

**Interview with General Edward Belyea, Anchorage AK August 2009. Interviewed by Dan Hart and Kathryn Plimpton of HDR|e2M, Inc.**

Gen Belyea associated with Kulis from April 1967-1989. Captain in 1967-Brigadier General in 1989.

Fairbanks flood in 1967. During 9 day period Belyea made 19 flights into Fairbanks as co-pilot. Ed Granger was the Pilot. Flew transports all day-24 hours. Transported food and supplies to Fairbanks and brought people back, because they needed a place to stay. Group of high school students (had yellow jackets-called them the Yellow Jackets), would meet each person or family at the base and would find them families to stay with in Anchorage. Showed up at the airport at 3-4am waiting for airplanes to come back. Nearly all 8 C-123's were flying to Fairbanks during that time. 1500ft of runway at the Fairbanks airport was free of water. Kulis was a staging point for Fairbanks Flood relief.

Initially, when Gen Belyea first arrived, they did a lot of flying for the state:

During springtime Fish and Game, and Federal Fish and Wildlife personnel and boats, were transported out to the village sites in AK. Every two years, state troopers' vehicles at villages were replaced and Kulis ANG would transport those.

In early 1970s, Kulis was investigated by FBI and OSI for hauling non-DOD cargo. Final analysis was that most of the items hauled were not DOD items, but also did not violate the federal regulations (451513R). In fact, they decided that Kulis should be commended for the work they had done. Investigation was called off.

First C130Es came from Texas. They looked shiny and new but were rotting on the inside. Wing cracks, lots of repairs.

C130Hs were brand new. Gen Belyea picked up the first Kulis C130s. Got them in mid-1976. Belyea took over as commander in November of 1976.

Conversion from C123s to C130s:

"C130s could carry twice as much, twice as high, twice as fast." Engines are different too. C130 engines could go 2-5 times longer without overhauls.

Conversion from C123 to C130s required a significant amount of retraining. Sent people to Little Rock's C130 training school. General Belyea was the last to go back for training. E Model to H model, no change really.

When Belyea arrived in 1967, Kulis had 17 pilots and 2 navigators. Along with maintenance crews and other support groups. Total unit was 250 or so. 130-140 full time technicians.

Alaska Air National Guard was called a "y-out" or "why out." In 1967, the AKANG had three years before it would be disbanded. So no construction went on during that period. 1969 they dropped the Y-out

program and construction began. During that time they had only a handful of buildings; one hangar, old J's way(?) hut for flight maintenance. Lots of building since 1969.

"I made the rank of General because of the NCO's"

"This place was absolutely packed with good people, and I couldn't have done anything without them."

"We were sort of a flying club."

"You get up, 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning. You get your flight plan, its just starting to get day light. You crank up your engine and you line up on the runway...Freedom!"

Ted Stevens International Airport, only had three fire people. Not enough to run their equipment and not enough equipment in general. They used Kulis equipment and personnel. There was an agreement that Air Guard would help with crashes. Margie Paulson, nurse at Kulis, helped out during a DC10 crash. Air Guard pulled people out of Ted Stevens crash.

National ANG people would come to Alaska to fish and hunt. Pre-1976 the AF Chaplin and other bigwigs from DC were busted for poaching Red Salmon (using illegal hooks). Saw Alaska ANG as their "resort" so they were protective of the base in Anchorage. Gen Belyea "It was hard to get over that image." One thing that changed it was moving from Alaska Air Command to Tactical Air Command.

Under TAC started air drop training, assault landing. Before that, it was just cargo hauling.

MAC, then consolidation and MAC was gone. Now under PACAF.

Col. Nelson, commander of the 616<sup>th</sup> (Elmendorf) came to tour Kulis. Both fly the same planes c130s. After the tour he remarked to Gen Belyea, "You have crew chiefs with 10-15-20-21 year's (maintenance) experience. That's how **old** my mechanics are!"

The base has changed considerably from 1967 to today. "From half a dozen little buildings and one small hangar, it's amazing, and it's a shame to lose it."

Gen. Belyea came up flying fighters. Came to AK ANG and had to learn to fly C123J's. It wasn't hard to learn. An airplane is an airplane, but the mission was different. Fighters take off, go do your mission and return to same place. Cargo, you take off and next thing you know you are landing in some small village up north, landing on rivers and lakes. The mission is very interesting.

"You get up, 4:30, 5 o'clock in the morning. You get your flight plan, its just starting to get day light. You crank up your engine and you line up on the runway...Freedom!"

DEW Line Missions ACS sites inland

Four days a week Kulis had an AEC mission. Be at Elmendorf at 5am to pick up a load of cargo and fly it to one of the radar sites. During the early 1970s.

Dillingham radar site, the runway is 4000 feet and one end is 800ft higher than the other end, so you land uphill and takeoff downhill, "and when you take off, you really take off."  
Even when Kulis had C130s they would fly those to supply the radar sites. The runways were all long enough for the C123s and C130s.

#### Operation Santa Claus

At first just St. Mary's but later, all over the villages up north.

C130s from California, Georgia, and Mississippi came up to AK in winter to practice air drops. 10 C130s all landed on a frozen lake near Kiana.

During Cold War, Gen. Belyea was meaconed. (Meaconing is the interception and rebroadcast of navigation signals. These signals are rebroadcast on the received frequency to confuse enemy navigation. Consequently, aircraft or ground stations are given inaccurate bearings.) Out by Barrow, needle on radio and it was just swinging. Couldn't lock on to the radio in Barrow. Changed frequency and was able to tune into the station.

Pope in Alaska on 26 February 1981. Mass of the Holy Spirit at downtown Anchorage church. Meeting with clergy and religious people, then a farewell ceremony. One day.

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/travels/sub\\_index1981/trav\\_far-east\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/travels/sub_index1981/trav_far-east_en.htm)

The AKANG was there to help with arrival. Hangar would have been used if there was inclement weather. However, it was nice so they just helped with people issues.

Alaska Air Command. Mid -80s is when they were merged with other groups.