

PONY EXPRESS

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943rd Rescue Group, Davis-Monthan AFB Ariz.



Welcome Home

THE PONY EXPRESS

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Pony Express

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FY 2009 UTA Schedule

10-11 Jan 09
7-8 Feb 09
7-8 Mar 09
4-5 Apr 09
2-3 May 09
6-7 Jun 09
11-12 Jul 09
1-2 Aug 09
12-13 Sep 09

On The Cover:

Happy to be home, Tech. Sgt. Joseph Piccoli holds his baby son as his wife welcomes him home from his deployment to the Horn of Africa. Photo by: MSgt Ruby Zarzyczny, 943rd Rescue Group, Public Affairs



Mr. Michael B. Donley is the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C. He is the 22nd Secretary and was confirmed Oct. 2, 2008. He is responsible for the affairs of the Department of the Air Force, including the organizing, training, equipping and providing for the welfare of its more than 300,000 men and women on active duty, 180,000 members of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, 160,000 civilians, and their families. He also oversees the Air Force's annual budget of approximately \$110 billion.

Honoring our commitment to Wounded Warriors

*By Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force*

Developing and caring for our Airmen and their families is a top priority. And no task is more important than ensuring our Wounded Warriors receive the services and support that they need throughout the recovery process. For this reason we are proud to support Secretary Gates' designation of November as Warrior Care Month. Our effort will highlight ways to access the many Warrior Care programs available to service members and their families.

Airmen are integral to Wounded Care, providing world-class medical care for those injured in combat zones and constant care during critical transportation to facilities around the globe. During my recent visit to Southwest Asia, I witnessed the intensity firsthand when I saw Airmen save the life of a victim seriously injured by an Improvised Explosive Device. It was a hard-hitting reminder of the dangers you face and the superb care you provide every day.

While we strive for increased awareness during this campaign, let us also be mindful of the work left to do. We must continue to eliminate any remnants of the stigma once associated with psychological health issues, and institute preventive

measures to that end. There is no doubt that combat action leaves more than just the visible scars we often think of when discussing Warrior Care. It is our duty as Wingmen to understand the signs of combat-related stress and to do everything in our power to see our fellow Airmen and their families get the assistance they need. Programs like [Air Force Wounded Warrior](#) (AFW2) support our Airmen through personalized care.

As we turn our focus to the upcoming holiday season, I hope that you will keep our Wounded Warriors and their families in your thoughts. Air Force families are essential to our success and willingly accept many of the same sacrifices we make as individuals. The families of wounded, ill or injured service members give even more as they take the journey toward recovery with their loved one. It is our solemn duty to keep our commitments to these Airmen and their families by providing the best possible care and support.



(Center) Master Sgt. John Harris, 306th Rescue Squadron first sergeant waits with deployed Reservist's family members inside the 943rd Maintenance Squadron Hangar for their love ones to deplane after returning from a deployment to the Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Africa.

Photo by Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny

Welcome Home Guardian Angels

By Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny
943rd Rescue Group, Public Affairs

Approximately 20 families waited in the 943rd Maintenance Hangar Friday night (Jan 6) for their 306th Rescue Squadron reservists to return from their tour of duty supporting Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, Djibouti.

Also standing by were more than 30 Patriot Guard Riders. Aligning their motorcycles to form an honor cordon, they waved their U.S. American Flags to welcome home the reservists as they pasted by to greet their loved ones, who they had not seen for three months, with hugs and kisses.

The Reservists, (pararescuemen, combat rescue officers, vehicle maintenance technicians, survival, escape, resistance and evasion specialists, parachute riggers and supply technicians from the 306 RQS, one CRO and a PJ from the 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick Air Force Base, Fla. and a rigger from the 304th Rescue Squadron at Portland, IAP, Ore.,) deployed during the holidays to support CJTF-HoA by providing combat search and rescue support and search and rescue capabilities to the joint forces conducting humanitarian mission in Eastern Africa.

“The unit did an outstanding job improving both the mission and the facility while transitioning this mission from CENTCOM to AFRICOM,” said Maj. Jason Wetzel, 306th RQS commander. “A task most active duty units would be extremely challenged to accomplish due to their level of experience. Experience is something we have a lot of!”

“The team performed better than advertised, successfully executing the only CSAR mission in AFRICOM history,” added Major Wetzel. “We worked seamlessly with our joint CSAR task force which included the Air Force C-130s, 79th RQS, CH-53 (Super Stallion) helicopters with the Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464 (HMH-464), Marine Corps Air Station New River, NC and Army SAR Security teams.”

While the 306th was deployed, it's members were on alert for

CSAR missions. They also supported search and rescue and medical evacuation assistance for CJTF-HoA military members conducting the humanitarian missions building infrastructure and wells, providing medical assistance, TB eradication, and other much needed services to the developing countries surrounding Djibouti.

This deployment also allowed the PJs and CROs to do the necessary training required to maintain their combat search and rescue skills.

“We were able to conduct numerous parachute jumps, static line and free fall while we were there,” said Tech Sgt. John Lane, 306th RQS pararescuemen. “We also trained and jumped with French soldiers.”

“We did dive training in the Gulf of Aden which today is the world's most pirated waters, Tech Sgt. Lane said. “While we were there we trained with a Marine CH-53 Flying Squadron,” he continued. “We trained a company of Marines to fast rope.”

Some say that a primary mission of the CJTF-HoA is to win the hearts and minds of the local people in the developing nations and persuade them not to side with terrorists groups.

Tech Sgt. Lane shared a surreal experience he had while conducting training at a drop zone in the middle of nowhere in the African desert.

“There was a Children's Hospital with a Spanish flag, a Djiboutian Flag, and an European Union Flag more than a mile from any city,” said Tech. Sgt. Lane. “When I saw the flags it made me realize that we're not the only ones here trying to help. We are part of a global response to help Africa.”

In Africa the U.S. and other nations are using their military to provide humanitarian work to help and to spread good will to the people of Africa. It's a different way of preventing terrorist insurgency into the continent.

“I will never view Africa in the same way,” said Tech Sgt. Lane. “The news portrays Africa as a war torn continent. What I saw were good people. Even with the immense poverty they were always smiling, always helpful and very happy people.”



Capt. Andrew Buser, 306 RQS wades in the water near the HOA after successfully completing a static line jump during a RAMZ bundle drop training exercise.

Air Force Photos Courtesy of the 306 RQS

Welcome Home



SSgt Michael Zopfi is reunited with his family after returning from his three-month deployment to Djibouti, Africa.

Photo by Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny



While deployed to the HOA, Pararescuemen from the 306 RQS conduct a trans load tactical training scenario. This exercise was conducted under live fire from the MH-53 helicopter and in air refueling from a C-130 Hercules aircraft.



Photo by SSgt Richard Dunn

From Left to right: Maj. Jason Wetzel, Capt Andrew Buser, Chief Master Sgt. Landon Willhoite, and Tech. Sgt. John Lane take a group photo in front of an MH-53 helicopter after a training exercise in the African desert.



While deployed, SSgt Richard Dunn conducts a static line jump into the waters near the HOA during a RAMZ bundle drop training exercise.



A 71st SOS HH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopter hoists a reservist during a training mission in the Southern Arizona desert in the late 1980s.

A valley ruled by Giants

Looking back 20 years at unit history

By Master Sgt Ruby Zarzyczny
943rd Rescue Group Public Affairs

Twenty years ago at the 943rd Rescue Group reservists worked in the “Valley of the Giants.” On the flight line, six Jolly Green Giant helicopters call sign Pony resided on the flight line. There these giants, more than 18 feet tall, stretching 73 feet, and more than 15 feet wide awaited the call of the 71st Special Operations Squadron.

When called, these Ponies, two CH-E3s and four HH-E3 helicopters, weighed more than 22,000 (max) pounds, equipped with hoist (HH-3Es) and two 50 cal machines guns, used two General Electric T58-GE5 turbo shaft engines to soar to altitudes of up to 21,000 feet to traverse the terrain where angels feared to tread.

Most of these helicopters were Vietnam Veterans many flying with the 20th Helicopter Squadron and the 21 Special Operations

Squadron in Southeast Asia supporting Operation Pony Express before entering the Air Force Reserve fleet. Supporting this operation is how they got their call sign that is still used today with our HH-60 Pavehawk helicopters. Then, the units four HH-3Es helicopters would soon become Operation Desert Storm Veterans as well when the unit deployed to support Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in Southwest Asia in 1990 to 1991.

The most famous Pony of our Vietnam Vets was the “Black Maria” (pronounced muh-Rye-uh). Identified in official documents by its tail number 63-09676, she was built by Sikorsky Aircraft in 1963. She led a charmed life surviving 107 bullet hits and remaining ready for duty.

In 1989, the Tucson Citizen wrote an article about the “Black Maria” where Lt. Col. Lester E. “Ed” Smith, Air Force Reserve pilot from the 302nd Special Operations Squadron, Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. recalled flying the Black Maria with the 20th Helicopter Squadron in Southeast Asia from 1966 to 1967.

“I was one of the extremely fortunate ones,” Lt. Col. Smith said. “I got shot at, but I was never in an aircraft that actually took a round through it.”

“During one mission, I was sitting in another helicopter on the ground as backup while 676 was delivering troops to a battle zone. We were listening to the whole thing on the radio,” he said.

“Black Maria” took at least three hits on that mission. One of the rounds went through the structural mount of the ‘green house’ (referring to the plastic canopy that covers the pilots’ compartment.) It blew the “green house” out. Had the pilot been taller, he would have been hit.

“A second bullet severed an electric cable that parallels the shaft controlling the tail rotor, Lt. Col. Smith added. “It was within an inch or so of taking out the whole tail rotor system—and that would have put them in an uncontrollable situation. It was just one of those fluke situations.”

“Yes another round penetrated one of the main rotor blades,” he continued. “Punching a 2-inch hole through it, it missed the spar (a critical area of the blade) by three inches.”

“When that thing came back over, you could hear it coming from about 10 miles away. It sounded like a shotgun going off every time that blade went around—Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!” he laughed at the memory.

Lt. Col. Smith said, “The overall mission was pretty much like the current Special Operations mission—getting guys in to wherever—infiltration and getting them back out.”

Although she was charmed, the Black Maria could not have continued her duty without the help of skilled aircraft mechanics. Tech. Sgt. Henry Shaw, 943rd MXS, now Senior Master Sgt., and Tech. Sgt. Doug Lesho now retired Senior Master Sgt. working for NASA as an Occupational Safety and Health Specialist, after working Quality Assurance on the space shuttle Orbiter, were the last crew chiefs for the Black Maria before she was delivered to

the U.S. Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio in 1991.

Sergeant Lesho believed the Black Maria to be one of the most reliable CH-3E helicopters as her record shows.

“Being her crew chief was one of the greatest honors of my Air Force days, said SMSgt. Lesho. “Of the handful of helicopters I had the pleasure to crew, 676 was the most special to me. I was assigned as crew chief following then-TSgt. Henry Shaw. To be promoted, and assigned as crew chief to the Black Maria, was really a dream come true. I treated her like she was my own.”

“The CH-3E has a very special place in my heart, as does the 71st SOS and 305th RQS,” he added. “Basically, I feel like I grew up with the CH-3E and the unit. I know I always thought the grass would be greener somewhere else, and complained at times... but looking back I have a very fond nostalgic feelings.”

SMSgt. Lesho was with the unit for 10 years. He crewed the Black Maria, and the HH-3E 67-14724 that was transferred to the Tunisian Air Force along with three other unit HH-E3s helicopters from 1992 to 1995. When the unit transitioned to Rescue and the HH-60 Pavehawk in 1994, he briefly crewed 229 before being promoted to QA Chief. Also while assigned to the unit he participated in Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Provide Comfort, Northern Watch, Patriot Amigo, and Patriot Cabillito, as well as many TDYs to San Diego for water work.

For the unit, the saddest day with the Jolly Green Giants was March 12, 1989 when a Giant fell from a clear moonless sky

during a nighttime joint training mission. Fifteen souls were lost that Sunday night. Four aircrew from the 71st Special Operations to include the unit’s commander and 11 Special Forces soldiers from 5th Special Operations Group, Fort Bragg, N.C. perished when Pony 1-2, CH-3E 65-15692 helicopter went down in the an uninhabited desert 20 miles Northwest of Tucson.

To honor these men who “gave all” in the service of their country, CH-3E 65-12799 Jolly Green Giant helicopter was received from the U.S. Army, Fort Rucker, Ala. and sent to the unit in pieces by the truck loads and reassembled by reservists who volunteered their time to construct the Pony 1-2 memorial static display at the DM Heritage Park. The memorial is a replica of 692 and stands to memorialize these 15 brave men’s service and sacrifice for our nation’s defense.

The unit held a dedication service and has held memorial services every five years since then.

The group will assemble March 8, 2009 in front of this Jolly Green Giant static display to honor the crew and passengers of Pony 1-2, to instill our unit heritage and uphold our promise to never forget.

There are still unit members who were here 20 years ago. Mr. Dan Stutsman, Maj. Michael Williams Senior Master Sgt Henry Shaw, Senior Master Sgt. Mike Flake, Master Sgt. Chuck Ruth, Master Sgt. Tom Morris, Master Sgt. James “Smitty” Smith, Master Sgt. Lori Milner, Master Sgt. Luis Alvarez, Master Sgt. Dominic Esparza, Master Sgt. Ed Dawson and Tech. Sgt. Joy

Lee, just to name a few. They can tell you what it was like to walk through the “Valley of the Giants.”



March 1946, the Air Rescue service was established under the Air Transport Command (ATC) to provide rescue coverage for the continental United States. By 1949, ARS aircraft covered the world’s transport routes.

First AAF Helicopter Rescue, April 1944

Lt. Carter Harmon made the first AAF helicopter rescue, in Burma behind Japanese lines on April 25-26, 1944. First Air Commando sergeant pilot Ed “Murphy” Hladovcak had crash landed his (VULTEE L-1A VIGILANT) L-1 light plane with three wounded British soldiers on board.

Taxing his (SIKORSKY R-4B HOVERFLY) YR-4 helicopter (shown above) to its performance limits, Harmon made four flights to the site, making the final hasty liftoff just as shouting soldiers burst from the jungle. He learned later the soldiers were not Japanese, but an Allied land rescue party.



AIRMAN'S ROLL CALL

Joint Expeditionary Taskings

The Air Force provides vital capabilities to the Joint team in support of the Global War on Terror. Part of the missions and capabilities we deliver have until recently fallen into a broad category of tasks designated as “In-Lieu-Of” (ILO). The

Department of Defense enacted several changes to Joint terminology in October 2008, replacing most ILO designations with other terms that more accurately describe the nature of the tasks.

With the introduction of these new DoD terms, the Air Force is launching the term “Joint Expeditionary Tasking” (JET) to describe the critical nature of the work Airmen are performing within the Joint team. Currently, there are a little more than 4,000 Airmen supporting JET.

The following are some facts about JET:

- In nearly all cases Airmen are filling jobs very similar to their Air Force jobs, duties which are within their core competencies.

In 80 percent of the cases, Airmen are doing the same job they would be doing in the Air Force

- Nearly all force sourcing requirements being filled by our Airmen fall into Air Force core capabilities or competencies or involve us doing something for which no service has listed as a capability or competency.

- Examples of JET include security forces cops guarding detainees, enlisted transportation personnel driving convoy trucks across the desert and civil engineers rebuilding infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Airmen working JET are excited and motivated to perform their mission. Many of them are volunteers and many more wait impatiently for the opportunity to fill these critical roles. They are doing an incredible job and we should celebrate their accomplishments and recognize that working JET gives them invaluable joint war-fighting experience.



“By Name” Not “By Law” Protects your wishes

By Maj. Robert P. Erber
Deputy Staff Judge Advocate, 920 RQW/JA

The Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI) affords military personnel the ability to leave up to \$ 400,000 to their loved ones. However, by not taking the time to consider and name specific beneficiaries you risk that the SGLI proceeds may go to someone you never intended. When members use “by law” as a beneficiary designation, they forfeit a unique opportu-

nity to take care of the people or institutions they care about the most. Moreover, the “by law” designation also creates a significant risk of delay in payments, of payments made to unintended beneficiaries, and of protracted and costly court litigation.

Congress established the Servicemen’s Group Life Insurance Act, 38 U.S.C. § 1965 *et seq.*, to make group life insurance available to current and former members of the armed forces. Private insurance companies provide the insurance through a policy issued to the United States, and the policy names as insureds each participating service member. The federal government contributes a portion of the premium expense for the policy, shouldering the increased costs traceable to the additional risks associated with insuring military personnel.

When an insured service member dies, SGLI requires that the private insurer pay the proceeds “to the beneficiary or beneficiaries as the member or former member may have designated by a writing received prior to death.” If the insured fails to designate a beneficiary before his or her death, SGLI provides the order of precedence of beneficiaries as: (1) the insured’s spouse, (2) the insured’s children or descendants, (3) the insured’s parents, (4) the executor of the insured’s estate, or (5) the next of kin under the law of the state in which the insured was domiciled at the time of his death.

SGLI is a contract between the member and the insurance provider. It is not controlled by the terms of one’s will. The member holds an absolute right to name any person or entity he or she chooses as a beneficiary. The insurance provider pays the beneficiary named by the member. By failing to name a benefi-

“By Name” not “By Law” cont.

ciary or beneficiaries, a member gives up the ability to control the disposition of as much as a quarter of a million dollars. This sum of money affords an opportunity to make a real difference in the future of a person or entity the member cares about.

The 1965 federal statute creating SGLI did not envision the use of “by law” designation. While the law sets forth an order of precedence, a member’s understanding of the terms “child” and “parent” may not align with the statute or federal case law interpreting the statute. For example, federal courts limit the word “parents” to natural parents. It does not include a stepfather or stepmother, foster parents or persons who acted throughout the member’s life as a parent. With the increase in blended families in our society, this distinction may not be understood by a member who wants to include a stepparent, foster parent, or other person who cared for him or her as a parent among the SGLI beneficiaries.

More importantly, the member may not want a parent who abandoned him or her at a young age to share in the SGLI proceeds. An actual case of a member who died on active duty with “by law” as the beneficiary designation for SGLI illustrates this point. For his entire military career, the member had sent monthly allotments to the foster parents who raised him. Yet upon his death, his SGLI proceeds went not to the “parents” he intended but to the drug-addicted natural mother who had abandoned him as a child.

Similarly, under a “by law” designation, the SGLI proceeds of a military member who, at the time of death, was still married but estranged and separated from his or her spouse would likely be paid to that spouse regardless of the status of the relationship. In such cases, the member may not have wanted the money paid to the spouse. In some exceptional cases, courts have exercised great efforts to avoid payment to a surviving estranged spouse where

the facts and circumstances clearly demonstrated the relationship was broken. However, significant delay and expense still accrued as the estranged spouse sought to receive the SGLI proceeds as “widow” under the “by law” distribution scheme.

These examples illustrate just a few of the hazards and unintended results of “by law” designations. In each of the examples discussed, by simply naming the persons the member wishes to benefit from SGLI avoids the problem. A direction to pay “John G. Smith,” with the relationship indicated as “Foster Parent” will block any challenge from a natural father who abandoned the member as a child. Designating the beneficiaries as the children of the member’s marriage to a named spouse (e.g., “the children of my marriage to Jane C. Smith”) captures a child born of the marriage after the filing of the SGLI designation form and precludes a challenge from an illegitimate child alleging paternity. In short, the specifically named beneficiary will prevail over an unnamed claimant.

Finally, in addition to avoiding the “by law” designation, members should periodically review and update their beneficiary designations to ensure they continue to reflect their intentions. At a minimum, members should do so during in- or out-processing as part of a PCS move; as part of regular readiness checks while preparing to deploy and on return from a deployment; when significant event occurs in one’s life, such as a marriage, divorce, separation, birth or adoption of a child, or death of a named beneficiary; or when a member wants to change his or her beneficiary designation.

943d personnel who wish to update their SGLI beneficiary (via a SGLV Form 8286) should contact 228-2191. If you have a question regarding this article or wish to discuss any other legal issue, please send me an e-mail at Robert.Erbe@dm.af.mil. Legal assistance appointments are available during UTA weekends.



943rd Rescue Group Reservists share their time with hospitalized veterans Feb. 11, 2009 at the Southern Arizona Veterans Health Care Center. The Sikorski HH-60 Pavehawk helicopter was a common bond shared between Mr. Kim Gillett, U.S. Army Veteran, and the reservists. Mr. Gillett was an engineer who worked on the Sikorski, Piasecki, and other helicopters. He shared his experiences working to fix problems with the helicopters and the characters he met along the way in the early days of helicopter aviation.

Around the Group



Above: Capt. Aaron Milner, 943rd Maintenance Squadron Maintenance Officer, (center) leads the Airmen of the MXS in formation to a salute during the 943rd MXS Change of Command Ceremony, Oct 2.

Photos by Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny



Master Sgt. Dominic Esparza, 943 RQG Top Three President presents Staff Sgt. Patricia Salas, 943rd Mission Support Flight with a certificate of Induction into the noncommissioned officer corps during the unit commander's call Jan 11, 2009. The certificate reads: The United States having trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity, and abilities of Staff Sgt. Salas inducts this valued member as a noncommissioned officer. The 943rd Top Three organization wants to ensure all members promoted to the ranks of noncommissioned and senior noncommissioned officers are properly inducted.



Major Michael Williams (right) assumed command of the 943rd Maintenance Squadron when he received the guidon from Col. Robert Dunn, 943rd Rescue Group Commander (left) during a change of command ceremony at the Officers Club Oct 2.



Mrs. Renee Williams, wife of Maj. Michael Williams, 943rd MXS commander, is the Key Family Member for the Squadron. She will work with Family Readiness to provide support to the deployed Airmen and their families.

943rd Reservists Salute hospitalized Veterans

Below: Twelve Reservists from the 943rd Rescue Group visited with hospitalized veterans Feb 11, 2009 at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, Tucson, Ariz. to celebrate the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. These Reservists and family members gave the hospitalized veterans valentines, made by local school children, and homemade blankets, made by VA volunteers. During their visit they shared "war stories" from the past and present" giving the precious gift of time to the vets. The National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans is a celebration conducted around Valentines Day every year to pay tribute and express appreciation to hospitalized veterans. This event is also intended to increase community awareness of the role of the medical center and encourage individuals to visit hospitalized veterans and become involved as volunteers. From top row, left: Master Sgt. Dominic Esparza, Tech. Sgt. Brad Hovey, Tech. Sgt. Lacy Gearheart, Staff Sgt. Tim Parrish and Tech. Sgt. Beth Barwinski. Front row, left: Miss Kayleen Hovey, Ms. Tortillas Bailey, Staff Sgt. Calista Heath-Martinez, Cadet Master Sgt. Estevan Luera Desert View High School Jr. ROTC, and Tech. Sgt. Augustin Luera.

"I believe taking time out for our fellow veterans who are sick is very worthwhile. It's a blessing to be able to listen to them as they share their stories," Tech. Sgt. Beth Barwinski, 943rd RQG.

"During the visit, I felt like we were being honored for volunteering, but the real honor was being in the presence of the older vets and hearing the stories from their past. These are stories you will not find in any book, stories that unfortunately will soon be lost, so for us to get the chance to hear them and thank them for their service was a very memorable experience," Staff Sgt. Calista Heath-Martinez, 306th RQS.

Below: 943rd Tech. Sgt. Beth Barwinski and Tech Sgt. Augustin Luera and his son Estevan pose for a photo with Mr. Moises Gnavarrette, U.S. Air Force veteran, after talking to him about his days spent in the Air Force.



Tech. Sgt. Lacy Gearheart, Mr. Kim Gillett, U.S. Army Veteran, Staff Sgt. Calista Heath-Martinez and Master Sgt. Dominic Esparza pose for a photo after visiting with Mr. Gillett in his hospital room.

Staff Sgt. Tim Parrish, 943rd MXS shakes hands with Mr. Roy Ivans, U.S. Navy veteran, after thanking him for his service during the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Celebration at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care Center.

News Briefs

Pony 12 Memorial Service, March 8

Sunday at 3:30 p.m. the 943rd Rescue Group will have a memorial service for Pony 12 at the D-M Heritage Park in front of the CH-3E Jolly Green Giant Helicopter static display dedicated to the 15 Airmen and Soldiers who lost their lives March 12, 1989 in the desert near Tucson, Ariz. Units will form up with their guidons, so please be in place by 3:15 p.m.

This memorial service is to honor the men who "gave all" in the service to our country, to instill our heritage and to honor our promise "we will never forget."

Volunteers wanted at VA hospital

The Southern AZ VA Health Care System is currently looking for volunteers for patient escorts (in-hospital), clerical, appointment reminder assistants, respite program (in-home), patient recreation assistant, Tram (golf cart), DAV Van's an recreation Trip drivers, entertainers, and group visitors. Volunteer orientation classes are scheduled monthly. For more information contact the PA office or the VA volunteer services at (520) 629-1822.

Fitness Test, Saturday and Sunday

Mr. Bracamonte will be conducting fitness tests March 7 and 8 at 7 a.m. at the base track. Reservists must be in military status to participate.

Softball Players wanted

The DM April/May intermural softball seasons is starting. The group is looking for players to form a team. If you're interested in playing or supporting the team, please call TSgt Josh Reed at 228-2238.

Breakfast Burritos, March 7

The 2009 Military Ball planning committee will be having a coffee and breakfast burrito fundraiser in the MXS breakroom Sat. March 7 from 6:30 a.m. to 8 a.m. Donations are being accepted. Recommended donation is \$3.

2009 ACC Heritage Flight Trn. Conf.

March 6-8, see the heritage flight training from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Observation Areas at Base Operations. Flightline tours from 8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. The 355 OSS will have a burger burn and souvenir booth. Heritage: P-51, P-40, A-1, F-86 Demo: F-15 C, F-15E, F-16, F-22 and the A-10.

For on-base emergencies

The direct line to get emergency assistance via a cell phone is **228-3333**. From a government telephone 911 will get you there.

When someone calls 911 from a cell phone during an emergency, the call goes downtown first and then gets routed to DM Fire. This can take up to 90 seconds. This time could be the difference between life and death.

The DM fire department asks that you program **228-3333** into their cell phone should it ever be required.

If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Fire Chief Ray LeClair at 228-4757.

Air Force Discrimination Hotline

Phone numbers are 1-888-231-4058; commercial 210-565-5214 and DSN 665-5214. The Discrimination Hotline allows personnel to immediately report complaints regarding discrimination, to include sexual harassment. A stand-alone number for EO complaints will ensure concerns are quickly identified and resolved.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Q&A

<http://www.esgr.org/>

Q: What is ESGR?

A: Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense organization. It is a staff group within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, which is in itself a part of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Q: What Can ESGR do for you?

A: ESGR also provides advice about your rights and responsibilities, when it comes to Guard and Reserve service and your civilian employment. If you are having a problem with your employer, talk to your chain of command. If you are still unable to resolve the problem, contact your ESGR representative for help.

Q: Is an employer required to pay an employee who is on military leave of absence?

A: No. While many employers offer differential pay or a specific number of paid military leave days, an employer is not required to pay an employee on military leave of absence.

Q: How does military service affect employee status or seniority in the workplace?

A: An employee must be considered not to have been absent from the workplace if the only reason for that absence was service in a uniformed service. A returning employee must be

made "whole" by: - being allowed to contribute to the pension plan any amount that would have been contributed had the employee not been absent - being reinstated with privileges and status the employee earned by length of service (for example, after 3 years with a company an employee may be entitled to accrue more vacation per year, or after 5 years an employee is automatically advanced to a management position.)

Q: Can an employer refuse to allow an employee to attend scheduled drills or annual training?

No. Employees must be excused from work to attend inactive duty training (drill) or annual training and the employer must reemploy the employee as if he or she has not been absent.

Q: Is there a limit to the amount of active duty an employee can perform and still have reemployment rights?

Yes, there is a 5-year cumulative total of military service an employer is required to support. Not included in that total are: inactive duty training (drills); annual training; involuntary recall to or retention on active duty; voluntary or involuntary active duty in support of a war, national emergency, or certain operational missions; or additional training requirements determined and certified in writing by the Service Secretary, and considered to be necessary for professional development or for completion of skill training or retraining.

For more ESGR questions and answers and to learn how to recognize your employer for supporting your reserve duty visit <http://www.esgr.org>.



Photo by Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny

Master Sgt. Tim Monzingo, 305th RQS 1st Sgt., Master Sgt. John Stonehouse, 943rd MXS 1st Sgt., Command Chief Master Sgt. Gerald Delebreaux, 920th RQW, Chief Master Sgt. Evelyn Wahl, 943rd AMDF and Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Ginther, 943rd OSF conducted a first sergeant's board Nov 1, 2008 to recommend selects for the 306th RQS and the 943rd OSF 1st Sergeant.

943rd RQG First Sergeant Selection

By Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczny
943rd Rescue Group Public Affairs

The 943rd Rescue Group held its first, first sergeants board during the November 2008 UTA to recommend Airmen for the position of first sergeant for the 306th Rescue Squadron and the 943rd Operations Support Flight.

Dressed in Class A Blues, polished and shined the candidates opened the 943rd Maintenance Squadron's conference room doors to face a panel of first sergeants, senior noncommissioned officers, and the 920th Rescue Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. They were asked a series of questions by the panel and their answers were evaluated and then scored.

The interview questions were developed to evaluate the candidate's sincerity, first sergeant job knowledge, and opinions on current issues.

"One of the questions was a lengthy scenario question," said Master Sgt. John Stonehouse, 943rd MXS first sergeant. "It was meant to test the candidates listening skills. As a first sergeant it is very important to have good listening skills to be able to understand and overcome the issues facing the unit."

The candidates were also judged on demeanor, presentation,

communications skills, and confidence. After lengthy deliberation two candidates were selected.

"We held the board to make sure we selected the right people for the job," said Master Sgt. Stonehouse. "Our candidates had diverse backgrounds and they were all outstanding. We spent a lot of time reviewing the packages and interviews. We selected the best two candidates for the job."

It's very important to have the right people in the first sergeants positions because they work for the commanders and they are the voice of the enlisted force.

Master Sgt. John Harris was selected for the 306th RQS first sergeant position and Master Sgt. Nancee Tyler was selected for the 943rd OSF first sergeant position.

Congratulations are in order as they both recently graduated for the U.S. Air Force First Sergeants Academy and will be here to serve their commanders and their unit members during the March UTA.

