



NEW HAMPSHIRE Summer 2012
National Guard
MAGAZINE

A Decade of
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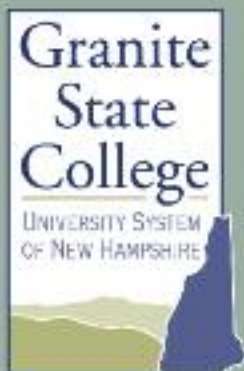
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NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Summer 2012

A note about resiliency 2

None of us had ever shot a .50-cal 3
Retired Master Sergeant Nancy Young

We used the Guard in the right way 5
Retired Major General John Blair

A sense of importance to being deployed 7
Sgt. 1st Class Shannon Kulakowski

I wanted to cover the story 9
Bob LaPree

Then, no one understood what Gaurdsmen did 11
Lieutenant Colonel Laurie Farris

It has made our relationship stronger 12
Michelle May

The days were long, but the year flew by 13
Grant Munson

People look out for each other here 14
Sue Brown

My little piece made a difference 15
Staff Sergeant Christopher McWilliams

New Hampshire as a state is stronger 17
Governor John Lynch

N.H. marksmen on target 18

SFS personnel hone skills at Fort Devens 20

To Helena and back 21

3rd Battalion soldiers sweep Best Warrior competition 22

Rojek and Concord Family YMCA work together to improve military family fitness . . . 25

Never leave an airman behind 27



7



18



27



Army Promotions & Awards 28

Air Promotions & Awards 28

On the cover: Past issues of the NHNG Magazine attest to the dedication and sacrifice of New Hampshire's citizen-soldiers, airmen and families over the last 10 years.



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A Note About Resiliency

The last 10 years were unprecedented for the New Hampshire National Guard on so many different levels. We fought wars on two fronts, supported U.N. peacekeeping missions, and ferried nearly a third of our force to New Orleans in the aftermath of the worst natural disaster in U.S. history. We also responded to three, 100-year storms at home. Overnight, we went from benchwarmers to starters performing both our state and federal missions concurrently.

Starting with 9/11, we decided to re-examine the decade through the words of those who defined it. How have we changed? What have we learned about ourselves? Was it worth it? Are we better off?

1st Sgt. Mike Daigle and I interviewed 10 people throughout the spring of this year. Our original list was more ambitious, but the constraint of time and space always has a say in our final product. In this issue of the New Hampshire National Guard Magazine, you will hear from the soldier, the airman, the general, the reporter, the pilot, the wife, the son, the behavior health specialist and the governor. While they are not a complete account of the New Hampshire National Guard experience, we think the interviews collectively represent a diverse perspective and a powerful message about resiliency.

We edited the responses for clarity and length only.

*–Maj. Greg Heilshorn,
State Public Affairs Officer*

None of us had ever shot a .50-cal

Retired Master Sgt. Nancy Young served with the N.H. Air Guard's 157th Logistics Readiness Group.

Following 9/11, I pretty much had the feeling, when we found out it was caused by terrorists, it would lead to war. We – the 157th Air Refueling Wing – started combat air patrols, and I did a three-month active duty tour to support that mission. Like everybody else I was upset – how could anyone come on American soil and do such a thing?

At the time of my deployment to Iraq, the Army was running short of people in some career fields. Someone had the idea to start using Air Force and Navy people to fill those positions. They called us, 'in lieu of' soldiers. So the military took people, in groups of five, from different bases. Some were Guard, some were reserve and some were active duty. They threw us all together and made platoons out of us.

The Army soldiers had the advantage of training as a unit and deploying as a unit. We were made up of all kinds of different units and forced to work together. And working with the Army is different. I started my career in the Army Reserve so I kind of knew what it would be like.

When the five of us arrived in Kuwait, they put us in a big circus tent. I actually liked it because I was with my guys. They were like brothers to me. But when we got to Balad, the Air Force made us separate. They said there would be no co-habitation. So right away I was ripped from my comfort zone.

I was put in with a good group of women, but it was still a shock to me. The Air Force seemed to only step in when they wanted to impose their rules on us; otherwise, they just let the Army do what they wanted with us. We were like the bastard children nobody wanted to claim.

We had very little training. That was a detriment. None of us had ever shot a .50-caliber. We did get some training, a little bit, in Kuwait. We were told we would be doing convoys for coalition forces; some of us would be on gun trucks, and some would be doing line haul missions. When we got to Iraq, all of us did gun truck missions.

Staff Sgt. Mike Steer and I went into Gun Truck Platoon 2. Master Sgt. Phil Cote, Tech. Sgt. Dave Guindon and Staff Sgt. Chris Moisan went into Gun Truck Platoon 1.

We were trained on the fly, which probably isn't the best way to get trained in a war zone.

On my first mission, on the way back to Balad from Baghdad, we were attacked by insurgents. We were in a 35-minute firefight. That was the first time I really thought some of us were not going home. At Balad we were mortared on a daily basis. You almost got used to it – until you heard someone actually got killed in a mortar attack.

We used to joke with each other that none of us wanted to die in a porta potty.

We were on missions with the 744th from New Hampshire. It was good for us because they were from New Hampshire – we had that bond. We worked well together.

From the time we arrived in Kuwait, Dave Guindon started changing. He used to be one of the funniest people to hang around. He started being more and more withdrawn. He seemed to have resentment for the position the Air Force put us in.

We were told the only thing that would keep us alive on a mission was to keep moving, even if someone was in the way. It was like everything we were being taught was against everything we had learned about being good human beings.



Nancy Young, then a master sergeant with the 157th Air Refueling Wing, receives an inoculation during a medical screening at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington prior to deploying to Iraq in 2004. Photo: 1st Sgt. Mike Daigle, Deputy State PAO

In one of Dave's earliest convoys there was an improvised explosive device strike. His window was blown out, and he suffered some hearing loss. I think that added to everything: the stress of being in Iraq, the stress of constantly being under attack and the stress of the missions. I saw grown men cry, they were so scared of going outside the wire.

I didn't want those people in my truck if they would break down in combat.

But Dave wanted to go on missions. He seemed to have problems in his down time back at the base. We knew he was having problems.

We all decided that Dave needed to see a psychiatrist to help him. So Phil Cote brought him to the Army psychiatrist who refused to treat him because he was in the Air Force. We then brought him to an Air Force psychiatrist. In my opinion that was a big mistake. At least the Army doctor had some idea of what happened outside the wire. The Air Force people didn't go outside the wire.

The only alternative was to get him home or to Germany. We pleaded with our command, but they said no. We contacted our leadership in the 157th at home, but they said they no longer had control of us. No one would do anything for him.

Coming home was the happiest day of my life, except for the birth of my son. In less than 24 hours, I had the worst day of my life when I received word that Dave had taken his own life.

I have been on convoys where I have seen people killed right in front of my eyes – but Dave's death had the biggest impact on me.

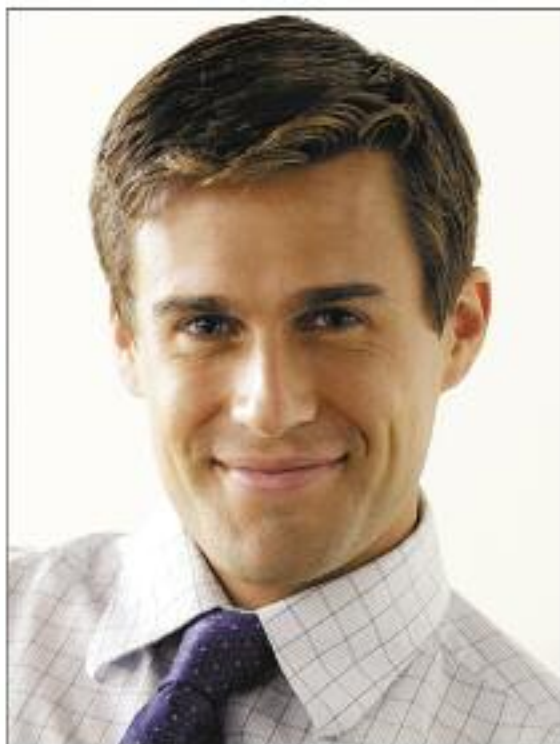
None of us knew why it happened.

I felt that if we had the debriefs at the demob station, like the Army did, they could have maybe seen that Dave needed some additional counseling.

I have been home a long time now. It took some adjustment. I had a hard time going back to drill, but I did and finished my 20 years and retired.

Unless people had family or friends serving, the American people didn't seem to know there was a war going on. Our country seems very disconnected and disinterested in what military people go through and sacrifice.

It was my duty to go. I wouldn't hesitate to do it again. I wish things had turned out differently for us. A lot of things fell through the cracks. ❖



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We used the Guard in the right way

Retired Maj. Gen. John Blair was the Adjutant General of the N.H. Guard from 1994 to 2004. He served as a combat medevac pilot in Vietnam.

When we were attacked on 9/11, I knew it was going to lead to something else, and I knew it was going to lead to a lot of people being deployed. I remember people being supportive even though we closed our armories and posted guards. At the time, we didn't know if it was an insurgent attack, but people wanted to do something. We opened our armories for blood drives. I anticipated that we'd go over, get the job done, and do it quickly because we had such strong support of the mission. Once we were over there, I don't think the country continued the same support, and the only ones bearing the pain were the military and their families – the pain of combat.

The country still says they support the troops. I believe they do, but not as much support for the mission. I imagine if I were still in, I'd feel the same way. I went through a period where I was thinking, do these people want to be defended, do they care enough to be defended, and does our military have the gumption to go in and carry it out and not drag it out for 10 years? I went through my war, and we quit and got nowhere. I feel we are doing the same in Iraq.

I think about Jeremiah (Holmes) every day. I have two grandsons who go to school at St. Thomas Aquinas (in Dover) which is on the same road as the cemetery. I think about Jeremiah every time I drive by it. I think about that day and the days I lost my friends from my medevac unit. There were five of us that were in the medical service corps that went to Vietnam on the same day, and I was the only one who returned on a scheduled flight. Two were KIA, and two were WIA and evacuated on an Air Force medical flight.



Retired Maj. Gen. John Blair makes a point during an interview April 12 at his home in Barnstead.
Photo: 1st Sgt. Mike Daigle, Deputy State PAO

I'm so saddened to hear about all the suicides that are occurring even though we are doing all these things with reintegration. What a waste for the family and the country. For the families especially. Guindon's suicide really bothered me. He didn't have a chance to receive any of that help. These young guys who had the PTSD problems while I was there were young and unprepared emotionally for what they would face. Take Guindon's group. These guys were Air Force. They worked in the motor pool. Then they were expected to provide convoy security. That must have been quite an awakening to be placed in a ground combat role.

I recently visited two of my buddies in Florida – one guy I hadn't seen in 43 years. We served together in Vietnam. I met one in Jupiter, and we talked from 10 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon. Both were warrant officers in the 283rd Medical Detachment, Pleiku. Both of them had PTSD. Everywhere we went,

we were shot at and picking up people with all levels of injury. That's pretty hard on a young kid. I was pretty old at 23. It just didn't hit me the same way. They were 19, 20 years old. Just young kids. I had college. They went from high school to flight school to Vietnam. I was a medical service corps officer. I was trained for this. I was ready for it. We were glad to see each other. It was good for all of us.

Looking back on the Guard's role over the last decade, I think the Guard and the country are very much better for it. We used the Guard in the right way. The Guard responded rapidly and did so well. They have proved themselves. I hope it's not forgotten. ♦

Editor's note: Sgt. Jeremiah Holmes was the first NH Guardsman killed in Iraq. He died on March 29, 2004, when his vehicle struck an IED.

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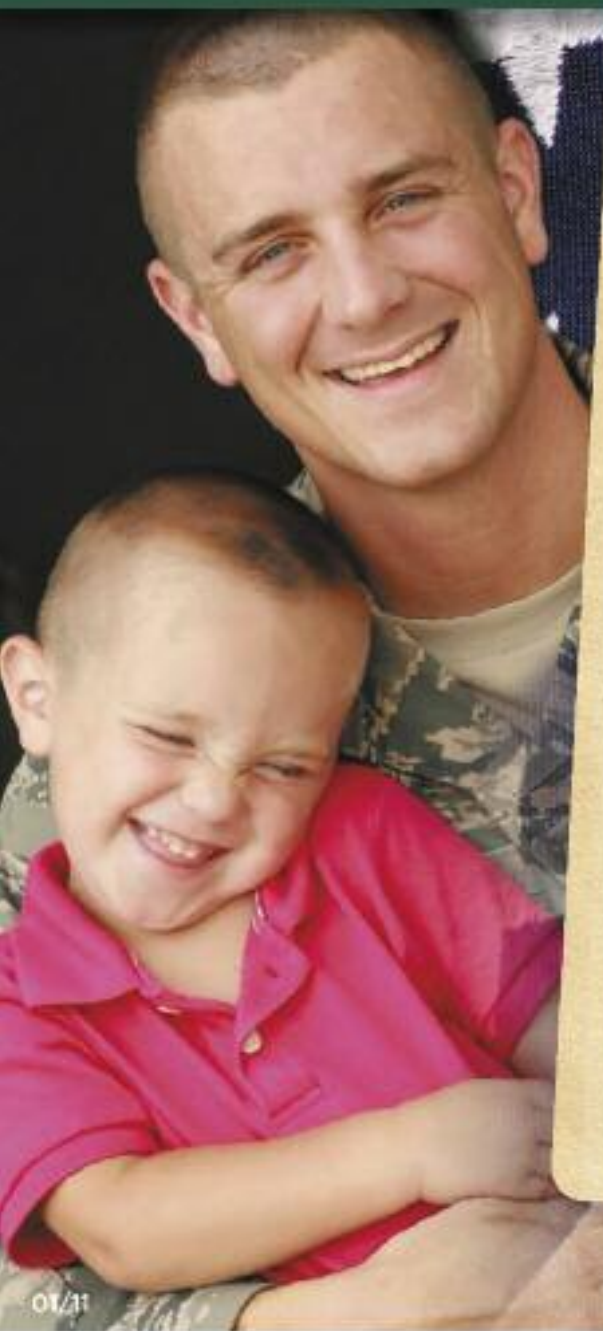
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A sense of importance to being deployed

Sgt. 1st Class Shannon Kulakowski is a platoon sergeant in the Mountain Infantry Company.

When 9/11 happened I had just got off active duty. I was living in Hawaii at the time, going to school. I remember thinking, “Great, I just get off active duty – something is happening, and I am going to miss it.” I was in the Hawaii Guard at the time, and I did end up taking part in the Noble Eagle mission.

At the time, I thought there would be a war, but I didn’t think it would go on for 10 years. I thought it would just be something to avenge the attack on us.

I am from New Hampshire, but I didn’t have any idea what the Guard did here. I had no idea there was a mountain infantry company. I had run out of money in Hawaii, so I moved home and joined the Guard here. My first drill was April 2002.

In spite of my impression of the Guard, I found it to be a very professional unit. I was actually taken aback by the professionalism.

It seems funny to say now, but we were all almost in a panic because we thought we might miss out on everything (the war). There was good training in Charlie Company, but none of us knew what our involvement would be. We all wanted to be part of that first group that went to Afghanistan.

When we finally got our alert to deploy to Iraq, we didn’t think we would be part of the fight. We thought we would be tower guards or something like that. Looking back, we were incredibly naive.

It was a tough deployment. Because of all of the units being called up at the time, we were short handed so we had to have some fills from other units. I was thinking I was going to end up going to war with the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. I thank God we had the leadership we had. They kept us all together.

The deployment ended up being completely different than we expected. We were attached to an active duty MP battalion.

We felt like red-headed stepchildren, being attached to an active duty airborne unit. But our people were amazing.

I thought we had the most professional company in the battalion. That happened because of our leadership. It meant a lot to us that we were kept together for the



Sgt. 1st Class Shannon Kulakowski

deployment. Our pre-deployment training helped a lot.

Every time we talked about it, we would say, “How did we get so lucky?” We had one of the most dangerous jobs in Iraq, but we had good equipment and good people. We looked at the 744th trucks and saw their homemade armor plates. Our unit had injuries but for the most part they weren’t debilitating.

We had old timers who had been in the unit and new people. We had people who walked around with a swagger before the deployment but then came home and decided war wasn’t for them.

In 2007, I deployed with an embedded training team. It was a good deployment. It was quiet. We worked with a police unit. It was frustrating. Every time the government starts a program, they seem to get it wrong for the first few years.

We worked with soldiers from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Germany. They were great. They were the most professional soldiers I have ever worked with. They were able to work without the bags of cash and the power of the U.S. military. They used diplomacy.

In 2009, Charlie Company deployed again, this time to Afghanistan. I enjoyed it. I had a great platoon. I feel like if I got out of the military tomorrow, I would

be able to say I have done everything I set out to do. I am very proud of that.

Again the Charlie Company guardian angel protected us. The units before us and the units that followed us all took casualties.

People sometimes say that civilians don’t know what it is like in the military. I would say there are people in the military that don’t know what war is like, even if they deployed.

I can’t get over how great our guys did. They made me look great. Some of the guys may be going through bad times because of what they went through, but they are all proud of what they did.

I can’t speak for everyone, but there is a sense of importance to being deployed. If you survive combat, you feel pretty good about yourself.

As soon as you come home, that is all over. It is almost like the people at home do too much for us. Handing people a check for their late rent is just developing a pattern.

It should be the chain of command that helps people because they know where the problems are in the unit.

We shouldn’t be working with the soldier just after deployments. We should work with them all the time, before, during and after. Because guess what—if your life is f—ed up before you leave for deployment, it is going to be f—ed up when you get home.

And I know lot of people are better for being deployed. I know I am. Some things on deployment suck, but I think for the most part, maybe 90 percent, people are glad they went.

It is a sense of pride. We have done something only a tiny percentage of Americans have done. I moved a platoon in combat. It kind of hardens you.

I am a little more political. I feel more invested in what is going on in the world.

I think the wars were worth it. We are not going to know for a long time. Just look at the Arab Spring. We upset the applecart. I hope what we did changes things, but I don’t know if I will see it in my lifetime.

This experience will define my generation. We have developed the leaders of the future. I hope we have more of a voice now.

We were soft before. Now we have been to war. I have trained my entire adult life. All of us who served in the National Guard can say, “We were there.” ♦



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I wanted to cover the story

Bob LaPree was a staff photographer for the Union Leader newspaper who embedded with N.H. Guard units in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I was at the Manchester Airport Sept. 12, 2001. Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry (Mountain), was doing security. Seeing them there made me realize things were going to be different. I assumed there would be follow-on attacks by Al Qaida. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

I didn't really see the Guard becoming such a huge component of our military effort. I didn't see us becoming involved in two long wars.

But I knew that as a New Hampshire photo journalist, I wanted to cover the story as intimately as I could. And I knew I could get the support of the paper (The Union Leader) because of their commitment to military people.

It would be different covering the National Guard part of the military because it was made up of members of our community. I wanted to make sure people knew what was going on. There is a disconnect between civilians and people who perform military service.

Needless to say, I was proud of the way the paper was quick to take up the commitment to send me to Iraq and then Afghanistan with Charlie Company.

For a journalist, it is rare to be able to do such an in-depth, long-term story at home and abroad. It is the most important work I have done in a 40-year career. It has had such an impact on readers. It has also been a way for me to honor the military for their commitment and service.

I was really pleased to see the Guard had such a high level of professionalism and skill, particularly given people's impression of the Guard from the Vietnam era. They are the real deal. I was also taken by the quality of the Guard's leadership that I have met in the last 10 years. As a civilian, you can kind of step back and be an observer. It is interesting to see how the officers reacted to their men. The leaders I observed were genuine. I also saw that the sergeants' corps was top notch.

Initially, while I was in Iraq with our units, soldiers seemed quite cautious around me, especially the young ones. It



Bob LaPree, former staff photographer for the Union Leader, sits in the turret of a humvee while embedded with Mountain Company in Iraq in 2004. Photo: 1st Sgt. Mike Daigle, Deputy State PAO

didn't help when after the first story I sent home, there was a photo of a soldier without his eye protection, and he got in trouble for not wearing his glasses.

They were hesitant to hang around me, but once I had been there a while and had gone outside the wire with them, I was able to overcome their initial skepticism of me.

In Afghanistan I was embraced more quickly by the soldiers. I assume it was because of my history with the unit. It was good because it made me feel like less of an outsider. Most often in my profession, there is a strong line between the journalist and the subject. It is different in a combat area where you are living with the people you are writing about.

It is tricky business working with a big organization like the military. It has its own culture, rules and mindset, particularly regarding how they feel about the press. For example, when we were in Iraq, the public affairs officer at the base told me the commanding officer was reading my dispatches every day. It makes you look over your shoulder a bit because you know they control your access to the story. And access to the story is the only thing you have as an embedded reporter. You want to maintain that access so you can get the story. It adds to the tension. Fortunately, the rules are not that strict, so I was able to tell the story.

I am really proud about what I have been able to do – personalize what was happening and not letting people forget.

As far as what has been asked of our soldiers, I think they will have burdens to carry for the rest of their lives. The multiple deployments seem like such a heavy burden.

When I meet a veteran of these wars, I always ask how they are doing. I know what they do is tough. I think I understand a little of what they feel. Most people seem to cope pretty well but not without stress and strain for a while. I remember one soldier I had met in Iraq. I ran into him three years later. I asked how he was doing, and he said, "I finally slept through an entire night without nightmares."

It seems like the younger guys handle it better. It is hard to know what is inside people. Sometimes people seem to get a little far away when they talk about it.

One of the things about Guardsmen is they are basically civilians in a war. They don't have exactly the same mindset as full-time soldiers. They go from a peacetime lifestyle to a full-time war. It seems to add a dimension to their experience that the full-time military doesn't have to deal with.

In the big scale of things what we have done as a nation has not had a particularly beneficial effect on the countries we have tried to help. As a great power, we have great responsibility. We need to be more effective in bringing positive change to the countries we want to influence. Invading and occupying countries is seldom a positive experience, although sometimes it is justified. ♦



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Then, no one understood what Guardsmen did

Lt. Col. Laurie Farris is a KC-135 pilot for the 157th Air Refueling Wing. She currently serves as the director of operations for Joint Force Headquarters.

I was a stay-at-home mom – my civilian job, if you will. I was actually golfing that day. My kids were in school. Everybody was calling in. I do remember I was on alert that night at the base, and I think I flew the next day: combat air patrols over New York City and D.C. We refueled F15s and F16s. It was a surreal moment seeing the hole there. We did a lot of CAPs. From 2 a.m. to 8 a.m., I'd come home and put the kids on a bus to school.

You never thought you were going to do a CAP mission over your own country. Overseas, you can understand why you are doing it. Over Turkey or northern Iraq, you never felt that vulnerable. You could still see the big cloud of dust.

Then, no one really understood what Guardsmen did.

Not too long after, we began setting up an air bridge overseas. There was a lot of uncertainty. We didn't know where we were going or how long we were going to be gone. Who do you send first? Do you send the guy with the new baby, the guy who is going to lose his civilian job? We were trying to figure out a fair way of doing it. So we did a lottery. Gen. Reddel was the squadron commander then, and he said he would go first. I'll never forget that. That impressed me. That was leadership. He had an airline job, two kids at home and a wife that worked. My name was drawn to be part of the second rotation, so I knew I was going in the February time frame. I will never forget flying overseas on the day of the Super Bowl. It was the Pats' first Super Bowl. We had a commercial airliner feeding us updates. Funny what you remember, like Vinatieri's kick.

When I first got the call that I had to leave, I was at the bus stop, and I remember a mother saying, "You're a mother. You should stay home with your children." I knew my children would be all right for two months, but I knew I didn't want my kids growing up in a country afraid of terrorists. It was my turn. It was my duty as a citizen-soldier. It's tough to leave your kids and not have them understand. My daughter was 7; my son was 4. That was hard. My husband was in the military,



In 2003, then-Maj. Laurie Farris, a pilot with the 157th Air Refueling Wing, and President George W. Bush wave to the crowd before the president's speech in a hangar at Pease Air National Guard Base in Newington. Photo courtesy of White House

so he understood. He rearranged his schedule to be a stay-at-home dad.

In 2003, we had returned from a deployment in Qatar. We flew flags on the plane. We had a flag to present to the UNH hockey team. The presentation was arranged to coincide with President Bush's speech in one of the hangars at Pease. We presented it to the coach before the president was introduced. We were on stage already. I was thinking this is once in a lifetime, so Bush comes by, and I

asked him if I could have a hug. He said sure. I thought the secret service would come. Then he said, "Now turn and wave to the crowd." I have that picture in my office. I need to mail it to him to see if he will autograph it.

I believe we helped turn the tide. My family is stronger. My friendships are stronger. The people I work with are like my brothers and sisters. I think the citizen-soldier came out stronger than ever and are the future of this country. ♦

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It has made our relationship stronger

Michelle May is the wife of Command Sgt. Major Victor May and long-time volunteer with the NHNG Family Readiness Program.

I was with a (dental) patient. I remember the patient, and I remember one of the doctors told me about the towers. The first thing I thought of was my children and what do they know and what is being told to them. They were at school. I was thinking of that. I remember my son calling me. All this stuff on the news, and I told him to shut off the TV, and we'll talk about it when I get home. I didn't think of Victor, of his unit, at all until after all the talk and discussion and how things at the airports were going to change and how the world was going to change. That's what I remember from 9/11.

I remember Victor saying, "This is huge. It will change New Hampshire." Our two kids were in junior high at the time. The school hadn't told them anything. There's no one who doesn't know where they were or what they were doing on that day. My children don't remember what it was like before 9/11. It's all they know.

I remember there was talk for a long time about the possibility of my husband's unit deploying. They were building them up. There was a lot of training. His first

deployment was in 2006. I still was in denial up to the very day he left. Right up to the minute, I was in denial. I became really active shortly after 9/11. As a spouse of a Guardsman, I always thought it wasn't going to affect us too much. It was a part-time job for him. I needed to know more for myself and my family – the language, the acronyms. For me, that's when I started to become more active with volunteering for the Guard and get close to my husband in that respect.

It helped me. I was able to grow and was able to help people when they were in a heightened state for their spouse or son or daughter deploying. We had to make the best of it. The year he left was the year my youngest one graduated from high school, and then I had to get her ready for college. Our oldest was already out of the house. My household went from four to just me. I had that Army family that I developed over the years. At that moment, when I was by myself, I knew what that support meant.

I look back now and the time does go fast in hindsight. At the time, it didn't feel like it. Victor's first deployment was 18 months. Six months of pre-training and 12 months in country. The toughest part for me at home was just having to bring my daughter to college by myself.

That was not right. We were supposed to be doing this together. I had to be married to my cell phone. If my daughter couldn't reach me, she started to worry. If I couldn't reach her, I would start to worry. And not being able to reach Victor when I wanted to made it that much more difficult.

The best thing was when it was over and obviously making so many friends with families going through the same thing. One family was going through the same scenario as we were. We'll be friends forever. It was different the second time. Our communication was so much different. We Skyped all the time, where before the only communication was AKO instant messaging and sending packages. I felt like I was sharing more about what was going on at home. My daughter was married, so I lived with her. His tour was shorter, so that was a relief. I still stayed active with the Family Readiness Group. It was a different group of people. I never stopped being active.

I never watched the news when he was gone. That's my advice. I couldn't even watch "Army Wives" when he was over there. It's a humbling experience to go through. As a military family, it brings everybody together. We're not on a post. It's not like you can all meet at the gym. If I go to the monthly gathering, I'll be able to connect with someone going through the same thing. For me, I got satisfaction and fulfillment from doing that, and being more of a veteran, I could help other people. There were a lot more parents this time around. There were a lot of young soldiers.

In my marriage, all the times I've been apart from my husband has made our relationship stronger. It's not always easy, of course. We've been married 27 years. That's a long time. As hard as it was, it has made us stronger people and has made our relationship stronger. Our children value and respect their father. It's all they've ever known. My son just joined the National Guard. It was a huge accomplishment for him.

I supported the decision to go into Iraq. We had to do something. We couldn't just take it and never do anything about it. But even though we had to retaliate, nothing is going to replace the people taken. Hopefully, we made an impact and left some good things. We need to protect ourselves now. We need to take care of home. ❖



Michelle May is congratulated by N.H. Guard senior leadership during a volunteer awards ceremony April 15 at Joint Force Headquarters in Concord. Photo: Tech. Sgt. Mark Wyatt, 157 ARW PA

The days were long, but the year flew by

Grant Munson, 17, is the son of Chief Warrant Officer 4 George Munson, a pilot with the 238th Medevac Company.

My parents didn't tell me we were being attacked. I was in second grade at the time and when I came to school, everyone was freaking out. I had no idea what was going on. I was pretty awestruck that somebody could do that. It was scary almost – the fact that they could get a plane like that seemed too easy. I didn't really think about my dad leaving. I was 7 years old at the time.

In 2004, my dad got called up for the first time. He had been in Desert Storm, so I knew a little about what he did from his stories. I was really sad that he had to go, but not too bothered by it. I was scared, but not as scared as maybe I should have been. It was cool that he was doing that, and I was really proud of him.

I remember having to do extra work around the house, and when he'd call, there would be that ping sound and the delay over the phone. We'd email a lot, too. I remember playing a lot of video games. My mom wasn't too much of a nuisance. I could get away with things a

little more. Sometimes, when we had events at school where I would see other dads, it was hard. Everyone was really supportive.

The time kind of flew by. The days were long, but the year flew by. The second time he deployed in 2010 was similar. I have two sisters and a brother. I'm the oldest. We all kind of helped our mom out. We all get along pretty well so that helped. The best part was only having one parent at home and being able to schmooze one parent instead of two. We Skyped. It was nice to see him and talk to him, but sometimes it was too much of a good thing. The hardest part was not having my dad around for hunting, fishing and skiing, or sitting around watching a game.

I would tell other kids who have a dad or mom deploying to find something that will keep your mind off it. Video games. Friends. I've always been a social person, so my friends were important. It's not always going to be smiles and rainbows. You just have to cope. Like I said before, the days and weeks are pretty long, but the year is pretty short.

Everyone would ask what he did. I knew he was flying helicopters and



Grant Munson

rescuing people, but I kind of wished he had big guns on his helicopter. I could see myself flying or fighting, if college doesn't work out. I do like paintball. I could definitely head in that direction. My father has made a decent career out of it. ❖



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People look out for each other here

Sue Brown is the director of psychological health for the N.H. Guard.

My job is dealing with crisis – that is the whole job really.

I came here to work with the military. My dad was in the Army Guard; my brother was active duty Army; my grandfather was in the Navy, so I always had an interest. I wanted to help service members access substance abuse and mental health services. I was honored to be chosen to help people in the military.

Since I have been here, I have learned a lot about the services available. Having a background in psychiatric services and substance abuse has helped.

It has been surprising to me how much I have been affected by the sense of community here, of family. And how much I have been affected by the deployments, people coming home, people killed in action. It has made me feel very connected; anything that has impacted service members has impacted me.

In private practice, there is a very sharp line between the therapist and the patient. Here, I can see a co-worker every day and then see them as a client, as someone who needs my help.

It has been kind of inspiring, generally. People's drive, motivation, strength, all of the military values – seeing people live by those values is impressive. Being here as long as I have, seeing a soldier's willingness to ask for help and leadership's level of support is like no other setting. In no



Sue Brown

other subculture do people look out for each other as they do here. There is an incredible level of dedication to each other. Leadership's willingness to come to me about issues and convincing me they want to help has been consistent. Getting help isn't used punitively, and getting help isn't being seen as a weakness.

Being on call 24/7 has been hard – it takes its toll on you. If I am playing a tennis match, I check the phone for messages when I stop to take a drink so there is no delay getting back to people – sort of having no time when I don't have to worry about getting a call.

Having a chaplain here is incredibly helpful. All of the resources here make us a pretty strong team. The motive for us is to help people. Really, everyone seems to care about other people.

On the military side, the willingness to drop everything, to put themselves and their families second, surprises me every time. It shouldn't impress me any more; it does happen every time. And they don't question it when they are called. In most other worlds, people would be thinking they should get overtime. It doesn't occur to anyone here. They just do what they have to do.

One of the things we struggle with is the people who come in with pre-existing conditions. What everyone needs to know is that people are who they are before they come into the military. People coming in with a problem and then getting ready to go to a war zone make it a bigger problem. Although we have also had people who deploy with problems come back stronger. Everyone reacts to trauma in a different way. On the other hand, just coming in to sign on the dotted line and then go to war is pretty impressive. Even with no combat exposure, it is a big commitment.

In general, the organization is full of examples of strength and resilience: service members who have deployed multiple times, spouses who manage the house alone for a year at a time, kids who manage their sports and their school work while taking on additional responsibility at home – it is an extraordinary group of people.

A lot of times people assume deployment equals coming damaged, when in fact, we are full of examples of growth.

On Sept. 11, I was running errands. I had a CD playing in the car. I went into the town offices – they had a radio on, and that is how I found out what was going on. I was shocked and scared. I wanted to get my son, even though he was in a safe location. I wanted my family with me.

As the child of a fire chief, I grew up knowing bad things happen no matter what you do. Military people have that same awareness. I don't think most of the country has that same sense.

Regarding whether it was worth it – there is no easy yes or no answer. I don't think doing nothing was an option. But being connected to a gold star mom – when I look into her eyes, I would have to say no. ❖

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My little piece made a difference

Staff Sgt. Christopher McWilliams is the training NCO for the Mountain Infantry Company.

I joined the Guard in May 2001. Service is a family tradition. My father was an active duty sergeant major, my grandfather was a master chief in the Navy, my brother is active duty Army.

I did two deployments with the South Carolina National Guard – to Djibouti on the Horn of Africa in 2002 and to Kuwait in 2002-2003. When I came home, I realized I had kind of a dead-end job, so I moved to New Hampshire to try something new. I had family up here.

Three days after reporting for duty to Charlie Company, we received our alert order so I never did get a new job. We went to Iraq. I was a gunner on mounted patrols. I enjoyed it. Sometimes there were many tedious hours of boredom, but there were also those moments of sheer terror. After so many years of training, it was good to finally put some of it to good use.

At the time, it seemed like my little piece of the effort was making a difference. I still feel like my little piece of it, although very small, did make a difference.

I didn't get to come home with the rest of the company. I was medically evacuated out to Germany. My squad was ambushed on Nov. 14, 2004. It was an IED-initiated ambush. I took a bunch of shrapnel in my shoulders and back, a little in my face.

Since I had lost a lot of blood, they couldn't treat me in Iraq or Germany. Due to a mistake in my orders, I ended up at Fort Dix instead of Walter Reed. I eventually was treated at the Boston Medical Center.



Staff Sgt. Christopher McWilliams

I never did get back to normal – I still suffer some limited range of motion.

While still on orders, I applied for a job in military personnel and was selected. I started the day I came off military orders. Then I worked as a re-integration NCO – the equivalent to what Soldier Outreach does today. I think I helped a few people out. Like in most cases, the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

In April 2009, we were notified that we would be deploying to Afghanistan. It was quite a different experience from Iraq. We were more engaged with the local population. We were at a small outpost with the Afghan Army.

For Charlie Company, it was more of a traditional infantry mission. In Iraq, we had been at a sprawling base where you

couldn't help crossing into another unit's area. In Afghanistan, we controlled a pretty big battle space.

By then I had progressed in rank and was the battle NCO for the company. Now at home I am the training NCO for the unit.

To sum up how I feel about all of the deployments – life goes on. You can't dwell on the things that happened. I have pretty much focused on rebuilding my family. I am alive, I have a job, life is good. And I am enjoying time with my son.

If I were to advise a young soldier going to war, I would say, "Put your mind to the task and do your job."

I am proud of my service – proud of my individual and unit accomplishments. But there is more to life. I think my biggest task is being a father.

On the strategic level, I have no idea if all the war was worth it – that is not my realm. On a personal level, it was worth it. I think every soldier, regardless of his mission, should feel some personal pride in having an impact on something greater than himself. ❖



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New Hampshire as a state is stronger

John Lynch is serving in his last year as the governor of New Hampshire. In 2010, he was re-elected to a record fourth straight term.

I heard about the attack over the radio. I was on my way to Lee for a meeting for the University System of New Hampshire. I was chairman of the board of trustees. I was in Lee in time to see the second plane crash into the tower. I was in disbelief. I was horrified that so many innocent lives were lost. At the same time, I had a feeling of pride. As people were running out of the buildings, firemen, policemen and other first responders were rushing into them. I was angry that we were attacked, but it was a day of pride because people were risking their lives to help others.

My understanding of the National Guard then was that it was made up of citizen-soldiers whose primary mission was to serve in New Hampshire on an as-needed basis. Once I became governor, I was aware of the transition that was beginning to happen with our Guardsmen who were deploying to Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East, which, from my understanding, was a different role.

I was at nearly all the ceremonies for soldiers leaving and when they came home. I spent a lot of time talking to soldiers and their families, and gained a deep understanding of the sacrifices involved. Especially for the families. It was a tremendous sacrifice on their part. In some cases, soldiers missed the birth of their child. Others missed birthdays and anniversaries. I remember a mother telling me that the only time her daughter got to see her dad was by Skyping. She didn't realize he was a real dad until he came home.

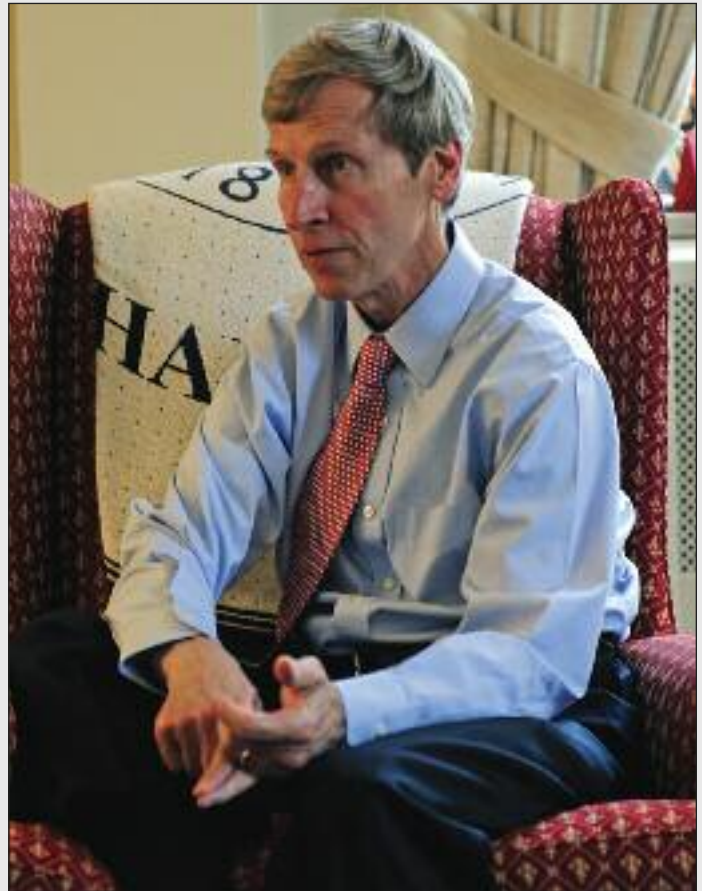
The loss of soldiers killed in action was extremely difficult and sad for the families and the state. I met with many of the families of our fallen. There is a void in the hearts of New Hampshire citizens over the deaths that occurred. We can take some comfort in knowing they were committed to a greater good.

The Guard responded at home as well. Since I've been governor, we've had three 100-year floods, an ice storm, wind storm and a tornado. Each time the Guard was there to do whatever they could to be helpful. There was never a question about whether it was their job or not. Just the presence of the Guard made people, families, communities, and myself feel comforted – that everything was going to be all right.

Because the Guard has been so visible over the last eight years with the contributions they've made here after disasters and the sacrifices they've made overseas, people have enormous respect for the Guard.

There's no question that New Hampshire as a state is better for it, and the Guard is more prepared because they've been asked to do things they're typically not asked to do. The Guard is more integrated with state agencies, first responders and non-profits. That's a plus for New Hampshire. The Guard is also more prepared for their soldiers and airmen returning from overseas. They know better what kind of support and resources they need.

The men and women of the National Guard who were in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Middle East were over there protecting us and our liberties and freedoms. So, if we get to enjoy those



Gov. John Lynch discusses the N.H. National Guard during an interview at the State House in Concord on May 8. Photo: 1st Sgt. Mike Daigle, Deputy State PAO

liberties and freedoms every day, then certainly being over there was worth it.

I would tell the next governor that being the commander in chief of the New Hampshire National Guard is a very important part of the job. I would urge the next governor to really go out of his or her way to immerse themselves in the Guard. Get to know the soldiers. Get to know their families. They do so much for us. The least we could do is be there for them. I'd really urge the next governor to take that job very seriously. ❖



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N.H. marksmen on target



1st Lt. Mark Fazio, a member of the marksmanship team representing the New Hampshire National Guard at the U.S. Army Small Arms Competition in Fort Benning, Ga. in March, shoots during a pistol match. The team competed against soldiers from other Guard and reserve units, active duty Army and Special Forces units.



Capt. Allen Corey II, a member of the marksmanship team representing the New Hampshire National Guard at the U.S. Army Small Arms Competition in Fort Benning, Ga. in March, shoots during a pistol match. The team competed against soldiers from other Guard and reserve units, active duty Army, and Special Forces units.



From left, Sgt. Daniel Hebert, Sgt. 1st Class Shawn MacPherson, 1st Lt. Mark Fazio and Capt. Allen Corey II are members of the NHNG Marksmanship Team who competed at the U.S. Army Small Arms Competition in Fort Benning, Ga. in March. The team competed with Guard, reserve, active duty and Special Forces soldiers.

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Whitney Hughes, 114th PAD

It is often said that there are two types of people on the battlefield: marksmen and targets. The members of the New Hampshire National Guard's marksmanship team, part of the sustainment training branch, not only pride themselves in being marksmen, but recently showcased their expertise to distinguish themselves in a national Army-wide competition in March.

Four members of the team traveled to Fort Benning, Ga., where the best shooters from Guard, reserve, active duty and Special Forces components come together each year to compete in the U.S. Army Small Arms Championships. As a team, the soldiers earned 19th place out of 57 teams and distinguished themselves in the pistol competition by earning 4th place.

"Although the primary focus of the sustainment training branch is to provide effective marksmanship training to individuals and units of the New Hampshire National Guard, when it comes to competition at the regional and national levels, the intent is to send a team that will represent New Hampshire well, which I feel our team successfully did," said Capt. Allen Corey, a member of the team.

In addition to their success as a team, the members – Capt. Allen Corey, 1st Lt. Mark Fazio, Sgt. 1st Class Shawn MacPherson and Sgt. Daniel Hebert – had personal victories as well. Fazio took third place as an individual in the overall pistol competition. Additionally, Hebert

and he both earned excellence in competition points, which are critical to their careers as competition shooters and is a big deal at this level of the competition, according to Corey.

"These points help the soldiers receive credit points toward the Excellence in Competition Pistol Badge. Many soldiers do not know this, but this award is worn on your dress uniform, supersedes the qualification badges and is a permanent award," said MacPherson, who also distinguished himself by placing 23rd out of 357 competitors in the individual competition.

Another fact that soldiers may not know is that these soldiers reached this level of competition by starting at the state level here in New Hampshire, and they can train with these shooters through the STB's marksmanship program.

The primary focus of the sustainment training branch is to provide effective marksmanship training to individuals and units of the New Hampshire National Guard. The marksmanship program is designed to take soldiers from each unit, hone their skills, turn them into subject matter experts in marksmanship, so they, in turn, take those skills back to their units. Soldiers who are given permission from their units make the commitment to drill with the STB at Fort Devens and focus solely on marksmanship from roughly March to November depending upon the weather.

This gives soldiers the chance to become the marksmanship SMEs for their units, and also gives them the chance as shooters to place in the state competition, right where the team who traveled to the championships in Fort Benning started.

"Competition is one aspect of what we do, but we also focus on providing training to individual soldiers as well as units. Soldiers that train with our program will ultimately return to their unit as subject matter experts in



Sgt. 1st Class Shawn MacPherson, left, and Sgt. Daniel Hebert, both members of the marksmanship team representing the New Hampshire National Guard at the U.S. Army Small Arms Competition in Fort Benning, Ga. in March, load their pistols before a match.



marksmanship,” said Corey. “Marksmanship is the most essential skill that soldiers can possess and correlates directly to success on the battlefield.”

The team’s expertise and success did not go unnoticed at the battalion level. Lt. Col. David Mikolaities, the former STB marksmanship coordinator and new battalion commander for the 54th Troop Command, was extremely proud of how they represented the NHNG.

“These soldiers did an outstanding job in representing our state and should be commended for their dedication,” said Mikolaities. “The regional and national level sustainment training exercises do an excellent job of simulating stress, which typically can only be found in a combat environment. Their performance is a reflection of their dedication and is proof of the caliber of instruction conducted on a monthly basis by our STB for the benefit of soldiers and airmen in the NHNG.” ♦

From left, Capt. Allen Corey II and Sgt. 1st Class Shawn MacPherson, members of the marksmanship team representing the New Hampshire National Guard at the U.S. Army Small Arms Competition in Fort Benning, Ga. in March, discuss how they will negotiate a pistol range. The team competed against soldiers from other Guard and reserve units, active duty Army and Special Forces units.

SFS personnel hone skills at Fort Devens

By Tech. Sgt. Mark Wyatt, 157th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

Eight members of the 157th Security Forces Squadron, along with three combat arms training and marksmanship instructors, traveled from Pease Air National Guard Base to the range at Fort Devens, Mass., to qualify on the M-240B and M-249 weapon systems March 5.

Each squad is assigned personnel that carry an M-240B and M-249 as part of a unit tasking requirement. These individuals



Staff Sgt. Brett Peterson, left, and Tech. Sgt. Philip Soares, both 157th Security Forces Squadron Combat Arms Training and Marksmanship personnel, fire weapons prior to a live fire training mission on the M-240B and M-249 weapon systems March 5. Airmen fired the weapons on pop-up targets that provided instant feedback as well as allowed personnel to utilize their sights and engage targets at varying distances. Photo: Tech. Sgt. Mark Wyatt, National Guard

are required to qualify with live fire on their respective weapon once a year.

“It’s critical to the quality of training that personnel are able to utilize this live-fire training range here with pop-up targets,” said Staff Sgt. Brett Peterson, 157th Security Forces Squadron CATM instructor. “Each airman qualifying on the weapon is able to get a much better understanding of the full range of capabilities each weapon system has.”

In addition to the hands-on use of the weapon, the range at Fort Devens provides opportunities that are not otherwise afforded at home station.

“The pop-up targets at Fort Devens are a great way to provide immediate feedback to personnel,” Peterson said. “The range also allows airmen an opportunity to utilize their sights and engage targets at varying distances.”

CATM personnel not only qualified on each weapon as part of their annual training requirement, they were responsible for maintaining a safe environment.

“In addition to being proficient on the weapon to properly instruct members within the squadron, we’re there to maintain range safety,” added Peterson. “There are a variety of things that can go wrong, so it’s most important that we maintain a safe environment for personnel.”

Despite a recent snow storm that dumped over a foot of snow in early March, training was not impacted by the harsh weather conditions.

“We train in all types of weather, so the snow that day had very little impact on the quality of training,” Peterson said. “If anything at all, the snow made it a little more challenging to clean up brass buried in the snow after.”

CATM personnel made it clear that they understand well the good fortune they have in being able to train at Fort Devens.

“The training these airmen received today is invaluable. We are very lucky to be able to utilize the range here,” Peterson said. “Hopefully they will use this knowledge and experience and pass it on to their peers in the squadron.” ♦

To Helena and back

Story and photos by Sgt. Richard Frost, 114th PAD

Perched on a jagged, rocky mountaintop in Helena, Mont., U.S. and Canadian soldiers stood side by side as they scanned the vast panoramic views ahead of them. They had labored up the cliff side, working and sweating together to conquer the dangerous ascent up a granite wall. This was part of a historic joint training event between the New Hampshire National Guard's Mountain Company and their Canadian counterparts. The exercise was not only ground-breaking for the current soldiers, but mimicked the training held here 70 years ago that formed U.S. and Canadian soldiers into the famous "Devil's Brigade," a renowned early special forces unit.

Members of Charlie Company, 3-172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), New Hampshire Army National Guard, and the Princess Louise Fusiliers Regiment of Canada, with support from other Canadian regiments, conducted a historic, two-week joint training exercise at Fort Harrison in Helena from April 20 to May 5. The training involved using advanced mountaineering skills and combat tactics in a mountain environment.

"The point of the exercise was to train with our Canadian counterparts and to compare tactics, techniques and procedures and make both countries a more diversified fighting force in mountain environments," said 1st Sgt. Kenneth Kinsella of Charlie Company.

Fort Harrison provided the ideal training environment for the mountain soldiers.

"What better place to train for the current war we're fighting than here?" said Lt. Col. David Mikolaities, battalion commander, 54th Troop Command. "This facility is perfectly suited to train for the fight we're in right now. There are few training areas in the continental U.S. where one can conduct high angle marksmanship training, live-fire mortar training and various mountaineering exercises all within an hour radius."

The terrain provided training for the mountain soldiers who relished the opportunity to not only hone their military mountaineering and combat skills in the rugged terrain, but to compare and contrast their tactics with their Canadian counterparts.

"We conducted fixed-line training, which is good when you need to move a lot of troops on steeper terrain," said Canadian Army Lt. Steve Swinamer, Princess Louise Fusiliers Regiment, advanced mountain operations advisor. "We did body-rappelling and also did some tactical movement training. The Americans do things a little bit differently than we do, so conducting this training jointly was key."

In addition to the joint mountaineering training, they spent significant time on Fort Harrison's ranges and conducted joint mortar and high angle marksmanship training, which, given Montana's mountainous terrain and high elevation, is well suited to preparing units for combat in areas such as Afghanistan. The exercise concluded with a four-day field exercise in the unforgiving terrain in temperatures that dropped to freezing some nights.

The training holds special significance because the last time a joint training exercise of this type was conducted here between U.S. and Canadian forces, it gave rise to today's modern Special Forces components of both countries, according to retired Army Col. Raymond Read, museum director at Fort Harrison.

"It makes sense that we would join our Canadian counterparts to train here at Fort Harrison," said Mikolaities. "There's a lot of history here that goes way back to some of the origins of



Sgt. Dustin Rogers, a military mountaineer-qualified infantryman with Charlie Company, 3-172 Infantry (Mountain), helps a soldier from the Canadian Army's Princess Louise Fusiliers Regiment during military mountaineering training in Fort Harrison in Helena, Mont., on April 29.

Special Forces, where the U.S. and Canada first trained together in mountain warfare."

In 1942, during World War II, at the direction of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Gen. George Marshall, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, an elite unit was formed. Their mission was to parachute into occupied enemy territory and destroy vital Axis installations. This force required a quality training area for special training in mountaineering, skiing, parachuting, demolitions and weapons. Fort William Henry Harrison in Helena, Mont., was selected. Volunteers from the U.S. and Canadian armies came to this fort to train in these tactics. They were designated the First Special Service Force, and their legacy as "The Devil's Brigade" has carried over into today's special forces of both countries.

In addition to the historical significance, most members agreed that the training here was critical for the joint success of our missions, and that this training should continue in the future.

"Working with the Americans was great," said Swinamer. "We actually amalgamated all the platoons, so half was American and half Canadian. They have a slightly different skill set that they bring to the table, so trading information was key to seeing what every individual had to offer." ♦



Soldiers from Charlie Company, 3-172 Infantry (Mountain), fire a mortar while training May 2. The unit was training with the Canadian Army's Princess Louise Fusiliers Regiment during military mountaineering training in Fort Harrison in Helena, Mont.

3rd Battalion soldiers sweep Best Warrior competition

Story and photos by Sgt. Brian Gordon, 114th PAD

Two soldiers from Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 197th Fires Brigade, emerged victorious in the 2012 New Hampshire Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.

The lower enlisted category was won by Spc. Bryan Wilcox of Hudson and the noncommissioned officer division was won by Staff Sgt. Peter Laflamme of Nashua, both of Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 197th Fires Brigade.

Fifteen soldiers from throughout the New Hampshire National Guard gathered for the challenging, three-day event

conducted at the Regional Training Institute in Centre Strafford May 14, 15 and 16.

In order to be dubbed Best Warrior, they contended in various events during the competition which included weapons qualification and a stress shoot, land navigation courses held in both the day-light and night, an Army Physical Fitness Test, eight different warrior tasks such as tactical combat casualty care and reacting to a possible improvised explosive device. They also faced a board on military topics and current events and another where the



Spc. Bryan Wilcox

soldiers recited the soldier's or the NCO creed. A written test and a road march completed the competition.

"This competition was designed to promote esprit de corps and to allow the soldiers to showcase what they know," said Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Considine, command sergeant major of the 197th Fires Brigade. "We get to see the best of our best."

The competition began with weapons qualification. The soldiers zeroed their weapons and then engaged targets ranging from 100 to 300 meters in both kneeling and prone positions. The competitors also took part in a stress shoot exercise which simulated combat conditions by having the soldiers crawl, run and fire from standing, kneeling and prone positions at various targets while being timed.

Pfc. Elijah Hawkins of Milan, a soldier with Alpha Battery, 3rd Battalion, 197th Fires Brigade, said the weapons firing was the best part of the competition for him.

The two land navigation courses completed the first day of competition. The second day started with the PT test and moved right into the warrior tasks and board appearances. The sunshine and warm temperatures helped to keep spirits up during the long day of challenge.

"This was a great event," said Sgt. Christopher Strauder of Milford, who serves with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 197th Fires Brigade. "It encourages soldiers to step outside their regular drill routine and get more practice with the basic skills we don't use that much. I'm a better soldier now than I was before I did this."

The warrior tasks presented the soldiers with a wide variety of challenges. Besides first aid and IED stations, there



Pfc. Jeremy Provenche, A Battery, 3rd Battalion, 197th Fires Brigade jogs toward the finish line of the 10K road march during the 2012 New Hampshire Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition at the Regional Training Institute in Centre Strafford May 14, 15 and 16. The competition tested soldiers from around the state on various warrior tasks and military knowledge.



Staff Sgt. Peter Laflamme

were stations involving vehicle searches, interacting with news media, effective communication, map reading and requesting medical evacuation over a radio. Disassembling and assembling an M-249 machine gun was particularly demanding at one station, with only a few soldiers passing the event.

“It’s difficult for the part-time soldiers to get a weapon to practice on,” said Sgt. Marcus Manning, of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3643rd Brigade Support Battalion, one of the testers at that station. “We explain exactly what they did wrong, so everyone walks away knowing a bit more than they did coming in.”

As each soldier rotated through the stations, the NCO’s running each one explained exactly what was expected of the competitor and then what they missed in each event.

During the boards, soldiers presented themselves in their Class A uniform or Army Service Uniform and were graded on their appearance and how they answered a series of questions and recited the creeds.

The second day finished up with a 100-question written exam on military topics.

The final day of competition consisted of a grueling 10K road march with the competitors wearing a load-bearing vest and helmet while carrying a replica M-16, water and a 35-lb rucksack. The warm and dry conditions worked in the soldiers’ favor with four soldiers finishing in under the minimum time of one hour and 15 minutes to the cheers of the NCOs running the event and their fellow competitors.

“The route was pretty steep, but the event was really motivating,” said Wilcox, who finished first. “I had to walk uphill a lot but I was jogging downhill.”

The competition was attended by five

soldiers from the Canadian Armed Forces who acted as observers. “We plan to bring some of the ideas of this competition back home with us,” said Warrant Officer Kenneth Nunn of the Cape Breton Highlanders, 36th Brigade of Land Forces, Atlantic Area. “We’d also like to have some of our soldiers come down and compete in this event. It’s great when our soldiers train with yours. They tend to work well off each other.”

The weekend ended with an award

ceremony in which Command Sgt. Maj. John Nanof, command sergeant major of the New Hampshire National Guard, handed coins out to each competitor and awards to the winners.

Wilcox and Laflamme were to go to Camp Smith, New York, to compete May 15-18 in the Regional Best Warrior Competition, the winners of which then compete nationally. ♦



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Rojek and Concord Family YMCA work together to improve military family fitness

By Capt. Suzanne Lamb, 157th ARW PAO

While growing up on Navy bases, Tech. Sgt. Robert Rojek spent a lot of time at base recreation centers.

"I had a great time learning to swim and playing soccer and baseball," says Rojek, a member of the 157th Air Refueling Wing force support squadron. "I truly believe these activities helped shape me and allow me the benefit of being a healthy individual."

In November 2011, Rojek became the full-time wellness and sports director for the Concord Family YMCA. Since then, Rojek has promoted awareness of Concord Family YMCA health and fitness programs to military members and their families.

"Parents and military members can come get a workout and at the same time bring their children and let them burn off some energy," Rojek said. "To me, the YMCA is as close to an actual military installation combination health, fitness and recreation center as you can get."

The parent of two children, Rojek is very concerned about the increasing obesity in children.

"I have talked to many parents. Many feel that it is truly unsafe outdoors for their kids," he said. "They also feel they are too busy to take their kids out for hikes, walks, jogs, bike rides or just to kick or throw the ball around. They willingly let their kids sit in front of the television for hours on end because they are afraid to send them out of the house for outdoor play."

Rojek sees the Concord Family YMCA as a possible solution.

"There are several different programs that are offered at this location for both adults and children, and activities for families to participate in together," Rojek continued.

Shortly after starting employment last November, Rojek worked with other Concord Family YMCA directors to establish a military membership program.

"The Y recognizes that military and their families make tremendous sacrifices for our country, our safety and our freedom," says James Doremus, executive director of the Concord Family YMCA. "Reaching out to military through a 50 percent discount on membership is our way of saying thank you for your contributions and sacrifice."

A Concord Family YMCA membership allows members to use any YMCA facility in New Hampshire. A military member can join the Concord Family YMCA and participate in any YMCA program in the state.

"We provide a wide array of programs and services that will appeal and be supportive to military with families as well as single members," Doremus said. "A Y membership provides the perfect environment and enables all military to increase or maintain their level of fitness in order to be as effective as possible."

Rojek hopes military families will take advantage of this resource and develop healthy habits that will be passed on to their children.

"I have been running for 28 years and have tried to follow in my father's footsteps by staying healthy and trying to take care of myself," Rojek said. "The best advice I can give for anyone wishing to increase their health and fitness is to watch their portion size, eat clean and unprocessed food, and exercise."

For more information, contact Tech. Sgt. Robert Rojek at robert.rojek@ang.af.mil. ♦



Tech. Sgt. Rob Rojek, 157th Force Support Squadron, assists Master Sgt. Jeffrey Vermette, judge advocate paralegal, with form in the weight room. Rojek, a wellness and sports director for the Concord YMCA, worked with directors to establish a military membership program. Photo: Staff Sgt. Curtis Lenz, 157 ARW PA



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Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Mark Wyatt,
157th ARW PA

Ten Airmen from the New Hampshire Air National Guard challenged themselves on the hills of McIntyre Ski Area in Manchester running through mud and conquering obstacles during the inaugural Adventure 5K Race, April 28.

Running in their first race of the season, a group led by Tech. Sgt. Saul Davidson formed a team called Obstacles Illusion that includes service members and dependents.

The team intends to participate in six or seven races throughout New England this summer.

“For anyone who ever wanted to go through the basic training confidence course again, this is your opportunity,” said Tech. Sgt. Saul Davidson, the team’s captain. “It’s also a great opportunity to come together as a team and support one another and build friendships within the organization.”

Supporting one another among the more than 800 competitors was evident throughout the race as team members, as well as strangers, helped one another overcome difficult obstacles together.

“The key is to not leave someone behind,” said Tech. Sgt. Jessie Davidson. “It’s all about teamwork and finishing together.”

The team, outfitted with shirts that have Obstacles Illusion written across the chest and includes the 157th Air Refueling Wing shield on one sleeve and the United States flag on another, is honored to



Obstacle Illusion, a team composed of members of the New Hampshire Air National Guard, pose before competing in the Adventure 5K at McIntyre Ski Area April 28. More than 800 participants ran through mud trails and over obstacles during the 3.1-mile event.

represent the New Hampshire Air National Guard at similar events later this summer.

“I’m extremely proud to wear this uniform shirt with the flag on one sleeve and the unit shield on another at these events,” said Capt. Alex Smith. “It gave me goose bumps this morning when they gave me my shirt, and I put it on.”

Team members encourage others to join the team and experience the fun and camaraderie at these races.

“Whether you’re interested in participating in each of our events or only a few, come and join our team Obstacles

Illusion, and meet some great people and have a lot of fun,” said team captain Davidson.

For information on joining Obstacles Illusion, contact Tech. Sgt. Saul Davidson at saul.davidson@ang.af.mil or Tech. Sgt. Jessie Davidson at Jessie.davidson@ang.af.mil or visit their Facebook page at [Facebook.com/obstacleillusions](https://www.facebook.com/obstacleillusions). ❖



Tech. Sgt. Jessie Davidson slides down the final obstacle during the Adventure 5K at McIntyre Ski area April 28. Davidson and 10 others from the New Hampshire Air National Guard participated as a team called Obstacle Illusion. More than 800 participants ran through mud trails and over obstacles during the 3.1-mile event.



Senior Airman Luke Gregory completes a mud obstacle at the Adventure 5K at McIntyre Ski area April 28.

Army Promotions & Awards

Private 2

Chad Brouillet
Joel Campbell
Bradley Mackert
Jamieson Dickinson
Jonathan Picott
Stephen Ferry
Matthew Anderson
Dennis Mitchell Jr.
Russell Chandonnet

Private First Class

Christopher Demain
Galen Garretson
Kenneth Brown
Timothy York
Jeremy Letendre
Charles Brown V
Ryan McLaughlin
Jennifer Stenberg
Spencer Dayton
Timothy Huntley
Jacob Vanblarcom

Specialist

Olivia Brecheen

William Donovan IV
Christopher Mowen
Brandon Chadwick
Sarah Chick
Trevor Milbury

Sergeant

Joseph Emond
Dawn Waites
Darrell Kiley
Michelle Burke
Sean Dubia
Anthony McInnis
Kelly James
John Petrillo
Justin Sargent
Kaitlin Rorick

Staff Sergeant

Jeremiah Smith
Richard Shaughnessy
Kathryn Stansfield
David Leclair
Rodney Anderson
Shelly Garber
Frederick Lochner

Scott Jones
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Peter Cate
Brian Gordon

Sergeant First Class

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Kevin Harvey Jr.
Lenamaye Williams
James Kendall
Sean McLain
Jeremy Chaisson
Donald Smith
Jeffrey Bickford
James Hannan IV
Kevin Sawler

Master Sergeant

Sacha Gregoire
Bryan LaFlamme
Andrew Lane

Warrant Officer

Randy King Jr.

Chief Warrant Officer 2

Kathryn Roney
Fernando Vasquez

2nd Lieutenant

William Arpin
Sean Connolly
Ian Hanson
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Captain

Jeffrey Seavey

Major

Mark Bianchi

Brigadier General

Peter Corey

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Beverly Cole

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