

# ★★★ BIG SKY FLYER



Vol. XXXIII, No. 5- May 2011



INSIDE



Boss Day a huge success



Upcoming June ORE

# WELCOME HOME RED HORSE

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By Col. Pete Hronek  
120th Fighter Wing Commander

# Goodbye Winter, Hello Busy Season

## ORE, Open House highlight the months ahead

Vigilantes and fellow Airmen,

Vigilantes, I'm not sure about you, but I can assume most of you are ready for spring to be sprung and to have this winter behind us for good! Most will say it has been a long one and the challenges were not any easier having to fight the weather. Even though there were so many things out of our control, what I admire about our Wing is the ability to overcome, and like I always say, "It is because we have outstanding Airmen!"

With better weather finally here, our schedule stays busy as usual. While we continue to hone our warrior skills, we also look forward to enjoying an Open House here at the Wing this July to show off what we do as members of this great military.

I know you are gearing up for the ORE this June, and this year it will sharpen our skills in all phases of how we fly, fight, and win. Phase I will exercise how we deploy, and Phase II exercises how we fight in all aspects of war that we are tasked. Please use the May UTA to ensure you are ready to go and do not leave without understanding the requirements you will be expected to perform in June. Know the instructions given by your supervisor, review the Airman's Manual, and have the warrior mind-set from the start of the Phase I to the end of Phase III!

In July, in conjunction with Malmstrom Air Force Base, we will celebrate our local military here on the hill with the Blue Angels performing for us and our community. There will be support needed from the Wing to make this event happen, and I appreciate those who will add their special skills along with the volunteers who will make the event possible. I hope most of you can attend!

The men and women at our detachment continue to do great work for our country, and they must be our top priority to support as they do this 24/7 mission. They just completed a Staff Assisted Visit (SAV) by 1st Air Force to help us prepare for a formal Alert Force Evaluation (AFE) by PACAF this summer. This is our nuke mission, and perfection is the standard. There are items we must fix from the SAV to reach that standard, and I have no doubt we will reach it, but they will need our support and attention, for they are our wingmen even though they are 3000 miles away.

You are well aware of our future as we continue our current mission in the F-15 and as we work with the Air National Guard and Air Force on future missions. Nothing is in stone yet, but the bottom line is all our Airmen, full and part time, will be doing great missions in the air and on the ground-way into the future. Expect formal announcements this summer.

I want to thank all who participated in making the Boss Lift in April a huge success. Working to support our Employee Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) people is one of the best relationships in any of the states. We flew over 100 bosses and supporters of our Airmen in a KC-135 tanker to see our F-15's refuel, and the next day we were able to fly 50 of our star performers! Thanks again, even though mother nature tried to put a damper on the event, we still succeeded!

Finally, welcome home to the RED HORSE; job well done. As always, you did outstanding work for our nation and for many in the AOR! Great job, and I am so happy you are all safely home to your families! As usual, times are busy and challenging, but we have some fun ahead also. We operate at higher performance and stress levels, but you all handle it well and are the most professional and resilient Wing of our nation!

My best to you and your families this spring as we put "old man winter" behind us!



Master Sgt. Robert Gibson briefs Boss Lift participants prior to their flight in the KC-135 tanker. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. John Turner.



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**FRONT COVER:** Members of the 219th and 819th RED HORSE Squadron depart from the plane carrying them back from Southwest Asia. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson.

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# ESGR Boss Lift ~ "Amazing!"

Civilian employers get a chance to see  
how the MTANG operates

The Montana Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) took over the 120 Fighter Wing's hangar Saturday April 2, 2011 for Boss Lift 2011.

From the time they checked in until they deplaned the KC-135, employers had the opportunity to see what guardsmen do on a drill weekend.

"We appreciate having this facility to stage displays for various units such as fire, safety, munitions etc.," said Parker Sullivan, MT ESGR representative at the 120th Fighter Wing.

Brig. Gen. John F. Walsh, The Adjutant General of the Montana National Guard and Director of the Montana Department of Military Affairs, and Brig. Gen. Bradley Livingston, Commander of the Montana Air National Guard, were on hand throughout the day, meeting with employers and thanking them for employing guard members.

"Today is a great experience for people to learn more about the Montana Air National Guard and experience what those airman do for us daily," said Mike Flaherty, State Chair for the MT ESGR. The highlight of the day was a flight aboard a KC-135 Stratotanker where employers had the opportunity to observe in-flight refueling of four F-15 Eagles.

"You can sum it up in one word- amazing!" said employer Sharon Virgin, broker and owner of American Realty Group.

The overall mission of the ESGR program is to develop and promote employer support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and resolving conflict between employers and service members.

"It was interesting to know how many people are involved in the guard and how it affects the communities around the state," said employer Richard W. Tressel, owner of CNRX Enterprises in Kalispell.

Each employer received a bag with information on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, brochures on the top 10 reasons to hire a service member, what ESGR is, MT ESGR job and education job fair, employer partnership of the armed forces website information, an ESGR travel tumbler and an ESGR pen.

By Maj. Rick Anderson  
MTANG Chief of Public Affairs



ABOVE: ESGR members and employers pose in front of a KC-135 Stratotanker prior to the Boss Lift flight on Saturday of the April UTA. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. John Turner. BELOW LEFT: Don Parkin of Avmax Group Inc. receives the Montana ESGR Above and Beyond Award from Brig. Gen. Bradley Livingston and State Command Chief Master Sgt. Mitchell Brush. Also pictured are State ESGR Chair Michael Flaherty and Maurizio Primiani, director of operations for Avmax Group in Great Falls. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. John Turner. BELOW CENTER: The view from the boom operator's perspective of a four-ship formation of MTANG F-15s. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Touchette. BELOW RIGHT: The boom operator at work during a refueling mission. U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. John Turner.



# RED HORSE back from the AOR

**"Best seen to date," six month deployment in Southwest Asia comes to an end.**

A specialized Montana Air National Guard unit, the 219th RED HORSE Squadron, recently returned from Southwest Asia marking their third involuntary full unit mobilization in support of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The seven month deployment adds to its long list of proud and distinguished accomplishments. The classic association with its sister unit, the 819th RED HORSE Squadron, proved once again to be a professional organization that provides a phenomenal capability for combatant commanders worldwide.

The 219th RED HORSE Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. Ryck Cayer, a veteran of four six-month deployments, said the squadron members overcame the usual shortage of materials, tools and heavy equipment expected in an austere environment to complete all of the projects.

"I would say that from my memory this was the smoothest deployment that we've had. The unit cohesion was outstanding—best seen to date, the project management, leadership and group morale, it was just like none I've ever seen before," said Lt. Col. Cayer.

The experienced 219th RED HORSE personnel served leadership roles in operations, logistics and command positions, said Lt. Col. Cayer.

"You can see the association that the 219th has had with the 819th over the past 14 years has really developed and matured. The association has made for a strong RED HORSE unit," he said.

The combined active-associate RED HORSE squadrons completed 60 projects valued at \$45 million during the deployment.

The largest project was completed at Forward Operating Base Dwyer, Afghanistan. The airmen built two hammerheads for a brand-new runway, an aircraft parking ramp for C-17s and a large quonset-like facility, said Lt. Col. Cayer.

Senior Master Sgt. Brian Furr served as the logistics superintendent at FOB Dwyer, in charge of vehicle maintenance, supply and services for the RED HORSE personnel. The real-world deployment provided a training opportunity for every member of the squadron, he said.

"It was real good training for all our new folks that are in upgrade training and the scope of the projects that we had allowed our members that are already upgraded to really hone their skills," said Sergeant Furr.

At FOB Shindand, Afghanistan, the airmen constructed facilities to bed down the MQ-1B Predator unmanned aircraft system for the 451st Air Expeditionary Wing. The RED HORSE personnel built two separate sets of parking aprons, aircraft shelters and maintenance facilities at this location and installed all of the needed utilities.

The airmen also constructed facilities to bed down A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft at Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Master Sgt. Robert Brewer headed the structure shop for the Kandahar project. He said that the RED HORSE personnel, the active duty members and the contract personnel worked well together. "Everyone understands that it's one team, one fight. We're there to achieve a goal, so working with the Army and the Navy goes very well," he said.

Most of the RED HORSE personnel worked on projects within Afghanistan, but some members were spread out across the region. The squadron also sent airmen to work projects in Kyrgyzstan, Oman, and Qatar.

Lt. Col. Cayer served as the deputy group commander for the RED HORSE Group based in Kandahar, but was able to check on the progress of the projects and visit the troops in the field during the deployment.

"I traveled to all those sites twice, once in the beginning of the deployment and once at the end of the deployment. It was just a great job to be able to go out and see the amazing work that troops do out there, in the conditions that they work in," he said.

Master Sgt. Mark Lund, NCOIC of the RED HORSE mission in Oman said that communicating back home was the best that he had experienced during a deployment.

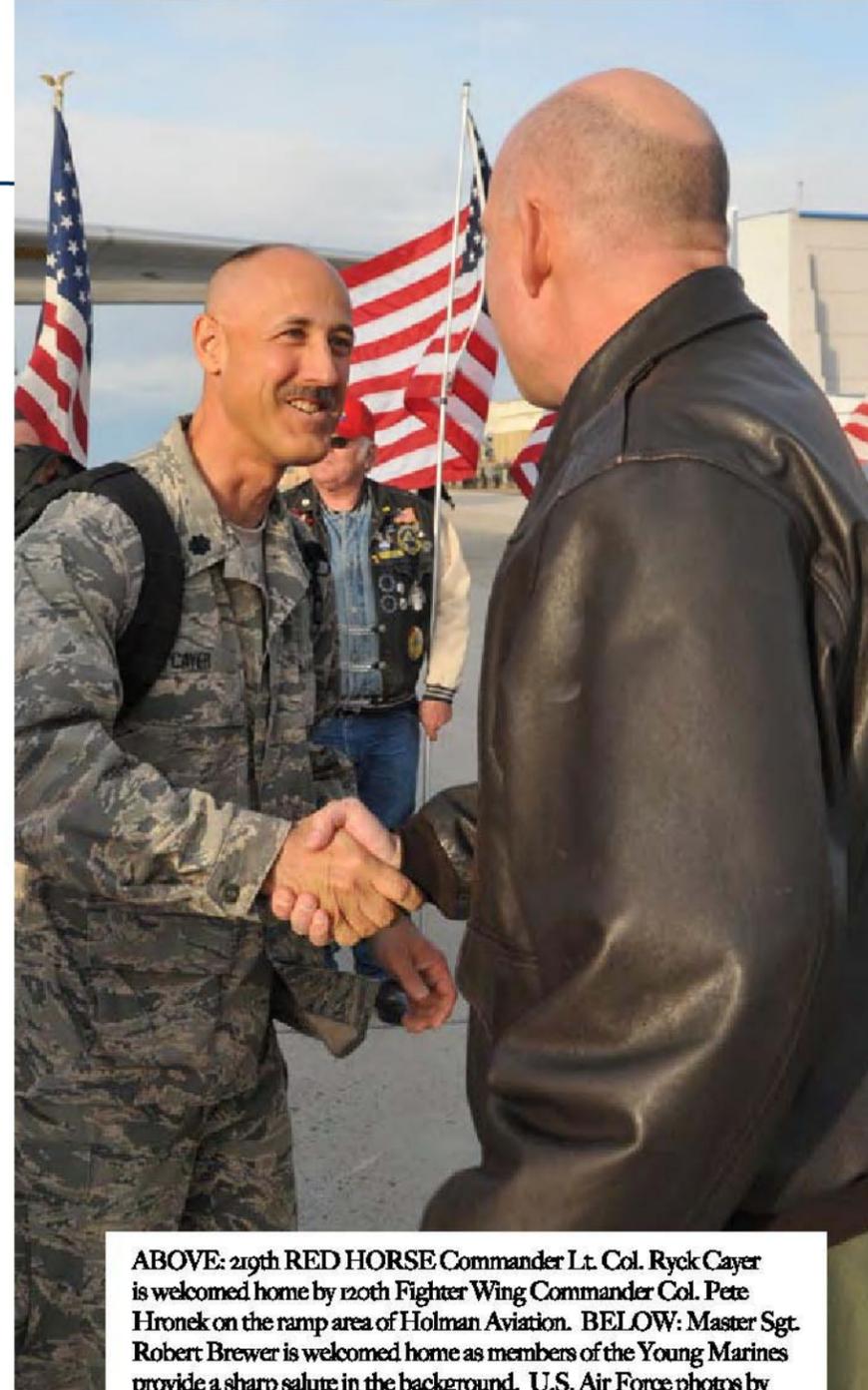
"It was wonderful. There were no problems, not only did we have a DSN line, we had the internet capability and also as time went on at our location they got the Wi-Fi going. People were able to Skype and do all kinds of wonderful things. I've never seen it to where troops were so able to talk to their families on a routine basis," he said.

The airmen were also able to offer much needed education and training to the Afghan nationals.

"Our equipment operators and mechanics gave a small class to the Afghans on maintaining their vehicles. So after hours we did a little training for them to help complete the mission on the FOB," said Master Sgt. Patrick Habel, who served as the NCOIC for FOB Wolverine, in Zabol Province, Afghanistan.

Lt. Col. Cayer is proud of what the 219th RED HORSE Squadron accomplished during the deployment. "For a small little unit in the middle of Montana, it's kind of amazing to think of what capability that Montana and the U.S. Air Force has right here. It's a global capability," he said.

by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson  
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



ABOVE: 219th RED HORSE Commander Lt. Col. Ryck Cayer is welcomed home by 120th Fighter Wing Commander Col. Pete Hronek on the ramp area of Holman Aviation. BELOW: Master Sgt. Robert Brewer is welcomed home as members of the Young Marines provide a sharp salute in the background. U.S. Air Force photos by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson.



RED HORSE personnel win the hearts and minds of the local nationals. 219th RED HORSE Squadron courtesy photos.



ABOVE: the rugged landscape of Afghanistan was the backdrop for many RED HORSE projects. BELOW: one of the many structures that the RED HORSE personnel built during their deployment.





# JUNE ORE PREP

## MAKE SURE YOU ARE READY



### NOTES:

Exercises are time for us to come together as individuals and demonstrate that we are capable of operating as a cohesive unit.

There are a few things to bear in mind when participating in an exercise.

- If you have a question, find somebody with an answer.
- If a task needs to be accomplished, find a way to help out.
- Lastly, remember to arrive and leave each day looking and acting like a professional.



# A "Taste" of Basic Training

Simulating the environment of Lackland promotes level of success

Members of the 120th Fighter Wing's student flight were able to taste a small portion of what life in basic training might be like during the February unit training assembly.

The new recruits can expect to be carefully scrutinized while they visit the dining facility at Lackland Air Force Base. For their benefit, student flight leaders developed a scenario where they would portray training instructors during lunch, recreating the uncomfortable confrontations between the Military Training Instructors (MTIs) and airmen.

"What we try to do is simulate training instructors asking questions. Everything that they're going to be responsible for at Lackland Air Force Base, we are trying to simulate here, so when they get there, their level of success is much higher," said Capt. Michael Loy, the student flight officer in charge.

On this day, 25 student flight members participated in the scenario. During the exercise, the members formed a single line into the dining facility, signed in and filled the tables properly during lunch.

A1C Matthew Heinert was picked to serve in the important role of chow runner. "I had to come ask permission for us to come eat, and I had to direct traffic for where they would sit and got yelled at a lot and did pushups. It was a good learning experience", he said.

The training has been successful in preparing the new airmen for basic training. Surveys are provided to new airmen when they return to the 120th Fighter Wing. They are questioned on how well the program prepared them for the basic training experience.

"Every single time, they appreciate this training. They know it helps them be more successful at Lackland, and that's the key driver. They want to be successful and they really enjoy it," said Capt. Loy.

The exercise was developed based upon the common experiences of the student flight leadership.

by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson  
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



BELOW: Capt. Michael Loy discusses basic training dining facility etiquette with Airman 1st Class Cameron Buss and Airman 1st Class Nare Blainc. RIGHT: Tech. Sgt. Josh Brown provides instruction as Airman 1st Class Melissa Debolt enters the dining facility. U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson.



# Motorcycle Safety

Opportunities for completing a rider safety course

With the high price of gas, more and more people are turning to alternative means of transportation, namely motorcycles. If you are thinking about becoming a motorcycle rider and wish to ride on a DoD installation, you need to attend a motorcycle rider safety course. Keep in mind that AGR's who ride a motorcycle are required to attend a motorcycle rider course regardless of where they ride. The unit funds 10 slots for the Basic Rider Course and two slots for the Advanced Rider Course. The unit does not pay for spouses or dependents to attend, however, we strongly encourage them to do so if they are going to ride a motorcycle.

Here is some information on both of the courses:

The basic rider safety course is two days long and specifically designed for novice and beginning riders. The class is intended to provide basic, entry-level skills for new riders to begin practicing and to assist in the development of the mental and motor skills necessary for safe street riding. Students will spend approximately five hours in the classroom learning skills needed to ride safely and about 10 hours on the riding range applying those new skills to practical motorcycle riding.

In the classroom, you will learn about the different types of motorcycles, their controls, and how they operate. You will discover how to create your own strategy for riding in traffic and dealing with critical situations by seeing. You will learn the importance of safety gear. You will also learn the effects of drugs and alcohol on your riding abilities.

On the riding range, students will begin with basic clutch control, straight-line riding, shifting, braking, swerving and cornering, then advance to maximum cornering, braking, and swerving.

For the basic class, training motorcycles and helmets are provided. Students are responsible for providing the additional required protective clothing - eye protection, full-fingered gloves, boots or shoes that cover the ankle, sturdy pants, and long-sleeved shirt or jacket. Students must have a valid driver's license or learner's permit to operate a motor vehicle to be able to take the course; a motorcycle endorsement or permit is not required. Students must meet the objective of all exercises and pass a brief knowledge test and riding skill test to successfully complete the class.

The Advanced Rider Course is designed for the seasoned riders with several years and lots of miles under their belts. This new course applies the handling techniques used by sport bike riders to simulate real world street riding situations.

Students start with an important classroom discussion of how to handle the challenging risks of riding, and what handling techniques can manage those risks. Then students learn to use the proven handling techniques used by sport bike riders to make their ride the best ride. This class is not just for sport bikes - the techniques of high performance handling and control apply to any motorcycle.

For the advanced class, students provide their own street-legal motorcycle, DOT-approved helmet, and additional required protective clothing - eye protection, full-fingered gloves, boots or shoes that cover the ankle, sturdy pants, and long-sleeved shirt or jacket. You are also encouraged to carry insurance on your motorcycle.

Students must have a valid driver's license with a motorcycle endorsement. Students must meet the exercise objective and pass a brief knowledge test for successful completion. Please contact Senior Master Sgt. Ronny Grina or Master Sgt. Brian Bickel at extension 2125 or 2540 to sign up.

## MTANG MOTORCYCLE MENTORSHIP CLUB

With the motorcycle riding season rapidly approaching us here in Montana and the rising price of gasoline, many of us are turning to alternate means of transportation such as motorcycles, mopeds or even four wheelers.

I am Staff Sgt. Chris Phinney with the MTANG Fire Department and I would like to personally invite all past and present Montana Air National Guard members who ride motorcycles, quads, or mopeds to step up and take part in the creation of the 120th Fighter Wing Motorcycle Mentorship Club. With the safety of all unit members being the number one concern of our Senior Leadership, they would like to emphasize the importance of the wearing the proper PPE, riding in a safe and pertinent manner and being a wingman for our fellow riders. They have agreed that by creating a motorcycle mentorship club here at the 120th Fighter Wing, we would not only be able to promote motorcycle safety but to mentor our novice riders.

The purposes and goals of creating a local mentorship club here is, first and foremost, safety for our riders. We can accomplish this by working with the Safety Office to ensure that all those current and those future riders out there get the proper training needed. The second purpose is to promote esprit de corps among those troops from the past and present members of the 120th Fighter wing. This can be done with the establishment of a club and allowing those members to get together and enjoy this great state while riding together. My final goal of creating a motorcycle club here is to allow those riders a chance to voice their concerns to our Safety Office and our leadership.

For those current riders that are registered with the Safety Office, we will be sending out emails to you in order to get a plan together on how we as a wing would like to press forward in creating a motorcycle club here at the 120th Fighter Wing. For those current and future riders who are not registered with our Safety Office, please feel free to contact Master Sgt. Brian Bickel at extension 2540 to be placed on the email list so that you can receive that information also. I would like to wish all motorcycle riders a fun and safe 2011 riding season.

# The Fading Bugler

Live Buglers becoming a rare commodity at military services



Photo Illustration, by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson.

The official performance of the bugle call "Taps" during military funeral honors dates back to 1891 when it was first written into the U.S. Army Infantry Drill Regulations.

This brief, yet powerful string of notes can have a great emotional impact on the family members that attend military funerals conducted in honor of their loved ones.

Unfortunately, the presence of a live bugler sounding Taps is a fading tradition, as few service members with brass instrument playing skills are volunteering to serve as buglers for military honors.

This national bugler shortage has also affected the 120th Fighter Wing Honor Guard, which currently has only two members available to sound Taps.

Live buglers have sounded the call of Taps for over 120 years. Now, we need you to answer the call to serve as a real, live bugler and continue this time-honored tradition as a member of the honor guard.

To address the shortage of buglers, in 2003 the Department of Defense authorized the use of the ceremonial bugle to play Taps to honor qualified veterans at military funerals.

The ceremonial bugle consists of a brass horn fitted with a battery operated digital music bugle insert placed in the bell of the instrument. Taps is played out of the bell when the operator presses a switch on the insert.

This high-tech solution to the lack of a live bugler is not the preferred method to sound Taps for most members of the honor guard.

According to Chief Master Sgt. Marty Leonard, the manager of the 120th Fighter Wing Honor Guard, malfunctions can occur with the use of the ceremonial bugle. Previous errors during funerals have included batteries that have died in the bugle insert, the insert being accidentally dropped out of the bell and the mourners being unable to hear the recorded music that is projected from the bell of the instrument.

Master Sgt. Chris Wilson is a 15 year member of the honor guard and serves as one of the team's two buglers. "If there is no live bugler available, I think it's a good option. It's better than having just a stereo playing a CD out there. However, I feel that it's the privilege, the right, the honor to play Taps at a funeral and to have a live bugler at somebody's final resting place," he said.

The bugler shortage is not due to a lack of unit members possessing previous high school band experience. Tech. Sgt. Josh Brown is a 120th Fighter Wing recruiter and recruits a majority of new members from Great Falls and the surrounding Cascade County area. There are eight high school bands in the Great Falls Public School system, and many of the high schools in the smaller communities within the county have made band a mandatory subject.

We continue to recruit members that have had brass instrument experience in high school bands. These new recruits need to know that their services are needed and valued by the families of veterans who have passed on.

Chief Leonard often hears from grateful family members who have witnessed the military funeral honors provided by the honor guard.

"They are very touched by it; they're always very thankful of the representation of the military. If you're not a member of a military family, you don't understand the sacrifices. Every veteran gives more than what the average citizen does," he said.

There isn't a lack of patriotism or volunteerism with our new recruits either. The honor guard membership currently stands at 50 members, and there are always individuals that express their interest in joining the team.

A bugler can expect to feel a great deal of personal satisfaction by playing Taps in the final tribute to a veteran.

"My primary focus is that I want to pay my respects in a proper way and that is to perform Taps flawlessly and to make sure that the first note is crisp and clean and in tune and where it needs to be," said Sergeant Wilson.

The honor guard maintains a high-quality brass field trumpet that is available for new buglers to use if they don't already own their own trumpet, cornet or bugle. Training will also be offered to those individuals that are interested in learning how to play Taps.

We must continue the tradition of using a live bugler to sound Taps at military funerals. If you have the skill or ability to play a bugle, please contact Chief Leonard at 406-791-0259.

We owe it to our veterans to have a live bugler performing Taps at their funerals. One of the last memories the grieving veteran's family will have of the funeral will be those 24 melancholy notes. The final tribute to their service should be recognized by a real, live bugler, not a cheap imitation.

Editor's note: Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson is a member of the 120th Fighter Wing Honor Guard and has performed Taps for more than 50 military funerals.

by Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson  
120th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

# Flight Over the Falls

Blue Angels highlight Open House and airshow July 30th and 31st

## MONTANA'S MILITARY OPEN HOUSE



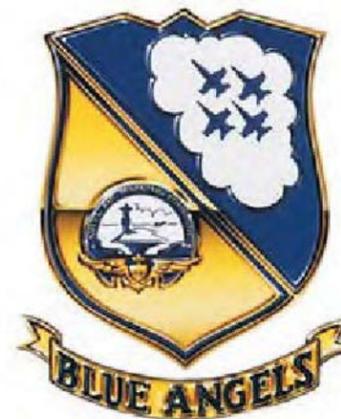
Mark it on your calendar! The 120 Fighter Wing and Malmstrom AFB are teaming up to hold "Montana's Military Open House - Flight Over the Falls" on July 30-31, 2011 at the Great Falls International Airport.

We hope to bring any and all other groups of the military in the State of Montana and beyond to do something great for our community, our servicemen and women and their families.

In addition to the Blue Angels the US Army "Black Daggers" jump team and the ACC A-10 demonstration team are scheduled to perform with other civilian acts to be announced.

If you would like to be a part of event or know of an organization or club that might like to be involved with the Open House, you can have them contact the planning team by emailing [contact@greatfallsairshow.com](mailto:contact@greatfallsairshow.com). For updated information, visit the website at [greatfallsairshow.com](http://greatfallsairshow.com)

See you there!



# HISTORY Of THE MTANG

From the June 1961 archives.

Selections from the public affairs photograph negative file for June 1961 show unit members attending a consolidated active duty camp held at the base on Gore Hill. 120th Fighter Group members were documented training in their various job specialties, including services, maintenance and operations. Eight new chief and senior master sergeants were recognized by Col. Roger D. Young. Open ranks inspections were conducted, and a parade was held on the ramp area of the base.

# 1961



## The News You Can Use

### Online Library

Members of the military, spouses, and children can take advantage of these and many other resources from the DoD MWR Libraries:

- Test prep for the SAT, CLEP, ASVAB, and more
- College planning resources
- Portable civilian career resources

You must register to access all of these great resources. Registration is free. When you are on the web site, look for the "are you a new user?" on the left side of the screen and click "register" to begin the process.

Peterson's DoD MWR Libraries Education Resource Center  
[www.petersons.com/army?refURL=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.militaryonesource.com](http://www.petersons.com/army?refURL=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.militaryonesource.com)



### Top 3 Introduces 120th Wing Coin.

The Top 3 is pleased to announce the arrival of the 120th Fighter Wing coin. This coin is a culmination of years of effort by our unit members and it is a Master Sgt. Jason Johnson design. The Top 3 is proud to sponsor this project on behalf of the 120th Fighter Wing. We believe that you will be as impressed with the coin as we are and hope that you will find it worthy to drop on the bar at your next club appearance or present as a memento at your next retirement. The price for this coin is \$6 each. As a reminder, we also offer a Montana Top 3 coin that can be purchased, but that is given to newly minted master sergeants if they attend a meeting and pay their dues within the first quarter of their promotion.

### Sexual Assault Hotline

The Department of Defense today launched its newest initiative to support victims of sexual assault.

"We believe the Safe Helpline will provide DoD sexual assault victims with a variety of support outlets, which will lead victims to report sexual assault, seek needed information and receive care."

Safe Helpline offers three access options designed for service members:

- Internet: Users can log on to <http://www.SafeHelpline.org> to receive live, one-on-one confidential help with a trained professional through a secure instant-messaging format. The website also provides vital information about recovering from and reporting sexual assault.
- Phone: A second option is to call the telephone hotline at 877-995-5247 to speak with Safe Helpline staff for personalized advice and support. Safe Helpline staff can also transfer callers to installation-based sexual assault response coordinators, on-call victim advocates, civilian rape crisis centers or to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- Text: The third option is for users to text their location to 55247 inside the United States or 202-470-5546 outside of the United States to receive automated contact information for the SARC at their installation or base.



## Let Your AGR Retirement Be A Positive Experience

by Chief Master Sgt. (ret.) Larry Seibel

As each year goes by in the Montana Air National Guard more and more unit members are becoming eligible for retirement. I want to take a few minutes and talk about some of the challenges my wife Patti and I faced when we were nearing our retirement date and provide you folks that are nearing retirement with some information that will help make your retirement experience flow smoothly. Both Patti and I retired as AGR's so most of what I will share with you applies to AGR retirements. In the future there will be additional articles written on traditional guard retirements.

Your first step in the AGR retirement process is to contact Senior Master Sgt. Jeffrey Wheeler at 791-0102 and he will brief you on everything you need to know on how to initiate your AGR retirement. Jeff was extremely helpful to both Patti and I when we retired. You need to contact him approximately six months before your retirement date to start processing your retirement.

When I retired on July 1, 2009 as an AGR my retirement was flawless. DFAS Cleveland established my retirement pay record in MYPAY in a timely manner, Malmstrom AFB finance paid me my last active duty paycheck on time, and the Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver (ARPC) mailed me my DD Form 214 in record breaking time. On Feb. 1, 2011 Patti retired as an AGR and what could go wrong with her retirement went wrong. DFAS Cleveland, Ohio is the organization that builds your retirement record and eventually processes your retirement check. They depend on ARPC in Denver to send them the correct retirement paperwork, i.e. the member's active duty retirement order and DD Form 2656 to establish your active duty retirement pay record on MYPAY. What I found out is ARPC in Denver and DFAS in Cleveland, Ohio don't communicate with each other. The end result is if there is a problem with your retirement you may never know about it until you don't receive your first retirement check. Call them to make sure they have everything they need to process your retirement.

Other problems encountered with Patti's retirement was on Jan. 21, 2011, Malmstrom AFB finance called and said they were not processing her final active duty paycheck because no one ever sent them a copy of her out-processing checklist. Now keep in mind she was retiring on Feb. 1 2011 and Malmstrom AFB waited until Jan. 21 to contact Patti with this news. Big disconnect! What I have experienced in the past as the Personnel Superintendent and as the 120th Fighter Wing Command Chief is the Malmstrom AFB Finance Office changes personnel frequently and there is definitely a breakdown in communication between Malmstrom AFB and the Montana Air National Guard. The last challenge with Patti's retirement was receiving her DD Form 214 from ARPC in Denver. When she called ARPC in Denver their answer was, they had no record of her active duty time, her awards and decorations, or her overseas tours. If she had not been proactive in calling ARPC she would have never received her DD Form 214.

Why have I taken the time to share with you the challenges we faced when we retired from the Montana Air National Guard? I assure you it was not to put you to sleep but to make you aware that you and you alone need to be proactive and responsible for the success of your retirement process. Don't assume that your retirement will flow smoothly when you retire because in some cases it won't. In closing here are a couple of points of contact to call if you are experience challenges in your upcoming retirement. Enjoy your retirement because you deserve it! I know I am enjoying mine!

Senior Master Sgt. Jeffrey Wheeler	791-0102
DFAS Cleveland, Retired Pay	1-800-321-1080
ARPC, Denver, Colo.	1-800-525-0102

# Faces of the Guard

Chief Master Sgt. Otto honored



A Chief Induction Ceremony was held at the Great Falls International Airport March 4, honoring Chief Master Sgt. Douglas Otto for attaining the highest enlisted rank in the United States Air Force.

Chief Otto enlisted into the U.S. Air Force in 1991 and is a graduate of the Security Police Academy. His first duty assignment was at Malmstrom Air Force Base, and in 1995 he transferred to the 120th Fighter Wing of the Montana Air National Guard.

Chief Otto presently serves as the security forces manager and the NCOIC of the standardization evaluation section for the 120th Security Forces Squadron.

His civilian career is dedicated to public service. He serves as a police officer with the Great Falls Police Department and is the department's sex crimes investigator. Chief Otto is also a member of the Honor Guard, is a sniper and observer for the High Risk Unit, a firearms instructor, and a field training officer for the GFPD.

He also serves his state as a member of the Montana Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.



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