

A star rises for the Arkansas Air National Guard

~ Travis D. Balch honored with promotion to the rank of brigadier general

by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

Arkansas National Guard State Public Affairs Office

CAMP JOSEPH T. ROBINSON, Ark.--The Arkansas Air National Guard claimed the newest star in the state when Travis D. Balch was pinned Brigadier General at a June 8 ceremony here.

General Balch serves as the chief of staff, Headquarters Arkansas Air National Guard, a position he has held since May 1. As the chief of staff he assists the adjutant general and the Air National Guard commander in formulating, developing and coordinating all programs, policies and plans for Air units in the state.

The Arkansas Air National Guard includes a fighter wing, the only Air National Guard C-130 training wing, an intelligence squadron, a marksmanship training unit, a weather flight and a bombing range at Fort Chaffee Maneuver Training Center in Fort Smith.

General Balch was born in Fort Smith and is a 1975 graduate of Lavaca High School. He graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1980 with bachelor's degrees in Zoology and Education. He joined the Arkansas Air National Guard in 1979, and was commissioned a second lieutenant after graduating from the Academy of Military Science in Knoxville, Tenn.

When the 189th Airlift Wing converted to the C-130 Hercules aircraft in 1986 he was hired as a full-time instructor pilot, and eventually worked his way up to the position of wing commander. He has over 4,500 hours of flying time in commercial, trainer, tanker and airlift aircraft.

"He has excelled in every one of his jobs in the Air National Guard, and he is certainly deserving of this promotion," said Maj. Gen. William D. Wofford, the adjutant general of the Arkansas National Guard. "This is a very special day for the Balch family and a special day for the Guard family."

At the height of the ceremony, General Balch's son, Air Force Academy Cadet 1st Class Daniel Balch, helped uncase his father's new one star Air Force flag. Cadet Balch represents the third generation of the family to serve in the military. Brig. Gen. Balch's father was an Air Force Senior Master Sergeant.

"No one rises to this level in the military on their own merits," said General Balch, following his pinning. "For over 28 years I've had the privilege to work with some extraordinary people -- people from all walks of life who have voluntarily raised their right hand and sworn to protect this country."

Friends, family and well wishers packed into the auditorium at the 233rd Regional Training Institute's new general instruction building on Camp Robinson to witness the promotion. Among them was state Senator Gilbert Baker.

"I've watched now General Balch's career, and I've worked with him in the community, and I've worked with him at church. He's helped my son who's a member of the 123rd Intelligence squadron," said Sen. Baker. "To see him come to this level of leadership and service to our country is just encouraging."

Photo cutline:

Maj. Gen. William Wofford, Arkansas' adjutant general, and Glo Balch pin brigadier general insignia onto Brig. Gen. Travis D. Balch's uniform at a June 8 ceremony at Camp Joseph T. Robinson in North Little Rock. General Balch is the Arkansas Air National Guard's chief of staff. He is a command pilot with more than 4,500 flying hours in commercial, trainer, tanker and airlift aircraft. (Photo by Master Sgt. Dianna Seerey, 189th Airlift Wing)



