

4/25/2025

Edited 5/4/2025

Chapter 3b -My Air Force Overseas Duty in Scotland (1955-1957)

My Journey Overseas

The day after I said goodbye to LaRue my folks drove me to Boise to catch a flight to New York City. It was the last week of August 1955. After 30 days at home I was short on money, so Dad bought me a first-class ticket on United Airlines. I said I would pay him back when I got settled, and I did. My orders showed my assignment was RAF Chicksands, which is near London.

We had a shrimp dinner at a seafood restaurant and then I changed into my uniform at the hotel, as I had to travel in uniform to get a military fare. I boarded a 4 engine United DC-6B in the evening and it made stops in Salt Lake, Denver, and Chicago. Seems like all I did was eat. I would be sleeping and the stewardess would wake me up and serve a full course meal on china. They gave me special attention. I had to change planes in Chicago and that was a scary task for a country kid. I found my connection and it was on to LaGuardia in New York arriving about noon.

I had arranged to go to the home of a classmate in radio school, Merle Chucknick, who lived in the Bronx. I didn't know anything about public transportation, so decided to get a taxi. It was quite a distance, and expensive but I made it. He lived with his parents on the 5th floor of a walk-up apartment building. They were Polish, and we had pigs in a blanket for Sunday dinner. It was a new food experience for me.

My friend took me around New York City the next day to see Times Square, the Empire State Building and other sights. I had to report the following day, so he took me on the subway to Sheepshead Bay where the processing center was located. I appreciated him showing me around and getting me to the right place. It was a dry run for him as he was to report to the same location in a few days.

The Manhattan Processing Center on Sheepshead Bay was huge. It is where military personnel wait for transportation overseas. I checked the bulletin board several times a day looking for a manifest that might have my name on it. A few were lucky and went by military air, but most went by troop ship. It was two or three days and my name was suddenly posted for the USNS General William O. Darb. It was a small WW2 era troopship bound the next day for Southampton, England. I did not have enough change to make phone calls and was restricted to base until departure.

An article I found later in the Star and Stripes Newspaper listed the typical cargo for this ship was 1,434 troops, 260 crew, 459 dependants, 18 pets, 54 tons of household goods and baggage, 3,000 bags of mail, and 18 vehicles and can take 7-9 days depending on the time of year. My crossing certificate is dated September 7, 1955 and I believe we made it in seven days or eight days

The morning of August 30, 1955 we loaded onto 6x6 trucks and were transported to what I believe was the Brooklyn Army Terminal. The truck drove out onto a covered pier where we unloaded, shouldered our duffel bags, marched up the gang plank, yelled out our name, and checked off as on board (my first cruise).

We were directed down into the bowels of the ship which was the hold with bunks four high that were canvas stretched across a frame. The bottom bunks looked claustrophobic to me, so I grabbed a top one. At least I wouldn't have a body hanging over me and I could sit up in my bunk without hitting my head. We were in the hold and restricted when top side to the bow and the stern. The dependents got all the nice space in between, and cabins. The makeup of the troops was about 1,000 army, 400 air force, a few Navy, and the crew was Navy. The army guys were always complaining about having to spend a year overseas. I was going for three years.

After claiming a bunk, I went aft top side to get some air and look over the scenery. I was standing next to an old army noncom (he was probably 30) and he said, "first one". I said, "yep". He said, "son, let me give you some advice. Unless you want to work the whole voyage stay top side tonight until they run you off. They will start assigning duty for the entire voyage in a little while and you will not be around. Also, you are going to start feeling sick, so keep eating no matter what". His advice was good as I had no duty and I managed to keep everything down. It was a struggle and I didn't throw up while most everybody was losing it.

Eating was an experience. There were long tables with rails around the edges to keep the trays from sliding off the table. The ship rolled constantly and when you looked out one side you saw sky and the other side you saw water then vice versa. There was vomit in the drinking fountains, ladders, stair wells, and everywhere you went.

A big surprise was cold salt water in the showers. There was no entertainment and the hold was stifling hot. I spent my time top side, weather permitting. There were gambling games going on twenty-four hours a day.

One night it was announced the Queen Mary would overtake us in the early evening on its way to Southampton. We saw it coming from behind on the port side. We ran over to the rail and the ship started listing badly. An announcement over the loud speakers told us to back away from the rail and spread out. The Queen Mary passed us with lights ablaze and we could hear

the music and the passengers having a great time as they sailed away in the night and left us in their wake.

(Around 2009 Larue and I spent a night on the Queen Mary in Long Beach, California where it is now a hotel and museum. It was launched in 1936 the same year as me.. It was quite an experience to stay in a 1st class cabin with all the original wood. The desk had a hole for a teapot to sit securely. You could see that it had seen a lot of use. We also did a crossing on the Queen Mary 2 in 2016 from Southampton to New York, then on to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. There was quite a difference in the two Queen Mary's.)

The last two or three days the sea was rough. It was a big relief when we entered the channel and cruised for several miles to Southampton. The English countryside was picturesque and I stood at the rail and took it all in. We docked in Southampton around September 7th and set foot on English soil.

Those of us in the USAFSS were loaded on a British bus for a short trip to nearby RAF Shaftsbury. I remember sitting behind the driver as we roared down the narrow winding roads on the left. I was pretty nervous about it.

We were told that our uniforms in England would always be our wool dress blue's. Our khaki summer uniforms would not be worn because of the cool weather.

We had to surrender our American money and were given paper military script in exchange. Even the nickels and dimes were paper. We were also issued ration books that allowed one carton of cigarettes per week and one imperial quart of booze per week. Then we were shown our quarters that were WW2 Royal Air Force. We were ready for a nice hot shower in fresh water. We found there were bathtubs instead of showers.

After eight days on the rolling sea we ready for beer, so the base club was next on the agenda. We thought we would get American or British beer, but all the club had was Beck's beer, which is German. The German's tried to bomb England and especially the Port of Southampton into oblivion just 10 years ago and all we can get is German beer. We discovered the hard way that German beer is much stronger than American beer and we didn't feel too well the next morning. For some strange reason we had to take turns standing guard duty during the night.

(After that experience I never drank a Beck's beer again until recently, making it almost 60 years. Strangely enough it was in Southampton, England. LaRue and I flew into Southampton from Dublin to catch the Queen Mary 2 in February 2015. We arrived three days early to have time to relax and look around. One day we went to a nice Italian restaurant for lunch and the only beer they served was Becks. So, I relented and had a few more before we departed Southampton.)

The next day it was announced that several of us would not be going to RAF Chicksands near London but to a place called RAF Station Kirknewton in Scotland. The Air Force had another change in plans for me. The change didn't really bother me as by now I was used to the Air Force way of doing things. Waiting for our departure we got lectures on how to conduct ourselves.

History of the USAF at RAF Station Kirknewton

The abandoned RAF Station Kirknewton located a few miles from Edinburgh, Scotland was first evaluated by the USAF in January 1952. The following are the words of Colonel Russell T. French in his now declassified (at the time Top Secret) oral history interview. It is heavily redacted, and the redacted parts refer to Scotland, Edinburgh, RAF Station Kirknewton, and the Royal Air Force. His interview is as follows:

“...it was about 6 o’clock in the morning. It was probably the most dreary picture I ever had in my life—cold, overcast, and everything. I finally managed to find out where (redacted) was and managed to get hold of a cab, and after several wrong turns, we arrived at a desolate bunch of buildings which had formerly been used as a PW camp for Italian prisoners. They were basically concrete block buildings and not very many of them. Also, a big old hangar which had originally been used by the (redacted) to use as storage for their aircraft because it had been built originally for a fighter field. But there was a big hill located at one end of the airfield, and I guess after (redacted) lost several aircraft into the hill, they discontinued all operation. Then it became an Italian PW camp, and then subsequently a possible location for (redacted). a wider part of the base was an opportunity for housing to be put into that area.....the other part which is the airfield site is where the antenna field would go.....nothing there except an old hangar and no water or anything there. It was sort of a dreary picture. I remember returning from the so called site survey and my recommendation basically was that although it appeared from a geographical standpoint and looking at the map an ideal location,it was not a very practical place to move.....but that was sort of glossed over in a hurry by the powers-to-be to advise me that not only were we going to send (redacted) but I also was probably going to be the commander of it. So we kind of rolled with the punches. When I returned we had a cadre I believe of about 30 enlisted people and I think six officers. And we departed on or about July 1952.....arriving at (redacted). When we first got there we stayed in various places—I know that the six officers with me arranged to stay in a boarding house (redacted)stayed there for I guess approximately three months, and in the meantime were able to get some support (redacted) to get some tents put up and get some camp stoves and make the place habitable for the small cadre. Then we built some more tents to handle the people—the typical WWII type thing of putting down a wood base and putting the tent over it and had the old diesel camp stove which used fuel oil to heat with. So, the situation was quite primitive for the first year, and then

managed to get some construction.....as we continued to build up the base from the six officers and 30 men until we got up to I guess 3-400 men who were living in tents and we were operational. In fact, we were operational from the very beginning. I think we had one or two positions that we got going in a matter of three or four weeks after we were there."

The above narrative is what the early arrivals found in 1952. I was in the second bunch of arrivals in 1955.. The tent living quarters had given way to prefab barracks known as the "H-frames", as they were in the shape of an H.

My Journey and Arrival at RAF Station Kirknewton

Early September 9, 1955 we boarded a British bus and headed to Scotland. The roads were narrow and winding all the way. I enjoyed sitting up front watching the road and the scenery. It took all day and well into the night. We arrived at Kirknewton around midnight. I think the driver was lost as we were all over southern Scotland. We were tired, grumpy, hungry, and about to revolt when the driver finally found the place. He pulled up to the gate and was directed to the mess hall. It was a WW2 era olive-drab concrete building with a single light bulb over the door

It was raining and mud was everywhere. It was a depressing place. A cook was on duty and served eggs to order with chipped beef and gravy on toast (SOS). It tasted great after all day without much food.

The cook was on duty since "midnight chow" was served for the midnight shift before going on duty and to the swing shift after getting off duty. Off duty airmen arriving from Edinburgh on the last bus would also slip in wearing "civvies" until it was declared off limits unless you were in uniform.

We were taken to supply and issued sheets, blankets, and pillow cases and then taken to one of four old buildings utilized for transient personnel. These were the buildings used during WW2 to house POW German and Italian Officers until they could be transported to the United States. The latrine was a separate small building between the four buildings. You had to cover some distance outside in the weather to get there.

The only thing needed to complete the look of a POW camp was a wire fence around the place. This site was located down a hill from the main base, so we were isolated from everyone.

We finally got to bed about three or four in the morning and figured with no instructions for the next day we would sleep late. We were roused out early and told the 1st Sgt would be arriving at 8am for an inspection! We hustled around to get things shaped up and he strode in with white gloves and started inspecting. Nothing was satisfactory and we got chewed. He told us that "if

you ever need to talk to me just come to my office and I will be glad to court martial you." He was old school and cranky.

We then processed in and attended a briefing. We were told that we could never talk about our work and were given a cover story. Later in the day we were told that several of us were not cleared yet for top secret and I was one of them. The others would move and join their assignment after going through a security briefing and signing their life away. The rest of us would continue to bunk where we were and would be on work detail around the base. My duty was to pick up litter all day.

I discovered the University of Maryland gave college extension courses and a new semester was set to begin. I enrolled in Freshman English. I had been there only a few hours and I was back to studying again.

It was late fall, wet, and cold. A senior career airmen told me that it has rained since he arrived three years ago to open the base. If you didn't get pneumonia the first year you would get TB the second year.

We were issued knee length fleece lined parkas with fleece lined hoods. They became the most essential item of our on-base attire. The heat in the barracks was a small oil burner at each end of the barracks and did not do much for the middle. The only sitting area was your foot locker and a couch on one end that would sit three people.

After a few days I ventured into Edinburgh and found Edinburgh to be cold, dark, wet, and the air full of coal smoke. The people wore dark clothing and were hurrying along hidden under umbrellas. It wasn't a pleasant experience. We walked around and hit a couple of pubs and found the beer to be cellar temperature and the whiskey to be Scotch whiskey. Neither too appealing. Princess Street Gardens and the castle towering above was impressive.

I spent my spare time reading books, writing letters, and studying. There was a small snack bar up the hill at the main site where you could get snacks. It had a small jukebox with 25 records on it. A record of Bing Crosby singing "I'll be home for Christmas" played over and over. Those going home played it to our chagrin as we would not be going home for another three years. I played "The Green Door" a lot since the door into the operations building in the secure area was green. The song was also known as "What's Behind the Green Door". It seemed to be appropriate. I could not go through it until I was cleared for top secret.

Four of us were still in the transient barracks when Christmas came. We got two of those red fold out paper Christmas bells and cut some green and red crepe paper stringers and put them up for a little Christmas spirit. I have a picture in my old photo album of me sitting on my foot locker with book in hand and the decorations visible hanging from the rafters. I wrote that an

airman walked in with a case of beer and two boxes of Ritz crackers and we were going to have a Christmas party.

I got a small break from picking up litter. It was two weeks at the new NCO Academy where I cleaned the class room, got coffee from the mess hall, and donuts from the snack bar. (One year later I found myself attending the NCO Academy in the second class)

There was also a week working at the rifle range on a nearby Royal Army base. My job at the range was to help qualify the officers on the 45 pistol and the airmen on rifles.

I had one other break from litter patrol when I was assigned to the antenna maintenance crew. There was a large antenna field that covered the old runways that were last utilized during the war. Each antenna had four tall wooden poles that the wires were strung between. The poles were hinged at the bottom so they could be lowered for maintenance. The maintenance crew would lower a pole with a winch on a truck and my job was to paint it with olive-drab paint. The job lasted three or four weeks and it was great to work with regular guys that had been there for a while.

In my work around the base I got to know support people that you normally would not get to know while working shift work in the secure compound. It would pay off later.

I was issued a steel helmet, a gas mask and once in a while played solder. We would have an alert, handed M-2 carbines, and go out into the surrounding woods to set up a perimeter to protect whatever we were protecting. It was spooky on a dark snowy night out in the woods tromping around.

By February 1956 everyone but me had received their top-secret clearance. I was moved to a barracks on the main site that housed support personnel and continued to be a general all around flunky.

I started getting letters telling me the FBI had been around asking a lot of questions about me. Everyone assumed I was in trouble. I realize now that the reason my clearance took so long is because I grew up at a remote mine in Idaho. The closest FBI office was 500 miles away. They got around to investigate when they had nothing else to do and had the time to travel.

I decided to use a couple days leave in conjunction with the weekend and take the train to London to see my uncle Dallas and family. I left Edinburgh in the late evening on the "Flying Scotsman" which was a large steam engine pulling a string of coaches. (It is now famous in the history of British train travel). I arrived in London in the morning and went to the Underground to catch the train to South Ruislip where they lived. It involved a change of trains and when I got off to make the change I forgot the name of my destination. I checked my ticket to see

where I was to go, and didn't realize that I was going back to where I started. Not knowing any different I exited through the stall where a worker looked at my ticket. He brought it to my attention that I had not gone anywhere. This was after nearly two hours of riding. The tickets show where you bought the ticket and not your destination. So, I got back on the train. When I got to my train change the old gentleman in the compartment directed me, and I ended up at South Ruislip. I walked several blocks and somehow found my uncle's house.

Uncle Dallas and Aunt Patricia, who was from the London area, showed me a great time. We attended a musical production in London and had dinner at the Douglas House. It was a nice hotel, dining room, and bar for U.S. military personnel. The steaks were just like back home and reasonably priced.

Patricia was from nearby Henley-on-the-Thames and we spent a night at her family home, which was a big estate. It was a great break from Kirknewton and picking up litter.

I learned a lot about Uncle Dallas on the trip. His job was to keep track of the nuclear bombs stored in the UK. He had a long history of nuclear weapons as he had worked on the trigger mechanisms for the atomic bomb at the Los Alamos Laboratory. Later he was in the ground crew with the bomb group that dropped the atomic bombs on Japan.

My clearance finally came through about March 1956. After security briefings and signing my life away I was assigned to Dog Flight or Dog Trick as we called it. It would be shift work that went around the clock seven days a week, 365 days a year. We would rotate shifts with Able, Baker, and Charlie flights. The rotation was seven days on day shift, then the next day start seven on swing shift, then on the next day seven on the midnight shift. Then it was two full days off, and start over. Finally, I was going to get to go through the green door. It was behind a huge prison like fence with armed Air Police

I moved into the H-frame barracks with Dog Trick . They were in the shape of an H with 10 bunks in each of the legs of the H, with the latrine in the center. Each leg of the H was called a bay. Each bay was heated by two small oil burners. If they were turned up on high they glowed red and were dangerous.

I was nervous about copying morse code since I had not heard any for many months. I started by sitting beside experienced operators. After a couple of weeks I was put at my own console. I had a headset, two big receivers, a direction finder, a reel to reel recorder, and a typewriter loaded with continuous six part paper. There were about fifteen radio operator positions and a few Russian linguist positions. My job was to search and copy transmissions if I found something.

The USAF Mission at RAF Station Kirknewton

I start this section by saying that none of the following could be talked about until a few years ago when the veil of secrecy was lifted. However, there was never an announcement that it was lifted. We never talked about what we did. Even after the veil of secrecy was lifted we were not sure if it was okay.

*(Note*Around 1999 I was thinking about Kirknewton and my old buddies, so I started searching the Internet. I finally found a reference on the RAF Chicksands webpage about a Kirknewton reunion to be held in April 2000. I called the number that was listed. The reunion was scheduled for April 26-28, 2000 at the Flamingo, Hilton in Las Vegas. LaRue stayed in Arco to tend the motel and I drove down. It was the first big reunion of the group and over 300 attended. It was great to see my old buddies on Dog Trick, Frank Donovan, Dan Kroll, Joe Mullican, and Jim Stockie. Also, George Page who worked in the orderly room. He told me that our friend Henry Singer died in a motorcycle wreck shortly after he returned to Kentucky.*

Duncan Kirkley living in Australia had started a rudimentary Kirknewton website, and he was dropping it after the Las Vegas reunion due to personal issues. I took it over and started enhancing it. I also started an Alumni List with about 120 names from a list that Roger Oleson was maintaining. I have grown that list to 2200 names.)

The reunion was a huge success and we voted to have one every two years with the next one in San Antonio, Texas, which is the home of the USAFSS. George Page retired from the Air Force and lives in San Antonio and assisted with organizing that reunion. After San Antonio we met in Biloxi, Mississippi under the direction of Joe Mullican, retired Air Force, and lives in Biloxi. An alumni association was formed, and I was elected President. After a meeting and a vote, the next reunion was scheduled for Colorado Springs. During the Colorado Springs reunion we voted to meet every year.

(In 2013 we held our reunion in Edinburgh Scotland. We contacted the RAF who was operating a glider school at the old runways at Kirknewton and were invited to attend a briefing on what they were doing. We in turn would brief them on our role at Kirknewton. I had turned over the alumni President job to Fred Crawford and he asked me to do the briefing. After thinking it over I found that I was not comfortable talking about what we did. He is a director with the Armed Forces Center at the Minneapolis Airport and has connections to get the briefing cleared with the Air Force.. He said he would put it together, which he did.

When we got to Edinburgh I had a mission to find my old friend, Joe Mickulick. I had heard he retired from the Air Force and was living in Edinburgh since his wife Eleanor was from there. I found him in the phone book and called. His wife answered and said he wasn't there and who am I. I told her and she was excited and said, "I remember you, Harry. You were at our

reception". Joe was away for an afternoon at the pub and called me back later. He didn't want to come to the reunion but would stop by before the banquet to say hello. We connected at the bar and had a good visit. When I told him about our briefing the RAF on what we did at Kirknewton he got excited and said, "Harry you cannot do that. It is all classified". I assured him that it was now okay.)

I am including the presentation below as it is good background information.

The United States Air Force Security Service and RAF Kirknewton

By Frederick H. Crawford, SSgt, USAFSS, 1962 - 1966

Before I begin to outline our involvement at RAF Kirknewton, I think it important that we recount the forces that led us to be assigned to this facility.

The **United States Air Force Security Service** (often abbreviated **USAFSS**) was essentially the [United States Air Force's intelligence](#) branch; its motto was *Freedom through Vigilance*. It was created in October 1948 and operated until 1979, when the branch was re-designated the [Electronic Security Command](#). It was later re-designated Air Force Intelligence Command, then it became Air Intelligence Agency, and is currently called the Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency.

Composed primarily of airmen culled from the cream of the Air Force's enlisted recruits, (the top one-half of one percent), the USAFSS was a secretive and tight-knit branch of Air Force [cold warriors](#) tasked with monitoring, collecting and interpreting military voice and electronic signals of countries of interest (which often were Soviet and their satellite [Eastern bloc](#) countries). USAFSS intelligence was often analyzed in the field, and the results transmitted to the [National Security Agency](#) for further analysis and distribution to other intelligence recipients.

Individual airmen — stationed at locations scattered across the globe, ranging from [Alaska](#) to the [Pacific Islands](#) to [The Far East](#) to [Mediterranean Countries](#) to [The Middle East](#) to [Western Europe](#) and to [North Africa](#) — did a variety of jobs, almost all of them related to listening to and interpreting Eastern Bloc, Communist Chinese, and North Vietnamese military communications. All of these activities, plus most ancillary missions, were conducted by the 201 (Cryptanalyst), 202 (Radio Traffic Analyst), 203 (Language Specialist) and 29X (Morse Intercept and Printer Ops) who were, to a man, enlisted personnel. USAFSS personnel with top secret code word clearance knew the call signs for every Soviet airplane, the numbers on the side of each plane, the name of the pilot in command; the whereabouts of nearly every Soviet Air Force VIP; the location of every Soviet missile base; -- its weaponry, commander and deployment. Analysts would scan the reams of intercept copy looking for “key words” that

would require instant analysis and reporting directly to NSA and possibly the President of the United States in a “Critic” report format.

However, the job of collecting signal intelligence required many elements to be successful in meeting its mission. The most important element was the antenna array covering 35 acres of ground and was composed of A, B and C band elements that covered the range of frequencies that the enemy transmitted on. Some were assigned to clandestine missions to monitor telephone exchanges at principal air bases in the European Theater of Operations. The antenna field at RAF Kirknewton completely covered the airfield just outside these doors.

The information collected in the field was usually sent via encrypted land-line and radio systems to a co-located group of USAFSS analysts who would interpret the data, format reports and send them on to the National Security Agency or other recipients.

This land, this RAF Kirknewton became one of those spots in the US Air Force Intelligence gathering network that we had the honor of serving.

The history of RAF Kirknewton spans the years 1940 to the present day. Beginning as a grass airfield in late 1940, the base was first home to the 289th Squadron, an anti-aircraft co-operation unit formed on November 20, 1941, which later moved to Turnhouse in May 1942. During WWII, the base was used as a temporary POW Camp (Camp 123) for German officers while they were awaiting transfer to the USA. After the 289th moved, the airfield became the Refresher Flying Training School, which prepared inactive pilots for posting to Operational Training Units. However the school was disbanded by October. For a short time the base went under a care and maintenance period, before becoming a satellite for RAF Findo Gask (Flying Training) in March 1943. But because of the Air Ministry Airfields Boards decision in August 1943, to not allow necessary runway extensions the base was taken over by the 44th Group Maintenance Unit Command, in February 1944, and the 243rd Maintenance Unit used the airfield for the storage of bombs until being disbanded in January 1956. Later accounts of hazardous crosswinds from the nearby quarry may explain why the based was closed to air traffic. From the early 1950’s onward, the airfield was no longer used for aviation, being used by the USAF for storage, and security programs until it was handed back to the British in 1967.

Having ceased to be an active airfield (but still under USAF control), Kirknewton became one of the earliest Cold War projects when the CIA and USAF established a ground station here in May, 1952. The beginning of the USAFSS airmen who were going to be assigned to RAF Kirknewton began with 15 airmen at the 8th Radio Squadron at Brooks AFB. In February 1952 they went to the 41st RSM (Radio Squadron Mobile) in Bremerhaven, Germany. When their background investigations were completed and they received their security clearances, in May 1952 they left for Kirknewton.

The unit at Kirknewton started out as Detachment 102 of the 10th RSM and later became the 37th RSM with 6 officers and 39 airmen.

During its first year of operation, the base was used to evaluate a number of antenna configurations, with the aim of determining the most effective configuration for intercepting Soviet communication and radar signals. By August 1952, the 37th RSM began operations as a functioning unit and by September had 17 officers and 155 airmen.

At the end of June 1953, five antennae had been dismantled and replaced by an array of eleven Rhombic antennae, and by the end of 1953, USAF Security Service 37th Radio Squadron Mobile employed 17 officers and 463 airmen, tasked with the interception of voice and Morse signals, including military and commercial naval traffic, with priority being given to signals involving Soviet radar and air operations. Over the following years, the project grew to include messages being transmitted by developing mediums as technology advanced, including fax, picture and other information being sent through the Soviet news channels. Similar progress was also being made in the upgraded capabilities of the radar signals being intercepted.

On May 8, 1955 the 37th RSM was re-designated the 6952nd RSM.

On July 1, 1963 the 6952nd RSM became the 6952nd Security Group until inactive in July 1966.

In 1965, while intercept operators at the NSA's Chicksands station in England focused on the radio messages of Warsaw Pact air forces, the operators at RAF Kirknewton were covering "ILC" International Leased Carrier" traffic, including commercially run radio links between major European cities. These networks could carry anything from birthday telegrams to detailed economic or commercial information exchanged between companies, to encrypted diplomatic messages.

Kirknewton's position also meant it was responsible for maintaining security over part of the *Hot-Line* connecting Washington to Moscow, as the cable route passed though the area.

By the mid 1960's, many similar bases featured gigantic antenna systems that could monitor every HF (High Frequency) radio message, from all angles, while simultaneously obtaining bearings that could enable the position of a transmitter to be located. In addition to RAF Kirknewton, other similar bases were established in Chicksands, England, San Vito in Italy, Karamursel in Turkey, the Philippines and Misawa, Japan. Quickly, other similar bases were established around the world, some in exciting places and others in isolated, lonely outposts, but all dedicated to their mission.

Manning levels fell to 300 over its fourteen years of operation, with the base finally closing in August 1966. The former communications listening post had been manned by radio operators,

linguists and analysts, all who had Top Secret Codeword and above, security clearances, with the base also classified, Top Secret Codeword.

The Lord Provost of Edinburgh marked the closure of the base at a formal ceremony, held that year, in the Lord Provost's chambers

-----end of reunion 2013 presentation-----

My Morse Intercept Duties at RAF Station Kirknewton

The job entailed searching for a certain type of call sign, or recognizable transmissions, and copying everything that was sent. Sometimes hours would go by as you sat there with one hand on the big dial slowly searching. If you made a couple of contacts a shift you were doing really good. If you found something you started copying and it usually turned to coded messages, which came in groups of five characters or numbers. This was the important part that got your utmost attention. Once you started copying an analyst would come by and tear off a page and go to the back room and make an ID. Once in a while they would come back somewhat excited and you knew it was important. The next thing to do was zero in on the frequency with the direction finder and get the direction the signal is coming from. If they started speaking Russian I turned on the reel to reel recorder and notified the Russian linguists. Usually the other end would be responding on another frequency, so if I had time I would use the other receiver to look for them. Once you started copying the other operators that were not occupied would start looking for the other end also.

When Sputnik was launched by the Soviets October 7, 1957 I got the assignment to copy what it was sending. It was sending the same letter over and over at regular intervals. It soon became obvious it was a recording and not a human sending it.

One night I was searching, and I was sure I picked up an SOS. I was so startled that I wasn't sure and never heard it again. Later that night we heard that the passenger liner Andrea Dorea had gone down. I wonder if that was an SOS from her?

After a few months I was given the hot corner position as that operator was heading home. It was a mad house all shift without pause as it was a whole network of bases and airplanes. Paper flew through the typewriter nonstop and I was totally wiped out by the end of the shift. We had to type a codeword at the top and bottom of each page and it was difficult to get it on there without missing transmissions. I don't know if I got that job as punishment or if I was really good.

I got a little break after the hot corner assignment and sat at a special desk and communicated via secure line with the Brits to get direction findings on intercepts we were working. I felt

rather intimidated talking to them as they were old guys and had been doing this for years. They tolerated this young whipper snapper and we got along fine. I was never told who they were or where they were. The policy was, "need to know". If you didn't need to know you were not told anything.

The Food

The food on base was not too bad. The cooks did the best with what they had. However, for three days a month they were required to serve C rations that had been in storage for years and probably since the war. The best was probably the beans and wieners. It must have been tedious opening all those individual C ration boxes and the little tins of stuff in them.

About once a month we would get steak which was thin and not the best steak but still a treat. Before we started midnight shift we would get breakfast as well as the swing shift coming off duty. If we came in on the last bus from town we would hurry and change into fatigues and get the midnight breakfast. Fried eggs and SOS tasted good after a night in Edinburgh.

One time the mess hall ran out of food as the supplies did not arrive. I wrote that we had stew two times a day for quite a while.

One good thing is that we did not have KP duty as we all contributed to a fund to pay local workers. We did this gladly.

The food in town was not all that good and portions were small as they were still in recovery mode after the war. The best was fish and chips with malt vinegar and wrapped in newspaper. One of our first trips into town Ed Smith and I went into the Manhattan Cafe and saw they had steak on the menu. It resembled a small piece of shoe leather. It was really small so after eating it we ordered another. That was the wrong thing to do as it really offended the owner. I think we set international relations back with that gaffe. We later found a small cafe on Rose Street that served a big platter of spaghetti at a reasonable price. Ed and I would share one of those on occasion.

Other Important Happenings

In April 1957 I was promoted to Airman First Class (three stripes). It had been delayed several months as we had been frozen in rank because of military budget problems. This meant a raise in base pay from \$117 a month with over two years of service to a base pay of \$140.40 per month. I also got foreign duty pay of \$13.00, and a clothing allowance of \$4.20, for a total of \$157.60. Then \$17.70 income tax withheld, \$3.16 social security tax withheld, ten cents US soldiers home withheld, and a \$50 allotment sent home. My net for the month to spend was \$86.64. This is all from a document I have in my files. A big perk with the promotion was that

I could now belong to the NCO club that had cheap booze, steaks on weekends, a big juke box, and slot machines.

Two months after my promotion to Airman First Class I was selected to attend the NCO Academy for two weeks. This was a big deal as I was the only intercept radio operator out of a total of ten people selected. Most were already NCO's, which is Staff Sgt or above. It was also gratifying as this was the second NCO Academy Class ever conducted at RAF Station Kirknewton. I was the flunky taking care of the first NCO Class while I was waiting for my clearance,. Now I was in the second class.

The end of June 1957 I lucked out and got the camera I had been wanting for a long time. A lot of guys had their name on a waiting list for a German made Kodak Retina III-C 35mm camera ever since they arrived. This is the same camera that President Eisenhower used and I had seen pictures of him with it. One came into the base exchange and nobody had the cash on hand to buy it. I slipped in with \$92 and bought it. That is almost a month's pay, but I wanted it badly. This is the first one they got in for the last year and a half, so I lucked out. It had a rangefinder, a light meter, and was much smaller than my old heavy square Argus C-3. I was a happy camper. I wrote to LaRue that "I show it off just like it is a new car." Then I wrote later "man oh man I really love my new camera now that I know how to work it. Just like one guy said today. It almost takes a college education to run one." *(note-I still have the camera)*

It was about this time that I had half of my overseas tour completed. I was single, had uncorrected vision, and was in excellent physical condition, so I could apply for the Air Cadets and pilot training. I filled out the application and took some tests. Orders came to report for an eye examination by a local eye doctor which I passed with flying colors. Then it was report to Prestwick AFB, Scotland for a physical by an Air Force Flight Surgeon and I passed. Then orders came to report to South Ruislip near London for seven days temporary duty for more physical, eye, and aptitude tests. After all of this was done the official word came "that the Air Force has a surplus of pilots and no new cadets are being accepted". So once again stymied by the Air Force. I decided then to finish my tour, get discharged, and go to college. I wonder now if my connection with the USAFSS ,which had the highest priority in the Air Force was the real reason for not being accepted.

Changes at Home

The Bradley's closed down the Patterson Ima Mine in April 1957 since the price of tungsten was well below what it took to mine it. Jack Bradley was also the President of the Bunker Hill Mine in Kellogg, Idaho and he put together a joint venture between Bunker Hill and Grace Lines that was to be based in Guatemala. Dad was to be the mining expert in Guatemala to locate minerals for shipping to the United States. So, the folks moved to Guatemala City.

LaRue and I wrote regularly after I got to Scotland. It started tapering off by the end of 1955 and there is no recollection of any correspondence during 1956. She was busy in high school and had other obligations. I heard she had moved on with a new boyfriend, Dave. I knew him to be a jerk and couldn't quite understand the attraction. Then we resumed writing in April 1957 as she had dropped Dave, was excited about graduating, and thinking about her future. I had been thinking about taking leave and coming home for a visit the summer of 1957 and hopefully also revive our relationship. I had been sending a monthly allotment home to put in savings and planned to use some of it. Then I found my money had been invested for me in mining stock. Being broke and with the folks in Guatemala I gave up going home on leave. LaRue's letters ended again the summer of 1957. After graduation she worked as a telephone operator then went to live with Loa and Max in Walnut Creek, California in December 1957.

Social Life and Events at RAF Station Kirknewton

Most of the social life in Edinburgh centered around the Berkeley Bar and later in the evening, the Palais. The Berkeley was like an American club with music and they catered to the Yanks with cold Scottish Tenants Lager Beer. I preferred the more traditional pubs like my favorite, the Shakespeare, the pub at the Caledonian Hotel, the Black Bull, and Fairley's which was rough and later declared "off limits".

Scottish teenagers finish school at an early age if they don't score high on the exams for higher education. The outlook was dreary for them in Edinburgh in those days. The girls saw the Berkeley as a great opportunity to meet a yank and a ticket to the United States. The yanks saw it as a great opportunity also. Later in the evening when the Berkeley closed most would gravitate to the Palais which was a huge dance hall with a live band. We discovered a few years ago that Sean Connery was a bouncer at the Palais at the time. Frank Donovan swears it was Connery who bounced him out the side door and beat on him.

There was a gang called the Teddy's that would harass yanks going from the Berkeley to the Palais. They carried bicycle chains to work you over with. It was always best to walk in a group. They acted tough but did not seem to carry anything out. A bunch of us were in the West End Cafe waiting for the last bus to the base one night and we were told the Teddy's were on their way with their chains. There were some anxious moments, but they never showed up.

We always dressed well when we went to town. We wore slacks and a sports coat and more often a suit and tie. A top coat was essential because of the weather. Alexandre's, a men's clothing store in town, had a tailor with samples at the base at scheduled times. About all of us ordered tailored sport coats and suits as the prices were a bargain. I got a Harris tweed sport coat, a dark blue wool suit, and a dark gray wool suit. I already had a nice tweed top coat that I bought in Pocatello the last year of high school and had that in Scotland. I found receipts in my

cigar box full of memorabilia and found a receipt from Alexandre, Ltd for \$42 for two pieces that I presume was the two suits. Another receipt for \$21.25 was probably the sport coat.

Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev came to Edinburgh for a few days on a diplomatic visit. We were well briefed and told there would be Soviet agents around town and to be careful. I went to town with some buddies and went to the Shakespeare that had a nice quiet atmosphere and a nice back room with a fireplace. I preferred it to the rowdy Berkeley crowd. A well-dressed fellow started paying attention to our table and started up a conversation and offered to buy drinks. We accepted knowing what he was up to. He was a Soviet agent and he didn't mind buying even though he was getting nowhere. Probably liked an excuse to drink on his government's money.

In early 1956 I became friends with Bill Davenport from New York state. He was from a wealthy family and had brought a new Oldsmobile 98 with him to Scotland. We decided to take a run in it over the long break to London. Six of us loaded into the Olds and took off in the late afternoon. I remember we were listening to the Armed Forces Network and Elvis Presley was singing "Blue Suede Shoes" as we departed Edinburgh. We drove into the evening and needed gas so stopped in a small village with one gas pump. The locals gathered around to watch as we filled up the big monster. We then drove through the night and arrived in London in the morning. We spent a couple of nights at the Douglas House in London and had a great time.

On July 6, 1956 tragedy struck and took Bill Davenport and Gene Asay who was from Utah. A fishing excursion had been arranged for a weekend on nearby Perthshire Lake. Some guys including Frank Donovan went early in a small boat operated by local fisherman to an island out in the lake. Others were to be ferried across when they arrived that evening, and a few of us were planning on joining them the next day. Bill and Gene were making the crossing that night in the dark and the boat capsized due to bad weather and big waves. They were wearing the heavy parkas that we were issued, and the weight pulled them under. They didn't have a chance. It was a sad memorial that we had on base for them a few days later.

We had a couple of beach excursions to Gullane Beach on the North Sea. We chartered a bus and loaded up cases of beer, picked up the married couples in Edinburgh, a few local girls, and headed for the beach. It was cold and windy, but we had a great time.

A lot of the guys had played golf at home and were excited to be in Scotland. They played the famous golf courses whenever they could. I had never seen a golf game so was not interested in it. I now wish I would have. We hardly ever saw summer in Scotland. Seems like we would be working the midnight shift and would be sleeping during the one day of summer. However, the summer of 1957 turned out to be the hottest summer in forty years and the temperature

would get up to 80 degrees. We were told to get out our summer khaki's and they would be the Class A uniform for five weeks.

Travel Opportunities

Travel in Europe was a big attraction. In May 1956 I had built up some leave time so Glen Moore, Jim "Big Mo" Molinaro, and I caught a hop from an airbase in England, and flew to Rhein Main Air Base in Frankfurt, Germany. On our way into town we were shocked to see so many bombed out ruins from the war. They were still rebuilding.

We once again experienced first hand how potent German beer is. "Big Mo" was a stocky Italian built like a tank and sort of resembled a gorilla the way he moved. He had a black belt in Judo, so we just let him do his thing. We were in this bar and he manages to get us ejected out the front door. We thought "no problem", we'll go around the corner and go in the next one. We saw an entrance and went in. The only problem it was the side door to the place we had been ejected from, so out we went again.

We had a hotel room in town so if you needed a break you could go back to the room and go out again later in the evening. We had been hearing about food called Pizza and we found a place that had it.. I had my first pizza in Germany and I thought it was awful.

After a couple of days, we caught a night train to Paris and got a hotel room by the Gare Du Nord and went sightseeing. We didn't know there was a pedestrian tunnel to get to the Arc de Triumph and walked across about eight lanes of traffic. We were called a lot of things. We had to visit Place Pigalle with the rowdy bars that the military guys favored. The law was that they had to close the doors from 3am to 4am for housecleaning. We were thrown out at 3am but some rowdy Army Airborne guys kicked in the door, and we all went back in.

I bought a black beret in Paris and with my dark blue suit thought I looked like a Frenchman. After three days in Paris we caught a train to Amsterdam and spent a couple of days sightseeing. I bought a pair of wooden shoes to send home. Finally, it was time to get back and we caught the ferry across to England and then the train to Edinburgh.

In October 1957 me, Ed Smith, and Jim Molinaro went on leave to Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and Germany. We went by train to an air base outside of London and signed up for space available on any flight to Spain. We ended up on a weekly Navy courier flight to Madrid and spent a couple of days seeing the sights. We were not impressed with Spanish food and ate a lot of spaghetti. Then we got on an overnight express train to Lisbon, Portugal. The authorities came through the train in the early evening and looked at our papers. We were traveling on military orders and did not need passports. There was a lot of consternation and discussion among them and then we were told the train would stop and let us off at Talavera, the next little

town. The problem was that our orders were not in Spanish as well as English. The train stopped about midnight in this little town just to kick us off. The express train never stops there so it was an abnormal event. We found a little rooming house that had several beds upstairs and told we could get some room mates before the night was over, but we didn't. We were up early and caught the first local to Madrid (I still have the ticket). It took several hours as it stopped at every little town. We shared our compartment with farmers and chickens going to market.

We went to the American Embassy in Madrid and they did a Spanish translation for us and we caught the same evening train to Lisbon. The authorities were on us like flies, and the train stopped at the border with Portugal. We were ordered off and scrutinized by the Portuguese authorities and eventually told we could board and continue. We planned to stay three days in Lisbon as a train out of there did not leave until then. We saw everything we wanted to see and were discussing what we would do for two more days in the hotel bar that night. An older gentleman in a black suit was listening to us and struck up a conversation in good English. He had a big Chrysler limo and he was driving to Cadiz, Spain, which is next to the Rock of Gibraltar, to pick up rich Americans that were arriving by ship. We could ride with him for a very small sum of money which sounded great to us.

We took off the next morning riding in the back of the limo in style. After a while he suggested we stop in a village and get some wine, grapes, bread, and cheese and we concurred whole heartedly. He had some empty wine bottles that he got filled from a barrel at a cost of 20 or 30 cents per bottle. It was great wine, and we went merrily on our way. It was a long trip on tough roads along the coast of Portugal and Spain and we spent the night in Seville, Spain. It was a nice hotel with the rooms looking down on an open court yard and had great entertainment that night with Flamenco dancers. It was not too far the next day to Cadiz and he let us off. We were walking around wondering what to do when we started talking to a young American guy walking along the pier. He had a big sail boat and was about to depart for the United States. He had lots of room and said we were welcome to come along. Mighty attractive offer but just didn't fit our situation. He said he was an actor that had a part in card scene in a popular western movie. I cannot remember the name for sure but I believe it was High Noon.

A ferry boat was about to depart for Tangiers, Morocco so we got tickets and boarded. It was a nice trip across the strait. When we debarked we were approached by a bearded male Moroccan in a long gown and fez who was friendly and spoke good English. He would be our guide for a small fee and recommended a nearby hotel. His fee was reasonable, so we took him up on it and he toured us around for two days.

On the return ferry we shared a compartment with a couple of older Spanish ladies. After the authorities had gone through and we were ready to debark they retrieved the contraband that they had hidden under our seats! We would have been the ones in trouble if the authorities had found it.

We caught a train to Madrid and went out to Torreon AFB to catch a hop back to the UK. We were able to get a flight and departed for London. We would have time for an all-night train ride to Edinburgh and report in on time for the swing shift. The weather turned bad and our flight diverted to Frankfurt, Germany. With luck we thought we could still get back in time. However, we could not land at Frankfurt either and was diverted further east to Munich with no possibility of a flight until the next day. If we could get to London the next day we would be a day late. We checked into the transient barracks and caught a bus into Munich. We were in a bar in civilian clothes and the Army MP's came through checking ID's, passes, etc. "Big Mo" Molinaro had a little too much German beer and took exception to being checked as we were doing nothing wrong. We hadn't done anything wrong until he mouthed off. The MP's hustled us outside to their little booth in the middle of the street and proceeded to write us up. The paper work would go directly to our unit. After writing us up they sent us back to the base which ruined the rest of the evening. The next morning, we were able to catch a hop bound for London and it looked like we would be AWOL only one day. In route the weather turned bad again and we were diverted to Prestwick, Scotland which was a tremendous stroke of luck. We landed and caught a train to Edinburgh and reported for duty on schedule and in the nick of time. Now we had to sweat out the report coming from Germany. It could result in the loss of a stripe and pay which you never recover from.

A few days later my friend George Page caught me and gave me a big grin. He worked in the orderly room and screened all the incoming mail to route it to the proper place. He had seen our write up when it came in from Germany and tore it up. It pays to have friends in high places.

(I talked to George about it a while back. He said, "I cannot confirm nor deny that ever happened". He spent a career in the Air Force and said he counseled young airmen not to do the things he did as a young airman)

My Escape from Scotland and the High Marriage Rate

The early arrivals in 1952 lost their security clearance if they married a local girl. The Air Force soon realized that approach would lead to not enough people to carry out the mission. The policy was changed with clear guidelines and severe penalties if you married and talked out of school. It worked, and I never heard of any problems. In fact, everyone was overly protective of the nation's secrets. If a local asked you what you do out there the standard reply was "clerk typist". They would say "how can you all be clerk typists?" Then they would ask about all the poles with wire strung between them and we would reply, "helicopter pilots practice there". Then "how come we never see any helicopters?" and our reply would be "they only fly late at night in the dark". I don't think we fooled anybody. They just gave up.

The tour of duty was three years and it was likely that young airmen would meet someone, fall in love, and get married. It is a fact that the marriage rate was 80%. Only Ed Smith from Salt Lake and I escaped from our group that was sent to Scotland. I surely didn't want to bring a Scottish wife home. LaRue was in the back of my mind, even though we had stopped writing. I hoped we would reconnect when I got out of the Air Force.

One by one our guys were getting married to local girls and I attended a lot of weddings and receptions. One memorable one was Jim Stockie from Montana marrying Ruth from Edinburgh in February 1957. The reception dinner was formal with all kinds of silverware and fine china. All of us were worried about which silverware to use with each course. Somehow, we made it through.

Ruth's cousin, Terry, a tall blond girl was at the reception and all the single airmen were quite taken with her. However, she was not in the least bit interested in yanks. Later, however, she said she might talk to me on the phone if I were to call, and I got her phone number. I finally summoned up the courage to give her a call and got nowhere. I tried again, and she would go to a movie, but we had to meet in a place well away from the bus stop, and not go where yanks hung out. I met her at the designated place and we went to a movie.

Jim and Ruth had a party in their flat. I arrived late after closing the pubs at 10pm, and to my surprise Terry was there. She was quiet, seemed troubled, and left before midnight to go home. In hindsight I think she was wrestling in her mind about hanging out with a bunch of fun-loving yanks versus staying true to her values.

We agreed to meet again for a movie. When my bus got to the regular West End Cafe bus stop, she was standing there, much to my amazement. My buddies had not seen anyone meet me in the past and were all eyes. We left them wondering about it all as we walked away together. That night on the bus ride back to the base I decided not to call her again. I thought she might be getting too interested when she was waiting for me at the bus stop, and I didn't want to get involved any further. I always wondered if LaRue might still be around and available when I got back, although I had no indication it might be possible. I wanted to be available just in case.

I had been contemplating volunteering for a transfer to Samsun, Turkey as a call had been put out for volunteers. It was a remote assignment and you received per-diem of \$6 per day to live on the local economy. I heard through the grapevine that you could save the per-diem, and I decided to go for it. It required a year remaining on your enlistment, so I extended six months and received my orders to proceed to Samsun, Turkey.

The night before I was to depart Kirknewton, a Halloween party was being held in the old airplane hangar. The Airmen's Club was bringing a bus load of girls from Edinburgh to attract airmen to the party. I was there and shocked to see Terry get off the bus. This was totally out

of character for her and told her so. Then I got around to telling her I was transferring to Turkey and that was that. I did feel bad that I had not called her and let her know that I was leaving Scotland. I departed the next day and never looked back. Just another fork in the road.

(I connected with Jim and Ruth Stockie at the Las Vegas Reunion in 2000. The subject came up about the whereabouts of Terry. They told me she ended up marrying an airman and then passed away due to leukemia at a young age. All I can say is I must have convinced her that hanging out with a yank was okay.)

My Journey to Samsun, Turkey

There was a going away party at the old hangout, the Berkeley. Then I caught a train to London about midnight with several guys going to Turkey also. We conked out in a compartment and almost missed our change of trains. We made it to an air base outside of London and was put on an old two engine C-47 headed to Frankfurt, Germany. It was loaded with crates of cargo. We wore parachutes and sat in web seats along the sides with our feet up on the crates. The weather was really bad over the English Channel, and we had our doubts we would make it. We could hear the pilots talking and looking for lights in the dense fog. We finally arrived at Rhein Main Air Base and stowed our duffel bags at the arrival/departure counter. Then we dropped our AWOL bags with our orders inside at the transient barracks and headed for Frankfurt.

It was early morning when we caught a cab back to the base. We got to the guard gate and none of us had our orders. There was no way they were they going to let us on base. We were in uniform, so they finally let us through. After a couple hours sleep we boarded an old tired four engine C-54 cargo plane. We were joined by about 20 more airmen from units in Germany going to Turkey. There was a pole between the ground and tail section of the plane so the tail would not drop and hit the tarmac We had to walk forward after the engines were started and before taxiing so the pole could be removed.

Off we went again sitting in web seats along the sides and cargo in the middle. We droned over the Alps and then started letting down in Italy. We could see the leaning tower of Pisa which was quite exciting. All we did was refuel and continue to Athens, Greece where we spent the night in a small hotel.

At the Athens airport the next morning there was a huge crowd. A Russian four engine TU-104 jet had arrived, and it was the first to be seen in a western country. It was painted as a commercial passenger plane, but it had a bombardier position in the nose. I got pictures as our old crate was parked nearby.

End chapter 3b – continued on chapter 4B in Turkey