

# AIR BRIDGE

► Vol. 13, No.4

► 927th Air Refueling Wing, Air Force Reserve Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

► May 2008



www.927ARW.afrc.af.mil



U.S. Air Force photo/SrA Jeremy Brownfield, 127WG Michigan Air National Guard

***The last KC-135 flight flown by an Air Force Reserve crew at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mich., nears the completion of its taxi as it returns to the tanker parking area. The aircraft was piloted by Col. Gary Beebe, 927ARW commander and Lt. Col. Robert Nicholson, with Senior Master Sgt. John Fill serving as boom operator. Transfer of the last tanker to the Guard was scheduled for May 1, 2008.***

## *A Great Era's Last Taxi*

### *The final tanker flight*

Thomas Schmidt  
*927ARW Public Affairs*

**A**s daylight approached, it was evident that sunshine would be as rare as Eskimos being sighted in South America. With thick, dark clouds hovering close to the ground and raindrops streaming from the sky, the sound of jet engines reverberated across the ramp as a 927 Air Refueling Wing, KC-135 crew completed pre-flight preparations for what would be the final flight flown from Selfridge by the wing.

Piloted by Col. Gary Beebe, wing commander, with Lt. Col. Bob Nicholson sitting in the co-pilot's seat, and accompanied by Senior Master Sgt. John Fill, chief boom operator, the aircraft began its taxi to the takeoff point where it lifted ever-so effortlessly into cloud shrouded skies.

With another successful mission in the books, the crew brought the bird safely home. After departing the aircraft, the two pilots shook hands and commented to one another, "nice flight."

The crew was greeted by many well wishers, many of whom had seen the first

aircraft arrive in 1993. A potluck luncheon was enjoyed by all and Colonel Beebe addressed the gathering saying, "The wing has been very successful; since 1963 we have had 35 years of accident-free flying. This is an end to a great era . . . today is our last day of owning our planes and flying them."

Lieutenant Colonel Nicholson reminisced about the flight saying, "When speaking to the Grand Rapids International Airport control tower I shared with them that the 'Piston' call

*(please see, Last Taxi, page3)*

## ▶ VIEW FROM THE TOP

# Leadership changes

Col. Gary Beebe

**T**he 927ARW is now at MacDill AFB. At Selfridge we are now Detachment 2, 4th Air Force. Being a part of this team has been the highlight of 34 years of service. I thought about all we have accomplished as a team since the BRAC announcement. We started with over 950 people in the wing and approximately 250 were full time employees. The best estimate right now is less than 30 traditional reservists and 25 Air Reserve Technicians and civilians don't have a plan.

You are all part of a great team. You have looked out for each other, encouraged each other and admonished each other. You accomplished two major deployments, picked yourself up from a marginal inspection grade to one of excellence, and a successful staff assistance visit for the Operations Group. You executed the wing flying hour program, integrated with the Air National Guard and shared your skills. You deployed to the AOR and returned with honor....all the while working on how to deal with the BRAC move.

Peter Senge is considered one of the most influential men in the world on team learning and learning organizations. As you read the quote from



Peter Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline*, think about how you have come together as a great team...to be part of something larger than yourselves...of being connected....of being generative....making this a period of life lived to the fullest!

When people are asked what it is like being part of a great team, the most striking response is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than them self, of being connected, of being generative. It becomes quite clear that, for many, their experiences as part of truly great teams stand out as singular periods of life lived to the fullest. Some spend the rest of their lives looking for ways to recapture that spirit.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of that team and that experience. You should be proud of all you have

(continued on next page)

Col. Kenneth D. Lewis, Jr.  
*Wing Commander*

**H**ello to all present and future members of the 927<sup>th</sup> ARW. It is a great honor to be part of a wing that has such a grand and prominent history.

I look forward to working with each and every one of you as the 927<sup>th</sup> goes through the move and standing up at MacDill.

I want to thank Col. Beebe and Col. Fowler for the exceptional work they have done in taking care of the men and women in the 927<sup>th</sup>. I also want to acknowledge the great leadership they have shown in such trying times.

Col. Doug Schwartz also deserves a word of praise for the excellent work he and his team have done with the initial lay down of the wing at MacDill. Moving, standing up or converting a wing takes a tremendous amount of dedicated effort and Colonel Schwartz was the right person for leading the charge.

Moving and standing up a wing is never an easy task. It creates change and sometimes the change does not fit with personal desires or requirements.

Decisions have to be made at all levels. Most of you have made a decision to either stay or go. Some of you have probably had the decision made for you. For



my part, the mission will come first. Our job is to stand up the 927ARW in the most expeditious manner possible in order to get into the fight.

We have two wars and the country needs our help in the Global War on Terrorism. At the same time it is my job to ensure we do the best we can to take care of the people charged with performing the mission. That means you.

I certainly recognize the sacrifices all of you have made and will continue to make in order to maintain the 92 ARW's reputation as AFRC's premier tanker wing.

Once again, thank you in advance for all you do.

## ▶ VIEW FROM THE TOP

accomplished in the last three years.

The effects of BRAC are not over yet. We still have work to do. There are OPRs and EPRs, and awards to write. We say goodbye to people every day. Make sure you thank them for their service. This is not just the job of the commanders and first sergeants. It is the job of everyone on the team.

With your very livelihoods' at stake, you put the team first and looked after the needs of this nation. Most Americans will never know or appreciate what you have sacrificed for this nation.

This is the last "Airbridge" from Selfridge. May God richly bless all of you and if you truly desire to recapture that spirit of being part of a great team...start by being a great teammate!



**Col. Gary E. Beebe addresses audience after relinquishing command of the 927th Air Refueling Wing during a change of command ceremony held Apr. 27, 2008 at MacDill AFB, Fla.**



**Col. Gary Beebe proudly displays a Honorary Chief Master Sergeant bust presented to him by the 927ARW chiefs. He was recognized for his dedicated support of enlisted troops.**



## Last Taxi *(continued from front page)*

sign won't be active around here anymore." He continued, "It felt a little weird. This was the last time I could fly our own aircraft. But I will continue to fly the KC-135, only under the watchful eyes of the Guard." The colonel was in the group to fly the first sortie when the wing converted to tanker aircraft in 1993. First to fly, last to fly – rightfully fitting most would agree.

With the Base Realignment and Closure process in full swing, the transfer of aircraft to the Michigan Air National Guard approached its final stages as the Guard prepared to accept the last of eight aircraft around May 1.

The end of an era but the memories will last a lifetime.



U.S. Air Force photo/SrA Jeremy Brownfield, Michigan ANG

**From left, SMSgt John Fill, Lt. Col. Bob Nicholson and Col. Gary Beebe pose in front of the tanker they flew as the last Air Force Reserve Command KC-135 flight at Selfridge ANG Base, Mich. The tanker was previously owned by 940ARW, located at Beale AFB, Calif.**

## ▶ CHANGE OF COMMAND

# Wing moves, begins new chapter

Thomas Schmidt  
927ARW Public Affairs

Airmen searching for new 'Reserve' homes, choosing retirement or assignment to Air Force Reserve Personnel Center and some making the decision to become Florida residents took on a feverish pace as the day of change, the day of the inevitable ceremony subtly arrived.

Col. Gary E. Beebe, 927<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing commander, passed the reins of command to newly selected commander, Col. Kenneth D. Lewis Jr., during a change of command ceremony held April 27, 2008 at MacDill AFB. Colonel Lewis most recently served as operations group commander with 349<sup>th</sup> Air Mobility Wing based at Travis AFB, Calif.

"You, the citizen Airman of today, are more highly tasked than any in our history, but you are also the most professional and well trained. Make the most of your relationships with your new partners. Use your experience to mentor and teach these great young Airman how to live our core values as we fight and win our nation's wars," said Colonel Beebe as he addressed the troops before relinquishing command. "Cling to our core values and decide today that you will not compromise them even in the face of adversity. You are all warrior leaders. Take that very seriously, but learn one thing better than anything else: learn to lead with humility. Learn to always say hello, please, thank you, can I help you and, most importantly, to say 'I'm sorry.' We all blow it sometimes. Admit your mistakes and move in the right

direction direction. It will empower your leadership."

The wing is now partnered with 6th Air Mobility Wing in its new surroundings on the shore of Tampa Bay. By sharing equipment, the wing will be able to train more people and make better use of its assets. A seamless partnership will have Reservists, active duty personnel and civilian employees working side-by-side



**Col. Gary E. Beebe renders final salute to 927ARW troops during change of command ceremony held at MacDill AFB, Florida, Apr. 27, 2008. Col. Kenneth D. Lewis, Jr., new wing commander, looks on.**

every day to accomplish the wing's mission.

With the assignment of 145 air reserve technician, 465 traditional reserve and 22 civilian employee positions, the air mobility wing gained an additional four KC-135 R-model aircraft, bumping up the total number of tankers to sixteen to be flown by combined active duty and Reserve aircrews. Aircraft formerly managed by the 927<sup>th</sup> ARW have gone to the Michigan Air National Guard.

"We are going to build the premier KC-135 associate wing," said Colonel Lewis. "When I ask you to integrate with active duty everywhere, it makes sense to do so. Or, when I tell our

Airmen (they) need to conceive, devise and implement better ways of utilizing resources in order to maximize our efficiency and productivity, it is because the better we do our jobs as individuals and collectively, as a wing, the more we contribute to the destruction of our enemies."

Despite these changes, "morale remains high and the remaining people realize there is a big job to be done," said wing officials.

Lineage of the 927ARW dates to Jan. 15, 1963 when it was activated as 927<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group and organized into the Air Force Reserve Feb. 11, 1963. One of the wing's components, the 63<sup>rd</sup> Air Refueling Squadron, traces its roots back to World War II. During 1942, the 63<sup>rd</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron was constituted and deployed with C-47 aircraft to the Pacific Theatre delivering airborne troops, providing air re-supply of forces and aerial logistic support.

The 927TCG was re-designated 927<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Group in 1967 and flew C-119 aircraft until 1969. Being re-designated as 927<sup>th</sup> Tactical Air Support Group on June 18, 1969, the unit flew U-3 aircraft until 1971 after which the unit became known as the 927<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Group and flew C-130 aircraft. During 1992, the unit converted to KC-135 *Stratotankers* and became 927<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing in Oct. 1994.

Colonel Beebe will remain at Selfridge as he commands 4<sup>th</sup> Air Force Detachment 2 to close out Reserve business in 2009 before retiring to end a 34-year Air Force career.

## ▶ FROM THE CHIEF

# Nostalgia

CMSgt Clifford D. Whitenburg  
Command Chief Master Sergeant

Please allow me to indulge a few nostalgic thoughts.

This is a sad occasion for me, the last article in the 927 ARW (Selfridge) Air Bridge. It has been a wonderful journey over the past two-plus years being able to work with the finest Airmen, not only in the U.S. Air Force, but any air force in the world.

I set out with many dreams and goals, some have been realized and some have not. Have I been a success? It's not for me to say. I wasn't trying to be a success, only the best Airman I could be. I would like to leave you with a letter I wrote almost two and one-half years ago when I interviewed with Col. Beebe for this opportunity and blessing called Command Chief. As I look back, my motives today are the same as they were then and will continue to be as long as I wear Air Force blue.

## Why I would like to be the Command Chief

When I was accorded the privilege of becoming a Chief Master Sergeant in November 1999, I was asked what my philosophy would be as a Chief. Without hesitation I replied, "...the same it's been for more than 22 years of military, and 24 years of civilian life." In my office you

will find a quote from one of history's greatest mind's who said, "And whosoever of you will be chiefest shall be servant of all." Throughout my life I have found the greatest satisfaction in serving those around me.

Becoming Command Chief would afford me the opportunity to serve my fellow Airman in a much greater capacity and permit me to give back to those who have made significant investments of time, energy and wisdom in my life and career.

As much as I would like to take credit for all I have achieved these last 28 years, I realize I owe a great debt of gratitude to many men, women, officers, enlisted, subordinates and superiors who have invested in me personally and professionally. I realize the role of Command Chief should not be sought casually or flippantly, nor should it be sought for personal gain.

There will be a price to be paid by the one chosen as the Wing's next Command Chief and I have carefully and purposely weighed those costs with my family, my employer, and my conscience. I'm willing to accept without hesitation, the duties and responsibilities of being a bridge from you to your Airmen, and from your Airmen to you. What I will seek to do as Command Chief is not new, but something I

have already dedicated myself to for more than 28 years.

I have striven to set the right example for my subordinates through personal integrity, personal development and willingness to mentor and help Airmen throughout the Wing, regardless of their squadron affiliation. I have purposely set out to influence Airman, non-commissioned officers, senior non-commissioned officers and officers to perform their duties and responsibilities for the betterment of not just themselves, or their individual squadrons, but the Wing as a whole. Whether or not I have been successful is for others to judge, but I believe I have consistently given my best to advance and enhance Airmen from across the Wing.

As Command Chief, I will continue to dedicate myself, my time, my resources, and my life experience to the betterment of our men and women, their careers, their personal lives, and the success of our Wing as it faces new and daunting challenges in the years to come. It is a distinct honor to be considered for this position, and if chosen, **would regard this opportunity to serve the Airmen of the 927 ARW as the most significant of my career.**

Last words from the Chief: Thank you to all the men and women, enlisted, officer and



civilians that have made my time as the Command Chief the very best of my career. I wish you all God's best as you continue on in life and hope to see each and everyone one of you on the other side one day. God Bless!

- Chief Whit



▶ MEMORIES OF THE PAST



# AIR BRIDGE

Volume 13, No.4 May 2008

Col. Kenneth D. Lewis, Jr.

927th Air Refueling Wing Commander

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Thomas C. Schmidt  
Public Affairs Chief/Editor

Capt. Terry R. Bond  
Public Affairs Officer

Deadline for submitting items for publication is the first day of the unit training assembly (UTA) of the month preceding publication. We reserve the right to edit all submissions. To submit items, phone (586) 307-5575 or DSN 273-5575. All photographs are U.S. Air Force photos unless otherwise noted.

## ▶ MEMORABLE MOMENTS

For 25 years I have compiled numerous memories and experienced more than I ever imagined when I first enlisted. The friends I have made and the deployments we were involved in gave new meaning to the phrase "Weekend Warrior". Panama, Columbia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Pisa, Istres, Mildenhall, North Carolina, Texas, Florida, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Georgia, Alpena, just to name a few of the great places I have put down boots. But here on Selfridge were also some of the best memories. Family day gatherings, air shows, welcome home celebrations and such showed us what we are all about.

There were some sad notes of courageous members sacrificing their life for the freedoms of this great country along with helping the community welfare of others. Long deployments in support of Operation Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, Joint Forge, Deny Flight and Northern Watch plus countless others have been part of the history of Selfridge. Brave Airmen leaving behind their families and friends to do what their nation called for and standing for what they believe in. Who could ask for more?

In 1991, I will never forget the sight of the C-130's flying over announcing their return from the desert and the exciting celebration thereafter. So many things have impacted my life along with the rest of you reading this blurb, but the biggest thing we can all take away from this and store in our memory banks is the second family we have all gained by being part of the best Air Force Reserve Wing in the United States!

The 927th will forever be part of my life and as sad as this reality is before us now, the memories can never be erased from our hearts and souls. Bless all of the past and present members as we go "ABOVE ALL" making new memories. - *Master Sgt. Lewis J. Soldatek*

Memories of the 927<sup>th</sup>!! There are so many over my 25 year association with the unit, but when thinking of the "most precious", my thoughts immediately went to September 1990, Operation Desert Shield, which then became Desert Storm. I was privileged to have been involved from the first briefing of 13 personnel being deployed through the homecoming of over 200 people. So many times we had "practiced" deployments...now it was the "real thing". I never saw people pay so much attention during chemical warfare briefings!

In life, when we look at what is really important, it is always about people and relationships and this was a time when more than ever the unit took those lessons to heart. We worked as a team to truly create the 927<sup>th</sup> family to support the loved ones of those who were deployed. We "created" family support because the model did not exist in the reserve component. Coming together, using all of our resources and community partnerships, we provided a caring environment....on the day of deployment we provided a place for those being deployed to be with their families and say their good-byes. Then the next week we provided briefings with necessary information, along with childcare. Who can forget playing bingo with the kids where the prizes were toilet paper and playing cards!! Then twice weekly support groups, along with special dinners and field trips provided a social network for family members.

Then the big reunion....God blessed the 927<sup>th</sup> with the safe return of every member. As C-130s flew over the hangar, tears flowed and smiles broke out. It was the best feeling...the 927<sup>th</sup> Family!!!

- *Col Catherine F. Lick*

► **POTPOURI**

**Promotions**

*Master Sergeant*

Harold D. Potter, 4AF/Det 1  
Wayne Williams, 4AF/Det 1

*To Staff Sergeant*

Mario Jimenez, 4AF/Det 2  
Adam M. Johnson, 4AF/Det 2

**927th Air Refueling Wing Farewell Festivities**

**Golf Outing** - Friday, June 27 - 2 p.m. starting time - Selfridge Golf Course  
\$36 per person (includes 18 holes of golf, cart, beverage and food)

**Ice-Breaker** - Friday, June 27 - 6 p.m. until ?????- Best Western Concorde Inn,  
Gratiot Ave., south of M-59 - \$5 per person

**Farewell Party** - Saturday, June 28 - 3 p.m.  
Hangar 35 (relocation & retirement ceremonies) Hangar 36 (party)  
\$5 per person (includes dinner, refreshments and entertainment)

Dinner - broasted chicken, pasta, green beans, salads and cake  
Note: There are no activities planned for children & adult refreshments will be served.

**Sunday brunch** - June 29 - 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.  
Mulligan's (located at Selfridge Golf Course) - \$8 per person

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Please provide the following information to include payment (checks only)  
payable to 927ARW and return to 927ARW/PA, 43087 Lake St., Selfridge ANGB,  
MI 48045 by June 7, 2008.

Name of participant	Golf \$36 ea.	Ice-Breaker \$5 ea.	Party \$5 ea.	Brunch \$8 ea.
Totals				

Name of sponsor \_\_\_\_\_ Amt encl: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Due to Public Affairs positions being temporarily vacant at the wing's new home in Florida, publication of the Air Bridge will be temporarily suspended effective with this issue. When the public affairs operation is up and running in the near future it is anticipated publication will resume.**

**It has been a privilege for the public affairs staff to produce the Air Bridge over past years for the enjoyment of our readership. It is hoped you found it informative and professional as it has been our goal to meet the needs of the men and women of the 927<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing.**

**On behalf of the staff, a fond farewell and wishes of good luck are extended to all who have set out on a new adventure in their career. Change is not normally welcomed but it is inevitable and with it so often comes better things in life.**

**You are left with this simple thought - think positive, act positive, be positive and above all, be a professional.**

927th AIR REFUELING WING (AFRC)  
7718 HANGAR LOOP DRIVE  
MACDILL AFB, FL 33621-5502

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 2008-745-269/80004

PRESORTED STANDARD U.S. POSTAGE PAID Permit No. 388 ALBUQUERQUE, NM
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