

Saratoga Base Echoes 'New' Air Force

By ARDIS ANDERSON

A skyline of huge white golf balls is the first imposing view of a little known, self-sufficient community populated by about 125 men and some women and children in the heart of Saratoga County.

Occupying about 44 acres of land at Ketchum Corners (about nine miles southeast of Saratoga Springs), this miniature city ideally is situated on one of the highest points in eastern New York and offers a panoramic view of the Mohawk Valley and Adirondack Mountains.

MASTERMINDING operation of the community is a formidable job since it requires tremendous electronic know-how and numerous other skills ably executed by Capt. Arthur N. Spellman, who assumed command Nov. 13 of the 656th Radar Squadron (SAGE) of the Air Force.

"This is definitely the best location I've ever had," commented the congenial commander reflecting on his eight years in the Air Force. A native of White Plains, he came here from an assignment as commander of Cape Charles Air Force Station in Cape Charles, Va.

The Saratoga Air Force Station, which looks more like a college campus than the usual concept of a service base, houses many stories. For the more technical-minded, it is an account of the complex Semi-



Staff Photo by Bud Hewig

Saratoga Air Force Station—A Plane Watcher

Automatic Ground Environment System (SAGE) through which the local site feeds information along with other sites to the 21st Air Division Headquarters in Syracuse. This information concerns the range, azimuth (bearing) and height of aircraft.

FOR OTHERS, the prime story may be the men themselves and their families who also are an integral part of community life in the surrounding areas of Saratoga Springs, Ballston Spa, Malta and Stillwater.

For still others, particularly those who are veterans of World War 2 or the Korean Conflict, the eyebrow raiser would be the new mode of living, changes in discipline and a breaking with many service traditions of the past.

There have been many changes since the Saratoga Air Force Station was first occupied in 1952. For one thing, the population of the SAGE community has dropped in recent years, primarily because of a change in the mission, according to Captain Spellman. While the base at one time had about 250 men stationed at the site, today's operations are ably handled by about 125 airmen and officers and about 30 civilian employees.

SINCE 1968, Captain Spellman explained, Aerospace Defense Command has operated under a new system of Back-Up Interceptor Control (BUIC) making it no longer necessary for each individual site to have aircraft control capabilities. Under this system, fewer enlisted men and officers are required.

While the capabilities of equipment at the base are classified secret information, Captain Spellman said these facilities will not become obsolete as long as there are aircraft. He envisions no cutbacks and believes operations will continue on a status quo basis in the foreseeable future.

Speaking of the nontangible changes in the military the last 20 years, Captain Spellman commented: "A veteran of World War 2 or Korea would be amazed by the differences." He added that these changes have taken place gradually in all branches of the military service.

The tough topsergeant who arbitrarily disciplined a private 20 years ago is as much a relic of the past as high buttoned shoes. "Threats and coercion have been replaced by management techniques—definitely an improvement," the captain said.

NOTING THAT many young people today have a stereotyped erroneous view of life in military service, the commander pointed out servicemen have the same basic rights as any civilian.

"I cannot arbitrarily discipline any man," he remarked.

"I must read him his rights before questioning him. . . . He doesn't have to answer any of my questions, and he has the right to a lawyer."

In the past, military commanders often punished their men for civilian offenses committed off base. This now is illegal, the captain noted.

Looking at the more tangible changes—the base cafeteria—it was obvious that chow lines where the ice cream landed on top of the chip beef in the mess kit today are only non-appetizing memories. The base cafeteria might be compared to similar facility at Skidmore College. The food is attractively served by civilian employees and is eaten at small tables in the comfortable dining room.

ONE AIRFORCE tradition which has not changed but may give way in the future, is the requirement of short cropped hair.

While discussing the enigma, Captain Spellman pointed to a young airman well blessed with a thick main of black hair and commented: "He has an appointment with me this afternoon. These younger fellows want to get a haircut. . . . I want to wear their hair longer than the Air Force permits, and I have to keep after some of course, they are allowed to wear wigs off duty," he grinned.

One thing comes through loud and clear to a visitor at the

base—good morale. Everyone, from enlisted men to the commander seems delighted with the base and its location.

Fulfilling one's military obligation for those lucky enough to be assigned to Saratoga Air Force Base is similar to acquiring a short-range job with more than the usual fringe benefits and top-notch facilities. Most of the men work a 40-hour week with 30 days vacation a year and all federal holidays.

THEY ARE required to be in

uniform only while on duty. In their own hilltop community they have dormitory-style living quarters with single rooms for those who are not married and two and three-bedroom ranch houses for the nine men who live on the base with their families. Other married servicemen live in the surrounding communities.

Also available on the base is a library, a bowling alley, a clubhouse, store, recreation hall, intramural sports, softball and basketball teams. Available for borrowing, in the same manner a civilian takes out a library book, are motor boats, water and snow skis, golf clubs, skates, hunting rifles and all other types of sport and athletic equipment.

The men are kept up-to-date on what's new in the Air Force, at their station and in the surrounding communities through their official newspaper, edited by Second Lt. Louis Stams, public information officer.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS at the

base are supplied by a dental clinic, a chapel equipped for services of all denominations and a medical dispensary. A commissary recently was opened and is available to all retired servicemen. Commissary hours are from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays and offer an opportunity for those eligible to beat the inflation bite in the supermarkets.

College courses are taught on the base, or an airman may attend a nearby college or university with the Air Force picking up 75 per cent of the tab.

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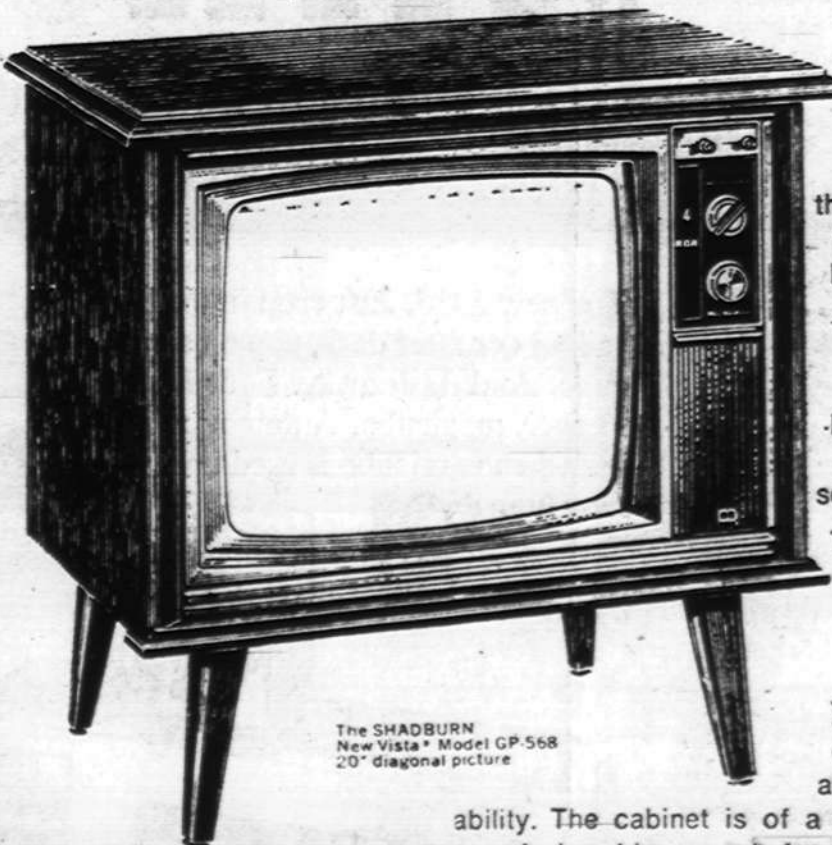


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Short Hours--

From Page 1-B

and Liquor Store, at the corner of Ontario Street and Livingston Avenue, on behalf of a group of store owners opposed to the majority of the store owners association, brought suit against the Albany County ABC board and the SLA and sought an annulment of the ABC order for 9 p.m. closing hours.

RENSSELAER COUNTY Supreme Court Justice John T. Casey upheld the Albany County ABC board action and ruled:

"The order of the local board herein had a reasonable basis, i.e. to lessen the risk of intoxicants being placed into the hands of certain disturbers during the increased hours of closing . . ."

Koblentz and Koblentz, 90 State Street, were attorneys for Mr. Triolo. Eli Ratner, counsel for the SLA, represented the members of the Albany County Alcoholic Beverage Control Board.

Two Injured In Chain Crash

Four cars, two of them parked in the used car lot of John Pugliese at 1907 State Street, Schenectady, figured in a collision yesterday morning on State Street at Manchester Road, Schenectady.

Patrolman Edward J. O'Connor reported that a car being driven onto State Street from Manchester Road by Jeanette M. Schlansker, 33, of 227 Manchester Road, Schenectady, when it was struck from behind by a car driven by Donald Brownell, 25, of 848 State Street, Schenectady.

The impact drove the Schlansker car into the two used cars in the Pugliese lot. The Manchester Road woman complained of knee bruises and Mr. Brownell also was hurt, but neither required hospital care.

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