On Memorial Day, May 27, 2019, members of the 194th Fighter Squadron and the 144th Fighter Wing remembered and honored Lt. Col. Seth “Jethro” Nehring by posing with his dedicated F-15 Eagle while on a deployment for Exercise Diamond Storm 2019 at Royal Australian Air Force Base Darwin, Northern Territory. (Courtesy photo by U.S. Air Force)

Commander’s Comments
By Col. Dave Johnston
144th Mission Support Group

144th FW Patriots, it’s my turn in the barrel for jotting down some words from me to all of you.

Over several days, I’ve considered what I wanted to convey that doesn’t sound like a stereotypical, flowery-worded, commander-approved message. In short, here is what I’ve got for you. See... this is what a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the vaunted academic powerhouse CSU, Sacramento gets you!

Service is a commitment for however long you choose to make that commitment. But that commitment is critical, and you are either in 100% or you shouldn’t be in. We don’t do this to get rich, we don’t do this to become famous, and we shouldn’t be doing this to get discounts.

There are lots of reasons why we initially make the decision to serve. “College money,” “I need to get out of Clovis!” and “I always wanted to serve” are just a few.

But we also choose to do this because it is important and very few others are willing to raise their right hand like we do. It is special. It is sometimes thankless but always necessary because if you weren’t doing this, who would?

I have been at this for more than 30 years, and it has been an interesting ride. I have had some very high “highs” and some really low “lows,” but I wouldn’t trade any of it for the world.

My service has taught me a lot about myself and others. It has made me cherish the friends I have made—those still serving, retired, and lost. It has taught me that serving others is a commodity that very few people take seriously anymore. Mostly, it has taught me that the value of my service is not determined by the position or authority I hold but by the passion and dedication I bring to it.

Whatever position and level of authority you hold, please bring the passion and dedication it deserves. There will come a time for each of you during your military career when your passion begins to wane—other things in your life will require your dedication. But until that time comes, keep serving! Your country and your fellow Airmen need you!
Most are familiar with Roger Water’s declaration, “We don’t need no education!” While I am a big fan of Pink Floyd, I can’t say his declaration in that song is worthy of serious consideration.

All too often, I have seen slots open up, and highly skilled, qualified personnel miss out on an opportunity for promotion because they failed to address their professional military education. While serving on a wing promotion board recently, I cringed when applicants missed out on a whopping 15 points for not having a Community College of the Air Force degree, a Bachelor’s degree, or their senior enlisted joint professional military education. Likewise, when personnel don’t take their skill level training seriously, they fall behind. It negatively impacts readiness, and too many failures on skill level correspondence courses can result in ending someone’s career.

Professional military education and correspondence courses are Airmen 101 requirements. Everyone must understand that they form the basis of standardizing a knowledge base for Airmen. Deployed locations rely on these standards, because they come prepackaged with expectations, and failing to meet them is failing in an Air Force core value: excellence in all we do.

Rather than squeaking by with meeting minimum educational requirements, we should be striving to exceed them. The Air Force and Air National Guard recognize this and have raised the bar by including the CCAF degree for MSgt and higher ranking promotions. On one hand, this increases the level of difficulty for promotions, but on the other hand, it incentivizes an overall greater level of education for the AF and ANG. This is a mutually beneficial outcome because highly educated personnel have a much better chance of getting a better job after retiring.

Other good news comes in the form of educational assistance, such as the GI Bill, and the California Educational Assistance Award Program. In a cohort challenge, 2nd Lt. Garibay, Airman First Class Carroll, and I jumped into the academic fray two years ago, enrolling at National University for a Master’s Degree in Cyber Security. It was an absolute blast to share this experience with my fellow Wingmen, and we all completed our Master’s Thesis together, graduating just last month. A degree like that will develop younger Airmen with knowledge and discipline, and for an old dog like me, it helps in terms of an exit strategy for employment after military retirement.

Our cohort trio, dubbed “Team Conan,” battled our way through this degree with all of us funded by the EAAP. For more information on signing up for this excellent, highly recommended program, contact Ms. Katrina Beck at katrina.m.beck2.nfg@mail.mil, or Ms. Clarita Cortez at clarita.l.cortez.nfg@mail.mil, or visit the California National Guard website: https://calguard.ca.gov/education.

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Last but not least. I hate to break it to Mr. Waters, but we do, in fact, need our education!
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE BASE DARWIN, Australia—
The California Air National Guard’s 194th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, Fresno, California, teamed up with the several units from the Royal Australian Air Force to conduct bilateral training during Exercise Diamond Storm May 6-26, 2019.

Diamond Storm is an Australian Air Warfare Center-led exercise designed to enhance interoperability amongst allies and facilitate the introduction of fifth-generation capabilities into the Australian Defense Force.

“It’s incredibly important to continue collaborating with one of our most trusted allies and show support in this part of the world,” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. David Allamandola, 194th EFS program manager. “The Australians have created a phenomenal exercise that has increased both our levels of aptitude. Utilizing their unique airspace has highlighted different tactical problems we don’t get to see on a regular basis. It’s definitely a great opportunity to be with them, that we are privileged to participate in.”

This exercise, the last of a three-part series, also benefits as being a certifying criteria of the Air Warfare Instructor Course for the Australians.

“This is one of the most intense courses the [Australian Defense Force] offers to its candidates,” said RAAF Wing Commander Scott Woodland, 2 Operational Conversion Unit commanding officer. “We are taking highly skilled F-18 pilots and taking them to the next level. It’s been very challenging and very demanding with long hours, but ultimately, it gives great rewards.”

The U.S. Air Force and RAAF want to continue to build on the benefits of this exercise through the Enhanced Air Cooperation initiative and conduct more frequent training together.

“Being able to integrate as a force, understanding each other’s capabilities and limitations, and where we can utilize maximum effects with those capabilities is important,” said Woodland. “Having the expertise that U.S. [Air Force] units bring to the fold also help develop our candidates as well.”

The aim for the increase of training opportunities between the U.S. Air Force and RAAF is to aid in future integration efforts.
When I began working at the 144 Fighter Wing four years ago I had no idea the incredible experiences I would share with Airmen both home and abroad. In my role as the Director of Psychological Health, I have the opportunity to walk alongside members in the midst of their highest achievements and during moments of immense struggle. I often witness ubiquitous examples of Airmen’s strength, courage, and commitment. The grit and resilience of the human spirit never ceases to amaze me.

I believe one of the most important aspects of my role as DPH at the Wing is to provide a safe space for Airmen to process life’s stressors and experiences. Research confirms that this is an important practice and reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety. Seeking help early goes a long way in reducing the impact of problems both personally and professionally, which also impacts the mission.

Over the last few years I have participated in several temporary duty assignments stateside including exercises in Nevada, Hawaii, and Alaska. I have found the time away from the Wing is an amazing opportunity to build connections with Airmen in a very different atmosphere than at our home station. Over the last several weeks, I have supported our service members during a deployment exercise on international soil. I would like to share some of the thoughts that come to mind as I consider this valuable experience with our unit in theatre.

It’s very different from home station! During an exercise, the typical boundaries between various squadrons become less evident. Units come together continually providing support to one another to make the mission happen and succeed. Spending a lot more time together, during work hours and beyond, develops strong connections similar to a family system.

Relationships are valuable! As humans, we are hardwired for connection. It is so important to have someone that you can trust to share life with. During a deployment when service members are very far from their family or friends, fellow wingman provide vital support! The close connections between airmen promotes the ability to recognize when others are not doing well or having a hard day. They are able to check in and “be there” for each other mitigating negative consequences.

It’s a mixed bag filled with some awesome gains and hard losses! Yes, the deployment provides an opportunity to explore new places around the world; however, it can be a very vulnerable and a lonely time as service members miss their closest connections and wish they could share the

(continued on pg. 6)
experience with those they hold dear. It is a huge challenge navigating the time difference and finding the right time to connect with loved ones. Moreover, service members often miss out on important family milestones and events back home. On the other hand, the deployed environment provides an opportunity to spend more time enjoying activities they may not have the time for due to daily responsibilities and chores at home. Sight-seeing, exercise, and shared activities during idle time can be a valuable release reducing sadness and increasing self-care.

What happens during the deployment comes home with us! There is an old saying in the military “what happens TDY stays TDY!” We know from research and everyday experience that this is not true. Airmen return home from a deployment with both the good and the negative experiences. The consequences of all our choices have an impact on us personally, our family, and on our close connections including the mission.

The support from “home station” is essential. The ability to accomplish the mission abroad does not happen in a vacuum. There are dedicated service members at the Wing working hard to ensure the deployed airmen have what they need to succeed.

Accomplishing the mission abroad is hard work! I know from my own personal experience that it requires a ton of energy to travel. It is not for the faint of heart. What I’ve witnessed during this exercise is beyond amazing when I consider all that goes into one successful sortie. Facilitating the complicated logistics between three different international locations, the massive amount of equipment required, and the successful coordination of the various tasks is incredible!

The time I’ve spent in theatre has been invaluable. I now have a glimpse of what our service members experience being away from loved ones for an extended time. It is a substantial sacrifice even when they are able to experience new and amazing destinations. I have developed and fostered connections with members that I have no doubt will continue as we return to the Wing. I am extremely grateful for our amazing airmen at the 144th Fighter Wing that have taught me so much about tenacious grit and hard work. They are truly heroes I admire both home and abroad.

(U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Christopher Ridlon, 194th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron commander, stands beside an F-15C Eagle while deployed to Australia for Exercise Diamond Storm 2019. (Courtesy photo by Jaryd Stock, Aviation Photography Digest))


(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Roland Dansereau)
Serving Airmen in The Republic of South Korea

Airmen took place when everyone from the 144th were packing up. I wanted to help, so I offered to pack.

Our Airmen would not let me help. Instead I was told, “We got this. You just bring the moral and smiles.”

On another day, after making a food run, one young man told me how glad he was that I was there to talk to. Those are the interactions that keep me coming back, and they happen every drill. It always touches my heart when I know I make a difference. Whenever we are out and about, we try to foster meaningful communication with those we meet. We seek to develop relationships by engaging Airmen in conversation.

I have found the greatest leverage is encouragement, not a false bravado, but finding something that a person does well and sharing my observations. I do this on the flightline as I watch the Airmen work, in the toolroom as they distribute supplies, or when I’m making meal runs for those who are hungry.

While they were deployed, some of our younger Airmen had a more difficult time departing from their norm. Many were homesick and missed loved ones. Others had trouble getting used to the food, the heat, and the language differences. Those small stresses can become compounded, so I was glad to be there to support them, offer an encouraging word, and help them work through those challenges.

While counseling Airmen, I always keep in mind that not everyone holds to the same faith tenants. The Chapel Team supports our Airmen from all belief systems. Keeping this in mind, I always try to help others find the greater meaning in life and the greater meaning in what they are experiencing. In the most challenging times of crisis, having a safe person who listens and helps you look for answers can mean the difference between life and death. Helping the Airmen of the 144th find spiritual wholeness and resiliency through the challenges of life is my greatest passion.

A few years after 9/11, many of my children’s friends joined the military upon graduating from high school. One young man from Sanger, after serving in Afghanistan, came home and committed suicide. I knew him, although not well; Still, the senseless act touched me deeply.

At that point, I wanted to do something because I knew I could help. So after a 21-year break in service, I raised my right hand and took the oath to serve and protect again. I donned the Air Force uniform once again so that I could serve. And, now, I serve to support our Airmen.
Walk-ins available Sun. 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

To schedule ID card appointments visit RAPIDS at: https://rapids.UTA

Saturday: 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Please let your family and friends know that the 144th Airman and Family Readiness Office is here for them upon your absence! If there is anything they need or have questions about, please refer them to the Family Readiness Office.

Family Readiness Office contact info:

DSN 665-0102
Toll Free 1-800-525-0102

Jacqueline Trafton, 144FW Airman, Miss Clovis

Miss Clovis, Jacqueline Trafton, who is also an Airman at the 144th Fighter Wing, visits veterans during the welcome home event hosted by Central Valley Honor Flight at Fresno Yosemite International Airport, May 5, 2019.

Airman Trafton is currently a member of student flight and is awaiting a date to complete U.S. Air Force Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base, followed by technical school.

Honor Flight is a non-profit organization that raises funds to honor veterans. They organize regular trips to take veterans during the welcome home event hosted by Central Valley Honor Flight at Fresno Yosemite International Airport. The defenders will know that these vehicles belong to TDY/Deployed members and will not have to try and locate the member in any adjacent buildings.

Post- 9/11 GI Bill Deadline

The July 12, 2019 deadline is rapidly approaching. After that date, Air National Guard members with over 16 years of service will not be able transfer Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to their dependents.

The process of transferring benefits in MilConnect must be started as soon as possible. Complete and return the statement of understanding to the Retention Office.

Master Sgt. Michael Wilson, Retention Office manager, will be traveling to the National Guard Bureau office in June to process transfer requests for 144th FW members, and he needs to make sure their requests have been submitted before he leaves.

Everyone, who has applied to transfer their benefits, needs to contact Master Sgt. Wilson directly to confirm its complete. Several members have applied for a transfer, but have not completed the process. Please contact Master Sgt. Wilson at 559-454-5283.

144th FW Voters

Now is a great time to get ready for the 2020 election! Even if you are already registered to vote in your registered state, you should B Quit out and start a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA).

The AFPC/TFSC is the primary source of voting information and assistance for 144 FW members.

TFSC contact info:

DSN 665-0102

Converse: 210-565-0102 or Toll Free 1-800-525-0102.

Most States require completion of a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to start the absentee voting process. The FPCA acts as both a registration and absentee ballot request form. The Federal Voting Assistance Program encourages military voters to submit a new FPCA every year. For Active Duty service members and those in the Reserves and National Guard, the FPCA must be completed every year, regardless of whether a member is deployed, on TDY, or Technical Training.

FPCA submits. If you'd like more information on the Federal Voting Assistance Program or need help with the absentee voting process please contact:

TFSC

DSN 665-0102

Converse: 210-565-0102 or Toll Free 1-800-525-0102.

www.144fw.ang
Legal

Legal assistance is available on UTA weekends at the following times:
- Walk-ins available Sun. 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- Article 137 held in the Chapel at Sat. 3 p.m.
- Deploying before next UTA? - Come in anytime
- For Power of Attorney see Master Sgt. Garcia, Mon. to Fri. 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Call 454-5153 ahead of time to ensure someone is available Visit our website for your “Ticket Number” to bring with you at: https://aflegalassistance.law.af.mil/lass/lass.html

Customer Service

DEERS/ ID Cards
- Mon. to Fri. 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Walk in Hours
- Mon. to Fri. 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Appointments Only
- UTA Saturday: 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- UTA Sunday: 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Note: ID card actions over UTA weekends are limited to wing members only. The Friday before every UTA we offer walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for wing members and their dependents.

Airman and Family Readiness

- Please let your family and friends know that the 144th Airman and Family Readiness Office is here for them upon your absence! If there is anything they need or have questions about, please refer them to our office.
- Ms. Dorene Vierra, 144th Fighter Wing Airman and Family Readiness Program manager: Work: (559) 454-5383 Cell: (559) 530-7807. Please call me any time!
- Command Post’s 24/7 number: (559) 454-5155. They are an important contact to relay information to commanders, chaplains or anyone else at the Wing.

Medical Group

UTA Weekends Hours
- Saturday: 6 a.m. to 6:45 a.m. for physical training exemptions
- Sunday: 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. for due or overdue PHA items

Customer Service Hours:
- Mon., Tue., Thu. Fri. 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Provider Schedule and Audiograms:
- Thu. 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- Thu. 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- By appointment only
- MGD Appointment Line: (559) 454-5247
- Closed every Wed.

Public Affairs Shared Image Drive

- Images taken by Public Affairs are now available on base through a shared drive. Any one interested in these images can map your base computer to \144fw-fs-v7\publicmedia.

Airman and Family Readiness

Saturday, June 1, 2019

Bake Sale
- 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the base pavilion
- Hosted by the 144th FW Volunteers Group

Senior NCO Induction Ceremony
- 3 p.m. at the Base Dining Facility

Other Announcements

Post-9/11 GI Bill Deadline Approaching
- Contact Master Sgt. Michael Wilson, Retention Office manager, to confirm that transfers have been completed

Scheduled Munitions Inventory
- IAW AFMAN 21-201 A3.2.1.7. The Munitions Flight will be conducting its monthly 10% stockpile inventory from June 1 to June 7, 2019

UTA Menu

Dining Facility open 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Meals are $5.60 for AGR, officers, and members on orders.

Saturday

Main: Roast of pork loin, savory baked chicken, roasted red skin potato, rice pilaf, bacon wrapped asparagus, carrots, buttered dinner rolls
Short Line: Hamburger, grilled chicken sandwich, mini pizza, burritos, onion rings, french fries, chocolate chip cookies, apple pie, cantaloupe

Sunday

Main: Meat loaf, grilled chicken, mashed potatoes, white rice, corn on the cob, broccoli, buttered dinner rolls, brown gravy
Short Line: Hamburger, grilled chicken sandwich, mini pizza, burritos, onion rings, french fries, chocolate chip cookies, cherry pie, watermelon, grapes, salad
Mission Statement

Federal Mission - The 144th Fighter Wing is to provide Air Superiority in support of worldwide joint operations as well as Air Defense of the United States. Additionally, the Wing provides agile combat support, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to combatant commanders around the globe. The Wing also provides a variety of homeland defense capabilities to U.S. NORTHCOM.

State Mission - The 144th Fighter Wing provides a variety of Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) capabilities to the Governor of California. Primary contributions include Ready manpower, reconnaissance assets, response to chemical, biological and radiological attacks, security, medical, civil engineering and command and control.

Wing Priorities

1. BE READY TO DEPLOY AT A MOMENT’S NOTICE.
All 144th Fighter Wing Airmen will be combat ready whenever the Combatant Commander calls or a deployment tasking is assigned.

2. BE READY TO PERFORM OUR STATE MISSION.
All Airmen must be ready when the Governor calls and needs the support of the 144th Fighter Wing.

3. CONTINUE ALERT OPERATIONS.
We have a 24/7/365 alert mission -- we must flawlessly continue to execute that mission.

Commanders’ Priorities

1. People
2. Mission
3. Mentorship
4. Internal controls

CONGRATULATIONS!!
Congratulations to Col. Jeremiah Cruz, 144th Fighter Wing commander, for being selected as a recipient of the 2019 League of United Latin American Citizens, Excellence in Service Award!