

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Nebraska Guard honors late adjutant general in January

■ Retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng dies in January after lengthy illness; served as Nebraska's adjutant general from 1987-2000

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor



Retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng
Nebraska Adjutant General
(1987-2000)

Nebraska's fourth-longest serving adjutant general, retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng, died after a lengthy illness Jan. 12. He was 71.

Heng served as the adjutant general for Nebraska for 13 years, beginning in 1987 when he was appointed to the post by then-Gov. Kay Orr.

Along with leading the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, Heng also served as the director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. He retired in December 2000 after having served as adjutant general for three separate governors.

Heng is survived by his wife, Sharon, three grown children, Mark, Nick and Lisa, and 10 grandchildren.

According to Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, current adjutant general for Nebraska, the state owes much of its recent success

to the late general who helped put the Nebraska Guard into position to effectively serve in the current Global War on Terrorism.

"Lt. Gen. Stan Heng spent nearly 14 years faithfully serving his state and country as the adjutant general for Nebraska," said Kadavy. "The Nebraska National Guard has performed superbly during the past seven years in support of the Global War on Terrorism and owes its success to the vision, leadership and action of General Heng. We owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude for his service to the Nebraska National

See HENG on 10.

Flying High



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Heading Out: Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing process out of their alternate work location before returning to their primary work center during the 155th ARW's operational readiness inspection in Gulfport, Miss., in January. The Airmen's primary building had received simulated damage earlier in the day.

Air Guardsmen pass major inspections with flying colors

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

After nearly two years of planning, preparing and exercising, the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing conducted a pair of major inspections in late January designed to test the organization's ability to support two major missions.

"I'm very pleased with the results," said Col. Rick Evans, commander of the

Lincoln-based 155th ARW, after an Air Mobility Command inspector general team gave the unit its official grades during a debrief on Feb. 12.

The wing received an overall "Excellent" rating from the nuclear operational readiness inspection (NORI) and an overall "Satisfactory" rating from its operational readiness inspection (ORI).

"Clearly we are one of the top KC-135 units in the nation when it comes to the nuclear business, so those results prove

See INSPECTIONS on 7.

Army celebrating noncommissioned officers in 2009

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

For those Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers wearing stripes, listen up. 2009 is your year.

Beginning in January 2009 has been designated by the U.S. Army as the "Year of the Non-commissioned Officer."

According to Gen. George W.

Casey Jr., Army chief of staff, the year-long observation is designed to build public aware-

ness of the important roles that Army sergeants of all ranks play in today's Army while also focusing on enhancements to such areas as NCO education, fitness and leader-

ship.

"We're taking this year and making it the Year of the Non-commissioned Officer so we can recognize their courage, their commitment, their compe-

tence and their contribution to this war," said Casey during a Jan. 5 kick-off event at Fort



Bliss, Texas.

"There is no doubt in my mind that our noncommissioned officer corps is the glue that holds this Army together and allows us to accomplish the impossible," said Casey. "We wouldn't be the Army we are today without our noncommissioned officer corps and I would not be the officer I am today without

See NCOS on 9.

State's top Army Guard recruiting assistant says honesty key to her continued success

By Sgt. Michael Coleman
Staff Writer

Most Soldiers know that GRAP - the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program - is a great way to help enlist Soldiers and earn extra cash.

But Staff Sgt. Christina L. Green has taken the program to a new level.

Green, a member of the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance,) has helped nine Soldiers enlist into the Nebraska Army National Guard and has another 11 candidates in the process of enlisting. That makes her the most

See GREEN on 14.

'Team Dragon' Soldiers welcomed home after tough year-long training mission in Afghanistan

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

As a distant "thump, thump, thump," sound gradually echoed through the air around the Nebraska Army National Guard Aviation Support Facility, Dec. 11, the crowd of children, wives, husbands, parents, friends and others began to get excited.

After all, members of the Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team were scheduled to arrive soon aboard a CH-47 "Chinook" helicopter after a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.

Guests began running outside to meet the helicopter and welcome their loved ones home, only to hear an announcement over the loud speakers:

See TEAM DRAGON on 5.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Welcome Home: Maj. Vernon Chandler is greeted after a year-long deployment to Afghanistan by his wife, Lisa, and their daughter, Katie. Chandler was part of "Team Dragon," made up of 16 Nebraska Guard Soldiers that assisted with the Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team.

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NEWS DIGEST

■ President Obama vows not to waver in America's defense

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) – President Barack Obama pledged a “prudent use” of military power as the nation works toward “ushering in a new era of peace” in his inaugural address to the nation Jan. 20.

“Our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint,” he said from the west side of the Capitol after taking the oath of office as the 44th president. An estimated 2 million people crowded the National Mall and surrounding area to hear his address.

The use of these principles will allow America to develop greater understanding of other nations and greater cooperation against common threats from them, he said. “We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan,” Obama said. “With old friends and former foes, we’ll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet.”

Obama said Americans will not apologize for their way of life, nor waver in its defense. “And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you,” he said.

America is a country of doers and risk-takers; it is an immigrant country where each generation worked hard to provide for the next, he said.

“For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life,” Obama said. “For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.

“For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sahn,” he continued. “Time and again, these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions, greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.”

■ Obama thanks troops, pledges support following meeting with Joint Chiefs

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – In his first visit to the Pentagon as commander in chief, President Barack Obama thanked U.S. troops and pledged to provide the resources they need to accomplish their missions, Jan. 28.

Obama spoke to reporters after meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and



Defense Department photo

Pentagon Meeting: President Barack Obama addresses the media during his first visit to the Pentagon since becoming commander-in-chief, Jan. 28. Obama and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and all the service chiefs to get their inputs on the way ahead in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to discuss military readiness, “difficult decisions” on Iraq and Afghanistan and other national security threats and objectives.

“I want to first of all thank all of the men and women in uniform who are represented here. They are the best that this country has to offer,” Obama said after he and Vice President Joe Biden shook hands with a row of troops from all service branches who lined an E-ring Pentagon hallway.

“All of you who are serving in the U.S. armed forces are going to have my full support and one of my duties as president is going to be to make sure that you have what you need to accomplish your missions,” he said.

Obama said the first point he addressed with the Joint Chiefs – the senior-ranking officers of each military service branch – was gratitude for the service and sacrifice of troops and military families, who he said were responsible for national freedoms that sometimes are taken for granted.

He also suggested he would relieve some of the pressure placed on the military by more evenly distributing responsibility among other U.S. government elements.

“We have for a long time put enormous pressure on our military to carry out a whole set of missions, sometimes not with the sort of strategic support and the use of all aspects of American power to make sure that they’re not carrying the full load,” he said. “And that’s something that I spoke to the chiefs about and that I intend to change as president of the United States.”

■ Spokesman calls Aghanistan troop buildup ‘delicate’ endeavor

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates is expected to present the Pentagon’s proposal for a U.S. troop increase in Afghanistan to President Barack Obama in the near

future, Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said Jan. 29.

“I think everybody’s committed to doing this as quickly and responsibly as possible,” Morrell told Pentagon reporters. “In the coming days, the secretary hopes to present the president with his recommendation.”

Gen. David D. McKiernan, who commands U.S. forces in Afghanistan as well as NATO’s International Security Assistance Force, has asked his bosses for a 30,000-troop increase, which effectively would double the U.S. military contingent in Afghanistan. Gates and other senior civilian and military officials at the Pentagon have said they believe it is necessary to send more troops to Afghanistan to suppress resurgent Taliban fighters and al-Qaida terrorists.

The White House is reviewing U.S. strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, Morrell said. Any U.S. troop increase for Afghanistan, he said, needs the approval of the new commander in chief.

Increased violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan threatens global security and constitutes “the central front in our enduring struggle against terrorism,” Obama said during a Jan. 22 visit to the State Department.

Obama also is studying several options presented to him by Pentagon officials for a drawdown of U.S. combat troops from Iraq.

During his Jan. 27 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Gates said if Obama approves the Afghanistan troop increase, that most of those extra forces could be provided to McKiernan by midsummer. Gates is mindful of the balancing of risk regarding U.S. troop strength in Iraq and Afghanistan, Morrell said, noting that the Iraq drawdown affects the numbers of additional troops available for deployment to Afghanistan.

“It’s a delicate plus-up, because you’ve got to do it commensurate to the infrastructure that exists” in austere Afghanistan, Morrell said.

■ Officials congratulate Iraqis after provincial elections

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Senior military officials congratulated the Iraqi people for holding provincial elections Jan. 31, praising the Iraqi and U.S. forces that helped make the elections safe. More than 14,400 candidates competed for 440 seats in 14 of 18 Iraqi provinces. Though five candidates were reported killed in the campaign leading up to the polls, there were no reports of deaths or major violence on the day of the elections.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command, issued a statement Jan. 30 in which he applauded the work of everyone involved in the effort to have a successful election.

“Congratulations to the Iraqi Government, the Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqi people, the United Nations, the interna-

tional observers and Coalition elements for their concerted efforts in making today’s provincial elections an event of which all Iraqis should be proud and an effort the world should applaud,” Petraeus said.

■ Gates cites high demand for Guard’s domestic mission

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The National Guard must be able to meet its domestic responsibilities in addition to its operational missions, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told the Senate Armed Services Committee Jan. 27.

“The demand for Guard support of civil authorities here at home remains high,” Gates said in a statement to the committee.

“For example, the ‘man-days’ that Guardsmen have spent fighting fires, performing rescue and recovery, and other duties increased by almost 60 percent in 2008 as compared to 2007.”

To compensate, the Defense Department has “substantially increased” support for the Guard and Reserve, which for decades had been considered a low priority for equipment, training and readiness, the secretary said.

“Today, the standard is that the Guard and reserves receive the same equipment as the active force,” Gates said. “For (fiscal) 2009, the base budget request included \$6.9 billion to continue to replace and repair the National Guard’s equipment.”

Gates said the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve, a panel created by Congress four years ago, has also helped to ensure that both reserve components are better trained, manned, and equipped for this new era. “We have taken, or are taking, action on more than 80 percent of the commission’s recommendations,” Gates said.

For example, the panel suggested a combined pay and personnel system to fix problems that arise when Guard and Reserve members shift from the reserve pay system to the active duty system. Gates said the Defense Department now is launching that integrated system.

Shortly after he became the secretary of defense, Gates implemented mobilization policies that are more predictable and conducive to unit cohesion. “I have tried to ease, to the extent possible, the stress on our reserve components,” he said. “We have provided greater predictability as to when a Guard member will be deployed by establishing a minimum standard of 90 days’ advance notice prior to mobilization. In practice, on average, the notification time is about 270 days.

“There is no longer a 24-month lifetime limit on deployment,” he continued, “but each mobilization of National Guard and Reserve troops is now capped at 12 months.”

The goal is five years of dwell time for one year deployed. “We have made progress towards this goal, but are not there yet,” Gates acknowledged

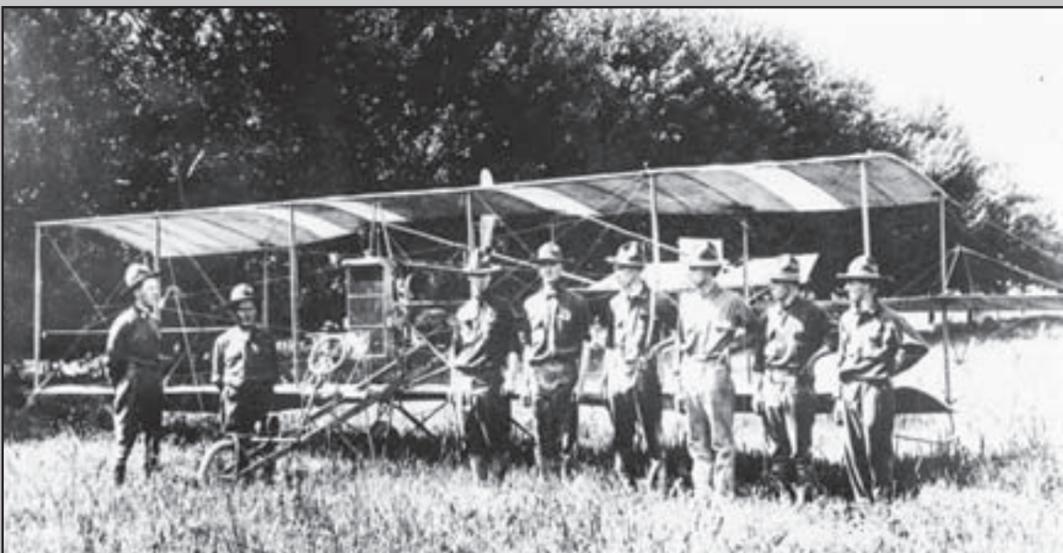


Photo courtesy of retired Capt. Douglas Hartman

Early Days of Nebraska Aviation

Members of the Fremont, Neb., Signal Corps pose for a photograph in front of their Model D Curtiss airplane sometime in 1913. The airplane, which was the first aircraft of the Nebraska National Guard, was destroyed in an accident in 1914. The Nebraska National Guard Historical Society photograph was recently discovered by retired Capt. Douglas Hartman while he was researching another project. It was the first time that Hartman, who wrote “Nebraska’s Militia: The History of the Army and Air National Guard (1854-1991),” had seen the photograph.

Prairie Soldier

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Photos by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Mark Roland

Billowing Business: Spc. Waylon Lippold, a parachute rigger with Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, starts the parachute folding process by carefully aligning each panel of the canopy and lining up each radial seam on long tables.



Into the Great Wide Open: Airborne Soldiers jump into a clear morning sky over the Husker Drop Zone near Mead, Neb. on a cold morning, Jan. 24. The jump was the first operation that members of Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, provided parachutes for since standing up as a new unit. The jump included Soldiers from the Nebraska and Utah National Guard as well as active duty Soldiers from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command based at Fort Bragg, N.C.



Keeping the Lines Straight: Spc. Waylon Lippold, parachute rigger for Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, carefully lays out the anti-inversion net at the bottom of the parachute before he begins the folding process.



Inspections: Spc. Waylon Lippold, a parachute rigger with Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, inspects the air channel of the T10-D personnel parachute. The air channel, formed by the radial seams of the parachute canopy, allows the air to flow through to properly open the parachute from the top down.

■ New rigger unit final piece of Nebraska puzzle Leaping Into Action

By Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

Members of Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, leapt into operation, Jan. 24, when they conducted their first mission in support of a Nebraska Army National Guard airborne operation during a parachute jump at the Husker Drop Zone near Mead, Neb.

According to unit officials, the Seward, Neb.-based parachute rigging detachment is the final piece of the puzzle to make the Nebraska National Guard self-sustaining when it comes to airborne operations.

"Our war-time mission is to deliver 120,000 pounds of cargo through 64 foot diameter cargo parachutes, to drop supplies to the battlefield...water, ammunition, food," said Sgt. 1st Class William VanSetten, detachment readiness sergeant and Rigger Operations noncommissioned officer. "The backup (mission) is the personnel side of it. We'll sustain 146 parachutes for personnel drops."

The detachment, which is part of a company headquartered in Duluth, Ga., began operation last March when VanSetten became the first member of the new organization. The detachment currently stands at 54 percent of its strength and is working hard to fill its ranks, said VanSetten.

The unit is scheduled to officially stand up later this year.

According to VanSetten, the unit actually began supporting airborne operations two weeks earlier when it was scheduled to support a jump at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb. That jump was cancelled because of the weather.

The detachment is currently responsible for providing rigger support to Beatrice's Troop C (Long Range Surveillance,) 1-134th Cavalry, which potentially has 90 paratroopers, and Omaha's 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) in Omaha, which has potentially 160 jumpers.

Packing parachutes – which are considered life support systems for paratroopers – is an involved process with many checks and inspections. Packing begins with the inspection of the parachute material on a light table and the inspection of all suspension lines and knots. Riggers then go through a meticulous process to fold and secure a parachute into a deployment bag to ensure that it will open properly during a jump.

"A (Soldier) coming out of Rigger School – by the book – takes 52 minutes to pack a parachute. With about two years of experience they can get it down to six to 10 minutes," said VanSetten.

At the military occupational skills (MOS) school, Soldiers not only learn how to properly pack a parachute, they are also required to jump with the parachute they pack as part of their final testing.

"A parachute rigger is the *only* MOS in the Army that being airborne is part of your MOS," said VanSetten. "You have to go to jump school before you go to Rigger School, for your own jump proficiency as well as your confidence in your own packing."

"Anything you pack, you jump," he added. "When you're in the school environment, it's new to you. It does make you kind of nervous, but it does instill in you the spirit to do things right."

For Spc. Waylon Lippold, a recent graduate of the Rigger School who has



Careful Eye: Sgt 1st Class William VanSetten, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, rigger operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge, supervises Spc. Waylon Lippold as he pulls suspension lines through stow loops. All steps of the folding operations are carefully supervised and inspected to ensure the parachutes, considered a life support system for airborne Soldiers, work properly.

been packing parachutes for two weeks at the Det. 2, 165th QM Co., the first jump with a parachute he packed was a nervous event.

"There are a lot of details learning to pack a parachute. A lot of small details you have to remember; a step-by-step process," Lippold said.

"You go through a couple of weeks learning how to pack (a parachute) and you jump with the first one...there is always that 'What did I forget?' in your head. Then you jump out and it was the best opening I've ever had. It was a great experience," he said.

The weather for the rigger detachment's first support mission was the coldest jump many of the Soldiers had ever made. The ground temperature was 1 degree with a six-knot wind, but the conditions were perfect for a jump.

"When the air is cold, the parachute falls the slowest, the air is the densest," VanSetten said. "And this is the first

time these parachutes have been jumped. They're brand new and that's when the canopy has the most porosity density. So everyone had a very-very soft landing... almost a stand up landing."

With the in-state parachute rigging company the Nebraska National Guard airborne operations are a lot easier to logistically coordinate. Prior to the Det. 2, 165th QM Co., standing up, parachutes had to be delivered by quartermaster units out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Edward Whitehill, readiness sergeant for Omaha's 195th FSC (Special Operations) (Airborne,) the support provided by rigger unit was a key component to the success of the unit's weekend jump operations.

"Their support was a critical piece to what was required," Whitehill said. "I can't say enough about the 165th. They jumped through hoops to meet our needs and our timelines."

Transportation battalion headquarters cited for work during Iraq mission

By Sgt. 1st Class Bob Harpst

734th Transportation Battalion

The Nebraska Army National Guard's Kearney-based 734th Transportation Battalion was honored for meritorious service during its deployment to Iraq when it was presented with the Meritorious Unit Commendation during a ceremony at the National Guard armory in Kearney, Jan. 10.

During its August 2006 – August 2007 deployment to Iraq, the battalion headquarters and its subordinate units completed 1,415 convoy security missions while traveling 2.4 million miles over the most dangerous roads in the world. They also experienced 754 combat related incidents.

According to the organization's commendation citation, "Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th Transportation Battalion, and its subordinate units displayed exceptionally meritorious service in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The battalion distinguished itself by providing timely and responsive convoy security throughout the theater during intense combat operations."

"One of the largest transportation battalions in Multi-National Corps Iraq, the unit included active Army and Army National Guard companies as well as United States Navy electronic warfare augmentees. The unit's extraordinary execution of its convoy security mission greatly aided Coalition Forces in promoting economic and domestic security for the Iraqi people. Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th



Photo by David Nore

Honoring Iraqi Service: Chief Warrant Officer 2 Todd Wagner places the Meritorious Unit Citation streamer on the colors of the 734th Transportation Battalion during a Jan. 10 ceremony in Kearney, Neb.

Transportation Battalion's outstanding performance of duty is in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflects distinct credit upon the unit, the 13th Sustainment Command and the United States Army."

The Meritorious Unit Commendation is awarded by the Secretary of the Army to units "for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service for at least six continuous months of military operations against an armed enemy."

Subordinate units under the 734th Transportation Battalion also awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation were Company B, 1-16th Infantry; Battery D, 1-5th Field Artillery, both from Fort Riley, Kan; 259th Engineers of the Arizona National Guard; 755th Chemical Company of the Nebraska Army National Guard; and augmentees from the United States Navy Electronic Warfare Detachment.

General receives second star

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Timothy J. Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, received his second star Feb. 13 when Gov. Dave Heineman officially pinned the rank of major general onto the Omaha native.

During the same ceremony Kadavy was promoted to the permanent rank of brigadier general. According to National Guard Bureau policy, adjutant generals are allowed to wear the rank insignia one above their permanent rank until they attain the rank of permanent major general.

Assisting Heineman in pinning the two-star rank on Kadavy's uniform were Kadavy's wife, Laurie, and son Peter. Kadavy's other son, Seth, is a member of the Corps of Cadets at Virginia Tech University and was not able to attend the ceremony.

As the adjutant general for Nebraska, Kadavy serves as the senior officer of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and the director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. He has served as the adjutant general since Nov. 3, 2007, when he succeeded retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Roger P. Lempke.

According to Heineman, he was extraordinarily honored to participate in the promotion ceremony.

"As a West Point graduate, I know what this means," said Heineman. "I am just extraordinarily pleased with the job that General Kadavy has done as the adjutant general for our state."

"We had a great leader in General Lempke and now we have a terrific leader in General Kadavy. We've been very, very fortunate in our state to have that kind of leadership in the Nebraska National Guard and that's why the Nebraska National Guard is so well re-



Photo by David Nore

New Stars: Timothy J. Kadavy (center) receives his new stars from his wife, Laurie, and Governor Dave Heineman during a Feb. 13 ceremony at the Governor's Hearing Room in Lincoln.

spected," said Heineman.

According to Kadavy, he appreciates the opportunity to serve as the adjutant general for Nebraska, adding that he also appreciates all the work that the Nebraska National Guard and Nebraska Emergency Management Agency have accomplished in the 15 months since he assumed the post.

"You just all make it extremely easy to be the adjutant general because you care so much about your nation and you care so much about your state," Kadavy told members of the Nebraska Military Department that attended the ceremony, "whether it's preparing units or Soldiers and Airmen to support the Global War on Terrorism, whether it's responding to a tornado in Kearney as you did last May, or it's helping other states out such as we've done with forest fires in California, or in a matter of three days pulling together 1,000 Soldiers and Airmen to go down and help citizens in Louisiana."

"I can't say enough about how proud and how appreciative I am of what you do each and every day," Kadavy added.

'Pike's' return helps grow bonds between veterans, current Soldiers

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The 'Pike' is back.

The 'Pike' – or rather the 'Pike Patch' – is the distinctive unit emblem of the 67th Infantry Brigade.

Featuring a white, spear-like device that was used by infantrymen in the Middle Ages, the pike patch was worn by Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the state's primary Army combat organization from the time it was organized in 1963 until the point that the brigade became part of 35th Infantry Division in 1984.

With the activation of Nebraska's new 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade last September from the 67th Area Support Group, the patch has reappeared on Nebraska Soldiers' shoulders from Omaha and Nebraska City to Lincoln, Beatrice, Fremont and Hastings for the first time in two decades.

According to the Soldiers who first wore the patch years ago, it's a sight for sore eyes.

"Obviously, something that leaves and comes back is meant to be," said 1st Sgt. Timothy Greiner, the senior noncommissioned officer for Headquarters Company, 67th BfSB, who first wore the patch as a 17-year-old private when he joined the 67th Infantry Bde.'s operations section as a radio operator.

According to Greiner, who recently returned to the brigade and became the headquarters company's first sergeant during an assumption of responsibility ceremony Jan. 10, when the brigade transferred to the 35th Infantry Div., it was hard

on everyone within the organization to lose the distinctive patch.

"It was really hard for us to see the patch go away. A lot of us moved out of the unit when it happened," he said.

One of those Soldiers who experienced that change was retired Command Sgt. Maj. Donald Lintz, who served as a member of the 2-134th Infantry and the 67th Infantry Brigade headquarters staff.

Lintz, who would go on to become the state command sergeant major, said it feels good to see the 'Pike' back on the shoulders of Nebraska troops.

"It really makes you feel proud," said Lintz, as he watched a group of 67th BfSB Headquarters mingle about on the "Spirit of 1776" armory drill floor shortly after Greiner assumed the first sergeant mantle.

Above the Soldiers stood a freshly painted 'Pike Patch' symbol that had been placed there as part of the 67th's transition to its new mission. "You feel like you're part of the organization again when you see the patch up there."

Lintz said he believes many of the 67th Infantry Bde. veterans felt like they were losing a dear friend when the patch went away in 1984 and again when the brigade was deactivated in the late 1990s as part of the state's transition away from a combat-exclusive force struc-



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Standing Tall: Members of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, stand in formation at the "Spirit of 1776" armory in Lincoln as their new 'Pike' emblem looks down on them from a nearby wall.

ture.

Those feelings have resurfaced with the reintroduction of the patch.

"We were proud of it then," said Lintz. "When we lost the brigade, when we lost the colors... I was at that ceremony. It was kind of like losing an old friend."

"Now that it's back, you feel proud of the brigade again," Lintz added.

Greiner said he understands those feelings.

"There's an old saying, 'Let it go,'" said Greiner. "The state of Nebraska let the brigade go to switch to the ASG. They didn't want to at the time because it took a lot of positions out of the state of Nebraska.



Back To The Start: 1st Sgt. Timothy Greiner accepts the colors of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, during an assumption of responsibility ceremony Jan. 10, in Lincoln. Greiner started his military career in HHC, 67th Infantry Brigade, an organization that eventually became the 67th BfSB.

They didn't want to let it go, but they had to."

"Look at it today – it came back," he added. "In my mind, that means that it was meant to be in Nebraska. It was meant to be the 67th Brigade."

Even the younger members of the organization – Soldiers who have joined the organization long after the changes – say they understand at least partially what the reintroduction of the 'Pike Patch' means for Nebraska.

"It means a lot to me," said Staff Sgt. Jerod Ideus, who recently joined the brigade headquarters as a training sergeant after having spent much of his military career assigned to the 1-167th Cavalry. "When I first read about the history of that patch, it means strength. There's a lot of honor in it, too."

"I look at all these pictures on the walls in this building and you see all of these older

gentlemen wearing that patch," Ideus said. "Now, we've finally got it back."

Ideus said he and other Soldiers now understand that they have a bond with earlier generations of Nebraska Soldiers that they didn't realize before.

He added that he would like the brigade's younger Soldiers – those who don't already know about the history of the patch and the brigade – to be told the history of the organization they're entering when they receive their patch.

"Once you start reading some of the stuff they did back in the 60s... that's cool," said Ideus.

"I think that most (of the 67th BfSB Soldiers) know, but there are some that need to. When they come in and receive their patch, their section sergeants need to put it on their shoulders and say, 'This is what it means to be in this organization and to wear this patch.'"

Young girl sings special song to welcome father, Soldiers home

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

“First to fight for the right and to build the Nation’s might” is definitely not a part of any normal lullaby.

But when you’re the daughter of a Soldier, lullabies are a bit different.

Six-year-old Katie Chandler has often drifted off to sleep to the lyrics of the Army Song sung by her father, Maj. Vernon Chandler, who is the executive officer for the state Recruiting and Retention Command. By the time Katie was three years old, she knew the song by heart.

“Proud of all we have done, fighting till the battle’s won,” is a definitely poignant line of the song considering the year the Chandlers recently endured.

Major Chandler was one of 16 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who made up “Team Dragon,” which deployed to Afghanistan in December 2007 to assist in the on-going Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team (ANA-ETT) effort.



Photo by David Nore

During a December 2007 send-off for her father and his fellow Soldiers, Katie, then only five years old, volunteered to sing the Army Song. Katie said she wanted to sing “for my daddy and all the Soldiers.”

During Chandler’s deployment Katie continued to practice, mostly by singing along with her favorite country singer, Taylor Swift. “She has her Taylor Swift CD in the truck and she bellows it out in the back seat,” said Chandler. “She knows all the words to every song.”

Although she had Taylor Swift to keep her busy during the day, Katie missed her father’s lullabies at night.

“When he was gone, sometimes she would ask me to sing the Army Song, the National Anthem and any other patriotic song I could think of before she went to bed,” said Lisa Chandler, Katie’s mother.

After a long year, Chandler’s deployment was near its end and Katie was asked if she would once again sing the Army Song to welcome the Soldiers home during a ceremony in Lincoln. She quickly said yes.

As the Dec. 11 welcome home ceremony drew to a close, Col. Kevin Neumann, commander of Team Dragon, called on Katie to sing the Army Song as she had done prior to their deployment. Katie stood in front of the Soldiers, their families and other distinguished guests and belted out the Army Song, with her father at her side.

“I’m extremely proud of her,” said Chandler. “She wanted to do it. She’s always been patriotic without any spurring from either one of us. She’s always been very supportive, even at such a young age...she loves Soldiers.”

Katie’s version of the Army Song has gained her quite a bit of notoriety. Other Soldiers have expressed their appreciation to Chandler. Katie can even be seen on the internet.

“Part of it is on YouTube,” said Chandler. It turns out one of the Patriot Guard riders put a video on YouTube that includes a little snippet of Katie singing, he said.

With her father home from his deployment, the patriotic lullabies are sure to resume.

“And the Army Goes Rolling Along.”



Photo by David Nore

Let The Celebration Begin: A crowd of friends and family members break into loud cheers as a Nebraska Army National Guard CH-47 “Chinook” helicopter carrying members of “Team Dragon” lands at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Dec. 11. The Soldiers carried by the helicopter were returning to Nebraska and a reunion with their families and friends after serving for a year in Afghanistan.

TEAM DRAGON

continued from page 1.

“The first helicopter is only carrying the bags. The Soldiers are about 10 minutes behind.”

Loved ones - especially children - were not deterred, however, and continued to file outside to ensure they were the first to welcome their Soldier home.

Marge Payer, the wife of Command Sgt. Maj. John Payer, and her daughter Jill, 13, were among those who were waiting anxiously for their Soldiers’ return.

“It’s a reunion back with your husband and it’s a beautiful thing,” she said. “Just happy to be back together again.”

“We’ll be able to see him every day,” added Jill. “He’ll be home for Christmas.”

According to Payer, her family marked the days of the deployment by creating a construction paper chain with each link signifying a day that their Soldier was gone. Payer said she had the honor of adding the last link to the chain to mark the last day of separation.

Sixteen members of the Nebraska Army National Guard, code named “Team Dragon,” were mobilized for duty in December 2007 under the command of Col. Kevin Neumann. The Soldiers came from a variety of units from across Nebraska to create the Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team (ANA-ETT) and were responsible for providing training mentorship to members of the newly forming Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police Force.

Among those who gathered at the Nebraska Guard air base to welcome Team Dragon home was Janelle Marr, whose husband is Capt. Drew Marr. Janelle, who stood with her two children, C.J., eight, and Kenzie, five, likened her husband’s return to starting anew.

“I hate to sound hokey, but it’s like the first day of the rest of our lives,” said Janelle. “It’s like a new beginning.”

C.J., who sported a shirt proclaiming, “Warning! My Dad is home and I will run you over to get to him,” was ready to have another male in the family again. Without his father there, in public, “I have to go in the girl’s bathroom,” said C.J.

Kenzie quickly ticked off the things that she missed doing with her dad the most: “Going to the water park with him in the summer and jumping on the trampoline.” She added that as soon as she saw her dad she was going to go at him like a “flying monkey” and give him a tight, tight hug.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

A Year In The Making: Five-year-old Kenzie Marr gets a welcome home kiss from her father Capt. Drew Marr after he returned home Dec. 11 from a year-long deployment to Afghanistan where he helped train the new Afghan National Army and police force.

Moments passed until once again the “thump, thump, thump” sounds of an approaching helicopter were heard. This time there was no doubt it was the Soldiers.

The lumbering Chinook landed and rolled to its parking spot, nearly blowing over some of the smaller guests with its rotor wash. With the rear cargo door facing the crowd, it slowly lowered to the delighted cheers of family, friends and guests.

After what must have felt like an eternity to family and friends, the 16 Soldiers filed out of the Chinook, shook the hands of distinguished guests and then quickly found their families and friends for a long overdue welcome home.

After Command Sgt. Maj. John Payer reunited with his family, the excitement of what this day meant was palpable. “It’s real important,” said Payer. “The families all out here to see us...that’s what makes us tick when we’re over there.”

“Coming home to them is a truly special moment for all of us,” Payer added.

Capt. Drew Marr echoed Payer’s comments, adding: “This day means everything. We all came home...that’s the important part. We’re all here.”

Kenzie Marr had said she was going to give her father a “monkey hug” and she was able to accomplish her mission.

“I got a huge ‘monkey hug,’” said Marr. “It was wonderful. You just can’t beat it.”

Following the family reunions, a formal ceremony was held to officially welcome the members of Team Dragon home. Among those who spoke was Brig. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, who thanked the Soldiers for their service.

While working with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police Forces, “you made a tremendous impact on their professionalism and their ability to lead their country into the future,” said Kadavy.

Neumann, commander of “Team Dragon,” addressed the crowd with words of thanks to the Soldiers and hope for the future in Afghanistan.

“Words can’t express how thankful we are that we all made it back together and in one piece,” said Neumann. “Our mission is complete and I am confident we have left Afghanistan a more secure and better place than it was when we arrived.”

As Neumann’s last order of business, he called upon six-year-old Katie Chandler, daughter of Maj. Vernon and Lisa Chandler, to sing the Army Song, just as she had a year earlier when “Team Dragon” deployed.

Then, with the year-long deployment behind them, “Team Dragon” stood at attention as Command Sgt. Maj. John Payer took charge and belted the words that they and their families had so longed to hear: “Team Dragon, dismissed.”

Wii-habilitation

Guard donation to be used by hospital to study popular gaming system's use in rehab program

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

One of the most popular home gaming systems around today may have found an application for Soldiers and Airmen who have suffered injuries requiring intensive rehabilitation.

On Feb. 13, the Nebraska National Guard presented Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln, Neb., with a check for \$4,000 earmarked to purchase Nintendo Wii Fit systems to enable ground-breaking research into the application of the popular video game system as an in-home physical rehabilitation tool.

"We have expensive equipment in the rehab hospital," said Marsha Lommel, president and chief executive officer for Madonna. "But when people go home they don't have access to that equipment."

Along with civilian patients, Madonna serves Soldiers and Airmen from Nebraska and Iowa who have injuries requiring rehabilitation. The story of one such Soldier brought the attention of Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson to Madonna. Nelson and Maj. Gen. Robert Bailey, deputy adjutant general for the state of Nebraska, met with the leaders of Madonna and discussed ways the Nebraska National Guard could help.

After discussion between Madonna and the Nebraska National Guard, the deci-



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Wii-search: Judith Burnfield, Ph.D. P.T., director of the Institute for Rehabilitation Science and Engineering at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln, Neb., demonstrates a muscle and skeletal rehabilitation research tool on Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Birch, state command sergeant major. The Nebraska National Guard donated \$4,000 to Madonna to assist in research on the possible benefits of the Nintendo Wii Fit system for home use by rehabilitation patients.

sion was made to donate the money specifically for the Wii systems. The money comes from an earlier \$15,000 donation to the Nebraska National Guard from Tri-West Healthcare Alliance.

"They had this idea of using the Wii system and doing some research to see if those can be used by people that were

receiving care," said Bailey.

According to Madonna's proposal for the distribution of donated funds, two Wii systems will be purchased. The first system will be deployed in the day room for therapeutic use by outpatients. While patients wait between therapy sessions, they will be encouraged to use the Wii

systems to practice skills while having some fun. Data will then be collected on the benefits of the Wii.

The second Wii Fit system, and the remainder of the money, will be used specifically for research purposes within Madonna's Institute for Rehabilitation Science and Engineering. The researchers will explore necessary adaptations to the pressure and motion sensor controllers to ensure usability for disabled patients and incorporate the data into a research study on the usefulness of the Wii Fit system for clients recovering from injuries.

Madonna is on the cutting-edge with research on the use of the Wii Fit system in rehabilitation and officials hope the donation by the Nebraska National Guard will lead to future grants to expand their research for home use of the Wii Fit in rehabilitation.

"We know of no one who is doing the kind of research we are doing in our gait and motion lab to look at the physiological effects of using the Wii," said Lommel.

The union between Madonna and the Nebraska National Guard aims to provide injured Soldiers and Airmen with the best care possible.

"It means a lot to me," said Lommel. "They deserve the very best care."

"We formed a great partnership," said Bailey. "All of us are looking for ways that we can contribute to the health care... for our returning warriors."

Nebraska Army National Guard truck drivers prepare for next overseas mission

By Capt. Andrew J. Nelson
Staff Writer

A scene repeated many times during the past decade occurred again Feb. 7 at the Penterman Armory in Lincoln.

Soldiers walking around carrying brown folders labeled "deployment file." Others sitting in rows of chairs chatting with each other or talking on cellular phones, waiting for an opening at desks under signs labeled, "finance," "chaplain" and "educational services" to be asked about their health, their families, their insurance.

About 140 Soldiers of the 1195th Transportation Company from Kearney, Lexington and McCook went through Soldier Readiness Processing - SRP - on Feb. 6-7 at the National Guard air base in Lincoln. The unit is expected to deploy to Iraq later this year.

It's the second time the unit has been mobilized for an Iraq-related mission. About 70 percent of the 1195th's Soldiers have been deployed before.

It's easier for those experienced Soldiers to go through SRP and other pre-mobilization training, said Sgt. 1st Class Martin Misener, the 1195th's readiness sergeant. They know it's important, but also routine and something that needs to be done.

"They won't be lollygagging around," Misener said. "They'll get right on the training tasks." The Soldiers who have deployed are "really adamant about training the people who haven't," Misener said, and "making sure they are prepared to go."

Younger Soldiers might get frustrated with waiting during SRP, Misener said, but the veterans are there to tell them it has

only begun. Waiting is a way of life during mobilization and during war. In theater, the Soldiers will find themselves waiting all the time for any number of things: Topick cargo up, to drive through a gate, for the Xbox to arrive.

"You go 100 mph and then you'll wait some more," he said.

One of the Soldiers passing on his experience to greener troops is Sgt. Christian Norseen of rural Loup City. The 26-year-old truck driver deployed with the unit to Kuwait in March 2004, back when it was the Company B, 735th Main Support Battalion.

"They ask me what it's like and I tell them the best that I can," he said. "But you can't really explain it until you experience it."

Pfc. Ashley Nanfito, 20, of Kearney is one of those who will soon begin her first deployment. She said the veterans freely share pointers on things like convoy security and battle drills.

"Most of my friends say it is not that bad," she said. "You get used to daily life. It goes by quicker than you think."

The first time the unit deployed, Norseen had only a few weeks notice. This time, he and the rest of the unit's members had more than a year.

"It's a lot easier," he said. "But at the same time it weighs on your mind... Before, you didn't have to think about it and worry about it."

The 1195th is expected to mobilize in April, going first to Camp Roberts, Calif., before moving to Fort Stewart, Ga., said 1st Lt. Jessica Hoelting, the 1195th's executive officer. After that, the Soldiers expect to go to Iraq with a mission of providing security for convoys; they should return to Nebraska after about a year.

Tie A Yellow Ribbon

Nebraska's military families to receive additional support through newly created 'Yellow Ribbon Reintegration' program

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

Nebraska National Guard families now have another resource to assist them throughout the entire deployment cycle.

Called the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, it is designed to augment the current family program by hosting informational events and activities, while also providing referrals and community outreach services to Guardsmen and their families.

"The goals are building ready, resilient families and supporting them throughout the deployment cycle," said Jeanne Felker, Nebraska Yellow Ribbon coordinator. Working along with Felker are Lisa Chandler, Tiffany Albanez and Alisia LaMay, all Yellow Ribbon support staff.

Felker knows firsthand the issues a family goes through during a deployment. Her husband, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Felker, has been deployed twice.

"Helping other people helps me. I enjoy working with military families... because I understand what families go through," said Felker. "I have a passion for getting out there and letting our military families know there are resources available to help them build a bridge over deployment."

Chandler, who also knows what families go through during a deployment, echoed Felker's comments.

"I just want to serve the

families and the Soldiers," said Chandler. "I am a military spouse and that is where my heart is."

"It's about serving the families and the Soldiers," she added.

The Yellow Ribbon program is designed to be a "proactive information conduit" for families throughout the deployment cycle, according to Felker.

During pre-deployment, program specialists will help prepare service members and families for the rigors of military service while helping increase the family's resilience.

Once the service member has deployed, Yellow Ribbon activities and events will focus on resource awareness and skill building opportunities; this knowledge enables families to better cope with the challenges and stresses associated with separation. Felker said in addition to the existing Family Program activities and programs that support families during deployment, Yellow Ribbon events will be made available at 30 to 60 days after the service member has mobilized and then again at 30 to 60 days prior to homecoming.

When the service member returns from deployment, the Yellow Ribbon program events focus on reconnecting the service member with the family and community, while assisting with reintegration into civilian life.

The Yellow Ribbon Program has been instituted to ensure both families and Soldiers are aware of all the resources avail-

able to them.

According to Chandler, the resources available to Soldiers and their families is an ever expanding list. She said a few examples of what the Yellow Ribbon program provides are information, services, referral and proactive outreach to Soldiers, spouses, employers and youth.

"It's about going a little further into it than the initial mobilization and the traditional reunion," said Felker.

According to Felker, the Yellow Ribbon program helps give service members peace of mind while they are deployed.

"Knowing there are resources available for your family allows the service member to focus on the mission," she said.

"A Soldier who knows that their family is being well taken care of is a more effective Soldier," said Chandler. "If we can be there to put their mind at ease knowing that their family has resources back here, they can do their duty and their mission."

Felker said she feels fortunate to work in a state like Nebraska where a strong Family Program exists and communities are so supportive of military members and their families.

"I feel that the inception of the Yellow Ribbon Program is both the National Guard and the Department of the Defense's way of recognizing the sacrifices that our Guard Families make in the name of freedom," said Felker.



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Going, going, going...

The National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., said goodbye to a 50-year-old icon when the base water tower was taken down in late January and early February. The tower was removed by Spiral Solutions of Omaha, Neb., from Jan. 27 - Feb. 9. The motto, 'Your Very Best' was painted on the tower after one of the workers heard Col. Rick Evans III use those words to describe his expectations of the 155th Air Refueling Wing during its operational readiness inspection. The tower thus served its final days as a morale booster for the members of the Air Guard unit participating in the inspection. The tower was removed to make way for additional construction projects on the base.

INSPECTIONS continued from page 1.

our reputation is well-deserved," said Evans.

He added that "the Air Force's refocus on the nuclear mission made this perhaps the highest-visibility of the two inspections."

On the conventional side, the inspector general indicated that the 155th ARW is "an extremely motivated combat-ready wing with strong leadership."

"That statement says a lot about the quality of our people and how they perform under pressure," said Evans.

Evans added that "it was most impressive to see that the 155th ARW was rated 'Satisfactory' or higher in every major graded area and sub-area on both inspections. This is a clear indication that the wing was up to the inspection challenge and is also mission-ready across the board."

The late January inspections were the first time the 155th ARW received back-to-back nuclear and conventional inspections since it converted to the KC-135R Stratotanker mission in the mid-1990s.

The unit's last conventional ORI was in April 1996 when approximately 370 Nebraska Air Guardsmen deployed to the Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Miss.

In 1996 the unit was paired with the 121st ARW from Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base, Ohio, a partnership that was renewed for this year's ORI.

Evans said working with the 121st ARW again was beneficial "because we were very familiar with our primary partner."

Both the 155th ARW and 121st ARW started their inspections on Jan. 21 when teams of AMC inspectors arrived at both bases to conduct the nuclear ORI.

For the 155th ARW, this was the unit's third nuclear inspection since converting to the KC-135, and first since November 2002.

According to an Air Force News Service article, "the inspection tests every aspect of a wing's nuclear surety program... this includes the examination of everything and everyone, from character and abilities to safe weapons handling, accountability, management and administration."

Both the Nebraska and Ohio units both received passing grades on the nuclear surety inspection, results that attracted attention at the highest level of the Air National Guard.

"I am extremely pleased with the results of these inspections," said Lt. Gen. Bud Wyatt, director of the Air National Guard. "The skill and dedication displayed by our Airmen at the 121st and 155th Air Refueling Wings



Carrying The Load: A member of the 155th Air Refueling Wing moves luggage after arriving in Gulfport, Miss. for the operational readiness inspection.

reflect the professionalism our entire Air National Guard team demonstrates every day."

"Supporting the Air Force nuclear enterprise is just one of the important missions the Air Guard is committed to fulfilling," he said. "These inspections validate the capability of the Air Guard to execute our nation's most critical missions."

After the nuclear inspections were complete, the 155th and 121st ARWs joined up at Gulfport CRTC for the combined ORI, starting on Jan 25.

During the ORI, the 155th ARW was inspected in many different areas, starting with the its ability to respond to a contingency deployment tasking by deploying people, cargo and aircraft to a simulated forward operating base.

At the forward base the 155th ARW joined up with the 121st ARW and members from the Air Force Reserve's 88th Aerial Port Squadron and 459th Logistics Readiness Squadron to form the 902nd Air Expeditionary Wing.

Together, members of the 902nd AEW prepared to defend the base against attacks while supporting 24-hour contingency flying operations. 155th ARW members were mostly assigned to the night shift, while the 121st ARW covered the day shift.

The units were then tested with a variety of simulated ground and air attacks and other disasters. Evaluations centered on the unit's ability to survive attacks and then recover the base so that it could continue operating tankers in support of combat operations.

The final phase consisted of tearing down the base and safely redeploying all personnel, cargo and airplanes back to Lincoln within 48 hours.

The 155th ARW deployed a total of 312 people and approxi-



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

What's The Plan?: (From left) Col. Adam Dabrowski, Col. Richard Evans, Lt. Col. Carl Tesch and Col. Keith Schell form a plan of action after "bugging out" of their work center in response to a simulated attack during the 155th Air Refueling Wing's operational readiness inspection in January at Gulfport, Miss.



Sand-bagger: Master Sgt. Scott Spady helps move sandbags to fortify buildings during the 155th Air Refueling Wing's operational readiness inspection in Gulfport, Miss., in January.

mately 53 tons of cargo to Gulfport, Miss. This was the unit's second largest deployment ever, following only the 1996 ORI deployment.

According to Evans, it was extremely important for the unit to do well during the inspections.

"It's one thing to assess yourself and your organization and think you're on the right track," he said. "It's more valuable to have an outside party come in, assess you against established standards and tell you that you're on the right track."

"That's exactly the feedback we received from the AMC IG team," Evans said.

Evans said the inspectors were particularly impressed with the Nebraska Guardsmen's attitude throughout the inspections.

"I think the IG team chief's comments told us what's important: 'Wing personnel were highly motivated and well prepared for these inspections... the 155th ARW is clearly a combat-ready wing who's ready to meet any mission tasking.'"

Evans said along with receiving passing grades, the 155th ARW also takes away a clearer



This Is My Rifle! Tech. Sgt. Mark Groves gets training on clearing a weapon from Tech Sgt. David Schmidt during the operational readiness inspection. Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing were tested on their ability to deploy and function in a combat scenario.

understanding of how to best support assigned missions under difficult conditions.

"We were told that the IG team's mission is 'to improve readiness and capabilities through inspections.'" Evans said.

"There is absolutely no doubt that the 155th is a better organization due to going through the inspection process."

Evans noted that the intense inspection preparations were extremely valuable in two ways.

First, he said, "solid preparation resulted in the wing passing both inspections."

"Secondly, and more importantly, our combat readiness has increased. Our members are now more familiar with everything they need to do to safely deploy and effectively operate in a demanding wartime environment."

"The challenge now is to maintain our skills at a high level," added Evans.

Evans also noted that "it clearly takes a team effort to succeed in any big endeavor and that was the case during these inspections."

In fact, he added, the IG team chief highlighted "superb teamwork" as strength within the wing. "It took all 900 members of the wing working together to succeed and the IG team validated that our teamwork is solid across the board," said Evans.

The 155th doesn't have much time to enjoy its inspection success. The unit will now undergo a three-day Environmental, Safety and Occupational Health Compliance Assessment Management Program evaluation, known as an ESOHCAMP, in mid-March.

Striped History

■ Today's NCOs share history of service, leadership stretching back to earliest days of United States

(Editor's Note: The following was taken from the Department of the Army's Year of the NCO Website at www4.army.mil/yearofthenco)

Revolutionary War & Early United States (1775-1840)

The history of the American Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) began in 1775 with the birth of the U.S. Army.

The U.S. NCO did not copy the British. He, like the U.S. Army itself, blended traditions of the French, British and Prussian armies into a uniquely American institution.

As the years progressed, the American political system, disdain for the aristocracy, social attitudes, and the vast westward expanses further removed the U.S. NCO from his European counterparts and created a truly American NCO.

During the early years of the American Revolution, little standardization of NCO duties or responsibilities existed.

In 1778, during the long, hard winter at Valley Forge, Inspector General Friedrich von Steuben standardized NCO duties and responsibilities in his Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States.

Among other things, this work set down the duties and responsibilities for corporals, sergeants, first sergeants, quartermaster sergeants, and sergeants major, which were the NCO ranks of the period. It also emphasized the importance of selecting quality Soldiers for NCO positions.

The development of a strong NCO Corps helped sustain the Continental Army through severe hardships to final victory.

From the American Revolution to World War II, the non-commissioned officer received his promotion from the regimental commander.

Entire careers were often spent within one regiment. If a man was transferred from one regiment to the next he did not take his rank with him. Without permanent promotions of individuals, stripes stayed with the regiment.

In 1821 the first reference to non-commissioned officer chevrons was made by the War Department.

A General Order directed that sergeants major and quartermaster sergeants wear a quartered chevron on each arm above the elbow; sergeants and senior musicians, one on each arm below the elbow; and corporals, one on the right arm above the elbow.

The chevron went through a series of changes between 1840 and 1860. In 1847 the chevron was worn in the inverted "V." A

few years later it was turned point down in the "V." Epaulets only were worn with the dress uniform.

Chevrons remained point down until a new uniform regulation in 1902 again placed the point up, where it remains.

In 1825, the first attempt was made to establish a systematic method for noncommissioned officer selection.

The appointment of regimental and company NCOs remained the prerogative of the regimental commander.

Regimental commanders were expected to accept the company commander's recommendations for company NCOs unless there were overriding considerations.

In 1832, Congress added to the ranks of noncommissioned officers, creating the ordnance sergeant. This was a specialized position, with the duties centering on receiving and preserving the ordnance, arms, ammunition, and other military stores of the post to which he was assigned.

In 1840, an effort was made to give the NCO Corps greater prestige by adopting a distinctive sword. The model 1840 NCO sword remains the sword of the NCO Corps and is still used on special ceremonial occasions.

Civil & Indian Wars (1861-1885)

During the Civil War, non-commissioned officers led the lines of skirmishers, which preceded a regiment. Non-commissioned officers also carried the national and regimental colors of their units. This deadly task was crucial to maintaining regimental alignment and aiding commanders in locating units on the battlefield.

The Indian Wars between 1861 and 1885 usually consisted of numerous scattered skirmishes over wide areas. This type of war led to the further enhancement of an NCO's role as a small-unit leader.

Often fighting in small detachments, troops relied heavily on the knowledge and abilities of their NCOs.

In 1885, the first retirement system was established for enlisted men. The system allowed a man to retire after 30 years of service with 75 percent of his active duty pay and allowances.

Advances in technology during the last half of the 19th Century greatly affected the NCO Corps. The Army was forced to compete with industry for technical workers. In 1908, Congress approved a pay bill, which rewarded those in technical fields in order to maintain their services.

A master electrician in the Coast Artillery made \$75-\$84 per month, while an infantry ser-



National Guard heritage painting by Keith Rocco

From Cornrows To Hedgerows: Members of the Nebraska National Guard's 134th Infantry Regiment fight through the hedgerows of Normandy, France, during the pivotal battle of St. Lo in July 1944. The regiment would experience heavy casualties during the battle, causing many Nebraska sergeants to take on high levels of responsibility.



Nebraska National Guard Historical Society photo

Civil War Service: 1st Sgt. Joseph W. Johnson, Company A, 1st Nebraska Veteran Volunteer Cavalry, from Plattsmouth, Neb., poses for a photograph in 1865. Hundreds of Nebraska Soldiers like Johnson would serve in the Civil War, fighting primarily in the Western Theater of Operations.

geant major earned \$25-\$34 per month. The infantry sergeant major made about the same as a sergeant in the Signal Corps (\$34-\$43 per month).

Early 20th Century (1902-1909)

The duties of the non-commissioned officer were further defined during the early 20th Century. The five or six pages of instructions that von Steuben's Regulations had provided in 1778 grew to 417 pages when the Non-commissioned Officers Manual was written in 1909, reflecting the greater complexity and bureaucratization of a modern army.

In 1902, the chevron was turned to what we would today call point up. It also was greatly reduced in size. Though many stories exist as to why the chevron's direction was changed, the most realistic is that it looked better. Clothing had become more form-fitting; indeed, the ten-inch chevron of the 1880s would have wrapped completely around the sleeve of a 1902 uniform.

Post-World War I & the Interwar Years (1930-1948)

Since the Army had given little thought to raising a wartime cadre of NCOs during World War I, it had to default to its traditional method in which officers identified potential NCOs in the ranks.

Training for these men after their selection was completely on-the-job. While this practice worked well in the small Regular

Army and the National Guard where officers had sufficient time to know their men, it could not work as well in the press of organizing, training, and deploying new units when so many of the junior officers had themselves only recently received their commissions.

Thus, many units suffered from inadequate NCO leadership until commanders learned how to identify men who would perform well or Soldiers demonstrated a talent for leadership on the battlefield.

After World War I, Congress reorganized the NCO ranks. Five NCO ranks were established: master sergeant, technical sergeant, staff sergeant, sergeant and corporal. First sergeant became a position comparable in rank to the technical sergeant.

There were 231 vocational skills that could add \$3 to \$35 to the Soldier's monthly pay.

During the late 1930s, technicians were created in enlisted grades three, four and five (NCO ranks of corporal, sergeant and staff sergeant).

To distinguish technicians from NCOs, the former had a "T" placed in the center of their chevrons.

The Army introduced this system in order to provide more promotion opportunities for technical personnel. This system also protected the prestige of NCO ranks because technicians could not hold leadership positions. In 1948, the technician ranks were discontinued, but they would be succeeded by the specialist ranks in 1955.

World War II (1949-1959)
The Army's experience with NCOs during World War II was much like its experience during World War I.

One important difference was that while NCO training was still on-the-job, many wartime units had a lengthy period of training in the United States before deploying overseas, giving many new NCOs invaluable leadership experience. On the other hand, many units spent much more time in combat than dur-

ing the earlier war.

Casualties and other losses forced commanders to watch for potential new NCOs among their men, and these men usually had only their natural leadership talent and combat experience to guide them once promoted.

The creation of the Women's Army Corps during World War II led to women in the NCO ranks for the first time.

In 1945, Congress passed legislation entitling enlisted men with at least 20 years of service, and not more than 29, to be placed on the retired list. They thereupon drew 2.5 percent of their average pay for the six months preceding retirement, multiplied by the number of years of active service. These men remained in the reserve until completion of 30 years of service.

In the immediate post-World War II era, the service for the first time began a systematic effort to improve the training of NCOs. The Army developed a career guidance plan for each stage of an NCO's career.

Across the Army, major commands established schools to provide Soldiers with the training needed to perform effectively in NCO leadership positions.

Leading the way in this field was the postwar constabulary in occupied Germany. The sensitive and decentralized nature of the constabulary's operations required the highest caliber of NCOs.

On Dec. 17, 1949, the first class enrolled in the 2nd Constabulary Brigade's NCO school. Two years later, the school became the Seventh Army Non-commissioned Officers Academy. In 1959, Headquarters, Department of the Army, established the first Army-wide standards for NCO academies.

In addition to NCO academies, the Army encouraged enlisted men to advance their education by other means. By 1952, the Army had developed the Army Education Program to allow Soldiers to attain credits for academic education. This program provided a number of ways for the enlisted man to attain a high school or college diploma.

Korean War & Pre-Vietnam Era (1951-1970)
During the Korean War, the massive expansion of the active Army combined with decisions not to keep draftees and mobilized reserve component Soldiers on active duty for the duration created serious personnel turbulence.

See NCO HISTORY on 9.

NCOS continued from page 1.

the noncommissioned officer corps who trained and mentored me throughout the year.”

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, state command sergeant major for the Nebraska Army National Guard, Nebraska is planning to use the year-long observance to focus attention on the incredible work and contributions that Nebraska's NCOs are making on a daily basis, both at home and abroad. He said it's a long-overdue opportunity.

“For years and years the slogan has always been that NCOs are the backbone of the Army,” said Burch, Feb. 2. “Officers are ultimately responsible for what happens in a unit. They are the commanders that lead units, or the platoon leaders that lead the platoons or the section leaders that lead the sections.”

“But within that command structure is the NCO support channel, which basically has two main functions – that's mission accomplishment and taking care of the Soldiers,” Burch said. “So it's important that we recognize the value that NCOs bring to the operational mission as well as the sustainment of our units. The NCO is who we expect to ‘take care of the day-to-day business’ so our officers can focus on command responsibilities.”

According to Burch, the year will include both formal recognition events as well as a number of informal ones.

For example, he said, two of the Nebraska Army National

Guard's major subordinate commands – the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and the 92nd Troop Command – will host at least two NCO induction ceremonies this year. NCOs will also be recognized during a number of other state events and local events, including the upcoming Best Warrior Competition to be held at Camp Ashland in March.

Burch said the state's NCOs will also have increased opportunities to participate in of civic outreach events to heighten awareness in the civilian communities about the changing roles and responsibilities that sergeants play in today's military.

Burch said his overall goal for the observance is a better understanding – both within the Nebraska Military Department and the entire state of Nebraska – of what NCOs bring to the Guard and the Army as a whole.

“It gives us the opportunity to address the many facets of the NCO's job,” Burch said.

“Accomplishment of the mission has probably been brought to light significantly more during the Global War on Terrorism because we've got (sergeants, staff sergeants and sergeants first class) out there doing such things as serving as convoy commanders.”

Burch said he recently talked with retired Brig. Gen. Jim Murphy about the responsibilities that today's Guard NCOs have. Burch said he asked Murphy if past leaders would've ever had a staff sergeant serve as a convoy commander as staff ser-

geants now commonly do in Iraq.

“He agreed that back in his day, that would've been unheard of,” said Burch. “But we rely on them more now because we know that our NCOs are better prepared than ever before (and they're more professional than ever before.”

“Particularly in the Guard and Reserve, they have so much more to bring to the table than their military training,” Burch said, adding that many sergeants are carpenters, electricians, computer technicians or community and business leaders in their civilian lives. “It probably makes them better adaptive to dealing with situations they might run into in a war-time environment.”

According to Pete Geren, secretary of the Army, the year-long recognition will give leaders throughout the Army the opportunity to educate the American public about what an incredible job NCOs are doing.

“We have many things that we want to accomplish,” said Geren. “One is to just recognize the contributions that our NCOs make – past and present – and recognize them for internal and external audiences. We want to inform the country, inform the Congress and also inform young people about what NCOs do for our Army and help them better understand what an exciting opportunity and a career the choice of being an NCO in the United States Army is.”

(Editor's Note: Army News Service contributed to this article.)



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Leading The Way: Staff Sgt. Nicholas Province listens to instructions as he and other members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Training Team conduct a training exercise at Camp Ashland in May. Sergeants like Province now perform a wide array of leadership roles in today's Army National Guard that would have been unimaginable just a decade earlier.

NCO HISTORY continued from page 8.

By late 1951, many NCO positions were filled by enlisted men with less than two years of service; this situation would only worsen as the war continued. Some of these men did reveal a natural talent for their duties, but while most were diligent, they lacked the expertise provided by lengthy experience and extensive training.

The Army recognized from the start of the war that a partial mobilization would fail to meet the demand for NCOs. Basic Training Centers conducted eight-week leadership training programs for promising recruits, and branch schools ran similar programs.

However, not enough draftees volunteered for the programs — indeed, by 1953, draftees were being involuntarily ordered to leadership courses — and most graduates lacked experience as leaders since they went directly overseas after the course.

Another effort to address the shortage of squad leaders was an eight-week course at the Infantry School for selected graduates of the leadership courses at basic training installations, designed to produce infantry squad leaders for units overseas. This program, however, did not begin until the summer of 1953.

Many units established their own leadership training programs. These courses and programs varied in length and effectiveness depending on the concerns of the commanders who established them and the quality of the instructors assigned to them.

Generally, commanders spoke highly of these programs and some saw them as the only thing preventing the collapse of enlisted

leadership in their units.

In 1958, two grades were added to the NCO ranks. Senior leaders expected that these grades, E-8 (master sergeant) and E-9 (sergeant major), would provide for a better delineation of responsibilities in the enlisted structure. They also hoped that additional grades would help in obtaining and retaining good NCOs.

At this point the NCO ranks were corporal, sergeant, staff sergeant, sergeant first class, master sergeant, and sergeant major. In 1960, Elvis Presley was promoted to sergeant while serving with the 3rd Armored Division in Germany.

In 1963 a comprehensive study of recruit training showed that the quality of NCO instructors at Army training centers was far below that found in the other services.

In response, the Secretary of the Army established a pilot drill sergeant course.

This course would provide NCOs who, for the first time in the history of the Army, were formally prepared to conduct recruit training.

The success of the pilot course resulted in the adoption of the drill sergeant concept at all basic training installations in the Army and the establishment of the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant School.

The program initially was limited to male Soldiers, but in 1972 six NCOs from the Women's

“The goal of the corps of NCOs, whose duty is the day-to-day business of running the Army so that the officer corps has time to command it, is to continue to improve our Army at every turn. We want to leave the Army better than we found it. Regardless of the kind of unit you're in, it ought to be an ‘elite’ outfit because its NCOs can make it one.” — Sgt. Maj. of the Army William G. Bainbridge
Fifth Sergeant Major of the Army

Army Corps became the first female students at the drill sergeant program.

Sept. 11, 2001 to Present Day (2001-Present)

On Sept. 11, 2001, members of the al-Qaeda terrorist network attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon; these acts plunged the United States into a war with Islamic fundamentalists. Seeking to destroy one haven for the terrorists, the United States launched attacks on Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's government, a radical Islamic fundamentalist group known as the Taliban, openly supported the terrorist al-Qaeda organization.

They wrongly assumed that their landlocked country was impenetrable to attack.

In October 2001 the first insertion of Special Forces teams into Afghanistan occurred. Within hours, these teams started assisting the Northern Alliance, an ally of the United States, and directed air strikes against Taliban positions. In the passing days, the teams split into three-man sub-teams to cover a greater area.

As the collapse of the Taliban

began, the Northern Alliance approached the key northern city of Mazar-e Sharif.

By Nov. 5, the Special Forces units and their Northern Alliance allies had readied their assault on Mazar-e Sharif. At a key position in the defense of the city Tangi Gap, the Taliban and their foreign allies massed for a determined fight. However, Special Forces called in devastating air strikes. These air strikes allowed the Northern Alliance to charge forward with horses, foot Soldiers, and troops mounted in trucks to crush the Taliban and foreign forces with ease.

The Taliban and al-Qaeda forces reeled in defeat. On Nov. 13, 2001, Kabul, the capital, fell to the Northern Alliance. The remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces fled the country or sought refuge in the mountains.

After crushing the Taliban in Afghanistan, the United States turned its attention to the unresolved issue of Iraq. In preparing for the second war against Iraq, the United States formed a coalition with Britain, Spain and a number of other nations.

In the opening months of 2003, the 3rd Infantry Division deployed to Kuwait in preparation for the invasion of Iraq. After months of preparation on March 19, 2003, the United States plunged into war against Iraq with devastating air strikes.

On the next day, the 3rd Infantry Division and the Marine

Expeditionary Force streamed across the border and captured the Iraqi oilfields in Rumaila. By the 22nd, the 3rd Infantry Division crossed the Euphrates River streaming northward.

In the days that followed, the Iraqis crumbled without major resistance and the operation slowed due to high winds and dust storms. In Najaf and Nasiriya, Iraqi forces found it impossible to match American Soldiers training and preparation in the use of firepower and technology.

Following the defeat of the Iraqi army, a guerrilla war ensued. Insurgent forces adopted the car bomb as a major means of inflicting carnage.

As the insurrection continued, militia groups took control of many areas and the situation in Iraq deteriorated.

In early 2007, the U.S. responded, with a “surge” of troops, to purge all militia and insurgent groups from Baghdad and other key areas in Iraq. By the end of 2008, this effort proved successful and the situation in Iraq stabilized.

Today, NCOs lead their troops in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. These NCOs continue the history and traditions of those who went before them.

They retain the duties and responsibilities given to them during the American Revolution and the role as a small unit leader received on the Western Plains.

They are leaders that train and prepare their Soldiers for combat as they did in World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm and throughout America's history.



Nebraska National Guard photo

All Smiles: Nebraska's Adjutant General: Maj. Gen. Stanley Heng smiles as he talks on a radio in this undated photo. Heng was remembered as a general who loved visiting with his Soldiers and Airmen during field training exercises.

HENG continued from page 1.

Guard."

Heng was born on Nov. 4, 1937, in Nebraska City, Neb., and grew up on his family farm. He graduated from Nebraska City High School in 1955 and received his bachelor of Arts degree in Human Relations from Doane College, Crete, Neb., in 1987.

He entered military service on Jan. 23, 1956, when he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was assigned to Fort Chaffee, Ark., and Fort Banks, Mass., as a personnel specialist. He was honorably discharged from active duty in November 1957 and joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in March 1958 and was assigned to the 2nd Battle Group, 134th Infantry, in Nebraska City, Neb., attaining the rank of platoon sergeant.

Heng began his full-time employment with the Nebraska National Guard in June 1960, serving in various capacities including administrative supply technician, staff training assistant, department adjutant and secretary to the general staff.

Commissioned in May 1964, Heng was assigned as assistant communications officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 168th Field Artillery Group. He became commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 168th Field Artillery, in March 1966. In March 1968 he was transferred to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment and assigned as headquarters adjutant. He was assigned as company commander, Company C, 2-134th Infantry, in April 1974.

In May 1975 Heng was reassigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment as race relations and equal opportunity officer. He was assigned as assistant director of administration in October 1979.

In May 1980 he was assigned as commander, Headquarters, Command and Control. He was assigned the post of secretary to the general staff, Headquarters, State Area Command in March 1983. In October 1986 he became commandant, Nebraska National Guard Military Academy. He was appointed adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard in June 1987.

Heng was buried with full military honors on Jan. 17 in Lincoln, Neb.

According to Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees, the adjutant general of Oregon who became an adjutant general the same year as Heng and worked with the late general in various capacities, Heng was respected nation-wide.

"I had the great good fortune to work with Stan Heng as an adjutant general, as a senior official at the National Guard Bureau and as a close personal friend," said Rees, who served as acting National Guard Bureau chief several times during Heng's tenure in Nebraska. "His genuine concern for Soldiers and Airmen and his strong belief in the National Guard

marked his outstanding leadership in state and national matters."

"He worked diligently through the hard times of the post-Desert Storm era to preserve the effectiveness of the Nebraska National Guard. He had the vision and courage to take bold steps to dramatically alter troop structure of long standing so that it would fit the needs of the Nebraska for the 21st Century," Rees said.

While serving as adjutant general, Heng was confronted with a number of issues that would ultimately affect the very nature of the Nebraska National Guard.

In the early 1990s, following Desert Shield/Desert Storm and subsequent Defense Department decisions to downsize the American military (including the National Guard,) Heng, like many National Guard leaders across the United States, was faced with difficult decisions. Chief among these issues was how to make the Guard viable for the 21st Century in an era where even the very need for a National Guard was being called into question.

"Long before transformation became a principle in vogue in the United States military, General Heng recognized and provided Nebraska and the nation with the type of force that was useful and relevant," said retired Maj. Gen. Walter Zink, who served under Heng in various capacities during the late general's stint as adjutant general.

One of several major decisions was made in May 1992 when the Nebraska Air Guard was tapped to convert from the RF-4C Phantom II aerial reconnaissance mission to the KC-135R Stratotanker aerial refueling mission.

"The decision to transition from the RF-4C to the KC-135R was very tough, but in the end it was the best decision possible for the Nebraska Air National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Robert Bailey, deputy adjutant for Nebraska.

That decision would result in a new organization – the 155th Air Refueling Wing – which has since served in every major American operation including the bombing campaigns of Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia, Operation Noble Eagle in the United States, and Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom overseas. It would also result in a building boom at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, adding \$58 million in new construction and rehabilitation of the base's aging facilities to meet the new mission's needs.

"General Heng had a unique ability to see the big picture and he clearly took the long view," said Bailey. "Today we have a long-term, secure mission which contributes daily to the U.S. Air Force mission. More people are involved in the mission and we can immediately see Nebraska's important contribution to the defense of America."

"Today's fighter units, across the na-

Late general's family remembers him simply as 'Dad,' 'Grandpa'

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

For many Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen, he was known as "General Heng."

To a few, however, he was simply known as either "Dad" or "Grandpa."

For both groups, however, it was easy to see that the late Lt. Gen. Stanley M. Heng's family meant more to him than mere words could ever fully say.

According to Mark Heng, who served as the family spokesperson following the late general's funeral Jan. 17 in Lincoln, Neb., he will always remember his father as a lovingly committed husband and father.

"My father loved his wife," Heng said. "He was a good man. He was gracious and caring. He really loved his children and grandchildren."

"Dad was always there whenever we needed something," Heng added. "He loved us unconditionally."

Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley Heng served in the military for 45 years, the last 13 of which as the adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard and director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

A few days before his retirement on Dec. 2, 2000, Heng spoke briefly about the philosophy he carried with him throughout his time in the military and the debt of gratitude that he owed his wife, Sharon, for all of the sacrifices she made along the way.

"She was a Soldier," said Heng in 2000, adding that over the course of his 45-year military career his wife had spent more than 1,000 weekends at home on her own. "We are a very close family and I honestly don't think that I cheated them because they were always at the top of my list of priorities."

According to Sharon Heng, the general's wife since October 1959, she

never felt cheated by the times the couple was apart because of military responsibilities. "I never saw it as a sacrifice," she said in a December 2000 *Prairie Soldier* article. "When we got married, Stan was already in the National Guard, so I knew what I was getting into. I knew that he was probably going to make a career out of it, so I just accepted that part of our lives."

"Also, knowing that he was doing work in the Guard was much easier to deal with than if he had been off playing golf or something like that," she said.

Making things easier was an agreement the two made early on that General Heng would always try to come home at night if at all possible.

"It really wasn't as hard as it might sound," she said. "In all those years, I don't think there was ever a time that Stan missed one of our kids' athletic events or dance recitals."

Mark Heng said he and his brother and sister always appreciated that their father was always there for them.

"He was just always there," he said, adding that he also appreciated the commitment his father had made to his home state.

"I know he loved the state of Nebraska," Heng said. "He loved Nebraska and he loved serving the state of Nebraska."

"I think what I'll miss probably the most is the way he treated my mother," Heng added.

That commitment to family and service wasn't lost on others, either. According to Maj. Gen. Raymond Rees, the adjutant general of Oregon who was appointed TAG the same year as Heng, he and his wife developed a strong friendship with Stan and Sharon Heng over the years.

"Stan and Sharon were a great team," said Rees. "Their wit, loyalty and dedication made them an example to all."

tion, are searching for future missions. We have General Heng and the past leaders of the unit to thank for providing stability all these years... and well into the future," Bailey said. "He also taught us to never rest on what is comfortable...to always be looking for opportunity and missions, to insure the viability of the Nebraska Air National Guard well into the future."

For the Army Guard, perhaps the largest single decision Heng made affected the 67th Infantry Brigade. The brigade traced its heritage back to the earliest days of the Nebraska militia through the American Civil War, Plains Indian Wars, the Spanish American War and World War I to World War II where the 134th Infantry Regiment earned numerous laurels during the bloody fighting at St. Lo, France, and in the Ardennes Forest during the Battle of the Bulge.

Following Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield, the Army commissioned a study and found that it needed additional combat service support units, primarily in the transportation and logistical fields.

In December 1997, after the state had already deactivated the 2-134th Infantry and the 1-168th Field Artillery Battalions, Heng announced that the Nebraska Army National Guard would voluntarily participate in Phase I of the Army National Guard's Division Redesign Study by transforming the 67th Infantry Bde. into an area support group.

The Guard's Division Redesign Study had been conducted to develop alternative uses of the Army Guard combat units to enhance the Guard's relevance to the National Military Strategy.

At the time the decision affected over 1,500 state Soldiers, or roughly 40 percent of the Nebraska Army Guard, most of whom were serving in combat arms specialties.

"Our proposal gives us a chance to get in the front row... to be on line to receive

more units with more relevance to the needs of the Army," said Heng at the time of the 1997 decision.

The decision, while painful, offered many different positive aspects. At the time, nearly 95 percent of Nebraska Army Guard units were closed to female membership because of the combat exclusion rule. By changing from a combat-centric force to a combat service support mission, a new generation of women to join the Guard and receive a wide array benefits in communities that had been closed to them before.

Additionally, the decision allowed the affected units to receive new, more modern equipment while also receiving more federal funding for training. Ultimately, that decision would bring a variety of new logistical and transportation units to the Cornhusker state, many of which were the first Nebraska Army National Guard units to deploy into Iraq following the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003.

According to Kadavy, Heng's vision, timely decisions and true caring for the Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard have had a long-lasting impact on the Nebraska Military Department.

"During his career General Heng made a tremendous positive effect on the lives of thousands of Soldiers and Airmen through his leadership, character and compassion," Kadavy said during the Jan. 17 funeral. "He was a genuine compassionate leader. It's who he was each and every day."

Kadavy said the decisions Heng made during his 13-year tenure as adjutant general helped place the Nebraska National Guard into a position that has allowed it to serve exceptionally well during the current, on-going conflict.

"His decisions brought relevant missions and structures and as a result our state and nation are well-served."

"General Heng will surely be missed, but he will never be forgotten."



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On Behalf of a Grateful Nation: Retired Maj. Gen. Walter Zink presents the American flag to Sharon Heng, wife of the late Lt. Gen. Stanley M. Heng who died Jan. 12 after a lengthy illness. Heng served as the Nebraska adjutant general from 1987 - 2000. He was buried in Lincoln, Neb., with full military honors on Jan. 17.

‘He was the heart and soul of the Nebraska National Guard’

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The “heart and soul of the Nebraska National Guard” was laid to rest Jan. 17 when more than 400 family members, friends, former comrades and current Guardsmen gathered at the “Spirit of 1776” armory in Lincoln, Neb., to honor the late Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng, former adjutant general for Nebraska.

“Leaders come in many different forms and it’s easy to say that General Stanley M. Heng was the right leader for the Nebraska National Guard,” said retired Maj. Gen. Walter Zink II, one of several former colleagues who spoke about Heng during the funeral services. “But saying that doesn’t really do justice to General Heng’s leadership qualities.”

“When he became adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, he assessed what the organization needed and applied the leadership principles and qualities to make him the right person to lead the Nebraska Guard,” said Zink.

According to those who knew and worked with Heng early in his career, it was always evident that the Guard officer was destined for bigger and better things.

“I first met Lieutenant Heng the very first year that I came to Nebraska,” said retired Maj. Gen. John Ramey, former commander of the 35th Infantry Division. “It was at Camp Ashland as an instructor for the (Officer Candidate School) class. Lieutenant Heng was our committee chairman, so he was in charge of the rest of us. It didn’t take you very long to look at him and to see that this guy was destined to go much higher in the ranks.”

“It was also a time that I established a friendship with him that was everlasting and never wavered,” Ramey said. “General Heng was a people person. He would never ask anyone to do anything that he would not do himself. General Heng mentored me and sup-

Former adjutant general remembered for his vision, concern for Guardsmen

ported me all the way through my military career and obviously, without his support, I would have never progressed to the levels that I did.”

Another one of those who met Heng at Camp Ashland and developed a lifelong friendship with him was retired Brig. Gen. James Murphy, former assistant adjutant general, Army, for the Nebraska National Guard who now serves as the civilian assistant to the Secretary of the Army. According to Murphy, he too feels fortunate to have been mentored by Heng as a young lieutenant.

“I moved here from Chevy Chase, Md., and didn’t know a person in the state of Nebraska,” said Murphy.

“I hooked up with these two gentlemen (Heng and Ramey)... that was the best move I ever made.”

Murphy said he and Heng would often talk about issues ranging from leadership techniques to Army procedures during their time at Camp Ashland. Heng, Murphy said, was always prepared with an answer, often pulling a manual out of his meticulously cared-for uniform that had the answer they were looking for.

“The Army has had a few slogans over these years. ‘There’s Strong and then there’s Army Strong,’ or ‘Be an Army of One.’ The best one that I thought summed up Stan Heng was, ‘Be All that You Can Be,’” Murphy said. “This will always remind me of Stan.”

“I value all of the hours that I spent with him at Camp Ashland,” he said. “The legacy that General Heng continued was the importance of education and working with the



Farewell: Maj. Douglas Wagner salutes as members of the Nebraska Army National Guard honor guard prepare to fold the flag over the late Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng’s coffin, Jan. 17, in Lincoln, Neb.

troops to get that extra 10 percent... be it knowledge, be it leadership or training.”

There were also some lighter moments, said Murphy.

“We as staff were typical lieutenants. I remember many sessions where we spent many moments talking about where we were going to go next. We figured that we were going to be captains for life,” said Murphy. “Later, Stan and I used to laugh about that, ‘This might be as far as we go.’”

According to Zink, probably the biggest key to Heng’s leadership success was his genuine interest in his Soldiers and Airmen.

“What is indelibly etched in my mind is General Heng’s unconditional love of the Soldiers. He thrived in the field or on the base with his Soldiers and his Airmen,” said Zink. “And they all knew it.”

“Whenever General Heng was with his troops, there was always a chemistry that you could almost touch. And because of the example that he set, he grew an outstanding group of leaders, both (noncommissioned officers) and officers,” said Zink. “Just through his example he mentored junior leaders on accepting hard assignments and challenging themselves and their subordinates to perform to the highest standards.”

Along with being a great motivational leader, Heng was



Military Honors: A Nebraska Army National Guard honor guard escorts the casket of the late Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng onto the “Spirit of 1776” armory drill floor as the late general’s family walks behind it, Jan. 17.



Final Goodbye: Sharon Heng, wife of the late Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng, pauses to touch her husband’s coffin at the conclusion of his funeral services, Jan. 17, in Lincoln, Neb.

also a committed family man, said Ramey, who added that the late general seemed to always be interested in how the families of his Guardsmen were doing.

“General Heng was an outstanding Soldier and leader, but he was also a very compassionate person,” Ramey said. “He was concerned about his family’s wellbeing as well as your own relatives.”

“I had many meetings with him over the years as we went through the levels of command – some good and some not so good,” Ramey added. “But, every meeting that we had always started out with, ‘How’s your family?’ He was genuinely concerned. He wanted to know how your family was.”

And the Soldiers knew that compassion and interest was real, said Zink.

“General Heng was first and foremost a family man,” said Zink. “With his wife Sharon, they were proud of their children and grandchildren. And he took great delight in asking about the families of his troops. It was commonplace to see him in the field visiting with a young Soldier or Airman about a new marriage or a new baby or just asking how college was going.”

“Soldiers and Airmen know when a leader is going through the motions. And each of General Heng’s troops knew that his interests were genuine,” he added. “If you look in the dictionary for the definition of Nebraska National Guardsman, you would see a picture of Major General Stanley Heng.”

According to retired Command Sgt. Maj. Tom Shunk, Heng’s last appointed state command sergeant major, the enlisted force knew and trusted that Heng had their best interests at heart.

“General Heng realized that Soldiers’ families were just as important to the success of the National Guard as new units or

updated equipment,” said Shunk, adding that Heng always took in account the effects upon Soldiers’ families and employers before he made a major decision.

“He encouraged the enlisted members to lead,” Shunk said, adding that Heng understood the skills that many enlisted Soldiers and Airmen brought to the organization. “General Heng also encouraged Soldiers to seek out new skills and attend schools needed to enhance their potential.”

Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, current adjutant general for Nebraska, said that dedication has indeed had a lasting impact, giving the Nebraska National Guard the skills, expertise and moral compass it has needed to tackle the on-going challenges of the Global War on Terrorism.

“During his career General Heng made a tremendous positive affect on the lives of thousands of Soldiers and Airmen through his leadership, character and compassion,” said Kadavy. “He was a genuine, compassionate leader... it’s who he was each and every day.”

“Additionally, he was the heart and soul of the Nebraska National Guard during those 13 years,” he added, saying that the decisions he made have had long-lasting impact throughout the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard.

Zink agreed, saying that Heng’s legacy continues on today.

“As the Nebraska National Guard – Army and Air – achieve successes in the Global War on Terrorism, much of the foundations for those successes comes from the leadership and examples set by General Stanley Heng,” said Zink.

“Still today, we stand on his shoulders. That is the legacy that will continue to be felt across our formations for a long time to come.”

Unit helps rewrite book on detainee care in Iraq

■Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers make huge impact in Iraq during year-long medical deployment

By Lt. Col. Anita Curington

Special for the *Prairie Soldier*

On Oct. 2 2007, the Nebraska Army National Guard's 110th Medical Evacuation Battalion was re-designated as Task Force (TF) 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion (MMB) and alerted for deployment.

It was a moment when the reality of the upcoming deployment to Iraq really began to sink for the members of the Lincoln-based organization.

"I was happy to be deployed

with people

I knew, which provided a good sense of community," said 1st Lt. Bernadette Brown-Clerk on her first impression after being alerted for the deployment.

Another 110th Soldier, Spc. Gary Sons, added: "To tell you the truth, I wasn't scared or nervous. I was ready. I expected it to happen soon anyway."

Battalion officials soon learned that their mission was to establish Joint Detainee Healthcare Operations at Theater Internment Facilities/Reconciliation Centers (TIFRC) in order to provide full spectrum level II health service support and force health protection for detainees and coalition forces in accordance with established standards of medical care and international guidelines.

This work would ultimately support the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of detainees back into Iraqi society.

The first task for the unit was to reorganize and convert into a Multifunctional Medical Battalion.

The Multifunctional mission incorporated the missions that were once accomplished by three different types of medical battalions: Evacuation, Medical Logistics and Area Medical Support.

Concurrently, the unit began pre-mobilization station training coordination with both First Army and the Nebraska Army Guard's Pre-Mobilization Training Assistor Element.

From Oct. 25 - Nov. 15, 2007, the unit's medics attended mandatory military occupational specialty pre-deployment training at Camp Bullis, Texas. Following this training, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, TF 110, attended five days of pre-training at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb.

According to 1st Lt. Joseph Mangiameli, the Nebraska training facility made a huge impact on the unit's readiness. "Greenleaf is a fantastic asset to the state and its Soldiers," he said.

The Greenleaf training included individual weapons qualifications, Army Warrior Task training and driver qualifications. The Nebraska Soldiers also attended numerous briefings while completing on-line courses required prior to overseas deployment.

"Although many objectives were accomplished at Greenleaf Training Site, one which proved to be invaluable was knocking



Running Tough: Maj. Thad Fineran and other 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion Soldiers participate in the 'Army 10-Miler' race while stationed in Iraq.

out all of the paperwork for our security clearances," said Staff Sgt. Dennis Hartman.

The unit mobilized into federal service on Dec. 1, 2007, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 07-09 under Task Force 134 (Detainee Operations) and the 62nd Medical Brigade.

The unit reported to its mobilization station at Fort Lewis, Wash., on Dec. 4, 2007, where the 110th MMB linked up with its subordinate unit, the 996th Area Support Medical Company (ASMC) from the Arizona Army National Guard.

While at Fort Lewis, the Guard Soldiers accomplished such tasks as Soldier readiness processing, central issue facility equipment processing, mandatory briefings, weapons qualifications, combat training, Army Warrior task training, Iraqi language training, land navigation, medical communications for combat casualty care (MC4) training and unit movement operations.

Following a break for the Christmas holiday, the unit began concentrating on such collective tasks as base defense, defeating improvised explosive devices, short-range marksmanship, detainee operations, convoy lanes and the Mission Readiness Exercise (MRE) validation.

TF110 left Fort Lewis the evening of the Jan. 28 and flew from McChord Air Force Base, Wash., to Bangor, Maine. They then flew to Leipzig, Germany, and finally arrived in Kuwait on Jan 30 at 6:20 a.m. local time.

Everyone arriving at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, is required to spend a minimum of 10 days acclimating and preparing for their mission.

"The stay in Kuwait was good. It gave us plenty of time to acclimate. I enjoyed the extra time to get a good workout program going," said Spc. Heather Davey.

While at Camp Buehring, the unit completed more required training including company-level counter-insurgency training, staff enabler training, counter-IED awareness training, counter-remote control IED electronic warfare (CREW) training and some more medical training.

And then it was time to move north into Iraq.

"When first entering Iraq, all I had for a base of knowledge was what I had heard in the media, which was, 'All of them (Iraqis) hate us, they don't want us here and they all want you dead.' I've found this to be most untrue. Most of them want the same thing



Photos courtesy of the 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion

At Least It's A Dry Heat: Sgt. 1st Class Kristine Loeck and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ronald Helton hold up a thermometer that reads 130 degrees during the long, hot summer months of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion spent at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

we want: Peace and an end to the war," said Spc. Michael Rieke, recalling his thoughts about arriving into Iraq.

The unit arrived at Camp Liberty in Baghdad, Iraq, on the morning of the Feb. 19, 2008.

The unit was originally to be stationed in Ramadi, but a decision to change the final destination from Ramadi to Baghdad was made as a result of TIFRC construction being behind schedule. Because of that, detainee healthcare wasn't needed yet.

The unit command post became operational within two days of arriving and began its left seat/right seat training with members of both the 62nd Medical Brigade and TF 31st Combat Support Hospital (CSH).

The 31st CSH was located with one of the Theater Internment Facilities (TIF) near the Baghdad International Airport. Nebraska Soldiers soon began working directly with TF31 to provide healthcare to the detainees while also providing such services as patient administration, pharmacy, dental and medical logistics.

Once TF 110 MMB completed its LS/RS training, the Nebraska Soldiers assisted other units within the Iraqi theater by providing mental health support to the 31st CSH in Bucca, providing medical maintenance and patient administration support to the 86th CSH in Baghdad and providing administrative support to the 261st Medical Battalion in Balad.

To accomplish this, TF110 detainee operations liaison officers continuously traveled to Ramadi and Taji to work through medical issues associated with the construction and planning of the TIFRCs. The staff also visited with the other two MMBs in Iraq to "crosstalk" within their functional areas, compare operating procedures and to discuss best practices and lessons learned.

TIFRC operations continued to fluctuate throughout the deployment following Gen. David Petraeus' decision to off-ramp Ramadi as a TIFRC location in June 2008.

The focus of TF110 shifted to the Taji TIFRC, which was slated to open in December 2008, and to future detainee medical planning.

"People remained positive



Patch Ceremony: Lt. Col. Anita Curington places the patch of the 62nd Brigade onto the shoulder of Staff Sgt. Dennis Hartman during a patching ceremony at Camp Liberty, Iraq. Also pictured are: Command Sgt. Maj. Randy Stucker (far left), Spc. Ross Hartman (center) and Spc. Gary Sons (far right.)

about it and the Force Health Protection section continued to make plans for the healthcare facilities," said Davey.

A team of four Nebraska personnel visited Camp Bucca for 10 days to learn about the medical systems there in comparison to the systems in place at Camp Cropper. TF110 then developed new initiatives.

One new initiative was a program of instruction for the medics that begins at pre-mobilization and continues until redeployment. The second initiative was a Nurse Case Management program that assigns detainees with chronic medical conditions to a nurse for education and patient monitoring.

"There appeared to be a lack of continuity of care. I saw Nursing Case Management as a means to provide that continuity along with several other benefits," said Mangiameli, who was responsible for the initial program concept.

A third initiative involved the testing and implementation of an electronic medical encounter system into the wire medicine program while a fourth involved standardizing detainee healthcare and doctrine.

TF110 reviewed over 140 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) resulting in the development of a theater-wide comprehensive and standardized detainee medical care SOP, a detainee leader's guide, a wire medicine SOP, and the algorithm-directed troop medical care guide for patient screening. TF110 also determined the correct manning for future TIFRC medical units coming into theater.

These products assisted in

doctrinal writing for detainee medical operations that was submitted to the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) and will be added into leader's guides, field manuals and mission training plans.

TF110 was called upon in September 2008 to provide an independent assessment team to inspect detainee healthcare operations at Camp Bucca and Camp Cropper. Three members of TF110 spent the month at Camp Bucca inspecting wire medicine operations, compound treatment rooms and CSH operations.

"I helped inspect facilities, audit records and folders, and interview detainees. It was hands-on proof of our counter-insurgency efforts within the healthcare field. Overall, the trip was rewarding and I am glad to have had the experience," said Staff Sgt. Andrew Singaas, part of the Independent Assessment Team.

After completing the inspection of Camp Bucca, home to over 18,000 detainees, the team returned north to inspect Camp Cropper while also assisting the 328th CSH. TF 110 then provided officials at the Fort Lewis-based First Army with a package of specific training requirements for detainee healthcare operations and scenarios.

TF110 redeployed in mid-November back to Fort Sill, Okla., and after completing de-mobilization activities, returning to Lincoln, Neb., in time for Thanksgiving activities.

(Editor's Note: Lt. Col. Anita Curington was the commander of the 110th MMB during its year-long deployment.)

First Seeds

■Nebraska Agricultural Development Team begins year-long mission helping Afghan farmers grow better futures

By Lt. Col. Shelly Herrod

Executive Officer, ADT Forward 28

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – The Nebraska Army National Guard Agribusiness Development Team hit the ground running once it arrived at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan late last autumn.

Because the unit did not fall in on another ADT, it was without a lot of the equipment to become mission capable on its own.

That didn't stop the Nebraska Guard Soldiers, however. The unit immediately linked up with the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) and Task Force Warrior SECFOR (Security Force) for some right seat rides that afforded the ADT's Agricultural team and SECFOR leadership an opportunity to become familiar with the ADT's areas of operations and a chance to meet the local leaders and other representatives.

By December the unit finally received the equipment necessary to conduct its own missions. Since then the unit has conducted 83 missions throughout the ADT's four assigned provinces: Bamyan, Panjshir, Parwan and Kapisa. The total square miles is 9,885.

The team's initial visits entailed KLE (key leader engagements) with village elders, governors, agricultural directors and Directors of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL). The leaders addressed their immediate agricultural needs and concerns within their provinces to the ADT team.

A majority of the concerns addressed drought, lack of irrigation, animal health, disease and immunizations, storage for produce, seed wheat and trellising for grapes. Flooding is an issue in some areas and impacts the yield of certain crops and feed for livestock.

The unit is also working closely with representatives from the USDA, PRT and CMA (cooperative medical assistant.)

According to Col. Mike Johnson, commander of the Nebraska ADT, the team is working to establish the foundation for future Guard ADTs to build upon.

"Our work is just the beginning with plans for ADTs to continue to provide

agricultural support for the next five years," said Johnson. "A team from Kentucky will replace our team upon our redeployment to Nebraska. The project is expanding with a total of seven teams in country and working by this summer."

"We will continue to work to identify short-, medium- and long-term goals needed to improve in the area of agriculture in Afghanistan. We will work hard to complete important projects and insure a seamless hand off to those that follow us," Johnson said. "We will work with the Afghan people to build a better life for their families and help end the constant struggle for them to have enough food."

These local visits are already yielding positive results and providing the ADT with direction regarding the areas of focus for the team. The team has discovered that most of the Afghan farmers who own vineyards do not trellis or prune their vines, allowing grapes to lie on the ground until harvested. This reduces production and profit for local Afghan farmers.

The team is currently working on four CERP (Commanders Emergency Response Program) projects involving demonstration vineyards and grape trellising totalling approximately \$440,000 outside Bagram in the Parwan and Kapisa Provinces.

The grape trellising and one of the demonstration vineyards combine resources and expertise with Roots of Piece, which is designed to provide income for villagers, who are hired for planting, and local suppliers, who provide the equipment, while giving farmers in the surrounding area an opportunity to observe and participate in training sessions on planting, trellis construction, insect management and irrigation.

Another of the ADT's projects involves grape harvest baskets. This project is designed to further support grape growers in the Shamali and Bagram Airfield area of operations by providing heavy duty harvest baskets via the agricultural depots. The results should ensure that more fruit reaches the market in good condition, increasing profits for the grape growers.

The grape basket project is in coordina-



Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Shelly Herrod

Building New Friendships: Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Miller, Nebraska Army National Guard, hands out 'Husker Aid' items to local Afghan children during a stop to check out veterinary field units and agricultural depots in the Parwan Province of east central Afghanistan in December. The 'Husker Aid' items were donated to the members of the Nebraska National Guard's Agribusiness Development Team by Lincoln East High School secretaries.

tion with the ANDS (Afghanistan National Development Strategy) and MAIL ((Ministry of Agricultural, Irrigation and Livestock.) This project is designed to promote horticulture for export while also increasing production for expanding markets and developing human capacity for sustained growth.

Since 55 percent of the families within TF Warriors AO own livestock, the ADT has implemented an animal public health information campaign designed to educate and train the local population on available animal health care services. 28 different posters, pamphlets and printed material will be distributed to provide information on the treatment of diseases in the local language.

Every month a specific topic will be promoted and distributed via posters or pamphlets. The Nebraska team's goal is to provide the people of Afghanistan with a better understanding of the diseases that plague their livestock along with preventive measures and services provided by the VFUs (Veterinary Field Units).

Future projects for the ADT include additional grape plants in Parwan and Jan Quadam and Zinzee Sufi Baba Village, cherry tree and apricot orchards in Panjshir Province and several projects with Albironi University that include land leveling, a windmill, cattle chutes, windmill overflow, skid steer, and stock tanks. The projects total approximately \$850,000.

A new concern is insect infestation, which is affecting the grape vineyards and pomegranate trees. In Southern Tagab

Valley the borer beetle is causing extensive damage to the pomegranate orchards while the cicada bug is affecting the grape vineyards.

The ADT is working to solve this problem in conjunction with a USN Entomologist and local producers regarding a pest management plan.

Johnson recently participated in a radio interview and answered questions at Radio Sada-e-Azadi, also known as Peace Radio, in Jabal Saraj District of Parwan Province. Peace Radio's audience consists of approximately 1.5 million listeners, including Afghans in the provinces of Kapisa, Parwan and Panjshir.

During the interview Johnson discussed the team's mission and upcoming projects. Concerns voiced to Johnson were the inability of the government in the past to understand and alleviate certain crop diseases and survival of the livestock during harsh winter months.

Johnson explained that the ADT is working to identify diseases, teach the farmers what to look for and assist with identifying issues with the livestock. The team is also working toward a program to help provide vaccinations and improved feed for the animals.

The focus for the team is going to include continuation of KLE and monthly meetings with universities and Agricultural Ministers, directors and governors.

The team is already beginning to see progress from its visits and is winning the hearts and minds of the people in Afghanistan.

Middle Easterners' hopes not much different than most Americans' says speaker

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When it comes to defining the goals and concerns of average Middle Eastern citizens, the results are not much different than when attempting to define the goals and concerns of average Americans.

That was one of the messages that Dr. Naser Z. Alsharif brought to the "Spirit of 1776" armory in Lincoln, Jan. 29, when he served as the keynote speaker for the Nebraska Military Department's "Greater Middle East Heritage Celebration."

Alsharif, the associate professor of Pharmacy Sciences at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, said that contrary to popular misconceptions, average Middle Eastern citizens share many dreams with Americans.

Citing a recent survey by the Gallup Organization in which 50,000 Muslims were polled, pol-

sters found that the vast majority of Muslims said their top hopes were for security and democracy.

"When they asked young Muslims, 'What are your hopes for the future?' their number one answer was, 'A good job,'" said Alsharif. "They don't talk about jihad. They don't talk about violence. Their hopes, if you believe this survey, (are to find a good job.)"

During his presentation, attended by Nebraska Military Department employees and local community leaders, Alsharif detailed the rich history of the Middle East and how it actually takes its definition and geographical identity from the 19th Century when England, Russia and other European nations were competing for influence.

Alsharif said the region's history, which includes the stories of early Judaism, Christianity and Islam, has affected the region's political, religious, cultural and societal make-up in many different and often unexpected ways.

Alsharif says he is a case in point. "I happen to be an Arab, a Muslim, an American and a Palestinian," he said.

"Those are very important parts of my nationality; my identity as an individual," Alsharif said, adding that like many naturalized citizens who hale from the Middle East, he is extremely proud to be an American, yet is keenly aware of the issues facing people still living in the Middle East.

"They're proud to be Americans, but they have their issues and they're passionate about it. They want to talk about it," he said. "They're not radical or irrational – they're passionate. And there is a difference."

Alsharif, who along with serving as a professor, is the president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (Omaha Chapter), a member of the Islamic Speaker Bureau (Nebraska) and a board member of the Conference for Inclusive Community (Midlands Region.) He admits that he, like everyone, has personal biases that affect his views of the world that were shaped by his personal background and experiences.

"I am an American because I believe in everything this nation stands for in terms of what the Constitution says this country

represents," he said. "I believe in it strongly and wholeheartedly."

"As a Palestinian – that's the emotional part of me," he added. "The history of my people as Palestinians is a history that has sadly been impacted by our government after the second World War. And it's not easy for me to talk about because I do believe in this country and it stands for, but when it comes to that issue... (I have) many issues to struggle with."

Alsharif said he is also equally proud to be a Muslim and an Arab. Unfortunately, he added, popular media often paints the Middle East with a broad brush, making distinctions that often do not tell the true story.

For example, he said, there is a difference between being a fundamentalist Muslim and being a radical or irrational Muslim.

"If I am a fundamentalist Muslim, then I believe in the fundamentals of Islam," he said. "There's nothing wrong with that."

"Now if I'm a radical or irrational Muslim or Christian or Jew, then I'm in trouble and I should be targeted as far as what are my actions and what are my plans,"

Alsharif said. "But if I'm a fundamentalist Muslim, then I'm proud of that because then I'm a better Muslim."

According to Brig Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general of Nebraska, understanding cultural differences and learning how to accept people as they are and how they act is important in today's age more than ever before. That's why events like the Greater Middle Eastern Luncheon are important because they give opportunities for members of the Nebraska Military Department to learn more about the world around them.

Kadavy said all too often, people want to place people into larger groups rather than dealing with them as individuals.

The Nebraska National Guard, he added, has to rise above that.

"My view is that we judge individuals by deeds, by character and by their heart, not by where they were born or what group they belong to or whether they're male or female," he added.

"Our goal here is to provide opportunities and the quality pursuit of those opportunities and dreams for all."

Army Strong

Nebraska Soldier scores 402 points on physical fitness test

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Staff Photojournalist

When the Army came up with the term, 'Army Strong,' it probably had somebody like Private First Class Holden Isley in mind.

Isley, a member of Lincoln's 1167th Brigade Support Company, set the physical fitness standard at a nearly impossible level to match recently, when he scored a 402 on his final Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) at the end of his Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, S.C.

His score of 402 is believed to be the highest score ever achieved at Fort Jackson.

Sgt. 1st Class Chris Robinson, a drill sergeant with Company E, 313th Infantry Battalion, said Isley's score of 402 crushed the previous mark of 350 and was the highest he or any drill sergeant had even heard of.

A perfect score on the APFT is 300. However, when Soldiers score above 300, like Isley, they are then eligible to be scored on an extended scale, added Robinson.

In order to reach his score, the 24-year-old Isley ripped off 132 pushups and 114 sit-ups in two minutes and ran two miles in 11 minutes and 52 seconds.

Originally born in Vietnam, the diminutive Isley and his siblings were adopted and moved to the United States in 1994.

Isley attended Bishop Neumann Catholic High School in Wahoo, Neb., and received a two-year degree in Mar-



Feel the Burn: Pfc. Holden Isley demonstrates one of the pushup strengthening techniques he learned from his drill sergeants while at basic combat training. Isley's physical fitness training helped him score what is believed to be the highest Army Physical Fitness Test score ever at basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

keting from Southeast Community College in Lincoln.

Isley said he initially had no desire to serve in the Army Guard, but followed his brother's lead and enlisted.

Following basic training Isley said he now finds the Army more appealing.

"After basic training it's pretty fun," said Isley. "I did PT (physical training) so good (my first sergeant) let me set up the claymore and blow (it) up."

"Pretty fun stuff," he added.

Isley said he has always enjoyed working out and staying active. He has been lifting weights three times a week for three years.

During BCT, Isley used his free time at the end of each day's training to help improve his APFT score. Isley said he and several other Soldiers ran, did pushups, sit-ups and dumbbell flies.

In doing so, he helped motivate other Soldiers to improve their own scores.

"I tried to motivate them to keep their body active...so they can keep themselves in good health," he said.

"I got to help out all my buddies," he added. "Show them how to do the exercise to help im-

prove their PT score."

Robinson said he and fellow drill sergeants have limited time with Soldiers, but Isley stepped up and served as a motivating force, not only in his company, but for the whole battalion.

"He was a great Soldier. I was proud to have him," said Robinson. "He definitely motivated me. He would push me harder when I'd run against him."

After scoring the 402 points, Robinson said he hopes to use Isley's experience to motivate future Soldiers as well.

"I kept his card," said Robinson. "I'm going to use that as kind of a motivational tool."

"Here's something to strive for, here's something to try to beat," he added.

Isley said he has no doubt that his record won't stand forever. "The record is meant to (be broken)," said Isley.

Still, the experience has Isley feeling good about what he accomplished and what he has the ability to achieve in the future.

"I feel pretty good," said Isley. "Every time I go someplace, I keep thinking to myself that I can do it. I want to leave something behind where people look back, or my drill sergeant looks back, (and say,) 'Wow, that guy worked hard.'"

Working hard isn't anything new to Isley, either. He said it's part of his personal creed: To make the most out of every moment.

"When you're young, time is your best friend, so just don't waste it...don't abuse it," he said.

"Just keep yourself active."



Focused Training: Pfc. Holden Isley shows the training style that helped him perform 114 situps during his basic combat training at Fort Jackson, S.C. Isley's Army Physical Fitness Test score of 402 is the highest score ever attained by a basic training graduate at Fort Jackson. Isley also helped other members of his basic training platoon improve their physical fitness scores by training at night.

New full-time chaplain to provide spiritual support to Camp Ashland Soldiers

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Staff Photojournalist

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) at Camp Ashland, Neb., finally has someone it has needed for quite some time.

A full-time chaplain.

Chaplain (Maj.) Phillip Houser recently became the first full-time chaplain for the RTI. A Lutheran pastor, Houser is an Air Force chaplain who is currently in the process of transferring to the Nebraska Army Guard.

According to Houser, roughly 4,000 students go through Camp

Ashland each year and it is not unusual for many of the Soldiers to have recently returned from deployment. That sometimes leads to additional stresses.

In the past, Camp Ashland Soldiers and faculty had few chaplain and worship services available.

"My duties are essentially to provide spiritual and emotional support and care for the students, and for the staff and faculty of the Regional Training Institute," said Houser.

Camp Ashland's 209th RTI is one of six full-time noncommissioned officer (NCO) education system schools in the National Guard. The school is responsible for training Midwestern Soldiers from both the reserve and active components of the Army.

The primary focus of the

209th RTI is the Warrior Leader Course (WLC) and it is the leading trainer of the WLC in the entire Army school system.

The RTI is also responsible for the initial phase of the basic NCO course, the first two phases of the truck driver training (88M) Military Occupational Specialty qualification, and houses officer and warrant officer candidate schools.

Finally, the RTI provides quarterly instruction for Army instructor trainer courses.

Houser has already begun splitting his time between the RTI and Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, and is working to establish the chaplaincy at the RTI.

"There has never been a chaplain in the history of the RTI," said Houser. "This is a brand new position that has come about as a response to a

perceived need."

"The leaders of the RTI, in concert with the leadership of the Guard, recognized the need for a full-time person to serve in this capacity," added Houser.

Even though Houser admits his new position is in its infancy, there are many goals he hopes to reach. "In the short-term, my goals are to establish a very visible, productive, meaningful chaplaincy presence at the RTI," said Houser. "We have begun that process, but we're still in the crawling stages."

Although Houser has already performed worship services at the RTI, having a proper facility for an office and a place of worship has been challenging, he said. "One of my most important goals is to move from a makeshift facility for serving the community out there, to a permanent place," he said.

GREEN

continued from page 1.

successful GRAP participant in the Nebraska Army Guard.

Green is a 15-year veteran of both the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard. She said she gets the interest of potential Soldiers by sharing her experiences and telling them what the military has helped her accomplish.

"It has helped me out in going to school and I've been able to travel the world," said Green, who received help from the Guard while earning three degrees. She is currently studying to become a registered nurse.

"I am a single mom with two kids. I know what it takes to rely on family to take care of my kids when I am at training or deployed," she said. "I help others understand the good, bad and ugly."

Green said she believes honesty is a key to recruiting. "There is a lot of misunderstanding about the military right now," she said.

Green is currently working full-time for the Guard on a temporary assignment, helping prepare the 313th Medical Company for mobilization. She has already been on four deployments with the Air Guard.

"I don't see a point in lying about it," she said. "Deployments are going to happen."

Green also shares what it is like to be a woman in the military. "The experience that I've had has made me a stronger person and I can let other women know what they can do."

Sgt. 1st Class Scott Stanley, a Nebraska Army National Guard recruiter, says about a quarter of the Nebraska Army National Guard is female and Green's help is valuable in recruiting women into the Guard.

"It is huge for potential recruits to see women already serving and successful in uniform," Stanley said.

GRAP is a useful tool for recruiters and Soldiers. It provides a source of candidates who are not only interested in, but informed about, the National Guard. "GRAP is real critical," said Stanley. "Soldier referrals have always been the best source of recruits."

GRAP compensates participating Soldiers with a cash incentive for each successful referral. Green has earned about \$18,000 through GRAP and could make as much as \$22,000 more for the recruits who have not yet gone to basic training.

"I highly recommend that (other Guardsmen) do it," she said. "The money is very helpful."

Green is planning on using her GRAP income to help pay for a house.



Houser

"The space we ultimately use for worship will be a space that is permanently set aside for that, but it will also be a space that can be and will be utilized for other educational classes," he said.

Houser is looking forward to continuing to serve the Soldiers and faculty of the RTI. He said he is thankful that leaders addressed the need for a full-time chaplain.

"The welfare and morale of the troops is really valued very highly...cherished even. And if it were not for that, my role would be impossible," said Houser. "The chaplaincy is there to support the students as they go through the programs, and the faculty as they do their jobs."

"My hope is that we can build a chaplaincy program that really will help facilitate their welfare and their well-being."



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



VA mortgage counselors trained to help veterans experiencing mortgage problems

By Bonnie Bessler

Transition Assistance Advisor

Veterans Affairs (VA) now has a Mortgage Counseling Program.

VA can only intervene on VA guaranteed loans. However, if the veteran does not have a VA guaranteed loan, counseling advice can still be sought.

First, make sure that the individual does not just ignore his/her mortgage default problem. Ignoring the problem may make it impossible for the VA counselor to assist in any manner.

Ensure the service member or other mortgage holder (the VA centers may only speak with

a spouse if his/her name is on the mortgage) has the following information available when they call the 1-877-827-3702 assistance line:

- Reason for default? Has the problem been resolved?
- Does the individual desire to retain the property?
- Plan to bring the loan current.
- Monthly gross and net income.
- Monthly expenses.
- Installment payments (car, credit cards, mortgage, etc.).
- Copies of pay stubs for all involved parties (never send originals).
- What actions are being considered against them?

When calling the 1-877-827-

3702 number, one of the following actions will happen:

- If the caller has a VA guaranteed loan, the call will be redirected to a live VA loan technician. This technician may intervene on actions being taken by the mortgage holder.
- If the caller does not have a VA guaranteed loan, the call will be redirected to their regional loan center. The loan center may only offer guidance on what actions the loan holder may want to consider taking.

As of Oct. 10, 2008, VA may refinance a loan up to 100 percent of the value of the property. Loan holders may also want to look into FHA Hope for Homeowners and FHA Secure loans. 1-888-995-HOPE (4673.)

Volunteer Spotlight: Jennifer Smith

My name is Jennifer Smith, wife of Staff Sgt. Thomas Smith, and mother to three-year-old Heather and a child due at the end of May.

I am currently the Family Readiness Group leader for the 72nd Civil Support Team based in Lincoln. I grew up as an Air Force brat in Cheyenne, Wyo., so I always knew that the military life was a lifestyle I could live.

After my graduation from Chadron State College in 2004, my husband got a job with the newly formed Civil Support Team and we have been in Lincoln ever since. The CST is unique because all 22 of its members are active duty, either Air Force or Army.

Being the FRG leader for the 72nd CST has been a rewarding experience. The things I have learned and the people I have met have changed my life.

It was rough in the beginning, as it was a new experience to live in Lincoln.

The CST was a newly formed unit, so we were starting from scratch, which was a little intimidating. The staff in the State Family Program Office helped us along the way by providing us tremendous support.

I took on the role as the FRG

leader not really knowing what I was getting into. The journey has been great as I have really enjoyed getting to know the families of the CST.

The members of the unit are spread out geographically, with several of our members living in Omaha. This has been a challenge in trying to plan activities since we try to plan activities so all families can attend.

Unit members travel frequently to train and attend schools, so trying to find a time to get all the families together has been tough.

Being a military spouse is very rewarding. I get to provide essential support for some of the most brave and honorable citizens in our country. Without the support of the spouses and families, deployments for our Soldiers would be much harder.

A book I would recommend all military families read before a deployment is *When Duty Calls: A Handbook for Families Facing Military Separation*, by Carol Vandesteeg. The book made me feel better about preparing for a deployment and it stresses the importance of an FRG during the rough times.

Red Cross helps families cope with deployment

By John Moyes

Family Program Office

On Nov. 12, 2008, the American Red Cross initiated a new training tool for military families at Grand Island, Neb.

The two instructors, Michelle Hultine and Lyndy

Bixler, presented the program Coping With Deployments: Psychological First Aid for Military Families.

Both are licensed mental health counselors in Nebraska and have had many years of experience counseling individuals with mental health concerns. Prior to presenting this pro-

gram, each instructor received specialized training in Washington DC from an American Red Cross Services to Military Families lead trainer.

The purpose of this course is to increase the ability of military families to successfully cope with stresses during the deployment cycle.

Leaders keeping eye on Post Deployment/Mobilization Respite Absence program

The purpose of this article is to update leaders, Soldiers and family members on the actions the Nebraska National Guard is taking to assist Soldiers in receiving PDMRA benefits.

The Nebraska Army National Guard has approximately 220 Soldiers awaiting guidance (mostly 734th Transportation Battalion and 1-167th Cavalry Soldiers) on the implementation of the Army's Post-Deployment/Mobilization Respite Absence (PDMRA) benefits. The basic details of the details of the program are:

The Secretary of Defense directed that a program to compensate active and reserve component Soldiers who are required to deploy above the standard rotational goal for involuntary mobilizations be implemented. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD P&R) established a new category of administrative absence entitled "Post-Deployment/Mobilization Respite Absence (PDMRA)."

Here are the facts:

• PDMRA program guidance was published in August 2007, five months after the OSD, P&R guidance which directed retroactive implementation to Jan. 19, 2007.

• PDMRA was established to compensate Soldiers for breaking their dwell time. The Reserve Component model for deployment is 1:5, one-year deployed and then five years of dwell at home. The Title 10 or Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) Soldiers are treated the same as active component Soldiers and should have two years of dwell time.

• This program applies to creditable deployments and mobilizations that were underway on, or commenced after Jan. 19, 2007.

For reserve component Soldiers, creditable mobilizations are defined as mobilizations under Title 10, United States Code, sections 12301a, 12302, or 12304.

These are involuntary mobilizations and the Soldier has to have a previous deployment within 72 months of involuntary deployment. All Soldiers deployed under 12301 (d), which is a voluntary mobilization, are not entitled to accrue PDMRA days unless in Iraq or Afghanistan.

PDMRA days do not continue to accrue while a Soldier is on transition leave and/or extension of orders for the purpose of PDMRA usage.

• For complete guidance refer to DA PPG Chapter 8-5. A summary is depicted in the table listed above, but does not cover all the complexities of this program or this process:

• For Title 10 or AGR Soldiers, PDMRA days "not" used within 12 months of returning from deployment or during PCS travel are lost. Nebraska Army National Guard AGR Soldiers used all of their PDMRA "days."

Unused PDMRA days cannot be retained and carried to the new PDS for later use.

Reserve component Soldiers may use accrued PDMRA during any authorized R&R leave period, in combination with or in lieu of using chargeable annual leave.

However, PDMRA cannot be used "in conjunction with" R&R leave to extend the overall authorized R&R leave period of 15 or 18 days.

No orders are published at the mobili-

IG Voice

By Lt. Col. Owen McCauley
State Inspector General

Deployment/Mobilization beyond the following number of creditable months during the most recent 36 months (Active) or 72 months (Reserve)...

12	18	24
...generates for each month or fraction thereof the following number of days for administrative absence...		
1	2	4

Note: Soldier will earn one day of PDMRA during month 13-17. Soldier will earn two days during month 18-23.

zation station by HRC, instead a memorandum is published authorizing additional days of pay and allowances beyond current 12302 mobilization orders.

• The gap in administrative policy from Jan. 19 - Aug. 15, 2007 and when Soldiers of the Army National Guard were released from Active Duty (REFRAD) created a population of approximately 21,000

Army Guard Soldiers who were REFRAD without receiving the benefit of PDMRA because administrative guidance was not published.

The Way Ahead:

• ASA, M&RA recommended that the Department of Army's G-1 (Personnel) along with Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve develop and staff courses of action that would provide a fair and expeditious means for PDMRA compensation. Proposed recommendations were submitted to OSUD, P&R for review and consideration. It was revealed that legislative changes are needed to support and ensure proper implementation.

The OSUD, P&R must brief the Secretary of Defense and make the request for rapid law change before congress. The final resolution is therefore many months down the road.

• Proposed legislation (S. 3310) was forwarded to the Secretary of Defense for final review and further recommendations prior to submission to the Commit-

tee on Armed Services in the Senate.

This proposed legislation addresses the issues associated with gaps in administrative guidance and delivery of PDMRA benefits for shadow area Soldiers.

• The proposed legislation would provide for a one time cash payment of \$200 per day for each day of PDMRA earned and limits the final payment to 40 total days. All payments under the pending proposal must be made not later than one year from the date of enactment of the proposed legislation.

This legislative solution is what the leadership of the Army, Army National Guard and OUSD, P&R request. National Guard Bureau will continue to monitor this proposed legislation, and once finalized, will publish clear, comprehensive guidance on making restitution for all Soldiers affected.

• During discussions with the Nebraska Congressional Delegation in December, Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, explained the program and asked our representatives for support in approving legislation authorizing PDMRA benefits.

The Nebraska Army National Guard's Personnel Office maintains a list of Soldiers who are affected by this delay and maintains and distributes updates on pending progress when received.

• In addition to Nebraska, the Minnesota National Guard has also been proactive in briefing their Congressional delegation and governor.

The Minnesota governor contacted the Secretary of the Army to discuss the issues with the PDMRA program.

The Nebraska National Guard command group, personnel office and inspector general will continue to monitor the progress of the implementation of the PDMRA program.

As additional information becomes available, commanders of units affected by this program will receive updates.

Mentorship helps prepare each Guardsman for future challenges

Many of you have heard Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy talk about mentorship as a leadership responsibility.

In fact, he has made it one of his priorities to insure that Soldiers and Airmen have every opportunity for advancement and to create the conditions for every member to have a long and successful career in the National Guard.

This is the leader's responsibility. Leaders, at every level, must develop the skills of their "up and coming" Soldiers and Airmen. Mentoring is a critical part of the leader's "tool kit" to insure that we prepare leaders for the future.

You may be familiar with the terms "hard power" and "soft power," which come from the writings of Harvard Professor Joseph Nye.

In his book entitled *Soft Power* the author defines these "powers" as actions between nation-states. Examples of hard power used by nations are to embargo goods, economic sanctions and freeze assets; military response is also a hard power tool.

Soft power initiatives are another way nations exert power over one another. Examples of soft power may include foreign aid, cultural and educational exchanges. All these tools, soft and hard, are used to gain influence, leverage or control over another nation's activities.

While the National Guard is not in the business of controlling the lives of our members, we would like to control the work environment in such a way as to insure that all members have equal opportunity, fairness in advancement and are treated with respect.

We gain or lose influence with others based on how we use the tools of leadership. To be effective we must use all the tools, hard and soft power tools, in the leader's "kit bag".

Most of the "hard" tools available to leadership in the quest to develop future leaders are directed by regulation. These tools are primarily provided to us from military guidelines for leadership and are required actions to evaluate and grow new leaders.

Examples of hard tools might include challenging our members in new positions, performance appraisals, rating reports and various technical evaluations. These typical leadership tools are commonly used to help develop people and challenge them to excel in new ways.

Again, these tools are directed by regulation and tested by time.

Conversely, soft tools, while in many cases highly desirable, are not required. Examples of soft tools are employee recognition, monetary awards and decorations just to mention a few. Mentoring is, in my view, one of the "soft" tools in the

On Military Service

By Maj. Gen. Robert Bailey
Nebraska Deputy Adjutant General

leader's kit bag.

While everyone has heard of mentoring, few people formally mentor others. Mentoring, while always encouraged, is difficult to force on people.

Mentoring is more the "art" of the leader.

Why should we consider mentoring? Soldiers and Airmen learn from their surroundings.

We have a highly educated force of Soldiers and Airmen. They are observant and draw conclusions, form opinions and develop themselves, based on the actions and behavior of their leaders.

Yet, the question must be, do they always learn the correct lesson from these observations? This is where mentorship can be invaluable.

In a mentoring situation, three parties must gain – the mentoree (the person receiving the mentoring), the mentor and the organization. Clearly the intended benefactor in the mentoring relationship is the mentoree. Yet, in my experience, every mentoring experience was also a great benefit to the mentor as well.

The senior member, usually the mentor, invariably learns a great deal, not just about the mentoree, but about the chal-

lenges others face within the organization. This benefit can be so strong that many would say it is a form of "reverse" mentorship. The mentor gains great insight into how his or her leadership style can be adjusted and as a result, will become a better leader.

The benefit to the mentor is not a by-product of the relationship, but rather a direct outcome of mentoring.

In the end, the mentoree and mentor should both gain, and as a result be successful and be prepared for advancement.

Finally, throughout the entire process of mentorship the organization is the clear winner. The organization has improved leadership at all levels with junior officers and enlisted members ready to assume greater levels of responsibility.

Preparing leaders, Soldiers, Airmen and civilians for the challenges of the future is everyone's responsibility. Each service member needs and deserves our best effort in this regard, and the organization culture must encourage this development at every opportunity.

How can we do this together? First, we must recognize that anyone can mentor. Mentoring does not take a special skill.

What it does take is a special concern for the future of our National Guard. It cannot be directed by regulation or forced on anybody. Yet, it can be and should be available to every-

one. Each individual has a role, and each person can reach out as either a mentor or someone wishing to receive mentoring. Mentoring does require the willingness to work one-on-one with a Soldier or Airman in a relationship based on respect and trust.

If you are a young Soldier or Airman in our organization and you want to be more engaged and involved in unit activities, or your own development, please seek out a senior NCO or officer and ask if he or she could help you understand the best path to a successful enlistment or a career in the Guard.

This isn't a time for shyness or hesitation. You must be aggressive. The decision you make may help you with your career goals and a successful Guard experience.

For the senior NCO or officer, you know your people best; you probably have a mixture of hard chargers and possibly a few slow starters.

Yet each person can gain by your mentorship.

Each Soldier and Airman will add greater value to your organization if you will take time to show them the path to personal growth and increased responsibility.

The outcome is simple – better Soldiers and Airmen in your unit. And you will be a better, more respected leader and your unit will be more successful in any future operation.

Veterans Affairs opening new outreach clinics in Nebraska communities

Veterans Affairs Community Based Outreach Clinics, commonly known as CBOCs, are expanding in the Nebraska Western Iowa VA Health Care System.

This is good news for veterans as services will be more widely available across Nebraska. Here is an update of what has been happening with the CBOCs:

•Oct. 14, 2008, — the Lincoln clinic located at 600 South 70th Street unveiled one of three OIF/OEF Transition Clinics. The Lincoln clinic is unique as it provides its own clinic entrance and is slightly removed from the rest of the clinic. This clinic is set up to provide a "one stop shop" with a focus on general health care, mental health care and social services for issues that are unique to OIF/OEF veterans.

This clinic is open Monday through-Friday with Wednesday evening appointments available. To contact this clinic call Toll Free 866-851-6052, ext 9-6301.

•Nov. 3, 2008 — Norfolk clinic located at 710 South 13th Street, Suite 1200, opened its doors to a brand new CBOC. Norfolk has always had a CBOC but was unable to accommodate all the veterans that live in this area.

VA Update

By Bonnie Bessler
Transition Assistance Advisor

With that shortfall a new clinic was opened.

To contact this clinic call (402) 370-4570.

•Holdrege opened a new CBOC at 1118 Burlington Street. To contact this clinic call (308) 995-3760.

•Additional CBOCs are being planned for in the future. Plans call for one to be located in Bellevue at Erhling Berquest Hospital. It is expected to open sometime early this year. VA is also looking for adequate space for a clinic in O'Neill and is planning to expand the current clinic in North Platte.

•Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on Oct. 10 at the site of the Alliance State Veterans Cemetery. When complete, the cemetery is expected to accommodate 8,500 burial sites on 20 acres.

Questions should be addressed to Bonnie Bessler, Nebraska National Guard transition assistance advisor. She can be reached at (402) 309-7433 or at bonnie.bessler@us.army.mil.

Nebraska warrant officers mirrored other athletic teams' success in 2008

Every year is a great year for Sports; 2008 just proved outstanding.

The Nebraska Cornhuskers football team had significant success. Coach Pelini's football team won the Gator Bowl with a dramatic come-from-behind victory.

A nine-win season is something we Husker fans can talk about until spring football and definitely gave fans hope for next year.

The Husker volleyball team had a victory over Washington in the NCAA tournament and produced a tremendous effort against Penn State in the final four at the Qwest in Omaha.

Doc Sadler's basketball has been seen as a scrappy bunch of young men who don't know the word quit and they tirelessly leave their best efforts on the court especially when the chips seem to not fall their way.

Finally, the Arizona Cardinals (my pick to win the Super Bowl) led by Kurt Warner made a great playoff run, but fell short due to a last minute drive by the Steelers and Ben Roethlisberger.

I began reflecting on all this and the lessons we can learn from sports. Now I don't have any insider information, I only draw my opinions based on 40 years of being an "expert" Nebraska fan.

From my view, I see strong leadership coming from Nebraska's Athletic Director and our coaches. It seems to me that they have created a culture that emphasizes a strong work ethic, a healthy caring respect for each other, integrity in all circumstances and a sense of commitment to each other that raises a team to success.

Chief's Business

By Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steve Weber
Nebraska Army National Guard
Command Chief Warrant Officer

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Zachary Hartmann, Nebraska's warrant officer recruiter, can vouch for the fact that I'm always looking to apply a sports metaphor to our state's warrant officer strength goals. I am confident that what I believe to be true about Nebraska's athletic program is also true about Nebraska Army National Guard's leadership, the Guard's Soldiers and our warrant officer team.

Let me explain by sharing a few winning examples of Nebraska-like excellence.

The Nebraska Warrant Officer Corps scored 31 new warrant officers in 2008. This was a T.D. (Team Delivery) of 100 percent of authorized strength. This goal was achieved by a great team of Soldiers who decided to make the commitment to become a warrant officer.

Many more of the Guard team contributed to this achievement, including warrant officer recruiters, warrant officer TAC (Teach, Assess and Counsel) officers, leadership at the Regional Training Institute (including instructors) and all the Personnel Office staff members who accomplish the hard work and put together Soldiers Federal Recognition Boards packets. Capt. Samantha Keech and the Medical Command crew have contributed greatly by providing Chapter 2 physical exams for new officers.

The game is still on. We are challenged by our head coach (Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy) to take warrant officer strength to

125 percent. I have related to Hartmann that we are now in the fourth quarter of this strength game. We are on offense and driving to the goal line, filling some hard to fill critical warrant officer positions in the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and the 623rd Vertical Engineers.

On Super Bowl Sunday, 19 Soldiers (attending Pre Warrant Officer Candidate training at Camp Ashland) committed to join our warrant officer team. This is a warrant officer class that I consider to be filled with All American recruits. If there were a warrant officer scouting service such as Warrant Officer Scout.com it would rate this class as the best in the country.

As this future class of warrant officers train this year, I will remind them to strive for excellence and to build toward the significant success of the entire warrant officer team.

"Just as last year's class demonstrated, you must emulate a strong work ethic. You need to have a healthy caring respect for each member of the team with a sense of commitment to each other that you will not let any member of the team down."

"My advice is that you must maintain personal integrity in all situations set before you. I expect you to uphold the 'Army Values' keeping them in your thoughts and actions. I encourage you to come together as a team, just like the tradition of Nebraska's Husker teams, with a can-do attitude. If you do, you will have fun scoring the winning T.D."

I will remind the other 130 members of the Nebraska warrant officer team to do likewise.

Worth Repeating

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

— Abraham Lincoln
Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865.

Street Talk

“What is your new year’s resolution for 2009?”



Pvt. Megan Reynolds
Recruit Sustainment Program - Kearney

“To stay in shape and work out more often.”



Pvt. Brian Bruce
734th Transportation Battalion

“To try and get in better shape for the military.”



Pvt. Tony Steinhour
313th Medical Company
(Ground Ambulance)

“I want to do better in school.”



Pfc. Erin Gold
734th Transportation Battalion

“To quit smoking. It’s hard.”



Sgt. Tyler Schik
734th Transportation Battalion.

“I would like to spend two-to-three hours a day studying instead of messing around.”



Pfc. Jenna Medley
92nd Troop Command

“My resolution is to make it to church every Sunday except drill weekend.”

General Heng was visionary leader who knew where we needed to go

This past January the Nebraska National Guard lost one of our great leaders and a dearest friend, retired Lt. Gen. (Nebraska) Stan Heng.

The Adjutant General Major General

Timothy J. Kadavy



sions, but in retrospect they were on the mark.

We are an organization with many opportunities for all Nebraskans. Our end strength continues to grow and units possess

Many of our more senior Soldiers and Airmen served with and knew General Heng. For those of you who did not, he was the Nebraska National Guard adjutant general from 1987 to the end of 2000.

He was an extraordinary Soldier and leader who always worked to ensure Soldiers and Airmen were always at the heart of every issue and the focus of every decision.

During his tenure as the adjutant general, General Heng was a true transformer, even before transformation was in vogue in Washington. Changes in technology, demographics, Force Structure and equipping drive a need for continuous review, updates and at times decisions to ensure an organization is positioned to succeed not just today, but well into the future. General Heng understood this fact and did his duty

as a leader to ensure the Nebraska National Guard was always pushing forward and positioned for success.

A senior leader’s most significant duty is to provide their organization a vision for the future. A vision provides a control to ensure change is managed and that it does not overwhelm or surprise the team.

Vision is a long-term event and requires continuous discipline to ensure it becomes reality. General Heng knew where he wanted to take us and had the strength to keep from deviating off course.

The Nebraska Army and Air National Guard that we have today is the result of General Heng’s long term vision and dedication to relevance, opportunity and capability. Change is never easy and many did not agree with some of the deci-

ness readiness levels unattainable just a few years ago.

It was not easy to let go of the Army combat brigade or to transform to an air refueling wing. But we could not man the brigade and the RF-4 was a legacy aircraft about to be retired to the boneyard.

The easy thing to do is nothing, but ultimately the Nebraska National Guard would have been left irrelevant, inadequately equipped and underfunded.

Today, we are a Nebraska National Guard that is critical to the national defense, homeland security and emergency response.

We are the organization that General Heng envisioned during his tenure as our adjutant general.

We owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

General Heng: Late Nebraska Guard general had extraordinary human touch

January 12, 2009, was a sad day.

That afternoon I received an e-mail message announcing that retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng had died after a lengthy illness.

In a way, I felt like I’d lost a major mentor in my professional life, a person to whom I’d looked up to since the day I first met him in October 1990.

Back in 1990 I was marking my first drill as a Nebraska Army National Guard journalist and had been assigned to cover the send-off ceremony for members of the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance,) who had just been mobilized for Operation Desert Shield.

As I waited for the ceremony to begin at the Naval Annex building in Lincoln, my noncommissioned officer-in-charge, Staff Sgt. Ron Bradrick, and I were standing alongside a wall when I noticed a general officer walking up to us.

Up until this point my history of interaction with generals was pretty short. Granted, I’d taken photos of a few over the years and had even been able to interview one or two, but other than that, my basic philosophy was pretty simple: if a general comes into your area...get out of the area.

So, needless to say, I had some pretty strong preconceptions about how generals are supposed to look, sound like and act.

As General Heng walked up, he saw Sergeant Bradrick and reached out his hand, saying “How’s your family Brad?”

Listening to these two Soldiers talk, it was as if they were two life-long friends rather than a two-star general talking to a staff sergeant.

Moments later, Sergeant Bradrick introduced the general to me, who immediately started asking me about my family, where I was from and where I

was going to school.

I doubt the meeting had much of an impact on General Heng, but it did have a significant one on me. I remember thinking as he walked away, “This is no ordinary general.”

As I attended the late Nebraska Guard leader’s funeral last month, the memories came flooding back. I remembered the times I traveled with him to various annual training exercises and listened in as he talked to the Soldiers and Airmen he encountered. I remembered trips to places like Fort Knox, Ky., Fort Riley, Kan., and Washington, D.C., and how he always seemed to be able to identify with the people he met on a deeply personal level.

I also remembered talking with General Heng early on about the changes the National Guard was facing in regards to tightening military budgets and increasingly harsh questions about the need for a National Guard to fight “tomorrow’s wars.”

As these memories flooded over me, I started thinking about the late general’s legacy.

General Heng was a person who was extremely interested in preserving the history of Nebraska’s Army and Air National Guard, while at the same time realizing that if the organization was to survive and be relevant in the future, hard decisions had to be made now.

In my mind, today’s Nebraska National Guard is General Heng’s legacy— an organization made up of highly professional Soldiers and Airmen who have been increasingly called upon to serve America in one of the most



My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Kevin J. Hynes

turbulent eras in recent memory.

But that only tells part of the story.

I think that when I remember General Heng years from now, I

will remember the man who always took time to ask how I was doing, who got to know my wife and our sons’ names, who seemed to be genuinely interested in the work I was doing and my professional development.

I will always remember fondly one moment when I was preparing to go to school for six weeks to pursue my commission. My wife and I were putting some finishing touches on some legal paperwork at the Judge Advocate General’s office when General Heng stopped in. Seeing my wife, he asked how she was doing while also giving her a little pep talk about what getting my commission would mean for our family in the long term.

He then bent down to talk to my one-year-old son, Patrick, who promptly told General Heng – to both my wife’s and my horror – to go away. Laughing, General Heng winked at us and said, “I guess that’s my cue.”

I last saw General Heng last summer when he and his wife, Sharon, stopped by my office. General Heng wanted to talk about some camera issues, but the visit quickly descended to talking about our families and remembering a few of the ‘good ole days.’

I think that’s probably what I’m going to miss the most – knowing there was a leader out there who truly cared about his Soldiers and Airmen, a leader who took the time to simply listen and be a good mentor.

Farewell, General Heng. You will never be forgotten. And you will definitely be missed.

AWARDS

Army National Guard Bronze Star

Maj. Craig W. Strong

Legion of Merit

Sgt. Maj. Robert J. Bergman
Master Sgt. Richard C. Tomjack

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Daniel G. Lonowski
Lt. Col. Martin J. Riley
Lt. Col. Chad R. Stevens
Lt. Col. Timothy M. Zegers
Maj. Kevin L. Garner
Maj. Steve P. Petersen
Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeffrey A. Husa
Sgt. 1st Class Chad M. Bruce
Sgt. 1st Class Guadalupe M. Calleroz
Sgt. 1st Class Dennis L. Cullison
Sgt. 1st Class Sylvester Grandberry
Sgt. 1st Class Dale E. Jackson Jr.

Sgt. 1st Class Ricky L. Kerst
Sgt. 1st Class Kevin E. Meyers
Sgt. Patricia J. Rupp

Army Commendation Medal

Maj. Mary J. Mangels
Maj. Thomas E. McLeod
Maj. Steve Petersen
Sgt. 1st Class Bruce A. Nakai
Staff Sgt. Joseph G. Serkiz Jr.
Sgt. Nicholas A. Kemp
Sgt. Carol A. Miller
Spc. Troy A. Bear
Army Achievement Medal
1st Lt. Clinton F. Brady
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gregory J. Reicks
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Torrey J. Baker
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Monty A. Woodward
Warrant Officer KC Sohl
Warrant Officer Tollie H. Yoder
Sgt. 1st Class Dale T. Alexander Jr.

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel R. Jamison
Sgt. 1st Class John C. Jurgensen
Sgt. 1st Class Paul M. Kimble
Sgt. 1st Class James C. Mendoza
Sgt. 1st Class Scott R. Stanley
Sgt. 1st Class David E. Strohhenn
Sgt. 1st Class Mitchell S. Taylor
Staff Sgt. Dominik G. Chase
Staff Sgt. Christopher L. Harmon
Staff Sgt. Kirsten L. Jespersen
Staff Sgt. Nicole D. Kordik
Staff Sgt. Christopher I. Russell
Staff Sgt. Ryan E. Thompson
Staff Sgt. Gregory L. Wolff
Sgt. Christopher P. Herndon
Sgt. Eric J. Martin

Nebraska National Guard Legion of Merit

Col. David D. Zwart
Master Sgt. Patrick J. Ness

Nebraska National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Master Sgt. Kerry D. Wyatt
Sgt. 1st Class Cecilio T. Roman

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

1st Lt. John M. Heatley
Sgt. 1st Class Rodney P. Bussinger
Sgt. 1st Class Dustin E. Guenther
Sgt. 1st Class Jay D. Hanna
Sgt. 1st Class Gregory D. Leiker
Sgt. 1st Class Tomas C. Ortiz
Staff Sgt. Peggy J. Davis
Staff Sgt. Denise Y. Rothwell
Sgt. Petra L. Blevins
Sgt. Steven P. Cannon
Spc. Stuart J. Mason
Spc. Lisa N. Weyers

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Chad J. Adams
Sgt. 1st Class Terence G. Burns
Staff Sgt. Maren C. Stewart
Sgt. Justin R. Olson
Spc. Elizabeth R. Dean
Spc. Brian D. Sloan
Spc. Scott E. Upchurch

Nebraska National Guard Recruiting Achievement Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Chad J. Adams
Sgt. 1st Class Carl J. Dehling
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel R. Jamison
Sgt. 1st Class Paul M. Kimble
Sgt. 1st Class Cecilio T. Roman
Staff Sgt. Kirsten L. Jespersen
Staff Sgt. Nicole D. Kordik
Staff Sgt. Christopher I. Russell
Staff Sgt. Chad A. Schroetlin

Staff Sgt. Scott R. Stanley
Staff Sgt. Maren C. Stewart
Staff Sgt. Ryan E. Thompson

Air National Guard Bronze Star Medal

Col. Robert A. Athan

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Barbra S. Buls

Air Force Commendation Medal

Capt. Christopher L. Ganshert
Tech. Sgt. Jesse H. Arant

Air Force Achievement Medal

Tech. Sgt. Brannon K. Lauritzen
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Wattier
Senior Airman Nathan S. Tesch
Senior Airman Brittney C. Truscott

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard Major

Grant W. Siedenburg

Captain

Jeremy D. Chancellor
William R. Harris Jr.
James R. Hewitt
Jeremy K. Smith

First Lieutenant

Sarah M. Dance
Joyce B. Dolezal
Jessica A. Hoelting
Adam M. Hogue

Chief Warrant Officer Two

Mathew L. Vanderpol

Master Sergeant

Monte A. Kerchal
Paul M. Kimble

Terry D. Rasmussen

Sergeant First Class

Jeffery A. Holbrook
Christopher I. Russell
Ryan E. Sullivan

Staff Sergeant

Christine E. Braun
Joseph C. Haag
Adam C. Junck
Landen C. Koopman
John C. Moore
Nathan J. Reicks
Travis D. Richards
Matthew D. Simms
Josiah D. Unger

Sergeant

Bradley C. Arnold
Aaron D. Buettner
Dustin J. Douglass

Juan C. Francis
Brandon J. Jancik
Richard J. Maple
Nicholas R. Noel III

Specialist

Mathieu K. Ethington
Juan C. Francis
Lemarcus D. Gaskins
Aaron E. Johnson
Jeffery H. Mann

Private First Class

Jeffrey L. Stout
Andrew S. Turner

Private Two

Dirk E. Arneson
Laurette E. Beal
James D. Bishop Jr.
Aaron D. Debartolo
Jacob J. Fosket

Caylub A. Hayes
Trevor J. Kurtzhals
Daniel J. Wardyn
Alec M. Zackery

Air National Guard Lieutenant Colonel

Robert E. Hargens

Chief Master Sergeant

Rocky W. Heberlee

Senior Master Sergeant

Randal M. Eickmeier
Thomas J. Kripal

Master Sergeant

Jennifer E. Eloge
Paul M. Savick
Vicky R. Stevens

Technical Sergeant

James L. Daberkow
Donald Dissmeyer
Steve R. Fisher
David J. Rudebusch
Daniel R. Westman

Staff Sergeant

Douglas D. Carlson
Jonathan D. Carrison
Christopher D. King
Christopher Krotz
Michael D. Wellman
Daniel Williams

Senior Airman

Amanda A. Colborn
Christine M. Koenig
Aimee Lempke
Bradley J. Metz
Sean W. Miller
Victoria Pelan

Gregory S. Pollmann
Jeffrey Tlanka

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Chief Warrant Officer Scott J. Zaske
Master Sgt. Patrick J. Ness
Sgt. 1st Class Craig A. Brown
Staff Sgt. Donovan P. Redl
Staff Sgt. Matthew D. Schaub

Air National Guard

Master Sgt. Timothy D. Majerus

TAPS

Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng

Shorttakes

Nebraska's military, vets to be honored during May event

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Nebraska's military members and their families will be saluted, May 16, when the National Guard Association of Nebraska and Gov. Dave Heineman host "Salute to Nebraska's Military" at Mahoney State Park.

While many of the day-long events are still in the planning stage, the day will feature concerts – including an evening headline act – as well as a number of activities and displays

including youth fishing instruction, archery range, BB gun range, pony rides, paddle boats, climbing walls, informational exhibits, the Army Guard's "Patriot Chopper," NASCAR Car #88, educational exhibits and an evening barbecue.

According to event organizers, a wrist band – available for a minimal fee – will be required for some of the listed events, however access to the military displays, informational exhibits, educational seminars and Game & Parks demonstrations will be available without wrist-

bands. May 16 is also free park entry and fishing day.

The event is open to members of the Nebraska National Guard, Nebraska-based active duty and reserve forces and their families, Nebraskans who are veterans of any branch of the U.S. military and their families, and current state and federal employees of the Nebraska National Guard, Nebraska Military Department Nebraska-based active duty and reserve forces and their families.

The event is being conducted

in partnership with the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, the Employees of the Nebraska Military Department, the Nebraska National Guard, Stars & Stripes Sertoma, and VA-Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System.

Mahoney State Park is located south of Ashland, Neb., near Interstate 80. A block of rooms, cabins and camp sites are available at Mahoney State Park. Reservations will be accepted on a first come, first served basis through April 15. 2008 rates apply.

Standard cancellation policy will apply.

Attendees are also reminded to be prepared to provide proof of military service if requested (military ID, employee ID, DD-214 or proof of members in a U.S. military organization such as the American Legion, DAV, VFW or Patriot Guard.)

People looking for more information, are encouraged to check out the event's Website at www.armedforcescelebration.com or contact Sgt. Dave Rickers at (402) 230-9128 or Terri Kattes at (402) 429-4725.

Offutt Air Guardsmen play Santa for Omaha group home

By Capt. Wendy Squarcia

170th Group

The men and women of Offutt Air Force Bases' 170th Group, Nebraska Air National Guard, had the privilege of playing "Santa" for the second year in a row for the Youth Care and Beyond Group Home in Omaha, Neb.

The Guardsmen volunteered to provide individual Christmas gifts to each and every child and adult in the agency, as well as a few group gifts to help out the residences.

The gifts included clothes, toys, books, DVDs, pots and pans, a steam cleaner, a bike, Creighton tickets and a George Foreman grill.

According to Ginger Apprich, development director for the group home, the volunteer response from the individual Guard members was tremendous.

"The 170th Group lit up the faces of the children and adults and made their holiday," she said.

The Youth Care & Beyond Group Home is a small, but determined non-profit agency located in the heart of North Omaha. The group home provides services to residents from the entire state of Nebraska. Their mission is

to enhance the lives of special people both now and in the future.

Many of those services are life-changing for the residents. There are currently 28 clients at the group home with the hopes of expanding the mission into other areas of preventative and supportive care.

Youth Care and Beyond has been a part of the Omaha community, providing services to clients for nearly 30 years. There are three individual group homes that make up Youth Care and Beyond, which provides services to children 10-18 years of age and adults 19-years and older.

"Most of our clients are wards of the state and have been abused and neglected, and all have developmental disabilities," said Apprich. "We bring out the 'ability' in them."

Funding for the facility comes in the form of donations, grants and fundraisers, with a small portion coming from the state.

The 170th Group has "adopted" this group home and will be playing a large role in helping them with specific needs in the future. Recently, the home needed a washer and dryer for one of the boy's homes.

After sending the email out request-



Photo courtesy of the 170th Group

Warm Thank You: (From left) Col. Mark White, commander of the 170th Group, Nebraska Air National Guard, and Capt. Wendy Squarcia, a member of the 170th Group who served as her unit's Youth Care and Beyond Group Home project officer, hold a thank you card created for the 170th Group in appreciation of the donations made by the unit shortly before Christmas. Unit members donated clothes, toys, books, DVDs, pots and pans, steam cleaner, Creighton basketball tickets and even a George Foreman grill to the Omaha organization.

ing help, it took less than five minutes to get a response from one of the unit members offering both a washer and dryer.

Youth Care and Beyond has been very appreciative for all the donations. "Wow, you guys must be angels," said Apprich recently.

Riders from the sky

Nebraska Air National Guard cyclists aim to tame prairies, spread Guard message

By Lt. Col. John Rued

170th Group

Twenty years ago, Senior Master Sgt. Ron Perdunn and I first crossed bike paths on a week-long cycling tour of Nebraska.

At that time there were no bike paths—just miles and miles of rural highways. Ron was a relatively young Airborne Maintenance Technician and I was a very young navigator. We were both stationed at Offutt.

The catalyzing event for this career-long friendship was the now defunct SWATH – SAC Warriors Across The Heartland – an annual recruiting and public affairs event sponsored by the Strategic Air Command headquarters that featured cyclists and runners carrying the Air Force message to hamlets and farmsteads across the Great Plains.

Since then, the use of bicycles to educate and recruit has evolved: SAC went away, Strategic Command arrived and SWATH remained... at least for a while.

When SWATH faded, a succession of popular U.S. Air Force RAGBRAI teams bloomed in its place. As the teams grew in size, regional teams – reflecting a unique identity and culture – spun off.

One of these was the Nebraska Air National Guard cycling team, now in its fourth year.

The Riders

Perdunn and I are both members of the Nebraska Air Guard's 170th Group at Offutt Air Force Base. Together with Master Sgt. Mike Minnick and Senior Master Sgt. Mark Forster of the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln. We are the core of the Nebraska cycling team.

Team membership varies annually and is dependent on rider availabilities—unit deployments and family commitments do affect participation.

Team membership is not restricted to Guard members, either. We have attracted riders from the active duty and civilian world as well as among our family members and friends.



Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. John Rued

Rolling Along: Members of the Nebraska Air National Guard biking team roll toward the finish line of the Bike Ride Across Nebraska (BRAN.) Pictured are: Lt. Col. Wayne Snyder, Master Sgt. Clare Koble, Lt. Col. John Rued, Brenda Nolt and Senior Master Sgt. Ron Perdunn.

That diversity is a major source of team strength, said Perdunn, adding: "On the team, we have had the entire spectrum of riders with military backgrounds. From Airmen to commanders, I have never seen a time that we, the military community, have put at the disposal of the local communities such a diverse group to sit among, relate to and discuss Guard life with in such a low-key environment."

We four have a long history of riding, initially each participating for specific reasons.

For me, a girlfriend got me started in cycling, thinking that it would strengthen our relationship.

It did; I still have the bike.

Cycling's sustained appeal to me is that age-old challenge: man and machine interfacing with nature.

Forster started cycling in 1981 as a way to get back in shape after a car accident. The low impact physical therapy coupled to practical transportation soon fixed cycling as a lifestyle staple.

He sums cycling as "a sport that can be combined with commuting to work, vacation travel, going to lunch... it has a low im-

pact on the body and you can see something new every ride, versus jogging on a treadmill where you never move."

Perdunn began riding while stationed in England in the early '80s. "Everyone cycled everywhere," he said. "I started riding the 12 miles to work and everyone thought I was crazy. When I came back to the states it felt like nobody rode."

Touring was "like all the crazy people coming together," he said.

Why We Ride

The concept of public relations and recruiting drives is not new. Regional air shows attract Air Force hardware. Air Force recruiters trek over lonely roads as they travel between rural high schools.

But these activities target a specific demographic: aviation enthusiasts and high school students. They lack the serendipitous nature of the cycling tour.

And therein lays the adventure: You never know who you will meet; you never know who you can influence.

"The benefit of these rides," Forster said, "is exposing young people to positive images of the Guard in a non-threatening environment."

Perdunn agrees, saying the Guard has an obligation to get out among the people. "I enjoy being connected to a state and serving within the state," he said. "It's their team and they can't see us when we're hiding behind the base fence all the time. It's good to get out and say 'Here we are,' and tell our stories."

The Rides

The Nebraska Air Guard team favors three regional rides: Bike Ride Across Nebraska (BRAN), Tour de Nebraska (TDN), and the (Des Moines) Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI).

Each ride has its unique features. But, as unique as each ride is, there are similarities.

Daily leg lengths average 60 miles, although places of scenic or historical import often beg one to get off the bike to explore. Long summer days harken to the days of youth when responsibilities were few while the camaraderie of fellow teammates and fellow cyclists make you truly feel part of something bigger.

And, finally, the sense of accomplishing a physically demanding feat makes you feel pretty good.

Our Goals

Our goals on these tours are simple: First, to establish an Air Guard presence among those who may not have familiarity with their hometown Air Force, whether they are fellow riders or people we meet along the way. Second, to participate in passive, non-threatening discussions of our chosen profession.

"Most of the people I talk to in small towns aren't even aware that the Air Guard exists," said Forster.

"During the Tour de Nebraska in 2006, I talked to one individual for over an hour about the Guard," said Forster. "He just

asked questions rather than having a recruiter tell him about the benefits."

"The most common question I get asked is, 'Are you a recruiter?'" said Perdunn. "Afterwards they seem to open up with everything they wanted to know about the military, but were afraid to ask."

"I have asked after speaking with several people, 'Would it have made a difference if I was a recruiter?' They all said they didn't want me to sell them the military, but they did want to know about it—and what it had to offer—without the sales pitch."

The Way Ahead

Guard participation in cycling tours is a cost effective way to reach out and expose ourselves—figuratively—to the public, whether it is to other riders, host communities, or people we meet along the way.

Air shows are expensive. Recruiters are few. We offer an alternative to getting the word out.

Fortunately, our approach has been recognized for its inherent benefits at the national level. All three rides have been approved by the National Guard Bureau as supporting the recruiting mission.

This means that Active Guard Reserve members have the option of riding in a permissive TDY status.

Currently, traditional members desiring to ride will have to ride on their own time, though we are working with our Iowa Guard cycling counterparts to figure out a way to put the part-timers on orders.

Interested in riding? Try it.

Whether it is to train for these sanctioned recruiting rides, to explore a new facet of fitness, or to extend your social networking within an area of similar interest, we invite you to ride with us.

No doubt, riding can be challenging. But riding is also a lot of fun, especially in a group... this group.

For more information contact us at john.rued@offutt.af.mil (or john.rued@kadena.af.mil); ronald.perdunn@offutt.af.mil; mark.forster@ang.af.mil; and michael.minnick.1@ang.af.mil.

Airman's son wins national championship, earns USA Track & Field honors

By Maj. Mark Hopson

170th Group

On Dec. 13 Justin Liedke toed the line at the 2008 USA Track and Field National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championship Meet at Pole Green Park in Mechanicsville, Va.

Lined up against Justin was a field of over 200 "Bantam" age-group (10-years-old-and-under) national qualifiers.

Suddenly, as the gun fired, Justin shot off the line. His race plan was simple: get out fast and lead from start to finish.

Justin is the 10-year-old son of Nebraska Air National Guard Senior Master Sergeant Laura Liedke and her husband Gregg. Sergeant Liedke is the airfield manager for the 170th Operational Support Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base while Gregg recently retired after a 30-year career with the Air Force Weather Agency.

Their son is no ordinary competitor. He is one of the most-talented youth distance runners in Nebraska history.

He is the Nebraska State Cross Country champion for 2007 and 2008, holds the Nebraska State Record for the Bantam Boys 1500 meter "Metric Mile" run

with a time of 4:51.92 and is a multiple-time All-American who placed third in last year's National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championship Meet as a 9-year-old in the 10-and-under race.

This past summer, Liedke finished second in the 1,500 meter run at the National Junior Olympic Track & Field Championship Meet.

In other words, he entered this year's National Meet as a favorite.

Liedke competes for the Cornhusker Flyers Track Club. The Flyers are based in Omaha and their mission is to promote the sports of Track & Field and Cross Country throughout Nebraska.

Eight Flyers have won Junior Olympic Cross Country National Championships in the club's 32-year history.

Liedke was racing to become the ninth.

Flyers Coach John Wissler said: "We



Photo by Action Sports Images

Championship Form: Justin Liedke, son of Senior Master Sgt. Laura Liedke, crosses the finish line of the 2008 USA Track and Field National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championship Ship, Dec. 13.

He joined other USA Track & Field Athletes of the Week for 2008 including Beijing Olympic Gold Medalists Bryan Clay, Stephanie Brown Trafton and Sanya Richards, as well as Hall-of-Fame marathoner Join Benoit Samuelson.

knew Justin was better at longer distances than his main competitors. But, if it came down to a speed race in the last 100 meters, he might be in trouble."

"So, he needed to set a fast pace and build a big enough lead that the other runners wouldn't have the kind of speed necessary to catch him," Wissler said.

Liedke did just that, winning his national championship.

In fact, his margin of victory was the largest of the 10 different age-group races at the National Championship Meet.

For that reason, Liedke was named the USA Track & Field Athlete of the week for the week of Dec. 15.

He joined other USA Track & Field Athletes of the Week for 2008 including Beijing Olympic Gold Medalists Bryan Clay, Stephanie Brown Trafton and Sanya Richards, as well as Hall-of-Fame marathoner Join Benoit Samuelson.

"I had a good start. At 800 meters I felt good, so I took the lead," Liedke said later.

"I jogged the course with (teammate) Nick Falcon the night before and he made some jokes that helped relax me."

Justin stretched his lead to 30 meters with 1,000 meters to go.

"I knew I had to run a hard 1,000 to the finish. When I got to the last turn with 300 meters to go, I didn't hear any breathing behind me so I just ran as hard as I could to the line."

Liedke finished the 3,000 meter course in first-place in a time of 10:39, a full 26 seconds ahead of the second-place finisher, averaging a 5:43-minute mile pacer over the 1.86 mile course. (That converts to a 8:34 mile-and-a-half time.)

"What was really cool," he said, "was when I crossed the finish line and entered the chute, someone handed me a little white card. It said, 'This is the shell that started the race you won.' I turned the card over and there was the shell casing from the Starter's pistol."

Liedke said he was surprised to be named the athlete of the week.

"I'm humbled by the whole experience," he said. "To be named with the world's best is an honor."

Dreaming In Red

Guard Soldier follows dream by attending walk-on tryouts for Nebraska Huskers

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Dream (*drēm*) *n.* 1. To have a deep aspiration; hope for something. 2. To consider something feasible or practical; conceive even remotely.

The first thing a person notices when meeting Pvt. Michael Wesson, a truck driver with Columbus' 1074th Transportation Company, is his large, brickwall-like frame. Packing 300 pounds on a five-foot ten-inch frame, he looks like the type of Soldier who could realistically pick up the truck the Army taught him to drive.

The next thing is the grip of his hand as it engulfs yours in a warm, strong handshake.

But ask him about his dream of playing football for the Nebraska Cornhuskers and suddenly the smile of a star-struck elementary student explodes from his face.

"It's always been there," he says, his face creased by the large, toothy smile. "When you grow up a Nebraska boy...you want to play Husker football. It's that simple."

"I grew up watching the '97, the '95 and the '94 teams. I heard about the '70 and '71 teams," said Wesson, referring to Nebraska's five national championship football teams. "I actually came up here when I was young and stood in the stands and thought, 'Wow, I'd love to play here someday.'"

Despite putting up good numbers as an offensive center and defensive lineman for the Papillion-LaVista football team, Wesson didn't play enough to attract attention from any college football teams. At the time, he said, it didn't matter.

"I knew from the 11th grade year that I was going to Nebraska because the Guard was going to pay for it," said Wesson, who enlisted in the Nebraska Army Guard two years ago last December.

However, simply getting qualified to go to basic training was a huge challenge. At the time of his enlistment, Wesson said he weighed around 375 pounds.

"I was a big boy," said Wesson, adding he spent most of his high school years lifting weights and supplementing his diet to build up his size for football. "I didn't know what running was, to be honest. So, I hit the track every day after school."

The first day, Wesson said, he struggled to finish a complete 400-meter lap. The next day, he completed two. "By the end of the week, I was doing a mile in 16 minutes, but I was doing it. By the

end of the month, I was doing a mile in under seven minutes."

"I just kept going and going and going until by the end of six months I was conditioned to do six miles a day," Wesson said. "So, when I got to basic, it really wasn't that hard for me. In fact, I was able to get into Alpha Squad, which was made up of the fastest runners. I ran that at 375 (pounds.) It just blew my drill sergeants away."

According to Wesson, he had to learn how to train differently. In order to go to basic training, Wesson had to pass a body composition test, which he did by recording a 28 percent body fat composition, earning him a waiver for his weight.

Basic training, however, was still hard.

"The fact is, you don't get to eat like you're used to and you don't get to eat after everything you do like you did at home," he said. "You aren't constantly supplementing, so you aren't building muscle. You aren't working out your biceps except when you are doing push-ups. I was doing weights every day."

"Running (however) really strengthened my legs and toned them out," he said. By the end of basic training, Wesson had slimmed down to an incredible 202 pounds, essentially losing nearly half of his body weight. He also earned the confidence of his drill sergeants, who designated him a trainee squad leader.

After returning home from basic training, Wesson settled into life as a student-Guard Soldier. Still, the dream of becoming a Husker football player nagged at him.

Last summer, he learned that Nebraska's new coach, Bo Pelini, had decided to reinvigorate the Cornhuskers' legendary walk-on program.

The program allows students to try out for the football team while paying their own way to college. Over the years, hundreds of Nebraska students, including Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen, have participated in the program.

Even though earning a spot on the walk-on team was a distinct long shot, Wesson decided to reach for his dream. Wesson said he began working out with hopes of attending the team's tryouts last fall. "In comparison to high school, I can really move. I'm much, much stronger. And I'm more alert in my surroundings. Why not?" said Wesson.

As fortune would have it, though, two days before the scheduled tryouts, Wesson was mobilized for the Hurricane Gustav relief effort.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Memorial Stadium Goal: Pvt. Michael Wesson stands overlooking the football field at Nebraska's Memorial Stadium. Although he's not a Nebraska Cornhusker Football player yet, Wesson hopes to make the team as a walk-on lineman. He recently took the first step when he attended tryouts for the walk-on program, Jan. 29.

"That kind of put me behind a little bit," Wesson said.

This past winter, Wesson said, one of his buddies told him that the Huskers were again planning to hold tryouts in January for current University of Nebraska-Lincoln students. About three weeks before the planned Jan. 29 workouts, Wesson's buddy called again to inform him that the tryouts would begin promptly at 6 a.m. at the Hawks Championship Center.

"I trained and trained," he said, adding that he put particular emphasis on weight training and running the 40-yard dash. "I wanted to be the biggest guy there strength-wise because I didn't know what to expect from the tryouts."

According to the *Lincoln Journal-Star* newspaper, approximately 40 UNL students showed up for the early morning workouts. Wesson was among them. He said the tryouts were run "militaristically."

"(The coaches) came in and said 'Line up. Get in line. We're going to take your weight and your name,'" Wesson said. "Everything was 'Yes, sir,' 'No, sir.' You had to have respect for them or they (would) kick you out right away."

The prospects then began running. First the 40-yard-dash, then three 55-yard-dashes, then 'shuttles,' which Wesson said consisted of four 15-yard dashes.

Wesson said he consistently met the minimum times for a lineman while beating out athletes trying out for the "skill position."

The coaches, said Wesson, seemed particularly interested in who was willing to put in the effort required of a Division 1 football player. "They were looking at how big your heart was, but at the same time they were looking at how good of condition you were in," he said.

Wesson said his only struggle came at the end of the shuttle run. After his partner made several false-starts requiring the two to start over, Wesson said he simply didn't have enough gas left in the tank. "My body just gave out and said, 'You gave it your all.'"

At the end of the tryouts, the coaches gathered the prospects around them and told them to keep working out if they were interested in participating in walk-on tryouts later this summer. They then named 10 athletes that they wanted to see back at those tryouts.

Wesson's name was among those listed.

"It was very fulfilling," said Wesson about hearing his name announced. "I was like, 'Hmm, I guess I did make an impact.' I was kind of expecting (to) hear it when I was outlasting the skill players. They were just giving up."

"I was just gassing it...just going and going," he added. "This is my dream."

Later, after the athletes were filing out of the Hawks Center, one of the coaches thanked Wesson for coming out. "I said, 'No problem sir,'" said Wesson. "They asked if I was military and I said, 'Yes, I'm in the Guard.'"

"He said that's probably why you lasted so long," added Wesson.

Wesson said he's planning to train hard and return for the tryouts. He said his goal is to decrease his weight to around 240 pounds while trimming his 40 time to around 4.7 seconds.

"I know what to expect now. I know what to train for."

Even though making the walk-on team is still a very distinct long shot, Wesson said the experience whetted his appetite to see his dream – or at least the pursuit of his dream – through to the finish.

"It would be amazing," said Wesson. "I've got time. Why not live the dream and go for it? You only live once."

Marathon officials encourage runners to try out for Nebraska team

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team is looking for a few good runners interested in tackling a pretty big challenge.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Kramer, state marathon program coordinator, Nebraska is looking for runners to compete in May's Lincoln/National Guard Marathon, which serves as the primary trials for the 'All Guard' Marathon Team.

Kramer said she hopes to field between 11 and 17 runners on this year's team.

"Last year we had a male make the (All Guard) team for the first time in several years," said Kramer. "We didn't have any females make the team, though, because many of the runners who have made it in the past had conflicts with schools, deployments or were

injured."

Kramer said she hopes that will change in 2009. A number of female runners will be back for the race this year.

Kramer said she's also already had inquiries from three athletes who are considering becoming members of the state team. She said she's looking for even more.

According to Kramer, Guardsmen who sign up to run the full marathon will receive a Nebraska uniform in exchange for agreeing to participate in a number of recruiting events and races during the year.

For those not sure they're ready to tackle the 26.2-mile race or take on the additional recruiting commitments that come with being on the team, Kramer suggests the half-marathon race.

"It's a good way to get your feet wet and to see if the program is for you," she said.

For those that compete in the full marathon, they are eligible

to compete for a spot on the "All Guard Marathon Team," made up of approximately the top 50 Guard marathoners in the nation.

Staff Sgt. Michael Hagen is the new National Guard Bureau Marathon Program coordinator. A former Kansas Air Guardsman, Hagen now works full-time for the Army Guard in Lincoln overseeing the team's participation in a number of national races.

Hagen has taken the team to the Air Force Marathon at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, the St. Jude's Marathon in Memphis, Tenn., and the Mardi Gras Marathon in New Orleans, La.

Hagen said the team did particularly well during the Feb. 1 race in New Orleans. "The race went really, really well," he said, adding the Guard fielded three half-marathon relay teams – mens, womens, and mixed – for the Merrill Lynch "Run For The Children" race, which benefited

Children's Hospital. Each Guard team won its individual category.

"On average, we beat the second place team by probably 28 minutes," said Hagen. He said each member of the four-person relay team completed a four-mile leg during the race. "The runners were really proud of their accomplishments."

Following the race, the teams were presented with a \$200 gift card to be used at local restaurants. After a quick discussion, the teammates donated the cards back to race organizers so that the Children's Hospital could give them to families in need.

"They pretty much decided at the finish line to tell the organizers to keep the cards and give it to a family that could better use it," said Hagen.

Along with the relay teams, Guard runners also did quite well. Troy Harrison of the Pennsylvania National Guard took fifth overall in the men's race

while Varinka Barbini, Kentucky National Guard, placed third overall in the women's race.

The race results were just half the success, however. Along with running in New Orleans, the Guard team also helped local recruiters by setting up a National Guard informational booth at the "Health and Fitness Expo" before the race.

There, the runners talked with other athletes about Guard benefits while informing them about the National Guard Marathon Program.

Hagen said the team collected a total of 58 leads for Guard recruiters at the Expo. It was the largest collection of leads that Hagen has seen since taking over the program and the largest that many on the team have seen in some time.

Kramer encouraged people interested in the state program to contact her at (402) 309-7112.