

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

Engineers deploy to Silver Flag

UCI
MSEP
HSI
success

Fit to Fight ... why you really should care

By Lt. Col. Karen Barrett
Wing Fitness coordinator

Why should you care about the new fitness standards? Your Reserve career could depend on your ability to pass the Fit to Fight test.

The new Enlisted Performance Report and Officer Performance Report forms are now in place. Both forms contain a block to indicate if physical fitness standards have not been met. A referral report results if standards can not be achieved.

The minimum passing score is 75 percent. The new change to Air Force Instruction 10-248 also eliminates the

marginal category. You either pass or fail.

Think you can “no-show” your fitness test? Think again! IC 2007-1 to AFI 10-248 says, “An unexcused failure to report for a scheduled fitness appointment may be punishable as a violation of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice.”

Preparing to test by engaging in regular exercise and eating a healthy diet is the best way to off-set pre test jitters and ward off the temptation to “disappear” before a test.

What happens if you fail? You must retest within 180 days and complete a “Healthy Living Program.” This pro-

gram is available on-line for reservists. It consists of behavior modification, fitness and nutrition education. It is tailored to assist members improve weight and fitness levels safely. If you remain in “poor” status for a continuous 24-month period, your commander may consider administrative separation. Other actions may apply as well.

Successfully completing annual fitness training is more important than ever. Take the initiative now, prepare during the month, and on UTA’s partner up with a fitness buddy. Instead of hoisting those brewski’s after sign out, lift some weights. You’ll feel good in the morning and perform better in the long run.

Rules change to require ARTs to wear uniforms full-time

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — When people visit an Air Force Reserve Command unit during the week in the coming months, they are likely to see more people in military uniforms.

The Air Force changed three of its instructions Aug. 7 to require all air reserve technicians to wear military uniforms rather than civilian clothes while working in civilian status. ARTs are full-time civilian employees who serve in the same job as Air Force reservists. They’ve been wearing uniforms when in military status.

ARTs in some locations are already wearing their uniforms all of the time at work. Others haven’t started wearing their uniforms everyday because they have not been required to do so.

“We want our ARTs to be in uniform because we are integrating with the Regular Air Force and Air National Guard throughout the Air Force,” said Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley, AFRC commander. “Total Force Integration is changing how we interact with the rest of the Air Force.

“Even before 9/11, the regular component depended on us to get the job done,” he said. “That dependency is growing because we cannot afford to do business as usual. We need to consolidate our forces and capitalize on each other’s strengths.”

As example of progress, General Bradley cited reservists preparing to fly F-22s with the Regular Air Force in Alaska, reservists flying their own C-17s in California and reservists standing up and managing a C-130 unit in North Carolina with an active associate unit.

“We are able to take on new and challenging missions because of the skills and experience of our air reserve technicians,” said Chief Master Sgt. Troy McIntosh, AFRC command chief master sergeant.

“Some technicians have told me they feel this uniform change is calling their military dedication or patriotism into ques-



US AIR FORCE PHOTO BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

New changes will require all air reserve technicians to wear military uniforms rather than civilian clothes while working in civilian status.

tion,” the chief said. “That is not at all the case. Our technicians have proved themselves in the past and, I’m confident, they will continue to do so in the future.”

General Bradley said the Air Force Reserve is entering a new era, which is vastly different than 1958, the year the air reserve technician program was created.

“I believe wearing uniforms is an important step to being a full partner and an Unrivaled Wingman in today’s Air Force,” General Bradley said.

The Air Force Reserve has about 1,335 ART officers and 8,400 ART enlisted people. (Air Force Reserve Command News Service)

MOHAWK

442nd Fighter Wing

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Charge-of-quarters



SENIOR MASTER SGT. TIM STORMS 442ND 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. Thomas Wilkes works to set up a tent to be used as a shelter during the 442nd Civil Engineer Squadron's July deployment to Silver Flag near Tyndall AFB, Fla. For more on the deployment see the related story on pages six and seven. (Photo by Master Sgt. Bill Huntington)

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442nd Fighter Wing Tip of the Spear

MASTER SGT. LINDA JOBE 442ND MAINTENANCE GROUP

Master Sgt. Linda Jobe is the NCOIC of the commanders' support staff for the 442nd Maintenance Group. She has directed the realignment of work details for all administrative and personnel specialists assigned to the CSS.

In preparation for the Unit Compliance Inspection, Sergeant Jobe worked full-time to review all commanders' programs and ensure regulatory compliance for CSS oversight of those programs. Sergeant Jobe coordinated the revision and integration of two separate file plans into a single, compliant file plan.

Sergeant Jobe's customer focus is second to none. All visitors to the 442nd MXG are greeted warmly. All members of the CSS look to her leadership and emulate her service mentality.

During a shortage of full-time staff in the CSS, Sergeant Jobe oversaw the review of the training documents for all staff personnel and ensured compliance on required annotations. She created a mutual folder for all unit personnel to access common forms and increased the CSS effectiveness immediately.

She is a highly respected leader in the CSS, sought out by commanders and customers alike.

UCI MSEP HSI

442nd shows excellence in triple AFRC inspection



By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

It's always a little nerve-racking waiting to see how you did on a test. But 442nd Fighter Wing Airmen are breathing a little easier now that they know the results of the August unit compliance inspection.

The five-day review, conducted by Air Force Reserve Command's Inspector General team, also included detailed looks at maintenance and medical operations, and ended with inspectors and wing commander, Col. Steve Arthur, very pleased.

"The overall big message is 'well done,'" the colonel said. "With the pace we're setting in just the one year I've been here, this inspection shows we're doing an admirable job of prioritizing what's on our plate and getting those things done."

While an operational readiness inspection tests a unit's combat readiness, a UCI ensures a wing is operating in accordance with federal laws and military standards.

"A unit compliance inspection takes a look at a wing's processes and procedures to determine whether it is operating 'by the book,'" said Col. Jon Berrie, AFRC Inspector General and UCI team chief. "There are legal and regulatory requirements that must be met for a unit to be in compliance with Congressional directives, the law, and Air Force and Department of Defense regulations, as well as regulations from other federal agencies. Our job is to ensure those laws and regulations are being followed. It's a requirement that we inspect units and make sure Air Force Reserve Command units are good stewards of taxpayers' money."

At the inspection's out-brief August 5, several Airmen were recognized as "superior performers," including Master Sgt. Jeff Caldwell, 442nd Operations Group career advisor.

"This was a very thorough inspection," he said. "They came in and looked at our programs and they dug in pretty deep. But we're ready (to fulfill our mission). That's the bottom line."

The wing's maintenance Airmen also impressed inspectors during the maintenance standardization and evaluation program review, an inspection that the AFRC inspector general Col. James Stewart described as "brutal."

"That's an accurate portrayal," Colonel Arthur said. "But when you look at it, we had the second highest MSEP score for the evaluation portion in AFRC history, and it was a 'sat' (satisfactory), so that tells you the difficulty of the inspection."

"Satisfactory" is the third tier in the

MSEP's five-tier scoring range of outstanding, excellent, satisfactory, marginal and unsatisfactory.

The MSEP looked at two areas, program management and evaluation. Colonel Arthur said program management is very objective versus evaluation, which is quite subjective.

"Program management is pretty straight forward, whereas there's a lot of interpretation with evaluation performance," he said. "This is where evaluators are watching our talented maintenance people repair and maintain A-10s. They look at how they utilize technical orders, how they follow procedures. These inspectors did a very fair, accurate assessment and they showed us some areas where we can improve."

"This is very difficult to pass," Colonel Stewart said. "But this is a unit that is war-tested and you can tell in the quality of the individuals here. Another thing that stands out is how friendly and professional and courteous everyone is. Everyone seemed to be well-prepared."

With the current fast and furious operations the wing's involved in, Colonel Arthur said such inspections can be "a bitter pill to swallow" but they yield good fruit in the end.

"The reality is that every once in a while it's good to have an outside organization come look at how you operate," Colonel Arthur said. "It gives you a different perspective and that's important because when you're here day in and day out, a lot of things can become routine. It's sometimes easy to overlook the details."

"When you have a high tempo of operations, one of the first things that drops is documentation," he said. "Our tempo isn't going to let up, but this inspection is absolutely indicative of having lots of talented, experienced people. The calm that we're operating with now shows we know how to handle pressure."

Tech. Sgt. Shaun McCrea, the computer systems administrator for the maintenance group, was one of several Airmen recognized for outstanding performance at the MSEP outbrief.

"It was intense," he said. "They definitely went through with a fine-toothed comb. Sometimes you don't get the big picture, but they made suggestions and we'll go off those. I know our unit is top notch. We have people who've been doing their jobs a long time and it just goes to show what experienced, hard-working individuals who know their job can do. It just shows excellence in all we do."

"We knew it'd be tough going in," said Lt. Col. Eric Vander Linden, 442nd Maintenance Group commander. "As

Colonel Arthur said, with everything we have going on, plus the gravity of this inspection, this was a major undertaking. When you look at what our people did, it speaks volumes about them and what a great job they did. With wanting to do well, to further the legacy of this wing, you look at not just our inspection history, which has been outstanding, but our deployment history, too. This is a great organization and with that comes a desire to perpetuate that legacy."

At the MSEP out-brief, Colonel Arthur had high praise for the wing's maintenance Airmen and he made an admission to them.

"You are all awesome," he said. "From day one, I knew you were absolute professionals. I don't gather you up and thank you enough, but I am the luckiest wing commander in the world to have you."

"Let's keep our focus, as we spin-up for the AEF (air expeditionary force)," Colonel Arthur said. "Great job."

On the medical side of the house, IG teams conducted a health service inspection, which looked at three areas, expeditionary medical operations, in-garrison medical operations and leadership.

As with the UCI and the MSEP, the HSI showed the medical squadron had some strengths and some areas needing improvement.

"Our primary mission is to have combat-ready people and combat-ready equipment," Colonel Arthur said. "When we get an opportunity to bring a team in to help us, it's a tremendous opportunity. We have a tremendous group of people in the medical squadron and I'm very proud of you, and I know General Bradley is proud of you."

A handful of medical squadron Airmen were recognized for their efforts, including Staff Sgt. Amy Cottrell, non-commissioned officer in charge of medical readiness.

"I think, as a squadron, we've tackled a huge obstacle," Sergeant Cottrell said. "I think we're going to come out of this feeling more cohesive. During the inspection, we just asked what we could do for each other."

"The main message I want to take back to headquarters is that the 442nd Fighter Wing will continue to serve this nation and the Air Force in an outstanding manner," Colonel Berrie said. "This wing's men and women are mission-focused and highly professional. I want to let Gen. (John) Bradley (AFRC commander) know that at Whiteman AFB, Mo., there exists motivated, competent and well-trained people in an A-10 wing that is ready to go to war and support our national objectives whenever and wherever they are needed."

UCI top performers

By Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

Several Airmen were recognized for their efforts during the recent unit compliance inspection, maintenance standardization and evaluation program inspection, and health service inspection.

THE UCI

- The aircrew life support team of Senior Master Sgt. Joseph O'Daniel, Master Sgt. Robert Safley and Tech. Sgts. Michael Fair, Peter Filis and Philip Youngblood.
- The wing status of resources and training system team of Senior Master Sgt. Tony Fleming and Tech. Sgt. Craig Burton.
- In the communications and information area, Tech. Sgt. VerNessa Stoudermire was recognized as a superior performer.
- The fuels checkpoint operation team of Tech. Sgts. Robert Ybarbo and Michael Hamm, and Staff Sgts. Gregory Guebert and Evan Michael. SrA. Nicole Allen was recognized as a superior performer.
- The military personnel flight personal systems management team of Master Sgt. Terry Johnson and Tech. Sgt. Steve Musick. In the personnel area, Master Sgts. Lori Deardorff and Jeffrey Caldwell were recognized as superior performers.
- In services, Master Sgt. Travis Stickles was recognized as a superior performer.

MSEP SUPERIOR PERFORMERS

- From the 442nd Maintenance Squadron: Senior Master Sgt. Gary Thornberry, and Master Sgts. Michael Bannon and Regina Brewer.
- From the 442nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Tech. Sgts. Christopher Barton and Shawn McCrea.

HSI SUPERIOR PERFORMERS

- Maj. Donna Hoppe, Master Sgt. Maria Cox and Staff Sgt. Amy Cottrell.
- Maj. Bruce Weyenberg received an Air Force Inspection Agency coin.



Above: Hidden by a two-way mirror, Detachment 1, 823rd RED HORSE Squadron cadre are able to keep a close watch on the visiting Civil Engineer leadership as the exercise scenario is played out. The cadre provide inputs for the exercise to keep the Engineers on their toes responding to new challenges and threats.

Below: Tech. Sgt. Blaine Edwards and Staff Sgt. Thomas Wilkes discuss the exercise's progress with Senior Master Sgt. Cody Ellett. Sergeants Wilkes and Edwards had been setting up shelters that the engineers would occupy during the exercise.



Silver

Engineers hone s

By Master Sgt. Bill Huntington

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, FLA. – For most people a trip to Florida’s Gulf coast would mean playing in the surf and enjoying life on sandy beaches.

For some 442nd Civil Engineer Squadron members attending Silver Flag exercises in July, however, it means chemical warfare training, bomb crater repair and long, often grueling, hours of work in the hot sun.

Nearly 50 of the Wing’s engineers joined Airmen from 21 other Air Force units from as far away as England and California for the five-day exercise held here.

Detachment 1, 823rd RED HORSE (Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers) Squadron hosts Silver Flag and the squadron’s 77-person cadre provided the 157 Airmen a hands-on “class room” designed to train CE, services, finance, contracting, communications and personnel troops in building and maintaining bare-base operations at forward-deployed locations. It’s something the red-hatted RED HORSE Airmen do well as they train more than 10,000 people at the facility each year.

Training on the 1,200-acre heavily-wooded site just east of Tyndall’s main base mirrors what Airmen could expect if deployed to a base with little or no infrastructure and are called upon to prepare the site for a follow-on deployment of an operational flying organization.

Moreover, the “training aids” supplied by RED HORSE – a freshly bomb-cratered 6,000-foot runway, crashed aircraft, a tent city waiting to be erected, and much, much more – add to the realism of the exercise.

“The training program simulates a bare-base environment very well,” said Staff Sgt. James Van Gilder, a 442nd CES firefighter. “It is an intense program that builds confidence in your abilities.”

The full spectrum of engineering talent – readiness, fire-protection, engineering, entomology, fuels, structures, electrical, power production and others – is put to the task establishing the base. Often one CE discipline found itself assisting in the missions of another discipline.

“All areas were undermanned so everyone was doing a little bit of everything to get the job done.” said Tech. Sgt. Mark Kuhaneck, a 442nd CES power production specialist. “The challenging part was trying to accomplish all the tasks with a limited number of people in a short period of time.”

The tasks from the cadre came fast and furious.



er Flag

skills at Tyndall AFB

Using Harvest Falcon and Harvest Eagle equipment the engineers built a tent city for force beddown while enduring simulated attacks, which take them through all of the chemical warfare mission oriented protection postures. Advanced base recovery after attack is another element integrated into the program.

Utilities and HVAC – heating, air conditioning and ventilation – troops provide the needed power and air conditioning to make life more bearable in the hot, humid climate.

On the runway, which is always several degrees hotter than the rest of the base, heavy equipment operators or “dirt boys” as they are affectionately termed, fill and repair bomb craters while other Engineers string a temporary airfield lighting system in preparation for aircraft operations.

On another part of the site, Airmen tap a small lake for water to be processed through a Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit, or ROWPU. A ROWPU would provide the potable water needed at an airfield.

Firefighters face both aircraft and structure fires. At a crash site in the woods, they rescue aviators from a “downed” aircraft.

Deployed CE leadership coordinated the effort and, with the entire operation was closely monitored by the RED HORSE cadre as Airmen built mission-essential skills.

“(We were) able to work with the equipment and use it as if it were a real-world operation,” Sergeant Kuhaneck said. “We did mobile aircraft arresting system installation and operation, generator maintenance and operation, mobile generator operation and light carts operation. We do not have this equipment (at Whiteman) and it provides us with hands-on training on this equipment.”

Sergeant Van Gilder agreed. “I benefited from learning how to use newly-developed equipment, and refreshed my skills with equipment I’ve previously used,” he said “The intense training environment tested the strength of our team, but positively impacted our group dynamics as a result.”

While the local environment presented some physical challenges for Sergeant Van Gilder and the other firefighters, it also helped each of them learn something about themselves.

“Part of the curriculum for firefighters is to perform your job while wearing your chemical equipment underneath your fire gear,” he said. “Wearing that equipment – combined with the extreme heat of a Florida summer – provides you with a clear understanding of your personal limitations.”

Everyone from Whiteman and the other bases bonded together as one team and accomplished the tasks at hand – learning another valuable lesson about team work.



Above: Master Sgt. Kurt Kissel and Tech Sgt. Nathan Hooten hang wash basins on a portable latrine facility they had to assemble during the exercise.

Below: A firefighter rescues a crewmember from a “crashed” aircraft. The RED HORSE troops used a decommissioned F-4 Phantom fighter placed in the woods on the Silver Flag site to provide a more realistic scenario of an aircraft crash as a training aid.



Year One



Wing Commander discusses first 12 months

by Maj. David Kurle

Col. Steve Arthur took command of the 442nd Fighter Wing July 8, 2006, and in his first year has overseen one of the wing's busiest years ever.

He welcomed home 420 of the wing's Citizen Airmen from deployments abroad, including an aviation and maintenance package from Afghanistan, a civil engineer squadron from Iraq and security forces returning home from Kyrgyzstan.

The colonel took command as the wing gained nine A-10s and more than 200 people as mandated by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission. In addition, upgrades to the A-10, which are still ongoing, will move the aircraft into the digital age.

He has guided the wing through the on-again, off-again operational readiness inspection schedule and led the 442nd through its first unit compliance inspection in five years – an inspection the wing passed with flying colors.

The wing hosted a number of guests, including Lt. Gen.

John Bradley, Air Force Reserve Command's top officer; U.S. Senator Christopher "Kit" Bond and even Vice President Dick Cheney, all of whom required involvement from the wing commander.

In this busy year, Colonel Arthur has also had a little time to look at the future.

Some of the milestones in the coming years will be the upgrade to the A-10C; the completion of a post-BRAC building boom, in which 14 construction projects are underway; more deployments in 2008 for aviators, maintainers and expeditionary combat support reservists; as well as the addition of a geographically-separated A-10 flying and maintenance unit at Moody Air Force Base, Ga.

At the end of his first year as the wing's 24th commander, Colonel Arthur shared a few of his thoughts with *The Mohawk*, the 442nd FW's monthly magazine.

Mohawk: You've been the wing commander of the 442nd Fighter Wing for one year. What have you learned about this wing during your first year?

Colonel Arthur: I have learned that this wing is a very talented, very experienced, very dedicated group of Citizen Airmen.

Mohawk: This is your second wing commander job, but you've been in fighter wings all over the Air Force Reserve. What traits does the 442nd Fighter Wing have that make it unique?

Colonel Arthur: Some of the unique things that drive the 442nd Fighter Wing are: Number one, its location. It's on an active-duty base. Some of our wing structure is built on specific support from our host, the 509th Bomb Wing. Being a tenant unit on an active-duty base drives, obviously, how we're organized and how many bodies we might have in specific functions. The way this wing is organized is based on the support provided from our host.

Another unique factor to the 442nd Fighter Wing is the experience and talent levels of our people. Given the short period of time I've been wing commander, we've shouldered a heavy load and a huge amount of taskings. This wing continues to operate with an absolute calm, professional response and displays a very strong work ethic.

Mohawk: How has the wing responded to your leadership style and management principles in this first year of your command?

Colonel Arthur: I think people have done really well. All commanders have their own little quirks and issues that are important to them. One of the things I've found, when I start re-viewing our status on those items that are important to me, there's typically a lead-turn in the wing and those issues have been dealt with already. Again, that's the experience level of this wing manifesting itself.



Col. Steve Arthur speaks to the wing for the first time July 8, 2006 during the 442nd Fighter Wing's change of command ceremony in the 5-Bay hangar.

Mohawk: How do you like living and working in Missouri?

Colonel Arthur: Well, this past winter was a little cold, and, other than digging my truck out of a snow bank, it really is nice to live here in the Midwest. It's beautiful, it's got great people, my family absolutely loves where we live. The cost of living is really hard to beat.

Mohawk: How healthy is the 442nd Fighter Wing's relationship with our active-duty host unit, the 509th Bomb Wing?

Colonel Arthur: It's a great relationship, and I think that is really driven by the leadership in the 509th Bomb Wing. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind that when General (Gregory) Biscone talks about "Team Whiteman," the 442nd Fighter Wing is a part of that team. They give us great support, everything we've needed from them, they've responded to.

Mohawk: We cleared a big hurdle recently, which was the Air Force Reserve Command unit compliance inspection. How did the wing perform in your estimation?

Colonel Arthur: I think the wing performed admirably. The preparation was way better than I expected. As I was telling you before, the high operations-tempo people have been working under in just the short year that I've been here, absolutely amazes me. And yet, they get everything done and get it done in compliance with regulations, directives and the law. Everything is according to the "the book."

Mohawk: What are your top priorities for the wing during the rest of your command? Have these changed over the past year?

Colonel Arthur: My priorities haven't changed a bit. The obvious number-one priority is preparation for battle, and that's combat-ready people, combat-ready equipment.

Both of those things are pretty challenging issues right now because as we go to 24 primary-assigned aircraft, we're getting a lot of young people who require a lot of training to become combat-ready. All the modifications we're doing to airplanes and the workload associated with those modifications, as well as aviator training to be proficient with those modifications, is a huge workload.

We're doing great in both of those areas right now.

Mohawk: As you look ahead at the next few years, what changes are in store for the men and women of the 442nd Fighter Wing?

Colonel Arthur: The obvious change is the stand-up of the A-10 associate out of Moody (Air Force Base, Ga.). That's going to be a big



PHOTOS BY MASTER SGT. BILL HUNTINGTON

Colonel Arthur, in addition to leading the wing, must stay current and qualified in the A-10 Thunderbolt II. The 442nd Fighter Wing is the second A-10 unit he has commanded. The colonel has also flown F-4 Phantoms, F-16 Fighting Falcons and HH-60 helicopters over the course of his Air force career.

change for people in the 442nd Fighter Wing because we're going to be directly supporting the reservists – 190 of them – at a separated unit, associated with an active-duty fighter wing.

Initially we're going to do all of their support for them – we're going to do all their financing, cutting orders, getting them paid and other requirements. We're going to take care of all those things until those capabilities stand-up at Moody.

I don't see any changes in our participation in the war, nor do I see any changes in the expectation that we will accomplish inspections to ensure that we're ready for battle. But, I think over the next couple of years, when I look at my "crystal ball," I think we're going to see changes in the basic construct of some of those inspections to reduce their effect and footprint. We can better utilize the money and time spent performing inspections by applying it toward preparing for combat.

Mohawk: Is there anything else you would like to address?

Colonel Arthur: I don't do this often enough, but I'd like to thank all the people in this wing for the good work and effort that they put into the 442nd Fighter Wing. It's an absolute pleasure to be their wing commander. People are really talented in this wing, the competence on display here is unmatched.



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

Capture: Airmen remember falling into enemy hands

by Tech. Sgt. Leo Brown

NOTE: This is the second of four articles in a series about Airmen from World War II who were shot down and captured by the Germans. The downed flyers eventually ended up in Stalag Luft III, a prison camp in eastern Germany, made famous by the 1963 movie, The Great Escape, based on the book by Paul Brickhill. These Airmen were interviewed during a reunion in Kansas City in April.

Oct. 10, 1943, started out happy for 2nd Lt. Fred Frey, a 23-year old co-pilot on a B-17 Flying Fortress. Now 87 years old, he said he'd just received a three-day pass to go to London, but another co-pilot couldn't make his mission. So Lieutenant Frey, who retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1963, was picked as a pinch hitter for a bombing run on Munster, Germany, which had key railroad junctions and was a part of the Ruhr industrial area.

After hearing about the amount of possible German resistance over his target that day, Colonel Frey said he felt a little uneasy during his pre-flight briefing.

"It's a funny feeling when (your briefers) tell you you're going to have 400-some (enemy) planes out there over the target," he said. "Two hundred-some of your ME-109s and roughly 200 of the Focke-Wulf 190s. And what flak (anti-aircraft) you can expect on the route going in and coming out. That's an eerie feeling."

"Flak" stands for the German *fliegerabwehrkanone*, which means "flyer defense cannon." The main German anti-aircraft weapon was the 88 mm cannon and thousands of them dotted cities and industrial centers, waiting for American and British bombers.

While there wasn't much defense against flak, Colonel Frey said the B-17s, flying in formation, presented a formidable challenge to airborne foes.

"The aircraft would be 50 feet below each other and 50 feet off to one side," he said. "That's when you have the most concentrated firepower. You had 10 .50-caliber machine guns on each B-17. Your position was covered completely around the aircraft. Hence the term 'flying fortress.' Not that that means a hell of a lot to the Germans.

"The fighters hit you before the target," Colonel Frey said. "Then they let the flak take care of you. The minute you clear the target, they hit you again. The Germans would send up the ME-110s and they would fly parallel to us, so they have your route, altitude and speed, and they'd radio that down to the gunners and they would set the fuses on the anti-aircraft shells so they would explode at your altitude."

Colonel Frey's plane dropped its bombs and that's when his crew switched from offense back to defense.

"The fighters were all over us," he said. "We wound up with 20-millimeter shells coming in the cockpit. You're trying to stabilize the aircraft. I had my glasses knocked off. A shell blew up right in front of my face. It came in from behind me and I got the burst from the flash. I wound up with first and second degree burns. Shrapnel from the shells wound up in my leg and A2 jacket, and my sleeve was all shredded.

"One burst went into the control column and we lost control of the aircraft," Colonel Frey said. "The aircraft was doing lazy eights,

the engines are running like crazy and you have no control on the manifold pressures. You hit the button to bail out. We lost 33 planes that day.

"The navigator was shot up," he said. "He had three or four wounds. I had to take off my oxygen mask and climb out of my seat and get my chest pack on. The plane was going through all these crazy movements. My bombardier was froze in the hatch and I had to place myself against the bulkhead and shove him through with my feet."

For some veterans, including 1st Lt. Chuck Woehrle, getting out of a plane was only half the battle.

Lieutenant Woehrle, 90, a St. Paul, Minn., resident, was a B-17 bombardier. On May 29, 1943, his plane had released its bombs on German submarine pens at St. Nazaire on the French coast, when he said FW-190s attacked, forcing him to bail out.

"I pulled the (parachute's) D ring and nothing happened, and I was falling and falling and falling," he said. "I knew something was wrong. I looked down and the chute had not opened. Finally, I (was able to) pull the 10-foot chute and 'Wham!' – the chute went up and fractured my jaw and dislocated my shoulder."

Remarkably, Lieutenant Woehrle said he was overcome with a feeling of gratitude.

"I was so thankful," he said. "It was so quiet after all we'd been through. I said the Lord's Prayer and I wondered how high I was. We bailed out over 25,000 feet and it was cold up there, very cold."

Fighting the cold, he said he also began swinging in his chute, as on a pendulum.

"You get sick and you grab two or three shroud lines," he said. "I did that, but the chute turned down, and down I went again. I was running out of space. I had about 3,000 feet left and a whiff of wind came by and opened the chute. The water wasn't cold and it didn't give me a chill. Then I saw in the distance two black specks and thought they must be ships."

Sure enough, they were French fishermen, who gladly helped the downed Airman. Lieutenant Woehrle said they took him to their home on an island. Given his injuries, he said he was especially grateful for their assistance, as short-lived as it would be.

"My jaw was fractured and my teeth didn't mesh," he said. "My shoulder felt better once it worked itself back into place, but it's terribly painful when it comes out. They were poor people, but they were generous with me. A woman made me something with eggs in it, and some toast and wine. It tasted awfully good to me. I was going through my escape kit – money, maps, compass, a Colt .45 revolver – when a man came in waving his hands. 'Allemands ici!' ('The Germans are here!') They'd seen the parachute."

Tech. Sgt. Homer Reynolds, a Rosalia, Kansas, resident, also had some reflection time in his parachute. He was a flight engineer and upper turret gunner on a B-24 Liberator, shot down by flak on



Lt. Col. retired Fred Frey

April 23, 1944, near the Hungarian-Czechoslovakian border.

"Your whole life goes before you," he said. "In the 10 minutes or whatever it took to get to the ground, you're wondering what your family's going to do. My wife was home. She was supposed to have a new baby. And you just wonder. You just recall your whole life, because you didn't know where it was going or how it'd turn out."

Some veterans said once they landed, they were generally treated decently by German Army troops. In fact, two of them, retired Col. Stephen King, 83, of La Mesa, Calif., and then-2nd Lt. Jim Gregory, 82, of Long Beach, Calif., said they wouldn't have survived if German soldiers hadn't come to their rescue.

Colonel King, a B-17 pilot who was a first lieutenant when he was shot down June 18, 1944, said he landed in a field outside Hamburg, Germany. Several farmers surrounded him and herded him into a fire station. Before he knew it, his hands were tied behind his back and a noose was thrown around his neck.

"There were two groups of people and I could tell they were arguing about whether to hang me or not," he said. "One group wanted to and the other group, led by a Catholic priest, didn't want to. All of a sudden, a couple of German soldiers came through the crowd. Thank God there was an anti-aircraft battery near-by and they cut me down and took me off for interrogation."

Lieutenant Gregory, a B-17 navigator, was 19 years old when he was shot down August 16, 1944, near Zeitz, in eastern Germany. He said he also landed near some not-too-friendly farmers.

"I didn't have any idea what I was going to do," he said. "Over the hill came two or three farmers. One guy had a gun. They all came down (to me) and said, 'Do you have a gun?' I said 'no.' They tried to help me up and then this guy – about two and a half to three feet away from me – pulls out his 9-millimeter Luger (a pistol) and blasts me in the mid-section."

"That put me back down on the ground and there was a momentary shock on the part of some of the civilians and myself,"

Lieutenant Gregory said. "Then from down the road on his bicycle comes a (German Army) sergeant. He's yelling at the guy (who shot me) and he took the gun away from the guy. I think he saved my life. Who knows what would've happened."

Eventually, Lieutenant Gregory was taken to Camburg, Germany, and kept for a short time in the cellar of the *rathaus* (city hall), where he was treated by a German doctor.

Many captured Airmen were routed to Oberursel, near Frankfurt, in western Germany, to Dulag

Luft, an interrogation center. The flyers said they were shocked and discouraged at the amount of information their rival Air Force had about them. They were also stunned when they realized some of their interrogators were "Americans."

Colonel Frey said his interrogator told him "he was a major from the *Luftwaffe* and he was from Seaside, New Jersey.

"He starts talking about the Jersey seashore, telling me he's going to be back there when Hitler wins the war and he's going to enjoy himself," he said. "I thought, 'Son of a bitch!' And he started asking me questions," Colonel Frey said.

The colonel gave only his name, rank and serial number, so the interrogator, he said, "begins to recite to me when I graduated from flying school, when I arrived in England.

"He told me about my CO (commanding officer) who just got promoted to colonel," Colonel Frey said. "These were things that



World War II bomber crews faced the constant threat of enemy fighters and "flak" during their missions over occupied Europe, much like the crew of this B-24 Liberator on a bombing mission over Germany in 1945. Airmen faced capture by the German military when they were forced to parachute from damaged aircraft.

just happened yesterday and here he is running all that off. It's very disarming. He was so damn shrewd. It was unreal the way he asked those questions. No matter what you said, they got something out of it."

"My interrogator was from Boston and he'd been there 19 years before the war," Sergeant Reynolds said. "He knew all your slang and he let me know right quick that he wasn't going to put up with anything from me. He hit me (in the mouth) and knocked off two teeth, chipped them off with his pistol. He said he'd make an example of me for the rest of you (POWs). I came out bleeding a little bit.

"You were supposed to give your name, rank and serial number, but they knew more about me than I knew about myself," he said. "They had pictures out of the Wichita newspaper when I graduated from gunnery school. I had some of the identical ones at home. They knew what I took in school and that I'd worked in Kansas City."

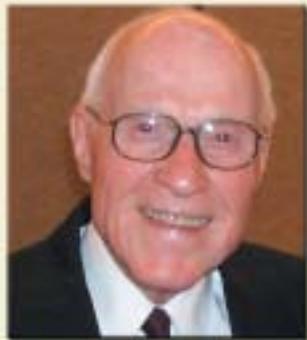
"We have a tendency to think we're pretty damn smart," Colonel Frey said. "The best thing ever said about interrogation is to keep your mouth shut. You think you're being smart with some answers and you're not. Believe me. They're trained for that."

He and roughly 10,000 other Allied Airmen would stay at Stalag Luft III until January of 1945, when many of them were force-marched and carried by train to Moosberg, Germany. They were liberated there by Gen. George Patton's 3rd Army on April 29, 1945, one day before Adolf Hitler's suicide and nine days before the end of the war in Europe.

Most of the veterans at the Kansas City reunion weren't involved in the real "great escape," but they certainly have their share of courageous and amazing stories.

The veterans' memories of the horrible moments of combat and capture, now more than 62 years old, were told in such detail and with such emotion at the reunion — it sounded as if the experiences happened yesterday. Little doubt these Airmen have replayed their experiences a million times in their minds. As the men talked, many of them mixed present and past tenses, as if going back and forth between the present and the past, a past that has earned these Americans the rightful gratitude of military members and civilians alike.

For longer versions of their stories and the stories of other Stalag Luft III veterans, please visit the 442nd Fighter Wing's Website at www.442fw.afrc.af.mil, and look for the World War II POW Series on the left side of the home page.



Charles "Chuck" Woehrl

With a thumbs up signal, Tech. Sgt. Tami Goodhart, 442nd Maintenance Operations Flight, prepares for take off on a T-38 incentive ride that she was awarded for being the 442nd Fighter Wing NCO of the Year for 2006. (US Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Bill Huntington)

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TO THE FAMILY OF:



"I'd like to thank all the people in this wing for the good work and effort that they put into the 442nd Fighter Wing.

It's an absolute pleasure to be their wing commander.

People are really talented in this wing, the competence on display here is unmatched."

Col. Steve Arthur