

erties, began quoting possibilities of occupancy by the first of the year to their clients. Formal approval of the airport package was not to come until February 14, 1966. During the intervening 5 months the community waited, and it was difficult to convince many community leaders that patience was in order. The airport authority had been intensively engaged in negotiations with the Beech Aircraft Corp. for months and had agreed on tentative lease arrangements early in December 1965. Beech executives had emphasized that occupancy beginning the first of the year was most important in their decision to open new facilities.

During the 5 months of waiting for the approval of the key package in the disposal plan, that for the airport, the airport authority could claim no important progress. The community as a whole was receiving a considerable amount of glowing publicity from many sources and the local paper and local radio stations quite regularly publicized the truly remarkable efforts of local citizens who had given of their time and money to the problem of base conversion.

An out-of-towner State official was quoted as saying that "the loss of Schilling has been the greatest thing that has ever happened to central Kansas." In his opinion, Salina's past interest in the base had reduced its interest in the welfare of the area. He was quickly refuted by Editor Austin who seriously doubted that Salina had failed its friends but that certainly it was not the fault of the Air Force.

On the anniversary date of the announced closing the Journal reviewed the accomplishments of the past year in a series of feature articles. "It Was a Crisp November Thursday the Day That Salina Changed Directions"—"Salina Didn't Roll Over and Play Dead"—"How Does a Proud Air Force Base Die?"—"Airport Authority Faces Complex, Exciting Task"—"Black Thursday Revisited"—"Year One AS (After SAFB)"—"There Are Spots of Life Where Students Study." In one article the Journal reminded its readers of OEA Consultant John Kavanagh's statement in the first meeting with Washington and regional representatives when he said, "Don't let this thing become a power struggle within your own community. That kind of fratricide will kill you." Such a struggle had not occurred. The opposite—a spirit of cooperation, an ingathering of the forces of the community resulted in a number of feature articles in major newspapers from coast to coast who saluted DOD officials and the community leaders for their actions.

On December 6, 1965, the community read with considerable interest of Secretary McNamara's announcement of additional closings of military installations. This time the headline, "Kansas Bases Escape Axe" was followed by a question mark and the miniature letter in the Journal said:

DEAR SAL: Well, at least Salina doesn't have to worry and wait any more.
Yours,

INA.

Salina could accept, quite dispassionately, the news that other military establishments would be closed. Editor Austin had this to say:

From the viewpoint of logic, Secretary McNamara is right. It might not be entirely premature to say that Salina also was right when the town agreed to roll over and say "Uncle" in return for federal help in converting those concrete acres to civilian usage. Protests would have only delayed the inevitable. Indeed,