

VIKING FLYER



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934th Airlift Wing,
Air Force Reserve Command,
Minneapolis-St. Paul International
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On the cover

934th Security Forces Squadron
Capt. Dan Forcier
clears snow from sidewalks around the security forces building Nov. 16 when the Twin Cities received its first major dusting of snow for the winter season.



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UTA schedule

| | |
|----------|------------|
| Jan. 6-7 | June 2-3 |
| Feb. 3-4 | Jul. 14-15 |
| Mar. 3-4 | Aug. 4-5 |
| Apr. 7-8 | Sept. 8-9 |
| May 5-6 | |

Commentary

A time for reflection

I am not really sure what happened to 2000, it seems like it just started and we are already into the holidays and the twilight of this year.

Although at this writing we are still talking about "chads" and who will become the next President, we do have a lot to reflect upon and to be thankful for.

For one, it looks like things are going to hold together overseas so we will not have a "Deny Christmas" this year.

As usual the Wing has performed magnificently this last year.

Even though the 934th Airlift Wing was not in its vulnerability window for the AEF we deployed over 760 people and used over 12,000 active duty mandays in support of missions throughout the world.

In addition we added to our impressive 158,000 accident free flying hour record and continued to amaze the command with our 76 percent aircraft mission capable rate average.

We hosted the President three times, the Vice President once, numerous other political leaders, and generals from all services.

All of this work did not keep us from volunteering our time to the community. Members of the 934th participated in the Paint-A-Thon, the Phyllis Whitley Foundation Camp Parson's Project, and many other charities and community projects.

In addition the 934th broke its own record of giving to the Combined Federal Campaign. Our goal this year was the highest set to date and we surpassed that amount by several thousand dollars.

We have seen valued

members of the organization retire or be promoted to jobs that have taken them far from Minnesota.

In return we have welcomed new members into the 934th family who bring fresh ideas and perspectives.

Our organization is healthy and vibrant and total manning is at 103 percent of authorized.

This coming year we will be doing our part for the Expeditionary Air Force. We are responsible for 320 15-day rotations to locations including Incirlik, Moron, Istres, Ramstein, Skopje, San Vito, Sembach, Aviano, Prince Sultan, Al Dhafra, Al Jaber, Eskan Village, and Ali Al Salem.

In addition some of us will be participating in a Readiness Assistance Visit and an Expeditionary

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Col. Dean Despinoy
934th AW commander

Individuals who have a question they feel needs a personal response from the 934th Airlift Wing commander can call his hotline at 713-4685. Questions are recorded and individuals may leave their name or remain anonymous. Questions of general interest will be answered in the *Viking Flyer*.



Holidays provide chance to take stock of values

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. (AMCNS) — The upcoming holiday season provides an opportunity for all of us to take stock of the important values that continue to guide our nation.

In this era of tremendous international uncertainty, the world continues to look to our country as the guiding light of freedom.

Every day, from posts, bases, and ports around the world, America's soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, Coast Guardsmen and Department of Defense civilians steadfastly support and defend our nation's strategic interests.

As the foundation upon which we have built and protected our freedoms, our great military remains central to our nation's ability

to forward the cause of democracy to the four corners of the globe.

U.S. Transportation Command continues to project both compassion and strength across the entire spectrum of military operations. You should be very proud of your magnificent contributions to such a variety of missions.

Our nation's demonstrated resolve to friends and foe alike is inextricably linked to your commitment to excellence.

I want to personally thank each of you for the professionalism and dedication that I see every day. I am proud to serve as your commander in chief — and equally as proud of the service you give to our great nation.

As you, the great men and

women of U.S. Transportation Command and our components Air Mobility Command, Military Sealift Command and Military Traffic Management Command, gather with your families

this holiday season, give thanks for the stability and prosperity you provide the world.

Please celebrate this holiday season safely, and look forward to the next year with great hope and charity. Happy holidays!



Gen. Charles T. "Tony" Robertson Jr., Commander in Chief, U.S. Transportation Command and Commander, Air Mobility Command

TDY is adventure; much more than expected

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia-- As I prepared for my TDY I told people this was an adventure and little did I know how much of an adventure it would be.

As I begin my sixth week, this tour of duty has been more than I expected. The job, the people and the mission have all been very rewarding.

I experienced the normal TDY transition time period, adjusting to the new time zone, virtually on the other side of the world.

There is actually a nine hour time difference between Minneapolis and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

It took me several days to learn where all the organizations and facilities were located.

When I left the 934th, I had several issues that I knew needed my attention.

The biggest was that the Air Reserve Components (ARC) were taking over the majority of the civil engineer duties at Al Dhafra, UAE. A site survey was required but had not been coordinated.

When I arrived at Eskan Village, Saudi Arabia, I learned that there was an airlift problem that needed resolution.

These issues have been successfully resolved. I worked with Air Force Reserve Command and ANGRC, along with the 763rd EARS/CC and 363rd AEW/CV to coordinate dates for the site visit.

That visit by four AFRC engineers took place last week. The transportation into and out of Al Dhafra has also been resolved.

One of the primary things I have learned is that taskings to the units must be filled.

When an ARC member doesn't deploy as they volunteered to fill a position or if they arrive late, it causes real problems and a potential for a mission failure.

When a guard or reserve member doesn't arrive by the Date Required In place (DRI), there is a scramble to find someone to fulfill that mission.

The biggest surprise since I arrived has been the attitude of the people.

After they get over their initial apprehension, they enjoy their work, and their coworkers.

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*Col. Paul Groskreutz
934th Support Group
commander*

Enlisted Medal of Honor winner loses cancer battle

SAN ANTONIO -- America lost a hero Nov. 8 when Air Force Medal of Honor holder John L. Levitow died at age 55 at his home in Connecticut after a lengthy battle with cancer.

The Vietnam-era sergeant was buried with military honors Nov. 17 at Arlington National Cemetery.

President Richard M. Nixon presented the Medal of Honor to Levitow on Armed Forces Day, May 14, 1970, for gallantry in combat 15 months earlier.

"This was a sad day for our Air Force," said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Jim Finch. "John Levitow for years has been woven into the fabric of enlisted heritage.

"Through his heroic efforts, he was the embodiment of our core value 'service before self.'

"His name has become synonymous with excellence, said Chief Finch, "and his legacy will continue to live in the hearts and minds of all Air Force members today and well into the future."

Levitow was cited for valor as an AC-47 gunship loadmaster during a mission on Feb. 24, 1969.

Flak had severely damaged his aircraft and peppered him with more than 40 shrapnel wounds in his back and legs.

Seeing a smoking magnesium flare amid a jumble of spilled ammunition in the cargo bay, Levitow threw himself on the flare and hugged it close as he dragged himself to an open door despite loss of blood and partial loss of feeling in his right leg.

As he hurled the flare through the door, it ignited white-hot, but harmlessly outside the aircraft.

"Sergeant Levitow served during a war in which heroic acts



John L. Levitow examines the cockpit of the C-17 named for him, the Spirit of John L. Levitow, Jan. 23, 1998 in Long Beach, Calif. Levitow, one of only 16 airmen awarded the Medal of Honor for exceptional heroism during wartime, died Nov. 8 at his home in Connecticut after a lengthy battle with cancer. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Tudor)

were commonplace, but by any standard, his courage that night was extraordinary," said Secretary of the Air Force Whit Peters.

"His selfless actions saved not only his own life but the lives of seven others.

"For three decades he has been an inspiration to all of our airmen — enlisted, officers and civilians," Secretary Peters added.

In recounting the event, Levitow had said he remembered the pilot yelling back to the crew, but didn't remember anything after that.

All members in the cargo compartment were wounded, according to history reports.

The aircraft sustained more than 3,500 fragment holes in the fuselage and a two-foot-wide hole in the right wing.

"What I did was a conditioned response," Levitow said in 1998. "I just did it. The next thing I remembered was seeing the landing strip."

After his Air Force service,

Levitow continued a close relationship with the military. He spent 22 years devoted to veterans affairs, and later worked in Connecticut developing and designing veteran programs.

Since 1969, the Air Force has honored him in many different ways.

· He has been a part of the Air Force Professional Fitness Exam booklet and, as any NCO who has pored over those promotion books knows, Levitow was the lowest ranking airman in history to earn the Medal of Honor.

· The Levitow Honor Graduate Award is presented to the top professional military education graduate from Air Force Airman Leadership Schools.

· The 737th Training Group Headquarters building at Lackland Air Force Base was named in his honor.

· Air Mobility Command named a C-17 Globemaster III after him in 1998.

"The Spirit of Sgt. John L. Levitow" is the first to be named for an enlisted person.

· Hurlburt Field, Fla., honored Levitow in 1998 by making him part of their Walk of Fame, which honors Medal of Honor recipients.

"John Levitow was a living legend, a true hero to the Air Force family," said Gen. Michael E. Ryan, Air Force chief of staff.

"His courageous, selfless combat actions demonstrate the essence of our core values and will forever serve as a standard for individual sacrifices and service.

"We will miss him. Our thoughts and prayers of comfort and peace are with the Levitow family."

Authorization Bill boosts reservist benefits

3.7 percent military pay raise effective Jan. 1 a key provision in the FY 2001 National Defense Authorization Act signed into law Oct. 30

WASHINGTON – More pay and better benefits highlight key provisions for reservists and reserve retirees in the fiscal year 2001 National Defense Authorization Act.

Signed into law Oct. 30 by the president, the act authorizes a 3.7 percent military pay raise to take effect Jan. 1, 2001.

The bill increases the maximum number of reserve retirement points that may be credited for inactive duty for training in a year from 75 to 90, which means reservists can earn a better retirement pension based on attending drills, performing annual training and completing correspondence courses.

Military retirees, including those from a reserve component, are required to switch from military health care to Medicare when they turn age 65.

The bill authorizes TRICARE as a secondary insurance to Medicare Part B, starting Oct. 1, 2001.

Retirees will still have to pay the \$45 fee a month for Part B, outpatient coverage but the military health care system is supposed to pick up annual deductibles and copayments for hospitalizations.

The legislation also provides for comprehensive retail and national mail-order pharmacy benefits for Medicare-eligible retirees.

Within 180 days after the act became law unless postponed by the secretary of defense, reservists

and active-duty members may deposit up to 5 percent of their basic pay, before taxes, each month in the Thrift Saving Plan.

They will also be allowed to deposit special pay, incentive pay and bonuses into the TSP account to maximum amount allowed by the Internal Revenue Code.

Unlike the provision of TSP for federal civil service employees under the Federal Employee Retirement System, the government does not have to contribute matching funds.

However, the service secretaries can authorize contributions to TSP accounts of members serving in critical specialties as a retention incentive.

With the advice of the Thrift Board, the secretary of defense can postpone the effective date of the military TSP another 180 days but must tell Congress about the delay.

Many of the benefits offered by defense bills are also not immediate because DOD must implement policies and programs before those benefits are delivered to service members.

For example in the past Congress has said reservists traveling to an inactive-duty for training location more than 50 miles from home should be eligible to stay in billeting on the same basis as active-duty people.

The authorization bill adds teeth to that claim by requiring DOD to put it into action with a regulation.

The change should benefit individual mobilization augmentees the most because IDT billeting for unit reservists is usually provided for by the unit.

Reservists can avoid even more out-of-pocket expenses, since

the authorization bill permits them to travel space-required on military aircraft to and from their home and the place of their annual tour and inactive-duty for training.

Just like last year's enlisted aviation pay boost, qualifying reservists may receive special duty assignment pay on a prorated basis during inactive duty for training periods.

Instead of an entire month's allowance, they receive one day of pay for each drill period of duty.

DOD and the services will determine who should receive special duty assignment pay, which varies in amount according to the type of duty.

The maximum monthly allowance for active-duty people jumped from \$275 last year to \$600 this year.

When performing funeral honors, reservists may request the \$50 stipend authorized by last year's authorization bill or one day of basic pay as if the duty were a unit training assembly.

With more missions going to reserve components, Congress authorized an increase in the number of members who can serve in full-time Reserve positions in support of the Air Force Reserve Command.

The additional high-grade authorizations, which took effect Oct. 1, are: 20 colonels, 75 lieutenant colonels, 88 majors, 97 chief master sergeants and 76 senior master sergeants.

The Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard will divide up the increases, based upon their original requests. (AFRC News Service)

Reserve families included in new dental program

Air Force Reserve families will be included as beneficiaries for the new TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) beginning Feb. 1, 2001 under Department of Defense policy guidelines.

This will significantly expand the number of Reserve forces personnel eligible for TDP.

One important new feature will allow Reserve members called to active duty in support of contingency operations to sign their family members up for the TDP by excluding them from the mandatory enrollment period.

"The TDP will be a tremendous benefit to National Guard and Reserve personnel in the very near future," said Charles L. Cragin, principal deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. "And the new policy guidelines will significantly improve the readiness of Reserve force families."

Under the current program, all military personnel are required to have at least 24 months remaining on active duty to enroll in the TRICARE Family Member Dental

Plan (TFMDP).

The new program will reduce this mandatory enrollment period from 24 months to 12 months of service commitment. It also will combine the TFMDP and the TRICARE Selected Reserve Dental Program (TSRDP).

For Air Force Reserve members, this means more covered services than were available under the TSRDP and a larger provider network.

Since 1995, more than 30,000 Reserve force personnel have served on involuntary active duty tours to support presidential Reserve call-ups for Bosnia, Kosovo and Southwest Asia. Reserve personnel ordered to active duty in support of contingency operations are limited by statute to serving an active duty tour of 270 days or less.

"The TFMDP mandatory enrollment period has precluded these reservists from enrolling their families in the TFMDP," said Cragin. "Without the new guidelines, reservists who cannot afford to pay



the full premium for continuing their civilian dental plan would be denied family dental coverage while on active duty."

The new policy guidelines for TDP were recently published in the Federal Register. The program will be administered through a new contract with United Concordia Companies Inc.

"Contingency opera-

tions are ongoing and the new dental program will be a significant benefit for Reserve families in the near future," Cragin said.

"The authority to waive the mandatory enrollment period demonstrates our commitment to military readiness. If our families receive better care, the more ready our Total Force will be."

Personal job crisis turns into strong support from employer

By Linda D. Kozaryn
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON-- About this time last year, Army 1st Lt. Craig Yarbrough got caught between a rock and a hard place.

When the National Guard called him up for nine months' active reserve duty in Bosnia, his civilian boss objected.

What began as a personal job crisis for Yarbrough ended up producing strong employer support for the National Guard and reserve components.

Yarbrough's dilemma turned into a win-win situation for his employer, Brinkman Technologies Inc., of Carrollton, Texas, and the Texas Army National Guard.

The citizen-soldier and his boss, Mark Brinkman, company president and chief executive officer, told their story recently.

They addressed about 250 corporate executives at a conference designed to promote partnerships between the military and corporate America.

It wasn't that Yarbrough didn't want to go to Bosnia, he explained. He'd been called up for duty many times during his 13 years with the high-tech company. In all, he'd spent more than two years away from the job serving Uncle Sam.

But this time, Brinkman objected to losing a division vice president for such a long period.

Yarbrough managed a \$2.4 billion project involving 170 international American schools in more than 130 countries.

His absence would have a significant impact on the company.

Brinkman appealed to Yarbrough's commander.

The CEO wrote saying he

would support Yarbrough's deployment if the lieutenant were "an essential element to the success of Task Force Eagle."

If he wasn't mission essential, Brinkman proposed, perhaps the command could send someone else or reduce Yarbrough's tour.

No can do, responded Army Brig. Gen. Robert L. Halverson commander of the Texas National Guard's 49th Armored Division. The 49th was designated to command Multinational Division North, he said, and Yarbrough was being mobilized and deployed under a Presidential Selective Reserve Call-Up.

By law, employers must hold employees' jobs when reserve component personnel are involuntarily called to active duty.

Halverson noted that the Bosnia mission would be the first time since the Korean War that a reserve component command had been given responsibility for active-duty combat forces.

The deployment represented "a significant opportunity for the 49th Armored Division to validate the competency and value of the reserve component in the overall defense strategy of the United States."

Because of his civilian and military experience in negotiating and managing contracts and in working internationally, Yarbrough was tagged to be the mission's commercial services officer.

The lieutenant was important to the success of the deployment, the general wrote, adding, "it would be virtually impossible to get another individual through all of the certification training at this late date."

Yarbrough packed his gear and

set off for Bosnia.

Brinkman Technologies provided the Texans with video teleconferencing equipment so they could keep in touch with their families and employers.

In return for his support, Yarbrough later invited Brinkman to visit Bosnia to see firsthand what it means to be a member of the nation's reserve forces.

Employer support committees throughout the United States sponsor programs to promote understanding between employers and the military.

"Briefings with the Boss" provide an informal forum for communication between employers and commanders, and "Bosslifts" transport employers and supervisors to active duty sites to show them what their reserve component members do while they're away from their civilian jobs.

"When I got the invitation to make the trip to Bosnia," Brinkman recalled, "I've got to tell you, it was not on my summer plans for a vacation spot."

Even though he confessed to having a lot of misgivings about the trip, Brinkman said he knew he had to go. Shortly before he left, he talked with family members who came to > BTI to make a video call. They thought he was "extremely lucky" to be Bosnia bound.

"I've got to tell you, 'lucky' wasn't one of the words I was thinking about. But I realized I was lucky to get the opportunity to learn about what Craig does on his deployments and also, I was very excited to be able to go over there and support the troops."

Arriving in the Balkans, he
(Continued on Page 8)

Armed troops not something employer sees everyday

(Continued from Page 7)

said, one of the first sights to impress the CEO was the fact that the troops were armed.

"Seeing people carrying guns is not something I'm used to in Carrollton, Texas."

The first day, Brinkman clambered aboard a helicopter to tour four towns in Bosnia. In some areas, he said, 80 percent of the homes had their roofs blown off and windows blown out.

He heard that when the Serbs ran out of explosives to blow up homes, they set a lit candle in the middle of the house, shut the doors and windows and turned on the gas. "That was quite upsetting knowing that people went through that," he recalled.

"Once we got on the ground, driving through the neighborhoods — actually walking the streets, what was even more upsetting was seeing people living in those homes with no roofs and no windows. It was quite an eye opener."

He also visited mass graves sites. "Seeing actual human bones in peoples' backyards. Seeing children's shoes amongst the bones. Seeing the backs of the homes pockmarked with bullet holes where they executed people. It was very moving and upsetting."

On July 4, the Texas Army National Guard band that had traveled to Bosnia with him played at an Eagle Base park.

"It was kind of like small town USA," he said. "When they played the national anthem, there were soldiers from all over the world, standing up, and I've got to tell you, my knees went weak when I saw soldiers from different countries saluting our flag. It was an amazing

moment for me, realizing how far this world has come in the past ten to 15 years. I'll never forget that as long as I live.

He came home with a new perspective. "I felt a little guilty for having written that letter to Gen. Halverson," he said. "At the time, I knew what our corporate needs were, but I didn't have the knowledge base, or the understanding of what the military mission was. I got that in Bosnia."

He wrote a letter after the trip to the commander of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment.

"What you and all the troops are providing to the world with your presence in Bosnia will have an effect on the world for generations to come," he wrote.

"Just think of the thousands of children growing up in Bosnia today who will not have to live through what their parents did. They will grow up knowing how to live in peace and with the knowledge that individuals from around the world, like you, gave of themselves to give them this gift."

The skills reserve component personnel develop and the personal growth experienced by being deployed in Bosnia is carried back into civilian life, the CEO noted.

"What you learn about yourself and the world during your deployment will make you a stronger leader and teacher for your family, your employer and anyone you come in contact with," he wrote.

Addressing his counterparts at the Washington conference, Brinkman said being in the National Guard or Reserve requires people to demonstrate a high level of dedication to both military and civilian professions. "They must

continually work within two separate schedules and maintain a level of organization that most people don't have to consider," he continued.

"To compound these difficulties, some of these men and women must deal with a negative corporate attitude, an attitude that exemplifies a lack of importance and concern toward their National Guard duties. I find it ironic that some companies don't support the very thing — the military — that provides them with the freedom to grow and prosper."

Brinkman said the Guard and Reserve members he knows don't watch a clock to determine when their day is over. "They know their day is over when their job is finished. They don't wait for others to make their decisions on how to perform their duties; they lead others and show them the way."

Overall, BTI has benefited from Yarbrough's military training and deployments, Brinkman said. "The personal growth, knowledge and perspectives he has obtained from his travels around the world and his experience living in and around different cultures has allowed him to give insight and to others within the company," the CEO said.

"It is my experience that the more we do for Craig to allow him to excel in his duties within the National Guard, the better teammate we receive when he returns," Brinkman continued. By sharing his time with the military, the BTI employee "becomes a stronger leader with an extremely well-rounded knowledge base, which ables him to get the job done. As a corporate CEO, I don't believe I can ask for anything more."

DOD to reshape workforce via expanded buyout program

by *Gerry J. Gilmore*
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — An expanded civilian buyout and early retirement program will enable the Department of Defense to reshape its workforce, the Pentagon's top civilian personnel official said.

Diane Disney, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for civilian personnel policy, said the fiscal 2001 National Defense Authorization Act extends the scope of the buyout and early retirement programs. The legislation allows DOD to retain some job positions vacated by employees taking separation incentives and reassign those slots to specialties envisioned for the workforce of 2010.

"The existing early retirement and buyout programs are continuing," Disney said. "There is no change in them. What we have is

an additional authorization that permits us to reshape the workforce."

Under the original program, Disney said, DOD was required to abolish a position every time an employee taking a buyout left the organization.

In fiscal 2001, about 1,000 buyouts under the expanded program will be offered within DOD, Disney said. Another 4,000 buyouts are on tap for each of the next two years, pending congressional authorization.

Many "baby-boomer" DOD civilians are expected to retire during the next five years, Disney said. In light of these developments, she said, DOD must now start hiring younger people with the information technology and other specialized skills needed for tomorrow.

"After 11 consecutive years of downsizing, we have many organizations where we might have the right number of people, but we don't necessarily have the right mix of skills," Disney said. "The expanded buyout program will allow us to permit someone to leave, but then allow us to reengineer that position for the skills that we'll need in 2010."

Disney said the original civilian buyout program "was very much" a downsizing tool. Since 1989, officials note, the defense department trimmed more than 400,000 civilian positions, with nearly 140,000 employees having qualified for separation incentives.

DOD does plan to reduce the workforce further — about 4,200 positions in 2001 and 3,400 in 2002 — through normal retirements, the original buyout program, and attrition, Disney said.

Enlisted PME

Programs will undergo top-to-bottom review this spring; first review in more than 8 years

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — The Air Force's enlisted professional military education programs will undergo a bottom-to-top review in the spring — the first in more than eight years.

The enlisted PME structure consists of Airman Leadership School, Noncommissioned Officer Academy and the Senior NCO Academy. The review will be conducted in late March at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. The review team will be led by Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Jim Finch and comprise command chiefs and other functional experts throughout the Air Force, according to Chief Master Sgt. Michael Eitnier, chief of En-

listed PME for the education division at the air staff.

"Like all dynamic programs, enlisted PME requires periodic review," Eitnier said. "The team will focus on each level of PME and will look at issues such as whether we are training our folks at the right time, how many airmen are sent, the curricula presented, and the program's links to promotion and career development."

Eitnier said one of the key issues officials want to look at is how PME scheduling ties into the expeditionary aerospace force concept and how can we accommodate essential training around EAF rotations with minimum mis-

sion impact.

The chief said he doesn't foresee major changes to the current PME structure, which currently produces roughly 27,000 graduates annually. "I'm not sure we will see any program changes; this is an opportunity to validate what we are currently doing," Eitnier said. "PME is a viable, dynamic program, particularly in the curriculum area. The education we're giving our folks is essential and meets the field's needs."

Once the group finishes its review, any proposed recommendations or initiatives will be forwarded to personnel officials and the Air Force chief of staff.

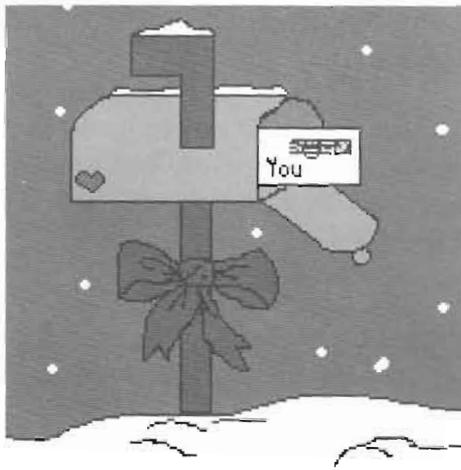
Kids can write Santa, courtesy of an AF unit

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska (AFNS) — Forty years and about 500,000 letters ago the 58th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron received its first bag of Christmas wish lists addressed to Santa Claus.

Today, the 354th Operations Support Squadron is still helping spread the holiday spirit through the Letters to Santa Program.

According to the chief elf for the holiday program, the story goes that post offices around the United States didn't know where to send letters addressed to Santa Claus. When they realized there was a post office at North Pole, they began forwarding the letters to here, said Staff Sgt. Robert Tidwell, a weather forecaster with the 354th OSS.

When the letters to Santa started arriving, no one was quite sure what to do with them. That's when volunteers from the 58th



WRS stepped in to help answer the letters.

About 40,000 letters passed through the unit in the first nine years of the program.

Along with wish lists from children around the world, the unit also receives notes from parents hoping to get a personalized letter for their child signed by Santa. The unit keeps a stack of two different preprinted notes signed by the jolly

old elf ready to send to children. As a special touch, it also includes a picture to color in each envelope.

"We put the notes in an envelope, put on our Santa's mail bag stamp and take the letters down to the North Pole post office. The canceled stamp reads 'North Pole, Home of Santa Claus,'" said Tidwell.

"We hope people will send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with their child's letter to Santa. That helps us get it out a bit faster. But, either way we'll make sure the child gets a reply from Santa," said Tidwell.

Children of all ages who want to send their wish list and get a special note back from Santa can write to:

Santa's Mailbag
c/o 354 OSS Weather Flight
1215 Flightline Ave
Eielson AFB, AK 99702

Letter program spreads holiday cheer abroad

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — Anyone interested in participating in a special holiday mail mission to spread goodwill and cheer to military men and women around the world can do so through "Operation Dear Abby," according to Military Postal Service Agency officials.

The operation, started 16 years ago by Abigail Van Buren — known through her nationally syndicated column as "Dear Abby" — encourages Americans to send cards and letters to service members stationed overseas during the holiday season.

To ensure the mail is received within the required time frame and adheres to Defense Department

security guidelines, MPSA officials said the mail must be limited to first-class letter mail weighing 13 ounces or less.

When sending mail to a specific area, people are asked to address it to the closest geographic hub, which will distribute the mail to all services in the area that it supports. In order for the system to cover the widest possible area, the addresses must remain generic. Addresses other than those listed below will not determine the distribution. For example, a letter addressed to a "Soldier" may be distributed to an airman, sailor or Marine.

The following are this year's

addresses:

Europe and Southwest Asia

Any Service Member
OPERATION DEARABBY
APO AE 09135

Mediterranean Basin

Any Service Member
OPERATION DEARABBY
FPO AE 09646

Far East

Any Service Member
OPERATION DEARABBY
APO AP 96285

Pacific Basin

Any Service Member
OPERATION DEARABBY
FPO AP 96385

The addresses will only be valid from Nov. 15 to Jan. 15. The U.S. Postal Service will not accept any mail for these addresses received after Jan. 15.

Mentoring program

Seniors spend day touring maintenance facilities

By Staff Sgt. Suzanne Runtsch
934th AW Public Affairs

"What do you want to be when you grow up" is a question many people may remember hearing growing up, and their response may have been to scratch their head as they pondered the possibilities.

For three local high school students, one way they learned more about a career in aircraft maintenance was by taking part in a job-mentoring program with the 934th Maintenance Squadron.

Guidance counselors from Morris High School matched up the high school seniors with the squadron. The school has outlined a real-world job-hunting scenario.

"The students made all their own arrangements, just as they would applying for a real job," said Capt. Jay Smeltzer, 934th maintenance officer. "They prepared and mailed resumes to me, made transportation and lodging arrangements, and asked for appointments for a job interview.

"I wanted to help the students be successful," said Smeltzer. "My role was to provide feedback and guidance on job interviewing techniques."

While here, the students visited the aerospace ground equipment, hydraulic, machine, electro-environment and machine shops. They saw various phases of what the squadron does and how it all comes together. They also watched some aircraft launches.

Smeltzer believes the project



Master Sgt. David Strande (kneeling), aircraft crew chief and Capt. Jay Smeltzer, 934th maintenance officer, discuss the C-130 with high school seniors Aaron Wurm, Jennifer Kleespies and Brian Harstad. (Photo by Maj. Marge McGlenn)

is valuable for both the students and the unit.

"Any chance we have to educate high school students is great, it's a recruiting opportunity," he said. "Pairing up students with professionals in the career path they have an interest in is the best way for them to learn about a job." Smeltzer believes mentoring involves more than sharing career knowledge. He sees informal mentoring happening everyday, and notes that mentors extend both professional and personal growth.

"Mentors in my life have helped me build my moral charac-

ter," the captain said. "They've challenged me to evaluate my values and have been compassionate without losing sight of the mission. I believe the best mentors help you build personal integrity—which has a direct correlation to work performance.

"Mentoring these high school students is a way of giving back," Smeltzer said. "I'm a composite of the leaders I've worked for." He believes mentors should share their successes and errors, "mentors can't be afraid to share their weaknesses, to help others avoid and learn from them."

Local news

Viking Victor

Major Maureen Banavige

Position/unit: Deputy commander, 934th Logistics Group

Education: Master of science in Business Administration, Boston University; Bachelor of science in Applied Mathematics, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester MA.

Professional organizations: Reserve Officers Association

Civilian occupation: Full-time mother

Hobbies: travel, golf, bike riding

Goals: To ensure folks in the logistic group have a work environment that fosters teamwork and excellence and allows them to achieve their own military goals.

Family: Husband, Jo; children, Ben 4; Jeb, 2; Maeve 1; live in Independence MN.

Comments: I enjoyed my time working with all of the great folks in the logistics support squadron. They are a dedicated and hard-working team, and the next commander will be privileged to work with them.



Wing initiates C-130 shuttle for UTA travelers

934th Airlift Wing members living in the North Dakota area now have another transportation option to make their monthly Unit Training Activity, thanks to a relatively new C-130 shuttle service.

Officials said the new service to Grand Forks AFB was combined with the shuttle flight already in existence for unit members residing in the Chicago area.

The shuttle departs Minneapo-

lis on Friday for Chicago first, then continues on to Grand Forks AFB, arriving there at 3:45 p.m. The aircraft departs Minneapolis Sunday for Chicago, then continues on to Grand Forks AFB, arriving there at 9 p.m.

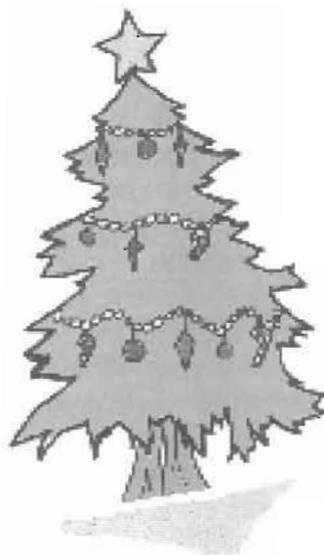
Officials said unit members taking advantage of the new service will be authorized lodging both Friday and Saturday nights. They stressed it is the individual's responsibility to make sure they are placed on the lodging reservations list at their unit. They pointed out the success of the new service will depend on sufficient participation to make the trip cost effective.

Individuals who wish to be placed on the passenger manifest, or who have questions about the shuttle should contact Master Sgt. Helenka M. Sommers at (701) 747-4339.

Holiday get together set for Dec. 11

The 934th Airlift Wing commander and his senior commander's are sponsoring a casual holiday get together at the Officers Club on Dec. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

They invite all employees, which includes reservists, ARTs, civilians and their spouses to join them for heavy hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Attendees are encouraged to wear their favorite casual holiday clothing.



Wing exceeds CFC goal

Members of the 934th Airlift Wing dug deep into their pockets, contributing several thousand dollars over their goal during the annual Combined Federal Campaign.

Local

"Our goal was \$21,000," said Roger Hansen, this year's campaign coordinator. "Thanks to the generosity of employees within the 934th,

we just skyrocketed past that, with pledges totaling more than \$24,000.

Hansen pointed out that this could not have happened without the support of key workers who made this year's campaign a major success. He extended his thanks to Deborah Helseth, Capt. Bonnie Tremblett, Patricia Olsen, Deborah Manselle, James Mathews, Larry Ryan, Robert Keldsen, Diane Eckstein and Joe Bystedt.

AFSA begins annual membership drive

Chapter 858 of the Air Force Sergeants Association began its winter membership drive Dec. 1.

All enlisted personnel from the 934th Airlift Wing are eligible to join.

Annual dues for airmen basic through senior airman are \$15 and annual dues for staff sergeants through chief are \$21.

"AFSA has fought for many benefits for Air Force Reservists for the last three years," said Master Sgt. Lin Davidson, chapter president and a member of the 934th Airlift Wing. "It has worked with other military support organizations to increase the size of the annual pay raise for reservists. It has also gotten the IDT points earned in one year raised from 75 to 90. And all ARTs should be AFS members after AFSA fought to protect the paid military leave benefit."

AFSA members enjoy travel, insurance, shopping and health insurance discounts. There are educational programs available for members and their families. Each unit orderly room has AFSA applications or individuals can contact their first sergeant. For more information call the local chapter at 952-884-6077 or email: Ldavidson7@juno.com.

Services sets holiday hours

Hours of operation for several services facilities will be curtailed over the Christmas and New Years' holiday period.

Local

Base lodging will be closed Dec. 24, 25 and 31, and Jan. 1.

The Fitness Center will be closed Dec. 23, 24, 25, 30 and 31, and Jan. 1.

Both the Officer and NCO Clubs will be closed Dec. 23-26, and Dec. 31 until 6 p.m. Both clubs have reservation-only activities planned New Years Eve. Contact them for details. Both clubs will be closed New Years Day.

Menu for December UTA

Local

The menu for the December UTA in the dining facility will be:

Chicken or stir fried pork for Saturday entree; Swiss steak or baked chicken for Sunday entree.



Viking Victor

Capt. Ray Otto

Position/Unit: Executive Officer, 934th Airlift Wing

Previous Position: Sole Crash Investigator for Air National Guard (full-time); Section Commander for the 459th Maintenance Squadron (part-time), Andrews AFB, MD

Education: JD, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND; Bachelor of Science in Aviation Maintenance Management, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Daytona Beach, FL and international campuses.

Professional organizations: Life member Air Force Association (National Director, Maryland State president).

Hobbies: any water or air sports

Wife: Deanne

People

Promotions

MSgt. Robert C. Buie, 934th OSF
MSgt. Donald W. Macelroy, 934th MXS
MSgt. Margaret McGillzimny, 27th APS
MSgt. Lee D. Nupson, 934th MXS
MSgt. David A. Roach, 96th AS
MSgt. Pamela S. Russell, 934th AW
MSgt. Mitchell A. Shores, 934th MXS
TSgt. Jody K. Knight, 934th MSF
TSgt. Leo B. Moreno, 934th SFF
SSgt. Stephanie Belle-Isle, 934th ASTS
SSgt. Stacy L. Bounds, 934th MXS
SSgt. Eric A. Drexler, 934th LSS
SSgt. Bradley A. Hegge, 934th CES
SSgt. Elliot Labeau, 934th CF
SSgt. Jessica L. Lind, 934th OSF
SSgt. Charity M. Lusteck, 934th AW
SSgt. Terry L. Mackowick, 934th ASTS
SSgt. Nicole R. Scheuer, 934th ASTS
SSgt. Steven C. Ward II, 934th LSS
SSgt. Angela A. West, 934th ASTS
SrA. Daniel R. Mellesmoen, 934th SFS

Newcomers

Shirley M. Smith, 934th OSF/DO
SSgt. Edward J. Kusterbeck, 934th MXS/LGMV
Charles Lowe, 934th MXS/LGM
Deborah E. Carriger, 934th CF/SCB
Maj. Margaret A. McGlenn, 934th AW/PA
Janet L. Dalton, 934th AW/SE
Al Eakle, 934th AW/PA
Ronald P. Martin, 934th AW/FMF
Kenneth C. Rogers, 934th OSF/DOIA
Carl W. Snider, CPM

Meritorious Service Medal

Col. Lou Anne G. Page, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, first oak leaf cluster.
Maj. Lizabeth L. Erickson, 934th Aeromedical Staging Squadron.
Maj. Christopher J. Lewis, 934th



(From left to right) Tammy Davis, lodging manager; Margaret Belson and Tina Goff, front desk clerks and Elvira Burley, front desk supervisor, proudly display certificates earned by Belson and Goff through the AFRC Performance Plus Program.

Logistics Group.

CMSgt. Donald A. Hohn, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.
CMSgt. Jeffrey M. Irving, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.
MSgt. Timothy O. Atchley, 934th Aeromedical Staging Squadron.
MSgt. Joseph P. Brinza, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.
MSgt. Brandy G. Fulton, 934th Aeromedical Staging Squadron.
MSgt. Bernadette Koehle, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.
MSgt. John G. Nutting, 96th Airlift Squadron.
TSgt. Thomas S. Slavik, 27th Aerial Port Squadron.
TSgt. Richard J. Welter, 934th Maintenance Squadron.

Air Force Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. (Dr.) Jorge L. Llambes, 96th Airlift Squadron, first oak leaf cluster.
MSgt. Richard G. Dunne, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, first oak leaf cluster.
TSgt. Mark C. Quinlan, 27th Aerial Port Squadron, first oak leaf cluster.
Maj. Kirby L. Bauer, 934th Airlift Wing.
Maj. Cleo L. Bonham, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.
Maj. Anne C. Jones, 934th Aero-

medical Evacuation Squadron.
1Lt. Ronald G. Ross, 934th Aeromedical Staging Squadron.
MSgt. Karen J. Carlen, 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron.
TSgt. Donald W. MacElroy, 934th Maintenance Squadron.
TSgt. Bruce C. Medearis, 934th Maintenance Squadron.
Air Force Achievement Medal
TSgt. Orin H. Johnson, 96th Airlift Squadron, first oak leaf cluster.
TSgt. Richard B. Kullmann, 934th Maintenance Squadron.

Air Reserve Meritorious Service Medal

Tech. Sgt. Ken Olsen, 934th Security Forces Squadron, 3rd oak leaf cluster
Ed Johnson, 934th Services Squadron, 1st oak leaf cluster

Air Force Longevity Ribbon

Senior Master Sgt. David Provo, 934th Security Forces Squadron, 4th oak leaf cluster
Tech. Sgt. Clarence Cavalier, 934th Security Forces Squadron, 2nd oak leaf cluster
Tech. Sgt. Ken Olsen, 934th Security Forces Squadron, 2nd oak leaf cluster
Tech. Sgt. DeWayne Schnider, 934th Services Squadron, 5th oak leaf cluster
Staff Sgt. Thomas Their, 934th Security Forces Squadron, 1st oak leaf cluster
Senior Amn. Brian Wahlstedt, 934th Security Forces Squadron

Armed Forces Reserve Medal

Master Sgt. Shawn Ferrin, 934th Services Squadron, with silver hourglass
Tech. Sgt. Douglas Blair, 934th Security Forces Squadron
Tech. Sgt. DeWayne Schnider, 934th Services Squadron

Base hockey team gears up for ice play

By Staff Sgt. Suzzanne Runtsch
934th AW Public Affairs Office

White clouds of condensed air rush past their lips as players race across the ice, chasing a small black disk, long sticks slicing through the air.

As lakes freeze and birds fly south, Minnesotan's know ice hockey season will soon follow and members of the base hockey team are gearing up for another season.

"I love the game," said Joe Bystedt, who is in his first year as coach of the Flying Vikings. "My job as coach is really to organize the team. As players, we all coach each other."

A player with the team for five years, he is the nondestructive inspection shop chief in the 934th Maintenance Squadron.

The team consists of 22 players, with five skaters and one goalie on the ice during play. Word of mouth is all the team has used to recruit players from year to year. "Everyone on the team is out there because they enjoy playing hockey," said Bystedt. "When you live in



Returning player Ian Owen on the ice.
Photo by Mark Woodson

Minnesota you learn to appreciate winter sports."

Sponsored by the Morale, Welfare and Recreation office, they play in an organized league comprised of eight teams. The team plays 14 games per year on Sunday nights at the Charles Schultz arena (formerly St. Paul Highland Park arena), 800 Snelling Ave. South, St. Paul, in either the north or south arenas.

"Margo Leslie has gone out of her way to fund and support the team," Bystedt said. "MWR covers the league and practice fees, and

tournament costs." Players must have their own equipment and pay for uniforms.

"I play a lot of sports and nothing wears you out as fast as hockey," the coach said. The league is open to men and women. It's a no-check, no slap shot league. "We're all adults," he added, "and we all have to go to work the next morning."

"I enjoy just being with the team and having a good time," said team forward Paul Owen. "The team has become more organized in the nine years I've been a member." A crew chief in the 934th Maintenance Squadron, he said, "We have more players and there's a higher interest level in the game."

The team's coach said it's fun to get together with other reservists outside of work.

"On the rink there is no rank," Bystedt said. "Our commander (Cam LeBlanc) is the goalie. It's fun to launch a few pucks at him."

The following is the team's schedule for the remainder of the season:

Flying Vikings ice hockey season schedule

| DATE | TIME | OPPONENT | ARENA |
|---------|------------|-----------------|-------|
| Dec. 3 | 10: p.m. | Deloitte-Touche | South |
| Dec. 10 | 9:10 p.m. | West Whalers | North |
| Dec. 17 | 9:10 p.m. | St. Paul Police | North |
| Jan. 7 | 10:20 p.m. | Burlington | North |
| Jan. 14 | 8:50 p.m. | Air Guard | South |
| Jan. 21 | 8:50 p.m. | West Sharks | South |
| Jan. 28 | 10:20 p.m. | Keane | North |
| Feb. 4 | 10 p.m. | Deloitte-Touche | South |
| Feb. 11 | 9:10 p.m. | West Whalers | North |
| Feb. 18 | 9:10 p.m. | St. Paul Police | North |
| Feb. 25 | 10 p.m. | Burlington | South |
| Mar. 4 | 10:20 p.m. | Air Guard | North |
| Mar. 11 | 8:50 p.m. | West Sharks | South |

Time to celebrate this year's accomplishments

With the holiday season upon us and as the first year of a new century comes to a close, it's appropriate that we take a moment to celebrate our accomplishments of the past year and honor the citizen airmen who have made our command great.

Because of your dedication, professionalism and commitment, the command was able to play an even larger role in the Expeditionary

Aerospace Force. Without you EAF would not be the success that it is today.

In addition, you answered the call for help and came to the aid of people in need at home and in a host of foreign countries, which is really what the holiday season is all about.

You can be proud of your accomplishments and in the way in which you carry on the tradition of

dedicated citizen airmen serving America.

Marsha and I wish each of you and your families the happiest of holiday seasons and the best of new years.



Maj. Gen. James E. Sherrard
AFRC commander

Colonel Despinoy comments

Holidays a time to enjoy, appreciate families

(Continued from Page 2)

Operational Readiness Inspection. The plate is full as usual, but never let it be said that the country does not need the reserves.

Through all of this activity plus countless events associated with your civilian job and family we continue to serve proudly. The holiday period is the time to enjoy

our families and fully appreciate their love and support.

As a small token of my and the senior commander's appreciation for all that you and your families do, we are sponsoring a casual holiday get together at the Officers Club on Dec. 11 at 6:30 p.m.. We invite you and your family to join us for heavy hors d'oeuvres and an cash bar.

Wear your favorite casual holiday clothing. There may even be prizes for the best and ugliest holiday sweater. The event is for all members of the 934th family to include reservists, ARTs, civilians and their spouses. Hope to see you there.

To all, have a safe and joyous holiday season and thank you for all you do.

Colonel Groskreutz comments

Consider a 30-day stay if it can be supported

(Continued from Page 3)

Many wish they had volunteered for a longer TDY period and request to extend their stay. Since I get involved in all of these, I can tell you it is easier to volunteer for a longer period "up front". After you get here it is almost too late. In fifteen days you barely get to know what you are doing, so I encourage you to consider 30 days if you, your family and your employer can support the extra time.

My biggest adventure involves a chaplain.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Gerry Houge and I were neighbors in Albert Lea several decades ago. The Chaplain and I lived about a block away from each other. My brother remembers delivering the newspaper to the Houge household.

Gerry and I have had a great time getting to know one another again.

Thanksgiving was last week. Just like back home, "the family" got together to celebrate the day. The JTF-SWA command section, of

which I am part, had dinner together at the Mirage Dining Hall.

That made the day special. Everyone had a good time enjoying their SWA family.

The next holiday will be Christmas/New Years. Some of us are currently planning on how to make that time special. Being away from family and friends during the holidays is difficult, but we can meet that challenge.

I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the desert.