

Sole passion



Boeing Field Service Representative John Morgenstern makes sure the CH-46 helicopters attached to Marine Squadron One are mission ready.

DAVID GROESBECK PHOTO

Field service rep still learning—and loving his job after 44 years

BY RANDY JACKSON

Whenever John Morgenstern watches the president of the United States board one of the helicopters assigned to U.S. Marine Squadron One, his pride takes flight with the aircraft.

Morgenstern is a Boeing Support Systems Field Service Representative deployed with U.S. Marine Squadron One, which is responsible for the operation of the fleet of helicopters supporting the missions of the president of the United States.

The exact number of Sikorsky VH-60s—the aircraft publicly known as Marine One when the president is aboard—is classified. But the entire squadron includes seven CH-53s and seven Boeing CH-46s. Morgenstern called the CH-46 the workhorse of the unit. It's affectionately dubbed The Phrog (pronounced “frog”) because of how it looks taking off near the Potomac River—the eastern boundary of the squadron's Virginia base. “Like a frog leaping from a pond,” he said.

A die-hard CH-46 maintenance and mechanical expert, Morgenstern spends anywhere from 60 to 100 days per year away from home in support of the presidential mission. He sits in the back of a Boeing CH-46 helicopter often with U.S. Secret Service agents and U.S. Marine squadron members who have become his extended family.

Morgenstern is passionate about his job and has been for each of the 44 years he's served as a field service rep for Boeing. “In my initial interview, back in 1957, I told the interviewer that being a field service

rep was the only thing I wanted to do; and he replied, ‘That sounds like a pretty short-sighted career plan.’ So I said, ‘You asked me what I wanted to do, didn't you?’ I was sure I had blown the interview,” Morgenstern said, smiling.

Three weeks later, fresh out of college, he got the job.

U.S. Marine Brigadier Gen. Andrew O'Donnell called Morgenstern a true standout. “He is without a doubt the most professional and impressive technical representative I've worked with in my 27 years of aviation experience,” he said. “He's an icon... a legend. His willingness to travel on a moment's notice in support of the presidential mission and Boeing products is impressive. His ethic and dedication are always of the highest level.”

Asked what the most memorable moment in his tenure with Boeing and Marine Squadron One has been, Morgenstern recalled meeting Pope John Paul II during what would be the pontiff's last visit to the United States.

“I got a chance to meet the Pope and shake hands with him while I was supporting the security detail in the CH-46. It was an awe-inspiring experience,” said Morgenstern.

Morgenstern is proud of his work and the company that has given him the opportunity to have an impact on so many lives. “I never stop learning,” he said. “The world has been my classroom, and I've been fortunate to pass on the Boeing work ethic to some of these young U.S. Marines and mechanics who get up every morning and look forward to doing the best job they can.”

If you can't see the pride in Morgenstern's face, just follow his car. His license plate reads B-O-E-I-N-G. ■

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