

AFA National Report

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By Frances McKenney, Assistant Managing Editor

Field Trip: Alabama to California

When Alabama's **Montgomery Chapter** takes you on a field trip, better pack a suitcase.

In June, the chapter's aerospace education VP, Susan Mallett, and member Debbie Dahl led a teachers workshop on a 2,000-mile journey from Montgomery to California. The field trip gave the instructors hands-on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics experiences and educated them about STEM careers their students could pursue.

The project involved AFA on several levels: Participants Roberta Ludwigsen and Sylvia Dean had earlier been selected as chapter and state teachers of the year, so as part of their rewards, the Montgomery Chapter and **Tennessee Valley Chapter (Ala.)** sponsored them on this six-day trip. An AFA Chapter Matching Grant and AFA Alabama provided some funding. In California, **William J. "Pete" Knight Chapter** member Megan Tucker helped line up activities, and Chapter President David Smith hosted AFA members for an evening at his home. Other financial and in-kind support came from Civil Air Patrol, Air University Foundation, and other organizations.

The 908th Airlift Wing at Maxwell AFB, Ala., flew most of the 45 participants to Edwards on a C-130. After the seven-hour flight, the teachers took a hangar and flight line tour, followed by a Knight Chapter-sponsored reception at the Air Force Test Center Museum.

The workshop participants visited the NASA-Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards, Mojave Air and Space Port in Mojave, a wind turbine facility in Tehachapi, the Southern California Soaring Academy in Llano, and at least four museums.

Of all the sites visited, Mallett picked out the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena as an attention-getter because of the Mars Science Laboratory. Mobile laboratory rovers undergo testing there, and it turned out that seeing and touching one gave the teachers a greater understanding of events, about two months later, when the rover Curiosity landed on Mars.

This field trip began as part of the AFA-Air Museum Education Initiative, fostered by George K. Muellner, then



AFA Board Chairman Sandy Schlitt (right) and Michael Dunn, then AFA's President-CEO, took part in the Focus on Defense symposium in Utah in June. See p. 72.

AFA's vice chairman of the board for aerospace education. The field trip specifically helped the pilot program get under way at the Yanks Air Museum. Mallett said that a tour and briefing at the facility, in Chino, gave the educators "historical insight into the legacy of our nation's aviation heritage."

Mallett—who also serves on the state level as AFA aerospace education VP and on the national level as part of the Aerospace Education Council—has conducted far-ranging field trips before. Other destinations were: Kennedy Space Center in Florida; Albuquerque, N.M.; and Dayton, Ohio.

This field trip, however, was far more ambitious. "The moving pieces didn't stop moving," Mallett said.

STARBASE in the Shenandoah

The first STARBASE youth education program in Virginia run by the National Guard debuted in July, capping five years of effort by the **Northern Shenandoah Valley Chapter**.

US Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.) attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony in

Winchester and told the crowd that a past chapter president got him involved in establishing this STARBASE, located at the National Guard's Cherry-Beasley Readiness Center.

DOD STARBASE Program Manager Ernie Gonzales, in his remarks, specifically mentioned strong support from then-AFA President-CEO Michael M. Dunn, whom he credited with moving the approval process along.

STARBASE is a DOD and National Guard Bureau initiative for at-risk youth ages six through 18. The program uses hands-on learning to build STEM abilities. It also covers drug-use prevention, self-esteem, and other life skills. The STARBASE acronym stands for Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration.

STARBASE Winchester occupies two classrooms, said James Hannam, vice chairman of AFA's Aerospace Education Council. A group of students immediately began using these rooms in the program's inaugural session that got under way after the official opening

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

ceremony. Observed by the visitors, the students carried out a typical learning activity: constructing a safety harness for an egg (representing an astronaut in a space capsule).

STARBASE began with Michigan educator Barbara Koscak in the late 1980s. She captured the interest of the 127th Wing commander at Selfridge ANGB, Mich., Brig. Gen. David Arendts, with the idea of having Air Guardsmen teach the STARBASE children. The military personnel could demonstrate the use of STEM in their everyday work and could serve as role models for the importance of education, teamwork, and self-discipline.

Today STARBASE takes place in more than 60 locations. In Virginia, Norfolk Naval Base has hosted the state's first. At the opening of the second one, in Winchester, AFAers—including Chapter President Norman G. Brander, VP Norman M. Haller, Secretary Stephen J. Pederson, Treasurer John P. Tagnesi, and Aerospace Education VP Thomas G. Shepherd—discussed the possible startup of a Richmond-area STARBASE.

Air Force Week in New York City

New York's **Iron Gate Chapter** contributed to a successful encore Air Force Week in New York City.

USAF's Chief of Staff started Air Force Week in 2006 to showcase the Air Force mission, assets, and way of life. The exhibits, air shows, sports events, and concerts that make up an Air Force Week have taken place in more than a dozen cities, most recently in 2010 in Cocoa Beach, Fla., and New York City.

This year, the opening ceremony in the Big Apple again took place on Manhattan's West Side, at Pier 86 on the Hudson River, where the decommissioned aircraft carrier *Intrepid* is docked as a museum. Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley and Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr., head of Air Education and Training Command, attended the event.

Iron Gate donated \$1,000 for the USO reception that followed this ceremony.

The chapter joined with other associations in sponsoring an Air Force Week presentation by retired Col. Richard H. Graham. He spoke about the SR-71, based on his seven years of flying the "Blackbird" on reconnaissance missions. Graham has written three books about his experiences. Some 200 people attended Graham's briefing, said Chapter President Frank T. Hayes.

In addition, the chapter funded an appearance by Jonna Doolittle Hoppes. She spoke to groups of children about her grandfather, Jimmy Doolittle, leader

of the 1942 raid on Tokyo, Medal of Honor recipient, and AFA's founding father.

Hayes said the chapter manned an AFA tent in a highly visible location: the second spot on Pier 86. During the Aug. 19-21 period of Air Force Week, *Intrepid* Sea, Air, and Space Museum ticket sales were 9,000 on Sunday, some 5,600 on Monday, and an estimated 6,000 on Tuesday, he reported.

Hayes said that every morning, Iron Gate Chapter members arrived at the pier with 100 New York bagels, at least four dozen doughnuts, and 150 bottles of water for the airmen running the Air Force exhibits. For lunch, the chapter provided pizza—New York-style, of course.

Utah's Focus on Defense

The theme—"Acquisition and Sustainment in the 21st Century AFMC"—merely hinted at what really brought 400 people to the Focus on Defense symposium, sponsored by Utah's AFA chapters: **Northern Utah, Salt Lake, and Ute-Rocky Mountain.**

In June, government, military, and defense industry representatives turned out for the 33rd annual symposium to discuss the defense budget squeeze and to learn how Air Force Materiel Command's organizational restructuring would affect them.

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Retired Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering III, former Missile Defense Agency director and now senior vice president at Booz Allen Hamilton, opened the day-long symposium with an industry perspective on the budget's impact and on the consolidation of AFMC centers from 12 to five.

Lt. Gen. Judith A. Fedder provided insight from her viewpoint as deputy chief of staff for logistics, installations, and mission support. Brig. Gen. Dwyer L. Dennis, head of the ISR and Requirements Directorate at AFMC, described what the requirements process will be after the reorganization.

Maj. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan, KC-46 program executive officer at the time of the symposium, gave an overview of the tanker's role and how the program was structured for success. Bogdan is now deputy PEO for the F-35 strike fighter program.

The commander of what was then the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, Maj. Gen. Bruce A. Litchfield, was the last government-sector speaker. He gave what Utah State President Walter W. Saeger Jr. called "a passionate presentation" on the "positive impact" of the Air Force Sustainment Center's standup at Tinker AFB, Okla. Litchfield was promoted to three-star and became the center's commander in July. The newly renamed air logistics complexes at Ogden in Utah, Warner

Robbins in Georgia, and Oklahoma City now report to him.

Northern Utah Chapter member Kevin J. Sullivan, who commanded the Ogden complex at Hill Air Force Base from 2003 to 2007, served as symposium chairman for the second year. Saeger was overall chairman for the symposium and follow-on two-day golf tournament. The golf outing raised nearly \$35,000 for the Utah Aerospace Education Foundation.

Focus on Defense social events included its traditional salmon BBQ and a "Midcourse Correction Party" centered on the golf outing. FOD culminated with an awards banquet.

Remembering Truman and the Bomb

Kansas City's **Harry S. Truman Chapter** in Missouri held a ceremony Aug. 6 to mark the 67th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan and to express gratefulness that President Truman made the decision to use it to end World War II.

According to the *Independence Examiner* newspaper, about a dozen visitors joined chapter members in observing the chapter's ceremony. It took place at the Truman Presidential Library and Museum in Independence.

Chapter President Patricia J. Snyder served as master of ceremonies. Jerry Hughes delivered the main address. Chapter VP John M. Campo and

Communications VP James M. Snyder joined members Joan M. Boyd and Anita Seibolt as the Honors Element and laid a wreath at Truman's tomb in the museum's courtyard.

James Snyder explained afterward that the group held their commemoration at exactly 11 a.m. At that time, on Aug. 6, 1945, on the East Coast, the White House press secretary released Truman's statement announcing the use of the atom bomb. (Truman himself was aboard the cruiser *Augusta*, sailing home from a wartime conference at Potsdam.)

Snyder said the Truman Chapter began performing this anniversary ceremony last year, assuming responsibility after the dissolution of the Harry S. Truman Appreciation Society. It had begun the annual observance in 1995.

Mesmerizing Colorado

Colorado State AFA—the **Gen. Robert E. Huyser, Lance P. Sijan, Mel Harmon, and Mile High Chapters**—held its annual State Awards Dinner, featuring a guest speaker with a "mesmerizing" talk.

CyberPatriot Commissioner Bernard K. Skoch "energized the crowd," wrote State President Tom Cavalli. Skoch spoke about the need for STEM and the role CyberPatriot has in developing cybersecurity skills in high school students.

Keeping the emphasis on education, Cavalli introduced to the audience the

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Colorado State Teacher of the Year, Janet Krompfer. She teaches science at High Plains Elementary School in Colorado Springs.

Among other awards, the Mel Harmon Chapter from Pueblo received the State Chapter of the Year award. Kevin D. Estrem of the Lance P. Sijan Chapter was named Colorado Member of the Year.

SrA. Nicholas A. Hurt, 721st Security Forces Squadron, Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, was chosen as Airman of the Year. Cavalli pointed out that Hurt had been selected even before USAF picked him as one of this year's 12 Outstanding Airmen.

Other military awards went to: TSgt. Rene Hernandez, 302nd Civil Engineering Squadron, NCO of the Year; SMSgt. Jeffrey A. Flight, 302nd Operations Group, SNCO of the Year; and Capt. Kirk W. Greene, 21st Mission Support Group, Company Grade Officer of the Year. All three come from Peterson Air Force Base.

Civilians of the Year were Michael A. Owen, from the 4th Space Operations Squadron, and Anthony R. Flowers, 50th Civil Engineering Squadron. Both are from Schriever Air Force Base.

Colorado State Executive VP Stephen K. Gourley and a team from the host Mile High Chapter in Denver organized the awards dinner.

South Carolina State Convention

TSgt. Joshua S. Thacker of the 169th Fighter Wing, McEntire JNGB in Columbia, S.C., came away as the big winner at the South Carolina State Convention. The **Swamp Fox Chapter** hosted it in Sumter in April.

A crew chief with the 169th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Thacker received both the Outstanding Air Force Person of the Year award and the Outstanding Aircraft Technician award.

The AFA recognition came on top of Thacker's other 2012 wins as a Continental US NORAD Region 1 Warrior awardee and as NCO of the Year for the South Carolina Air National Guard. "An all around good guy," commented State President John R. Allen Jr.

The convention's awards banquet highlighted "superlatives," as Allen put it, in several other military categories: the 79th Fighter Squadron at Shaw, named Outstanding Squadron; Capt. Seth Taylor from the 20th Fighter Wing at Shaw, named Outstanding Aviator; Capt. Tamatha Rand, 315th Logistics Readiness Squadron, JB Charleston, Outstanding Logistics; and SMSgt. James Rider from McEntire, Outstanding Mission Support.

For the second consecutive year, Clemson University's AFOTC Det. 770 received the top ROTC unit award.

Strom Thurmond Chapter member Col. James G. Riemens-Van Laare accepted the plaque for his cadets. Berea High School cadets in Greenville earned the Outstanding JROTC Unit award.

AFA awardees included **Columbia Palmetto Chapter** President E. G. Shuler III and Chapter Treasurer Sharlene Shuler and Thurmond Chapter Treasurer William F. Mays. Sharlene Shuler took home a second award, as state Member of the Year, and the Thurmond Chapter did, too, as the Most Improved Chapter.

Amy Baldwin, an Oakbrook Middle School instructor from Charleston, received the Teacher of the Year honor.

Maj. Gen. Lawrence L. Wells, 9th Air Force commander at Shaw AFB, S.C., delivered the keynote address.

More Chapter News

■ Armed Forces Week, May 11-19 in Milwaukee, promised a 128th Air Refueling Wing open house with airplanes, entertainment, and food. The **Billy Mitchell Chapter** had a hand in this last one: Its members sold steamed corn during the two-day-long military display at General Mitchell Airport. The chapter, headed by Victor L. Johnson Jr., had help from a group of cadets. Chapter members who manned the booth

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included VP Ralph J. Pietruszynski, Secretary Henry Syring, Don Adams, and Edward H. Garrison.

■ In Tucson, Ariz., in July, Sabino High School math teacher David Kukla received the Arizona State Teacher of the Year award from State President Ross B. Lampert and **Tucson Chapter** President James I. Wheeler. Kukla had first been named the Tucson Chapter's Teacher of the Year. He garnered the award through a unique process, wrote Lampert: Chapter Aerospace Education VP Bob Anderson polled students and parents at high schools and in Civil Air Patrol squadrons around Tucson to find award candidates. Kukla's nomination stood out. In addition to teaching algebra, trigonometry, and calculus, he recently helped the local CAP group land a \$250 AFA grant for a remotely piloted aircraft to use in search and rescue.

■ The **Long Island Chapter's** Teacher of the Year has been selected as the New York State Teacher of the Year. Ed Moloney teaches technology to students in grades seven through nine at P. J. Gelinas Junior High School in East Setauket. Moloney covers topics such as wind technology, solar energy, global warming, and carbon footprints and uses wind turbines, solar ovens, and stop-animation software to interest his students in STEM.

■ In New Mexico in July, the **Albuquerque Chapter** co-sponsored a luncheon with the local Military Coalition group. Republican Lt. Gov. John A. Sanchez was guest speaker. He talked to the audience about the importance of the upcoming elections and encouraged taking part in the process, according to Chapter President Robert M. Hudson. More than 70 members, as well as John A. Toohey, New Mexico state VP, attended the event.

■ Florida Region and State President Michael H. Emig, **Waterman-Twining Chapter** President Edward H. Hance, and **Red Tail Memorial Chapter** member Ben Langer paid an office call on US Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.) in Palm Harbor, Fla., to present him with the AFA Florida Congressional Leader of the Year Award. Bilirakis is vice chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. He chairs the Veterans' Affairs Task Force for the Republican Policy Committee and co-chairs the House Military Veterans Caucus.

■ Wearing aloha shirts and leis, Maryland State President Joseph L. Hardy and John L. Huggins Jr., president of the **Thomas W. Anthony Chapter**, were among chapter members in colorful attire for the Hawaiian-themed retirement party for Col. Kenneth R. Rizer and his wife, Cheri. Rizer had been commander of the 11th Wing at JB Andrews since 2010. At the July farewell,

the chapter announced establishment of the Rizer Presentation Fellowship. It makes possible future donations to AFA—specifically for aerospace education—in the Rizers' name. ■

reunions@afa.org **Reunions**

Redhorse Assoc. Sept. 22-26, 2013, in Bowling Green, KY. **Contact:** Charlie Hogan, 1838 J Brown Rd., Park City, KY 42160 (270-749-5461) (chogan@scrtc.com).

Seeking members of the **16th/13th Tactical Fighter Sq**, Eglin AFB and Udorn RTAB (1965-68) for a reunion in the fall of 2013 in Colorado Springs, CO. **Contact:** Roger Krause (719-659-7696) (rlandmsk@earthlink.net Attn: Reunion). ■

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