Courtesy photo

*Col. Robert McCutchen Jr., 56th Fighter Wing special assistant to commander, reached his 5,000th F-16 flying hour March 24. This feat has only been accomplished by two other F-16 Fighting Falcon pilots in the Air Force.*

# Luke AFB pilot reaches 5,000 F-16 flying hours

by Airman 1st Class
DAVID OWSIANKA

56th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

A pilot at Luke Air Force Base reached a feat March 24 that only two other F-16 pilots have accomplished throughout their careers. Col. Robert McCutchen Jr., 56th Fighter Wing special assistant to commander, reached his 5,000th F-16 flying hour.

Reaching such a milestone didn't come easy. In fact, it takes an average of eight hours from mission preparation through post-mission grade sheet completion to take the F-16 to the skies for a 75-minute sortie. Some missions, depending on complexity, can take more.

However, Colonel McCutchen didn't have to reach to find that commitment – as a youngster, it dwelled within him. When he was a boy, he spent time around airplanes and watched them fly – after all, his father was a fighter pilot who flew in the Korean War and Vietnam War.

Inspired by his father, Colonel McCutchen began his training in the first Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training class at Sheppard AFB, Texas, in 1982 flying T-37 and T-38 aircraft. After he completed his training, he went to MacDill AFB, Fla., to train in the F-16.

"I remember my first flight at MacDill," Colonel McCutchen said. "Like any other pilot who flew the F-16 for the first time, I was amazed with the aircraft and felt behind in the jet. After completing the training, I went on nine consecutive F-16 assignments."

One of his assignments landed him at the U.S. Air Force Fighter Weapons School. Graduating, he said, played a significant part in his long career, which opened doors for assignments and presented opportunities he might not have had otherwise.

His most recent move, 14 years ago, led him through the gates of Luke. For nearly a decade and a half, Colonel McCutcheon has been associated with the 56th Fighter Wing and the 944th Fighter Wing as an associate instructor, where he's shared his vast knowledge of the F-16 with hundreds of young pilots."The reason why we put that much time into flying the aircraft is because we demand excellence in our flying," Colonel McCutchen said. "We extract every possible learning point from each flight. We want to be efficient with the fuel in terms of teaching and learning, leading to higher proficiency in how to employ the airplane.

"Being a pilot is not a profession that allows mediocrity," he said. "We must do it with passion and strive toward excellence."

Looking back, Colonel McCutcheon realizes his story is special.

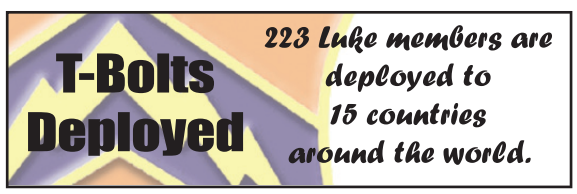
"Most of my compadres, who I trained with in the F-16, were branched during their careers into other aircraft or nonflying duties," he said. "I am fortunate and blessed to have been able to fly the F-16 for 28 years."

## THUNDERBOLT ALMANAC

### Fiscal 2011 graduates

| | |
|---|---|
| 62nd FS | 36 |
| 308th FS | 28 |
| 309th FS | 35 |
| 310th FS | 35 |
| 21st FS | 8 |
| 425th FS | 3 |
| 56th TRS | 60 |
| 607th ACS | 42 |
| 107th ACS | 17 |
| 372nd TRS, Det. 12 | 322 |
| 56th OG (IFTU) | 31 |

Hours flown: 16,291.5
Sorties flown: 12,175
*(As of Tuesday)*




# IN BRIEF

## Change of command

Lt. Col. David Hillman, 56th Communications Squadron commander, will relinquish command to Maj. Zachary Warakomski at 9 a.m. April 8 at Club Five Six.

## 1st Sgts Appreciation Night

Past and Present, Diamonds are Forever is the theme of the first sergeants appreciation night, cocktails at 5 p.m. and dinner at 5:30 p.m. April 15 in Club Five Six. Guest speaker is Chief Master Sgt. Anthony Brinkley, 11th Wing command chief, Andrews Air Force Base, Md. The menu is a 4-ounce petite filet and chicken breast for $24, tortilla-crusted Tilapia for $20 or asparagus-berry salad for $18. Clothing is uniform of the day. To make a reservation or for more information, call Master Sgt. Joe Perez at (623) 856-5892.

## Housing office move

The Luke Housing Management office has moved to the northwest side of Bldg. 1133, southeast of Bldg. 1150. For more information, call Leon Jones at (623) 856-6629.

## Month of military child

April is Month of the Military Child and activities for children and parents include walk around things day Monday, bell bottoms day Tuesday, knock your socks off days Wednesday, tip toe day Thursday, a mini carnival from 4 to 5 p.m. April 8 on the child development center playground, and more throughout the month.

## MOAA dinner

MOAA is a nonprofit veterans' association dedicated to maintaining a strong national defense and preserving the earned entitlements of members of the uniformed services. Membership is open to those who hold or have ever held a warrant or commission in any component of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and their surviving spouses. The next dinner meeting is 6 p.m. April 14 at Club Five Six. For more information, call Marilyn Squires at (623) 546-8536.

## Commissioning briefing

A commissioning briefing is 2 p.m. Tuesday in Bldg. 1150, third floor and is open to active-duty members and their spouses. The briefing is mandatory for enlisted personnel interested in Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, officer training school, the Air Force Academy or medical commissioning. For more information, call the education center at (623) 845-7722.

## Post 9/11 GI Bill briefing

A Post 9/11 GI Bill Benefits briefing is 2 p.m. Thursday in Bldg. 1150, third floor. It is open to retired members, active-duty members and their dependants, and covers how to elect or transfer benefits. Transfer of benefits to dependants who are in DEERS must take place prior to retirement or separation. For more information, call the education center at (623) 845-7722.

## Sexual Assault Awareness Month

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response office is presenting a Walk a Mile in Their Shoes event Sunday through April 30; brown bag movies at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Wednesdays in April in the SAPRO, Bldg. 1150, Room 1052; and promoting the ongoing Bystander Intervention Awareness Training Thursdays at McViper's. It is gender-specific, with the female group meeting at 8 a.m. and the male group meeting at 10 a.m. for the rest of the year. For more information, call the SAPRO at (623) 856-4878.

## Flightline feast

The Luke Community Chapel presents a flightline feast 6 p.m. Wednesday at the 308th Aircraft Maintenance Unit pavilion. Dinner is free and includes ham, cheesy potatoes, scalloped corn, corn bread, salad, dinner rolls, punch, lemonade and dessert. For more information, call (623) 856-6211.

## Relief for Japan evacuees

For military Japan evacuees who may need assistance, military relief societies may provide financial assistance for departure from Japan. To get assistance, go to any Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force or Army installation that has a military relief society office or call (877) 272-7337.

See **BRIEFS,** *Page 15*