

I graduated from Loran-C Monitor School at Governors Island on 6/19/70 as a SNET and arrived in Keflavik in July. I stayed there for the next two years, first as a technician/watch stander, then lead technician as an ET3 and ended up as Chief of the station in July of 1971 as an ET2. I rotated back to Governors Island in July 1972 to be an instructor in the Loran Monitor School, where my specialty was the AN/SPN-30 Receiver. My promotion to ET1 was delayed by the Nixon administration, along with a special calibration mission to the Mediterranean, due to budgetary cuts (thank you Tricky Dick!). The promotion finally arrived (but not the trip) on 2/23/73. I didn't have long to enjoy the new rank as my enlistment ended on 4/12/73.

The CO of the Keflavik station for the whole time I was there was LT (later LCDR) H. T. Sherman. The technical officer was a CWO; the first was Guy Seago and the last was a Mr. White. We were also supposed to have an ET1 or a Chief ET, but that never seemed to work out while I was there.

Because the CO was also the COCO for both the SL-6 Norwegian Sea Chain and the SL-7 North Atlantic Chain we also had a yeoman and two radiomen to handle all the paperwork. There also was supposed to be four seaman as watch standers, two ET3 duty technicians and one ET2 lead technician for a total compliment of thirteen.

The station used four AN/SPN-30 receivers modified for using a master external oscillator instead of their internal ones. Because there was a double pulsed Loran-C transmitting station just forty miles away, a special clocked attenuator circuit was added to the antenna line to knock the signal level down during its transmission times. A very stable quartz oscillator fed through a distribution amplifier synchronized everything.

Shortly before I arrived in Kef, the station had been moved from its original on-base location out into the boonies at the DYE-5 Tropo Scatter communications site due to severe EMI. However, everyone still lived on the NATO base itself, which caused a logistics problem in getting the watch personnel shifted back and forth, so the station was run 24 on/24 off. The two duty watch standers alternately worked six hour shifts, with no assigned duties in their off hours. When all the bosses, the yeoman and the day-working radioman went back to base in the evening, the technician on duty was in charge of everything.

Because we were nearly always short of regular seaman for watch standers, one of the radiomen would cycle through the watch standing list. As a result, the technicians were also

required, on top of their other considerable duties, to handle the nighttime radio work. Radio work is really a misnomer as most everything was done by teletype. The problem was, of all the skill and knowledge requirements needed to become an electronics technician, typing was not one of them. As there was no typing course that could bring the hunters and peckers quickly up to speed, one had to teach oneself. It was mostly a matter of self preservation.

One of the "other duties as required" that often involved the duty technician in hours of radioman work was Soviet nuclear test monitoring. Putting it briefly, by continuously monitoring the delay of the Loran-C sky wave signal, a nuclear blast, even underground, could be detected. The sky wave signal was also affected by sunspot activity, so two different messages were generated by either one of these anomalies. The sunspot activity was not a priority and the message could be handled as time allowed. However the nuclear blast information was a priority and had to be handled ASAP. Both of these messages were quite lengthy and were sent to dozens of locations around the world. The messages were mostly handled using perforated paper tape which saved a lot of typing. However, all night long, notices of non-delivery would come in and the messages would have to be resent, individually, to the affected locations. No mistakes were allowed, quite a trick after you have been awake for the better part of twenty-four hours.

There was also some real radio work and the call sign of the monitor station was TFR-2 as the Loran transmitting station at Sandur, Iceland already had TFR. We used the same 1 kw SSB phone transceivers that seem to have been the standard at many Loran-C stations. I don't remember the frequencies, but one was in the American 40 meter amateur band where we would be heard making periodic and often futile radio checks, resulting in occasional QSL requests.

I hope this helps to fill in some blanks in the history of Loran-C. If you have any questions, please ask.

Dan