



American Military Heritage Foundation

Dedicated to preserving, in flying condition, a Vintage PV-2 Harpoon in memory of all who fought on behalf of the United States of America

March 2020

Another month has gone by and Indiana has lived up to its reputation of changing weather. Therefore, there hasn't been much in the way of work taking place at the hangar or on the plane. Some how we are going to have to get mother nature to co-operate with us allowing us to finish up a couple of items so the plane can be moved to MIE for installation of ADSB. So, if any of you have some type of influence over the weather would you please take care of it. I realize some of our members are hibernating in Florida while others are jetting around the world, hopefully to nice warm spots.

"It is well to remember the entire population of the universe, with one trifling exception is composed of others." *John Andrew Holmes writer*

There are many things going on within the AMHF all of which take time, money, and people. Now you can take those three items and try your best to separate and talk about only one or two. However, my challenge to you is to go ahead and try it then let me know how it works out.

Do any of you remember as a child wanting something and your parents would say something like, do you think money grows on trees or you don't need that? If not, maybe you will remember your children asking you. Now when I started my business some thirty-five years ago, I had a friend that was a WWII veteran and a retired tool and die maker helping me out. I was still working full time at another job at the time. One day I came home from work and he was at my shop working. I looked at him and said I would like to have a Heli arc welder and his response to me was, how much work do you have for it? My response was none. Ok you don't need it. About a month later I came into the shop and informed him if we had a Heli arc welder, I could immediately get five hundred dollars in new business. His response was when is it being delivered? That was the day I really learned the difference between a need and a want and I still make myself use these criteria today and believe me sometimes it is hard.

Why this conversation? The AMHF is no different, there may be all kinds of wants. However, currently I believe we have three immediate needs. One, operating capital to keep the organization financially stable. Two, ADSB installed so we will be able to attend air shows this year. Three, a hangar by the end of air show season so the plane will be inside so that both the plane and our members will be protected from the elements. You say he didn't mention any wants. OK, we need an educational outreach program available to schools. How about fly in breakfast and open house. Museum available to the public. Last but not least a better presence in the community wherever that might be.

If you haven't figured it out by now, we are right back to time, people, and money. We need to all be moving in one direction to meet the immediate needs of the organization.

“Energy and persistence conquer all things.”

Benjamin Franklin

OK that just about does it for this month as promised the interview from an individual that served on the DEW line follows. Before the interview there are some definitions and identifications for pictures that you might find helpful as you read the interview.

Have a great month,

Gaylon

Dew line: Distant early warning line, a line of radar sites across Alaska and Canada to give us warning of planes coming from the north. This was discussed last month operated 1957-1965.

D 8 CAT: This would have been one of the largest caterpillar/Bulldozers at the time.

Weasel: M29 weasel is a tracked vehicle built by Studebaker. It would resemble some of the snow vehicles used today for rescue in high snow areas.

Picture 1: Is a map of Alaska which will give you a reference as to where this all took place.

Picture 2: Is the radar sight that would be at the upper camp.

Picture 3: It was not identified and I am not sure whether it is a D-8 Cat or a Weasel.

Picture 4: Airfield at Indian Mountain.

Picture 5: Is a Connie landing and you will notice he is going uphill.

Picture 6: This was not identified. However, it appears to be the power station at an earlier time and definitely winter.

Picture 7: Shows power station at a later date,1972, and a view of the line up to the radar site.

If you would like more information on the DEW Line there is a n abundance out there and there are many more pictures of life at Indian Mountain.

William Esterling

United States Airforce 1954 to 1958

After finishing basic training, naturally Lackland AFB, William was sent to Mitchel Field, NY. He was there for approximately one year. From there he was sent to Shaw AFB Sumter, SC. He spent two years there and then it was off to Alaska to serve at one of the DEW line stations as a mail clerk.

One interesting point was William's original orders had him going to the Aleutian Islands. However, one of the other airmen wanted to go there so they just traded. The commanding officer said it didn't make any difference to him since both required the same qualifications, taking care of the mail. Now you think that is not important, just imagine not being able to get any mail from home or send letters back home.

When you start counting up time it has been 62 years since William was stationed at Indian Mountain Airforce Station. Therefore, one would not expect him to remember everything. It is located 15.8 miles East South East of Hughes Alaska. When they flew him in the first time, they landed at Hughes first then flew on to Indian Mountain. William said they always landed up hill and took off downhill. He explained to me they had a lower camp and an upper camp. The

upper camp was the location of the radar facility. The lower camp supplied all of the electricity and water to the upper camp otherwise each one was self-sufficient. There would be 15 to 20 airmen at each camp and they did not rotate from one to the other. As he remembers it was around eight miles from lower camp up to the top and the only way there was via jeep or truck during the summer. In the winter it was a D-8 Cat or a Weasel. During the winter months the only way to get water at the upper camp was to haul it up in a tank behind the cat. William also mentioned that the buildings were so designed that you did not have to go outside to move from one place to the other. He also explained that there were dividers inside in case of fire to keep it from spreading.

The coldest temperature he could remember was 60 below. He did tell me they ran out of fresh food at one point and had to eat C-rations until they could get a plane in. Sometimes we just can't fathom not being able to run to the grocery and grab a loaf of bread and other supplies we might need. You also must remember there were no roads to go anyplace; it had to come in by air. William told me if they were lucky, they would get mail once a week. He would sort it then distribute it. This would require him to go to the upper camp at least once a week during the summer and whenever weather permitted during the winter. William related one trip in the winter when he was going to the top camp on the D-8 in white out conditions and it took 6 to 8 hours to get up there. He refused to ride the cat back down and they sent a Weasel up to bring him down and it quit about 2 miles from the lower camp. William and the driver had to walk the last 2 miles.

From sometime in April to September he could see people from Florida dredging for gold on the Indian River. He told me that he was never able to go down and check it out or look for any gold. At that point his wife said "too bad, maybe she would have been rich."

Remember I told you they landed at Hughes first? The population of Hughes in 2010 was 77. That is down from 78 in 2000. Sometimes they would make a trip over to Kotzebue and it has a population of 3,200. You can only guess what the population would have been in 1958. I don't know if any of you remember the Dairy Queen commercial advertising their Northern most facility? You guessed it Kotzebue, Alaska just north of the Arctic Circle. That also brings up the statistic that Alaskans consume more ice cream per capita than any other state.

I have attached some pictures of the Indian Mountain AFB. They should give you a real good idea of what life was like in that area. William entered the Airforce August 20, 1954 was released January 10, 1958 at McCord AFB and transferred to the Airforce Reserve to finish out his obligation which ended August 19, 1962. I would also like to thank William for allowing me to tell his story and thank him for his service.





INDIAN MOUNTAIN LRRS (UTO)
Closed to Public
Elevation 1220
N65 59.57/W153 42.26

Photo Date Aug 1998
Data Date Mar 2001

UTO CTAF 126.2
UTO RCO 122.6
ANC CENTER 124.6

Windsock

4100 X 120

24

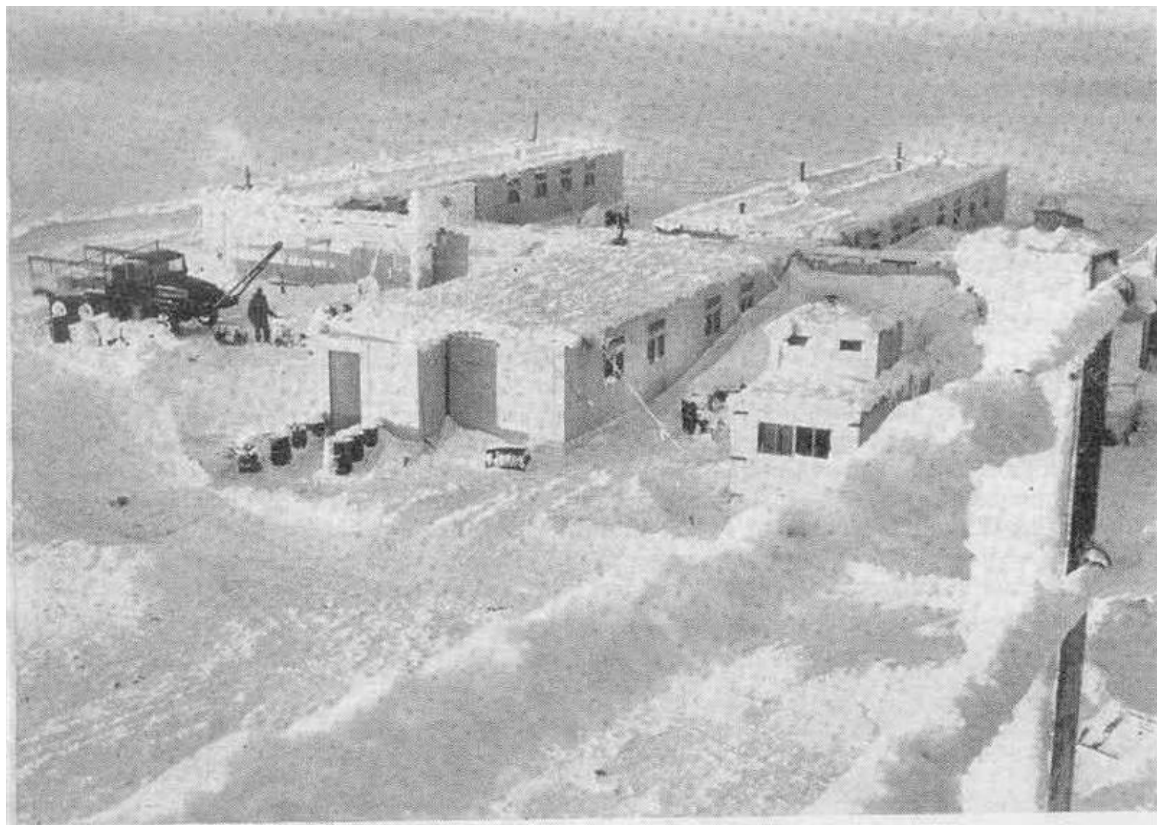
Windsock

Closed to Public, Official Business Only
USAF installation. Civil aircraft require
landing permits prior to landing.
For permits call 907-552-7384/3636/5265.
Land RWY 24, takeoff RWY 6.
RWY 6 7.1% down gradient.
30 min radio notice 126.2 required.
REIL and VASI avbl via request 126.2

Photo courtesy
Alaska DOT, Fairbanks



ca 1964



ca 1972 - Power plant and power line to Top Camp

