



America's First Choice

CONTACT

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Magazine for and about Air Force Reserve members assigned

to the 34th Air Mobility Wing, 9th Air Force Base, California

January 2004

Travis Team Honor Guard

(See stories on Pages 6-7)



The New Year brings with it a fresh perspective - a chance for new beginnings



Pass and Review

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

Welcome to the January 2004 UTA! January is a time for reflection and a chance for new beginnings. The problems of the world do not just disappear overnight but the New Year gives us a fresh perspective, a renewing, to assist us in moving forward to handle the tasks we have before us.

Last year we persevered through an incredibly high ops tempo in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and we still have more than 800 members activated. Looking back at 2003, I reflect on a year of noteworthy achievement. I took command of the wing in July 2003 and right off the bat the wing earned the title "Best Reserve Wing" in 15th Air Force. This occasion tops last year as the first-ever consecutive victories for a wing in the award's history - now setting a new record of winning the Solano Trophy three years in a row. Our Maintenance Group just recently received the Air Mobility Command Daedalian Trophy; the second time in three years and to complete the year the wing received the distinctive

award of Air Force Outstanding Unit with Valor for meritorious service in a combat area. This is the ninth time the wing has received the Outstanding Unit Award but the first time in 349th history earning the "with valor" distinction. The award recognizes the units overall excellence in



every phase of mission accomplishment compared to every unit in the Air Force.

I had the distinct honor of pinning the Bronze Star on one of our top enlisted members, Chief Master Sgt. Sue White, 749th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, for her stellar accomplishments in support of Operations Southern Watch, Enduring

Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

The year brings many new challenges ahead for the wing, it appears the ops tempo will pick back up this month with the potential rotation of troops in theater, the new physical fitness standard will begin soon and the Wing Unit Compliance Inspection is slated for next month B flight. As usual the wing has a lot on its plate, we continue to carry out our mission day after day, flying more than 18,574 hours annually fulfilling our mandate of Global Reach, Global Power. In every discipline whether it was medical, personnel, aerial port, security forces, civil engineers, mission support, maintainers, or operations, you never faltered.

Indeed, the men and women of the 349th have always set the standard for the rest of the command, and the Air Force. Excellence in all we do. That never changes, no matter what the year.

Words to guide our lives.....

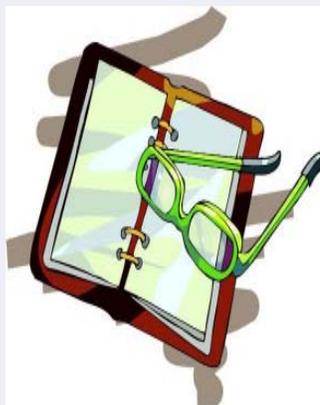
by Col. Fouab Yacoub
349th Vice Commander

Sometimes we forget the hard work and dedication of the individuals of this great wing. The following quote from our 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, summarizes the tribute to all of you in the trenches:

"It is not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the

arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause. Who at the best knows the triumph of high achievement and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall

never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."



President Roosevelt was the first president to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Always remember this—you are the front line for the deeds and the policies of our country, you fail and our country stumbles, you succeed and the whole world knows it.



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On the Cover



Travis Team Honor Guard:

Being a part of the Travis Team Honor Guard (pictured, at left, in front of the state capital building, Sacramento, Calif.,) makes you a part of a very elite force - people who set the bar for the Air Force Reserve motto, "Above and Beyond."

See Pages 6-7 for two stories highlighting some events the Honor Guard supports and who has been recognized for being able to shine even in this group of outstanding men and women.

Cover photo by Nan Wylie and Arielle Kohn,
Base Multimedia Service Center

Strength in flexibility

Happy New Year! I hope that each of you and your families had a blessed holiday season and were able to celebrate in a meaningful way.

A new year usually causes us to think in terms of a “new beginning” or a “fresh start”. Those positive perspectives are important and valuable in getting ourselves energized and motivated.

We need to take our renewed energy and motivation and put them to work so we can continue to lead the way in our fight against world terrorism, current and future operations and our pending Unit Compliance Inspection (UCI).

While the 349th has a proud and glorious history of success in all that we do, it is now time to demonstrate just how good we are to everyone during our UCI.

We have spent months planning, training and preparing for it, now it’s time to just do it.

I believe one of our greatest strengths is our flexibility. We must all be able to

balance our schedules and commitments with our families, employers and with the Air Force.

However, we must each continue our efforts to contact our elected officials, our various associations, and continue our dedication to our legislative efforts at all levels. Yes it takes a lot of work and time, but the results are worth the effort.

One new recent change which is a result of your efforts is the unlimited use of our commissaries for basically anyone with a military identification card. This means no more carrying and showing your pink 24 visit card to shop at the commissary. This took many years to become reality, but was definitely worth the effort.

There are many other initiatives that also need your attention to become reality. The 55 year retirement program, TRICARE, the numerous 1/30th rules, space available travel for family members, and many more need your support.



Chief's Counsel

By Command Chief Master Sgt.

Anthony L. Maddux

Finally, we must also continue to recruit and retain our people. I believe by working together we can lead the way--in readiness, in recruiting and retention, in community activities and mission accomplishment because that is our way.

We have a brand-new year that is full of opportunities to be successful. Let’s charge into this New Year with enthusiasm and excitement and a renewed commitment to prove to the world that we are and will be the professional military organization of choice for the Air Force and our country.

Have a great year!

Feature

Dr. King had a major impact on us all

by Maj. Chris Clay

349th Military Equal Opportunity

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was born on January 15, 1929. He was best known as a civil rights leader but was also a minister and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Every year we pause on the third Monday in January to honor his life, his accomplishments, and his legacy.

The celebration of MLK day is not merely a holiday for African Americans. It is a holiday for all people--because every race, religion, color and creed are part of the great dream he had for America.

The impact of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on America is second to none. During his life, he energized the poor and the disenfranchised. He stood up to violence, social and economic segregation, and injustice in the Deep South.

His courageous leadership in the face of harassment, death threats, beatings, and bombings was truly amazing. Although he was a target of violence, he continued to

eloquently preach the values of equality, tolerance, nonviolence and interracial cooperation throughout his life.

His adversaries were lynch mobs, hate groups, various state and local governments, including many law enforcement departments. As a result, he went to jail 29 times; nevertheless, he kept on marching, protesting, and organizing to achieve freedom for others.

As a visionary, his great dream of a vibrant, multiracial nation, united in justice, peace and reconciliation that has a place at the table for children of every race and room at the inn for every needy child, inspired leaders everywhere strive to make this a reality.

Tragically, Dr. King was gunned down by an assassin’s bullet at the tender age of 39 while on a mission to help striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tenn. get better living wages.

Today, thanks to his work, explicit discrimination has been outlawed. More women and people of color are visible in politics, the media, and in corporate boardrooms across the nation.

Before Dr. King, their inclusion in such areas was minimal. He once said we all have to decide whether we will “walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness.”

He believed life’s most persistent question is “What are you doing for others?” In his final sermon, he prophetically said that upon his death he would like somebody to mention that, “Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I want you to say on that day, that I did try in my life...to love and serve humanity.”

As we reflect on all that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., accomplished in his life this January 19, 2004, let us remember his sacrifices, his courage, his love for humanity and his leadership.

Let us all ask ourselves that persistent question, “What am I doing for others?” Then let us take action.

In this manner, his impact on America will continue through future generations.

To learn how you can help others in your community, please visit the King Center website at: www.thekingcenter.org.

349th Wing wins AFOUA with Valor

by Patricia Schwab-Holloway
349th Public Affairs

The 349th Air Mobility Wing received the distinctive award of Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor for meritorious service in a combat area.

This is the ninth time in winning the AFOUA, but this is the first time in the 349th wing's history to have the "with valor" distinction.

The Air Force Outstanding Unit Award recognizes a unit's overall excellence in every phase of mission accomplishment as compared to every unit in the Air Force.

The 349th AMW is the second largest wing in the United States Air Force Reserve. 349th AMW personnel fly the C-5 Galaxy and KC-10 Extender. The missions of the C-5 and KC-10 include airlifting personnel and material worldwide as well as aerial refueling a

wide variety of aircraft. It is also home to the 349th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, responsible for treating patients during medical airlift; the 349th Airlift Control Flight, tasked to enter austere locations and prepare for United States Air Force aircraft arrival; and the 349th Medical Squadron, capable of providing hospital services worldwide, in a contingency environment.

The mission of the 349th AMW is to "Recruit, train and retain enthusiastic Reservists to provide Global Reach for America." This makes the wing responsible for training almost 4,000 Reservists who, in turn, work side-by-side their active duty counterparts in the 60th Air Mobility Wing, also stationed at Travis.

Over the past 12 months the 349th has had more than a third of its troops deployed in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom.

Currently more than 200-members of

the 349th are mobilized in support of Operation Noble Eagle, or homeland defense.

"The hardworking citizen airmen assigned to the 349th Air Mobility Wing take pride in serving their country and their community and it shows. Receiving an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor is a very significant recognition. The operations tempo has been extremely demanding since 9/11 and this award lets the men and women of the wing know their efforts in going 'Above and Beyond,' especially in the Global War on Terrorism, have not gone unnoticed," said Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Gisler, Jr., 349th Air Mobility Wing Commander.

All members assigned to the 349th AMW between 1 Aug. 2002 - 15 Aug. 2003 are authorized to wear the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award ribbon with a "V" (for Valor) Device.

Contact customer service at (707) 424-2346 for any additional information.

Maintenance named best in AMC



by 1st Lt. Jeffrey Danielson
60th Maintenance Group

What makes a maintenance organization the best in the Air Mobility Command? Attitude -- the 349th and the 60th Maintenance Groups' attitude of teamwork, dedication and innovation has earned them the coveted AMC Daedalian Trophy for 2003. This is the second time in three years the men and women of Travis Team have received this prestigious award at the major command level.

Officially called the Clements McMullen Memorial Daedalian Weapon System Maintenance Trophy, the Daedalian Trophy is awarded annually to the best maintenance unit in the Air Force with 1,000 or more people assigned to it.

This year the two AMC level finalists were last year's Air Force level winners, McChord Air Force Base and Travis. A team from Headquarters, AMC visited both bases and unanimously sent the trophy back home to the Travis team.

The combined efforts of all Travis maintainers, be they active duty, reserve, or civilian, along with contracting teams

from Hillstrom's Aircraft Services, Gold Coast Aviation and Boeing COMBS all came together to produce one of the best maintenance years in Travis' history.

"I believe it is safe to say there are few, if any, organizations that display the level of teamwork found on a daily basis here at Travis," said Col. Thomas Linster, 349th Maintenance Group commander.

"Teamwork made this possible," agreed Col. Dan Steele, 60th Maintenance Group commander. "The attitude of cooperation between active duty, reservists, civilian employees, contractors, and numerous base organizations was the driving force behind this AMC Daedalian Trophy."

This past year, Travis maintainers kept the wing's 37 C-5 and 27 KC-10 aircraft in perpetual motion around the globe. C-5 airlift was critical to America's ability to project military might and successfully execute combat operations with overwhelming force during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Travis KC-10's refueled over 13,500 coalition aircraft during the fighting, keeping airpower where it is needed most - over the battlefield supporting our troops on the ground.

In addition to combat operations, Travis

maintainers supported 519 presidential support missions, numerous VIP missions, and transport for the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai.

War-time missions aside, the one accomplishment that has instilled the most pride in the men and women of the Travis maintenance family is the permanent elimination of the C-5 cannibalization jet, a historic first in the 35 year history of the aircraft. This accomplishment not only freed up sorely needed aircraft for critical missions, it also raised the C-5 maintenance bar. It was all made possible through the attitude of teamwork, dedication, and innovation.

While the Daedalian Award is presented for maintenance excellence, it must be noted that the Travis community as a whole made this award possible.

This Daedalian Trophy tops off a year of stellar accomplishments performed by extraordinary people who day-in and day-out make the mission happen.

The Travis maintenance team will now represent AMC for top honors at the Air Force level and has every intention of making America's First Choice the best maintenance team in the Air Force.

Appreciation for “Above and Beyond”

by Capt Dawn Young
349th Public Affairs

It's an annual event, which showcases airmen who are constantly giving back to those who gave before them.

These airmen perform at more than 650 funerals a year. Bringing class, distinction and honor to those veterans who gave so much during their military careers.

The event was the Honor Guard Appreciation Awards Luncheon. It was held at the Travis Air Museum Nov. 22, 2003. More than 50 awards and medals were handed out in recognition of the outstanding achievements of the 349th Air Mobility Wing Honor Guard and their contribution to the Travis Team Honor Guard.

The 349th Air Mobility Wing Honor Guard was established in 1994 and had only 12 members on its roster. Today there are more than 40 members to carry on the professionalism and hard work that

these airmen bring to the words: “Honor Guard.”

Brig. Gen. Thomas Gisler, 349th Air Mobility Wing commander, praised the members of the 349th Honor Guard by stating, “the honor guard is the shining example of the Air Force’s Core Values. Each and every member has a never-ending quest for excellence. They have earned this day and they deserve it.”

The 12 newest members of the team received a plaque during the ceremony from the 349th AMW Command Chief Anthony Maddux. The plaque signifies the completion of their first year on the honor guard.

The Top 3 Council recognized four members for their outstanding support, hard work, contributions and sacrifices made as being a member of the honor guard. The members are: Tech. Sgts. Jonathan Casero, Takeo Eda and David Satterfield, along with Master Sgt. Manuel Ruiz.

Additionally, members were awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal or

the Air Force Achievement Medal for their outstanding achievements.

The Honor Guard has one award that is presented to the member of the year. In order to be in the running for this award the member had to have been one of four quarterly award winners. This year the Member of the Year Award was presented to Staff Sgt. Takeo Eda, 55th Aerial Port Squadron.

Eda has dedicated more than five years to those who came before us by being on the honor guard. “I’ve always enjoyed drill and performance and being on the honor guard is a perfect fit for me,” said Eda. “The uniforms aren’t bad either.”

The entire event, to highlight the Honor Guard, was put on by the Top 3 Council.

Those interested in joining the Top 3 Council may contact Chief Master Sgt. Anthony Maddux at (707) 424-3922 or any Top 3 Council member. For those interested in additional information about the Travis Team Honor Guard, you may contact the Mission Support Group at (707)424-3737.



Photo by Kristina Cilia,
Base Multimedia Service Center

Pride in service: Senior Airman Rosalyn Davis, 349th Aerospace Medicine Squadron and member of the 349th Honor Guard, performs a flag folding ceremony Nov. 18, at Brandsford Elementary School as part of “Operation Teddy Bear.”

Members of the 349th Air

Airman 1st Class Jennifer Mogayze, 45th Aerial Port Squadron
 Airman 1st Class Ruth Tang, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Senior Airman Rosalyn Davis, 349th Aerospace Medicine Squadron
 Senior Airman Teresa Gomez, 349th Memorial Affairs Squadron
 Senior Airman John Jacoby, 349th Civil Engineering Squadron
 Senior Airman Alexander Putman, 349th Medical Squadron
 Senior Airman Debra Rabanal, 349th Security Forces Squadron
 Senior Airman Donald Schaeffer, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Senior Airman Sun Tai, 349th Medical Squadron
 Senior Airman Richard Wingate, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Senior Airman Ross Wood, Jr., 55th Aerial Port Squadron
 Staff Sgt. Takeo Eda, 55th Aerial Post Squadron
 Staff Sgt. Myla Ferrer, 349th Memorial Affairs Squadron
 Staff Sgt. Nicole Gonsalves-Frantzreb, 349th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
 Staff Sgt. Anne-Marie Scott, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Staff Sgt. Matthew Stohner, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Donald Bishop, 349th Security Forces Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Luis Caragan, 349th Mission Support Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. John Casero, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Imarogbe (Eric) DuVoe, 349th Mission Support Squadron

An elite force -Travis Team Honor Guard

by 349th Honor Guard Staff Members

It's a title that confers respect and carries immense responsibilities - Travis Team Honor Guard.

One hundred and five active duty and 45 reserve members have earned that title and now travel throughout California bestowing honors on fallen comrades and performing ceremonial events.

There has been a marked increase in the demand for honor guard services, especially for funerals. In 1999, Congress passed a law requiring the Defense Department to provide military funeral honors for each eligible retiree or veteran beginning Jan. 1, 2000.

Unfortunately, because of force reductions, mission realignments, base realignments and closures, the area of responsibility for many bases has increased dramatically. Many bases, including Travis, have ever-increasing requests for military funeral honors.

The Travis Team Honor Guard Reserve

members used more than 3,850 mandays to fulfill 100 percent of requested funeral honors and other ceremonial events.

Reserves makeup 32 percent of the Team Travis Honor Guard performing 40 percent of the 535 funerals in 2002 and 45 percent of the 468 ceremonial details.

Although rendering military honors for Air Force personnel and their family members during funeral services is their primary mission, the past years events included much more.

Members of Travis Team Honor Guard marched with the Colors for Air Force Joint Band at the Nationally televised Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif., presented Colors for the 2002 World Series (Game 5), performed a Flag Folding ceremony for Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager during a charity banquet and presented Colors and Firing Party for Travis Air Tattoo during the Doolittle Raiders' Reunion.

"Superb initiative and leadership are the qualities that best personify Master Sgt. Jon Saunders," said Lt. Col. Truman Lum, 349th Mission Support Group deputy

commander and Officer-in-charge of the 349th Honor Guard.

Saunders' was recently recognized as the Air Force Reserve Command Honor Guard Program Manager of the Year.

The Honor Guard is always looking for dedicated and motivated airmen - airmen like Staff Sgt. Myla Ferrer who was awarded the Air Force Reserve Command Honor Guardsman of the Year Award.

Sergeants Saunders and Ferrer were hand picked by the Air Force Reserve Command to perform in Washington, D.C., at the Order of the Sword ceremony in honor of Dr. James G. Roche, Secretary of the Air Force.

Ask any Honor Guard member how they keep it all going and you'll hear "it's a team effort all the way."

Combining active and Reserve members epitomizes the "team within a team" approach espoused by today's Air Force.

To learn about how you can become a member of the Travis Team Honor Guard contact Lt. Col. Truman Lum at (707) 424-3737.

Mobility Wing Honor Guard

Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey McVane, 301st Airlift Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Glen Miller, 349th Logistics Readiness Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Andre Morton, 55th Aerial Port Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Paul Redlin, 349th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Dana Rhodes, 349th Aeromedical Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. David Satterfield, 349th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
 Tech. Sgt. Carlos Tillmannshofer, 349th Medical Squadron
 Master Sgt. Carl Brown, 70th Air Refueling Squadron
 Master Sgt. Ralph Davis, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Master Sgt. Rafael Gaddi, 349th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
 Master Sgt. Michael Lytle, 55th Aerial Port Squadron
 Master Sgt. Paul McCullough, 349th Mission Support Group
 Master Sgt. Carol Robideaux, 349th Maintenance Group
 Master Sgt. Oscar Rodriguez, 349th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
 Master Sgt. Larry Rojas, 55th Aerial Port Squadron
 Master Sgt. Lastenita Schuster, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Master Sgt. Pamela Silas, 349th Air Mobility Wing
 Master Sgt. Johnny Yu, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 Senior Master Sgt. Timothy Martin, 349th Aeromedical Staging Squadron
 1st Lt. Sharon Williams, 349th Aerospace Medicine Squadron
 Capt. Alice Quiroz, 349th Medical Group



Photo by Kristina Cilia, Base Multimedia Service Center

Showing them how it's done: Master Sgt. Rafael Gaddi, 349th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and member of the 349th Honor Guard, assists in performing a flag folding ceremony Nov. 18, at Brandsford Elementary School as part of "Operation Teddy Bear."

The 349th delivers with "Operation Teddy Bear"

by 2nd Lt Robin Jackson
349th Public Affairs

Members of the 349th Air Mobility Wing supported "Operation Teddy Bear" this past holiday season. This event brings Christmas cheer to many children at local area elementary schools.

Appropriately named "Operation Teddy Bear," wing volunteers delivered 1,000 Teddy bears to children at five local schools on various occasions between Nov. 18 and Dec. 17.

The program began as a grass-roots effort 18 years ago organized by Wing civilian employees Cipriano Villanueva and William Ronders.

While discussing Christmas plans with some faculty at Crescent Elementary School, they learned that the holidays would be unfortunate for some of the underprivileged children.

Ronders and Villanueva stepped in, and with assistance from the 349th Air Mobility Wing and donations from the services squadrons on base, ensured a joyous holiday season for these special children.

They conducted raffles, bake sales and accepted cash donations to raise money, which they used for the children's Christmas event.

In the first year, the event consisted of cake, cookies and punch shared with the

children. Soon the number of classrooms and children participating increased. As the years went by, it evolved into gifts, which began as stuffed Christmas stockings and are Teddy Bears today.

The program, which began at Crescent Elementary School in 1984, has expanded to Bransford Elementary School, Markham Elementary School, Anna Kyle Elementary School and Cleo Gordon Elementary School.

The expansion coincided with the Wing's formal participation. According to Command Chief Master Sgt. Anthony Maddux, the Wing's Top 3 Council annually donates time and funding to this event, helping to make it the success it is today.

In recent years, with the support of the 349th Wing and the local community, the children have also been taken on field trips to the Sacramento Zoo, San Francisco Exploratorium, on cookouts at parks, and to Disney's Show on Ice.

Senior Master Sgt. Pat McReynolds, 349th Air Maintenance Squadron, took the lead in organizing this past year's event, which encompassed collecting donations, purchasing Teddy bears and coordinating the delivery dates at the schools.

"Our first meeting in September went very well," said McReynolds. "However, we are always looking for volunteers to



Photo by Kristina Cilia, Base Multimedia Service Center

Santa's little helpers: Tech. Sgt. Kari Sumner, 349th Component Maintenance Squadron, Santa Claus (also known as Senior Master Sgt. Pete Briggs, 312th Airlift Squadron) and Mr. Cipriano Villanueva, 349th Communication Squadron, are key components to "Operation Teddy Bear."

assist with the operation. It is a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community, to the kids."

Last year, "Operation Teddy Bear" volunteers delivered 800 Teddy bears to the local children. This past year the goal was exceeded and 1,000 Teddy bears were distributed.

To become a part of this operation, promoting good will and kindness and seeing the joy on the faces of the children, call Senior Master Sgt. McReynolds at (707) 424-0774.

Giving, most importantly, also includes of your time

by Lt. Col. Truman Lum
349th Mission Support Group

My family and I had the distinct pleasure of participating in "Operation Give Thanks" sponsored by the 349th Rising 6 Group this past Thanksgiving at the Yountsville Veterans Home, Yountsville, Calif.

Tech. Sgt. Susan Lofton and Staff Sgt. Myla Ferrer of the 349th Memorial Affairs Squadron, hosted this and served a special meal to several hundred of those brave souls that did so much for our country.

More than 30 members of the 349th and their families volunteered to spend

the holiday with their "extended" family of fellow veterans.

I think the experience is best seen through the eyes of my teenage son. My son was initially a bit reluctant to help as in the past we had only baked cookies and cakes to drop off at the home verses the personal contact with the elderly vets; but I think the experience was best summed up when he said at the conclusion of the event, "Dad, don't let this go to your head but I'm really glad you had me come and help". I thank God that he now understands that giving also includes of your time.

The Yountsville Veterans Home houses up to 1,500 veterans of our nations military services and encompass those

who served in the battles such as Bellieu Woods, Iwo Jima, Pusan, and Tet. From a pair of 105-year old veterans of WWI and WWII to the more numerous and contemporaneous Korean and Vietnam era vets--Yountville is now home to these proud Americans.

Perhaps setting up and taking down tables, serving beverages and food, and assisting in innumerable other ways may seem insignificant and mundane, but the gratitude expressed by the veterans more than compensated for the time shared with them on this traditional American day of thanks.

A favorite WW II Army Air Force song best summarized the feeling in the air, "Bless Them All."

Reflection helps guide your future

by Chaplain Gregory S. Stringer
349th Air Mobility Wing

A Happy New Year's to all! As we enter a New Year, it is good to take some time to reflect on how our life fared in the previous year and to look where we would like to go in this New Year.

Why do this? God has reminded us that human beings have a purpose to love and serve God with all their being, and to love our neighbor as ourself. This is found in the Bible, The Gospel of Mark, chapter 12, verses 28-31.

It is a helpful thing to take some time to reflect on the unseen spiritual things of life, that truly affect the seen things, our actions and words of everyday life. The start of the New Year is a perfect time for this reflection.

The exercise is not to find reasons to feel depressed when we see our

imperfections and shortcomings. Instead, it is a new opportunity to let God re-focus us on His love and forgiveness, and the things that are eternal. It is a time, to see if our priorities in life are reflecting God's purpose for our life.

If not, we can make an effort to re-prioritize or eliminate those things in our life. It is a time to look at the previous year, and see what lessons we learned and then apply those lessons in the coming months of the New Year.

In this way, we can actively use the opportunities God gives us in the New Year to allow Him to make a positive difference in our lives, and in the lives of those we interact with each day.

Here are some suggestions: Take time to let God nurture your soul, by spending time with God in His word and prayer; If you have been hurt by someone, ask God to help you forgive that person; If you have hurt someone, go to the person and

ask for forgiveness; Nurture the Air Forces' Core values, even outside the workplace; Look for ways to make a positive impact on someone, each day of the New Year; Schedule time with the important people in your life and hold to that commitment, so the "stuff" of life can't push them out so easily; Seek how you can make a difference in your neighborhood or community, one person at a time; Take care of the life, God gave to you.

I encourage you to take some time in this New Year to do this and watch how God will bless your life and those lives around you as you keep the important and lasting things, first in your life. If you would like help to do this, our office staff is always available. For additional information or to schedule an appointment, contact the wing Chaplain's office at (707) 424-1368.

God bless you.

News Briefs

Fed grants admin leave to demobilized reservists

In a Nov. 14 memorandum, President Bush directed executive departments and agencies to grant five days of uncharged, administrative leave from civilian duties to federal employees returning from active-duty.

"The federal government will continue to be the model for employer support to the Guard and Reserve," wrote the president in the memorandum. "We are the guarantors of the rights of returning service members under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, and I am personally committed to providing each of them our full support, recognition and assistance."

Kay Coles James, director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, issued guidance to department and agency heads on implementing the president's order.

"Many of our employees have endured great disruption to their families and their normal lives as a result of their service in the war against terrorism," James said. "Therefore, I join the president in urging that agencies do everything possible to ease their return to civilian life."

The five work days of excused absence

covers employees who were activated for military service in connection with Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Federal agencies will release more guidance explaining the excused leave policy. (*AFRC News Service*)

Air Force announces wear guidance for new nametag

The Air Force has established both the mandatory wear date and proper wear for the new metallic nametag on service dress uniforms.

According to personnel officials, effective Jan. 1, the nametag must be worn on the wearer's right side of the service dress jacket with the bottom of the nametag level with the bottom of the ribbons. It should be centered between the sleeve seam and the lapel.

If a duty badge is worn on the wearer's right side of the service dress jacket, men will center the badge a half-inch below the new nametag; women will center the badge a half-inch above the new nametag.

When the maternity jumper is worn as the maternity service dress, the nametag should be centered on the right side and

placed even to, or 1 1/2 inches higher or lower than, the first exposed button.

The nametag will also be worn on all pullover sweaters on the wearer's right side with the bottom of the nametag level centered between the middle of the sleeve seam and the seam of the neckline. It will not be worn on the cardigan sweater. (*AFPC*)

Members tax statements are available online myPay

Defense Finance and Accounting Service officials announced that servicemembers, military retirees and annuitants and civilian employees can access their tax statements via myPay.

Military members and Department of Defense civilian employees will have access to view, save and print their tax statements from myPay web site at: <https://mypay.dfas.mil>. Other users may call customer support at (800) 390-2348.

MyPay provides a secure method to manage pay account information, officials said. Available around the clock, customers can make changes online, instead of at the finance office.

Officials are projecting all tax statements be posted by Jan. 26. (*AFPN*)

Tax relief law aids military, families

Reservists who travel more than 100 miles to attend drills or meetings no longer have to itemize to claim a tax deduction for overnight travel expenses.

This change and other benefits for members of Air Force Reserve Command and their families are the result of the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003, signed into law by President George W. Bush Nov. 11. The "above-the-line" deduction for overnight travel is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2002.

"Reservists will be able to deduct unreimbursed travel expenses such as lodging, 50 percent of meals and any transportation costs," said Lt. Col. Janet Fenton, director of the Armed Forces Tax Council.

Another major change increases the death gratuity payment to \$12,000 and provides that the full payment is tax-free. That portion of the act is retroactive to Sept. 10, 2001, to provide for servicemembers who died in the terrorist attacks the following day and in the ongoing global war on terror.

"If you are killed on active duty, regardless of whether you're in theater, or in a training accident or die from disease,

your family receives \$12,000 death gratuity that is not taxed," Fenton said. "And that's a big change. In addition, any future increases to the death gratuity will remain tax-free."

When the tax code changed in 1986, it allowed any military benefit existing in September 1986 to remain tax-free, Fenton said. However, it was always unclear whether military child care was included in that, she added.

"This act merely makes it clear that those provisions of child care were intended to be tax-free to military members," she said.

The tax act also provides for extra tax-filing time for servicemembers serving in contingency operations. The internal revenue code allows for those serving in combat zones or hazardous-duty areas to have an extension of time – usually 180 days from the time the person leaves the combat zone – to file taxes.

"A lot of military operations don't rise to the level of being declared by the president as 'combat,'" Fenton said. "But there are several contingency operations where servicemembers are outside the continental United States."

Capital-gain exclusion for home sales

is another area people are looking for tax relief in, Fenton said.

"This act will allow members to suspend the period of time which they have to sell their home and take the tax exclusion so they won't have to pay that capital gains," she said. "It's retroactive to 1997 so military members who have sold their homes since 1997 have one year from Nov. 11, 2003, to request a refund for any tax they did pay."

Since 1997, when the law was previously changed, if servicemembers who owned a home got reassigned more than 50 miles from that home or was ordered to move on post, they were no longer able to roll over the gain from that sale to the next home they purchased.

Also since 1997, individuals could exclude up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 for married couples) of gain from the sale of a home if they resided in it for two of the five years preceding the sale. Under this act, military and foreign service people can suspend (for up to 10 years) the time transferred away from home on official extended duty for purposes of applying the five-year portion of the two-out-of-five-year rule. (*AFRC News Service from American Forces Press Service*)

Retirement eligible civilian employees need to prepare

by Master Sgt. Ron Tull
Air Force Personnel Center
Public Affairs

There are 22,735 Air Force civilian employees eligible for retirement, and by 2008 the number will increase to 49,816.

Officials say retirement eligible employees need to start thinking about their retirement now.

Potential retirees are 'highly encouraged' to contact the Benefits Entitlements Service Team, or "BEST," on line or by phone for a calculation of projected retirement pay. Information on benefits and planning - both key to making good retirement choices - is also available, says Mrs. Maria Molly, team chief.

"We want folks to start thinking about retirement the day they come on board," says Mrs. Molly. "It's never too early."

She advises employees planning to retire to contact BEST at least one year before retiring to receive counseling. Applications should be filed 90 to 120 days prior to the effective date of retirement.

One-on-one counseling is also available over the phone, says Mrs. Molly.

"We have employee information at our fingertips and a BEST counselor can cover issues from health care insurance to options for withdrawing from their Thrift Savings Plan account," she says.

During the process, BEST sends out three update letters to keep the potential retiree informed. The first letter acknowledges receipt of the application and the next notifies the employee of their eligibility to retire. The third letter is notification that the retirement application has been sent to the servicing finance office.

"The final stop is the office of

personnel management, where the retirement is finalized and retirement payments are started," Mrs. Molly says.

Civilian appropriated-fund employees serviced by BEST can obtain additional information at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/best/retiring.htm.

Benefits counselors may be reached toll-free 1(800) 997-2378, or 527-2378 within the San Antonio area. Hearing impaired, can call TDD 1 (800) 382-0893 or commercial (210) 527-2276.

Overseas employees will first dial a toll-free AT&T direct access number for the country they are in. Benefits counselors are available weekdays from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Central Time.

Employees located at the Pentagon, Air Logistics Centers, Air Intelligence Agency, and USAFE bases should contact local civilian personnel offices for retirement counseling and processing information.

Reservists gain commissary use, other benefits

The fiscal 2004 National Defense Authorization Act offers reservists and their families unlimited commissary privileges, better health benefits and an overall average military pay raise of 4.15 percent.

President George W. Bush signed the defense bill Nov. 24. It allows reservists in the Selected Reserve, reserve retirees under age 60 and their families to have access to commissaries on the same basis as active-duty people, retirees and their families.

The act authorizes a minimum pay hike of 3.7 percent to everyone with additional increases to mid-grade and senior NCOs and mid-grade officers.

To improve readiness, the law permits the Department of Defense to provide immediate medical and dental screenings and care to reservists who are assigned to a unit that has been alerted or notified of mobilization. Reservists can obtain improved TRICARE coverage until Dec. 31, 2004, under the following circumstances:

- Non-mobilized reservists and their families can enroll on a cost-share basis if the reservist is unemployed or the employer does not offer health insurance.

- Coverage for mobilized reservists and their families can begin up to 90 days before the start of the reservists' active duty. Previously, coverage started only when the active-duty period began.

- Coverage can continue up to 180 days after separation from active duty.

Previously, coverage lasted up to 60 or 120 days after separation, depending on the years of service.

Another change expands eligibility for family members to enroll in Department of Defense Dependent Schools on a space-available, tuition-free basis. In the past, this benefit was limited to families of reservists who were recalled from an overseas location. The change also permits DODDS enrollment if reservists are recalled from a continental United States location.

On Sept. 30, 2003 the president signed the FY 2004 Department of Defense Appropriations Act, which allocates \$368.2 billion to operate and man all of DOD during the fiscal year that ends Sept. 30, 2004. The funding represents a \$51 billion increase in last year's spending.

This year Air Force Reserve Command gets \$3.47 billion, which permits a Selected Reserve end strength of 75,800-74,140 traditional reservists, and a full-time Active Guard and Reserve cadre of 1,660 members.

Last year the command received funding for an end strength of 75,600, which included 1,498 AGRs.

Under the reserve personnel appropriation, the Air Force Reserve receives nearly \$1.29 billion to cover pay, allowances, clothing, subsistence, travel and other related expenses. Last year's RPA budget was for nearly \$1.24 billion for the Reserve.

Another \$2.18 billion goes to

operation and maintenance funding to train, organize and administer the command this year. O&M funds pay for flying hours, depot maintenance, repair of facilities and equipment, travel and transportation, civilian pay, recruiting, and communication, as well as procurement of services, supplies and equipment. The command receives an additional \$20 million this year compared to last year's O&M budget.

That extra funding includes \$12 million to cover the transition of three C-9A Nightingale aircraft from the active force to the Reserve's 932nd Airlift Wing at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. Congressmen in Illinois announced in mid-September the wing's shift from a Reserve associate unit to a unit-equipped status.

"This is great news for the men and women of the 932nd Airlift Wing," said Col. Oral Carper, the wing commander. As a unit equipped with its own aircraft, the wing will focus "on providing an airlift capability to the Air Force by supporting the transportation of passengers, patients and cargo, while continuing to train and support our aircrews and aeromedical evacuation people," the colonel said.

Although funded for in a separate DOD account, the Air Force Reserve receives \$45 million for equipment that will improve readiness and combat capability. Congress added these funds in a special National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation. *(AFRC News Service)*

VA launches 'Kids Page' Web site

Department of Veterans Affairs officials announced the launch of "VA Kids" on Nov. 5.

The new Web page is designed to help young people understand what it means to be a veteran.

"The ideals of military service and patriotism can be unfamiliar to some children and young adults," said Anthony Principi, VA secretary. "The VA Kids Web page supports President George W. Bush's initiatives on education and volunteerism by providing an entertaining and informative way for young people to learn why veterans are special."

One section of the site targets students

in kindergarten through fifth grade, another for students in sixth through 12th grades, and a third for teachers.

The site also has information about VA, Veterans Day, scholarships, student volunteer opportunities, events for disabled veterans and links to veteran-related sites.

For younger students, the site has interactive activities such as puzzles, coloring pages, matching contests and age-appropriate language to describe a number of patriotic topics.

The older students' page has information on volunteer programs, scholarships and more sophisticated

educational resources, games and reference links.

The teachers' section contains links and suggested classroom activities.

"The title 'veteran' is bestowed by a grateful nation on citizens willing to sacrifice everything to preserve our freedom," Principi said. "It is our responsibility to honor these heroes by ensuring that each American generation understands what this prestigious title means."

For additional information, people may visit the site at www.va.gov/kids.

(Courtesy of American Forces Press Service)

2004 RESERVE DRILL PAY

Reserve and National Guard members will get a minimum drill-pay increase of 3.7 percent under the 2004 defense authorization bill. Higher targeted raises would follow the same pattern as active-duty pay hikes, with increases of 4.6 percent to 6.25 percent going to some warrant officers and midgrade and senior enlisted people. Rates shown are for four drills, a typical weekend for reservists. The rates that would take effect Jan. 1:

Years of service	<2	2	3	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26
Commissioned officers															
O-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,669.94	1,678.16	1,713.04	1,773.85
O-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,460.59	1,481.62	1,512.03	1,565.12
O-8	346.09	1,067.32	1,089.76	1,096.07	1,124.03	1,170.94	1,181.81	1,226.27	1,239.05	1,277.34	1,332.75	1,383.90	1,418.04	1,418.04	1,418.04
O-7	858.76	898.62	917.12	931.81	958.31	984.57	1,014.93	1,045.21	1,075.58	1,170.94	1,251.49	1,251.49	1,251.49	1,251.49	1,257.80
O-6	636.47	699.23	746.11	746.11	747.97	779.99	784.26	784.26	828.85	907.62	953.87	1,000.12	1,026.42	1,063.05	1,104.74
O-5	530.61	597.73	639.12	646.88	672.64	688.15	722.13	747.05	779.20	828.48	851.06	875.10	901.44	901.44	901.44
O-4	457.81	529.95	565.33	573.21	606.02	641.24	685.04	719.18	742.87	766.47	764.39	764.39	764.39	764.39	764.39
O-3	402.62	456.32	492.53	536.96	562.66	590.88	609.18	639.25	654.84	654.84	654.84	654.84	654.84	654.84	654.84
O-2	347.77	396.09	456.20	471.59	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33	481.33
O-1	301.93	314.21	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79	379.79
Commissioned officers with more than four years of active duty as enlisted members of warrant officers															
O-3E	-	-	-	536.96	562.66	590.88	609.18	639.25	664.55	679.03	698.86	698.86	698.86	698.86	698.86
O-2E	-	-	-	471.59	481.33	486.64	522.48	542.48	557.37	557.37	557.37	557.37	557.37	557.37	557.37
O-1E	-	-	-	379.79	405.63	420.61	435.91	460.97	471.59	471.59	471.59	471.59	471.59	471.59	471.59
Warrant officers															
W-5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	714.74	739.26	763.85	788.58
W-4	415.92	447.44	460.30	472.95	494.73	516.22	538.00	559.23	581.22	615.65	637.70	659.24	681.58	703.59	726.10
W-3	379.83	395.72	411.94	417.25	434.30	453.75	479.43	504.85	531.84	562.10	572.23	580.93	589.89	609.34	628.84
W-2	334.12	353.20	369.88	382.03	392.44	421.03	442.89	469.14	474.96	485.85	494.98	512.40	529.70	547.16	547.16
W-1	295.05	319.19	335.37	346.82	373.64	390.44	405.34	421.97	432.96	442.92	459.14	471.42	471.42	471.42	471.42
Enlisted members															
E-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	502.57	513.95	528.33	545.25	562.21	589.49	612.55	636.89	673.97
E-8	-	-	-	-	-	411.40	429.59	440.83	454.34	468.99	495.39	508.78	531.51	544.14	575.25
E-7	286.00	312.18	324.08	339.95	352.30	373.51	385.48	397.36	418.66	429.28	439.40	445.58	466.41	479.89	514.00
E-6	247.41	272.14	284.18	295.83	307.99	335.49	346.18	358.04	368.43	372.12	374.65	374.65	374.65	374.65	374.65
E-5	226.69	241.79	253.47	265.47	284.09	300.12	311.96	315.70	315.70	315.70	315.70	315.70	315.70	315.70	315.70
E-4	207.77	218.43	230.26	241.87	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20	252.20
E-3	187.61	199.39	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38	211.38
E-2	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36	178.36
E-1	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12	159.12

E-1 with less than four months: 147.21

Source: Defense Department, 2004 defense authorization bill

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The website is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at: www.airforceonesource.com, provides a real person to talk to when you need help or the answer to any of life's myriad questions when sometimes it may seem that there's too much to handle. When you log on, your **USER ID** is **airforce**, and your **password** is **ready** or you may call at 800-707-5784.

Contact the 349th Family Readiness office for additional information at (707) 424-1616.