

## Fireman's Challenge in Oman pairs up Army Space with Air Force



Above, 2LT Keith Woodburn, of the 193rd Space Battalion goes for the gusto during the Fireman's Competition held in the Sultanate of Oman. Woodburn, dressed in helmet and a life pack, is saddled with 50 feet of S-rolled hose on his shoulder while dragging another 250 feet of hose as he is cheered on by teammates Senior Airman Heather Shields and fellow Space soldier, SSG Kent Brandsted. Opposite page, top, Cheered on by Senior Airman Heather Shields (in Army tee-shirt) — 2LT Keith Woodburn pounds a railroad tie three feet with his sledgehammer. Team Army-Air Force poses with their prizes after finishing in fourth place out of nine teams that competed in the Fireman's Challenge. Army Space Command Photos

By LTC Michael Yowell

**O**MAN — “GO ARMY AIR FORCE!!!!” That was the cheer of the interservice team during the 405th Air Expeditionary Wing’s first Fireman’s Challenge in the Sultanate of Oman. On a sunny 90-degree Sunday afternoon, three members of the Army Space Command’s Test and Evaluation unit joined with three Air Force Medical Group members for a series of challenging events. Team composition was simple, a six-person team with at least one female member. While eight other Air Force teams were formed five men to one woman, the Army-Air Force went fifty-fifty.

Air Force Capt. Alicia Wright, a Life Skills social worker with the base Medical Group, spearheaded the team’s true equal flavor and recruitment. Staff Sgt. Melissa Buss and Senior Airman Heather Shields

were with Wright on the same flight to the base in January and quickly joined her. Their challenge came when balancing the team makeup.

“We went to this event with the sole intention of having a good time instead of being hell-bent on winning,” said Wright. “We didn’t even know what we were going to do beforehand other than the requirement to be able to carry a 125-pound dummy.” Having recently arrived, Wright saw the Army Space soldiers and decided to ask them to join in. “Most people do not even realize that there are Army soldiers on base,” added Buss.

Being on a base of nearly 2,000 airman makes the six soldiers from the 193rd Space Battalion, Colorado Army National Guard, quite invisible but 2LT Keith Woodburn, SSG Kent Brandsted and SGT Michael

Hurley eagerly accepted Wright's offer. Each member had to compete in two events during the challenge and all six had to take part in the last event. In true team spirit, all Air Force members sported Army T-shirts.

Starting off the six events, Hurley had to race a three-inch fully charged fire hose 100 feet, then shoot water through a window until the bucket inside filled — striving for the speediest completion time. Buss then took her turn with the best of the two times counting for the team. "The hose knocked the wind out of me as soon as I turned it on. I'm glad that someone from base fire was standing behind me," said Buss. The team started off well with the best time of all the teams.

Having watched the other teams in the first event, team "Army-Air Force" strategized that the key to the Fireman's Challenge was not so much speed and agility but rather thinking about what you were doing before doing it. With that in mind — and no rest breaks between events — they started off on the second event of rolling out three 50-foot sections of hose and connecting them before the entire team had to race to the end to shout "Fighting Fire" three times. They then had to reverse the process by dropping the hose, disconnecting it, and s-rolling the hose before dashing across the finish line.

Dressed in a fireman's helmet and bunker gear, Woodburn negotiated a traffic cone course with 50 feet of hose on his shoulder before dragging a roped truck tire 50 feet. Lastly he used a sledgehammer to drive a railroad tie three feet. Tagging his similarly dressed partner, Brandsted dragged a fire hose and had to shoot at two windows — filling two buckets — before hefting a 125-pound dummy and carrying it 100 feet.

Following the combined event, Hurley had to move a dummy 50 feet, drop it and drag another dummy back before tagging Buss to repeat the process.

One of the hardest events found Woodburn dressed

again in helmet and a life pack, saddled with 50 feet of s-rolled hose on his shoulder and dragging another 250 feet of hose all the way until it was fully stretched. Then Woodburn had to run it back while Wright and Shields s-rolled the hose back up.

Finally the entire team raced with canvas buckets to douse a roof designed to drain into a 55-gallon drum.

The team quickly realized that it had to pace the water flow onto the roof since too much at once would overshoot the drain and waste time.

Quickly they had it filled to the second ring on the barrel, and their challenge was complete.

"It was hard work," reflected Woodburn. "It was a good thing to break up the monotony of the day-in day-out work schedule here."

Competition was very tight throughout the challenge and team "Army-Air Force" took fourth place. Prizes for the team included 405th AEW T-shirts, mugs, coffee cups and key lanyards. The Fireman's Challenge was so popular that it will be a monthly base event. No doubt Team Army-Air Force will aim to improve its standing.

