

# KANZA



## SPIRIT

931ST AIR REFUELING GROUP

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November, 2002

McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas

Vol. 7, No. 11

# Rare-Weather Friend

931st/NWS tech one of few to receive hero award for rescuing pilot

**Staff Sgt. Jason Schaap**

*931st Public Affairs*

Mike Gill has always had an interest in aircraft. It's one of the reasons he joined the Air Force 18 years ago. It's one of the reasons he enjoys his civilian job as an electronics technician for the National Weather Service in Wichita, often traveling to remote Kansas airports to maintain equipment.

And it's why Gill took notice of an old Piper Tri-Pacer nearby as he and a co-worker returned to work at an airport in Russell, a small town in northeast Kansas.

About an hour later, as the two worked out of the back of their work vehicle, they heard a "loud thud."

"I looked around the corner



*Master Sgt. Mike Gill, Aircraft Generation Squadron and National Weather Service electric technician, was awarded the Department of Commerce's Gold Medal for heroism in rescuing a pilot from an aircraft mishap (photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Schaap).*

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# KANZA SPIRIT

931ST AIR REFUELING GROUP

Vol. 7, No. 11

Commander,  
931st Air Refueling  
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## Deadlines

The deadline to submit articles and newsbriefs for publication is the 20th of each month.

## Legal info

This funded Air Force newspaper is an authorized publication for member of the U.S. military services.

Contents of the *Kanza Spirit* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or the Department of the Air Force.

Editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the 931st Public Affairs Office. All photos are Air Force photos unless otherwise indicated.

# Commander proud of 'Outstanding' UCI, wants total 931st force if tempo increases



**Col. Jeffery Glass**  
*Group Commander*

My thanks to everyone on the "Outstanding" Unit Compliance Inspection. The out brief went very well. We had a few problems, but overall the results were definitely up to 931st standards.

The unit had 11 Superior Performers, two Superior Performer Teams (the War Readiness Element Team and Computer Systems Management Team) and two persons recognized for Outstanding Dress and Appearance.

The numbers of Superior Performers were as large as a unit ten times our size; truly remarkable. All of these individuals will be recognized during the December Commander's Call.

Our flying squadron is continuing to deploy to the forward-operating-location without any problems. We are actually sending additional people over the required amount to help out the active duty. The additional people include operations and medi-

cal support personnel.

Your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed. All of the senior Air Force Reserve Command staff, along with the senior staff at Air Mobility Command sees your volunteerism as amazing.

Our Civil Engineer Squadron lost another opportunity to shine at the scheduled Inspector General Exercise after AMC cancelled all IGX's for the foreseeable future. We all know how hard they trained and I am sure they would have made us proud. Hopefully we can get them in sometime soon.

Many questions have come my way about what will happen next in the war against terrorism. All that I know is that the planners are looking at all of the possibilities. We will all have to wait until our superiors make the decision on the next step.

My goal, if we increase our present posture, is to lobby for a total 931st operation to include maintenance, operations and our civil engineers. I do not want to see all of our forces split between numerous forward operating locations.

While we wait to see what shoe drops next, all of the 931st family needs to take some needed time off. Hopefully, everyone can enjoy the upcoming holidays.

## FRAUD WASTE & ABUSE

To file a fraud, waste or abuse complaint with the Air Force, call (316) 759-3192 or toll free (800) 424-9098.

## UTA SCHEDULE

Next UTA: Nov. 16-17  
Dec. 7-8  
Jan. 11-12

The *Kanza Spirit* is mailed each month to all 931st Air Refueling Group members on file with Personnel Systems. If you are not receiving your copy each month, check with your orderly room or administration section to ensure your address on file is correct.



An Air Force E-3 Sentry takes on 75,000 lbs. of fuel to continue its 14-hour mission over Afghanistan. The E-3 is more commonly known as the AWACS, or all-weather surveillance command control system aircraft (photo by Staff Sgt. Travis Aston).

## *931st members help deployed unit achieve milestone*

**Tech Sgt. Scott Leas**  
*384th Air Expeditionary Wing  
 Public Affairs*

**OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (AMCNS)** - To the seasoned crewmembers of the KC-135 Stratotanker, it was like almost any other mission over Afghanistan. Only this aerial refueling mission marked 20,000 accident-free hours flown in support of Operation Enduring Freedom by the 913th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron here Oct. 13.

"This is a landmark mission for us," said Lt. Col. John Michel, commander of the 384th Expeditionary Operations Group. "It's a tremendous accomplishment to reach this milestone while maintaining our high standard of safety. And it couldn't have happened without the hard work of everyone here. It takes a team of butchers, bakers, and a lot of maintainers to reach this point."

It also takes a team of talented crewmembers to consistently deliver fuel to the fight. Michel credits much of the unit's success to the professional total force teamwork of active, guard and

reserve aircrews. "The crew for this mission is our first true rainbow crew in theater. We have both active and reserve pilots as well as boom operators."

Air Force Reserve Command pilot Maj. Glenn "G.P." Powers with the 913th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, home-stationed at the 931st Air Refueling Group, McConnell Air Force Base, Kan., tells of the pride reserve crews feel in support of combat operations over Afghanistan. "I'm proud to be doing this. "It's the wave of the future. Reserve crews train for this. This is one of the ways we employ what we train for."

Capt. Donald "D.W." Schmidt, aircraft commander for the mission, explained it was normal to fly with Air Force reserve members at home station. "We fly with them at McConnell. It's what we have trained for and it's working out well."

The crew of six met for the pre-flight briefing at 11:30 p.m. on Oct. 12. On the flight line, ground support crews were readying the aircraft for its historic mission before the aircrew arrived for the pre-flight check. As the crew pre-

pared for flight, Col. Steven Wayne, commander of the 384th Air Expeditionary Wing, explained why the mission is so vital to the Global War of Terrorism.

"Tonight's mission will refuel an E-3 with 70,000 lbs. of fuel," said Wayne. "It will take about 70,000 to get us there and back. That might seem like a lot, but it keeps other aircraft in the fight."

The E-3 Sentry is an airborne warning and control system aircraft, known as AWACS, that provides all-weather surveillance, command, control and communications needed by commanders to make decisions during combat operations.

"If any aircraft has to return to its home station to refuel, that's time wasted. That's why tanker support is so vital to the cause," explained Wayne.

While the mission was a milestone for the unit, it was routine for the crew.

The KC-135 left its forward deployed location flying four hours over harsh desert terrain to its rendezvous with the E-3.

"It's hard to believe anyone could

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of the truck and saw the plane upside down, its wings and propellers all bent up," said Gill, a maintenance squadron master sergeant for the 931st.

The two men ran over to help the pilot still trapped inside. The crash had bent the wings, blocking the doors from opening.



*'We just did what we had to do.'*

--Master Sgt. Mike Gill

The men could smell leaking gas as they pushed the fuselage away from the wings to remove the pilot hanging upside down inside.

They cleared the pilot from the plane, but the seemingly disoriented man returned to the dangerous crash scene.

Gill pulled him away once again, later chuckling about why the man returned to the aircraft.

"His hearing aide was still in the cockpit," said Gill. "That's why he seemed disoriented; he couldn't respond to us because he couldn't

hear us."

They drove to the terminal, where the pilot's friends were shocked to see him. A hangar blocked the view from the terminal to the crash scene and the friends were still watching for the plane that never took off.

"The good Lord was looking after that pilot that day," said Dick Elder, chief meteorologist at the NWS

familiar with aircraft mishaps.

"An upside down airplane is a fire waiting to happen," Elder said.

Gill later learned the pilot, unlike most other pilots, had tied down a battery that, if loose, likely would have ignited the 18 gallons of fuel leaked from the plane.

The Department of Commerce Gold Medal, the highest honorary award granted by the department

Secretary, was given to Gill and his co-worker for their heroic actions during a ceremony in Washington D.C. Gill was allowed to take his 15-year-old son, Dustin, with him to share in the experience.

"It was first rate all the way," Gill said. "I really felt honored."

The ceremony marked the first time Elder, a 25-year NWS veteran, knew someone recognized with a gold medal as an individual, something he said is extremely rare.

"Very few are given out to individuals," Elder said.

"They're almost always given to groups of people for team efforts."

It's his NWS team, Gill said, that works to save lives all year long, warning Kansans of deadly tornadoes, giving pilots vital information for safe flying and monitoring some of the most severe weather in the country. All his teammates are heroes who make him love going to work every day.

"I have the best job in the world," said the 36-year-old Arkansas native. "And I get to do it in the air capital of the world."

in Wichita who nominated his two technicians for a medal. "No one else saw the crash. Who knows what would have happened to that guy if they hadn't been there. An upside down airplane is a fire waiting to happen."

"We just did what we had to do," said a modest Gill in response to the heroic status he and his co-worker soon gained following the incident last spring. "We never thought what we did was heroic."

What they did was risk their lives to help another, according those

## Air Force leaders send letters, pins to thank employers

**Tech Sgt. Scott Elliot**

*Air Force Print News*

**WASHINGTON** – In recognition of the air reserve components' contribution to the war on terrorism, the service's senior leaders are sending their personal thanks to employers of Air National Guardsmen and Air Force reservists.

Secretary of the Air Force Dr. James G. Roche and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper are sending joint letters and lapel pins in recognition of the sacrifices made in support of the war.

The Air Force is asking guardsmen and reservists to come forward with information about their civilian employers, as this information is not routinely collected.

"The real key to the 'Thank the Employer' program is gathering information from our airmen," said Brig. Gen. Ed Tonini, an activated Kentucky Air National Guardsman working with the Air Force office of public affairs. "We need every commander and supervisor to make the case,

face-to-face, to their people."

So far, the Air Force has collected data from more than 34,000 of the country's 190,000 citizen airmen.

"It's about recognition," the general said. "First and foremost, it's the fact that we have leadership in the Air Force that recognizes that this particular constituency is vital and important to the success of the Air Force. We cannot do the job of the Air Force without supportive employers, so we're reaching out to them to thank them and let them know they're full partners in what we're going through right now."

Two Web sites are available for traditional members of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve Command, including individual mobilization augmentees, to provide their employer information

They can visit :

[www.yourguardiansoffreedom.com/thanks](http://www.yourguardiansoffreedom.com/thanks)

Personnel who have been activated for a second year can provide their information at:

[www.yourguardiansoffreedom.com/year2](http://www.yourguardiansoffreedom.com/year2)

### **SAFETY**, from page 3

live down there - but they do," said Wayne. "They are the enemy. They are hunkered down in the mountains we're flying over every day."

While in a refueling track over Afghanistan, the E-3 moved into position to take on 70,000 lbs. of fuel at a rate of 3,000 lbs. per minute. The boom operator, Chief Master Sgt. William Karasko with the 913th EARS, skillfully joined the two aircraft.

"We fly 14-hour missions," said the E-3 pilot. "It's your fuel that's keeping us up here."

"You're at 75K," Karasko tells the E-3 pilot.

"Thanks guys. We're backing out," replies the receiving pilot.

The KC-135 then turns back for another four hours of flight before completing its mission and the unit's 20,000

hours of accident-free flying.

To date, the 384th EAW has delivered more than 24,353,582 gallons of fuel.

That is enough gas for a car averaging 25 mpg to drive 400 hundred years without stopping.

In the 20,000 hours the unit has flown in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, its aircraft have transited 11 million nautical miles - enough to circle the globe 440 times.

"I think it's impressive that this wing has made this mark in so short a time," said Schmidt. "It just shows how hard everyone here works. Many of these jets are 40 plus years old. It's incredible how the maintenance crews are able to keep it all flying nine to 10 hours. That's not easy to do."

Wayne helped put the difficulty in maintenance of the aging aircraft into perspective. "Imagine if you had a car

as old as this aircraft and how much maintenance it would take to keep it running."

Yet Karasko is quick to praise the KC-135. "This aircraft is extremely reliable. It's about 35 to 40 years old, but it takes as many people to ensure that we are ready to meet the mission. The bottom line is that it doesn't matter what you do. What you do has a direct contribution to the mission. This just happens to be the end result."

Wayne explained that these missions are critical because the Air Force is still fully engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom.

"We are still hitting vital military targets. There are bad guys being taken out every day. People may not see it on the nightly news as they have in previous operations, but we are still waging war on our nation's enemies," said Wayne.

### **Service dress uniform gets new nametag**

The Air Force's service dress uniform welcomed back an old friend Oct. 1: the nametag. The new nametags will be available in Army and Air Force Exchange Service military clothing sales stores at a future date when stocks become available.

### **Reservists eligible for Troops to Teachers program**

Reservists with a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution or have one year of college with six years experience in a vocational or technical field may now be eligible to receive benefits under the Troops to Teachers program.

People interested in continuing to serve their country and discovering a new and rewarding career in teaching can access

[www.ProudToServeAgain.com](http://www.ProudToServeAgain.com), the Troops to Teachers Web site, to see if they are eligible and for more information.

### **Undergraduate TA increases**

The tuition assistance rate has increased to \$250 per semester hour for undergraduate studies with the annual cap per person increasing to \$4,500.

Graduate study assistance will remain at \$187.50 per semester hour. For more information, call (316) 759-5423.

### **Group T-shirts for sale**

Group T-shirts are available for \$10 each until Nov. 17. The shirts are black, 100% cotton with the Kanza Roach on the front. To order or pay for your T-shirt, see your orderly room or Tech Sgt. Bob Lorenz in the Group Career Advisors office.

### **Group feedback program to be implemented**

A new Suggestion and Feedback program is being implemented at the group to give all members an opportunity to be heard and understood. Suggestions and/or recommendations for improvement, as well as comments about what makes the unit successful are welcome.

Forms and boxes to put them in will be placed on each floor of building 850 and near the Civil Engineering and Aero Medicine Flight orderly rooms.

Any and all ideas are welcome, especially suggestions to fix recognized problems.

One of these concerns and the outcome will be featured monthly in the Commanders Corner of the *Kanza Spirit*.

All other concerns will be addressed by phone and/or e-mail.

## SPRIT SPOTLIGHT



**Airman 1st Class  
Karalee Mulow**  
*931st Operations Support  
Flight*

**This month's selectee is a Neosho Rapids, Kansas native who has been in the Air Force for one and a half years.**

**Job title:** Intelligence Specialist

**Civilian job:** Full-time student at Wichita State University

**Favorite way to relax:** Hang out with friends, take a sauna at after the gym, sleep

**Easiest way to annoy me:** Complain too much or tell me I can't do something

**Most influential person in my life:** My grandmother

**What I'm reading now:** School books (but only right before a test)

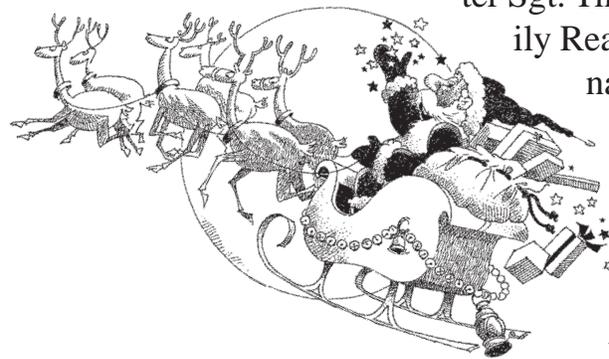
**What I'm listening to now:** Eminem, Nappy Roots, The Vines, Celine Dion ... pretty much anything

**If I won \$1 million, I would:** Give some to family and charity, help my friend with medical bills, then go on a long vacation

# Operation SANTA Underway

The group has begun its annual collection of new toys, clothes and non-perishable food items for needy 931st families this Christmas. Boxes like the one pictured on the right are located throughout group facilities for members to place their donations. Monetary donations are also being accepted by Master Sgt. Cody Smith in the Safety office and Master Sgt. Tina Proulx in the Family Readiness office. Nominations for families in need of donations may also be submitted to Master

Sgt. Smith. For more information, call (316) 759-3683.



## Mimi-Me



Col. Jeffery Glass, group commander, gives Dawne Hargrove, group headquarters secretary, her reward for winning a Halloween costume contest as Mimi Bobeck from the "The Drew Carey Show." Also pictured is Capt. Rebecca Fox, group performance planner, as the Wicked Witch of the 931st (photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Schaap).

**Cotillion Comedy**

Nov. 15 – Comedian Bill Engvall with special guest Larry the Cable Guy. Advance tickets are \$30 for reserved, \$25 for general admission.

Tickets available at Select-A-Seat locations. Cotillion Ballroom is at 11120 W. Kellogg.

**Thunder Hockey**

Nov. 16 – Wichita Thunder host the Bossier-Shreveport Mudbugs in Central Hockey League action. Game time is 7:30 p.m. at the Kansas

Coliseum. Tickets available at Select-A-Seat locations and the Kansas Coliseum.

Wide range of ticket prices with military discounts available.

**Dance Festival**

Nov. 15 and 16 – Kansas Dance Festival at Wichita State University. Festival will begin at 7:30 p.m. at Miller Concert Hall, Duerksen Fine Arts Building, 21st Street North and Hillside. Tickets are \$9.

**Performing Arts**

Nov. 15-17 – “Sly Fox” performed by the Wichita Center for the Arts, 9112 East Central. Times are 8 p.m. on the 15th and 16th, and 2 p.m. on the 17th. \$16 for adults, \$14 for students and seniors. Call 634-2787 for information.

**Youth Symphony**

Nov. 17 – Wichita Symphony presents a Youth Orchestra Concert. Begins 3 p.m. at Century II Performance Hall, 225 West Douglas. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$2 for 12 and under.

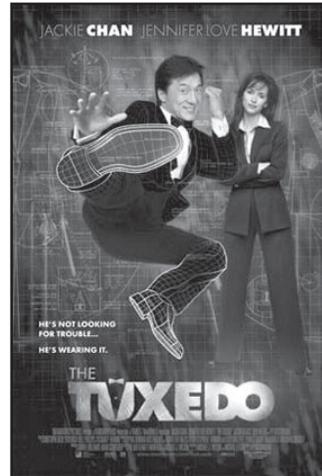
**At The Movies**



**THE BANGER SISTERS**

**FRIDAY, NOV 15 7pm**  
**1 hrs. 38 min.** Susan Sarandon and Goldie Hawn meet back up 30 years after living life as music groupies and find they have many more differences than they use to.

**MPAA Rating:** R for sexual content, language and some drug use



**THE TUXEDO**

**SATURDAY, NOV 16 7pm**  
**1 hr. 36 min.** Jackie Chan is a New York cab driver who tries on a coma-ridden spy's hi-tech, futuristic tuxedo. Chan sets off a series of events and eventually takes over a covert government mission. Also stars Jennifer Love Hewitt.

**MPAA Rating:** PG-13 for adult situations, language and violence

*Movies are shown at the **McConnell Air Force Base Theater** and are subject to change.*

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