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Article Summary: The air base had a positive effect on Kearney's economy but strained city services and resources. Providing housing and recreation for a sudden influx of soldiers proved difficult. Racial issues emerged when black soldiers and their families arrived.

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Photographs / Images: retreat parade on Central Avenue celebrating the second anniversary of the WACs; dance in depot maintenance hangar; members of Hostess Club awaiting a bus ride to the base; official photo of Clark Gable taken during processing at KAAF; WAC recruiting office in downtown Kearney; WACs strolling down Central Avenue; base officers at the Bombshelter Club in the basement of the Fort Kearney Hotel; Don Patsios at his Kearney taxicab stand with a group of soldiers drinking free beer that Patsios had distributed in honor of VJ Day

KEARNEY, NEBRASKA, AND THE KEARNEY ARMY AIR FIELD IN WORLD WAR II

By Todd L. Petersen

During World War II the government called upon communities across the nation to participate in the fight against the Axis and most responded quickly. Some cities responded more rapidly than others, anticipating, long before the declaration of war, the possibility of significant economic gain

for those willing to seek out and host defense projects. Unfortunately, they did not always anticipate the problems that such projects might bring as communities attempted to cope with a large influx of military personnel and defense workers.

Kearney, Nebraska, actively sought

and eventually received a large military project in the form of an air base. The base's construction provided thousands of jobs, and approximately 800 Kearney-area residents worked as civilian employees at the base after it opened. Additional income was funneled into Kearney's economy by soldiers passing through the base. If there had been any skepticism in Kearney about the end of the Great Depression, the building and operation of the Kearney Army Air Field removed all doubt.



Retreat parade on Central Avenue celebrating the second anniversary of the WACs. Courtesy of Maxwell Air Force Base Archives.

Kearney Army Air Field

What happened to Kearney is representative of the wartime experience in many parts of the United States. The air base had a positive effect on the economy but strained city services and resources. The city suddenly had to confront racial issues following the arrival of black soldiers and their families. Other difficulties resulted from the sudden presence in a small midwestern town of tens of thousands of single young men from all across the country. Public perception of what the military would require of Kearney did not always correspond to actual needs and to the community's ability to respond to them. It was only natural that problems developed considering the make-up of Kearney's population and the size of the air base in relation to the city.

In 1940 Kearney had a population of 9,643 people, among whom were public spirited individuals who saw potential opportunities in new defense projects. Three Nebraska cities, Kearney, Grand Island, and Hastings, joined together to form the Central Nebraska Defense Council. The organization tried to convince Washington that Nebraska would be a suitable locale for defense establishments. The Kearney Chamber of Commerce formed a special committee, with six sub-committees, to assemble data and write a report on the Kearney area. Copies of the report were delivered to every federal agency involved in choosing sites for defense projects. Committee representatives traveled to Washington to meet with officials from several branches of the military and with elected officials.¹

Efforts to secure an air base for Kearney were initiated in 1941. Although Kearney and Grand Island were cooperating in seeking defense industries for central Nebraska, they were also competing against each other and against North Platte for what was

termed a "national defense airport." Newspapers reported that the airport would serve as a storage depot for newly constructed airplanes from the bomber plant at Fort Crook. Later that year rumors began to circulate that an aviation training school would be located somewhere in the middle of the state. According to reports in Lincoln newspapers local businessmen would be asked to buy the land or develop local facilities for the training school. In order for Kearney to be considered for the project, a suitable airfield had to be made ready quickly if Grand Island or North Platte were not to win the competition.²

In an April 1941 election, a bond issue providing for the sale of \$60,000 in bonds to finance a new airport was passed by Kearney's voters. Total cost of the project was to be over \$360,000, with the balance being funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).³ Kearney had previously been using the Keens Airport, located just northeast of Kearney near the National Youth Administration area (NYA).⁴ A more suitable tract of land was selected five miles east of Kearney on Highway 30 and construction began on October 21, 1941.⁵ The new Keens Airport, dedicated on August 23, 1942, consisted of two asphalt runways (4,200 and 4,500 feet long), and a single hangar.⁶

On September 1 the *McCook Gazette* reported that Kearney and several other Nebraska towns had been chosen as locations for army air bases. The statement was in a news report concerning the impending construction of what would soon be known as McCook Army Air Field. Though the statement was unofficial, it gave an accurate description of what would soon happen. An airfield at Kearney would serve as the primary base among several other airfields in nearby Nebraska towns, including McCook. On September 3 the *Kearney Daily Hub* noted that the army had taken over the Grand Island airport and that an army engineer had inspected the runways of the new Kear-

ney airport.

On September 10, Captain Lyman G. Youngs, from the Omaha district office of the Army Corps of Engineers, arrived in Kearney to examine the airport. He met with city officials, chamber of commerce representatives, businessmen, and with the media to explain the needs of the army. Although no official announcement was made at that time, it became apparent that another airfield would be built. The new Keens Airport was inadequate for the army. The runways were not long enough or strong enough to accommodate very heavy bombers. The airplane for which Kearney Army Air Field would be designed, the B-29, was a military secret at the time the Keens Airport was built. Kearney's new airport was destroyed and a completely new airfield built in its place.⁷

By September 11 the army had settled into offices in the National Guard Armory in downtown Kearney. An immediate call was made for stenographers and draftsmen. The citizens of Kearney were asked to donate typewriters as these machines were in short supply. The city water department served as a clearinghouse for rooms, apartments, and houses, which were desperately needed for the soon-to-be-arriving workers and which would be needed later for military personnel assigned to the base.⁸

The lack of housing turned out to be the most significant problem with which the city had to deal. The problem persisted throughout the war and contributed to the decision to close the base in 1949. When accommodations were sought for construction workers in 1942, rooms did not become available as quickly as anticipated. Landlords were quick to raise rents far above previous levels. In the September 14 issue of the *Kearney Daily Hub*, Lieutenant L. W. Winget, the base operations officer, announced that specific rent areas did not have to be created in order for rents to be frozen. It was too late to raise the rent and anyone doing so would be subject to prosecution

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under a general order in effect in all defense areas.⁹

However, the warning went unheeded and numerous complaints led to the arrival in March 1943, of a representative of the rent division of the Office of Price Administration (OPA). His report eventually led to the imposition of federal rent controls in Buffalo County on May 1, 1943, which rolled back rental rates to the level existing on March 1, 1942. A rent control headquarters was established on the second floor of the city hall. Eventually it was determined that twenty-six percent of the dwelling units in Kearney experienced rent increases that averaged about forty percent.¹⁰

At a special session of the city council on September 14, 1942, councilmen tried to deal with some of the other problems inherent in World War II boom towns, including how to regulate trailer homes. The council passed a trailer camp ordinance that was intended to alleviate some of the difficulties caused by the lack of housing. The ordinance provided for a yearly permit fee, a daily inspection fee, and established health standards for trailer camps. A water supply had to be furnished, along with one flush toilet for every fifteen people. The county fairgrounds was estimated to provide sufficient room for 150 trailers. Other problems were also addressed at this meeting. Police Judge S. S. Sidner called for additional policemen to cope with the population influx and pressed his point by mentioning that several professional gamblers had already returned to Kearney.¹¹

On September 29 Captain Youngs urgently appealed to Kearney residents for more housing. He pointed out that within two or three weeks the population of Kearney would increase by twenty to thirty percent and that the new arrivals had to have a place to stay. Captain Youngs went on to call upon the patriotism of Kearney's residents.

The housing of construction workers is a direct service to those who are fighting for the existence of this country on the fighting front . . . Kearney must supply houses.¹²

Also on September 29, in spite of the fear of public resentment, the city council voted to relax provisions of the recently enacted trailer ordinance to allow trailers to be parked on private property. Additional fees were imposed and parking remained forbidden on vacant lots. This action was spurred by the revelation that workers were already moving trailers into town from other war plant areas and that the established trailer camps were unable to accommodate additional trailers. It was hoped that cooler weather would lessen the likelihood of outbreaks of disease due to the crowded conditions.

On September 30 Mayor Ivan Mattson pleaded for more cooperation in arranging housing. All furnished houses and furnished apartments were already rented and the bulk of the new people had not yet arrived.¹³ By November 2, 1942, the water department had found accommodations for over 2,500 people. Hotels and rooming houses accounted for an additional 600-800 people.¹⁴ Following the arrival of the first groups of workers, construction on the new airfield began in earnest.

On October 1 approximately 1,000 men were employed building the base. The runways were poured in just over three weeks. Paving was completed twenty-one days ahead of schedule on November 24. The runways, aprons, and taxiways were all constructed of concrete in excess of eight inches thick. The apron was nearly 5,000 feet long and 500 feet wide; each of the three runways was over 7,000 feet long. One thousand carloads of concrete were used on the runways. The apron was laid out between the airfield buildings and the north/south runway with a taxiway marked off into twenty-eight parking spaces for B-29s. The parking plan contained in the army's Combat Crew Processing Guide indicates total parking space for as many as 139 B-29s at the airfield.

Six large hangars were constructed. Four were modified under the direction

of Lieutenant Colonel Vernon B. Trevelyan, the first base commanding officer, who recognized that the hangars could be made to hold more than they were designed for simply by adding a large room on the west end of each building that would accept the tail of one airplane. This then allowed another airplane to enter the hangar nose first; the doors could very nearly be closed with only the tail surfaces of the second airplane remaining outdoors.¹⁵

When construction began, crews were set to work at a frantic pace building a multitude of structures including barracks, warehouses, a post office, and a hospital. On Wednesday, October 7, at ten o'clock in the morning, construction began on one of several mess halls. By Monday morning, October 12, meals were being served to 400 men in this new building. Housing was constructed for 542 officers, 3,230 enlisted men, and 132 WACs. Even the city court system helped keep construction moving quickly. When workers were arrested in town for minor offenses, such as intoxication, they were released on bond so their absence from work would not delay construction. Ultimately over 3,000 workers were employed in building the base. Buildings were constructed right up to the end of the war but the majority were in place by the end of 1942. Construction was officially considered complete on February 1, 1943.¹⁶

In the fall of 1942 Kearney's normal routine of school vacations at the high school and college was altered to help speed construction work at the airfield. The length of both the Thanksgiving vacation and teachers convention was increased to allow students more time to help with the harvest and airfield construction. The students tended to favor work at the base over helping with harvest. Many high school students were already working at the air base after school and on weekends.¹⁷

The sudden increase in population experienced by the city when construc-

Kearney Army Air Field

tion began in 1942 led to an equally sudden increase in enrollment in the public schools. The announcement of the base's construction came just before the beginning of the school year leaving little time for additional planning by the school administration. While the base was being constructed, an extra 493 students were enrolled. These extra pupils caused many classes to exceed fifty students and instructors were faced with teaching large groups of children with varied backgrounds.¹⁸

The base at Kearney served primarily as a place to conduct an inspection procedure known as "processing." Near the end of 1942 it became obvious to the military that crews and airplanes needed a final check before proceeding overseas. To deal with this necessity seven processing headquarters were activated on February 1, 1943. The processing headquarters which eventually dominated the Kearney base was the Seventh Heavy Bombardment Processing Headquarters (Seventh Processing HQ). The responsibilities of the Seventh Processing HQ included performing maintenance checks on the airplanes, primarily B-17s and B-29s, to insure the best possible performance when they departed the United States. The men who operated these bombers were also processed at Kearney. Combat crew processing consisted of issuing the proper gear, checking to see that all inoculations were up to date, providing last minute instructions, and having the men write wills. Crewmen were also tested to determine if any of them were unfit for combat duty. The procedures took from three to seven days. When the men left Kearney, they proceeded to a port of embarkation and then went directly to a combat zone. Tens of thousands of soldiers were processed at Kearney. For many it was their last opportunity for a pass while in the states, leaving Kearney with the dilemma of providing amusement to hordes of restive young men.¹⁹

On October 15, 1942, a representative of the Federal Security Adminis-



Dance in depot maintenance hangar... (right) Members of Hostess Club awaiting a bus ride to the base. Both courtesy of Maurice May.



tration addressed a meeting of several clubs, churches, commercial recreation agencies, and other community groups. He outlined the need for recreational facilities in Kearney. Raising money for these facilities would be the responsibility of the community. A resolution was passed directing the mayor to appoint a recreation committee and a director and that the committee be authorized to raise funds to operate a recreation program. The Kearney Recreation Committee was soon formed. At a subsequent meeting, on November 6, the committee heard from a representative of the National Recreation Association, who warned that the base and the servicemen coming to Kearney

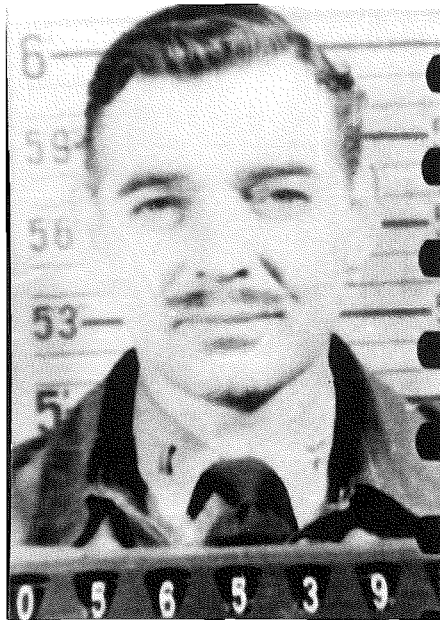
would seriously disrupt life no matter what was done; the town must provide for the needs of the soldiers in an acceptable form or "the men will seek them out in forms not desirable to the town." The speaker pointed out that if "colored" troops were sent to Kearney the problem would be doubled because separate facilities would have to be made available.²⁰

Working quickly the committee announced a \$10,000 Recreation Fund Drive to be undertaken before the end of the month. Speakers were provided to any group that wished to have an explanation of the campaign. Following solicitations made at downtown businesses, PTA block captains can-

vassed the residential districts of Kearney on November 24. Every house was called upon and hourly reports were broadcast over KGFW radio. By the morning of November 26 the fund lacked only \$177 from reaching the \$10,000 goal. By all estimates more money was raised on this fund drive than in any previous undertaking of a similar nature in Kearney. By the middle of December the committee had been renamed the War Recreation Committee. The old Safeway building at 2007-09 Central Avenue was chosen for the service center and remodeling proceeded rapidly. On January 16, 1943, the service center was opened even though work on the building was not yet completed.²¹

To provide an acceptable method for the soldiers to meet the hometown girls, plans were made to form a Hostess Corps that would furnish partners for service men at dances, for playing cards or ping pong, and to participate in the day-to-day operation of the service center. The Hostess Corps was set up along military lines with upstanding women of the community serving as "officers." A general, six colonels, and two captains were responsible for recruiting Hostess Corps members and chaperoning at service center functions. Hostesses had to be at least eighteen years of age, of good moral character, and single. They were to report to the center only when called and had to agree to be accompanied to and from home by their captain. Only approved hostesses were allowed to attend special functions at the center. Ultimately over 500 girls served as hostesses. Actual operation of the center was carried out by a separate Hospitality Corps of local women who helped at the snack bar, the registration desk, the mending table, or in the lounge.²²

This system worked well for the duration of the war but by November 1945 it began to break down. By this time so many girls were attending the dances that the chaperon system was discontinued for dances held at the air



Clark Gable's official photo taken during processing at KAAF. Gable served as a gunnery instructor in England. Courtesy of Maurice May.

base. From then on dances sponsored by the service center were held only downtown so that admittance could be more closely controlled.²³

The creation of the Hostess Corps was an attempt by the city to control relationships between soldiers and local girls. The potential problems these relationships could lead to were discussed at PTA meetings and in newspapers. One article carried in the *Kearney Daily Hub* indirectly placed the burden of sexual responsibility on the girls and warned that if the venereal disease rate became excessive the military might declare the city off limits to service personnel.²⁴

The medical organization at Kearney Army Air Field (KAAF) included the Venereal Disease Control Council to deal with this problem. To reduce the likelihood of contracting VD, prophylactic stations (pro stations) were provided for base personnel. Such stations were not unique to the base at Kearney but were in operation at every military installation in the country during the war. Three

pro stations were in operation for soldiers at KAAF: one for the "colored" detachment (Squadron E), another in the base hospital, and the third at Ten East Twenty-Second Street in downtown Kearney. The pro stations provided prophylactics or examinations and the necessary shots following exposure. Soldiers also could receive basic medical attention. Following an inspection by the Twenty-first Wing Inspector, Kearney was said to have "one of the best Prophylactic Stations ever seen."²⁵

Part of the blame for the VD rate experienced by KAAF personnel was attributed to brothels. At least five such establishments were tolerated in the city during the war. Problems were also encountered with "Victory Girls," who came from as far away as Valentine, Nebraska, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. When the police encountered soldiers escorting women who, according to police records, had "no visible means of support," the soldier would be turned over to the MPs and taken to the pro station while the woman would sometimes be charged with vagrancy. If infected with VD, she would be sent to the Omaha Rapid Treatment Hospital; if uninfected, she was usually placed on the next bus home.²⁶

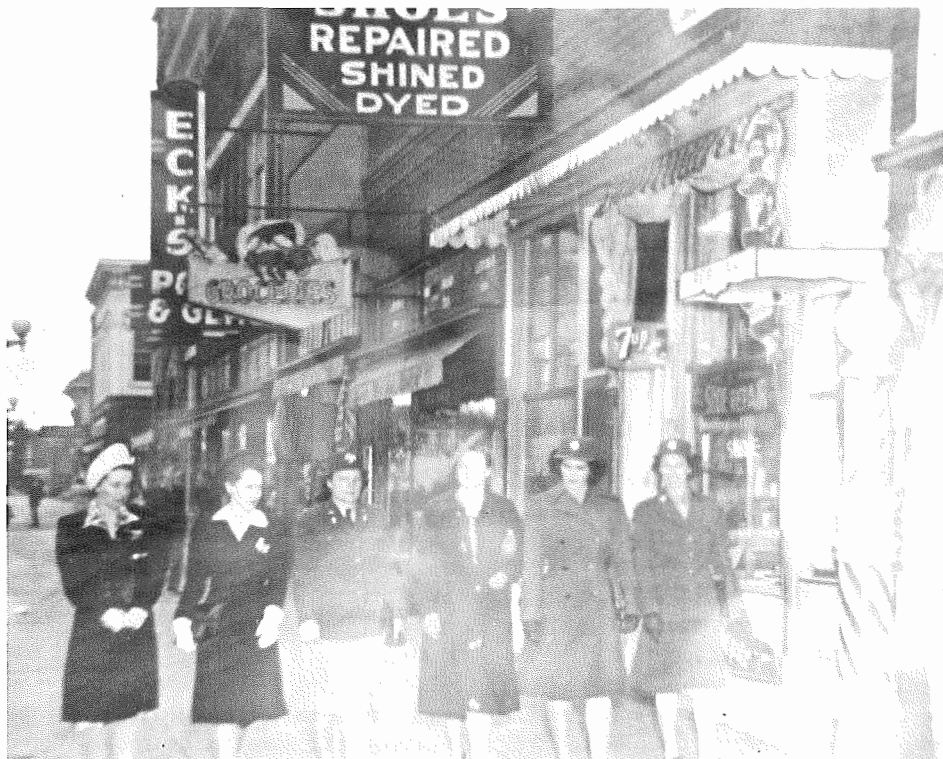
Generally the VD rate at KAAF was within the middle one-third of the rates for all bases in the continental United States. At times, however, the rate soared. One such period was early in 1944 when a higher than usual VD outbreak forced the imposition of a curfew. The curfew was initiated on February 28 and required that all military men be off the streets and on their way back to the base by midnight. The curfew was lifted on March 31 following a reduction in the VD rate. A year and a half later, in August 1945, the rate more than doubled from previous monthly levels. The post surgeon attributed this outbreak to "excessive drinking and celebrating brought about by the news of the Japanese surrender."²⁷

Providing wholesome entertainment

Kearney Army Air Field



WAC recruiting office in downtown Kearney . . . (right) WACs stroll down Central Avenue . . . (bottom) Base officers enjoyed the Bombshelter Club in the basement of the Fort Kearney Hotel. All courtesy of Maurice May.



for the troops was thought to prevent this type of undesirable behavior with its associated health risks. The service center was considered the best method of keeping the troops occupied while they were in town. But the cost of maintaining the service center would be a burden on Kearney's resources. The city had sought USO support from the beginning but assumed that it would have to administer the center for an extended period of time. On February 2, 1943, two unexpected announcements were made. The first was that the USO would be taking over the service center, placing the Salvation Army in charge. The service center was thereafter referred to as the USO. The other announcement was that "Negro" troops would definitely be stationed at KAAF and that another center would have to be provided.²⁸ Only three days later on February 5, a location for a recreation center for the black troops had been found. The Kearney War Recreation Committee, soon renamed the War Recreation Board (WRB), leased the Keller building at 2222 Avenue A. Financing was again the responsibility of the local committee but it was hoped that assistance could eventually be obtained from the USO or the Federal Security Administration. Much like the service center for white troops, the service center for black servicemen opened while yet unfinished on March 20, 1943.²⁹

However, unlike the white service center, which enjoyed the support of the community, the opening of the service center for "colored" troops (366 Club) caused an uproar. No one wanted the 366 Club in his neighborhood. Another problem was caused by a requirement from which the military would not deviate, that of requiring beer to be served at the 366 Club even though alcoholic beverages were not served in the USO. The USO had a national policy against serving alcohol in any center it operated. Furthermore, white troops could obtain liquor from any local tavern, while the military feared that allowing black troops to

enter a white tavern could lead to racial violence. Therefore the army insisted that beer be served at the 366 Club at 2222 Avenue A, which was just across the street from the Methodist Church.³⁰

The Methodists, along with other Kearney churches, were opposed to the military's seeming encouragement of the use of alcohol by the troops. The Methodists threatened an injunction if the WRB insisted on the club remaining at the Avenue A address. Selling beer at the 366 Club was delayed in an attempt to mollify the churches and forestall the injunction. In a meeting held on April 13, army officials warned that the city would be declared out of bounds for all officers and enlisted men unless some provision was made promptly to provide beer to "Negroes" where they would not have to be brought into contact with white soldiers. The WRB quickly found a location at 1815 Central Avenue, just south of the Union Pacific tracks. When the new location was proposed at a city council meeting that evening, it was immediately opposed by councilmen from that part of town. Other locations were considered but it was felt that the recreation center and beer parlor should be operated together, and because the location at 2222 Avenue A was the only one available with restaurant equipment and utensils, it remained the best location. On April 14 there was another meeting between representatives of the WRB, the army, city councilmen, and church leaders. The army reiterated its previous position and added another threat, suggesting that married men too would be required to live on the base unless the problem was solved immediately. The following morning the Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee, the Retail Committee, and the Air Base Activity Committee quickly approved the original Avenue A location. Beer would be served free of charge until a liquor license was obtained.³¹

The WRB experienced another problem at the 366 Club that was not a factor

at the USO. Because there were no black residents of Kearney, a suitable Hostess Corps consisting of local girls could not be created. Wives of the black soldiers attempted to solve the problem by forming the Army Hostess Club. Girls from the Lincoln USO and from Omaha were frequently brought to Kearney to provide dance partners for unmarried black soldiers. On several occasions the dances turned into stag parties when the girls failed to arrive. After this happened a few times the men began to travel to Omaha when the girls could not be brought to Kearney.

The WRB was also responsible for arranging for a swimming pool for black soldiers that was constructed in 1943 at the site of the 1733 Ranch west of Kearney. The base motor pool provided rides to and from the swimming pool, which was open daily from 2:00 P.M. to 10:30 P.M. during the summer months. Attendance averaged 75-100 men daily. Parties and dances were also held there at what was known as the 1733 Club. Unlike the white service center that had been taken over by the USO in February 1943, Kearney's WRB administered the 366 Club for most of the war. The USO finally took over the administration of this club in January 1945. Both clubs were closed on January 17, 1946.³²

The military attempted to do everything possible to exercise control over the men when they were downtown. The Military Police (MP) maintained offices at Twenty-three East Twenty-second and whenever a disturbance was reported that involved servicemen, the MPs accompanied the city police to the scene.

It was inevitable that some crimes would be committed by military personnel. On September 16, 1944, two enlisted men from KAAF were arrested in Grand Island. One of them was transferred to Hastings and charged with the rape of a Hastings woman. The assistant provost marshal at KAAF attempted to find out why the men were detained but received little coopera-



Don Patsios (center) at his Kearney taxicab stand, with a group of soldiers drinking free beer Patsios had distributed in honor of VJ Day. Courtesy of Maurice May.

tion from the county attorneys of Adams and Hall counties. Civilian authorities apparently thought that the accused would not be brought to justice if returned to the military and therefore opted to pass sentence before the military could regain possession of the offenders. Such a view, at least in Adams County, may be attributed to a rape slaying that occurred in 1943. In that crime a soldier stationed at Harvard was convicted and later executed in 1949 for the murder of a sixteen-year-old Sutton girl. The KAAF soldier who was charged with rape in Hastings was tried, plead guilty, and was sentenced to seven years in the state penitentiary. The Courts and Boards Section at KAAF eventually obtained a transcript of the proceedings from the county prosecutor but not until the perpetrator was safely behind bars in Lincoln.³³

Despite having to deal with racial and social concerns new to Kearney, the general mood of the community toward the service men was receptive. Some soldiers hunted pheasants and swam in local sand pits or the river. Kearney's parks and the football field

at the college were made available for the use of the troops. Soldiers were frequently invited to dances held in town. On holidays soldiers were invited to have dinner in Kearney homes. Many citizens volunteered to work at the USO and others helped out at the base. On November 23, 1944, at the request of the commanding officer, the Buffalo County chapter of the American Red Cross opened a snack bar at the base for combat crews. The canteen closed on October 5, 1945. During its period of operation the ladies of the community who ran the canteen provided over 91,000 servings.³⁴

Soldiers from the base frequented Lexington, Gibbon, and other small towns nearby in an attempt to find relaxation, entertainment, or amorous relationships. Occasionally troops from the base would visit nearby towns on an organized basis. On Easter Sunday 1943 over 200 soldiers from KAAF traveled to Minden to attend church services. The men were then treated to Sunday dinner in 150 Minden homes. A parade around the square at 2:30 P.M. was followed by variety shows.³⁵ On July 4 of that year another celebration

was held in Minden, this one to raise funds for recreation centers and day rooms at KAAF and at the Naval Ordnance Depot near Hastings. However, the \$500 raised was a disappointment to the military.³⁶ Such gatherings never again took place even though many towns requested them.

The return of U. S. military forces to peacetime strength in 1946 significantly reduced the number of men stationed at KAAF. By March 1946 only 219 servicemen were at the base; 284 civilians were employed. However, city officials had been informed early in 1946 that a fighter group would eventually be stationed at Kearney. Hope remained high that the airfield would soon be revitalized as part of the new Army Air Force.³⁷

On December 9, 1946, it was announced that fifty-two additional housing units would be constructed at KAAF. This was the first concrete evidence that the base would not be abandoned. On July 23, 1947, a group of men arrived at KAAF to set up what would ultimately become the Twenty-seventh Fighter Wing. Equipped first with P-51 and later with F-82 long-

range fighters, the mission of the Twenty-seventh was to escort B-29 bombers equipped with atomic weapons in attacks on the Soviet Union. During the Blizzard of 1949 the base provided airplanes used in a large airlift of food, fuel, and hay for stranded ranchers in northern Nebraska. Finally, in March of 1949 the air base was closed and the Twenty-seventh was transferred to Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas. At the time many of the residents of Kearney felt that the move was politically motivated. The military insisted that the move was made because of budgetary considerations and a shortage of adequate housing.³⁸

The greatest significance of the air base for the people of Kearney was the sizable payroll it provided. Many local men and women found employment at the airfield, first during its construction and then later when it was in operation. The spending by military personnel stationed at the airfield and by civilian workers helped to boost the local economy. Between 1940 and 1947 the population of Kearney increased from 9,643 to 13,000. Bank deposits for the period increased from \$1,769,400.00 in 1940 to \$9,416,437.00 by 1947.³⁹ The airfield also provided a means by which the average person could directly contribute to the war effort even if he or she was unable to serve in the military. Many people worked at the base for this reason alone. Whether packing parachutes, typing, turning a wrench, or unloading coal, working at the airfield gave people a sense of participation.⁴⁰

In addition to the economic benefits, the air base affected Kearney in many ways. The rapid growth experienced by the city placed an unanticipated strain on city services. The arrival of thousands of young men in a small town like Kearney sometimes threatened community social norms. The stationing of over 200 black soldiers in an all white community created additional challenges for which the community was unprepared. With the exception of the housing dilemma, each of the prob-

lems was eventually resolved. The community rose to the occasion and the overall experience, for both the city and the air base, was positive. Kearney gained prestige by having the base and the soldiers (about to enter combat) had a town nearby where they could find relaxation and entertainment. When the chamber of commerce convinced the government to locate a base at Kearney it secured a healthy economy for the town for the duration of the war. It also exposed Kearney's citizens to a range of people and problems that they had not previously experienced.

NOTES

¹*Kearney Daily Hub*, Jan. 14, 1942, 2; Jan. 24, 1948, 2.

²*Ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1941, 2; Aug. 27, 1941, 1.

³*Ibid.*, Mar. 12, 1941, 11; Apr. 19, 1941, 1; Aug. 19, 1941, 1.

⁴The NYA area is better known today as St. Luke's Home. It was originally built as a military school, but was later converted for use as a school for technical instruction. During the war it was used periodically for offices by military personnel from the airfield.

⁵*Hub*, Aug. 19, 1941, 1; Aug. 21, 1941, 1; Aug. 27, 1941, 1; Oct. 16, 1941, 1; Oct. 21, 1941, 1; Oct. 23, 1941, 1.

⁶*Ibid.*, Aug. 24, 1942, 1-4; September 1, 1942, 1.

⁷*Ibid.*, Sept. 2, 1942, 1; Sept. 3, 1942, 1; Sept. 5, 1942, 1; Sept. 10, 1942, 1.

⁸*Ibid.*, Sept. 11, 1942, 1.

⁹*Ibid.*, Sept. 14, 1942, 1; Nov. 3, 1942, 1.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, Mar. 3, 1943, 1; Apr. 28, 1943, 1; May 4, 1943, 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Sept. 15, 1942, 1.

¹²*Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1942, 1.

¹³*Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1942, 1; Sept. 30, 1942, 1.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, Nov. 2, 1942, 1.

¹⁵U.S. Army Air Forces, *Kearney Army Air Field History* (Headquarters, U.S. Air Force Historical Records Center, Maxwell [AL] Air Force Base), B2286, Monthly Unit History, Nov. 1944, 40-41; Oct. 1944, Combat Crew Processing Guide, 6; B2287, Aug. 1945, 50; (Hereafter *KAAF History*); Interview with Lieutenant Colonel R. J. Dunn, Jr., Kearney, NE, Jan. 8, 1990; *Hub*, Nov. 25, 1942, 1; *Kearney Air Base News*, Dec. 31, 1943, 1-6.

¹⁶*Kearney Army Air Field Duster*, Dec. 8, 1944, 5; Police Arrest Records, City of Kearney, 1941-45.

¹⁷*Hub*, Oct. 20, 1942, 1; Oct. 16, 1942, 1.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1943, 1.

¹⁹*KAAF History*, B2285, Activation to Sept. 1, 1943, 85-88; B2286, June 1-July 1, 1944, 24-25; Dec. 1944, Organization and Administration, 5; Oct. 1944, Combat Crew Processing Guide, 6; B2287, July 1945, 15-16; U.S. Army Air Forces, *Organization History, Seventh Heavy Bombardment Processing Headquarters, Kearney Army Air Field* (Headquarters, U.S. Air Force Historical

Records Center, Maxwell (AL) Air Force Base), A0141-A, Feb. 1, 1943 to Sept. 1, 1943, 1-3.

²⁰*Hub*, Oct. 16, 1942, 1; Nov. 7, 1942, 1.

²¹*Ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1942, 1; Nov. 23, 1942, 1; Nov. 26, 1942, 1; Jan. 15, 1943, 1.

²²*Ibid.*, Jan. 21, 1943, 1-6; Jan. 28, 1946, 2.

²³*Ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1945, 4.

²⁴*Ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1942, 1; Mar. 19, 1943, 2.

²⁵*KAAF History*, B2286, Oct. 1944, letter from Venereal Disease Section to KAAF Station Hospital, Nov. 7, 1944; *KAAF History*, B2287, May 1945, Monthly Sanitary Report for May 1945, 3-4; Headquarters, Seventh Service Command, Medical Circular Letter No. 8-1, May 10, 1945, 1; *KAAF History*, B2285, Activation to Sept. 1, 1943, 68; *KAB News*, Dec. 17, 1943, 6.

²⁶Cabell Phillips, *The 1940s, Decade of Triumph and Trouble* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1975), 181-83; Interview with former Assistant Kearney Police Chief Thurston Nelson, Kearney, Ne., Jan. 16, 1990; Interview with Jim Patsios, Kearney, Ne., May 23, 1990; Interview with John Keogh, Kearney, Ne., May 23, 1990; Police Arrest Records, 1941-45.

²⁷*KAAF History*, B2285, Mar. 1 to Apr. 1, 1944, 1; Base Regulation 35-11, dated Mar. 30, 1944, Apr. 1 to May 1, 1944, 46; *KAAF History*, B2287, May 1945, Monthly Sanitary Report for May 1945, 4; Aug. 1945, Station Hospital, 55; Monthly Sanitary Report for Aug. 1945, 4; July 1945, Monthly Sanitary Report for July 1945, 2; *KAB News*, Mar. 3, 1944, 6.

²⁸*Hub*, Feb. 2, 1943, 1.

²⁹*Ibid.*, Feb. 5, 1943, 1; Mar. 22, 1943, 1.

³⁰Kearney City Council Minutes, Apr. 13, 1943. *Hub*, April 14, 1943, 1, 8; Apr. 16, 1943, 6; Apr. 17, 1943, 3.

³¹*Hub*, Apr. 14, 1943, 1, 8; Apr. 15, 1943, 1; Apr. 16, 1943, 6; Kearney City Council Minutes, Apr. 13, 1943.

³²*Duster*, May 12, 1944, 1; Jan. 12, 1945, 1; *Hub*, Feb. 2, 1943, 1; Jan. 17, 1946, 1; Jan. 28, 1946, 3.

³³*KAAF History*, B2286, Sept. 1944, 15-16; *Hub*, Sept. 18, 1943, 1; Sept. 24, 1945, 1; Nelson interview; interview with Stephen King, Nebraska Dept. of Corrections, Lincoln, Feb. 5, 1990.

³⁴*Hub*, Sept. 24, 1945, 1; Nov. 9, 1945, 6; U.S. Air Force, *History of Kearney Army Air Field and Twenty-Seventh Fighter Wing History* (Headquarters, U.S. Air Force Historical Records Center, Maxwell (AL) Air Force Base), B0938, Aug. 1947, Staff Meeting Minutes, 5; *KAB News*, Oct. 8, 1943, 7; Nov. 12, 1943, 1.

³⁵*Hub*, Apr. 26, 1943, 1; *Minden (Ne.) Courier*, Apr. 29, 1943, 1.

³⁶*Minden Courier*, July 8, 1943, 1.

³⁷*Hub*, Mar. 5, 1946, 1; Maurer and Maurer, eds., *Air Force Combat Units of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 8, 10.

³⁸U.S. Air Force, *History of Kearney Air Force Base* (Headquarters, U.S. Air Force Historical Records Center, Maxwell [AL] Air Force Base), B0938, Aug. 1947, 7; Sept. 1947, 1; Feb. 1949, 1, Base Services, 10; Weekly Activities Report, Feb. 1, 1949, 3, 4; Feb. 9, 1949, 3, 4; Feb. 24, 1949, 1, 6; *Hub*, Dec. 9, 1946, 1; Jan. 25, 1949, 1; Jan. 26, 1949, 1; Feb. 14, 1949, 1; Aug. 18, 1947, 2.

³⁹*Hub*, Jan. 24, 1948, 6.

⁴⁰See interviews with Lois Nelson, Minden, Ne., Apr. 1, 1990; Norma Jacobsen, Minden, Ne., Jan. 1, 1990; Harold Forsberg, Kearney, Ne., Jan. 23, 1990; Patsios interview, May 24, 1990.