

**Our Plan is to RESCHEDULE the INDIANAPOLIS REUNION!**

**BUT, not Until Sometime in Late 2021 or, most likely, not until 2022 !!!**

(We hope to have more information by Jan 2021)

**ACTIVITIES:** We will attempt to reschedule the cancelled 2020 schedule which included: 1) an Indianapolis Symphony concert, 2) Dinner at the elegant Columbus Club, 3) Visit to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, 4) Visit to the American Legion Hq, & 5) a Banquet at the famous 1911 Club. **However, the COVID-19 problem prevents our advance planning.**

**WHAT WE WILL DO:** Keep you abreast of our progress as we sort out the problems of scheduling the reunion while the **outcome of the pandemic is still unknown**. At the present, we are **unable to lock-in any hotel, bus or tour outings**.

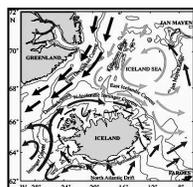
**A CALL For Your EMAIL:** Please send your email address to Chick so we can send future Newsletters to you by email and save greatly on postage – our treasury would benefit. Chick's email is: [littlechick@msn.com](mailto:littlechick@msn.com)

**WEBSITE CHAIRMAN,** Joe Pyrdek, H-3, 1967-68. Joe has worked tirelessly & constructed an entirely new Iceland Radar Website. Find it at [www.usrsi.org](http://www.usrsi.org) – (it may show with this icon on a smart phone as--- 

**HISTORY BOOKS AND COINS.** We have a few books and coins left. The price of each item is the same -- \$10. Make your check out to Iceland Radar Sites Reunion and mail to the Chairman of our organization,

William Chick, 3021 Frost Meadow Way, Fort Mill, SC 29707 [littlechick@msn.com](mailto:littlechick@msn.com)

**SECRETARY/TREASURER,** Ruthann Couch, H-1, 75-76. Our annual voluntary membership dues run \$15 per year. Write checks to "Iceland Radar Sites Reunion" and mail to: Ruthann Couch, 3250 Whitbeck Blvd, Eugene, OR 97405-1938



**WE WEATHERED THE WEATHER - By Jerry Tonnell, Editor**

No matter what Iceland radar site you served at, and no matter when in time you served your tour, every last one of you were subjected to some of the **harshes, bone-chilling, strong-winded weather during your time on the Rock – and that was in the summer**. The average, wind-chill factor high, was in July in the high 40s & the low in the low 40s -- we would almost never be warm – & the powerhouse men had to run their equipment a full 12-months of the year. The below statistics provide evidence as to just how uncomfortable the weather was while you were stationed there:

**H-1.** The intensity of most of the rainfall was above average and yielded a total of 47 inches per year. The average high and low in July was 55°F & 47°F -- in January, the averages were 35°F and 27° F. However, with the average wind speed at 13 mph, the "wind chill" temperatures were about 49°F and 41°F in July and 26°F & 18°F in January. The temperature exceeded 65° on the average of only once a year.

**H-2.** Because of the average wind speed at 15 mph, the "wind chill" temperatures were about 45°F and 37°F in July and 22°F and 12°F in January. For 246 days a year, precipitation came in the form of rain, freezing rain, or snow – 151 days had rain & 133, snow. There were almost no thunderstorms, and lightning was rarely ever seen. Winds often reached above 100 mph as they whipped across H-2's mountain-top perch on the mallard-shaped, thin, Langanes Peninsula.

**H-3.** There is no barrier island to protect the site from the sea. The average high and low in July was 53°F and 47°F. In the dead of winter the averages are 35°F and 28°F. While the station is not subjected to the extremely high winds experienced by the northern sites, the average wind speed is higher – at 17 mph. That meant that the "wind chill" temperatures were about 46°F and 38°F in July and 24°F and 15°F in January. Hofn had a total of 215 days a year with some form of precipitation, and the annual rainfall was a wet 55 inches.

**H-4.** No weather data was available for this site; however, the weather at H-4 was cruel. It was usually never warmer than 59°F in the summer, nor lower than 10°F in the winter, and the temperature range at Latrar was relatively narrow. Since H-4 was the farthest north & the most elevated of the radar sites, it's certain that their temperatures were more severe than H-2. Rain or snow was recorded an average of 171 days each year-- the annual rainfall was a moist 43 inches.

**The below anecdotes from our veterans should help your weather experiences on "The Rock."**

**WW 2 Stories (1941-45)**

From Bert Stammerjohn, "The weather is often stormy with frequent high winds of gale and hurricane force ...The camp was exposed to high winds, and rain was common. Tents could be kept up only by guying them to the trucks...We had Quonset huts which did not suffer the same damage that the lighter built Nissens did. But we did have a crew of our heaviest men going around hammering down the corrugated metal that kept coming loose.....I learned to dread the continuous sound of wind across the guy wires and antennas... That day we saw a number of planes which were anchored in Skeijajordur harbor – giant Short Sunderland flying boats and PB5 Catalina amphibians that capsized and sank in the high waves.... On Oct 24, 1942, a visual sighting of a Nazi Focke-Wulf 200 was reported by observers at Thingvellir at 0735 hours. This aircraft had previously been tracked by radar. At this time at least one radar was tied down due to high winds."



From Michael O'Connor, on trouble supplying a WW2 radar site on the East Iceland shore. "I know they came in by boat and had to make rafts out of 55 gal drums to bring supplies ashore. One raft tipped into the sea, and a good deal of supplies were lost. They constructed the site over the course of several months in harsh weather and were occasionally strafed by German aircraft. In Sept 1942 a Norwegian anti-sub plane crashed nearby, nearly hitting the bunks where the men were sleeping."

From Major David M. Shoup, USMC, wrote to his wife on 20 January 1942: "Well, we had ...one of those wind storms for which this place is noted. And in spite of the huts that are built and banked to 'take it,' a number had the ends sucked out, others just pressed together and some mess halls of Icelandic concrete construction were laid low... I saw men rolled along the ground. I moved all out of my hut that was loose and locked the safes and field desks ... and hoped... The wind was 80 miles per hour all day with intermittent gusts reaching velocities of 120 miles per hour."



**H-1- Trailblazers Stories (1952-53)**

These radar men were sent to Iceland in 1952 to erect a temporary radar system after Iceland allowed US forces back to the island because of the Korean War. They faced the same problems their predecessors in WW II faced when constructing an adequate radar site, and support housing, etc. The constant rain, snow, and cold winds hampered their efforts.

From Jack Hamilton, "Other problems surfaced when the winds reached 35 knots. At that point, the two wings of the parabol-shaped radar antenna were removed, lessening wind-exposed surfaces. Whenever this was done, which was often, the range of the radar was shortened, which in turn resulted in an ineffective airborne warning and control system."

**H-1 Stories (1953-2006)**

From Walter Strojny, 1953-54, "That C-124 on page 18 (of the radar history) must be the one I flew on my trip to Reykjavik in Dec. '53. It had wood benches running the full length of the fuselage (INSIDE). I was sitting where the loading ramp ended and the wood bench started. With the wind whistling in between the clamshell doors, there was only about 7 degrees difference between inside and outside temp! BRRRRRRRR."

From Mark Hanneram, 1976-78, "I listened to a US pilot descend to his cold, watery death after his private Piper ran out of fuel... I camped at Thingvillir with friends... watched the midnight sun barely dip below the horizon... laughed as my drunk co-workers on one-year tours went out into the rocks to fight the "devil birds"...suffered from the incredible stench of "Kef Katie" when the wind blew in the wrong direction."

From David Larcy, 1990-91, "I remember one day in particular when it was very windy, and I was walking back to the dorm from the HQ building, when a large gust of wind stripped the glasses off my face and threw them several feet away. I had to have them repaired due to the damage..."

From Mike Groff, 1994-95, "I'll never forget the one time I ate a healthy helping of isa, just to come out of the chow hall and met by the fine smell of the Sandgerði. That wind (those that have smelled it will know exactly what I mean.) I had to run over to the side door of the HQ (to the mailboxes) to take shelter so as not to waste the fine meal I had just consumed."

David Jarratt, 1961-62, L-20 pilot, "The month before I left in March 1962 we had 52 inches of snow. I also remember trying to walk out to the hanger one windy day – we couldn't make it. The ramp was pure ice and the head winds gusting over 60 K."

**H-2 Stories (1956-1960)**

From Maj Paul Coke, 11 Jan 1961, "We had pegged the anemometer by the time the winds reached 80 mph with gusts over 100 mph. After 8 straight hours, the wind started to subside, but the gusts remained strong. As we looked up into the bubble, we saw that the cap at the top was starting to fail as some of the seams were splitting. We stopped the antenna from rotating and faced it into the direction of the wind. The storm finally blew a large hole in the bubble and it was ripped to shreds -- but it stayed anchored to the base. We laid out the pieces of the dome on the floor of the gym and waited for a team from Keflavik."

From John Hewitt, 1961, "Imagine snow blowing right through the thick concrete walls in the hallways connecting the various sections of the site (except for the Tropo building which was away and separate.)"

From Duane Balkema, 1960-61, "On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1961, in a blinding snowstorm, in a Gooney Bird that had messed a wingtip in a ground loop on the beach sand landing --we all prayed it would come in, but we could only hear it when all of the sudden it was taxiing up to the shack on the beach. The pilot, an old Air Force Colonel, got out leaving an engine running as the two Navy Pilots bolted out the door and threw up on the ground. The Air Force Pilot was a crusty old guy who was not afraid of flying into hell as proven by the 0-0- landing. He said he flew up to the site over the Glaciers as usual and scared hell out of the Navy guys who would take over and fly back going around the Island and its Glaciers."

From Dan Scallen, 1957-58, "The H-2 site Installations Engineer phoned and reported that the buckling of the bubble in high winds changed the operational status of our radar so that the antenna would be shut down when winds exceeded 90 mph. In Jan 1958, this resulted in the bubble being severely torn by the rotating antenna. In Feb, 1958 a hole in the underground fuel line running from the underground storage tanks to the Heating plant prevented fuel from being pumped into our ignition boilers. To overcome this problem, we had to provide fuel from a 2,000 gallon truck to heat the entire facility."

Phil Harrison, 1958-59, "...I remember the arctic breakout storms. Rocks actually rolled up the hill and banged the walls when the winds went over 110 knots...pretty often."

From Fremming Nielsen, 1958-59, "There was a time or two when the winds were so strong the anemometer was pegged. At one such incident the wind actually tipped over one of the 6 X 6 trucks, and, as one "O" Club resident noted, created whitecaps in the toilet bowls.... I also recall that in order to help bring flights in during marginal weather or during the dark winter months, we devised a series of smudge pots that we put across the approach end of the runway. These were buckets filled with old oil and other burnable material which would help the pilot pick out the end of the runway which would otherwise not be clearly



visible... As I recall, Iceland had a designated parachute jump zone generally in the vicinity of Keflavik. This was in recognition of the fact that the weather could change so quickly over the island that a C-47 taking off for one of the remote sites could experience such a dramatic change that a landing was not possible anywhere on the island. Since the C-47's did not have sufficient fuel to make either Greenland or Ireland, parachuting would be the only remaining option."

From William Chick, 1959-60, "We were buried under the snow all winter long and for several months the buildings were covered. One night several of us opened one of the doors and found a hollow area all the way around the building near the walls. We ran and played and pulled ice sickles off the side of the building that measured 6 to 8 feet long. I made the mistake of taking my ice sickles inside in the hallway and bumped into the First Sergeant. He did not see the fun in it and put me on KP."

From Don Prater, 1960-61, "It wasn't long after the arrival of the USO troop that another storm ripped the radar bubble off & damaged the radar antennas beyond repair... The wind blowing across the radar bubble sound like thunder. Sometimes the whole building would shake...The blizzard came along while I was on duty in the radio shack. The best I remember it snowed only a few inches but the wind created drifts six feet high. The door to the building was snowed in. I had to spend a couple days there until we were able to dig out. Emergency rations had been stored in the radio shack in case people got stranded there. I think they were K-rations. It looked like they had been there for some time. I decided to try some of them. A standard package contained a

can of beans, wieners, a chocolate bar, crackers, & a small pack of Camel cigarettes. When I opened the crackers they turned to dust. The beans & wieners were so strong they gave me indigestion for days. The only really eatable food was the chocolate. I tried lighting one of the cigarettes. One draw & it went up in smoke. Luckily, I only had to spend a day or two there."

### H-3 Stories (1955-1988.)

From Darwyn McCall, 1955-56, "The wind sock down there was going in so many directions; I didn't see how the pilot knew which way to go in. He took a chance and we dropped some more. There were a few minutes of wondering, until we were low enough to get under the cross-winds that were flipping us around. We touched hard, bounced, touched lightly, and settled softly. Passengers then boarded a 25-foot motorized whale boat for the quarter-mile boat ride into the town of Hofn."

From Sid Rowley, 1973-74, while flying to Keflavik, "About 25 to 30 minutes after takeoff from Hofn, we entered heavy clouds and experienced moderate turbulence and heavy icing. Believe this! Both engines lost power and stopped. Talk about the sound of silence!!! We broke out of the clouds at approximately 2500 feet and fortunately were over the beach near the town of Vik. The pilots slid the craft onto the beach. Best landing I have ever been involved with..."

From Clark Wigley, 1976-77, "I cursed it every day when I had to do the 'Hofn lean' to get from the BOQ to the chow hall or to ops. I will never forget being told that new mattresses had arrived...but the wind was blowing at about 40 knots. I stepped out of the east end of the BOQ with my hands tightly gripping the little handles on the mattress, took two steps and the next thing I knew I was rolling end-over-end on a mattress... alternately hitting the ground when the mattress was not under me."

### H-4 Stories (1956-1960.)

From the History, the trip from Keflavik to Isafjordur – nearest town to H-4, "When nearing touchdown on water, the plane needed to be almost perfectly level. If not, one of the floats attached to the end of the wing would 'catch the water.' When that happened, the aircraft could crash. This rarely occurred when landing on calm water, but the prevailing winds near Isafjordur were often strong. The weather was usually overcast and covered with fog. On many flights the pilot would have to fly around watching for a hole in the clouds. Once located, he would dive the craft through the opening to make the approach to the sea landing. This made for a very exciting descent! In choppy seas, the PBV struck the water with a force that could jar the insides of the passengers and crew alike. The flying boat sat so low in the water that a first-time traveler would honestly believe that the plane was sinking."

From Reverend Robert Jack, a British Chaplain on a visit to H-4, "At Isafjordur, we changed into a fishing boat 28 tons heavy. This stage of our journey was tough, primitive, and dangerous. To sail for five hours into the full blast of an Arctic storm on a little craft made of wood demands a certain amount of courage, tenacity, and a good stomach."

From Bill Boulineau, 1956-57, "When we left the docks and headed out, just as soon as we turned around the breakwater, the seas really got rough. Never having been on the open ocean before, I didn't really know what to expect, but it certainly wasn't this. It was to be about a 4 hour boat ride to the site, and this trip took us over 6 hours to make... I can't ever remember being so scared of dying in my life, but I sure thought I wasn't going to make it this time."

From Reverend Jack, 1957, "Suddenly, a wind reaching gale force in less than ten minutes hit the camp. I stood up, walked towards the window, and looked. It was ten o'clock and there was no darkness outside. All through May, June and July there is perpetual light in this part of the world. I saw a large packing case fly through the air and glide over the edge of the cliff. Debris, boxes, and boarding mixed with snow dashed through the frosty air at seventy miles an hour. Some crashed against the walls of the barracks and boarded windows which had been previously broken in a storm. Other material disappeared high into the sky. An old timer said, 'Why,' he said when I saw his face break into a broad grin, 'old friend Gus is back again. Fifty miles an hour is his lapping pace, but when he comes in at full speed he'll be going on at a 135 miles an hour.'"

From our Radar History, "On Sept 7<sup>th</sup> winds over 100 mph caused great damage to the site...Oil barrels were scattered all over the beach and the barge was blown onto the beach, broken in two, with the engine completely blown off... a severe wind of 135. A 2 ½ ton capacity four wheel trailer was blown through the perimeter fence and over the cliff..."

