Oregon scores second highest in nation on Command Logistics Review Team results

By KAY ERISTAD
AZUWUR STAFF

The future is what we have to look forward to now, this is going to happen again in the spring of 2005," Col. Herb Sims, Oregon National Guard chief of staff, said as he congratulated the attendees at the post command logistics review team (CLRT) conference in Salem. "I can’t be more ex- cited about an event you all made so successful."

This year’s CLRT inspection proved the Oregon Army National Guard was up to the challenge of correcting past problems in the area of logistics, to the point of excellence.

The overall results of the CLRT inspection this year were impressive. Of the 19 areas inspected, Oregon received a "satisfactory" rating in 17 categories, while only two areas received a "needs improvement" rating and no areas were found to be unsatisfactory.

Oregon has gone from the worst state inspected in 1995 to the second best in the nation, and this accomplishment was achieved during a time of massive deployments.

Oregon is the third-highest state in terms of deployments, deploying more soldiers per capita than any other state except one. The review team felt Oregon could serve as a role model for other states.

Col. Douglas Pritt, USFPO for Oregon, presented the overall results and outlined the lessons learned from this recent inspection:

1. Long range planning is imperative—we need to start today for the next CLRT.
2. This is a team effort—both brigades and HQ STARC provided many individuals who dedicated themselves to making sure this inspection would prove Oregon is ready.
3. Leadership—Without good leadership, we cannot achieve our goals in any area.

Pritt outlined the positive outcomes of this successful CLRT inspection: due to our recent superior rating, it will probably be at least four years before the next inspection; we now have a direct exchange for organizational clothing and individual equipment; we now consolidate marksmanship weapons; we learned about ourselves; and we learned about trust and cooperation with others.

"We need to improve in the areas of velocity management, reports of service, training, and unit level logistics system equipment/training in order to maintain our current status of excellence," Pritt said.

State Command Sgt. Maj. Don Newman thanked everyone for their outstanding efforts. "We can now ensure our soldiers are properly equipped with good serviceable equipment to meet their requirements," Newman said. "I am going to charge you with the responsibility to stay focused and prepared for 2005."

The luck of the Irish follows Oregon Guard members as the marathon team competes in Virginia’s Shamrock Sportsfest

By 2nd Lt. KEVIN JAMES
NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA—The luck of the Irish was with members of the National Guard marathon team on March 10, as they ran at the Shamrock Sportsfest. National Guard runners took top places in team events at the Shamrock Marathon/8K race with the Guard Marathon Team and the Guard Open 8K team walking away carrying the 1st place military titles.

The ocean wind was merely a whisper and the sun shined bright, for a perfect day for the Guard’s Open 8K teams, which swept the top places in military team competition.

Although members of several 8K military teams were from different states, the diversity did not cause them to fall short at the finish. Spc. William Raitter of Co. A, 1249th Engineer Battalion, Bend, led the Guard runners with a time of 25:08 and a 16th place overall finish. Raitter’s team finished in 1st place with a team time of 131:25.

The Shamrock races are set up for fitness enthusiasts of all levels with separate races including an Open 8K, a Masters 8K, and a 2.62 mile marathon. Not only did the Guard walk away with first place military team finishes in the Open 8K, they also ran away with first place in the marathon.

The marathon course was designed to be fast moving, with a flat, out-and-back course. Runners traveled through the resort area along the ocean and con-{}
Maj. Gen. Alexander H. Burgin

A few weeks ago I attended a meeting at Gowen Field, Idaho, to discuss the deployment of portions of the 116th Armor Brigade to Bosnia in next February in support of SFOR 11.

In attendance were the 25th Division commander, who will serve as commander of the international force, and the adjutants general from Idaho, Montana, Indiana, and South Dakota.

Our 3rd Battalion task force headquarters for one of the maneuver elements will be responsible to enable the Dayton Peace Accords.

The requirements continue to change in theater, but all the commanders involved are working hard to develop a plan that will successfully train, mobilize and deploy our soldiers.

There is no doubt our soldiers from Oregon will complete this mission with pride and professionalism. Their exploits will make all of us proud to serve with them.

Recently, a team from National Guard Bureau completed a command logistic review team inspection (CLRT) for the Oregon Army National Guard. This was an in-depth review which evaluated all of our logistic capabilities. We received outstanding ratings, and in some areas, Oregon set the standard for the rest of the nation.

Many of you worked hard over the past nine months in an effort to meet these rigorous standards. As a result of your work, our national reputation as a quality organization remains intact.

To everyone who participated in the preparation and the inspection, you have my gratitude and respect. This is a true dedication to excellence.

I had the opportunity to visit the 116th Air Control Squadron in action at Nellis Air Force Base at the end of March. They were there in support of a Red Flag exercise, which represents the finest air combat training in the world.

All the unit members performed their tasks in an exceptional manner, and the 116th again proved that it is trained and ready for any contingency.

Annual training is just around the corner for most of our units. The opportunity to train on a collective basis does not occur very often, and we must do everything possible in order to take full advantage of it.

As a reminder, please keep in mind that the safety of our soldiers and airmen must always take precedence. Train hard, but always train smart.

You may notice some budget constraints as we progress through this fiscal year. Each branch of the military is presenting a list of requirements to Congress in order to alleviate some short falls. I believe we can accomplish our stated goals and objectives in Oregon, and we will continue to make adjustments where necessary.

Strength management and personnel readiness remain our top priority. Please work in your unit to do everything possible to attract new members and retain those soldiers and airmen that have made us so great.

Thank you for your service to our state and nation.

State Command Sgt. Maj. Donald F. Newman

Now that it is spring time, we are all looking forward to this annual training period. This promises to be a very busy year for all of the soldiers in the Oregon Guard.

Besides our annual training, soldiers, we have had a very dry year, up to now. This enhances the chance of forest fires.

As you all know, we play a major part in the protection of life and limb against forest fires in Oregon. We are also getting some units ready for a six-month deployment overseas.

The STPA board for E7, E8 and E9 was completed on April 8, and the results should be out soon. The boards were redone to comply with the regulations, which changed the way scoring was done. Last year, soldiers were awarded up to 750 administrative points and up to 250 leadership points.

The new regulation awards up to 600 administrative points and up to 400 points for leadership. All STPA boards will be conducted using this formula.

This will let the soldiers that have good leadership traits have a chance to move up and get trained.

All soldiers need to remember that it is their responsibility to make sure their records are complete and correct. You get a chance to review them each year, so make sure that you do and that they are correct. You need to ensure that all of your education is listed.

As you know, SCU has been increased from a maximum of $200,000 to $250,000. If you want the increase, there is nothing you have to do; however, if you do not want the increase, you will have to resubmit the paperwork through your unit.

The new headgear will be issued to the units for wear starting on June 14. All soldiers of the Oregon Army National Guard will wear the beret. The only exception is if you are flagged for weight or have not passed an APFT. If you have not passed weight or APFT, you will wear the BDU soft cap.

You will also need to learn the words to the Army song. The Army chief of staff has directed that all soldiers stand and sing the Army song whenever it is played.

As always, I want to encourage you to turn in names of potential recruits to the recruiter assigned to your unit. We need good soldiers and there are a lot of benefits for new recruits available now. We are at a manning low, and we need soldiers to keep the strength up. While on the lookout for potential recruits, do not forget to take care of the soldiers in your command. Retention is just as important as recruiting to keep morale high.

Please help us keep the Oregon Guard strong.

Command Chief Master Sgt. J. Wayne Stuart

This past month I was able to visit the 116th Air Control Squadron while they were deployed to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

They were there doing their job, controlling aircraft, as part of Red Flag. We had a great visit and I was able to learn more about what they do. It’s really great to hear Guard personnel talk with such pride about their jobs.

We had a bonus on that trip; an opportunity to see another Oregon Air Guard member, Tech. Sgt. Kim Long, serving a three-year tour with the Thunderbirds. She gave us a tour of the facilities and introduced us to many of the team members.

This has done an excellent job serving as an ambassador of the Oregon Air Guard.

If you weren’t able to attend the 7th annual awards banquet, you missed the best one yet. Over 400 in attendance; good food and a good time; with 75 of our outstanding men and women receiving awards. I would like to thank all the committee members for making it such a success. Be sure to put the next one on your calendar for 2002.

Commanding General, Oregon National Guard
On the slopes: 115 MPD practices wartime mission in Vermont

By Master Sgt. JONATHAN CARUSLE
IS MORE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT


CISM is French for International Military Sports Council, whose motto is “friendship through sport.”

Eighteen countries participated in this competition. The skiing events included biathlon, giant slalom, cross country, and military patrol race.

During the championships, the members of the 115th helped amass over 3,000 digital pictures, 10 media releases, 100 plus hours of video footage, and predicted the issues of a daily French-English newsletter. The soldiers also put together a video of the overall CISM 2001 events for use by Department of Defense news services.

“The pace of our job is always full speed,” Staff Sgt. Brian Suits, 115th MPD said. “Without the organization and teamwork that you can only find in the Army, our mission would fail. This kind of total effort doesn’t exist in the civilian media.”

The video photographers were constantly on the move. Some of the video shots happened so quickly that video photographers had to follow along on skis. Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Hovie skied down the slope taking pictures of athletes during the practice prior to the event. Spec. Bryan Thompson raced by on the snowboard carrying his video recorder.

Fifth Army evaluated the 115th MPD during this time.

“What the 115th MPD crew does is awesome,” Master Sgt. Alex Bonilla, Fifth Army adviser, said. “I’ve never seen that type of video coverage before. I saw the footage from the video taken while on skis. They take their jobs serious and put it to the max.” Spec. Vo Minh McBurney shared his talents as an illustrator, producing a finished CISM 2001 collage.

“CISM gave us the chance to practice our wartime mission,” Maj. Matt Henrick, 115th commander, said. “We packed up, moved out and set up a public affairs operations center all within 48 hours. We, as a unit, have an absolute need to hit the ground running and go operational within short time constraints. CISM was the first time we’ve worked practice deployment since Bosnia, and it gave us a chance to identify unit strengths and weaknesses.”

All events had maximum coverage from the public affairs with some video clips airing on local TV channels.

“It was refreshing to see some of the footage being used on the local TV stations,” Hovie said.

“The Oregon MPAD far exceeded my expectations,” 1st Lt. Michael Johnson, the Vermont National Guard public affairs officer, said. “I devised an ambitious plan for this event and the success of the campaign depended on the professionalism of the MPADs. I was overwhelmed with the success and professionalism of everyone involved with public affairs for the CISM. The still photography and videography I would equate to commercial quality. And the Oregon MPAD is really good stuff, not great; this was great!”

“The CISM public affairs office produced the best newsletter I’ve ever seen,” Suba Sathy, National Guard Bureau sports, said. “We always try to do a bilingual newsletter but this is the first time it’s actually gone to print in French and English.”

The mission was a success for the 115th MPAD. They produced top notch products and were able to effectively train in a mission environment. This is another feather in Oregon’s cap for the effectiveness of the troops. Vermont will remember Oregon as a professional group who can support other states with a can-do attitude.

Thrift Savings Plan open to service members in October

By JIM GARAMBONE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Service members can begin to sign up for the Thrift Savings Plan by Oct. 9, 2001, DoD officials said.

The Thrift Savings Plan is a retirement and investment plan that has been available to civilian government workers since 1987.

Congress extended the plan to include service members in 2000.

“It’s in addition to your regular retirement benefits managed by the Office of Civilian Personnel Management,” said a DoD official. “It’s an optional program.”

The open season for signing up will run from Oct. 9 to Dec. 8. Deductions start in January 2002.

In 2002, service members can contribute up to 7 percent of their basic pay.

The maximum amount service members can contribute from basic pay will change to reflect the percent of basic pay that will rise to 10 percent by 2005 and become unlimited in 2006.

Unlike civilians, who cannot make lump-sum contributions into the program, service members may also contribute all or a percentage of any special pay, incentive pay, or bonus pay they receive.

“You can contribute from 1 percent to 100 percent of your special pay, incentives and bonuses into the thrift plan,” Emswiler said.

The total amount generally cannot exceed $10,500 for the year. Contributions from pay earned in a combat zone do not count against the $10,500 ceiling. Combat zone contributions are subject to a different limitation, however, 25 percent of pay or $35,000, whichever is less.

Like civilian employees in the program, service members must choose how they want their money invested. Right now, there are three funds to choose from.

First, the fund runs the gamut of safe—the G Fund invests in special government bonds—to riskier investments—the C Fund tied to the stock market. There is also an F Fund for investing in commercial bonds.

TSP will unveil the new S and F Funds in May. S Fund investments go to a stock index fund that pays small business, and F Fund investors will track international companies the same way.

Service members will be able to start, change or reallocate their TSP contributions during two open seasons held each year. These are November to January and May to July.

“Because bonuses are hard to predict, if you are already participating in the plan and contributing from basic pay and you receive, for example, a reenlistment bonus, you can elect to contribute at any time,” Emswiler said.

Contributions to the plan come from “pre-tax” dollars.

Service members pay no federal or state income taxes on contributions or earnings until they’re withdrawn. Uniformed services retirees cannot contribute to the TSP.

The TSP is designed to allow active duty members and members of the ready reserve or National Guard to save a part of their military pay for retirement in a plan that offers pre-tax savings, tax-deferred investment earnings, and low administrative and investment expenses.

Therefore, only pay for active service, such as basic pay, incentive pay, special pay and bonuses, can be contributible to the TSP.

Participation in the TSP does not affect your ability to contribute to an IRA. However, because uniformed service members are all covered by the uniformed services retirement plan, the ability to make tax-deductible contributions to an IRA depends on the service member’s income and that of the spouse.

The services will have teams visiting members to explain the program. Until then, see the thrift plan’s uniformed services pages at www.tsp.gov/uniserv/index.html for more information.

The Army Song: “The Army Goes Rolling Along”

March along, sing our song with the rhythm of the drum Count the brave, count the true who have fought and won We’re the Army and proud of our name We’re the Army and proudly proclaim: First to fight for the right, and to build the nation’s might, and the Army goes rolling along Proud of all we have done, fighting till the battle’s won, and the Army goes rolling along CHORUS Then it’s hi, hi, hey! The Army’s on its way Count of the calvary and strong (two, three) For whither-e’er we go, you will always know that the Army goes rolling along Valley Forge, Custer’s ranks, San Juan hill and Patton’s tanks, And the Army goes rolling along Minute men from the start, Always fighting from the heart, and the Army keeps rolling along CHORUS Men in ragos, men who freeze, still that Army marches on, And the Army went rolling along Faith in God, then we bright, And we fight with all our might, as the Army keeps rolling along. Based on “The Caisson Song” by R.J. Tec, E.L. Graber Written and adapted by W.H. Arbery
Oregon soldiers achieve 50 percent graduation rate at EIB qualification

Band member earns Army-wide honor

Oregon’s Staff Sgt. Joseph Worley receives an Army Commendation Medal from Brig. Gen. Michael D. Rochele, commander of the Soldier Support Institute at Fort Jackson, S.C. Worley received the Army bands noncommissioned officer of the year for the National Guard award.


The Oregon Army National Guard’s 41st Separate Infantry Brigade was well represented at the 7th Infantry Division Expert Infantryman Badge Test, which was held at Fort Carson, Colo., April 16-27, 2001.

Of the 10 Oregon Guard members that tested for the coveted EIB, five were still remaining on graduation day. The national average, Army-wide, is approximately a 22 percent graduation rate. So having the Guard members achieve a 50 percent qualification rate is definitely something to be proud of.

The EIB test measures the individual infantry soldier’s physical fitness and ability to perform to standards of excellence in a broad spectrum of critical infantry skills. It is awarded to any soldier in CMP 11 or CMP 18 (except 1BD medic) who demonstrates excellence in the performance of the test.

The purpose of the EIB is to recognize any outstanding infantry soldier who attains a high degree of professional skill, expertise, and excellence; to identify any infantry soldiers who can expertly maintain, operate, and employ his weapons and equipment; and to enhance individual training programs in infantry units by providing a difficult, yet attainable, goal for which any infantry soldier can strive.

Each candidate must pass 40 tasks that must be done at their respective stations, without receiving either two “no-gos” at the same station or a total of any three “no-gos.” If either of these situations occur, the candidate is out of the course. Each task must be done to standard, in sequence and within the limited time given.

The Oregon soldiers trained with active duty soldiers from 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, 10th Special Forces Group in addition to other locally-stationed units and some from Fort Hood, Texas. The EIB HILL stations and all their related equipment were shut down the weekend between train-up week and test week to allow the cadre and candidates some time off. The Oregon soldiers decided they hadn’t come to see the sights, and in true infantryman form they improvised, adapted and overcame this two-day training opportunity obstacle.

Oregon soldiers acquired training aids from the local units who were not using them. Many of these units had been training for several months on the EIB tasks and many of their soldiers were testing for the EIB for the second, third and some even their fourth time. After learning all this, the Oregon soldiers knew it would be an uphill battle to prove themselves, and didn’t want to miss out on any possible training.

By the end of test week, the active unit personnel were leaving the EIB site by squads. Being the only reserve soldiers taking the EIB test, Oregon drew what seemed to be quite a bit of attention from both officer and enlisted, at all levels.

By graduation day, senior leaders could be heard time and time again trying to motivate their soldiers by using the Oregon National Guard as an example of what training, proper motivation and determination can accomplish.

In the end, the Oregon soldiers put their training to the test and made Oregon proud.

State Park Rangers train at Kinsgley Field

“ar were looking for an overall musician-soldier, someone that does well in everything,” said 1st Sgt. Jan Johansen, 234 Army Band. “Someone that excels in everything.”

While a member of the 234 Army Band, Worley has performed on tuba in the Dixie band, german band and brass quintet. Worley also performs on the bass guitar in the stage band, jazz combo, blue grass band and rock and roll.
The Pied Piper of priesthood: Guardsman celebrates 35 years in uniform and 15 years of ministry in LaGrande

By DAVE STAVE
L A GRANDE OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Father Hank Albrecht has been in the priesthood for 15 years, 13 of those in La Grande. That might sound like a fairly long tenure for a minister to be in one place.

But for the 58-year-old pastor of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in La Grande and the smaller Catholic churches in Elgin and Union, longevity has been the name of his game.

Albrecht also has spent 35 years in the military, and he has no plans to quit. A second-chance Army Guard unit in La Grande, Col. Albrecht has been selected to participate in the Army's war college through extension courses.

Successful completion of the college will put him in a position to be promoted to brigadier general. The Army has had only a few chaplains attain that rank.

Albrecht's military career began in the 1960's when he was drafted into the Army. He grew up in Dufur near The Dalles, graduated from high school and attended Eastern Oregon University for two years before entering the Army.

His five years of active service included attending Officers Candidate School, teaching infantry courses at Fort Benning, Ga., and serving a stint in Vietnam.

When his active duty ended, Albrecht returned to The Dalles, where he operated a cherry orchard and owned Piped aircraft dealership.

"I sold small planes and repaired them," the priest said.

Albrecht remained in the business for about a decade until deciding to enroll at Mount Angel Seminary in Western Oregon. He was in the late 30's.

Albrecht said all of his life experiences led him to pursue the priesthood.

He entered the seminary in 1981, and was ordained a priest on May 14, 1986. He served as associate at St. Peter's Catholic Church in The Dalles for two years before coming to La Grande.

"Father Hank, as he is called, said he's been pleased to see the way his congregation has become involved in all Army functions," Lt. Col. Greg Brown, commandant of the Oregon Army Guard, said.

"The people have shown ownership in the parish," he said. Many have stepped up to take roles of service.

Judy Loudermilk, who has attended the La Grande church for 41 years and has worked on the restoration committee and finance council, said Albrecht has worked to get people involved.

"His idea is that we need to be able to run the parish when there is not a priest there," Loudermilk said. She attributes Albrecht's longevity in La Grande to his love for people.

"He really likes people. He likes everyone to feel important. He's done a lot to bring our parish closed together."

Albrecht agrees that he enjoys people, and "not just Catholic people, but people from all faiths and even people who have no faith."

Albrecht said key to his beliefs is that "every single person is important to God and is loved unconditionally by God."

"My best friend is the last person I met," he said.

Joyce Pavlinac, who has served at Our Lady of the Valley as a minister to the sick and minister of liturgy, said she's admired Albrecht's flexibility in celebrating Mass.

"He's had children's masses, youth masses and Spanish masses, even though he doesn't speak Spanish."

He loves to minister to the children," Pavlinac added. "They follow him and say, 'I'll remind me of the Pied Piper.'"

Sitting in his office wearing a Honolulu T-shirt and a blue denim jacket that Albrecht talks freely about his varied interests.

He owned a plane after becoming a priest, but a few years ago he sold the aircraft and bought a place on the Hawaiian island of Oahu that includes two houses.

He uses one of the houses as a vacation getaway and rents the other.

Albrecht said he continues to enjoy mechanical work. He has three 1966 Chevrolets that he's restoring.

But lately he hasn't had much time for his tools or his classic cars. "I've been too busy with parish work," he said.

Editor's note: This story was reprinted with permission by the LaGrande Observer, and was first published on Saturday, May 12, 2001.

Oregon marksmen fare well in CNGB shooting championships


O regon soldiers competed with shooters from Illinois, Indiana, Maryland and Nebraska at the 69th Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB) Shooting Championships held March 23-25 at Camp Joseph T. Robinson.

The event, coordinated by personnel from the National Guard marksmanship training unit in South Dakota, Nebraska at the 69th Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB) Shooting Championships held March 23-25 at Camp Joseph T. Robinson.

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The small bore rifle match was "close, really a tight competition. Nobody walked away with the match. It was pretty much a match right up to the last stage, 'rip and tuck' all the way between the top three teams," Master Sgt. Kenneth Strom at, ranging in age from 20 to 25 years, from South Dakota, Nebraska at the 69th Chief, National Guard Bureau (CNGB) Shooting Championships held March 23-25 at Camp Joseph T. Robinson.

Second place was won by the Oregon's Headquarters STARC team of Lt. Col. Greg Brown, Master Sgt. Nelson Shew, Sgt. 1st Class John Lane, and Sgt. Charles Spicer.

Along with the Oregon team finished with an aggregate of 3355.

"We qualified four teams but only had enough shooters to field three of the teams," Browning said.

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"The CNGB matches are open to any soldier or airman in the Guard," Lt. Richard Jones, officer in charge, said.

"The potential for this program to expand in the future is unlimited. By using primarily sub-caliber weapons, the program is not only cost-effective, but is also manageable down to the individual soldier level."

Jones pointed out that CNGB is an integral component of the overall marksmanship training program and that the refined habits and extended conditioning of physical shooting skills this ‘off-season’ program offers, work directly with the national match and combat training programs.

"My intent as the program manager is to add incentive to both individuals and teams to compete in the first phase of the championships," Jones said. "My goal for 2002 is to see our numbers grow to over 2,000 individual competitors and to add sniper as a new discipline," Jones concluded.

The championships involved 108 Army and Air National Guard shooters who had advanced through two qualification postal matches to make it to the national unit.

A total of 1,529 shooters began phase one of the CNGB postal matches, with 360 shooters making it to phase two.

From that number, the top five teams in the six shooter disciplines of combat rifle and pistol, smallbore rifle and pistol, and air rifle and pistol were invited to compete in phase three, which is for the national championship.

Overall, the CNGB drew competitors representing Army and Air National Guard units from Arkansas, Nebraska, New York, Idaho, Texas, Minnesota, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, Oregon, Ohio, South Dakota, and Utah.

Oregon sent 12 soldiers, or over 10 percent, of the 108 competitors.

"We hope to get other units involved and send more teams next year," Browning said.

This was the fourth straight year for the CNGB to be held at Camp Robinson, the home of the Guard marksmanship program. Previously, the event had been staged at Bismarck, N.D.

The CNGB competition, one of the premier shooting events in the Army and Air National Guard, began in 1932.

Oregon's competition results are:

Small bore rifle: 2nd place (team)
Sgt. 1st Class John Lane: 4th place
Sgt. Charles Spicer: 5th place
Air pistol: 4th place (team)
Maj. Dale Andruss, 1st place
Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Hogankamp Staff Sgt. Rick Halvorson Staff Sgt. Richard Vincent
Air rifle: 5th place (team)
Maj. Geoffrey Liljenwall: 2nd place
Master Sgt. David Clark Staff Sgt. David Novacek
Staff Sgt. Bonnie Dunn
LEAVING ON
A JET PLANE
Veterans’ Opportunities Act of 2001 introduced in Congress

Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) has introduced the Veterans’ Opportunities Act of 2001, his first major bill as chairman of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

A House Veterans Affairs Committee press release reports that key provisions of the measure include:

1. An increase in the VA burial and funeral allowance from $1,500 to $2,000 for veterans whose deaths are service-connected, and from $300 to $500 for veterans with non-service-connected disabilities;
2. An increase in assistance to severely disabled veterans for automobile and adaptive equipment from $8,000 to $9,000;
3. An extension to as early as nine months before discharge from the VA, Department of Defense, and Department of Labor transition counseling.

The period would be extended to as much as 18 months for those retiring after military careers.

For more information on the activities of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, or to write your representative, visit http://veterans.house.gov/welcome/webindex.htm.

New VA hotline for Agent Orange available for Vietnam veterans

Veteran’s voice now has a new national toll-free help line to answer questions about Agent Orange Exposure, health care, and benefits.

PR Newswire reports that the VA expects considerable interest in the new help line at (800) 749-8387 because of a new policy that allows Vietnam veterans with adult-onset Type II diabetes to receive disability compensation for ongoing medical problems linked to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides during the war.

VA representatives staff the hotline from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST, or you can access a 24-hour automated system at other hours.

The VA has established a specific Agent Orange Web Page in conjunction with the help line that can be accessed at http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/benefits/orange/

Meanwhile, Stars and Stripes reports that Vietnam veterans with Type II diabetes should go ahead and file their claims with the VA now.

Claims may not be processed until the “rulemaking” is done, but filing early helps get an earlier effective date for disability compensation. Once your claim is filed, collect whatever information you have about your service in Vietnam as well as medical information about your diabetes, and submit it to the VA.

Remember, you must submit medical evidence of your current condition before the VA is required to “assist” you.

From the VA: The VA estimates that approximately 200,000 Vietnam veterans will receive service-connection for their diabetes up to the first five years under the new policy.

More information is available at:

Retiree appreciation day events held across America

The Army has released the dates of 34 Retiree Appreciation Day events across the country.

Retiree Appreciation Days, also known as RADS, are one- or two-day seminars conducted annually at major Army installations or metropolitan areas to bring to retirees, soldiers and their families up-to-date information on America’s Army and changes in retirement benefits.

Installation retirement services offices organize RADS, and put together a program of guest speakers and displays covering topics such as health care, retired pay, survivor benefit plan, veterans’ benefits, Social Security, military legal aid and retirees as adjunct recruiters. Some RADS also offer health fairs.

For more information, contact the RADS sponsoring the event. Installation operators can provide local RSO phone numbers. Installation RSO numbers are also listed on the Army retirement services homepage at www.odcsp retiring.army.mil/retire.

April 26 Fort Huachuca, Ariz.
April 28 Fort Jackson, S.C.
May 5 Fort Bragg, N.C.
May 7 Schofield Barracks, Hawaii
May 18 Fort Lewis, Wash.
May 19 Fort Ord, Calif.
June 6 Fort McPherson, Ga.
June 22-24 Fort Carson, Colo.
Aug. 4 Tobyhanna, Pa.
Aug. 11 Vermont
Sept. 7 Fort McCoy, Wis.
Sept. 8 Buffalo, N.Y.
Sept. 15 Fort Benning, Ga.
Sept. 21 Fort Myer, Va.
Sept. 21-22 Fort Bragg, N.C.
Sept. 22 Fort Polk, La.
Sept. 22 Fort Lee, Va.
Sept. 22 Vicenza, Italy
Sept. 22 Castleguerra, Sp.
Oct. 9 Fort McHenry, Md.
Oct. 13 Houston, Texas
Oct. 20 Fort Monmouth, N.J.
Oct. 20 Fort Benning, Ga.
Oct. 27 Fort Leavenworth, Kan.
Oct. 27 Fort Bliss, Texas
Oct. 27 Fort Sam Houston, Texas
Nov. 3 Fort Dix, N.J.
Nov. 7 Fort Benning, Ga.

DoD implemented Tricare senior pharmacy program on April 1

The new Tricare senior pharmacy program officially began operation on April 1 for an estimated 1.4 million potentially eligible uniformed services beneficiaries age 65 years and older. The Tricare senior pharmacy program is a comprehensive drug benefit not provided under traditional Medicare.

By law, to use the Tricare retail and mail order benefit, beneficiaries age 65 and over must either enroll in Medicare Part A and enrolled in Part B. Exceptions: Those who turned 65 before April 1, 2001, are eligible for the benefit, even if they are not enrolled in Medicare Part B. For more information on enrollment requirements for Medicare Part B, the toll-free number for Medicare is (800) MEDICARE or (800) 633-4227.

Beneficiaries also must be registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Beneficiaries who are unsure about their DEERS enrollment status or eligibility for this program may contact the toll-free defense manpower data center support office beneficiary line at (800) 538-9552 for assistance. The call center is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Pacific.

At the same time, DoD is also simplifying the prescription co-payments for all DoD beneficiaries, including the different co-payment possibilities from about 30 to three.

The new Tricare pharmacy benefit offers a straightforward co-payment structure and the following four dispensing options listed in order of cost/value to the beneficiary:

Military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacy. MTF pharmacies will continue to fill prescriptions written by either military or civilian prescribers for medications prescribed by the MTF's formulary. There is no co-payment or out-of-pocket expense for prescriptions filled at the MTF.

National mail order pharmacy (NMOP). Prescriptions will be $3 for up to a 90-day supply of most generic medications, or $9 for up to a 30-day supply of most non-generic medications.

Retail network pharmacy. Prescriptions will be $3 for a 30-day supply of most generic medications or $9 for a 30-day supply of most non-generic medications.

Retail non-network pharmacy. Beneficiaries will pay either $9 or 20 percent of the total cost, whichever is greater, for a 30-day supply of a medication after they have met the Tricare annual deductible. Both deductibles and co-payments are applied toward the Tricare catastrophic cap.

To use the retail pharmacy benefit beneficiaries should show the pharmacy a current uniformed services identification card. To update an ID card, beneficiaries may call toll-free (877) DOD-MEDS or (877) 363-6372 to locate the closest military ID card issuing activity. The call center is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Eastern.

In February and March, Tricare’s regional contractors sent a mailing to Medicare-eligible military beneficiaries worldwide. The mailing included a Tricare pharmacy identification card brochures, local pharmacy directories, NMOP brochures and NMOP registration forms. For more information on the Tricare senior pharmacy program, see the military health system/Tricare web site at www.tricare.osd.mil/pharmacy

Address changes

Retiree Services Office
PO Box 14350
Salem, Oregon 97309

Name of retiree

New Retiree

Change

Stop

Deceased

Rank of retiree

Current address

City

State

Zip

Retired from

Army NG

Air NG

Federal

State

Retiree Service Office
Open every
Tuesday
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Mail inquiries and changes of address to:
Retiree Service Office
PO Box 14350
Salem, Oregon 97309

ATTENTION: Eastern Oregon retirees

Address:
Military Retiree Office
3285 Airbase Rd.
Mountain Home, ID 83647

Phone: (208) 587-9771
Fax: (208) 587-4222

E-mail: milrettoff@worldnet.att.net

Website: home.att.net/~milrettoff
Retirees needed for new JROTC instructors in next three years

The Department of Defense is seeking military men and women to instruct high school Junior ROTC students. The American Forces Press Service reports that Pentagon officials say there will be about 1,200 openings over the next three years. By fiscal 2005, the program will employ about 7,000 instructors. Retired active duty officers and enlisted personnel are eligible to apply. There are no age limits. Processing time can range from six months to a year, and people may apply while they are still on active duty. The service secretaries can hire O-4s to O-9s and E-5s to E-9s. Sometimes they take retired E-5s.

Each service has about a seven- to 10-day instructor training program. Once trained and certified by the service, it is up to school districts to actually hire JROTC instructors. Once hired, instructors continue to receive their military retired pay.

The service branch and school district then split the difference that returns the instructors’ pay back to active duty levels. For more information, go to DoD’s transportation web site at www.dotransportation.org. Click on internet career links and then to specialized job search links, where the four service branches are listed. Or, go to the service web sites and type in “JROTC” as the search word.

Fiscal 2001 NDAAP pay raise targets mid-level NCOs

Some mid-level noncommissioned officers will see an increase in their pay in January 2001, under a provision in the fiscal 2001 National Defense Authorization Act. Air Force Print News reports that, unlike last year’s July 1 pay table re-

Department of Veterans Affairs raises coverage for insurance

Military members leaving the service with government life insurance coverage at a new higher limit now will be able to continue coverage at that level in their civilian lives. A US Department of Veterans Affairs press release in August 2001 states that a law allows service members to buy up to $250,000 in government life insurance coverage while in the military, up from the previous limit of $200,000. Similarly, when they leave service, they can now have a policy under the Veterans’ Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program at the same higher ceiling, but only if they had that top level while in uniform. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) now offers both VGLI as well as Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program for military members.

This change generally does not affect existing VGLI policyholders because the maximum coverage permitted under VGLI is limited to the amount the service member had under SGLI when he or she separated from active duty or the reserves.

Veterans generally must choose VGLI coverage within 120 days of discharge, although with evidence of good health that sign-up period may be extended another year. Rules are more liberal for military members who are totally disabled at the time of separation.

The VA provides insurance coverage to approximately 2.7 million veterans, active-duty members, reservists, and Guardmen. For more information, call (800) 669-8477 or visit www.insurance.va.gov.


The web site is the first of several improvements rolling into the Army’s recreational vehicle parks and camp sites, including a name change:

“We wanted to make our RV park information much more accessible to customers,” said Joe Pettoni, Outdoor Recreation program manager at the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center. “This website is just a seed that will grow into much more.”

The outdoor recreation site was launched in February and lists information about military RV parks and campsites at installations throughout the United States.

“When you call up the site, a map of the United States appears,” said Pettoni. “You click on a state, then a map of that state appears. The information is divided into seven different categories that are in the red and the Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard sites are in blue.”

Visitors to the site will find information on the location of the RV parks and campsites, directions from the nearest major highway, phone numbers, amenities, the number of pads and camp sites, and fees. It also lists any cabins, cottages or duplexes available for rent. Future additions to the web site will include a trip computer to determine mileage, local on and off post recreational opportunities, and inter-service Morale, Welfare and Recreation specials for RVers and campers.

“Eventually we plan to add sites in Europe,” Pettoni said. “Our ultimate goal is for campers to be able to reservations online.”

As for the name change from Travel Camp” to RV Park, Pettoni said the Army needs to conform to industry standards and make the name recognizable to customers.

While the name change is cosmetic, other changes are more substantial, like training, Pettoni said. “We held the first-ever Department of the Army-level training for 15 RV park managers in February,” Pettoni said. The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds and the National Foundation for RVing and Camp- 

Civilian and military paramedics combine training

The 1042nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance) recently conducted a mission scenario with the McKenzie Fire and Rescue unit near Eugene. Both organizations had the opportunity to observe each other’s equipment, and the 1042nd conducted “Medevac 101” and a live demonstration for the civilian paramedics. The training enhanced everyone’s knowledge of the other’s capabilities and opened some great communication for mutual training.
Judge Advocate General’s Corps launches legal service Web site

WASHINGTON — The US Army Judge Advocate General’s Corps has launched a legal service Web site as a portal of legal information for military members and their families. The site, www.jag.net/army.mil/Le galHelp, serves as a central information and resource knowledge center, said officials. It includes information on personal legal assistance, claims, trial defense, and victim/witness information for the Army. It provides preventive law information and helps users find the nearest legal assistance office.

The JAG Corps legal site aims to provide soldiers and spouses with information to make informed decisions on personal legal affairs, maintain legal well-being, readiness, avoid consumer scams, and otherwise minimize “legal” distress.

The idea, said Maj. Gen. John D. Altenburg Jr., the assistant judge advocate general and JAG Corps’ chief information officer, is to provide soldiers and family members 24-hour (7-7) desktop access to useful information for their own legal preparedness. It is a green effort for the Army to maintain their personal legal affairs.

It is designed to be a doorway to Internet-based legal information and services for those eligible for military legal assistance under Title 10 United States Code, said Altenburg. He explained the site does not offer legal advice, rather, information that site users should consider to prevent legal problems or before consulting an attorney.

Kingsley Field restores KC-97 Stratotanker

So far, over 200 man-hours have gone into the restoration of the KC-97 Stratotanker, pictured above at the Medford airport. The C-97 was developed by Boeing as a military transport aircraft. When modified for refueling it was designated as a KC-97. This aircraft was built in 1953 and in service until 1977.

When delivered to the Medford Airport, it sat, rusted out and in severe disrepair. Col. (Ret) Nathaniel “Bud” Glickman has overseen the restoration project, enlisting the help of Kingsley’s talented shop-row maintenance: Senior Master Sgt. Jimmy Dear; Master Sgt. Ben Patterson; Tech. Sgts. Dave Moore, Todd Johnston, David Chinander, and Scott Riedeau; and Staff Sgts. Jim Childs, Kathy Glazerbrook, Mark McDaniel, Doug Underdown, Brian Horner, and Tim Bremner.

Restoration will be finished by May, with the dedication set for June 11. It will be moved on airport property where it can be seen off Biddle Road. The upper deck of the aircraft will be used as a museum and meeting place for the Rogue Valley community.

Tricare Dental Plan increases readiness for reserve soldiers

Arlington, Va. — Tricare’s new dental insurance program will help ensure reservists are ready to deploy when they’re called, DoD medical officials said.

“We want to encourage a higher level of dental health and dental readiness than we saw during Desert Storm/Desert Shield,” Navy dentist Dr. (Capt.) Lawrence Mark McKinley said.

McKinley is a senior consultant for dentistry for the Tricare Management Activity and also is the chief of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

He described reservists’ dental readiness as “unfortunately” low during the 1990-91 Gulf War period. Army Reserve Lt. Col. William Martin said roughly 35 to 40 percent of Army reservists activated during the Gulf War needed dental work before they could deploy. Martin is the program manager for reserve affairs for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

“In some cases, individuals needed a week’s worth of dental treatment before they could deploy, which is a situation that those on active duty at the time did not have,” McKinley said.

The new Tricare Dental Plan went into effect Feb. 1. It replaces the Tricare Selected Reserve Dental Program and provides dental coverage for military members the same dental benefits package that is available to families of active duty service members.

The new program will also help the reserve components meet a 1998 DoD requirement that says they must document an annual dental screening for all their service members.

“One thing that’s a real challenge,” Martin said. “Up to this point there hasn’t been much movement.” The services were given three years to meet the screening requirement, but recently were given a three-year extension to February 2004, he said.

The requirement for yearly screenings poses several problems. “Most reserve components don’t have the infrastructure to perform annual dental exams,” he said.

Even for those units that have embedded dental assets, spending valuable drill weekends providing routine screenings can degrade their skills. “If they’re part of a field unit, their go-to-war mission is to provide emergency care, not screenings,” Martin said.

He also noted that the reserves are a geographically diverse force. Only 20 percent of reservists operate within a reasonable distance to a DoD medical facility.

Increasing readiness isn’t the only reason for the new DoD dental program. According to the Tricare Dental Plan available to reservists and their families, “The total-force concept is important. We’re all one family,” McKinley said.

“With increasing deployments we need to make this quality-of-life benefit accessible to the reserve community as well as the active duty community.”

For more information on the TRICARE Dental Program, visit http://www.tricare.osd.mil/tricare/benefici ary/suppreg.html.

Korean War Service Medal available to all Korean veterans

The DoD’s 50th Anniversary of the Korean War Committee wants veterans to know that the Korean War Service Medal is still available.

Air Force Print News reports that during the Korean War, the United States disallowed the wearing of the medal because of regulations at that time that prevented American service members from wearing a foreign award. Congress changed that regulation in 1954.

If you have relatives who served in the Korean War, you are the lead agent for distributing the medal.

The Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph Air Force Base will process requests and distribute the medal to all Korean veterans who qualify, regardless of branch of service.

Applicants must furnish a copy of their DoD Form 214 (discharge papers) as proof of eligibility.

People who need to request their military records can download a request form at http://wwwhra.nara.gov/regional/ mprfs180.html.

Veterans applying for the medal should contact the AFPC by calling (800) 558-1404, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. CST, or contacting the Air Force at the following address: (210) 565-2431, (210) 565-2520, or (210) 565-2516.

Information is available at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/awards.

Tricare beneficiaries advised to save receipts for reimbursement

Many new Tricare benefits will be phased in over the next six to twelve months. A Tricare news release reports that among the new programs that will be implemented over time are coverage for school-requied physicals, reimbursements for certain travel expenses for Tricare Prime beneficiaries, and reduction of retiree catastrophic care.

In the meantime, Tricare Management Activity (TMA) is advising beneficiaries to save receipts, explanations of benefits, and other claims-related information for this covered services and benefits obtained from Oct. 1, 2000 until program implementation so they can later obtain reimbursement from the managed care support contractors in their regions.

TMA will widely publish the date upon which beneficiaries may claim savings with the required receipts, and the managed care support contractors will adjudicate claims for dates of service retroactively to the effective date established by Congress.

Meanwhile, two new Tricare benefits became effective April 1.

Active duty family members enrolled in Tricare Prime will no longer have to make co-payments for the care they receive from civilian providers because they will still have to make pharmacy co-payments for the mail order pharmacy program and at network retail stores.

Also, there is a new simplified co-pay structure for prescription drugs provided to eligible uniformed services beneficiaries.

The latest information about Tricare benefits can be obtained through the Tricare Web site at www.tricare.osd.mil. Beneficiaries may also contact the managed care support contractor in their region, their nearest Tricare service center, or Tricare beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinators at a military treatment facility.
Buffalo soldier speaks out about a segregated Army

By JOE BURLASS
Army News Service

WASHINGTON —

L

eaving a black comrade to die in an
all-white field hospital is the most vivid memory of the few
remaining “buffalo soldiers” has of a segregated Army.

Retired 1st Sgt. “Trooper” John Wright recalled his World War II expe-
riences while serving with the all-black 9th Cavalry Regiment.

He talked to a Pentagon audience during a Black History Mon-
archization, “Conversation with a Buffalo Soldier,” on Feb. 23.

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