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Speaker 1 Hello everybody. Welcome back to the Debrief podcast. I am joined here by the 97th Air Mobility Wing Command Team, Colonel Baker and Chief Flores. And we have a special guest here on episode three, Staff Sergeant Gagne. We really appreciate you being here. Gentlemen, how are you doing?

Speaker 2 Awesome. We had an opportunity to podcast number three where the great host and we got Sergeant Gagne here, which we're really excited to set off and embark on. Episode number three It's going to be awesome. I think your.

Speaker 3 Service life's good. We just had one of the busiest months up until now, whether it's flying or medical ops or just hosting some amazing, amazing people that have left quite a legacy. Yeah, it's it's been it's been one heck of a month.

Speaker 2 It really has been one heck of a quarter. And having the vice chief here was absolutely incredible. General Allman was. Just very prescient with his perspective. And for our airmen to get his his thoughts and hear directly from him was fantastic. The exchange was highly valuable. And then we had 11 homecomings that came graduated wing commanders and band chiefs and just was really special, really special week. And then you kept that off with all the incredible work the team's been doing to just job it.

Speaker 1 I appreciate you guys already bringing up the legacy, the spear that happened because it was really I think it was really important for for our base. And I wanted to get your guys's perspectives on a lot of these gentlemen were in your places, you know, years ago. And how did it feel like seeing these people?

Speaker 2 It was a really special night. The moment that we got them all back for the ice breaker was the moment where they all reconnected. And the idea here is really to connect those amazing leaders with our airmen. And so there can be an exchange and of course, to take care of them and welcome them back. This is this is Mobility's hometown. So bring them back. And, you know, we saw Sergeant Gagne out there with with the rest of the team. It was amazing. The the atmosphere was electric. It really was. And so it was it was incredible, I think. And and the perspectives that they shared with our airmen just were beyond valuable. So it was a it was a great I thought it was a great week, a great moment. And maybe maybe you could share to jump into.

Speaker 4 And look at the tailgate, getting to see everybody actually like tailgate, like tailgate style where you go to different trucks and trailers and tents and stuff like a football games. All the squadrons came together and they were sharing everything. And I thought it was really cool that that we all came together and Colonel Carney was like, This is amazing. So I thought that was awesome.

Speaker 2 Yeah. So who is Colonel Carney when he was your wing commander here and now he's General Carney. And then it was really cool to see the vice chief and general all them circulate. And that's the way that tailgate was designed and to make his way through and have airmen coming up. And actually we had Sergeant Treat came up and had a strategic level conversation. So a master sergeant in our wing had a strategic level conversation with General Allen about some of the things going on and world events and what's going on. And I was blown away to see that exchange happened right there in front of my eyes and that there was definitely some great dialog between those two.

Speaker 3 Yeah, from the Comanche side of the house to have four of our previous command chiefs, a lot of them with multiple Comanche tours, and they still think so fondly about this place. I mean, they were emotional. They told stories, they shared stories of their folks. But every single one of them, all four of them said this is their number one base that they've been at. So hopefully I'm not giving some insider baseball that they don't want heard. I won't use any names. But to hear that was was pretty powerful and just goes to show the mystique and really the legacy, the spear. It's living and.

Speaker 2 True. It's there, it's real.

Speaker 1 And I think a sleeper perspective to is I had the opportunity to follow the key spouses and the importance that they have and just making sure they're educated on and informed on what's going on around base as well.

Speaker 2 That's a great point. And that does tell the whole picture. And that portion with Miss Allman was really valuable to being down at the Spouse Employment Center, engaging with key spouses, some of the civics, just putting all that together. So really what the team pulled off were really proud of this team. I mean, they pulled off a visit from our vice chief of staff of the Air Force, General Alvin. In parallel to that, they pulled off a visit for missile then and in parallel to that are 11 other home comers that between them we had two retired three stars. Two retired two stars, three one stars and four four command chiefs. That's really, really special and really difficult to pull that off. And I think we honored everybody appropriately in the process this year. Thanks for bringing that up. It was a it was a monumental.

Speaker 3 Yeah. My 21 year career, I've never seen a more dynamic divi visit and for us to pull it off the way we did. Just exceptional work from our team. And I cannot thank them enough or praise them enough. Really. That was an incredible effort.

Speaker 2 Yeah, absolutely.

Speaker 1 Well, while we have Sergeant Gagne here, I guess we can ask. Yeah. Back to our guest of honor. Back to our guest of honor, please. Yeah.

Speaker 2 We just wanted to give her time to favorite.

Speaker 4 Yeah.

Speaker 2 Where she wants to go with this. Yeah.

Speaker 1 But right away, we'll just dig right into it. And I'd love a brief introduction from you, you know, who are you? What do you what do you do here for? For the mission here at Altus Air Patch. Yeah, we'll start there.

Speaker 4 Well, I'm sorry, Gagne. I work at the 54th Air Filling Squadron. I am.

Speaker 2 Registered.

Speaker 4 I am a squadron aviation resource manager. So I make sure everybody is legal to fly on those jets when they step and I track all the hours and all that fun stuff.

Speaker 1 So one question we asked. Well, everybody so far. A couple of you know, where when did you join the military if if your prior other service like chief year but the Air Force when did you when did you join the Air Force and why. What's your what's your origin story right there.

Speaker 4 Oh, so I've been a military brat my entire life. My dad did 30 years as a C-130 loadmaster. I just retired on, say, like, six years ago. And seeing him do there for his life just feels like this is it for me. I'm not going to college like airforce it is. So at 16 I went down to maps and I saw it and everything like that. And at 16, yeah, they let me go in at 16 and then I didn't ship out until like 18, but I started the maps process and the delayed entry and all that stuff at 16. And then I graduated high school and I left in November of 2009, and then I got stationed back at Travis with my dad. So I was never in gaming. I was always your chief supporter. So yeah, it was nice.

Speaker 2 But that's a pressure.

Speaker 4 That's like a there's a lot.

Speaker 3 There's a lot that's a blessing, I imagine. Mostly a curse depending on how you look at it.

Speaker 4 From.

Speaker 3 A military perspective.

Speaker 4 It was it was a blessing looking back. It was a blessing looking back. But I had a lot of lessons learned at Travis. One time I, I worked on the harm at Travis, and then I had to do record reviews for Carnival. So like, we would come to your office to do your records reviews and I parts of the visiting commanders because I was there visiting the commander. So I thought like that was the spot for me. So I go in the office in a second, so it gives me a look and she's like, What are you here for? And I was like, I'm your dad's records of you. And she like, Oh, okay. Because she goes in his office and he comes out and he's just got this grin on his face. And I was like, Is, are you ready? Your records are real. He's like, Yeah, I saw you parked in the visiting communities and I was like, I'm here to visit you. And he was like, That's not what that's for. So it was a quick lesson learned, you know, and it was exciting. But no, I, I joined 29 gas station and Travis and then I got stationed in New Jersey and then I got out as here.

Speaker 2 That's cool. Did you did you graduate high school at Travis?

Speaker 4 I did.

Speaker 2 So you came back to your hometown? Mm hmm. At least your high school graduated hometown for your first time in. That's wild.

Speaker 3 Mm hmm. You can almost say that's your mobility's hometown.

Speaker 4 Right. But it's not clear.

Speaker 3 What a what a great story. And it's one it's interesting. Where were the debriefed go? Where they go to the airmen that park there or to the Air Force for not being crystal clear on know can park. I can almost see.

Speaker 2 Definitely a turtle in there. Yeah. You can give some credit for the interpretation.

Speaker 3 On that one. Did they change the sign or did everybody get it right after that?

Speaker 4 No, I think they everybody just got it right. I went back and briefed the office and I was like, hey, if you see this parking spot, it's not for you to park in.

Speaker 1 It's awesome. But gentlemen, you asked Sergeant Kenny to be here on the podcast personally. I'm curious, what made you want to invite her on the podcast?

Speaker 2 Yeah, I think this was a no brainer. We were working. Obviously, the pattern is clear. We're working our way up, our structure and we in the NCO structure. And so it is interesting at the wing level that we operate at. There are some names that just become household names because of the performance of the members. And so Sergeant Gagne is absolutely one of those folks. We we this we kind of spitball on this a little bit of, you know, bar napkin. Hey, who are we going to pull into the next one? And Jeff and I have this thing where when it's the right person, we both just know it. And so we kind of bounced back and forth on a few different we we chewed on this a little bit. And then I don't know if I said it or you said it, I think it was you actually. And you said Gagne. And I said, Danny, thanks, Danny. It's it, without a doubt. I think it's just the fact that we know the great work that she's been out there doing. And so when you're an NCO and you have impact at the wing level to the point where the wing leadership team recognizes that and sees it, that's a that's a bring it bring her in and put her on the podcast. That's that's what I think. What do you think, Chief?

Speaker 3 Absolutely. So we had Stringer we had our previous Scotty Shoemaker here, and he had a presence about them. Right. And I think Ariel herself, and that's her personally, by the way, she she's not just staff sergeant, but she has a first name. She had a presence about her. I actually met us the first time I recognized meeting you was at Air Power Leadership Academy, which we kicked off our inaugural class back in late summer. And Sergeant Gagne was was in that class and right away stood out. She was active, but not dominating the conversation. She had great insight, great presence. You can tell right away charisma all around. And when I got invited to this, I thought I was going to do a lot of the talking. I said maybe 70 words because that's how involved the class was, specifically Sergeant Gagne and how powerful that was. And then you transitioned from that environment to the 54th. And I get and and I get to be a proud boom operator even now. One I know, I know I'm flying safe if we have a person of her caliber in that office. But when you walk by there, you can tell the airmen have high morale because they have a they have an amazing leader that's going to take care of them, but also hold them accountable. You talk about that coach versus cheerleader. She's the epitome of a coach out there. You can tell invest in your airmen. They believe in her, but she also holds them accountable. And I would venture to say she probably pushed into that line, never exceeding that, which I thought was awesome. And recently one of our airmen got to pay me a visit and you can tell he was calm because he had certain gaining there with them to make sure that she was going to hold the line and make sure that if there was feedback to give even to the command chief, it was going to be said. So his household name and perhaps my first point

has been a little bit different just because of the interaction I get as a boom operator. But sir, you get to you get to fly with us.

Speaker 2 No, I do. But there so and I've seen I've seen the good work over there, too. Absolutely. See you out. You know, get and getting things moving and keep the mission going over there. And by the way, the work she does is what ensures safety applied. The fact that we must know that every single person to certify that every single person is current, that they should be at the controls or at the boom of that aircraft. And that's where it gets done. So it's it's life and death. It's happening there in the sense of flight safety. So, I mean, my hat's off to the team that, you know, that's the level of professionalization of a force. That's what makes us the big leagues. I don't mean that from a place of hubris. I mean that from admiration for our team. That's that's the big time. That's that's the level of professionalization that it takes that we know with great confidence, without a doubt that when that crew steps to the jet, they're ready to go, they're safe, they're training their current and they're ready to fly. So, yeah, I've seen them work. Yeah.

Speaker 3 I don't know how this makes you feel, but.

Speaker 1 Yeah, if he's going to ask you, how does that make.

Speaker 4 You feel?

Speaker 3 My hope is you didn't drive here because now you could probably float home.

Speaker 4 So I feel like, oh, my gosh, this all just went to my head. No, this is it's amazing to hear this from from your level because, like, I feel like it's not it's not it doesn't happen very often for a lot of people, but it's it's extremely wanted. It's nice. It's very nice to hear. Makes me excited to want to do more. So my dad, I emailed him when I got the email from the lieutenant and I was like, Dad, what do I say? I don't speak Air Force that well. What do I do? You sound like I want the link to this podcast immediately. You know.

Speaker 3 What? What pointers did he give you?

Speaker 4 He did not get. My dad is currently in Korea right now, so we're a little time zone off right now. But he's out there for an exercise.

Speaker 3 And what do you think he would tell you?

Speaker 4 He what.

Speaker 3 Advice.

Speaker 4 Would you share? He would probably tell me just to stay humble and use tact. But tact has been something that's been on all of my initial feedbacks, the lack thereof, maybe a little too outspoken, a little too truthful sometimes.

Speaker 1 But can you imagine him right now laughing? Oh, he's really going to try and do this.

Speaker 3 This is the debrief. Do you find any truth to that?

Speaker 4 To the lack of tax? Yes, absolutely. There are many areas that I need to work on in my career, and I'm going to hit 13 years in November. And I'm still learning a lot as I go. But the time and place for certain conversations and how you approach things is how things change or get done. And I had a talk with Sergeant Slater the other day how we were going to change the Air Force. And if you like, you have to do it and approach it in a certain manner. And young Sergeant Ariel did not know how to approach things. She just blurted them out and just hope for the best.

Speaker 2 It's not uncommon, I think, you know, this is I love this. We're going to this is going to be a great onion to peel back. This gets back to the conversation about truth to power. On the things of consequence, how the timing and how we have conversations. And we could go all the way down to Chief talks about this all the time, about the power of relationships. And I'm a big believer that the power that we that we have in the strength of getting things done is in relationships. So there's a you know, it comes down to that's the balance. I think part of what you're talking about there is, is how do I provide feedback? I mean, if it's life, limb or eyesight, it needs to be unfiltered and immediate. But outside of that, now it becomes a question of when and how. But it's really important to be able to have that. And ideally, unless it's really toxicity or there's somebody that is really harming teammates, then it really comes down to how do I preserve relationship in the process? And I think that's the part you're getting at. So it sounds like maybe, maybe in the beginning it was, you know, roll the grenade and the frag pattern goes out and, you know, we just clean up afterwards. But yeah. So you learn. But you think you've learned. I don't see that. You know, I don't work with you every single day. But that's not what comes across at the table right now.

Speaker 4 I'm learning from you.

Speaker 3 And your humility to to tell us that that was spot on feedback as a person that probably spoke before, he thought a little bit myself when I was your age and yes I would say in the boss kind of hit this but I'm a little quotes person so a smart person is what's to say. A wise person knows when to say it. Timing is everything with some things, and knowing your audience is important where you left right limits are. But you know, I expect a little fire from our core, right? And I rather y'all speak truth to power and get it out. But it's our job to shape y'all. So the fact is, it sounds like you got a good mentor that's that's that's trying to set you up for the long game, which is, which is awesome because can you speak in a way as a professional? I think that's the key and refining that message. Yes.

Speaker 2 Or reduced emotional way that where you can where you can do both. And I think most times you can if done in a way. But I agree with Chief, though. Now you'll hear you. You probably haven't directly heard me talk about this. I don't know if our folks have, but I grit it a little. Grit. The system is good. I am a fan of some grit at the table if there's a position or an issue that needs to get fleshed out. That's how you get a pearl. You have to have that grit in the system. It can't just all be everybody in in perfect synchronization all the time because that's not realistic. So we know if that's the way a team feels like everything is great. There's no issues out there. You're just not looking in the right places or somebody is just not speaking truth to power. And so it's really this is a powerful conversation.

Speaker 3 And so you remember we went to RFA to the Wing Commander, Comanche breakout session. I remember Adam Grant, that author. He pointed out a little quadrant in this little feedback that he was giving us, and he said, Do you know who your disagreeable

givers are? Right. So people that give that are giving for the right reasons, but they're willing to disagree. At the end of the day, for for other not for themselves. And that was pretty powerful just for me. How do I know who those people are? And am I? Are we helping shape them to be more little more professional? But we know their heart's in the right place.

Speaker 2 That's a great point. Great way to look at it.

Speaker 4 And open my eyes up to a lot of that, though.

Speaker 2 In the air power leadership class. So did you all get into that in some of your sub sessions?

Speaker 4 We did all of this. That course was amazing for us. It was so I wingman. I'm not going to lie. I went in one topic we had get involved in in the organization and somebody was like, Oh yeah, five, six is great. And I was like, No, no, absolutely not. I don't agree with that 100%, because when I didn't get when I didn't get promoted a few times, the first question I was asked was, Well, where are you in five, six? And I was like, No, but I was in these other organizations. Why does five six carry such a big weight? Why is that one so important? And then we like to run it for like the entire course. And now, now I'm like, Well, how am I supposed to fix something I don't like if I'm not in it? So now I'm taking steps to get involved more with that and shape it to where other NCOs who think like me can come in and see. It's not it's not what they all say and why it's changing.

Speaker 3 So what was your thoughts? What was the root issues with the five six?

Speaker 4 Before, I felt like it was broken by box checkers. The people who don't have any passion for what they're doing but are just doing it to say they did it essentially. And I wanted more passion from then CEOs that were in there, and I'm getting there now. There's a lot of CEOs in there with a lot of great ideas, and it's exciting to see where we're going to go this year.

Speaker 3 What are you hoping to get out of it?

Speaker 4 I'm hoping well, I don't want to get something out of it. I'm hoping that we can give the NCAA something more. I want them to have more professional development. I want them to have more. Togetherness, essentially cohesion. Yeah. I want the I want the NCAA to be a team again. And I feel like. When they said that we just do because we were like, What? What are the funds for? And they're like, Oh, well, it's for the the staff promotion and the technology. And then I was like, What about the other CEOs and our staff? Sometimes what are we doing for them? And they're like, Wow. I was like, What if we do like a cookout or something to bring them all back together now that there's no membership dues and you can just join and be a part of it? I felt like we needed to get that back.

Speaker 2 Cool. Powerful. I mean, I think you. The part I like about this, too, is that you've decided that a way to organizational changes, to participate. I had an airman one time when I was when I was a young major and I was talking to him and we're talking about testing for staff. And he's like, well, I'm not studying because I don't want to make staff. And I said, Really? That's not very inspiring. Like, why? Why don't you want to make staff? I just I just don't want to make staff. I was kind of scratching my head and provided some

mentoring and, you know, had had, you know, disconnected from that conversation. And then I kid you not, it was probably about three weeks later I end up with another engagement. And then I overheard the airman talking about something in the regulations that he did not like and saying, well, you know, that's just wrong. I don't like that. I said, Well, you've chosen to not influence it because you told me three weeks ago you don't want to get promoted. So part of the discussion is, you know, you promote and participate in the process so that you can change it because it was a local, it was an internal, it was an internal process. And it's like if you want to have influence in your flight, then you probably want to study and get promoted so that so that you can be in charge and you can be the supervisor, you can change that process. So I think you discovered that in the power of that, which is pretty cool.

Speaker 3 Yeah. I just that quote came into mind, if you can't beat them, join them. They should actually be if you want to beat them, join them. Yes, exactly. Yeah. Mind blown. Yeah.

Speaker 1 That's great. Sergeant, game one of our conversation before we started here on the on the podcast, you mentioned you had just recently got back from a deployment. Do you mind me asking you how that went? Did you have a decent time over there? What did you do over there?

Speaker 4 I. Was deployed for seven months to Iraq and then home for about a year now. But I stepped outside of my comfort zone. So I did a task force deployment. And it was it was amazing. It was amazing. I did some stuff and I augmented as Intel and I was the battle captain for our talk. So I was coordinating missions that we were doing and diverting planes and all sorts of things. It was civilian clothes, so I couldn't wear uniform. I had and I was on my own compound. I couldn't associate with other people and I was running two locations I had outside and Erbil. So it was it was amazing. I would go back to one of the office, but then would say, here it is more good work.

Speaker 2 It's incredible. Tactical Operations Center, you mentioned the talk. I can't tell you how much. How much. I've been forged in leadership experience, in different talks, in different places. I think there's a lot to be said about that. Pretty incredible that you stepped out with that wide of an aperture on the different things that you were out there doing. And that did come back. We've we've talked about this and some of the some of the packages that we've seen come up and different things. And Dragon.

Speaker 3 Was that your first deployment?

Speaker 4 No, my first deployment was in 2012 to our background with the KC Times. That was just straight arm for four months and was in and out but all different.

Speaker 3 So a number was this for you.

Speaker 4 To this is just number two.

Speaker 3 Was this a better deployment, the previous one?

Speaker 4 Yes, it was. So I felt like I was in a spot here, not just here, but like in my life where it was very. Groundhog Day. You know, you wake up same thing every day. And to do this deployment really brought back the fire inside was like, okay, I'm going to do this.

This is how we do it. And to see the impact that all the little steps have to make those missions happen out there from stateside to everybody having a piece. And it was it was amazing.

Speaker 3 It's awesome.

Speaker 2 It's inspiring.

Speaker 1 So I one of the biggest things about this is mentorship. And I think it's going to be, you know, normal. What would you. What advice would you give airmen under you or even other NCOs? Just some very general advice. More specifically, let me ask you about airmen who want to make NCO. Make that staff sergeant. Make that tech sergeant. What advice would you give them?

Speaker 4 Study hard. Study hard. The system works. A lot of people were very concerned when the EPA's changed from the You're not going to be a fire. Will fire. We're going to reach you. What you actually are kind of saying and. The work speaks for itself. Like you, if you work hard and you do what you're supposed to do and you care. I think you'll you'll see the system works. But if you don't care. I don't think it's going to work out for you.

Speaker 2 Yeah. That's something we talk about all the time is trying to we talk about forging the world's most inspired, proficient adaptive mobility warriors. We say it a lot, but we really mean it in your what you're hitting on is that inspired part that's the the fire and fire in the belly, you know, the heart of the lion kind of thing, that. But you have to care.

Speaker 4 You do.

Speaker 2 You have to want to own your battlespace as as what? In whatever you're doing. And so I wish I could bottle that up. Let's talk about this. I think we might have said this in the very first one, but I'm coming back to it again because it's it's that important, but it is kind of contagious. And Jeff and I remember when we were on the mall in D.C. and there was a bunch of litter and garbage, and we were walking as a group for a fee and we started just picking up some of the litter because we were walking and we just didn't like the fact that there was litter on the National Mall. And lo and behold, guess what happened? Other people just started picking it up. Now, maybe it's because we're in leadership positions or whatever, but I just I just like to think in that little vignette that part of that's what you're saying, which is, you know, if somebody cares, it can be contagious. And other people will other people will start at least rising to meet the standard that you're setting.

Speaker 3 Plus, it makes it fulfilling. Yeah, that's the other piece. If you're just driven by the next carrot, when you get there, it's it's it's hollow, right? So I've seen people that when they don't get promoted or things just don't work out that specific cycle, it doesn't define them. And that's powerful. And they instead focus on on all the other values and whatnot and point to their airmen and continue to be a good teammate, continue to be a good, great parent or husband or wife. I've seen that those are the folks that long term do better in our Air Force than the folks that seem just driven for the sake of being driven.

Speaker 2 Yeah, the transactional piece, you know, that that part you described, they're just just looking for the next carrot or a transactional approach. I think the chief's point can. Have some. Yeah.

Speaker 1 Chief, would you say that that's kind of like people checking boxes versus, you know, getting to actually know somebody and, you know, somebody with some personality and some character. You know, there is a difference between the two. And is that what you were kind of getting at?

Speaker 3 Absolutely. Absolutely. Box checking. To me, there's a couple of things with that, is have we really explained the why behind things like why does this matter for you to go? Is it to check a box or for you to continue to grow in a another area? You know, when I the five six, I look at that. For me, the benefit I would want to see that you get that's a giving piece is go network. You can network with your fellow CEOs and and guess what? Now, that means that you can take care of issues at your level because you have some up and out. What do you call it then to you now, I'm not using the words correctly right now, but you have some influence that's up and out where you can take your problems at your level, which means as a chief, you're more valuable to the institution and to your mind. And that's really good. And then the other piece is that you're growing. You continue to grow and guess what appears want to follow you that are nowhere in your chain of command. I think that's the other very, very powerful piece that goes there. But I some of the box checking to me is are we again instilling the right core values? And if I have an airman that's going just to box check, I'm going to wonder, what are you doing back at your in your backyard, back in your unit? My big thing is take care of your backyard before you try to take care of somebody else's meaning. Develop your airmen, take care of your unit. The cleanliness, the the appearance, all the all those things. Are you doing that before you're trying to go clean up other squadrons in groups and wings? And if that's not happening, then I don't want you to go. I'd rather you focus that time and attention within your own backyard. So what just happened there is that Chief Laws is famous, what do you call it? Just going into a diatribe.

Speaker 2 So I think you're hitting on death. There needs to be depth behind what you're doing. And institutionally, when we say these are the things we want airmen to do because it develops X, Y or Z, their character, their leadership ability, their skill sets on the job, those things make sense. And like Chief said, it's when people aren't doing it for the right reasons or they're trying to do it touching, go when they when they really need to be taking care of their business. There needs to be depth there and purpose behind it. And that's when we move away from that or when we lose focus on that part, that's when we get into the regime of box checking, which isn't helpful.

Speaker 1 Chief, one of your best questions that I really enjoy is and I'm going to ask Sergeant Gagne for you if it's okay. Please, is there's there's a day where gosh, I don't think I can say a word for word. There's there's the day you signed the dotted line and you enlisted. But there's the day that, gosh, what is it? There's the day you that you really serve, the day you join versus the day you.

Speaker 3 Go, the day you when you enlisted versus the day you joined. Or sometimes different like. And to me one is when you enlist for whatever reasons, and the day you join, you're committed to the institution. So a quick debrief for you, Janson's. Write it down.

Speaker 1 Yeah.

Speaker 3 You're right out of hell. But my question to you is, and I know James very well, and I can I know my audience so I can be a little more honest and be a little playful to you. That's actually really good. I appreciate. I was like, I'm actually humbled that you remember that, like.

Speaker 1 Oh, it's got to be there.

Speaker 3 But but for you, Ariel does that or those two dates, one and the same, or are they different? And can you tell us perhaps that that watershed moment that got you there?

Speaker 4 I think they're both the same. Wow. I think they're both the same. Only because this is my entire life. I've never thought about getting out or having a job on the outside like this. This is it. I might. I might need to take a step and start being more prepared, like just in case something ever happens or something like that. But no, of my heart and soul, where I was in the Air Force that I raise my hand.

Speaker 3 So do you. Do any moment stand out that just reinforces your commitment to service that you thought this is why serving is so amazing.

Speaker 4 Me. I don't know. I guess like the I want to say the day I got my check on my duty service commendation medal, I haven't at the date we were had, there weren't a lot of one time I was getting those. So getting one of those was very special to me.

Speaker 2 That's a big deal.

Speaker 4 Is is very special. So I'm very proud of that.

Speaker 3 That's cool. Yeah, that's awesome.

Speaker 1 But. So we got your advice. We got they joined versus, say, enlisted. What? Ah, I don't I don't believe we asked you what motivates you to get up, get out of bed and do your job everyday?

Speaker 4 People, people motivate me. I don't I don't do it for me. I do it for the people. And if I didn't have such such good leadership from laying down, I don't think it would be the same outcome. It really it really makes a difference when you've got like your own to use watching and check in on the commands. He's watching the checking and all the other people are coming in to check on you and it's just like, Wow, they care. I care to look at that and the system works, but I people motivate me. People are maybe.

Speaker 3 You have no idea how reassuring that is to hear, because that's I would say, Colonel Baker and I that's like that's our that's our jam. Now, the mission, obviously, right. Getting the mission done. But you do it through people. Yeah. And that's the piece that I like to think we're fueled by airmen. We we had a rough week the next day. Amazing. That's our five monsters because of the airmen we get to engage with every single day.

Speaker 2 Yeah, I would I would absolutely agree that, in fact, a lot of times at the flight commander courses, some of the preparatory courses like Officer Leadership Academy and Air Power Leadership Academy, that's something that I try to I try to start off with. And the fundamental thing that I that I usually say in those is this is a fundamentally human

business that you're about to step into for flight commanders and flight chiefs and folks that are going into those leadership roles with you as a supervisor and eventually as a senior NCO will step into. And the sooner that you recognize that and accept it for exactly what it is, the better I think you can be as a leader, which means this. What I come back to on that is that, yes, there are certainly challenges with with in the human business. You know, there's challenges. Things can get sticky, things get really tough. It's personalities involved. There's life involved. There's lots of contact with with tough problem sets. But at the end of the day, that is also the great reward. There is nothing like seeing an airman grow and being a part of that growth and being part of a successful team that that wins on the battlefield or wins on the flight line or name your place forward in the talk, like you said, pretty incredible stuff. So I feel that from you. I mean, that is the way you put it is is perfect. And I'm hopefully giving a little elaboration there, too, to make the point that that's another thing I wish we could pile up and that folks and there's a lot of people that are out there that feel that same way and it makes a difference. And clearly it's making a difference with how you operate course that.

Speaker 1 And gentlemen, we're kind of winding down here a little bit. I mean, if there's anything else you'd like to ask Sergeant Gagne or, you know, just pick out a little bit. I mean, the floor is yours if you'd like.

Speaker 3 How about picking?

Speaker 4 Please don't pick on me.

Speaker 2 Or questions for us. We can go either way to you.

Speaker 1 You can always. Yeah, you can ask that question, too.

Speaker 3 I have one for. I have one for you. Like, what would you say? What is one of your best leadership pieces of leadership advice?

Speaker 4 Oh, man. To be a servant leader, I would say, is my best leadership advice once you stop trying. So back in back in the younger days, I was like a rank chaser. I wanted to make an X rank. I wanted to do anything I could to get that. And once I just had the epiphany and I was like, you know what? It's not about me anymore. It's about the people. And then once that changed, things started progressing and started going in a different way for me. So I would say the servant leadership style is my best advice. I don't forget your people.

Speaker 2 It's great. What about for us? Questions for.

Speaker 4 Us? I do. I have one. I just want to know. Like getting to pick your number two and you guys working together. How is that like? It makes you guys very strong. That. How do you guys balance each other out? How is your harmony?

Speaker 2 So we did I think it's very interesting. We did not we did not know this. I did not know this in the hiring process for the Comanches. I like to think that, you know, obviously I had a good process at five folks on the slate. They were all amazing. But you know, this this chief here, the fundamental question I was trying to answer is who is the right command chief for the men and women of Altus Air Force Base trying to answer that fundamental question. It turns out after we'd had a little chance to work together. So we

knew that. We knew that there was I we hadn't consciously characterized it this way, but there was a balance between us. What we found is we took a personality profile before the offsite back in September, and we are almost a mirror image of each other on personality traits. Now we're both pretty, you know, relatively within within a couple, within a standard deviation or so of a baseline. So we're not like firewalled and one or the other, but where he has, where he has peaks on, on strengths, you know, I will have and I will have an opposite or where he peaks in one trait, I kind of have the opposite wave in the other. So I think that that kind of shows that and demonstrates it. But I think in terms of the relationship, I think that that that's a good fit. There's there's definitely balance there. I think what we hope that the team sees and what this is another thing it's like commander courses in different courses that I try to always point out is the real strength of this is the relationship. And so if you if you and the team pick up on on the fact that, you know, there is deep trust here and that we are both committed to serving, to your point, the men and women here and that, you know, we're we're focused together with the same vision, then I think that can be really powerful. And I think that is really the strength of when we talk a lot about the power of our NCO corps and our senior NCO corps and the officer corps. And we we talk about the dynamics of those. And I think it's really important and special, and I agree that is a competitive advantage. But what's also a competitive advantage and maybe the the most powerful one is in the relationship that we have. And so and I think that that flows down. So if there is a tight, productive, deep trust relationship between the commander and command chief, then that goes down to the group level, that goes down to the squadron level and it goes down to the flight level. And so there's an example there that hopefully, hopefully were set. That's how I see it. How do you how do you see it?

Speaker 3 Great. We make music? Yes. There's never a bad day. I think maybe some tough days, but.

Speaker 2 Yeah, for sure.

Speaker 3 But not necessarily between us. I mean, I'm at the point now where I just wanna let you down, and that's a good place to be, because I am absolutely trusted. But. You know, you're my Colonel Baker's, my 11th commander. Like I worked for ten other commanders directly as our CEO, was there at the squadron or group level and out the wing. But I've never had a relation like this with the commander is still professional, I think. And that's the other part. We know each other well enough where he's Colonel Baker. I'm Chief Lloris. But we can get down to the brass tacks of talking about issues. And I'll give you one more debrief moment. For me, that was great. And it showed the strength of this relationship was we had a situation where I worked really hard to the chief channel to get something smoothed out that I thought everybody wanted. But I never close the loop with a specific group commander and there was a little bit of fallout. And I felt like I was I kind of got a raw deal out of the situation. And Colonel Baker, you know, he he let me share it. He was good, but he let me stay with it for a day. And then he said, put yourself in the in the other commander's shoes and ask yourself where maybe things could have gone sideways. And and he kind of walked me down the path of where I should be owning a piece of that and not be vague for reason. But that was a great moment for me to to what one learn one of my blind spots, which was I probably moved out a little bit too quickly and didn't communicate full intent with the people around me. And to the bigger one was that it's business, no need to get fired up about it. And I got pretty fired up about it. And that's part of my passion in service, is that sometimes if I put my heart and soul into everything. You respond emotionally, which is another important thing. Go into things with heart and soul. But if it's going to be a negative response, lead with the head on that one, not with

your heart. And that's important because people will shut you out really quickly if you lead with the heart on negative type of feedback. Because folks who want to hear it. I don't think so.

Speaker 2 Yeah. It's really got to be got to be thoughtful and, you know, there's a time and place on it. But it needs. It needs to be thoughtful work. Great. But I will tell you to use some examples. But we talked about truth to power. We had a we had a great conversation. I don't actually remember what the specific issue was. And this is what what he's talking about in the relationship and how there has to be there has to be that that part where this is the this is just a ground truth. And it was a it was an issue. I don't think it was highly consequential, but it was it was an important issue. And Chief asked me, said, hey, sir, just just curious, like on on this message, what what you said was this what was heard was this was that what you wanted to say? I said, absolutely not. So that was exactly the opposite. He's like, Well, sir, I'm just going to tell you, I think that's what got heard. I was like, All right, let me get this back in the box. But without that, without that fundamental truth to power piece, you know, everybody goes on and there's either a miscommunication, miscommunication or worse, there's interpretation of something that wasn't intended. And that's that's not good. So you know that you asked COURT We could probably riff on this for a really long time, but it's really important and I appreciate you asking that because it's something that I've always enjoyed from Squadron Command and up to now have been trying to put my finger on that. I still have it fully figured out and I haven't got my thoughts really, really gathered in a very succinct way, which is why it's taken a while to get through this. But there is something in the power of the enlisted core officer relationship that when it is right and represented in those ways. Anything is possible. That's how we that is how we outmaneuver our adversaries, frankly. So, yeah, I'm really I'm really proud of this of this relationship. And I say all the time, if I got if I get no decisions right and we command, I know I got one right. So in making that higher, you know.

Speaker 3 We don't say is nobody throwing Colonel Pablo chalk and that's a.

Speaker 2 Great yeah we got a we got a great.

Speaker 3 Give a shout out to him. Yeah he is phenomenal sometimes and you know sometimes I mean we we share values we're different in our approach mean Colonel Baker. But there's times where he comes in and brings in our parade with other data and we're like, Oh, but he's right. Yeah. And he keeps the chains going and he's the you call him the trustee by.

Speaker 2 A trustee base. He is too. And he keeps the trains moving on time and keeps us keeps our process integrity square and yeah he's been phenomenal to have up there so that's our our third leg of the of the triad up there.

Speaker 3 Absolutely cool. Anything else and the other questions was that you're that's is like a softball we can talk about that. It's like asking the gym person, why do you like working out in L.A.?

Speaker 4 I don't know if you guys remember when you were walking out, we were talking about trust and how you guys trust your selves and your leadership and how it makes a good team. Like for like looking up at like the squadron command section and stuff like that, the trust that they have with each other. When I ask, does the trust go with the transparency? And you guys were like, Absolutely, they are hand in hand. And the

transparency that you guys give us is amazing. I will say that there's not one time we've met where I can't say something and you guys give me like the real transparency between your decisions or like whatever is happening that we're asking about. But I appreciate that part.

Speaker 2 I can appreciate that. I mean, it's good feedback for us, helps us reinforce because trust me, we get plenty of feedback. It's not it's not always good and we try to take that as well too. But it helps us reinforce the the good things that are working out there. And I do think in this this comes up in five courses and I won't riff on this too long, but it is important that, you know, you have to understand, particularly as your the size of your organization increases, the decisions that are made are going to have cascading effects and there's going to be larger population sets. And it is almost certain that some folks will not be satisfied with that decision. But what I have truly found is that if when making a decision and this is the transparency piece, if you can articulate and one, two or three points what the rationale behind that decision is, and it's not emotional and it's thought through there's logic there, then most people can live with it. They might say, Yeah, I don't agree with that, but okay, I see how you got there. Let's move on. So I think that's an important part of the decision making dynamic for leaders. And as you continue to as you'll all continue to say around our airports and do great things, hopefully that can be a little arrow in your quiver to think through as especially as the decisions get more consequential, because ultimately everybody won't be happy. But if you can always articulate how you got there and it makes sense, then even the those that disagree can at least go, okay, let's move on. So yeah, we certainly try to, in the hard business of the business that we're in is we can't always articulate every component of that because some of it is Air Force business, some of it is personal to a member or somebody who's involved in a situation. So it does make it a little harder to navigate that all the time. Some sometimes, you know, folks see, you know, our inability to communicate details for for a good reason because their sensitivities for other people, families or Air Force business as a lack of transparency, which is not always the case sometimes and sometimes it's just not time. Yet more information is coming, but the time is not right now. So these are you're hitting on some of things, but thank you for the feedback. We'll keep trying to reinforce that.

Speaker 3 Yes. Yeah. Brutal transparency is like my tagline. It's not always brutal, but it's true and consistent and considerate of the person. But that's something that we're big on. I mean, whether it's corrective actions or on the wing, people want to know that things were upheld. And I think transparency is the component that really goes after the grace and times, those greater details that if you let it fester, it can kind of erode to a unit. So the more you can be transparent, even if it's the ugly truth, sometimes that's the best policy. Great.

Speaker 2 Great questions you had. Do you have a list over there? No. Like really thought provoking questions. And these some of these seed the next.

Speaker 1 Yeah, exactly. It's we're always learning every podcast, which is great. The debrief is always learning. But as we wrap up here, I know you asked a couple of questions. It's your show. Do you want to give any shout outs to anybody before before we log off?

Speaker 4 I blame Sergeant Williams, Carrie Williams for the five six. Because I told her if she ran for a seat, I would go and support her.

Speaker 2 But shout out Sergeant Williams.

Speaker 4 Well.

Speaker 3 She's a she's a call out.

Speaker 2 Did you say calls?

Speaker 3 Yes, sir. Williams, another one of the 5 a.m..

Speaker 4 Version.

Speaker 3 Keeps. She's in there every, every morning. Get in after it is.

Speaker 1 Yeah, yeah. But hey, we can't thank you enough for your time and for coming out. It's. It's always a pleasure. Every guest we have, we it's always a different conversation, too. As Colonel Baker says, there's always a different onion appeal. I feel like there's always different topics. You know, it's the same.

Speaker 3 And I feel like I have to tell our listeners, is that your coffee cup is consistently here.

Speaker 1 It's going to be consistently here every single time. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But hey, thanks again.

Speaker 4 Thank you.

Speaker 1 Colonel. Chief, I really appreciate your guys's time. It's always a pleasure sitting down with you guys and again, getting to do this debrief.

Speaker 2 It's a.

Speaker 1 Privilege. Now, is there anything, anything else you guys want to want to revisit.

Speaker 2 And just say thanks as well? I have my thanks. And I think this tax thing that you mentioned is has seemingly come along very well, so.

Speaker 4 I hope so.

Speaker 3 Yeah. Did you ever tell us your did you ever tell us your dad's name?

Speaker 4 I'm sorry. It's it's Maxie Gagne.

Speaker 3 Maxie. Chief Gainey.

Speaker 4 Would.

Speaker 3 Be. He's in. He can be really proud when he hears this. Have a feeling.

Speaker 2 So there's your shout out.

Speaker 3 Chief Gagne, if you need any other insight that we can do on the air, send me a note.

Speaker 4 Oh, yeah, it will go.

Speaker 1 Awesome. Thank you, guys. And thank you, everybody for listening.

Speaker 2 Thanks, everyone. Dance.

Speaker 3 Thanks again. Thank you all.

Speaker 2 See you next time.