In the last year, Detachment 390 has seen tremendous change, from having three new faces in the cadre office to moving across the street to the Chemistry Building, as we watched our beloved North Hall crumble to mere memories. Our Detachment has endured through all of this, integrating seamlessly in our new home as well as establishing our USO in yet another building. Even with our reduced numbers we continue with training and producing some of the best officers the Air Force has seen.

In this newsletter, you will find Q&A with all of our cadre and NCO members, as well as with two Detachment 390 Alumni who are currently thriving in their respective fields. To finish it off, we have included cadet statements on multiple subjects as well as pictures of cadets in action. We hope you enjoy this year’s edition of The Blue Salute!
Getting to Know Our Commander:

Lieutenant Colonel
Robert J. Bement

C/4C Haley B. Randich

How has it been so far working with the new members of cadre?

First of all, I’m just flat out glad they are here, because last semester with no cadre personnel was difficult. I would be glad if anyone were here, the more bodies the better. But all of them are uniquely talented in their jobs and while they had no ROTC experience coming in and had zero changeover with their predecessors, all of them hit the ground running and have been very enthusiastic about being here.

How has your approach to leading at Detachment 390 changed in the last year?

I came in last year when we had cadre members who had already been at the detachment for three years. When that happens, the assumption is that you don’t want to rock the boat. You have experienced people who have been on the job, they are doing what they are doing for a reason that I might not know about yet because I’m the newcomer. You always sit back and learn and assess before you walk in and make radical changes.

So, I think last year that’s kind of what I did. I allowed the Cadet Wing to run as it had the previous year. When you see things then that don’t make sense to you or you think could be run better, then you make changes. I have done some of that this year. Captain McMahon has done some of the same thing. He observes something and says “why do we do that?” And if I do not have a good answer for that, then he feels free to make changes. If you ever get the standard military answer, “that’s how we’ve always done it”, that does not mean its necessarily the best way. It can just mean, “that’s what’s easiest, that’s what we’re used to.” Next year I’ll be making changes as well. This year was a bit of experimentation and next year will be a bit more of that as well.

What accomplishment are you most proud of since coming to the detachment?

Just seeing the cadets grow over time. And that’s not necessarily an individual accomplishment for me, but as an Air Force officer, a trainer here, and someone who has been involved in ROTC, I feel proud knowing that the Air Force is going to be better while seeing these officer cadets grow and mature. I can’t personally take credit for it but it just part of this process that I am involved in. I can’t say “hey, he’s going to be the lieutenant that he is because of me” or “hey, she’s going to do great things for the Air Force because of me,” that’s not what it’s about, but it’s definitely something that I am proud to be involved in.

What has been your biggest challenge at the detachment?

I would say there are two big challenges: firstly, the manpower and resources constraint that we have here in the Cadet Wing. We just can’t spend the one on one instruction time that I would love to be able to spend with all the cadets. The other thing would be that last year, I had very lofty expectations about molding the minds of future second lieutenants. My expectations of the senior cadets were probably too high. I have been in the Air Force for 23 years, and I didn’t remember what it was like to be a second lieutenant or a trainee. I had to realize that my goals were too lofty and have more realistic expectations.

What do you think, going forward, the Air Force will be looking for in future second lieutenants? Has that perception changed at all since you’ve been here?

Not since I’ve been here. I think the Air Force has changed its expectations for young officers in general. We’re expecting tech savvy lieutenants who are much more skilled in things that weren’t important back when I commissioned. You can just see that when you look around at the number of engineers we have in the program and the number who are studying STEM; it’s disproportionate to the rest of the fields of study at the University, drastically different from 20 or 25 years ago. You can make arguments about whether that is a good thing or a bad thing, but the reality is, jobs can be very tech specific. Even something like intelligence. Captain McMahon and I are both intelligence officers, and the amount of knowledge and fidelity in data-collection systems is drastically different than it was. It used to be that I just dealt with the content of reports and images, now I have to know how those are collected and developed, and ways to make that faster. That’s a huge change. But at the end of the day, the number one thing that they are looking for is an ability to lead.

Because still whatever job you’re going into, you’ll have a team of people, and as a very young officer it’ll be your job to lead them.

Are there any more assignments you’re still looking to get in your Air Force career?

I’ve actually been corresponding with a few people about my assignment after this. I’m kind of excited about it, but I can tell you my wife is not excited about it. I’m looking to be a base commander in Afghanistan after this, a one year assignment as a “garrison commander” as the Army calls it. I’m really excited because firstly I think it would be nice to soak away some money on an assignment as kind of a last hurrah, but also honestly because it just sounds like a fun job. It’s something I want to do. Whether I want to get out of the Air Force after that assignment or stay in, it’s the one thing that I’m really looking towards doing.

How does your assignment change over the summer?

Most of what we do is geared towards running the ROTC program and training cadets, so a lot of people do wonder what in the world we do over the summer when there are no cadets here. One, we get caught up on all the paperwork we can’t do when we are busy training cadets. It’s about preparing for the next school year, but also catching up on all the paperwork we’ve ignored for the last eight months because we’ve had cadets to train. It’s an opportunity for all of us to take some time off as well because it’s impossible for me to take a two week leave in the middle of the school year. Then again, there are times when absolutely nothing is going on in the office because for example, Sergeant Smith and Captain McMahon are going down to Field Training this summer. Sergeant Foster and I are waiting to hear whether we will be asked to escort cadets on the Ops Air Force PDT’s that will be taking place this summer. We also have a new officer coming in this summer; we’ve got to train him. So there’s actually a lot going on in the summer. But we also can get off at 4:30. Our schedule is very flexible during the summer but there’s still plenty of work to be done.

What book has influenced you the most in terms of your Air Force career?

I would probably say my favorite book is The Great Game by Peter Hopkirk. I’m a big history buff, and The Great Game is about the founding of Afghanistan. The trouble over Afghanistan has gone on for centuries and the trouble that Afghanistan has caused world powers is significant. So it’s an interesting book in that regard, and I was a captain in the Air Force when the focus shifted to Afghanistan. Since I had already read The Great Game, I knew more about Afghanistan than half of the people I worked with. Hopkirk is also a great writer and makes history seem like an Indiana Jones movie. I recommend all his books.
Getting to Know Our Operations Flight Commander: 
Captain David F. McMahon
C/4C Haley B. Randich

What year did you commission and from where? 
I graduated from the Air Force Academy in 2009 with a degree in Business Management.

In your opinion, how does preparation for active duty differ from the Academy to ROTC? 
It differs greatly. A lot of it has to do with time constraints; with ROTC you’re often doing about 5-7 hours a week of military stuff but at the Academy it’s 24 hours a day. You have reveille every morning, taps every night, and everything in between; you’re in uniform, you’re marching to lunch. You are doing your freshman training after 3-4 classes every day. ROTC allows you to have some enjoyment of regular life. It’s a nice balance, and with that said, I think ROTC has some advantages because it teaches you to deal with the distractions of the outside world a little better than the Academy does. That’s not to say that ROTC isn’t without its challenges, its just different.

What positions have you held during active duty? 
At first I was in pilot training; I washed out of that. Then I went to Intel school for about 7 months; after that, I was assigned to Hurlburt Field down in Florida. I spent two years as an AC-130U chief of intel, at the Fourth Special Operations Squadron. I did about a year as an executive at the First Special Operations Support Squadron, and then did about 15 months at the 25th Intelligence Squadron. That was my first intel only unit, which was a nice experience. It’s nice to have an AFSC that actually matches the mission description of the unit. After that, I moved here.

How many deployments have you been on? 
While I was down at Hurlburt I deployed twice to Afghanistan, once to Bagram and once to Kandahar.

Are deployments a rewarding experience and would you recommend them to everyone (if given the choice to volunteer)? 
Deployments were a great experience; really eye opening and makes you feel like everything you did up until that point was worth it, to go on that deployment. Know what you are getting into though, not everyone will have fun on a deployment. I like that it’s all mission all the time; you know what your job is and what’s at stake. You can focus on the mission, you don’t have to deal with training, you aren’t worried about paying rent or anything. You put away a lot of money while on deployment. You also get into killer shape, because you have a lot of time to work out and have good facilities to do it. Deployment provides a lot of opportunity to better yourself both as a person and a professional.

Was there a noticeable difference working with Special Operations Forces? 
Working with SOF was a great experience. The thing about Special Operations is that it is an inherently joint endeavor. Nobody does it alone; you’re always working with your partner branches. It teaches you how to speak a little bit of their language. It’s also great being the tip of the spear; being a part of cutting edge operations that you know a week or two later might be on the news. It was pretty exciting, it makes you feel pretty relevant.

What made you come to ROTC? 
I wanted to come to ROTC for two reasons: one is that I wanted to see what the ROTC program was like in comparison to my own experience. I also wanted to use it to help shape the next generation. I think that’s an important thing. I always tried to sponsor new lieutenants as they came into my unit. I wanted to be there to guide new lieutenants and I think being here is a prime location and opportunity to do so. I also wanted to pursue a graduate degree at a top-notch institution like the University of Michigan, I’m currently trying to pursue that as well. I’m very lucky and fortunate to have been selected for this assignment.

Was this detachment your first choice? 
It was. My other options were the University of Puerto Rico, the University of Alabama, and the University of Florida. I put Michigan first and Puerto Rico second, I left out Alabama and Florida because I was ready to get out of the south.

What are your goals for Detachment 390 as the new Operations Flight Commander? 
Number one is I want to make competent, confident lieutenants who are motivated to go out and do great things in the Air Force. Secondly, I think that we could grow this program a little bit. I think that comes with having a great program and awesome people who can get newcomers excited about embarking on this life of service in the Air Force. Lastly, I want to make this fun. I want to make this into a program where people don’t just do it for a scholarship or a guaranteed job. I want people to do this because this is interesting and exciting work. Even though it’s not a perfect world and there isn’t always perfect training, this is a far better alternative than some of the other options that are out there. I want people to see that. I want people to want to be officers in the military.

What are some of your hobbies? 
I really enjoy exercising; I like weightlifting and running distances under 5 miles. I like to watch baseball and football. I like to spend time with my friends, go boating or go to the beach. I also like alpine skiing.
Getting to Know Our NCOs:
Technical Sergeant
Bernard L. Smith
C/4C Haley B. Randich

When did you enlist?
I enlisted in December of 1998.

What made you want to join the Air Force?
I was always curious about being in the military, but I had an interest in law enforcement. So I tried to become a cop; I went to the police academy back home and I failed at the police academy because I couldn’t shoot. So the police chief told me that if I went out and got more experience he would consider hiring me as a police officer and send me back to the police academy. So I joined the military and started out as a Security Forces officer. I did that for six years, and had no desire to go back and try the police force, so I stayed in the military.

What jobs have you held?
For six years I did Security Forces, and then I went back and retrained for personnel. I have been a personnel assistant since 2005.

Which assignment would you say was your favorite/most rewarding?
I would say the assignment I enjoyed most was at Moody AFB in Georgia; simply because I was closer to family, about an hour away from home. So it was like I could go to work and then on the weekend get away from everything. Being able to enjoy holidays with your family and come home is great.

How different is it working in an academic setting rather than an active duty base?
It’s more relaxed. You aren’t constantly around a bunch of military members, it’s just a different atmosphere. Definitely more relaxed.

How does Michigan compare to other states you’ve been stationed?
Cold. Besides the cold, the drivers here are crazy. The road conditions are all jacked up, I bought a car and I can’t even drive it here because the roads are all messed up from the weather. Had I known that, I probably would not have gotten the car.

What are some of your hobbies?
I like to work out. I like to get out and run. When the weather is nice, I like to just get out and explore what Michigan has to offer.

What advice do you have for cadets entering the active duty Air Force?
Just be confident. Be confident in whatever decision you make because you could be in charge of a lot of people. Not everybody is going to agree with your decisions, you can’t please everybody, so just be confident.
Getting to Know Our NCOs: 
Staff Sergeant Asanya S. Foster 
C/4C Haley B. Randich

When did you enlist in the Air Force?
April 20th 2010.

What made you want to join the Air Force?
Honestly, I attended college for a year and a half, and I had no idea what I wanted to do or to study and I needed some structure and something else to help me along the way so I decided to enlist.

What jobs have you held in the Air Force?
I am a 3DO by trade initially, which is a knowledge operations administrator, and with that we covered all of SharePoint, all publications, everything that is the backbone of the Air Force. And now that we’ve merged over to 3A1, I’m administration, which means paper-work, and a lot of it.

What has been your most rewarding assignment?
I would say this job even though I only just started. I have more of a hands on thing going on with the cadets, with commissioning and Field Training, I am able to see the product of all the hard work.

What is different about working in an academic setting rather than an active duty base?
It’s very different. There’s less drama, for one thing. You learn a lot more here than actually being active duty for some reason. You guys teach me a lot, and I like it.

How does Michigan differ from other states you’ve been stationed at?
Michigan isn’t bad. Before this I was stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, and it didn’t have a lot going on, so compared to that Michigan is a ten, so I’ll take it. The weather sucks, but it’s okay.

What are some of your hobbies?
I ride motorcycles. I also love to watch movies.

What advice do you have for cadets entering the active duty Air Force?
My advice would be that even though you’ve just commissioned as a second lieutenant and you’ve got your college degree, take a step back. Take a step back and learn from others around you.
Getting to Know: Detachment 390 Alumni

Alumni Featured:

- Lt. Rhodes, Student Pilot
- Lt. Cichon, Nuclear and Missile Operations Officer

Lt. Rhodes, Student Pilot, Laughlin AFB, TX

What year did you commission and what is your degree/AFSC?
I commissioned in 2013 with a degree in Aerospace engineering. Right now my AFSC is 92T0 (student pilot.) It will change when I am selected for my designated airframe.

Many cadets want to fly, are there any tips to better your odds and to perform better at Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT)?
It’s really all about your GPA, your major doesn’t make a difference at all really. The way it works is, it’s all plugged into a computer system then all applicants are racked and stacked. Engineering definitely helped during UPT, but not with getting the actual slot. For performing better at UPT, time management is key. Every day is a 12-hour day and learning to plan for upcoming flights or simulations. It’s a 60-hour work week every week.

What does a typical day look like at UPT?
Show time everyday usually changes. We show up and go into formal briefings which is run by the students. Throughout the day expect to have 2 flights or 1 flight/ 1 sim, basically two events per day. Do what you need to do to show up prepared for either. Days vary based on where you’re at, you could have classroom discussion some days and then not on others. For the first two phases you will be on what’s called formal release, which means you get to go home 12 hours after showing up but not a minute earlier and if you’re not flying or in a sim you’re expected to be in the flight room studying. During phase three of UPT, they ease up and let you go get lunch in-between events, you just don’t have to study all the time in-between but you still have to show up prepared.

What airframe are you hoping to get selected for?
CV-22 Osprey. After IFS I was chosen for the “heavy” community. Ospreys are in that community and they are a pretty awesome aircraft. Right now I am flying the T-1A Jayhawk.

How did you prepare for active duty after commissioning?
Just used that short period to get my life in order (finances, etc). Just tried to get everything that I had control over in order because after I went in, there was no time to do anything. I also used that time to have some fun since I knew I wouldn’t have time to do so later. I went to Argentina for vacation during that time.

How well did ROTC prepare you for active duty?
It taught me the professional military environment extremely well. Det 390 is heads above the rest in customs and courtesies. The work hard attitude really made a difference as well, that goes into planning LLAB and such, I really see a difference in other officers that went to different programs.

Is there something you wish there would have been more focus on that would ease the transition?
Maybe more discussion on how to make a living on LT pay. Learning to budget and to save and set yourself up for retirement plan.

As a new 2LT, what are the first steps to take when you arrive at your first duty station?
I showed up as part of a mass group of students and went through in-processing, but that is specific for student pilots. I was then given a checklist with all the “to-do’s” on it. The most important things to get taken care of immediately are housing, pay (including PCS travel pay) and your CAC card.

Any words of wisdom for cadets who are about to commission or for those who want to fly?
For soon-to-be-commissionees, GET PUMPED! The Air Force is awesome! But also enjoy the last few days of college because you will definitely miss them.
For those who aspire to fly: take a lesson or two in a small aircraft to make sure that you enjoy flying, I have seen multiple people show up and do their first flight and hate it and quit right on the spot.
Getting to Know: Detachment 390 Alumni Continued

Lt. Cichon, Nuclear and Missile Operations Officer, Minot AFB, SD

What year did you commission and what is your degree/AFC?
I graduated in 2014, I have a Bachelors in Professional Chemistry from Eastern Michigan. Currently I have the privilege of being a 13N(Missile Operator).

What did you do to prepare for AD from the day you commissioned to your first day of AD?
I said goodbye to all my friends/ family. Closed out bank accounts (you would be surprised where some banks are located and where some are not), made sure my uniforms were ready to go, packed my car, and took off. I spent the entire allotted time to drive to Vandenberg exploring the country and brought my cousins along with me to make it a road trip.

What did a typical day look like during tech school?
Everyone has a different experience at tech school. You either take it seriously and learn a lot, or you don’t. There are a lot of people with an in-between attitude as well. They give you an hour for lunch then right back to work until around 1630-1700. You study a lot, because with the weapon system we work with there is so much to learn at first, and then small details to perfect and master later. It’s really hard to compare missile training to other tech schools because not every day is the same. We had certain days where it was dedicated to school and learning and other days were dedicated to practicing the skills we had just learned (they were called “trainer days”). I spent an entire month going to school at 1800 and leaving at 0200 if we were lucky. Other shifts were scheduled for those trainer days so you could potentially be done with the day at 1100 in some cases. Missiles is a whole separate beast from most AFSCs.

What’s a typical day look like on a regular duty day?
Regular duty for a 13N revolves around training and alert. Alert is a 24 hr [sometimes longer] shift underground in a reinforced bunker monitoring your flight’s missiles. Lots of things can come up during that time such as faults with the missile system, security situations, exercise tests, communication system problems, and lots and lots of messages to deal with from higher authorities. It is a coin toss on whether you will have a quiet alert with normal actions and requirements or you get the alert from hell with everything happening at once. With training days you’re scheduled for a four hour block where you simulate a lot of the actions we don’t do in real life but need to do to make sure we are proficient if the need arises to perform our duties. Other than that you have quite a bit of free time to enjoy life in the great white north.

What are some fun/interesting things to do around Minot?
The fun things to do are: travel, ice fish/fish in the summer, hunt, see the badlands, go to Canada, see the Minot Minotauros Hockey team, enjoy some of the nice restaurants in town, go ATVing/dirt biking, and honestly a ton more I’m not mentioning. You can rent boats and jet skis from the outdoor rec on base, and go enjoy the tons of lakes located nearby. Don’t just stay put and be a hermit in your house. The people I have met here at Minot are some of the best people I have met in my entire life.

How well did ROTC prepare you for active duty?
Operations life here at Minot is not something I feel like I was really prepared for. I stand firm in my belief that a lot of things in life you can read about and hear stories about, but you need to just go out and do them to fully understand them. That is how active duty is for me. I enjoyed my time in ROTC, but besides using the Tongue and Quill and making bullets (which I still am not good at), I haven’t really needed much of the other knowledge that I stuffed into my head. Most of you will need a lot of the advice the NCOs/Officers will give you when dealing with your enlisted personnel under your command. However as a 13N operator, I don’t interact much with the enlisted, and when I do it’s over a phone so building that relationship is a lot harder.

Is there something you wish there would have been more focus on that would ease the transition?
I would have liked to see forms explained better so when I got drowned in paperwork at tech school, I understood what I was signing. I would have liked to see a small focus on keeping your welfare up, especially when you get an assignment that tests that ability. You have no idea how many people up here hate and loath their job. I haven’t really needed much of the other knowledge that I stuffed into my head. Most of you will need a lot of the advice the NCOs/Officers will give you when dealing with your enlisted personnel under your command. However as a 13N operator, I don’t interact much with the enlisted, and when I do it’s over a phone so building that relationship is a lot harder.

As a new 2LT, what are the first steps to take when you arrive at your first duty station?
1) Get a map from the police at the gate. Getting lost is the easiest way to show up late.
2) Realize yes, it is that obvious you are new.
3) Make sure you show up in the right uniform. I showed up in Blues my first day and got laughed at because everyone was in ABUs.
4) Make a friend. You’re on your own for the first time (some of you might have significant others but think of that other LT who doesn’t) and it will get lonely if you don’t put yourself out there and make a friend; a partner in crime so to speak. That connection will benefit you for your entire career, mark my words.

Any words of wisdom for cadets who are about to commission?
A lot of people will tell you that your time in will be what you make of it. That is the best and truest advice I think can be given. If you didn’t/don’t get the AFSC you have always wanted, if you get a crappy base, if you show up to tech school and realize you hate all the people surrounding you, that will only drag you down and people will see your bad attitude. Minot is known to be a place no one wants to go, but honestly it reminds me a lot of Michigan, just a little windier. Since I gave myself a chance to like and enjoy the area I have found tons of places to visit and activities to do. I'm sure no matter where the Air Force takes you in your career, as long as you make the best of it you will see the rewards.
The Life of A Cadet

By: C/3C Taylor E. Stone

From North Hall to the Chemistry Building, University of Michigan Air Force ROTC cadets faced a new training environment. Though they were placed in a new location, they continued to develop great leadership skills throughout the year.
Cadets Perspective on the transition:

“North Hall was like a home to me; But I believe we are still getting the proper training to become Air Force Officers.”
- Cadet Williams

“The lounge is a great place to study. It has a lot of snacks and is close to Wendy’s.”
- Cadet Yau, W.

“The Chemistry Building is a great place to relax with other cadets before and after events.”
- Cadet Newberry

“It was a drastic change for the services, but I think we made it work. Being in cadet leadership, we had to find new and innovative ways to train, but the chemistry building provides a nicer facility. It integrates ROTC more into the daily life of college students, which makes us more visible.”
- Cadet Patrick
Favorite ROTC Memories:

*Playing paintball against Michigan State during Warrior Weekend.*
- Cadet Trost

*“Being a Flight Commander during drill. I felt satisfied and confident when I did well.”*
- Cadet McHaffie

*“My favorite memory was watching cadets rappel off of the parking structure and talking to them after when they were hyped up on adrenaline.”*
- Cadet Koltiska

*“I stood next to Coach Jim Harbaugh on the Big House football field for a color guard event.”*
- Cadet Randich
Mentorship and Comradery at Detachment 390

Many people view themselves as being part of a family in ROTC. Why is that?

“"I love getting to know my mentorship family on a personal level instead of just being trainers and subordinates.””

- Cadet Krawczyk

"Everyone is fun to be around. I loved when I played Axis and Allies while in Airmen Battle Uniforms while in Airmen Battle Uniforms with some of my squadron mates."

- Cadet Baxter