

Commander's Connection



Photo by Airman 1st Class Susan Penning

Col. Philip Ruhlman speaks with Mr. Chuck Crumbo, *The State* reporter, Saturday, following the return of 682nd Air Support Operations Squadron members.

"Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Philip Ruhlman, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil.

*Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in *The Shaw Spirit*.*

Q I was referred to a clinic in Manning and went to Tricare/Managed Care for a travel claim. They said they would only pay actual expenses if it's over 100 miles. They made this appointment, but I put wear and tear on my personal vehicle. This doesn't seem fair to me. I recently retired after 20 years of service, and I think I deserve better treatment. Why can't retirees get paid travel for anything less than 100 miles?

A Thank you for inquiring about the recent changes to your travel benefits due to

your retirement. TRICARE Prime travel entitlement is available for non-active duty TRICARE Prime enrollees, including dependents, only when they are referred for specialty care more than 100 miles from the primary care location.

This regulation is not Shaw-specific, but comes from the current National Defense Authorization Act. You can refer to the TRICARE Web site for additional information:

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/factsheets/viewfactsheet.cfm?id=181> or call the managed care flight at 895-6228 if you have any further questions.

Salute sharply, carry on

By Staff Sgt. Lee Watts
Internal Information chief

Earlier this week, while working with a ROTC cadet, I commented on how many changes of command were going on and, I was anxious to see what the new commanders would be like. Then the cadet asked me a question that made me pause.

"What is it that separates a good commander from a bad commander?"

I thought for a moment. When this person graduates the ROTC program, they might well be my commander one day. What kind of words of wisdom do I want to pass on to a future leader?

The value of mentoring is something you hear over and over. Though it's usually the senior member mentoring the junior, here was a unique opportunity to do it almost in reverse.

I answered the cadet, "A good commander is one who builds an atmosphere where even the most junior Airman feels free to contribute, and where their ideas and inputs are valued."

However, I thought some qualifications needed to be made to that statement, so I continued.

"A good commander also has to build an atmosphere of discipline and respect. There comes a time when if the

commander wants to do it one way and you want another, you salute sharply and carry on."

You often hear about leadership, but I want to talk about followership. This is the military. It's not a normal job. Normal jobs don't have the responsibility we do. Normal jobs don't ask for the kinds of sacrifices that the service does. Normal jobs may pay better, be safer, and not cause you to be separated from you family. There is a reason it is called the "service."

No one was drafted. We all volunteered to: "obey the orders of the president of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me..." This oath comes with the phrase, "I will bear true faith and allegiance..." As great of a responsibility as a commander has to lead, so do we to follow, not only in actions, but in attitude.

Whenever you are asked to do an unpleasant detail, does your attitude fulfill you oath or does military bearing go out the window? Attitude is everything. You can think what you want, but don't act like you're above details.

Reality check: Everybody look down at your sleeves, those are normal stripes aren't they? Look at your collar, those are normal bars too, I believe.

I think we have gone too far and lost some of the discipline and respect I see in the other services.

Let's focus on military bearing and remember, sometimes you just have to salute sharply and carry on.

Air Force Fun



By Staff Sgt. Lee Watts

Yes, I just PCS'd from the ROK and am now in XP. I'm to ensure everything is AOK for the UCI and all your stuff is GTG. According to the CSRL and IAW the AFI you must go TDY to the UAE for AEF 1.

The Shaw Spirit

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Commanders, coaches prepare teams for win

By Maj. Bryan Wolford
55th Fighter Squadron
assistant director of operations

Recent real world and exercise experiences motivated me to reflect on a term engrained to the Armed Forces...readiness. The Department of Defense emphasizes unit and joint readiness in nearly every speech and paper, defining it as "the ability of US military forces to fight and meet the demands of the national military strategy." Air Combat Command incorporates readiness into its mission statement "Develop Airmen, Prepared to Deploy, Ready to Fight." Even I have flouted my organization as "exceptionally trained and ready." So what image do you conjure up when you hear the word readiness? My mind quickly travels to Oxford, Mississippi on National Collegiate Athletic Association I-A football game day where University of Mississippi head coach, David Cutcliffe, focuses his players and fans with one simple question, "Are You Ready?"

Through my personal experiences, I can shed light on individual readiness—readiness to lead as an expert, readiness to accept responsibility and readiness to commit to excellence.

During my interview with Coach Cutcliffe, I noticed many similarities between a football head coach and an Air Force commander. Both are tasked to build a team, intensely train to battle and win. Interested to hear a non-military perspective, I asked Coach Cutcliffe his take on readiness. He explained readiness is best understood when "the will to prepare is greater than the will to win. Readiness is the foundation. Players have been to basic training, passed all the exercises and are ready for the real test—game day." When the whistle blows, readiness is tested as the players and team engage the opponent, knowing the team that makes the fewest mistakes will ultimately win.

Winning requires individuals to possess a readiness to lead as expert. The Air Force is the most-technologically advanced service, and our Airmen receive high-tech skills just out of Basic Military Training. Following technical school, our Airmen

apply learned, expert skills and motivation to quickly advance in responsibility, earning three, five, seven and nine-level qualifications. Similarly, pilots master flight skills and leadership roles before advancing to flight lead, mission commander and instructor.

Coach Cutcliffe's slogan "If it is to be, it's up to me" forces his players to actively pursue readiness. Just like Air Force senior leaders, Coach Cutcliffe expects his players to know the plays and show motivation. When armed with the expert skills and a can-do attitude, his team is confident and aggressive. Readiness requires both motivation and expertise; and both sharpen the winning edge. If you encounter individual readiness that misses the mark, ask questions to determine if the poor performance is a result of motivation or expertise. Because lacking either produces the same dismal results.

The second area an individual controls to enhance readiness is a willingness to accept responsibility. During Exercise SEA LION 04-08 in February, several of the warriors tasked to deploy were turned back for failing to accomplish foundational requirements. As a supervisor, this disturbed me because preparedness to deploy and readiness to fight is an aspect of our military life that isn't as visible as performance in our primary duty. By neglecting your foundational requirements of medical, dental, immunizations, fitness test or life skills, you prove our force unready and create burden for commanders and your teammates. Or worse, you can jeopardize your family's future as my father's friend, a retired US Army Reserve officer, did by failing to prepare a will.

Foundational requirements also apply to Ole

Miss Football with academics, classroom performance, weight training and positive community involvement. A player who fails to accomplish foundational requirements is benched on game day. Coach Cutcliffe created a program for his team that fosters responsibility and moral behavior.

It's called "Stop & Think" and asks four questions: Is this a risk I can afford to take? How will this affect my future? How will this affect my family? How will this affect my teammates and coaches? At the start of the season, each player is given a business card with a stop sign emblazed with "Think" and the four questions on the front; on the back are the names and phone numbers of the Ole Miss coaching staff. Accept responsibility for yourself and be prepared to assist others to best insure individual readiness.

The final individual enabler is a readiness to commit to excellence. Our third Air Force core value proclaims "Excellence In All We Do." My commitment to excellence extends to my personal readiness, my unit's readiness and my Air Force career. I find that readiness involves asking questions and reflecting on past experiences. Further, I feel the highest levels of readiness when I see my unit is ready. And when the team is ready and the force is strong, I can confidently visualize my future in the Air Force.

Consider this Coach Cutcliffe analogy, "The strength of the pack is the wolf; the strength of the wolf is the pack." When you are ready, your position is solid and unwavering. This allows you to positively influence others closer to readiness.

America entrusts its Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines to fight and win its wars. Senior leadership ensures the Armed Services are organized, trained and equipped. Commanders ensure good order, discipline and readiness—an often elusive aspect of our individual military capability. And now you are armed with the sight pictures of readiness to lead as expert, readiness to accept responsibility and readiness to commit to excellence so you can confidently and aggressively answer Coach Cutcliffe's question "Are you ready?" I know I can, and I will continue to crosscheck my foundational military requirements and reflect on current world events to ensure future readiness. Our mission to develop Airmen, prepare to deploy and be ready to fight focuses us on the win—the ultimate objective.



Courtesy photo



Photo by Staff Sgt. Nathan Bevier

Members on base train on for contingencies during a Major Accident Response Exercise Monday in the 20th Civil Engineer Squadron readiness building.