

FACT FINDING PROJECT: Dow AFB--Historically, Economically, and Strategically

SPEECH: Time, Place, Occasion:

Speaker:

4060th ARW Commander, Colonel Orie O. Schurter

Subject:

Dow Air Force Base and the Community

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FACT FINDING PROJECT

SUBJECT: DOW AFB AND THE COMMUNITY

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I. HISTORY (1923-1945) OF DOW AIR FORCE BASE

A. ORIGIN OF DOW

The origin of Dow AFB may be traced back to August, 1923, when General "Billy" Mitchell landed on the then F.F. Rich Farm on Cooper Road, with 18 Martin bombers and 11 DeHavilland scout planes, the entire U.S.A.F. of that time.

It was at this time that General Mitchell told Bangor Rotarians: "I see a great future for Bangor as an air base. It is a natural air center and ideally suited as an airdrome."

Although various flying services operated from this location before 1940, it was not until August of that year that construction actually began on a large scale. The base was originally intended to serve as a forward airdrome for active defense against enemy attacks from Europe, and was built to house a heavy bombardment group (Note: Heavy then, is light and medium now.), or a pursuit group, together with supply, ordnance and air base units for support. The second function, not originally contemplated, proved to be of vital importance--the use of the air base for the ferrying of tactical bombers, fighters and transports across the North Atlantic direct to combat zones in Europe, Africa and Asia.

B. ROLE DURING WORLD WAR II

During World War II, Dow was host to such organizations and commands as the 1st Fighter Group, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 97th, 303rd, 306th, and 308th Bombardment Groups of 8th Air Force; the 92nd Reconnaissance Group (Anti-submarine patrol); the 332nd Sub-Depot (which handled the State of Maine Aircraft School); the Air Transport Command (North Atlantic Division), the

1905th, 1906th, 1913th, and the 924th Aviation Engineer Regiments (nearly 5,000 Aviation Engineers were trained at Dow); and the 135th Army Airways Communication System Headquarters.

During the course of World War II, nearly 100,000 combat crew members passed through Dow AFB with their aircraft, either en route to, or returning from, the war theatres. The strength of the base has varied from a low of 1,200 to a high of 7,000 personnel.

As of 1946, actual military expenditures on Dow AFB runways and buildings were \$9,500,000. Other expenditures on the airport site, not included in the aforementioned figure, totalled \$700,000 (WPA funds); \$184,000 (CAA funds) \$80,999 (State funds); and \$75,000 from the City of Bangor, an additional total of \$1,063,746. This \$10,563,746 figure represents capital expenditure alone and does not include the cost of removable equipment.

1923-1945 historical accounts taken from February, 1946 History of Dow AFB as compiled by 1st Lt. A. G. Thompson, Historical Officer.

I. HISTORY (Cont'd) (1946-1955)

C. DOW - 1946-1955

The 14th Fighter Wing arrived at Dow in 1946. During the time the 14th was stationed here, they were credited with "ironing out" the bugs of the first F-84 Thunderjets. In October, 1949, the 14th Fighter Wing left Dow and in December of that year the base was deactivated. The Maine Air National Guard, stationed at Dow since the end of World War II, began using the base as a training camp in December 1950, and two months later the 101st Fighter Interceptor Wing of the Maine ANG was called to active duty. Dow was reactivated in February 1951 and almost immediately the 132nd Fighter

Wing (Nebraska-Iowa ANG group called to duty), moved here. At the time of reactivation Dow was under the Air Defense Command (EADP) and in April with the arrival of the 132nd Fighter Wing was transferred to the Strategic Air Command. In January 1952 the base was transferred to the Tactical Air Command.

June 1952 found the 132nd Wing transferred to Alexandria AFB, La., and on 1 July, a month later, Dow was reverted back to the Strategic Air Command with the base under command of the 4009th Air Base Squadron.

In January 1953 command changed from the 4009th Air Base Squadron to the 506th Strategic Fighter Wing. The 506th SFW was placed on training status and assigned the Korean-tested F-84G Thunderjet. During the latter months of 1953 the 506th SFW performed a 3-month TTX tour in Japan with its primary mission set as the defense of the northern part of Japan.

On January 15, 1954, the 506th became the first operational organization of the USAF to receive the F-84F Thunderstreak, marking the second time a Dow unit "checked-out" first with a Republic Aviation jet aircraft.

September 1954 found Dow AFB established as a permanent base.

In March 1955 the 4060th Air Refueling Wing officially replaced the 506th SFW which transferred to Tinker AFB, Oklahoma.

Dow AFB is also the home of the 49th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron (ADG) and the 101st FIW of the Maine ANG. Dow also gives supply and logistical support to the 33rd Crash-Rescue Boat Flight, Southwest Harbor, Maine; the 765th AC&W Sq., Charleston, Maine; the DeBlois Bombing Range, Columbia Falls, Maine; the 907th AC&W Sq., Bucks Harbor, Maine; Newton AFB, Portsmouth, N.H., and Plattsburg AFB, Plattsburg, N.Y.

1946-1955 Historical accounts taken from History of Dow AFB by S/Sgt Raymond O'Hara, and present Information Services Office files.

II. DOW AFB STRATEGICALLY

A. STRATEGIC LOCATION AND UTILIZATION

Dow Air Force Base is located on the Great Circle Route to Europe, Africa and Asia by way of Newfoundland, Labrador, Greenland, Iceland or the Azores, utilizing any one or a combination of these points. Bases for the route are located at Goose Bay, Labrador; Ungrove Bay, Quebec; Frobisher Bay, Baffinland; Stephenville and Cander Lake, Newfoundland; Narsarsuaq, Sondrestromfjord and Ikot, Greenland; Heekes Field, Iceland; Kindley AFB, Bermuda; and Santa Maria and Lagen in the Azores. During World War II it was not unknown to fly non-stop from Bangor to Marrakech, North Africa, a distance of over 4,000 miles. With this knowledge it is not difficult to visualize the strategic location of Dow employing modern aircraft. Operation HI-Flight presently utilizes Bangor's location on the Great Circle Route to good advantage in ferrying aircraft to many of the points mentioned.

B. MISSION

To organize and train a force capable of immediate and sustained air-to-air refueling operations in any part of the world, utilizing the latest technical knowledge and advanced procedures. To be prepared to perform those tasks assigned in current emergency plans and related operations orders. To participate in the reserve training program to the maximum extent by training and administering assigned reserve personnel and units. To be prepared to supervise the participation of assigned units in disaster relief and other domestic emergencies. To perform such missions and assignments as may be directed by higher headquarters.

III. DOW AFB ECONOMICALLY

A. ECONOMY - DECENTRALIZATION PROGRAM

Undergoing a decentralization program for procurement of supplies and services, the Air Force is shifting from its central procurement system to local or base level purchasing. This program has greatly increased the purchasing power of Dow Air Force Base.

For example, the first nine months of the current fiscal year (beginning July 1, 1954 to present) the Dow AFB Purchasing and Contracting office has issued 5,978 procurement transactions for a total of \$1,567,409 covering 19,334 items.

Comparative figures for the same period of time the year before are 3,406 procurement transactions for a total of \$880,368 covering 9,156 items, showing a near doubling of procurement this year.

More than 50 per cent of all items procured are purchased from vendors and contractors doing business within the Bangor area.

Contracts this year are broken down as follows: 3,700 purchase orders for supplies and services; 970 petty cash transactions; 15 sales contracts; 321 construction and other contracts; and 972 purchases against blanket purchase orders issued to local vendors.

An example of items and annual dollar amounts from Dow are: milk, \$100,000; bread, \$30,000; ice cream, \$30,000; other food items, \$220,000; electrical energy, \$90,000; fuel oil, \$100,000; gasoline (automotive), \$75,000; gas (bottled and piped), \$5,000; construction supplies (electrical, plumbing, paint, etc.), \$450,000; construction contracts, \$440,000; and sales contracts, \$25,000.

The total expenditure for March 1955 was \$362,311 as compared with \$209,799 for March 1954 and \$91,037 for March 1953. During the month of April 1955 it would appear that we do not have the steady increase in business pointed out, since spending for that month amounted to \$280,690 as opposed to the \$302,187 figure for April 1954. The reverse is true, however, since large construction contracts during April 1954 swelled the figure. Actually there were 100 more transactions during April 1955 than April 1954 and the compared figure of \$114,966 for April 1953 bears this out.

Dow AFB has recently taken over the function of contracting for commercial repair of base equipment. This function, formerly performed at distant Air Force depots, required a large transportation expense. This additional business has been distributed among a large number of local concerns. All interested firms have been afforded the opportunity of participating in this program which amounted to \$50,000 this year and an approximated \$75,000 volume is expected next year.

Information obtained from Base Procurement Office, Major Donald T. Saunders, OIC.

B. FINANCIAL EFFECTS DUE TO PAY RAISE

Base Finance estimated the increase in pay for military personnel at Dow as \$30,000 in April 1955. Pay to military personnel for that month amounted to \$477,000, with the civilian payroll totaling \$101,294. \$200,000 approximately, went to military personnel and their dependents in Class Q and E allotments. Considering these figures in conjunction with the \$280,690 in base procurement, Dow economy amounted to approximately \$1,000,000 in the community last month.

Information obtained from Base Finance, 2nd Lt. Robert D. Kates, Deputy Finance Officer and Base Procurement, Major Donald T. Saunders, OIC.
