H I S T O R Y

MUROC ARMY AIR FIELD

4144th AAF BASE UNIT

October 1946 through December 1946

SAN BERNARDINO AIR MATERIEL AREA

HISTORY OF
MUROC ARMY AIR FIELD
4144th AAF BASE UNIT

The acquisition of land became an important project during the latter part of 1946. The expansion of the research program made necessary the acquiring of additional facilities, and details pertaining thereto were outlined in a letter to the Commanding General, San Bernardino Air Materiel Area, dated 20 August 1946.[1] A letter dated 20 December 1946[2] dispatched to Hq AMC emphasized the importance of immediate action to secure land as indicated on maps previously submitted.

Mr. C. P. Keegel from the Mining Section, San Francisco Division of the United States Engineering Department, and Mr. Paul Crow, from Lt. Col. Payne's office, Air Corps Engineering, Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, visited Muroc Army Air Field to obtain necessary data which would aid in locating future structures at the Field.

A complete revision was made of the Master Plan. The work was completed by the Public Relations Officer, who was assisted by numerous enlisted men. The biggest problem in connection with the Master Plan is the lack of equipment and experienced personnel.

Cash disbursements for the month of November totaled $90,000, and for December, $87,250.43. This includes travel pay and a portion of the military pay roll.

The cost of operation of Muroc Army Air Field, including civilian personnel salaries, for period "D", 22 September through 19

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1. CO, MAAF, to CG, SBAMA, 20 Aug 1946, See Appendix No. 59
2. CO, MAAF to CG, AMC, 20 Dec 1946, See Appendix No. 60

October amounted to $213,858; for period "E", 20 October through 16 November $235,233. This was higher than period "D" due to additional issues by Air Corps Supply to experimental Engineering. For period "F", 17 November through 14 December, operation cost amounted to $202,300. This represented a cost reduction of $32,933 from period "E", and was the result of large property turnins to Air Corps Supply by Experimental Engineering.

On 24 October 1946, auditors from Headquarters Fourth Air Force visited the Field for the purpose of auditing the fiscal records pertaining to appropriated funds suballotted to Muroc Army Air Field by Fourth Air Force for operation of Muroc Army Air Field. Up to 1 January 1946, funds for operation were suballotted from Fourth Air Force. From 1 January 1946 to 1 July 1946, Hq AMC made direct suballottments to Muroc AAF. SBAMA began allotting funds for operation of MAAF on 1 July 1946.

Additional personnel funds under Air Corps were received during December to complete requirements of first half of the fiscal year 1946. Additional funds were also received for the purchase of fuels and lubricants as the result of supplemental request made by Budget and Fiscal Office. There were 381 procurements in the amount of $82,970.53.

SUPPLY SECTION:

The 620th AAF Base Unit, working in conjunction with Aberdeen Bombing Mission, experienced difficulty in getting B-29 parts. This was mainly due to lack of stock level of these parts at SBAMA.

Authority was received from Headquarters AMC to go directly to Sacramento AMA where there is an adequate stock level of B-29 parts.

SBAMA advised that the specialized depots were not recognizing the Blue Streak priority that had been authorized for the 620th AAF Base Unit, and upper Atmospheric Project that is being conducted at Inyokern, claiming that Blue Streak priority is no longer authorized for these projects. Serious difficulty will be experienced in obtaining supplies for these projects if this priority is not restored. Many of the requests have to be extracted from the east, and without a priority shipments come very slow. Assurance was given that prompt action would be taken to get the priorities reinstated.

During the last quarter of 1946 Ordnance Supply shipped to the Sierra Arsenal approximately 390,000 pounds of explosives which were excess to the needs of the field. Thirty-nine thousand pounds of practice bombs were received and are in storage at the Ordnance Ammunition Area.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION SECTION:

1st Lt. Thomas A. Cielesz, Information and Education Officer, was replaced by Captain Raymond G. Teborek. Captain Teborek left to attend school and Captain Orson Moore is now acting Information and Education Officer.

Information and Education Section received the Army Vocational Information Kit which is designed to supply military personnel with

job information that will help them adjust to the post-war world of work. This kit contains helpful information on about 300 of the largest fields of employment.

Seven general education development tests were given to military personnel, and a number of high school credits were obtained for enlisted men on the basis of their military training.

Lack of qualified instructors to conduct classes for the Information and Education Program, has necessitated that personnel pursue their studies through correspondence facilities. If qualified instructors could be obtained, many enlisted men and officers would be eager to take part in classes that would be beneficial in enabling them to obtain college credit.

SPECIAL SERVICES:

The monthly USO shows were enjoyed by large and enthusiastic audiences representing the majority of MAAF personnel, both military and civilian. The troupe for each show was provided government transportation from Los Angeles to the Field. Refreshments were provided by the Officers' Mess at no cost to Special Services. Two Halloween dances were held on 29 and 30 October respectively. Money for these parties was appropriated from the Unit Fund. A band was contracted from Los Angeles. Hostesses were obtained from Los Angeles USO Headquarters and from the Avalon USO. The girls were transported by government vehicle and served refreshments at the enlisted mens' mess upon arrival at Muroc Army Air Field.

Two very successful Christmas dances were held on the 18th and 19th of December for Squadrons A and C, respectively. Forty-five

girls were brought by government transportation from Los Angeles for the dances. Dale Eymann's band furnished the music.

Fifty tickets to the New Year's Rose Bowl game at Pasadena, California were allotted to this field through the efforts of the Special Service Section. Eleven additional tickets were later obtained. Because of the large demand for tickets, distribution was made by a drawing held between movies at Theater #1 on 17 December. Only military personnel were entitled to apply. Twenty-five names were drawn, the winners each receiving two tickets at $5.50 per ticket.

Because of the geographical location of Muroc Army Air Field, the morale of the enlisted men presents quite a problem. Recreational facilities are very limited, and the dances are a real occasion. Special Services is not very active because of limited facilities and funds.

The Hobby Shop reopened in October and was very successful. The craft room was moved to a larger building. The main feature is the building of model airplanes by the enlisted men. However, very little equipment is available.

CONSTRUCTION:

The work of the general contractor on the conversion of building P-300 to an engine overhaul building, for all types of engine overhaul is 99% complete. The electric contract for the same building is 85% complete. This was the only construction accomplished on the field during this period.

Laying of the Ordnance Rocket California Institute of Technology water line at Flight Test Base has been completed.

HOSPITAL:

A request was made by Muroc Army Air Field for the activation of a 25 bed hospital. Detailed information concerning this problem was conveyed to the Surgeon General on 1 October 1946.[3] This was disapproved by the Command Surgeon for the reason that there was a great lack of medical personnel.

Hospital facilities at Muroc are very limited. The dispensary, with only six or eight beds, provides for only minor bed confinements. Hospital cases are sent either to March Field or Pasadena, California. Aside from the hospital facilities being inadequate, in cases of emergencies the outcome of a patient may be jeopardized if weather conditions do not permit use of an airplane for transportation to a hospital. In this event it is necessary to transport patients to the nearest hospital by ambulance, which is a distance of almost 100 miles from Muroc.

The inefficient heating facilities at the Station Dispensary contribute to the difficulties in the care of patients, both out-patients and those remaining in quarters as bed patients. Attempts have been made, without success, to correct this situation, which also affects the health of personnel engaged in the care of patients, and the administration of duties of the Dispensary.

Captain Philip L. De Long, MC, who had served as Post Surgeon, was relieved of this assignment when he was attached unassigned to the Separation Center at March Field for the purpose of being

3. CO, MAAF to Surgeon General, Wash., 1 Oct 1946, See Appendix No. 61

separated from the army. First Lieutenant Chaillie C. Bernard, MC, replaced Captain DeLong as Base Surgeon.

SALVAGE SECTION:

Total sales receipts for the last quarter of 1946 for the Salvage Section were:

October	$3,925.06
November	118.29
December	341.80

During the month of October the first decrease in value and inventory of surplus property occurred. Shipping instructions for property valued at $45,708 were received and filled.

During the month of November $6,639.39 worth of surplus property was delivered to purchasers. Nine vehicles were disposed of, out of a total of 44 vehicles on hand. During the month of December $57,350.84 worth of surplus property was disposed of. A shipment of 2570 double decker beds is in progress.

A box car load of salvage paper was shipped to Independent Paper Stock Company on 24 October, and a car load of tin cans was shipped to Metal and Thermite Corporation, Los Angeles, California on 9 November.

BASE OPERATIONS:

The Navy's Chance Vought XF6U-1 made a high speed taxi run on the dry lake bed on 1 October, and made its initial flight at 1440 on 2 October. Only the usual technical "bugs" were discovered.

An emergency landing was made on the Dry Lake by a P-80 from March Field on 2 October 1946 at 0935. The throttle stuck, but

the landing was successful. Another P-80 from March Field made an emergency landing on the Dry Lake on 4 October, this landing was also successful. The Dry Lake at Muroc almost daily proves its indispensable value to the Army Air Forces.

On 3 October 1946 General Stowell from Wright Field arrived at 1055 piloting a B-17G, and Major General Power arrived at 1800 the same day. They were to supervise the trial speed runs of one P-80 and the XP-84.

Rear Admiral E. M. Pace arrived at 1000 on 7 November to look over the Navy projects on this Base.

On 27 November Rear Admiral M. S. Slattery arrived at this station accompanied by Commanders C. F. Kemp, and A. B. Metzger. They came to discuss the XF6U-1, XFJ-1, SF2R-1 and XF5U-1.

The B-29 carrying the XS-1 took off at 1413 the 11th October. The rocket was released between 1455 and 1456, landing at 1503. The mission was completely successful.[4, 5]

On Saturday, 9 November, Muroc Army Air Field was host to the Navy's huge transport, "Constitution", which made its initial flight from Burbank, California. The aircraft took off at 1348 to return to Burbank. Mr. J. Toyle was pilot and Mr. Tony LeVier acted as co-pilot.

Muroc Army Air Field was the scene of a history making event on 9 December. On that day the Bell XS-1, carried by a B-29, took off for its first power flight. The rocket was dropped at 1154 from an altitude of 27,000 feet. When the first unit was turned on, a streak of flame came from the tail of the rocket and continued

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4. Photograph Bell XS-1 See Index. See Appendix No. 62
5. Photograph Bell XS-1 See Index. See Appendix No. 63

to glow until the unit was shut off. The second unit was fired with results coincidental with those of the first. A FP-80 was following the rocket to observe its reactions and also to take photographs. When the pilot of the XS-1, Chalmers Goodlin, fired the four units simultaneously, the FP-80 could not maintain a speed consistent with that of the Supersonic. This was the first time that the full power of the rocket had been fired while the ship was in flight. It made a successful landing at 1213.

On 13 November 1946, 60 miles north of Holtville Naval Air Station, Holtville, California, Lt. Colonel Joseph F. Brannock, of the 620th AAF Base Unit stationed at Muroc AAF, crash landed a B-25. Prior to the crash landing Colonel Brannock gave full instructions and orders to his crew and passengers to bail out. His orders were carried out immediately after the right engine went out. All members of the crew and passengers survived. One officer and one enlisted man were injured, and they were taken to McCornack General Hospital, Pasadena, California.

POST EXCHANGE:

On 23 December the Post Exchange received a $3000 grant from the Army Exchange Service to repair the cafeteria and Post Exchange.

Mr. Nougle, a food consultant from San Francisco Regional Office, spent eight days at the Field advising and assisting the Post Exchange Officer, 1st Lieutenant William D. Willett and the cafeteria concessionaire, in setting up a more efficient plan of operation for the cafeteria concession.

TECHNICAL ENGINEERING:

The Republic Aviation Corporation worked with further developments

on the XP-84. Colonel Councill started to fly XP-84 #1 back to the Republic factory in New York, but had an emergency landing at Amarillo, and another at Shawnee, Oklahoma. As a result of this, further development tests will have to be conducted on TG-180 engines.

Douglas Aircraft Corporation of Santa Monica, California is conducting tests on XB-43. There was some delay this past month, awaiting return of engines. The engines arrived later in November and tests were resumed. Modifications were made on the airplane in order to install units.

Northrop Aircraft Company of Hawthorne, California is conducting tests on the XB-35 at this base. They have been trying to solve gear box and prop difficulties. In addition, they have decided to incorporate many long standing modifications, and this work is now in progress.

Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation has been making further tests on the XP-81. XP-81 #2 arrived at this base on 10 October. This project encountered some delay while awaiting arrival of TG-100 engines.

The Long Range Ground to Ground Pilotless Aircraft research program is progressing satisfactorily. Modification of test area is being made. The tracks have been ground with a special grinder to make them smoother.

North American Aircraft Company is still testing the XFJ-1, Navy Jet Fighter. Recent flights have been made to determine stall characteristics.

The ORCIT project conducted by California Institute of Technology spent the month of October making modifications and repairs on equipment. Feed lines for liquid propellent are being tested. A firing is expected at a later date.

The Helment High Speed project is an active project, and these helmets are used in P-80 flights. There should be a variety of sizes in these helmets.

XF2R-1, Navy Fireball, arrived 22 October 1946. The first two flights were made with this airplane 1 November 1946. Some difficulty was encountered with propeller control which has been corrected. There are some heat spots along fuselage from TG-111 exhaust which are being investigated.

The B-29 High Altitude Test conducted by Boeing Aircraft was started 9 October 1946. The first phase of this test was the dropping of photo flash bombs from 40,000 feet. The first bombs worked satisfactorily and exploded at the prearranged 6000 feet altitude, but the last bombs dropped did not explode until they hit the ground. This was overcome in the second test.

The other phase of this project was the heating of 100 octane fuel to 110°F and climbing to 40,000 feet. The only difficulty was leaks in the fuel bags. This project has been completed and returned to Seattle.

The first flight of Ryan Aircraft, XF2R-1 was on 31 October. The second flight was on 6 November. The turbine wheel on the TG-100 developed cracks and had to be replaced. Paint blisters along

the fuselage from TG-100 exhaust and pilot suffers from extreme temperature in the cockpit.

High speed crash helmets have been used for approximately 40 hours of P-80 flight time. Complaints on their tightness at altitude seems to be the only comment from pilots. Lack of P-80s on flying status delays this project to some extent.

Bell Aircraft Company and National Aeronautic Corporation of America conducted the first power flight of the XS-1. The rocket was dropped from an altitude of 27,000 feet. First a single unit was fired, then two, and finally all four units for a short period of time. The flight was very successful, and only a few technical problems were encountered.

The Flight Test Branch assigned the Bendix Density Control to ship No. 44-85-96. The high idling test is being run on ship 44-85077. The emergency go-around test is being conducted on ship 44-84-996, on which ship the ejector test is being reworked.

4144th AAF Base Unit
Muroc Army Air Field

MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTH

1946	Assigned Officers	Enlisted Men Sq A	Enlisted Men Sq C*	Total
31 October	83	629	96	808
30 November	91	635	90	816
31 December	86	605	101	792

*Colored EM

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL STRENGTH

1946	Assigned	Authorized
31 October	315	353
30 November	313	350
31 December	328	350