

## Texas Wing Commanders' Change Of Command Ceremony

21 September 2003

Major General Ragsdale, Brigadier General Wheless, Colonel Bess, Colonel Parker, Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen. First and foremost, I would like to say "thank you" to Colonel Todd, it is truly an honor for giving me an opportunity of a lifetime.

It is an honor, to have the opportunity to lead each of you, the great volunteers (Seniors and Cadets) of Texas Wing. Each of you brings special talents to our great organization, and more importantly you come together as a team to make things happen. In the past couple of years we have been challenged and have come through each and every time.

To help illustrate this, let me take a moment to name just a few of our outstanding accomplishments.

- Since January, our membership has increased to over 3,200 members.
- We have averaged 6 – 10 missions per month and flown over 5,000 flying hours this year, to include locating one of our own – Lieutenant Colonel Bishop.
- During the recent National Board, Texas Wing received the unit citation for our efforts provided in the shuttle mission. In addition, our aerospace education program was recognized as the 3rd best wing in the nation.
- The Cadet Program is strong, a winter and summer encampment was held with over 410 cadets participating of which 250 cadets attended for the first time. We had over 50 cadets attend a national level activity, 11 cadets participated in the International Air Cadet Exchange, 2 earned the Spaatz award and 3 cadets entered into the Air Force Academy.
- The list goes on.

Our program is getting stronger everyday, especially with help of National Headquarters. They continue to provide us strong support.

In the past year our aircraft continue to improve, several received new paint jobs and new interiors. We have received one glider and thanks to Colonel Todd another glider is inbound.

We have received a new 16-passenger van, 25 laptop computers with printers, Internet access to all of our units, over 150 VHF/FM radios and one repeater. The radios alone have a value of over \$260,000.

General Wheless, please accept our sincere appreciation for the outstanding service National Headquarters provides, thank you.

With all these great accomplishments, there is always room for improvement. Thanks to CAP-USAF Southwest Region's Liaison Staff, led by Lieutenant Colonel Fentress, they provided our wing with two in-depth staff assistant visits and conducted an evaluation on our emergency services and counter drug operations. During these visits, they helped identify our weak areas and I would like to report we're making significant improvements. Lieutenant Colonel Macklin, please pass our appreciation to Lieutenant Colonel Fentress and the entire staff for their hard work and assistance in making our wing stronger.

As we have looked in our past, what can we expect to see in the near future? The wing staff will continue to look for ways to better support each of our 11 groups and 57 squadrons in each of the three missions; emergency services, cadet program and aerospace education. In the next 30 days, we will be outlining our wings objectives and goals for the future. Some of these will include establishing closer relationship with our Texas State Guard, Texas State Department Emergency Management (which was recently demonstrated during hurricane Claudette) and state government.

We will continue to prepare for National Headquarters Compliance Inspection visit for next February and our next Air Force Search and Rescue/Evaluation. In addition, we're looking forward to seeing the completion of our new headquarters building.

With all this in mind, we must ensure we take steps to protect our resources, you and our members, through a strong safety program.

As I come to a close, I would like to recognize a special person in my life. We first met as Cadets and we continue to grow together. There is no doubt I would not be a Chief Master Sergeant in the Greatest Air Force or become your wing commander without the strong support my wife has given me, thank you Carol.

I'm proud to serve with each of you. I'm looking forward to meeting with the wing staff tomorrow morning, and especially with the Cadet Advisory Council and our Group Commanders.

Thank you and God bless our country, Civil Air Patrol and each one of you.

Robert F. "Frank" Eldridge  
Colonel, CAP  
Commander