



# AFA National Report

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By Frances McKenney, Assistant Managing Editor

## Twenty-five Years of Florida Galas

The Air Force Gala in Orlando, Fla., celebrated its 25th anniversary in February.

Hosted by the **Central Florida Chapter**, which organized the first formal banquet and ball in 1984, the black-tie event serves as the culmination for the Air Force Association's Air Warfare Symposium and Technology Exposition.

In looking back at the past two-and-a-half decades of Florida galas, Chapter President James E. Callahan told the audience that the tradition started with Norman J. Abramson. Chapter president at the time, Abramson urged AFA to hold a tactical air warfare symposium in Orlando.

He was backed by Martin H. Harris, who became the association's National President that year. (He went on to serve as Chairman of the Board, 1986-88.) Together with chapter member Nancy Blue, the group mustered support from USAF commanders and a small number of companies whose products were associated with Tactical Air Command. This laid the foundation for the symposium and expo that drew more than 800 visitors, this year.

During awards presentations at the 25th anniversary gala, nine people who had a hand in establishing the annual event were named Jimmy Doolittle or H. H. Arnold Fellows: John H. Combs, James L. DeRose, Richard A. Ortega, Robert E. Ceruti, Tommy G. Harrison, Ralph D. Heath, Bryan B. Paul, Abramson, and Harris.

Callahan noted that the chapter is "dedicated to aerospace education" and over the years has raised \$2.5 million for educational programs at all levels. He also pointed out that the chapter's support for the Air Force Memorial now totals \$220,000.

Among the honored guests at the 25th anniversary gala were Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton A. Schwartz, CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley, and the dean of the air attaché corps, Australian Air Commodore David Steele.

## AFA on Capitol Hill

AFA officials made House calls—and Senate calls—in February, introducing



Photo by Dan Higgins

*This year, the Central Florida Chapter raised \$65,000 for AFA's aerospace education programs. Presenting the donation at the Air Force Gala in Orlando in February are (l-r): Tommy Harrison, gala chairman; Sandy Schlitt, AFA's Vice Chairman of the Board for Aerospace Education; Joe Sutter, AFA Chairman of the Board; and James Callahan, chapter president. The chapter also donated \$10,000 to the Air Force Memorial Foundation, this year.*



Staff photo by Shane Barker

*AFA Board Chairman Joe Sutter (right) met with Kentucky Republican Rep. Brett Guthrie (left) while making office calls to new lawmakers on Capitol Hill. In the 111th Congress, 25 percent of Senators and 22 percent of House members have military experience.*

themselves to freshmen members of the 111th Congress.

AFA Chairman of the Board Joseph E. Sutter was scheduled to meet 19 Senators and Representatives or their military legislative aides. James R. Lauducci, AFA's Vice Chairman of the Board for Field Operations, and Michael M. Dunn, President-Chief Executive Officer, each made a similar number of office calls over the course of three days on the Hill.

During his visits, Sutter explained AFA's overall mission and its value as an independent resource for members of Congress. He spoke about the need to recapitalize USAF's aging aircraft fleet, particularly replacing the KC-135 tanker and HH-60 combat search and rescue helicopter, and the importance of continuing production of the F-22.

In turn, the members and professional staffers had nearly as many questions for Sutter. They asked about the location of the new Air Force Global Strike Command and 24th Air Force. They sought more information on Air Force units in their districts. They were interested in USAF's renewed emphasis on the nuclear mission.

Four of the freshmen legislators whom Sutter met have a military background: Rep. John Fleming (R-La.) as a former Navy medical officer; Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.) in the Army reserve; Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) in the Army Medical Corps; and Rep. Tom Rooney (R-Fla.) in the Army JAG Corps. Fleming and Rooney are members of the House Armed Services Committee.

Sutter also sat down with Sen. Mike Johanns (R-Neb.), Rep. Tom Perriello (D-Va.), and Rep. James Marshall (D-Ga.), a three-term Congressman, HASC member, and co-chairman of the Air Force Caucus.

Sutter said afterward that making early contact on Capitol Hill was vital. "Fewer members of Congress have any military experience," he said, "and often their staff person working defense issues is young, new, and eager for information."

### **On the Local Level**

The **Tennessee Valley Chapter's** experience underscores Sutter's point.

In Huntsville, Ala., in February, Chapter President Frederick Driesbach visited with the staff at the office of newly elected US Rep. Parker Griffith (D). Driesbach spent a half-hour explaining the chapter's role to staffer Jayne Murray.

A few days later, Griffith's lead local staff member, Jim McCamy, telephoned and asked to be included on future

chapter mailings. Griffith served in the Army reserve in the 1970s.

### **Merit Badge**

The **John W. DeMilly Jr. Chapter** and the 482nd Fighter Wing at Homestead ARB, Fla., helped a group of Boy Scouts earn their aviation merit badges in January.

The chapter proposed the idea, and its president, Ramon E. de Arrigunaga, coordinated the project with the local Boy Scouts council and the Air Force Reserve Command wing, headed by chapter member Col. William B. Binger.

Thirty-eight scouts and two dozen chaperones gathered on a Saturday morning at the air reserve base, welcomed by CMSgt. Clarence S. Tears Jr. He is the command chief master sergeant for the 482nd FW and also the chapter's vice president.

De Arrigunaga, a retired USAF pilot, taught the class, covering everything from a brief history of aviation to the basics of flight and navigation. The scouts then created posters showing a Cessna 172's instrument panel. For a second hands-on activity, they assembled balsa wood model gliders and experimented with wing placement. This exercise drove home the principles of weight and balance, de Arrigunaga said later.

The scouts visited the base's control tower and also checked out the cockpit of an F-16 set up for static display by the 482nd Maintenance Group. Chapter member Col. Melvin J. Giddings Jr. is the group commander. The youngsters clambered up onto a maintenance stand, set up alongside the aircraft. Once level with the cockpit, they had a chance to talk to the F-16's pilot, Lt. Col. John Poor, the 93rd Fighter Squadron's acting commander.

At the end of the visit, the scouts took an open-book exam to qualify for their merit badges.

De Arrigunaga said the visitors and airmen-volunteers enjoyed the day so much that wing commander Binger agreed to host—perhaps quarterly—more groups of scouts studying for the aviation badge.

### **Honor in Our State**

At the January meeting of the **Lewis E. Lyle Chapter**, Arkansas State President Jerry Reichenbach delivered a history lesson on the Medal of Honor.

By profession a librarian for the Lockheed Martin C-130J program at Little Rock Air Force Base, Reichenbach has a deep interest in military history. Chapter Secretary Morris D. Cash reported that for the meeting,

Reichenbach delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the medal's background, including photos of many recipients, highlighting those with ties to the state.

Twenty-four awardees were born in Arkansas or had their medal credited to the state either because they moved to or enlisted from there. Three served in the Navy, three in the Marine Corps, and the rest were soldiers.

Among the high-profile MOH awardees with Arkansas ties: Gen. of the Army Douglas MacArthur, born in Little Rock. Another World War II-era recipient was Maurice L. Britt, nicknamed "Footsie," an Arkansas Razorback and Detroit Lions football player. He became the state's lieutenant governor (1967-70). Nick D. Bacon, the son of Caraway, Ark., sharecroppers, earned his MOH during a second tour of duty in the Vietnam War. He went on to become the state's director of veterans affairs and is one of two living MOH recipients with ties to Arkansas.

Reichenbach included information on Air Force awardees such as Sgt. Maynard H. Smith who, as Reichenbach tells it, had to be rounded up from kitchen-police duty when it came time for his Medal of Honor presentation.

### **Bank on It**

The **Tidewater Chapter (Va.)** and AFJROTC cadets from a local high school together raised more than \$600 for Operation Homefront, a nonprofit organization that helps military personnel.

The drive to raise the money got under way at Grassfield High School in Chesapeake, Va., where chapter member Gordon R. Strong is the senior aerospace science instructor. Cadets from two classes took turns taking home what they called a "bank"—a cardboard cylinder, just over a foot long, decorated with Operation Homefront stickers. Over a six-week period, they collected donations, returning the bank every school day.

"We always have a number of cadets who are very active in all the activities, but everyone from the two classes wanted to take the bank home," said Strong, who is also the chapter's aerospace education VP. "Every day, someone wanted it."

Based in San Antonio, Operation Homefront provides emergency assistance and morale-boosting goods and services to troops, their families, and injured service members. It has some 30 chapters nationwide.

At the AFA Tidewater Chapter dinner meeting in February, the Grassfield cadets presented a check for \$455

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to Carol Berg, head of the Hampton Roads Chapter of Operation Homefront. William M. Cuthriell, Tidewater Chapter president, presented another check for \$200 on behalf of his group.

**In Sync**

Maj. Gen. Ralph J. Jodice II, commander of Air Force District Washington, was keynote speaker for the annual awards luncheon of the **Thomas W. Anthony Chapter (Md.)**.

He presented an overview of AFDW, as well as a description of the Air Force's top issues. He told the audience at the Andrews Air Force Base club that USAF's goals and AFA's mission were—in the words of the base newspaper, *Capital Flyer*—"in sync with each other."

Among the awards featured at the luncheon, Charles C. Thompson IV received the AFA Medal of Merit for outstanding service, presented by Maryland State President Robert B. Roit and Chapter President Charles X. Suraci Jr. Thompson was the chapter's aerospace education VP. Joseph Hardy and Chapter Treasurer Thomas Bass shared honors as the chapter's 2008 Member of the Year.

**More Chapter News**

- In Vermont, the **Green Mountain**

**Chapter** featured an Eighth Air Force B-17 pilot as its February luncheon speaker. J. Francis Angier, a Vermont farmboy, enlisted in 1942 and two years later, at age 21, was shot down during an attack on Hamburg, Germany. He spent seven months as a POW in Poland and near Munich. In postwar years, he continued farming and served in the Army National Guard and Air National Guard, retiring as a major. "A few minutes with Francis," said Chapter President Joel A. Clark, "and you quickly realize that he exemplifies the best of the 'Greatest Generation.'"

■ The **Roanoke Chapter** organized the latest Virginia state meeting, attended by nine chapters in February. State President Jeffrey L. Platte of the **Langley Chapter** presided over the day-long business session, with participation from two dozen chapter representatives. The Roanoke Chapter, headed by James H. McGuire, hosted the evening's dinner program, featuring Brig. Gen. Charles W. Lyon as guest speaker. He spoke about his experiences as the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing commander in Southwest Asia, where he was deployed until last July. He is now director for joint integration in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements. Among the nearly 80 guests at the dinner were cadets from three

high schools, Virginia Tech, and Virginia Military Institute.

■ For a second year, the **Gold Coast Chapter (Fla.)** sponsored a Wreaths Across America ceremony at the Department of Veterans Affairs South Florida National Cemetery in Lake Worth. On Dec. 13, more than 350 such wreath-laying ceremonies to honor veterans took place simultaneously in cemeteries nationwide. The tradition was started in 1992 by the Worcester Wreath Co. of Maine. In south Florida, chapter members Virginia Knudsen and Virginia Montalvo coordinated the ceremony. ■

## Reunions

[reunions@afa.org](mailto:reunions@afa.org)

**18th FIS.** July 23-26 in Grand Forks, ND. **Contacts:** Bob Renner ([afbobr@aol.com](mailto:afbobr@aol.com)) or Jim Sidebottom ([sidebottoj@hotmail.com](mailto:sidebottoj@hotmail.com)).

**AAC pilot classes (WWII).** Sept. 10-13 in Tucson, AZ. **Contact:** Stan Yost, 13671 Ovenbird Dr., Fort Myers, FL 33908 (239-466-1473).

**Doolittle Raiders.** April 15-19 in Columbia, SC. **Contact:** [www.celebrate-freedomfoundation.org](http://www.celebrate-freedomfoundation.org).

**Operation Halyard AAF veterans.** June 17-21 in St. Joseph, MI. **Contact:** Don Alsbro (269-925-7176) ([dealsbro@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dealsbro@sbcglobal.net)).

**Pilot Class 55-U/56-A.** Sept 24-26 at the Nativo Lodge, Albuquerque, NM. **Contact:** Gerald Buster (505-994-0882) ([geraldobuster@mac.com](mailto:geraldobuster@mac.com)).

**RRVA and Nampows.** April 15-19 at the Town & Country Resort Hotel & Convention Center in San Diego. **Contact:** [www.militaryreunionplanners.com/rrva](http://www.militaryreunionplanners.com/rrva).

Seeking **40th FS and 40th Flight Test Sq** members for a reunion in Fort Walton Beach, FL, in October. **Contact:** Bill Highfield, 706 Watering Hole Pass, Williamson, GA 30292 (770-229-4297) ([reddevil40@bellsouth.net](mailto:reddevil40@bellsouth.net)). ■

E-mail unit reunion notices four months ahead of the event to [reunions@afa.org](mailto:reunions@afa.org), or mail notices to "Unit Reunions," *Air Force Magazine*, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209-1198. Please designate the unit holding the reunion, time, location, and a contact for more information. We reserve the right to condense notices.

**More photos at <http://www.airforce-magazine.com>, in "AFA National Report"**

### AFA Conventions

May 8-9	<b>South Carolina State Convention</b> , Charleston, S.C.
May 13-15	<b>New Jersey State Convention</b> , Atlantic City, N.J.
May 28-30	<b>California State Convention</b> , March ARB, Calif.
June 5-6	<b>Oklahoma State Convention</b> , Enid, Okla.
June 13	<b>Virginia State Convention</b> , Richmond, Va.
July 10-11	<b>Florida State Convention</b> , Jacksonville, Fla.
July 17-19	<b>Texoma Region Convention</b> , Dallas
Sept. 12-13	<b>AFA National Convention</b> , Washington, D.C.
Sept. 14-16	<b>AFA Air &amp; Space Conference</b> , Washington, D.C.