

Volume No. 12/December 1994

VIKING FLYER

For members of the 934th AW, Air Force Reserve, Minneapolis-St. Paul IAP ARS, Minn.



VIKING FLYER

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On the cover



SSgt. Anthony Orr, 934th SPS, works with Combat Arms Training and Maintenance. For more on CATM's year-round mission, see Page 7.

(Photo by SSgt. Niklas Hammarberg)

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Commentary

Wrapping up '94

Fast, furious, successful year ends

by Col. Michael Gjede
wing commander

As I look at the calendar, I find it difficult to believe that another year has rolled by -- my second as commander and the fourth since the tempo has really picked up for the Air Force Reserve.

Just to put the year in perspective, consider the following information that was presented by the vice commander of AFRES at the recent fall planning meeting of the Reserve Officers Association. In the 38 years between 1953 and 1990, AFRES units participated in 10 contingency operations. From 1991 to 1994, however, we got involved in 23!

This year alone, the 934th was called upon to support missions in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Cuba and Southwest Asia. And these are in addition to our "everyday" missions, not to mention the Quality Air

Force Assessment in August with our super rating. Just to prove how well we did, over 150 visitors have come to benchmark from our success.

And to spice things up, we had an election year, which led to numerous visits from important politicians -- including our commander-in-chief, who couldn't seem to get enough of Minneapolis.

So as we enter the holiday season, take time to reflect on the many accomplishments of 1994. They've shown me we're more than ready to meet the challenges of 1995.

Happy holidays! ☐



Gjede

Christmas spirit, all year long

by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Peter Esterka
senior chaplain

Christmas is a time of joy and peace. The birth of Christ again in our year, on our cultural calendar and in our conscious awareness, celebrates his obedience to God.

In the mystery of God's plan, Christ's coming expresses God's intention to be with us. Jesus came to us as our redeemer. He showed us how to overcome that which is a hindrance in our life and the purpose of our life; that is, to love others as we have been loved by God.

During this Christmas season, we'll experience again what Christ is all about. In our kindness toward each other, in our willingness to share our treasure with others, in our delight in sharing our time and even in our smiles and the positive attitude we communicate, we're able to spread at least a little of what it means to bring peace and good tidings.

This, too, is participating in the bringing of redemption. We come, as Jesus did, at Christmas bringing peace and joy. Too bad this Christmas spirit isn't with us for the entire year. Let us make it so!

This is why I wish you all a merry, blessed Christmas and a happy new year. May the joy and peace of Christ remain with you for the entire year. ☐

UTA schedule

Jan. 7-8	June 3-4
Feb. 4-5	July 29-30
March 4-5	Aug. 12-13
April 1-2	Sept. 9-10
May 6-7	



Note: The tentative UTA paydate will be printed in this section on a trial basis. December UTA pay should be deposited by:
Dec. 14

Briefs in blue . . .

Pay hike approved

The fiscal 1995 Defense Appropriations Bill signed by the president Sept. 30 gives the military a 2.6 percent pay raise next year.

In the \$243.6 billion defense spending plan, the Air Force received \$1 billion less than its '94 budget. It received \$263.2 million less in operations and maintenance funds than it needed for programs that include civilian pay, base support, training and education programs, flying operations and communications, said officials.

The approved Air Force Selected Reserve end strength of 78,706 represents a reduction of 2,794 positions compared to last year's ceiling. On another Reserve matter, air reserve technicians will remain protected until Sept. 30, 1995, from reduction in force actions. The protection may be renewed only if Congress includes such a "fence" in future appropriation bills. (AFNS, AFRESNS)

Act affects officer promotions

Provisions of the new Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act may affect the way some Air Force Reserve officers are promoted. The act takes effect Oct. 1, 1996.

A key change will shift the selection process from "fully qualified" to "best qualified from among those fully qualified."

Also, officers will be allowed to voluntarily delay a promotion for up to three years when there is no vacancy immediately available. (AFRESNS)

Officers move in January

The following Air Force Reserve officer moves take effect Jan. 15:

▣ **Brig. Gen. James Sehorn**, director of operations, Headquarters AFRES, Robins AFB, Ga., returns to McChord AFB, Wash., as the 446th Airlift Wing commander.

▣ **Brig. Gen. Keith Reiling**, 349th Air Mobility Wing commander, Travis AFB, Calif., replaces Sehorn.

▣ **Brig. Gen. Michael Peters**, 452nd AMW at March AFB, Calif., travels upstate to command the 349th AMW, replacing Reiling.

▣ **Col. Clayton Gadd** moves from commanding the 459th AW, Andrews AFB, Md., to the 452nd AMW, replacing Peters.

▣ **Col. Jon Gingerich** moves from commanding the 446th AW at McChord to the 459th AW at Andrews, replacing Gadd.

▣ **Brig. Gen. Michael Quarnaccio**, 433rd AW commander at Kelly AFB, Texas, and **Col. Peter Bentley**, 512th AW commander at Dover AFB, Del., will swap places. Bentley is a former commander of the 934th. (AFRESNS) □

Commentary

More than just fun

Challenges for Reserve shatter old 'flying club' image

by Lt. Col. Tim Anderson
wing vice commander

As I write this article, the 934th is being asked once again to provide people for an unspecified purpose to go to an unspecified place for an unspecified length of time. Sounds a lot like the military to me, and if the opportunity to perform under such a set of circumstances is disconcerting to you, you're probably in the wrong line of work.

What I've described above is nothing more or nothing less than doing our job. I can remember the days as a squadron pilot when life in the Air Force Reserve consisted of "boring holes in the sky" and working with the scheduler to find a garden spot for the next cross-country trip. That lifestyle -- or workstyle -- gave rise to the "flying club" mentality dogging the reserve forces for way too long.

As we well know, all that has changed. The change began in January 1990 when the 934th participated in the tail end of Just Cause, and the end is not in sight. Since then, we've been tasked for Desert Wind/Shield/Storm, Provide Promise (with more "Promise" to come), a couple of Operational Readiness Exercises and Operational Readiness Inspections, one Aircrew Standardization/Evaluation Visit, a Quality Air Force Assessment and, most recently, Haiti. Now it appears we may be on the move again. The flying club days are gone.

I heard someone say recently, "It's just not fun anymore." There's too much new stuff to learn and do -- new techniques, high-tech equipment, computerization and different procedures, and we have to be able to do it all in chemical gear! Well, I guess I'd reword this quote to read, "It's not *just* fun anymore." But if you're in the military just for fun, you're really in the wrong place. We have a job to do, and

more and more often, we're being given the opportunity to do it.

Obviously, there are pressures and demands placed upon us because of the ever-increasing need for the U.S. military to do more with less. We must be mindful of our limitations, collectively and individually, especially regarding our civilian jobs and family needs. But in my opinion, "We ain't seen nothin' yet." It's a sure bet reserve forces will be called upon regularly to fill in gaps existing within the active-duty force.

We need a strong active-duty military, and we have one. The world situation and domestic environment dictate, however, that we also maintain a strong reserve force. We have that, and you're the reason the Air Force Reserve is proving regularly to everyone that we can do the job when called.

We can be really proud of that, and for me, that's where the fun is. □

New chief of staff -- what to expect

by Gen. Ronald Fogelman
chief of staff of the Air Force

As my tenure as your chief of staff begins, I want to tell you how excited and honored Miss Jane and I are to represent everyone in the U.S. Air Force. We look forward to the privilege of serving you and our nation.

The purpose of this message is to let you know where I'm coming from and what you can expect in the days ahead. As we face the future, we should be guided by four basic thoughts. I plan to say more about these in a series of follow-on messages and when I meet personally with you, but let me put them on the table up front.

The first thought concerns the pace of change. There has been some speculation that, as I take charge, I'll slam on the brakes and steer us in an entirely new direction. That simply is not the case.

In my view, our Air Force is on the right course. Following the coalition's victory in the cold war, the Air Force entered a period of dramatic and rapid change. We drew down our force structure, reengineered our organization, initiated a quality movement, defined a mission and vision statement to guide us. We owe a debt of gratitude to our former chief of staff, General McPeak, for leading us through those turbulent times and making us the best Air Force in the world.

Our challenge now is to build on the strong foundation we've already laid. At the same time, we need to provide our people greater stability. While there's always room for continuous improvement, any adjustments in the near-term will be relatively small -- more like putting the finishing touches on a report or trimming an aircraft in flight rather than making a hard turn.

Second, we must always bear in mind that the Air Force is a "team within a team." Our Air Force team is a total force -- a mosaic of civilians, guardsmen, reservists and active members. This team is engaged in high-tempo operations around the world.

In each of these operations, individual airmen, officers and civilians in many specialties are hard at work, contributing



Fogelman

unique strengths and capabilities to the task at hand. But everywhere we operate, you'll also find that Air Force men and women are part of a larger team. We work side-by-side with soldiers, sailors, Coast Guardsmen and Marines. Together we are part of a joint team.

This does not mean that blue suiters must shed their Air Force identity. We should be proud of our Air Force heritage and trumpet our core capabilities, just as the

other services take pride in their own traditions and accomplishments. Nevertheless, the American way of war has been fundamentally changed by Goldwater-Nichols, and we must work together to defend our nation. Thus one of the first questions we must ask in contemplating any course of action is its impact on the other services and the joint teams led by the commanders-in-chiefs of our unified commands.

Third, the members of our Air Force team need to know we value their hard work and sacrifice and we'll take care of their needs. The secretary of the Air Force and I are committed to ensuring the highest possible quality of life for our people. We won't rest in our efforts to provide quality housing, medical care and on-base services for our Air Force family. But quality of life also requires a strong, daily input from all commanders and supervisors. We must foster an atmosphere in which people understand the purpose of their work and are empowered to improve the way we do business. We must also ensure that our people are actively encouraged to develop their full potential and are properly recognized in performance

(Continued on Page 11)

New uniform, revisited

The new Air Force chief of staff has addressed the issue of uniform changes early in his tenure.

Gen. Ronald Fogelman announced several changes Nov. 2, which are summarized here:

☐ The enlisted coat with new stripes will remain "as is."

☐ He plans to return to rank on the shoulders for officers, suggesting waiting to purchase the new coat until an "epaulet fix" is determined.

☐ Fogelman said the new coat won't be needed for official photos for promotion, as he plans to delete the requirement for photos in promotion folders by Jan. 1, 1995.

☐ Officers and enlisted will start wearing the U.S. insignia without the circle on the lapels.

☐ The basic policy on badges is that if an individual earned it, it can be worn for the rest of his or her career, but with four as the "reasonable limit."

☐ The service hat will be mandatory for field grade officers, with the policy under review for all others.

☐ "The jury's still out" on restoring nametags to the new coat.

☐ The next uniform board is scheduled for early 1995, but Fogelman plans to disband it afterwards. "We will have effectively satisfied our objectives in this area," he said. (AFNS) ☐

Desert disappointment

934th members got the call, but it ended in a bittersweet no-go

by MSgt. Tim Turner
public affairs

All dressed up and no place to go is how five members of the 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron must have felt in October.

The reservists were scheduled to deploy to Southwest Asia to support U.S. military members ordered into the region by the president after Iraq amassed thousands of troops along the Kuwait border earlier that month.

"Ten five-person Reserve and Guard aeromedical teams were asked to go over, and we were one of the units that volunteered," said SSgt. Jennifer Whorton, a member of the 934th aeromedical crew that said yes to the mission.

The units tasked for the mission were under the direction of the active duty's 23rd AES at Pope AFB, N.C. Unbeknownst to the 934th AES crew, the North Carolina base would be the closest they would ever get to their Southwest Asia destination.

Whorton's ordeal began on Wednesday, Oct. 12, when she received a call at her Kansas City home from the AES. "My name is on a 'short list' of other unit members willing to deploy on short notice to support these kinds of missions," Whorton explained.

"I work for Northwest Airlines in Kansas City," she continued. "About two hours after I got the call, I was on a Northwest jet bound for Minneapolis."

Once at the 934th, Whorton met up with the other AES members who would accompany her on the mission: Maj. Marjorie Boldenow, TSgt. Joseph Brinza, 1st Lt. Michael Johnson and TSgt. Karen Jones.

The team spent all of the next day, Thursday, readying for the deployment. "We got our uniforms, chemical warfare garb and mobility bags in shape, and we met with the base family assistance representative to make sure our records were current," Whorton recalled.

As the sun rose Friday morning, the AES crew was on a C-130 enroute to Pope with two aeromedical crews from the local Air National Guard unit.

"Once at Pope, we were put on a 'short leash,' which meant we had to be ready to deploy in an hour or less," Whorton said. "The only problem was that they put us up in a hotel 45 minutes away from Pope, so we spent most of the time in our hotel rooms watching movies and waiting for the call that never came."

Meanwhile, several other Reserve/Guard aeromedical units -- including the two local ANG teams -- did get that call.

By Wednesday of the following week, the AES received official word that they would not be going to the Middle East, as the Iraqi troops had pulled back. The next day they were aboard a C-130 returning to Minnesota.

Back at the 934th, Whorton and the team reflected on the

deployment that almost was. "We were frustrated because we ended up spending a week at Pope doing nothing," she recalled. "Some of the other Reserve and Guard aeromedical units at Pope waiting for the call said, 'Relax, take it in stride.' But we couldn't -- we were ready to go."

Despite the team's disappointment, Whorton insisted the aborted mission was a positive learning experience. "It's kind of a double-edged sword," she admitted. "Obviously, no one in our squadron wants a war. But we're trained to provide medical assistance to casualties of war. Sometimes you want to put that training to the test."

From a personal standpoint, Whorton said the mission proved she can prepare herself emotionally for a long-term deployment.

"Before I left Kansas City, I said all my goodbyes to my husband and family, fully expecting to be away for at least a couple months," she indicated. "I was ready to go, both emotionally and training-wise."

Although the unit's mission to the Persian Gulf never happened, Whorton is confident in her unit's capabilities. "Our entire squadron is well prepared to do the job at the drop of a hat," she said. □

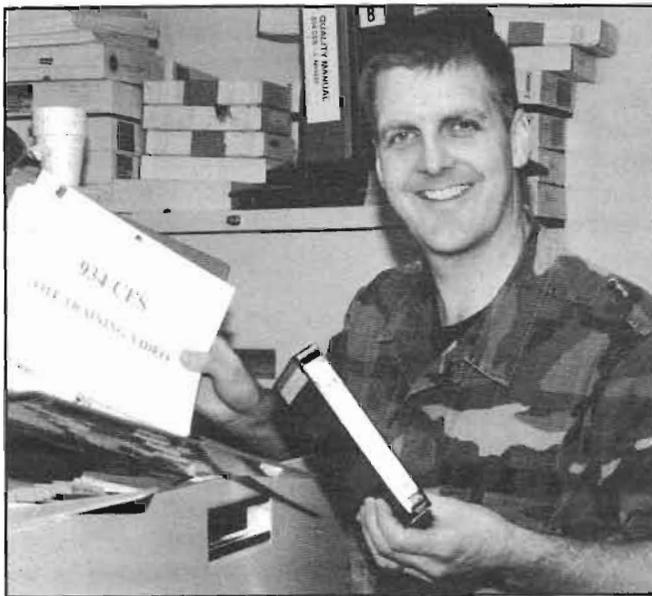


(Photo by Charle Huntington)

SSgt. Jennifer Whorton heads for the 934th C-130 bound for Pope AFB, N.C.

Best of the best

Senior NCO of the Year MSgt. John Nirschl



Unit: 934th Civil Engineer Squadron.
Job responsibilities: Education and training supervisor.
Education: Bachelor's in electrical and electronics engineering, North Dakota State University, Fargo, N.D.; associate's from Fergus Falls Community College, Fergus Falls, Minn.; three associate's degrees in different career fields from the Community College of the Air Force.
Hobbies: Reading, fishing, camping, auto repair, traveling and relaxing.
Civilian occupation: Electrical application engineer, Rockwell-CACD, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; licensed electrical engineer in state of Iowa.
Professional organizations: Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Iowa Engineering Society and Air Force Sergeants Association.
Goals: "Make more time for myself and my family; do more camping, traveling and fishing; continue to motivate myself and others in developing abilities -- obvious or not obvious."
Family: Wife, Jayne; children, Joey (8), Jeffrey (5) and Jenny (4); live in Cedar Rapids.

SrA.

Unit: 27th Aerial Port Squadron
Job responsibilities: Loading and unloading cargo from aircraft, and palletizing aircraft loads.
Education: Currently enrolled at Mankato State University, Minn., pursuing a bachelor's in electronics.
Hobbies: Electronics, camping and hiking.
Civilian occupation: Shift supervisor at Taytronics, an electronics plant in St. Peter, Minn.
Goals: "To complete my degree."
Family: Single, live in North Minn.

Junior Capt



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Scott Johnston

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or Officer of the Year
. Kelly Bankole

Unit: 96th Airlift Squadron.
Job responsibilities: C-130 navigator.
Education: Bachelor's in geography, with honors, from Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich.; master's in public administration, Golden Gate University, San Francisco, Calif.
Hobbies: Civilian flying, aerobics and antique shopping.
Civilian occupation: Tax preparer, H & R Block, Burnsville, Minn.
Professional organizations: Reserve Officers Association, Air Force Association and Women Military Aviators, Inc.
Goals: "Upgrade to navigator instructor; get the 96th completely trained in quality in the near future."
Family: Husband, Cullen; baby daughter, Lindsay Ann, born on Halloween; live in Burnsville, Minn.
Comments: "I'm greatly honored by this award, and I'd like to thank those who helped me complete my nomination package."

NCO of the Year
MSgt. Jean Hohn

Unit: 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.
Job responsibilities: Aeromedical evacuation technician, NCO in charge of standardization/evaluation and primary technician flight examiner.
Education: Licensed Practical Nurse degree, Eveleth Area Vocational-Technical College, Eveleth, Minn.
Hobbies: Gardening, landscaping, yardwork, baking, cooking and collecting cookbooks -- has over 300.
Civilian occupation: L.P.N., associate case manager, Health-East Optional Care, St. Paul, Minn.
Professional organizations: Air Force Sergeants Association, Multiple Sclerosis Society, Alzheimers Association, American Legion, Disabled Veterans Commander Club, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum National Wildlife Research Association, National Arbor Day Foundation and others.
Goals: "With the military, to complete a smooth transition to Air Combat Command, and in my capacity, help unit members achieve true interoperability with medical aircrew members



throughout the worldwide air evacuation system. Personally, to spend more time with my husband and family at home."
Family: Husband, Don, a senior master sergeant in AES; adult children, Jennifer and Paul; live in Lino Lakes, Minn. □

Family support survey

by SSgt. Larry Dean
public affairs

Survey results are in, and now the new 934th Family Support Center staff is using those results to look for ways of helping base families.

"Separate surveys were sent to reservists and family members in June, and

A recent survey reveals 934th families may not be prepared for the member's deployment, so big challenges face the family support staff

the results have been enlightening," said SSgt. Paige Petersen, NCO in charge of family readiness. "The most surprising

thing we found out through the surveys was that the majority of reservists and family members don't have a family care plan."

A family care plan, according to Petersen, is especially critical during a service member's absence. "The plan is to provide for the care of the family members' financial, legal and medical needs," she said. "The main reason the family readiness program was developed was that reservists'

families weren't prepared for Desert Storm. This caused a lot of hardship for family members."

Following are some of the other major responses to the survey questions:

▣ A total of 336 reservists and 127 family members responded. The majority were relative "newcomers," with 42 percent in the 934th for five years or less and 30 percent, from five to 10 years.

▣ Sixty-four percent of reservists are married and 8 percent are single parents.

▣ Sixty-seven percent of reservists and 87 percent of family members responding said they don't know what services are offered through the 934th Family Readiness Program.

▣ Only 29 percent of responding family members know their spouse's military and medical benefits and entitlements. Eighty-seven percent of family members, however, know where all of the family's important papers are.

▣ Forty-eight percent of reservists responding have a will; however, 87 percent say their reserve records are up to date. Family members indicated only 34 percent have a power of attorney in case their reservist deploys.

▣ Eighty-two percent of reservists responding have full-time jobs, yet only 13 percent said their employer has visited the base.

▣ Seventy-four percent of reservists said child care is not an issue for them.

"We always hear about child care problems, so it was extremely surprising that both reservists and family members said child care wasn't a problem," Petersen pointed out.

Responses from the survey led family support to organize its first program during the October UTA, addressing how to write an estate plan. Peterson said the office will hold a Family Health Fair during the December UTA to help publicize the 934th Family Readiness Program.

Petersen added that surveys were also sent to 450 civilian employees and 45 key people on base. "To date, we've received 100 completed surveys and are currently compiling them," she said. □



VADEX '94

(Photo by SSgt. Michael Dvorak)

A 934th aircraft, aircrew and aeromedical specialists participated Oct. 22 in the annual Veterans Affairs Department of Defense exercise, or VADEX. It tests capabilities to support a large-scale medical contingency, with 200 moulaged "patients" airlifted to seven U.S. sites. Pictured are SSgt. Kennedy Burnett (left), a civilian with 934th Disaster Preparedness who is also in the local Air National Guard aeromedical squadron, and Maj. Marilyn Hoy, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.

CATM

This cadre of combat arms experts ensure members' proficiency

by MSgt. Tim Turner
public affairs

Whether there are changing fall colors, drifts of snow, slushy spring thaws or summer's swirling clouds of bugs, the base firing range is up and running on the UTA.

Located a few miles from the base along the Minnesota River, the firing range is managed by eight members of the 934th Security Police Squadron in Combat Arms Training and Maintenance.

"Each year, we qualify hundreds of base reservists and Department of Defense people on a variety of weapons," explained MSgt. Robert Kahl, NCO in charge of the firing range, "including the M-9 pistol, M-16 rifle, M-16 machine gun and M-203 grenade launcher."

Reservists who, because of their Air Force Specialty Code or mobility status, must be weapons qualified, are divided into A, B and C categories, according to MSgt. Joseph Ockwig, CATM superintendent.

"For example, Category A includes security police," Ockwig said. "Category B includes civil engineer and aerial port squadrons, and Category C includes the logistics support and aeromedical evacuation squadrons."

The category a reservist falls into determines how often and which weapon or weapons they're required to qualify on. "Category A people, for example, need to qualify twice a year on their weapon," Kahl explained. "Category C reservists qualify every two years on their weapons."

The base firing range consists of 28 stations, comprised of a concrete floor, wooden frame and a tin roof. The shooters fire



SrA. Sean Gillam, a reservist in financial management, takes aim.



Members of the 934th Security Police Squadron provide the marksmanship training. Left, SSgt. Anthony Orr watches the firing line for proper safety procedures. Below, SSgt. Guy Decovich, computes the score of a trainee.

(Photos by MSgt. Tim Turner)



at a paper target simulating the upper anatomy of the "enemy."

"The object is to get as many hits in the chest area as possible," Kahl said. Shooters fire at targets placed at seven, 15 and 25 yards away from them.

Shooters are also put under different firing situations and time constraints to simulate a hostile environment, Ockwig said. "During a war, you're not going to have the luxury of firing at a stationary target," Ockwig said. "Chances are, the enemy is going to be moving and firing right back at you."

The CATM staff also teaches the basics of handling, caring for and shooting the weapon at the firing range. But perhaps the most important aspect taught is safety, according to Kahl.

"Most of the safety things we teach are common sense, such as never pointing the weapon at someone, but they bear repeating," he said. "Firing a weapon can be fun, and hunting and gun clubs are certainly great hobbies. But they're also serious business." □

Daring escape

Chaplain remembers his desperate flight from communism

by MSgt. Darrell Habisch
public affairs

Though Christmas can be a time of loving miracles and hope, one 934th reservist's memories of his own special miracle brings to mind a daring escape from daily threat of brain-washing, imprisonment and death.

Those dark memories of Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Peter Esterka are of his native Czechoslovakia before he and two friends risked their lives to escape. Though Esterka, now a Monsignor, wasn't a priest at the time, even priestly vestments were no protection -- in 1954, three Roman Catholic priests were convicted of crimes against Czechoslovakia and hanged. Another was accused of being a spy and spent 11 years in prison, only to die of mysterious causes after his release.

"I couldn't breathe there," said Esterka, recounting his escape at age 18. "The communists stifled everyone."

When he was 16, the communists closed his Catholic school and sent him to a "reeducation" school. "It was mostly brainwashing," he said. "I learned carpentry and went to work in a factory. Because I attended church and refused to join the Communist Party, I was refused any benefits."

During the '50s, the Communist Party purged most of the intelligentsia, explained Esterka, including educators, business leaders, medical and professional people, and depended more on the working class. "Although the secret police were on my back, I was working in a factory and considered reliable," he said. "So I applied and was accepted to an institution of higher learning."

But after two years of school, Esterka knew his future was limited under communist Czechoslovakia. "It was then that a friend, Joe, and I decided to escape," he said.

The pair began their daring move by train. Friends distracted the armed guards, and the two would-be defectors slipped aboard, heading for a city close to the Austrian border.

They rode until an official began checking identification papers. Moving quickly, they jumped from the speeding train into the night, narrowly escaping detection.

While walking to the border, Esterka and Joe met a friend, Syr, who noticed their bag filled with wire cutters, rubber gloves,

black pepper and other essentials. "Syr knew we were planning an escape and insisted he come along," said Esterka. "Even though he wasn't prepared, we said yes."

Later that night, the trio made their way slowly through the farm fields of Czechoslovakia. "We crawled through alfalfa, sugar beets and other produce, hoping no one would see us," Esterka said. "When we thought we'd reached the border, it was 4 a.m. and daybreak was coming. I could see a machine gun nest 40 yards away. Every few yards, we scattered pepper to throw the guard dogs off our trail. We didn't know where the mines were -- we just crawled on."

Soon the men reached train tracks crossing an open field. Esterka was the first to look over the tracks and see three barbed wire fences. Each fence had four strings of high-voltage wire.

"We crawled to the fences, and immediately, a flare shot into the sky -- we froze," Esterka said. "Maybe a rabbit set it off, or perhaps it marked the changing of the guard, I don't know. Soon a group of soldiers approached, but they didn't stop -- they just went on."

"After they were far away, we crawled to the fence," he continued. "At one point, I wanted to run to the fence. As I got up, a cramp seized my leg, and I dropped to the ground. Joe was lying on his back and noticed a trip wire for a mine we definitely wouldn't have seen. That cramp saved us."

The trio reached the fences and pulled out their wire cutters. Esterka and Syr made it through, but Joe, without any wire cutters, got stuck. "I went back to get him," Esterka said. "Seventy yards away was a guard tower. I remember being amazed the soldiers didn't see the sparks flying as we cut the wires. I pulled Syr through, and we crawled 200 yards to a large, painted rock marking the border. We'd reached Austria."

Within hours of their escape, the secret police were interrogating Esterka's parents. "Twenty years later, my mother told me what really made the agents mad was that we had escaped from right under their noses," Esterka explained. "We'd crossed right through the most heavily fortified border area, next to the main road connecting the two countries."

Miracles do exist, according to Esterka. "Syr, who wasn't a particularly religious man, was the least prepared to escape," Esterka said. "After praying at the first cross we encountered in Austria, he said that if anyone doubted miracles, he would just tell of our escape." □



The three men who lived a miracle are pictured here in Rome in 1961. From the left are Esterka, Syr and Joe.

Patches needed

Obsolete or worn-out unit patches are requested by public affairs to send to requestors writing from around the world. Either send patches through distribution, call for pickup of larger parcels or drop by public affairs in Bldg. 760, Room 130. For more information, call Ext. 5337.

Winter parking rules explained

From Nov. 1 through April 15, overnight parking on the base is prohibited except in lots designated for extended-period parking. Vehicles parked overnight in any other space will be ticketed and will

be towed if necessary for snow removal.

Extended-parking areas include the lot east of the tennis court, the west side of Earhart Street between Military Highway and Sixth Street, and the south side of Bldg. 865. For further information, call 934th Security Police, Ext. 5400.

Weather procedures set

The 934th uses the services of radio station WCCO-AM 830 to announce base closure or work hour changes during severe winter weather. If no announcement is made specifically for the 934th, normal work schedules apply. □

Kudos

Awards

Air Medals

TSgt. James Corneya OG
 Capt. Michael Erickson OSF
 Maj. Richard Gabe (1 OLC) OSF
 Lt. Col. Richard Huntington AW
 TSgt. James Schmidt (Basic, 1 OLC) AS

Promotions

SSgt. John Daily SPS
 TSgt. William Davis MSF
 TSgt. Sandra Dudley MSF
 SSgt. Frank Feldt AS
 SrA. Terri Floerchinger SVF
 SSgt. Gary Ford MXS
 MSgt. Constance Gastonguay ASTS

SSgt. Susette Gossett
 TSgt. John Hoffman
 MSgt. Jean Hohn
 SrA. Annette Honebrink
 SSgt. Calvin Lehna
 TSgt. Kenneth Olson
 SMSgt. Julie Perry
 MSgt. Phillip Sells
 TSgt. Caprice Williams
 TSgt. John Wulfing

Newcomers

SrA. Bryan Appel
 A1C Kermit Anstine
 SSgt. Gregory Duncan
 AB Jerome Hargreaves

SPS
 AS
 AES
 MSF
 AES
 SPS
 ASTS
 SPS
 AW
 ASTS

SSgt. Kent Johnson LSS
 AB Christopher Mitchell AW

Unit honors

SSgt. Eric Sund, APS, "Porter of the Quarter" Award for July-September 1994

Reenlistments/extensions

SrA. Tracy Anderson CF
 TSgt. Daniel Bohnen AES
 TSgt. John R. Chalich SPS
 MSgt. Brandy Fulton ASTS
 TSgt. Gordon Murphy CES
 MSgt. John Nirschl CES
 Sgt. Philip Vanzuilen MXS
 SSgt. Jason Velasquez OSF □

New chief of staff ...

(Continued from Page 4)
 reports and through awards and decorations. These are attributes of a quality Air Force.

Finally, good teamwork requires strong leadership. You don't need to have the word "commander" in your job title to be a leader. In fact, we can find and need leaders at every level of our organization. There are several things every leader must do. Leaders must know their people -- not as names, but as individuals -- and what they can contribute to the organization and its mission. Leaders also must treat their people with dignity, the way all of us would like to be treated. And leaders must not be afraid to make tough decisions, to accept responsibility. Being a leader requires courage of convictions and a sense of fairness in dealing with people.

There are a lot of intangibles about

leadership, but as a young officer, I was taught there are four simple pass/fail rules for all leaders.

☐ First, there can be no rule through fear. That's a tough task in a military organization where the commander's word is law.

☐ Second, there can be no inappropriate displays of anger. The rationale for this is simple -- if a person cannot control himself or herself, how can I expect them to control a unit?

☐ Third, there can be no breaches of integrity. Commanders get paid to know the good, the bad and the ugly. We gain nothing by trying to hide bad news. Keep the senior leadership informed. A lack of integrity is a show stopper -- it will not be tolerated -- it undermines the profession we practice, the profession of arms.

☐ Finally, the Air Force will not tolerate racial, religious, ethnic or sexual harassment -- period. Our individual people are too valuable to be hamstrung by not being allowed to reach their full potential.

Throughout my military career, I've learned that success or failure is based on people-to-people relations. Fostering strong people ties takes time, effort and attention. I'm totally committed to this and want to foster this philosophy throughout the Air Force.

Now you know a little of where I'm coming from. We must provide a stable environment, build a "team within a team," enhance quality of life and foster strong leadership at all levels. These are the central ingredients to make today's Air Force even better tomorrow. □

Tragedy of suicide

Getting help for people who need it is an important part of leadership, friendship

by MSgt. Gary Pomeroy
air force news service, pentagon

"I love you and the kids, but I just can't live with myself anymore. I am overwhelmed with life. I hurt -- my head, my throat, my guts. I can't think straight anymore. I'm overwhelmed at work. I have become ineffective. I need to sleep. I'm sorry."

This suicide note -- left by a 26-year-old Air Force E-4 -- illustrates a common trait among many suicide victims: they don't want to die -- they want relief from their problems.

While there are some common characteristics among many of the 30,000 annual suicides in the United States, it's too simplistic to characterize any such act as "typical." Suicide cuts across all ages, economic, social and ethnic boundaries.

In the United States, the overall suicide rate per hundred thousand persons has remained constant -- at about 12.4 -- throughout the century. As the population has grown, however, the number of suicides has steadily increased.

There were 2,654 suicides in the Department of Defense from January 1983 to the end of 1993. The 723 suicides in the Air Force during the same period ranged from airman basic to full colonel and included one cadet.

More telling may be the fact that the suicides outnumber homicides in this country. During 1992, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 29,750 people in the United States committed suicide compared to 26,570 homicide victims.

Numbers, though convenient in portraying trends and identifying who commits suicide, accomplish little in explaining why individuals end their lives. The debate is broadened by medical professionals, researchers and others who disagree over the level to which suicide is linked to mental illness.

"You very commonly hear folks, including a lot of medical people, say that people who commit suicide are psychiatrically impaired," said Nick McDowell, chief of homicide for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations.

McDowell, who has investigated every Air Force suicide since 1983, said victims who were mentally ill "account for maybe a maximum of about 3 percent." Professionals may disagree among themselves on this percentage, but they tend to agree with McDowell's general assessment that people get backed into corners.

"For the most part, these are fairly ordinary people caught up in, what is for them, an extraordinary circumstance for which they lack coping skills," McDowell said. "They've just basically become overwhelmed. But are they overwhelmed by things external to them or are they a part of their own problem? Do they help overwhelm themselves because of their inadequacies or inability or unwillingness to deal effectively with life?"

For the most part, McDowell said, the answer is yes. "The single most common thing that you find is difficulty in inter-personal relationships: husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend," McDowell said.

But there is also a "high incidence" of work-related problems, financial problems and substance abuse. "It's kind of hard to separate one from the other," McDowell said.

A bad relationship will affect work performance and the downward spiral begins. If a person slips into depths of despair, a "suicidal crisis" -- which may last about 10 days -- sets in.

"It's very rarely a compulsive act," McDowell said. "It's a poor solution in response to chronic problems. And what winds up happening is the person says: 'I'd rather be anyplace than where I am.'"

Some will mention to others their

desire to die. Some comments are subtle and others are not. "One kid," McDowell said, "told 18 different people, 'I'm going to kill myself. And here's how I'm going to do it, and here's when I'm going to do it.' And he did it."

McDowell believes that, overall, the Air Force has made strides toward making its people aware of what to look for in those who may have suicidal tendencies.

"What we've tried to do is provide information for leadership academies and the NCO schools to show how to recognize that a person is a potential suicide and give some ideas of what to do to deal with it," he said.

The people most likely to spot a potential suicide victim are friends, co-workers and immediate supervisors, according to McDowell. "If these people are able to recognize the problem for what it is, they can initiate action that can make the difference between life and death," he said. □



(Photo by TSgt. Tom Dyer)

Toys for Tots

Annette Spindler (left), 934th Recreation Services Office, and SSgt. Ronna Puck, 934th Services Flight, ask for new, unwrapped toys this UTA for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve's "Toys for Tots" drive. For information, call Ext. 5316.