

Retired Air Force mechanic still flying high

By John Melvin Patterson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Millions have watched the Thunderbirds, a precision U.S. Air Force flying team, perform miracles in the air.

Thanks to Doug Gibson and others like him, Thunderbird pilots have been able to create the air wizardry that has made the outfit a fan favorite.

For 22 years, Gibson, a Las Vegas resident and businessman, kept the planes running smooth with his deft hands. He was a mechanic.

"I was able to keep my mind on my work — the pilot's lives were at risk — but, I felt as if I were walking on air, I was that happy, and proud," Gibson recalls.

Since his junior year in high school in Hampton, S.C., Gibson dreamed of being an aircraft mechanic.

At 14, he was already a skilled repairman, fixing household appliances, lawn mowers and automobiles.

Soon after graduation from North District High School, Gibson entered the Air Force. The training hereceived at Shepard Air Force Base in Texas, coupled with his natural talent, put his career on solid footing.

His enlistment — especially with the Thunderbirds — allowed him to travel extensively,

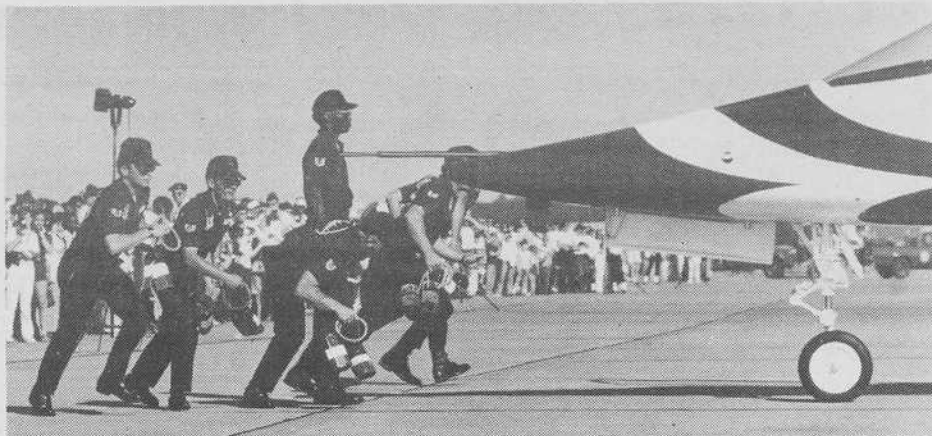


Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

Tech. Sergeant Doug Gibson freezes at attention while an Air Force Thunderbird comes to a stop during an air show.

meet celebrities and cultivate some long-lasting friendships. One of his friends still is Air Force General Lloyd "Fig" Newton, the first black pilot for the Thunderbirds.

After 22 years, he decided it was time to hang up the wrench. "The traveling was the thing that tired us out," Gibson said of his family. "We felt it was time to settle down, put down our roots."

Since he served at Nellis for a majority of his enlistment and the family had grown accustomed to Las Vegas, he decided to make the city home.

Gibson and his wife, Louvenia, have three children.

While enlisted, Gibson earned the designation as number one crew chief. That honor meant he was the best Air Force mechanic

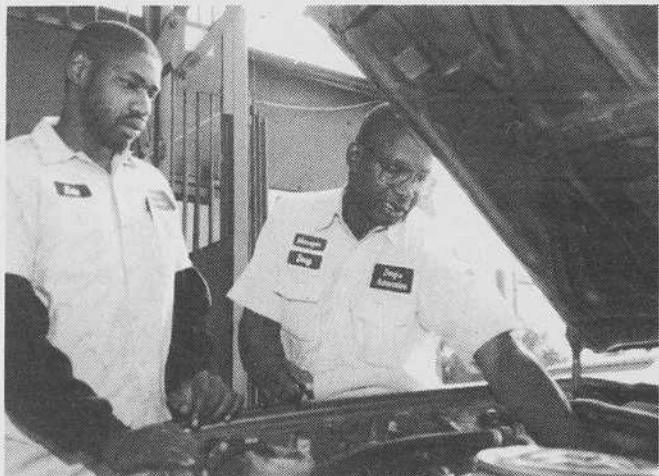
in the world.

For more than a decade, Gibson has put that same skill to work in his own business, Doug's Auto & Elec. Emission located at 1601 N. "D" St. "Going into business for yourself is part of the American dream," he said.

Every chance he gets to counsel young people, he delivers the same message, a message he says has helped him succeed in the Air Force and in life.

"Persevere! Never give up! Dreams do come true!" he said.

"Get a good education and work hard. When you become successful, you'll be filled with so much pride you'll think you'll bust open. Your loved ones will be extremely proud of you, and so will the community."



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Doug Gibson, right, helps fellow mechanic Eric Jordan fix a car at his repair shop on Tuesday.

Contest showcases talent, raises money

By Angela Khristin Brown
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Las Vegas' best and brightest, more than 300 in all, showcased their musical, dance and artistic skills during the World Class Talent Show sponsored by KCEP Rhythm Radio FM 88.1

The Oct. 30 show at UNLV's Artemus Ham Hall, which served as a fund raiser, hinted a bright future for home-grown talent, organizers said.

Acts like Serena, Higher Ground and the Las Vegas High Steppers enchanted the crowd with their talent. The performances sung of pride.

KCEP general manager Sherman Rutledge also beamed with pride.

"Each performer did extremely well," he said. The show afforded young performers an opportunity to be competitive, he said. "The talent show also builds character and gives the youth the opportunity to seek a career in the industry."

The performances warmed the audience. The crowd cheered as family, friends and other great talent took center stage.

Only the best are chosen to participate, Rutledge said.

"There was a lot of great talent who participated this year," he said. Just getting to perform signaled amazing talent.

"There were 300 contenders who auditioned in areas such as special vocalist, solo vocalist, group vocalist, gospel, and dance," Rutledge said.

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"Each artist act was videotaped and reviewed in 6 categories on a point system. Only the highest scored were chosen to be a part of the show."

The show was moved to Ham Hall for audience convenience. Last year's event took place at the Sammy Davis Jr. Festival Plaza at Lorenzi Park.

Rutledge said it is too early to know if station has met its fund-raising goal but, he said, "It looks promising."

Winner's of the 1997 World Class Talent Show were: Comedy: *Brandon Severs*, first place; *Malt Duck*, second place; *Kevin Figgers*, third place. Rap: *Leland Smith*, first place; *Alaze*, second place; *Murderous Click 420*, third place. Singer: *Momo*, first place; *Bettina McKinney*, second place; *Resse Covey*, third place. Group Singers: *Knia*, first place; *Sincere*,

second place; *Shade of Ebony*, third place. Gospel: *Mecca Madison*, first place; *S.W.O.R.D.*, second place; *The Bishop*, third place. Miscellaneous: *Kimyah Fuggins*, first place; *Say It With Signs*, second place; *Flexstyle*, third place. Dance: *Byron Smith*, first place; *Mixed Q*, second place; *Space Cadets*, third place.



Sentinel-Voice photo by John Broussard

Sherman Rutledge, general manager of radio station KCEP-FM 88.1, acknowledges all the contestants who participated in the 1997 World Class Talent Show last Thursday at UNLV's Artemus Ham Hall.

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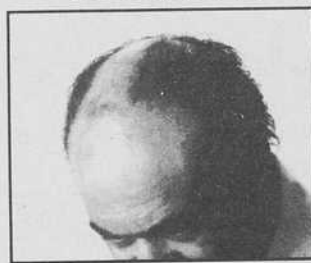
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First place winners, left to right, Kimyah Fuggins, Knia (group singers), Mecca Madison (front), Momo, Byron Smith, Leland Smith and Brandon Severs (rear), show off their trophies from the talent show held at Ham Hall last Thursday.

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