

INTRODUCTION

TO

HOFN ICELAND



INTRODUCTION

The 667th AC&W Squadron, located near Hofn, Iceland, commonly referred to as H-3, is situated in an interesting though isolated section of the island. The station is approximately 200 miles east of Reykjavik and keeps in touch with the main base, Keflavik, chiefly by aircraft, both commercial and military. The town of Hofn has a harbor which coastal ships use in transporting heavy equipment to H-3, but ships are relatively infrequent and aircraft represent the major tie with Keflavik.

Planes delivering mail, supplies, and personnel land on a runway constructed on a sand and gravel spit which, incidentally, was the spot where the first aircraft landed in Iceland in 1924. A boat is then used to travel the short distance across the inlet where military vehicles carry personnel and supplies the 12 miles from Hofn to H-3. The gravel road winds through grass covered, rolling country, generously studded with large rocks. The natives raise a potatoe crop, and hay to be fed to the sheep, horses and cows in winter, but most of them depend on fishing for a livelihood rather than agriculture. There are many sod huts that the Icelanders lived in before the introduction of concrete, which is presently used for practically all of the buildings here. According to local reports, many of the huts are hundreds of years old.

Near the end of the trip from Hofn, the concrete buildings comprising H-3 come into view. Situated on a small rugged cape, the station has ocean on three sides. While located directly on the coast, the station is practically in the shadow of several mountains or rocky crags which loom some 3,000 feet skyward. Jagged mountains line the coast and occasionally give way to the glacier "Vatnajokull" which flows seaward through mountain valleys. Several fingers of Vatnajokull, second largest glacier in the world, are visible from H-3.

The climate throughout the year is comparable to New York City; a fact contrary to the concepts of most Americans who believe that Iceland is a cold, desolate and bleak iceburg, barely inhabited by man. Though glaciers suggest cold weather, this is not necessarily true since the summer season brings temperatures of 50-60 degrees with a great deal of sunshine (this is due to the influence of the Gulf Stream which passes the coast of Iceland). Winds are common in winter with temperatures ranging from 9-39 degrees. Weather is peculiar in Iceland in that it changes rapidly; a sunny day can give way to fog, wind, rain and drizzle in a matter of minutes; a feature to which it is hard to become accustomed. In addition, during mid-winter the sun is visible a minimum of four hours per day while in the summer it is not unusual to have twenty-two hours of sunlight. This is occasioned by the proximity of Iceland to the Arctic Circle. Completing the inventory of natural points of interest is a small island which serves as the habitat for a large colony of seals, whose antics may be watched, during off duty hours.

You will be pleased to know that our living quarters at H-3 are two very pleasant, one-story concrete buildings. The buildings, divided into two and three-man rooms, are equipped with a desk, desk-lamp, coil spring beds, innerspring mattresses and built-in wall closets. Double paned windows, asphalt tiled floors, and steam heat keep the rooms warm and pleasant during wet, cold weather. The Day Room in the Airmens' Barracks affords various game facilities and a comfortable place to read. An NCO Lounge is also maintained in the NCO barracks. Each barracks has automatic washers and dryers, plus iron and ironing facilities.

RECREATION FACILITIES

A varied selection of recreational facilities are available to fill off-duty hours. There is enough selection that any individual can find a worth while activity.

The center of recreational activities is the gymnasium which has been developed in one end of the supply building occupying an area approximately 40 X 90 feet. Basketball, volley ball, badminton, weight lifting and various other gymnastics, as well as the theater, are part of this facility. Along the line of less strenuous pastimes we have a small but adequate library as well as a complete photographic darkroom for the camera fan. Of course the favorite recreation is the evening motion picture. Normally the theater has a new picture every night, managing to satisfy everyone with a variety ranging from "shootem up" to foreign intrigue and musical comedy.

An NCO Club is open evenings for airmen and Non Commissioned Officers alike. Here, music and cards with a social atmosphere are to be found every night. Officers have at their disposal a small but adequate lounge in the Bachelor Officers Quarters.

The Hobby Shop offers a variety of off-duty activities, such as leather work, oilpainting, jewelry making and wood working. It is no doubt obvious that with activities ranging from mountain climbing to ping pong, there is no need for off-duty hours to pass slowly.

We have an amateur-MARS radio station available to interested persons. An Icelandic amateur license is required to operate the amateur radio station. To obtain an Icelandic license, interested persons must present their stateside license to the J-5 section, Air Forces Iceland, at Keflavik along with a very small fee. We also have an AFPS radio station, run by the personnel at H-3 on a volunteer basis. If you would like to become a "DJ", you are welcome to join the staff. Our station is open 24 hours a day, with a very up to date transcription music library.

We are sure that you will also enjoy our fishing lake, if you are an avid angler. The lake produces unusually large fresh water trout and during the season there are daily excursions to the lake by H-3 personnel. All fishing equipment needed is available here. We are sure you will enjoy these activities, which are designed to suit our personnel.

MEDICAL SERVICES

H-3 is provided with excellent medical care. The 667th is one of the few squadrons assigned a Medical Technician, whose duty is the welfare of the men assigned here. The technician operates a two bed dispensary equipped with sun lamp, heat lamp, vaporizer, X-ray, and limited Medical facilities. Emergency cases are flown to Keflavik for hospitalization under skilled doctors and attendants. A periodic dental check is made by a Dentist who visits the site on an average of every six months.

SUPPORTING SERVICES

Similar to any base, the 667th has all the supporting services including a very efficient Civil Engineering section and motor pool. One service that receives special attention is the Post Office. The Post Office is operated by a bonded and competent Postal Specialist, offering a complete postal service which includes all classes of mail, parcel post and money orders.

Another popular service is the Site Exchange. All essential items are purchased from this branch of the Keflavik Exchange. Notions, toiletries, cigarettes, snack foods, nationally known cameras and accessories and a limited line of gift items are stocked. Mail order catalogues are available for securing articles not available in Iceland.

Power on the station is supplied by Cummins diesel engines which provide a standard 110 V alternating current. Also located in the power building are two oil-fired steam boilers which provide heat for the station.

The Supply section at this station carries the standard organizational equipment plus a service stock of radar parts. The facilities of supply are modern and adequate in all respects. Items of pershipakocold weather equipment are available from Supply, namely a fleece lined Parks.

The cafeteria style Dining Hall accommodates approximately 150 men and is equipped with new furnishings and provides a good hot meal when it is most needed, making the atmosphere pleasant. The facilities include a bakery which supplies the squadron with fresh bread and pastries. There are three cold storage rooms built to accommodate a 90 day reserve food supply. These lockers permit us to have fresh dairy products, vegetables and meats at all times.

Spiritual guidance and counsel is always of vital importance to our personnel and this is provided by monthly visits of both Protestant and Catholic Chaplains flown in from the main base at Keflavik.

MISCELLANEOUS FACTS OF INTEREST

Radio reception from all points of the world especially Europe, is quite satisfactory. Telephone calls and telegrams to the US are furnished in Hofn.

Leave may be taken from H-3 to either the United States or to the European Continent. Regular MATS and commercial flights make it possible to travel from Iceland to the United States within eight to twelve hours.

H-3 is relatively small but one thing is obvious, all supporting services are available.