

HAPPY HOLIDAYS! Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



National Guard engineers given all-star sendoff

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When it comes to leaving family and home for a year-long deployment to Afghanistan, Sgt. Jacob Bramhall said the anticipation is by far the worst part.

"I'm ready to go," said Bramhall, a construction and masonry specialist with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 623rd Engineer Company from Wahoo and Hastings, Oct. 28, as he waited outside a packed Wahoo High School gymnasium for the start of a send-off ceremony that would signal the official beginning of his unit's mobilization for Operation Enduring Freedom. "The anticipation is the worst part. I've been to Iraq once, so I'm ready to go."

"This is the hardest part," he added, a slight tremor cracking his voice.

"This" was saying goodbye to his fiancée Kristy Soukup and his 6-year-old daughter Paige, both of whom clutched onto Bramhall's digital patterned uniform as the trio tried to spend their last minutes together quietly as hundreds of other well-wishers passed by them in the hallway that led to the gym.

"It's the hardest part of the whole deployment... that's for sure," he said.

Soukup agreed, saying her mind was filled with frightening possibilities as she waited for the dreaded moment when she would have to let him go and watch him board a bus to begin their year-long separation.

"Just worrying about him," she said, her voice breaking with emotion. "Just hoping that we can talk to him almost every day."

"This is hard because we knew about this for a year. The last time he was gone, we only had about three days notice, so it was three days... gone," she said. "I don't want to see him go, but I just want him to go and come back soon."

The emotions felt in this little corner of the Wahoo High School gymnasium were palpable. **See ENGINEERS on 5.**

Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Until We Meet Again: Pfc. Jared Doggett, 623rd Engineer Company, receives a kiss from a loved one following a send-off ceremony for the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier's unit, Oct. 28, in Wahoo, Neb. The unit is deploying overseas in support of Operation Enduring Freedom where it will be responsible for a number of different engineering projects.

Farewell

■ Families, friends pack Omaha high school to say good luck to deploying military police headquarters

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

After a year of intense training designed to prepare them for the rigors of operating an overseas internment center, members of the Omaha-based 402nd Military Police Battalion began a new phase of their mission when they were wished farewell by family, friends and a wide array of leaders, Nov. 28, during a ceremony in a packed house at Omaha Northwest High School.

For many, it was a bittersweet moment as the Soldiers tearfully said so long to their loved ones while admitting that they were excited to finally start a mission they'd been preparing for for months.

"Honestly, it's one of those mixed days," said Capt. Jeff Boyden, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 402nd MP Bn., commander. "You're sad in one way because you're leaving your family and loved ones, but excited, too, because we finally get to go do the mission that we've training for so long."

"I kinda liken this to... if you're a football team - and in Nebraska, we're big football people - if you only practice and you only scrimmage and you never get to play a game, then you never really feel fulfilled," Boyden said. "So, this is also a fulfilling moment because we get to go do the mission that we've been training for."

Still, that didn't mean leaving was going to be simple, though. Far from it, Boyden said.

See M.P.S on 7.

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Medical Soldiers answer life-saving call once again

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Back in 2006 Heather Springer was a newly enlisted Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier who wondered nervously what the future had in store for her as she prepared to deploy to Iraq as a flight medic with the Lincoln-based Company C, 2-135th General Support Battalion.

On Nov. 28, the Springer was one of approximately 75 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who gathered at a high school gymnasium in southwestern Lincoln, Neb., as

a huge crowd of family and friends wished the Lincoln-based unit and several other detachments well as they prepared to deploy to Iraq once again.

But unlike the nervous young Soldier of 2006, Springer is now a decorated combat veteran - one of just two Nebraska Army National Guard female Soldiers to earn the Bronze Star Medal with "Valor" device - and is eager to put her skills to the test once again.

"I love my job and I'm really excited to get the chance to go over one more time and do it," she said. "It's worth it putting school on hold

to go and defend our country."

There are some differences this time, however. Unlike 2006, she is deploying to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn where she will be responsible for helping train the newer members of the unit on the skills it takes to be a successful flight medic. She's also going to Iraq with a new last name as she and one of her best friends from the first deployment were married just two weeks before the current mobilization.

"He was one of my best friends during the last deployment, so it will be nice to have that guaranteed sup-

port system with me wherever I go," said (Springer) Wunderlich, whose husband, Sgt. Jeremy Wunderlich, is also deploying again with Co. C, 2-135th GSAB, as a helicopter crew chief.

Wunderlich said she's proud to be going to Iraq with her husband and the other members of the unit, many of whom will undoubtedly be looking to her for guidance.

"It's definitely a lot different being on this side of the table," she said. "The last time we got deployed, I was the new kid. So to be on this side of the table during the deployment

See MEDICS on 9.

Retired Nebraska Air Guard general working to shine light on 30-year-old mystery

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Mark Musick has a story he wants to share with the rest of the world.

"The story is, the richest man in America died a pauper...but lived with the woman he loved."

A retired Nebraska Air National Guard major general, Musick admits it's a story that he never expected nor sought to tell. Yet, through a strange twist of fate in which a key figure in the tale entrusted him with the answer to one of the single biggest mysteries of the late 20th Century, Musick has now spent much of the last eight years seeking to confirm what he agrees is

a fantastic and weird tale.

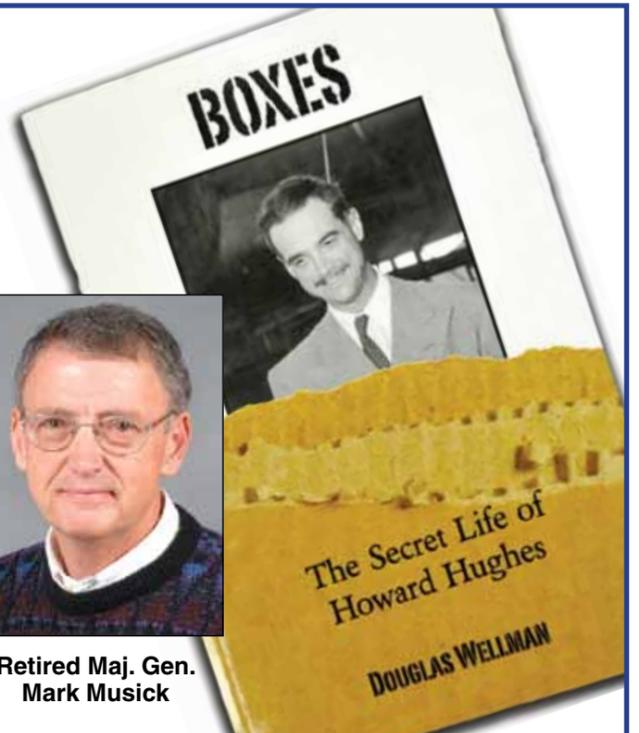
It's a story, he believes, that changes history.

By all accounts, Mark Musick has already had quite a career. A native of Blair, Neb., Musick rose through the ranks of the U.S. Air Force and the Nebraska Air National Guard as a distinguished navigator during his 36-year military career.

He served as the commander of the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing, the assistant adjutant general for Air and finally as the mobilization assistant to the deputy commander of U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.



Retired Maj. Gen. Mark Musick



See MYSTERY on 13.

NEWS DIGEST



Defense Department photo

Message From The Commander-In-Chief: U.S. President Barack Obama addresses troops at Bagram Airfield during a surprise visit to Afghanistan, Dec. 3.

■ President Barack Obama says service members prove America's best days lie ahead

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — The bravery, resolve, expertise and commitment of American service members proves that America's best days lie ahead, President Barack Obama said at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, Dec. 3.

Obama thanked American service members and civilians for their sacrifices during a visit to the headquarters of Regional Command East. The command, built around the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division, is responsible for some of the toughest territory in Afghanistan.

Obama arrived at Bagram and met with Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry. The president visited the Bagram hospital and awarded five Purple Heart medals to wounded service members there. He then met with a platoon of 101st Airborne troopers who lost six Soldiers, Nov. 29, when an Afghan Border Police trainee opened fire on them.

Obama spoke to more than 3,500 service members in a hangar at the base. He thanked them for their service and said they are part of an unbroken line of Americans "who have given up your comfort, your ease, your convenience, for America's security."

The president traced the sacrifices of previous generations of Americans who'd also found themselves serving in war during a season of peace.

"They did it for the same reason that all of you do," Obama said. "Because the freedom and the liberty that we treasure, that's not simply a birthright. It has to be earned by the sacrifices of generations — generations of patriots, men and women, who step forward and say, 'Send me.'"

A year ago, the president ordered a surge of 30,000 more American troops into Afghanistan. Some 95,000 U.S. service members and thousands of American civilians now serve in Afghanistan.

"Thanks to your service, we are making important progress," the president said. "You are protecting your country. You are achieving your objectives. You will succeed in your mission."

'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' remains in effect as Gates, Mullen tackle implementation plan

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, welcomed the Senate's vote, Dec. 18, to repeal the so-called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law, while emphasizing that the current law and policy will remain in effect until they and President Barack Obama certify the plan to implement it.

"Once this legislation is signed into law by the president, the Department of Defense will immediately proceed with the planning necessary to carry out this change carefully and methodically, but purposefully," Gates said in a statement released Dec. 18.

The legislation specifies that the repeal will take effect only after Gates, Mullen and Obama certify that new policies and regulations to implement it are "consistent with the standards of military readiness, military effectiveness, unit cohesion and retention of the armed forces," the secretary noted.

"As I have stated before, I will approach this process deliberately

The NATO effort has halted the Taliban's momentum in Afghanistan, the president said, as NATO and Afghan government forces have reclaimed and held large swaths of the nation. "You're going on the offense, tired of playing defense, targeting their leaders, pushing them out of their strongholds," he said.

Obama told the service members and civilians they can be proud that because of their efforts and sacrifices, Afghanistan today has a more hopeful future.

Progress is slow, the president acknowledged, and has come at a high price.

"So many of you have stood before the solemn battle cross — the display of boots, a rifle, a helmet — and said goodbye to a fallen comrade," Obama said. "This year alone, nearly a hundred members of the 101st have given their last full measure of devotion. There are few days when I don't sign a letter to a military family expressing our nation's gratitude and grief at their profound sacrifice."

Obama said the service members in America's military come from every conceivable background and unite to serve a greater cause.

"Through your service, you demonstrate the content of the American character," he said. "Some people ask whether America's best days lie ahead or whether our greatness stretches back behind us in the stories of those who've gone before."

"When I look out at all of you, I know the answer to that. You give me hope," he continued. "You give me inspiration. Your resolve shows that Americans will never succumb to fear. Your selfless service shows who we are, who we always will be, united as one people and united as one nation, for you embody and stand up for the values that make us what we are as a people."

■ VA officials expand support for families of low-income vets

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Department of Veterans Affairs officials announced Nov. 9 an important program designed to provide enhanced services to low-income veterans and their families who are at risk of being homeless. Under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, VA officials will provide grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that will help break the cycle of homelessness among America's veterans at risk.

The program will deliver grants to community agencies for vocational and rehabilitation counseling, employment and training service, educational assistance and health care services.

Agencies also will provide direct financial assistance for daily living, transportation, child care, rent and utilities and other expenses. They also may propose funding for additional services in their supportive services grant application based on the specific needs of their communities and local veterans.

"Ending homelessness for veterans and their families will require all segments of our communities to work together," said Michelle Obama. "I am pleased this new program will help more local organizations support them

"No longer will able men and women who want to serve and sacrifice for their country have to sacrifice their integrity to do so. We will be a better military as a result."

— **Admiral Mike Mullen**
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

and will make such certification only after careful consultation with the military service chiefs and our combatant commanders and when I am satisfied that those conditions have been met for all the services, commands and units," he said.

Mullen said he looks forward to working with Gates and the service chiefs and said he's "committed to making sure that process is well-led, maintains our combat readiness and upholds our high standards."

In the meantime, Gates said it's important that the men and women in uniform understand that, although today's vote means the policy will change, the implementa-

tion and certification process will take time.

"In the meantime, the current law and policy will remain in effect," he said.

"Successful implementation will depend upon strong leadership, a clear message and proactive education throughout the force," he said. "With a continued and sustained commitment to core values of leadership, professionalism and respect for all, I am convinced that the U.S. military can successfully accommodate and implement this change, as it has others in history."

Mullen welcomed legislative over judicial repeal of the law, noting that it "preserves the military's prerogative to implement change in a responsible, deliberate manner."

He echoed Obama's conviction that repealing the policy is "the right thing to do."

"No longer will able men and women who want to serve and sacrifice for their country have to sacrifice their integrity to do so," the chairman said. "We will be a better military as a result."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

374 years old and still going strong

Happy Birthday National Guard: (From left) Nebraska State Sen. Bill Avery, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, and Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy cut the National Guard's birthday cake, Dec. 12, at the Penterman Armory in Lincoln, Neb., as part of the 374th birthday celebration for the National Guard. The National Guard was founded on Dec. 13, 1636, when Massachusetts Bay colonists formed the first militia unit, starting a Citizen Soldier heritage that has spanned the history of the United States and continues today in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and numerous other locations around the globe.

when they need it most."

"This new program will provide valuable new tools in our campaign to end homelessness among veterans and their families," said Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. "Partnering with homeless agencies across this country, we will attack the problems that underlie homelessness and, for the first time, fund services for the spouses and children of homeless veterans."

By mid-December, VA officials were to provide local agencies with the instructions necessary to apply for grants under the program. Eligible veteran families include those who are residing in permanent housing, are homeless and scheduled to become residents of permanent housing within a specified time period, or who have left permanent housing and are seeking other housing that is responsive to such very low-income veteran family's needs and preferences.

(From a VA News Release)

■ New Air Force supercomputer can read, correct input mistakes

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Video games have advanced by leaps and bounds in the past few years. What once was a big black box with a bad video version of ping-pong is now a sleek, motion-capturing, high-resolution computer system capable of networking around the world.

Mark Barnell, director of high-performance computing and the Condor Cluster project at the Air Force Research Laboratory, has used that technology to create a new supercomputer.

The Condor Cluster, a heterogeneous supercomputer built from off-the-shelf com-

mercial components — including 1,716 Sony PlayStation 3 game consoles — could change the supercomputing landscape, Barnell said Dec. 2 in a "DOD Live" bloggers roundtable.

The system computes operations by the trillions per second — called "teraflops" in the computing world. Some supercomputers can operate at a quadrillion calculations per second, or a "petaflop."

Barnell said the Condor Cluster also represents new ways for supercomputers to increase computational resources while using less energy. "This particular system is about half a petaflop, or capable of about 500 trillion calculations per second," he said. "In the current time that we can measure it, it's about the 35th- or 36th-fastest computer in the world, and with some things that are going to be changing in the next eight or nine months with some upgrades, we could boost it to maybe the 20th-fastest computer in the world, and at the same time make it, at that moment in time, the greenest computer."

One area the Condor Cluster is being used in is neuromorphic computing, or "computational intelligence." Essentially, programmers write algorithms to "teach" the computer how to read symbols, letters, words and sentences. By programming the computer to read, in theory it can be taught to fill in gaps and "think" on its own.

The idea is that the computer, when taking in millions of lines of data, could fill in gaps or rearrange the pages in case of human error.

The Condor Cluster can read 20 pages of information per second, and even with 20 to 30 percent of the characters on the page removed, can recover all of the sentences and words with about 99.9 percent accuracy, Barnell said.

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Looking For Hidden Weapons: Pfc. Shelby Willey, 402nd Military Police Battalion, searches under a seat for possible hidden weapons during a class on conducting a vehicle search. Willey and other members of her battalion were preparing for an overseas deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Getting Down To Work: Staff Sgt. Petra Blevins, a finance noncommissioned officer, practices searching a truck for hidden weapons or explosives during the 402nd Military Police Battalion's Nov. 5-19 annual training at Camp Ashland, Neb. The organization, which was mobilizing shortly for Operation Enduring Freedom, also trained at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., and at the unit's armory in north Omaha.

Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Putting All Their Eggs In One Basket

Weeks before mobilization, 402nd Military Police Battalion Soldiers conduct critical annual training

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Lieutenant Colonel Eric Teegerstrom admits it was a pretty big risk.

Less than a month before his unit, the 402nd Military Police Battalion, was scheduled to mobilize and deploy for Operation Enduring Freedom, it conducted an annual training in Omaha, at Camp Ashland and the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., to complete the organization's required collective and individual pre-mobilization training.

As such, if something unplanned occurred or members of the unit weren't able to attend the A.T., the unit would probably have found itself having to conduct even more work once it got to Fort Bliss, Texas, for its final mobilization training.

Still, Teegerstrom said the risk was one he was willing to take in order to allow his Soldiers to have the ability to maintain what he calls a "normal Guard training cycle."

"One of the goals for our mobilization over the last year was to try to maintain what I consider a normal Guard training cycle," he said. "We did one (drill weekend) per month. We did annual training during the summer. And then three weeks prior to our mobilization, we did an additional A.T. period."

Teegerstrom said that in order to make the training a success, he enlisted the help of instructors from the 209th Regional Training Institute and the Guard's Pre-mobilization Training Assistance Element, which also fit into his goal of trying to keep the impact on the Soldiers' families and employers as small as possible.



Learning About Afghanistan: Staff Sgt. Robert Halmes Jr., 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), teaches a class on cultural awareness to members of the Omaha-based 402nd Military Police Battalion, which was conducting training at Camp Ashland, Nov. 11, in preparation for its upcoming deployment.

"We wanted to remain as family friendly as possible," he said, adding that a key portion of his battalion's plan was trying to train as much as possible within Nebraska's borders.

"Nebraska has good facilities. Nebraska has good people," he said. "We incorporated the RTI into our training, which is something that hasn't happened very often, but the RTI has a plethora of good instructors and a lot of good knowledgeable folks who have deployed themselves."

The goal of the Nov. 5-19 A.T., said Teegerstrom, was to complete all the unit's required Army Warrior Tasks, battle drills, theater-specific individual required training and theater-specific leader training and any other required briefings.

Teegerstrom said by scheduling the A.T. for the weeks leading up to the unit's late November mobilization, he hoped to have the vast majority of the approximately 145 Soldiers scheduled to deploy with

the 402nd MP Bn. on hand.

"With mobilizations, you always have a lot of personnel turmoil (with) people moving in and out of the unit," he said. "So what we were trying to do was wait until the last minute possible to minimize the number of people we would have to have doing makeup training or doing the training over."

That made the annual training "absolutely critical," said Teegerstrom.

"To tell you the truth, it's absolutely critical in the sense that you've kind of put all your eggs into one basket, to kind of use

an old metaphor, that you will have everyone here and that you will be able to get everybody through the training because you're not giving yourself the opportunity to have multiple training iterations like if you did (additional drill weekends) over an entire year period."

For example, during the November annual training, members of the 402nd MP Bn., conducted individual and crew-served weapons qualifications for those Soldiers that still needed it. They also worked on a variety of battle drills, like combat movement techniques or searching a vehicle for possible hidden weapons or explosive devices. They also attended a variety of briefings designed to prepare them to effectively operate in Afghanistan.

A side benefit of the early November annual training was that it gave the unit the opportunity to build additional camaraderie, which was especially important



Checking The Fit: Sgt. 1st Class Richard Cole Jr., 402nd Military Police Battalion, helps Lt. Col. Eric Teegerstrom, battalion commander, make adjustments to his gas mask, Nov. 11, at a Camp Ashland classroom. According to Teegerstrom, the Nov. 5-19 annual training was critical to helping his battalion make its final preparations for its upcoming deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

considering that more than 50 percent of the unit was deploying overseas with the unit for the first time.

"Some of these Soldiers, we didn't receive (them) until the last couple months, so if we'd done these other A.T.s earlier in the year, well then they would've been coming in and we wouldn't have had this opportunity to make them part of the team prior to departure from the state," Teegerstrom said. "So that's been a real help."

According to the Soldiers—many of whom are relatively new to the Army National Guard and have not yet deployed, the training was tough and realistic.

"It's going well," said Pvt. Danna Miller, a unit supply specialist, as she and several other Soldiers practiced searching a beat-up and rusting pick-up truck for possible hidden weapons and explosives. "I'm learning a lot more stuff than

I did before."

Even the more experienced Soldiers said the training was an important part of getting ready to serve overseas in a combat zone where realistic training often plays a critical part in a unit's success or failure.

"It's awesome, great training," said Staff Sgt. Corey Hiller, battalion personnel sergeant. "Everything is well-planned. We've got a lot of troops out here and motivation is high."

"It's pretty realistic training. It's giving everybody a good overview and just some good refresher training."

Overall, Teegerstrom said he was pleased with how well the training went.

"I feel confident and comfortable with where our training is at and now it's just taking that next step of getting to the mobilization station and done what we need to do there."

Officials cut ribbon in Beatrice

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

The grand opening for the new \$13 million Beatrice Armed Forces Readiness Center conducted on Oct. 13 is a prime example of close collaboration between the Nebraska National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve according to Gov. Dave Heineman.

"This \$13 million project was authorized by the base realignment and closure commission and it is an example of how close collaboration between the Nebraska National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve can boost efficiency and control costs," said Heineman during the ceremony.

The new facility replaces a 50-year old building that still stands just across U.S. Highway 136 to the east. The old armory will be declared state surplus and offered to other governmental entities, which eventually may include the city of Beatrice.

The new AFRC will consolidate National Guard units from Beatrice, Fairbury and Falls City as well as the Army Reserve unit in Wymore. Resident units will be Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry, Detachment 3, 1167th BSC, Detachment 2, 754th Chemical Company and USAR unit 2nd Platoon, 1011th Quartermaster Company.

The new 60,006-square-foot facility will be capable of supporting 215 Soldiers.

"This is a place of training, planning and mobilizing for the Soldiers, their families and the community of Beatrice," said Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general. "Readiness centers are buildings of purpose and they are rarely thought of as innovative or cutting-edge, but that is exactly what this facility is."

Considering the geothermal heating and cooling system, the translucent wall panels and energy-controlled lighting, which contribute to the efficiency of this building, there will be considerable reduction in the operating cost over the life span of the building, said Lyons.

"This facility is also the symbol of the Nebraska National Guard's enduring relationship with the community of Beatrice. So I would like to thank the community of Beatrice and their leaders for their support and contributions for this project," he said.

Special guests on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremony included Heineman, U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, Nebraska State Sens. Norm Wallman and Bill Avery and Beatrice Mayor Dennis Schuster.

Fortenberry cited the importance of the new facility.

"Our celebration today of not of just brick and mortar, it is the celebration of a long-

New \$13 million Armed Forces Reserve Center will support 215 Nebraska Army Guard, U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers



Photos by David Nore

Officially Opening The New Center: Gov. Dave Heineman (third from right), U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (second from right), Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons (fourth from right) and other dignitaries cut the grand opening ribbon for the \$13 million Beatrice Armed Forces Readiness Center, Oct. 13. The new AFRC is located on the east edge of Beatrice and is the Nebraska National Guard's and U.S. Army Reserve's newest combined training facility.

storied tradition of the Citizen Soldier. This new facility reflects the respect and honor the people of Beatrice and southeast Nebraska have for Soldiers' service. So congratulations to all who have been involved," he said.

Lyons thanked all the assembled visitors for their support and reminded them of the sacrifices made by Citizen Soldiers.

"This facility is also the symbol of the Nebraska National Guard's enduring relationship with the community of Beatrice. So I would like to thank the community of Beatrice and their leaders for their support and contributions for this project," he said. "Finally I want to thank the many Soldiers from Beatrice and the surrounding communities who are busy training at the National Training Center and Camp Shelby, Miss., on their way to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. They are the



Grand Tour: Col. Timothy Zegers (far right), construction and facility management officer, explains the capabilities of the various multi-use classrooms and the green technology used in building the new Beatrice center.

finest Soldiers in the world and as such are deserving of this world class facility."

Nebraska Guard engineers head overseas

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

The Soldiers from the Wahoo-based 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) were wished farewell during a brief ceremony at Fort Bliss, Texas, Dec. 3, before they left for a long deployment to Afghanistan.

There to speak to the approximately 160 Soldiers who make up the unit were Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska's adjutant general, Command Sgt. Major Eli Valenzuela, state command sergeant major, and Maj. Philip Houser, a Nebraska Army National Guard chaplain.

Lyons thanked all of the Soldiers for their dedication and sacrifice.

"I want to take the opportunity before you all take off here tomorrow night to just say thanks for what you do," said Lyons. "I mean this sincerely, I really am proud of each and every one of you."

Lyons acknowledged what it means for the Soldiers to take a year away from their normal lives to serve.

"It says a lot about you," he said. "It doesn't matter if it's your first time or your fourth time, you put your lives on hold, you leave your families behind...you leave your bosses behind; you come here and do what needs to be done. So I truly mean it when I tell you, each and every one of you, how proud I am of what you do."

The 623rd had prepared for months in advance and then spent a month at Fort Bliss training on various Army tasks as well as other mission-specific items that they may see once in theater.

"We've done numerous construction projects while we've been down here, whether it's building fighting positions, doing work on drywall, or building structures," said Capt.

"We've been able to find out how people work together and develop that team attitude before we head overseas."

— Capt. Chris Pelchat
623rd Engineer Company commander

Chris Pelchat, commander of the 623rd Eng. Co. "We've had an opportunity to exercise almost everybody."

According to Lyons, the 623rd is a relatively new unit and the first vertical construction company that the Nebraska National Guard has sent into theater since before 9/11. Their mission is very unique, he added.

"These guys and gals are going to actually be building infrastructure and sustaining infrastructure," said Lyons. "For Nebraska, this is a first time for doing that, so they're somewhat unique in that what they do — the mission that they accomplish. They get to physically look at (the result) and there's some pride and ownership in that."

Because the 623rd Eng. Co. is relatively new, many of the members bring diverse work and deployment experience from previous units. Sgt. Michele Rivera, a wheeled mechanic, previously deployed to Iraq in 2006-07 with the 1074th Transportation Company. She said the training and deployment process has improved greatly.

"Based on my first deployment to now, it seems like it's gotten a lot better as far as it's not a bunch of infantry stuff that they teach you. It's more towards your mission," said Rivera. "You're not out there doing ruck marches and clearing mine fields...instead

you're actually doing what you might do when you go over there."

Rivera said she was glad the deployment date had come so they can begin their mission and was excited to see the differences between Iraq and Afghanistan. "It will be a good experience going to another country and seeing both sides going from Iraq to Afghanistan," she said. "You can see the differences between the two countries and the people."

Rivera also said she was happy to be part of a unit with such a unique mission. She added that she hopes to be involved in some of the possible humanitarian missions the 623rd Eng. Co. may be a part of.

Spc. Jeff Thoman, an interior electrician, joined the Nebraska National Guard after a time in the active duty Army where he deployed to Iraq in 2008-09. He said he is also excited about the unique mission of the 623rd compared to his previous deployment.

"Before, I was a tanker and my platoon was attached to an infantry company, so we'd just do patrols, patrols, patrols," said Thoman. "You don't really see a whole lot of your effort as a physical form, but this is kind of nice to build something and say 'Hey, look at that, I built that...' It's really nice to have an end goal to work towards."

In addition to building actual structures, the training has built camaraderie among the Soldiers and the deployment should strengthen that teamwork. "We're pretty close as a unit right now, but it's going to make us closer and it's going to make people stronger," said Rivera. "When you come back you don't realize how strong of a bond you've built with the people you deployed with...you become a family."

"We've been able to build a lot of unit integrity," said Pelchat. "We've been able to find out how people work together and develop that team attitude before we head overseas."



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Santa's Elf: Lt. Col. Craig Strong, financial manager for the U.S. Property and Fiscal Office, helps sort toys for needy Lincoln-area kids, Dec. 10, as a volunteer for Operation Santa Claus. The Nebraska National Guard has teamed with KFOR radio to provide more than 3,000 kids with toys their parents otherwise may not be able to afford.

Guardsmen lend Santa helping hand

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Assistant Editor

Thousands of needy Lincoln-area kids were guaranteed to find a present under their Christmas trees this year, thanks to Operation Santa Claus.

Operation Santa Claus is a program in which KFOR radio teams up with the Nebraska National Guard and several local businesses to fulfill gift requests from needy families — families that may not otherwise have the means to give their children a present to open Christmas morning.

"The goal is to get deprived or underprivileged kids toys and get them something that they want for Christmas," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Monty Woodward, the forward repair supervisor for Training Site Command and the Guard's coordinator for Operation Santa Claus. "Without this program there would be 3,000-plus kids that wouldn't get anything for Christmas."

According to Woodward, needy families fill out an application for the program at any of 10 different charity agencies in Lincoln. Once the applications are evaluated the lists are sent to area stores where the wishes are filled with toys purchased with money donated by KFOR listeners. After the stores fill the orders, the toys are taken to a warehouse where Nebraska National Guard volunteers sort the toys based on the requesting agency and then separate the toys for each family that applied through that agency. When the toys are finally sorted they are taken back to each agency where the families can pick them up.

This year more than 30 Guard members volunteered for the effort. Lt. Col. Craig Strong, financial manager for the United States Property and Fiscal Office, volunteered along with his two children, Jack, 11, and Claire, 9. He said helping out around the holidays goes hand-in-hand with military service.

"It's keeping with the spirit of Christmas," said Strong. "It's so consistent with our values to help those in need, either overseas or back here at home. It's something that we're used to — volunteering and stepping up and giving back."

Strong also wanted to get his children involved to give them an understanding of how fortunate they are.

"They are old enough now to understand that the season isn't just about receiving, it's about giving," he said. "So I wanted them to understand that message and also let them understand how fortunate they are and how important it is to remember those that don't have everything that we're so blessed to have."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Holding On For A Few Moments Longer: Pfc. Austin Peterson holds onto his teary-eyed girlfriend, Cristal Maldonado, while waiting to load onto a bus that would begin his journey as his unit, the 623rd Engineer Company from Wahoo and Hastings, mobilizes for Operation Enduring Freedom.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Standing Tall: Pvt. Andrew Wacker holds his unit's guidon while other members of the 623rd Engineer Company from Wahoo and Hastings stand in formation before departing Wahoo for training at Fort Bliss, Texas, Oct. 28. The unit was mobilizing for Operation Enduring Freedom, its first mobilization since standing up as a Nebraska Army National Guard unit several years ago.

ENGINEERS continued from page 1.

School were essentially a microcosm of the feelings on display as more than 160 Soldiers assigned to the engineering unit said goodbye to friends and families. Also on hand were an array of local, state and national leaders as well as a crowd estimated of more than 2,000 people who had all come to Wahoo to wish one of the newest Nebraska Army Guard units well before the Soldiers started off on the unit's first overseas deployment.

"Wow," said Gov. Dave Heineman as he addressed the overflowing crowd. "Thank you for being here today to show your support for the Soldiers who are about to deploy on our behalf. I see this all the time wherever I go. Nebraskans just turn out because we want these Soldiers to know we're behind them, we support them, we love them, we care about them and we're here for them."

"This is so important and meaningful to them," he added. "I say that as a veteran. Nothing is more important than to know that we have the support of our families, our friends, our neighbors, this state and the United States of America."

Heineman also had advice for the Soldiers, many of whom were preparing to deploy overseas for the first time: "We're really proud of you. Listen to your first sergeant, your (noncommissioned officers) and your officers. Be alert the entire time. I know from experience, just listen to the first sergeant. Whatever the first sergeant says, do it and you'll be okay."

Heineman also pledged his support to the families of the deploying Soldiers.

"For the families that are here today... we have a great support team here within the Nebraska National Guard for all of our families when their loved one is deployed. Take advantage of that," he said.

"If you have any challenge whatsoever, call (Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons personally or you call me. We want to make sure that you're taken care of."

Also speaking to the Soldiers, families and friends were U.S. Senator Mike Johanns, U.S. Representative Jeff Fortenberry, Nebraska State Senator Chris Langemeier and Wahoo Mayor Gerald D. "Jerry" Johnson.

The 623rd Eng. Co. was formed approximately four years ago. It now consists of approximately 160



Photo by David Nore

All In The Family: Spc. Vickie Smith, supply specialist for the 623rd Engineer Company, holds a friend's baby, Haley Brands, while she waits for farewell festivities to begin in the Wahoo High School gym. Smith was accompanied by her sister, Spc. Kim Sykes, of the 313th Medical Co. (Ground Ambulance), and brother-in-law, Sgt. James Sykes, of Co. C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

"I am also confident that the 623rd will make the great state of Nebraska, the Nebraska Army National Guard, the community of Wahoo and all families proud We are building freedom."

— Capt. Chris Pelchat
623rd Engineer Company commander

Soldiers assigned to Wahoo and a detachment based in Hastings. According to Capt. Chris Pelchat, company commander, the unit has accomplished much in those four years.

"In October 2006 I was one of only four members in the unit," said Pelchat. "We had to get Soldiers from Fremont to stand in for a unit photo for the Wahoo newspaper following the activation ceremony."

"It's humbling to see what kind of support the Soldiers have to rely on," he added as he gazed out at the capacity crowd.

Pelchat said after completing several weeks of mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas, the Soldiers

expect to deploy to Afghanistan where they will be involved in a number of different construction projects including running a pre-fabrication shop while also building barracks, guard towers, shower and laundry and facilities, and running electrical lines.

"Today's an exciting time to be an engineer in the Nebraska Army National Guard and also to be in the 623rd," Pelchat said. "Our mission is to construct and provide infrastructure for not only our troops, but also Afghan National Security forces to help them take a greater role in securing their future."

"This direct tie between our mission and the success of the Afghans is exciting and something we can all be proud of," he added.

According to Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, the Soldiers will be making a major impact overseas.

"They're going to do a very important mission," said Lyons during the formal ceremony, adding he expects the unit to do exceptionally well. "We know these Soldiers. I know the NCOs in the unit. I know the officers. I know the commander and they are extremely well led."

"Some of the strongest NCO leadership in the state is present in the 623rd and that's going to be vital – absolutely vital – as they



Photo by David Nore

Showing Support: Wahoo residents turned out in force to show support for the Soldiers of the 623rd Engineer Company by flying U.S. flags and holding banners. The Wahoo Volunteer Fire Department and other area fire departments hoisted large U.S. flags across a downtown street as the unit's chartered buses drove through the main streets of Wahoo.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Thanks For Your Service: A row of Wahoo Elementary School students wave flags and homemade signs as they wish members of the 623rd Engineer Company well as they depart Wahoo for training at Fort Bliss, Texas.

go forth and do their mission," he said. "I served in Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007 and it is a different Afghanistan today than it was then. And I am absolutely confident (in) the skill and professionalism and the drive of these Soldiers in the 623rd (in) that when they leave, it will be a different Afghanistan a year from now... a better Afghanistan."

To prepare for the deployment, Pelchat said the unit has conducted numerous training and engineering-related exercises.

Pelchat said he and his staff also spent countless hours researching their mission, talking to their counterparts currently in Afghanistan and thinking through the various scenarios they may encounter. He said he's confident the unit's ready to do good things.

"I am also confident that the 623rd will make the great state of Nebraska, the Nebraska Army National Guard, the community of Wahoo and all families proud," he said.

"We are building freedom."

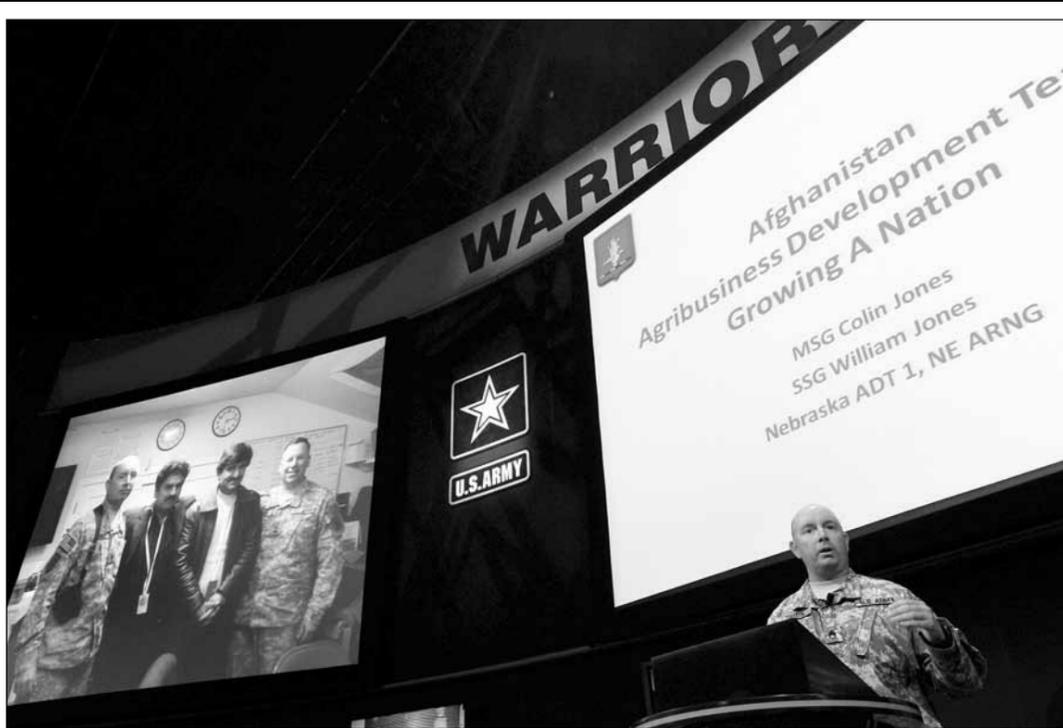


Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy

Afghan Agriculture: Staff Sgt. William Jones of the Nebraska Army National Guard speaks to attendees at the annual conference of the Association of the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C., about his experiences as a deployed member of an Afghan Agribusiness Development Team, Oct. 25. ADTs are deployed to work with local Afghan farmers to develop more efficient farming practices as well as improve ways that local farmers can get their produce to market as a way to ensure long-term stability in the region.

Guard's agribusiness teams work to provide sustainability

By Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy
National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON — No matter the size of the project, the ultimate goal of the National Guard's Agribusiness Development Teams is to increase the sustainability of the Afghan people, two Nebraska Army Guard members told attendees at the annual conference of the Association of the U.S. Army on Oct. 25.

Master Sgt. Colin Jones and Staff Sgt. William Jones deployed to Afghanistan in 2008 as part of the third ADT to deploy.

ADTs are composed of National Guard members, who come from a variety of military skill sets. However, the core of the team is composed of service members, who, on the civilian side, draw from a multitude of agriculture-related fields and expertise.

While they were the third team to deploy overall, they were the first such team in many of the provinces they worked in, said Master Sgt. Jones. Because they were first in those areas, initially there were more questions than answers.

"When we arrived in Bagram (Air Base), we were not really sure of what we were going to do," said Master Sgt. Jones. "We had an idea of what we were going to do in country, but making contacts with everyone when you're going into it blindly, especially a mission as important as the one we were, (was daunting.)"

Initially, the teams contacted outside agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development, said Master Sgt. Jones. Through those agencies they were put in contact with local leaders and village elders.

"We had to meet with the key (local) leaders to find out what their true needs were and what we needed to do to meet those needs," said Staff Sgt. Jones.

Because the team was responsible for an area roughly 10,000 square miles in size, said Master Sgt. Jones, those needs varied throughout each of the four provinces the team was responsible for.

Once it was established what the needs of local farmers and leaders were, figuring out what projects were needed and where

"Honestly, my grandmother told me about this stuff for years and years. You know what, when I saw this, I called my grandmother, who is 99 years old, and said I totally understand now."

— Master Sgt. Colin Jones

to start was the next hurdle.

"Getting projects underway, as we found out right off the bat, was rather daunting," said Master Sgt. Jones. "Anything on a smaller scale of about \$2,500 or less, a small impact project, we could conduct pretty easily."

With larger scale projects, said Master Sgt. Jones, that meant the green light needed to come from higher up, with some needing approval from the division commander level. But, the projects all had one large goal behind them, which was to "increase some kind of sustainability for the Afghan people themselves," said Master Sgt. Jones.

Farming techniques, however, differed widely between Nebraska and Afghanistan.

"During our initial assessment, we had to figure out how the Afghan people were working their land," said Master Sgt. Jones. "Most villagers will plow their fields with a single-bottom plow and two ox."

"Honestly, my grandmother told me about this stuff for years and years. You know what, when I saw this, I called my grandmother, who is 99 years old, and said I totally understand now."

However, said Master Sgt. Jones, just because the technology was dated didn't mean it was a bad thing. It just required the team to adapt other farming techniques to the way the local farmers worked.

"The thing we had to understand was, this is actually working," said Master Sgt. Jones. "What we decided to do was we were going to complement what these farmers are doing already. They're working the ground, but instead of bringing in a big John Deere four-wheel-drive tractor with an eight-row planter, insecticide, fertilizer boxes and all that sort of stuff, you've got to do something that complements what

they have."

That meant working with animal-driven farm implements as well as introducing different crops into the area.

"We did some fruit tree re-establishment in the area," said Staff Sgt. Jones, adding that included apricots and almonds as well. "Those were very big projects that were making (local farmers) a lot of money. They either were transporting it and marketing it out to (other countries) or they were selling it in the local villages."

Farmers also were introduced to different ways of growing crops in order to achieve greater yields.

"Grape vineyards were another big project that we ran there," said Staff Sgt. Jones. "The best grapes and raisins I've ever eaten was in Afghanistan. But, we had to teach them how to properly raise grapes. The first grape field that we saw they were all on the ground, so we had to come up with trellising projects."

Some projects the team took on alleviated other issues not related to agriculture.

Excess grain and crops were often stored in the homes of the local farmers, said Master Sgt. Jones, and when space ran out there, often local schools were used.

"More than once, and I couldn't believe it myself, but as we were cruising around the countryside you'd see all these chairs sitting outside of school lined up nice and pretty, dress right dress, and that's where they conducted their classes," said Master Sgt. Jones.

Grain bins were donated by Nebraska farmers and then shipped to Afghanistan. Once in Afghanistan, however, security concerns prevented the Soldiers from assembling the bins.

As a way around that, and to pass on other skills, local farmers were taught how to assemble the bins.

"There is a process to put these things together correctly," said Master Sgt. Jones. "We were able to get classes conducted and then they went out into these regions and set these grain bins up."

In the end, though, the Soldiers often learned just as much from the local farmers and left with a new appreciation for working the land.

"These are smart people," said Master Sgt. Jones. "They can take nothing and build something. It was great working with them."



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring Veterans

Lt. Col. Rick Gray, Nebraska Army National Guard director of Aviation and Safety and a veteran of numerous overseas deployments, talks to the students of the Elmwood-Murdock Elementary School about Veterans Day, Sept. 11, as part of the school's annual observance. Gray, who also spoke at the Elmwood-Murdock High School, was one of more than 50 Nebraska Army and Air National Guard members who participated in a wide variety of Veterans Day activities across the state.

Guard Soldiers, families learn more about benefits during October Yellow Ribbon event

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

If nothing else, Soldiers and family members attending the Oct. 17 Yellow Ribbon Program pre-deployment briefings at the Embassy Suites in Millard, Neb., now know that when it comes to mobilization, they're definitely not alone.

Nearly 500 Soldiers and family members from four Nebraska Army National Guard units and several other detachments crowded into the huge conference center to listen to a variety of briefings designed to prepare them for their upcoming deployments.

Each of the units was scheduled to deploy between November and early January.

According to Lt. Col. Shelly Herrod, Yellow Ribbon Program director, the event — which was one of the biggest the state has put on to date — was designed to provide important information to the Soldiers and their families about the various types of

support and benefits available to them during their individual deployments. "It provides (families) with the information that the Soldiers receive at the pre-deployment and it links them to the resources that are available while that Soldier is away," said Herrod.

This included such things as a pre-deployment legal brief that outlined various types of laws that are designed to protect the rights of military members and their families during a deployment, to a lecture from the state's director of psychological health designed to help give the Soldiers and their families members helpful ways of dealing with the inherent stresses brought on by deployments.

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a relatively new program sponsored by the Department of Defense. It is designed to help Soldiers and their families during each phase of the deployment from the pre-deployment notification, through the actual deployment and finally the reunion and reintegration por-

tions of the mission.

According to Brig. Gen. Lyons, Nebraska adjutant general, the program is vital to maintaining the health of military families during an increasingly active period of mobilizations.

"If you kind of look around the room, it's a fantastic turn out here today," said Lyons. "I really want to thank each and every one of you for taking time out of your day to come here with your loved one as they prepare to answer the nation's call."

"Absolutely, absolutely they cannot do it without you, family members, friends and maybe some employers here in the room today.

We absolutely cannot do what we are asking your loved ones to do without your support."

That's particularly important considering the missions the units participating in the October Yellow Ribbon event would be called upon to do.

These ranged from included engineering, military police and logistical support missions in Afghanistan, to aerial medical evacuation support in Iraq, to aviation support in Kosovo.

"Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan are all represented in the room," said Lyons. "I think that's indicative of what the nation is asking us to do. And that's going to continue."

In fact, said Lyons, the Soldiers are actually a part of around 1,600 Nebraska Army National Guardsmen who have or will be mobilizing during an 18- to 24-month window of time beginning this past summer.

Lyons said that with such a huge number of Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers going overseas to serve in vital missions, it's equally vital that the families who are being left behind understand and know how to receive the support they deserve while their loved ones are gone.

That's why the Yellow Ribbon Program briefings are so important. "Our overall objective here today is that none of you leave with a question unanswered," he said.

For more information about the Yellow Ribbon Program, contact Herrod at (402) 309-7938.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Meet My Flat Daddy: Caitlyn Caniglia, daughter of Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeff and Angie Caniglia, poses with a photographic version of her father that was on display at the Nebraska National Guard Family Program Office booth, Oct. 17, during the Yellow Ribbon Program event.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Message Of Love: Darlene Boyden writes a message to her husband, Capt. Jeff Boyden, and other members of the 402nd Military Police Battalion before the start of a Nov. 28 send-off ceremony at Omaha Northwest High School. The Omaha-based battalion headquarters was mobilizing for Operation Enduring Freedom.



See You Soon: Sgt. Gary Sons, 402nd Military Police Battalion, hugs his girlfriend, Sharisse Smith, following the Nov. 28 send-off ceremony for Sons' unit, which was mobilizing for a year-long mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom

M.P.S continued from page 1.

His wife of nearly five months agreed.

"It's a little easier than I thought it would be," said Darlene Boyden, moments after she wrote a small message to her husband and the approximately 145 other members of the 402nd MP Battalion on a poster created by the unit's family readiness group. "I cried all night long and then I cried this morning, but this is nice because I'm with women I know... we're all in the same boat."

Darlene Boyden said that although she is worried about her husband's, she is more concerned with how the couple's six kids – three of whom are still at home – will deal with the separation.

"I'm not so worried about him yet," she said. "I'll worry more as time goes by. I'm more worried about the kids... I'm worried about the teenagers."

According to Lt. Col. Eric Teegerstrom, battalion commander, such feelings are a normal part of a deployment. Gathering members of his organization around him about 10 minutes before the start of the ceremony, he gave his Soldiers some advice on how to deal with their emotions and the deployment.

"Remember, today starts Phase II," Teegerstrom said, who has already gone through two similar ceremonies before, first as a deploying Soldier and then again later when his wife, an U.S. Army Reserve officer, deployed. "Your families are out there and they're all going to be very proud."

"The bottom line is, the focus is about you all today. Everybody will know who the 142 folks are who are leaving today," he said, adding that their assembled families would soon be like Dr. Seuss' 'Grinch' in that their hearts were about to grow two sizes larger as they watched their Soldiers stand in formation together. "They're going to feel that pride. I want you to feel that same pride."

Teegerstrom also encouraged his Soldiers to keep their focus during the upcoming training and deployment.

"It's a marathon, not a sprint," he cautioned. "Every day we need to have a constant sense of urgency...



Packed House: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 402nd Military Police Battalion stand in formation during the Nov. 28 send-off ceremony at Omaha Northwest High School before a packed gymnasium crowd of families, friends and other well-wishers.

get that mission done for the day and we move on... every day."

"You bite it off in small lumps and it doesn't look so big and it doesn't look so long," Teegerstrom added a few moments later.

A short while later the Soldiers marched into the packed gymnasium to the thunderous applause of the assembled crowd and the music of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Army Band.

It was soon apparent that the family's hearts weren't the only ones swelling with pride.

"I always tell people that the best part of being governor is that I get to see Nebraskans at their best each and every single day," said Gov. Dave Heineman. "Well, it can't be any better than it is today to be able to stand in front of this group of distinguished and dedicated professional Soldiers who are willing to put their lives on the line for all of us, to defend our freedoms and our liberties and to preserve peace around the world."

"I want you to know that we're very, very proud of you," he added.

He wasn't the only one, either. U.S. Senator Mike Johanns also admitted that the sight of the formation of Soldiers standing on the floor of a packed gym was something he, too,

wouldn't soon forget.

"Someday I will look back on my years as a United States senator and governor and I'm going to remember the many, many times... where I said to myself that I am so proud to be a Nebraskan," he said. "I can tell you this is going to be one of those days."

According to Johanns, demonstrations of support like the one in Omaha go a long way in showing the Soldiers that they have the backing of their families and communities at home. That's particularly important considering the nature of the mission the Nebraska Soldiers were about to carry out.

"Soldiers, you carry the nation on your shoulder," said Johanns. "You're going to a place where quite honestly, every minute, every hour you represent us and our great country and I know that you are going to do it with skill and determination."

"And you're going to do it in a way that will make us all proud," he added.

For Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, the Omaha ceremony meant quite a bit to him personally, too. Not only was he wishing the organization farewell as it prepared to start its Operation Enduring Freedom as the leader of the Nebraska Na-



Thanking Soldiers For Their Service: Sgt. 1st Class Richard Cole Jr. and other members of the 402nd Military Police Battalion accept hand-folded American flags from a pair of Webelos Scouts who are members of Cub Scout Troop 477. Each member of the Omaha-based Nebraska Army Guard unit received a flag shortly before the Nov. 28 send-off ceremony at Omaha Northwest High School.

tional Guard, he was also wishing one particular Soldier good luck as a proud father.

Lyons' son is a member of the 402nd M.P. Bn.

He admitted that farewell ceremonies are often emotional experiences. This one was no different.

"There is some sadness today," he said. "Family members, loved ones... we're going to miss these Soldiers. It's absolutely right that we feel that emotion. We wish them the best and we're going to think about them everyday."

"To the loved ones here, you've been there for us each and every step of the way. As this unit trained over the past year, you were there for them," Lyons said, adding that as adjutant general he would work tirelessly to ensure that they receive the support they need during the year-long mission.

He also urged the families and loved ones to seek out the support they need.

Teegerstrom echoed those comments.

"Family members, it's going to be tough sometimes over the next 365 days," said Teegerstrom. "Approximately one half of this unit is either on its second or third deployment. So, families who have lived through this before, you kind of know what to expect."

"But every deployment is different," he said before encouraging the families to seek out help when needed and also to attend the planned emotional support group meetings. "They can do a lot for you. It's an admission of strength if you go to the emotional support groups, not of weakness. So, please take advantage of that," he said.

Teegerstrom then vowed that his organization would make the families and the state proud of them during their upcoming mission. "Family members, each and every one of these Soldiers will be well-trained and well-disciplined," he said. "As an M.P. unit, it is incumbent upon us to set the example for all those other units out there... to be disciplined, to have unquestionable integrity and to serve with honor."

"I come here and promise (to you) that next year they will stand here in pride in knowing that the unit did everything it could."



Photo by Lt. Col. Bob Vrana

Special Cartoon: Mason Mastroianni, who produces the award-winning "B.C." cartoon series, creates a special rendition of his cartoon strip for members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Oct. 11.

Cartoonist pens artwork for brigade

■ 'B.C.' creator visits Nebraskans during USO trip to Iraq

By Lt. Col. Bob Vrana

67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

COB ADDER, Iraq — Nationally syndicated newspaper cartoonist Mason Mastroianni, who produces the award-winning "B.C." cartoon, visited Contingency Operating Base Adder on Oct. 11.

The Binghamton, N.Y., cartoonist was one of several syndicated cartoonists participating in the USO sponsored National Cartoonists' Society Tour. The whirlwind tour visited Washington, D.C. area military hospitals and military installations in Kuwait and Iraq.

During the visit Mastroianni created a special edition Pike B.C., acknowledging the 67th BFSB's large area of operations



in Iraq.

Mastroianni's grandfather, Johnny Hart, created B.C. in 1958 and Mastroianni took over after Hart's death in 2007.

Hart was an Air Force Korean War veteran and though Mastroianni is not a veteran he

is very supportive of the military services.

"I want you guys to know how much I appreciate you and that we don't forget you even though (Operation New Dawn) is not in the news as much as it used to be," Mastroianni said.

Troops increasing efforts to advise, assist, equip Iraqis, U.S. general says

ALEXANDRIA, Va., (AFPS) — U.S. troops are re-doubling their efforts to advise, assist and equip Iraqi security forces in advance of the December 2011 deadline for all American troops to leave the country, Army Brig. Gen. Jeffrey S. Buchanan said Dec. 7.

Buchanan, the director of strategic effects in Baghdad, said the advise and assist mission in Iraq has gone well since the end of the American combat mission in August.

But more needs to be done, he said.

"We've got a lot to accomplish and we are very much geared to getting everything we can do before American forces depart," Buchanan said.

U.S. Forces Iraq officials are looking at many different options for the next year, he said.

"The big idea is we want to get as much done as we can," Buchanan said. "We don't want to start withdrawing forces and closing bases now because that's going to limit what we do."

American forces will probably stay at the current strength through early summer, Buchanan said. The troops are working to transition the police training capability, for example, to the State Department in advance of the withdrawal. Buchanan said the just-under 50,000 American forces now in Iraq also have two other missions to fulfill: conducting partnered counterterrorism operations and working the transition of the mission in the country to a State Department lead.

Terrorism is still a problem in Iraq, with al-Qaida trying to stage a comeback, he said.

"They have no support among the people," the general said. "Their attacks continue. Al-Qaida is determined and they have never changed. But they have been degraded through the combined efforts of the Iraqi and American security forces."

Al-Qaida cannot attract money, Iraqis or foreign fighters to their cause, Buchanan said. Iraqi security forces have the security lead in the country and daily attack levels are at their lowest since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in March 2003.

Two agreements govern the relationship between the United States and Iraq, the general said. The first is the security agreement signed in 2008. Under that, all American troops will leave Iraq by the end of next year.

"U.S. Forces Iraq's mission will be completed and our troop presence will go to zero," Buchanan said. "But this isn't really an end, it's a transition point based on the other agreement we signed: the Strategic Framework Agreement."

That agreement looks at the long-term relationship between the United States and Iraq in agriculture, economic development, governance, education, science and technology and security.

Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers dish up 'diamond' service in Iraq

By Spc. Kayla Tarr

1167th Brigade Support Company

CAMP SLAYER, Iraq — Walking into the dining facility (DFAC) at Camp Slayer, a person will get more than just breakfast, lunch or dinner... at the "Desert Diamond" DFAC customers get an engaging social experience.

At least, that is the idea Sgt. Daaron Kiefer had when he started greeting customers with "Welcome to the Desert Diamond!" as they picked up their tray and silverware.

The responses he received were good, according to Sgt. Trent Hellbusch, the contracting officer technical representative (COTR) for the DFAC. "The expressions on their faces and the comments (that he got) were awesome," said Hellbusch. So they made it a regular practice, he added.

Hellbusch, Kiefer and the rest of the five-man crew — made up of Spc. Jonathan Litherland, Spc. Tony Vodicka and Pfc. Jared Cyr — split the day into two 12-hour shifts, starting at 5 a.m. and 5 p.m., to cover four meal times a day: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and midnight chow.

The hours might be long, but there are perks to the job. All five agree that one of the best parts of their job is getting to meet, and talk to, the variety of people who come to the DFAC.

A common topic of conversation is sports,

say the crew, and they've given their DFAC a distinctly Nebraskan flavor with a large Cornhusker poster and more Husker football decorations for their headcount tables.

To keep things fair, they invite others to bring representations for their favorite teams. A sergeant from Louisiana has brought in small logos for various teams, which they are collecting at their headcount table, but other than that, no one has taken them up on their offer.

"(There is an) Air Force captain that comes in at night and seems to enjoy taking our Husker stuff and throwing it around a bit... she's a Texas fan. We let her do it because it makes us enjoy our jobs more."

— Pfc. Jared Cyr
1167th Brigade
Support Company

As for any friendly rivalries? "(There is an) Air Force captain that comes in at night and seems to enjoy taking our Husker stuff and throwing it around a bit," said Cyr. "... she's a Texas fan. We let her do it because it makes us enjoy our jobs more."

It's actually amazing that the Nebraska Soldiers can interact with their customers at all. Between Sept. 6, the day they began service, and the date this article was first published in October, Hellbusch's crew will have served between 80,000 to 85,000 Soldiers, civilian contractors and third country nationals. On average, they serve 2,500 people a day.

However, they try not to let everyone be just another face in the crowd, and will go out of their way to help customers get the most out of their meal. Being able to put a smile on everyone's face is the best part, said Vodicka.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Malizzi

Husker Proud: (From left) Pfc. Jared Cyr, Sgt. Trent Hellbusch, Spc. Tony Vodicka, Spc. Jonathan Litherland and Sgt. Daaron Kiefer of the 1167th Brigade Support Company pose next to a University of Nebraska Cornhusker Football Team poster they put up in their dining facility at Camp Slayer, Iraq.

The food may not be better than any other DFAC in Iraq, and it definitely won't remind anyone of the home-cooked meals they are missing, but, with their outstanding service,

Hellbusch and his team are out to brighten their customers' day a little bit.

That, says Hellbusch, is how they earn their "diamond" rating.



Spending Time With Dad: One-year-old Riley Hawke plays with a pair of American flags as he sits on his father's knee as Sgt. Matthew Hawke listens to dignitaries speak to his unit, Nov. 28.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Thanks For What You're About To Do: Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joseph Dolton, Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, checks out the miniature folded flag that was presented to him by Webelos from Cub Scout Pack 477 after the send-off ceremony for members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, Nov. 28, at Lincoln Southwest High School.

MEDICS continued from page 1.

where we're responsible for training the new people, it's an honor. It's a privilege."

"I'm really excited to get the new people integrated and to teach them about what it is to be a flight medic."

According to Capt. Daniel Smith, Co. C, 2-135th GSAB commander, approximately 72 percent of his unit is deploying with the unit for the first time. That's a pretty significant number considering that the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter medical evacuation unit is one of the most deployment-seasoned organizations in the Nebraska Army National Guard, having served in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, Hurricane Katrina and Iraq during the past 20 years.

Smith said much will be expected of the unit's seasoned Soldiers, like the two Wunderlichs.

"A lot of it weighs heavily on the guys who have mobilized before," said Smith moments before the Nov. 28 send-off ceremony at Lincoln Southwest High School, one of two Nebraska Army Guard mobilization ceremonies taking place that day.

Complicating matters, Smith said, was the fact that not only did the mobilization come about a year earlier than expected, the unit has been extremely busy the past nine months or so, supporting the early spring eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., participating in a multi-state fire fighting conference, conducting a major inspection, while also supporting the recent Gulf Oil Spill operation and other such state missions as this summer's flooding in Nebraska.

"It's been a busy last couple months," said Smith, adding that the unit's focus is now on getting



Heading Out Again: Sgt. Heather Wunderlich chats with retired Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke and U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns, Nov. 28. Wunderlich, the second Nebraska Army National Guard female Soldier to earn the Bronze Star with 'Valor' device, is heading to Iraq for the second time.

to Fort Hood, Texas, where they will be supporting the 40th Cavalry Brigade from the California Army National Guard. Still, he said, he's extremely confident the unit will once again do well during its time in Iraq.

About a half hour later, senior state leaders also expressed that same confidence in the Nebraska Army Guard helicopter unit's ability to perform superbly overseas.

"I want to thank you for your service to the Nebraska Army National Guard and your service to the United States of America," Gov. Dave Heineman told the assembled Soldiers and their accompanying families and friends.

"As someone who served, it's an enormous pleasure to stand with you today. You are our finest. You are our best. You understand

the mission. You are well-trained. And I know that you will execute in outstanding fashion," Heineman said. "Air evacuation is a complex operation. It can be dangerous. But I know that you are up to the task."

U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns echoed those sentiments.

"Their nickname, 'Husker Angels,' defines very well the critical role that they play in saving lives," said Johanns, adding that the unit continues a legacy of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers providing excellent medical support in Iraq.

"The situation in Iraq is obviously different," he added. "Operation Iraqi Freedom is now Operation New Dawn, marking the transition from combat to support operations. Charlie Company will be charged with the timely and efficient movement of wounded

troops to medical facilities."

"We all have such great faith in this unit and the expertise that these Soldiers bring," Johanns said.

The unit will have many responsibilities in Iraq, said Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, the most important of which will be serving as the critical link between battlefield injuries and lifesaving treatment.

"For some, it's a first-time deployment. For others, it's a second or third," he said. "You will draw upon that experience. You will continue to serve our state and nation as you always have... with distinction and pride."

And that will serve them well when lives are at stake, Lyons predicted.

"When you're in Iraq and you're on that first-up team and that call comes, everyone will sortie," he said. "Flight operations... maintainers... medics... crew chiefs... pilots... that

UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter will launch and answer that call for a wounded Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine. And you will do everything humanly possible to get that wounded service member the care that he (or she) needs and perhaps save (his or her) life."

"What more heroic mission is there?" Lyons asked.

Lyons also commended the unit's battle buddies - the fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, sons, daughter, husbands and wives of the Soldiers - for the support they had already given during the mobilization training phases as well as during the upcoming deployment.

"They absolutely would not be here today without their battle buddies: their moms, their dads, their family members and their

significant others," he said.

For many of the Soldiers, those words definitely hit home. Soldiers like Sgt. Matthew Hawke, who is deploying overseas for the first time as a unit crew chief.

Hawke spent the entire send-off ceremony bouncing his one-year-old son, Riley, on his knee while sitting next to his wife Nicole and their children, Austin, 4, Jasmine, 11, and Trinity, 9.

Also sitting nearby were his mother, mother-in-law and other members of his family.

Hawke said he's anxious to deploy, yet nervous at the same time.

"I'm excited to go do my mission, but I'm going to miss my family at the same time," he said. "It's rough."

Still, Hawke said he knows he's well-trained and deploying with an exceptionally well-prepared unit. That attitude will definitely serve the unit well once it gets to Iraq, said Smith.

"When the phone rings with the medevac calls, our crews will be ready to fly without question to save the life of someone they don't even know," Smith said. "It is our job to ensure that the volunteer infantry Soldier that has given the government a blank check is given the best chance to survive so that they can return home to their families."

"Every second counts," Smith said, adding that a wounded service member has a 98 percent chance of survival if they can be evacuated to a medical treatment facility.

He added he will give his utmost to make sure that the unit doesn't fail to live up to its stellar reputation.

"I will give everything I have to make sure that we are a success."

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

INTERVENE

When I recognize a threat to my fellow Soldiers or Airmen, I will have the personal courage to **INTERVENE** and prevent Sexual Assault. I will condemn acts of Sexual Harassment. I will not abide obscene gestures, language or behavior. I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I will **INTERVENE**.

ACT

You are my brother, my sister, my fellow Soldier or Airman. It is my duty to stand up for you, no matter the time or place. I will take **ACTION**. I will do what's right. I will prevent Sexual Harassment and Assault. I will not tolerate sexually offensive behavior. I will **ACT**.

MOTIVATE

We are American Soldiers and Airmen, **MOTIVATED** to keep our fellow Soldiers and Airmen safe. It is our mission to prevent Sexual Harassment and Assault. We will denounce sexual misconduct. As Soldiers and Airmen, we are all **MOTIVATED** to take action. We are strongest... together.

Sexual assault is a crime, demeans the value of others and erodes the basic foundation of trust so vital to the success of every military mission.

Leaders of the Nebraska National Guard will take an active role in educating our service members about the prevention of sexual assault.

Sexual Assault Hotline
(402) 525-0078

Joint Force Headquarters Sexual Assault Response Coordinator: Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gena Hegemann

155th Air Refueling Wing Sexual Response Coordinator: Capt. Nicole Nuss

2010 ♦ Nebraska National Guard com

2010 Nebraska National Guard timeline as taken from the pages of the *Prairie Soldier*:

January

♦Command Sgt. Maj. Richard J. Burch, Nebraska Army National Guard state command sergeant major, selected to become newest command sergeant major for the Army National Guard.

♦8: Nebraska Air Guardsmen attend Yellow Ribbon Reintegration training at Lincoln Holiday Inn.

♦11-15: Nebraska National Guardsmen assist FEMA teams in making preliminary damage assessments in 47 Nebraska counties affected by December 2009 blizzards.

♦16: Col. Tom Schuurmans, Nebraska Army National Guard chief of staff, honored during retirement ceremony in Lincoln. Schuurmans, who was promoted to the rank of brigadier general (Nebraska), served for more than 30 years in the military.

♦18: Omaha students spend Martin Luther King Day preparing backpacks for kids affected by upcoming deployments of Nebraska Army National Guard units.

♦21-24: Nebraska Army National Guard recruiters unveil "NASCAR Challenge" at Omaha Car Show.

♦24: Nebraska Army National Guard units conduct "Guard for a Day" recruiting activities at Fremont, Neb., armory.

February

♦2: Command Sgt. Eli Valenzuela selected to become next Nebraska Army National Guard state command sergeant major.

♦4: Former Nebraska Army National Guard Brig. Gen. (Neb.) William "Steve" Rein is buried with full military honors following his death on Jan. 29 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Rein served as the Nebraska Army National Guard chief of staff from July 2004 until May 2006.

♦7: Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela assumes role as state command sergeant major.

♦11: A District of Columbia Army National Guard LUH-72A Lakota helicopter makes a refueling stop in Lincoln, Neb. Nebraska Army National Guard officials say they expect to receive their first LUH-72A in January 2011.

♦17: U.S. Senator Mike Johanns visits with families of the 1195th Transportation Company during a trip to the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

♦20-21: More than 1,100 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers and their families attend a Yellow Ribbon Program pre-deployment workshop.

March

♦5: Nebraska Army National Guard training officials show off a new Army Operator Driving Simulator in Lincoln, Neb. The simulator allows Soldiers to practice driving various Army vehicles before actually driving the real thing on the road.

♦13: Nebraska Army National Guard officials host a Recruit Sustainment Program open house at the Norfolk armory.

♦15: Officials break ground on new \$8 million Armed Forces Reserve Center in Columbus, Neb.

♦16-20: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade prepare for their upcoming deployment to Iraq during an extended drill period at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

♦26-27: Staff Sgt. Dominick Chase and Spc. Daniel L. Sandman earn top honors during the Nebraska Army National Guard's Best Warrior competition held at Camp Ashland, Neb.

♦31: Officials break ground on new \$26.9 million Nebraska National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln, Neb.

April

♦6: Nebraska state senators formally congratulate the 155th Air Refueling Wing for earning its 10th U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award during a ceremony at the state capitol in Lincoln, Neb.

♦7: Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman honors Nebraska's military kids during a proclamation signing ceremony at the state capitol in Lincoln, Neb.

♦10: The 734th Transportation Battalion welcomes Lt. Col. Kevin Garner as its new commander.

♦15: Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing lift a KC-135 Stratotanker with air during a crash, damaged, disabled aircraft recovery exercise at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

♦16: 1195th Transportation Company returns from year-long deployment in Iraq

♦26-30: Nebraska National Guard hosts Great Plains Army Aviation Fire Fighting Conference designed to prepare Army Guard aviators for the various missions they might perform dur-



Photo by Master Sgt. Vern Moore:

Cold Weather Steam Bath: Tech. Sgt. James Daberkow, a crew chief with the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, operates the AirPlus de-icing system while removing ice from a KC-135R Stratotanker's wing, Jan. 9, after Lincoln, Neb., was hit by a major snowstorm during the Christmas holiday season.



Photo by Pfc. Justin Zdan

Charging In: Soldiers assigned to Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), and Company A, 325th Military Intelligence Battalion, begin to clear a building of potential insurgents while training in a mock Iraqi village at Camp Guernsey, Wyo., May 15. The Soldiers were part of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise held throughout much of May in Wyoming.

ing a fire emergency involving aviation assets.

May

♦April 30-May 10: 623rd Engineer Company (Vertical Construction) holds "Castle Stakes" construction competition at Mead Training Site.

♦1: Daryl Bohac promoted to assistant adjutant general and the rank of brigadier general.

♦2: Lincoln/National Guard Marathon hosted in Lincoln

♦8-28: Members of the 67th Battlefield

Surveillance Brigade participate in "eXportable Combat Training Capability" (XCTC) exercise at Camp Guernsey, Wyo. The exercise's aim is to immerse Soldiers in training designed to resemble scenarios they may encounter in their deployment to Iraq.

♦13: Cpl. Lucas Mutschelknaus honored by Red Cross for heroism after responding to a car accident involving a member of the Air National Guard.

♦15: Approximately 30 military kids tour Husker facilities at Memorial Stadium.

♦21: Around 60 employers participate in a "Boss Lift" and visit the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade during their "eXportable Combat Training Capability" (XCTC) exercise at Camp Guernsey, Wyo.

♦22: Forty-five members of the 192nd Military Police Detachment wished farewell during a ceremony in Nebraska City before beginning a deployment to Iraq.

♦28: Officials break ground on new \$7.9 million Armed Forces Reserve Center in McCook, Neb.

June

♦2: Camp Ashland's 2nd Battalion, 209th Regi-



Sweet Homecoming: Janna Mas... shortly after he stepped off a bus i... served in Iraq for nearly a year. Ma... Transportation Company, which h...



Off To Afghanistan: Pfc. Joseph... Surveillance), says goodbye to hi... market Park just prior to boarding... Enduring Freedom that would tak...

Completes extremely busy year ♦ 2010



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Mashek embraces her husband, Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Mashek, in front of the Kearney High School, April 16, after having Mashek is the shop foreman for the Kearney-based 1195th as detachments in Lexington and McCook.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Monitoring The Progress: Jeff Going, a deputy state fire marshal, watches a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter drop water from a "Bambi Bucket" during the Great Plains Army Aviation Fire Conference, April 29, at the Mead Training Site near Mead, Neb.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Warm Hug: Senior Airman Amanda Koepping, a member of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Medical Group, gives a hug to a member of Team Alabama during the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games' volleyball tournament, July 22. Koepping was one of around 180 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen who supported the July 16-23 Special Olympics Games in Lincoln, Neb.



Photo by David Nore

Prichard, Troop A, 1-134th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and its girlfriend, Samatha Metzler, July 31 at Lincoln's Hay-a bus, the beginning leg of a mobilization for Operation the cavalry squadron to Afghanistan.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Combined Arms: A 734th Transportation Battalion Soldier stands guard in his armored Humvee as a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter lifts off during a convoy exercise at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., Aug. 11.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

To Infinity And Beyond: Staff Sgt. Nic Bethune, a crew chief with the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Nebraska Air National Guard, strikes his best Buzz Lightyear pose while participating in the first Jack O'Lantern Jog held at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Oct. 2. The event was designed to help build awareness of the importance of physical fitness.

135th Quartermaster Company, conduct an "administrative" parachute jump to display aerial capabilities to family and friends.

•19: Employers visit members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade during an Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve "Boss Lift" to Fort Lewis, Wash. Employers were treated to a unique show when the 155th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker they were on refueled the Air Force's demonstration team, the "Thunderbirds."

•31: 1-134th Cavalry Squadron (Reconnaissance and Surveillance) mobilize for Operation Enduring Freedom.

August

•6: Approximately 70 members of the 313th Medical Company welcomed home after a nearly year-long deployment to Iraq.

•7: Hundreds of runners participate in the KFOR/Nebraska National Guard Thunder Run at the Lincoln Municipal Airport.

•12: Twenty-two 155th Security Forces Squadron members return after a six-month deployment to Iraq.

•13-15: Nebraska National Guard's top marksmen compete in the 2010 Marksmanship Sustainment Exercise (a.k.a. the "Tag Shoot") at the Greenleaf Training Site in Hastings, Neb.

•14: Seventeen Soldiers graduate from the Officer Candidate School and Accelerated Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland, Neb.

•14: Three Nebraska National Guard Soldiers graduate from third in-state Warrant Officer Candidate School at Camp Ashland, Neb.

•21: Nebraska Air National Guard members paint a house during annual Paint-a-Thon.

September

•11: Three Nebraska National Guard units honored with the state and regional Col. Don Hatten Awards for Supply Excellence.

•12: Camp Ashland's 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) welcomes Col. Scott Gronewold as new commander.

•12: Nebraska's Joint Force Headquarters welcomes first Air Guard Commander when Maj. Brenda Fujan accepts command during a ceremony held at the Spirit of 1776 Armory in Lincoln.

October

•2: Nebraska Air National Guard hosts first annual "Jack O'Lantern Jog" at the Nebraska National Guard Air Base in Lincoln, Neb.

•3: Nebraska Air National Guard unveils new nose art on KC-135R Stratotanker

•11: 'B.C.' creator visits members of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade serving in Iraq, pens unique unit cartoon.

•13: Officials cut ribbon to new \$13 million Armed Forces Reserve Center in Beatrice, Neb.

•17: Nearly 500 Soldiers and their families attend a Yellow Ribbon Program pre-deployment briefing at the Embassy Suites in Millard, Neb.

•25: Master Sgt. Colin Jones and Staff Sgt. William Jones discuss their deployment to Afghanistan as part of the Nebraska National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team during the annual conference of the Association of the U.S. Army in Washington, D.C.

•28: Soldiers assigned to the 623rd Engineer Company from Wahoo and Hastings wished farewell during a ceremony at the Wahoo High School gym prior to starting an Operation Enduring Freedom deployment.

November

•5-19: Soldiers from Omaha's 402nd Military Police Battalion conduct an annual training exercise at Camp Ashland, the Greenleaf Training Site and at the North Omaha Readiness Center to prepare them for an upcoming deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

•26: Dan Whitney (aka "Larry the Cable Guy") presented with the Nebraska National Guard Homeland Defense Service Ribbon for work in supporting Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen.

•28: Members of Lincoln's Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, and its detachments wished farewell during a ceremony at Lincoln Southwest High School before an Operation New Dawn deployment.

•28: Members of Omaha's 402nd Military Police Battalion wished farewell during a ceremony at Omaha Northwest High School before starting a mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

December

•3: Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, and other National Guard leaders visit members of the 623rd Engineer Company at Fort Bliss, Texas

•12: National Guard celebrates 374th birthday during a ceremony in Lincoln, Neb.

ment (Regional Training Institute) welcomes Maj. Gary Ropers as its new commander.

•2-30: A Nebraska National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and two four-person crews deploy to Louisiana to assist in the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico by slingloading sandbags to prevent oil from reaching inland marshes.

July

•10: Camp Ashland, Neb. Warrant Officer Candidate students "Green up" Ashland by painting the town's main street benches, railings and

trashcans green.

•10: Members of the 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion welcome Lt. Col. Randall Ames as their new commander.

•11: Thousands wish members of 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade farewell at Seacrest Field in Lincoln prior to their deployment to Iraq.

•14: Nebraska Air National Guard spouses treated to a ride during an aerial refueling mission in a 155th Air Refueling Wing KC-135R Stratotanker.

•14-18: Approximately 180 Nebraska Air and Army National Guardsmen participate in a Chemical, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) training at the Great Plains Regional Training Center near Salina, Kan.

•16-23: Hundreds of volunteers from the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard support the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games held in Lincoln.

•17: Members of 195th Forward Support Company (Airborne) and Detachment 2,

Hitting the Road

Air Guard engineers travel to North Dakota for important training exercise

By Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube
Staff Writer

On a cool, crisp November morning, 84 members from the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Civil Engineer Squadron flew to a Regional Training Site near Fargo, N.D., for a Nov. 4-8 training exercise.

According to Master Sgt. David Wieting, Prime Beef manager, "The civil engineer squadron has many Status of Resources and Training (SORTS) tasks that can't be accomplished on site."

Some of this training includes the ability to repair bombed out runways. To accomplish this task, heavy equipment operators have to clear away debris from the bomb crater and properly fill in the hole. Structural specialists then bring in fiberglass mats to cover the hole and make the runways usable again.

"All this needs to be accomplished as quickly as possible to keep the aircraft flying," said Wieting. "However, the size of crater, type of aircraft using the runway, climate and types of material available used to fix the crater are all factors CE can't control."

"What CE can control is organization, proficiency and skill levels, which is why this training is so important," said Wieting.

The trick is, the training can only be accomplished at three sites in the United States. That's what made the North Dakota training so important.

"The main goal for this training was to get the SORTS reportable tasks completed," said Lt. Col. Robert Hargens, 155th CES commander, "and to give CE a chance to deploy somewhere to work together and build unit morale."

The training extended to nearly every area of the 155th CES.

"The electricians are required to climb electrical poles a certain number of times to stay proficient. The RTS has all the poles with all the proper climbing gear available for electricians coming in for training that is not available at Lincoln," Wieting said.

Members of the unit's power production element were also able to train on generators that also aren't available in Lincoln. The MEP-12 is a high voltage generator with enough power to provide electricity for an entire base.

Senior Airman Philip Francis, a power production specialist, had recently deployed to Iraq. He said the North Dakota training accurately replicated the skills Airmen need to be successful during overseas deployments.

"The training we are getting here is really good and is applicable to what we did in Iraq," Francis said. "This training is important so we can stay proficient at our jobs."

"When we deploy, it is important we know our jobs because the other people we work with have the same skill levels and that makes the jobs go smoother without as many road blocks," Francis said.



Photos by Senior Airman Jason Leith

Putting It All Together: Two members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Civil Engineer Squadron construct an Alaskan small shelter at the Regional Training site near Fargo, N.D., Nov. 4. The Alaskan small shelter is essentially a small tent-like structure used for housing members when they're deployed.

Even Hargens got into the act.

"There was a ton of stuff that was new to me that I haven't had the opportunity to do," Hargens said. "I worked with the crews that set up the mobile aircraft arresting system and we ran the truck that actually caught the wire and brought it out, simulating what an aircraft would do."

"I had the opportunity to actually get some hands-on training with the heavy equipment, which I haven't done before," Hargens added. "I watched the (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) folks blow some stuff up using C-4 explosives, which they aren't allowed to use in Lincoln, and I put on firefighting equipment and worked with the firemen during their structure training."

The fire fighting training was particularly important. The firemen trained on an F-16 egress trainer, structural firefighting training, mobile aircraft arresting system training and firetruck driver training.

"The firemen received training in several different areas that proved very beneficial for everyone especially our new members," said Tech. Sgt. Clay Parker, a fire department crew chief.

Although the aircraft burn pit was closed for winterizing, the firemen were able to do egress training on an F-16. This type of training is not available in Lincoln since the 155th ARW is an aerial refueling unit. However, when deployed, firefighters need to know how to egress pilots from fighter aircraft while dealing with ejection seats, he said.

According to Tech. Sgt. James Ironthunder, another crew chief, the truck driving training is also important.

"We needed refresher training on the P-18 Tanker truck and the P-19 Crash truck since we don't have these vehicles in Lincoln, but these are the trucks we drive overseas when we are deployed," Ironthunder said.

Ironthunder added that some of the new unit members were able to train on trucks to help them get prepared for deployments. Firefighters don't get driver training on the two types of fire trucks during technical school, so the North Dakota exercise gave them the opportunity to work



Filling It In: Heavy equipment operators from the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Civil Engineer Squadron repair a "bomb crater" during a Rapid Runway Repair exercise at the Regional Training Site near Fargo, N.D., on Nov. 5. The exercise was designed to give the Nebraska Air National Guardsmen the opportunity to practice many of the skills that they can't practice on during normal unit drills in Lincoln, Neb.

with vehicles that they're not yet licensed to operate.

During the structural fire training, firemen put wooden pallets in a burn tower and lit them on fire to simulate a building fire.

"We practice with a wood fire because it burns hotter than a propane fire," said Parker. "That way everyone gets used to the heat and how fast the proper water stream starts cooling the fire."

"This training helps refresh some of the veterans and teach our new members about staying low, adjusting the water stream and proper firefighting techniques they don't necessarily learn in the technical school," added Parker, "which helps a lot when deployed overseas because we can see a lot of structural fires from rocket attacks."

Members of the squadron also practiced assembling Alaskan Small Shelters. These are small tent-like structures used for housing members when they're deployed.

Once the shelters were assembled, the electricians ran electricity while HVAC specialists installed heating and cooling units. The power production members assisted by setting up generators to provide power for everything. The utilities shop also set up a field deployable shower, shave and latrine structure. The training is required because



Getting Defensive: A 155th Civil Engineer member demonstrates how to defend his area while working in a high point position during combat skills training conducted in North Dakota, Nov 4.



Here's What We're Going To Do: Two firefighters from the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Civil Engineer Squadron discuss firefighting procedures during a structural fire exercise conducted at the Regional Training Site near Fargo, N.D., on Nov. 5.

civil engineers are often required to establish a new base in a remote location.

Wieting also trained the CES members in combat skills training. Air Soft weapons were used to simulate real weapons.

"It was like a big game of capture the flag," said Parker. "It was a blast."

Medical units' call up for Desert Shield/Desert Storm was first since World War II

By Richard Clark, PhD.
State Command Historian

Twenty years ago this month, Nebraska's 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) and Detachment 1, 1267th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), prepared to deploy to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield.

The deployments were the first time Nebraska Guard units had deployed to a warzone since World War II.

Through the course of the mobilization and deployment, the units faced tragedy, saved lives and reaffirmed Nebraska's warrior tradition.

On Aug. 2, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait and massed troops along the border with Saudi Arabia. In response, then-President George H. W. Bush announced the beginning of Operation Desert Shield, a defensive mission to prevent the invasion of Saudi Arabia. President Bush activated select components of the nation's reserve forces and deployed the 82nd Airborne Division to the Saudi Arabian border.

On Nov. 11, 1990, Maj. Steve Peterson received an early-morning notice that his unit, the 24th Medical Company, had been put on alert. He contacted his key unit personnel and instructed them to gather the next morning at the Army Aviation Support Facility at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb.

The first piece of business was the reorganization of the 24th. The Army mobilized the unit according to a revised table of organization that reduced the unit's number of UH-1 Iroquois (Huey) helicopters and personnel.

Personnel and equipment removed by the unit reorganization were assigned to the newly-created Detachment 1, 1267th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), and were not scheduled to deploy. Thus, leaders of the 24th Med. Co. had to complete the reorganization and manning roster before deploying unit members could be notified.

The mobilization plan gave Soldiers 72 hours to prepare for

First of a Two-Part Story



Photo courtesy of Deb Tankesley

Training For War: Members of the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) conduct a road march while wearing their Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) equipment in preparation for a deployment to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990.

departure to their mobilization station. On Nov. 17, President Bush announced the federalization of the 24th and mobilizing Soldiers were informed of their activation.

Three days later, the 24th Med. Co. left Lincoln to much fanfare. The spectacle included flights of Hueys flying down the length of "O" Street before banking right at 84th Street

toward Fort Riley, Kan.

At Fort Riley, the 24th Med. Co. readied for its deployment by preparing its Hueys to operate in desert conditions, acquiring vital medical supplies, and familiarizing Soldiers with essential operations equipment.

On Christmas Eve, Peterson received notice that his unit would depart in two days and members of the 24th celebrated the holiday with nonstop, final preparations.

The unit traveled by different means, and by Dec. 31, the last of the unit arrived in Saudi Arabia.

Shortly after the 24th Med. Co. departed for Fort Riley, the newly-created 1267th Med. Co. was placed on alert. The 1267th was a split unit with elements from Nebraska and Missouri. Members of the 24th who did not deploy with the unit were transferred to the 1267th, but Nebraska's Detachment 1, 1267th Med. Co., only had 35 slots for the 95 Soldiers displaced by the mobilization of the 24th.

Under the leadership of 1st Lt. Pete Rose, the pre-mobilization team selected Soldiers and organized

equipment for the coming deployment. Like the 24th, the 1267th had little time to prepare, and by Dec. 1, 1990, the detachment left Nebraska to join the remainder of the 1267th in Missouri.

The mobilization station for the 1267th was Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Unlike the equipment of the 24th, which traveled overseas by airplane, the equipment and helicopters of the 1267th would ship by sea from the Port of Houston, Texas.

On Dec. 14, three flights of Hueys left Missouri for Texas. By the time the unit reached Texas, poor weather and a low flight ceiling began to trouble the pilots.

Near Cleveland, Texas, one of the flights encountered heavy ground fog causing the helicopter of 1st Lt. Pete Rose, Chief Warrant Officer Carol L. McKinney, and Staff Sgt. Dallas Cooper to fly into a tree. All three Soldiers were killed in the crash.

Despite the tragedy and a brief investigation, the unit continued its preparations for deployment, and in early February, left Fort Leonard Wood for Saudi Arabia.

**Coming in February:
Operation Desert Storm.**

MYSTERY continued from page 1.

Following his retirement from the Air Guard in 2008, most figured that Musick would settle into his civilian career with a non-profit organization in Lincoln. What most didn't know, however, was that Musick was already heavily involved in a research project he was growing increasingly convinced would help settle the mystery surrounding the final days of Howard Hughes.

Throughout much of the 20th Century, Hughes had captured the public's attention. A renowned aviation pioneer and owner of numerous early flying records, Hughes had also made a name for himself in the motion picture industry, as an engineer, as an early Las Vegas developer, an airline executive, as a noted playboy and as a notorious and obsessive recluse.

According to most accounts, Howard Hughes slipped out of the public eye in the late 1950s and early 1960s and reportedly holed up in several of the hotels he owned in Las Vegas. From that point, Hughes mostly existed as a ghostly legend until 1976 when he reportedly died during a flight from Mexico to the United States.

At the time of his death, the 6-foot, 3-inch Hughes reportedly weighed approximately 90 pounds and had a long scraggly beard, hair and finger nails, essentially a shell of the once vibrant aviator.

His financial holdings were worth an estimated \$2.2 billion.

For years, Musick said he had barely any interest in the Hughes story. That all changed during a trip to Alabama in January 2002.

Musick said he was traveling through the area when he decided to drop in on a lady named Eva McLelland with whom he had worked as part of his job.

According to Musick, McLelland was interested in leaving some property to the non-profit organization, so he'd talked with her several times over the past couple years. Through their conversations, she learned he was an Air Guard general and enlisted his help in obtaining a ramp from the VA for her trailer when her husband became sick in the late 1990s.

Musick said the early conversations were always somewhat strange. "I knew that there were things that just weren't right because when we talked, her husband would never answer the phone and that there was something messed up about his birthday, military records and all of this stuff."

Musick said his meeting with the woman in January 2002, about two months after her husband's death, was their first face-to-face encounter.

Musick said he took the 84-year-

old McLelland to a local Waffle House for breakfast. Things, he said, quickly got "weird" from there.

Midway through breakfast, Musick said, "she leaned across the table and said, 'I've got a secret that I want to tell you.' But she looked around kind of like somebody was listening and then she said, 'But I can't do it here.'"

"I thought, 'Oh geez.... What is this all about?'" he recalled thinking to himself.

After finishing their waffles, Musick said, they loaded back into his car for the return to McLelland's home. Within minutes, she turned to him and revealed a secret so startling Musick said he wishes someone would've photographed his face.

"She said, 'There's something that I want to tell you... I was married to Howard Hughes.'"

Musick said he struggled to comprehend what she was saying.

"I thought she was a lunatic," said Musick, adding that he immediately realized that just by listening to her, the credibility he had built up as a general was now on the line. "I said, 'But Eva, Howard Hughes died 25 years ago.'"

Her simple response has haunted him since. "She said, 'That's what everybody wants you to think.'"

Musick said Eva then began telling a fantastic tale.

According to McLelland, she met a man by the name of Verner (Nik) Nicely - pronounced Nick-eh-lee - while she was serving with the U.S. State Department in Panama. Although the man said he was working there as an aviation supervisor, McLelland said Nik was constantly surrounded by a group of mysterious aides who always seemed to be at his beck and call. He also always seemed to be "doing work" with the aides, yet never had a local workplace.

Within months the couple, despite McLelland's misgiving about what she described as the man's peculiar activities and quirks, were married in Panama. They then began a journey that would take them to multiple destinations including Arizona and Florida before they settled in a small travel trailer in a remote wooded area located several miles outside of Troy, Ala.

They lived there, essentially isolated from society, for several decades. McLelland also became a first-hand witness to her husband's weird activities and obsessive fear of "being discovered."

McLelland also described her growing belief that her husband wasn't who he said he was, but was rather the elusive Howard Hughes, a fact that he confirmed to her in his own unique way in the mid-1970s.

Musick said he struggled to be-

lieve McLelland, whom he described as being very intelligent with a great memory, as she told her story. Yet, he said he simply couldn't be sure.

"She remembered details that I would've long forgotten about," he said. "And that's one thing that really intrigued me about her story... that when she would tell me episodes, nothing ever changed. Her details never changed."

Musick soon found himself researching McLelland's facts himself. He traveled to Arizona to learn more about Eva's story there. He traveled to Ohio to learn more about the mysterious Verner Nicely, a former U.S. Air Force aviation maintenance specialist, who, according to Nicely's family, was supposedly involved in a classified counterdrug CIA operation in Central America at the time of his disappearance in the late 1960s.

He also learned that this Nicely pronounced his name "Nice-lee" unlike the man McLelland married, and that according to the Ohio veteran's enlistment records, he was a five-foot, 11-inch tall man, unlike the other Nicely who Eva described as around six-foot three-inches tall.

Musick also began studying books on Howard Hughes and discovered that many of his known activities between 1969-1973 seemed to fit the facts that McLelland described often.

Musick said the more he researched, the more he found himself unable to discredit what Eva told him. "For four years, from 2002 until 2006, my mind went back and forth," he said. "It's got to be made up. He's got to be lying. She's got to be lying."

"But the summer of 2006, I was at her apartment - she was living in Jacksonville, Fla. - and I said, 'Eva, do you have any pictures of him?' And she said that he never wanted his picture taken, but I do think that I have a couple. And we started looking around her apartment."

Musick said McLelland was the type of person who never threw anything away. So, within a short time, their found several photos of the reclusive Nik.

"It was a man... a tall, slender man... a long ways away," Musick said. "It was right then that it hit me that she's not lying. This is absolutely true."

Over the next few years, Musick continued his research. He would talk to McLelland and then go out to either confirm or deny what she told him. He also brought in a noted documentary filmmaker to videotape McLelland telling her story.

He also began looking for a writer to help him tell the extraordinary story to the public. Many prospective authors refused to even speak with him, Musick said. However,

before long, he was introduced to Douglas Wellman, assistant dean of the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, through a friend Musick had worked with at STRATCOM.

During a May 2008 meeting at Wellman's home in California, Musick laid out McLelland's story.

"I started telling him this story that I had and he looked at me pretty skeptically," Musick said. "We talked for two hours about the story and then I started bringing out the documentation. Documents. Wedding certificates. Medical certificates. Pictures. All this stuff and just started going through it."

Finally, Wellman asked Musick if they could meet again at his USC office the next morning. Musick left Wellman with his manuscript, anxious to see what the next morning's meeting would bring.

The next morning, Wellman sat down and told Musick what he thought. "He said that I got about halfway through the manuscript and I understand that you're looking for an author," Musick recalled. "And then he said, 'I'd like to do it.'"

Musick said Wellman then told him why he had agreed to sign on.

"He told me that the thing that sold him was my documentation. That's what did it," said Musick. "The story wasn't going to do it, but when you started going through that (documentation) - I mean we went through three notebooks of it - when you started going through this, he said, there's something to this."

Wellman and Musick's book, entitled *"Boxes: The Secret Life of Howard Hughes (2010 WriteLife LLC)"* was published earlier this year. In it, Wellman details McLelland's story as it was told to Musick (in the book he is referred to as Mark Miller) and how it relates to what is known about the last years of Hughes' life.

It also details their belief on how the mysterious billionaire pulled off what may have been the greatest disappearing act in the past 100 years.

"(Howard Hughes) wanted to escape," said Musick. "He did not like publicity and he could never, ever escape because wherever he went he was recognized... even as shabbily as he would dress, he was recognized."

Central to the story, said Musick, is Hughes' work with the CIA in developing satellite communications systems as well as a project to help raise a sunken Russian nuclear submarine in the early 1970s.

They also detail how Hughes, with the help of his aides and possibly the CIA, found a mentally incompetent man and made him a "stand-in" Howard Hughes, which helps explain differing accounts of Hughes being unkempt, drug-addled

and emaciated and a healthy, articulate, well-groomed businessman who flew jets and met with international leaders at the same time.

Mostly, Musick said, the book lays out the facts that he's collected and lets readers make their own decision.

Since the publication of the book, Musick and Wellman have both been busy. Along with multiple speaking engagements, an exhibit at the Strategic Air and Space Museum near Ashland, Neb., has been developed to display some of the artifacts that Musick has collected or was given by McLelland, including the \$5,000 engagement ring Nicely bought McLelland in Panama, even though his reported salary was only \$10,000 a year at the time.

Musick said he's still learning more about Hughes, adding that since the publication of the book, he and Wellman have received phone calls from people who have relayed additional information to them.

Information has also come in other surprising ways.

After McClelland's death in December 2009, Musick and his wife Susan attended her funeral in Troy, Ala. They began talking with the funeral director and her husband, neither of whom knew about the story that Musick was working on.

Suddenly the conversation took an interesting turn that helped shed light onto a part of the story that Musick didn't quite understand.

"(Wellman) kept asking me, 'Why did they live in Troy, Ala.?' Musick said, adding his explanation was always that it was probably because McLelland had grown up in the area.

What he learned at McLelland's funeral changed that idea.

Musick said the funeral director suddenly began talking about a major aerospace manufacturing firm that had operated out of Troy years earlier. After a few moments, they remembered that it had been a Howard Hughes Company.

"My wife and I didn't say anything... we didn't even look at each other," Musick recalled, adding that despite their actions, both were thunderstruck by the new information. "So, as you bring this all together, my God, it all fits," he said.

Musick said ultimately his goal is to tell the story of a remarkable woman - who lived a remarkable life in her own right - and the secret she kept for three decades.

"What I hope is that it comes out and becomes known that this woman kept a secret for 31 years, was loyal to her husband and has now come out and explains the mystery of Howard Hughes," said Musick. "That's all I care (about) honestly."

"It absolutely changes history."

■After 22 months of challenges, accomplishments and changes, well-traveled Nebraska Soldier comes...

Home Again!

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Imagine putting a life on hold for 22 months.

Think of all the changes that could and will take place over that time, both internally and externally. It's not a matter of if the changes occur... but rather when they occur because nothing ever stays constant in life.

**22 Months In
Afghanistan**
Fifth and Final Part of
a Multipart Series

Russell Bartholow knows this about as well as anybody.

By December of 2009, Bartholow was a Nebraska Army National Guard first lieutenant in the last days of a monumental journey that had taken him from a normal life in Lincoln, Neb., to northern Afghanistan where he had worked diligently for 22 months trying to make a concrete impact in the lives of the Afghan people.

In charge of a five-person Effects Cell, Bartholow had indeed made an impact through the various projects he had worked on, not the least of which was a glittering new park he had help build from what had once been a rusting junkyard and minefield left over from when the Soviets had fought here.

Needless to say, Bartholow could look back on all he'd accomplished with an intense feeling of pride. Still, as he counted down his final days in Afghanistan, Bartholow felt conflicted.

"I was excited, of course, to go home, but now being in Afghanistan for 22 months, I had really become, from my perspective as much as an American Soldier could become part of that culture... I had separation anxiety," he said.

"I loved sleeping on the cots. I had learned to work through languages and culture. I knew how to exist and survive," he said. "It was almost frightening to come home to something that was even more frightening than what I was leaving."

The chief reason behind this reason, Bartholow admits now, was the fact that he and much around him – both in Afghanistan and back home in Lincoln – had changed since early 2008.

He was stepping back into a pair of roles he had never known before.

Growing Love

Prior to Bartholow's mobilization in January 2008, he had dated Julie Rogers. That relationship had grown out of long-lasting friendship that was now becoming much deeper for both people.

Still, with the Afghanistan mobilization fast approaching, both agreed to take a wait-and-see approach.

Rogers said part of the reason was she understood how important the mission was to Bartholow, so she'd decided to put their relationship "on hold" while he was away during what she expected at the time to be a year-long deployment.

"I could see that (joining the National Guard and deploying) was something that he would regret for the rest of his life if he didn't do that," she said. Still, it was hard to see him leave for Afghanistan in early 2008. "We were dating at the time, but we didn't make any commitments because we wanted to (wait) until after we knew when he was coming back from Afghanistan."

During the coming months, the two talked frequently on the phone or via the computer. Their love for each other began deepening in ways neither had expected.

"For me, specifically, the relationship became more intense because

being married and having a relationship with someone you care about became much more important to me and her the longer we were apart," Bartholow said. "It was almost as if absence made the heart grow fonder. It sounds silly, but if you read an (Ernest) Hemingway novel... life, war, pestilence... it seems to up the ante on these emotions and your relationships seem to move faster when you're faced with these extreme situations."

Bartholow's first two-week leave came in November 2008 when he met Rogers in Hawaii for a dream vacation. The recent separation had them both thinking about the direction their relationship was heading.

"I wanted to marry her then because I was afraid of dying and leaving her with nothing because we knew we loved each other," Bartholow said.

Rogers, however, wasn't sure that it was the right time, yet.

Bartholow had already discussed with her his desire to stay in Afghanistan longer than he'd originally planned. He spoke about the options. He spoke about his desire to extend so that he could take on the Effects Cell assignment and make an even greater impact than he was currently making. They were all good reasons, Rogers said.

"It showed me that he had grown," she added.

Still, Rogers wasn't sure about marriage quite yet. "I wanted to make sure that we had an end in site of him coming home," she said.

Rogers added she also began noticing differences in Bartholow during their trip to Hawaii. "He was more emotional," she said. "He was more thoughtful and contemplative."

"I think war has effects on someone, no matter who you are," she said. "But he also had a view of another culture that made him appreciate things in the United States more."

By the time their vacation was over, both admit they were devastated emotionally by having to say farewell once again. It would be July 2009 before they physically saw each other again.

This time, both admitted that they were ready to get married. So sure was Bartholow that he was already showing photos of Rogers to his co-workers – including many of the Afghan leaders he was working with – and describing her as the woman he was about to marry.

One day one particular mullah had a present waiting for Bartholow when he arrived for their meeting. "(He had) bought her a dress... a wedding dress," Bartholow said, adding that he was also given a traditional Afghan outfit with the understanding that they would wear the clothes when they were married.

Bartholow said it was just another sign of how his relationship with the local Afghans had grown during his time overseas.

"Families are by far number one in their lives," he said. "Just by speaking about a wife with an Afghan man is significant because they don't talk about women amongst each other and certainly not with a foreigner."

Married... And A Surprise

During Bartholow's second leave to Nebraska in July 2009, the couple decided to get married a few days later, on a bright Sunday morning, Rogers' father – a retired Madison, Neb., district county judge – married them in front of their family.

True to Bartholow's promise, the couple each wore the traditional Afghan clothes during the ceremony.



Photos courtesy of 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow

Chilly Weather, Warm Welcome: 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow poses by a sign made by his family welcoming him home from a 22-month deployment to Afghanistan in December 2009. Bartholow arrived back in Lincoln, Neb., during the middle of last year's Christmas Eve blizzard.

Rogers called the clothes a meaningful tribute to the people her husband was working with in Afghanistan.

"It was meaningful because the people he was working with... these are very, very poor people and they presented this wedding gift to somebody they had gotten to know from another country that is very different from their's," she said. "Family is very important. So, making this marriage commitment as family, it meant a lot that they would send along this gift."

All too soon, leave was over again. And once again the newlyweds had to deal with the emotions that the separation brought. Bartholow said the emotions he felt this time were different than the ones he'd experience in Hawaii the previous year.

"The fact that the emotional impact was so negatively deep had the biggest impact on me," he said. "I didn't realize that I could care about so much... that it would hurt that much to leave."

He added that he suddenly remembered the times he'd snickered at the married Soldiers in his unit as they went through similar emotional separations. Now, he realized how little he had understood back when he used to tell others: "C'mon, what's the big deal. You're going to be back in nine months... man up."

"I had to eat those words and realize people who are single have a lot different scenario than men and women who are married with a wife or husband and kids," he said.

Still, Bartholow figured he'd figure out some way to complete the final months of deployment. What he didn't know was that fate was about to send him another unexpected twist.

About six weeks after returning to Afghanistan, Rogers broke the news to Bartholow.

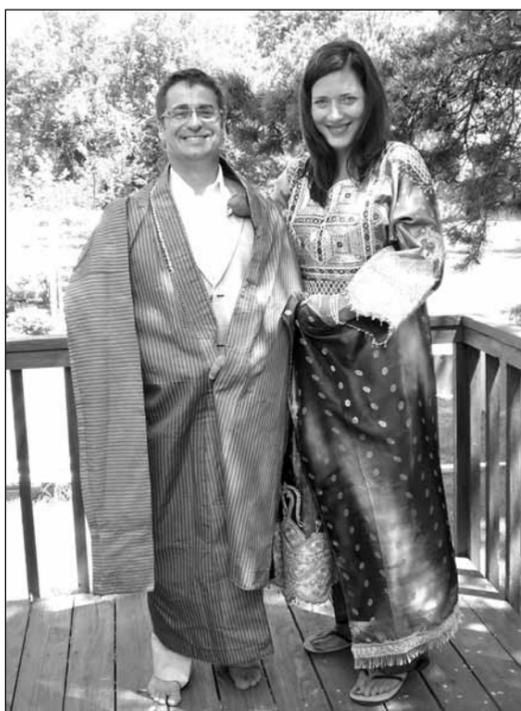
She was pregnant.

Bartholow said finding out that he was about to become a father was like being a child and learning that he was going to Disneyland. He added that he started whooping, hollering and screaming.

"(It was) excitement you cannot contain, but you have to," he said. "That was the exciting part."

It also got him thinking about his new responsibilities. "The other side of that fulcrum was not wanting to die... not only as a husband, but now as a father," he said. "It's a crazy transition I went through as a husband and then a father in Afghanistan."

Bartholow said the news also



Wedding Day: 1st Lt. Russell Bartholow and Julie Rogers pose for a wedding day photo on the deck of their Lincoln, Neb., house, July 12, 2009. The couple wore a set of traditional Afghan wedding clothes, given to them by an Afghan mullah as a wedding gift, during their marriage ceremony.

affected the way he conducted his work in Afghanistan.

"I had to work harder to operate status quo on the mission because now I didn't think of things as this 'Let's go rock and roll' single guy. Now... unfortunately, I was much more cautious and I had to calculate that into my mission planning and my (operations) orders," he said.

"It was a very awkward feeling," he added. "I found myself now really caring for the Soldiers on my team in a manner that didn't approach the care that I had for them before. I saw each of them as my son or daughter... it was really crazy crap."

Home Again

That goes a long way in explaining the mix of feelings Bartholow felt as he completed his mission in Afghanistan.

Finally, after a long flight home, Bartholow arrived in Kansas during the midst of last Christmas' blizzard. After hitching a ride home with a fellow Soldier, he arrived in Lincoln on Christmas Eve.

Rogers said it was a Christmas she'll never forget.

"I assumed that since it was really snowy we would just stay in Lincoln, but he was delayed so many times (because of the weather) he said, 'My goal is Norfolk, Neb.," Rogers recalled, saying that Bartholow was convinced that he wanted to make the three hour trip to spend the holidays with Rogers' family.

"So we drove through the weather... it was horrible, but we made it

for Christmas."

"It was a really great Christmas," she added, saying she had an extra special present for her husband. She handed him a sonogram of their baby. They were having a son.

Beckett John (Rogers) Bartholow was born on April 8 this year.

Both say that becoming new parents while also learning how to transition into their new life together has been a challenge at times. They also say that they've learned much about themselves during their time apart.

"There's lots of people (who) might not be supportive hourly, but there's tons of people around who are supportive generally and in their own subtle ways," said Rogers about what types of advice she would give to other military spouses in similar circumstances.

"I would say that we're all stronger than we realize and with the support of family and friends, I really think it makes it easier."

Bartholow said he, too, learned much during his 22-month journey.

"The first thing that I learned is that Americans, when looked at globally, are truly unique because of our ideals and perspective of freedom. That was my first lesson, not only as an individual Soldier who wanted to go rock and roll and experience something, but also as a dad and a husband," he said. "All these moms and dads, they leave their home to go possibly die. That was the first lesson."

"The second is, we're the world police and other countries, as much as they don't like us in their press, count on us," Bartholow said. "And the third biggest lesson, I came back as an extremely humbled person... extremely humbled... in realizing how well we have it here in the United States when compared to people who essentially live like Jesus did."

"And I'm humbled by the sacrifices that I watched people make," he said. "Before, I was a different person. I was probably a little more arrogant. Going over as a second lieutenant and coming back, I definitely listen more and I want to have a positive impact."

Finally, when asked to answer the question as to whether he accomplished the mission he had set out to do years ago in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Bartholow pauses for a second... wipes a tiny tear from his eyes... and then says: "110 percent yes. That's what makes me a very fortunate man... yeah, I'm a fortunate man."



Guard Family NEWS You Can Use



Study: Children of deployed more likely to seek mental health care

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Young children from military families are more likely to seek mental and behavioral health care when a parent is deployed than when a parent is at home, a military study has concluded.

Findings also show that children of married couples — with the father as the service member — are more likely to seek care than children with a married military mother or with a single service member parent, said lead researcher Navy Cmdr. (Dr.) Gregory H. Gorman, a staff pediatrician with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

The study, which included more than a half million children from active-duty families, was to be published in the December issue of the journal "Pediatrics" and was posted on the journal's website, Nov. 8.

From fiscal 2006 to 2007, a team of researchers examined the records of more than 642,000 military beneficiaries ages 3 to 8. They looked at all outpatient visits — whether to military or civilian facilities — billed to Tricare, the military's health care system. They then matched those records up with parents' deployment records.

Compared to a baseline of care established prior to deployment, researchers found military children are 11 percent more likely to seek care for behavioral and mental health issues during deployments than when the parent is at home, Gorman said.

Gorman said he broke issues down into three categories: anxiety disorders; pediatric behavioral disorders, such as attention deficit disorder; and stress disorders, which include post-traumatic stress disorder and other types of stress reactions.

The study indicated an overall rate increase of 15 to 19 percent within these categories, with rates of anxiety and stress disorders showing the highest increases.

The findings substantiate what the military community has anecdotally known for a long time: deployments affect children. However, Gorman said, "It's the first time ... we've quantified how it really affects children and how it affects the military community as a whole."

The findings are particularly significant when set against the backdrop of an overall decrease in medical visits for issues such as colds or routine care, Gorman said. The study indicated a 10 to 11 percent drop in visits for physical ailments while a parent



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes



Hundreds attend three 'Haunted Armory' celebrations in October

(Above) Some of approximately 500 disguised military kids make their way through the annual Haunted Armory in Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 29., put on by the Nebraska National Guard Family Program Office. Similar Haunted Armories in Kearney and Omaha attracted about 125 kids each.

(Left) A ghoulie welcomes kids to the Haunted Armory in Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 29

was deployed, he explained.

The drop in medical treatment makes sense, Gorman said, since the spouse is acting as a single parent.

"They're juggling a lot more responsibility, so perhaps the threshold for bringing a child in for a doctor's visit may change," he said. They may defer on routine visits, for example, until the parent returns from deployment, he said.

Researchers also found distinctions based on a child's age and a parent's gender, and they noted a gradual increase in care-seeking rates as children increased in age.

Gorman attributes this to older children's wider array of emotional and behavioral responses.

Children's gender didn't seem to play a significant role, he said, with girls and boys experiencing the same impacts. However, gender did play a role among parents. Researchers found that when the caregiver back home was the mother, the mental health visit rates increased.

However, if the caregiver was the father,

less of an increase was seen, Gorman said. He also noted an increase in care for children of married service members, as opposed to those of single service members.

Gorman chalked up these distinctions to recognition.

Mothers typically are the primary caregivers and may be more in tune with a child's behavioral and mental health needs than the father, he explained. And, during a deployment, a child of a single service member may go to live with an extended family member or close family friend, who may not be as aware of the child's behavioral norms, so is less likely to recognize variations, he added.

"We probably underestimated (the increase) in those populations," Gorman said.

Gorman said he hopes the study will go a long way in helping to identify issues among military children and how to better address them, particularly among civilian providers.

"Hopefully, this will help to inform civilian pediatric providers," he said. "They also need to be aware of the resources that they can call on for these families."

Army leaders promise not to cut family programs

WASHINGTON (ARNEWS) — Army leaders promised to leave family support programs intact when looking for ways to reduce the service's budget, Oct. 25.

"We want to ensure that the family programs we're operating are run well and efficiently and if we need to make adjustments so they can be more so, that's fine," said Secretary of the Army John McHugh. "But what we won't do particularly as a first reaction, is look to those programs as a source of budgetary savings."

During the Oct. 25 opening presentation at the 2010 Association of the United States Army's Annual Meeting and Exposition here, McHugh discussed the Army's challenge of operating in a constrained budget environment as well as efforts to modernize the Army.

He and Army Chief of Staff George W. Casey Jr. went into more detail during a press conference immediately following that ceremony.

In regard to a challenge by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to the military services to find ways to trim some \$100 billion from the defense budget over the next five years, the Army's two senior leaders said they won't look to family support programs — which they say are important to supporting the all-volunteer force — but will instead look to things like restructuring commands and doing "portfolio reviews" of Army capabilities.

"A lot of what we're finding is coming out of capability portfolio reviews and it's basically redundant programs or nonperforming programs," said Casey, noting the Army also is looking at force structure realignments. "We're asking ourselves, for example, do we still need a four-star general in Army Europe and what should a support force structure in Europe look like? I suspect we'll be able to garner some significant military and civilian savings at those headquarters."

Those portfolio reviews, McHugh said, "already show great promise in bringing better discipline to our programs — better evaluating and realigning our requirements with the reality of today and where we think tomorrow is going."

McHugh said a good budget policy starts with people and education — the things that create our greatest hedge against future threats. That hedge: adaptive, innovative, thinking enlisted Soldiers, officers and NCOs — folks who will make a difference."

Being good neighbor important when considering security concerns

The world has changed dramatically in recent years.

Many people can still remember the days when they left their homes unlocked and hid house keys under door mats. Now, there is a new outlook regarding security.

More and more people are taking security more seriously due to recent criminal and terrorist incidents. This new outlook has led people to make sure they have locked their doors and have only given a house key to a trusted neighbor.

It is also important in today's security environment for neighbors to look out for one another. People should report any suspicious activity that takes place in the neighborhood.

How many times late at night have you seen someone who doesn't live in your neighborhood trying to look into a neighbor's home? How

many times have you seen something odd in the neighborhood and said to yourself, "That doesn't look right?"

Do not be afraid to call local law enforcement if you see someone around a neighbor's home if the situation deems it necessary.

Many people also remember the days of their youth when they could "roam" local communities and feel safe. The potential for criminal activity affecting children has increased. It is now necessary for parents to watch their children more closely and make sure they have been instructed on what to do in the case of an emergency.

While particular attention is being paid to the security of military and government facilities, some people may overlook simple security measures for their own residences and neighborhoods. Below are a few

Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder
Antiterrorism Officer
Nebraska Air National Guard

simple suggestions for improving the security of homes and neighborhoods:

Home Security:

- Lock all entrances at night, including the garage. Keep the house locked, even if you are at home;
- Ensure interior windows are locked at bedtime or when not at home;
- Consider installing a bolt and peep-hole on exterior doors for added security;
- At night, keep drapes and curtains closed;
- Make sure outside lights work

and consider timers for both exterior and interior lights;

- Restrict the possession of house keys. Change locks if keys are lost or stolen and when moving into a previously occupied residence;

- Be alert to public works crews and other utilities requesting access to your residence. Check their identities before allowing them inside home or contact the parent company to verify employee status before allowing entry;

- Never leave children alone or unattended, and know where they are at all times;

- Instruct children on how to call for help.

Be A Good Neighbor:

- Be alert for suspicious activity at neighbors' residences. Make note of suspicious individuals and record details of their activity. Contact

local authorities and make your neighbors aware of the activity.

- Watch for unfamiliar vehicles cruising or parked frequently in your neighborhood, particularly if one or more occupants remain in the vehicle for extended periods of time. Write down license numbers, make, model and color of suspicious vehicles. Note descriptions of occupants and take a photograph if it can be done discreetly;

- Treat with suspicion any inquiries from strangers concerning the whereabouts of family members or neighbors;

- Report all suspicious activity to local law enforcement as appropriate.

For more information, contact Maj. David Cooper, Nebraska Army National Guard, (402) 309-7406 or Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard, (402) 309-1565.

National Guard in the community

Why do people choose to do the things they do?

Why do people choose to do the things they do? What or who initiates circumstances causing people to act as they do?

Some people would say that it's the result of careful research and examination of alternatives. Maybe, but I believe that the influence of others may be a more probable cause.

Here's an example of how a Nebraska National Guard member significantly touched the life of a young person.

I was privileged to sit on a board responsible for interviewing young Nebraskans interested in attending any of the U.S. Military Academies. Obviously, one of our concerns is why each young person is considering a military career.

One remarkable young fellow answered that his city league baseball coach was a Nebraska National Guardsman whom he really admired and tried to emulate. This Guardsman expected his best effort, coached him with patience, challenged him and set an example for him as a thoughtful, disciplined, physically fit and "just all-around great guy."

The young man said he wanted to be just like this Guardsman because he respected him so much and that's why he's choosing the military as a career.

I couldn't help myself – I simply had to ask him who his baseball coach was.

His answer – Wil Bindel.

So if you have the opportunity to read this,

Sergeant Major Bindel – thank you for making a positive and lasting impression upon this young man. You have influenced him in powerful ways, in

ways that will not only benefit him as he sets upon his career path in service to his nation, but also as he engages with his family, community and organizations.

You probably didn't know how much influence you were exerting upon this young man and I'm sure you never thought of it – you just coached the young man in baseball, but you taught him lasting values at the same time.

I think that we can take a lesson from this young man's admiration for his coach who just happened to be a National Guard member.

As you know, the military is among the most highly respected professions in the United States. According to research done in September 2009, firefighters, doctors and nurses, teachers, postal workers, and military service members are viewed by the American public as the top five most respected professions.

Firefighters polled 93 percent confidence by the public; doctors and nurses; members of the armed forces, teachers and postal workers each polled 81 percent.

With this high degree of public respect accorded the military, it stands to reason that Guard members exert significant influence

Another Voice

By Brig. Gen. Roma Amundson
Assistant Adjutant General-Army

within their respective communities.

I think it's important that we Guardsmen acknowledge this and understand that the majority of Americans respect and value their contributions to the defense of our nation.

Nevertheless, the fact that the public holds members of the Armed Forces in such high regard is also a tremendous responsibility.

As National Guard members, we are often integral members of our communities, holding positions of leadership within volunteer groups, youth leagues, churches and charitable organizations, businesses and, in some cases, elected office. We are taught leadership and organizational skills within the military and often, without any volition or desire to be viewed as leaders, are recognized as such within our communities.

We demonstrate the values of selfless service, loyalty, personal courage and commitment to duty that are drilled into us in training.

We exude the quiet confidence of people who know that they and a team can together accomplish almost any task. We encourage people to continue on despite the difficulties and we are among the first to offer a helping hand.

It's no wonder that people recognize the National Guard members as leaders. We can

never separate our personal lives from our military calling; all across Fort Nebraska, we are known as members of the Nebraska National Guard, even though we may be teachers, farmers, doctors and nurses, mechanics, business owners, truck drivers ... and coaches of young people.

The responsibility we have as leaders is to realize that what we do and say may have a significant and lasting impact upon the lives of others, even when we don't realize that we are creating that impact.

We need to consider the effect of our words and actions upon others and always aim to achieve constructive and positive results in our interactions with others.

We Nebraska National Guard members have the opportunity to build relationships with the communities in which we live and work, and in so doing, touch the lives of those whom we influence.

Let's take on this responsibility seriously and, at the same time, utilize the opportunity to represent the military as truly "America's finest."

Wil Bindel is a Nebraska Army National Guardsman who really affected the life of one person in positive and significant ways. While I'm certain that countless similar stories involving other Guardsmen could be written, I know of his example because I saw a direct result sitting in front of me.

Thanks again, Wil!

Learn to simply enjoy the moment

"I feel defeated." "I just have too much to get done." "I can't sleep." "Nothing ever works out the way I planned." "I'll never get this all done." "No one cares anyway." "I am so scared that it won't work out." "I feel like I am spinning my wheels." "I keep running into road blocks."

"There is no enjoyment. I go to work. I come home and do chores. I go to sleep. I wake up and start all over."

These are common statements that people often tell themselves throughout their day and it only makes things more difficult. A person can get so caught up in what has happened and what might happen that they miss the happiness and excitement taking place as they worry.

At times, we become fortune tellers and assume that we know the outcome because that's what happened last time. This judgmental nature can stifle us as individuals from enjoying day to day nuances and striving to make today the best day that it can be.

We get lost in the past and what has happened and believe that because that is how it has always been that is how it will always be. We forget, however, that the one constant in life is "change."

Luckily, each and every one of us has ability for free thought and the ability to take what we have learned from the past, make decisions in the present, and the ability to use this knowledge to change the future. When we get down on ourselves and become fortune tellers of the awfulness that will come, we are inevitably ensuring that awfulness is what we will get.

So this Holiday Season I challenge you to try something different.

Take charge of your day-to-day challenges and enjoy each moment as it unfolds. Things will happen as they happen. Find the enjoyment in each nuance and find the greatness as it comes.

Imagine if I asked you to drive from your home to a destination 50 miles away, to which you have never traveled, using only your rear-view mirror? How successful would you be? Now imagine that I ask you to take the same drive, at night, without lights. How successful will you be?

Some may actually make the trip. Some wouldn't even leave the driveway.

Those using the rear view only method would likely hit several things and it would be slow going. Those driving in the dark may make it, but it also would be slow going and likely not without a few detours off the road.

Much like this example, each day we need to spend an adequate amount of time looking forward, an adequate amount of time looking back, and the majority of our time making adjustments for the here and now. If we try to navigate life by making all our choices and decisions by only looking at the past, it will be slow going and undoubtedly frustrating. If we only look forward and fear what is coming we will likely be equally frustrated.

Unless you're a fortune teller, you can't foresee exactly what is coming, but you can

Healthy Coping

By Viola Raschke
Director of Psychological Health
Nebraska National Guard

make an educated guess based on the trip so far and what is happening now and then make adjustments as obstacles present themselves.

So in life, check your rear view mirror periodically to see what's happened in the past to make sure that you are considering what's behind you. When moving forward, look only as far as needed so you can make adjustments for foreseeable obstacles, but not so far that you are worried about things that you cannot foresee.

If you miss something here or there, or something suddenly runs into your path, make the best of it and move on.

The most important thing, though, is to be in the driver's seat. Make your own decisions about what you want, how you want to reach your destination and who will be riding with you. You can adjust and make similar strides day to day.

How does one learn to live more in the present with glances at the past and future to help guide their current course? For centuries eastern cultures have used meditation. The process of meditation includes an idea called "Mindfulness."

Mindfulness means being in the present, being aware of what is happening, what you are doing, observing what is going on, and taking it in without the judgment of shoulda, woulda, coulda, oughta. It is a nonlaborative, nonjudgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or physical response that presents itself is acknowledged and accepted as it is.

Focus on being effective or doing what works and away from right/wrong, good/bad, or fair/unfair, rather focus on "what is."

Letting go of judgments and merely accepting the situation for the facts. Letting go of "what should or ought to be" and focusing on what is and how to best improve the moment will not only improve the moment, but will likely improve the long term as well.

The best way to attain such an understanding is to slowly become more self-aware. One can do this by practicing meditation. It starts with learning relaxing breathing techniques, moving on to being able to be mindfully present in everyday life.

For more information on learning mindfulness, meditation, and learning to live in the moment, go to Military One Source, log in, click Find Information, click the Managing Stress, and scroll down to the Paperbacks and Play away books. I recommend the following:

- ♦ *Beginners Guide to Meditation* (Play away audio book)
- ♦ *Crazy Busy: Overstretched, overbooked, and About to Snap! Strategies for Handling your Fast-Paced Life* (Paperback)
- ♦ *Purpose Driven Life* (Playaway audio book)

Fire safety awareness key to developing unit, individual plans

Fire safety is always something to be aware of when conducting training and should be looked at from multiple angles.

First, each individual should be aware of their responsibilities regarding fire safety. Second, units should provide training and guidance and address known risks. Third, we should be aware of the fire prevention measures that are already in place in our facilities and their capabilities or lack of capabilities. Fourth, we should be aware of where flammable and combustibles are stored and to make sure they are stored properly and in the right types of containers and storage.

Regarding individual responsibilities each person should use common sense in that if it looks wrong it probably is. Examples are as follows:

- ♦ Smoking should only be done in designated areas, away from flammables and with adherence to posted signs and placards;
- ♦ Make sure cigarettes are properly extinguished and disposed of in proper receptacles;
- ♦ Look for and know the proper evacuation routes out of facilities to their respective safe rally points;
- ♦ Ensure that no open flames are ever initiated within a structure, such as candles or incense.

Regarding unit responsibilities each unit should conduct training and provide guidance for fire safety as part of their safety programs. For example:

- ♦ Address fire safety issues and programs during safety briefings to unit members and any other individuals that may be working in your area, such as contract workers;
- ♦ Provide such fire training as fire drills so people know evacuation routes and rally points to gain accountability in the case of fire;
- ♦ Review plans for storage of flammables and combustibles and ensure that they are stored correctly and limit their potential;
- ♦ Ensure fire extinguishers have been inspected and are up to date. This is important for facilities and for such unit tactical equipment as tent and vehicle extinguishers;
- ♦ Always brief personnel annually about your facility fire alarm signal. When a permanent physical system is not in place, develop an alternant fire alarm signal.

Regarding facilities issues, many of our facilities are equipped with fire alarms and suppression systems. Know where the fire control panels and alarm pulls are located.

There are many facilities that are older and do not currently have such systems. There are plans in place to try to install such systems, but as mentioned earlier, there are many things we can do to ensure safety within our facilities.

The OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.38 Employee emergency plans is as follows:

- ♦ "Emergency action plan elements." The emergency action plan should address emergencies that an employer may reasonably expect in the workplace. Examples are: fire; toxic chemical releases; hurricanes; tornadoes;

Safety Talk

By Lt. Col. Curtis Abendroth
Design and Project Manager,
Construction and Facilities
Management Office

blizzards; floods.

The use of floor plans or workplace maps which clearly show the emergency escape routes should be included in the emergency action plan. Color coding will aid employees in determining their route assignments.

♦ "Emergency evacuation." At the time of an emergency, employees should know what type of evacuation is necessary and what their role is in carrying out the plan.

The designation of refuge or safe areas for evacuation should be determined and identified in the plan. In a building divided into fire zones by fire walls, the refuge area may still be within the same building but in a different zone from where the emergency occurs.

Exterior refuge or safe areas may include parking lots, open fields or streets which are located away from the site of the emergency and which provide sufficient space to accommodate the employees. Employees should be instructed to move away from the exit discharge doors of the building, and to avoid congregating close to the building where they may hamper emergency operations.

♦ "Fire prevention housekeeping." The standard calls for the control of accumulations of flammable and combustible waste materials.

It is the intent of this standard to assure that hazardous accumulations of combustible waste materials are controlled so that a fast developing fire, rapid spread of toxic smoke, or an explosion will not occur. This does not necessarily mean that each room has to be swept each day.

Employers and employees should be aware of the hazardous properties of materials in their workplaces, and the degree of hazard each poses. Certainly oil soaked rags have to be treated differently than general paper trash in office areas. However, large accumulations of waste paper or corrugated boxes, etc., can pose a significant fire hazard.

In summary you can see that awareness and training are the keys to ensuring that fire prevention is constantly addressed. One thing that should always be done with any fire prevention program is to do proper risk assessments and always ask for guidance.

Each unit should have a Fire Safety Marshal that addresses each of the commanders Safety program fire prevention elements. Another resource is to ask the respective safety office for guidance.

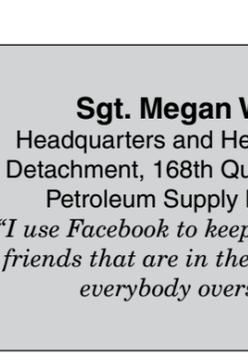
Units and organizations shall conduct periodic surveys and make on-the-spot changes where an unsafe action or condition is brought to light. The Facilities Maintenance Office is available for guidance and fire safety system support.

Street Talk

“How do you use Social Media to receive information about the National Guard and stay in touch with your friends and family?”



Staff Sgt. Phyllis Brown
155th Air Refueling Wing
“My son that’s in the Navy and my son that’s in the Army... that’s what I use it for. Just to communicate with my boys.”



Sgt. Megan Wolff
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion
“I use Facebook to keep up with my friends that are in the Guard and everybody overseas.”



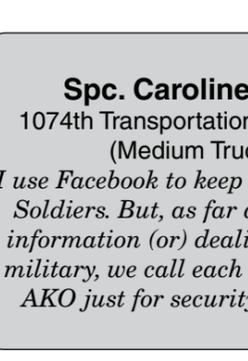
Spc. Trevor Rasmussen
1057th Transportation Company (Light/Medium Truck)
“It helps out if you don’t know what is going on. You can always find information.”



Airman 1st Class Jared Callahan
155th Civil Engineering Squadron
“I use Facebook very seldom to catch up with old friends... (to) see what friends are doing. There are people that are Facebook fanatics. I’m not really that.”



Master Sgt. Jodi Schmidt
155th Air Refueling Wing
“I do not use Facebook. My concern is (Operational Security), people putting things out there that they shouldn’t.... A big pro is for deployment... constant communication.”



Spc. Caroline Gies
1074th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
“I use Facebook to keep in touch with Soldiers. But, as far as personal information (or) dealing with the military, we call each other or use AKO just for security reasons.”

Nebraska Military Department accomplished much in 2010

Time flies....2010 is just about in the rear view mirror.

First and foremost, I would like to say thank you to each member of our team. Who am I talking about? If you are reading this, I mean you!

I recently had the opportunity to speak to the Soldiers and Airmen who will deploy to Afghanistan on the second Nebraska Agribusiness Development Team (a historic first for us as a joint force). I shared with them, “Yak Team Wahed.” Loosely translated, this means “One Team Together.”

Our Soldiers, Airmen, Emergency Management and state employees are joined by our retirees, families, friends, employers and communities as a team. It truly took all of us together to enjoy the tremendous year that was 2010.

This past year was filled with many significant points of celebration. We welcomed home many of our fellow Army and Air National Guard units and individual deployers. Their stories have been recounted so well in this and previous issues of the *Prairie Soldier* and local media in pictures, video and words.

To see our family and community support at these events is truly inspiring.

As I said one year ago, it is safe to say that we continue to live in challenging times. We are now mid stride in the increased operational tempo that we foresaw for 2010 and 2011.

The holiday season is especially difficult when separated from loved

The Adjutant General Brigadier General Judd Lyons



or professional need. We must continue to sustain a climate where seeking assistance is encouraged and recognized as a sign of strength.

I am pleased to provide this update on our effort to recapitalize our facilities. The new Joint Force Head-

quarters 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, is in Phase II construction.

If you have the occasion to be on the Air National Guard Base, take a look. You can clearly see the progress and recognize what a great facility this will be. The new Columbus and McCook Armed Forces Reserve Centers are approximately 60 percent complete. The new dining facility at Camp Ashland is operational and looks great. We also held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Beatrice Armed Forces Reserve Center.

We 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.

Amey 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.

I will use this paper to continue my message that we stand shoulder to shoulder so that no one stands alone. Whether you are a uniformed member (past or present), state or NEMA employee, family or friend, we want help to be there for you when and if you are in need. We are a family in the Nebraska Military Department and we look out for each other.

I spoke at a recent sendoff about the importance of Battle Buddies. Who is yours? I am very pleased with progress in our Peer Support training program but we won't rest in this area. 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

ones. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with our deployed Soldiers and Airmen as they perform their missions separated from family and friends. Here at home, we certainly saw our share of challenges in the Emergency Management area. Just about a year ago our civilian and military team responded quickly and effectively to the November and December winter storms. When statewide flooding occurred this past June, our Military Department was there for the citizens of Nebraska.

The holiday season is especially difficult when separated from loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with our deployed Soldiers and Airmen as they perform their missions separated from family and friends.

Amey 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.

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National Guard families took on much more work during extremely busy 2010

You know, it sounds like a broken record, but when I look back at all that the Nebraska National Guard was tasked to do and accomplished over the past 12 months, there's really only one word to describe it.

Wow. The first decade of the 21st Century really has been a unique and challenging time. Not the least of which are the challenges it has placed on our state's National Guard men and women, the vast majority of whom are traditional, “part-time” Citizen Soldiers and Airmen.

2010 was no different. In fact, in a lot of ways, it may have been one of the more challenging ones we've faced in recent years.

By taking a quick glance at the 2010 timeline printed on Pages 10-11, which just includes just the events that the *Prairie Soldier* covered over the past 12 months, one definitely can get a sense of just how busy this past year was.

Things like last year's winter snowstorm and springtime flood recovery support, the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade's eXportable Combat Training Capability exercise, the Nebraska Air National Guard's compliance inspections, the call-up to support the Gulf Coast oil spill recovery, homeland defense support exercises, unit call-ups and homecomings... the list of what the Nebraska National Guard was called up to do last year was truly impressive and something that every single member of this organization should be proud of.

The work, however, did not come without a cost. Whenever we're

My Turn Editor, Prairie Soldier Kevin J. Hynes



this year. This past December drill I was in several meetings where Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac, the Nebraska National Guard deputy adjutant general as assistant adjutant general, Air, issued a challenge.

called upon to do something... especially when we're called upon to do something more... somebody or something pays a price.

This past month as we prepared the December issue of the *Prairie Soldier* I had numerous opportunities to sit back and reflect upon all that the Nebraska National Guard accomplished and just how busy the past 12 months were. I also started thinking about how much additional work my family – particularly my wife – had to take on so that I was able to meet all the requirements that such a busy year brought with it.

Honestly, I really couldn't shake the sense of guilt that I felt about having shifted all these additional responsibilities to my family as work often kept me absent from home and other important family activities.

Again, somebody paid a price this year and that somebody was my family. I have a sneaky suspicion that they weren't alone and that every single member of the Nebraska National Guard could share similar stories.

Granted, my family took on these additional requirements willingly, or at least I didn't hear them complain too much. But still, they were affected as much, if not more, by this extremely busy year as I was.

The thing is, I don't know that I really, honestly told them how much I appreciated their support

In essence, he said, he had never attended a promotion or retirement ceremony where the honoree didn't take time to thank his or her family for their support over the years. However, he added, how many times does a Guardsman take time to thank his or her family for their support outside of those ceremonies?

General Bohac's challenge to the staff was to go home and thank our families this Holiday Season.

As I sat there I realized he really had a point. I really haven't adequately expressed my appreciation to my family since my last promotion. I realized that I needed to change that.

I'd like to encourage other National Guardsmen to do this as well.

It's often been said that we simply couldn't do the work that we do without the support of our families. The reason it's been said so often is that it really is incredibly true.

Without the support of our families, there wouldn't be a Nebraska National Guard. It's as simple as that.

This Holiday Season, let's make sure our families know what they and their support mean to us as we continue the work that the National Guard, Nebraska and the United States calls upon us to do. It's the least we owe them.

From my family to yours, may you all have a blessed Holiday Season and a very happy New Year.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
Thomas A. Hanson
David S. Rasmussen
Craig W. Strong

Major
Ryan F. Kramer

Captain
Christina Rios

First Lieutenant
Oliver S. Berglund
James P. Cole
Peggy J. Davis
Benjamin J. Faltys
Gregory J. Graham
Dain L. Miller
James M. Small
Casey J. Sullivan
Tommy N. Vu

Chief Warrant Officer Four
John P. Ayers

Chief Warrant Officer Three
Eric M. Wiczorek

Chief Warrant Officer Two
Lewis P. Messier
Kristopher J. Schaaf

Master Sergeant
Michael G. Hayes
Gregory L. Lammers

Sergeant First Class
David S. Hild
Ryan J. Johnson
Albert N. Koesters Jr.
Jacob W. Robinson
Matthew J. Thoene

Staff Sergeant
Andrew D. Arnold
Jacob A. Bramhall
Douglas N. Brestel
Aaron R. Krajcick
Chad R. Lemmer
Charles B. Roberts
Benjamin J. Schall

Grant D. Severson
Shawn M. Sims
Ryan D. Wangler

Sergeant
Jon A. Buller
Matthew S. Burke
Joshua D. Cowsky
Travis J. Dunn
Derek S. Fryer
Brycen L. Gillming
Jason D. Goodjohn
Anthony D. Hindman
Kent L. Matousek
Peter R. Matson
Matthew C. McCard
Jeffrey J.M. Meyer
Christopher L. Miller
Martin R. Mills
Lucas B. Mutschelknaus
Timothy A. Smallcomb
Scott L. Stevens
Tyler M. Villwok
Nicole A. Watzke
Alex J. Williams
Austin R. Williams
Ethan W. Yarolimek

Specialist
Kenneth M. Adkins
Kyle P. Anderson
Jessica M. Berns
William J. Blevins
Christopher L. Borreson
Ross A. Bricker
Jonathan D. Bridges
Kurt W. Delisle
Jarred D. Doggett
Curtis J. Erickson
Thomas D. Faughn
Lyndon W. Griner
Joshua J. Hatheway
Robert E. Hedlund III
William E. Jones
Paul T. Kasselmann
Aaron M. Kaufman
Joseph E. Libal
Colton J. Luchsinger
Isvi S. Machuca
Anthony M. McLeod
Daniel E. McPherson
Jeremy L. Menagh

Adam C. Miller
Nicole M. Miller
Manuel S. Molina
Eric R. Moseman
David M. Mueller
Loc T. Nguyen
Michael R. Olmstead
Prissylla Penaherrera
Austin J. Peterson
Jason T. Pope
Megan L. Reynolds
Fernando Rodriguez
Dominic Rossitto
Clark W. Rowse
Braxton C. Sawyerkociemba
Ethan M. Schroeder
Taylor D. Siebrandt
Andrew J. Smithson
William M. Sons
Zachary W. Spurgeon
Kendra B. Thilliander
Lance C. Thomsen
Josh L. Vogel

Private First Class
Gage A. Brummer
Jerome A. Burton
Erica A. Cardenas
Justin L. Cox
William J. Dittmer
Ethan D. Dodd
Jeremy R. Eaton
Matthew N. Elsasser
Detrick R. Jacobs
Luke J. Kelley
Jill A. Lenz
Reed M. Lukow
Brian K. Miller
Chris D. Neumiller
Saul Ortiz
Kevin M. Reasor
Sean P. Reynolds
Erika D. Root
Ricky T. Saunsoci
Derek S. Sawyerkociemba
Jerrod J. Silver
Robert A. Stenger Jr.
Brittany J. Taylor
Alex M. Topil

Private Two
David J. Brandt

Briar L. Broyles
Jarell J. Grant
Andrew M. Holton
Jordan T. Janssen
Jeremiah R. Ludwig
Christine A. Martinez
Brian J. McKay
Ethan W. Olson
Aubreeann N. Patterson
Jeffery B. Stocking
Jered E. Tidyman

Amanda N. Underhill
Nathan J. Vodicka
Mary R. Vu

Air National Guard Major
Bryan R. Scholtes

Technical Sergeant
Jason A. Loch
Corrie E. Pryzsiecki

Ashlea N. Smith

Staff Sergeant
Lynn P. Fletcher
Tyler S. Loos
Daniel Mahan
Nicholas May
Trevor D. Piening
Nathan S. Tesch
Vannessa L. Vasquez

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Legion of Merit
Chief Warrant Officer 5 Burdette B. Chappell

Meritorious Service Medal

Col. Scott A. Gronewold
Maj. Kelly R. Hoskins
Maj. Guy F. Moon
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Eric V. Cole
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeffrey J. Kuklis
Sgt. 1st Class Kevin E. Bachman
Sgt. 1st Class Michael D. Goodwater
Sgt. 1st Class Robert R. Schwanz

Army Commendation Medal

Maj. David S. Rasmussen
1st Lt. Rob Foxworthy
1st Lt. Eric J. Sattelberg
1SG Douglas A. Schultz
Sgt. 1st Class Randy R. Freye
Sgt. 1st Class Christopher H. Kidd
Staff Sgt. Thomas L. Friesell
Staff Sgt. David K. Hanson
Staff Sgt. Jeremiah B. Houlden
Staff Sgt. Dean P. Martin
Staff Sgt. Michael E. Oehm
Staff Sgt. Cody A. Trindle

Staff Sgt. Robin J. Troesper
Sgt. Nathan J. Ledden
Sgt. Dane M. McGiney
Sgt. Dustin R. Morris
Sgt. Michael L. Noyes Jr.
Sgt. Tyler R. Sanderson
Sgt. Alisha S. Wagner
Spc. Cassandra M. Daynothorn
Spc. Kecia K. Spofford

Army Achievement Medal

Capt. Gary P. Hansen
Capt. Jacques S. Smith III
1st Lt. Bernadette J. Brown-Clerk
Staff Sgt. Karl E. Girard
Sgt. James T. Estes
Sgt. Garret F. Schultz
Sgt. Lonnie L. Tenhulzen
Spc. Amanda J. Anderson
Spc. Mark L. Bentley
Spc. Daniel I. Sandman
Spc. Linsey M. Trackwell
Spc. Heath E. Wragge
Pvt. Tyler J. Holton
Pvt. Jacob J. Fosket
Pvt. Jessica F. Phillips

Nebraska National Guard

Commendation Medal
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Daniel N. Hill
Sgt. Maj. Scott D. Bates
Sgt. Damon J. Schlenker
Spc. Andrew P. Lebaugh

Nebraska National Guard

Individual Achievement Medal
Capt. Rebecca M. Mockelman
Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin J. Radke
Staff Sgt. Nicholas L. Alberts
Staff Sgt. Cameron J. Araujo
Sgt. Daniel J. Melgoza
Sgt. William J. Schlote
Sgt. Nicholas A. Vancura
Sgt. Ryan J. York
Spc. Coy M. Boland
Spc. Christopher K. Lohman
Spc. Kyle D. Mostrom
Spc. Heath E. Wragge
Pfc. Jacob N. Campbell
Pfc. Sheri A. Pence
Pvt. Marcus A. Potter

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Sgt. Maj. Michael K. Stoltenberg
Sgt. 1st Class Morgan C. Muller
Sgt. 1st Class Robert R. Schwanz

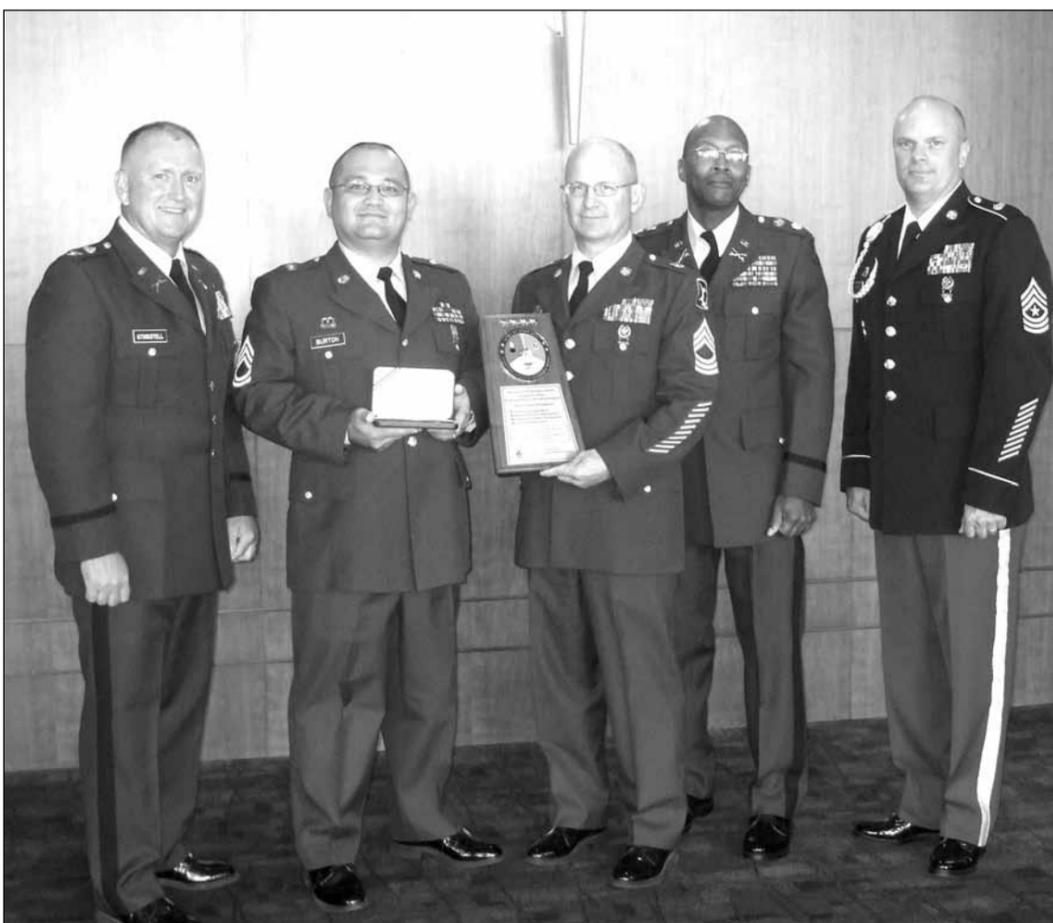
Staff Sgt. Rick G. Carter

Air National Guard
Master Sgt. Kenton E. Disney

Master Sgt. Dennis P. McCoy
Master Sgt. Patricia J. Petersen
Tech. Sgt. Shaun M. Gilfillan
Tech. Sgt. George L. Gonzales
Tech. Sgt. Thomas J. Jochum

Shorttakes

National Award Winners



Courtesy Photo

Camp Ashland Soldiers honored for superior efforts in supply management

(Left to Right) Col. Mark Stockstell, Nebraska's director of logistics, Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Burton, supply sergeant for the 209th Regional Training Institute, Master Sgt. Dorrance Atherton, 209th RTI noncommissioned officer-in-charge, Maj. James Williams, 209th RTI supply section, and Sgt. Maj. Boyd Navratil, supply and logistics senior noncommissioned officer, show off the National Supply Excellence Award for Calendar Year 2010 following a ceremony held in Richmond, Va., June, 24. The 209th RTI won the national supply excellence award in the Table of Distribution and Allowances category. The RTI has since also won the calendar year 2011 state and regional Supply Excellence Award and will compete again at the national level again in the coming months.



Santa stops by armory



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

(Above) Talking To The Big Guy: Quinlan Johnson struggles to remember what he wanted to tell Santa Claus while attending the annual Joint Force Headquarters Christmas Party held at the "Spirit of 1776" armory in Lincoln, Neb., Dec. 12. Officials expected approximately 500 people to attend this year's party including families of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and the 1167th Brigade Support Company, which are currently deployed to Iraq.

(Left) Spinning Class: Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Leicker prepares a stick of cotton candy during the Dec. 12 Joint Force Headquarters Christmas party.

Nebraska Guard thanks 'Larry the Cable Guy' for support

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Nebraska National Guard presented its most famous fan and honorary command sergeant major with another award following Nebraska's 45-17 win over the Colorado Buffaloes, Nov. 26, in Lincoln, Neb.

Standing in a crowded skybox high above a rapidly emptying Memorial Stadium, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, officially presented Dan Whitney (better known as "Larry the Cable Guy") with the Nebraska National Guard Homeland Defense Service Ribbon in recognition of the support the famed comedian has given to the organization since 2006.

"Most you probably know that Dan, about four years ago, took it upon himself to kind of adopt the Nebraska National Guard and our Soldiers and Airmen who are serving overseas," Lyons told the skybox group that included Whitney's wife, two children, and other friends and family members.

Among this support, Lyons said, were specially designed clothing and hats that he sent overseas for members of the 1-167th Cavalry Squadron, visits to Walter Reed Medical Center to visit wounded

Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers, and a continuing effort to provide skybox tickets to recently deployed Guardsmen for Nebraska home football games.

Lyons then presented Whitney with a framed copy of his newly earned red-white-and-blue Nebraska National Guard Homeland Defense Service Ribbon.

Also attending the ceremony were Brig. Gen. Daryl Bohac, assistant adjutant general, Air, Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, state command sergeant major, and five recently returned Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who had just watched the Nebraska-Colorado football game from a skybox, courtesy of Whitney.

Lyons said the presentation was a "very, very small token" of the organization's appreciation. "You didn't have to do it, Dan, but you did."

This marks the second straight year that the Nebraska National Guard has formally thanked Whitney for his support of the state's Soldiers and Airmen. Following last year's Nebraska-Oklahoma football game, then-State Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch presented Whitney with a certificate making him an honorary command sergeant major in the Nebraska Army National Guard. Whitney still wears the subdued command sergeant major rank on his hat during performances.

Bohac pinned the Nebraska Homeland Defense Service Ribbon below that rank



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Guard Shows Its Appreciation: Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, adjutant general for Nebraska, presents Dan Whitney (better known as "Larry the Cable Guy") with the Nebraska National Guard Homeland Defense Service Ribbon, Nov. 26, at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb.

during the formal presentation.

Whitney seemed genuinely touched by the gesture as the Nebraska National Guardsmen joined the other members of the skybox

crowd in applauding him for his generosity.

"We appreciate you all, too," Whitney told Lyons, before looking at the ribbon. "Dude, that's sweet... that's really cool."

Proud Moment For Former World War II Prisoner Of War: Keith Colson, 93, waves to the crowd in Memorial Stadium on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, as he's introduced before the start of the Nebraska-Kansas football game, Nov. 12. The former German prisoner of war was one of 11 Nebraska veterans honored as honorary gate sentinels during Nebraska's annual Veterans Day game.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

75 Guardsmen treated to Nebraska-Kansas game

Cornhuskers continue annual Vets Game tribute

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Keith Colson refused to go inside and get warm.

He was determined to soak in every last scarlet and cream moment of it in.

At 93 years old, he probably would've been forgiven if he'd followed the suggestion of Chris Anderson, Nebraska Athletic Department, and gone inside of Memorial Stadium with the other military veterans to warm up.

After all, it was early November and the coming winter season was already beginning to sink its icy claws into Lincoln, Neb., as a bitter wind swirled around the capacity crowd gathering to watch the University of Nebraska Cornhuskers play their long-time rivals from Lawrence, Kan., one last time before the hometown team moves to the Big 10 Conference next year.

But Colson, smiling beneath a pile of blankets that had been placed on his lap to ward off the chill as he sat in his wheelchair along the edge of the football field watching the hulking Nebraska defensive linemen warm up for their game with the Kansas Jayhawks, had one simple answer to the suggestion: "No."

Colson's son Jeff laughed as he watched his father's eyes sparkle as he looked around the vaunted "sea of red."

"He's having the time of his life," said Jeff. "The last time he was here was 1936 when he was 18 years old. Can you imagine how much this place has changed since that time?"

Like Memorial Stadium, Colson, too, has had quite a life since that time.

When World War II broke out,



Let's Go Huskers! (From left) Master Sgt. Ben Teicher, 155th Air Refueling Wing, and Spc. Lance Hardy, 195th Forward Support Company, cheer for the hometown Cornhuskers to make a defensive stand, Nov. 12. The two were among 75 Nebraska Guardsmen given tickets to the annual Veterans Day game by the University of Nebraska.

Colson joined the Army and was trained as an machine gunner. In December 1944 he was captured by the Germans and spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner of war.

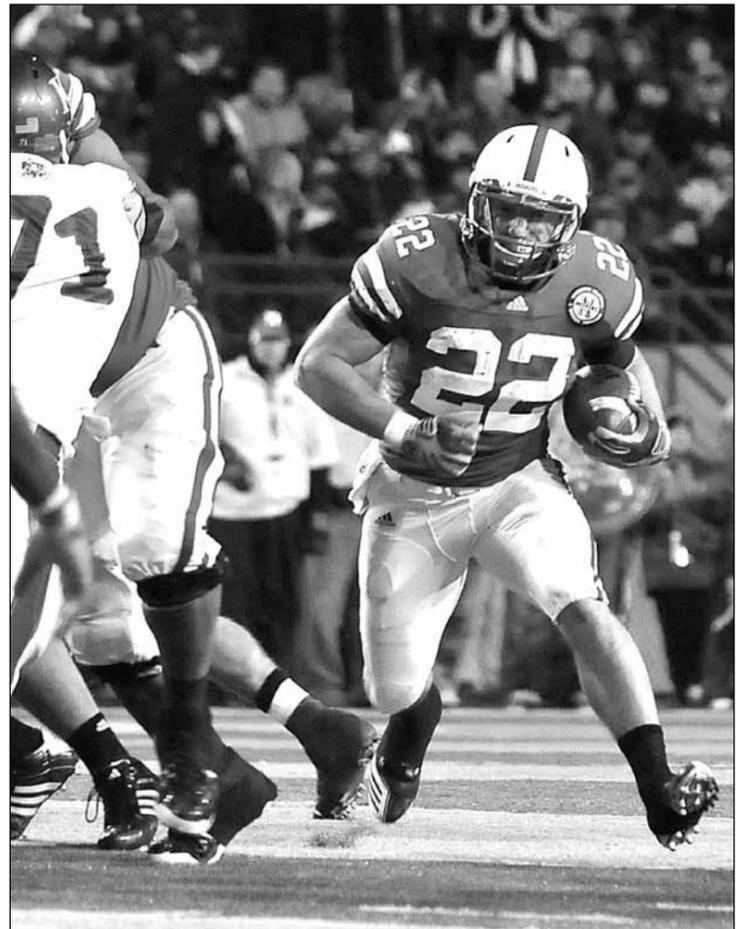
Following the war, he lived in Stromsburg, Neb., where he worked for 40 years as a brick layer. He now lives in a nursing home in a room which is filled with Husker memorabilia. Jeff said it was quite an honor for his dad when he was informed he would be one of 11 past and current members of the U.S. military who would be honored before the start of the Nov. 12 Nebraska game as "Gate Sentinels."

Others included two fellow World War II veterans, one who helped liberate POWs following the war and Edward Mauser, the oldest living veteran of Company E, 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, that was immortalized in Stephen

Ambrose's "Band of Brothers."

Other veterans - who represented all branches of the services - included Korean and Vietnam War veterans as well as veterans of the current conflicts. Among the newest veterans was 1st Lt. Dion Booker, a former safety who played for the Nebraska Cornhuskers from 1998-2001. Following in the footsteps of his father, who served in the U.S. Marine Corps for 20 years, Booker joined the U.S. Army in 2008 and now is serving as a platoon leader at Fort Riley Kan., as a member of the 1st Infantry Division.

Also serving as gate sentinels were Capt. Carl Johnson, an operations officer with the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron who just completed a six-month deployment to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, and Staff Sgt. Neil Wesley, a team



Looking For The Endzone: Nebraska's Rex Burkhead (#22) rushes around the corner during the third quarter of Nebraska's 20-3 victory over the Kansas Jayhawks, Nov. 12, in Lincoln, Neb.

leader with the Nebraska Army Guard's Troop C, 1-134th Cavalry. Wesley recently completed his second deployment overseas when he deployed with the Nebraska Army National Guard's Afghan Agribusiness Development Team to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan from September 2008-August 2009.

Along with the sentinels who were honored before the start of the game, which was named the Veterans Day Observance game by the University of Nebraska, approximately 75 members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard were also treated to free tickets to the game by the university. Sitting in several rows of metal folding chairs behind the Nebraska benches, the Soldiers and Airmen said they were having fun as they watched Nebraska fight its way to a 20-3 victory over the Jayhawks.

"It's pretty awesome," said Staff Sgt. Katie Gerdson, a personnel specialist with the 155th Mission Support Group. Gerdson, a native of Illinois who recently moved to Lincoln, Neb. She said the game marked her first visit to Memorial Stadium. "It's neat to see the sea of

red that I've heard about and it's a really good environment."

She added that being able to see her first game while wearing a uniform made the occasion all that more memorable.

"It's a really neat experience and we really appreciate it," she said as she sat next to Senior Airman Casey Linden, a cyber systems operator with the 155th Communications Flight, clapping to keep their hands warm in the cold evening air. "It's a lot of fun and it's a lot of positive support that sometimes we don't get recognized for."

Also having fun was Pvt. Dave Cushing, a member of Seward's Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company. This marked the fifth time that Cushing has been to the game, but the environment made it probably the most unforgettable, he said.

"It's great," he said about the fans who constantly came up to him to offer their thanks for his service. "Everybody is just so supportive. I've had people come up and shake my hand and say congratulations for what you do... we support everything. It means a great deal."

Thanks

*For your support of
Nebraska's Military*



**SEPTEMBER 4, 2010
NU vs. WKU**



**SEPTEMBER 11, 2010
NU vs. IDAHO**



**SEPTEMBER 25, 2010
NU vs. SDSU**



**OCTOBER 16, 2010
NU vs. TEXAS**



**OCTOBER 30, 2010
NU vs. MISSOURI**



**NOVEMBER 13, 2010
NU vs. KANSAS**



**NOVEMBER 26, 2010
NU vs. COLORADO**

**GATE SENTINEL PROGRAM
MILITARY APPRECIATION GAME
GAME DAY DVDS**