

## Team Aerospace Revisited

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Back in 1992, I was a young USAF flight surgeon in Germany, part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron. I had been a flight surgeon for 4–5 years and been in AsMA all of those years, but never attended an annual meeting. I was too busy deploying into European and African countries, supporting all sorts of fascinating operations/exercises, and doing the tactical and operational work of supporting the flyers and soldiers of the nation in those unique areas. Plus, in my off time, I was visiting the sights in European capitals, skiing in the Alps, and generally having a good time. The Berlin Wall had fallen during my tour. Tom Clancy declared that we had "won the Cold War" over world communism. Desert Shield and Storm had kicked off, finished, and transitioned to Northern Watch. I even got married in the Rhein Main Air Force Base Chapel to my lovely wife Holly. My first child was born in the old Wiesbaden Hospital. Washington, D.C., was about as far away from my mind as I could imagine. But back in the States, something was happening to U.S. medicine, and in D.C. something else was happening in aerospace medicine (at least in the USAF).

Medicine itself had been changing from the old in-patient based system of past decades, indeed of past centuries. Hospitals were shedding beds and began operating at full occupancy capacity. Surgery was moving to outpatient-based facilities due to the amazing innovations in laparoscopic surgical techniques of the 1980s. Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) were the rage. The Air Force was getting in on the act by changing from a traditional clinic/hospital command structure to the new and exciting "Objective Medical Group." They were also changing from Air Force "Regulations" to Air Force "Instructions." Meanwhile, without much fanfare, a new set of leaders took over in USAF Surgeon General's office headquarters Aerospace Medicine office, known then by the letter designation SGPA. Lt. Gen. Alexander M. "Rusty" Sloan was the Air Force Surgeon General. He hired Col. Landry as SGPA. Dr. Roger F. Landry was initially certified in Aerospace Medicine in 1980 and had had a variety of base level assignments and command level experiences setting him up as a great choice for chief flight surgeon for the Air Force.

I say all that not simply to get a mention in Dr. Landry's will (©). If you have any inkling of his career since retirement from the USAF, you would know that he is the author of the award-winning book, *Live Long, Die Short: A Guide to Authentic Health and Successful Aging*. Hint: he plans on outliving all of us. But I say all that to get to this point. Col. Landry was the first, in my experience, to popularize the moniker "Team Aerospace." As the top flight doc for the Air Force, he repeated those words in every speech or briefing or training session or lecture. He said those words so much that many began to give him grief for saying it. He started having to pay a "fine" for uttering the words "Team

Aerospace." I recall several conferences where he had a pocket full of quarters that he would toss into the crowd whenever he said "Team Aerospace." He threw a lot of quarters. He used it a lot. These were my formative years in the business of Aerospace Medicine.

Now I tell that story to get to the real point. As I'm sure you've all read my other President's Pages (yeah right!), you'll recall that I've waxed eloquent on the amazing breadth and depth of the support that Aerospace Medicine provides to those we serve. From the study and development of medical standards to the training of airmen and astronauts, to the maintenance of health and performance of operators, to the deployed support in a remote location or space, or to investigating an accident, the list of knowledge, tasks, expertise, skills, you name it... to do all this cannot be done by a single profession. It takes a village. It takes "Team Aerospace." And AsMA has evolved over its history to include the entire team.

AsMA began in 1929. It was a pure medical society for physicians only. The Space Medicine Branch was founded in 1950 and was all physicians, as well. This was the first year that the Aero Medical Society allowed "branches." The specialty of Aviation Medicine was recognized in 1952 by the American Board of Preventive Medicine. As described in an earlier President's Page (August), clinically speaking the practice of medicine is for physicians. But as outlined in my first President's Page (June), the practice of Aerospace Medicine is so much more. Over the years, AsMA has adapted to include the entirety of "Team Aerospace." From the official 1966 beginnings of the Aerospace Physiologist Society to the Flight Nurse Section, to the Aerospace Human Factors Association, to the Aerospace Nursing and Allied Health Professionals Society, these constituent organizations include the full breadth of specialized professionals that deliver the human performance events and outcomes required in the aerospace environment. And our Association has a place for medical technicians, physiologists, researchers, nurses, psychologists, physical therapists, dentists, pilots, and every manner of physician medical specialist. It takes a village. It takes a team. Team Aerospace.

This was how I came to know what it takes to be good in our business of Aerospace Medicine. Teamwork. Public Health officers, industrial hygiene experts, medical technicians, nurses, corpsmen, biomedical engineers, pharmacists, nutritionists, bioenvironmental



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engineers, safety experts, medical examiners, forensics experts, aerospace and mechanical engineers, life support technicians, researchers, acquisitions... the list goes on and on. In medicine, physicians are THE critical part. In Aerospace Medicine, physicians are necessary, but not sufficient to get the mission done. It takes a village. It takes a team. Team Aerospace.

AsMA is still, at its core, a medical professional society. It holds positions within the American Medical Association and interacts significantly with the American Board of Preventive Medicine.

It represents the recognized medical specialty of Aerospace Medicine. But it is unique within the universe of "organized medicine" in that it is not composed of solely physicians but of all the vital members of the team required to "git 'er done." AsMA recognizes the "team sport" nature of our business and provides a unique venue for this amazing team to come together and improve the way we deliver the vital product of Aerospace Medicine. Here's to the entirety of Team Aerospace. I'm tossing my nine quarters out there now, Dr. Landry. Keep 'em flying.