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Air Force courtesy photo

The 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron is working with NOAA and Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California to conduct operational and research weather reconnaissance into Atmospheric Rivers on the U.S. West Coast. The first mission was Feb. 1.

By Jessica L. Kendziorek
403rd Wing Public Affairs

In November 2018, California experienced one of its most destructive fires with more than 150,000 acres burned, more than 18,000 homes destroyed, more than 80 deaths, and with the winter rainfall season ahead, heavy rain can bring flooding and mudslides.

This rainfall season puts the Air Force Reserve's 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron in an on-call status to fly Atmospheric Rivers beginning February through the middle of March.

The squadron, also known as the Hurricane Hunters, conducted their first Atmospheric River mission this year Feb. 1 flying two WC-130J aircraft out of Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, California. The Hurricane Hunters are working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California to conduct operational and research weather reconnaissance drops into these weather events.

"Atmospheric Rivers are just what they sound like, a river of moisture in the atmosphere," said Maj. Jeremy Dehart, 53rd WRS aerial reconnaissance weather officer. "During these events mois-

ture can be transported from the tropical areas and they normally occur during the winter time frame."

These rivers of moisture are important for flooding and water sheds along the west coast, and these events can provide the areas of California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska about half of their annual water supply, in just a few months.

This phenomenon is not as well understood as other weather events, so doing reconnaissance research missions are critical for analysis and to help create better forecast models. This is the third year the 53rd WRS has participated in this mission.

"The data gathered during these research flights is sent directly via data assimilation to global numerical weather prediction models, and indirectly for forecast improvement," said Maj. Ryan Rickert, 53rd WRS aerial reconnaissance weather officer, who served as the mission director. "This will give a better understanding of the physical processes at work in these storms, which can lead to better representation of these processes in models, and thus better forecasts at all relevant space and time scales."

"While we release numerous dropsondes in tropical systems, the Atmospheric Rivers missions are dropsonde intensive, with the loadmasters dropping more than 30 dropsondes per mission," said Dehart. To read more, [click here](#).

Attitude of gratitude key to resiliency

By Senior Airman

Kristen Pittman

403rd Wing Public Affairs

It is Friday, March 21, 1997, in Yucaipa, California. The final spring break of high school has commenced. What better way to celebrate than with the clamor of conversation and laughter among good friends.

The boyish compulsion to impress girls at any cost and the youthful mindset of invincibility included riding in the back of a truck on a seemingly innocuous afternoon drive to pick up a friend.

For Kevin Waterhouse, then 17 years old, spring break came to an abrupt end when he was riding in the bed of the truck and the driver lost control on a curve, crashing into a home at 80 miles per hour.

The impact of his body against the cab of the truck resulted in, among a gruesome laundry list of injuries, his spinal cord being severed in three separate places leaving him paralyzed from the chest down.

Spring break was not the only thing that ended for Waterhouse that day. His cross-country pursuits. His dream of attending the Air Force Academy or enlisting to serve in the Coast Guard. His ability to walk. All dashed in an instant.

"I never once considered that I might not have the use of my legs someday," said Waterhouse. "It never crossed my mind as a possibility, so all of my planning was military. Air Force, Coast Guard, police, maybe and all of a sudden I can't do my plan, my backup plan or the backup plan to my backup plan. I had to refigure out what I wanted to do with my life."

Almost 22 years, two degrees, countless people young and old being influenced by his story, and one book later, Kevin now serves as the wing commander's 403rd Flyer



Photo by Staff Sgt. Shelton Sherrill

Kevin Waterhouse, along with his service dog Jade, serves as the wing commander's secretary for the 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. He was in an accident at age 17 that left him paralyzed from the chest down.

secretary for the 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

After such an accident, especially at such a young age, one would expect a grieving period or maybe a period of depression to have occurred, but Waterhouse said he never went through a "why me?" phase. He credits the support from those around him as his initial catalyst towards resiliency and being able to rise to the new, unexpected challenges he was faced with.

Despite the physical setback, Waterhouse said being in a wheelchair has taught him a lot and given him valuable insight on the subject of resiliency and has allowed him to teach and help others.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, resiliency is defined as the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress or an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

Those black and white explanations suffice for non-human elements such as a business model or a memory foam mat-

tress, but human challenges are so unique to each individual facing them that resiliency cannot be defined or explained in so few lines.

For Waterhouse, there is a lot of learning and adaptation involved in order to be resilient.

"Resiliency," he said, "is having faith that no matter what happens you are going to have the strength to get through it or that you already have the strength to get through it. You just have to learn how to tap into it."

He also said an important factor of resiliency is gratitude. Focusing on and being grateful for what he has rather than lamenting over what he has lost allows for Waterhouse to maintain a positive outlook and attitude which provides him with the ability to move forward.

After his accident, in his quest to figure out what to do with his life, Waterhouse said he traveled the country for 15 years. He worked at camps, volunteered at places like the YMCA and visited newly disabled people in hospitals with his service dog, Jade, to lift others up.

"Extend the hand of service," Waterhouse said as advice to those facing a challenge. "There

is nothing like losing yourself in service to help you be grateful for what you have."

Just like any other person's path in life, except for the part where he was in a wheelchair, Waterhouse did from time to time face adversity in the form of people underestimating his capabilities.

Shortly after the accident, he revisited his life-long aspirations to serve his country by talking with an Air Force recruiter post-accident thinking surely there was still some way he could serve his country. The recruiter explained to him that due to his physical disabilities, the best way he could serve the military was to go home and pay his taxes.

Waterhouse, not allowing anyone to dictate his capabilities took the advice with a grain of salt and continued to push himself, despite setbacks like losing his leg and all of his toes to infection. He pursued higher education at Ottawa University in Ottawa, Kansas where he graduated first with a Bachelor's degree in business administration and later with a Master's in the same subject area.

After finishing his education, his life-long desire to somehow serve his country just like his Army Ranger father and his government-employed mother remained. He took matters into his own hands and said he filled out over 180 job applications for federal employment. Evidently those efforts paid off and landed him with the Air Force Reserve as a civil servant in December 2017.

Col. Jennie R. Johnson, 403rd Wing commander, hired Waterhouse.

"The leadership team here has been very supportive," said Waterhouse. "They gave me my shot and gave me the chance to get in."

To read more, [click here](#).



403RD HEADLINES

FLIGHT PREPARES NEW RECRUITS

Attending basic military training can be an intense experience, pushing a person's mental, physical and spiritual limits. Knowing what to expect can help future Airmen cope with those challenges.

Master Sgt. Chasity Roush, 403rd-Wing Development and Training Flight Chief, helps newly recruited Air Force Reserve enlistees prepare for life at BMT. Unique to the Reserve world, this program is specifically designed to prepare new recruits for the rigors of basic training as well as ensure that they remain within military standards during their time in the delayed enlistment program.

"I like to call it a BMT prep course. We try to prepare our newly gained trainees that are going to basic training," said Roush. "The intention of the program is to help with retention at BMT and technical school and it will present better Airmen coming back. If you go better prepared, you can obtain more information while you're there, versus just trying to survive."



DEJA ASSUMES COMMAND OF AES

Lt. Col. Deborah S. Deja assumed command of the 36th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron during a ceremony held at the Keesler Medical Center Jan. 13.

The 36th AES specializes in moving critically ill or injured troops after they have been stabilized or received damage-control surgery using specialized medical teams who provide medical care during air transport. In 1994 Deja graduated from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Hawaii earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, then commissioned into the Air Force in 1996. She deployed in support of operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, Freedom's Sentinel and Inherent Resolve.



NEW SYSTEM ASSISTS EVAL BACKLOG

Headquarters Air Reserve Personnel Center, Buckley Air Force Base, Colo., has implemented an innovative new system to reduce the processing time for officer and enlisted performance reports. Since coming on-line in the fall of 2018, this automated system, created by developers from the Future Operations and Integration Directorate at HQ ARPC, has processed nearly 20,000 officer and enlisted performance reports.

"This new application is being used to combat the evaluations backlog and allows technicians to focus on evaluations that require more oversight instead of reviewing each OPR or EPR submitted to ARPC," said David Kent, the IT specialist and programmer who spearheaded this initiative.

Until recently, the tens of thousands of performance reports received by HQ ARPC each year required individual evaluations technicians to cross-reference multiple data points using several different programs. This labor intensive process, as well as a new enlisted evaluation system directing an additional 90,000 evaluations to be processed by HQ ARPC annually with no additional manpower or automation to handle the workload, resulted in delayed processing time and an inventory reaching more than 50,000. [Click here to learn more.](#)



Air Force News



Vice Chief's Challenge seeks innovative ideas

WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- The Air Force is continuing to look to its Airmen to create innovative solutions to the service's trickiest challenges, this time specifically seeking their help to improve multi-domain operations.

At the Air Force Association convention late last year, Air Force senior leaders announced the creation of the Vice Chief's Challenge, a Total Force-wide competition created to solicit innovative ideas to solve Air Force-level problems.

Unlike other Air Force innovation programs, in which Airmen are asked to share their ideas to fix problems in any aspect of the Air Force, the VCC series will identify a specific topic area that is a priority for the service. The inaugural VCC is focused on MDO and challenges participants to develop innovations that will allow warfighters to see their operating environment more clearly. To read more, [click here](#).

Air Force updates enlisted evaluation policies

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) -- The Air Force recently updated evaluation policies for enlisted Airmen, refining the process and requirements for enlisted performance reports.

The revised policies are in response to feedback from the field and are geared towards increasing flexibility for commanders and empowering performance within the enlisted corps. The updated policies will impact almost every active duty enlisted Airman as well as those in the Guard and Reserve.

One of the more significant updates covers a long and widely debated subject. Under the new policy senior noncommissioned officers who complete an associate's degree or "higher level degree from a nationally or regionally accredited academic institution" are eligible for promotion and senior rater stratification or endorsement consideration. [Read more here.](#)

UTA FY19 DATES

Feb. 9-10	March 9-10
April 6-7	No May UTA
June 6-9	July 13-14
Aug. 3-4	Sept. 7-8

WING NEWS ON BASE APP

The 403rd Wing now has its own section in the Keesler Air Force Base app. This section includes Air Force Reserve-specific news and resources, important dates and events, and even the latest edition of the 403rd Flyer accessible on any mobile device. To download the app search “Keesler” in the app store or visit <https://apps.apple.com/keeslerafb2>.



AIRMEN CAN SUBMIT INNOVATIVE IDEAS ONLINE

Airmen who have an innovative idea that could save the Air Force Reserve money can submit those plans online through either the Airmen Powered by Innovation or Replication Proven Innovations programs. To learn more, visit: <http://www.afrc.af.mil/About-Us/Innovation/Submit/>.

JOINT HOMETOWN NEWS

Members can highlight career achievements with their hometown media by submitting a Joint Hometown News Release online [here](#).



403RD FLYER

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COMMANDER'S CALLS SATURDAY

Col. Jennie R. Johnson, 403rd Wing commander, will have two commanders calls Feb. 9 at the Roberts Consolidated Maintenance Facility. The first commander's call is at 7:30 a.m. for the 403rd Mission Support Group, Wing Staff Agencies and Aero-medical Staging Squadron. The second commander's call is at 9 a.m. for the 403rd Operations and Maintenance Groups. For more information, contact the 403rd Wing Public Affairs Office at 228-377-2056.

NCO INDUCTION CEREMONY SUNDAY

The Noncommissioned Officer Induction Ceremony is Feb. 10 at 8:30 a.m. at the Roberts Consolidated Maintenance Facility Auditorium. For more information, call Chief Master Sgt. Michelle Santiago, 403rd Maintenance Squadron, 228-377-3475.

KEESLER, BILOXI AIR, SPACE SHOW

The 2019 Keesler and Biloxi Air and Space Show is May 4-5. The air and space show will feature numerous acts headlined by the Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team. The event will be divided into two portions; the morning portion, taking place on Keesler from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., will feature a number of smaller air acts, ground demonstrations and static displays. The afternoon portion will be taking place along the beach just off U.S. 90 with White Avenue being show center from 1 to 5 p.m.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT CLASSES

The Senior Leaders Course is March 18-19 at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla. This course is for commanders and chiefs and is a two day overview of all things process improvement. The 403rd Wing Green Belt Academics class is April 8-12. Green belt training develops individuals to lead process improvements. It also teaches participants to use tools like Six Sigma, a method to eliminate variation and standardize processes, and lean initiatives, which are designed to eliminate waste or no-value added steps from a process. For more information about these classes and available future classes, contact Chief Master Sgt. Monte Snyder, wing performance process manager, at 228-377-4282 or at monte.snyder.1@us.af.mil.

SHARE YOUR ADVENTURE, GET THE APP

Many Air Force reservists chat about their duty weekends with others, but that talk can be part of the Get 1 Now program to keep the Air Force Reserve strong by reaching new potential recruits. “Get1Now” encourages Reserve Airmen to refer people they think would be a good Airman in the Reserve, in a peer-to-peer referral program. The program also has gift-worthy awards for reservists who refer people who are qualified leads to an Air Force Reserve recruiter. Some of the awards include Bluetooth headsets, fleece jackets, coolers, tumblers, tablet cases, laptop sleeves and more. Download the “Get1Now/Share Your Adventure App” for Apple or Android phones at www.get1now.us to submit leads while on the go. To read more, [click here](#).

RESILIENCY RESOURCES AVAILABLE

There are many resources available for Airmen and their families who may be struggling. These resources include the [Chaplain](#), 228-377-0400 or 228-297-7288; [Director of Psychological Health](#), 228-806-0913; [Airman and Family Readiness](#), 228-376-8728; [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator](#), 228-377-7278; [Violence Prevention Integrator](#), 228-377-2814; [Military Family Life Consultant](#), 228-365-5834 or 228-365-5927; [Civilian Employee Assistance Program](#), 800-222-0364; [Military One Source](#), 800-342-9647, or [Key Spouses](#). The Air Force Reserve Command's Airmen and Family Readiness site includes links to several resources at <https://www.afrc.af.mil/About-Us/Airman-Family/>. The Air Force also has a resilience website at <https://www.resilience.af.mil/>. To view the resilience message by Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee, Air Force Reserve Command commander, visit: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/643271/air-force-reserve-command-resilience-video>.

