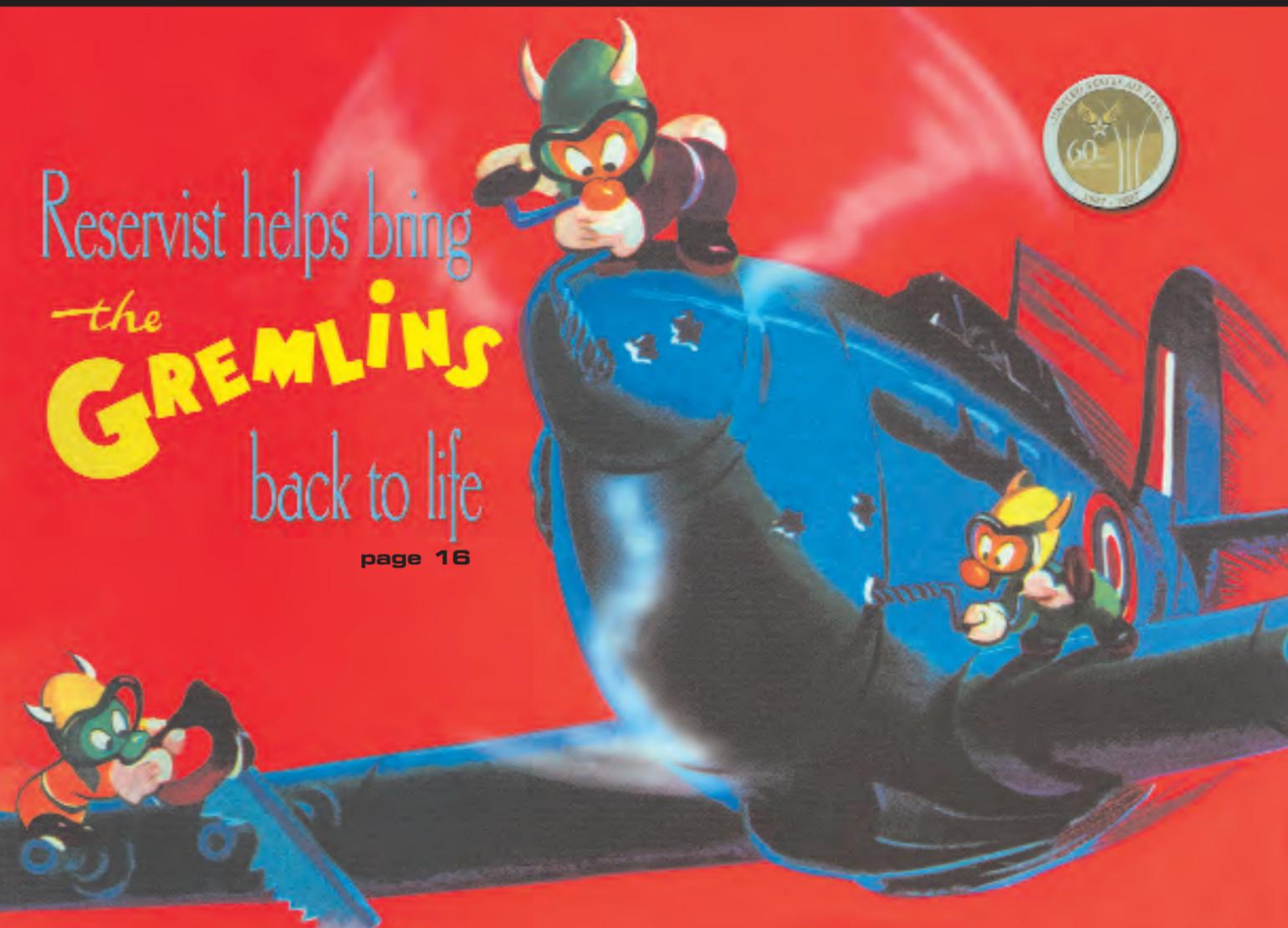
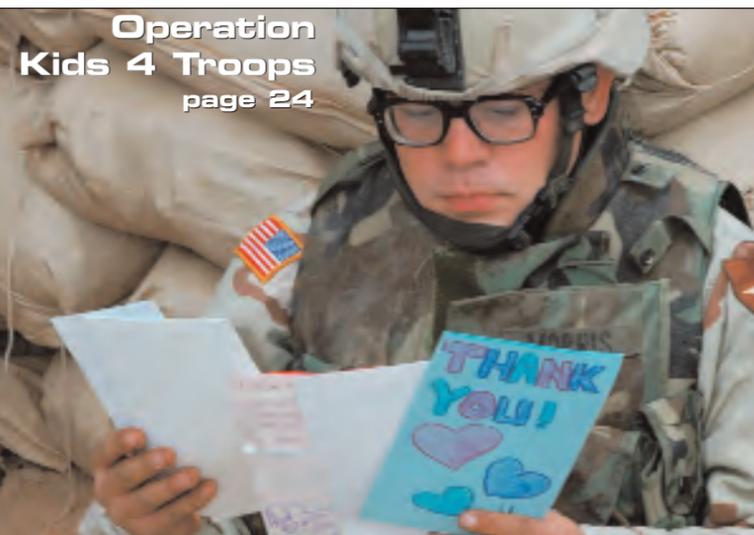


Citizen AIRMAN

Vol. 59 No. 5
October 2007
www.afrc.af.mil
Official Magazine of the
Air Force Reserve



Reservist helps bring
the **GREMLINS**
back to life
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Operation Kids 4 Troops
page 24



AFRC's vision: Leveraged community connections
page 10

AFRC integrates across mission areas

A few weeks ago, I participated in ceremonies to stand up our newest unit in the Air Force Reserve — an F-22 associate unit in Alaska. This new unit is just the latest initiative that keeps us an unrivaled wingman.

If you are a student of history, you will know that the Air Force Reserve was Total Force before the term was coined. Our first associate unit was stood up at Norton Air Force Base, Calif., in 1968, and since then we have associated with the regular Air Force in nearly every mission area.

We continue to integrate across Air Force missions. In the very near future, you will see a new Air Force Reserve space wing. We will continue to grow in the command and control of space with associate programs at Vandenberg AFB, Calif., and Schriever AFB, Colo.

Our presence in combat systems support will grow with associate units at Beale AFB, Calif., and Hurlburt Field, Fla. We are also investigating growth in combat support through associations at Nellis AFB, Nev., and Charleston AFB, S.C.

The flying mission will continue to integrate with new associations expected at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., and Tyndall and MacDill AFBs, Fla. We are staying in the business of training warriors with a new unit at Eglin AFB, Fla. We are also integrating more at the Headquarters Air Force level.

Our combat experience and mission readiness are recognized and sought by the regular component. To learn from us and to better utilize our weapon systems, a new twist on the associate model is being introduced — the active associate unit. This is the reverse of the classic way we have associated in the past. In this case, the regular Air Force falls in on our equipment. No other service is doing this.

The Air Force Reserve is the role model not just for the other uniformed services of the United States but also for militaries around the world. But to remain out front, ahead of the pack, we need to look beyond what we are doing today to what will be necessary in the future — we need to move beyond Total Force.

We must be a viable force, a force capable of reconstituting, refocusing and recapitalizing while remaining operationally engaged in the defense of our national interests. In an era of diminishing budgets, we must make sure each dollar we spend



TECH. SGT. KEITH BROWN



MASTER SGT. CHANCE C. BABIN

(Top photo) A crew chief marshals an F-22 Raptor into place at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, during a ceremony marking the aircraft's arrival Aug. 8. (Above) Staff Sgt. Michael Whelan gives Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley a tour of the 477th Fighter Group's new facilities at Elmendorf.

returns increased capability.

We have shed the old adages we have been anchored with — weekend warriors, part-timers and reserve culture. Because we are part of a single Air Force, we must take steps to look and act as Airmen every day. As we work closer with our regular component partners, we must minimize the differences that lead to misunderstanding.

That's the reason air reserve technicians will now wear the Air Force uniform every day. I know you are professional and patriotic. Your fellow Reserve Airmen know you are disciplined and capable. But I want to show how well integrated we can be with the regular component by minimizing the differences.

Nobody should walk out onto a flight line, into a maintenance shop or onto an air operations center floor and be able to pick out the Reserve Airmen at first glance. They should have to squint to see the differences in patches. I know we already perform well beyond the minimum standards, and I want us to get credit for it.

To go beyond Total Force, we need to continue to make the decisions that are right for the mission. As budgets compete for every dollar, we need to ensure we are recognized as the combat warriors we are and we are essential to meeting Air Force mission goals. We need to continue to fly and fight as an unrivaled wingman. ★



Chief's View

By Chief Master Sgt. Troy J. McIntosh
Command Chief Master Sergeant, Air Force Reserve Command

Excellence is the standard, not just an expectation

Now that we find ourselves more lean and agile as a force, it is imperative that we work in an environment of excellence. Excellence cannot be an expectation; it must be the standard.

We have been called the best Air Force in the world. This title comes with a great deal of responsibility. We are challenged to always set the standard to follow, not only for each other but for the world.

This can be a daunting task. As enlisted members, we have many opportunities to excel and broaden our military knowledge through military and civilian education.

The Air Force provides a broad range of professional military education programs. However, for many people, taking advantage of these opportunities can be a challenge. Balancing deployments, civilian employment and family responsibilities can be overwhelming.

PME, both in-residence and by correspondence, enables us to maintain the standard of excellence. Senior enlisted leaders are always looking for new opportunities to expand our knowledge base by adding courses like Keystone, Gettysburg, Creative Learning Center and now the Enterprise course to our management tool kit. Each course takes us to the next level.

In 2006, Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley, our commander, made it a requirement that all members in a senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant billet must complete the Senior NCO

IF WE DO NOT STRIVE TO

MEET OUR GOALS, WE FIND

OURSELVES IN A WORLD OF

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YOU OR THE AIR FORCE.

Academy before entering the position. Some see this requirement as a career blocker, but it is quite the opposite! This is a step to build our relevance with our regular Air Force counterparts and maintain a level of excellence that the Air Force Reserve is famous for. Excellence is the standard. This is only the beginning.

Along with PME, civilian education is another opportunity to broaden our knowledge and achieve our goal of excellence. The Air Force has asked each of us to obtain our Community College of the Air Force associate's degree. By attending technical school and PME, most of you are more than halfway there.

But don't stop there. Take the next step and get a bachelor's degree. The CCAF has released a new program to help you reach your dream. This program, along with tuition assistance and other scholarship opportunities, makes a bachelor's degree an obtainable goal. Not only are you improving yourself, but you are adding a highly trained and educated asset to your employer and the Air Force.

It's very easy to become complacent in our everyday tasks, not only on the job but in life in general. If we do not strive to meet our goals, we find ourselves in a world of mediocrity, not excellence. This does not work for you or the Air Force.

Set lofty goals, and with each success you'll find yourself growing as an Airman. Once again, thank you for allowing me to represent you, our greatest asset. ★

C-17 on Ice

A loadmaster and maintenance members conduct preflight checks on a C-17 Globemaster III before taking off on an Operation Deep Freeze winter fly-in mission Aug. 25 from Pegasus White Ice Runway, Antarctica. A C-17 and 31 Air Force Reserve and regular Air Force Airmen from McChord Air Force Base, Wash., conducted the annual winter fly-in augmentation of scientists, support staff, food and equipment for the U.S. Antarctic Program at McMurdo Station, Antarctica. (Tech. Sgt. Shane A. Cuomo)



On the front cover: (Top) The Gremlins have been lying low since the 1940s, but they are back to help the Air Force celebrate its 60th anniversary. See story on page 16. (Image courtesy of Walt Disney Productions and Dark Horse Comics). (Bottom left) An Air Force Reservist is helping to get encouraging letters into the hands of those who are deployed. See page 24 for the story. (Matthew Stephens). (Bottom right) The sixth in a series of seven articles on the Air Force Reserve's new vision, "One Air Force, Same Fight ... An Unrivaled Wingman," takes a look at leveraged community connections. See page 10 for the story.

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Citizen Airman magazine (ISSN No. 0887-9680) is published bi-monthly by Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command Office of Public Affairs for the commander of Air Force Reserve Command. Copies are mailed, free of charge, to the homes of all Reservists. Content is normally news articles and features developed for release to commercial media as part of the Air Force Reserve's continuing public affairs program. Opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the Air Force Reserve. All photos are U.S. Air Force photos unless otherwise indicated. Readers-per-copy ratio: 4-1. Send inquiries and submissions to HQ AFRC/PAP, 255 Richard Ray Blvd, Suite 137, Robins AFB, GA 31098-1661. Or, fax them to DSN 497-0878 or commercial 478-327-0878. Our e-mail address is afrc.pap@afrc.af.mil.

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Round the Reserve

A brief look at what's happening throughout Air Force Reserve Command

New Rules Require Technicians to Wear Uniforms

When people visit an Air Force Reserve Command unit during the week, they will likely see more people in military uniforms.

The Air Force changed three of its instructions Aug. 7 to require all air reserve technicians to wear military uniforms rather than civilian clothes while working in civilian status. ARTs are full-time civilian employees who serve in the same job as Air Force Reservists. Prior to the change, they were only required to wear uniforms when in military status.

ARTs at some locations were already wearing their uniforms all of the time at work. Others were not wearing their uniforms every day because they were not required to do so.

"We want our ARTs to be in uniform

because we are integrating with the regular Air Force and Air National Guard throughout the Air Force," said Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley, AFRC commander. "Total Force Integration is changing how we interact with the rest of the Air Force."

"Even before 9/11, the regular component depended on us to get the job done. That dependency is growing because we cannot afford to do business as usual. We need to consolidate our forces and capitalize on each other's strengths."

As an example of progress, General Bradley cited Reservists preparing to fly F-22s with the regular Air Force in Alaska, Reservists flying their own C-17s in California, and Reservists standing up and managing a C-130 unit in North Carolina with an active associate unit.

"We are able to take on new and challenging missions because of the skills and experience of our air reserve techni-

cians," said Chief Master Sgt. Troy McIntosh, AFRC command chief master sergeant.

"Some technicians have told me they feel this uniform change is calling their military dedication or patriotism into question," the chief said. "That is not at all the case. Our technicians have proved themselves in the past, and I'm confident they will continue to do so in the future."

General Bradley said the Air Force Reserve is entering a new era, which is vastly different than 1958, the year the air reserve technician program was created.

"I believe wearing uniforms is an important step to being a full partner and an unrivaled wingman in today's Air Force," he said.

Before bargaining unit ARTs are required to wear uniforms while working in civilian status, a start date for the change to instructions must be agreed

315th AW patch adorns academy football jerseys

Players on the U.S. Air Force Academy football team are wearing the 315th Airlift Wing unit patch on their jerseys this year. The Air Force Reserve Command unit at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., is one of 10 Air Force units to have its patch sported on the academy jerseys.

The idea behind the "Heritage Units" is to bring the Air Force and the academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., closer together. The chief of staff of the Air Force and the Air Force historian selected the 315th AW patch because of the unit's long-standing and illustrious history. They felt it is one of the better units to represent the Air Force during its 60th anniversary events.

Originally established as the 315th Troop Carrier Group in 1952, the 315th AW's heritage includes many foreign, combat and non-combat decorations; campaign expedition credits; service streamers; and years of service dating back to World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

"It's an honor for the 315th AW to be recognized by the chief of staff and the Air Force Academy Falcon football team," said Col. Mark Bauknight, vice commander of the 315th AW and a 1984 academy graduate. "It highlights the great team we have with the active duty and operational Reserve in today's Air Force."

The players are wearing the patches near a shoulder on the front of the team's home-game jerseys throughout the season. This is the first time players in any sport have worn unit patch-



CAPT. WAYNE CAPPS

The 315th Airlift Wing at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., is one of 10 Air Force units to have its patch on Air Force Academy football players' jerseys this year, in celebration of the Air Force's 60th anniversary.

es on their uniforms, although the academy's basketball team wore deployed unit patches during this past playoff season.

During televised games, the announcers will give more information about the units and the history of the patches. Also, information will be included in game programs. ★

(Tech. Sgt. Mary Hinson, 315th AW public affairs)

Pope's Puns



CARTOON BY MASTER SGT. W.C. POPE, WESTOVER AIR RESERVE BASE, MASS.

upon by management and each local bargaining unit. As a result of these negotiations, there will be multiple implementation dates throughout the command. Until these individual agreements are reached, bargaining unit ARTs may voluntarily wear uniforms to work, or they may choose to wear civilian clothes.

The Reserve has about 1,335 ART officers and 8,400 ART enlisted people. (Air Force Reserve Command News Service)

Command Aims to Reduce Annual Training Time

In the near future, Airmen will finish annual ancillary training requirements online in 90 minutes. They currently spend six times that much time attending briefings.

Slated to start as early as Oct. 1, the new program will give Air Force Reservists more time to train in other areas during their monthly unit training assemblies.

The implementation steps that determine which briefings will be part of the new ancillary training program have not been released. However, many of the briefings Airmen have to attend annually will be combined into a new "block instruction" plan. Instead of getting time-consuming briefings on several subjects, Reservists will receive the information more efficiently.

The 90 minutes of briefings will satisfy most annual training requirements. However, new Airmen arriving at their first duty station or Airmen deploying overseas will continue to get the standard briefings.

The new training format doesn't affect "functional" training, such as chemical biological nuclear explosive defense training and weapons training. (Air Force Reserve Command News Service)

Flight Test Unit Closes Its Doors

After more than seven years, the 420th Flight Test Flight, which operated out of the Williams-Gateway Airport in Mesa, Ariz., will close its doors for good Oct. 31.

The unit supported the T-38C avionics upgrade program by flying depot-level test sorties and acceptance check flights after the cockpit upgrades were complet-

ed. In addition, pilots would pick up aircraft and bring them to Mesa for upgrade at a Boeing facility and then deliver them after the work was complete.

"The avionics modification involved a total overhaul of all the flight, engine and navigational instruments, and the complete rewiring of all components forward of the rear cockpit," said Lt. Col. Tom Saxon, 420th FLTF commander. "The work took about 800 man-hours and six weeks to complete. The overall training platforms were improved by the addition of a heads-up display, inertial navigation system, and flight recorder and debrief system."

The update is expected to extend the life of each Talon about 20 years.

Members of the unit validated the modifications, valued at \$450 million, on 468 aircraft.

"This process involved approximately 1,000 flight test missions, 2,400 delivery sorties and the oversight of 375,000 maintenance man-hours in our contractor oversight program," Colonel Saxon said. "We have accomplished this mission ahead of schedule every month for the past seven years, under our budget and without a mishap."

The unit was originally stood up in

May 2000 and organized as the 622nd Regional Support Group, Operating Location E. After the 413th Flight Test Group was created at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., the unit was renamed and activated under the group in August 2001.

Since the unit was formed to support work done under a fixed contract, everyone knew that someday the end would come.

"As the unit deactivates, we have found jobs for those who desire them," Colonel Saxon said. "Some have joined the individual mobilization augmentee forces, some moved to other units within the flight test group, and some are retiring after 20-plus years of service." (Staff Sgt. Celena Wilson)

Oklahoma Wing Partners With Guard Unit

Air Force Reserve Command's 507th Air Refueling Wing at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., began a new partnership in August when members of the Oklahoma Air National Guard teamed up for the drill weekend.

With this action, the 507th ARW became the first AFRC wing to have an Air National Guard wing associated with it.

Approximately eight Oklahoma ANG aircrew members are part of an initial cadre working side by side with their Reserve hosts to stand up associate operations.

As a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission process, the 137th Airlift Wing at Will Rogers World Airport was identified to lose its C-130 Hercules aircraft and convert to a KC-135 Stratotanker associate unit with the 507th ARW.

Under this associate organization, the 507th ARW is the host wing with all 12 KC-135 aircraft owned by AFRC. The Oklahoma ANG maintains separate administrative and operational control over its people, who work together with Reservists to fly and maintain the aircraft. For deployable taskings, both the

507th and 137th function with six primary aircraft assigned.

"When you think about it, starting this associate relationship is pretty exciting," said Col. Jeffery R. Glass, 507th ARW commander. "We're part of a DOD (Department of Defense)-wide Total Force Initiative reorganization. We're going to show that our air reserve component mix will be just as viable and beneficial to national defense." (Lt. Col. Rich Curry, 507th ARW public affairs)

ARPC Cadre Brings Personnel Answers to Troops

Bringing the latest personnel news and information directly to Guard and Reserve Airmen is an essential job of the Air Reserve Personnel Center cadre.

The cadre visits gatherings of Reservists and Guardsmen to explain the latest personnel changes and how they affect that specific group of Airmen.

"There are a lot of new policies being implemented all the time," said Linda Berkey, ARPC director of staff and cadre leader. "We try to explain the important things they need to understand for their career."

Upon request, a team of two to four people travels from ARPC in Denver to the unit training assembly, combined training assembly or other event to brief on personnel policies, programs and procedures, as well as answer general questions from the audience.

Some questions can be answered after a phone call to ARPC.

"We'd much rather let the entire group

know the answer if possible," Ms. Berkey said. "We'd have a hard time getting the message to all of them individually."

Cadre members also are available during breaks to help with specific individual-related questions.

"This is probably the most important part of our visits," Ms. Berkey said. "If people have had a problem getting personnel-related situations resolved, it's nice for them to have a chance to speak with someone face to face."

Because the team members aren't physically connected to their computers and the military personnel data system, they are unable to research specific questions on site.

"We are happy to bring their questions back to ARPC for further research," said Gary Brown, one of the speakers on a recent trip to F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo.

For information on scheduling the cadre, visit the ARPC Web site (<http://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/library/guardandreservebriefings/index.asp>), send an e-mail to arpc.eventsupport@arpc.denver.af.mil, or call commercial 303-676-6314 or DSN 926-6314. (Master Sgt. J.C. Woodring, ARPC public affairs)

Lounge Facility Opens at Duke Field

After a nearly two-year journey, the Outpost Lounge at Duke Field, Fla., opened for business Aug. 4.

Located in a facility that formerly served as the base's enlisted club, the lounge's return is a great boon for everyone involved, said Col. Steve Chapman, 919th Special Operations Wing commander.

"(The lounge's opening) represents an opportunity for all the Reservists to enjoy the facility," Colonel Chapman said. "It's great for camaraderie. It's great to get business done."

Myron Webb, Duke Field Services business manager and the lounge's project manager, said he is happy to see his two-year labor or love complete.

"It feels great to see the facility finally open," he said. "Hopefully, this grand opening got the attention of the people. 'I hope they enjoy the service we're going to provide.'"

For Senior Airman Lange Daugherty, who travels three and a half hours to Duke from Phenix City, Ala., to perform his Reserve duty, the lounge is a much-needed addition to the base.

"(The Outpost) was sorely needed," Airman Daugherty said. "Everybody wanted to come here and hang out. You don't have to drive into town, plus you're around the people you know." (Greg Davenport, Eglin Dispatch staff writer) ★

Air Force preparing to test fit, wear of new service coat

By Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski

Air Education and Training Command officials are spearheading a fit and wear test of the new service coat.

About 1,000 Airmen will be selected for the initial fit test to find candidates with a variety of body types. Once those Airmen are identified, about 400 of them will actually participate in a 90-day wear test in the spring.

Test locations are Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., and its Gunter Annex; Lackland and Randolph AFBs in Texas; and the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado. In addition, the Air Force Honor Guard will put the coat through its paces.

The new service coat has gone through several prototypes, and Air Force leaders settled on a design similar to the uniform worn by Gen. Hap Arnold. Once feedback from the wear test is received, the Air Force Uniform Board will make final decisions on the new coat's details and, with approval from Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley, send it into production.

One proposal calls for the new coat to have variations based on the formality of an event. For example, an Airman participating in a ceremony might wear his medals on the coat, while a public affairs Airman taking photos or a security forces Airman working the door at the event would wear his ribbons. This would allow Airmen to attend a formal event in different capacities.

In addition, a coat made of higher-quality fabric will be available as an option for Airmen who want to wear a more professionally tailored uniform. This commercial, custom-tailored coat is being put together through a contract with Brooks Brothers.

The high-quality fabric coat will initially be available to general officers, command chiefs and select other individuals. It will be available to every Airman a few months after that.



Senior Master Sgt. Dana Athnos models the new Air Force service dress coat. The design is based on the uniform worn by Gen. Hap Arnold.

The retail price has not been determined.

"Overall we want our Airmen to stand proudly in their dress uniform, and this coat will better represent our contributions today while evoking the heritage of yesterday," said Brig. Gen. Floyd L. Carpenter, Airman Development and Sustainment director. ★

(Sergeant Buzanowski is assigned to the secretary of the Air Force public affairs office in Washington, D.C.)

It's Your Money

By Ralph Lunt

You can't eat your house!



One of the most common questions my clients ask is, "Should I pay extra each month on my mortgage?" A more important question people should be asking is, "What should I do with the extra money I have each month?"

First of all, every situation is different, and there is no single answer that is right for everyone. If you find yourself in this situation, you need to seek individual, professional advice. With that in mind, I don't pay extra on my mortgage and typically advise the same to my clients.

When asked this question, my usual response is, "You can't eat your house." Typically, my clients give me a "this guy is a knucklehead" look and say they weren't planning to.

Now that I have their attention, I explain that while having your house paid off is a common and understandable goal, in many cases, it does not make sense. For starters, if you itemize deductions on your income taxes, you can count the interest you pay on your mortgage. This, in turn, reduces the cost of the borrowed funds, a.k.a. the loan, based on your income and filing status.

If you don't itemize deductions, not paying off your mortgage early may still make sense. You can take that extra money and invest it elsewhere, thus diversifying your assets. Think about it. Do you really want to have all of you net worth tied up in your primary residence? I say no way!

A healthy real estate market depends on having a balance of willing buyers and willing sellers. Right now, we have plenty of willing sellers and not so many willing buyers. As a result, sales prices are decreasing. The fact is, in certain parts of this great country, you can lose money selling your home.

A big part of planning your financial path involves being prepared for the unexpected. For grins, let's say you put every extra penny into paying off your mortgage and you own your house free and clear at age 50.

Now, let's say you lose your job. All your equity/ownership/net worth is tied up in your house. You need cash to pay your living expenses. You decide to use your house as a source of funds. However, because you don't have a job, your application for an equity loan is denied. You don't have any money to buy gas or groceries, and you can't eat your house!

In this scenario, you would have been much better off had you been saving/ investing your extra cash in a readily available liquid account, especially if the rate of return exceeded the costs of your loan.

Maintain that goal of paying off your mortgage, but don't rush it. Financial flexibility puts food on the table. ★

(Editor's note: This feature is designed to provide financial advice of a general nature. Individuals should conduct their own research and consult a financial adviser before making any financial decisions. Based in Cleveland, Ohio, Mr. Lunt is a certified financial planner and vice president of a financial planning and consulting firm. He is also a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserve, serving as the reserve forces director for the Great Lakes region of the Civil Air Patrol adviser's program.)

Connecting to our communities — not just tied to them. We will leverage these connections to maximize participation over a lifetime of military and civilian service

Leveraged Community Connections

By Senior Airman Erik Hofmeyer

(Editor's note: This is the sixth in a series of seven articles on the Air Force Reserve's new vision, "One Air Force, Same Fight ... An Unrivaled Wingman." The subject of this article is Leveraged Community Connections, one of the six aimpoints contained in the vision document that are designed to establish markers to gauge the direction the Reserve is headed in the future. It is these aimpoints that make members of the Air Force Reserve unrivaled wingmen.)

There is a connection that is central to Reservists' identity as unrivaled wingmen that members of the regular Air Force don't share — civilian employment in their community.

While the regular component shares ties to family and community, Reservists are integral parts of their civilian communities because their livelihoods, along with the livelihoods of their families, are dependent upon their civilian employment. When these relationships are strong, everyone — the employer, the Airman, the family and the local community at-large — benefits.

For Reservists, the local community isn't just a place where they live for a relatively short period of time before moving on to their next assignment. It's a place they call home and where they often have deep, long-standing roots. The community is also a place where the vast majority of them work full time as

civilians and where they help develop solid relationships with the Reserve, their employers and their families.

It's these relationships that allow Reservists to continue the tradition of volunteering to answer the nation's call to duty. One key to our Airmen realizing their full potential as unrivaled wingmen, said Col. Gary Crone, primary architect of the Reserve's new vision document, is "our ability to continue building upon our connections to our local communities — building relationships that benefit both the individual and the employer."

"For volunteerism to remain a viable method for meeting mission requirements, we must ensure employers willingly support Airmen who volunteer for service, not just when Reservists are called to active duty without their consent," said Colonel Crone, who was recently named director of strategic communications for the Air Force Reserve.

"Managing service expectations includes understanding the employer's expectations as well," Colonel Crone said. "You can't expect an employer to support an Airman taking off for Timbuktu at the drop of a hat if the employer has no clue that Timbuktu was a possibility. Our members need to be just as honest with their employers as we expect the employers to be with our Airmen.

"Every employer should know by now that for many Reservists, active duty is more than one weekend a month and may require periodic and repeated absences from the workplace. If our people are not passing that message to their employers, in many cases, they are asking for conflict. Remaining silent and hoping that the day will never come when they will have to tell their employer they are going to be on extended active duty is not a plan for success if the reality is you are going to serve."

Throughout the years, studies have shown nearly a third of the men and women who decide to leave the National Guard and Reserve identify "employment conflict" as the source of their problems, according to the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Web site (www.esgr.org).

The best way for Reservists to keep employment conflict to a minimum is to fully explain participation expectations to employers, who are often operating in a sort of information vacuum, said Eugene Hebert, chair emeritus for the Delaware ESGR Committee.



Many employers have never served in the military, and the opportunity for the average citizen to encounter someone in uniform is limited, Mr. Hebert said. Unless the Reservist/employee clearly outlines expectations and why his or her military participation is important to the nation, the employer may view Reserve duty as a lark or of little value.

"There is strength in partnership," Mr. Hebert said. "It really helps when Reservists tout the value and experience derived from military service and how much civilian employers benefit as a result of this service."

Employer events, which may include flights, sponsored by individual Reserve organizations play an important role in helping to strengthen the connection between the military and the local community. They familiarize employers with what their employees do for the Reserve; they show the professionalism of their employees; and they give employers a chance to see the skills Reservists bring to their civilian careers.

For example, the 434th Air Refueling Wing at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Ind., offers an innovative program designed to connect with members of the civilian community.

Operation Handshake is part of the wing's orientation flight program that targets people in specific professions or regional areas instead of a wide cross-section, said Lt. Col Gary Lockard,

434th ARW public affairs officer.

"It's a great way to reach out to folks who don't really know who we are," Colonel Lockard said. "Operation Handshake helps overcome the initial apprehension of some people by inviting people who they know in their profession."

The 434th ARW has used this personalized approach to reach out to firefighters and police officers, health-care professionals, educators, and engineers.

The wing takes the approach one step further on the orientation flights by trying to match aircrew members with guests from the same regional area to foster closer connections, Colonel Lockard said.

Another important element in trying to build strong community connections, Colonel Crone said, is to remember that community does not apply to just areas immediately surrounding a military installation. This is particularly important for family members living some distance away from where they serve. Anticipating and proactively providing assistance to families of Reservists who are deployed can make a big difference in their attitude toward and support for the Reserve, the colonel said. ★

(Airman Hofmeyer is a traditional Reservist assigned to the 482nd Fighter Wing public affairs office at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla. He wrote this article while on special assignment with Citizen Airman.)

Our Future ... We will change community ties to community connections.

Making History in Alaska

F-22 partnership solidifies Reserve's future in fighters

By Master Sgt. Chance C. Babin

Pacific Air Forces and Air Force Reserve Command embarked on a new journey together Aug. 8 with the arrival of six F-22 Raptors at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

The two commands are entering into an associate unit relationship to fly and maintain the Air Force's newest fighter. Under this arrangement, AFRC's brand-new 447th Fighter Group — comprised of the 302nd Fighter Squadron, 477th Maintenance Squadron and 477th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron — will be an associate unit to PACAF's 3rd Wing at Elmendorf.

"This is the beginning of a new chapter in the Air Force Reserve, flying the newest fighter in the Air Force and teaming up for the first F-22 permanent basing in PACAF," said Col. Eric Overturf, the 477th FG's first commander. "This is a chance for the Reserve to be relevant in the fighter world for the next 50 years."

Being involved with the F-22 so early in its lifespan is something Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley, chief of Air Force Reserve and AFRC commander, said he would have never imagined three years ago.

"It is exciting to, at this point, have the Reserve invited to participate in this mission with Pacific Air Forces," General Bradley said. "I think the reason General Hester (Gen. Paul V. Hester, PACAF commander) and General Moseley (Gen. T. Michael Moseley, Air Force chief of staff) have asked us to be a part of this is our 76,000 Citizen Airmen have done so well the last few years in supporting our Air Force."

With the establishment of the 477th FG as an associate unit, the regular Air Force men and women of the 3rd WG are gaining a long-term partner.

"Airmen here at Elmendorf are no strangers to new aircraft or missions," said Col. Thomas Tinsley, 3rd WG commander. "These Arctic Airmen have been bedding down front-line fighters since 1941. The F-22 is the 13th fighter aircraft to call Alaska home."

"The major difference this time is we are teamed with our unrivaled wingmen in the Reserve. These professional Airmen will be integrated into every part of the F-22 operations and bring Total Force Integration to a new level."

"The proud Airmen of the 3rd Wing and 477th Fighter Group team are members of one Air Force sharing the same fight," Colonel Overturf said. "That means when you walk the flight line at Elmendorf, you will not be able to differenti-

ate between Reservists and regular Air Force Airmen. You will witness a Total Force team, seamlessly integrated and working together to build the best air supremacy wing in the world."

General Bradley said that getting on board with the F-22 mission was one of his top priorities.

"This is the biggest deal in my term as chief of Air Force Reserve," he said. "We do a lot of important things for our Air Force. I hate to pick and choose. Everything we do is important; every Airman we have is important; every mission we do is important. But this is really going to be a high-visibility mission."

Maj. Brian Silkey, a 477th FG pilot, had the honor of representing the Reserve by flying in one of the first six aircraft.

"It's a great honor to be part of this historic event," Major Silkey said. "I feel very privileged that the 3rd Wing has included the Reserve on its team, and I look forward to being part of the team flying the F-22 up here. It's a great airplane."

In addition to having a Reserve pilot fly in one of the first six F-22s, Reserve refuelers accompanied the Raptors on their

trip from Virginia to their new home. Members of the 514th Air Mobility Wing, McGuire AFB, N.J., and 434th Air Refueling Wing, Grissom Air Reserve Base, Ind., provided refueling support in KC-10 and KC-135 aircraft, respectively.

The 477th FG is part of the Reserve's 10th Air Force. Brig. Gen. Thomas R. Coon, 10th AF commander, was on hand for the Raptors' arrival. He pointed out the benefits that both the Reserve and regular Air Force gain from this association.

"From the active-duty perspective, what they are going to get is continuity over long periods of time," General Coon said. "Having that continuity and level of experience is very beneficial to the commanders."

"From the Reserve's perspective, we are in the process of a large reduction in our total fighter force, and there aren't going to be enough airplanes 15 to 20 years down the road to have all the units we have out there in the Guard, Air Force Reserve and active duty. So, we are going to have to associate in order to stay in the fighter business. This is a way we can stay relevant in all the different things the Air Force does, and it really is the way of the future."

With the formation of the new organization, the Reserve is keeping alive the heritage of two historic unit designations. Both the 477th FG and 302nd FS trace their history back to the fabled Tuskegee Airmen of World War II fame.

"I feel blessed to have the history of the Tuskegee Airmen to start my unit with," Colonel Overturf said. ★

(Sergeant Babin is a traditional Reservist assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing public affairs office at Patrick AFB, Fla. He wrote this story while on assignment at Elmendorf AFB.)

F-22 Raptors taxi following touchdown at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, during a ceremony marking the aircraft's arrival Aug. 8. Under an associate unit relationship, the regular Air Force's 3rd Wing and Air Force Reserve Command's 477th Fighter Group will fly and maintain the aircraft. The 477th FG is AFRC's first F-22 unit. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Keith Brown)

Competition features blended teams

from New Jersey, South Carolina

Air Mobility Rodeo 2007 featured a first among competitors when regular Air Force and Reserve Airmen from two bases joined forces to form blended teams.

The blended teams, both competing in C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, represented the 315th and 437th Airlift Wings at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., and 305th and 514th Air Mobility Wings at McGuire AFB, N.J.

Hosted by Air Mobility Command, Rodeo is a biennial readiness competition involving U.S. and international mobility air forces. The competition focuses on improving war-fighting capabilities and support of the Global War on Terrorism.

This year more than 40 teams and 2,500 people traveled to McChord AFB, Wash., to take part in the competition July 22-27.

The blended team from McGuire comprised three C-17 aircrew members and 10 maintainers. Capt. Daniel Fehl was the only Reserve representative among the aircrew members, while the maintainers had five Reserve members.

In addition to the blended team, the 514th AMW also sent one 15-member KC-10 Extender team comprising four aircrew members and 10 maintainers, all of whom were Reservists.

Reservists and regular Air Force Airmen at Charleston also combined aircrew members and maintainers together to form a blended C-17 team. In addition, the 315th AW competed separately in the security forces, aerial port and aeromedical evacuation events.

Forming the blended teams proved to be a rewarding experience for everyone involved, said Air Force Reserve Master Sgt. Paul Sigloch of the 514th AMW.

"The active-duty side was really stressed due to deployments, so that's when the idea came about for blended teams," Sergeant Sigloch said.

In addition to alleviating some of the stress associated with preparing a

team for the Rodeo, combining resources gave the teams a Total Force advantage.

"When you build a team from two different sources, you have the advantage because it was like a fantasy football draft where you get to choose your best players," said Master Sgt. Russell Gardner, active-duty maintenance team chief, 437th AW. "We were able to take the best and make our two fabulous teams better and stronger."

Not only did members from both teams feel like they were able to come better prepared to compete, they all stated they were excited to compete in a way that mirrored real-world operations.

"I was on the last C-141 Rodeo team in 2000, but we weren't a blended team," said Sergeant Sigloch. "Active duty and Reserve still helped each other out, but now with the combined team, it reflects what we do in the real world; now we are together."

The blended teams provided a snapshot of how the job gets done every day, Sergeant Gardner said.

And it's how that Total Force is carried out in the real world that let Airmen come together and perform extraordinary feats at Rodeo 2007, said Capt. Dan Lang, a C-17 pilot with the 437th AW. He flies alongside Reservists in daily operations.

"Because of the Total Force culture, people are good at working with other people and learning about them quickly," Captain Lang said. "What makes them a good team are those personal skills."

It's the mixing of personalities, experiences and skills on both sides that not only builds a better competition team, but also a better Air Force, he said.

"It's been a great experience working with Reservists, because they bring something new to the table, and they know a lot," said Senior Airman Arjuna Ramcharan, 305th AMW C-17 crew chief from McGuire AFB. "I never realized how much Reservists impact active duty and the Air Force mission." ★

Members of the 910th Maintenance Squadron, Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, run toward the cargo ramp of a C-130 during an engines running on-load.

Rodeo '07



Team members from the 446th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, McChord Air Force Base, Wash., discuss evacuation procedures during the aeromedical static configuration event.

SENIOR AIRMAN CLAY LANCASTER



Reservists from the 446th Airlift Wing's Rodeo maintenance team salute their departing C-17 Globemaster III aircraft.

ABNER GUZMAN



SENIOR AIRMAN PATRICK J. DIXON



AIRMAN FIRST CLASS NICHELLE GRIFFITHS

Airmen from the 315th Airlift Wing, Charleston AFB, S.C., get ready to run out to a C-17 during the aerial port engine running on-loads competition.

And the winners are ...

Air Force Reserve teams either captured or shared in seven awards at Air Mobility Rodeo 2007 July 22-17 at McChord Air Force Base, Wash.

Award winners were:

- Best C-17 Preflight Team — 446th Airlift Wing, McChord AFB.
- Best KC-10 Post-Flight Team — 514th Air Mobility Wing, McGuire AFB.
- Best C-17 Maintenance Team — 315th/437th AWs, Charleston AFB, S.C.
- Best C-17 Air Drop Aircrew — 315th/437th AWs.
- Best Aeromedical Evacuation Contingency Crew — 446th AW.
- Best Aerial Refueling Team — 315th/437th AWs and 97th AMW, Altus AFB, Okla.
- Best Aeromedical Evacuation Team — 446th AW.

The top overall award for Best Mobility Team went to the 60th AMW from Travis AFB, Calif.

A total of six Air Force Reserve wings competed in Rodeo 2007. In addition to the 446th AW, 514th AMW and 315th AW, the 910th AW from Youngstown Air Reserve Base, Ohio, 916th Air Refueling Wing from Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C., and 439th AW from Westover ARB, Mass., also participated in the event. (Staff reports) ★

Reservist helps bring

the GREMLINS

back to life

By Bo Joyner

The Gremlins are back! The magical and mischievous little creatures with aviator goggles and suction-cup boots who wreaked havoc on Allied airplanes have been lying low since the end of World War II. But they've come out of hiding just in time to help the Air Force celebrate its 60th anniversary.

In 1941, Roald Dahl, the acclaimed children's author who would later write "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," "James and the Giant Peach" and "Matilda," wrote his first book. Titled "The Gremlins: a Royal Air Force Story," the book told the tale of Gus, a fighter pilot in England who, during a dogfight, sees one of the creatures drilling a hole in his plane's wing. The story chronicles Gus's efforts to persuade the Gremlins to change their mischievous ways and aid the Allies' war efforts against Nazi Germany.

Mr. Dahl, then a Royal Air Force flight lieutenant, wrote the story while serving as an air attaché to Gen. Henry "Hap" Arnold in Washington, D.C., where he supported Operation Bolero, the two-year air supply mission for what would become the Normandy invasion. Because Bolero was a high-profile and demanding mission, Mr. Dahl "de-stressed" by writing the book as a story for Airmen to tell their children. He began sharing his story with friends, and a copy soon found its way into the hands of Walt Disney.

Mr. Disney, a strong advocate for an independent Air Force, bought the rights to the story with plans to make it into a full-length animated motion picture. While the motion picture was never completed, the Disney studios did produce a hard-cover book with Mr. Dahl's words and illustrations from Disney artists as a means to promote the planned movie.

The book was published in 1943, but only 5,000 copies were distributed worldwide. Despite its small press run, the book helped touch off a Gremlins craze in the United States. The mischievous sprites — long popular in British aviation folklore — were soon featured in other books, cartoons and advertisements and on numerous military insignias.

They remained popular

throughout the rest of the war. But after the fighting ended, the Gremlins slowly faded into relative obscurity.

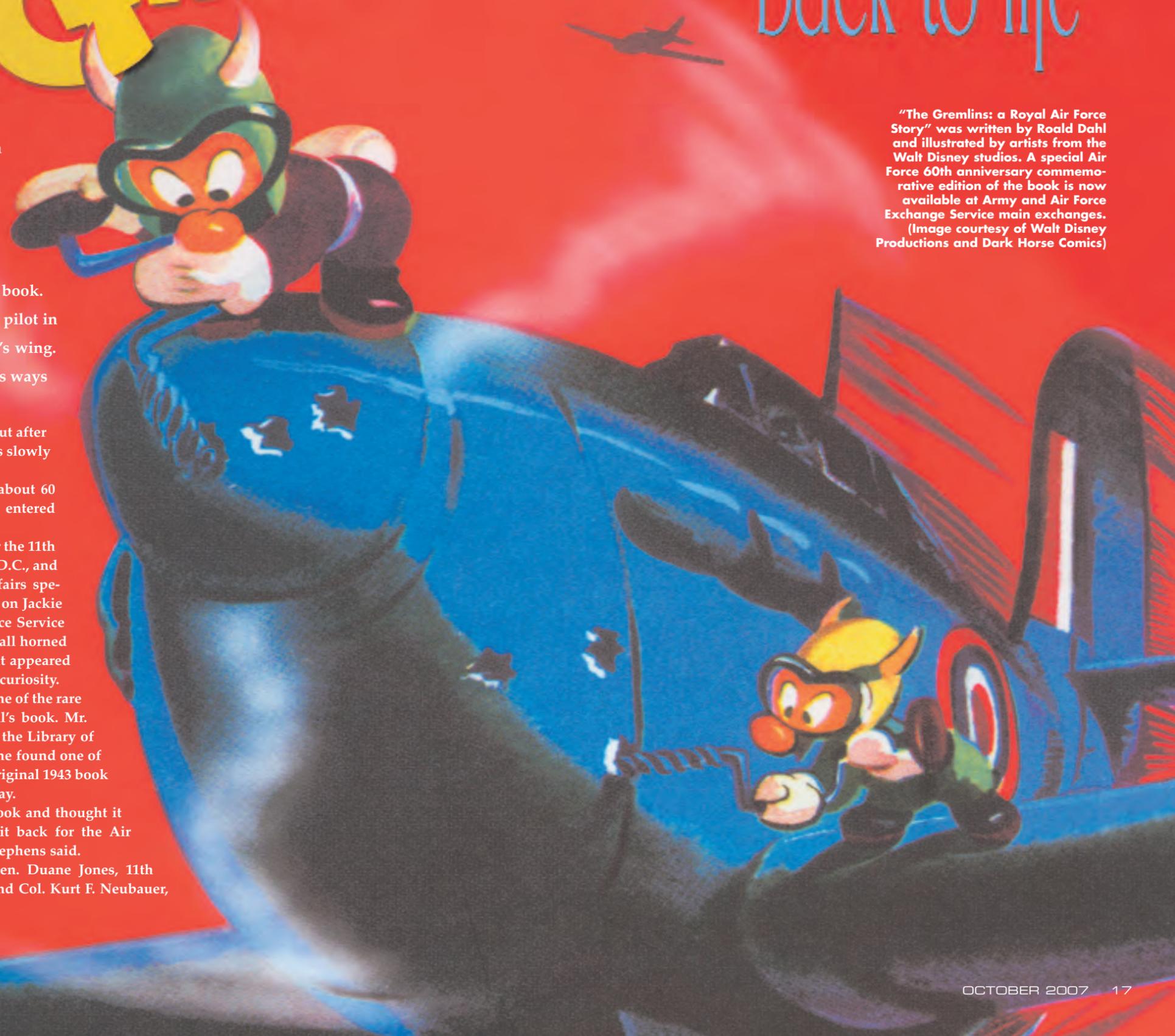
They remained that way for about 60 years, until Andrew Stephens entered the picture.

Mr. Stephens, the historian for the 11th Wing at Bolling Air Force Base, D.C., and an Air Force Reserve public affairs specialist, was doing some research on Jackie Cochran and the Women Airforce Service Pilots early in 2006 when the small horned and goggled female creature that appeared as the WASP mascot piqued his curiosity.

The creature was a Fifinella, one of the rare female Gremlins from Mr. Dahl's book. Mr. Stephens's research took him to the Library of Congress in Washington where he found one of the estimated 300 copies of the original 1943 book that are thought to still exist today.

"I just fell in love with the book and thought it would be a great fit to bring it back for the Air Force's 60th anniversary," Mr. Stephens said.

With the support of Brig. Gen. Duane Jones, 11th Wing commander at the time, and Col. Kurt F. Neubauer,



"The Gremlins: a Royal Air Force Story" was written by Roald Dahl and illustrated by artists from the Walt Disney studios. A special Air Force 60th anniversary commemorative edition of the book is now available at Army and Air Force Exchange Service main exchanges. (Image courtesy of Walt Disney Productions and Dark Horse Comics)

the organization's current commander, Mr. Stephens set out on a quest to have a special edition of the book printed in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force.

His quest led him to Mike Richardson, president of Dark Horse Comics, who led the charge with Disney and the Dahl estate to bring the book back to life.

"Mike Richardson is very passionate in his support of the Air Force, like a modern-day Walt Disney," Mr. Stephens said. "This project would never have succeeded without his active involvement."

"I was amazed to find that Roald Dahl's very first book had been out of print for more than 60 years," Mr. Richardson said. "To learn that he had collaborated with the legendary Walt Disney on this project and that the book was responsible for bringing the mischievous little creatures known as Gremlins into our pop culture was even more astonishing."

"Dark Horse was extremely pleased to team up with the Disney company in order to re-introduce this lost treasure to modern readers, both young and old. To hear that this book has found a new audience, with the men and women of our armed forces and their children, makes this project even more worthwhile."

While Dark Horse sells the book commercially through several sources and Gremlin toys through its Web site, a special Air Force 60th anniversary commemorative limited edition of the book is now available exclusively at Army and Air Force Exchange Service main exchange stores.

The book was first made available at select exchanges the first day after Thanksgiving last year and sold out Air Force-wide within a few hours.

"At Bolling, all of the copies were gone the same day," Mr. Stephens said. "We

set a base record, selling 600 books in a matter of hours. It was bigger than Harry Potter."

An additional 10,000 copies were distributed to exchanges beginning on Independence Day. Priced at \$10, the book is proving to be a popular gift item for people throughout the Air Force community. Because they are sold through AAFES, profits are returned to the Air Force in the form of base services.

Mr. Stephens believes the book has been so popular because it appeals to both adults and children alike.

"There's a moral to the story that adults, especially Air Force members, appreciate: that the problems that face us all can be overcome with cooperation and building friendships," he said.

"For the children of Air Force members, the book lets them know there are always people looking out for their mom or dad when they're gone away. The

Gremlins serve as a metaphor for the wingmen who serve alongside their loved one. The children really are the biggest fans of the book because they appreciate its message in ways we've outgrown."

Mr. Stephens said he knew the project was a success when he saw an Airman reading the book to his child under a tree at Bolling.

"It's a great opportunity for parents to bond with their children in an Air Force environment," he said. "We don't see many opportunities like this for Air Force families to come together, but this book fits the bill perfectly."

Brig. Gen. Janet Therianos, director of the Air Force's 60th anniversary task force, believes the book is a great fit for the service's big birthday celebration.

"The 60th anniversary is a historic milestone for the Air Force and its Airmen," she said. "However, the spirit of commemoration can be hard to communicate to a child. The Gremlins book is an ideal way for us to reach Airmen of yesterday, today and tomorrow and inspire children with lasting memories of what being a part of an Air Force family really means."

Mr. Stephens calls Gremlins the official "spokesfigment" of the Air Force's 60th anniversary. A Gremlins exhibit is currently on display in the Pentagon Library and Conference Center. Mr. Stephens said he is amazed by the e-mails he receives from people all over the Air Force, praising the family-friendly message of the book.

A public affairs staff sergeant assigned to Joint Task Force Civil Support at Fort Monroe, Va., as a Reservist, Mr. Stephens believes the Gremlins project has allowed him to marry his civilian career and Reserve training in a unique way.

"The book has allowed me to utilize both my skills as a historian in academic research and as a PA in awareness marketing," he said. "I would not have been able to succeed as a historian without my PA training and wouldn't have known what to look for as a PA without my historian skills. It almost seemed like the project was tailor-made for an Air Force Reservist like me."

Now that the Gremlins have come back to life in the new printing of Mr. Dahl's beloved children's book, Mr.



Andrew Stephens, historian for the 11th Wing at Bolling Air Force Base, D.C., and an Air Force Reserve public affairs specialist, poses at the Gremlins exhibit at the Pentagon Library and Conference Center.

Stephens said it's possible they might finally make their way to the big screen.

"It's a possibility," he said. "If there is enough interest, the folks at Disney might look at finishing the movie that was first started more than 60 years ago."

For Mr. Stephens, that would just be icing on the cake.

"It's been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity — the kind of project that just makes you feel good all over," he said. "The Gremlins story has a rich and timeless quality to it, and the illustrations in the book are as rich as those in Walt Disney classics such as Pinocchio and Dumbo. It's great that the Gremlins are back among us, and, this time, I think they're here to stay." ★

Stephens said it's possible they might finally make their way to the big screen.

Gremlins 101: Get to know your friendly neighborhood air sprite

Also known as air sprites or air guardians, Gremlins are a type of forest sprite that diverged into a new species at the beginning of the 20th century.

Their woodland habitats destroyed to create aircraft factories, early Gremlins retaliated with "acts of annoyance and mischief" toward pilots. During World War II, Allied aviators reached an accord with the Gremlin community where Gremlins would act as tailgunners, looking out for the best interests of aviators in exchange for environmentally friendly policies on Air Force bases.

To adapt to life in the air, Gremlins created their tell-tale flight suits. Usually brightly colored, the flight suits are equipped with suction-cup boots and special goggles. Gremlins also have a "pan-dimensional pocket" on their flight suits from which a variety of tools

— from hammers and saws to blow torches and jackhammers — can be withdrawn as needed.

Originally quick to use tools to inflict mischief on an aircraft, Gremlins are now known to repair damage to aircraft at lightning speed to ensure the pilot's survival.

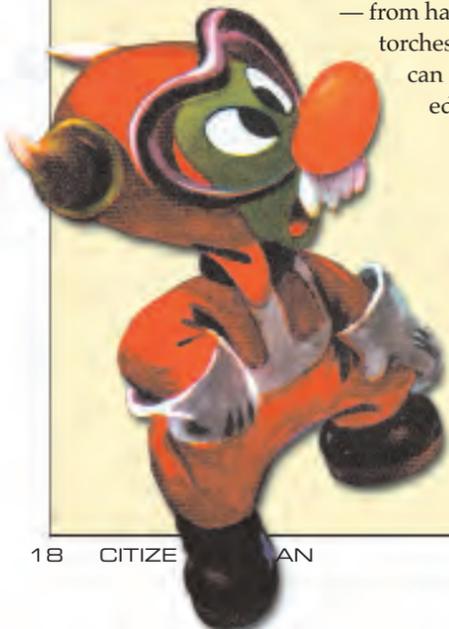
Preferred habitats

for Gremlins are airfields and training bases, although Gremlins congregate wherever military aviators gather. Every military aviator is assigned a Gremlin by the Gremlin Training School, with many Gremlins remaining assigned to aviators for the duration of the latter's career.

Gremlins have a unique diet and are usually seen eating used postage stamps. Their favorite type of stamp is one from an envelope that has traveled a great distance. It has been hypothesized that the Gremlins' "magical" abilities are "recharged" by the letter writer's positive emotional energies (love, hope and faith), which are imbued into every heart-felt letter to Airmen, with the stamp providing sufficient ambient energy for the Gremlins to function. This supposition is assumed correct as Gremlins have been known to refuse stamps on junk mail and collection notices. ★

(Information from Andrew

A typical Gremlin (left) and Fifiella or female Gremlin (right).



IMAGES COURTESY OF WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS AND DARK HORSE COMICS



Lt. Col. (Dr.) Scott Sayre, a dentist assigned to the 445th Aeromedical Squadron, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, works on a Senegalese patient during Shared Accord '07 in Linguere. Dr. Sayre is being assisted by Corp. Chief Idy Diarra, a surgical technician in the Senegalese Army.

'Their Only Help'

Medics provide quality care to people with no other options

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Chance C. Babin

It's 8:30 p.m. and a group of 14 Air Force Reserve Command medics are sitting out in front of a hooch in Senegal, Africa, trying to cool off from the grind of a 10-hour day.

The temperature is still hovering in the mid 90s, but it seems almost chilly after working in 115-degree heat throughout the day. But no one is complaining because they all volunteered to come to the isolated desert region of Linguere to help people who can't afford basic health care for themselves or their families.

The Reservists teamed up with a battalion of Marine reservists and a handful of Sailors and Soldiers to form Task Force 225 as part of Exercise Shared Accord. The purpose of the joint exercise, which took place June 16-30, was to improve relations between the United States and Senegal and provide a training opportunity with members of the Senegalese military, while at the same time providing humanitarian assistance to the local population.

As soon as they arrived, the Air Force Reserve medics saw a steady flow of patients for 10 consecutive days in the hot desert environment of Linguere, centrally located in northern Senegal.

"Our Air Force Reserve physicians provided quality medical care to more than 4,400 Senegalese, many of whom waited for days," said Maj. Melissa Triche, a medical planner for the AFRC international health specialist program. "I'm very proud of the efforts that were put forth by the medics on this team. The care they provided significantly improved the overall health of the local population.

"The experience and expertise that our physicians brought with them saved the lives of several Senegalese during this MEDCAP (Medical Civil Actions Program)," she said. "To me, that spells out a successful mission for all involved."

For the members of the medical team, the mission was a great opportunity to touch the lives of people who in many cases have no other means available to improve their lives.

"It's been a positive experience," said Capt. (Dr.) Jessica Tse, an optometrist with the 349th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, Calif. "It makes everyone reflect on their lives and be grateful for what we have. To be able to improve so many people's lives has been very rewarding. It definitely makes you want to do another mission like this."

For some medics, the trip was their first time participating in a humanitarian mission.

"I've always wanted to do something like this," said Maj. (Dr.)

Darin Brimhall, a physician with the 752nd Medical Squadron, March Air Reserve Base, Calif. "Going to regular drill gets dull, and I was looking for an assignment to use my skills to help people. This has rekindled my passion for what my role is in the Air Force."

For many of the patients, treatments that would be considered routine in the United States have been neglected due to the lack of resources.

"I'm amazed that the dental decay rate is so high; periodontal disease is rampant," said Lt. Col. (Dr.) Scott Sayre, a dentist with the 445th Aeromedical Squadron, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. "We've seen some very unusual things that you only see in textbooks or learn about in school."

"We're their only help. If we don't do (the surgical procedures), there's no one else who will, because they don't have the money. From that perspective, dental problems become life threatening."

The work of the medics didn't go unnoticed by the Senegalese medical people and military members working at the clinic.

"I think it's a good thing because some of these people have not enough money to satisfy their needs," Abdoulaye Ndao said with a broken English accent. "This kind of thing is great for them. Some are suffering and have no way out to serve this problem, but fortunately the



Maj. (Dr.) Darin Brimhall, a physician from the 752nd Medical Squadron, March Air Reserve Base, Calif., conducts a well baby exam.

American care gives them opportunity to be cured."

Part of every successful mission stems from having a talented team whose members work well together, even when the environment and work conditions are challenging.

"We have a good team, very cohesive," said Maj. (Dr.) Brandon Isaacs, an individual mobilization augmentee flight surgeon assigned to Ellsworth AFB, S.D. "I think we are having more of

an impact on the general population because in many cases we are doing life-altering procedures."

Dr. Isaacs performed several minor cosmetic procedures, such as removing lipomas and sebaceous cysts, which will allow the patients to integrate back into their society.

"The general public has such a negative impression on people who have simple benign defects that are cosmetically problematic," Dr. Isaacs said. "They become outcasts in society. Removing the benign lesions allows them to be accepted back into society as normal human beings."

One of the people the doctor treated was a man named Moussa Ba. Dr. Isaacs removed a lipoma from his forehead.

"I feel very good now and happy," Mr. Ba said through an interpreter. "I was feeling very ashamed because people were looking at me. Now it's gone, and my life is good. It's changed my life."

When Mr. Ba returned days later to have his bandages changed, he told Dr. Isaacs that he told everyone in his village that the doctor was a miracle worker.

While Dr. Isaacs took on the task of performing these minor, yet life-altering, surgeries, Lt. Col. Will Mosier made taking care of premature babies one of his priorities.

Colonel Mosier, an international health-care specialist with the 459th Aeromedical

Staging Squadron, Andrews AFB, Md., said his experience in developmental pediatrics provides him the background to serve as a consultant to medical staff on complicated cases such as caring for premature infants without incubators being available.

"A misunderstanding in the U.S. is that infants will die without an incubator, which is not true" Colonel Mosier said. "It's a balance between providing adequate infant stimulation and parent education."

While the medics were busy in Linguere, the Marines were training in Dodji, about 15 miles away, where Capt. Paul Kim, a public health officer from the 86th Contingency Response Group, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, was responsible for sanitation and hygiene.

"It was a great experience where I was able to do what I was trained to do in an austere environment," Captain Kim said. "The Marines and the Navy corpsmen made it possible to keep the training site sanitary. Thanks to their efforts, we had no disease, non-battle injuries."

Also while he was in Dodji, the captain met with the mayor to give him preventive medicine tips in preparation for mosquito season and donated permethrin and Deet (insect repellents) to the training site commandant for his troops to use.

"The exercise was an overwhelming success," said Lt. Col. Michael Froeder, inspection instructor and executive officer for the 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines, Garden City, N.Y. "The Senegalese and Marine Corps units integrated seamlessly when they were conducting training. The integration of the other services was outstanding. Each service's unique capabilities complemented each other well."

"Overall, as a task force with personnel and units from all over the country, we've conducted an exercise in an arduous environment in a safe manner while providing a great deal of humanitarian assistance to those in need." ★

(Sergeant Babin is a traditional Reservist assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing public affairs office at Patrick AFB, Fla. He deployed to Senegal as a member of the Air Force Reserve medical team.)

Flight surgeon supports wrestling team

By Master Sgt. Chance C. Babin

As Maj. (Dr.) Brandon Isaacs sits out in the African desert one night, he tells the story of Air Force wrestler Corey Farkas defeating former world and Olympic champion Rulon Gardner at the USA Wrestling National Championship in 2003. Dr. Isaacs is in Senegal with a group of 13 other Reserve medics performing a medical humanitarian mission, but as he tells the wrestling story he is back in Las Vegas.



Maj. (Dr.) Brandon Isaacs, an individual mobilization augmentee flight surgeon assigned to Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., and the official team doctor for Air Force wrestling, checks a Senegalese baby's lungs during a routine check-up.

"I was sitting there watching when Rulon tried to throw Corey and couldn't do it, as Corey fell on Rulon's back," Dr. Isaacs said. "I was sitting next to his dad when he took the photo that I now have on the wall at my office."

For Dr. Isaacs, an individual mobilization augmentee flight surgeon assigned to Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., this upset victory is still one of the highlights of his tenure as the official team doctor for Air Force wrestling, a title he's held since 2002.

Dr. Isaacs' background as an osteopath makes him a perfect fit for the wrestling team, but it was more luck than his qualifications that landed him the job. Back when he was stationed at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, where the Air Force wrestling team conducts its training camp, he would go watch the wrestlers practice. The team needed a doctor, so he decided to accompany them to the Armed Forces Championships.

"I didn't realize what I was getting in to. This was a world-class organization," Dr. Isaacs said. "When we got to Nationals later that year, I was able to use my osteopath experience, which came in very handy because I was to do manipulation while taking care of them."

According to the American Osteopathic Association, osteopathic medicine is a complete system of health care with a philosophy that combines the needs of the patient with the current practice of medicine. Doctors of osteopathic medicine practice a whole-person approach, which means they consider both the physical and mental needs of their patients.

"Sports medicine has always been my focus because you have a motivated clientele who wants to get better," he said. "Sports medicine is the most rewarding because I can get (the wrestlers) back on the mat to finish a match or continue in the tournament."

Although Dr. Isaacs is the team doctor, he also acts as a trainer during the team's matches. "Most of the stuff I do with the team is maintaining the members' overall health, particularly when they are cutting weight," Dr. Isaacs said. "I also manage their muscular skeletal injuries and help them rehab and get back on the mat."

In the five seasons Dr. Isaacs has been with the Air Force team, it has won three national championships. He said he spends about three weeks a year with the team on official business, traveling to three tournaments and spending time at training camp.

"I travel to tournaments with them on my own dollar," he said. "I do it because I love it. I love wrestling." ★

(Sergeant Babin is a traditional Reservist assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing at public affairs office at Patrick AFB, Fla. He deployed to Senegal as a member of the Air Force Reserve medical team.)



Lt. Col. Steve Bonning, a physician's assistant assigned to the 913th Medical Squadron, Willow Grove Air Reserve Station, Pa., conducts a routine medical exam.

OPERATION Kids 4 TROOPS

Soldiers from the Army's 2nd Infantry Division, deployed in Ramadi, Iraq, show the letters they received from the Kids 4 Troops program. (Matthew Stephens)



Support for Reservist's letter-writing program takes off

By Bo Joyner

Watching the evening news one night about three years ago, Spencer Cluff finally had enough. Fed up with all of the negative press surrounding the ongoing war on terrorism, the high school health science teacher and Air Force Reserve technical sergeant took it upon himself to make sure American troops fighting overseas get the message that there are still people back home who support what they are doing for their country.

"I just felt this overwhelming urge to show support for our troops," said Sergeant Cluff, who serves as NCO in charge of the 507th Medical Squadron's dental clinic at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. "Since I'm a teacher and my wife is

a teacher, we thought that the innocence and compassion of children would be a good place to start."

As a result, Sergeant Cluff and his wife, Carrie, launched Operation Kids 4 Troops to solicit and send letters and drawings from children in the United States to service members serving in the Middle East. And what started in his classroom and his wife's classroom has spread like wildfire.

"By the end of the first year, through word of mouth, we had children from 12 school districts writing letters," Sergeant Cluff said. "The second year, the Oklahoma Department of Education got on board, and we had 570 school districts participating."

It wasn't long before schools from other states heard about the program, and children from all over the country began sending their letters and drawings to Sergeant Cluff's tiny post office box in Yukon, Okla. As word of the program spread, adults began to get involved, too.

"Today, I get between 20,000 and 25,000 letters a month," Sergeant Cluff said. "My garage is full of letters, and they're all over our house."

Determined not to let any negative messages get to the troops, either Sergeant Cluff, Carrie or one of the handful of volunteers who helps with Kids 4 Troops reads each one. Letters with political agendas, hateful content or a depressive tone are sorted out.

Sergeant Cluff uses a number of different avenues to get the letters into the hands of the troops. He partners with www.anysoldier.com, a Web site where Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and members of the Coast Guard can add their names to a list requesting correspondence from home. He also works with Operation Gratitude, a California-based charity that assembles and sends care packages to troops overseas.

"We send them boxes full of letters, and they include them with the care packages," Sergeant Cluff said.

He has also worked with local radio stations that are doing care package drives for the troops.

Last year, the sergeant established a Web site, www.kids4troops.com. The site has received more than 170,000 hits from people in 60 different countries. On the site, people can write and e-mail letters, submit the name of a deployed military member who would like to receive a letter, volunteer to help or send a donation. Sergeant Cluff still pays most of the Kids 4 Troops bills out of his own pocket.

"All of our extra money goes to mailing letters," he said. "We've gotten a few donations, but we could use some financial help to make sure we get these letters overseas."

"The letters we get are just amazing. One little boy, not understanding just how big the Army is, sent a letter to a Soldier asking him to say hey to his dad, Sergeant Rico, who has been gone for a while. In another letter, one lady sent part of the yellow ribbon from her front porch that she said she will keep up until all of our troops are home."

Connie Hues of Yukon has sent more than 40 letters to troops this year.

"They're over there fighting so that we can be safe over here. Writing a note of thanks is the very least I can do," she said in a recent news story in *The Oklahoman* newspaper.

Sergeant Cluff and his program have been featured in a number of newspapers and on television news programs throughout Oklahoma, and he has been recognized by a number of elected officials for his efforts. In fact, April 9 was proclaimed "Kids 4 Troops Day" in Oklahoma by Gov. Brad Henry. Sergeant Cluff is currently working on a book that features some of the most touching and supportive letters and drawings he's received.

He said he has been overwhelmed at how Kids4Troops has grown.

"I never expected this," the sergeant said. "But as long as the letters keep coming in, I'll continue to send them out."

For more information on Operation Kids 4 Troops, to send a letter or to volunteer, visit www.kids4troops.com. ★



Tech. Sgt. Spencer Cluff (center) holds the proclamation declaring April 9 "Kids 4 Troops Day" in Oklahoma. At right are four of the up to 25,000 letters Sergeant Cluff receives every month. He then sends the letters to troops deployed overseas.





Maj. Gen. James C. Wahleithner, shown here early in his career, accumulated more than 10,000 flying hours in 14 different aircraft.

A True Gentleman

Maj. Gen. James C. Wahleithner epitomized the term

By Gene Vandeventer

(Editor's note: In 2008, the Air Force Reserve will celebrate its 60th anniversary, having been established in 1948 as an organization separate from the regular Air Force. This is the third in a series of six articles leading up to the 60th anniversary celebration that honor some of the people who are responsible for where Air Force Reserve Command is today and how it got here. The articles are based on the personal experiences and fond memories of Gene Vandeventer, who served as an aid-de-camp at Headquarters AFRC, Robins Air Force Base, Ga., from 1986 to 1990. Mr. Vandeventer currently works as a civilian in the Directorate of Historical Services at HQ AFRC. People of diverse ranks and grades are listed in no special order. By telling these people's personal stories, Mr. Vandeventer hopes to both recognize their outstanding sacrifice, determination and foresightedness while expounding upon the Reserve's prestigious history to the next generation of Citizen Airmen.)

When you meet a true gentleman, you immediately are impressed with how he addresses and communicates with people. ... people of all colors, nationalities, gender, and, in the case of the military services, all ranks and grades.

Maj. Gen. James C. Wahleithner was such a gentleman.

The general's military records, as both an enlisted member and officer, were outstanding. In his career, he commanded airlift and fighter wings across the continental United States throughout the Cold War years and beyond.

In May 1985, he assumed the senior leadership position of 4th Air Force commander at McClellan Air Force Base, Calif. In this position, General Wahleithner had personal accountability and command of Air Force Reserve tactical and airlift resources in the Western United States. His responsibilities also included

Reserve rescue, special operations and weather reconnaissance missions.

His two assignments prior to being selected 4th AF commander were as deputy to the chief of Air Force Reserve at the Pentagon and 10th Air Force commander at Bergstrom AFB, Texas.

General Wahleithner was not a big man in stature. I'd say he stood no more than 5'10" and was light in weight. But the shadow this warrior cast was extremely long. By reputation, the general was known as firm but fair in his dealings with Airmen and civilians of all grades.

The first time I met him was in 1986 when he traveled to Robins AFB, Ga., to attend military meetings at the Air Force Reserve headquarters. General Wahleithner was a fast walker with a laptop computer bag in one hand and his "black book" in the other. He had names, phone numbers, and multiple lists of personnel and flying data in that little black book. In addition, he kept track of "man-days" for the numbered air force assets he commanded and probably had some good cooking recipes as well.

Back in the mid-1980s, laptops were new on the scene, but the general kept up with all the latest technologies. He may have been from the old school, but his mind was always in the future. He was business-like in his demeanor, but when passing you in the hallway, he would, with genuine concern, greet you by name, asking how you were in a most meaningful way.

I recall one day during another visit to the headquarters the commander of the Air Force Reserve presented him with a 10,000-flying-hour patch, a special achievement for any Airman. He accumulated those many flying hours in the pilot seat of A-37s, T-33s, F-105s, F-4s, F-16s, C-119s, C-141s, C-5As, A-10s, KC-10s, KC-135s, HC-130s, H-1s and H-3s.

In 1989, General Wahleithner became the ninth Air Force Reserve recipient of the command's Order of the Sword, the ultimate enlisted person's acknowledgement of a true leader among leaders.

However, the most impressive thing about this man was not his military accolades or decorations, although they were plenti-



In addition to his accomplishments as a pilot, General Wahleithner commanded airlift and fighter wings throughout the country and served as 4th Air Force commander.

ful, but rather it was his fixed, persistent concentration on doing what was best for the aircraft, people and mission that he commanded. He was business-like in his application; he had to be. But he was farsighted in his aspirations for his people, fighting for every benefit and every available man-day, even if it meant tossing some fur up in the air when dealing with the command leadership at the headquarters.

One thing's for certain: If General Wahleithner had your cause at heart, no one could champion it better than he.

I recall at his retirement dinner in Sacramento, Calif., his headquarters staff gave him perhaps the perfect farewell gift — a beautiful horse saddle. You just gotta like a person who loves horses, and the general loved horses. He bought a few acres of land in California and from there did what he enjoyed doing most — riding and caring for the quarter horses he raised.

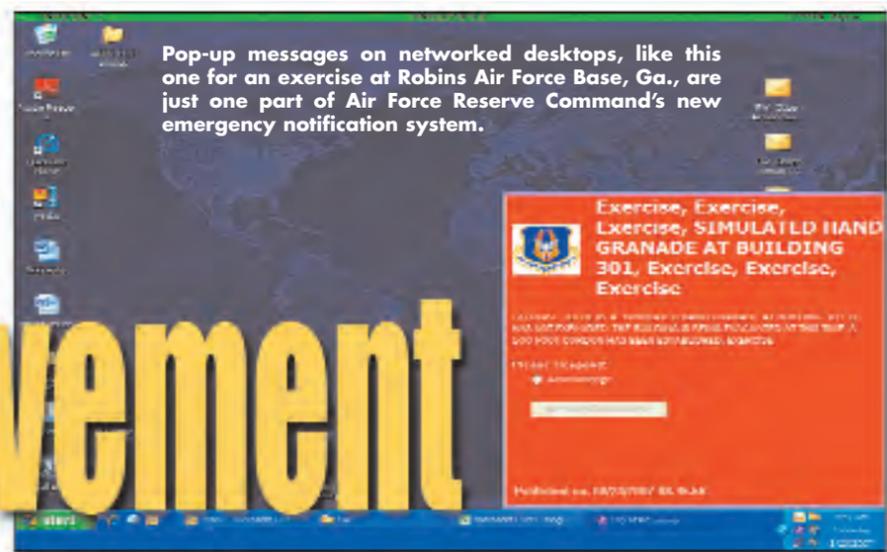
After his retirement from the Air Force Reserve, General Wahleithner continued to fly as a part-time pilot at the Sacramento Executive Airport and Mather Airfield, ferrying light cargo and passengers on small aircraft. He continued serving his church, community and family throughout his retirement years.

On July 23, 2002, his Piper Cherokee crashed in a heavy fog near Arcata, Calif. In an instant, General Wahleithner no longer needed his laptop or his little black book. He died on a heavily wooded hillside.

Survived by his wife, Jacqueline, 11 children (all names beginning with the letter J), 20 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, the finality of his death affected everyone dearly. Seven of his children had joined him in serving in uniform with the Air Force Reserve. He did his best in recruiting the finest! He was so proud of all his children and their children, and whenever he spoke of them, he grinned widely with pride and joy.

No matter his rank, no matter his status in life, James Wahleithner was a hero to more than just his family. He was a hero to anyone who had the privilege of serving with him in the Air Force Reserve. He was, after all and foremost, "Gentleman Jim." ★

A Big Improvement



Pop-up messages on networked desktops, like this one for an exercise at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., are just one part of Air Force Reserve Command's new emergency notification system.

New system automates emergency notification procedures

By Staff Sgt. Celena Wilson

The days of maintaining paper lists and conducting emergency personnel notifications via telephone are becoming a thing of the past throughout Air Force Reserve Command — replaced by an automated process that operates with the push of a button.

Until recently, AFRC command posts did not have the automated tools necessary to notify people during emergencies in a timely manner. During duty hours, notification was straightforward and primitive — accomplished either by calling people on the telephone or physically walking through work areas and verbally letting people know what was happening. Outside of duty hours, people were informed through the use of telephone rosters.

Officials recognized these time-consuming processes needed to be improved. Maintaining up-to-date telephone rosters was a constant issue. Limited command post resources at the wing level posed another problem.

“Air Force policy and guidance (Air Force Instruction 10-218, Personnel Accountability in Conjunction with Natural Disasters or National Emergencies, and AFI 10-2501, Air Force Emergency Management Program Planning and Operations) required (major commands) to establish and maintain an emergency notification system for full-spectrum threat response readiness and personnel accountability in the event of natural disasters or national emergencies, using multiple communication modes to reach all personnel,” said Robert Tharp, AFRC Program Management Branch chief. “In the past, notifications were an extremely time-intensive, manual process. We recognized this deficiency from Hurricane Katrina and other emergency events that have occurred in the past two years.”

AFRC has more than 44 bases and tenant units employing approximately 76,000 military and civilian personnel located around the world, many of whom do not work on or near a base. As a result, finding a workable solution to conduct quick and effective emergency notifications was a critical issue.

The command responded to this challenge by establishing an integrated product team to look at options and come up with a solution to meet major command requirements. After conducting extensive market research and analyzing all its options, the

team selected an automated network-centric emergency notification system called AtHoc IWSAlerts.

IWSAlerts provides AFRC with the capability to create an emergency management system in which every command post controller has the technology to automate emergency notification processes and alert everyone on what is happening, almost immediately. Notifying people in the event of an emergency and providing them with information on what to do is no longer the tedious hassle it used to be, Mr. Tharpe said.

IWSAlerts was deployed in a centralized fashion across the command in order to benefit from faster emergency responses, improved consistency across the numerous locations and increased visibility for commanders of force status. Using pre-defined Department of Defense-, Air Force- and AFRC-developed scenarios, command post controllers at any location with permission-based network access can now select the relevant emergency scenario or create a new one based on mission needs to alert their personnel either on or off base.

“The system will deliver alerts via various means including a pop-up message on networked desktops; phone calls to home, work or mobile phones; and e-mails to work and home addresses,” Mr. Tharp said. “Notifications can range from force protection condition changes and anti-terror warnings to natural disaster alerts for approaching tornados, hurricanes or other emergency situations.

“AFRC wants people to be aware of emergency conditions that could impact them as quickly as possible after a threat is identified, no matter where they are at the time.”

As part of the implementation process, IWSAlerts was integrated with the Common Access Card for secure user identification and authentication. Personnel contact information was also securely accessed from both the Military Personnel Data System and Defense Civilian Personnel Data System. However, to ensure the system is used to its fullest potential, AFRC personnel need to do their part by making sure their personal information is kept up to date via the Virtual Military Personnel Flight Web site for military members and the Air Force Personnel Center MyBiz Web site for civilians.

Another option for users who have access through the local area network on their desktop is to use the self-service module built into the system to update their data directly to the IWSAlerts servers through the purple AtHoc globe icon located in the bottom right-hand corner of their computer screen.

As part of the system standup, the command sent out e-mail notifications through the IWSAlerts call center to military members asking them to visit the vMPF site to update their contact information. These e-mails generated some response from people who were concerned about their legitimacy.

“The team received several e-mails and phone calls in response to the notifications because the e-mails were generated from a non-military address,” Mr. Tharp said. “But after learning these were official notifications sent from an authorized AFRC-contracted call center, people were satisfied and enthusiastic about the system and its capabilities.

“Part of the educational process with any new system or capability is making people aware of changes in business processes and getting the word out,” he said. “AFRC personnel were not used to getting notifications in this manner, and some were simply not expecting them. Eventually, all AFRC wings will have this capability and be providing notifications to AFRC personnel through this system.”

The system also takes care of individual mobilization augments and mobilization assistants.

“Implementation of IWSAlerts to support the AFRC Readiness Management Group operation has been a big success,” said Capt. Thomas McClyde, RMG IWSAlerts manager. “Prior to having IWSAlerts, notification of IMAs was a slow, tedious process. Now, with the new system, the RMG staff can notify any IMA and supporting IMA queries within minutes, making their jobs much easier.”

Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver began using IWSAlerts to support notification of MA resources and for local emergency notifications in August.

“It’s a great improvement to our former manual notifications to our MAs and personnel of ARPC,” said Stephen Hannan, ARPC communication and information director. “Prior to IWSAlerts, it could take us hours or even days to accomplish 100-percent notification. Now we can achieve positive contact in mere minutes.”

One of the lessons learned during testing and standup of the system, Mr. Tharp said, was not to send alerts to the home e-mail addresses and telephone calls to people who are deployed.

“Recognizing this, we worked with AtHoc to establish a way to block notifications to those who were identified as ‘deployed’ in the system and eliminate any unnecessary calls to their homes and families,” he said. “We are teaching command post controllers and other administrators how to set up this feature and will be working with AFRC units to implement this capability.”

A key capability of the program allows tracking of responses to emergency notifications.

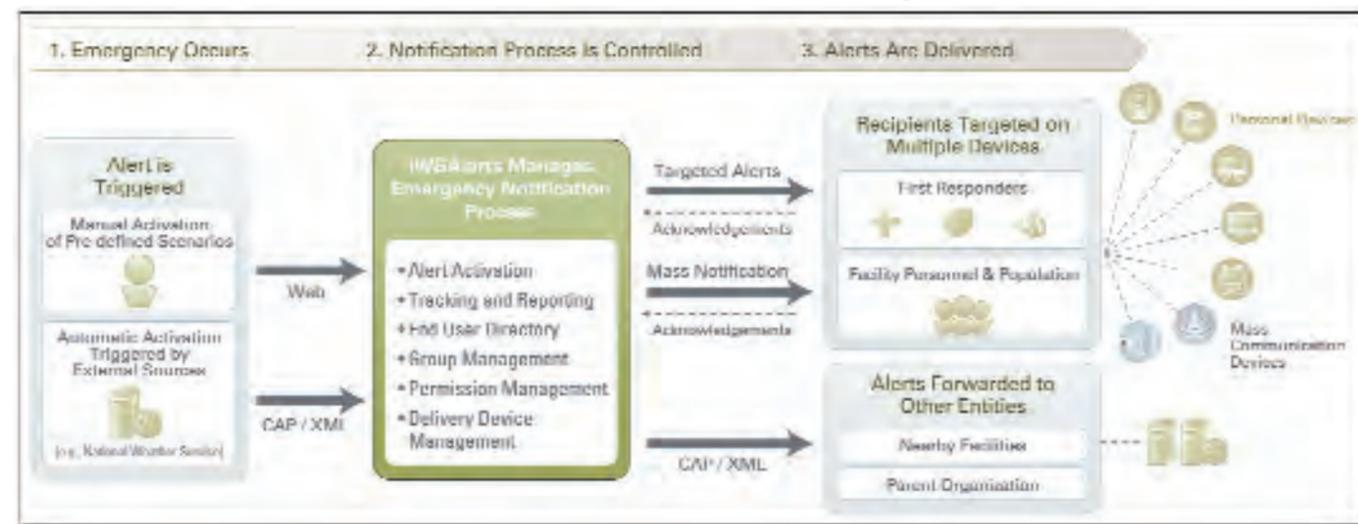
“We can generate alerts that request responses, which the system will record,” Mr. Tharp said. “This capability allows us to capture basic personnel accountability. For example, when an alert is sent out, individuals are asked to respond. With their acknowledgment of the message, this data is recorded. This data is then added to the IWSAlerts alert data base and can be used to see the results of the alert.”

Using IWSAlerts, units can track the progress of notifications in near real time. The average time for an IWSAlerts notification by local area network pop-up message is less than 90 seconds. For e-mail notifications, it’s less than three minutes. The automated call center facility can notify via telephone up to 200 people per minute.

Mr. Tharp said the Program Management Branch has plans to tie IWSAlerts into the Giant Voice systems at AFRC host bases and will be working this effort during the next fiscal year. Giant Voice is a network of outdoor speakers used to broadcast messages to a base population. The organization is also working with AtHoc to provide wings with live weather feeds.

“We hope to have this live weather alert capability, which will be tailored to each AFRC wing’s location, early next year,” Mr. Tharp said. “When implemented, this tool will provide real-time weather information to AFRC command posts and allow for further dissemination to wing users.

“Every day we are finding new uses for IWSAlerts, not only in our AFRC command posts, but in other AFRC functional areas as well. It is a fantastic system that has a lot of potential to automate other processes within the command.” ★



The new emergency notification system delivers alerts as quickly as possible no matter where people are at the time.

A New Era

AF team, led by Reservist, assumes Army garrison operations

By Senior Airman Olufemi A. Owolabi

A new era of base support began for some Soldiers at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, which is collocated with Balad Air Base, Iraq, when the Army transferred the authority of garrison operations to the Air Force's 332nd Expeditionary Mission Support Group Detachment 1.

Col. Ralph Romine assumed command of the Army garrison operation from Army Col. Stephen Nakano during a ceremony July 28.

Colonel Romine, who deployed from the 88th Air Base Wing, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, where he is individual mobilization augmentee to the commander, is the first Air Force member assigned to the unit as a garrison commander for LSA Anaconda since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We are here because the expectation, sometime in the future, is that the Air Force will become the senior installation authority on the property at Balad," Colonel Romine said. "All base operations will later be transferred to the Air Force. We are here to start that process, and I am extremely honored to be the first Air Force garrison commander for the whole of Anaconda.

"After seeing all the operations, I am excited about bringing my team's collective experience together and putting us to good use here. We are fully prepared and ready to go, and we are really thrilled about this mission."

The unit's mission is to provide force protection and quality-of-life support for service members, Department of Defense civilians, contractors, and Iraqi and foreign nationals living and working on LSA Anaconda.

Most of the 96 Airmen assigned to this new mission were selected from Air Force mission support group units, and they bring with them diverse experiences including lodging, contract management and evaluation, food services, and vehicle operations.



Col. Ralph Romine is the first Air Force officer to command garrison operations at Logistical Support Area Anaconda in Iraq. The colonel deployed from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, where he is assigned as individual mobilization augmentee to the commander of the 88th Air Base Wing.

"This first team fits perfectly into what we need," Colonel Romine said. "These Airmen have stepped up to do a very good job. With their experiences, we hope to expedite, streamline and make things more efficient."

He added that though the Air Force does some things differently, the change from Soldiers to Airmen will not, in any way, hinder the new team from rendering quality service to its customers. The customers will never see the difference. They will still be able to get the services they need, he said.

"Initially, there will be no changes externally because, obviously, we are still working for the Army, and the population we serve out of this garrison is mostly Army," Colonel Romine said. "This garrison is so big that we have to take the time to take a look at

things and see what needs to be done before making changes. From the garrison standpoint, any change we make affects 28,000 people. We can't arbitrarily make any change; we have to think it through and understand all the consequences before we implement it."

The colonel said the previous team did a very good job of upgrading most of the infrastructures at LSA Anaconda with a master plan for construction and renovations. The colonel's team plans to come together and follow that plan, approving what needs approval and making necessary visible changes in order to make LSA Anaconda better for everyone.

"There is nothing we (the Air Force) can't handle," Colonel Romine said. "We are here to do the job and show that the Air Force knows how to do base support. We are excited about the mission and the challenges. My goal is to leave this place better than I found it and to get my team home safely." ★

(Airman Owolabi is assigned to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing public affairs office at Balad Air Base, Iraq.)

Sea of Faces

Foundation provides financial aid to adopting parents

This November marks the 18th anniversary of National Adoption Awareness Month. For Maj. Jennifer Cunningham, an individual mobilization augmentee assigned to the Pentagon, the annual month-long celebration holds special significance. She and her husband are both adopted.

But her involvement with adoption doesn't stop there. In September 2004, the Cunninghams embarked on a personal journey to expand their family through adoption. They were matched with a 9-month-old little boy from China. Although the child had a heart condition, the Cunninghams were prepared to bring him home and provide him with the love and medical attention he needed.

Unfortunately, the process ended abruptly when they learned he had passed away in the orphanage.

"To look at him, his chubby red cheeks and gentle smile, you would never know he was so sick," Major Cunningham said.

Instead of shying away from the adoption community after suffering such a loss, the major decided to turn her grief into hope for other families looking to adopt a child. Just one month later, she launched the Sea of Faces Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing financial assistance to families adopting internationally.

What Major Cunningham lacked in experience she made up for with enthusiasm as she jumped into the project headfirst, designing a Web site, organizing a board of directors and soliciting support for her heart-felt cause.

International adoption expenses can range anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000 depending on the country the child is from. During the initial stage of their adoption, Major Cunningham read blogs describing the desperate measures families are willing to take to pay for adoption expenses. She became very concerned about people jeopardizing their financial futures in order to meet the many milestones throughout the process.

"Families are mortgaging homes, depleting savings and maxing out credit



Army Staff Sgt. Jef Spangler and his wife, Amanda, pose for a photo in Vietnam after picking up their adopted daughter, Meadow. Their son, Hunter, is taking a nap. The Sea of Faces Foundation helped the Spanglers with their adoption.

cards in order to cover the considerable fees," she said.

And adoption expenses don't always end when the children come home, the major said. Oftentimes they need significant medical attention and varying levels of therapy. This only adds to the stress of an already daunting process.

Major Cunningham said it was an educational and emotionally draining process getting Sea of Faces off the ground. But she persevered, and in September 2005 the foundation awarded its first grant. As of today, the foundation has assisted 16 families with \$27,500 in grants.

"We've done more than I had ever hoped, and it spurs me to want to do more," the major said.

Sea of Faces is unique in that the foundation does not restrict applicants based on family income, state of residence or medical needs of the child. In addition, it allows families to apply up to six months after the date the child comes home.

"The debt doesn't magically disappear when the adoption is finalized," Major Cunningham said.

The foundation is expanding its assistance options with a matching grant program and has applied to be included in the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign.

Major Cunningham said there are an estimated 87 million orphans around the world and that families interested in adoption should not be deterred by the cost.

"There is such a tremendous need, for both the children as well as the families willing to open their hearts and homes," she said. "We are honored to be a small part of this life-changing decision."

In recognition of their efforts to establish the Sea of Faces Foundation, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, is honoring the major and her husband through its Angels in Adoption program. This program gives all members of Congress the opportunity to honor individuals, couples or organizations that have made a difference in the lives of children through adoption.

This year the Cunninghams' district representative, Tom Fenney, selected them for the honor. All of the "Angels" were scheduled to be recognized at a formal gala Oct. 4 in Washington, D.C.

For information on National Adoption Awareness Month and the Sea of Faces Foundation, visit www.seaoffaces.org or contact Major Cunningham via e-mail at director@seaoffaces.org. ★

(Staff reports)

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