

Commander's Connection



Photo by Mr. Stan Bailey

Col. Philip Ruhlman (center), Mr. Jim Vose (center left), 20th Services Squadron deputy chief, and Airmen cut the ribbon Saturday for Club Fusion, the Airmen's club on base.

"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*.

Recently, I noticed big, metal yard sale signs at the self-help store. The desk clerk said the signs were to replace the ones base-housing residents tape to stop signs and street poles. Yet, I see bright pink, yellow and cardboard boxes advertising yard sales. The sad part is, these same signs will probably be up after the yard sales are over. We get notices for weeds growing in our yards, but what about notices for not taking down yard sale signs?

Thank you for your concern about yard sale signs. Housing Maintenance provides metal signs at the U-Fix-It store to base occupants for their yard sales. We are currently taking down signs we find on poles and notifying occupants about the availability of the metal signs. We have had articles in *The Shaw Spirit* and we will continue to publicize proper yard sale posting.

CSAF emphasizes power of your vote

By Gen. John P. Jumper
Chief of Staff of the Air Force

Around the world, the Airmen of our United States Air Force make a difference. From the collapse of the Soviet Union and Desert Storm more than a decade ago to our global planning and execution of air and space power today, Airmen have done more than their part for our nation. In the coming months, we need to make a difference in another way. We all need to exercise the privilege only enjoyed by free nations — the privilege of voting.

Most of you have been employed in an Air expeditionary Force since you have been in the Air Force. You have seen our way of life compared to others in troubled parts of the world. While we as Americans are not without our problems and issues, if all the borders of all the nations of the world were open to all people, where do you think most would choose to reside? There is little doubt that it would be in the Land of the Free.

There have been many books written in recent years about our founding fathers — the men who wrote the powerful words that forged a new nation. In our Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson penned a phrase that is the cornerstone of our democratic institutions and makes us unique among nations. He wrote, "...Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed." It is this idea of the "Consent of the Governed" that empowers each

of us in the form of our vote.

Many of us have experienced some obstacles to voting while serving in the armed forces. The absentee voting system has traditionally been fraught with challenges, but we have been working hard to minimize the red tape. With Airmen and their families serving around the globe, many suffer from delays in mail service — another obstacle to registering and voting. Our leadership in the Department of Defense has worked with the U.S. Postal Service to give priority to voting materials in the mail system. To facilitate the voting process, we have also created a user-friendly voting link called "Airmen Votes" on our Air Force Link website for you and your families to use. The "Airmen Votes" icon on the Air Force Link website, www.af.mil, will guide you to all the information you need to register to vote, file an absentee ballot request, and send in an absentee ballot. In most cases, all you need to do is fill out a postcard and mail it in. Guidance is available for all states and territories and for those Airmen living overseas. Your family members who are eligible to vote can use this web link as well, including children away from home while attending school. If you still have questions, contact your Voting Assistance Officers — they are available to address your voting questions or concerns. We want to make voting as easy as possible. The Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. Jim Roche, and I are dedicated to ensuring every eligible Airman



Photo by Airman 1st Class Susan Penning

Airman 1st Class Jebek Lansanah, 20th Mission Support Squadron, activates her right to vote Tuesday by filling out an absentee ballot request form. Born in Germany, she became an American citizen Aug. 11.

has the opportunity to vote. As Airmen we have all taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution that guarantees our right to vote. As a nation we accept divergence of opinion and candidates with different views. I encourage you to avail yourself of the right to vote for candidates and on the issues of your choice. No other single act is so fundamental to our form of Government. Please register. Please vote.

The Shaw Spirit

Shaw Air Force Base editorial staff

Col. Philip Ruhlman.....20th Fighter Wing commander
Capt. Mark D. Gibson.....Public Affairs chief
2nd Lt. Bryan D. Cox.....Internal Information chief
bryan.cox@shaw.af.mil
Staff Sgt. Alicia Prakash..... Editor
spirit.editor@shaw.af.mil
Airman 1st Class Susan Penning.....Staff writer
susan.penning@shaw.af.mil

Ms. Adriene M. Dicks.....Correspondent
adriene.dicks@shaw.af.mil

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20th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office
517 Lance Ave., Suite 107
Shaw Air Force Base, S.C. 29152-5041

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Classified ads may also be dropped off at *The Shaw Spirit* office in Bldg. 1122 by Tuesday at 2 p.m.

Helmets keep Shaw's littlest riders safe

By Staff Sgt. Donna Hustad
20th Fighter Wing Safety office
Ground safety craftsman

Head injury is the leading cause of wheeled sports-related deaths among children and the most important determinant of permanent disability after a crash according to a survey conducted by The National SAFE KIDS Campaign in 2003.

Head injuries account for more than 60% of bicycle-related deaths, more than two-thirds of bicycle-related hospital admissions and about one-third of hospital emergency room visits for bicycling injuries. Without proper protection, a fall of as little as two feet can result in a skull fracture or other traumatic brain injury.

Unfortunately, bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product except the automobile. In 2001, 134 children ages 14 and under died and nearly 314,600 were injured in bicycle crashes. Additionally, more than 176,000 children ages 5 to 14 are

treated each year in hospital emergency rooms for injuries related to skateboards, scooters and skates.

It is estimated that more than 70% of children ages 5 to 14 ride bicycles. Also, child participation in other wheel-based sports, such as skateboarding and inline skating, has grown exponentially over the past decade. Participation in wheeled sports helps children develop the habit of healthy physical activity, and also contributes to a sense of independence and responsibility.

No one wants to keep children from these types of activities, just to ensure they are protected as much as possible. Helmets can avert the serious consequences of a seemingly typical childhood incident such as falling from a bike. When worn correctly and consistently, helmets are very effective at reducing the risk of a head injury by as much as 85% and the risk of brain injury by as much as 88% when worn properly. Some children may wear the helmet, but may wear it tilted on the head or



Photo by Airman 1st Class Amber McCarthy

Children at the BX pick out bikes and safety helmets Wednesday. More than 300,000 children were injured in bike accidents in 2001.

with the straps unsecured.

Bikes are a classic symbol of childhood recreation, transportation and health. Ensure this is an enjoyable experience for your child and require them to always wear a helmet and wear it properly. As adults, we should set the right example by always wearing a helmet while participating in all wheel-based sports as well. It could save your head one day too!

If you ride and operate a non-motorized means of conveyance on base, including but not limited to, bicycles, tricycles, unicycles, skates, roller-blades, skateboards, and scooters, you must wear a helmet according to AFI 31-204 SHAW AFB SUP 1, *Motor Vehicle Traffic supervision*.

(Statistics information, courtesy of Sumter County SAFE KIDS Coalition.)

Modern day patriots are all around us

By Col. Gary Lane
5th Maintenance Group commander

MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. -- We often read in our history books about patriots. What often comes to mind is someone like Mel Gibson dressed in early day garb as he was in the movie, "The Patriot." We may even think of Soldiers in rags in the snow at Valley Forge facing an overwhelming force of British regulars.

What about modern day patriots? Are there such people who risk their lives daily to protect our way of life, our nation that our forefathers passed down to us?

If you are in the military, I ask you to go look in the mirror. If you are married, then take your spouse with you. You are now looking at a true patriot who is willing to put his or her life on the line, suffer whatever hardships come his or her way and cheerfully set about to do his or her tasks. Look outside at your military friends and neighbors: more patriots.

Not one of us decided to enter the military to get rich. There is absolutely no way anyone of us can seek out fortune with a military career. But our nation and our citizens can count on us to be there to prevent aggressors from taking away our way of life, our liberties, our government or our land.

For 228 years, men and women like us have stood up and taken oaths to protect and defend the Constitution and our nation against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Many have given up their lives in defense of our nation. Many more have been wounded, maimed or severely injured.

Our nation's forces are now entirely made up of volunteers just like you. Throughout the hardships of frequent moves, high operations tempo, long hours without additional compensation, many missed important family events (our children taking their first steps, their first birthdays or Christmases, anniversaries) and long separations that put us in harm's way, we continue to sign on the dotted line for another tour to continue on in our nation's defense.

It doesn't matter where you work, whether it's pushing papers at the military personnel flight, on gate guard duty or roaming the missile field, turning wrenches on the jets, deep underground in a missile silo, putting the throttles to the firewall on takeoff, ensuring the government funds are wisely spent, or serving up chow at midnight, you are a patriot in every sense of the word.

What are our attributes? We beat ourselves up unmercifully when things don't turn out as planned, but we fail to credit ourselves when our

work turns out spectacularly. Openly, we feel embarrassed when we are decorated for service above and beyond, but deep down, we feel proud that we did a job well done.

We willingly place ourselves in harm's way to keep our families safe, for we know that if we don't, an aggressor or a band of thugs will soon be putting us all in jeopardy.

Our spouses and family understand this, and they are the unsung heroes of this clan we call the profession of arms. They are the ones who deal with broken down cars in the middle of the winter, and who care for our children who keep them up all night because they are sick or are missing us while we are deployed to some desolate location where someone is taking potshots at us. They are the ones who dread the midnight visits by the commanders because something has happened to one of our aircraft or one of us.

Patriots, you are the reason this nation is still free. You are the reason our citizens can travel the world knowing the United States is the sole superpower of the world.

We are surrounded by patriots; look in the mirror, look at your neighbor and if you are married, especially look at your spouse. God bless the patriots of the United States of America -- God bless you!