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NAS Kingsville Air Boss closes active duty career in grand style

Story by Jon Gagné, Photos by Fifi Kieschnick, NAS Kingsville Public Affairs



NAVAL AIR STATION (NAS) KINGSVILLE, TEXAS --- When Lt. Cmdr. David Anderson left his home in Granite Falls, Minn., for the Naval Academy in 1988, he had visions of playing football at the highest levels and a dream of flying jet aircraft. By the time he graduated from the academy in 1992 with a degree in political science, he was on his way to fulfilling both.

Anderson played two years on the Naval Academy football team as a tight end – and was part of two Navy teams that beat Army in the annual Army-Navy classic.

“Participating in the Army-Navy game and winning both years was the highlight of my football career in college,” Anderson said recently. “Playing on a national stage in such a historic game, was something I’ll never forget.”

Three years after graduation, Anderson began a career in Naval Aviation, a career that included four assignments at NAS Kingsville – one as a student, two as an instructor pilot, and another as Air Boss, Executive Officer, and Air Show coordinator for the host command.

Anderson’s retirement ceremony was held April 16, at the NAS Kingsville Captain’s Club -- a day after the 2012 Wings Over South Texas air show concluded -- a show that he directed. An estimated 120,000 people visited the base for the 2012 air show, making it the most-attended air show ever held in Kingsville.

"Looking back," Anderson told more than 200 people attending the retirement ceremony, "I wouldn't recommend planning an air show leading up to your retirement. I've learned that the hard way. There just weren't enough hours in the day, but somehow, as a team, we got through it."

Anderson took his final flight on active duty on the last day of the air show, taking control of a T-45 Goshawk and participating in a four-plane formation flight and power display for Training Air Wing TWO. Upon conclusion of the flight, Anderson's aircraft was treated to a wash down by the NAS Kingsville fire department, and once he exited the aircraft, he was given a traditional up-close "wet down" by friends, family members and shipmates.

"Taking my final flight as part of a highly successful air show was a great way to close my active duty career," he said.

Capt.-select Matthew McLaurin, commanding officer, Defense Contract Management Agency Japan at Naval Air Facility Atsugi, served as guest speaker for the retirement ceremony. McLaurin was Anderson's roommate at the Naval Academy, and the two men have remained close friends over the years. Pastor Bil Cornelius, founder of the South Texas Bay Area Fellowship, provided the invocation and benediction.

NAS Kingsville Commanding Officer Capt. Mark McLaughlin presented Anderson a Meritorious Service Medal during the ceremony, along with congratulatory letters from the surviving U.S. presidents Anderson served during his career, the Governors of Texas and Minnesota, and a host of others.

The Anderson children, daughter Keilah and son Luke, also received Letters of Appreciation from Capt. McLaughlin, and Anderson's wife Kim was declared a "Yellow Rose of Texas," by Texas Governor Rick Perry.

Anderson's career included numerous deployments, a 12-month support assignment in Iraq in 2008, an assignment he volunteered for, as electronic warfare officer with Marine Regimental Combat Team One covering Al Anbar Province in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and received the Bronze Star Medal for superior performance. He accumulated more than 3,000 flight hours and logged more than 400 carrier landings.

During his closing remarks at retirement ceremony, Anderson turned to his Air Operations crew and thanked them for the dedication and devotion to the command mission.

"[At Air Operations], I've been fortunate to serve with the greatest Sailors I have ever have the privilege of standing alongside during my 20 years of service. I'd like to use a quote from the late Jim Rone, which I believe describes you appropriately ...

“The challenge of leadership is to be strong but not rude; to be kind but not weak; to be bold but not a bully; to be thoughtful but not lazy; to be humble but not timid; to be proud but not arrogant; and to have humor but without folly.”

“Thank you to each of you for teaching me what true professionalism really is. I cannot thank you enough for your dedication and devotion to duty.”



Lt. Cmdr. David Anderson, left, is presented a Meritorious Service Medal by NAS Kingsville Commanding Officer Capt. Mark McLaughlin during the retirement ceremony April 16 at the NAS Kingsville Captain’s Club. Anderson was presented the award for superior service as Air Operations Officer and acting Executive Officer from 2009 to 2012. (Photo by NAS Kingsville Public Affairs)



Friends and family members provide Lt. David Anderson a traditional "wet down" following his final flight on active duty April 15 as part of the NAS Kingsville 'Wings Over South Texas' air show. (Photo by NAS Kingsville Public Affairs)



The Anderson family is piped aside at the conclusion of his retirement ceremony April 16 at the NAS Kingsville Captain's Club. (Photo by NAS Kingsville Public Affairs)