

# Awards, retirement, conference, visitors keep us busy

By Col. James Norris  
437 AW vice commander

Brig. Gen. Bishop is TDY this week. He departed Sunday for London, England to speak at a military airlift conference, composed of United Kingdom military, government and industry representatives. This conference is being held to explore European military airlift requirements for the next century. They invited in a number of military airlift experts, including General Bishop. Conference attendees were looking forward to his insights as the keynote speaker from his experiences as the Director of Mobility Forces during our Kosovo engagement.

General Bishop departed the U.K. Tuesday and flew directly to St. Louis and Scott Air Force Base, Ill. to attend Phoenix Rally, a gathering of the Air Mobility Command senior leadership. He is back in the office today.

I had the pleasure of greeting Maj. Gen. Scott C. Bergren, the director of maintenance, deputy chief of staff for Installations and Logistics, Headquarters U.S. Air Force who arrived Monday afternoon. He was the chairman of the Maintenance Executive Review Group conference held here this week.

In addition, we are glad to welcome back to Charleston Col. Glenn Locklear, a former 437<sup>th</sup> Logistics Group commander. The review group this week was discussing a number of key logistics issues affecting the United States Air Force. Charleston was glad to play host to this group.

The 437<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Personnel and Education Training Manager of the Year award ceremony was held Wednesday at the Charleston Club. The following folks won the Outstanding USAF Personnel Manager of the Year base honors for their respective categories: Capt. Richard Erredge, Lt. Charles Cates, Master Sgt. Russel McCray, Staff Sgt. Juan Marrero, Senior Airmen Isaac Weary, Staff Sgt. Lisa Barkman, Senior Airmen Howard W. Capps Jr. and Kerry Barnett.

Receiving top honors for the base Air Force Education and Training Manager Award were Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Schoenrock, Staff Sgt. Pamela Goode, and Staff Sgt. Tabitha Davis. My congratulations to all! The competition was really keen and I was really proud to have the opportunity to participate in the ceremony.

Today, Chief Master Sgt. Larry Hill from the 437<sup>th</sup> Comptroller Squadron retires at 2 p.m. in a ceremony in the Charleston Club. Best wishes to Chief Hill, Mary

and his daughter, Melissa, and son, LJ, as they move back home to Dayton, Ohio, and expect to find employment in the local area. We wish you continued success.

On Thursday, I had a chance to meet with retired Col. Jack Mechanic, director of the Omaha, Neb. Operating Location for the Defense Finance and Accounting Center. He was the guest speaker for the American Society of Military Comptrollers dinner that evening and was also here to preside over Chief Master Sgt. Larry Hill's retirement ceremony.

I also had an opportunity to meet with retired Chief Master Sgt. Greg O'Donoghue, our representative on the USAF Retiree Council who was our special guest at the Retiree Activities Office Christmas party at the Charleston Club on Thursday. As a member of the Retiree Affairs Council, the chief is our retirees' direct link to the Air Force Chief of Staff.

As the holiday party season gets underway, I remind everyone to have a great time during the holiday season, but don't mar the festivities with a DUI incident. The holiday rush is on to buy gifts for families and friends and "caution" is the operative word as the roads and parking lots will be jam-packed with people. Enjoy the holiday season!

By Chief Master Sgt.  
James Morton  
6<sup>th</sup> Medical Group

Dec. 1 marks the 40th anniversary of the first person promoted to the grade of chief master sergeant.

The mere mention of the title "chief" brings to mind visions of wisdom, strength, bravery, commitment and honor. But the grade of chief master sergeant actually has a humble history.

Originally recommended by the Cordiner

## Highest Air Force enlisted rank rich in history

Committee (formally known as the Defense Advisory Committee on Professional and Technical Compensation) in 1957, the creation of the "supergrades," E-8 and E-9, was driven primarily by grim enlisted retention figures over the previous 10 years.

In 1949, more than 80 percent of first-term airmen left the service after their first tour. With the Soviet Union's launch of "Sputnik" sending waves of panic through our government, and military leaders reporting to Congress that U.S.-based strategic bombers couldn't get off the ground in response to a missile attack due to lack of skilled maintenance personnel, Congress took heed.

In early 1956, Congress commissioned then General Electric's president, Ralph J. Cordiner, to review the reasons for poor retention. The Cordiner Committee found that sophisticated weapon systems were causing more and more time to be spent in training, rather than in actual work within an airman's specialty.

Additionally, the committee reported that most airmen could expect much higher pay in comparable civilian positions. They reported a significant pay inversion between supervisory and subordinate personnel, and

finally, found severe promotion stagnation at the grade of E-7.

In response to the committee's recommendations, President Eisenhower signed Public Law 85-422, establishing the two new highest enlisted grades for all services and a new compensation system aimed at reducing turnover.

An extremely important underlying reason for the creation of chief master sergeant was to show young men and women serving their first term that there was significant prestige in becoming a senior non-commissioned officer in terms of both pay and position. Air Force leaders also saw this as an opportunity to slowly do away with the warrant officer ranks.

The Air Force initially selected 2,000 personnel for promotion to senior master sergeant, with actual dates of rank being Sept. 1, 1958, and March 1, 1959. Of those initial 2,000 senior master sergeant selects, 1,700 were later selected for promotion to chief master sergeant, with 620 being promoted on Dec. 1, 1959. The remainder of promotions were withheld until June of 1960 due to budgetary limitations.

Some will say many of the same situations that prompted creation of chief master

sergeant exist today: pay disparity between supervisory and subordinate personnel, alarming retention rates, perceptions of better pay in the civilian community.

Regardless, over the past 40 years the Air Force has made tremendous strides in highlighting the prestige associated with becoming a senior NCO and ultimately, a "chief." The creation of the senior enlisted advisor (now command chief master sergeant) and the chief master sergeant of the Air Force positions demonstrated the leadership commitment to recognizing the contributions and value of our enlisted corps.

Despite some continued difficulties in utilization and compensation of our enlisted corps, take it from someone who recently attained the enlisted ladder's promotion pinnacle — it's great to be a chief. I cannot imagine a nation or military service bestowing any greater honor than to select and trust someone to mold, mentor, protect and lead one of its greatest national treasures: the outstanding men and women of our enlisted corps — the future leadership of the greatest aerospace force the world has ever known.

*(Editor's note: A SNCO Academy paper, "Super Grade Creation," written by Senior Master Sergeant Michael Stewart, and "History of Directorate of Military Personnel," published by the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel (1958) were used in preparation for this article.)*

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