

FEATURE

437 AGS mid shifters maintain the mission into the night

Photos and story by Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith
437 AW Public Affairs

As the sun comes up at Charleston AFB, the workday is just ending for those who work the night shift in the 437th Aircraft Generation Squadron.

There is sometimes a misconception that those who work nights do less, but 437 AGS mid shifters say there is nothing further from the truth.

"Our primary mission is to focus on aircraft scheduled to fly the next day," said Senior Master Sgt. Lawrence Strother, Barracuda Flight lead production superintendent for the night shift. "We have a lot of aircraft returning from local missions during our shift and we have to turn them serviceable for the morning schedule or next day."

The loss of the C-141 has had an impact on the nighttime workload, said Master Sgt. Phil Summers, an Air Reserve Technician and Gator Flight production superintendent.

"With the C-141 and its special operations low-level mission, there were more night takeoffs, which meant the swing shift was responsible for getting the aircraft ready," he said. As the last of the C-141s prepares to leave Charleston, more missions are being flown during the morning hours, which moves a lot of the workload to mid-shift.

"Graves used to be a more laid back shift," said Summers, "but not any more. We stay busy."

Despite the workload, most of the troops working the late shift for the 437 AGS don't mind.

"I've been working nights since February and I love it," said Senior Airman Raymond Rightmeir, a crew chief assigned to Gator Flight. "The focus is on work and we don't have to deal with things that they do on days, like details."

Senior Airman Tate Schily, Gator Flight crew chief, agreed with Rightmeir, and said he works nights by choice. "I've been working nights for two and one half years and really like it, though it took a little getting used to."

He said, "living in the dorms, while working nights, was hard at first," but he got used to the sounds of bay



(Above) Roger Desilets does a post-flight inspection.

(Right) Senior Airman Raymond Rightmeir needs a flashlight during his Dash 6 card inspection.

orderlies running the vacuum cleaner up and down the halls.

AGS civilian Wayne Angel has been working nights for 31 years and said it has enabled him to do more and take advantage of other opportunities.

"Working mids has enabled me to work a second job and go to college," he said. "I also like to fish and working nights makes it possible for me to do more of that."

Though Angel, Schily and most of the other night shift workers like their hours, they all agreed that they would like to see a few changes made to accommodate those working into the morning hours.

"We're limited to where we can eat," said Angel. "We have to depend on snack machines or brown bag lunches."

Wayne said they remember a time when the dining facility was open during the early morning hours to accommodate those working the same hours. Members are limited to where they can go off base because of the hours most businesses keep and there isn't any place open on base.

Despite all that, Master Sgt. Henry Warden, Production Superintendent for Panther Flight, said the good outweighs the bad. "I've worked all three shifts, and though I'm fatigued all the time working nights, I've been able to spend time with family and do things with them I could never do working swings."

Senior Airman James Shipley, an electro/environmental journeyman assigned to Barracuda Flight, installs an oxygen regulator.



Staff Sgt. Gabriel Baca signs off discrepancies during a post-flight inspection.

