



#### July-September 2023

The official newsletter of Chapter 398 of the Air and Space Forces Association (AFA).

#### AFA Mission

Our mission is to promote dominant U.S. Air and Space Forces as the foundation of a strong National Defense; honor and support our Airmen, Guardians, and their families; and to honor and respect our enduring Heritage

#### To accomplish this, we:

Educate the public on the critical need for unrivaled aerospace power and promote aerospace and STEM education for a technically superior and professional workforce to ensure national security.

Advocate and promote aerospace power to favorably shape policy and resourcing decisions to guarantee the strongest aerospace forces in the world.

Support Airmen, Guardians, and the families of the Total Air Force and Space Force, including Active Duty, National Guard, Reserve, civilians, families, and members of the Civil Air Patrol.

#### Chapter Officers

President – Dann Mattiza  
Vice President – Nelson Arroyo  
Secretary – Susan Ault-Davis  
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#### **AFA Chapter 398**

Box 1220  
Mary Esther, FL 32569

[www.Hurlburt.AFAFlorida.org](http://www.Hurlburt.AFAFlorida.org)

## **2023 National Convention of the Air & Space Forces Association**

**Dann Mattiza, President, Chapter 398**

My wife and I recently joined other AFA'ers at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland to attend the 2023 AFA National Convention. As always, the venue was outstanding. The Convention ran officially from Saturday to Sunday and then the Air and Space Cyber Conference ran from



Monday through Wednesday. The Conference included 48 Panels and over 170 speakers. Mixed into that were 2 dinners. The first honored the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the years and the second, the USAF Birthday. Concurrently, the Technology Exposition was held Sunday through Wednesday featuring hundreds of booths displaying new technology and upcoming systems.

Unfortunately, neither my schedule or budget allowed me to remain for the Conference. The business portion of our Conference began at 1300 on Saturday and concluded around 1400 on Sunday. Regional President meetings and Delegate workshops were conducted during Saturday morning before the business meeting.

The Convention began as normal with welcoming remarks by the Chairman of the Board, Bernie Skoch, a credentials report, and approval of the rules and procedures of the Convention. The Keynote speaker followed, Dr. Jennifer Miller, Office of the Secretary of the AF, Directorate of Staff. The remainder of the business session on Saturday consisted of the CEO Report, Nominating Chair report, and reports by the Vice Chairmen for Education and Field Operations, and remarks by the various candidates for Chairman of the Board for Field Operations and National Director at large. The high point of the session was the introduction of and presentation by the National Teacher of the Year, Mr. Bill McInnish of Eau Gallie High School in Melbourne and nominated by the Florida Space Coast Chapter. (Please take a look at the current issue of the AFA magazine for an excellent article on Mr. McInnish.)

Following the close of the Saturday session, delegates adjourned and then regathered for the Awards Dinner. During that event, Hurlburt was awarded the Aerospace Education Excellence Award for Extra Large Chapters and the Unit Exceptional Service Awards for Communication and Community Partners (Extra Large Chapter). We also received recognition with the Community Partner Achievement Award and the Chapter Growth Award. Individual Awards were announced for Mr. Joe Kinego (Medal of Merit) and Mr. Rick Soria (Exceptional Service Award).

The Sunday Business session resumed the next morning with a short Memorial Service and a Final Credentials review. Delegates then voted for the next Vice Chairman of Field Operations and two new National

Directors at Large. The National Director for the Eastern Region race was uncontested and won by Mr. Todd Freece, outgoing President of the AFA Florida Region. Mr. Chris Canada of Nebraska was elected as the Next Vice Chair for Field Ops and Mr. Bill Harding of California and Mr. Robin Rand (currently an Appointed Director). The new term of office for all offices (except the Treasurer) is three years.

The afternoon session included presentations on the AFA Recruiting Task Force, the Wounded Airman Program (WAP)/Air Force Wounded Warrior (AFW2), and the United Forces and Families (F2) programs. There were also presentations from Arnold Air Society/Silver Wings and updates on AFA Finances and IT issues.

## IN HONOR OF THE WOMEN WHO SERVED

Were you aware that Okaloosa County has a park dedicated to the Women who have served in our military forces over the years? I was not until a few months ago, so I went to search it out and see what was there.

The Park is located near the Convention Center on Okaloosa Island, near the North side of the parking lot. It is accessed by a walking bridge from the parking area and consists of a wide, paved walking path that meanders through the landscape to the edge of Choctaw Bay and then back to the beginning. The park was formally established on Veteran's Day in 2021, so it is almost 2 years old.

The wall at the entrance to the park states the park is there to recognize the millions of Women Veterans of the United States Armed Forces, from the Revolutionary War to today. Beyond the wall there is a large open circular court with flags displayed for every military service, along with the US and POW flag.



That leads to the pathway through the park. As you veer to the right to begin your journey you first see the statue of **Margaret Corbin** who participated in the Revolutionary War while accompanying her husband, an artilleryman. When the gunner was killed in a battle, her husband took over as gunner and she assisted manning the gun. After her husband was killed, she manned the gun by herself and continued to fire until she too was wounded and unable to fire. She is recognized as the first woman to receive a US military pension.



Continuing through the park, you will find statues and plaques honoring **Cathay Williams**, who served in the Civil War and later as a Buffalo soldier (using the name William Cathay), and **Lenah Hagbee**, a WW I Navy Nurse—one of the original 20 nurses who formed the Navy Nurse Corps—and later awarded the Navy Cross for her efforts. She has even had a ship named after her!

Next is someone we all recognize, **Jacqueline Cochran**. As a part of her many achievements as an aviator, she was Director of the Women's Air Service Pilots (WASP) in WW II and later served as a Col in the USAF Reserve. She was also the first woman to break the sound barrier in a F-86, set an altitude record of 55,253 feet in 1961, and holds the standing world record of 1429 mph in a F-104G. She was inducted into the International Aerospace Hall of Fame in 1965 and the US Aviation Hall of Fame in 1971.



Farther along the pathway, we find two nurses representing the Korean War and Vietnam War eras. **Jonita Ruth Bonham** first served as an Army Nurse as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt in the Army Air Corps Medical Corps in 44-45. After tours in the Philippines and Japan following the war, she returned to the US and resigned from the Army. As many other veterans, when Korea broke out, she rejoined the US Air Force and served as a Flight Nurse in a Medical Evacuation Squadron. She survived a crash into the Sea of Japan one evening and managed to help rescue 17 other survivors before allowing others to help her. She had suffered a broken cheekbone, skull fracture, broken shoulder and broken wrist in the crash. She was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the first woman so honored.

**Sharon Ann Lane** was a member of the Army Nurse Corps Reserve and was assigned to VietNam in 1969. While there, she worked in the 312<sup>th</sup> Evac Hospital on the ICU and later the Vietnamese Ward. She was killed in a rocket attack on the base that killed 2 and injured another 27 persons.

**Sgt Leigh Ann Hester**, Kentucky National Guard member of the 617<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company, served in the Persian Gulf War. She was team leader at Camp Liberty, Iraq when the convoy she was shadowing was ambushed. She and her team flanked the insurgents and dismounted to engage the enemy. They cleared two trenches of the enemy, eventually killing 27 insurgents and wounding 6. She was awarded the Silver Star for Valor for her actions, the first such award given to a female since WWII.

The final statue and plaque honor **Naseema**, an Afghanistan born, US immigrant who moved to the US when she was 12. She eventually enlisted in the Air Force and rose to Senior NCO rank while earning her bachelor's and master's degrees. She was then selected for OTS and commissioned in 2001. After 9-11, as the only Pashto speaker in the USAF, she was assigned to combat missions as an Airborne Cryptologic Linguist and earned several Air Medals. Major Naseema provided intel support for the entire US air and ground operations in Afghanistan for several years, saving hundreds of coalition and Afghan lives and aircraft and removing thousands of insurgents from the battlefield.

While only 8 statues and stories are presented during this path through the park, they represent hundreds of other women who have served in the military of our nation. Space is available to add additional statues and plaques in the future as needed to represent future periods of conflict for our country. While that thought is perhaps disheartening, it is, unfortunately, inevitable.

Our profound thanks to the Okaloosa County Commissioners and others who conceived and created this park to honor our Military Women. We are fortunate to have this in our area and I encourage each of you to visit it, especially as the weather gets a bit cooler.



## SPOTLIGHT ON

### The Lt Col Gerry and Kathryn Chapman Memorial

A vibrant and committed AFA Chapter 398 Community Partner since 2015. Through the dedication and ongoing contributions of the Lt Col Gerry and Kay Chapman Memorial, we continue to serve our Air Force family, cadets, teachers, students and our community.

Thank you in memory of Gerry and Kay Chapman

## 2023 COMING EVENTS

### November

8 - Executive Board Meeting, 1139, Clemenza's at Uptown Station

### December

13 - Executive Board Meeting, 1130

## CHAPTER 398 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

AFA Chapter 398 is very fortunate to have very supportive Community Partners. Through their generous funding and involvement, we were able to support our Wounded Warrior training camp, Teacher Workshops, Teacher of the Year recognition, Space Camp, student scholarships, Unsung Heroes Airmen recognition, Cyber Patriot competitions, regional Science Fair and much more.

Thank you to all current partners who renewed their commitment this year and went above and beyond with grants and other financial support.

Again, "Thank you!" to all our Community Partners who supported us throughout the year. We are looking forward to a very busy and successful new year and with your support we will make it better than ever.

<b>Platinum</b>	
Alion Science and Technology	The Boeing Company – Ft Walton Beach
Elbit Systems of America	Lockheed Martin – Ft Walton Beach
Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems	Lockheed Martin MFC SOS CLSS
<b>Gold</b>	
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University-Worldwide	Eglin Federal Credit Union
Lt Col Gerry & Kay Chapman Memorial	SA Technical Services Inc
<b>Silver</b>	
Cherry Wealth Advisors	Clemenza’s at Uptown Station
Emerald Coast Endodontics	Nathan Hall DMD, "Family & Cosmetic Dentistry"
Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Associates	Preston Hood Chevrolet
Sacred Heart Medical Group – Rheumatology	
<b>Bronze</b>	
Aqua Pool and Patio Company (CP of the Quarter)	Awards Plus Frames by Sharon
Beach Bank	Booz • Allen • Hamilton
Dennis and Company	Edward Jones
FNBT Bank	On-Point Defense Technologies, LLC
Serigraphia Inc	
<b>Basic</b>	
Emerald Coast Funeral Home	Freedom Self Storage
Jimmy’s Men’s Store and Pawn	McNeil Hotel Group

Community Sponsorship levels are: Commando - \$5000, Diamond - \$2500, Platinum - \$1000, Gold - \$500, Silver - \$300, Bronze - \$150, and Basic - \$100. If you know of any business interested in becoming a Community Partner, please contact one of our chapter officers.

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