Brabazon takes command of Naval Air Station Patuxent River

By Donna Cipolloni
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

Capt. John Brabazon officially assumed command of Naval Air Station Patuxent River in a change of command ceremony Sept. 17, held outside on the catwalk atop the installation’s air traffic control tower.

After reading his orders, Brabazon addressed Rear Adm. Carl Lahti, Commandant, Naval District Washington, and others in attendance at the intimate gathering — purposely kept small due to COVID-19 restrictions — as well as additional family and well-wishers who watched the event online via Facebook Live.

“It is an honor and a huge privilege to command the largest naval air station in the world,” Brabazon said. “I’m grateful for the confidence expressed by Adm. Lahti and the outstanding Sailors, Marines, Navy civilians, dedicated contractors and, most importantly, their families, who make up Team Pax. The opportunity to continue serving our country is, quite honestly, deeply humbling.”

Brabazon went on to recognize all military spouses, especially his wife of more than 17 years, Lisa, whom he noted has been his “rock and foundation for my entire time of Navy service.” He also said he was proud to have his four sisters “tuning in today with their families; and I believe we’re about 240-feet closer to my parents today. I know they’re smiling down upon us.”

This new role as commanding officer follows Brabazon’s tenure as the air station’s executive officer, a position that falls under the Navy’s Fleet-Up program. In that program, executive officers serve approximately 18 months before they “fleet up” to become the commanding officer for their command tour on the same ship or station, thus providing focused command leadership stability.

Brabazon, a native of Pennsylvania, graduated with a Bachelor of Science from Pennsylvania State University in 1996 and Master of Engineering degrees from Jacksonville University and the Naval War College. He is also a Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI program fellow.

His operational tours spanned both coasts and overseas, commanding the “Pelicans” of Patrol Squadron (VP) 45 Jacksonville; as department head in the “Golden Eagles” of VP 9 Hawaii; and as deputy commander CTF-37 Bahrain. He served as an instructor pilot with the “Pros Nest” of VP-30 and as shutter and officer of the deck underway aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76).

Ashore, he served as action officer to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Europe & NATO); advance travel officer for the Secretary of Defense; Deputy Director, Navy Senate Liaison, Office of Legislative Affairs, and most recently as Deputy Executive Assistant to the Office of the Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

Capt. Brabazon reported as Pax River’s Executive Officer on April 11, 2019.

His personal awards include the Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), the Bronze Star Award, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, and various team and campaign service awards.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Brabazon charged members of Team Pax to “continue to look out for each other and diligently follow the guidelines of our healthcare professionals. Safely enjoy time with friends and family, and return to work recommitted to our high ideals of service above self. Maintain course, and in accordance with Navy tradition, increase speed. We will continue to raise the customer service standard in support of our 53 mission partners, so when the United States gets into a fight defending our values overseas, the best team on the planet — our Navy and Marine Corps Team — owns the skies. It all starts here at NAS Patuxent River.”

Brabazon is the 42nd NAS Commanding Officer to serve at Pax River, which was commissioned in 1943.

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Test Pilot School XO participating in WWII anniversary flyover

By Paul Lagasse
U.S. Naval Test Pilot School Communications

When a fleet of vintage warbirds takes to the skies over Washington, D.C., Friday to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, U.S. Naval Test Pilot School Executive Officer Cmdr. Jeremy DeBons will be among them.

DeBons will be flying a Piper L-4 Grasshopper, the military version of the ubiquitous Piper Cub, as part of the Arsenal of Democracy Flyover Sept. 25, during which more than 70 aircraft will fly over the Washington Mall in historically sequenced formations representing the war’s major battles and concluding with a missing-man formation.

“T am incredibly honored to be participating and to see the level of participation from World War II aircraft and their owners across the country, especially during the pandemic,” DeBons said. “The organizers have put in countless hours of planning to ensure we remain safe in the air and healthy on the ground. The airplane that DeBons will be flying is actually a civilian Piper J-3-65 built in 1939 that has been restored to a World War II-era L-4 configuration complete with distinctive black-and-white D-Day invasion stripes. DeBons was originally scheduled to be a backup pilot for the aircraft’s owner, Art Nalls, a retired Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel, vintage aircraft restorer, and airshow pilot based in California, Maryland, but a last-minute schedule conflict put DeBons in the pilot seat for the event.

DeBons first flew the airplane in 2012, earning his tailwheel rating.