

PATRIOT

439TH AIRLIFT WING • AIR FORCE RESERVE • WESTOVER ARB

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Base buried by February nor'easter

Article and photos
by TSgt. Sandi Michon

A classic nor'easter dumped nearly a foot of snow on Westover on Feb. 4-5, making the UTA weekend more than a challenge.

Snow rapidly accumulated as reservists from across the Northeast battled slippery roads and poor visibility to make it to sign in on Saturday morning. Snow fell throughout the day, and reservists shoveled walks as an additional duty assignment. Some early closings accommodated reservists as travel conditions worsened.

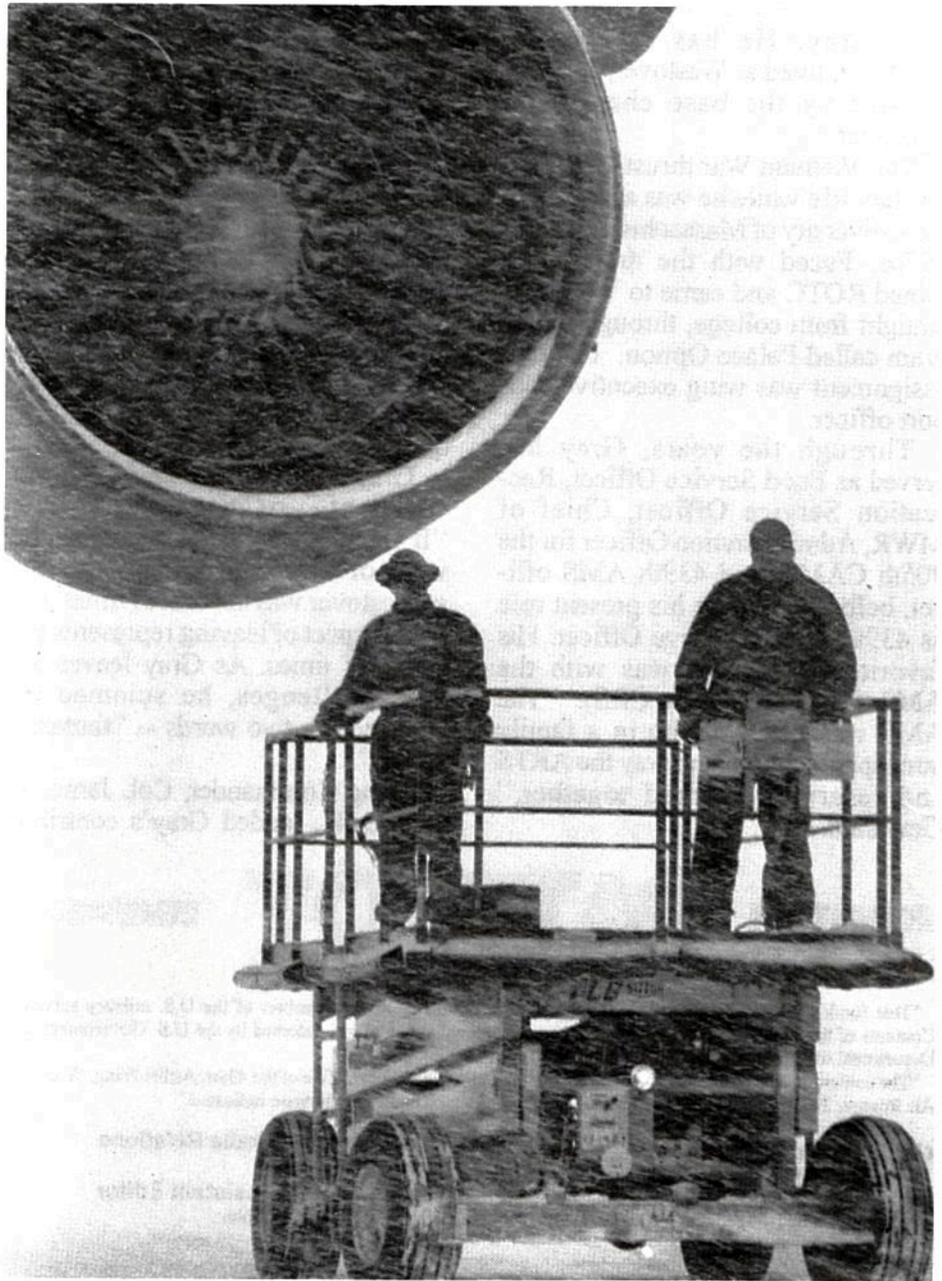
With typical New England response, roads and grounds crews, both civilian and reservists, worked around-the-clock to clear 1.5 million square yards of pavement. By sign out on Sunday, one half million yards of snow were plowed and/or hauled.

Fourteen roads and grounds reservists augmented the civilian force of approximately 20 (including overhires).

Winds, gusting up to 47 knots, caused snow drifts to play tag with snow plows.

Snow removal on runways, taxiways and flightline is a science in itself. Wind direction is factored to determine where snowbanks are placed, and how the snow is plowed. The height of snowbanks is critical for clearance of aircraft wings. C-5's were shuttled from one side of the flightline to the other to give plows ample room to clear the ramp.

Spray from huge snowblowers, when caught by the high winds, seemed to blend with the clouds. The



LET IT SNOW – Members of the 439th EMS refused to let a little thing like a nor'easter that dumped up to a foot of snow on Western Massachusetts, keep them from completing their tasks during the February UTA.

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Wing says 'so long' to popular executive officer

Photo and article
by TSgt. Sandi Michon

You can take Tom Gray out of Westover, but you can't take Westover out of Tom Gray.

Such are the sentiments of Maj. Tom Gray, who is transferring to Mississippi after 20 years service at Westover.

"Westover is involved in every significant event in my adult life," said Gray. He has worked at Westover, lived at Westover, and was married by the base chaplain at Westover.

The Vietnam War thrust Gray into military life while he was a student at the University of Massachusetts in the 1970s. Faced with the draft, Gray joined ROTC and came to Westover, straight from college, through a program called Palace Option. His first assignment was wing executive support officer.

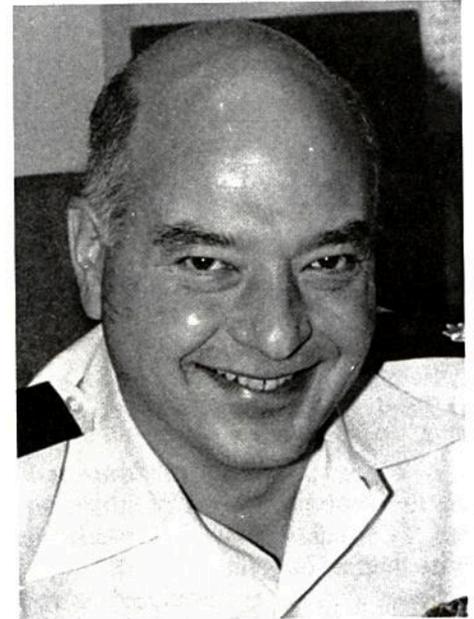
Through the years, Gray has served as Food Service Officer, Recreation Service Officer, Chief of MWR, Administration Officer for the 905th CAMS, and 439th AMS officer, before assuming his present role as 439th AW Executive Officer. His favorite assignment was with the AMS (now the 439th CRS). "The AMS was like working in a family atmosphere. I liked the way the ARTS and reservists worked together," Gray said.

For Gray, a West Springfield native, the move to Mississippi provides many new opportunities. He will become the Deputy Commander of the 403rd Logistics Group at Keesler AFB, Miss. The move not only affords positive career progression, but is an opportunity for Gray and his wife, the former Sharon Schultz, to merge geographic locations. Sharon recently retired from the U.S. Navy, and is currently completing a teaching degree in Nebraska.

A farewell party was held in Gray's honor on Feb. 3 at the Westover Club. Gray's reaction to the nearly 200 people in attendance was "total awe." Gray endured a steady stream of good-natured teasing from those who thanked him for his service to Westover, and wished him well in his new endeavor. "I can't believe that many people came out for another rubber chicken dinner," he quipped.

Gray cited Charles Dickens from "A Tale of Two Cities," when he said, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." He said his 20 years at Westover was the best of times, but the prospect of leaving represents the worst of times. As Gray leaves for new challenges, he summed up Westover in two words -- "fantastic place."

Wing Commander, Col. James P. Czekanski, lauded Gray's contribu-



Maj. Tom Gray

tion to Westover. "In the 20 years that Tom has been at Westover he has touched the lives of thousands of reservists. He will certainly be missed by all of us, especially those in the

Three PA technicians collect AFRES awards

Three members of the 439th Airlift Wing Public Affairs staff were recognized for their individual efforts in the annual Air Force Reserve Media Contest while the "Patriot" was given a second place finish.

Capt. Paul Kocsak was a double winner, taking top honors as the Print Journalist of the Year and third place in supporting photograph category.

TSgt. Sandra Michon placed first in the Picture Story category while **SSgt. Christine Mora** took top honors for News Articles.

The "Patriot", which has finished either first or second in the competition for the past 10 years, was beaten out this year by the "Jet Set" from Grissom ARB, Ind.

The first place winners in all categories and all newspaper winners will compete in the Air Force contest.

PATRIOT

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Col. James P. Czekanski

Chief of Public Affairs
Gordon A. Newell

Wing Public Affairs Officer
Capt. Paul Kocsak

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SSgt. Vincent Blanchard
SSgt. Paul D. Mantikoski
SSgt. Christine Mora
SrA Joseph F. McLean
AB Richard Cipolla

Wing intel shop again named best in AMC

by MSgt. Tom Allocco

Westover's intelligence specialists have again been recognized for their contributions on the front lines in missions from civil war in Africa to the drug war in this country. For the third time in four years, the men and women of Westover's Wing Intelligence have been recognized as the best in Air Mobility Command.

The wing intel shop, headed by Maj. Robert Freniere, will receive a trophy at Scott AFB, Ill. in April citing them as the Outstanding Reserve Intelligence Unit in AMC.

The trophy recognizes the intelligence specialists' involvement in Operations Restore Hope (Somalia); Support Hope (Rwanda); Uphold Democracy (Haiti); Southern Watch and Vigilant Warrior (Persian Gulf).



TSgt. Cinthia Trask

TSgt. Trask selected top NCO

TSgt. Cinthia Trask, wing intelligence specialist, recently pinned on her new stripes and was also named Outstanding Reserve Intelligence NCO in Air Mobility Command.

Trask served in the Persian Gulf in support of Operations Southern Watch and Vigilant Warrior from October to January. While deployed she set up 24-hour intelligence analysis and briefings in a two-person shop for KC-10 aerial refueling crews operating out of Al Dhafra AB, United Arab Emirates.

Trask first went to the UAE airbase in support of the Vigilant Warrior deployment of troops and aircraft to the Persian Gulf in response to Iraqi armed threats against Ku-

wait. She volunteered for extended duty in support of the Southern Watch enforcement of the Iraq no-fly zone.

During the year she was recognized as an Inspector General "Superior Performer" in recognition of her leadership skills. Her additional duties included assisting 22nd Air Force inspection teams, development of training videos and reorganization of the wing's intelligence library.

Trask served on active duty for four years, followed by a seven-month tour at Rota, Spain as the only AMC intelligence specialist during Desert Shield and Storm.

by MSgt. Tom Allocco

Wing Intelligence staff:

Maj. Robert Freniere

Maj. Christopher Donovan

Capt. Ed Miller

Capt. Marc Tracz

SMSgt. Lawrence Milliken

MSgt. Virginia Zilinsky

TSgt. Gayle Gordon

TSgt. Cinthia Trask

SSgt. Joseph Houghton

SSgt. Tracie Alfano

SSgt. Jeffrey Knight

SrA. Julie Kycia

AIC Jonathan Stark

Roy Longley

The unit also provided personnel to assist Drug Enforcement Administration operations in Sacramento, Calif. Contributions to the anti-drug effort include helping set up a statewide computer system to track marijuana growers.

At Westover the intel shop provides daily worldwide updates for commanders and the 300 aircrew members of the 337th Airlift Squadron. Their area of responsibility is the entire world scene, wherever aircrews face a potential threat. When there is civil unrest in Latin America or terrorist activity in the Middle East, it is the intelligence specialists' job to be sure that aircrews leave Westover armed with the most current information on developments.

Training programs include escape and evasion, anti-terrorism, reporting procedures, and jamming and interference.

Additional duties in 1994 include writing and implementing the intelligence scenario for Operation Medstar, and the combined Reserve and National Guard mass casualty exercise at Dogpatch in July. They also assisted in junior officer training programs here during the summer.

Another quiet recognition during the year was the fact that the Westover intelligence unit was often specifically requested to assist other

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C-5 flight training is Hutchinson's next stop

by MSgt. Gordon A. Newell

For 2nd Lt. David Hutchinson the long journey from the C-5 cargo compartment to the flight deck neared its culmination in January when he graduated from Undergraduate Pilot Training at Laughlin AFB, Texas.

The next stop for the former 337th Airlift Squadron loadmaster is Altus Air Force Base, Okla. where he is undergoing eight weeks of training in the C-5 Galaxy in hopes of becoming the 337th's first pilot to come up through the ranks.

"Everyone at Westover has been tremendously supportive," he said. "From the people in military personnel who helped me get my commission to everybody in the 337th (Airlift Squadron). I owe them a lot of thanks."

Hutchinson began his military career in 1985 when he joined the Connecticut Air National Guard as an environmental specialist. He came to Westover in 1990 as a loadmaster and full-time student. His education was interrupted by Desert Storm but after the war he returned to school and graduated from the University of Connecticut where he also earned a pilot's license through the school's aero club.

He was commissioned through the Deserving Airman Program after passing the Air Force Officer's Qualifying Test and was soon on his way toward earning his pilot's wings.

Hutchinson described his year in Texas thusly: "It was the longest and the shortest, the best and the worst, the most difficult and the most fun year of my life."

"There was an awful lot of studying to do and at first I was concerned about washing out. At first I kept wondering, 'What if I wash out?' I just didn't want to let anyone down."

"But once I got into the groove, things seemed to just fall into place."

Hutchinson's training consisted of 347 hours of academics and 97.3 flying hours in the T-37 and 178 classroom hours and 214 flying hours in the T-1.



Courtesy of 2nd Lt. David Hutchinson

2nd. Lt. David Hutchinson

"The T-1 training was fabulous," he said. "Instructors stressed the crew concept which for me was extremely valuable."

Hutchinson was the only reservist of 21 students but also had the largest gallery present at graduation.

A 439th AW aircraft and crew which consisted of the Wing Commander, Col. James P. Czekanski and

337th AS Commander, Lt. Col. Fred Castle were on hand for the ceremonies. Several members of Hutchinson's family were also present.

"Dave has worked very hard to get where he is," said Czekanski. "This is a perfect example of the opportunities that are available in the Air Force Reserve if a person is willing to make the sacrifice."

Expanded role for reserve forces foreseen

WASHINGTON D.C.--The Air Force is considering an expansion of assignments for Air Force reservists and members of the Air National Guard--possibly including service with combat units, the service's top general said Tuesday.

"Is the great involvement of the Guard and Reserve in the day-to-day activities of the Air Force going to be the norm? The answer is yes," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman.

Fogleman said that he was well aware that some elements of the Guard and Reserve have had to adapt to a "pretty heavy workload" in recent years, perhaps even spending months stationed far away from home.

But given the cutbacks in force structure and current budget restraints, that is not going to change, the general said.

Fogleman said the Air Force has been successful in integrating part-timers into jobs in transport and refueling units, but that could well translate into other areas, such as combat.

The general said he has begun a yearlong study of the mix of duties given the active duty and part-time force and doesn't expect to make any major changes before that study is complete.

"We've discovered that if we're flexible in terms of tour lengths, we can do it," Fogleman said.

(Air Force News Service)

C-5s complete six-ship formation testing

Six C-5s and more than 120 fliers and maintenance personnel from the 436th Operations Group at Dover AFB, Del. completed three weeks of six-ship formation testing at Pope AFB, N.C., Feb. 3. The testing was conducted by the 33rd Flight Test Squadron from McGuire AFB, N.J.

The purpose of the test was to assess the feasibility of procedures for three-ship and six-ship C-5 airdrop formations, and to determine any limitations caused by aircraft wake turbulence. Never before had the C-5 performed such formation flying.

With the C-141 scheduled for retirement, Congress is looking at other alternatives for military airdrop capabilities.

Lt. Col. Ron Richburg, operations officer for the 3rd Airlift Squadron and mission commander, said Congress asked the Air Force, "Can you drop an Army brigade from the C-5?"

Because the C-5 has not been flown in large airdrop formation, officials weren't sure of the answer, the colonel said. That led to the brigade airdrop test.

"Our role was to put six C-5s in the air and over a determined drop zone. Once the load left the airplane, it was then the Army's job to determine the feasibility," said Richburg.

Nine missions were flown and each time six C-5s departed Pope AFB at 30-second intervals. The aircrews and maintenance personnel were very successful at getting the planes in the air with the given requirements and flying them in formation over the drop zone, the colonel said.

Superb maintenance was the key to success, according to Richburg. "We've got a team of maintainers who never doubted our ability to launch six C-5s at 30-second intervals."

The C-5s flew the tests in formations at 2,000 and 4,000-foot intervals. The 2,000-foot interval is standard for formations flying on visual flight rules. The 4,000-foot interval is standard when flying through weather on instrument flight rules. Although the C-5 formations flew at both intervals, all flying was conducted in clear weather during daylight.

During each test flight, the formations made up to 11 passes over the drop zone. During each pass, two dummies, weighing from 150 to 300 pounds, were dropped from planes four, five and six. Test directors from the 33rd FTS and the Army's airborne board studied the effects of wake turbulence generated by the formation on the deployed parachutes during each pass.

The C-5s also dropped heavy equipment platforms weighing 3,000 to 5,000 pounds each. Although they weren't part of the test, 60,000-pound platforms were also dropped, since the C-5s and aircrews were in place at Pope AFB.

The test plan for the six-ship formation was finalized in September, said Richburg. That month, Dover C-5s began flying two-ship formations and two more aircrews were brought in to fly in the formations. In December, Dover C-5s flew three-ship formations at Pope AFB.

Flying a C-5 in a formation is different from flying a C-5 by itself, said Richburg. "The big thing involved is to pick up movement forward and aft, left, and right, and understand the relative movement of the airplanes in front of you to maintain your formation position."

With the Air Force's part of the mission successfully completed, the test community will be studying the results of the drops to determine overall success.

AMC NEWS SERVICE

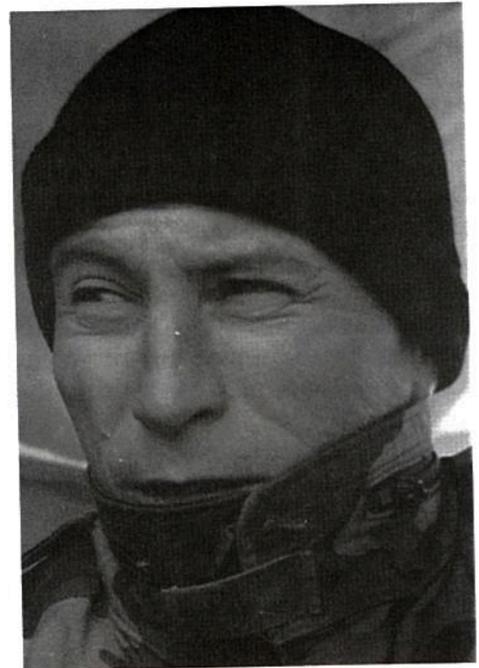
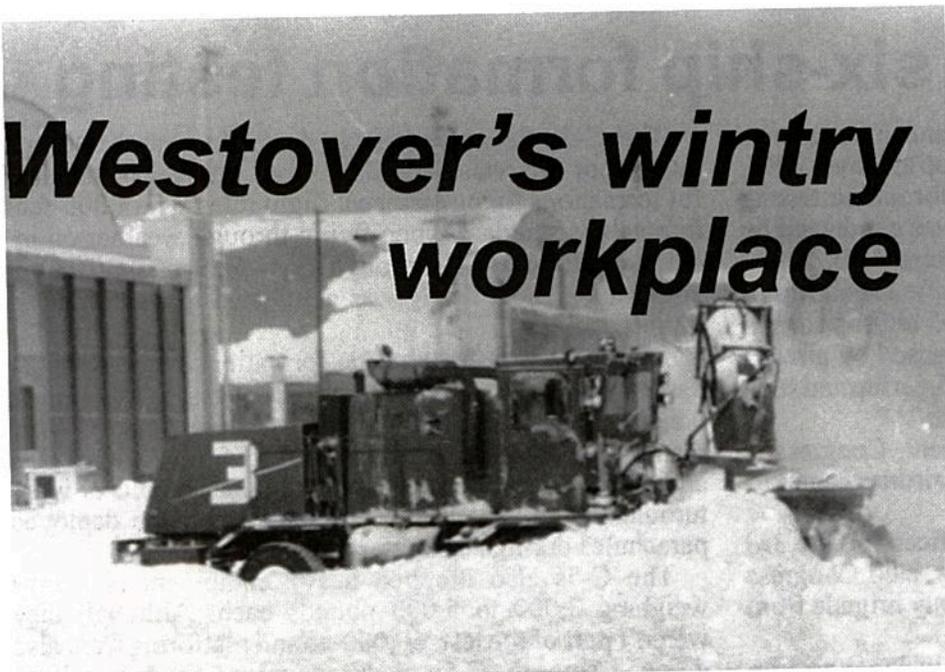


Plow repair

Quick turnaround time for plow repair was essential to Westover's efficient snow removal plans. Phil Thomas, left, attaches a new plow cable on a roll-over vehicle. Helping are; Scott Vangsness, far right, and Everett Simmons. After the repair, the blade was tested, and the vehicle rejoined the fleet on the flightline.

photo by TSgt. Sandi Michon

Westover's wintry workplace



continued from front page

11 rollovers (plows with rollover blades) and six blowers worked in tandem as they executed specific strategies to clear the snow. Radios, in each plow, squawked instructions to prioritize plowing plans.

Because of space and drifting considerations, yards of snow were loaded in dump trucks and deposited in various areas on base.

What initially looks like fun in larger-than-life Tonka trucks, becomes very tedious after several hours behind the wheel.

"It's okay at first, but after 12 hours of plowing, you are ready to stop," said SSgt. Moses Zanazanian, 439th CES heavy equipment operator. Breaks never seemed long enough, and returning to the cold brought fresh shivers to plow drivers.

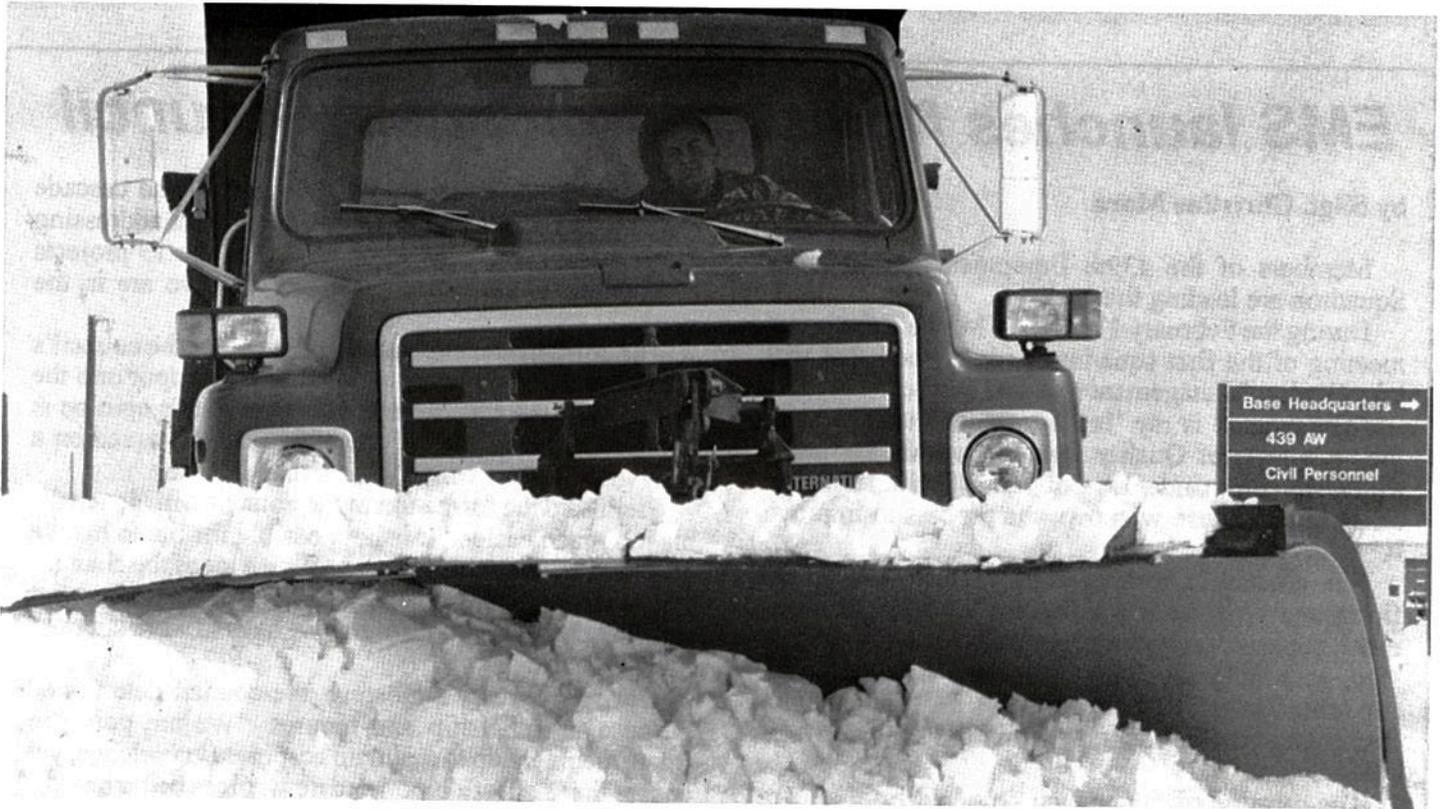
Winter is always challenging for flightline maintenance personnel, but February's blustery blizzard made routine jobs bone-chilling. Maintenance specialists battled heavy snows and poor visibility on Saturday, and frigid temperatures on Sunday. Atop the maintenance stands, rivetting engine cowlings, reservists braced their bodies against the gale-force winds. Fingers froze quickly as wind chill factors were at 30 to 40 degrees below zero on Sunday. Heating hoses, attached to generators, provided minimal relief to C-5 mechanics on the flightline.

The snow that fell during the February UTA brought the season total to 17.7 inches for the season. Normal snowfall by February is 27 inches. According to base weather forecaster Bob Schwaber, the temperatures for the UTA were well below seasonal averages.

While the snowy weekend caused many weather-related problems, Schwaber was proud of their forecasting expertise. "The storm was just what we expected," he said.

SEASONAL SACRIFICE -- Huge blowers appeared to pace back and forth on the flightline (upper left) and flightline maintenance was cold for SSgt. Jim Felker, above, and SSgt. Kenneth Kenneally, below, both 439th EMS structural repair technicians. SSgt. Moses Zanazanian, 439th CES heavy equipment operator plows base streets (upper right), while maintenance members fight driving snow as they work on the C-5 cowling. A look in the plow's rearview mirror, at right, shows tandem plowing techniques.





EMS launches first squadron quality council

by SSgt. Christine Mora

Members of the 439th Equipment Maintenance Squadron are leading the pack.

During the February UTA, the EMS held the initial meeting of the first squadron-wide council that will take Quality Management one step further.

"The council is my 'brain trust' and will become the receptacle of Quality concerns within the unit," said EMS commander Lt. Col. James Pielli. "It makes sense to task those who own the process to improve it."

The council is composed of 11 members drawn from, and representing different levels of management, supervision, work force and enlisted membership, according to CMSgt. Vincent Viglione, EMS superintendent. "The council will be charged with continuing quality changes within the squadron," he said.

The creation of the council emerged from a team project during the unit's Quality training and is not the

only one to be implemented. "As part of the cascade training, the teams had to work on a project addressing issues within the unit," Pielli said. "Of the 19 projects completed, 17 have been realized and two are in the works."

The commander explained that it will be the council's role to enable every unit member to have input into the direction of the squadron, ensure everyone's opinion is being recognized and "ultimately make the squadron a truly great unit of which to be a member."

Pielli said the formation of the council will also make his job much easier. "It is not possible for me to handle all issues on my own," he said. "With a lot of the changes we've undergone in the last couple of years -- most significantly, force reduction -- we have to work smarter, not harder."

During February's meeting, the council determined purpose, membership and tenures. "We are going to rotate membership to maintain corporate knowledge, yet ensure there is fresh blood and new voices being heard," Pielli said.



HEAVY ARTILLERY – Members of the 42nd APS, the 337th AS, and HQ, Co., 197th Brigade Artillery of Manchester, N.H., recently conducted a joint field artillery loading exercise at Westover. The team loaded a 155mm howitzer and its support equipment

onto a C-5 under the watchful eyes of 337th loadmasters. For TSgt. Joaquim Henriques, of the 42nd APS ramp section, the exercise brought his military career full circle from his earlier days with the 197th during the 1961-62 Berlin Crisis.

Chief's Council boosts scholarship to \$350

by MSgt. Gordon A. Newell

For the sixth straight year, the Chiefs' Council at Westover is offering scholarships to enlisted reservists or dependents, but this year the stakes have been raised.

"We did so well during last year's Open House and Air Show, we decided to increase individual awards to \$350 this year," said CMSgt. Larry Lose, who is president of the council.

Since the program began in 1990, the Council has award a total of \$15,000 to deserving students, Lose said.

The application that appears on this page may be used by those wishing to apply. More application forms are available in all unit orderly rooms. The cutoff date for applications is

June 25 while awards will be presented at a luncheon on Aug. 6.

In addition to Viglione, CMSgt. Joseph LaFrance and CMSgt. Mike Winters comprise the scholarship committee.

To be eligible for scholarships, candidates must:

- be dependents of 439th AW enlisted reservists or be enlisted reservists themselves;
- be accepted to or presently attending an accredited college or university carrying a minimum of six credit hours per semester;
- have maintained a scholastic

rating of a 'B' average or better during senior year of high school or have a 2.75 cumulative average in college.

To apply, candidates must submit an autobiography to include outside activities and scholastic or extra curricular activities.

Also required are a letter of recommendation from a school official, a copy of most recent transcript and a completed application form.

Forms must be mailed to:

CMSgt. Larry Lose
439 CES/CEF
250 Patriot Ave. Suite 2
Westover ARB
Chicopee, Ma 01022

439th AW Westover Chiefs' Council scholarship application

Student's name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Age _____ School attended _____

School address _____

Class standing _____ Scholastic rating _____

College desired _____

Address _____

Date accepted _____ Major/course selected _____

Name of 439th AW Reservist/parent _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Unit assigned _____ Rank _____

Length of service _____

Length of service In 439th AW _____

Return To: CMSgt. Larry Lose, 439th CES/CEF, Westover ARB, Mass. 01022

Patriot People

Name: James G. Nichols Jr.
Rank: SSgt.
Age: 28
Address: Chicopee, Mass.
Unit: 337th AS
Position: Loadmaster
Civilian position: None, so far
Favorite food: Shrimp and crab legs
Years of service: 9
Favorite sport: Golf
Favorite hobby: Building airplane models
Ideal vacation: Daytona Beach
Best way to relax: Playing guitar
Preferred entertainment: UTA flying safety meetings
Favorite hero: Garth Vader
Favorite music: Rock n' roll
Favorite movie: *Top Load*
Favorite aircraft: C-145 Stargazer
Pet peeve: Neon lights at the club
What I would do if I won \$1 million: Buy a house, and have the neon lights removed at the club.



TSgt. Sandi Michon

SSgt. James G. Nichols Jr.

Intel shop best in AMC... continued from page 3

intelligence organizations. During the year they were asked to assist the 22nd Air Force Intelligence Section in development of a Quality Air Force Assessment, and they also demonstrated computer operations at a AFRES intelligence symposium in San Antonio.

To do their job, the intelligence specialists are trained in variety of fields, from political science and international defense capabilities to computer and briefing skills.

"To win top honors three years out of four is only possible because every member does their share and then gives extra. I'm very proud of what they do," Freniere said.

In 1994 Wing Intelligence broke new ground when it instituted the Maj. Leonard V. Spray Memorial Award in memory of a deceased former active duty and reserve intelligence officer. The award, annually honors the 439th Airlift Wing aircrew members who best reflect air intelligence expertise. The Reserve Officers Association recently decided to make the award a national one.



SSgt. Paul Mantikoski

INTEL ROSTER – Eight of the 11 members of the award-winning intel shop are: (left to right from back row) TSgt. Cinthia Trask, MSgt. Virginia Zilinsky, SrA. Julie Kycia, Maj. Bob Freniere, Capt. Marc Tracz, AIC Jonathan Stark, SMSgt. Larry Milliken and SSgt. Joseph Houghton.

Congressional issues will concern Air Force Reserve

WASHINGTON — Air Force Reserve senior leaders have identified six top issues that Congress is working on or that they are seeking congressional action on.

The issues are readiness, quality of life, requisite resources, employer support, equipment modernization and full-time end strength.

Readiness: The men and women of the Air Force Reserve continue to play a major role in the United States' involvement around the world and at home. On any day of the year, Air Force reservists can be found at work on -- or over -- every continent in the world, said command officials.

They believe more participation will broaden the Reserve's experience base. "Reserve skills become sharpened with use, and reservists become better able to serve the nation," the officials said.

Readiness is not new to the Reserve. "We have demonstrated our readiness for years, responding, mission-ready, on short notice, exactly as advertised," officials said. "However, we must closely monitor our resources in this era of drawdown and decreasing budgets to preserve our current readiness."

Quality of life: People are the Air Force Reserve's most important resource, the officials said. To maintain its history of success, the Reserve must be able to recruit and retain the best and brightest young people. Quality of life issues are a big key to doing that. The Reserve's focus is on the following areas: entitlements, improved quarters, family services and reducing personnel turbulence.

Requisite resources: Congress has expressed concern that the Reserve components are assuming addi-

tional missions without additional resources. This issue becomes more important as the country places more reliance on the Reserve components as the active side draws down. The senior leaders said the command is eager to assume new missions and taskings but must receive the accompanying funds and personnel.

Employer support: Employers are an integral part of the Reserve triad of reservists, their families and their employers. The Reserve has surveyed employers, and they have expressed an interest in monetary relief. To support Reserve employers, U.S. Rep.

Michael Bilirakis (R-Fla.) has introduced HR471, a bill which provides a tax credit to employers of members of the Ready Reserve or National Guard.

Equipment modernization: Congress appropriated \$25 million for Air Force Reserve miscellaneous equipment this year. Congressional help in the past has provided the Reserve with aircraft and upgrades, which have enhanced its ability to fly anywhere in the world on a moment's notice. Modern equipment directly impacts readiness, the senior leaders said. "The Air Reserve Components must continue to receive modern equipment at the same rate as the active-duty Air Force," they said. "This is another area that must be closely watched in this era of drawdown and decreasing investment budgets.

Full-time and strength: The Air Force Reserve is facing severe reductions and shortages in its technicians, civilians and reservists on extended active-duty programs, which forces the command to give added emphasis to end strength.

The issues are readiness, quality of life, requisite resources, employer support, equipment modernization and full-time end strength.

Briefs

Enlisted council plans Dining-Out

Westover's Enlisted Advisory Council will hold its monthly meetings at 2 p.m. on Saturday of each UTA in the Wing Conference Room, Building 1850, starting March 4.

SSgt. William B. Gagnon, Council president, said plans are being formulated for an Enlisted Dining Out and he is looking for volunteers to help. Anyone interested in working on this project is asked to call Gagnon at (413) 737-9779 or by writing to him at 24 Clantoy St., Springfield, Mass. 01104-2446.

Officers' Dining-Out will be rescheduled

An officers' Dining Out, scheduled for March 4 has been canceled but will be rescheduled later in the year according to Lt. Col. Diane Hamer who was coordinating the event along with Maj. Pat Hale.

More information will be available as the event takes shape, Hamer said.

CAP needs uniforms

The Westover Composite Squadron of the Civic Air Patrol is in need of Air Force uniforms for cadets.

Any active or retired reservist wishing to donate items to the CAP is asked to contact 1st Lt. Robert G. Erhardt at (413) 593-1954.

APRIL UTA DATES

A UTA April 1-2
B UTA April 22-23

Pittsburgh chaplain recounts local plane crash

by Capt. Paul P. Koscak Jr.

It's something straight out of a Stephen King novel.

A human torso speared by branches dangles from a tree. Nearby, the trunk of another tree is smeared by pasty human tissue. Elsewhere, a severed leg is mixed with crinkled metal and torn fabric. And what seems like singed hamburger on a slab, is a smashed rib cage.

But this is real.

It's what's left of a USAir flight from Chicago to Pittsburgh Sept. 8, 1994. Investigators say the Boeing jetliner was in an 85-degree, 800-mph dive when it slammed into woods and disintegrated just short of the airport. No one survived.

Those were just a few horrors Lt. Col. Adrienne Howard used to illustrate her talk Saturday at the chaplains' annual prayer luncheon held at the Westover Club on Feb. 4.

Howard, a chaplain at Pittsburgh's 911th Air Wing, was one of several religious leaders who supported more than 500 911th Air Wing volunteers involved in the cleanup.

"At ground zero, we found parts of the cockpit 26 feet below the ground," Howard said. "We found the decapitated body of a flight attendant."

Recovery crews excavated down to 47 feet looking for clues to the crash and remains that could help identify what was left of the 132 passengers. The twisted rib cage turned out to be the co-pilot, Howard said.

"You would be walking and feel a soft crunch and realize you were stepping on someone's bones," she said.

The grisly carnage and 12-hour days dealing with death in 98-degree weather took a toll even on the most stoic.

Euphemisms helped.

"Going to the hill" meant working at the crash site. "Hitting the wall," became the jargon recovery workers used to describe a breakdown. Howard said it wouldn't be uncommon for someone to just lay down and curl up on the ground. Other times the symptoms were less overt--shaking, tremors, sweats.

"Our primary function as chaplains was just to be there," she said. "No prayer could be said to make it better."

One of the 911th's hangars became a makeshift morgue. Inside, workers in protective suits received the bodies--or pieces of bodies--transported from the crash site in refrigerated trucks. There, they were tagged, embalmed, treated with a granular hardening

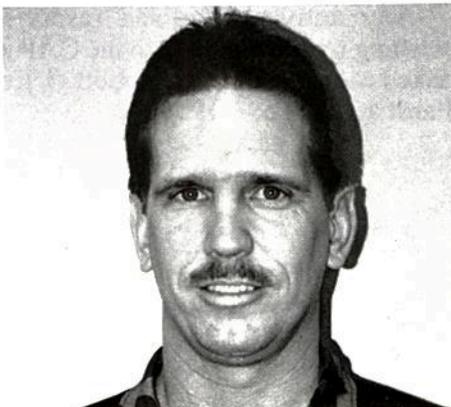
agent to retard contamination and then placed in coffins that filled one end of the hangar.

Howard passed around a plastic bag containing some hardening agent while she spoke. Even with the ghastly assembly-line process, it still took 31 days before all the identified remains were returned to families of the victims. What was impossible to identify was buried in a mass grave, Howard said.

For a few who helped in the recovery, the experience surfaces from time to time, revealing itself in unpleasant ways, Howard said.

...the jetliner was in an 85-degree, 800-mph dive when it slammed into the woods and disintegrated just short of the airport. No one survived. ...more than 500 911th Air Wing volunteers helped in the cleanup.

PATRIOT



Published monthly for Patriots like SSgt. John W. Wheeler, of Easthampton Mass., and 2,875 members of the 439th AW at Westover ARB, and geographically separated units.

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