



The DOUBLE EAGLE

"Twice the Citizen! Army Strong!"

MARCH 2015, Vol. 3 No. 12

NELDIA WATSON: SHAPED BY HER EXPERIENCE AND INSPIRATION

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COVER STORY:

Neldia Watson, opposite page, the Army Reserve Equal Opportunity Compliance Specialist and Diversity Manager, speaks on her experience as a woman in the military, at the U.S. Army Reserve Command headquarters, February 24. The Equal Opportunity Directorate employee reflected on her personal inspiration as part of Women's History Month. (Photo by Brian Godette/U.S. Army Reserve Command)



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DOUBLE EAGLE



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Living the American Dream?

After BRAC 2005 relocated my wife and I from our Georgia roots to Fort Bragg, N.C., in 2011, we decided we would rent in Pinehurst instead of buying a home - just to make sure the Sand Hills would stick with us.

As Army civilians, we had moved three previous times in 10 years, mostly because I started government service much later than my wife and I was looking for career-building assignments.

This past August, after much soul-searching, we decided that Fort Bragg would be my final stop. My wife already retired in 2010 while at Fort McPherson, Georgia.

After renting for three years, we finally decided to buy a home. After all, isn't that part of "The American Dream?" She wanted a home that no one else had ever lived in and had a screened-in porch. I wanted a bigger home office for my freelance work. The only way to get what we wanted was to build.

So, the journey began in August and finally ended Feb. 23 when we closed on our new home.

Like many husbands, I feel my wife watches WAY TOO MUCH HGTV and DiY network. Those networks flood the minds of wives with ideas that are either too expensive or beyond the home remodeling capabilities of their husbands.

We joked with our realtor and our construction foreman that we would probably get divorced at least 10 times during the construction process. Mostly in part because of ideas she had garnered from those networks

Maybe to our advantage, we were not on a fast-build timeline. The builders had six months to complete the job. They finished two weeks early which was remarkable considering they started and finished two other homes before ours was complete.

To my surprise, we really didn't squabble at all over the process. I can't say the same for our builder. As the process neared the end, there were some frustrating moments. My construction foreman did get the "knife hand" a couple of times. Unfortunately, he never saw it ... I was on the telephone venting my frustration with folks not paying attention to detail.

But in the end, the movers came, we battled snow and ice during the move, turned over the rental keys, and set out to organize our new home.

I'm not really sure if owning a home nowadays is "living the American dream" or not but from our screened-in porch, it sure looks like it to us. 🇺🇸



Timothy L. Hale
Editor



Timothy L. Hale, a U.S. Air Force veteran, is an award-winning photojournalist and editor of the USARC Double Eagle. He is member of a number of professional organizations to include: Nikon Professional Services, National Press Photographer's Association, and the North Carolina Press Photographer's Association. The views expressed in this column are expressly his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Army Reserve Command, the Department of the Army, and/or the Department of Defense.



Shaped by her Experience and Inspiration

Story & photo by BRIAN GODETTE
U.S. Army Reserve Command

PROUD WOMAN VETERAN. Neldia Watson, opposite page, the Army Reserve Equal Opportunity Compliance Specialist and Diversity Manager, speaks on her experience as a woman in the military, at the U.S. Army Reserve Command headquarters, February 24. The Equal Opportunity Directorate employee reflected on her personal inspiration as part of Women's History Month.

FORT BRAGG, N.C. - A person once said, "Not only know thyself, know where you have been, know where you are going, know the place of 'all knowing', know the present moment."

Neldia Watson, Army Reserve Equal Opportunity Compliance Specialist and Diversity Manager, embraces that notion during a month where women in history are celebrated.

"When I think of Women's History month, I think of all the great accomplishments women have made in support of our nation," said Watson. "I think of teachers, lawyers, Soldiers - any woman who has done anything that has made an impact on who I am."

Like many in the Army Reserve, Watson, a retired Army master sergeant and federal employee, has her own story and focus of inspiration that has guided her through 32 years of combined federal service.

"As a little girl I always said, 'I think I want to be one of those social worker people,'" she explained, laughing. "I thought I had the solution to everything and could make everyone's life a whole lot better. Of course I don't and I'm not a social worker, but being in the human relations field has satisfied that."

Watson's current job requires her to ensure Soldiers comply with equal opportunity and diversity standards in the military.

She reflected on the 13 years in the military when she served as a recruiting noncommissioned officer, a time she calls the "high-light" of her military career.

"There were some advantages

and there were some disadvantages to being a woman in the Army and a female recruiter," she said. "We dealt with the public a lot, with civilians, and those in the school system, and people who didn't see females as being Soldier material."

That misconception disheartened Watson, fueling her resolve to not only be the example of who a female Soldier is, but what the military could offer to both males and females.

"The great part of my job was introducing people to what the Army was about, because we have so many different areas and jobs to include male and females," she said. "The basic stereotype 'that women don't belong in the Army' made it difficult to get in, and it was up to me to show them how women do play a vital role in the military, by giving them success stories, and showing them how women have overcome those stereotypes, achieving great things in the Army and civilian sector."

Such reflection and strength in knowing her worth and the worth of women in general started close to home for the Grambling, Louisiana native.

"My mother and my grandmother are my inspirations," Watson said. "My grandmother raised 10 children all by herself. She was a farmer - a female farmer! Which back in that day was unheard of."

Watson's eyes drifted towards the ceiling and she began to smile as memories of her grandmother and mother came to mind.

"My grandmother and her 10 children were able to run a farm, produce, make quilts, and soap - selling all those things,

taking care of her children, with no education," she recalled fondly. "My mom was also a single parent and she raised us to always do the right thing and to care about other people. Those two women are my heroes, my inspiration."

The firm foundation set by the women before her, molded her and encouraged her to be a role model for other young women.

"As a recruiter, when you are trying to bring more females into the military, they like to see someone who is a successful woman," she said. "I'd share my stories with them, tell them what it's like going through basic training and I think they liked the idea that you don't have to be hard, you can just be yourself and accomplish great things in the Army."

"When I came into the Army I was a part of the very first units to be co-ed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, she said. "At that time a lot of the drill sergeants and senior leaders didn't have high expectations for us, so you had to do extra to prove that you were equal too, because all we wanted was the same opportunity as our male counterparts."

Watson prides herself on the quality of her work and the affirmation that women are strong powerful leaders, like her mother and grandmother.

"Today I tell young women to go out and do the best that you can in everything that you do and to never let someone put labels on you," she said.

"I just want to be a good example," Watson said. "If someone can take something from what I've said, what I've done or a training I provided, then I am happy." 🌟

BLOWING DOWN BARRIERS

Story & photos by SGT. 1ST CLASS MICHEL SAURET
416th Theater Engineer Command

CONCORD, Calif. - She took charge of the formation for her first time since joining the unit.

There was no fanfare. There were no pink balloons or colorful streamers announcing her arrival.

"Receive the report," 1st Sgt. Raquel Steckman ordered the company.

Each platoon sergeant did, taking accountability of Soldiers among their ranks.

They reported to Steckman: the first woman in the Army appointed to a combat engineer company as a first sergeant.

But for her, being a woman is irrelevant. When the topic is brought up, she laughs it off entirely.

"I just don't think it's a big deal ... Why do you have to point out that I'm a freaking female? I'm trying to do a job here ... It just blows my mind," said Steckman, now with the 374th Engineer Company (Sapper), an Army Reserve unit located in Concord, California.

Being a female first sergeant, after all, is not such a monumental occasion. There have been plenty of them before Steckman around the Army, and plenty others who served as commanders and command sergeants major. Ranger school has recently opened to females, and more than 40 women have graduated the elite sapper training since 1999.

"Gender or race have no impact on how well (Soldiers) will perform a task," said Steckman.

So ... End of story. Stop the press.

Except her appointment marks another barrier breached in the integration process of women in combat units. There are more than 20,500 combat engineers across the Army, and currently none of them are women. The position is expected to open to females once a congressional notification from the Secretary of Defense makes it official. It will become one of 14 combat-specific military occupational specialties previously closed to women.

Steckman became eligible for this position because she joined the Army as a bridge crewmember. Soldiers in her MOS train alongside combat engineers frequently, even as early as basic combat training. Combat engineers (12B) and bridge crewmembers (12C) both feed into the same leadership role: combat engineer senior sergeant (12Z). Only five women in the Army currently hold that position. All five are in the Army Reserve today.

Being an Army Reserve unit doesn't make these combat engineers any less "manly." They talk about 12-mile ruck marches, bivouacking and 5-mile runs like it's their everyday life. During formation, platoons compete against each other.

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"I just don't think it's a big deal ... Why do you have to point out that I'm a freaking female? I'm trying to do a job here ... It just blows my mind."

— 1st Sgt. Raquel Steckman
374th Engineer Company (Sapper)

Female First Sergeant takes charge of combat engineers



TRAIL BLAZER. First Sgt. Raquel Steckman waits in the rain before the start of formation with the 374th Engineer Company (Sapper), Army Reserve unit headquartered in Concord, Calif. Steckman is the first woman in the Army appointed to a combat engineer company as a first sergeant.

STECKMAN

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They each appoint a Soldier to disassemble and reassemble an M240 machine gun to see who can do it fastest. Their Army jobs revolve around explosives, blowing stuff up.

However, both Steckman and her company commander have said that being an Army Reserve unit in the Bay Area, just an hour north of San Francisco, made this appointment an easy transition. That's why for Steckman, this "female thing" isn't such a big deal for her Soldiers.

"Their whole life isn't focused on (their Army job). They leave. They go home and they do other jobs. So their spectrum is much broader "The reason why it's different in the Reserve is because those guys go to civilian jobs, where they interact with females all the time," said Steckman.

Steckman doesn't ask herself what her role is as a "female" first sergeant. Her focus is on the job, not the gender.

"I'm constantly asking: What does a first sergeant do? 'They always say beans and bullets,' so (my) responsibility is to make sure the Soldiers are taken care of as far as training, vehicles and their well being," she said.

Steckman has wanted to serve in the military for as long as she remembers.

"My dad's favorite picture of me is where I'm

wearing a purple one-piece swimsuit and my curly long hair sticking out from underneath my grandfather's sailor's hat, saluting. It's his favorite picture. Carries it around with him still," said Steckman, who grew up in Eben Junction in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

She wanted to join the Marine Corps at 17, but her parents wouldn't sign the paperwork. Instead, she joined the Army Reserve in 1998. She became one of the first female bridge crewmembers, which had opened up to women a few years prior. She fell in love with the job, learning to operate boats as a private.

"We went out on the water, and they said, 'Sure let's see how you do on the boat.' And they say you either get it or you don't. You either can operate or you can't. And I loved it ... I freaking loved it," she said.

From there, she grew in the ranks, eventually joining the Active Guard Reserve program and served as the operations sergeant at the company and battalion levels. Her office is decorated with awards, plaques, and coins she collected from each unit or school she attended.

One multi-role bridge (MRB) company presented her with a red-haired Barbie dressed in a GI Joe uniform holding a plastic rifle. The Barbie is mount-

SETTLING IN. Steckman takes a phone call to discuss a Soldier who wants to join her unit. Steckman is the first woman in the Army appointed to a combat engineer company as a first sergeant. On the shelf above her are various coins, awards and plaques she collected in her various units throughout her Army career.

A Barbie, opposite page, dressed in a "G.I. Joe," uniform was presented to 1st. Sgt. Raquel Steckman for her dedication and service as the operations sergeant for the 401st Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge).



ed to a wooden base with a plaque thanking her for her dedication and service. Her most prized award is a paddle from the 652nd Engineer Company (MRB), from Hammond, Wisconsin, where she spent 12 years.

When she graduated from her senior combat engineer course in North Dakota, she received two coins: one for making the commandant list, and the other for being the first female to graduate the course.

“I was actually pissed off they gave me a coin for being a female,” she said.

There’s no malice or resentment in her voice when she said this. She’s not an “angry” woman, or a “bossy” woman. She doesn’t see herself as having something to prove. She’s just a Soldier in uniform.

“I just. I don’t know. I’ve always wanted to fly under the radar and just be. I never wanted to be the center of attention,” she said.

Interestingly, Steckman isn’t the first woman to join the 374th Engineer Company. There are four other females in the unit already, all holding non-combat positions: Two are medics, one a mechanic and one a nuclear, biological, and chemical specialist.

When asked, they don’t make a big hoopla over having a female first sergeant.

She’s one of the female medics at the unit, and she references the human anatomy often in some of her responses. Even as a woman, she’s used to being one of the “guys.” She gives medical care to male and female Soldiers as part of her job.

However, when given time to

reflect, she sees the value in the Army changes happening around her.

“I was thinking about this. It’s not about us. It’s about all the women who had to deal with not being accepted and having to fight for their rights to do their jobs. We’re just here. We’re doing what we could have done all along. But somebody 20 years ago had to bust their ass. There’s been nurses and medics getting killed who are female that weren’t given the same opportunities that are now being given to us,” she said.

She doesn’t have to look far to see this reality.

Her fellow medic, Staff Sgt. Melissa Ruggieri, is now 38 years old. She said that 10 or 15 years ago, she was in the best shape of her life, but she was never afforded the opportunities some of the women are granted today.

She spent six years in active duty. She remembers a moment when she was about to pick up a combat litter during a training event, and a male Soldier cut her off. He grabbed the litter before she could. As though she was too fragile, and she might break from carrying her own share of the weight.

For much of their Army lives, they’ve seen female Soldiers treated as liabilities instead of assets. But now, things are changing.

“I wanted to be able to test myself, and see how far I could go (but wasn’t allowed). I’m so happy for the females that are coming in that are able to test themselves to the limit. To go for it. Unfettered. It’s gotta be amazing,” said Ruggieri.

Being a Soldier doesn’t mean

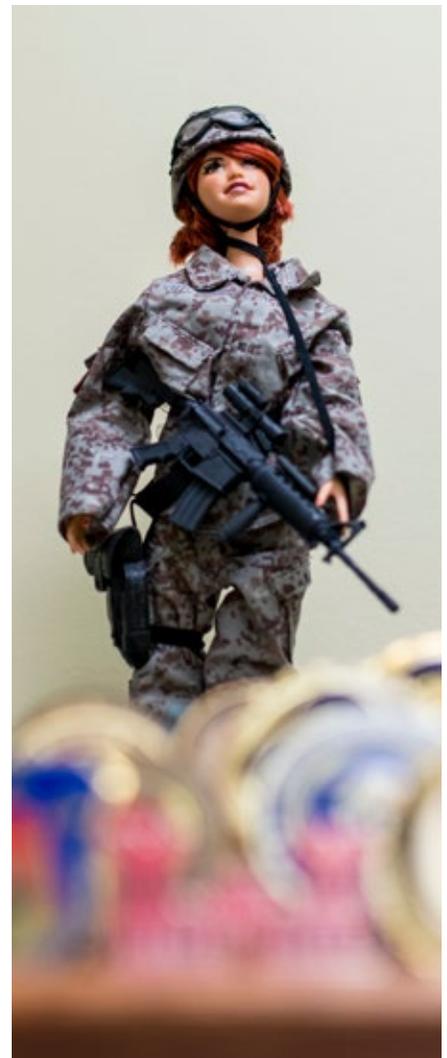
they have to stop being feminine.

Steckman’s face lights up when talking about her two children. Her motherly affection becomes evident in her eyes. She’s been married five years to a man whom she considers a mentor. He is also a first sergeant, but with the Wisconsin National Guard.

Sometimes, when he opens the door for her, she playfully steps back so he can go through it first.

“I’m opening it for you,” he would object. “Ever heard of chivalry?”

“I don’t know what that is. I’m a Soldier,” she would rebut, jokingly. “But he’s always treating me like a lady.” 🇺🇸



Finding balance across the mil-tech, civilian workforce

PART 3

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third interview in a series of articles regarding civilian manpower reductions in the U.S. Army Reserve. The first two articles ran in November 2014 and February 2015. Kevin J. Slider, USARC Civilian Personnel Management Office Director, responded to questions about these reductions, the impact they will have, and how to prepare. Below is the transcript from that conversation.

DE: What were your feelings when you were told the workforce would be re-balanced?

KS: We live in interesting and challenging times - at least for the present and foreseeable future. We understand reshaping an organization affects everyone, but for those who are filling positions whose function are being eliminated, it is a significant emotional event. Please understand the decisions to eliminate positions are extremely difficult ones for managers too. We feel committed to do everything possible to avoid involuntarily separating any employee from federal service, however, we can't promise this won't happen. We will ensure the workforce is informed about the procedures, provide transition assistance, and information on benefits, entitlements, and retirement.

DE: What is the most important message the Army Reserve needs to send to employees, both those being let go and those who will remain?

KS: We believe each and every employee is important to our mission, and we will do all we can to find a place for them in our organization. I'll be honest though, this may be difficult in some cases. Each situation and every employee's circumstances are unique, so it's hard to gauge what might be required of both the Army Reserve and each employee to keep them with us. I hope and expect we'll be able to

keep everyone who wants to stay; while challenging, I remain optimistic.

DE: Who is managing the force balancing process: Fort McCoy CPAC, or USARC CPMO? Or is it a joint effort?

KS: There are many people involved in balancing the force, and it is truly a total Army Reserve effort. The USARC CPMO and the Fort McCoy CPAC will work collectively and together with Army Reserve leaders to implement the necessary strategies to minimize the impact to our Civilian workforce.

DE: How many employees will be affected by this action?

KS: From my perspective everyone in the Army Reserve is affected. Most certainly those employees whose positions are eliminated will be directly affected; however, employees and Soldiers who stand with in our formations will also be impacted, as they decide which functions to continue performing and which we will stop doing, while continuing to maintain ready units in support of our nation's defense.

DE: When are these reductions scheduled to take place?

KS: Positions will be reduced in phases. The first two years, Fiscal Year 15 and Fiscal Year 16, will see us reduce the military technician population from nearly 9,000 to just under 8,000 – an 11 percent cut. The next phase, will occur from FY17 through FY19, when we'll reduce our Army Civilian positions from 3,508 to 3,098, a 12 percent cut.

DE: Why are these positions being eliminated?

KS: We are faced with difficult choices about

spending, and our elected leaders have made the decision to reduce spending on the Armed Forces. The active Army will shrink from about 510,000 Soldiers now by 60,000 over the next five years. The Army Reserve will shrink from 202,000 Soldiers now to 195,000 over the next two years. Similar reductions to our civilian workforce were also required of Army leadership.

DE: Will the number of employees projected for elimination be balanced against attrition through those vacated by retirement or accepting another position?

KS: Yes, in fact we expect most of our reductions will be a result of normal attrition, like retirements and voluntary movements, when an employee takes another position.

DE: What category of jobs are these, in which occupational areas?

KS: This is hard to gauge. From what I've seen the impacts are spread across our organizations, including those positions we fund for other entities that support us, and across all occupational areas throughout our structure. I do want to stress this reduction is associated with shrinking resources and decisions about which functions we'll either stop performing or do differently.

DE: What is the range of civilian grades of these positions that are being eliminated?

KS: The positions identified for elimination spread across the range of grades throughout our structure. This reduction is associated with shrinking resources and leadership decisions about which functions we'll either stop performing or do differently.

DE: Which geographical areas will lose the most positions?

KS: Most of our military technicians are found in units and in the maintenance and equipment concentration sites; thus a large number of those cuts will come from there. On the other hand, the Army Civilian positions are found across the command, so we've reduced these positions broadly, but tried to retain them in our formations to the extent we can, to protect the Army Reserve's ability to generate ready units and Soldiers.

DE: Which commands will be affected, and how many positions will they lose?

KS: The Army Reserve must reduce a total of 1,000 military technician positions and 410 Army civilians. These reductions are spread across all of our organizations, including those positions we fund for other entities that support us.

DE: How are employees affected notified, by whom and how early?

KS: Supervisors will normally deliver the notice to their employees; while this may not be possible in every case, any affected employee will receive a notice at least 60 days in advance of any action that eliminates the position they currently occupy. The notification will also provide information and resources to employees to include facts sheets, information on the Priority Placement Program, and internal placement assistance.

DE: Will being eliminated impact Federal retirement benefits, and if so, how?

KS: There is a variety of factors and options available regarding employees' retirement benefits due to their unique situation and the elimination of their position. Therefore, I recommend employees schedule a one-on-one counseling with our Benefits and Retirement Specialists at the Fort McCoy CPAC or the Army Benefits Center.

DE: Can employees being released retain their Federal health benefits?

KS: Under the current rules, Department of Defense employees who will be separated due to RIF can continue enrollment for 18 months following separation. During this time the agency will continue to pay its share and any additional administrative costs, and you will continue to pay your share.

DE: Can employees identified for separation access and take their TSP savings? If so, what types of penalties will they be subject to or will this be waived?

KS: When you separate from Federal service, you can choose to leave your money in your TSP account or you can withdraw the vested TSP account balance

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BALANCE

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in accordance with specific requirements. If the account balance is under a certain amount, the TSP Service Office will notify you and you will be paid the account balance in a single payment unless you request that it remain there or you select another withdrawal option. I recommend employees begin reviewing the additional information about tax implications located at the TSP website.

DE: What level of assistance is being offered to employees being eliminated?

KS: There are a number of tools providing assistance we can and will offer. Retirement seminars, counseling, the employee assistance program, training assistance, priority placement, working with other Army and Defense agencies, and even working with civilian employers.

DE: Is there any involvement with Federal and civilian agencies to assist those employees affected?

KS: The DoD Priority Placement Program will be available for the employees potentially impacted. PPP is an automated referral program that matches eligible registrants with job opportunities at DoD activities. Early registration in PPP is strictly voluntary. In addition, USARC is currently evaluating its internal placement program, and will publish more definitive guidance in the near future. Generally, we will review our civilian vacancies as they occur to determine if there are any placement opportunities for employees. We will make a determination if impacted employees are minimally qualified, and work with organizations to determine if a placement is possible.

DE: What is being done to help these folks make the transition from their Federal position to either another government or civilian job?

KS: We are already providing assistance to employees through site visits and increasing our offering of retirement seminars. As we work through the process of reducing positions, we will do our best to retain everyone who wants to continue to be a part of the Army Reserve family. We'll offer reassignments, both

voluntary and management directed, make available incentives like early retirement and separation, and only when those tools are unable to achieve our objectives, turn to a reduction in force. You'll see greater emphasis on providing guidance and assistance to employees in an effort to minimize the possibility of a RIF.

DE: Will buy-outs and early retirement be offered, and if so, what will the terms be?

KS: Given the number of positions that we expect to be vacated through attrition, the use of early retirement and voluntary separation incentives is likely to be targeted to achieve specific objectives, for example to achieve balance in certain skills. There may also be some instances where we're unable to achieve the reductions targets we've assigned; in these cases again, incentives might be offered.

DE: Are separation payments going to be made, and how much will these be? When will affected employees receive separation pay?

KS: Eligible employees will receive severance pay. Severance pay is paid to employees who are involuntarily separated from federal service. There are eligibility requirements – an employee must complete at least 12 months of continuous employment and lose their jobs through no fault of their own. Federal regulations provide a formula for calculating the dollar amount, but the total amount of severance pay that can be paid to an employee is limited to 52 weeks, about a year's salary. The actual calculation formula is somewhat more complicated and technical. To receive an actual computation, please contact the Fort McCoy CPAC or the Army Benefits Center.

KS: We are going to do everything we can to keep folks who want to remain a part of the Army Reserve family, a part of the Army Reserve family. However, the reality is we might not be able to do that in some cases.

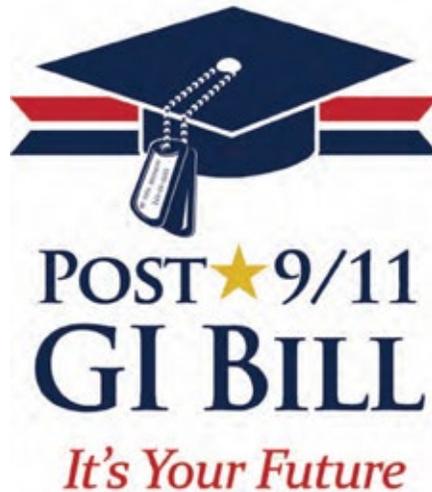
I would encourage employees to look at their own personal situations and become informed, we will be providing as much information and assistance as possible, but I encourage employees to do the same just for themselves, so they are better prepared for whatever may come. 🤖

Navigating the Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve

Part 1 of 2

Story by **TEDDI EMBREY**
Team Lead, Army HRC GI Bill

The U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC) Army Reserve GI Bill Team receives and resolves more than 400 Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) inquiries each month. The team also responds to hundreds of emails from Army Reserve Soldiers, unit administrators, and G1 staff members. Following is a compilation of frequently asked questions and answers regarding the MGIB-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) program, which is also known as the title 10 U.S. C., Chapter 1606 program.



Q: What is the Reserve Component Manpower System (RCMS)?

RCMS is a web portal — <https://rcms.usar.army.mil/new> — that contains several applications used to manage and report TPU Soldier data. The MGIB Eligibility Application is just one of the modules residing there and is used by TPU Unit HR personnel to manage and report MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606 Basic Benefit and Kicker eligibility data to the HRC Army Reserve GI Bill Team for approval.

After approval, RCMS updates TAPDB-R (the official database of record). That data is then sent from TAPDB-R to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) with eventual transmission to the VA.

Q: I thought the VA manages GI Bill programs?

DOD (in this case, the Army Reserve GI Bill Team) is responsible for making all GI Bill eligibility determinations on Army Reserve Soldiers as well as for updating, maintaining and reporting GI Bill eligibility data to the VA. The VA administers GI Bill program benefits, making payments or denying benefits based upon the eligibility data it receives from DOD.

Q: I called the VA Customer Call Center and they said I was not eligible for MGIB-SR, Chapter

1606 benefits. I signed a six-year contract with the Army Reserve. Why am I not eligible?

You probably are eligible for MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606 benefits, but your TPU Unit of Assignment may not have updated your MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606 eligibility data in the RCMS MGIB Eligibility application. You need to check with your Unit Administrator or Human Resources (HR) Sergeant to ensure your MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606 eligibility has been properly updated in the

RCMS MGIB application and transmitted to the HRC Army Reserve GI Bill Team for approval.

Q: My Unit Administrator does not know about or how to use the RCMS MGIB Eligibility application. How can I get my MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606 eligibility fixed?

Your Unit Administrator will need to gain access to RCMS through the RCMS Help Desk via email at Help@tibercreek.com or by calling 1-800-339-0472. If the Unit Administrator needs additional training on how to fix your MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606 eligibility, the Unit Administrator may follow the “How-To” guidance on the RCMS MGIB Eligibility Application, contact the HRC GI Bill Team toll free at 1-800-872-8272, or send an email request to the HRC GI Bill Team common email box at usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-mgib@mail.mil.

Part two of this article will appear in April.

For technical assistance, submit an inquiry to the RCMS Help Desk via email at Help@tibercreek.com or by calling 1-800-339-0472.

To submit a question about MGIB-SR, Chapter 1606 eligibility or to request additional training on the RCMS MGIB Eligibility Application, contact a member of the HRC Army Reserve GI Bill Team at 1-800-872-8272 or send an email inquiry to usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.tagd-mgib@mail.mil.

FINDING YOUR INNER ATHLETE

Chief Warrant Officer 4 JENNIFER WOLFE

Executive Officer to the
U.S. Army Reserve Command Chief Warrant Officer

Lt. Gen. Jeffrey W. Talley, U.S. Army Reserve Command commanding general, has expressed his desire for a United States Army Reserve-wide fitness initiative in order to reduce the number of flags for Army Physical Fitness Training failure, promote individual fitness and unit readiness, and encourage esprit de corps across all Army Reserve formations.

As a result, USARC has developed the Army Reserve Fitness Challenge for Soldiers and civilians. Family members are strongly encouraged to participate but will not be tracked or receive certificates.

The operations order for the Fitness Challenge was released January 8 and it describes the Challenge as a way to get the Army workforce moving, and provide an opportunity for increased camaraderie within Army Reserve formations while encouraging healthy competitiveness.

Certificates, based on levels of participation, will be presented to all who complete the program. The timeframe for the challenge is 10 weeks consecutively anytime between Feb. 1 and April 30.

Exercise will be tracked on a USARC-produced spreadsheet and forwarded to the Program Manager no later than May 1.

Participants will use the first week to acquire a baseline APFT score, either from their latest PT test or from a current diagnostic test. The next eight weeks will be when exercise is tracked.

Participants must complete a minimum of three hours per week of cardio and/or functional fitness activities.

Examples include physical activities that result

in an increased heart rate, e.g., running or walking (depending on profile or preference), cycling, swimming, and functional fitness, e.g., CrossFit, Boot Camp-style workouts, elliptical, or one of the popular mail-order workout programs.

Hours must be completed in at least 15-minute increments that are dedicated to physical activity.

The last week of the Challenge will be when the official APFT is taken. That score will be compared with the baseline score to empirically demonstrate the effects of your fitness activities on your fitness level.

Events in the Army Reserve Fitness Challenge can be conducted as a unit and/or individually. The honor system will be utilized when recording the results of each individual or unit.

Units are strongly encouraged, but not required, to incorporate the Army Reserve Fitness Challenge events and participation during their Battle Assembly weekend Physical Readiness Training Program.

This is a great opportunity for you as a leader to organize these events for your Battle Assembly, act as a mentor to your unit members who may struggle with PT, and challenge yourself to improve your own level of fitness.

You can find the Challenge Facebook page at USAR Fitness Challenge, <https://www.facebook.com/#!/USARfitnesschallenge>.

Questions, suggestions, and tips can be directed to the Facebook page or to the Fitness Challenge e-mail box, usarmy.usarc.ocar.mbx.fitness-challenge@mail.mil.



Recognizing our Army women

By CHAPLAIN (MAJ.) REBEKAH A. MONTGOMERY
USARC Chaplain's Office

A friend posted on social media recently; "Not all women wear pearls and sensible shoes to work, some wear dog tags and combat boots."

March is Women's History Month and this month we honor and recognize the legacy of service, sacrifice and dedication to our profession in arms of female service members everywhere.

For many female Soldiers, we are only here because of Family members, friends and mentors who encouraged and supported us to enter into service when female service members are still a minority.

Some of our females are the daughters and granddaughters of veterans who sought to continue on their Family's legacy. Some of our Soldiers are mothers and grandmothers who are modeling for their children leadership and selfless service. Some of our Soldiers felt a calling to enlist or commission from deep within their spirits to serve our country and embody the Warrior Ethos.

Just as the prophet and leader Deborah demonstrated inspirational leadership in the Book of Judges and Queen Esther courageously faced a treacherous leader in the Book of Esther, to our own female Soldiers and leaders, we are inspired by those who went before us.

The first female chaplain was commissioned into the Navy in 1973. Since then, dozens of other female clergy members have answered the call.

Army Reserve Chaplain (Maj.) Renee Kiel, decided to commission as a chaplain after 9/11.

"I had already had a long enlisted career in the Army Reserve when the towers fell on 9/11," Kiel said. "I knew as a sergeant first class in the Army Reserve, I would be deployed soon. I was a newly minted Lutheran Pastor serving a congregation and thought, 'If I'm going to go to war, I'd like to go as a Chaplain.' So I put in for a direct commission and was assessed as an Army Reserve Chaplain in June 2002.

"Since then I have had the privilege of representing the presence of God to Soldiers and Families in the midst of their joys and sorrows. Serving as a female Army Reserve Chaplain fills a niche within the Corps. There are ministry situations in which a female presence is especially welcomed and comforting," Kiel said.

We endeavor to carry on the tradition of Citizen-Soldiers as spouses, mothers, daughters and sisters to inspire the next generation. For God and Country, Twice the Citizen – ARMY STRONG! 

FORSCOM/USARC Christian Bible Study

U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command hosts a weekly Christian Bible study.

Studies are held each Tuesday,
starting at 11:30 a.m., Room 1901 near the USARC G-4.
Please come and share a time of fellowship and worship with us.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

Second Timothy 3:16-17

BRING IT HOME 2015: 28 DAYS FOR LIFE



(FILE PHOTOS by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve Command)

ARMY RESERVE FACT:

Annually, since Fiscal Year 2012 about 30 percent of all Army Reserve Not In A Duty Status fatal vehicle accidents occur on motorcycles. In Fiscal Year 2015, one Citizen-Soldier has already died. Since Fiscal Year 2012, the five deadliest months for Army Reserve riders are August (7 dead), March and July (4 dead in each), October (3 dead) and May (2 dead).

DON'T LEAVE YOUR PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE BEHIND

MOTORCYCLE ATTITUDE? YOU BET!

Story By Chief Warrant Officer 5 KENNETH OLENSINKI
USARC Safety Office

Safe motorcycle riding is attitude.

Command Sgt. Maj. Leeford Cain, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center command sergeant major said, “Safety doesn’t just happen, it’s a byproduct of exercising self-discipline.

How do you instill self-discipline into a Soldier?”

Once you sit on that leather seat, you are your best and often only Battle Buddy.

If you abandon self-discipline, even for a moment, your risk is uncontrolled!

Tearing the right front mirror off my K1000 BMW is how I learned that lesson.

Splitting lanes of traffic (riding between rows of moving vehicles on a road, a legal activity in some States) at 60 mph on the California I-5 is where I learned it.

I arrived home quite shaken up. Another half-inch to the right, or even a split second difference and I would have gone down in high density traffic with at best, severe injury.

I went inside. I looked into my 7 years old daughter’s eyes and parked my bike ... for about seven years!

Riding bikes is fun and it’s hard to stay off. I bought another bike, and I made a new and firm commitment to motorcycle safety.

I took a motorcycle refresher course and purchased all the high speed Personal Protective Equipment.

The Army Reserve realizes that motorcycle safety is a combat multiplier and has committed resources to train Citizen-Soldiers through the Army’s Progressive Motorcycle Program, developing Motorcycle

Mentorship Programs (MMP) and ensuring regional support command safety offices have funds for Citizen-Soldiers to receive free training in their home towns!

Of the 216 motorcycle accidents reported in the Army’s Risk Management Information System for 2014, 34 resulted in fatal injury.

Those don’t look like bad survival odds until you consider the rest of the stories. Read the non-fatal accident descriptions. Some read, “Soldier was taken to hospital for dislocated shoulder”. Others are worse, “Soldier suffered a broken right arm, broken legs with the right leg possibly needing amputation”.

There are two facts that every motorcycle rider must come to understand and evaluate.

If you ride long enough, you’re likely to be involved in an accident. When the accident occurs, you will get hurt, after all, the energy absorbing crumple zone is your own body.

I am not advocating you park your bike like I did years ago. I do advocate taking the Army’s Basic Soldiering Skills into your personal life.

Don’t ride a bike that’s unserviceable, don’t ride beyond your skill, actively manage risk likely to occur, train to standard and wear the best PPE you can acquire.

Most important is your Motorcycle Attitude. Check it regularly and adjust it when necessary. Will your motorcycle attitude help you “Live to Ride” or will it earn you a lifetime disability or perhaps a veteran’s burial?

MANAGE THE OTHER 28 DAYS FOR LIFE! 🇺🇸



Army Reserve veteran reflects on Vietnam



Spec 5 Bill Patterson/ Long Binh, Vietnam 1969

Story by **DR. JOHN A. BOYD**

Director, Office of Army Reserve History

The Office of Army Reserve History is pleased to feature a few comments from an Army Reserve veteran of the Vietnam War.

Spec. 5 William “Bill” Patterson is a Soldier with a unique experience in the Army Reserve.

His first unit was an Army Reserve infantry division – the 81st Wildcats. By 1967, the Army Reserve had transitioned from infantry to what were predominantly Combat Service and Combat Service Support units – so he became a truck driver.

The last thing Bill Patterson expected was to serve in Vietnam.

Up until 1968, no reserve or guard unit had been called up for deployment. And then came the unexpected – a call up that would take him from Augusta, Georgia to Vietnam and back. Here is a brief description of Patterson’s experience:

“I enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve in July of 1964 and joined the 81st Infantry Division Company in Augusta Georgia.

“I took Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, August ‘64-November ‘64. My Service Number was (redacted). I then took Advanced Individual Training (Infantry) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, November ‘64-March ‘65.

“My MOS was 11B I believe (Light Weapons Infantryman). I was then released from active duty and returned to my reserve unit in Augusta. My unit was later disbanded or relocated and I was transferred to the 319th Transportation Company which had been moved to Augusta. I was assigned to be a truck driver, MOS 64B20 I think. The 319th was called to active duty in March of ‘68.

“We were ordered to Fort Lee, Virginia for training.

We were given new 5 ton Multi-Fuel cargo trucks which we loaded on ships in Newport (News), Virginia. We flew out of Norfolk, Virginia in late September '68 and landed in Bien Hoa Air Base in South Vietnam.

"We served combat arms units fighting the war until August '69. We returned to Augusta off active duty. My six-year enlistment was complete in July of '70 and I was Honorably Discharged from the Army as a Specialist Five (E5)."

Patterson recalled his thoughts on the day he left Vietnam: *"I remember thinking 'is this really happening?' Had I and nearly all of us who came with our company actually survived the war and were now going home? We had been ambushed, involved in firefights, driven over road mines, worked to constant exhaustion, allowed too little sleep, delivering high explosives, knocked around by the broken roads and breathing red*

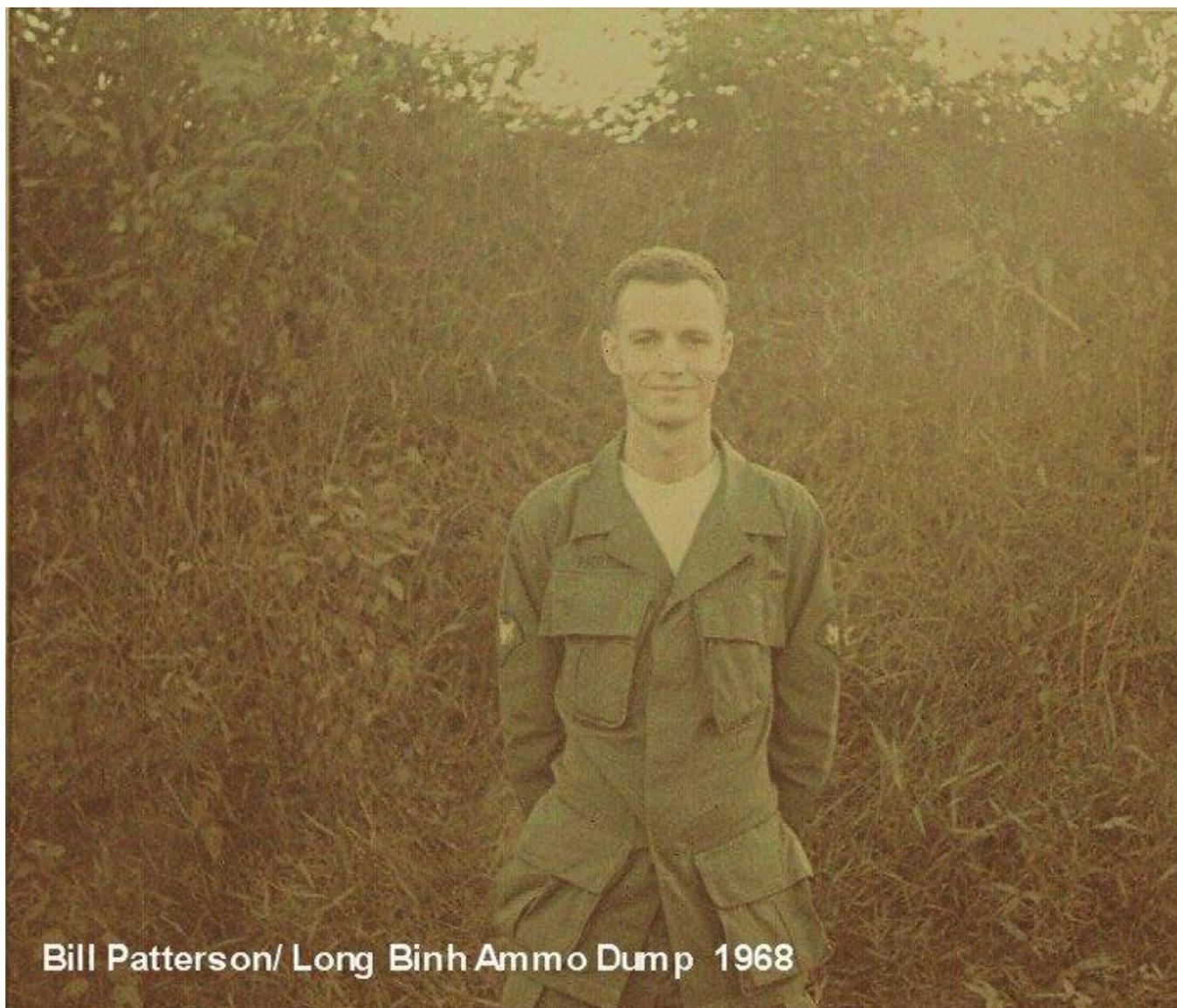
dust daily. How could we have survived such duty for so long and not suffered high casualties? I still don't know all the answers to the questions I had. I do know that each company member was determined to do the job by whatever means needed. The guys got the job done.

"I became business manager of the Army's Bowling Program at Fort Gordon, Georgia and retired in May '99 with 33 years service.

"After a few years I began to record my Vietnam memoirs and they became a published book in October 2014. I am grateful and respectful to all who served in the Vietnam War."

William E. (Bill) Patterson

His book, "Vietnam Convoy Trucker" can be found online as a free preview or purchased in either hard cover with dust jacket, soft cover, or as an e-book. 🌐



Bill Patterson/ Long Binh Ammo Dump 1968

FORSCOM/USARC Soldiers, Civilians Remember Andrew Brown



A FITTING TRIBUTE. Barbara Sisson, Assistant Chief of the Army Reserve, above left, presents Anglea Brown, mother of Andrew T. Brown, his Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt certification during a Remembrance Service held in his honor at the U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command headquarters, Feb. 19, at Fort Bragg, N.C. Family and friends, right, mourn the loss of Brown as speaker after speaker lauded him for his work, charm, and personality. Brown, 28, previously worked at FORSCOM and was working at USARC at the time of his death. He is survived by his mother, Angela Brown of Baltimore, Md., his fiancée Samantha Labady, his brother Jeffrey, many other family members and friends and co-workers. (Photos by Timothy L. Hale/U.S. Army Reserve Command)



FORSCOM/USARC Staffs Celebrate Black History Month



U.S. Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command employees, dressed in period Army combat uniforms representing different periods in history, show the differences in each era during the 2015 Black History Observance at FORSCOM/USARC headquarters, February 18. The Equal Opportunity Directorates of FORSCOM/USARC presented the observance which highlighted contributions by blacks over the past 100 years. U.S. Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command employees view information on black accomplishments in history, after the 2015 Black History Observance at FORSCOM/USARC headquarters, February 18. The Equal Opportunity Directorates of FORSCOM/USARC presented the observance which highlighted contributions by blacks over the past 100 years. (Photo by Brian Godette/U.S. Army Reserve Command)



Army Reserve honors its Vietnam veterans

Story by **TIMOTHY L. HALE**
U.S. Army Reserve Command

FORT BRAGG, N.C. – Several U.S. Army Reserve veterans, who served with distinction, were honored at a ceremony here, marking the 50th anniversary of Vietnam.

Members of the 319th Transportation Company, based in Augusta, Georgia, recalled their tour of duty from 1968 to 1969.

The unit still serves today, most recently in 2011 during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

According to U.S. Army Reserve History Office documents, the 319th was ambushed seven times while hauling supplies between September 1968 and July 1969. They suffered one casualty and received a meritorious unit citation and numerous individual awards.

“In the end, 42 U.S. Army Reserve units – 5,689 men and women – received the call to arms; of these,

35 units would go to Vietnam,” said Dr. John A. Boyd, U.S. Army Reserve History director and command historian. “Most learned of their mobilization through local radio and television rather than official Army channels.”

George Lively and Tim Campbell served in the 319th.

Lively, from Augusta, and Campbell, from across the Savannah River in North Augusta, S.C., attended the ceremony.

Lively said the unit operated out of Long Binh but they saw plenty of South Vietnam, running every class of supplies imaginable – pretty much anything you could shoot, move, wear, or drop by air.

“You’d pray that you didn’t have a flat tire to change,” said Lively, now a financial planner. “We drove more than 1 million miles, as a company. I’ve



TROXLER'S TRUCKERS. A photograph of Capt. Drew Troxler, 319th Transportation Company commander, U.S. Army Reserve, in Vietnam, was shown during a Vietnam commemoration ceremony at the U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command headquarters, Feb. 6, 2015, at Fort Bragg, N.C. The ceremony, marking the 50th anniversary, was the first of many that will be hosted by the Office of Army Reserve History across the United States this year. (Courtesy photo/Office of Army Reserve History)

forgotten now, but it was lots and lots of tons (of supplies).”

Lively said he feels that he led a “pretty charmed life” while serving in Vietnam and was never in any “really bad” ambushes. That said, he did discover a surprise after one ambush.

“I found a bullet hole in my truck,” he said. “I was in the front half of the convoy and we just pressed on.”

In their year in country, the unit only lost one Soldier.

“It shows that we were well-trained, we did what we were supposed to do, and we were real lucky,” he said.

After one ambush, Campbell and the other members hit upon an idea to make them a little less likely to be attacked.

“I decided the white star on the side of our door was not a good idea and it put a bulls eye on me,” Campbell said. “I vehemently had a discussion with some of the folks back in the motor pool. Within a day or two, I was pulled off the road and given a can of black paint and a stencil and we went ‘blackout.’ I think the 319th was probably the first unit in Vietnam that went ‘blackout.’”

Campbell said it wasn’t long before other Army units followed suit and covered the white paint vehicle markings with black paint.

Unlike many Vietnam veterans who returned home only to be spat on in airports and taunted by passersby on the street, the members of the 319th returned to Augusta as a unit.

“We were met by a U.S. Army band at the airport, (and) the mayor (of Augusta) came out in the middle of the night to greet us,” Lively said.

James Cardo, U.S. Army Reserve Ambassador for North Carolina, said ceremonies commemorating the efforts and sacrifices are long over-due for Vietnam veterans.

“I don’t think the 2.5 million people who served there (Vietnam) got the recognition they deserved,” said Cardo, who also served in Vietnam as an infantry officer and retired from the Army Reserve after 30 years of military service.

“It was a divisive time in the country,” Cardo said. “I think it took time for the country to come around to not talk about the politics of it, or whether it was a good war or a bad war, but to realize the vet-

erans had gone and done their best and come home without a lot of recognition.”

Cardo said the Army learned from the past and today’s programs like Yellow Ribbon, Fort Family, and Strong Bonds provide help for today’s veterans that his fellow Vietnam veterans never experienced.

“The Army has learned and the communities have learned that we’ve got to do a better job of trying to reintegrate people when they come back from something that traumatic,” he said.

Boyd said Army Reserve Soldiers served with distinction throughout the conflict and the award records reflect their service. One Silver Star, five Legions of Merit, 384 Bronze Stars and 20 Purple Hearts were among those earned. In addition, the 231st Transportation Company (Medium Boat) was the Army’s outstanding transportation unit in 1969 and received the National Defense Transportation Award. Two other units were recommended for the Presidential Unit Citation, 13 Meritorious Unit Citations, and one for the Unit Cross of Gallantry. 🇺🇸



GUEST SPEAKER. Jim Cardo, U.S. Army Reserve Ambassador for North Carolina and a Vietnam veteran, gives his remarks during a Vietnam commemoration ceremony at the U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command headquarters, Feb. 5, 2015, at Fort Bragg, N.C. The ceremony, marking the 50th anniversary, was the first of many that will be hosted by the Office of Army Reserve History across the United States this year.

416th Engineers “Pave the Way” at the National Training Center



GEARED FOR CONSTRUCTION. Pfc. Luc Messmer, 300th Engineer Detachment, Sgt. Jason Bugalecki, 300th Engineer Detachment, and Sgt. Maj. Rick Virgil, 389th Engineer Battalion, measure the moisture level in a portion of a runway at the forward landing strip being built by Army Reserve engineers at Fort Irwin, Calif., Jan. 15.

Story & photo by **SGT. 1ST CLASS DARRIN McDUFFORD**
416th Theater Engineer Command

FORT IRWIN, Calif. – Dust filled the air as 120,000-pound wheel tractor-scrappers ripped layers of dirt from their resting place on the ground, while a 9,000-pound soil compactor treaded the remaining dirt, preparing the surface for a forward landing strip.

Six months ago, the 389th Engineer Battalion,

a subordinate unit to the 416th Theater Engineer Command, received the lead on the airstrip.

Since the project’s start, the 389th supervised two survey and design detachments and four horizontal construction companies to lay the groundwork.

The landing strip will be completed this February, and will spread across 25,000,000 million square

feet or almost 574 acres of Fort Irwin's desert land.

A task from the chief of staff of the Army came down informing Fort Irwin commanders that the National Training Center will conduct a Joint Forcible Entry exercise during a rotation this July, which will require the airstrip with dual 8,000-foot runways to support aircraft as large as the C-17 Globemaster III with its wing span of 170 feet and length of 174 feet.

According to Maj. Paul M. Grant, chief of Plans Operation Group, Fort Irwin has an airstrip already, but doesn't meet the requirement.

"USARC (United States Army Reserve Command) received the request from Forces Command of our need for the landing strip to support the exercise," said, Grant. "This forward landing strip would have to enable live fire, accommodate infrastructure, and, importantly, allow flexibility."

The strip will allow field landings to replicate operations in an austere environment and create more training opportunities for rotational units.

With an unlimited budget and an abundance of time, this might have been easy to accomplish. Except, the Army had only \$750,000 and seven months to do it.

Building began in December, and now the units have just over a month to complete the project.

"A civilian contractor would charge between \$15-20 million to build this," said Capt. Andy Marchese, 389th Engineer Battalion, Forward Landing Strip officer in charge

"Army Reserve engineers are geared for construction, and this provides them valuable training," Marchese added, "This experience is unique and outside of normal operations but within the realm of exceptional training."

The 389th Engineer Battalion is the lead agency for this project in support, but it cannot complete it without the use of Soldiers from the 387th Engineer Company, 411th Engineer Company, 801st Engineer Company, and 312th Engineer Command. Additionally, the 313th and 300th engineer detachments provided the survey and design.

The units worked in tandem with the other units and with some overlap of personnel.

"Each unit follows on the next within their rotation," said Sgt. Maj. Rick Virgil, 389th Engineering Battalion sergeant major, "Some engineers have

a minor learning curve, but there hasn't been any problems with the changeover."

The unit went to the Air Force to seek technical specifications of the landing strips and received advice, but the Soldiers in the survey and design detachments designed the runways and an apron, which is an attached parking area.

"Our Army Reserve engineer companies have been working hard to transform this patch of ground into a forward landing strip. This landing strip will be a key feature to allow future Army rotations to complete their training," said Marchese.

More than 200 pieces of equipment being used to complete this operation was drawn from Equipment Concentration Sites 370 and 371 located in Yermo, California, and Fort Hunter Liggett, California.

The project requires a tremendous use of logistics. Engineer leadership faced various challenges: Getting people to and from the installation, handling administrative requirements, moving tons of dirt, plus the 100,000-200,000 gallons of water required to add moisture to the desert dirt allowing it to be pliable enough to move.

This has also been a great training opportunity for engineer Soldiers, a kind they don't get often," said Virgil.

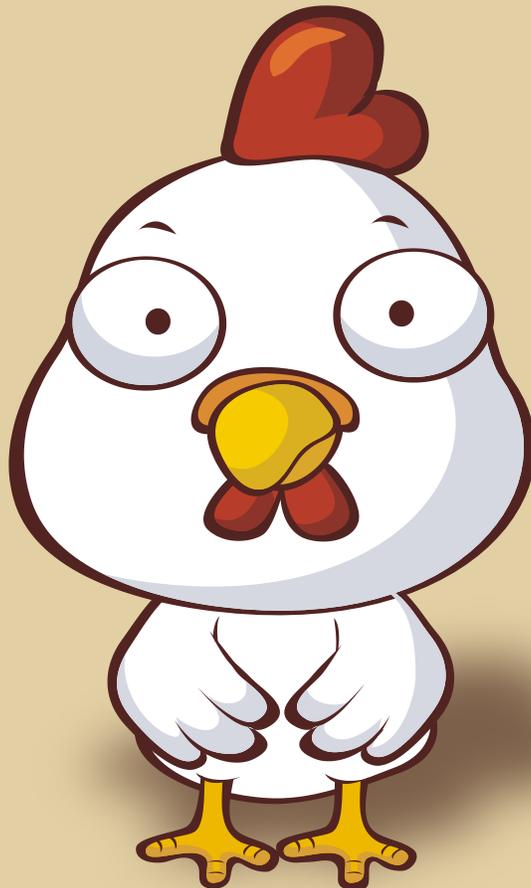
"Anytime when training is great like this, and Soldiers are increasing their skills, is a great day in the Army," said Staff Sgt. Lindsey Schilling, supervisor with the 411th Engineer Company.

Grant said, "I have another airfield, and that increases training objectives. Yearly, Fort Irwin sees 10 rotations of brigade combat teams and mechanized infantry of thousands of personnel from Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and coalition forces who train here."

"My dealings with the 389th have been excellent. Their attitude is great. This is what they want to do, and they have been aggressive about getting this accomplished," stressed, Grant, "I have 110 percent confidence in them."

These teams of construction engineers used bulldozers, scrapers, graders and other heavy equipment to move tons of earth and material to put in an airstrip for training. This builds a force of Soldiers who compile a breadth of expertise that can be used in natural disasters, conflicts or streamlining readiness at a fraction of the cost. 🇺🇸

ATTENTION!
ARMY RESERVE SOLDIERS!



CHICKENS DON'T HAVE TEETH!
DON'T BE A CHICKEN!
SEE YOUR DENTIST!

**TO MAKE A DENTAL APPOINTMENT,
CALL THE NUMBERS BELOW:**

TPU SOLDIERS (under the Army Selected Reserve Dental Readiness System): Call 1-877-437-6313 and Logistics Health, Inc. will assist you in making an appointment **FREE OF CHARGE**.

AGR SOLDIERS (outside of the Military Health System catchment area): Call 1-866-984-2337 to obtain a control number prior to making your appointment. Then provide your dentist with a DD 2813 for completion and fax it to 1-608-793-2960.

ANY ARMY RESERVE SOLDIER: You can also use your personal dentist! Have your dentist complete a DD 2813 and fax it to 1-608-793-2960.