

Heartland WARRIOR

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West leads 'Red Tags'...2
New MXG commander...4
Maintainers swap boom...6

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

On the cover...

Tech. Sgt. Daniel Tomasiewicz, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron aircraft pneudraulic technician, places a 'remove before flight' safety tag on a KC-135R Stratotanker as he works to remove a boom from the aircraft at Grissom Feb. 24. The boom needed to be removed for repair after an unidentified noise was discovered in the aft section of the boom near the rollers.

West commands 'Red Tags'



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Andrew McLaughlin

Lt. Col. James West, 74th Air Refueling Squadron commander, receives the 74th ARS guidon from Lt. Col. Gerard Malloy, 434th Operations Group commander, during a ceremony at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Ind., Feb. 8.

**By Staff Sgt.
Andrew McLaughlin**
Public Affairs staff

The Fightin' Red Tags recently said farewell to their commander as a new leader took the reins.

Lt. Col. James West was given command of the 74th Air Refueling Squadron, colloquially known as "The Fightin' Red Tags," as Lt. Col. Brian Stopher relinquished command of the unit during a ceremony here Feb. 8.

Lt. Col. Gerard Malloy, 434th Operations Group commander, who presided over the ceremony, welcomed West and expressed confidence in the new commander.

"He's the right person for the job," said Malloy.

Stopher, who will retire March 1, thanked the 74th ARS Airmen for their service and emphasized that although he was the commander, he worked for them.

"You're taking over the best group of people I've worked with," Stopher said to West during the transition.

After receiving the 74th ARS

guidon, signifying the change of command, West thanked his family for their support and said he appreciated the opportunity to lead the squadron.

Turning to the Airmen he now commands, West then asked them to remember the mission they support and the role they play in its success while encouraging them to not lose sight of greater things while accomplishing their routine duties and requirements.

"Find a place where you can make a difference and do it," he continued.

West's active duty Air Force career began in 1989 after graduating from Auburn University, Ala., and completing Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps. He transferred to the Air Force Reserve in 1999 and has held various leadership roles since.

He is also a command pilot and has deployed in support of Operations Allied Force, Provide Promise, Provide Relief, Restore Democracy, Enduring Freedom, Desert Calm, New Dawn and Unified Protector.

Pinaire named Airman of the Year, saves life

**By Tech. Sgt.
Douglas Hays**
Public Affairs staff

Sometimes a person has to find the right fit, which is exactly what one Grissom firefighter did, propelling his career to unexpected heights.

Senior Airman Kenneth W. Pinaire Jr., 434th Civil Engineer Squadron fire protection journeyman, was recently selected as the 434th Air Refueling Wing Airman of the Year for 2013.

"This is probably the greatest accomplishment in my Air Force career so far," said Pinaire, a 6-year Air Force veteran who recently cross-trained to be a firefighter in August 2012. "I never thought I'd win Airman of the Year, but I finally found a job that makes me want to push myself to be better."

And, push himself he did in 2013 as he completed a rigorous seasoning training program and devoted more than 160 hours of off-duty time to achieve his emergency medical technician basic certification.

During that time he also mastered 100 hours of hazardous materials technician certification, completed three aircraft firefighting vehicle licenses in two-thirds the average completion time and finished 12 hours toward his Community College of the Air Force degree in fire science.

"(Pinaire) set new standards," said Maj. Paul Brenner, 434th CES commander, of the

2007 Maconaquah High School graduate. "He has a true passion for learning."

It was that passion for knowledge in his craft that paid out big dividends in 2013 as he saved both lives and property. Due to Grissom's mutual aid agreements with the surrounding areas, the 25-year-old Airman had even greater opportunities to use his training in the local community.

Pinaire was first on scene of a trench collapse that trapped a patient, said Brenner, adding that he secured the scene and provided medical care to include oxygen therapy that saved the patient's life.

He was also the primary medic at a vehicle rollover accident on U.S. 31 near the base, where he helped expedite getting a patient to a trauma center for advanced care, the commander continued.

"The best thing about last year would be getting out in the community and helping them with things like car wrecks, where you're with patients and telling them, 'hey, we're here for you and we're going to do everything we can to help you out,'" said Pinaire. "It feels good to make that big of a difference."

It wasn't only medical runs that set Pinaire apart last year.

He responded to a KC-135R Stratotanker fuel spill and contained more than 50 gallons of fuel, which protected



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Senior Airman Kenneth W. Pinaire Jr.

both the \$39.6 million aircraft as well as then environment. He also responded to an off-base fire helping stop nearly \$80,000 in structure loss.

And, while Pinaire serves as a Grissom firefighter as a traditional Air Force reservist, he doesn't let his service to the community stop there as he dons the firefighting gear of the Pipe Creek Volunteer Fire Department, a local department just outside Grissom's gate.

"I joined Pipe Creek to gain more experience because with Grissom not having a large response area we don't get a lot of fires, but with Pipe Creek I get more runs and more involved with the community," he explained. "Even if it's

small stuff, doing the job more makes me better."

He's said he's also been able to share some of his Air Force training with the volunteer fire department, making the community safer.

"With the training I've received at Grissom I'm one of the more highly trained fire fighters," said Pinaire, adding that he's also served as an instructor for aircraft fire training, helping Purdue and Columbus, Ind., airport firefighters achieve Federal Aviation Administration certification.

Even when not on duty with either fire department, becoming a firefighter has brought him into the fold of a

See 'Pinaire' page 9

Schulte tapped to lead 434th Maintenance Group

By Tech. Sgt. Mark
Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

While a record-setting winter has some wanting to flee the Midwest, one Air Force Reserve colonel is glad to be headed back as she has been selected to lead the 434th Maintenance Group here.

Col. Anna Schulte, who commands the 403rd Maintenance Group at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., was recently selected to command Grissom's maintainers and will assume her role March 23.

Schulte will replace Col. Paul Weimer, who will command 919th Special Operations Maintenance Group at Duke Field, Fla.

The colonel said she joined the Air Force to be an aviator in 1980, but when that didn't pan out she took advice from her father, an active duty maintenance chief master sergeant, who pointed her toward the aircraft maintenance career field.

"I said if I can't fly them, I'll fix them, so I drove from Laughlin AFB in Texas to Travis (AFB, Calif.) and joined the reserve 349th Maintenance Squadron there," she recalled.

Since then, Schulte has held a variety of positions to include officer in charge of mission systems, job control officer, executive officer, logistics branch chief, squadron commander and group

commander. She has also deployed in support of Operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom.

No stranger to command, Schulte has been in leadership at the group level since 1999, when she filled in as the acting group commander for the 445th Logistics Group at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

Part of the reason Schulte said she is excited for her new job is that she



U.S. Air Force photo

Col. Anna Schulte

is returning back to the Midwest, an area that suits her.

"The south isn't for everyone," she explained. "I love the north and four seasons, and it's close to my family in Ohio, so for me it's a perfect fit."

Despite a desire to leave the south, Schulte said she will miss the people she worked with at Keesler AFB.

"The unit down there was outstanding," she elaborated. "I admired the C-130J's capabilities, the people supporting them, and their two missions including

tactical airlift and hurricane reconnaissance, but it's time to move on to the next challenge."

Looking ahead, the colonel said she is excited about those challenges and opportunities at

Grissom.

"I haven't worked on KC-135s since 1989 at March ARB, Calif., so it's good to get back into that world, and work heavy aircraft," she said. "I'm ready to get back into the strat way of doing things with maintenance philosophies and procedures, and getting to know my Airmen."

And, getting to know her people

is one of the biggest challenges Schulte said she will have, but one from which she will not shy away.

"By far the biggest challenge will be getting out and meet the [Air Reserve Technicians], traditional reservists and civilians," she said. "There are over 500 of them and only one of me, but I'll endeavor to meet with everyone and make sure they all understand I work for them."

As far as work is concerned, the colonel said on her first trip ever to Grissom she was impressed by the Airmen she will command as she saw their dedication first-hand in the aircraft they maintain.

"There are some beautiful planes here," Schulte commented. "They are taken care of, they've got the [tender loving care] in them."

She went on to say that TLC is indicative of Air Force Reserve maintainers.

"It's not like that with the active duty, who, depending on their rank, move every 2 or 3 years to another aircraft system," she elaborated. "When our maintainers come into the unit they could stay for years and have that expertise and sense of ownership that the active duty doesn't have, and you can see that in the planes."

"Maintenance has been good on these planes and they are going to last a lot longer than they need to," she added.

Well-maintained planes and challenges ahead weren't the only thing to greet the new colonel on a two-week trip to Grissom. She was also met with Hoosier hospitality.

"I've met a lot of the wing people, and they are all very welcoming," she concluded. "It's nice being on a small base because you get to know everyone, know where everything is and you build that closer camaraderie than when you're spread out all over a gigantic base."

While Schulte will officially assume her new responsibilities in late March, her assumption of command ceremony will not take place until the April unit training assembly.

*"...I'll endeavor to meet
with everyone and make
sure they all understand
I work for them."*

- Col. Anna Schulte

Bauchle recognized as NCO of the Year

By Tech. Sgt. Douglas Hays
Public Affairs staff

It's been said that noncommissioned officers are the backbone of the U.S. military as they are the first-line supervisors and hands-on experts leading Airmen in excellence.

One such leader, Tech. Sgt. Christopher Bauchle, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron fire protection craftsman, was recently selected as the 434th Air Refueling Wing NCO of the Year for 2013.

"He embodies what it is to be a fireman and NCO," said Chief Master Sgt. Steve Groszek, 434th CES fire chief. "He leads by example, is willing to go the extra mile, and he is always taking care of others – always putting the firefighting family ahead of himself."

As a testament to his willingness to go above and beyond, Bauchle stepped up and served as an assistant chief of operations for the Grissom Fire Department, where he dedicated more than 140 off-duty hours to fulfill administrative requirements.

"We had two great master sergeants retire, and with those retirements went with them over 50 years of experience, so that opened up a big void when it comes to knowledge and real-world experience," explained Bauchle. "I've always thought that you should be able to step into the job above you, to know what to do."

"And, I had that opportunity to go into a position above my pay grade, and I was able to learn a lot from that challenge," he added.

And, taking on a challenge in pursuit of excellence is something Bauchle has demonstrated he isn't afraid to do.

On top of completing several credit hours last year toward a Master of Science degree in homeland security, the Indianapolis-native graduated as a class leader from both Indiana's and Georgia's smoke diver courses.

"You talk about a hard class, it's like Navy SEAL training for fireman," explained Groszek, who is also a graduate of the arduous course. "They put you in situations where you run out of air, where you have to conserve your air and where you're physically out of your limits, so when you get in a situation like that you can go back to your training and survive."

"It's all about training the mind and the body to adapt in pretty extreme environments," added Bauchle, stating that less than half of the course's participants graduate. "They'll wear you down physically and then put you in situations where you have to make critical decisions while experiencing things like tunnel vision and auditory exclusion."

"It's all so that these horrible situations become charted territory for you so that if, God forbid, you get in a situation like that you have the knowledge



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Tech. Sgt. Christopher Bauchle

and abilities to get you and your team out safe," he continued. "It's about making good firefighters into better firefighters."

Not letting that training go to waste, the NCO of the Year took his knowledge and applied it to training here at Grissom.

"I've been able to bring a lot of that in to the contingency training here and apply it to both the firefighting training and even deployment preparation training," explained Bauchle.

And while completing two versions of the extreme course wasn't enough, Bauchle sought out even more training as he completed a hazardous material incident commander course in just two weeks and was certified as an Indiana state vehicle and heavy machinery rescue technician.

He was also the first 434th CES firefighter to be licensed on a P-34 rapid intervention vehicle, using his knowledge and experience to train the rest of his 28-member flight.

"He's so forward thinking, and his approach is so analytical – he really is a genius," said Groszek. "And, having someone like that on your team is such a tremendous benefit."

Not only has the GFD benefited from his training, but so has the entire base and those in his community.

Maintainers face frigid cold for boom swap



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Senior Airman Joshua Christian, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron aircraft hydraulic systems specialist, works to remove a cable from KC-135R Stratotanker boom at Grissom Feb. 24. Christian and his fellow 434th AMXS Airmen work in all of Indiana's weather conditions to keep Grissom's KC-135s mission capable and flying.

Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

While the phrase, "Keep 'em flying" was used to sell war bonds during World War II, that motto has become a way of life for Air Force maintainers.

Recently, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron maintainers at Grissom have had to face bone-chilling temperatures during a record setting winter to keep their KC-135R Stratotankers flying.

This was seen recently as several of Grissom's maintenance troops worked to swap out a boom on the back of a KC-135.

"We were doing an acceptance inspection after this came back from [programed depot maintenance], and during routine maintenance there was a loud noise we couldn't identify as we telescoped the boom in and out," said Tech. Sgt. Randy Brooks, 434th AMXS aircraft pneudraulic technician. "It's heavy maintenance to get in there, and we'd have to gut this boom to fix it, so it's quicker to change

this boom and send it off to get fixed."

Depot-level maintenance includes the repair, modifications or updates to aircraft beyond the capabilities of what can be found at operating locations.

Since the aircraft recently returned from depot, Brooks said the maintainers decided to send it back to have it fixed there.

"We have a choice -- we can take this off and send it to our back shop guys who can fix it, or we can replace it and send this one back to depot," he explained. "Since it came from depot, we will send it back to them."

While this scenario involved hydraulic troops swapping out a boom due to a maintenance defect, boom swaps by 434th Maintenance Squadron hydraulic back shop happen frequently at Grissom.

"Our back shop guys swap out booms every two years on these aircraft," said Brooks. "We just did this one because of the noise."

Grissom maintainers are responsible for maintaining the 434th Air Refueling Wing's 16 KC-135Rs.

Tech. Sgt. Randy Brooks, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron aircraft pneudraulic technician, left, and Senior Airman Robert Kirleis, 434th AMXS aircraft hydraulic systems specialist, work to remove a boom from a KC-135R Stratotanker at Grissom Feb. 24. The boom needed to be removed so it could be repaired after an unidentified noise coming from the aft portion of the boom near the rollers was discovered during a routine maintenance check.



Life-saving medic awarded top senior NCO honors

**By Tech. Sgt.
Douglas Hays**
Public Affairs staff

Stepping away from home helped one senior noncommissioned officer step into the limelight.

Master Sgt. Rosalba De La Paz, 74th Air Refueling Squadron medical element technician, was selected as the 434th Air Refueling Wing's Senior NCO of the Year for 2013, a year in which she completed two deployments.

De La Paz's first deployment was to 86th Aerospace Medicine Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where she worked at a contingency aeromedical staging facility providing medical support for the Air Force's largest expeditionary operations group.

While there, she managed nearly 2,700 patient moves on 223 aeromedical evacuation flights, said Lt. Col. Brian Stopher, 74th ARS commander.

"She worked 17 hour days to ensure after-hour mission success," Stopher said of her dedication.

Charged with leading 19 Airmen on her shift, De La Paz said she scheduled patient movements and provided life-saving medical care for everyone from infants undergoing neonatal intensive care to wounded warriors coming off the battlefield. She also said she even worked with transporting animals



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Master Sgt. Rosalba De La Paz

under veterinarian care.

"It's was a life changer because working at Grissom, you don't see that side of the medical field while here our main focus are the annual physical health assessments," she said. "There I got to see the people who made that sacrificial difference and help them."

While rendering medical care and transporting them to medical facilities was part of the care she provided, De La Paz said she was able to help them in a completely different way as well.

"For the patients, the biggest thing was being able to listen to them, and they all had a story they wanted to tell," she recalled. "They don't

want to talk about the injury; they just want to talk about themselves without someone asking about their injury, and want to be remembered for who they are outside of the medical setting."

"It's really an amazing thing when you're the one that can make a difference for people and concentrate on the person and not on their illness," she continued. "You know you made a difference when you see their eyes light up a happy smile on their face when you walk into the room or after your chat."

And, making a difference with her patients wasn't the only way De La Paz had an impact in Germany as she also helped to change the lives of her

Airmen.

"I worked with a lot of senior airmen who were a little hesitant with their skills and leadership abilities," she recalled. "So, every week I gave them leadership tasks and had a leadership roundtable to help enhance their abilities and their leadership skills."

"They all really grew from when we first started to when we left," the master sergeant continued. "It's great working with the people and being able to bring out leadership qualities in them -- knowing that I was able to help and build character under the people I had with me."

De La Paz's second deployment with the 340th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, may have looked a lot different in location and tasks, but she said it was equally as rewarding.

While there, she provided support and tracked medical readiness for more than 180 aircrew members made up of reserve, guard and regular Air Force Airmen, and her command lauded for her management of the aircrew fatigue management program and its 100 percent accuracy and accountability.

During that deployment, Stopher said she also responded to 33 in-flight or ground emergencies, where she evaluated aircrews to determine their return

See 'De La Paz' page 10

Grissom Airmen awarded medals for service

By Senior Airman
Jami Lancette
Public Affairs staff

For their meritorious service in the U.S. Air Force, 34 Grissom Airmen were recently awarded medals.

Meritorious Service Medal

Three 434th Air Refueling Wing Airmen were recently presented with Meritorious Service Medals. President Lyndon Johnson established the MSM by Executive Order 11448 on Jan. 16, 1969, as the counterpart of the Bronze Star Medal for the recognition of meritorious noncombatant service. Those who received MSMs are listed below:

- Capt. Michael R. Hill, 434th Maintenance Group
- Master Sgt. Brian Dickerson, 434th Maintenance Operations Flight
- Tech Sgt. Charles Ruisard, 434th Maintenance Squadron

Air Medal

Thirteen aircrew members were presented with Air Medals. The Air Medal was established by May 11, 1942 and is awarded to U.S. military and civilian personnel for single acts of heroism or meritorious achievements while participating in aerial flight and foreign military personnel in actual combat in support of operations. Below are those who received Air Medals:

- Lt. Col. David Schmitt, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron
- Maj. Daniel Keeney, 434th Operations Support Squadron
- Maj. Bradley Thompson, 74th Air Refueling Squadron
- Capt. Shawn Bailey, 74th ARS
- Capt. Robin Cosand, 74 ARS
- Capt. Jacob Creel, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron
- Capt. Scott Street, 72nd ARS
- Chief Master Sgt. Jeffery Maier, 74th ARS
- Tech. Sgt. Jerald Cummings, 72nd ARS
- Tech. Sgt. Mckayla Dick, 74th ARS
- Tech. Sgt. Joshua Welch, 74th



U.S. Air Force graphic by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

ARS

- Staff Sgt. Clayton Duncan, 72nd ARS
- Staff. Sgt. Courtney Storey, 72nd ARS

Aerial Achievement Medal

Five officers and two NCOs were awarded the Aerial Achievement Medal, which is awarded by the Department of the Air Force to U.S. military and civilian personnel for sustained meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. The following received the Aerial Achievement Medal:

- Lt. Col. Douglas Gullion, 434th OSS
- Lt. Col. David Schmitt, 72th ARS
- Lt. Col. Erik Thorell, 72nd ARS
- Maj. Daniel Keeney, 434th OSS
- Maj. William Schneider, 434th OSS
- Staff Sgt. Clayton Duncan, 72nd ARS
- Staff. Sgt. Eric Maul, 74th ARS

Air Force Commendation Medal

One officer and three Airmen received Air Force Commendation Medals. This medal was authorized by the Secretary of the Air Force on March 28, 1958, for award to members of the Armed Forces of the United States who distinguished themselves by meritorious

achievement and service. Below are those who received commendation medals:

- Capt. Theodore Karagias, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron
- Tech. Sgt. Joseph Demore, 434th AMXS
- Tech. Sgt. Zuriel Lund, 72nd ARS
- Tech. Sgt. Jessie Rood, 72nd ARS

Air Force Achievement Medal

Seven Grissom Airmen were awarded the Air Force Achievement Medal. This medal was authorized by the Secretary of the Air Force on Oct. 20, 1980, and is awarded to Air Force personnel for outstanding achievement or meritorious service rendered specifically on behalf of the Air Force. Below are those who received achievement medals:

- Tech. Sgt. Foy Cox, 434th Security Forces Squadron
- Tec Sgt. Joseph Demore, 434th AMXS
- Tech. Sgt. Jessie Rood, 72nd ARS
- Tech. Sgt. David Schneider, 434th MXS
- Staff Sgt. Timothy Augustyn, 434th SFS
- Staff Sgt. Joseph Fruggiero, 434th MXS
- Senior Airman Bernard Johnson, 434th ARW

Pinaire, from page 3

special family 24/7.

"They tell you it's a brotherhood when you go into it, but you don't really realize it until you're actually doing the job that there are guys who are willing to do anything for you, and you'd do for them," said Pinaire. "It's fun being able to work with a bunch of guys with whom you have so much in common."

And, while he now fits like a glove into his new family and role as a life-saving firefighter, his new path almost never happened.

"It was something I always thought about doing, I just didn't think I had the resources to do

it," Pinaire explained.

"I got talking to people one day about being a volunteer firefighter, which got the gears turning and the next thing you know I was talking about cross training into the unit.

"Ever since then I've absolutely loved it," he elaborated. "It's the best decision I've ever made in my life."

The Peru, Ind., native said he now fully embraces his role and all the responsibilities that come with it, especially as a role model.

"One of my most memorable moments was when I was doing driver's training on Engine 8 driving through

Eagles Pointe, and we came to a stop sign where a school bus was dropping little kids off and when they got off the bus they were waving and smiling at us, and even the kids on the bus were rolling down the windows," said Pinaire. "It made me remember when I was a kid how cool it was to see a fire truck and see firefighters and I was finally a firefighter getting to see that excitement.

"I love being someone that kids or younger people look up to and say, 'I want to be like that,'" he continued. "It's a really good feeling when you have

people that look up to you."

While being a role model for kids is important, Pinaire also offered some advice to his fellow Airmen about how they can achieve both careers success and happiness.

"It may sound cliché, but follow your dreams," he shared. "If there's something you want to do, go for it.

"I have a philosophy now of 'why not?'" he concluded. "You only get to live once, so why not try?"

Pinaire will now join three other 434th ARW annual award winners to compete at the 4th Air Force level.

Bauchle, from page 5

As a crew chief of a first-in firefighting truck, Bauchle responded to a KC-135R Stratotanker experiencing hydraulic failure.

In that incident, he was able to establish command and isolate the scene, maintain accountability as five aircrew members were evacuated and additional damage to a \$39.6 million aircraft was averted, said Maj. Paul Brenner, 434th CES commander.

Bauchle also demonstrated quick thinking that lead to a life being saved as he responded to a male in cardiac arrest and was able to use an automatic external defibrillator to revive the patient.

And, if saving money by averting damage to an aircraft wasn't enough, Bauchle worked in conjunction with a local Peru, Ind., fire department to coordinate live-fire training, which saved more than \$20,000 in temporary duty costs.

While his performance in his job and commitment to self-improvement were a major factor in his award, Bauchle was also evaluated on his service to the community.

In 2013, the NCO of the Year not only organized a 13-person team to complete a race in full fire gear to earn money for an Indianapolis-based homeless shelter, he also completed a 12-mile obstacle course to support wounded warriors and aided five fellow firefighters earn credits toward their Community College of the Air Force degrees.

"He really is the heart and soul of this department and is always helping others," said Groszek.

While Bauchle said he's proud of the recognition, he said he sees this award as one for the entire GFD.

"Anyone who wins an annual award like this doesn't do it without support from their unit, from the other NCOs," he explained. "There's no way to do any of this without the help of others and surrounding yourself with great people.

"That's the way we look at it in the fire department -- it's a victory for the whole department because of everything everyone contributed," he added.

When asked about what advice he may have for fellow NCOs or young Airmen, Bauchle said the biggest thing they can do is apply themselves with excellence toward knowing their job.

"With all the requirements that we have to meet throughout the year, it's easy to lose sight of the big picture, but you need to be constantly applying yourself to your career, staying proficient in your job or preparing yourself to step up in to that next job," he explained. "Never underestimate the importance of applying yourself and not losing sight of the big picture of how you support the mission and impact that has on the overall Air Force.

"When you get a bunch of airman and NCOs all pushing for that same goal, you're able to do amazing things," Bauchle concluded.

With the challenges and achievements of 2013 behind him, Bauchle will now join three other 434th ARW annual award winners to compete at the 4th Air Force level.

Manas KC-135s complete final mission, leave Kyrgyzstan

By Staff Sgt. Travis Edwards
376th Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs

TRANSIT CENTER AT MANAS, Kyrgyzstan -- The Transit Center's final aerial refueling mission over Afghanistan landed here Feb. 24, completing the end of an era.

After six hours of traveling, refueling A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, and F-16 Fighting Falcons, the KC-135 Stratotanker touched down to a fanfare of saluting Airmen.

Col. Mike Seiler, the 376th Expeditionary Operations Group commander, piloted the historical flight.

"It's pretty special to be able to say that we were able to fly on the last sortie out of Manas," Seiler said. "When (I) think about it, we flew our last sortie just like we did our first one--fighter support, troops in contact. ... I got chills rolling down the runway for the last time."

Over the last 12.5 years here, KC-135s flew 33,500 sorties that led to 135,000 aircraft refueled with more than 12.2 billion gal-

lons of fuel delivered, enough to fill 9,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

"I wish there was an honest way to track how many times a tanker mission has directly affected troops on the ground," Seiler said.

Senior Master Sgt. Jeffrey

Bishop, the 22nd Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron superintendent, was the boom for the final mission.

"It all comes down to people ... Airmen with a big 'A,'" Bishop said. "This team -- I would go to war with them anytime." (AFNS)



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Travis Edwards

A KC-135 Stratotanker taxis while members of the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing salute at Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, Feb. 24. The KC-135 departed the after the final refueling mission over Afghanistan from the TCM.

De La Paz, from page 7

to flight status in a high-operations tempo environment.

Wanting to make a difference in Airmen's lives again, De La Paz was hand-selected to be an additional duty first sergeant.

"She was a trusted advisor," remarked Stopher.

While her two deployments differed during the year, the one constant she took on both was her sense of volunteerism.

From working to feed people, to volunteering at a blood bank and even augmenting postal members to process

holiday mail, no matter the location she was at she got involved.

"I did a lot of volunteering, it helps to pass the time," she said.

And, while improving the lives of others was a hallmark of De La Paz's 2013, she was also focused on improving herself.

To maximize global medical readiness, Stopher said she graduated from total-force sustainment training designed to advance readiness skills.

She also graduated from the National Defense University's Senior Enlisted Joint

Professional Military Education Course and Senior NCO Academy.

When asked if she had advice for fellow Airmen on how to find success and rewards in their careers, De La Paz said they should look for opportunities to serve, especially on deployments.

"It's really fulfilling, and you get to see the world outside of your element," she continued. "You get to work with others, and that makes you a more well-rounded leader."

In speaking of leadership, De La Paz said she was thankful

to those who led here and supported her throughout last year and her entire career.

"I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without supportive leadership, especially Chief (Master Sgt.) Jeff Maier and Colonel Stopher.

Prior to joining the Air Force in 2007, De La Paz served in the Army for nine years as a combat medic.

With the deployments behind her, De La Paz will now join three other 434th ARW annual award winners to compete at the 4th Air Force level.

'Mustache March' puts focus on Air Force heritage

Commentary by Maj.

Jon Quinlan

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Public Affairs

TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. -- So it's March and what's the first thing you think about in this glorious month... Mustache March of course. Maybe not, but this year Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh issued a challenge to the force for this March.

"I don't think we've ever had an all-in Mustache March, have we?" Welsh said during his speech at the Air Force Association's Air Warfare Symposium. "I'm putting the smackdown on you guys. Air Force-wide Mustache March, MAJCOM competitions."

What's the deal with Mustache March and the Air Force? As some of you may know, it's about tradition, heritage and honoring those Airmen that fought before us.

Three-time ace pilot Brig. Gen. Robin Olds was one of those legendary Airmen and he sported an equally legendary mustache. He was a "triple ace" with a combined total of 16 victories in World War II and the Vietnam War. Every March I see his picture with his handlebar "bulletproof" mustache which he fragrantly wore against military regulations. Some say he was one of the greatest aerial warriors America ever produced, the fighter pilots "fighter pilot."

This brings us to today and to us. Sure there is plenty of frustrating news about lowered budgets,



U.S. Air Force photo

Triple ace fighter pilot Brig. Gen. Robin Olds, a combat veteran of World War II and Vietnam, sports a mustache next to his aircraft. In honor of Olds, "Mustache March" is a way to honor Air Force heritage while having some fun and perhaps getting made fun of in many cases.

draw downs and Air Force reductions in force but we, as professional Airmen, should stay away from that noise. One way for me and maybe you is to grow and be proud of your mustache, be proud to be an Airman and be proud of our heritage.

Yes your wives, significant others, co-workers and bosses may ridicule your sorry excuse for a

mustache. That is what makes mustache march so great. We know mustaches are generally at a low point of acceptance in America but we can keep it real and proudly grow our disturbing facial hair in the name of tradition and in accordance with AFI 36-2903 of course.

In case you were wondering, here is an excerpt from AFI 36-2903:

3.1.2.2. Mustaches. Male Airmen may have mustaches; however they will be conservative (moderate, being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme) and will not extend downward beyond the lip line of the upper lip or extend sideways beyond a vertical line drawn upward from both corners of the mouth. (AFNS)