

The KC-135 jet air refueling aircraft would be relocated by June 1965.

Schilling Air Force Base would be closed by June 30, 1965.

The word "shock" was used to describe the reaction of civilian and military citizens of the Salina community. Disbelief better describes the reaction of those that were closest to the base. Despite spirited statements by civic leaders, statements exhorting the community to reach for our bootstraps, bitterness best describes the mood of the people. "We have a sound economic future, with or without the base." "We have good leadership and good people." "A crisis either knits a town together or disintegrates it." These and other similar truths had a hollow ring on the 19th of November. On that date, the one-line letter, which appears daily on the front page of the Journal, said:

DEAR SAL: And a Merry Christmas to you, too, Secretary McNamara.

Yours,

INA.

Not all of the reaction was prompted by economic loss considerations. A great many more people had equally important reasons to resent this unexpected development. City Commissioner R. W. Bull spoke for many thousands of Salinan's when he said,

The men and women of Air Force Families constitute a real and lasting loss Salina will suffer from the scheduled closing.

Salina has profited from the base, not only in our economic life, but because of its people. They have become a part of our community and many have been interested in our civic life. They come and go, but their coming and going has left a great deal with us. We will recover from the economic impact of the closing I have no doubt, but we are going to lose what these fine people have brought to us and we are going to miss that very much.

Neighborhood conversations with the sergeant from across the street and the major from next door were awkward and most unpleasant that evening.

Not all of the local discussion during the next few days was devoted to questioning the basic intelligence of those in high military and governmental position. There was the ribbon cutting ceremony opening the newest portion of Interstate Highways 170 and 135W that intersect immediately west of the city, the Statler-Hilton Inn project appeared to be on the road to success, the voters were asked to approve an industrial development tax levy, and the FHA promised to protect the Salina real estate market to prevent it from becoming a depressed real estate area in the wake of the announced closing. (No such commitments were forthcoming from the VA, however.)

There were many letters to the editor offering advice and other Kansas editors were expressing their opinions. Three editorial views were expressed. Philosophical gents whose pocketbooks were not involved brought out the bromide about everyone being for economy until it affects them. It depends upon whose ox is being gored and so forth. Helpful friends sent flowers and said that the closing is a challenge and can lead to solid industrial development. The political scientists among the scribes announced that Salina's case was a test of the federal program to ease the transition from war preparedness to the paths of peace.

DEAR SAL: Can McNamara beat swords into plow shares?

Yours,

INA.