From Wake Island to Western Plains Energy: The Steady Leadership of Army Veteran Jeff Kindler

For Jeff Kindler, joining the U.S. Army wasn't a question of *if*, it was a matter of *when*. "I always knew I was going to join," he said. "When I was in kindergarten, my best friend and I would do low crawls across the playground. His dad was our first recruiter."

That early enthusiasm led Jeff to enlist in June 1991 as an 11B Infantryman, serving through 1997 with assignments in Hawaii, Wake Island, Saudi Arabia, and Germany. Each location offered its own challenges and lessons, but one deployment left a lasting mark.

"When I was deployed to Wake Island, we were guarding Chinese immigrants who had been caught trying to enter the U.S.," Jeff recalled. "They told us how their government controlled everything about their lives, from what they wore to what they ate. It really opened my eyes to how many freedoms we take for granted here in America."

Those experiences helped forge a calm, disciplined approach that Jeff carries into his civilian career today. As a Back-End Operator in the Process Department at Western Plains Energy, he applies the same resilience and problem-solving skills he learned in uniform. "The Army prepared me for difficult situations," he said. "That training stays with you, it helps you stay steady no matter what comes your way."

At Western Plains Energy, Jeff values both the people he works with and the flexibility the ethanol industry provides. "I like the schedule and the people," he said simply. After more than two decades since leaving the service, he's long since completed his transition to civilian life, but the principles that guided him as a Soldier continue to define his work ethic.

Outside the plant, Jeff is happiest hunting and spending time with his family. He and his wife of 23 years, Mary, have two children, Maggie and Michael, who share their parents' appreciation for the outdoors and hard work.

From guarding freedom on remote Pacific islands to fueling America's energy independence at Western Plains Energy, Jeff Kindler's story reflects the quiet strength of so many veterans who continue to serve in new ways every day.