

THE Airstream

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910th pays tribute to retiring Commander



34 year career, a long and winding road...

Col. Tim Thomson
Commander

When I walked into the Air Force ROTC office at the University of Arkansas in early 1971 with a low draft lottery number and a desire to finish my college degree before being drafted or serving in the military, I never dreamed that my life would turn out this way. I never thought I would make a life-long career out of the military and certainly never thought I would be a pilot flying a variety of USAF aircraft over the course of a very long flying career. I never dreamed I would command a flying wing or be in charge of a base with a couple of thousand people on it. I never thought all this would happen, and it is still hard to believe that I am in my 34th year to discover that it was all true. I guess I will wake up on 17 July and realize that it really did happen; I really have gone this far and made it down this long and winding road known as an Air Force career.

There are ups and downs that we all have in our Air Force experience. I have had my stumbles and triumphs, just as you all have. For instance, I have had many second thoughts over the past 19 years about separating from active duty with over 15 years of time and only 4.5 years away from an active duty retirement. On the other hand, if I had not joined the Air Force Reserve, my Air Force career would, no doubt, have ended without the opportunity to command a unit or continue my flying career. These are choices we all make in life, sometimes on the spur of the moment or sometimes from a mere intuition that we were meant to have a different experience in our military careers. I felt I was meant to lead and command. I was not offered those types of leadership opportunity while on active duty. I also did not want to stop flying, because I felt like I was simply not ready to give it up and be a staff guy for the rest of my career at age 38. So I chose a different path and became an Air Reserve Technician with no break in service. I considered it the start of a second career; it has been much more than that.

The Air Force Reserve Command has given me opportunities that I did not dream of while on active duty. Subsequently, I have gained in positions of authority and responsibility as an Operations Officer in a C-130 flying squadron, an Operations Group Commander of a 12-aircraft unit, and a Wing

Commander at two C-130 bases. I'm proud of the fact that through all of those assignments, I have somehow been able to maintain Instructor Pilot qualification. It means a lot to me to be able to fly. It gives me a sense of accomplishment and makes my day, every time I get in the seat. More importantly, it gives me credibility with the people I lead, whether they are crew chiefs on the flightline or pilots, navigators and loadmasters in the flying squadrons. It is what our base is all about. No AFSC exists at Youngstown ARS if there is not a flying mission. We must never lose sight of that fact.

I love the C-130. I have flown it to many international destinations in the far corners of our world. It doesn't get there fast. It's not comfortable for long trips. It can't carry much cargo when it must fly 2500 miles. However, there is no other airplane in the world that can land on a semi-prepared 3000 foot strip out in the middle of the jungle in Columbia or Peru. No other large aircraft has its maneuverability and agility. None have the forgiveness of the powerful turbo-props with the ability to give you full power instantly. No large aircraft is safer, given the variety of missions we fly with it. No other aircraft could execute aerial spray at 150 feet with the safety and consistency that we do it here at Youngstown and around the country.

Despite my love of flying, one of the great things about being a Wing Commander has been the association I have had with units who support our great mission here. Our 910th Maintenance Group and the people who fix and maintain our C-130H2 aircraft are the best in the business. All of our mission support units - Services, Aerial Port, Security Forces, Logistics Readiness Squadron, Civil Engineers, Mission Support Flight, Personnel Flight, Mission Support Group staff, Contracting, Civilian Personnel and the EAST Corporation have taught me things I would never have known, had I not been a Wing Commander and had the need to learn about their business. They have shown me that they all play a key role in the running of this base and the deployment of forces to support the warfighters. My own Wing Staff has also taught me that their successful completion of various staff actions serve to maintain the mission focus of our wing by getting our folks paid, improving our safety and risk management, connecting with our civilian community and the media and assisting our commanders with a variety of

legal/personnel management matters. I have not seen a more dedicated group of people in my Air Force career.

What's in your future? Your future is what you make of it yourself, by taking advantage of every opportunity you have here at Youngstown. The most immediate issue at hand is the need for your personal effort in helping the Wing through a successful Operational Readiness Inspection in March-April of 2008. Make that your top priority. Listen to your new Wing Commander, Colonel McGregor, because he knows what must be done to successfully plan and execute this Air Mobility Command ORI. Follow his lead, and you will have good direction and know where you need to go for success. Approach the mission with enthusiasm and positive attitude, and that will get us through the test. As for the long term future of this base and wing, no one, including myself, can predict what it will hold. I can assure you of one thing: Expect change and lots of it. This will not be the same base or wing ten years from now. I predict there will be at least one major change in our mission, such as a change in organization or absorption of an active duty unit for the purpose of building an associate unit with active and reserve components.

Where am I going, what am I doing, how will I get there? These are all questions I asked myself a year ago when I contemplated retirement. They have all been answered now. After over 34 years of commissioned service, I have decided that I just can't give up this Air Force experience. So I am going right back to where I started my career, Columbus AFB, Miss., and I am going to help teach young Air Force pilots how to fly in jet aircraft as a contract simulator instructor. I am as proud and enthusiastic now, 34 years later, as when I entered USAF Pilot Training in October of 1973. I can think of no better way to retire from the Air Force.

"The long and winding road, that leads to your door will never disappear, I've seen that road before. It always leads me here; leads me to your door."

Sung by Paul McCartney of the Beatles on the album, "Let it Be," 1970

910th AW, 934th AW team up as 922nd AEW for ORTP 4



U.S. Air Force illustration/Tech. Sgt. Bob Barko Jr.



U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Bob Barko Jr.

Airmen, assigned to the 922nd Air Expeditionary Wing, conduct a “buddy check” of their Individual Protective Equipment before boarding a bus contaminated during a chemical weapon attack as part of ORTP-4 and the Readiness Safeguard Exercise held at Volk Field, Wis., May 15-20. The 922nd AEW is made up of more than 700 Airmen from the 910th AW and the 934th AW, based in Minneapolis.



U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Master Sgt. Ed Jones

Master Sgt. David Yukon and Senior Airman Maria Naylor, both 910th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighters, attack a fire on the simulated C-130 airframe at Volk Field during ORTP-4.



U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Master Sgt. Ed Jones

A member of the 922nd AEW Security Forces watches a group of protesters from the woodline during ORTP-4 as part of the Readiness Safeguard exercise held at Volk Field.

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On the cover...

A graphic illustration of images commemorating the retirement of 910th Airlift wing commander Col. Tim Thomson. This month's Airstream cover was created by 910th AW PA Assistant Mr. Eric M. White.

The eagle hasn't landed - he's just taking off ...

Col. Tim Thomson looks back at AF past, forward to new adventure

Senior Airman Ann Wilkins Jefferson
910th AW Public Affairs

As a young boy in Forrest City, Ark., Tim Thomson dreamed of being an astronaut. He never imagined that decades later he'd actually pin on the "eagle" insignia of a colonel in the United States Air Force. When the colonel retires from the 910th Airlift Wing in July 2007, he'll end a 34-year military career and personal adventure that could fill volumes.

Hearing all the colonel experienced, in his own words and those of his closest friends and coworkers, Tim Thomson is Superman and every Airman at the same time. He's the ultimate professional in uniform but quite the comedian behind the scenes. He's taken a roller coaster ride that's par for the course as a member of the Armed Services – the highs and lows of great achievements and great sacrifice. He's an officer, a pilot, a boss; he's a friend, a family man, a patriot.

As Col. Thomson begins to tell his story of why he joined the Air Force, he sits back in his office chair in a green flight suit, a beautiful day outside the window behind him. He talks about what great weather it is for a motorcycle ride, one of his favorite pastimes back in his early service days. A frightening incident as a young father had him quit the hobby for years until coming to Ohio in 2004, when he took a safety course and obtained a Harley Sportster license.

But before he rode his first Harley-Davidson "hog," Col. Thomson was a "Hog," aka a Razorback as a student at the University of Arkansas. During his sophomore year of college in 1971, Col. Thomson joined the Air Force ROTC's two-year program, choosing it over the other services simply because it was the branch he spoke of first. In early 1972, his junior year, he entered the Flight Indoctrination Program.

"I stumbled into it – it wasn't something I thought I could qualify for; I was a business major," the colonel said.

In May 1973, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administra-

tion and received his commission as a second lieutenant.

He interrupts his personal history to detail what was happening on the global scene at that time: the Vietnam Conflict, the peace agreements in France and the subsequent winding down of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

"Things were cut way back, including pilot slots. Although graduating as a Distinguished Graduate from ROTC helped," he said.

Even so, after graduating, the young lieutenant had to wait until almost August to go on active duty. In the meantime he worked for his father, Joseph, at Thomson T.V. and Radio in Arkansas. The elder Thomson was a former staff sergeant, a recording specialist and radio repairman for the U.S. Army Signal Corps during World War II and the Nuremberg war crimes trials. He and his wife, Virginia, had two sons, Tim and his brother G. Brian Thomson.

By October 1973, 2nd Lt. Thomson was sent to Columbus Air Force Base (AFB), Miss., for Undergraduate Pilot Training. After one year at UPT, he graduated in the top 10 percent of his class.

"I was selected as a T-37 (a twin-engine jet training aircraft) Instructor Pilot (IP)," the colonel said, but added that he hoped to be assigned to a fighter and yearned for deployments.

During 1975 and 1976, Lt. Thomson stayed at Columbus as an IP with a few short deployments to Strategic Air Command bases. His best friend, Bill Short, introduced him to a co-ed at the Mississippi University for Women. She was a fashion merchandising major named Cheryl Peterson from Biloxi, Miss. They dated for about 10 months and were married in September 1977.

"He's a hoot!" Cheryl recalled about what attracted her to her future husband, "And he's not bad on the eyes."

He also received that deployment he had been eyeing.

"About that same time I got an assignment on the OV-10 (a turboprop-driven light

attack and cargo aircraft) to go to Germany. It still wasn't a fighter, but cool," he said.

Cheryl was able to join her husband at Sembach Air Base, Germany, once he found a place off base. They lived in an apartment in an old house with a Germany landlady, in a town called Winnweiler, 10 minutes north of Sembach.

"It was the Cold War time," Col. Thomson illustrated with another history milestone, "but we had an opportunity to travel, get a taste of other countries."

Jurvis Klovans, a fellow OV-10 pilot and good friend of his over in Germany, said at the end of their tour over there, Thomson put his family before one of his dreams.

"I don't know if a lot of people know this, but [Tim] was offered an opportunity, to have gone for the F-4 (jet fighter), possibly the F-15 (jet fighter) or F-16 (jet fighter). He turned it down because he wanted to fly C-130 cargo aircraft in Mississippi to be closer to family."

"We were ready to come home," Col. Thomson said. "A lot happened. About a year and a half [after living] in Germany, Cheryl got pregnant, so we took a house on base. Our daughter Sarah was born August 20, 1980."

The colonel stops to point to the history pages paralleling his career then: U.S. team beat the Soviet team in Olympic hockey, the space shuttle Columbia was launched, the Iranian hostage situation.

By his request, the then-Capt. Thomson was reassigned to Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., to fly WC-130E/Hs "Hurricane Hunters." During that tour, he flew all over the Pacific, which he said was great because he was able to fly longer distances. One of his more harrowing flights ever involved flying a WC-130 into a nasty super typhoon off the island of Luzon, which shook the aircraft so violently he couldn't read the instruments and felt like he was losing control of the aircraft, he said.

"Luckily, we flew out of this severe turbulence as quickly as we had flown into it. If it would have lasted another minute, I think we could have lost the aircraft and crew."

In 1985, after the captain was promoted to major, he went to the 23rd Air Force as a flight safety officer, working in special operations, at Scott AFB, Bellville, Ill. There daughter Shawn was born July 21, 1986.

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July 2007



Courtesy photo

Foreshadowing? Tim Thomson in a cub scout uniform from Forrest City, Ark., his hometown.



U.S. Air Force photo

Col. Thomson assumed the duties of wing commander of the 910th Airlift Wing here in June 2004. Just prior to that, he was wing commander at the 913th Airlift Wing in Willow Grove, Pa.



Courtesy photo

Col. Thomson, as a second lieutenant, leaning on the fuselage of a T-37 training jet, at his first assignment after undergraduate pilot training, a T-37 Instructor Pilot at Columbus AFB, Miss.



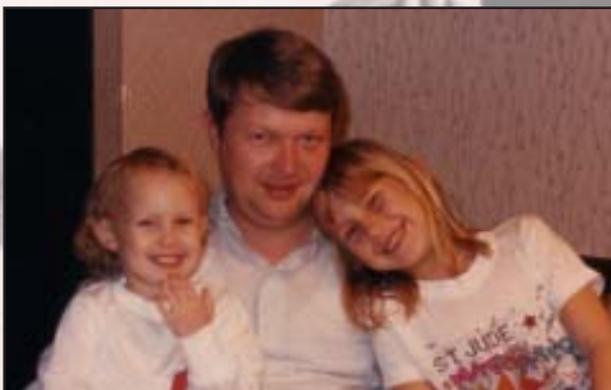
Courtesy photo

A self-taught motorcyclist since his early days at Columbus AFB, Col. Thomson still enjoys riding his bike today.



Courtesy photo

On his wedding day in Sept. 1977 to Cheryl Peterson of Biloxi, Miss.



Courtesy photo

Thomson as a young father with his and Cheryl's two daughters, Shawn (now 20) and Sarah (now 26).



U.S. Air Force Photo

The colonel will trade his green flight suit for a blue one in his new career as a civilian instructor pilot.

Courtesy photo
Background photo: Maj. Tim Thomson completes a pre-flight inspection on an aircraft tire.

Col. Thomson completes command, career at 910th

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"I checked out the C-21 (a small jet-powered cargo/passenger aircraft) doing staff flying. It was good to get away from the office," he said.

After special ops moved its headquarters to Florida, he opted to stay at Scott as a C-130 systems safety officer for Headquarters Military Airlift Command for flight safety, non-flying for about one and a half years.

A few years later, he came to a crossroads in his career and was unsure about his next big step. At this key moment, Maj. Thomson ran across Col. Max Hegler, a senior officer he had known on active duty from years past. Col. Hegler had moved to the reserve component himself and within three months offered his former IP a job in the Reserve at Maxwell AFB.

So in August 1989, Maj. Thomson moved to Montgomery, Ala., to join Col. Hegler's staff, working as a C-130H2 instructor pilot and Operations Officer (Air Reserve Technician) for the 357th Airlift Squadron. In 1993, the major was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Col. Thomson inserts what was playing out on the world stage in the early 1990s: Desert Shield was mobilized, the Bosnia War and Sarajevo.

In August of 1996, he was hired as Operations Group Commander at the 913th AW, Willow Grove Air Reserve Station (ARS), Pa. The lieutenant colonel was promoted to colonel in 1997. Three years later, Col. Thomson assumed command of the 913th.

One of the most infamous days in U.S. history happened while Col. Thomson was in charge at Willow Grove: September 11, 2001. The base was sandwiched in between the two primary terrorist targets, New York City and Washington, D.C. He led the wing in a variety of deployments and operations associated with the subsequent Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Finally, on June 26, 2004, Col. Thomson assumed command of the 910th Airlift Wing here. Three years later and on the eve of his retirement, he said during his time at the 910th, one of the shining moments was seeing the recent groundbreaking for the new lodging facility at Youngstown ARS; a low point will be missing the Operational Readiness Inspection in 2008.

Chief Master Sergeant Bob Glus, 910th Command Chief, said, that in the close to two years he worked with Col. Thomson on a daily basis, "What I really enjoyed about him on a professional level was that even though we had different opinions on things and disagreed, he always explained why. And as soon as we

walked out the door, the business was done. We'd go have a beer. He made you feel important, that he valued your opinion."

Chief Glus continued, "The colonel always put himself second, he was concerned about everyone else ... he never threw his rank around ... he is down to earth, humble. That's one positive aspect he brought to the base – plus I think I got a friend for life."

This sentiment was echoed by several others, such as Lisa List, the colonel's civilian secretary during the week and also a master sergeant in the Judge Advocate General office here as a Reservist.

"You can tell that he really cares about people on base," List said, saying he puts a lot

"I'm going to take off this green flight suit and put on a blue one -- the coolest thing in the world."

Col. Timothy Thomson

of careful thought into decisions that will affect someone's career.

List also pointed out what she felt was a high point for her boss's tenure in Youngstown: "When he came into this job, we were under review for BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) and what a way to start. I think he's proud of that (that the 910th was saved)."

Yet she also knows the lighter side of Col. Thomson's personality. "He has a great sense of humor, and he's a James Brown fanatic!"

Maj. Larry Murphy, the wing executive officer, seconded that and added, "He likes jazz, rhythm and blues. His musical taste is what would be hip with the young crowd today."

One of those young people today is the colonel's daughter Shawn, now 20. She said although he's very professional, her dad is really easy going and enjoys having a good time. She also said regarding his deployments and time away, "I was pretty lucky ... most of his big deployments were when I was really little."

Shawn also credits her mother, saying she was always very good about being a military spouse. And Col. Thomson said, "Cheryl has been a mother and homemaker for my entire Air Force career ... endured all the family separations and extensive TDYs."

Cheryl said the most difficult time to recall was easily, "When he got off active duty and he went into the Reserve, we were in two different parts of the country with two little

girls, for about a year. Everybody was stressed at that time," she remembered.

Specific events that Col. Thomson said made him homesick were when, "I missed both my 20th and 30th high school reunions because of UTAs."

Now that her husband is retiring from the Air Force Mrs. Thomson is looking forward to going down south to be by family and for him having his weekends free, whether it means they can travel a little or just be together. She added, "I'm so proud of him for his whole Air Force career. He's a wonderful man. A couple of people said they are where they are today because he helped them."

Col. Thomson credits some of those who helped him, too: "Capt. Mike Johnson, my T-37 IP and my Buddy IP when I returned for IP duty at Columbus AFB, also Brig. Gen. Rich Moss, for giving me the opportunity for command of the Operations Group at Willow Grove."

Col. Hegler, now retired, said of Col. Thomson's character, "Tim is one of my best friends, ever. He's totally dependable, totally honest. One of the most outstanding officers I've ever met ... and he's hilarious. He is and always has been a great American."

Even though his official Air Force career is complete, Col. Thomson is still crossing into the blue – a blue flight suit, that is. He will work as a civilian instructor pilot for Lear Siegler Inc. (LSI) down at Columbus AFB. An old UPT friend, retired Lt. Col. Ron Vaughn, who works for LSI informed him of the position.

The colonel pulls up a picture on his computer monitor of a training jet he'll be flying for LSI. He beams as if he's a new father showing off a photo of his newborn. But he is even more enthusiastic about the kicker of his story.

"Here's the best part: I'm going back to where my career started. Cheryl and I will be celebrating our 30th anniversary out there. I'm going to take off this green flight suit," he said as he tugs lightly on his collar, "and put on a blue one – the coolest thing in the world. I'm excited about it."

And as he looks back on a career he says he never imagined for himself, the man whose dream as a boy was to fly into space can see he left his mark in service to his country not far off from his childhood ambition. But now he moves on to a new adventure. The eagle has not landed – he's just taking off ...

This is only a test!



U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Bob Barko Jr.

Firefighters, assigned to the 910th Civil Engineer Fire Department, lower Senior Airman Adam Schatschneider from the wing of a C-130 during a confined space/aircraft extraction exercise held here Sunday of the June UTA. Senior Airmen Eric Porth (far left) and Ed Carter (far right) watch from the aircraft wing as other firefighters also look on. The three Airmen are fuel systems technicians assigned to the 910th Maintenance Squadron.

The 910th Maintenance Squadron and the 910th Civil Engineer Fire Department conducted a confined space/aircraft extraction exercise Sunday during the June UTA. The exercise, an annual safety requirement to maintain the effectiveness of their emergency rescue plan, used the scenario of a technician, or an entrant, working inside the wing of a C-130, becoming unresponsive yet still breathing. A technician stationed on the wing, or an attendant, notifies a technician standing by, or a runner, to call the CEF via 911. After the call is placed, the attendant and runner carefully work to lift the unresponsive entrant from out of the wing. Within moments, members of the CEF enter the hangar and work quickly to stabilize the "patient," transport him off of the wing, out of the hangar and to medical attention. "This is an annual requirement but we conduct the exercise twice a year, one for each of the CEF shifts," said Michael J. Norris, the Ground Safety Manager here.

NEWCOMERS

910th adds to the family

Maj. Gary W. O'Connor, 76th Aerial Port Sq.
Capt. Jeremy M. Matyas, 773rd Airlift Sq.
Master Sgt. James A. Stoakes, 910th Civil Engineer Sq.
Tech. Sgt. William N. Jarman, 773rd Airlift Sq.
Tech. Sgt. James A. Shutt, 773rd Airlift Sq.
Staff Sgt. Richard E. Cunningham, 773rd Airlift Sq.
Staff Sgt. Clyde W. Miranda Jr., 910th Maintenance Sq.
Staff Sgt. Jackie M. Nichols, 910th Security Forces Sq.
Staff Sgt. Michael P. Price, 773rd Airlift Sq.
Staff Sgt. Brian S. Taylor, 910th Services Sq.
Senior Airman Steven M. Haines, 910th Logistics Readiness Sq.
Senior Airman Anthony B. Lewis, 910th Logistics Readiness Sq.
Senior Airman Latrece M. Nesbit, 910th Medical Sq.
Senior Airman Dustin S. Thorton, 773rd Airlift Sq.
Airman 1st Class Edgar Miller III, 76th Aerial Port Sq.
Airman 1st Class Holliane M. Palcic, 910th Operations Support Sq.

PROMOTIONS



Jeannette D. Holland, 773rd Airlift Sq.
John C. Jones, 910th Maintenance Sq.
Thomas A. Torrence, 773rd Airlift Sq.



Brian P. Barrett, 76th Aerial Port Sq.
Robert C. Moore, 910th Logistics Readiness Sq.
Robert H. Plant, 910th Security Forces Sq.



Sarah L. Currie, 910th Airlift Wing
Phillip Golden, 910th Services Sq.
Douglas A. Lindh, 910th Civil Engineer Sq.
Peter L. Schultz, 910th Maintenance Sq.



Maria E. Reckzin, 76th Aerial Port Sq.
Timothy D. Vial, 910th Maintenance Sq.
Daniel R. Yates, 76th Aerial Port Sq.



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U.S. senator talks YARS with local TV media



U.S. Air Force Photo/Tech Sgt. Bob Barko Jr.

U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown, Ohio, visited the Youngstown Air Reserve Station, May 30. During the freshman senator's whirlwind 90-minute YARS tour, he met with the senior leadership here, received briefings on the 910th Airlift Wing's mission, enjoyed some Mahoning Valley hospitality provided by the Base Community Council and talked with some of the Reservists and technicians here. Senator Brown also had the

opportunity to get an up close view of the the Modular Aerial Spray System utilized in the 910th's aerial spray missions. He also was given a guided tour of the exterior, interior and flight deck of a C-130 by 910th wing commander Col. Tim Thomson. Senator Brown concluded his brief stay at the base with an interview session, held on the flight line, with reporters from the local ABC, CBS and NBC affiliate television stations.

Make a
NOTE!

**The next
AIRMEN
COUNCIL MEETING
will be held:
Date: JULY 14, 2007
Time: 3 PM
Location:
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