

HERITAGE TODAY



Squadron:

The Heartbeat of the Air Force

This is the most powerful air force in the history of the world. We fly planes faster than the speed of sound...and conduct operations in places that don't exist on any map. We put satellites 22,000 miles into orbit and bombs on target anywhere, any time our country calls us to do so. And at the heart of it all is the squadron. When you look in the mirror as a squadron commander, you see someone that's dedicated their life to the defense of this country. What others see is leadership worthy of their trust. General LeMay once said, "Leaders are not born. They are educated, trained and made." Boy, was he right. That's because we become leaders over time—learning each day from our successes as well as our failures. And yeah, there have been failures. Without them, we wouldn't learn the meaning of humility. We wouldn't learn how to lead ourselves, much less others. Oh sure, you can bark out orders to do this or that, but to lead, to truly lead, now that requires someone willing to follow you up that hill. And that's an honor we must earn. We have to understand how every decision we make impacts someone else's life—and the lives of everyone who depends on them. We earn it by leaning on those around us because, believe it, they've seen things you haven't and know things you don't. We have to know when to stand our ground and when to let our guard down. We must be transparent, deliberate and always able to adapt as circumstances change—because they will. It's our job to know the mission like the back of our hand and to develop the men and women responsible for executing it. You may have 40 Airmen under your command. Maybe a hundred...or a thousand—they are all looking to you for their "why." For their purpose. It's on us to help them find it in themselves, to inspire them during those times when their job feels like just a job. Our day doesn't begin at reveille, and it definitely doesn't end at

retreat. It can be lonely, filled with hard decisions and moments when it's better to shut up and listen than to be heard. We will be under incredible pressure, but we'll never show it. We can't. Instead we'll handle it just like all those who came before us. You see, these shoulders of ours must be broad enough to carry the burden of the entire squadron if we have to. And we have to. Because that A1C, that sergeant, that civilian in your squadron is a family member. And we'll do anything for our family. Aim high, Airman.