Vol. 4 Issue. 11 *Supplement to the Desert Lightning News* **November 5, 2010**

309th Maintenance Wing announces its first civilian Wing director

By Bill Orndorff
309th Maintenance Wing Public Affairs

Sue Dryden has been selected to direct the 8,000-employee 309th Maintenance Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah.

The 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group is aligned under the 309th Maintenance Wing.

Ms. Dryden, who was serving as the wing's vice director, took over as acting director on Sept. 16 with the departure of Brig. Gen. John Cooper, the former 309 MXW Commander. Her director selection was announced Oct. 14 by the Secretary of the Air Force.

Assuming wing leadership is the capstone of a career that began as an active-duty jet engine mechanic, then advanced from a GS-5 technician to the senior executive service. Ms. Dryden is the first civilian to direct the wing since it was officially formed on Feb. 24, 2005.

"I truly believe this is the best job in the Air Force because it is not very often that an SES, first of all, gets an opportunity to have an in-charge job -- often times they are the deputy," she said. "More importantly, it's an opportunity to make a difference for our country, the Air Force, and the people here at Hill. There are so many people in the wing and now I have the opportunity to help improve their quality of life, and help improve their work environment."

Ms. Dryden started her Air Force career as an active-duty recruit in 1978 after working an assortment of jobs following high school graduation, including at an avionics company in Atlanta, Ga.

"Many of the people in that company were retired Air Force, and they started me thinking about joining the Air Force," she said. "I wanted to go to college and I saw that as an opportunity to get some of my college paid for and still be able to eat."

After visiting a recruiter's office, she was offered the Air Force specialty of jet engine mechanic, based on her test scores in that area.

"I had a little bit of experience, being around cars and things like that, so when I took the test, I scored high," Ms. Dryden said. "There were very few females in the Air Force in maintenance at the time, so there was really kind of a push to get females into those non-traditional roles."

Indeed, the 1970s Air Force saw many advances for women, including the first female civil engineer, the first female commissioned through ROTC, the first female admitted to the Air Force Academy and the first female promoted to brigadier general and later, major general. But there were some adjustments.

"At my first duty station in Germany, in the engine shop, they didn't have a women's restroom," she recalled. "They had one built eventually but that's how it was for new females in the maintenance environment."

Following five years active duty, Ms. Dryden went to Robins AFB, Ga., where she worked for nearly 20 years in the maintenance, aircraft, logistics and technology and industrial support directorates. Duties included F-15 jet engine mechanic, C-141 budget chief, Business Plans and Programs Section chief, and deputy chief of the C-5 and F-15 Production Divisions. She also managed worldwide depot maintenance activities for the F-15.

In 2002, she moved to Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, where she worked in the AFMC Directorate of Logistics and the Aeronautical Systems Center in director positions for seven years.

Ms. Dryden has been with the 309th Maintenance Wing since June 2009, and was promoted to SES (Senior Executive Service) in January 2010.

When she assumed command of the wing, Ms. Dryden gave employees three things to remember:

"First, what you do is important. You serve this nation, whether it is military service or civil service. Our warfighters count on how well you do your job each and every day, so give it your best," she said.

"Number two, what you do is not always easy so don't let the tough times get you down. And number three, celebrate the victories. Take time to recognize your accomplishments both big and small."

The 309 MXW repairs and modifies aircraft components, the Minuteman III missile and aircraft, including the F-16, F-22, A-10 and C-130.

"In the future, there will be changes in the fleet structure," Ms. Dryden said. "F-16s will continue to retire, though not at the same rate they did last year. The F-35 is a new workload we'll be taking on, and we continue to take on new workloads with respect to F-22, F-35 and C-17. We're even we're looking at taking on remotely piloted aircraft."

Ms. Dryden is continuing the wing's Aerospace Maintenance Quality Standard program, started in 2009 and designed to define, validate and control maintenance processes and equipment and enhance customer satisfaction.

"My focus is safety first, quality, schedule and cost in that order. We will achieve those things through AMQS, the Voluntary Protection Program and employee engagement," she said.

As part of employee engagement, workers are able to have a say in their work and what they do, and how they do their job.

"Part of AMQS is process certification. We've been doing baseline compliance events and I want to move more towards including process improvement into that," she said. "That way, if we're doing Lean events, the employees will have an opportunity to define that process and define their workplace -- if you will, 6s (straighten, shine, system, safety, standardize, sort) their workplace and make it better organized for them to work."

Before she came to work for the wing, Ms. Dryden visited Hill several times while on TDY.

"I really fell in love with the place and that's why, when the opportunity came up, I wanted to move here," she said. "I love the people, I love the area, I

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love the fact that most people -- rather than live to work, they work to live. I hope I can stay here for awhile."

Now, visiting the shops, Ms. Dryden says she's found wing employees are very serious about doing their jobs.

"Usually their biggest complaint is that they don't have everything they need to do their job," she said. "They are dedicated to the Air Force and to Hill and they just want what they need to get the job done, then leave them alone and let them work."

Ms. Dryden describes herself as a wife, a mother, a grandmother and a dedicated civil servant.

"I'm somebody that is very passionate about what I do. I care a lot about people and I take my job very seriously," she said. "I've been a mechanic out on the floor, I've been a planner out on the floor, I've worked my way up and most importantly, I care about our employees. I'm very dedicated to doing the best job that I possibly can to support them."

309 AMARG Vision

"To be the premier logistics enterprise providing diverse, flexible, world-class depot level maintenance and logistics capability sustaining our joint, interagency, and international partners."

Towing team makes record-setting no. of tows

The 578th Storage & Disposal Squadron's aircraft towing and servicing teams combined talents during the months of June through September and made an incredible 1,278 aircraft movements, or separate tows, around 309 AMARG. Primarily due to an influx of retiring Combat Air Forces (CAF) restructuring aircraft, individual tows since April included record-setting numbers of F-15s, F-16s, as well as programmed arrivals of A-10s, F-18s, T-43s, P-3s, C-130s and more. Front row, Wayne Duke, Robert Fullmore, Michael Walker, Donald Marks, James Avis, George Kontos (Supervisor); middle row, Mario Soto, Juan Loredo, David Peck, Robert Thompson, Roger Eckhoff, Wayne Lyon, Robert Parra, Andre Cloutier, Robert Fowler; back row, Gene Koller, Kevin Johnson, Randy Wilkins, Johnny Frankle. Not shown, Kenny Hail.

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AMARG inventory team "rocks" and rolls 35K tooling items out the gate

The first large-scale removal and disposal of aircraft production tooling in AMARG's history began last week, an effort culminating a year and a half of weekly meetings by a small, yet diversely talented group of individuals here.

This specialized inventory team inventoried 35,000 pieces of F-111 aircraft production tooling and gained System Program Manager (owner) approval before transferring these production templates, press blocks, installation fixtures, patterns, and molds to Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Services of Tucson. A subsequent sale of the materiel was made to a local metal and iron recycling company for final destruction.

According to Ms. Judy Ouillette, inventory manager for AMARG, "the team's ultimate goal is to create an accurate inventory before ECSS is deployed throughout the Air Force."

ECSS or the U.S. Air Force's Expeditionary Combat Support System will soon transform the world of Air Force logistics and provide integrated software, standardized business processes, and a number of capabilities to assist the Air Force, including AMARG, to support the warfighter.

Asset management and visibility is just one of ECSS's many capabilities and Ms. Ouillette and the inventory team expect to achieve a 100 percent accurate inventory by the time ECSS is implemented here.

Front row from left, Richard Sertich, Logan Bennett, Judy Ouillette, Major Iriz Yazno, Karyn Lasch, Rita Smith, Lucie Offerle, Duane Burmeister, Rebecca Anaya, Darrell Lewandowski; middle row, Ron Craig, Jesse Nava, Matthew Padgett, Curtis Hunt, Christopher O'Rourke, Timothy Liberty, Anthony Francis, Robert Simmons, Ed Kron, Rob Raine; top row, Walter Voltz, Wayne Renaud, Xavier Piper, Mario Romero, David Skutecki, and Ed Bellenger. Not shown, Sue Detrick, Greg Hofacre, Andre Piper, Terrence Rezac, Richard Ruley, and Mark Babcock.

"Since the F-111 is no longer flown by the U.S. Air Force, production tooling for the aircraft is no longer required," said Ms. Ouillette.

"We're also pairing the C03 list, or removed assets inventory list, with the aircraft we continue to store here. Any assets we can't match or associate with an air frame will go," said Ouillette.

Recently, and as a result of this inventory team's efforts to scour AMARG for orphaned or abandoned assets, they recovered and shipped out $10.8 million worth of A-10 engine save-list parts back to the Air Force's repair line. At times, these secure, though forgotten items, are the result of the initial storage agreement signer's retirement and no follow-on coordination with AMARG.

"They rock!," said Ms. Ouillette when describing the team. "Not only have they succeeded in the turn-in of F-111 tooling, they achieved it while concurrently working A-10 wing disposals; F-15 conformal fuel tank demilitarization; B-1B inventory and prep for disposal; missile tooling disposal; and developing plans to consolidate and store items more efficiently," she said.

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