

Robert J. Freeman

Dr. Maxwell

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### **The Nuclear TAC**

“Treat others how you want to be treated, and always hustle” is something Lt. Col. Martin F. Brabham consistently tells his children. For many, this “golden rule” is not a way of life, but it is for Lt. Col. Brabham, who understands that treating others with respect and caring



for others is crucial to the success of a team. Lt. Col. Brabham learned a lot from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, and from his career working as a Missile Operations Officer (or missileer as they are called in the Air Force), and he’s used this knowledge to lead others during his career in the Air Force. Now he enjoys applying these experiences by mentoring people here at The Citadel in his current position as a TAC officer for November Company.

Lt Col. Brabham grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, but it wasn’t until he went to a Citadel football game when he was younger that he had ever seen or understood what The Citadel was really like. “I didn’t really know where I wanted to go in high school. I knew I wanted to go to college, but I hadn’t really decided where until senior year when I did some tours around the campus.” Col. Brabham’s journey at The Citadel was like many others have experienced before and after his time, with some hard lessons being learned about studying,

discipline, and the entire cadet experience. “I had trouble learning how to study. My grades suffered because of that, and I had to learn some hard lessons about accountability,” he told me. Col. Brabham wasn’t sure if he wanted to join the military until he came to The Citadel, where he says that he learned more about what the real military was like in ROTC classes, which all cadets are required to take regardless of their commitment to commissioning or continuing in the civilian sector. “I really was able to see what the military was like through ROTC classes,” he said. “I didn’t know anyone in my family that had been in the military before me, so it was then that I got to see the uniforms and the opportunities the military would give me.” At that time, Lt. Col. Brabham decided to commission with the Air Force.

The job of a missileer is something that many people don’t think about in their day-to-day lives. Sure, many Americans know that our country has stockpiles of nuclear weapons, but the inner workings, maintenance, and operations of these nuclear weapons are closely held secrets to the United States of America. Lt. Col. Brabham had the opportunity to learn these secrets through his role as a missileer. “The training and academics needed to learn about these systems was very serious,” he told me. “I would often be in academic classes or studying from seven in the morning to around eight o’ clock at night, so that’s when I really learned the importance of studying and figured out a study routine.” Col. Brabham was sent to Minot AFB, North Dakota, with the 91st Missile Wing for his follow-on assignment, where he did around 255 combat crew alerts and helped command the test flights of two Minuteman-III intercontinental ballistic missiles from Vandenberg AFB, California.

After having the huge responsibility of controlling intercontinental nuclear bombs, Col. Brabham accepted even greater responsibilities. After his time at Vandenberg, he went to serve with the 3rd Space Launch Squadron at Cape Canaveral, Florida, where he eventually became

the Delta IV Flight Commander with the 5th Space Launch Squadron, commanding all Delta IV launches and flights from Cape Canaveral. From there, he went on to serve as lead launch operations inspector for MAJCOM, and after that he began working as an AFROTC instructor at Clemson University. From there, in 2015, he went back to Vandenberg AFB in California, where he was responsible for nearly everything related to launches as the Chief Operations Officer, a task that for many would be a daunting amount of responsibility. Col. Brabham commented on the importance of the United States Space Force, saying, “It’s a totally valid branch, and if I had joined the Air Force around five years ago, working in the same area that I did, I would have probably made the transition to that branch.” After he worked with missiles and space operations, Col. Brabham became the Commander of the 320th Training Squadron in Joint Base Antonio-Lackland, Texas, another command role that requires arguably the greatest amount of care for your subordinates than any other position.

After his military service, Lt. Col. Brabham went on to become a TAC Officer for November Company, where he has the opportunity to mentor and coach both young people who going into military services and those who are continuing in the civilian world. Col. Brabham says that he “landed the job I always wanted—being around young people and teaching them is something that I’ve always wanted to do, and being back in my old stomping grounds is great.” Col. Brabham really has a passion for helping young people decide what they want to do; he even helps out senior cadets in their search for jobs when they’re having trouble finding one. Col. Brabham’s advice of “Treat others the way you want to be treated, and always hustle,” is something that he lives by as a TAC officer every day.

For Col. Brabham, it isn’t about the “cool stuff” he got to do but more about the people that he met along the way, saying that “I was really fortunate to meet a lot of good people in my

service, one of which was an Air Force General, whom my wife and I became close with while working with him.” Col. Brabham’s service is extraordinary—not many people get the opportunity to lead rocket launches or work with ICBM’s—but he is a people-person above all else. “I wouldn’t have been able to do so much without the support of my family, my wife and my kids moving around with me and everything,” he explained. Colonel Brabham sees himself as a resource for his people to come to, which is why his position as a TAC Officer is the perfect fit for him.

From being a missileer, to leading rocket launches, training young Airmen, and mentoring Citadel cadets, Col. Brabham has lived his life to the fullest, having many amazing experiences and meeting great people along the way. Col. Brabham plans on staying at The Citadel until retirement and doing what he does best, mentoring and teaching others.