

The Debrief Ep. 1 Final.mp4

Speaker 1 Hello, everybody, and welcome to the debrief on the Airman First Class Jantz and I am joined here by the Mighty Ninety Seven Command Team Colonel Blaine Baker and Command Chief Master Sergeant Cesar Flores. Well, welcome guys. This is episode number one. I really appreciate you guys coming out here. I mean, the first thing I got to ask you guys, how was your weekend? It was beautiful weather outside. Would you guys do?

Speaker 2 Yeah, it was awesome. Thanks for having us. First of all, we've been we've been talking about this. We are really stoked, absolutely fired up about the opportunity to start a podcast. I mean, heck, how many people get to do this? It's an incredible opportunity. So yeah, a great weekend. Beautiful weather chief. What were you getting out to get out there and run your paces and run around the base a couple times a

Speaker 3 day on Sunday? Got my running on out on Saturday was a lot of fun to do this. A lot of overdue things. I need to get done around the house after an incredible annual awards ceremony on Friday nights. Got to watch a very tough Super Bowl for many people I was rooting for. Cincinnati didn't work out. I know Senor Kauffman over at the W series and a good place for now, but we'll pick them up in the finish line down the road.

Speaker 2 We got, we got them. Is going to be OK, man. Yeah, it was. It was a great weekend for me too, and I talked about the annual awards ceremony. It was just really inspiring. I mean, erm, and we have our world class. It was one of the most memorable nights I've had in a long time, just to take time to reflect on that. So that really started the weekend off. Awesome, beautiful weather. I played a couple of rounds on the golf course. Oh, there you go. Got got to question again why it is that I continue to play this sport that I'm terrible at.

Speaker 1 However, golf is the greatest because it's all. It only takes one shot for you to come back. The next time you might, you might shoot, you know, over 100. But guess what? You hit one shot and you're like, Wow, I can actually play this game. But then again, the next shot, you shank it and you just keep coming back.

Speaker 2 Though I'm still trying to find that one shot or jab. I find it, I will tell you. But it's but it is fun. It's good weather,

Speaker 3 so they tell me you'll never know how tough golf is unless you play regularly. So my response to that, so I guess I'll never know.

Speaker 2 Oh, well, my friends, I go back on on golf as we dove down this rabbit hole a little bit, but we have some funny conversations about any sport where you have to be completely quiet. And so we have this whole running debate and some of my circles on on is a sport that you have to be totally quiet on. What is that? What does that mean and the challenges of that in your own headspace? But fun, tough and fun, mentally challenging.

Speaker 1 And that's exactly what it is. But so people are probably wondering what is this? What is the debrief? You know, in your own words of what is this podcast? What is this podcast to you guys?

Speaker 2 Yeah, we really the debrief when you start to pick apart that word. That is a really important part of our culture. You know, our Air Force culture, what it means to be airmen, part of airmanship is the debrief, you know, something that that we do not just in the flying world, but we do it in all the different specialties that we have in some way, shape or form. Some call it after action reviews, some call it hot washes in the flying world debriefs a term that's used a lot, but it's really used. I think it's grown completely across our Air Force now and debriefs a great way to to culturally look at how we can improve. It's really an improvement tool over time, and I think when it was built, the idea was figure out what happened, why it happened and how do we get better. And so we thought, Heck, that's a great thing to take it after for a podcast and look at that, not just in what we do day to day, but how do we grow as professionals? How do we grow personally and how do we grow as humans? You know, the debrief, right? So what happened? Why did it happen and how do we get better? And we've we talked a little bit about that. I think it's a great name. I mean,

Speaker 3 absolutely and really is going to focus a lot of life lessons. And in that vein, how do we get better from there? So as a Comanche, they always tell you, be vulnerable. And so this guy to my right is always vulnerable, and I feel like a lot of people can learn from our failures, right? Where can we get better at? And I love it an air crew role, they say there's no rank in the cockpit, so that means that at the Debrief, everyone comes from the same level to try to make each other better. And I feel like whether it's the guest or us being able to look at each other, every airman Jantz been able to give us that that deep, deep reports how to get better. I hope people can walk away, reflect on what we talk about and ask, What can I action to be a better airman, a better human being or whatever the case may be? So, you know, I always thought when I identified the debrief with actually looking up, I just thought it was it was a gracious way to hold each other accountable. She remains right, so I think we have things to offer each other. It would be a disservice if we don't share that with each other.

Speaker 2 Yeah. And I think to go on that a little bit, and it's not even just holding each other accountable, let's hold ourselves accountable. Absolutely. How often do we take the time to actually sit down and truly, truly reflect? Yeah, we're busy. You know, everybody, everybody out there is busy their job in it and this space a perfect example of that every single day. Everybody out there fly the line and moving the line and doing what they need to do to make this mission go. And this is just a great opportunity to to do exactly what Jeff said and execute a debrief. So we're looking forward to it, and that's really where it kind of popped out of thin air. But these these opportunities to share with airmen and and take time to reflect are important.

Speaker 3 You know, I think it's important. I mean, really the vein after this is getting all airmen get to know the leaders that are here, their journeys, their trials and tribulations, their successes and failures, and the debrief on how what lessons learned they got from that so they can hopefully reach other people's lives and make themselves better.

Speaker 2 Yeah, and I think sharing a little bit about for this first version, at least, you know who juvenile are an opportunity for us to to connect a little bit more and and we are generally very uncomfortable with putting ourselves front and center talking about ourselves because we're always trying to be sensitive to people's time. And we say this ID tag and urban leadership school, we we don't want to talk at you for an hour. We'd like to hear from you a little bit. But in the end, the reciprocal of that is sometimes it's good for people to know who the leaders are, who are empowered to make decisions for this

organization. And so maybe a little time to sort of unwind and figure out what makes us tick a little bit would be helpful to for the team and probably helpful for us as we go through this, this very, very first formal debrief process. I think we can have a lot of frankly have a lot of fun with it.

Speaker 3 Absolutely. But never guess, how about we start with you? But I know that to me.

Speaker 1 I appreciate that. But again, I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you, too. It's funny. You mention, you know, not every airman knows who their leadership is or even their command team. I was having a conversation just this morning with another airman, and he mentioned, you know, not knowing the command team very well. He know he he obviously knows his squadron commander and that and in that tree. But when it comes to the command team, he was like, I just don't, I just don't see it. And you know, and I think we are very we're very fortunate in public affairs to have the opportunity to work with you, two gentlemen and work with all the commanders and all the chiefs and all these people in higher positions. And we just get to know, you know, and not ever and not everybody, you know, junior enlisted to like, we just don't have that opportunity.

Speaker 2 So you're you're exactly right. I'm glad you pointed that out. One of the things that I tried to express to my teams, whether it's the the front office team or or you may have heard me say this before, chief probably definitely has is to really be successful as an organization. For the whatever that immediate supervision is or whatever that immediate leadership layer is. They have to know not just something about who they are, is the professional they need to know something about that person. So in this case, you need to know two things. You need to know who Colonel Baker is and what Colonel Baker stands for. But to really be effective at the next level and build that deep trust, you have to know who Blaine Baker is. You have to know a little piece of that. And that's the part that we find really difficult sometimes in our business. And this is what I call lowering the shield. We tend to walk around with with shields up, oftentimes for really good reasons, sometimes just because of our life experiences and figuring out what we can do at the right times to lower that shield a little bit so that people get to know not just Colonel Baker, but they get to know Blaine Baker and in this case, Cesar Flores that really, you've kind of hit on the essence of why we're doing this podcast and it goes back to that debrief concept. So we've talked, we've talked about that a bit before, but I'm glad you brought that up and that part of this is getting to know the decision makers across an organization. That's awesome.

Speaker 1 Awesome. And and I'll steal the show right back and I'll go back to my to my introduction. So this is my first duty station. I had tech school out in Fort Meade and I got here just last July. I am a Minnesotan, not born and bred, but I claim Minnesota as my home right now. I pray for them. It's like zero degrees out and it's sunny and seventy seventy five here for an hour and a couple of days ago and I go back down. But but yeah, so I grew up as an army brat. Both of my parents were active duty army who are near the sea and joining the military wasn't necessarily like a hard decision for me. I'm a little older as a junior enlisted. I'm twenty five and so I did. I did go to college as well. I went for law enforcement. I was going to be a law law enforcement officer up in the state of Minnesota. But with the climate up there at that time, this was early. Twenty nineteen COVID hit and there were some law enforcement events that happened up there that the climate of law enforcement in Minnesota at the time just wasn't. It wasn't an ideal spot for myself. And so it was it was a real easy decision to to join the Air Force, especially when you have two army parents who were like, Hey, if you're going to enlist, go in the Air Force.

Speaker 3 Sound advice? Yeah.

Speaker 2 You know, it's funny. We do hear that frequently, but you know, we're we're so tight with our with our brother and sister services. It's incredible. We have such deep and profound respect. But you know, the same way, there's always that healthy competition between the two, but that's great. So they set you, they help set you on your oh yeah,

Speaker 1 they were like, Hey, if, if, if you're going, we're going to make sure you go in the Air Force. And so here I am. Almost a couple of years later, sitting down with the command team of all this Air Force base, you know who I would have never thought, you know something like this. But like I said, it's a great opportunity and I get to see you, two gentlemen, at least once a week. You know, whether it's through passing or we're doing, you know, whether it's a photo op or something, you know, it's it's super awesome and it's a great experience and I love my job. That's awesome. I love public affairs.

Speaker 3 And just maybe I picked up a third of this before we got on camera. But you're a hockey fan.

Speaker 1 Big hockey guy. So I grew up as a New York Rangers fan. My father is from northern Jersey, and so me and my siblings, we all adopted. You know, we grew up with the Yankees, the Giants and the Rangers. And there's there's a lot of flak that comes back with that, especially being a Yankees fan. But, you know, not not all those teams are great forever. So we're especially the giants right now. The Giants have had a tough couple of seasons right now, but hey, you know, we're we're pushing it through. But living in Minnesota, I have become a little bit of a hometown team guy too, and I support the Minnesota wild. Definitely, the Vikings. Not so much. The twins. Definitely not the twins. But I play. I grew up playing hockey. You know, occasionally I drive down to Wichita Falls. I drive an hour and a half to Wichita Falls to go play hockey on either a Wednesday evening or or Sunday. During the day, just as just a step on the ice and go, you know, just it's not readily available around here. So when I do have that opportunity, it's the best thing in the world because I grew up playing it every single day when I was a kid.

Speaker 3 It's also my light up when we talk hockey. Yeah, we know your niche now.

Speaker 2 Yeah, same thing. You know, he when he was saying he's loving his job and happy to be here and you know, we see we get to see that every day and we get to see that in different airmen. And hopefully, you know, the team here sees the same in us. But that's that's that's fantastic. And I don't know that we'll have a hot hockey rink at Al-Jazeera Patch any time in the very near future. I can promise you something like that, but I don't think I think of all the projects we have in the works to make this a premier base.

Speaker 1 No, not an I don't

Speaker 2 think an ice hockey rink is going to make the cut, but but not because we're biased against you.

Speaker 1 That is fair. That's for the record. Yeah, but well, there's a very brief introduction about myself, Colonel Baker. Would you would you like to introduce and introduce yourself?

Speaker 2 Yeah, I think I'm going to flip the script one more time and let chief go.

Speaker 1 There we go. Let's go, chapter chief goes.

Speaker 3 All right. Good, have him. I was giving you the spotlight, sir. I could do

Speaker 2 party because we spent. We do these introductions a lot. And so what he was going to say to start and then I promise I will go to you, but you are going to say I'm an inner city kid from Fort Worth.

Speaker 3 There you go. Inner city kid from Fort Worth, Texas. So I'll even start before that. My two parents, Maria and Manuel Flores, they they were born and raised in Mexico, not too far apart, and they immigrated eventually to the US. So first generation American log of my sister and my two younger siblings grew up in a city like like my boss said. Definitely a rough upbringing, but we had a lot of family, so we always have that family feel. My dad worked his butt off, and if there's one thing I definitely gain from him was with his work ethic. My mom, she is the heart and soul of our family, and they definitely gave me a propensity for a compassionate side. I just don't think I grew into it until later on. I met my wife, Patricia, but I didn't really aspire for much. Growing up, I just like to play outside and had a lot of lack of supervision in a good way. Even though my parents hold me accountable when it mattered the most and was not a very good student, so I knew when I graduated high school that the military was going to be my way out of that situation. So coming from that kind of that kind of community, a lot of folks don't move away. Matter of fact, they promote folks to stay there. And I decided to join the army, go to be airborne when I got to Fort Benning, Georgia, right when I got off the bus. I actually share this with our attackers last week. I knew I didn't want to be in the army, the second I walked off that bus, I knew it wasn't for me, but I also told them I did have a sense of service even then and I gave them. I gave the army three years of the best I could have. Some amazing team leaders got my grit and discipline. And three years and a couple of weeks later, I separated as a sergeant, which is a pretty good feat. I think for the amount of time I was cut off for a couple of years went to school. That didn't work out too well. But my hometown sweetheart Leticia, who has been the reason why service has been so amazing up to this point but joined the Air Force, became a cop. Security forces. I wanted to be a boom operator from the start, but they said, no, we we need cops right now. So I did, and that was probably one of the best five years of my life as far as a leader. I definitely where the gun business deployed twice in twenty five and twenty seven both combat deployments, and it was the experience of a lifetime, especially. The second one definitely taught me the value of Obama's life and kind of carried me into the where I lead today and hopefully the selfless service that we carry ourselves with. But if you really want to go deep, I don't think. If if I was really to speak to the core of why was I still had some bad attributes? Again, I emphasize growing inner city, I think I always felt like I had something to prove. And because of that, I think I carried a lot of baggage on me and wanted to prove myself. And so it wasn't necessarily to become better for my airmen, become better so I can prove you wrong. And I think that definitely didn't carry into me making good relationships with certain people. So I left a little bit of a path of destruction there. I bet. But I was good at what I did, so I think my senior leaders excuse me for some of my behavior that I probably gained along the way. But then I'm tech sergeant. That was my ticket out of security forces, even though I love that career field became a blue upgrade on the KC 135. That was the first time I was around officers other than infantry and security forces officers, and that was a culture shock to see how pilots operated. And that's where I really first learned the term debrief and the way they do things because security forces with it after action, reviews and

hot flashes and whatnot. I love the crew concept, really cut my teeth in that in that way of life. I vividly remember when I made Master Sergeant and I was the squadron superintendent for the first time and. My daughter was three or four years old, and my son was I think he was 11 or 12 in the squadron commander, trusting me implicitly. And that's when I realized that you have nothing to, you have nothing to harbor any more. Going forward, I felt trusted, and that's the first time I kind of liberty and kind of let go of all the bad things that fueled my my service up to then. Anyway, that kind of fooled me where I went, May chief that way. And my last base, or it was where I met Colonel Baker and was immediately drawn to his way of leadership. Here we are today, sir. Yeah, quite a journey. It's been a

Speaker 2 heck of a journey, and I didn't remember that. We've talked about this not not before this podcast, but we just talked about this in passing and I really didn't remember that. I do remember seeing chief and seeing chief in action and just thinking, that's a leader of character. That's that's what popped into my mind. And what was very interesting about chief here, since you kind of made a little bit of the connection on on how we had our first overlap on locations was in the hiring process for Comanche I a for positions of consequence and hires of consequence such as Comanche position. I'm a believer in three hundred and sixty degrees of evaluation. So you you want to know as much about that individual as you can. And so I check back with all his peers, his many peers, not all his peers. You get too many for me to check back with, but many of his peers, people who had supervised him, people who either worked for or had worked for him. And it was a resounding. Level of support across the board from all of those. Can I ask you this is something you shared, a lesson you shared in other places, you talk about the difference between when you signed up for the Air Force and when you joined the Air Force.

Speaker 3 Yes. So I think everyone has an enlistment or an oath of office state or when they initially join, whether it's an officer or one of our airmen. And the day you join, like most people you joined because of or you enlisted, I'm sorry, is because of college money or because you're trying to get out of your situation or some other external factor. Serving your country and pure intrinsic value is there, but is not at the forefront. Always. And that's OK. We don't always focus on recruiting tools on that, and we're trying to get folks to come join our service. But those two dates were very different. I vividly remember when I was in Iraq and two thousand seven we just we were I was in combat ops outside the wire patrols, and it was towards the end of our shift and we got hit by an IED. It was devastating. I got some shrapnel wounds and some burns to my hands and face. And for most of my hair off, my gunner took a piece of shrapnel the size of a softball to his leg and my driver got knocked unconscious and we thought, we're going to die out there. And I can go into the story. But through the efforts of a lot of people, we were able to save my brother's life and get everybody out of there and who was waiting for me back at base camp was my flight commander at the time. And when I met him that high that I was on tie the wire when I came back in, I collapsed into his arms and. Do those efforts and even just knowing that the wing commander, my wife was pregnant with my daughter Kendall back here in the states, he personally went to go, went to go, deliver the news and kept her updated until I got out of the hospital and got better. And that's what I really do. That's when I realized, Geez, where? What other line of work would you? Would it ask so much of you? But in the flip of a switch, go from that to give given everything they have to support you and get through such a traumatic event and be able to take care of your family. And they had me. I was hooked up to that, sir, and I would say that's the that's the day I actually joined the military, and those two days are not always the same. And I will ask our listeners and viewers, what are those two dates and are they the same? If not, what was the date that

you joined? And how can you reflect on that and debrief others on finding their source of joining the military?

Speaker 2 Or maybe where will it be in the future? Yes, sir. They're not there yet. And I love that story about you because it's like, I call it the heart of the lion kind of stuff. I know at the end of the day that's what it's going to take to beat a peer competitor. It's going to take heart of the line, but getting back up off the mat when when we're down and the truth is, we're all going to be there at some point, at least in terms of getting setbacks in life, one way shape or form. Now his was in a way that I think we could all hope that we could persevere in the way that he did, and his team did

Speaker 3 a quick shout out. Lt. Jason Daniels, you're the reason why I stayed in to this day. So, so thank you for that.

Speaker 2 That's awesome. As perfect it is. But when we have setbacks, whatever those are, you know, that's what we want our airmen to be able to bounce back off the mat and not just not just get back up, but get back up swinging and get back up and get back out there and back at the mission. So it's really important stuff, and that's where that's the part I love and this story and this goes into a little bit of, you know, when we talk about the debrief and what happened and why and how do we get better? And you know, when you really start diving down deeper, it's about what makes us who we are as people. And you know, that's a big part. I just love when he tells that story. I think it's good for our, you know,

Speaker 3 for our audience. So, so I tell you the power of moments, and I have many of them over the years. That's one of them. Another powerful moment was actually when I met you over at our mobile home, I was the sitting 100th operations group superintended at the time. I know those names have changed, and the boss man here was the vice commander for the mighty 100th and bloody 100th. Still, a lot of pride and joy. And you were serving that unit, but I remember we were linked up together to go brief newcomers to all our folks that just are onboarding or reconciliation. And you will come in here. Let's let's go over the slide really quick and we spent five, 10 minutes on them. First time I've done that, usually we can just wing it and it's going to be OK. But he wanted to take the time to make sure we delivered a good product and that we did not violate our folks as time and effort because that's the most important thing in the world that we have is giving each other our time and attention. And you wanted to make sure that that was good to go. And I'll tell you, sure, I got hooked that day. I was like, Holy crap, I'd follow this guy anywhere because that was you got I was hooked from there. And then he just delivered every single time on his, his selfless service and how awesome that he hired me to come here. And our motto was go for broke his point. We're fulfilled. Our service is amazing and we're going to try to enrich everyone's life again after our mission to defend this great nation chief's right.

Speaker 2 I mean, it's really about who are we as people and why we're serving and we do. We say that to and we set to act too. And you know, it is. It is go for broke. And when it's it's really about serving the team and

Speaker 3 that I think,

Speaker 2 you know, as chief has told his story, you can see I can see how he got to where he was. You know, that grittiness that growing up a little rough like you did your Air Force experiences and hard knocks in your army time and his defender time and sensor time and boom operator time. And you know, all this kind of comes together and and it

makes us makes us who we are and we end up where we are. And in my case, to rewind the tapes back. And this is a part that he knows really well because we spend quite a bit of time together. I grew up in a little town in South Carolina. I was born in a town called Spartanburg, South Carolina. Not not a big town, but we're getting bigger and growing. But it was my childhood was was a was a rough childhood and a lot of ways to not not the inner city style, but there were some hard knocks and Spartanburg, just in the neighborhoods where I was running around and growing up. You know, I had a household where both both my parents. At age five or six had split, so I had a single mom who is raising four of us in the house and trying to do the best that she really could, and she was we were scraping, scraping by. There were times when we we just made do with what we had and we went on. So in that kind of like in a little bit of your story, a lot of my time was spent unsupervised or supervised by my older siblings. And I think we all know how that goes. There are some hard knocks involved in that. So, you know, so so I grew up that way, but I was I was the youngest in the family, so I did have that with some hard knocks. It was also I knew I had a support mechanism in my in my older siblings, which is appreciated to this day. But you know, there were some running around and some will call it minimal supervision. I had on on, you know, unfortunately, you know, my dad was really struggled with alcohol was, you know, abusive, frankly. So so we we ended up living in a household from the time that he was there. And I'll tell you a little bit more about that story, but it was very difficult. And that was something that was not shared and not known outside our inner house. So I found myself constantly struggling to try to reconcile what happened behind the walls and the doors of our house. And then what happened outside the doors of our house and what people knew and didn't know. So I struggled with that really deeply for a long time, and a lot of times I didn't really realize how much I was struggling with that all the way up until my adult life, trying to reconcile a dad who in some ways provided my parents ended up getting back together when I was in fifth grade. So that came with with a share of turbulence. But it also puts the family back together in some ways. But it also exposed me back to that abusive household. And so, so that was tough all the way from about fifth grade going forward. On the flip side, and the good side is, you know, I had a dad that at least I knew cared regardless of the weaknesses and challenges that we had in the house. But what I fundamentally found through that process and through those those struggles was that that it made me stronger and it made me grittier and it made me tougher. And that I was going to have to figure out what to do with myself and how to protect myself in some ways and and how to find a way to to make sure that I made something of myself. So for me, that avenue was with sports. I was always, always involved in you name your kind of sport, and I was out there doing it. And fortunately, through that time, I had some incredible school administrators and teachers and some coaches who were the ones that I think really kept me on the straight and narrow. I am absolutely convinced based on the level of violence and abuse and drinking that happened in our house that had I not had those teachers and those coaches and sports to lean on that, it would have been an extremely difficult path for me. But I had two teachers who really took me under my wing when I got to high school. I had Nancy Adis, who is who is one of them, who she was just. I had an extracurricular class with her where I could tell, and I never talked to her about this. But I bet if I found her now, she would probably recognize there was. There was a young man who by all appearances had things together, but was probably struggling. And then I had a teacher named Sandy McCloud, who kind of did the same thing. And so they were kind of the academic on the teacher side. And then I had two amazing coaches my baseball coach, Ed Taylor, who was just as tough and as hard edged. As they come in, and if anybody from Walhalla, South Carolina, who grew up playing baseball in South Carolina hears that name, they will know Ed Taylor and they will know that Ed Taylor was a demanding, demanding coach and he pushed hard, but he

promoted toughness and discipline and a fighting spirit like few people I've ever come across on Earth. And I had a wrestling coach named Kirk Cruz Berger, who is another one who was just that leader of character that worked with me and helped me and shaped me and taught me those, you know, there's there's levels of discipline that you need to be successful on the wrestling match. The same way Coach Taylor taught me that on the on the ball field. And then with the two teachers, I really feel like, you know, that school environment was what got me through and gave me what grit down at what I call the hard core that I know when push comes to shove that if we've got a mission to do and there is a mission on that ball and a mission on that rests on that, that we're going to get it done. And then I had one of my best friend's father's money, Joseph, who was kind of that again, that leader of character, that example for a young man that you really need, who who had the things that my dad couldn't provide in those ways he certainly did provide. In other ways, it wasn't all bad. But Lonnie Joseph was kind of that example for me to go, OK, this is what this is, what good leadership looks like. And this is this is a father figure that I can then I can try to emulate. And so I tried to do that. And so I got to, you know, I made my way to the city, though I started off in elementary school where I'm going through some of these challenges, getting books out of the library, and I would find books on astronauts and I would just read every page, every word of every page, and I'd go back to the library and the card catalog. Remember that or how they worked in the Dewey Decimal System? Remember this? Now, I may not have actually use that. I may have just gone to the wall of books and found the books I wanted, but hypothetically, I was using those systems. But I'd get more astronaut books and I'd read these stories and in my mind, those stories or what I set my sights on, and I never did make it quite all the way where I was going, but I definitely, definitely was trying to get to that path. And so that's what drove me, you know, as I as I applied to different colleges and the Air Force Academy, I kind of had that in my crosshairs for a while and and that didn't work out and apply to some military colleges and ended up with the Citadel, which again, for me. When you think about this, a young man who on the outside has things together and has some structures in place that had provided protective mechanisms for me, such as sports and great teachers. I wanted that highly structured environment. I don't know that that was a conscious thought, but I know now looking back on it that that is the environment that I needed to be successful, the environment that allowed me to mature. They gave me that discipline the same discipline that chief talks about in his military lifestyle and the way he lives his life now. But I needed that in the in the college environment too, because because I was young and still learning a lot and so got to the Citadel and then really tried to pursue the pilot path, which when you read through all the old astronaut books, the path to astronaut was through flying airplanes. And so I was excited. I was immensely excited about anything that had to do with that. So I just kind of worked my fingers to the bone as best I could at the Citadel and really tried to be a good cadet and a good teammate. And I think that's what forged a lot of me and chief sees this. This is me now. You know, some of the some of the military discipline side that I that I learned from there that stuck with me for a long time. You know, it was really a lot about doing the little things that equal the big things as levels of personal discipline and how you live your life. And those at the foundation for me to, I think, be successful in the Air Force. But I didn't get a pilot training slot right out of college. I got a navigator slot. I did not compete exceedingly well on the pilot training board when I was a young cadet. And you know, the reason why is because my aerospace studies commander, the colonel in charge of that detachment, didn't know who I was, and he didn't know I wanted to be a pilot. I had good academics. I was good on my fitness test. I did really good in all the dimensions of being a cadet, but I was extremely quiet and I always sat on the back row and my commander didn't know who I was or what I want to do with my life. And so he didn't know this goes back to he didn't know Blaine Baker. He knew Cadet Baker, who sits

in the back of the class and he's a solid cadet. But when it comes to how he racked and stacked his pilot candidates, I wasn't anywhere near the top of the list. And so I learned that after the fact, he actually brought me in his office and said, Hey, we can offer you a navigator slot if you're if you're interested. I wasn't originally on the on the Navigator slate, and I said. Absolutely. Anything that can. Moving towards that path where where I can go down this adventure. And so that's what I did. So I went to Navigator School, became an electronic warfare officer. That's a navigator rating, but a particular position and spent my first three years. The Air Force on the AC 130 gunship learned so much about how the Air Force works and the beginning of really Operation Enduring Freedom. So I did three deployments in that field. So one for enduring freedom and then twenty three, two to four minutes for Iraqi freedom with some incredible leaders and aircrew members in that community. And so I had this little stint in Abersoch, which I never wear on my sleeve because that community is such an incredible community. And I was there for such a short time, but I'm really proud of that time there, and I still have contact a lot of folks in that community, but we talk about the debrief. I will tell you on a gun ship crew, the debrief was sacrosanct. The debrief was brutal. The debrief was thorough and no stones were left unturned, and everybody own their mistakes, and we would go around all 13 crew members and that debrief if there was a mistake that was made or something that needed to be talked about, that happened on that crew. We were talking about it and we're not going to leave anything on the table and we never did. And so I learned a little bit about the debrief in that community, which I think some of the origins of that between the special operations community and the fighter community really speaks to the debrief so that after three years, they went to pilot training C-17s for a long time. Most of my career was spent on. The C-17 got a lot of time again, with some amazing air crew members learning how to do the business of air mobility, which is the most incredible business and rewarding business that I can think of. And throughout some deployments forward for that and moving some relief missions, doing doing the gamut of air mobility and airlift. It was an incredible journey and I really appreciated that was a great opportunity. So then I went Squadron Command and I got matched to Squirter Command into the contingency response group, which again was a new dimension to my Air Force career. I got to do that throughout Squadron Command and deploy a team forward into Iraq, supporting the Mosul offensive down at this base called K.R. West, which was. Just the timing of which was. Amazing in terms of of what the team was able to accomplish to move logistics and fire platforms and and help help move that fight, and I got to learn a lot about what our force does and chief and I talk about this all the time. The way had ALS and TAC and talking about what all the different offenses really bring to the fight. So I have the opportunity to serve with amazing people and learn so much more and be mentored. And we haven't talked about this and how we can pull on this thread when I get to the end. But this this mentorship that happens at all levels, you know, it's not just one dimensional from from, you know, chief and I with with more experience to the less experienced, I mean, mentorship goes all directions at all levels. And so I had the privilege of do a contingency response doing some relief for hurricanes Irma as well as Maria, and then went through as Jeff said to the Vice Wynn Command at the first touch on the KC 135 and the mission of the bloody 100th, we finally saw the light. It was the light. It was amazing. And I'm so proud of that and hear me say that all the time, you know, the KC 135 seasoned aircraft, but best damn seasoned aircraft in the entire world, and we're proud of it. And it's an amazing mission. And so got it. Got a taste for that. And as chief knows, because he was there for several years more than I was. That was a busy mission and it's busy now. And the heritage and the legacy that the bloody 100th has that is connected back to World War Two is something that we can we can all tie into. And we've tried to do that here as we've gotten all the way to Altus Out Desert Patch, which for chief and I both were chomping at the bit and really hoping that we

could get to allow this for me out. This is the epicenter of air mobility as mobilities hometown as we like to call it. And it is where mobility starts and having first touch on a mobility airman is a privileged position in our air force. And so chief and I were both hoping that we could get here. We love this part of the world. We love the mission. And so, so here we are. We've gone pretty much full circle, right?

Speaker 3 And absolutely no. El-Sissi's holds a special place. I mean, we get to interact with our amazing airmen. I mean, reproduce 70 percent of our mobility, our forces, aircrew and just the fact of the training you so many folks in their formative years, you get to pour into those areas. And that to me, is the essence of going for broke right there.

Speaker 2 Yeah. And, you know, I think as we as we go through things like this podcast, The Debrief, we can learn from all the things that we've covered between what you've seen from your formative years in the army to being a defender and center operating room library. All of those, we can bring those in and tie in things like the body under oath and that legacy. And we've, I think, moved the needle a lot and built on a great foundation that our predecessors left for us to try and triangle why in our World War Two connection?

Speaker 1 I know we've been talking about bringing on some guests and guests from, you know, from commanders down to senior enlisted leaders and even some junior enlisted and NCOs like we're just going to cover the entire totem pole. It seems like if if, if we have the opportunity we're going to, we're going to bring them on. And I mean, that's the biggest thing getting to know from other leaders and not just yourselves, because guess what, everybody on this base has a story. Some I'm sure a lot of them have multiple stories, and I know that's a big, a big thing we want to do with this podcast is get other people's perspectives as well. I mean, if you guys know, are there anybody you guys are certainly looking forward to having on in the future?

Speaker 2 Yeah, I mean, first of all, you're you're exactly right. I think, you know, and I appreciate you indulging us for this one, and hopefully that's good for folks to really get to know us again. That shield down version of us, you know, the blind baker in the season for us. But you nailed it. Airman chance, because, you know, hopefully we can spend the remainder of the debriefs, talk about the great team we have around us, and so I can think of an airman off top of my head. That would be awesome. Chief, what do you what do you think?

Speaker 3 Well, we just so happened. We again, we just Friday we had our wing annual awards ceremony right off the bat. Our winning airmen of the year, senior airman Scotty Shoemaker. Yeah, Shoemaker Scotty doesn't know, but we're going to target him to be our next guest. He's one of the things I want this podcast to be as relatable to every single rank and or airmen, regardless of which demographic they come from. And I think having starting with it, we're serving leadership and we start with our airmen. Yeah, I agree. I like their stories and get their debrief on their journey on how they got here.

Speaker 2 Absolutely. And you know, we talked about mentorship goes. It operates at all levels and it cuts across all ranks. And I think you started it by saying, you know, it's it's not about rank and when we when we get on an aircraft, you know, we have the privilege of. Cross into the blue pretty frequently when we get to do that, the first thing I say at the table is let's get let's get the rake off and then let's refer to each other by our crew positions, which is what we are here to do. We're here to execute a mission in the aircraft, and so it's going to be perfect. We get our airmen up here who can share their life story. And the really

cool part is and it's going to start with their mission shoemaker. When we get him in here, you're going to see. An incredible woman who's got an incredible story to tell, and we had the opportunity to to speak with him after the annual award ceremony on Friday and. There's a lot, a lot to determine. Incredible human has a lot to offer, and sure.

Speaker 1 But I mean, we're at that time of the show where we're kind of winding things down. You know, we got our introductions. We we know we have a basic understanding of of the debrief and what we're really looking forward to in this. But is there anything you guys would like to say closing out as we close this episode?

Speaker 2 You know. It's the heart of the lion stuff. You know, it's about how do we get better, where we where we started the conversation know how, how do we get better as professionals personally, but more importantly, even as as humans going forward? So I know our teams got a lot to offer. I'm really excited about it serving with with this leader. I'm on my left here. It's just a privilege, and I think the audience is going to find that once we once we connect with some of the amazing airmen in this wing and hear their stories and and synthesize some of those, some of those great themes, and so was great leadership elements. It's going to be really, really powerful. So we're excited about it. And thanks for doing this, by the way. Yeah.

Speaker 1 Of course, when when the opportunity came up, I didn't even second guess I was like, Of course we got it. Yeah, a podcast podcast command team gets mentorship. Hey, it's just it's another great opportunity that I have. And again, just listening to you guys and being able to listen to the future mentors that we have on it's it's just going to be a great time and I'm excited to see where this journey takes all of us.

Speaker 3 Yeah, it'll be interesting if this is successful and how we measure success, we'll see. It'll be interesting to look back at this first podcast and just to see how we all grow together between us and just the guests that we have in

Speaker 2 our mission statement. Yeah, I think so, too. I hope we can hit on, you know, you just mentioned something then to have ambassadors around. But what I've just started to hit on this. It's it's a what do you need team mentality and that's what that's what you're demonstrating there. And I bet when we get Shumaker on on our next podcast, we're going to see this come out again.

Speaker 1 And I would say that is a great wrap to episode one. I appreciate you guys again, and I look forward to the next episode.

Speaker 2 All right. Thanks, Emergence. Appreciate it.

Speaker 3 Sounds good. Debrief number one. Complete, complete.