

2000 AFA Team of the Year

Crew Chief's Best



From the left, Bancroft, Warren, Fischer, Elledge, and Cundy.

Keept 'em flying. That is the responsibility of the crew chiefs, who ensure that USAF aircraft are in top flying condition at all times. In 1999, this job took 76 percent of all crew chiefs overseas on deployments, where they maintained more than 40 types of aircraft for missions as diverse as combat strikes in Operation Allied Force to humanitarian relief in Central America. Five crew chiefs, all enlisted members from the aircraft maintenance force, were selected by the Air Force and AFA as the Team of the Year.

AFA National President Thomas J. McKee noted, "While some Air Force specialties can be missed for a few days with minimal operational impact, crew chiefs cannot be missed at all, even for a few hours. Without their efforts, USAF aircraft could not and would not fly."

SSgt. Ronald D. Bancroft, 16th Aircraft Generation Squadron (AFSOC), Hurlburt Field, Fla., deployed to Brindisi, Italy, for Operation Allied Force. As lead crew chief, he maintained four 16th Special Operations Wing AC-130U gunships and helped to launch 53 gunship sorties into Kosovo. He turned in a 95 percent maintenance mission effectiveness rating. Within 12 hours of arrival, Bancroft had two more gunships

repaired, prepped, armed, and ready to go. He also directed repairs on other aircraft and, when a Navy F-14 suffered a burnt wiring harness for an external fuel tank, he worked with Navy technicians to get it repaired rapidly.

TSgt. Kent C. Cundy, with AETC's 97th Maintenance Squadron, Altus AFB, Okla., is the 97th Air Mobility Wing's "best aircraft crew chief." His isolation of discrepancies during C-17 ground engine runs produced an overall 12-hour fix rate of 82.3 percent, which far exceeded the command goal of 62 percent. He sustained an 80 percent mission capable rate and 95 percent departure reliability rate. Tasked to support Kosovo relief efforts, his efforts raised the on-time departure reliability rate to 90 percent. Cundy's leadership skills and proficiency helped the unit earn AETC's Maintenance Effectiveness Award.

SrA. Brett D. Elledge, C-130 crew chief with AMC's 40th Airlift Squadron, Dyess AFB, Tex., was selected to be a flying crew chief, a position normally reserved for more senior mechanics. He was also singled out by the inspector general team for the best safety practices they had seen in 10 years. During a crucial resupply mission to Soto Cano AB, Honduras, Elledge spotted a gear

box problem normally requiring an engine change. Instead he worked with the Honduran air force and engineered a temporary fix that let the mission proceed.

SSgt. Edwin W. Fischer, 325th Bomb Squadron (ACC), Whiteman AFB, Mo., is a B-2 stealth bomber crew chief. In Allied Force, his thoroughness and efficiency helped produce a perfect record in B-2 sortie production and on-time takeoffs. Selected as section trainer, Fischer revamped 60 task curriculums within two months and trained or certified more than 300 personnel in two bomb squadrons.

SSgt. Gary G. Warren Jr. is an A-10 crew chief with PACAF's 355th Fighter Squadron, Eielson AFB, Alaska. Warren's leadership enabled his section to achieve an overall 97 percent pass rate on quality assurance inspections. His technical skill produced a 100 percent eight-hour fix rate and 86.3 percent mission capable rate. He was also instrumental in making sure that seven A-10s that his squadron acquired from Moody AFB, Ga., were prepped and ready for deployment in time for the squadron's second trip to Al Jaber AB, Kuwait, for Operation Southern Watch.