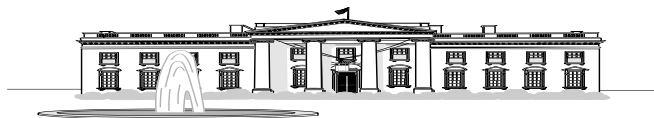


## **"The Aiguillette"**

### **The Society of White House Military Aides**

**March 2022**



**Spring 2022**

**March 16, 2022**

**Dear Society Members,**

**We are happy to see the positive news coming to our new quarterly newsletter. Advisors Jim Barry (Reagan / Bush '41), Editor, and Bob Kettle (Clinton), our Communication Committee Chair, are doing a great job with this, and having some fun with it too!**

**Please become a member, our form can be found [here](http://www.swhma.org) or you may pay at the website after registering at [www.swhma.org](http://www.swhma.org) and then click on "Shopping Cart".**

**Highlights are the recognition of AMB Abelardo Valdez (Johnson / Carter Chief of Protocol) as a Distinguished Graduate for Texas A&M University, congrats Lalo! Jim has interviewed the three (3) current Biden Aides who joined us for our December 15th, 2021 Advisor Social at The Congressional Country Club. They are MAJ Andrew Schoka, Army Senior Aide (Trump / Biden); MAJ Lindsey Gerheim (Biden) a White House Fellow; and MAJ Mike Ryan (Biden), the White House's first Space Force Aide. Wow! May the Force be with these three as they join our Society and become the 15th Administration to be represented in the Society's ranks, the first being two Roosevelt Aides, and very special they were!**

**We look forward to a first-time mentoring event at The Army and Navy Club on May 12<sup>th</sup>, and LTC Paige Young (Obama). Paige talks about this event in this newsletter.**

**What is Kenn reading, "Strategy of Denial" written brilliantly by Eldridge Colby who was an OSD DAS for Strategy and Force Development, a related Directorate to where I worked under SECDEF Cheney. Mr. Colby favors the Fait Accompli as the preferred strategy of China for seizing control of Taiwan and then the Philippines. Interesting given what has happened in Ukraine.**

**That's it! We're all in this together. God Bless America!**

***Kenn Riordan, Jr.***

**The Society of White House Military Aides**

**"AN ASSOCIATION OF WHITE HOUSE MILITARY AIDES  
WHO HAVE SERVED OUR NATION'S PRESIDENTS"**



***Kenn Riordan, Jr., USA (Ret)  
Founder and Chairman (Reagan)***

## Social Aide Interviews

### Andrew Schoka (Trump/Biden) Interview

*By Jim Barry (Reagan/Bush)*

1. Where are you from (hometown) and where are you living now?  
**I'm originally from northern VA, and currently live on the MD side of D.C. in Beltsville.**
2. Which service are you a member of?  
**USA**
3. Specialty within the service?  
**Cyber Operations Officer**
4. Which President(s) do/did you serve with?  
**I joined the WHSA program in early 2019 under President Trump. I was fortunate to work in support of the 2020 Presidential Inauguration, and currently serve under the Biden administration.**
5. What's one great memory of serving in the White House you can share?  
**I've written before about my experience serving as a Social Aide during the 2020 Presidential Inauguration, which is certainly one of my most cherished memories while serving in the program. Another incredible experience at a much smaller-scale event was the time I was asked to provide a White House tour to two visiting general officers from the UK military. I was able to get permission for a special addition to the "usual" tour for these visitors, and enjoyed showing them the scorch marks visible on the bricks inside the tradesman's entrance, as I reminded them of what had happened during a previous "visit" by members of the British Armed Forces. They promised to be more courteous this time around!**
6. What are you doing now in the military?  
**I'm currently the team commander for 100 Combat Support Team, a cyber operations support element assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters - Cyber (Army).**
7. If you could achieve one great achievement, what was it, or what will it be?  
**My proudest moments in the Social Aide program have not come during the actual White House events; rather, they've come about while seeing newly-recruited Army Social Aides take their first steps inside the White House while reporting for their first event. I've been tremendously fortunate to serve as the Service Program Manager for the Army since 2020, and have participated in recruiting and selecting over a dozen officers (all outstanding individuals and far more qualified than I!) to the program. Being able to share the unique experiences of the Social Aide program with our new Aides, and see them develop their own love of White House history as**



**they rise through the ranks of the program, has been an incredible privilege over the past few years.**

8. What advice would you give to your 25-year-old self? Or, if you're around 25, what advice would you give to yourself as you were entering high school?

**Before commissioning and later joining the WHSA program, I don't think I had much awareness of or appreciation for the White House as an institution or the incredible array of memorials and monuments in the city, despite living in DC my entire childhood. Visiting the museums and monuments became a common experience, but I think it wasn't until later on in life that I realized how fortunate I had been to grow up surrounded by so much incredible history right by my doorstep.**

9. What do you like most about the SWHMA?

**Meeting and connecting with WHSA alumni! Putting current Aides in touch with potential mentors and helping bring back some historical experience to the program has been a fantastic asset offered by SWHMA during my time with the program.**

10. What would you most want to read in the newsletters?

**I always enjoy the commentary and input from prior Aides, especially those in the earlier administrations. Really helps to give some perspective on the program's history and sheds some light on the major differences between the current program and in previous years.**

11. What news source do you read every day/often? Can be a newspaper, new site, blog, etc.

**I get most of my news from Reddit and a handful of technology news sites (Ars Technica, WIRED, Krebs on Security) mostly.**

12. What book has had the biggest impact on your life that you would recommend to others?

**One of my recent reads was *The Bomber Mafia*, by Malcolm Gladwell. It's a fascinating deep dive into early USAF history and the development of modern strategic bombing doctrine, along with an interesting depiction of defense industrial research and manufacturing. Highly recommend for anyone who enjoys WWII history or military technology.**

13. Who are you? (how would you want someone to describe you)

**More than all else, I consider myself a passionate and perpetual learner. Whether related to my day-to-day duties, academic pursuits, or brushing up on White House trivia, I try to approach all things with a learner's attitude.**

# Michael Ryan (Biden) Interview

By Jim Barry (Reagan/Bush)

1. Where are you from (hometown) and where are you living now?

**I am from Colorado Springs, CO (which is probably why I chose NOT to go to the Air Force Academy ☺). I currently live just outside of D.C.**

2. Which service are you a member of?

**Was USAF 2009-2021, now USSF as of June 2021**

3. Specialty within the service?

**Developmental Engineer / Program Manager**

4. Which President(s) do/did you serve with?

**President Biden (active WH Social Aide since June 2021)**



5. What's one great memory of serving in the White House you can share?

**While there are many great individual memories, I think what I have enjoyed most is being in the unique position as the only US Space Force Social Aide (for the time being). Everyone has so many questions for me about the USSF and it has been refreshing to see people get excited about it. That excitement gets lost in normal day-to-day work life.**

6. What are you doing now in the military?

**I currently work as a Program Manager for some unique capabilities at the National Reconnaissance Office. I am transitioning to be a Program Element Monitor at the pentagon this summer (will represent major acquisition programs to higher HQ and will serve as the program's liaison to congress)**

7. What's one piece of advice you would give to someone leaving the service?

**Expect that the civilian world will operate differently**

8. If you could achieve one great achievement, what was it, or what will it be?

**I think my end goal is to have a successful career without burning out or losing focus on my personal life.**

9. What advice would you give to your 25-year-old self? Or, if you're around 25, what advice would you give to yourself as you were entering high school?

**Put yourself into more uncomfortable situations**

10. What do you like most about the SWHMA?

**I am brand new to SWHMA but initially I really like the sense of community that it provides.**

11. What would you most want to read in the newsletters?

**Cool stories. More current pictures with Aides...if the WH is willing to release them**

12. What news source do you read every day/often? Can be a newspaper, new site, blog, etc.

**Various. I have not yet found a single source that is unbiased & that I'm happy with**

13. What book has had the biggest impact on your life that you would recommend to others?



**Top book in general: Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. For productivity: Getting Things Done by David Allen or Atomic Habits by James Clear.**

14. What can you tell us about the Space Force?

**Most people I talk to think that the USSF is establishing something brand new. In reality, most of the personnel, on-orbit assets, and missions already existed under the Air Force (think GPS, missile warning, weather satellites, military comm, launch, etc.). It is very similar to how the Air Force was established from its roots in the Army Air Corps.**

**Worldwide military and commercial investments in space is skyrocketing, so the creation of the USSF is probably a good way for the U.S. to stay on top by focusing on this very complex and politically sensitive domain.**

15. What do you like about the Space Force?

**As a small and brand new organization, the USSF can cater more to the needs of individual service members. For example they are looking into allowing 6 year assignments. They are also changing our professional military education to partner more with industry and focus on more hands-on and relevant learning. There are only about 6.5K active duty military in the USSF, so they can afford to take some risks and try new things.**

16. Anything you don't like about the Space Force so far?

**Can't say I'm excited that the name they settled on for Space Force members is "Guardians." There were also discussions early on of changing to Navy rank...missed opportunity, would have been cool to be a Captain again. Otherwise, the service has some work to do on implementing planned changes, but I guess it will take time for them to get their sea legs (err space legs?).**



*A picture from Michael's promotion at the National Archives (2019), "It was pretty cool taking the oath in front of the constitution, proud of that."*

# **Major Lindsey Gerheim (Trump/Biden) Interview**

*By Jim Barry (Reagan/Bush)*

1. Where are you from (hometown) and where are you living now?

**I grew up in Alpharetta, GA and am currently stationed in Washington, DC.**

2. Which service are you a member of?

**Active-Duty Army**

3. Specialty within the service?

**Military Police Officer**

4. Which President(s) do/did you serve with?

**Presidents Trump and Biden**

5. What's one great memory of serving in the White House you can share?

**Being that the SWHMA has incredible servants across each of these administrations and POTUS, they say a picture is worth a thousand words so please enjoy the attached photos with each of our Commander and Chiefs taken over the last year with my promise to do a story exchange at future SWHMA events.**

6. What are you doing now in the military?

**I just concluded my year as a 2020-2021 White House Fellow. Under the Trump Administration I served at the Department of Commerce for the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Intelligence and Security. There we focused on TikTok/WeChat, ICTS Supply Chain, and the SolarWinds breach. After experiencing January 6 as a DC resident and the transition of administrations, I then served at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) working on the Executive Order for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA) and working with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council (CHCO Council) focused on the future of work for the Federal Workforce in alignment with COVID-19 and pandemic 'new norms.' Today I serve the National Cyber Director (NCD) and continue to volunteer as a WH Social Aide.**

7. What's one piece of advice you would give to someone leaving the service?

**I have not left the service yet, but what I would first say is THANK YOU for your service and impart that the military will 'go rolling along (Army)' but that the uniform does not define their worth in society or value to the professional job market. The experience, skills and camaraderie learned during our military service is priceless but our ability to communicate our value to the civilian workforce takes practice, so I recommend that they take advantage of every transition program, certification, and opportunity offered but even more important – prior to submitting transition paperwork, reach out to mentors in fields you think you want to pivot too and those you may not consider for 30 minute conversations to help you (1) work on your ability to translate military to civilian service and (2) make connections with industry leaders in and out of your field to find the right career path for you and your family out of uniform.**

8. If you could achieve one great achievement, what was it, or what will it be?

**This might be an atypical response but the greatest achievement and legacy I have not secured is getting married and having a family. Balance in service... I will know it when I see it (and feel it).**

9. What advice would you give to your 25-year-old self?

**There will never be a good time, make now the right time to enable yourself to live with no regrets.**





10. What do you like most about the SWHMA?

**Opportunity to connect with leaders in and out of uniform who understand the opportunity of serving in the WH, have incredible stories from behind the scenes, and make the time and commitment to bring our community together to share their families, passions, and a few libations to discuss the many opportunities of our incredible friendships ahead.**

11. What would you most want to read in the newsletters?

**Quick WHSA Stories, Historical WH Facts, and opportunities “to get the band back together.”**

12. What news source do you read every day/often? Can be a newspaper, new site, blog, etc.

**I subscribe and read ‘The Factual’ every morning. They promote “unbiased news, trending topics, determined by data – not politics, and rate stories according to political leaning and credibility of source and facts within articles while always showing multiple perspectives across the political spectrum.”**

13. What book has had the biggest impact on your life that you would recommend to others?

**I recommend *Say Anything: How Leaders Inspire Ideas, Cultivate Candor, and Forge Fearless Cultures* by Doug Crandall and Matt Kincaid PhD. Each short chapter walks through military, sports, and everyday real life scenarios where leaders either achieved or failed to achieve a safe and empowered culture (permission to speak freely). What I love is at the end of each chapter is a “how to” section of how to immediately bring this culture into your team.**

14. Who are you? (how would you want someone to describe you)

**I was asked this exact question during my interviews to be a WH Fellow, however, our answer could only be one word - my word remains “genuine.” I might offer that as a midcareer military leader I am at the rank where I am selected less for “best available and qualified” and more for my reputation and personality (or lack thereof) in selection to join a team. I am not an ‘on and off’ switch and I don’t want to be perceived as different in and out of uniform, on and off duty, with those above me, next to me, or on my team. So as the saying goes ‘what you see is what you get’ and it is certainly ‘good, bad, and ugly’ but in every moment you get all of me, genuine me.**



## Members Spotlight

### AMB Abelardo Valdez (Johnson) Inducted Into The Texas A&M Corps of Cadets Hall of Honor

On July 24, 2021, AMB Abelardo Valdez (Johnson), was given one of the greatest honors a Texas A&M Cadet could receive. He was inducted into the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets Hall of Honor.

Since 1876, when the Corps of Cadets and the University were established, only 185 former Cadets have been inducted into the Corps of Cadets Hall of Honor. These have included many generals, such as General Earl Rudder, who commanded the Ranger Battalion that scaled the cliffs at Point Du Hoc at the Normandy Invasion on D-Day and later served as President of A&M, and only two U.S. Ambassadors who also were military officers. President George H. W. Bush, who established his Presidential Library and inspired the establishment of the Bush School of Public Service at A&M, and Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates who served as President of A&M were inducted into the Hall of Honor as Honorary Members.





Bobby “BlackHat” Walters (Reagan/Clinton) “Vaxed To The Max”

Bobby BlackHat is at it again with another hit: [https://youtu.be/e\\_FnRxqp8XQ](https://youtu.be/e_FnRxqp8XQ)





## Events

### **SWHMA Spring 2022 Mentorship Event**

Greetings! I hope everyone is getting excited about this year's SWHMA spring event. It has been a long time since we have been able to get together in person and the board wanted to make this a memorable and useful experience to attend. The events of the past two years have caused many people to reflect on changes they'd like to make in their lives both professionally, and personally. Keeping this in mind, the board decided to focus this year's spring event on mentorship. On May 12th at 1730 at the Army Navy Country Club, SWHMA will be hosting its first speed mentoring session as part of our spring event. We will also host a guest speaker who is passionate about mentorship and leadership, Lieutenant General Dan Caine. Lt Gen Caine is currently the Associate Director for Military Affairs at the Central Intelligence Agency and was one of the fighter pilots from the DC Air National Guard that was airborne protecting Washington DC on 9/11.

For our speed mentoring event we will need volunteer mentors and mentees. Please do not be shy! We have hundreds of years of valuable military and civilian experience amongst us. We will be following a protocol that is used by Dana Perino's mentoring program called "Minute Mentoring". Mentors meet with five sets of three mentees for short conversations. Each mentor, seated at a table, imparts three tips for success to their group of mentees. The tips serve as a starting point for discussion during the remaining time. After ten minutes, the mentees move to the next mentor and mentor will be joined by three new mentees. The formal mentoring session will last for about 40 minutes to an hour depending on how many participants we have and will be followed by a networking reception. If you would like to be a mentor or mentee, please contact Paige Young at [paige.h.young@gmail.com](mailto:paige.h.young@gmail.com).

Thanks,

Paige



## White House Christmas Tour

While we did not have a Christmas tour in 2021, we will be back in 2022!





## **Society Leadership Rallies and Takes a Stand at the Congressional – Live Free or Not!**

Contrary to rumor, the Society's leadership team and closest friends were not "encouraged" to leave the Congressional Country Club by the Maryland State police after 4 hours of talking, drinking, and eating. It's just not true, the Congressional in fact has its own security team!

We had a very special group of people assemble, our Advisors past and present, our most trusted friends, some of whom have assisted the Society for almost 30 years, the Judge Advocate General for the US Coast Guard as special guest, RADM Melissa Bert (Bush '43), and three (3) current Trump and Biden Aides which I venture had a very good time indeed. They were paired with LTC Paige Young (Obama), Dr. Kelly Brown (Clinton / Bush '43), and Melissa. Des femmes formidables que vous comprenez! We were also joined by Advisors Emeritus COL (Ret) Roger McNamara (Johnson) and COL (Ret) Bill Sinnott, who have stepped aside to allow younger aides to lead us forward. Thank you Roger and Bill, our friends!





## How to Connect

### **LinkedIn:**

Our SWHMA LinkedIn group currently has 124 members. We invite SWHMA members to join us as we look to develop the group as a way to further connect our members. If you're on LinkedIn please join us!

To access our LinkedIn group, please go to [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) and either sign up for an account or log on. Once you are logged on, please search for The Society of White House Military Aides. Once you access the group page, select "Ask to Join". Once confirmed, you will be added to the group.

### **Facebook:**

Our SWHMA Facebook group currently has 237 members. To join the our Facebook group, please search "White House Military and Social Aides" or use the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/923613964355467/> and ask to "Join" the group. Once confirmed, you will be added to the group.

### **Newsletter ideas and suggestions:**

Kenn Riordan, Jr.: [lordstrider@earthlink.net](mailto:lordstrider@earthlink.net)

Sarah Chapman: [sarah\\_chapman@comcast.net](mailto:sarah_chapman@comcast.net)

Bob Kettle: [kettlere@gmail.com](mailto:kettlere@gmail.com)

Jim Barry: [jtb@celerity05.com](mailto:jtb@celerity05.com)

### **Renew your Membership:**

Here is how:

Please go to <https://www.swhma.org/members/shopping-cart/> and login to your account or create a new registration. Once logged in, you can select which membership type you would like to purchase.