

Chapter 8

Nineteen Heroes

In Loving Memory of the Nineteen Heroes who paid the ultimate price for freedom at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

Eglin Air Force Base, Florida

MSgt Kendall K. Kitson, Jr., Yukon, Oklahoma



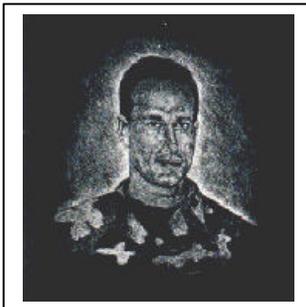
Nickname: “K.K.”

Down to earth sense of humor best expressed with simple anecdotes: “Let me look into my crystal ball and see what I can find to support the mission.”

He always kept his cool as production superintendent even when the jets were not cooperating.

He enjoyed fishing and boating and playing volleyball with the troops in Saudi.

TSgt Daniel B. Cafourek, Watertown, South Dakota



33 FW Maintenance Professional of the Year for 1995.

Considered by most as the “Resident Mechanic of the F-15.

The consummate professional, indisputably recognized as the squadron’s finest crew chief. He carried out his duties with quiet resolve and dedication to detail. The first certified technician in the wing.

He had one of the largest hearts and strongest commitment to friendships and family. His stoic demeanor was shed when carousing with friends. That’s when his fun loving and utterly hysterical persona shone through. He loved his wife, friends, fast cars, tuning up his 93 Mustang, and rock and roll.

TSgt Patrick P. Fennig, Greendale, Wisconsin



Flightline Expeditor

Pat was well traveled with 7 assignments in 16 years of service.

He excelled as a Flightline Expeditor because he was able to juggle the many demands of the daily flying mission while taking care of the young men and women on the flightline. He was loved and respected by his subordinates because of his devotion to them.

Pat was selfless and the first to volunteer for any deployment. In the three years prior to his last assignment, he was deployed in support of Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY and Operation SOUTHERN WATCH three times.

Pat loved the Air Force, traveling, shooting, scuba diving and spear fishing. He liked the finer things in life; gourmet food, good wine, good scotch, and wouldn't hesitate to pay \$50 for a good hand-rolled cigar.

Pat lived life to the fullest and seized every minute!

TSgt Thanh Van Nguyen, Panama City, Florida



Born in Saigon, South Vietnam.

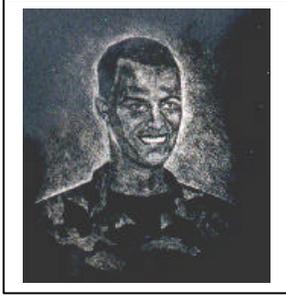
Nickname: "Gus"

When he arrived in the States both he and his brother had the same name. He was baptized Catholic and given the name Augustino.

He was a Gold Flag Combat Oriented Repair Initiative Manager and was directly responsible for the Wing being recognized as having the most productive Gold Flag program in ACC. He was a key contributor to a Gold Flag grand total savings of \$4.61M in FY 94, 95 and 1st Qtr 96.

He was a Vietnamese linguist protocol volunteer for Eglin AFB and also volunteered many hours in the community helping Hurricane Opal victims.

SrA Earl F. Cartrette, Jr., Sellersburg, Indiana



Nickname: “JR” (junior), “Spoon-man”

JR was a crew chief by trade and was assigned to the Support Section.

Known as a practical joker, JR kept the times in Saudi “light-hearted”. He also drew clown cartoon characters on the squadron bulletin board to convey light-hearted messages to the squadron.

He enjoyed auto racing and spent time rebuilding a Chevy Nova as a tribute to his Father who passed away in 1992. The car had belonged to his father who had sold it before he passed away and JR had bought it back.

SrA Jeremy A. Taylor, Rosehill, Kansas



Jeremy was assigned to the 33d Maintenance Squadron as a jet engine mechanic.

He had an outgoing personality and enjoyed cookouts with his fellow mechanics.

He was the son of a career military father (retired Chief).

Jeremy played soccer in high school and became an avid beach volleyball player while at Eglin. During the three years prior to his death, he coached children’s soccer teams on base and coached a women’s softball.

Jeremy was very close to his family and would talk with them every Sunday on the phone.

Sgt Millard D. Campbell, Angelton, Texas



Nicknames: “Dee” and “Soup”

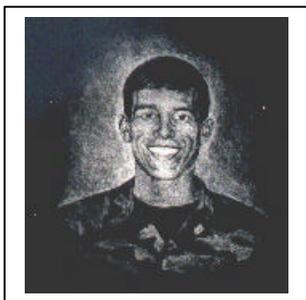
Dee was the NCO, Daily Flight Operations. He accepted his duties without question, carrying them out with resounding quality and expertise. He had effectively transitioned into his new position prior to deploying to Saudi. His job required technical knowledge to make quick and precise decisions. He not only performed brilliantly at that position but also at operations scheduling.

Dee was quiet and mild mannered. He was the right hand of all supervisors. He made sure all operation specialists assigned to him were well taken care of. He always made sure all the younger airmen had somewhere to go during the holidays.

He loved baseball and was drafted out of high school to play professionally, but he declined and took a scholarship to attend college instead. After meeting his wife, Marie, he joined the Air Force. He, of course, played squadron softball leading his team in hits, home runs, and RBIs.

Dee was a class act and will be missed by all.

A1C Brent E. Marthaler, Cambridge, Minnesota



Nominated as “Airman of the Quarter” for the 58th Fighter Squadron.

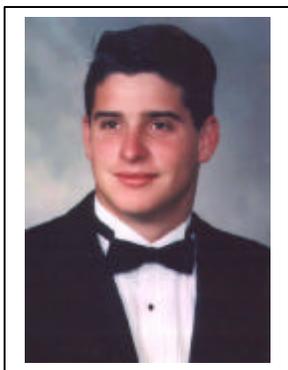
Winner of the Top Performer of the Month for TAMS Flight, January 1996.

As crew chief of the Squadron Commander’s jet, he was always observed putting in an extra effort to keep his jet flying.

Brent was known for his great attitude and politeness, and was instrumental in keeping spirits high. At shift change, he would enthusiastically yell “Good morning mid shift” to his comrades.

Brent also devoted time teaching Sunday school classes to children at the Eglin Base Chapel.

A1C Brian W. McVeigh, Debary, Florida



Crew Chief.

Brian is remembered for the example he set for his crew and his very quiet personality.

Brian was a big auto racing fan and also enjoyed lifting weights. One pilot recalls “Brian would crush your hand when you shook hands with him at the jet”.

A1C Peter J. Morgera, Stratham, New Hampshire



Pete came to the 33rd from the 53d FS, Spangdahlem, Germany.

He was an Assistant Dedicated Crew Chief. He earned an Air Force Achievement Medal for maintaining his aircraft at a 90.2% fully mission capable rate, well above the 84% Air Force in Europe standard.

Pete had been deployed to Incirlik, Turkey in support of Operation “PROVIDE COMFORT”. He was assigned to the 33rd OSS in January 1996 as an end of runway technician. He volunteered to go to Saudi so that he could upgrade to 5 level the right way by crewing jets.

Pete was a reliable and hard working professional. He enjoyed playing darts, shooting pool and going to the beach. A very caring individual – never without a smile.

A1C Joseph E. Rimkus, Edwardsville, Illinois



Nickname: “Dinky”

Member of the Weapons Load Crew.

Joseph was always very respectful and well mannered. He always wore a tie when he went to visit his grandma because she liked to see him in a tie.

He would always volunteered for additional duties and never complained.

Joseph enjoyed playing basketball. He was also a “Closet Barber”; while in Saudi, he enjoyed cutting his friends hair.

A1C Joshua E. Woody, Corning, California



Nickname: “Woody”

Weapons Load Crew

Josh was a selfless hard worker with an outgoing personality. He was upbeat, spirited and always had a smile on his face.

He was recently married and was looking forward to returning home to his new spouse.

Patrick Air Force Base, Florida

Captain Christopher J. Adams, Massapequa Park, New York



Capt. Christopher Adorns, called “Chris” had two loves in his life: His best friend and fiancée Air Force Capt. Karen Oullette and their new 32-foot cabin cruiser, dubbed the “Diamond Ring.” He named his boat for his girl, because after their wedding, the couple was going to sail Diamond Ring to the Bahamas for the honeymoon that never was. Most of their friends received their wedding invitations days before the blast.

According to friends, Adams knew he and Karen were going to get married five years ago. It was the last thing on their “Five Year Plan” that was right on schedule.

“Chris would drop everything in a second to stop and help someone else,” said fellow Capt. Ted Ferguson, who also was Adams’ roommate and friend of six years.

Adams’ peers said his concern was always his people. “That was his job as an officer. When he made a decision as an air craft commander, his concern was always his crew - what was best for his crew,” said Capt. George Kochis, pilot. “And every one’s input was important, from the junior airman up.

Ferguson agreed: “Chris would do anything for the good of the squadron and its people. One year, Chris volunteered to take a Saudi rotation for a married guy so he could spend the holiday with his family.”

Adams also volunteered for and participated in airlift operations during Operation Desert Calm, and was selected to fly a sensitive mission filming the oil fires in Kuwait during Desert Storm.

He later deployed to Provide Promise, the humanitarian airlift into Bosnia, and flew 16 missions under combat conditions.

Captain Leland T. Haun, Clovis, California



Anyone who didn’t know Capt. Leland Haun would describe him as a quiet person. But he was very well rounded according to his peers who describe him as a Jokester, artist, comedian, ferocious reader of books, but first and foremost as a family man. He earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Industrial Arts from Fresno State University in July 1989, and joined the Air Force that same month.

His first duty assignment was to the 41st Electronic Squadron at Davis Monthan, Ariz., where he made quite a name for himself during a training exercise, according to Johnson, then a loadmaster with the 41st.

“On the HC-130, we do a lot of radar jamming,” Johnson said. “During this particular

exercise, their objective was to knock out the communication with the ground battle field. Instead of hitting the battlefield, Haun cut the comm. between the chow hall and the battle line. Nobody got called for breakfast or lunch, so everything came to a standstill. They got debriefed and told that certain frequencies couldn't be jammed anymore because people had gone 18 hours without eating."

He was known for those same types of antics at the 71st. He joined the rescue squadron here in June 1994. He was credited with saving a life when he participated in a rescue off of ship, 1,600 miles off of the coast of Florida.

Haun, a former college volleyball player, distinguished himself in Saudi as well. He received a ton of mail while deployed. "He always had mail coming from his family. Constantly, and he always sent letters to them too," Kochis said. "He would get at least two letters every day!"

"How can I explain how great the guy was?" Jenson asked. "I mean, I know how I feel, but I can't describe it. There real!' aren't any words. But that's what he was...great."

MSgt Michael G. Heiser, Palm Coast, Florida



Communications System Operator

Master Sgt. Michael Heiser joined the 71st Rescue Squadron in December, 1995 as an airborne communications system operator and a C-Flight superintendent. He hadn't been at the squadron long before he went away to the HC-130 Combat Rescue School at Kirtland AFB, N.M., which is a must for all members of the squadron who participate in rescue operations. He graduated from Kirtland and had only been back in the squadron for a few months before he was sent to Dhahran to put to practice what he spent months learning.

Heiser was new, but he made a good first impression on his flight commander, Capt. Ben Walsh. "When I called him in and told him he was going to be the new flight supervisor, Heiser expressed concern to me that he was too new to do a good job. I told him I knew he could do the job or I wouldn't have selected him. He was that conscientious."

Like Adams, Heiser was in the process of settling down in a new house with his fiancée, Nancy, when he was killed.

SSgt Kevin J. Johnson, Shreveport, Louisiana



Rescue HC-130 Aircraft Flight Engineer

Staff Sgt. Kevin Johnson was referred to simply as “KJ”.

Johnson’s real passion was flying. According to co-worker Tech. Sgt. Dave Love II, K.J. was always flying. Since becoming a C-130 flight engineer in 1983, he amassed a total of 5,800 flying hours in a C-130 aircraft, 87 of those hours were in combat and 280 in combat flight support. A lot of those hours were spent away from his three children and wife.

His wife, Sheryl, wants it known that .he loved to fly and he enjoyed the life (of a flier), said a fellow unit member, fighting back tears.

Johnson’s devotion to duty was nearly unparalleled. His peers never had a chance to tell him that right after he left for Saudi, they had recommended him for upgrade to flight evaluator-the highest level of proficiency a flight engineer can attain.

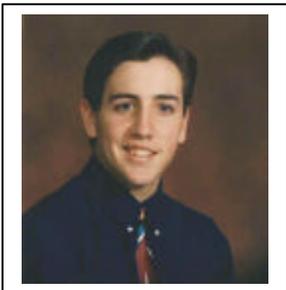
Johnson had an additional duty in supply. Tech. Sgt. Charles “Stretch” Meador, a loadmaster who worked with Johnson in supply, said he could always hear KJ coming because he insisted on carrying his key ring in the bottom pocket of his flight suit.

“He couldn’t sneak up on you. You could hear him a mile away,” Meador said. “I used to hear him coming down the hail and yell out, ‘Hey KJ! and he always wondered how I always knew it was him.”

In addition to being a devoted family man and military member, Johnson was dedicated to the Lord. He was a faithful member of the Holy Name of Jesus parish in Indialantic, which held a memorial service June 28.

Johnson’s Christian beliefs helped him through another tragedy in 1985 when a C-130 from his unit crashed at Fort Hood. Johnson was there to help the families of those who died, just as others gathered around his family during their time of grief.

A1C Justin R. Wood, Modesto, California



HC-130 Loadmaster

The loadmasters affectionately referred to Senior Airman Justin Wood as "Junior" because the 20-year-old was the youngest member of the squadron.

Junior joined the 71st Rescue Squadron Jan 5, 1995. He was the first active-duty loadmaster to go from civilian to fully qualified loadmaster, a job normally reserved for experienced personnel. He was on his second deployment to Saudi Arabia and two weeks shy of his 21st birthday. He packed a lot in his 21 years, flying 34 combat missions, and his actions contributed to the squadron being credited with saving 10 lives.

Squadron members say Wood is the guy who kept everyone laughing with his Jim Carrey “Ace Ventura” impressions.

He was always on, according to Master Sgt. Julian Johnson. “He was just like a puppy. The energy he gave off to the rest of the squadron was uplifting,” said Johnson, a fellow loadmaster. “There wasn’t a down side to Justin. He was full of energy. He could put a smile on anyone’s face.”

That’s the hard part for his buddies in Dormitory 506, said Senior Airman Robert Carden, who was Wood’s fellow loadmaster and dorm neighbor.

“We are like a family. He was always making everyone laugh. He was the happiest person I knew,” said Carcier.

“You couldn’t walk by him without cracking a smile,” said Johnson. “The only time I ever saw him down was when he fell in love with Pocahontas at Disney World.”

But that was Junior being Junior, Johnson said. “He was always moving, doing something. Once, we were in Las Vegas and he won \$90 at a nickel slot machine. When they (casino officials) found out he wasn’t 21, he was asked to leave the premises and not come back.”

That was cool with Junior. He took the money, bought inline skates and spent the rest of the time skating there.

“That’s just the way he was,” said Johnson. “He was an entertainer. I still can’t believe he’s gone.”

Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska

SSgt Ronald L. King, Battlecreek, Michigan

Offutt AFB in Nebraska, home station of Staff Sgt. Ronald L. King, who was assigned to the 55th Contracting Squadron, Offutt dedicated a dining facility in his memory on April 20, 2001.

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio

A1C Christopher Lester, Pineville, West Virginia



U.S. Air Force pallbearers carry the casket of Airman First Class Chris Lester in Pineville, W. Va., who was killed by the truck bomb in Saudi Arabia on June 25, 1996.

His fellow airmen at Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio also honored airman 1st Class Christopher Lester of the 88th Civil Engineer Group with a memorial service on July 1, 1996. An exhibit featuring Lester's photo is located in Building 22 at Wright-Patterson.