LORO" which stood for Langanes Officers' Recreation Organization.

One tradition in LORO was that the junior ranking officer was required to be the 16 MM projectionist for the Army/ Air Force Motion Pictures that were shown in the Officers' Club. He had to set up the screen, load the film, collect the admission, keep the

books, and show the film. If the machine or film malfunctioned – he became the brunt of all criticism –



and was even criticized if the movie was poor. Our commander, Major Beighley, always sat in front, two or three feet from the screen. Since he had razor sharp eyes, he wanted the movie to be in perfect focus. I learned to operate that machine quite well. After I had been at the site for over two months, a new 2nd Lt, Robert E. Fitzgerald, Jr, arrived in mid-March – he was junior to me in grade. I quickly transferred the job of projectionist to him. Unfortunately, he just wasn't able to keep the film in perfect focus despite all of his efforts – it probably had to do with his eyesight which a few months earlier, had disqualified him from pilot training. As a result, I got the job back. Watching movies

was a big part of our evening activities.

The Royal Order of the Scarlet Scarf. One of our members, 1st Lt George Frasca, was quite an innovator. I believe he was the creator of a club we called, "The Royal Order of the Scarlet Scarf." To become a member – which was highly encouraged – one had to consume three of a specially concocted drink called a "Swampage." The Swampages had to be consumed between 9 and 12 PM without passing out. It was an especially potent drink – once you passed muster, you were given the formula for the drink. Upon becoming a member, you also received a piece of scarlet cloth.

The "Chair." There was also a custom in LORO of giving certain members a "ride" down the hall of the BOQ. We would label this activity as giving the person "The Chair" since it consisted of putting someone in a wheeled office chair and pushing him at break-neck speed down the long hallway. One day, the commander of the 57th Fighter Interceptor Squadron was at H-2 on a TDY visit – a Lt Col (Colonel selectee) Harris F. Krause. Col Krause was soon to be the Commander of the 1400th Operations Group – the higher headquarters of all the radar sites. Somehow, we convinced ourselves and Col Krause that he should be given a ride in "The Chair." When that was done, we figured (wrongly) that our squadron commander, Major Joe W. Beighley, should be the next rider. Against his protestations, and with the grin of the on-looking Col Krause, we gave Maj Beighley a ride in the chair. After Col Krause left the next morning, we all paid for our "crime" and were made to realize our mistake.

The Long Three-Day Pass. The LORO club members agreed to chip in and rent a one bedroom apartment from May to September in Akureyri, a city of about 10,000 on the north coast of Iceland. The plan was to go in pairs, using leave or 3 day passes to get a little rest and recuperation. In late May, it was

Bob Fitzgerald's and my turn. We signed out on leave, bought a ticket and boarded an Icelandic Air DC-3, and flew to Akureyri. After four days of relaxation we caught a military hop for the trip back to H-2. However, when we got over H-2, the field was fogged in so the plane continued, stopped at H-3, and finally returned to Keflavik Air Base. We were now more than twice as far from H-2 as we had been when we took off. We tried to get back to H-2 three different times during the next 7 days – all we succeeded in doing was to log 10 hours of aimless air time flying back and forth over the island, each time returning to Keflavik when we couldn't get into Thorshofn. It just so happened that our Squadron Commander, Major Beighley, was also stranded at Keflavik. He had been TDY to Keflavik to sit on a promotion board when the bad weather struck.



Bringing the "Green Machine" from Keflavik to H-2 in early June 1959. Major Joe Beighley (R) did nearly all the driving.

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The Story of the "Green Machine." A man of action, Major Beighley called H-2 and convinced our Ops Officer, Captain Joe W. Bosworth to let us "borrow" his green 1954 Ford Station Wagon. Our plan was to drive the wagon all 454 miles to the radar site on the unimproved gravel roads. Captain

Bosworth, initially expecting to be assigned to Keflavik Air Base, had reluctantly been forced to leave his vehicle at Keflavik when he was ultimately assigned to H-2 in January 1959. He gave us the OK. We went to the transient barracks and got an H-2 bound automobile mechanic that had just arrived at Keflavik and told him to pack his bags. On the morning of June 9th, Major Beighley, the auto mechanic (a SSgt), Lt Fitzgerald, and I (Lt Tonnell) started the journey to H-2 traveling the twisting roads of northern Iceland. After driving about 300 miles in 15 hours averaging 20 miles per hour, we reached Akureyri late that night –it was still light. We were informed that a snowstorm had closed the road from Akureyri to Thorshofn – we had to remind ourselves that it was the 10th of June. The next day we boarded a USAF C-47 and flew to H-2 for the last leg of the trip – it was the first plane to get through to our site in over two weeks. A couple weeks later, Captain Bosworth flew to Akureyri and drove his '54 Ford the rest of the way to H-2. The car was not in the best of condition even before the trip and Captain Bosworth decided to leave the vehicle permanently at H-2 for use by site personnel. The Ford became what we officially called, "The Commander's Staff Car." But the nickname we gave it stuck: "*The Green Machine.*"



F-89 Flyovers. When the men in the radome "painted" unidentified or suspected hostile aircraft approaching our site, they would alert H-1 at Rockville AFS. The 57th Fighter Interceptor Squadron would then scramble a couple of F-89s to intercept the intruders. Unfortunately, the F-89 was heavily armored and as a result was limited in its range. Once they got to our site they had only enough fuel to make a quick intercept and then head back home. One of the first flyovers I saw was in early February 1959. An F-89 flew low over our site and dipped his wings – I suspect that it was Lt Rufus DeHart (*at the end of his tour in Iceland, DeHart left the USAF, got a medical degree, reentered the Air Force, and then rose to one of the top positions in the USAF Medical Corps --he retired in the grade of Brigadier General.*)



The H-2 Golf Course in late-January 1959

Leisure Activities.

Golfing. A month or two after I arrived, one of the Weapons Controllers, 1st Lt David Moore, asked me if I wanted to go golfing?

He told me that a golf course had “sort-of” been laid out near where we had skated. I didn’t see any greens or pins or tee boxes, but that didn’t prevent us from checking out a couple of golf sets from Special Services and giving it a go. I quickly learned not to bet on shots with Moore. He had been a starter on the Ohio State (*of the Big Ten*) varsity golf team when in college (*a fellow by the name of Jack Nicklaus joined the same team a year after Moore graduated.*)

Ice Skating. The day after I arrived at the site in January 1959, Lt Moore, drove me down the side of the mountain in a ¾ ton Weapons Carrier utility vehicle and we went ice skating on a small frozen lake at the foot of *Mt Heidarfjall* and about 300 feet off the shore of the ocean. The ice was rough and once you got going, the wind was strong enough to keep you bumping along at a good clip. All that changed when you turned around and faced the wind.



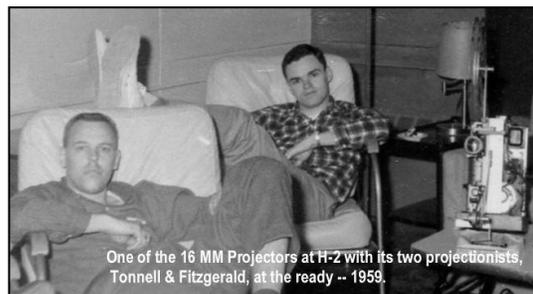
Ham Radio. About 25 feet from my office, there was a single-side-band ham radio MARS unit for use by licensed ham radio operators. Lt Chuck Towner and Captain Joe Croft knew how to operate the system and helped guys talk to the folks back home.

luggage, plastic model kits, etc. I bought a 35 MM Samoca camera for about \$29 – I took some very clear



Shopping. There was virtually no place to shop off-site. However, there was a tiny Base Exchange that was open a few hours each week where one could buy film and cameras, underwear, souvenirs, excellent slides of Iceland with that camera – it turned out to be a good investment. Besides fishing, one of the main industries of Iceland was the sheep industry. Through the BX at the main base, it was possible to buy a 3’x 4’ white sheepskin rug for as little as \$7.00. I bought one and shipped it home to my mother as a Christmas gift.

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Movies. The gym doubled as the site theater. Army/ Air Force motion Hollywood movies were shown on 16 mm projectors 5 to 6 nights a week for about 25¢ per person. We painted one wall of the gym with a reflective silver paint so the movies would be sharper. However, an occasional errant volleyball would leave its mark on the

screen. We then had to get out the paint. The NCO showing the films was paid out of the proceeds from the films. Sometimes flyers would arrive with the film and we would display them around and outside the theater to attract customers. We had a popcorn machine and the ticket taker would sell popcorn and candy to the patrons.

We were supposed to get five, 16 mm new films in per week flown in by air – they were rotated between the remote radar sites. Often the resupply flight to the site was delayed because of bad weather. One time, we went for over two weeks without a flight. In the meantime, we watched the same 5 films three times each – one was named, “*I Was A Teenaged Werewolf*” starring Michael Landon in his first full feature film made in late 1958. When the plane finally arrived, it had 15 new films on board which we were only able to keep for a week. Somehow we managed to watch all 15 movies in a one week period – two and even three per evening.

Sightseeing. During off duty hours we could take walks around the mountain. There were a lot of photo opportunities at the site. One day I accompanied some of the men who wanted to go to Thorshofn to take pictures. I took a few myself -- got some pictures of the local kids cleaning fish.

Leave. Taking leave was encouraged for all personnel during their stay at the radar site. Many opted to stay put and accrue extra leave. Others saved enough money to fly to Europe or the states. However, leave was discouraged in July & August because that was the time when most of the people finished their one-year tour of duty – it was a time to train the new arrivals concerning their duties.

Sports Competitions.

Volleyball and Badminton. We organized a volleyball tournament and formed several teams. Volleyball was the only team sport we could easily play in our gym -- the ceiling was too low for basketball. In fact, we had to learn to set the volleyball low for the same reason. Playing badminton was much easier because we rarely hit the ceiling with the shuttlecock.

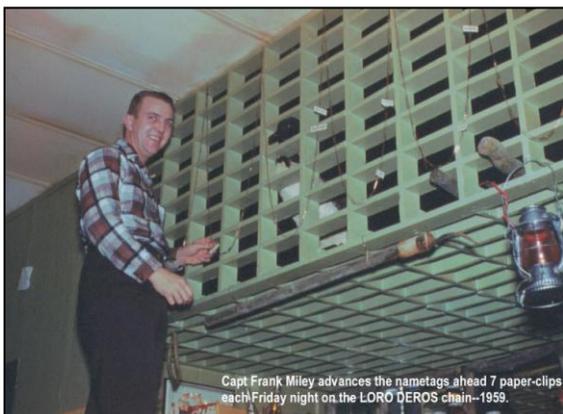
Basketball. Despite the low ceiling, basketball enthusiasts did their best to shoot baskets without hitting the ceiling. We even sent a team to Keflavik to compete in an island-wide tournament.



H-2 Softball game, Ron McIntosh is at bat.

Softball. A few miles down the mountain, a softball field (*of sorts*) had been fashioned by the Iceland Prime Contractors when the site was first under construction in 1956-57. A team was formed. I traveled with the team and played center field when we competed at Keflavik Air Base in July 1959. We won half of our games in the base tournament – pretty good considering the conditions under which we practiced (*The*

previous year, I was the pitcher on our dormitory fastpitch softball team at the U. of Wisconsin. We were undefeated until the championship game. I had broken my left wrist the start of my senior year and had to rely on my right hand to do everything for the 18 weeks my left wrist was in a cast. Over time, my right arm got much stronger and, miraculously, this somehow allowed me to throw a fastball with a gigantic curve. As the H-2 softball season began and, armed with my sterling past performance, I informed my H-2 teammates of my pitching prowess. All went well until I tried to throw some pitches – I couldn't hit the broadside of a barn and the curve was totally gone. Since my left wrist had since healed, my right arm had returned to normal. I lost a lot of credibility with the guys and I suspect they didn't believe my story. So I took my place as the Center Fielder and remained as quiet as possible.)

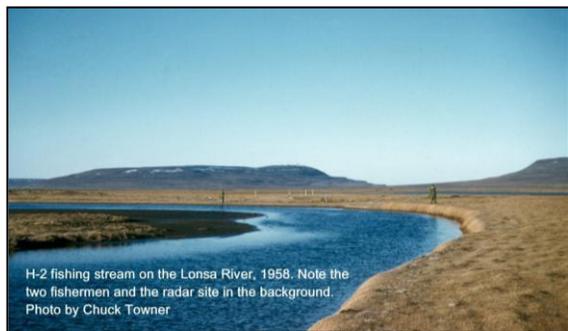


Capt Frank Miley advances the nametags ahead 7 paper-clips each Friday night on the LORO DEROS chain--1959.

DEROS Chain Watching. Our predecessors at LORO had erected a DEROS Chain (Date Estimated Return from Over Seas) above the bar in the Officers' Club. It consisted of 365 paperclips strung end to end, one for each day of the one-year tour at H-2. The clips were looped from left to right across the wall above the bar. When you arrived, your name was placed on a small slip of paper and hung on one of the paperclips on the DEROS Chain. On Friday night after work, we had a big ceremony wherein one of the guys stood on top of a barstool and carefully moved everyone's name 7 paper clips closer to the end. A big cheer went up after the move was completed.

Along the Chain were several milestone marks – 300 days, 200 days, half-way, 100 days, and 10 days. When you hit 99 days left, you were automatically allowed to get the “double-digit fidgets.” At 9 days left you qualified for the “single-digit fidgets.”

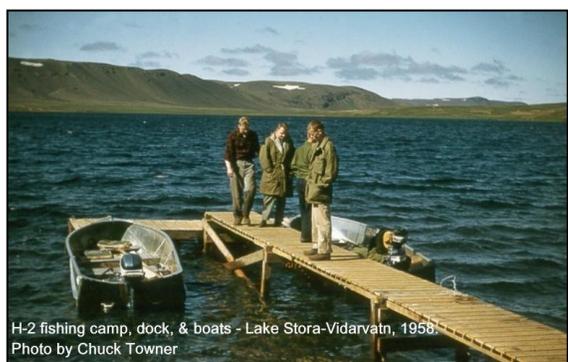
Fishing Contest. We also had fishing contests -- \$5.00 for the longest caught and \$3.00 and \$2.00 for second and third. The fishing was done on the *Lonsa River* which emptied into the nearby ocean. Using Unit Funds we were able to rent fishing rights -- it was at base of the mountain.



H-2 fishing stream on the Lonsa River, 1958. Note the two fishermen and the radar site in the background. Photo by Chuck Towner

Cribbage Tournament. We organized a cut-throat rules cribbage tournament and had a lot of site personnel participate. We conducted the matches in the NCO Club. I had played a lot of cribbage in college and thought myself to be pretty good – that is until SSgt Luther Thomas from Ops cleaned my clock.

Fresh Water Fishing. The site rented two fishing spots. One was on the river just 4 miles down the mountain on the road to the airfield. The *Lonsa River*, a modest sized waterway, ran under a concrete road bridge north into the ocean. Fishing in the river began in May. The second fishing place was on a lake which was located about 40 miles west of the site. The lake was at about 2,000 feet elevation and sat in a crater between two mountains. It was difficult to reach because the road was often muddy and impassible. But the fish were plentiful including German Brown Trout and Arctic Char. On Feb 22, a Holiday, we attempted to drive a couple of trucks to our fishing lake to check on our fishing shack, dock, boat, and motor. We came within a few miles of our destination but had to turn back because of snow on the road at the top of one of the mountain passes. We headed back before sunset. Three of us tried again



H-2 fishing camp, dock, & boats - Lake Stora-Vidarvatn, 1958. Photo by Chuck Towner

on Thursday, 2 March, and we finally got through to the lake –named *Lake Stora-Vidarvatn* – but not before getting stuck a couple of times (luckily we were able to dig out.) We inspected the camp and found everything to be all right. We heated k-rations on an outside campfire, had a meal, and then returned to the radar site. However, because of ice, we rarely fished in the lake until June of each year. On a subsequent trip to the lake, I was able to catch a 24”, four pound-plus trout – it made my day.

One day, we got word that a four star general might be able to visit our site in the summer – apparently he was into fishing and an inquiry was made about our fishing lake. We made an effort to get it in good shape just in case he could make the trip (*unfortunately he couldn't get to H-2 because of bad weather – we were disappointed because we wanted the general to appreciate the living conditions and work performed at our isolated site.*)

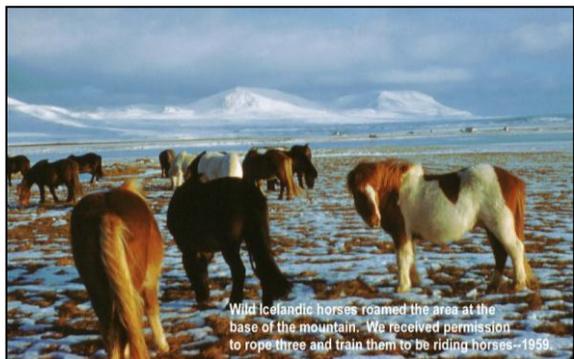


Eight H-2 troops, along with the site interpreter (L), embark on a boat named the Fossa to fish for cod on one of the site sponsored charters—1959.

Deep Sea Fishing. I made arrangements with Sigurdur Sigurjonsson, the captain of the Icelandic boat, *Fossa*, to take some of our men on day-long deep-sea fishing trips. The *Fossa* was a 30-foot commercial cod fishing boat harbored in Thorshofn. I paid the captain 700 kronur (about \$44 at the official exchange rate) for 7 passengers. Since I had my government and Icelandic driving licenses, I sometimes drove the men to town in the 6x6. Many of the site personnel took advantage of this opportunity despite the fact that the majority

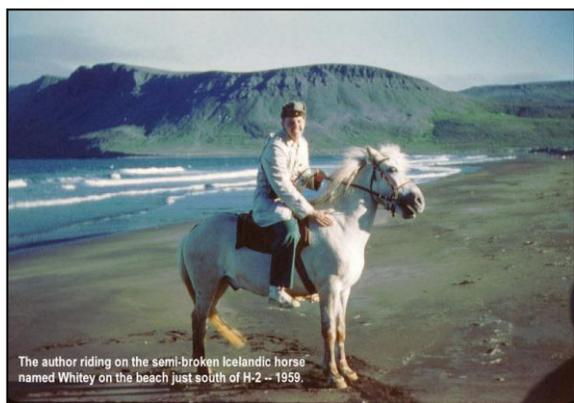
got very seasick. One group of H-2 men caught 78 codfish -- a couple weighed over 20 pounds. The site cooks obligingly prepared them for supper which was enjoyed by all site personnel.

Horse Back Riding. In April 1959, we received funds to purchase three **Icelandic horses**. We had seen several roaming the valley below the site and they all seemed to be wild. We bought three of them



Wild Icelandic horses roamed the area at the base of the mountain. We received permission to rope three and train them to be riding horses--1959.

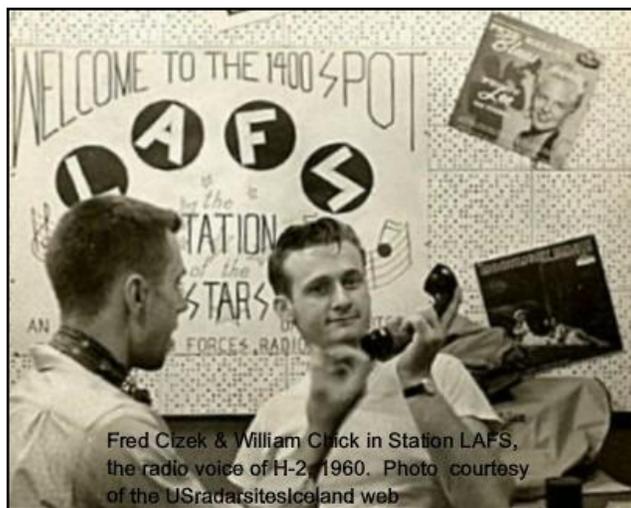
from a local sheep farmer. An A1C by the name of O'Connell unit had grown up on a quarter-horse farm in Tennessee and knew all about horses. We transported the horses up the mountain to the site in our 6x6 trucks. The very talented NCOIC of Installations, SMSgt Hall, had his people convert a couple abandoned construction shacks, originally used to house the workers who built the site, into a small stable and a corral for our three horses. O'Connell then "broke" the horses so that we would be able to ride them. We also bought three English saddles -- the kind without a horn. As Special Services Officer, I became one of the first "customers" to ride these horses and I found that they were not entirely broken -- at least at first. Riding them on an English saddle made for a real sporty outing. Renting the horses became a favorite pastime for many of the site personnel. We charged about 25¢ and hour and a dollar for all day. We used the proceeds to help pay for the horses' feed and grooming supplies -- their names were *Whitey*, *Blackie*, and *Brownie*.



The author riding on the semi-broken Icelandic horse named Whitey on the beach just south of H-2 -- 1959.

I rented a horse on several occasions and rode down the mountain to the black sand beach. Once my horse felt the soft, fine, volcanic sand on his feet he felt the urge to break into a gallop. Not being much of a horseman, I tried to pull back on

the reins so the horse would slow down -- it only made the animal more determined to run like the wind. In the meantime, I was hanging on the best I could wishing all the while that we had purchased western style saddles (more expensive) which sport a horn for holding on to. Instead, the only thing I could grasp was air. From that point on, I kept the horse off of the beach and rode on the pastures, hills, and valleys. Sometimes Bob Fitzgerald and I would each rent a horse and go out investigating the area around the mountain. On a couple of occasions, we stopped by the farm of an old Icelander who lived at the base of the mountain just south of the site. We put his grandson on the back of my horse and walked him around the barnyard. He and his grandfather seemed to really enjoy the experience.



Fred Cizek & William Chick in Station LAFS, the radio voice of H-2, 1960. Photo courtesy of the USRadarsitesIceland web

LAFS: Langanes Air Force Station Radio. The site had its own radio station operating on 10 watts of power. It was manned by volunteers and often music and news broadcasts from Keflavik were relayed to site personnel as well major league baseball games. In addition, program transcriptions from AFRS in Europe were received and played. A couple of times each day, an H-2 disc jockey would play music over the air from a stock of records collected from site personnel. Two local nightly news programs were also aired. Several of the men volunteered to man the station as disk jockeys -- they kept life interesting at the site. While I was there, Lt Frem Nielsen

was the OIC – he did a good job.

Unit Fund Monies. H-2 received \$280 a month in Unit Fund monies for recreational use. With this money we were able to buy needed equipment and supplies and prizes for our various competitions. The site Unit Fund Council decided how the money would be spent. As an example, we bought a complete reel to reel tape recorder, a full weight lifting set, rods and reels, lures, and life preservers for our fishing equipment and a 5-horse outboard motor for our fishing boat. We even formed a weight-lifting club.

Weather.

The weather was a constant thorn in our side-- never warm and never very cold with an ever present gusty wind. The range of temperature from high to low, winter through summer, is only about 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. One day we reached 60° -- that is as high as I ever remember -- and it never got below 15° during my tour of duty. A few days after my arrival in January, the winds reached 80 MPH and I could not see 10 feet in front of me because of the blowing snow. When the winds blew at about 35 knots (40 MPH) we considered that to be “mild” winds. The winter temperature was often very moderate at the site. It was not unusual to have highs between 30° and 35° F. As a result, the accumulation from a heavy snowfall didn't last all that long. In Feb 1959, we went for over two weeks without a day below freezing. During January and February, the temperature did not drop below 20° above zero.

In mid-Feb we had winds in excess of 100 MPH for almost three hours. The last couple of days of February the wind had averaged 70 mph. The previous year, a 2 ½ ton 6x6 truck trailer was picked up by 150 MPH winds and blown over the fence. In March, we had high temperatures in the low 40s and almost all the snow melted. The adjacent mountain was covered with a green, moss-like, grass. The abundant black lava rock made a nice contrast against the mountains. In early April we had a monster snowstorm and the attendant winds blew the snow over many of our windows. We really felt isolated. In August 1959, the temperature never got above 49° and it rained some each day for over 20 days in a row. During the warmest month of the year, July, the average high was 51° F and the average low, 44° F.

Local Icelanders.

We had an Icelandic who was assigned to the site as our “interpreter.” He lived in the local fishing village and came around a few times each week. Since he didn't have a security clearance, we were required to keep him out of our secure areas such as the radar dome and crypto center. He didn't speak English all that well and was kind of a quiet fellow. His name was Jon Olafsson.



H-2 Icelandic policeman, Arnar Abalbjornsson, was very popular with the men assigned to H-2 -- 1959.

There was also a local Icelandic Policeman, Arnar Abalbjornsson, who visited the site often. Our radar site was in part of his jurisdiction. His father was the airport manager. He seemed to be a great guy and we invited him to our Officers' Club for refreshments from time to time. He spoke English about as well as our interpreter and I think his elderly grandfather lived on a sheep farm at the base of our mountain. He was one of the smallest of the Icelandic lawmen I had run across. He stood 6 feet tall – which was the bare minimum for island cops. Many were very large men. (*I corresponded with Olver Arnarsson, the son of Arnar Abalbjornsson and Arnar still lives in Thorshofn.*)

Another policeman, Baldur Gudjonsson, also had jurisdiction at the site – and he started his duties in the summer of 1959.

In February, our Commander invited the local doctor, his wife and small children to visit the site and watch one of our movies. Later, he also invited more local luminaries to the Officers' Club (LORO) for a party one night. Included were the local mayor, doctor, preacher, airport manager, our interpreter and their wives. Also invited was the Icelandic Policeman, Arnar, who was single. We watched the movie, "The Old Man and the Sea" starring Spencer Tracy – they really enjoyed the film. Normally, women are not allowed on the site, but these were the wives of the leaders of the nearest city, Thorshofn. Liquor is very expensive for Icelanders and they are more or less limited to a drink they call Aquavit – a bland beverage that looks and tastes like schnapps. But when we opened the bar, our guests couldn't get enough



H-2 Tropo Tower at midnight in June 1959 looking NNW into the setting sun.

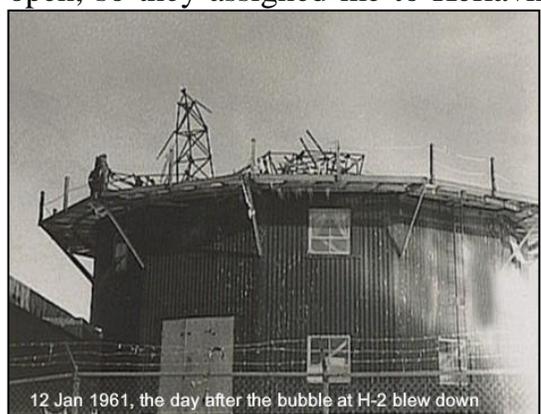
of our different kinds of booze. By 3 AM it seemed we had all become pals for life –we even had to convince them that it was time to go home. We made some good friends with the local leaders which probably helped civic relations, because while I was at H-2, the local Communists never seemed to be a problem for us. The H-2 officers chipped in to pro-rate the bar bill.

Overall, the Icelanders that we met were friendly and helpful to us. Those stationed at the main base in Keflavik had a different opinion probably because those opposed to the stationing of US troops were concentrated

in Reykjavik or Keflavik. However, in the outlying areas, the consensus was that the Icelandic people were a fine group. Contributing to this was that our exposure to the locals was limited, plus the fact that those stationed at remote radar stations were living a life similar to the Icelandic people – one filled with hardship and exposure to severe weather.

Tour at H-2 Cut Short.

In mid-August, I was notified that I would be reassigned to the main base at Keflavik for the remainder of my tour in Iceland. Apparently I was the first choice to be the Aide de Camp to Brigadier General Gilbert Pritchard -- the newly arrived Iceland Defense Force (IDF) NATO Commander and replacement for Brig Gen Henry G. Thorne. Luckily, they asked me if I wanted the job. I said "no", so they selected the Assistant Adjutant General from IDF (a naval officer) as his Aide. That made the naval officer's job open, so they assigned me to Keflavik to be the new Assistant Adjutant General – I would work for an Army Major and a Navy Commander in a joint office.



12 Jan 1961, the day after the bubble at H-2 blew down

List of Commanders of H-2, 667th AC&W Squadron.

- 1956-57. Major William E. Wright
- 1957-58. Major Gilbert R. Ralston
- 1958-59. Major Joe W. Beighley
- 1959-60. Major Hugo H. Vetter
- 1960-61. Major Paul E. Coke (*Major Coke moved the Squadron to H-3 at Hofn in late Jan 1961 after the H-2 Radome was blown down on Jan 11, 1961.*)

B. 1 SEP TO DEC 1959: ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE (IDF), KEFLAVIK AIR BASE ASSIGNMENT. SOURCE: LETTERS HOME FROM, AND RECALLED MEMORIES.

The New Job.

The reason for my assignment from H-2 to IDF is an interesting one. General Pritchard's predecessor, Brigadier General Henry G. Thorne, had an aide-de-camp who was a naval officer. That naval officer had earlier filled the billet as Assistant Adjutant General (AAG) at IDF. When he became General Thorne's aide, he was unable to spend adequate time in the AAG position. Usually when a new general arrives on station he picks his own aide-de-camp and does not retain the aide of his predecessor. However, the naval officer continued as General Pritchard's aide until the general could choose his own aide. For some reason, which is not clear to me, I was the top nominee to be the new aide. Usually, to become an aide-de-camp, an officer must first volunteer for the post and be interviewed in advance by the general. I was not. While still at H-2, I was asked by my new Sq Commander, Major Hugo H. Vetter, if I was interested in becoming General Pritchard's aide-de-camp. I replied, "No, I have no interest in the job because I am not planning on making the Air Force a career." As a result, the naval officer continued as the aide. After waiting at H-2 for about 10 days for good flying weather, I was finally reassigned and flown to Keflavik at the very end of August. On 1 September 1959, I started my new job as Assistant Adjutant General *(which was actually an O-3, naval officer's billet. I replaced a Naval Academy officer, Ensign Allan J. Gottdenker USNR, as Asst Adjutant General, Iceland Defense Force [IDF], when he assumed the full time duty as aide de camp to Gen Pritchard. Three weeks later, the general was sent home at the request of the Icelandic government.)*

Had I accepted the aide's job, it would have been a short-spent position since General Pritchard left the island prematurely about the 24th of September. In retrospect, had I been able to see into the future and know that I would eventually make the Air Force a career, I would have accepted the job as aide-de-camp – who knows, maybe the General would have taken me with him back to the states which would have cut my Iceland tour short by three months. I had the opportunity to play badminton with him on a couple of occasions and I attended his farewell party at the Officer's Club held a day or so before he and his wife departed for the USA. Upon arrival at IDF, I was given a supply of stationery with the following heading:

**HEADQUARTERS
ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE
APO 81, NEW YORK, N. Y.**



B/ Gen Gilbert Pritchard at H-2, Aug 1959,
photo courtesy of USRadarsitesIceland web

The Firing of General Pritchard.

The following is my recollection concerning the dismissal of Brigadier General Pritchard. Bear in mind, that I was a 23 year old, 2nd Lieutenant, and very "green behind the ears." In 1993, I found all the letters that I wrote to my parents while I was stationed in Iceland. In my letter home, dated 26 September 1959, I made the following comments:

"Dear Mom and Dad, 26 Sept 1959.

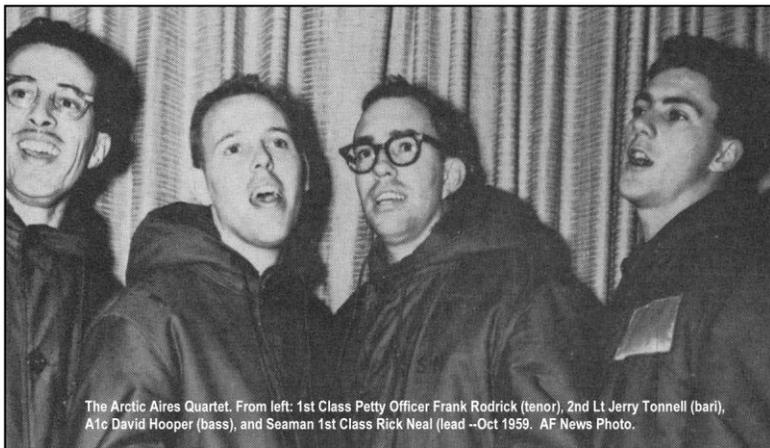
...A couple of days ago our commanding general left Iceland at the request of the Icelandic Government... Just like in America, the

average citizen often believes what he reads in the newspapers, and many Icelandic people, and especially their politicians, are up in arms about some events that occurred at Keflavik base on the 6th of September. You have already read in the American newspapers about what happened – our papers must have gotten the account from the Icelandic communist controlled newspaper. However, the account is not correct. Here's what I believe really happened. On the night of Sep 6th, two Icelanders and two American citizen pilots, flying for a German Airline, passed a security post driving in two vehicles in a secure area near an Air Force hangar without stopping (this is where we keep our fighter jets at night). The armed U.S. guard halted them and, when they were unable to show adequate identification, the four trespassers were forced to lay face down (Americans included) in a spread eagle position for 9 ½ minutes until an Air Force sergeant arrived, identified them, and let them go. The local newspapers said the four men were forced to lie in “mud” puddles and never mentioned that two of the four were Americans. The fact is they were lying on a concrete ramp and not in mud. Further, the Icelandic weather bureau itself reported that there had not been any precipitation for over 10 hours – which meant the concrete was dry. In addition, the guard's weapon was not loaded & he held it at port arms (on his shoulder) & did not threaten the men.

Under the circumstances, General Pritchard did the right thing when he supported the actions of the guard who was only doing his duty. Because of that and a couple other minor incidents, the Icelandic Government officially requested that he be removed from office. Even though he had been in Iceland for less than two months, General Pritchard was well liked by the troops. We hated to see him go and thought he was unfairly treated by the host nation.”

After this letter was written, I learned that the Icelandic Police Chief (called a Judge) at Keflavik Airport investigated the whole incident and refuted almost all the charges against the Air Force sentry. Nonetheless, the damage was already done, and most of the local Icelandic population believed the account they had read in their newspapers. I know this happens in America all the time – mostly because, at the national level, the American news media is often inaccurate and unfair and one-sided in their reporting. As I recall, General Pritchard was reassigned to a key post in America and was eventually promoted to Major General before he retired a few years later.

Barbershop Quartet. Soon after arriving at IDF at Keflavik, I was in need of a haircut. IDF Hq had its own part-time barbershop manned by a Navy 1st Class Petty Officer (*Note: the Navy traditionally provides free haircuts to the troops by using onboard ship sailors -- during shore duty assignments, off-duty Navy-sponsored sailors, do the cutting.*) As I was talking to the barber – a 1st Class Petty Officer -- I told him I was a barbershop harmony buff. Ironically it turned out that the barber was a “barbershopper” himself, having sung tenor in a number of choruses and quartets in the States. We decided to form a quartet and began our search for a lead and bass. After a short time we had our foursome and took the name, **Arctic Aires**.



The Arctic Aires Quartet. From left: 1st Class Petty Officer Frank Rodrick (tenor), 2nd Lt Jerry Tonnell (bari), A1c David Hooper (bass), and Seaman 1st Class Rick Neal (lead --Oct 1959. AF News Photo.

Members of the quartet were: Frank (Fran) Rodrick, singing Tenor, me, singing Baritone, Air Force A1C David Hooper (who just happened to work for me), singing Bass, and Rick Neal – a Navy Seamen 1st Class, singing Lead. We sang at the Officers' Club, the Service Center, the Base Chapel, and a couple

other places. One night we were invited to sing some songs on the AFRS Television station at Keflavik Base. For a quartet uniform, we wore our military-issue green parkas.

New Car. While still at the radar site, I had decided to purchase a sports car at the end of my tour in Iceland, and then have it shipped back to the states. Under this arrangement I would take delivery of the car at the Brooklyn Naval Yard in New York City. However, after I was assigned to Keflavik, I decided to move up the purchase and delivery so that I could drive the car in Iceland for awhile before shipping it back to the USA. I took a bus ride into Reykjavik, visited the Austin Healey dealership, and ordered the car. A week or so later, after concluding some business at the American Embassy in Reykjavik on the 12th of September 1959, I went over to the car dealer and picked up my car. It was a white Austin Healey



The 1960 Austin Healey roadster I bought in Reykjavik in Sept 1959 with money I had been able to save while at H-2.

3000 sports car, with road speed tires, Le Mans headlights, overdrive (which gave it six gears forward), and had an AM/FM radio with a short wave feature. I drove it back to base on the 40 mile gravel road from Reykjavik to Keflavik Airport. I found that it was very difficult to get the shift gear into reverse, so after one embarrassing episode of not being able to back out from the BOQ parking lot, I spent a lot of time learning how to get the gear in reverse – and just in case, I also backed into as many parking spots as I could. Around the middle of November, I drove the Healey to Reykjavik for shipping to the USA.

DEROS - finally. I was fortunate that I had arrived in Iceland in early January because that qualified me to be eligible for “Operation Santa Claus.” This program allowed folks like me to get back to the states in time for Christmas and resulted in the Iceland tour being reduced by over two weeks. I qualified and was set to depart the island on 20 Dec 1959. A couple of weeks before my departure, the people at IDF had a “Hail and Farewell” party for the newly arrived and for me and some others who were leaving. After the new arrivals were introduced, I was presented a “Bless” Certificate. As a surprise, my boss had arranged for the other three members of my quartet to join me in singing a few songs. The next morning, the Base Commander came up to me and asked about my barbershop quartet hobby.

As I arrived at the Passenger Gate, I watched the incoming troops deplane from the same aircraft that would shortly take off with me onboard headed home. As was the custom, when the newly arrived got to the waiting area, a few short-timers would walk up to them and say, “How many days do you have to go until you DEROS?” The answer would always be, “I’ve got 365 days to go.” Whereupon the antagonist would reply, “Well, I only have 10 days to go before **my** DEROS – if I were you, I would “**cut my throat.**” The antagonist would then turn about and walk off.

Since I was still a 2nd Lt and had been at a radar site for eight months and then at the somewhat separate NATO IDF headquarters for only the last four months, I was not a very recognizable person at Keflavik. As a result, I was mistaken for one of those who had recently arrived from the states. One of the short-timers approached me with the same question about my DEROS. Instead of answering, I asked him this question, “How many days do **you** have before **your** DEROS?” He replied with a big grin that he had just 10 days to go. I answered by saying “Well, I have only 10 MINUTES to go – and if I were **you** I would cut my throat.” I then turned and walked toward the gate to board the plane bound for the USA.

So ended my year in Iceland – 10 Jan to 21 Dec 1959.

POST SCRIPT: After arriving at McGuire AFB, NJ, on the 21st of Dec, I got in a bus and traveled to New York City to pick up my Austin Healey at the Brooklyn Naval Yard. It was a sunny and pleasant day and the temperature was 62° -- higher than anything I had experienced in the past 12 months in Iceland. There was absolutely no snow on the ground anywhere. My travel companion was 1st Lt Jerry Goodrich, a fellow U. of Wisconsin graduate, who had shipped his new MG from Iceland on the same ship as my Healey. My car was ready for pickup, but Jerry Goodrich's MG was still on the docked boat. We drove back to down town New York in my car, checked into the Times Square Hotel, bought some Broadway show tickets at the USO, and had near front row seats to see the original cast perform *The Music Man* show. I planned to leave early the next morning, 22 Dec 1959. I awoke at 6 AM and looked outside and saw a 14-inch blanket of snow covering the ground and my car which was parked outside. I borrowed a shovel from a suspicious storeowner across the street – he probably let me use it only because I was in uniform – and shoveled a path for my tires from the parking lot over the curb to the street. I jumped in my Healey and got out of New York just in time because the city all but closed down most roads later that morning. I drove through horrible weather and snow covered roads some 1,000 miles all the way to Appleton, Wisconsin, arriving late in the evening of 23 Dec 1959.

I was back home in the land of the round doorknobs and glad to be there.

Written, June 2002, and updated with photos in 2012