

# 760 RADAR SQUADRON (SAGE)

## MISSION

## LINEAGE

760 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron  
Redesignated 760 Radar Squadron (SAGE)

## STATIONS

Colville AFS, WA

## ASSIGNMENTS

## COMMANDERS

Maj Jack H. Egginton, #1954

## HONORS

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## EMBLEM

## MOTTO

## NICKNAME

## OPERATIONS

760th Radar Sq (SAGE): assigned 1 Jan 51 at Colville AFS, WA, assigned to 505th Gp; transferred to 162nd Gp 25 May 51; . . transferred to 25th AD 6 Feb 52; transferred to 4702nd Def Wg Jan 53; transferred to 9th AD 8 Oct 54; transferred to 25th AD 15 Aug 58;. transferred to 4700th AD Wg 1 Sep 58; transferred to Spokane ADS 15 Mar 60; redesignated from AC.Og Sq to 760th Radar Sq (SAGE) 1 Sep 60; discontinued 1 Jun 61.

The 760th AC&W Squadron began operating the AN/FPS-3 and AN/FPS-5 radars at this site in February 1952. This site took over coverage once provided by site L-28, Spokane. In 1956 the AN/FPS-5 height-finder radar was replaced by the AN/FPS-6 model. In 1958 the 760th operated a newly installed AN/FPS-20 radar. In August 1960 this site was deactivated due to budget constraints. Squadron deactivation occurred in November.

Shortly before the Korean War, the U.S. Air Force began looking at the 49° Longitude between Canada and the United States as a possible 'outer ring' of defense for their Strategic Air Command (SAC). These 'satellite' bases were authorized by Congress in March 1949 to insure the country would never again be caught unaware as it was at Pearl Harbor. An Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron could detect any aircraft within a 150 mile radius. The 760th AC&W was affiliated with 9th Air Division (Defense), Geiger Field Air Force Base Spokane, WA.

A site 22 miles E of Colville on Tiger Hwy (Hwy 20) by Black Lake was chosen as the 760th location. The mountain, which apparently had no name then, is now called "Radar Dome". A low bid of \$761,254 was accepted by the Utah Construction Company of Richmond CA in June of 1950 and the first buildings begun shortly thereafter. 760th officially began operations on 28 November 1950. The Base layout was divided in the middle by the road leading to the Radar Dome. On the left side of the road were the motor pool, three barracks for enlisted men and the sergeant's barracks. Situated behind the motor pool, between it and barracks one, was the supply room. Behind barracks one and two was the combination PX/gym/theater. The NCO (non-commissioned officers) club sat between, but in back of, the Supply and PX. Airmen, NCO's and officers all used the club. On the right side of the road was the orderly room and Officers barracks (upstairs) with a dispensary and library on the main floor. Next was the Power Plant where coal was used to supply steam heat to all buildings through large overhead pipes. The last building on the right before heading up the road to the Radar Dome was the Dining Hall.

The Radar Dome was approximately one mile above the base and consisted of communications, cryptography, radar and, in 1956, five or six Army Personnel in Radio. There could have been Army personnel stationed there in other years but the only person known to be in the Army and stationed at 760th is Ed READ.

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Very little information appeared in the local Statesman Examiner about the Base. The paper for 17 Nov 1950 quoted Capt Moe WRIGHT, Engineer Corps officer... "100 or more men will be stationed at the site, the men will be white and of higher than average intelligence". He urged the community to refrain from asking the troops about their work. No mention was found of the name of the Commanding officer when the base opened, but Major John SINGER was commander in June and

also December 1951. Major Jack EGGINTON was the commander from 1952-1954 and then again in 1957-1958. Other Commanders included; Major Leslie CROZIER and Capt James GOLDEN. Capt John SAMILA was Commander in August 1960 when it was announced the base was closing.

The total personnel were usually close to 150, peak strength was 188 military and 21 civilians. At least 75-80% of these were single airmen, plus approximately 10-15 Officers and 20 civilians. Married personnel lived in Colville or surrounding areas. In 1955 a housing area was built just below the base which included nine houses. Major GOLDEN was Commander at the time and this could be the reason it was called "the Golden Circle." After the Base closed, all facilities were turned over to Spruce Canyon Youth Camp. When the Camp closed, these houses were sold and relocated around Colville.

Elevation at the barracks was 3200-3300 ft and at the Radar Dome 4000-4200 ft making for long winters and deep snows. The motor pool kept trucks running 24 hours a day in below zero weather. Transportation to and from the Radar Dome ran on a regular schedule and to miss the bus meant a long cold walk on winter mornings. One time an airman was lost near the Base and two Search and Rescue Teams were sent out to hunt for him. When "A" team failed to return from the search, the Fire Fighting Team was sent out to find the first group. Eventually all three units returned safely, as did the lost airman, but no one got much sleep that night. Bear and deer were common sights and many young airmen were 'city boys' not used to the isolation and wildlife. But M/Sgt WALDEN is the only person with the distinction of shooting his bear in Base Housing.

When not working, airmen spent their time reading, (over 300 books in the library!), playing cards, watching movies or swapping stories in the NCO club. The more sports minded airmen joined the 'Ray-Darts' basketball team. Tournaments between other 9th Air Division teams, as well as Inchelium, Hunters, Kettle Falls, Trail and Grand Forks B.C. didn't result in 1st place trophies but were always fun. TV reception was often poor, in spite of the TV antennas stuck up on trees. Colville formed a 'civic group' to study ways they could make the military feel welcome. Dances and fund raisers were held to furnish a club with furniture, TV, and games for the men. Many enlisted men found "second" homes in Colville with girl-friends or local residents where they could get a home cooked meal and a taste of civilian life. Several Airmen married local girls and some of these returned to Colville to live after they were discharged.

Getting to and from Colville often proved to be a hazard in itself as the paved road ended at Park Rapids when the base first opened and remained unpaved until around 1956. The road from Park Rapids to the Base was gravel, but Park Rapids Lodge had pool tables, beer, and music so it was often the destination. One of the airmen who lived at Park Rapids designated himself town 'Mayor'.

The Airmen published their own twice monthly Newsletter, called the "Railway Express". The newsletter tells of bowling tournaments, squadron dances and scheduled movies. Talent and variety shows were held in the Colville High School auditorium to benefit various charities, and "The Bill BILOY Combo", "The Vocals" and "The Singing Sergeants" regularly took part. The Colville Community Chorus, under the direction of Mrs. Robert SKIDMORE, invited any airman interested in helping with Easter and Christmas performances. Open house was held on Armed Forces Day, and most holidays were celebrated with special dinners in the dining hall. The proposed pay increase

listed in the January 1958 Railway Express called for a six percent cost-of-living pay raise bringing an Airman 2C monthly pay to \$99.37. An Airman 1C was to receive \$140 a month for less than two years of service and \$180 for two through four years of service.

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The 760th A.C. & W. article appearing in our April 2003 "Pioneer Branches" has sparked a flood of memories, as well as a few hundred more names, for some of the Airmen stationed there. There are also corrections which needed to be made and several more pictures retrieved from long forgotten photo albums and boxes. It seemed important to do a follow-up to the original article to include this information.

There is also a web site [www.radomes.org](http://www.radomes.org) dedicated to preserving A.C. & W. information from all radar sites. Their official name is the "Online Air Defense Radar Museum." This site contains information, pictures, names and newspaper articles pertaining to radar sites. Dick Konizeski, one of the researchers for 'radomes' sent information about 'Gap Filler' radar sites which supported the Colville AFS. These sites were Curlew, Lone, Mazsma, Northport and Okanogan. Prior to becoming a gap filler, Curlew was known as the 638th AC&W. Capt. Frank Davis was operations officer of the 760th in 1954 and went on to become squadron commander at Curlew. This site is now the Curlew Job Corps. Pat Graham, former owner and Editor of the Statesman Examiner, wrote an article about the Lone site and it and several pictures are on the 'radomes' website.

In late 1953, the Army and Navy Publishing Company put out a year book in which many of the members of the 760th are pictured. It is titled '760th A.C. & W. Squadron, 4702nd Defense Wing.' James Irwin sent pictures of various sites around the 760th from an Air Force newspaper which states that "Hunting and fishing facilities in the Colville area are unsurpassed and greatly compensate for the lack of 'Big City Living.'" Jim Irwin was instrumental in starting the 760th Squadron Newspaper, "The Railway Express", in Feb 1955. "Railway" was the 760th Radio Call Sign. Major McCune (a WW2 POW) was Squadron Commander at that time, 1st Lt. Irwin (Adjutant), the editor and 2nd Lt. Dale Feaster the Sports Editor. Bowling, table tennis, basketball and gossip (all in good fun) were the primary sports. From these three sources, as well as e-mail and letters, I was able to add over 200 names to our original list of Airmen.

In the letters received, most of the men remarked on the fishing and hunting. The next most common memory was the gravel road and/or the cold, snowy winters. Many wondered just how much Colville has changed. I encouraged them to purchase the genealogy society's latest publication "Little Journeys Around the Town" which is the history of Colville's Main street in the

early 1920's with updated photos of each block on Main street.

One of the pilots wrote that he doubted any pilot did low passes on the radar site with his wheels down as it would be a court martial offense with severe consequences. But, he added, "the guys in WW2, much less disciplined than military pilots, could have gotten away with it, and I'll admit it was fun to contemplate such acts." The story probably originated because the Air Defense Command had calibration aircraft that flew over the radar sites and helped the site operators calibrate their height finders, which were notoriously inaccurate. These aircraft, in order to slow down and call out their altitudes over the VHF radio in use in those days, may have dropped their landing gear and approached at different altitudes.

Another airman commented that the 760th was part of the Western Air Defense Force (WADF) in the Air Defense Command (later NORAD) and friendly rivals of the Strategic Air Command. A clarification of which division the 760th belonged to has also been addressed. The 760th started out as part of the 4702d Defense Wing of the 25th AD (Air Division). Then, when the Ninth Air Division was created in October 1954, it was assigned to the Ninth AD, then went back to the 25th AD around 1958-59 when, apparently, the Ninth AD was discontinued. The 760th closed in 1960. A list of Commanders (plus another 100 some names) was sent by John FRIEL. John was stationed at the 760th twice; once from April 1951 to October 1953, then after a tour of Korea, he returned in October 1954 and stayed until April 1957. During that time he served for over two years as Personnel Sgt Major. John married a girl from Colville and they now live in Canton, Massachusetts. Major John A. Singer was the first Commander and some of the others, not necessarily in order, are Major Donald Jones, Major James K. Golden, Major John A. McCune, Major Wendell A. Steele, Major Paul D. Werner, and Capt John Samba. Capt. Jack Riddle was Acting Commander for 45 days between Commanders.

760 Colville AFS, WA FPS-3; FPS-5; FPS-6; GPS-3; FPS-6A; FPS-20. Feb-52 01-Nov-60 Site deactivated due to budgetary cuts. Was east of town. A split site, the lower camp was the Spruce Canyon Youth Camp, but has since been torn down.

#### History of Colville AFS, WA

This site took over coverage once provided by site L-28, Spokane. The 760th AC&W Squadron began operating an AN/TPS-1B medium-range search radar in March 1951 at then Lashup-Permanent site LP-60. In November 1951 an AN/TPS-1C replaced the -B model. This radar was subsequently replaced by an AN/FPS-3 long-range search radar and an AN/FPS-5 height-finder radar at this now Permanent site (P-60) in February 1952. In 1956 the AN/FPS-5 height-finder radar was retired and replaced by an AN/FPS-6 model. Also in 1956 an AN/GPS-3 search radar was installed. In 1958 the 760th operated a newly installed AN/FPS-20 radar, and the AN/FPS-3 radar was retired. An AN/FPS-6A height-finder was added also in 1958. In 1960 the AN/FPS-20 was modified to the AN/FPS-20A model. In November 1960 this site was deactivated due to budget constraints. References: "Searching the Skies"; misc. ADCOM documents; eyewitness accounts.

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Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.  
Unit yearbook. *25<sup>th</sup> Air Division (Defense). 1953-1954.*