



**Florida Region President
Air Force Association
2008 AFA NATIONAL CONVENTION REPORT
12 – 16 September 2008**

It was my pleasure to represent the Florida Region at this year's AFA National Convention in Washington, DC. I was joined by 27 other AFA Florida members from around the state and together we formed the largest state delegation present at the convention. The following is a brief summary of the week's activities:

Friday, 12 September 2008

After an uneventful flight (the best kind) from Orlando, Jackie and I were able to check into the hotel at 10:30 AM and go to our room. The first order of business for the day was the AFA Region President's Meeting at 1:00 PM. Joe Sutter, AFA Vice Chairman of the Board for Field Operations, led the meeting. Also attending were Bob Largent, AFA National Chairman of the Board; Sandy Schlitt, AFA Vice Chairman of the Board for Aerospace Education; and Mike Dunn, AFA President and CEO. Joe reviewed the Field Resolutions that were scheduled to be presented at the business session on Sunday. The resolutions were as follows: 1) Rescind the policy allowing chapters to ask their members to opt in to newsletter distribution; 2) Return to the old formula for calculating chapter support payments; 3) Remove from the Constitution those provisions that combine the offices of National Secretary and Treasurer; 4) Offer the surviving spouse of a Life Member the *Air Force Magazine* for life; and 5) Merge/incorporate Aerospace Education into the AFA mission statement. Joe wanted to make sure that the Region Presidents understood the resolutions so that they could be discussed at the Region Caucuses on Saturday night. Next, the chapter rejuvenation efforts at Charleston AFB were reviewed. The work at Charleston is making some progress but is still underway. Joe asked that each of the Region Presidents review the chapters in their Region and recommend two or three that could be candidates for this year's rejuvenation efforts. The AFA Strategic Plan and its impact on the upcoming Chapter Payment Plan were discussed. No significant changes have been made to the plan since it was presented to the Region Presidents in April 2008. Once the plan receives final approval, materials will be distributed to the field for implementation. This will probably occur in October 2008. The chapters' tax status has not changed. Chapters are still 501(c)19's. A ruling from the IRS may be coming in the near future. Once this happens, AFA HQs will be putting out guidance to all chapters on the 501(c)3 requirements. Mike Dunn mentioned that several new membership initiatives are being implemented. Most of these will occur at AFA HQs. But a few will be implemented in the field. More details are to be presented later.

The Region Presidents were then invited to remain for the AFA Executive Committee (EXCOM.) I attended most of this meeting. At the EXCOM, Bob Largent stated that AFA will be putting more effort into four Strategic Focus Areas: 1) Increase efforts to educate the public and decision makers on the criticality of aerospace power to National Defense; 2) Be more effective advocates for the AF by telling the AF story better at the national and grassroots levels; 3) Reverse AFA's declining membership; and 4) Grow AFA financial resources to support our mission. The EXCOM next reviewed the Field Resolutions. They voted to support the

Aerospace Education addition to the Mission Statement resolution and to oppose all the other resolutions.

Saturday, 13 September 2008

The next morning, I attended the meeting of the AFA National Board of Director. At this meeting I was able to speak with AFA Florida member and National Director Gen Lloyd “Fig” Newton. General Newton asked me to keep him informed of AFA activities occurring in Florida. Much of the information presented at the EXCOM was repeated for the National Directors. The most significant actions at the meeting were a re-write of the opening paragraph of the Statement of Policy (SOP) and a review of the Field Resolutions. The SOP lead-in rewrite was led by former AF Chief of Staff General John Jumper. After much debate, the Board of Directors decided not to support the EXCOM’s recommendation and voted to support the resolution to make the Secretary and Treasurer as separate positions. They also voted to add Aerospace Education to the AFA mission statement. They voted to oppose the remaining field resolutions. With the Directors’ vote to add Aerospace Education to the AFA Mission Statement, no further action was required. The Mission Statement will be changed. Therefore, the Field Resolution was moot and was not presented to the convention delegates.

On Saturday afternoon, the convention delegates heard supporting speeches from all the candidates running for national office. This included supporting speeches from Ray Turczynski for Craig Allen, Bonnie Callahan for Max Friedauer, and a speech from Max as well.

After the candidate speeches, the AFA Florida Hospitality Suite was opened for the first time (yours truly did a stint as bartender for this session.) Tommy and Marty Harrison, once again, did a marvelous job setting up and hosting our Hospitality Suite. We had one of only two suites at the convention - Virginia being the other. Thanks to our industry sponsors for their great support!



Later that night, we all attended the AFA Awards Banquet. At the dinner, several notable AFA Florida chapters and members were recognized. This included the following: the Col Bud West Chapter - Outstanding Medium Chapter of the Year; the Hurlburt Chapter - Outstanding Large Chapter of the Year; the Central Florida Chapter - Exception Service Award for Overall Programming; the Hurlburt Chapter - Aerospace Education Excellence Award Large Chapter; the Eglin Chapter - Aerospace Education Excellence Award Extra Large Chapter; Richard Ortega - Distinguished Sustained Aerospace Education Award (the very first recipient of this new award); and Max. Friedauer - Chairman’s Citation. A grand evening for the state!





The final activity of the day was the AFA Florida Region Caucus. We were very fortunate to hear from almost all the candidates that were running for national office. Chairman Bob Largent dropped by the caucus to swear in our State Officers for the coming year. We also reviewed the plans for the Congressional Visit on Tuesday morning. Finally, we reviewed all the Field Resolutions that were to be discussed at the business session the next day.

Sunday, 14 September 2008

On Sunday morning, many of our members traveled to our beautiful Air Force Memorial for the annual Memorial Service. This service recognizes the many AFA members that have passed away in the last year.

Later that morning, the Business Session of the Convention got underway. We heard a report from all five officers of the association as well as President/CEO Mike Dunn. Sandy Schlitt reported on a new Aerospace Education program that AFA is sponsoring. It is a National High School Cyber Defense Competition. This year's "proof of concept" program will be held in conjunction with the AFA's Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando this coming February. Between

4 and 8 AFJROTC units and one Civil Air Patrol unit from the Orlando area will complete in the initial effort. If successful, the Cyber Competition could be spread nationwide. Treasurer Steve Lundgren reported that our finances are in good shape. Chairman Largent reported on the AFA four focus areas mentioned above. The AFA Statement of Policy was approved by the delegates. And the election of new officers was completed. Officers elected for the 2008-2009 Operating Year include the following:



Chairman of the Board, Joe Sutter of Tennessee; Vice Chairman of the Board for Field Operations, Jim Lauducci of Virginia; Vice Chairman of the Board for Aerospace Education, Sandy Schlitt of Florida; Secretary Judy Church of Kansas; Treasurer Steve Lundgren of Alaska. I'm happy to report that our own Max Friedauer was elected as a National Director at Large. Along with Max, the following National Directors were elected: Director at Large, Len Vernamonti of Mississippi; and Director from the East Geographic Area, Scott Van Cleef of Virginia.



Following lunch, the Business Session continued. After much debate, the Field Resolution to reverse the previously approved actions to combine the Secretary and Treasurer positions and keep them as separate positions was approved. Approval of this resolution necessitated a change to the AFA Constitution which required a two-thirds vote for approval. The Constitution change was overwhelming approved. The three other field resolutions

dealing with chapter newsletters, chapter support payments, and Air Force Magazine were all disappointed. It will take some time before these approved changes will be reflected in our governing documents.

Next, the President of the Lance P. Sijan Chapter of Colorado (AFA's Unit of the Year) briefed on how they run their highly successful chapter. The next briefing was from the National Commander of the Arnold Air Society and the National President of the Silver Wings. They spoke to the delegates on ways to improve the working relationships between AFA and their organizations. President Mike Dunn wrapped up the session announcing several new AFA initiatives. AFA will be establishing a group of speakers around the country that can address Air Force issues in their local media markets. More information will be released as this program is developed. Finally, a new membership recruitment program called "Member Get a Member" was discussed. It will be a competition open to all AFA members and will run from 1 October to 31 December 2008. To enter, all you need to do is "recruit" a new AFA member. You get one entry in the contest for each new "paid" member you sign up. At the end of the contest, drawings will be made from all the entries to win prizes. Prizes include a 1st prize of \$1,000; 2nd prize of a laptop computer; and 3rd prize of an iPod. Recruiters are responsible for insuring that their names are entered on the membership application. Look for more details in the near-future. Thus ended a very busy day and completed the 2008 AFA National Convention.

Monday, 15 September 2008

Monday was the start of AFA's 2008 Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition. At the opening ceremony, new Air Force Chief of Staff, General Norton Schwartz, briefly addressed the attendees. Later that morning, AFA presented awards to many outstanding Air Force units, military members and civilians for achievement during the past year. Several members and units from Florida were recognized including several Special Operations units at Hurlburt field and the AFA National Teacher of the Year, Mr. Leo Murphy, from Choctawhatchee High School, Fort Walton Beach, Florida.



After lunch, we were honored to hear an address from the new Acting Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley. Some of the major issues he addressed included the nuclear mission, the recently deferred tanker deal and Airmen-specific issues such as manpower, force shaping and taking care of families. "We need to take care of Airmen and families," Secretary Donley said. "We can have the best technology in the world, but our Airmen are the most valuable asset." He wrapped up his speech by saying he is optimistic that the Air Force will work through the challenges that face it. "We will continue to deliver the

kind of decisive air, space and cyber power that the American people deserve and expect. And,

just as in the past, the Airmen of tomorrow will inherit a force that we decide upon today."

Later on Monday, I attended two AFA workshops. The first was on Aerospace Education. The Teacher of the Year program was discussed and there are no significant changes from last year's program. USA Today discussed the Visions of Exploration Program. Again, there were no significant changes from last year's program. The Civil Air Patrol discussed several aerospace education programs that they have. This included their aerospace education textbook "The Journey of Flight." Each AFA chapter is entitled to a free copy of this textbook. They also discussed their Aerospace Connection in Education (ACE) Program. Details of the program are available at their web site: www.cap.gov/ae.

The second workshop was on the 2009 Chapter Support Payment Program which will take effect on 1 January. A draft of this program was reviewed and a PowerPoint briefing on the program was presented to the members present. This briefing was almost identical to the briefing that was presented at our AFA Area Meetings this spring. There are no significant changes in the program as was presented at those meetings. Final details on the program will be released this October.

The day concluded with the always impressive Outstanding Airmen of the Year Dinner. At this dinner, the twelve Outstanding Airmen of the United States Air Force are recognized. This year Florida was honored to have three of the twelve Airmen: MSgt George Price, Jr. of Patrick AFB, FL; TSgt James Weltin of Rockledge, FL (Patrick AFB); and SrA Mary Bullock of Hurlburt Field, FL.

Tuesday, 16 September 2008

Tuesday morning was the Annual AFA Congressional Reception. This year the event was held in the Senate's Dirksen Building. Several members of the AFA Florida delegation made the trip to Capitol Hill and supported the reception. We were very pleased to be visited by three congressional members: Representatives Allen Boyd, Ron Klein and John Mica. We were also joined by staff members from Senator Bill Nelson's office and Representatives Jeff Miller's and Corrine Brown's offices.



During the reception, Chairman Largent, General Schwartz and Secretary Donley spoke to the assembled group. The Florida delegation was also fortunate to have an opportunity to speak directly with Secretary Donley, General Schwartz and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rod McKinley – who still claims Deland, FL as his home. Interestingly, General Schwartz' mother also lives in Deland. Secretary Donley said that we must have a large delegation since he had met more people from Florida than from anyplace else. I must admit that this year's event was much better than the Congressional "Breakfast" we held last year.

Next the delegation, traveled over to the House's Rayburt Office Building where we met with Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen was selected as the 2008 AFA Florida Legislator of the Year. Meeting in her personal office, we presented her with a trophy from the state and were able to spend a few minutes discussing the issues facing the Air Force and the activities of AFA Florida. Representative Ros-Lehtinen and her staff were very gracious to us during our visit. They went so far as presenting every member of our delegation with a picture of the trophy presentation. The Congresswomen even took the time to sign every one of the pictures, keeping Representative Dave Weldon (a past AFA Florida winner) on hold in the process. All-in-all the Congressional Reception and office visit was a great success – mainly due to the hard work of our own Dennis Moran. Also, big thanks go out to Stan Bodner for setting up the visit to Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen's office.



As you can see from the activities listed above, your AFA Florida delegation had an enjoyable and informative trip to our nation's capitol. We were very fortunate to have several members who were attending their first AFA National Convention. I believe that they learned a lot from the experience. I know I did during my first trip and from every trip since then. If you have not been to our national convention, I would encourage you to consider attending next year's event. It will be held in a new location, the Gaylord National, on September 12-16, 2009. Try it – you'll like it!

I want to thank Larry Belge for taking the wonderful photographs you see in this report. If you have any questions or want any more information on the trip, feel free to contract me. Take care.

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