

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN: William Chick**, H-2, 1959-60. 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. Jerry will tally the votes and the results will be published in the December 2007 Newsletter.

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## **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.)



Speaker Francis Gary Powers Jr., (above right) 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

