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FLYER

Vol. XXXVII No. 2 - February 2014



## 120TH AIRLIFT WING VISION

WE ARE WARRIORS IN THE MONTANA VIGILANTE TRADITION COMMITTED TO ATTAINING A WORLD CLASS AIRLIFT WING TO FLY, FIGHT AND WIN. OUR EMPOWERED AIRMEN ARE MISSION FOCUSED, SAFETY CONSCIOUS AND HIGHLY TRAINED TO BE THE BEST OF THE BEST, ABLE TO DEPLOY ANYTIME, ANYWHERE FOR OUR GREAT NATION AND STATE IN WAR OR AT PEACE



A C-130 Hercules aircraft featuring the Montana Air National Guard tail flash sits on the ramp at Reno/Tahoe International Airport.



Vol. XXXVI No. 2 - February 2014  
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FRONT COVER: Two C-130 Hercules aircraft, one featuring the tail flash of the 120th Airlift Wing, Montana Air National Guard, sit on the ramp at Reno/Tahoe International Airport in Reno, Nev. Right: Maj. Elisabeth Schmidt receives a shadow box encased American flag from Maj. Gen. Matthew Quinn during the hometown heroes event during the December 2013 UTA.

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Brig. Gen. Ken Switzer addresses Airmen of the 120th Fighter Wing for the final time at the unit's commander's call Jan. 10, 2014. Switzer retired Feb. 8, 2014 after an illustrious 34 year military career. National Guard photo/Staff Sgt. Michael Touchette.

# Brig. Gen. Switzer Retires

## Thumper punches out for the last time

Montana Air National Guard Chief of Staff Brig. Gen Ken Switzer retired during the February drill weekend concluding a 34-year military career.

Switzer serves as chief of staff for the Montana Air National Guard; the primary advisor to the adjutant general and the commanding general.

Switzer comes from a strong military family background. His late father served in the United States Air Force, retiring as a master sergeant at Malmstrom Air Force Base, his mother retired as a colonel in the Army Reserve, his brother retired as a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps, and his uncle was killed in action while serving as a lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force in Vietnam.



Brig. Gen. Ken Switzer says goodbye to Chief Master Sgt. Laurie Fox at the Great Falls Air National Guard base Jan. 10, 2014. Switzer served in the unit prior to becoming the commander of the Montana Air National Guard. National Guard photo/Staff Sgt. Michael Touchette.

"In the Switzer clan there is a lot of military background," Switzer said. "I can trace my American military heritage to my grandpa, Nathan Switzer, and he fought in the Revolutionary War in Virginia. Since then there has always been a Switzer in the military."

After graduating from Bozeman High School in 1979, Switzer entered the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md. and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in general engineering in 1983. Switzer was then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Switzer and his wife are high school sweethearts; they met their sophomore year at Bozeman High School and began dating the beginning of their senior year.

She drove with me out to Annapolis the summer after we graduated and when she returned to Montana we wrote each other daily, Switzer said.

They got engaged when Switzer was home for Christmas break and his wife moved to Maryland where she attended the University of Maryland so the two could see each other on weekends.

"We both graduated then came back home to Bozeman and got married," Switzer said. "She's been with me ever since and we celebrated our 30th anniversary this past summer."

Switzer attended and graduated from U.S. Marine Corps Basic School with honors and was selected to attend flight school. He completed his basic naval flight training and was designated a naval aviator in February 1986.

Switzer said that being the son of an Air Force master sergeant, he was exposed to airplanes growing up and he knew he wanted to fly.

He received his initial jet fighter training in the F/A-18 Hornet then was assigned to the "Thunderbolts" of VMFA-251 at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in South Carolina.



Brig. Gen. Ken Switzer says goodbye to Tech. Sgt. John Kramer, a fuel systems mechanic with the 120th Fighter Wing's Maintenance Group. Switzer and Kramer joined the Montana Air National Guard the same year. National Guard photo/Staff Sgt. Michael Touchette.

Following a WESTPAC deployment to South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, Switzer attended Navy Fighter Weapons School, made famous in the 1986 action drama film "TOPGUN." He then transferred to the Naval Strike Warfare Center as a tactics and training instructor.

In August 1990, Switzer deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield aboard the aircraft carrier USS Independence.

Switzer applied for and was accepted as a member of the Blue Angels, the Navy's flight demonstration squadron. He served as the narrator during the 1991 season, the opposing solo pilot during the 1992 season and as the lead solo during the 1993 season.

In 1992, Switzer deployed with the Blue Angels for a month-long European tour, performing shows in Sweden, Finland, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain. Switzer has the distinction of being one of the few American military pilots to have had the rare opportunity to fly a Russian MiG 29 "Fulcrum" and a Sukhoi SU-27 "Flanker."

"We flew into Russia and actually spent a week there and part of that military to military exchange was that we got to fly each other's planes," Switzer said.

After leaving active duty in the Marine Corps, Switzer returned to civilian life in Montana, but soon joined the Montana Air National Guard where he began flying the F-16 Falcon with the 120th Fighter Wing.

In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Switzer was federally activated and flew combat air patrol missions in support of Operation Noble Eagle from various alert locations in the United States.

"We had just converted to the F-16C a year prior. I was a drill status Guardsman working construction and flying about five days per month when September 11th happened," Switzer said. "We knew right away that not only was this huge, something just happened in American airspace and I got a feeling that we were going to go to work pretty quick – and we did."

Switzer said it was a turning point in his military career because he realized that he needed to be doing it full-time because the Air National Guard had a lot going on.

In 2002, Switzer deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Southern Watch, ensuring Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 mandated No-Fly Zone over Southern Iraq.

"That was a big deal for us," Switzer said. "I can tell you I was nervous, all of us were, flying out of Saudi Arabia and the first time you cross the border into Iraq and realize we are at war and people are going to shoot at you – and did."

Switzer went to work for the Montana Air National Guard full time in 2004. That same year, he was appointed by Governor Judy Martz to the Montana Governor's State Workforce Investment Board, where he served as the Apprenticeship Committee Chair and as a member of the Executive Committee.

During his tenure with the Montana Air National Guard, Switzer has served as a Flight Commander, Group Commander, Joint Staff Director, Vice Chief of the Joint Staff, and Chief of Staff.

During his flying career, Switzer has amassed more than 4,400 hours, 59 of which were in combat. He primarily flew the F/A-18 Hornet while in the Marine Corps and Blue Angels, then the F-16 Falcon in the Air National Guard.

In 2010, Switzer returned once again as a drill status guardsman and began working as a Teamwork and Performance Coach for Check-6 Inc., a teamwork consulting company.

"All of these folks that I work with we all flew together, we went to Annapolis together, we went to the Marine Corps together, There is a shared history that spans three decades," Switzer said. "We take how to work as a team and how to excel as an organization and we apply this to the deep water well and mining industries."

Switzer said that following his retirement from the Air National Guard on Feb. 8, 2014, he plans to continue in his civilian career, be a husband to his wife and spend as much time as he can with his new grandchild.

Switzer's parting advice to the Airmen of the Montana National Guard is to work hard, find something you enjoy doing and make it a place where people want to come to work.

"Along the way, establish those relationships with the people who you work with because it won't be too long 'til 30 years will have gone by and it's those relationships you have established that will carry on for the next 30 years," Switzer said.

By Staff Sgt. Michael Touchette, 120th FW Public Affairs



Brig. Gen. Ken Switzer takes a final look into the 120th Fighter Wing's hanger at the Great Falls International Airport Jan. 10, 2014, before returning to the Joint Forces Headquarters in Helena. Switzer served with the unit when he entered the Montana Air National Guard. National Guard photo/Staff Sgt. Michael Touchette.

# Silver Flag

RED HORSE, 120 CES participate in joint training

Montana Air National Guard and United States Air Force civil engineering specialists deployed to Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. to participate in a week-long Silver Flag training opportunity Jan. 31.

Silver Flag consists of seven days of intense Air Force civil engineer specialty training which culminates in a 12-hour exercise that tests the Airmen in such diverse career areas as fire protection, electrical power production and pavements and construction.

In a cooperative effort, 19 members of the 120th Civil Engineer Squadron, four personnel assigned to the MTANG's 219th RED HORSE Squadron and seven members of the 341st Civil Engineer Squadron from Malmstrom Air Force Base traveled as a group to participate in the exercise.

Combining the three local units to train together allowed them to utilize military airlift to fly to Tyndall. Cost savings was not the only advantage to the joint deployment. The Silver Flag exercise also allows the members to mentor each other and share professional experiences.

Airmen operate out of tents set up in the bare base location and endure pre-attack and post-attack training scenarios. Newer members of the squadron expand their career knowledge and skills participating in these exercises.



Master Sgt. Scott L. Benedict and Staff Sgt. Mark A. Payton stand behind a waist-high pile of snow alongside the tarmac at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (National Guard photo / Master Sgt. Jason Johnson)

"I think Silver Flag gives the younger Airmen who've not deployed a chance to learn about the austere environment and what to expect when they get put into that environment," said 2nd Lt. Aaron Jewett, who serves as OIC of the 120th CES Emergency Management Flight and is also the deployment OIC. "They'll learn to be innovative when using their resources and how to problem solve without being able to call downtown to get a supply of materials if they need them. That's the make-do, can-do attitude that CE is great about."

The exercise also offers the civil engineers the chance to experience unique training opportunities provided by the location's specialized equipment and austere environment.

"A lot of the equipment that they are going to be working with at Silver Flag we do not have up here at the 120th Fighter Wing," said Senior Master Sgt. Brian Bickel, 120th CES Production Controller and NCOIC of the deployment. "Take power production, for instance. They have a portable arresting system for the aircraft when they land. Our personnel will be deploying that system and setting it up in a contingency wartime environment setting. That's something that we just can't do up here."

Members of the 823rd RED HORSE Squadron will provide the training to the Montana civil engineers during the week and also will serve as the exercise evaluation team at the end of the event. During the final exercise they will evaluate the Montana civil engineers on their ability to put their training to work in a proficient and timely fashion.

Unit leadership sees great value in participating in realistic training exercises such as what Silver Flag has to offer.

"As a commander these are the types of training experiences that you seek to build that esprit de corps and cohesion you need in a unit," said 120th CES Commander Lt. Col. Ryck Cayer. "It also provides leadership opportunities for NCOs to develop into strong leaders in a different environment that includes different stressors. That's the kind of training you want to see before you're actually placed into a real-world scenario."

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

# Home Town Heroes

Recently deployed Airmen honored

Fifty-four members of the Montana Air National Guard were recognized for completing overseas deployments during a Hometown Heroes Salute program held at the 120th Fighter Wing Larsen Room on Saturday of the December Unit Training Assembly.

The national program was developed by the Air National Guard and is designed to thank the deploying personnel and their families for their service and for the sacrifices made while they served their country far from home.

"It's just so hard to be away from family members for so long and we know about the sacrifices that the deployed Guardsmen and their family members go through," said MTANG Family Programs Coordinator Staff Sgt. Paige Held. "So this is a way for us to show our appreciation to them so they can remember that the deployment was important."

Representatives from Montana's congressional delegation joined MTANG Commander Brig. Gen. Bradley Livingston, 120FW Commander J. Peter Hronek, MTANG Command Chief Master Sgt. Timothy Zumbrun and 120FW Command Chief Master Sgt. Timothy Huffman in a reception line welcoming home the Guardsmen.

The Air Guard personnel received recognition based on the amount of time spent deployed overseas. MTANG members who served tours from 30 to 179 days were presented with a rosewood-framed Hometown Heroes Salute coin which included a special letter of appreciation from the Director of the Air National Guard. Those who served between 180 and 365 days received a framed United States flag, a coin and letter of appreciation.

Spouses and family members of the deployed members also received special recognition for their sacrifices.

"The Guardsmen think it's great and they're excited about it

and I know that they look forward to receiving their awards because of all the hard work they've put in," said Held. "It's definitely nice to show the family members that they are important to the mission too."

This is the sixth year that the MTANG has participated in recognizing its deployed members with a Hometown Heroes Salute program.

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



Above: Retired Chief Master Sgt. Cari Kent, Central Montana Regional Superintendent for the Office of US Congressman Steve Daines, reads a message from the state's Congressman to Montana Air Guardsmen at the Hometown Heroes event held at the 120th Fighter Wing in Great Falls December 7, 2013. Representative Daines commended the Airmen on their service to their state and nation.

Below: Maj. Gen. Matthew T. Quinn, Adjutant General for the State of Montana, and Brig. Gen. Bradley A. Livingston, Assistant Adjutant General - Air and Commander of the Air National Guard, prepare to present awards to Airmen honored during the Hometown Heroes event held at the 120th Fighter Wing in Great Falls Dec. 7, 2013. National Guard photos/Staff Sgt. Michael Touchette



## Clear Skies

The sky is black as night  
With lightening flashing so bright  
The thunder booming so loud  
You can't hear the crowd  
Rain starts streaming  
I watch while dreaming  
Thunder like a beating drum  
Makes me start to hum  
Lightening that lights up the earth  
Showing everything its worth  
The air smells so fresh and clean  
Making such a surreal scene

*Staff Sgt. Briana L. Boggio*

# Airman of the year winners

Recognizing Outstanding Airmen



Senior Airman Merrill L. Jessop  
Airman of the Year  
120th Security Forces

Staff Sgt. Peter M. Fleek  
NCO of the Year  
120th Security Forces

Master Sgt. Edward J. Mclean  
Senior NCO of the Year  
120th Security Forces

Medals earned:

- 1 - Bronze Star Medal
- 1 - Defense Meritorious Service Medal
- 4 - United States Air Force Combat Action Medals
- 34 - United States Air Force Meritorious Service Medals
- 32 - United States Air Force Commendation Medals
- 46 - United States Air Force Achievement Medals



Also recognized:

- 4 - Basic Military Training honor graduates
- 16 - Technical School distinguished graduates
- 20 - Airmen completed professional military education courses
- 24 - Retirees
- 35 - Airmen awarded Community College of the Air Force associate degrees.



Master Sgt. Edward T. McNamee  
1st Sergeant category  
120th Security Forces.

“I am so impressed and so proud of the accomplishments of the wing and for those that are recognized today.” - Col. J. Peter Hronek



Capt. Kenneth F. Fechter  
Junior Officer of the Year for 2014  
120th Civil Engineering Squadron Base Deputy Engineer

# Chaplain Allen Retires

Guardsmen gather to say goodbye

120th Fighter Wing members gathered together on Sunday morning of the December unit training assembly to celebrate the career of one of the unit's long-serving chaplains.

The retirement ceremony recognized Chaplain (Lt. Col.) John Allen's 23 years of service to his country and state.

As chaplain, he served in the role as advisor; offering advice on issues that affected the health, morale, welfare and quality of life of the unit's assigned personnel to seven different wing commanders during his tenure with the Montana Air National Guard.

In addition to conducting chapel services, he responded to numerous tragic events occurring at the MTANG and Malmstrom Air Force Base and participated in civic programs such as Flag Day and Memorial Day events.

120th Fighter Wing Commander Col. J. Peter Hronek served as the presiding officer of the retirement ceremony.

"I want to thank Chaplain Allen for his great career," Col. Hronek said. "The psychological health program, the family program and of course, the Chaplain Corps that we have are the three legs of a stool that is such a huge part of keeping us on track as wingmen and Airmen in completing the mission, and his leadership in the Chaplain Corps has been tremendous."

During the ceremony Chaplain Allen was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and his wife, Ruth Allen, received a spouse certificate of retirement from the Air Reserve Personnel Center and a spouse certificate of appreciation from the 120th Fighter Wing.

A commemorative plate was presented on behalf of the Chief of Chaplains, United States Air Force Maj. Gen. Howard D. Stendahl.

To conclude the formal presentations, a certificate of retirement from the Armed Forces of the United States of America signed by Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, and Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clark III, Director of the Air National Guard was presented to Chaplain Allen by Col. Hronek.

Chaplain (Maj.) Arthur McCaffrey served under Chaplain Allen for over eight years and was the first to stand and share his comments with the audience.

"It's been my joy working for Chaplain Allen in the sense that the first



thing I noticed about him was that he was a leader that I could ask anything," Chaplain McCaffrey said. "To me, that was something that I want to be in my leadership."

Chaplain Allen shared a few of his many memories of offering spiritual care and guidance to the members of the unit.

"Unfortunately, chaplains often shine when it's darkest out," said Chaplain Allen. "We tend to feel like we are in the wings a lot and ready to step forward when the call comes in. But we've had some very good days, some happy times with baptisms and weddings."

Chaplain Allen's service took him on deployments to such distant locations in the world as Germany, South Korea and Antarctica.

His major military awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Achievement Medal, Antarctica Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Air Force Overseas Ribbon-short tour and the Air Force Expeditionary Service Medal.

Cake and refreshments were served to those in attendance at the conclusion of the ceremony in celebration of his final day serving as a chaplain with the MTANG.

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



Above: Col. J. Peter Hronek presents Lt.Col. Allen a certificate of retirement at a ceremony at the Great Falls IAP April 6, 2013.

Left: Chaplain Allen and his wife, Ruth, listen as Col. J. Peter Hronek, Allen's commanding officer recounts the chaplain's service with the Montana Air National Guard during a retirement ceremony at the Great Falls IAP April 6, 2013. National Guard photos / Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson

# HISTORY *Of* THE MTANG

On January 17, 1964, the Friday before the January 1964 UTA, members of the Montana Air National Guard participated in a toll collection to raise funds for the March of Dimes.

The bearded Guardsmen's unusual appearance was authorized due to the celebration of Montana's territorial centennial that year.

From the 120th Fighter Wing History Archives

# 1964



## The News You Can Use

### BREAKFAST WITH THE BOSS

Montana Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (Montana ESGR) will hold a Breakfast with the Boss March 20, 2014 at the Billings Armed Forces Reserve Center on Gable Road.

They have space for 30 civilian bosses of Montana Guard and Reserve members to attend.

Information on Montana ESGR, USERRA Law, employment (why hire a guard or reserve members) and simulated firing range opportunity will run from 7:00 am to 8:30 am.

The event is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Montana ESGR just had a Breakfast with the Boss for civilian bosses in Great Falls and it was a hit. The Great Falls event was held during a drill weekend and had lots of activities, including an Abrams Tank, tank simulator, and indoor firing range.

Bosses had breakfast and learned more about Montana ESGR before checking out the simulators.

Reserve component members do not attend, just the bosses.

Sign up early as space is limited. All RSVP registrations sent to Ms. Parker Sullivan Program Support Technician, Montana Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, 2800 Airport Avenue B Great Falls, MT 59404-5507. Email: [parker.sullivan.ctr@ang.af.mil](mailto:parker.sullivan.ctr@ang.af.mil) so she can begin a registration list.

RSVP DUE: Friday, March 14, 2014 on or before for planning purposes.

Thank you for inviting your civilian boss to attend. The more they know about your Guard jobs, the better they can work with you.

### MT National Guard Scholarship

Effective July 2012 the pay out has increased to 100.00 per credit (12 credit max). Applications are available at the retention office (green form).

First time users must complete a W-9 and provide a voided check (or SF 1199)

Take advantage of this great opportunity. Students you have until 30 days after the semester ends to turn in your grades to MSgt JP Gunter. Ensure your name is on the grades you turn in.

You can email your grades directly to [jon.gunter@ang.af.mil](mailto:jon.gunter@ang.af.mil)

### Bernard Curtis Brown II Memorial Scholarship

Applications are available to apply for the Bernard Curtis Brown II. Memorial Scholarship for children to attend NASA Space Camp.

NASA Space Camp ([www.spacecamp.com](http://www.spacecamp.com)) is a place of learning where kids come together for a journey they will never forget. For many, it is a lifechanging event – helping them make decisions about their educational and vocational careers. This extraordinary adventure teaches our youth about astronauts and space travel... and so much more. They learn leadership and they develop bonds of friendship that can last a lifetime.

To be eligible, children must be the child of a military member on active duty or mobilized Guard or Reserves, post 9/11 veteran or the child of a military member who died while serving on active duty or mobilized Guard or Reserve status and enrolled in grades 6 through 9.

### Post 9/11 GI Bill available to Military, Dependents

Qualifying for the Post 9/11 GI Bill is easy if you follow a few simple steps:

- You must have a DD Form 214 proving all Title 10 time after 9/11/2001.
- Apply online by visiting the VA website ([www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov))
- Complete the Educational Bene-fits Form 22-1990 on VONAPP
- If you want to transfer the GI Bill to a dependent, take your DD Form 214s to MSgt J.P. Gunter in the Retention Office.

### NETWORK OF CARE ONE-STOP SHOP

The Network of Care for Service Members, Veterans & Their Families is a one-stop shop for virtually all services, information, support, advocacy, and much more. This is an anonymous site which brings together VA, DOD, State and County services onto one site.

This public service is an attempt to bring together critical information for all components of the veterans' community, including veterans, family members, active-duty personnel, reservists, members of the National Guard, employers, service providers, and the community at large.

Log on at: <http://www.montana.networkofcare.org/>

### Want to be in the Big Sky Flyer?

If you enjoyed this month's Big Sky Flyer center photo layout and would like to feature your shop or section in a future display, please contact Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson at 791-0226.

We're always looking for opportunities to photograph our personnel in their work environment doing interesting and visual activities. This is a good opportunity for you to recognize your employees or co-workers for all of their hard work.

# Faces of the Guard

Master Sgt. Christopher Nichols



(National Guard photo / Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)

Master Sgt. Christopher Nichols joined the military July 30, 1989 as a member of the Military Police in the United States Army. He joined the 120th Security Forces Squadron in 1997 after serving eight years active duty.

Nichols was awarded the Bronze Star and the Air Force Combat Action Medal on February 9, 2014 after returning from a six-month deployment to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. While there supporting Operation Enduring Freedom, Master Sgt. Nichols led a team of 18 Airmen on 160 patrols outside of the airfield. The team would patrol in vehicles and on foot in the area surrounding the base.

Nichols said that his civilian job, a Sergeant for the Thompson Falls Police Department, was a help while on walking patrols and talking to individuals they encountered.

He also credits the professionalism of the other members of his team including five other 120th Security Forces Airmen.

