

Squadron Changes Commanders for Only the Second Time in 47 Years

By 1st Lt Janet Antonacci
PAO, Westchester Hudson Composite Squadron

ARMONK, NY. November 19, 2010 – “On my command, flex your knees”. With those words Lt Col Johnnie Pantanelli gave her last order as commander of the squadron which bears her name, a unit she took command of in 1963. Ever mindful of her cadets the last thing she wanted to see was any of them buckle while at attention. Presiding over the change of command ceremony was the Southeast Group Commander, Major Darren Cioffi who summed the colonel up best when he said, “she is about the cadets.”



On this night Lt Col Johnnie Pantanelli relinquished command of the squadron to Captain Ed Miraglia and while this was a celebration of his first command make no mistake about it this was a celebration of the outgoing commander who began her CAP career in 1944 after being honorably discharged from the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. “This is just another chapter for her,” remarked former NY Wing Commander Col Ken Andreu who was a cadet under her command in the 1960s. “She has affected the lives of hundreds of people in CAP,” said the current Wing Commander Col Jack Ozer who also attended the ceremony.

Pantanelli a 66 year CAP veteran has no plans of retiring and will now assume the role of advisor to the group commander. “She came to CAP and never left,” remarked Cioffi who added “knowing I had has meant the world to me.” her former squadron observer and radio scanner eventually assuming the North Castle unit in model to her squadron’s female former Cadet Commanders who when not busy with work or college often return for visit and a dose of Pantanelli inspiration.



To understand the woman one need only look at the accomplishments of her cadets, several of whom have won appointments to military service academies, hosted or participated in the International Air Cadet Exchange Program and garnered many CAP awards including one Spaatz achievement and one cadet commander appointment this past year to the New York Wing Encampment. She has earned the respect and loyalty from everyone she has ever led, cadets, seniors and even parents, “It is her whole personality that spells out CAP”, said Major Richie Johns the squadron’s Deputy

Commander of seniors and one of Pantanelli's biggest fans adding "This woman is a jewel."

As Capt Miraglia took command Lt Col Pantanelli left with many memories and no regrets. When asked what she would miss most Johnnie, with her characteristic twinkle in her eye said, "I'm not going to miss anything. I'm not going to miss anything at all."