



Ohio Adjutant General's Department

Mike DeWine, Governor

Major General John C. Harris Jr., Adjutant General

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Stars align for Ohio National Guard's newest general officer *Richland County resident promoted to brigadier general*

COLUMBUS, Ohio — As the flags in front of the Maj. Gen. Robert S. Beightler Armory gently swayed in the wind, Col. Gary McCue, a previous crew chief, pilot and commander, pinned on the one-star rank of brigadier general during an Aug. 7 promotion ceremony.

While the outdoor location of the ceremony may have been chosen primarily to accommodate COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, the plaza in front of the Ohio National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters painted a perfect background setting for the starting point of McCue's journey as a general officer. The bricks beneath his feet, engraved with the names of previous general officers and leaders that came before him, serve as the foundation of the ONG force. A 20-foot minuteman statue towering in the background embodies everything the National Guard stands for, which McCue will now represent in every action he takes. And a memorial to the fallen, featuring a battlefield cross, offers a solemn reminder of the sacrifice and responsibility that rests on leaders, like McCue, who must make difficult choices.

Promotion to a flag officer rank is no easy feat. In fact, of the approximately 500,000 Airmen currently serving in the U.S. Air Force — among the active component, Reserve and National Guard — a little over 18% are commissioned officers. About 0.5% of commissioned Air Force officers make it to the general officer ranks. At any given time, that means the stars will align for less than 500 Airmen who swear the oath of office and gain the responsibility and privilege to pin stars on their shoulders.

"The role of a general officer is incredibly demanding," said Maj. Gen. John C. Harris Jr., Ohio adjutant general. "You must be able to build teams and build trust. Brig. Gen. McCue has a proven track record of both, and, as a former enlisted crew chief, he has the compassion to lead those who serve in the Ohio National Guard. I expect big things from him and for him."

McCue, a resident of Bellville, Ohio, who joined the military in 1983 and is a command pilot with over 5,000 flying hours and several deployments under his belt, said there has never been a time in his 37-year career that he has considered getting out and doing something else.

“From a young age, I wanted to fly. It’s all I’ve ever wanted to do,” McCue said. “I believe had I not gone to flight school, I would have chosen a different path in the Air National Guard. I would have served regardless.”

McCue has served in a variety of leadership roles that have prepared him for his new position as director of the joint staff for the ONG. In just the last 10 years, McCue has served as the Ohio Air National Guard director of staff, deputy director of air operations at the Air National Guard Readiness Center at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland and commander of the 179th Airlift Wing in Mansfield, Ohio.

McCue acknowledged that the experience gained serving in these positions has provided him with great insight, leadership lessons and strategic perspectives in the face of challenges. And he’s had to be an innovative thinker, especially when the 179th AW faced a Base Realignment and Closure in 2005 and another potential closure when it lost the C-27J Spartan in 2011.

Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, is the congressionally authorized process the Department of Defense has used to reorganize its base structure, which entails a federally appointed commission evaluating military installations and making recommendations to close certain ones for greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness across the force.

In 2005 and 2011, the 179th’s mission was on the chopping block, but each time the unit came out stronger on the other side, receiving new missions in the face of potential closure. McCue, the then-operations commander and wing commander, respectively, played a vital part in those successes.

“They told us we would close, and both times we came together, worked hard, and received the news that we’d stay open. It’s this ‘can-do, never back down and never give up’ attitude that cannot be put into words,” McCue said. “It brought me this overwhelming sense of pride of what our members can do. We come together like family in the face of adversity because we are family.”

His wife Molly and their four daughters have been his No. 1 support system, seeing him through each new challenge. McCue has known his wife for most of his life, but they reconnected and were married in 2010. Since then, Molly has never missed an opportunity to support her husband.

“She is an incredible supporter. She has attended every event with me, and truly enjoys the military life,” McCue said. “She is an amazing role model for our girls.”

His daughters grew up at the 179th watching their father fly planes, and Josie and Carly have followed in his footsteps by enlisting into the Air National Guard at the 179th. His family showed up in full support during the promotion ceremony. His wife and daughters helped in the pinning ceremony. Josie, now an airman first class, was in full service dress and helped unveil her dad’s Air Force one-star general officer flag for the first time. Having his family there when he pinned on was special.

“I think they are pretty darned proud of me, but they also keep me in check. They ground me, and remind me often as to who’s really in charge, even if I am the one wearing the star,” McCue chuckled. “I’m humbled to have made it this far, and I don’t take it lightly. I have a robust sense of humor but I take this position and responsibility extremely seriously.”

As he heads into his new role as the director of the joint staff for the ONG, McCue reflected on the advice and insight of leaders he's learned from, worked alongside and looked up to.

As a junior officer and young pilot, he was told, every step of his military career would be his choice to succeed or mess up, and with each new duty, he focused on that professionalism along with the fundamental core value of the Air Force — integrity.

“There's a reason integrity is our top core value. People make mistakes but it's a matter of intent,” McCue said. “Making an honest mistake and owning up to it makes all the difference, and it keeps us from becoming a one-mistake organization.”

As director of the joint staff, McCue's job will be to ensure the organization stays on track and to act swiftly and decisively on behalf of the adjutant general and the governor to save lives, mitigate suffering and prevent property damage during natural or man-made disasters and emergencies. He will be responsible for the integration and coordination of National Guard capabilities in support of the Homeland Defense mission and Defense Support to Civil Authorities operations, to include the oversight of more than 16,000 dedicated Army, Air and State Defense Force personnel.

“My challenge to you, keep doing the things that got you here, keep managing the intangible, keep building trust,” Harris charged McCue during the promotion ceremony. “When you wonder what it takes to be a general officer, look in the mirror.”

Newly promoted, McCue assumes his new role as a general officer and says his direction is clear: “Focus on the job at hand and be the best you can be in those duties.”

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EDITOR'S NOTES: Photos from McCue's promotion ceremony are available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/6320946/stars-align-ohio-national-guards-newest-general-officer>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Stephanie Beougher, public information officer, at 614-506-3490 or stephanie.k.beougher.nfg@mail.mil.

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