

## **Return to PARIS.....2<sup>nd</sup> Radio Relay Sq Remote Radio Relay Site in Korea**

At the end of May, 1955, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Bob Furrer, OIC, turned his 2<sup>nd</sup> Radio Relay Sq PARIS VHF/FM Duplex relay site over to Company "C" EUSA Long Lines Signal BN, HQ in Daegu, Korea. PARIS is located one mile north of the now city of Mokchon, some 5-miles SSE of Chonan and at turnover, it had a call-sign of HIGHPOINT. The site is currently operated as HIGHPOINT by the 501<sup>st</sup> Signal Company, 36<sup>th</sup> Signal BN (Daegu) located at Camp Humphrey, Korea.

Since researching and compiling the 2<sup>nd</sup>RRSq history with other former members of the squadron and researching and documenting Army signal and Air Force Communication sites throughout Korea with a vast number of former Army and Air Force sig/comm men, I have had an "itch" to visit my old PARIS Site. Through a chance email forwarded to me by Emil Obrey, formerly with EUSA Long Lines Signal BN, regarding a request from LTC Mark Rosenstein, CO of the 36<sup>th</sup> Signal BN, Daegu, for historical data on some current Army signal sites that were formerly operated by the Air Force, I stuck my oar in and offered access to my sig/comm site data. One thing led to another and I popped the question, "Is it possible for me to visit my old Highpoint Site?" The answer was positive, given lead time to organize a visit.

Fifty-five years later, on 7 September 2010, I put in an email request for a Space A seat at SEATAC/McChord AFB and Kunsan and Osan ABs in Korea. Shortly it was determined that 14-15 Oct would be the scheduled date for gathering at the 501<sup>st</sup> Signal Co at Camp Humphrey, to mount the Highpoint Site expedition.

Patriot Express now flies twice weekly from SEATAC to Misawa, Japan and on to Osan AB and Kunsan AB in Korea, so the Saturday 9 Oct 1230 show time was my pick. I called McChord on 9 Oct and there was a 125-seat release for this flight. I followed with a call to the McChord-Ft Lewis SEATAC shuttle (360-876-1737) for required reservation from the base to SEATAC (\$15.75 one-way) and confirmed reservations at Turumi Lodge, Osan AB, for Monday, 11 Oct.

I then drove up to McChord AFB and, entering the base, discovered that they had just recently required vehicle registration decals again for the designated Joint Base Lewis-McChord. It was then over to the AMC Terminal to verify that my Space A sign-up was in the system. I obtained a hard-copy verification, then registered and parked my vehicle in the long-term parking lot next to the terminal parking area.

The shuttle deposited me at Iceland Air in the main terminal, adjacent to the AMC check-in. Show time had been moved forward to 0040 Sunday morning and seat release held at 120. Boarding finally started at 0415 and we were airborne at 0524 PDT, to Misawa, Japan, in a North American Airline Boeing 767. SEATAC charges \$16.10 departure tax for each Space A passenger. The final passenger accounting when leaving Misawa, required all airline crew to remove their shoes so they had sufficient digits for the count, and close to four hours on the ground, so we didn't get airborne until 1050 local time. We

touched down at Osan AB about 1310 and were processed through their new AMC terminal, a vast improvement over the temporary terminal-custom services that were held temporarily in the old BX (now the construction site of the new Challenger Enlisted Club) I had experienced in 2005.

Checking in at the Lodge, DISASTER! My reservation and confirm number didn't hold up. No sweat! The base has several contract hotels in Songtan, just outside the Main Gate, and Mr. Kang of the New Seoul Hotel provided transportation and checked me in at the hotel for \$54.00 USD a day. The hotel is also easy walking distance from the Main Gate and the rooms are quite comfortable with bath, efficiency kitchen and computer. It is advised that one should pick up what you would like for your breakfast at the Shoppette in the BX, as McDonald's Egg-Mac Muffin's are three blocks away. Also, a bar of US sized soap is desirable, as the hotel provided soap is about the size of an old "four-bit" piece. A very good Brazil Steakhouse, the Churrascaria Rio Grill, is right across the street, whoops alley, from the hotel. A bottle of local beer and several courses of BBQ steak, pork and a very interestingly slice of spiced BBQ pineapple come to \$25 USD.

**Important notes:** 1) The military in Korea now uses a DBIDs (Digital Bionic ID System) whereby all permanent military personnel have their ID card entered into a data base file, along with the their authorized length of stay. Then ID cards are scanned upon entering any base in Korea, no problem. I was not made aware of this system, nor directed to log into the file, so on three occasions, my retiree ID card was rejected and then learned of this system (in Bldg 936) and that a second piece of personal ID (Drivers license, passport, etc.) was required for proper ID. 2) The Korean SOFA agreement provides that retirees can use the BX, commissary, Class 6, etc. by obtaining a temporary ration card at the Air Base Ration Control Office (in Bldg 765). You must have a ration card to even enter the BX sales floor and shopette from the Food Court area.

Wed 13 Oct I was fairly well stabilized after the drawn out flight over and took a 45-minute \$5.60 morning bus trip from the Myung Jin Bus Terminal on base to Camp Humphreys. CPT Reinhardt of the 501<sup>st</sup> Signal Co met me and took me to the Humphreys Lodge. Rooms are \$65.00 a day and include a Continental breakfast. The Lodge is located nearby the Community Center, which hosts a very nice snack bar (closed Sat/Sun) and has several internet computers available in the Arts and Crafts room. The PX and Food Court, bank, post office, commissary, Burger King and a Korean restaurant are all within a 2-3 block walk.

On Thursday, 14 Oct, I met LTC Mark Rosenstein, CO of the 36<sup>th</sup> Signal BN at the 501<sup>st</sup> Signal Company, CPT Tony Reinhardt CO of the 501<sup>st</sup>, Steve Hoover of the post Public Affairs office and some twenty staff members of the Signal BN and Company. I had been requested by Mark to provide a 30-45 minute briefing covering my 1954-55 Paris Site mission, operations, maintenance, support and general life on-site and in Korea. Earlier, I had been informed that the site access road was "all chopped up" at the upper end and might not be passable by vehicle. Anyway, Steve and I were transported in a 4-wheel

drive van, with water and the “catered” MREs for lunch in a separate pick-up and the rest of the people in a bus.

Getting to the site was via a series of paved expressways, 4-lane arterials and two lane secondary paved roads, all signed in Korean, with extensive adjacent urbanization and industrial development. There was absolutely nothing that I could recognize not even formerly prominent hills and stream crossings. Approaching the old village of Mokchon at the base of the Paris mountain, it was well signed and some in English, but nothing of the past was recognized. The now modern city of Mokchon is home to the Independence Memorial Hall of Korea, the site of a major historical battle of Cheonan.

Finally, along one of the locally paved service roads, we stopped at the turn-off onto the site access road and waited for the bus to arrive. Part of the program was for all of the signal people to hike up top site. As Mark said, “The exercise will be good for the staff.” Our vehicle then proceeded onto a fully paved single-lane macadam road, a far cry from the old severely rutted and unsurfaced “goat trail” that I recall. At the top end of the paved road, a proper concrete helicopter landing pad is now located, adjacent to a double gated entrance through the two site perimeter security fences. (While waiting for the troops to complete their hike, a group of Koreans parked by us and went onto a well worn path by the fence, at the lip of the mountain face. Here they strapped on their “Paragliders” and went sailing around that side of the mountain.) From here, it was a well-maintained and gravel-surfaced lane that brought us to my former site vehicle parking area, located some 30-40 feet below top site, where the operations building, kitchen-mess hall and my quarters were located. The only “relic” remaining from my time was the concrete stairway that led from the parking area to top site, and it now had improvements of a steel pipe safety railing along each side.

The site now contains only an emergency power building where my former vehicle maintenance building sat at the end of the vehicle parking area, a microwave tower where the radio Quonset sat and a microwave equipment building where the former kitchen-mess hall sat. This relay site is now unmanned, totally automatic and even supplied with a commercial power transmission line. Top site has been considerably reshaped from what I remember. Trees and underbrush are now so prolific, not only on and over the entire mountain, but also throughout the Korean countryside, that it is almost impossible to recognize any former land marks or land forms the were easily seen following the devastating war. This provided absolutely no possibility of taking any photographs from the site to the areas below for comparison of the changes that had taken place since my photos of 1954-55. There was evidence in this “jungle” of growth that a former access path to a lower bench on the south side of top site existed, which was the path and stairs down to the old “Club Highpoint” and airmen’s quarters.

With everyone assembled below the microwave tower, I was introduced and gave my briefing of what a remote radio relay site operation and living environment was like back in the 1954-55 “dark ages.” At this point, I became aware that I was “sand-bagged” as I fulfilled a requirement for their “program” for a staff Officer Professional Development Program. I suppose this was only fair Army “pay-back” for all of the “stuff” I had

pinched from the Army through “Midnight Requisitioning” during my time on the mountain. Upon completion of my presentation, LTC Rosenstein presented me with a Certificate of Appreciation, a composite drawing representing the 36<sup>th</sup> Signal BN mission and operation in Korea, their challenge coin and a 36<sup>th</sup> Signal BN jacket pin, signifying honorary membership in the BN.

Lunch time was now upon us and it was MREs – Meals Ready to Eat. I chose an entrée of beef in a sauce, which was a lot like a stew, and quite tasty. However, there is a marked difference between MREs and my old C-rations and 3-in-1 rations. Everything is packed in a sealed heavy-duty plastic, which to me was impossible to open unless you had a good sharp knife, and Homeland Security at SEATAC had relieved me of mine. An additional difference is that you need at least a couple of canteens of water: 1) Some 6-ounces to put in a plastic bag with the “chemical” heater for the entrée; and 2) 12-ounces to mix with your “Cool-Aid.” The other food items were quite similar to that of C-rations, hard cracker/biscuit, squeeze packet of peanut butter-chocolate mix in place of canned jam, etc., but no cigarettes. I still believe I would prefer the old C- or 3-in-1 ration with its unique can opener and solid tin cans that you can firmly hold, rather than a floppy plastic bag, plus the utility of the empty cans. The entrée is a hot number to handle when fully heated.

With the completion of lunch, it was back to Camp Humphreys. To me, this was the culmination of a desire to check out my “old stomping grounds”, but in reality, it fit into my lifelong realization that, “You can go back, but you can’t go back.” The location may be the same, but the environment has moved along with many changes over time.

After spending a couple of additional days at the Humphreys lodge, I took the bus back to Osan AB and this time my Turumi Lodge reservations held up. I was placed in a 1<sup>st</sup> floor VQ for \$39.00 a day. Again, eating on base became a problem as Rickenbacker’s closed at 1400 and you had to either walk to the Food Court at the BX or hit the little convenience shop in the lodge for a frozen “delight!” The “O” Club still operates, but not on weekends.

On Monday, the 18<sup>th</sup>, I checked with AMC Passenger Service Counter and there was a 91 Space A seat release for the Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> Patriot Express. Show time had been moved up to 0500. So, with the in-room coffee pot and a pastry purchased on Sunday at Rickenbacker’s, I was set for roll call that morning.

Roll call was finally held at 0530 and everyone was boarded, and there were seats still available for the stop in Misawa AB, Japan. Around 0730, I was through customs, checked in and made “peace” with the SEATAC charge of \$16.10 head tax and an additional \$13.00 custom fee, for a total of \$29.10! We broke ground in a Boeing 767 around 0900 local time and touched down in Misawa at 1050. Here we were again confined to terminal arrival and departure lounges for some 3-hours. As usual, security made provisions for an outdoor smoking break adjacent to the lounge and later, a “snack” truck was available for those fine edibles: pizza, cold sandwiches, and bags of crunchy and assorted drinks. We were airborne again at 1410 local time (Korea and Japan are in

the same time zone) and arrived at SEATAC 0550 PDT. We were fed two meals and a snack while enroute and “drink” was available at \$5.00 a go, with service provided by a standard cabin crew.

With only a carry-on bag, I waltzed through baggage claim and customs in a “hiccup”, was at 00 Gate south end of the main terminal baggage claim area for 0645 (Earliest bus 0445) Lewis-McChord shuttle (No reservations required from the SEATAC end) and a \$15.75 fare deposited me right at the Long-Term Parking lot and then it was only 165 miles between me and home.

A continuous on-the-go 23-26 hour time span from home to or from Osan AB, Korea, certainly takes the “starch” out of a person and a couple of days of good rest on both ends really helps. But always remember, Space A is the way, and the price is right!

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