

## National youth program gains recognition from Department of Defense

### Ohio Royal Rangers take orientation flight on Air Force cargo plane

Royal Rangers groups from North Bloomfield, Ohio, Assembly and Corinth Assembly in Kinsman, Ohio, recently took a special flight aboard a U.S. Air Force C-130 transport plane.

Pastor Mike Levelle of North Bloomfield Assembly, who serves as auxiliary staff chaplain at the Youngstown Air Force Reserve Station, approached the Air Force more than 2 years ago trying to make arrangements for the flight.

"I was told that I needed to submit literature describing the Royal Rangers program," Levelle said. "After the Air Force reviewed the literature, we were granted status as a recognized national youth group by the Department of Defense."

During the time officials were reviewing the program and Royal Rangers leaders in the church were trying to schedule the flight, "we experienced several setbacks," Levelle explained, "such as military downsizing, budget restrictions, realigning of air base status, and the readjustment of flying time for Air Force Reserve pilots."

Levelle explained that the orientation flight the Royal Rangers finally took was the type of flight the Air Force has always given to Civil Air Patrol and Scout groups. These flights cost the approved groups nothing, he said. "The pilots and other Air Force personnel are required to fly a certain number of hours and flights to keep their training current. Taking up these orientation groups is simply part of utilizing those training flights, as circumstances and funding permit."

The delay in getting their flight scheduled was due to a combination of having Royal Rangers reviewed by the Defense Department to qualify as a recognized youth group and specific budget considerations at the air base they would be flying out of.



Above: Boarding through the rear of the U.S. Air Force C-130 cargo plane. Right: Fastening seat belts and getting strapped in for the flight.

"Our persistence paid off, and on April 1, 1993, this became a reality," Levelle said.

The C-130 the group flew on was stationed at the Youngstown Air Force Reserve Station in Vienna, Ohio. It was attached to the 910th TAG unit. The flight itself lasted about 2 hours. "We flew to Buffalo, N.Y., and back across Pennsylvania to the Youngstown base," Levelle said.

"We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the command and staff of the 910th. It was their courtesy and kindness that made this flight so memorable," Levelle said.

The group making the flight numbered 37 Royal Rangers boys and leaders from the two churches. Levelle praised the church Royal Rangers leaders for the hard work they put into meeting Air Force requirements to make the flight possible.

"Senior Commander Jeffrey Kish of the North Bloomfield Assembly should be credited for organizing the event from the Royal Rangers side," Lev-



elle explained. "Jeff made sure that Social Security numbers were recorded, all men and boys had a complete uniform, and that all had up-to-date membership cards. All these were needed for the preflight inspection."

Cpt. John Keytack, public affairs officer at the reserve base, met the group and gave a preflight briefing and slide presentation about the modern Air Force. Levelle explained that Keytack was the officer who put the Rangers groups' request into writing and saw it through channels to get permission for the orientation flight.

"The Air Force does these orientation flights to utilize

their training flight time and also to interest young people in aerospace technology, aviation, and the Air Force," Levelle said.

He added that part of the thrill of the experience was the recognition it gave to the Royal Rangers program. Now that their group has set precedent it opens doors with the Air Force for recognition for other Royal Rangers groups.

"We believe we have set a precedent for the Royal Rangers program nationwide," he said. "The paperwork is established, the groundwork has been laid in hope that other Royal Rangers outposts will be able to experience this adventure." □