

# Guardsmen died serving country

by **Barbara Crane**

**Tundra Times reporter**

**EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE —** Hundreds of friends, fellow Alaska National Guard members and representatives from the other military branches gathered Sept. 23 to attend a memorial service honoring Master Sgt. William Malico and Master Sgt. Cheryl Helgerman.

Malico, 36, and Helgerman, 28, died in a Sept. 20 explosion and fire which destroyed their Air Guard KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft. They were boom operators, responsible for the inflight refueling of other aircraft from their tanker.

"Having Bill here made every job easier," said Lt. Col. Charles Johns. "He saw his job as being whatever needed to be done."

"Cheryl wasn't a quitter," recalled 2nd Lt. Wendy Brennan. "She always wanted more, wanted to go beyond."

Brig. Gen. John Stafford said it was important to remember that Malico and Helgerman died in the service of their country.

"But don't forget they also lived every day serving their country, their community, their friends and their families," Stafford said. "They were good people."

The cause of the explosion and fire is still under investigation by a military board.