

# CITIZEN AIRMAN

October 2018



## CARRYING THE TORCH

RESERVE'S FIRST FEMALE F-35 PILOT IS NOW A WING COMMANDER  
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# From the Top

 @AFRCCommander

## WHEN WE TAKE CARE OF AIRMEN, THEY TAKE CARE OF THE MISSION

Heroes of the Air Force Reserve: I'm honored and humbled to take command of this outstanding organization.

I've been a Reservist for 18 years. Like many Citizen Airmen, I joined the Air Force Reserve because my family needed stability, which the Reserve could provide. So, after 14 years in the Air Force, I "changed patches" and became a Citizen Airman.

When I walked through the doors of my new Reserve unit, I felt like I'd just come home.

The Reserve still feels like home today, which is why I've remained a Citizen Airman for nearly two decades. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to serve with many amazing individuals. I've witnessed their accomplishments in peacetime and in combat, and I can attest that our people are our greatest asset. When we take care of our Airmen, they take care of the mission.

I've been privileged to serve at every level of command, but my roots are in the unit. The squadron is where I grew up. That's where the majority of our Citizen Airmen serve. Our squadrons execute the mission, they are the heart of our Air Force.

As chief of the Air Force Reserve and commander of Air Force Reserve Command, my focus is on our Citizen Airmen and our Reserve squadrons. Your objective is the mission, and my purpose is to ensure your success.

The mission of the Air Force Reserve is to provide strategic depth and operational support to the Joint Force. Our Citizen Airmen and squadrons must be lethal, combat-ready forces. My intent is to prioritize strategic depth and accelerate readiness, to guarantee we can execute today's missions and triumph in tomorrow's fight.

A squadron is only as good as its leadership. While the ultimate responsibility for a unit belongs to its commander, there are commissioned and noncommissioned leaders at all levels of our organization. Our success depends on all our leaders. All must be capable, able to accomplish the mission and focused on caring for Airmen. My intent is to develop resilient leaders who can optimize unit performance, maintain



readiness in peacetime and win in war.

The core value of "Excellence in All We Do" includes providing excellent support to Airmen. Our organizational operations, structure and processes greatly impact our Airmen and squadrons. This year, we began correcting problems in several areas, including medical readiness, talent management and financial operations, and we will continue to

fix outdated practices and cumbersome processes. My intent is to reform our organization, remove internal hindrances and modernize our force structure, allowing our Airmen and squadrons to focus on warfighting.

Readiness, leadership and organizational operations are all key components to our success and to our nation's defense. But the most critical element of all is our culture. It influences every aspect of our organization, including unit performance, cohesion, morale, readiness and retention. We must keep the faith with our Airmen, enhance trust and create the right culture across the enterprise – a culture where Airmen feel valued for their contributions.

The culture of the Air Force Reserve was what made my first Reserve squadron feel like home. It's the reason I still wear the uniform today.

The Air Force Reserve is about the mission. It's about our Citizen Airmen and our squadrons. My goal is to create an environment where people want to stay and serve. I want our Airmen to be motivated to do great things and to be able to serve to their full potential.

Ultimately, all Reserve Citizen Airmen should walk into their unit and feel as if they're home.



**RICHARD SCOBEE**  
Lieutenant General  
Commander, Air Force Reserve Command

# Chief's View

 @AFRC.CCC

## GENERAL MILLER: AFRC'S ENLISTED FORCE SALUTES YOU

*(Editor's note: Gen. Maryanne Miller assumed command of Air Mobility Command on Sept. 7, becoming the first traditional Reservist to be promoted to four-star general and lead an Air Force major command outside of Air Force Reserve Command. She served as chief of Air Force Reserve and AFRC commander from July 2016 to September 2018.)*

As our commander, General Miller was an amazing leader with a humble heart, who was always giving and always taking care of others. She was committed to us and enlisted force development. She didn't just talk about changes in support of our enlisted force, she made changes.

Less than one year into her tenure, General Miller collaborated with our senior enlisted teams to take action supporting the enlisted force. Among some of the changes implemented were the development of a standardized chief master sergeant selection process and the establishment of the Air Force Reserve Senior Enlisted Council and the first ever Enlisted Grades Council.

On January 24, 2017, General Miller signed the Air Force Reserve Policy on Chief Master Sergeant Positions. Since then our chief master sergeant vacancies are advertised through established processes outlined on myPers. This ensured every Airman has visibility and equal opportunity to compete for these positions. Standardizing the hiring process gave selection panels clear guidelines on choosing the best leaders and provided transparency for every step of the process. Now all enlisted Airmen can begin to see their career development path, and mentors and supervisors can best educate Airmen on how they too can become senior enlisted Citizen Airmen.

This standardization was just one of many changes that improved the foundation of the enlisted force. Those improvements continued in April 2017 with the establishment of the Air Force Reserve Senior Enlisted Council. Because of General Miller's revolutionary thinking, this council brought together chiefs from across the command, ensuring the members had a wide range of policy, operational and functional expertise.

This council is making a difference through open discussion, creating solutions for our enlisted members and their development. One of the council's first achievements was to redefine the Whole Airman Concept, streamlining the focus on what we do and how we do it for all Reservists: civilians, traditional Reservists, Active Guard/Reserve



Above, then-Lt. Gen. Maryanne Miller and Chief Master Sgt. Ericka Kelly talk to enlisted Reserve Citizen Airmen at the 940th Air Refueling Wing, Beale Air Force Base, California. Below, Miller speaks to enlisted members at the 419th Fighter Wing, Hill AFB, Utah.

members, individual mobilization augmentees and Air Reserve Technicians.

General Miller continued to keep the enlisted force at the forefront with the establishment of the Enlisted Grades Council in April of 2018. This council was created to support solutions of the Air Force Reserve Senior Enlisted Council and to apply those solutions to each enlisted grade, from airman basic to chief master sergeant. The Enlisted Grades Council is still in its infancy but has an established charter and business rules. There will be more to come from the Enlisted Grades Council.

General Miller was a strong supporter of enlisted developmental education. Because of her efforts, in-residence schools are overflowing with Reservists and we now have waiting lists for these courses. Removing the requirement to complete Professional Military Education in correspondence prior to attending in-residence has increased the number of Reservists wanting to participate in in-residence courses. Following a successful beta test, the Chief Master Sergeant Leadership Course was added to the Enlisted Developmental Education Board, making the course available to all chief master sergeants and senior master sergeants. We are currently revamping the Chief Master Sergeant Orientation Course and reviewing the curriculum. Both of these courses have waiting lists as well.

General Miller's support and dedication to the enlisted force bettered our training and equipped us with the resources we need to be effective, providing a combat-ready force capable of fulfilling combatant commander requirements.

Thank you for all your mentorship, encouragement, support, knowledge and confidence in our enlisted Airmen. We salute you.



**Ericka Kelly**  
Chief Master Sergeant  
Command Chief Master Sergeant  
Air Force Reserve Command



Tech. Sgt. Leland Hastings, Air Force Reserve's 919th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron, demonstrates fast rope braking procedures as he lowers himself from a tower on Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The event was part of over-all critical individual task training for the SOSFS Airmen, a program that precedes more advanced special operations forces training. (Master Sgt. Jasmin Taylor)

On the cover: Col. Gina "Torch" Sabrie poses while taking the seat of an F-35 at Hill Air Force Base, Utah. Sabrie, the Air Force Reserve's first female F-35 pilot is the commander of the Air Force Reserve's 419th Fighter Wing at Hill. Check out her story on page 10. (Todd Cromar)

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## CITIZEN AIRMAN

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# MEET THE SCOBEEES

## Family definitely comes first for new commander and his wife

By Bo Joyner

*(Editor's note: Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee became the chief of Air Force Reserve and commander of Air Force Reserve Command during an assumption of command ceremony at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, on Sept. 27. Two days before the ceremony, we had a chance to talk with General Scobee and his wife, Janis. Here's what we learned about the Scobees.)*

If there is one thing Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee has learned during his 32 years of Air Force service, it's that family support is critical to a successful military career. Luckily, General Scobee has the passionate support of his wife, Janis, as he takes the helm of the Air Force Reserve.

"I think we make a really good team," the general said. "And I know I wouldn't be where I am today without her by my side."

"The first thing you notice about Rich is his sense of humor," Janis said. "You can't be sad for very long or upset for very long around him. That can be kind of frustrating as his wife, but he is really very funny. He is the also kindest person I know. One thing he says all the time is 'you don't throw people away.' You help people. Even if they have made a mistake, you help them. He practices that every day with everybody. He gives so much grace and kindness and he makes me want to be a better person every day."

The Scobees have three children. Their oldest son Dexter is working on his doctorate degree in electrical engineering and robotics at the University of California, Berkeley; daughter Christi is currently studying abroad, working on her master of business administration in Galway, Ireland; and youngest son Andrew is a junior in high school.

Both of the Scobees trace their roots to the South. Janis was born and raised in Harlan County, Kentucky, a small coal mining community, while General Scobee moved a lot with his military family as a child but considers Chattanooga, Tennessee, to be home.

The Scobees have moved several times as General Scobee has progressed up the ranks.

One of the highlights of General Scobee's career was serving as commander of the 506th Air Expeditionary Group at Kirkuk Regional Air Base, Iraq, in 2008

In his current position, the general will split his time between the nation's capital and AFRC headquarters at Robins as well as make frequent visits to Reserve organizations throughout the country.

Mrs. Scobee is looking forward to traveling with her husband when her schedule allows. Like her husband, she loves to meet with Citizen Airmen and their families.

Both of the Scobees are passionate about providing Reservists with the support they need at home so they can be their best while in uniform.

"One thing that Janis helped me realize is that everything you do in your career – even in service to your nation – has to be in line with the needs of your family, however you define your family. If you don't have support, you can't be your best," General Scobee said. "I have a spouse who stands by my side, helps me when I need help. She's a sounding board when I need advice. She's always there for me. What we've learned is that when Airmen don't have support, it's hard to serve in the Air Force Reserve."

Mrs. Scobee is a strong advocate for support programs that help Reservists and their family members. "We expect excellence from our Airmen in all they do and they deserve excellence in all of their support programs," she said.

She is heavily involved in the Key Spouse program and serves as the Key Spouse mentor for all of the Reserve's senior spouses. "I've been involved with Key Spouse ever since it first came along in the Reserve and I think it's a great way to make sure every family stays connected, either during deployment or day-to-day life. Having a resource like a Key Spouse available 24/7 is super important."

She is also a big proponent of the Yellow Ribbon program. "I think Yellow Ribbon is the best way for our Airmen and their families to learn about and get connected to the programs they might need before, during or after a deployment. Reservists often don't live close to a military base and their families are not connected to a base or a military support system. They need to know about all of the programs the Reserve offers and that's what Yellow Ribbon provides."

"My advice when it comes to Yellow Ribbon is 'Go,'" the general said. "I need our Airmen to go to Yellow Ribbon. That's where we connect Airmen and their families to the programs they need. When you are stressed about what is going on back home, your head is not in the game on a deployment. We have to have your head in the game when you are deployed."

Like all Reserve families, the Scobees said they struggle with finding balance with all that is going on in their busy lives.



Family comes first for Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee and his wife, Janis, shown at left. Top left, the Scobees pose with oldest son Dexter and his wife, Ilina. Top middle, daughter Christi is currently studying abroad in Ireland. Top right, youngest son Andrew is a junior in high school and an Eagle Scout. (Courtesy photos)

"Something I learned from our command chief is that balance might not be the right word," the general said. "Something will always be out of balance. What we are looking for is harmony. At some point in your life, your family is going to take priority. At some point, you are going to go into combat and the military is going to take priority. At some point, maybe changing jobs or when you have an increase in responsibility, your civilian career is going to take priority. All of these things have to be in harmony, but not necessarily balance."

How do the Scobees strive for that harmony?

"It is hard because Rich is gone so much, but we really value the time we do get to spend together," Janis said. "When we do get a day together, we like to reconnect and nest at home and maybe work on a project together around the house. A good day for us would be to go to the home improvement store, go out to eat breakfast and then work on something together around the house."

"When we're on the road, we like to do these weird, kitschy kind of outings," she added. "We like going to places like the Winchester Mystery House (a famous haunted house in San Jose, California) and the Stanley Hotel in Colorado where The Shining was set."

"And being from the South, nothing beats a trip to Dollywood and a good funnel cake," the general added.

Speaking of food, Mrs. Scobee is a culinary school graduate and an accomplished chef.

"We eat really well at the Scobee house," the general said.

"I love to cook and host people at our house," Janis said. "When we were in Colorado, I was able to use what I learned at culinary school as a volunteer at the Care and Share Food Bank in Colorado Springs. We taught low-income families to cook healthy and nutritious food that tastes good on a budget of \$25 to \$30 a week. That doesn't go very far. We taught them the basics of nutrition and cooking. That was a really neat experience and I would not have had that opportunity if I wasn't a military spouse."

As General Scobee takes command of AFRC, he and Mrs. Scobee have a message for all Reservists: "Know that your senior leaders, including spouses, are working hard to take care of you and we are committed to building trust in our organization. We want to make sure you have everything you need to be comfortable and supported. Have fun and enjoy the ride! Always remember that these are the good ole' days you are going to tell your grandbabies about one day."

# NEVER FORGET

## 22nd AF commander reflects on 9/11 experience

By Meredith Kirchoff

United Airlines Captain Craig La Fave flew from Washington D.C., to Paris on Sept. 10, 2001. The then-Air Force Reserve major expected to make the return trip the next day on Sept. 11, when instead terrorist attacks unfolded that changed his country, industry and career forever.

“We got to the hotel and no sooner than I put my head down, the phone rang in my room,” La Fave said. On the other end of the line, his fellow first officer told him to turn on the news.

“I turned on the television half asleep, having worked all night, and I saw the second tower being hit,” he said. “We realized they were United aircraft, so we all gathered in the lobby.”

For three days, La Fave’s fellow aircrew members, and those of other airline crews and passengers, anxiously roamed the city waiting for the air routes to reopen.

La Fave, now commander of Air Force Reserve’s 22nd Air Force, experienced the events of that day and those that followed as only someone who is both an airline pilot and Air Force member could—contemplating the gravity of what the situation meant for life as he knew it and what he would return home to.

“It was a tragedy on many levels. For my company it meant we lost two aircraft on the same day and upwards of 35 employees, and we lost 3,000 American citizens,” La Fave said. “For airline families it meant disaster on many levels. It was the beginning of what we call the lost decade. It meant multiple bankruptcies for the airline and some families. For those of us who were Reservists or Guardsmen, it meant going back to active duty, mobilizations and family separations.”

Grounded with other Citizen Airmen meant a collective yearning to get back to military units and get into the fight. Those feelings mixed with the uncertainty of what the conflict would look like.

“I was already asking, ‘how are we going to get these guys?’” La Fave said. “We were all ready to put our war paint on. We met

other aircrews at restaurants with other Air Force Reservists and Air National Guardsmen and everybody was mentally getting ready for what was to come.”

On Sept. 14, 2001, La Fave piloted the first United Airlines flight back from Europe to Washington-Dulles International Airport following the attacks of 9/11.

“We were all very tense,” he said. “We left with a different set of security rules and we’re now returning with a whole new era (of rules). We flew there with our tool kits, our knives that we all had to surrender at some point to get home.

“We got to the airplane and not everyone had perfect clarity on their family situations,” he recalled. “It was my leg to fly home and there were a lot of tears and a lot of stress during the crew briefing. I remember leaving the briefing thinking, ‘I’ve got to get up there, I’ve got to get my mind on flying; I needed to get my head in the game.’”

On what was a crystal clear day, La Fave’s Boeing 777 flew low over New York City on the approach to Washington.

“We had a bird’s eye view right over Manhattan of two smoking holes. So, that really brought it all to the forefront,” he remembered.

The call sign for the flight that day was United 911. It was the last United Airlines Flight to ever fly under that call sign.

“As we landed, we had Reservists reporting for duty,” La Fave said. “Some guys left the airline and never came back and some guys left and came back a year later. And for me, I left and went back to my Reserve desk job to try to figure out how to get into the fight I thought might only last a few months.”

At the time, La Fave served as an individual mobilization augmentee with the Defense Contract Management Agency in Washington D.C.

“I wanted to get back and be a flying squadron commander in a time of war,” he said, having come from an operational C-5



*Maj. Gen. Craig La Fave, 22nd Air Force commander, left, poses in the flight deck of a United Airlines Boeing 737 with fellow Air Force Reservist and former 22nd AF vice commander, retired Air Force Col. Louis Patriquin, during an airline trip in July 2018. (Courtesy photo)*

unit at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, prior to that assignment. Some patience was needed as it took about four years for La Fave to make his way back to flying C-5s, followed by C-17s and eventually squadron command.

The general didn’t know it was still early on in what would evolve in both name and reality to the “long war.”

“The early days of the war I spent in the crisis coordination center of the Pentagon right next to the NMCC (National Military Command Center) as a watch officer,” he said. “Standing watch, tracking events and feeding information to my undersecretary. Watching it from afar, I didn’t quite like that.”

After making his way to a C-17 squadron, he volunteered for a ground deployment to Baghdad in 2007 and again to Afghanistan in 2012. La Fave spent five consecutive years on military leave from his airline job, but didn’t experience furlough like many of his fellow airline pilots.

“It reinvigorated me because they killed my countrymen and destroyed my industry, so I had a little bit of vengeance on the Taliban and al-Qaida myself,” he said. “And to this day, I’m still not over it and we’re still at it.”

The general saw the role of the Air Force Reserve evolve as the

war continued, moving away from the strategic Reserve of his early career and toward an operational Reserve. He acknowledges not all Airmen lived the events of 9/11 as he did, especially those now serving who may have been preschoolers at the time.

“You could argue their motivations are pure and right and they’re doing what they can for their country,” he said. “The operational requirement hasn’t gone away and the requirement to utilize our operational Reserve is still there, so our Reservists are front and center; they’re needed, they’re relevant in the fight and we need these Airmen to continue to serve.”

Now a Traditional Reservist and Boeing 737 captain for United Airlines, La Fave says he’s impacted to this day by his personal experience on Sept. 11.

“It impacted a generation of Airmen, aviators and of Americans I think,” he said. “My kids were impacted, all of America was impacted.

“So, we snapped a chalk-line there on Sept. 11, 2001,” he added. “Things were truly different on Sept. 10th. It does motivate me, every day.”

*(Kirchoff is the public affairs officer for 22nd Air Force.)*

# CARRYING THE TORCH

**RESERVE'S FIRST FEMALE F-35 PILOT IS NOW A WING COMMANDER//**

**STORY BY BRYAN MAGAÑA, PHOTOS BY TODD CROMAR**



**B**efore she climbed into the world's most advanced fighter jet to become the Air Force Reserve's first female F-35 Lightning II pilot, Col. Gina "Torch" Sabric had already flown 10 airframes and racked up 22 years of flying experience.

"My family can tell you I've wanted to be a fighter pilot forever," said Sabric, the first female commander of the 419th Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah. "I've always been fascinated with air and space."

Service is in her DNA. Growing up in Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania, her mother was a nurse and her father a police officer, and she had several uncles who served in the Air Force. But it was a trip to a local airshow that turned her aviation dream into a tangible goal.

"My dad was a private pilot, so he took me to an airshow when I was a little girl, and I remember looking up at those airplanes and being amazed," Sabric said. "Ever since then, I knew I was going to be a pilot."

Twice in her teens she went to U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama. A few years later, she had followed in her dad's footsteps, earning a private pilot's license while studying aerospace engineering at Penn State. By 1995, Sabric was ready to join the Air Force and had no doubts she'd be wearing a flight suit.

"If you really want something, you work your hardest to get it."

Sabric proved herself as the top graduate from navigator training, launching her career first as an F-15E Strike Eagle weapons system officer and later as a distinguished graduate from pilot training into the F-16 Fighting Falcon. Add to that the MQ-9 Reaper, a remotely piloted aircraft, and the T-38 Talon, which she flew as "red air," or simulated enemy against F-22 Raptors. Most recently, she flew special operations missions in the C-146A Wolfhound out of Duke Field, Florida.

"I don't have the typical flying career," Sabric said of the multiple airframes she's flown. "I've had the opportunity to bounce around with different aircraft and mission sets. I think it's made me a better pilot because I've had the opportunity to experience so much outside the fighter world."

Her career is different in other ways, too. Sabric said she's grown accustomed to answering questions about being a woman in the fighter world – one that, until 1993 when then-Capt. Jeannie Leavitt became the Air Force's first female fighter pilot, was dominated by men.

"In the '90s, women were just getting into fighters," Sabric said. "Back then, you were either the only girl in pilot training, or just one of two. But once you prove yourself in the cockpit, gender doesn't matter anymore. A fighter pilot is a fighter pilot and everyone has to do the same job."

Sabric said a lot has changed in the past 20 years. She doesn't feel like "the token girl" in the squadron. She has more than 2,500 flying hours, including time in combat, and has deployed numerous times in support of Operations Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and Noble Eagle.

"It's great to know that today there are little girls, like me, who look up and see fighter jets and say, 'I can do that.'"

Sabric said she loves talking to school groups and touting some of the ways both men and women can serve in the Air Force Reserve.

"When you take off the helmet and the long hair comes out, that's a good thing for girls to see," Sabric said. "I remember when I was a lieutenant, we brought a group of

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*Col. Gina Sabric is the Air Force Reserve's first female F-35 pilot and the commander of the 419th Fighter Wing, Hill Air Force Base, Utah.*



**“Once you prove yourself in the cockpit, gender doesn’t matter anymore. A fighter pilot is a fighter pilot and everyone has to do the same job.”**

– Col. Gina Sabric, 419th Fighter Wing commander

Girl Scouts to the F-15E simulator. That was really eye-opening to me because it was a moment when I realized how far we’ve come. We were able to show these girls what opportunities were open to them that weren’t just a few years earlier.”

Still, there’s only a small number of women fighter pilots in the Air Force, and only three others – all active duty – in the F-35 community.

Sabric said the birth of her son in 2011 was the deciding factor in leaving active duty for the Air Force Reserve, as it offered more flexibility in how and where she served.

“The Reserve provides an opportunity to serve either part time or full time when it works for you and your family,” she said. “It’s unique because everyone is here by choice. About two-thirds of our Airmen serve part time, and they do a phenomenal job of balancing work – both military and civilian –

and family, because they want to serve in some capacity.”

Earlier this year, the Reserve brought Sabric, a single mom, to Hill AFB in Northern Utah, where less than three years earlier the 419th FW and its active duty counterpart, the 388th FW, received the Air Force’s first operational F-35A. Since then, the two wings have flown the F-35 in a “Total Force” partnership, launching more than 9,000 sorties and logging nearly 15,000 hours in the jet.

“When I was told I got this job, a huge smile came across my face and I thought, ‘Wow, I just got the golden ticket,’” Sabric said. “It’s an amazing opportunity to be a fighter pilot and fly the latest fifth-generation aircraft at an operational wing. It doesn’t get any better.”

Sabric became fully qualified in the F-35 in August, having finished two months of training at Eglin AFB, Florida, and addi-

tional flying hours at Hill.

“I’m still new in the airplane,” Sabric said. “Every sortie you learn something new, so as I continue to fly I’ll continue to learn. What the F-35 brings to the fight now, it’s lightyears beyond fourth-gen aircraft.”

Aside from the stealth technology that keeps the F-35 virtually invisible to radar, Sabric said the most impressive aspect of the jet is its “sensor fusion” – the vast wealth of information it collects and sends that can be shared with other aircraft, giving

pilots a bigger picture of the battlespace.

“Learning the F-35 is a challenge, and it’s a lot of new information to process and interpret,” Sabric said. But her diverse flying experience prepared her to make yet another switch. “Luckily, it’s still stick and rudder, and flying is flying.”

Sabric looks forward to helping the F-35 reach full operational capability at Hill. By 2019, the base will be home to 78 jets and four fighter squadrons capable of worldwide deployment. It’s a responsibility and privilege she couldn’t have imagined as a girl growing up in Tobyhanna.

“Sitting in this seat for the 419th, surrounded by these beautiful mountains, flying the premier fighter of the Air Force – I could not be happier to be where I am right now.”

*(Magaña is assigned to the 419th Fighter Wing’s public affairs office.)*

# LEADING THE WAY

## RESERVE CITIZEN AIRMEN UNLOCK POTENTIAL OF AIR FORCE DATA

STORY BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. TIMM HUFFMAN, PHOTOS BY TECH. SGT. ROBERT BARNETT

In the summer of 2017 the Air Force turned to a team of Reserve Citizen Airmen to lead the rapid standup of a new organization focused on leveraging the oceans of data generated by the service.

The move was in response to a review of the Air Force's data environment that identified a number of mission gaps between the operators and the data they needed to be effective.

Instead of waiting to start the Chief Data Office until the lengthy process of allocating manpower and hiring a permanent staff was completed, the Air Force leaned on the Air Force Reserve, which offers a ready pool of highly-trained and easily accessible talent.

Gen. David L. Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff, announced Maj. Gen. Kimberly Crider as the first chief data officer during the Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium in September 2017. Less than a year later, on July 1, 2018, Crider handed the organization off to the permanent chief data officer, Eileen Vidrine, at an initial operationally capable level.

"Having access to Reservists to come in on a temporary basis to operationalize the mission while the business processes mature was indispensable," said Vidrine, adding that "the amount of work done before I got here was significant."

Crider was a natural fit for the job of standing up the CDO and, as the mobilization assistant to the Under Secretary of the Air Force was in the right place at the right time. The general has more than 30 years of information technology experience across every Air Force major command, as well as extensive industry experience as an engineer, IT consultant

and thought leader.

Following her appointment as interim CDO, Crider surrounded herself with a team of Reservists who would help her begin the tasks of building the Air Force data strategy and enterprise information model that would shape how the Air Force handles and connects data moving forward.

Among her team of both enlisted and officers was Col. Nevin Taylor, an Air Force Reserve individual mobilization augmentee who has extensive experience in the field of data science and who has authored three books on the subject. Prior to coming to the CDO, he co-chaired the U.S. Data Cabinet's Data Interagency Working Group, which gave him a good vantage point on what was working in government.

Taylor's involvement in the Air Force's data efforts actually pre-dates Crider's. He first began working on the initiative in 2016, creating a data framework to determine what initial operationally capable and fully operationally capable states would look like. Once those details were finalized and Crider instated as CDO, the marathon to tackle the Air Force's data was underway.

The Reserve-led data effort was tasked with laying the foundations of the organization so the permanent staff could start immediately once the Air Force brought them on board. This included working with key Air Force leaders, developing governance and policy, and building a framework for the Air Force's data strategy. Additionally, the team was tasked with tackling a number of proof-of-concept projects.

One of those proofs was solving a student pipeline problem

**“Data is a strategic asset. We need to leverage data in effective ways, faster than our adversaries, to improve our insights, to drive performance and to deliver a competitive advantage.”**

– Maj. Gen. Kimberly Crider, First Air Force Chief Data Officer

for schools training Airmen moving into critical career fields. The CDO gathered and reviewed all of the data it could find on the placement process, used that data to identify the cause of the problem and then implemented a solution. By taking the time to collect and analyze data and then use that data in the planning and programming phase, the schools were able to address more than 1,000 missed seats in initial skills training, said Taylor. "Data doesn't give you answers," said Taylor. "It gives you good questions to ask."

In a warfighting environment where a single sensor can generate petabytes of data daily (think 2,000-year-long non-stop playlists), it's imperative to have a strategy for how to make that mountain of data usable in a way that can inform the decision-making process, noted Crider.

The Air Force's people and machines are creating, collecting, processing and exchanging data for specific operations but before the CDO, there was no real process to facilitate the analysis of that data to look at trends and predictive analysis of data over time.

Compounding that problem, said Crider, was a lack of clearly defined rules governing how data would be stored and tagged for later retrieval, or retrieval by another part of the Air Force.

"We don't even know all the data we have or where it is. We don't have methods to make data accessible; it is not well maintained and we don't have standards to ensure its quality," said Crider.

That's why the CDO set five goals for Air Force data: make



*Maj. Gen. Kimberly Crider led a team of Reserve Citizen Airmen in standing up the Air Force's Chief Data Office.*



it visible, accessible, understandable, linked and trustworthy (VAULT).

Crider, who is an avid runner, likened the road ahead of the Air Force's efforts to get its arms around its data to running a marathon. In the long-distance race, she said runners have to put in the foundational training, stick to a pace and exercise patience; sprinting will burn you out. A runner has to know the layout of the full 26.2-mile footrace but can only maintain situational awareness of the five miles in front of them. Sticking to the plan enables you to get through.

Applying this marathon mentality to the Air Force's data opportunities holds tremendous potential, she said. However, if the Air Force doesn't go the last mile to act on the insights that data and analytics reveals, then it's not fully completed the task to deliver operational and competitive advantage from data.

"It's the last mile in a marathon that makes you a true runner," said Crider, to underscore the importance of the Air Force following through on operationalizing the insights it gets from data. "If we never do anything with the results of the data analytic efforts, we've only exercised the process, not truly transformed to a data driven organization."

In addition to Crider and Taylor, four Reserve enlisted

Airmen contributed heavily to the effort. Chief Master Sgt. Sarah Faith, Senior Master Sgt. Eric Londres, Tech. Sgt. Malo Jones, Tech. Sgt. Janitza Colon and Senior Airman Corey Speight carried a lions-share of the workload, from keeping the moving pieces of personnel matters in order to providing executive support to leadership.

Speight, who is a fuel cell maintenance Airmen at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, found the position in the Volunteer Reserve System while working as an executive assistant at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. With a degree in hospitality management and extensive management experience in the restaurant business, Speight was a natural fit for the team.

The enlisted Reservist is like the oil in a machine, keeping everything moving smoothly. He is primarily responsible for managing schedules for CDO leadership, setting up workshops and handling daily operations. Because no one has ever done what the CDO is doing, the team must be fluid in their thinking and actions in order to take the organization to the next step, he said.

"The Reserve enlisted team are -- and have been -- the backbone of the CDO," said Crider.

The CDO also has six Reserve data liaison officers strategically

placed across the major commands. These Reserve officers are the CDO's eyes and ears on the ground, building relationships and identifying areas where the CDO can come in and make things better for the Air Force.

Col. Maureen Carroll, whose Reserve assignment is IMA to the Air Force Network Integration Center commander, has also served as the CDO's data liaison officer to Air Mobility Command. As the CDO liaison officer, she has focused on coordinating with leadership, working several use-cases, and facilitating AMC's data governance, policy and strategy development.

Two of the major projects Carroll worked for AMC were with the communications division (A6) and the analysis, assessments and lessons-learned division (A9). For the A6, she has helped break new ground in the area of accessing data; with A9, she is helping design a series of use cases to access and bring together data in new ways to optimize global mobility planning.

The colonel, who has a data security background from the civilian world, said that while it can be challenging to help guide the adoption of new business processes, she finds the work exciting.

"The evidence shows that this is the path to go down," said Carroll. "The way we've been doing business, we can get by, but we can do so much more with data."

As the CDO strides towards its fully operational status, Reserve involvement will decrease. That doesn't mean their support wasn't crucial to getting the organization to where it is today.

According to Vidrine, standing up a new organization in the Department of Defense is a demanding task and the Air Force Reservists who brought the CDO to initial operating capability did an outstanding job. She added that the team was committed



and willing to be on the leading edge, even if it meant learning new skills, developing partnerships and the ability to adapt in an evolving environment.

Vidrine, herself a former U.S. Army Reservist, said the agility demonstrated by the Airmen who stood up the CDO is not an easy skill to attain but is one she believes serving in the Reserve nurtures. In the Reserve, you have to learn agility to balance work, life, family and your military commitment.

"The amount of work done before I got here was significant, these Airmen continue to rise to the challenge and what they have accomplished is truly exemplary," said Vidrine.

For Crider, who is still involved but is wrapping up her CDO work, the outcome was worth the effort.

"Data is the future of our force," Crider said. "Being part of the CDO team was an exciting venture... unlocking and unleashing the power of our data is going to keep the Air Force at the forefront of mission success. We must take full advantage of data so we can sense, learn, decide and act faster than our adversaries and ensure the maximum effectiveness of our force."

*(Huffmann is chief of content management and training with the Air Force Connect Office.)*

*Reserve Citizen Airmen who have played a key role in establishing the Air Force's Chief Data Office include, clockwise from top left, Tech. Sgt. Janitza Colon, Col. Nevin Taylor and Senior Master Sgt. Eric Londres.*



# CHASING DREAMS

Reserve maintainer perseveres with music, art career

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Shelton Sherrill



**F**rom a church pulpit to a stage bar, this former preacher walks into the spotlight. As his fingers dance on the guitar strings, his voice sings tales of pain, perseverance and his journey to exuberance. As if in a trance, the audience hangs on his every word, and in those moments, this native Alabama Reserve Citizen Airman is able to live out his dream.

“I’m living the best days of my life right now. Maybe the better days are in front of me, but I know these days are far better than the ones that preceded it,” said Tech. Sgt. Abraham Partridge, a maintenance squadron intergraded missions systems technician with the Air Force Reserve’s 403rd Wing, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

Partridge has topped music charts, exhibited paintings at events and played at exclusive music venues, but his life wasn’t always full of happiness. His road to happiness was filled with some tough times wrapped in despair.

At 18, Partridge moved out to pursue a theological degree. Four years later, he not only earned a degree, but he also met the woman who became his wife. They later moved to the Appalachian Mountains in Kentucky where Partridge accepted a pastorate and was in charge of guiding other’s souls.

Quickly realizing he had the ability to influence people’s lives, Partridge began to look deeper into what he was teaching. Partridge said he began to see a different truth than what he was preaching to others. Tormented and conflicted, he said he had to decide to follow his own beliefs, which went against the church’s beliefs, or accept this reality and live in an eternal jail.

“It (preaching) became something that I couldn’t do anymore,” said Partridge. “So, I packed everything I owned, my family, drove back to Mobile, moved in with my mother and started over.”

After returning home, Partridge took a minimum wage job and then bounced around doing various manual labor jobs until he joined the Air Force Reserve. During these dark times of doubt and uncertainty, Partridge’s pen and paintbrush were a therapeutic guide and outlet that brought him back to happiness.

He started working a steady civilian job while serving once a month as a Reservist until going on a deployment overseas in 2013. Upon his return, Partridge took a full-time position as an Air Reserve Technician. This newly found job security and benefits the Air Force Reserve provided, allowed him more time to realize what made him happy in life. So he started to perfect those talents which were once his savior: art and music.

*Tech Sgt. Abraham Partridge, a 403rd Maintenance Squadron intergraded missions systems technician and Reserve Citizen Airman, poses for a portrait with his guitar at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. Partridge performs folk music and paints folk art.*

“At the same time I started to write songs, I created visual art,” said Partridge. “It made me feel good. No one ever appreciated it, so I was secretive about my artwork and songs for a long time.”

The more his skills grew, the more he would let other people peek into the artistic world that he had created.

“His passion for music is beyond anything I have ever witnessed,” said Tech. Sgt. Earnest Scruggs, a maintainer with the 803rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. “For years it was something that he did just for himself, close friends and family. Lucky for us, he started to open to the world a little and let a few more of us hear some of the songs he had written.”

As time passed, Partridge said he finally did his first performance in front of a live audience. It was during a songwriting competition in Gulf Shores, Alabama. A crowd of more than 200 people gave him a standing ovation at the end of the show. Not only did he gain confidence in his talents, he also met a producer who helped him record his first album. That record provided him notoriety and started him on the road of touring.

“I’ve been playing shows from Texas to Key Largo to Cleveland,” said Partridge. “All while being an ART, a Reservist, a father and a husband, which is really difficult.”

Partridge’s determination fueled him to continuously grab opportunities touring while also recording his second album and getting picked up by a record label.

The success of his music then opened the doors for his artwork. Partridge’s publicists and manager came to his house and was captivated by one of the few paintings his wife allowed him to display in the house.

“I brought out all my other pieces hidden in the corner of my house, and they loved all of them,” said Partridge. “It was the first time anyone showed any interest in that part of what I do. So, I made my art public and within a month it was



every time. That’s why he’s had so much success in such a short period of time.”

Partridge continues to work full time with the Air Force Reserve while still pursuing his passion for art and music. Partridge said he doesn’t seek fame through all of this. His true happiness continues to bloom as long as he is able to provide for his family, create art and perform.

He is living proof that a person can follow his dreams while serving as a Citizen Airman. Everyone’s path to internal happiness may be filled with obstacles, but he reveals that an important tool needed to build success is perseverance.

“If you’re doing anything original, when you first start doing it, everyone is going to look at you wide-eyed like you’re crazy,” said Partridge. “But if you persevere, believe in your work, put it out there and perfect your craft, eventually things will start happening.”

*(Sherrill is assigned to the 403rd Wing public affairs office.)*

*Far left, Partridge trains a Citizen Airman on avionics equipment at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. Left, Partridge performs at a venue in Mobile, Alabama. Below, Partridge displays some of his artwork at the same venue.*



over the United States and the Netherlands. After hiding his talents for more than a decade, Partridge transformed his life struggles into art.

“I am not bragging, because I didn’t have anything to do with it,” said Partridge. “I really feel like perseverance has led me here, and I have been extremely blessed.”

“Not to take away from his talent, but the most inspiring part of Abe is his drive,” said Scruggs. “He puts himself in front of people and he delivers

international news.”

Partridge has had feature articles in the Associated Press, Washington Times and other national publications. His last record debuted at number 19 on the European Americana Music Charts. He represented the Gulf Coast Blues Society in the 2017 International Blues Challenge and has toured all



# LIFE SAVERS

## Air Force celebrates 75 years of air evacuations

By Maj. Angela Washington

This year the Air Force celebrates 75 years of air evacuations and the scores of injured service members who have been safely flown from combat areas to higher echelons of care.

Although the Air Force didn't graduate its first class of fully trained flight nurses until 1943, using air evacuation as a tool to transport injured soldiers actually started well before the current formal air evacuation system was established. As early as World War I, planes were used to transport injured individuals. However, the concept of utilizing the care of trained nursing staff members while transporting the injured by air was not fully realized until 1932, when Lauretta M. Schimmoler, a nurse and a pilot, established the Aerial Nurse Corps of America.

It was Schimmoler's vision that qualified nurses would be available to provide care specific to the demands of patients being transported by air.

While the U.S. military did not immediately recognize the value of such care in the air, as World War II raged on and the number of wounded and sick in both the European and Pacific theaters increased, the military began to look for a quicker method of evacuating patients.

In November 1941, the Medical Air Ambulance Squadron was started with the intent of transporting war casualties by air to improve survival rates. Initially, the U.S. Army Air Corps attempted to evacuate some casualties in B-17 Flying Fortress bombers before quickly learning that the B-17 was not suitable for carrying patients.

The Army Air Corps also recognized that patients being transported needed care providers in flight.

The first Air Surgeon, Brig. Gen. David Grant, encouraged the training and use of skilled nurses to transport casualties by air. It was known that patients transported by air were subject to stresses of flight that can impact the patient's outcome and nurses and medics would need to be trained in this field.



Above, members of the Air Force Reserve's 445th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron conduct a training mission onboard a C-17 Globemaster II. Below, nurses at Bowman Field, Kentucky, train with gas masks.

The 349th Air Evacuation Group was established at Bowman Field in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1942. Under the group was the Medical Air Evacuation Training Squadron, which was tasked with training these "angels of mercy."

Initially six weeks in length and later stretched to eight weeks, the training encompassed specifics of air evacuation as well as general military instruction.

Nurses participated in ground bivouac exercises, practiced emergency landing or ditching protocols and spent hours on training flights between Bowman Field and Camp Atterbury, Indiana. The first group of fully trained flight nurses graduated on February 18, 1943.

At the graduation, Grant noted that these nurses and medics accepted some of the highest risk of any military personnel. They would perform their duties on aircraft meant for cargo missions and would therefore not have the benefit of the red cross marker to signify a medical mission. Nonetheless, these brave men and women volunteered unselfishly for this job.

Once their training was complete, the flight nurses and medics were off to areas overseas to practice their skills at transporting the sick and wounded out of the area of combat and back to a higher echelon treatment facility.

Not only did their presence offer a timely transfer of the patients, it offered relief to the forward medical units busting with wounded soldiers. In flight, the nurse would be fully responsible for all

the casualties onboard the plane with the assistance of one medic. If a flight surgeon was not available, the nurse would also be expected to assign priority to the evacuees being recovered on the ground.

These early missions were conducted on C-47 Skytrains, which could carry up to 24 patients after being converted into a hospital with straps to hold the litters.

The air evacuation nurse and medic would monitor the patients' pulse and respirations, offer comfort measures and attend to wounds throughout the flight back to a hospital at a rear operation location or a base hospital.

The use of air transport had a huge impact on the war effort.

An October 1945 article in the *Air Surgeon's Bulletin* entitled "Air Evacuation of One Million Patients: Review of Operations to VE-Day" lauded the success of air evacuation in saving lives noting that more than 350,000 patients were evacuated out of the European front between D-Day and VE-Day alone.

Hundreds of thousands more followed in the Pacific front leading to the headline number of one million patients transported by air evacuation.

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower said, "We evacuated almost everyone from our forward hospitals by air and it has unquestionably saved thousands of lives." He went on to categorize the advent of air evacuation in the same class of impactful things as sulfa and penicillin drugs, blood plasma and whole blood products in decreasing the fatality rate of war casualties.

Air evacuation continued to be a valuable tool for the military in the wars that followed World War II. Hundreds of thousands of patients have been successfully transported back to higher echelons of care outside the combat area, decreasing the fatalities of each war or conflict to this day. The men and women who have served as flight nurses or air evacuation medics have risked their own lives to ensure the safe transport of others.

Today, the Air Force aeromedical evacuation system is an important part of the Air Force global mobility mission. The AE mission is



Above, Soldiers walk patients on litters to a C-130 Hercules in Mosul, Iraq, for transport on an aeromedical evacuation mission in 2009. Inset, early air evacuation trainees pose for a photo at Bowman Field.

to provide "time sensitive, mission critical en-route care to patients to and between medical treatment facilities. The AE system falls under Air Mobility Command and AE missions are carried out using C-17s, C-130s and KC-135s.

Now consisting of two registered nurses and three air evacuation technicians, the modern air evacuation crew can configure one of these aircraft into a temporary flying hospital which can serve as many as 97 patients at a time.

The bulk of the Air Force's air evacuation mission is the responsibility of the Air Force Reserve. The Reserve has 18 AE squadrons across the nation. There are 10 Air National Guard units with AE squadrons. The active duty force has only four AE squadrons.

In addition to standing ready to provide timely air evacuation to the nation's military men and women, the AE system also offers humanitarian relief when the need arises. AE squadrons have participated in air evacuation missions of individuals impacted by natural disasters such as hurricanes or earthquakes.

Following in the footsteps of the brave men and women who have performed the aeromedical evacuation mission for the past three quarters of a century, the Reserve Citizen Airmen who serve as flight nurses and air evacuation technicians stand ready to meet the nation's needs in the area of air evacuation.

(Washington is a flight nurse assigned to the 445th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio)



# BUILDING AN INVISIBLE SHIELD

## Reservist paves path for cyber defense

By Eric M. White

Master Sgt. Robert Beveridge stands at the forefront of cyber operations for the 910th Airlift Wing, Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, but his contributions and impact to cyber defense are greater than the sum of his Reserve duties there.

In a small, nondescript building in the back corner of Youngstown Air Reserve Station, a team of approximately 12 information technology specialists is hard at work. Most of the team's members work in IT fields for private companies, universities or government agencies, but today, they wear Air Force uniforms.

Their job is to develop, maintain and advance an invisible shield surrounding the 910th Airlift Wing's aircraft and infrastructure. The shield must be dynamic and stalwart to maintain resiliency, evolving just as quickly as adversaries develop new weapons targeting the Air Force's critical assets.

Beveridge is the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 910th Communications Squadron's cyber systems operations section.

He joined the Air Force soon after high school, enlisting to become a weather specialist, following in his father's footsteps.

"I knew I wanted to give back, to serve, to do something," said Beveridge.

Citizen Airmen serve within a particular career field, but the part-time nature of their Reserve commitment allows them to pursue opportunities outside of the Reserve. Some are Air Force Reserve lawyers and stay-at-home parents. Some are Air Force Reserve firefighters who own contracting businesses.

Others are Air Force Reserve dentists who operate private practices. Beveridge's private ventures provide a powerful complement to his Reserve duty, allowing him to oversee the development of the training he conducts for the 910th CS.

Beveridge is the senior cyber security engineer team lead for the Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. His complementary career paths took some careful orchestrating.

In 1991, while serving in the Air Force, he earned a bachelor's of science degree in computer information systems, much at the insistence of his mother. His civilian career led to a position as a systems and network engineer.

In 2003, Beveridge wanted to align his Air Force and civilian careers, so he cross-trained into communications with the 171st

Communications Squadron of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. Career opportunities moved him to Youngstown in 2015. He quickly fell in love with the leadership, people and unit.

Later that year, while assigned to the 910th CS, Beveridge started hearing about the Cyber Squadron Initiative and metamorphosis of Air Force IT specialists from service deliverers into network defenders. His first question upon hearing about the initiative was, "When are we going to be involved in that?"

On a personal level, Beveridge's question was answered in 2016 when the Air Force contacted his team at the Software Engineering Institute. Familiar with their experience in developing cyber training for the Department of Defense, the Air Force asked them to develop curriculum for Mission Defense Teams, dedicated cyber defense specialists. MDTs, the bulwark of cyber squadrons, work to protect the Air Force's five core missions.

The training platform would be used to qualify MDTs at pathfinder units, pioneering communications squadrons that would form templates for other units to follow.

More recently, Beveridge is finding the answer to his question at YARS as he trains his team of Reserve Citizen Airmen via the same platform he helped develop through the Software Engineering Institute.

The 910th CS is slated to begin officially transforming into a cyber squadron in fiscal year 2019 by rolling out MDTs, but Beveridge's initiative in developing, delivering, assessing and improving the training platform within the 910th has the unit ahead of schedule.

"That's what I've been undertaking on the civilian side for the last two years," Beveridge said. "Because of that, I'm able to bring that training here."

Maj. Russell Whitlock is the commander of the 910th CS. He says MDTs are the primary focus in transforming communications squadrons into cyber squadrons. They help usher in an operational mindset rather than a support squadron mindset.

"The cyber squadron initiative, and internally to that, the MDT's effort," said Whitlock, "is to assure the mission and vision of the 910th Airlift Wing, to provide that current, qualified, mission-ready force by protecting the installation's key cyber terrain."

Whitlock sees tremendous advantage to having a highly-qualified asset such as Beveridge on hand during the transition.

"My job at the Software Engineering Institute is to train DoD in cyber security," said Beveridge. "So a lot of my customers are the cyber mission force from U.S. Cyber Command. We developed an entry-level course in taking the cyber systems folks who are really trained to do information assurance and service delivery and training them to do cyber."

As with any new undertaking, there are some questions that will need answered.

According to Whitlock, once a mission assurance mindset has fully set in, leaders will have to ensure that service delivery and support for network assets remain intact. Some of that will have to be formulated as the concept evolves.

Whitlock says the key question cyber squadrons hope to answer is, "can people actually do their jobs?" Their goal is to verify and ensure that people have safe and secure network assets that offer the full functionality necessary for their work. The goal is to promote mission assurance. Whitlock insists that with Beveridge's unique skill set, forward-thinking approach and private career connections, he'll be a critical part of the future.

Although Beveridge intentionally aligned his Reserve and civilian careers, he often marvels at just how well they mesh together. Some of his favorite endeavors have been hosting cyber skills competitions conducted by his Carnegie Mellon team but involving his 910th team.

A recent three-day event, Cyber Lightning, featured personnel from several military units competing in skill sets such as malware hunting, vulnerability detection and mitigation strategies within an exercise network platform. Such exercises allow Beveridge to see how well his training platforms are working by testing the very people those platforms target.

"Because I'm in those two worlds, it allows me to make that sort

of thing happen," said Beveridge. "That's thrilling to me, I don't ever want it to end."

While both balancing and interweaving his Reserve duties with his civilian pursuits, Beveridge's recent opportunities have awoken a newfound passion for education and mentorship. He is enrolled in a PhD program for instructional management and leadership through Robert Morris University.

"My goal is not just to educate myself but to mentor the next generation coming in," said Beveridge, "to continue pushing that, educate, lead by example and really push, especially the younger troops, to never stop learning."

The cyber squadron transformation is full of challenges, but due to the contributions of one 910th Reserve Citizen Airman, the transition is a bit smoother, both for the 910th and the Air Force as a whole.

*(White is assigned to the 910th AW public affairs office.)*

*Master Sgt. Robert Beveridge, noncommissioned officer in charge of the 910th Communications Squadron's cyber systems operations section, poses for a photo at his workstation. As a Reserve Citizen Airman, Beveridge has assisted the Air Force in establishing cyber squadrons through both his Reserve role and his civilian career as the senior cyber security engineer team lead for the Software Engineering Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. (Eric M. White)*





## PATRIOT WARRIOR 2018

*Clockwise from top left, Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 927th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, move simulated casualties to the back of a Hercules C-130 during Exercise Patriot Warrior at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, in August. Patriot Warrior is Air Force Reserve Command's premier exercise, providing an opportunity for Reserve Citizen Airmen to train with joint and international partners in airlift, aeromedical evacuation and mobility support. (Spc. John Russell). Airman 1st Class Demetri Ramdath, emergency manager with the Air Force Reserve's 514th Civil Engineering Squadron, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, reacts to a simulated enemy opposition forces attack. (Staff Sgt. Amy Picard). Air Force and Army firefighters participate in a mass casualty training scenario. (Staff Sgt. Nicholas A. Priest). Senior Airman Lynn McPherson, 927th Aeromedical Staging Squadron technician, secures a strap over an Army Soldier during an engine running unload and offload training scenario. (Staff Sgt. Xavier Lockley). For more from Patriot Warrior 2018, check out <https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/PatriotWarrior2018>.*





# RESILIENCE

## Airman bounces back after losing his leg, commits to helping others

By Senior Airman Katherine Miller

Every morning when Scott Palomino attaches his prosthetic leg and every night when he takes it off, he thinks about April 10, 2004 – the day his life changed forever.

“That image is burned into my head. I can’t ever un-see it,” he said. “I could not feel the bottom half of my body, but I looked down and all I saw was my right leg covered in blood and the lower part of my left leg had been blown off.”

Palomino currently serves as the director of the Airman and Family Readiness Center at the Air Force Reserve’s 301st Fighter Wing, Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, Texas. He knows first-hand about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and he is determined to help others deal with this debilitating condition.

In late 2002, Palomino began his Air Force career as a battle management operations specialist. BMO specialists are responsible for providing radar control and surveillance during offensive and defensive air operations.

In October 2003, he was deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While deployed, the young Airman spent long days in tight quarters surveying and assisting in controlling aerospace equipment and radars, along with identifying opposing threats.

Enemy attacks were common and the work was stressful. April 10, 2004, was a particularly busy day, and Palomino was exhausted when he finished his shift.

“That night, someone must have been looking out for me,” he recalled. “I always slept in the bed closest to the door of our tent with my head facing the door so I could hear people coming in and out. But that night, I was so tired I just crashed on my bed with my feet toward the head of the bed. If I hadn’t slept that way that night, I would have died.”

Not long after falling asleep, Palomino was awakened by one of his tent mate’s screams and the blast from an enemy mortar attack.

The mortar hit the opposite side of the tent. The initial blast took Palomino’s left leg and ultimately took the life of Airman 1st Class Antoine Holt. Shrapnel from the blast injured two more tent mates.

Following the attack, Palomino was taken to the medical treatment facility on site for initial treatment to stop the bleeding and numb the pain. Eventually, he was transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Maryland for surgery and rehabilitation.

“When I was discharged from Walter Reed, I was given two big paper bags, each filled with medication,” Palomino said. “One contained medication for my mental health, while the other was for physical pain.”

Palomino said the medication was helpful, but he needed more than pills to deal with the PTSD that came after losing his leg and one of his best friends.

“Medication is often necessary for many with PTSD, but without treatment, it only masks the problem,” he said. “Treatments like counseling and therapy help make it easier for people to live with their PTSD.”

Palomino was subsequently medically retired from the Air Force and received a Purple Heart.

Determined to help others deal with PTSD and other mental health issues, he attended college for social work and received his master’s degree and counseling license.

“I tell this to everyone I see, especially veterans who have seen combat: PTSD is much like having little demons living inside your head,” Palomino said. “All it takes is one moment for them to overtake you. PTSD never goes away, so we have to learn to cope and educate ourselves on how to overcome when they start to whisper things to us.”

Palomino said it’s vital for people who are struggling with PTSD symptoms or going through other hardships to seek out help and not try to handle their problems solely on their own.

Dr. Heather Thanepohn, Air Force Reserve Command’s Director of Psychological Health program manager, agrees.

“Help-seeking is a matter of finding and receiving support from others,” she said. “Everyone experiences tough times and sometimes we can’t solve our problems alone. Going through a challenging situation alone can be stressful and exhausting. Seeking assistance from family, friends and/or others can truly help.”

“Seeking help from a variety of resources is often a good idea. Family, friends, doctors, helplines, books, and/or specialized providers, like mental health, financial, spiritual and legal, can bolster resilience and create a diverse support network.”

*(Miller was assigned to the 301st FW public affairs office when she wrote this article.)*

*Scott Palomino, 301st Fighter Wing Airman and Family Readiness Center director, is a survivor of a deadly mortar attack at Balad Air Base, Iraq, on April 10, 2004. The attack took the life of Airman 1st Class Antoine J. Holt (Tech. Sgt. Charles Taylor)*



# MOONLIGHTING

## Colorado Reservist spends her spare time as a bat rehabilitation specialist

By Tech. Sgt. Richard Mekkri

Sachiko Boland, a staff sergeant in the Air Force Reserve who serves as a separations specialist at the Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver, was strolling around the Colorado Renaissance Festival in the summer of 1999 in a Renaissance-period costume when she unwillingly picked up a small passenger.

Unbeknownst to her, a bat hitched a ride in the thick folds of her skirt. When a festival patron pointed out her hitchhiker, she reached her hand out to the tiny creature and her life changed forever.

"I just reached down and the bat crawled into my hand. It was the softest little creature," she said.

Having a deep love for animals but feeling no connection to one in particular, Boland always struggled to find her spirit animal. Everyone in her life had an animal with which they deeply identified. Her sister loved wolves. One friend connected to eagles and raptors, another friend to owls. That day, Boland started her life-long relationship with bats and began learning as much as she could about the mysterious creatures.

Fourteen years passed before Boland began her three-year apprenticeship to become a certified bat specialist. After completing the apprenticeship and receiving her rabies vaccination, Boland submitted paperwork with the state of Colorado stating that she was going to begin working with a bat rescuer. She also signed an agreement that she would not keep any bats as pets.

"After all," she said, "bats are happiest and healthiest in the wild."

Now a certified bat rehabilitation specialist, Boland works alongside her "bat crew," a team of local bat rehabbers. She receives rescue requests for bats in people's homes or yards and calls of injured bats attacked by house cats or other wildlife.

When a call about an injured or trapped bat comes to the team, a member retrieves the bat and delivers it to Boland.

She cautions that bat rescue is not for everyone.

"Individuals not trained in bat rescue should not touch bats or attempt to care for

them," Boland said. "Training and safety are very important to keep the humans and the bats unharmed when it comes to rescue and rehabilitation."

After she receives an injured animal, her training kicks in. Boland performs an examination to ensure the major wounds are taken care of first before cleaning the bats and checking their eyes and ears, similar to triaging a human patient.

"The worst calls I have received are those of a bat stuck to freshly poured blacktop or to sticky flytraps placed outside. It is a time-intensive process to remove and treat the animal," she said with a tear in her eye. "They do not always survive."

Having a support system is important in times like these, Boland said. She finds comfort in other members of her bat crew.

"We have each other," said Denise Schaefer, Boland's friend and a licensed rehabber. "We all jump in and it really is a support group. We know how difficult it is. It's heartbreaking to lose a bat even though you try and try and try. Sometimes it just doesn't work."

Schaefer has rehabilitated bats with Boland for nearly two years and credits her with mentoring her through many key points in the rehabilitation process.

"She is so focused and so patient," Schaefer said. "Bats are fragile. It can take up to two hours to remove one from a flytrap. You end up with holes and tears (in their wings). It's a very painstaking process and it takes an ungodly amount of patience and self-discipline to do what she does."

Schaefer also learned the bond that forms in animal care and struggles to voice how special each bat can be.

"The bats all have different personalities," she said. "They're individual creatures and being so tiny, you want to protect them and make them happy. You don't want them to hurt. You don't

want them to be sick."

Boland uses a variety of techniques to treat the injured bats. She learned some methods on her own and others by engaging with other bat specialists.

"Bats really heal more when you pay attention," Boland said. "It's the element of human touch. People heal faster when they receive physical therapy and are stretched and massaged. It's the same with bats. Doing that to the bats decreases the time it takes them to rehabilitate. We've grown back full wings in a matter of a month by performing mineral oil massages."

Once the bats are healed and able to fly, Boland's team returns them to within a five-mile radius of where they were found to maximize the chance they return to their colony.

Those who find the injured bats often call Boland to find out about their "Batsy" or "Vampirella" or "Pearl." After updating them, Boland takes advantage of the time to educate them on how bats benefit the ecosystem.

Better than poisonous insecticides, bats can eat up to 1,000 bugs per hour or 8,000 to 11,000 per night. And they enrich soil through nutrient-rich waste known as guano.

"There is absolutely no maliciousness in them," Boland said. "People assume that because of the old vampire movies, bats are out to get them. In Colorado, we have insectivorous bats. They don't want you, they want the bugs around you. They look like little puppies and teddy bears. They're mind-blowingly adorable."

"Bats get a bad rap," Boland said. "Give them a chance and you will see what they do for us."

For more information about bats or to help Boland in her rehabilitation efforts, contact the Colorado Bat Crew at [www.coloradobatcrew.com](http://www.coloradobatcrew.com), [www.facebook.com/Batrescues](http://www.facebook.com/Batrescues) or [batrescues@gmail.com](mailto:batrescues@gmail.com).

*(Mekkri is assigned to the ARPC public affairs office.)*



*Sachiko Boland, a bat rehabilitation specialist and staff sergeant in the Air Force Reserve, holds Zoe, a Hoary Bat she is nursing back to health. (Tech. Sgt. Richard Mekkri.)*



*Staff Sgt. Robert Brinton, fire team leader in the Air Force Reserve's 419th Security Forces Squadron, Hill Air Force Base, Utah, takes aim with an M-249 squad automatic weapon during a recent unit training assembly weekend. (Senior Airman Justin Fuchs)*