



Lighthouse News

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Air Force One's Right Hand Man — by John W. Kennedy

Robert L. Sealey originally joined the military after he ran out of money to pay for his junior year of college. The music major intended to stay long enough to let the GI Bill finance the rest of his education.

Today, Sealey is a certified Assemblies of God minister, leading worship Sunday mornings at Calvary Grace Assembly of God in La Plata, Maryland. Plus he's still in the military — as U.S. Air Force Command Chief Master Sergeant at Andrews Air Force Base.

In fact, Sealey last year became the senior enlisted adviser to the 89th Airlift Wing commander. The wing is responsible for Air Force One and all the airlift support for the nation's leaders, including the president, vice president, first lady, secretary of state and secretary of defense.

"Our job is to make sure they get where they need to be safely and securely, and that they are connected en route," says Sealey, a native of Zanesville, Ohio. "We like to think by making sure one of our diplomatic missions goes forth we can prevent a thousand combat missions from happening."

Air Force One, of course, is a pretty impressive aircraft. Whatever the president can do in his White House office he also has the technology, logistics and communications capabilities to carry out in the sky.

As right-hand man to the 89th Airlift Wing commander, Sealey, 43, deals with the morale, training, equipping and well-being of the enlisted force. The wing has 1,200 active-duty military members, plus 600 civilian contractors.

Sealey has been promoted six times in his 23 years in the Air Force. He has received a host of major honors, including airman of the year for his squadron twice and non-commissioned officer of the year for his squadron six times.

Since August 2008, Sealey has been worship leader and occasional preacher at Calvary Grace AG. He plays guitar and keyboard.

"He also plays a couple of other electronic devices," says Tom Cogle, pastor of Calvary Grace. "Sometimes it sounds like he has a whole orchestra going."

Cogle remembers that Sealey asked for prayer the night before he started his new assignment for the 89th Airlift Wing.

"He didn't feel worthy, so we laid hands on him," Cogle recalls. "He wanted

the Lord's help to handle the new responsibilities."

Sealey composes worship songs and sings frequently at churches and ceremonies. In February he sang the national anthem, led worship and offered a moving rendition of an original composition for a military service at King's Way Christian Center in Cape Coral, Florida. The service featured 2,600 white crosses planted on the church grounds to honor U.S. military men and women who have died fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"He has an incredible ability to take people into the presence of the Lord and allow a freedom of worship that is anointed and dynamic," says King's Way Pastor Dan Lumadue.

Sealey had a Pentecostal upbringing and first sensed a calling to ministry as a 12-year-old boy attending church camp. Yet he didn't act on that calling until he had been in the military nearly a decade.

In 1995, he received orders to transfer to Okinawa, Japan, to become chief of security forces for an intelligence squadron at Kadena Air Base. He soon landed at Neighborhood Assembly of God, a church geared to military members and pastored by AG missionaries Ed and Faith Ferguson.

Sealey remained in Japan seven years. He credits the Fergusons with mentoring him and solidifying his call to ministry.

Initially, Sealey just sat on the back row on Sunday mornings.

"Faith Ferguson came up to me after church one day, smiled, and said, 'Bob, it's time to get off the back pew,'" Sealey recalls.

Lumadue, then associate pastor at Neighborhood Church, likewise encouraged Sealey to develop his musical gifts.

"It became very apparent very quickly that he had God-given abilities," Lumadue says. "We began to utilize him more. He has a tremendous voice and an incredible heart for God."

Sealey joined the Neighborhood Church staff as worship leader.

"He went from sitting on the back row on Sunday morning to leading worship — first in the midweek service and then on Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings," Ed Ferguson says. "Bob grew so rapidly in his spiritual experience that soon I had him minister to the congregation in Sunday services."

In 2002, a year after Sealey obtained a criminal justice degree, the military transferred him to Germany, where he served as security forces manager at Ramstein Air Base. He found an off-base AG missions military church and again joined the staff, leading worship and becoming involved in pulpit ministry. He spent a year as chief security forces manager at Ali Al



Air Force One on the flight line at its home field at Andrews AFB, Maryland. Command Chief Master Sergeant Robert Sealey stands in front of the aircraft (top right) and addresses fellow Air Force personnel and family members and guests at a special event (bottom right).



Salem Air Base in Kuwait before his state-side advancement.

Although he is a dedicated military man, Sealey also is highly devoted to his family. Married for 22 years to Connie, whom he met in the Air Force police academy, they now have four children: Robert, 20; Jacob, 17; Whitney, 15; and Olivia, 10.

Cohorts say Sealey is affable and has a knack for instilling confidence in and gaining the loyalty of those around him. Sealey strives to remove obstacles so that young airmen can serve to the best of their ability. He does a great deal of counseling about the impact on family members when airmen are deployed for extended periods.

"When it comes to career choices, his first question is always 'What is God's will?'" says Lumadue, who considers Sealey his closest friend. "He has the ability to trust God when things seem difficult or the outcome is unknown. He has an unwavering commitment to Christ."

Eventually, Sealey would like to be involved in full-time ministry. Although he already is eligible for retirement, Sealey has no imminent plans to leave the military.

"I feel my pulpit is where I am now," Sealey says. "I can have an impact on people's lives from this level."

Sealey joined the military in 1986, near the end of the Cold War.

"Young airmen who sign up today know exactly what they are getting into when they raise their hand," Sealey says. "They've made a determination to serve their country at a time when the nation is at war. I take great joy in watching their passion."

Note: No matter what one's rate or rank, we can all learn from CMSgt. Sealey and the way he was challenged to "get off the back pew" and then began to put to work the gifts given to him by God. May each of us also see our workplace as the pulpit the Lord has called us to faithfully serve in with professional excellence, while letting our lights shine for His glory in word and deed.

From the Nov. 8, 2009, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*. Reprinted with permission. John W. Kennedy is news editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel*.

United States Coast Guard
Memorial Service
for
Crew of CG1705

Friday, November 6, 2009 at 11:00 am
U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento,
McClellan, California

COAST GUARD
AIR STATION SACRAMENTO