

Kingsley Field Key To Basin Prosperity

By GUY W. FARMER
Kingsley Field, an Air Force installation on the outskirts of Klamath Falls, is a key to the continued progress and prosperity of the entire Klamath Basin.

The F101-B "Voodoo," awkward on the ground but deadly and graceful in the air, is a familiar sight by now in the skies over the Klamath area. Those who disengage the loud roar of the huge jets would do well to consider vital role played by the Air Force in the economic and military life of the Basin.

Kingsley Field is a city in itself. It is self sufficient in most respects but dependent on Klamath Falls in many ways. With a population of almost 1,500 and an annual payroll in excess of six million dollars, the base is big business.



COL. RUPERT C. WELCH, 42, became Kingsley Field commander last July. He entered the United States Cavalry in 1941 to begin his long and distinguished military career. He is "combat ready" in the F100-B "Voodoo" and has amassed more than 4,000 hours flying time. Colonel Welch was preceded at Kingsley by Col. Jack W. Williams, Lt. Col. Raymond A. Thornton and Col. Samuel Grashio.

shared the facility for the next 10 years. Then, early in 1956, with the government stressing a strong defense program as a deterrent to war, the Air Force decided that Kingsley Field would fill in the air defense gap between Portland and San Francisco.

The base was reactivated by the Air Force on April 8, 1956. At first it was to be called Klamath Falls Air Force Base but it was later named Kingsley Field in honor of a young Portland bombardier, Lt. David R. Kingsley, who lost his life in 1944 during a bombing raid over Ploesti, Romania. Lieutenant Kingsley dropped his bombs and, despite the fact that his aircraft was extensively damaged by flak, he administered first aid to two wounded crew members and strapped his own parachute on a wounded gunner to save the man's life.

A small handful of men worked diligently and the new base began to mushroom. The first base commander, Col. Samuel Grashio, and a full complement of men arrived in May, 1956. Since that time, more than 25 million dollars has been expended to develop the Air Defense Command's newest base.

Fighter Group
The 408th Fighter Group was assigned to the base as the primary unit. The organization was first constituted in April, 1943, at Key Field in Meridian, Miss. It was the 408th Bombardment Group in those days. After conducting flying training programs at bases in Mississippi, Florida, Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma, the group was disbanded in April, 1944.

The 408th, in little more than five years, has earned an enviable reputation throughout the Air Force and Air Defense Command. Last fall, the 408th was designated as the best 101 outfit in Air Defense Command as a result of an operational readiness inspection conducted by headquarters. The 322nd Fighter - Interceptor Squadron and 408th Consolidated

Maintenance Squadron (CAMRON), deployed to Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., late in the year and scored a near perfect record in simulated atomic rocket firings.

Those squadrons are two of five squadrons on the base under the jurisdiction of the 408th group. Besides the 322nd and the 408th CAMRON, there are the 408th Materiel Squadron (MATRON), 408th Air Base Squadron (ABRON) and 408th Air Force Dispensary. Four other units receive logistical support from the 408th Fighter Group: they are the 827th Radar Squadron, the 204th Aircraft and Airways Communication System Detachment (AACSS), Detachment 2 of the 35th Weather Squadron and the Office of Special Investigations (the Air Force's cloak and dagger outfit).

The 827th Radar Squadron is best known for the giant "bubble" or radome atop Hamaker Mountain, east of Keno. From that vantage point, radar surveillance is maintained over a large portion of the Northwest. Electronic messages are also relayed from Portland Air Defense Sector headquarters at Adair, near Corvallis.

Base Commander
The present base commander is Col. Rupert C. Welch, a 42-year-old veteran who has been flying for more than 19 years. The colonel has become known at Kingsley as a man who does not like to accept second place in anything. He is fully qualified in the "Voodoo" and is a fair, but exacting commander. He was born in Oklahoma, has been a test pilot and is an expert in the field of supply and materiel. The versatile base commander has accumulated more than 4,000 flying hours and holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from San Francisco State College.

Colonel Welch and his wife, E. Kathryn, and two children, Janet K., 15, and Rupert C. Jr., 12, live in Falcon Heights. The base's mission is air defense. Guarding against surprise air attack is a 24-hour-a-day job.

Air Force men are subject to call at any hour of the day or night. Simulated defense exercises are frequent. In the largest exercises, giant B52, B47 and B57 bombers are sent into the area in an attempt to penetrate the defense network.

"Air defense is a team job," Colonel Welch says. "Every man must do his part to make the system work." The system is called "alert." Fully clothed crews are standing by at all times in the alert hangar at the north end of the field. Through cooperation between air and ground crews, two 101s can be airborne within five minutes of any attack warning. The description of Kingsley Field as a city is not a misnomer. The base has its own grocery store and meat market, variety store, dry cleaners, post office, snack bar, church, fire department and theater. Other personal services such as legal advice, medical services and rental of sports equipment is made available to the airmen.

Housing Area
The housing area was completed in November, 1958, at a cost of 4 1/2 million dollars. It was named Falcon Heights in a public contest in July, 1959, by Don Stastny of Maine. The 290 families have two, three and four bedroom units in the brick duplexes. Each unit is furnished with electric appliances, a garage and has a spacious yard. Falcon Heights is considered to be one of the most modern housing areas in the Air Force. Due to the demand for units, airmen below the grade of airman first class must live in town. Falcon Heights, like any community of young couples, has a prodigious birthrate.

What are the prospects for the future? Despite talk of missiles and fully automatic warfare, Kingsley Field will remain an interceptor base for the foreseeable future. The 20 "Voodoos" lined up on the Kingsley Field flight line are a powerful deterrent to a potential aggressor. There are several projects "in

the mill." The largest one in progress is a complete refinishing of the runways at the field. The strips must be strengthened to withstand the beating that they take from 20-ton 101s landing at a speed of 200 miles an hour. A new addition to the base chapel to house Sunday School and Bible classes is underway. The alert hangar is also due for a remodeling. And an armament-electronics building is scheduled for completion this year.

The continued growth of Kingsley Field means progress to the Klamath Basin. Last year, besides the six million dollar payroll, another two million dollars was spent with contractors and firms in the local area. This helped to offset the slump in the lumber industry. So, based on a record of solid achievement and active leadership, the community may well be proud of Kingsley Field which, in turn, is looking ahead to the challenge of the space age.

NEW PINEHURST COURSE
PINEHURST, N.C. (AP)—Construction of a fifth golf course has begun at the Pinehurst Country Club. The winter resort club tucked away in North Carolina's sandhills hopes to have the course ready for play in September.



THIS AERIAL VIEW of Kingsley Field shows the layout of one of the Air Defense Command's newest bases. The flight line and F101-B "Voodoos" are lined up in the middle of the picture. The FAA control tower is at the left of center and the main north-south runway is at the extreme left. The alert hangar, where air and ground crews stand 24-hour alert, is at the bottom of the picture. Kingsley Field is an important factor in the continued progress of the Klamath Basin as it contributes nearly \$10 million a year to the economy.

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