

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Season's Greetings

Army Guard medics wished farewell in October
See story and photos on 5.



Nebraska Guard finishes strong recruiting year

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Nebraska Army and Air National Guard recruiters enlisted nearly 600 new Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen in Fiscal Year 2009, ending the year on a strong note.

According to Nebraska Army National Guard recruiting officials, the Nebraska Army National Guard recruited a total of 471 new Soldiers during Fiscal Year 2009, which ended on Sept. 30.

The Nebraska Army National Guard ended FY 2009 with a total strength of 3,783 for an overall strength of more than 99 percent.

Nebraska Air National Guard recruiters also excelled in FY 2009 recruiting by enlisting 95 new Airmen into the force.

The Nebraska Air National

Guard ended the year with a total strength of 1,000 for an overall strength of 103 percent.

According to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, the recruiting efforts have placed the Nebraska National Guard in a strong position to continue to be prepared to support a wide array of natural or man-made domestic emergencies in Nebraska or other states while also continuing to fulfill contingency missions around the world.

"I'm very proud of the work that our Nebraska Army and Air National Guard recruiters have done this past year. Today's Nebraska National Guard is stronger, better equipped and better trained than at any other single time in our organization's history and I'm excited by the opportunities that lie ahead

See RECRUITING on 8.

Holiday on the Rails



Meeting The Big Guy: Noah Newton, 2, talks to Santa Claus, Dec. 4, while riding on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad's Holiday Express. According to Ann Newton, Noah's mom and wife of Sgt. Wes Newton, the trip was unforgettable. "It's his first train ride and his first time meeting Santa. It was awesome."

National Guard families enjoy unique railroad treat in December

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

"The thing about trains... it doesn't matter where they're going. What matters is deciding to get on."

— Conductor
Polar Express (2004 Warner Bros.)

Several hundred Nebraska military members and their family had a unique opportunity to get the holiday season started on the right foot – or rather track – recently when they were given a free 90 minute-long holiday-themed train ride, courtesy of BNSF Railroad.

Speeding along the Nebraska tracks aboard a specially outfitted "Holiday Express" train, the military families were treated to hot chocolate, cookies and even a visit from Santa Claus, who gave each child a specially created BNSF train-themed ornament.

"It's a lot of fun," said a wide-eyed Jackson McNally, 4, as he sat next to his 1-year-old brother Ashton and his father, 2nd Lt. John McNally, a member of the Lincoln-based 1167th Brigade Support Company, Dec. 4.

"It's really pretty," he added, looking around at the vintage passenger car that

See TRAIN RIDE on 18.

Air Guard support services consolidated into one squadron

By Capt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing's services and military support flights stood before their respective commanders for the last time in Lincoln, Nov. 14, as they prepared to combine into a single force support squadron.

During the 20-minute ceremony, the two commanders relinquished command of their affected flights and retired their flags.

Then the commander of what had been the 155th Military Sup-

port Flight took command of the new combined 155th Force Support Squadron by accepting the consolidated organization's new flag from Col Richard Evans, wing commander.

Both flights, which had been standing in separate formations, were then physically combined, weaving both together as a single formation.

Capt. Pamela Geistlinger, new 155th FSS commander, then took a few minutes to address the members of newly formed unit.

"If there's one constant in the military, it's change. We hear that

adage all the time, but we must accept it if we're to remain relevant as individuals and as an organization," said Geistlinger.

The active Air Force has already completed the organizational transition designed to put many areas that need each other to function smoothly, both at home and when deployed, under a single, streamlined control. The merger is designed to both cut costs and simplify processes important to military and family members on base.

Officials say it will not affect the outstanding service already given to customers by both sections.

"For instance, casualty affairs, mortuary affairs and the family program office work closely together, but fell under different flights," said Geistlinger during the change of command. "But ultimately each area is responsible for the care of our fallen or wounded warriors and their families and will now be one cohesive team."

According to Geistlinger, the change affects 46 military and civilian personnel on the base. Officers will have new job titles, but the enlisted members will keep their current positions. Unit officers will

See CONSOLIDATION on 2.

Guard's top chefs aim at national title

By Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

Call it the military's version of the "Iron Chef."

Competing on a grassy plain in central Nebraska while the sounds of Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers conducting marksmanship training echoed in the distance, the food service section of the 267th Support Maintenance Company, Nebraska Army National Guard, showcased their culinary abilities before a national judging panel while competing for the 42nd annual Phillip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Food Service, Oct. 17, at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

Working together under the ever-watchful eyes of the national inspectors, five 267th Maintenance Co. cooks prepared a meal for 50 Soldiers in a field environment using the unit's mobile kitchen trailer, essentially a kitchen

See COOKS on 3.



Photo by Mark Roland

Serving a Feast: Spc Matthew Plantenberg (right), a cook assigned to the 267th Support Maintenance Company, Nebraska Army National, serves an evening meal for hungry Army Guard Soldiers, Oct. 17, during the national judging competition for the 42nd Annual Phillip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Food Service.

Recruiter thanks Lincoln teacher by arranging trip for her, sick husband

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Cindy and Dean Hoehne had things pretty good. "Of course we had our normal worries, but it was just a pretty easy-going normal life," said Cindy.

Cindy, a career-coach teacher at Lincoln's North Star High School, and Dean, a night merchandiser at Sam's Club, have been married more than 24 years and have two children, James, 22, and Sarah, 19.

As a career-coach teacher, Hoehne provides students with as much information as possible about available opportunities so they can begin planning their future

See TEACHER on 8.

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NEWS DIGEST

■Afghanistan success attainable, Petraeus says

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Achieving success against extremists in Afghanistan is a challenging, yet attainable mission, the commander of U.S. Central Command said at a Capitol Hill hearing, Dec. 9.

Success in Afghanistan “is of enormous importance and it is attainable,” Gen. David H. Petraeus told members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

“But achieving our objectives will not be easy,” the four-star general told senators, noting “the challenges are great.”

Petraeus said he supports President Barack Obama’s revised Afghanistan strategy, part of which involves the deployment of 30,000 extra U.S. troops there over the next several months. “I do believe that the policy the president announced last week and the additional resources being committed will, over the next 18 months, enable us to make important progress in several critical tasks” in Afghanistan, said Petraeus, the architect of the Iraq surge.

Those tasks, he said, include reversing the Taliban’s momentum, increasing the capabilities and numbers of Afghan security forces, helping to improve Afghan governance and setting conditions for the start of the reduction in U.S. combat forces in July 2011 in a way that does not jeopardize the progress that has been achieved.

Though achieving these tasks will be difficult, Petraeus said, Afghanistan presents a no more hopeless situation than that which existed in Iraq prior to the start of the surge of forces there in 2007. Indeed, he noted, the level of violence and numbers of civilian deaths in Iraq during the height of the insurgency there were much higher than what has been experienced in Afghanistan.

“But, achieving progress in Afghanistan will be hard and the progress there likely will be slower in developing than was the progress achieved in Iraq,” Petraeus said.

■Defense secretary lauds National Guard for roles in Afghanistan, around world

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates noted the role the National Guard plays and will continue to play in Afghanistan and other anti-terrorism operations around the world, Nov. 19, when he addressed participants in the National Guard Bureau’s Joint Senior Leadership Conference.

Some 300,000 National Guard members, about 70 percent of the Guard force, have served in these roles since the 9/11 attacks, he said. In addition, nearly 65,000 Guardsmen are deployed in support of overseas operations. Defense Department officials recently announced that the Iowa National Guard’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team will deploy to Afghanistan in 2010.

Gates said he expects the Guard to continue to play a significant role in Afghanistan and in areas beyond combat operations: agricultural, rule of law and governance, among them.

He cited, for example, the benefit of agricultural development teams, Guardsmen who bring agricultural expertise to the effort.

“When you send Guardsmen with this kind of experience, it has a huge impact,” he said.

While recognizing these capabilities, Gates made clear he sees reserve component service members conducting these noncombat missions as only a temporary solution until other agencies and organizations step in with sufficient civilian expertise.

■Air National Guard crews prepare to fly C-27J Spartans

ARLINGTON, Va., (AFPS) – The Air National Guard, for the first time, will be the sole operator of a new aircraft straight off the assembly line when it starts operations with C-27J Spartan cargo planes.

The Spartan, the latest propeller-driven airlifter, is an “extremely rugged” aircraft designed for austere environments, Air Force officials said. It is about half the size of a C-130, with 3.5 cargo pallet positions.

“It is the first time in U.S. Air Force history where the service acquired a new airframe solely owned, operated and maintained by the Air National Guard,” said Lt. Col. Chris Beckman, the Air Guard’s aviation planning and execution chief.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates moved the C-27J program and its related direct support mission from the Army to the Air Force in April. The Army chief of staff, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., supported Gates’ decision. “We need the capability to resupply our forces,” he said. “We do not have to fly the planes to get that.”

Flying fixed-wing aircraft is not an Army core competency, the general added.

Since then Air Mobility Command and the Air National Guard have taken a serious approach to building the program, officials said.

“Making a switch like this is no small affair, especially at this phase in the acquisition process,” said Lt. Col. Gene Capone, Air Mobility Command’s C-27J test manager at the Joint Program Office. Capone added that the Army lost its fiscal 2010 funding for the C-27J due to the change, so the Air Force will fund the Army’s completion of the multiservice testing and evaluation.

Air National Guard pilots and loadmasters from the 179th Airlift Wing in Mansfield, Ohio, and the 175th Wing in Baltimore will be the first operational C-27J crews to be trained and deployed, and are critical participants in testing and evaluation, Beckman said. The testing and evaluation, scheduled for April, will determine if the C-27J program is ready for deployment and domestic operations, he added.

Two Army National Guard units, Company H, 171st Aviation Regiment, from Georgia and 1st Battalion, 245th Airfield Operations Battalion, from Oklahoma also will participate in the testing and evaluation.

In addition to aircraft in Mansfield and Baltimore, the Air Force will field C-27J’s at units in Fargo, N.D.; Bradley Air Field, Conn.; Battle Creek, Mich.; and Meridian, Miss.

Blue Angels coming back to Lincoln in September 2011

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The U.S. Navy’s “Blue Angels” are heading back to Lincoln, Neb., in 2011 to help the Nebraska National Guard mark an anniversary that has immense significance for the state’s military men and women, and their families.

The Navy’s premier jet demonstration team will be the headline act of a Sept. 10-11, 2011, air show hosted by the Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing, exactly 10 years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The Air Guard’s 155th ARW was called into action on 9/11, flying aerial refueling missions in support of combat air patrols over the nation following the attacks.

According to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, “the historic anniversary will make this one of the nation’s premier commemoration events on that day.”

“We’re proud the Blue Angels chose to be in Nebraska on that date,” he added.

This will mark the first time the Blue Angels have appeared in Lincoln since September 2006 when they were the headline act of a similar air show hosted by the Nebraska Air National Guard in cooperation with the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce.

That year, nearly 300,000 spectators saw the Blue Angels perform.

The 2006 air show was also a boon to the area economy, with contracts and sales generating over \$14,000 in sales tax revenue alone. The Lincoln Food Bank also benefited by donations of over 15,000 pounds of food and \$5,000 in cash. More than 650 special needs kids and their families were also able to enjoy a special show by the Blue Angels.

Along with marking the 10th anniversary of 9/11 attacks, 2011 is also the 100th birthday of naval aviation and the 65th birthday of the Nebraska Air National Guard, the 2nd oldest Air National Guard organization in the country.

“We are absolutely thrilled to be hosting the Blue Angels in 2011,” said Col. Rick Evans, 155th ARW commander. “The Blue Angels decision to come to Lincoln is a testament to the warm reception and great crowds that the Blue Angels drew in 2006. We are honored to host another air show for the community.”

The 155th ARW has appointed Lt. Col. Bob Stevenson as the project officer for the air show and coordination has begun with the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Lincoln Airport Authority and other sponsors and organizations that will play key roles in putting on the event in 2011.

Army leaders continue to struggle with Soldier suicide rate increases

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The rate of Soldier suicides continues to concern Army leadership, with 211 active duty and reserve component suicides confirmed this year, the Army’s No. 2 officer told Pentagon reporters Nov. 17.

“Simply stated, it is not a single problem with a defined set of symptoms or markers,” said Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, Army vice chief of staff. “There are no easy answers or solutions. We still haven’t found any statistically significant causal linkage that would allow us to effectively predict human behavior.”

As of Nov. 16, 140 active duty Soldiers and 71 reserve component troops had taken their own lives this year. The Army reported 140 active-duty suicides for all of 2008, a record high since 1980, when the Army first began tracking suicide statistics.

Although 2009 likely will be another record high for suicides in the Army, Chiarelli said, a variety of actions and studies have made progress. The general noted the recently launched Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program, the Suicide Prevention Task Force and the Army’s five-year research partnership with the National Institute of Mental Health. But leadership intervention is the biggest factor in prevention, he said.

Almost one-third of the Army’s suicides this year occurred in January and Febru-

ary. The trend for most months since then has been significantly lower because of the Army’s initiatives to raise awareness, identify undiagnosed mental illnesses and remove the stigma of psychological issues, Chiarelli said.

“We’re making progress,” the general said. “The general trend line, with the exception of a couple of months, has been down. If you were to ask me the single reason why I think we’re starting to make progress, it’s leader involvement across the entire force.”

The reality, Chiarelli noted, is that each incident is as unique as the individual. While the Army’s initial cause for concern was in the stresses brought on by frequent deployments, he said, about one-third of suicides have been by Soldiers who never deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Soldier suicides increased this year at Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Stewart, Ga.; and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, but were down at other frequently deployed Army posts such as Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, N.C.; and Fort Drum, N.Y., the general said.

Army officials are having difficulty pinpointing specific contributing reasons for suicide, he acknowledged, but have gained a better understanding of traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress as factors, he said.

CONSOLIDATION continued from page 1.

also attend a bridge school for legacy personnel and services officers, which can be done by correspondence. New officers will attend a combined in-residence course.

The upcoming unit compliance inspection in late 2010 will present some unique challenges for the FSS.

“They’ve not yet inspected Air National Guard bases under the new FSS construct because they were given a grace period after implementation,” said Geistlinger.

According to Geistlinger, the first units will be inspected at the start of 2010, so there won’t be many other bases to learn from their experience with the new squadron.

“Communication will be the biggest challenge since everyone is used to working independently within the framework of their own personnel and serviced areas. We need to get everyone thinking outside that box and moving in that direction,” she said.

“I think it will definitely be a great opportunity for all the personnel involved and I think both sides are looking forward to learning what their counterparts and their new teammates know and do,” Geistlinger added.



Photo by Senior Airman James Lieth

Two Units Become One: (From left) Col. Richard J. Evans III, 155th Air Refueling Wing commander, and Capt. Nicole Nuss, 155th Services Flight commander, retire the services flight’s flag during the 155th Force Support Squadron activation ceremony, Nov. 14, in Lincoln, Neb.

For example, some members of the personnel section helped in the dining hall earlier that day by serving food. It was a way to help both sections get to know what their new team members do on a drill

weekend, said Geistlinger.

“We have members deployed from (services) so they were short,” she said. “So the other side stepped in and helped out. I think they’ll do more of these things.”

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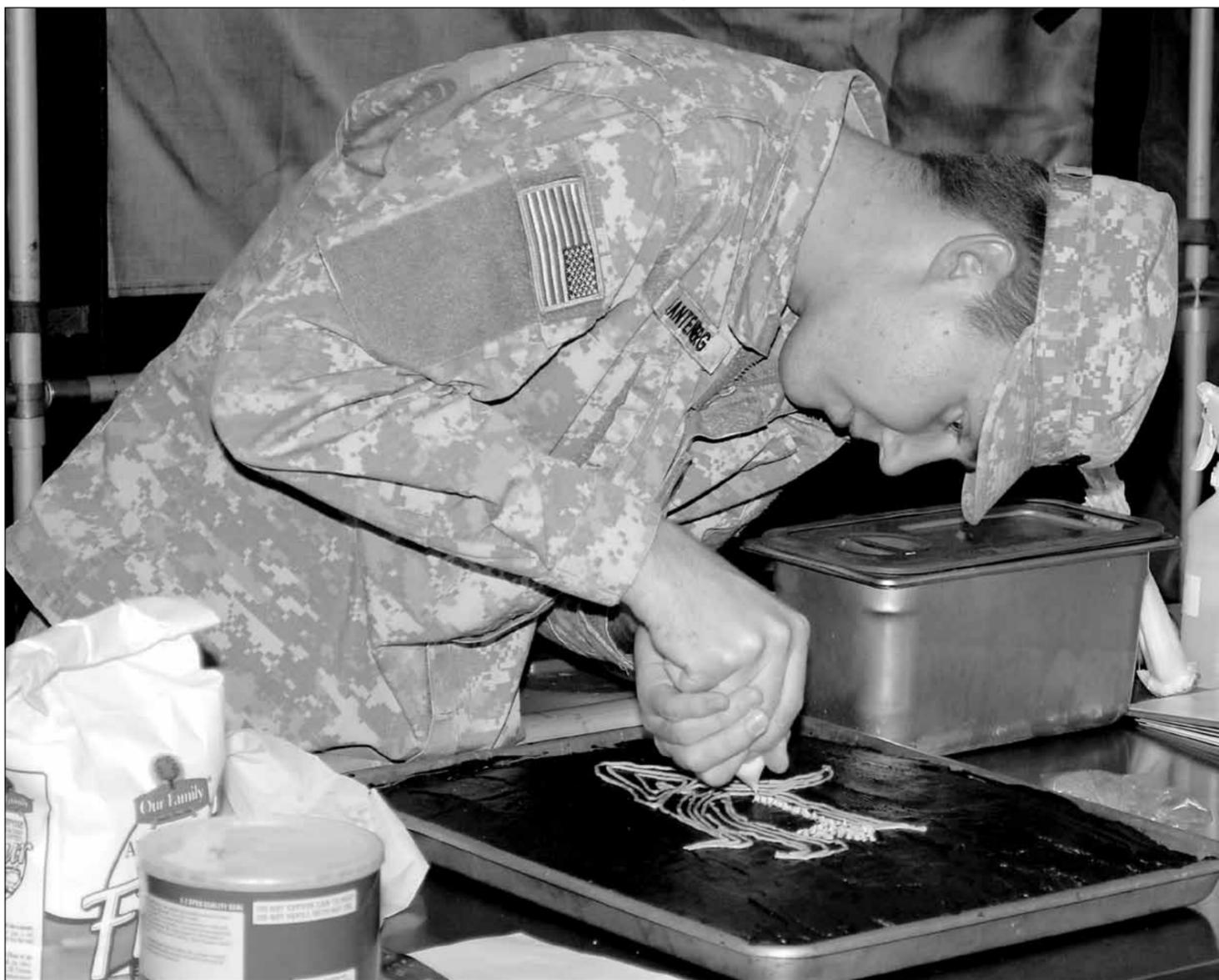
By The Numbers: A sample tray showing the precise serving portions for each part of the Oct. 17 meal hangs in the 267th Support Maintenance Company's mobile kitchen trailer during the Connelly Competition national inspection.



Photos by Mark Roland



Modeled For Success: Sgt. Javier Arias, head count specialist, puts the finishing touches on a sand table model the 267th Support Maintenance Company used to brief Connelly Competition inspectors.



Husker Cake: Spc. Matthew Plantenberg, a cook with the Lincoln-based 267th Support Maintenance Company, Nebraska Army National Guard, recreates his unit's Cornhusker patch in icing on a cake for the evening meal's desert.

COOKS continued from page 1.

on wheels. Along with being evaluated on their cooking abilities, the Soldiers also were graded on 10 separate areas ranging from cooking and sanitation procedures to their adherence to Army administrative, safety and supply regulations. Simply getting to this point meant that the section, which was representing Region 5 in the Army National Guard's National Field Kitchen Category, had to conduct hours of training and practice on the unit's mobile kitchen trailer to develop the level of expertise needed to be competitive.

"At first it was to get some experience for my cooks on a (mobile kitchen trailer), some field training," said Sgt. Katherine Smith, first cook for the maintenance company. "When they go to (advanced individual training) the MKT is already popped open. They just show them what it looks like. When they actually get to cook on it, it was good experience for them." "It just grew from there," Smith said. "When I learned that it was the first time Nebraska competed in five years, it became really important to do our best." The work must have paid off

because the cooks had already won the state and regional competition. Still, this was the national competition, which meant that the Soldiers had to take their efforts to an entirely different level. According to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tollie Yoder, company food service officer, the work actually started at the beginning of the year when the unit decided to compete in the competition. "When we first talked about competing (the cooks) said 'It would be easy, I cook.' I had to explain to them that it's more than just cooking... it's site setup, power plan, field sanitation issues, rodent disposal, sanitary issues, taking care of ration accounting, ration accessibility, ration control, portion control, trash management, water distribution point, and water purification tasks." Smith said the training and preparations made a major impact on the unit's success.

"When we learned that you have to do more to do it, it was like 'Alright we can do this.' Then it became really hard because we realized that we couldn't do it with just five cooks." Instead, Smith said, it took the entire unit to help the cooks prepare for the various stages of the competition. That level of support especially came in handy when the night before the regional competition a thunderstorm blew in, sending the Soldiers to tornado shelters while four-and-a-half inches of rain fell on the training site, flooding the area the mess section had spent days preparing for the competition. The unit halted training and moved the site to a downrange location and completely set up the new



Sharpening Up Equipment: Spc. Adreann Janacek, a 267th Support Maintenance Company cook, sharpens a knife as part of her preparations for the evening meal, Oct. 17, at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.



Water Inspections: Spc. Sean Hanger, Field Sanitation Team member, tests for chlorine concentration of a water sample taken from a water buffalo during the 267th Support Maintenance Company's participation in the 42nd annual Phillip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Food Service, Oct. 17 at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

site in one day. "That was very challenging, but they overcame it," Smith said. The October competition also marked the last time these Soldiers would be together as a team. Two cooks have transferred to another maintenance company and are preparing for deployment next year, while another will become a wheeled mechanic in a detachment closer to home and stay in the unit. Smith will also soon change jobs because of her full-time military position. Still, that didn't make the Soldiers work any less hard. In fact, it actually caused them focus that much more on making sure the inspection went well. "We all knew this was like our like our last hurrah," Smith said, "and the section wanted to do really well. Out of all the cooks I've ever worked with, this is probably one of the best because we got along so well. We all hope we will be able to work together in the future." After completing the inspection, the cooks now are participating in a different type of competition... the waiting game. They should find out how if their work paid off in December when the results are released. Smith was optimistic. "I think we set the bar really high. I think the biggest thing is that we couldn't have gotten this far without the unit's support and everyone in the cook's section really, really, really appreciates the help the unit gave us."

Guard medics complete final days at Fort Hood

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When it comes to providing medical care on an ever-changing battlefield, the medics of the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) know that time spent refining their skills in training often equates to lives they'll be able to save once they get to Iraq.

That's why the Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard's Lincoln-based unit took their time at Fort Hood, Texas, so seriously.

"It's good because then every medical procedure you do becomes second nature," said Pfc. Tori Morton, a 313th Medical Co. medic from Alliance, Neb., as she prepared to respond to a simulated emergency call, Nov. 13, at Fort Hood, Texas.

Morton and approximately 70 other unit Soldiers were completing the final days of a mission readiness exercise, the final step the unit had to successfully complete before deploying to Iraq.

"You don't have to stop and think about it," Morton said about the training she was receiving. "It just becomes something you do instead of something you have to think about. And it saves lives a lot quicker."

Since leaving Lincoln, Neb., on Oct. 17 the members of the 313th Med. Co., the Soldiers have spent their month-long stay at Fort Hood, Texas, accomplishing a wide array of tasks, ranging from day and night range qualifications to convoy live fire exercises, drivers training in the massive RG-33 Mine Resistant Ambush Vehicles (MRAPs), and improvised explosive device awareness and defense classes.

The mission readiness exercise – more commonly called an MRE by the Soldiers – was essentially



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Radio Links: Pvt. Jessica Kassebaum, a 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) medic from Lincoln, Neb., monitors radio traffic from her Humvee ambulance during a training exercise at Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 13. Medics have to be ready to respond to an emergency on a moment's notice.

the graduation exercise of the Fort Hood phase of the unit's mobilization.

According to Maj. Grant Siedenburger, unit commander, the exercise was designed to see if the unit could successfully perform their mission in a stressful, ever-changing climate.

"We're at the run phase," said Siedenburger, Nov. 13, the third day of the MRE. "What they've done is increase not only the patient load, but also the complexity of the patients... traffic accidents, multiple gun shot wounds, multiple casualties."

Additionally, Siedenburger said the trainers were also increasing the level of "white noise" the unit was receiving, essentially having members of the unit's headquarters staff respond to a wide array of communication traffic.

Siedenburger said the ultimate goal was to see if the unit was indeed ready to deploy.

"The importance is yet to be seen, but as a commander, it's a training event where I'm able to get everybody together for just over 30 days in order to see (if we're able) to execute," he said.

That training is monitored by outside observers, said Siedenburger, who then give him an unbiased appraisal of the unit's capabilities and steps the unit should take to increase its abilities in certain areas that they might not have thought of.

"It's an outside look that's able to really help the 313th," he said.

During this particular exercise, the unit was split into separate platoons. Each platoon's ambulance crews then were required to respond quickly to emergencies as they occurred, provide

the correct types of medical treatment and then efficiently move patients to treatment facilities or hospitals.

For example, during one particular exercise a three-person ambulance crew was required to respond to the scene of an accident where a civilian driver had been seriously injured.

Arriving on the scene, the three medics had to quickly assess the victim's injuries, move him to their nearby ambulance and then begin providing medical treatment – all under the ever-watchful eyes of an active Army medical trainer.

The exercise ended when the medics handed the injured truck driver off to a simulated hospital staff.

According to Pvt. Jeffrey Ostwald, a medic from Omaha, the training was crucial in preparing Soldiers like him for the rigors of the rapidly approaching deployment to Iraq.

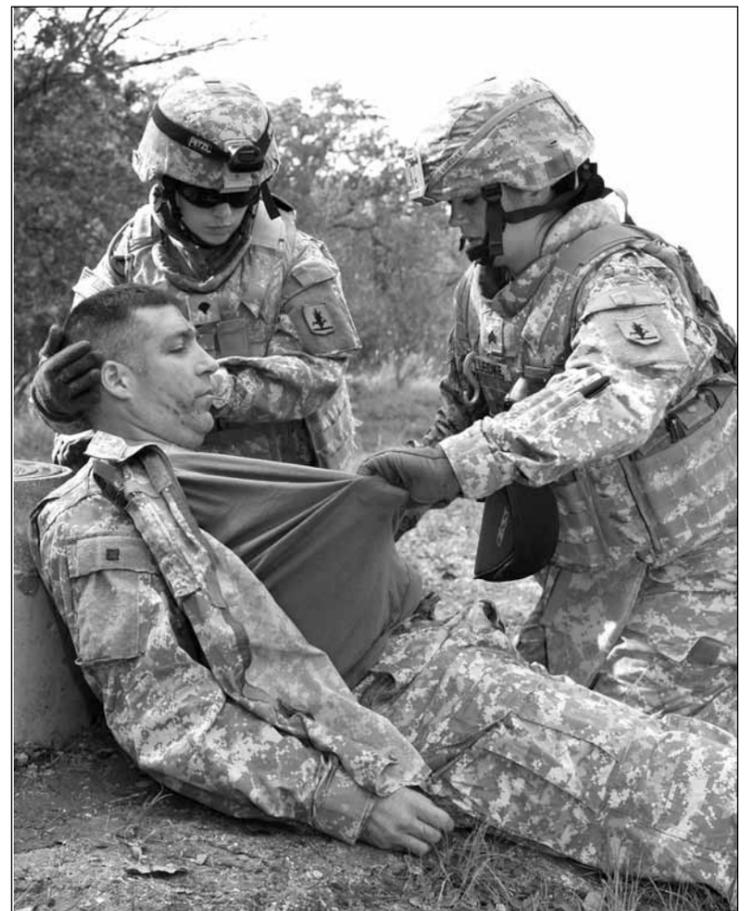
"I think it's kind of the next step up," said Ostwald, a 2001 graduate of Millard South High School. "With the deployment right around the corner, it's kind of coming to terms that it's a little more serious. And, as far as the casualties that we've been treating, they're actually people who are playing the parts of casualties a lot better than what we've dealt with in the past."

"I think it's really good hands-on training," he added. "I think it's been really good training."

Morton seconded that thought. "It's been going fast," said the 2002 Alliance High School graduate. "A lot of it we've already done, but it's good to get it into your head before we go over."

Siedenburger said the ultimate benefit of the training is that it gives the unit's Soldiers a month to really focus in on what they're about to do.

"Training right now is going very well," he said. "The motivation is high within the unit. They can see that end-state... that we're currently going down the road to



Roadside First Aid: Spc. Catherine Clark and Sgt. Bethany Luedke, 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), tend to a truck driver after he sustained "injuries" in a simulated traffic accident.

Nebraska Soldiers okay after deadly shootings

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers conducting mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas, were unharmed during the Nov. 5 attack at the Soldier Readiness Processing Center that claimed the lives of 13 Soldiers.

According to Maj. Grant Siedenburger, commander of the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) that was conducting mobilization training for their upcoming deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, members of his unit were training at several locations on North Fort Hood, located approximately 45 minutes away from the site of the attacks, when they were suddenly informed to take shelter.

"Suddenly the loud speakers around the post went on, informing us to take shelter," said Siedenburger. "And that's pretty much where we stayed until around 7 p.m. that evening."

Within minutes, Siedenburger said he was able to get a head count of his Soldiers and call

back to Nebraska to inform senior Nebraska Army National Guard leaders that the members of the 313th Med. Co. were safe and accounted for.

The Lincoln-based unit wasn't the only Nebraskans affected by the shootings.

Lt. Col. Dan Lonowski and Lt. Col. Martin Riley, members of Nebraska's Joint Force Headquarters, were also at Fort Hood preparing for an overseas deployment. The two Guard officers, who mobilized in support of the Alabama Army National Guard's 135th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, had just arrived at Fort Hood a few days prior to the shootings in preparation for a deployment to Afghanistan. They were just a few blocks away from the deadly incident.

At the time, Lonowski said, they were also told to take shelter. "We were basically kept in a warehouse until around 7 p.m.," said Lonowski, a public affairs officer.

One member of the Alabama's 135th ESC was wounded in the attack, but is expected to recover, said Lonowski.

that Iraqi operational theater."

The training also has raised Siedenburger's confidence in his unit's ability to perform well in a difficult environment.

"The comfort level has definitely increased," he said. "We're able to see the teams start to meld... we

have the focus of the Soldiers and they're tracking, and confidence is way up."

Which ultimately could make the difference in Iraq, said Morton.

"We are more than ready to get to Iraq and start doing our actual job and get started helping people."



Preparing For A Mission: Pfc. Tori Morton, a 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) medic from Alliance, Neb., prepares her medical bag during a lull in the training, Nov. 13, at Fort Hood, Texas.

Defense Department launches review in wake of Fort Hood shootings

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates announced the Defense Department will conduct a broad review of the Nov. 5 Fort Hood, Texas, shooting that left 13 dead and dozens injured.

Former Army Secretary Togo West and retired Navy Adm. Vernon Clark, former chief of naval operations, will head the initial 45-day review, which will inform a follow-on investigation expected to last four to six months.

"The shootings at Fort Hood raise a number of troubling questions that demand complete, but prompt answers," Gates said during a Nov. 19 Pentagon briefing announcing the review.

"It is prudent to determine immediately whether there are internal weaknesses or procedural shortcomings in the department that could make us vulnerable in the future."

The department review is separate from both the criminal investigation of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan – the Soldier charged with 13 counts of premeditated murder – and a review ordered by President Barack Obama to take a government-wide look at all intelligence related to the incident. Initial findings of the president-mandated review were due Nov. 30.

The purpose of the department review is three-fold, Gates said, including targeting possible gaps

in procedures for identifying dangerous service members who could pose credible risks to other troops. The review also will assess how "adverse information" about troops is recorded and handled, and will gauge the level of security and emergency response capabilities at Defense Department facilities.

As part of the initial review, each military service branch will appoint a senior official to work with Clark and West on service-specific issues, Gates said.

"In light of the Fort Hood incident and unique challenges, the Army will conduct a more in-depth, detailed assessment of whether Army programs, policies and

procedures reasonably could have prevented the shooting," he said.

The Army's findings will be submitted as part of the Army's contribution to the departmental review, Gates added.

He noted the initial review represents only the beginning of the process, with preliminary findings leading into a follow-up investigation.

"Its results will inform and largely shape a department-wide follow-on examination of any systemic institutional shortcomings, an examination I expect to be completed within four to six months," he said.

The more in-depth review will

entail each service selecting an investigative panel that will report their findings up the chain of command to a department-level panel.

The department-wide group will assess the findings and identify changes needed in policy and procedure, as well as areas where additional resources are required, Gates said.

"Among other issues, this review will cover topics such as service member support programs, care for victims and families of mass-causality events, how we assess and sustain the performance of health-care providers, and overall stress on the troops and their families," he said.



Goodbye: Sgt. Annie Kobza, a member of the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) gives her brother Andrew a long hug, Oct. 17, following a ceremony at Lincoln's North Star High School wishing members of the Nebraska Army National Guard unit well before starting a mission that will ultimately take them to Iraq.



Hard To Let Go: Sgt. Justin Theasemeyer, a 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) health care specialist, gives his wife Megan a kiss as they hold hands moments before the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier loaded onto a bus bound for Fort Hood, Texas.

Stepping Off Into Familiar Territory

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

■Nebraska Guard medical company wished farewell before beginning second Iraqi Freedom deployment

Within every unit deployment ceremony, there are dozens upon dozens of individual stories to tell. The Oct. 17 send-off ceremony for members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) was no different.

Friends, fellow Soldiers, dignitaries and family members by the hundreds filled Lincoln North Star High School's auditorium to overflowing as they wished the approximately 70 members of the Lincoln-based medical company farewell.

The Soldiers were beginning the next step of a mission that will ultimately take them back to Iraq for the second time in five years.

And within each individual group, special stories unfolded on a brisk, early autumn morning in Lincoln.

Take Sgt. Laura Yeramyshva for example. A 313th Med. Co. medic, this is the 23-year-old's second mission to Iraq. So, she should have already known what its like to leave home and deploy overseas.

Still, the October send-off ceremony was a completely new experience for Yeramyshva.

When the 313th Med. Co. was called up for Operation Iraqi Freedom in October 2004, Yeramyshva was still in advanced individual training, learning the skills needed to be an effective combat medic. By the time she got home, the unit had already deployed, so the young Nebraska Soldier mobilized separately with one other 313th Med. Co. officer and caught up with her unit approximately two months into its year-long mission.

"The first time it was just kind of saying goodbye individually and then we left," said Yeramyshva. "There was no big send off or anything."

This time Yeramyshva was leaving with her fellow company mates, which created an unexpected situation. Yeramyshva's family seemed to be determined to send the maximum amount of support they could to the Nebraska Soldier as more than 50 family members and friends crowded into North Star High School to wish the medic well.

"There's just so much more family," said Yeramyshva shortly after posing with her extended family for photographs. She added that leaving this time was probably a little more

emotionally taxing.

"It's a little harder."

While Yeramyshva mingled with her family, Sgt. Justin Theasemeyer, a unit health care specialist was participating in a much more intimate, yet equally important farewell.

Sitting on a bench away from the growing crowds, Theasemeyer was spending his last few moments in Nebraska with his wife Megan and their 11-month-old daughter Atley.

The Beatrice-native admitted he was fighting a few nerves as he prepared to say goodbye to his family to begin his first overseas since joining the unit three years earlier.

"A lot of nerves," said Theasemeyer. "Not being able to see my family for a year, that's probably the most nerve-racking. I'm nervous to see what life is going to be like over there."

"I'm excited to be able to go over there and do this job, but yet I feel like I'm going to be a little bit homesick at first," he added.

Probably the toughest part, said Theasemeyer, will be missing the next 12 months of his daughter's development.

"I'm going to miss her first and probably second birthday. Probably the most important years of a kid's life are the first two," he said. "I was hoping that she'd start walking... and she's getting to the point where she'll take a step and then she'll go down to her knees."

"We did celebrate her birthday a month early so that I could be part of it," said Theasemeyer, who added that his father also served in the military, so he understands the stress that a deployed parent can have on a child. "I'm looking forward to coming back and seeing how much she's changed."

According to the dignitaries who came to formally wish the Soldiers farewell while also offering words of support to the families left behind, Nebraska and the United States can never fully repay the sacrifices being made on their behalf.

"I want to say to the Soldiers of the 313th, we're very, very proud of you," said Gov. Dave Heineman.

"You did an unbelievable job five years ago when you were in Iraq. I know you will do an outstanding job again this time."

"And I want you to know on behalf of the state, (the citizens of Nebraska) know what this is all about," he added. "We are engaged in a War on Terror. There are others out there who want to destroy what we stand for in terms of our freedoms and the opportunities that we have in this great country called the United States of America. So, you have a very, very important mission. The citizens of this state understand that."

Sen. Mike Johanns agreed.

According to Johanns, who traveled to Iraq several years ago as a member of President George Bush's cabinet and spent time with Soldiers from Nebraska and Iowa, he's convinced America's military men and women are committed to the success of the mission and that he must do all he possibly can to give them the tools they need.

"I think there are really two things that I want to focus on today that I want to tell the Soldiers," he said. "The first thing is, as long as I have a voice on the floor of the Senate, I will stand up to get you the resources you need to fight this War on Terror, because I just fundamentally believe that you don't send men and women into harm's way and then not give them the resources necessary."

"And then the second thing is something that I know we will all be doing in the weeks and months ahead," Johanns added, "that is that I will remember each of you in my prayers daily and I will remember your families in my prayers so that you will come home to us in the months ahead safe and sound."

According to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, the members of the 313th Med. Co. are trained and prepared to conduct "their life-saving mission" with exceptional skill and expertise.

"I am absolutely positive that they are going to perform magnificently in theater," he said. "There's a lot of experience in this unit.



Family Support: Sgt. Laura Yeramyshva (lower center) poses for a photograph with the more than 50 members of her extended family who gathered together, Oct. 17, to wish the Nebraska Army National Guard medic farewell.



Good Luck: Members of Staff Sgt. John Ternus' family and friends gather along a sidewalk to wish the Nebraska Soldier good luck. Pictured are (from left) Jason son) with daughter Haley, wife Lynda, Brad Wiland (friend), Brenda (daughter), Jenny (daughter), Kayton (grandson.)

For our family members, they can take comfort in that. They are well trained, they are well led and they are eager to get on with their business of performing their life-saving mission in Iraq."

Lyons also thanked the families and employers attending the ceremony "for loaning us your loved ones and employees here for service with the Nebraska National Guard."

"I know for the family members here, it's hard to see your Soldiers leave. You need to take faith in knowing that they have trained hard for this mission and that when they leave Fort Hood, Texas, they will be the best trained and best equipped unit that the United States Army can possibly put into the field."

Lyons also pledged the full weight of the Nebraska National Guard's support to the families left behind. "We can provide the best possible support to our families and our employers of the Soldiers of the 313th and that's exactly what we're going to do."

Maj. Gran. Siedenbug, company commander, said the unit is now ready to return to Iraq and begin supporting the mission it has trained for months to do.

"We are stepping off and into

familiar grounds," he told the assembled crowd, adding that the unit plans to build upon the history and lineage that the unit recorded during its first Iraq deployment. "Throughout the past couple weeks, the recurring question has been: 'Commander, are you ready?'"

"The answer without any reservation or hesitation is, 'Yes.'"

Siedenbug added that the unit will train even harder during its time at Fort Hood so that it can provide the best possible care in Iraq. "During the next year, it's not about oneself," he said. "It's about sustaining what we as Soldiers and what we as Americans believe in."

Siedenbug wasn't the only one excited to get started. Both Yeramyshva and Theasemeyer said that despite the nerves, they're ready to go to Iraq and provide the best medical support available.

"We've been training for this and getting ready for this for nearly two years. Ever since we've been on alert, we've been training like crazy. We're well equipped and really prepared to do really good things over there," said Yeramyshva.

"I'm excited to go and do my job," added Theasemeyer. "I'm going to enjoy it and my family, I know, is going to be taken care of back home."

Dozens sign oath supporting reservists

■Norfolk-area employers pledge public support to National Guard, Reserve employees in largest state ESGR ceremony

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

Dozens of Nebraska employers gathered in Norfolk, Neb., to form the largest single Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve statement of support certificate signing ceremony, Oct. 28. Approximately 55 employers signed the document during a unique ceremony at the Faith Regional Medical Center, while an additional 25 employers signed the statement the day before, according to ESGR staff.

"We have a lot of employers here that have tremendous support to the Reserve and Guard," said Jim Sinek, chief executive officer of Faith Regional Medical Center.

"One of the keys here today is getting out the message to other employers that maybe aren't as aware of the law, maybe don't understand how two-plus-two equals four relative to their ability to have a business in America (by being) protected the way we are by these brave men and women," he said.

The conference room was filled with a diverse cross section of business owners, civic leaders, local and state government officials, and representatives from the National Guard, Army Reserve, Air Force Reserve and Naval Reserve.

According to Sinek, supporting Guardsmen and Reservists is simply the right thing to do.

"We have 102 employees in Faith Regional Health Services that have affiliations with, or family members in, the armed forces. We have developed and modified a whole number of policies to comply with the law," said Sinek.

"But most important is to develop that culture that is supportive of the folks that are in the Guard and Reserve so that when they go out and work on behalf of



Photos by David Nore

All Together Now: Norfolk area employers and civic leaders pledge their support to the National Guard and Reserves, Oct. 28, at Faith Regional Medical Center in Norfolk, Neb.



Pledging Their Support: Clark Froehlich, president of Bank First, and Jim Mangels, president of 1st National Bank, sign statements of support at Faith Regional Medical Center in Norfolk, Neb., Oct. 28.

America, and on our behalf as far as being able to have businesses in America, that they can feel comfortable that they can come back to their job and that their employer will support them"

Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant

general for Nebraska, said in today's operational climate it's imperative for employers and their Guard and Reserve employees to work closely together.

That's why he was so appreciative of the employers who gathered

in Norfolk to voluntarily sign the certificate of support.

"To those of you here that employ reservists, it is a sacrifice," he said. "Employers are partners in our formations; family members are partners in our formations; I want to thank you for your support."

Jim Duel, ESGR area chair, said the certificate of support is one way that employers can publicly state their support for their Guard and Reserve employees.

"These certificates provide a way for businesses and others to demonstrate visible, public support for the civilian-Soldiers who now make up half of the U.S. armed forces," he said.

ESGR volunteers provide free education, consultation and, if necessary, mediation for employers of Guard and Reserve personnel, according to William Nelson, ESGR program support specialist. Employers interested in obtaining more information can contact him at (402) 309-7105 or william.nelson1@us.army.mil.

Defense Department authorizes Army National Guard units preparing for mobilizations to conduct contiguous training

ARLINGTON, Va. (NGNEWS) — Mobilizations for most Army National Guard units run for a total of 12 months, which includes training and deployment time.

However, recent changes have been made that allow units to conduct pre-deployment training in Title 32 status before moving to their post-mobilization site in Title 10 status.

This adjacent training can be up to 45 days for aviation units and up to 30 days for other units based on their assigned missions.

The secretary of defense recently granted temporary authority to allow unit commanders and adjutants general to request the additional training time under the Contiguous Mobilization Policy, which will allow the unit to remain under a Title 32 state status while preparing for the upcoming deployment.

In representing the collective view of 53 of his colleagues, Maj. Gen. Greg Wayt, adjutant general of Ohio, said, "We believe this is the right decision for the members of the National Guard, their families and employers as we continue to provide trained and ready Soldiers and Airmen in support of overseas contingency operations, and I appreciate the secretary's support of this initiative."

Contiguous mobilization training is conducted by a traditional Guard unit.

"It is connected to its mobilization date, so there is no break between when their orders have them

report to an Army mobilization platform and when they complete the state training," said Col. Robert Moore, chief of the Army National Guard training division. "They just go completely through it."

The program is designed for units that, because of their mission requirements, don't necessarily fit into the 12-month deployment mold.

"What we found out... is that not every unit fits in that template and that things change, and we need to set some other options," Moore said.

The option of additional training time can allow the Soldiers of a deploying unit additional time to hone the skills required for the mission of the unit.

"Sometimes a unit will find out it... has an unusual mission or a difficult mission or something different than it normally trains for and it needs to train adjacent to federal mobilization," said Moore. "Or, some of the big units — the brigade combat teams — are just so large it takes a little bit more time to get them ready."

It also allows unit members to develop and build on the collective tasks of the unit.

"Our job is to provide trained and ready units," said Moore. "Without being able to have everybody together for a period of time, to include the leadership, you can't do that. You can only concentrate on individual skills. This allows them to perfect their training as a unit to the appropriate level."

Capt. Rick Scoggins, who is currently deployed with the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, North Carolina Army National Guard, said contiguous training kept critical Soldier skills from perishing due to breaks in service. "This led to a better trained, more proficient, confident force," he said. "The teamwork established early on was reinforced by contiguous operations."

There are other benefits to additional training time. Many units will spread out training opportunities over a period of weeks or months prior to a deployment.

The contiguous training option allows for that training to be consolidated into one block, giving the Guard member greater stability with his family and civilian employer, said Moore.

"It means that a traditional Guardsman has a little more security in terms of benefits and not having broken employment," said Moore. "It just allows him to have the security that he will leave his employer, have his benefits and be assured that he will be able to pay his rent and then be transitioned into the regular Army (for the deployment)."

The contiguous training option, however, isn't automatically granted. Unit commanders must request authorization for the additional training time through their state's adjutant general.

The request will then be forwarded through the National

New program honors Air Guardsmen, families for deployments

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Eight Nebraska Air National Guard officers and their families were honored by Brig. Gen. Steve Adams, assistant adjutant general, Air, for their work and sacrifices during deployments in support of the Global War on Terrorism at a Nov. 15 ceremony held at the Waverly Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9875.

The ceremony, which was held during the Nebraska Air National Guard's Joint Headquarters reunion, is part of a new Air National Guard-sponsored program called Hometown Heroes Salute.

Hometown Heroes Salute is one of the largest recognition endeavors in the history of the Air National Guard.

According to Air Guard officials, the program is designed to honor Airmen and their families for the sacrifices they have made during deployments lasting more than 30 consecutive days in support of such contingency operations as Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, Hurricane Katrina and others.

Announced by Chief Master Sgt. Richard Smith, then-command chief master sergeant of the Air National Guard during a senior leadership conference in November 2008, the program is currently honoring those Airmen affected by deployments since 2001.

Beginning in 2010 the program will honor those Airmen and their families who have been deployed since Jan. 1, 2009.

The November ceremony was actually the third such event honoring Nebraska Air National Guard Airmen.

On Sept. 19 the 155th Air Refueling Wing honored approximately 400 unit Airmen during the organization's annual Honors Formation.

The 170th Operations Group held its Hometown Heroes Salute ceremony, Nov. 14, at the 55th Maintenance Group theater at Offutt Air Force Base. A total of 17 Nebraska Air Guardsmen and their families were honored during that event.

The awards given to the Airmen are based upon a tiered system. Those who deployed from 30-179 consecutive days received a framed Heroes Salute Coin with a letter of appreciation signed by the Air National Guard director and command chief master sergeant.

Those who were deployed between 180-365 consecutive days receive a framed American flag with Hometown Heroes Salute Coin.

Those deploying for 366 consecutive days and longer receive an eagle statue with a Hometown Heroes Salute Coin.

Additionally, the spouse or significant other of the deployed Airman receive a Hometown Heroes Salute engraved rosewood pen and pencil set while each child of the deployed Airman received a set of dog tags engraved with the Homeland Heroes Salute logo.

Each honored Airman is also given a Hometown Heroes Salute medallion to present to the center of influence of his or her choosing.

Medical specialists brush up on skills in England

■ Two-week exercise at RAF Lakenheath gives 155th Medical Group specialists opportunity to conduct critical training

By Senior Airman Brandon Kusek
Staff Writer

For many, a late summer trip to England would seem like the perfect vacation. For the more than 45 members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Medical Group, the Aug. 15-29 annual training at RAF Lakenheath, England, was anything but a vacation. They were traveling overseas to receive a wide variety of medical training that will ultimately help them be much more capable during overseas deployments.

"It was great training," said Master Sgt. Todd Schneider, 155th Med. Group superintendent of Aerospace Medicine. "With our limited time during drill weekends in Lincoln, it's hard to get the time to complete our required skill training."

"By traveling to England, the unit was able to focus on our training without having to worry about things like (Preventative Health Assessments) and all of the other things we do during a drill weekend. Also, because we're not a treatment facility in Lincoln, there are certain things that we simply can't do," he said. "By going overseas, we were able to concentrate on our training, which will help us if we're ever deployed."

While in England, the 155th Med. Group specialists worked side-by-side with their counterparts from the 48th Medical Group at RAF Lakenheath, essentially serving in a wide variety of areas throughout the base hospital as well as at the base's optometry, dental and medical administrative clinics and offices.

Schneider said the Airmen who participated in the training came from a cross-section of specialties ranging from nursing services, aerospace medicine, health service management, flight medicine, medical service corps, public health, dental and optometry.

For members of the unit's nursing services section, the training meant the opportunity to work in a wide array of hospital areas including rotations in the post-anesthesia care unit, the obstetrics ward, the surgical unit, emergency room and the family medicine unit.

According to Senior Master Sgt. Scott Boden, unit health systems specialist, the training was something the group needed badly.

"We haven't had a training (deployment) like this in seven years – it's supposed to be every five," said Boden.

"We can't do surgeries or patient care. One



Photos by Senior Airman Brandon Kusek

Building Lifesaving Teamwork Skills: Tech. Sgt. Jeff Frey (left) and Staff Sgt. Matt Jordan perform lifesaving techniques on a simulated emergency mannequin during the 155th Medical Group's two-week training exercise at RAF Lakenheath, England.

of our main purposes in Lincoln is PHAs," he said.

"We really want to get training requirements signed off that we can't get anywhere else and do some helpful networking."

This was not the first deployment for some of the Nebraska Airman. However, for others like Senior Airman Sarah Chadwick, coming to England was a unique first experience.

"I was very excited when I found out because this is my first time going overseas for anything," Chadwick said. "I was looking forward to going as a unit and getting to work together not only with the people from Lincoln, but from Lakenheath also."

The opportunity to use some skills she hadn't practiced since technical training school made the Airman a little anxious.

"I didn't really know what to expect because it has been a while since I've worked in a hospital," she said. "But I was ready to be busy and get to put my skills to work in a fully functional hospital."



(Above) **Casting Call:** (From right) Tech. Sgt. Kevin Jones, 48th Medical Group, RAF Lakenheath, demonstrates casting techniques on Master Sgt. Todd Schneider, 155th Medical Group, Nebraska Air National Guard.

(Left) **Gentle Touch:** Senior Airman Sara Chadwick checks on a newborn girl at the 48th Medical Group Maternity Ward at RAF Lakenheath, England.

Nebraskans receive valuable hands-on training during Lakenheath mission

By Senior Airman Brandon Kusek
Staff Writer

Pigs feet, fiberglass and training dummies.

For the aerospace medical technicians of the Lincoln-based 155th Medical Group, Nebraska Air National Guard, the learning was non-stop during their Aug. 15-29 annual training in England, courtesy of members of the 48th Medical Group from RAF Lakenheath.

One day in particular was especially loaded with training for many of the Nebraska Air Guardsmen.

The Airmen spent a lot of time learning about trauma and medical assessments, casting and suturing during a day-long exercise where the 48th Med. Group instructors taught new skills while also offering refresher training in areas the Nebraskans may not have practiced in since technical training school.

One Lakenheath member the Airmen became familiar with was Tech. Sgt. Victor Malone, 48th Medical Group noncommissioned officer-in-charge of clinical education. Malone played a huge part in planning and executing the training.

"We found out on pretty short notice and tried to fit in as much stuff as possible with what fit training requirements," he said.

"So we lined up things like patient assessment, trauma assessment, eyes and nose intake and outtake, and running the nurses and med techs through medical

simulations."

In one session, the Airmen used medical dummies. In another – the casting session – Orthopedic Clinic specialists built arm casts and let members of 155th Med. Group cut them off. Finally in the suturing portion, the Lakenheath technicians provided pigs feet so that the Nebraskans could practice hands-on suturing.

"The most beneficial was the suturing by far because you don't do it in the field, you do it in the clinic. But realistically we could possibly do it in Lincoln, so it's good to get hands-on training in something like that," said Staff Sgt. Matt Jordan, an aerospace medical technician from Nebraska.

"If someone working during a duty week-



Photos by Senior Airman Brandon Kusek

Practical Training: Tech. Sgt. Heather Burkholder, 155th Medical Group, Nebraska Air National Guard, learns suturing skills while using pigs feet during a deployment to RAF Lakenheath, England.

end were to suffer a laceration, we now have people capable of taking care of the injured person right there on the base," Jordan added.

One of the most unique training experiences was the use of the 48th Medical Group's simulation mannequin.

The medical simulation mannequin was purchased to help doctors, nurses and medical technicians practice their emergency procedures.

"We wanted something that would make the docs, nurses and med techs more comfortable so when they practice, they're not practicing on live people," said Malone.

"This way they can see what they did right, what they did

wrong...and if they mess up in the practice room, no one dies."

Because of the amount of hands-on training time that Guardsmen are restricted to, Malone said he was pleasantly surprised at how well the Nebraskans performed and accepted the training he and his staff provided.

"My experience with the Air Guard is from deployments; and they can do everything that we can on the active side, it's just that sometimes it takes a little more time to get them spun-up," he said.

"That's why we're doing the training. They may not have been on the level of training that we are on the active side when they came, but they will be by the time they leave."

One group he was particularly pleased with was the medical technicians, saying that the feedback they gave him was extremely helpful. Malone said he prepared the training no differently than he would for an active duty person.

"The approach I take every day to training is that your students are a direct reflection of the instructor," he said. "If they succeed in the real world, we succeeded in the classroom."

One of the biggest points Malone tried to constantly drive home was the fact that a person should never stop learning.

"Stuff is changing everyday and our job as medics in the military is to be on top of things. If you don't learn everything you can and aren't as well trained in your job as you can be, people die," he said.

"No matter what you think, no matter what you do, the moment you stop learning you're dead, or someone else is."

Army Guard company earns prestigious maintenance awards

By Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

The old adage goes: "a mechanic's vehicle is the last one to get worked on."

Members of the 267th Maintenance Company (Support Maintenance Company) recently proved that they consider maintaining their own equipment a major part of their job when they won the Nebraska and regional Army Award For Maintenance Excellence and placed sixth nationally in National Guard Bureau's Medium Modified Table of Organization and Equipment category.

The award, which is one of the categories of the Combined Logistics Excellence Awards program, is designed to showcase units for their commitment to the maintenance of their equipment and what the unit does to improve itself.

"The AAME is a competition not

only on how units do maintenance, but also overall training (preventive maintenance checks and services)," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 KC Sohl, automotive maintenance warrant officer for the 267th SMC. "(It also looks at) what we do to make the unit better, what we do on a day-to-day basis to make the unit better."

In order to compete in the competition, Sohl built a packet that detailed the unit's combined efforts. That packet was then evaluated and scored at each level by boards that scrutinized them to determine which units best contributed to the overall Army readiness.

Just a quick look at the packet shows that Fiscal Year 2009 was an extremely productive year for the 267th SMC.

The unit started the year as part of the 1,000 Nebraska Soldiers who deployed to Louisiana, providing maintenance support for the relief

efforts of Hurricane Gustav.

Throughout the year members conducted training, briefings and certified on all pre-deployment training and assistance team requirements for the M-1 year in the Army Force Generation training model, completed quick reactionary force training, combat lifesaver course and driver training.

Many unit members also completed required military occupational specialty, noncommissioned officer education system and officer education system schools. Others completed such training as the movement officer course, hazardous material training and ammunition handlers' classes.

The unit also completed required preventative maintenance inspections, services and maintenance on their own equipment while still performing maintenance operations at the various state maintenance shops and supply centers.

That came on the heels of 36 unit Soldiers volunteering to deploy or command directed to transfer to other mobilizing Nebraska units.

The unit also spent time building family support through Family Readiness Group activities and a picnic, while also supporting the community during Operation Santa Claus and other community projects.

Though Sohl put the packet together, he was adamant about where the credit goes for the unit's success.

"It's not me that wrote the packet... I just put the words in. I just put it together. That's all I did," he said. "It wasn't me turning the wrenches. I wasn't the one inspecting the weapons. I wasn't the one doing the services."

"They want to see what makes our unit so great and I will tell you what, it's not me, it's the unit as a whole," Sohl added. "It's (Sgt 1st Class) Larry Martin - he's always

trying, he's always striving for more training and better resources. The 267th has always had good training and why... because Martin is always out there putting his foot forward trying to get the best we can."

"Same with the warrants, same with the NCOs - they're always trying to strive to put out a better product for people, for other units," he said. "It's the unit as a whole, it's not just one person."

Reflecting back on the busy year, Sohl had a personal message for the members of his unit: "Thank you everyone for what they've done for the 267th. I really do appreciate what everybody does and what everybody goes through."

"It's not just one weekend a month and two weeks a year, I think that's the time we have off, so I really do appreciate everybody's help. It was a good year; it was definitely worth writing about, worth putting down on paper."

TEACHER continued from page 1.

after high school. Among other things, one of Hoehne's duties is to line up visits from schools, groups offering financial and scholarship advice, and recruiters from the Nebraska National Guard.

The Nebraska Army Guard recruiter assigned to North Star is Staff Sgt. Joseph Strack.

Hoehne and Strack, who has served two years as a recruiter in the Nebraska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command in Lincoln, were introduced in March 2009. Strack said he was immediately welcomed into Hoehne's classroom.

"She is a big supporter of the military in general," said Strack. "She bends over backward and drops what she's doing to try to help us out."

In the past Hoehne had let recruiters from the active branch of each service into her class, but now only extends that invitation to the Nebraska National Guard simply because they don't harass the students if they aren't interested.

"The (active) branches of the military, they don't take no for an answer," said Hoehne. "The Guard has been very respectful of that."

Hoehne makes it clear if students don't show interest, but are still hassled, those presenters will never be allowed back into her class, she added.

Hoehne has let Strack into her classroom several times. She's also allowed multiple National Guard banners to be hung in the school, helped students participate in "Guard for a Day" activities where they get to speak with Nebraska National Guard members and tour facilities and equipment, got Strack on the career education board, and even had a "Number 88" National Guard NASCAR driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr. visit North Star High School.

In getting to know each other, Strack quickly learned that Hoehne was a huge fan of NASCAR and, arguably, it's most popular driver who just happens to be sponsored by the National Guard.

"You could meet Mrs. Hoehne and know within 10 minutes that she's a huge Dale Earnhardt Jr. fan," said Strack. "Most people have Cornhusker flags in their front yard; they have a Dale Jr. flag."

Hoehne said she and her husband are such big fans of Dale Earnhardt Jr. that they'd actually planned to celebrate their upcoming 25th wedding anniversary by finally going to a NASCAR race in person.

"We had talked about for our 25th anniversary that that's what we should do," said Hoehne. "We



Courtesy Photo

This Is The Pits! Staff Sgt. Joseph Strack poses with Cindy and Dean Hoehne near "pit row" at the Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kan., Oct. 4. Strack and other Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters provided the trip to the NASCAR race as a thank-you for everything Cindy Hoehne has done for the Nebraska Army National Guard as a career teacher at Lincoln's North Star High School.

should just go to a race because we'd always talked about going."

Then came June 19, 2009.

While attending a wedding hundreds of miles away, Hoehne received a phone call from Dean. He didn't feel well and was going to go to the hospital to see what was wrong. It turned out that Dean had a perforated bowel, which had caused infections and tremendous pain. His best option was surgery to repair the perforation.

The news that came next changed the Hoehnes' future forever. They learned Dean was much sicker than initially thought - he had cancer.

"When they went in, they found a mass on his colon that had already metastasized to his liver," said Hoehne. "So stage four, right there."

The Hoehnes had to rethink their entire future. With Dean now unable to work and the medical bills piling up, Cindy's income was simply not sufficient to allow them their dream of an anniversary trip to a NASCAR race.

"Joe and I were talking one day and I go 'Well, that's not going to happen now,'" said Hoehne. "There is no way we can afford to do something like that on one income."

After hearing the Hoehnes wouldn't be able to realize their dream, Strack hatched a plan to thank Hoehne for everything she has done for the Nebraska National Guard.

Strack said he and other recruiters combined the points they'd earned from [zone.com - a recruiting program that lets Army Guard recruiters use points they earn from recruiting to purchase National Guard-themed items they can either give to new recruits or assist in future recruiting efforts - to buy tickets to an Oct. 4th race at the Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kan.](http://www.guardmission-</p>
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Strack then called the Hoehnes to give them the news.

"Dean was actually in the car with me," said Hoehne. "I just about wet my pants when I was driving. I said 'Dean, we're going to NASCAR.'"

On the morning of Oct. 4 Strack picked up the Hoehnes before dawn and made the drive to Kansas City. According to Strack, they began their day with breakfast at the National Guard's tent in the infield. They then toured the pit areas, garages and victory lane.

After an impressive lunch, the Hoehnes then had a moment they'd dreamed of: a question and answer session with Dale Earnhardt Jr. for the approximately 30 people in the National Guard's tent.

After the interview session, Strack and the Hoehnes made their way above to pit row to watch the race. While there they were allowed to listen to the communication between Earnhardt and his pit crew.

"The race was amazing," said Hoehne. "Joe always made sure Dean and I were in front."

"It's so much fun," she added. "Everybody was so nice. Every person that we met down there from the Guard was just accommodating

and welcoming."

During the race Earnhardt led 41 laps, but eventually ran into problems in the pit and finished in 36th position. Although the outcome of the race wasn't what Strack and the Hoehnes had hoped, Strack said it meant a lot to be able to give a special moment back to someone who has helped the Nebraska National Guard so much.

"It means everything to me, especially under the circumstances that they were under," said Strack.

"Just looking at the smiles on their faces and the looks in their eyes made everything worth it," he added. "Seeing people getting something that they've been wanting to do and being able to provide that for them makes it all worthwhile... I don't think I could have picked two better people to go with."

Hoehne said she never expected to be given the chance to enjoy a NASCAR race with her husband. She said she can't thank Strack and the Nebraska National Guard enough for that opportunity.

"Overall I would say it was an awesome day of fellowship, of racing, of caring and of sacrifice," said Hoehne. "It's something I'll never forget doing. It's one of those things I can check off my bucket list and I owe it to Joe and the Guard, for sure."

According to Hoehne, Dean has responded well to chemotherapy and much of his cancer is in remission.

"He's doing really, really well," said Hoehne. "Like 95 percent of the cancer is not showing up on any test at this point."

Hoehne remains optimistic, yet realistic about her future with her husband. She is relying heavily on her faith.

"It's in God's hands now whether our future is another two years or whether it's another 25 years," said Hoehne. "You have to live each day as if each day was your last because you never know. Whether it's me or him, you just never know."

And although Dean's prognosis is much improved, the Hoehnes have been through a difficult time since his diagnosis.

Yet for at least one day during that time, a recruiter and the Nebraska National Guard allowed them to take their minds off of life's tribulations.

The Hoehnes and Strack are now more than coworkers and Cindy said she will always be indebted to Strack and the Nebraska National Guard.

"He gave so much more to us than I'll ever be able to give back," said Hoehne. "It was a Sunday he could have been with his wife and he chose to spend it with us and to give us something that we probably would never be able to do."

Guardsmen, Reservists encouraged to nominate employers for ESGR recognition

By Steve Moseley

Nebraska ESGR Committee

Guardsmen and Reservists: Nominate your employer for the 2010 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award at www.FreedomAward.mil.

The 2010 nomination season has begun and will close Jan. 18, 2010.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees.

The organization recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of the law and resolves conflicts through mediation.

ESGR volunteers provide free education, consultation and, if necessary, mediation for employers of Guard and Reserve personnel.

For more information, please contact Executive Director William Nelson at (402) 309-7105 or email william.nelson1@us.army.mil for more information on ESGR Employer Outreach Programs and volunteer opportunities.

RECRUITING continued from page 1.

of us in the months and years ahead," said Lyons.

"I firmly believe that the Nebraska National Guard is one of our nation's premier military organizations," he added. "We offer something that no other military service can: the opportunity and responsibility to serve our state and nation. We continue to look for men and women interested in joining our ranks and becoming part of our outstanding team."

Many opportunities still exist for quality individuals who would like to become a part of the Nebraska Army or Air National Guard. The Guard offers a variety of benefits including money for school, competitive pay for weekend drills and valuable real-world training.



Remembering The Wounded: Col. Philip Stemple, commander of the Lincoln-based 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, provides some history by the memorial to Purple Heart recipients at the Veterans Memorial Garden in Lincoln, Oct. 23. 67th BfSB Soldiers used a day at the memorial garden to reflect on those who served before them.

Pike Brigade Soldiers' visit to Lincoln garden prompts introspection

■ Soldiers take break from deployment preparations to tour veterans' memorial

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

Members of the Lincoln-based 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade used a cool windy afternoon to pay tribute to service members who came before them when they were given a guided tour of the Veterans Memorial Garden in Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 23. Veterans Memorial Garden advisory board members Jess Smith and Bill Bowmaster provided the Soldiers with tours of the grounds, which includes more than 20 memorials to every branch of service and various groups of service members. Located in Antelope Park near the intersection of A Street and Normal Boulevard, the memorial garden was created after an outpouring of enthusiasm and support following the success of the 1991 Persian Gulf War. It was founded to remember and honor the veterans of all branches of service throughout the history of the U.S. Some of the monuments honor World War I and II veterans.

Another features a small section mimicking the Vietnam Wall. Others are memorials to such groups as the Tuskegee Airmen, military women and MIA-POWs. According to Col. Philip Stemple, 67th BfSB commander, the day was meant to remind the present Soldiers of their place in history. "We had a great opportunity as Nebraska Guardsmen to kind of look back at our history and to remind ourselves that we are one link in a long chain," said Stemple. "We're one link in the long chain of freedom; we're one link in the long chain of sacrifice and selfless service." Stemple said he hopes the Soldiers of the 67th BfSB, who are scheduled to deploy to Iraq sometime in mid-2010, gain not only a sense of honor from service members who came before them, but also some encouragement for their upcoming deployment. "I would hope they get a little bit of inspiration...in the months ahead to do our part and to remind



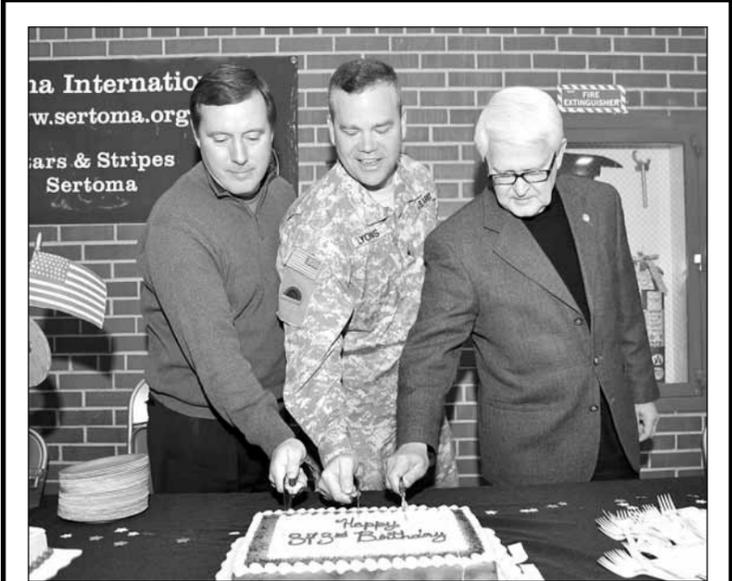
Moment Of Reflection: Spc. Jonathan Paisley, an assistant team leader with Company C (Long Range Surveillance,) 1-134th Infantry, looks at a Vietnam Wall-inspired monument at Veterans Memorial Garden in Lincoln, Oct. 23. The Vietnam monument contains the names of 405 people with Nebraska ties who died in the Vietnam War.

ourselves that it's important what we're doing," he said. The Soldiers, many of whom have never been to the garden, were moved by the experience. "I was pretty impressed with it," said Staff Sgt. Alvin Sueper, a readiness noncommissioned officer for the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 67th BfSB. "I liked how they did different monuments representing the different people that have served the country." The Soldiers also expressed appreciation that the efforts of service members like them haven't gone unnoticed. "I think it's good that there are people out there who want to remember the sacrifices that have been made on behalf of their country," said Sueper. "It's a very humbling experience," said Stemple. "It's one that makes you appreciate some of the things that you take for granted, some of the freedoms and some of the simple pleasures of life." "It's important to remember those that have gone before us because if it wasn't for their sacrifice, we wouldn't be here today," Stemple added. For more information on Veterans Memorial Garden, contact Lincoln Parks and Recreation at (402) 441-7847 or check out the Website at <http://parks.lincoln.ne.gov>.



Guided Tour: Members of the Lincoln-based 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade tour Veterans Memorial Garden in Lincoln, Oct. 23. The 67th BfSB is preparing for a June 2010 deployment to Iraq.

Happy 373rd



Celebrating the Guard's Birthday: (From left) Lt. Gov. Rich Sheehy, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons and State Sen. Bill Avery make the first cuts into a National Guard birthday cake, Dec. 13, at the Spirit of 1776 armory in Lincoln, Neb. The officials were part of a ceremony marking the National Guard's 373rd birthday. The Guard officially traces its roots to the first muster, which occurred on Dec. 13, 1636, when the Massachusetts Bay Colony's militia companies were organized into three regiments and became the first organized defense forces.

Nebraska community honors local, nation's veterans with newly dedicated memorial park

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

Burwell, Neb., home to Nebraska's Big Rodeo, recently dedicated a new Veterans Memorial Park, Nov. 11, in recognition of the more than 1,000 Burwell area veterans who have served in the armed forces. The Burwell Veterans Memorial Park, which was designed to honor all of America's veterans, sits on four donated city blocks. It features large columns around a dais, which represents each of military services, along with a large flag pole skirted by flag poles for each military service. "This land was donated by Ron and Judy Simpson who had a vision that they needed to do something for the community," Howard Fairbain, chair of the park committee. "Ron's father and uncles all served at the same time in the service. They were all in World War II." The park, which sits in the corner of Burwell's downtown square, was full of local residents, dignitaries and at least 350 school children with the Burwell Elementary choir



Standing Proud: Veterans stand tall during the dedication ceremony of Burwell's Veterans Memorial Park, located on four city blocks donated by a local family, on Veterans Day.

and High School band performing during the gala event. Patriot Guard riders lined the entire dais near a large monument that read: "Only Two Defining Forces have ever been offered to you, Jesus Christ and the American Soldier. One died for your soul, the other for your Freedom." The memorial is a work in progress and a 7-foot-high and 70-foot-long brick wall will be constructed with inscribed bricks bearing the names of service men and women. Walking lights, underground sprin- klers, more stone benches and lights for the flags will round out the park. According to two dignitaries who spoke at the event, Burwell can be proud of the progress it's made in honoring its local and national heroes. "Burwell has a proud tradition of service to our country and this is certainly meaningful way of honoring that service," said Brig. Gen Judd Lyons, adjutant general for the Nebraska National Guard. Lyons also paid tribute to the 10 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who have given their lives in the current conflict. Also speaking at the memorial dedication was Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, who commended the city of Burwell on the construction of the memorial park. He also read a proclamation from Gov. Dave Heineman.

Change of Schedule

Military police unit changes training plans after learning about potential mobilization

By Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

One year after retiring the 867th Quartermaster Battalion colors and standing up as the new 402nd Military Police Battalion (Internment and Resettlement), an Omaha military police battalion recently ramped up its training schedule after learning that it is being considered for a possible deployment in support of U.S. Central Command in 2010, roughly a year earlier than it had expected.

"We were M-1 for (training year 2010), which means we should have had another year to prepare; however, now we have to prepare more rapidly than what we were projecting," said Capt. Jeffrey Boyden, commander for the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 402nd MP Bn.

According to Boyden, unit officials have had to scramble to change their training plan to accomplish all of the required training due to the change.

"We had to develop a complete new training plan for (Training Year 2010) to get us prepared for this potential deployment," Boyden said. "We are doing collective training for most months along with our (Pre-deployment Training and Assistance Element) requirements for the mobilization."

Since standing up in 2008, the MP battalion has spent much of the last year filling individual vacancies, completing individual training as well as a few other requirements, most of which were based upon the battalion's standing in the Army Force Generation model, which is designed to help unit commanders and leaders prepare for mobilizations based upon a predictable schedule.

"What we've done the last year is pretty much focus on individual training with only making moderate steps toward collective training," Boyden said, adding that the unit's first true collective training occurred during the August drill weekend when Soldiers from the organization transformed part of Camp Ashland to resemble a makeshift detention facility and then practiced the skills they



New Detainee: Sgt. Jeffery Wagner (center), corrections officer, starts the in-processing procedure for a new detainee (Pvt. Spencer Bartlett) by presenting the paperwork to Sgt. Charles Garman, administration specialist, during training at the North Omaha Readiness Center in October.

need to work in a detainee-type of environment.

They were also supposed to conduct their annual "MP Challenge" in October, however, with the (mobilization notification) Boyden said the organization decided to remain at the North Omaha Readiness Center to simulate working in a "hard shell environment" similar to what they most likely will work in overseas.

During the October exercise, battalion Soldiers transformed the civilian side of the North Omaha Readiness Center into a simulated detention facility. They then practiced the steps of moving detainees.

For example, the entrance into the building became the security and search area. After passing through this area, detainees were escorted by guards into an open bay where the detainees were then processed through the biometrics, administration and accountability, supply, personal hygiene, medical and records review sections.

The detainees, who were dressed in orange jumpsuits borrowed from Douglas County law enforcement to add another dimension of realism, were then escorted into classrooms that had been transformed into cells and pods for the exercise.

Throughout the exercise, battalion Soldiers drew from the knowledge of the organization's more experienced members to lead

the training.

Staff Sgt Ryan Westmeyer is a former member of the 192 Military Police Detachment who deployed to Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, and worked in the detention facility there from 2003-04. He is now a platoon sergeant in the 402nd MP Bn. headquarters company. During the October exercise, Westmeyer served as the watch commander for the middle shift.

"We're practicing doing a continuous shift operation where you have to go in between several shifts and actually go through the shift change," Westmeyer said.

"The (sergeant of the guard) is going to come in and get all the information he needs on what happened on the prior shift. At that point he will conduct a guard mount, letting everyone know on the oncoming shift what's going on, how many inmates, how many are high risk, what problems they had that might be possible problems that are going to reoccur."

According to Westmeyer, passing on the experience he and other Soldiers have is critical to getting the organization's younger and less experienced Military Police officers ready for the challenges they may encounter overseas.

"We have quite a bit of strength in the unit where we are able to push out and let Soldiers know the



Photos by Mark Roland

Lunch Is Over: Sgt. Jeffery Wagner, corrections officer, places wrist restraints on a detainee (Spc. James White) before returning him to his 'cell' at the North Omaha Readiness Center.

information we have and pass on that knowledge," he said.

Westmeyer said he's glad the unit still has time to refine processes while getting the younger Soldiers the training they need.

"Right now it's a little bit difficult because we're trying to work in all the new people," Westmeyer said.

"We're just getting past the walk phase now, where people are seeing the big picture all together, which is a crucial step. That makes this training a little more exciting because it's finally a situation where we're not coming to drill and everyone is doing their own separate training. We're actually seeing the way that it all comes together in the big picture."

The use of the training center facility also enhanced the training.

"This is a lot more realistic," Westmeyer said. "When we had the tents we had to throw a lot more things in: 'Okay, we're going to pretend this is a normal building.' This would be a lot closer to the hardened facility that we would actually be working in there."

According to Boyden, this past year's annual training at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., is also helping the unit in an unexpected way. While at

Fort Leavenworth, the 402nd MP Bn. Soldiers received training from active duty military police there and even had the opportunity to work in the United States Disciplinary Barracks.

Early next year, Boyden said, Soldiers from the active Army's 40th MP Bn. from Fort Leavenworth will be working with the Nebraska Soldiers to help the Omaha battalion headquarters prepare for the challenges it may face in the Central Command theater of operations. Those are the same Soldiers the 402nd MP Bn. worked with during last year's annual training.

"We have very good rapport with these people and they are willing to help us out with an external evaluation," said Boyden.

The organization is also making plans to participate in an exercise called Patriot Justice next year at Fort Bliss, Texas, as part of its annual training.

Patriot Justice is an evaluation exercise where internment and resettlement battalions actually operate a theater internment facility and then receive a grade on how well they do in accordance with the organizations' mission essential task list, according to Boyden.

Nebraska City military police unit mobilizing

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Approximately 45 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from a Nebraska City-based detachment will be moving out in early 2010.

Members of the 192nd Law and Order Detachment recently learned that they will mobilize for Operation Iraqi Freedom in May.

This will be the second major mobilization for the military police detachment, which served in Kosovo from October 2003 until September 2004. The detachment was then based in Omaha.

According to Nebraska Army National Guard officials, the unit will conduct its mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas, following which it will deploy into the Central Command theater of operations.

While overseas, the unit will be responsible for law enforcement duties and investigative services in support of installation or garrison commanders.

The mobilization is expected to last one year.

UNL revises attendance policy for 'Student-Soldiers'

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen needing to take off time from their University of Nebraska-Lincoln classes to attend extended training weekends can now breathe a little easier thanks to a revised university policy that treats absences for military training the same as it does for those students missing classes for university-sponsored events.

That's particularly good news considering that the National Guard has recently begun shifting its training model to much more home-station pre-mobilization training. With that shift in the training paradigm, unit training assemblies are often extended to three or more days compared to the traditional two-day weekend drill.

For many National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, the extended drill weekends aren't cause for concern. For others who attend college, the extended UTAs may force them to miss some of their college classes.

In response to the shift in the pre-mobilization model, the University of Nebraska has updated its attendance policy to explicitly excuse students with any military training obligations from class.

While the attendance policy has always

allowed for excused absences for Soldiers and Airmen given military orders, the attendance policy lacked specificity with regard to the newly established extended UTAs according to Maj. Robert Ford, UNL Reserve Officer Training Corps executive officer and a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard.

"What was kind of left in a gray area and not specifically addressed was a National Guard Soldier (or Airman) needing to miss class on a traditional drill weekend," said Ford.

The policy previously stated: "Students involved in university-sponsored activities, including intercollegiate athletics, may need to be excused from class, lab, or studio meeting." The revised policy will state: "Students involved in military training or university sponsored activities..."

According to Ford, the university has always been supportive of students in the military and prior to the extended UTAs the issue never even came up.

"Under the old traditional National Guard model it wasn't an issue that a student often faced," said Ford. "As we are changing our mobility strategy it's going to be something that will come up more often, so that's why the policy needed to be clarified."

Learning of the new pre-mobilization model has been an educational experience for the faculty and staff at UNL as well.

"I just don't believe that some of our faculty members realized the new demands that are being put on our Soldiers for training in light of potential deployment," said Michelle Waite, assistant to the chancellor for community relations at UNL.

According to Waite the policy change should provide student-Soldiers and Airmen with some security, knowing that faculty members can be approached and will be happy to work with them and be a bit more flexible in their attendance policy.

Ford gives a lot of credit to UNL for their quick recognition and action once the issue was raised.

"Once they realized that there was even a question, they immediately took action and have unanimously approved it at all levels to get the policy explicitly changed," he said.

The revised attendance policy should take the burden of explaining an absence off of the individual Soldier or Airman, but by no means excuses them from completing the work they miss.

"It's still up to the Soldier or Airman to communicate with the professor early because the excusal policy doesn't excuse you from the work. It just means they will do everything they can to work with you to allow you alternative ways to complete your work," said Ford.



Final Inspection: (From left) Sgt. Jeremy Borrell and Sgt. Waylon Lippold, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply), prepare final inspection paperwork before a Nov. 20 cargo drop.

Seward riggers practice preparing, dropping supplies

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When it comes to picture-perfect days for a parachute jump, members of the 195th Special Operations Forward Support Company (Airborne) and Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply) couldn't have picked a much nicer one than Nov. 20.

Light breezes and temperatures ranging in the upper 50s made the afternoon's jump at the Husker Drop Zone near the Mead Training Site one of the most enjoyable in recent memory.

"Today was an absolutely perfect day," said Sgt. Jeremy S. Borrell, an airdrop sergeant from Seward's 165th QM Co. who completed his 10th parachute jump that afternoon.

"Normally when we're jumping in the summer it's too hot and if we're jumping in the winter, it's too cold. A day like today, it's absolutely beautiful. Not very heavy winds, so



How'd It Do? Spc. Chad Holmes 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) and Spc. Luke Katz, Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply), inspect a cargo pallet after the air drop.

it's a really good opportunity to make a good parachute landing fall and to have a really soft landing."

While the weather may have had the Airborne Soldiers smiling, what



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On The Way: Four packages begin to deploy their parachutes as they drop away from a U.S. Air Force Reserve C-130 aircraft during a parachute drop over "Husker Drop Zone" near Mead, Neb., Nov. 20. The cargo was prepared for the drop by members of the Nebraska's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply.)

really had Borrell and other riggers from his unit grinning ear-to-ear was the fact that they'd just completed a major milestone in their unit. Prior to launching dozens of paratroopers into the cloudless sky, members of a U.S. Air Force Reserve C-130 aircraft crew first dropped five parachute-equipped supply pallets onto the drop zone from a height of 500 feet, all of which landed safely within meters of the planned target.

According to Staff Sgt. Wayne Johnson, 165th QM Co. readiness sergeant, the drop was a successful test of his unit's ability to prepare cargo pallets – which weighed between 330 and 900 pounds – for aerial delivery using G-14 cargo parachutes.

Johnson said it was a critical test for the unit, which is still gaining practical experience after transitioning to its new mission a little over a year ago.

"Today, the mission is to support the 195th out of Omaha," said Johnson earlier in the day as his crew of parachute riggers worked to make the final preparation on the

cargo before they were moved onto the C-130 aircraft from the 94th Airlift Wing, Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga.

"Basically we're doing a personnel and cargo drop resupply. This is (the type of) operations that are overseas. Almost 70 to 75 percent of resupply overseas right now is by aerial delivery and that's what we're going to be demonstrating today out at Husker DZ," he added.

Johnson said this wasn't the unit's first opportunity to prepare and drop cargo from an aircraft, the first being in September when the unit conducted a drop as it returned to Nebraska after supporting the 195th SOFSC's two-week annual training in Montana. This time, however, the unit was actually going to test its ability to drop a heavier load requiring two parachutes to successfully float the cargo to the ground.

The day was also an opportunity for newly qualified riggers to apply their skills to a real cargo drop problem, he added.

"This is a refresher," Johnson said. "What we are doing is basically

working with the materials supplied to us by the state... working with that and trying to figure out our configurations."

He said it's a stressful exercise. "It definitely makes your heart-rate go up when you see it come out of the aircraft... making sure that everything is operable so it doesn't go straight down to the ground," Johnson said.

Fortunately, everything worked well, with all of the cargo pallets hitting almost exactly where they'd been targeted to hit. According to Borrell, who was aboard the aircraft when the cargo was launched, it was exciting to see the unit's hard work pay off.

"Everything went fantastic," he said. "Everything went smooth. We had great openings of the parachutes. Everything hit the target."

"There's nothing better than seeing it go out of aircraft," Borrell added. "I'm looking forward to seeing the video... I'm looking forward to seeing if there's anything that we can do better, but from where I was sitting, everything looked fantastic."

State legislative staffers spend day walking in Guardsmen's boots

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

With an early morning fog blanketing Lincoln, 28 Nebraska state legislative staff assistants arrived at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Sept. 23, and were given an opportunity to walk a mile in the boots of Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen.

Called the Legislative Staff Brief, the day was meant to provide the staff members with a better idea of what the Nebraska National Guard and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency do.

"The primary goal was to introduce the staffers to the Military Department and NEMA, and give them a good understanding of the benefits and the things that we bring to the state," said Terri Kattes, the Nebraska Military Department state legislative liaison and special projects coordinator. "I want them to have an appreciation for the military and the people that we have here, and the professionalism in how they do their jobs."

The staff members, who hold positions ranging from administrative assistant to legislative fiscal office advisor, began their day with informational briefings about the Nebraska Military Department and Emergency Management Agency and the direction of the Nebraska National Guard from Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general. They were then given a tour of an Air Guard KC-135 refueling airplane and an up-close view of various Army equipment including decontamination tents and first responders' equipment.

With the fog burning off throughout the morning's briefings and tours, the staff members boarded either a CH-47 "Chinook" or UH-60 "Black Hawk" helicopter and then flew to the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb. There, staff members furthered their Soldier experience by dining on the military's



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Battle Rattle: Sheila Page, legislative aid for Nebraska State Senator Colby Coash, gets outfitted with personal protective equipment prior to riding in a Humvee during a convoy training mission through a training lane at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb., Sept. 23.

finest cuisine: Meals Ready to Eat.

Following lunch the staff members received a tour of the newest Armed Forces Readiness Center at the Greenleaf Training Site; a demonstration of the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer that teaches Soldiers how to get out of a Humvee following a rollover; a chance to sharpen marksmanship skills in the Engagement Skills Trainer, which uses laser-fitted weapons to improve accuracy; a chance to use the Virtual Convoy Operations Trainer that uses virtual reality to simulate various positions held during a convoy; and finally, a chance to don body armor and ride with Soldiers in a Humvee through the IED training lane.

According to Kattes, this was the first legislative staff briefing in eight years, so most participants hadn't seen anything like this before. Their favorites varied.

"The helicopter rides were a big highlight and they really liked going through the Air Guard tanker as well," said Kattes.

Mike Lovelace, legislative fiscal office advisor, said he really enjoyed riding in the Chinook, but also liked seeing how the Nebraska National Guard is using its resources.

"It's nice to see the different construction that is going on, the facilities that have been built recently," he said.

"I think my favorite thing so far has been the helicopter," said Noelle Badeer, an

administrative assistant for State Senator Tony Fulton, District 29. "But I would also say the most eye-opening – the thing that I felt like put me most in the position of the Soldier – was the Humvee ride because you're wearing part of what they wear, you're in the Humvee... it's like you're there."

The staff members said they also gained an appreciation for the training Soldiers and Airmen must go through just to perform their jobs, adding they were impressed by the Soldiers and Airmen they interacted with.

"The training that our Nebraska National Guard members get looks to be excellent, the facilities look good and everybody has been very knowledgeable and very helpful," said Lovelace.

"I think I got a new appreciation for what Soldiers do in combat, but also all the work that it takes to train people," said Badeer. "I didn't realize how much infrastructure, how much funding, how many people it takes to prepare people to go to battle."

In the feedback Kattes has received from the participants, she thinks the goal was achieved.

"Everyone really enjoyed their day. They felt like they learned a lot and were very impressed with the Soldiers that they met and their experience and their knowledge and their professionalism," said Kattes. "The Soldiers sold it themselves."

Kattes said Nebraska Military Department leaders hope to make the legislative staff brief an annual event because the day's activities clearly left an impression on the participants.

"What our men and women in Nebraska are doing, and what all the Soldiers are doing overseas, is preserving the freedoms we take for granted and frankly, today has brought that home for me," said Badeer.

"The impact of being in a Soldier's shoes for a day was incredible and I'm not going to forget that."

2009 - The Year

Taken from *Prairie Soldier* headlines

January

10 – Kearney's 734th Transportation Battalion receives Meritorious Unit Citation for work during Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment.

12 – Retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng, former Nebraska adjutant general (1987-2000,) dies after lengthy illness; Buried in Lincoln, Neb., on Jan. 17.

24 – Members of Seward's new Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply,) conducts first support of Nebraska Army National Guard parachute jump.

24 – Members of the 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) conduct icy airborne jump near Mead, Neb. Temperatures were in the single digits at the time of the jump.

February

8 – 402nd Military Police Battalion, Omaha, conducts combative skills training during weekend drill.

9 – Nebraska Air National Guard officially opens first recruiting station in Omaha.

12 – 155th Air Refueling Wing receives passing grades after conducting Operational Readiness Inspection at Gulfport, Miss., in January.

13 – Timothy J. Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, receives second star during ceremony at State Capitol in Lincoln, Neb.

27 – Private James K. Treacle, 24, of Lexington, Neb., dies while training at Camp Ashland, Neb.

28 – Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team begin work on new vineyard in Janquadam, Afghanistan.

March

6 – 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment air crews land C-12 aircraft in Lincoln, ending seven-month deployment to Afghanistan.

7 – Soldiers from Omaha's 402nd Military Police Battalion conduct pepper spray training at North Omaha Readiness Center.

7 – Jon F. Fago promoted to rank of brigadier general during ceremony at Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

9 – Nebraska National Guard, Army Reserve officials break ground for new Armed Forces Readiness Center in Beatrice, Neb.

9 – David C. Petersen promoted to rank of brigadier general during ceremony in Lincoln, Neb.

11 – Governor Dave Heineman honors Nebraska Army National Guard noncommissioned officers during State Capitol ceremony.

12 – Specialist Heather Davey, 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, honored during Washington, D.C., ceremony after being awarded prestigious "Angel of the Battlefield" award for work during her deployment to Iraq.

21 – Hundreds of military children participate in annual Easter Egg Hunt at Nebraska National Guard air base.

22 – Sergeant Cody Trindle (Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance) and Spc. Matthew Lamb (1167th Brigade Support Company) named top noncommissioned officer and enlisted Soldier during Nebraska Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition at Camp Ashland, Neb.

23 – Senator Ben Nelson honored by National Guard officials in Washington, D.C., after the Nebraska senator is awarded the National Guard Association's Gen. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Award.

April

4 – Colonel Philip A. Stemple assumes command of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade during change of command ceremony in Lincoln, Neb.

14 – Nick Hartwig and Brandon Scusa of Wilber-Claytonia High School design winning artwork for 2009 Nebraska Air National Guard nose art competition.

18 – Newest Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers compete in the annual Recruit Sustainment Program's Warrior Challenge at Camp Ashland, Neb.

23 – Nebraska military children honored during state-wide luncheons.

May

2 – Engineers from 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) conduct Castle Stakes competition at Mead Training Site.

3 – Nebraska National Guard officials wish deploying Airmen, families well during send-off event at Nebraska National Guard air base.

3 – Top National Guard runners compete in annual Lincoln/National Guard Marathon in Lincoln, Neb. 1st Lt. Nathan Flores, Texas Army National Guard, wins male race; 1st Lt. Varinka Barbini, Kentucky Army National Guard, wins



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Need A Lift? Chief Warrant Officer 2 Zac Hartmann, a medevac pilot with the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, is hoisted into a waiting UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter by Sgt. James Nordman, a crewchief with the 2-135 GSAB, during their annual training, June 6-20.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Steady Hands, Racing Nerves: Sgt. Cody Trindle, Company C, 1-34th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance,) demonstrates his ability to run an IV on a medical simulator under the ever-watchful eyes of Sgt. Bethany Luedke, a medic with the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance,) during the 2nd Annual Nebraska Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition held March 20-22 at Camp Ashland, Neb. Trindle won the Noncommissioned Officer Category.

female race.

4 – Members of Wakefield High School senior class honored by Nebraska Army Guard after nearly one-third of class enlists into the military, 12 of which joined the Nebraska Army Guard.

12 – More than 1,500 people turn out in Kearney to wish members of the 1195th Transportation Company farewell before start of Operation Iraqi Freedom mission.

13 – Members of Nebraska's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team hold agricultural training at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, for representatives from the Zinzee and Turkman villages along with staff members from Al Bironi University.

15 – Lieutenant Colonel Tom Brewer awarded the 2009 Chief Standing Bear Humanitarian Award during State Capitol ceremony.

17 – Bellevue, Neb., renames street in honor of the late Spc. William L. Bailey III, a former Bellevue Volunteer Fireman and member of the Nebraska Army Guard's 755th Chemical Company who was killed in Iraq on May 25, 2007.

18 – Nebraska National Guard officials join with state and federal emergency management specialist to conduct multi-state Vigilant Guard exercise.

21 – Twenty-five Nebraska Army Guard recruits

leave for basic training as part of first Nebraska Army Guard "Buddy Platoon" in more than two decades.

24 – Members of Nebraska's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team teach classes on storing grain for farmers from the Parwan, Panjshir and Kapisa provinces in Afghanistan.

25 – Two Nebraska Air National Guard flight crews conduct 135 Memorial Day salutes over Nebraska cemeteries.

28 – Army Aviation Support Facility #2 dedicated in Grand Island, Neb.

30 – Soldiers from Grand Island's 1-376th Aviation Battalion begin annual training at Camp Ashland, Neb.

June

6 – Retiring Brig. Gen. William Kuehn honored by Nebraska National Guard during ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb.

6 – Sixty-four members of the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion begin two-week annual training.

6 – Soldiers from 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) begin unique three-week annual training at Fort Riley, Kan.

7 – Members of Nebraska City's 192nd Law and Order Detachment begin two-week annual



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Photo Finish: Col. Dennis Hayward, 155th Air Refueling Wing, holds up a sign congratulating his unit mates as the 155th ARW receives its preliminary grades after an operational readiness inspection in January.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Saluting A Late Guard Leader: Maj. Douglas Wagner salutes as the American flag is lifted from the coffin of the late Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Stanley M. Heng, Jan. 17. Heng served as Nebraska adjutant general from 1987-2000.

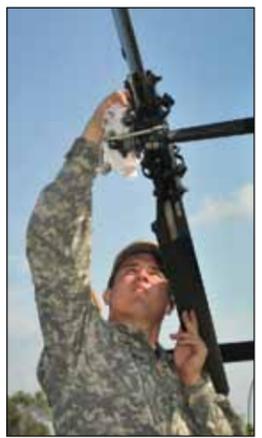


Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Wipe Down: Pvt. Caleb Schoeneman, 1-376th Aviation, dries water from an OH-58 helicopter tail rotor, June 6.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Smoke Screen: Members of the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) use smoke as a screen during Military Operation in Urban Terrain training at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., June 26. The 313th mobilized for a mission in Iraq in October.

training at Fort Riley, Kan.

18 – Cooks from the 267th Support Maintenance Company overcome massive thunderstorm to compete in the regional category of the 42nd annual Philip A. Connelly Award competition at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

21 – Sixty Nebraska girls and boys attend Operation Purple Camp at Camp Eagle.

22 – Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) kick off annual training at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

26 – Governor Dave Heineman announces that Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, has been selected to become the deputy director of the Army National Guard; Announces search for new adjutant general.

July

11 – Roma Amundson promoted to rank of brigadier general; First Nebraska National Guard woman to reach general officer rank.

11 – Nebraska Air Guard air crews conduct unique water survival training at Branched Oak Lake near Lincoln, Neb.

12 – Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hargens assumes command of 155th Civil Engineer Squadron from Lt. Col. Gary Krupa during ceremony

That Was - 2009



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Taking Cover: Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Statotanker crew members man a lifeboat while participating in water survival training at Lincoln's Branched Oak Lake, July 11, as Nebraska Army Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters move into position.



Photo by Mark Roland

Operation Lick Your Wounds: Members of the 267th Support Maintenance Company conduct Military Operations in Urban Terrain training at the Greenleaf Training Site in a force-on-force exercise.



Photo by David Nore

Year Of The Noncommissioned Officer: Gov. Dave Heineman and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch stand on the floor of the State Capitol rotunda, March 11, while holding the official signed document proclaiming 2009 as the "Year of the NCO" in Nebraska.

at Nebraska National Guard air base.
15 – Six 1-134th Cavalry Soldiers depart Nebraska for Normandy, France, where they will represent the current Nebraska Army Guard organization during more than a dozen ceremonies honoring the 134th Infantry Regiment's contributions there during World War II.
17 – Les Mesnil Rouxelin, France, unveils a plaque honoring the late Lt. Col. Alfred Thomsen, former commander of the Nebraska National Guard's 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, who was mortally wounded near Conde-sur-Vire on July 30, 1944, after having led his battalion through a successful attack to capture St. Lo, France.
18 – St. Lo, France, unveils plaque honoring the mark where members of the 134th Infantry Regiment, which originally hailed from the Nebraska National Guard, entered the embattled city 65 years earlier.
24 – Lieutenant Colonel Tom Rynders assumes command of 1-134th Cavalry from Lt. Col. Brett Andersen during ceremony at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.

August
1 – Members of Nebraska National Guard air base fire department conduct annual vehicle



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring A Legendary Nebraska Infantry Regiment: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) honor guard pose for a photograph with retired Col. James Huston at a church in St. Georges-Montcocq, France, on July 18, nearly 65 years to the moment that Huston led a patrol of 134th Infantry Regiment lieutenants on a patrol into St. Lo, which was devastated by a nearly month-long battle to capture the strategic Norman city. The Nebraska Soldiers spent several days representing the current lineage holders of the 134th Inf. Regt., at numerous ceremonies marking the regiment's role in liberating St. Lo, France.



Photo by David Nore

Roll Over Trainer: Pvt. Michelle Berry performs an emergency exit from the Humvee Egress Assist Trainer (HEAT) that allows Soldiers to practice battlefield survival procedures after a Humvee rollover.



Photo by Sgt. Michael Coleman

Lending A Hand: A member of the Nebraska National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Nuclear and High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force helps an "injured" civilian during Operation Vigilant Guard in Des Moines, Iowa, June 19.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Can't Hardly Wait: Two-year old Aniah Schroeder waits at the Lancaster Events Center in Lincoln Aug. 28 for her uncle, Staff Sgt. Adam Schroeder, to return from a year long deployment to Afghanistan as part of the Agribusiness Development Team.

Lt. Col. Matthew Kelly.
10 – 92nd Troop Command hosts second Bosslift exercise during annual training at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.
14 – Officials cut ribbon to new \$11.9 million Armed Forces Readiness Center at Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.
15 – Members of 155th Medical Group, Nebraska Air National Guard, begin two-week annual training at RAF Lakenheath, England.
22 – Colonel Michael Navrkal, Omaha, assumes command of 92nd Troop Command.
22 – Thirteen Nebraska Soldiers receive commissions as second lieutenants; 10 others sworn in as warrant officers during graduation ceremonies at Camp Ashland, Neb.
22 – Retired Maj. Gen. Walter Zink II and retired Command Sgt. Maj. David Hauschel become 45th and 46th inductees into Camp Ashland Hall of Fame.
23 – Judd Lyons, Omaha, promoted to brigadier general, sworn in as 32nd Nebraska adjutant during ceremonies at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.
28 – Families and friends welcome Nebraska Army National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team back to Nebraska after year-long mission to Afghanistan.

September
12 – Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham, 170th Group, honored in Washington, D.C., as the Air Force's Outstanding Senior Noncommissioned Officer.
12 – 126th Chemical Battalion Soldiers compete in annual Dragon's Challenge at Camp Ashland, Neb.
18 – Master Sgt. Martin Coleman, Nebraska Air National Guard explosive ordnance disposal technician, participates in EOD demonstration during deployment to Southwest Asia.
23 – Nebraska state legislative assistants spend day learning more about Nebraska Army, Air National Guard.

October
1 – Army, Air Guard recruiters complete successful year, enlisting 471 new Soldiers and 95 new Airmen.
2 – Members of Norfolk's 189th Transportation Company tell deployment stories to four University of Nebraska-Lincoln student journalist as part of project for Norfolk Daily News.
3 – Nebraska National Guard helps honor former Vietnam War MIA Spc. 5 Donald C. Grella, who is buried in Laurel, Neb., 43 years after disappearing during helicopter mission in South Vietnam.
17 – Seventy members of Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company wished farewell before starting year-long mission to Iraq.
17 – Cooks from the 267th Maintenance Company compete for top honors during 42nd annual Philip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Food Service at Greenleaf Training Site.
28 – Dozens of employers and civic leaders from Norfolk, Neb., sign pledge of support to Nebraska's military reservists during ceremony.

November
5 – Members of 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) and two other Nebraska Army Guard officers take cover during shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, that leaves 13 dead. No Nebraska Soldiers are involved in the incident.
6 – Wahoo's 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) accepts state's Supply of Excellence Award, prepares for Army Guard-wide competition.
7 – Dan Whitney (aka "Larry the Cable Guy") made honorary Nebraska Army National Guard command sergeant major by Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch.
7 – Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers, Air Guard Airmen watch Nebraska Cornhuskers defeat rival Oklahoma Sooners during annual Military Appreciation Game at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb.
14 – Two KETV journalists take up co-worker's challenge; take Army Physical Fitness Training test with members of 754th Chemical Company, 126th Chemical Battalion's headquarters detachment in Omaha, Neb.
14 – New 155th Force Support Squadron created from 155th Military Support Flight and 155th Services Flight during ceremony at Nebraska National Guard air base.
14 – 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion welcomes new commander as Lt. Col. Shawn Edwards succeeds Lt. Col. Anita Curington.
15 – 155th Air Refueling Wing announced outstanding Airmen for 2009. Taking home honors are: Master Sgt. Carla Miranda (Senior Noncommissioned Officer Category,) Tech. Sgt. Mark Durant (NCO Category,) Senior Airman Abby Ford (Airman Category,) and Master Sgt. Jason Holsten (First Sergeant Category.)
15 – Eight Nebraska Air Guard officers from Joint Force Headquarters honored for past deployments as part of new Air Guard-wide recognition program.
20 – Seward-based riggers conduct cargo drop during airborne operation at Husker Drop Zone near Mead, Neb. Marks second cargo drop for newly formed Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply.)
21 – Members of 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) conduct airborne jump at Husker Drop Zone near Mead, Neb.

December
5 – 402nd Military Police Battalion welcomes new commander as Lt. Col. Eric Teegerstrom assumes command of the Omaha-based organization from Lt. Col. Byron Diamond during ceremony in Omaha.
6 – Major Kevin Bricker assumes command of the 1-376th Aviation from Lt. Col. George Harris during ceremony in Grand Island, Neb.
12 – 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade conducts noncommissioned officer induction ceremony in Lincoln.
13 – Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen gather in Lincoln to celebrate National Guard's 373rd Birthday.

PRAIRIE SOLDIER SPECIAL FEATURE

The Nebraska Army National Guard simply couldn't do its mission without the hundreds of professional noncommissioned officers that make up its ranks. From the command sergeants major who are responsible for looking out for the morale and welfare of their troops, to the supply sergeants who makes sure that Soldiers have the equipment they need, to the medical sergeants who maintain Soldiers' health and treat their wounds, to the drill sergeants who ensure that Soldiers start their careers on the right foot, the Nebraska Army National Guard depends on the quality and professionalism of its NCOs

to make sure that the hard jobs get done right the first time. They literally are the backbone of the Army.

As part of the Army's continuing Year of the NCO observance, the Prairie Soldier spotlights the work that Nebraska Army National Guard NCOs do on a daily basis to ensure that the Nebraska Army National Guard is ready, trained and capable to do its mission.



PATRIOTS in Stripes

Command sergeant major representing Nebraska's enlisted men, women daily

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When it comes to describing what Richard Burch does for the Nebraska Army National Guard, on the face of it, it's really quite simple.

As the state command sergeant major, Burch is the principal advisor to the adjutant general on all issues relating to the state's enlisted force. That means that if it matters to Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers, it matters to Burch.

Now, when it comes to describing *how* Burch accomplishes this important mission... well, mere words seem somewhat inadequate. That's because the issues that Burch deals with on a daily basis are as varied as the enlisted force he represents in the Nebraska National Guard.

For example, one day Burch might be helping the adjutant general and other senior state leaders develop plans for a particular operation or problem. On another, he might be meeting with other senior enlisted leaders, providing guidance to them so that they can help meet the state's strategic goals.

On another, he might be outfitted in field gear as he talks with deploying Soldiers at a place like Fort Hood, Texas. On another, he might be meeting with Soldiers' families or employers, helping them better understand and overcome the challenges the Global War on Terrorism has brought with it.

There are even times when he might be meeting with civilian and foreign military leaders in order to help them better understand the incredible capabilities that the U.S. NCO Corps provides to the United States.

According to Burch, a 33-year Nebraska Army National Guard veteran, it's this flexibility to tailor his work schedule to best meet the daily and long-term challenges that he most enjoys about the job he's held since March 2007.

"In this job you can be as busy as you want to be," said Burch recently as he took a few



Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch
Hometown: Hastings, Neb.
Job Title: State Command Sergeant Major, Lincoln, Neb.
Years of Service: 33
Family: Wife: Sandy; Daughters: Jennifer (Umana), Jody; Son-in-Law: Erick Umana; Grandchildren: Alex, Abby

minutes to catch up on e-mails in his office that's within voice distance of the adjutant general's desk in the state headquarters building in Lincoln, Neb. "The more things that you are involved in, the more things that you can hopefully positively influence."

Burch said being flexible is the key to being a successful command sergeant major because one simply can't always predict the issues that will crop up during the course of a day or night.

"Sometimes you get some stuff that's tough to deal with," he said. "The number of issues I tend to deal with on a daily, weekly, monthly basis seems to be a little bit more than what I'd anticipated it to be, but then reflecting back on the number of Soldiers and Airmen that we're dealing with in the state, maybe it isn't that many."

"But there's always something. There's always a hot button. There's always a Soldier, a family member, an employer out there that has questions and 99 percent of the time they're valid questions," he said. "It's just a matter of educating the force, educating our families and educating our employers on how the Guard operates and the restraints that we have to operate under."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Representing The State's Soldiers: Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch (right) talks with Sgt. Timothy Greiner, 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance), Nov. 13, at Fort Hood, Texas. As the state command sergeant major, Burch is responsible for representing the state's enlisted Soldiers at the highest levels of the Nebraska National Guard.

According to Burch, the goal of becoming the state's senior enlisted Soldier was something that evolved over time during his military career.

"I was the readiness NCO and first sergeant out in Company D, 2-134th Infantry, in Hastings and I wanted to be the operations sergeant for the second infantry battalion," he said. "So, I had to move to Lincoln in order for that to happen."

"After moving to Lincoln and taking that position on, I enrolled in the Sergeants Major Academy and it was about that time that I set my sights on the state (command sergeant major) position," he added.

The reason, Burch said, was the realization that a person's ability to impact Soldiers in real, meaningful ways increases the higher one goes up the NCO leadership ladder.

"As I worked my way up from company to battalion, I could see at the battalion-level how much more of a broad reaching impact I could have on Soldiers in that battalion," said Burch.

"And I realized that at the state (command sergeant major) level, you could have an even broader impact. And that is part of what we do as leaders... we try to challenge ourselves."

After being selected to be the state command sergeant major by then-Maj. Gen. Roger P. Lempke, Burch said he was surprised at all the job entailed.

"I think maybe the biggest eye-opener was the level at which you operate (as the state command sergeant major)," said Burch. "I'd never really taken that strategic look at the Nebraska National Guard and everything that goes into that line unit out there in North Platte, Hastings or wherever it might be... the impacts on that unit's ability to do what it needs to do and all the different pieces that have to come together. Everything from paying the water bill to new construction to Soldier training to collective training to personnel management, equipment distribution and all those logistic functions... there's so many things out there you can influence."

The ability of individual NCOs to influence operations is probably the biggest change Burch said he's seen over his career. In fact, just as little as 10 years ago sergeants were mostly employed as team leaders and squad leaders where they were responsible for accomplishing a piece of a much larger mission, Burch said.

See BURCH on 16.

Convoy commander tested daily in Iraq

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Growing up in Kearney, Neb., Ryan Jeffries used to stare at a painting entitled "Reflections" that hung in his family's home.

In it, an aged Vietnam vet stands, head bowed, next to the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., with his hand outstretched, touching the reflection of fallen comrades who, like the veteran, stretch out their hands to give comfort to their mourning friend.

The painting was purchased by Jeffries' stepfather, a Vietnam veteran, when Jeffries was just 13 years old. And even though he didn't understand the depth of feelings that painting conveyed to his step dad, the youngster still spent hours staring at the painting, trying to pull meaning from canvas.

"I was too young to understand combat and loss, but through the painting's power I was able to get a glimpse of what my father, stepfather, grandfathers and a long line of fine Americans before them had sacrificed in defense of this great nation," Jeffries recently wrote in a Veterans' Day editorial for the *Kearney Hub* newspaper.

Today Jeffries is a staff sergeant in Kearney's 1195th Transportation Company, which is currently completing a year-long tour at Camp Victory, Iraq, located on the outskirts of Baghdad. A veteran of two other deployments to Iraq, Jeffries now understands the painting's poignancy in ways he never could as a young boy.

"As a combat veteran myself, I have come to understand that the real heroes are the ones who never came home, those who are buried in foreign lands so that this country could remain free," wrote



Staff Sgt. Ryan Jeffries
Hometown: Kearney, Neb.
Job Title: Squad Leader, Convoy Commander, Kearney, Neb.
Years of Service: 17
Family: Single

Jeffries, a 1993 graduate of Kearney High School who spent eight years as an active Marine, serving as an artilleryman and U.S. Embassy guard in South Africa, Hungary and Belarus. He joined the Georgia Army National Guard as a fire direction control sergeant in 2002 and was deployed to Iraq twice before transferring back to



Photo by Spe. Fabian Andalbo

Iraq Inspection: Staff Sgt. Ryan Jeffries (right) conducts a pre-combat inspection of Sgt. Justin Harmin's equipment prior to a 1195th Transportation Company convoy mission to Baghdad, Iraq.

Nebraska and the 1195th Trans. Co. in September 2008.

Within a few short months after transferring into the 1195th Trans.

Co., Jeffries learned that he would most likely deploy back to Iraq for a third time.

See COMMANDER on 16.

New job gives Soldier responsibility for others' lives

■ *Nebraska Army Guard sergeant changes unit in pursuit of dream; realizes new job brings new responsibilities*

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

For almost as long as he's worn a uniform, Sgt. Jeremy S. Borrell had one simple dream: to jump out of airplanes.

However, since joining the Nebraska Army National Guard as a member of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, in December 2002, the opportunity seemed to elude him at every turn.

So, when the opportunity came to enlist in a newly forming airborne rigger unit in Seward, the 25-year-old Grand Island native said he literally "jumped" at the chance.

"Initially, the first thing that jumped out at me was the opportunity to go to airborne school," said Borrell, an airdrop sergeant with Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply.) "It was something that I looked forward to most of my military career."

However, since joining the unit and attending the parachute rigger course at Fort Lee, Va., earlier this year, Borrell said he now understands that being a rigger means much more than simply packing parachutes and getting to jump out of an airplane a couple times a year. Much, much more, he adds.

"One of the great things about being in our unit is we get to do a unique job within the military – being able to not only pack parachutes for other jumpers, but frequently jump ourselves to maintain our level of proficiency and provide safety for all the other individuals who use our parachutes," said Borrell.

That means that every time Borrell and his fellow riggers prepare personnel or cargo parachutes, they are literally holding the life of another Soldier in their hands.

"The level of responsibility is very high and we always try to achieve the highest level of responsibility because with the parachute system for personnel, it's a life-



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On The Drop Zone: Sgt. Jeremy S. Borrell, an airdrop sergeant with Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company (Light Air Supply,) poses for a photograph after successfully completing an airborne jump at Drop Zone Husker near Mead, Neb.

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. Jeremy S. Borrell
Hometown: Grand Island, Neb.
Job Title: Airdrop sergeant, Seward, Neb.
Years of Service: 7
Family: Single

saving device," said Borrell. "If it isn't for that parachute, (the jumper) is going to have a bad jump and all kinds of different things can happen."

It's a level of responsibility that Borrell has already been exposed to on numerous occasions going back to his first Nebraska Army Guard unit.

Shortly after joining the Guard, Borrell was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom in early 2005, serving a year in Iraq as a

member of the brigade commander's security detachment. While in Iraq Borrell frequently manned a Mk-19 automatic grenade launcher or M-249 light machine gun mounted atop one of his unit's armored Humvees.

It was an important and potentially deadly mission.

Borrell said he learned a lot about leadership by simply watching the senior noncommissioned officers within his unit.

"I had the opportunity during my time with Alpha Troop to serve under some of the finest NCOs that I've seen in the military and I try to live out the things that they instilled upon me early on in those years," said Borrell, who pinned on his own sergeant's stripes just two months ago.

"I really hope that someday my lower enlisted Soldiers will be able to take the lessons that I've taught them and use them in their own leadership."

One of the most important lessons, said Borrell, is setting a professional example.

"One of the most important traits that a leader has to have is to set an example," he said. "Lead as you expect your Soldiers to follow. If you can't perform the task, you shouldn't expect your Soldiers to perform it."

Maintenance sergeant keeps focus on developing Soldiers

By Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

Michael Rudebusch started his military career as a TOW (Tube, Optically, Wire) and Dragon Missile maintenance technician in the Nebraska Army National Guard's Company B (Maintenance), 67th Forward Support Battalion.

While there, he spent many years supporting Soldiers of the 67th Infantry Brigade during annual training periods at Fort Carson, Colo.

After utilizing his educational benefits and graduating from Southeast Community College, Rudebusch found it difficult to get a job. That's when he made the decision to join the active Army and became a satellite communications operator/maintainer. During the six years he spent on active duty he was stationed at the Defense Communications Systems station at Landstuhl, Germany, and later transferred to Fort Huachuca Ariz.

Missing home and deciding the active duty life was not for him, Rudebusch returned to Nebraska and rejoined his maintenance company.

In 2004 Rudebusch deployed to Iraq and spent a year at Forward Operating Base Speicher. While deployed in Iraq, he helped support units which had started using commercial band radios for communication within a convoy. When the radios were turned in for maintenance, there were no technical manuals available and no repair parts in the Army inventory. What could have been a major issue was quickly solved by the members of the Nebraska Army Guard maintenance company.

"The unique thing about the Guard is that we support various equipment, not just the equipment that we have in the unit, but all types of equipment in the units that we support," said Rudebusch, now a sergeant first class assigned to the 267th Maintenance Company (Direct Support.)

Rudebusch is the maintenance chief for

"I'm a firm believer that if I ask you to do it, I had very much (better) be able to do it myself," he added.

That's particularly important in a unit like the 165th, said Borrell.

"The NCO has a really important role in the aerial delivery and rigging in general," he said. "It's important for us to not only ensure that our lower enlisted are performing tasks to standard, but to also mentor them and pass on everything that we've learned not only as Soldiers in the rigging field, but also the things that I've picked up my entire career in the military."

As the only rigging unit in the Nebraska Army Guard, Det. 2, 165th QM Co. is responsible for providing parachutes for fellow paratroopers in the 165th SOFSC and Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance.)

They're also responsible for preparing cargo for delivery to forward operating bases using cargo parachutes, more commonly referred to as G-14s.

As one of several airdrop sergeants assigned to the aerial delivery section, Borrell is responsible for preparing the cargo for drops, ensuring that the G-14 parachutes are packed correctly and that the parachutes are correctly rigged onto the cargo so that the pallets exit the aircraft correctly and the parachutes deploy in such a way as to deliver the packages safely to the ground.

Borrell said it's a job he's quickly learned to love.

"The aerial delivery side is something that I really enjoy," he said. "Getting to watch the containers go out the back of the aircraft and have successful parachute deployments is something that's exciting to watch."

Borrell said he also understands that it's a skill that's in high demand today in places like Afghanistan.

"They're using a ton in theater," said Borrell. "That's how all of the forward operating bases are getting resupplied. With the lack of (main supply routes) that run through Afghanistan and a lack of safety on those MSRs, this is huge right now."

"Riggers are getting lots of opportunities to make a very large impact on what's going on over there. And it's exciting to be a part of that," he added.

"I look forward to the opportunity at some point in my military career to be able to utilize my skill downrange."



Photo by Mark Roland

Maintaining Focus: Sgt 1st Class Michael Rudebusch, maintenance chief for the 267th Maintenance Company, is also a fulltime electronic mechanic for the National Guard Bureau's Forward Repair Activity-Nebraska, supporting over 30,000 Standard Army Management Information Systems (STAMIS) and Logistic Enabler computer systems in 27 states and territories. .

the 267th Maint. Co.'s Electronics Maintenance Platoon.

"The role of the NCO in the maintenance arena is extremely important," he said. "We are the ones that make sure that all the (preventative maintenance checks and services) are done; that the Soldiers are trained, MOS qualified and that they can do their job."

"The officers in the unit have to rely on those NCOs to get the work done and to make sure the work is done to the quality that the military requires," he added, "to develop those mechanics, electronic mechanics and vehicle mechanics, to ensure they have the knowledge and abilities to test it and

See RUDEBUSCH on 16.

Sergeant puts teaching to test

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

For four years Sgt. 1st Class Jason Roberts worked hard to give future noncommissioned office the tools they needed to be successful in their next military assignments.

Serving as a Warrior Leaders Course instructor at Camp Ashland, Roberts knew the job he was doing was extremely important. He was helping build tomorrow's leaders.

Roberts now is putting the skills he taught to specialists and newly promoted sergeants to the test as the detachment sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 126th Chemical Battalion.

A member of the Nebraska Army National Guard since 1992, Roberts became the senior enlisted leader of the Omaha-based detachment earlier this year. Since then, Roberts said, he's been working hard to learn his new job while using the leadership techniques he helped teach others.

"It's kind of a big switch compared to what I'm used to," said Roberts earlier this summer



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

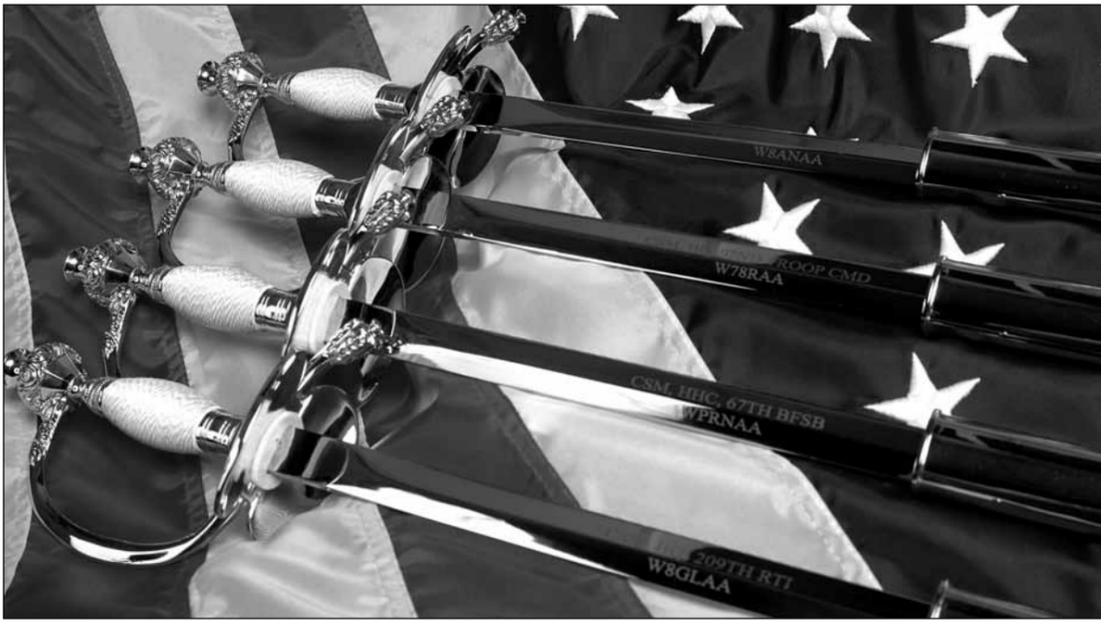
2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. 1st Class Jason Roberts
Hometown: Fremont, Neb.
Job Title: Detachment Sergeant, Omaha, Neb.
Years of Service: 17
Family: Wife: Kelly; Children: Kelsey, Sydney, Haley, Courtney

during a convoy to his unit's annual training at Camp Rapid, S.D., just three months into his new assignment. "I've been here going on month number three... it's a big shock."

As the detachment sergeant, Roberts is essentially the acting first sergeant for the detachment, which is too small to have a first sergeant of its own.

That means he's responsible for providing
See DETACHMENT SERGEANT on 16.



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

National Guard resurrects tradition

■ Noncommissioned officer swords being presented to unit senior sergeants

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

The Army National Guard resurrected a tradition that dates back more than 169 years by authorizing National Guard units to present a sword to each unit authorized a first sergeant and/or command sergeant major.

The Nebraska National Guard recently began distributing the swords to its units during "Uncas-ing and Assumption" ceremonies around the state.

The ceremony and passing of the sword to the unit's senior NCOs is intended to signify the senior NCO's commitment to being responsible for the Soldiers in their organization.

"The traditional role of the NCO is to ensure the accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of the Soldiers...ensuring they are trained and ready to perform all the tasks associated with the unit's mission," said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, Nebraska's state command sergeant major.

According to Burch, the history of the senior NCO sword presentation dates back to 1840 when the War Department adopted the unique NCO sword.

At that point it was a completely functional weapon intended for hard and dedicated use in war.

No longer applicable in today's warfare, the sword is now a symbol of the leadership the senior NCO



NCO Swords: NCO swords will be given to each unit assigned a first sergeant and/or command sergeant major. The swords will be inscribed with the unit's designation and will be passed from outgoing senior noncommissioned officer to incoming NCOs as a symbol of the passing of responsibility for the enlisted Soldiers in their units.

provides, remaining razor sharp just like the NCO that possesses it.

"It represents a tool within the NCO Corps that was used throughout history as a fighting instrument," said Burch.

Burch said he envisions the swords will become an important symbol of the NCO Corps' commitment to ensuring that enlisted Soldiers are properly trained and cared for, and dedicated to the ultimate accomplishment of their unit's mission.

The swords will not only serve as a symbol of the NCO, they will serve as a canvas for which to display the history of each unit.

"Every sword will have an inscription of the unit that the sword belongs to and as we continue through history...and the lineage of the unit changes... that lineage will follow on the NCO sword," said Burch.

"That way 50 years from now you'll be able to see the lineage of the existence of that sword and the units that it has been passed through."

According to Burch, there are a total of 39 swords that will be given

out, 13 for command sergeants major and 26 for first sergeants. The swords will be given out during uncasing ceremonies within the next few months.

1st Sgt. John Snoozy, senior sergeant for the Lincoln-based Joint Force Headquarters, was the recipient of a sword during a ceremony held at the "Spirit of '76 Armory" in Lincoln, Nov. 14.

Snoozy said he was thankful to be a part of something so rich with history.

"It's a great honor to be a part of such a military tradition," said Snoozy. "History and our foundation (are) extremely important to the military and just being a part of that little piece of history is a great honor."

Burch said he hopes the sword ceremonies will inspire the Soldiers standing in formation to better themselves and possibly become the senior NCO receiving the sword someday.

"I think there is going to be a 'wow factor' because it is a sword," said Burch.

"This is representative of every enlisted Soldier who aspires to be an NCO down the road and every NCO that aspires to be that senior noncommissioned officer in the unit."

Burch said he also sees the NCO sword as a piece of history that distinguishes the NCO Corps from those in command positions.

"There's a lot of heritage that goes back to the founding days of the NCO Corps...so that little piece of history is carried forward through the sword," said Burch.

"I hope it instills pride in our heritage and pride in the fact that the NCO Corps is, has always been and will continue to be the backbone of the Army.

RUDEBUSCH continued from page 15.

find any problems that may arise. A basic knowledge of electronics allows you to repair anything that has power applied."

Developing the Soldiers in his unit requires a lot of time to make things happen on the weekends.

"When Soldiers come in on a Saturday and Sunday, the NCOs have already (spent) at least two to three days prior to that working with our support personnel on the fulltime side on getting equipment for Soldier to work on. Making those arrangements, knowing what jobs are going to be worked, knowing what the parts status are for the equipment that is there, takes a lot of coordination prior to the actual drill, a lot of behind the scenes work."

During the weekend Rudebusch spends a lot of time supervising his maintenance personnel.

"In my position as the maintenance chief, it's (my job) to make sure that the work is done, making sure all documentation is done according to the regulations, making sure that the *right* parts are ordered, and making sure that people are actually doing the job that they are supposed to be doing."

Enforcing the standards while his Soldiers are doing maintenance is another part of the job that Rudebusch takes seriously.

"We all have the tendency to think we have the ability to fix things that may be beyond our capabilities," he said. "As an NCO it is our job to reign those in and to sometimes to motivate others who want to take short cuts."

"There are regulations for a specific reason and technical manuals for a specific reason – and that's what we work to and that's what

2009
YEAR OF THE
Strength from within **NCO**

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Rudebusch
Hometown: Seward, Neb.
Job Title: Maintenance Chief, Electronics Maintenance Platoon, Lincoln, Neb.
Years of Service: 22
Family: Wife: Tonya; Children: Daniel, Mikayla, Victoria

we train to. Only then can we for sure know that we are sending out a quality product and that the customer is going to be able to use it immediately when they get it...it's an NCO's job to do that," Rudebusch said.

Taking care of the new Soldiers in the unit is a main concern for Rudebusch and a motivator to provide a quality drill weekend, utilizing all the time available for training.

"Those Soldiers coming right back from school are highly motivated and want to get their hands on the equipment, and they don't want to come back to a unit that is doing nothing," he said.

"We get those Soldiers back and get them working on equipment."

Teaching the young Soldiers how to do their job will pay in the long run according to Rudebusch, and should be done at all levels.

"Building that ladder and that backbone that NCOs are, when my day comes to retire and somebody takes my spot, the position they vacate will be filled with somebody as qualified as themselves."

DETACHMENT SERGEANT

continued from page 15.

guidance to the other detachment NCOs on training, administrative requirements and overall morale and discipline.

In essence, he serves as the unit's assistant head coach, taking the plans and overall goals of the unit commander and ensuring the missions get completed.

As a former WLC instructor, Roberts said he's constantly trying to utilize the basic leadership techniques taught at Camp Ashland. Still, like taking on any new challenge, mistakes inevitably happen, he added.

"We used to teach about the leadership side – the communication and ensuring understanding," said Roberts, adding that he knows that he sometimes fails to communicate his wishes as clearly as he'd like to. "Then what gets communicated there doesn't end up

being the same."

The key to effective leadership, he added, is the ability to learn from one's mistakes while also being willing to ask questions. It's also about doing everything possible to make sure the mission gets done accurately and within the set time limits.

"The NCOs are driving the train, so to speak," said Roberts. "Definitely, the officers are making the plans and providing the guidance and so on, but somebody's got to carry it out."

"It's kind of like the middle guy in between the mission and the men," he added.

"The mission gets taken care of as well as the welfare of the Soldiers, putting out information as well as passing it up, basically ensuring that the whole picture gets taken care of."

COMMANDER continued from page 14.

As a staff sergeant assigned to a transportation company in Iraq, Jeffries serves in one of the most crucial jobs in his unit: convoy commander. As such, Jeffries exemplifies the radical changes in responsibilities that noncommissioned officers have taken on since the start of the Global War on Terrorism.

"I supervise 23 Soldiers daily and am responsible for up to 30 vehicles and 30 additional personnel while on missions," said Jeffries. "We conduct convoy security in and around Baghdad, escorting commodities of food, fuel, ammunition, etc., from the Camp Victory base to smaller contingency operating bases."

That also means that Jeffries is responsible for every aspect of the convoys he leads ranging from planning to execution.

It's a huge responsibility, but definitely one Jeffries always envisioned himself doing.

"I definitely saw myself doing this job as I have prior deployment experience in this role," said Jef-

fries in a recent e-mail interview. "This is the kind of duty that NCOs are meant to perform. It requires leadership, organizational ability and a high degree of technical and tactical proficiency."

To be successful in such an important and often stressful role, Jeffries said he relies upon the lessons he's learned throughout the course of his military career.

"Our NCOs are the lifeblood of this unit, carrying out the key tasks of day-to-day operations," he said. "Flexibility is the key to our success. There is no such thing as a 'typical' mission due to the ever-changing enemy (tactics, techniques and procedures) and the constant need to adjust for accommodation of Iraq's 'return to normalcy.'"

Jeffries said he's also been surprised by how little things can make a big impact.

"I have been surprised by the depth of the impact that our seemingly small piece of the pie has on the larger picture and daily 'battle rhythm,'" said Jeffries.

BURCH continued from page 14.

That's definitely not the case today, though.

"The NCOs of today are taking on a much bigger role – a much bigger role – in that they are ultimately responsible for operations," he said.

"A prime example is your convoy commanders out on the highways and byways of Iraq. Those folks are convoy commanders," Burch added. "10 years ago they may have been a ground guide at a critical turning point. Today they are the actual convoy commanders; they're operational leaders."

This increasing level of NCO responsibility is something that will most likely continue in the months and years ahead, Burch said.

"I think first off one of the driving factors is the educational level of our NCOs. We have a lot more NCOs with college degrees," he said. "It's not required of them, but they've chosen to make their military career a

life-long learning process whereby they continue to grow in their capabilities through education systems, be it military or civilian, which makes them more competent, more confident in what they do."

"That mechanic, that truck driver, that infantryman, they all have specific skill sets that they need to be good at. In days of old, the (Military Occupational Specialty) proficiency was the endgame, where now it's not just the MOS proficiency, but also the ability to step up to the challenge and take on more responsibilities," he said.

"Our Soldiers aren't afraid to take that challenge. They, in many cases, seek out the challenges and seek out the hard jobs and continue to learn and grow."

Above probably anything else, the real strength of America's military capabilities lies with its reliance and trust in the NCO Corps' ability to adapt to challenges as they occur. That's a direct result of the investment the United States made in developing a highly

professional, highly competent and highly agile NCO Corps, said Burch.

"I think the NCO Corps has responded tremendously over the course of the past eight years in identifying that their role is growing," he said. "It's not really a hard line in the sand as far as how far the NCO Corps will grow and expand into, but I think the capabilities that the growth gives the Army and the Army National Guard is important."

"We still need the skills and the abilities that the Officer Corps brings to the planning process... we still need to rely on them to be that level of leadership... and we need the NCO Corps to be proficient at their level of leadership as well," he said.

"But, the more we can compliment each other, especially in this era of sustained combat operations, the more we can sustain at the high levels that we are sustaining."

110th Medical Battalion welcomes new commander to organization

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

The Lincoln-based 110th Medical Battalion (Multi-functional) welcomed a new commander during a change of command ceremony held at the Penteman Armory at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 14.

With family, friends, distinguished guests and members of the 110th Med. Bn. looking on, Lt. Col. Shawn Edwards, Omaha, assumed command from Lt. Col. Anita Curington, Bellevue.



Curington

Col. Michael Navrkal, 92nd Troop Command commander, officiated over the ceremony

Navrkal thanked Curington for her service as commander and said he was confident the 110th Med. Bn. is better now than when she assumed command.

"As a commander, one thing you want to do is you want to leave the command better than when you got it," said Navrkal. "In her particular case, she has definitely done that."

Curington said her two-year command was a busy time, punctuated by the 110th's deployment to Iraq from December 2007 to November 2008, shortly after she assumed command.

"I would describe my battalion

command time as a whirlwind, rollercoaster ride," said Curington. "Within 30 days of assuming command we received our mobilization order and within another 60 days we were on our way to Fort Lewis, (Wash.)"

When Curington began her command, the 110th was a Medical Evacuation Battalion, but upon return from their deployment to Iraq they were transformed into the Multifunctional Battalion. It also assumed command of the 313th Medical Company, 267th Ordnance Company and 43rd Army Band.

Curington said the success the battalion and its members have enjoyed is a direct result of the hard work and teamwork.

"All of these accomplishments are not the result of one person's effort or leadership, but demonstrate the professionalism and the quality of the Soldiers standing in formation," said Curington. "I would like to thank each of you for your commitment to your unit, the battalion, and the Nebraska National Guard."

Curington challenged the members of the 110th Med. Bn. to continue raising the bar and constantly exceed the standard for their new commander. She also charged the new commander to continue the 110th Med. Bn.'s outstanding reputation.

"Lieutenant Colonel Edwards, I wish you the best of luck in your battalion command," she said. "You have a great group of Soldiers, NCOs and officers standing behind you. The 110th has an outstanding reputation in both the Army medical department and the National Guard Community. I charge you to

continue that tradition."

"It has truly been an honor to represent you and your unit as the 110th battalion commander," she added. "You are America's heroes."

Curington was born Dec. 1, 1965, in San Angelo, Texas. She graduated from Meade Senior High School, Fort Meade, Md., in 1983 and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health Education from Texas A&M University in 1988.

Curington received her commission through the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets ROTC program in 1987 and was assigned to the U.S. Army Reserve control group. She joined the Wyoming Army National Guard in 1990 and served as the human relations/equal opportunity officer until December 1993 when she joined the Nebraska Army National Guard.

She has held a variety of staff and leadership positions including company commander of the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance); 110th Medical Battalion personnel, operations and executive officer, 67th Support Group (Area) operations officer. She also served as an inspector general for the Nebraska Joint Forces Headquarters and as commander of the Guard's 72nd Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction.)

In taking command of the 110th Med. Bn., Navrkal urged Edwards to always concentrate on ensuring the wellness of the Soldiers under her command.

"The advice I would give you is when you make a decision always think about Soldiers, families, employers and communities," said Navrkal.

Edwards was born on May 5,



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

New Commander: Lt. Col. Shawn Edwards (far right) receives the colors of the 110th Multifunction Medical Battalion from Col. Michael Navrkal, Nov. 14.

1964, in Lincoln, Neb. She graduated from Omaha North High School in 1982 and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice in 1995 from Bellevue University and a Master of Science Degree in Information Technology Management from Touro International University in 2006.

Edwards enlisted in the Army National Guard on Sept. 12, 1985, and was assigned to Company A, 135th Signal Battalion. She received her commission through the Camp Ashland's Officer Candidate Program in July 1992 and was assigned to Co. A, 135th Signal Bn., as a platoon leader. She has also served in a variety of leadership positions including executive officer, Co. A 135th Signal Bn., alcohol and drug coordinating officer, Headquarters, State Area Command, company commander and supply officer for Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 126th Chemical Bn., and communications and electronics Officer for the 67th ASG.

She has also served as chief, Per-

sonnel Systems Section and chief, Mobilization Readiness Section, National Guard Bureau; armed forces manager, Camp Victory Iraq; division operations officer and chief, Officer Manager Branch, National Guard Bureau.

Edwards and her husband Randy have two children, Michael and Rashaun, and a granddaughter, Myanna. The Edwards live in Omaha, Neb.

After assuming command Edwards thanked the Nebraska National Guard leaders for giving her the opportunity to command the 110th Multifunctional Med. Bn.

"Taking care of Soldiers is a number one priority for me because we have to ensure that our Soldiers are not only physically fit, but mentally prepared," said Edwards. "I strongly believe that if you take care of the Soldiers they in turn will ensure the mission is accomplished."

"I look forward to working with each and every one of you and carrying on the tradition that's already been established by the 110th."

Chemical unit invites Omaha reporters to try out physical fitness test

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

After nearly 20 years, the push-ups seemed to come out slower and harder than he remembered.

"It was horrible," said Mike'l Severe, 40, a former U.S. Army helicopter crew chief, Nov. 14, after completing the push-up portion of an Army Physical Fitness Test with Soldiers from the Nebraska Army National Guard's 754th Chemical Company and the 126th Chemical Battalion's headquarters detachment. "I remember where I used to get to 40 before I'd stop."

For Severe, now a morning reporter for Omaha's KETV television station, the November morning PT test was about redemption; about bettering the physical fitness score he recorded five years earlier while participating in a similar test at Camp Ashland, Neb.; about reliving a few of the memories he still has of a 19-year-old Soldier enjoying what he now calls "the best time" of his life.

However, after knocking out far less push-ups than he'd hoped to, Severe realized that the morning's physical fitness test was going to be a lot tougher than he'd originally expected. He immediately started making goals to do better.

"I'm definitely coming back next year better prepared for it," he said, smiling as he glanced over at a pair of co-workers, one of whom had set the test up for him.

According to Capt. Chuck McWilliams, commander of the Omaha-based 754th Chemical Company and KETV's morning meteorologist, the idea of inviting Severe and two other fellow KETV journalists to the South Omaha Readiness Center to participate in his unit's PT test began several months earlier.

"Earlier this summer John Oakey was saying that he'd like to get back in shape," said McWilliams. "So he came over to my house and I got him started on an exercise routine."

McWilliams then began joking



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Final Steps Until Next Year: Mike'l Severe, morning reporter for Omaha's KETV, completes the final steps of his walk test while participating in an Army Physical Fitness Training test with members of the 754th Chemical Company and the 126th Chemical Battalion's headquarters detachment.

about how he needed to administer a PT test to Oakey, the KETV news anchor, so he could see how far he'd progressed in his exercise regimen. "It kind of went from there," said McWilliams.

This was actually the second time that Oakey and Severe had taken a PT test with McWilliams. About five years earlier, McWilliams — a former member of the U.S. Navy — was a newly enlisted Army National Guard Soldier attempting to receive his commission through the Nebraska Army National Guard's Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland.

McWilliams said while attending OCS, he and Oakey — a former member of Texas A&M University's Corps of Cadets — often talked about military physical fitness training. Severe, a former Army crew chief, also soon joined in.

"They ended up coming out and doing the PT test with us," recalled McWilliams, adding that they also brought along a videographer to capture the event.

When Oakey recently approached Williams, now an Operation Iraqi

Freedom veteran, about creating a physical fitness program for him, they decided it would be interesting to see how far they'd progressed — or regressed — over the five years since the original test.

They soon enlisted Severe and John Thomas, the morning show's traffic reporter, to also participate.

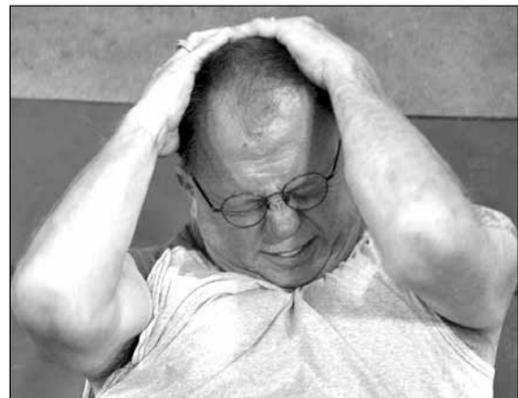
"They came to me about a month ago," said Thomas, 53. "I'd just started with the TV station and they asked, 'Do you want to do it?' and I said, 'Why not.'"

The reason, said Thomas, was pretty simple. "I did it to be part of the team, but also to see what kind of shape I'm in. I work out pretty regular myself, but this summer I didn't because I had too much yard work to do," he said.

After learning about the proposed PT test, Severe, a father of two young children, said he wrote the date on his calendar, figuring that he'd have plenty of time to prepare.

Unfortunately, those preparations kept getting pushed off.

"I'm kind of embarrassed," he said. Still, he wasn't about to back out. "It sounded like fun. And every



Last Few Sit-Ups: John Thomas, KETV traffic reporter, struggles to complete a few more sit-ups, Nov. 14, at the South Omaha Readiness Center.

time you watch it, it brings back the old memories of being in the service, being 19 years old," Severe said.

A few days prior to the November test, Severe said the journalists gathered at the KETV studio to watch some of the video tape from the Camp Ashland test. Unfortunately, a day before the scheduled test, Oakey and his family fell victim to the flu, temporarily forcing him to delay his test.

Severe and Thomas however arrived at the Omaha armory bright and early to try their hand at the test, standing in line with dozens of Nebraska Soldiers as they waited their turn to punch out as many push-ups and sit-up as they could in a two-minute time limit.

"Wow, that's a totally different thing than crunches," said Thomas after completing the sit-ups phase. "You definitely start to feel them after a little bit."

When it came to cardiovascular portion of the test, Thomas opted to complete the two-mile run with the Soldiers while Severe, who recently had knee surgery, decided to complete the two-and-a-half-mile walk.

Later both reporters said they were glad they took the test, adding that it was also an eye-opening experience.

"I don't know too many people who are in the Reserves and I never ask

them much about what they do," said Thomas. "So I didn't know what to expect. I had no preconceived notions."

"It was just something new to do and to just see what the guys go through and how I compare to the Soldiers," he said before adding with a smile: "I did better than the minimums. How that compares, I don't know, but I did pretty good for an old fart."

Severe said he also enjoyed the

experience.

"Of course you always want to support our troops and now it's even more important. If any of these guys see us go out there and try it and (if) maybe that gives them any kind of enthusiasm to do it more, that would be kind of cool," Severe said, adding that the test brought a flood of good memories back.

"The best time of my life was when I went into the Army. It basically turned me around," he added. "I was kind of a screw up... I'd done almost two semesters and I was below a 0 grade point average. And I joined the Army and basically turned my life around."

"I always say to young kids when I talk to them, go do a short stint. Sign up for four years and when you get out, you'll be better prepared for life."

McWilliams said he's glad the two reporters enjoyed the event, adding that he hopes his unit's Soldiers will also take something away from the occasion as well.

"For the Soldiers, to see that some other people are involved in physical activity... (hopefully it will) inspire some of the younger Soldiers to make physical activity a part of their life, not just because they're members of the National Guard, but also because it's part of a healthy lifestyle."

Tiny spooks invade Lincoln, Kearney armories

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Princesses, monsters, fairies, goblins and even a few stormtroopers.

That was the scene that greeted visitors to the Nebraska Army National Guard armories in Lincoln and Kearney, recently.

The visitors, who had come by the dozens in search of candies, prizes and a generally good time, were participants in the annual Haunted Armory party put on by the Nebraska National Guard's State Family Program Office.

As in the past, the parties were a huge success.

"It was great time," said Lori Neumann, state family assistance coordinator. "The crowds were just awesome."

According to Sgt. Michelle Degarmo Shapland, family program specialist, more than 500 people attended the Oct. 23 event held at Lincoln's Spirit of 1776 Armory while more than 150 people attended a similar event at the Kearney Armory, Oct. 30. The parties were open to Nebraska military members and their families.

Degarmo Shapland said the parties, which are easily the most popular event the staff



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Ghoulish Welcome: A zombie peers out from behind a curtain, part of the Spirit of 1776 armory's haunted hallway, which was put on by a number of different units and organizations.

plans each year, serve a vital function.

"The annual Haunted Armories are a resource to bring our families of the Nebraska National Guard together for bonding," she said. "It is also a way for the departments, units, family readiness groups and various outside organizations to say thank you to those who sacrifice the most: our children of the service members."

"(It's also) a bonding time for our Soldiers and their families."

This marked the fifth annual event in Lincoln and the first time the event has been held in Kearney.

Supporting the Lincoln event were: the 267th Maintenance Company Family Readiness Group, the 501st Storm Troopers, State Support Services Division, Automated Records Branch, family readiness assistant,



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

And The Winner Is... Young Halloween revelers wait patiently as judges work to choose the winner of a Halloween costume contest, Oct. 23, at the Spirit of 1776 armory in Lincoln. This year's party attracted more than 500 military family members and guests.



Courtesy Photo

Halloween Decorations: A young party-goer receives a tattoo during the Haunted Armory party held in Kearney, Neb. According to State Family Program officials, more than 150 military family members attended the first-ever event in Kearney, Oct. 30.

family readiness support assistant, Raising Canes, VFW Post 131 and Auxiliary, STARBASE Nebraska, AFROTC, Yellow Ribbon Program, 402nd Military Police Family Readiness Group, Nebraska Women's Basketball - Fast Breakers Booster Club, Construction Facilities Management Office, 1-376th Service and Support Aviation Battalion, 165th Quartermaster Company Family Readiness Group, VA Nebraska/Western Iowa, Heartland Federally Employed Women, United States Property and Fiscal Office, Military OneSource, Stars and Strips Sertoma, Joint Force Headquarters, Retiree Volunteers.

Supporting the Kearney event were: the

MFLC, Quality Inns and Suites, MOS, youth specialist, Miller American Legion and Auxiliary, Photo Booth (Erik Axthelm), Tri City Storm Hockey Team, American Legion Post 52, Buffalo County Veterans Service Office, Yellow Ribbon Team, 734th Transportation Battalion, Fort Kearney Chapter American Red Cross, FPO FAC, 1195th Transportation Company Family Readiness Group, The Big Apple Fun Center.

Additionally, FPO ADOS supported a twisted circus hallway in Kearney while the Kearney Family Program Office created a kid-friendly hallway and Todd and Kathy Buck supported a Hallway of Tribute.

TRAIN RIDE continued from page 1.

was decorated with Christmas lights and holiday greenery.

According to Andy Williams, a BNSF spokesman, the train ride was the railroad's way of saying thanks to Nebraska military men and women, and more importantly, their families, for all the sacrifices they've made since Sept. 11, 2001.

"Bringing this train out was just a way for us to say thank you to the military... but also to the families who are sacrificing while their loved ones are off protecting the freedoms that we have here in America," said Williams, Dec. 4, as he moved from vintage car to vintage car - many of which dated back to the 1950s - thanking the families for their service.

The Dec. 4 train ride, which carried approximately 300 military families from the Lincoln Haymarket station to a turn around point just east of Ashland, was actually the second such holiday ride for Nebraska military families.

The first ride took place in Omaha a day earlier for approximately 200 military family passengers.

According to Williams, this marked the second straight year that BNSF has traveled a portion of its national rail line, offering free holiday trips to military families.

"We're a very pro-military organization with about 1,000 of our employees having been mobilized since the start of the war," he said. "About a year ago, we started thinking about ways that we could say thank you to not only these military families, but the greater military community. That's how we came up with the concept of the Holiday Express."

The Holiday Express was actually a train consisting of 11 vintage passenger cars that were decorated for the holidays.

In a sense, it was as if the train featured in the animated 2004 Warner Bros. film, "The Polar Express"



An Early Visit From Santa: Santa Claus talks to Sgt. Christopher Brammer and his two children, Gabbie, 10, and Xander, 5, during a 90-minute ride aboard the "Holiday Express," Dec. 4.

had jumped off of the big screen and come to life in Nebraska.

Williams said BNSF took the train to several states last year and was continuing the effort by visiting such states as Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois and others in 2009. It plans to continue giving military rides again next year, most likely on the west coast.

He said it's a small expression of gratitude for the tremendous work that America's military and their families are doing on behalf of the United States.

The riders said the gift was anything but a small token.

"I think it's a very generous thing that BNSF has done for us," said Sgt. Christopher Brammer, a team sergeant with the Beatrice-based Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance), as he rode the rails with his daughter Gabbie, 10, and 5-year-old son Xander. "It's amazing."

Brammer said he particularly appreciated the fact that the gift enabled him to spend precious time with his two children.

"It means a lot. Not only did it save me the cost of buying a couple train tickets and going out enjoying an afternoon, but everything is planned," he said, smiling as a BNSF employee offered his son another cookie.

Gabbie agreed. "It's a pretty good ride," she said. "Me and my dad and my brother really like it."

She admitted she really didn't know what to expect when she'd learned that her family was going to take an afternoon ride. "I didn't know it would be this fancy."

According to McNally, he and his family were also having a tremendous time on the Holiday Express.

"It's pretty exciting," he said. "The boys only get to see trains from far away. This is our first time on a full-sized train. We've been looking forward to this for a couple of weeks."

Heather McNally echoed those thoughts.

"This is a pretty big deal for us because this isn't something that we get to do every day. And Jackson loves trains, so he's really looking



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Showing Their Support: Matt Rose, BNSF chairman, president and chief executive officer, presents Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, and Gov. Dave Heineman with two \$10,000 checks, one for Offutt Air Force Base's Youth Center and another for the Stars and Stripes Sertoma Club to be used in support of the Nebraska Family Program.

forward to this. And it means a lot to me to have all of us together."

The train ride wasn't the only gift BNSF bestowed upon Nebraska military families, either. Following the train ride, Matt Rose, BNSF chairman, president and chief executive officer, presented Gov. Dave Heineman and Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, with two \$10,000 checks, one for Offutt Air Force Base's Youth Center and another for the Stars and Stripes Sertoma Club to be used in support of the Nebraska Family Program.

Rose said they're part of the railroad's continuing commitment to America's military families.

"This is kind of a personal issue for us," Rose said. "We've literally had hundreds of people from BNSF serve in our armed forces, both in the reserves and in the combat theater over there. Right now we have over 10 of our BNSF family who are over there serving."

"We try to do a lot of things for the military including making sure that they are well taken care of while they are providing service to our country, but we also have a real passion to hire military people when they come back into the private sector," Rose said. "It's been a great partnership and a great relationship between the railroad and the military."



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Eyes on family program staff members

■ New assistant brings big goals to family program office

Greg Engler joined the Family Program Office as the new family readiness assistant this past October.

Engler is married with three children and one grandson.

Born and raised in Omaha, Neb., Engler graduated from high school and joined the Nebraska Army National Guard.



Engler

He began his military career as a traditional Soldier with the Combat Support Company, 1-134th Infantry, as a scout gunner in Wahoo, Neb.

Engler later moved to a full-time position at Camp Ashland's Region IV's Noncommissioned Officer Academy where he served as a cadre trainer.

He ended his military career (with 27 years of service) as a senior small group leader at the Regional Training Institute at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Engler has been involved in Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and recently served as the company family readiness group leader for the 600th Transportation Company.

He has a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Bellevue University. His hobbies include fishing, hunting and working his dogs.

As the FRA, Engler said he hopes to establish strong family readiness groups that are able to effectively communicate and support each other. He also looks to establish well-trained teams with good working relationships between the family readiness leaders, military points of contact and unit commanders, as well as be able to establish a system that recognizes and thanks volunteers who have put in so much of their personal time and energy.

■ Army Guard child/youth specialist looking to tackle issues facing Nebraska's kids

My name is Pam Stemple and I have just arrived in Nebraska this summer after living in the Washington, D.C., area for five years.

I have been married to Col. Phil Stemple for 21 years. We have three kids: Tomas, Rachel, and Andi. We have lived all over the world and I have really enjoyed it.



Stemple

I have lived through three deployments. Tomas, our son, has been to Afghanistan twice, and Phil has been to Iraq. Both of my Soldiers were gone at the same time in 2007.

I have learned a lot from that time.

I am from Garland, Texas. One of my greatest achievements was that I retired from the U.S. Navy Reserve in 2005 after 24 years of service.

My latest volunteer experience was as the family readiness group leader for National Guard Bureau for two years. I have also volunteered for various positions in social groups within the Army and also in my children's schools and church.

As the child and youth deployment specialist for the Nebraska Army National Guard, I am looking forward to starting a new teen/youth program and keeping up with all the yellow ribbon events, special events for holidays, supporting the FRGs, and childcare/respite issues.

With the deployments coming up in the near future, my motto is: FAMILY STRONG, ARMY STRONG!!!!

■ New youth coordinator experienced with Guard

My name is Jessica Shottenkirk. I started working in the Family Program Office, as the National Guard state youth coordinator in



Shottenkirk

November. I was born and raised in Lincoln. I attended Pius X high school.

My boyfriend and I recently bought a house in the highlands. We love being homeowners.

We have a 5-month old baby girl named Brooklynn. My mother is retired from the army and my brother is currently serving.

Our Military Kids program supporting families one child at a time

By Tiffany Albanez

Yellow Ribbon Support Specialist

Part of my job as a Nebraska Yellow Ribbon support specialist is to research and learn about every possible program and benefit available for National Guard Soldiers and families. My absolute favorite program to tell people about is *Our Military Kids*.

Supporting military kids is a high priority of mine, both personally and professionally. I know firsthand the trials and tribulations military kids go through because I lived it.

I grew up as the oldest of three kids in an active duty household and trust me, the oldest always has to pick up the slack when a parent is deployed.

I also taught junior high and high school in two predominately military school districts (near Offutt AFB and Fort Carson, Colo.) I have seen the effects a deployment can have on a student's school work and

attitude. Children of National Guard and Reserve families, those who are "suddenly military" when the deployment alert is delivered, can have a more difficult time adjusting to the deployment than a child in an active duty household.

Our Military Kids recognizes this unique aspect of Guard and Reserve families and has created a fantastic organization that recognizes the special sacrifices Guard and Reserve kids make every day.

Our Military Kids is a non-profit organization that provides grants for up to \$500 to children of deployed National Guard and reserve families. Their mission is to help fund enrichment activities such as sports, fine arts, and tutoring.

Children 3 years old through 12th grade are eligible if their parent is currently deployed. There is no limit on how many kids per deployed family may apply, as long as they meet the age requirements.

In 2004, Linda Davidson and Gail Kruzal, the organizations creators, piloted the pro-

gram with a deploying National Guard unit out of Winchester, Va. It has since grown to all 50 states and most territories in the last five years.

The list of sports *Our Military Kids* sponsors includes baseball, boxing, cheerleading, dance, horseback riding, even judo and squash. School trips and tutoring are also eligible, following proper requirements.

Each child can request a second grant up to \$500 if the deployment is at least 365 days and if it has been at least six months since the first grant was awarded.

All of the grant money is donated by companies such as Lockheed Martin, Target, General Dynamics, GEICO and private donors including Colin and Alma Powell.

Once the application is submitted, including a copy of the deployment orders, DEERS ID card or birth certificate (if the deployed Soldier is the biological parent of the child,) and corresponding information from the service provider, it generally takes two weeks to receive approval.

If the application is approved, *Our Military Kids* will send the child a "thank you" packet and their check will go directly to the service provider. Please keep in mind, *Our Military Kids* is a separate organization from *Operation: Military Kids (OMK)*.

Any military spouse will testify that one less thing to worry about during the deployment helps no matter what one's financial background is. Keeping kids in a routine is highly recommended to help with emotional stability and *Our Military Kids* recognizes that children need to have activities to look forward to, be excited about, and to help them grow as individuals throughout the deployment.

Additionally, *Our Military Kids* honors the children of severely wounded service members with special criteria for those situations.

I strongly encourage anyone to visit *Our MilitaryKids.org* to participate or donate to a cause specifically created to pay tribute to the sacrifices military kids make, too.

Patience necessary when traveling by air over holiday season

■ Officials say travelers should expect delays when traveling by air over holiday season

The holidays are once again upon us, and many people will be traveling across the nation to spend time with their families and friends.

A number of us will venture into crowded airports to board a flight full of holiday travelers.

This may be a time-honored tradition for many of us who have chosen to serve our country. However, it now takes a little more time to get into the terminal, show identification, have checked baggage screened, and pass through metal detectors.

We may be asked to step off to the side and allow screeners to

thoroughly check our carry-on bags or to have a wand passed over us.

Those of us flying this holiday season should be prepared for delays due to random changes in security screening at different times and at different airports.

We need not get upset about the delays, but should share our holiday spirit with the security personnel who are working at airports during the holidays and not spending time with their families and friends.

Why? Because, they are doing their jobs and ensuring we all make it safely to see our loved ones.

We can also do our part to make sure we and fellow travelers have a happy and safe holiday season while flying across this great nation.

Before you leave the house:

- Try to travel "light." Don't take

Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder
Antiterrorism Officer
Nebraska Air National Guard

your entire closet and don't bring more than one carry-on item.

- Avoid taking military luggage such as duffel bags or flight bags. Also, make sure any bags taken do not have military patches or emblems on them.

- Remove all sharp items, knives and other prohibited items from your luggage before you leave home.

- Place valuables such as jewelry, cash and laptop computers in carry-on baggage.

- Don't bring wrapped presents. You can bring your presents, but plan on wrapping them at your destination.

- Ensure family or friends have a copy of your travel itinerary and

emergency contact information.

- Before you leave the house, make sure you have locked all doors, closed the garage door and have asked a trusted neighbor to watch your home.

Going to and arriving at the airport:

- Arrive early for your flight. A good rule of thumb is to get to the airport at least two hours before takeoff.

- Be a "people watcher" and immediately report any suspicious activity you see in the airport to law enforcement or airport security personnel.

- Check-in and pass through security checkpoints as quickly as possible so as to avoid unsecured areas of the airport.

Security screening:

- Have a picture ID and boarding pass readily available at all times.

Use your state driver's license or state-issued ID to check in and board flights.

- Start removing loose change and other metallic items before you get to the metal detector.

- Remove outer coats, suit jackets, and blazers.

- Cooperate with and follow the instructions of airline staff and airport security personnel.

On the flight:

- Remain alert during your flight and report any suspicious activity to flight attendants or aircrew.

- Keep a low profile by not discussing your military affiliation with fellow passengers.

Please contact the following for more information:

Capt. David Cooper, Nebraska Army National Guard antiterrorism officer, (402) 309-7406; or Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard antiterrorism officer, (402) 309-1565.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard Lieutenant Colonel

Troy A. Paisley

Major
John P. Calabro
Ryan S. Earleywine

Captain
Jocelyn J. Kuta
Jacques S. Smith III
Jonathan D.D. Wymer

First Lieutenant
Michael K. Hoffmann

Chief Warrant Officer Three
Patrick L. Hegemann

Chief Warrant Officer Two
Corey L. Baker
Britt A. Moser

Warrant Officer One
James D. Lane
Nicholas S. Richardson

Sergeant First Class
Lisa M. Almquist
John A. Koesters
Troy S. Lewis
Roger D. Ramos
Michael G. Uhing

Staff Sergeant
Mark A. Faber
Brian T. Griess
Owen P. Kramer
Jacob R. Krause
Jessie A. London
Michael R. Minnehan
Jason A. Willits
Erik M. Wolgan

Sergeant
Sean C. Amen
Danny F. Engel
Wyatt A. Feilmeier
Michaela L. Gomez
Richard P. Goodwin Jr.
Michael L. King
Carl J. Nolte
Jason C. Papke

Specialist
Adam J. Brodahl
Nathaniel M. Collins
Ryan S. Crum
Kyle J. Giger
Trey W. Gothard
Jared A. Grell
Benjamin G. Helmink
Justin M. Keeton
Nicholas D. Lonowski
Jamie L. McCabe
Luke L. McQuistan
Micah S. Roberts
Craig D. Sholts
Primo D. Sipin Jr.
Thomas J. Sloup
Dustin L. Stoner
Makayla B. Supik
Kimberly M. Sykes
Charles S. Warner

Private First Class
Leon C. Baker
Patrick R. Beerbohm
Brian J. Bruce
Russell L. Burns
Wyatt D. Carson
Anthony W. Coppedge
Curtis J. Erickson
Tyler R. Hightree
David A. Howard
Alex R. Jones

Kal R. Kasselder
Eric A. Kosmicki
Matthew L. Leffler
Jessica A. Marlow
Dannyl D.A. Pesek
Raul S. Rodriguez
Ryan S. Schacht
Christopher a. Schmid
Andrew R. Scobie
Shane M.V. Shockey
Andrey L. Vance
Devin H. Wilson

Private Two
Joshua C. Annen
Kurt W. Delisle
Erik A. Hernandez
Clay S. Johnson
Jordan V. Jones
Jacob A. Kraatz
Jesse M. Lalumendre
Joshua D. Osterhoudt
Austin J. Peterson
Matthew D. Pusch
Dylan A. Recek
Justin W. Spector
Derek J. Utemark

Air National Guard
Lieutenant Colonel
Michael A. Hoskins
Joseph G. Conrad
Arthur J. Newsome

First Lieutenant
Domenique M. Lira
Yolanda Canter

Master Sergeant
Michael F. Spieker

Technical Sergeant
Daniel Cadenbach

Casey D. Svitak

Staff Sergeant
Travis Laframboise

Kyle B. Martin
Joseph G. Reisdorff

Senior Airman
Vinessa M. Boice
Amanda Koeping

AWARDS

Army National Guard
Legion of Merit
Brig. Gen. Judd H. Lyons

Meritorious Service Medal
Lt. Col. Anita K. W. Curington
Lt. Col. Richard A. Gray
Master Sgt. Mark A. Larson
Sgt. 1st Class Brian F. Kuss
Sgt. 1st Class Rebecca J. Schiewe

Army Commendation Medal
Maj. Brent D. Flachsbart
Capt. Andrew S. Collins
Sgt. Maj. Brian T. Folts
Sgt. 1st Class Bruce A. Nakai
Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Pearson
Staff Sgt. Jeffrey D. Murphy
Staff Sgt. Christine L. Rafferty
Sgt. Michael L. Noyes Jr.

Army Achievement Medal
Capt. Russell L. Stewart
1st Lt. Joseph W. Neumann
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Torrey J. Baker
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Stephen C. Goni
Master Sgt. Janice Hendrix

Master Sgt. Kent L. Ropers
Sgt. 1st Class Christopher L. Sterns
Staff Sgt. Nicholas L. Alberts
Staff Sgt. Rick G. Carter
Staff Sgt. Amber D. Engelman
Staff Sgt. Randy A. Garver
Staff Sgt. John Inthavong
Staff Sgt. Daniel J. Murphy
CDT Gregory P. Veys
Sgt. Brent A. Anderson
Sgt. Octavio Baeza
Sgt. Lane L. Barnason
Sgt. Elliott J. Gray
Sgt. John T. Nicola
Sgt. James M. Nordman
Sgt. Topacio A. Ortiz
Sgt. Dustin J. Sanderson
Sgt. Jennifer L. Stolle
Sgt. Jeremie E. Wunderlich
Spc. Seth W. Thompson
Pfc. Aaron A. Dickey
Pfc. Christopher M. Gilland
Pfc. Kody J. Mrshall

Nebraska National Guard
Meritorious Service Medal
Sgt. 1st Class Dale T. Alexander Jr.

Nebraska National Guard
Commendation Medal
Spc. Joshua A. Wilken

Nebraska National Guard
Individual Achievement Medal
Staff Sgt. Amber D. Engelman
Sgt. Chelsea L. Dunbar
Sgt. Eric L. Wilford
Spc. James A. Adelman
Spc. Glenn J. Cox
Spc. Keith D. O'Brien
Spc. Mitchell K. Osantowski
Spc. Heath E. Wragge
Pfc. Owen P. Karre

Air National Guard
Meritorious Service Medal
Lt. Col. Steven Plamann
Master Sgt. Mark Heithoff

Air Force Commendation Medal

Air Force Achievement Medal
Tech. Sgt. David Job

RETIREMENTS

Air National Guard
Lt. Col. Steven H. Plamann
Master Sgt. Daniel R. Foreman
Master Sgt. Brian D. Johnson

Master Sgt. Mark L. Heithoff
Master Sgt. Lyle E. Newburn
Tech. Sgt. Duane L. Eivins
Tech. Sgt. Penny E. Gerking

Army National Guard
Sgt. 1st Class Gary L. Richters
Sgt. Honey Dewitt

Shorttakes

Engineers earn shot at national supply title

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

One of the newest units in the Nebraska Army National Guard was presented with some prestigious hardware, Nov. 6, when the supply section of the Wahoo and Hastings-based 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) was presented the Col. Don Hatten Award for Supply Excellence during an award ceremony at Camp Ashland, Neb.

The unit, which was competing in the Modified Table of Organization and Equipment unit division, won both the state and seven-state regional supply competition. It competed for the Army National Guard's national title, Nov. 17, when a team of supply experts inspected the unit's supply operation.

According to Col. Mark Stockstell, Nebraska Army National Guard state logistics officer, the unit has much to be proud of.

"It speaks very highly for the 623rd," said Stockstell shortly after presenting the state award to 1st Lt. Chris Pelchat, commander of the 623rd Engineer Co., in front of a formation of unit Soldiers. "It takes the whole unit and I really appreciate all the hard work and dedication your staff put in to achieving this."

Also honored during the ceremony were Staff Sgt. Michael Warrick, unit supply sergeant, and his team of supply technicians.

Warrick said the team spent hours upon hours working to ensure that the unit's supply records, operating procedures and inventory were ready for the inspections. He said that along with earning the awards, it also helped prepare the unit for a possible mobilization next year.

"It definitely helped us to get ready to mobilize because the more excellence you have in supply, the greater you maintain your logistical posture, the greater your ability to mobilize the unit," he said. "It means that the Soldiers have the gear that they need to be successful for the mobilization."

Since the unit is relatively new, Warrick said that when they decided to compete for the state award he and his team of supply specialists came up with a plan. That plan, he added, was the key to their success.

"The key is staying focused on maintaining and sustaining excellence in logistics," Warrick said. "But I think a lot of it came from coming up with a vision and a goal."

"To achieve any kind of success, you've got to have a vision and a goal, and you've got to be able to lead your guys to reach that goal. And then you work toward that goal," he said. "The key aspect was training the guys in the section on the key tasks."

Pelchat said the award was a team effort that will ultimately help make the unit that much more capable in the event that its mobilized next year. "This wasn't just a supply excellence award, it was an award for the entire unit," Pelchat told the 623rd Engineer Co. Soldiers after accepting the award from Stockstell. "I know that on numerous occasions each one of the platoons provided people to help out the supply section."

"If our supply is not ready logistically, then we're not ready and we're not mission capable," Pelchat added.

Also honored from the 623rd Engineer Co. supply section were: Spc. Brian Sloan, Fremont, Spc. Scott Upchurch, Omaha, Pfc. Christopher Borreson, Colon, Pfc. Jacki Bouray, Lincoln, Pfc. Kayla Johnson, Grand Island, and Pfc. Thomas Sloup, Fremont.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Awardees: Members of the 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) pose with the Col. Don Hatten Supply Excellence Award, which was presented to them at Camp Ashland, Neb. Nov. 17.

Nebraska Guard honored for State Games support

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Nebraska National Guard received two special plaques from the Cornhusker State Games, Nov. 3, when the state amateur athletic organization honored the Guard for its long-time support of Nebraska athletics.

"It's been a wonderful partnership," said Dave Mlnarik, executive director of the Nebraska Sports Council, shortly after presenting plaques to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general.

One recognizes the Nebraska Air National Guard as a platinum-level corporate sponsor while the second recognizes the fifth anniversary of the Nebraska Army National Guard's participation in the sponsorship support program. Since the start of the Cornhusker Games, the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard have supported the



Photo by David Nore

Thanks: Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Dave Mlnarik, Nebraska Sports Council executive director, and Col. Daryl Bohac pose with two plaques that were presented to the Nebraska National Guard on Nov. 3.

competitions in a number of ways including the annual Cornhusker State Games Torch Run and the annual opening ceremonies.

The Cornhusker State Games just celebrated its 25th anniversary

this past summer.

"The Nebraska National Guard has really been there since the start," said Mlnarik. "Just the support we receive through the annual Torch Run out in the communities is crucial."

Mlnarik added that the Cornhusker State Games is a 5013C event, meaning that it does not receive any tax funding. As such, it must depend on volunteer efforts and corporate sponsorships.

"We depend on the type of support we receive through partnerships, like the one we have with the Nebraska National Guard," he said. "It's crucial to our success."

The 2010 Cornhusker State Games are scheduled to be held June 25-27, with some of the scheduled 63 sporting events to be held even earlier.

For more information, check out the Website at www.nebras-kasportsCouncil.com.

Camp Ashland supply specialists honored for state, regional success

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Members of the 209th Regional Training Institute's supply operations section were honored by the senior Nebraska Army National Guard logistical officer in November.

Moments before beginning an inspection that could ultimately lead them to Washington, D.C. to accept national supply excellence awards, Col. Mark Stockstell presented Master Sgt. Dorrance Atherton, 209th RTI supply sergeant, with the 2009 Col. Don Hatton supply of excellence award, given out annually to the best Nebraska Army National Guard supply operation.

The RTI was competing in the Table of Distribution and Allowance Unit Category.

The RTI supply operation was honored for taking first place in its region, defeating similar units from seven other states including Louisiana and Texas, two of the largest Army National Guard states in the country.

Greeting the Commander-in-Chief



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Governor meets with Air Force's top senior noncommissioned officer

The Air Force's top senior noncommissioned officer for 2009 met with his commander-in-chief when Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham, 170th Group, met with Gov. Dave Heineman at the State Capitol in Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 23. Bingham, the chief host aviation resource manager at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., is a full-time Nebraska Air National Guardsman assigned to the 170th Group. Along with winning the Air Force's top senior noncommissioned officer award, Bingham was also the top senior NCO in the Nebraska Air National Guard and the entire Air National Guard.

Street Talk

“What is your favorite holiday tradition and why?”



Pfc. Enrique Rodriguez
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 168th Quartermaster Battalion (Petroleum Support)
“Easily my favorite is that Mom makes so many pumpkin pies, there are no words to explain it.”

Pvt. Prissylla Penaherrera
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 126th Chemical Battalion
“At Thanksgiving we write down what we're thankful for and we just have family time.”



Staff Sgt. Megan Zuver
155th Logistics Readiness Squadron
“Going to my grandmother's house on Thanksgiving and eating a ton of food and just spending the day with relatives and then... playing cards in the evening.”

Spc. Jacob Nelson
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 168th Quartermaster Battalion (Petroleum Support)
“We do a big family gift exchange on Christmas Eve and spend all of Christmas Eve together.”



Senior Airman Shawn Patsios
155th Logistics Readiness Squadron
“I just like going to church on Christmas Eve with all the family. It's a good time for us to all get together and sit down and actually have a meal.”

Spc. Caleb Morehead
754th Chemical Company
“Definitely my favorite tradition is Christmas. I come from a pretty big family and we all come together and it's just good family times.”



Expect challenging times to continue for Guard in 2010

As I close out my first full quarter as your adjutant general and look ahead to the 2010 calendar year, I am reminded of what a great organization we belong to and how each of you represent the best of Nebraska.

I have often said to others how proud I am of the dedication and sense of service our Military Department members bring to bear each and every day.

Our Soldiers, Airmen, Emergency Management and state employees continue to impress our civilian leadership and our fellow citizens with our readiness to respond and our professionalism.

I can't thank each of you enough for your service and sacrifice. It is my sincere hope that you will pass along the same to your loved ones and employers.

It is safe to say that we continue to live in challenging times. We are in the beginning stage of increased operational tempo with our Army National Guard deployments with several individuals as well as our 1195th Transportation Company and 313th Medical Company in theater. Many more will follow in 2010.

Our Air National Guard is engaged in its Air Expeditionary Force rotations with approximately 100 airmen in theater and a security force element departing in early 2010.

Please join me in keeping our deployed Soldiers and Airmen in our thoughts and prayers as they perform their missions away from family and friends.

Much has been written and opined with regard to the new strategy for Afghanistan. From my perspective, the strategy is sound with the effort to disrupt the insurgents, build the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and begin to transfer lead responsibility to those forces in July 2011, subject to conditions on the ground.

Here at home, we continue to train and prepare our Soldiers and

The Adjutant General
Brigadier General
Judd Lyons



We must continue to sustain a climate where seeking assistance is encouraged and recognized as a sign of strength.

I am pleased that 2010 has been designated as the Year of Diversity in the National Guard. This will serve to energize our

efforts to foster an inclusive organization where all Nebraskans feel they are welcome.

We need to ramp up our engagement in all of our communities with our unique message of service to state and nation. I believe there is work to be done in our effort to make our National Guard reflective of the communities we serve and ensure our members have the opportunity to contribute and succeed to the best of their abilities.

We continue to make great progress with our facilities, notably the recent multi-million dollar funding inclusion for our new Joint Force Headquarters facility, which will house our Army and Air staff, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and Operations Center as well as a communications element of the Nebraska State Patrol. Groundbreaking for this, as well as the new Columbus and McCook Armed Forces Reserve Centers, will occur in 2010.

Work continues apace on the new dining facility at Camp Ashland as well as the Beatrice Armed Forces Reserve Center. We also continue plans for significant development at our Mead Training Site.

Exciting times continue in this military construction area to provide the best possible facilities and training areas for our Soldiers and Airmen.

Amy and I want to wish our entire Military Department family a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. If your holiday plans involve travel, please be safe! We will work together to meet the challenges ahead, accomplish our missions and support each other, our families and employers.

As always, I am honored to support you as adjutant general.

‘Our Soldiers, Airmen, Emergency Management and state employees continue to impress our civilian leadership and our fellow citizens with our readiness to respond and our professionalism.’

Airmen in accordance with sourcing requirements. There will be some turbulence in this area as the fluid situation in Iraq and Afghanistan continues to develop. We will adjust accordingly.

We have always been an adaptable and flexible organization. The credit for this rests squarely with you, your families, employers and our communities.

As we look ahead to January 2010, we will renew our Peer Support training program.

The goal of this important program is to provide all Nebraska National Guard members with the opportunity to seek out and receive emotional and tangible peer support through times of personal or professional need.

We will train Peer Support specialists in our units to assist leadership in developing and managing resiliency programs within their units.

Today's Guardsmen stand proudly next to past generations of Citizen Soldiers

As hard as it is to believe, 2009 is rapidly coming to an end, and with it the end of the first decade of the 21st Century.

This has admittedly been a difficult column to write for no other reason than that I really don't know what it is that I want to write.

Simply put, 2009 was a busy year, sandwiched between an equally busy year that preceded it and one that will soon unveil itself. It's also been an extremely busy decade in ways that I doubt anyone could've predicted back in December 1999.

The Nebraska National Guard has proven itself countless times in the past 10 years and as a result has a tremendous amount to be proud of as we enter 2010.

Yet, even as we look forward to what will undoubtedly be another extremely busy year filled with mobilizations, inspections, deployments and contingency missions and operations, we can also look backward to our organization's past and realize that we're a part of a long line of Nebraska Citizen Soldiers who have worked time and time again to make our communities, states and nation a better place.

Recently, Nebraska experienced its first major snowstorm of the year. As I worked to clear my driveway and sidewalks of snow, I suddenly started thinking about the fact

My Turn
Editor, Prairie Soldier
Kevin J. Hynes



Nebraska Soldiers were spending a Christmas away from family and friends in a foreign land devastated by warfare, just as several hundred Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen today are spending this year's holiday

season away from their families and friends in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Today's Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard stand proudly with their forebears in the knowledge that they've done their part in service of their communities, state and nation, just as countless others have done before us, drawing back to the original founding of the Nebraska National Guard in 1854 through the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I and II, Korea, Operation Desert Storm, the Balkans and finally the current War on Terrorism.

Undoubtedly, challenges will face this organization in the future. However, based upon our organization's past and current service, I think it's safe to say that we will be up to the task.

From my family, the staff of the Prairie Soldier newspaper and the Nebraska National Guard Public Affairs Office, may you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

that just about 65 years ago to that day members of the Nebraska National Guard's 134th Infantry lived through similar conditions during World War II.

Back then, the Soldiers – many of whom had already fought across Europe from the bloody hedgerows of St. Lo, France, to the wooded hillsides of eastern France and western Germany, were thrown into battle to help maintain a tenuous link with the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division, which was surrounded by the Germans at Bastogne during the infamous Battle of the Bulge.

Despite the horrendous winter weather conditions and even more horrendous fighting, the 134th Inf. Regt. Soldiers, fighting as part of the 35th Infantry Division in concert with other famed American Army fighting organizations, helped halt the last major German offensive, ultimately enabling the Allies to defeat Hitler's Germany several months later.

Back in December 1944, the Ne-

Lottery Winner

Nebraska Soldier bags trophy elk on first try after earning rare big game state permit

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

Gary Redden admits it's been quite a year. He recently became the first Nebraska hunter to win a big game permit in his first try at a state lottery. He then followed that up by bagging a world class elk.

"It's quite a story," the lifelong hunter said recently as he recalled the application process he went through — a process that began during a blizzard last February.

"I was substitute teaching at Winnebago, Neb., because I had just got back from basic and (advanced individual training)... I had to fill in my time before the next school year started, so I started substitute teaching," said Redden, a specialist assigned to the 189th Transportation Company, based in Norfolk and Wayne, Neb. Redden had previously taught for four years in the Wayne school system.

"So, during the big February storm me and two teaching colleagues thought we could make it back to Wayne on gravel roads — you know, a four-wheel drive truck — typical guy thinking, right?"

Winter Fortunes

After dropping off the female teacher, Redden and his friend soon saw a stalled vehicle as the drove up a snow-custed hill. Stopping to pick up the stranded motorist, they then proceeded down the hill.

Soon, they too became stranded when their truck slipped off the icy gravel road.

"We had to call the husband of the lady that we had just previously dropped off a mile back," he said. "He couldn't get us out."

So in typical rural Nebraska fashion, the blizzard found Redden and his colleague staying over at the rural farm house with time on their hands. That soon led to an evening conversation about hunting with the generous Nebraska family while waiting out the storm.

Redden grew up in South Dakota hunting and fishing with his father, but he has a special penchant for game hunting.

"I grew up in the Pierre area; my dad hunted a little bit and fell away from it, so I started to get together with friends and their dads to hunt," he said. "My dad liked to fish — we fished all the time — but I took more of the hunting aspect and from there hunted ducks, geese, pheasants and deer and about anything you can imagine in South Dakota."

Talking through the long wintery night, the farm family soon told Redden that they knew someone who had hunted in western Nebraska who had got a "nice" elk. They gave Redden the friend's phone number.

"I happened to just keep that phone number and gave the gentleman a call a week or two later," Redden said. "He said go ahead and apply for (a permit) and if you get one I will help you."

"I didn't tell my wife, but I applied for a first-time application and the unit (Niobrara River unit) I was in, this was only the third year for applications," he said. "I

don't check my e-mail regularly, so I didn't know the draw status of the elk tag."

Lottery Winner

"We were over at my father-in-laws for Easter and I checked the draw status on the computer and it says 'Awarded.' And a week before that my wife says 'How come there is a \$150 transaction taken out of our account and it says Game and Parks?'"

Redden finally told his wife about his application for the game tag. His mind then began to race.

"I thought, 'Oh my gosh, I got the elk tag.' My father-in-law laughed about that. It was only one of four bull elk tags for that unit," he said.

In fact, according to Game and Parks information, the Niobrara River unit has the smallest number allowed elk tags for big game in Nebraska. The overall success rate for elk tags hovers around 33 percent statewide, so Redden knew he was fighting an uphill battle.

After confirming with Game and Parks that he'd won the lottery, Redden said he couldn't believe his luck. "I just started jumping up and down," he said. "Thank goodness there wasn't anyone in my house because I started screaming and hollering, they would have thought I was crazy."

Redden then called the person who had offered assistance months earlier.

He, too, couldn't believe Redden's luck since many hunters had tried for years to win the coveted big game permit.

"I had my contact — and when I say contact, I mean the guy that helped me hunt. You know how it is with hunting, you know a buddy that knows a buddy that can help or knows something. He said he knew somebody over in the Cody-Kilgore area and he would be willing to give him a call," he said.

Preparations

Redden soon began his pre-hunt preparations, hoping that they would lead to the successful filling of the elk tag.

"I went out in June, July and August to meet the gentleman that my buddy hooked me up with and met a couple of land owners and got to know them so they could see my face and get to know me. You know, ask for permission if we needed and kept in touch with them," he said.

"One land owner took me out on his ground and said 'Here is my ground and you are more than welcome to hunt on my ground', things like that."

Redden wanted to hunt in the correct fashion.

"I wanted to do this the right way, not just be one of those guys that shows up on a Saturday morning and says 'Oh, I'm here to go elk hunting, do you care if I shoot an elk on your land?'" he said.

"It is a big honor to hunt. I don't care if you are hunting pheasants or turkey or what, I don't have ground like that so you have to do it the right way. You know you don't have to develop a friendship, but, what I want to say is develop a trust."

During the pre-hunt stage, Redden would typically drive out to the



Photo courtesy of Spc. Gary Redden

What A Trophy: Spc. Gary Redden poses with a trophy elk he took in the Niobrara River Unit. Redden, of Wayne, Neb., shot the elk after he won a hunting license lottery on his first try this year. The bagged elk was the result of months of scouting and coordination with land owners in the north central part of Nebraska.

grounds at 2 a.m. and scout to find tracks and signs. Still, he knew there was only so much he could accomplish.

"Scouting in the summer and scouting during the breeding season is totally different because there is so much rut activity," he said. "There aren't mountains out there, but lots of canyons. Finally it was time to hunt."

Elusive Target

"Day one we sat and called, but nothing big came by. Day two and three, we were near a water tank because we saw tracks around that earlier and nothing," he said.

At this point the wait was beginning to wear on Redden because he only had one week from school during a 30 day elk season to bag his game.

The fourth day was different. As Redden and his companion went back to their original spot they soon found elk signs. The two were dumbfounded.

"We were up high and guess where the elk were?" he said, "They were down low."

"It was just like turkey hunting. They (elk) give a little bugle, like with a turkey's gobble in the distance. We were walking and heard that bugle and thought it must have been a hawk scream."

After walking through the rugged terrain for about five more minutes, they heard the bugle again.

"We heard that second bugle and we stopped and turned and said 'That was a bugle.' We turned around and I was running faster than the fastest sprint runner in the world."

Closing to within 500 yards of the elk, Redden bugled toward the game, which quickly returned the horn-like sound. "Then we carefully closed the distance, trying to sneak up on them and came upon this little open patch by some trees," he said. "I bugled and he bugled back, so I thought he would walk out of the trees."

Redden knew he was close to his lifelong dream.

"We just sat there 10 or 15 minutes and nothing was happening," he said.

Redden knew the rule of thumb: don't walk into the trees with elk because they will run, and not like a deer, which will run 100 yards and then stop and turn around to see what is going on. Instead, elk run for 10 minutes or until they are long gone and safe.

Redden told his partner he couldn't go into the trees, but his buddy urged him on.

"My best description to him of what it would be like was like Elmer Fudd going after Bugs Bunny,"

"I wanted to do this the right way, not just be one of those guys that shows up on a Saturday morning and says 'Oh, I'm here to go elk hunting, do you care if I shoot an elk on your land?'"

— Spc. Gary Redden

he said. "But, I decided to go into the trees after all... sure enough a satellite bull (small bull) and a couple of cows see me and they take off running just like that."

After saying a few choice words, Redden took off after the animals.

"All of a sudden I see these other elk out in the field," he said. "Mind you, this is where I had hunted three days before without seeing anything and here are 40 elk out in this pasture."

Redden quickly made his final preparations.

"They are about 180 yards, I ranged them and I am trying to find which one to shoot, like 'Where is he at?'" Redden recalled. "All of a sudden I saw the rack moving; he was kind of shaking his rack around trying to get his hair back together... so I kept back in the trees about 10 yards just to keep my concealment and they kept looking, but they couldn't see me."

"I had my shot, I took my shot and he dropped with one shot," Redden said.

Waiting for a few minutes, Redden then moved slowly toward the fallen elk. It was dead.

Redden had just shot the biggest trophy of his life and one of the biggest big game trophies on record in Nebraska.

"I guess I didn't jump up and down or anything, I just sat there and said thank you... with a grin from ear to ear" he said.

"I called my wife," said Redden. "You have to understand I thought I was just going to shoot a typical elk. I didn't think I was going to shoot a nice 341 class elk. She knew from the tone of my voice I got a good one."

"I told her that I got a good one alright. I asked her where I could hang it and she said jokingly 'in the garage.'"

One For the Records

The Boone and Crockett North American Big Game scoring system

is a method to rate big game as trophy animals. Redden's green score (or first field score) placed this animal in the 341 point range.

"With a rifle... anything over 350 is considered a trophy, but rule of thumb anything over 300 is considered a trophy," he said. "We green scored him at 341 and three-eighths."

"After 60 days of drying time I can have him measured officially, but when I go out there in May to pick him up I will have the Nebraska Game Fish and Parks score him. We figured he will be a non-typical because of the six points on one side and seven points on the other side" said Redden.

"That doesn't matter to me. That is just a little character as far as I am concerned. We think he may come out to be around 334 after drying."

The elk has been measured at 51 inches on the right and 50 on the left, "and we think he is around 45 inches wide," he said.

Later in Kilgore, Neb., Redden was icing down the animal's chest cavity when a man saw him on the street. Redden quickly recognized him as the landowner of the ground he had hunted.

The owner told Redden he didn't think an elk would be shot on his land.

"I got a couple of pictures with him and sent the photos of him and the elk with a big thank you card a couple of weeks later," Redden said, adding that he also sent cards to the people who originally helped him during the snow blizzard.

"I will definitely send him some elk meat when it is ready" he said. "It takes a lot of people to make something like this successful."

Redden admits Molly, his wife of seven years, is a good sport about the whole hunting process. She even has mentioned they could maybe add a family room onto the house to mount the monstrous elk trophy.

His three children, Sydney, 5, Gavin, 3, and Mallory, 1, watch the hunting channel with him; Sydney is already asking for a pink BB gun he admits.

Redden said he plans to host a party when he gets the elk back from the taxidermist in May. He also placed much of the credit on those who helped him in the hunt.

"I met some new friends now and hopefully I can help them out someday also," he said. "That is the great thing about this, besides shooting a beautiful trophy."

When asked if he would try for another tag next year Redden said: "I believe the rules say I can apply for a cow tag for the next three years. Am I going to apply? No," he said with a chuckle. "I want to stay married."

'Call Him Sergeant Major Cable Guy'

■ Nebraska Guard promotes Nebraska native comedian for donations to state's Soldiers, Airmen

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Larry the Cable Guy has a new title. Call him Command Sgt. Maj. Larry the Cable Guy, now.

Minutes after the Nebraska Cornhuskers pulled off a 10-3 upset stunner over the rival Sooners of Oklahoma University, Nov. 7, -- a win that had long-time Husker fan Dan Whitney (aka Larry the Cable Guy) smiling from ear to ear -- Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, Nebraska Army National Guard state command sergeant major, nearly brought the Nebraska native to tears as he officially presented the famed comedian with a framed certificate that made him an honorary command sergeant major in the Nebraska National Guard.

"This is something that we've wanted to do for a long time," Burch said. "We really appreciate all that you do for America's military. And we especially appreciate all that you've done and are doing for the Soldiers and Airmen of the Nebraska National Guard."

Since 2006 Whitney and his wife have donated six tickets to a luxury box at Nebraska's Memorial Stadium to recently deployed Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen so that they can attend Husker home games.

Burch said the donations are just some of many the Pawnee City, Neb., native and his wife have made in recent years. In 2006 the Whitneys sent 500 personally designed Husker t-shirts and 500 hats over to Iraq for Nebraska Guardsmen serving there. They



Check Out These Stripes: Dan Whitney (aka "Larry the Cable Guy") shows off the stripes Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch gave him after giving him an honorary promotion to Nebraska Army National Guard command sergeant major in recognition of Whitney's support of Nebraska National Guardsmen.

also donated funds to the "Freedom Flights" program, which help send Nebraska veterans to Washington, D.C., to see the new World War II Memorial. They have also donated a portion of the proceeds from Whitney's



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring The Cable Guy: Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, Nebraska Army National Guard state command sergeant major, poses with Dan Whitney (aka "Larry the Cable Guy") after presenting him with an honorary promotion to command sergeant major in the Nebraska Army Guard.

Army green 'Git-R-Done' wristbands to the Diabetes Research Institute at the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine as well as a \$1 million donation to the Child Advocacy Center in Lincoln, Neb., to help children who are victims of serious physical or sexual abuse.

Whitney seemed overwhelmed by the promotion to honorary command sergeant major.

"This is just the coolest thing ever," said Whitney as he pinned a set of black subdued command sergeant major stripes to his camouflaged Husker hat. "I just don't know what to say."

In talking with Burch, Whitney recalled his father Tom Whitney, a Korean War veter-

an, and how he used to travel with his father to VFW halls across Nebraska as part of the late Whitney's band, "The Memphis Beats."

Following the presentation, which was attended by Whitney's wife Cara, their two children and his mother Shirley, Whitney said he never expected anything back for the donations he's made over the years. It was simply just the right thing to do, he added.

"I really appreciate everything you folks do," he added after thanking Burch and several other Nebraska Guard Soldiers who had just attended the Nebraska game, courtesy of Whitney's skybox donation. "I really am humbled by this recognition. I'm going to wear these stripes on my hat from now on."

Nebraska honors veterans, donates tickets to service members

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Staff Sgt. Dustin Schlote was growing hoarse.

Standing with more than 86,000 of his closest friends -- most of whom were decked out in scarlet red -- Schlote smiled as he looked around at his surrounding, his voice croaking slightly as he described the scene.

"This is just surreal," said Schlote, the operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge for the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1195th Transportation Company, as he stood against a concrete wall in Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 7. "It's absolutely nuts."

"A week ago this time I was in Baghdad, Iraq," said Schlote, smiling. "Now I'm here in Memorial Stadium, cheering on the Huskers... it's just surreal."

Schlote's unit is currently deployed to Camp Liberty, Iraq, where members of the Kearney-based unit that has detachments in McCook and Lexington, Neb., were finishing up their fourth month of providing guntruck security support for convoys traveling through the central part of Iraq. Normally Schlote would've been with his fellow Nebraska Guardsmen, most likely waking up in the early morning hours to watch as the Nebraska Cornhuskers took on the 20th-ranked Oklahoma Sooners in a matchup that faced two of the nation's premiere defenses.

However, instead of watching the game via Armed Forces Network, Schlote was actually attending the game live, courtesy of the University of Nebraska Athletic Department.

Schlote, who was home on a two-week leave, as well as around 150 other Nebraska service members were given free tickets to the game as part of the University of Nebraska's annual Veterans Day observances.

Another Nebraska Soldier taking in the evening's game was Sgt. Chris Martin, a Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier who recently returned home to Nebraska after serving for a year in Afghanistan as a member of the Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team. Martin was one of nine service members from various services stretching back to World War II honored by the university before the start of the game.

Like Schlote, Martin was blown away by the reception he received from the hometown crowd.

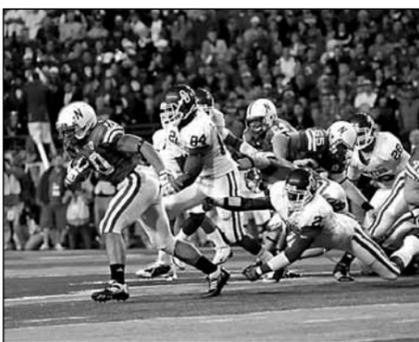
"I was honored to be honored," said Martin, who also served in Iraq in 2005 as a member



Celebrating The Home Team: Spc. Justin Volkman and Spc. Brian Stroyek, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Troop B, 1-134th Cavalry, celebrate with other Nebraska National Guardsmen during the Military Appreciation Game, Nov. 7, at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb.

of the 267th Ordnance Company from Lincoln. "To be recognized as a veteran in front of that many people in that arena, that just blew me away... and to be part of a game like this, that was just huge."

Along with appearing on the giant Huskerson screen that dominates much of the northern section of the stadium, Martin also had a chance to shake hands with Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman and former Husker Mike Rozier, who won the Heisman trophy as a Nebraska runningback in 1983. He said he also shook hands with dozens of Nebraska fans during the course of the game.



Breakaway: Nebraska Cornhusker runningback Roy Helu Jr. (#10) breaks into the clear during the University of Nebraska's Nov. 7 match-up against the University of Oklahoma Sooners. Nebraska won the match-up between their longtime rivals, 10-3.

on a mission, you're pretty much stuck on the camp you're stationed on. You really don't have the ability to get up and go out and do

"Nebraskans are all patriotic and they're all very respectful of the military," said Martin. "Just to be part of that was an amazing experience."

Schlote said having the chance to attend a football game while on leave from his deployment definitely is something he will never forget.

"You forget what it's like to have the freedom to simply walk around and take in something like this," said Schlote. "In Iraq, if you're not



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Tough Defense: Nebraska Cornhusker safety Matt O'Hanlon (#33) returns one of three Oklahoma Sooners passes he intercepted during the Nov. 7 Big 12 match-up between the long-time conference foes. O'Hanlon, a former walk-on, would receive national defensive player of the week honors for his efforts.

something like this."

"Also, in Iraq there is just so much poverty. People are pretty much trying to simply get by," he added. "Here, to see so many people come together for a football game, that's something that really just sticks out. Many people just don't know how well we as Americans have it."

Schlote said he definitely gained a great sense of appreciation for what the University of Nebraska gave him and the other Soldiers, Airmen, Marines and Sailors in attendance.

"I just can't thank the University enough for what they're doing for the service members," he said. "A lot of guys can't afford to do something like this. So, when they get the ability to come and cheer on the team they love, that's really big."

Martin agreed. "I know that planning major events like a football game are really stressful," he said. "But to take the time out of that game to honor the state's veterans, that just really says a lot about the University of Nebraska."

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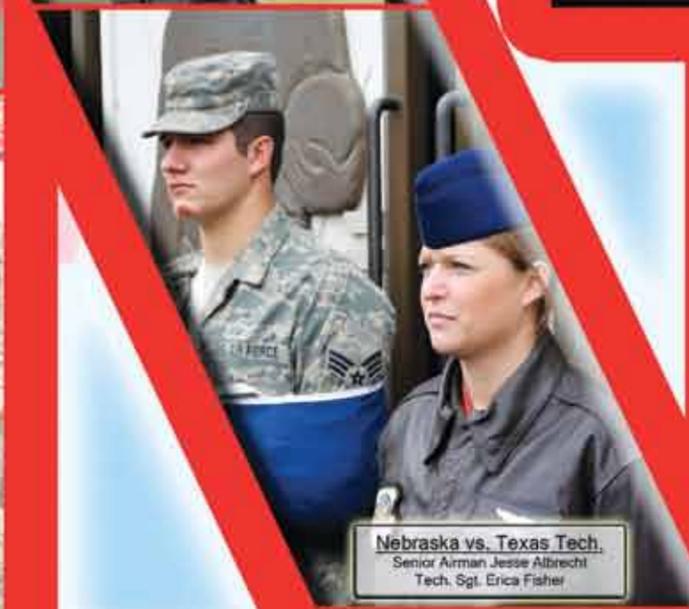
Nebraska vs. Florida Atlantic
Sgt. 1st Class Jacob Widholm
Staff Sgt. Matthew Rouse



Nebraska vs. Oklahoma
From left: Maj. Calvin "Beech" Dale, Cpl. Lambert Mills, Capt. Harry Freivogel,
Airman 1st Class Jim Rall, Capt. Kemper Wilkins, Col. John Bryan,
Ensign Chance Irvine, Staff Sgt. Anthony Whitfield, Sgt. Chris Martin



Nebraska vs. Arkansas State
Sgt. Rosa Hartman
Sgt. Heather Davay



Nebraska vs. Texas Tech.
Senior Airman Jesse Albrecht
Tech. Sgt. Erica Fisher



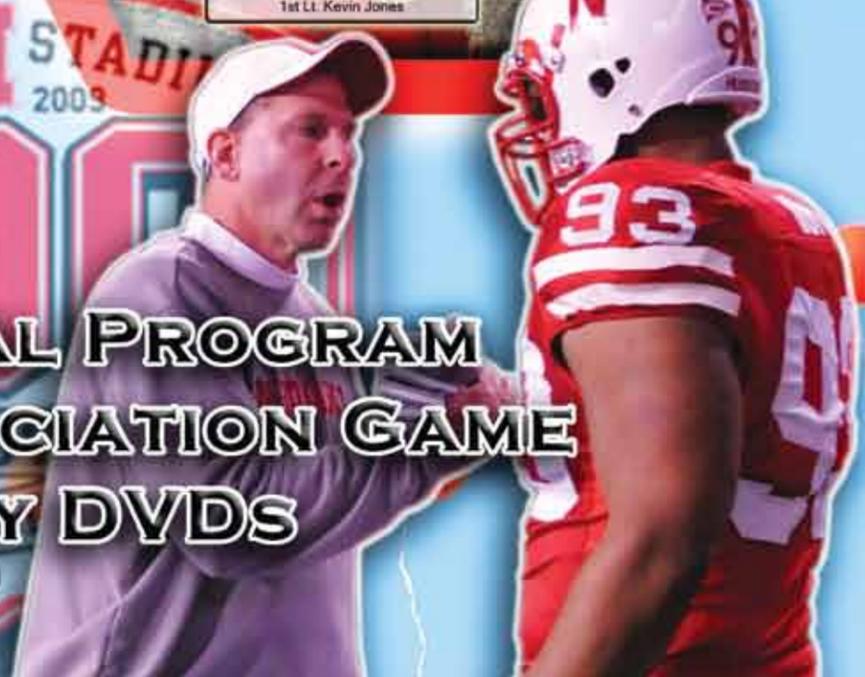
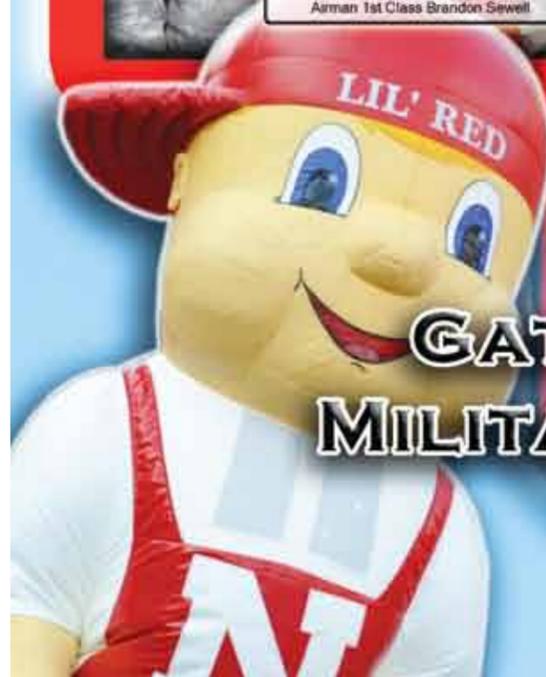
Nebraska vs. Kansas State
Sgt. Sara Wells
Sgt. 1st Class Mark Erlandson



Nebraska vs. Louisiana-Lafayette
Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham
Airman 1st Class Brandon Sewell



Nebraska vs. Iowa State
Sgt. William Fredrick
1st Lt. Kevin Jones



GATE SENTINEL PROGRAM
MILITARY APPRECIATION GAME
GAME DAY DVDS