

Official Magazine of the Air Force Reserve

CITIZEN AIRMAN

Vol 66 No. 6 December 2014

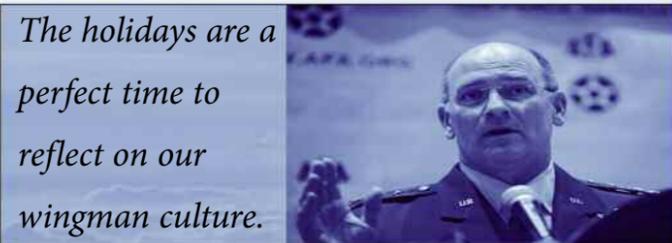
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“We leave no family behind.”

Key spouses are always there to lend a helping hand ... Page 14



LIEUTENANT GENERAL
James F. Jackson
 ★★ ★
FROM THE TOP



The holidays are a perfect time to reflect on our wingman culture.

A SENSE OF BELONGING

As this holiday season approaches, Barb and I want you to know we appreciate your service. This year has been challenging, but you answered the nation's call without fail. This holiday season is a perfect opportunity to reconnect with friends and loved ones, but for some it may be a challenging time. Use this time to strengthen our wingman culture and reflect on the importance of what you do for our nation.

Both Barb and I value the sense of community and belonging we have in our Air Force Reserve. This sense of belonging, or wingman culture, is one of the best things about serving. Our Air Force family includes our men and women in uniform, civilian employees, contractors and the families that support them. We understand a sense of belonging is critical, not only for service members but for their families as well. Together we are stronger.

It is easy to forget that some of us may not be able to spend the holidays with family and friends this year. For those far away from loved ones or for those who are alone this season, the holidays may be a very difficult time of year. I want you to

know you are not alone. Use this time to connect with friends and co-workers, and I challenge those surrounded by family and friends to reach out to those who may not be as fortunate. Leverage your Air Force family.

One of the ways to get connected is through our Key Spouse Program. The Key Spouse program encourages peer-to-peer wingman support and provides an opportunity for spouses and families to build relationships with each other throughout the year. In partnership with your leadership, key spouses provide a critical link to strengthen our community. By reaching out and staying connected, we create stronger bonds within our Reserve family. These types of programs increase our resiliency. I encourage you to read the article that begins on Page 14 in this issue of *Citizen Airman* to learn more about the Key Spouse Program and to contact your local Airman and Family Readiness Center for volunteer opportunities.

Together we comprise the most capable and professional Air Force in the world, and you are an immensely important

part of that team. The holidays are a perfect time to reflect on our wingman culture and strengthen the bonds that make us a great Reserve force. Enjoy the season and take time to say thank you to those who support you as you continue to serve. Thanks for all you do!

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT
Cameron B. Kirksey
CHIEF'S VIEW

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND TEAM WELLNESS

Happy holidays! I think this season is the perfect time to discuss my third focus area, Team Wellness, that I talked about in my last *Citizen Airman* commentary. Wellness for our Airmen and their families involves physical, mental, spiritual and social aspects. This season gives us time to focus on all aspects of wellness, especially the social aspect. My goal for our enlisted force this season is to connect with family, friends and the Airmen we work with, while at the same time reaching out to our deployed troops and wounded warriors.

I want us to focus on how we can be socially fit as individuals and as an organization. The Wingman Toolkit describes social fitness as "having a strong sense of belonging and connection to the people around you. It's being able to develop and maintain trusted, valued relationships that are personally fulfilling and provide a safe place to exchange ideas, views and experiences."

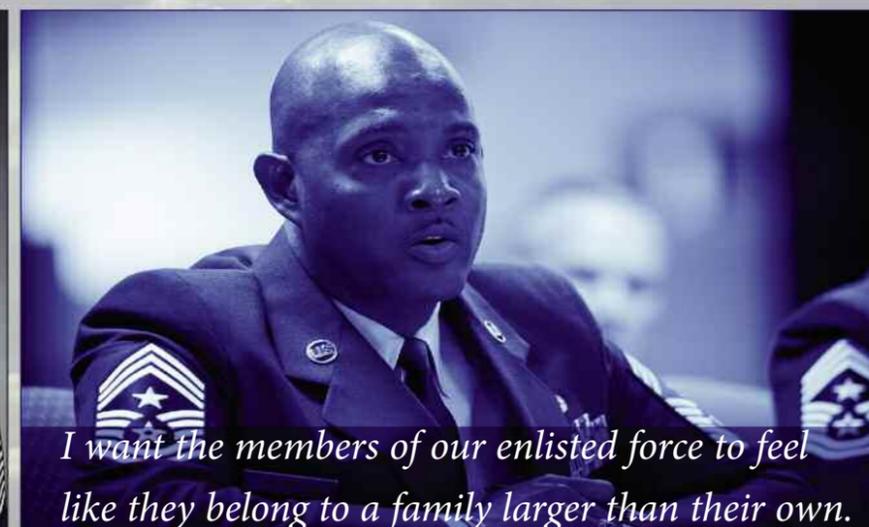
The holiday season gives us time to strengthen those relationships we value and provides an opportunity to reach out to those around us.

As General Jackson points out in his commentary, the holiday season can be a time of excitement and fun, but it can also be a challenging time. Some may be spending this holiday season alone due to a deployment, a permanent change of station move away from family and friends or the loss of a loved one. We have lost some of our fellow Airmen to suicide this year, and historically this is due in part to a sense of isolation. If you are feeling isolated this season, know your fellow Airmen are there to lend a helping hand. Reach out to your Air Force Reserve family for support.

I also challenge you to remember our deployed warriors and wounded warriors during this time of year. Take some time to reach out to these members of our team.

A simple holiday note or care package can make the difference in how they feel this season. We have some great programs such as the Wounded Warrior Project that support our wounded warriors, but strengthening our individual connection with them can go a long way in helping our wounded Airmen recover. My goal is to ensure all Airmen are connected to our Reserve family.

Working on our social connections is the first step in developing a stronger Reserve force. The holidays provide the perfect chance to slow down, evaluate our priorities and ensure our work-life balance is in order. Take time to relax and celebrate with your family and friends this season. Take time to connect with your fellow Airmen and develop strong and lasting relationships with each other. I want the members of our enlisted force to feel like they belong to a family larger than their own. It will require the entire team to make that possible. And remember, no matter what time of year, I'm here for you!



I want the members of our enlisted force to feel like they belong to a family larger than their own.

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Program improves knowledge, skills of designated tractor-trailer trainers

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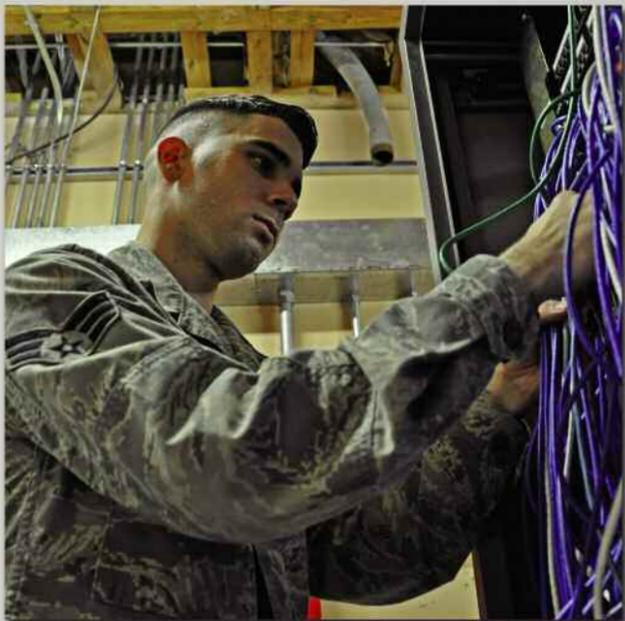
Staff Sgt. Johnathan Maupin, 307th Security Forces Squadron, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, crawls underneath strands of barbed wire during the Global Strike Challenge mental and physical competition at Camp Guernsey, Wyoming. The Global Strike Challenge is the world's premier bomber, intercontinental ballistic missile, helicopter operations and security forces competition involving units from Air Force Global Strike Command, Air Combat Command, Air Force Reserve Command and the Air National Guard. (Master Sgt. Greg Steele)



Pilot for A Day Peyton Malloy poses with Capt. Joshua Harris of the 337th Airlift Squadron during a tour of the control tower at Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts. Pilot for a Day is a program that provides high-spirited children like Peyton who have serious or chronic medical conditions, along with their families, the opportunity to be guests of Westover and the U.S. Air Force. Peyton was accompanied by his mother Anne; father, Robert; and sister, Ashlyn. (Senior Airman Monica Ricci)



Melbourne Police Department Commander Marc Claycomb looks at a 7.62mm GAU-2C minigun mounted on an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter during a tour of Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. The Reserve's 920th Rescue Wing sponsored the tour for the Brevard County Chiefs of Police Association. (Staff Sgt. Sarah M. Pullen)



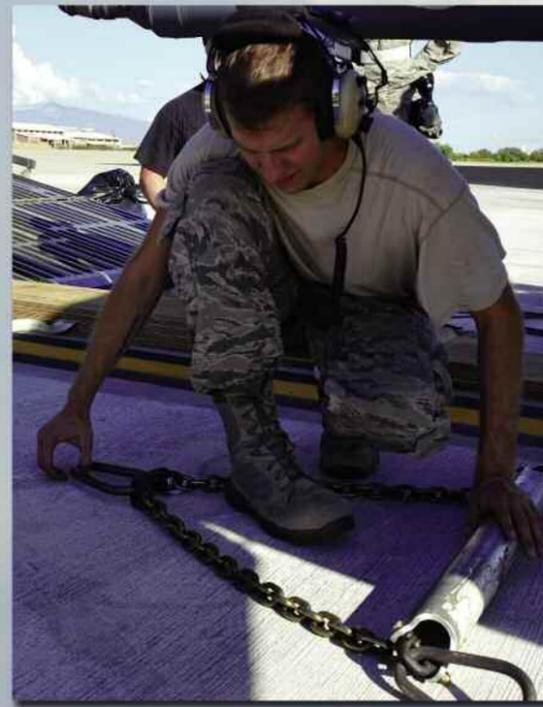
Senior Airman David Montano, a client systems technician with the 482nd Communications Squadron, checks port security in a "Comm Closet" at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida, as part of the command cyber readiness inspection. (Senior Airman Nicholas Caceres)



Members of the 934th Civil Engineer Squadron from Minneapolis conduct bivouac training at Camp Ripley, Minnesota. The four-day exercise covered convoy operations, vehicle down/recovery drills, unexploded ordnance/improvised explosive devices, casualty evacuations and more. (Shannon McKay)



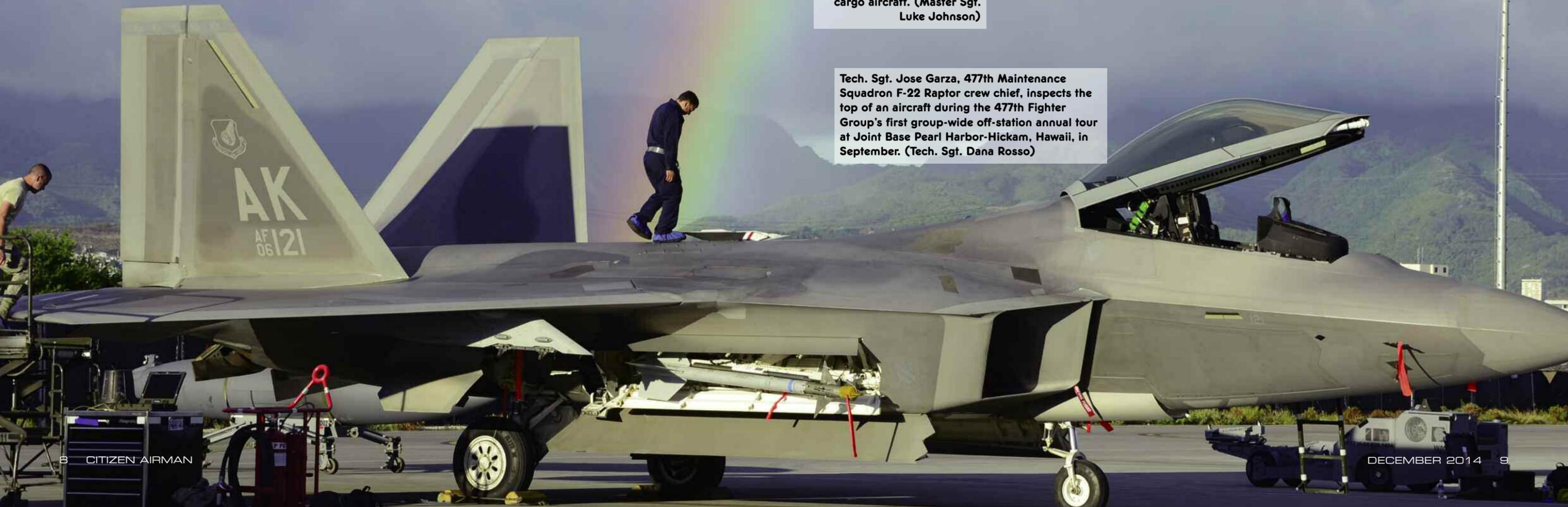
Tech. Sgt. James Marshall, 434th Security Forces Squadron fire team leader and combat training instructor, points out search areas to Senior Airman Caresia Barton, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron material management apprentice, as she searches Senior Airman Kelsey McFadden, 49th Aerial Port Flight aerial port specialist, for contraband during a security forces augmentee field training exercise at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana. (Staff Sgt. Ben Mota)



Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Crump with the 943rd Maintenance Squadron, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, prepares a spreader bar to attach to the tow cable of a C-5 Galaxy cargo aircraft in preparation to tow an HH-60G Pave Hawk on board the cargo aircraft. (Master Sgt. Luke Johnson)



96th Test Wing firefighters participate in a car extraction training exercise at Duke Field, Florida. Members of the day crew at Fire Station 4 took part in the exercise to meet a training requirement. (Tech. Sgt. Samuel King Jr.)



Tech. Sgt. Jose Garza, 477th Maintenance Squadron F-22 Raptor crew chief, inspects the top of an aircraft during the 477th Fighter Group's first group-wide off-station annual tour at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, in September. (Tech. Sgt. Dana Rosso)

Defense Department Honors Employers for Support of Guard and Reserve

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel honored 15 private- and public-sector employers from across the country for their exceptional support of employees who serve the nation in the National Guard or reserve.

Among those receiving the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award — the highest recognition that the Department of Defense bestows on employers for their support — were two businesses nominated by Air Force Reservists. The awards were presented during a ceremony Sept. 26 at the Pentagon.

The award recipients were chosen from 2,864 nominations received from guardsmen and reservists for going far beyond what the federal law requires to support their military employees.

Hagel said the 15 employers honored with the award “represent the very best in employer support to our guardsmen and reservists. Guardsmen and reservists across the nation rely on strong bonds with their civilian employers. By recognizing these 15 exceptional employers, the Department of Defense celebrates the contributions made by American employers to our citizen warriors. I commend these extraordinary employers for their unwavering commitment to service members and their families.”

The two award-winning companies nominated by Air Force Reservists were J.G. Management Systems Inc. of Grand Junction, Colorado, and Shofner Vision Center of Nashville, Tennessee.

The other award recipients were:

- Arizona Public Service, Phoenix, nominated by the Army Reserve.
- AT&T, Dallas, nominated by the Coast Guard Reserve.
- CH2M-WG Idaho, Idaho Falls, nominated by the Navy Reserve.
- General Mills Inc., Golden Valley, Minnesota, nominated by the Army National Guard.
- The Los Angeles Fire Department, nominated by the Navy Reserve.
- New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services,

Concord, nominated by the Army National Guard.

- PNC Bank, Pittsburgh, nominated by the Army National Guard.
- St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee, nominated by the Army Reserve.
- Triumph Pharmaceuticals Inc., St. Louis, nominated by the Army National Guard.
- UNC Health Care, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, nominated by the Navy Reserve.
- Washoe County School District, Reno, Nevada, nominated by the Air National Guard.
- Zions Bank, Salt Lake City, Utah, nominated by the Army National Guard. (*Information taken from an article written by Cheryl Pellerin, DOD News, Defense Media Activity, Washington, D.C.*)

Air Force Changes Instructions for Enlisted, Officer Oaths

The Air Force has instructed force support offices across the service to allow both enlisted members and officers to omit the words “so help me God” from enlistment and officer appointment oaths if an Airman chooses.

In response to concerns raised by Airmen, the Department of the Air Force requested an opinion from the Department of Defense general counsel addressing the legal parameters of the oath. The resulting opinion concluded that an individual may strike or omit the words “so help me God” from an enlistment or appointment oath if preferred.

“We take any instance in which Airmen report concerns regarding religious freedom seriously,” said Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James. “We are making the appropriate adjustments to ensure our Airmen’s rights are protected.”

The Air Force will update the instructions for both enlisted and commissioned Airmen to reflect these changes, but the policy change is effective immediately. Airmen who choose to omit the words “so help me God” from enlistment and officer appointment oaths may do so. (*Information courtesy of the Secretary of the Air Force public affairs office*)

TRICARE Changes Way it Communicates with Beneficiaries

The Department of Defense no longer sends paper letters to notify beneficiaries about changes to their TRICARE coverage and eligibility status. Instead, beneficiaries now receive emails or postcards directing them to online resources where they can view coverage and eligibility information.

TRICARE officials said correspondence with beneficiaries occurs one of two ways. If beneficiaries have a valid email address in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, they receive an email telling them to go to milConnect (<http://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil>) to read their letter. Beneficiaries who don’t have an email address in DEERS get a postcard directing them to milConnect.

Officials said the emails and postcards do not contain private information but rather only a short generic message informing beneficiaries of a change to their coverage or eligibility.

Beneficiaries can access informational letters on milConnect via a DOD self-service logon account.

More information is available by clicking on the “Sign Up” button on the website. Officials said this is the preferred method, since a self-service logon account can be used to gain access to multiple websites through milConnect. However, milConnect is also accessible using a Common Access Card or Defense Finance and Accounting System personal identification number.

Regardless of how they receive notifications about changes in coverage and eligibility, TRICARE beneficiaries must have access to milConnect to view the information. (*TRICARE news release*)

Guard, Reserve Association in Niagara Falls Comes to an End

Airmen in the Air National Guard’s 107th Airlift Wing flew their final AC-130 flight at Niagara Falls International Airport Air Reserve Station, New York, Sept. 25, ending a seven-year air reserve component combat delivery association between the Guard and Air Force Reserve.

As a result of recent force structure changes, the 107th is transitioning to a new mission that involves flying remotely piloted aircraft.

This is the third mission change for the ANG unit since the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission decision to transition the unit from flying KC-135 Stratotankers to flying C-130 Hercules aircraft with the Reserve’s 914th Airlift Wing under a Reserve associate structure. Both wings flew and maintained Reserve-owned C-130s during the association.

“The 107th and 914th Airlift Wings, as an association here, had several great years together as partners in the mission,” said Col. John Higgins, 107th commander.

Guardsman Lt. Col. Buff Hoffman, 328th Airlift Squadron chief of standards and evaluation, said the association was a success due to the hard work of Guard and Reserve Airmen at all levels. (*914th AW public affairs*)

Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron Honors Former Member

The 315th Airlift Wing at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, recognized a former member of the wing by naming a building in his honor.

Master Sgt. Ronald Hall served the wing as a member of the aeromedical evacuation squadron. During a ceremony at the base Sept. 20, friends, family members and former co-workers gathered to honor his significant contributions to the AE career field by officially designating Bldg. 416 as the Master Sergeant Ronald A. Hall Aeromedical Evacuation Operations Facility. Hall passed away in 2011.

“Air Force heritage is remembering those who made lasting contributions to the nation,” said Lt. Col. David Ball, 315th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron chief of operations. “When Airmen ask, ‘Who was Ron Hall?’ it gives us the chance to explain his accomplishments and highlight the values he exemplified that we hold dear.”

Hall began his military and AE career in 1983 and came to Charleston in 1987. While at Charleston, he played a key role as an AE technician and evaluator, and was qualified to serve on C-141 Starlifters, C-130 Hercules, KC-135 Stratotankers and C-17 Globemaster IIIs, as well as Civil Reserve Air Fleet aircraft.

Hall’s professionalism helped to further AE’s role to “preserve the fighting strength” by providing in-flight medical care aboard mission-directed aircraft used to airlift patients.

His service and dedication to the Air Force took him to locations all



over the world to include Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Hawaii, Europe, Japan, Panama, the Azores, St. Croix and Puerto Rico.

“For 24 of his 28 years of service, Master Sgt. Ron Hall served as an aeromedical evacuation technician at the 315th AES,” Ball said. “He became an instructor and later an evaluator, teaching new generations of Airmen how to care for wounded in flight.”

Despite having a massive heart attack while on an alert crew after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Hall fought to regain worldwide mobility status and later deployed in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

“Master Sergeant Hall was truly considered a subject-matter expert within the AE community; he made tremendous contributions over the years in support of global aeromedical contingencies, exercises and training,” said Col. Diane DiFrancesco, 315th AES commander. “Naming our operations building after Master Sergeant Hall establishes a permanent reminder of the values he represented to all those who had the honor to know and serve with him.” (*Capt Michaela Judge, 315th Airlift Wing public affairs*)

Air Force Releases Criteria for New Service Medal

Air Force officials released nomination criteria for the new Nuclear Deterrence Operations Service Medal, following Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James’ May 27, 2014, authorization.

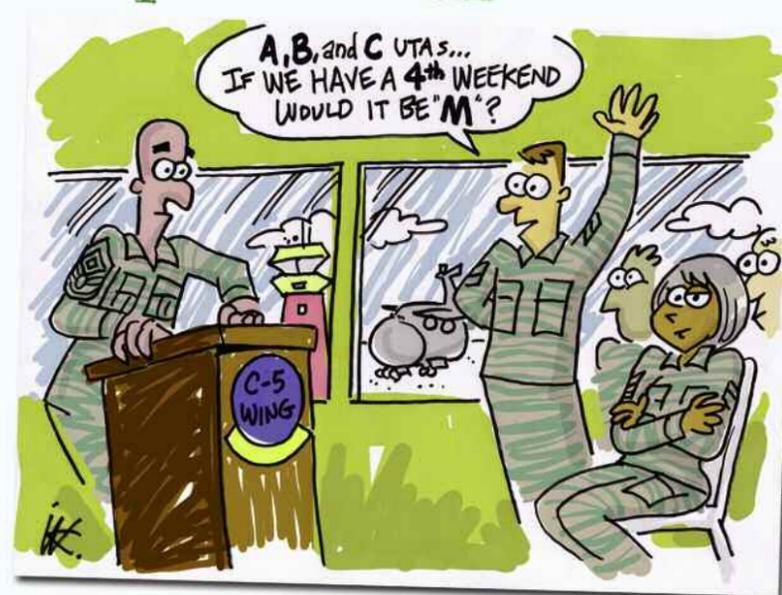
The medal will be awarded to individuals for their direct support of nuclear deterrence operations.

“This service medal provides a clearly visible way to recognize the dedication and professionalism of our Airmen who are the guardians of our nation’s nuclear deterrence. Because of our success, oftentimes nuclear deterrence operations can be overlooked as a critical function,” said Col. Zannis Pappas, the missile operations career field manager. “The medal acknowledges the special challenges faced by those Airmen charged with supporting the nuclear enterprise and will be a point of pride by all who wear it.”

Service members may be awarded the nuclear deterrence medal if they were assigned, deployed or mobilized to a wing, center or below in support of the nuclear enterprise for 120 consecutive days or 179 non-consecutive days. Subsequent awards will only be authorized when a permanent change of station to a qualifying unit has occurred.

“The Air Force continues to demonstrate its support to the most vital part of the nuclear enterprise — the Airmen,” said Maj. Gen. Garrett Harenack, Air Force assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration. “This medal exists as a tangible way to acknowledge

Pope’s Pun



the importance of this mission and the dedication and pride that the men and women in the nuclear community show to their country. Having secretary of the Air Force-level interest testifies to the importance of this decoration and impact on nuclear operations.”

The medal will be worn with an “N” device for those who dispatched to a missile complex for 179 nonconsecutive days in direct support of intercontinental ballistic missile operations or are in direct support of nuclear laden aircraft. Only one “N” device will be worn, regardless of the number of qualifying assignments. An oak leaf cluster will be worn for subsequent awards, which will only be authorized when a PCS has occurred.

Eligibility for the medal is retroactive to Dec. 27, 1991. Nominations for currently serving Airmen will be processed through their respective chain of command.

A member’s current group commander is considered the awarding authority for the medal. Retired or separated Airmen can submit a request to the Air Force Personnel Center recognition section for validation. The award can be presented posthumously, as well, so family members of deceased Airmen can also contact AFPC for information.

The medal is currently under development with a projected date of availability through the Defense Supply System of March 2015.

More information and full eligibility criteria

are available on the myPers website at <https://gum-crm.csd.disa.mil/app/login/redirect/home>. Guard, Reserve, retired and separated Airmen and their family members may contact the Air Reserve Personnel Center at 800-525-0102 for assistance. (Information courtesy of the Secretary of the Air Force public affairs office)

Grissom Airmen Train to Protect the Base

Twenty-five members of the 434th Air Refueling Wing at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana, volunteered to participate in a week-long training event designed to hone their combat skills and help keep the base safe.

After completing the training, the Reservists are prepared to augment the 434th Security Forces Squadron with various missions.

“A positive attitude with a warrior mindset is not optional,” said Master Sgt. Robert Delee, 434th SFS assistant training manager. “These augmentees will work side by side with security forces in protecting assets and personnel.”

To help meet the security forces squadron’s manning requirements, four instructors put Airmen from the 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron, 434th Communications Squadron, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron and 49th Aerial Port Flight through an extensive training course.

“The augmentee program is designed to assist security forces personnel for a variety of missions that require additional personnel,” said Master Sgt. Ralph Ross, 434th SFS training manager. “We rely on help from base personnel during these times of need to ensure that Grissom has an adequate amount of staff to complete the mission.”

The training program included instruction in basic security forces concepts, weapons qualification, use of force, flight line security, handcuffing techniques, team tactics, searches and more, Ross said.

In addition to mastering classroom training, trainees also were required to demonstrate their ability to perform the physical and mental aspects of the security forces mission, Delee said. (Staff Sgt. Ben Mota, 434th ARW public affairs)

Reserve Announces Schedule for Implementing Static EPR Closeout Dates

On the heels of the Air Force establishing Jan. 31 as the closeout date for all regular Air Force staff sergeant enlisted performance reports, Air Force Reserve personnel officials released a list of static closeout dates for all of its enlisted Airmen.

Static closeout dates for Reservists will be as follows:

- May 31, 2015, chief master sergeants. Effective Feb. 2, 2015, change of reporting official EPRs for chief master sergeants will no longer be accomplished.
- Sept. 30, 2015, master sergeants. Effective June 3, 2015, change of reporting official EPRs for master sergeants will no longer be accomplished.
- March 31, 2016, senior airmen and below. Effective Dec. 2, 2015, change of reporting official EPRs for senior airmen and below will no longer be accomplished.
- July 31, 2016, senior master sergeant. Effective April 3, 2016, change of reporting official EPRs for senior master sergeants will no longer be accomplished.
- Nov. 30, 2016, technical sergeants. Effective Aug. 15, 2016, change of reporting official EPRs for technical sergeants will no longer be accomplished.
- Jan. 31, 2017, staff sergeants. Effective Oct. 4, 2016, change of reporting officials EPRs for staff sergeants will no longer be accomplished.

Personnel officials said members of the active Guard and Reserve will continue receiving annual evaluations, while Reservists in all other statuses will continue to or begin to receive biennial reports.

These are part of a series of changes being implemented to the Enlisted Evaluation System and Weighted Airman Promotion System over the next 25 months.

These changes are designed to better meet the needs of the Air Force and Airmen, differentiate more effectively between good and great performers, and value job performance first and foremost. (Chief Master Sgt. James R. Pascarella, Directorate of Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia)

Reserve Pilot Reaches Flight-Hour Milestone in F-22

By Tech. Sgt. Dana Rosso

A Reserve F-22 Raptor pilot assigned to the 302nd Fighter Squadron at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, became the eighth pilot in Air Force history to reach 1,000 flight hours in the F-22 during a sortie in Hawaii Sept. 9.

“It feels great to reach this milestone doing a job I love,” said Maj. Ryan Pelkola. “During my 1,000-hour sortie, I gave an upgrade ride to Col. Charles Corcoran as part of his syllabus to be a combat mission-ready wingman. When I was active duty in the 525th Fighter Squadron, he was my squadron commander and gave me the majority of my instructor pilot upgrade rides. I feel like we have come full circle, and I am glad he was a part of this milestone.”

The major was among members of the 477th Fighter Group who traveled to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam for their first-ever off-station annual tour.

“This was an important training opportunity because it allowed us to function as a unit and put our leadership team to new tests that we don’t get at home,” said Col. Tyler Otten, 477th FG commander. “Hawaii is a great location; it provided us an opportunity to train in a different environment and to work hand in hand with one of our fellow F-22 squadrons at the Hawaii Air National Guard.”

A group of 175 Airmen from maintenance, operations, civil engineering, security forces and force support were transported to and from Hawaii on a C-5 Galaxy and four C-17 Globemaster IIIs from Reserve units at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, and March Air Reserve Base, California.

Prior to joining the Reserve, Pelkola spent 12 years on active duty flying F-15s and F-22s in Alaska before relocating to Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico. He separated from active duty in 2013 and returned to Alaska to join the 302nd FS.

Pelkola is the third pilot assigned to the 477th FG to reach the 1,000-hour milestone in the F-22. Col. David Piffarerio, 477th deputy commander, was the first in the group, as well as the entire Air Force, to reach the mark, while Maj. Jonathan Gratton of the 302nd FS was the second in the group and the fourth in the Air Force.

“The squadron prides itself on being tactically proficient as our first priority,” Pelkola said. “In doing so, we provide tremendous support to the active duty.”



TECH. SGT. DANA ROSSO

Maj. Ryan Pelkola, Reserve F-22 pilot assigned to the 302nd Fighter Squadron, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, is the eighth pilot in Air Force history to reach 1,000 flight hours in the F-22.

The 477th FG is integrated in every F-22 mission set with its active-duty partner, the 3rd Wing.

“This is a huge milestone in a pilot’s career, and to be one of the first pilots to reach 1,000 hours in the Raptor is particularly noteworthy,” Otten said. He said Pelkola’s achievement is also a “great indicator of the tremendous partnership we are creating between the reserve and active components. Together, we stand poised to conduct the nation’s business as a total force team.”

(Rosso is assigned to the 477th FG public affairs office at Elmendorf-Richardson.)



Some Advice About Financial Shows

By Ralph Lunt

I recently listened to a guest I like who was on a financial show. During a span of about five minutes, the topics of discussion were all over the map: the Ebola scare, investors being desperate for something to buy, the election results and the effect they will have on the markets, lower gasoline prices and how they may help retailers, the cold weather, the sale of boots and whether or not shoppers will go to the mall, hot gifts for the holiday season, etc.

One common phrase the show’s guest often used was, “I think.” As he discussed an issue, he commented that he didn’t think this or that would happen as a result. Whew, so much to process!

Close your eyes for a minute and imagine yourself shopping for a new car and having the salesperson tell you, “I think the vehicle will perform, and I have some confidence the different features will work, but I’m not sure.”

I appreciate the job the folks on these financial shows do. Although they have no control over the markets, their intent to inform you is sincere.

After considering what I listened to, I have a few take-aways to offer. Remember that markets involve willing buyers and willing sellers, and there are no guarantees. Given that, after 22 years, I assure you the markets will always fluctuate! Investing is a long-term process. Expect fluctuations, but never panic. I’d never adjust my Thrift Savings Plan based upon comments made by someone on TV. The most important factor in investing is your risk tolerance. In my opinion, what I find most valuable is listening to leaders of publicly traded corporations discuss the challenges they face managing their companies — how they lead, recruit, etc. Fly safe!

(Editor’s note: This feature is designed to provide financial advice and information of a general nature. Individuals should conduct their own research and consult a financial adviser before making any financial decisions. Based in Cleveland, Ohio, Lunt is a certified financial planner and vice president of a financial planning and consulting firm. He is also a colonel in the Air Force Reserve, serving as the reserve forces director of the Great Lakes Region of the Civil Air Patrol adviser’s program.)

“We leave no family behind.”

Key spouses are always there to lend a helping hand

By Bo Joyner

“We leave no family behind.” That’s the motto for the Key Spouse Program at Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts, but it’s a sentiment that is being expressed at Air Force Reserve locations all over the country as the program takes off throughout the command.

“We have awesome volunteers, and they do take that motto seriously,” said Shanna King, a manager with the Airman and Family Readiness Center at Westover who helps oversee the Key Spouse Program there. “Whenever a family member needs anything, our key spouses are ready to step in and get that person the help he or she needs.”

King said key spouses pay special attention to the family members of deployed Reservists, but they are available to help whenever the need may arise.

“You never know when the dog is going to run away on the same day the washing machine overflows and you just need somebody who understands you,” she said. “That’s what the Key Spouse Program is all about.”

DeAnne Biscoe has been a key spouse at Westover since 2006. She has helped countless people over the years and is always eager to pitch in and lend a hand. Her husband, Master Sgt. Andrew Biscoe, works in the base public affairs office, and Deanne sprang into action when someone in her husband’s office had a heart attack during lunch a couple of years ago.

“Somebody had to take care of getting in touch with the family, getting them here and getting them to the hospital so they could be with their service member,” she said. “There were a lot of people taking care of the service member, the paperwork and so forth, but my thoughts were focused on the family members and the help they would need. We made sure there was a room in lodging for them when they got here, and we had some food there for them and toothbrushes, toothpaste, those kinds of things. We just wanted to make sure there was less for them to think about when they got here so they could focus all of their attention on their service member.

“Key spouses have connections. They know

people on base and can help get things done. We never know what kind of call we are going to get, but we usually know where to go to get people the help they need.”

Therese Sarnelli, wife of Master Sgt. Ronald Sarnelli assigned to the 337th Airlift Squadron, has also been a key spouse at Westover since 2006, when the program was known as the Key Family Member program. Like Biscoe, Sarnelli knows how to get things done on base. ... and off it. She recently drove a spouse to the airport in Hartford, Connecticut, to meet her husband who was returning home

from a deployment.

“If you hold a military ID or are the children of someone in the military, you can get a gate pass at most airports,” she said. “You have to go through security, but you can meet your military person at the gate. When they get off the plane, their family can be waiting there for them. This spouse didn’t know that, so it was kind of cool to surprise her husband that way. It is little things like that that we try to do for our family members.”

Karen Breazeale is the key spouse mentor for the 301st Fighter Wing at Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, Texas, and she is working hard to promote the program there. Her husband, Col. John Breazeale, is the wing commander.

“When I got here about a year ago, they had a good Key Spouse Program in place, but it was mainly focused on deployments,” she said. “We want to make sure all

301st Fighter Wing family members know someone has their back — not only during deployments, but all the time.”

At

Fort Worth, key spouses are known as STARS (an acronym for Spouses reaching out To Welcome and inform All Reserve/Integrated Active Spouses).

“Key spouse STARS are a lot like customer service reps for squadron spouses,” Breazeale said. “They might not know the answers to all of the questions, but they do have the training and resources to connect you with the people who do have those answers.”

She said about five new people per month are signing up to be key spouses at the 301st. Ultimately, Breazeale said she would like to have about one key spouse for every 25 wing members. That way, the key spouses wouldn’t be stretched too thin and could always be there for the people within their extended family.

Breazeale is excited about how the program has grown at Fort Worth and is hoping a new web page will help push the program to the next level.

“The Reserve is a little different from the active duty in that our families are located all over the place, not all right here close to the base,” Breazeale said. “The idea is to let the spouse in Waco who never makes it to the base know that there are people in her area that can be there if she needs help.”

“We have a lady who lives in New York who got her own little program started to help people in her area,” Sarnelli said. “She decided on her own to get the spouses who live close to her together, and now they are having coffee dates and get-togethers with the kids. We have spouses who can’t always make it here to the base, but they still want to help out.”

Westover and Fort Worth both have exemplary Key Spouse Programs, and one thing they have in common is that spouses of military members of all ranks are involved.

“We have spouses of senior airmen all the way up to colonels and everything in between,” King said of the program at Westover. “And we are lucky that we have some male key spouses as well. Sometimes it’s better to have a guy help another guy who has a question or a problem.”

“Military rank has absolutely nothing to do with the key spouse STARS,” Breazeale said. “We are just a group of spouses connecting spouses. I think people sometimes confuse key spouses with an officers’ wives club, and it’s nothing like that at all. We just have a strong belief that no member of the 301st Fighter Wing family should ever feel alone.”



Another thing that successful Key Spouse Programs have in common is support from senior leaders.

“Our program is a wing program,” said Col. Frank Amodeo, commander of the 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. “We began with a wing vision for a successful program to take care of Airmen and families. Our first sergeants and commanders have buy-in. As the wing commander, I personally participated in the required key spouse training and explained my expectations. I attend every key spouse meeting.

“We have only one mentor so that we are centrally managed with execution at the squadron level. Our team of key spouses includes enlisted Airmen, spouses of officers and enlisted Airmen, and spouses of civilian employees. One of our Airmen, who was a key spouse, now works in our Airman and Family Readiness Center. This provides great understanding in AFRC of our key spouse challenges and needs.”

The Key Spouse Program is an official unit/family program overseen by commanders designed to enhance readiness and establish a sense of unity within the Air Force community. The program was standardized across the Air Force in March 2006 to address the needs of all military families with special emphasis on support to families across the deployment cycle.

“I remember Mark’s first deployment. It was scary, and we didn’t know what to expect,” said Betty Welsh, the wife of Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, in a recent Air Force news article. “It was then that the spouses of the deployed got together and grew our own spouses group.”

“The Key Spouse Program gives our entire Air Force family another way to get help when it’s really needed,” the chief of staff said. “Commanders and first sergeants enable and sup-

“YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THE DOG IS GOING TO RUN AWAY ON THE SAME DAY THE WASHING MACHINE OVERFLOWS AND YOU JUST NEED SOMEBODY WHO UNDERSTANDS YOU. THAT’S WHAT THE KEY SPOUSE PROGRAM IS ALL ABOUT.”

port our unbelievable key spouses in providing peer-to-peer guidance and wingman support to the families who are so vital to the success of our Air Force.”

The Key Spouse Program is designed to:

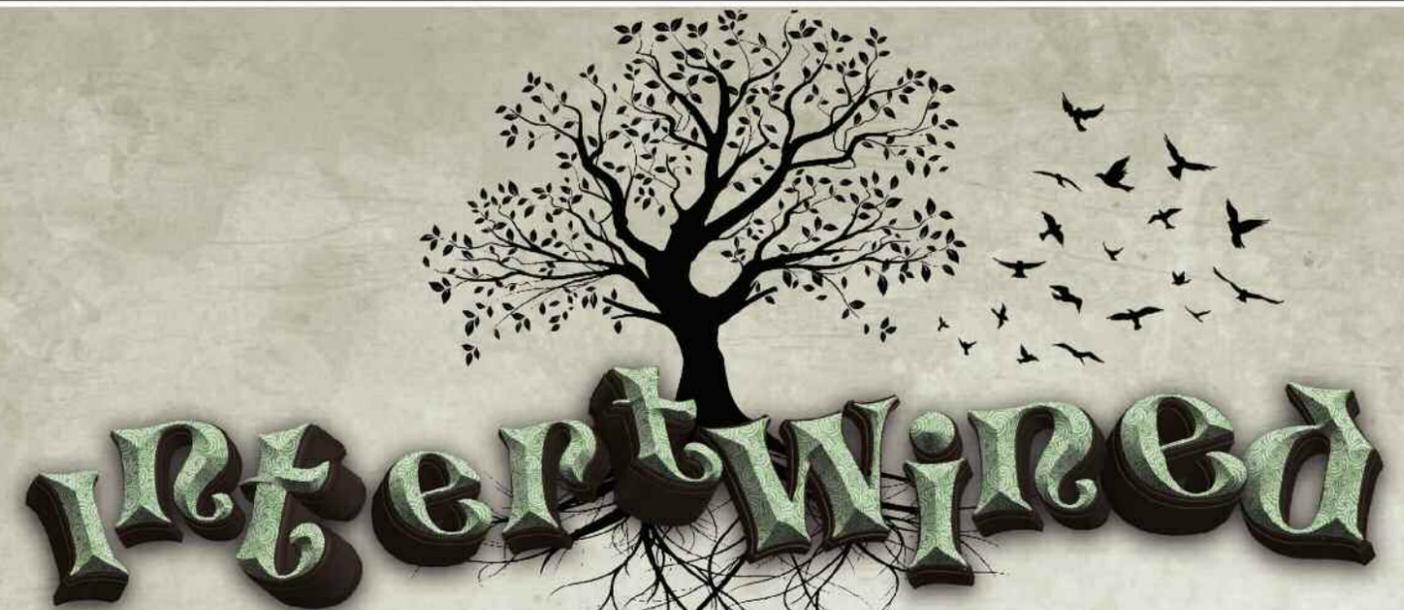
- Promote individual, family and unit readiness;
- Establish continuous contact with spouses and families;
- Encourage peer-to-peer wingman support;
- Provide links to leadership;
- Provide an informal sounding board; and
- Strengthen leadership’s support team.

“The Key Spouse Program encourages peer-to-peer wingman support and provides an opportunity for spouses and families to build relationships with each other throughout the year,” said Lt. Gen. James F. Jackson, AFRC commander.

To find out more about the Key Spouse Program at your location, contact your Airman and Family Readiness Center.



Three of the key spouse STARS from the 301st Fighter Wing at Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, Texas — (left to right) Annette Mallard, Karen Breazeale and Amelia McMillen — pose for a quick photo during the wing’s Family Day in October. The Key Spouse Program plays a crucial role in helping people maintain a healthy balance between their military, civilian and family responsibilities by providing them with the resources they need.



Col. John Tree has blended his civilian and military lives into two successful careers

(Editor’s Note: This is the first installment in a regular series of articles that will highlight the unique capabilities that Air Force Reservists bring to the fight every day. Make sure to check out future issues of the magazine for more Profiles in Leadership.)

By Bo Joyner

Most Air Force Reservists lead a double life. They have their full-time civilian career and part-time military career, and they keep the two separate. Then, there are Reservists like John Tree, who manage to intertwine their civilian and military careers in a unique way that is beneficial for both their civilian employer and the Air Force.

As a civilian, Tree has carved out an extremely successful career in the food industry, holding key positions with companies like Procter & Gamble and Kellogg’s along the way. For the Air Force, Tree has built a successful career in the logistics field, reaching the rank of colonel and culminating in his current position as the senior Reservist to the director of resource integration at the Pentagon.

Combining his functional experience in marketing and brand management gained from the food industry along with 24 years of experience in logistics and acquisition management with the Air Force has led Tree to his current civilian position as chief executive officer of Raymond Express International, a global leader in produce and the perishables shipping industry.

“We procure and ship produce to Asia, where we then merchandise it in grocery stores,” Tree said during a recent phone interview from his Los Angeles office, “so it’s the perfect blend of food marketing and logistics. I’ve primarily had a logistics career in the Air Force and a food marketing career on the out-

side, but there had always been a firewall between the two. What I find enjoyable about running Raymond Express is that it’s food marketing and logistics all in one company. It kind of brings both of my careers together as a capstone.”

Looking back, Tree said it’s interesting to see how his two

As a civilian, John Tree is the CEO of Raymond Express International, a global leader in produce and the perishables shipping industry. As a Reservist, Col. Tree is the senior Reservist to the director of resource integration at the Pentagon.



careers have mirrored each other and benefited each other over the years.

"I was able to manage two careers with both of them progressing at about the same pace," he said, "and I always felt like there was some good cross-pollination going on.

"I took some of the best practices from my civilian employers like P&G and Kellogg's and brought them to different military jobs I had. For five years, I was at AFMC (Air Force Material Command) headquarters as an acquisition IMA (individual mobilization augmentee), and during that time, I got to work with a lot of senior leaders and share with them some of the things I was learning on the civilian side. They found this to be quite useful, and it helped shape some of their business processes for the command.

"Then I got to be a squadron commander at Charleston (Air Force Base, South Carolina) for three years, and I was able to take a lot of the leadership I learned in command and bring it back to my civilian life. The command experience made me a much better civilian manager."

Tree commanded the 38th Aerial Port Squadron from 2005 to 2008.

"Throughout my career, it's gone both ways," he said. "I think I've been a better Reservist because I've had a meaningful civilian career, and I think I've been better in civilian life because I've had a meaningful military career."

It hasn't always been easy. As the CEO of Raymond Express, Tree has to travel to Asia on a regular basis, and it's nearly a six-hour flight to the Pentagon whenever he has to perform his Reserve duty. Add in a wife and five kids ranging in age from 2 to 15 and the fact that Tree was recently selected as a member of the board of directors for the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, and it's hard to find enough hours in the day to do everything that needs to get done.

"It definitely gets a little crazy at times with scheduling everything," Tree said. "Traveling to Asia and back and forth to the Pentagon requires a lot of collaboration. The best part about traveling these days is that with iPhones and the FaceTime app, I get to video conference with my wife and kids every day. It really makes me feel more connected to the family and alleviates some of the stress of being away, especially for the younger boys who don't understand where I've gone or when I'll be back."

Tree brings his vast military experience to work with him every day at Raymond Express, and he brings his vast civilian experience with him to his military career and to the AAFES board of directors meetings.

"It was a huge honor to be appointed to the AAFES board," he said. "AAFES has a very talented management team, led by a civilian CEO. My business experience and background help me make meaningful contributions to this \$10 billion-a-year company with stores across all Army and Air Force bases worldwide."

Tree was an Air Force brat growing up. His father was a

career Air Force fighter pilot who flew combat missions in Vietnam for a year.

"There were six kids in my family growing up, and I was the oldest son," he said. "For as long as I can remember, my dad told me I was going to the Air Force Academy, whether I wanted to or not. That's probably not the best sales pitch my dad could have given me, but, happily, by the time I graduated from high school I had developed my own desire to go the Academy as well. I enjoyed my time there, graduating in May of 1990, and have been in the Air Force ever since."

Tree spent seven years on active duty and then made the switch to the Reserve. Along the way, he earned a master of business administration degree in marketing from Chaminade University in Honolulu and a master's degree in economics from the University of Oklahoma. He served as an assistant brand manager at Procter & Gamble and a senior brand manager and then a marketing director at Kellogg's. He went on to create a national beverage company and become the president of a regional granola company and then serve as president of Caymen Ventures, a firm focused on identifying middle

market companies for sale in the consumer goods, food and beverage, logistics, and supply chain sectors. Backed by private equity sponsors, its due diligence efforts culminated in a successful transaction of Raymond Express International in Feb 2013, which he then joined as the CEO, moving his family from Chicago to Los Angeles.

As a Reservist, Tree has held positions as a traditional Reservist, an Academy liaison officer and an IMA. In his current position, he back-fills for the director of the Air Force's Resource Integration Directorate, which is responsible for Air Force logistics, installations and mission support long-range planning, strategic support planning and associated policies. The directorate prepares, executes and manages programs totaling \$21 billion annually for aircraft, missiles, munitions, equipment, vehicles, infrastructures and facilities.

Tree likes to tell young Airmen who he comes in contact with that it's possible to have success in both the military and in civilian life.

"As I mentor a lot of younger Airmen, both officer and enlistee, the biggest thing I realize when I look back is that I have been better at both sides because of the other side. The burden and challenges of being in the Reserve and trying to coordinate everything is definitely worth it because it will make you better. Not only do you get a chance to serve our country and work with very talented professionals, but you also get tangible skills that are valued on the outside. You become a more interesting person. When people tell me that maintaining two careers is too hard or it's too much to do, I try to share this perspective with them and hopefully motivate them to keep at it. For me it has definitely been worth it."

Family Comes First

Following tragedy, Tree family spreads the word on drug overdose dangers

By Bo Joyner

Family always comes first. No matter how busy John Tree gets as the chief executive officer of an international produce shipping firm, a colonel in the Air Force Reserve and a member of the board of directors for the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, he always makes sure his wife, Michelle, and their five kids come first.

"This is the second marriage for both me and my wife, and we have this kind of Brady Bunch-hybrid thing going on where we each brought two kids into the marriage and then we had two kids together," Tree said. "And they are the most important part of my life without a doubt. I tell people all the time to treasure every day you have with your kids, because you never know when it could be the last day you get to spend with them."

Tragically, Tree learned this lesson first-hand when his 19-year-old daughter, Stephanie, died from an accidental drug overdose in August 2011. She had taken some anti-anxiety pills called Klonopin she got from a friend and later was drinking alcohol at a party. The toxic combination of the pills and alcohol killed her.

"I didn't know it at the time, but a lot of kids were taking common anti-anxiety pills like Klonopin and Xanax before big tests or exams to calm their nerves," Tree said. "A lot of kids had prescriptions or took them from their parents' medicine cabinets, and they would share them with their friends because they relaxed them and helped them get through the day. What these kids don't realize is that these pills can be highly toxic and fatal if you mix them with alcohol."

"Stephanie got drunk one night, and the combination of that alcohol and those pills in her system put her to sleep and she never woke up. She passed out at a party and nobody even knew until they went to wake her up the next morning and she wouldn't wake up. She had died sometime during the night."

Needless to say, Stephanie's tragic death turned the Tree family's life upside down. Her father was devas-



John and Michelle Tree pose with their five kids at the top of Pike's Peak. No matter how busy he gets, family always comes first for Tree.

tated and heartbroken. She was definitely the apple of her daddy's eye.

"She was always laughing and so full of life," he said. "She was looking forward to her next semester of college and had big plans for her life and then, just like that, she was gone."

"The pain never goes away, but it helps me cope when I spread the word on how dangerous these drugs can be that so many of our young people are taking."

Just months after Stephanie's death, Tree decided to run for a House seat in the U.S. Congress, in part to spread awareness about the dangers of mixing drugs and alcohol.

"I certainly wouldn't consider myself a one-dimensional candidate where my only thing was to talk about Stephanie, but I certainly wove that into a lot of the speeches I got to give just to warn parents about the dangers," he said.

Tree didn't win his bid to become a congressman, but he continues to spread the word about the dangers of mixing anti-depressant drugs and alcohol.

"I think our nation has done a good job of educating teens about the perils of alcohol as well as illegal drugs, but not enough has been done to educate our teenagers on the fatal dangers of mixing common prescription anti-anxiety pills with alcohol," he said. "Friends know not to let their friends drive drunk, for example, but they don't know how to recognize the signs of physical distress and call 911 when a friend's life is at stake from this lethal combination."

"I have pledged the remainder of my life to help increase the awareness of these dangers and will gladly do what I can to help others avoid this tragedy. If just one parent hears me and talks to his or her kids about this, maybe somebody's life can be saved."

To promote awareness, Tree maintains a web page in his daughter's honor. Check it out at www.stephanietree.com.



John and his daughter, Stephanie, shortly before her tragic death in 2011.

Maureen Kozak, the wife of Col. Raymond A. Kozak, 512th Airlift Wing commander at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, sits on her mother's lap for a family photo taken in 1963 in the United Kingdom. Her brother Brian sits on the lap of their father, Maj. Kelly Cook, who was declared missing in action four years after this photo was taken. (Submitted photo)



Never Forgotten

Daughter of missing Air Force pilot shares story of loss

By Master Sgt. Veronica Aceveda

The name, rank and service of Col. Kelly Cook are imprinted on POW/MIA bracelets to this day. He is still missing.

The pilot's name is also engraved on a memorial marker on the grounds of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was declared killed in action in 1976.

The ultimate sacrifice he paid for his country is honored each September on National POW/MIA Recognition Day. He is not forgotten.

As a 7-year-old, Maureen Kozak, wife of Col. Raymond A. Kozak, 512th Airlift Wing commander at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, and one of Cook's six children, was the one who answered the door in 1967 when uniformed Air Force officers came to the house looking for her mother. She said they waited in the car until her mother returned from the commissary.

"I hid behind a chair and heard them tell her," she said. "I remember her putting her hand over her mouth, the stricken look on her face and being taken to the neighbors."

Her siblings, two younger brothers and three older sisters, ranged in age from 2 to 21 at the time they learned their father, a fighter pilot, was missing in action in Vietnam.

"To this day, we are a very tight-knit family," Maureen said. "We share a sadness that's always there. ... He was a special guy."

Born and raised on a Kentucky farm, Kelly Francis Cook reportedly had a scholarship to attend a state university but decided to work his way through college at the University of Notre Dame, where he earned money by typing manuscripts for professors. In 1942, only one semester shy of earning his degree, Cook joined the Army Air Corps as an aviation cadet.

As a second lieutenant, he flew the B-24 Liberator while sta-

tioned in Italy during World War II. He later authored a book, "The Other Capri," based on his experiences there. After the war, the bomber pilot returned to Notre Dame, finished his degree and became an English teacher for his alma mater. The literary scholar also had other works published, including several pieces of poetry, two of which can be found framed in Maureen's home.

As a first lieutenant in the Iowa Air National Guard, Cook was ordered to active federal service during the Korean War. He flew the F-84F Thunderstreak at several bases before serving as a 5th Air Force staff officer at K-55, now known as Osan Air Base, Korea. He continued flying early-generation fighter/bombers and went on to graduate from the Air Weapons Course in 1955.

Grooming him for a future assignment, the Air Force paid for Cook to earn a master's degree in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Continuing his activity-duty career, his last assignment was as the assistant director of operations for the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing in Vietnam, where he flew the F-4C Phantom. At the time he went missing, he was pursuing his doctorate degree through the University of Denver.

Cook shared his experience and knowledge with many others through teaching. He was one of the first professors at the Air Force Academy, where Maureen was born. Cook was later assigned to teach at the Royal Air Force College in Cranwell, United Kingdom, furthering the military careers of cadets both stateside and overseas.

"He was a fine man, a superb officer and an example to every cadet in his squadron," said retired Col. Jim Graham, one of Cook's students at the academy. "He has been sorely missed by every one of us."

The impact her father had on others is something his daughter

holds dear to her heart.

"From a very young age, he dedicated his life to his country," Maureen said. "He had done so much and was only 45 years old."

Shortly after learning that her husband was missing in action, Maureen's mother moved the family from Hamilton AFB in Novato, California, to Colorado Springs, where they still had ties and a better support system during that difficult time.

"She built a house there, thinking he was going to come home," Maureen said. "For a long time, we thought he might be a prisoner of war, so mom sent packages through the Red Cross. "But, we didn't discuss it much; it was too painful."

After seven years of seeking answers and enduring a life of the unknown, the family received a glimmer of hope in 1973 when aircraft carrying prisoners of war from Vietnam returned to the United States.

"I watched the television the entire day — waiting for him to get off a plane," said Maureen as she fought back tears, reflecting on that day.

Operation Homecoming returned 591 POWs to the United States, but none of them was her father.

Three years later, Cook was officially declared killed in action, body not recovered.

Maureen and her family continued to live in Colorado Springs, where her father had left a legacy. Because of his contributions to the Air Force and the Academy, Maureen said the school's leadership and cadets continuously showed their care and support for her family.

She recalled growing up very entwined in military life, attending football games, weekend concerts and church on campus. She and her husband, a graduate of the academy, were married in that same church.

"Who else better to understand the journey my family has been through than a pilot himself," said Maureen, in reference to how some might have thought she would have avoided marrying a service member. "He helps me tremendously throughout this journey. He knows more about my father's service history than I do. It's as if he knew him. Actually, both of our fathers were World War II aviators, and we honor them in every way we can."

The Kozaks had been married eight years by 1992, when Maureen's mother received an update on her husband's case.

"It was as if he died that day," Maureen said.

Nearly 25 years after he went missing, the Cook family learned new details surrounding his death.

During a night training mission on Nov. 10, 1967, two F-4C aircraft were shot down over North Vietnam. Cook ejected from his aircraft and was one of two Airmen who were captured by the Vietnamese. Two other Airmen were killed. The report indicated Cook died within days from his wounds and was buried on a farm.

"To know that he was captured and alive for a period of time was very upsetting for everyone," Maureen said. "Even though we got a little further down the road in knowing how his life ended, the search continues for his remains. We may never get his remains, but I still can't help but dream about it happening

Maureen Kozak holds the formal memorandum dated Nov. 11, 1967, that notified her mother of the circumstances that led to the missing status of Lt. Col. Kelly Cook. Maureen's father was initially listed as missing in action and later declared killed in action, body not recovered. (Staff Sgt. Mercedes Crossland)

before my mother passes.

"I am very grateful our government is still searching for our POW/MIAs," she said.

Maureen and her brother Brian spearhead the family's efforts in remaining active in the Department of Defense's personnel recovery and accounting community. She said it's slightly easier for them to represent the family and stay knowledgeable in the latest developments, because they were only 5 and 7 years old when their father went missing, whereas their older siblings had up to two decades of time and memories with their father.

"It's far too difficult for them emotionally," she said. "Even over the holidays when we talk about him, they always break down in tears."

For this reason, Brian and Maureen keep in touch with the families of other POW/MIAs. They are members of various organizations dedicated to POW/MIA support and often attend meetings, briefings and conferences focused on the subject.

Maureen specifically sought volunteer work with Friends of the Fallen, an organization that helps provide comfort to the families of fallen service members who come to Dover AFB for the dignified transfer of their loved one.

"Helping in this manner means so much to me, because our family has been where their family is — having suffered a loss," she said.

As a wing commander's wife, Maureen has attended numerous events, which have featured a toast, tribute or display recognizing POW/MIAs.

"They are wonderful," she said. "I wish more of my family could see these beautiful honors. I also think they help the new generation learn something about their Air Force heritage and remind them there are still so many unaccounted for."

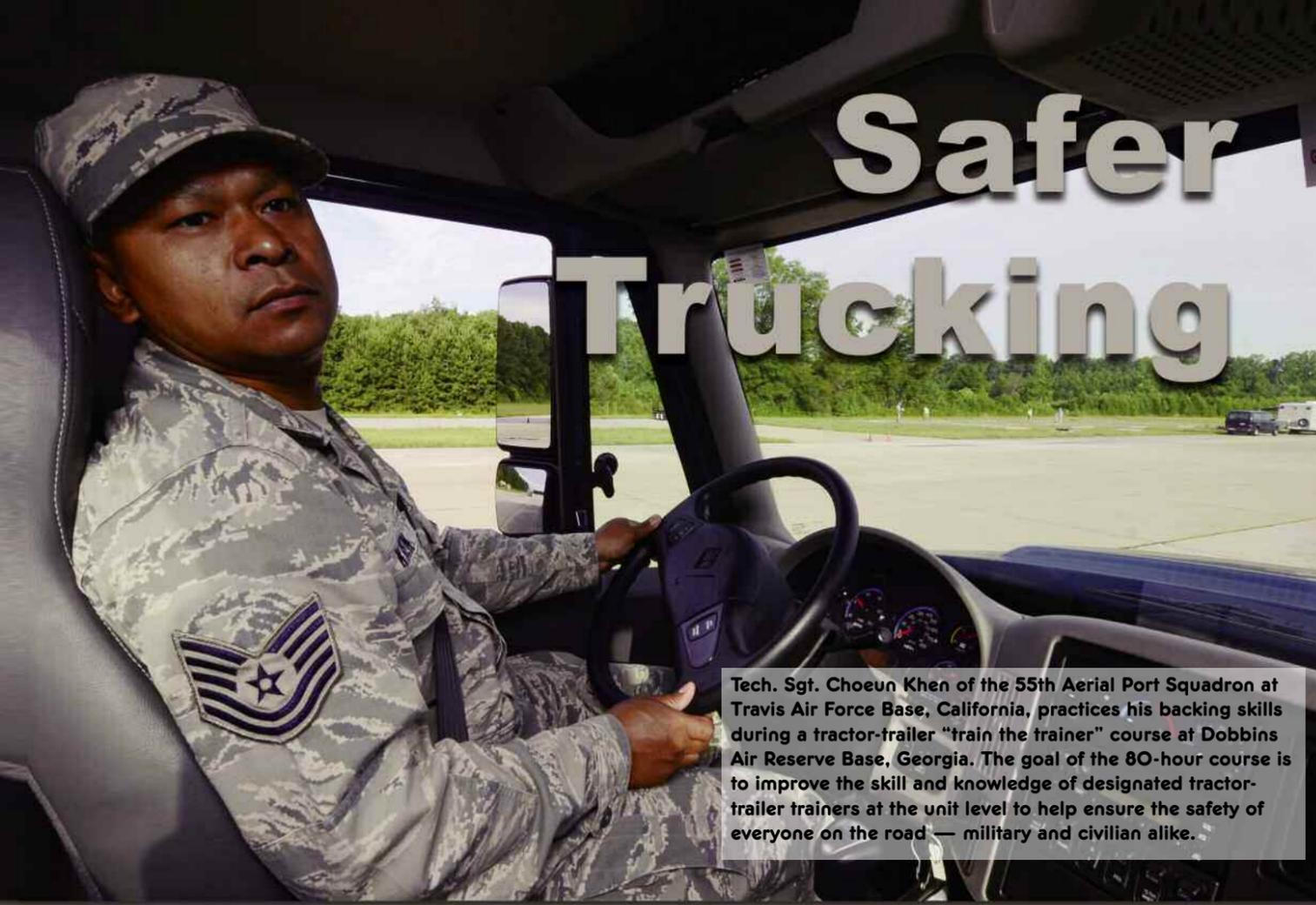
As of September 2014, more than 83,000 Americans are listed as missing in action from World War II to present, according to the Defense POW Missing Personnel Office. From the Vietnam War, 1,641 are still unaccounted for, including posthumously promoted Col. Kelly F. Cook, a decorated pilot, revered professor, husband, father and friend.

In his honor, Maureen said she always tries to participate in National POW/MIA Recognition Day, which has been observed on the third Friday of September since 1986. These observances are significant for Maureen and other families who are still waiting for their loved ones to be accounted for and repatriated.

"Whether it's a simple nod of silence or a full ceremony, they all count," Maureen said. "They all mean something — especially to me."

(Aceveda is assigned to the 512th AW public affairs office at Dover AFB.)





Tech. Sgt. Choeun Khen of the 55th Aerial Port Squadron at Travis Air Force Base, California, practices his backing skills during a tractor-trailer "train the trainer" course at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia. The goal of the 80-hour course is to improve the skill and knowledge of designated tractor-trailer trainers at the unit level to help ensure the safety of everyone on the road — military and civilian alike.

Program improves knowledge, skills of designated tractor-trailer trainers

Story by Senior Airman Daniel Phelps, photos by Don Peek

For the past year, Air Force civil engineers at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, and Indiantown Gap Air National Guard Base, Pennsylvania, have been conducting a tractor-trailer "train the trainer" course to ensure the safety of everyone on the road — military and civilian alike. The program is an 80-hour total force course with the goal of improving the skill and knowledge of designated tractor-trailer trainers at the unit level.

The program came about as a result of the efforts of Chief Master Sgt. Trevor Shattuck, career field manager at the Air Force Civil Engineer Center, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. He saw a need for more extensive tractor-trailer training in the Air Force after attending a civilian course.

"After going through that course, my eyes opened up and I realized we were deficient in our training for tractor-trailers," Shattuck said. "We are going to get our guys up to a level comparable to their civilian counterparts, so when we put our Airmen outside the gate in garrison they will be safe operators. The people around them on the surface streets can feel confident that the guy driving the truck behind, beside or in front of them knows what he's doing."

The course was designed to mirror the civilian course, said Tech. Sgt. Ryan Cleary, an instructor at Dobbins ARB. Adding to that, the Military CDL (Commercial Drivers License) Act of 2012 allows for an easy transfer of a military members' military license to a civilian license, providing an added benefit for

employment in the civilian sector.

"This course helped me in both my military and civilian jobs," said Senior Master Sgt. William Mills, heavy repair superintendent for the 94th Civil Engineer Squadron at Dobbins. He said taking the course allowed him to skip the skills test portion of the CDL examination. "I was only required to take the written portion to receive certification."

As a civilian, he is a foreman at Georgia National Cemetery in Canton.

"With this being a two-week course, it was very convenient for me," Mills said. "It definitely enhanced my career."

The instructors at Dobbins are working toward making the course more than just "comparable" to civilian training. The course began in August 2013 as a one-week course, evolved into a two-week course and is still being enhanced.

"We are currently working with the Professional Truck Driver Institute — the gold standard for training in the truck driving world — to get certified," said Master Sgt. Alexes Abrams, a course instructor. "By February, we plan on meeting those standards and will be the first in the Department of Defense to have that certification."

According to Marlene Dakita, PTDI certification coordinator, out of the hundreds of private, publicly funded and carrier truck driving schools, only 59 in the United States and Canada have gone through the extensive PTDI certification process and been validated to meet the organization's standards.



Senior Airman James Wright, an instructor at the Air Force Reserve Command Expeditionary Combat Support Training Certification Center at Dobbins, evaluates a tractor-trailer driver's ability to park within a specified area.

This (getting certification) would make those who go through this course tremendously more marketable in their job searches, Abrams said.

Since Shattuck brought the CDL course to Dobbins, Reservists have been leading its direction and development.

"We are the only CE school in the Reserve," Cleary said. "Plus, being near Atlanta, there is a variety of traffic that students learn to navigate. We also have a dead (inactive) runway that allows for safe training opportunities. We have all the variables for driving."

Another thing Reservists offer is continuity. With low turnover, the same people who are there leading the course can be counted on to be there for an extended period of time.

Abrams said the biggest challenge to this course is time.

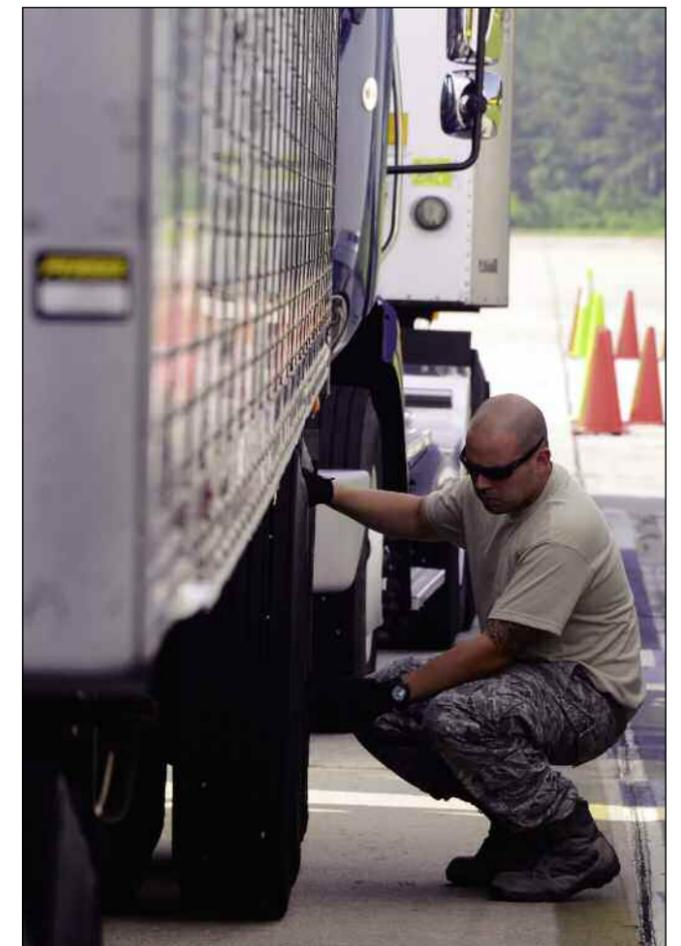
"There is a lot of information to go through in two weeks," he said. "We have to be good stewards of our time."

The professionalism of the students and teachers has allowed the course to be successful, Abrams said. Issues come up with the vehicles such as leaky hoses and flat tires, but everyone is able to push on and stay on track.

"It has taken a lot of nights and weekends and temporary duties to put this together — the lesson plans, assets and plans of instruction," Cleary said. "It took about six months to get our first class going. Our first class was 40 hours, but that wasn't sufficient, so we expanded to the 80-hour course. And, we are still expanding the program to ensure its quality."

Abrams said he hopes that eventually they will also be able to open up the school to people from other branches of the service. For now, it is only open to students in the Air Force.

(Phelps and Peek are assigned to the 94th Airlift Wing public affairs office at Dobbins. Amy Ausely, Air Force Civil Engineer Center public affairs office at San Antonio-Lackland, contributed this article)



Senior Airman Daniel Galvez of the 55th AES performs a comprehensive inspection prior to operating a tractor-trailer rig.



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