

Pay attention

I was very interested in a letter warning of a "breakdown in general military discipline" if "improper wear of the uniform or misfolding the flag" goes uncriticized in the pages of your magazine [AirMail, March 2004].

Another article from that issue focused on the sexual assault problems facing the Air Force Academy ["A Time for Healing"]. The cadets have all the small stuff handled like hair and uniforms worn correctly, yet in this environment of incredible "military discipline," dozens of female cadets were being sexually assaulted.

To those who bemoan the improper wear of the uniform and whatnot, ask yourself this question: Are you more likely to notice a button out of place on someone's uniform or signs that a person may be contemplating suicide or is being harassed?



Good read

The new March Airman looks better than ever! My son had an appointment, and I took it with me and read it from cover-to-cover. What a plethora of great, interesting stories.

The academy sex abuse story ["A Time for Healing"] was especially handled well. It truly covered the issue. The Guam brown snake story ["Keeping the Serpent at Bay"] was terrific as well as "Night Watch."

I don't think there was a single story I didn't read from beginning to end!

Joel Langton
via e-mail

Too often we focus on the meaningless details at the expense of our own people's well-being. That's part of what went wrong at the academy. Their leaders were more concerned with the cadets' abilities to march straight than protecting them from harm. That's the type of attitude we should be worried about.

Staff Sgt. Brian Matthews
Otis Air National Guard Base, Mass.

Squeaky wheel

I'm curious why the March 2004 issue dedicated eight pages and a cover to the Air Force Academy? Why continue to focus on this embarrassment to the Air Force? By your records ["The Book," January 2004] only 19 percent of officers come from the academy.

Being an avid reader for many years, I don't recall any significant number of pages dedicated to Officer Training School or ROTC. Your selective reporting gives credence to the axiom "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." By a strictly financial viewpoint, OTS and ROTC grads provide 'more bang for the buck' than academy grads, whose problems are a waste of taxpayer's dollars and column space in Airman magazine.

1st Lt. Joe Page II
Minot Air Force Base, N.D.

Heartfelt thanks

I'd like to give special thanks to Airman magazine, especially Master Sgts. Tim Barela and Scott Wagers for the wonderful job, attention to detail and profound sensitivity to such a horrific event in our lives ["Mail from Hell," April 2004]. Throughout the interview and photography sessions, unwavering sincerity and superior levels of technical proficiency were their hallmarks.

The battle scars and emotional fissures may never fade because we wake to the telltale reminders daily. We will survive. I believe it's important for articles like this one to be produced. Our innocence has been robbed with this act of terrorism and the others that followed.

Again, a heartfelt thank you to the staff of Airman magazine.

Daniel McWilliams
via e-mail

'Get over it'

I've been reading your stories about Operations Iraqi Freedom and Endur-

ing Freedom and noticed you ignore the most present aircraft in theater — the C-130. The C-130 has always been the workhorse, but you showcase the pretty airplanes. While not very glamorous, C-130s do far more daily to influence the battlefield in Iraq than any fighter aircraft. This is not a fighter pilot's war; it's an airlifter's war. Get over it, and shed a little light on the impact the longest production aircraft in history is making.

Maj. Randy Turner
Texas Air National Guard

Who are we to argue

I just read "Two Cultures, One Force" [April 2004] and noticed the photograph on Page 22 identified the aircraft in the background as an E-8C. As a KC-135 crew chief, it caught my eye immediately. I see a distinct Air Mobility Command gray color scheme, the pilot director indicator lights, a yellow center line stripe and the distinct exhaust cone of an F-108 engine in the far right section of the photo. That image is of a KC-135, not an E-8C.

Staff Sgt. Mark Williams
Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D.

More 'yakkin'

I enjoyed the kayaking article ["Water Workout," April 2004], but I'd like to offer some supplemental information gleaned during my assignment at Kadena Air Base, Japan, where I did a bit of "yakkin" on the crystal clear waters surrounding Okinawa.

The gentleman pictured in the article is without two pieces of required gear: a hat and sunglasses. Also, wearing scuba gloves will keep blisters to a minimum, and a strap-in backrest will significantly ease back pain. Drinking water is also a good idea.

Optional gear to make the outing more fun includes a mask, fins and snorkel should you want to cool off and enjoy the fabulous underwater world. A light wetsuit does double duty to provide buoyancy while protecting you from sunburn. Finally, scuba booties will protect your feet from the sun and chafing from your fins, and will come in handy for launching and landing your kayak.

Senior Master Sgt. Rick Rivard
Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D.

The 'Kun'

I just read Tech. Sgt. Orville Desjarlais' story on Kunsan Air Base ["Running with the Pack," April 2004]. I hated to leave for my follow-on to Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., after my tour there. I made so many friends there, and I still keep in touch with several of them after 23 years. The "Kun" was a terrific tour!

Ron Scharven
Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio

Not fair

I read "Embracing Korea" [May 2004] and laughed. It seems to me you're placing a lot of high regard on one base as if none of the other bases, including Osan Air Base, have an important mission there on the peninsula. Osan is a lot closer to the DMZ, roughly 50 to 80 miles. Granted, to be there at any base is tough due to having to be away from loved ones for a year, but I don't think it's fair to place emphasis on one base that's so far from the DMZ. If anything, do something on both air bases. I'm not dogging the "Kun" out, but we all have the same mission.

name withheld by request

Different opinion

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the article "Embracing Korea" [May 2004]. About 50 years ago, I was a radio operator assigned to the Suwon Bomb and Gunnery Range located on the Yellow Sea. While assigned to Osan Air Base, Korea, we lived and worked at the range. We also had a good relationship with the area Koreans.

Jerry Gergasko
via e-mail

Army Good Conduct Medal

I'm responding to the answer you provided in the May 2004 AirMail about the Army Good Conduct Medal clasp being awarded to Air Force members when they were part of the Army Air Forces. However, Air Force members were also awarded the medal and clasp after the Air Force became a separate branch of the military in 1947. I enlisted in the Air Force in October 1948, and my Department of Defense Form 214 dated 1961 shows I was awarded the medal and clasp with three loops. After that I was awarded the Air Force Good Conduct Medal.

retired Master Sgt. Bob Sunden
Fredericksburg, Texas

Meet the Staff

Master Sgt. Scott Wagers is a 20-year veteran from Atlanta, Ga., whose previous assignments include Colorado, Nebraska, Germany and California where he started his career processing reconnaissance imagery for the intelligence community before cross-training into still photography. As a senior photojournalist, he photographs and writes features while assisting the director of photography in selecting and editing photographic content for Airman. If you have photo essay ideas or want to know how to submit a photograph, give him a call at (210) 925-7757 or DSN 945-7757, or drop him an e-mail at scott.wagers@afnews.af.mil.

by Darris Wagers



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"So Murdock, despite my warning about flyin' over D.C. last night during the 4th of July fireworks finale"