

COMMENTARY

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AIRLIFT
Dispatch

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Wing staff among those who impress me

By Col. Vern "Rusty" Findley II
437 AW commander

I am still actively visiting squadrons and groups this week and will be for the next few weeks. This past week, I had an excellent opportunity to visit with the wing staff and learned about many of the great projects they are working. I started with an overview by Lt. Col. Craig Armstrong, director of wing staff, and then spent the week visiting with the Inspector General, Manpower and Organization, Chapel, Military Equal Opportunity, Retiree Activities, Plans, Command Post, Staff Judge Advocate, Public Affairs, Historian and Protocol.

We have a busy wing staff involved in many programs that directly benefit the entire wing. Whether that is handling a congressional staffer visit or ensuring a servicemember gets reimbursed for damages from a household goods shipment, the folks on the wing staff are doing great things for all our 437 AW personnel.

While visiting the chapel, I finally succeeded in getting Senior Airman Tasha Palmer, the chapel funds manager, to smile with a little persuasion and perhaps a little arm-twisting on my part. Our new chapel is certainly a fabulous facility. It is the best chapel I have seen in a long time, and it is easy to see why it won a 1997 design award among all buildings within Air Mobility Command.

I flew two sorties this weekend and had an absolutely fabulous time. It was really great to finally get up in the air again and fly this world-class airplane. I got to experience many of the different capabilities of the C-17 to include air refueling with a KC-10, flying a low-level route and practicing assault landings at North Auxiliary Airfield. The whole weekend was great.

At the MacDill AFB airshow, I participated in the "mentoring tent." This is where they bring senior leaders in from all the services and people, young and old, learn more about the Air Force and our sister services. We had many people visit the tent and I hope to implement a similar mentoring tent at our airshow in October. It is a great way to help our recruiters!

The biggest highlight, however, was flying down there March 31. My thanks to instructor pilot Maj. James Regenor, pilot Capt. Sandra Chandler, co-pilot 1st Lt. Blane Howell, and loadmaster Staff Sgt. Christopher Schick. All were from the 17th Airlift Squadron. Specials thanks to the flying crew chief, Senior Airman John Ortstad.

I was honored at staff meeting, Monday, to pass along several awards to our Public Affairs Office. The base newspaper, in the tabloid-size commercial enterprise

newspaper category, was named as the best in command in 1999. The 437th Communications Squadron photo lab played a key role in that award and Staff Sgt. Richard T. Kaminisky received the best in command for a stand-alone photograph for 1999. The PA office also received the AMC Director's Excellence Awards for best Internal Information and Community Relations programs for 1999.

On Tuesday, I had the distinct pleasure of presenting the Diamond Sharp awards to Staff Sergeants Ray A. Alls (437th Contracting Squadron), Raymond F. Vandyne (16th Airlift Squadron), Manuel Trejo Jr. (1st Combat Camera Squadron) and Matthew P. Podunajec (437th Mission Support Squadron). The Diamond Sharp awards are presented monthly to staff sergeants and below who impress their unit first sergeants with day-to-day excellence. The program is administered by the first sergeants council and has been around for about five years.

It was also a pleasure to award the Intramural Commander's Trophies to the 437th Civil Engineer Squadron in the small unit category (250 employees or less) and to the 437th Supply Squadron for the large unit category. The commander's cup is presented to those squadrons who accumulate the most points in intramural sports competition. Intramural sports are a great way to stay in shape while boosting unit pride. I encourage all of you to participate. See the story on page 15.

On a related note, you may have noticed a number of old timers competing in the chiefs versus the colonels golf tournament Wednesday. Two teams of colonels competed against two teams of chiefs. A fun time was had by all!

I recently announced at staff meeting that Command Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Bruch is headed to work for the Air University commander Lt. Gen. Lance Lord, at Maxwell AFB, Ala. Chief Bruch has done a wonderful job for Team Charleston. We appreciate all his hard work, and it is truly a great opportunity for him to work for a three-star commander. To fill Chief Bruch's position, we have Chief Master Sgt. Harvey Hampton from Grand Forks AFB, N.D., arriving in May.

Things are going well and I am having a great time getting to meet everybody. I start my orientation visit with the 437th Logistics Group this week, followed by the Medical Group and Operations Groups later. I plan to take this weekend to aggressively unpack boxes since I am so far behind on that task. No matter how many times you move, it never gets any easier when it comes to unpacking and rearranging a home. Have a safe and enjoyable weekend. It certainly is a pleasure to be part of the premier airlift wing on the face of the planet!

Night shift

I notice that most of the time when articles are done in the base newspaper, they're about the work done mostly during the day shift. I feel it might be a good idea to recognize swing and mid shifters more; to bring a little more morale to those shifts because they're not recognized as much.

Great idea! I asked my newspaper staff to ensure our swing and mid-shift workers are covered in future articles. You should be seeing a special "Night Shift" feature in the very near future. You can all help the base newspaper editor, Staff Sgt. Pam Smith, by providing news tips and maybe even articles or photos, if you feel

Action Line

The Commander's Action line is your direct link to me. It's your opportunity to make Charleston Air Force Base a better place to live, work and play.

First give the appropriate base agency a chance to solve the problem, but if you don't get a satisfactory answer, call me at 963-5581 or send an e-mail to action@charleston.af.mil.

To ensure you receive a response to your concerns, please leave your name and the information needed to contact you.



so inclined. Please contact her at 963-5536 or 5608.

Gas prices

I come to base once a week to take care of shopping and get gas. The gas prices are my concern. The gas on base is the same as most places off base. I

was under the impression that we do not pay federal tax on gasoline and everything else on military bases. If that's true, why are we paying such high prices for gasoline?

Thank you for your concern. You're partially correct; the Base Exchange

is immune from state and local taxes. Unfortunately, Congress has waived this immunity, so we pay a similar price as local gas stations for the gas we sell.

We survey local service stations and establish the AAFES price equal to the lowest price surveyed. Our gasoline prices are fair and competitive with the local community, yet allow the base to cover operating expenses and generate monies for the morale, welfare, and recreation fund, which is returned to everyone affiliated with our base! For more information, call Daniel Schmidt, BX General Manager, at 963-5679, or the Services Commander, Maj. Brian Blankenship, at 963-3800.