

# ***THE LIFE SUPPORT NEWSLETTER***

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Greetings to all. For starters we are highlighting several Life Supporters. The first two are senior NCO's, MSgt Mike Sedillo and MSgt Brian Gratten, who are assigned at Wright Patterson and are working with the lab to insure that future equipment, as it is developed and tested, is ready for operational use. To my knowledge it has been a long time since we have had active duty Life Supporters in positions such as this and in my opinion it's about time. Below is what their jobs entail.

## **First Brian Gratten:**

The Bio-dynamics and Acceleration Branch mission is to conduct research to define crew responses to tolerances and stresses encountered during aircraft emergency escape, survivable crashes and maneuvering accelerations, and to develop technologies for protection and performance enhancement. It is currently the only DoD facility conducting research to evaluate the biodynamic response of volunteer

human subjects. This testing capability combined with our world-class modeling program provides a unique work environment that is unparalleled.

As the assigned Life Support Craftsman and facility superintendent, I provide maintenance and technical assistance relative to the research and development of personal protection and life support equipment and procedures to improve and sustain war fighter performance, protection and survivability. Our ultimate goal is to provide safe escape for the aircrew.

I also act as a test conductor or safety monitor supporting human and manikin impact testing. The principle investigator uses the data collected during these impact tests to verify test hypothesis. Additional I volunteer as a human test subject for impact, vibration and acceleration experiments.

We are currently evaluating or testing the following areas: We are working

with the new helmet mounted displays and Panoramic NVG's to study the applicability of current helmet mass property limits to the torso retraction environment. We are using humans and manikins on our inertia reel simulator to study and validate performance criteria of powered inertia reels with added helmet weight.

Our vertical drop tower is being used to quantify the strength, size, and density differences in lumbar and cervical vertebral bodies between males and females of diverse sizes. In the past we didn't have women in high performance aircraft so we have relatively little data. The vertebral data will be used to study biodynamic responses during impact. This will provide safe ejection criteria for all occupants, and to enhance models.

We are also doing a helmet pull study that will determine correlation between chinstrap failure loads and manikin neck loads. Our goal of this test is to find differences between the Integrated Chin and Nape Strap (ICNS) and the Separate Chin and Nape Straps (SCNS).

We are developing test methods for objective seat cushion and aircrew comfort study. The study will be used to develop and test cushions to determine pilot comfort and performance during extended flight.

**Now to Mike Sedillo:**

MSgt Mike Sedillo's works at the Air Force Research Laboratory at Wright-Patterson AFB where he apply's his experience in night vision goggle maintenance. He has worked on both laboratory and field test evaluations of the Panoramic Night Vision Goggles (PNVG) that will provide flyers with 160% increase in their field of view. Mike championed Life Support-friendly maintenance concepts for the PNVG's that will dramatically improve the ease of maintaining the PNVGs. His idea of a purge-free system that can be repaired using snap-on solder-free modular components will certainly ease the workload burden on Life Support troops world-wide. Mike recently engaged in helping to develop new helmet fitting procedures for the Joint Helmet Mounted Cuing System. He will be working with the Navy to ensure the new targeting helmet can be fit with minimal effort to the Life Support technicians and with the best effects for the pilots. Mikes duties at the LAB are to review and edit Operational Requirements Documents (ORDs) to ensure new equipment acquisitions align with Life Support maintenance management practices. To review/edit Statement of Work (SOWs) and to ensure contractors deliver items compatible with current and near-future equipment items. He ensures items align with basic Life Support safety/integration concerns. Also he reviews Panoramic Night Vision Goggle design developments and provides input to ensure PNVG's align

with Life Support maintenance/management practices and to provide input on experimental items in area of safety, integration and design modifications to ensure items are maintainable and user friendly. Mike has also written technical papers on in-house and field experiments for the SAFE Journal.

Mike also provides expertise to field units and MAJCOM's on issues pertaining to fielded NVG's, attends conferences to display lab equipment and assists as a test subject in laboratory experiments. Mike is currently working two Joint Programs the Integrated Panoramic NVG and the Helmet Mounted Cueing System as well as the STRIKE Helmet 21.

Thanks to Chief Larry Cuffee for his help in putting the above together. Both of these troops work for Larry.

These are two outstanding troops and I have been privileged to be able to work some with them on new projects. We have come a long way since we "PE" troops were issuing helmets and masks and parachutes over the counter after a pre flight and checking the altitude and time setting and winding the timer while working for my first stateside boss **TSgt Jimmie Cartwright**. I had the opportunity to talk at some length recently with retired Chief Cartwright discussing the first HGU-2/P Helmets that were put into service in the early 60's. Mr. Lou Abraham, who was the

Director while the SPO/Depot was still at Olmstead AFB PA (Harrisburg PA) and he supplied Jim's whole wing with the new helmets. At Eglin we had been part of the "operational test" of the new helmet.

While talking with some of the early Life Supporters and trying to determine when our "career field" was officially established we have determined that using the first 92210 graduating class at Chanute Field as the starting point that we will be celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2003. A lot of our attendees at the Reunions have been "Life Supporters" back to the 1947 start of the AF and some even beyond that. Working with Emmett "Jim" Jennings who provided a copy of the PAM/Orders for the "second" graduating class that he was in which was in early 1954. Also Marty Stage is working with the folks down at Maxwell to get some of the original course syllabus and Special Training Standards. More on this subject in the next newsletter but lets all start planning on making this 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special and all plan to attend the reunion for sure in 2003!

Some new contacts have come in this recently. Heard from Russ Terrell, Dave Swinson and Tony Magnall. Tony is working at the SPO as the tester on the new Joint Service Aircrew Mask Project. SSgt Eli Huertas, who is the current NCOIC of the 8FW Life Support Training at Kunsan Korea, sent

a nice note in response his request for the Life Support Web address and my request to find out if my old “shop” was still in operation on Kunsan.

*Just wanted to thank you for taking your time to educate us and keep us Life Supporters in touch with the rest of our Life Support family, past and present. Yes, the shop that you had on the flight line does not exist any longer. The 35FS is out in the middle of the flight line, but they have a building that is about 4-5 years old and are getting a new one built within 2 years. The 80FS just moved in to a new building in December. They have a state of the art facility; the Life Support shop is huge and really nice. They also built a CCA in the building that has airlocks, showers, intercom system; every room has a door with a window to limit the amount of cross contamination. I feel as if the Air Force leaders are starting to take care of us guys now. I work at the wing along with the superintendent so if you need anything please let me know. Once again I just want to thank you for trying to keep us united and for being one of the guys before me that keeps me motivated to carry the torch into the future. Thanks from "DA KUN" [eliezer.huertas@kunsan.af.mil](mailto:eliezer.huertas@kunsan.af.mil)*

MSgt Bill Beckett moved into the retired ranks in May and is still active in our business and is working for Wel-Fab, Inc. Bill is the sales & marketing

person for the Collapsible Container Series @ Wel-Fab Inc. They provide collapsible containers for all branches of the military, civilian transportation and the emergency management system. Bill sells and markets mobility containers for shipping and storage of equipment. He also markets a 320 & 220 gallon water/liquid storage container for potable water storage or shower use. It's great to see that Bill is still active.

Also had talks with SMSgt Rick Murray who is the Super at Little Rock and was writing an article for the Airlift/Tanker Magazine about the aircrew life support profession. We provided some background on the history of aircrew life support and the development of the career field. We hope to add a copy to the next newsletter! Last month I, along with Bill Wood, Jerry Johnson and Doc Bill Sears had an evening with Tony van Hasstert. Tony and Sissy are both doing well in retirement and Tony has even joined forces with the County of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department on the Community Action Team. Way to go Tony!

That's about it for this issue. Please keep in touch and I hope to see more and more at the reunions.

*Cheers, Tommy*



## **PERSONAL SPOTLIGHT**

*This edition's Personal Spotlight is  
CMSgt Leaster Williamson, USAF  
(Ret.)*

The spring/summer of 1945 was a very fast-paced time in America's history. The war in Europe was ending, however the war in the Pacific continued. It was during this time that future Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Leaster Williamson was drafted into the Army. Originally, he was sent to Fort Riley, Kansas for armor training to be a tank gunner. Luckily the war in the Pacific ended and the Army decided that they didn't have as great a need for tank gunners as they just had. So, as the Army so often does, decided that Private Williamson could retrain into one of the following career fields: Quartermaster Corps, Ordnance, or the Chemical Corp. So, and luckily for our career field, he chose the Quartermaster Corps which at that time had the parachute shop under it.

After his training, Chief Williamson got himself stationed at Fairfield/Suisun Army Air Field in Personal Equipment. That base still exists as Travis AFB, California. In November 1946, Chief put on his snowshoes and PCSed up to Great Falls Army Air Station (East Base), Montana (still in business as Malmstrom AFB). With the war behind us, the base's operations had been scaled back until there were only about 110 troops on the base as a housekeeping unit. Chief Williamson showed his versatility by accepting (getting volunteered") the responsibility of being placed in charge of Quartermaster Clothing, P.E. Clothing, P.E. Kits, Chutes, and the Snack Bar (was he the first SNACKO?)

In 1947, we saw the birth of the United States Air Force and Chief Williamson wisely chose to hook up his wagon with the "blue." With the onset of the Berlin Crisis in 1948, Malmstrom was again "ramped" up and Chief Williamson was placed in charge of the parachute shop. This lasted until July '52, when Chief was sent up to Ladd AFB, Alaska to test items as varied as tents to parkas in cold climates. Then it was back to the "lower 48" in March 1953 where Chief Williamson was assigned to a Psychological Warfare unit at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. Throughout the ensuing years Chief Williamson had many other assignments to locations like: Bad Tolz, Germany (Apr '55), Lake Charles AFB, Louisiana in 1958,

Malmstrom (again), and HQ Strategic Air Command at Offutt AFB, Nebraska where he made Chief Master Sergeant. In 1968, Chief Williamson was sent to Kadena AB, Okinawa where he had to set up a sea survival school for PACAF to meet the requirements of the increasing tempo in South East Asia. Then it was back to HQ SAC in January of 1970 where he remained until his retirement in 1975. Chief Williamson worked with life support equipment for aircraft as varied as: C-54s, F-89s, C-47s, C-131s, B-47s, and KC-97s, and probably many, many more that I didn't list.

After his retirement from the Air Force, Chief worked for the Rainbird Corporation for approximately 15 years until he really retired. Currently Chief Williamson lives with his wife of 53 years, the former Irene Moroz, in Gulf Breeze, Florida. They have three children: Dan, Susan, and Charles, along with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Chief, for your dedication, professionalism, and with the other professionals of your era, for helping lay the foundation of our career field, a tip of the hat and a well deserved salute from we who came after you. Thanks!

**(Fast's Note: I could have probably used up half the newsletter on Chief Williamson's spotlight and still wouldn't have done it justice. Chief recounted that he and his wife have attended every one of the Life Support reunions and plan on**

**attending this year's. If you'd like to hear more stories about the early days of our career field from someone who was there, make your plans to attend. As I said in the opening paragraph of my December 2000 article about my former Life Support Officer making flag rank and saying, "...if he wasn't the first, he was one of the first." This can also be said of Chief Williamson. If he wasn't the first Life Supporter, he was surely one of the first. It was my privilege and honor to talk to Chief Williamson about his distinguished career.)**

**Ed "Fast" Chewning**

## **CHILI SEZ**

Hi everybody! Sorry about all the problems with the web site. After updating the assignment history file, I was not able to get back on to correct a problem some of you had reported. I'm happy to say that all is well and the file has been replaced.

As you all know we lost Richard Traufeld back in January of this year. Richard was a veteran of World War 11 and the Korean and Vietnam wars. His contributions to the career field from the beginning when it had a MOS instead of an AFSC paved the way for what is now called Aircrew Life Support. It's people like Richard Traufeld that we should never forget. Richard was a true pioneer in the business of saving aircrew lives. His battle with cancer is over, may he rest in peace.



We are a little late with this one, but according to his dad, SMSgt (ret) Ben Gillespie died January 8, 1998 suddenly at the Shaw AFB hospital.

## **ACC AWARDS**

If you have not visited our web site lately then you probably don't know the following. CMS Dave Chitwood and the life support staff at HQ ACC took action to honor CMS John Shields by having the special trophies and awards regulation officially changed from the "ACC Aircrew Life Support Awards" to the "Chief John Shields ACC Aircrew Life Support Awards". This is great news especially since we were not having any success getting a good bust made of John. The contributions towards the bust will be returned unless the contributors instruct me to do something else with the money.