



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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2,400 ACRES, EIGHT FIREFIGHTERS, EIGHT AERIAL PORTERS, TWO RUNWAYS AND ONLY ONE ... NORTH FIELD GROUNDSKEEPER

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – At Charleston AFB, there are hundreds of workers who maintain the facilities, equipment and grounds. At North Auxiliary Airfield, S.C., there's only one.

Quinton Wallings, the engineer and equipment operator at the 437th Civil Engineer Squadron's North Field Division, is responsible to care for more than 2,400 acres. He cuts the grass, a never-ending project; fixes the roads, which are subject to fallen branches, being washed out or visited by wild animals; and does minor maintenance of the equipment at North Field.

"His official title is groundskeeper," said Jeff Feltner, 437 CES North Field lead firefighter. "It sounds fairly simple, but he's responsible for all the equipment out here. He's a jack-of-all-trades.

"He's very dedicated, and is a vital part of the North Field machine," Feltner continued. "We couldn't get by without him."

North Field, primarily a training base, consists of two runways, equipment and personnel drop zones, and a fire station. There are 15-20 people who continually support the mission of North Field. Of those, Feltner said there are a minimum of eight firefighters on duty, eight aerial porters (to assist with aerial drops), two combat controllers and the grounds-keeper.

Feltner said at CAFB, Foreign Object Damage is a big thing. At North Field, it's wild animals that find their way onto the runway.

"A wild bull was loose on this base about four months ago," said Feltner. "(Wallings) went off base to all the local farms to find the owner."

Wallings said he never did catch the bull. He also said he sees deer everyday and must keep them away from the flightline.

Wallings' love for his work is evident.

"I plan on staying here until I die," said Wallings. "I hope to retire here. I love it because it's outside work, and there's nobody to bother you. I enjoy working outside."

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Controlling the grass at North Field is Wallings' largest job. Grass covers most of the 2,400 acres of North Field.

"I like to be out cutting grass and getting my job done," said Wallings. "Cutting grass is (hard) work, but I enjoy it. In the winter I do a lot of control burning of the grass to prepare for the summer. It's hard to keep up with the grass around here."

The 15-year groundskeeping veteran of North Field helps out almost everyone at the site with minor repairs or cleaning.

"He helps us if something breaks down here," said Feltner. "He's a great guy, and he doesn't ask for anything in return."

Wallings said he also assists the tower with cleanup.

"The people in the tower inspect the runway," said Wallings. "But they come to me to get stuff done. I vacuum the runway if there's anything on it. I also work with their flying schedule to cut (grass) around the lights."

Wallings doesn't stop at helping just his coworkers.

"I found a stray cat, and decided to take care of it," said Wallings. "Everyone loves the cat. I just feed it and give it a place to stay."

Before starting work at North Field, the 55-year-old was a foreman for the South Carolina Highway Department, which ended up being his bridge to North Field.

"I worked for the highway department, and I knew the operator who worked here before me," said Wallings. "I used to give him pipe for different projects he had here." Weeks went by, and it had been a while since Wallings saw the groundskeeper. He decided to ask the supervisor where he went.

"The supervisor said he had changed jobs and went back to Fort Jackson (Columbia, S.C.), and he asked me if I wanted the job," said Wallings. "I thought about it for a while and decided to take the job."

Wallings said when he first started at North Field, the job wasn't nearly as large as it is now.

"There's more grass to cut," said Wallings. "The place got larger, and there's more to keep up."

The small town of North, S.C., located just outside the gate of North Field, is where the versatile handyman has spent his life.

"I was born two miles from here," said Wallings. "I've never stayed more than five miles from the gate."

Wallings' family consists of a wife, Cathy, and four children, Christine, Renee, Jason and Nicole.

Feltner said Wallings works like a well oiled machine, always getting the job done.

"He's very self-supporting," said Feltner. "When he leaves this place, they are going to have a hard time filling his shoes."

"On a personal level, he's someone you always want to be friends with," continued Feltner. "On a professional level, you can't go wrong with someone like Mr. Wallings."

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