

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

**Cannon Range
revealed**



Annual event supports homeless Vets

442nd Fighter Wing volunteers help stand up KC 'Stand-down'

By Senior Master Sgt. Todd Sieleman
442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Consider this the next time you pull on your uniform. The American military and its members – above all other aspects of society – should be honored and revered, for without the soldier's sacrifice no other aspect of society could possibly exist.

You and I wear our uniforms proudly because it's a symbol that associates us with the honorable task of stepping up and defending our country against those who want to see it destroyed. Today the American public appreciates the soldier, but it hasn't always been that way.

During the Vietnam War, returning service members were often greeted with disdain and abuse. I believe today's continued support of the military member is, in part, an attempt by society to correct that wrong. People want a tangible means to show that dishonoring the veteran is not a mistake to be repeated.

The Heart of America "Stand-down," an annual event in support of homeless veterans in Kansas City, provides an opportunity to honor some of our veterans. This volunteer-driven event accomplishes many things, but chief among these is a chance to simply say, "thank you."

Stand-down is traditionally a term that represents an area away from battle, allowing service members a chance to unwind. For any number of reasons, a large percentage of today's homeless are veterans and the Kansas City event gives homeless vets a respite from life on the streets. Numerous civic organizations pitch in to provide resources and volunteers to assist in the Stand-down program.

This year's event ran over a two-day period, June 22 and 23. Starting on a Friday night, the homeless veterans who participated stayed in a "tent-city" and entertained themselves with Karaoke (some of the singers weren't half bad – particularly the James Brown imitator).

After a peaceful night of sleep in a protected environment from the dangers of the street, a hot breakfast was served. Throughout the day, volunteers provided additional services including free haircuts, showers, counseling, medical care and the biggest draw of all, clothing issue.

The 442nd Fighter Wing has become involved in this activity and provides an opportunity for wing members to take part. This year, numerous Wing members volunteered and provided unmatched support. A huge thank-you goes out to

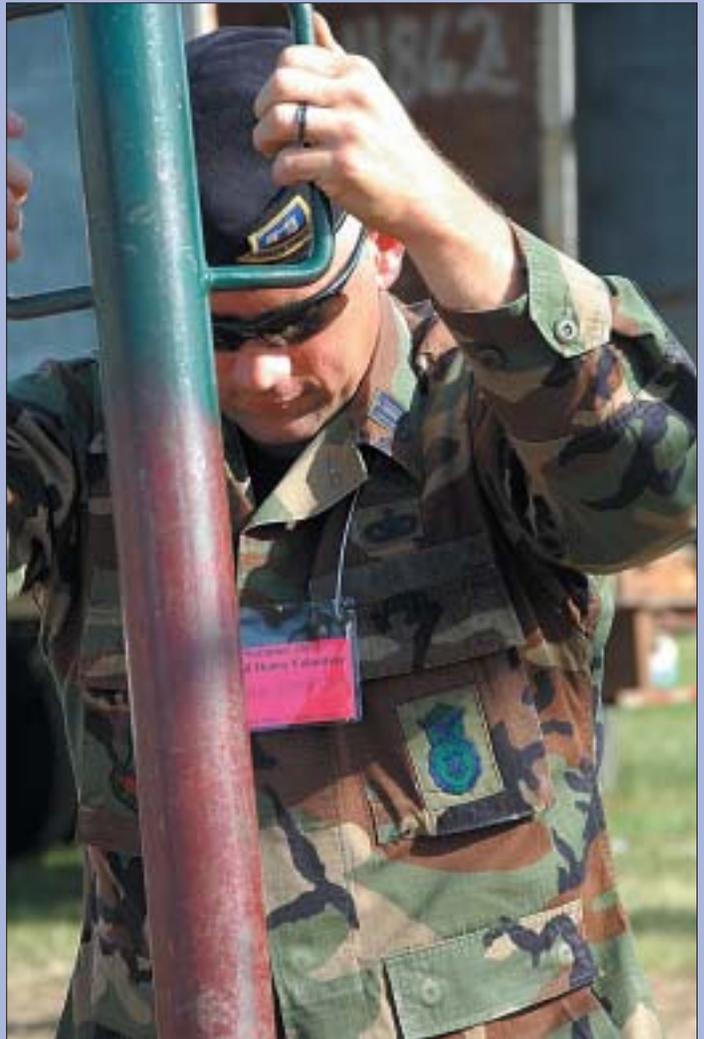


PHOTO BY MAJ. ANNE YELDERMAN

Capt. Dan Diercks, 442nd Security Forces Squadron commander, pounds a tent pole into the ground in Kansas City for the Heart of America Veterans Stand-down. The June event is designed to serve Kansas City-area homeless veterans. Volunteers build a tent city to house veterans, then provide various, need-based services.

all who participated in this year's event and also to those who have supported the Stand-down in the past. Their efforts have paid off. In the end, volunteers assisted 760 veterans and provided a host of benefits.

But perhaps the biggest benefit was to our volunteers who may have captured a grateful smile on the face of a veteran who finally felt appreciated for their service and sacrifice.

Editor's note: Retired Chief Master Sgt. Steve Kottman and Sergeant Sieleman, the 442nd AMXS First Sergeant, serve on the Heart of America Stand-down committee and are points of contact for volunteers.

MOHAWK

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442nd Fighter Wing Tip of the Spear

TECH. SGT. SPIRIT SPENCER 442ND FIGHTER WING SAFETY

Tech. Sgt. Spirit Spencer is an information manager with the 442nd Fighter Wing safety office. She eagerly volunteered to be an upgrade trainer for all 3A0 personnel assigned to the wing staff, establishing a master training plan and implementing training requirements for members outside her area of responsibility. Sergeant Spencer also went above and beyond by engineering an ancillary training program for reservists to accomplish required training. While this program has been benchmarked in other areas of the wing staff, it has proven to expedite the process of ancillary training and simplify the procedures to accomplish these growing requirements.

Sergeant Spencer is truly a Citizen Airman who inspires others, both on and off duty. She volunteered to be a Wright-Flight instructor in Springfield, Mo., and is involved in other youth activities in her community. She earned a 100 percent grade-point-average at her 7-level school, spearheaded efforts to create a new wing safety Web page and skillfully revamped the records management program for the safety office, which received positive response during a recent staff assistance visit. Her administrative skills, coupled with her many accomplishments, make her an invaluable asset to the 442nd FW.



August 2007
 Charge-of-quarters



MASTER SGT. TODD SIELEMAN 442ND AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

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COVER PHOTO: Col. Herman Brunke, chief of the Operational Capabilities Requirements division at Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command and an A-10 pilot, banks a 303rd Fighter Squadron A-10 Thunderbolt II over Cannon Range near Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., June 20. The range is managed by the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing and serves as a vital training facility. See story pages 6-10. (Photo by Maj. David Kurle)

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Reserve recruiting deals new card to 'Get 1 Now'

By Staff Sgt. Tom Talbert

Revolutionary changes to Air Force Reserve Command's "Get 1 Now" recruitment program could provide an added boost in the number of enlistments.

The Get 1 Now program has been around since 2000 and relies on reservists to refer friends and acquaintances to recruiters.

In March of last year, the already successful program became Web-based, enabling Airmen to provide leads to their local recruiters by accessing www.Get1Now.us. That change, along with offering token, collectable coins as rewards, quickly made the program the command's most successful recruiting venture.

The coin incentive portion of the program mirrors many civilian companies in giving incentives to current employees when they recommend people to become new employees.

Recently, the Get 1 Now Web site has undergone major improvements to workflow, then Air Force Reserve recruiting decided to send out a Get 1 Now wallet-sized information card, with the Airmen's user I.D., password and the Web site on it. Citizen Airmen in the 442nd Fighter Wing received their new Get 1 Now cards during the July UTA.



"It's all about ease and accessibility," said Senior Master Sgt. James Fritzen, 442nd FW senior recruiter. "Now, like never before, it's incredibly convenient for Airmen – who no doubt are telling their friends and family about their experiences, adventures and camaraderie in the 442nd – to readily transfer that zeal, and the perceived questions of their contacts, to qualified recruiters with just a few quick and painless keyboard strokes."

Line recruiter, Master Sgt. Jerry Hancock, echoes Sergeant Fritzen's excitement for the program.

"It's a fabulous way for good people in our unit to bring more good people on board," he said. "People expect recruiters to say good things about the Reserve, but you can't get a better recommendation than from unit members who speak highly of the Reserve."

Recruiters have experienced a 39 percent success rate from lead to gain, which, according to Sergeant Fritzen is the greatest success rate for any recruitment program.

"When reservists share their job satisfaction and enthusiasm with the people they talk to and work with, we get quality recruits and Airmen get to work with the people they enjoy being around," Sergeant Fritzen said. "The simplicity of Get 1 Now is a winning situation for all of us."



PHOTOS BY MAL DAVID KURLE

Col. Mark Ronco gets hit with a stream of water from a fire-hose held by his daughter, Emily, after landing from his final A-10 flight in the 442nd Fighter Wing July 15. Colonel Ronco served as an A-10 instructor pilot, flight commander, assistant operations officer, squadron commander, group commander and vice wing commander during his Air Force Reserve career in the wing. The hose down is an Air Force tradition for a pilot's "fini-flight." Colonel Ronco will become the military liaison to the State of Kansas' emergency management office.



A-10s to get digital makeover

by Senior Airman Tim Beckham
355th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

DAVIS-MONTHAN AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz. (AFPN) — Air Force officials are making significant changes to A-10 Thunderbolt IIs as part of the “Precision Engagement upgrade,” which changes the aircraft designation from the A-10A to the A-10C.

“It’s the largest upgrade the A-10 has ever had by far,” said Maj. Drew English, the program manager for A-10C Precision Engagement.

“The gist of it is to bring the A-10 from being an analog jet to a digital jet,” he said.

The most significant change to the A-10C is the addition of the Situational Awareness Data Link, or SADL. With SADL, the A-10C joins a massive “Internet-like” network of land, air and sea systems. Each individual node in this network “uploads” information for other platforms to see and use, and “downloads” information to better perform individual missions.

For the A-10C pilots at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, this means they digitally access the most current information from command and control systems instead of annotating friendly and enemy locations in grease pencil on paper maps. SADL automatically updates the digital battlefield information on the integrated moving map in the aircraft.

With SADL, participants gain situational awareness by exchanging digital data over a common communications link continuously updated in real time.

“With SADL you can see everything that a friendly user puts on the link,” said Lt. Col. Michael Millen, 357th Fighter Squadron operations officer. “Everyone with a piece of the puzzle can put it on the net, which collectively creates an electronic representation of the battlefield. SADL automatically downloads the pertinent information and displays it on a screen in the cockpit.”

SADL is a military inter-computer data exchange format, similar in many ways to the more prolific format, Link 16 (used by F-15 Eagles, some F-16 Fighting Falcons, and many command and control platforms), and supports the exchange of tactical information in real time. SADL is used primarily by U.S. land forces, the A-10C and the F-16C in the tactical arena. Link 16 and SADL share information via gateways, which are land-based or airborne portals that permit the transfer of information between different formats.

A command and control platform — such as the 12th Air Force Air Operations Center here — can send digital communication via SADL to the A-10C for a variety of purposes. Tasking messages, targeting information, threat warnings, and friendly

locations can all be sent and received by the A-10C. Additionally, the A-10C is the only platform with the ability to task other fighter platforms to attack targets.

The airframe becomes even more lethal when an advanced targeting pod is combined with SADL. This allows A-10C pilots to quickly find targets while remaining clear of surface to air threats, and then digitally assign other fighters to attack the targets.

“In this aircraft I can find a target in my targeting pod, assign it to another fighter, clear him to attack it, watch his bombs hit, and provide a bomb damage assessment to the (air operations center) with little or no verbal communication. And it takes about half the time,” Colonel Millen said. “It’s a phenomenal improvement.”

This responsiveness is critical to coalition ground forces whom, when ambushed and outnumbered, may need immediate firepower — in a matter of minutes — to survive and accomplish the mission.



COURTESY GRAPHIC

A representation of what the data link will look like to A-10 pilots.

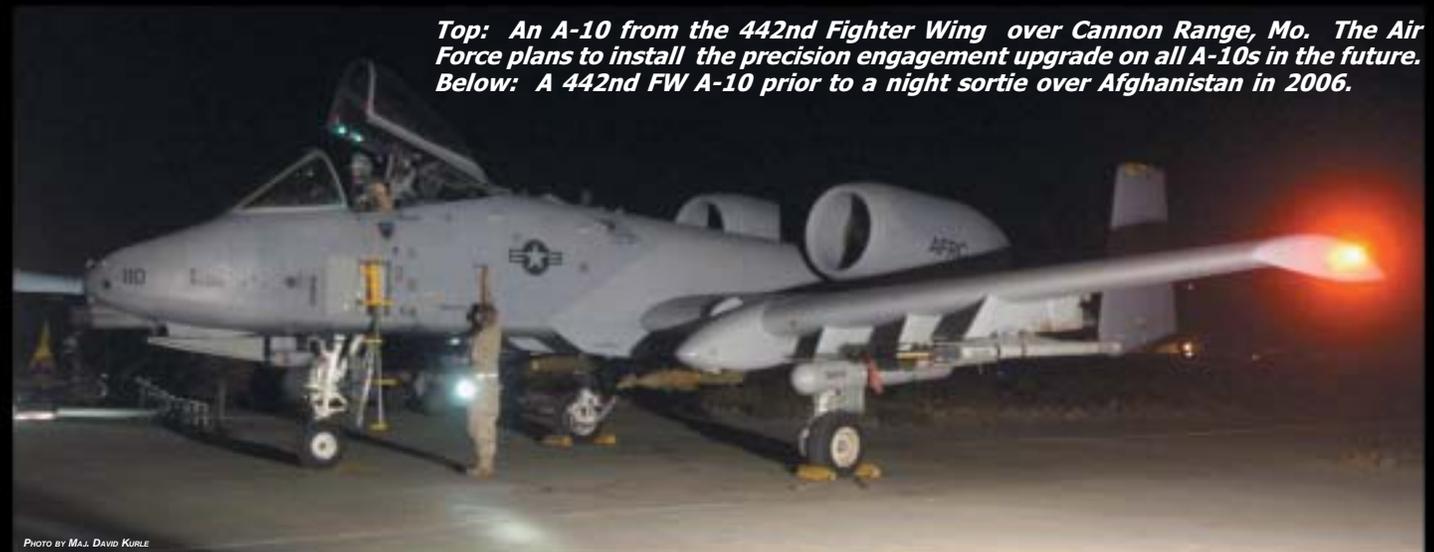


PHOTO BY MAJ. DAVID KURLE

Cannon Rang





Wing's A-10 pilots stay combat-ready with Guard unit's help

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

There aren't many jobs where you have to drive a road grader, put out a fire, build a Soviet T-72 tank, run a lawn mower, and be ground eyes and ears for combat aircraft.

But that's all in a day's job for the Air National Guardsmen of the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing Detachment 1 at Ft. Leonard Wood's Cannon Range, near Laquey.

The range has a host of customers, including Army and Air National Guard units, but the "primary users are A-10s from Whiteman (Air Force Base)," said Lt. Col. Scott Porter, range commander. "They make up about 80 percent of our flights."

Sporting numerous targets, the range is vital in helping 442nd Fighter Wing A-10 pilots sharpen their war-fighting skills – without it, "hog drivers" would have to fly to ranges in Arkansas or Kansas, which would increase flight time and decrease training time.

"Our mission statement is to provide a relevant, realistic range for aircraft," said Senior Master Sgt. Randy Flores, the range's non-commissioned officer in charge. "All the simulation is invaluable to pilots. Our biggest thrill is when pilots deploy, and they come back and say, 'We didn't lose a pilot or a plane.' That means we're doing our job here."

Pilots have high praise for the range's staff.

"They're very professional," said Maj. Les Bradfield, A-10 pilot from the 442nd Operations Support Flight. "They keep the range safe, but they keep it as realistic as they can. It's critical for our mission proficiency.

"At times when the range isn't available, we have to practice differently and it's not real-world training," Major Bradfield said. "They've built villages and various tactical targets and with what's going on in the real world, it's critical."

Capt. Mike Sadler, a pilot in the 303rd Fighter Squadron agreed.

"I think Cannon has put a lot of hard work into making target arrays that

Used as a gunnery target at Cannon Range near Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., this armored personnel carrier has been hit repeatedly by 30-millimeter bullets from the 442nd Fighter Wing's A-10s. Cannon Range, run by the Missouri Air National Guard, is vital to training the wing's A-10 pilots, as well as pilots from other Reserve, Air National Guard and active-duty units across the country.

Top, right: Maj. Aaron Linderman, an A-10 pilot from the 303rd Fighter Squadron, fires the 30-millimeter gun from an A-10 Thunderbolt II during a strafing run at Cannon range near June 20. (Photos by Maj. David Kurle)

Continued, next page...



Above: Senior Master Sgt. Randy Flores, left, and Lt. Col. Scott Porter examine a hole in a gravel road created by an inert 500-pound, concrete-filled practice bomb at Cannon Range near Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., June 19. Below: Mark-82, practice bombs with high-drag chutes dot the ground in front of a tank target.

are realistic,” he said. “They’ve even gone as far as cutting out silhouettes of people.

“They have ground radar threat emitters that can simulate enemy threat systems and the jets can pick that up,” he said. “So it simulates that we’re being targeted. They have smoky SAMs (surface-to-air missiles) they can launch. They’re not at the aircraft, but in the vicinity of the aircraft during a pass. It launches, trails smoke and simulates a missile launch so we can react accordingly.”

Since Detachment 1 is isolated from other Air Force or Air National Guard units, the staff needs to be resourceful – they are their own specialists in public affairs, supply, civil engineering and many other fields.

“We’re like a small family,” Sergeant Flores said. “It’s like we’re on an island here. We have good and bad days like married couples. If you’re not careful here, you can lose perspective and forget what you’re about in the bigger picture. You have to focus on your job. If you don’t have the facilities ready, the pilots can’t do what they’re supposed to do.”

The Cannon Airmen wear a patch on their battle dress uniforms that proclaims “PARATIAD AGENDUM,” which means “READY FOR ACTION”. They must be just that, especially with Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom continuing.

“Every branch, except the Coast Guard has used us,” Colonel Porter said. “We provide a service and you set your operating hours by what your customers need. If I have a special operations unit that goes until five in the morning, so be it. We have to look at what’s in the nation’s best interests and look at what units are going to war.”

When the range is “hot” and customers fly in with live munitions, eyes and ears are alert in the 52-foot tall control tower, on the ground and in a small trailer near the tower’s base.

In the trailer sits Tech. Sgt. Jarrod Schomaker, who monitors



Tech. Sgt. Jason Woodworth, structural craftsman with the Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Fighter Wing Detachment 1, drives a road grader to smooth out one of the many gravel roads at Cannon Range near Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo. All 11 of the detachment's people are qualified heavy-equipment operators despite coming from diverse career fields. (Photos by Maj. David Kurle)



the Joint Advanced Weapons Scoring System (JAWSS) computers. Sergeant Schomaker is one of five NCO's who have completed rigorous upgrade training on the new system. Working in conjunction with 14 cameras on two towers, and, in Sergeant Schomaker's words "a slew of microphones," JAWSS is extremely precise in tracking and scoring pilots' efforts.

"We've had this system since September of 2006," Sergeant Schomaker said. "At first, I think some pilots resisted it, but it's very unique because it's so user friendly. Before this, it was all 'eyeball.' JAWSS scores and pinpoints bullets, bombs, everything. It takes the human element out of it and you get pretty precise with it. It's accurate to less than two inches in the strafe pit and within one meter on other targets and it makes scoring so much more efficient.

"The pilots will dictate to us which target they want to hit and probably 80 percent of the time it changes," he said. "We preload it in here and score it. We can say, 'Bomb one was so and so, bomb two was so and so.' We're recording the pilots' voices, their actions, everything. When the pilots get their printouts, they can make their adjustments. It helps us support what we know and it sometimes changes the pilots' way of thinking."

Sergeant Schomaker pointed out that none of the JAWSS' capabilities would be available if the range staff hadn't put in some hard labor, digging nearly 7,000 feet of trench for cables.

"It took a lot of planning and a lot of work," he said. "It's amazing how much each person (on our staff) impacts us. It's huge."

In the tower, a range control officer (usually Colonel Porter), Sergeant Flores, Sergeant Bill Anderson, range operations supervisors and others carefully eye aircraft as they circle and make their passes.

Three telephones, seven radios, a couple of computer screens and a maze of wires cover the tower desk, but the communication between the tower, the pilots and Sergeant Schomaker is crystal clear.

The tower Airmen must talk frequently with Federal Aviation Administration officials in Kansas City and Springfield, Mo., as well as other ranges and Fort Leonard Wood's airfield.

"It gets kind of busy in here," Sergeant Flores said after hanging up with Kansas City FAA, during a recent A-10 visit. "But it's all about safety. You want to make sure no one is down range, you make sure the range gates are closed. If we're going laser-hot, you make sure everyone has their night vision goggles

Continued, next page...

Construction constant at Cannon Range

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

Spanning 4,800 acres, Cannon Range is a playground of sorts, but the "play" that goes on there is deadly serious.

Tasked with providing realistic targets for 442nd Fighter Wing A-10 pilots and a host of other customers, the range staff uses surplus government property and simple ingenuity to produce "enemy" tanks and planes.

They even built a fake mountainside railroad tunnel entrance and a train made of trucks, trailers and six discarded fire engines.

That resourcefulness and creativity enhances military training and saves tax payers' money. The surplus property is obtained from Defense Re-utilization and marketing offices nation-wide via the Internet.

"Our supply guy, (Tech.) Sgt. (Joel) Britton, is on the official (DRMO) Website a couple hours every day looking for stuff," said Tech. Sgt. Jarrod Schomaker, the range's computer systems operator.

"You buy some stovepipe, modify a truck and slap a couple of missiles on it and call it a missile launcher," said Lt. Col. Scott Porter, the range commander. "If I want to build a Korean airfield, or if our scenario is Djoubiti or a rescue in Honduras, I really need to have 'building-block' capabilities, just like if I had a bunch of Legos.

The range sports a number of real tanks and armored personnel carriers, some of which are gutted from hundreds of strafing runs. But real vehicles tend to hinder training because they can't be moved easily while homemade items can be re-deployed on the range, thus challenging pilots to stay alert even after multiple flights over the range.

Colonel Porter said that more homemade "buildings" have popped up on the range since the fall of 2003. This is critical, given Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

Currently, a complex of buildings is under construction, built from shipping containers designed for tractor-trailer trucking, which will be used for many purposes, including convoy training for ground forces.



A "train," built from surplus vehicles, and "railroad tunnel" are just two of the creative targets built by members of the Missouri Air National Guard at Cannon Range.

or protective glasses on. You make sure everyone is in position.”

No matter how intense things get, the staff agrees that safety is priority one. “Safety is the name of the game,” Colonel Porter said.

“We’re in the middle of nowhere,” Sergeant Flores said. “We’re a 45-minute ambulance ride from Fort Leonard Wood. Thank goodness we haven’t had anyone hurt.”



The staff can thank themselves for their perfect score of zero injuries. They’re meticulous, as they man equipment ranging from lasers to lawn mowers. Keeping the 4,800-acre range up to speed requires them to drive road graders and bulldozers, and be trained in fire fighting.

Their safety efforts also require them to be good environmentalists. “Every year, we do a ‘clean-up’ of a portion of the range,” Colonel Porter said. “We go

through the range with explosive ordnance disposal specialists. It’s really a huge FOD-walk. We pick up everything and inspect everything. We burn off that portion of our range each year so we can see each object on the ground.”

“We recycle everything,” Sergeant Flores said. “M-60 tanks, bombs, bullets.”

While the range residue removal and recycling efforts are friendly to the land and



Above: An F-16D Fighting Falcon from the Illinois Air National Guard flies over Cannon Range June 20. The range serves units from across the country. Left: Senior Airman Jarrod Schomaker, a computer systems operator from the Missouri Air National Guard, scores hits on various targets in the Cannon Range complex

to tax payers’ wallets, some interesting finds have been bagged.

“This was an artillery range in World War II,” Sergeant Flores said. “We find 155-millimeter rounds from then, 1940s and 1950s practice bombs. We’ve even found munitions from 1914.”

303rd Fighter Squadron pilots volunteer for range duty

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

Keeping Cannon Range operating at peak efficiency for its many customers is a meticulous job. As with any military operation, someone must be in charge. For the range, that “someone” is the range control officer (RCO), who assumes ultimate responsibility for ensuring range readiness and safety.

Both officers assigned to the range act as RCOs, but they can’t do it alone, so the range has a “guest RCO” program. Two 442nd Fighter Wing pilots, including Capt. Mike Sadler, recently volunteered to be guest RCOs and, after going through an intense week-long training regimen, said they have learned that the job carries a huge responsibility.

Lt. Col Scott Porter, Cannon Range commander noted that having guest RCOs is a win-win situation for the guests and the range staff.

“It helps us keep the range open,” he said. “Otherwise, we’d never take leave or temporary duty. We have to have the RCOs here. It gets them some time on the ground and they get that perspective. It enhances safety and understanding for the RCOs’ unit and us.

“The big takeaway for the RCOs is that they have 100

percent responsibility and they have to treat every (aircraft) pass as if it’s the one in a million that could have a catastrophic result.”

“It’s quite a responsibility knowing you’re the guy,” Capt. Sadler said. “If anything goes wrong, you have to deal with it. You’re constantly on the lookout. In the tower, you have the benefit of listening to the radio, so you know what the pilots are going to do before they do it. You have to analyze everything to make sure it’s legal. It gives you a little more respect for what the ground guys are seeing.”

That’s not to say Capt. Sadler is on his own when he is an RCO. He relies on the experience of the range’s enlisted Airmen.

“They are some of the greatest, hardest working guys I’ve ever met,” Captain Sadler said. “I’m not just saying that. They offer us some great training and targets. You walk in there and it’s impressive.”

He noted that looking at things from the RCO’s perspective has given him insights he didn’t have before.

“Everybody likes watching the A-10s from the ground,” Capt. Sadler said. “Getting to do that, I get to listen to how other people fly. I can listen to the pilots’ tactics, to their plans, how they’ll prosecute targets and how they deal with threats popping up.”



An A-10 from the 303rd Fighter Squadron drops a practice, high-drag, 500-pound bomb over Cannon Range.

Heritage to Horizons



Airmen endure captivity in Nazi Germany

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

Imagine winning a trip to England, France and Germany, spending time near the French coast, dining on new foods and meeting many locals. Add a train-ride the width of Germany, from Frankfurt to near the Polish border, and you have the makings of a wonderful vacation.

This experience, however, was very much unwanted for a special group of Airmen from World War II, who were shot down and captured by the Germans. Airmen who spent a good part of the war held in Stalag Luft III, a Luftwaffe prisoner of war camp.

Now senior citizens, this group of “kriegies” (short for the German “Kriegesgefangenen” – or prisoners of war) met in late April in Kansas City for their 62nd reunion. They meet every two years to celebrate the date of their liberation on April 29, 1945, at Stalag Luft VII-A in Moosberg, Germany, by Gen. George Patton’s 3rd Army.

In the next three issues of the *Mohawk*, their startling stories of capture, internment and liberation will be told. Although there’s a certain bravado that comes with being an Air Force flyer, these heroes – although they would deny that title – are incredibly humble and unassuming. They draw no attention to themselves or to the sufferings they endured.

“It’s unreal today, but then we thought we were invincible,” said Lt. Col. (Ret.) Fred Frey, 87, of Montgomery, Ala. “I show up (at the reunions) to see a couple of my buddies. Some people grow on you and you become brothers. Charlie Thompson and I have been together now for 62 years. He’s from Utah and I’m originally

from New Jersey, but we love each other like brothers. We think alike. When you live with an individual under the most adverse conditions you can imagine, people grow on you. You really get to know the individual. It isn’t a casual friend to you. It’s a friend.”

While their numbers are thinning, the Kansas City reunion drew more than 70 veterans, plus their families and friends. Although they have many painful memories, these men possess a wealth of wisdom and humor.

“The older we get, the braver we were,” said Jim Gregory, 82, of Long Beach, Calif. “I think coming back is one of the best things. It’s a great memory jogger. Of course, there’s the fun of seeing people you knew. We all grapple to relive our youth.”

“It’s emotional and gratifying,” said Hal Halstead, 83, of Bismark, N.D. “It’s just joyful. Sometimes you open up old memories. You look forward to the camaraderie.”

Mr. Gregory and Mr. Halstead were crewmembers on “Full House,” a B-17 shot down on Aug. 16, 1944. Mr. Gregory said, “It’s not true that I told him (Mr. Halstead) that if he had to bail out to count to 50 before opening his chute.”

“(Full House) proved not to be a winning hand,” said Mr. Halstead, who was a 20-year-old second lieutenant when he was shot down. “I didn’t know until after the war, you could go higher in rank.”

“Humor was extremely important,” Mr. Gregory said. “No question about it. Both then, and years later. I think they call it PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). It did affect people. I can’t document that, but guys were really worried. We weren’t sure just what would happen. It all depended on your individual experiences, your psychological upbringing and other things.”

Their humor, along with patience and ingenuity, helped them keep their military bearing – their mental and physical composure under stress – as they faced combat, interrogations and a very uncertain future at Stalag Luft III.

The camp, made famous in the 1963 movie “The Great Escape”, the true story of 76 Allied Airmen tunneling out of Stalag Luft III in March of 1944, was in eastern Germany during the war. After the German surrender in May of 1945, the camp’s location (near the town of Sagan) fell into Polish territory. “Stalag Luft” is short for Stammlager Luft, meaning “permanent camp for Airmen.”

Today, a museum stands near the camp site.

Senior Airman David Baugh and Tech. Sgt. Roger Turner build a pallet July 14 to transport baggage for the 442nd Civil Engineer Squadron's deployment to Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga., and Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. Airman Baugh is a firefighter while Sergeant Turner is the squadron's mobility equipment custodian and a heavy-equipment operator. The 442nd CES reservists deployed for two weeks for Silver Flag, an exercise designed to test the squadron's combat readiness. (Photo by Maj. David Kurle)

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