



## Veteran shares his story at Retiree Appreciation Day event

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10/26/2010 - **RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany**-- -- The face of the Kaiserslautern Military Community is not just the average Airmen, Soldier, Sailor or Marine that lives or works here every day.

Another group that calls the KMC home are those that have made the military a career, retired and have elected to stay here in Germany.

(Retired) Chief Master Sgt. Leon Sidoruk is one of these individuals.

Chief Sidoruk, 82, has a face that's weathered with age, yet his eyes have a spark -- a light that shines at the opportunity to talk about one of his true loves, the U.S. Air Force.

Chief Sidoruk was one of many KMC retirees that participated in Team Ramstein's Retiree Appreciation Day Oct. 15.

The annual event, held at the Officers Club, was held to honor those who have served in the past and are a part of the greater KMC, while also providing the latest information for retirees and family members. The day included guest speakers and an opportunity to receive flu shots, an optometry screening and other various services.

"Retiree Appreciation Day is very important here at Ramstein because we want to reach out specifically to retirees around the KMC," said Col. Stephen P. Lambert, 86th Airlift Wing vice commander. "Retirees continue to be ambassadors and a connection between the local community and the constantly integrating military."

Each retiree attending had their own personal reasons for joining the military, Chief Sidoruk was no different. But often times, the more interesting story is why people choose to stay and make it their life-long career.

"Making the Air Force a career? In my opinion, everybody should stay because the Air Force offers tremendous opportunities," he said with a smile.

This statement comes from a man that experienced active duty during the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Cold War. The chief saw the Air Force change and evolve with the times and took full advantage of all of the opportunities it offered him.

When Chief Sidoruk was stationed here at the USAFE headquarters as superintendent, he took the chance to travel and see Europe. The chief also grasped the chance to continue his education while in the Air Force.

"If I could give one piece of advice, I would say you must find time for school regardless of how busy you are and how often you get deployed or go on Temporary Duty Assignments," the chief said. "There is always time for education."

One of the things that makes Chief Sidoruk's nearly 30 years of service even more impressive, is the fact that he was not even born as a U.S. citizen. Chief Sidoruk is actually Polish born and he was then drawn to the country that he is now so proud to have served.

The reason he chose the Air Force in the first place was his love of flight and he was given the opportunity to realize this dream as well as many others during his long career.

During his service, he worked in avionics, airborne radio and meteorology. However, no matter which job Chief Sidoruk performed, the uniform was always the same.

"I am so proud to be an American because of what I gained in the Air Force," he said. "It will never leave me-- never."

After retirement, Chief Sidoruk chose to stay in Germany. And it is here at Ramstein that he has continued to watch the Air Force evolve. Despite all of the change, he is impressed with how well the Airmen still show

respect to retirees.

"The Security Forces Airmen at the front gate always make me feel welcome," said Chief Sidoruk. "They are always generous with the word 'sir' and always show the respect servicemembers and retirees deserve."

Every time he approaches Ramstein, he feels the camaraderie and respect the military has always given him, he said.

"The bond between retirees and current military members is remarkable--almost like a common language between the two," said Colonel Lambert. "We as active duty can relate to retirees who have once been through the same frustrations and experiences."

With more than 1,300 retirees living in the KMC, this connection is vital, which is why the base hosts the annual event.

"Retirees are a vital key to our military way of life, as they continue to serve even when they are not on active duty," said Colonel Lambert. "Their service before self is greatly appreciated."

For more information on retiree programs, contact the Retiree Activities Office at DSN 483-7333 or Commercial at 0631-411-7333