

Simply stated, the Cold War Conference and the Reunion were both outstanding. I'm uncertain how the two were put together, but that started at the Reunion at SF88 last year. Among other things, it was an "Anchorage Centennial Event," and had the full support of the Alaska Governor's Office, the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation, and several other, heavy hitting Alaska historical organizations. The various military organizations extant in the area supported the conference fully as well.

With all the horsepower behind this event, I will admit that I felt as many of you did that our reunion was going to get lost in the background. However, I'm extremely grateful that I gave it a shot because it was, without exception, one of the top three best-organized events I've ever attended, if not the best. The committee made sure the Alaska Nike Veterans were recognized, and maintained in the forefront of the event. Many things have changed since we left Alaska, and the state is definitely firmly planted in the 21st Century. Our accommodations were excellent all the way through, and the food was the same. Many times I realized that the prices there are about the same as other places we've been (especially San Francisco!). On the bottom line, it was an absolute value trip.

The trip to B Battery, 1st 43d ADA (Site Summit) was an eye-opener. If any of you thought we were isolated on a precipice, there is no comparison. I thought 72 degrees below zero was cold, but I can't imagine 20 below with 165 knot winds on the top of that knob. A salient thought I had during the visit was the same as I had at B/2-562; we treated those dogs badly. The reason Summit is still predominantly intact is that nobody in their right mind would go up there to try to steal something. The fact that it's on live Army firing ranges also helped, I'm sure. Compared to Peter and Mike, Summit's four-star accommodations. The Anchorage Alpha Battery (Site Point), now Kincaid State park, was a good visit as well, but much of it has been converted for public outdoor sports use. There have been significant efforts to restore Summit, and they show.

I didn't take the Alaska Railroad trip through Denali to Fairbanks, but all who did thoroughly enjoyed it. My drive up Alaska Highway 3 (through Denali) was gorgeous, and the weather was a real gift. The highway was actually very good, and the well-located construction areas reminded me of home. There are hours with nothing but scenery and animals out there. The stay in Fairbanks was excellent as well, as were the accommodations. We took the Riverboat Cruise as so many of us did in the Sixties, and others checked out the Poker Flats launch site and the BMEWS station at Clear, and had a great lunch out in the Alaska sticks.

Patton and I made tracks for Bravo and Charlie Batteries as soon as we could. The Army and Air Force had given the Governor's Office the usual slick excuses that we couldn't visit the Nike sites because of blah and blah and blah. You all know from your experience in the US military that just meant it would take some

work to support the event. You also know what undisciplined rabble officers are, and that all those excuses and the range danger signs just mean maybe to us. At first, we weren't sure if we had found the B Battery road, and there was a locked barricade on it at about the two-mile mark. I am now certain that it was the right road, but it took a couple of dream-filled nights to do that. It didn't hurt that we were dealing with Fall foliage either. We had lunch at Eielson's "Food Court" and headed for Johnson Road (the Delta Battery end of the circuit). It was paved all the way up to a pumping station, then very well-surfaced hard dirt from there. Typically, it was an excellent road except for the dust. We almost literally ran into Charlie Battery IFC Building; I don't remember it being that close to the main road. The main building is gone, but all the concrete portions are there, and enough form for a memory re-start. The Army is using the old Launcher Area for equipment storage, and to support operations in the training area that our old sites have become. The old Alaska Missile Firing Range that goes nearly over to the Canadian border was incorporated into a huge training area. You may remember the Sheridan's and Infantry Carriers up on the site roads back in the sixties.

Earlier in the trip, we had passed several Light Artillery (105mm Howitzer) convoys. We found them out the Bravo Battery extension. They were busy organizing and occupying a non-tactical area, and weren't in any kind of firing order, so we passed them and went on to Bravo Battery. It was a similar experience; I don't remember it being that close to the road, although it probably was because it wasn't considered a through road then (we had a fence and a gate for the IFC area). It is difficult to recognize the place because the vegetation has taken it back. We remember both areas as being bare of trees and bushes, and being able to see each area clearly from the other. Not so now. Trees obscure everything, and are thick as dog hair. The launcher magazines are still standing but the roofs have been removed, and the terrain has changed significantly. It took us ten minutes to find the warhead bunker, which was clearly visible from the IFC area when we were there. That thing is HUGE but was literally obscured by trees and other vegetation we had to wade through to find it. There was nothing left we could find of the dog kennels. The Army is using B Battery for training sites, training vehicle storage, and training area support. I'm attaching some of the photos I took, but they are large files and the message will be about 6MB total. I have more and will send them as I get them reduced through the Paint editing program.

The last day of the program, we toured Eielson, and went to Alpha Battery for lunch. The Chena Flood District has the Launcher Area now, and the missile magazines are storage buildings. They are the best-preserved of the section buildings, still have roofs, and the old overhead winches are still in the buildings. The local American Legion Post provided a great chili lunch and refreshments (beer of course).

The person who is most responsible for organizing the conference to our knowledge is Barbara Propes, and she stayed with us the entire time. She is the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Alaska Lieutenant Governor. I've organized a lot of these things, and attended a lot more, and she is undoubtedly a master of the organization craft. She made us all feel that our Cold War Service was important. I wish that you could have all attended.

Best Regards, Jim Biles