

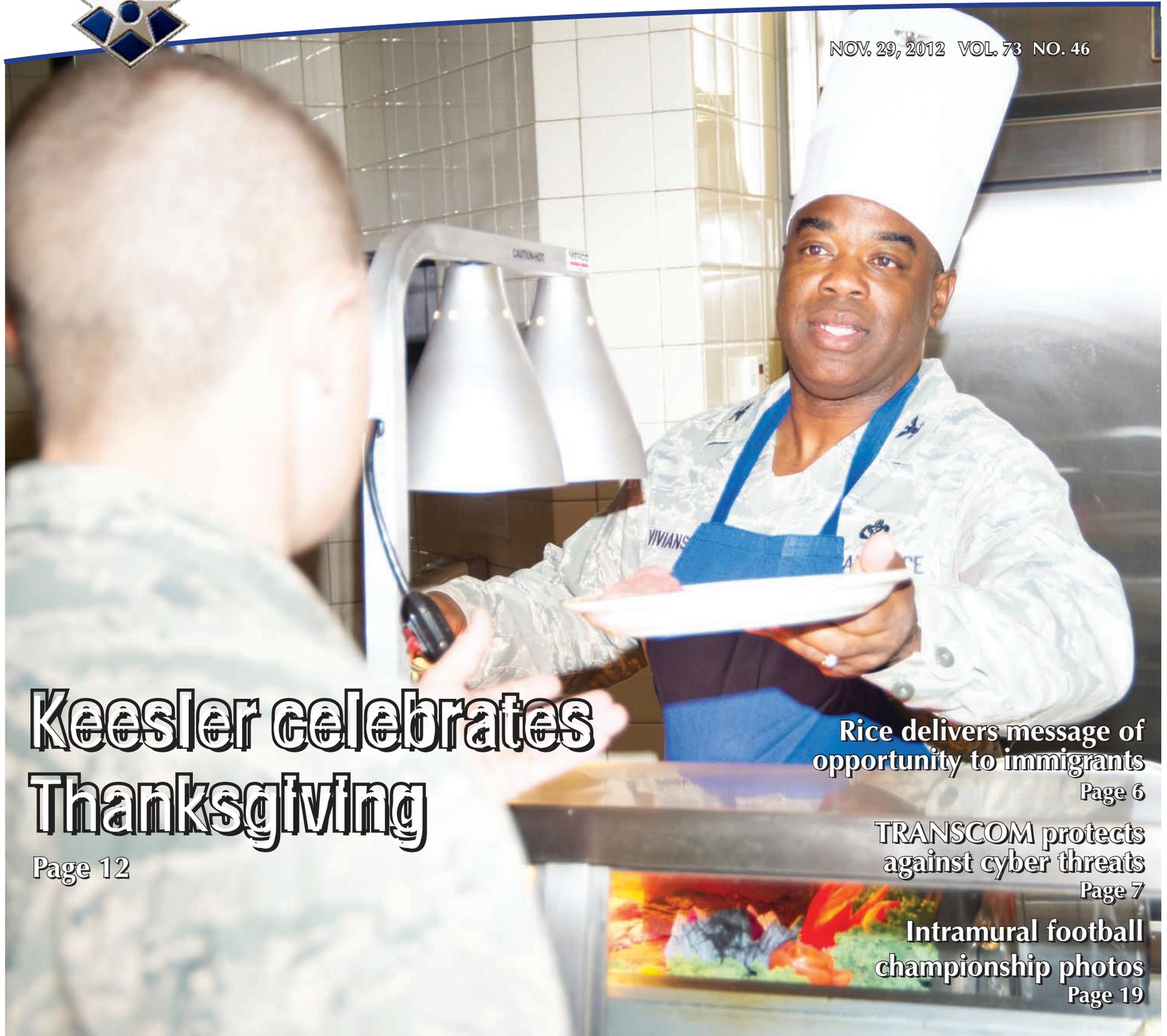


KEESLER NEWS

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI

Train. Fight. Win.

NOV. 29, 2012 VOL. 73 NO. 46



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KEESLER NEWS

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ON THE COVER

Col. Mark Vivians, 81st Mission Support Group commander, serves roast beef to Airmen at the Azalea Dining Facility during lunch on Thanksgiving Day. It's a tradition at Keesler for commanders, first sergeants and superintendents to dedicate their time during the holiday to serve a Thanksgiving meal to their Airmen.

Photo by Adam Bond



PHOTO OF THE WEEK



“You’ll shoot your eye out”

AJ Wright, son of Lisa and Lt. Col. Jonathan Wright, 81st Mission Support Group deputy commander, is set to perform as Ralphie in the Biloxi Little Theatre’s production of “A Christmas Story” Nov. 29 through Dec. 2 and Dec. 6-8.

Courtesy photo



THE WORLD'S BEST AIRMEN — TRAINING, FIGHTING WINNING

Be a wingman, not a wall — report violations

By Lt. Col. Brad McAlpine

335th Training Squadron commander

Being the commander of a technical training squadron for the last 18 months has truly been a whirlwind. I have seen so many of the good things our Airmen do on a daily basis and seen that the wingman concept is critical to what we do each and every day! Unfortunately, many of our youngest Airmen have misinterpreted the wingman concept. Being a wingman is about taking care of each other, watching out for the warning signs of stress and taking the appropriate action to ensure fellow Airmen get the help they need. It is not meant to

create a wall of protection for those who decide to commit crimes such as sexual assault, underage drinking or breaking regulations.

The wingman concept is out there to help us take care of each other and ensure each of us is able to fulfill the mission of the United States Air Force on a daily basis. At times, this means encouraging an Airman to talk with a Chaplain, members of the sexual assault prevention and response office or mental health personnel. Other times, it is just sitting down and talking with that Airman, getting to know them as a person, understanding where their stressors are and offering a helping

hand. Each Airman is unique and first-line supervisors, commanders and senior leaders need to take the time to get to know their people.

The wingman concept is not about shielding those in your unit, your circle of friends or your roommate in the dorms when they violate laws, rules or regulations. When an Airman commits a crime or breaks a rule or regulation, his or her transgression needs to be reported. Failing to report such breaches may seem like you are being a good wingman to the Airman, but you are failing to protect those wingmen who rely on you the most, those who follow the rules and laws

each and every day. Those who put up the wingman wall are doing a disservice to each of us and each of us needs to understand that you are not being a “snitch” or a “rat,” you are being a wingman to the rest of us.

I ask that each of you stand up to the pressure of not reporting violations in cases, ranging from the most benign to the most serious. Only by each of us doing our part, can we truly be great wingmen, remove crimes against each other, like sexual assault, and make our Air Force the truly great organization that we can be! Go out and be a good wingman and do not fall into the trap of being a wall.

Airman recounts ‘night to remember’

By Tech. Sgt. Crystal Lee

Air Force Network - Incirlik

INCIRLIK AIR BASE, Turkey — Some things occur in life that you never forget. Things that leave a scar and others that never even heal. There are lessons to be learned from those experiences, and I learned a big lesson on drinking responsibly at the tender age of eleven.

So I volunteered to share a part of my life normally reserved for those close to me. I decided to share a time that will never leave me in hopes that others don't have to experience the pain it brought. If you know me, you know that I keep family matters private. This account, however, may help sway someone's decision and prevent an alcohol related incident.

It was Friday, date night for my parents.

I was 11 and my little sister, Jen, was 9. We were at the age many parents start let their kids stay home alone. Mom and dad were invited to a party in Bowie, Md., which was about an hour away.

AWESOME! Jen and I had the whole house to ourselves. We proceeded to, you know, do typical kid activities. At around 2 a.m., we heard knocking at the door. I didn't grow up in the best neighborhood, so there was no way I was opening that door. The knocking persisted and we were terrified. Jen and I actually hid under the bed because we thought someone was trying to break into the house.

The next morning we woke up under the bed. We got up and knocked on mom and dad's room door. No answer. I opened the door; they hadn't come home.

I picked up the phone to call my grandpa and found that it had been off the hook since last night. That's when he told me mom and dad were hit by a drunk driver. He said it happened last night around 1 a.m. and he had tried to call us. Grandpa was the one knocking on the windows and doors.

Once we got to our grandparents house, we were told the details of the accident. My father was driving home on Oxon Hill Rd. when a drunk driver swerved into their lane and sideswiped them. Dad hit a telephone pole head on. Mom wasn't wearing her safety belt and her face went through the windshield. Dad had this crazy adrenaline rush and pulled my mom out of the car. We found out later that his back was broken. He was out of commission for about six-to-seven months.

After gramps gave us the news, Jen started to freak out and I started crying. I'm not sure if I was crying due to sadness or because I was angry as hell, probably both.

Sunday evening at around 5 p.m. our parents came home. They were lucky to survive. They recounted the events from that night. I asked dad if the drunk driver got hurt. Dad said, “No. The guy thought the whole situation was funny.”

Our lives drastically changed. No more family outings to the park, no more fun things and nothing normal for kids our ages. Instead, the next several months consisted of Jen and I taking care of our parents.

What upsets me the most is that this didn't need to happen; responsible decisions could have prevented the

entire event.

When someone abuses alcohol it affects more than just them. It has a ripple effect to everyone who cares about that person, those they hurt, and the people who are left behind to pick up the pieces. Take ownership and responsibility for your actions and what you put in your body. There are other things you can do besides drink excessively.

Find that niche that makes you happy — go to school, play video games, travel, etc. If you do drink, know your limit. Know when to say “when.” Ask yourself, “How are my actions going to impact other people?”

My life was affected by an irresponsibly selfish guy who couldn't make the right decision concerning alcohol and almost killed my parents. Don't be that person.

For more news, photos, videos and information, log on to www.keesler.af.mil or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/keeslerafb

Rice brings message of opportunity to immigrants

By Tech. Sgt. Betch Anschutz

AETC Public Affairs

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr., commander of Air Education and Training Command, spoke to immigrants from 87 countries Nov. 20 at a U.S. naturalization and citizenship ceremony at Trinity University's Laurie Auditorium here.

As the guest of honor, General Rice addressed the 885 new citizens to welcome and encourage them to get the most out of the opportunity citizenship can bring.

"I share in your joy," he said. "This is indeed a special day, not only for you, but for all of us who call ourselves Americans."

Although his first citizenship event, the general said he has been to many other events that mark a transition in one's life, as with Airmen in Basic Military Training.

"We make only one promise to the people we bring into the Armed Forces, but it is one of the greatest promises we can ever make to them," the general said. "We promise them opportunity."

Rice urged the new citizens of all cultures, ethnicities and genders to strive to reach their full potential in America. After sharing his personal reflections of the successes of his family after generations of hard work, he encouraged all of the new citizens to do the same.

"Is this the land of opportunity? You bet it is," he said. "And my family, like millions of others, is living proof of this."

In conclusion, the general spoke of his hopes for all of those in attendance.

"Just as citizenship provides benefits, it also incurs responsibilities," General Rice said. "One of those responsibilities is to use the opportunities we are given, not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of our communities and our country."

"For new citizens, this country has given you an opportunity that will open up other opportunities for you and your family. I encourage you to repay this considerable gift by helping to keep this country strong in whatever way you can," he concluded.



Photo by Dianne Moffett

Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr., commander of Air Education and Training Command, speaks to immigrants from 87 countries Nov. 20 at a U.S. naturalization and citizenship ceremony at Trinity University's Laurie Auditorium in San Antonio, Texas. As the guest of honor, General Rice addressed the 885 new citizens to welcome and encourage them to get the most out of the opportunity citizenship can bring.



'Smokeout' inspires children's artwork

Nicole Barattini, daughter of Jessica and Master Sgt. Anthony Barattini, 338th Training Squadron, holds her banner with Kellie Lamb, the health promotions coordinator for the Mississippi Tobacco Free Coalition for Jackson County, and Alison Block, Magnolia Elementary Principal. Nicole is in second grade at Magnolia Park Elementary in Ocean Springs, and was announced as the winner of the Great American Smokeout poster contest Nov. 14. Her poster will be made into a banner and hung in the school.

Photo by Jessica Barattini

TRANSCOM protects against cyber threats

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. — The new Joint Cyber Center here at U.S. Transportation Command is helping protect against persistent cyber-attacks while ensuring secure, uninterrupted access to the networks that underpin the command's global mission.

TRANSCOM gets more cyber-attacks than nearly every other U.S. combatant command, and experienced 44,551 "computer network events" during 2011 alone, and intrusion attempts are increasing, Gen. William M. Fraser III, TRANSCOM's commander, told Congress earlier this year.

Those breaches, if not detected and defeated, could bring the military's global transportation and distribution enterprises to their knees.

Unlike most combatant commands that interface primarily with other secure military and government networks, TRANSCOM relies heavily on commercial partners that deliver 70 percent of its supplies and passengers around the world, Fraser told legislators.

Ninety percent of the command's distribution and deployment transactions are conducted in cyberspace, he said, much of it using unclassified and commercial systems lacking the safeguards provided on dot-mil and dot-gov networks.

"We are very cognizant of the fact that U.S. TRANSCOM movements represent an Achilles' heel for U.S. power projection en route," said Lt. Col. Robert Hume, the Joint Cyber Center's intelligence branch chief. "If that is where you want to disrupt what the U.S. military does, that is where you go."

Recognizing this vulnerability, Fraser identified unfettered access to secure information networks as one of four



major focus areas in the command's recently released five-year plan.

"Every day, U.S. TRANSCOM operates in a cyber domain that is increasingly at risk," he noted in the plan. "Cyber defense is a command imperative. We must be much more proactive in protecting our information technology infrastructure and the credibility of the information we exchange with our allies and national partners."

The new Joint Cyber Center, established last spring, is taking the lead in this endeavor.

As part of the Defense Department's new cyber security strategy, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta last May directed every combatant command to stand up such a center, said Col. David Johnson, chief of TRANSCOM's Joint Cyber Center.

"Secure cyber networks are vital to every combatant command, whether it is a geographic combatant command fighting the war or a functional combatant command moving materials around the world," Johnson said. "Information is

how you provide the direction to your sub-units."

Panetta gave the combatant commands free rein to organize their centers based on their own requirements, spelling out 65 specific tasks to accomplish. He designated a transitional evaluation period to determine which structure proved most effective.

TRANSCOM already had a running start when Panetta's mandate came down. About 10 years ago, far-sighted leaders at the command established an informal joint cyber center to protect their networks. That framework brought together the command's plans and operations, communications and intelligence capabilities to confront the cyber challenge.

"So when we stood up our (Joint Cyber Center,) all we really did was take the three entities that already existed and were working together and put them into the same office," Johnson said. "The relationships were already there."

The new JCC operates as a 24/7 command-and-control center, focusing on three basic functions, he said. Work-

ing with other elements of TRANSCOM's Command, Control, Communications and Cyber Systems directorate, its members help secure the command's information networks and help its partners secure theirs. The JCC also directs defensive operations to protect these networks and offensive operations to stop cyber-attacks in progress.

Johnson emphasized that unlike other combatant commands that could use offensive cyberspace operations to create a battlefield effect, TRANSCOM concentrates primarily on defensive operations. Offensive cyberspace operations, if required, would be conducted by U.S. Cyber Command, and only to defend against an attack, he said.

"We are aware what is available to us, and have the capability to use it," Johnson said. "But we don't see ourselves using it the same way that geographic combatant commands do. We look at the capabilities on the offensive side primarily to beef up our defense."

Johnson called TRANSCOM's decision to maintain an embedded intelligence cell within the JCC one of its strengths.

"It gives us incredible insight into enemy capabilities and intent," he said.

Intelligence experts are "quite literally analyzing, in near-real time, the activity on our networks, and they are able to see enemy activity and react to it," Johnson said. "We understand the adversary, and we understand what he is doing faster than most of the networks in the Department of Defense."

The command's efforts recently garnered TRANSCOM the National Security Agency's Frank Byron Rowlett Award for excellence in information systems security. TRANSCOM has been a finalist in the competition for the last three years and won

first place in 2003.

But despite a strong track record, Hume recognized that "your networks and your data are only as strong as your weakest link."

To reinforce those weakest links, TRANSCOM established a 'chiefs of information' forum to help contractors improve their information assurance practices. The command's acquisition directorate stood up a commercial executive advisory board to educate commercial vendors about the cyber threat, and changed language in TRANSCOM contracts to hold contractors to specific standards in protecting their data systems.

TRANSCOM also is considering creating a secure network for non-DOD contractors to use for communications concerning command missions.

Contractors, recognizing their own vulnerability, are anxious to strengthen their cyber defenses, Hume said.

"This is a two-way street in that adversaries attempting to leverage access to (contractors') networks, to gain access to U.S. government data also enables them to gain access to their own corporate data and theoretically, undermine their business models," he said.

Johnson emphasized the fine line between espionage and a cyber-attack.

"If I break into your system and see what you are doing, it is only one more keystroke to disrupt what you are doing, because I am already into your network," he said. "People don't understand that once they are in there spying, it is exceptionally easy to change what they are doing and attack. It is just a matter of intent."

"And that is something we are cognizant of every day here at TRANSCOM," Johnson continued. "It's a recognition that guides everything the JCC does."

Keesler leadership serves lunch to Airmen on Thanksgiving Day

Chaplain (Capt.) John Schuetze leads a blessing for the Thanksgiving meal at the Azelea Dining Facility at Keesler, Nov. 22. It's a tradition at Keesler for commanders, first sergeants and superintendents to dedicate their time during the holiday to serve a Thanksgiving meal to their Airmen.



Lt. Col. Johnathan Wright, 81st Mission Support Group deputy commander, serves food to Airman Basic Kevin McKinnon, 335 Training Squadron.

Airman loses 100 pounds to join Air Force

By Steve Pivnick

81st Medical Group Public Affairs

After Airman 1st Class Mitchell Imlah graduated high school he woke up one morning and wondered, "What am I going to do with myself?" It was then he decided he wanted to enlist in the military. There was one drawback though; he carried 300 pounds on his 6-foot frame.

When he visited a recruiter, he discovered that his weight would be a major impediment.

The recruiters "laughed me out of the office when they saw I was 300 pounds," Imlah said.

Undeterred, Imlah, from Bevent, Wisc., took the initiative to shed about 50 pounds before stopping by the Air Force recruiter in nearby Rhinelander.

"Although I still needed to lose more weight to reach the 197-pound maximum, the recruiter was confident enough I'd meet my goal that he placed me in the Delayed Entry Program. I stopped by often to

show him I was losing weight."

Once he reached the 197-pound mark, Imlah reported to the Milwaukee Military Entrance Processing Station on Feb. 2, 2012, and on March 20 was at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, to begin basic military training. After his May 7 graduation, the new, streamlined Airman attended phase I medical technician technical training at the Fort Sam Houston Medical Education and Training Campus in San Antonio, graduating Sept. 5. Remaining in San Antonio, he completed his phase II training Oct. 22.

After taking leave at home, Imlah arrived at Keesler Nov. 2 to begin his new role as a member of the 81st Medical Operations Squadron.

Imlah said he lost the weight without following a formal program. "I changed my diet, ran and worked out. That was the only way for me to lose it." As a reminder of his remarkable achievement, he carries a tattered photo of



Photo by Steve Pivnick

Airman 1st Class Mitchell Imlah prepares a treatment room for a patient. Imlah recently arrived at Keesler, his first duty station, after losing more than 100 pounds to join the Air Force.

himself tipping the scales at 300 pounds.

He noted he now weighs 205 pounds. "I gained some weight due to increased mus-

cle. I continue to work out a lot and plan to stay at my current weight."

Raised by his mother and grandparents, Imlah, now 19,

said, "My mom and grandparents are really proud of me for losing all that weight and for being a member of the Air Force."

Keesler to participate in Mississippi Bowl

By Susan Griggs

Keesler Public Affairs

Keesler will share the spotlight with two community college football teams at the 2012 Mississippi Bowl, 2 p.m. Sunday at Biloxi High School's Indian Stadium.

Military members and their families are admitted free to the fifth annual event that pits the Copiah-Lincoln Community College Wolves, Mississippi's community college champion, against Garden City Community College Broncbusters from Kansas. Service members must be in uniform or present a valid military identification card.

Highlighting the game's military appreciation theme,

Brig. Gen. Brad Spacy, 81st Training Wing commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Angie Johnson, 81st TRW command chief, will lead Keesler's contingent, which includes base leaders, the 81st Training Group's 50-state flag team and American flag teams, technical training students, active-duty and civilian members, retirees, wounded warriors and spouses of deployed members.

The halftime show includes a drill competition featuring four teams from Keesler training squadrons, with the winner claiming a Mississippi Bowl trophy.

For more information, go to <http://www.mississippi-bowl.com>.

Squadron Holiday Card Contest

Squadrons, show your holiday spirit! Enter the Holiday Card Contest!

Judging Criteria: • **Most Charismatic**
Exhibiting appeal, charm, alluring and attractive

• **Innovative**
New idea, creativity or inventive

• **Classic**
Serving as a standard of excellence, traditional and enduring

Prizes: One prize will be awarded for each category. Winning squadrons receive a free, one-day indoor pavilion rental at the Marina Park including grills, tables and chairs for a unit party.

Rules: Must comply with contest rules:

- Minimum of 4x8-foot plywood
- Free-standing (no digging of holes)
- Paint backside and include Squadron name and POC
- Display cards on Larcher Blvd., in the field between Shaw House and the Exchange
- Cards must be in place by noon, Dec. 7
- Register with Outdoor Recreation, 377-3160

Judging will be held NLT Dec. 14. Winners will be announced by email.
Squadrons are responsible for upkeep of cards throughout the display period and must remove them by Jan. 6.

KEESLER NOTES

2012 supply classes

Quarterly supply classes are held in the CSC Supply Conference Room, Room 121B, Taylor Logistics Building.

Block I - supply indoctrination is 9-10 a.m. Dec. 20. All newly-assigned supply custodians and resource managers are required to attend. For more information or to sign-up for any block-training class, call 228-377-5998.

Precious metals recovery program is 10-11 a.m. Dec. 20. All newly-assigned PMRP monitors are required to attend and refresher training is required annually. For more information or to sign-up, call 228-377-5998.

Block III equipment custodian refresher training is 1-2 p.m. Dec. 20. Supply equipment custodians are required to have block III custodian training annually. For more

information about the block III training or to sign-up, call 228-377-2270/7800.

Block IIA- bench stock training is 2-3 p.m., Dec. 20. For more information or to sign-up, call 228-377-4180.

Block IIB - repair cycle training is 10-11 a.m., Dec. 21. For more information or to sign-up, call 228-377-4491.

Handel's Messiah

The 2012 fall performances of Handel's Oratorio, Messiah, take place 7 p.m. today at the Keesler Triangle Chapel, 7 p.m. Saturday at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park Campus Fleming Auditorium and 3 p.m. Sunday at the Saint Joseph Catholic Church. Admission is free for all three performances.

Central selection board

The CY113A Col (LAF-J),

and Lt. Col. (LAF/LAF-J) central selection board will convene March 18 at Air Force Personnel Command headquarters.

To be eligible for the P0613A (LAF-J) and P0513A (LAF/LAF-J) CSBs the officer must have an extended active duty date of Sept. 19 or earlier with a date of separation of June 16, 2013 or later. Also, officers on active duty under the Voluntary Recall Program or any other Reserve Recall Program must have at least one year on active duty as of the board convening date, starting from their new EAD date.

For more information call 228-376-8356.

AAHC Fish fry

The African-American Heritage Committee is holding a fish fry 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. today at Marina Park.

CCAF graduation

The Community College of the Air Force Fall 2012 commencement ceremony is sched-

uled for 3:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Bay Breeze Event Center. The commencement speaker is Col. Mark Vivians, 81st Mission Support Group commander. Scholarship awards will be presented by the Air Force Association, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, University of Southern Mississippi, William Carey University and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. A reception will follow the ceremony. For more information call 228-376-8708.

NCOA scholarships

The Mathies NCO Academy's class 13-1 is offering two, \$250 scholarships to Keesler spouses or dependents who plan on attending an accredited junior college, trade school or four-year university in the 2012-2013 academic year. The purpose of the scholarship is to give a Keesler dependent recognition for their civic and academic achievement. Applications are due Dec. 6 and winners will be notified Dec. 10. Applicants are required to answer questions about their college goals, interests and extracurricular activities as well as complete a one-page essay. For more information call 228-377-3944.

STOMP training

Specialized Training of Military Parents is coming to Keesler Monday and Tuesday. This training is geared for parents with special needs children and will take place at the BBEC from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days. Call 228-376-8728 to register.

Tuition assistance

Active-duty members requesting tuition assistance may do so no earlier than 30 days prior to their class start date.

81st MDG holiday services minimal

The 81st Medical Group will have minimal services Dec. 13, 24, 25, 31 and Jan. 1. The emergency room, however, is always available.

Keesler Airman's Attic

The Keesler Airman's Attic provides free donated items to enlisted members of any branch, E-5 and below. The facility is located at the corner of Meadows Drive and First Street and is open Mondays, Wednesdays and every non-training Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The last Saturday of the month is an "all ranks" day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information call 228-377-3814.

Keesler Events Calendar

Today

8 a.m. — Veterans' benefit briefing at the Sablich Center Room 108A.

1 p.m. — Retirement benefits briefing at the Sablich Center Room 108A.

— Airman and family readiness center post-deployment briefing at the Sablich Center Room 108.

5 p.m. — Mongolian barbecue at the Bay Breeze Event Center.

Friday

6 p.m. — Ladies night at the arts and crafts center.

6:30 p.m. — Friday night fun at the youth center for ages five to 12.

Saturday

9 a.m. — Beginners woodworking class at the arts and crafts center.

11 a.m. — Pizza and pins at Gaudé Lanes bowling center.

3 p.m. — Christmas on

the Water in Biloxi. watch the Keesler Dolphin in the parade of boats or ride along for \$50 with outdoor recreation.

4 p.m. — Parents' night out at the youth center for ages six through 12.

Monday

3:30 p.m. — 81st Training Wing enlisted promotion ceremony at the Bay Breeze Event Center.

Tuesday

9 a.m. — Pre-separation counseling at the Sablich Center Room 110.

— Airman and family readiness center post deployment briefing at the Sablich Center Room 108.

1 p.m. — Retirees pre-separation counseling at the Sablich Center Room 110.

Dec. 5

8 a.m. — Heartlink seminar for spouses new to military life at the Sablich Center

Room 108.

1 p.m. — Retirement benefits briefing at the Sablich Center Room 108A.

— Airman and family readiness center post-deployment briefing at the Sablich Center Room 108.

4:30 p.m. — Holiday in the park at the marina.

Dec. 11

9 a.m. — Pre-separation counseling at the Sablich Center Room 110.

— Airman and family readiness center post deployment briefing at the Sablich Center Room 108.

1 p.m. — Retirees pre-separation counseling at the Sablich Center Room 110.

Dec. 12

8 a.m. — Newcomers orientation at the Sablich Center Room 108B.

Kick off the holiday season with some free, family fun.

Holiday in the Park

4:30 p.m. Dec. 6 in the Marina Park

- * Visit from Santa Claus*
- * Tree Lighting*
- * Holiday Music*
- * Food and Beverages*
- * And more!*

Bring your camera for pictures with Santa!

For more information, call 377-3160.

Hosted by Outdoor Recreation.

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www.keesler81fss.us

World War II veteran returns to England

By Capt. Brian Maguire

501st Combat Support Wing Public Affairs

Editor's note: This feature is part of the "Through Airmen's Eyes" series on AF.mil. These stories focus on a single Airman, highlighting their Air Force story.

ROYAL AIR FORCE ALCONBURY, England — On a typical day from 1942 to 1945, the flightline on Royal Air Force Alconbury, England, would be full of activity as aircrews, maintainers and weapons troops prepared as many B-17 Flying Fortresses as they could for missions in Germany.

One of those troops was Ted Penn, a quartermaster in the 685th Air Materiel Squadron, who returned to RAF Alconbury on Nov. 13; the first time in 67 years; to discover the installation in a far different state than when he left it in October of 1945.

On his tour of the base, Penn shared some of his experiences about World War II RAF Alconbury.

"We'd play baseball in the summer and football in the winter," the 92-year-old Penn, of Berkeley Heights, N.J., said. "We'd organized a baseball team and played against Jimmy Stewart and his team when they were here at Alconbury for a little bit."

The Soldiers had many activities to choose from during their downtime to keep them occupied and not go stir crazy, Penn said. The command provided trucks to take us to local pubs and towns where we would buy a meal and some drinks and socialize with our British neighbors.

Not all of his time at Alconbury was peaceful, as he was present when an explosion rocked the runway. On May 27, 1943, after delivering some supplies to the flightline, Penn stood around talking with "the munitions folks" loading 500-pound bombs on the B-17s before a mission. As the loaders were finishing their task, they told Penn he should head out for lunch and they'll join him.

"One of the guys, I didn't know his name, told me to get on my bike and beat them down to the mess tent so I could be first in line," he said. "Halfway down the hill, I heard a terrific explosion and the force rocked me on my bike. I hopped off and saw a tremendous fire."

The ground personnel were arming a B-17F (tail number 42-29685) in the dispersal area when the 500-pound bomb detonated. The explosion, in turn, set off several other bombs. In an instant, 18 men were killed, 21 injured and four B-17s were destroyed on the ground. Eleven other B-17s were damaged. Penn survived by mere seconds.

"The fellows I was talking to were all gone, and I could just as well have been killed if they hadn't told me to go ahead," he said. "Nothing was left of their plane but a big crater."

Penn was also responsible for delivering supplies throughout the island, including in the run-up to the D-Day landings.

"My boss, Lt. Sheets, and I would be on per diem where we wouldn't see the base for weeks at a time," he said. "We were hauling equipment back and forth



"I've always marveled at how much he remembers from those days. Hearing him tell of his experiences back then allowed me to have a greater appreciation for what he experienced as a 22-year-old Soldier away from home for the first time."

— John Penn

all over, preparing for the invasion. There were times where it seemed like if we brought more men and equipment, this island would sink!"

During their time in Britain, the Soldiers could also get passes to travel, giving Penn the opportunity to visit Ireland, Leicester and London. Penn happened to be touring London when victory in Europe was announced.

"There were so many people out you couldn't even move," he said. "Everyone was just happy, laughing and crying on the streets and hanging out of windows."

The post-war days at RAF Alconbury were not all

full of joy, however. While Penn and other Soldiers stood in formation waiting to depart RAF Alconbury one last time for home, in October 1945, the officer present asked for a volunteer to run and fetch the paperwork necessary to get them all home. A Soldier volunteered and hopped in the waiting jeep for what should have been a 10 to 12 minute trip.

"About thirty minutes after he left, someone drove up and said the guy had rolled the jeep and died," Penn said. "It was very sad to see someone make it safely through the war, only to die right before we went home."

After departing RAF Alconbury, Penn boarded the USS Lake Champlain, an aircraft carrier converted to carry Soldiers home from Europe. All of the aircraft were removed from the carrier and there were Soldiers all over.

"Near the States, we hit the tail-end of a hurricane," Penn said. "The waves were so high, they came up and washed over the flight deck of the carrier. They'd also pick the ship up, and it would start vibrating because the propellers were hanging out of the water."

Once he got home, he surprised his parents, since they weren't aware he'd be coming home so soon.

"I was walking down the street and saw my dad walking toward me," he said. "My dad did a double take and then ran to greet me. He led me back into the house and in the kitchen to show my mom, and said he wasn't going to work that day."

Penn was accompanied to RAF Alconbury his son, John, who grew up hearing stories of his father's time in the Army.

"My father kept in touch with his Army buddies after he left the service in 1945, but of the dozen or so friends he wrote to each year, there is only his friend, John Swisher, and himself left from the group," said John. "I've always marveled at how much he remembers from those days. Hearing him tell of his experiences back then allowed me to have a greater appreciation for what he experienced as a 22-year-old Soldier away from home for the first time."

John was the driving force behind the visit, as he was determined to see where his father served. It took several months to convince his father to come, but he was finally able to convince his father to return to England.

"This was my father's second time in England and my first," he said. "I would have felt something was missing if we had not visited the airbase that was the source of so many memories for him, both good and bad. Alconbury played an important role in his life as a young man, the three and half years he was there, and now I have a better feel for the context of his stories, having seen the base personally. It was important for me to give him the chance to pass on his knowledge and experiences to today's Airmen."

334th TRS takes intramural football championship



Photos by Kemberly Groue

Rodney Watson, 403rd Wing, sprints down the field for a touchdown as 334th Training Squadron defenders attempt to stop him during the intramural flag football championship game Monday. The 334th TRS defeated the 403rd, 28-26.



Brandon Jackson, 334th TRS, leaps in the air for a touchdown pass.



The championship trophy is positioned for presentation to the 334th TRS for winning the intramural flag football championship.



Derek Lewis, 334th Training Squadron quarterback, elects to keep the ball to score a touchdown as Terrill James and Rashad Campbell, 403rd Wing, close in on defense.