



## **Veteran of the Month March 2004**

### **Congratulations to Kenneth Wesche!**

In partnership with the Veterans Coordination Commission, I am pleased to present the March, 2004 Veteran of the Month—Kenneth D. Wesche.

Kenneth D. Wesche grew up on a farm just outside Jewell, Ohio. He attended Defiance College for one year and in 1961 joined the United States Air Force. His first assignments were at Lackland AFB & Keesler AFB and thus began his career as Air Traffic Control Radar Technician. Ken's first "real" duty station was at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, where he spent three years. Prior to leaving Ohio, Ken met his future wife Ruth at the local roller-skating rink. It was at Keesler, nearly 42 years ago, that he and Ruth married and their only child, Bobbi, was born.

His first remote assignment was at Sondrestrom AB, Greenland and after a year, he spent the next three winters at Ellsworth AFB, SD. At the end of his second enlistment, he left the Air Force to work for Control Data Corporation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After a year as a Quality Control Technician, Ken reenlisted and they returned to Wright-Patterson AFB for the next two years. Ken and his family were then sent to Stuttgart AB, Germany for a year and then on to Ramstein AB, Germany for the next two years. Their next move found them at Sheppard AFB, Texas for two years and they were thinking about when and where to retire. Ken volunteered for yet another remote assignment, this time to King Salmon AFB, Alaska, while Ruth and Bobbi moved to Rapid City. Ken's follow-up assignment to Ellsworth AFB in 1978 was his last.

Master Sergeant Wesche retired from the 2148th Communications Squadron as their NCOIC (Non-commissioned Officer in Charge) of the Maintenance Work Center in 1982, after twenty years and seven days. While in the Air Force, Ken was recognized with various medals and recognitions for his exemplary service and dedication, Airman of the Quarter and NCO of the Quarter on multiple occasions. When asked about his military career, Ken remarked "I loved the tremendous feeling of gratification in keeping aircraft in the air when the weather was terrible, I helped to keep those men alive."

Ken decided to go back to college and he and Bobbi both attended the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. Ken has a Physics Major with a minor in Mathematics and Bobbi has a major in Mathematics. After graduating he opted to return to government service, first as a Payload Specialist for Electronic Surveillance Satellites for the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington D.C. and then as an Intelligence Analyst for the China Lake Naval Weapons Center in California. Ken gave nearly thirteen additional years of service to his country before retiring again.

Ken and Ruth have made Rapid City their permanent home where they get to spend lots of time being Grandpa and Grandma to Mikayla, Blake and Kyle. His daughter Bobbi refers to her Dad as a professional spectator/booster/donator. Not only was he there for her as a child, coaching softball, driving the Northwest Junior High School cheerleaders "Hound staff car," showing up for just about everything; he is also there for his grand kids.

Ken currently is the Coach for the Squirt level Rushmore Thunder Youth Hockey Team. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Rushmore Hockey Association and has been the State Hockey Tournament Director. He is a member of the Masonic Lodge Mount Rushmore 220, serving as the Worshipful Master in 1985, and the Naja Temple of the Shrine. Additionally, he is a member of both the Sigma-Pi-Sigma (Physics) and Pi-Mu-Epsilon (Mathematics) Honor Societies. In his spare time, Ken's plays hockey for the Adult Recreational League.

Ken's most recent accomplishments actually were stimulated way back in his own youth. His "local hero" was an Ohio State Trooper who had graduated from Ken's high school. Ken knew he wanted to be a highway patrolman, until they told him he was too short. Not to be deterred, he took the opportunity to be a member of the inaugural class of the Rapid City Citizens Police Academy in the spring of 2003. Since then he has been sworn in as a Rapid City Reserve Police Officer.

Ken Wesche is recognized for his continuing support to the American way of life. Patriotism has always been important to Ken and he proudly shows it whenever and wherever he can.