

P O A  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

ADDRESS REPLY TO

COMMANDING OFFICER  
LTS CAPE SARICHEF  
REFER TO FILE

1956 JUL 12 AM 11 37

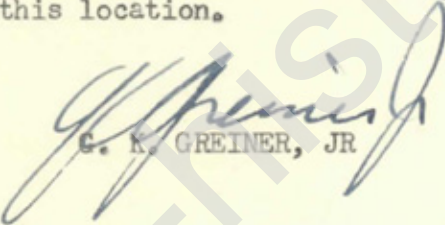
28 June 1956  
A7

From: Commanding Officer, LTS Cape Sarichef  
To: Commandant (PO-2)

Ref: Comdt PO-2 lttr 22 May 56 file A7

Subj: Overseas loran station survey; forwarding of

1. In accordance with ref. (a), the subject report is forwarded. It may also be of interest to note that an article was written for the Coast Guard Magazine in 1951 about this station. It is quite colorful and may be quite helpful. It deals with the life of the personnel at this unit and also the history of the Coast Guards light station previously established at this location.

  
G. K. GREINER, JR

Copy: Commander 17th Coast Guard District

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## CAPE SARICHEF

"The Aleutian Islands are a prolongation of the formation of the Alaska Peninsula, sweeping in an arc 900 miles or more to the westward and forming the southern limit of the Bering Sea. The topographic features are uniformly rugged; The islands are mountainous, and the shores bold, with numerous off-lying islets, rocks, and reefs. In addition to the lack of surveys, navigation in this region is made difficult by the prevailing thick weather and further by the lack of knowledge of the currents which attain considerable velocity at times.

"The weather of the Aleutians is characterized by persistently overcast skies, high winds and violent storms. No other area in the world is recognized as leaving worse weather in general than that which the Aleutian Islands experience. It is an important characteristic of the weather that the northern shores of the islands have far better weather generally and much less fog than the southern shores. The winter temperatures over the aleutians are moderated by the warm waters of the Japan Current system, and the islands are, therefore, usually free of ice which would interfere with navigation" The average temperature for Cape Sarichef for 1955 was 37.9 degrees fahrenheit with a maximum of 72 degrees and minimum of 6 degrees fahrenheit. Rainfall for the same year was 34.28 inches with 25.5 inches of snow.

"Unimak Island, the first of the Aleutian chain, is separated from the end of the Alaska Peninsula by narrow Isanotski Strait (also called False Pass). This pass is practically closed by shoals at its entrance from the Bering Sea. Unimak is about 50 miles long and 23 miles wide; it is extremely mountainous, bare of trees, and generally grass covered."

Shishaldin Volcano, 9372 feet in elevation, near the center of the island, is the highest mountain in the Aleutians. It is snow covered except where rocks and projections afford no lodgement. Shishaldin has been in eruption several times in recent years.

Pogromni, third largest mountain on the island, towers behind us here at Sarichef. It is a extinct volcano reaching 6520 feet in the sky.

"Unimak Island is one of the group known as the Fox Islands, the others being Unalaska and Umnak and their associated islands."

Unimak Pass is the first ship passage southwest of the Alaska Peninsula for a voyage into the Bering Sea. It is about 10 miles wide between Scotch Cap and Ugamak Island.



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"Unimak Pass is the widest of the Fox Island Passes and is the one most generally used by deep-draft vessels." It is also the only lighted pass.

"Besides being a gateway to the Bering Sea, Unimak Pass is also used by some vessels to effect a shorter and better weather route across the North Pacific Ocean. The route westward via the Bering Sea avoids prevailing head winds and heavy seas that are encountered south of the Aleutians."

Traveling from the south through treacherous Unimak Pass, Scotch Cap becomes visible first. Here the Coast Guard has established a 240,000 candlepower lightstation manned by five enlisted men. This light, the brightest in the Aleutian Chain, guards the Pacific side of the pass.

Midway through the pass, is Sennet Point, a low flat, grass covered bluff with a bold rocky coastline. Here, approximately 10 miles from either Scotch Cap or Cape Sarichef, is located the dirt airstrip. There are three buildings associated with the strip; two buildings for stowage and one for the radio, generator and stove. The strip is unattended except when planes use it at which time personnel from Cape Sarichef journey forth to assist.

"Cape Sarichef is a steep, grassy bluff about 175 feet high; back of it is a tableland, there a gradual slope upward to Progromni Volcano. A black lava-flow extends northward along the coast to within a half mile of Sarichef."

Cape Sarichef has a Coast Guard Base atop the bluff which guards the Bering Sea side of the pass. Its facilities include a loran station, a light station, radio beacon, fog signal and the district secondary radio station NRW. It is connected to Sennet Airstrip and Scotch Cap by 20 miles of dirt and rock road.

The island is uninhabited by people except for the mentioned installations and a small village at the eastern end of the island. There are no roads, except to the airstrip, so we are in effect isolated. No communications has been established with the outside world, except by radio.

The station at Cape Sarichef consists of four main buildings, and three quonsets. The buildings are; the loran building, the stowage and ham shack, the light, fog signal and radio beacon building, and the barracks with attached garage, galley, stowage rooms and engineroom. The radio facilities will soon be in this building also. The quonsets are used for stowage and one has a DC shop in it. Their life is questionable since they are in poor shape and may have to be torn down.

The station has a normal complement of 16 but in order to operate properly, usually has more. They include a corpsman, two radiomen, two enginemen, cook and four ET's. The moral, is suprisingly very high,



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although there is plenty of work.

\*The terrain and weather seriously limit any outdoors sports. The only outdoor recreation is hiking or "boondoking". Men seldom travel more than 10 miles though, since the terrain is extremely rough. Hunting of some small game is permitted although bears and foxes are protected by game laws on this island. There are many seals, whales, eagles and ptarmigan around. There seem to be few fish though. Indoors, we have a pool table, a ping pong table and, in the making, a photo lab. Movies every night, providing the Navy gives us enough, helps a lot. But even so, moral is high.

Our main trouble is combatting nature. In the spring, the thaws wash the road away and to rebuild it with personnel who have never used a grader or bulldozer before, is not easy. It is a continual problem to keep the vehicles running, because they are not sheltered from the weather but left outside. In the winter, the waterline might freeze and so it goes.

Every other Tuesday, the Coast Guard Airdet, Kodiak, sends a logistics flight to Sennet Airstrip. This is the sole means of supply except for three or four ships which stop during the summer months. Because the weight of incoming supplies is greater than the regular log flights can carry, supplies accumulate in Kodiak over the winter months and are brought out in the summer. This is the only supply hardship.

Mail is flown in every week by Reeves Aleutian Airlines during the summer. In the winter, the mail is delivered by the Coast Guard log flight every other week.

The food here is the best ever experienced in the service. Fresh vegetables, fruit and eggs are flown from Seattle every month. The stores include everything one can want from nuts and popcorn to filet mignon.

There are no woman, civilians, cars, or children here and none are permitted. Living here is inexpensive since there are only three costs; food which costs approximately \$50 per month for officers, canteen articles bought from Kodiak, and mail order items, The latter is optional but often resorted to.

One item is closing. Up to now, this has been a completely isolated station. Now the Air Force is building a classified project within two miles. There will be many changes made because of it in the next two years. They will be to our benefit.

Submitted:

C.K. GREINER, JR. LTJG, CO