

May 2014

# RABBIT



THE ... OF THE 513TH



**RESERVE  
FOOTBALL:**  
White holds off Gold  
in head-to-head match  
(p. 4)

**PLUS:**  
Rep. Tom Cole visits the 513th // Former 970th pilot wins marathon division



# RABBIT TALES



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*All photographs are Air Force photographs unless otherwise indicated.*

## NEWS

# Rep. Tom Cole visits the 513th

Oklahoma congressman expresses support for Reservists, AWACS

by Staff Sgt. Caleb Wanzer  
513th Air Control Group Public Affairs

Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., visited the 513th Air Control Group at Tinker Air Force Base April 18 as part of a base-wide tour to hear the accomplishments of and issues facing military units at the base.

The 513th is an Air Force Reserve unit stationed at Tinker and is the only reserve unit to maintain and fly the E-3 Sentry, an Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft.

During a morning briefing for the congressman, 513th Airmen explained how they support the AWACS mission by providing maintenance and aircrews when the active-duty 552nd Air Control Wing, also at Tinker, is unable to provide enough Airmen to fulfill mission requirements.

Cole asked questions during the briefing ranging from the proposed inactivation of the 513th to the unit's role in allied operations. He expressed appreciation for the Reservists during his visit and voiced his support of their mission at the Oklahoma-based installation.

"With this latest round of cuts, we've run the risk of cutting into military muscle," Cole said. "I don't think the president wants to leave



*Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., talks with Col. David Robertson, the 513th Air Control Group Commander, during a briefing April 18 at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. During Cole's visit, 513th Airmen explained the Air Force Reserve AWACS mission and the vital role it plays in flying and maintaining the E-3 Sentry Airborne Warning and Control System. (Air Force Photo/Staff Sgt. Caleb J. Wanzer)*

the military less capable than when he found it, and Congress doesn't want to either."

Lt. Col. Steve England, the director of operations for the 513th's 970th Airborne Air Control Squadron, showcased the invaluable skill and experience found within the Airmen of the unit. The majority of 513th members served at the active-duty 552nd before becoming Reservists, England said. Allowing the Airmen to move to a part-time status allows the Air Force to keep experience maintenance and aircrew Airmen who don't need the training that new service members require. Typical training time for AWACS

career fields ranges from eight months for certain aircrew positions to four years for radar and avionics maintenance jobs.

Col. David W. Robertson, the commander of the 513th ACG, appreciated Cole's visit to the unit.

"I was really pleased that he took time out of his busy schedule to visit the 513th and hear our story," Robertson said. "It's good to have people at his level able to tell our story and address the issues that we're facing."

Cole also visited Navy and active-duty Air Force units on base during his tour. First elected in 2002, he is the representative for the fourth district of Oklahoma.



# White wins out

by Master Sgt. James Gasaway  
*Sports Contributor*

There are several long standing rivalries in football: Ohio State vs. Michigan, Alabama vs. Auburn and Texas vs. OU, but none compare to when Reserve White and Reserve Gold get together on the turf. The annual showdown has always resulted in close games and this year was no different.

Both teams came into the week two match up with impressive opening season wins: White dispatching the Ironmen 35-0 and Gold dumping the 552 Flying Snake Dogs 21-0.

Defense was the name of the game. White began the game with the ball and steadily drove down the length of the field to Gold's red zone. After three failed attempts to punch the ball into the end zone thanks to a stifling defensive stand by Gold, Reserve White kicker Todd Bayles nailed a 20-plus yarder to put White up by three points going into the second quarter.

The score stayed the same the entire second half with neither team mustering much offense.

Thanks to big interceptions by Gold's Tom Carter and Kevin Spano and White's Chris Jackson, neither offense could move the ball.



Reserve White player Henry Pope slows to avoid a defensive player while Gold player Kevin Spano reaches for a flag. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Caleb Wanzer)





◀ Reserve Gold player Joe Huizar turns to move down the field while White's Todd Bayles prepares to pull a flag. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Caleb Wanzer)

White finally put a drive together late in the contest with Ralph Hawkins hitting several receivers and linemen to move the offense into Gold's red zone.

On a third and short, Hawkins dialed up the out and up play and hit a speeding Brian VanCuren for

the game's only touchdown. Todd Bayles sealed the deal with the extra point.

White stayed undefeated for the season with a 10-0 win as Gold fell to a 1-1 season record.

Both teams look to meet again in June when the playoffs kick off.

▲ Reserve White's Chris Jackson launches down the sideline while Gold player Christopher Montalbano runs to stop the drive. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Caleb Wanzer)



## Former 970th pilot wins Boston Marathon division

Pat Rupel beats out more than 2,000 runners in the 60 to 64 year-old male division

by Staff Sgt. Caleb Wanzer

513th Air Control Group Public Affairs

When Pat Rupel crossed the finish line of the Boston Marathon last year, he planned on it being his last. The weather had been perfect for long-distance running with light winds and temperatures hanging in the 50s.

Rupel, a recently retired lieutenant colonel with the 970th Airborne Air Control Squadron at Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma, finished sixth in his age group with just five minutes over the three-hour mark on the clock. His brother, Ray, had convinced Rupel to run the Boston Marathon with him as a strong finish to Rupel's competition marathon career.

As the brothers and their families packed their luggage into a friend's SUV for the trip home just before 3 p.m., they heard what Rupel thought were metal bleachers crashing at the finish line. The group was less than a half-mile away from the line, so the noise was easily heard.

"The second bomb went off about 12 seconds later, and I knew it was a bomb," he said. "In about three or four minutes, we could see people running on the street, panicking."

As the minutes ticked by, the sounds of sirens grew. The police began to arrive and told Rupel's group to leave the area.

"I wouldn't say it was total chaos, but it was starting to go that way," he said.

The Rupel family stayed with friends outside the city for a few days before returning to Boston for their flight home. They drove back April 19, 2013, the day bombing suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was arrested in a massive manhunt in Woburn, Massachusetts, less than 15 miles from Boston's Logan International Airport.

"We weren't sure we could get back to the airport because everything was on lockdown," Rupel said. The normally busy streets were mostly empty, allowing them an easy drive.

It didn't take long after Rupel returned home to Edmond to decide to run the Boston Marathon again. He said that he felt he needed to run to support the people of Boston after the terrorism they faced during his last trip. His brother committed to running it with him, and they each began training again for the race.

"We started to plan to go back even a month after," Rupel said. "We had about a year of preparation. Usually, preparation starts about six months out."

He ran that summer with the

Mount St. Mary High School cross-country team in Oklahoma City, where he had been volunteering for the last five years.

Rupel's training routine, ranging from 40 to 70 miles a week, wasn't hampered that year by any injuries, he said. Since he began running marathons again in 2008, his injuries have become less common as his running technique improved.

When April rolled around again, Rupel was ready. He and his brother traveled to Boston on their own this time. The change in security between the two years was drastic.

"We got wanded at one checkpoint," he said. "We couldn't carry bags like we did last year."

The welcoming Bostonians more than made up for the tighter security, Rupel said. He thought people were friendly last year, but they went overboard this year to accommodate the athletes.

"The crowds were phenomenal," he said. As he ran, he heard people shouting "Go blue!" and "USA," referring to him by his bright blue Air Force shorts and tall socks with USA written on the sides.

The race stretched through mostly rural towns, but there were plenty of people lined along the route for encouragement, he said.



At about the halfway point, Rupel passed what has become known as the Scream Tunnel, a stretch of the route thronged by women from an all-girls college in nearby Wellesley, Massachusetts, who offer encouragement and tout hand-drawn signs offering free kisses to runners.

Rupel chatted a little with fellow runners, he said. He talked with a group of midshipmen from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, but spent the majority of his time concentrated on the run itself.

"Most of the time you're pretty focused," he said. "When you're

Left, Pat Rupel crosses a checkpoint April 21 at the 2014 Boston Marathon. He finished first in his division of more than 2,000 runners. (Courtesy photo)

Right, Rupel sits in his office at the 970th Airborne Air Control Squadron shortly before retiring in 2013. (U.S. Air Force photo)

competing like that, you don't waste too much time."

As he neared the finish line, one of his hamstrings started to cramp, forcing him to finish the race with a broken stride. His goal had been to finish this year in the top three



finishers, but the cramp stole at least two minutes of precious time.

The clock registered at 2:59:08 as he crossed. Rupel knew he did well, but he didn't expect to earn the top spot for the 60 to 64 year-old male division.

"I was a little shocked when I ended up first overall," he said.

Despite his strong performance in the April 21 race, Rupel said that this time is really the last. While he won't give up running completely, the 2014 Boston Marathon is the big finish to his 40-year marathon career.





**Major Matt Portno**

**Unit:** 970th Airborne Air Control Squadron

**Job title:** E-3 Pilot

**Hometown:** Holyoke, Massachusetts

**Civilian Job:** Realtor

**Place you'd like to visit:** Japan

**Favorite part of your job:** Being able to do what I love with some amazing people.

**Biggest pet peeve:** Being stuck on a sortie with another crew member who has bad gas.

**Little known fact about you:** I once had my own TV show.

**Favorite memory from your time in the 513th:** Probably my last deployment in 2012, when we were in Southwest Asia for 180 days. It was a Reserve-run deployment, and being gone for that long with the people I was with made it that much easier and enjoyable.

**If you had superhero ability, it would be:** I'd love to be able to teleport. Just think of how much of your life you'd get back not having to sit in a car! Plus, it would make for some pretty cool grand entrances. Poof! Here I am!



**Senior Airman Richard Keane**

**Unit:** 513th Maintenance Squadron

**Job title:** R and R Technician

**Hometown:** Madrid, Spain

**Civilian job:** Mechanic

**Place you'd like to visit:** Europe

**Favorite part of my job:** I get to use my hands and help my fellow Airman.

**Biggest pet peeve:** Finding parts to get the job done.

**Little known fact about me:** I'm easy to get along with and have a good sense of humor.

**Favorite memory from your time in the Air Force:** Working on the AWACS.

**If you had a superhero ability, it would be:** To have the strength of 10 men.

## Distracted driving: it can happen to you

'Be honest, are you always as attentive as you should be?

by **Senior Airman Alexis Siekert**  
*52nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs*

We all think, "That'll never happen to me." We've all read the statistics and heard the slogan, "Distracted driving is deadly driving" on the American Forces Network.

But be honest, are you always as attentive as you should be?

I'll admit it here, now, that I'm not.

Yes, I've taken my eyes off the road to change the radio station, check my hair in the mirror or rummage around my purse for my lip balm. And one of those very same everyday actions in the wrong moment changed my perspective on how I operate my vehicle.

On this particular morning, it all started with the simple act of locating my ID card.

Twenty seconds later, my car was on an entirely different road after flipping twice over a barrier.

The fact that I can type these words now is a miracle that is not lost on me. My car was totaled. The caved in roof was only part of the damage, yet I was able to walk away.

On the morning of my crash, I had plenty of time to get to work. I wasn't speeding, and my mind wasn't on anything other than the drive. As I got closer to the gate, I grabbed my wallet out of my pocket to get my ID. In the moment it took me to look down to make sure I had the right card, I veered off the road.

My tires screeched as I slammed on the breaks trying to correct my direction. I was traveling more than 40 mph when I narrowly missed oncoming traffic, took out a deer-crossing sign and two road markers before falling into the ditch. I don't remember the first turn, but I knew I was upside down the

### HOW NOT TO REPEAT MY MISTAKE

#### #1

Have your ID card or relevant papers out of your pocket and easily accessible before you start your vehicle.

#### #2

Have a passenger change the radio or navigate with GPS or their smartphone instead of taking your eyes and mind off the road.

#### #3

Even if it isn't answering a phone call or a text, merely one second of taking your eyes off the road can cause damage or injury.

Courtesy of:  
*Air Force Safety and  
513th ACG Safety*

second time when I could feel my weight being fully supported by my seatbelt. You could hear the shattering of my windows and metal on concrete just before I finally came to a stop.

I was very fortunate to walk away without a scratch, bump or bruise. I attribute most of this to German engineering, my seatbelt and a lot of luck. But I'm very aware that those three factors didn't cancel out the fact that what I did was wrong. I could have killed myself or someone else.

Now a week later, I am still trying to wrap my head around those few seconds before my crash. But beyond the shattered glass and the sirens of the police and ambulatory services, I knew that I had to change the way I measured risks because I can't count on being this lucky a second time.

I owed it to myself after the crash to write this story - not as a public affairs Airman merely meeting a weekly quota or as a recent survivor of an accident such as this doing community service awareness - but as a simple word of advice to my fellow Airmen.

This isn't a preachy "Don't do this" message--just a hope that no one reading this ever has to go through what I went through.

Perhaps you're like me and hadn't fully thought about these potential risks, but I hope none of you repeat my mistake.

Remember:  
**SAFETY BEGINS  
WITH YOU!**

513ACG.Safety@us.af.mil

## Where are they now?

**Col. George Gorham (1997-2003)**

**– In what positions did you serve at the 513th?**

Operations officer at the 970th, commander, vice group commander. I came at Col. Suggs' offer to be the operations officer for the 970th as it stood up. Later, I became the commander and finished as the vice group commander.



**– What is your current job?**

I am currently a history and English teacher with Edmond Public School system. I will be retiring at the end of this year.

**– What was one of the biggest challenges you faced while assigned to the 513th?**

Standing up a Reserve unit in Air Combat Command, which had very little experience with associate Reserve units, was a very challenging time. There were many roadblocks put in our way, yet we persevered and now you are an outstanding unit.

**– What is your favorite memory of the 513th?**

The way the entire unit responded to the activation for Kosovo. We had just experienced the 1999 devastating Oklahoma City tornado, yet the unit quickly responded and took over a vast amount of the active-duty commitments as they went elsewhere. The unit proved for the first time how outstanding it was in all situations.

**– Do you have any advice for current members?**

Stay focused on the mission; help each other in all facets of the mission and life. I have been through several downsizings of the Air Force, so stay focused on doing the best job you can each day.

## Promotions for May

Congratulations to this month's promotees!

**Staff Sgt.** Landon B. Ketchersid (513th MXS)

**Tech. Sgt.** Nicole K. Singh (970th AACCS)

**Tech. Sgt.** Jesse A. Ung (513th MXS)

**Master Sgt.** Jason P. Strayer (970th AACCS)

## Fit to Fight hall of fame



**Team Tinker**

**513th ACG**



### 1.5-Mile Run

Men: **7:51** **8:57** Men: TSgt Daniel McDonald

Women: **9:44** **12:07** Women: TSgt Krystal Stalder



### Pushups

Men: **110** **82** Men: SrA Robert Duncan

Women: **65** **48** Women: 2nd Lt. Lily Rollins



### Situps

Men: **109** **82** Men: 2nd Lt. Michael Doughty

Women: **84** **60** Women: 2nd Lt. Amie Deal

### 1-Mile Walk

Men & Women: **9:15** **11:22** Men: MSgt Darrell Freel

**13:57** Women: MSgt Elizabeth Staff

## Fit to Fight MVP's from April

**SSgt Nicholas Eckenrode**

Unit: 970th AACCS

Score: **97.9%**

**Maj. Cody Chitwood**

Unit: 970th AACCS

Score: **96.6%**