



## Remembering The Past...Eielson AFB

---



**April 15-21, 1928** – Carl Ben Eielson, along with Hubert Wilkins, the famed Arctic explorer, flew in a Lockheed Vega from Point Barrow, Alaska to Spitzbergen, Norway. They became the first to cross the North Pole by air. After taking off from a runway that Eielson thought may be too short for heavy loaded Vega, the flight time was just over 20 hours. However, the journey took a total of six days because of a fierce winter storm they encountered along the way. Afterwards Eielson and Wilkins received a hero's welcome on their trip back to the United States...a journey that took another three months because of all the stops and celebrations along the way.



**April 1939** – Congress appropriated \$4 million to construct an Army cold weather test station for aircraft, equipment and material near Fairbanks, Alaska. Preliminary construction, consisting of brush clearing and the pouring of a test concrete pad, started shortly afterwards. Initially referred to as Fairbanks Air Base, the field was named Ladd Field in honor of Maj. Arthur K. Ladd, killed in an aircraft accident near Dale, South Carolina on Dec. 13, 1935.



**April 14, 1940** – The first Army Air Corps detachment, headed by Maj Dale V. Gaffney, arrived at Ladd Field. They brought with them a crated Douglas O-38 observation aircraft, the first military aircraft to be assigned to Alaska. It was later destroyed in a crash landing south of Fairbanks. The United States Air Force Museum recovered it in 1968 and had it restored and placed on display there. Ladd Field served as a cold weather test facility and as an Air Transport Command base for the transfer of American aircraft to the Russians during the war.

After the war, Ladd AFB became a fighter interceptor base until it was transferred to the Army in 1960 and renamed Fort Wainwright. (Note: As a result of WWII and the Lend-Lease program, it was determined a satellite air field for Ladd was required...in 1944 crews started on Mile 26 Satellite Field...now Eielson AFB)

**April 1, 1948** – Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Eielson AFB (base complement) was organized at Eielson AFB.

**April 30, 1950** – Armed Forces Radio Service Eielson aired for the first time at Eielson AFB.



## Remembering The Past...Eielson AFB



**April 16, 1952** – A 12-lane bowling alley opened in the basement of Ptarmigan Hall (now known as Amber Hall).

**April 13, 1953** – The base auto hobby shop opened on Flight Line Avenue in two Quonset huts.

**April 30, 1955** – The base library opened in the basement of the recreation center.

**April 25, 1956** – The 58th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron began transitioning from WB-29 to WB-50 aircraft.



**April 18, 1958** – The base newspaper was renamed the Eielson Times.



**April 15, 1961** – A roller rink opened in the old Army gym (currently our Shoppette). Clamp-on skates were available to rent at a cost of 40 cents per pair.

**April 21, 1961** – Brenda Lee performed at the Baker Field House.

**April 26, 1963** – The Ben Eielson High School was dedicated in honor of Carl Ben Eielson. The commissioner of education for the State of Alaska, William T. Zahradnicek, was the principal speaker for the event. The new facility had the capability to house 223 students.





# Remembering The Past...Eielson AFB



**BEN EIELSON PORTRAIT**—A1C Franklin King (l), 5010th Air Base Wg., presents his painting of Carl Ben Eielson to Col. W. W. Jones, base commander, in a ceremony in the commander's office. Airman King, assigned to graphics, did the painting in his spare time. Lt. Col. Harold J. Guernsey, Comptroller; Maj. S. S. Haney, Management Analysis Officer and SMSgt. Russell S. Smith, NCOIC Graphics, were present for the ceremony.

**April 21, 1964** – A WB-47 assigned to Detachment 1 of the 55th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron crashed on takeoff. Three of the five crewmembers died in the accident.

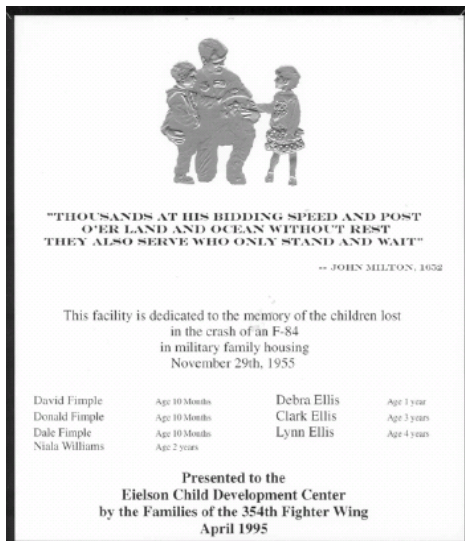
**April 1964** – A1C Franklin King presented the base with a painting of Carl Ben Eielson.

**April 1971** – The 5010 Supply Squadron was recognized as the “Best in the Air Force” when it earned the 1970 Daedalian Supply Effectiveness Award. This was the first Alaskan Air Command unit to receive this award.

**April 4, 1980** – Headquarters, USAF, formally notified Alaskan Air Command that its F-4Es would be replaced by F-15A and A-10As in fiscal year 1982. The Command decided to assign the F-15s to the 43rd Tactical Fighter Squadron on Elmendorf AFB and the A-10s to the 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron and move the squadron to Eielson AFB. The plan also called for inactivating the 5010th Combat Support Group at Eielson AFB and activating the 343rd Composite Wing in its place with the 18th Tactical Fighter Squadron assigned to it.



**Apr 1, 1982** – The Alaskan Air Command closed the combat alert center at Eielson AFB and placed it in warm storage.



**April 1995** – The new Child Development Center was dedicated in honor of the seven children that died on November 29, 1955, when an F-84 crashed into family housing.

**Apr 1, 2002** – Headquarters PACAF activated Detachment 1, 353rd Combat Training Squadron at Elmendorf AFB and assigned it the 353rd Combat Training Squadron at Eielson AFB effective April 15, 2002.