The official voice of the Air Force Research Laboratory

news@afrl

Features

June 2002

Secretary retires after 33 years of federal service

by Ranney Adams, Propulsion Directorate

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — Thirty-three years of federal service can provide a lot of memories for a retiree, but those memories also live on in the people who remain at the 'Rocket Site'.

Betty L. Sumrow's Outstanding Civilian Career Service Award, presented at her going-away party on April 18, was only an indication of her impact here at the Air Force Research Laboratory's Propulsion Directorate for the past 27 years. During those years, she trained her share of new lieutenants and engineers, fresh out of school. Rank was not a restriction, because she also did a fine job with lab leaders over the years.

During her career, she saw a revolution in office equipment ranging from teletypes and typewriters to modern day desktop computers, cell phones, PDA's, color copiers, and closed circuit television systems. For Sumrow, carbon paper was a thing of the past and good riddance.

Sumrow was always the person you asked questions, and invariably, she would know the answer or the direction you needed to proceed. As an executive secretary, she also trained new secretaries for the lab. It was mentoring in the best sense, producing personnel who have advanced in government service and spread out across the nation - all with the Sumrow 'Quality Work Stamp' affixed in their daily efforts. Her 'eagle eyes' could spot a spelling or grammar error at three paces, and in her mild-mannered way, she would gently point out the problem.

As any good manager or leader knows, the real people in charge are your administrative staff, striving to give you the time and tools necessary for the job.

Sumrow was a master at administrative multi-tasking, anticipating needs and keeping the 'Rocket Site' running smoothly while its researchers provided the nation with rocket propulsion technology innovations.

Nearly 200 people gathered to honor Sumrow, who had begun her employment at Edwards with NASA Dryden, moving to the Army Aviation activities on mainbase, and finally in 1974, finding a home with rocket scientists at the lab.

During her farewell party, she received her honors and tributes with grace. These included a national flag that had flown, respectively, over the nation's capitol and the Rocket Site, a congratulatory letter from President George W. Bush, and messages from friends and former colleagues from around the world. A special message came from her daughter, Lisa, who had moved several years ago to Tennessee with her son, Cody. That message was highlighted when they both entered the Rocket Science Center for a surprise reunion. Former bosses, who owed her so much for her devotion and hard work across the years, spoke of moments and actions that could not be forgotten. Then it was her turn, for she had her favorite folks, and things that needed a home, or caretaker. As she divided up her plants, and shared her feelings, there was not a dry eye in the group.

For them, a member of the family was going away, but Betty Sumrow will not be forgotten. **@**