

HONORARY CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT

MR. JOE PANZA

I nominate Mr. Joe Panza, Col. (ret), and Director Air University Foundation to be an Honorary Chief Master Sergeant with the Maxwell-Gunter Chiefs Group. Mr. Joe Panza's distinguished contributions to the enlisted men and women of Maxwell-Gunter have been nothing short of spectacular. Mr. Panza has utilized his ties with the Air Force Association to make a difference in the lives of Airmen not only at Maxwell-Gunter but across the entire Air Force. From working with the Enlisted Heritage Hall, to pushing for enlisted presence at Air Command and Staff College's "Gathering of Eagles" Program, to supporting CCAF's 35th Anniversary, Mr. Panza has been a staunch supporter of the enlisted corps. He was the moving force behind the AFA Chapter 102's "Berlin to Baghdad Memorial Fund," a project to raise \$125,000.00 for the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall. The purpose of the campaign was to fund development and fielding of museum-quality displays and exhibits for the recently completed facility expansion. Mr. Panza developed a worldwide list of potential supporters, designed the stationary and a full color promotional flyer advertising the campaign, and obtained printing support, through personal contacts, for all promotional products. He spent numerous hours assisting in raising funds to support this effort, personally executed the computer mail-merge of solicitation materials, and assisted in the assembly and mail out of the campaign package. His personal initiatives to contact corporate, business, military associations, and individuals, resulted in thousands of dollars in contributions. Additionally, he personally met with the Commander of Air University, and the Commanders of Air War College, Air Command & Staff College, and Squadron Officer College to seek their support for "class legacy contributions" in support of the "Berlin to Baghdad Memorial Fund." The direct result of his personal initiatives was an influx of over \$40,000 in contributions - nearly 1/3 of the total of \$125,000 raised during the campaign. As a member of the "Gathering of Eagles" committee he has played a key role in the support of the Air Command and Staff College's "Gathering of Eagles" program that, for twenty five years, has paid tribute to notable airmen. Through personal initiative he nominated CMSgt (ret) Wayne Fisk, a two-time Silver Star recipient for heroism during the Son Tay raid and the battle of Koh Tang island. Chief Fisk was subsequently selected and became the first enlisted "Eagle," joining the company of aviation giants Curtis Lemay, Jimmy Doolittle, Robin Olds, Chuck Yeager and many others. This was an extremely important and ground breaking initiative. Following this precedent-setting nomination and selection he nominated the first CMSAF (ret), Paul Airey, who became the second enlisted "Eagle." Finally, twenty five years after the inception of the Gathering of Eagles, enlisted airmen are now routinely considered for this prestigious program. This long overdue recognition is a direct result of Joe Panza's personal involvement and perseverance. The inclusion of enlisted airmen is a clear reflection of the support of Joe Panza and ensures the Gathering of Eagles now more vividly presents balanced support of officers and enlisted. Additionally, Joe Panza has directly contributed to the promoting and furthering the goals of enlisted Airmen on a National Level: the 35th CCAF anniversary & banquet. In late 2006 Joe Panza was in attendance when Colonel Klincar, Commander of the Community College of the Air Force, called a meeting to discuss the CCAF 35 Anniversary Celebration to be held in March of 2007. The highlight of the celebration was to be a banquet where a bronze bust honoring SSgt William Pitsenbarger, Medal of Honor recipient, was to be unveiled. The striking of the bust had been commissioned, but funding for it, and other aspects of the banquet, was a major concern. Joe Panza immediately volunteered, and took it upon himself, to raise the funds necessary to support the entire banquet, including the funding of the Pitsenbarger bust. This was

a major undertaking with AFA National importance since the bust was to be presented to Mr. Bob Largent, AFA President, and Mr. Boyd Anderson, AFA Vice President for Aerospace Education, who would accept the bust on behalf of the AFA National for display in AFA National Headquarters. This has special National significance as AFA was the prime mover in the establishment of the CCAF and annually funds thousands of dollars in Pitsenbarger scholarships. Through Joe's personal initiative he initiated a fund-raising campaign by contacting many organizations throughout the country, and within the search and rescue community, to seek contributions in support of the banquet and the purchase of the bust honoring SSgt Pitsenbarger. SSgt Pitsenbarger, a Pararescueman and Medal of Honor recipient, is one of the heroes of the rescue community, and is very well known. As a direct results of his efforts, Joe single handedly raised over \$12,000, which not only covered banquet expenses, it also allowed for the purchase of a second bronze bust of SSgt Pitsenbarger that now resides in the foyer of the CCAF Headquarters. Additionally, Joe did not stop at "simply" raising the funds to support the banquet; he sought out crew members and associates of SSgt Pitsenbarger who had flown with him at Bien Hoa, Vietnam (several who were with him on his fateful mission that earned him the MOH). At Joe's urging, four of the pilots, Colonels Hal Salem, Dale Patter, Ray Murden, and Carl King, several of Pitsenbarger's fellow pararescuemen, including CMSgt Wayne Fisk, and one of Pitsenbarger's roommates CMSgt Roy Boudreaux, came to Maxwell AFB and attended the banquet to honor their fallen comrade. It is not an overstatement to say that without the personal initiative and efforts of Joe Panza, the grandeur and success of the 35th CCAF anniversary banquet would not have been possible. His efforts directly enhanced the image of the CCAF and Air University on a National level. Mr. Panza also takes his support of the enlisted corps to Squadron Officer College and the Air and Space Basic Course, ASBC, where he stresses company grade officer involvement in support of the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Hall. He routinely briefs the ASBC student council on the importance of officers showing their support for the enlisted corps by contributing to the building of displays and exhibits at the Heritage Hall that will perpetuate the legacy of the enlisted corps. As a result of his initiative, several classes have made "class legacy" donations in support of the Heritage Hall. These efforts by Joe Panza go well beyond the norm, and play an important role in motivating hundreds of newly commissioned Lieutenants. There is little doubt that Joe Panza is a staunch supporter of the enlisted corps. His outstanding initiative, vision, and tireless efforts, reflect great credit upon himself and the enlisted men and women of Maxwell-Gunter and the Air Force. He is definitely deserving of the title....Honorary, Chief Master Sergeant. He has performed like a Chief and deserves to be recognized as such. Perhaps no one person has done more to elevate the status of Airmen over the past few years at Maxwell-Gunter than Joe Panza. Let's honor him like he has honored us.

Respectively Submitted

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Karl Sagstetter, CMSgt, USAF