

Tradition of honor strong among Daedalians

By Staff Sgt. Lee Watts
Internal Information chief

Having flown combat missions in two wars, earning a Silver Star and logging more than 5,000 flight hours in single engine fighters, a retired pilot now guides the current generation of pilots in a tradition of honor.

"The first promise of every Daedalian is to place nation above self," said retired Col. Robert Shofner flight captain of Shaw's Order of Daedalians, an organization of and for fighter pilots. "What a fighter pilot does on every mission demonstrates precisely the meaning of putting nation above self."

Col. Shofner said the Order of Daedalians is important because it builds camaraderie and gives pilots a chance to share their history.

Col. Robert Beletic, 20th Fighter Wing Operations Group commander, and Daedalian member, agreed with the importance Col. Shofner places in the organization.

"I think it's important in society, and for fighter pilots specifically, for generations to get together and talk. In our case we discuss tactics, training and such and have some fun along the way."

Col. Beletic said the order gives pilots a chance to pass along the important things that don't come in a flight manual.

According to Col. Beletic, there's more to being a Daedalian than just being a military pilot and more in being a military pilot than just flying.

"A Daedalian is somebody who is worthy of trust and the confidence of fellow Daedalians. It's a way of living,

not only in the sky, but on the ground and throughout your entire life. It's God, honor, country and with each mission it's putting your life on the line to back up those words."

Col. Beletic said he considers men like Col. Shofner heroes not only for what they did as pilots, but more so for the way they continue to serve even after retirement.

"Honor, the warrior spirit, those intangible things are what make pilots want to spend time with and listen to heroes like Col. Shofner. It's the tradition of leading by example and by sharing your piece of air history that gives the order a special meaning. I encourage every pilot to join the Daedalians," said Beletic.

The Order of the Daedalians is strictly for military pilots. Those interested in membership or who want more information, can e-mail Col. Shofner at nubbettyshofner@aol.com.

With more than 30 years in the Air Force and flying more than 300 missions, the aircraft Col. Shofner piloted include: A7-Ds, F-100s and F-84s. Monday, during an orientation flight, he was able to add the F-16 to that list.

Once airborne, Col. Shofner was given a feel of what a current generation fighter can do.

"It's a super aircraft," said Col. Shofner of the F-16 after the flight. "It's powerful and the instrumentation is fascinating. It's simply a great air machine."

Though the Air Force now does much of its fighting at night, during Col. Shofner's time, it was far different.

When asked, he told of how a night attack earned him the Silver Star.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Shirley Henderson

Col. Beletic (left) does a preflight check with Col. Shofner Monday.

"During the Korean War we didn't have the night vision of today or even the flares used to illuminate targets during Viet Nam. Then, if you were to attack a convoy, as soon as they heard the aircraft coming all the trucks would turn off their lights. This made them virtually disappear.

In early 1953, I was on a mission at dusk and saw two plumes of smoke off to my left. I rolled over to it and saw two trains carrying supplies to the enemy. To hide the sound of my approach I cut the engine back to idle. I didn't have enough ordnance to take out both trains. So, I rolled in on the tracks in front of the lead train, then maneuvered on the last car and tracks behind the second train. This cut the trains' escape route forward and back. There were several flatbeds on those trains with anti-aircraft guns firing at me. Since I was out of ordnance, I had to strafe them. I was able to take out about eight of the anti-aircraft guns

before heading back to base.

On the trip, I noticed I was losing fuel quicker than normal. When I landed I saw where the fuel was leaking through a large hole in the right wing. I reported back the location of the train and others went in to finish it."

After the war, Col. Shofner went on to fly combat missions in Viet Nam and finished his career at Shaw as the inspector general for 9th Air Force from 1975 to 1980.

Now serving as the lead of Shaw's Daedalians, Col. Shofner said, "Being a fighter pilot is something special. A Daedalians main purpose is to put nation above self and to encourage young people to pursue military flying careers and continue the traditions."

Shaw's Order of Daedalians meets monthly in the Daedalain room of Shaw's Conference Center. It is decorated with artwork and artifacts of fighter pilots who've lived by the core value, Service Before Self.



Right, Chloe (left) and Maggie, 2 and 4-year old daughters of Mrs. Ashley and Staff Sgt. Don Russell, 77th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, said they needed to sit down after Shaw's Easter egg hunt April 10 because, "It's hard work" collecting eggs.



Left, Senior Airman David Tackett, 20th AMXS, scattered the eggs at the Youth Center Sports Complex for Shaw's annual Easter egg hunt. There was a prize-winning golden egg for each age group.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Lee Watts

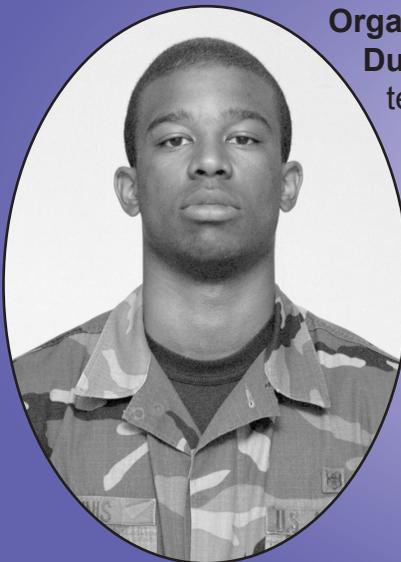
Madison, 2-year old daughter of Senior Airman Mitch Ward, 20th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, gets assistance from her mother, Cindy, while collecting eggs.



Spirit Spotlight



Airman 1st Class Donald Ennis



Organization: 20th Medical Group

Duty title: Aerospace medical technician

Job duties: Patient care

Hometown: Washington, D.C.

Time in service: One and a half years

Off-duty interests: Exercising, traveling and reading

Words I live by: "Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing."

Airman 1st Class Aaron Angel



Organization: 20th Comptroller Squadron

Duty title: Customer support technician

Job duties: Document control and travel document processing

Hometown: Gloucester, Va.

Time in service: One and a half years

Family: Husband, Airman 1st Class Gabriel Angel, 20th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Off-duty interests: Spending time with family, running and remodeling home

Words I live by: "Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift."

4th Annual OCSC Art Auction

The Officers Civilian Spouses Club is scheduled to host the 4th Annual Art Auction today at the Conference Center. A preview of items for sale begins at 6:30 p.m. and the auction begins at 7:30. Works will range from lithographs, etchings and engravings to watercolors and original oils. Tickets \$7 at the door. For more information, contact Mrs. Tami Corby at **tcorby@sumter-sc.com** or call **436-2667**, or call Mrs. Linda Watson at **481-7154**.

