



# AIR GUARDIAN

ALASKA AIR NATIONAL GUARD



1952 2002  
50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

# On the shoulders of giants

by Brig. Gen. Van P. Williams Jr.  
Commander, 176th Wing

"If I have seen farther than others," Isaac Newton once wrote, "it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

Over the last 50 years, the Alaska Air National Guard has produced a few giants of its own. On this, our golden anniversary, it is fitting that we look back and honor these individuals; the thousands of dedicated men and women who created a tiny, 16-man unit, then helped build it into one of the finest Air National Guard organizations in the country.

Any such tribute must start, of course, with Col. Lars Johnson, a name practically synonymous with the early days of the Alaska Air National Guard. In late 1951, after spending countless hours bending the ears and twisting the arms of military and territorial officials, Johnson got what he was after: promises of support for the creation of a new Air Guard unit.

"They said they would back it with the assurance [that we would] pick up the ball and never drop it until the Air Guard was authorized," Johnson wrote some 40 years later. "And that is exactly what we did."

But after Johnson, who would we recognize next? Albert Kulis, one of the first — and, sadly, not the last — members of our organization to make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of

duty? Larry Campbell, our first African-American member, who joined as a captain in 1963 and made colonel less than 10 years later?

Patrical Dolezal? Pappy Elmore? Marjorie Paulson? Harold Wolverton? The fact is, the Alaska Air National Guard has helped produce (and, in turn, been strengthened by) too many giants to single them all out by name. Any such attempt would be woefully inadequate.

And perhaps that too is fitting. For 50 years, this unique organization has been driven by the uniform excellence of all the men and women who comprise it, from top to bottom. On every drill weekend and on all the days in between, these dedicated patriots have been the lifeblood of the Alaska Air National Guard, and its true heroes.

As we look back on a half-century of accomplishment, I would like to extend my personal thanks to all these giants of the past. It is on their shoulders we stand as we reach for the sky.



Brig. Gen. Van P. Williams Jr. has led the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing since October 1996. He previously commanded the 168th Aerial Refueling Wing at Eielson for just over two years.

## 50th Anniversary

### Schedule of events

#### 30 May

1800 – 2300: Icebreaker social/no host bar for local and out-of-town retirees/alumni and key staff at the Millennium Hotel.

#### 31 May

0800 – 0900: Continental Breakfast for invited guests at Kulis' Ops Theater (Bldg. 21). POC SMSgt. Wendy Brown (249-1122).

0900 – 1600: Kulis, HQ AKANG (FRC) and other facility tours for invited guests. Locations and POCs depend on selected tour.

0900 – 1000: 176th Wing current mission briefing and HQAKANG briefing for invited guests and staff in Ops Theater. POC TBD.

1000 – 1100: "Gathering of Eagles" AKANG warrior legacy/heritage seminar for invited guests and interested personnel in Ops Theater. POC Maj. Mike Haller (428-6031).

1200 – 1300: Luncheon for invited guests in the Vehicle Maintenance Facility (Bldg. 52). POC SMSgt. Rich Zellner (249-1455).

1300 – 1400: 176th Wing current mission briefing and HQAKANG briefing for invited guests and staff in Ops Theater. POC TBD.

1400 – 1500: "Gathering of Eagles" AKANG warrior legacy/heritage seminar for invited guests in Ops Theater. POC Maj. Haller.

#### 1 June

0800 – 1100: Capabilities Exercise for all personnel and invited guests at Malemute Drop Zone on Fort Richardson (trans. provided).

1100 – 1300: Chief's Group picnic for all CAPEX attendees. POC Chief Andy Pierce (249-1795).

1430 – 1600: Kulis Klassic 5K/10K Run for all personnel and invited guests. Run will start at T-33 pad (long-term parking). POC Capt. Eric Budd (428-7230).

1800 – 2200: 50th Anniversary Ball at Sheraton Hotel. All invited; mess dress not required. POC Capt. Kay Spear-Budd (249-1408).

#### 2 June

0900 – 1100: 50th Anniversary Annual Awards Ceremony for all personnel/guests in Hangar 2. POC Capt. Eric Budd (428-7230).

1200 – 1600: Family Day Celebration for all personnel, family members and invited guests. POC CMSgt. Brian Shaffer (249-1875).

#### 21 June

0600 - ????: Commander's Cup Golf Tournament at Eagleleg Golf Course. POCs MSgt. Kirk Whitehurst and Capt. Marie Wauters.

## About the cover



Passing in front of Mt. McKinley, this formation comprises all the mission aircraft the Alaska Air National Guard has ever flown.

The original work is a handmade illustration designed and created by artist James Morris in honor of the Alaska Air National Guard's 50th anniversary. It is used on the cover of this special edition of the *Air Guardian* with his permission.

Larger, high-quality reproductions will be available for purchase from the Wing Commander's Office. Pricing had not been determined as of press time; contact MSgt. Lynn Mayer (249-1239) for more information.

## The Air Guardian

The *Air Guardian* is published quarterly. This funded Air Force Magazine is an authorized publication for members of the 176th Wing, located at Kulis Air National Guard Base, 5005 Raspberry Rd, Anchorage, Alaska 99502-1982.

Contents of the *Air Guardian* are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of the Air Force or the National Guard Bureau.

The *Air Guardian* staff may be contacted during UTA weekends at (907) 249-1352 or via DSN at (317) 626-1352. The e-mail address is: [john.callahan@akanch.af.mil](mailto:john.callahan@akanch.af.mil)

# Contents



## The big 5-0

Check here for a list of events and activities.



## The 1950s

In the beginning . . .



## The Guard today

Two pages of colorful characters.



## Thank you

Letters from a few of the Air Guard's not-so-secret admirers

## Command

### Adjutant General of Alaska

Maj. Gen. Phillip E. Oates

### Commander, 176th Wing

Brig. Gen. Van P. Williams Jr.

### Vice Commander, 176th Wing

Col. Gene L. Ramsay

*This special edition of the Air Guardian is dedicated to Col. Lars Johnson, and to all members — past and present — of the organization he helped create.*

## Staff

### 176th Wing Public Affairs

SrA. John T. Callahan

This issue produced with assistance from SrA. Shannon Oleson of the 176 CF Visual Information Unit.

# The 50s

EVERY STORY STARTS SOMEWHERE, and the story of the Alaska Air National Guard starts with Col. Lars L. Johnson.

Tough and determined, Johnson came to Alaska in 1938, and was called to active duty when America entered World War II three years later. He served with distinction in Alaska and the Philippines, and when the war ended was assigned as a flight instructor in Bogota, Colombia. In 1949 he returned to Alaska, intending to work as a miner and commercial fisherman. Those plans were set aside when then-Territorial Governor Ernest Gruening named him the first official adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard.

## Cleared for takeoff

At the time, Alaska was the only U.S. state or territory without its own Air Guard unit. Almost immediately, Johnson and his aide, Lt. Lee Lucas of Juneau, set about changing that.

"There was some reluctance," Johnson would write years later. "The territorial legislature did not want to provide money. Some in the military felt the territory would not be able to support a squadron."

With support from Gruening and U.S. Senate territorial delegates Bill Egan and Bob Bartlett, Johnson made it his personal crusade to bring the doubters around to his point of view. He spent countless hours lobbying state and federal officials, and personally made several trips to Washington D.C. to make his case.

In July 1952, at a meeting for city officials and businessmen at the Anchorage YMCA, National Guard Air Division Commander Maj. Gen. Earl Ricks announced that Johnson's drive had paid off. He said the government was willing to

## Air Guardsmen Survey Alaska To Form Units

**JUNEAU (Special)** — The National Guard Bureau will make a survey of Alaska in the next week to determine the possibilities of an Air National Guard for Alaska, Col. L. L. Johnson, adjutant general, announced today.

"We must have information as to who is interested in joining an air national guard unit as soon as possible," Colonel Johnson stated.

Representatives of the Air Division for the National Guard Bureau will visit the Territory for this purpose.

Former Air Force personnel are especially invited to call their local National Guard headquarters in Anchorage, Fairbanks or Juneau for further information. Informal questionnaires will be available at the local National Guard headquarters by Thursday.

invest \$1.5 million to establish an Air Guard unit in Anchorage, either at the city's international airport or on Elmendorf Air Force Base. The only condition: that Johnson prove he could find enough people to man the unit.

A quick survey initiated by Johnson indicated widespread interest in the idea, and on Sept. 15, 1952, the federal government authorized and recognized the 8144th Air Base Squadron.

## Getting off the ground

At its creation, the 8144th included 11



Above: The enlisted men of the 144th Air Transportation Squadron line up for inspection in 1956. ANG photo.

Center: F-80s over western Alaska. ANG photo.

Right: More than 50 children from St. Lawrence Island board a C-47 to take them to Anchorage for medical treatment in 1959. ANG photo.

1950

1951

1952

1953

1954

Col. Lars Johnson's efforts result in federal recognition of the 8144th Air Base Squadron. Johnson separates from the Army National Guard to accept a commission in the Alaska Air National Guard and simultaneous appointment as its commander and adjutant general.

The new unit gets its wings. With the arrival of the T-33s and F-80s, the unit is re-designated the 144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron.

Two separate flying accidents within one hour take the lives of the first AKANG members to die in the line of duty, including 1st Lt. Albert Kulis.



enlisted men, five officers (including Johnson, who shortly thereafter separated from the Army National Guard to accept a commission in the Air National Guard and simultaneous appointment as its commander and adjutant general), and no planes. Its headquarters were located in a small office above what was then the bus depot on Fourth Avenue. Because the office was so small, the men convened for their first UTA in a nearby Quonset hut.

Their first aircraft, a T-6G "Texan" trainer, arrived in February 1953. In that month's issue of *The Men in Blue* (an early, single-sheet precursor to this publication), Lt. Lucas noted that the arrival provided the unit with their "first real wings" and that "pilots of the squadron will put the recent arrival from the sunny south to immediate use."

Soon five more trainers arrived, operating out of Elmendorf's Hanger #3. In keeping with the Air Guard's mission to provide national air defense, the pilots began training in earnest for their planned transition to jet fighters. As that training progressed, the unit was re-designated the 144th Fighter-Bomber Squadron in July 1953.

The first jet, a T-33A trainer, arrived in October, shortly followed by F-80C "Shooting Star" jet fighters. By late Fall of 1954 the growing unit was fully equipped with 14 F-80s, two T-33s, three T-6G trainers, two T-6 observation planes and a C-47A "Gooney Bird" transport.

Then disaster struck.

### Twin tragedies

November 16, 1954 was a dark day for the young organization.

First, a T-33 on a training flight over Point McKenzie checked in with ground controllers, then simply vanished. Neither the plane nor its occupants, Lt. Roger Pendleton and Capt. Lionel Tietze, were ever seen or heard from again.

Less than a half-hour later, a training flight of three F-80s led by 1st Lt. Albert Kulis passed in formation over the Goose Bay area, on the west side of Knik Arm. Lt. Kulis' wing man watched as his fighter went into a steep, diving turn and vanished into a cloudbank. Two weeks later, wreckage belonging to Kulis' jet was found in the mud at Goose Bay, but the fighter sank before it could be recovered.

That spring, the Alaska Air National Guard moved out of Elmendorf and onto its new base near Anchorage International Airport. After an informal vote, the base was dedicated in honor of Lt. Kulis.

Sadly, the tragedy was just the first of several the Air Guard unit would experience over the next few years.

In October 1955, a T-6 crash near Eagle River killed 1st Lt. Clermont O'Born and an Army Guard observer, SFC Norman Henry. Six months later, Capt. Blinn Webster died following a mid-air collision with an Air Force trainer. In February 1957, Capt. Richard Otto was killed in a crash while participating in an Army National Guard training exercise north of Anchorage.

The lowest point came in November of that same year. Four Alaska National Guardsmen — Capt. Robert Kafader, 1st Lt. Dennis Stamey, SSgt. David Dial and SSgt. Floyd Porter — died when their transport plane crashed near Gustavus in Southeast Alaska.

### Moving forward

At that time the new Air Guard organization was small enough so that everyone knew each other, and every member felt these deaths personally. However, that did not stop them from pushing ahead with their mission.

While other Air Guard units around the country were receiving surplus aircraft, in 1955 the 144th's F-80s were exchanged for new, top-of-the-line F-86 "Sabre" fighter jets. Along with new aircraft came the unit's third designation in as many years, this time the 144th Fighter Interceptor Squadron.

That designation also proved short-lived. A decision was made at the national level to shift the Air Guard's emphasis from air combat to airlift, and the newly rechristened 144th Transportation Squadron (Light) turned in its Sabres for C-47 "Gooney Birds" in 1957.

With the abrupt switch came many long faces among the 144th pilots. In the end, however, the new mission proved to be a perfect



marriage with the needs of the soon-to-be-recognized state of Alaska. The C-47s may have been old and slow, but they were strong, versatile and capable of taking an enormous amount of abuse. Alaska's rugged geography and unpredictable weather would put those qualities to the test.

1955

1956

1957

1958

1959

The AKANG moves into its new base near Anchorage's international airport. Unit re-designated 144th Fighter Interceptor Squadron.

Unit redesignated the 144th Transportation Squadron (Light). In December, the 144th air-drops food, clothing and toys to the Yukon River village of St. Mary's Mission. Thus is born Operation Santa Claus, the AKANG's annual airlift of donated toys and clothing to rural communities around the state.

Col. Lars Johnson retires as Chief of Staff of the organization he almost single-handedly created. Former barnstormer and bomber pilot William S. "Pappy" Elmore becomes the new AKANG commander.

# The 60s



THE NEW DECADE BROUGHT WITH IT A NEW SET OF WINGS. The Alaska Air National Guard's tough but aging C-47s were replaced by larger C-123J "Provider" tactical airlift transports. With the new aircraft, the 144th Air Transportation Squadron's "light" designation was upgraded to "medium."

The new C-123s were not only larger than the aircraft they replaced, but more powerful. Each was equipped with wingtip-mounted jets to augment their Pratt & Whitney engines. Their 4,600 horsepower and 2,000 pounds of additional thrust helped the C-123s offset the drag and additional weight of their most significant modification: skis.

Early 1964 found the 144th participating in Polar Seige, the largest training exercise ever conducted in Alaska. No one could have known that much greater test awaited.

## Earth-shaking developments

On March 27, 1964, the most violent earthquake in the recorded history of North America struck Southcentral Alaska. Tsunamis devastated Valdez, Seward and Kodiak. Gaping fissures, crumbled buildings and burst pipes dotted Anchorage.

In the immediate aftermath, Maj. James

Rowe arrived at Kulis from the airport, reporting that its control tower had been demolished. Two Air Guard members sped over with a wrecking truck, which they used to free three men trapped in the rubble. Rowe, meanwhile, fired up a C-123 and went aloft, serving as an emergency control tower and relaying what he could see to the rest of the world.

Maj. Gen. Thomas Carroll, the Alaska National Guard's adjutant general, immediately directed Maj. John Podraza to assume command at Kulis and activate the Guard. Downed phone lines made communication difficult, but that didn't matter—within 20 minutes after the quake ended, the *Anchorage Times* reported, Guard members began streaming into Kulis without being called.

(Indeed, most phone lines were down, and for a time the area's only reliable communication with the outside world was through the powerful radios on board Maj. Rowe's C-123.)

Every resource at the Guard's disposal was brought to bear in the disaster response effort. Personnel from the Motor Vehicle Section supplied electricity using



Top left: A C-123J transport over Anchorage.

Top right: Mr. Fur Face competitors gather for a group mug shot.

Bottom left: This moose is headed for greener pastures, courtesy of the AKANG and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Bottom right: A much smaller Kulis ANG Base.

1960

1961

1962

1963

1964

The 144th ATS (Light) is given an upgrade to Medium.

In the dead of winter, the 144th uses its ski-equipped C-123s to best advantage, rescuing a group of 11 scientists from the Naval Arctic Research Institute stranded on a floating ice island in the Arctic Ocean.

The AKANG responds to the Good Friday Earthquake. In addition to providing disaster relief, the Guard also asked local merchants to donate baskets, eggs and candy, which Guard members then distributed to children on Easter.



served as the eyes and ears of the world in the aftermath of the earthquake); and the flight engineer, TSgt. Kenneth Ayers. Also dead was Maj. Gen. Thomas Carroll, the adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard.

waters rushed in.

Within five hours of the first call for assistance, the first of many C-123 flights began carrying supplies into Fairbanks and evacuating area residents. The homeless were flown to Anchorage, where they were offered shelter, food and medical attention, either at Kulis or the Alaska National Guard's newly-named Camp Carroll on Fort Richardson.

During a non-stop nine-day period, the 144th accumulated 223 flying hours using its C-123s and one C-54 "Skymaster" transport to fly 138 sorties. At the end of that period, the unit had ferried 2,371 people and more than 300,000 pounds of supplies. Less than three years after being presented its first Outstanding Unit Award, the 144th would win its second.

emergency power units.

Maintenance Squadron members took emergency steps to bring heat to strategic buildings, and the dispensary was prepared by medical technicians.

A warehouse on base was converted to a shelter for civilians rendered homeless by the quake, with a makeshift dining hall and over 100 beds. By midnight, 97 of those beds were occupied.

Over the next few weeks the 144th would fly 131,000 pounds of cargo and 201 passengers in support of earthquake relief efforts. It was, by all accounts, one of the Alaska Air National Guard's finest hours, and its performance earned the 12-year-old organization the Air Force's Outstanding Unit Award.

A little over a year-and-a-half later, tragedy struck again, as an Air Guard C-123 went down near Cape Romanzof on the Bering Sea Coast. Killed were Lt. Col. John Podraza, Maj. Herb Bedrow, TSgts. Oscar Holland and Freddie Spradlin, and SSgt. Lewis Harris.

**Another milestone**

By this time, it was becoming obvious that the Alaska Air National Guard was outgrowing its single-squadron status. Laying the groundwork for future expansion, the organization was officially designated the 176th Tactical Airlift Group in 1969. The Group retained the 144th Tactical Airlift Squadron as its flying unit.

**The Fairbanks Flood**

Swollen by rainfall three times heavier than normal, the Chena river suddenly burst its banks in August 1967, flooding much of the Fairbanks area. One woman whose home was flooded reported that her family didn't even have time to put on their shoes as the



**Guard mourns losses**

On April 27, 1964 — barely a month after the quake — an Alaska Air National Guard C-123 plunged into the ocean shortly after takeoff from the Valdez airport. Killed was the plane's three-man crew, including the pilot, Lt. Col. Thomas Norris Sr.; the co-pilot, Maj. James Rowe (who, circling Anchorage in a C-123 a month earlier, had

**1965**

**1966**

**1967**

**1968**

**1969**

The 144th provides the only airlift support for Polar Strike, a multi-force exercise involving more than 4,000 troops.

The AKANG celebrates its 15th birthday with a visit from its founder, Col. Lars Johnson. "Senator Gruening and I helped with the Guard's organization, but we can't take credit for the success that followed," he tells the men. "Only you can."

The AKANG is reorganized and designated the 176th Tactical Airlift Group, with the 144th Tactical Airlift Squadron as its flying unit. More than 700 personnel positions are authorized within the Group.

# The AKANG



AKANG photo by SrA Kelly McManus



FROM ITS HUMBLE ORIGINS A HALF CENTURY AGO, the Alaska Air National Guard has grown into a professional force of more than 1,900 full- and part-time members. During that time, it has been credited with saving tens of thousands of lives and relieving pain and suffering for many thousands more.

Among the most active Guard organizations in the country, at any given moment its members are at work in the sky and on the ground, protecting American citizens and national interests at home and abroad.

As the United States enters a new era of homeland defense and national security, it will likely rely to a greater extent than ever on the men and women of the Air National Guard.



USAF photo by MSgt William Morris



AKANG photo by 176 CF V



AKANG photo by SrA John T. Callahan



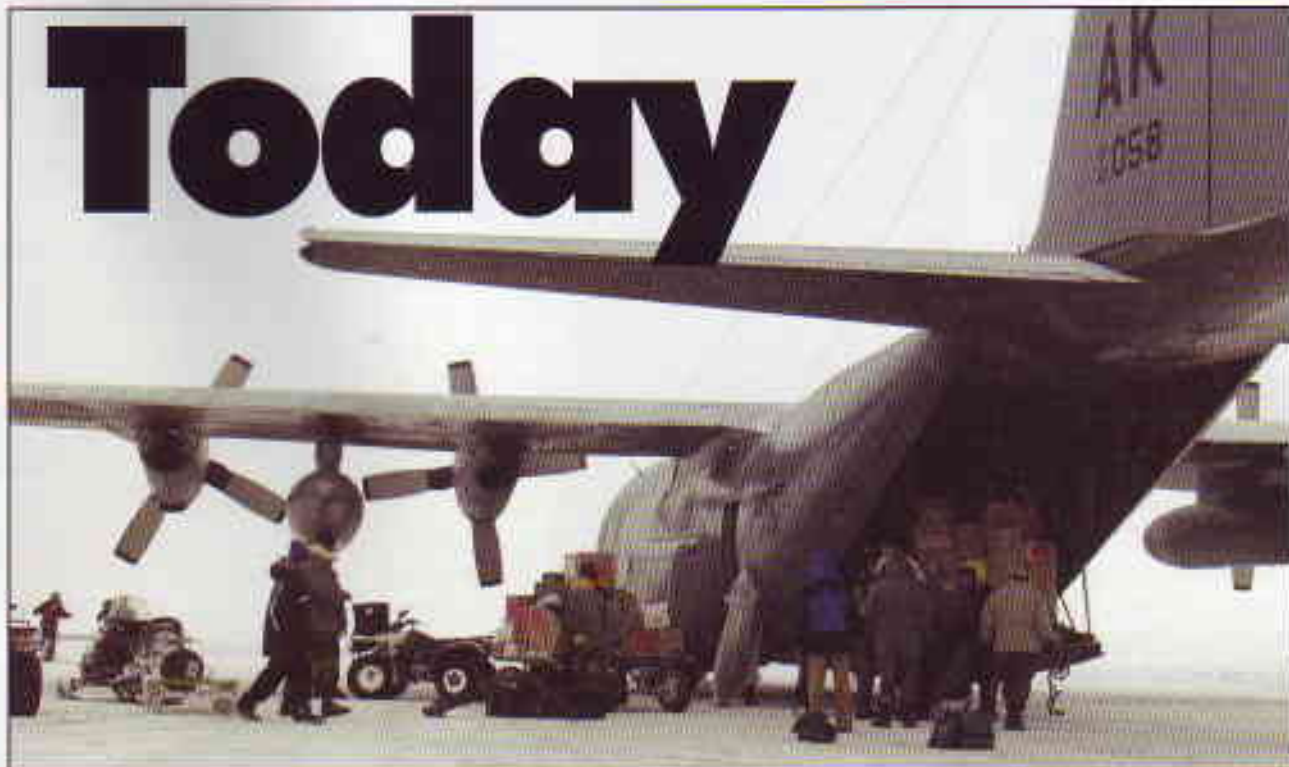
AKANG photo by 176 CF V



# G Today



photo by SrA Kelly McManus



AKANG photo by SrA Kelly McManus



al Information



AKANG photo by 176 CF Visual Information



AKANG photo by 176 CES Visual Information

Top left: A member of the 176 SFS watches the June 2000 CAPEX.

Top center: SrA Martin Williams of the 176 MXS Engine Shop works on an engine

Top right: Members of the 144 AS unload Christmas goodies from a C-130 at Savoonga during Operation Santa Claus 2000.

Middle left: SrA James Johnson, a security forces specialist with the 168 SFS at Eielson AFB, demonstrates perimeter security measures for Operation Noble Eagle.

Middle center: 176 CES firefighters during a 1998 training exercise.

Middle right: An unidentified member of the 176th Wing during snow clearing operations on the Kulis ramp.

Bottom left: 144 AS forklift operators standby to provide assistance to the Anchorage International Airport after a 747 ran off the runway in 1999.

Bottom center: A C-130 gets a checkup from a member of the 176 MXS.

Bottom right: 144 AS Capt Bobby Beard pilots a C-130 during Operation Northern Edge in March 1999.

al Information

"KULIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE IS MANNED AND COMMANDED BY HOMETOWN MEN," noted the 1969 revision of the Alaska Air National Guard Handbook. "A typical Air Guardsman is a young family man, carving a future for himself. He is vitally interested in Alaska and its future."

Just a year later, that description — part of it, anyway — would have to be changed as the chief nurse at Fort Richardson, Capt. Marjorie Paulson, became the first woman to join the Alaska Air National Guard.

Paulson said that while the Guard took a year to decide whether to accept her application — "There certainly were people who didn't think women belonged in the Guard," she told the *Air Guardian* after retiring in 1997 — her admission to the 176th Tactical Dispensary actually generated little fuss around Kulis.

The media was another matter. "HURDLING THE MALE BARRIER" blared a large headline in the *Anchorage Daily News*. "AIR GUARD GOES CO-ED" said another.



Capt. Marjorie Paulson

"So that was my claim to fame," Paulson would joke years later.

It didn't take long for others to follow in her footsteps. The next year, Jenifer Huebner became the first female Alaska Air National Guard enlistee (Huebner was also the first woman in

### She's Guard Officer

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Marjorie Paulson, 26, an attractive brunette, is the first woman to join the Alaska Air Guard. She previously served with the Army Nurse Corps, and only joined the Air Guard last month when she became Capt. Marjorie Paulson.

She is one of three officers attached to the 176 Tactical Dispensary at Kulis Air National Guard Base, located near Anchorage International Airport.

Capt. Paulson's husband, Bob serves with her. He is a loadmaster, and as a non-commissioned officer, he is out-ranked.

the country to join a National Guard civil engineering unit).

### Steady growth

The Alaska Air National Guard's reorganization as a group in 1969 had set the stage for future expansion. By the end of 1970 four squadrons had been organized to

perform the flight operations, maintenance, supply and support functions. Along with the tactical dispensary had been added a communications flight and a civil engineering unit to give the Group the "total react capability" enjoyed by Guard units in the other 49 states. The 176th's focus on tactical airlift missions would not change, however. In fact, it was to be expanded, and the Group was authorized another 475 positions on top of its 275 existing slots.

Another obvious sign of progress was the increasing extent to which the Alaska Air National Guard was integrating its operations with the U.S. Air Force and other Air National Guard units. In the Fall of 1971, Kulis hosted three "Prime BEEF" (Base Emergency Engineering Force) Air Guard teams from Colorado, Iowa and Nevada. Serving their two weeks of annual active duty, the visiting Guard members built a modular dormitory, a small arms target range, several parking areas and a base entry gate

on Kulis. It was the first time such units were deployed to help another Guard unit outside their home states.

The next year, it would be the Alaskans' turn to mobilize. The 176th Civil Engineer Flight sent their own Prime BEEF team first to Arizona to work on several construction projects, then to Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., to attend a five-day Prime BEEF exercise. The next year found a 60-member Alaska Prime BEEF team in Osan Air Force Base, Korea, helping to build a chapel, rebuild an ambulance facility and augment the base's fire crew.

Even as America began to suffer through the post-Vietnam era, the Alaska Air National Guard continued to enjoy political and public support. In 1974 Kulis added a new Operations Center and a multipurpose building, and recruiting levels would increase steadily before dropping off



somewhat toward the end of the decade.

### Bigger planes for bigger things

The 144th Tactical Airlift Squadron's mission was changed to worldwide airlift in 1976, and it was assigned to the Military

1970

1971

1972

1973

1974

Lt. Col. Dempsey Anderson becomes the first AKANG member to receive the Meritorious Service Medal. The citation notes he personally recruited 60 new members to the group.

Maj. Gen. William "Pappy" Elmore retires as ANG adjutant general. He joined the AKANG as a flying instructor in 1954, and served two separate stints (1964 to 1966 and 1971 to 1973) in the Alaska National Guard's top spot.

Another first. *Airlift* magazine features a married mother of six, her own and tech school to become a craft mechanic.

# The 70s



Airlift

Command as the

"gaining" command in the event it was federalized for active duty. A mechanical upgrade was in order, and after 16 years of service the unit's C-123s were replaced with C-130E "Hercules" transports, boasting increased speed, range and carrying capacity.

(The C-123s were returned to the Air Force, which was then to give them to the South Korean Air Force. Getting them to Korea, however, posed an unforeseen problem: the planes were so old no one in the USAF had any experience flying them. The problem was solved when one pilot and one mechanic from the Group flew to Arizona — together with a load of out-of-print repair manuals and no-longer-manufactured parts — to teach their USAF counterparts how to fly and maintain the old birds.)

### Building the total force

By this time, the increasing integration between active duty and reserve-component military

forces had progressed the point where the concept had a name of its own: the Total Force.

"In short, Total Force stresses a 'shared responsibility' among all service components of this nation," Group Commander Lt. Col. Edward Belyea wrote in the *Airlift* newsletter. "No longer do these Reserve forces have to depend on obsolete equipment handed down to them by their "big brother" active duty force."

With its new C-130s, the 176th Group began participating in the Total Force almost immediately, flying to Panama, Germany, Korea and elsewhere to support U.S. military and humanitarian missions.

It also began taking on greater responsibilities in the annual Brim Frost joint force exercises, and took part in the "Red Flag" wargames program in Nevada.

All this new activity would require a stronger support infrastructure, and in 1977 Alaska Air National Guard kicked off one of its largest construction projects ever. More than \$3 million was invested in a new composite maintenance building, an aerospace ground equipment (AGE)

support building and a new petroleum operations facility on Kulis.



Top: Brig. Gen. Kenneth Taylor, assistant adjutant general of the Alaska Air National Guard, pins the American Legion Junior Air Force ROTC General Military Excellence Medal on Cadet SSgt. Margaret Holeman, a student at West High School in Anchorage. USAF photo.

Bottom left: Capt. Marjorie Paulson, the first woman to join the Alaska Air National Guard.

Center: A C-123J Provider undergoes repairs outside the 176 TAG hangar in 1971. AKANG photo by 176 CF Visual Information Unit.

Bottom right: The Air Guard likely meant the difference between life and death to this downed pilot from King Salmon. AKANG photo by 176 CF VIU.

1975

1976

1977

1978

1979

reports that Amn. Chris Ditty, returned from basic training the AKANG's first female air-

Total Force concept begins to be implemented. 144th's mission changes to worldwide airlift.

Firefighters from Kulis respond to crash of a Japan Airlines DC-8 at the Anchorage International Airport.

AKANG flies surplus World War II torpedo netting to Bethel to help shore up the town's eroding waterfront.

40,000 hours accident-free: A new Group safety mark.

BY THE 1980S, IT WAS EASY TO SEE THAT THE ALASKA AIR NATIONAL GUARD HAD CHANGED IMMENSELY FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF THE 8144TH AIR BASE SQUADRON. It had not only grown larger but evolved, gaining experience and taking on more responsibility as it matured.

That being the case, it was perhaps no surprise when, at age 34, the organization spun off a new unit of its own.

The 168th Air Refueling Squadron started life in 1986 as the 176th Tactical Airlift Group's Eielson-based Detachment I. Its mission, under Lt. Col. Doug Clinton, was to build a tanker unit from the ground up.

In the Spring of 1986, members of the unit — what few there were — began a 17-day tour of other Air National Guard tanker units. This trip had a dual purpose, one of its participants would recount later: "One, conduct interviews and make selection for the jobs ... and two, steal people."

Evidently they were very persuasive, because the new unit was staffed by 16 officers and 65 enlisted personnel by September, when its first planes, four renovated KC-135 aerial tankers (military versions of the Boeing 707), arrived.

Obtained from the Arkansas Air

National Guard over vociferous objections from local politicians, the KC-135s were hand-me-downs, and the 168th's other facilities were antiquated. Despite this, the unit still managed to supply 70 percent of the theater's air refueling training needs in its first six months of operation. Only two years after being activated, its first Unit Effectiveness Inspection resulted in a rare "excellent" rating.

The early days of the 168th, like those of its Anchorage parent, were not without tragedy. On

September 25, 1989, one of the unit's aircraft exploded on the flightline, killing MSgt. Cheryl Helgerman and MSgt. Jim Malico. Saddened but resolute, the other members of the unit pushed ahead with their mission.

For its first four years of existence, the 168th was assigned to the 176th, which was redesignated the 176th Composite Group in recognition of its newly diversi-

### 176th increases operations tempo

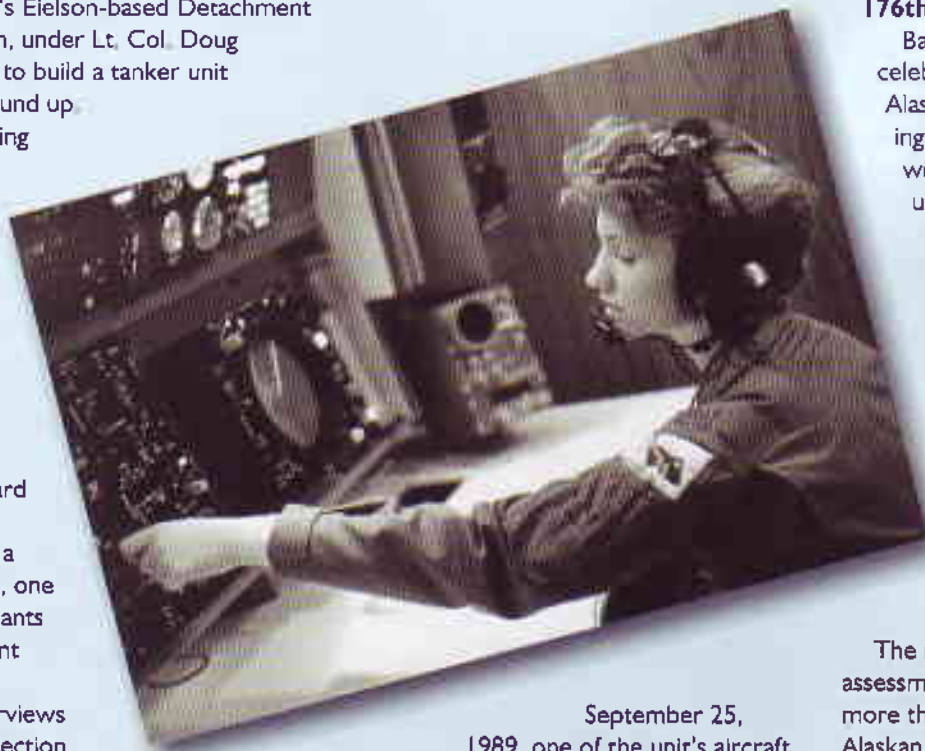
Back in Anchorage, the 176th celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Alaska Air National Guard by welcoming back an old friend, as Ruth Kulis, widow of 1st Lt. Albert Kulis, came up from California to visit the base.

That weekend "will forever be one of the most important memories of my life," she wrote in a letter of appreciation. "While you honor the Kulis family on such an occasion, you are also honoring my husband's friends who were part of the original 16 men, pilots and crews, who laid the groundwork for ... the finest organization in the Air National Guard."

The next few years would prove her assessment true, as the Guard became, more than ever, an integral part of the Alaskan landscape.

In 1985, an explosion at the village oil storage tank in Gambell destroyed not only their heating oil, but their primary fuel for power generation. The 144th brought the remote village a state emergency response team, along with portable generators to restore power.

The next year, heavy rains in Cordova broke through a reinforced dike. The



September 25, 1989, one of the unit's aircraft exploded on the flightline, killing MSgt. Cheryl Helgerman and MSgt. Jim Malico. Saddened but resolute, the other members of the unit pushed ahead with their mission.

For its first four years of existence, the 168th was assigned to the 176th, which was redesignated the 176th Composite Group in recognition of its newly diversi-

1980

1981

1982

1983

1984

176th Group becomes the first Air Guard unit in the country to score an "outstanding" on a formal Aircrew Standardization/Evaluation Test (ASET) inspection.

Preparations begin to replace the 176th's C-130Es with the newer, more capable C-130Hs.

176th Group hits 60,000 accident-free flying hours. The unit would hit the 80,000-hour mark only four years later, reflecting its increased operations tempo and the worldwide scale of its mission.

# The 80s



ever.

In the days after the March 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, the 144th flew many sorties delivering oil containment booms, supplies and emergency personnel to Valdez. Air Guard members remained in place in various support

roles even after the actual airlift

was handed over to civilian contractors. In particular, firefighters from the 176 CES provided crash response and fire protection for the Valdez airport, where traffic had increased from 14 or so flights per day to well over 400.

On a somewhat lighter note came the effort to save a handful of gray whales trapped in the ice near Point Barrow. Their plight captured the attention of the national media, and the 176th Group was asked to provide logistical support for the rescue attempt. The episode ended, the *Airlift* reported, with the whales "last seen headed south to vacation in the sun."

small town required a forty-foot section of large-diameter culvert pipe to divert the flood waters away from the town's hospital. Kulis quickly generated an aircraft and crew to supply the equipment, helping avert extensive property damage and evacuation of the hospital.

### Save the whales

The Alaska Air National Guard would close out the decade with two of its highest-profile missions



Far left: Navigator 2nd Lt. Wendy Brennan was the 168th Air Refueling Squadron's first female aircrew member. AKANG photo.

Top center: A big truck catches this young man's attention at the 1985 family day celebration. AKANG photo

Bottom center: TSgt. Ralph Hitchcock, 176 MXS. AKANG photo

Right: A member of the 176th Services Flight rolls out the good stuff. AKANG photo.



1985

1986

1987

1988

Kulis' new operations/training building is dedicated in memory of former AG William "Pappy" Elmore.

A restored AT-6 "Texan" attack trainer completes Kulis' collection of vintage unit mission aircraft.

The *Air Guardian* replaces the old *Airlift* newsletter as the official 176th Group news publication.

The 176th Composite Group, including all subordinate units, is presented with the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its accomplishments from June 1, 1986, to May 31, 1987.

THE 1990s KICKED OFF WITH A BANG, but the groundwork had been laid three years before.

In 1987, the Air Force announced that Elmendorf's famed 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron was being deactivated.

Sen. Ted Stevens, the senior member of Alaska's congressional delegation, asked Alaska Air National Guard leaders if they were interested in taking over the mission. The Alaska Air Guard was heavily involved in activating the 168th Air Refueling Squadron at Eielson, but interest was high, and the answer to Stevens' query was a resounding "yes."

At the end of the year, Stevens announced he was seeking \$74 million to acquire the aircraft the new Guard unit would need. Over the next few years, representatives from the National Guard Bureau would visit Alaska many times, conducting site surveys and helping lay the groundwork for the new organization.

In early 1989 the new unit began hiring its first full-time personnel. From April through June of that year, the maintenance and operations personnel trained on a UH-60A Black Hawk on loan from the National Guard Bureau.

With all the pieces falling into place, the 210th Air Rescue Squadron was officially recognized by the federal government on April 4, 1990.

(The 210th moniker was derived from a bit of Air Force history: During the 1940s and 1950s, the old 10th Rescue Boat and Air Rescue Squadrons had gained fame for pioneering arctic search and rescue techniques on numerous daring missions. Alaska Air National Guard historian MSgt. Cliff Salisbury researched the history of the 10th and received Air Force approval to have the new unit designated the 210th — or "second 10th" — in its honor.)

The military mission of the 210th was Combat Search and Rescue — picking up downed aircrew members during war-time. Beyond that, the 210th had an important peacetime mission: to stand on constant 24-hour alert, ready to rescue military personnel and civilians stranded in Alaska's unpredictable wilderness.

The 210th became the first U.S.-based rescue unit to receive the new MH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter when its first one arrived in June 1990 (they would be redesignated HH-60Gs in 1992). Three others arrived by August.

#### Formal arrangements

The 210th was formally activated with much fanfare August 11, 1990. Guests included Sen. Stevens, Brig. Gen. Lee Lucas (Col. Lars Johnson's former aide), and two dozen former members of the old 10th Rescue Squadron. Uncasing the guidon, one veteran of the 10th passed it to 176th Composite Group Commander Col. Ken Taylor, who passed it in turn to Lt. Col. Gene Ramsay, the new squadron's first commander.



Organizational work continued, and in November and December the first of the 210th's new HC-130Ns arrived. These airborne tankers were equipped to supply the Pave Hawks with aerial refueling. They were also able to serve as airborne search vehicles and as platforms for pararescue and equipment air drops.

#### That others may live

Between January and March 1991, the 210th rescuers rolled into action, initially sharing the 24-hour Alaska Theater helicopter alert duties with the deactivating 71st. They received



1990

1991

1992

1993

1994

210th Air Rescue Squadron activated. 168th Aerial Refueling Squadron grows to Group size, doubling its number of KC-135 "Stratotankers" from four to eight.

On August 2, the 176 Composite Group passes the 100,000-hour accident-free flying mark.

AKANG volunteers begin restoring one of the organization's old C-47 "Gooney Birds" for eventual display on Kulik. Consolidated Base Personnel Office becomes Military Personnel Flight.



credit for their first four saves January 18, rescuing survivors of a light plane crash near Cordova. In April they mounted their first high-altitude rescue, plucking two climbers from the 8,000-foot level of Mt. Jarvis. The next month the squadron would leave that mark in the dust, setting an Air Force record by saving a climber stranded at the 14,400-foot level of Mt. McKinley.

More achievements followed, and the 210th began to receive notice in the national press.

In June, responding to a request from the U.S. Coast Guard, the unit flew its first long-range mission over water to rescue an injured mariner whose boat was beyond the unrefueled range of the Coast Guard's helicopters.

In late October the Alaska Air National Guard received an urgent request to help rescue the freezing survivors of the crash of a Canadian C-130 on Ellsmere Island, 430 miles from the North Pole. An HC-130 was dispatched to the site while maintenance crews at Kulis worked frantically to partially disassemble two Pave Hawks and load them aboard a waiting C-5 "Galaxy" transport. Arriving in Greenland shortly after midnight, the crews worked feverishly to reassemble the aircraft. The helicopters were put back together and in the air in less than seven hours; together with the HC-130, they were credited with 13 saves.

In only its first year of operation, the 210th Rescue Squadron was given credit for saving 72 lives and assisting in the rescue of 20 more.

### Other activities

Rescuing Alaskans in need may have been the most visible Alaska Air National Guard activity in the 1990s, but outside the glare of the spotlight the organization was as busy as ever.

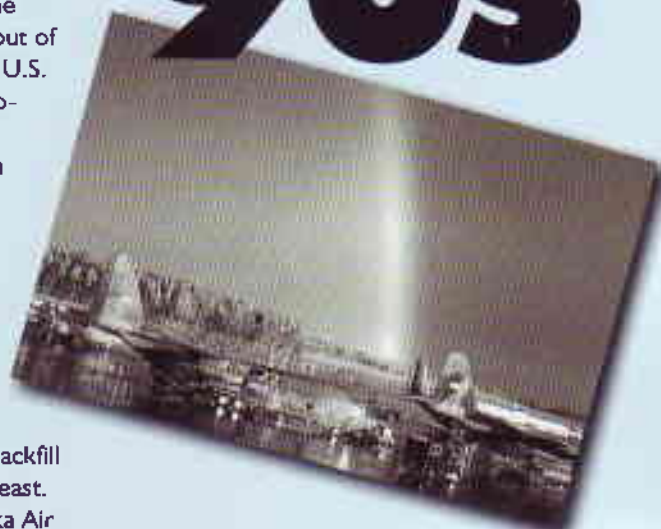
In 1994, for example, the last contingent of Alaska Air National Guard members returned home from their second overseas rotation to Kuwait. For a period of five months, some 60 members rotated through there on 60-day schedules, while rescuers from the 210th operated two helicopters out of the desert kingdom in support of U.S. fighters patrolling the southern no-fly zone over Iraq.

Two aircraft and aircrews from the 144th also flew numerous sorties in support of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, airlifting cargo and personnel being staged for deployment in the Gulf. And, among other deployments, members of the 176 Clinic went to Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina to backfill for personnel assigned to the Mideast.

On October 1, 1995, the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Composite Group became the 176th Wing. The next month, the organization hit the 120,000 accident-free flying hour mark. From the tragic 1965 C-123 crash near Cape Romanzof until 1995, the Alaska Air National Guard had taken on Alaska's dangerous flying conditions without a single major accident. The mark would continue to the end of the decade and beyond.



# The 90s



Top left: SMSgt. Leif Strand receives the Senior NCO of the Year Award and the NCO Academy Graduates' Association Leadership Award at Kulis' 1999 awards ceremony. AKANG photo by A1C Kelly McManus.

Top right: AKANG volunteers search the snow in Turnagain Pass for a missing snowmachiner. Anchorage Daily News photo by Jim Lavrakas.

Center: TSgt. Lee Langbehn puts an M60 machine gun through its paces at the Sportfire Range. AKANG photo by SrA. John T. Callahan.

Above: Kulis ANG Base on a beautiful day. AKANG photo by MSgt. Michael DeYoung.

Bottom right: 210 RQS pararescuers during an exercise in the mountains east of Anchorage. AKANG photo by SSgt. Marty Kimble.

1995

1996

1997

1998

1999

176 WG hits 120,000-hour accident-free flying mark. The last major mishap was at Cape Romanzof in 1965.


Col. Van P Williams Jr., commander of the 168 ARS, leaves that organization to assume command of the 176th Wing. In September 2000 he will become the first general to command the 176th.

Five 210 RQS pararescuers are awarded the prestigious MacKay Trophy for Meritorious Flight. The award is presented for the daring 1998 rescue of six people off Mt. Torbert, west of Anchorage.

# Thanks

## Honoring a half-century of sacrifice and service

**STATE OF ALASKA**



**Executive Proclamation  
by  
Tony Knowles, Governor**

The Alaska Air National Guard celebrates its 50th Anniversary of service to Alaska and the nation this year. In September of 1952, sixteen young men, more than half World War II veterans, got together to establish the Air National Guard unit for the Territory of Alaska. With their singular vision, regular contact, and deeply held conviction that what we can do, we can do better.

Through the years they have moved forward, supported and assisted their fellow Alaskans. They've saved hundreds of lives from Menikoff to Barrow. They have braved some of the worst weather conditions and terrain in our planet in order to find and rescue those in need.

Among the ways the Alaska Air National Guard impacts Alaska is by serving, with men and women who are paid the price of freedom with their lives. With each loss of a comrade, the Guard has made itself even more. Their resolve, their courage, and their tenacity are nearly legendary to the profession of arms.

While honoring our Alaska Air National Guard members, their families, and their employers, we note their steady growth in strength which is now over 2000 strong. They continue a tradition of serving the citizens, our freedom and security at home and on far distant shores.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tony Knowles, Governor of the State of Alaska, do hereby proclaim the month of June 2002 as

**Alaska Air National Guard 50th Anniversary Month**

In Alaska, and call upon all Alaskans to extend kindness, respect, and support to the men and women of the Alaska Air National Guard.

DATED: May 2, 2002



*Tony Knowles*  
Tony Knowles, Governor  
who has also authorized the seal  
of the State of Alaska to be affixed  
to this proclamation

**United States Senate**  
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540


May 2, 2002

I want to take the occasion of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Alaska Air National Guard to commend the extraordinary contributions of the 4000 Alaskan Air National Guardsmen through the years. I have great respect for the men and women who serve.

When I think of this great organization, I think of many great friends — people of vision and courage — like Senator Fritz Hollen, Bill Bradley, Sam Taylor, Jr., and Sen. Taylor, Jr. — who served as both great friends.

For the past 50 years and continuing service of the Alaska Air Guard remains the backbone of Alaska. Each of you have a great sense of purpose, of duty, and willingness to serve our country with a high commitment and energy in working with the citizens of the great state of Alaska and our Nation. Thank you for all you do for your country.

With best wishes,  
*John Stevens*  
JOHN STEVENS  
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

 **Fairbanks North Star Borough** City of the North

May 10, 2002

**To Members of Our Alaska Air National Guard:**

It hardly seems as though 50 years have passed before us, but here we are — the growth of Fairbanks and the Interior has been mirrored by the steady growth and strength of the Alaska Air National Guard. Fifty years ago, you began life with 16 airmen and officers, one airplane and an incredible dream. Look at you now!

With the 168th Air Refueling Wing right here in our own backyard, more than 700 members strong at Eielson Air Force Base and the promise of continued growth at Clear Air Force Station, your future could not be brighter. Alaska, and indeed our nation, relied upon from the moment you came into existence — all through the Cold War years, during Vietnam, later in the Persian Gulf War, and now during the War on Terrorism.

With more than 2,200 members with units at Eielson AFB, Elmendorf AFB, Kulis ANG Base and Camp Denali, you have Impact and Import in wide ranging areas in each of our lives.

We are convinced that the dream of those very first Alaska Air Guard members remains alive today through all of your success. The missions you accomplish, the freedom — our freedom — that you protect is as important as now as it has ever been.

We deeply and sincerely appreciate the sacrifices made by each of you, by your families, and your employers. We know that you always give your best effort. On behalf of all of us, thank you!

Sincerely,  
*Rhonda Boyles*  
Rhonda Boyles, Mayor

176th Wing Public Affairs  
Kulis Air National Guard Base  
5005 Raspberry Rd  
Anchorage AK 99502-1998

PRSRRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
ANCHORAGE AK  
PERMIT NO. 838