



# The Sijan Sentinel

Volume 4 – 2024

May 2024

WELCOME TO AFA  
SIJAN CHAPTER #125



President: Caty Rozema  
Vice President: Aaron Prupas  
Secretary: Gayle Divine  
Treasurer: Coen Williams

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Aristotle is quoted as saying, "good habits formed at youth make all the difference." If that is true (and who am I to question Aristotle?!), the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) is doing a heck of a job of instilling good habits in our youth that will allow them to make a difference.

Gayle Divine and I had the distinct pleasure of presenting awards to JROTC cadets at Mitchell, Sand Creek, and Falcon High Schools this spring. WOW! These young people are poised, dedicated, engaged, and determined. What a gift these young people are to their communities and what a gift they will be wherever they land throughout their educations, careers, and lives!

And we, the 'older' generations, are fortunate. We can support these young people as they form good habits to become the men and women who will make all the difference.

Want to get involved and support our local JROTC programs? Please reach out! You'll be amazed, inspired, and encouraged.

Congrats to all JROTC (and ROTC!) cadets on completing another year of service and demonstrating your commitment to being good citizens. You are amazing.

And to the rest of us, together, let's make a difference!

Caty

## ON THE HORIZON

Spring and summer are full of exciting AFA happenings. **Be sure to visit our [website](#) for details on upcoming events or email us a [LancePSijanAFA@gmail.com](mailto:LancePSijanAFA@gmail.com).** Your participation in these activities and events is a fantastic way to support our future leaders and connect with the local Air & Space Forces community!

- 5/28: USAFA Awards Ceremony
- 5/30: USAFA Graduation
- 6/22 State AFA Meeting, Grand Junction
- 6/26: USAFA Class of 2028 (Freshman) In-Processing Day Parent Information Fair
- 8/14: IMAGE Golf Tournament
- 8/24 State Awards Banquet and Business Meeting

### Lance P Sijan Chapter Monthly Board Meetings

Every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of Month, 5:00PM, Visit our [website](#) for in-person location and online link

**MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE****LANCE SIJAN'S INCREDIBLE JOURNEY****BY JOHN L. FRISBEE, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR****EXTRACTED FROM AIR FORCE MAGAZINE VOL. 69, NO. 12**

Alone in enemy territory with no food or water and unable to walk, Capt. Lance Sijan refused to give up. On the night of Nov. 9, 1967, Lt. Col. John Armstrong, Commander of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing's 480th Squadron based at Da Nang, rolled his F-4 into a bomb run. The target was Ban Loboy ford on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. In the backseat was 25-year-old Capt. Lance Sijan, flying his 53rd combat mission. Armstrong pickled his six bombs at 8:39 p.m. Almost immediately, the aircraft was engulfed in a ball of fire as the bombs detonated a few feet below the F-4. Neither the FAC controlling the mission nor Armstrong's wingman saw chutes. But there was one chute. Sijan ejected and was drifting toward a flat-topped, heavily forested karst formation. For Sijan, recollection stopped as the 195-pound captain crashed into the towering trees. Sometime the next day, Sijan regained consciousness in a haze of pain. He had suffered a compound fracture of the left leg, a crushed right hand, head injuries, and deep lacerations. Most of his survival gear was gone. He tended the broken leg as best he could, then lapsed again into unconsciousness. The following morning, a flight of F-4s picked up the sound of Sijan's beeper, and a search-and-rescue operation got under way. Throughout the day, Sijan maintained contact with the rescue force, but several attempted pickups were thwarted by NVA gunners. At 5 p.m., a Jolly Green chopper made it in directly over Sijan. In a desperate attempt to crawl through tangled vines to the chopper's penetrator, Sijan lost contact with the rescue force. As darkness fell, the SAR operation was called off. Early the next morning, the search resumed, but Sijan's radio batteries were depleted. Failing to make contact, the SAR team was recalled. Sijan was on his own. If he were to survive, he must make his way down the steep karst to water and an open area where he could warm the radio batteries and call in a chopper. With a crude splint on his shattered leg and only the thumb and forefinger of his right hand functioning, Sijan began the most incredible journey in the history of Air Force survival efforts. For several days, Sijan, lying on his back, pushed himself over the sharp rocks with his good right leg, a few painful inches at a time. His only source of moisture was dew licked from foliage in the mornings. There were many falls down the steep slope and periods of unconsciousness and delirium. First his clothing became shredded, then the skin on the back of his body, until he was inching along on raw flesh. At last he found water and pressed on, inch by agonizing inch. Forty-five days after he parachuted into the forest, Sijan saw ahead the open area he had been looking for. He dragged himself over a bank and fell unconscious in the middle of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, three miles from his starting point. The young captain regained consciousness in an NVA road camp, his formerly athletic body little more than a skeleton partially covered by transparent skin. He was given some food and water, but no medical attention. In spite of his pitiful condition, his mind focused constantly on escape. When some strength returned, Lance Sijan overpowered a guard and dragged himself up a trail, only to be recaptured and punished. Sijan was moved to a temporary prison near Vinh, where he was beaten severely, but refused to give any military information. The guards, who had never seen a human in such ghastly condition, refused to touch him. Sijan was put in the care of Maj. Bob Craner and Capt. Guy Gruters, an F-100 FAC crew who had been shot down near Vinh. The latter had been in Sijan's squadron at the Air Force Academy. In his lucid moments, Sijan gave them the details of his long, painful journey. Several days later, the three were loaded on an open truck for a three-night trip to Hanoi in the chill monsoon rains. At Hoa Lo Prison, they were put in a damp cell. Sijan, who had contracted pneumonia and was near death, asked his cellmates to prop him up on his pallet so that he could exercise his arms in preparation for escape from that grim, impregnable bastion. On Jan. 22, 1968, Capt. Lance Sijan died. When the POWs were freed in early 1973, Craner and Gruters recorded the details of his long fight for freedom and his resistance to torture. Later, they were major sources for Malcolm McConnell's book, *Into the Mouth of the Cat*. On March 4, 1976, President Gerald Ford presented the Medal of Honor posthumously to Sijan's parents, and on Memorial Day of that year, a new dormitory at the Air Force Academy was dedicated in his memory. Sijan's will to survive with honor was an inspiration to other POWs during the dark days of the Vietnam War, as it should be to all of us. He demonstrated, as few have the almost limitless capacity of the human spirit to triumph over the depredations of fate and the malevolence of lesser men.

## AFA SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

The **Lance P. Sijan Chapter** awards scholarships annually to outstanding high school seniors who have been accepted for enrollment at a college or university, and to current outstanding college freshman, sophomore, and junior students. Scholarships are open to immediate family members (son, daughter, spouse) of active duty and retired Air and Space Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard members in Colorado Springs; AFJROTC cadets; college freshmen, sophomores, and juniors from the greater Colorado Springs area attending any college or university; Silver Wings members; and Arnold Air Society members. [Sijan Chapter Scholarship application – DUE May 30](#)

The Francisco Garcia Scholarship is awarded by the Colorado State Air and Space Forces Association (CSAFA). It is awarded annually to one recipient in the State of Colorado. The applicant must be a graduating senior from a Colorado high school and intend to obtain a college degree in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) related field. [Garcia Scholarship Application – DUE May 30](#)

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND YOUR SIJAN COMMUNITY



Right: Sand Creek High School JROTC Awards, April 24, 2024.

Left: Cadet Katherine Taylor receives the AFA JROTC award from Sijan Secretary, Gayle Divine.

Below: C/1st Lt. Jaden Walls is excited to receive a scholarship from Liz Casey of ENT!



Sijan President, Caty Rozema, presents the AFA Medal to Cadet Figueroa at the Mitchell High School JROTC Awards Ceremony on Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND YOUR SIJAN COMMUNITY



### AMATEUR RADIO ON THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

The very first school in Colorado to participate in the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) event took place on April 22 at Stratton Meadows Elementary School. Eight students spoke directly to crew member Jeanette Epps on the ISS. They asked many interesting questions for 15 minutes. Science teacher Dara Gardner was the emcee for the event. Through Thrive Home School Academy, Ms. Gardner and others inspire students to pursue interests in science and technology. The Pikes Peak Radio Amateur Association (PPRAA) installed a large temporary antenna on the roof of the school to make this happen. Click here for the local media coverage: [District 2 kids chat with astronauts on the International Space Station | KRDO](#)



Left: Students line up to ask their questions of astronaut Jeanette Epps on the ISS.

Below Left: Radio equipment for the ARISS event at Stratton Meadows Elementary School.

Below Right: Sijan Secretary, Gayle Divine, is pictured with science teacher, Dara Gardner and Thrive Academy students.



## COMMUNITY PARTNER PAGE

### JOIN THE MISSION!

AFA's Community Partner Program is a business membership that aligns chapters with organizations in their local community; fostering connection with local bases, growing support for the Department of the Air Force, and providing them a consistent level of connection with their community no matter the industry.



### Become a Community Partner!

"Becoming a Community Partner is a great way to get your business involved with your local Air Force and Space Force community! For more than 40 years, businesses have been joining the Air & Space Forces Association to support both AFA National and local AFA chapters.

Not only does a Community Partner receive all the benefits of an AFA membership, such as a variety of product and service discounts, insurance programs, and much more, but the partner will also receive a wooden plaque with a date medallion and a window decal. These will show customers and clients that your business supports our troops!"

Category One (CP I) \$90.00 annually - Business can designate one person to receive AFA Membership and enjoy all benefits thereof.

Category Two (CP II) \$180.00 annually - Business can designate two people to receive AFA Membership and enjoy all benefits thereof.

Want to know more? Check out <https://www.afa.org/membership/community-partners>

## CHAPTER AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

- *To contact us or to be added to the Lance P Sijan chapter distribution list, please email us at: [lancepsijanafa@gmail.org](mailto:lancepsijanafa@gmail.org)*
- *To update your contact information, email National AFA at [membership@afa.org](mailto:membership@afa.org). Note that the chapter cannot change your email, mailing address, or other contact information. It must be done on your National membership profile.*
- *To join or renew your AFA membership, visit [www.afa.org](http://www.afa.org)*
- *For details on AFA member benefits, visit <http://www.afa.org/afa/memberbenefits>*

Make sure you continue to receive our communications. You don't want to miss out on \$1 ice cream sundaes or any of the other exciting events we have in the works. Update your contact information today. Email National at [Membership@afa.org](mailto:Membership@afa.org).

While we can update our mailing list, Sijan representatives cannot update your official AFA contact information. You must contact National.

Do you know someone who would like to know about our events but isn't a member yet? We're happy to add them to our mailing list. Have them send a request to us at [LancePSijanAFA@gmail.com](mailto:LancePSijanAFA@gmail.com).

## OPPORTUNITY CORNER

Your AFA Sijan Chapter has opportunities for involvement in multiple areas, as little or as much as you would like. Areas of most need are in support of education and programming.

**VOLUNTEER**  
*you can make a difference!*



## CONTACT US!

**Sijan Chapter**

**Website:**

[www.lancepsijanafa.org](http://www.lancepsijanafa.org)



**Email**

[lancepsijanafa@gmail.com](mailto:lancepsijanafa@gmail.com)

**Mailing Address**

Air & Space Forces Association  
Lance P Sijan Chapter #125  
PO Box 77322  
Colorado Springs, CO 80970

**AFA National**

**Website:**

[www.afa.org](http://www.afa.org)

The AFA is an independent, nonprofit, civilian education organization promoting public understanding of aerospace power and the pivotal role it plays in the security of the nation. AFA publishes Air Force Magazine, conducts national symposia and disseminates information through outreach programs. It sponsors professional development seminars and recognizes excellence in the education and aerospace fields through national awards programs. AFA presents scholarships and grants to Air Force active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve members and their dependents, and AFA awards educator grants to promote science and math education at the elementary, secondary, and high school level. Nationally, AFA has more than 100,000 active members. The AFA National Website is [WWW.AFA.ORG](http://WWW.AFA.ORG)

The Lance P. Sijan Chapter is one of the largest, most active chapters in AFA, with more than 1600 members. The Sijan Chapter, one of four AFA Chapters in Colorado, primarily focuses on support to the Colorado Springs area, including Peterson AFB, Schriever AFB, Cheyenne Mountain Air Station, and the USAFA. The AFA Sijan Chapter is proud of our rich heritage and strong support for the Colorado Springs Air Force community. We pride ourselves on active support to the local Colorado Springs "Air Force Family," providing approximately \$40,000 and thousands of volunteer hours in support annually!