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CONTACT

Vol. 25, No. 01

Magazine for and about Air Force Reserve members assigned to the 349th Air Mobility Wing, Travis Air Force Base, California

January 2007

349th Air Mobility Wing shows appreciation to Honor Guard



Total Force is now

Welcome to the January 2007 UTA! January has always been a time for looking back to the past and, more importantly, forward to the upcoming year. It's a time to reflect on the changes we want or need to make. A time to resolve to follow through on those changes, a time for reflection and a chance for new beginnings. The problems of the world do not just disappear overnight but the New Year gives us a fresh perspective, a renewing, to assist us in moving forward to handle the tasks we have before us.

In the year past the Air Force Reserve has gone through many changes, from Base Realignment and Closure decisions, Program Budget Decision 720, where the Air Force Reserve will have to reduce its manning by 7,744 members, to new aircraft, new squadrons and changes in missions. PBD 720 is a challenge in itself, the Reserve will close some of our Geographically Separated Units, and one-third of the 7,744 personnel reductions will come from the medical career field, some from units and some from the Individual Mobilization Augmentee program, however all career fields will be affected even if not directly.

Personnel cuts are always tough, yet at

times they are necessary. According to Secretary Michael Wynn, Secretary of the Air Force, "the Total Force is now." It is necessary to produce a smaller, more capable, more affordable Air Force right now. We will have some of the same commitments and challenges but we will deal with those challenges differently. With a smaller force we will have to change our processes and embrace the Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century plan and continue to be the most efficient and



effective wingman we can be. The Air Force Reserve mission statement "Deliver sovereign options for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests — to fly and fight in Air, Space, and Cyberspace" will move us from today through the next decade in the Air Force



By Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Gisler, Jr.

Reserve. There are many changes ahead however changing with a purpose leads to growth and I for one am excited to see where this will lead us.

I encourage each and every one of you to take some time to assess your life and make sure all of your responsibilities in career, family and military are being met. If they are not, develop a plan on how you can improve on those areas in your life.

The citizen Airmen of the 349th Wing will remain always ready to fulfill our role as proud partners in America's defense. We continue to carry out our mission day after day. That never changes, no matter what the year.

In other words, 2007 promises to be busy and challenging and we wouldn't want it any other way. Have a wonderful UTA!



photo by Patti Schwab-Holloway, 349th Public Affairs

A generous donation: Former 349th members, Lt. Col. (retired) George S. Buchanan and Lt. Col. (retired) Jerald D. Nelson, both of the 349th Navigators' Association, hand a donation check in support of Operation Teddy Bear to 349th Command Chief Master Sgt. Patricia Thornton and Senior Master Sgt. Michael Lattanzi, 945th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron an Operation Teddy Bear committee coordinator, on behalf of the organization, Dec. 14. Operation Teddy Bear was started more than twenty years ago by 349th Wing mail room civilian employees, Mr. Bill Ronders (reservist) and Mr. Cipriano Villanueva, who is better known as 'Mr. V.' In 1999, the 349th AMW Top Three assumed responsibility for the program. This past year's Operation Teddy Bear distribute about 900 Teddy bears to nine elementary schools, shelters and hospitals. (Editor's note: Visit the 349th Wing web site at <http://www.349amw.afrc.af.mil> for a full article on Operation Teddy Bear.)



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CONTACT

Vol. 25, No. 01

January 2007

Inside this issue

4 Command Chief Commentary

Command Chief Master Sgt. Patricia A. Thornton's commentary shares some of her favorite motivational words of wisdom.

5 Operations Security for everyday use, 365 days a year

As Federal employees, we are the representatives of the people. The American people trust us to do our jobs and keep them safe. The mishandling of information can put everything at risk and cost the lives of many Americans.

6 Team Travis firefighters earn world championship

Team Travis firefighters came out ahead of more than 700 participants from U.S. and Canadian municipal fire departments in this year's World Combat Challenge.

7 Operation Give Thanks, a lesson in love

A 349th member tells a fascinating story shared with him during 'Operation Give Thanks' at the California Veterans home in Yountville, Calif. - a story not about a past military battle, but instead a more recent story about love.

8 Since you can't pick your family, try picking your coworkers

Good help is hard to find. Now you can help with the 'Get One Now' program.

9 AFPC offers guidance to retiring civilian employees

The Air Force Personnel Center's Benefits and Entitlement Service Team encourages civilian employees who want to retire in the next few years to plan ahead.

10 Reservists deal with homecoming stress

People who deploy deal with some stress in conjunction with going or returning home. What you should do if the stress doesn't go away on its own.

11 News briefs from around the Air Force

12 Wing 'Spotlight' Airman - highlights outstanding 349th members

On the Cover



Cover photo by Staff Sgt. Meredith Mingledorff, 349th Public Affairs

Appreciating hard work: 349th Wing members gather to show their support and appreciation during the 349th Wing's Annual Honor Guard Recognition Luncheon, Dec. 3. The luncheon was conducted in Bldg. 80, the Travis Air Museum. Presenting the colors at the event are (left to right) Staff Sgt. Adan Reyes, 749th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Technical Sgt. Matthew Stohner, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, Technical Sgt. John Mackenzie, 349th ASTS and Staff Sgt. Rosalyn Pearson, 349th Aerospace Medicine Squadron.

Now rather than later

What a blessed Christmas and holiday season - so much to be thankful for during the past year! Now that it's the New Year, I'm sure many of you have specific resolutions in mind. If one of them is to be promoted this next year or you would like to ensure someone else will be promoted, have I got a plan for you! First of all, based on experience, whether you're a promoter or a promotee, unit vacancy or Promotion Enhancement Program, officer or enlisted, following this plan will give you a competitive edge, especially critical in these times. Here's the plan:

- For the enlisted, familiarization with Air Force Instruction 36-2618, Enlisted Force Structure is imperative. It spells out the responsibilities for each rank. Individuals being considered for promotion should already be meeting and exceeding the standards of the rank they are aspiring to; if not, they should not be promoted. Remember awards are for what you've done in the past; promotions for your potential as a leader at the next rank.

- Have a grooming timeline established. Supervisors should have a good idea who they will recommend for promotion and set these individuals up for success. How? By first ensuring they excel at their jobs, by submitting them for quarterly and annual awards, ensuring they have current (within three years) extended tour or outstanding achievement medals, i.e., Air Force Achievement, Commendation or Meritorious Service medals. Send them to leadership development courses, conferences and other self-improvement classes, such as Leadership Development Program, Headquarters Orientation, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Leadership, Franklin Covey or computer classes. Offer them opportunities to take on additional

duties, share with them information about community involvement and then allow them to participate in organization such as Human Resource Development Council, Top Three, Rising Six, Operations Teddy Bear, Gratitude and Give Thanks, 349th Enlisted Workshop, Honor Guard Recognition Ceremony or mentoring at Airman Leadership School. All of this develops the whole person, which is especially critical for the highly competitive PEP process.

- Promotion is a dual responsibility. Supervisors provide the path; the member needs to follow it and lead the way.

- What individuals do in their civilian lives counts. In fact, being multi-faceted citizen Airmen, while challenging, demonstrates time-management abilities which contribute to leadership development. Many of our folks are earning certificates, degrees and licenses while gaining civilian job experience which directly relates to their military job. This better enables them to lead at the next level. All of this should be included in packages that are written for them.

- It's critical that packages be written well, whether they're Enlisted Performance Reports, Officer Performance Reports, medals, PEPs, quarterly or annual awards, or special awards. Having served on many boards, I will tell you well-written packages are key but rare. Here's a secret, the more packages you write, the better you'll become at writing them. The Top Three sponsors EPR, awards and PEP writing classes. Take advantage of these or set up your own unit program. Also, the best packages are not written by one person; they are scrubbed by a team before submission. This team writing method has proven to be highly successful, and I encourage all units to adopt this concept.



**By Command Chief Master Sgt.
Patricia A. Thornton**

Another thing - good packages have good bullets that follows this template:

AIR

A = Action

I = Impact

R = Results (percentages and numbers)

- Start writing the packages several months before the suspense. This does not need to be a last minute, labor and time intensive process. Set up a process to write a few draft bullets on each individual each month, and when it's time to write the package, it's just a matter of refining the bullets. As a rule, we should all keep a running timeline of accomplishments on ourselves so when needed, we can contribute to this process.

- Well-written EPRs and OPRs are a must. Just about every board and special assignments require copies of the last two, and they are reviewed.

- Professional Military Education must be done, whether correspondence or in-residence.

- Fitness is important. Meeting or exceeding the minimum standard, 75, demonstrates commitment to leading the way as a role model for others.

It brings me great joy to see our well-deserving Airmen being recognized for their accomplishments through medals, and awards, which lead to promotions. Have a plan, then have a team execute it. Let's take on this New Year by showing we care by taking the time to know and then recognize our people - now, rather than later!

New Year brings chance to look forward, look back

by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Gregory Stringer
349th Air Mobility Wing

Happy New Year to all of you! The year of 2006 has closed and the new year of 2007 has arrived! One thing is for sure, as we look back into 2006 and forward into 2007, many choices presented themselves to us and many decisions were made, that

will again be apart of our life as we begin 2007. So, with all those choices and options that present themselves before us, where can we go to find some guidance on making responsible and healthy choices and decisions? I would submit to you that God has some very good help for us in the Scriptures. In fact, in the book of Psalms from the Holy Bible, the writer states this about God's Word: "Your word is a lamp

to my feet and a light to my path." Ps 119: 105. The writer is reminding us that God's Word is a beacon that guides us through the darkness to safety. It helps us to see the way clearly, so we do not stumble and fall into unseen pitfalls. It helps us see what choices would keep us healthy in our relationship with Him and with others. It shows us how to make

(See Choices on page 8)

Operations Security everyday, 365 days a year

by Lt. Col. Jason Fought
349th OPSEC Officer

What is Operations Security? OPSEC is an analytical process used to deny an adversary information, generally unclassified, concerning our intentions and capabilities by identifying, controlling, and protecting indicators associated with our planning processes or operations.

OPSEC does not replace other security disciplines, it supplements them.

OPSEC – A New Mind set:

Our attention to security must change now. The events of Sept. 11, 2001, proved there is a demonstrated and known threat. How many times have we heard that terrorism is a threat? But, most of us thought it could only happen elsewhere—not in America.

Unfortunately, we have suffered several terrorist attacks in recent years: the Oklahoma City bombing, the U.S.S. Cole attacks and the tragic events that unfolded on Sept. 11, 2001.

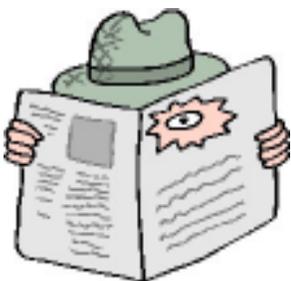
In these cases, the adversary was successful because they knew our vulnerabilities. American people unknowingly provided much of what was used against us. The only thing our enemies brought to the table was their personal agenda and their resolve.

As Federal employees, we are the representatives of the people. We develop, we plan, we perform. The American people trust us to do our jobs and keep them safe. The mishandling of information can put everything at risk and cost the lives of many Americans.

Why is learning OPSEC important?

The information that is often used against us is not classified information; it is information that is openly available to anyone who knows where to look and what to ask.

Operations security is a tool that our adversaries believe in and a tool used by the United States government that needs to be understood



and integrated into our daily routines.

Our work is information and not all of it is classified. What we don't always realize is how much we are giving away by our predictable behavior, casual conversations, routine acquisitions, and use of the Internet.

We must be careful about what we are revealing—failure to do so could provide our adversaries with information they need to conduct future terrorist acts.

What can you do?

We can all incorporate OPSEC into our everyday work routines. Practicing operations security will help you accomplish your goals. When you do something, ask yourself, "What could an adversary glean from the knowledge of



this activity?" "Is it revealing information about what we do and how we do it?"

It is helpful to view yourself and what you're doing as an adversary would. For example, what can be learned by observing your actions or reading what you've posted on a web site?

What are OPSEC indicators?

What do people observe about your schedule? What do you do when you go to work? What are you revealing by your predictable routines and the way you do your business? These things are 'indicators.'

OPSEC helps people identify the indicators that are giving away information about mission, activities, and operations.

Who is the adversary?

Let's not focus strictly on terrorists. Remember, there are other adversaries out there. For example, many foreign intelligence services continue to collect information about us that could be used to hurt us in the future.

We sometimes focus on what just happened, but it is a certainty that our enemies will continue to look for and find our weak links.

What are the capabilities of our adversaries?

We can never underestimate the capabilities or strength of conviction of terrorists or any other adversary. Nothing

is more dangerous than people who are willing to die for their cause.

What is the risk?

The terrorist threat existed before Sept. 11, 2001. We just did not believe that such a horrific event could ever happen. Every thing we do involves risk. The application of an OPSEC process develops effective countermeasures to help us accomplish our mission by analyzing and minimizing the risk that we may inadvertently reveal critical information to our enemies.

The interagency OPSEC Support Staff:

Our enemy took us by surprise and our country will never be the same again. In order to effectively bring the enemy to justice, we need to maintain the element of surprise. Every element of our operations is more sensitive than ever before. We must rededicate ourselves to our mission and our country to help ensure that what happened on Sept. 11 will not be repeated.

Security must be incorporated into every aspect of our jobs. If we are not vigilant in protecting critical information, a attack on America will happen again.

The future of our nation depends on changing the way we look at security. OPSEC can make the difference. It is absolutely essential that it be understood and incorporated into everything we do.

The 349th OPSEC Program managers are available to assist organizations and individuals with OPSEC materials, training, operations analysis, and implementing best practices for your particular activity.

For more information, please contact me or Master Sgt. Terri Bernatzke at (707) 424-3725.



Five steps of OPSEC

- Identify Critical Information
- Identify the Threat
- Assess the vulnerabilities
- Analyze the risk
- Develop countermeasures

Team Travis firefighters earn world championship, third straight year

by Patti Schwab-Holloway
349th Public Affairs

Technical Sgt. Mike Melton, 349th Civil Engineer Squadron, lead the Team Travis firefighters to their third consecutive win at the World Firefighter Combat Challenge, Nov. 7 to 11 in Henderson, Nev.

Team members, who train hard throughout the year, came out ahead of more than 700 participants from U.S. and Canadian municipal fire departments in this year's Combat Challenge.

During the challenge, firefighters perform five tasks including climbing a five-story tower, hoisting and chopping, dragging hoses and rescuing a life-sized, 175 pound "victim" — while racing against themselves, their opponent and the clock. In addition, participants must wear their "full bunker gear," including an air-breathing apparatus.

The Travis Team, which began competing in 2000, had to overcome "some challenges" of their own when Senior Airman Joe Almony, 349th Civil Engineer Squadron, slipped and injured his hand during competition tryouts. Although this was a setback, Airman Almony refused to let this stop him or hurt his team; he went on to compete and complete the competition.

"It was the toughest dog fight I ever saw and the team rose

to the occasion," said Mr. John Speakman, Travis Air Force Base fire chief.

Even though the team suffered this setback that didn't stop them from winning the overall challenge and earning some outstanding individual awards.

Sergeant Melton, 349th CES, placed third and Staff Sgt. Harry Myers, 60th CES, placed 8th overall and 9th in the men's division. Adam and Shenah Groom, 60th CES, finished third in the male/female tandem event and Mr. Dave Chiodo, 60th CES, finished third in the over 50 tandem event.

"This is yet another Team Travis success story involving active duty, Reserves and civilian members and epitomizes the 'One Team, One Fight' concept," said Col. Steve Arquette, 60th Air Mobility Wing commander. "The fact that this is a three-pete for our firefighters

just demonstrates how committed to excellence they are."

The Challenge seeks to encourage firefighter fitness and demonstrate the rigors of the profession to the general public. The wearing of "full bunker gear" and the breathing apparatus simulates the physical demands of real-life firefighting.

The following are the members of the Team Travis Combat Challenge Team: Technical Sgt. Mike Melton, 349th Civil Engineer Squadron, team captain and team coach; Staff Sgt. Harry Myers, 60th Civil Engineer Squadron; Senior Airman Joe Almony, 349th CES; Mr. Dave Chiodo, 60th CES; Mr. Adam Groom, 60th CES; Mr. Aldrico Caragan, 60th CES; Ms. Shenah Groom, 60th CES and Mr. Joey Dominguez, 60th CES. (Note: Staff Sgt. Candy Knight, 60th Public Affairs, contributed to this story.)



photo by Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Vaughn, 60th Civil Engineer Squadron

Team Travis firefighters are world champions for third straight year: (From left to right) Mr. John Speakman, Travis Air Force Base fire chief, Staff Sgt. Harry Myers, 60th Civil Engineer Squadron, Mr. Joey Dominguez, 60th CES, Mr. Dave Chiodo, 60th CES, Mr. Aldrico Caragan, 60th CES, Technical Sgt. Mike Melton, 349th CES and team captain, Mr. Adam Groom, 60th CES, Ms. Shenah Groom, 60th CES and Senior Airman Joe Almony, 349th CES, pose for the camera during the World Firefighter Combat Challenge.

Operation Give Thanks, a lesson in love

by Maj. Rick Tubbs
301st Airlift Squadron

My family had the pleasure of volunteering for “Operation Give Thanks” at the California Veterans Home, Yountville, this past Thanksgiving.

We met many engaging “old soldiers” with all kinds of interesting tales of past war glory. You could probably write a best selling book about the experiences shared by the many brave service men and women at that facility. The most fascinating story I heard that day was not about some past military battle, but instead was a more recent story about love.

Joseph and Doris Hahn sat eating meals in the same dining hall for years never knowing the other existed. Then one day it was as if cupid fluttered into that dining hall and saw big red circles painted on the hearts of Joseph and Doris. Unable to help himself, he drew two arrows and scored direct hits on those bull’s-eyes starting a love story for all to enjoy.

Doris made the first move. The cagey 78 year old knew what she wanted and wasn’t afraid to act. She invited Joseph on a wine tasting tour through the Napa vineyards. Joseph at 82 was wise enough to recognize a golden opportunity and take advantage of it. He assumed Doris was asking him on a date. As might be expected of any self respecting lady, she, of course, denied the accusation but immediately followed her denial with an acceptance of “his offer” to turn her invitation into a romantic

interlude. Thus the seeds of love were planted, and the beautiful flower of marriage would soon follow. Like all blossoms, the wedding was planned for the spring, but this particular bloom would have to wait.

First Doris had a serious leg injury putting her in the hospital and preventing her from walking down the aisle. As that leg healed she injured the other leg. Love sick and yearning for her wedding, she then suffered a heart attack. Just as she was recovering from those maladies, Doris fell and broke her hip. Feeling tremendous sympathy for his soon to be bride, Joseph broke his leg. Desperate and running out of patience, the two love birds planned a covert operation to complete their mission of matrimony. Doris used a lunch break as her cover, snuck out of the hospital in a wheel chair, and finally after over five months of delay, Joseph and Doris exchanged their vows with the county clerk as the picturesque Napa hills looked down on them and smiled. That wedding



photo by Staff Sgt. Meredith Mingledorff, 349th Public Affairs

Maj. Rick Tubbs, 301st Airlift Squadron, sits with Doris and Joseph Hahn, during the 349th Air Mobility Wing’s “Operation Give Thanks” at the California Veterans Home, Yountville, this past Thanksgiving.

was on Nov. 2.

As I talked with Joseph and Doris, they were as giddy as any newlyweds of two weeks. With much laughter and flirtatious looks shared between them, the two could not say enough of how they felt about each other. I will offer what I believe summed up their bantering; it showed me that no matter what our age, love is still the same.

Joseph said of his wife with warmth in his eyes and a smile on his lips, “She’s a keeper!”

Doris replied with a sparkle in her eye and a wink, “He’s just a dirty old man.”

Somehow I get the feeling this love story ends, “And they lived happily ever after.”



Courtesy photo

Good neighbors: Col. Robert Millmann, 349th Air Mobility Wing vice commander, thanks members of the Solano Transportation Authority after accepting a proclamation honoring the Wing during the STA’s 9th annual awards ceremony Nov. 8. The proclamation recognized the wing for “performing with exceptionally meritorious service and achieving an unprecedented record of success providing worldwide strategic airlift and aerial refueling while meeting or exceeding all national objectives.” The STA also acknowledged 10 other local Solano County agencies for everything from construction projects to safety.

Can't pick your family, pick your coworkers

by Patti Schwab-Holloway
349th Public Affairs

How many times have we heard or even said 'Good help is hard to find?'

Now you are the answer to this age old problem and the Air Force Reserve Command wants to reward you when you utilize the 'Get One Now' program.

"Why not work a long side of people you know, like and trust?" said Technical Sgt. William Biddle, 604th Reserve Recruiting Flight Operating Location EA, recruiters for the 349th Air Mobility Wing.

"That is the key to why this program is so successful; a win-win. This gives the power to the 349th member to pick their coworkers and help the Wing and the Air Force Reserve Command stay a quality force" he said.

The 'Get One Now' program originated in 2001 and is exclusively an Air Force Reserve Command program. The idea mirrors many civilian companies in the same way that they give incentives to current employees when they recommend people to possibly become new hire employees.

"You have the unique opportunity to reach out to family, friends and coworkers who already know the benefits of serving from your experiences," said Sergeant Biddle. "Every one of us is a recruiter - and let's face it, people you know are going to listen and trust you over me every time," he chuckled.

The program provides two types of incentives: one for referral and one for accession.

Referral Awards are based on military tradition, the 'Get One Now' awards are primarily commemorative coins. For every referral submitted, the Reservist receives a Referral Coin Award numbered one through 10, the number corresponding to the number of the referrals. Referrals may be accumulated over time. The 'Get One Now' program provides these coins for each referral whether or not the person actually enlists.

Referrals are cumulative for coin awarding purposes, but accessions are calculated by fiscal year to count toward the 'Top Performer' award.

The second type of incentive is the Accession Coin. These coins are fashioned after Commander's Coins and are awarded to Reservists when a referral turns into an accession. Coins are awarded for one through four accessions. The award for the fifth accession is a leather portfolio and pen and for the sixth accession you will be given a pair of pewter steins.

Accessions are counted within a fiscal year. For example, a Reserve member who has two referrals turn into accessions would receive Accession Awards one and two. But if the next accession falls in the next fiscal year, the Reservist receives Accession Award one again.

The easiest way to submit is by using the web site: <http://get1now.us> or call 1-

877-786-2372. Faxes and business cards submissions are no longer accepted.

Information you provide will be used by the Air Force Reserve Recruiting offices only. Your information will never be sold, rented or distributed to any other branch of the military or third party.

Every year the Air Force Reserve honors 'Top Performers' who get the highest number of accessions. Awards are given to an individual and to the base or wing with the most accessions. Will you be the next winner?

For questions regarding the 'Get One Now' program contact: <http://get1now.us> or the 349th Recruiting office at (707) 424-3111.



Get One Now Rules

- All Air Force Reservists are eligible to participate, with the exception of AFRC Recruiters, their family members and Reserve liaisons.
- There is no limit to the number of referrals that may be submitted.
- A referral must result in an enlistment within 24 months of entry into the Get One Now Program to qualify for the Accession Awards.
- A referral must be submitted to the get1now.us web site, to 1-877-786-2372, by online "chat", or by email, to qualify for the Get One Now Program.
- Referrals may accumulate over time.
- An accession must be achieved during the fiscal year to qualify for the Get One Now Awards for that particular year.

Choices...

(Continued from Page 4)

choices that keep our whole being healthy. And when we as imperfect people make a bad choice and face hurtful consequences, God shows us His forgiveness, healing, and restoration, so we can correct our course and get back on the path which leads to health and life in our relationships and in our own body, mind, and soul. The wonderful and good news is that God promises to help us through all of the "stuff" of life and provide people around us to assist us on our way.

So what does all this look like in our lives? It begins by remembering that God loves you very much and that He wants you to care for your life and the lives of those around you. It shows itself in

making choices that promotes the caring of our body, mind, and spirit. That means eating right, getting enough rest, and exercising. It involves the respecting of yourself and others, so you do not mistreat yourself or others by entering into irresponsible behavior that would place your physical, spiritual, or emotional life at risk. It means asking for help when you find yourself becoming burdened with cares due to loneliness, stress, a broken relationship, illness, a financial set back, or a loss of some kind. It means assessing all our activities at work, at home, and while we recreate to make sure we are doing things in a safe manner. It is seen in filling our minds with good things and thinking and acting on them. It shows itself by being mindful that you are never alone,

God is there with you to help you handle each day with all that it brings. It is a person that looks to be a positive influence on those around him or her and the community in which he or she lives.

The Air Force calls this using our Core Values to define who we are and who we become; using Operational Risk Management to care for our lives and property; being a Wingman to care for and help each other through our lives; and creating a Culture of Responsible Choices so we can affirm life instead of hurting human life. The Chaplains of the 349th AMW stand ready to assist you to work through the options you may be considering and to make choices that will glorify God, care for your life, and serve others. God Bless you!

AFPC offers guidance to retiring civilians

The Air Force Personnel Center's Benefits and Entitlement Service Team encourages civilians who want to retire in the next few years to plan ahead and seek counseling early.

Potential retirees should contact BEST at least one year before retirement to receive one-on-one counseling over the phone, and to request a counselor-prepared estimate. Employee information is available to benefits counselors who are able to cover issues that are so important to retirees.

"Planning ahead cannot be overstressed," said Ms. Janet Thomas, an AFPC Human Resources Specialist. "Many individuals retire, only to discover their retirement pay is insufficient to live on. In addition, many are not prepared to meet financial commitments occurring between date of retirement and receipt of the first retirement check, which can sometimes take up to two or more months."

Many employees believe all the service in their service computation date for leave is creditable towards retirement. For many, this simply isn't true, according to Ms. Thomas.

"Employees who previously took a refund of their retirement contributions, or owe a deposit for temporary service or military service, may discover this service is not creditable for retirement," said Ms. Thomas. "Individuals who are retired military might need to know

whether it would be advantageous to combine their military and civilian service."

In planning for retirement, there are many factors to consider, such as whether to provide a survivor benefit for the spouse in the event of the employee's death after retirement; whether they are eligible to take health and life insurance into retirement; sick leave credit; Thrift Savings Plan withdrawal options and direct deposit. In addition, it's important not to change the mailing address or bank account for direct deposit during the few months before and after retirement.

A wealth of information is available on



the BEST Web page at <http://ask.afpc.randolph.af.mil/best/default>. Simply click the "Retirement" link on the far left side of the page and select from the many available items, including Retirement Eligibility, Military Deposit, Plan/Prepare for Retirement, and How to Apply for Retirement."

Those ready to retire should submit their retirement applications to BEST 90 to 120 days prior to the effective date of retirement. During the process, three letters are sent to update the potential retiree on the status of his/her application.

— The first letter acknowledges receipt of the application.

— The second verifies he/she is eligible to retire.

— The third is notification that the retirement application package has been sent to the servicing payroll office.

The final stop for the retirement application is the Office of Personnel Management, where the final authority for approval of the retirement resides. OPM also starts the retirement payments.

Air Force-serviced civilian appropriated fund employees serviced by BEST may reach BEST benefit counselors weekdays from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CDT. Employees located in the United States can call toll-free 1-800-616-3775 (press 2, then 2 again, and follow the prompts). Hearing impaired employees may reach benefits counselor by calling toll-free TDD 1-800-382-0893. (AFPC)

AAFES lets you "TAKE IT HOME TODAY!"

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service is expanding its "TAKE IT HOME TODAY!" initiative, which puts items of necessity and convenience immediately into the hands of military families the world over.

With the "TAKE IT HOME TODAY!" program service members can now immediately enjoy furniture, major appliances, carpeting, mattresses and box springs, as well as selected electronics.

The new plan, which was tested at selected AAFES exchanges in the United States and overseas last year, includes benefits such as instant credit upon approval, no up-front fees or down payment, a low interest rate and low monthly payments.

"Our tests made it clear that shoppers were excited about the opportunity to make a furniture, appliance or other large purchase and take the product home that very same day," said AAFES Exchange Credit Program Business Analyst Colleen Youngblood. "With low interest rates and instant approval, military shoppers

can now enjoy their purchase sooner."

With a \$299 minimum purchase, major appliances, 27-inch or larger televisions, carpeting, riding lawn mowers, large exercise equipment and spas may be purchased through the "TAKE IT HOME TODAY!" program. Accessories, including end tables, may also apply when they are purchased with a qualifying item.

"This program is perfectly targeted to meet the needs of today's highly mobile military community, especially those members just starting military service or their families," said AAFES' Pacific Region Commander Col. Ann Borgmann. "Now members can immediately get the furnishings and appliances needed without incurring a large debt."

The "TAKE IT HOME TODAY!" program is now available at all AAFES facilities that stock qualifying merchandise. Authorized exchange customers contact the Travis Air Force Base, Base Exchange at (707) 437-4633 for additional details. (AAFES)

Reservists deal with homecoming stress

by Master Sgt. Collen McGee
433rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Most people who deploy to a war zone deal with some stress in conjunction with going there or returning home.

Sometimes the stress goes away on its own; sometimes it doesn't.

"In many ways, readjustment stress can be considered a normal reaction to abnormal events," said Dr. Jennifer Wood, a licensed psychologist with the Harlington Texas Veteran's Administration Outpatient Clinic. "Given that combat exposure is not typically part of American life, it's logical that most service men and women would have some reaction to their combat experience."

Reservists may face more stress issues because upon returning home, they are no longer surrounded by people who can identify with the deployed experience.

"As a civilian predominantly, you aren't in the military constantly and not constantly in a military mind set," said one Airman who has deployed several times and asked not to be identified. "Even though you practice (train), you have no concept until you go over there."

One of the most difficult things the Airman dealt with was the rapid shift in mind set from security to absolute vulnerability.

"Within two or three days, suddenly you are dealing with the worst trauma ever," said the Airman. "(You are dealing with) a significant change to sudden chaos in this place, the loss of the security of having wife and family around to a chaotic, fragmented system."

A second Airman, who also asked not to be identified, spoke about this shift and related it to her return from deployment.

She described having to make fast decisions while deployed, based on available information, and knowing those decisions could impact life. Then, coming home and learning to deal again with decisions that to her should be quick, easy and not that important. But to her boyfriend, those decisions are vital parts of his daily routine.

For both Airmen, coming home after going through a high-pressure deployment was like being suddenly ejected from a mental pressure cooker back into the old

version of normal without letting the steam dissipate. For each of them, their minds were still in the battlefield mode and each reported similar issues with things that were typical in life on the home front.

They talked about difficulties with crowds, confrontational personalities, sounds and smells. They related about the inability of friends and family to identify with the things they were going through because none of them had any similar experiences.



The second Airman admitted that the crowd at the recent Lackland Airfest was tough for her to deal with. She confessed to a desire to avoid work when it intersected with the crowd.

Withdrawing from uncomfortable situations is a normal reaction for anyone.

Fortunately, providers now have an arsenal of effective strategies and treatments to assist with readjustment concerns, according to Dr. Wood.

One technique that has proven effective in lessening the impact of the lingering trauma is all about confronting the experiences.

"The normal thing is for people to talk to their buddies," said Dr. (Maj.) William Isler, chief of clinical health psychology at Lackland's Wilford Hall. "The reminiscing part is useful – the retelling of the story."

Dr. Isler said that veterans organizations served that purpose in the past by putting people with like experiences together. For today's war-zone veterans, there are more resources available and more is known about coping strategies for those suffering from post traumatic stress.

"We know, in PTSD treatment, it isn't the avoidance that helps, it's the retelling, writing it down, adding more descriptors," said Dr. Isler. "Use audio tape – tell your story and listen to it to lessen the effective significance that the brain places on it.

Desensitizing – the actual mechanism is something everybody uses all the time."

Dr. Isler explained that when people continue to tell their stories about their experiences those experiences lose their ability to cause distress.

A veteran of service in Iraq, Dr. Isler recommends getting help before feelings of post traumatic stress become post traumatic stress disorder. But many people fail to seek mental health assistance for fear that they will be labeled.

"There are real risks to career," said Dr. Isler. "But it is less than 5 percent (of those seen by a military provider) and those are mostly the ones that wait until they are already having problems."

Dr. Isler explained that if a person seeks immediate readjustment help, before serious issues arise due to avoidance, then normally they can get the help they need without adverse impact.

"Usually, there is no engagement with the command at all," Dr. Isler said.

After a deployment, reservists don't always seek active-duty services because they are no longer on military orders. But there are services available to those who need them. And getting help for readjustment issues doesn't mean a person is mentally unstable. But if ignored, stress issues can become physical health issues that can cause weight loss, loss of sleep and even hypertension. Physicians are also more apt to recognize warning signs of PTSD as more is learned about it.

"It is more accepted now. People are not going to get dinged having it (PTSD)," said Dr. (Lt. Col.) William Bailey, a physician with Air Force Reserve Command's 433rd Aerospace Medicine Squadron and a cardiologist. Although Dr. Bailey does say there are medications that prohibit continued Reserve participation, there are ways to treat readjustment issues and PTSD that don't require medication.

"Within the South Texas Veterans Health Care System, several teams of providers have been established specifically to address the needs of returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi freedom veterans," said Dr. Wood.

"There is a system available," said Dr. Bailey. "Seek it and work with and involve loved ones ASAP. Find Veteran's

(Continued on next page)

Compensation, pay table increases

Drilling reservists now can enroll in the new Tricare Standard for Selected Reserve health plan. The expansion of TRICARE Reserve Select will allow all qualified members of the Selected Reserve to purchase health care coverage, with three tiers of premium sharing. TRICARE Management Activity and Reserve Affairs worked together to develop this new benefit and finalize system changes to launch the program. Beneficiaries may find the most current information about TRICARE Reserve Select on the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/reserveselect/index.cfm. (AFPN)

ABU available to deploying Airmen

The Airman Battle Uniform is on track for distribution this spring to Airmen deploying as part of Air Expeditionary Forces 7 and 8.

The uniform will be ready for distribution to Airmen deploying as part of AEF 7/8. Most Airmen will get two ABU sets and two Desert Combat Uniform sets for their deployment.

Battlefield Airmen with Air Force specialty codes for combat rescue, special tactics, pararescue jumper, combat control, tactical air control Airmen, members of the special operations weather team, battlefield weather Airmen and explosive ordnance members will each receive four ABU sets.

By October the Air Force will begin issuing the ABU to basic military trainees and in June 2008 the uniform will be available for purchase in Army Air Force Exchange Service outlets.

The ABU boasts 236 different size options in both male and female sizes. Additionally, its permanent press finish means the uniform cannot be starched, pressed or dry-cleaned. Airmen will

be able to pull the ABU from the clothes dryer and wear it without further treatment. Any ironing could degrade the effectiveness of the uniform.

The cost for the uniform, pants and coat, runs about \$81. Additional items, such as socks, T-shirts, belts, and ABU-style hats will also need to be purchased. Airmen are authorized to wear DCU-style boots with the ABU until the newly designed green boots become readily available. The green boots are priced at \$100. The expected mandatory wear date for the new ABU is October 2011.

Proper protocol during Reveille, Retreat

When in uniform, at the sound of Reveille or Retreat, stand at parade rest. At the sound of "To the Colors" or "The National Anthem," stand at attention and salute until the last note of music has played or until the colors are secured, whichever is last. When in a vehicle, at the sound of Reveille or Retreat, pull the car to the side of the road and stop when safe to do so. All occupants are to remain quiet until the last note of "To the Colors" or "The National Anthem" has played.

When wearing the PT uniform during Reveille and Retreat follow the same guidelines as for civilian attire. At the sound of Reveille or Retreat, stop and stand at parade rest. When "To the Colors" or "The National Anthem" begin, stand at attention and place your right hand over your heart. If wearing a hat remove the hat and place it over the heart using the right hand.

Airmen are not required to salute when wearing the Air Force Physical Training gear. Although the Air Force has specific guidelines on the proper wear of the PT gear, it is considered civilian attire.

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Administration clinics in general within the VA system for group sessions where you talk things out about feelings and changes. If it is mild, go immediately to join a group to talk not short-term but long-term. Then go regularly for maintenance every three to six months. For severe stuff, immediately go to the VA with your spouse and ask for help. Make your spouse a part of your care."

Dr. Isler agrees a spouse, significant partner or family members should be involved in the readjustment process.

"Schedule time on the couch and talk daily," recommends Dr. Isler. "Slow down enough where you specifically talk about the readjustment. Ask are we getting along? Have an agenda if possible."

If people don't know if they need help, Dr. Isler recommends listening openly to comments from those around them.

"Listen to your friends," said Dr. Isler. "If they are continually saying things like 'you're on edge' or 'lighten up' maybe it is worth listening to them.

"It is always easy to slip through the

cracks if you want to," said Dr. Isler who said the Air Force follows up on previously deployed members at three-, six- and 12-month intervals.

Diagnosing PTSD or traumatic stress is based entirely on the honesty of the person being interviewed.

"It is, therefore, vital that individuals discuss their concerns openly and honestly with their providers," said Dr. Wood.

Both of the Lackland Airmen actively sought help with readjustment issues and tools to assist with post traumatic stress. Help is available. For more resources and information on PTSD or readjustment stress check out the Web sites and resources listed below.

The Veteran's Administration Medical Center system's specialized PTSD clinics and programs can provide to eligible veterans educational information and diagnostic evaluations concerning PTSD.

The Readjustment Counseling Service's community-based Vet Centers provide information and diagnostic evaluations concerning PTSD to any veteran who

served in a war zone or in a military conflict, such as in Panama, Grenada or Somalia. There are no co-payments or charges of any kind for Vet Center confidential services. The toll-free number is 1-800-905-4675.

PTSD and stress-related information

Military Onesource provides guides for deployment and homecoming for Airmen and family members – <http://militaryonesource.com>

Veteran's Administration National Center for PTSD provides sections on various types of stress related issues and a Frequently Asked Question section about PTSD – <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov>

Deployment Health Clinical Center provides fact sheets and resources for clinicians and military members – <http://www.pdhealth.mil>

Air Force Crossroads provides information for Airmen and families – <http://www.afcrossroads.com>

National Institute of Mental Health pamphlet on PTSD – <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/nimhptsd.cfm>

Name: **Kelly Norris**
Rank: **Senior Master Sergeant**
Squadron: **349th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron**

Years in the Reserve: **22**

What is your job in the Squadron? **Flight Superintendent and detailed as Unit Deployment Manager, Emergency Management Representative, Anti Terrorist/Force Protection manager and Security Manager**

How does your position affect the overall mission? **My positions require me to be involved with aircraft generations, maintenance and prepare the squadron members to deploy if called upon by our leaders. Providing Global Reach for America**

What do you like best about the Reserve? **The training, traveling and the people that make up the Air Force Reserve. We have the ability to be involved with things that the public only sees on the news.**
What is the most meaningful thing you have been a part of as a Reserve member? **Having the opportunity to go to Iraq and see firsthand our airlift mission in action; planes, equipment and supplies being delivered 24/7 to those on the front-lines and seeing the meshing of Active Duty, Reserve and Civilians into ‘One Team.’**



Courtesy photo

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Schedule release of tax statements

Projected distribution dates for Defense Finance and Accounting Service customers' tax statements:

- Retiree Annual Statement: Available on myPay as of Dec. 9, mailed via U.S. Postal Service Dec. 16-31;
- Retiree 1099R: Available on myPay as of Dec. 15, mailed Dec. 16-31;
- Reserve Air Force, Army, Navy W-2: Available on myPay Jan. 2, mailed Jan. 5-8;
- Civilian employee W-2: Available on myPay Jan. 9, mailed Jan. 11-18