

A tribute to

By Master Sgt.
Michael Rivera [●]
AF Special Operations
Command

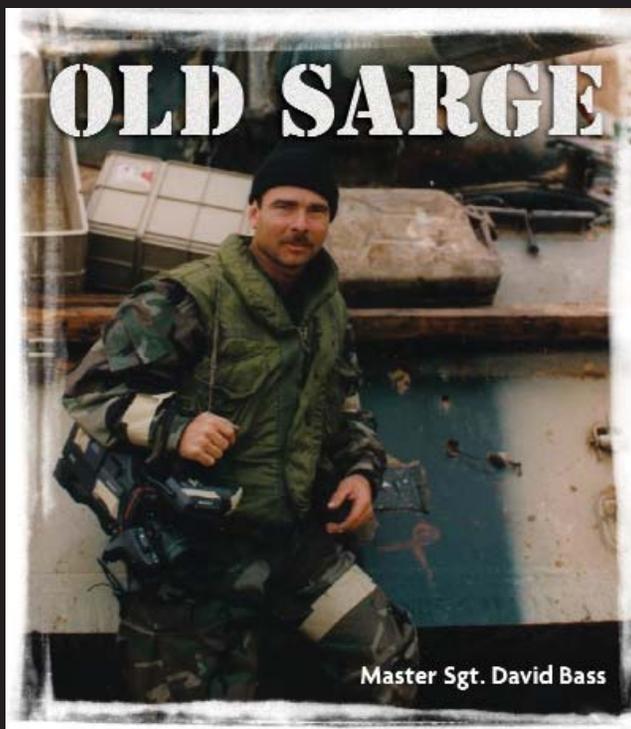
In January of 1990, I took a short trip down the flightline to the base photo lab and had the first opportunity to meet an individual who would change me forever. For those of you lucky enough to have known Master Sgt. David E. Bass, I'm sure you can imagine my first thoughts.

First off, Sergeant Bass was not a big man. He was quiet, but larger than life. I soon found out that in the Combat Camera community he was a legend, and as a videographer he was the best. From the moment I met him, I wanted to be like him ... Old Sarge.

I called him the Old Sarge because he would usually pull out a rusty, little, old pocketknife to let me know that no matter how big I was, he was bigger. He would always say to me, with a heavy Panhandle accent, "Sergeant Rivera, I wouldn't advise you messin' with the Old Sarge!" I spent hours watching him edit and no matter how simple the story was, he would produce incredible videos.

He was old school and a lot of that rubbed off on me. I've caught myself telling people, "If you need so many fancy transitions, your footage must be pretty bad." That was Sergeant Bass. I remember sitting in a tent with him for several months at King Fahd International Airport in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, listening to his stories. He always had the best ones and you could never tell how much was true, but it didn't matter.

He is one of only a few Combat Cameramen to be



awarded a Bronze Star with Valor, presented for heroism during Desert Storm. He was with an Army Special Forces Team when they came upon barracks that were being used by the Iraqis. His team came under heavy fire and although he videotaped quite a bit of the action, he put the camera down and picked up his M-16 rifle. Some of the Iraqis decided to surrender; maybe they knew Sergeant Bass was out there with his old, rusty pocketknife. Or

perhaps it was because he had dropped so many of their buddies. He was an avid hunter, and I'm sure those skills came into play that day in the desert.

He said, "I didn't feel nervous or scared at the time ... we were all doing what we were supposed to be doing."

He stayed behind to document the clean up after the war while the rest of the cameramen went home. A few months passed and it was time for Dave to return. We all waited with anticipation for his return at the airport. A few nights of fun and several bottles of aspirin later, things eventually got back to normal.

After the Gulf War, he went to Fort Dix, N.J., to be the superintendent of the Communications Support Division of the Air Mobility Warfare Center. Shortly after arriving, he became ill with cancer and passed away six weeks later. His memory lives on in each of us. The Contingency Communications Building was named after him in a dedication ceremony that took place in June 1998. My second son, David, was born right before Sergeant Bass passed away, and I always tell people proudly, my son was named after the Old Sarge.