**RETIREMENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JESSICA SELLERS (MELVIN BANKS)**

Hello everyone!!! I would like to thank all of you for being here today as we celebrate Air Force Reservist Melvin Banks and commemorate the occasion of his retirement. I want to extend a special welcome to TSgt Banks’ family: (**Name his wife**), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your fairly new bride but inspiration, muse and conscience for WAAAAAYYY longer than that, and your wonderful sons, Matthew, Miguel, and Malcolm. When it comes to dedicated, conscientious, and enthusiastic members of our team, TSgt Banks exemplifies all that is admirable. With his incredible **THIRTY THREE** years of service in the Air Force Reserves, he has certainly left an indelible mark on the reserves and all areas impacted by his diligence and professionalism. This can really be considered the “end of an era.” I cannot imagine this place without him... literally... he was here when I arrived in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and, as some of you “My Fair Lady” fans might remember.... “I’ve grown accustomed to his face...” (**Wait for the laugh**)

TSgt Banks began his life in the small seaside town of Metairie, Louisiana.... did you know that place is so small, why do you think they called them **SHRIMP**?” (**Wait for the laugh**)... the town would not have had enough room if they kept calling them **SHELLFISH**!! Too many letters!! (**Wait for the laugh**) I’ve heard the town is so small (**you can encourage the audience - like Johnny Carson used to do, to say**)... okay... you may ask... **together now.**.. “**HOW SMALL WAS IT**?” Well, rumor has it the fire department uses **squirt guns**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)... Did you know they had to widen the Main Street in order to paint the traffic stripe down the middle? (**Wait for the laugh**)... anyway, it was a colorful place from which to come, and it, apparently, for TSgt Banks, was a good place to leave... and as self described “opportunist” with the plan to become an entrepreneur, he embarked on his life journey. He also thought a great deal about another goal, and that was to one day become an Air Force ROTC high school instructor. What vision he had... what aspirations... Melvin Banks was ready to join the Reserves.... welll... mainly because he **HAD TO**... you see, he ran out of money in college and joined the reserves to pay for school.... but thinking about his financial situation, in retrospect, maybe the bank and the town of Metairie were a little to small to contain his dreams... and cash..... so off he went

TSgt Banks’ first assignment was the 917th Civil Engineering Squadron, right here at Barksdale AFB, LA. He was in charge of food services and in January of 1991, he was called to Active Duty to support Desert Storm. While TSgt Banks served in support of this deployment for just about six months, the operation itself lasted \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ months in total **(Note: when I checked, the info said Desert storm lasted from 1/17/1991 - 2/28/1991 so you may have more accurate information**). Thanks to his contributions in food services on these maneuvers, the impact on the lives of those fed and nurtured increased \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**please provide details**).

Upon his return from Desert Storm, TSgt Banks was ready to make a **lasting, permanent** contribution in other areas of his service. Some may say, “He **REALLY SHUT. IT. DOWN**.” I’m referring to his assignment at the 924th Civil Engineering Squadron at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Texas.... was he just too darn good for that team? Maybe... but this we will never know... because he **wasn’t even there for a whole year** when the unit was **shut down**!!!

After that unit was closed, Melvin Banks switched gears .... a little... and chose to honor a short commitment in the Texas National Guard in Houston at Ellingdon Field. After that short “detour?” Excursion?” “Sidestep?” TSgt Banks saw the light and heeding the calling.... back to the reserves in the IMA program at Lackland Annex as a food services instructor...

By 2006, TSgt Banks was ready to return to one of his “military homes.” He wanted to be closer to his family and accepted his assignment back at Barksdale in the 917th Services Flight under the command of then Major Allen Spiers. That position morphed into the 307th Force Support Squadron which distinguishes TSgt Melvin Banks as the longest serving member in my unit. I wonder if there are any others who might surpass this impressive tenure. And his service didn’t stop there... he’s been with my unit ever since that last assignment running our Wing Fitness Program. He has also been diligent in insuring our unit’s success by guiding us through **TWO** Compliance inspections with excellent results!!!

If I had to look at TSgt Melvin Banks “By the Numbers,” it would look something like this:

* **3,812** ... Thats the number of physical fitness tests I have calculated that he has administered over the course of his career. You know the commercial tag line that goes, “**Never let them see you sweat**?” No??? Neither did any of those people he tested... I’m sure he must have seen **PLENTY OF IT**!! (**Wait for the laugh**)
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Name another quantifiable statistic from his career... number of meals overseen, number of food service people he trained, etc**)
* **33** years of service in the Air Force Reserves. I know I’ve already mentioned this... it’s **WORTH REPEATING**.
* **3** - probably TSgt’s Banks’ **GREATEST** achievements are his three wonderful sons whom he absolutely adores!! He has been a devoted parent, unconditionally and no matter what, and even though there were some serious times of adversity, even as a single parent, his sons meant and mean the world to him... I’m sure we can see the gratification and joy written all over his face when he thinks of his boys and how each one is on his own personal road to success in life.
  + Matthew, who is 22, just graduated from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ College and is here with us, and although It’s hard for me to imagine, I have a feeling that he thinks even more highly of his father than even I do!!
  + Miguel, 20, is a sophomore at Baton Rouge LSU, as well as following in his dad’s footsteps in the Army Reserves.
  + Malcolm is 18 and is currently attending East Texas State University, and if he’s anything like his father.... we’ll hear some great things about him too!!

I don’t want to keep going on and on about this great colleague, but I can’t help thinking.... maybe if I keep talking, he won’t leave?!?!? (**Wait for the laugh**).

Melvin Banks’ contribution to the military, his community, and all he has met doesn’t stop at this door... which I may throw myself against to block his departure (**Wait for the laugh**)... In the civilian sector, he completed the “Troops To Teach” Program and is currently teaching business elective courses at a local high school. He will now have time to indulge his hobbies which involve his fascination with working on computers and, I’m quite sure, spending lots more quality time with his sons and his wife , \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And while I know that he’s probably best known in the 307th Bomb Wing Family for running the Wing Fitness Program... which was turned over to the capable hands of MSgt Alecia Williams, I have a feeling he will also miss the Air Force family and all of its camaraderie.... but I doubt it will be as much as we will miss him, his contribution, and his dedication to the Air Force.

I have found throughout life and through all of the personal and professional connections I’ve had the privilege to encourage and sustain, that when a genuine, authentic friend and comrade comes along, that person stays with you forever. I am confident that although TSgt Melvin Banks will technically leave us today, he leaves behind a legacy of dedication, a sense of community, and the certainty that he has made an indelible contribution to our lives, our work, and our progress in the United States Air Force, and for that, I want to express my deepest gratitude.

Thank you!!