



Remembering Our Heritage



21-27 May

26 May 1923: Lieutenant H. G. Crocker, 8th Squadron which was assigned to the 3rd Attack Group, demonstrated the mobility of the Air Service by flying from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border in 11 hours and 29 minutes in a modified DH-4B. It was purported to be the longest solo non-stop flight at the time. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), Activation to 31 December 1941, p. 12)



22 May 1926: The Alaska Aerial Survey Expedition departed from San Diego Naval Base in the minesweeper *Gannet* (AM-41) towing the covered barge YF-88 for Ketchikan. It arrived there 10 June. Lieutenant Ben H. Wyatt, USN, the expedition leader, took off two days later from San Diego at the head of four Loening OL-4 amphibians. Two amphibians experienced difficulties along the way and were delayed. Lieutenant in his Lowning and one other arrived at Ketchikan on 8 June. The Alaska Aerial Survey Expedition had been initiated following a meeting between Dr. George Otis Smith, Director of Geological Survey, Dr. Phillip S. Smith, Alaska's chief geologist, and CAPT A.W. Johnson, Assistant Chief of the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics. The U.S. Geological Survey needed aerial photographs taken of southeast Alaska for the production of maps and charts. The Department of Interior wanted information on topography north from Ketchikan to Skagway and the Forest Service wanted accurate information on lakes, rivers and glaciers. The Geological Survey agreed to partially fund the project with a \$7,500 transfer of funds to the Navy to purchase cameras. (Stevens, *Alaskan Aviation History*, pp.319-323.)



23 May 1933: Maj Gen Benjamin D. Foulois, Chief of the Army Air Corps, submitted a report to Gen Douglas MacArthur, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, in which he addressed the defense of Alaska and described its strategic value. He focused on the area encompassed by the Alaska Range on the north, the Wrangell Mountains on the east and the Kenai Peninsula and Chugach Mountains in the South. He termed the area the strategic heart because of the gold, copper, coal and oil deposits there. He noted the need to protect the ports of Cordova, Valdez and Seward. He recommended that a composite group of aircraft and two coastal patrol units be based in Alaska to provide protection, and that they be based near Fairbanks with the ability to deploy to Anchorage, Seward, Cordova, Kodiak and Nome. He believed the Aleutian Islands, southeastern Alaska and the Seward Peninsula were not worth making an effort to defend. (Foulois to Army AG, 23 May 1933, subj: Air Corps Peace Time Requirements to meet the Defense Needs of the United States, quoted in Woodman, *Duty Station Northwest*, Vol II, p. 50.)

22 May 1940: The *Anchorage Daily Times* reported that the Senate sent the President's request for additional \$1.8 billion supplemental budget which included \$12,819,060 for an Anchorage air base. (*Anchorage Daily Times*, 22 May 1940.)

23 May 1940: The *Anchorage Daily Times* announced that the House of Representatives had approved \$5,065,000 for construction of Navy air facilities at Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. The paper also stated that 1,000 men working in two shifts constructing Ladd Field with a third shift to be added. (*Anchorage Daily Times*, 23 May 1940.)

25 May 1940: The *Anchorage Daily Times* carried an article in which Maj Dale Gaffney announced that several bombers were coming to Alaska and permission was being requested to over fly Canada. The article also stated that Maj Gaffney and Lt. Marvin Walseth had flown to Fort Yukon. (*Anchorage Daily Times*, 23 May 1940.)



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26 May 1941: The air echelon of the 36th Bombardment Squadron consisting of six B-18As under command of Maj William O. Eareckson, arrived at Elmendorf Field. The two bombardment squadrons and the 18th Pursuit Squadron constituted the only air units in Alaska until shortly after declaration of war. There were around 18 P-36s and 12 B-18s assigned during the period. The defense was oriented to an attack from the west. The two bombardment squadrons spent the remainder to the year until 7 December 1941 flying coastal defense patrols from Point Barrow to Seward. (Written notes, Col Fred Ramputi, USAF Ret, undated, on file 3rd Wing History Office, Elmendorf AFB.)



23 May 1942: The 54th Fighter Squadron was brought up to a full complement of 25 P-38Es and the pilots began deploying to Elmendorf Field from Paine Field, WA, stopping en route at Edmonton, Alberta, and Watson Lake where they had to refuel their own aircraft. The maintenance personnel accompanied them in C-47s. The pilots had first flown their fighters to the Lockheed Factory at Burbank, CA, where the P-38s were modified for long-range 150-gallon drop tanks that later became standard on the P-38F. The Lightnings also received winter equipment. The pilots arrived over

Los Angeles during a blackout, but managed to land safely. (Nocenti, Hist, 54th Fighter Squadron, 15 Jan 1941-31 Dec 1943, pp. 11-15.)

25 May 1942: The 3rd Bombardment Group suffered its heaviest loss to date when Japanese Zero fighters shot down five of six B-25s with the loss of all crewmembers during a strike against the Japanese airfield at Lae, New Guinea. The bombers of the 13th and 90th Squadrons approached Lae from the sea. Weather was bad and forced this east coast approach, which provided the Japanese with ample preparation time. By the time the target was reached, all Zeros were airborne and anti-aircraft was heavily engaging the formation. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, pp. 17-18, *Grim Reapers*, pp. 29-30)



24 May 1943: Pilots from the 90th flew into a storm while searching for an enemy submarine near Oro Bay. All landed safely except for Lt Wonderly who encountered severe icing and steadily lost altitude. Both gunners jumped at the bailout command and as the pilots were preparing to jump, they flew out of the storm into clear skies. SSgt Lott, bailed into a blizzard and hiked several days until reaching Moresby. SSgt Lyle Crovisier never returned. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 55)



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21-27 May

25 May 1943: The 3rd Bombardment Group was redesignated the 3rd Bombardment Group (Light) at Port Moresby, New Guinea. (Lineage and Honors History, 3rd Operations Group)

26 May 1943: The 3rd Bombardment Group completed the move from Port Moresby to Dobodura. (Hist, Third Bombardment Group (Light), 1 January 1942 to 31 March 1944, p. 123)



22 May 1944: The 77th Bombardment Squadron launched two B-25s from Attu flown by 2Lt Douglas E. Baker and 1Lt Claude W. Wilson, on a shipping strike near Paramushiru Island. They bombed and strafed a 140-foot picket boat during the early evening hours approximately 125 miles off the coast of Paramushiru Island. (Field HQs, 11AF A-2 Intelligence Summary No. 44-41 for 22 May 1944; 1/Lt Chauncey M. Griggs, Hist, 77th Bombardment Squadron, May 1944, p.14.)



24 May 1944: Major General Davenport Johnson, Eleventh Air Force Commander, visited the 404th Bombardment Squadron. During his stay, he announced that the Japanese were increasing their bomber strength in the Kuriles and cautioned everyone to dig trenches and fox holes in the squadron area. That night he joined a bomber crew on a night mission against installations on Shimushiru Island. His B-24D, 41-11850, developed engine problems and began losing power in two engines. The crew threw out the flack suits and ammunition to lighten the load and returned to Shemya. The two other B-24 crews continued

the night photoreconnaissance mission over Shimushiru Island and bombed Japanese installations on Matsuwa Island in the central Kuriles. Five of six PV-1 crews from VB-135 flew an armed night photoreconnaissance mission over central Shimushu Island in the northern Kuriles. (Field HQs, 11AF A-2 Intelligence Summary No. 44-43 for 24 May 1944; 1/Lt H.D. Leland, Hist, 404th Bombardment Squadron, May 1944, p. 7.)

23 May 1947: The Alaskan Air Command insignia was adopted. The shield's blue field and golden yellow outline represented the Air Force colors. The white star and red disc center stood for the early symbol of the Army Air Corps. The single wing represented the Eleventh Air Force. The Big Dipper and North Star symbolized AAC being the northernmost command in the Air Force. (Ltr, AF Military Personnel Ctr to AAC Historian, "Organization Emblem-Alaskan Air Command, 14 May 1976.)



22-23 Jun 1951: Captain Heyman, 8th Bombardment Squadron, became the first 3rd Bombardment Wing B-26 pilot to score an air-to-air victory. He was returning from a night strafing mission, when he heard a controller calling for any aircraft in the Seoul area who had ammunition left. Captain Heyman responded and was radar vectored to the point where a Russian built Polikarpov PO-2 biplane was harassing front line troops. Because of its slow speed of 85 knots, the lightweight, and nimble single engine observation aircraft proved difficult to engage. Captain Heyman lowered the flaps and landing gear and opened the bomb bay door to slow his B-26 down to less than 130 knots. After spotting the PO-2 in the moonlight, Captain Heyman lost sight his prey that kept turning into him each time he attacked. The PO-2 pilot descended, and Captain Heyman spotted him again against the background of a river. He succeeded in shooting the enemy plane down with a 90-degree deflection shot with wing-mounted guns at an altitude of 800 feet. (*The Invader*, 9 July 51; Thompson, *B-26 Invader Units Over Korea*, pp. 52-53)



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21-27 May

25 Jun 1951: The 731st Bombardment Squadron was inactivated. Simultaneously, the 90th Bombardment Squadron (Light, Night Intruder) was activated, acquiring the personnel and equipment of the inactivated squadron without a mission change. (Maurer, *Combat Squadrons of the Air Force, World War II*, p.304)



24 May 1957: The *Anchorage Daily Times* reported that the Air Force had abandoned its plans to construct radar stations at Chiniak (F-18) on Kodiak Island and Sitkinak Island (F-19) south of Kodiak Island. At the time, construction of the aircraft control and warning station at Chiniak was virtually complete at 79 percent complete. None of the electronic equipment had been installed. The Air Force had decided that the cost of the sites would outweigh any operational gains. As a result, they were boarded up with plans to turn Chiniak over to the Navy and leave small military detachments at them to prevent deterioration. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1957, p. 102.)

21 May 1961: The *Anchorage Daily Times*, in an editorial announced the need for stationing ballistic missiles in Alaska. It cited Alaska's central location and its nearness to the Soviet Union. It cited a reported missile site at Anadyr in Siberia and the fact that Alaska without a missile capability to counter it was vulnerable. According to the editorial, missiles based in Alaska could reach targets in Russian and China. The editorial went on to say that Alaska because of its vast size offered an ideal location to test missiles as well as a place to hide them in its deep valleys, thick forests and huge glaciers. ("On Missiles," *Anchorage Daily Times*, 21 May 1961.)

26 May 1963: Commissary privileges that had been extended to civil service employees on Eielson AFB were withdrawn. It resulted in dissatisfaction and threats of resignation on the parts of those involved. (Miller, Hist, AAC, Jan-Jun 1963, p. 109.)

22 May 1973: The Federal Aviation Administration issued an amendment to restricted airspace boundaries permitting the Air Force to use the Blair Lakes Bombing and Gunnery Range Monday through Friday. The change incorporated information gathered at the public hearings the year before. The requested boundaries remained unchanged but ceilings were lowered than what the Air Force requested. In the southern sector, the ceiling was lowered from 22,000 feet 7,500 feet and in the northern sector, from 22,000 to 4,000 feet. Civilian aircraft could fly through the area when it was not in use. (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, pp. 176-177.)



26 May 1973: Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) asked Lt. Gen. James C. Sherrill, Commander-in-Chief what the advantages and disadvantages of Alaska being an overseas area. General Sherrill directed a study be conducted. The Alaskan Air Command completed its study on 7 September 1973. It determined that benefits such as housing, cost of living, temporary lodging allowances, foreign service pay for enlisted, and overseas tour credit would be lost if the overseas area designation for Alaska was abolished. Personal mail would be subject higher cost if the APO benefit was abolished. The loss of overseas status would also reduce the tour length to a minimum of a year, which would impact readiness. The change in status was not considered favorably and remained in place. (Hales, Hist, AAC, Jul 1972-Jun 1974, pp. 62-64.)

25 May 1976: The Aerospace Defense Command operational staff notified General Hill that the Army was planning to inactivate the 1st Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery and 524th Ordnance Company providing Nike Hercules air defense missile defense around the Anchorage area during the October-December 1976 time frame. General Hill protested the decision, noting that additional air defense assets would have to be provided to off-set the loss. (Hales, Hist, AAC, 1976, pp. 37-38.)



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21-27 May

24 May 1982: The F-15 Flight Simulator became operational on Elmendorf AFB. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1982, p. 270.)

23 May 1987: The first F-15C, 81-0021, to be assigned to Alaskan Air Command arrived on Elmendorf AFB. (Cloe, Hist, AAC, 1987, p. 84.)

24 May 1993: The Alaskan Command Center and the 3rd Wing Command Post were consolidated to become the Elmendorf Command Center. (Hist, 3 WG, 1993, Chron)



22 May 2003: Colonel Robertus "Dutch" C.N. Remkes, 3rd Wing Commander, along with Mr. Roger Feuge, 3rd Services Squadron Skill Development Chief, officiated at the ribbon cutting ceremony at the renovated wood hobby shop. The shop had been closed for two years until a new state of art exhaust system could be installed. ("Cutting Up," *Sourdough Sentinel*, 30 May 2003.)