AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Beaumont Wade

CURT SHANNON

BIOGRAPHY

Chief Master Sergeant (Ret.) Curt Shannon enlisted into the Air Force in 1966 when it seemed inevitable he would be drafted into the Army. While he was in basic training, a presentation showing fighter jets strafing targets and dropping bombs inspired Shannon to become an aircraft armaments system technician. "I just loved it," Shannon said about his career choice, adding that he enjoyed the camaraderie, teamwork and feeling of mission accomplishment. During his 32-year career, Shannon served in Korea, the United Kingdom and Iceland. He was the senior enlisted advisor to eight wing commanders during assignments at K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base, Michigan; Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina; 440th Composite Wing (Provisional), Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; and Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. "I always looked at the wing advisor job as the one guy on base who got paid to tell the boss what he needed to hear, not what he wanted to hear," Shannon said. He retired from active duty in 1998. Shannon continues to serve the Air Force as the director of the Malmstrom Air Force Base museum where he educates the public daily about the heritage and missions of the base.

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Staff Sergeant Nick Wilson

ALEX SLOCUM

BIOGRAPHY

Master Sergeant (Ret.) Alex Slocum entered basic training in July of 1979. He completed Law Enforcement Specialist Technical School at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and had assignments throughout the world; to include Kwang Ju Air Base, Korea, Clark Air Base, Philippines, and Royal Air Force (RAF) Mildenhall, England. Slocum completed three deployments to Saudi Arabia throughout the 1990s, retiring in 2000. After his retirement from active duty he was employed with the Kansas City Royals and later Techseco Incorporated until securing civilian employment at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. He is currently employed with the 509th Bomb Wing as a security specialist in the Information Protection Office. Slocum is an award winning historian with The American Legion and served for two years as commander of Matthews-Crawford Post 131. He was recently elected to the position of commander for the Department of Missouri's Sixth District in June 2014. Slocum continues his service as a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans and is also a board member of the Veterans Assistance League at the Missouri State Veterans Home-Warrensburg.

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Staff Sergeant Luis Loza Gutierrez

MARVIN SUTTON

BIOGRAPHY

Staff Sergeant (Sep.) Marvin Sutton began his military service in 1980 by protecting assets and people as a police Airman with the 321st Security Police Squadron, at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota. Like many security forces members, 18-year-old Sutton was tasked with the responsibility of not just protecting lives, but aircraft and facilities worth millions of dollars. "Knowing that I had such a responsibility drove me to develop a strong work ethic because I knew others depended on me to do my job to the best of my abilities," said Sutton. "It was something not to be taken lightly." He became an Air Force air traffic controller in 1983 and separated from the military in 1988. Although he is no longer in the military, Sutton continues to keep aircraft and people safe. He currently works as an air traffic controller for the Air Route Traffic Control Center in Fort Worth, Texas. It is a job he has been doing for more than 25 years, made possible thanks to his military service. "The military was a great stepping stone for me because it provided me with an opportunity to learn a set of skills and experiences that I was able to use as I transitioned back into civilian life," said Sutton. "That experience of serving my country is a valuable part of my life, and it has helped me better ensure my success."

AIM HIGH ... FLY, FIGHT, WIN

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Staff Sergeant Marleah Robertson

MAYME TANNER

BIOGRAPHY

Mayme Tanner is one of the last surviving female pilot trainees from the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). The program allowed women to fly as civilian pilots in military aircraft, providing their assistance where needed during World War II. Tanner was one of over 1,000 women, out of 25,000 women who volunteered, accepted into the WASP program during the war. Women accepted into the program were between the ages of 21 and 35 and were taught to fly the military way, even though most of them had more flight hours than male pilots in the Army Air Corps. During their training, they endured the same routines of military boot camp. They were then assigned to military bases across the country where their duties included towing targets, aiding as flight instructors and flying radio-controlled planes. By the end of World War II, the WASPs had flown over 60 million miles in every aircraft in the Army Air Corps and only 38 were killed while serving their country. WASPs were never militarized, while they served they remained civil servants. In 1977, Jimmy Carter signed into law a legislation awarding the WASPs veteran status. Tanner recently celebrated her 100th birthday on July 25, 2014, and is recognized as an idol for women everywhere, telling them, "Any girl can do it if they're determined to. Just stay with it."

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Senior Airman Damon Kasberg

SCOTT WAGERS

BIOGRAPHY

Master Sergeant (Ret.) Scott Wagers enlisted in the Air Force on June 1st, 1984. When his recruiter showed him a list of potential jobs he was eligible for, he selected aerial photographer. "With the Cold War still in full swing, I naively imagined that I would soon be operating powerful camera systems while flying high above Russia in the SR-71," he said. After graduating technical school, Wagers found out he would not be behind the camera taking imagery, but on the ground developing film from SR-71s and satellites. For the next six years, Wagers contributed to reconnaissance missions, including Operation El Dorado Canyon and monitoring military operations in East Germany before the Berlin Wall came down. In 1990, he cross trained into still photography where his career thrived. Wagers attended the first Worldwide Military Photographer's Workshop and the Department of Defense Photojournalism School at Syracuse University. In 2002 he was recruited by Airman Magazine. During his time as a military photographer, Wagers covered the Air Force mission throughout 43 countries, but he said the best opportunity has been teaching and mentoring young Air Force photographers and public affairs specialists. Since retiring in 2010, Wagers continues teaching members of the Air Force family as a para-educator in the Department of Defense Education Activity.

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Staff Sergeant Robert Biermann

ANTHONY WARNER

BIOGRAPHY

Staff Sergeant (Sep.) Anthony Warner had a fascination with languages and aimed to become a professional interpreter. After joining the military in 1987, he traveled to the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, to learn Russian and Italian. Upon graduation, he served as a Russian cryptologic linguist and arms control interpreter. As part of his duties, he conducted arms control inspections to ensure participating countries were complying with international treaties. Before separating from active duty in 2001, Warner was selected to attend Moscow State University where he received a certificate in Russian interpretation and also worked at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Today, he serves as one of 15 Air Force civilian arms control treaty compliance officers and puts his fluent understanding of Russian, French, German and Italian to good use. In his limited spare time, Warner teaches fitness courses around the world. In 2000, he appeared on a Russian television show, hosted by a Russian Olympic athlete, where he taught fitness. He recently returned from Beirut, Lebanon, where he was the first American to present a certification course for the Aerobics and Fitness Association in the Middle East. He has taught additional classes in Germany, France, England, Russia, Spain, and Lebanon.

AIM HIGH ... FLY, FIGHT, WIN

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Rich Oriez

JIM WIDLAR

BIOGRAPHY

Airman First Class (Sep.) Jim Widlar enlisted in the Air Force on December of 1960 and was assigned to the Strategic Air Command's 706th Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Atlas) at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base (AFB), Wyoming. He was an Atlas-D Missile Mechanic assigned to a launch maintenance crew with the 389th Missile Maintenance Squadron. His primary duties were to provide periodic maintenance to the SM-65D weapon system. He was also on alert returning missiles offline for scheduled maintenance to "Ready State A" during the defense readiness condition 2 Cuban Missile Crisis, and again following President Kennedy's assassination in 1963. Other duties included loading, off-loading and escorting airlifted missiles on the Douglas C133B Cargomaster. He also had a temporary duty assignment to Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, to assist in four Atlas-D missile launches. Upon deactivation of the Atlas-D weapon system in 1964, he received an early separation from the USAF and relocated to Silicon Valley, California, where he finished his career in the electrical construction industry. Widlar, now semi-retired, lives near Boulder, Colorado, as a founding member of the Association of Air Force Missilieers, and as a volunteer at the F.E. Warren AFB Heritage Museum where he served nearly 50 years ago.

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

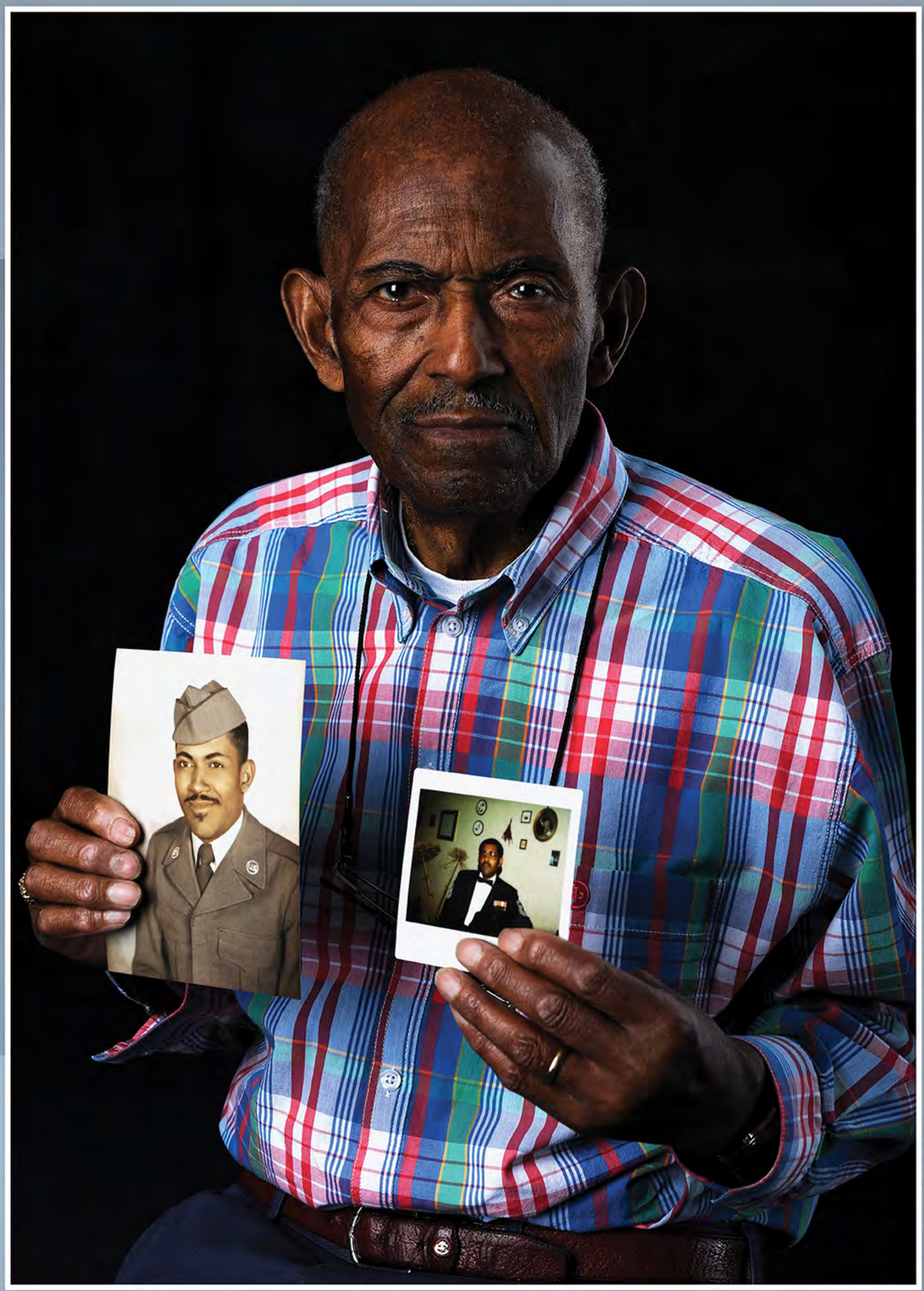

Photo by Senior Airman Damon Kasberg

NAPOLEON YATES

BIOGRAPHY

Chief Master Sergeant (Ret.) Napoleon Yates enlisted in the Air Force while it was still in it's infancy in 1951. He was issued brown shoes, making him a true part of the "brown shoe corps" and upon completion of basic training he was promoted to private first class. Yates upheld his belief in "strong dedication to mission support," through his 29-year career working as a contracting specialist. He supported the Air Force mission while stationed around the world; California, Michigan, Wake Island, Alaska, Delaware, Spain and Germany. As the procuring contracting officer in Torrejon Air Base, Spain, he took on many projects, but one stood out to him. "I played a role in the construction of an ocean-water desalting plant, this allowed local villagers to access fresh water. It's a fond memory," Yates said. In 1980 Yates retired from active duty, but his dedication to the Air Force did not end there. He would go on to work two separate contracting careers for the Air Force. Now after more than 60 years of service Yates truly retired in June of 2014. After a lifetime of service and dedication to the Air Force, Yates described his time in the military in a few short words. "It was a long ride, but it was a good ride," he said. Yates passed away in August of 2014.

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Staff Sergeant Carlin Leslie

JERRY YELLIN

BIOGRAPHY

Captain (Ret.) Jerry Yellin is an Army Air Corps veteran who served between 1941 and 1945. Yellin enlisted two months after Pearl Harbor on his 18th Birthday. After graduating from Luke Air Field as a fighter pilot in August of 1943, he spent the remainder of the war flying P-40, P- 47 and P-51 combat missions in the Pacific with the 78th Fighter Squadron. Yellin was part of the first land based fighter mission over Japan on April 7, 1945 and was the lead on the last mission of the war on August 14, 1945. Although his flying career was short he witnessed more turmoil then any human being should ever have to witness.

Today Yellin cares for the new generation of veterans who are battling post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), by sharing his story of PTSD after witnessing 16 World War II fighter pilots, all his friends, die in battle.

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY PRESENTS

VETERANS IN BLUE

VOLUME V

Photo by Matt Meindl / Courtesy of USC Dornsife College

LOUIS ZAMPERINI

BIOGRAPHY

Captain (Sep.) Louis Zamperini was an Olympic distance runner, inspirational speaker and an airman during World War II. He was a bombardier in a B-24 that was flying a reconnaissance mission on May 27th, 1943, when his plane malfunctioned and fell into the Pacific Ocean. He and surviving crew members drifted for 47 days on a raft; constantly fighting off hunger, thirst, heat, storms and shark attacks. Upon reaching land, Zamperini was captured by Japanese Navy forces and spent nearly two years enduring torture as a prisoner of war (POW). Despite being declared missing at sea and later "killed in action", he returned home to a hero's welcome in 1945. Zamperini was a recipient of the Purple Heart, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Prisoner of War medal. He went on to become and inspirational speaker and in 1988 at the age of 81, ran a leg in the Olympic Torch relay for the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, not far from the POW camp where he had been held. Zamperini is the subject of the bestselling book, "Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption" by Laura Hillenbrand. A #1 New York Times best-seller, it's also being made into a movie directed by Angelina Jolie and is scheduled for a December 2014 release. He passed away on July 2nd, 2014.