



Former Adjutant General passes away

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Story by Staff Sgt. Robert R. Adams, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs

SPRINGFIELD - Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Harold Holesinger of Springfield, Illinois, former Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard and Korean War Veteran, passed away

on March 7. Holesinger served as the Adjutant General (TAG) from 1983 to 1991 and was the first and only Air National Guard General to ever serve as the Adjutant General of the ILNG to date.

"Most of the senior leaders in the Illinois National Guard today began their careers under the leadership of Major General Harold Holesinger, including me when I came to Illinois in 1989," said Maj. Gen. Richard J. Hayes Jr., the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. "He cared very deeply about the Airmen and Soldiers he led, and his influence continues to shape the success and achievement of the Illinois National Guard today."

Holesinger was born on October 4, 1929 in Morrison, Illinois where he graduated from Morrison Illinois High School in 1948.

Holesinger's military service began in 1948 when he enlisted as a private in the 33rd Division of the Illinois Army National Guard. He enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1950 and entered Aviation Cadet Training in the fall of 1951.

Holesinger received his pilot wings and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force at Laredo Air Force Base, Texas in September 1952. After completing Advanced Fighter Gunnery Training he was assigned to the 8th Fighter Bomber Squadron at Taegu Air Base in Korea. During his time there he flew a combat tour in the F-84 aircraft. In December of 1953, he was transferred to the 364th Combat Crew Training Squadron at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas where he served as a gunnery instructor pilot and flight commander until his release from active duty in September 1955.

From there Holesinger entered Northern Illinois University and joined the 108th Fighter Interceptor Squadron of the Illinois Air National Guard. He transferred to the 170th Fighter Interceptor Squadron in 1956 and began full time Federal Military Technician employment with the Illinois Air National Guard.

Photo Cutline: Official photo of Maj. Gen. (ret.) Harold Holesinger.

While with the 170th Tactical Fighter Squadron he served as Flight Commander, Squadron Operations Officer and assumed command of the Squadron in 1957.

Holesinger served in the command position from 1957 to 1962 including the period during 1961-62 when the unit was called to active duty during the Berlin crisis.

In 1962, he became Director of Operations of the 183rd Tactical Fighter Group upon its formation and assumed command of the group in January of 1976.

Col. (ret.) Donald Kunzweiller, former Director of Public Affairs of the Illinois Air National Guard said Holesinger was his commander at the 183rd.

"General Holesinger was a demanding leader that wanted perfection, but was always professional and very well respected," said Kunzweiller.

Kunzweiller said he also knew Holesinger while he served as the Adjutant General.

"I had a lot of respect for him as a leader and he was one of the best bosses I've ever had," said Kunzweiller. "He was very well educated on the inner workings of the Air and Army National Guard and was always striving to make the Illinois National Guard the best it could be."

Holesinger went on to command the 126th Air Refueling Wing from June 1978 to Sept. 1983.

"During the time period that Holesinger served as commander of these fighter units they achieved a reputation of being among the top units in the Air National Guard," said Adriana Schroeder, Command Historian of the Illinois National Guard. "His unit participated in numerous special field exercises and deployments outside the continental United States."

Holesinger was appointed the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard on Sept. 15, 1983.

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Jay Sheedy, former Assistant Adjutant General – Air, said he worked for Holesinger on many different levels throughout his career starting at the wings and then on the state level staff while Holesinger served as TAG.

"I always looked up to him as a mentor and always said his greatest quality in terms of leadership was his honesty," said Sheedy. "His integrity was superb, he was a demanding leader, but never asked anyone to do something that he wouldn't do himself."

Sheedy said Holesinger was a military officer first and his thoughts were always about the National Guard.

Col. Drew D. Dukett, Logistic Management Officer of the Illinois National Guard said he was a staff sergeant in the Illinois Army National Guard while Holesinger was TAG.

"He was always very proud of his service as a combat pilot," said Dukett. "He was a very approachable leader and took an interest in Soldiers of all ranks."

Holesinger flew more than 6,000 hours during his career.

Col. Shiela Perry, the Deputy Human Resources Officer of the Illinois National Guard, also knew Holesinger early in her career when she was working in communications.

"No matter who you were, regardless of rank he was always so caring and it was a true pleasure to know him," said Perry.

During his military career Holesinger was awarded the Combat Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service medal and the Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon along with many other awards and decorations.

Holesinger was also a part of the Air Force Association, National Guard Association of the United States and Illinois, the Reserve Officers Association and Rotary International (O'Hare Club).

"On behalf of the 13,000 Army and Air National Guardsmen of the Illinois National Guard, our thoughts and prayers go out to Major General Holesinger's friends and family," said Hayes.

Funeral and visitation services will be at Staab Funeral Home at 1109 S. 5th St, Springfield, Illinois 62703 in Springfield, Illinois. The visitation will be Thursday from 4 p.m. – 7 p.m. The funeral will be Friday at 9 a.m.

The burial service will be Friday at 10 a.m. at Camp Butler in Springfield, Illinois. There will also be a Celebration of Life ceremony held at Concordia Village 4101 W Iles Ave, Springfield, IL 62711 immediately following the burial ceremony.