

TAILWIND

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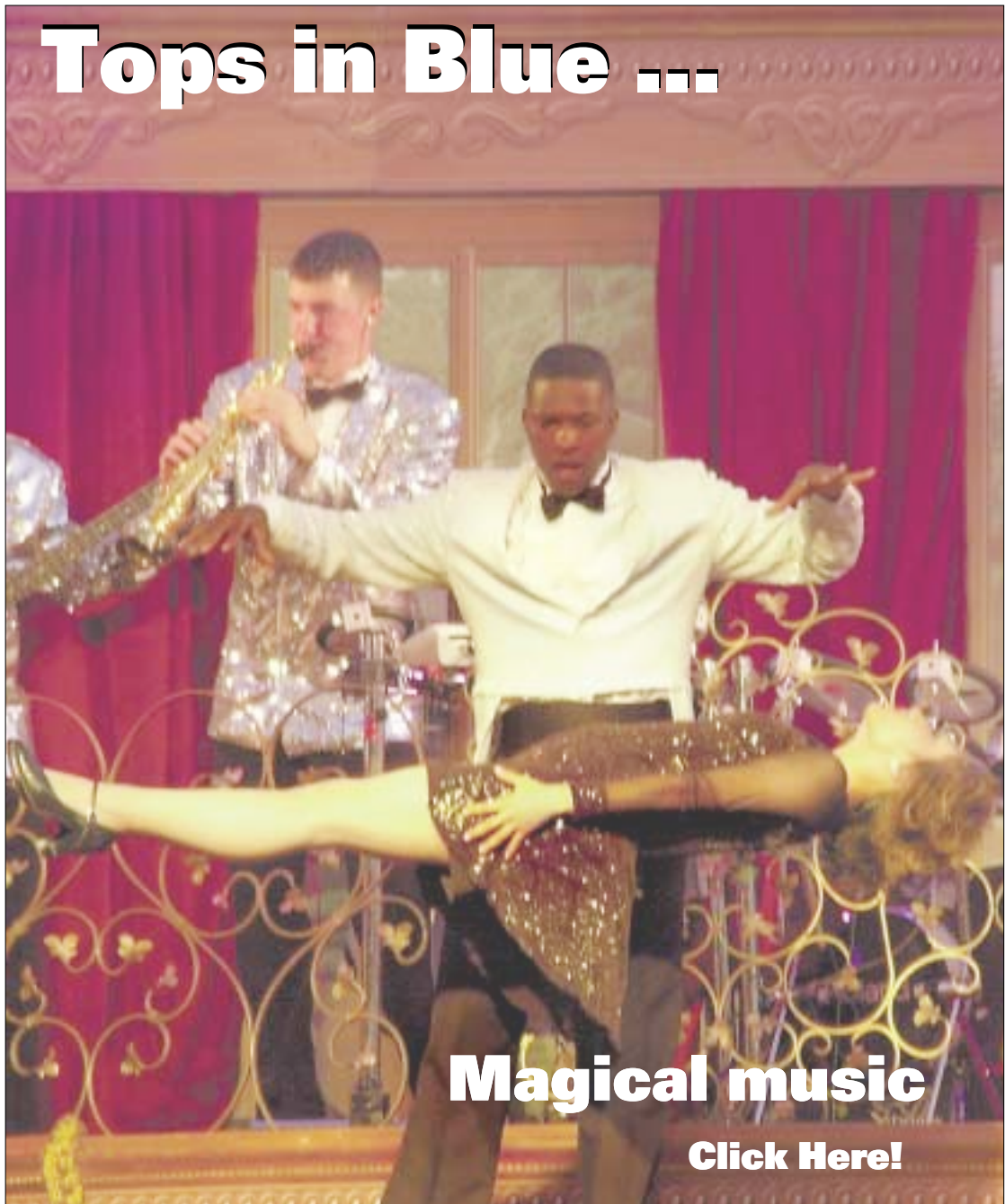
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Tops in Blue ...



Magical music

[Click Here!](#)

Energy tip: Use small fans, box fans or ceiling fans instead of the central air conditioning unit when you stay in one room for an extended period.

Words from the Top...

Team Travis is on the move

By Brig. Gen. Thomas P. Kane
60th Air Mobility Wing commander

As usual, Team Travis is scurrying about this week with our hair on fire! From Thursday through this weekend alone, we will deploy 150 members of our team to support an Inspector General Exercise, and the 615th Air Mobility Operations Group launches more than 75 people to two joint exercises. This on the heels of a presidential Banner mission to Europe and an Aerospace Expeditionary Force swap-out to include our own 120-day KC-10 deployment in support of Southern Watch. Some people have actually said they look forward to TDYs to get a rest from the hustle and bustle at home!

Thanks to the hard work of some of our best and brightest — including Lt. Col. Mark Dillon, Lt. Col. Jim Couch, Maj. Dennis Hensley, Maj. Chris Mardis, Capt. Alex Miravite, Capt. Dan Oosterhous, 1st Lt. Alvaro Solorzano, MSgt. Nate Middleton and Cheryl Brown — our 150-person C-5 team is ready for their Operational Readiness Inspection. They will fold into the IGX expeditionary wing along with 500 other active, reserve and Guard warriors prepared to demonstrate their readiness. The Air Force Inspector General, Lt. Gen. Raymond Huot, is in Savannah, Ga., observing the IGX in a "train and inspect as we plan to fight" environment. Bon chance to our warriors, be safe and show the IG why we are America's First Choice!

In the meantime, the rest of Team Travis continues to provide day-to-day care and feeding of Air Mobility Command's biggest base and the Gateway to the Pacific! After an audit of our "use or lose" leave statistics, it appears that slightly more than 95 percent of our military members took their 30-day leave entitlement this year. My question is, what happened to the other 5 percent? Despite under-manning in most of our areas and high ops tempo, commanders and most of the rest of us have taken time to use this entitlement. Take your leave! There are still 57 days left in the fiscal year for those of you who haven't had your priorities straight. The base and your unit can and will manage without you!

I don't know how many of you took time to go to Vacaville's Creekwalk Tuesday evening to watch the Tops in Blue performance, but for the more than

1,500 people who did, I think you will agree ... WOW! It's amazing how much talent we have in our Air Force!

My thanks for outstanding leadership in organizing the support for Tops in Blue goes to **Tim Wible** and many members of **Maj. Marc Bass' 60th Services Squadron** — including **Stephe Pierce, CMSgt. William Garner, MSgt. J.L. Brownfield, Christina Rommel, Kevin Foster, Sandy Sadorra and Margaret Lohry**; as well as **SSgt. Julie Cariglio, MSgt. Jose Fuentes, Cindi Williamson** from the Vacaville Park Service and Vacaville Mayor **Dave Fleming**.

Tops in Blue director **Tom Edwards** told me the group relishes coming to Travis, which provides a setting reminiscent of the USO Starlight tours of the past! It's great to take your family to these free events, and if you missed this one you can still take advantage of the many free outdoor concerts planned in Vacaville and Suisun through the rest of the summer. Take time to take your family out and enjoy some great entertainment. Special thanks again to Tops in Blue for another great performance!

We had three more great performances this week during ceremonies recognizing our people's achievements.

On July 26, Team Travis honored 55 graduates of the Sgt. Paul J. Ramoneda Airmen Leadership School. Congratulations to all the graduates, their families and those senior airmen who received special distinction: John L. Levitow winner **Douglas Williams**; distinguished graduates **Steven Reed, Ana Raquel Barton, Joseph Rivera, Judith Martinez and Heather Williams**; and Leadership Award winner **Michael Agustin**. All our graduates will be listed in next week's Tailwind.

While our senior airmen prepared to enter the ranks of junior NCO's, 141 of our junior NCO's were inducted as senior NCO's during a ceremony Wednesday. After a two-day mentoring and informational seminar these new master sergeants and their spouses, families and friends join the senior leadership team of the best air and space force in history — congratulations! Thanks to the Top 3 committee that put together the seminar and ceremony: **MSgt. Clifford Costello, MSgt. Sylvia Crowder, MSgt. Barbara LeRoy, MSgt. Lucinda Matteson, MSgt. Rebecca**



Brig. Gen. Thomas Kane, 60th Air Mobility Wing commander, and Gary Svatek, USPA & IRA, present Sean Jones with a \$200 merchandise gift certificate. Jones was the lucky winner of a drawing at Tuesday's Tops in Blue concert.

Raymond, MSgt. Kathy Barri- no, MSgt. Alfredo Saldivar, SMSgt. Diane Foote, SMSgt. Jerry Williams, SMSgt. Eric Harmon, SMSgt. Robert Petty and SMSgt. Hector Carrion.

The third major recognition event of the past week was the Team Travis Quarterly Awards ceremony held yesterday morning. Again, I am in awe of the tremendous people we have at Travis AFB! I will tell those of you who are new to Travis that in 27 years I have yet to see a more world-class recognition program anywhere! If you want to experience "No One Comes Close," come to the next quarterly awards. Thanks to our commanders, supervisors and other leaders for taking time to make each and every recognition event professional and memorable.

+If you haven't noticed, we are in the throes of a major base Focus Week! Each of the groups teamed up to tackle some of our traditional eye-sore areas: the Commissary and Base Exchange, the Military Family Housing area on Travis Boulevard and our dormitory area. Our Focus will be on tending to the much-neglected parking areas and high-traffic common use areas. Leading the way, the **60th Support Group** attacked the Commissary and BX with a vengeance ... super job, **red hats!** Now I expect you ALL to do your part to keep the area neat and clean! To my friends who can't seem to find the cart return areas and who leave AAFES and DeCA advertising and coupons in abandoned carts or just discard them in the parking lots, be prepared. Big Brother is watching, and you may be asked to join our elite Base Appearance Team. I need all of you to help keep Travis up to the standards you have come to expect from America's First Choice!

To help keep up our housing neighborhood standards in the future, today we will induct Team Travis mayors for eight of our 10 neighborhoods. These mayors — **Wes Housel, Heather Frye, Eric Jaren, Kristen**

Rodrigues, Tod Rosenberg, Dave Welch, Rickey Whitfield and Robin Copeland — act on my behalf to ensure the health, safety and appearance standards of our neighborhoods. They have direct access to me and are empowered to identify and resolve problems and enforce standards in our family housing and neighborhoods.

I expect everyone's cooperation in our neighborhood program. My goal is to expedite the replacement of the remaining 1,100 1960's-vintage houses before they become "crack houses" like 119 Virginia Street. Your efforts over the past year resulted in the award of \$21.4 million to replace the remaining 184 state street homes, but more remains to be done!

This week, I'll end by asking EVERYONE to get involved in Travis' number-one priority: affordable housing. As you have read in past issues, newcomers to Travis still need all of our help to find affordable and safe housing, whether they are unaccompanied airmen or airmen with families. The situation is not getting any better — our Basic Allowance for Housing still lags behind the inflation of the Solano County real estate market — and this definitely affects our readiness. Airmen can't perform 100 percent when they don't have safe and secure places to live or must constantly worry about how to pay the rent. After studying the situation and talking to our people, I have concluded this housing situation also is a major retention detractor!

If you have a home or rental, or know of one in a safe neighborhood, I need you to bring it to the attention of our housing staff (specifically **1st Lt. Nikki Schwartz**) by e-mail. If you can, list that property using the Travis AFB "M2M" Web site at www.M2Mreferral.com; it will assist new families in identifying an affordable and safe place much quicker! Thank you for your support and understanding. I love being your wing commander! And, if we ever complete the moat around the base, I may get to stay here until we replace those 1,100 homes.

Tailwind

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Michael Moseley / Daily Republic liaison

ON THE COVER: Tops in Blue show off their magical talents at Tuesday's Creekwalk concert in Vacaville.

When it comes to entertainment 'No One Comes Close' to Tops in Blue

Michael T. Moseley
Daily Republic liaison

They load and unload their own equipment, drive their own trucks, set up their own sound and lighting systems, play their own instruments, sing their own songs, do all their own dance steps, perform all of their own stunts, then move on to the next venue and do it all over again. They are the men and women of the Air Force's premier talent showcase: Tops in Blue.

The man who has kept this entertainment flight in the air for the past 30 years is Thomas Edwards. Acting as producer and director of the Tops in Blue tour, Edwards never puts together a show until he first sees the talent he'll be dealing with each year.

According to Edwards, it takes more than just talent to be a good performer, you have to "feel" the music.

"I'm looking for people who are willing to take their God-given talent and run with it," Edwards said. "Don't hold back, let it flow."

Years ago, to be considered as a member of Tops in Blue, an Air Force member had to compete in three annual talent contests — base level, major command and Worldwide. Placing in the top three in any particular category, in any of the competitions, could move the performer on to the next level. At Worldwide, the top performers in each category were interviewed by Edwards and his staff for consideration in Tops in Blue.

That practice ended in 1994, when rules to join this elite team changed. Today, prospective performers are required to make a video tape to send to Edwards and his staff, though some bases still hold annual talent shows.

"Some people just set up a camera and shoot themselves singing in front of their refrigerator or whatever," Edwards said. "Some try to make the tape look professional, but that's not what I look for. I just look for potential. Is there a potential for that person to be in the show?"

After the tapes are reviewed, about 80 contestants are chosen to attend the Worldwide competition.

"In the old days we'd have 250 people at Worldwide," Edwards recalled. "You talk about that many people at Worldwide to these people and it amazes them."

During the Worldwide competition, contestants attend interviews, dance trials, music auditions, specialty training sessions, and do a live performance. It's not an easy thing to get through according to Edwards.

"By the time I see them, they've been through all this, each segment with a panel of seven judges," he said. "I pretty much know everything about them by then." That's when he begins to write the show.

"The problem with a lot of people [in the Air Force] is that they see these people performing up here and think 'I couldn't do that.' Well, none of these people thought they could do that either."

Edwards believes that whatever talent he needs for a show, he can find in the Air Force. This year, Edwards decided he needed a magician — so he created one.

"He's actually a comedian," Edwards said of SSgt. Walter Campbell. "We designed the props for the show and had someone come in and teach him how to do the tricks."

Campbell, a supply systems analyst at Spangdahlem AB, Germany, performs three illusions in the tour this year. At the beginning of the show, to the strains of "A Brand New World," Campbell performs a short Zombie ball routine which results in the appearance of a levitating woman. Later in the show, Campbell is joined by an assistant, SrA Natalia Maldonado, a security communications journeyman from Beale AFB, Calif., to perform an illusion made famous by the husband and wife team of Jonathan and Charlotte Pendragon. The illusion is simply called "Metamorphosis." Campbell's final illusion always breaks SrA Katherine Palmer up. Palmer, an operations resource management journeyman from Davis Monthan AFB, Ariz., is placed in a cabinet comprised of four compartments. Campbell, with the assistance of SrA Michelle Brown, a logistics planner apprentice from Offutt AFB, Neb., disassembles the cabinet while Palmer is still inside. Logistics planning is then required to reassemble Palmer's body correctly.

Keeping the theme "The Magic of Music" in this year's show, Edwards throws in one more magical number as A1C Vince Remo, a medical services apprentice from Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C., sings and dances with a floating cane before being joined by the rest of the ensemble.

Just like any other unit in the Air Force, Tops in Blue has a mission, and as Edwards sees it, that mission is simple: "Our main job is to uplift the morale of the troops."

The members of this elite organization realize that, like charity, moral support begins at home. Just before the group's performance in Vacaville's Andrews Park, A1C Kristina Robinson, a special operations communicator from Hulbert Field, Fla., broke her arm while unloading equipment.

"I was shocked to see her at the show," said Maj. Ivan Thompson, an Air Expeditionary Force manpower officer stationed at the Pentagon.

"You don't know what it's like," said Edwards, "to sit in an emergency room and wait to see if one of the performers is going to miss a show, be sent home altogether or what. But she wanted to do the show."

And do the show she did, but not without the support of her fellow performers.

"They helped me do my make-up, did my hair, they're my family," Robinson said tearfully.

With Robinson's arm in a sling, it was up to wardrobe designer Jeri White to step in with a little improvisational costuming. She made sure every outfit had a matching sling.

Robinson's broken arm wasn't the only physical injury endured by a member of Tops in Blue while performing for the Travis crowd.

SrA Ryan Ennis, a munitions storage crew journeyman from Anderson AFB, Guam, was suffering from a severe injury to his inner ear. Unable to take medication when performing, Ennis sang and danced through the pain, intensified by loud noise, and completed the show without complaint. His solo "How Do You Like Me Now?" was his tribute to determination.

According to Edwards, however, it takes more than just support from within for the team to put on a good show.

"Oh, they love this concert feel," Edwards said, referring to the outdoor venue of Andrews Park. "There were people peeking out from behind

trees. This is truly like performing in the woods."

That's a good thing, Edwards said, pointing out that they would rather perform in a relaxed environment like a park. It's also important for the crowd to get involved.

"It's hard for performers when they don't get a reaction from the crowd to not feel like they're failing," Edwards said.

For that reason, the troupe often leaves the comfort of their controlled environment — the stage — and ventures down into the crowd, singing to and sometimes dancing with various audience members. At one point, several spectators were even brought up on stage to perform the Twist — with Hula Hoops.

And so it goes for 11 straight months, across the United States and through 20 foreign countries. Singing and dancing to hits from country to pop, from rock to hip-hop, from jazz to rhythm and blues, Tops in Blue brings an Air Force mindset to the public at large — "I'm Proud to be an American."

As the entire ensemble sang the words to that popular song Tuesday night in Andrews Park, more than 2,000 people stood in unison on the phrase, "I'd gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today, 'cause there ain't no doubt I love this land. God bless the U.S.A."

"God bless Tops in Blue," Brig. Gen. Thomas P. Kane, 60th Air Mobility Wing commander, told the performers after the show. "You are the best of us. When I see the smiles on the faces of the children, I say to myself, 'That's what it's all about.' You're saying to the world, 'Thank you for understanding our mission.'"

CMSgt. Dan Johnson, 60th AMW command chief master sergeant, echoed Kane's sentiments. "You mean everything to us, to the community, to the country. Thank you for representing the United States Air Force so perfectly."

"It's more than what they mean to the Air Force," Kane agreed. "It's what they mean to the country as a whole. They present a talent for the children to see and desire to imitate. I think it's safe to say that just like our Air Force motto, when it comes to talent, 'No One Comes Close' to Tops in Blue."

Edwards adds that it takes more than just their small group to put on a good show.

"It's easy to get support on an Air Force base," he said. "But, out here in the civilian world, it's nice to know we're loved as well."

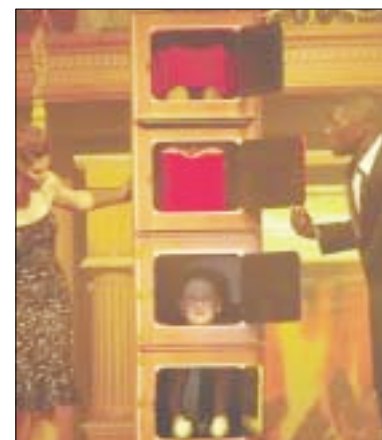
Vacaville Mayor Dave Fleming was more than thrilled that Tops in Blue returned to the Creekwalk this year.

"More than 70 percent of Travis airmen live in Vacaville," Fleming said. "There are many more retirees here, too, so it's only right that Tops in Blue should be here."

"Tim Wible [manager of the Westwind Inn] was fantastic," Edwards stated. "Whatever we needed, he got it. We love playing Travis."

After the crowds, commanders and concessionaires had left the park, Edwards gathered with his team, joined by family and friends, to toast former members who were present and comrades through the years.

Capt. Katheryn Ellis, 60th Medical Operations Squadron, was with the troupe last year and was on hand to toast them this year, saying, "When I



Michael T. Moseley / Daily Republic liaison

(Top), Thomas Edwards, Tops in Blue producer and director for the past 30 years, scrutinizes the performance in Andrews Park, Vacaville. (Left center), SrA Katherine Palmer waves cheerily to the crowd before being dismantled and reassembled — incorrectly, much to her chagrin (right center). (Above), SSgt. Walter Campbell produces a levitating woman during the opening sequence of the show. (Right), Campbell and SrA Natalia Maldonado perform the legendary "Metamorphosis" illusion.



Michael T. Moseley / Daily Republic liaison

(Left), The entire Tops in Blue ensemble finishes the performance with "God Bless the U.S.A." (Below, far left), A1C Spencer Massieno-Allen performs Chuck Barry's famous duck walk. (Below, center), SrA John Cappuccio, puts down his saxophone to strut his stuff in a "three-minute country love song." (Below), A1C Vince Remo combines two of the 1960's most popular crazes — the Twist and the Hula Hoop (six to be exact).



(Above left), Six audience members are coaxed on stage to assist Tops in Blue in bringing back the Twist, this time with Hula Hoops. (Above), SrA Michael Hosmon and his fellow country singers croon "One More Day" to SrA Natalia Maldonado and her cowgirls. (Far left), A1C Kristina Robinson broke her arm at 1:30 p.m. the day of the performance. With a different cast and sling to match each wardrobe, Robinson went on to show that even in the Air Force entertainment division the mission must go on. (Left), SrA Ryan Ennis also performed in pain from an inner ear injury which increased with the noise of the music.