

U.S. Radar Sites of Iceland Newsletter, June 2003

H-1, 932nd; H-2, 667th; H-3, 933rd & 667th; H-4, 934th.

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The Dayton Reunion. Based on all the comments from the survey, the Dayton Reunion was a great success! We had 110+ veterans attend. Along with their spouses and guests, there were about 220 in all. Thanks to our Hospitality Chairman, Andy Holzinger, ample refreshments were on hand. I am sure this helped to promote many of the wild stories about Iceland – *although, some may have been fiction*. Our Chaplain, Joe Pischieri, kept praying for us to get the plaque ceremony in without the predicted heavy rains – those prayers were answered. It was a great ceremony thanks to all the help from the folks at the Air Force Museum. For the whole story, check out our Web site to view the many photos and documents from the Reunion: <http://usradarsitesiceland.org/>.

The Next Reunion? We need input from each of you on where to have our reunion in 2005. The 67 exit surveys revealed that Biloxi, Las Vegas, Branson, and Colorado Springs were at the top of the list. But we need feedback from all who would like to attend the next reunion. Where, and at what time of the year, would you like to meet? Please contact me by the 1 December 2003, so that we can start working on the reunion site.

WHAT HAPPENED AT DAYTON?

50TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION, 24-27 APRIL 2003, DAYTON, OHIO,

by Jerry Tonnell, US Radar Sites of Iceland Historian, H-2, 1959

Thursday, 24 April 2003. By Thursday evening, nearly 40% of the veterans and their guests had arrived, picked up their registration packages, and began socializing in the Hospitality Room. Room 1063 soon became a room number to commit to memory because it was there that we renewed old friendships and made new acquaintances. Under the leadership of Andy Holzinger, H-1, 1962-63, Hospitality Chairman, the room was well stocked with the following: coffee, soda, spirits, popcorn, munchies, photo albums, and plenty of tall tales. We were advised that for the next couple of mornings there would be breakfast rolls available. Soon, many of the vets were proudly wearing their Radar Site hats and shirts that had been so professionally designed by Joe Pyrdek, H-3, 1967-68, Memorabilia Chairman. That evening, many paired up with old and new friends and dined in the Hotel restaurant or drove the short distance to one of the many nearby fine eating establishments. Before retiring for the evening, some folks began to read the Reunion History, but put it down and decided it was more than they could handle in a late night's reading.

Friday, 25 April 2003. In the morning, as we visited the Hospitality Room, little did we realize that the free breakfast rolls were easily big enough to feed a hungry man. The weather was looking ominous which did not bode well with the Iceland Radar Plaque Dedication Ceremony scheduled for that afternoon. Many more veterans arrived, and now about 75% of all those planning to attend had already checked in. William Chick and his wife, Connie, were at the Registration Desk until relieved by Tom McDonald, H-3, 1981-82, our Registration Director.

The Plaque Dedication Ceremony. At about 1 PM, several vehicle caravans made the 8-mile trip to Memorial Park on the grounds of the USAF Museum, Wright-Patterson AFB. Upon arrival, the rain, which had been threatening all morning, finally began to fall – but only lightly. Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959, the Ceremony Organizer, verified that all the principal parties were in place. Diane Zukoski of the USAF Museum staff sought the advice of the Reunion Coordinator, William Chick, H-2, 1959-60, asking him if we should invoke the indoor inclement weather plan. Being a true veteran of the day-to-day weather he experienced in Iceland, Chick made it clear that the ceremony would take place out of doors. In an effort to beat an approaching downpour, the ceremony began a few minutes before the scheduled 2 PM start time.

Nearly 150 people gathered in front of the podium as the Colors were posted by the Wright-Patterson AFB Honor Guard. Then we all joined in the singing of The National Anthem. In the background was a granite memorial stone with a veil covering our Radar Plaque. After Reunion Chaplain, Joe Pischieri, H-1, 1979-80, lead us in the Invocation, Jerry Tonnell, Reunion Historian, stepped to the mike and read the Citation he had written to accompany the Plaque Dedication. By this time, a light rain was steadily falling on both the people and on the ink of the Citation. Fortunately, Jerry had the original Citation under cover and off to the side, glass framed, and placed in a plastic covered container – he was actually reading a copy of the Citation. What saved the day was the bill of the H-2 hat he wore – the one designed by Joe Pyrdek. The bill kept the majority of the rain off of the Citation with the exception of a couple dozen minor water smears. The framed Citation was left for future display in the USAF Museum -- this citation can be seen in the 'Reunion Memories' section of our associations' Website: <http://usradarsitesiceland.org/>

After the Citation was read, it was time for Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59, our Director of Admin, and William Chick to come into focus. Situated on either side of the veil, they pulled away the cloth exposing the Iceland Radar Plaque. [*The Plaque itself had been the project of Craig Hackett, H-4, 1960-61, and his committee – unfortunately, he was unable to be at Dayton for the ceremony.*] The official presentation of the Plaque was put in the hands of retired Colonel Doug Harper, H-3 commander from 1972 to 1973. Col Harper asked Major General Raymond Moorman (Ret), of the USAF Museum staff, to come to the podium at which time he presented the Plaque to the General. He also presented a complete set of radar site patches donated by Mike Mangone, H-1, 1960-61, as well as a copy of the Reunion History. General Moorman then addressed the assembly and highlighted the importance of the radar vets' contribution to the Cold War effort. A light rain continued to fall. After the Benediction by Joe Pischieri, the Colors were retired by the Honor Guard while a bugler from the Wright-Patterson AFB Band played Taps. In sum, it was a very

moving Ceremony which brought a few tears to some of the most hardened of veterans. Although the weather was less than ideal, it just so happened that the conditions – overcast with light rain, windy, and 55° -- were almost exactly what we all experienced on any given “balmy,” summer day in Iceland. It was only fitting that the weather turned out the way it did. When done, many stayed & toured the huge USAF Museum.

Saturday, 26 April 2003. By now, all 112 vets and 95 guests had arrived -- for a total of 207 people. Another 23 vets, plus nearly 20 guests were forced to cancel in the two weeks leading up to the Reunion – mostly for health reasons. After breakfast, the veterans prepared for the individual radar site meetings.

Radar Site Meetings. Each radar squadron had a room set aside for their meeting. At 9:30 AM the vets arrived at their respective meeting areas armed with their photos, slides, albums, and memories. Most of the meetings lasted over two hours -- this helped to form a bond among the participants as they exchanged mailing and email addresses and relived their days on the “Rock.”

Business Meeting Highlights. On Saturday afternoon at 2 PM, a meeting was scheduled of the general membership to discuss the future of the Iceland Radar Site organization. William Chick showed up a full 45 minutes before the scheduled start time and sat alone for some time in the large meeting room. At first thought, to a casual observer, attendance at such a meeting would not seem very interesting. However, as 2 o'clock approached, the vets started trickling in. By 2 PM the room was almost full with several folks standing at the back. There must have been over 100 in attendance – quite a testimony to the interest in continuing the association. *[For purposes of continuity, the Radar Sites of Iceland veterans' organization will hereafter be referred to as, the “Association.”]* A few key issues were decided at that meeting, including:

- 1) **Dues.** That there would be a collection of annual dues for those who want to continue the “Association.” The amount was set at \$15 per year to be paid starting 1 June 2003. Checks would be sent to our Treasurer, David Hawk, H-1, 1985-86, at 114 Larry Lane, Pauls Valley, OK 73075. All dues payments would be entirely on a volunteer basis and made out to: 50th Anniv Iceland Radar.
- 2) **Next Reunion.** That the “Association” should schedule another reunion – possibly in 2 years time – the date and place to be decided by the Executive Committee after taking into account the results of the Reunion Surveys and feedback from the next Newsletter.
- 3) **History Sales.** That the extra copies of the Reunion History would be made available for sale at \$7.00 per copy which would include postage and handling costs. Proceeds would go entirely to the “Association” to help pay for the cost of the printing. The books can be obtained from William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036. Checks should be made payable to: 50th Anniv Iceland Radar. In the event we receive more orders beyond our present stock, action will be taken to print more.
- 4) **Newsletter.** That a newsletter will be printed and mailed sometime in late June summarizing the status and goals of the “Association.”
- 5) **Website.** That our “Association” Website would continue to operate using the funds provided by the voluntary dues. It was pointed out that there are two Iceland Websites; however, the one named AirForcesIceland is hosted by Yahoo **and is not our website!!**

The “Association” Website is: <http://usradarsitesiceland.org/> and is paid for by the “Association.” One benefit of our Website is that there are no ads and the chance of having cookies placed on your email address by various advertisers is nil – there are no ads on our site. However, there is an annual fee for this service – the Executive Committee felt it worth the cost in order to foster privacy. The meeting adjourned at about 3 PM. William Chick did an excellent job at orchestrating the session's agenda.

While the meeting was in progress, many of the guests and spouses were visiting the lobby where most of the albums were on display. Several had been lovingly assembled by W.C. Chilton, H-1, 1961-62, Display and Decorations Chairman.

The Reunion Banquet. By about 6:30 PM, all 207 attendees had assembled in the Banquet Room. The MC was Jerry Tonnell. We then sang the National Anthem, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Reunion Chaplain, Joe Pischieri, then lead us in the Invocation.

Our “**Special Guests**” were then introduced. They included:

Col Frank Herrelko, commander of the WW II 556th Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion of the USAAF. Col Herrelko, approaching his 90th birthday, served in Iceland from 1943-1945 as the commander of 8 or more radar sites. He is considered a radar pioneer.

Lt Col Van Don Kepley, current commander of the 932nd Air Control Squadron, at Naval Air Station, Keflavik. He was joined by one of his flight commanders, 1st Lt William Gallian.

Chuck Comstock, H-3, 1973-74, was introduced as the donor of the inscribed wine glasses. He donated enough glasses so that one could be provided to all in attendance.

Einar Jonsson and his son, Jon Einarsson. Einar is an Icelander who was employed by H-4 as a “Cat” driver during the years 1956-1960. Any H-4 member will tell you that Einar, called “Highpockets,” played a key role in the survival of all who were assigned to that site.

Introduction of the Executive Committee. They included William Chick, Reunion Coordinator; Reed Thomas, Director of Admin; Joe Pyrdek, Memorabilia Chairman; David Hawk, Treasurer; W.C. Chilton, Display and Decorations Chairman; Andy Holzinger, Hospitality Chairman; Tom McDonald, Registration Director; Jack Hamilton, Trailblazers Chairman; Joe Pischieri, Chaplain; and Jerry Tonnell, Reunion Historian and Banquet MC. Absent from Dayton were Craig Hackett, Plaque Chairman; and Bill Boulineau, Website Coordinator.

Remembrances of Iceland. Life at the site: Through the eyes of the radar veterans. Short addresses were given by the following:

- 1) **Lambert Stammerjohn, WW II Radar in Iceland.** Bert spent 1941-1943 in Iceland as one of the pioneers of the military application of radar.
- 2) **Jack Hamilton, the 1952-53 Trailblazers.** Jack was in the first group of radar men to land in Iceland in post-WW II Iceland.
- 3) **Larry Robin, H-1, 1964-65, the 932nd AC & W Sq at Rockville AFS.** Larry represented the largest number of attendees at the Iceland Reunion.
- 4) **Federal Judge William Fremming Nielsen, H-2, 1958-59, the 667th AC & W Squadron.** Frem spoke on behalf of the men who served on that mountaintop radar site farthest from Keflavik called Langanes AFS.
- 5) **Col (Ret) Douglas Harper, H-3, 1972-73, the 933rd and 667th AC & W Sq.** This former commander of H-3 spoke on behalf of those who served at Hofn AFS from 1955 to 1988.
- 6) **John Broughton, H-4, 1959-60, the 934th AC & W Sq.** John spoke for the men who were assigned to the most remote radar site in Iceland. Also speaking about H-4 was **Einar Jonsson** who came to the Reunion from Iceland. He was a caterpillar driver whose job was to keep the steep mountain road open year round so that those at the site could be kept supplied – a job he performed for four long years.
- 7) **Lt Col Van Don Kepley, 932nd ACS, 2001-2003.** As the current squadron commander, Col Kepley spoke as a representative of those who are presently serving in Iceland at the 932nd ACS at Naval Air Station, Keflavik.

Comments by Reunion Leaders. The two principal leaders and organizers of the Reunion addressed the audience. **Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59,** Reunion Director of Admin, spoke to us about the “Association's” Website. He officially thanked all who contributed.

William Chick, H-2, 1959-60, Reunion Coordinator, had the last word. He related the "Association's" journey from the initial concept of a Reunion to its final realization in Dayton, Ohio.

Sunday, 27 April 2003. Sunday was a day to give thanks for the weekend's events & bid farewell to the old friendships renewed and the new ones made over the past three days. Promises were made to keep in touch and exchange photographs. We began our return to the far corners of the USA, with a few flying back to Iceland. All departed on a positive note. **But, there were new developments after the Reunion:**

A few days after we returned from the Reunion, I received an e-mail from Lt William Gallian. As mentioned earlier, he was at Dayton along with his boss, Lt Col Don Kepley, current commander of the 932nd Air Control Squadron in Keflavik. Gallian provided me with some interesting information: Very recently, the Russians decided to test the air defenses of Iceland by sending two late model Bear Bombers into Icelandic air space. "*The Russian planes were of the so-called "Bear" Type, Tupolev 142 'Bear F' and 'Bear J.'*" Both bombers were intercepted.

As your Historian, I find this to be an unusual event in that the Soviets have mostly stayed away from Iceland since 1991 (*which more or less coincides with the end of the Cold War.*) There were very few intercepts between 1991 and 1999 -- in fact; there hasn't been an intercept of a Russian bomber by the 932nd since 1999. That is, until April 2003.

Also of interest is the fact that we have long known that Russian military intelligence agencies are very proficient, and the military leadership of that nation sometimes uses such information to make their own kind of statement. For example, if you look on P. 27 of your Reunion History, you will note the following entry I inserted near the photo of General Chappie James. It reads, "*On 17 Sep 1976, just hours after Gen Daniel "Chappie" James arrived at Keflavik to award AFI and the 932nd the USAF Outstanding Unit Award, two Tu-95 Bear Deltas were intercepted as they entered Iceland's air space...*" Was the timing a simple coincidence or was it a plan to embarrass four-star General James who, at the time, was the Commander of Air Defense Command?

Now let's move to April 2003. Were the Russian's aware that the commander of the 932nd and one of his flight commanders were TDY to the United States at the time of their incursion? And more importantly, did the exact timing of the Bear flights have any significance? I'll let you decide. Did you know that this first intercept in four years occurred on Friday, 25 April 2003 -- the very same day and just a few hours before we dedicated the Radar Sites of Iceland Plaque to the USAF Museum? Did the Russians know about the date and time of our Plaque Dedication? Had the 932nd not detected the Bears, or the F-15s not intercepted and escorted them toward home, what kind of victory could the Russians have claimed? Would that have put a damper on our ceremony? We know they are masters of the game of chess. Were they hoping for a Checkmate? However, as in years past, the Radar Sites of Iceland foiled the Russian Bear's game plan and sent them back to their dens.

The outstanding tradition of the "Silent Sentinels" of the Northern skies lives on!!

U.S. RADAR SITES ICELAND NEWSLETTER,

DECEMBER 2003

H-1, 932nd; H-2, 667th; H-3, 933rd & 667th; H-4, 934th.

Web Page: <http://www.usradarsitesiceland.org/>

William Chick, H-2, 1959-60, 2005 Reunion Chairman. littlechick@msn.com

We are actively planning for our next reunion. It is tentatively scheduled to be held sometime during the year 2005 -- we are leaning toward timing the event for the 3rd week of May or the 3rd week of September depending upon where we have the Reunion. We have narrowed down the location to four possible sites: 1) Biloxi, MS; 2) Branson, MO; 3) Colorado Springs, CO, and, 4) Las Vegas, NV. We hope to make the final selection by the end of the first quarter of 2004 so we can advise everyone a year early to allow plenty of time to make plans. We would appreciate your help in making this selection. In addition, we would like to know what month of the year you prefer. Can you attend? Where and when? Let us hear from you.

Contact me by e-mail littlechick@msn.com or snail mail, William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036, or phone 803-932-9596.

Reed Thomas, H-4, 1958-59, Administration & Membership. Reed01@optonline.net

We are still looking for others who served at Iceland radar sites. If you have some old orders please send them to me. To date, we have found a total of about 1,000 radar vets. For those of you who have an internet connection, you can check your data at: <http://www.usradarsitesiceland.org/>
Our goal is to produce a complete roster of all who served at each site. The roster will show the history of those who served and what their duties were. We have already completed our Roster of H-4 -- go to our Web page to see what it looks like. Then check your name as it appears at the site to which you were assigned. If there is no Title or Rank shown for you, please send me an e-mail or regular mail with the correct data and I will update it. Paul Blais, H-3, is helping me enter data from the old search files. Upon completion, we will begin to try to find those in the search files. Our next project will be the Memorial for our deceased members. I wish to thank Bob Haines, Chuck Towner, Bill Boulineau, Bob Brauch, and Joe Pyrdek for helping to get the photos on our web page. I estimate it will take us about 2 years to process all the data we now have. Thank You for your Support. Reed.

David Hawk, H-1, 1985-86, Treasurer. dhawk1940@swbell.net

Dues. At our Dayton reunion it was agreed that there would be a collection of voluntary annual dues for those who want to continue the "Association." The amount was set at \$15 per year. All dues payments are entirely on a volunteer basis and should be made out to:

"50th Anniv Iceland Radar." Send your check to our Treasurer, David Hawk, 114 Larry Lane, Pauls Valley, OK 73075. For those interested, our financial statement is now posted on our Web page. Check it out at <http://www.usradarsitesiceland.org/>

Jerry Tonnell, H-2, 1959, Historian. jtonnell@mindspring.com

MORE ICELAND RADAR HISTORY BOOKS WERE ORDERED AND HAVE ARRIVED.

Because we sold out of the original supply of Radar Histories, we printed a new batch and they are ready for sale - **at cost**. For those who have not yet purchased one, let us review just what is inside this 60 page book, which includes 110 pictures, plus photos of 15 USAF patches.

1) The History explains why we were assigned to Iceland – you'll be surprised to find out just how important your job was to National Security.

2) Then, for the benefit of family members, there is a short explanation of how radar works.

3) Next, there are two chapters about the life and experiences of those assigned to Iceland during WW II and at Keflavik Air Base in 1952-53.

4) Finally, the last four chapters are the longest and cover life at H-1, H-2, H-3, and H-4.

Each of the last four chapters include the following sections:

- a) Details of the trip from Keflavik to the site
- b) The history of the operation and construction of the site
- c) The site's mission and significance of its shoulder patch
- d) Details of weather extremes at each site
- e) Excerpts through the years from various official IADF, Air Forces Iceland, 85th Group, and Unit Histories
- f) The relations we had with the local Icelanders
- g) Life at the Site featuring anecdotes from veterans of each unit -- in fact, about 74 different vets are quoted as they tell their interesting stories.

When you read the Conclusion to the History, you will be left with a sense of pride knowing just exactly how important your job was to help prevent a possible world war. To tell the truth, the History makes all those who served at a radar site in Iceland look pretty good. *(Several important Air Force Libraries around the nation will also be given a copy of the History so that your contribution to our nation's defense will be preserved and not forgotten.)*

How to get one. The new batch of Histories cost a little more since not as many were printed. They cost **\$8**, including postage and handling.

Make your check out to: 50th Anniv Iceland Radar. Send your order to: William Chick, 104 Summit Point Court, Chapin, SC 29036

1-803-932-9596 or Fax- (803) 932-2295

ATTENTION. ALL NEW MEMBERS & THOSE MEMBERS WHO DO NOT YET HAVE A COPY OF THE RADAR HISTORY.

Until supplies are exhausted, we will send a copy of the Iceland Radar History Book to all new members upon receipt of their annual dues (\$15) plus \$3 – **a total of \$18**. This offer also applies to current members who did not receive a copy of the History at the Dayton Reunion or have not purchased one from William Chick through the mail. When you send the \$18 to our Treasurer, just indicate that you want a copy of the Iceland Radar History.

William C Chilton, H-1, 1961-62, Scrapbook. wcandnelma@blomand.net

I am still looking for old Radar Site photos for our scrapbook for H-1, 2, 3, & 4, and from WW II Iceland Radar sites. Please send them to me at:

210 Parish Lane, McMinnville, TN 37110-5336, 931-668-8473

Below is a photo of the Memorial Plaque we dedicated in the Memorial Gardens at the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio, on 25 April 2003.

