

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

WLBZ Radio Station Records

Manuscripts

4-5-1968

Salute to Dow Air Force Base

WLBZ Radio

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/wlbz_station_records



Part of the [History Commons](#), and the [Radio Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

WLBZ Radio, (April 05 1968) "Salute to Dow Air Force Base". *WLBZ Radio Station Records*. MS 608. Tape A 1968 5 4. Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, University of Maine.

https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/wlbz_station_records/183

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in WLBZ Radio Station Records by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

University of Maine Raymond H. Fogler Library Special Collections Department

Transcript of a sound recording in MS 608, WLBZ Radio Station Records, Bangor, Maine, 1931-1973

Title: Salute to Dow Air Force Base

Date: April 5, 1968

Recording number: Tape A 1968-5-4

Length of recording: 24:14

[transcript begins]

ANNOUNCER: Donovan Auto Sales at 1555 Hammond Street in Bangor, in conjunction with WLBZ Radio, present a Salute to Dow.

[Sound effect: airplane in flight, then music]

NARRATOR 1: The U.S Air Force and Dow Air Force Base, Bangor, Maine. For 27 years, one of the prime facilities in the defense posture of the United States. Dow, which on July 1st of this year, ceases its military mission to become a vast civilian complex of education, industry, and commerce. Dow, the bustling air facility that began as a farm pasture and emerged as one of the best jetports in the country today. [Music]

NARRATOR 2: Back in 1923, one would have been termed a visionary if one had prophesied that someday the skies over Bangor would be crisscrossed by jet contrails, that the Queen City would reverberate to the thundering roar of powerful engines. Aircraft in those days were an object of curiosity, piloted by daring young men in helmets and goggles.

NARRATOR 1: But one man foresaw what the future held for Bangor. In August of 1923, the legendary General Billy Mitchell led a flight of 18 Martin bombers and 11 de Havilland scout planes into Bangor, making a hayfield landing at Rich's farm, now the partial site of Dow Air Force Base. And the general, whose belief in air power led to his court martial, addressed the local Rotary Club. The general gave the club members assembled for their weekly luncheon at the Bangor House a burst of enthusiasm and foresight. "I see a great future for Bangor as an air base. It's a natural air center." And today no one can doubt these words which were received politely, but a bit skeptically, by the Bangor city members of the Rotary Club.

NARRATOR 2: It was not until 1940 that the citizens were to see the first steps in making General Mitchell's prediction come true. In the early spring of that year, the War Department chose Bangor's Municipal Airport as the site for a primary air defense base of the northeast coast. With Hitler's blitzkrieg engulfing Europe, the location was judged as one of the best in the event of an enemy attack on the continental United States.

NARRATOR 1: In July, the army engineers arrived and began to move earth, layout runways, erect the first crude barracks and headquarters buildings. On July 1st of 1941, six months before the smoking hell of Pearl Harbor, the first military air unit arrived at Dow, the 43rd

Bombardment Group. The B-118s, rather the B-18s, that comprise the group's strength started a long military history that is to officially terminate on July 1st of this year. [Music]

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to a salute to Dow, a look back through the past and ahead into the future of Dow Air Force Base in Bangor. [Music]

ADVERTISEMENT: Any used car dealership must base its reputation on reliability, integrity and quality products. Such is the case at Donovan Auto Sales at 1555 Hammond Street in Bangor. Donovan Auto Sales sells and services all makes of automobiles. If you're looking for a quality used car, I urge you to drop in at Donovan's and look at a truly fine car, a 1963 Buick Riviera two-door, hard top. This car is completely equipped, including a full console, automatic transmission, the complete power package including power windows, power seat, power steering and power brakes. This beautiful Buick also has air conditioning, a very desirable accessory during the warm summer months. This Buick is absolutely immaculate inside and out and must be seen to be appreciated. The sale price, only twelve hundred ninety dollars, now at Donovan Auto Sales, 1555 Hammond Street in Bangor. At Donovan Auto, our cars make good, or we do.

NARRATOR 1: In 1942, the base received its name. Dow was named in honor of Second Lieutenant James F. Dow of Oakland who was killed while on a training flight. And Dow became synonymous with America's air might. During World War II, more than 100,000 combat crewmen and 10,000 aircraft passed through the facility on their way to and from Europe. Since then, the Bangor base has played an integral part in Air Force activity, the Berlin airlift, the Korean conflict, the war in Vietnam. Dow has been a part of it all.

NARRATOR 2: Soon the last strategic air command bomber and tanker will leave Bangor, assigned to another base. But many residents can recall the exciting day when Bangor got its first close look at the highly sophisticated B-52 missile platform bomber. The sleek, eight jet craft roared over the city, landed smoothly, and was officially launched by Mrs Richard K. Warren, wife of the publisher of the Bangor Daily News.

AUDIO B-52 ARRIVAL: And right now the aircraft is making what is called a clean pass over the field with wheels and gear and flaps up. Let's listen. [Sound of airplane passing] A brand new B-52g, just fresh from the Boeing Airplane Company factory in Wichita, Kansas, the first of the aircraft for the 341st Bomb Squadron based here at Dow Air Force Base in Bangor. And now Mrs. Warren hands her bouquet to a very pretty young lady and is ready to christen the aircraft with a traditional bottle of champagne.

MRS. WARREN: I christen this The Maine Downeaster. [Sound of bottle hitting aircraft.]

AUDIO CLIP CONTINUED: And at the first try, the bottle breaks and the plane is traditionally christened the Maine Downeaster.

NARRATOR 1: Dow Air Force Base has seen many types of aircraft since that day in 1923 when the then entire U.S Army Air Command landed in a hayfield on the outskirts of Bangor. From propeller-driven craft to sleek multi-engine jets, all have used Dow's runways and facilities. And some perhaps owe their lives to the alert professional performance of the base's ground

personnel, such as on the 15th of May 1957 when ground control approach saved four jets lost in thick weather.

AUDIO CLIP: [Sound of airplane] Uh, [DCA?] this is Gulf 1. Reporting out of range, with a heading of 220, altitude 2,500 feet, over. Roger Gulf 1. Maintain your heading and altitude. Your emergency procedure is if you lose communications for any one minute in the traffic pattern or five seconds on the final approach climb to 2500, intercept and hold on the southeast course of the Bangor range. Contact tower control for further instructions, over. Roger. Understand.

NARRATOR 1: A time when constant drill and training paid off, on the ground and in the air. The men of Dow keep in a constant state of readiness.

AUDIO CLIP continues: [Inaudible] did you read us? We're at [inaudible] Ok, [?], turn to the left, and then to the right. [Ok, turn back on to the right, you'll see] 100 seconds. Turning left. Sixty seconds, ready, ready, thirty seconds, [alarm sound], ten. Five. Down. Turning.

NARRATOR 1: A practice bomb run high in the skies over the central United States.

AUDIO CLIP: [Air raid sound] [Yankee Papa scramble?, Yankee Papa, zero one, zero two, vector? Zero nine zero. Gate 40 Angel. Contact blue bottle [08?] when airborne.

NARRATOR 1: The signal that sent the pilots and observers of the 75th Fighter Interceptor Squadron of Dow running to their sleek F-101s.

NARRATOR 2: Dow is also the home of the Maine Air National Guard, citizen airmen who keep in a highly trained posture to back up the men of the regular Air Force. [Sound effect, plane going by]

ANNOUNCER: You are listening to Salute to Dow, dedicated to the personnel and dependents of Dow Air Force Base in Bangor.

ADVERTISEMENT: [Music] Why do people in the Bangor area buy cars at Donovan Auto Sales? The basic reasons are that when they buy at Donovan's they are assured of a quality used car at the lowest possible price. They're assured of fast, efficient service and genuine friendliness that keeps them coming back again and again. When you're ready to trade your car remember Donovan Auto Sales. Right now, Donovan Auto is featuring a 1963 Chrysler Imperial four-door hardtop. The interior is finished in beautiful red leather. The car has the complete power package including power steering, power brakes, power windows, and power seat. This is a quality automobile that you must see and drive. The price, only ten hundred ninety dollars, now at Donovan Auto Sales. At Donovan Auto, our cars make good, or we do. [Music]

NARRATOR 1: Dow is not all aircraft, not all highly sophisticated armament. Dow is people. And Dow people are part of the Bangor area community, active in civic organizations, giving of their time to fund drives, supporters of their church, of youth organizations. And Dow has long been active in the sports life of the community, offering keen competition to local teams in softball, basketball and in individual competition. The relationship between Dow and the

community might be summed up in the words of the late Master Sergeant Ted Hall, the oldest NCO in the Air Force at the time of his retirement in 1961.

AUDIO CLIP, INTERVIEWER: You must have quite a few memories, Ted, today, after retiring here in the end of your 20-year service. What's the one that stands out most in your mind?

HALL: Well, I think the one of the outstanding things that I've seen here is the actual cooperation of the downtown people and a wonderful community relation that exists between Dow Air Force Base and the people. I think that they realize that we're not a separate organization out here, that we're a part of the community. And I think that the hand of friendship that the people of Bangor have extended to the personnel who were in the service here at Dow... I don't think I've ever seen anything quite like it before and I know...

NARRATOR 1: Dow Air Force Base has played host to many visitors from people who make headlines to people just dropping in to partake of the base hospitality. The king and queen of Thailand, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, President Johnson and his First Lady who visited Dow on her way to Campobello for dedication ceremonies marking the summer home of the late President Roosevelt as an international park.

AUDIO: Mrs. Johnson, uh John Wellington from WLBZ, Ma'am. Um, what do you think of Maine, what you've seen of it.

MRS. JOHNSON: In just the briefest glimpse, so far, it's certainly been a friendly and wonderful crowd. And I'm looking forward so much to my trip to Campobello.

WELLINGTON: This must be quite a change from...

NARRATOR 1: But perhaps the most famous visitor to Dow, the late President John F. Kennedy who visited the facility on October 19, 1963, a few days more than a month from that fateful day in Dallas.

AUDIO: And here comes the other helicopter, the other Army helicopter, for the President. Quite a breeze there. This is really quite an event. There goes the ramp, now, the ramp to the rear door of the aircraft. The door of the aircraft is being opened by a Senior Master Sergeant of the Air Police. The ramp is being wheeled up ready for President Kennedy to descend. The ropes for the VIPs are being extended and it looks as if the President will walk down the down the ramp, be greeted by officials of Dow, by Lieutenant General Nazaro, by Brigadier General Neely, by Colonel Klein, by William Hathaway, Chairman of the State Democratic Committee and then other VIPs. Here comes the President now, Mr. Kennedy steps smiling from the door of the jet. He's holding a hat in his right hand but he is not wearing the hat. It's not, I believe, the habit of the President to wear a hat. He's receiving a good round of applause now from the people gathered here. Senator Muskie, Senator Edmund S. Muskie and his attractive wife, are right behind the President. And here comes Maine's Senior Senator, Margaret Chase Smith, and behind her is first district Representative, Stanley R. Tupper. The President also is accompanied by military aides and Secret Service men. It's interesting to note that the Secret Ser... you can tell the Secret Service men. They are not watching the President; they are watching the crowd. The president is shaking hands now down the reception line. He had just

finished greeting Mr. Hathaway, Bill Hathaway of the Democratic Committee. Now the President is shaking hands with the invited guests who are standing behind a rope here. It seems to be a leisurely process, but so much work has gone into this. The President is smilingly greeting these people and I wish we could get a little closer and hear what's going on, but of course that's...

NARRATOR 2: Through the years, Dow has been an integral part of the state of Maine and the defense of the nation. And many regarded the large SAC facility as a permanent fixture, a member of the community for years to come. But there were always rumors, always talk that the base might close. These were disregarded in many quarters. Dow was too strategically located. Dow was a strong point in the thwarting of any possible attack. But on November 19, 1964, the official word came from the Pentagon and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. In the interests of economy, Dow would close as a military installation on June 30th of 1968.

NARRATOR 1: The announcement brought reaction, cries of anguish, talk of what will we do without Dow? But then City Manager, Joseph R. Coupal, Jr., did not join the gloom spreaders.

AUDIO, INTERVIEWER: Manager Coupal, do you have any statement to make here regarding this afternoon's announcement of the closing of Dow in 1968?

COUPAL: John, obviously this is not entirely unexpected. The City of Bangor has been quietly considering what action it would take if, or not if, but when, Dow Air Force Base was deactivated. I think that all of the indicators over the past three or four years have uh pointed towards the eventual deactivation of this base so that it doesn't come as any great shock to us. As a matter of fact, we now...

NARRATOR 1: There was also a comment on the Congressional level, one from Senator Muskie, contacted by WLBZ news shortly after the closing announcement.

VOICE OF MUSKIE: I can say at the outset that I've written the following letter to Secretary McNamara, and I quote from it, "The decision to phase out SAC operations at the Dow Air Force Base in Bangor, Maine, carry serious implications for the future economic health of that community and the areas surrounding it. Although I recognize the considerations which led to this decision, I hope that the phasing out program will be carried out in such a way that a change in future policies with reference to the manned bomber program could take advantage of the capability at Dow...

NARRATOR 1: But Dow is closing down. Personnel are moving out to new duty stations. Aircraft are winging off the long concrete runways. And on June 30th, the base officially ceases its military function. But what about the future of Dow, Bangor's International Airport? One man very closely concerned with that is Peter D'Errico, Dow Reuse Coordinator for the City of Bangor.

VOICE OF D'ERRICO: Another means of transportation with unlimited potentials, which undoubtedly would be a stimulus to the growth of this area, is aviation. The facilities at Dow Air Force Base, soon to be operated as a public airport, provides us with a unique opportunity for expanded economic activity. The excellent flight facilities, coupled with the many modern

industrial type buildings, should prove very attractive to new industry. Interest in this airport has already been expressed by international carriers, by fixed base operators who wish to provide services to general and corporate aviation, and by airlines for training and proficiency of their aircrews. A prime development goal is to attract an aviation oriented industry with a need for both the flight facilities as well as the adjacent building. If the reuse of this resource is guided by sound planning, patience, and forethought, we can achieve significant economic changes by providing new job opportunities and develop the basis of a new mover in the economy.

NARRATOR 1: Once again the sounds of jet engines are heard at Dow Air Force Base. This time, the scene, the windswept flight line. This morning, Friday, April 5th, 1968, the last two planes from the military mission at Dow are about to leave. A KC-135 Strato tanker and a B-52 bomber. The tanker, dubbed the City of Brewer and piloted by Major Robert J. Corte, and the B-52, the City of Bangor piloted by Colonel James L. Flanagan, Commander of the 397th Bomb Wing. We talked briefly with Colonel Flanagan just before he boarded the craft for the flight to Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana.

WLBZ INTERVIEWER: Colonel Flanagan, as you prepare to take the last B-52 out of Dow, what are your impressions at this point?

FLANIGAN: Well, once you realize that Dow and the Air Force people have been an integral part of the community for something like 27 years now, I think you can understand that those of us still here feel that this is somewhat a sentimental occasion for us, since these are the last two airplanes that will belong to the regular Air Force establishment to be here.

WLBZ: And of course there's added significance in the fact that the planes are named the City of Bangor and the City of Brewer.

FLANIGAN: Yes, we thought this would be most appropriate, so we held back these two particular airplanes in order to let them be the last to depart here.

WLBZ: Thank you, Colonel. Good luck on your flight.

FLANIGAN: Thank you.

NARRATOR 1: [Sound of airplanes] Following a brief ceremony, the two planes taxied to the runway and prepared for takeoff. This was the scene at 11 o'clock this morning.

AUDIO from DOW: Last B-52 to leave Dow Air Force Base is now heading down the runway, and in just a moment will be airborne, piloted by Colonel James Flanagan the 397th Bomb Wing Commander. The plane is now coming down the runway. The last B-52 to leave Dow Air Force Base, to be followed very shortly by a KC-135 tanker. The plane is now airborne. Colonel Flanagan piloting the last B-52 from Dow Air Force Base headed for Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana.

NARRATOR 2: The two planes circled the field and flew over the base and the city, dipping their wings in a salute. And the last bomber and tanker have left Dow Air Force Base.

NARRATOR 1: Dow Air Force Base in Bangor, a military installation with a proud history and a bright future. [Music]

ANNOUNCER: You've been listening to a Salute to Dow, dedicated to the personnel and dependents of Dow Air Force Base in Bangor by radio station WLBZ. Salute to Dow was written by John Wellington and produced by Dan Everett. This is the Maine Broadcasting Company. A Salute to Dow was presented by WLBZ in cooperation with Donovan Auto Sales at 1555 Hammond Street in Bangor. At Donovan Auto, our cars make good, or we do.

[Music, with lyrics: Peace and freedom is our aim. The U. S. Air Force guards the light of liberty. We're men of the U. S. Air Force, flying wings of victory.]

[transcript ends]

For more information about this transcript, audio recording, or other materials in Special Collections at the University of Maine, contact:

Fogler Library Special Collections
5729 Raymond H. Fogler Library
Orono, ME 04469-5729
207.581.1686
[um.library.spc @ maine.edu](mailto:um.library.spc@maine.edu)