

AirScoop



104th Fighter Wing | www.104fw.af.mil



May 2025





The AirScoop is a product of the 104th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

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@104thfighterwing

From the Commander, Deputy Commander & Command Chief

Barnestormers,

I hope this message finds you well. As always, I am honored to serve alongside each of you.

Our conversion to the F-35 moves forward at full speed. The F-15s continue to depart and pilots and maintainers have left Barnes to become qualified on the F-35. Saying goodbye to the F-15 is difficult - especially after calling that cockpit my home for more than 25 years. I know those emotions are shared across the wing, and I'm looking forward to saying goodbye in style with a farewell party in August. We are closing the Eagle chapter of the book we continue to write. Your adaptability and commitment ensure that we remain mission-ready as we start the next chapter.

As we move forward, we also take time to honor the past. The upcoming F-100 memorial is an opportunity for us to reflect on the contributions of those who came before us. The F-100 played a critical role in air power history, and this memorial serves as a tribute to the brave men and women who flew and maintained this aircraft.

Never forget that our history as MA guardsmen runs to the foundations of this great nation. Our participation in events celebrating the Salem Muster and the 250th anniversary of the "shot heard 'round the world" allowed us to engage with our community and highlight the Commonwealth's rich history of military service. Additionally, the Boston Marathon gave us yet another chance to stand in support of those pushing themselves to the limit—whether running for a cause, honoring a fallen service member, or simply achieving a personal goal.

We recently celebrated the Month of the Military Child, recognizing the strength and sacrifice of the children of our service members. The egg hunt and farm friends visit provided moments of joy and connection for our families. Military children face unique challenges, and their resilience is a testament to the strength of our community.

We were honored last month to host Lt. Gen. Luke "Torch" Ahmann, Commander of the 1st Air Force and NORAD Continental U.S. His visit reinforced the critical role we play in national security and defense. Engaging with leadership at this level provides valuable insight and strengthens our mission focus.

As we continue forward, let's carry the spirit of integrity, service, and excellence in everything we do. Thank you for your commitment to our mission and each other.

In your service-

Moon, Shaggy & Chief



104th Fighter Wing member embodies courage, determination, and mental strength

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY Melanie J. Casineau

BARNES AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Massachusetts- Courageous, fearless, dedicated and mentally strong are a few ways to describe Airman First Class (A1C) Elijah Harris. Within a few weeks of returning from basic training and technical school, A1C Elijah Harris, 104th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Specialist, was asked to compete in the annual Massachusetts National Guard Best Warrior Competition (BWC). Harris was the only member from the 104th Fighter Wing to compete, and one of two from the Air National Guard.

The annual Army National Guard Best Warrior competition determines which junior enlisted Soldier and NCO from the National Guard's 54 states and territories will represent more than 330,000 guardsmen at the Army Best Warrior competition this fall.

Harris represented the 104th FW while competing against members of the Army National Guard, Kenya Defence Forces, and Irish Defence Forces in a 3-day intense physical and mental competition that tests the tactical and technical skills. It included weapons proficiency, land navigation, mountaineering skills, emergency medical tasks, and combat casualty care. This also included multiple timed ruck marches and the Army Combat Fitness Test. Vast knowledge of military procedures was imperative.

Harris had never heard of this competition before and had never done anything like this. Basic training couldn't prepare him for this.

"I found out about the competition through the PA Office," said Harris. "When I approached the Command Chief and Mr. Christopher Riga, asking who from the wing was participating, they said that no one was. I thought that was sad. So, they signed me up".





Harris felt that if anything helped prepare him for this competition it was his life challenges and his training in becoming an Eagle Scout.

“As someone who generally has had a rough-going in life, you become adaptable to oncoming challenges like these. Sleeping in the field, running and rucking, even shooting under stress are nothing compared to the harsh challenges people live through everyday,” Said Harris.

Technical Sergeant Shane Coakley, 104th Fighter Wing Security Forces Specialist, was asked to train Harris for the competition. Coakley had previously competed in 2014 and came in 6th place. Harris was the fourth competitor he coached for the Best Warrior Challenge. The day he met A1C Harris he encouraged him to respectfully decline participation in the BWC due to his lack of experience and time to prepare physically.

“He refused, and I am so glad that he did,” said Coakley “Elijah had the least amount of time to prep and by far the most junior enlisted I trained for the BWC.” said Coakley “They have added many new events and put the competitors through more stress throughout the competition, than in previous years”

Most competitors train yearly for this event, most have competed before, and most are in the Army. Harris had none of this.

“I knew I needed a lot of work in no time at all to even have a chance of finishing the event, so when Mr. Riga said he was setting me up with Tech. Sgt. Coakley, and that he would get me right. My immediate expectation was that this guy was a big, strong, psychopath,” said Harris. “And don’t get me wrong, Sgt. Coakley is definitely big and strong, but he was very thoughtful about what I needed to focus on to be ready. What I needed to eat and drink, when I needed to train and rest, he was always checking up on me and telling me what I should be doing next.”

Coakley and Harris had never met each other. However, Coakley has been with the 104th Fighter Wing for 16 years. Harris quickly found out that members of the 104th Fighter Wing take care of each other.

When Harris was first signed up for this competition, his goal was just to make it through a few events and learn more about the Army way of life. Slowly those expectations

started to include having fun at the event, even if he was no good at the tasks.

He started studying, getting equipment, and stepping up his training. He practiced with Master Sgt. Kelliher, 104th Security Forces Squadron, and the CATM team, received a better rucksack from Tech. Sgt. Jessica Gallis, 104th Logistics Readiness Squadron and prior competitor, map reading courses and land navigation skills from Mr. Christopher Riga, 104th Fighter Wing Chief of Staff.

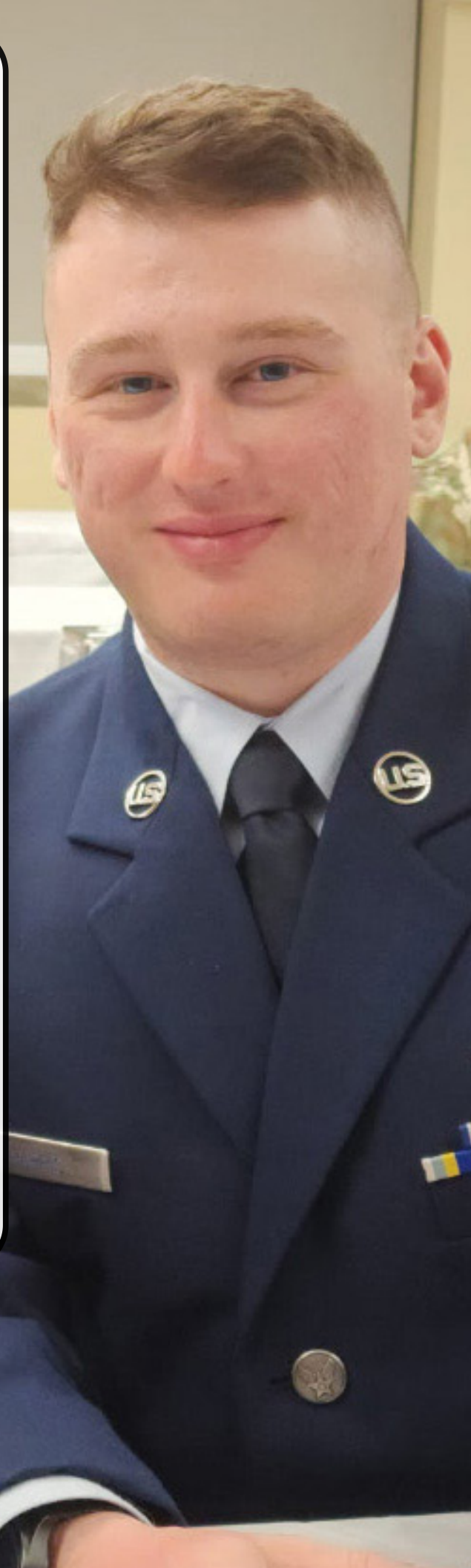
"When all that came together, and it was the Sunday before the event, I shifted my goal from just going and having fun, to being a "GO" at every one of the stations, which would qualify me for placement at the end of the event," said Harris

"It's not enough to be strong or fast for an event like this – you need endurance, both physical and mental. You run everywhere, your field gear and your weapon always hanging from your shoulders. You don't sleep well. The people executing the event are Army First Sergeants and Sergeant Majors, some with tabs, all with decades of experience, making soldiers want to give up and go home," said Harris

Coakley also contributes his 6th place accomplishment to his impressive mental and physical toughness prior to the BWC. Harris then performed at the BWC like a seasoned NCO but as an A1C two months removed from tech school, and represented the 104th Fighter Wing with respect and a true warrior spirit.

"I am honored that I was given the opportunity to train A1C Harris and I hope he continues his "never quit" attitude," said Coakley.

[Click to see full gallery](#)



HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



1AF Commander Visits



Wing Provides Incentive Ride



Change of Command Ceremony

HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



388th Muster in Salem



Medical Group assures compliance



Security Forces Hosts Lift-A-Thon

HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



Budget officer promoted



LRS holds Assumption of Command



Norwegian Foot March

BARNESTORMER COMMUNITY



AFROTC Tour, Bolsters Recruiting

**Hurts ONE
Affects ALL**

**Preventing Sexual Assault
Resource Fair, Provides Critical Support**



Wing Hosts Base Tours

PROMOTIONS

CAPT. MAJ. DAVID DRUGA	MDG
SSGT. TSGT. CHARLES MACMILLAN	SFS
SrA SSGT. EDGAR RUIZ	CE
SrA SSGT. SEAN MYTKOWICZ	MXS
Amn A1C ERNEST OBENG	FSS
Amn A1C MARY OLUOKUN	FW
Amn A1C JHON CHOCHOTTE	MDG
SSGT. TSGT. CODY FONGEMIE	MDG
SMSGT. CMSGT. MICHAEL LAND	MXS
Amn A1C ANGELICA CHEPURIN	AMXS
A1C SrA MADISON CLARK	AMXS
Amn A1C AIDAN STOUGHTON	AMXS
A1C SrA TAO HONG	SFS
A1C SrA NATHAN MANSER	SFS
SSGT. TSGT. JOSHUA COUDRIGHT	AMXS
A1C SrA SEAN SPARVERI	MXS
Amn A1C SAWYER GOODNOW	LRS
Amn A1C JACK BARROWS	MXS
Amn A1C DANIEL LAGUERRE	MXS
Amn A1C DAVID OWUOR	FSS

Congratulations!

RETIREMENTS AND DEPARTURES

SMSGT. SANDRA WOODIN,
FSS | 36 Years

1LT JAMES QUIGLEY
Heading to NY ANG | 18 Years

SSGT. JOSHUA COUDRIGHT
Heading to AK ANG | 11 Years

SrA BRENDEN GADRY
6 Years

Best Wishes!

HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

A REGULAR COLUMN BY KINDA-HISTORIAN
MELANIE J. CASINEAU

The Origin of the 104th Fighter Wing Airscoop: Possibly the Oldest Newspaper in the National Guard

On the night of Wednesday, May 4, 1949, the very first issue of The Thunderbolt, the publication that would later evolve into today's Airscoop, was handed out to 200 members of the 131st Fighter Squadron. It wasn't glossy or fancy. It was a hastily assembled, six-page mimeographed newsletter that told the facts.

While researching the history of the Airscoop, I gathered information from the printed copy of the May 1974 issue to tell this story.

The first editions were started by Sergeant John Lundberg, who wrote, brought to life with cartoons by Staff Sergeant Stephen Shea, and introduced by Master Sergeants John McMahon and Albert Besett. Inside were updates on building the Airguardsman Club, the licensing of the new K1FAB radio transmitter, the story of AB Bill Mahoney at Lowery's, the first Air Guardsman to attend a service school, along with promotions and a long-hoped-for pay raise.

Over the decades, The Thunderbolt and later the Airscoop captured it all. The completion of buildings, the graduation of technical school students, the milestones and memories of thousands who've worn the uniform. These pages became more than a newsletter, they became documents for history that would forever tell our story.

In 1953, the print process was the mimeograph, which later changed to multilith printing. In 1954, when the Thunderbolt aircraft retired, the name officially changed to the Airscoop. The publication returned briefly to mimeograph (1955–1958) before stepping into the commercial printing world in May 1958 with a 12-page letter-sized format that held strong for many years.

From print to pixels, the Airscoop has transformed again with the times. What started as ink on paper now streams as an audio podcast, modern, mobile, and always mission-ready. But don't worry, the digital copy is still available and can be printed too.

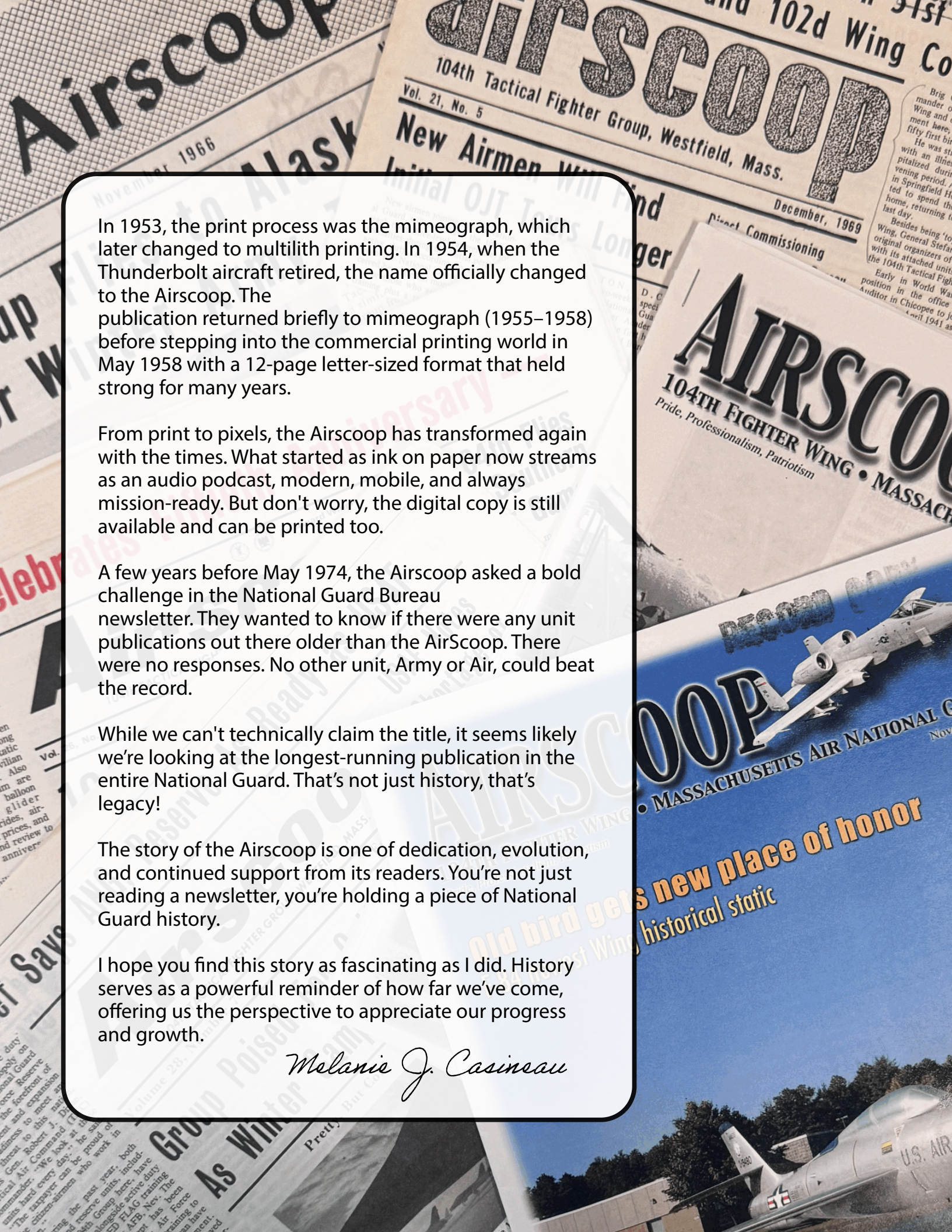
A few years before May 1974, the Airscoop asked a bold challenge in the National Guard Bureau newsletter. They wanted to know if there were any unit publications out there older than the AirScoop. There were no responses. No other unit, Army or Air, could beat the record.

While we can't technically claim the title, it seems likely we're looking at the longest-running publication in the entire National Guard. That's not just history, that's legacy!

The story of the Airscoop is one of dedication, evolution, and continued support from its readers. You're not just reading a newsletter, you're holding a piece of National Guard history.

I hope you find this story as fascinating as I did. History serves as a powerful reminder of how far we've come, offering us the perspective to appreciate our progress and growth.

Melanie J. Casinsau



F-35 CONVERSION CORNER

The conversion journey began in Spring of 2023 when the secretary of the Air Force approved Barnes ANGB as the preferred location for a new fleet of F-35s. This selection drove the requirement for favorable completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which was achieved in November 2024. Upon favorable completion of the EIS, the Secretary of the Air Force signed and reported to Congress the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD was approved in December 2024, which means that the decision to station the F-35 at Barnes is official! We have already begun divesting F-15s and will continue divesting through September of this year in preparation for the arrival of our first F-35s in June 2026.

-Maj. Brian 'Brass' Burke

A grayscale image of an F-35 fighter jet, viewed from a low angle, showing its stealthy design and canopy. The jet is positioned behind the four statistics boxes, with colorful, wavy lines in yellow, red, and blue flowing around it.

21

**Personnel currently
off-base training
(1 Pilot | 20 Maintainers)**

17

**Additional Barnestormers
training off-base this Spring
as part of the "Core Cadre"**

15

**New construction projects
scheduled throughout the
conversion - starting with OPS**

20

**The number of F-35s
scheduled to be delivered
by Summer 2027**



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