

CANNON

Spotlight



Sara Gurian, Lt. Col, USAF
27SOFSS Commander

Life on an Air Force base comes with 'norms' that other jobs do not. One of those norms being the routine change of command in leadership. There are achievements that many hope to make within the ranks of the USAF, few being bestowed the honor to command a squadron. Lt Col Gurian is the new Commander of the 27 Special Operation Force Support Squadron. Here is a short interview with her to share who she is.

Q: Where did you come from?

A: I just PCS'd in from RAF Mildenhall in England. But I'm originally from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Q: What's your favorite base to date?

A: My favorite base to date would probably be Yokota Air Base in Japan. It was my very first duty station. As a newlywed with my husband, we got to explore Tokyo and all the surrounding areas and it was absolutely amazing.

Q: Any favorite spots that you visited?

A: We went scuba diving a lot. So I would say the ocean.

Q: Do you have any pets?

A: I do. I have a dog named Freya. She's a German Sheppard/Belgian Malinois mix. She's only two years old. She's very loyal, very well trained and obedient. I also have another dog Lucy, but she lives in Colorado. She's a Golden Retriever.

Q: What are some of your favorite hobbies?

A: I love to cook and bake because I love to eat. So those two go hand-in-hand. I grew up bowling. I've been bowling since I was four, so I do enjoy bowling quite a bit. Just anything with my family.

Q: You have two kids correct?

A: Lily is seven, Lucas is ten. My husband is Stephen. His career was a police officer. I pulled him over seas. We've been overseas for 10 out of the 16 years we've been serving. That's a long time overseas, so we're happy to be back in America.

Q: What are you looking forward to most at the new commander of the 27 SOFSS?

A: I'm just looking forward to the people of the squadron. I think our people are what makes the mission happen. So far the people I've met are absolutely amazing, so I just look forward to making the squadron my family.

Q: Was being an FSS Commander your career goal?

A: Honestly, no. However, just having commanded before I came here, it's the best job in the Air Force being a squadron Commander. So I am super honored and humbled to have this opportunity, especially twice.

Q: What's your leadership philosophy?

A: I feel like there's many different philosophies that you can throw together, but for me it's; if we take care of our members of our squadron, they will take care of the mission.

Q: What change do you hope to bring to the 27 SOFSS/Cannon AFB?

A: I just hope to step up what Lt Col Parker has already created. This is an outstanding team. If we continue to polish it and just make it better, but just to step up our game to the next level and ensure that we've created a culture and climate where everybody can excel at their job and do everything that they need to do to support the community.

Q: Were there any events at your last FSS that you want to bring here [to Cannon]?

A: We did do a huge comic-con event. We called it Milde-con. I kept teasing like, "Soon there will be a Cannon-con." But I think, for now, I really just want to take in and see everything that we do offer. Because I'm sure I only got like a slight snippet of everything that goes on here. And I think each environment of different bases bring different opportunities to have events.

Q: Having prior experience as a Commander, are there any challenges to the job?

A: There's a lot of challenges. FSS is a beast. And there's so many different activities. I always refer to it as my 'job jar'. The jar is so big and there's so many things you're trying to balance and keep track of. Luckily I have an outstanding team that are going to help me stay on track and stay informed. I think that the 'informed' piece is the biggest one. Because I trust the team, but just making sure that I'm informed enough to then elevate that and let leadership know what's going on. Or to ask for help in certain situations.

Q: Who or what inspires you?

A: First, my dad inspired me. He lived the 'Air Force life' and I wouldn't be here if he hadn't done it. Honestly, I think all of my squadron Commanders have really inspired me as I go through the ranks. Because it is such a difficult job and they've done it so smoothly and easily. So it's nice to be able to see and it gives me that inspiration that I can do the same.

Q: Where do you see yourself in the future?

A: I always say that I still don't know what I want to do when I grow up. Which sounds crazy because I'm sure people look at me and they're like, "You've grown." But I'm hoping, in the future, I can be more of a mom. I am a mom now, but I think that I give so much to the squadron and to my career that I'm not as involved at home. Maybe once my careers over my husband can go to work and I can be the mom that I want to be.

Q: Is your family a key element to your leadership?

A: It really is. My family is my life. And I always say that I'm a mom first. Because nobody else can replace me as mom. The Air Force will always find another Commander to sit in this position or they'll let Maj. Boyd or Mr. Boyd lead the squadron. That's just one of those things that I'm not replaceable as a mom and a wife. My family is definitely very important to me.

Q: Any last comments or words of wisdom?

A: Comments wise, I'm just happy to be here. I already love the squadron. I'm super excited to be a part of this team. Words of wisdom, "Don't waste today worrying about tomorrow." I often times stress about what's to come and don't enjoy the moment. You can plan for tomorrow, but don't waste your day worrying about tomorrow.



Timothy "Repo" Sessions, Ch, Maj, USAF

27 SOW Wing Chaplain

When looking for solace, people often times go home or to a friend's house. But at Cannon, there's a place that all base members can go if they feel they need outside guidance. The Cannon Chapel offers worship services for the Catholic and Protestant faiths, volunteer opportunities for those who seek to give back and a welcome solitude for those needing to step away for a bit. Chaplain Sessions had much to share about the Chapel and his role leading it.

Q: As the Wing Chaplain, what are some of your responsibilities?

A: I ensure that our worship programs are taking care of the religious needs of folks here. We have our Catholic parish and our Protestant parish, I ensure that we have our Chaplains in place to provide that support to folks. But then I also make sure that our Chaplains are assigned to various units. Here we have them assigned by group. So, we'll have a SOG Chaplain, MXG Chaplain, Med Group and MSG Chaplain. We make sure we're putting the right people in with the right units to just kind of provide the unit engagement.

Q: What's a memorable task that you've been assigned?

A: I was at Walter Reed in 2004 doing a Clinical Pastoral Education Program and we had a lot of folks coming in who were injuries, like casualties, from Afghanistan and Iraq. Being able to care for the individuals that were coming home, and a lot of them were waking up for the first time, post injury, and to be there and offer care to them and their families. And also support folks like the nurses and the doctors. That was very memorable and very rewarding.

Q: Have you dealt with any difficult or emotional circumstances that make being a Chaplain challenging?

A: To be a Chaplain, you have to have a heart for people. Anytime you have people who

come to you, and they're struggling with something in life, you never know what kind of situations you're going to have walk into your office, but some of the things people carry sometimes it can affect you as well. Having to deal with the loss of a military member and working through the grief with the unit but also trying to work through that same grief at the same time, often times you kind of have to put yourself on hold. I have to find a way to kind of work through those issues too.

Q: Is there anyone that you can go to for that?

A: Yes. I mean, my dad was a Chaplain, so I'm a second generation Chaplain. I often can go to him and just say, "Hey dad I had a bad day." or "This was a difficult situation." And I'm just able to bounce some things off of him. Often times, just my family, we still have privileged communication. So, I always have to keep that stuff sacred, but if I'm having a tough day, I can still go home to my wife and say, "Hey, it's been a pretty rough day."

Q: Can you explain the Oasis Airmen Ministry more and what their goals are?

A: The Oasis, the name in and of itself is kind of the concept behind that. If you think of a deserty place, it can be hot, it can be tiring, it can be weary, an oasis is a place in the midst of that where people can come and get refreshed, renewed and connected. We want to help Airmen connect, we want to give them a place where they can feel like they're contributing to something. On a spiritual level, we want to give them opportunities to exercise and practice their faith. That's really what we're trying to do with the Airmen Ministry Center.

Q: Do you perform the masses or services yourself?

A: So mass, that would be the priest, and he is the only one that can do mass for the Catholic parish. For the Protestant parish I try to make sure that I'm in the rotation to preach, but I'm not the primary lead for the Protestant parish.

Q: Is there a priest assigned to Cannon?

A: Yes. We have Father Pedro Jimenez. He's our Catholic priest. The remaining Chaplains we have are in the Protestant faith.

Q: Is the priest Active Duty?

A: Our priest is Active Duty. That's something unique to Cannon, because not every CONUS (installation within the United States) have Active Duty priests.

Q: Every week the chapel sends out a Cannon Kairos newsletter, can you explain the name and share more on your mission behind the newsletter?

A: The words Kairos is a Greek word, it means 'a special appointed time'. What are we trying to get at with that? We want our community to know what the chapel has to offer. It's just a way to get the information out to the base of what we have to offer and some of the big events that we have.

Q: The Chapel hosts a lot of events/activities, are most of these events run by volunteers?

A: Right now, a lot of the programs that we offer are either run by a contractor or Active Duty chapel staff. We do have some programs that we're trying to build upon which we definitely need a lot of volunteers to help us to offer those programs.

Q: What are the Chapel's favorite events to host? Why?

A: I can tell you the 'why'. Building community. We want to ensure that when people come to Cannon that they feel like there's things for them to do and ways for them to connect to other folks. Favorite events... One thing that's unique to Cannon that we are blessed to do are the family, marriage and date nights. That is something that not every base does. And it's really cool to be able to see families get away, connect with each other and be given tools so that when they come home they are able to improve on their relationships.

Q: If there's one thing that you would like to share about the Chapel that many people might not know, what would it be?

A: We're here for everybody. We're here for the member (Active Duty), we're here for their families, and we're here for the civilians and contractors. You don't necessarily have to be of a certain faith to benefit from what the Chapel has to offer. Sometimes people think that's the case and that's not necessarily the case.

Q: Do you have any last comments?

A: Anywhere you go is what you make of it. That's what I've learned. I'm a military kid, I grew up as a military brat. Any place you go is really what you make of it. It's not the place. And it's not necessarily the people. It's kind of your attitude and your choice to try and see the positives in it and try to choose to enjoy wherever you're at and whatever you're doing.