**CHANGE OF COMMAND SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JESSICA SELLERS**

Wow!! I’d really like to thank everyone for joining me today for this very special occasion. Before I begin, Major C, can you please place the Squadron at ease.

Chaplain B, thank you once again for that wonderful invocation and T Sgt P…., thank you for that beautiful rendition of the National Anthem. \*\*Pause\*\* Col V, I want to acknowledge you once more and to express my gratitude for entrusting me to lead the men and women of the Force Support Squadron. To Gen A, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to be here Sir, and although I’m sorry that my time on your staff was so short lived, seeing you here today and having the opportunity to acknowledge your positive impact on those you lead provides reassurance and a great sense of completion. Gen E, thank you for your mentorship and leadership. Colonel R, it has been a pleasure working for you these last couple of years. There is no doubt that I would not be standing here if it weren’t for the great example that you set, and for your guidance and pearls of wisdom. Thank you Sir. Col V, Col A, thank you both for your vote of confidence in my ability to lead the Wing’s backbone of support... I will not let you down. Col C, I am looking forward to working with you and the entire maintenance team, Sir! Other distinguished guests, thank you all for being here today. To paraphrase General Colin Powell, “The most important thing I learned is that soldiers watch what their leaders do. You can give them classes and lecture them forever, but it is your personal example they will follow.” To all of you, thank you for providing exemplary standards of leadership. If it’s true that “I am part of all that I have met,” then I want all of you to rest assured that the unique spirit and inspiration each one of you has selflessly shared with me and with my fellow enlistees (**Is there a more appropriate word to use for your fellow comrades? If so, please switch**) has been passed on and will regenerate and continue to inspire through me and through those I am fortunate to lead.

As I look to this side of the room where my family is, words cannot express my joy and appreciation. Many of you know that last year was a very hard year for my family. My father was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and my mother suffered ailments that landed her in the hospital for some time, but through the grace of God, my parents are both here and alive to see today and witness this event. They traveled 13 hours from Anchorage Alaska to be here this afternoon. Thank you. My mother comes down to visit from Alaska almost annually but my father has not been out of the state in almost 15 years. The last time that my Dad saw me in uniform was at my commissioning ceremony, roughly 10 years ago. I’m so glad they could be here today. Mom, Dad, Texas hank you for everything that you’ve done for me, from instilling values in me at a very young age, to sending me to college and not freaking out when I told you that I had joined AF ROTC my junior year to just give it a “try.” Well, we **CAN** say that I’m still “just giving this a try...” and I think we can agree on **TWO** things.... One is that this “try” appears to be going “pretty well,” **(Wait for the laugh**) and two, that you only have **YOURSELVES** to blame... (**Wait for the laugh**). After all, it was the **TWO** of you that shared your strong sense of duty and integrity. It was and is the **TWO** of you who taught me to love and respect our country, and it was and is the **TWO** of you who instilled in me an incredible strength and ethic.... one that I am duty bound to continue to abide by throughout my career and throughout my life.... so thank you for your love and support and for being there for me... and ultimately US, through all of this. This ceremony is a clear reflection of your uncompromising compassion, grit, and tenacity and I am proud to have inherited those valuable qualities. To my beautiful sister, R, who is also here from Alaska to share this moment today, thank you for all of your support, for listening to me vent, and for just being a shoulder I can always lean on. I’m so grateful that you are here and actually, whether you realize it or not, your presence and spirit are **always** with me. (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) I guess if I had mentioned that earlier... that you’re always with me... you probably could have saved the airfare, but hey!!! There’s never a substitute for the **REAL** thing!!! (**and wait for the laugh**).

To my girls, O and T, Mommy loves you both very much. Thank you for keeping me on my toes, and thank you for reminding me every day that there’s a reason why I do what I do, and while my purpose is as a direct result of the incredible lessons I learned from my parents, that purpose... to serve and to lead... is strengthened that much more by knowing that you two are watching.... probably even more closely than my commanders! I want you to be proud of me, but most of all, I want you to learn the importance of service and honor. ...And to my amazing husband, T, the love of my life, thank you for being my rock and my support. Each day we wake up and hit the ground running, it’s a non-stop sprint from dawn until dusk, and while it seems that too often we may lose sight of each other as a priority, I want you to know that is not the case. It is because we live such busy, filled, mutually supportive lives that I am able to take that strength that we generate and share it with others.... and I appreciate you more than you will ever know.

To the men and women of the Force Support Squadron, it is an incredible honor to stand before you today as your new Commander. About three years ago, I remember confiding in my husband and saying, “Boy, it would be really neat to be the FSS/CC,” ... and now here I am. **OKAY... NOW WHAT???? (Wait for the laugh**).

 A leader is someone who earns trust, sets a clear standard then inspires people to meet that standard. General Norman Schwarzkopf reminds us, “Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character...” and I intend to lead with both.... along with compassion, open mindedness, and the willingness to learn from each one of you as well. Although many of you know me and my background --- and if you don’t, well... it’s in the program... life and circumstance are not stagnant. This command... our respective assignments... are organic... and we all must learn to forge connections based on mutual respect and the achievement of our common objectives. My first goal

as commander is to earn your trust and respect as a leader. That’s not something that will happen overnight but I can assure you that I believe that together we can continue to accomplish great things and move the ball down the field. If you’re wondering what’s important to me, it is taking care of our customers, no matter who they are. I think the FSS is doing an incredible job right now because like many in this room, I too have been a customer of the FSS. As we continue to progress and manage our own internal FSS processes, I look forward to us strengthening and expanding innovative support to the Wing. My priority is to always consider the effects on our customer before we make any changes. Gone are the days when people could visit their local MPFs and get help right away. Today we have diminished resources, but the workload is still there and our customers expect to have their issues taken care of in a timely manner. We have a tough job that isn’t going to get any easier. In less than 6 UTA days, many of you will be heading down range to do what you have been trained to do, and that is to provide outstanding support. These next few UTAs will seem like a sprint as you not only ensure you meet all readiness requirements but ensure others being deployed from other units are ready to go as well. Always remember: “Service before self.” You guys know all about that core value.

General Powell was known to have had a “list” of rules that he followed and shared... as needed, and although I won’t take the time to go through each item, some are obvious and necessary:

* Check small things
* Share credit
* It **CAN** be done.
* Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier
* Be careful what you wish for... oh.. **WAIT**... I mentioned **THAT** one already!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

Life... and service... are about **balance**. It is my intention, as commander, to find the way to balance **your** needs with the needs of the 1,500+ Airmen that we support across two states. If each and every one of you aren’t finding fulfillment and satisfaction to come to work and don’t feel you can take care of your families or have that balance, then we have a problem, and while we all must not lose sight of our intended purpose in our service and while on our missions, it’s important to be able to bring a sense of maturity, professionalism, and the knowledge that as an integral part of a critically important team, once again, service is greater than self.... and one fuels the other. And remember... don’t lose sight of who you are, from where you have come, and why you’re here. Life is one massive learning experience and every day, as we learn from each other, we also teach one another. General Powell also reminds us to “remain calm, be kind, have a vision, be demanding.... and **get over it**....” **NOT** necessarily in that order!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). More than anything, I want all of you to know that it is a privilege to work with each one of you and we will all be stronger, more prepared, and more experienced from this shared mission.

Col V, again thank you Ma’am for your vote of confidence in me. I assure you that the FSS has been and will continue to be in good hands and the FSS will do whatever possible to strengthen and expand its support to the Wing. Thank you once again to my family for joining me today for witnessing this important milestone in my career.

I also know that these ceremonies don’t put themselves together. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank everyone who had a hand in coordinating this event. I am proud to be back in the Wing and I look forward to leading the men and women of the FSS. Thank you all!!