



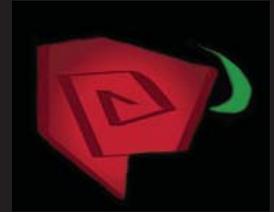
Ken Hackman

The Godfather

of VI

By Master Sgt. Karen Petitt [●]
Managing Editor

They call Ken Hackman “The Godfather” of Visual Information. Part of that title comes from his founding of the Air Force photojournalism program in 1971 and shaping it into what it is today. Part of the title comes from his own extensive portfolio of excellence to include covering the Vietnam War, summer Olympic games at Montreal, Los Angeles, Seoul, Barcelona and Atlanta, portraits of Chuck Yeager, official photographs of presidential aircraft and most Air Force inventory aircraft from the past 30 years. But, most of this enduring title comes from his ability to mentor and shape young photographers, and give them the training and expertise they need to be successful. His creative approaches, such as a “Gong Show” contest of best photos or a video teleconference to critique others’ work, is matched by his ability to focus on the individual while molding the career field. His love of photography since age 11 eventually propelled the Lancaster, Pa., native into an Air Force photography career at age 17. Assigned to Yokota, Japan, he traveled the Far East working for a reconnaissance unit with the Air Photographic and Charting Service. He got out after his first enlistment, and then worked numerous VI positions as a civil service member until his retirement. He still mentors, coaches, judges, teaches, critiques and advises. He said he’s sending the message that although technology has changed drastically, the need for creative people hasn’t. Now, though, those creative people must know how to market their photos as well. Society has an insatiable appetite for imagery, so it’s not only taking good photos, but getting those photos to the right people that will make a difference for the future of VI. And, after all, “father” knows best.



From those who know

“Ken Hackman is BY FAR, the best and most respected leader I’ve ever had the pleasure of working for in my 20 years in the Air Force. The immense leadership void created by Ken’s retirement has never been filled, but his legacy of 40 years of photographic excellence remains. Mr. Hackman ... always said “whatever it takes” to make ourselves and our photography better. He is a leader, mentor, friend and father to all of us. He truly is “The Godfather.”

— **Master Sgt. Raymond Conway**
European Stars and Stripes

“Like a haven of information, the player that everybody turns to. The man that never fades into obscurity, but always is there available to you with a wise criticism and a smile.”

— **William Kimble**
4th Combat Camera
Squadron

“His reputation is impeccable. His word is gold. His actions always fair. He is always there if you need help. I still cherish those times when he “chewed my [butt] off” for bad photography. I will always be thankful to him for making me a better photographer ... and person.”

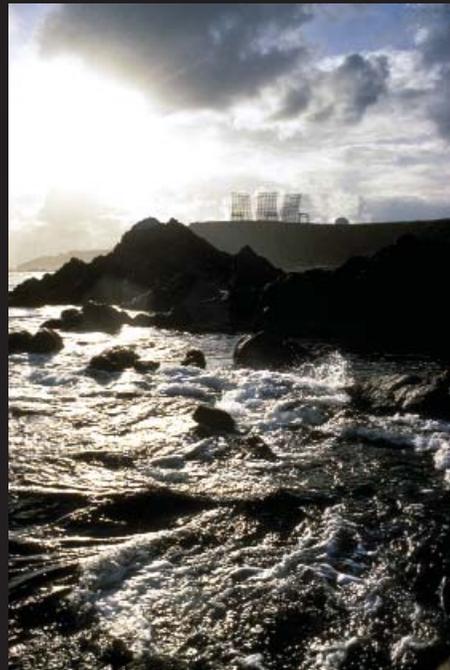
— **Master Sgt. Val Gempis**
AFNEWS, Yokota, Japan



Gorman wildflowers



F-10 after the rain



Shemya radars