

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

**Egress shop:
They deal
with ACES
A customer's
endorsement**



VIEW POINT

Greetings,

The Air Force Reserve is hiring over 8,800 in FY09 and I need your help! The strength of our Air Force Reserve depends on recruiting Americans who will uphold the high standards you have set. Your personal involvement will ensure the next generation of Airmen shares your professionalism and dedication to maintaining our nation's freedoms.

I urge you to share your Air Force Reserve experiences with your friends and family. Let them know we have many job openings and refer them to the Air Force Reserve Recruiting web site at <http://afreserve.com>.

Have you heard about our Get One Now referral program? When the individuals you refer join the Air Force Reserve, you become eligible for awards such as an iPod, HDTV or laptop computer! Go to the <http://www.get1now.us> website right now to make a referral, review awards or manage your account. All Reservists are automatically enrolled with an account. New Reservists receive their cards within one month of joining the Air Force Reserve. We are all recruiters! Thanks for helping us maintain our strength.

Until next time,

CS

CHARLES E. STENNER, JR., Lt Gen, USAF
Commander



MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

** inside * inside * inside * inside **

Commentary page 2



RAV TIME

10th AF team visit helps Wing prep for ORI
PAGE 4 AND 5

EGRESS ACES

Maintainers work to 'preserve' pilots' lives
PAGES 6 AND 7



TO THE SUMMIT

Reservist inspired by late-father's determination
PAGES 10 AND 11

Salina joint operations page 10
303rd change of command page 10

May 2009
Charge-of-quarters



SENIOR MASTER SGT. TODD SIELEMAN
442ND AIRCRAFT
MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

Call the CQ from on-base at 99-1 (660) 238-7428. From a local off-base number (i.e., Concordia, Warrensburg, Sedalia etc.), dial (660) 238-7428. To call toll free from off-base, dial (800) 260-0253 and press seven after the prompt.

COVER PHOTO: Staff Sgt. Anthony Bonham, a 442nd Maintenance Squadron Egress technician, carefully swings an ACES II ejection seat into position for installation into a Wing A-10 Thunderbolt II. For more see pages six and seven. (Photo by Master Sgt. Bill Huntington)

MOHAWK

Vol. 61, No. 4
May 2009

This funded Air Force Reserve newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services.

Contents of the Mohawk are not necessarily the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.

The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the 442nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office, 931 Arnold Ave., Whiteman AFB, MO 65305-5070.

All photographs are Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.

Deadline for article submission is 12:30 p.m. Sunday during the unit training assembly preceding the desired month of publication.

COMMANDER, 442ND FW

Col. Mark Clemons

CHIEF, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Maj. David Kurle

PA NCOIC/EDITOR

Master Sgt. Bill Huntington

PA STAFF

Tech. Sgt. John Vertreese

Staff Sgt. Tom Talbert

Staff Sgt. Kent Gagarise

Staff Sgt. James Emerich

Senior Airman Danielle Wolf

For more information, call Public Affairs at commercial voice number: (660) 687-3842 or fax at: (660) 687-2985. DSN:975-3842/3844, or fax: DSN:975-2985. E-mail submissions or questions to: william.huntington@whiteman.af.mil

This newspaper is printed on recycled paper.



T 442nd Fighter Wing Tip of the Spear

TECH. SGT. ROBERT ORTMAN 442ND MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

As a phase dock technician Tech. Sgt. Robert Ortman is responsible for inspecting, troubleshooting and repairing a variety of major aircraft systems, assemblies and components. As a key contributor to phase maintenance, his meticulous work habits and superior technical skill are evident in each completed task. Recently, Sergeant Ortman received three consecutive "zero defect" ratings from Quality Assurance in his assigned inspection area. His efforts enabled the early completion of the phase inspection, increasing the combat capability of the 442nd Fighter Wing. During the March operational readiness exercise, Sergeant Ortman once again provided his expertise in aircraft troubleshooting and repair. Upon notification of a brake malfunction on aircraft number 79-0093, he took on the arduous task of troubleshooting, repairing and performing the operational checks under the rigors of the operational readiness inspection scenario in mission-oriented-protection-posture four conditions. His efforts returned this aircraft to fully-mission capable status ahead of expectations contributing to the completion of 100 sorties in two days.

Always eager to take on added responsibility, Sergeant Ortman responded to the task of teaming with other technicians to assess and adjust the phase-inspection workflow process in order to expedite the inspection progression and decrease the number of phase workdays for the aircraft. The results were an adjusted flow that has contributed to an astounding 23-percent decrease in phase workdays directly impacting aircraft availability for the Air Force Reserve. Sergeant Ortman's example of integrity, service and excellence is why he is the "Tip of the Spear."



PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

Staff Sgt. Donald Johnston, a 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron A-10 crew chief, makes good use of bunker time in Alarm Black by studying his Airman's Manual during the February operational readiness exercise. Sergeant Johnston and other 442nd Fighter Wing members will have the chance to put their knowledge, as well as their experience, to the test as the 10th Air Force Readiness Assistance Visit plays out this month.

May RAV dress rehearsal for real ORI Exercise designed to show wing's strengths, weaknesses

By Staff Sgt. Kent Kagaris

The seats in the theater are empty but the cast is in full costume and their lines are memorized as they prepare for opening night. It is one of many dress rehearsals where they hone the delivery of each line in hopes of rave reviews from the critics.

The 442nd Fighter Wing is not preparing for a play but the buzz-word around base seems to be, "dress rehearsal." May's unit training assembly will include a readiness-assistance visit from 10th Air Force, which will point out where the wing excels and what the wing must improve on in preparation for the operational readiness inspection in October.

"The readiness assistance visit won't give us our final grade," said Colonel James Mackey, the 442nd vice wing commander. "The 10th Air Force team is talking directly with the Air Combat Command Inspector General team, therefore we can expect the same thing in October."

"In a sense it's a dress rehearsal," he said.

Colonel Ozzie Gorbitz, 10th Air Force assistant director of operations and RAV team leader, explained that he and his inspectors will strive to provide the 442nd a full dress rehearsal for its upcoming operational readiness inspection.

"If our RAV team does the job properly it will mirror

October's ORI," he said.

Approximately 70 people will make up the RAV team and will use a script similar to the script used by the Air Combat Command Inspector General, but turned up to a higher frequency in order to be more demanding than the IG team in October.

"The RAV team hopes to identify any ORI issues the wing has and is a resource to help correct deficiencies before the actual ORI," Colonel Gorbitz said.

As 442nd FW Citizen Airmen prepare for May's UTA, they may wish to heed these words of wisdom.

"Treat it no differently than the actual ORI," Colonel Gorbitz said.

The results of the RAV will be used to validate outstanding performers and superior processes to help other units who will prepare for ORIs, Colonel Gorbitz explained.

The RAV team's visit brings high demands and Airmen should be ready for the bar to be raised in May, Colonel Mackey said.

"I want to see an ORI scenario in May that challenges us

more than the IG team will in October, so Airmen should come prepared," he said.

There is some good news as the wing approaches the light at the end of the tunnel.

"May brings us six more days in the gas mask, but after that there are only four," Colonel Mackey said.

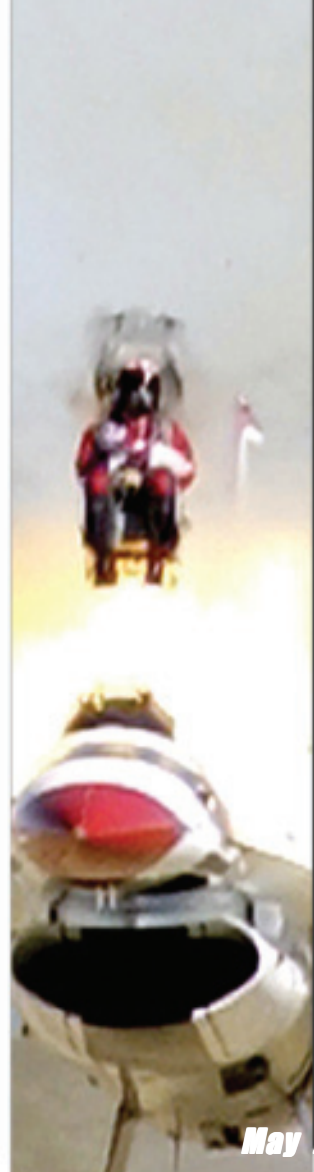
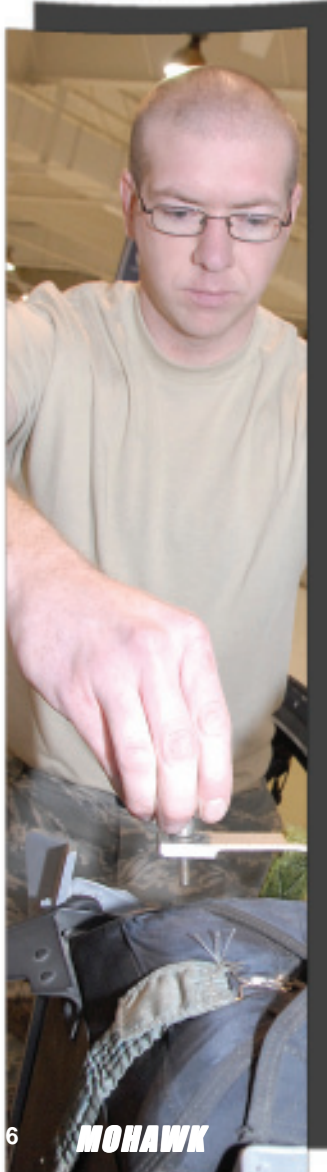
10TH AIR FORCE READINESS ASSISTANCE VISIT TEAM MISSION AND VISION

Mirror the Air Combat Command Operational Readiness Inspection construct in a manner which provides the wing leadership with accurate, timely and detailed feedback on the unit's performance.

A.T.S.O. How much do you really know?

Test yourself with these ATSO awareness questions. This Quiz is a monthly Mohawk feature in preparation the October Operational Readiness Inspection. Check your responses against the answers in the Mohawk Yellow pages, but wait to look until after you've come up with your own.

1. "Attack is over and NBC contamination and/or UXO Hazards are suspected or present," is conveyed to troops by a black flag, by hearing Alarm Black announcement or by hearing what over the siren?
2. An attack that is probable in less than 30 minutes is indicated by what alarm condition?
3. Turning off interior and exterior lights, covering doors and windows and creating "cat's eyes" on vehicle running lights are forms of this.
4. Regarding heat during a deployment, you should drink water before you get thirsty and you should consume _____ quart(s) per hour during moderate work in temperatures over 82 degrees.
5. Boot and glove decontamination troughs are located at entries to shelters, work centers and work areas. Troughs should contain water and what percentage of chlorine solution (household bleach)?
6. In what Alarm Condition is attack is probable in less than 30 minutes and you should focus on final protection and contamination avoidance measures?
7. True or False ...during blackout conditions during the post-attack phase, you should check M8 paper with a chemical light stick.
8. You and your belongings may be searched, you most likely will show your ID card, you better know the sign/countersign procedures, entry authority lists may be verified... all are common activities found when passing through what area?
9. Regarding Challenging of Intruders, all of the below are true except:
 - A. Intruders can be aggressive or passive, male or female, adult or child, and can show up anywhere
 - B. You should challenge ALL intruders
 - C. Upon hearing or seeing a group or lone person approach, give the command "halt" just loud enough to be heard.
 - D. "Halt" is the internationally accepted term for "stop" and its use is mandated by the Geneva Convention
10. An example of this type of report would be "3 enemy personnel, cutting concertina wire, entering compound, traveling towards Command Post. Wearing all black including masks. Seen at 2300, carrying rifles or automatic weapons."



By Mast

In the few options they had to the outcome

Over those changes developed, ejection system

Today has to eject aircraft's ejection take them

At the Advanced

Better oped in the one type of dardized se pilots and be trained goal was to conditions, cluding "Z" tion envelope

Original Glas Corpora any, more

Accor the seat ha envelope, envelope e

Test

By Lt.

Ed bolt II c Ist Lt. J found o tunately his stor

I t w wa air eng the war.

The eject wa to about and wh

Pilots can take comfort in knowing that 442nd MXS Egress troops are ...

... dealing A.C.E.S.

er Sgt. Bill Huntington

early days of aviation, pilots had very little hope of surviving if they were to leave their aircraft in flight. Typically, the outcome was fatal.

Over the years, as technology developed, egress systems improved as first, parachutes were used, and later, in the case of military aircraft, egress systems came on line.

Today, if the worst happens and an A-10 pilot is ejected, he or she can feel confident that the egress system will safely, and quickly, get them out of danger.

The heart of the A-10 egress system is the Concept Ejection Seat II.

Known as ACES II, the seat was developed in the early 1970s as a way to standardize the design of the seat. One benefit to having a stan-

dardized seat was a reduction in training for both pilots and maintainers, who previously needed to be trained in a variety of seats. Another design goal was to have better performance in a variety of situations, such as low or adverse altitudes, in- or out-of-zero, the lowest point in the ejection sequence or zero altitude, zero speed.

The seat is currently manufactured by McDonnell-Douglas Corporation, and later Weber Aircraft Company. More than 8,000 seats have been made.

According to the official Air Force records, the ACES II has had a success rate of 94.4 percent in ejections and 89.9 percent when including out-of-ejections.

While much of that success rate is due to the design of the system, even the best designed product is only as good as the maintenance it routinely receives.

In the case of the 442nd Fighter Wing, the ACES II seats here are among the best maintained.

Under the guidance of Senior Master Sgt. Kevin McMenemy, 442nd Egress Flight chief, the shop has a highly-trained cadre ... most seven-level qualified ... of Air Reserve Technicians and traditional reservists.

"We have to go to a six-week tech. school down at Sheppard Air Force Base," said Staff Sgt. Chuck Wilson, an egress systems technician with nine years maintaining the seat. "Then it's about 15 months of on-the-job training to complete a five-level and 12 more months to get a seven-level."

During that upgrade training the technicians refine their skills on the 180-pound seat, removing them from the A-10s when they come in to the phase inspection area of the five-bay hangar, bringing them into the shop for maintenance and returning them to the aircraft before it's ready to return to service.

A critical and potentially dangerous part of the egress troops work deals with the 17 explosives on the aircraft – the rocket catapult that fires at 5,000 pounds of thrust for .55 seconds, which propels the seat and pilot away from the aircraft.

One unique component is the seat-trajectory

and pitch-attitude control, or STAPAC, package. It is designed to keep the seat flying in a straight trajectory. The package includes a rocket, which produces more than 1,000 pounds of thrust for one half of a second. The seat also holds a the pilot's parachute and a survival kit.

"When the pilot pulls the (ejection) handle," Sergeant Wilson said, "just 1.8 seconds later, they are fully ejected underneath the canopy floating back to the ground."

Even with the explosives, however, Sergeant Wilson said the ACES II is one of the safest around.

As seat maintenance needs to be performed, Egress troops remain busy. At any given time there are two to four seats in the shop being worked on.

"We always have to monitor the time change requirements," Sergeant Wilson said.

Staff Sgt. Anthony Bonham, one of the newer egress technicians, came to the 442nd after an active-duty stint with the 509th Bomb Wing. While both aircraft use the ACES II system, Sergeant Bonham said he likes working on the A-10.

"The seat was about the same," Sergeant Bonham said. "But what you have to do to pull the seat; the A-10 is a lot simpler."

The shop's goal is 100-percent accuracy in maintenance and it's something they take very seriously. A pilot's life can depend on the fact that, when needed, the seat will operate as advertised.

Testimony of a satisfied customer

Col. (ret.) Jim Preston

Editor's note: On March 22, 1982, while flying an A-10 Thunderbolt II on a two-ship training mission in the skies over Germany then Col. Jim Preston, forward deployed from R.A.F. Bentwaters, England, described what it is like to have to use the A.C.E.S. II ejection seat. For him, it was an experience he was able to walk away from. This is his story.

I was supposed to be a low-level navigation sortie, but the weather was bad down low, so we climbed into reserved airspace for some air-to-air engagements. Both engines compressor-stalled during an engagement. While I won the engagement, you might say, "I lost."

The total time from losing both engines to making the decision to eject was less than three minutes, coming down from around 12,000 feet to 500. I was completely focused on getting the engines restarted, when it was finally apparent that it wasn't to be, there was no ques-

tion of the seat working...it either would or it wouldn't, but either way, I didn't have a choice.

There were seven or eight A-10 crashes at Bentwaters during the time I was stationed there. Mine was the sixth, but only the second where the pilot survived. The first four were all fatal; two pilots had ejected, but for various reasons the pilots didn't survive. However, in none of the cases did the seat malfunction. I was convinced early on that the ACES II was an outstanding ejection seat.

It was textbook perfect! Because of temporal distortion (a phenomenon where time seems to slow down during very stressful situations), the whole sequence went by in slow motion. Because of our great life-support training, I knew what to expect, and watched each step of the sequence occur—the inertia reel tugging me back into the seat, the canopy separating, the rocket firing underneath the seat, the ride up the seat rails, and being tilted backward as the drogue chute began pulling out the main parachute.

It was like sitting in a chair with people rocking it from side to side,

see 'Customer' page 9



A 442nd Fighter Wing A-10 fires at a Smoky Hill Range target near Salina, Kan.
PHOTO BY WALTER SUT, BILL HARTWIG

Pilots, maintainers conduct joint training at Salina

By Senior Airman Danielle Wolf

When Citizen Airmen of the 442nd Fighter Wing deploy for combat operations, they serve – and fight – alongside military members from a variety of sources, including the Army and Air National Guard, regular Air Force, and even with people from other, allied nations.

These operations, known as “combined” or “joint,” are more and more common and finding opportunities to train in a joint environment is crucial in preparing for combat operations. However, those opportunities can be difficult to obtain.

Recently, Citizen Airmen from the 442nd Maintenance Group deployed to Salina, Kan., for an exercise with the Kansas Air National Guard, Regular Air Force and Army National Guard. A-10 pilots from the 442nd FW’s 303rd Fighter Squadron flew from Whiteman Air Force Base to practice firing the plane’s 30-millimeter cannon and dropping munitions on Smoky Hill Range.

Pilots were able to land and tactically turn the jets at the nearby Salina Airport, fly training missions over the range again, then return to Whiteman because of the maintenance crews deployed to Salina to service the aircraft.

The pilots spent a week practicing at Smoky Hill Range, 10 miles from the Great Plains Joint Training Center (GPJTC) located at the Salina Airport. The center affords both military and civilian organizations an opportunity to train in a joint environment using real-world technology to train and respond to military and civilian emergency-response missions. In short, the GPJTC’s objective is to provide real training for the real world.

“Centered on the facilities at the Kansas Regional Training Center, Salina Municipal Airport and the Smoky Hill Weap-

ons Range, the GPJTC offers outstanding capabilities for conducting joint training,” said Colonel James Mackey, 442nd vice wing commander and coordinator for the week of training.

The Smoky Hill range offers 36,000 acres for combined-arms training, allowing pilots the opportunity to team up with Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) for their missions. The pilots and JTACs were given scenarios similar to situations encountered while deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.

The scenarios included helicopter flight operations, cordoned searches, hitting high-value targets and engaging close-air-support targets using the 442nd Fighter Wing’s A-10s.

“We were able to work with each other on a tactical level,” said Lt. Col. Jeffry Jordan, Commander of the Kansas Air National Guard’s 284th Air Support Operations Squadron, which provided the JTACs for the exercise. “(The troops on the ground) started coming under fire and we had to call in the mighty A-10s.”

In a deployed, combat location, pilots would normally have JTACs on the ground to act as liaisons between themselves and the ground commander.

A JTAC is responsible for the safety of friendly forces and controlling war-planes to engage an enemy target. The JTAC clears airspace by de-conflicting other aviation traffic, as well as artillery fire from the ground. JTACs also ensure friendly troops are outside the CAS assets bomb fragmentation area and finally inform pilots of the target location – as well as when to fire.

In normal training missions from Whiteman however, the A-10 pilots rarely have anyone on the ground. While they stay proficient at hitting targets, pilots don’t get the experience of communicating

with JTACs on the ground as they would on a combat mission.

During normal training sorties the pilots fly to the range, fire training rounds and return.

“If we go to Smoky Hill during the week, we only get about 20 minutes of target practice because of the travel time,” said Maj. Shad Magann, a 303rd FS A-10 pilot. “But by being in Salina already, we were able to get about an hour of practice each time.”

Colonel Mackey said, “Training there allows us to go to a different range and find new targets that we don’t use day to day.”

In the two hours between sorties, the 442nd maintainers worked to refuel and prepare the A-10s for the next mission. Using Maintenance from the wing allowed crews to “tactically turn,” meaning the A-10s were loaded with bombs, fuel and bullets for a follow-on mission.

During that time, pilots and JTACs met and talked about the previous training missions. They were able to watch weapons videos, analyze objectives and discuss the missions from their perspectives.

“We’ve never really been able to debrief like this,” Major Magann said. “Normally it’s by phone or radio, or we try to catch up with them at the end of the week but they aren’t always able to come to Whiteman to debrief with us. This way though, we were able to meet face-to-face and find out what works and what doesn’t work.”

Major Magann said this shows both the pilots and the JTACs a different perspective, educating each party about their capabilities and the limitations.

“This is similar to how we operate in Afghanistan,” Colonel Mackey said. “We used the assets we had, and it turned into

Continued next page

303rd Fighter Squadron changes leadership at April UTA ceremony

Lt. Col. Brian Borgen, right, takes command of the 303rd Fighter Squadron during a ceremony in the 442nd Fighter Wing's 5-bay Hangar April 4. Officiating the change-of-command ceremony was Col. John Hoff, 442nd Operations Group commander (left), and the 442nd Command Chief Master Sgt., Chief Al Sturges. The squadron has deployed aircraft and pilots four times to Iraq and Afghanistan to provide close air support, combat search and rescue and forward-air control capabilities for the Global War Against Terror. Colonel Borgen replaced Lt. Col. Mark Ernewein as the squadron's commander.



PHOTO BY MAJ. DAVID KURLE

Customer (from page 7)

but not violently. In fact, there was no pain, no sensation of wind or high G-forces. The only "violence" was the parachute opening shock, which brought me back into real time immediately. There were absolutely no surprises, which in my mind is a testament to the training I received from life support and the skills of the technicians in the Egress shop.

My perspective did change afterward. My faith in the seat, already pretty substantial, was strengthened even more. My appreciation for its designers, its builders, its maintainers and our life-support folks went deeper than ever.

The environment we work in can be pretty unforgiving, and we rely on our training to, first, keep us out of trouble, and second, to get out of that trouble

alive. We depend 100 percent on the expertise of our life support techs and our maintenance people, including the Egress folks. There's a bond between us, and while it's not acknowledged as often as it should be, it's the basis for the inherent trust between the guy who works on the jet for hours at a time and the guy who gets to borrow it for a couple of hours to try to break it.

When I got back to Bentwaters, I went to the Egress shop. I brought a case of beer and a bottle of Jack Daniels. The guys were extremely humble, and just seemed to be happy the seat worked.

At the time it didn't click with me, but can you imagine a job where if your product, or the thing you work on, doesn't work, somebody dies? Conversely, how good would it feel to see someone come back from what would have been certain

death, solely because what you did saved his or her life?

This experience, more than any other, brought home the reality of what a great team we are in the Air Force, and even more so in the Air Force Reserve.

The experiences I had, and the friendships I made, while serving with the 442nd will stay with me forever.

If I could have done one thing differently during my career, it would have been to spend more time in the hangar with the people who kept me safe over the years. They are the lifeblood of the 442nd Fighter Wing, and they remain very important to me.

Lt. Col. Preston, a long-time member of the 303rd Fighter Squadron, retired from the Air Force Reserve in June, 2006 and now resides with his family in northern Virginia.

Salina (from page 8)

a great training opportunity for everybody."

"The value of this mission was immeasurable," Colonel Jordan said. "In Salina we were able to execute our mission plan and debrief with everyone at once."

Colonels Mackey and Jordan said they are hoping to continue joint-training missions in the future at the Salina facilities and would like to eventually have permanent-party, civilian maintainers in Salina ready to take on the military missions.

"It's a great facility that they have invested a lot of money in and has a lot of programs," Colonel Mackey said. "Joint training is difficult to find and using the Salina Airport to tactically turn from provides us that opportunity. On this exercise alone, we worked jointly with the 10th ASOS from Fort Riley, (Kan.), the 116th ASOS from the Washington Air National Guard, the new 284th ASOS from Kansas Air National Guard, and the HH-60s from the Kansas Army Guard."

Crew Chief Randy Julien, who went on the trip to help launch and maintain the aircraft, agreed that it would be beneficial to have permanent maintainers at the facility.

"They would be able to fly the missions to Salina without pre-planning," Julien said. "They wouldn't have to rely on anybody else."

Instead, he said, the 303rd FS would be able to set its own schedule and determine the most convenient times to do weekly missions at Smoky Hill Range, without concern for the availability of the maintainers.

"(Previous programs) have given us the opportunity to integrate, but those have gone away," Major Magann said. "We are starting to lose knowledge and integration with the Army. But eventually, it would be nice to see this kind of thing happening several times a week; it would be the best solution to maintain integration."

Brigadier General Michael Longoria, commander of the 93rd Air Ground Operations Wing, based at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., visited the exercise and commented on the positive training.

"I was deeply impressed with the exercise and the JTAC pilot debrief," he said. "I have full confidence in the program's success and applaud the dedication to provide leading-edge training to our war fighters."

The 303rd has intentions to return to Salina in July for additional training.

To the SUMMIT

By Staff Sgt. Kent Kagarise

In November 2008 Master Sgt. Steve Cohick, 442nd Fighter Wing Maintenance Squadron munitions technician, ran the “Maynard Cohick Half Marathon,” (13.1 miles) as part of the Outdoor Fitness Festival’s week of events in Springfield, Mo.

It was the 30th anniversary of the Maynard Cohick Half Marathon and it held a very special meaning for Sergeant Cohick.

Maynard Cohick was an avid outdoorsman and had: sailed around the world, served in the U.S. Army, climbed every major peak in the United States including Mount McKinley, been to the top of Mount Communism in Russia, practiced law as an attorney, had a goal of crossing Antarctica on cross-country skis while pulling a sled and was Steve Cohick’s beloved father.

Tragically, Maynard passed away Sept. 19, 1979 while climbing Mount Annapurna in Nepal when the massive air pressure from an avalanche falling into an adjacent crevasse forced Maynard and two other climbers from a 6,000-foot cliff.

Steve was a wide-eyed 15 year old at the time and moving into a phase of life where a father and son often bond through common interests and long talks about the challenges of adulthood.

“It was very tragic for me,” Sergeant Cohick said. “It was an impressionable time in my life and just about the time I was going to learn the secrets of this life – he was taken from me.”

Although Maynard passed away all too soon, he left a very indelible mark on Steve’s life by living his 42 years to the fullest, and keeping his eyes on life’s daunting summit.

“I’ve tried to emulate what he taught by keeping goals in my life. I believe anybody can achieve what they want. You’ve got to have a goal – achieve that goal and move onto the next one,” Sergeant Cohick said. “That was my father’s touchstone.”

Maynard was selective in the mountains he chose to climb and shunned conquering Mount Everest because he felt it had already been done more than enough by others. He wanted to climb mountains that were challenging and technically difficult, Steve explained.

Steve Cohick claims that people who are into mountain climbing are a unique group of individuals who have a special charisma that causes them to be accomplished and driven.

Steve grew up watching his father prepare for climbs and grew an appreciation for the rewards of exercise. This is much of the reason he still puts a major emphasis on pushing his body to new extremes.

“My dad would strap on a 150-pound backpack and wear ankle weights while walking the stairs of a 12-story building – 28 times with all that gear – in one night. It’s hard for anybody to understand putting yourself through this to reach the top of a mountain,” Sergeant Cohick said.

Aside from mountain climbing, Maynard was also a competitive cyclist and runner who helped found an organization titled “The Ozark Mountain Ridge Runners.” Those same folks still run a store called “Ridge Runner Sports” and are responsible for starting the “Maynard Cohick Half Marathon” two months after Maynard’s death.

Due to Air Force obligations, Sergeant Cohick had not been able to participate in the half marathon so upon returning from an Afghanistan deployment in July 2008 he dedicated three months to training for the feat.

“It was something I felt like I had to do – it was an obligation,” Sergeant Cohick said.

Steve started running three miles at a time adding a mile to his distance once a week until he was up to 12 miles daily. The fruits of his labor resulted in finishing 335th place, out of 680 runners, in just over two hours.

“You gotta push through the pain to attain progress. Once you realize you can keep on going you’ll realize it’s not that big of a deal – anyone can do it with two good legs. I plan to finish below two hours next time,” Steve said.

Sergeant Cohick is calm and focused when he talks about the Air Force fitness test and what Airmen can do when faced with an upcoming evaluation.

“You should always be setting goals for yourself, even small ones, especially when it comes to the Air Force fit-to-fight standards,” Sergeant Cohick said. It can be dangerous to wait until the last minute to train.

“My father always spoke of goal setting and achievement,” he said. “He

would speak at schools, colleges and other organizations about his climbs and setting goals. It would really pump people up to see his climbing equipment and slide shows. It was very motivational and his speaking engagements were how he received donations for his climbs.”

Maynard Cohick’s body was never recovered due to the altitude and climate of Mount Annapurna. Sergeant Cohick is haunted by a dream where he hears what seems to be his father’s voice in the distance, but he can never quite reach him.

Maynard’s friends who were not on the ridge at the time of the avalanche, carved a stone memorial at the base camp. While Steve has seen photos of this tribute, he has never been able to visit.

“I plan on going to the memorial in the next ten years,” Sergeant Cohick said. “I think it might provide me some closure.”

For many this may not sound like such a tremendous goal to meet, but it takes a month just to get to a base camp, let alone three months to climb a major peak.

“It’s basically an entire season,” said Sergeant Cohick.

His father passed away 30 years ago and neither of them ever had a chance to say good-bye. There’s no urn or grave-stone to visit. Steve pauses as he describes what it might feel like to arrive at that base camp.

“There’s nothing like it – there simply are no words,” he said.

In 1983, at the age of 19, Steve Cohick joined the Air Force and has tried his best to live his life and career in a manner that reflects his father’s mantra.

“To the summit.”



Clockwise from opposite: Maynard Cohick, (left) Gil Harder, (right) and Eric Roberts (background) organize camp on Dutch Rib, a knife-edge ridge on Mt. Annapurna in Nepal. Later, high above this camp, an extensive field of ice and snow gave way, crashing down into the crevasse to the left. The massive over-pressure of air caused by the avalanche blew the climbers into a 6,000 foot deep crevasse on the other side of the ridge, killing all three. Above: Master Sgt. Steve Cohick finishes the half marathon named in honor of his father, Maynard Cohick. Below: The three climbers, Eric Roberts, Maynard Cohick and Gil Harder. Background image: A stone marker in Nepal memorializes the three friends.



Vice President Joe Biden shakes hands with members of Team Whiteman April 16 during a visit showing administration support for the troops. Vice President Biden later traveled to Jefferson City and the University of Missouri-St. Louis to highlight progress of the Recovery Act. (U.S. Air Force photo/ Senior Airman Cory Todd)

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
442ND FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS
931 ARNOLD AVE.
WHITEMAN AFB MO 65305-5070**

TO THE FAMILY OF:



**“... You will see that your generation is the most-powerful,
best-disciplined and best-trained warriors
America has ever produced.”**

**- Vice President of the United States
Joseph Biden**

442nd Fighter Wing on line -- www.442fw.afrc.af.mil