

Ep. 54: Welcome our new command chief

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Welcome to the Sword and Shield podcast and the 960th Cyberspace Wing. Today I'm joined by Chief Master Sergeant Billie Baber. Welcome, Chief.

Thank you.

We are excited to have this opportunity here at the Leadership Summit to have this discussion.

And I'm excited personally, to join the team here in the next few months. Super excited. It's been great these past couple days being able to hang out with the wing and you to see all the magic happen and all the wonderful. I'm so excited to be part of the gathering of great minds.

Yes, sir.

That's awesome. I think it's a great opportunity for you to get out and we're not afraid of the challenges, help understand and know you're going to be a great part of team to help us solve those problems. Appreciate it. No, this is a great opportunity. How many new incoming command chiefs get to do this? You know, comment is in the leadership, comprehensive and get to know the Chiefs, get to know the Colonels, get to know the leaders. This is an amazing opportunity and thank you.

It's awesome and we don't do this very often, especially with COVID, to get everyone together at one time. So it's been great to try and take advantage of that. I think you're Robin so it was difficult travel to that screen opportunity here. With missions we have going on expose, not just you but everybody that's here. What's going on so you're at ARPC right now and this is an opportunity to tell away a little bit about you and what you believe in and so just kind of walk through some things and the discussion goes so tell us a little bit about Chief Billie Baber and kind of how you grew up in the air force.

Chief really paper Okay, so I started off as way back when as Reg AF, personnel has been my entire career. Stepped out for a bit to do PME. My heart is with professional military education to an artist with developing their Airmen. So one of the best assignments that I've ever had, and did some stunts in San Antonio, Kirtland in New Mexico, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and came back from Ramstein and that's when I became an IMA in the Reserve world and became an NCO Academy instructor at Lackland and did that for a few years in became a member the three four years and was a TR there for about a year and somebody told me about this amazing AGR program I knew nothing about it and they're saying you can be on active duty but

you're still a reservist and I was like sign me up. So I became an AGR and the 340s and from the 340s, I went to the Air Reserve Personnel Center and its requirements systems requirements work there worked on FM's, too, don't hold that against me.

You know, a lot of our work was behind that. It just looked like it.

And then from there, I went to the reserve personnel center and became the superintendent of the Directorate 30 px Dawn and became the headquarters real group superintendent, which is now a command chief position. One thing about the reserve we're always growing and being better, and that was honored to be selected as the air resynchronize chief and that's where I'm at right now. And you know, and I did mention my PMETs and I was lucky enough to be an instructor in such a young age in my SEO career, but I knew right then in there, that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my careers to develop Airmen.

And that is what my passion is. And that's why I'm so looking for this opportunity because the 960 opportunities absolutely at your PC and take advantage of those opportunities to develop our guys and to develop our external customers. It's gonna be great to be able to be more face to face with the airmen and be able to really get in the weeds and what they learn their needs again, and end development the best way I can. That's awesome.

I also enjoyed going back from headquarters staff back to the field and for us officers. I really enjoyed the field staff and field staff so your experience between those is really excited about your time the 340 of understanding that supported wing structure. You've you fought through some of the same things that we're doing now. Your experience with Rio I think is really critical to your you know, your opportunity here that we've given you because of GSU structure the challenges so you clearly understand Yes, sir.

Huge amount of challenges that come with being a GSU supported to supporting entities and just, you know, again, the most important is making sure our airmen are taken care of whatever that looks like, you know, whether whatever those obstacles are, my job is to tear him down, right to at least get the communication flow, the partnerships, the you know, the mission partners and I know, online lenders a lot looking forward to building those relationships because that's what it's about. Absolutely, building great relationships and making sure we're taking care of each other. And yeah, I think that that's really critical. The other thing too, that I'm really excited to join the team is this development piece and so we're new way I still call us a toddler and we're still two and a half and sometimes we have our tantrums the tantrums, has developed peace. I think we're at a critical point of our maturity and take it to the next step and I think with your background, their developmental wise, you get it you know, we've talked a number of times about development was important your passion for it's really going to help us take our organization to the next level.

Absolutely, you know, the experience that I do bring from ARPC and that development you know, we see it in action and we develop it at headquarters level, but to actually go down and execute it is what I really looking forward to I know in

enlisted development in the reserve has had a history good, bad or indifferent. There's history there. And I'm not, you know oblivious to it. But I do believe and I do know that there are kinks to work out. And we're getting there slowly. And there's some credibility to that we kind of need to put back into it as an enlisted force and so really looking good. Looking forward to doing that. Coming from the headquarters literally, like I said, developing it and now being able to put it into action. I think that inside your credibility immediately with the wing and enlisted airmen that you can speak to all those things you can tell them by the skill, so you can just tell that that's a myth that doesn't exist. I think there's a lot of urban legends floating around. I think we need to simply do a better job of informing and given her a scenario and opportunities to develop and then you know, find a good pathways for people and offer apps and opportunities to grow with all their different statuses and sometimes it's better than it's best for you in your life to serve as an IMA or maybe even guard or MPR MBA tour, go to school Reg AF work, like let's find the right opportunity for people at the right time. Limit develop them and then bring them back is there absolutely. And I think what's really important is being transparent. I think for the longest time, you know, development happened up in the sky in headquarters, and we didn't know how it just happened. And now we're getting better about being transparent. These are the things that we really want to see you doing. So you can develop yourself. We want to deliberately manage your talent. We've not been the best at that in the past. And we know that we can be better than that. And one of the things being at headquarters is being in those conversations and know that our leaders are really working to deliberately manage the out the amazing talent that we have in the Air Force Reserve. And watching that kind of happen has been phenomenal. And bringing that information back I think is even that much more important. And letting folks know how it happens. You know, we just don't do it. You know, one day decide we're going to we're going to develop our array this way. It's a long process, and we really are invested and we want to make sure that we're doing it right. And in the feedback from the field is where we also need to get better at to make sure orders is it's just hard sometimes to make sure that we are getting all of that communication and so that the experience I bring from headquarters and with the ability that I will be able to, to you know, communicate back up to the headquarters. It's just going to be invaluable. Those relationships are already built, that it's really helpful. And I think when we talk about what we value is important for them and understand from a service from a you know, just the Air Force, Reserve Command and then playing from those values. You create expectations for people and I think it's important for us to work to get better on this officer side, much smaller, it's easier to do. I want to talk at least I've talked a lot about it's okay for you to make decisions what's going on your life right now for what your level of commitment and development is into.

And then make decisions that based on other things in your life and then come back because that's why we joined the reserve but as for other opportunities inserted, we get their most enforced.

I really hope so, you know, one of the you know, one of the things I tell everyone all the time when you're at Reg AF everything's kind of guided for you, you know,

they're like you're going to this next assignment Great. Let me go in the reserve. We've got so many decisions to make, and family decisions, professional decisions. We don't have an assignments NCO up in the sky making assignments for us, and we've got status decisions to make, you know, we got to feed our families. We're going to take care of our families. And what does that look like? And so there's so many options out there for us and sometimes it's overwhelming, and sometimes some of our airmen just can't get there. Right and that's okay, because we're in the reserve. So finding that balance is I think going to be very difficult. In the enlisted roll. I think we can get there for the most part because we kind of are right people are starting to move around a little bit better. Kind of planning for that next move in and that's where we want to be sure where do you want to be next? How can I get you there? And you need to do your part for me to help you get there as well. So it's a partnership, and it's a lot of just coming together and making sure that our career plans line up with our family plans and where we want to live plans. So many things you it's in the perfect world, we would be able to move around that tail and it put it right where we want them at. But so we again, I do feel we're getting better at that. But we really have to start early with our Airmen, having them kind of feel out their career path and what they want to do. And manage those expectations. And, again, excited to be able to start there, right, letting our airmen know Hey, you are the greatest reserve in the world Air Force Reserve in the world. You have all these awesome opportunities. Start thinking about it now. You want to think about it.

The complexities of this system and opportunities can be overwhelming, but also the positive side. There's lots of opportunities faculty, and Favier. I think you're right like we need to help them understand what is out there. Communicate to them, the option to understand them and then have them you know, help them through whatever that decision matrix is. It's there to help them get to where they want to go. It's two way street which you mentioned, right? They got to be able to communicate with us what they want. Even if that's a right now. Good where I am. I got the old school, certain family I got a small business recently jobs really busy taking care of I mean, they'll take care of a parent or COVID kid like there's so many things going on that there are so many opportunities as long as we can find a way to communicate with instructions that are yes, absolutely. Just so many opportunities out there. And, you know, a lot of a lot of the senior NCOs that I talked to now, and a lot of the chiefs are, you know, I wish I would have known all this years and years back, but we could do a little bit better planning and open up those apertures of the career opportunities, opportunities that are out there. So I think the earlier we start, the better. So I don't really be able to record can't do this alone. Right. So we need all of our supervisors out there. Looking at Sam like, it's on all of us here. Yes, we'll do this. We need to empower supervisors and our leaders to make sure they have these tools to help they're making the most level and we're sending the consistent message to what those development opportunities are. Absolutely. Again, being transparent for a living record window. There's the good, the bad and the ugly, and making sure that they know what those are, and not being surprised. Yeah, there's a lot of there's a worry a lot about the communication and be able to communicate and not only communicate but does the message that I intended, me, Rick Erredge,

intends to deliver. Not only does it get there that's one thing didn't reach there but how was it perceived? How was it received?

So what kind of things are you thinking about as you're you know, as when you start here, how you want to communicate what kind of what type of things are you interested in? So you know, when I became the Command Chief at ARPC, one of my major initiatives was I'm not doing this at the moment. I want to make sure my message is received well. I want to make sure it's positive and I want to make sure that they're understanding and I think the way I was successful, I like to think I was successful at that was making sure that I was consistently communicating with the people around me not making decisions in a bubble. You're making sure I was talking to the chiefs to the senior NCOs and to the NCOs. And you know what I would do that I would hold it listed calls with my senior NCOs, the NCOs and even the few airmen that we have at your PC, and just making sure I have especially with the senior enlisted, you know, those open lines of communication tell me what I'm doing that go well, you and making sure that that trust is there so they can see chief that didn't look that and go very well. And me being able to take that feedback and fix that communication piece that may have gotten mixed up. So I think that's very important to write. We're a team. We're a large team than the less but we're a team. It's important that we communicate. And transparency is huge. But I am I am never opposed to somebody come up to me and say Hey, Chief, that didn't go too well. You know, could you explain it?

Take another shot at that.

Exactly, for sure. Absolutely. Because there's nothing more important than make sure that the airman understands you and where you're coming from in your intent is always well, sometimes it doesn't come across that way to make sure that you're communicating with the folks and making sure that and I think it's something that I spent a lot of time on too is that self reflection, like did my message get there and be accepting of that feedback? A lot of times, I've seen supervisor sounds like, like what else Lieutenant or Captain like, I don't get that. Like, I need to be open. Like, you know, I feel like you're that person like anybody can come talk to you. So you and I have had tough discussions in the past and I need that, right. You know, we all need that. Somebody that's going to say, you know what, boss, like, that was dumb. I remember you dragging me into things like you gotta go do that. And I'm like, Man, I don't want to it's hard. You're like, No, you got to do like, and like, sometimes you'll say, I got it. Like, I don't eat here. Like, I'm going to take care of this.

So that's important, too. I think behavior for leaders to understand. The right timing and tempo is messaging.

And then using the people around you to help convey that message.

You know, they're, you know, I there's no disillusion of my job. And my job is to support you, and to make sure your mission is getting across in your vision.

And so that's my job. That's my job to make sure that you are successful and you have all the tools you have to take care of your area. And part of that is me making sure I'm communicating with them and communicating their, their thoughts, their

concerns to you, and how we together as a team can make sure we are taking care of them. I don't believe it. I mean, I appreciate that, but it's not me. I like to think it's our mission and then we're on it that's it, so I really appreciate this opportunity and looking forward to spending more time in building this thing and like you lose something gladiators to help them. Build, Build list whatever's next my vision is cyber dominance anywhere anytime any domain that's what we want to do in power.

You know, get theirs is our real job and you know, some ex military graduates and X ray here. So excited Matheson it's our job to figure it out yet it's our job building the next generation of leaders and doing it to the best of our abilities because these are, you know, you never know when you're talking to the next Chief Master Sergeant Air Force or the next Chief of Staff of the Air Force. And just having a little part in that is huge, is huge. And you can guide and direct somebody in the wrong direction as you've had some interactions with some of our search the Air Force Reserve in your past life and you know, at that time, you may look like that super sharp versus going to be achieved someday but you don't know like you said that. They're going to get to where they are. Absolutely and you know, yes, I've been stationed and I've worked with Chief Messer on the Air Force, right. And, you know, even em as a tech sergeant me as a young staff sergeant. He impacted me for my entire career. And you know, watching him get selected as a Chief Master Sergeant in the Air Force. I was just like, well, you know, I predicted it.

I said this. No, but you just never know. You never know who you can touch. You never know who's going to remember you for one little thing that you have done to their career into their life, just by showing that you care. And that's what he did. And that's what he does. He's very talented and very special and taking care of folks and just leaving that imprint. And man, if I could do that just one person I think that the next time was in a good meeting next by a future Command Chief, and when commander is probably out there somewhere maybe not knowing right now but could be the future was in the past. Maybe they are here and I think that I think that task very seriously. Absolutely. Absolutely. I take that task. This job very seriously. You never know who's watching. You never know who that next person is going to be. All we can hope is, you know, I was a good influence, and you're a good influence and we have the next future leaders in the Air Force Reserve, trying to do our best so wrap it up and really appreciate you spending this time and you know, I kind of just sprung it on you last minute.

So by the time people hear this, you know, finally got the timeline figured out you'll be in the sea you'll be talking to people and get down to learn the mission and help us forge the future as the next gladiator command chief to say.

Thank you, sir. I can't tell you how much I appreciate this and given me the opportunity to kind of share some thoughts and even before ported to becoming a gladiator, first step in a number of conversations we'll have on the mic and probably more often like as well the teacher is fine, appreciate chief. Safe travels and until we meet again, gladiators. Check us out. Sword and Shield podcast.