

## Rattlesnake Boots

*By Pete Clark*

On 01 Jul 67, Weather Operations at Lowry Air Force Base were gone, leaving only bones to be picked by researchers, scientific and historical. That morning I signed the log book at Buckley Air National Guard Base, six miles east of Lowry. A week was spent working with an outgoing civilian weather observer, learning the differences between Lowry and Buckley in the nuances of weather observation and also familiarizing myself with the operation of the antiquated equipment in use at that weather station.

I knew about the abundance of rattlesnakes at the BKF Weather Site but I did not know about the packs of wild dogs which roamed the base. I was advised to carry a piece of two by four any time I stepped outside at night, while on duty, in case wild dogs were in the area. As for the rattlesnakes, the Air Force said they would issue Jump Boots to those of us who did not have them. After an observer, me, was snowed in for twenty-four hours, the Air Force issued Arctic Parkas to those of us working at the weather site.

Being Regular Air Force and attempting to get co-operation of the Colorado Air National Guard was like dealing with a foreign military organization and a hostile one at that. After a few months, the weather tower had been erected and was ready for inspection and occupation. For various reasons, a military weather observer must be able to see the intersection of the north-south and east-west runways. When Buckley's Commanding General looked out of the new tower's west window in search of the runway intersection, all he could see was the roof of the 1910th Comm Squadron building which also temporarily housed the weather observers. "Who approved this site?" the general demanded. "You did Sir," his aide quietly replied. The roof of the building was lowered so we could properly do our work.

When we occupied the tower, the only communications equipment which was installed was AT&T's Long Line Teletype. The Colorado Air Guard was responsible for the installation of telephones and the Tel-autograph which was used for local dissemination of weather observations. After a month, I decided the situation had to change. One morning, I did not transmit observations locally and people were upset, but could not call as I had no telephone. Before noon, the equipment was installed.

The Colorado Air Guard said there was never a problem with F-100's returning from practice Fire Support Missions with napalm bombs, which failed to release. I gritted my teeth on several occasions, when an F-100 coming in on final approach would have a live napalm bomb hanging under one of its wings, unstable, dangerous. During thunderstorms, I could see lightning running along the tops of something stacked beside a runway. A radio maintenance man told me those were racks of napalm bombs that were well grounded.

I received my snake boots 11 Jun 67. I was released from active duty 13 Jun 67.