



STORM CHASERS ~ Adventures from 6th Weather Squadron (Mobile)

Dedicated to all members of 6th Weather Squadron (Mobile) USAF - 2017 Publication Due - 190 pages

For decades the Air Force provided most of the upper atmosphere weather soundings. Helium balloons with weather recording instruments and radio signals sent information from the ground—release of the balloon all the way up to 100,000 feet. The technicians and the rawinsonde weather operators on the ground tracked the balloon and recorded on their charts at least five elements of weather for every foot of elevation. Sixth Weather Squadron (Mobile) had the most dangerous and the most adventurous duties and distant jobsites—for example, all up and down Tornado Alley, covering at least eight states from February to June. Tinker Air Force Base, our headquarters, was the belt buckle in Tornado Alley. Oklahoma usually had at least fifty tornadoes a month. But we spent months living in tents or WWII Quonset huts, working in small cramped tents, even having supplies dropped to us when on remote island sites.

When the United States needed to test thermonuclear detonations and missiles, especially in the far Pacific, Sixth Weather had “flights” of rawinsonde operators and technicians all over the Pacific Ocean. There were many other assignments—just to name a few, mapping South America and New Guinea, deploying to islands near the war-zones to provide crucial information to B-52 crews bombing Vietnam, finding radioactive debris from Russian nuclear tests, and other top-secret missions. We call Sixth Weather “The Original Storm Chasers,” because we chased storms as scientifically as we could in Tornado Alley, decades before civilians thought about doing it.

In addition, in the air and on the ocean we chased and followed hurricanes, and typhoons, but thunderstorms and subsequent river floods were important missions as well. We had temporary duty stations all over the world. The National Oceanic and Aeronautical Administration (NOAA) used our data. But the biggest storms we chased were thermonuclear firestorms—the granddaddy of all storms. The intense thermal radiation forms a fireball which reaches ten million degrees Celsius in one millisecond. The fireball will blind you. The shock waves will annihilate both you and any nearby buildings. The wind speeds and directions can change drastically and dangerously. Attention must be paid to the prevailing winds and civilian populations.

Joining the military was the best decision we made. The Air Force Weather Schools had excellent training which could last up to a year, good for a lifetime job. We found out what it took to become a man, self-reliant, a member of a team, physically fit, a well trained airman. We became dependable every day for isolated off-site duty, with just a sergeant's supervision—only one link in the chain of command. We learned how to travel and work and live with people from different families, different communities, different states, and different countries. We got out of our own little worlds, and hometown perspectives. What a gift! And it was all free.

Here are the adventures and romance of one such Storm Chaser and a few close buddies—Chance and Dakota, along with many other friends in the Storm Chaser Squadron. You follow Luke and Lacy from first-love romance through one challenge after another. How can there be a good ending? On the rocky way you will discover dynamic and memorable personalities in this saga of Sixth Weather Squadron. They all grew up—and in good part became all they could be—because of the duties and adventures and camaraderie in Sixth Weather. Our reunions for years after showed one success after another in each member's life after serving in Sixth Weather Squadron (Mobile).

This 6th Dimension Newsletter is published for the exclusive use of our 6WSAA members. Information is included as reported without vetting and is edited for space. If you discover an error or items that need a correction, please notify Gerry Guay Editor, Email: webmaster@6thweathermobile.org Members are encouraged to submit articles, information or stories that would be of interest to the general membership. Thank you.



Notes from 6th Weather Squadron History Files - January to December 1960

In 1960 we find Lt Col Bernard Pusin as Commander of our 6th Weather Squadron (Mobile) with Lt Col David Barrow as Executive/Operations Officer. Our manning chart in January authorizes 265 positions but only 197 filled for 77% manned. In June authorized positions dropped to 194 with 188 assigned for 97% manned. I guess that's one way to increase that % manned... And our annual budget is a whole \$140,500. The morale of the squadron was considered the highest on Tinker AFB despite 50 to 60% deployment on TDY 8 months of the year. We had the highest degree of squadron mission accomplishments and teamwork. The first half of 1960 saw 17 mobile teams deployed and supported two other teams with observers. The two AST#7 (Photomapping Support) teams terminated in February. Ops team continued at San Joaquin Valley with Project Stratus thru April then redeployed in November and a team continued at the White Sands Missile Range thru January. The largest project support at this time was Tornado Alley-1960 with Severe Weather Warning in Phase 1, Feb thru May and Phase 2 mid-May thru Sep which corresponds with the Northward seasonal migration of the maximum severe weather activity. The last weeks of January were used in a field exercise and simulated team deployment for all Tornado Alley teams, and was held on base. Because the Sferics equipment was considered too sensitive, those teams did not participate although they did operate at the training site for proficiency and calibration. TA teams were deployed to Dyess AFB TX, Ellington AFB TX, Reese AFB TX, Fort Smith AR, Turner AFB GA, Blytheville AFB AR, Tinker AFB OK with Sferics at Goodland KS, Sioux City IA, Chanute AFB IL, Richards-Gebaur AFB MO, Tinker AFB OK, and Blytheville AFB AR, then 7 teams in North-central US at Goodland KS, Huron SD, Waterloo IA, Scott AFB IL, South Bend IN, Fort Chaffee AR, and Tinker AFB OK. One team assisted a government sponsored project by Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids, IA while another was on the Great Salt Lake Desert for Project Horsestall, near the Wendover bombing range. Supporting two ARDC projects was a team at Goodfellow AFB, TX forecasting trajectories using high altitude balloons, and a team at Eglin AFB, FL for surface observations.

Weather Editing made changes to handle the domestic network increase from three to six circuit operation in March. A Unit Manning Document was submitted the increase the personnel in this section from five to twelve airmen because the workload is to be further increased in July when AWS detachments begin transmitting over the network.

RAVU was checking observations from 30 stations, then increased to 34 with the start of Tornado Alley. During 1960, 7605 Raobs were checked with 4931 Rawins. There were 6000 pieces of correspondence also handled by RAVU in this period in addition to researching records to formulate new methods of records checking.

The Maintenance Section repaired all rawinsonde and sferics equipment during the winter with concentration on equipment support of Tornado Alley teams. Two rawinsonde sets were provided to the U.S. Weather Bureau Polar Operations Project.

A mobile rawinsonde display was deployed at the AMS meeting at Scott AFB, IL, and we provided a float to the Armed Forces Day Parade on OKC. We also entertained displays for several TV stations at the Tinker operating site.

On the publications side there is a highly satisfactory result in the Team Guides for use of our teams at operation locations, and the high success during the trial period proved much better than the old system and renamed "Flight Guides".

A proposed administration and personnel records system consolidation to 4th Weather Group was determined to be an undesirable move that would hamper quick response and operations move for our mobile activities and projects. We were the only squadron in AWS that was not under CAPS (Centralized Administration and Personnel System) and consolidation would jeopardize the very mobility of this squadron.

If you would like to comment, correct or add to this, please e-mail me at webmaster@6thweathermobile.org and I will try to include them in the next newsletter. Thanks, *Gerry Quay*

Changes: Please keep us informed of any e-mail or address changes by e-mailing us at:



webmaster@6thweathermobile.org or

USPS mail us 6WSAA c/o Buck Bucklin, 8 Sherwood Lane, East Hampton, NY 11937



Final Launch



Thomas A. Rule - 1929 – 2012. Thomas Rule, age 83, of Paris, IL passed away Friday December 21, 2012 in Twin Lakes Rehab Paris. He was a rural mail carrier for the United States Postal Service and an insurance producer for Met-Life Insurance Co. Tom was 22 year veteran of the U.S. Air Force. Served in 6th Weather Squadron (Mobile) in 47, 50-60+. He was a member of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. Tom was born November 12, 1929 in Paris the son of the late Forrest and Ruth A. Eldredge Rule. He married Mary Whitton Rule July 16, 1950 in St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Paris. Tom is survived by his wife; his daughter Chris Smalbach and her husband Earl of Indianapolis, IN; his grandson Thomas Maxwell Smalbach of Indianapolis, IN; his brother Ronald E. Rule of Eaton, Georgia.



Howard H. Schmidt - 1925 - 2016. Howard Schmidt, 90, Wittenberg, WI died on Monday, April 11, 2016 at Ministry St. Clare's Hospital, Weston. He was born on May 12, 1925 in Edgar, the son of the late Rev. Karl and Laura (Junge) Schmidt. Howard attended grades 1 through 8 in Strasbourg Saskatchewan, Canada and then moved to Merrill in 1939. Howard was drafted in the United States Army in 1944. He served in Germany during World War II in the Glider Infantry which was part of the 1st Allied Airborne Army that crossed the Rhine... River near Wessel. He was awarded Glider Wings, Combat Infantry Badge and the Bronze Star. Howard was discharged in 1946. Upon discharge, Howard returned to graduate High school in Merrill. He then served in the Navy Reserve from 1947-1951. On September 7, 1952, Howard was united in marriage to Lola Voigt in Hamburg, WI. She survives. He then enlisted in the United States Air Force and served in the Weather Service in the United States, Greenland, Germany and Korea. He retired from the Air Force after 23 years of service. He was a member of 6WSAA and served in 6th Weather Squadron (Mobile) from 1953 to 1955. Howard graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point in 1975 and taught fourth and fifth grades at Sacred Heart School in Polonia for 11 years. Howard was active in the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Wittenberg Lions. He was also a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wittenberg serving as past congregation president, the Bloecher-Johnson American Legion Post #502, Wittenberg and the Elderon Memorial Post #8068 Veterans of Foreign Wars. Howard was honored to take part in the Never Forgotten Honor flight and was also presented with the Quilt of Honor from the Quilts of Valor Foundation. Survivors include his wife, Lola, Wittenberg; children, Steven H. Schmidt, Elderon, Carla (Jesse) Hanke, Wittenberg and Timothy J. Schmidt, Tigerton; five grandchildren, Jennifer (Randy) Janusch, Alan (Kayla) Hanke, Carl (Melissa) Baron, Joshua Breitrack and Samuel Schmidt; eight great-grandchildren, Kara, Makenna, Saul, Wyatt, Taya, Morgan, Owen and Annika and many other nieces, nephews and other relatives. Howard was preceded in death by his parents; two sisters, Ruth Schmidt and Mae Muschinske and one brother, Roger Schmidt.



Robert Gene Plisek 1945 - 2016. Robert Plisek, 71, of Dewey, OK passed away with loved ones by his side, Wednesday, December 14, 2016 at the Jane Phillips Hospital in Bartlesville, OK. He was born August 9, 1945 in Nowata, OK to Rudolph and Alice Plisek. Robert served over 20 years in the Armed Forces of Army and Air Force where he retired as a Tech Sergeant. He served in 6th Weather Squadron (Mobile) in 1976 – 77 and was a member of 6WSAA. Robert is survived by his son Lonnie Cort and wife Tammy of Springfield, Missouri, daughter Pamela White and husband James and their two children of Derby, KS, and by a previous marriage two step children, two brothers, Duane Plisek and wife Patricia of Bartlesville, OK and Lonnie Plisek of Dewey, OK, two sisters, Janice Price and husband James of Rogersville, MO and Gaye Cantellay and husband Mike of Enid, OK and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents Rudolph and Alice Plisek, a son Tony D. Plisek, two brothers: Charles A. Plisek and Leon A. Plisek, three sisters: Caroline Brewer, Lou Ann Viles, Betty Jo Nadine and Frances Joy Kelley.

*"We are grateful that we can gather together once again to renew friendships and make new ones, celebrate with those who are present, remember and miss those who are absent, and mourn those who are departed."
Chuck Miller*

