

The Bluegrass Guard



Volume Eight, Issue Five

serving the men and women of Kentucky's Army and Air National Guard

March 2004

***Train as you fight,
fight as you train!***

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receives Bronze Star

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Regional Training Center
Photo by Staff Sgt. David W. Altom

A message from *The Top*

First off I want to tell each and every one of you how proud I am to be associated with the dedicated and professional Soldiers of the Kentucky Army National Guard. You are, without question, the best trained and most able Soldiers in the entire Army National Guard inventory. You have risen to and surpassed every task laid before you, and I am humbled to be associated with you. But let me also say that as good as we are, we can be better.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Our job is to provide the President and the Governor with units that are fully mission capable. By retaining the great Soldiers we have and recruiting new Soldiers, we can do this without having to cross-level Soldiers into other units. Cross-leveling is an unfortunate by product of not having enough manpower. The only way to fix this is to recruit and retain. Talk to your friends and have them check out the Guard. Ours is an elite service organization – the only dual status organization in the entire military – and we are the organization of choice when there is trouble at home or abroad. Challenge your friends to join us and become one of the best of the best.

TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL PROFICIENCY

This should be the number one goal of each and every Soldier in the Kentucky Guard. You must be skilled in the basic Soldier skills. Know your Common Tasks like you know the back of your hand. Take one hour every month prior to coming to drill to brush up on the Soldier skills you will need for that weekend. Know your individual weapon inside and out. Familiar-



ize with it as often as possible. And above all else, challenge your leaders to make training meaningful and realistic! Let them know you want to train hard!

PHYSICAL READINESS

I know that it is difficult to maintain a personal physical routine, but it can be done. If you would take thirty minutes every other day to do some sort of physical activity, it would keep you in good enough shape to do anything you wanted. Perform a mini-APFT every other day, doing as many pushups as you can in two minutes, then sit-ups, then run two miles. Just this small amount will greatly enhance your physical and mental health and it doesn't take any time at all.

Also, make sure you see the doctor for an annual check-up. Thanks to professional organizations such as the Enlisted

Association (EANGUS), Association of the US Army (AUSA) and the Non-Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA), TRICARE is available for those of you who don't have health insurance. Take advantage of this and see your doctor for routine checkups. You can't fight if you aren't fit!

FAMILY READINESS

You can't focus on the task at hand if you don't know your family affairs are in order when you are on the battlefield. A Soldier who has problems at home is a Soldier who makes mistakes. Get your family to attend your unit's Family Readiness Group meetings. Don't wait until you're deployed. Start now! Make sure they have the number to the Family Assistance Center (1-800-372-7601, Option #1). Talk to your chain of command or go online and check out the benefits that are available to you and your family. I also urge you to join any of the professional organizations listed above and support their fight to get you more benefits.

BOTTOM LINE

Keep yourself ready at all times. Recent history has shown that mobilizations can happen at any time and without warning. Stay fit, stay trained and prepare your family. If you have any questions that you need answered, use your chain of command. If that fails, contact me at the email address below.

God bless each of you and this great nation of ours. **HOOAH!!!**

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The Bluegrass Guard

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Guardsmen returns to the Bluegrass wearing Bronze Star

Story by Pfc. Charles L. Westmoreland
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Kentucky Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer Stanley Searcy has been awarded the Bronze Star for his accomplishments during a six-month tour of duty in Afghanistan.

Searcy left the comfort of home, friends, and family, as well as the safety and stability he had known for 12 years while working as a maintenance technician for STARC Headquarters, when his technical expertise was beckoned. When the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, based out of Fort Irwin, Calif., deployed a detachment to train the Afghan National Army, Searcy volunteered to accompany the "Blackhorse" Regiment as their chief of maintenance operations from May to December of last year.

While in Kentucky Searcy was one of the KYARNG's senior maintenance advisors. He spent his days conducting drivers' training, fixing equipment problems, and helping units prepare for mobilization. For a veteran like Searcy, his position was routine and often predictable. While working in Afghanistan 15 miles south of Kabul, his life was anything but.

Repairing salvaged T-62 tanks that were manufactured during the 1960's became the new routine. Searcy and his team were responsible for turning more than forty ancient, steel relics into combat-ready machines, enough to equip an entire armor battalion.

"We were constantly replacing engines and mixing and matching parts," he said. "Sometimes we'd have to pull off and replace turrets because the barrels were warped."

In addition to the time spent repairing vehicles in the maintenance bay, Searcy conducted two weekly classes teaching the Afghanistan army how to operate and maintain the vehicles he was rebuilding.

During the training sessions an interpreter was present to relay Searcy's directions and knowledge to the host



Chief Warrant Officer Searcy in Afghanistan with retired Maj. Gen. D. Allen Youngman and an unidentified friend. Photo by State Command Sgt. Maj. John Gipe

nation army. Not only did Searcy have to improvise his teaching style, but also his work schedule in order to complete what needed to be done.

"Over there the Sabbath lasts from Thursday to Friday, and the soldiers returned to work on Sunday," Searcy said. "During Ramadan the soldiers only worked half-days so we had a great deal to accomplish with very little time."

Searcy credits the unit's success to the Afghan nationals, saying they were "very positive and eager to learn while working inside the motor pool."

The ultimate goal of the American soldiers present was not only to provide better equipment and training, but also a better way of life, Searcy said.

The soldiers of the 11th ACR, including Searcy, conducted traffic stops at night, confiscating contraband such as hashish, opium and illegal firearms. These procedures were then taught to the Afghan army.

"The majority of the nationals were

glad that Americans were there," Searcy said. "The locals said they could travel without worrying about their safety. They said we gave them hope for their country."

Searcy spent a great deal of free time performing electrical work on a mosque, installing wiring so that a speaker system could be used for worship.

With a Bronze Star added to a full list of accomplishments, kicking off his boots and settling into retirement still isn't an option. Searcy considers the deployment a positive experience and is leaving his career plans open in case a similar assignment presents itself. Despite his desire to serve the National Guard, however, he admits the difficulty of being away from home.

"Of course I missed my friends and family, but while in the desert I realized how much I missed the grass and trees too."

KyARNG race car rolls in 2003; prepping for 2004 season

Story and photo by Spc. Kyle Key
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BARDSTOWN, Ky—When the morning fog lifted over My Old Kentucky Home, a familiar noise echoed through the valley- the thunder of 151 race cars guzzling a volatile mixture of methanol and 114 octane racing fuel.

On October 18-19, the Bluegrass Speedway hosted its 23rd Annual Dirt Track World Championship in Bardstown. This year's race became even more interesting with the addition of the Kentucky Army National Guard race car #1, the National Guard's first professional dirt track car in the country.

"When the Guard car pulled out onto the track, it made me proud," said Gary Reed, a race fan from Lebanon, Ky. "The whole stadium cheered and clapped."

The Kentucky Army National Guard Racing Team is led by an experienced group of dedicated drivers and mechanics. Wooldridge Racing has been competing professionally for the last three decades.

Headquartered in Frankfort, Billy Wooldridge, owner and 27-year veteran of the Kentucky Army National Guard, was ecstatic when asked to drive under the Kentucky Army National Guard banner. His son, Mike Wooldridge, drives the patriotic red, white and blue Guard car for the team.

"It's a passion to me," said Mike. "It's in my blood and you just can't get it out."

According to Mike, informing people about the Guard through racing is a great match.

"It's a good way for people who don't normally come in contact with the National Guard to learn about who they are and what they do for our country. Race fans feel honored that the Guard is an active participant in this exciting and



Driver Mike Woolridge warming up in Army National Guard race car #1

growing sport. And I feel honored and privileged to be driving for them."

At every race throughout Kentucky, the Kentucky Army National Guard's Event Team Coordinator, Master Sgt. Bobby Turner ensures the welcome mat is rolled out for race fans.

"We set up the National Guard tent, have autographing sessions, give away T-shirts and we're usually the only team that has a show car for fans to see up close," Turner said.

Although it's a lot of work, Turner believes it's worth knowing you've made a positive impact with people. Turner said during the fall the show car will be used in high schools throughout the state allowing students to assemble mock pit crews and compete against one another.

The Guard car has garnered a lot of exposure to an estimated 1 million race fans at competitions, Thunder over Louisville, the Kentucky State Fair and other events throughout Kentucky.

"We've seen the Guard car several times at racetracks all over the state," said Sylvia Nuckuls from Castillian Springs, Tenn. "My son is in the Guard and when I saw the car, I got goose bumps."

The team's rigorous schedule takes them to as many as 40 races

during the racing season, which runs from March to October.

"It's not only good exposure, but you get more quality people in the Guard," said Gary Reed from Lebanon, Ky. "Dirt Track fans are not any different than NASCAR fans...they're both passionate and very patriotic."

According to James Essex, Public Relations Director for the Bluegrass Speedway, the Battle of the Bluegrass Dirt Track Series Championship is growing every year with more entries and ticket sales. Essex said because of its popularity, 5-6 races are scheduled to be televised during the 2004 season.

"We've had an excellent turnout this year. There are approximately 15,000 race fans here at the track and we had 151 vehicles to enter into the championship," said Essex.

Look for the Kentucky Army National Guard #1 late model racing car and the Wooldridge Racing Team at speedways across Kentucky next year: Bluegrass Speedway in Bardstown, Richmond Raceway, Junction City Raceway, Florence Raceway, Barren County Speedway, Salyersville ½ Mountain Speedway, Thunder Ridge in Prestonsburg, Lake Cumberland Speedway and Clinton County Speedway.

Outstanding Airmen of the Year

The 2003 Outstanding Airman of the Year winners were selected from more than 25 individuals nominated. The selection process was based on an airman's leadership traits, significant self-improvement, and airbase and community involvement.



Senior Airman Mason Hoyt was presented with an Outstanding Airman of the Year certificate Feb. 7 during a banquet at Paroquet Springs Convention Center in Shepherdsville, Ky. Hoyt, a combat controller, who was recently promoted to staff sergeant, is the Kentucky Air Guard's Outstanding Airman of the Year winner in the airman category. Sergeant Hoyt saved the lives of 500 Kurdish fighters and his own team while deployed in Iraq in 2003.

Staff Sgt. Joe Youdell was presented with an Outstanding Airman of the Year certificate at the event. Sergeant Youdell, a pararescueman from the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, was responsible for providing emergency medical care in Iraq after 1,000 U.S. soldiers parachuted into the country. He is the Kentucky Air Guard's Outstanding Airman of the Year winner in the NCO category.



Senior Master Sgt. Jon Rosa is presented the Outstanding Airman of the Year certificate during the banquet. Sergeant Rosa spent three months in Afghanistan last year guarding the country's president, Hamid Karzai. Prior to that, Sergeant Rosa spent two months in Iraq, arriving in the northern part of the country just days before Operation Iraqi Freedom began. He is also a combat controller and the winner in the senior NCO category.

Kentucky rifles train for war!

Story by Staff Sgt. David W. Altom

The HET — a heavy equipment transport to you and me — crunched gravel as it made its way along the convoy route, the engine whining loudly as it picked up speed. Suddenly, the sound of gunfire emanated from the adjoining treeline and there was shouting from inside the cab of the truck: "There they are! Two o'clock! Two o'clock! Shoot 'em! Shoot 'em!"

The two gunners replied with firepower, hitting their targets quickly and efficiently.

"Wait 'til that next truck comes through," another voice yelled. "I bet they don't see 'em until they're right on top of 'em."

The popping of M-16 rounds in the distance triggered smiles all around.

"This is good stuff!" a soldier said as he checked his MILES gear. "Gotta love it!"

Last fall the Kentucky Army National Guard established a vanguard force protection training project for combat support soldiers, specifically the 2123rd Transportation (HET) Company. The program was championed by retired Maj. Gen. D. Allen Youngman, who was adjutant general at the time of the unit's mobilization for deployment to Iraq.

"The Army puts a lot of effort in the training of all soldiers in the very basics of rifle marksmanship," said Youngman. "But only certain combat maneuver units get anything beyond that. Usually all we do for our combat service support soldiers is 40 rounds a year, barely enough to maintain basic mastery of the weapon and certainly not enough to fight.

"If you look at where the national guard is getting deployed today, it's not the infantry and the armor and cavalry guys getting in the fight, but it's the support folks, and they are the ones we don't provide any training for."

Until now, that is.

The Kentucky Guard program is conducted in classic army style: crawl, walk, run. Crawling consists of teaching soldiers young and old the modern techniques in weapons handling, safety, and then more safety; fingers off the trigger, muzzles down and treating all weapons as though they're loaded.

A young soldier asks "What if the weapon is unloaded?" A firearms instructor replies with "What's safety rule number one?"

"All guns are loaded!" shouts the soldier.

"There's your answer," said the instructor.

Jim Higgenbotham, chief instructor for Riposte Training, oversees the training process.

"Soldiers get ingrained in bad habits on the range. Most of us get our information from television or the movies. That is not real world. We try to give them a picture of what they are likely to encounter out in combat."

"If we can train the soldier to operate reflexively with their weapons and hit what they shoot at, we will probably save lives."



Kentucky Army Guard troops practice the basics of close quarters combat in preparation for their deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Photo by Capt. David Page

A ride on a virtual convoy prepares soldiers for live fire exercise.



Photo by Staff Sgt. David W. Altom

The next phase of training is firing live ammo in combat mode. Looking up and down the range, you won't find anyone laying in a prone position or in a foxhole. Everyone is standing, and rather than shooting at 200 or 300 meter targets, the soldiers face silhouette targets less than 15 meters away. Bringing the weapon to ready position, sighting, tactical reloading and recovering from malfunctions are all in the training process. There's some initial fumbling, but everyone soon gets in synch.

After learning the basics of close quarters combat, soldiers then go to the Engagement Skills Trainer where shooters get in the seat of a simulated humvee and protect a virtual convoy from cyber-aggressors. Then it's off to the MILES range for practical application and fine-tuning of lessons learned.

The final step is live fire from a moving vehicle. HET crews make multiple runs, first slow, then at speeds up to 35 miles per hour. Everyone gets to shoot as well as drive while others are shooting. Aimed and suppressive fire are both practiced. Safety, as always, is foremost. The training comes together and soldiers are pleased and proud to see targets falling as the large trucks move down the line.

In addition to developing the training program, the problem of how to protect the driver also had to be solved. Current U.S.

A gunner's view at the engagement skills trainer.



Photo by Capt. David Page

Army doctrine consisted of handing the driver a loaded rifle and hoping for the best. The Kentucky solution? Punch a hole in the top and station a trained soldier there.

Chief Warrant Officer Marvin Dalton was in charge of making the HETs defensible. "We were challenged to knock some holes in the tops of these trucks. The design we came up with doesn't create any structural integrity loss, it's quick and easy and lightweight. We're also moving the right hand mirror, giving the assistant driver a clearer field of fire. The process is not expensive. We have less than \$200 in each truck as far as materials go."

The commander of the 2123rd Transportation Company, Capt. Roger Metz, had high praise for the training program.

"If you have the most expensive piece of equipment and are not trained to use it, you're not effective. We're making the soldier effective and giving them the firepower."

"This training gives us the edge over the enemy. Without it, our troops would be going to the battlefield without knowing how to fight. We love it!"

Maj. Gen. Youngman expressed pride in the program. "The 2123rd is comprised of people who started this process as truck drivers. They are now mounted warriors and people should fear them if they bear them any ill will."

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT Even at speeds of up to 35 mph the soldiers from the 2123rd Transportation Company show they can hit the target during a live-fire exercise. Photos by Staff Sgt. David W. Altom



New temporary health benefits for Reserves announced

Courtesy United States Department of Defense

The Department of Defense announced today that it will implement the "2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program" for certain eligible Reserve Component sponsors and their family members.

The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal 2004 authorized new health benefits, some permanent and some temporary. The 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program includes three temporary Tricare benefit provisions; some are effective as of Nov. 6, 2003, and all expire Dec. 31, 2004. Total expenditures for these new provisions may not exceed the \$400 million limit established by Congress for fiscal 2004. Tricare Management Activity will implement the new provisions in phases starting in the spring.

"These new temporary provisions were designed by Congress to improve readiness and enhance access to care for Reserve servicemembers and their families," said Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. "We are implementing these new provisions as soon as possible," he said.

One provision temporarily authorizes Tricare medical and dental coverage for Reserve component sponsors activated for more than 30 days and their family members. Eligibility begins either on the day the sponsor receives delayed-effective date active duty orders or 90 days prior to the date the active duty period begins, whichever is later.

A second provision temporarily extends eligibility for Tricare benefits to 180 days under the Transitional Assistance Management Program for Reserve component sponsors who separate from

active duty status during the period Nov. 6, 2003 through Dec. 31, 2004, and their eligible family members.

The third provision temporarily extends Tricare medical benefits to Reserve component sponsors and family members who are either unemployed or employed but not eligible for employer-provided health coverage.

These temporary provisions end on Dec. 31, 2004.

"We encourage Reserve component sponsors and family members to save health care receipts, claims and explanation of benefits for dates of service from Nov. 6, 2003, through Dec. 31, 2004. This is necessary in the event the sponsor is determined to be eligible and the care qualifies for retroactive Tricare reimbursement once the 2004 Temporary Reserve Health Benefit Program begins," said Winkenwerder.

The three permanent health benefit provisions of the NDAA include:

- benefit counselors for the Reserve component in each Tricare region;
- authorization for medical and dental screening and care for members alerted for mobilization; and
- Tricare eligibility for reserve officers pending orders to active duty following commissioning.

Additional information for Reserve component families, who have questions regarding the Tricare benefit or need assistance processing Tricare claims, are available on the Tricare Web site at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/> [<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>] and the Reserve Affairs Web site at <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra>. Each Tricare region will soon have a designated beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator available to assist members and families with understanding and using their enhanced Tricare benefits.

Law provides military tax breaks

RICHMOND, Va. (Army News Service, Feb. 6, 2004) — The Internal Revenue Service is helping taxpayers use a new law that adds deductions for some reservists, expands the definition of combat zone, and provides income exclusions for certain home sales.

President Bush signed into law the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 on Nov. 11 with retroactive provisions making it beneficial for some Soldiers to file amended returns on form 1040X.

Taxpayers may exclude gain on a home sale, provided they have owned and used the home as a principal residence for two of the five years before the sale. A reduced maximum exclusion may apply to those who satisfy part of the two-year rule. Military personnel often retain ownership of a home while away on duty, but eventually sell it without returning to live in it, perhaps failing the use test completely, IRS officials said.

The new law allows persons on qualified extended duty in the U.S. Armed Services or the Foreign Service to suspend this five-year test period for up to 10 years of such duty time. A taxpayer is on qualified extended duty when at a duty station that is at least 50 miles from the residence sold, or when residing under orders in government housing, for more than 90 days or for an indefinite period.

This change applies to home sales after May 6, 1997. A taxpayer may use this provision for only one property at a time and may exclude gain on only one home sale in any two-year period. Although an amended return must usually be filed within three years of the original return's due date, the law gives qualifying taxpayers who sold a home before 2001 until Nov. 10, 2004, to file an amended return claiming the exclusion.

Also under the new law, National Guard and Army Reserve members who stay overnight more than 100 miles away from home for a drill or meeting may deduct unreimbursed travel expenses (transportation, meals and lodging) as an above-the-line deduction.

In addition, the definition of "combat zone" was expanded under the new law to include contingency operations. The various extensions granted to combat-zone participants to hold off on filing returns or paying taxes until after they return will also apply to those serving in contingency operations, as designated by the Secretary of Defense, IRS officials said.

For more information visit the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov, or by calling 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).

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Boone Center Post Exchange has a lot to offer

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. David W. Altom

One of the best kept secrets at the Boone National Guard Center in Frankfort is the Post Exchange. Supported by the Fort Knox Army Air Force Exchange System and managed by Tom Eustace, the BNGC PX offers Kentucky National Guard airmen and soldiers the convenience and affordability of a post exchange without the drive to Fort Knox or Fort Campbell.

"It's convenient and you don't have to fight the crowds," said Debbie DeMers, wife of Maj. Brian DeMers. "And then there's the fact that you don't have to pay sales tax on your purchases. That really helps."

"You can even order from the catalog, but Tom does a good job getting things for us from Fort Knox."

The BNGC PX doesn't cater only to National Guard members. Anyone eligible to shop at a military post exchange can shop there. Active duty, reserve, retired, Marine Corps or DOD civilian, it doesn't matter. All that's required is the proper identification.

For more information on the Boone Center PX call Tom at 502-607-1111. BNGC PX hours are 1000-1730hrs, Tuesday through Saturday. For more information on the Boone Center PX call Tom at 502-607-1111. BNGC PX hours are 1000-1730hrs, Tuesday through Saturday.

