

# WE ARE AFA

By Kari Lynn Hahn

## #WEAREAFA

AFA members: What you guys and gals do to support our Air Force is awesome! To highlight you and your work for the association, we launched the "We Are AFA" initiative on social media earlier this year. Share your stories and photos with us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AirForceAssociation>. Use #WeAreAFA.

The strength of AFA lies in the inspiring men and women who support our Air Force.

The word "family" has a different meaning for each person.

At the Air Force Association's Air & Space Conference in National Harbor, Md., in 2013, CMSAF James A. Cody summed up "family," saying: "It can be a spouse, a child, a parent, a friend, a wingman, a neighbor. ... Our families sacrifice and serve along with us. ... Their strength is our strength."

If you are reading this article, you are a part of our AFA family. I am blessed to have the honor to travel around the country, meeting and supporting the amazing men and women who make up our Air Force and AFA.

As I began collecting stories for this article, family quickly became the reoccurring theme.

As with all families, AFA is diverse. We are brought together by a love for our Air Force. We are airmen, spouses, children, parents and siblings. We are officers, enlisted personnel, and civilians. We are serving our Air Force. We are mentors and friends. We are strong, resilient, and dedicated. We are young. We are old. We are the history. We are the future. We are airmen for life. We are AFA.

These are just a few stories about our amazing AFA family.

# The Farrells

One of AFA's mission areas is to support our Air Force family. The Farrells of Northern Virginia are one example of an Air Force family supporting AFA right back. Life Member Maj. Shannon M. Farrell joined the association in 1998 as a cadet with the Norstad Squadron of the Arnold Air Society at AFROTC Det. 415 at the University of Minnesota. The unit is closely associated with AFA's Gen. E. W. Rawlings Chapter in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Farrell's wife, Jamie, joined AFA as an eMember. As a military spouse, she balances taking care of her family with her career as an author. She even worked in a reference to *Air Force Magazine* in one of her books, *Southern Fried Blues* (<http://www.jamiefarrellbooks.com>).

The Farrells are the proud parents of three children, ages two, four, and seven. They gave the children legacy life memberships at Christmas 2014, making them our three youngest, and arguably cutest, AFA Life Members and ensuring a proud tradition of support to the Air Force for years to come.

Shannon Farrell has been active with AFA since joining, supporting local chapters at nearly every Air Force installation where he has served, in roles ranging from Web master to vice president for awards to chapter president. He has served on the national-level Membership Committee and currently serves on the national Development Committee.

The next generation of Farrells is too young to do much more than cheer on dad, but the kids have a good time and love looking at *Air Force Magazine* each month. Their father remains actively involved in AFA, especially since chapter and national leaders keep asking him to be.

As one of AFA's current Emerging Leaders, Farrell is dedicated to advancing our association and increas-



Photo by Shannon Farrell

**AFA Emerging Leader Maj. Shannon Farrell (left), his wife, Jamie—who's an eMember—and AFA's youngest Life Members.**

**“After attending a few activities, anyone can find the great network that welcomes and includes new members and provides mentorship and opportunities to all.”**

—Maj. Shannon Farrell

ing membership. He agrees with the philosophy of James W. Simons, AFA's 2014 Member of the Year: All it takes most of the time is just to ask. In Farrell's words, “I think people should join the professional organization of the Air Force to support the team that advocates for the benefits of airmen and supports airmen around the world. I think that once [a person has] joined and after attending a few activities, anyone can find the great network that welcomes and includes new members and provides mentorship and opportunities to all.”

Farrell knows that his AFA experiences will be passed on to his children as they become and remain active in AFA. Among the highlights, he's met Air Force living legends: many of the past few years' classes of the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year; several

former Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force, like retired CMSAF Gerald R. Murray and retired CMSAF James A. Roy; and ex-four-stars, such as retired Gen. William L. Kirk and retired Gen. Gary L. North.

Farrell also hopes that his children will benefit, as he has, from personal mentorship from fellow AFA members, if they choose the profession of arms someday.

The Farrells represent the strength of our Air Force and our families: a dedicated airman and emerging leader, a strong and brilliant military spouse, and three children who look up to their parents as the heroes they are and provide the much-needed comic relief during difficult times. The Farrell family serves our Air Force and AFA together.

# Kevin Jackson

If you're active in the aerospace defense industry around Washington, D.C., then chances are you're familiar with Kevin L. Jackson's warm smile, easy chuckle, and steadfast dedication to our Air Force and the Air Force Association.

Although he has never had the privilege of wearing the uniform, he still bleeds Air Force blue. Jackson serves on AFA's Board of Directors as a national director representing the East geographic area. He is Saab Defense and Security's vice president of business development for air warfare systems.

When Jackson began his career at Honeywell and was responsible for several Air Force programs, he set out to learn more about the Air Force. He joined AFA in 1994 and credits his membership as one of the resources that helped him accomplish this goal.

"AFA, the force behind the force, was invaluable in educating me and providing me with folks who understood the Air Force," he said. "I was greatly influenced by the passion and integrity of the AFA members and staff I met. As a vice president with Saab Defense and Security, it keeps me connected with the Air Force and industry. I am extremely grateful for Saab's willingness and active support for me to run for office and serve on the AFA board."

Jackson originally joined the Donald W. Steele Sr. Memorial Chapter in Arlington, Va., where AFA stalwarts such as Mary Anne Thompson, James Hannam, and Skip Williams mentored him. After serving as the chapter's vice president, he went on to serve as president of the Nation's Capital Chapter and a member of AFA's Nominating Committee, Audit Committee, and Membership Committee.



*Kevin Jackson (center) sometimes attends AFA events far from home. Here, he's at the Florida State Convention in 2013 with Tommy Harrison (left) and Mike Richardson.*

**“To be able to provide some form of support for the brave men and women who suffered defending our freedom was pretty overwhelming.”**

—Kevin Jackson

Jackson chairs the national-level Development Committee. He encourages busy colleagues to get involved with AFA when and how they can. “It’s a great organization where you individually can make a difference. Start with whatever your time and resources will allow,” he said.

When I asked Jackson what his favorite AFA memory is, he couldn’t pick just one. Among his favorites is being a part, with F. Gavin MacAloon, of AFA’s pilot version of the Wounded Airman Program, for the Nation’s Capital Chapter and Steele

Chapter. Jackson said, “To be able to provide some form of support for the brave men and women who suffered defending our freedom was pretty overwhelming.”

Other favorite memories include his involvement as a corporate sponsor of the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year and mentoring Arnold Air Society members. When those cadets look at pictures of their commissioning ceremonies, they’ll see Jackson in them because they considered him family.

This is yet another example of our AFA family continuing to grow.

# SSgt. Joseph Senteno

We have so many amazing airmen in our AFA family to be proud of. SSgt. Joseph C. Senteno is one of them. In 2013, he was selected as an Outstanding Airman of the Year for his role as a financial analysis technician in Air Force Global Strike Command.

Senteno oversaw a \$9.2 million budget and executed more than \$129 million in Air Force funds. He recaptured more than \$13 million of overestimated costs to return buying power to his wing and developed a detailed balance tracker for all financial obligations. It became a benchmark for the command.

His efforts made funding available ahead of schedule for security forces and

Airmen Leadership School upgrades, and he identified and corrected \$52,000 in financial transaction errors to ensure Air Force funds were in the appropriate funding stream.

As a member of AFA's Enlisted Council, Senteno assisted Air Force senior enlisted members in developing policy recommendations on quality-of-life and other service matters that impact the enlisted force.

He encourages colleagues to "soak in" the information AFA provides in *Air Force Magazine* and the magazine's "Daily Report" electronic news column. "I think with any group or organization, members should want to be a part of it

because they truly believe in the mission and support the cause," he said. "Staying informed on current events and technology is also crucial for members in order to be prepared and knowledgeable."

After moving to Nellis AFB, Nev., Senteno reached out to the local AFA Thunderbird Chapter to stay involved and help others. Senteno said Chapter President Robert Cunningham gave him "the honor of regularly speaking to the Airman Leadership School students and informing them about the AFA mission and getting involved."

AFA's grassroots culture reinforces the idea that your AFA family will always be with you wherever you move. As Senteno pointed out, "Many members in our local Thunderbird Chapter are retired military and local citizens who support the Air Force and our members. Recognizing all the support, leadership, and dedication from them made me want to stay involved."

**"Staying informed on current events and technology is also crucial for members in order to be prepared and knowledgeable."**

—SSgt. Joseph C. Senteno

Photo by Cathy Hall



SSgt. Joseph Senteno takes time to visit with A1C Jared Shepler, A1C Marklawrence Lazarte, and SrA. Caleb Prentice (l-r).

# Ollie Crawford

As much fun as it is to read about AFA history, the stories are much more colorful when you hear them in person from someone who was there at the beginning. O. R. “Ollie” Crawford, an AFA Charter Member—meaning he joined the association at its inception—entered the Army Air Forces in 1943 and served as a fighter pilot in World War II. He joined AFA in 1946 when he heard that Gen. Jimmy Doolittle was forming it at the request of Gen. Henry H. “Hap” Arnold. Crawford said he joined to help make the Army Air Forces “a better Air Force.” Many years later, he is still hard at work with AFA to make our Air Force better.

When Crawford first joined the AFA family, he was soon to be an Air Corps Reserve instructor pilot at Tinker Field, Okla., checking out World War II pilots in old, worn-out aircraft that he called “simply dangerous.” He sent a letter to then-Rep. Lyndon B. Johnson (D) of Texas—Crawford’s home state—requesting better and newer aircraft. The letter reached then-Air Force Secretary W. Stuart Symington and helped in advocacy efforts for a better-equipped new Air Force.

Crawford went on to serve AFA as a chapter president, state president, regional vice president, and all the way to AFA National President in 1990 and Chairman of the Board in 1992. He helped establish the Air Force Memorial Foundation and was instrumental in building the Air Force Memorial. He is an AFA national director emeritus, a member of the Senior Leadership Advisory Group, and a member of the Air Force Memorial Advisory Committee. He is also a member of the Alamo Chapter Executive Committee. In 2009, at age 84, he became the oldest person to fly in the U-2 Dragon Lady reconnaissance airplane.



*In December 2009, Crawford celebrates completing a flight in a U-2 high-altitude aircraft from Beale AFB, Calif.*

**“I will always be on hand to help our great and wonderful AFA.”**

—O. R. “Ollie” Crawford

When you’ve been around since the beginning, it is hard to choose a favorite AFA memory, but Crawford has one that is unique. A group of officials from the South African government, South African Chamber of Commerce, and South African Air Force, or SAAF, Association invited him to South Africa to represent AFA. This was part of an ongoing public relations effort at the time to improve the world’s opinion and acceptance of South Africa due to its apartheid policy, which was starting to fall apart.

Crawford was the guest speaker at an SAAF Association black-tie dinner that he called a “rousing gathering.” Following the dinner, Crawford visited several South African Air Force bases where he was called on for remarks regarding AFA and the US Air Force.

The South African Defense Minister summoned Crawford for a 15-minute visit that morphed into an hour-and-a-half session. Crawford said it was very “informative.” He then met with South African political leaders, visits that Crawford summarized as “rather interesting.”

Today, Crawford is chairman and co-founder of the San Antonio Airpower Heritage Foundation, leading efforts to build the San Antonio Aerospace Education Center and Museum on the grounds of the former Kelly Air Force Base. (See “Center of Attention,” *Wingman Magazine*, January 2015, p. 6.)

Seventy years after our AFA family started, Crawford is still there, fighting to help make our Air Force better. He said, “I will always be on hand to help our great and wonderful AFA.”

# Gil Petrina & Julie Petrina Curlin

The Petrina family is well-known around AFA. Gilbert E. Petrina Sr. became involved with AFA in 1955 when he served as the first Arnold Air Society national commander. Starting in 1960, he was involved in the field for AFA at the local, state, and national levels.

Gil Petrina Jr. remembers growing up reading *Air Force Magazine*—or at least looking at the pictures. In the early 1990s, Gilbert Sr. introduced three of his children, Gil, Julie, and Jenifer to John O. Gray, AFA executive director, and Dorothy Flanagan, AFA's director of protocol. The three young Petrinas were quickly enthralled by the world of AFA conventions, protocol, Air Force leadership, and AFA mentors.

"AFA is a family affair for the Petrina family," said Julie Petrina Curlin. Together with sister Amy, all four children followed in their dad's footsteps, joining the Air Force and getting involved in AFA early in their careers.

At one time, Amy was a cadet at the Air Force Academy, Jenifer was a second lieutenant, Julie was a first lieutenant, and Gil was a captain. In fact, Gilbert Sr. commissioned Gil, Gil commissioned Julie, Julie commissioned Jenifer, and Jenifer commissioned Amy. As AFA Under-40 National Directors, Gil, Julie, and Jenifer continued the Petrina legacy to "keep [the] gang together as [we] gained valuable professional insight into the organization through [our] work at the national level," recalled Julie.

It only takes a few minutes talking with her or Gil to get caught up in the excitement of our AFA history and Air Force heritage. When asked why she likes being an AFA member, Julie said one only needs to read *Crusade for Airpower: The Story of the Air Force Association*, and then "you can't help but fall in love with this organization."



Julie Petrina Curlin and Gil Petrina share a laugh—as well as a long family history of volunteer service to AFA.

**"If people really knew all our AFA does and has done ... there would be no doubt that this is a professional organization worthy of their membership and participation." —Gil Petrina**

She noted the passion that early airpower advocates like Arnold and Doolittle had in "crafting the vision of AFA."

Gil said he wished people knew more about AFA's history and its accomplishments. Among them, it was instrumental in the creation of a separate Air Force in September 1947, started the Community College of the Air Force and the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year program, and has fought for personnel, equipment, and strategy issues for the Air Force. It built and manages the Air Force Memorial, gives out thousands of dollars in scholarships to airmen, and recognizes their achievements, he added.

"If people really knew all our AFA does and has done, especially our uniformed and civilian members, there would be no doubt that this is a professional organization worthy of their membership and participation," said Gil.

He recalled the time at an AFA National Convention when he was a B-52

pilot and, together with a B-1 colleague on AFA's Junior Officer Advisory Council, spoke with a World War II bomber pilot who flew B-24s and B-25s out of Sicily and North Africa.

"I asked him if he had ever flown over Ploesti [in Romania]," said Petrina. "He said, 'Yes, four times. I got shot down on the fifth. I evaded [capture] for two weeks and got picked up and put in a POW camp. I escaped and evaded for another two weeks and got picked up and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp.'"

Petrina said the man paused and then said, "Yeah, but what you two guys do is awesome."

"That sums up what AFA means to me," said Petrina. "It's a family affair, the professional organization for the Air Force, and a living history of the Air Force and our heritage." ★

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*Kari Lynn Hahn is AFA's vice president for member and field relations.*