

Mrs. Nottingham Earns AOG Honorary Membership

Mrs. Norma C. Nottingham, who personally processes over 10,000 Congressional nominations to the Academy and coordinates some 1,500 appointments with Academy officials and Congressional offices each year, was honored by the Association of Graduates in September by being named only the 14th Honorary Member of the association. She joins current honorary members James I. Conboy, Barry M. Goldwater, Harold U. Littrell, William Lyon, Robert F. McDermott, and Freida B. Weber in this prestigious recognition.



Mrs. Norma C. Nottingham accepts her honorary membership plaque from Brig. Gen. (Ret) James P. Ulm, '61, AOG president and chairman of the board. She became only the 14th individual to hold this honor.

AOG President and Chairman of the Board Brig. Gen. (Ret) James P. Ulm, '61, made the presentation to Mrs. Nottingham at a breakfast gathering of some 60 AOG directors, Academy facul-

ty and staff, and staff persons from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives at the Radisson Inn Colorado Springs North on Sept. 16. Mrs. Nottingham, herself a Senate staffer for some 20 years, has for the past 13 years served as Chief, Cadet Branch, Air Force Academy Activities Group, HQ USAF, Washington, D.C. In that capacity she has developed an unparalleled rapport with members of Congress and their staffs as well as her counterparts in the admissions offices of sister service academies.

In addition to processing and coordinating thousands of Congressional appointments, she has conducted over 500 one-on-one briefings on Capitol Hill for members of Congress and staff personnel. The briefings thoroughly cover the Academy experience, the nomination process, and provide useful information on generating interest in academies and evaluating prospective cadets. Mrs. Nottingham also created an extremely popular information package for new staffers complete with sample letters and forms relevant to Academy nominations.

On the occasion of her honorary membership presentation, Mrs. Nottingham was conducting one of her four annual Congressional staffer orientation visits to the Academy. These visits, which bring some 120 staffers to the Academy each year, provide extremely valuable insight and exposure to those who play such valuable roles in bringing young men and women to the Academy.

Honorary memberships in the AOG are awarded only to those individuals who "...have rendered outstanding and conspicuous service to the Air Force and/or the Academy." Memberships are limited to 20 living persons. Each requires nomination by a member of the AOG Board of Directors and a unanimous vote by the sitting board.

The Association of Graduates is pleased to welcome Mrs. Nottingham to its membership and to recognize her in this manner for her past and continuing contributions to the Air Force Academy.

Former Grad Fighter Pilot Flies Russian MiG

By SrA. Steve Horton
Falcon Flyer Staff

A sure sign times are changing and the Cold War is over is when an Air Force Reserve officer and former fighter pilot can travel to a once-top-secret air base outside Moscow and gets certified to fly a Russian MiG-29.

John Buckley, Class of 1977, a reserve liaison officer and former air officer commanding at the Academy, became one of only two dozen Westerners to ever fly the MiG-29 when a Florida-based company, called "MiGs Etc.," contracted with the Russians to allow people to pay for flights in the former Soviet Union top fighter jets.

"We went to the Zhukovsky Flight Test Center just outside Moscow," said Buckley. "This was such a top-secret base at one time it's not shown on any maps, and we were there to fly their MiGs. It was amazing."

Buckley and five others traveled to Moscow from countries around the world for the unique experience. Once there, the group went through a flight physical and initial training to prepare for their flights.

"The first few flights were in the back seat," said Buckley. "Then I told the instructor I wanted the front seat. After three flights in the trainer my instructor put me in the front seat and I did everything from takeoff to landing."

Even though flying the trainer was exciting, Buckley still wanted to fly the MiG-29. On the last day, his wish came true. "The MiG-29 is an amazing aircraft," he said. "It was easy to handle and I felt I could have flown it all day."

Getting certified to fly the MiG-29 was a great experience, according to Buckley, but having the chance to sit down and talk

with someone who was essentially his Russian counterpart and his enemy during the Cold War was an equally gratifying experience.

"The instructor who I flew with was the number two test pilot in Russia and I was able to learn a lot from our conversations," said Buckley. "He told us the reason they allowed people to come to Russia and fly their planes for a relatively cheap price, was so people could see how good their fighters perform."

Buckley's learning experience wasn't limited to his conversations with his instructors. He was allowed to take photos of everything at a base that two years ago nobody even talked about.

"We walked around with cameras and the Russians encouraged us to take pictures," he said. "It was incredible to see some of the most advanced technology in the world and all around it, the grass hadn't been cut in years. Grounds keeping just isn't a priority for them."

Buckley believes the openness of the Russians to allow a former U.S. Air Force fighter pilot to become certified in their MiG-29 is a sign things are moving in the right direction between the United States and the former "Evil Empire." (*The Falcon Flyer*)

Transcripts Available From Academy Agency

Graduates who need transcripts from the Academy may request them by letter from: Hq USAFA/DFRR, 2354 Fairchild Drive, Suite 6D106, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo. 80840-6210. For those who wish to request a transcript by telephone, please call 719-472-3970 (commercial) or DSN 259-3970.