



What's That Awful Smell?!

There isn't a service member around who hasn't heard or used the phrase, "Well that just stinks!"

This sentence is often used in frustration and is usually directed at some unforeseen or undesired circumstance. You know, you've been there: the orders of a superior are unwanted, untimely, or illogical; the assignment is less desirable than expected; the chow hall food is actually odoriferous; or the street food at your exotic overseas location is unexpectedly challenging to the olfactory system.

Sometimes, the descriptive epithet is elicited by a perpetual, local circumstance such as the fish drying racks and fish oil rendering operations near Wakkanai Air Station, one that so many of us personally experienced. (I know of 8 of us that were there at the same time in the early 60s.) There just wasn't any comparison to the misery elicited by this particular smell, when confronted by it after exiting the chow hall following a satisfying (??) meal of C rations and left overs! I know, I shall never forget the impact of that odor!

I am here to testify that there is another, worse smelling circumstance than the Wakkanai fish racks, and many Silent Warriors have experienced that one too. Let me remind you of it, although I hope none of us will ever share it again.

Many of our fellow crewmembers have spent TDYs at the old Shemya Air Station, pulling alert duty and flying Cobra Ball/Burning Star missions. Most pulling this duty have experienced aircraft maintenance circumstances that warranted a down-time "beer light" for the crew. Most took such opportunities to explore the small island, visit the dump, conduct unsanctioned archaeological digs at South Beach, visit old Quonset hut clubs established by permanent station employees, search for old coke bottles at the grounded supply barge, and/or simply go fishing.

Silent Warriors wasting good drinking time on such wholesome activities infrequently, but inevitably, encountered the stinkingest situation in the whole world. Is it coming back to you? That strong, putrid smell accosts the visitor long before the cause is seen. Once seen and smelled, it is a circumstance that can never be forgotten -- much like the Wakkanai Fish racks.

Yep. Now, you remember it! The smelliest thing in the world is a huge pod of walruses! Resting, fighting, copulating, sleeping, roaring, or just stinking on the rocky shoreline of the Rock, the "Black Pearl" of the Pacific, is that unexpected-but-horrific challenge to the nostrils.

Even if enthralled by the visual beauty and wonder of such a gathering, one can't help but just mutter, "Well that just stinks!"