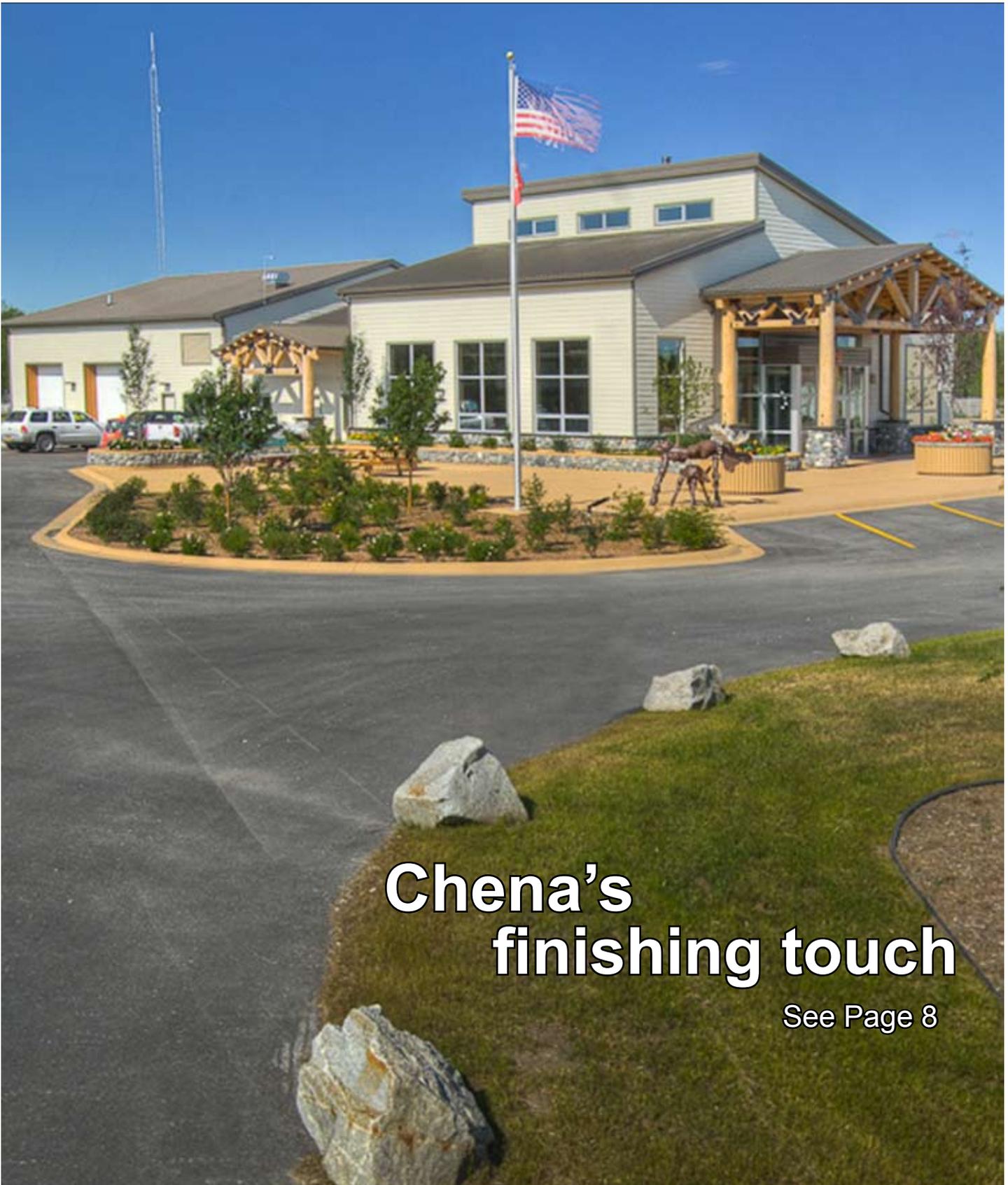




Arctic Engineer

"Building and Preserving Alaska's Future"



**Chena's
finishing touch**

See Page 8



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Cover photo

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District completed a \$5.4 million renovation and expansion of the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project administrative building in North Pole last summer. The office space, kitchen, restroom and conference room were remodeled while the 2,250-square-foot addition made room for an emergency response bay, entrance foyer, meeting area, guest reception area and interpretive exhibits. (Photo by Mark Yezbick, Bristol Industries LLC)

Commander's Corner

Reflecting on success, reshaping for future

Thank you for reading the "Arctic Engineer," one of the Alaska District's tools for communicating our mission and programs to internal and external audiences. It showcases our motto, "Building and Preserving Alaska's Future," and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers motto, "Building Strong."

In this issue you will read about the renovation and expansion of the administrative building at the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project in North Pole, as well as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's new Satellite Operations Facility in Fox. Both projects were part of the \$120 million in construction that the district executed with American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds, and showed how we are able to responsively and innovatively perform for our customers.

You also will read about the Manning Point Formerly Used Defense Site project that won the Secretary of the Army's Environmental Excellence Award for Restoration. Manning Point is one of more than 140 active FUDS properties the district is remediating. Evidence of our ability to execute is demonstrated in the large congressional "plus-ups" received last fiscal year by this program along with the Army and Air Force environmental programs. FUDS got an additional \$20 million while funding for the other programs increased by almost 50 percent. Moving forward, this will remain one of the large opportunities for the district.

Other articles in this issue highlight the people of the district and what a truly special group of professionals we serve with every day.

Christopher Bean is our first participant in the Arctic Warfighter Training Program to transition into a full-time civilian position in the district. We are extremely impressed with what Chris has accomplished and proud to have him on the team.

Away from work, Forest Brooks, a long-time teammate who serves in our Civil Works Branch, led an effort to establish the first veterans museum in Alaska. Thank you, Forest, for being a leader in the district and in the community.

In February 2011, we lost a distinguished American when Virginia Talley, wife of the late retired Brig. Gen. Benjamin B. Talley, died. Both were dedicated in service to Alaska and the nation, and they left a legacy in a scholarship fund to support college students pursuing science and engineering careers.

Of course, one magazine edition cannot possibly encapsulate the myriad of accomplishments by our team since the last publishing of the "Arctic Engineer."

Besides delivering excellence in executing a \$650 million workload, we continued setting the standard for supporting Overseas Contingency Operations and executing our

emergency management mission, completed one of the largest military construction years in our history, moved innumerable civil works studies forward, initiated or completed four harbor construction projects, completed a dozen dredging projects, took more than 2,500 regulatory actions, completed more than 200 real estate actions – including the consolidation of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson – and executed countless

projects in our Environmental and Special Programs Branch.

We also have seen an explosion of opportunity and execution of work for the U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Agency for International Development and Air Force Material Command in the areas of humanitarian assistance, foreign military sales and agency support throughout the Asian mainland in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Laos, Nepal, Palau, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and other countries. All this shows that the district is making a positive difference in the security of the United States and the lives of all Americans. Thank you for your service.

As I talk to people in the district, there is concern about future workload and opportunity. No doubt, budget constraints throughout the government

will affect our mission and programs. We must recognize that what and how the district executes will change in the coming years as it has in the past.

Clearly, our Military Construction workload will diminish along with the number of federal budget inserts for our Civil Works Program. Although we see great opportunity in overseas work, continued strength in environmental work and other areas for potential mission growth, the district must reshape itself in order to meet the challenges of the future.

This is why we completed a seven-year plan last fall called "Operation Crossroads." As part of this effort, a team from throughout the district analyzed where we are and where we need to be in 2017 to ensure that inevitable change is smooth and leads us to a point where we are able to effectively execute future missions. For teammates who have not read this plan or thought about where they fit in, I encourage them to do so and discuss it with their chain of command.

Lastly, I want to thank the entire team—to include our supported commands, stakeholders throughout Alaska and customers—for your teamwork and dedication. It is truly a privilege to be part of an organization on a journey from "Good to Great" while we "Build and Preserve Alaska's Future." I appreciate all you do in service to this great nation.



Col. Reinhard Koenig

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reinhard E. Koenig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Drummed out

Extensive cleanup eases community's subsistence concerns

By Kristina Curley
U.S. Army Environmental Command

Polar bears, although spotted in the area, turned out to be a non-issue. The real challenge encountered during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District cleanup at the Manning Point Formerly Used Defense Site was finding more than triple the number of anticipated fuel and oil drums scattered across this remote area of the Alaskan tundra.

Despite this surprising discovery, the FUDS team successfully removed the 1,400 drums during a 28-day period, battling foggy conditions and some daunting logistics—a feat recognized by the team's reception of the Fiscal Year 2010 Secretary of the Army Environmental Award for Environmental Restoration and a team achievement award from the Department of Defense.

The Manning Point Distant Early Warning Line Drum Staging Area, located in northern Alaska near the Jago River delta and east of Kaktovik, operated during the Cold War. The drums, which once contained Petroleum, Oil and Lubricant products for the station, were scattered across the river delta by severe weather during the past 50 years. The cleanup, which eliminated potential future releases of petroleum products into the Arctic Ocean, included removing all drums and any residual drum contents, collecting necessary samples under the drums, and if necessary, excavating and disposing contaminated soil.

“The project removed both an eyesore and an exposure concern for the subsistence hunters and fishers in the Jago River area,” said Aaron Shewman, project engineer. “The residents of Kaktovik have worried about oil products getting into the water and into the fish they eat. With the drums gone, that is no longer a concern.”

For the Jago River cleanup, the FUDS project presented a litany of challenges, said Ron Pflum, project manager.

The site is located in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, so extra precautions were necessary to obtain a permit to access the area from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including



(Top photo) Drums scattered across the Jago River delta were deposited by storms moving through the area. The removal of more than 1,400 drums will help to eliminate future releases of petroleum product into the Arctic Ocean.

(Bottom photo) Sam Widmer (left) of Weston Solutions works with Eric Jenks (center) and Mike Flisk (right) of Marsh Creek, LLC, to retrieve a buried drum from a sand bar. All of this extraction work was done by hand. (Courtesy photos)



development of a polar bear awareness and interaction plan.

In addition, the site is reachable only by helicopter or barge. Equipment was transported more than 800 miles and delivered by barge. Workers were flown to and from the site daily. Helicopters also transported the recovered drums to Kaktovik using slings that held at most 10 drums. The extra drums meant at least 100 more helicopter runs were necessary.

“The contractor and crews really stepped up,” said Ron Broyles, environmental engineer. “As soon as

the threefold increase in drum quantity was realized, the contractor mobilized a second helicopter. For a solid week, two helicopters were used to sling loads of drums retrieved from the sand bars.”

The crews, which included personnel hired from the local native population, put in 12-hour days, often not starting until after 10 a.m. because of persistent fog, which prevented earlier flights for most of the month.

The helicopter pilots also helped mitigate several days of standby time by making runs in the evening when



Courtesy photo

A load of drums is flown to Kaktovik. Extra drums meant at least another 100 helicopter runs were necessary to complete the remediation.

there were breaks in the fog.

The weather was a huge factor, especially since the project, which started Aug. 3, 2010, had to be completed before the whaling season commenced in September, Broyles said.

Although only 15-20 percent of the drums were buried in the river delta silt, those presented another hurdle, said Shewman.

Because heavy equipment use is restricted in ANWR, each drum had to be dug out by hand. All of the drums had to be removed from their locations and personally staged for helicopter transport.

As the drums and any contents were removed, the work crew visually evaluated the soil beneath each one and field-screened the soil with a photo-ionization detector.

If the detector gave a reading, a sample was collected for analysis at an offsite laboratory.

The drums were transported to Kaktovik, where they were opened, cleaned, crushed and placed into



(Top photo) Darren Kayotuk (left) and Eric Jenks (right) use a demolition saw to dehead a drum before cleaning out residue inside.

(Bottom photo) Eric Jenks (left), Mike Flisk (center), and Dave Vandergriff (right) process drums in Kaktovik. The drums are cleaned and crushed before being placed into a container for shipment to a metal recycler in Fairbanks. (Courtesy photos)



containers for disposal in Fairbanks. Any POL discovered in the drums was transferred into new drums for transportation to a POL recycling facility in Palmer.

Soilsamples showed no contaminants above regulatory levels, so soil removal was unnecessary, Shewman said.

Pflum said another benefit of being able to complete the Jago River project was a savings of nearly \$500,000 for the FUDS program.

The Jago River removal action, originally scheduled for 2011, was instead conducted concurrently with another nearby FUDS project at Brownlow Point on the North Slope. Joint execution of these projects resulted in cost savings for reduced mobilization/demobilization requirements, shared logistics planning, comprehensive work

planning documents and combined lodging arrangements.

The team agreed that because the Alaska District FUDS program has more than 10 other Alaska North Slope sites to look at in future years, the lessons learned and relations forged during the Jago River removal action will help limit cost growth for those cleanups and achieve program objectives in a reasonable amount of time.

“The relationships established with regulatory agencies and local villages are critical to future success in implementing remedial/removal actions on the North Slope of Alaska,” Pflum said. “The trust earned by the Manning Point Jago River Project Delivery Team ensures expectations can be met and understood when working at new locations.”

Data collector

Satellite operations facility unveiled nears Fairbanks

Story and photos by Curt Biberdorf

Gold isn't the only valuable resource found in Alaska's Gilmore Valley.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fairbanks Command and Data Acquisition Station is also located there, and from its rural perch on an 8,500-acre federal reservation away from radio and television wave interference, it captures daily significant satellite information critical to its national and international customers.

To continue the mission and enhance its capabilities, NOAA replaced the operations building in Fox, constructed in 1961 when NASA first opened the station, with a new 20,000 square-foot, \$11.9 million facility. The project was managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District and built by Alcan Builders Inc. of Fairbanks.

During an event to officially open

the facility Aug. 24, Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presented a ceremonial key to NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco.

"It's a great day for the Corps of Engineers as well as for NOAA and (to reflect on) the great partnership that we have had over the past several years to get this facility constructed," Koenig said.

The project was made possible by \$9 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Sen. Mark Begich said he sometimes hears complaints about the Recovery Act's effectiveness, but the building is evidence of its success.

"People around the globe will never understand that small amount of money in the big picture has a huge impact on their lives every day," he said.

The station collects data from 26 spacecraft operated by NOAA, NASA,

Department of Defense, Europe, France, Japan and Taiwan.

Because it is farther north than any other satellite communications facility in North America, it receives more environmental data than any other station. From its seven onsite antennas and two antennas in Barrow, the station makes nearly 60,000 contacts annually, said Lubchenco.

Staff members work around the clock to send global data to clients for dozens of activities, such as providing information to forecast weather, develop temperature profiles of the atmosphere, monitor coastal sea ice or wildfires, and track volcanic ash and iceberg movement.

Missions include national security and defense as well as saving lives and property. Data gathered at the Fairbanks station has saved the lives of hunters and fishermen in Alaska and around the



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fairbanks Command and Data Acquisition Station collects information from 26 spacecraft for uses such as weather forecasting, and search and rescue.



The NOAA Fairbanks Command and Data Acquisition Station's new 20,000 square-foot, \$11.9 million facility was built to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Silver rating.

world. The facility is part of a global ground system that detects signals from people in distress who have activated their emergency beacons. In turn, these signals are transmitted to the Coast Guard, Air Force and local emergency departments to support a rescue.

However, to continue to conduct these missions, one critical component needed to change.

A Corps assessment in 2005 determined that the original building's lifespan was winding down, and continuing operations in the 50-year-old facility was not an option.

Trailers were brought in for contingency operations in case the facility needed to be abandoned after a damaging earthquake.

"The old building was becoming a real problem," said Larry Ledlow, station manager. The roof leaked, doors shifted out of alignment, dust gathered on the electronic equipment and temperatures reached uncomfortable levels.

Besides solving the structural and habitability troubles, the new facility will save energy and is built to meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and



Environmental Design Silver rating.

"Not only is this facility going to be functional, it really is an example of the leadership it's going to take in the future for us to become more energy-efficient and have more sustainable designs in all of our facilities throughout the U.S. government," Koenig said.

The new two-story facility with a "NOAA blue" exterior siding features an open floor plan for satellite

monitoring and reception area on the first floor with office space and a break room on the second floor.

The staff is still making adjustments after the move into the new building, but the positive change in attitudes is noticeable, Ledlow said.

"It's been a real pleasure working with the Corps," he said. "Their project management is amazing. The Corps really delivers for us."

Chena office renovated, expanded

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

From afar, the split-level roofing and timber framing hint at what is an entirely new look for the administrative office at the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project in North Pole.

Opened this past summer, the 23-year-old structure was renovated and expanded to keep up with the high quality of the dam and recreation area it supports.

“This has really been the missing component,” said John Schaake, Chena Project manager, who regularly hears compliments about the new facility from visitors.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District was both customer and manager of the \$5.4 million project, which was funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, designed by PDC Inc. and constructed by Bristol Design Build Services LLC.

The office space, kitchen, restroom and conference room were remodeled while the 2,250-square-foot addition made room for an emergency response bay, entrance foyer, meeting area, guest reception area and interpretive exhibits.

Schaake said he has noticed immediate improvements and benefits with the extra space in the ability to now host training and conferences as well as more easily inform individuals or groups of visitors about the Corps and Chena Project.

“(The possibilities are) all going to start growing when people know about what we have here,” he said.

Interpretive exhibits now on display are a diorama of the Chena Project, a mannequin dressed in a locally-made wolf fur parka and mukluks depicting an old-time Corps surveyor—complete with antique surveying equipment once used across Alaska and a restored antique snowmachine—and a standing Kodiak brown bear mount donated by Tim Feavel, senior park ranger.

The idea is to highlight the Chena Project for flood control, outdoor recreation and resource management. An attention-grabbing masonry heater, the first of its kind in a federal office setting, showcases the building’s energy efficiency, Schaake said.

More exhibits under consideration are touch-screen monitors with local and national Corps information as well as an interpretive video about the masonry heater. A display board of historic photos about the project may

also find a more permanent home.

“This place is kind of a work in progress,” Schaake said.

The new emergency response bay is set up like a fire department to allow rangers to quickly exit with their vehicles on assistance calls.

Rangers use a boat and all-terrain vehicles in the summer, and a tracked Small Unit Support Vehicle and snowmachines for the winter, which were formerly stored together with other garage equipment.

“Public safety is one of the primary reasons the Corps employs park rangers, and they must be able to respond to emergencies on any part of the flood control project regardless of season,” Schaake said. “The new emergency response bay is mission-critical and supports our ability to respond.”

Crisis prevention

The Chena Project was created after a disaster. In 1967, nearly 85 percent of North Pole, Fairbanks and Fort Wainwright flooded when the Chena River overflowed its banks.

In 1968, Congress authorized and appropriated construction of an 8.5-mile-long dam and outlet system to reduce the flood risk to those communities.

Construction of the \$256 million Chena Lakes Flood Control Project began in 1973. Since becoming operational in 1981, it has controlled flows of the Chena River 20 times to either regulate floodwater or divert it to the Tanana River to protect lands in the floodplain downstream of the dam. Total flood damages prevented to date are estimated to be \$259 million.

A side benefit of the Chena Project is opportunities for outdoor activities.

The Corps designed a recreation area, which consists of two parks and a small lake outgranted to the Fairbanks North Star Borough, a local cost-share partner, which collects user fees.

The Corps manages nearly 16,000 acres of public land for low-impact recreational activities, indigenous wildlife, and migratory birds and waterfowl. The Chena Project also promotes watchable wildlife, water safety and public safety programs on its lands.

More than 165,000 people visit the area annually to swim, boat, picnic, fly kites, hunt, fish, cross-country ski and ride snowmachines among other



Photo by Mark Yezbick/Bristol Industries LLC

A masonry heater inside the new addition of the Chena Project office is a visual centerpiece as well as a fuel-efficient source of heat in the winter.

Masonry heater stingy on fuel, generous on warmth

By John Schaake
Chena Project Manager

The Chena Project office masonry heater is a focal point and curiosity for every visitor.

It was designed to be a primary heat source for the nearly 3,000 square feet of office, conference room and reception area space in the Chena Project administrative building, and in an emergency, can warm the entire facility.

A masonry heater is a wood-fired, heat storage mass of rock in which short, intense fires produce a high level of heat that is stored and slowly released during the day. Used for hundreds of years by people living in northern latitudes with sparse amounts of firewood, this ancient technology has only recently been rediscovered

by energy-conscious and conservation-minded Americans.

Masonry heaters may resemble fireplaces, but the comparison ends there.

Most fireplace heat escapes up the flue, whereas the heat generated in a masonry heater winds through a mazelike route and is absorbed through thousands of pounds of rock mass along the way.

The burn, which can approach 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit inside, makes it the cleanest wood-burning device that exists. It produces little, if any, creosote and generates almost no wood smoke emissions because of these high combustion temperatures.

These heaters are also one of the safest ways to burn wood because fires produced usually burn no longer than a couple of hours. Compared to

woodstoves and fireplaces, masonry heaters are fuel misers, burning relatively small amounts of wood in only one to two brief firings per day.

A bonus for the Chena Project is that the land yields almost unlimited supplies of firewood.

Few visitors walk by the heater without thoroughly inspecting its construction, touching the rock mantle or asking staff about its use and operation. They physically experience the heat radiating from the rock and cannot overcome their inherent desire to gather around a warm hearth.

The Alaska District is the Corps' flagship and proving ground for this heating technology at its Chena Project and hopes to spawn interest in building masonry heaters where they are viable at Corps projects and federal installations across the country.

summer and winter activities. About 25 special use or event permits are issued annually for activities including retriever dog trials, trail riding, cross country meets, triathlons, scouting events, youth conservation camps and Civil War re-enactments. Each year, the Chena Project hosts a Paralyzed Veterans of America moose hunt for several individuals selected from across the country.

Sometimes there are even giveaways. When the flood gates are lowered to divert rising waters, downed trees collect against the dam's screen and must be removed. The public is then invited to cut and haul away a pickup truck bed full of firewood.

Caught up

The administrative building now meets current and future operational needs, Schaake said.

It complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, all environmental laws and the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, which requires federal agencies to reduce energy intensity by 30 percent by FY2015.

The comfort and usefulness of the facility has progressed a long way.

Schaake remembers how the project's original office, an old soil laboratory that was replaced by the now renovated structure at the current site, provided little heat in a region where winter temperatures routinely dip below zero.

"We had to wear parkas inside, and

there was frequently a skim of ice on the toilet," Schaake said. "We'd go out to our cars to warm up."

Before the recent upgrade, thousands of gallons of heating oil fueled the building's furnaces during the coldest months.

"Little, if any, design consideration was given to its operating efficiency or mission requirements beyond the most basic of functions," Schaake said.

The new office's design incorporated many of the techniques and practices from the University of Alaska's Institute of Northern Engineering in Fairbanks. The goal was to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels without sacrificing comfort or visual appeal. Wherever possible, optimal use of green building practices was used to reduce total energy costs and adverse environmental impacts, Schaake said.

Energy saver

To stay comfortable during the winter, zoned radiant floor heating powered by new state-of-the-art energy-efficient boilers replaced a forced-air heating system. Supplementary warmth is provided by the wood-burning masonry heater.

To help retain that heat, energy-efficient multipaned screened windows permit maximum light transmission while filtering ultraviolet rays. Boosted wall and ceiling insulation capacity along with new insulated exterior and garage doors further trap warm air.

To lower the electric bill, fluorescent light fixtures were replaced with

energy-efficient, full-spectrum LED lighting activated by a motion sensor. The building's exterior, flagpole and gate entrance LED lights also activate automatically based on the level of natural light.

An expandable solar panel system installed behind the office is expected to supply a minimum of 25 percent of the project's annual electricity.

The office was built with an array of durable materials, such as stone floors and concrete countertops.

Locally-obtained alluvial river rock was used to construct the entire masonry heater from floor to ceiling as well as the exterior plaza area walls and planters.

Douglas fir was used for the heavy timber framing, and the ceiling, wainscoting and trim came from recycled barn siding.

Visitor furniture is made from beetle-killed Alaska spruce trees, and the conference table was crafted by Feavel from a white spruce tree and flood debris wood removed from the Chena Project. Sliding barn doors enclose the conference room.

Open houses are planned in conjunction with seasonal public events, such as Snow Rendezvous, an event for snowmachiners, and Salmon Watch, a period in which people can view salmon passing through the dam, to continue to introduce the new office to the public.

"There's something for everybody here," Schaake said.

Driver to driller

Trainee experience opens door to new career

By Pat Richardson
Media Relations Specialist

Chris Bean loves his job. As the first Alaska wounded warrior to trade an Army occupation for a civilian career, Bean smoothly transitioned from a truck driver to a driller's helper at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District in a matter of months.

Bean participated in the Arctic Warfighter Trainee Program, a partnership between the district and the Warrior Transition Battalion-Alaska at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. It's the first Corps partnership in the nation to focus on facilitating civilian career development for troops on medical hold waiting to return to duty or leave the Army. The experience he gained

opened the path to his new career.

Bean medically retired after undergoing two anterior cruciate ligament replacement surgeries one year apart on his left knee. Two months after his second surgery, he broke his femur in two places.

His injuries landed him in the Warrior in Transition unit in September 2009. While recovering, the program placed him temporarily as a driller's helper trainee at the district in February 2010.

"I like being on the go," Bean said. "I would go insane in an office job."

This attitude would explain why he loves his new job as a driller's helper. The position keeps him outdoors and active with machinery.

"We knew going in that we could give back by helping some great Americans learn a new skill," said Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander. "What we found was that our warriors in transition are not only fully able to help us execute our mission, but they are inspiring us and improving our morale every day."

The Army established the Warrior Transition Program in 2007 to support returning wounded soldiers from Overseas Contingency Operations. The Army Medical Command established warrior transition battalions on specific installations, including Fort Richardson, to assist in the recovery of severely wounded, injured and ill soldiers, veterans and their families for as long as necessary. The battalions also help these soldiers take the next step in their lives.

The Alaska District and Warrior Transition Battalion-Alaska signed a formal agreement to create the Arctic Warfighter Trainee Program in May 2010. The Alaska District committed to providing workplace opportunities for certain screened soldiers while staying flexible to accommodate medical appointments and whatever else they need to heal.

"Our agreement with the Alaska District was the beginning of making a formalized program for the unit," said 1st Lt. Ian Cabbage, Warrior Transition Battalion-Alaska transition coordinator. "We modeled it after the Operation



Photo by Matthew Johnson

While assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion-Alaska, Chris Bean (right), driller's helper trainee, works with Lyle Cain, senior driller in the Soils and Geology Section, at the Combat Pistol Range on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Warfighter program in Washington, D.C.”

At the district, a military officer is in charge of periodically recruiting candidates for the wide variety of jobs available at the Corps. When Bean expressed an interest in machines and heavy equipment, he discovered that the district has drill rigs. So he decided to try drilling.

“I found a new love,” Bean said.

Bean worked as a driller’s helper for nine months, taking soil samples at the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project, railroad extension project at Eielson Air Force Base and three barracks projects at JBER. Soil samples are taken to detect chemical contamination and provide engineers data on the density and type of soil for foundation designs.

“Chris had experience with equipment when growing up, and he loves working with machines,” said Jim Pekar, Geotechnical Services Section chief. “He fit into the district like a piece in a puzzle.”

Mechanically inclined

Originally from Port Gibson, N.Y., Bean said he has always been fascinated with cars. In high school, he raced motocross and was heavily into mechanics. He taught himself how to operate a bucket loader and learned rudimentary welding by trial and error on his off-road vehicle after watching

others weld.

Seeing no jobs in his home state, he joined the Army two months after high school graduation in 2003. He scored high enough on his military entrance exam to pick any specialty and chose truck driver.

Bean volunteered for his first deployment from June 2004 to June 2005 with the 594th Transportation Company out of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Ky. He drove from Kuwait to the northernmost point in Iraq, 10 miles from the Turkish border, as part of a truck convoy transporting ammunition, fuel and other supplies to U.S. military bases. He was always on the road, logging 50,000 miles, and saw every forward operating base in the country, he said.

After his tour at Fort Campbell, he continued his military career at JBER. He deployed again to Iraq, driving trucks another 10,000 miles for the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, from October 2006 to December 2007.

“I was exposed to roadside bombs over 60 times,” Bean said. His truck was damaged many times and destroyed twice. He also saw dozens of firefights.

Permanent hire

His temporary assignment switched into a budding civilian career when a driller’s helper position opened. Bean applied and competed with other

applicants for the job. The district hired him in 2010, becoming the first trainee to be hired as a permanent full-time employee through the program.

“We hired Chris Bean because he had the skill set we needed,” said Marcus Palmer, Soils and Geology Section chief and Bean’s supervisor. “He received no special consideration other than what is available to all veterans.”

“He can do the work despite his physical limitation,” Palmer added. “He fetches tools, attaches the auger, handles tools and equipment, and shovels dirt. He can operate the drill rig for the senior driller.”

“We enjoyed him coming here,” said Pekar. “Chris has a great attitude. He helped us when we needed help.”

Bean credits his success and job satisfaction to Lyle Cain, the senior driller who is training him. Cain is passing along all of his knowledge as Bean’s mentor, and Bean is gaining skills, such as welding.

Cain has 19 years experience in the business, working across the state, including three years with the district. Old-time drillers in Anchorage and Fairbanks told Bean he is working with the best in Alaska.

Cain was featured in an episode of The History Channel’s “Tougher in Alaska” series when he worked for a drilling company hired by the Corps to retrieve soil samples at Newtok. The village is relocating because of widespread melting permafrost and erosion. The program filmed Cain lying on snow-covered ground in subzero temperatures forcing a track back onto a drill rig at Mertarvik, where the village wants to move.

“Chris is one of the best drill hands I’ve ever worked with,” Cain said. “He has absorbed about five years of experience in the short year he has been with me.”

Cain praised his eagerness to learn, problem-solving ability, work ethic and dependability. In a few months, he even expected that Bean would be able to take over his responsibilities in his absence.

“I would love to have more like him. I couldn’t ask for a better match,” Cain said.

Cain, Pekar and Palmer said they are pleased with the Arctic Warfighter Trainee Program.

“Chris gained skills, and we got assistance,” Palmer said. “As long as we get motivated workers like Chris, we would be happy to have another one.”



Photo by Ken McNally

Chris Bean (left) and Lyle Cain prepare a rig for rotary drilling on a rifle training range at Fort Wainwright.

Virginia Talley remembered for adventurous life

By Pat Richardson
Media Relations Specialist

Brig. Gen. Benjamin B. Talley has an undisputed place in Alaskan military history. His late wife, Virginia Morsey Wheeler Talley, has a place in the hearts of military engineers. Now this extraordinary couple's generosity will endear them to young engineers for years to come.

In her will, Virginia bequeathed \$100,000 to the Benjamin B. Talley Scholarship Endowment Fund, managed by the Anchorage Post of the Society of American Military Engineers. She died Feb. 18, 2011, on her 92nd birthday in Washington, D.C.

Brig. Gen. Talley oversaw military construction in Alaska leading up to World War II. The runways and facilities that he pushed through on an expedited schedule proved critical in repelling the Japanese invasion of the Aleutian Islands.

Virginia had a distinguished career and adventurous life of her own. She was married to Lt. Gen. Raymond A. "Speck" Wheeler, the 36th Chief of Engineers from 1945-1949, before Talley. She married both generals after they were widowed and retired from the military, but she shared many active civilian service years with them.

"Virginia was an amazing woman: strong, determined and an accomplished adventurer," said retired Lt. Col. Chris Turletes, a friend and former Alaska District deputy commander.

When Brig. Gen. Talley died in 1998 at 95 years old, Turletes served as Virginia's survivor assistance officer.

"I found that I needed more assistance than Virginia," he said. "She had things pretty well squared away."

Turletes said the experience gave him several "priceless" opportunities to meet with her at her homes in Anchor Point on the Kenai Peninsula and in Washington, D.C. He was able to admire the museum-quality artifacts, visit and listen to her life of accomplishments and adventures.

"We looked forward to Virginia's letters, post cards and Christmas updates because they would describe in amazing detail a recent exotic travel adventure photographing lions and elephants in Africa or two flat tires at once on the (Dalton Highway), or having high tea in London," he said.

The Talleys were longtime friends of

the Alaska District and Anchorage Post of SAME, often driving from Anchor Point to Anchorage to attend events at both organizations.

"It was a pleasure to be the officer assigned to escort the Talleys," said Bob Bechtold, former Army engineer officer at the Alaska District. "I learned so much from the fine example and demeanor of the Talleys."

In 1996, Virginia and B.B. attended his "History of Alaska" college class when he gave a presentation about B.B.'s contributions to Alaska. Each one added some finer points and shared stories. The students were amazed that they were still alive and provided some great insight and details, Bechtold said.

After B.B.'s death, Virginia maintained those ties. Turletes remembered that the district's executive office looked forward to her visits. He escorted her to annual SAME banquets, usually in subzero temperatures in January.

"She was a true friend and benefactor to the SAME Anchorage Post," he said.

The only woman in her law class, Talley graduated as valedictorian with a bachelor's degree and a law degree from Washington University in St. Louis in 1942. Besides earning two degrees, she served as the first female editor of the school's student-run academic journal. Upon graduation, as a fourth-generation lawyer in her family, she became an attorney for the Rural Electrification Administration.

For five years she traveled throughout the United States helping to establish rural electric cooperatives, mediating disputes and negotiating electrical facility purchases. Next, she worked 12 years for the World Bank, mostly in water resources development. She was their first woman to conduct business overseas.

After she married Wheeler, they served as consultants to the World Bank and the United Nations. They traveled to Australia, China, Congo, Egypt, India, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Southeast Asia from 1959-1974. After he died, she married Talley. They shared 23 years of marriage.

During his service in the district in the 1980s and 1990s, Turletes said Virginia regularly visited, attending district social functions, VIP visits and changes of command.

She was also very involved with Brig. Gen. Talley in making "Alaska at War," a documentary film about World War II in the Aleutian Islands. Premiering in 1986, it was shown by the district to give new officers some history on the Corps of Engineers in Alaska and accomplishments of Brig. Gen. Talley, Turletes said.

The main conference room in Alaska District's headquarters is named for B.B. and the adjoining conference room is named for Virginia.

On Oct. 24, the street along the bluff where the Corps building has been located since 1946 was also renamed after Talley.



Alaska District file photo

Virginia Talley's husband, retired Brig. Gen. Benjamin B. Talley, was named a fellow by the Society of American Military Engineers during the Alaska District's 50th anniversary celebration in 1996. The presenting officer is the late Col. Peter Topp, Alaska District commander at that time.

ACTIVE IN ALASKA



(From left) Stan Ragan, Michiel Holley, John Budnik and Kevin Morgan of the Regulatory Division compete in the 2011 Alaska District Golf Tournament at Eagleleglen Golf Course on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Aug. 26.



Kelly Drake, program analyst in the Emergency Management Office, harvests a bull caribou from the Forty Mile Herd Aug. 30 during a hunt off the Taylor Highway near Chicken.



Robert Jobson, archaeologist in the Regulatory Division, shows a bull musk ox he hunted about 40 miles from Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island in September 2010.



Lisa Pooler, budget analyst in the Engineering Division, drives into position for the tractor pull event after being hooked up to a sled at the Deltana Fair in Delta Junction July 29. Assisting Pooler on the tractor is her brother-in-law, Kim Ueeck.



David Gerland, Construction and Operations Division deputy chief, displays a brown bear he stalked Sept. 16 nearly 80 miles west of Iliamna.

Passionate patriotism

Honoring veterans leads employee on quest for museum

By Curt Biberdorf
Editor

More than a decade in the making, the Alaska Veterans Museum in Anchorage has the distinction of being the first and last.

It's the first museum of its kind in the last state to establish one, and arguably a fitting addition since 17 percent of the population in "The Last Frontier" is composed of military veterans—the highest per capita in the nation, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Opened last April, the museum's creation is an achievement that was started and nurtured by the patriotic passion of Forest Brooks, project formulator in the Engineering Division's Civil Works Branch at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District.

Brooks and his wife, Cathy, had just moved from Seattle, Wash., where Forest was employed by the Seattle District. When they received a misdelivered flyer advertising the 2000 Independence Day constituent picnic sponsored by state Sen. Randy Phillips and state Rep. Pete Kott, they decided to attend.

During a conversation with Kott, Brooks told him about his previous military museum experience in Washington state, that Alaska should have a similar museum and that he was interested in serving as a catalyst to make it happen. Kott and Phillips agreed that Alaska should not be the only state in the nation without a veterans museum.

Alaska was and still is sparse on military museums.

None are found at its three active military installations. A few museums have military exhibits, but the state did not have a museum devoted to veterans.

Ultimately, Brooks said the museum would need to be by and for Alaskans, with adjustments from the Washington-state model to reflect its unique history. Granted statehood 52 years ago, some of that history includes being the last place where hostilities of the Civil War occurred while still belonging to Russia, and being the only American land invaded and occupied by a foreign



Photo by Curt Biberdorf/Inset courtesy photo

The Alaska Veterans Museum opened in Anchorage April 17 in the 4th Avenue Marketplace. (Inset photo) Forest Brooks, along his wife, Cathy, led the way in founding the permanent exhibition.

nation since the War of 1812.

Foundation

The Brooks have been longtime active supporters of the armed forces. The military heritage of Forest's family dates to the Spanish-American War, and he has served 42 years as an Army civilian employee.

Cathy was "instilled with a sense of patriotism" as a child when her father was the Anchorage Fire Department chief, he said. Every day as a youth, she helped him raise and lower the American flag on the veterans flagpole at the Delaney Park Strip.

Forest's position in the Seattle District as a project manager of civil works water resources projects and studies presented him opportunities to interact with the community, particularly in the Centralia-Chehalis area where he attended intergovernment coordination meetings on the Chehalis River Flood Damage Reduction Study.

Cathy would accompany him, but instead of attending the meetings, Forest would take her to the new veterans museum located in a small storefront on Tower Avenue in Centralia.

In the mid-1990s, a small group of veterans in that area created a veterans memorial museum. They were led by Lee Grimes, who retired from his job so he could volunteer full time to make the museum a reality.

"(He) embraced a very personal

mission to create a place where veterans could go and be forever honored and remembered," said Brooks.

When Brooks finished his meetings, he returned to the museum and visited the veterans and volunteers.

After a few months of his informal affiliation with this group, Grimes invited Brooks to join the board of directors. He admits to being surprised and honored by the invitation.

The Brooks attended special museum events, such as parades and monthly special events focused on a certain era of veterans, as often as possible. They also introduced "Fan Mail for the Troops" to the Centralia museum, an activity they took on previously in Seattle. He served on the board for about two years before moving to Alaska in 2000.

"My association with the veterans memorial museum and the persons supporting it was the most fulfilling project I have ever been involved in," Brooks said.

Carried on

The Alaska Veterans Museum is focused on honoring American veterans and ensuring that the sacrifices they made to defend this nation's freedom are told and retold. It involved a range of interested veterans and nonveterans, Forest said.

Kott first founded an ad hoc committee, formed primarily by members of the Veterans of Foreign

Wars Eagle River Post. Brooks served as the informal secretary for the organizing group.

Nine charter members, including Forest, signed the nonprofit charter articles of incorporation for the new museum Nov. 11, 2001.

The mission would be to “create a museum for the inspiration and preservation of the memory of veterans and their sacrifices for America’s freedom; to educate the general public through the collection, presentation and exhibition of artifacts, and particularly the personal accounts of veterans; and provide activities to support veterans, and active duty, National Guard and Reserve members.”

Forest devoted hundreds of hours annually from 2001-2009 serving on the board of directors and as secretary.

He compiled meeting minutes, helped run the annual meeting and assisted the president with fundraising, among other activities.

Meanwhile, he and Cathy continued “Fan Mail for the Troops” with museum backing. They facilitated Anchorage public and private school students writing to support U.S. military personnel overseas and stateside. Through the years, nearly 48,000 cards have been sent.

Forest assisted in setting up the museum’s oral history program, modeling it after the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage Veterans History Project for those who served during World War II. Museum volunteers have interviewed more than 120 veterans.

Before settling into its current location, the museum collected and placed hundreds of artifacts donated by veterans from World War II to the present era at exhibits in the Anchorage Museum, Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum and Commemorative Air Force Museum in Texas.

Bigger dream

The Washington state museum began in a small storefront just as the Alaska Veterans Museum is now at its location on Fourth Avenue in Anchorage.

In 2005, the Washington museum moved into its own newly-constructed facility. Now filling a leased space, the next goal for Alaska is building a permanent stand-alone museum. Members want to start a capital campaign to build a \$6.5 million building using a design drawn up by University of Alaska Anchorage students.

During the museum creation in

Collection recalls Alaskan military history

The Alaska Veterans Museum, opened April 17, 2011.

It tells the stories of individual service members through uniforms, artifacts, memorabilia, photos and posters that cover the walls, hang from the ceiling or rest protected behind glass cases.

Recorded historical accounts from Alaska veterans are also played on a monitor.

Visitors can gaze at a hand-crafted 13-foot-long model of the aircraft carrier USS Essex filled with miniature model sailors, aircraft and other equipment, and view displays about the Japanese invasion of the Aleutians and the Allied Forces counterattack. Alaska’s role as a surveillance post and Nike missile base during the Cold War also is highlighted.

The museum operates on grant

money, donations and admission fees. It is always looking for pieces to add to the collection, specifically World War I uniforms and photos, World War II photos, Korea photos, Vietnam photos, Cold War uniforms, photos of the Nike Site Summit, scrapbooks, models of a Nike-Hercules Battery, and Gulf War uniforms and photos.

The museum is located in the Fourth Avenue Marketplace, 333 W. Fourth Ave., Suite 227 in Anchorage.

Summer hours are May 1-Sept. 30 every day from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. and winter hours are Oct. 1-April 30 Wednesday through Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Admission is \$3 and free for members and children under 2.

Information was compiled in part from Alaska Veterans Museum web site at <http://alaskaveterans.com/>

Washington state, Grimes viewed himself as an instrument of God and always gave Him the credit for whatever he was able to accomplish, Brooks said.

“Like (Grimes), I attribute all I have been able to do to divine help since there have been so many things that happened over the last decade that I could not have planned if I had even thought of them,” Brooks said. “Again, I was a pencil in God’s hand.”

Suelyn Wright Novak, who joined the museum board and is now executive director, became the catalyst for turning

his concept into a “bricks and mortar” facility open to the public, Brooks said.

After helping to stand up a veterans museum in Alaska, Brooks looks to full-time Alaskans to embrace the project and make it their own. This now appears to be happening.

“I truly hope the vast reservoir of veterans in Alaska will devote their time and energy to making the Alaska Veterans Museum a long-term success in a permanent location,” he said.

Forest plans to retire in 2012 and return to Washington with his wife.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Visitors to the Alaska Veterans Museum can listen to recorded stories of service members as well as view a collection uniforms, artifacts, memorabilia, photos and posters that cover the walls, hang from the ceiling or rest behind glass cases.



U.S. Army photo

District flashback

Officers quarters receive some exterior work at Elmendorf Field Sept. 8, 1941. Before the Alaska District formed in 1946, the Seattle District managed Army Corps of Engineers activities in Alaska. The War Department placed all Alaska military construction under the Corps starting in 1941. Construction on Elmendorf Field began June 8, 1940, as a major and permanent military air field near Anchorage. The first Air Corps personnel arrived Aug. 12, 1940. The War Department formally designated Elmendorf Field as Fort Richardson Nov. 12, 1940, but the air facilities on the post were named Elmendorf Field in honor of Capt. Hugh M. Elmendorf, killed in 1933 while flight testing an experimental fighter near Wright Field, Ohio. After World War II, the Army moved its operations to the new Fort Richardson, and the Air Force assumed control of the original Fort Richardson and renamed it Elmendorf Air Force Base. As a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure, Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base merged to become Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Oct. 1, 2010.

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