


W Hartland BIOGRAPHY

Volume 1

March 2013



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Heartland WARRIOR

Vol. 18, No. 3
March 2013

This Air Force Reserve online magazine is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services, family, and friends of Grissom Air Reserve Base.

Contents of the Heartland Warrior are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force.

The editorial content is edited, and prepared by the Public Affairs Office of the 434th Air Refueling Wing, Grissom ARB, IN, 46971-5000.

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

On the cover...

Tech. Sgt. Robert Woods, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron explosives ordnance disposal technician, tapes up loose ends on a simulated improvised explosive device during an EOD training exercise at the Grissom Services Complex here Feb. 21. The EOD flight is one of four of such new units in the Air Force Reserve Command.



Department of Defense photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Chad McNeelley

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel addresses Pentagon employees and service members during an all-hands call during his first day at the Pentagon, Feb. 27, 2013. Hagel earlier took the oath of office to serve as the 24th defense secretary.

New SECDEF confirmed

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- New Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel promised today to always be frank with the men and women of the department and said he expects all to be direct in return.

Hagel spoke to the Pentagon workforce and a worldwide audience on the Pentagon Channel just after taking the oath as the nation's 24th defense secretary.

"I'll never ask anyone to do anything I wouldn't do," the secretary said. "I'll never ask anybody to do more than I would do. That's the story of your lives. I wouldn't be worthy if that was not the case."

This is a defining time for the world, Hagel said.

"It's a difficult time. It's a time of tremendous challenge, but there are opportunities," he added. "I think it's important that we all stay focused, obviously, on our jobs, on our responsibilities, which are immense, but not lose sight of the possibilities for a better world."

Service members should not forget that America is a force for good in the world, he said.

"We've made mistakes. We'll continue to make mistakes. But we are a force for good," he said. "And we should always keep that out in front as much as any one thing that drives us every day."

The military needs to deal with the budget realities, the geopolitical challenges, cyber issues and the threats of terrorism, Hagel noted.

"We've got ahead of us a lot of challenges," he said. "They are going to define much of who we are -- not this institution only, but our country, what kind of a world our children are going to inherit."

Facing these challenges is difficult, the secretary said.

"But it's also pretty special," he added. "When you think about ... how many generations have had an opportunity to be part of something great, as difficult as this is ... we can really do something pretty special for our country."

The secretary promised service members he will do everything he can "to ensure the safety, the well-being, the future of you and your families."

"Now, I've got to go to work," he concluded.

Logistics planner is Airman of the Year

By Senior Airman
Andrew McLaughlin
Public Affairs staff

Every year the 434th Air Refueling Wing recognizes Airmen who best represent excellence in both their military and civilian lives.

This year, Senior Airman Jesse Vanengelenhoven, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron, was recognized as the best of the best as he was named the 434th ARW Airman of the Year for 2012 during a wing commander's call here Feb. 10.

Vanengelenhoven said he was very excited and surprised when he found out he won the award.

"I was just doing my job," he said. "It's an awesome step in my career, and I'm truly honored."

Just doing his job might be a bit of an understatement as the logistics planner, was recognized for going above and beyond both at Grissom and during a recent deployment to Southwest Asia.

During his time at Grissom last year, Vanengelenhoven served as a deployment manager for five C-17s which carried with them 152 Soldiers and detection dogs heading to the Middle East.

Not wanting to just manage deployments, he also volunteered to deploy himself as a logistics planner from May through November 2012. Vanengelenhoven started his deployment serving with the 386th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, ensuring passengers, cargo and flights got where they were

needed and when they were needed.

During this time, Vanengelenhoven said he had the daunting task of creating schedules of events for flights, which included considerations for ground and air transportation, customs inspections and any other required or unexpected stops along the way.

In a war-time environment, very few things go exactly as planned, so the logistics planner said he worked hard to create contingency plans to ensure the mission could still be accomplished in the event of setbacks.

What he didn't plan on was his supervisor falling ill and being sent to Germany, which forced him to step up and perform at a higher level.

"I can do this," he said when he was asked if he was up for the task.

And, if that wasn't enough stress and pressure, the Airman, who joined the Air Force in December 2010, was forward deployed down-range to the 455th ELRS at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, to fill a more vital and much more demanding position that dealt with managing more people with more critical timelines.

Despite all of the challenges, Vanengelenhoven said he enjoyed finding ways to get people where they need to go in spite of any obstacles that may present themselves, but his greatest reward for his job was helping servicemembers return home.

"You get to see and meet many different people



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Senior Airman Jesse Vanengelenhoven

throughout the process," he explained. "And, it was really cool to see people's faces when they get to go home."

And though he was recognized for his work as a logistics planner, one is not named Airman of the Year for just doing amazing things related to their job. A person must also show they are a well-rounded individual that seeks to support others on and off duty, and Vanengelenhoven did just that.

Back home, he assisted fellow Airmen at Grissom by helping them improve their physical fitness test scores through mentoring and encouragement.

"I just try to help them and give an extra boost," he said.

He also gave a boost to

himself as he pursued a college degree and to his community as he volunteered with a youth baseball team and his church.

Regarding his accomplishments, Vanengelenhoven gave much of the credit to his supervisors, who he said provided him with excellent training, mentoring and support.

But one of those supervisors, Master Sgt. Zachary Gaumer, 434th LRS logistics plans technician, put the credit back on the Airman.

"Senior Airman Vanengelenhoven exhibits the character quality and work ethic that sets him apart," explained Gaumer. "He will be a great leader and mentor for fellow Airmen for years to come."

Grissom holds on during ShakeOut exercise



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Senior Master Sgt. Joseph Lageose, 434th Maintenance Squadron production superintendent, dives under a desk during an earthquake exercise here Feb. 7. During an earthquake, it is recommended drop, get under cover and hold on.

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

Shaking things up, Grissom personnel dropped, covered and held on during a recent earthquake exercise here.

The base participated in the Great Central U.S. ShakeOut, an annual earthquake drill held in nine central U.S. states, Feb. 7, where participants were encouraged to drop down, get under cover and hold on when notified they were in a simulated earthquake scenario.

According to the event's website, 2.9 million people registered for the exercise and over 12.5 million people participated in ShakeOut events around the world last year.

While Grissom is surrounded by several minor seismic zones, perhaps the biggest threat comes from the New Madrid Seismic Zone, a 150-mile long fault system that has been responsible for major earthquakes in the past and is located along the Arkansas, Missouri, Ten-



Erin Strickland, 434th Air Refueling Wing, takes cover under her desk during an earthquake exercise Feb. 7.

nessee and Kentucky boarders.

"If we're talking about the same fault as the last earthquake we felt, where the epicenter was around Greentown, (Ind.), we could see

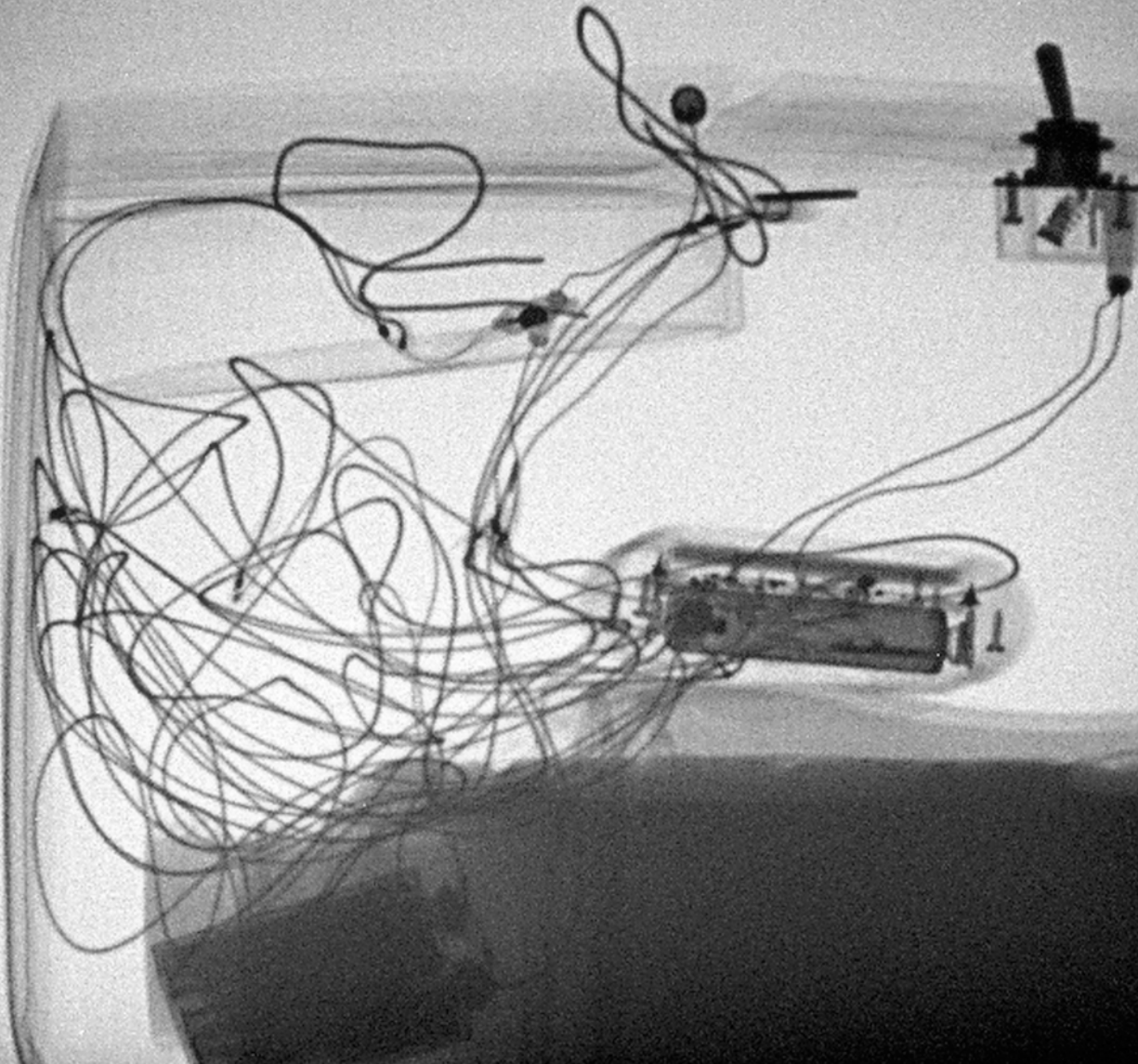
some damages such as broken windows," explained Bob Wydock, Grissom's deputy emergency manager. "But, if you're talking about the Madrid Fault cutting loose, there could be major damage, and we would be the location of choice for federal rescue services coming in to help."

And, with that great risk, comes great responsibility and preparation.

"It's important that we're prepared for any natural disaster so that we can survive it and continue on," explained Wydock. "By practicing for a disaster, you'll be better prepared for it, and the more you prepare, the better chance you have of surviving it."

And survival is a focus of Wydock and the entire Grissom Emergency Management Office.

"Mission continuation and force survivability is the whole reason why the Emergency Management shop exists," he said, adding that Grissom will continue to strive to prepare its personnel for any emergency situation.



The long walk:

Grissom's new explosive ordnance disposal unit comes online

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
434th ARW Public Affairs

Most explosive ordnance disposal technicians at some point make the long walk; a lone walk into the unknown to face off against a device that was designed to maim, kill and destroy.

A group of EOD Airmen, each having made their own long walks, are now making a trek of a different kind, as they stand up a new EOD flight here at Grissom, one of four such new units in the Air Force Reserve Com-

mand.

These new units support the growing demand for the highly-skilled EOD Airmen around the world, especially in places like Afghanistan, explained Senior Master Sgt. Brad McKinney, AFRC EOD functional manager.

"The Air Force Reserve EOD program started in 1994, and the early units were spread around," explained Senior Master Sgt. Scott Fleek, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron EOD flight superintendent. "We started with seven units that were associate flights, strictly made up of tradi-

tional reservists, and initially only a few of them had their own equipment cells for deployment."

As time went on in those early years, EOD units grew at different paces, having different numbers of personnel and equipment at each location.

"The number of personnel in each of those units varied," said Fleek, "One unit might have 23 EOD technicians while another only had 12."

But a lot changed in almost two decades with 9/11, Afghanistan and the increased threat of terror-

ism, and with that change came a high demand for EOD techs.

"The Air Force Reserve's answer was to take all of these flights and level them, so all of them have 14, except for three range bases, which have 16," explained Fleek. "In doing so, they took the positions at each stand-alone unit and made eight of them traditional reservist positions, and increased the number of (full-time) positions from two or three to six."

They also set up four new stand-alone units at Minneapolis-St. Paul Air

U.S. Air Force photo illustration by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Tech. Sgt. Robert Woods, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron explosives ordnance disposal technician, places x-ray equipment around a simulated improvised explosive device during an EOD exercise held here Feb. 21.

Reserve Station, Niagara Falls ARS, Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth and Grissom, added the 23-year EOD veteran, who arrived at Grissom in August 2011 to stand up the unit here.

The leveling of existing units' personnel along with the addition of the new units also had two major benefits, the first of which was an increase in force protection at Air Force Reserve bases.

"At some locations, we didn't have EOD support within 4 hours," said McKinney, who was the first Air Force reservist to graduate from EOD training. "That would be like having the nearest fire department three hours away, and you wouldn't want that."

The second benefit to the addition was an increase in ease of management.

"It's nice and cookie cutter with everything standard, and if you look at what's best, having standard numbers really helps," elaborated the functional manager. "It allows for headquarters to better manage manpower, and it's a lot easier to procure supplies and equipment."

But from a Grissom perspective, the first benefit is perhaps the greatest.

"At Grissom, we have three missions," said Fleek. "First and foremost is protection of the base and base assets against any explosive hazards, improvised explosive devices, or other devices

of terrorism."

And having an EOD team here at Grissom helps keep the base and the entire north central Indiana region safer, added McKinney.

The second mission of the 434th CES EOD Flight is a regional response to any U.S. military munitions around Grissom.

"The DOD is responsible for all U.S. military munitions from cradle to grave, from when it was made in the factory to when it's destroyed," explained Fleek. "If local law enforcement finds military munitions, such as a hand grenade, they have the option to call the closest military EOD unit, and if that's us, we will respond."

The third mission Fleek discussed is the unit's job of organizing, training and equipping deployable EOD technicians, which he added is just as vital as the first.

"For the Airmen that fill the traditional reserve roles, their job is to maintain proficiency and to be a deployable force," he explained. "My job is to ensure all the tools, equipment, funding, space, planning and architecture needed are there to ensure both the traditional reservist and the (active guard and reserve) EOD technicians become some of the most proficient EOD techs out there."

And, those AGRs use their experience to help train and equip the traditional reservists.

"Every one of our AGRs has spent time in Afghanistan or Iraq, so the wealth of knowledge we have is vast," said Fleek, who added that despite their

current abilities, the unit won't be fully operational until 2014.

"Currently we utilize some space in the 434th Communications Squadron building that's adequate for us, but we have a new structure being built," he continued. "It's a 50 by 62 foot, 3-bay garage that will house our response vehicles including our large, 36-foot long response vehicle, a 6-passenger truck, and a total containment vehicle, which is basically a large round steel sphere we can lock explosives in and transport them."

Still, despite having most of their equipment and a plan in place for required facilities, the unit is short on manpower.

"Currently, we're 50 percent manned, and I hope to be fully operations capable in October 2014, but the hard part about that is obtaining qualified EOD technicians," explained Fleek. "So, I hope to home grow them."

The unit is currently looking for both qualified EOD techs and young Airmen who would like to make a difference.

"Successful EOD techs are, for the most part, Type A personalities and have the ability to look at a problem, figure out the solution and act relatively quickly," Fleek explained while describing what he looks for when hiring a new EOD technician.

"And, when they make a choice, they stick by it."

"You have to be somebody that can work under pressure," added Master Sgt. Charles Lyon, 434th CES EOD noncommissioned officer in charge.

The flight's superintendent also described other



Tech. Sgt. Justin Krautkremer, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron explosives ordnance disposal technician, operates an Air Force medium sized robot during a recent training exercise.

characteristics he has seen help make a good EOD candidate.

“In EOD you work a lot with your hands as part of the problem solving process, so mechanically-minded people are definitely at an advantage, as well as having experience with computers and electronics,” he said, adding that that greatest quality is being a team player.

“It’s a team concept, and we all have to participate,” Fleek continued. “There are times where you rely on the person behind you to be holding the switch to explosives, and you need to be sure that he’s going to press it when you need him to press it and not before.”

Air Force Reserve EOD technicians go through almost two years of one of the most difficult training courses in active duty status before assuming a more traditional reservist’s role. That hard work up front helps prepare the Airmen for the hard work that comes with the job.

“The role of the Air Force EOD tech is no different than an Army, Navy or Marine EOD tech, and very commonly

we are supporting ground units,” explained Fleek. “Many EOD techs have been involved in multiple skirmishes; I’ve been shot at many times, and it’s a common occurrence for EOD techs.

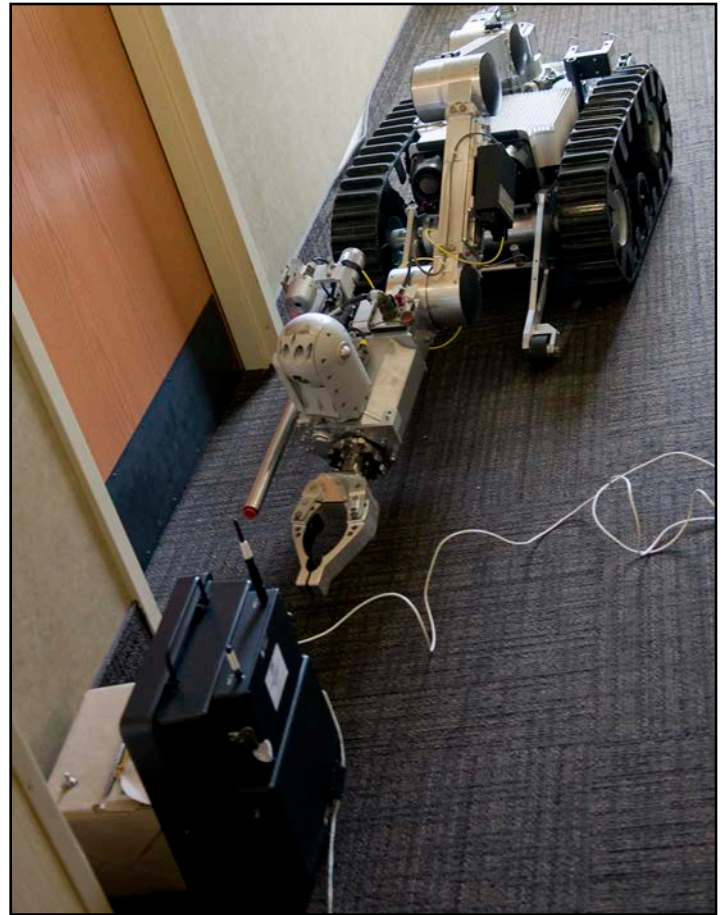
“It takes a special individual; it takes somebody that wants it bad enough,” he added. “It takes the reserve to fight a war, and the reserve needs EOD techs.”

But with great risk comes great reward.

“It’s a demanding career field that takes a lot of time and a lot of commitment, but it’s definitely very rewarding,” said Lyon. “It’s like a roller coaster because you’ll run into a situation, get an adrenaline rush resolving it, go back down to normal and then run back into another situation; it truly is up and down.”

Tech. Sgt. Justin Krautkremer, another Grissom EOD technician, agreed.

“I was looking for a good balance of field work and intellectual stimulus,” said Krautkremer, a nine-year EOD veteran. “I wanted a job that would challenge both my body



An Air Force medium sized robot moves in closer to a simulated improvised explosive device during a training exercise at the Grissom Services Complex here Feb. 21.



Tech. Sgt. Robert Woods, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron explosives ordnance disposal technician, renders safe a simulated improvised explosive device Feb. 21.

and my mind, and I got that.”

Those challenges are why many of the Grissom EOD technicians say they love their job.

“You don’t just sit on your hands,” said Fleek. “You get to blow things up, work with technology,

wear the bomb suit, and train like you fight.”

Krautkremer said his greatest reward comes from knowing he helps make a difference.

“Just knowing at the end of the day you helped safeguard people is awesome,” he concluded.



TOP NOTCH NCO

Maintainer named NCO of the Year

U.S. Air Force photo illustration by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Tech Sgt. Zachary Chapin, 434th Maintenance Squadron jet engine mechanic, was named the 434th Air Refueling Wing NCO of the Year for 2012. Chapin credits his leaders, mentors and supervisors for his success.

**By Senior Airman
Jami Lancette**
Public Affairs staff

Leadership, dedication, mentorship and a strong work ethic are just a few of the attributes that one Grissom noncommissioned officer has proven to excel in time and time again.

And for such excellence, both on and off duty, Tech Sgt. Zachary Chapin, 434th Maintenance Squadron jet engine mechanic, was named the 434th Air Refueling Wing NCO of the Year for 2012.

Chapin shared his gratitude for his award while giving credit to his leaders, mentors and supervisors, past and present, for

teaching him and guiding him to where he is now.

“Not only is receiving the award such a great honor, but I have had a lot of good mentors and supervisors that took a chance on me and guided me to get where I am,” said Chapin. “They took a chance on me, from a brand-new Airman working hands-on by myself for the first time, to later assigning me programs, and then to now having the trust in me to be a supervisor.

“Every step was important to getting me to where I am,” he added. “And, if it wasn’t for them I wouldn’t be here now.”

Described by his superiors as a tenacious

vehicle control NCO, Chapin was responsible for 128 airfield drivers, 19 vehicles, 250 pieces of equipment and \$12 million dollars worth of assets.

As part of that responsibility, Chapin designed six lesson plans and equipment recertification programs.

On top of that, he was lauded for initiating five quality deficiency reports that recovered more than \$50,000 and saved over 100 hours in wasted labor.

Chapin said he gained a lot of experience while deployed, something he has done three times in his career.

He deployed twice as a flight chief to Incirlik

Air Base, Turkey, where he maintained an equipment in-commission rate of 98 percent, and once to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, where he optimized equipment support and readiness during Operation Olympic Titan.

In conjunction to his military service, Chapin dedicated his spare time to volunteering in his community.

Chapin is a prisoner of war and missing in action district representative as well as a membership historian for a veterans group in Galveston, Ind. He also mentors high school students in career and life development and is a youth group leader at a local school.

Maintenance Squadron gets new commander

By Staff Sgt. Ben Mota
434th ARW Public Affairs

With one short movement, a flag was transferred, and with it all the authority and trust of a unit bestowed upon its commander.

It happened here during the January unit training assembly as Maj. William Chapman received the 434th Maintenance Squadron guidon from Col. Paul Weimer, 434th MXG commander, as he took command of the squadron.

"I've been observing Bill (Chapman) for a couple years now, and he has stepped up and shined," said Weimer during the change of command ceremony. "I am very very proud of him."

After accepting command Chapman expressed his enthusiasm about his newly accepted position.

"I am honored to be appointed as your commander and I am humbled by your performance and accomplishments," he said. "Your actions speak volumes on the quality of you as an organization and to the quality of each of you who fill the ranks and do the hard work."

Chapman said that he hopes to maintain the culture of excellence that the 434 MXS has demonstrated in the past while Maj. Mike Martini was commander.

Prior to his assumption of command, Chapman was a 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron operations officer and has been in the Air Force Reserve for nearly five years.

He also served in the regular Air Force for seven years and before receiving his officer commission served eight years in the Army National Guard as an enlisted combat engineer.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Ben Mota

Col. Paul Weimer, 434th Maintenance Group commander, presents a 434th Maintenance Squadron guidon to Maj. William Chapman as the major took command of the unit during a change of command ceremony here recently.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Rissmiller

On Approach

1st Lt. James Hall, 14th Airlift Squadron C-17A Globemaster III pilot, prepares his aircraft to refuel in-air behind a 434th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker during a local training mission recently. Both KC-135 and C-17 crews frequently participate in training missions to maintain their proficiency.

Grissom fire chief named SNCO of the Year

By Maj. Kelly Howard
Public Affairs staff

The belief that there is a difference between being a ‘chief’ and an E-9 helped earn a Grissom firefighter recognition as the 434th Air Refueling Wing Senior NCO of the Year for 2012.

“Whatever I do, I do to help those I lead better their careers,” said Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Groszek, 434th Civil Engineering Squadron firefighting superintendent, “I work for them.”

And, it’s that philosophy of fostering mentorship that set the cornerstone for the Groszek’s award.

“We mentor to say ‘who’s next; who will replace me?’” he emphasized.

Groszek not only applied that theory at Grissom, but abroad as well.

He spent the first three months of 2012, wrapping up a deployment to Southwest Asia, where he helped transition a base’s fire protection from civilian to military firefighters – a transition that saved more than \$3 million in contract costs.

But while the dollar value is fixed, the value on instilling pride and professionalism isn’t limited.

“I enjoyed building the fire department, and the teamwork that developed from it,” said Groszek, who added that part of his success came from his founda-

tions as a civilian firefighter.

“As a Chicago firefighter I get to work with traditions, values and a lot of history,” he explained, adding that he wanted to instill that same kind of pride in the firefighters there – starting from the ground up.

“Many of the Airmen didn’t know what the Maltese Cross stands for, or didn’t know what the eight points of the Maltese Cross represent and didn’t know what the ringing of the bells meant,” he said of the basic firefighting symbols and traditions.

So, the chief worked to teach them about their service and duty, and instill that sense of pride of profession in them.

Also during his deployment, which was his third, Groszek said he was able to balance process improvements with supportive personnel management.

From savings standpoint, he discovered and returned more than \$75,000 in overstocked fire equipment to central storage for reuse in the area of responsibility.

He also served as the vice-president of a deployed Top-3 council, an organization of the top three enlisted ranks, and hosted a 9/11 ceremony at the fire station that included dignitaries from 12 countries.

“People can complain



U.S. Air Force photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Groszek

about a situation or location, but I tell my young Airmen to get involved,” he said. “You can make it better – just do something!”

Following that mantra, he worked to improve quality of life for his troops by identifying and correcting a safety issue that had gone undetected for three years. The issue was resolved when he secured a contract to replace more than \$40,000 in outdated respirators.

As a lieutenant in the Chicago Fire Department, and a chief in the Air Force Reserve, Groszek has great experience in both the civilian and

military worlds, said Maj. Paul Brenner, 434th CES commander.

“He epitomizes what (someone having those experiences) can accomplish,” he said. “When the country needed him the most, he was able to help the war effort by truly leading young Airmen during his deployment.”

“All of my success is because leadership allows me to lead,” the chief said. “Major Brenner allows me to make decisions and do my job; I then can allow my Airmen to do their jobs without getting in their way. It is a total team effort.”

*“Whatever I do,
I do to help those
I lead better their
careers...”*



U.S. Air Force graphic by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner
Public Affairs staff

From their first to their last, America's Airmen earn each stripe of rank with dedication and determination.

The following 434th Air Refueling Wing Airmen recently earned their next stripe:

To senior master sergeant -- Kevin Connelly, 49th Aerial Port Flight; and Scott Kirisits, 434th Maintenance Group.

To master sergeant -- Angelique Hall, 434th Maintenance Operations Flight; Tyler Smith, 434th

Logistics Readiness Squadron; Robert Delee, 434th Security Forces Squadron; and Tanisha Silva, 434th Force Support Squadron.

To technical sergeant -- Martin Bragg, 434th Force Support Squadron; Joseph Demore, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; Mark Garcia, 434th LRS; Rita Gaskew, 434th Operations Support Squadron; and William Vansweden, 434th AMXS; Joseph Schluttenhofer, 434th Air Refueling Wing; Austin Horen, 434th AMXS; and David Dunlevy, 434th MXS.

To staff sergeant -- Stephen Bergamino, 434th AMXS; Bradley Bergling, 434th Civil Engineer

Squadron; Diego Cancino, 434th OSS; Christie Kurka, 434th FSS; Jennifer Lloydking, 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron; Andres Pazcolina, 434th LRS; Bradley Roggenbuck, 434th AMXS; and Jack Sanders, 434th LRS; Eric Baker, 434th Communications Squadron; David Bryant, 434th MXS; Angelica Colon, 434th Operations Group; James Poole, 434th FSS; and Andrew Wray, 434th Maintenance Operations Flight

To senior airman -- Michael Bullock, 434th LRS; Patterson Burks, 434th OSS; Jannis Alonso, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron; Jade Bess, 434th SFS; Lance Chase, 434th CES; Scott Hunter, 434th AMXS; Paul Ingram, 434th CES; Christopher Karlson, 434th AMXX; George Walker, 434th CES; Keith Wuetig, 434th AMDS; Ragheed Azooz, 434th CES; Jason Hrycaj, 49th APF; and Jason Lowe, 434th AMXS

To airman first class -- Zachary Blow, 434th MXX; Mayzin Nating, 434th MXS; Justin Tallman, 49th APF; and Mandy Thibeault, 434th AMXS

To Airman -- Kaitlyn Garton, 434th AMXS; Nicolas McClure, 434th AMXS; David Holland, 434th MOF; Kelsey McFadden, 43th APF; and Sarah Miles, 434th CES

In the limelight

Medals

Air Medal – Capt Brandon Bush, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron; Capt. Joel Nickelson, 74th ARS; Tech. Sgt. Jessie Rood, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron; Staff Sgt. Erich Maul, 74th ARS; Staff Sgt. Vicki Maxwell, 74th ARS; Lt. Col. David Schmitt, 434th Operations Support Squadron; and Capt. Robin Cosand, 74th ARS.

Meritorious Service Medal – Master Sgt. Lloyd Padgett, 434th Security Forces Squadron; Maj. Bruce Everett, 74th ARS; Maj. Brian Thompson, 74th ARS; Lt. Col. Arden Andersen, 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron; Lt. Col. David Mitchell, 72nd ARS; Lt. Col. John Pannell, 434th OSS; Lt. Col. Kenneth Hatcher, 74th ARS; Senior Master Sgt. Sara Lane, 434th AMDS; Master Sgt. John Bitzel, 434th OSS; Maj. Paul Brenner, 434th CES; and Chief Master Sgt. Stephen Groszek, 434th CES.

Air Force Commendation Medal – Capt. Richard Hastings, 74th ARS; Master Sgt. Ronnie Patterson, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; and Staff Sgt. Zachary Miles, 434th Maintenance Squadron.



First sergeant 'star' earns annual award

Staff Sgt. Ben Mota
434th ARW Public Affairs

Most have seen the brilliance inside a well-cut diamond, but inside this one, there is a star.

Master Sgt. Brian Rude, 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron first sergeant, was recently recognized as the 434th Air Refueling Wing First Sergeant of The Year for 2012 for his contributions to his squadron and willingness to go above and beyond to meet his Airmen's needs.

A first sergeant serves as an important link between the commander, enlisted personnel and support agencies, while also ensuring that enlisted Airmen understand the commander's policies, goals and objectives, explained Rude. However, the job responsibilities of a first sergeant go far beyond the working requirements outlined in an Air Force instruction, he added.

"First to arrive; last to leave," said Lt. Col Bryan Runion, 434th LRS commander, as he described some of the leadership attributes that led him to nominate Rude for the award. "Just in the short time I have worked with him I have seen a lot of positive changes in the squadron."

One of those positive changes implemented by the first sergeant was a squadron formation on Saturday mornings of the unit training assemblies, which led to better communication between unit leadership and members.

"We are one of the largest squadrons here at Grissom, and our people are separated across the base and even off base," said Runion. "The formation allows us to disseminate important information to our Airman and recognize their contributions and awards."

"We are all over the base, and getting the people together is important," added Rude. "With



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Mark Orders-Woempner

Master Sgt. Brian Rude

the implementation of the morning meeting I see that there is much more unit cohesion, and that is what I have been striving to do."

The first sergeant said that when he initially came to the squadron his primary focus was on the Airman he served and getting them together to build esprit de corps. He did this by creating a squadron booster club that has been responsible for events such as their recent chili cook-off.

"The chili cook-off brought camaraderie to the unit and boosted morale," said Runion. "It helps Airmen build relationships that ultimately lead to longer enlistments and a better work environment."

Rude also believes that it is his responsibility to make new Airmen feel welcome when they come to the unit. To help do this he developed a newcomers meeting that is conducted each UTA.

"The meeting helps lay down ground rules and expectations for the new Airmen, and provides me an opportunity to advise them of my role as a first sergeant," said Rude. "Most important the meet-

ing gives me a chance to get to know the newcomers and a little bit about their background."

One particular expectation that Rude focused on when he became first sergeant was physical fitness. To do this he chose to lead by example as he implemented physical fitness into drill weekends.

"We had several people overdue for their fitness tests when Rude initially came to the unit and now that is rare," said Runion. "Rather than just enforcing the rules, Rude sets an example by staying fit and participating in squadron PT during the drill weekend."

"Physical fitness is a condition of participation and has to be part of your lifestyle," added Rude. "I'll do whatever it takes to help someone with their fitness even if it means pacing them during their run."

Helping people in general has become something that Rude said he loves about his job and enjoys doing. His 22 years of military service, including 12 years of service for the U.S. Army, has help mold Rude to the "first shirt" he is today.

"I try to take all of the good leadership traits that I have learned from all of my prior mentors throughout my military career and implement them in my own style," he explained. "I have seen both bad and good traits from leaders, and I try to use the good ones and eliminate the bad ones."

One of those traits that make Rude an outstanding first sergeant is his working relationship with the squadron when he is off the clock.

"Communication with him (Rude) occurs 24/7 either through email or cell phone, and he always makes time," said Runion. "That is extremely important since we have a large squadron that consists of 90 percent traditional reservists and very few (full-time air reserve technicians),"