North Dakota Guardian

Volume 3, Issue 7

July 2010

Also Inside:

Wing Aces Inspections

Generational Gifts

With Honors

Military Funeral Honors Team Pays Tribute to Former Commander in Chief

Inside This Issue

Features

4 **Duty Bound**

Airmen from the 119th Wing kick-off their summer by financing their own trips to Washington, D.C., to visit cherished friends. As mentors at the Good Grief camp, the Guardsmen gain inspiration and extend their support to the children of fallen service members.

6 **Lasting Contributions**

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) C. Emerson Murry, former N.D. National Guard adjutant general, presents a powerful speech at this year's Memorial Day ceremony at the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery as the special guest speaker. A World War II Veteran, Murry remembers the victories of his generation.

10 **A Higher Standard**

North Dakota Military Funeral Honors team members are dedicated to rendering honors to those who have served. With a new program and improved training, they have been able to conduct an astounding number of funeral missions with the utmost professionalism.

Departments

Guardian Snapshots ..... pg. 8

News Briefs ..... pg. 14

Sound Off!..... pg. 15

North Dakota Guardian

Commander in Chief
North Dakota Governor
John Hoeven

The Adjutant General
Maj. Gen. David A. Sprynczynatyk

Chief of Public Affairs
Lt. Col. Rick Smith

Editor
Sgt. Eric W. Jensen

Contributors
Capt. Penny Ripperger
Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp
Staff Sgt. Amy Wieser Willson
Brig. Gen. Al Dohrmann
Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hagburg
Will ONeal
Bill Prokopyk
Maj. Gen. (Ret.) C. Emerson Murry
Sgt. Ann Knudson
Pfc. Jess Raasch
2nd Lt. Scott Noyes
Spc. Amanda Weninger
Sgt. Jonathan Haugen

The ***North Dakota Guardian*** is an authorized publication for members, families and retirees of the N.D. National Guard.

- Contents of the ***North Dakota Guardian*** are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, or the Department of the Army or Air Force.
- Editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Joint Force Headquarters, N.D. National Guard (JFND) Public Affairs Officer.
- Printed by United Printing, a private firm in no way connected to the U.S. Government under exclusive written contract with the JFND. Reproduction is by the offset method with a circulation of 7,500.
- The ***North Dakota Guardian*** is published by the JFND Public Information Office, Box 5511, Bismarck, N.D. 58506-5511, 701-333-2007

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Contributions to the ***North Dakota Guardian*** are encouraged! Send articles, photos and art to Editor, JFND PIO, Box 5511, Bismarck, N.D. 58506-5511.

Electronic submissions are preferred. Please e-mail stories in Word format to:
eric.william.jensen@us.army.mil
Phone: 701-333-2195 Fax: 701-333-2017
Digital photos should be at least 300 dpi.

On the Cover

Laid to Rest: Members of the North Dakota Military Funeral Honors team carry the casket of former Gov. Arthur Link as he is brought to the Capitol building in Bismarck to lay in state. Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, N.D. National Guard adjutant general, is also seen in the procession where he later presented Link's wife, Grace, with the North Dakota flag. Read more about the Military Funeral Honors program on page 10. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Amy Wieser Willson, Joint Force Headquarters)

Please visit us on the Web at:
www.twitter.com/ndnationalguard
www.youtube.com/ndnationalguard
www.flickr.com/photos/ndguard
www.facebook.com/NDNationalGuard

View from the Top

Comments from North Dakota National Guard Leadership

Brig. Gen. Al Dohrmann
Multinational Battle Group East Commander
North Dakota National Guard

The Support of Many Ensured KFOR 12 Success

After almost nine months in Kosovo and 11 months away from home, we are approaching the final transition of our deployment, our transfer of authority to (Kosovo Force) KFOR 13.

The U.S. Soldiers of KFOR 12 assembled last August at Camp Atterbury, Ind., where units from 14 states and territories and Soldiers from 37 states became a single, cohesive unit. While North Dakota Soldiers were in the majority, the core of our task force was strengthened by Soldiers from across the United States. By the time we ended our training in Indiana, we were one team of nearly 1,400 Soldiers ready to validate our training at our mission rehearsal exercise in Hohenfels, Germany.

At Camp Albertshof, an austere training facility in Hohenfels, Germany, we faced new challenges in our preparation for our mission. As with all prior challenges, the Soldiers of KFOR 12 rose to the occasion and were validated for the mission, with numerous examples of commendable performances.

We arrived in Kosovo in late October 2009 and took over authority of Multinational Task Force East. We immediately added soldiers from Armenia, Greece, Poland, Romania and Ukraine to the KFOR 12 team. We quickly went to work, with four battalion-size maneuver task forces patrolling our sector in southeastern Kosovo: Task Force Defender from North Dakota and Kansas; Task Force Mustang from California, Task Force Hellas from Greece and Armenia; and Task Force POL/UKR from Poland and Ukraine.

In February 2010, we became Multinational Battle Group East and entered the deterrent presence phase of KFOR operations. With the name change, our maneuver task forces transitioned into agile company-size units. Based on the improved security situation, patrols were de-emphasized and our Liaison Monitoring Teams broadened their role, becoming the primary eyes and ears of the Battle Group. Meanwhile, Turkish Soldiers joined the Battle Group to complement our maneuver companies from Poland, Ukraine, Greece and the United States. Additionally, we added positions to brigade headquarters for our multinational partners to make it truly multinational for the first time since the United States took over the eastern sector in 1999.

With an increased multinational presence and a decreased role for our maneuver elements, we then worked to adjust our U.S. force size. In May 2010, we successfully redeployed nearly 500 Soldiers from California, Kansas, North Dakota and the Virgin Islands to the U.S.

KFOR 12 managed these many transitions and challenges because of the outstanding work of the brigade staff and the subordinate task forces, diligently adapting to new missions and new roles. There is no doubt in my mind that KFOR 12 was the right force in the right place at the right time.

Before closing, I'd like to thank our Families, friends, employers and the state Joint Force Headquarters who have supported us throughout the entire train-up and deployment. Finally, thanks to the Soldiers of KFOR 12; I am proud of the work each of you has done for the Battle Group, for KFOR, and for the people in Kosovo; your legacy will live on long after we have handed over the mission to KFOR 13.

Sincerely,

Brig. Gen. Al Dohrmann

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hagburg

Brig. Gen. Al Dohrmann, of Bismarck, N.D., commanding general of Multinational Battle Group East, answers a question for media in Ferizaj/Urosevac, Kosovo, during a Dec. 30, 2009, press coffee.

First in a three-part series on the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

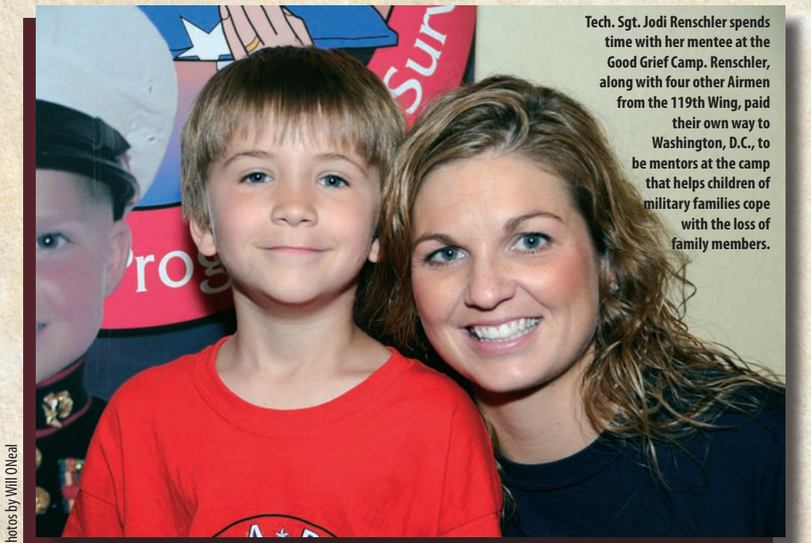
GOOD GRIEF

Airmen Inspired at Camp for Kids of Fallen

By Capt. Penny Ripperger
119th Wing

While many people recuperated from an exhausting Memorial Day weekend of fun with family and friends, five Airmen from the N.D. Air National Guard reminisce about a different type of weekend. A weekend that truly represents what Memorial Day is about: honor, dedication and devotion to fallen military members and their Families.

Tech Sgt. Jodi Renschler, Staff Sgt. Samantha Kolness, Staff Sgt. Mandi Hagen, Senior Airman Mandy Herrmann and Senior Airman Kaila Margheim gave up their extended weekend, used personal vacation time and paid their own plane ticket to attend a Good Grief Camp in Washington, D.C., through the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, more commonly known as TAPS.



Tech. Sgt. Jodi Renschler spends time with her mentee at the Good Grief Camp. Renschler, along with four other Airmen from the 119th Wing, paid their own way to Washington, D.C., to be mentors at the camp that helps children of military families cope with the loss of family members.

Photos by Will ONeal

Some of the children (orange shirts) and the mentors (blue shirts) of the 2010 Good Grief Camp take a group picture during the National TAPS seminar that took place in Washington, D.C., over Memorial Day weekend.

"I don't really consider it 'giving up' my weekend. I feel that it's my duty to give back, and I can't think of a better way to do it," Kolness said.

Compassion is addicting. This is the fourth year that both Kolness and Hagen have attended the Good Grief Camp. This was the first year for the rest of the North Dakota Airmen who attended, and most likely it won't be their last.

"This experience has changed my life and I can't imagine spending Memorial Day weekend anywhere else. We are with the kids from sun up to sun down while the surviving parent is in the adult side learning how to cope with their loss as well," Hagen said.

The weekend is full of fun events for the kids along with grief work to help the children deal and heal from the loss of a loved one, typically a parent. The weekend consists of grief activities, including a city tour of Washington, D.C., a 'Good Grief Bash' with food, games and even a performance by the Washington Redskins Cheerleaders and the U.S. Navy Drill Team.

Another important part of the weekend consists of a balloon release with a letter inside that the kids write to their loved ones who are "up in heaven," an emotional event for Hagen and something that hits close to home for her as a single parent.

"I am so glad this program is out there in case anything ever happened to me and my daughter was in this position. Volunteering my time is the least I can do for a family that has made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom," Hagen said. "There are no words to express the feeling of listening to a 7-year-old explain how his daddy jumped on a bomb to save the three men in his truck. The heartache could be felt and seen in the tears running down his face. I know that he had some small comfort in knowing that we, his military brothers and sisters, still care and we are here for him."

More than 347 children attended the Good Grief Camp this year. All of the mentors for the camp are volunteers from the military or a military association.

"TAPS also is just not for Families that have lost someone to a war, but they help families that lost a loved one to suicide, accidents and natural causes. They don't judge how your loved one died. They help all those who are grieving their loss," Kolness said.

Kolness, along with Hagen, was one of the first Happy Hooligans to attend the Good Grief Camp in 2007. The profound effects of the program are what keep her coming back.

"I have had the same mentee for four years now. Her name is Laura. Her dad passed away in 2004. She was very close to her father, even at the age of three, she felt loss. And she has changed so much since I first met her. Since I've been volunteering for TAPS, it's amazing how some of the kids that I've been around have changed and are more open about their fathers' deaths," Kolness said.

For more information about the TAPS program, visit www.taps.org.

Senior Airman Kaila Margheim and Senior Airman Mandy Herrmann spend time with their mentees at the Washington Monument during a city tour of Washington, D.C., one of many activities during the weekend that is dedicated to children and family members who have lost loved ones in the military.

Below, Staff Sgt. Samantha Kolness hugs her mentee, Laura. This was Kolness' fourth year volunteering at the camp as a mentor and she has had the same mentee every year.

Gifts From Heroes

Retired Maj. Gen. C. Emerson Murry, former North Dakota adjutant general, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942. He later served with the 17th and 82nd Airborne Infantry Divisions in the European theatre during World War II, including the Battle of the Bulge in 1944.

Bill Prokopyk

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) C. Emerson Murry delivered the following speech as the special guest speaker at the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery on Memorial Day, May 31, 2010. He served as the N.D. National Guard adjutant general from 1975 – 1984:

Today we pay tribute and honor past and present members of our Armed Forces who have done so much to build our country and keep it free. It is also the 65th anniversary of our victory in World War II — our largest war in our history.

It seems fitting to dwell a bit on this war and its Veterans since they are a rapidly passing generation and are typical of the finest in American character we find in our Veterans of all wars.

Few people remember the heritage that the World War II generation inherited. It included the poverty of the greatest depression in world history and it demanded of them more commitment, courage, faith and dedication than any generation in history in fighting a war that encircled the entire globe. Soldiers were not given a short term assignment overseas or limited combat rules. They did not enjoy a break in the demands of war. Many fought an almost endless series of battles from one country or one island to another without leaves or rotation. But they earned recognition as the most compassionate men and women to serve in war.

You may look at the living Veterans of World War II and see only men whose hair has gone or is gray; men who have spreading stomachs and bent shoulders. These are the wounds of time — a foe no man has ever conquered.

But I see real men. I see many who are heroes. I see them with smooth faces, clear eyes and flat stomachs. I see them hanging out of the windows of troop trains, waving good-bye to those they left behind. Our country was made safe because of these men who put their bodies and their lives between those at home and two powerful war machines that were intent on destroying this nation. These men bought a future for us.

Many of them were magnificent. Some of them had never been more than 200 miles from home. (America was a land of homefolks then.) Many had never seen the ocean, much less a battleship. Some had never driven a car, much less flown an airplane.

What did they know about world politics that brought on wars? Almost nothing.

What did they know about the enemy? Only that he was an enemy.

What did they know about weapons, tactics or strategy? Nothing.

If you asked them to describe Japan, show you Guadalcanal on the map or tell you where the Kasserine Pass is, you could have written a familiar story about the deficiencies of our public education system.

They sailed into the storm through the Atlantic and the wide Pacific with a minimum of training and often with inadequate or inferior weapons. Their aircraft in early years were not a match for the enemy. They took their ridiculously high-profiled, lightly armored, under-gunned Sherman tanks against the veterans of the German Panzer Corps. The Germans would kill four tanks and four tank crews, but the fifth that hadn't stopped coming would get them.

And so it went, in the Pacific jungles, in the African sands and in the European snows. They slugged on and on, making up with guts and blood what they and their officers who led them lacked in experience. In the end, their guts, endurance and ingenuity defeated the Samurais and the professional Prussian generals.

Most World War II Veterans were not given a hero's welcome on their return. They received few parades or special recognition. They simply received their discharge papers and returned home the best way they could — by train, bus, even hitchhiking. But it still may well be this country's finest hour — a time when everyone cared, everyone shared and the responsibility and concerns encompassed a whole generation. Never has the support of this country been mobilized in such a single-minded way for a single purpose.

I had the circumstance in life to be one of those men in World War II. I sensed the pride in self and unit and in our friends — a pride that developed within our platoons, companies and squadrons. As happened to almost everyone at some point as we moved along some road to one of the countless training areas, a strange new emotion swept over me. I looked at the long files of bobbing helmets and the familiar sweat-stained Soldiers bent beneath the dead weight of mortars, machine guns and full packs. I suddenly realized that I would go anywhere in the world, to the very gates of hell if necessary, for the people of this platoon and company. To be a member of this brotherhood filled me with a sense of belonging to something that transcended petty profit, greed and jealousy. We seldom have experienced quite the same feeling again.

I know those Veterans who served in World War II join me in saying they can never forget this glittering hour in American history. This generation literally saved the free world from the yoke of slavery. Some of them sleep forever in the dark, dank jungles of the Pacific islands. Others fell liberating the ancient cities of Europe. Many living Veterans of this, and of other wars, still bear the scars, both mental and physical, and will carry them to the end of their days.

But, to all Veterans of all wars who are still among the living, our obligation to our country and to those who sleep beneath the flags — both here and around the world — is not yet over. We must stand for the things that will continue to keep this country free, and pass it on with its freedoms to generations to follow us.

While our Armed Forces must, of necessity, be smaller, they can in no way be permitted to deteriorate and to be anything less than a hard-hitting, lean, effective force that is so strong that any potential enemy dares not try us.

We must remember that freedom is never free, and that we must allocate a sufficient amount of our resources, our interest and our money to maintain a security force that will keep us free and will give no hope to our potential enemies that they could prevail over us.

But again, returning to those Veterans of World War II who sleep beneath flags, to those who stand here today and to the current members of our Armed Forces, I would like to quote the British philosopher, John Stuart Mill, when he discussed war and man. He said, "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of all things; the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks nothing is worth a war is much worse. A man who has nothing for which he is willing to fight; nothing that he cares about more than his own personal safety; is a miserable creature who has no chance of being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

Those standing here today, members of our Armed Forces and the Veterans of World War II are among those better men and women who have kept us free.

To be born free is an accident. To live free is a responsibility. To die free is an obligation; for if we do not die free, we have not fulfilled our obligation to those we honor today, and we certainly will have failed our obligations to those who follow after us. ■

Members of the N.D. National Guard's Ceremonial Platoon render a 21-cannon salute during the Memorial Day service at the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery with a French 75 millimeter cannon. Using the theme "Still Serving," retired military members fulfilled key roles during the program including keynote speaker Maj. Gen. (Ret.) C. Emerson Murry and Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Robert Udland, former N.D. National Guard assistant adjutant general – Army (2005-08), who emceed the event. Retired Chaplain (Maj.) William Rushford was also in attendance to offer the opening prayer while Col. (Ret.) Curtis Juhala, U.S. Army Reserve, sang the national anthem.

Sgt. Ann Knudson

GUARDIAN Snapshots

Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp

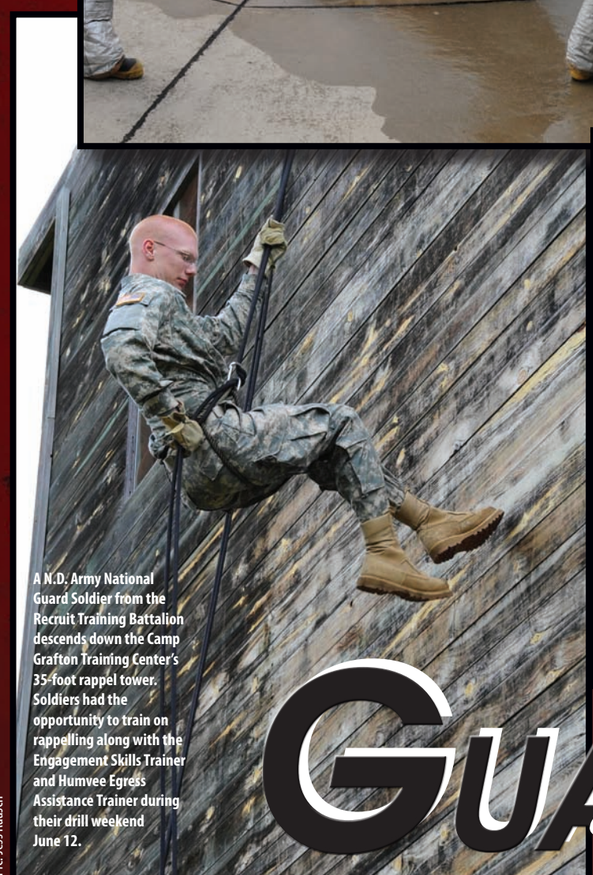
Senior Airman Logan Johnson leads Staff Sgt. Michael Ohren, both of the 119th Civil Engineer Squadron, on a two-person hose team June 5, as they approach a mock aircraft burn pit simulated tail fire while performing firefighter training at the N.D. Air National Guard Regional Training Site, Fargo, N.D. The mock aircraft burn pit provides realistic training for the firefighters with technically controlled flames emanating from various areas of a metal airplane frame.

Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp

Newly crowned Mrs. North Dakota America, Tech. Sgt. Tera Miller, of the 119th Operations Support Squadron, visits her work area June 7, at the N.D. Air National Guard, Fargo, N.D. Miller was selected 2010 Mrs. North Dakota America at the Grand Masonic Lodge, June 6, in Fargo. She will advance to the National Mrs. America pageant in Tuscan, Ariz., in September.

Sgt. Eric W. Jensen

Members of the 188th Army Band's rock ensemble, Three Time Rule, perform at the Military Service Center at Camp Grafton June 16. Pictured from left to right are Spc. Josh Peterson, Staff Sgt. Lynne Krug, Sgt. Kevin Krug and Spc. Troy Johnson. The performance was one of a variety of free shows scheduled for the various band ensembles during their two-week Annual Training period.



Pfc. Jess Raasch

A N.D. Army National Guard Soldier from the Recruit Training Battalion descends down the Camp Grafton Training Center's 35-foot rappel tower. Soldiers had the opportunity to train on rappelling along with the Engagement Skills Trainer and Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer during their drill weekend June 12.

Spc. Amanda Weninger

Spc. John W. Peterson, of Fargo, N.D., spends time with a local boy in Haiti before posing for a photo with the Haiti flag the boy was carrying. Peterson was part of a group of 21 Soldiers with the N.D. Army National Guard's 191st Military Police Company who volunteered for a three-and-a-half week humanitarian mission to Haiti.

Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp

Tech. Sgt. Thomas Brummer, of the 119th Operations Support Squadron, right, gets a high five from Vet Center counselor Dave Seifert, June 5, at the 119th Air Wing Expo at the N.D. Air National Guard, Fargo, N.D. Seifert is representing one of several organizations at the reintegration expo event designed to reach out to recently deployed Airmen to let them know about the opportunities and services that are available to them. Airmen who have deployed within the past year are required to attend the expo, but all Airmen are encouraged and allowed to attend the event, which is sponsored by the N.D. Air National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program.

The Path to Perfection

Military Funeral Honors Program Readies Members with Quality Training

Story by
Sgt. Eric W. Jensen
Joint Force Headquarters

To the unassuming, a first glance across the Camp Grafton theater during the week of May 17-21 might have looked like a symposium for sufferers of perpetual perfectionism. Guardsmen feverishly applied lint rollers to their dress blue uniforms in a race to eliminate rogue hairs and fluff. Rulers were used to gauge the proper placement of medals and ribbons. Buttons and brass were meticulously shined to a blinding gleam. Anyone who's ever prepared themselves for a formal event would have been more than content presenting themselves in the carefully groomed garments, but these members of the N.D. National Guard's Military Funeral Honors (MFH) teams strive for perfection. It's important to them. Even more so, it's important to the Families they render their services to.

While at Camp Grafton, 16 North Dakota and Montana Guardsmen attended a 40-hour MFH course. There, they learned how to perfect and refine the various components involved in showing reverence with full honors to Veterans at their funerals. These practices include the ceremonial folding and presentation of the American flag, playing of TAPS and administration of the firing party. Upon completion, participants use their training at a variety of memorial services while wearing the Honor Guard tab they earned on their dress uniforms.

Members of the Military Funeral Honors team await former North Dakota Gov. Arthur Link's funeral procession at the State Capitol building in Bismarck.

Bill Prokopyk

Sgt. Kacey Kruger greets a young boy during a funeral mission. His family later wrote a letter of appreciation for the lasting impression Kruger made.

Courtesy Photo

Collaborative Training

Not just anyone can make the cut — although the 16 participants in the May course did. Spc. Clinton Wescott of the 818th Engineer Company (Sapper), Detachment 1, has been a MFH team member since graduating from basic training in 2007. In that time, he's observed what types of qualifications are required by someone with a desire to present Veterans with deserving honors.

"They need to be someone who has military bearing and someone who takes it seriously and has pride in service," he said.

Wescott has participated in more than 150 funerals and attended the course to continue to develop his MFH knowledge and skills.

"Most of what I had been doing before was just a flag fold with no firing party experience or casket bearing experience. This class has shown us how to give the full honors," he said.

Most participants in the weeklong course have had a considerable amount of experience with MFH. Nearly all of them practice with a MFH team leader in their respective locations. North Dakota has 19 different MFH training locations across the state. Teams meet monthly for 2-hour training sessions, which are open not only to North Dakota Guardsmen, but to all components including the Navy and Marine Reserve as well as local Veterans' organizations.

2nd Lt. Eliud Feliciano, platoon leader with the 132nd Quartermaster, Detachment 3, out of Cando, N.D., felt a strong urge to become involved in MFH. His wife, Elizabeth, of the 132nd Quartermaster Company in Grand Forks, also is a MFH team leader in Fargo. Feliciano says there is a tremendous amount of satisfaction to gain by participating in the MFH program.

"It gives you a great feeling that you're doing this for the Families," he said. "The Families really appreciate it."

In a testimonial posted on the MFH page of the N.D. National Guard's website, one family member shares how important it was to have the MFH team involved in their loved one's funeral. Next to a photo of Sgt. Kacey Kruger, MFH Western area coordinator, greeting a young child, the text reads, "Words cannot express the impression that Sgt. Kruger makes every time he is called upon to present the American flag to a grieving family. This is an awesome impact on a great-grandson when the flag presentation was completed — a lifetime impression. Thank you."

Being the center of attention is commonplace for a MFH team. Just last month, in June, an MFH team with Air and Army Guardsmen gave honors to former Gov. Arthur Link as he "lay in state" at the Bismarck Capitol building. This makes appearances crucial to conducting funeral missions.

Sgt. Eric W. Jensen

Military Funeral Honors team members practice ceremonial procedures before being evaluated at the end of the 40-hour course.

During the 40-hour course, attendees were inspected by MFH instructors in painstaking detail. One instructor tells the group that work on the uniform is a constant process. There is always something to improve.

The smallest infractions can send MFH members back to the uniform prepping area to correct errors, and to most it seems like there is no way to perfect their attire. On average, each member adds another 15 hours onto the 40-hour course for the preparation of uniforms and the study of ceremonial movements.

"It's been pretty detailed," Wescott said. "Lots of work on the uniform. There were at least three nights where I was up past midnight working on the uniform."

While all will eventually satisfy the instructors' standards, they realize maintaining their appearance is a laborious task.

Staff Sgt. Nick Holmes, an MFH master trainer with the Washington National

Guard, said the detailed, thorough nature of presenting at military funerals makes for constant training and practice.

"The most challenging aspect of the course is staying motivated and dealing with the repetition of doing everything and doing it until you get it right," he said. "And then perfecting it after you finally get it right."

Holmes collaborated with North Dakota instructors during the course to compare training methods. Due to lack of funding or personnel, some states find themselves in need of MFH instructors. By syncing standard operating procedures, instructors are able to replicate the national standard in MFH no matter what state they teach students in.

"We worked very well together," Holmes said. "As soon as we got together everything seemed to be working out. These guys (North Dakota instructors) have a very good set-up."

Students at the course also represented different states. Spc. Jacob Noonan, of the Montana National Guard's 143rd Military Police Detachment, said he enjoyed being able to partner with his neighboring Guardsmen to the east.

"We get along well. It's nice to go somewhere and meet people with the same love for their job and be able to expound on that and work on it together," he said.

From the Ground Up

North Dakota MFH State Coordinator Janette Fetch remembers a time when limited personnel and inadequate training time restricted MFH members (then known as the Honor Platoon) from participating in a large number of funerals. Typically, the Honor Platoon would attend active duty funerals with service requested by the Casualty Assistance Center or members or retirees of the N.D. National Guard. Most often, they conducted one or two funeral missions each month.

Training areas were sparse, as well. Most Honor Platoon Guardsmen were in Bismarck with a few in Devils Lake. While arranging for funeral missions, they would have to reference Army field manuals on drill and ceremonies.

"With the current program, it is nice having a structure with regularly scheduled training to build confidence in our members," Fetch said.

Staff Sgt. Steve Hoikkala, central and east area MFH coordinator, agrees that the new methods of preparing Guardsmen for military funeral missions have been an evolution.

"Now we have a program where we can train the right way. We have a standard operating procedure and now we can honor Veterans and have the proper training to make sure to uphold the same professionalism that you would see out at Arlington National Cemetery," he said.

The training has certainly yielded results.

North Dakota's MFH program began in 2006. Much of that year into fiscal year 2007 was spent recruiting members to the program, training new members, creating relationships with the community Veterans' service organizations and funeral homes, and then executing the program. Bismarck and Fargo were the only two active training locations. During 2007, North Dakota conducted 188 funeral missions.

As the program continued, more training sites were introduced and the number of funeral missions increased significantly. In 2008, North Dakota MFH members participated in 680 funerals. In 2009, that number grew again to 885. From October 2009 to May 2010, 635 funeral missions have already been conducted for the 2010 fiscal year. Since the program's inception, North Dakota MFH members have rendered honors at nearly 2,400 funerals.

The number of funeral missions the MFH teams are able to attend are the result of the tremendous volunteerism shown by traditional Guardsmen.

"It's really our duty as service members," Hoikkala said. "A lot of these Veteran organizations can't do it on their own, and we don't have enough full-timers to do it on our own. Without these traditional Guardsmen, we couldn't do what we do. We're always looking for more volunteers to come forward to do their part."

MFH teams conduct an average of 80 funerals per month throughout the state. Currently, there are nearly 100 N.D. Army and Air National Guard MFH members, including those deployed.

Holmes puts a lot of stock in the caliber of service member that fills the MFH program's ranks.

"These are highly motivated Guardsmen that are dedicated to getting the mission accomplished at a higher standard than most," he said.

And while humans are never perfect, MFH team members always try to come as close as they can.

For more information about the MFH program, call Janette Fetch at 701-333-3339 or email janette.fetch@us.army.mil.

From left to right, Sgt. 1st Class Mary Jo Jangula, Sgt. Thomas Lawler and Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Handegard, Military Funeral Honors team members, conduct a ceremonial flag fold to signify the end of the first Memorial Road March June 6, 2008. The flag folding ceremony is typically done at a funeral for presenting to the deceased's loved ones. On this occasion, the tradition was to honor the anniversary of the deaths of Sgt. Travis Van Zoest and Cpl. Curtis Meher.

Sgt. Jonathan Haugen

Seal of Approval

119th Wing Praised During Evaluation

Story & Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp
119th Wing

U.S. Air Force vulnerability assessment team member and communications specialist Brian K. Turner, , left, visits with Master Sgt. Chuck Tersteeg, of the 119th Communications Flight, June 9 at the N.D. Air National Guard, Fargo, N.D. Turner asked questions about base communications systems to assess the facility's strengths and weaknesses during a weeklong evaluation of 119th Wing systems and infrastructure.

The N.D. Air National Guard was under the microscope during a weeklong evaluation of base systems and infrastructure June 7 - 11.

A U.S. Air Force vulnerability assessment team from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, visited the 119th Wing to examine all aspects of the facilities and processes used to conduct business. The team assessed what the Wing's strengths and weaknesses are and looked for ways to improve security and protection of resources and people.

"There is always room for improvement and an assessment like this forces us to step back and take a closer look at things we can improve and also evaluate the costs of those changes versus the benefits," said Lt. Col. Todd Branden, the 119th Support Group vice commander. "We need to have a first line of defense against physical as well as electronic intrusion, but we also need to have plans in place should there be some sort of failure with our initial defense."

The team of assessors visited with unit members in multiple areas of the base, to include: the fire station, the communications area and security forces to see which practices and facilities provide adequate protection in the event of a natural disaster or act of aggression. The assessment also identified things that can be adjusted to better protect the mission, people and resources.

"The assessors are not here to give the unit and facilities a score or grade, but to help the base to identify risks and determine whether the risks have strong enough defenses to provide protection or redundancy in order to maintain the mission," Branden said.

While official evaluations are never comfortable, the vulnerability assessments at military facilities are a valuable tool in reducing undesirable consequences to emergency situations and preparing strong barriers for infiltration and hazards.

"We are here to assess the installation and provide the commander with observations and recommendations to improve security and to better protect the people and the base. The N.D. Air National Guard is exceeding expectations in all areas that I have seen," said Col. Steve Priore, the assessment team leader.

"It is apparent to me the 119th Wing enjoys full support of the commander, because high standards like those witnessed here start with the leadership of the base," Priore added.

Military Police Complete Haiti Humanitarian Mission

N.D. Soldiers working in Haiti returned home June 13 after spending more than three weeks there on a humanitarian mission. The Soldiers, who serve with the 191st Military Police Company, left May 19 to take part in the U.S. Southern Command's New Horizons mission.

The Guardsmen provided force protection at four locations in Haiti, primarily to facilitate the construction of a base camp near Gonaives, about 95 miles north of Port au Prince.

During the 26-day mission, Soldiers subsisted entirely on MREs and bottled water, which was also used for bathing.

Sgt. 1st Class Troy Skelton, of Bismarck, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 20 other N.D. Soldiers in Haiti, called the mission a success, saying the Soldiers were professional, never complained and "did an incredible job."

Bridge Company First to Train on New System

The N.D. National Guard's 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge Company) became the first Army unit to train on a new bridge anchorage system in a fully operational scenario on the Missouri River, south of Bismarck, last month.

The Soldiers' training began with a 40-hour stretch of classroom instruction on the Improved Ribbon Bridge followed by a practical exercise with the equipment and bridge. The 210-meter bridge span underwent several tests and observations before being disassembled the following day.

The feedback Soldiers provided from the test provides manufacturers with a user perspective from which they can make final adjustments prior to production and distribution to military bridging units. Once deemed ready, the new anchorage system is targeted for immediate movement and delivery to Afghanistan.

Airman Returns from 14th GWOT Deployment

Lt. Col. Dan Bertsch, a staff judge advocate and one of the senior attorneys in the N.D. Air National Guard, returned home this past month from his 14th deployment, all of which have been voluntary, since the Global War on Terrorism began nearly nine years ago.

Of his many deployments, most recently Bertsch deployed to Iraq in 2008 for seven months. Shortly after returning from Iraq in April 2009, he left for Afghanistan in June of that same year to serve for an additional year.

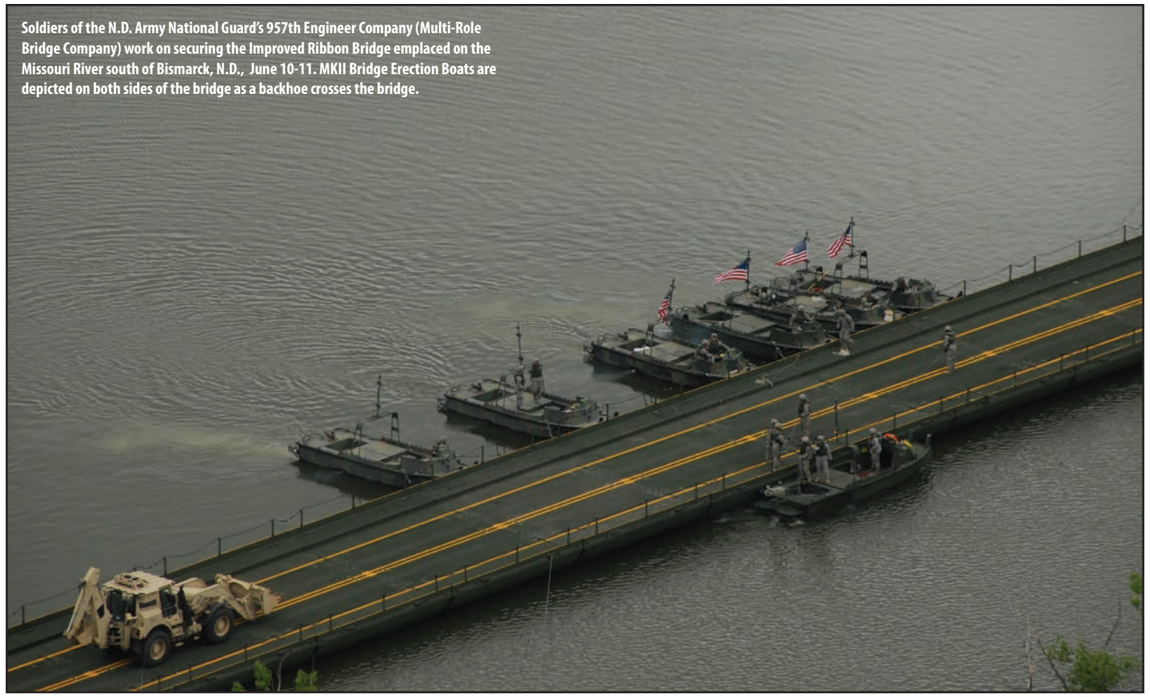
While in Afghanistan, Bertsch was assigned to the 438th Air Expeditionary Wing at the Kabul International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, serving as the staff judge advocate and legal mentor to the Afghan National Army Air Corps.

Specialist First in Nation to Receive New Award

Spc. Adam Walsvik, of Hazen, N.D., was among the first Army engineers to receive the Steel Order of the de Fleury Medal, a prestigious new engineer award. Walsvik serves with North Dakota's 188th Engineer Company (Vertical) and was the first specialist in the entire Army National Guard to receive the award.

In 2009, Walsvik bested his way to the national All-Guard Best Warrior competition at Fort Benning, Ga., after securing a first-place win in the enlisted category of the Region Six competition.

His excellent performance in the national competition, combined with his outstanding service during the N.D. Guard's 2009 and 2010 spring flood response, earned him the Steel de Fleury Medal nomination from his unit.



Soldiers of the N.D. Army National Guard's 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge Company) work on securing the Improved Ribbon Bridge emplaced on the Missouri River south of Bismarck, N.D., June 10-11. MKII Bridge Erection Boats are depicted on both sides of the bridge as a backhoe crosses the bridge.

Bill Prokopyk

Chaplain's Corner

Hat Trick Heroes

By 2nd Lt. Scott Noyes
Joint Force Headquarters

The life of a National Guardsman is constant change. The fact is that we wear many hats in the life we've chosen and change occurs every time we switch those hats. Each of us wears the proud hat of a Soldier. Other hats take the appearance of a civilian job, a father or mother, husband or wife, and maybe a student. In my case, I wear them all.

I am a husband who loves his wife, a father who loves his three children, a Soldier who loves God and country, an employee who takes pride in his work, and a student striving to reach greater heights. Most days I feel like a magician pulling off hat tricks. I found one explanation of performing magic as *one who produces extraordinary results*. I don't claim to be a magician and I'm not certain how it all gets done, but I do recognize how the extraordinary lifestyle of a Guardsman demands constant change.

C*hange; s*ome people can't wait for it; some people do everything in their power to avoid it; but reality proves change is persistent and consistent. King Whitney Jr. wrote, "Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful, it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful, it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident, it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better." In other words, you can either fear change, find hope in it, or be inspired by it.

2nd Lt. Scott Noyes

Though our hats frequently change, our values and principles must be consistent. My responsibilities as a father differ from that of an employee and my duties to my God and country are quite different than the demands of my professors. However, every area of life must preserve healthy and balanced morals in our unique and ever-changing environment.

Pastor and author Chuck Swindoll warns, "We become what we do or fail to do." Because change is persistent and consistent, we must always be ready for it. My father once said, "Expect change and adjust your mind before it happens." What then would strengthen and prepare you for change?

According to my father, we must first think ahead and get a proper mindset. Be ready for change and prepare your thoughts so that your actions reflect a positive response. Secondly, surround yourself with people who encourage you in truth and love. A negative surrounding can only discourage and distract the transition between changing hats. And lastly, practice encouraging others. This could be an act of service or simply talking or listening to someone.

Practice avoiding unwholesome talk, but rather speaking only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit the one listening. Begin with your wife or husband, your son or daughter, your battle buddy, your co-worker, or maybe it's your neighbor who simply needs some encouragement.

We must not take for granted these valuable assets entrusted to us: our Families, our health, our job and our country. So, as we daily wear and change our perspective hats in our ever-changing, unique environments, keep your values and principles in check.

Also, I challenge you to strive for those extraordinary results by putting into practice a proper and prepared mindset, a positive and true environment, and by taking time to encourage others.

Air Accolades

N.D. Air National Guard Recruiters Receive Awards

Left, Master Sgt. Glenda Edwardson, the recruiting office supervisor and health professional recruiter for the N.D. Air Guard, was awarded the 2009 Fourth Quarter Health Professional award at the National Recruiting and Retention Workshop in Dallas, Texas February 2010. The award recognizes Edwardson's recruitment of two new health professionals (Dr. Don Gunhus and Dr. Glenn Shamdas) gained during the 2009 fourth quarter time period.

Master Sgt. MJ Filloon received the Outstanding Retention Office Manager of the Year award for 2009. The award, also presented at the National Recruiting and Retention Workshop, recognizes superior retention programs and contributions to the home unit. North Dakota's reenlistment and retention rates for fiscal year 2009 were 93 percent. Filloon was the award winner for Region 2 which consists of 16 retention office managers.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hagburg

Brig. Gen. Al Dohrmann, Multinational Battle Group East commander, and his command staff prepare to begin the Memorial March with Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kevin Mehrer (second from left), of Bismarck, N.D., at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, June 6. Soldiers of KFOR 12 participated in the Memorial March, which coincided with the Memorial March in Bismarck, N.D. Together, the events mark the date and time two members of the N.D. National Guard's 1-188th Air Defense Artillery Security Forces were killed in 2006. Sgt. Travis Van Zoest, 21, of Bismarck, N.D., and Mehrer's son, Spc. Curtis Mehrer, 21, also of Bismarck, died when their vehicle struck an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan. The Memorial March is held annually to honor all fallen service members.