

WHAT HAPPENED AT MEMPHIS?

NOTE: Ruthann Couch contributed the below comments as to what happened at the Memphis Reunion. She graciously pitched in for me as I was not able to attend. Jerry Tonnell, Newsletter Editor.

Wednesday, May 30. Folks checked in throughout the day in both the Hampton Inn and the Fairfield Inn Hospitality Rooms. William and Connie Chick worked the Registration Tables. The Hospitality Rooms had plenty of water, soda, chips, muffins, cookies, and nuts. The hotels did not have a liquor license and would not allow us to serve alcohol in the Hospitality Rooms but our goody bags included 2 cans of beer and 2 small bottles of wine. William Chick presented an Iceland Radar Sites Reunion plaque to Allyson Boggan at Cline Tours that provided our bus transportation for the reunion. Allyson was very excited. She said this was the first reunion group plaque that she had ever received and that she will display it proudly on the office wall. Ruthann Couch, James Barto,



William Chick, and Peter Holland, presented an Iceland Radar Sites Reunion plaque to Teresa Smoot, the Hampton Inn Manager, and another plaque to the two Hampton Inn desk clerks. They were very appreciative. We were treated to Burger King Cheeseburgers and chicken sandwiches for dinner and Chick worked out a great price that included a veteran's discount. At 8 pm, we gathered in the Fairfield Inn Hospitality Room, which was the larger of the two Hospitality Rooms. Howard and Marty Behren showed slides of Howard ferrying a Cessna 172 from Albuquerque to Reykjavik in 1984 and of their drive around the

coast of Iceland, including Whale Bay, the fish drying racks and bubbling mud pots. It was extremely interesting and brought back a flood of memories. Thank you Howard and Marty!

Thursday, May 31. We boarded the buses and headed for the Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale, MS, the Blues Capital of the World. We enjoyed a pulled pork BBQ sandwich lunch at the Café Ground Zero and were



entertained by keyboard player and blues singer Lala Craig, who could really belt out the blues. We were all surprised, as was Lala, when her keyboard and microphone collapsed on the floor in the middle of a song but the staff quickly got everything squared away and the music continued. She played some of her original songs and some songs that we all knew. Prior to the music, Roy Shelly, Joseph Reeves and Colonel Douglas Harper presented an Iceland Radar Sites Reunion plaque to the Ground Zero Manager Lisa for display at the establishment. Ground Zero encourages folks to write their name on any surface in the club and there was plenty of graffiti that gave it a unique feel. Ground Zero is owned by Morgan Freeman, Bill Lockett and Howard Stovall and there are several interesting Iceland "connections" with the club. Bill Lockett is the former mayor of Clarksdale and Past Commander of American Legion, Post 28. His son, Oliver, lives in Reykjavik. Bill addressed our group and proudly displays the Icelandic flag at the blues club.

Chick presented an Iceland Radar Sites Reunion plaque to Bill Lockett as a token of our appreciation. Larry Robin introduced Tom Jones, who is a retired WO-4 and past Commander of American Legion, Post 28. He served in the US Navy at Keflavik and worked for the Armed Forces News Radio there. It is a small world! After lunch and the blues, we headed for Tunica, MS and the Gold Strike Casino for a little gambling and dinner. There was a little snafu with the dinner coupons for the Pickle and Jam Eatery because the contact person that Chick had worked with, was fired the week before our visit and no one at the Casino knew about the dinner coupons.

Chick got it sorted out and the food was good and we received \$5 in free slot play. Nobody got rich but nobody lost their shirt either. After a few hours at the Gold Strike, we headed back to the hotel and the Hospitality Rooms. We were extremely happy to present Colonel Douglas Harper with a "Quilt of Valor" in appreciation for his sacrifice and service to the United States of America. William Chick had done the leg work to get the quilt and Ruthann Couch read Colonel Harper's impressive biography while Peter Holland and Dwyte Evans wrapped



Colonel Harper in a "Quilted Hug of Gratitude." Colonel Harper served 23 years in the USAF and held his first command assignment as the Commander at Hofn (H-3) in 1972. Fred Engle and Lowry Ratcliff presented an Iceland Radar Sites Reunion plaque to Katherine Charlton, Manager of the Fairfield Inn, and she thanked us for our service to our country and for being such great guests. After a busy day, folks stuck around the Hospitality Rooms and shared memories and stories of their time in Iceland.

Friday, June 1. The group boarded the buses for Beale Street, also known as "Home of the Blues," where we had about an hour to walk around. We were dropped off by the statue of "The King" (Elvis Presley). Beale Street was quiet in the morning and it was easy to walk up and down the street to read the historical signs and peer into the numerous clubs and businesses, such as BB King's Blues Club, A. Schwab's Soda Fountain, Lansky Brothers Clothiers, Rum Boogie Café, the Blue Note Alley, the Tin Roof, & Club Hand. The sidewalk featured the names of many famous musicians and there was a variety of guitar art along the street. Some expanded their exploring by walking to the famous Peabody Hotel, Auto Zone Baseball Park, the Gibson Guitar Company (currently going through bankruptcy) and the FedEx Forum. We all headed to the BB King Café for a terrific buffet lunch that featured catfish and pulled pork. Our live entertainment at the café was canceled a few weeks back, but we did a great job of entertaining ourselves. It turns out that June 1st is a memorable day for some of our folks. Larry Robin turned 84, Gene Couch turned 82, and Joseph & Carol Reeves celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. The Birthday Boys and the Anniversary Couple were treated to a peach cobbler with vanilla ice cream to celebrate the events. Congratulations! We returned to the hotel and had a few hours before heading back to Memphis for the evening. We boarded the buses and headed back into Memphis for the banquet at the Rock and Soul Museum. It was fantastic! While there, we presented Toni Bell an Iceland Radar Sites Reunion plaque for display at the museum. Prior to dinner, a film explaining the history of music in Memphis was shown and it was great. Larry Robin took a few minutes and talked about the past reunions and how much fun they have been. Chaplain



Chip Norton said grace and we then proceed to the buffet dinner which was terrific featuring grilled chicken, shrimp & grits, macaroni & cheese, green salad and steamed vegetables. It was delicious. The bus drivers were able to take home several meals because there was so much great food left over. After dinner, we were able to tour the museum with headsets to listen to each display and it was extremely informative. There was a marquee in the museum welcoming the "Iceland Radar Sites." We returned to the hotel and congregated in the Hospitality Room for our

farewell evening. Colonel Harper showed off the Aerospace Defense Command "A" Award for H-3 in 1972. Colonel Harper had given out tickets for a series of drawings for items that he had brought from home including needlepoint pictures, most of which he had done himself, and fishing floats and other trinkets. It was a great way to end another successful reunion.

We also presented a plaque to Holly Townsend McElyea, Small Meeting Sales Manager for the Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau for all her assistance with our stay in Memphis.

This is **the last reunion that William Chick** will be able to organize due to his Parkinson's disease. He has done a wonderful job and we owe him a huge THANK YOU! We cannot forget about Chick's team over the years: Larry Robin, Reed Thomas, Jerry May, Jerry Tonnell, Joe Pyrdek, WC Chilton, Pappy Papworth, John Tianen, Ed Morris, David Hawk (deceased), Jerry Blackwell (deceased), Fred Schulte (deceased) and Connie Chick. They have all spent time and effort to make our Iceland Radar Site reunions special. Thank You! **Note:** Dwyte Evans & wife Sandra volunteered to help organize the next reunion if we decide to have another one next year or in 2 years.