

# US RADAR SITES ICELAND NEWSLETTER, Jun 2007

Newsletter Editor, Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959.

## **FROM THE CHAIRMAN:** William Chick, H-2, 1959-60. [littlechick@msn.com](mailto:littlechick@msn.com)

Thanks to all those who made Branson a huge success -- the committee staff, those working registration, hospitality, and to all who were in attendance. If you had not come, the work would have been in vain. Now we need to start working on our next reunion to be held in 2009 -- two locations led the straw poll: San Antonio and Laughlin, NV. However, Biloxi is still in the running. Vote and / or make your suggestions known by contacting Jerry May at, [jwmay@bscn.com](mailto:jwmay@bscn.com). Jerry will tally the votes and the results will be in published in the December 2007 Newsletter.

**Treasurer:** David Hawk, H-1, 1985-86. Many thanks for the great support the members have given our organization. Since we started in 2001, we have never had to starve Peter so that Paul could be fed. The Branson Reunion was a success equal to or better than our first two reunions. All reunion and post-reunion bills have been paid and the Treasury balance is \$7,500. -- give or take. I doubt many alumni organizations are in such good financial condition. In off-reunion years, expenses amount to about \$1,800 for the twice yearly newsletters and another \$300 for the Website fees. Reprints of Jerry Tonnell's book, History of the Radar Sites of Iceland, generally run \$400 to \$500 per batch, but all that money finds its way back to the treasury as the books are sold (at cost) -- ditto for the coins and other mementos that are offered from time to time.

Since 2001, I have held our money in a bank in Oklahoma City and have done most transactions by mail. I have gotten gun-shy about sending money via USPS and after the Branson Reunion, I opened an account at a local bank near my home. Please continue to make your checks payable to the Iceland Radar Reunion and don't forget to note on the 'for' line where your checks is to be applied -- for dues, donation, registration, banquet, life membership, etc. Our local USPS carrier sometimes mis-delivers mail. Most of the customers on Rt 1 know me, but don't know who Iceland Radar Reunion might be. In the event you send a check and it doesn't clear your bank by the end of the second month, please call me at (405)-238-0151. Address envelopes to: **David Hawk, Rt 1 Box 233, Elmore City, OK 73433.**

**Scrapbook Chairman:** W. C. Chilton, H-1, 1961-62. [wcandnelma@blomand.net](mailto:wcandnelma@blomand.net)  
Please send me photos for the scrapbooks. You can also send them to the Website Photo Chairmen, Jerry May or Bob Haines.

## **Historian:** Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959. [jtonnell@mindspring.com](mailto:jtonnell@mindspring.com)

The 2007 edition of our 64-page History book contains the history of all radar sites and includes 110 pictures as well as quotations from some 75 radar vets. It explains what we did, why we did it, and how it was done. About 30 books are still available for sale (nearly 600 have already been distributed.) They can be purchased for **\$10** including postage (our cost.) Write checks payable to "Iceland Radar Reunion" and mail to: **William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036**

**Membership Chairman:** Jerry Blackwell, H-2, 1960-61, H-3, 1961. There are now over 2,200 members. Please look for those old orders or if you recall a name pass it on to me: [blckjerr@aol.com](mailto:blckjerr@aol.com)

**Website Photo Chairmen.** Jerry May, H-1, 1962-63, [jwmay@bscn.com](mailto:jwmay@bscn.com) and Bob Haines, H-4, 1957-58, [RAMAC1440@aol.com](mailto:RAMAC1440@aol.com). Check the website for the new photos being posted everyday.

**Memorabilia Chairman.** Mike Mongone, H-1 & H-4 1960-61. [camco9x19@netzero.net](mailto:camco9x19@netzero.net)  
Our Website USRSI Store has history books, golf shirts, tee shirts, coins, pens, and hats. If you cannot find it on our website, give me a call at (386)-935-2322 or call William Chick: (803)-932-9596.

**Administrator and Webmaster.** Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59. [Reed01@optonline.net](mailto:Reed01@optonline.net)  
The Branson Reunion attendance had 138 members along with 129 spouses and guests for a total of 267 representing 39 states--the top 3 states were TX-10, OK-10, and FL-9. Unit attendance was: SAW-2, ACS-1, H1-54, H2-23, H3-38, & H4-20. Our Data Base has 4,173 names-- of this 1,804 are on the Search and Find Roster. Deceased members number 251. To see our Store, click on *USRSI Store*. Also see the *WHO/Where To?* section for updated information on Dues and Photos. Our Web Site location is: [www.usradarsitesiceland.org](http://www.usradarsitesiceland.org) No sign-in or password is necessary.

## WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BRANSON REUNION?

By Matz Malone, H-2, 1960-61

If success is gauged by satisfaction, the 2007 reunion in Branson of the USAF Radar Sites in Iceland has to be considered a success. Not only was it the largest registration turnout with 267 attending, the messages during the banquet underscored the importance of the roles each of us had in preserving the peace during the Cold War.

The numbers are growing each time we get together to remember and reminisce with friends & compatriots of the good times and the bad times that we all experienced during our tour at one of the radar sites.

Whether relating the hardships experienced at H-4, the bubble blowing down at H-2, the experiences on the coast at H-3, or the times at H-1, the snow, the wind or the loneliness of being so far from home and loved ones, there is a common thread in this patchwork fabric of Iceland service as we all served our tour. Ken Stanley, H-1, 1960-61, put his service at Rockville in perspective "...*It was the best experience I ever had...that I'd never want to do again.*"

We were younger and more resilient, and we didn't want to go, but we went because we had no other choice! We followed orders and went to a place many had never heard of. But, at the same time, we had an important job to do and we did it. In later years, we became more and more aware of just how important what we did in Iceland really was.

Fridthor Eydal, Icelandic author of the *History of the Iceland Defense Force* (1951-2006) remarked during his address during the banquet, "*The radar site network was the backbone of the Iceland Defense Force... Thousands of young Americans stood the watch. Those harsh conditions were a timely test of manhood.*"

Rex Marshall, H-1, 1997-1999, (Col, USAF Ret.) was in command when the 932<sup>nd</sup> moved from Rockville to Keflavik. He noted during his banquet address that those

who served during the more than 50 years of the U.S. presence in Iceland were “the pioneers... To each of you who served, ‘Thank You’ for the service to your country and the hard work protecting our country and for training and mentoring the young people who followed you... You had a history that continued.”

During the reunion, a plaque was presented to the Radisson Hotel Hall of Fame by the Radar Sites of Iceland Association (photo below.)



Keynote Speaker Francis Gary Powers Jr., (left & below) founder of the Cold War Museum project, said the Cold War Museum project is to preserve the Cold War history and to keep the history alive. “*The Cold War was a World War. Students are forgetting this.*” He noted that those who served in

Iceland will remember the part they played in the Cold War. “*Today’s War on Terror had roots to the Cold War. We can trace today’s world back to the Cold War.*” He related the events that led to his father, Francis Gary Powers, Sr., being shot down and



taken prisoner by the Russians in 1961. He was a CIA pilot flying U-2 high-altitude over-flight spy missions over the Soviet Union. At that time, few Americans had heard of the CIA, but President Dwight D. Eisenhower noted the CIA was “...vital but distastefully necessary to avert another Pearl Harbor.” The senior Powers was tried in Russia and found guilty and imprisoned as a spy. However, he was eventually released as part of a brokered trade between the U.S. and the Soviet Union for Russian Spy, Colonel Rudolph Abel. Powers died in a

helicopter crash in Los Angeles in 1977 while working for CBS.

The banquet was under the able leadership of MC Larry Robin, H-1, 1964-65, who kept things moving. During the ceremony, special recognition was given to all World War II veterans (left) who attended the reunion. Also recognized was Jerry Blackwell, H-2, 1960-61 for his work as membership chairman and for locating more than 700 of the 2,200 active members. Bill Chick, H-2, 1959-60 was presented a plaque for his continued outstanding service as reunion chairman.

Before closing, a moment of silence was observed for the 251 radar site vets who have passed away since their service in Iceland.

\*Note: all photos by Jerry May



# US RADAR SITES ICELAND NEWSLETTER, Dec 2007

Newsletter Editor, Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959.

It will be **SAN ANTONIO** in 2009.

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN:** William Chick, H-2, 1959-60. [littlechick@msn.com](mailto:littlechick@msn.com)

The votes are in and over 60% voted for San Antonio, TX for the site of our 4<sup>th</sup> major reunion to take place in 2009. Information on hotels, exact dates, and things to see are in the works and details will be in the June 2008 newsletter. Thanks to all the work done by the reunion committee. We are still growing in numbers and interest in maintaining our organization is very alive. Our numbers have increased by about 25 since the June report. We now stand at over 2,200 members found. However, we do need a new membership chairman. Jerry Blackwell, H-2 1960-61, is taking a well deserved break. Thanks go out to Jerry for his efforts -- he found hundreds of Iceland radar vets. Thanks Jerry! I appreciate and thank all who have both e-mailed and snail-mailed us. It shows there is a lot of interest and memories in our military past.

Mailing addresses and Email Update: If you have a new postal mailing address or a new e-mail address please pass it on so your files can be kept up to date. There have been many contacts about trying to find old friends. Send your changes to William Chick at [littlechick@msn.com](mailto:littlechick@msn.com) or Reed Thomas at [reed01@optonline.net](mailto:reed01@optonline.net). Or mail to the address on this newsletter.

**News About San Antonio (from *Travel Magazine*):** *“Great Getaways: Remember San Antonio, remember the Alamo. San Antonio is a city graced with both a cultural soul and a multicultural spirit. Drawn by the life-giving river, this crossroads of cattle and coin, frontiersmen and friars, was born as a Spanish Colonial outpost. San Antonio was melded from both Mexico and Texas, carved by the entrepreneurial commerce and worldly civility of German and other Western European transplants. Centuries later, San Antonio is top-of-mind for those seeking a weekend getaway or a week of relaxation and immersion into colorful history, Texas hospitality, cultural diversity, contemporary art, and historic architecture. First time*



*visitors awed—by the many new choices of restaurants, museums, shop, galleries, boutiques, and more. Visitors often start their San Antonio foray at the romantic River Walk, nestled 20 feet below street level, the San Antonio River meanders along curving cobblestone walkways and under historic stone bridges and archways. Some stroll the three-mile River Walk, shaded by tall, leafy cypress trees. Other floats by in river cruisers, or park themselves at a riverside table in anticipation of great San Antonio-style cuisine.”* In addition, there are military bases near by such as Lackland, Randolph, and Fort Sam Houston -- plus the Admiral Nimitz Foundation and the National Museum of the Pacific War. The largest Mexican marketplace outside of Mexico is in San Antonio. Championship golf courses, RV parks, shopping and more are also available in San Antonio. They have something for everyone.

**Membership Chairman needed:** Our committee is without a membership chairman at this time. If you are interested in helping call me at 803-932-9596. In the meantime, if you find some old orders with names please pass them on to me, W Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036

**Treasurer:** David Hawk, H-1, 1985-86. Thanks go to those who continue to support



the organization with your voluntary dues of \$15 per year. Welcome and thank you to the many new members that have joined since the Branson reunion. *(For those interested, a "Life Membership" status is available for a one time donation of \$150 -- 22 vets have become Life Members.)* Please make your \$15 check out to "Iceland Reunion" and mail it to: **David Hawk, Rt 1 Box 233, Elmore City OK 73433. Telephone is 405-238-0151**

**Memorabilia Chairman,** Mike Mangone, H-1 & H-4 1960-61. [camco9x19@netzero.net](mailto:camco9x19@netzero.net)  
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**Mini-Reunion.** The H-2 "Bubble Busters," the Airmen who were at H-2 on 11 Jan 1961,



the night the bubble was blown off the search radar tower, will hold a mini-reunion tentatively planned for April 4, 5, and 6, 2008, at the Clarion Hotel on Swing Road, Greensboro, NC. For information, contact Clarion Hotels at 415 Swing Road, Greensboro, NC 27409 (336) 299-7650. When making reservations tell them you are with the "Iceland Reunion Air Force Group." Reservation deadline is 4 March, 2008. Anyone interested in attending the H-2 mini-reunion should contact Gene Nezat (H-2, H-3, 1960-61)...[gnezat@earthlink.net](mailto:gnezat@earthlink.net)

**Historian:** Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959. [itonnell@mindspring.com](mailto:itonnell@mindspring.com)

In July, 2007, a copy of the *History of the Radar Sites of Iceland* book was presented to each of the following organizations: 1) Command Historian's Office, Hq USAFE in Ramstein, Germany, 2) The Director of the Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center [formerly the Air University Library], and, 3) The Director of the Air Force Historical Research Agency. Therefore, you can now be assured that the story of your contribution to the defense of America, as recorded in our official history, has been formally placed in three prestigious historical repositories. They are available for Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, Squadron Officer College, Senior NCO Academy, and other agency research projects.

The 2007 printing of our 64-page History book contains the history of all radar sites and includes 110 pictures as well as quotations from some 75 radar vets. It explains what we did, why we did it, and how it was done. About 15 books are still available for sale (618 have already been distributed.) They can be purchased for **\$10** including postage (our cost.) Write checks payable to "Iceland Reunion" and mail to: **William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036**

**2006 Update on the four closed Radar Sites, William Chick** writes: *"While in Iceland last year(summer 2006) for the closing of the 932 ACS, a group of us met up with a US Navy corpsman. He loved backpacking around Iceland and had visited each of the*



*four sites. He was eager to hear us tell what was there -- his description of each is as follows: at H-3 (Hofn) he hiked to the site of rubble and to the airfield; at H-2 (Langanes) he saw a telephone pole and some concrete slabs; at H-4 (Latrar) he saw many buildings still standing, but windows,*

*doors and roofs were collapsing; at H-1 (Rockville) the only thing left was the concrete pads outlining the buildings. We gave him our web site which gave him a great insight as to what was once there." <http://www.usradarsitesiceland.org/>*

**Website Photo Chairmen, Jerry May, H-1, 1962-63, [jwmay@bscn.com](mailto:jwmay@bscn.com) and Bob Haines, H-4, 1957-58, [RAMAC1440@aol.com](mailto:RAMAC1440@aol.com).** Check the website for the new photos being posted everyday.

**Scrapbook Chairman: WC Chilton, H-1, 61-62,** I am still looking for more pictures for our scrapbooks. Send copies of photos to 210 Parish Lane, McMinnville TN. 37110 or e-mail [wcandnelma@blomand.net](mailto:wcandnelma@blomand.net)

**Administrator & Webmaster: Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59. [Reed01@optonline.net](mailto:Reed01@optonline.net).**



Our database has 4,264 names of vets. They are from the following organizations: SAW, 9; ACS, 136; H1, 2044; H2, 297; H3, 1,351; H4, 387; and others, 40. Total: 4,264. Of this total, 1,722 are on our search list, 258 are deceased, and 22 are Life Members. In order to keep our data base of names, photos, and library of documents, we depend on the dues we receive from our members. If you have any photos or you have a factual story, please let us know so we can post it to our website.