



Remembering The Past...Eielson AFB



February 21, 1924: Our namesake, Carl Ben Eielson, pioneered the delivery of air mail in Alaska when he delivered mail in a DeHaviland DH-4 from Fairbanks to McGrath.

February 13-18, 1930: Approximately three months earlier, Carl Ben Eielson and his mechanic, Earl Borland, were killed when their Hamilton aircraft crashed while they were attempting their second rescue flight to an icebound ship in the Bering Sea, the *Nanuk*. After digging through deep, hard-packed snow, Canadian and Russian search parties found Borland's body on Feb. 13 and Eielson's body on Feb. 18. Both had been thrown some distance from the point of impact. On Jan. 13, 1948, Mile 26 Airfield was renamed in honor of Carl Ben Eielson. And, in 1956 a memorial was placed at the main gate to honor his memory (this memorial was destroyed in February 1963, see below, and a replica was built shortly thereafter. For many years it was located on the corner of Broadway and Central Streets however, it was moved in the late 1990s to its present home in Heritage Park).

February 1, 1940: The 18th Pursuit Squadron activated at Moffett Field, Calif. Approximately two years later, the 18th was re-designated as a fighter squadron.

February 21, 1951: The 58th Reconnaissance, Medium, Weather, replaced the 375th Reconnaissance Squadron. The 58 WRS earned the nickname the "Pole Vaulters" due to their frequent trips over the North Pole. The unit primarily flew WB-29 aircraft and later transitioned to WB-50 aircraft shortly before it inactivated in 1958.



February 8, 1952: Base newspaper named "Mile 26 Post," by 1st Lieutenant Hal Pressman, a Station Services officer. Sergeant Robert T. Blake designed and drew the original masthead.



February 1955: While 1st Lieutenant William J. Caffrey from the 720th Fighter-Bomber Squadron was flying his F-86F at an altitude of 32,000 feet, the canopy and his helmet blew off, exposing him to temperatures estimated at minus 60 degrees F and no oxygen. He initially cut his speed and descended, but due to a lack of oxygen he blacked out. Shortly after coming to, he regained his bearings and found himself only minutes away from Eielson AFB. He eventually



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landed safely without any radio communications. Lieutenant Caffrey sustained frostbite to his hands and ears.

February 1955: Television came to Eielson for the first time.

February 1, 1955: Alaska Overland Incorporated started operation of the Eielson-Fairbanks bus service. A one-way fare was a dollar.

February 15, 1955: A new guesthouse opened in the old area of Eielson AFB in building T-162. Daily rates were 75 cents for adults and 50 cents for children under 18.

February 20, 1955: The new base chapel opened at 3 p.m. as wing chaplain Martin J. Stein accepted the keys from Col. Cordes F. Tiemann, base commander.



January – February 1956: Cold-weather testing of an XB-52 and an F-100 took place. Over the last 50 years, B-52s have deployed to Eielson to participate in various exercises. In 2006, B-52s were once again on the ramp at Eielson for Red Flag Alaska 06-2. The aircraft deployed from the 93d Bomb Squadron, Air Force Reserves, Barksdale AFB, La.

February 1958: Cold-weather testing of a KC-135, a C-133 and an F-105 took place during the month. In 1962, KC-135s became permanently assigned to Eielson AFB and remain assigned to present day, making it the longest assigned aircraft at Eielson AFB.

February 27, 1963: A KC-135 crashed near the main gate, killing nine personnel, including A2C Roy L. Hursey, an air policeman on duty at the gate. Shortly thereafter, the new gate was dedicated in honor of Airman Hursey. The others that perished that night were: Maj. John C. Harris, Capt. John J. Weatherway Jr., Capt. Richard H. Hess, Tech. Sgt Daniel C. Cameron, Tech. Sgt Harold W. Butler, A1C Ronald Hiley, A3C Douglas L. Petner, and A2C Martin C. Jones.



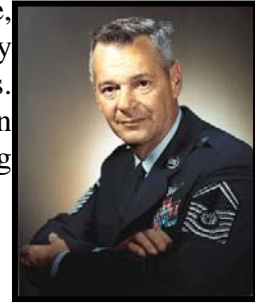
January – February 1964: Cold-weather testing of an F-4C took place at Eielson.



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February 27, 1969: The first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, CMSgt Paul W. Airey, visited Eielson AFB. Over the years, CMSgt Airey has visited Eielson on several occasions, along with many other CMSAFs. CMSAF Gerald R. Murray was the most recent CMSAF to visit the Iceman Team. (Note: CMSAF Murray was assigned to the 354th Fighter Wing from 1986 to 1992, while the wing was located at Myrtle Beach AFB, S. C.).



February 1977: Cold-weather testing of the A-10 aircraft took place through the end of the month. As part of the test, the aircraft participated in the “Jack Frost” exercise also hosted by the base.

February 27, 1985: An RC-135 belonging to Eielson’s 6th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing crashed near Valdez, killing all three aboard. Exactly one month later, a 25th TASS pilot died while flying an Air Warrior mission in California.

February 18, 1993: Capt. Glen S. Porter, F-16D pilot, and Maj. Robert D. Verdone, Flight Surgeon, 18th Fighter Squadron, were killed in an aircraft accident approximately 20 miles east of Eielson AFB.



February 1996: Eielson took possession of the first 12 Moose Lake Section “801” military family housing units. In October, French Creek units for enlisted members began to open up. Section 801 housing was privately owned, then leased back to the government. The first 801 housing in the Air Force were Eielson’s “Cool Homes,” constructed in 1986.

February 25, 2004: At approximately 8:30 p.m., an A-10 aircraft crashed near the Chena Flood Control Project, killing pilot Capt. Jonathan ‘Cosmo’ Scheer. A memorial service was held on March 1 at 11 a.m. at the base chapel.