

# Red Eagles Spring Newsletter

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Issue 5

## Fellow Red Eagles: Commanders Call

*This quarters article was written by George Gennin, Colonel, USAF (Retired) "G2" the fifth commander, 4477th TEF/TES.*



The positive impact the 4477<sup>th</sup> Test and Evaluation Squadron (TES) had on Navy, USMC, and USAF aircrew readiness has been verified in several conflicts in recent years. Without question, the mission of the Red Eagles was successfully executed over the years the 4477TES was operational, and the effectiveness of the training provided to those aircrews fortunate enough to be selected for exposures is underscored by the improved enemy kill ratio enjoyed by our Services in recent wars. As an extension of the USAF Aggressors, the Red Eagles provided selected aircrews the next level of training – exposure to the real “McCoy.”

The activation of the Red Eagles

and eventual transformation to an organization that could generate sufficient sorties to expose more of the Services combat aircrews was a monumental task. The security aspects of the program was always an issue that often controlled the schedule and availability of sorties – and this was an issue dealt with by all the Commanders throughout the life of the Red Eagles. Another monumental factor – one that had the largest impact on sortie generation – was the ability to obtain an adequate supply of parts needed to keep the MiGs in an operational status and safe to fly.

The Commanders who preceded me in the 4477TES all had different tasks and different challenges. From the very first day, they were faced with generating sorties with a limited number of MiG-17 and MiG-21 aircraft, a very limited and “ad-hoc” supply inventory/system, and only a hand-full of qualified MiG pilots who barely remained fully qualified due to limited sorties. Further, some were involved with building facilities at Tonopah to ensure future operations could be conducted safely and securely and to accommodate force modernization plans – for instance, the addition of the MiG-23. All the Red Eagle Commanders who preceded me – and all their personnel – accomplished a tremendous feat in establishing an organization that survived the early years and set the framework for future operations. However, it



### Editor's Column:

Spring is here and time to get moving on the chores around the house.

- Time to drag out the mower and do a little preventive maintenance. Change the oil, clean the air filter and remove the sparkplug wire before you remove that blade to sharpen it.
- Check the sprinkler system out and set the timer. This is a good time to check the garden hoses for new washers and leaks.
- Spring cleaning can also include; replacing the screens, cleaning the widows and painting inside and out. We're not getting any younger so be careful with the ladder.
- You can submit your stories or roster updates by emailing them to: [bgalloway5@elpasotel.net](mailto:bgalloway5@elpasotel.net) or [bobbro@bresnan.net](mailto:bobbro@bresnan.net) or mail to:  
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was time for change, a transformation to the “real” Air Force – the USAF leadership was losing faith in the ability of the Red Eagles to accomplish their mission effectively, efficiently – and most importantly, safely.

My time as Commander of the 4477TES can be defined as the “Transformation” era. I was directed from day one to transform the 4477TES into a professional organization that fit the mold of other Tactical Air Command (TAC) fighter squadrons. While I received a lot of direction and guidance from the TAC senior leadership (including General Creech), the Tactical Air Warfare Center (TFWC) Commander (General Gregory), and the 57<sup>th</sup> Wing Commander (General Kerby) – I also received a lot of support from these same gentleman. More importantly, while I was given the responsibility for the transformation, I was also provided the authority to make changes happen.

Changes were implemented on all fronts: personnel (standards, uniforms, code of conduct, professionalism, reinstatement of the military chain of command); operations (standardized and documented training, customary scheduling practices, establishment and compliance with rules of engagement, adherence to regulations, and multiple currency; logistics (establishment of reliable supply/parts sources, audit of existing parts and establishment of a computerized inventory system, and establishment of a parts inventory level based on projected utilization); maintenance (establishment of documented/written standardized maintenance processes and procedures that did not rely on the memory of any one individual, a phased maintenance approach that assured aircraft were operationally ready in sufficient numbers to support the flying schedule, accountability within the maintenance organization, introduction of fresh maintenance personnel assuring things were not done just because “that’s the way they were always done”, professional work ethics based on standards, and reinstatement of the military chain of command); and, last but not least, modernization/upgrades to the facilities, infrastructure, and aircraft fleet. Many of the folks assigned to the squadron at that time had been around for some time, especially the maintenance folks. As expected, the magnitude of changes were not readily accepted by all – and some even openly opposed any changes. However, the train



had departed the station on a determined schedule and agenda – folks either got on the train or were left behind.

The pilots assigned to the squadron were many of the best available from all the Services. However, the “fraternity approach” to the selection process did not necessarily ensure the best-of-the-best were recruited and hired. During my tenure, I opened the process beyond the Nellis-based Aggressors to include Fighter Weapons School graduates/instructors and Aggressors from across the combat air forces. The Navy and USMC selection process continued to ensure assignment of their brightest and best. While I was fortunate to have the best fighter pilots and instructors, the approach to flying operations was dismal. To rectify my concerns in this area, I selected Major Monroe Whatley to be the Operations Officer and assigned him the responsibility to standardize flying operations and to institute TAC policies, procedures, and standards. Further, I directed Monroe to

fully use the assigned Navy and USMC pilots and integrate them into all Red Eagle operations – unlike previously when they were assigned to a “Navy Flight” and not integrated into the organization. Monroe not only accepted the challenge, but also excelled in all areas,

and by the end of his tour was providing the forces more exposure to the MiGs than anytime in previous history. Additionally, he was accomplishing his mission more professionally and in a safer manner.

Obtaining adequate parts to keep the MiGs operational was always a concern. Although the maintenance organization was accomplishing a great job with what they had, if parts were not available to fix a problem, the aircraft could not fly. Cannibalization was a routine practiced on a daily basis, causing maintenance more work than necessary. Due to the limited number of MiGs and flying schedule requirements, aircraft were often put on the flying schedule rather than scheduling them for programmed maintenance. This became a double-edged sword – while initially the flying schedule was being met, the maintenance problems eventually mounted causing grounding of many of the aircraft at the same time. As a result of not having a preventative maintenance program, some severe problems surfaced, such as MiG-21 fuel bladder leaks, MiG-21 and MiG-23 ejection seats, MiG-23 engine/turbine reliability.

The maintenance organization was the critical element that had to be transformed if the Red Eagles were to meet ever-increasing sortie/exposure requirements. This necessitated changes throughout every facet of the organization – which was met with resistance by the “Old Guard.” My approach to transforming maintenance had a simple solution – I hired Major George Tittle to be the Red Eagle Chief of Maintenance, assigned him the responsibility for the transformation, and gave him the authority to make the Red Eagle maintenance organization the star of TAC and to prepare for growth and expanded sortie generation capability. George took the charge, made the tough decisions, and implemented changes that made the Red Eagles one of the finest maintenance organizations in the USAF. It became professional, had standardized, documented programmed and routine maintenance procedures – and eventually was producing more sorties than ever before in the history of the organization.

Once the groundwork for the transformation was laid and the support of the senior leadership regained, work was initiated to expand the squadron to meet and sustain anticipated future sortie requirements to support the growing exposure requests from the USAF, Navy, and USMC. With untiring support from (then) Major Dave “Marshall” McCloud (the Pentagon Manager for classified programs), we were able to obtain support and the funding needed to implement the planned expansion. This included significant funds to refurbish the Mig-23 engines and get them back in operational status, establishment of secure logistics supply channels needed to support both the Mig-21 and the MiG-23; acquisition of additional aircraft for the squadron inventory; and military construction funds for a intelligence facility/SCIF; a modern command and control (GCI) facility, and additional hangers to support the added aircraft.

Significant changes and improvements had been accomplished by the end of my tour as Commander. The Red Eagles had been transformed into a professional USAF unit that was producing more sorties for the Warfighters than in the history of the Red Eagles. The combat aircrews were exposed to the professional and capable Red Eagle pilots flying these magnificent MiG aircraft, but behind the scenes never to be seen by the

forces were the hard working support personnel that generated the aircraft that flew the sorties. The maintenance organization, led by a hard-charging George Tittle, was transformed into the best maintenance professionals in the USAF. They produced sortie rates equivalent to frontline TAC fighters – but they accomplished their job within a totally unique and limited maintenance capability. They were not afforded the flexibility of calling a sister unit to obtain parts when needed and could not obtain technical expertise from other TAC units. They were a self-sufficient, self-sustaining professional group that accomplished their job in a professional manner.

While significant improvements occurred during my tenure as Commander, and I feel that the Red Eagles were a better organization upon my departure, I was not the reason for these exemplary changes. The folks discussed above, and many others too numerous to name, understood the importance of the Red Eagles to the tactical community, shared the transformation vision, and worked hard and endlessly to make the Red Eagles survivable within the framework of the USAF. Without the support of all these individuals, the Red Eagles could have been deactivated years sooner – but because of their untiring efforts, the tactical fighter pilot community of all the Services benefited as proven in recent conflicts. I am pleased to have been a member of the Red Eagles and proud to have served with some of the best from the USAF, Navy, and USMC. I salute all Red Eagles.



*George “G2” retired from the USAF in 1990 as a Colonel and is currently President and CEO of SDS International, a defense services firm he founded in 1991. G2 and his wife, Laureen, live in Madison, Virginia in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains approximately 30 miles northwest of Charlottesville, where they have a ranch and raise registered Texas Longhorn cattle.*

## History Revisited

I've been busy doing retired man stuff. About eight months ago, my scanner crapped out and I went to Best Buy to find another one. I found a cheap one for around \$69 but Melody, bless her heart, insisted I get the more expensive Canon for around \$179. I'm really glad she had her way. This last week I went through all the photo albums and located all the negatives I could find. This is the first time I used the scan negatives and slides function on the scanner and it worked great. Comparing the film scans to the photo albums, I realized I didn't have all the negatives so then I started scanning photos from the photo albums.

During the week I spent at least some 30 hours just scanning photos of all the places we've been, baby pictures, just everything we have. I also found six boxes of 35mm slides from Okinawa and Viet Nam that I was able to scan and save on my computer. Using the software that came with the scanner, I was able to set it to make automatic adjustments for the best picture quality. It was a walk down memory lane.

I was thinking to myself that "I remember that" and "I had forgotten all about that". Looking at the photos of my wife and I when we were younger, well, it was like falling in love with her all over again. I know that sounds mushy but it was a wonderful experience for me. I copied all of the photos on to DVD's so the kids could have a copy. I would strongly suggest to anyone who does not have a scanner to get one and record all their photos for your family history and to pass it on to the kids as well as recovering some great memories.

*Ben Galloway*



### A Call To All Thunderbirds That Also Served As Red Eagles

The Red Eagles are the men and women that built, supported, maintained and flew the MiG-17, MiG-21 and MiG-23 at the Tonopah Test Range airfield from July 1979 thru March of 1988.

All Red Eagles were officially assigned to the 4477<sup>th</sup> Test and Evaluation Flight (initially). The 4477<sup>th</sup> was later designated a squadron.

Many of the Red Eagles are also Thunderbirds and the Red Eagles are attempting to reach all former members of the 4477<sup>th</sup>.

Therefore, if you were a Red Eagle and ARE NOT RECEIVING the Red Eagle newsletters, please contact either Ben Galloway at [bgalloway5@elpasotel.net](mailto:bgalloway5@elpasotel.net) or Bob Breault at [bobbro@bresnan.net](mailto:bobbro@bresnan.net) and we will get you added to our roster.

If you don't have access to email call me at 702 652-8614. If I don't answer, leave me a message.

We want to hear from you!

Thanks very much,

Gail Peck  
Bandit 9  
Former Commander  
4477<sup>th</sup> TEF





## Joint Meritorious Unit Award

This was brought to my attention by my good friend and coconspirator, Bob (Bro) Breault. This is another ribbon that you probably didn't know you were awarded. The 4477th TES was awarded The Joint Meritorious Unit Award twice for the following time periods:

1 Feb 79- 1Feb 84

2 Feb 84-1 Feb 87 (2nd Award)

The web site is:

<http://www.whs.mil/HRD/Civilian/CareerDevelopment/DODSponsoredPrograms/Acquisition/Jmua.cfm>

The Joint Meritorious Unit Award - This Ribbon is the only ribbon award granted by the Department of Defense and is the organizational equivalent of the Defense Superior Service Medal. It is awarded to joint units or activities where the joint activity must either report through Unified, Combined, or Specified Command channels or pursue a joint mission under the cognizance of the Secretary of Defense; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the commander of a Unified, Specified or Combined Command that is also a joint command; or the Secretary of a military department that has been designated the Executive Agent for the Secretary of Defense. The Joint Meritorious Unit Award - This Ribbon was established on June 4, 1981 by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and was implemented by Department of Defense Directive 1348.27 dated July 22, 1982. The Joint Meritorious Unit Award - This Ribbon was made retroactive to January 23, 1979. The first organization to receive the Joint Meritorious Unit Award - This Ribbon was the "Electronic Warfare During Close Air Support Joint Test Force" and was awarded the decoration on September 30, 1982.

Authorized by the Secretary of Defense on June 10, 1981, this award was originally called the Department of Defense Meritorious Unit Award. It is awarded in the name of the Secretary of Defense to joint activities for meritorious achievement or



service, superior to that which is normally expected, for actions in the following situations; combat with an armed enemy of the United States, a declared national emergency or under extraordinary circumstances that involve national interests.

This award ribbon is identical to the Department of Defense Superior Service Medal ribbon, indicative of the fact that the service performed would have been similar to warrant the award of this medal to an individual. It has a center stripe of red, flanked on either side by equal stripes of white, light blue and gold, with a narrow stripe of light blue at the edge. The ribbon is within a gold colored 1/16 inch wide metal frame with laurel leaves. Similar to other Army and Air Force unit awards, it is worn in the same manner. Additional awards are indicated by an oak-leaf cluster worn on the ribbon.

As Augustus McCray said to Newt in the epic western Lonesome Dove, "there's the information. What you can do with it, I don't know. But, there it is".

*Ben Galloway*

*Bob Breault, Asst. Editor and Contributor*

## In Memoriam

In the last several months we have lost two of our fellow Red Eagles. Our thoughts are with them, their families and loved ones. They are:

Stan Cibel, Crash Recovery, December 2009

Terry Davis, Supply, January 2010

