

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

A young child is sliding down a slide at a playground. The child is wearing a dark t-shirt and pants, and is smiling broadly. The slide is white and the background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting. The child's feet are visible at the bottom of the slide.

**442nd
thanks
family
members**

In the company of greatness

A 442nd Airman's reflections on our enlisted heritage

By Master Sgt. Jeff Caldwell
442nd Operations Group

Many people who know me will tell you I don't get awestruck easily. However, Aug. 22 it was my honor and privilege to watch, listen and shake hands with nine of the 15 men who served as Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force.

During the 2007 Professional Airman's Conference (PAC) and International Convention, hosted by the Air Force Sergeants' Association, some of the greatest men the Air Force has ever produced attended.

The following Chiefs graced a large audience with their presence: Chief Master Sgts. of the Air Force Wesley Airey, Robert Gaylor, James McCoy, Sam Parish, James Binnicker, Eric Benken, Frederick Finch, Gerald Murray and the current man to occupy the job, Chief Rodney McKinley.

While listening to the Chiefs answer questions, I realized how much military history was in that single room. These men have guided the enlisted force of the finest Air Force in the World.

I can't speak for all in that room but it was a moment that one might consider to be a life event; it was certainly a day I will never forget.

I'm a person that remembers my roots and I associate many of my successes in life to the training and mentorship developed while in the Air Force. Reflecting on my thoughts led me to question, "what am I doing to give back to the Air Force?"

Doing my job well has always been important to my personal goals but that has predominantly been task oriented with leadership across the lower levels. Although lower-level leadership and task excellence is very important, I want to lead from a multi-dimensional perspective. I am certain I can provide value to all levels of leadership in the 442nd Fighter Wing, 10th Air Force and Air Force Reserve Command.

It was those great men who inspired me to do more in the future by giving back to people in the Air Force through program excellence, solid leadership and Airmen development. As the Airman's Creed states, "I will never falter, and I will not fail," my direction is clear.

Even in moments of inspiration, life happens all around us. Unfortunately, I received a phone call later that day in which I found out my father had endured heart complications

but was recovering. When I spoke to him in his hospital bed and he asked what I was doing. I wanted to take his mind off his situation and cheer up the conversation so I told him I had just met nine Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force.

As a former Army Soldier, who fought in Vietnam, I could tell he was smiling on the phone when he told me how proud of me he was. In so many words, he conveyed that my place was at the PAC doing great things for our country instead of sitting in a hospital with him. I was more comfortable with my father's improving condition so I "Airman'd- up" as a professional and returned to my peers.



I believe true character is defined on one's actions during moments of adversity.

Later that evening during the PAC Ball, I decided this would never happen to me again and I mustered up the courage to trouble the Chiefs for a picture during program breaks. As I approached them, I firmly shook each of their hands and stated, "Chief, it would be my honor if you would take a picture with me." With a touch of tranquility, each in their own unique way made a nervous guy feel at ease.

I made my way around the room to visit with each of the nine Chiefs. What a tremendous amount of respect I have for those men and what they have done for our country. They find it within their hearts to reach out and touch lives; that is why they are and will always be Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force.

I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to attend that conference and serve with such brilliant people. However, I still find myself challenged with the question, "how much can one person do?" I know there is no standard answer for this question since everyone answers it in their own way.

I'm going to find my own answer.

The Chiefs have done so much to mature the Air Force, albeit, not all can achieve their level of success; but success is in the eye of the beholder. In our own unique way, we all can attain similar greatness with our own achievements to help our Air Force.

Anyone has the ability to inspire, guide and lead. There are supervisors out there right now who are furthering the development of our future Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force. I can't think of any better contribution to our Air Force at this time.

Yesterday's sacrifice, today's service, and tomorrow's honor!

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

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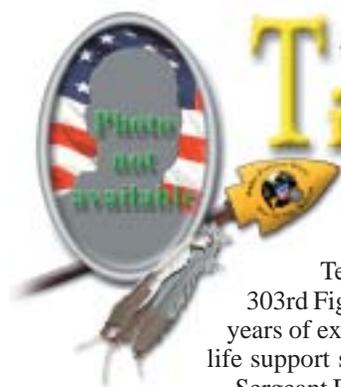
November 2007
 Charge-of-quarters



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: Family fun was the name of the game at the 442nd Fighter Wing's annual picnic during the October UTA. Light filtering through a tubular playground slide casts a green tint on one happy picnic goer. For more on Family Day see pages six and seven. (Photo by Master Sgt. Bill Huntington)



T 442nd Fighter Wing Tip of the Spear

TECH. SGT. PETE FILIS
303RD FIGHTER SQUADRON

Tech. Sgt. Pete Filis is the Assistant NCOIC of the 303rd Fighter Squadron's Life Support section. His 24 years of experience and innovative ideas are what makes the life support section successful.

Sergeant Filis is responsible for the Life Support's flightline section. He ensures the inspection and installation of all aircraft parachutes, maintains all the equipment contained in aircraft survival kits and monitors aircrew survival and chemical defense training.

His initiatives proved invaluable during the wing's recent Unit Compliance Inspection. As the section weapon's safety representative Sergeant Filis' management of the section's explosive safety program were superb. His strict compliance and efforts in promoting the program directly contributed to it receiving discrepancy-free evaluations from both wing safety office and Head Quarters Air Force Reserve Command's Inspector General. Sergeant Filis' program management was key to the Life Support section receiving the Unit Compliance Inspection team's Superior Team Award

His valued contributions continue to help make Life Support and this wing successful.

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Medicine man

Bomb loader 'bites bullet', becomes doctor

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

The tools of Doctor Scott Avery's trade include stethoscopes, ophthalmoscopes and otoscopes. The tools of Tech. Sgt. Scott Avery's trade include safety-wire pliers, 30-millimeter bullets and wrenches.

Sergeant Avery, a 42-year old resident of Lee's Summit, has lived a rare life since graduating from the Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences College of Osteopathic Medicine in September. Now a doctor of osteopathic medicine, he has chosen, at least for the time being, to stay in his Air Force Reserve job as an aircraft armament systems specialist with the 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

He said he has no trouble trading in his doctor's white coat for a battle-dress uniform and sports a sense of humor about his medical and military work, noting there are more similarities in being a doctor and a weapons loader than one might think.

"The A-10 is like a human being in that each has different systems," he said. "A person has a cardio-vascular system, a skeletal system, and our planes have systems, too. When you give patients advice, they may or may not do it. There's a good chance they'll be non-compliant. But the airplanes don't complain and they're always here when you need them.

"If you make a mistake in medicine, you could kill a person," Sergeant Avery said. "It's the same thing here. If I do something wrong and a bomb doesn't drop, I can kill someone. You need to pay attention to detail. You have to look at serious situations as serious, and double- and triple-check things in surgery and here. One time in surgery, the surgeon was always asking me, 'Do you see anything? Do you see anything?' You have to count all the tools. You have to count all the bullets. If you're missing a rag or a tool, bad things can happen."

The ability to focus isn't something new to Sergeant Avery. His resume' boasts 260 graduate and 290 undergraduate credit hours from his medical school; as well as Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kan.; Missouri Southern State University in Joplin and the Community College of the Air Force.

He said he's very proud of his academic accomplishments, but he's just as proud of his work for the Air Force Reserve. He said his military job is, in fact, something of a welcome relief.

"When you do medicine all the time, it's nice to have a



PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

Tech. Sgt., now Doctor, Scott Avery
442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron



PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

Joined by Senior Airman Heather Bax (left), one of his three-person weapons-loading crew team mates, Tech. Sgt. Scott Avery secures a BDU-33 on one of the Wing's A-10 Thunderbolt IIs.

break, to turn a wrench," he said. "There's nothing I'd rather do than come out here on a weekend and turn a wrench. Not because it's easy, but because it's different. I love working on the A-10. That's what it comes down to. I really enjoy it."

The sergeant, who deployed to Afghanistan from July to September of 2006, said his medical and military work have dovetailed nicely, as he has received nothing but support from co-workers, and he has been able to use each line of work to benefit the other.

"The support has been absolutely wonderful," he said. "It's really come from younger Airmen asking me how school's going and calling me 'doc.' It's really neat, because they're proud of me. A loader became a doctor and that makes me feel like a million bucks.

"Anybody can become a doctor," Sergeant Avery said. "I want all the young Airmen who join at 18 and who say, 'I'd love to be an officer, but I'm not smart enough' to not sell themselves short. You can be educated and be enlisted."

In addition to encouraging young troops to get the best education they can, Sergeant Avery said his Air Force Reserve membership has opened doors for him in the medical world.

"On rotations, I wear a miniature A-10 pin and that starts more conversations, almost always with veterans," he said. "One guy was 85 years old. He was a World War II vet. and an Army colonel. It doesn't matter what branch they're in, though. They love to talk about their military experiences and that develops a relationship."

Sergeant Avery's co-workers in each field said they have nothing but respect for his work ethic and for how much he cares about others.

"In school, Scott was very hard-working," said Dr. Kevin Punswick, D.O., who was a classmate with Sergeant Avery for two years in medical school. "He has a really neat story. He was working prior to medical school, so he was a non-traditional student. He went back to Johnson County Community College just to go to medical school. He was pretty relentless on getting in, and taking classes just to apply to medical school says something about his determination and motivation."

Doctor Punswick, now a second year family-medicine resi-



PHOTO COURTESY OF TECH. SGT. SCOTT AVERY

Taking the Osteopathic oath, Tech. Sgt. Scott Avery becomes Doctor Scott Avery in the offices of Dr. Sandra Willsie, (right) Dean of the College of Osteopathic Medicine, Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences.

dent at Research Medical Center in Kansas City, said he heard nothing but good things about Sergeant Avery's work at Missouri hospitals after their classroom time was completed.

"I heard from other medical school students who rotated with him in Joplin and Kansas City that he did a really thorough and excellent job," Doctor Punswick said. "The neat thing about Scott is no one is a stranger. He's good with all ages. He was very good with not only youngsters, but also the elderly."

"He's pretty funny and he's always good to work with," said Senior Airman Heather Bax, who works with Sergeant Avery on a three-person weapons-loading crew. "He has a really good sense of humor, but if you need something important, he's there. He would literally give the shirt off his back to somebody.

"He'll be a good doctor because he pays attention to detail, he's really honest and he won't tell you what you want to hear," Airman Bax said.

"I love helping people," Sergeant Avery said. "Helping people is one of the greatest rewards a person can have. If you give others what they need, you'll get back more than you can imagine."

Doctor Avery said he has his sights set on being a flight surgeon someday. He admits there are many challenges to meet before that becomes a reality, including possibly completing a residency in 2008.

Until then, though, Sergeant Avery is quite content with life as it is now.

"I love my (reserve) job" he said. "I love the people I work with. I love the Air Force Reserve. It's an absolute privilege to be here."

Family Day

Annual Appreciation pleases family members

By SSgt Tom Talbert

The 442nd Fighter Wing thanked its biggest supporters Oct. 14 at the annual family day picnic held in Whiteman's Skelton Park.

The skies were clear, temperatures more like summer than fall; the food was plentiful and fun abounded; but most appreciated on this day were the families of the Citizen Airmen of the 442nd Fighter Wing.

Capt. Robert Fritts, one of the officers in charge of the planning said organizers were incredibly busy pulling it off but grateful for the overwhelming turnout.

"It gets harder and harder to thank the families for all they do with so many deployed in the past, but we are delighted to do it when we can

with events like this,"

Family members enjoyed great food, a disc-jockey, board games and fine prizes. The day out was impressive.

If the eating habits of a nation is an indicator, these families are grateful. One-thousand bratwursts, 300 hot dogs, 400 bratwursts, 300 hot dogs, 250-pounds each of baked potato salad were consumed by 1,100 hungry people at the event.

"Not since 2004 have I been so welcome home, have I been so many wing-members here. At that time we served 1,000 family members. Captain Fritts said. "The deployments and the assignments are still about 250 people per wing participation."



PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. TOM TALBERT

Above: Senior Airman Andrew Carrender, 442nd Logistics Readiness Squadron, takes careful aim as he prepares to throw a horseshoe at the 442nd Family Appreciation Day.

Below: Food preparation was a non-stop effort as Wing members and their families enjoyed burgers, brats, beans and other fare.



PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. JOHN VERTRESE



Day fun in the sun

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PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

Above: With a mighty swing of a padded club a family member tries to take out Tech. Sgt. Richard Mesar, 442nd Security Forces Squadron, dressed in a "Red Man" suit, during one of many mock pitched "battles" staged during the picnic.



Left: Some 442nd Fighter Wing family members dressed in full battle rattle as they donned kevlar helmets and vests provided courtesy of 442nd Security Forces members to pose for special portraits.

PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

442nd quarterly award winners

NCO of the Quarter

Tech. Sgt. Tyler Bane

442nd Aircraft
Maintenance
Squadron



Airman of the Quarter

Senior Airman
Joanna Bedgood

442nd Medical
Squadron



442nd to oversee new A-10 associate unit

Commander accepts Flying Tiger heritage

by Corey Dahl

21st Space Wing Public Affairs

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — Two 442nd Fighter Wing A-10 Thunderbolt IIs carried a piece of Flying Tigers heritage away from Peterson Sept. 21 as part of an effort by Air Force officials to reunite three pieces of a historic World War II legacy.

During the transfer ceremony, 76th Space Control Squadron officials here gave the squadron's piece of the historic Flying Tigers heritage, which has been held since 1995, to the new 76th Fighter Squadron, an Air Force Reserve Command associate unit based at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., which will report to the 442nd FW at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo.

The 76th FS will now join the 74th and 75th Fighter Squadrons, which also share the Flying Tigers heritage, under the 23rd Wing, the same arrangement the original Flying Tigers shared in the 1940s.

Col. Steve Arthur, 442nd FW commander, said the new unit is excited to be adopting such a historic piece of Air Force history.

"It's entirely appropriate that the legacy of the 76th is continuing in the form of the first A-10 associate unit in the history of the Air Force and the Air Force Reserve, for the 76th has always designated a unit that has pioneered new territory in defending our nation," Colonel Arthur said at the ceremony.

The Flying Tigers heritage dates back to 1941, when a group of American volunteer pilots banded together under secret presidential sanction to defend China

against the Japanese. The unit eventually became renowned for its combat successes, often while flying in adverse conditions, as well as its distinctive Curtiss P-40 planes, which had shark-like faces painted on the front.

The unit was later split into the 74th, 75th and 76th Fighter Squadrons and fought the remainder of the war as part of the 23rd Fighter Group.

The 76th FS began preparing for stand up earlier this year, though, and Air Force officials decided to reunite the heritage under the same wing once again.

The 76th SPCS operates a counter communications system which provides a critical counter-space capability never before available to war-fighters around the world.

"With it's reincarnation as the 76th Fighter Squadron, this proud and storied unit will be the first-ever A-10 associate unit, flying a unique combat aircraft, which has been modified for the digital age," Colonel Arthur said. "These new A-10s – designated the A-10C – will be capable of dropping bombs guided by global positioning satellites and will have enhanced communications capabilities, all made possible by our teammates in Air Force Space Command; and the A-10 is expected to be a valuable part of the Air Force arsenal for two more decades."

For the 76th, the future means building a new legacy under their new name — the 76th SPCS Lobos. Unit members said they're sorry to see the Flying Tigers heritage go, but they're looking forward to beginning their own storied lineage.



PHOTO BY ROBERTA McDONALD

Col. Jay Raymond (left), 21st Space Wing commander at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., and Lt. Col. Jennifer Moore, 76th Space Control Squadron commander at Peterson, pass the squadron's share of the Flying Tigers heritage to Col. Steve Arthur, 442nd Fighter Wing commander.

Pod Squad

ECM shop keeps A-10s out of line of fire

By Staff Sgt. Tom Talbert

Long before Steve Jobs introduced his revolutionary I-Pod to the world, the U.S. Air Force had a pretty important pod of its own.

The AN/ALQ-184 Electronic Counter Measure (ECM) Attack Pod hangs missile-like on the underside of multiple types of U.S. Air Force aircraft, jamming the radar of enemies who seek the whereabouts of these dangerous fighting machines.

The 442nd Maintenance Squadron's Electronic Warfare Pod Shop devotes their entire duties to ensuring these complex jamming systems continue to bamboozle our enemies and protect the wing's 24 A-10 aircraft and pilots from radar guided missiles.

According to Senior Master Sgt. Edward White, Electronic Warfare Element Chief with the 442nd Maintenance Group, the pods offer some unique challenges to those tasked with their maintenance.

"The shell (of the pod) was bygone era technology for the mid-1970s," Sergeant White said. "Raytheon Corporation

Tech. Sgt. Harold Blunt (left) supervises Senior Airman Adam Dryden's work as he solders a damaged backplate assembly on one of the wing's AN/ALQ-184 Electronic Counter Measure (ECM) Attack pods. Senior Airman Adam Riegle (right) assists in the procedure.

guttled it, made it digital and created a highly sophisticated pod that saved the Air Force millions of dollars."

With the changes that take the pod forward to be functional until the Air Force is comprised of all stealth planes come some unique challenges and opportunities.

"It's hideously complex with a combination of digital and analog technology that keeps our five full-time and six traditional reservists hopping," Sergeant White said. "It takes a long time to become proficient in knowing these pods."

"To be honest with you, I had no idea what ECM stood for when I joined this group," said Senior Airman Elizabeth Healey, a traditional reservist from Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. "I liked the idea of a challenge, so this sounded appealing. You never know what you are going to get."

Airman Geoffrey From, with the shop since getting out of technical school eight months ago has a different perspective.

"I am getting my degree in electrical engineering so this is helpful," the Maryville, Mo., resident said. "Even though this isn't Star Wars, we are the only guys in the world who have it, so that's pretty exciting."

Airman Geoffrey From (left) and Senior Airman Sean Hargis perform a 30-day periodic maintenance inspection on the Electronic Warfare Pod Shop's ALM-233D mockup while in the background Senior Airman Adam Riegle observes their work.

PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON



AN/ALQ-184 V-12
Electronic Counter
Measure Attack pods

Heritage to Horizons P.O.W. series - Part IV

Liberation: Airmen recount forced march, repatriation

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

Note: This is the conclusion of a four-part series about Airmen in World War II who were captured by the German military. The entire series can be viewed on the 442nd Fighter Wing's public Web site, www.442fw.afrc.af.mil.

By January 1945, Adolf Hitler's "Thousand-year Reich" was nearing its end, after lasting just 12 years. As American, British and Canadian troops pushed into western Germany, the Soviet Union's Red Army rolled into eastern Germany, sending a flood of military and civilian refugees scurrying west.

Among those trying to avoid the Communist forces were the *Luftwaffe* guards at Stalag Luft III, which housed roughly 10,000 Allied Airmen. In late January, as Soviet troops neared the prison camp, the Airmen were told one night by their captors to pack what they could and immediately head west.

"We had four hours to get stuff together and then we started marching," said retired Lt. Col. Fred Frey. "Before the forced march, we had Red Cross parcels stored up in the camp, so the guys loaded themselves down with cans, the crazy fools. They used their pillows to tie it around their necks and all they did was drain their energy. They ended up throwing cans away. I didn't do that. I took what I was going to eat and stayed light.

"We left about 10 or 11 that night," he said. "We were marching in snow almost six inches deep. It was bitterly cold. You wouldn't believe it -- you wouldn't believe it. I'll never forget that damn march."

"We had to sleep where we could," said Colonel Frey, who buddied up on the march with the son of a churchman.

"Little Georgie Ziegler, that little son of a bishop. His father was a bishop in the Episcopalian Church in the Laramie Diocese in Wyoming and I used to call him a son of a bishop.

"The first day (of the march) we wound up in a barn and slept on the floor and in the haylofts. I kept George warm and kept him covered with my body. He was just shivering," recalled Colonel Frey, his eyes watering.

"I don't know how many men we lost," said Charles Woehrle, a first lieutenant at the time. "Some just laid down and froze to death. That was the lowest point of the whole thing."

Colonel Frey said the prisoners marched for three or four days, ending up at the town of Spremburg. From there, they took "40 and eights," boxcars designed for forty men or eight horses, to the town of Moosburg, where Stalag Luft VII-A was located.

"There were 50 or 60 of us in these boxcars," said Hal Halstead, a second lieutenant at the time. "Everyone had dysentery. Everyone was throwing up. It was a very bad ride. You could hear our bombers overhead. We'd be in a certain city, in the train marshalling yards and you could hear them."

The prisoners made their way south toward Moosburg, in southeastern Germany and once they arrived at SL VII-A, they played a waiting game that ended April 29, 1945, one day before Hitler committed suicide in Berlin.

"One day, we were sitting outside and we heard some rum-

bling," Lieutenant Woehrle said. "We asked the British and some South Africans what was going on. One of them said, 'I think it's a rear-guard action.'"

"We could see things moving and they were Sherman tanks covered with sandbags," he said. "Then we saw a big plume of smoke hitting the *platz* (town square) in Moosburg. We were (on high ground) and we could look right into the village. There was a big flagpole there with the swastika flying. All of a sudden, we noticed that the guard had left the guardhouse.

"Some of the German guards had taken off," said Homer Reynolds, a technical sergeant at the time. "But some wouldn't give up. I have pictures of two or three of them who were killed."

"Then we saw a command car coming in and we saw the swastika coming down, and up went a flag four times bigger and it took the breeze," Lieutenant Woehrle said. "It was the American flag. We were hanging on the fence and we were in tears. A little Scotsman was to my left and he said to me, 'Laddie, I don't want to sound unpatriotic, but that's the bloodiest finest flag I've ever seen,' and tears were running down his cheeks, and then we knew it was over."

The vacuum left by the retreating Germans was quickly filled by American GIs, as Sherman tanks rolled into the prison camp.

"One of the tank drivers had come into the camp and he was from Topeka (Kan.)," Sergeant Reynolds said. "He gave me a v-mail (victory mail) and I made it out to my folks and sent it. I told them I'd be home by my birthday and sure enough I got home by my birthday."

As U.S. troops poured in, one "liberator," bearing stars on his helmet and sporting pearl-handled revolvers, drew a lot of attention.

"In comes a Sherman tank and the hatch opens and someone threw out K-rations. I caught some bread and jam, and shortly after that, in comes General George Patton (the Third Army commander) in his jeep with his helmet and scarf on, his ivory six-shooters on each side. And he was just like a mother hen to us. He was sympathetic and wonderful, and he said, 'We're going to get ready to get you out of here in the next couple of days.'"

Food was such a preoccupation at Moosburg for the prisoners, as it was at SL III, that some Airmen weren't above having a case of "sticky fingers."

"I had the honor of stealing K-rats out of Patton's jeep," said Bill Whitney, a second lieutenant at the time. "He couldn't help but laugh. He just laughed about it and said, 'We've got to get you guys out of here and get you back to some food.' I recall that's what his comment was."

Other Airmen made games out of their slim culinary supplies.

"One time at Moosburg, we decided to have a parcel eating contest," Lieutenant Halstead said. "Two rather heavy chow hounds were pitted against each other. They had to eat a Red Cross parcel in 24 hours, with the exception of the soap and cigarettes, obviously. In that parcel was a pound of powdered milk, a pound of sugar, a pound of margarine, a pound of corned beef



Then 1st Lt. Charles Woehrle is included in a group photo taken at Stalag VII-A, Moosburg, Germany. Pictured are (L-R) John Fitzpatrick (hand in pocket), Ed Stephenson (beret), Ernie Sands (bending over stove), Francis "Fran" Finnegan, John Lindquist, Lieutenant Woehrle, Jim Houser and Lt. Marshall Draper (kneeling) of the 15th Bombardment Squadron. Draper had the unfortunate distinction to be the first U.S. POW in Germany, shot down on 21 June 1942. These men were roommates at Stalag Luft III. They stayed together on a forced march in January 1945, sharing food and emotional support. (Photo courtesy of Ben van Drogenbroek through the 458th Bombardment Group (H) Web page, www.485bg.com.)

and two D-bar chocolate bars.

"They elected to bake them into big, greasy chocolate-chip cookies and one chap almost made it to the end, and his handlers were saying, 'Come on, eat it, eat it, eat it,' and tears were in his eyes and he couldn't swallow it. And we'd watch this like the World Series. It was a big event to us," he said.

Today, the Airmen of Stalag Luft III share these and many other memories every two years at their reunions. Naturally, the veterans' experiences of being shot down, captured and liberated bring up many deep emotions in themselves and they have been left with many indelible memories.

"It's hard to understand the love you have for another kriegie," said veteran Bob Weinberg.

When asked at the reunion in Kansas City in April if he remembered his "kriegie" (prisoner of war) number, veteran Ernie Thorp didn't miss a beat.

"You betcha," he said. "7288. You bet, oh yeah. My social

security number? I'd say, 'Gosh, I don't know. I've got to look it up.' But I remember my kriegie number. You betcha. Yes, sir."

Out of their experiences have come a handful of strange friendships. Some veterans said they were able to track down *Luftwaffe* Major Gustav Simoleit and *Oberfeldwebel* (Master Sergeant) Hermann Glemnitz, two of their captors at SL III and invited them to attend the veterans' 1965 gathering, marking the 20th anniversary of their liberation.

One of the attendees at the Kansas City reunion was Hanns Scharff, the son of a *Luftwaffe* interrogator at Dulag Luft. Mister Scharff was welcomed with open arms by the veterans and their families, as was his father, who attended at least one reunion before his death in 1992.

"It was always great for my dad to meet his former prisoners," said Mister Scharff of Los Angeles. "He was a little disparaging to bomber pilots and he called them bus drivers, but he enjoyed meeting all of them."

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Tech. Sgts. Phillip Shaw and Elgin Cline III, 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, work on a strut replacement project for one of the 442nd Fighter Wing's A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, during the October Unit Training Assembly,

TO THE FAMILY OF:



**I am an American Airman.
My mission is to Fly, Fight, and Win.
I am faithful to a Proud Heritage,
A Tradition of Honor,
And a Legacy of Valor.
-- from the Airman's Creed**

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