

At the AFA National Convention in September 2019, Bill Yucuis invited newly elected AFA Chairman of the Board (CoB), Gerald Murray, to visit MacDill AFB. Bill had recently become the Waterman-Twining Chapter President and wanted to increase the AFA visibility with the airmen at MacDill. As the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) from 2002-2006, a visit by the AFA CoB would be a way to meet that goal. Gerald was flying into Tampa on the morning of Tuesday, November 19 and agreed to visit the base that afternoon. Bill met earlier with CMSgt Anthony Green, the 6th ARW Command Chief, to help coordinate a productive visit. With the assistance of Wing Protocol, we scheduled a whirlwind 3-hour tour to talk with all levels of MacDill enlisted airmen.

Besides Bill, MSgt Ashley Cohnes, one of our active duty Waterman-Twining Chapter members, was present for the tour. In 2006, then A1C Ashley Cohnes was named the PACAF Services Airman of the Year. That year, her AFSC was selected as AFA Team of the Year and she was selected to receive the award as the PACAF representative. AFA flew Ashley, and her Dad, to Washington DC to attend the Symposium and receive the award. One night, then CMSAF Gerald Murray hosted the award winners for dinner at their house. Ashley's father still proudly displays the picture of the two of them with CMSAF Murray and his wife. Ashley has been an AFA member ever since and is a valuable Waterman-Twining Chapter member today.

Our visit started in the Wing Conference Room with a short overview of MacDill AFB operations. All the Command Chiefs for the Wing units, plus the ranking AF Chiefs from CENTCOM and SOCOM, who are located on MacDill, attended this briefing. Then Senior NCOs from MacDill, including First Sergeants, Superintendents, and SNCOs from the COCOMs, entered the conference room for a Round Table discussion.



We then left for the Wing "schoolhouse". Gerald Murray first visited the First Term Airman Course (FTAC) where he talked with the newest young airmen assigned to MacDill. FTAC is a 1-week course given to new airmen within their first month of arrival. The Waterman-Twining Chapter presents a Professional Airman Award at their monthly graduation which includes a free 1-year AFA eMembership. The CMSAF talked about how MacDill was his first Air Force assignment and

how much the base had changed since arriving in 1977 and he saw 96 F-4s on the ramp.

He then went to talk with the Development Special Duty (DSD) base selectees, the Airman Leadership School (ALS) instructors, and finally the ALS students. For each group, Gerald Murray, with his vast experience, shared his insights about how the Air Force enlisted force was significantly better than when he first entered service. He also answered questions from each group.

Our last stop was at the Surf's Edge All Ranks Club, where Col. Stephen Snelson, the 6 ARW Commander, hosted an Enlisted All Call. Glenn Murray talked about how the Air Force completely changed after 911, including the tremendous increase in deployments, which continues today. Once again, he answered their questions. After this meeting, we went to an adjoining room where a few other Senior NCOs were waiting. Col. Snelson and Chief Green were able to announce that four of these NCOs were on the newest CMSgt promotion list. What a wonderful way to conclude this quick visit to MacDill AFB.

At every stop, Gerald promoted the AFA Vision and talked about how the Waterman-Twining Chapter was here to support that vision. I thanked Gerald Murray, as both AFA CoB and outstanding CMSAF, for taking the time to help our Chapter improve our stature at the base.

Bill Yucuis
President, Waterman-Twining Chapter #316