

At each of these public meetings the economic base of the community was discussed in detail and the following quotes from the new city plan were given serious emphasis:

The activities and changing role of Schilling (Smoky Hill) Air Force Base have had dramatic effects upon the economy of the community. At present, industry plays a relatively minor role in the economic picture of the community * * * Salina is the home of Schilling Air Force Base. The product exported by the base is defense; defense of the rest of the States, as well as to countries and peoples around the world. These defense products serve a different kind of market, a market whose level is set more by political decisions and in response to changing defense needs. * * * To date, the industrial growth in the Salina community has been less than in the other larger cities of the State. * * * While new industry is most desirable and necessary to balance and diversify the economic base, it is also necessary for the important purpose of halting the exporting of our young people to areas with better employment possibilities. * * * A greater emphasis must be placed on the expansion of industry in Salina to the end that manufacturing becomes a much more important element in the economy of the community. * * * If industry and manufacturing are attracted to the city, reduced activities or *closure of the airbase* will have a lesser and shorter lived effect on the economy of the community.

The businessmen attending the evening city plan meeting on the 18th of November 1964 had asked that the discussion be limited to industrial development considerations. A Salina Journal headline of that evening was the subject of pre-meeting considerations.

Ninety-five More Bases Will Be Closed—Mac Makes a New Slash—Announcement Will Be Made Thursday.

The engineer-planner leading the discussion, mildly familiar with a number of air base installations throughout the United States, was of the opinion that Schilling Air Force Base was a very improbable item in the list of forthcoming closures. Schilling had a splendid runway, only recently built for the arrival of a wing of B52's; right climate, good location, adequate support facilities, room for expansion, a record of economy and efficiency, the best maintained base in the 15th Air Force (probably best in SAC), a much desired bombing range, highly praised community relations, and many other reasons. Wing Commander Colonel Crompton was at a commander's call at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., to accept five new trophies emblematic of Schilling's top flight performances. A committee of local citizens was at Walker Air Force Base, N. Mex., to explain how to establish an effective base-community relationship to Air Force and civilian representatives from six other airbases.

The discussion leader opened the meeting with the admonition that some day Schilling would be on a similar list and the matter of diversification of the community's economic base had a new sense of urgency.

Chapter II

THE CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT, NOVEMBER 19, 1964

At 10:40 a.m. on November 19, 1964, the citizens of Salina heard that, within half a year, a segment of the community which had been a mainstay of business activity would disappear. Specifically, the Department of Defense announced that:

The B-47 bomber wing would be inactivated by March 1965.

The ATLAS F ICBM Squadron would inactivate by June 1965.