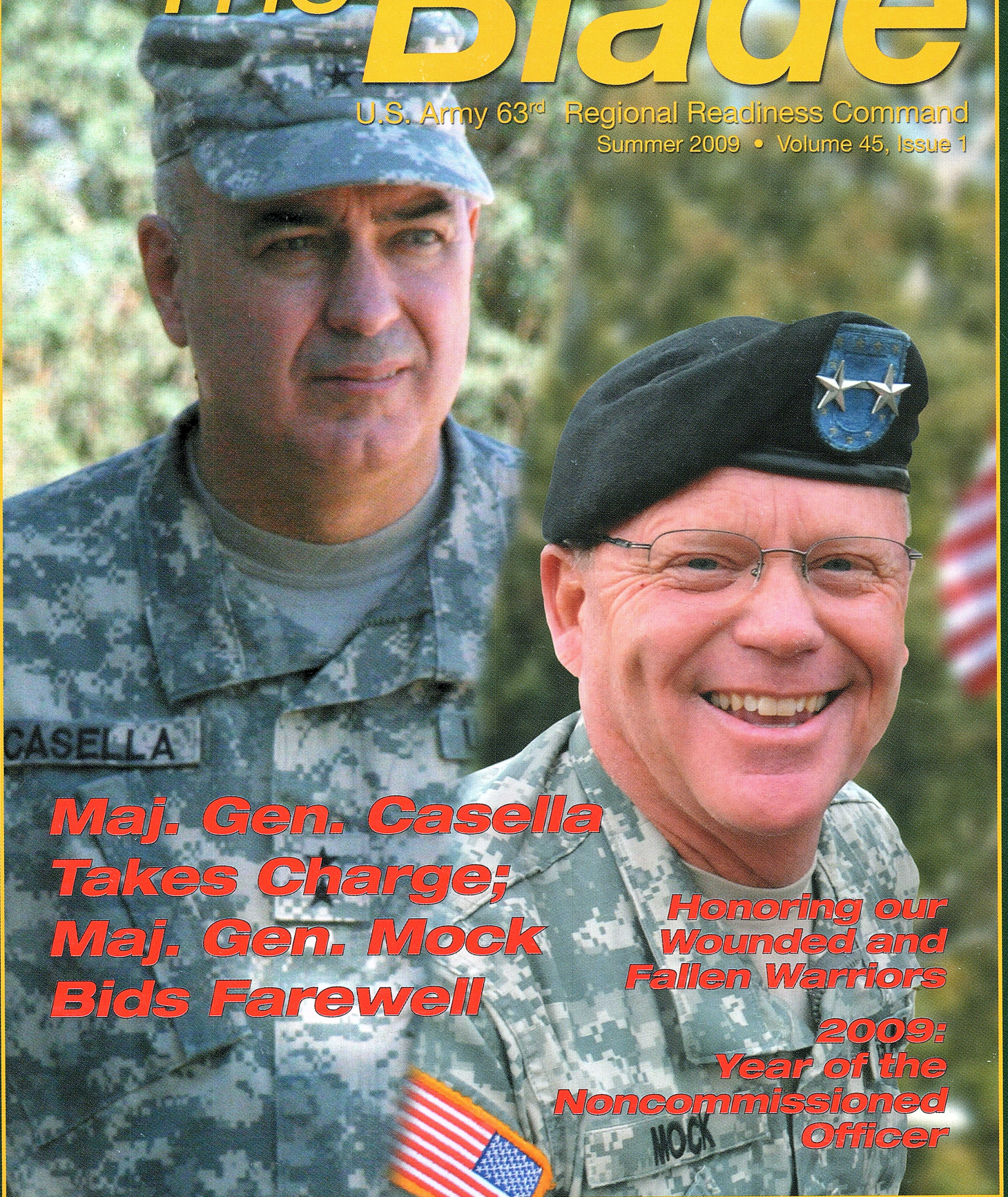


The Blade

U.S. Army 63rd Regional Readiness Command
Summer 2009 • Volume 45, Issue 1



**Maj. Gen. Casella
Takes Charge;
Maj. Gen. Mock
Bids Farewell**

**Honoring our
Wounded and
Fallen Warriors**

**2009:
Year of the
Noncommissioned
Officer**

COMMANDER'S CORNER

2009 brings change, stronger Army Reserve



Greetings, Soldiers, families and civilians of the 63rd Regional Readiness Command! Maj. Gen. Mock, who just retired, did an outstanding job as your leader. It

is with a great sense of pride that I take command of this distinguished unit.

2009 is a big year as we continue supporting our nation, though we'll also be moving toward inactivation.

The transformation of the Army Reserve while supporting the Global War

on Terrorism continues. It has been very challenging. Nationwide we have consolidated from 10 areas (Regional Readiness Commands) to four (Regional Support Commands).

The 63rd and the 90th RRCs (both within the RSC area) must both divest of their functions by December. We will by then have a fully functioning organization and headquarters, the 63rd Regional Support Command, at Moffett Field, Calif.

Our goal is to have as many Soldiers and units as possible on the operational side ready to deploy, and fewer who are in a non-deployable status.

Many of our full-time civilians will transfer into the RSC, of which I am also commander.

The RRC headquarters at Joint Forces Training Base will close, but the Army

Reserve presence there will grow. We will have two new headquarters there: a Sustainment Support Command yet to be named, and the 11th Military Police Brigade.

We will also have many transfer opportunities for our Reserve Soldiers as possible to those units so they can continue training at the base.

This will be a busy year, with both continuing transformation, deploying of troops, and the inevitable scaling down toward closing.

This will need a team effort by both full-time staff and Reserve Soldiers. Thanks for all your hard work! Let's continue our outstanding record in defending our nation.

– Maj. Gen. Bruce A. Casella

TOP TALK

HOOAH! Thanks to all our Warriors

On behalf of the 63rd Regional Readiness Command team, our Soldiers and families, I'd like to extend a special thank you to families of our Fallen Warriors. Not a day goes by that we don't have you or your Fallen Warrior in our thoughts and prayers.

On a personal note experienced by my wife Bertha and I, shared by Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock and his wife, Karen, we had the privilege and honor of meeting with several of our Fallen Warriors' families during our first Gold Star Family Weekend Retreat, held in San Diego.

The retreat was the second such event hosted in the Army Reserve. Thank you to our chaplain section and the many volunteers who made this a success. We were humbled and inspired by the families, young and old.

Throughout the weekend there were tears and smiles shared by all. For some family members, this was the first oppor-

tunity to meet other families of Fallen Warriors. For Maj. Gen. Mock and I, it was an emotional realization of the sacrifices of Soldiers and their families. We both walked away knowing there is just so much more we have to do. To our Families, know we will never forget.

To our Wounded Warriors and their families: know we pray for your expedient recovery and reunion with your Families and friends; thank you.

To our deployed Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guard, contractors and their families, thank you. We know how tough it is being away from each other, no matter how many times you've deployed. Stay focused on your mission and rest assured we will do everything we can to serve your families.

By now all have heard of the changing of the guard. Maj. Gen. Mock, officially retired on Dec. 6. He and his family were honored at a retirement dinner on Jan. 24.



Sir, your Soldiers and our families will be forever grateful for your leadership, mentorship and friendship. Enjoy family time; you've earned it...Hooah!

We welcome Maj. Gen. Bruce Casella as our commanding general. Sir, we look forward to your guidance and mentorship as we forge through our challenging transformation...Hooah!

To all: stay safe and stay focused. PMA!
– Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Roberson

CONTENTS

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Robert N. Roberson

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DEPARTMENTS

CG's Corner/Top Talk	1
Chaplain's Corner	7
Cover Story: New CG takes command	11, 12
Army Briefs	20
Safety	22

FEATURES

CG Farewell.....	3
Fallen MPs	4
Gold Star Retreat	5
Coping with Loss: The Nakamura Family	6
New Command Warrant Officer.....	7
Over the Shore	8
Year of the NCO	9
8-40 th Reunion	10
Torrance Armed Forces Day Activities	13
Family of the Year	14
Ambassador Furtado	15
Army gets Oscar back	16
Puget Sound Cleanup	17
Father & Son in Kuwait	18
56 th MPs Visit Elementary School	19
Suicide Prevention	21

Front cover: Maj. Gen. Bruce A. Casella (left) recently took command of the 63rd RRC. Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock, also shown, bids farewell and entered retirement. (Photo of Casella by Capt. Michael R. Garcia, 11th Aviation Command Public Affairs).

Back cover: Capt. Erik McCall, commander of HHC 63rd RRC, and 1st Sgt. Kenneth Rempel, first sergeant of HHC, lead Maj. Gen. Mock's truck while departing after retirement ceremony. (Photo by Sgt. Scott Akanewich, 63rd RRC Public Affairs).

Departing commander bids farewell, praises 63rd RRC Wounded and Fallen Warriors

By Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Paul E. Mock

To the Soldiers, family members and civilian employees of the 63rd Regional Readiness Command, 311th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and 11th Military Police Brigade: This is my farewell message to all of you. It has been an absolute privilege to command this organization for the past three years.

We have deployed throughout the world and welcomed home thousands of Soldiers who have proudly served their nation. We are still going through major changes and working hard to get our units, Soldiers and families into a predictable cycle of deployments and training.

Sadly, we have lost 11 Soldiers since the beginning of the war; some during my tenure: Sgt James Witkowski, Spc. Carla Stewart, Capt. Peter Sinclair and Sgt. Chun Ning Ng.

I mention these Soldiers as a constant reminder to me and us all of the serious and sometimes deadly cost of our collective service and sacrifice to our nation. We have learned hard lessons when it comes to taking care of Soldiers and families. In our communities, we have many Soldiers who have returned from the war with serious emotional and physical injuries and scars.

We have seen examples of Soldiers and families accepting and dealing with their personal traumas and setting examples of personal courage to which we can only hope to aspire. Sgt. Maj. Jesse Acosta, permanently blinded in a mortar attack, is just one such example. We have also seen examples where the post deployment system has left our Soldiers and families short.

These are our challenges. I ask each of you to always remember those families who have a fallen Soldier or those that return with injuries and mental

health challenges.

Healing our wounded Soldiers is something that will take more than time alone. It takes commitment, dedication, concern and sacrifice from all of us. Step up and make a difference. Thanks for all you do and for being you.

All of us, Soldiers, families and loved ones, civilians and contractors, are part of the greatest Army in the world. On behalf of myself, my family, and my wife Karen, I wish you the very best! Good luck and God speed to all.



Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock comforts family members during the funeral of Capt. Peter Sinclair, who died after duty in Iraq.

Fallen Comrades

Sgt. Ng of 314th MP Company dies during redeployment

Sgt. Chun Ning Ng, 37, assigned to the 314th Military Police Company in Irvine, Calif., died from complications due to a medical malady he sustained upon redeployment.

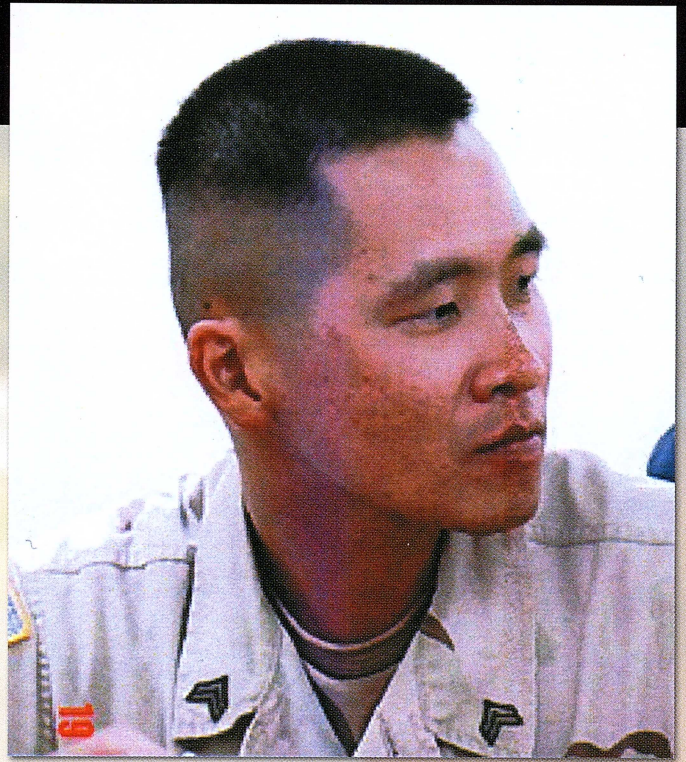
Ng collapsed from what is believed to have been a brain aneurism during his second day of demobilization at Fort Bliss, Texas, on Dec. 25, 2003. He was put on life support and remained in a coma until his death at the V.A. Medical Center in Mountain Home, Tenn.

In early 2003, Ng was transferred from the 313th Military Police Company out of Las Vegas, into the 314th which was called to active duty on Feb. 10 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On Aug. 18, 2005, Ng was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor, due to his heroic actions on April 18, 2003 when he protected a fellow Soldier during a prison riot at Camp Bucca, Iraq.

Friends and family members remember him as a thought-provoking teacher who enjoyed taking the time to talk to people and who was always willing to lend a helping hand. He was also an avid chess player, organizing chess tournaments during his service in Iraq.

Ng is survived by his mother, Lau



Sheung Ng and father, Sun Chan Ng; his brothers, Chun Wa Ng, Chun Ming Ng, and Dr. Chun Leung Ng; and his sister, Winnie W. Ng. He died June 19, 2008.

MP Officer Capt. Sinclair passes away after Iraq duty

Capt. Peter Sinclair, a military police officer who led Soldiers in Fallujah, Iraq, died June 12 in Garden Grove, Calif., from medical complications after returning from deployment.

Sinclair, 40, was assigned with the 314th Military Police Company and worked as a Los Angeles Police Department officer as a civilian. He had previously been deployed as an active-duty Soldier in Operation Desert Storm.

In Iraq, he commanded an ordnance company during the campaign in Fallujah to root out insurgents in 2004. He sustained multiple injuries, including to his back, and returned home for treatment.

His friends called him "larger than life." He had been captain of his high school football team and loved surfing in his youth. He was a big fan of the USC football team and loved animals. He was an alumnus of the USC ROTC program and was pursuing a master's degree at Cal State Long Beach.

Sinclair is survived by his parents, John and Barbara Sinclair; siblings Steven, John, Dana, and Jennifer; and sister Christine Sinclair Limon. He died June 12, 2008.



Gold Star Retreat ★★

Family members of fallen Soldiers meet at San Diego retreat to deal effectively with grief

By John D. Wagner, 63rd RRC PAO

SAN DIEGO—Sitting in the middle of grieving youngsters, Chaplain (Maj.) Marvin Santos guided them in a series of healing steps.

“I want you to write a letter with some final thoughts on the family member you lost,” he said.

The kids grabbed blue and black markers and started writing on butcher paper: “I want to tell you I love you.” “I miss you.” “I wish you could come home.”

The session was part of the Gold Star Family Weekend Retreat, held at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel. About 60 family members, adults and children, each of whom has lost a loved one in the war, arrived from more than 20 states. The event was organized by the 63rd RRC Chaplain section.

Among those arriving were family members of five fallen 63rd RRC Soldiers: Sgt. Paul Nakamura, Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Bolor, Sgt. Joseph Nurre, Sgt. James Witkowski and Maj. Charles Soltes.

For the kids, it was a weekend of gaining closure through the letters, talking before each other, and even pretending the loved one was still there and saying “I’m sorry I disappointed you when I didn’t do something right.”

Master Sgt. Rita Cossio worked with Santos in helping the youngsters.

“It’s okay to be sad and cry,” she said. “We’ve lost someone special and there’s a big hole there.”

The retreat had separate sessions for adults and children. In a nearby area, 30 somber family members sat in a

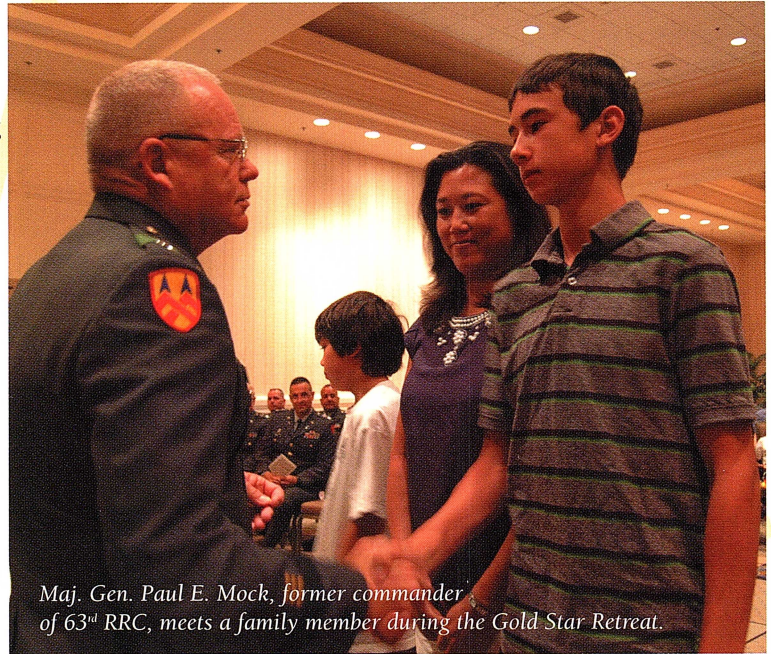
large semi-circle on an ornate green, blue and gold carpet as they listened to trained Air Force grief counselors.

Shed Tears

“We may shed some tears and will get an opportunity to share our stories,” said Air Force Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Elaine Henderson. “You will live longer if you let go of your pain. You will be able to be happy.”

Henderson and Air Force Chaplain

(Maj.) Christopher Otten, both assigned in Ohio, guided the training for the adults, who sat in a circle and listened. Both were trained at the Grief Recovery Institute and reviewed a series of “actions steps,” for people to deal with the over-



Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock, former commander of 63rd RRC, meets a family member during the Gold Star Retreat.

Sgt. Amy Ou

whelming emotions of loss.

One is being honest about how you feel.

“When you grieve, you hurt,” she said. “You learn to say (to people), you’re fine. Liar, liar, pants on fire. You need to tell the truth.”

She talked about the myths people typically learn when dealing with grief. These include: “Don’t feel bad. You can get a new one”, “It just takes time, so stay busy”, “Grieve alone”, and “Be strong for others.”

She described dealing with leftover feelings toward the lost family member. Family members may need ask forgiveness or express other feelings:

“I apologize for saying ‘I hate you.’ “
“I forgive you for being sarcastic.”
“I appreciate your courage.”

One woman said, “It seems like a lot of work. It’s easier just to stay mad.”

“But staying mad takes a lot of energy,” answered Henderson.



Master Sgt. Rita Cossio leads children in a therapeutic exercise during the retreat.

John D. Wagner

Nakamura family talks about loss of son in war, 5 years later.

By John D. Wagner, 63rd RRC PAO

SANTA FE SPRINGS, Calif.-Their son has been called a hero. But five years after the death of Sgt. Paul "Toku" Nakamura while deployed in Iraq, his family still copes in a day to day struggle with his absence in their lives.

"The pain will probably never go away," said Paul Nakamura, the Soldier's father. "Every time I am on the freeway and pass by the cemetery, I say 'Hello, Toku.' "

The family related their feelings during a recent interview in their living room with the Blade magazine right after the fifth anniversary of their son's death. Also present were chaplains (Maj.) Marvin Santos and (Col.) Stephen Boyd to give comfort as needed.

Toku, 21, was deployed to Iraq in early 2003, assigned as an ambulance driver with the 437th Medical Company. He was involved in more than 250 runs in Iraq and Kuwait to save the lives of injured Soldiers.

On June 19, 2003, his vehicle was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade in the blazing 120-degree heat near Iskandariyah. The driver and friend, then-Spc. Cory Carranza, stayed calm and roared out of the area to a nearby base. Toku did not survive the incident.

He was the first 63rd RRC Soldier to die in combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Though the Army praised his service in a combat zone, his family talked



Chaplain (Col.) Stephen Boyd gives a hug to Pearl Estuar, sister of Sgt. Paul Nakamura, during visit to the family. Right and rear center are Yoko and Paul Nakamura, the Soldier's mother and father.

about coping with the loss of the son and brother they loved so much.

They recall him as lifeguard, a car enthusiast who drove a primer-colored 1967 El Camino and a Boy Scout who reached the "Life" level.

Very Energetic

"He was very energetic and adventurous," said Yoko Nakamura, his mother. In their small living room, they sat next to a multi-shelf glass case with mementoes of Toku's life: his Desert Combat Uniform patrol cap; the encased flag given to them by Lt. Gen. James Helmly, then chief of the Army Reserve; his Troop 328 Scout hat; his medals including a Purple Heart.

On the bottom shelf were small green, brown and white stuffed bears left at Toku's grave site by parties unknown. Every year, his family has a gathering at Rose Hills Cemetery in Whittier, Calif., on the anniversary of Toku's death. Last June 19, 60 to 70 people came to the site to remember the young man. Rev. Ron Garcia, a neighbor held a service as people sat on the lawn. Soldiers from the 437th came as well.

"They had fond memories," said Pearl Estuar, the Soldier's sister, with tears in her eyes. "About the way he lived his life.

Family members display a glass case at their home with mementoes from Sgt. Paul Nakamura. From left are Pearl Estuar, his sister; Yoko Nakamura, his mother; Paul Nakamura, his father; and Miki Morales, his sister.



He wanted to give back to people. He would share things from his care packages. He would even give candy to the Iraqi kids. Not all the Soldiers liked that." Yoko and Paul go to the burial site multiple times per month and talk to their son.

Paul Nakamura often does landscaping of the site with a rake and scissors, and Yoko speaks to her son there.

"I tell him 'Toku' I saw your friends today.' I tell him everything," Yoko said.

They remembered the day he told them he was assigned to go to Iraq. The family was scared. Toku was always upbeat.

He told them "I'll come back and everything will be all right."

"He said in letters every week, 'Everything is okay.'"

Yoko Nakamura has attended Gold Star mother's meetings and met parents who have also lost family members in the war. She also presented flowers this year on Memorial Day in the Little Tokyo area of Los Angeles at the Japanese Cultural Center.

While the family talked, often with tears in their eyes, on the wall in front of them was a painting of a Soldier with a carrying bag walking toward a shining light. He was walking toward heaven, the family said.



Schuster becomes new command warrant officer

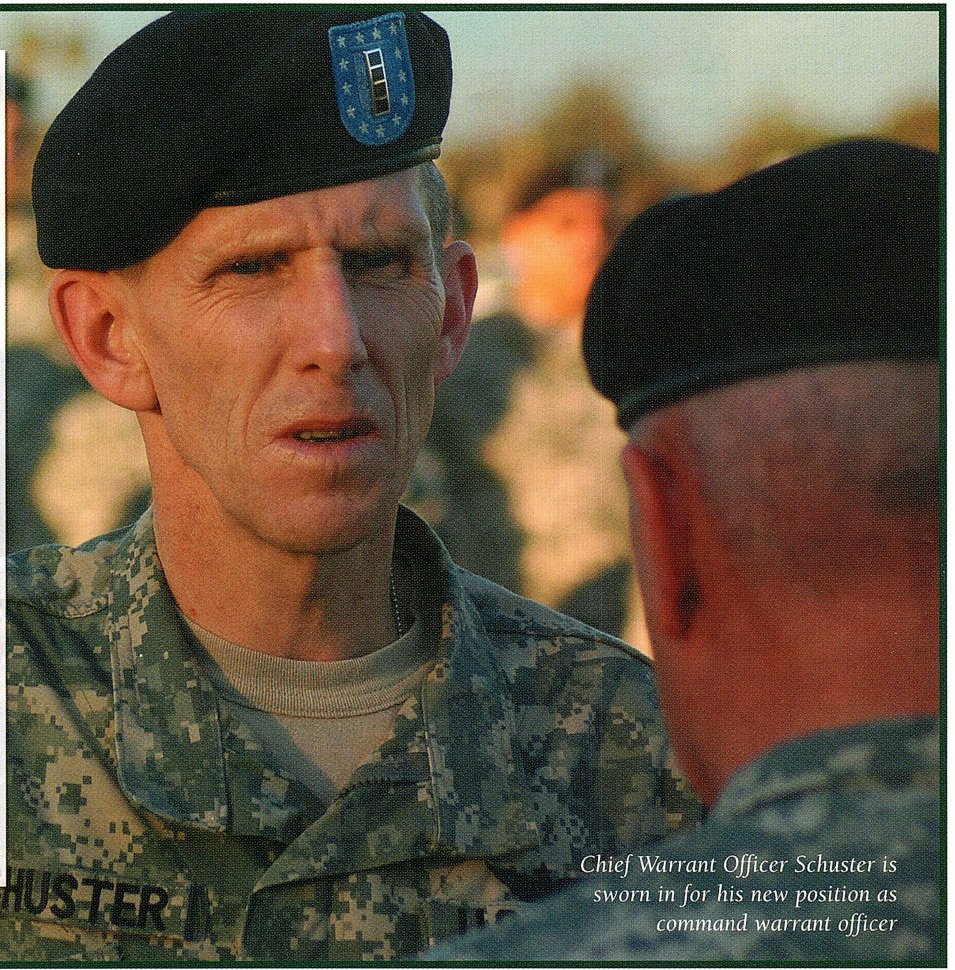
Chief Warrant Officer Keith B. Schuster recently took the oath to become command chief warrant officer for the 63rd RRC.

He served previously as vessel master for 467th Transportation Company out of Tacoma, Wash. Schuster has been in the Army since 1986 and is both a UH-1 helicopter pilot and an expert with Army tug boats.

He is a veteran of both Operation Desert Storm, serving as a helicopter pilot who transported officers across a theater; and Operation Iraqi Freedom, as a staff officer for the 375th Transportation Group.

"I am very flattered and excited," Schuster said. "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Hopefully, I can help other warrants, help those who want to become warrants and help the command. I want to make a positive difference across the board."

Soldiers desiring to become warrant officers should talk to their retention NCO's.

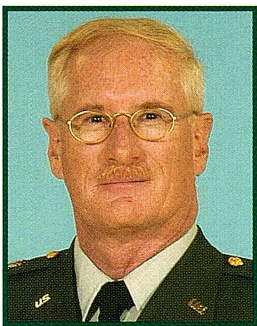


Chief Warrant Officer Schuster is sworn in for his new position as command warrant officer

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Soldiers and families should grieve losses correctly

By Chaplain (Col.) William L. Brunold, 63rd RRC



Last year, the 63rd RRC Chaplain section hosted a Gold Star retreat in San Diego. Invited to this event were family

members of Reservists lost in operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Some 60 Army Reserve family members were in attendance who received life-skills in grief recovery. This is an important part of the process through which all must go when losses come into our lives, especially losses as great as having a loved one die in combat.

Yes, we all experience loss of some

sort in life, sometimes multiple losses simultaneously. In reviewing the book, *When Children Grieve*, Dr. Fred Rogers (of Mister Rogers fame on TV) wrote, "There isn't anyone in life who hasn't experienced some kind of loss. It's comforting to know that we are not alone in our sadness."

We have all been taught that "time heals all wounds." However, this is not the case.

Many people have "stuffed" their grief and kept it hidden for many years. There are people who have waited decades for the right "time to heal." The best time, though, is right now. Grief, of course, is the natural outcome of loss. So if someone is grieving, it is not a mental disorder or a personality problem.

Unresolved grief can cause some serious problems if it is not dealt with. It can drain a person of their energy or cause one to shut down emotionally. If not dealt with in a safe and secure environment, grieving people will hide their feelings and even isolate themselves.

During the Gold Star event, the attendees received some unique training, from *The Grief Recovery Handbook*. They went through the exercises outlined in the book and were encouraged to use them in dealing with their recovery over the loss of our brave Soldiers.

From the Grief Recovery Institute, located in Sherman Oaks, Calif., comes this quote, "If we could just see the arrow sticking out of peoples' hearts, we might respond a little differently."

OVER THE SHORE-PACIFIC STRIKE

By Kent Ambrose, 63rd RRC Staff Writer

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — Unloading thousands of pieces of equipment from Navy ships anchored in Camp Pendleton's off-shore waters would prove demanding. But doing it without the benefit of a fixed pier or port, added a whole



Staff Sgt. David Jones, detachment commander of the 291st Transportation Detachment, directs movement of rolling stock into the 'Pikes Market' staging area as it comes off the cargo ships.

new operational and logistics challenge.

It was a challenge which the 419th Quartermaster Battalion, 304th Sustainment Brigade, and other 63rd Regional Readiness Command transportation units took on recently, during an exercise called 2008 Joint Logistics Over the Shore-Pacific Strike.

The exercise, hosted at Camp Pendleton last year, provided for the movement of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division equipment.

From Navy ships off shore, cargo containers are ferried to the pier where they are picked up and re-loaded onto commercial trucks by Army Reservists operating Rough Terrain Container Handler vehicles, or RETCHs.



Sgt. 1st Class, Gwendolyn McGraw a 419th support operations specialist, trained on the Mobile Tracking System, a computer system which monitors shipment convoys while in route.

"It's an amazing program; because there are MTS devices also attached to the equipment in transit. I always know where the convoy is," said McGraw.

Uploaded in Hawaii

Originally uploaded in Hawaii and destined for the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, 63rd Soldiers working under the direction of the 8th Theater Sustainment Command, helped set up ship-to-shore operations by receiving, staging, moving and tracking the division's supplies and rolling stock.

Bringing together about 3,000 Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, including National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers from around the country, the exercise gives joint-service logistics planners the ability to unload vessels in severe environments using the Navy Elevated Causeway System, a mobile pier system that can be

assembled by Navy Seabees in a matter of days.

"In a tactical or humanitarian situation we may have to download a ship farther away from a port or berth, based on location - or perhaps in some other



Joint Task Force Public Affairs Officer, Lt. Col. Michael Donnelly, briefs a group of visiting civilian employers, invited by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, on JLOTS operations.

austere location. An exercise like JLOTS 2008 contributes significantly to our ability to do that mission anywhere in the world," said an exercise official.

The 25th Infantry Division's vehicles and containers, inventoried and secured by 63rd transportation Soldiers, were hauled by commercial truck and rail-car to the NTC, to be received by 3rd Brigade Combat Team troops in anticipation of their deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. Setting up tactical operations centers at the Life Support Area several miles inland, and forward operating bases on the beach, provided training opportunities for the 419th and other 63rd units; training essential in also preparing them for up coming deployments.

63rd RRC participating units:

**291 TC DET, 211 TC CO,
923 TC DET, 889 TC DET,
201 TC DET, 643 TC DET, 371 CSSB**

(Story material used from "Soldiers, Sailors Train Over the Shore," by Elizabeth M. Lorge, July 30, 2008.

(Army News Service); and "Soldiers, Sailors participate in JLOTS '08," by Sgt. Stephen Proctor (8th Theater Sustainment Command Public Affairs)

ARMY RESERVE DECLARES 2009 YEAR TO HONOR NCOs

By John D. Wagner and Kalen Smith,
63rd RRC PAO

For the Army Reserve, 2009 has been titled the Year of the NCO. The Army noncommissioned officer, ever the professional, is truly the background of the service and of military operations.

The 63rd RRC would like to honor three outstanding NCOs who have made a difference in the Army Reserve.



SGT. 1ST CLASS SYLVIA BOWENS

Sgt. 1st Class Sylvia Bowens is a human resources NCO assigned to the 63rd RRC Headquarters and Headquarters Company. She is also a medical boards NCO in charge who has helped more than 1,200 injured Soldiers get support and resolution to their medical cases since 2006.

"She has a very empathetic, professional and patient style, which is comforting to those being serviced by her," said Miny Wilkes, human resources specialist and Bowen's supervisor.

She has helped Soldiers with a plethora of issues including combat related injuries, psychological issues, cancer, asthma, digestive disorders and many others.

"Many of the Soldiers I help are unsure what their options are when confronted with a medical situation that limits their participation in the Army," she says.

"Some are scared and don't want to lose their jobs and others just want closure. Some are in chronic pain and others are at the end of their career and need assistance making the transition.

"I find fulfillment in helping get their situation resolved in the best interest of the Soldier and Army."



SGT. MARTIN ARCILLA

Sgt. Martin Arcilla recently took part in the grueling 63rd RRC Best Warrior Competition at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif. He spoke before a board of command sergeants major. He competed in physical training. He soldiered out in the field.

And he won as NCO of the Year for 2009.

"Being in the competition was destiny for me," said Arcilla, the 380th OCONUS Replacement Center Battalion, in Bothell, Wash., part of the 311th Expeditionary Sustainment Command. "I'm honored to represent my unit, and proud that I won."

Originally from the Philippines, Arcilla says he has wanted to be a Soldier since age 6, after he saw soldiers come through his village and save his family from rebel groups occupying the area. After that, he said he knew he wanted to join the Army, but he just never knew it would be the U.S. Army. He served on active duty and later joined the Reserve in 2006.

Arcilla trained very hard for the Best Warrior Competition.

"I worked out every day, alternating between different workouts. I did push ups and sit ups every day, and I ran with weights," said Arcilla, 32. "I was shocked when they called my name, because we weren't given scores, no hints at whether we won or not -- nothing."

Arcilla will advance to the Army Reserve Command national-level competition in July.



SGT. 1ST CLASS JONATHAN AMADOR

Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Amador did such a bang-up job as a detachment NCO in charge that he was promoted to a position normally given to master sergeants.

As detachment NCO for the 483rd Transportation Battalion, he seamlessly organized weapons qualification, counseling of Soldiers, nuclear-biological-chemical-defense training with protective masks, as well as the administrative "taskers" common to the Army.

For Amador, it was all about the Soldiers and building a better Army. His superiors took notice.

"My biggest motivation is taking the younger enlisted Soldiers and helping them grow into future NCOs and leaders in the military," he said. "They are the ones who are going to follow me so I want to give them all I can to make them successful."

Amador was soon promoted in February to first sergeant of the 481st Boat Company, Mare Island, Calif., though still as a sergeant first class. He is organizing training and leading his Soldiers with the same efficiency.

Amador was also deployed to Kuwait with the 211th Transportation Company in 2003-2004. He served as operations NCO at Kuwait Naval Base, overseeing equipment moving out of theater, and then NCO at an air base who was in charge of personnel moving in and out of Iraq.

8/40TH DESERT DRAGONS REUNITE

By Kent Ambrose, 63rd RRC Staff Writer



More than 60 Desert Dragons pose for a group picture during their second consecutive re-union at a picnic in Tucson, Ariz.

TUCSON, Ariz. — Under a warm, April sun and for a second year in a row, more than 60 veterans re-united along with their families and friends during a picnic at a park in Tucson, Ariz.

Chatting and laughing over barbecued ribs, potato salad and soft-drinks and wearing blue and white name tags, they caught up on current events. They also reminisced about their time serving together, as the 'Desert Dragons', in the 8th Battalion 40th Armor Regiment (8/40th), one of only two Army Reserve combat arms units established. In a de-activation ceremony, in June 1996, the 8/40th, a 63rd Regional Support Command unit, cased its colors, ending fifty years of active service.

"We had Desert Dragons that traveled from as far as Virginia, Missouri, Kansas, New Mexico and Texas to attend the reunion," said retired Col. Mike Stephany, a former commander of the 8/40th, and former command executive officer for the 63rd. During this, their second re-union, the Tankers some of whom served during World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam

conflicts, shared stories, looked at old photos and displayed their unit memorabilia.

On one table lay a 1980-something t-shirt emblazoned with the M-26 Tank and crossed-sabers insignia, brought by retired Staff Sgt. Dennis Fowler. Fowler stenciled shirts with the battalion crest for his comrades during his stint with the unit.

Originally, motivated after attending a meeting after a few monthly breakfasts with some battalion old-timers and listening to them swap "war stories" Stephany came up with the re-union brainchild in 2007. "I was particularly inspired after meeting retired Command Sgt. Maj. Dale Hughes, a World War-II combat veteran who saw action in North Africa," said Stephany.

Hughes served

Hughes served with the 8/40th from 1948-1980 in assignments culminating as the battalion command sergeant major.

"For our first reunion we had over 35 Desert Dragons and family members attend," said Stephany. "The opportunity to rekindle friendships was so well received that the suggestion to host more reunions was strongly supported by all," Hosting the reunion meant sending out hundreds of invitations across the country to original unit members and younger battalion alumni, including some like Sgt. 1st Class David Krzysik and Maj. Larry Leon, currently serving in the Army Reserve.

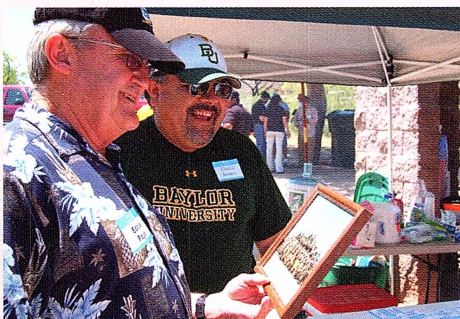
Gilbert Mejas joined the unit in 1961. "I came in as a private and left as the battalion command sergeant major in 1989," said Mejas. "I brought some of these guys

up." Yet, according to Mejas and the other tankers, long-time armor Soldiers, Dale Hughes, Vincent "Lucky" Luciano, Robert Lester and James Bayne, all veterans of World War-II and former Dragons, deserved the spot light.

With certificates of appreciation from the governor of Arizona, and coins from Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock, commander of the 63rd RRC, Stephany and re-union organizers recognized the veterans in a special ceremony. Sgt. Maj. Mark Papenfuss, a former Dragon, and currently the operations sergeant major to the Army Reserve

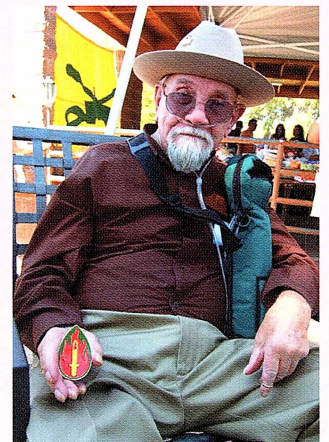
Command Sgt. Maj. Leon Caffie also presented the honorees with Caffie's coin.

"It was a real pleasure for me to have seen so many people in one place who brought back memories of long ago - what a fantastic group of men, and some women, who made up the 8/40th," said Stephany. "It is interesting how strong the bond remains for an Army Reserve unit inactivated more than 12 years ago".



Eddie Page and Arnold Romero talk about past adventures as they reminisce over an old "Dragon Battalion" group photograph.

Command Sgt. Maj., Robert V. Lester (Ret.), proudly displays the "Blood and Fire" insignia emblazoned on a 63rd RRC commander's coin he and three other WWII veterans were presented, on behalf of Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock.



A new beginning, a fond farewell; Command of 63rd RRC changes hands

By Sgt. Scott Akanewich, 63rd RRC Public Affairs

With the stroke of pen to paper on a sunny Southern California December day, Maj. Gen. Bruce A. Casella assumed command of the 63rd Regional Readiness

later the 377th Theater Support Command in Kuwait.

At the ceremony, evidence of camaraderie was the scene that took place out-

staff, who led the proceedings.

Next, Mock and Casella used a sword for the ceremonial cutting of a cake bearing an image of the 63rd "Flaming Blade" emblem. Soldiers and civilians munched down the treat to complete the reception. Mock then got into his pickup truck and made the drive down Lexington Avenue toward the front gate for the final time. A row of Soldiers lined both sides of the street, saluting and clapping to send Mock off into the sunset of retirement.

Casella, spoke enthusiastically of his new challenge and the additional assets he now has at his disposal.

"I see a lot of great things happening with everyone working together," said Casella. "One of my goals is to leverage everyone in the region among the different sections."

Casella also issued a mandate to his new staff.

"I need you guys to think out of the box a little," he said. "All of you need to work together - we're always looking forward."

In a lighter moment during the ceremony, Soldiers display to Maj. Gen. Mock t-shirts saying they "survived" his time as commander.



Maj. Gen. Paul Mock helps Maj. Gen. Bruce A. Casella cut the ceremonial cake signifying the assumption of command.

Command from retiring Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock.

It was an occasion that was a new beginning for one man and a melancholy farewell for the other.

Mock ended a distinguished 35-year Army Reserve career with a three-year stint leading the 63rd RRC and will be missed for his sense of humor as much as his leadership skills.

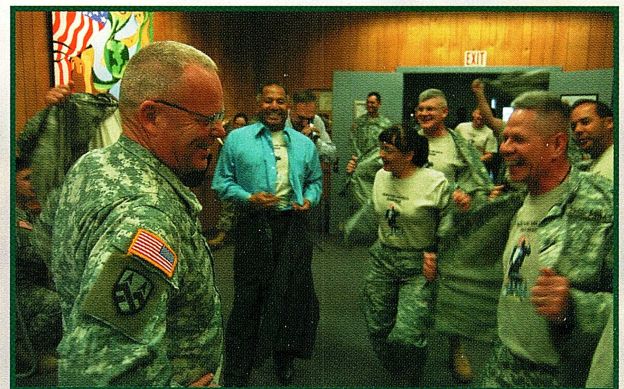
Casella came aboard with a distinguished record as a general officer and commander. He continues as commander of the 63rd Regional Support Command in Moffett Field, Calif. And like Mock, also previously commanded the 311th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and

side the boardroom immediately after the signing.

Mock emerged from the room to a round of "Auld Lang Syne" courtesy of the 300th Army Band, surrounded by his soon-to-be former comrades. He had no idea what was in store next.

Following the final note of the traditional New Year's Eve anthem, the band quickly adjusted fire and began belting out "The Stripper," to which Mock's staff started removing their ACU jackets to reveal t-shirts bearing an image of the general. Emblazoned across the front were the words "I Survived Gen. Mock."

The ringleader of the hi-jinx was Col. Susan Lee, chief of



Soldiers, friends celebrate Mock's career at lavish retirement dinner

By Sgt. Scott Akanewich, 63rd RRC Public Affairs

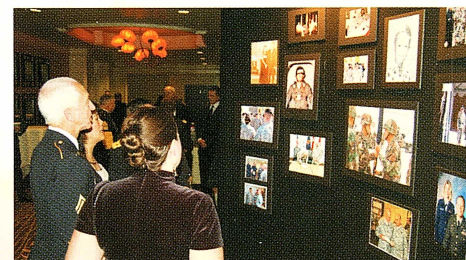


Maj. Gen. Mock gathers with family members. From left are son-in-law Air Force Capt. Clint Wahl holding son Austin, 2; daughter Tracy Wahl; son David Mock; wife Karen Mock; grandson Jacob Mock, 8; and Maj. Gen. Mock.

IRVINE, Calif.-In a lavish banquet with black and gold balloons overhead, punctuated with tasty food, humorous quips and fond memories, 63rd RRC said good-

As the evening wore on and the tributes were paid to Mock, it was evident this was a man cared for and liked by countless people and it was obvious the respect and admiration was mutual.

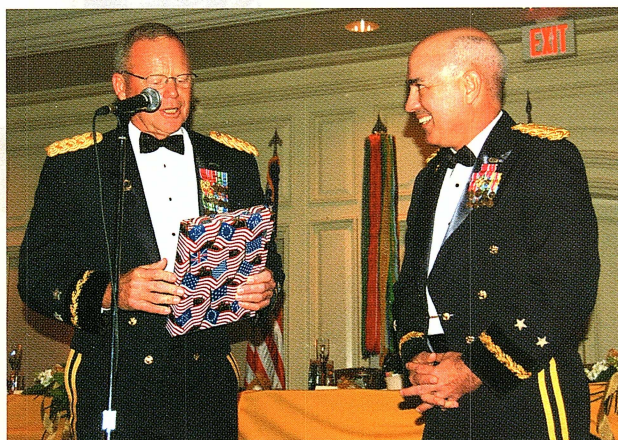
"It's been an honor and pleasure working for him," said Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Roberson, "He's a Soldier's Soldier." In a later humorous scene, Roberson announced "We'd like to welcome you to the 'Old Man's club' and presented him with a retirement rock-



years of camaraderie were re-lived through vivid storytelling and reminiscing about this colorful character's honorable path through life – personally and professionally.

Army musicians filled the festive room with music for the occasion, including the apt classic "Born to be Wild," a play on Mock's well-known passion for his Harley-Davidson, as well as his gregarious, outgoing persona that captured the hearts of so many over the years.

It was a fitting send off for a man who has dedicated his life to public service, protecting country and community. It was an honor well deserved.



Maj. Gen. Mock accepts a gift from Maj. Gen. Bruce Casella during the dinner.

bye to Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock.

The retirement dinner was held at the Hilton here and turned out to be a trip back through time for Mock. Displays adorned with photos from his military and personal life lined the hallway leading to the ballroom.

A seemingly never-ending line of people arrived to greet him from personal friends, as well as past and present colleagues from both the military and the Los Angeles Police Department, in which he spent his civilian career.

ing chair.

Handshakes and backslaps were exchanged, along with hearty laughter as



The 300th Army Band provided musical entertainment throughout the evening

Soldiers show vehicles, set up displays at Torrance Armed Forces Day

By Kent Ambrose, 63rd RRC Staff Writer

Regular participants, local Cub Scout troops relish in the parade's regalia, with some Scouts rendering salutes as military formations march by.



TORRANCE, Calif.-On a warm day in a major tribute to the armed forces, 63rd RRC Soldiers belted out band music, rumbled down the street in tactical vehicles and waved to the crowds in a jubilant mood.

The Annual Torrance Armed Forces Day Parade saw thousands of spectators come out to cheer marching units and see a wide array of vehicles and equipment roll by.

The 63rd had Soldiers and displays in the middle of the action this year and last

year. The Army Reserve 300th Army Band marched down the street playing catchy tunes.

The 163rd Ordnance Company last year drove Army fire trucks with sirens blaring and spraying water last year. This year the 582nd and 593rd engineer detachments (part of 163rd) had the honor.

"Whoever looked at us, we tried to hit them with misty spray," said Spc. Daniel Reyes, fire fighter with the 593rd. "They loved it. They wanted more."

The 222nd Broadcast Operations

Army Reservists from the 582nd and 593rd engineer detachments drive fire fighting trucks, blasting their water cannons while parade-goers also get a chance to cool off in the noon-day sun.

Detachment set up a DJ booth and mock television studio last year. Visitors could read news info and see themselves on camera.

"The hot day did nothing to diminish the enthusiasm of my team," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Williams, NCO in charge of the 222nd. "We were proud to be a part of the day."



63rd Army Reserve family wins AUSA 'Family of the Year' award

By Kent Ambrose, 63rd RRC Staff Writer



The Rallises gather for a family group photo at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, Calif. From left: Nick, Jessica, Sherry, Ron, Katrina and Justus.

Lt. Col. Ron Rallis, Sr., his wife Sherry and their five children, Ron Jr., Nick, Jessica, Katrina and Justus, live on the cutting edge of Army Family Programs.

Possessing qualities both endearing and valuable, the Rallises have contributed countless volunteer hours directly benefiting Soldiers and their families throughout the 63rd Regional Readiness Command and Army wide. Recently, The Association of the United States Army named them the Newell-Rubbermaid Family of the Year for 2008.

"We are extremely humbled by the award," says Sherry, a family programs advisor for the last 12 years. "The purpose of our service is to see Army Families become stronger, more self-reliant and to see them get access to their entitlements

Sherry Rallis, center, receives an Army Outstanding Civilian Service Medal by Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock and his wife Karen.



and benefits."

Jessica, 25, says her mother and her siblings have always been involved with whatever their father was doing in the Army. She recalls the family re-doing the white lines of a base parking lot and hanging wallpaper in offices during her dad's stint as the Headquarters and Headquarters Company commandant at the 63rd.

About Jessica

Currently Jessica is the 63rd's Army family team building coordinator. Ron and Sherry, as volunteers, answer to Jessica. "Turn-about is fair play," kids Jessica, who is also a talented singer and musician. "She's the best boss," replies Ron.

Katrina, 22, and Justus, 19, recount assembling hundreds of care packages on their living room floor, in assembly-line fashion, during the entire time their dad was deployed to Iraq in 2003.

"Dad would keep sending us names of troops who he thought needed to get a care package, so we kept making them," says Katrina, a dance instructor and choreographer. Justus, the family's technical guru, videographer-slash-sound technician, took it all in stride and thought it very cool to include toy Hot Wheels cars in the packages.

Ron and Sherry always believed in

their own family modeling, seeing the change for what they want to convey to others. A caption under Sherry's favorite family picture reads: "Patriotic service begins when the family is young."

"I never wanted my family to feel they had to sacrifice their dad while I served in the Army," says Ron. "I told Sherry in the beginning that our military service is going to be a family affair." For the Rallises, that meant including Nick, who has Down's Syndrome. Nick, who frequently attends conferences and Family Readiness Program events with his parents, is always eager to find someone who needs a hug or a pat on the back-and if it's your turn, a neck and shoulder rub.

Being Selected

In response to being selected as the AUSA Newell-Rubbermaid Family of the Year, a modest Ron says, "God gets the glory and my wife and kids get all the awards."

Ron and Sherry also give credit to Maj. Gen. Paul E. Mock, recently retired commander of 63rd RRC, his wife Karen, 63rd Family Programs Director Gil Martin and his staff for their support and providing them the opportunity to serve.

The criteria for selection as the AUSA Family of the Year Award is demanding. For example, the family must be active volunteers and one or more members must have volunteered for a minimum of two years for community, installation or unit programs. Additionally, the family must have been recognized by previous volunteer or service awards.

The Rallises, were chosen out of a broad base of eligible participants, nominated by committee members from 125 regional AUSA chapters around the world, from the Active Duty, National Guard, Army Reserve, Retirees and Army civilian families.

Army Reserve ambassador emphasizes selfless service

By Kent Ambrose, 63rd RRC Staff Writer

Campbell, Calif. native Dan Furtado grew up laboring on his family's Santa Clara County ranch and giving back to the community in which he thrived. An appreciation for hard work and service to others helped to define him.

"Every person shares a level of responsibility to society," he says. "We each have to do our part. I've always felt a sense of volunteerism."

His sense of social commitment and conscientiousness has led Furtado to success in several career fields – as lecturer in medicine and pharmacology at Stanford University, as mayor of Campbell in 1999 and 2003, and as a colonel (retired) in the Army Medical Corps with 40 years of service.

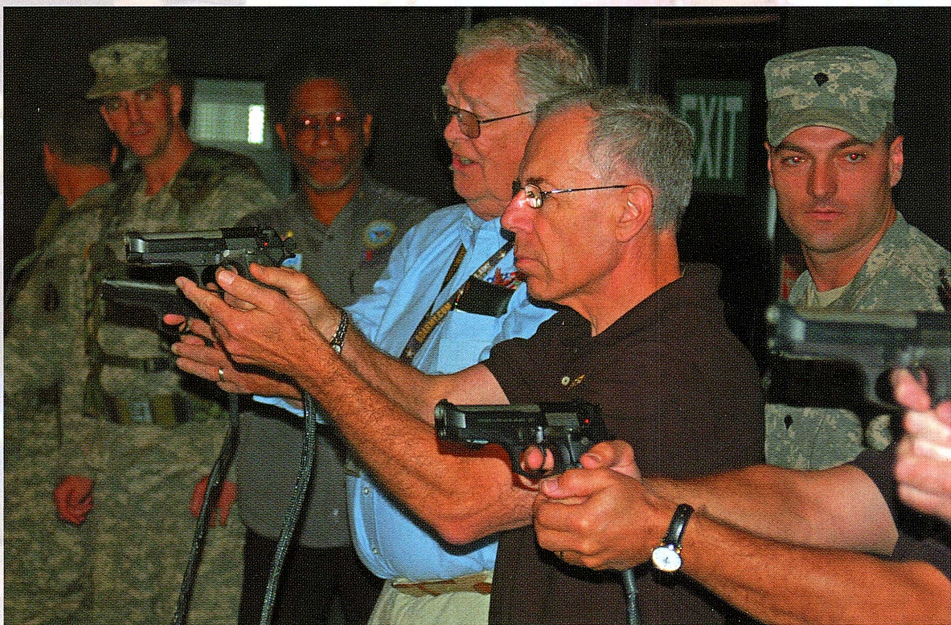
Touting his resume of extensive military and public service, Furtado was selected in 1996 as an Army Reserve ambassador for the then-63rd Regional Support Command.

Since then, he has sought to help and honor veterans, visit Wounded Warriors, assist the families of deployed Reservists, improve medical support to Soldiers, stress better Army Reserve-employer relations and take on recruiting issues and challenges. His activities cover the San Francisco Bay area and northern California.

"It has been very important to me to



Ambassador Dan Furtado rests during the Pacific Warrior exercise at Fort Hunter Liggett.



Ambassador Dan Furtado trains with 9mm pistol at an inside range at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif. during the Pacific Warrior Exercise.

live my life according to the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage," says Furtado, former commander of the 5th Brigade, 104th Division in Salt Lake City.

While enrolled in a compulsory Reserve Officer Training Corps program at San Jose State University, Furtado joined the Army Reserve in 1963. ROTC had a positive impact on Furtado, giving him an appreciation for the military.

Earns bachelor's

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in applied sciences and arts, the newly commissioned second lieutenant began a doctor of pharmacology degree program. Upon receiving his doctorate in 1969, Furtado was ready to fulfill his two-year Active Army obligation.

"I thought I would be assigned to Brooke Army Medical Center (at Fort Sam Houston, Texas) as a pharmacist," he said. "Instead I was given an instructor position in pathophysiology at the U.S. Army Medical Field Service School (in Carlisle Barracks, Pa.)."

Furtado said that his teaching position at the school opened doors, encouraging

him to pursue opportunities in teaching and education.

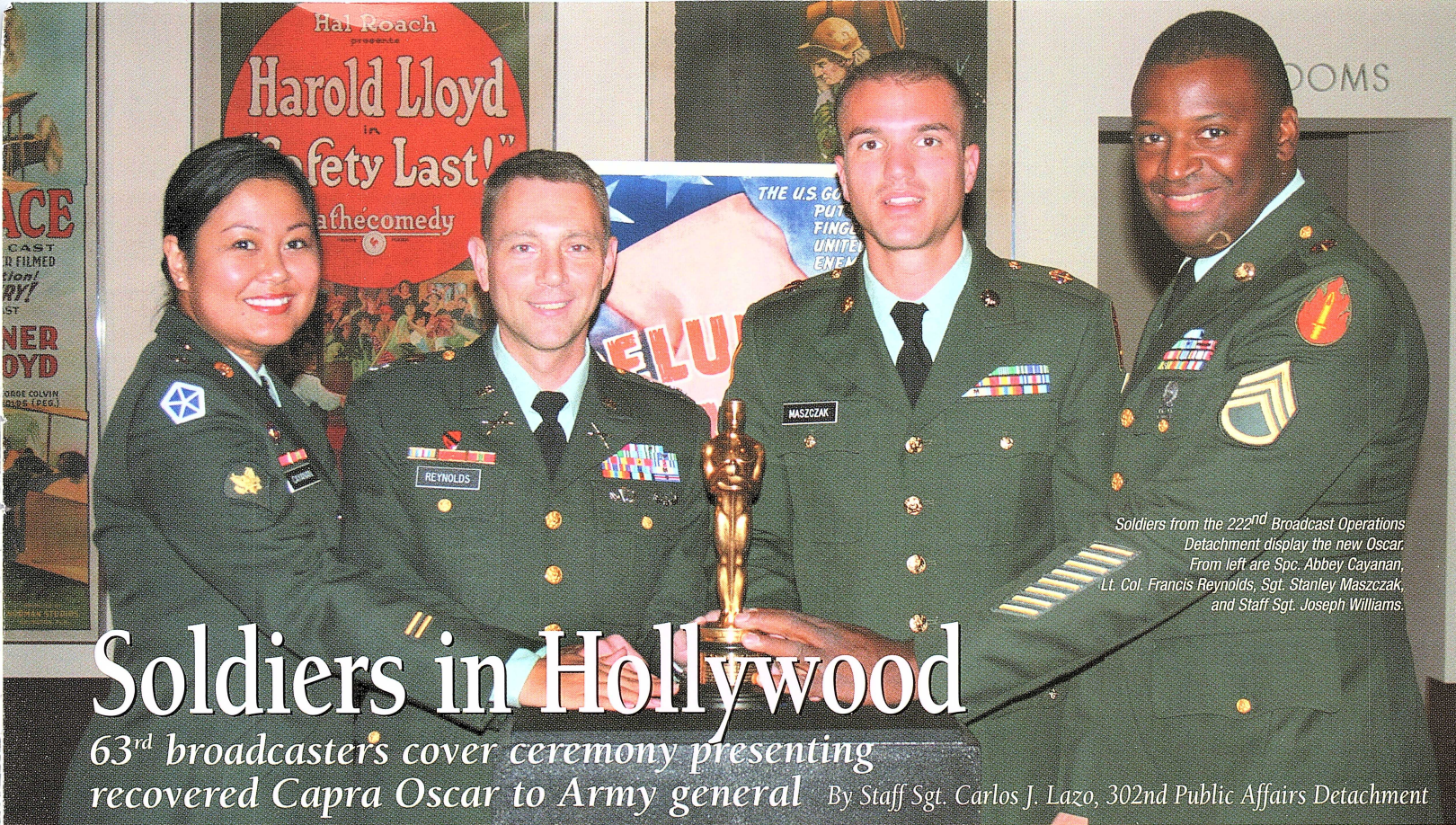
His upbeat attitude on life is also exemplified in his best-in-his-age-category, marathon runner and spokesperson for the American Heart Association.

"Balancing our mental, spiritual and physical health should help us put things in perspective," says Furtado.

Furtado points out that "not all of life is supposed to be exciting" - but more importantly, that how a person contributes to society, whether as a Soldier in the Army Reserve or in some other capacity, can add to an individual's self-worth. He also says that bridging the gap between personal goals and community awareness is based on different needs and priorities, but anyone can find a role to fill.

Furtado is also hopeful about the future of the Army and the Army Reserve.

"We have a very engaged and robust Reserve force which integrates the military with the civilian community, providing perspective and fostering a healthy, mutual respect," he said. "It's good for the military and the civilian community to listen to one another."



Soldiers from the 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment display the new Oscar. From left are Spc. Abbey Cayanan, Lt. Col. Francis Reynolds, Sgt. Stanley Maszczak, and Staff Sgt. Joseph Williams.

Soldiers in Hollywood

63rd broadcasters cover ceremony presenting recovered Capra Oscar to Army general By Staff Sgt. Carlos J. Lazo, 302nd Public Affairs Detachment

HOLLYWOOD, Calif.-In this world famous town of matinee starlets, movie moguls and broken dreams, the Army recently made Oscar history. It was a piece of closure for a statuette thought gone for good. And Soldiers from the 222nd Broadcast Operations Detachment were right there to record the event for all to remember.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences re-presented a recovered Oscar award to Army officials Sept. 3 in a ceremony at the Linwood Dunn Theater here for Maj. Frank Capra's 1942 documentary "Prelude to War." The film explained to the American people why their nation was in World War II.

Accepting the award, actually a valuable duplicate, was Brig. Gen. Jeffrey E. Phillips, deputy chief of Army Public Affairs. "Thank you...for seeing this award back to its place, in the hands of the Army and the Soldiers," he said. Sid Ganis, academy president, made the presentation.

Soldiers from the 222nd attending the event included Lt. Col. F. Lee Reynolds, Spc. Abbey Cayanan, Staff Sgt. Joseph Williams and Sgt. Stanley Maszczak.

The ceremony was held because Capra's production, chosen for Best

Documentary in 1942, only received a plaster plaque then, due to a shortage of metals during the war years. After the war, the Academy replaced the plaster awards with genuine shining gold Oscars. The award for Capra is still in his family's care but was not formally given, said Academy officials. In 1958, the Department of Defense contacted the Academy and requested a duplicate award for display in a special exhibition, said Ganis. The Academy approved and another statuette, with the same engraved citation and bearing the serial number 827, was given to Defense officials.

After the Exhibition

The statuette was displayed at the Army Pictorial Center in New York. After the center closed in 1970, the statuette disappeared until earlier this year when Christie's Auction House posted an Oscar for sale, bearing the serial number 827.

When the Academy notified the auction house, Christie's returned the award to be officially re-presented to the Army. In a ceremonial gesture, Phillips passed the gleaming award to Spc. Ashleigh Torres, broadcast specialist with the 222nd. He said Torres "represents the future of the Army."

Torres praised Capra for his dedication and patriotism.

"It sets a great example to anyone who is in the public affairs field," she said. "We're here to tell the Soldiers' stories...That's what he did and he got awarded for it. And we should all look up to him."

"Prelude to War" was produced by Capra's U.S. Army filmmaking unit in 1942 and was the first film of a seven-part series titled "Why We Fight," aimed at demonstrating to troops and to the American population, the reasons for America's involvement in the war.

Commissioned by then Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, it became required viewing for all troops overseas after its release and was submitted to the Academy by Capra for consideration in the new documentary category.

The 222nd also covered the Emmy Award ceremony interviewing many celebrities offering greetings and hope for the service members.



Reserve boat Soldiers help Active Army divers clean up Puget Sound waters

By Pam Garrison, 70th RRC Public Affairs Office

PUGET SOUND, Wash.—Piloting boats in weather ranging from sunny days to pouring rain, about 50 Army Reserve Soldiers worked with Active Army divers in a team effort to clean out hundreds of tires polluting the waterway here.

The tires had been placed in the Sound about 30 years earlier for a reef. The Army Reserve boats transported divers and served as platforms. The removal mission, dredging up the tires in August, took about a week.

Watercraft operator Spc. Joel Simienczuk, of the 175th Transportation Company, gazed at a pile of tires.

“That’s the biggest load we’ve had yet,” he said. “Yesterday we only had 17 but the divers are kind of getting into their groove now.”

Soldiers from the Army Reserve’s Pier 23 units in Tacoma — the 175th, the 709th, and 467th transportation companies — manned the Landing Craft Utility 2000, named the Malvern Hill. They also piloted two Landing Craft Mechanized-8s, or “Mike” boats.

The Malvern Hill is 170 feet long and 40 feet wide. The Mike boats are smaller and have limited space below decks. The divers used the Malvern Hill as a “base” to



Soldiers lower dredged tires onto an Army boat during an operation to clean up Puget Sound.

prepare for dives and the Mike boats to carry the tires to a site on shore for disposal.

The Army Reserve Soldiers assisted the active-duty Army divers who arrived to help Northwest agencies remove an artificial reef of tires from Saltwater Park near Seattle in August. Wildlife didn’t grow well on the artificial reef, nor were other forms of life attracted to them, and they were found to exude toxic substances. They had to come out.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife sponsored the plan submitted as a training request for the Army’s help. Once approved, the Northwest Straits Commission coordinated all the pieces that came together in August at Saltwater Park near Des Moines, Wash., halfway between Seattle and Tacoma, to remove about 300 tires in 50 to 60 feet of water, spanning 55 acres.

“Our job now is to go down, retrieve all the tires,” said Daniel Weber, from the 544th Engineer Dive Team out of Fort Eustis, Va. Weber is a diver in training. “We’re taking lift bags, lines, running lines through the bunch of tires, roping it together, lifting it up to the surface, bringing them around to the boat, bringing them up to the crane and recovering the artificial reef.”

Twenty of the Reservists then traveled to clear abandoned fishing nets from Deception Pass State Park, located at the northern end of Whidbey Island, through September.

“They did a fantastic job,” said Lt. Jose Alfaro, commander of the 709th. “This mission could not have occurred without the Reserve.”



Army Reserve boat experts stand ready for action during the clean-up mission.

Father and son serve side by side with truck unit in Kuwait

By Sgt. Tracy Ellingsen, 311th Expeditionary Sustainment Command

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait — Spc. Lylevalentine McMackin didn't have to call back to the United States to talk to his dad for Father's Day. He didn't even have to drop a card in the mailbox or send off an e-mail.

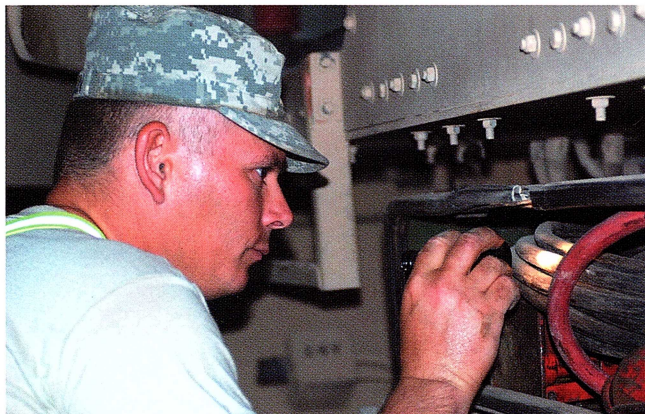
No, this Father's Day McMackin shot hoops with his father, Sgt. Frank McMackin, like they do almost every Sunday. Only this year, they played on a court in Kuwait while deployed supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The McMackins are both assigned to

“On the surface it seems like it would be a problem having father and son in the same platoon, but I've never had a problem, which speaks a great volume on their character,” said Sgt. 1st Class Cory Comeau, their platoon sergeant.

“Big Mack,” as Sgt. McMackin is called, is currently on his second deployment in the Global War on Terrorism. He deployed in 2006 to Iraq where he ran gun trucks for a year. In his civilian job, he works as a truck dispatcher for the Carl's Jr. company in Ontario, Calif. He lives in Anaheim, Calif., with his wife and with his daughter Chayla. His son, known as “Little Mack,” is the last of his three sons to be deployed to the Middle East.

“The others have all been here,” said Sgt. McMackin, speaking of his sons Spc. Devinshaw and Sgt.

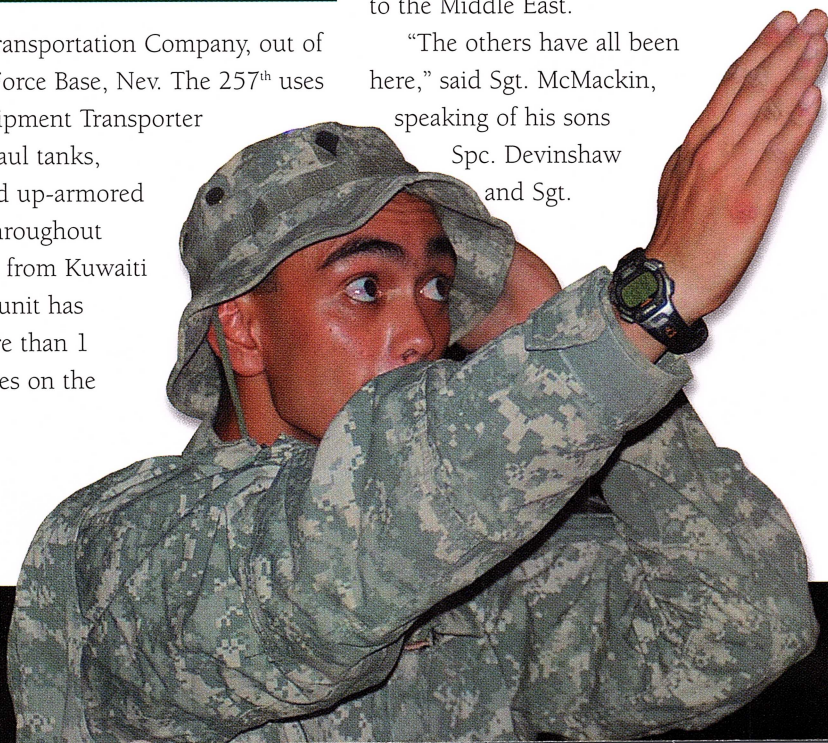


Sgt. Frank McMackin engages in maintenance during Kuwait duty.



Sgt. Frank McMackin, left, and his son Spc. Lylevalentine McMackin both deployed together with their unit for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

the 257th Transportation Company, out of Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The 257th uses Heavy Equipment Transporter trucks to haul tanks, artillery and up-armored humvees throughout Iraq to and from Kuwaiti ports. The unit has logged more than 1 million miles on the road.



Charles McMackin, both active duty infantrymen. “He is the last one.” The challenges of being homesick and missing family that affect many Soldiers are less prevalent among the McMackins.

Hang out

“Once in a while we'll hang out, go to the PX, play volleyball, play basketball,” said Spc. McMackin. “When it's me and my two brothers and my dad at home we play basketball every Sunday.”

But along with the benefits of being deployed together, this year is also proving to have some challenges. Unlike family members back home who don't know the day-to-day operations of their loved ones who are deployed, the McMackins know the dangers and the risks because they are both exposed to them.

“When we come back from a mission, I don't have to call home,” Spc. McMackin said. “I can just go talk to my dad.” The two are never sent out on convoys together and sometimes end up going days or weeks at a time with no contact. “I don't ask questions when he's gone,” said Sgt. McMackin. “I trust the guys he is with.”

(Editor's Note: The 257th returned home in February.)

Friends with the 56th MPs: Soldiers visit third-grade pen pals

By Kent Ambrose,
63rd RRC PAO

SOUTH GATE, Calif., — Returning from a morning assembly, Antonio Diaz and his third-grade students walked quietly down a hall and into their classroom. Awaiting them, seven Army Reserve Soldiers, wearing camouflage uniforms, stood at parade-rest amidst all the trappings of a real party.

Flags, balloons and table settings of patriotic colors, the smell of pepperoni pizza, cake and fruit punch, and half-a dozen school officials to one side did not complete the sensory experience. The event was held at Bryson Elementary School.

A few seconds later, news reporters, intent on capturing what was arranged as a surprise meeting between Diaz, his students and their pen-pal-members of the 56th Military Police Company, recently returned from duty in Iraq—surrounded them, armed with cameras, microphones and note pads.

“This was a déjà-vu experience for me,” exclaimed Spc. Carlos Real. “In 1991 my fifth-grade teacher’s son came back from the Gulf War and came to visit us—we also had a pizza party just like today—he was a role model for me and the other kids then.”

The festivity, a culmination of a year-long correspondence between Diaz’s class and the MPs, started out as a simple writ-



Kent Ambrose

Soldiers with the 56th MP Company observe students who sent letters to them while Soldiers were in Iraq.

ing lesson. “Our objective was for them to learn how to write a friendly letter. In the past I have had my students write to imaginary subjects or their family members,” said Diaz. “It was Wanda Ogle-Zipperian, one of my parent volunteers, who came up with the great idea of writing to Soldiers,” said Diaz.

Daughter Morgan

Zipperian, whose daughter, Morgan, is also Diaz’s student, explained. “Our children do not always hear what is going on or understand about the war or our Soldiers, so I suggested to Mr. Diaz that the kids write to the troops. He agreed.”

Diaz and Zipperian chose the 56th MPs, a part of the 63rd Regional Readiness Command, based in Phoenix, after learn-

ing that the unit was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Zipperian made contact with company 1st Sgt. Kenneth Juede, explaining their intent. “He was wonderful,” said Zipperian. “He really helped out on his end to make this happen while he and the Soldiers were so busy and doing dangerous missions.”

Throughout the 56th’s deployment, Diaz and Zipperian would assist the students in writing letters and putting together care packages for the MPs.

“We put in things like M&Ms, potato chips, candy bars. Even, a local 7-Eleven store donated five-dollar gift certificates to each student so they could purchase items for the Soldiers,” said Diaz. “Some of the kids brought stuff from home as well, like baked cookies.”

Included in the care packages were letters addressed to individual Soldiers. Spc. Daniel Torres-Garcia received a letter from student Javier Zamora.

“It’s nice to know it’s not only your family that cares for you, but these kids care about us, too.”

Torres-Garcia corresponded with Javier. “I asked him about things like, what he likes about school and what he’s doing in his class,” he said.



Kent Ambrose

The Soldiers socialize with students during the school celebration

ARMY BRIEFS

California State Tax Forms Offer Option to Help Army Reserve families

A new law in California offers taxpayers the option of contributing to a fund that assists Army Reserve families in financial need.

The new option, called the California Military Family Relief Fund (CMFRF under AB 3016) expands use of the fund, which previously was used exclusively to aid National Guard families.

The new fund allows Californians to help financially strapped families of Army Reservists and those of other Reserve branches as well. Recipient families would receive grants they do not have to repay.

Financial support would be provided to qualified families on the basis of established need and availability of funds. The fund can only provide this assistance from voluntary contributions each year by California taxpayers who want to support Army Reserve families.

How do you help? By voluntarily checking off box 61 and donating a specific amount on California state tax forms 540 or 540A or box 26 on form 540 2EZ.

Implementation procedures and regulations are under development. An announcement will be made when applications are being accepted.

New GI Bill offers benefits for Reservists called up for 9/11 mobilizations

The new GI bill recently signed into law boasts the most comprehensive education benefits since the original GI bill was adopted in 1944. The bill gives Reserve and National Guard Soldiers access who have been activated for more than 90 days since Sept. 11, 2001.

Many veterans who served after Sept. 11, 2001 will get full tuition and fees, a new monthly housing stipend and more money for books and supplies.

The program also offers up to \$1,000 a year for books and supplies needed and \$100 a month for tutoring. Soldiers can use the new GI bill up to 15 years after being honorably discharged or retiring.

The amount of tuition and stipends paid under the new bill will vary depending on state of residence, number of units taken and amount of post-Sept. 11, 2001 active-duty service. The percentage of payment ranges from 100 percent for 36 or more months service, to 70 percent for 18 months, down to 40 percent for 90 days

but less than six months.

A housing allowance will be made available to prior-service Soldiers attending as civilians. The rate would be that of a staff sergeant with family members.

For more information please talk to your unit education counselor.

Gates approves plan to end Army's 'Stop Loss'

WASHINGTON – The Army will phase out use of the so-called “stop-loss” program between now and January, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said.

Since the beginning of his term as defense secretary, Gates has called on the services to eliminate their dependence on the controversial program that allows the involuntary extension of service members' active duty past the scheduled end of their term of service.

The Army currently has 13,000 Soldiers whose active duty status was extended through the program so they could deploy with their units. The Army is the only service using the program.

The secretary said there will always be the need to hold a few people in the service, but it should be a small number. “I would like to get it down to scores, not thousands,” he said. The secretary's decision will eliminate the use of stop-loss for deploying Soldiers.

“Effective this August, the U.S. Army Reserve will no longer mobilize units under stop-loss,” Gates said. “The Army National Guard will stop doing so in September, and active Army units will cease employing stop-loss in January.”

The goal is to cut the number of Soldiers remaining in the Army under stop-loss by 50 percent by June 2010 and to near zero by March 2011. “We will retain the authority to use stop-loss under extraordinary circumstances,” Gates said.

The Army will put in place a number of incentives to encourage soldiers to voluntarily extend their enlistments to mitigate the impact the decision will have on unit cohesion and strength. The Army is now paying stop-lossed Soldiers \$500 a month. The program is retroactive to Oct. 1, when Congress passed the law permitting the payments.

The Army is able to make this move because of three reasons, Army officials said: the changing conditions in Iraq, a new unit rotation program that is being put in place, and the increase in the size of the Army. Over the next 18 months, the draw-

down in Iraq will far outnumber the increase in Afghanistan, Gates said.

Employees have rights to union rep present during discipline interview

Many of the same rights afforded workers in the corporate sector are available to government employees, as well.

You just have to know what they are. The Weingarten Rights were enacted into law by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1975. They remain to this day, a procedure through which any federal employee being interviewed during an investigation into possible wrongdoing is entitled to have a union representative during the questioning.

Employers can conduct investigative interviews when they have reason or cause to believe disciplinary action is warranted against alleged employee misconduct.

This is where the Weingarten Rights come into play.

If the employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or other adverse consequences may result from something they may say during this interview process, the employee is entitled to request union representation.

At this point in the proceedings, management has three options once union representation is requested by the employee: 1) It can stop the questioning process until the union rep arrives; 2) It can call off the interview; or 3) It can tell the employee it will call off the interview unless the employee voluntarily gives up his or her rights to union representation (an option the employee should always refuse).

The union rep is there as more than an observer. The Supreme Court decision recognizes the right of the union representative to actively participate in the interview process by assisting and counseling the employee. The rep must be briefed on what the accusations are and has the right to intervene if he or she believes the employer is attempting to deliberately confuse or intimidate the employee during the interview. The employee may also meet privately with the union rep before the interview begins.

Keep in mind, though, the rep cannot speak on the employee's behalf during the interview, but can advise the employee how to answer questions. In addition, the representative can add information after the interview to support the employee's case.

63rd holds Suicide Prevention 'Stand down'; Instructor: 'Pay attention to Soldiers who are having problems'

By John D. Wagner, 63rd RRC PAO

The Soldier in Iraq had been hit with too much. His fiancé sent him a vague "Dear John" letter and left him; next he learned she was pregnant by someone else; then his "friend" had cleaned out his bank account.

The Soldier had serious thoughts of ending his life.

"What should he do?" exclaimed Capt. Erik McCall, HHC commander, 63rd RRC to a crowd of Soldiers.

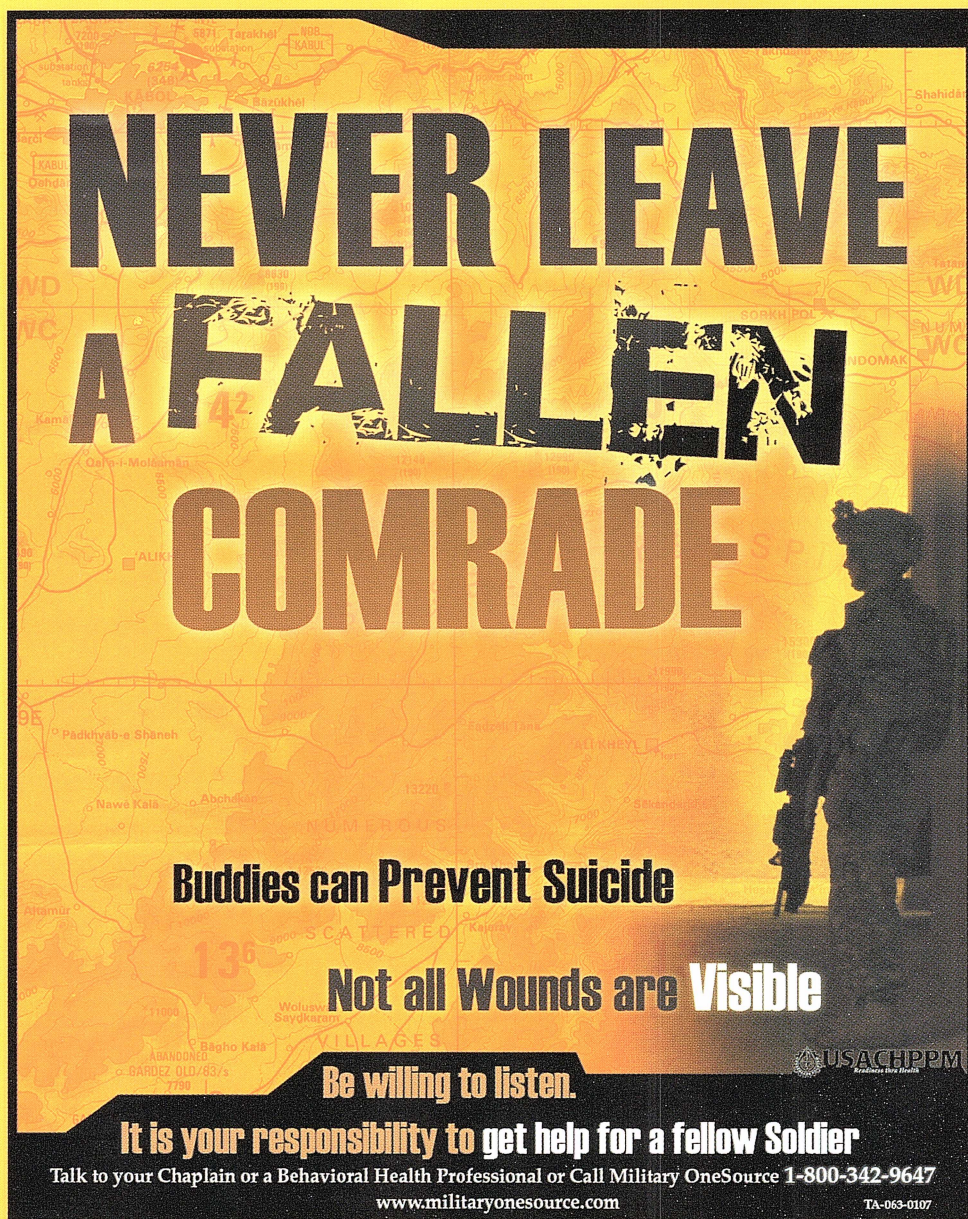
"Talk it out with somebody," a Soldier in the audience said.

McCall was leading a video briefing with real-life scenarios, to combat a serious problem: suicides in the Army are at an all-time high. Last year, 27 Soldiers in the Reserve and 128 in the Active Army took their lives.

To cope with the epidemic, the Army Reserve has ordered a three-phase stand-down of in-depth training for suicide prevention. The program is for Soldiers, civilian employees and family members.

Phase 1 lasted from Feb. 15 to March 15. Commanders conducted mandatory training for Soldiers and civilians, using what is called the "Beyond the Front" interactive video. Each showed the story of a troubled Soldier with three choices given to the audience at every key step.

Those at the training also learned about signs of potential suicide: giving away property, talk or hinting of ending one's life, broken relationships, acting bizarre or



**NEVER LEAVE
A FALLEN
COMRADE**

Buddies can Prevent Suicide

Not all Wounds are Visible

Be willing to listen.

It is your responsibility to get help for a fellow Soldier

Talk to your Chaplain or a Behavioral Health Professional or Call Military OneSource **1-800-342-9647**
www.militaryonesource.com

USACHPPM
TA-063-0107

unusual in a stressful situation, financial difficulty, and a history of substance abuse.

McCall emphasized that Soldiers need to watch out for each other and be observant.

"This is a new part of our duty-to pay attention to soldiers having problems," he said.

"There is no end to this mission."

He said this connects with the Army Values of duty, selfless service and personal courage.

"We are going the extra mile" by watching out for our buddies, McCall said.

Those attending also receive cards with the acronym ACE:

Ask your buddy: "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

Care for your buddy and remove anything he could use to harm himself.

Escort your buddy to the chain of command, chaplain or a mental health professional.

"This is a new part of our duty," said McCall, who led the first session in March.

Phase II is a chain teaching from March 15 to July 15. Those supervisors who go to Phase I, lead sessions for Soldiers, civilians and family members.

Phase III began Feb. 15, runs concurrently with Phases 1 and 2 and involves permanent annual training in suicide prevention. Commanders will also make such training available to Family Readiness groups.

The Dangers of Drinking and Driving: Las Vegas Soldier pays terrible price for DUI

By Jeff Harris
63rd RRC Safety Office

“Now the Army is a team. It lives, eats, sleeps, fights as a team. This individuality stuff is a bunch of crap,” George C. Scott in Patton (1970), directed by Franklin Schaffer.

Joining the Army, belonging to the Army, and working in the Army, feels pretty good. It's a great organization; it trains and provides a professional environment. So what happens when you believe that you are indestructible and feeling like you can survive anything?

A young 63rd RRC Soldier learned a lesson in 2007, the hard way. An off duty 19-year-old private first class Reserve Soldier sped through a stop sign in northwest Las Vegas, going about 80 mph in a 35 mph zone, slamming his truck into a Mercedes sport utility vehicle. He killed five people

ages 32, 1, 8, 11, 18 months, and seriously injured three others. The off-duty Soldier had more than twice the legal blood-alcohol limit, and at the time of the accident, was driving from a party to get cigarettes.

Although the crash was catastrophic for the family inside the Mercedes, the Soldier walked away from it with minor injuries.

The district judge recently sentenced Pfc. Ronald Jayne to 15 to 45 years in prison and ordered him to pay more than \$200,000 in restitution to the crash victims. Jayne, standing before the judge, said in court, “I want to tell all of you that I am so sorry for what I did. It was horrible. I'll never forget the shock of that night and the horror. And I know I caused that.”

Accidents don't happen in a vacuum – the key element is almost always people.

That night may not have been the first time the Soldier had a drink and drove – but it was the last time.

Our Army's strength comes through being a unified Army, a professional team. When people look, they see an Army. No one stands alone. Leaders are engaged and every person is looking out and taking accountability for the person next to them on and off duty.

What can you do? Do the right thing. If you intend to drink, designate a friend or battle buddy to drive. If you see a friend or battle buddy who has had too much alcohol, take their keys and drive them home. Bad consequences follow bad choices. Choices are a matter of will, not random chance.

Friends don't let friends drive drunk! Take the keys! Army safe is Army Strong.

Losses

- A Soldier was killed and another injured in a vehicle accident February 14 at approximately 0310 local in Nashville, Tenn. The Soldier was driving his 2006 BMW M3 at a high rate of speed when he lost control of the vehicle, causing it to leave the roadway, overturn, impact a tree and catch on fire. The passenger escaped with injuries. Initial reports indicate that alcohol was a contributing factor.
- A Soldier was killed in a motorcycle accident February 14 at approximately 2015 local near Kailua, Hawaii. The Soldier was operating a 2001 Harley-Davidson at a high rate of speed when he lost control of the motorcycle in a tight curve and hit a curb and concrete rail, causing him to be ejected. The Soldier was licensed, wearing all required personal protective equipment and had completed an Army-approved Motorcycle Safety Foundation course.
- A Soldier died February 8 from injuries sustained in a vehicle accident February 7 at approximately 2100 local near Mount Airy, N.C. The Soldier was driving his 1996 Toyota Tacoma pickup truck when he overcorrected, exited the roadway, struck an embankment and overturned. The Soldier was not wearing his seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle.
- A Soldier and his wife were found dead in their home February 16 in Bourbonnais, Ill. The Soldier and his wife were apparently overcome by carbon monoxide and died.

Safety Reflection
• Soldiers' risk assessments not only affect their own well-being, but also that of their friends and Families. Soldiers must continually implement the five principles of composite risk management to successfully mitigate risk and reduce the likelihood of being killed in an accident.

Get RISK? <https://safety.army.mil>

PLRS
**Preliminary
LOSS REPORTS**
for the week of February 12-18, 2009

4
U.S. SOLDIERS
DIED IN
ACCIDENTS
• 1 Soldier Injured

ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG

U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER



Capt. Erik McCall, commander of HHC 63rd RRC, and 1st Sgt. Kenneth Rempel, first sergeant of HHC, lead Maj. Gen. Mock's truck while departing after retirement ceremony.

☆☆ Thank you Maj. Gen. Mock! ☆☆