



The official online publication of the **920th Rescue Wing**, Patrick AFB, Fla.

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE ANGEL'S WINGS ONLINE PDF IS BEST VIEWED USING THE "TWO-UP" OR "SIDE-BY-SIDE" OPTION IN THE TOOLBAR AT THE TOP OF THE SCREEN.

IF THE OPTION FOR TWO-UP DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE TOOLBAR, RIGHT-CLICK ON ONE OF THE VIEW OPTIONS THAT ARE IN THE TOOLBAR AND SELECT IT FROM THE MENU THAT POPS UP

ANGEL'S WINGS

VOL. 6 NO. 2 • 920TH RESCUE WING • PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, FLA. • AIR FORCE RESERVE COMMAND • MARCH / APRIL 2008



WHEELS OF FORTUNE

A RESCUE-WING FLIGHT ENGINEER RACES AGAINST THE BEST TRAIL RIDERS IN THE COUNTRY

page 6

ANGEL'S WINGS

VOL.6 NO.2 MAR / APR 2008

920th RESCUE WING EDITORIAL STAFF

wing commander
COL. STEVEN KIRKPATRICK

chief of public affairs
CAPT. CATHLEEN SNOW

asst. chief of public affairs
1ST LT. JAIME PINTO

ncoic
MASTER SGT. RAYMOND PADGETT

editor
TECH. SGT. PAUL FLIPSE

staff
TECH. SGT. JEREMY ALLEN
STAFF SGT. HEATHER KELLY

contact

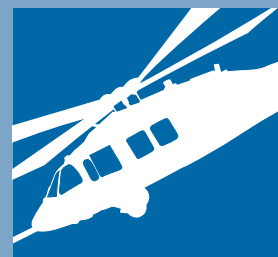
920th Rescue Wing Public Affairs Office
1225 Jupiter St. Ste 1-201
Patrick AFB, Fla. 32925-3323
Tel. 321.494.0535
Fax 321.494.1103

Online: www.920rqw@afrc.af.mil
E-mail: public_affairs@rescue920.patrick.af.mil



This funded Air Force newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services. Contents of **ANGEL'S WINGS** are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force. The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs office of the 920th Rescue Wing. All photographs are Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.

cover photo / TECH. SGT. PAUL FLIPSE



THE INSIDE SCOOP

news & features



THE RIDE STUFF pg.6-8

You won't get a much bumpier ride than on a helicopter, except maybe on a cross-country motorcycle like the one flight engineer Master Sgt. Carlos Gonzalez rode against America's top riders.



NO BULL pg.10-11

Recently, a group of Reserve pararescuemen made the trek to nearby Jacksonville in hopes of recruiting a few extreme sportsmen who aren't afraid to grab life by the horns.



NOW AND AGAIN pg.9

For the third year in a row, the 920th Rescue Wing hosted Operation Not on Our Watch, a county-wide event that educates teenagers on the dangers of distracted driving.

pointsofinterest

NEWS BRIEFS pg.4

MILITARY BALL TICKETS pg.4

EMPLOYER'S DAY pg.4

CIV MIL SCHOLARSHIP pg.4

BACK FROM IRAQ, JACK pg.5

FLY GIRLS pg.5

SAVE OF THE MONTH pg.9

A VERY SPECIAL BIRTHDAY pg.12

timemanagement

UTA SCHEDULE

May 3-4

June 7-8

July 12 -13

August 2-3

Sept. 6-7

Oct. TBA

Nov. TBA

Dec. TBA

DINING FACILITY

Br. 6 - 8 a.m. (weekdays)

Br. 5:30 - 9:15 a.m. (UTAs)

Ln. 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Dn. 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

FITNESS CENTER

Mon/Fri 5 a.m. - 11 p.m.

Sat/Sun 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

BARBER SHOP

Mon/Fri 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Sat 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Sun 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

CLASS VI / SHOPETTE / GAS STATION

Mon/Sat 6 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Sun 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Not every hero gets a parade

BY LT. COL. PATRICK JOHNSON

920th Aeromedical Staging Squadron

If you read the paper or watched the TV news April 1, you wouldn't have seen anything on the passing of a great American hero. No spectacular footage or fantastic war stories. No fanfare. Nothing.

Truth is, Maj. Kevin Wilkins went about his job in such a quiet, humble way, it was sometimes easy to forget he was there. I suppose it's no surprise he would be just as unnoticed in his passing.

Often times, we don't notice people like Kevin because of their unassuming nature. They don't seek attention no matter how much they might deserve it. So, when you saw Kevin working, he looked like he was just doing his job. But he was doing much more.

For 20 years, he prepared himself for when his country needed him. He was an EMT, paramedic & firefighter who became a nurse and went on to become a specialist in emergency room intensive care.

When the Air Force developed the highly-technical Critical Care Air Transport Team, he immediately signed up. He was so talented he quickly blended in with what were considered the best in a difficult field.

He volunteered for two tours in Iraq and worked tirelessly for our injured troops. He left his family to serve, and when he returned, there was no readjustment needed. Not

needing the accolades some people crave, he slipped easily back into his life seamlessly. It was as if he never left.

Away from the Air Force Reserve, he worked as an emergency room nurse in a Central Florida hospital. Not one to talk about himself or his accomplishments, most of

his patients never knew they were being treated by a real American hero.

Despite his quiet demeanor, Kevin was an extremist—he was extremely faithful, friendly and extremely dedicated to his faith, his country, his family and his job.

Then there was last week. He was near death, suffering the ravages of the brain tumor that would soon kill him. Was he lamenting his shortened life, feeling sorry for himself, secluding himself in preparation for his death? Although no one could blame him for any of these actions, Kevin did something surprising. He went to work, choosing to spend his last days on Earth using what strength he had left to care for others.

And now he's gone.

He left us in his own quiet unassuming way, surrounded by family, friends and coworkers. All grieving because they knew what we lost—a great man, a wonderful husband, father and grandfather. A talented nurse. A disciplined Air Force

officer. A true patriot.

And yes, Kevin was a great American hero. Even if it didn't make the headlines.



NEWS BRIEFS



Rescue Wing military members are encouraged to invite their civilian employer and their spouse to the **2008 EMPLOYER & SPOUSE DAY** set for Saturday, June 7 of the Unit Training Assembly.

This is a great opportunity to thank your civilian employer and your spouse for their commitment to your Air Force Reserve duty and to help them understand what you do while on duty.

The event includes a mission briefing, a look at the hardware, a picnic, face-to-face time with wing leadership and an aerial demonstration.

Members of the Florida Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Committee and the Airman and Family Readiness Office will be on hand to answer questions and make presentations.

Deadline for submissions is May 4. For more information or to submit a nomination, contact the 920th Public Affairs Office at (321) 494-0535/6.

ON THE RECORD

Never tell people how to do things.
Tell them what to do and they will
surprise you with their ingenuity.

- Army Gen. George S. Patton

The Military Personnel Flight career enhancement section is offering monthly **OPR/EPR WRITING WORKSHOPS**. Master Sgt. Green and Staff Sgt. Nicole Hanson will conduct the workshop at the Family Support Center (Bldg. 722 - between the lodging office and base library) from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

In an effort to lower the number of overdue performance reports in the wing, attendees are encouraged to bring laptops, blank forms, writing utensils, writing pads and open minds. The plan is to get reports written and completed during the sessions. We'll be breaking into work groups and exchanging knowledge and ideas.

If you have specific questions or topics you would like to cover, please contact Sergeant Green or Sergeant Hanson at (321) 494-7147 or (321) 494-6981.

Celebrate Air Force Reserve Command's 60th Anniversary in style at the **THIRD ANNUAL 920TH RESCUE WING MILITARY BALL** July 12 at the Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Hilton.

For more information, call Capt. Arlene Dolphin at (321) 494-6868, or Master Sgt. Val Grijalva at (321) 494-0306.



Time to send in your application for the 2008 Civilian Military Community scholarship.

The Scholarship Committee will award the successful candidate **\$1000 FOR THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION**.

Applicants must be a resident of Brevard County, attend college full time or part time (6 credit hours minimum) and have a special need to further their education. Application deadline is June 15. MAIL COPIES OF HIGH SCHOOL AND / OR COLLEGE TRANSCRIPT TO:

Don Beck
817 Dixon Blvd. Suite 6-B
Cocoa, FL 32922

According to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), the Defense Department will issue **IDENTIFICATION CARDS WITHOUT FULL SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS** printed onto them as a means of combating the ever-increasing problem of identity theft.

Between 2009 and 2010, all department-issued identification cards will feature only the last four digits of a holder's Social Security number.

New identification cards will be issued as they reach their expiration dates.



Where the heart is >> Members of the 920th Rescue Wing Security Forces Flight arrived safely at Orlando International Airport Feb. 29 following a six-month deployment to Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq. Among their duties there were perimeter security, flightline security and ground defense. (photo/Tech. Sgt. Paul Flipse)

Back on friendly ground

No longer sung to sleep by the angry din of war, a small group of security forces troops, all members of the 920th Rescue Wing here, returned home Feb. 29 from a six-month tour of duty at Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq.

The team of reservists, all members of the 920th Security Forces Squadron, arrived at Orlando International Airport in the early evening dusk to a rousing welcome from an enthusiastic gathering of friends, family and fellow 920th Rescue Wing reservists.

The team deployed from Patrick Air Force Base Aug. 20 bound for the North-eastern Iraqi Air Base. There, they served

as ground-defense troops, and their duties included perimeter security, flightline security and quick-reactionary-force measures.

But the sweet homecoming wasn't without bitterness. The 12 Airmen in the midst of the welcome-home celebration had deployed to Iraq as a group of 13.

Tragically, just one month into the deployment, Senior Airman Diane Lopes, was severely wounded during a mortar attack. Airman Lopes was evacuated first to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, then to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Md., where she continues to undergo physical therapy.

Fly girls flock, foster felicity

SAN DIEGO, Calif. – One of the Rescue Wing's most-visible Airmen recently left sunny Central Florida for sunny Southern California to attend the 19th Annual Women in Aviation conference in San Diego March 12-15.

Staff Sgt. Jennifer Drake, who sings the Star Spangled Banner at many 920th events, made the trip as part of the Human Resource Development Council's (HRDC) outreach program. She attended the conference with more than 3,200 participants and nearly 150 exhibitors, including most companies at the forefront of aviation.

Among event highlights were an exhibit hall, speeches by aviation legends (see *Sonic Boon*, pg.12) and professional development classes.

The conference culminated with the induction of Maj. Nicole Malachowski into the Women in Aviation's Pioneer Hall of Fame. Major Malachowski was the first female pilot to fly with the Thunderbirds, the Air Force's renowned aerial demonstration team.

Also present were members of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), the group of female civilian pilots who flew non-combat missions for the Air Force during World War II.

Women in Aviation, International is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing networking, mentoring and scholarship opportunities for men and women who are interested in careers in the aviation and aerospace industries.



Maj. Nicole Malachowski



Fifnella, mascot of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), the group civilian female pilots hired by the Air Force to fly non-combat missions during World War II.

Wheels of fortune

Whether he's hanging out of a helicopter over Iraq or hanging on to a motorcycle deep in the Florida back-country, one 920th Rescue Wing reservist makes sure he'll enjoy the ride by knowing what the hazards are

BY TECH. SGT. PAUL FLIPSE
920th Rescue Wing Public Affairs



Helicopters have never been confused with Cadillacs when it comes to giving a smooth ride. Taking a trip on one of the 920th Rescue Wing's HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters is sort of like holding a running jackhammer while riding the world's tallest, fastest roller coaster.

But maybe all that bouncing around is why Master Sgt. Carlos Gonzalez, a Pave Hawk flight engineer with the Rescue Wing, takes so well to the bone-jarring marathon that is cross-country motorcycle racing.

"It's brutal out there," said Sergeant Gonzalez, who has spent the last 17

years as a reservist with the Air Force Reserve's busiest wing.

He began riding motorcycles as a boy and now races once a month with the Florida Trail Riders (FTR), a group of amateur racers spanning from ages 12 to 60.

The sport of cross-country trail riding is a grueling test of endurance and strength. Typically, riders must navigate a 275-lb motorcycle through four laps of a rugged 10-12 mile course that tests them at every turn.

As racers navigate the course, they're faced with a constant stream of obstacles—paths through woods so

tight their handle bars (and shoulders) scrape the trees; thick, cement-like pits of mud that can stop a motorcycle in its tracks; and Florida's infamous Palmetto roots, which jut randomly from the ground like twisted veins of iron, a hazard Sergeant Gonzalez said was among the most daunting.

"Imagine driving down a road at 100 mph and coming across a half-mile stretch of speed bumps," he said. "It drains you of whatever energy you have."

Florida Trail Riders holds monthly races around the state against competition in conditions like one would find



in a small-town 5K race, according to Sergeant Gonzalez.

But in March, he got the opportunity of a lifetime as the Grand National Cross Country Championship (GNCC), the sport's equivalent to NASCAR, decided to open its season with a race in nearby Saint Cloud, Fla.

"It was the Daytona 500 of the off-road world," he said.

While the names of the GNCC racers weren't common to those outside the sport, Sergeant Gonzalez said the men he shared the track with were to the sport of cross-country trail riding what names like Richard Petty, Jeff Gordon

and the late Dale Earnhardt were to NASCAR.

"To race among people like Dick Burleson, Travis Pastrana and David Knight, I have definitely checked off one of the things I wanted to do before I die," said the 44-year-old reservist.

And so, with all his training behind him and his expectations humbly tucked away, the race was on.

Exactly 2 hours, 9 minutes and 54 seconds of physical abuse later, Sergeant Gonzales crossed the finish line—feeling he rode well but not knowing how he did. All he knew was he had just enough time to head back to his trailer,

(cont. next page →)

The wheel deal >> Master Sgt. Carlos Gonzalez (#77 -- in blue & white) navigates his way through the first turn of the Grand National Cross Country Championship's Triton Parts Unlimited March 4 at Saint Cloud, Fla., where he raced shoulder-to-shoulder against the top racers in the country. The 44-year-old master sergeant finished 10th. (photo/Tech. Sgt. Paul Flipse)



Ridin' dirty >> After completing the brutal Grand National Cross Country Championship course in 2:09:54, Master Sgt. Carlos Gonzalez takes a moment to catch his breath (left). Known as “Gonzo,” back at the 920th Rescue Squadron, the flight engineer finished 10th, a result so surprising to him he actually questioned race officials when they presented him with his plaque. (photo/Tech. Sgt. Paul Flipse)

(*Wheels* cont.)

catch his breath, gulp down a Gatorade and wipe some mud from his face before he and his youngest son had to head to work the pit stop for his eldest son, who was lining up for the next race.

The three Gonzalez men have ridden together since the elder returned home from a deployment to Iraq in 2003 to find his two boys had fallen in love with the sport. According to Sergeant Gonzalez, it was a true gift.

“To me, the time I spend with them doing the sport I love is priceless,” he said. “I looked at life in a different way after I got back from Iraq. It made me appreciate the time I spend with my kids. Anytime I go out with them, I feel like I’m on borrowed time. Now, the time we enjoy racing, practicing riding—it’s our time, just the three of us.”

In fact, Sergeant Gonzalez was so

focused on his son’s race he didn’t have time to find out how he finished in his own race. Though he felt he raced smart and finished well, he never imagined he would place near the top considering the quality of his competition.

When he finally got a look at the race results, Sergeant Gonzalez said he thought someone had made a mistake. He couldn’t possibly have finished in *10th place*.

“No—absolutely not did I ever even *think* about finishing in the top ten,” he admitted.

In fact, the humble master sergeant actually questioned the race official who handed him his plaque, still unable to believe he fared so well against such legendary riders.

“Are you sure,” he asked skeptically. Yes, the man said, absolutely sure.



Editor’s Note: Since the original interview with Master Sgt. Gonzalez, the Angel’s Wings learned he will soon leave the military after nearly 22 years of service. Sergeant Gonzalez will travel with his family to Bogotá, Colombia, where he will work for the U.S. State Department as the aircrew advisor there. Sergeant Gonzalez is a complete professional. He excelled at his job and was never too busy to help someone in need. He will truly be missed.

920TH MAINTENANCE GROUP
SAVE OF THE MONTH

Senior Master Sgt. Lorne Ward, Master Sergeants Salvadore Mendez, Lawrence Galbreath and Michael Pelezo, Tech. Sgt. Vincent Brown and Staff Sgt. Jason Pfister

distinguished themselves in the performance of outstanding service to the 920th Maintenance Group, Patrick AFB, Florida.



On February 5, a 106th Rescue Wing New York Air National Guard HC-130 aircraft landed at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station (CCAFS) to stand alert for a space shuttle launch, scheduled to take place 48 hours later.

Upon taxiing to the aircraft-parking spot, the aircrew noticed an engine-fire light illumination. They assessed the validity of the indication, then engaged the engine's fire-suppression system.

Coordination began immediately between the Air Guard aircrew and the 920th maintenance supervision to repair the damaged aircraft so it could remain on alert status for the rapidly-approaching shuttle launch.

Sergeant Galbreath was dispatched from the electrical/environmental section that evening. Upon arrival, he quickly assessed that there had not been an engine fire and began thoroughly inspecting the aircraft's wiring and fire-detection system. After hours of troubleshooting the issue, he determined the faulty part was the fire detection control unit. A replacement part could not be delivered in time for the shuttle launch thus, a decision needed to be made whether to repair the aircraft or find a replacement to complete the mission.

That evening, Sergeant Ward coordinated between Air Force Reserve Command, the Air National Guard and Air Force Space Command to obtain a fire bottle squib, used to discharge the extinguishing agent, for the new fire bottle. Early the next morning, the fire bottle and fire detection control unit from one of our own aircraft, which was being repaired in the ISO dock, was removed to accommodate the disabled Air Guard aircraft. That same day Sergeants Ward, Menendez, Pelezo, Brown and Pfister transported the explosive squib and associated parts for the repair to CCAFS.

Once at the aircraft, the maintenance team sprung into action. Sergeants Pelezo and Brown began working on removing the fire-detection control unit, while Sergeants Ward, Menendez and Pfister prepped the fire bottle and squib for installation. The fire control unit required Sergeant Brown to go inside the wing to work in a very cramped and confined space for hours at a time.

After all the repairs were made and the damaged and broken components replaced, the aircraft was functional-checked and returned to full mission-capable status. The efforts of these maintainers allowed the aircraft to stay on-station and complete its alert commitment without any delay or having to be replaced by the spare aircraft.

Based on their actions as well as their dedication to duty, the above mentioned are hereby awarded the "Save of the Month" for February 2008.



Air Force and community unite to save teens' lives

Patrick Air Force Base Fire and Emergency Services along with Brevard County emergency workers put on a dramatic reenactment of a tragic car accident during a driver safety event held here April 1-3.

For the third year in a row the 920th Rescue Wing and 45th Space Wing, in partnership with the local community, hosted Operation Not on Our Watch, a county-wide event that educates teenagers on the dangers of distracted driving.

Led by Air Force Reservist Senior Master Sgt. Rene Rubiella, the program included a re-enactment of an auto accident including deployment of the local police, fire and EMS responders and a behind-the-scenes look at trauma center medical teams working to save lives.

More than 4,000 Brevard County high schools seniors attended the three-hour event each day at Patrick Air Force Base. (photos/Capt. Cathleen Snow)

No bull

Reserve pararescuemen pay a visit to an extreme sporting event in search of men who aren't afraid to grab life by the horns

BY STAFF SGT. HEATHER KELLY
920th Rescue Wing Public Affairs



photos/Staff Sgt. Heather Kelly

Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service recently partnered with members of the 920th Rescue Wing for its first foray into the world of professional bull riding.

Representing the wing at Jacksonville's Veterans Memorial Arena were unit commander Col. Steven Kirkpatrick and a group of pararescuemen (PJs) from Patrick Air Force Base, Fla.

"Television and radio spots help raise awareness, but getting out into the community is where we see real results," said Chief Master Sgt. Robert Starkey, chief of the advertising branch of Reserve Command's Recruiting Service.

"With limited funding, we try to do a lot," he said. "The Army and Air Force have had success with recruiting at events like these. The audience is extremely patriotic and supportive of the Armed Forces," Chief Starkey continued.

"It's a great fit for PJs."

Addressing the packed audience from the center of the ring, Colonel Kirkpatrick opened the ceremony with some words on opportunities in the Air Force Reserve, highlighting the pararescue career field.

Tech. Sgt. Blane Morgan, Staff Sgt. Kacee Holmes, Staff Sgt. Dan Warren and 2nd Lt. James Sluder were on hand to showcase the profession and answer questions from prospective recruits.

"PJs come from a variety of different backgrounds," said Sergeant Morgan.

"We currently have an Olympic athlete and then guys who never played sports before joining," he said. "The one thing we all have in common though is that PJs want to go out there, save lives and put others before themselves," he added.

As a current pararescue trainee, Staff Sgt. Dan Warren first glimpsed this fact while deployed to New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina rescue operations. At the time, he was serving as a flight medic out of Westover Air Reserve Base, Mass.

"I got to see firsthand what these guys do, and I wanted to be a part of that," he said.

Due to the rigorous standards, the graduation rate for PJ trainees is staggeringly low—roughly 10 percent.

With seven months left in his training curriculum, Sergeant Warren said his experience so far has been challenging both physically and mentally.

"It allows you to see your limitations and how to build on them," he said.

Though on the surface, PJs and bull riders might seem as opposite as up and down, these niche professions share similar attributes, as each requires near super-human amounts of dedication and perseverance.

According to the official Professional Bull Riders Inc. Web site, professional bull riding is a fierce, rough and grueling sport with roots deeply imbedded in American culture, summed up neatly with a bit of southern country wisdom in the sport's motto: "It's America's original extreme sport."

While a comparison can be made to the physical challenges bull riding presents, there is one definitive difference between PJs and bull riders.

While a bull rider needs to last eight seconds to accomplish his goal during weekly competitions, PJs push the limits of endurance and strength every day.

"Our goal is to find folks who aren't afraid of a challenge," said Sergeant Morgan. Only then, he said, will they see "... how rewarding a career in Reserve pararescue can be."

Rough riders >> Though their four-wheeled vehicles weren't nearly as tough to ride as a 2,000-lb bucking bull, 920th Pararescuemen still got a rousing welcome during the opening ceremonies for the Professional Bull Riders event in Jacksonville (above); **bull riding** is sometimes called America's oldest extreme sport (bottom right), as it requires immense strength, stamina, willpower and the ability to ignore pain, the same qualities necessary to be a pararescueman; **wing commander** Col. Steven Kirkpatrick (bottom left) took time during the opening ceremony to educate fans about the wing's complex, demanding mission, and to thank fans for their loyal support of the military.





Sonic boon

Air Force Reservist, female aviator and former Broadway performer Staff Sgt. Jennifer Drake attended the Women in Aviation International Conference at San Diego March 13-15 (see *Fly Girls*, pg. 5). While there, she helped coordinate a surprise birthday celebration for keynote speaker and aviation legend, retired Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager, who turned 85. Sergeant Drake sang Happy Birthday to General Yeager, which she later described as an unparalleled occasion. "It was the only time I've had to practice that song," she said. General Yeager is the iconic Air Force test pilot who, in 1947, became the first to travel faster than the speed of sound in level flight and ascent.
(photo/Senior Airman Erica Knight)





The official online publication of the **920th Rescue Wing**, Patrick AFB, Fla.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK