

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

End of Nebraska Army Guard Era



Photo by David Nore



Photo courtesy of Steve Stone

Graduation: (Above) Chief Warrant Officer Steve Stone poses for a photo during flight school some 40 years ago. He was soon on his way to service in Vietnam.

April Showers: (Left) Vietnam veteran Chief Warrant Officer Steve Stone is ceremonially showered with water after his last military flight as a Nebraska Army National Guard helicopter pilot.

Last Vietnam helicopter pilot retires

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

A significant era came to an end, April 8, when Chief Warrant Officer Steve Stone became the last known Vietnam War helicopter pilot to fly for the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Stone, who capped off his 40-year military career by flying his last military flight at the controls of a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter on a cloudy

spring morning, accumulated over 5,400 flight hours as an Army aviator, including over 1,200 combat flying hours in Vietnam and during Operation Desert Storm.

While flying military helicopters in combat provided him with lasting memories, they were just some of many Stone collected during his Army aviation career.

"My most fond memories are of my days in aviation and those I have flown with," said Stone as he stood dripping
See LAST VIETNAM PILOT on 17.

Nebraska tornados prompt Guard call-up

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

Soldiers from several units in Nebraska were called to state active duty in support of emergency operations following several tornados and severe storms in central Nebraska during the late afternoon hours of May 29.

Call it luck, advance warning or being prepared, but somehow the Kearney and Aurora areas escaped with no serious injuries after the storm cells stacked cars and wrecked personal property.

Flooding caused by continued torrential rain continued to cause damage in the central and southeast areas of the state well after the storm.

"On reflection I think we can be thankful here in Kearney and central Nebraska that we haven't seen the devastation we have seen in the state of Iowa, Kansas and Oklahoma where tornados did horrific damage with loss of life. So, with that perspective, I am very pleased today," Governor Dave Heineman said during a news conference in Kearney, May 30, following the storm.
See TORNADO on 6.

Nebraska Air Guard sends tanker to Kansas

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

As far as days go, Master Sgt. Kim Davila of the 155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron admits that May 22 was probably going to be a little bit of a rough one.

That's because the airplane she and a team of three other Nebraska Air Guard crew chiefs had lovingly looked after for more than a decade would be making its last appearance on the Lincoln tarmac as a Nebraska Air National Guard airplane.

"It's going to be a tough day," said Davila, lead crew chief on aircraft number 61-0266 as she looked up at the gray

KC-135R Stratotanker a few days before the aircraft's scheduled departure. "I've worked on that airplane since it arrived in 1993."

As an Air National Guard aerial refueling wing, the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing has operated eight primary aircraft inventory (PAI) airplanes and one additional back-up aircraft since 1995. That, however, changed when National Guard Bureau directed the 155th ARW to send its backup aircraft inventory (BAI) airplane to the Kansas Air National Guard.

The reassignment is part of a nationwide effort among the Air Guard
See AIRCRAFT on 12.

Nebraska Air Guard completes mission to Greece

By 1st Lt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

The last of approximately 230 Nebraska Air Guardsmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln Neb., returned April 4 from a 34-day deployment to Souda Bay, Greece.

In typical fashion, the 155th ARW delivered over 4 million pounds of fuel to C-5 and C-17

transport aircraft supporting operations in Iraq. They also left the base a better place than what they found it.

When the members arrived at the end of February, they found sparse surroundings with only basic office furniture, lights, tables and chairs.

"We walked into a bare base situation and had to stand up the entire operations from scratch," said Lt. Col. James

Stevenson, commander of the 90th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron who also serves as the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron commander in Lincoln.

There were challenges to setting up shop in facilities that hadn't been used for a while.

"Lots of pigeons when we got there," said Staff Sgt. Isaac Cepek, an aircrew fight specialist with the 155th ARW. "There was nothing there, so

we set it up ourselves."

Like most of the sections that worked on the base, Cepek had to bring everything he would need with him from his Lincoln shop. He then set up working facilities as best he could.

"We pack everything we need for the road. We can repair there if needed, but if we can make it work until we get back, we do," said Cepek.
See GREECE on 8.

Air Guard medics provide medical treatment to remote Honduran villages

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Master Sgt. Todd Schneider had heard the stories before, but he really didn't believe them until he saw it with his own two eyes.

There, standing outside a makeshift medical clinic in a tiny village near the Honduran capitol of Comayagua, hundreds of local people had lined up for several blocks – in some cases hours earlier – waiting for the American medical personnel to arrive and begin dispensing aid.

Mothers holding babies. Fathers with their families in tow. Elementary students in school uniforms. Elderly people

See MEDICS on 4.

New Army, Air Guard disaster response team conducts May validation exercise

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska National Guard's training site near Mead, Neb., was hardly recognizable.

For approximately a week in mid-May, the prairie training site was transformed into the center of a major disaster.

There, members of the Nebraska National Guard's new Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force worked desperately to rescue victims trapped in a massive concrete rubble pile and then provide them with the decontamination and medical treatment they needed to survive a suspected terrorist attack.
See CERF on 15.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Lean On Me: A Nebraska National Guardsman helps a 'victim' walk toward a medical treatment facility during a disaster exercise held at the Mead Training Site, May 18.

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INSIDE

- Airborne Soldiers get chance to stretch legs during weekend jump 3
- Civil Support Team learns lessons from Czechs 5
- Afghan training team returns to Nebraska 9
- Truck company completes mission to Iraq 14
- Guard runners descend upon Nebraska 23-26

NEWS DIGEST

■ Volunteers needed for National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Omaha, July 25-29

Volunteers are being sought for the 28th National Veterans Wheelchair Games to be held in Omaha, July 25-29.

According to event organizers, approximately 2,500 volunteers are needed to help with this year's games, which will attract athletes from across the United States as well as from Puerto Rico and Great Britain. The athletes competing in the Omaha event will range from World War II era veterans to those who have recently served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

This year's games are being hosted by the Great Plains Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Department of Veterans Affairs Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are a multi-event sports and rehabilitation program for military service veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, amputations or certain neurological problems.

Attracting more than 500 athletes each year, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world.

The competitions include swimming, table tennis, weightlifting, archery, air guns, basketball, nine-ball, softball, quad rugby, bowling, handcycling, wheelchair slalom, power soccer, a motorized wheelchair rally, and track and field events. Exhibition events are also planned.

Athletes compete in all events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age.

Events will take place at the Qwest Center Omaha, Northwest High School, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Thunderbowl and Mockingbird Bowling facilities, and the Henry Doorly Zoo. Admission to the events is free.

Event organizers say more than 2,500 volunteers are needed to assist in a variety of events at several locations. The number of volunteers needed to support the Games averages to at least two volunteers per veteran.

The minimal commitment organizers are asking from volunteers is four hours.

Military volunteers can not be in a duty status during the games, according to Nebraska Military Department officials, however Nebraska National Guardsmen are being encouraged to assist during the games to help out the competitors, many of whom lost their limbs or received their injuries as a direct result of their military service. Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for the Nebraska National Guard, is urging

supervisors to offer liberal leave practices for those full-time employees wishing to volunteer.

For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, contact Craig Enenbach at craig.enenbach@va.gov or (402) 995-3460 or check out the Website at www.wheelchair-games.va.gov.

■ Gates supports enhanced GI Bill, cites retention issues

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) – Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates fully supports an enhanced GI Bill, but believes some measures being discussed on Capitol Hill would undermine the all-volunteer force by encouraging troops to leave too soon, Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said May 21.

Gates is "greatly encouraged" by the wide support for enhanced educational benefits for veterans and considers the legislation moving forward "extremely generous," Morrell said. "We have no issue with the fact that it is generous. We think our troops deserve to be rewarded for their service."

But the secretary fears that leading bills moving forward would hurt retention by offering educational benefits after just two years of service, Morrell said. Gates advocates offering enhanced benefits after six years of service to reward service members who opt to reenlist at least once.

"We are not trying to keep people here forever, but we are trying to create a system in which troops see the benefit of making a career out of the military," Morrell said.

That would create big problems to the military, particularly as it confronts the global war on terror. "Now, more than ever, we need to hold on to our superbly trained, battle-tested troops," Morrell said. "They are the key to victory in this conflict."

The secretary calls it "absolutely imperative" that the enhanced GI Bill includes a provision allowing service members to transfer unused educational benefits to their spouses and children.

About 97 percent of service members sign up for the Montgomery GI Bill, but only about 70 percent actually use the benefit. Typically they use about half of the 36 months of benefits available to them, officials said.

■ Chiefs testify to historic impact of Guard, Reserves

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) – The nation's top National Guard and reserve officers testified May 14 to the monumental and historic response by their forces in the nation's defense since the terrorism attacks against the United

States on Sept. 11, 2001.

The seven officers were called before the defense subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee to answer questions about the National Guard and reserves' 2009 budget. The chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air and Marine Corps reserves led the first hour-long panel, with the Army and Air National Guard and National Guard Bureau chiefs following for about the same amount of time.

Chief of the National Guard Bureau Army Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum called 2007 a year of "historic proportions" for the National Guard.

At one point in the War on Terror, National Guard members made up almost half of the ground forces in Iraq. He called the number of Guardsmen supporting the war overseas "staggering." Since 9/11, more than 400,000 Guardsmen have been mobilized in support of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

This is in addition to the Guard's response to state emergencies.

Blum said that readiness for his force boils down to three things: people, equipment and training. He said there needs to be an increase in the number of full-time personnel to help ready part-time units for deployment.

Regarding equipping the National Guard, Blum said recent commitments by Congress and DoD have boosted the Guard's readiness. "Equipment status is much better today than it was a year ago and will get better this year," he said.

■ Al-Qaida in Iraq now on the run, Defense officials say

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) – Al-Qaida terrorists in Iraq are being systematically hunted down and given little or no time to regroup as U.S. and Iraqi security forces tighten the noose, senior U.S. and Iraqi military officials said May 25 in Baghdad.

Al-Qaida terrorists were ejected from Baghdad and its environs more than a year ago by the surge of U.S. and Iraqi forces, Navy Rear Adm. Patrick Driscoll told reporters at a news conference. Driscoll was accompanied by Iraqi Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Mohammed al Askari.

"Recent improvements by the government of Iraq and the growing capability of the Iraqi security forces are improving security" across Iraq, Driscoll said. "Iraqi security forces are in the lead in Basra, Mosul and Sadr City."

Baghdad's Sadr City neighborhood, the home of Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, sprawls across Baghdad's eastern sector.

A continuing cease-fire agreement made between Sadr's militia and the Iraqi government has helped dampen violence in the formerly combustible area, where Iraqi security forces are now conducting security patrols.

Overall, Iraq has seen a significant reduction in violence, Driscoll told reporters. "In the past week, security incidents decreased to levels not seen since March of 2004," he said. In fact, insurgent attacks have declined by 70 percent since the surge of forces began in June, the admiral added.

■ New Army handbooks focus on first 100 days of combat

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The U.S. Army has published three new handbooks to help Soldiers prepare for the first 100 days of combat, officials said during a teleconference with online journalists and "bloggers" May 1.

Col. Steven Mains, director of the Center for Army Lesson Learned, and Milton Hileman, a senior military analyst, explained that there was a small but clear rise in the number of casualties early in a combat deployment, concentrated in the first 100 days.

"It's not a new phenomenon that... we just figured out and nobody had ever seen before, but it's something we could clearly show was the case in Iraq," Mains said. "And so it drove us to say, well, what do they know at day 250 that they really need to know during those first 100 days?"

After an extensive interview process with approximately 1,700 Soldiers, Mains and Hileman said that there were three key elements to surviving the first three months; avoiding complacency, good decisions made by junior leaders, and the efficient staff processes at the battalion and brigade level for commanders.

"When we interviewed the Soldiers one-on-one, we asked them to respond back to us as if they were talking to a fellow Soldier," Hileman said.

Overall, the Soldiers said they need to stay alert and stay attuned to the environment in order to survive, Hileman said.

Avoiding complacency was a reoccurring theme among the Soldiers interviewed, he added.

"Soldiers said that complacency in one way or another contributed to every casualty they saw," Hileman said. "It was little things like not following (standard operating procedures), not having all of your kit when you went out the gate on a mission, leaders not doing their pre-combat inspections and leaders not being adaptive in the way they plan their mission."

Mains explained the original idea was to write one handbook for Soldiers, but based on what the Soldiers told them, it grew into another handbook for junior leaders.

"The decisions the junior leaders make clearly affect survivability and mission accomplishment," said Mains. "And of course, they're not used to making those decisions because they're new in theater as well."

President presents Medal of Honor to fallen Army hero's family, June 2

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – President Bush presented the Medal of Honor to fallen Army hero Spc. Ross A. McGinnis' parents during a White House ceremony June 2.

"The Medal of Honor is the nation's highest military distinction; it is given for valor beyond anything that duty could require or a superior could command," Bush said before presenting the medal to McGinnis' father and mother, Tom and Romayne McGinnis, during the East Room ceremony.

Then-Pfc. McGinnis died at age 19 in northeastern Baghdad on Dec. 4, 2006, while protect-

ing his comrades from an enemy grenade that was thrown into his Hum-Vee.

McGinnis, who'd been riding topside in the vehicle's gunner's-hatch opening, dropped down and used his body to absorb the effects of the exploding grenade, thus saving four fellow Soldiers.

Presenting the Medal of Honor to McGinnis' parents was "a high privilege," Bush said, noting McGinnis was a selfless hero who could easily have jumped off the vehicle and saved himself.

"Instead, he dropped inside, put himself against the grenade and absorbed the blast with his own body," Bush said.

"In that split-second decision, Private McGinnis lost his own life and he saved his comrades."

McGinnis' surviving comrades, Sgt. 1st Class Cedric Thomas, Staff Sgt. Ian

Newland, Sgt. Lyle Buehler, and Spc. Sean Lawson, as well as some prior Medal of Honor recipients, also attended the ceremony.

Thomas has noted that McGinnis had plenty of time to avoid the exploding grenade, the president said, but instead chose to save his buddies.

"America will never forget those who came forward to bear the battle," Bush said. "America will always honor the name of this brave Soldier, who gave all for his country."

McGinnis enlisted in the Army at age 17 on June 14, 2004. At the time of his death, McGinnis was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division's 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, in Schweinfurt, Germany.

He was promoted to specialist posthumously.



McGinnis

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Into Thin Air: Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers jump off the tail ramp of a Nebraska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter during a May 17 training exercise at the Mead Training Site.



Check Your Gear: Capt. Kyle Hildebrand uses hand signals to communicate to Soldiers preparing to jump from the tail ramp of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter.



First of Their Kind: Members of the newly created 195th Special Operations Forward Support Company (Airborne) pose for a photograph before their first drill weekend parachute jump.



All Clear: Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Winn, Company C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134th Infantry, checks the airspace and the drop zone at the Mead training site from the tail ramp of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. Winn was checking for other aircraft in the area and correct placement over the drop zone before giving final pre-jump commands to the Soldiers waiting to jump from the helicopter.

Airborne!

■ First Nebraska Chinook jump allows Army Guard paratroopers to stretch legs during jump

By Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

Five members of the 195th Special Operations Forward Support Company (Airborne) became the first members of their unit to complete a jump, May 17.

The newest Nebraska Army National Guard's airborne unit started drilling in March and is still recruiting to fill in its ranks.

With only eight members of the unit currently airborne qualified, the five paratroopers piggy-backed on the 1-134th Cavalry Squadron operations.

The experience level of those jumping varied greatly. For Spc. Cory Nielsen, a wheeled mechanic for the 195th SO FSC, it was his first jump after completing Airborne school, where all jumps were done from a side door of a C-130 cargo plane.

For this operation paratroopers jumped from a CH-47 Chinook from Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion from Grand Island.

According to Guard officials, the differences between the aircraft are extreme. The fixed wing C-130 aircraft travels faster, 150 to 200 knots, and jumping from the side door into the prop blast sends a Soldier flying straight backward.

"Pushing 80 to 90 knots with the Chinook today," Nielsen said, "you went right out the back and didn't feel anything till you were a little ways away from the (aircraft) and the chute opens up real nice and soft."

For others it had been a long time since they felt the lift of the wind under the canopy of a parachute. Staff Sgt. Brian Buchholz, 195th SO FSC supply platoon sergeant, had completed over 25 jumps with units in the active Army. His last

jump was at Fort Bragg, N.C., in April 1987 with the 82nd Airborne Division.

Buchholz said he was thrilled to have the opportunity to jump again.

"I was really impressed with how everything comes back," Buchholz said about his opportunity to jump again after 21 years. "You couldn't ask for a better day... the wind, temperature or better conditions."

Others joining the mission had been away from the action even longer. To Sgt. Maj. Marty Baker, 1-134th Cavalry Squadron sergeant major whose last jump was in 1979 with 82nd Airborne Division, it was just another jump.

"Gravity still works the same," Baker said. "It was exhilarating (and I'm glad to be back in the saddle. (This is) one thing I missed about (not) being in the 82nd Airborne."

According to Guard officials, airborne operations have a great impact on recruiting Soldiers into the Nebraska Army National Guard who want to parachute and are prior service or new to the military. It also gives the National Guard a means to recruit Soldiers away from the active Army, they say.

Sgt. Erik Wolgan, 195th SO FSC combat medic who had previously completed 32 jumps, said it meant everything.

"That's what brought me back into the Guard," Wolgan said. "(It) was the opportunity to jump. That was it, 100 percent hands down. When they gave me the opportunity to jump now, I couldn't believe it and I ran with it."

This particular jump also had a great significance for future airborne operations in the state. According to Maj. Gordon Bjorman, 1-134th Cavalry executive officer, "with the Nebraska Army National Guard going from 56 to 346 parachute positions, this jump signifies a step



A Perfect Day to Jump: Nebraska Army National Guard paratroopers float down over the Mead training site after jumping from the tail ramp of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. The operation was conducted by one helicopter shuttling Soldiers from the Army Aviation Facility in Lincoln, which allowed 61 jumps to be completed during the morning training exercise, with some Soldiers jumping twice.

forward to self-contained airborne operations."

"What's unique about this jump," Gordon said, "is that for the first time in a long time we are using Nebraska airframes for the operation. That's one of the key components for our new force structure... that we intend to be self-contained for airborne operations."

The next step is to fill the parachute rigger positions in the new Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company in Seward, which will stand up next year. That will give Nebraska all the assets it needs to conduct airborne operations within the state, said Bjorman.

For the 61 jumpers participating in the May 17 jump, the parachutes were delivered by Soldiers from the 196th Quartermaster Company from Fort Campbell, Ky. This meant that the parachute packs had to be driven up from Kentucky and then returned to the rigging operations at Fort Campbell after the jumps were completed.

With the requirement for airborne Soldiers to jump once a quarter to maintain their jump status, anything that can help



A Successful Jump: Spc. Matthew Elsasser, Company C (Long Range Surveillance), 1-134 Infantry, packs his parachute into a carrying bag before moving to the rally point after jumping from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter over the Mead training site.

shorten the time between jumps – such as having an in-state rigger unit – will mean a lot to Nebraska Army National Guard paratrooper units, he said.

"We have the aviation unit that can drop us. We have an increased number of paratroopers that need to jump and we're getting ready to stand up a rigger unit next year. Once that rigger unit stands up we will be 100 percent self-contained," Bjorman said.

MEDICS

continued from page 1.

with ailments almost too painful to describe.

They were all there, waiting.

Some had come from dozens of miles away, standing or sitting together in open-air vehicles, or riding on the back of horses and mules. Others had simply walked the distance over mountainous trails, through the nearby jungles or along desert-like roads.

Schneider said it was an amazing sight that immediately reinforced in his mind how important the arrival of the American medics was to the people of the surrounding area.

"It was a big shock," said Schneider, one of six Nebraska Air Guard medics who deployed to Honduras to participate in a joint medical humanitarian mission from March 29 to April 12. "I had heard that we were going to see a lot of people. They tried to prepare us for that, but it was a little mind-boggling once we arrived there to actually see how many people were lined up to see us."

According to Schneider, who works as the fulltime health systems technician for the 155th Medical Group in Lincoln, the group helped evaluate and treat approximately 4,000 local Hondurans from six different villages during their two-week "Beyond Horizons '08" mission.

Schneider said the Nebraskans were part of a much larger joint team that provided medical services to remote village Honduras.

Based out of Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, Schneider said a typical day began early in the morning, sometimes as early as 4 a.m. The medical technicians would then travel by either convoy or Chinook helicopter to the day's destination, usually arriving around 9 a.m.

Some of the villages were high up in the mountains, separated from Comayagua by miles of perilous mountain roads. Others were in the desert plains, miles from the nearest hospital.

Schneider said that one thing remained constant however. Each day the American medical teams would be greeted by hundreds of Hondurans waiting to receive medical attention.

"They would already be lined up for a block, just waiting at a certain checkpoint," said Schneider. "People would come from miles around."

Schneider said the medics set up their makeshift clinics wherever they could. Sometimes this meant setting up in a school. Other times in a church. Still others in a nearby home.

And sometimes it meant simply setting up a folding chair outdoors and dispensing care as best as the medics could.

The six Nebraskans, said Schneider, worked primarily in the optometry and dental stations. Others worked in preventative health or with the doctors who accompanied the team to the village.

According to Staff Sgt. Amanda Meyers, a full-time aerospace medical technician who worked in both the preventative medicine section and as a floater between the different sections, the opportunity to work in Honduras was a dream come true.

"This is the kind of thing that medics dream about," said Meyers, adding that most Air Guard medics typically spend



Photos courtesy of Master Sgt. Todd Schneider

New Friends: Tech. Sgt. Carolyn Oborny, Nebraska Air National Guard aerospace medical technician with the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron, poses for a photo with a group of Honduran children during a break in the village of Laguna del Rincón, Honduras. While in Honduras, Oborny worked in preventative health and optometry services. She was one of six Nebraska Airmen who traveled to Honduras recently.



Smile: Senior Airman Rosalba Garcia, Nebraska Air National Guard aerospace medical technician, shares her Meal Ready to Eat with a group of children in Plan de Leones, Honduras.



Nebraskans: Members of the 155th Medical Group pose for a photo at the medical clinic at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras. (From left) Tech. Sgt. Jeff Frey, Staff Sgt. Amanda Meyers, Senior Airman Rosalba Garcia, Tech. Sgt. Cecilia Diaz, Tech. Sgt. Carolyn Oborny and Master Sgt. Todd Schneider.

their drill weekends helping perform unit physical health assessments and other routine medical processing. "We don't get (to do) a lot of hands-on medical treatment."

That wasn't the case in Honduras, however, where the medics were able to use their training to help people who were visibly in need of medical attention, said Meyers. "Most of us medics became medics to help people and to see and treat the injuries, to help the sick people," she said. "That's why we're medics."

"So it was really, really incredible to actually get to use a lot of the skills we've been taught," Meyers said. "That was a blast."

Meyers said the types of assistance ranged widely from Honduran to Honduran.

For example, in the preventative medicine section, the medics would speak to the people about the need to wash hands, boil water and thoroughly cook their food. They also provided each of the people with bars of soap and vitamins (chewable vitamins for children, pre-natal vitamins for child-bearing aged women and multi-vitamins for the men.)

They also gave each person drugs to treat intestinal parasites.

Others had their eyes checked or teeth examined – and often pulled. Still others received aid for injuries and illnesses.

Meyers said the philosophy was pretty simple. "They don't have any alternatives," she said. "It was just a way to provide very

basic medical care and hopefully teach them something. They always say if you feed a man a fish you feed him for a day but if you teach him to fish, he'll feed himself for years. It's kind of that thing...to teach them to wash their hands, to cook their food so they don't get sick. How to brush their teeth so their teeth quit falling out."

Meyers added she was incredibly moved by the people she met.

"We would pull up to the villages in the morning and there were lines...you could tell that people had been there for hours waiting for us. And the kids were just so excited just to see us. I'm not even sure they knew why we were there for the most part, but it was very cool because they would come running up to us... they were climbing on the Hum-Vees."

"If you had water or any kind of candy or toys you would just get swarmed."

While in Honduras, Meyers and Tech. Sgt. Carolyn Oborny also worked at a hospital in Comayagua. Meyers said the experience of watching people wait outside the hospital, sometimes for 36 hours or more, to be treated for a variety of injuries and illness ranging from badly broken bones to insect bites on foreheads that had developed into larvae, changed her perspective forever.

"I will never complain (for

having to wait) for 30 minutes to see my dentist," Meyers said. "Or if I have to go to the ER and have to wait 20 minutes. I will never complain about that again."

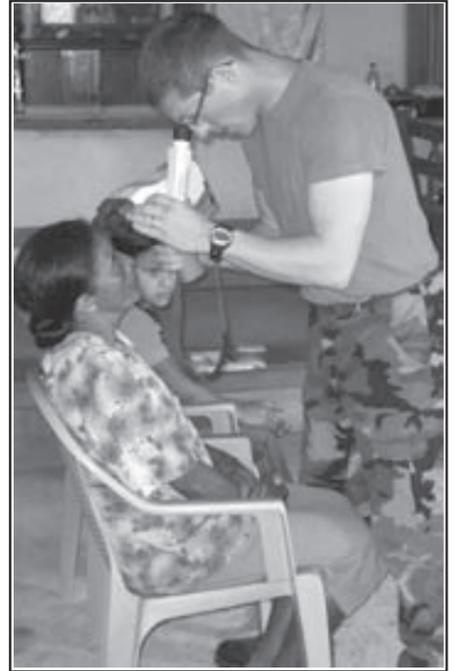
That's primarily because of the gratitude the Hondurans displayed for receiving the most rudimentary medical assistance, Meyers said.

"No one complained. You never heard anyone yelling or throwing a fit because they'd been waiting for an hour," she said. "The same thing when we went to the villages... some of them had to wait for quite a while to see the doctor. No one complained. Everyone was smiling."

Meyers wasn't the only one changed by the experience. Senior Airman Rosaldo Garcia is a 155th Medical Group medic. While in Honduras, she not only helped with the humanitarian effort, she also had a chance to interact directly with the Hondurans while serving as an interpreter.

She said the Hondurans she spoke to – including the Honduran military members who worked as guards at the various medical sites – were pleased to receive the help they did.

"A lot of people were happy to see us... were happy that we were there helping them," said Garcia. "They were also smiling and thankful for what we were doing."



Eye Check: Master Sgt. Todd Schneider performs an autorefractometer examination on a Honduran woman's eyes to see if she needs prescription glasses while working in a church in Horno, Honduras.

Garcia said her conversation with the guards were particularly enlightening. "They said if we weren't there, nobody else was going to help them. All these poor people could use all the help that we could give them."

Garcia said the entire experience was heartwarming.

"Seeing all those kids and helping them, and all those smiles and hugs from the kids... it actually made me teary," she said. "Seeing how they live versus how we live... we have so much and we're still not happy and always wanting more and more. And they don't have hardly anything and they're so happy and they're not asking for anything more... they're just happy."

Schneider said he too enjoyed his first opportunity to perform a humanitarian assistance mission overseas.

"It was something that I always wanted to do... so it was a good experience to share some of the training that I have received with people who normally don't have access to this type of care," said Schneider. "It was very rewarding."

Nebraska, Texas emergency teams learn from Czechs

By Sgt. 1st Class Merrion LaSonde
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

■ Disaster response exercise designed to help Americans, Czechs learn how to work together



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Merrion LaSonde

Wrapped Up In Training: Sgts. Nicolas Kemp and Landin Koopman, survey team members, 72nd Civil Support Team, Nebraska, prepare a sample for transport to a testing lab while Warrant Officer Bohdan Hrbek, instructor for sampling teams, Czech Army, looks on.

for liquid agents, not gas," said Hays. "Their mobile testing lab is built for more generalized purposes; our lab is very specific to our needs."

The second week was spent performing small individual team CBRN exercises, with the Czech instructors testing their American counterparts on the procedures they had learned.

"Their collection process is slightly different from ours," said Sgt. Landen C. Koopman, survey team member, 72nd CST. "They place their specimens into a Teflon container that is then placed inside a plastic bag and sealed with tape. We use lidded, glass jars for all collections except for biological specimens."

"We then take parafilm, a stretchy type of plastic tape, and seal the lid from leaks," said Koopman. "Then we place that jar into an overpack container, a hard plastic container lined with paper towels to absorb moisture, and then that goes into a Ziploc bag then into our cooler for transport to the lab."

The mobile sample testing laboratory used by the Czech Army is a prototype

and has been in use only for the past two years. "Their lab is very impressive," said Staff Sgt. Alfonso G. Garcia, survey team chief with the 6th CST. "Their technology is up to date and the same as ours; their sample preparation is similar, but the overall lab is very ruggedized and outfitted for a field environment. I have never seen a lab set up like that."

On the final day of field training, local school children from Libouchec elementary played the victims of a mysterious chemical leak in the school cafeteria. The combined teams went into action by extracting the children, transporting them to the decontamination site on Camp Tisa and processing samples taken from the school.

The children were all smiles while the Soldiers tended to their "illnesses" and, after they were given the "all clear," received the treat of a ride around the camp in military vehicles.

"Part of training is to create an unpredictable environment," said Lt. Hanus Ort, 3rd NBC Company commander. "The kids added a slightly different element to

this exercise. Even though we told the kids what to do, they were still unpredictable. They were very enthusiastic and really enjoyed it."

Some of the perceived differences in overall operations may stem from the fact that this exercise was on a slightly smaller scale because of the training environment.

"We have not seen their full-blown operation in action," said Capt. Michael A. Torres, 6th CST survey team leader. "Only half of their team is in attendance. We have been making up the other half for training purposes."

"They use military-style chemical masks while we use self-contained breathing apparatus where you carry an air tank on your back," said Hays. "The other thing I have noticed is we deal more in biological hazards due to the fact that we work in more of the emerging diseases and animal illnesses."

Each group experienced its own degrees of difficulty, but the lessons learned proved very beneficial.

"Their vehicle decontamination station is designed for a lot higher volume than what we do," said Hays. "It is set up more like a car wash that you drive through whereas ours is more like a fire hose. They can process more vehicles in a shorter period of time. That will be a take-home lesson for me that I will present to my boss for us to look into for the future."

Valuable additions to the overall training exercise were medics from the Regional Training Institute out of Camp Mabry.

"The makeup of the human body is the same worldwide," said Sgt. Cruz C. Gonzalez, a medic instructor with the RTI. "Their medics' and our medics' roles are interchangeable with the greatest patient care available. Their techniques and methods run parallel with medics in the U.S."

Members of the Czech Army CBRN team will journey to the United States in June to perform the same type of training exercise with a slightly different slant.

"Although the Czech CBRN team looks to both the military and civil side of their operations, they are more military focused, while we are more civil focused," said Hays. "We will take them to civilian training facilities and work with a civilian hazardous materials team."

Commissioning program returning to Kearney

■ Guard's GOLD program set stage for ROTC's return to central Nebraska

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

There were quite a few of vibrations felt on the campus of University of the Nebraska-Kearney, May 7, and it wasn't just because a Nebraska Army National Guard landed a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter on the football practice field.

Instead, the vibrations had much more to do with the announcement that the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps program is returning to campus this fall.

"It's a day I think we're going to remember," said UNK Chancellor Douglas Kristensen following the announcement. "I think this will be great for our campus."

According to Kristensen, the ROTC program has been missed at UNK since the Army decided to close the program approximately a decade ago. He added that by bringing the program back, the university will now be able to provide a variety of educational and leadership development training for students.

"We're lucky to have them

back on our campus. It's a strong piece of our academic offering and I also think it's a very good cooperative program to have on our campus," he said.

ROTC serves as one of the primary means of training and commissioning officers for the active Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

According to Capt. Rob Ford, a Nebraska Army Guard officer assigned to ROTC program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, ROTC is currently offered at two Nebraska schools: UNL and Creighton University, with satellite partnerships held at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Nebraska Wesleyan, Doane, Concordia and now UNK.

Additionally, the South Dakota School of Mines has an ROTC partnership with Chadron University while the University of South Dakota operates a similar partnership with Wayne State College.

The return of ROTC to Kearney began last fall when the Nebraska Army National Guard unveiled a new Guard Officer Leadership Development (GOLD) course within the College of Business and Technology.

Led by Maj. Will Prusia, that program allowed students to pursue their commissions through a curriculum operated under the Nebraska Army National Guard Officer Candidate School.

According to Prusia, ten students are currently enrolled in the GOLD program at UNK. Of those, five will remain in the program next year as seniors while the remaining students will transition into ROTC cadets.

Prusia said he expects a total of 20-30 students to enroll in ROTC by the time fall semester arrives next September.

"Having the two programs together is really a great thing for both the Nebraska Army National Guard and the ROTC to provide great opportunities for UNK students," said Prusia, himself a graduate of the UNK ROTC program who will now serve as the assistant professor of Military Science in Kearney.

Along with the increase in students, Prusia said the military staff at UNK will grow from two people to four.

The program – which will be part of the UNL ROTC battalion – will operate as Company B. In presenting Kristensen with the ROTC unit's new gold and black guidon, Lt. Col. Elizabeth Cisne said the Army is excited to bring ROTC back to central Nebraska.

"Army ROTC produces lead-

ers for our nation. Historically, data has shown us that officers commissioned into the ROTC program at the smaller schools have a higher propensity to serve a full career of service," she said.

Prusia said he is excited about the opportunity to offer ROTC to UNK students.

"It's just amazing that I would get the opportunity to be the first assistant professor of Military Science of ROTC here at Kearney," Prusia said shortly after planting the ROTC guidon into the UNK turf, officially bringing the program back to the university.

"ROTC has tremendous scholarship opportunities (and) leadership training opportunities that will truly bring about a level of excellence that our students at UNK will be able to carry forward with them into the future."

That should also open up opportunities for the Nebraska Guard to attract some of these newly commissioned officers



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Planted: Maj. Will Prusia plants the colors of ROTC into the University of Nebraska-Kearney turf, May 7, officially bringing the new program back to UNK

into the Guard, said Lt. Col. James Murphy, state Recruiting and Retention Command commander.

"The big significance is that the ROTC really has a brand. People really know about ROTC," he added. "The GOLD program, as good a program as it was, just was not commonly known. The brand that ROTC has is world renown, really. So, that allows us to recruit right at the high school level into UNK."



Photos by David Nore

Not Cleared For Take-Off: An \$11 million airplane owned by the Buckle Corporation suffered major damage at the Kearney airport when tornadic winds flattened its hangar. The hangar is located near the Kearney Nebraska Army National Guard armory. Members of the Nebraska Army Guard helped clear hangar debris from the nearby runway following the storm.

TORNADO continued from page 1.

“We have about 50 Soldiers on the ground here in Kearney providing assistance to local authorities, on traffic control points and security; 25 from the 1195th Transportation Company from right here locally in the Kearney area and later will have 25 Soldiers from the 1074th transportation based out of North Platte,” said Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, during the same news conference.

“We also have several Soldiers helping (the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency) with damage assessments.”

Damage at the Kearney airport and industrial park area included airport runway and hangar damage.

Also damaged was an expensive corporate jet housed across the road from the Kearney armory.

Army Guard Soldiers were soon called upon to help clear the damage, according to Kearney officials.

“They wanted to get all the big pieces of debris off the runway. Then they ran their street sweeper to get all the foreign objects off of there so planes could land on the runway,” said Sgt. First Class Martin Misener as he explained one of the first tasks 1195th Soldiers received after reporting to the Kearney armory the morning after the storm.

The National Weather Service office in Hastings issued its first tornado warning for the Kearney area at 4:58 p.m. on May 29 before at least two tornadoes began passing through and over the city on their way to Aurora and points east.

The storm left hundreds of trees uprooted while dozens of Kearney residents suffered severe roof damage. In all, estimates in excess of 30 damaged homes and several businesses were included in the initial reports.

The Kearney armory also



Details, Details: 1st Lt. Cory Huskey and Sgt. 1st Class Dan Mitchell coordinate duties for Soldiers of the 1195th Transportation Company at the emergency operations center located at the Department of Roads facility in Kearney.

received some damage, said Master Sgt. Bob Harpst.

“One overhead door was damaged and the lock on the gate to the vehicle compound was snapped off. But the strangest thing was a 45-50 foot culvert that was three-feet in diameter that must have weighed 800 pounds moved airborne several hundred yards to the north end of the airport from the area of the armory.”

Nebraska Soldiers mobilized for the emergency were assigned primarily to providing public safety and security.

“We are basically just traffic control for people that don’t need to be down that road,” said Sgt. B.J. Carlson of Minden as he stood at a traffic control point in the Kearney Industrial Park, which is located near the National Guard armory and nearby airport.

“The big issue is there are power lines leaning across the road. As far as we know the lines are dead... but we are just keeping everyone out except for

work crews and residents for safety purposes.”

Carlson said he expected to be called up as soon as the storm passed by.

“I am a member of the Minden Volunteer Fire Department and we had just returned to the fire hall after storm spotting. We were listening to the damage reports and were called up to be in Kearney the next morning.”

“This is pretty tame after Iraq and Katrina disaster relief” said Carlson, one of hundreds of Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers who supported the Katrina disaster relief or have been deployed to Iraq with Nebraska transportation units.

“A lot of people want to come in (the tree dump area,) but basically this is an exit point. So we have to tell them where to enter and dump trees. Most people are okay with it. We are basically just trying to move everyone smoothly through here,” said Sgt. Tim Cepel of the 1195th Trans. Co.



Tree Damage: Governor Dave Heineman, Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy and other officials survey the massive destruction of trees in Kearney’s Dryden Park during the governor’s assessment of tornado damage in the city.



Routine Duty: Sgt. B.J. Carlson and Pfc. Chris Loeffelholz pull duty at a debris drop off point at the Kearney industrial park, which is located near the National Guard armory and Kearney airport. “This is pretty tame after Iraq and Katrina disaster relief,” said Carlson.

Guard journalists tell stories in Kosovo

By Spc. Tegan Kucera
Staff Writer

While Kosovo became the world's top story, one Nebraska unit was there watching and helping tell the story.

The 111th Public Affairs Detachment has been in Kosovo since October. As a mobile public affairs unit, the detachment is made up of print and broadcast journalists who are responsible for covering stories on what American and coalition forces are doing

Probably the most unique opportunity, however, came in February when Kosovo proclaimed its independence.

"Actually being the unit that was stationed here when independence did happen was rewarding. We didn't really think it was going to happen," said 1st Lt. Lamartine Station, 111th PAD commander. "It felt good to know I was a part of that."

While in Kosovo the 111th PAD has many duties, including serving as the camp media center while also producing a monthly 32-page magazine, managing two Websites and coordinating with local media.

"It's been a learning experience for me," said Station. "I've done annual trainings and went down for Hurricane Katrina, but for me this is the full scope of public affairs operations."

The 111th PAD is part of Kosovo Forces (KFOR), which is a NATO mission. While in Kosovo, the unit has covered many different stories ranging from exercises to multi-national operations. Station said he prefers the ones

"The best day that I've had since I've been here was actually speaking with the people of Kosovo...finding out who they really are and being invited into their homes and seeing how they interact with people and how they interact with me."

—Sgt. Sheila Swantek

where Soldiers are helping the local Kosovo community.

Members of the 111th PAD agree. "I think getting out with the Soldiers and essentially being one (of them) is one of the coolest things," said Spc. Amanda Robinson, a broadcaster with the 111th PAD who has covered a variety of different stories while in Kosovo. "Instead of just interviewing people and coming upon a scene, to actually embed with them is probably the best way to do it. You get to feel what they're doing."

Robinson said one of the best missions she covered was a border patrol where an American squad patrolled the border with a Serbian squad to build relations with the foreign soldiers while also looking for smugglers and any other illegal activity.

"From what I understand I probably had one of the harder experiences out there because they just went off on a completely separate path," said Robinson.

"I thought the most interesting thing about it was that the maps (the Serbians) were using as opposed to the maps that we were using had completely different perspectives on where the boundary lines were. I never even put that into



Photo by Spc. Tegan Kucera

On Assignment: Spc. Amanda Robinson videotapes a Greek Army training exercise while deployed to Kosovo. Robinson is a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 111th Public Affairs Detachment.

consideration."

Since arriving in Kosovo, Robinson said, the 111th PAD Soldiers have made a good impression on the rest of Camp Bondsteel. "I think we do a pretty good job of just winning them over, so to speak," she said. "It seems as though everybody pretty much knows us because we're very visible."

According to Sgt. Sheila Swantek, print section noncommissioned officer-in-charge, helping tell the story of what the American and NATO troops are doing to help Kosovo remain peaceful has been a humbling experience.

"The best day that I've had since I've been here was actually speaking with the people of Kosovo...finding out who

they really are and being invited into their homes and seeing how they interact with people and how they interact with me...just seeing how thankful they are and seeing their true qualities," said Swantek.

Swantek said experiences like this have made the deployment worthwhile for her because they have taught her to treasure what she has even more.

"The biggest thing that I've probably have taken away is that the people of Kosovo don't look at who you are on the outside. They look at who you are on the inside. They appreciate everything so much. They don't take any thing for granted and every little thing to them counts," said Swantek.

Guard medical Soldiers expand skills during Korean mission

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's State Medical Detachment had a chance to learn about a new culture while also helping the staff of an active duty Army hospital when the detachment traveled to Seoul, South Korea, last year for their annual training.

Working at the 121st General Hospital at U.S. Army Garrison - Yongsan, the 30 Nebraska Army Guard medical Soldiers helped the hospital while much of the active duty Army staff participated in the Ulchi Focus Lens exercise.

According to Col. Dan Danaher, commander of the Lincoln-based detachment, the Nebraska Soldiers essentially worked in every area of the hospital that provides support to active and retired American service members, their families and members of the Republic of Korea military.

"When we got there and they saw who we were and what we could do... that kind of gave (the active Army staff) the opportunity to participate in this annual exercise," said Danaher, adding that the Nebraska team included doctors, nurses, physicians assistants, medics, and administrative and patient records specialists.

While in Korea, the Nebraskans were assigned to a variety of different hospital sections including the emergency room, various surgical departments, outpatient clinics, radiology, anesthesia, and patient administration. "We were operating shifts 24/7," said Danaher. "It was a great experience and they did a great job."

Danaher said that working in an active duty hospital was a unique opportunity for the members of the detachment. Typically, he said, the unit members deploy to places - like Central America or other exercise sites - in small teams, rotating every 14 days or so over a 90-day period.

"The goal was to mobilize as many of our troops possible," he said. "We've been doing (overseas missions) for a number of years...but typically you're on a mission where you have a PA or a doc and a garrison medic."

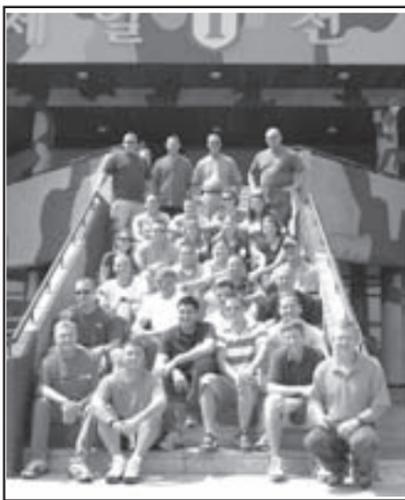
"The thought was that we needed to go more as a unit - take as many as we can and build that camaraderie and take what we learn here in Nebraska and function as a unit," Danaher added.

According to Maj. Darin Mongeon, an Army Guard physician's assistant who works fulltime as a civilian neurological and spinal surgery physicians assistant in Lincoln, the mission in Korea also gave the Nebraskans a chance to learn how to work with active duty medical providers in a hospital setting while also sharing with them some of the skills the Nebraskans have learned through their civilian professional life.

"We got used to integrating into a new working environment and they got used to having a National Guard team come in and just start working," said Mongeon. "It helps them real-



Overseas: (From left) Capt. Samantha Keech, Staff Sgt. James Young and Staff Sgt. Nicholas Effle take a break while working in the Emergency Room at the 121st General Hospital in Seoul, South Korea.



Photos courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Derek Whisenhunt

On The DMZ: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's State Medical Detachment pose for a group photo during a visit to the Demilitarized Zone in Korea.

ize the capabilities of the National Guard... that we're a resource that they can use."

Capt. Reuben Dennis Rieke Jr. agreed. An Army Guard PA who works as a neurosurgical physicians' assistant at the Uni-

versity of Nebraska Medical Center, Rieke said it didn't take long for the Army staff to begin utilizing the Nebraskans.

"We were thrown right into the operating arena," he said.

"Once they realized that we were trained, we were delivering babies with them, assisting in surgery."

The Korea deployment also gave the Nebraskan a chance to do something completely different than they normally get to do during weekend drill assemblies or within their civilian lives.

Take Sgt. Karie Chenell, for instance. A registered mental health nurse who works at the Lincoln Regional Center in her civilian, Chenell said the Korea mission gave her a chance to work as a medic in areas she normally doesn't for the Guard in Lincoln or at her civilian job.

"It was really cool because I'm a psych nurse on the civilian side (and I was) able to go and cross-train over in the (OB-GYN) area - the post-natal area," said Chenell, who also worked with Maj. Shirleen Smith in the surgical department. "It was really cool to be able to watch the baby assessments and those types of things."

Along with working in "literally every area of the hospital," the Korea mission also gave the Nebraskans a chance to experience Korea's rich culture while also learning about its current strategic value. This was definitely amplified dur-

ing a day-long visit to the Demilitarized Zone.

According to Smith, who serves as the detachment's head nurse, the Guardsmen were deeply influenced by the visit to the DMZ where they were able to see how the Korea peninsula still remains very much separated between north and south along a four-mile, mine-laden border and how a building - half in North Korea and half in South Korea - still remains as the principal negotiating site between the two sides.

"It's just a very clear dramatization of the divisions that exist," said Smith.

Chenell echoed that comment. "It was very powerful. It was somewhat emotional because of the political unrest that continues to this day."

Chenell said the visit to the DMZ made her realize how lucky she is to have born where she was.

"We take for granted the freedom that democracy gives us," she said. "It did open up my perspective because we were right there. It's one thing to read about it in the news, but we were right there."

Overall, said Danaher, the Nebraskans made a positive impression on the hospital staff during their stay in Korea.

"It was a great experience," he said. "In the National Guard you train two days a month versus in the active military 30 days a month, but when we hit the ground, we hit the ground running."

"They were very impressed with the speed, knowledge and ability of all of the Soldiers there where they could step right in and provide services to the patients and not have to ask a lot of questions."

'Few good farmers' heading to Afghanistan

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When Col. Mike Johnson began searching for members of the Nebraska Army National Guard to fill out the state's first Afghan Agribusiness Development Team (ADT) earlier this year, he liked to joke that he was looking for "a few good farmers."

He got that and more.

According to Johnson, who will serve as the commander of the team that will soon be deploying to eastern Afghanistan to help local farmers develop their own internal agricultural system, more than 120 Soldiers from across Nebraska volunteered for the 53 available positions.

Johnson said it's easy to see why the deployment was such an "easy" sell to the Guardsmen – many of whom have already served overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan for a year or more during previous deployments.

"(Nebraska has) agriculture as part of our background," he said. "I think the reason I had so many volunteers is it's a humanitarian mission where we're going to be helping folks right off from the start."

"Everybody's interested in helping people grow enough food to live on," Johnson said.

One of those who volunteered was Sgt. 1st Class Michelle Meyer, who will work as an administrative sergeant in Afghanistan. She said she's fascinated by the chance to do something that will have a dramatic affect on the lives of ordinary Afghans.

"I think it's going to be an eye-opener for a lot of us," she said.

To understand what the Nebraska team will be doing, one must first understand a little bit of recent Afghanistan history.

Prior to the 1979 Soviet invasion, Afghanistan had a fairly robust agricultural system, typically growing enough food to feed its own citizens while leaving enough left over to allow the Afghans to export a few of their crops to neighboring countries.

However, as the Soviets became bogged down in the Afghan war, one of the strategies the Soviets employed in an attempt to pacify the country was to drive the nation's farmers into the cities through aerial bombing and a massive seeding of mines throughout the nation's fertile valleys.

"Those farmers who had enough money, left Afghanistan for neighboring countries," said Johnson. Those who didn't migrated into the cities, taking their understanding of dry-land farming techniques with them.

When the Soviets finally departed Afghanistan in 1989, they left in their wake the hard-line Taliban and other local warlords who continued to fight a long civil war for control of the country, essentially devastating what was left of the nation's agricultural infrastructure.

What agricultural capabilities remained were soon turned over to the illicit growing of poppies and opium production to the point that by 2007 the State Department estimated that Afghanistan

supplied 93 percent of the world's opium.

According to Johnson, who traveled with an ADT from the Texas National Guard earlier this spring, the Taliban is extremely interesting in seeing this illicit drug trade continue because it's such a huge source of income.

"Honestly, the Taliban is like the mob," said Johnson. "They're forcing (the Afghan farmers) to grow poppies when they would honestly choose to grow food products."

The Nebraska ADT will be the third such team from the National Guard to work in Afghanistan, following in the footsteps of similar teams from Missouri and Texas. According to Johnson, the Nebraska team will be working in four eastern provinces to help area farmers develop such things as improved irrigation, erosion control systems, seed preservation and cool storage systems.

The team will also work to help the Afghans reestablish a market for their excess crops, hopefully recreating the export system the Afghan farmers enjoyed prior to 1979.

According to Johnson, the need is particularly great in Afghanistan where past decades of war have deteriorated not only the nation's agricultural infrastructure, but also the knowledge of how to farm that had previously been passed down from generation to generation of Afghans.

"It's documented that they do not have enough food source from one growing season to the next," said Johnson. "And now they're running into a crunch where the higher wheat prices are hitting them. So, even if wheat's available, it's difficult for them to afford it."

"We're honestly not going to target the poppy operation, but we're really going to try and give them a choice," said Johnson. "The normal Afghan wants to take care of his family. If he has the means to grow food to feed them for a year, we're hoping he chooses that over growing a poppy crop."

Johnson said the concept of the ADT was created about a year ago as officials looked for ways to help Afghan farmers develop alternatives to growing poppies.

The more officials studied the problem of getting agricultural experts into the field to help the Afghans, the more they realized that the mission was perfect for the National Guard – particularly those National Guard units that come from agricultural states where a high percentage of Guardsmen are involved in agricultural fields in their civilian careers.

Johnson admits the team – which is made up of a 12-person agricultural development section along with a security force element and headquarters personnel – has a big job in front of it.

"We're going back to the early 1900s," he said, adding that modern equipment like motorized tractors and other modern equipment is nonexistent. "They're so short of equipment over there. It's teams of oxen... and some of them can't even afford a team of oxen."

ADTs currently in Afghanistan are already having an impact, however. For example, he said, one area's grape crop was nearly doubled by simply getting the



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Training: Members of the Afghanistan Agribusiness Development Team watch a pair of Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers tackle a combat movement course at Camp Ashland.

vines off the ground and into trellises similar to those found in California.

That idea was developed by members of the Missouri ADT.

Johnson said he hopes to help the Afghans in the eastern region develop a more effective way of growing such crops as corn, wheat and potatoes in the fertile mountain valleys that make up the region. He said the team is also looking at ways to develop a new system of greenhouses to help in the cultivation of vegetables and better irrigation techniques through the use of windmills.

The team is also looking at helping stem the erosion problem through the construction of check dams and tree planting efforts – things that would not have been all that unfamiliar to the farmers who first settled Nebraska in the late 19th Century.

In order to prepare for the challenges of their deployment, Johnson and three other team members recently completed a three-week training session at the University of the Nebraska-Omaha Center for Afghan Studies where the Guardsmen learned more about the current political climate in Afghanistan, how religion and geography affects daily life, and language training.

Additionally, individual members of the team have been tasked to research and develop plans for the different agricultural issues in Afghanistan while also developing groups of Nebraska agricultural experts the Guardsmen can call upon for help once the Soldiers arrive in Afghanistan.

Johnson said the research has already caused surprising developments. For example, he said, the Guardsmen recently learned that Scottsbluff and Gering, Neb., have already established a "sister city" relationship with Afghanistan's Bamian Province. That same region, he added, is particularly interested in developing a sugar beet crop similar to the crops currently being grown near the western Nebraska towns.

He's also counting on the team's experience to help answer issues as they occur



Map Reading Test: Pfc. Peter Blackburn takes down the coordinates on a target during a map-reading test conducted at Camp Ashland during pre-mobilization training for members of the Afghanistan Agribusiness Development Team.

in Afghanistan. "Honestly, I was looking at people who could do more than one job," said Johnson about how he selected members of the ADT. "With our requirements and our mission, everyone is going to have to pick up several responsibilities."

"A number of folks out of the remainder of the team have Ag backgrounds. I'm not specifically naming as Ag experts, but they're going to bring their ideas and their assistance to our mission," he said. "I told them when we're facing issues we'll take any and all ideas." It's that type of collective work Johnson said he hopes will translate into success.

"When I was recruiting for this team, I said I was looking for a few good farmers," he said. "I also said, 'We're going to plant a few seeds and grow a nation.'"

GREECE continued from page 1.

Overall, the unit recorded 286.5 flight hours during the 61 sorties it flew during the 34-day deployment.

Most members were deployed for 15- or 30-day rotations, running 12-hour shifts around the clock.

According to the Air Guardsmen, the refueling efforts saved many Soldiers, Marines and Airmen from having to travel in dangerous convoys.

"Essentially our KC 135s refueled those other cargo aircraft to make sure our troops made it home safely or that our troops on the ground were able to ensure that they received the tools and equipment to be suc-

cessful in their mission," said Capt. Jemmell Carter, a new maintenance officer with the 155th ARW.

"We kept a lot of the long convoys – that would have normally put them in harms way – off the roads. The aircraft can take all their equipment and get it there quickly and safely for them," said Carter of his first deployment with the unit.

Carter, who served in the active Air Force for 12 years prior to transferring to the Air Guard in December, said he was proud of the service the whole unit provided while deployed.

"We met 100 percent of missions," said Carter. "That re-

ally is the nuts and bolts of it."

Carter had been on deployments with the active duty Air Force, but this was his first with the Air National Guard.

"I appreciate how the Guard looks out for their troops," said Carter.

"You definitely look out for the troops a whole lot more than active duty in the sense that we have guys that have been here so many years and a good culture on how we do business."

The 155th ARW also had a chance to lend a hand to other units on the base.

"The host Air Force unit from the 488th Intelligence Squad-

ron worked hard to help us set up our (communications) network. When that was done, our Comm folks then went to work for them and helped pull computer lines and software things they had on the back burner for a while," said Stevenson.

On the maintenance side, Detachment 1, 95th Reconnaissance Squadron, had aircraft generation equipment that was awaiting parts or had been inoperable for some time.

Members of the 155th ARW repaired some of their equipment and got it working.

The 95th RS is out of Mildenhall Air Base, England, but belongs to 55th Wing at

Offutt Air Force Base, a base that the 155th ARW frequently works with in Nebraska.

The Nebraskans' efforts left positive impressions on many people and units that interacted with the 155th ARW while deployed, said Stevenson.

"There is no greater compliment essentially than being complimented by another commander," said Stevenson.

"We discharged ourselves in a manner that people in Nebraska can be proud of. Our folks really knocked that one out of the park. They made my job easy and fun by going over and above, which is typical of our members."

Where Is He? Morgan Kuklis, 12, stands on her tiptoes to look for the bus bringing her father, Master Sgt. Jeff Kuklis, back to Nebraska after a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes



Photo by David Nore

Targets In Sight: The crowd awaiting outside of the 'Spirit of 1776' armory in Lincoln bursts into cheers as the bus bringing their family members home turns into the armory parking lot.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Welcome Home Daddy: Maj. Charles Blankman is mobbed by his sons, Michael, Riley and Andy after stepping off a bus during the welcome home ceremony for the Afghan National Army – Embedded Training Team '07.

Afghan training team welcomed home with hugs, tears, cheers

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Four-year-old Carter Kuklis knew it was a big day when he woke up May 13.

For the past 15-months, a huge paper-link chain that had once wrapped around his room had steadily shrunk daily, link by link, as the young boy marked the time until his father, Master Sgt. Jeff Kuklis, returned home from a deployment to Afghanistan.

Now, the chain was down to its last link.

Yet, instead of removing the last paper ring, Carter had a different plan for that one. A truly special plan.

"He said 'I want daddy to take it off,'" said Stacy Kuklis, Jeff's wife as she, Carter and Kuklis' two daughters – Morgan, 12, and Karlee, 21-months, waited anxiously near the doors of the "Spirit of 1776" armory in Lincoln for the bus that would bring their Soldier and 15 other Nebraska Army Guardsmen back home.

"This is a huge day for us," said Stacy. "We've been waiting for this for a long time. It's very exciting. We're ready for it to be over with."

Morgan Kuklis agreed, adding that she knew exactly what she wanted to do as soon as she saw her dad.

"Hug him," she said, "and probably play outside and do stuff with him."

It was a story that probably could've been echoed at least another 15 times by the other waiting families of the Guard



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Standing Tall: Master Sgt. Jeff Kuklis stands with his son Carter during the welcome home ceremony for members of Afghan National Army – Embedded Training Team '07. The team spent a year in Afghanistan training Afghan soldiers and policemen.

Soldiers who had come from Nebraska Army National Guard units from across the state to form the Afghan National Army – Embedded Training Team '07.

While in Afghanistan, the Soldiers – who became known as "Team Spartan" – were broken down into smaller detachments and then sent to locations across southern Afghanistan where they were responsible for providing mentorship to members of the fledgling Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police Force.

According to the team's commander, Lt. Col. Michael Deger, the Soldiers returned home to Nebraska with a lot to be proud of.

"Fifteen months ago Team Spartan consisting of 16 Nebraska National Guard servicemen set off on a journey as embedded trainers to the country of Afghanistan with the aim of

training, advising and mentoring the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police," said Deger during the welcome home ceremony. "The intent was to make them better and without question we did that."

"Your Spartans – these Spartans – they were at the front of groundbreaking actions across most of southern Afghanistan," Deger told the welcome home crowd that consisted of hundreds of friends, families, state and local dignitaries, and fellow Nebraska Guardsmen.

"Whether initiating some of the very first partnerships with the Afghan National Police forces or continuing the process of building, training and stabilizing the Afghan National Army, the Spartans were there taking the lead and making a difference."

"You would've been very proud to have seen these men perform," Deger added. "Given the stresses of combat, the conditions of austere and remote locations – and I mean very remote – and the conditions and challenges associated with multi-national, multi-cultural warfare and combat operations, it was not easy business."

Gov. Dave Heineman, one of several state and local leaders who publicly greeted the Guardsmen, said it was a great day to be able to welcome the Soldiers back to Nebraska.

"Welcome home and I want you to know as your commander-in-chief that there is not a more proud day for me than to have all of you back," he said.

"Thank you for your service to our country. Yesterday I had a birthday... I can't think of a better birthday present than to have you all back home."

Heineman added that he



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

All Smiles: Capt. Spencer Giles and his son Darby exchange smiles during the May 13 welcome home ceremony for members of Afghan National Army – Embedded Training Team '07.

was both humbled and proud in the knowledge that the Soldiers and their families had sacrificed much to help make a difference in Afghanistan.

"To see the young children waiting here today to see their dads, it's pretty special," said Heineman. "I want you to know that we are really proud of you."

Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, seconded those thoughts.

"You know that you were at this nation's tip of the spear as you served in Afghanistan, training the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police Force," Kadavy told the assembled Soldiers, adding that the work done by the Nebraskans has helped America set the stage for some day leaving an Afghanistan that is capable of defending itself and its people.

"The work that you have done over the past year has helped them take a giant step forward," he said.

According to Capt. Spencer Giles, who spent most of welcome home ceremony quietly playing with his two-and-a-half year-old son Darby while his nine-month-old daughter Joselyn and girlfriend Jana Humphrey sat close by, it was

great to be home. It was also great to know that he had made a small, but significant contribution while serving in Afghanistan.

"Words really can't explain being home. It's surreal," said Giles who helped mentor the Afghan national security forces. "Overall it was a great mission. It's going to take a long time until it's truly successful, but that's just kind of the nature of insurgency operations."

"It's a great mission," he added. "Hopefully when my next deployment comes up I end up back in the same theater working with the same people and I can see the progress that they've made."

Later, after being hugged and kissed repeatedly by his family, Kuklis, who also marked the time away in series of calendars he had hung in his room northwest of Kandahar, said it was hard to believe that he was back in Nebraska again.

"You sit here and think, 'Man that year went fast.' But then you think about it, and a lot of things have happened over the last year," said Kuklis.

"It feels surreal to be here. I'm anxious to get going and get back to my life... to be a family again."

'Jolly Roger' symbol to be featured on tanker nose

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

A smiling Jolly Roger symbol will soon be making its way to the nose of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker.

That's the news that came out of a ceremony, May 14, at Elwood High School when the Nebraska Air National Guard unveiled the winner of the 2008 "Nose Art" competition.

"We appreciate the great artwork that was submitted by all three of the entries," said Col. Rick Evans, commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing commander during the announcement ceremony held during an all-school assembly attended by elementary, middle school and high school students. "It was a tough choice for us and we like that... all three would look good on our aircraft."

"Of course, whenever you have a competition, you have to narrow it down to one," Evans added.

Winning this year's competition was Brandon Randolph, a 14-year-old Elwood High School freshman who is the son of Michelle and Jeremy Randolph. His artwork featured a huge skull and crossbones symbol of his high school's "Pirate" mascot surrounded by other scenes familiar to Elwood including a farming landscape, lake recreation and golfing.

Randolph said he spent approximately a week working on the artwork while constantly drawing and redrawing each feature of the logo to make sure it was 'just right.'

He added that he knew his logo would feature the pirate symbol before he even started. He then started thinking about the other things Elwood is known for.

"I tried to show the town of Elwood. I tried to do as much as I could in the town," said

Randolph about his logo. "Then I moved on to other things that are associated with Elwood, like the golf course, the lake (and) the farming that goes on."

Randolph said he didn't have a clue that he would win the competition until his artwork was finally unveiled.

"I was just thinking that whoever got it, I was happy for them," he said. "And then it was me."

The nose art competition is a Nebraska Air Guard community outreach program in its fourth year. In it, the contributions of local communities are recognized by asking a nominated community's artists to design a distinctive logo to be placed on the nose of a Air Guard tanker for a minimum of a year.

In being the 2008 spotlight community, Elwood joins Central City, Hastings and West Point, Neb. The community was originally nominated by Elwood natives 1st Lt. Joseph Remmenga, 155th Operations Group, and Staff Sgt. Eric Hilton, Master Sgt. Clint Snider and Tech. Sgt. James Kenning of the 155th Maintenance Squadron.

Hilton and Kenning both attended the ceremony in Elwood and had a chance to talk to the students about what they do in the Nebraska Air Guard and how they contribute to keeping the 155th ARW's aircraft mission-ready. Both later said they were pleased with the final artwork that was selected.

"I thought that it was good for the community of Elwood and good for the kids to get involved," said Hilton, a hydraulics journeyman who graduated from Elwood High School in 1996. He said he wasn't surprised that the selected Elwood logo featured a pirate symbol.

"All three were kind of along the same lines. I thought they were all pretty good and about what I expected them to be."

Kenning agreed.

"It's really cool. I'm very happy," said Kenning, a ma-



Artist Ahoy: Brandon Randolph, a 14-year-old Elwood High School freshman, holds his pirate-themed Elwood logo that won the Nebraska Air National Guard Nose Art competition, May 14. Elwood High School's mascot is a pirate.

chinist in the Metal Technology Shop who graduated from Elwood High School in 1998. "I was kind of hoping that it would be something that kind of resembled a pirate. That's our mascot and we're pretty big about sports and stuff at our school. And it's a small school, so we take a lot of pride in our mascot."

Kenning added: "I'm real excited. I can't wait to see it on the side of our plane."

The symbol will be officially unveiled on the aircraft later this summer before an invited crowd of Elwood citizens. The logo will then stay on the aircraft for at least a year, during which the community will receive periodic updates about where "their" aircraft has traveled to, said Chief Master Sgt. Terry Knapp, 155th Maintenance Squadron equipment flight supervisor who retired with 35-and-a-half years in the service a day after the announcement.



Homecoming: (Front from left) Elwood, Neb., natives Staff Sgt. Eric Hilton and Tech. Sgt. James Kenning answer elementary school students' questions about their jobs in the Nebraska Air National Guard. Standing behind them is Chief Master Sgt. Terry Knapp.

Knapp has served as the primary nose art program coordinator for the past three years.

Evans said Elwood can be rightfully proud of "its" aircraft as well as the work that its native sons do for the Nebraska

Air National Guard.

"As a city and community, you can be proud of Elwood being represented on that aircraft," he said. "We're really looking forward to seeing (that logo) on our aircraft."

Air Guard helps NORAD mark 50th birthday

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Nebraska Air Guard is helping the North American Air Defense Command celebrate its 50th birthday by being the first Air Guard unit to put a distinctive NORAD logo on the nose of one of the 155th Air Refueling Wing's KC-135R Stratotankers.

According to Chief Master Sgt. Barb Gossage, 155th ARW command chief master sergeant who also works full-time for NORAD and U.S. Northern Command in Colorado Springs, Colo., the logo is designed to recognize units that are currently assigned to air defense units or those that were once assigned to help NORAD protect the aerial sovereignty of Canada and the United States.

NORAD first stood up on Sept. 12, 1957, at Ent Air Force Base, Colo. It grew into its current configuration on May 12, 1957, when the governments of Canada and the United States ratified and signed the initial agreement sanctioning shared air defense command arrangements for all of North America.

The Nebraska Air Guard has served several different roles within the NORAD framework over the years. Beginning in



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

On The Nose: A new 50th Anniversary of NORAD logo sports the nose of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker.

1954, the Nebraska Air Guard's 173rd Fighter Interceptor Squadron was assigned to the Air Defense Command. The 173rd's mission was to maintain a level of effectiveness to destroy enemy airborne weapons and provide base services to support the flying mission.

The unit remained a fighter intercept unit until May 1963 when the 155th Fighter Group was transitioned into an aerial reconnaissance organization.

The Nebraska Air Guard has served a more modern role with NORAD recently, most notably beginning during the hours following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks when tanker crews belonging to the 155th ARW began supporting combat air patrol aircraft flying over American cities as part of Operation Noble Eagle.

Boys Town makes Army National Guard medic honorary citizen

By Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

Sergeant Heather Springer, a Nebraska Army National Guard medic, was made an Honorary Citizen of Boys Town during her visit with the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) classes at Boys Town, April 2.

Springer, a nursing student at the University of Nebraska Medical Center Nursing School in Lincoln and a 2002 graduate from Lincoln High School, was recently recognized by her military peers when she named the "DUSTOFF Medic of the Year" for bravery under fire after she rescued wounded American Soldiers in Iraq last summer.

Springer also received a Bronze Star for Valor for her actions in Iraq, making her just the second female Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier in recent memory to receive the prestigious medal.

At that time, Springer was a flight medic with the Lincoln-based Company C (Air Ambulance), 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

Sergeant Springer was invited by Lt. Col. Kevin Lee, JROTC director to share her experiences from Iraq and the military with the JROTC cadets.

Following her presentation, Father Steven Boes, national executive direc-



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland

Honorary Citizen: Father Steven Boes, national executive director for Boys Town, presents Sgt. Heather Springer, a Nebraska Army National Guard flight medic, with a certificate of Honorary Citizenship and miniature version of the "He not heavy, he's my brother" statue located at the front entrance to Boys Town, after Springer spoke to Boys Town Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps students about her experience in Iraq.

tor for Boys Town, presented Springer with a certificate of Honorary Citizenship and miniature version of the "He not heavy, he's my brother" statue located at the front entrance to Boys Town.

Guard Soldiers WOC around Camp Ashland



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Warrant Officers Hit Road In May: Members of Warrant Officer Candidate Class 01-08 participate in a four-mile rucksack march, May 16, at Camp Ashland, Neb. Currently, 11 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers are enrolled in the first Warrant Officer Candidate School class to be held at Camp Ashland, Neb. The Guard Soldiers are currently in the second phase of their course and should graduate as new warrant officer ones in July after completing phase three of the course at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

Look for story and photos in the August 2008 Prairie Soldier



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Eye On The Bucket: A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief keeps an eye on his aircraft's 'Bambi bucket' during a training exercise, May 1 at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Bambi Bucket Training

Army Guard helicopter crews practice putting rain down on wildfires

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A wildfire wouldn't have stood a chance May 1.

As part of the Nebraska National Guard's continuing preparations for the upcoming fire season, Army Guard helicopter crews spent the day completing their annual 'Bambi bucket' training by practicing dropping thousands of gallons of water onto simulated fires near Camp Ashland, Neb.

According to Capt. James Siedenber, Army Aviation Support Facility #1 operations officer, a total of seven Army Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilots and nine crewmembers practiced dipping water with a 500-gallon 'Bambi bucket' from a nearby sandpit pond and dropping it onto simulated fires during the final hands-on exercise of a three-day 'red card' certification process designed to qualify the crews to fight fires on federal land.

"We try to do the training annually right before fire season starts so that we're ready if needed," said Siedenber.

"The best time to do that training is in late April or early May when the ground is just beginning to dry out from winter because once it does, we're back into fire season again."

According to Siedenber, this year's training was particularly important because a number of the crews haven't conducted this type of training for awhile.

This time last year, the crews were

deployed to Iraq as members of Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

The fire fighting training included two days of classroom work where crews learned about federal wildfire regulations from officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, and about air space regulations and restrictions over a federal wildfire from the Forest Service's air operations specialist.

Siedenber said that in order to respond to a fire on federally owned land, crews must first have received federal 'red card' training. In receiving this training, the crews are now available to respond to state and federal fire disasters.

Along with the classroom training, the crews also learned how to set up emergency fire shelters and also how to use various flying and dropping techniques to place water in a manner that will best help ground fire crews defeat a wide variety of blazes.

During the final exercise, crews took turns dipping water from a sandpit pond near Camp Ashland and then took turns 'bombarding' a simulated fire during an operation that looked similar to both a racecar track and aerial ballet as two helicopters orbited around the lake, each taking turns dipping and dropping water.

According to Col. Scott Gronewold, acting Nebraska Army National Guard state aviation officer, the training is a major part of the state's effort to be prepared for the wide array of missions



Bringing Rain: A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew practices dropping water from a dangling 'Bambi bucket' during a fire fighting training exercise held May 1 at Camp Ashland, Neb. The exercise was designed to prepare and certify Nebraska Army Guard helicopter crews to fight wild fires. According to Nebraska Army aviation officials, a total of 16 crew members participated in the training.

it might be called upon to do at a moment's notice.

"It accomplished three things for us," said Gronewold. "Number one, to be ready to react to a state emergency. Number two, to be ready to react to a federal emergency. And number three, it's just great training for external loads."

"We have an external load mission and a water bucket is essentially just a variation of an external load," he said. "So, whether it's carrying critical supplies to the battlefield or carrying a bucket of water, it applies many of the same concepts."

Gronewold said that he's comfortable that the Army Guard pilots are ready to go.

"These pilots have been put under stress, so I'm confident in their abilities to make good decisions in stressful conditions," he said. "These are very smart and intelligent aviators who I've got a lot of confidence in."



Round Robin Training: Two Nebraska Army Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crews take turns dipping water from a sandpit pond near Camp Ashland using their 500-gallon 'Bambi buckets.'

Air Guard continues annual Memorial Day aerial salute

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard continued its long-standing tradition of performing flyovers on Memorial Day to honor the state's fallen military heroes, May 26.

Flying low over the rolling prairie of eastern and central Nebraska, a volunteer KC-135R Stratotanker crew from the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing flew over 71 Nebraska cemeteries and events.

The Nebraska Air Guard has conducted Memorial Day flyovers since the 1970s, according to Col. Rick Evans III, commander of the 155th ARW.

Evans has planned all of the events held since 1987.

"There have been a couple of years bad weather kept us from flying," said Evans.

The highlights of the route included flyovers of Lincoln's Wyuka and Memorial Park Cemeteries.

Omaha's Westlawn/Hillcrest Cemetery was included this year in conjunction with Governor Dave Heineman's dedication of a new military section of the cemetery. Other major locations include Norfolk, Columbus and Grand Island.

In total the route covered approximately 650 miles and included some of Nebraska's largest and smallest communities. Evans said the unit is proud to continue its tradition

of saluting the state's veterans.

That feeling is magnified considering the nature of current combat missions being conducted overseas by members of the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard.

"The Nebraska Air National Guard is honored to pay tribute to the many brave Americans who have served and continue to serve their country so well," said Evans a few days prior to Memorial Day.

"These flyovers salute their courage and sacrifice in the face of danger," he added.

Evans noted that the flyovers also salute the communities that have supported their hometown military members serving in times of war and peace.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Saluting America's Fallen Vets: A Nebraska Air Guard KC-135R Stratotanker flies over veterans graves at Elmwood, Neb.

AIRCRAFT continued from page 1.

Stratotanker community to meet two separate requirements, said Col. Rick Evans III, 155th ARW commander.

"This is essentially tied a little bit to (the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission) and a little bit to the acceleration of the retirement of the KC-135 E-model aircraft," said Evans.

According to Evans, the 2006 BRAC report directed the Air Force to speed up its retirement of the aging KC-135E fleet and replace it with the more modernized R-model aircraft like the ones the 155th ARW flies.

In order to do this, every current Air Guard KC-135R unit – with the exception of the Hawaii Air Guard – was directed to reassign its BAI aircraft to those units either transitioning to the KC-135 mission or upgrading from KC-135E model aircraft.

"So, our BAI aircraft is being transferred to Forbes, Kan., to become a PAI airplane," Evans said.

According to Evans, this is the second time that the Nebraska Air Guard has seen its aircraft sent to a different unit since it transitioned into the aerial refueling mission in the early 1990s.

In 1994, the wing – which was at the time a 10 PAI organization – sent two aircraft to Alaska. That reorganization – because it involved two of the wing's primary aircraft and not its backup – resulted in a loss of approximately 45-50 unit positions and unit flying hours.

Evans said that when the wing learned of National Guard Bureau's plans, they immediately asked NGB to provide more information before agreeing to release the aircraft to Kansas.

"Our main issue when we were told that they wanted us to transfer this aircraft was, 'Are we being treated fairly in the process?'" Evans said.

That process began with Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke and continued on into Brig. Tim Kadavy's term as adjutant general.

"It took a while, but we finally got the answer. The bottom line is nobody is going to have a BAI airplane in the KC-135 community in the Guard, other than Hawaii."

Evans said the decision affects nine other eight PAI units like Nebraska, all of whom are sending their backup aircraft to other Air Guard KC-135 units.

"So, we're not alone. There's going to be a whole bunch of other units doing the same thing that we're doing," Evans said.

Evans said wing leaders looked at a variety of things to decide which aircraft to send to Kansas. One of the biggest issues, he said, was determining which aircraft could be released without adversely affecting the unit's ability continue supporting missions while also preparing for its all-important operational readiness inspection next January.

Also factored in was a future change in the intervals between major aircraft inspections that each aircraft must undergo, from 12-months to 18-months.

Still, Evans said, it was a tough choice.

"These tail numbers that are assigned to us become ours. It's kind of like a classic car that you've done a lot of work on," said Evans, adding that he knew no matter what the decision was, it was going to be felt deeply by the crew chiefs who work on the aircraft.

"It was tough picking out a tail number," he said. "But it's kind of like hiring a job. You've got to settle on one. It's not easy to do, but we did settle on one."

Unlike 1995, when the 155th ARW lost unit members during the transition, this movement will not affect any personnel positions or a loss of flight hours. That's because it involves a backup aircraft instead of a primary aircraft, to which flight hours and manning are assigned.

Still, the loss of the aircraft will not be without some stresses on the unit, said Col. Keith Schell, 155th Maintenance Group commander.

"We're not changing how many hours we're flying. We're not changing the number of missions. We're not changing the duration of missions. So, we now have to use eight airplanes to fly the same amount of hours and accomplish the same amount of missions we did with nine airplanes," said Schell.

While that may not seem like



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Hard To Say Goodbye: (From left) Master Sgt. Kim Davila and Staff Sgt. Kyle Fastenau pose for a photo next to the Nebraska Air Guard KC-135R Stratotanker that was transferred to the Kansas Air Guard in May. Also serving as crew chiefs on the aircraft were Staff Sgt. Jim Daberkow and Staff Sgt. Dan Westman.

a major problem on the surface, it does have potential ramifications. Under the old nine airplane system, the unit typically was able to accomplish its training requirements, mission assignments and rigid maintenance inspection program by essentially having a spare aircraft to fit in wherever needed.

Thus, when the wing would deploy overseas on an aerospace expeditionary force mission to a location such as Incirlik, Turkey, the unit could have one or two aircraft in various inspection processes, while still leaving additional aircraft available to conduct mid-deployment rotations and flying training in Lincoln.

With only eight airplanes to meet the same flying and maintenance requirements, the 155th ARW will now have to focus even harder on finding ways around the various conflicting schedules, said Schell.

For example, he said, if the unit is supporting an AEF mission with several aircraft while two of its aircraft are in various inspection cycles, that will leave the wing with only a few aircraft to accomplish its ongoing training requirements and rotation schedule.

If one of those aircraft has a maintenance issue that forces it to be grounded? "We may have to rely on other Guard units to help with our AEF," said Schell. "Just like other units are going to have to rely on us."

Another aspect of the change will be the emotional impact it will have on the crew chiefs and maintenance technicians who

have supported the aircraft since they arrived in Lincoln and have literally put their "blood, sweat and tears" into making the aircraft the best KC-135s in the entire Air Force inventory.

"If you ask anybody who flies in our planes, these planes are just pristine," said Schell. "And it's due a lot to these crew chiefs. They're the ones who go up there and polish things up. They make sure they're clean. They take care of the little nittanoids that become problems. They help with the specialists."

"The same thing with the specialists. The specialists work on these planes and they know these planes inside and out," said Schell. "They know what they might have to tweak a little bit here or there to keep the aircraft in the fantastic shape that they are. So, now they're losing one of their planes."

Davila definitely knows what Schell is talking about. "Crew chiefs like to think each aircraft has its own personality and each aircraft acts accordingly," she said. "Sometimes you have to give it some encouragement and some coaxing."

Davila said she will particularly miss the aircraft she deployed with to so many different countries. One deployment in particular sticks out.

Following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the aircraft was the first Nebraska Air Guard airplane to be sent to Moron Air Base, Spain, where the unit helped set up the air bridge over the Atlantic Ocean to Central Asia as part of what would become Operation Enduring Freedom.

While in Spain, Davila and other crew chiefs decided to have a nose art logo designed featuring an American bald eagle and the twin World Trade Center towers that would stay on the aircraft for several years, effectively marking the aircraft as the first Nebraska Air Guard aircraft to support the Global War on Terror overseas.

That memory, said Davila, is going away with the aircraft.

"I think what is hardest is thinking that there is going to be a new crew chief working on it,"

she said. "Will they treat it with the same respect and caring that we did? That's what I think is the hardest about watching it leave."

Schell said the crew chiefs who worked on the departing aircraft will be reassigned into the crews on the other aircraft. Davila will continue working on aircraft as the lead crew chief on a different Nebraska Air Guard KC-135R.

Schell added that, even though the crew chiefs will now have to learn the varying 'personalities' of their new aircraft, he doesn't see any major impact from the team shakeups due to the fact that the aircraft crew chiefs typically work interchangeably together on each other's aircraft during overseas deployments.

"All of our crew chiefs will work together," Schell said. "If you look at our deployments, sure they're assigned to their aircraft, but when they deploy, they work with different people... they work with everybody constantly."

"I don't think it's going to be a big problem," he added.

According to Evans, once the conversion of Air Guard units to the KC-135R is accomplished by about 2011, there will be approximately seven or eight aircraft that will then be redistributed back to the eight PAI units as new backups.

"I would tell folks that right now, we're in the same boat as everybody else," he said. "Although we would've loved to have been able to have kept it, it's in the best interests of the Guard as a whole to transfer it to Kansas and help them get through their conversion."

"In FY-11, we're going to come back and make a strong case for the backup aircraft to return here," Evans said. "It probably won't be the same tail number, but it will hopefully be another jet on the ramp to help us do the mission."

Until then, Evans said, he feels good – and the rest of the unit should as well – in the knowledge that they are sending one of the very best KC-135s in the Air Force to Kansas.

"I'm sure Kansas is going to be very happy with the product they receive down there on the flightline and flying that jet around the world," Evans said.

"And when we get a new airplane in FY-11 hopefully, we'll take that on and do a good job with it as well."

Understanding ARFORGEN

■ New mobilization cycle designed to give Soldiers' families, employers more predictability

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

As the Nebraska National Guard transitions from a strategic reserve to an operational force, Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers will most likely be required to attend more frequent drill training assemblies and additional annual training periods preparing for mobilizations.

And that's good news for Army Guard families and employers.

Those two statements may seem at odds. However, under a new system of preparing units for mobilizations, the extra days of training spread over a one-to-two-year period prior to an Army Guard mobilization will in turn pay off in terms of extra weeks and even months that Soldiers will be able to remain with families and employers prior to that one-year deployment.

Called the ARFORGEN cycle – which stands for Army Force Generation – Army Guard units are now focusing their attention on conducting pre-mobilization during the two-year period prior to being available for deployment.

The new system is designed to give unit commanders the flexibility to create training plans that cause the least negative impact to Soldiers' families and their employers, according to Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska.

"The key to ARFORGEN is predictability for Soldiers, families and employers," said Kadavy. "The new mobilization policy limits the time away to 12 months from door step to door step. This means more time preparing during pre-mobilization training, rather than lengthy time at a post mobilization training station."

"While a Soldier will do longer drill weekends, and in some cases an additional drill weekend in a month, the return for the time invested is the reduction of mobilization from 18 months to 12 months," Kadavy said. "We are working to wisely use the addi-

tional pre-mobilization time in a way that will limit its impact on families and employers."

According to Col. Judd Lyons, Nebraska Army National Guard state training and operations officer, ARFORGEN was designed to replace the old Cold War method of mobilizing reserve units.

Within that framework, Army Guard units would often receive very little notice – sometimes just days or weeks – that they were mobilizing, leaving the Army Guard Soldiers with little time to prepare families and employers for their departure.

"That methodology didn't survive the Global War on Terrorism environment that we're operating in today," said Lyons.

According to Lyons, ARFORGEN – created in 2006 – is designed to place Army Guard units – with a few exceptions for high-need units – into a five year cycle plan. Lyons said ARFORGEN is designed to work "hand-in-hand" with last year's Defense Department decision to limit all Army Guard and Army Reserve mobilization to one year, while giving individual unit commanders an honest picture of when their unit can realistically expect to be mobilized.

ARFORGEN Explained

For example, say Unit X has just returned from a one-year mobilization in Iraq. For the next three years, this unit will be within what the Army calls its **Reset and Training** window.

During this time, the commander of Unit X will focus upon manning the unit, repairing and receiving new equipment, and the unit's general "collective" and individual training.

During this period, Unit X is not ready or available for major

ARFORGEN (Army Force Generation) 5 Year Cycle

Year	M-4 Reset and Training	M-2 Reset and Training	M-2 Reset and Training	M-1 Ready Pool	M Available Pool
Annual Training Days	15	15	21	21	15
Weekend Drill Periods	48	48	55	55	48
Additional Training Days	0	0	0	19	0

combat operations, however it can be called upon to respond to homeland defense missions or to provide support to civilian authorities.

Near the end of this period, said Lyons, unit Soldiers will receive notification that they are being "sourced" for a possible mobilization in approximately two years.

"(Getting this information) two years out will give the Soldier ample opportunity to work with their family and work with their employer... to say, 'Hey, I'm two years out from an available window – an available year,'" said Lyons.

Then, about one year out, said Lyons, the unit will receive its alert. At this time, the affected unit enters the second phase of the cycle, known as the **Ready Pool**.

During this approximately one-year period, Unit X will continue to work on mission-specific training focused directly on its potential mobilization mission.

The final phase of the ARFORGEN cycle is a year-long window when a unit could be called upon to mobilized, called the **Available Pool** phase.

Lyons said ARFORGEN is quantum leaps better than the old system.

"In the past we would have units that would receive relatively short notice of a deployment. We would do some personnel, medical, legal, financial

checks during that relatively short window and then we would send the unit off to a mobilization station," said Lyons.

"And then, depending upon what the mission was for that unit or what type of unit it was, it could spend anywhere from four to six months at its mobilization station, often repeating some of the

checks that we had just done and then accomplishing all of their training tasks that they needed to accomplish."

ARFORGEN's Impact

To accomplish the Defense Department's new one year "Door Step to Door Step" mobilization policy, Army Guard Soldiers must now conduct much more of their training at home during longer or additional drill weekends and annual training periods within the two-year window immediately leading into a unit's Available Pool window.

During this training window, said Lyons, Soldiers will focus on accomplishing such tasks as combat life saver training, drivers training, individual weapons qualifications and completing their Army Warrior Tasks, which consists of 32 individual tasks that all Soldiers must be proficient in as well as an additional 12 battle drills all units must be able to perform successfully.

Overseeing this training and making sure that the unit perform up to the Army's standards is an Army Guard organization called a Pre-Mobilization Assistance Training Element (PTAE) made up of approximately a dozen Army Guard combat veterans.

According to Lt. Col. Jerry Meyer, PTAE officer-in-charge, the ARFORGEN process has already helped shorten the post-mobilization time for one Army

Guard unit. The Lincoln-based 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom late last year. During the 90 days preceding its mobilization, the unit spent several days at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb., conducting training on a number of its required tasks.

"We were able to take days off of their post-mobilization time out at Fort Lewis, which was a success for us," said Meyer, adding that by doing five days of training at Hastings the unit was able to cut off about 11 days of mobilization time at Fort Lewis, Wash.

That time saving equated into more time the unit Soldiers were able to spend at home with their families or working for their employers that they wouldn't have gotten under the old system.

"It does work," said Meyer, adding that one day spent training in Nebraska will typically mean spending several less days at a mobilization station. In the long-term, training during the one to two years prior to mobilizing could cut weeks or even months off of how long a unit has to stay at a mobilization station before going overseas.

"We're trying to keep from disrupting families and employers as much as possible."

Lyons said the intent is to give individual unit commanders the flexibility to plan their own training program with the least amount of negative impact on Soldiers' families and employers as possible. This is possible, he said, because instead of trying to accomplish all of the training requirement in one tight time period, they can now spread it over the one or two years prior to mobilizing by utilizing longer or additional weekend drills and annual training.

"Ultimately the pay off is that they're going to have to spend less time at the (mobilization) station, which means more time at home with families and employers," said Lyons.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Air Guard continues preparations for inspection

Countdown to the Operational Readiness Inspection: January 2009

Hands Up: Staff Sgt Charles Snow, 155th Air Refueling Wing Civil Engineer Squadron, simulates checking for chemical contamination with a Chemical Agent Monitor (CAM) before allowing a member of the 155th Air Refueling Wing to transition from a toxic to a toxic free area during a Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) class. Members from the 155th Air Refueling Wing were instructed in several skills to better prepare them for deployment and an upcoming Air Mobility Command inspection in January.

Nebraska Air Guard Honors Day slated for August drill weekend

■ Recent retirees, Community College of Air Force graduates to be honored during annual event

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard will conduct its annual Honors Day formation Aug. 3 at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

According to event organizers, the Honors Day is currently scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. on the grassy mall area located in front of the Nebraska Air National Guard's main hangar.

Scheduled to be honored are Air Guardsmen who have retired during the past year as well as this past year's Community College of the Air Force graduates.

For more information, contact Capt. Nicole McCoy at (402) 309-1114.

This year's retirees are:
Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Roger P. Lempeke
Maj. Gen. Mark R. Musick
Col. George G. Boshae
Lt. Col. Steve Burke
Lt. Col. Kelly D. Carlson
Lt. Col. Renee A. Dalton
Lt. Col. Mark S. Novak
Lt. Col. Samuel R. Veney
Maj. Russel J. Buzalko
Chief Master Sgt. Victoria K. Cerino

Chief Master Sgt. Terry J. Knapp
Chief Master Sgt. Bruno Krygier
Chief Master Sgt. Michael J. Martin
Chief Master Sgt. Ronald Navratil
Chief Master Sgt. Douglas A. Richard
Chief Master Sgt. Donald D. Schritt Jr.
Senior Master Sgt. Bonita R. Damrow
Senior Master Sgt. Eugene E. Trausch
Master Sgt. Brenda L. Brockhoff
Master Sgt. Lynn M. Driver
Master Sgt. Freddie J. Ellis

Master Sgt. Gerald L. Frain
Master Sgt. Maybre L. Johns Jr.
Master Sgt. Gregory A. McNeese
Master Sgt. William D. Norris
Master Sgt. David C. Sandstedt
Master Sgt. Richard H. Stephens
Master Sgt. L. Stroud
Master Sgt. William L. Weber
Master Sgt. Bruce A. Woods
Master Sgt. Bruce W. Wright
Tech. Sgt. Brian W. Barnes
Tech. Sgt. Wanda K. Bowder
Tech. Sgt. David E. Brumley
Tech. Sgt. Daniel J. Clark
Staff Sgt. Helen A. Porter
This year's CCAF graduates are: (October 2007)
Tech. Sgt. Charles Aden
Master Sgt. Frank Albrecht
Tech. Sgt. Gary Banner
Tech. Sgt. Brendelyn Beck
Staff Sgt. Lucas Brown
Staff Sgt. Jad Callahan
Senior Airman Jonathan Carrison
Staff Sgt. Douglas Gerdes
Staff Sgt. Thomas Hersch
Staff Sgt. Christina Huskey
Senior Airman Jesse Johnson
Staff Sgt. Matthew Oestmann
Tech. Sgt. Daniel Patterson
Tech. Sgt. Aaron Self
Master Sgt. Mark Stocking
Senior Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode
Chief Master Sgt. Susan Turner
Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Venteicher
(April 2008)
Senior Master Sgt. Dallas Bartlett
Senior Airman Amy Callahan
Tech. Sgt. Joshua Dannelly
Senior Airman Riki Foos
Staff Sgt. Kevin Krausnick
Tech. Sgt. Thomas Lannin
Staff Sgt. Jarell Roach
Staff Sgt. Holly Robertson
Tech. Sgt. Nathan Salmon
Tech. Sgt. Eric Schlingman
Chief Master Sgt. Donald Schritt
Senior Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode



Welcoming Dad Home: Jalen Mullen, 5, rushes toward the outstretched arms of his father, Spc. Josh Mullen, shortly after members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 600th Transportation Company arrived back in Lincoln, Neb., after a year-long deployment to Iraq.



Proud Father: Spc. Cody Williams holds his three-week-old son Brody for the first time, May 9, after Williams arrived back in Lincoln at the end of a year-long deployment to Iraq.



Kiss Me I'm Irish: Sgt. Aaron Rowe receives a warm welcome home from his fiancée Becky Mooney, May 9, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln.

Truck company homecoming allows families to be whole again

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Please forgive Brody Williams for not fully realizing how big of a day May 9 was.

That's because he was only three weeks old.

His father, Spc. Cody Williams, sure understood the significance of the day, though. After all, it's not every day that you get to hold your son for the first time.

That's exactly what happened at the National

Guard air base in Lincoln when Williams and approximately 180 other members of the Omaha-based 600th Transportation Company

were welcomed back to Nebraska by hundreds of family members and other well-wishers as the unit completed a year-long mission as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

According to Williams — who stood near his wife Stacy — who stood near his wife Stacy as dozens of other unit members surrounded the Nebraska Army Guard Soldier as he cuddled the newborn — the day was almost surreal.

"It's pretty big," said Williams, smiling broadly. "It's very nice to hold him."

His first impression? "I think he looks like me."

Stacy agreed saying she was excited to see her husband holding their son for the first time and getting the chance to finally be together again. "It's also nice to have him home because now I've got somebody to help me with the baby," she added, laughing.

The Williams family wasn't the only one celebrating a reunion, either. Throughout the Army Guard hangar members of the 600th Transportation

Company huddled with families and friends, each celebrating their homecoming. Each with a special story to tell.

Take Spc. Carl Roux, for instance. As he waited his turn to exit off one of two charter planes that brought the unit back to Lincoln from the Soldiers' demobilization station at Fort Bragg, N.C., his girlfriend Jenny Vendetti stood bouncing the couple's three-month-old son Parker John.

And then, just as the Guard Soldiers emerged from the aircraft, the cheers that erupted from crowd so startled Parker that he too began crying.

Later, Roux said it felt good to hold his son again after last seeing Parker when he was born during Roux's leave from Iraq.

"I'm just excited to see him... to spend time with him," said Roux.

Vendetti agreed, saying it was nice to be together as a family.

"Big day... big day," she said, laughing. "It's his turn to change messy diapers."

Or take Sgt. Brandy Hoffman, whose return coincided with her daughter Kylee's sixth birthday. Considering that Hoffman didn't take leave during her time in Iraq so the homecoming was her first chance to see Kylee in a year, the day was big indeed.

"It's great," she said, adding that it was hard to wait that long to see her daughter again. She too was struck by her first impression. "She's huge."

Kylee said having her mother at home was the best present



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Dismissed! 1st Sgt. Allen Gabel dismisses the members of the 600th Transportation Company at the conclusion of the unit's welcome home ceremony, ceremonially ending the unit's one-year deployment to Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Tender Moment: Spc. Carl Roux and his girlfriend, Jenny Vendetti, share a quiet moment amongst the revelry of the welcome home crowds as they kiss their son, three-month-old Parker.

she could have asked for. "I'm happy," she said. "She hasn't been home in a long time."

"(This is) better than a birthday present."

While in Iraq, the 600th Trans. Co. — which was made up of Soldiers from Omaha and units from across Nebraska — was responsible for providing convoy security throughout much of southern Iraq. Operating out of Talil Air Base — which has since been renamed Camp Ali — the Soldiers spent countless hours out on the always dangerous roads while protecting critical convoys moving between American and coalition bases.

Sgt. 1st Class Mark Pegues, 2nd Platoon platoon sergeant, said the unit accomplished much during its time overseas. That's particularly impressive considering that the unit was made up of so many Soldiers from so many different units and Nebraska communities.

"Actually we did good," he

said. "We came together and we gelled real fast because most of the time (they were all) from small communities. Those groups came in and then pretty soon we just became one big unit."

That was pretty important, too, said Pegues, considering the types of missions the Soldiers were doing and the amount of driving that they were required to do.

"It was pretty fast paced. We completed quite a few missions," said Pegues. "But we had a good time."

According to the unit's commander, Capt. Ryan Kramer, the Soldiers returned home with much to be proud of.

"Your courage, your willingness to face danger for your country and each other made this day possible," Kramer said during the welcome home ceremony that was attended by an array of state governmental and military leaders including Gov. Dave Heineman, Sen. Ben

Nelson, U.S. Representative Jeff Fortenberry and Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy. "Because of you our nation is more secure. You have shown the world the skill and the might of the 600th T.C."

"When Iraqi civilians looked into the face of our Soldiers, they saw strength and kindness and goodwill," Kramer added. "When I look out at the faces of the members of the 600th T.C., I see the best of our country. I am honored to be your commander."

Kramer said an equal amount of praise is also due to the families of the unit Soldiers, who worked and sacrificed to make the unit successful while in Iraq. "When the kids were sick, when the house needed to be fixed and the lawn to be taken care of, you stuck it out," he said.

"When our Soldiers needed to hear, 'We love you,' or to get a care package from home, you were there. We can't thank you enough."

Checking For Survivors: Pfc. Brian Sloan looks for a 'victim' he and other members of the 623rd Vertical Engineer Company detected beneath tons of broken concrete.



Rubble Pile: A member of Wahoo's 623rd Vertical Engineer Company attempts to wake a 'victim' lying on top of a massive rubble pile at the Mead Training Site, May 18.



Helping Hands: Two Nebraska National Guardsmen move an "injured" victim from a massive rubble pile during the validation exercise for Nebraska's new Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force, May 18.

Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes



Tough Stretch: Senior Airman Katie Score tugs on her rubber boots while preparing to take a shift in the hot zone triage unit where Guardsmen must determine which victims need immediate care and which ones can wait.

CERF continued from page 1.

Fortunately for everyone involved, the attack was just an exercise designed to give the members of the newly created CERF a chance to fully demonstrate their newly learned skills before the ever-watchful eyes of federal evaluators who had been charged with ensuring that the new multi-unit team was ready to respond to a wide variety of emergency missions.

The CERF is a new Nebraska National Guard capability designed to assist civilian first responders in the fields of casualty search and extraction, casualty/patient decontamination and medical triage support.

The CERF is made up of 186 Soldiers and Airmen from Omaha's 126th Chemical Battalion Headquarters and 754th Chemical Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company, Wahoo's 623rd Vertical Engineer Company and Lincoln's 155th Medical Group, State Medical Detachment and 92nd Troop Command.

Also involved were the Air Guard's 155th Civil Engineering Squadron, Lincoln, and the Army Guard's 317th and 181st Engineering Detachment (Fire Fighting Team.) Norfolk.

According to Col. Michael Navrkal, Nebraska National Guard training and operations officer for domestic support, the Guardsmen did extremely well during the CERF's May 12-18 validation exercise.

"It went extremely well," said Navrkal. "(I'm) very pleased with what we saw from our Soldiers and Airmen."

"The bottom line is, they showed a tremendous amount of proficiency – both individually and collectively – in performing that mission that they've been given," he said. "You're talking about a mission that that's not their primary job in the military. This is really a secondary set of skills that they're developing."

"But they've really embraced

it – the mission overall and the training that's been required of them," Navrkal said. "I couldn't be more pleased with how they did."

The CERF was first formed in July 2006. The May 2008 exercise was designed to prove to federal evaluators that the team was now fully trained and capable of completing a wide array of missions in support of civilian first responders.

The Nebraska CERF is the 16th of a planned 17 National Guard CERFs. Nebraska will be responsible for providing support to the state of Nebraska and could also be called to assist officials in Iowa, Kansas and Missouri, said Navrkal.

During the Mead Training, the Nebraska Soldiers and Airmen practiced responding to a terrorist attack at a Lincoln mall. Not only did the Guardsmen have to locate victims located under tons of broken concrete, they also had to successfully decontaminate patients using the CERF's newly received decontamination equipment while also effectively managing the medical triage operations by deciding which patients needed immediate attention and which ones needed to wait.

According to Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, who visited the Mead Training Site on May 16, the new CERF is an important part of the state's ability to respond to a wide array of different emergency situations – both accidental and terrorist related. "We're very proud of what our Army and Air Guard does here in Nebraska to support the mission of the governor," said Sheehy, who also serves as the state homeland defense director. "They have played a significant role in the Global War on Terror. We're very proud of the capabilities they have developed over this period of time."

"This is just going to make Nebraska better prepared to re-



Big Load: A Guardsman pulls two 'patients' toward medical care during the validation exercise.



Clean Up Crew: Guardsmen decontaminate an injured 'victim' prior to sending the person on to the medical triage tents.



Caregivers: (from right) Lt. Col. John Rose and Lt. Col. John Majerus check a 'victim's' vital signs while working in the medical triage tent of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive (CBRNE) Enhanced Response Force.

spond and to recover from instances within Nebraska," he added.

Navrkal said the Nebraskans made a good impression on the National Guard Bureau evaluators, adding that the CERF received 'Go' ratings on each of its major evaluation areas during the Sunday exercise, May 18.

"Our Soldiers and Airmen performed tremendously across the whole spectrum of tasks that we have to complete," Navrkal said. "Informally... the evaluators said our Soldiers and Airmen did a tremendous job. They were very pleased with the amount of enthusiasm and the level of proficiency that our Soldiers and Airmen demonstrated on Sunday as well."

According to the Guardsmen involved, the mission is an excellent one for the Nebraska Na-

tional Guard to be involved in.

"It's good," said Senior Airman Katie Score, a 173rd Aerial Refueling Squadron medic as she struggled into her protective suit while preparing to complete her shift in the hot zone triage center. "You can definitely use (these skills) in the real world. You can definitely see the long-term goal."

Senior Airman Sarah Rasmussen agreed, saying the entire team was getting better with each iteration of the exercise.

"It's been going very well. We keep getting better every single day we do this," said Rasmussen, a member of the 155th Medical Group. "It's going smoothly today."

Another person sold on the new mission is Pvt. Riley Ohde, a member of the 755th Chemi-

cal Recon/Decon Co. who was working as part of the redress team, helping ensure that walking patients were clear of contaminants before helping them dress into clean clothes after going through the decontamination shower process.

"It's awesome...it's pretty interesting," said Ohde. "If we had to do it in real life, I think we'd be pretty good at it by now."

Ohde said it was particularly good to know that if the CERF was ever needed, she and her fellow Guardsmen would be part of an important asset to help patients receive the care they need.

"If this ever happens – and all of the chemical people say it eventually will – they're definitely going to need people who know how to do this. I think this training is definitely going to help us."



You Can Do It: Staff Sgt. Jerrimy Patzke (left), Recruiting and Retention Command, and Sgt. 1st Class Richard Hagedorn, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, help Brad Woosley, Omaha North West High School, conquer the rappelling tower in Omaha.

Photos by Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland



At the Controls: Tralisha Russell, an Omaha Northwest High School ROTC member, checks out the pilot's seat of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during the Guard for a Day event hosted by the Nebraska Army National Guard.

■Nebraska Army Guardsmen show off skills, equipment to Omaha-area high school students

Guard for a Day

By Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

Students from Omaha area high schools participated in the annual Guard for a Day program hosted by the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command at the North Omaha Army National Guard Readiness Center, April 4.

The students learned about the many aspects of a military career including weapon systems, night vision devices, vehicles, the latest communication systems and helicopters.

They were provided with the basic information for the many weapon systems used by Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers before they moved on to test their shooting skills in the Beam Hit marksmanship trainer and in the Marksmanship Challenge simulation semi-trailer. The simulators uses lasers

to replicate the basic marksmanship skills Guard Soldiers must practice in order to be ready to respond to a wide-variety of missions.

The students were then led into a darkened classroom where they had the opportunity to see how easy it is for a Soldier to see in limited visibility conditions with the help of night vision devices. The Guard Soldiers also helped the students overcome their fear of heights by climbing a rock wall and rappelling down the side of a building.

Customized vehicles, including the Orange County Choppers' Army National Guard "Patriot Chopper," were on hand and the students had the opportunity to have their pictures taken with the chopper.

Other vehicles included the custom built Nebraska Army National Guard Hum-Vee and 4x4 Chevy Blazer.

The students were also allowed to sit in the pilot's seat of a UH-60 Black



Patriot Chopper: Students from Bellevue East High School pose with the Orange County Choppers' "Patriot Chopper" during the Guard for a Day event hosted by the Nebraska Army National Guard. The recruiting event is designed to give high school students an idea of the different skills they can develop and the jobs they can do in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Hawk helicopter and talk with the crew.

The Guard event impressed at least one student. Tyrone Amos, a Fort Calhoun High School student, was particularly impressed with the Nebraska Army Guard M-4 rifle he had an chance

to examine during the Guard for a Day event

"I was thinking about going to the Navy...I think I will join (the Army National Guard)," Amos said. "This is pretty tight."

Guardsmen test state's new communication system during Mead exercise

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Compared to what was going on about 300 meters away, the sight of a tiny tent and its surrounding communications equipment seemed pretty insignificant to casual passers-by.

Yet, even though much of the Nebraska National Guard's attention during the week of May 12-17 was focused on ensuring that the newly fielded Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERF-P) successfully completed its federal certification exercise, this tiny communications tent marked an equally significant moment for the state.

That's because it was the first field exercise for the Nebraska National Guard's newly received Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISC.)

According to Capt. Chris Ganshert, JISC commander,

the system is designed to provide local incident commanders with a way of taking the various different radios, cellular phones and internet systems that military and civilian emergency agencies use and connecting them together.

"The initial intent for the JISC was for incident site communications," said Ganshert. "It ties in different agencies – fire departments, state police – with the military or each other."

"We've got radio network management so we can create talk groups between the different radio networks. We also have a satellite dish for reach back, so we have internet access – wireless or wired – for (Department of Defense) or commercial," he said. "We have video teleconferencing capabilities, primarily between other JISCs, but we're working to get it set up so that we can reach back to anybody with a (video teleconferencing capability.)"

Ganshert said Nebraska received its JISC about four weeks earlier. The CERF-P exercise,

he added, seemed like a perfect opportunity for the eight Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen assigned to the JISC to set the equipment up, test its capabilities and learn more about the new system.

"We've learned a lot," Ganshert said. "There are a lot of capabilities and a lot of interesting equipment to work with. The folks who came out and did it, I think they've had a good time learning and using the equipment."

"We got to iron out a lot of the issues you get when you take equipment out for the first time," he added. "We've gotten to run some of our own tests to make sure things work the way they're supposed to. It's been a really productive week."

Tech. Sgt. Vicky Stevens agreed. A full-time Guard employee of the Air National Guard Regional Operations Security Center in Lincoln, Stevens spent



Monitoring The System: Tech. Sgt. Vicky Stevens keeps an eye on the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability computer system during an exercise at the Mead Training Site, May 18.

her first rotation in the JISC working on the system's network. She said she was amazed by the JISC's capabilities.

"I think what's really exciting is that this thing is so cool," she said, laughing. "The things it can do are just awesome."

For example, she said, they were able to link up with another JISC in another state during the exercise. They also were able to connect the various phones and radios used by



Steady As She Goes: Spc. Shawn Sheets inspects the balance on one of the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability's radio masts, May 18, a day after high winds rolled through the Mead Training Site.

the CERF-P exercise participants.

"The things this thing can do sitting out in the middle of a field are just simply amazing."

Air Guardsman earns high praise while overseas

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nebraska Air National Guardsman deployed overseas received some pretty high praise from his overseas boss, recently.

Staff Sgt. Derek Hollrah is a ground radio craftsman assigned to the 155th Communications Flight in Lincoln, Neb.

Normally that means he spends his weekends maintaining the communications equipment for the 155th Air Refueling Wing's Command Post and the facility's air-to-ground ra-

dios, satellite communications systems and base-wide alert equipment.

However, beginning in January, Hollrah served at Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates where he was assigned to the 380th Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron. At Al Dhafra, Hollrah continued to serve in the Ground Radio Shop.



Hollrah

He also earned a reputation for being an exceptionally hard worker.

"I wish I had five more troops just like him," said Master Sgt. Thomas L. Wilkes, 380th ECS Transmissions branch chief in an e-mail to Lt. Col. Wendy Johnson, a member of the 155th ARW who was also deployed overseas to the Central Command area of operations at the time. "He has been a hard worker since day one."

"He is always the one taking initiative and lead on work that happens in this shop," said

Wilkes, who is a member of the Florida Air National Guard.

"I have pretty much depended on him as the go to guy when it comes to any (land mobile radio) work. He is dependable and can be counted on to get the job done. He far surpasses the work habits of his active duty counterparts."

That type of praise didn't surprise Master Sgt. Scott Spady, 155th Communications Flight Personnel Wireless Communications and Spectrum manager who supervises Hollrah during normal weekend drills.

"He's just an outstanding troop," said Spady.

"He's one of those guys that you never have to worry about because if there isn't any work to do, he'll go out and find some more work. He's just a tremendous worker."

Along with gaining a reputation as the 'go to guy,' Hollrah also earned some more tangible hardware during his time overseas, earning the title of Al Dhafra Air Base Noncommissioned Officer of the Month for March.

Hollrah completed his deployment in late April.



Photos by David Nore

Welcome Home: Sgt. John Nicola showers Chief Warrant Officer Steve Stone as he walks toward the Army Aviation Support Facility #1 hangar after completing his last flight as a Nebraska Army National Guard helicopter pilot.

LAST VIETNAM PILOT continued from page 1.

wet on the tarmac in front of the Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility in Lincoln after being ceremonially "wetted down" by fellow Guardsmen, signaling the end of his military aviation career. "The military is its own special group. You depend on each other. You build close bonds. I will miss that the most."

Stone began his military career in 1968 in the Warrant Officer Basic Course at Fort Walter, Texas. His first combat assignment was to the 176th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam from July 1969 - June 1970. He also served in Operation Desert Storm with the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance.)

In 2000 Stone became the just the third Nebraska Army National Guard aviator to be promoted to the rank of chief warrant officer five. According to Army National Guard flight records, Stone flew ten different aircraft models including the OH-23D, OH-58A, UH-1A, B, D, H, M, V, and UH-60A and L during his career.

Stone's last flight coincidentally landed on his 60th birthday.

In recalling the missions he flew, Stone remembered his first combat mission in Vietnam after being shipped to Southeast Asia right after completing flight school. "I remember my first day of combat," said Stone, who served with the 23rd Infantry "Americal" Division in Vietnam.

"I had just arrived in Vietnam and was flying with another aviator in the lead helicopter of an air assault. I didn't know that the helicopters behind us were firing rockets under our lead helicopter. I thought there were mortar rounds coming down on the (landing zone)."

Stone's combat campaign decorations include Vietnam Summer-Fall 1969, Vietnam Winter-Spring 1970, DA Sanc-



Feet On the Ground: Chief Warrant Officer Steve Stone holds a ceremonial magnum of wine marking his final flight aboard a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter on April 8, which was also Stone's 60th birthday.

tuary Counteroffensive, Defense of Saudi Arabia, Liberation and Defense of Kuwait, and Southwest Asia Cease Fire.

Stone said he recalled that when he first began flying, he learned how to operate helicopters from World War II veterans.

"I got in as a young kid. I can remember some of the older helicopter pilots 40 years ago who had been B-24 pilots in World War II who had learned to fly the UH 1D," he said. "Who would know that 40 years later I would be looking back on my experiences with younger pilots thinking similar thoughts about me?"

Stone's experience will definitely be missed, say members of the Nebraska Army National Guard.

"The aviation community will miss that experience. All the guys I learned from at flight school were a bunch of Vietnam-era guys," said Chief Warrant Officer Andy Eiler, who flew with Stone on his last flight. Eiler, who recently completed a year-long deployment to Iraq after graduating from flight school in late 2005, said the lessons he learned from pilots such as Stone

were indispensable.

"They have seen everything," he said.

Stone's landing at the Lincoln flight facility was witnessed by many Guard members who turned out to honor his flight. His wife Cathy and daughter Denise and many reporters also turned out to mark the milestone set by Stone.

After receiving his traditional water shower from a nearby firetruck and Soldiers standing near the hangar, Stone received a magnum of Martini and Rossi wine and then spent several minutes being interviewed by television and newspaper reporters before making his way up to flight operations. A little while later he was back on the road, returning to his hometown of Glenwood, Iowa.

Before leaving, Stone said the memory of the crowd waiting for him will stay with him forever. So will the memories of all the men and women he served with.

"You know the thing that has mattered the most over the years is all the people that I have worked with," said an emotional Stone.

Army Guard Soldier honored for turning barriers into bridges

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

"I love what I do." That's how Sgt. Adrian Velez, Nebraska Army National Guard describes his job as the Hispanic liaison for a wide swath of Nebraska—essentially ranging from the western outskirts of Lincoln to the Wyoming border, both north and south.

That love recently translated into a national award when Velez became the recipient of the National Guard Bureau's "Excellence in Diversity" Award for 2007.



Velez

"I was totally shocked," said Velez, who received the award during a national diversity conference in Westminster, Colo. "I knew that (Lavonne) Rosenthal had submitted me for the award, but I had no idea that I'd win it."

In reading Velez' nomination package, though, it's not hard to understand why the former Navy Sailor who has served in the Nebraska Army Guard for four years received the national honor.

According to the package, Velez travels an average of 3,000 miles a month across Nebraska, visiting schools, meeting business leaders and talking with potential Guard recruits and their families about the National Guard.

As one of two Hispanic liaisons for the Nebraska Army National Guard, Velez is primarily responsible for assisting Army Guard recruiters in matters dealing with the state's growing Hispanic community. Its an important mission, said Velez.

"What a lot of people don't seem to realize is that when people come to the United States, they come with a different perspective of how the government and the military work," said Velez, who works in the Kearney armory. "For example, in some countries, members of the military aren't paid. In others, kids are kidnapped to fill out the military."

"What these parents don't realize is that we do things completely different here," said Velez. "They need to be educated that we pay our military members very well; that we give them great benefits. I also try to explain to them how military service can also help a person receive their citizenship."

To help him do this, Velez has taken all of the Nebraska Army Guard recruiting flyers and translated them into Spanish. Then, when a recruiter visits a potential Guardsman, Velez goes along, translating what the recruiter is saying to the potential recruit's parents while showing them the same information their son or daughter is receiving.

"It really seems to help them understand what the Guard is and what we are offering," said Velez.

Along with helping recruiters, Velez also took the initiative to study and research immigration laws "to become fully informed on the often confusing wording," according to Velez' nomination package. That has helped him clarify what the phrase "one year of honorable service" means for Guardsmen hoping to become American citizens.

Velez is credited with helping one Guard Soldier whose residency status expired during his enlistment receive a temporary stay on his residency so that he could apply for citizenship.

Velez also helps recruiters by examining documents to prevent illegal individuals from being processed into the Guard.

Along with his other duties, Velez is also active within the Hispanic communities across the state, visiting with hundreds of students and dozens of other civic organizations about what the Nebraska National Guard does and the skills and careers it offers.

In endorsing Velez' nomination package, Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, lauded the work Velez has done.

"(Sergeant) Velez has made great strides to break down the barriers between the Nebraska (Army National Guard) and Nebraska's Hispanic citizens, replacing those barriers with bridges of relationships."

92nd Troop Command welcomes new commander

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard's 92nd Troop Command welcomed a new commander to its organization and said farewell to another, April 13, during a change of command ceremony held at the Penterman Armory in Lincoln.

Accepting the colors of the 92nd Troop Command from Brig. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, adjutant general of Nebraska, was Col. Judd H. Lyons, 45, of Omaha. Departing the 92nd Troop Command was Col. Roma Amundson, 58, of Walton. She had served as commander of the organization since June 28, 2004.

The 92nd Troop Command is made up of approximately 1,950 Soldiers assigned to 22 units located across Nebraska.

In saying farewell to the organization, Amundson said she will never forget all that the organization's assigned units accomplished during the time she served as commander.

"Soldiers of the 92nd Troop Command, you have entered upon that world stage where you have completed many different roles that have been assigned to you," said Amundson.

92nd Troop Command Guardsmen supported operations following Hurricane Katrina, wildfires in western Nebraska, an ice storm in central Nebraska, while also supporting many different homeland defense missions including the southwestern border operation. Guardsmen also have deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, to Central America where the Soldiers supported humanitarian operations in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, and to the Pacific in support of training exercises in South Korea.

Members of the 92nd Troop Command also helped mobilize 1,861 Soldiers—more than half of all Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who have been mobilized for duty in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

"As Soldiers of the Nebraska National Guard you clearly understand that private citizens have public duties," Amundson told the assembled Soldiers. "You are part of that 372-year-old tradition of Citizen Soldiers who have understood that the privileges of citizenship require the sacrifices of service."



End Of Term: Col. Roma Amundson (left) presents the 92nd Troop Command's organizational colors to Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, ceremonially ending Amundson's tour as the Nebraska Army National Guard organization's commander.

"I have been privileged and honored to have served as your commander during the last 46 months," she added. "Since June of 2004 I have stood in the wings as your commander and director and watched as you played out your roles on the world, national and state stages. I have watched each one of you serve with pride as a Soldier, a leader and American. I ask you now to continue to serve with that same constancy of effort, devotion to duty and adherence to Army core values."

Amundson was born on April 7, 1950, in Lynch, Neb. After graduating from Spencer High School in 1968, she received a bachelor of Arts degree with distinction from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She then received her master's degree in Education from the University of Nebraska in 1976 and attended the Goethe Institute for Language Study in Freiburg at Breslau, Germany.

Her military career began in April 1978 when Amundson enlisted into the Army Reserve. She transferred to the Nebraska Army National Guard in January 1979 and received her commission after graduating from the Camp Ashland-based Officer Candidate School in May 1980.

Amundson has held many different positions since, including communications platoon leader, detachment commander, assistant state director of the Nebraska Selective Service System, director of Information Management, defense movement coordinator, director of Facilities

and Engineering, director of Maintenance and director of Logistics. She has been assigned to become the director of Joint Doctrine and Training.

At the time of her assignment to the 92nd Troop Command, she was the first female Soldier to ever command a major Nebraska Army National Guard organization.

Amundson and her husband, Lt. Col. Randy Amundson, have two adult children, Justin and Dawn.

In assuming command of the 92nd Troop Command, Lyons said he expects the unit to continue to meet future challenges in the same way it has met all of its past missions.

"When we look at the Soldiers in formation here, we see a small representation of the 1,800-plus authorized Soldiers that make up the 92nd Troop Command," said Lyons.

"The diversity of Troop Command units is significant. So what binds this diverse organization together beyond simple wire diagrams and organizational charts? I submit to you that it is one mission that is common to each of the units that we see here today. Without exception, we must man, equip, train and retain our Soldiers in order to deliver needed capabilities to our fellow citizens here in Nebraska and for missions around the world when



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

New Boss: Col. Judd Lyons, new commander of the 92nd Troop Command, holds his organization's colors during the Nebraska Army Guard unit's change of command ceremony, April 13.

needed."

That means, said Lyons, a continued focus on hard, realistic training and family and employer readiness.

"Families and employers are silent, and sometimes not so silent, partners in our formations," said Lyons. "I challenge you to redouble your efforts to strengthen the bonds between Soldiers, their families and employers, and the missions we're asked to perform."

Lyons was born on May 29, 1962, in St. Paul, Minn. He is a 1980 graduate of the Missouri Military Academy and received a bachelor of Science degree from Bellevue University and a master of Strategic

Studies degree from the U.S. Army War College.

Lyons' military career began in May 1983 when he enlisted into the Nebraska Army National Guard. He received his commission from the Camp Ashland-based Officer Candidate School in May 1983 and has since served in a wide variety of positions including battalion assistant training officer, anti-armor platoon leader, armor platoon leader, company executive officer and commanding officer, battalion intelligence officer, 92nd Troop Command training officer, squadron executive officer, mobilization readiness officer, state recruiting and retention manager, 92nd Troop Command executive officer, Training Site Command commander and state training officer.

Lyons deployed to Afghanistan from 2006-07 where he commanded the 209th Regional Corps Advisory Command/Regional Assistance Command-North, which was responsible for training and mentoring the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police as part of Joint Task Force Phoenix. Lyons also serves as the fulltime operations officer (Federal Operations) for Joint Force Headquarters, Nebraska.

Lyons and his wife, Lt. Col. Amy Lyons, have three children, Alex, Ben and Sam.

Omaha recruiter shows off Army National Guard to old neighborhood

By Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

Specialist Gerard Christian brought the Nebraska Army National Guard to his old neighborhood in north Omaha, May 10.

"My mission today was to educate north Omaha about the National Guard. We don't really have our own identity.

Most people see our uniforms and it says just 'U.S. ARMY,' so I wanted to give us our own identity and the different things we have to offer as far as programs, education, job training and tuition assistance," said Christian, who was born and raised in north Omaha.

"I wanted to give us our own identity and the different things we have to offer as far as programs, education, job training and tuition assistance."

— Spc. Gerard Christian



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland

This Is How It Works: Sgt. 1st Class Cecil Roman, Nebraska Army National Guard recruiter, explains the operations of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter to a young visitor at the Omaha Awareness Day. The event was organized by Spc. Gerard Christian, Nebraska Army National Guard recruiter, to bring awareness of the Guard to the neighborhood where he grew up.

dered around the helicopter as Sgt. James Nordman, Co. C, 2-135th GSAB crew chief, spent time answering questions from adults and children about the aircraft.

"This is probably the best part of my job," Nordman said of his duties for the day.

"I love the public relations type of missions. It's great seeing the expressions on the kids' faces."

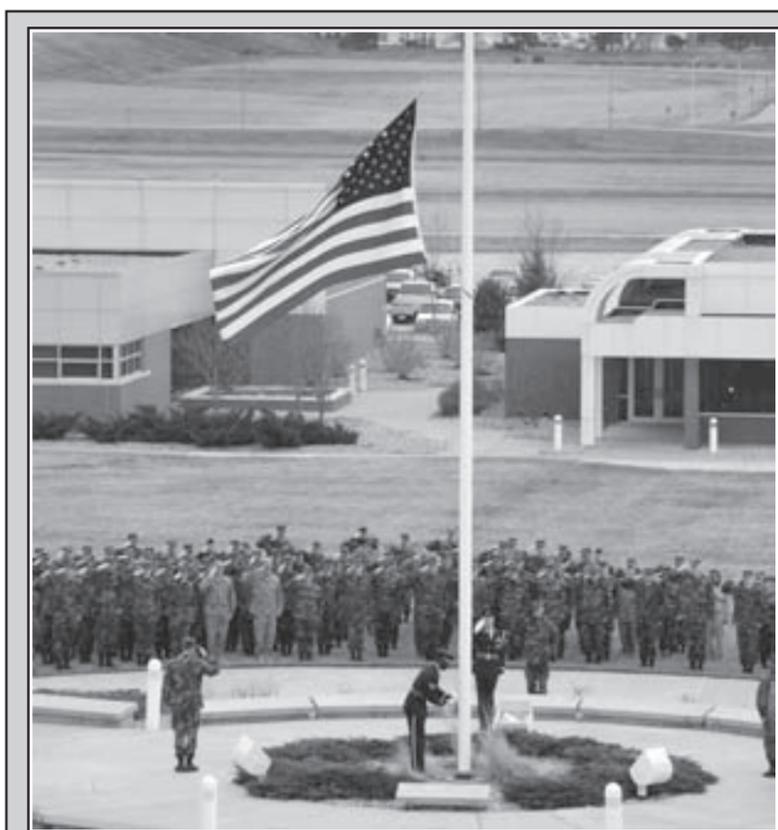


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Air Guard unit pauses to remember late Guardsman

Members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard, observed a brief moment of silence in memory of Tech. Sgt. Bradley Meyer, April 6. Meyer, 40, passed away on March 28 after suffering from ALS. He was a full-time employee of the Nebraska Air National Guard, serving as a logistics planner in the 155th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

Young Hero Returns

■ Twenty-three years after first visit to Guard, heart transplant survivor returns

By Lt. Col. Bob Vrana

State Public Affairs Officer

Twenty-three years after his first tour of the Nebraska National Guard, a very special young man made a return visit.

When Michael Swanson made his first visit to the National Guard it was as a five-year-old through the recently established Nebraska Make-a-Wish Program.

Make-a-Wish grants wishes to seriously ill children—young Michael had had a congenital heart defect that required a pace-maker.

Many children would have used their Make-a-Wish wish for a trip to Disneyworld, a meeting with a famous actor or sports star, or perhaps a big screen television or sophisticated audio system. Because of his love of the military, Swanson, even at age five, wanted to tour the Guard.

"I was into action figure GI Joes and I liked watching MASH back in the '80s," Swanson said.

In 1985 Make-a-Wish granted Swanson's wish and arranged to have Swanson and his family flown from his home in Hemmingford to Lincoln for a tour of Nebraska Air and Army National Guard facilities.

At that time the Air Guard had recently begun offering tours to children with life threatening illnesses in order to lift their spirits. Swanson was the third participant in that program but the first in conjunction with Make-a-Wish, which was chartered in Nebraska in 1983.

Swanson's memories of that day are a little hazy, but he distinctly remembers riding in the Air Guard mini-Phantom, a miniature RF-4 which has been retired from service and is now on display at the Air and Space Museum.

His other memories of that



Workhorse: During a tour of the Army Guard's Combined Support Maintenance Shop, Michael Swanson learns about the capabilities of the M-4 rifle from Sgt. Tonjah Thomas.



Poster Boy: Michael Swanson shows his wife, Summer, how he looked during his 1985 visit to the Nebraska National Guard. The poster was created for the Nebraska Make-a-Wish chapter's 25th anniversary.

Photos by Lt. Col. Bob Vrana

day include the airplane ride from Hemmingford to Lincoln and a ride in the Air Guard fire truck.

According to the June 1985 "Prairie Soldier," Swanson was also presented with a "Guardsmen for a Day" certificate by the base security police, sat in the cockpit of a real RF-4 Phantom, sat in an Army Guard helicopter while two other helicopters hovered in front of it, and boarded the adjutant general's U-8 airplane.

Swanson and his family also visited with Maj. Gen. James Carmona, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general at the time.

Although Swanson doesn't remember all the details of the trip, it made an indelible impression on him.

Unfortunately Swanson's health problems worsened and in 1990, at the age of 10, his heart failed and he was rushed to Denver for a heart transplant. The operation was a success and, with the exception of a transplant rejection scare in 2005, Swanson has led a normal life since then.

He completed his schooling, went to work and married.

Swanson currently lives in Alliance with his wife, Summer, and works as a locomotive engineer with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad.

Swanson, busy with day-to-day activities, didn't think about Make-a-Wish much; in fact he wasn't sure if the organization even existed until Make-a-Wish President Evonne Williams called him. As part of the organization's 25th anniversary activities Williams proposed Swanson's return visit to the Guard.

Swanson liked the idea and, thanks to the efforts of Nebraska Army National Guard Marketing Non-Commissioned Officer Sgt. 1st Class Lee Peterson and a number of other Airmen and Soldiers, the visit was scheduled for May 9.

Swanson and his wife were driven from their downtown Lincoln hotel to the Nebraska National Guard Air Base in the

Army National Guard Blazer, where they were met by Make-a-Wish representatives, KOLN-KGIN reporter Lance Schwartz, and a number of Guard escorts.

The whirlwind day included a tour of the Army Aviation Support Facility and an opportunity to sit in the pilot's seat in a Black Hawk helicopter; a tour of a KC-135 Stratotanker, including stops in both the cockpit and the boom pod; lunch in the Air Guard dining facility; a tour of the Army Guard's Combined Support Maintenance Shop, featuring a wide array of weapons and equipment; and culminated with a visit with the Nebraska National Guard's current adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy.

Much has changed in the 23 years between visits – different equipment, different facilities, different people – but Swanson found that the Airmen and Soldiers he came in contact with were just as friendly, knowledgeable and professional as those



Snug Fit: Michael Swanson shows off the uniform the Nebraska National Guard presented to him during his last visit. The uniform fit him in 1985.

who so impressed him in 1985. "It was nice," Swanson said. "Everybody was generous, they took their time. Everybody explained how things worked. It was a great experience."

Kids learn about Nebraska Military Department careers during annual event

By Patrick Hynes

Special for the *Prairie Soldier*

There were quite a few new faces around the Nebraska Military Department, April 24, but it had nothing to do with a new hiring effort.

Rather, the new faces were part of the Military Department's annual "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day" held in conjunction with the national effort.

The event is designed to give children – be they sons and daughters, grandchildren or nieces – the opportunity to learn more about the work that their family member does for the department while also offering them a chance to learn about the different career choices they will face as they grow older, according to Nebraska National Guard human resources officials.

Among those who participated in this year's event was Stasia Nielsen, the daughter of Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen who works in the adjutant general's headquarters building as an administrative assistance to the command divisions.

According to the younger Nielsen, who had had a chance to answer her mother's phone while also helping her with vari-

ous filing, shredding and office tasks, the day was "fun because I get to be with my mom."

"(I'm learning) about what my mom does at work," said Nielsen, a sixth grade student at Sterling Public School. "She talks on the phone a lot."

Another student participating was Kayla Knuth, who spent the day with Chief Warrant Officer Pete Steiner, a maintenance specialist and the Director of Maintenance Office in Lincoln.

According to Steiner, he wanted Knuth to learn more about his job in the Lincoln-based maintenance shop, "so she can have a better idea of what I do when I leave the house in the morning and to get an idea of what the Nebraska National Guard is all about in the maintenance arena and the kinds of things we do."

Along with learning more about what Steiner does for the National Guard, Knuth said she was also looking forward to going out to the hangar and seeing the Nebraska Army Guard helicopters.



Helping Mom: Stasia Nielsen helps her mother, Master Sgt. Shannon Nielsen, file paperwork at the Nebraska Military Department headquarters in Lincoln. The Niensens were one of a number of Nebraska Military Department families who participated in the annual 'Take Our Daughters and Sons To Work Day,' April 24.

"This is much better than sitting in class," said Knuth, a sixth grade student at Wahoo Elementary School.

Also participating was Anthony Ernesti, the son of Spc. Anni Ernesti who works as a human resources assistant in the National Guard headquarters in Lincoln.

According to the younger Ernesti, a third grade student at Seward Elementary School, he was having fun spending time with his mom at work.

"She helps people on computers," said Ernesti, who was helping his mother with computer monitors and the various filing she does every day.



Photos by Patrick Hynes

Computer Training: Spc. Anni Ernesti talks to her son Anthony about how she helps track different computer issues at the Nebraska Military Department's headquarters building in Lincoln. Anthony was participating in the annual 'Take Our Daughters and Sons To Work Day,' April 24.

(Editor's Note: Patrick Hynes is the son of Maj. Kevin Hynes. While participating in the Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day, he was assigned to report on what the other students were learning while spending the day at the Nebraska Military Department. He received help on this article from his father.)



Morning Break: Chief Warrant Officer Pete Steiner and Kayla Knuth smile for a photo during a break at Steiner's maintenance office in Lincoln.

Selfless Service: Lincoln's words still resonate

On May 26 I had the opportunity to spend time and speak with veterans groups about the importance of Memorial Day and why we must stop to remember our fallen service members.

Today many Americans talk about the rights, entitlements and privileges of being a citizen of the United States; very few stop to think or talk about the responsibilities of being an American. It takes dedicated and selfless citizens to make a democracy successful; we must vote, pay our share of taxes, follow laws and personally serve.

Without responsible citizens it would be very difficult for our country to prosper and survive.

On Memorial Day we stop to remember those Americans who gave their life and future for the security of our nation.

While we may have been influenced

by different aspects of the recruiting process (pay, tuition assistance, bonus, job training, etc...), we all

had a common recognition of the importance of serving our nation and the potential cost. The potential cost, loss of life, is what places military service apart from all other public service.

American service members have been providing this country Selfless Service for 232 years. It speaks of service member character past and present.

I would like to remind you of the comments President Abraham Lincoln made on the dedication date of the Gettysburg National Cemetery. It explains why we remember better than any other speech or document I have heard or read.

On Military Service

By Brig. Gen. Timothy Kadavy
Nebraska Adjutant General

He wrote the following:

"Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth

on this continent a new nation: conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war... testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated... can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war.

But, in larger sense, we cannot dedicate... we cannot consecrate... we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far and above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what

they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be here dedicated to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us... that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion... that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain... that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom... and this government of the people... by the people... for the people... shall not perish from the earth."

We remember because our service members serve for us "We the people..." not a king or a dictator, or for riches. We serve because in a democracy citizens must serve to ensure national security and prosperity for now and in the future.

Review boards designed to give Soldiers fair shake

There are numerous instances when Soldiers' issues concerning Officer Efficiency Reports, Noncommissioned Officer Efficiency Reports, adverse action information and conscientious objector reviews cannot get fixed by the chain of command, Military Personnel Office or the inspector general.

In these cases, the Army established a number of Special Review Boards. The Army Special Review Boards consist of four separate boards which adjudicate appeals from Soldiers.

These Boards have realigned and are now under the Army Review Boards Agency in Crystal City, Va.

The Officer Special Review Board handles OER and AER appeals in accordance with (IAW) AR 623-3. National Guard officers must submit their appeals to Appeals and Corrections Branch, G-1, National Guard Bureau,

IG Voice

By Lt. Col. Owen McCauley
State Inspector General

111 George Mason Drive, Arlington VA 22204-1382.

Active duty officers submit appeals to HRC Alexandria ATTN: AHRC-MSE-A, Appeals and Corrections Branch, 200 Stovall Street, Alexandria VA 22332-0442. USAR officers submit appeals to the HRC Evaluations Support Branch ATTN: AHRC-PSV-EA, 9700 Page Blvd, St. Louis MO 63132-5200.

The Enlisted Special Review Board handles NCOER and AER appeals IAW AR 623-3. National Guard NCOs submit their appeals to Appeals and Corrections Branch, G-1, National Guard Bureau, 111 George Mason Drive, Arlington VA 22204-1382. Active duty

NCOs submit their appeals to HRC Indianapolis, ATTN: AHRC-RE-A, Personnel Actions Branch, 8899 East 56th Street, Indianapolis IN 46249-5301. USAR NCOs submit appeals to the HRC Evaluations Support Branch, ATTN: AHRC-PSV-EA, 9700 Page Blvd, St. Louis MO 63132-5200.

The Department of the Army Suitability Evaluation Board handles appeals and petition requests to remove or transfer adverse information (Article 15, GOMOR, etc) from the performance portion of the OMPF to the restricted portion of the OMPF, IAW AR 600-37.

National Guard officers and NCOs submit their appeals to Appeals and Corrections Branch, G-1, National Guard Bureau, 111 George Mason Drive, Arlington VA 22204-1382. Active duty officers and NCOs and USAR officers and NCOs submit their requests to DASEB,

Army Review Boards Agency, 1901 S. Bell Street, Arlington VA, 22202-4508.

The Department of the Army Conscientious Objector Review Board handles all requests for consideration of conscientious objector applications, IAW AR 600-43.

These applications are submitted from the applicant through command channels to the GCMCA for consideration.

The GCMCA command SJA will send them to the DACORB after they have been reviewed at that level. The Address is DACORB, Army Review Boards Agency, 1901 S. Bell Street, Arlington VA 22202-4508.

As with any personnel issue, the chain of command, Military Personnel Office and the inspector general are willing and ready to assist our Soldiers with the appeals process ensuring their concerns are addressed.

Nebraska's first Warrant Officer Candidate class 'rising above rest'

During their fourth weekend of training at Camp Ashland, Nebraska's first Warrant Officer Candidate class took a four-mile march with heavy rucksacks, encountering blisters along the way.

Although visitors from the Warrant Officer Career Center at Fort Rucker, Ala., were not sympathetic to the blisters, they were very impressed with the warrant officer candidates as the candidates sang their class song and presented their class sign to Chief Warrant Officer Chuck McAllister.

Composing a class song and making a class sign are traditions established long ago by the Warrant Officer Candidate School. The song was sung to the tune of "Johnny Comes Marching Home" and here are the lyrics.

(First verse) "As candidates we're here today, Hurrah! Hurrah! The course is tuff, but we guess we'll stay, Hurrah! Hurrah! Our officers and NCOs told us this is the way to go. But we'll all feel better when warrants we become.

(Second verse) Warrant officers we'll be someday, Hurrah! Hurrah! Training Soldiers the proper way, Hurrah! Hurrah! We fit all we can in to each weekend wait one month and do it again, but we'll all feel better when warrants we become.

(Third verse) Brown class will always be the best, Hurrah! Hurrah! Soon we'll lead by examples we set, our time at Ashland we'll never forget and we'll all feel better when warrants we become.

Singing this little tune earned them talking benefits when eating at the dining facility. The sign made by the class was also explained by the candidates. The frame is brown, the Warrant Officer color, to represent the heritage of the Warrant Officer Corps.

The WOC rank is gold and represents the next phase in training. The ascending warrant officer ranks represent the ambi-

Chief's Business

By Chief Warrant Officer Steve Weber
Command Chief Warrant Officer



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes
Standing Tall: Members of Warrant Officer Class 08-001 in front of their sign.

tion to rise through the ranks as warrant officers. The Eagle Rising is the symbol of the Warrant Officer Corps.

"Rise Above the Rest" is the class motto. The Warrant Officer Candidate School staff is listed because it is their perseverance and leadership that allowed them to successfully complete the course. All of the candidates are listed because we can only be successful as a team.

All the warrant ranks are shown because the Warrant Officer Corps relies on warrant officers of every rank helping each other to accomplish the mission. The white background represents a fresh start as future warrant officers. The WOC rank represents their current place within the warrant officer corps. The Chief Warrant Officer Five rank is at the top because it represents the pinnacle of success as a warrant officer.

Warrant Officer Candidates Fotinos, Davis, Contreras, Flynn, Hanway, Petsche, Shively, Gonderinger, Kelly, Geiger and Riley are giving a great effort and striving to "Rise Above the Rest."

Cool head, remembering simple steps key when confronting violence

Force Protection is becoming more and more critical in today's world.

Many units are focusing attention on threats both "outside and inside the wire." These threats range from terrorism to criminal acts, as well as the potential for workplace violence.

Workplace violence usually brings to mind violence between co-workers, but this is only one example of a potential threat. Workplace violence encompasses more threats to include an active shooter situation, domestic violence or disgruntled visitors to a facility.

An active shooter situation is when an individual armed with a rifle or handgun enters a facility and proceeds to target occupants. These incidents have occurred more frequently in recent years due to multiple factors. One such factor is instant media coverage and this factor may lead to more active shooter incidents in the future.

Domestic violence is generally perpetrated by individuals outside of an organization, but who have a relationship with an employee or unit member. For example, a family member such as an ex-spouse may come onto an installation with the intent to threaten or harm a unit member. These incidents may occur in the workplace setting due to an offender simply knowing where a given individual is during the course of a working day.

Visitors coming onto an installation or into a facility may become disgruntled or violent. This often arises through frustration with customer services provided by a unit. For example, a person may come onto an installation to get an ID card. The person is first delayed at the main gate due to an expired ID card. The issue with the expired ID is resolved, but the person then finds out that the identification card machine is broken. This may lead the person to become disgruntled or irate.

Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder
Air Guard Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection Office

Thus, the person may threaten those individuals who were involved in the events at the main gate or with getting an ID card the next time a visit is made to the installation.

Remember, every situation is different and some domestic violence, worker-on-worker or disgruntled visitor threats may be resolved by supervisors or local security personnel.

However, immediate actions must be taken for an active shooter situation or if an incident escalates into a person threatening others with a weapon. First, someone needs to immediately notify local law enforcement and ensure other people in the area are warned of the threat.

The next step is to make sure everyone in the area or building seeks a protected location in which they can listen to instructions from broadcasts over public address speakers or from responding law enforcement.

A simple way to remember these important steps is to use the acronym C.A.L.L.

- CALL 911 and then local security as the situation allows
- ALERT other co-workers to the threat.
- LOCK all doors in a room which has lockable doors, no windows and has a phone.
- LISTEN to announcements broadcast over mass notification speakers or instructions from responding law enforcement.

For more information contact: Maj. Guy Moon, Nebraska Army National Guard, 402-309-7406, or Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard Antiterrorism NCO, 402-309-1565.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
Shawn R. Edwards

Major

Glenn E. Wattier

Captain

Robb M. Campbell
William P. McGreer
Nicholas G. Nymman
Daniel L. Smith
Lamartine X. Station
Nelbert C. St.Clair

First Lieutenant

Spencer P. Murdock

Chief Warrant Officer Five

Teresa A. Domeier
Jason L. Graff

Chief Warrant Officer Two

Justin K. Chadwick
Mark A. Talbert
Monty A. Woodward

Warrant Officer One

Bradley W. Adams
Keal S. Bockelman
Jessie F. Harris
Derek T. Whisler

Master Sergeant

Dorrance E. Atherton
Dennis D. Carroll

Sergeant First Class

Morgan C. Muller

Staff Sergeant

Brian W. Anderson
Jody L. Campbell
Andrew K. Singasas
Michael S. Weichman

Sergeant

Petra L. Blevins
Owen P. Kramer

Specialist

Anna P. Bach
Matthew L. Champ
James R. Flores
Michael L. Folkerts
Robert J. Gardner
Justin L. Gay
Richard P. Goodwin Jr.
Sean C. Hanger
Cordero R. Hansen
Bobbie L. Hunter
Severo Hernandez Jr.
Ryan D. John
Daniel L. Jones
Matthew P. Knievel
Allan J. Larrison
Robert G. Leonard
Peter R. Matson
Jeremy W. McConkey
Christopher E. Moulton
Nathan T. Nebelsick
Jason M. Newman
Robert T. Ohnesorge
Kevin A. Proctor
William T. Rader
Kyann M. Rasmussen
Casey J. Ryan
Darryl S. Schroeder
Kristopher C. Spencer
Michael R. Stone
Robert Tarr
James M.R. Taylor
Blake L. Vela
Eric L. Wilford
Ashley W. Woundedarrow

Private First Class

Brock A. Ackerman
Joshua C. Anderson
Rodney M. Aulner
Joseph A. Bizal
Andrew H. Brodahl
Christine A. Campbell
Jason D. Carlson
Steven K. Diefenderfer
Caroline C. Droscher
Nathaniel J. Emons
Nicholas J. Evans
Christopher L. Franssen
Cory B. Gotch

James M. Haggerty Jr.
Devin R. Handley
Joseph P. Hatzenbuehler
Tamara R. Johnston
Ashley D. Joint
Paul T. Kasselmann
Matthew R. Merchen
William F.F. Montoya
Joshua R. Morris
Ashley M. Nanfito
Chad C. Oestrich
Dustin W. Peterson
Tyler P. Potts
William J. Seier
James M. Sheldon
Robert E. Sherard Jr.
Aaron J. Svoboda
Tyall A. Thompson

Private Two

Cole A.O. Aboyade
Daniel D. Collins
Torey D. Helmick
Jessica D. Kassebaum
Anthony J. Keever
Robert J. Kotschwar
Ashley D. McKee
Monte A. McWilliams
Church S.L. Rivera
Dustin G. Wondercheck

Air National Guard Colonel

Keith A. Schell

Lieutenant Colonel

Maynard Dunning

Chief Master Sergeant

William J. Kerns

Senior Master Sergeant

Guy A. Boden
David A. Johnston
Lyle L. Urbank

Master Sergeant

Bryan E. Hart
Carla N. Miranda

Staff Sergeant

John J. Hoodjer
Bradley J. Schmale

Airman First Class

Corbin J. Hamernik
Brandon Lindholm

Aaron M. Trisch
Brittney C. Truscott

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
Col. Roma J. Amundson
Chief Warrant Officer Robert J. Pratt
1st Sgt. Thomas C. Pirrone
Master Sgt. Paul H. Spieker
Master Sgt. Robert S. Weatherly
Staff Sgt. Dustin M. Bauer

Army Commendation Medal

Capt. Michael B. Ertz
Chief Warrant Officer Brian L. Anderson
1st Sgt. John E. Quinn
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Clyne
Sgt. 1st Class Robert W. Jenkins
Sgt. 1st Class Kevin D. Kroon
Sgt. 1st Class Thomas J. Vodvarka
Sgt. 1st Class John G. Weddel
Sgt. Steven R. Loos
Sgt. Cherie L. Wilford
Sgt. John A. Youngblood
Spc. Lindsay S. Goodrich

Army Achievement Medal

Staff Sgt. Eric R. Fahrlander
Staff Sgt. Diane L. Lewis
Staff Sgt. Kevin McKinney
Sgt. Scot R. Gerten
Sgt. Gregory A. Olsen
Sgt. Erin D. Smith

Nebraska National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
Staff Sgt. Dustin E. Guenther

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Maj. Steven O. Ward
Staff Sgt. Tarissa R. Batenhorst
Staff Sgt. John Inthavong
Staff Sgt. Kristin L. Luebbe
Sgt. Crystal S. Kozak
Sgt. Colleen M. Zelazny
Spc. Mary Beth H. Beave
Spc. Nicole A. Watzke

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Staff Sgt. Charles E. Lindbloom
Sgt. Brandon S. Regnier
Sgt. Timothy J. Vanlaningham
Sgt. Jared S. Wiehn
Spc. Dustin J. Douglas
Spc. Angel R. Rodriguez
Spc. Amanda L. Vincent

Air National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
Maj. Spencer D. Hansen
Chief Master Sgt. Terry J. Knapp
Chief Master Sgt. Michael J. Martin

Chief Master Sgt. Donald D. Schmitt
Senior Master Sgt. Donald C. Birkenstall
Senior Master Sgt. Scott M. Tontegode
Master Sgt. Gerald L. Frain
Master Sgt. Dennis E. Kentfield
Master Sgt. Bruce A. Woods

Air Medal

Lt. Col. Mark C. McMahon
Lt. Col. John F. Rued
Capt. Sean M. Soder
Master Sgt. Mark E. Fusco

Aerial Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Mark C. McMahon
Capt. Benjamin M. West

Air Force Commendation Medal

Capt. Matthew A. Clough
Capt. Matthew E. Siemsen
Capt. Sean M. Soder
Master Sgt. Craig A. Shrimpton

Air Force Achievement Medal

Tech. Sgt. Michael A. Ewer
Tech. Sgt. Gregory A. Thimgan
Staff Sgt. Matthew W. Gullickson
Staff Sgt. Dustin R. Sabatka
Senior Airman Rosalba Garcia
Airman 1st Class Derek D. Myers

RETIREMENTS

Air National Guard

Maj. Gen. Mark R. Musick
Col. George G. Boshae
Lt. Col. Kelly D. Carlson
Lt. Col. Samuel R. Veney
Chief Master Sgt. Ronald M. Navratil
Tech. Sgt. Daniel L. Clark
Staff Sgt. Helen A. Porter

Army National Guard

Chief Warrant Officer Steven W. Stone
Chief Warrant Officer Martin H. Pargee
Master Sgt. Joseph E. Sokolik
Master Sgt. Paul H. Spieker
Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison

TAPS

Daniel Jochum
Tech. Sgt. Bradley P. Meyer

Shorttakes

General celebrates last military flight



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

(Above) **Wetting Down:** Maj. Gen. Mark Musick, former commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, receives a ceremonial 'wetting down' after completing his last military flight, May 1. Musick, who retired in June after serving as the mobilization assistant to the deputy commander of U.S. Strategic Command, is a command navigator with more than 3,300 hours in the KC-135R Stratotanker, and the RF-4C and F-4E Phantom II. (Right) **Happy Day:** Susan Musick and Abigail Musick, 7, help Maj. Gen. Mark Musick celebrate his last flight as a navigator aboard a KC-135R Stratotanker. Musick served as the commander of the 155th ARW from January 1995 until December 1998.



Awardees

Guardsmen, civilian leaders honored during National Guard Association-Nebraska banquet

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The National Guard Association of Nebraska honored nine military and civilian leaders for their contributions to the Nebraska National Guard, April 26, during the association's annual Spring Conference Recognition Banquet.

Held at the Strategic Air Command Museum near Ashland, Neb., the association honored retired Lt. Gen. (Neb.) Roger P. Lempke with the Brig. Gen. Campbell Award. Lempke served as adjutant general for Nebraska from December 2000 until his retirement last November.

The association also presented the Distinguished Service Award-Military to Maj. Gen. Robert Bailey, Col. Thomas Schuurmans and Chief Warrant Officer John Regan.

Receiving the association's Distinguished Service Award-Civilian were: retired Chief Master Sgt. Glenn Freeman, retired Brig. Gen. Dayle Williamson, Nebraska State Sen. Ray Janssen, Nebraska State Sen. Tom White and Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy. Sheehy also served as the keynote speaker during the banquet.

Receiving the associations' Meritorious Service Award was Tri-west Health Care Alliance.

Also honored during the banquet were the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard's Enlisted and Noncommissioned Officers of the Year. Honored were: Staff Sgt. Dominik Chase (Army Guard NCO of the Year); Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder (Air Guard Senior NCO of the Year); Master Sgt. James (Jim) Morbach (Air Guard 1st Sgt. of the Year); and Senior Airman Jon Carrison (Air Guard Enlisted Member of the Year.)

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Street Talk

“How has the skyrocketing price of gasoline affected you personally in your day-to-day life?”



Pfc. Chris Gilland

HHC, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion

“I live in Bellevue so I have to drive out to Grand Island to drill each month and it kills me being a private each month. It costs just about as much to get to drill as what I get paid.”

Spc. Kelsey Lamb

1075th Transportation Company

“I don’t go out as much as I used to. I don’t visit my parents as much. You just have to put your priorities in order and do what you can.”



Spc. Javis Olson

755th Chemical Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company

“Personally, I just kind of get annoyed by it. I live in Lincoln and I drive all over to find the cheapest gas. It’s pretty ridiculous if you ask me, but I try to not let it bother me.”



Pvt. Brandon Saathoff

623th Engineer Company (Vertical)

“It’s actually making quite a bit of difference. I go back and forth to Milford everyday for school. I’ve started car-pooling, but it’s still taking me about \$80 a week to go to school.”



Spc. Topacio Ortiz

Nebraska Medical Detachment

“It’s getting pretty bad. I’m alright right now because I’m working full-time, but once I start school...living in South Sioux City and having to go to drill in Lincoln every month to help out in the clinic, I’m spending about \$100. It’s hurting my pocketbook.”



Pvt. Scott Sneed

623rd Engineer Company (Vertical)

“You can’t really go out and do the things you need to do. I live and work on opposite sides of (North Platte) so filling up every other week is hurting my pocketbook. Getting down to drill — I go from North Platte to Lincoln — right there’s about \$150 every month for gas.”



Unit Wellness Team to focus on warriors, families, employers

The Nebraska National Guard is working on an initiative we are currently calling the “Unit Wellness Team”.

While we are still working to determine exactly what the team training and capability will encompass, I can tell you it will focus on Warrior, Family, Employer and ultimately unit readiness.

In the past few months I have held an officer and senior enlisted call to discuss my vision and goals... this one is at the top. At these meetings I have informed the team that we can no longer rely on family alert rosters and a holiday party to build family readiness. We can no longer have leaders that think about warriors only on weekends and during annual training periods.

The Global War on Terrorism is changing our nation’s view on how we use the reserve components... no longer are we a strategic reserve, we are now an operational force that will require a paradigm change in how we prepare our warriors, families and employers for the war fight.

In March we had to cancel our Family Program Conference due to lack of scheduled participa-

The Adjutant General Brigadier General

Timothy J. Kadavy



lies and employers ready... we can no longer wait until an alert or mobilization order are given to the state by the Army or the Air Force.

This requires a new way of think-

ing and action, and we are committed to the changes required to make this a reality.

The “Unit Wellness Team” should be representative of the enlisted, NCO and officer ranks, as well as family members. The selected members must be available and committed to the success of the unit and readiness.

My intent is for the unit members to nominate/select their team members. So the selectees’ families must also be committed to this process.

We are taking the next step in unit and family readiness, so it is critical we start off on the right footing. This program is about warriors and families, so it must succeed.

We are planning to kick off this program with a “Wellness Summit” in August of this year. The team is pulling together the plan and will be pushing information out to all units. I ask for your support in ensuring its success. More to follow so monitor the net.

tion. This was a disappointment, but we do understand the tempo at which our Airmen, Soldiers and families have been working. So we are using this time to reenergize our support programs and build some synergy through a “Unit Wellness Team” concept.

Initially, we will focus on family and warrior readiness, but eventually we would like to include employers and the Employer Support to the Guard and Reserve. When you go to war, your families and employers are impacted by your absence... so to leave them out of the readiness process would be wrong.

The “Unit Wellness Team” will assist units in ensuring warriors, families and employers are informed, trained and prepared for the probability of mobilizations and deployments. With the new focus on an operational reserve we must learn to think about readiness continuity, not as a cyclical event.

We must always be working to ensure we have warriors, fami-

Parenting tough part begins as son graduates from 5th Grade drug abuse resistance program

Last month I experienced another one of those “not quite ready to admit I’m getting old” moments.

Sitting at an elementary school gym, I had the opportunity to watch as my oldest son Patrick graduated from his school’s Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) course.

For those who are unfamiliar with the D.A.R.E. program, the course is designed to give elementary-aged students the skills they need to avoid drugs, alcohol, gangs and violence through a series of classroom lessons led by a civilian law enforcement officer.

According to D.A.R.E.’s Website, the chief goal of the program is to teach “children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live productive drug and violence-free lives.”

“D.A.R.E. goes beyond traditional drug abuse and violence prevention program,” according to a D.A.R.E. media kit news release. “It gives children the skills needed to recognize and resist the subtle and overt pressures that cause them to experiment with drugs or become involved in gangs or violent activities.

I knew this day would come someday, but it’s hard to admit that I now have a son who is old enough to actually encounter drugs and/or alcohol. But, there it is. I have a fifth-grade (soon-to-be sixth-grade) son who may soon be confronted with the choice of having to say no if somebody — possibly a friend — offers him drugs or alcohol.

As I sat there watching Patrick and the rest of his class receive their diplomas, I couldn’t help thinking to myself, “Now the hard part begins.” Up to this point, my wife and I have

My Turn

Editor, *Prairie Soldier*

Kevin J. Hynes



8th grade students that includes 12 45-minute lessons covering both drug information and life skills development dealing with such things as decision-making, anger management and

other issues youth today often face on a daily basis.

But, to me, the fight is now a lot more personal. That’s because it’s my kid — and soon to be kids — who are now facing these issues.

As I sat listening to Cass County Sheriff Deputy Wes Tuttle explain the different aspects of the D.A.R.E. program, one of the things that stuck with me at that point was how important parents are to the success or failure of keeping kids off drugs. In fact, he said, it is the single most important key.

I was also struck by the thought of how my son may soon be confronted with all-too-adult situations and how much I hope he’s ready to make the right decisions when the time, which it inevitably will, comes.

It’s unfortunate that we live in a world where things like drug and alcohol abuse are so prevalent. At the same time, I think we’re fortunate that there are people who are out there trying to help parents make a difference. We’re also fortunate that there’s information and help out there, be it from the school, our chaplains or even the Guard’s Family Support Program.

But ultimately, it’s up to each of us as parents to help our kids understand what the right choices are and to be there when they need us.

There’s an old saying that being a parent one of the world’s toughest jobs. I guess its times like this when you start to realize how true that saying really is.

been pretty lucky. The issues we’ve had to deal with while working to raise three sons have, for the most part, been pretty darn benign.

But, now that our kids are inching their way toward becoming teenagers, the issues we will undoubtedly face will grow exponentially. That’s because, from now forward, the decisions they make could very well have major impacts on the rest of their lives.

Drug and alcohol abuse are one of the biggest issues facing American families and communities today. That’s because the affects this abuse can have are long-lasting and often life altering.

That’s one of the reasons why the Nebraska National Guard is so interested in helping educate the youth of this state about the effects of alcohol and drug abuse, but also in helping law enforcement officials locate, identify and ultimately stop the people marketing in illicit drugs.

For example, in just the past year alone members of the Guard’s Drug Demand Reduction team visited 13 schools and provided information on staying drug free to 305 elementary students, 8,125 middle school students, and 598 high school students, according to Staff Sgt. Jenni VanDerPol, drug demand reduction coordinator.

It’s also why the National Guard Bureau has unveiled a new program this school year called “Stay on Track,” a “science-based curriculum” for 6th-

2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Time To Run: 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon competitors sync their watches to the sound of a cannon at the start of the 26.2 mile race held May 4 in Lincoln, Neb. The race serves as the annual trials for the National Guard's "All Guard" Marathon team.

Oregon runners take Guard team title

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

After a three-year hiatus, the Oregon National Guard is once again sitting at the top of the National Guard running world.

Competing in the annual Lincoln/National Guard Marathon held May 4 in Lincoln, Neb., the Oregonians cruised through the 26.2 mile course under picture-perfect clear skies to win this year's team chase over the Utah National Guard Marathon Team by a slim seven-minute and 11-second margin.

According to Oregon team captain, Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Vandervlugt, it feels good to win the team title after finishing second in 2006 and fifth last year.

"We're happy because it's a big deal for us to win," said Vandervlugt, who also won the Guard's Masters title with a time of 2:50.06. "It's something that I can take back to my state and say, 'Hey sir, look at what we did. We got you another trophy.'"

"We couldn't do this without the support of our commands in Oregon," he added. "They're the greatest."

This year's National Guard Marathon team competition attracted 18 team entries from across the United States. The team match results are determined



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Championship Finish: Staff Sgt. Edward King, Oregon Air National Guard, celebrates his finish during the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon. Oregon finished first in the annual team race with a combined time of 8:40.21.

by combining the overall running times of the top three declared members of the team.

The Oregonian team – which consisted of Vandervlugt, Edward King (2:52.06) and Sean Nixon (2:58.09), defeated the Utah National Guard Marathon Team – made up by Eric Peterson (2:59.46), Glen Tucker (2:47.08) and Raymond Workman (3:00.16) – by the score of 8:40.21 to 8:47.32.

The Wisconsin National Guard finished third with an overall time of 8:50.13. The Wisconsin team consisted of Jason Kirch (3:02.53), Michael Western (2:47.04) and Mike Zeigle (3:00.16).

The Oregon National Guard team also won the Military Team Division title at the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.

Vandervlugt, who has been part of several Oregon National Guard national championships over the years, said it's always been difficult to maintain the level of talent and consistency needed to maintain a championship-caliber team.

That's even more the case now, especially considering the nature of the overseas conflict the National Guard is engaged in.

"Two of the guys who were on the team this year were deployed last year... and one of them guys who was on the team last year is deployed now. Two of the guys who are here now, they're going to be deployed next year. And I'm

See OREGON on 25.

Golden!

■ Pennsylvania, Kentucky Guard runners tops at Lincoln race

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

While cruising over the Lincoln, Neb., streets for 26.2 miles under picture-perfect Spring skies, Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison, 32, of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard had one thought on his mind: winning the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.

"I wanted to do the best I could," said Harrison, who serves as an infantry instructor for the Pennsylvania Army National Guard's Regional Training Institute at Fort Indiantown Gap, Penn. "I really wanted to win the overall (race)... it didn't happen, but I still improved by over seven minutes on my best time.

Although Harrison finished the marathon in third place overall, just 51 seconds behind Lincoln's Levi Ashley who won the race with a time of 2:26:55, Harrison's time of 2:27:46 was a personal best and good enough for him to repeat as this year's National Guard Marathon's male winner.

"My goal was to run a 2:27 and that's what I did," said Harrison. "I'm really pleased. I ran a pretty good race. It was my best time by far."

According to Harrison, a steady pace was the key this year.

"I wanted to run a 5:35 pace and that's probably just about what I ran," he said. "I just wanted to maintain real close to that pace. I didn't want to go out too fast and I didn't want to speed up and slow down. I ran pretty consistent."

According to race officials, this year's marathon attracted 6,029 runners who competed in the full marathon, half marathon or National Guard Marathon. Of those runners, 172 were Guardsmen from across the United States who traveled to Lincoln to participate in the annual National Guard race that serves as the trials for the National Guard's "All Guard" Marathon Team.

In winning this year's Guard marathon, Harrison defeated Capt. William Bohlke of the Puerto Rico Air National Guard, who finished the race in 2:36.29. Bohlke, the 2006 Guard Marathon winner, finished this year's race in seventh overall. Finishing third in the Guard race and 13th overall was Sgt. 1st Class

See GOLDEN on 24.

Nebraska runners place well during Lincoln/National Guard Marathon

By 1st Lt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

Members of the Nebraska National Guard Marathon Team recorded a 10th place and an 18th place finish in the National Guard team competition during the 31st Annual Lincoln/National Guard Marathon, held May 4.

More importantly, however, the Nebraska team had one female and two male runners place in the top three for their age ranges, while one male also made the All Guard Marathon Team.

Spc. Brenton Duryea, a mechanic with the 1167th Battalion Support Company in Lincoln ran the race for his second time this year. His time of 3 hours, 28 minutes earned him

third place in the male 18-24 division and beat his personal goal of 3 hours, 30 minutes.

"It was a lot better this year," said Duryea. "It felt better. Last year I went out way too fast."

Duryea started running marathons last year out of defiance and the desire to raise money for a good cause. "Someone told me they didn't think I could do it. Last year I did it and then my sister got liver disease and so I raised money for that," said Duryea.

Capt. Robb Campbell of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade in Lincoln ran the marathon in 3 hours, 8 minutes and placed 38th of all the male Guard runners, earning a spot on the All Guard Team. Campbell has run the Lincoln marathon five other times, but this is his second year making

the All Guard team.

"The second year I ran I qualified that year, but I didn't go because of classes," said Campbell. "I was running cross country track for school and didn't know if the NCAA rules might disqualify me if I ran."

Campbell is looking forward to participating for the All Guard team this year. As a member of the team he will run marathons around the country and participate in recruiting efforts.

The Nebraska Guard Marathon team usually has more members, according to Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Kramer, who enjoyed her first year as the state coordinator for Nebraska team and assisted with the overall marathon administration. Five other women usually run

See NEBRASKANS on 26.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

On The Road: Master Sgt. Bryan Tlamka (#2136) and Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tlamka (#2137) pace themselves down a street near the state capitol in Lincoln, Neb. Both runners are members of the Nebraska Air National Guard.

2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

1st Lt. Varinka Barbini



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Vandervlugt

GOLDEN continued from page 23.

David Bice of the Kentucky Army National Guard.

According to Harrison, who works full-time for Volvo Powertrain in Hagerstown, Md., he was fortunate this year in that he recently changed work schedules so that he now works two 12-hour days on the weekend, leaving him the rest of the week to train for marathons.

"I've been running 70, 80 even up to a hundred miles a week for the past six to eight months," Harrison said. "I've been putting in a lot of mileage... a lot more than I ever had. That's really the key to what I did here."

Harrison added that the thousands of people who lined the race course – including dozens of Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen who supported the race – were also key.

"It was great... it's always great here with the support of all the people in Lincoln and the National Guard," he said. "You see so many people out there who are cheering you on. And I've ran it a couple times, so a lot of people kind of know me or recognize me a little bit. It's really nice because so many people are cheering you on."

While the men's champion was a repeat, this year's women's champion definitely was not. Taking first with a personal-best time of 3:01:45 was 1st Lt. Varinka Barbini, 27, of the Kentucky Army National Guard.

A Lexington, Ky., "rookie" police officer, Barbini said she was ecstatic to do so well at this year's race because her work schedule had made preparing physically for the marathon extremely difficult. "I was hoping to be under 3:20 this year because I was worried about my training and a lack of sleep the last week," she said. "I had some late arrests."

"I'm ecstatic and very happy," Barbini added.

Barbini said she really didn't know how well she'd be able to do at this year's race.

"I was a little nervous because I've only been running 30 to 35 miles a week because I'm a police officer full-time and it's hard to train because I work second-shift hours... a minimum of 50 to 60 hours per week," she said.

Along with taking first in the Guard female race, Barbini also finished third overall in the women's division.

"I was worried because my longest run was only 15 miles, so I was ecstatic but a little worried those last two miles," said Barbini, a member of the Kentucky Army National Guard's Medical Detachment who beat her time from last year by approximately nine minutes. "It was just exciting to come through (the finish line) because I saw the clock. It's (Sgt. 1st Class Jack Murphy's) last year so I wanted to make sure that I had a good time for him."

Murphy serves as the National Guard Marathon Program coordinator. He is retiring from the military early next year.

Taking second in the women's division and fifth overall was Spc. Patricia Smith of the Tennessee Army National Guard who completed the run with a time of 3:06:52 while Senior Airman Melissa Knight of the Iowa Air National Guard logged a time of 3:18:17 over the 26.2-mile course to finish in third place, 12th overall.

Winning this year's Masters race was

long-time Guard marathoner Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Vandervlugt, 43, of the Oregon Army National Guard who recorded a time of 2:50:06. Vandervlugt said the races seem to be getting harder the older he gets.

"The race was hard," said Vandervlugt, a full-time personnel sergeant with the Oregon Army National Guard's 3-116th Cavalry Squadron. "I don't train much anymore. Ever since I turned 40 I've had minor injuries (and) major injuries. So I'm forced to train less and that's very difficult for me."

"Marathons used to be very, very easy for me because my training was always so hard," he said. "Now I'm not allowed to train because of my injuries, so marathons are very hard now. I still believe that I'm a fast runner, but my body doesn't agree with me."

He said this year's marathon was a case in point.

"Today the first half was a 6:05 pace and it felt fine pretty much through (Mile) 13 or 12 and I was able to maintain that pace," Vandervlugt said. "And then I just crashed the last half."

"And it's all directly related to my training," he added. "I used to run 80 miles a week and now I run 25 to 35."

In winning the Masters event – which is for runners aged 41 and older – Vandervlugt placed ninth among Guard men runners and 23rd overall. He beat Staff Sgt. Michael Streff of the South Dakota Army Guard who finished in 10th place in the Guard race, 24th overall, with a time of 2:51:51 and Master Sgt. Walter Bird of the New York Air National Guard who finished third with a time of 2:57:55. That time was good enough for 15th overall in the Guard men's race.

The final results for the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon are:

Men: 1. Harrison, Troy, 2:27:46; 2. Bohlke, William, 2:36:29; 3. Bice, David, 2:42:21; 4. Bergquist, Michael, 2:43:27; 5. Western, Michael, 2:47:04; 6. Tucker, Glen, 2:47:08; 7. Schnell, Robert, 2:47:44; 8. Arnstein, Jesse, 2:49:38; 9. Vandervlugt, Timothy, 2:50:06; 10. Streff, Michael, 2:51:51; 11. King, Edward, 2:52:06; 12. Raitter, William, 2:54:46; 13. Jackson, Tom, 2:55:59; 14. Olive, Jeffrey, 2:56:15; 15. Bird, Walter, 2:57:55; 16. Nixon, Sean, 2:58:09; 17. Mittal, Vikram, 2:58:10; 18. Laymon, Paul, 2:59:11; 19. Zimmermann, John, 2:59:33; 20. Petersen, Eric, 2:59:46; 21. Zwiefel, James, 2:59:46; 22. Cavanaugh, Matt, 2:59:59; 23. Zeigle, Mike, 3:00:16; 24. Workman, Raymond, 3:00:38; 25. Mills, Timothy, 3:02:01; 26. Brill, Barry, 3:02:21; 27. Cuevas, Victor, 3:02:38; 28. Meyer, David, 3:02:41; 29. Kirch, Jason, 3:02:53; 30. Sinnett, Trent, 3:03:17; 31. Heaton, Tyrrell, 3:03:39; 32. Duarte, Chase, 3:03:43; 33. Edwards, Aaron, 3:03:58; 34. Graff, George, 3:05:27; 35. Mostoller, Luke, 3:06:07; 36. Embury, Michael, 3:07:48; 37. Frost, Troy, 3:08:03; 38. Campbell, Robb, 3:08:13; 39. Steadman, Robert, 3:08:55; 40. Petley, Daniel, 3:13:10; 41. Guinee, Kevin, 3:14:55; 42. De Heus, Jason, 3:15:08; 43. Marquis, Timothy, 3:15:09; 44. Charpentier, Luke, 3:15:38; 45. Goin, Evan, 3:16:35; 46. Waterman, Scott, 3:17:59; 47. Fabrizio, Nate, 3:20:57; 48. Domedion, William, 3:21:09; 49. Wheeler, Robert, 3:21:38; 50. Moran, Timothy, 3:23:26;

51. Smith, Gregory, 3:24:14; 52. Ollerbidez, Joseph, 3:24:21; 53. Shell Track, Sheldon, 3:25:19; 54. Bateman, Thom, 3:26:09; 55. Baker, David, 3:27:39; 56. Brunsberg, John, 3:28:15; 57. Hill, Joshua, 3:28:21; 58. Robbins, Dean, 3:28:22; 59. Duryea, Brenton, 3:28:51; 60. Baurer, James, 3:29:19; 61. Peterson, Brian, 3:29:46; 62. Nitz, Jamison, 3:29:47; 63. Allen, Judd, 3:30:21; 64. Herr, Gary, 3:30:36; 65. Guzi, Jeff, 3:30:50; 66. Brock, Herbert, 3:32:30; 67. Diaz, Michael, 3:33:50; 68. Blessing, Benjamin, 3:34:06; 69. Stoltz, Will, 3:34:41; 70. Stitt, Dennis, 3:34:52; 71. Allred, Brent, 3:35:19; 72. Silvers, Travis, 3:36:42; 73. Whisler, Gregg, 3:36:51; 74. Gordon, Dace, 3:37:40; 75. Frey, Jeff, 3:40:02; 76. Stafford, David, 3:42:00; 77. Voeller, Matthew, 3:43:18; 78. Lum Ho, Gregory, 3:44:10; 79. Rabenberg, Corey, 3:44:12; 80. Dotson, Ellis, 3:44:32; 81. Minnemann, Darren, 3:45:52; 82. Tassell, Todd, 3:46:14; 83. Gregory, Paul, 3:47:32; 84. Barthelme, George, 3:49:40; 85. Villaneuva, Alan, 3:49:44; 86. Perrone, Philip, 3:50:25; 87. Niles, Kenneth, 3:50:49; 88. Brand, Paul, 3:52:16; 89. Tlamka, Bryan, 3:53:51; 90. Long, Michael, 3:53:56; 91. French, Thomas, 3:55:02; 92. Keller, Matthew, 3:55:47; 93. Fillmer, Roger, 3:58:26; 94. Meissner, Brian, 3:58:54; 95. Collins, Marion, 4:01:06; 96. Coleman, Brian, 4:01:28; 97. DeVeau, Sean, 4:01:43; 98. Grey, Brian, 4:03:44; 99. Richter, Jared, 4:08:23; 100. Vega, Scott, 4:09:10;

101. Longhenry, Louis, 4:09:14; 102. Tlamka, Jeffrey, 4:10:02; 103. Gallo, Joseph, 4:10:05; 104. Mallinger, John, 4:12:59; 105. Banks, Michael, 4:18:39.

Women: 1. Barbini, Varinka, 3:01:45; 2. Smith, Patricia, 3:06:52; 3. Knight, Melissa, 3:18:17; 4. Stevens, Jill, 3:22:12; 5. Margetis, Nancie, 3:23:07; 6. Swatt-Robison, Martha, 3:34:44; 7. Trauba, DeAnne, 3:39:27; 8. Robb, Sarah, 3:40:02; 9. Goodwin, Paulette, 3:40:04; 10. McVenes, Michele, 3:40:49; 11. Mork, Casey, 3:42:31; 12. Hulette, Jennifer, 3:45:29; 13. Buckley, Lisa, 3:52:30; 14. Chipper, Colleen, 3:55:01; 15. Pingitore, Sanning, 3:57:46; 16. Nolan, Valerie, 4:00:37; 17. Wiese, Rebecca, 4:01:37; 18. Benito, Apolla, 4:03:50; 19. Weyers, Elisabeth, 4:06:38; 20. Edwards, Artavia, 4:07:53; 21. McKay, Rachelle, 4:13:35.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

GI Jill: Sgt. Jill Stevens completes the final steps of the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon while wearing her trademark running uniform.

Miss Utah turns in tiara for running shoes during National Guard Marathon

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Even by the most liberal standards, Sgt. Jill Stevens admits "it's been a weird year."

Being named Miss Utah. Competing in the Miss America Pageant. Being named the pageant's "America's Choice" winner. Speaking to youth audiences around the country about to what it's like to be both Miss Utah and a Utah Army National Guard Soldier.

The year, she says, has simply been a whirlwind.

On May 4 Stevens added another "diamond" to her tiara-like list of achievements when she was named to the 2008 "All Guard Marathon Team" after placing fourth in the National Guard Women's race during the National Guard Marathon Trials held in Lincoln, Neb., with a time of 3:22:21.

That time was also good enough for 15th place overall among women who competed in this year's Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.

"It's exciting," said Stevens shortly after being named to the "All Guard" team, made up of the National Guard's elite long-distance runners from across the country.

"I would probably rate this about a nine," Stevens said when asked how being named an All Guard runner compared to her other accomplishments this year. "Being a Soldier is probably a ten for me. And this, being a Soldier and a part of the All Guard team... its right up there."

Stevens admitted she was scared that she wasn't fully prepared to conquer the rigorous 26.2-mile marathon course.

"I haven't been able to train like I want to," said Stevens shortly after finishing the race, her short, blonde hair nestled in sweaty strings around her sunglasses as she walked around near the finish line trying to stretch tired muscles worn out by the long run. "This is my fourth state just this week that I've been... I was just lucky. I started out slow and then once I hit the halfway point, it was like, no reason to save anything... just keep going."

"And when I hit Mile 20, I was just like, 'Here we go... lock and load,'" added Stevens, who wore her white trademark "Miss USA, GI Jill" t-shirt during the race. "I saw the runners ahead of me and I just started picking them out. There's the next one...there's my next target. I just started picking them out one by one."

The Nebraska race marked Stevens'



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Happy Finisher: Sgt. Jill Stevens, Utah Army National Guard, celebrates finishing the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon, May 4, by signalling a thumbs-up sign. Stevens, who is the current reigning Miss Utah and was named the 'American Choice' winner at the 2008 Miss America Pageant, earned a spot onto the National Guard's "All Guard" Marathon Team by placing fourth among Guard women. Stevens regularly speaks around the country about how being an Army National Guard Soldier has opened up doors to her in civilian life.

fifth marathon since earning the title of Miss Utah last summer. Prior to that, she was a Summa Cum Laude student at Southern Utah University where she earned a degree in nursing. She has also worked as a fitness instructor for Gold's Gym as well as a bread baker for Great Harvest.

Last summer Stevens was also named one of four women for the "Women of Strength" feature in the September/October 2007 issue of Muscle and Fitness Hers Magazine.

Stevens, 25, is also a six-year member of the Utah Army National Guard, serving as a medic with the Utah Army National Guard Medical Detachment before she was moved to an assignment with Recruiting Command where she'll remain during her tenure as Miss Utah.

A war veteran, Stevens was mobilized for duty in Afghanistan with the 1st Battalion, 211th Aviation Group, in November 2003. She served there until

See MISS UTAH on 25.

2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon

All Guard racing team set for 2008 marathon season

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When it comes to competing on the All Guard Marathon Team, Tech. Sgt. Mike Zeigle knows a little bit about what it takes to make the elite National Guard racing team.

That's because, for the past 24 years, Zeigle has made every single team.

On May 4 Zeigle, who serves as a structural repairer with the 115th Fighter Wing based in Madison, Wisc., made it a cool quarter-century when the 52-year-old once again made the All-Guard team by finishing in 23rd place at the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon among National Guard men with a time of 3:00:16.

According to Zeigle, who works as an engineer for Trek Bicycle Corporation, he felt humbled over having been able to earn the right to represent the National Guard at various races around the United States so many times.

"I've been lucky that I've been able to stay clear of any real bad injuries and have been able to maintain my fitness over the years," said Zeigle. "I'm really proud to be able to represent the National Guard again."

The National Guard's "All-Guard" Marathon Team is made up of the top 40 National Guard men runners, 15 top Guard female runners and three "Super Masters" runners. They are chosen at the annual Lincoln/National Guard Marathon, held each year in Lincoln, Neb.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Jack Murphy, National Guard Marathon Program coordinator, this year's All-Guard team will be particularly tough to beat when the team begins com-



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Early Morning Stroll: 1st Lt. Robb Campbell, Nebraska Army National Guard, runs past the state capitol in Lincoln. Campbell is Nebraska's lone member of the "All Guard" Marathon team.

peting at races around the country this year.

"I think we have a strong All-Guard team this year," said Murphy. "The morale for the team just continues to grow. And the word's getting out."

"We had a lot of new runners here that had never heard about this program before. Once they got here, they learned about the recruiting and retention mission that this program has and they're very excited," Murphy added.

Along with running in races around the country, the All-Guard team is also responsible for setting up recruiting booths prior to each race and talking to prospective members about the National Guard and developing referrals for recruiting officials.

"I'm very optimistic about the direction the program is moving in and I think it's going to continue to be very successful



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Huge Task: Sgt. Steven Loos fills a mind-boggling row of cups in preparation for the thousands of runners who will pass by the 92nd Troop Command's water point located approximately half-way along the Lincoln/National Guard Marathon's 26.2 mile route.

for the National Guard," Murphy said.

He's particularly impressed that runners like Zeigle continue to work hard to make the team year in, year out.

"We have some people on the team who are just like Superman," said Murphy, laughing. "Even though according to the calendar they're getting older, their bodies just remain strong all the time. Mike's involved in biathlons and continues to stay fit. I'm sure genetics plays a part in it, but (he and the others) live a very active lifestyle."

"For someone to remain a part of this program for as many years as he has is also a reflection of the retention value that this program brings to members of it," he added. "A lot of the members on this team stay in the Guard actually because of this program."

According to Murphy, this year's team will feature a number of new runners as well as a number of veterans, like Zeigle. Murphy added that it is a great aid to the program to have runners like Zeigle who have competed in so many races under so many different conditions to act as mentors to the team's newest members.

Murphy said the generational shift has been good for both the Guard and the mara-

2008 All Guard Marathon Team

All Guard Team (Men) Troy Harrison, Pennsylvania; William Bohlke, Puerto Rico; David Bice, Kentucky; Michael Bergquist, Washington; Michael Western, Wisconsin; Glen Tucker, Utah; Robert Schnell, Arizona; Jesse Arnstein, New Jersey; Timothy Vandervlugt, Oregon; Michael Streff, South Dakota; Edward King, Oregon; William Raitter, Nevada; Tom Jackson, Illinois; Jeffrey Olive, Georgia; Walter Bird, New York; Sean Nixon, Oregon; Vikram Mittal, Massachusetts; Paul Laymon, South Carolina; John Zimmermann, Virginia; Eric Petersen, Utah; James Zwielfel, Alaska; Matt Cavanaugh, Minnesota; Mike Zeigle, Wisconsin; Raymond Workman, Utah; Timothy Mills, Iowa; Barry Brill, New York; Victor Cuevas, Puerto Rico; David Meyer, Colorado; Jason Kirch, Wisconsin; Trent Sinnott, Illinois; Tyrell Heaton, District of Columbia; Chase Duarte, Arizona; Aaron Edwards, Ohio; George Graff, Utah; Luke Mostoller, Arizona; Michael Embury, Kentucky; Troy Frost, Michigan; **Robb Campbell, Nebraska**; Robert Steadman, South Dakota; Daniel Petley, Pennsylvania.

All Guard Team (Women's) Varinka Barbini, Kentucky; Patricia Smith, Indiana; Melissa Knight, Iowa; Jill Stevens, Utah; Nancie Margetis, Illinois; Martha Swatt-Robison, Wyoming; Deanna Trauba, Utah; Sarah Robb, Indiana; Paulette Goodwin, Alaska; Michele McVenes, Minnesota; Casey Mork, Minnesota; Jennifer Hulette, Indiana; Lisa Buckley, Texas; Colleen Chipper, Virginia; Sanning Pingitore, New York;

All Guard Team (Super Masters) David Baker, Colorado; James Baurer, Washington; Brian Peterson, California.

thon team. "The older runners on the team have been really making an effort in their own states to attract younger runners," said Murphy. "They love this team and they love the competitiveness that it has at the events that we go to. They also understand that, even though they're excellent athletes, in order for us to continue to make this a good team, we need to attract younger athletes too... that we need this younger generation to help to continue to make us competitive."

According to Zeigle, he's still excited to make the team and to make a contribution.

"It never gets old," he said. "You know, it's a different feeling when you make the team for the first time. But even though I've been at it for 25 years now, I still get excited having the opportunity to represent my state and represent the National Guard."

MISS UTAH continued from page 24.

the unit's return in April 2005.

That's when Stevens said she started thinking about stereotypes people have about female Soldiers and pageant contestants.

"I wanted to break down stereotypes in the military that (people have about) female Soldiers. We are women. A lot of people think we're part male," she said, laughing. "And also in the pageant world... you don't have to be the typical pageant girl. You can also be an athlete. You can be a Soldier."

That's the message Stevens says she's constantly trying to reinforce during her many appearances around the country. "I'm really just trying to get out there (and) let girls believe in themselves and not what other people tell them to be," she said. "You can just be yourself."

Stevens adds that she's also trying to pass on a motto that she's developed for herself from her experiences in the military. "Lock and Load. Make every shot count. This is our one life to show what we're capable of, so don't waste

your ammo," Stevens said.

That motto definitely seemed to help Stevens as she competed in Lincoln. She said that with her schedule, it was hard to keep up with the training that she normally tries to accomplish during the days leading into a race. It didn't seem to matter though.

"I got a 3:22. I was stoked," she said. "The last six miles I had this adrenaline rush and I just kept going. I finished strong, which is a good thing because being a Soldier prepares you for things like this. It makes you hold your head high."

"And that was a good way to finish."

As part of the All Guard Marathon Team, Stevens will now be eligible to compete in several select marathons around the nation. She said she hopes to be able to fit a few into her already full schedule.

Yet, even if she doesn't, the selection will always be something she'll remember.

"I might mention this in a future speech that I write," said Stevens. "I'm writing a book, so this will definitely get in."

OREGON continued from page 23.

going to be deployed the following year," said Vandervlugt, adding that the runners know where their priorities have to lie.

"It's part of our job. We're Soldiers first, runners second. That's always a given."

The key, said Vandervlugt, is planning for those deployments and developing a group of runners to fill in when vacancies occur.

"I've got a good pool," he said. "Next year is going to be even harder... there might be three of us who are solid runners here next year, but with the deployments, you really just don't know. If I get my unit alert notice before, you don't know... I might not be here."

That's why the Oregonians have developed a motto that they take with them to each race they compete in.

"Run each race like it's your last until deployment," he said. "And then come back and try again."

The following are the results from this year's Lincoln/National Guard Marathon team championship competition.

2008 National Guard



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Helping Hand: Sgt. 1st Class Dave Spatz (right) offers assistance to Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison shortly after Harrison completed the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon in Lincoln.

- Marathon Team Results**
1. Oregon #1 8:40:21 (King, Edward, 2:52:06; Nixon, Sean, 2:58:09; Vandervlugt, Timothy 2:50:06.)
 2. Utah #1 8:47:32
 3. Wisconsin #1 8:50:13
 4. Kentucky #1 8:51:54
 5. Arizona #1 8:57:34
 6. Illinois #1 9:22:23
 7. South Dakota #1 9:24:12
 8. Minnesota #1 9:50:18
 9. Alaska #1 9:54:58
 10. Nebraska #1 10:06:51

- (Campbell, Robb, 3:08:13; Duryea, Brenton, 3:28:51; Nitz, Jamison, 3:29:47.)**
11. Colorado #1 10:07:02
 12. Idaho #1 10:39:48
 13. Tennessee #1 10:56:07
 14. Ohio #1 10:57:40
 15. North Carolina #1 11:17:38
 16. Virginia #2 11:18:06
 17. Florida #1 11:28:57
 18. Nebraska #3 11:54:18
- (Perrone, Philip, 3:50:25; Tlamka, Bryan, 3:53:51; Tlamka, Jeffrey, 4:10:02.)**

2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon

End of the Road

■Retiring marathon coordinator says last National Guard race emotional

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

During the years that Sgt. 1st Class John "Jack" Murphy has served as the National Guard Marathon coordinator he has seen quite a few races and met quite a few runners.

It's safe to say though, that years from now Murphy will always remember the May 4 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon.

That's because it was the last time he would stand at the finish line of the annual race as the National Guard Marathon coordinator.

"It was kind of an emotional day for me being the last time to watch the runners cross the finish line," said Murphy, who will retire from the Nebraska Army National Guard early next year. "I tried to give a hug to or shake the hands of everybody who came across. It was a very special day for me."

Having served as the National Guard Marathon Program coordinator since August 2002, Murphy is responsible for coordinating the annual race in Lincoln, which serves as the trials for the National Guard's "All Guard" Marathon team. He is also responsible for coordinating the team's involvement in civilian races across the United States while also making sure the members of the team keep up on their recruiting commitments as part of the "All Guard" team.

During his tour as coordinator, Murphy estimated that he's been involved in approximately 40 different races while meeting hundreds of Guard runners from across America.

He said the memories he made during the past six years are priceless.

"When you're in this job, you develop these friendships across the country. And I guess you're held accountable to that," said Murphy, adding that in a way he understood how Nebraska Cornhusker head coach Tom Osborne felt after having coached his last game. "I guess I can kind of relate to those kinds of feelings. You develop those kinds of relationships, and it's hard to let them go."

According to the runners who participated in this year's race, Murphy will be missed.

"He's been great... he's been like family," said Staff Sgt. Troy Harrison, Pennsylvania Army National Guard who won the Guard men's race this year. "He's treated us all like family. He's done everything for us. Anything we ask, he gets it done."

"It's Jack's last time and I wanted to make sure I had a good time for him,"



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Thanks For Everything: Sgt. 1st Class John "Jack" Murphy congratulates a National Guard runner at the finish line of the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon. Murphy, who will be retiring from the military early next year, has served as the National Guard Marathon Program coordinator since 2002.

said 1st Lt. Varinka Barbini, Kentucky Army Guard who set a personal record while winning the Guard women's marathon.

Barbini was one of dozens of National Guard marathoners who paused after crossing the finish line to hug Murphy, shake his hand or exchange a few words with the Nebraska Soldier.

Following the race, Murphy was presented with a Minute Man award by Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, for all that he had done to help promote the National Guard marathon program and general physical fitness.

"He has worked so hard over the past six years as marathon coordinator to ensure that this operation has gone on," Kadavy told the assembled marathoners



Championship Smile: 1st Lt. Varinka Barbini smiles at Sgt. 1st Class John "Jack" Murphy after she finished first among National Guard women at the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon. Barbini credited Murphy with helping her set a personal record during the May 4 race.

these runners, the relationships that are developed and the experiences you go through, it makes it all worth it."

"It's developed me to be a better individual and I'll take what I learned here and apply it to whatever endeavors I have in the future."

from across the United States. "It is going to be a loss to have him move on into his next career."

Murphy said he will definitely miss being around so many high quality runners as he moves on to the next stage of his career, whatever that might be.

"I know that it has to happen. You can't continue to do this forever, particularly in the military," he said. "It's bittersweet. I'm sad to leave this part of the program."

"There's a lot of hard work that takes place during the year, but when you come to these events and see

New marathon coordinator excited to get down to work

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The new National Guard Marathon coordinator is eager to get to work.

Tech. Sgt. Mike Hagen, 32, was recently announced as the new National Guard Marathon coordinator. He will succeed retiring Sgt. 1st Class John "Jack" Murphy later this year.

A native of Bismarck, N.D., Hagen ran his first marathon in 2003 when he competed in the Marine Corps Marathon shortly before transferring from the North Dakota Air National Guard to his current position with the 184th Intelligence Wing Detachment 1 at Salina, Kan.



Hagen

Shortly after moving to Kan., Hagen said, the Kansas state marathon coordinator asked Hagen if he would be interested in competing as a member of the Kansas Guard Marathon Team in 2004. The Kansas coordinator also soon informed Hagen that, as a "veteran" marathoner, he would take over for him as the state coordinator when he retired soon after the race.

Hagen said he loved the job. "I thought it was actually one of the additional duties that you get handed that I actually enjoyed and would devote a lot of extra time to."

In early May Hagen traveled to Lincoln to shadow Murphy as he coordinated his last Lincoln/National Guard Marathon. Hagen said watching all of the work that Murphy and his assembled staff had to complete to make a successful race left his mind swimming.

"That week was sometimes kind of hectic, sometimes kind of fly by the seat of your pants," he said. "You need to be flexible. Plans change. Things change. Times change."

"I just kind of stood back and watched a lot," he said, adding that he picked up quite a bit of information during the week he spent in Nebraska, adding that he can't wait to start his new job.

"My wife's excited. I'm excited," said Hagen, who is transferring to the Army National Guard. "We're excited to come up."

NEBRASKANS continued from page 23.

the Lincoln marathon, but three were hurt and the others didn't get their training started on time.

"I usually run it," said Kramer who was kept out of the race this year due to an achilles tendon injury she suffered after last year's race.

"I ran it, but pretty much right after that race I started going to PT (physical therapy)," said Kramer. "It finally healed in December and I couldn't get into good enough shape to start a training program."

Kramer is looking forward to next year's marathon.

"I am 100 percent now, getting back into my race shape and I hope to do really good next year," said Kramer who had made the All Guard team the past two years.

To become a member of the Nebraska marathon team is fairly simple says Kramer. "As long as they are running they

can be on the team," said Kramer.

Nebraska team members also must complete recruiting and retention activities for the Nebraska Guard.

Senior Airman Jamison Nitz of the 155th Air Refueling Wing ran his third marathon this year as a member of the Nebraska Marathon team. "I was happy with the time I got with the amount of training I got in," said Nitz who ran the 26-mile course in 3 hours, 29 minutes, placing 220th overall.

He said he plans to continue to run the Lincoln marathon, but hasn't decided about branching out to other marathons.

"I'm actually a shorter distance runner," said Nitz. "But I like being part of the team. It gives you a reason to run."

Spc. Valerie Nolan, a traditional Guardsman currently attached to the Joint Forces

Headquarters in Lincoln, was also pleased with her results in her fourth Lincoln Marathon.

"I got my personal best. I was trying to beat four hours, but I missed it," said Nolan, who ran the marathon in 4 hours, 37 seconds.

"I beat my last time by like 10 minutes."

Nolan started training for her first marathon while deployed to Kuwait with the 110th Medical Battalion and has kept up her demanding training while going to law school in Lincoln. She will graduate in May and hopes to join the active duty Air Force Judge Advocate General office after passing the bar exam.

The Nebraska Marathon team runs other local races in addition to the Lincoln Marathon.

"We do other runs, like the Havelock run, State Farm run," said Duryea.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Halfway Home: Spc. Elisabeth Weyers, Nebraska Army National Guard, passes the half-way point of the 2008 Lincoln/National Guard Marathon, May 4. Weyers finished in 19th place overall among Guard women with a time of 4:06:38.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Body English: Retired Brig. Gen. (Neb.) Steve Rein tries to influence the path of his putt during the National Guard Association-Nebraska Annual Golf Tournament at the Ashland Country Club. The April 25 event attracted 152 golfers despite being played in intermittent drizzle and brutally cold wind gusts.



Dressed For Success: Retired Master Sgt. Gary Wilhelm and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Shunk prepare to move out onto the drizzly and gusty golf course, April 25.

Golfers brave elements during annual links tourney

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Perfect day for golfing it wasn't.

Still, 152 golfers braved a stiff, bitterly cold wind and intermittent rain showers to compete in this year's annual National Guard Association-Nebraska Golf Tournament held April 25 at the Ashland, Neb., Country Club.

"It was cold and miserable... but when you're winning, that makes it a little easier to bear," said Staff Sgt. Ward Robinson, laughing.

Robinson, who is currently serving in a temporary full-time assignment with the Nebraska Army Guard's Military Plans and Actions Branch, was part of the four-person team that won the best-ball tourney with a solid nine under par score.

Robinson said the cold windy conditions – with frequent 30 miles-per-hour, bone-cutting gusts – was definitely the major obstacle that teams had to conquer during this year's event.

"You could just see the ball swing right or left as the gusts came through," said Robinson.

Because of that, Robinson and his team – which was competing for the first time in the tournament – came up with a simple strategy.

"When we were playing into the wind, we were just trying to



On The Way: Lt. Col. Chad Stevens attempts to chip his ball up to the hole during the National Guard Association-Nebraska Golf Tournament.

make par... to get through the hole as best we could," he said. "We then took a pretty aggressive approach when playing with the wind. The wind holes and the east-west holes were pretty much our scoring holes."

Robinson said he and his team enjoyed their first time at the golf tournament.

"We just went out to play and have fun," he said. "Fortunately, I had some pretty good golfers with me."

"It was fun. We all had a good time," Robinson added. "I just wish we could move it to May so that we could get some better weather."

According to Maj. Shelly Herrod, who coordinated this year's golf tournament, a total of 38 teams signed up to play in the event. The event also raised \$275.00 for the Nebraska National Guard Enlisted Association during a putt-off sponsored by the National Guard Insurance and retired Col. Dennis Hatfield who donated \$100 to the winner.

This year's winners were:

1st Place - 1st Flight (Ward Robinson, Paul Robinson, Peter Smith, Joshua Michaelson)

2nd Place - 1st Flight (Steve Petersen, Roger Petersen, Pete Alvestad, Donald Kemper)

3rd Place - 1st Flight (Gary Wilhelm, Todd Plies, Mark Stoner, Thomas Shunk)

High Score - 1st Flight (Bill Nelson, Joe Garcia, Dave Fusco, Ken Meyer)

1st Place - 2nd Flight (John Bailey, Dave Petersen, Richard McKinley, Daniel Fraley)

2nd Place - 2nd Flight (Curtis Abendroth, Dustin Young, Kevin Garner, Tim Zegers)

3rd Place - 2nd Flight (Greg Henderson, Carrie Pomajzl, Jeff Oakeson, Nate Broders)

High Score - 2nd Flight (Glen Wattier, Cory Languis, Eric Baptiste, Edwin Davis.)

Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers help Omaha celebrate Armed Forces Day

By Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland

Unit Public Affairs Representative

A pair of the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers helped Omaha celebrate Armed Forces day by showing the types of skills Soldiers can learn in the Nebraska Army Guard.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Prokopf and Staff Sgt. Jerrimy Patzke rappelled 85 feet from the ceiling of the Civic Auditorium during the May 17 halftime break of an indoor football game. The two Soldiers were participating in the Armed Forces Day celebrations at the half time show of the Omaha Beef and the Billings Outlaws football game.

"It was great," Prokopf said of the experience. "The guys that we worked with here at the Civic made themselves available to us, let us go up and check things out ahead of time and let us practice as our schedules allowed it."

The crowd was very patriotic and the Soldiers received a very warm welcome



Photos by Chief Warrant Officer Mark Roland

Playing Catch: Sgt. 1st Class Robert Prokopf (left on tailgate) and Staff Sgt. Jerrimy Patzke and toss t-shirts to the crowd from the football field inside the Omaha Civic Auditorium. The two were participating in the Armed Forces Day celebration during the halftime show at the Omaha Beef vs. Billings Outlaws game, May 17.

as they lowered from the ceiling.

"It was one of the most fun things that I have done in recruiting and this is my fifth year in recruiting," said Patzke.

Sgt 1st Class Robert Prokopf, readiness NCO for the 754th Chemical Company, received his training at Air Assault School and was a member of the 101st Airborne.

Staff Sgt. Jerrimy Patzke, a recruiter with the Nebraska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Command, received his training during Army Ranger School and was a member of the 3rd Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment out of Fort Benning, Ga.



On The Way: Sgt. 1st Class Robert Prokopf (left), and Staff Sgt. Jerrimy Patzke rappell 85 feet from the ceiling of the Omaha Civic Auditorium, May 17. The two were participating in the Armed Forces Day celebration during the half time show at the Omaha Beef vs. the Billings Outlaws game.

Omaha Royals giving free tickets to military families

OMAHA, Neb. – The Omaha Royals announced the creation of Operation RBI, April 17. It's a program that will provide an evening of entertainment to families whose loved one is serving or has recently served in America's military service, by giving them tickets to a Royals game.

The Operation RBI package includes a minimum of four reserved seats – negotiable depending on the family's size – to almost any Royals home game during the 2008 season. Excluded are the July 4th Independence Day Fireworks game and the July 18th game featuring post-game fireworks and Keith Anderson in concert.

"This is our way of honoring those men and women who have served in our country's military," said Lesley Crutcher, Royals director of community relations.

Those who qualify for Operation RBI: at least one family member is serving or has returned since January 1, 2007 from serving in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force or National Guard branch.

The Royals will provide the Operation RBI tickets for one family per home game during the 2008 season. Game dates are available on a first-come/first-serve basis.

Those interested in signing up for the program may download a registration form at www.royals.com. Click on "Community" at the top of the Website's home page, and then click on "Operation RBI."



White Gloves: Members of the firing detail stand at ease as they wait the command to fire a ceremonial salute.



Photos courtesy of the Oregon National Guard

"Ready Down!" Members of the Nebraska National Guard Funeral Honors Team are given the command "Ready, Down" just prior to moving a casket toward the mock up grave site. The command is designed to give the Soldiers an opportunity to look down to insure that there are no obstacles that may be in the way of their foot movement.

Final Honors

■ Nebraska Funeral Honors Team takes second at national competition

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

The Nebraska Army National Guard Funeral Honors Team placed second in a national military ceremonial competition held in Oregon recently.

The competition was attended by seven states that had qualified in their respective regions and had moved up to the national event held at Camp Rilea, Ore., for the 2008 National Honor Guard Competition, March 30 – April 4.

The funeral honors teams were formed in Nebraska as a result of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000 to provide military honors for qualified veterans. The team has been extremely busy ever since.

"We performed approximately 1,300 military funeral ceremonies in Nebraska last year, up from 800 the previous year and expect to do 1,500 this year," said Cliff Lant, Nebraska National Guard Military Funeral Honors coordinator.

The newly-organized national honors competition was formed to sharpen the skills of those Guardsmen who continue the military tradition of honoring Soldiers who have passed on. The Guard Soldiers were also able to share information and meet other state funeral honors teams.

"In order to compete in the finals in Oregon, the team had to first compete by making a DVD of their performance of honor guard funeral details and send it in to National Guard Bureau" said Sgt. Cody Green, team member.

The DVD, according to Green, was evaluated by National Guard Bureau, with only seven regional honor guard teams, not including the Oregon honor guard team, chosen.

Regional winners were: New York, West Virginia, Florida, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Idaho and Nevada. The Oregon honor guard won last year's competition so it received an automatic eligibility and the right to host the event.

Active Army Soldiers from Arlington Cemetery's Old Guard, who perform ceremonies at the national cemetery, trained National Guard evaluators and scored the events during the competition.

During the course of the competition, the state teams were evaluated on a variety of events including firing party, hearse off-loading, burial site ceremonies, flag folding, off-loading from military aircraft and taps.

Also included were numerous uniform inspections and physical fitness testing, said Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela who accompanied the eight person team to Oregon.

Most of the inspections and physical fitness testing were done in the early morning hours prior to the competition in dress uniforms.

Green said being a funeral honor guard is very rewarding job. Since he began as an honor



Old Glory: Members of the Nebraska National Guard Funeral Honors Team work together to carefully fold the American flag during the national competition.



The Eyes Have It: Sgt. Cody Green makes final adjustments to the folded U.S. flag based upon eye movement cues of the Soldier facing him during the six-man flag folding detail portion of the competition. The flag will be moved down the line to the final Soldier, who then presents the flag to surviving family members.

guard, he performed approximately 250 funeral details

"It's one last honor to give to the vets that have gone before me," he said, adding that families often thank and tell the team how much their presence and performance means to them.

Competing in Oregon were: Staff Sgt Bradley Schwartz, Lexington; Sgt. Cody Green, Alliance; Spc. Shawn Sullivan, Randolph; Spc. Adam Maley, Albuquerque, N.M.; Spc. Justin Otoski, Lincoln; Pfc. James Taylor, San Antonio, Texas; Pfc. William Rader, Cook.



"At Ease." Staff Sgt. Bradley Schwartz and the Nebraska National Guard Funeral Honors Team await an inspection by the Old Guard from Arlington Cemetery. Schwartz holds a leader book with all of his team members' biographical data for the Old Guard Soldier to reference during the inspection.



How Do You Measure Up? Spc. Casey Sullivan has his jacket press line measured and checked front and back for consistency, just one of many minute details judged during the numerous uniform inspections conducted during the intense 2008 National Honor Guard Competition held March 30 - April 4 at Camp Rilea, Oregon.