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To: Katie Dillon
Subject: RE: interview with Holdens

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Interview on April 19, 2016 with Reginald (Reg) and Barbara Holden of Rocky Mount, NC. at VBW. By Karl Stoltzfus and Katie Dillon with Dynamic Aviation

The Holdens both worked at Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage, Alaska from 1961 through 1963 during the time Col. William Draper was the Base Commander (Wing Commander)

Barbara was the personal secretary of Col. William Draper. She frequently took notes for him in short hand. She remembers him with great fondness as a great person. She describes him as an unusually handsome man, who was always a gentleman, always happy and always made the best of everything. He was by all appearances very healthy. He was very humble. He loved to fly. During an airshow at Elmendorf, there was a B57 crash and Colonel Draper immediately went to Barbara so they could start to interview witnesses. Barbara seemed to believe that there were some untoward military-political reasons that Colonel Draper went from being Eisenhower's pilot and aide for about 14 years and then got shuttled off to a very remote Alaska. Draper never said that and never had one bit of bitterness about anything.

Colonel Draper had to drive to Alaska and described to Barbara their long trip which included about 1,500 miles of gravel road and having to carefully analyze distances for fuel stops etc. His wife was Ruth and Barbara thinks they had three children, one girl and two boys. Priscilla is one daughter, James is one of the sons. (KDS). Barbara described Colonel Draper pushing the grocery cart around the commissary with Ruth loading it, in rather interesting terms.

Reg was the manager of the Elmendorf AFB Flying Club. Colonel Draper wanted to get some flying time so Reg checked him out in a Cessna 172. Reg was a low-time pilot and Colonel Draper had been flying big airplanes for 20 years so it was an interesting check out. Base regulations required that all new Aero Club members be checked out to fly off Elmendorf. The thing Reg remembered most was that Colonel Draper liked to fly with his shoes off. He said he could get the feel of the airplane better.

Reg, who was a Tech Sergeant, recalls how Colonel Draper told them the story about how the Columbine and all future presidential aircraft became Air Force One. They had been flying in the same airspace as a commercial airliner that had the same call sign. Col Draper thought that could lead to confusion so after they went back to Andrews he had a meeting with the FAA and they agreed that if the President was on the airplane they would call it Air Force One. There was never any mention of a near mid-air collision or anything like that-just a preemptive move to avoid confusion in the future.

In 1963 when Colonel Draper was 43 he had a severe heart attack and when Reg went to the hospital to visit him he was in very bad condition. It was one of Reg's saddest moments of his life. Colonel Draper, of course, had to retire. They moved back to Silver Spring, Maryland and Colonel Draper passed away at the age of 44.

I asked both Barbara and Reg what they thought about putting Col Draper's name on the airplane as the pictures displayed it and they both, with great certainty, thought that we should do him the honor.

KDS

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