

**Air Force Association (Florida)
2019 Convention
Courtyard Marriott, Ocala FL
July 12-13, 2019**

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation, Introductions and Roll Call

State President Sharon Branch called the Florida Air Force Association 2019 Convention to order at 0802 on July 13, 2019 in the Gulfstream Room of the Ocala Courtyard Marriott. Sharon gave the invocation and led the group in the pledge of allegiance.

Ten chapters were present, and four were absent. Two of the absent chapters (Highlands and McCarthy) are in inactive status. A list of chapters present is below and at Attachment 1.

Chapters Present

Red Tail #136
Martin H. Harris #303
Cape Canaveral #309
Waterman-Twining #316
Gold Coast #351
Eglin #365
Hurlburt #398
Falcon #399
Bud West #419
Florida West Coast #429

Chapters Absent

Florida Highlands #173
Miami-Homestead #317
Tyndall Chapter 355
James R. McCarthy #397

A quorum was present. A list of members who signed in at the convention is at Attachment 2.

Meeting Minutes – Ben Langer

Minutes from the AFA Florida 2019 Winter Meeting in Orlando, Florida on March 2, 2019, were distributed electronically before this meeting and paper copies were placed on tables for this meeting. This was done in lieu of reading the minutes. Since there were no objections or corrections, the minutes from the 2019 Winter Meeting were approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report – Gary Lehmann

Gary provided a proposed 2020 budget. On the income side, he noted that he had shopped around for best interest rates for AFA Florida's two Certificates of Deposit and found that other sources were all in about the same ballpark as the current bank offerings. Consequently, he did not move the CDs to other banks nor did he change the terms.

At the end of the meeting just before adjourning, the convention approved a 2020 budget that shows \$8,895 in income and expense (Attachment 3). In earlier discussion, however, prompted by a \$3,700 cost to AFA Florida for the hospitality suite at the 2018 National Convention, members asked whether it should be continued. It was concluded that the function of the hospitality room had changed. It now is social and no longer serves its original purpose as a forum for candidates for national office. Sandy Schlitt proposed that AFA Florida play host at a sports bar in the Gaylord and that it be for AFA Florida and members from other states. Tim Brock, noting that a hospitality suite is already in the AFA Florida 2019 budget, amended the motion, recommending that the line item in the 2020 budget be not for a hospitality suite but for a National Convention Reception. The motion was seconded, approved and is so recorded in the 2020 budget.

Candace Lovell made a motion to adopt the AFA National mileage rate in place of the longstanding 35 cents per mile now being paid to members on official AFA business. The motion was amended to adopt the national rate "in 2020 and beyond." The amended motion carried.

Future State Meetings – Sharon Branch

- The 2020 State Winter Meeting will be held in conjunction with the Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando on February 28-29. After the president's appeal for a host, no one stepped forward to sponsor this meeting. Future winter meetings will continue to be held in conjunction with the Air Warfare Symposium in order to attract attendance from AFA National executives. Bill Yucuis offered that videoconferencing could work well because it does with StellarXplorer meetings. The 2020 State Winter Meeting will be held by teleconference.

- The 2020 AFA Florida State Convention will be hosted by Falcon Chapter 399 in Jacksonville July 24-25 in a Doubletree hotel. Events will include a river cruise.
- Tom Carney proposed to conduct the 2021 State Convention in Tallahassee with hosting shared by panhandle chapters Bud West 419, Eglin 365 and Hurlburt 398 on a summertime date to be determined.
- Sharon proposed awarding an incentive from the AFA Florida state treasury to chapters to host future state conventions; she mentioned \$500 as an example of such an incentive. A decision on this proposal was deferred.

President Branch pleaded for better communication from chapter executives in response to her messages. She left that with, “You don’t communicate!” Likewise, Christina English, the Martin H. Harris Chapter Secretary, called for volunteers to assist the Martin H. Harris Chapter with the 2020 Air Warfare Symposium to be held February 26-28 in Orlando.

Field Operations Update – F. Gavin MacAloon, Vice Chairman, Field Operations.

Mac urged members to contact AFA Florida Executive Vice President if their chapter websites need correction. Likewise, he asked that email addresses be deleted from the James R. McCarthy Chapter 397 and Florida Highlands Chapter 173 web pages because those chapters are inactive and would be unresponsive to correspondents.

There ensued a discussion as to whether some national awards are meaningful. The conclusion: some are and some are not. Todd Freece took the opportunity to mention that the late Tommy Harrison had left behind lots of historical information (“boxes of stuff”).

Moving forward, Mac suggested that members continue to mentor potential candidates for emerging leaders and pointed to the current list on the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) web page (<https://www.afa.org/publications-news/air-force-magazine/2019-04-01/afa-emerging-leaders>).

The vice chairman for field operations acknowledged that AFA Florida “did good” this year in regard to awards. With that, he named AFA Florida’s Sharon Branch and Mike Liquori as recipients of the Chairman’s Award. Virginia, Florida and Massachusetts led

the field in competition for the outstanding state organization, with Virginia edging Florida by a very small margin. Once again, Mac urged chapters to submit awards. "Please submit your members for awards," Mac urged.

Training modules in many categories are available online and they should be used. Mac especially recommended that chapters send their new members and new officers to these training modules. The training modules, created as they are by volunteers, are very good.

The number of delegates to the national convention is decreasing. Paid delegates to the 2018 convention numbered 154 compared to more than 200 in previous conventions going back to 2015. Mac noted that candidates are needed to serve as vice chairman for field operations. He is in that role for the fourth year, which is unprecedented.

The AFA National Strategic Plan is in draft and will be presented to national convention delegates first. Every effort will be made to get out information ahead of time. Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright will talk to delegates at the convention.

A critique of reports on the AFA portal website is one of the items on the field priority list.

In response to a question by Sandy Schlitt, Mac reported that total AFA membership stands at 99,000.

Joe Burke, candidate for national director-at-large, member of the field council, and Virginia vice president for communication, reported on the IT transformation status. A chapter and state website rollout will provide a standard website, including domain names and templates. Chapters will need computer literate volunteers to implement these standard websites. Joe recommended getting a college intern or ROTC cadet to help when such volunteers are unavailable within chapter membership.

The convention adjourned at 1130 for lunch and awards.

Lunch and Awards

State President Sharon Branch presented CyberPatriot, StellarXplorers and state individual awards during ceremonies after lunch with Mark Chapman narrating. Two CyberPatriot awards were presented. The top Florida team in the CyberPatriot All Service Division was Civil Air Patrol's St. Augustine Composite Squadron. Their coach, Galin Hernandez accepted the award on behalf of team members on hand for the award. The top Florida team in the CyberPatriot Open Division was from Creekside High School in St. Johns, Florida. Their coach, Ms. Kathy Sinardi, accepted the award on behalf of the team members present for the occasion.

The top Florida StellarXplorers team was the Junior ROTC cadets from Baker County High School in St. Mary. Their coach, Drew Riddle, accepted the award on behalf of team members present.

The Florida Teacher of the Year was Dr. Caryn Smith Long, a fifth-grade teacher at Treadway Elementary School in Leesburg and 31-year veteran of the classroom. She was nominated by Orlando's Martin H. Harris Chapter 303.

State Individual Awards

The president presented Chapter Member of the Year Awards to the following:

Loreen Kollar	Bud West Chapter 419
Chris Bailey	Cape Canaveral Chapter 390
Shirley Pigott	Eglin Chapter 365
Carla Chin	Falcon Chapter 399
Patricia Lovarco	Gold Coast Chapter 351
Leslie (Les) Matheson	Hurlburt Chapter 398
Mike Liquori	Martin H. Harris Chapter 303
Benny Benitez	Miami-Homestead Chapter 317
Edwin Barbosa-Perez	Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136
Edwin Averion	Tyndall Chapter 355
Dennis Foley	Waterman-Twining Chapter 316

Exceptional Service Citations were presented to Shirley Pigott from Eglin Chapter 365; Ryan Price also from Eglin Chapter 365; John DeNys from Falcon Chapter 399; and Ernest Webster, also from Falcon Chapter 399.

The President presented four Sustained Service Citations. The recipients were Marian McBryde from Eglin Chapter 365; Bruce Fouraker from Falcon Chapter 399; Ransom (Ran) Mariam also from Falcon Chapter 399; Justin Burr from Gold Coast Chapter, and Todd Freece from Martin H. Harris Chapter 303.

In a break from precedent, Sharon presented a chapter award at the convention lunch, an award usually reserved for after-the-convention dinner. She presented both the Outstanding Medium Chapter of the Year and an Exceptional Service Award for Overall Programming to Tyndall Chapter 355. Ed Hood, the impetus for the Tyndall chapter being revitalized, was on hand with family members, in spite of his imminent deployment, to receive the awards.

The final Individual Award, the Region President Award, was presented to Ben Langer of Red Tail Memorial Chapter 136.

The convention re-convened for business and discussion at 1345.

Awards

Sandy Schlitt moved to recognize the late Martin H. Harris Chapter 303 member, Tommy Harrison, by naming an award in his honor, namely, the Tommy Harrison Florida Member of the Year Award (Gold Card). He anticipated that the award would be presented annually, when appropriate, to an AFA member for outstanding contributions over the past year or several years. This award would be in place of the existing State Member of the Year Award. The motion to institute the Tommy Harrison Gold Card Award was approved by majority vote and is effective in 2020.

Subsequent discussion centered on the Legislator of the Year Award given in some years to a single elected official. Two had been approved for 2019 although precedent allowed for only one. U.S. Congressman Neal Dunn (FL-2) was voted 2019 Legislator of the Year following a motion at the AFA Florida 2019 Winter Meeting. U.S. Congressman Daniel Webster (FL-11) was selected 2019 Legislator of the Year by the AFA Florida Awards Committee based on nominations from the field. The Awards Committee was composed of Executive Vice President Mark Chapman, chairman; Tom Carney; Gary

Lehmann; Candace Lovell; and Bill Yucuis. On a motion by Bill Yucuis, the convention approved 2019 Legislator of the Year Awards to both.

Election of Officers

The election of officers to take positions on October 1, 2019 was led by Bill Yucuis, chairman of the nominating committee. The slate was composed of Mark Chapman for President; Todd Freece for Executive Vice President; Dennis Foley for Secretary; and Gary Lehmann for Treasurer. Upon seeking and hearing no additional nominations from the floor, Bill declared nominations closed and the slate was elected by voice vote.

National Convention

Sharon called for more AFA Florida delegates to the National Convention in September. A glance by the President at the list of those attending this convention indicated that 11 from AFA Florida are planning to attend the AFA National Convention September 17-19 at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, National Harbor, Maryland.

Joe Burke, candidate for AFA delegate at large, described his background in the military and defense industry, his current work in modern IT systems as an industry executive, and commitment to AFA.

AFA Florida: State of Health, Chapter Closures and Chapter Crosstalk

The President acknowledged that with two chapters inactive and at least one other on the ropes, AFA Florida chapter health at this time was “not very healthy.” Russ Lewey urged that appeals for new members be directed to recently retired veterans.

Discussion about closing inactive chapters (Highlands Chapter 173 and McCarthy Chapter 397) again was inconclusive. Sandy Schlitt suggested identifying small groups within each of these chapters and sending letters to them seeking their involvement. Todd Freece described an informal veterans group meeting regularly in Orlando without much of an agenda other than networking. It seemed successful in attracting people in their 30s and 40s. Christina English encouraged involving cadets from Civil Air Patrol and AF Junior ROTC.

Tim Brock urged members to get the word out about StellarXplorers. They have their own website stellarxplorers.org and will be starting a new competition in October.

CyberPatriot, which started here in Florida, does not have representation at the state level of leadership and needs emphasis at both the chapter and state level.

Sharon mentioned that an AFJROTC initiative is providing a flight academy, enabling high school students to apply, train and learn how to fly, all funded by the U.S. Air Force.

Similarly, the Emerging Leader Program gets people in position to learn about AFA and become leaders in the AFA.

And finally, she reminded those attending that reports are due from chapters by the end of the month (July). "Please do them," she urged.

Mac indicated that issues with the new portal continue and that National continues to be responsive. An extensive password re-set issue still needs to be resolved, and work on that is progressing slowly because the service desk is composed of only two people. On another matter, he recommended reading the legislative update and circulating it for ideas from members.

Approval of the State Budget

A motion to adopt the 2020 budget was approved with the following changes: the AFA standard mileage rate per mile was approved for authorized transportation, the National Convention Hospitality Suite was renamed to make it National Convention Reception; and the amount was changed to \$1,000 in place of \$2,500 to defray costs of the reception.

Final Remarks

President Branch said she enjoyed being the AFA Florida President for the past two years. She enjoined members present to respond to the needs of the president-elect and not wait to the "last minute." She urged members to keep track of what they are doing so that the AFA legacy will stay alive – and to "keep fighting the fight!"

Adjournment

President Branch adjourned the meeting at 1645 and referred the convention to a dinner program and additional state awards.

Dinner and Awards

President Branch presented the following awards after dinner:

- **Exceptional Service Award:** Hurlburt Chapter 398
- **Outstanding Extra Large Chapter:** Eglin Chapter 365
- **Exceptional Service Awards:**
 - Martin H. Harris Chapter 303 for Aerospace Education
 - Martin H. Harris Chapter 303 for Communication
 - Martin H. Harris Chapter 303 for Community Relations
 - Martin H. Harris Chapter 303 for Veterans Affairs
- **Florida Member of the Year:** Dennis Krebs, Eglin Chapter 365
- **Jerry Waterman Award** (to an active duty Air Force member who made the most significant contribution to the Air Force): Colonel Brian S. Laidlaw, Commander of the 325th Fighter Wing at Tyndall Air Force Base
- **General Lewis H. Brereton Award** (to a civilian Florida resident for his or her outstanding contribution to airpower during the year): Jerry B. Williams, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Eglin Federal Credit Union

Guest Speaker Mike Liquori described how his upbringing, career in the Air Force, selection as an emerging leader and current position as a National Director is enabling his commitment to the Air Force Association.

President Branch adjourned the convention at 1945.

*2019 Florida State AFA Convention
Minutes, Awaiting Winter Meeting Approval, Amended TH Award*

*Recorded by
Ben Langer, Secretary and
Dennis Foley, Secretary-Elect
July 14, 2019*

Attachments

1. 2019 AFAFL Convention Chapter Attendance
2. 2019 AFAFL Convention Member Attendance
3. 2019 Budget with notes