

THE BEACON

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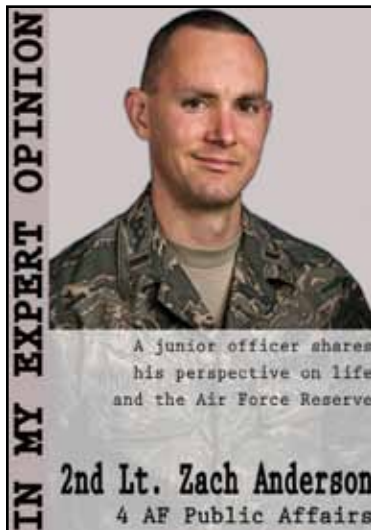
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COMMENTARY

Elementarily speaking, military members are heroes

Revved for his first official speaking engagement, albeit at an elementary school, 2nd Lt. Anderson is twice surprised by his young audience's candor



As a lowly 2nd lieutenant, I don't receive many speaking invitations.

And by not many, I mean none.

The fact is, most folks would rather hear the introspective thoughts of a colonel, a general or a senior non-commissioned officer as opposed to the incoherent ramblings of a butter bar. I completely understand that sentiment. Heck, I really wouldn't want to listen to myself, either.

However, last week when I was presented with an invitation to speak about my career in

was my chance to stand before an audience and captivate them with my eloquence as I gave a powerful, articulate speech about the Air Force, my job and specifically, what I do.

This is what all those practice briefings at Officer Training School were about! This is what I was trained for! This is what public affairs officers do! Needless to say, I was pumped.

My venue? Liberty Elementary School's 2010 Career Day.

My audience? A classroom full of first through sixth graders.

Okay, so it wasn't exactly addressing the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but I was still stoked. Finally, someone wanted to hear what the L.T. had to say!

I was determined to give a first-rate presentation. I spent hours working on a slideshow presentation explaining the different types of jobs in the Air Force. I prepared diagrams that showed how the military can help pay for college. I researched career fields and made notes about the points about my specific job I wanted to cover.

By the time Career Day rolled around, I was ready for anything.

"Shaking my hand was their way of saying thank you ... not to me, but to all service members. And, it was a genuine reflection of the appreciation and admiration the citizens of this nation have for all men and women in uniform."

2ND LT. ZACH ANDERSON

the Air Force Reserve, I jumped at the chance. At last, I finally had my opportunity to be just like the senior officers and enlisted members I admired. This

Well ... anything except for questions conjured up in the inquiring minds of seven-year olds.

My preparations paid off

and the presentation went without a hitch. The students were quiet and extremely respectful as I confidently delivered what I considered to be a top-notch informative lecture. After I finished, I opened the floor for questions.

In my brief military career, I have sat stone-faced and unflinching before review boards. I have received advanced training on how to respond to media queries and surprise questions on any scenario imaginable. I have dealt with hard-hitting journalists and answered controversial questions without batting an eye. I have conducted more interviews than I can count.

Those experiences were nothing compared to the grilling I received at the hands of a classroom of elementary school students.

A few excerpts:

Student: "Didn't you drop a nuclear bomb in World War II?"

Me: "Well ... Uhhhh not me specifically, no ..."

Student: "How many nuclear bombs are at your base?"

Me: "Oh, geez um, I can neither confirm nor deny ..."

Student: "What can you tell me about Area 51?"

Me: "Only what I've seen on 'The X-Files' ..."

Student: "What's the most fun thing you've ever done flying?"

Me: "Uhhh ... well, I once got a free upgrade to first class ..."

Student: "Does your boss yell at you every morning to get you out of bed?"

Me: "If by 'boss' you mean

See **SPEAKING**, page 3

Where's This?



Guess where this photo was taken and you could win a coupon for a **FREE LUNCH** at the Back Street Cafe. The coupon is good for an entree, a side salad, and a beverage.



"Where's This?" features a photo taken somewhere on March ARB. If you can guess where it was taken, simply contact The Beacon editor with your answer. The winner and answer will be announced in the next issue. When more than one person guesses correctly, a winner will be drawn at random. If you see your name published in a subsequent Beacon, contact the editor to schedule a time to pick up your coupon for a free lunch. **Good luck!**

Contact information:
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LAST WEEK'S WINNER

Reobie Markham
452 AMW Wing Staff



"The side door of the base chapel."

SPEAKING

Continued from page 2

wife, only if she's in a bad mood ..."

And so it went, questions from the kids about anything and everything concerning war, aircraft or the military they had ever heard or seen on video games, on TV or in a movie. I started to become discouraged. I mean, yeah, they were kids, but weren't they interested in what I do? Didn't they grasp the importance of my job in the military? Don't they understand that it's not all war, we aren't all fighter pilots and that we all have different jobs and different ways of contributing to the overall mission?

Then, the coolest thing happened.

As the class period came to a close and the students prepared to file out of the room, each made an effort to come by, shake my hand, give me a high-five or bump knuckles. They smiled at me, looking at me like I was the greatest thing ever. For a brief second, I wondered what I had done or said that was so great to get this type of response.

And that's when it hit me.

It's not about me, or what I said to the students.

It's not about my job, or about any of our individual jobs.

It's about the service, the sacrifice and the history that

our jobs in the military represent.

See, the kids weren't impressed with me, my job in the Air Force Reserve, or my own personal experiences. What they were impressed with, what they did understand, is the uniform I was wearing, or, more specifically, what that uniform stood for. They may not understand the intricacies of the different career fields in the military or how the real Air Force isn't quite like a movie.

But they do understand the significance of what thousands of men and women in uniform do each day. They understand that those who serve provide an incredible service to our country; they protect it, they keep

it safe and they keep it free. They understand that the military, and the history behind it, deserves respect and gratitude.

Shaking my hand was their way of saying thank you ... not to me, but to all service members. And, it was a genuine reflection of the appreciation and admiration the citizens of this nation have for all men and women in uniform.

I'm sure I'll have other speaking opportunities through-

out my career. No doubt I'll someday stand before an audience that will be impressed with statistics and facts ... an audience that will be interested in my fancy, informative slides. But I will never forget my first public speaking engagement to a small group of children, nor will I forget their genuine, innocent display of gratitude they displayed for all men and women who have served, no matter what their job.

Interested in becoming a member of the March Speaker's Bureau?

The base receives multiple requests weekly for speakers of all ranks and careers to speak to audiences ranging from children to VIPs

Contact the 452nd Public Affairs Office for more information
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MUSTER

Continued from page 1

base, reporting as directed by the Air Reserve Personnel Center for muster, paperwork and a series of briefings.

An Air Force Reserve fact sheet states the IRR consists of more than 42,000 former Air Force members. Many of these members are former active duty Airmen who continue to have a service obligation following the end of their active duty obligation. Sergeant Lewis said members of the IRR are required to periodically report for muster, so the ARPC can ensure they are medically qualified to continue in military service in the event the Air Force needs to activate them in the future.

Earlier this year, Sergeant Lewis contacted the ARPC in Denver and learned the base was assigned to host a muster in 2010. She scheduled the muster for a Saturday that did not conflict with a Unit Training Assembly weekend and spent months coordinating details of the muster with March units and local organizations.

"I had to stay in touch with the VA, the recruiters and ARPC to make sure everything that was required was taking place," Sergeant Lewis said.

Upon reporting, the IRR members signed in at the Cultural Resources Center, then listened to a series of presen-

tations. Col. Karl McGregor, 452nd Air Mobility Wing commander, welcomed the participants to the base. The Department of Veterans Affairs spoke about benefits for veterans.

Mr. Les Brockman, an ARPC representative who traveled from Denver for the muster, showed a video and spoke about IRR obligations and privileges. Chief Master Sgt. Patrick Wood from the 452nd

Reserve Recruiting Squadron talked about the benefits of becoming a participating reservist.

Sergeant Lewis was surprised to discover many of the muster attendees didn't know about many of the privileges they are entitled to as IRR personnel.

"Some of them learned things they didn't know about BX and Commissary privileg-

es, as well as MWR privileges. Some of them didn't even know they were entitled to an ID card," Sergeant Lewis said.

After the presentations were complete, the IRR members walked to the Education and Training building to complete medical paperwork, update personal information and, in some cases, renew their military ID card. Participants also had the opportunity to visit with rep-

resentatives at the Veterans Affairs and Air Force Reserve recruiting tables for further information.

Chief Wood and his recruiters catered breakfast burritos for the participants. Before the muster, they pre-identified IRR members who hold critical Air Force Specialty Codes so they could extend personal invitations to join the Reserve. Between the individual contact at the recruiting table and the presentation at the Cultural Resource Center, the recruiters gained 30 "good leads."

"The muster was an opportunity for them to see what the Reserve has to offer and, because they still have a remaining service commitment, it is a natural fit," Chief Wood said.

After each participant had submitted the required paperwork, their muster obligation was complete. Each IRR member earned \$205 as compensation for their time.

"This was the first IRR muster I've participated in," Sergeant Lewis said. "[The participants] were cordial people and everybody seemed to get along."

Following the muster, Sergeant Lewis reviewed the participants' surveys.

"Several of them said the muster was informative. The majority of them gave us good feedback and said it was well organized," Sergeant Lewis said.

INDIVIDUAL READY RESERVE MUSTER

CHECKING THE DETAILS: Staff Sgt. Benjamin Gutierrez (left) and Airman 1st Class Alisha Meza assist members of the Individual Ready Reserve as they complete paperwork during the muster held at March Air Reserve Base, May 22.

U.S. Air Force photo/ Megan Just