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THE BLUE RIDGE REVIEW

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American Friendship Week crosses boundaries

By Staff Sgt. Anne W. Lewis

A group of select Soldiers from the 80th Training Command (TASS) recently took a special trip to Luxembourg to participate in an annual celebration of its liberation from the Nazi regime of World War II.

The 80th Soldiers who took part in the 2009 Luxembourg American Friendship Week's memorial dedications, ceremonies, wreath layings, flag presentations, marches, and musical processions were deeply touched and grateful to the many Luxembourg citizens who said "thank you" in numerous ways.

One of the command team members on the trip, Command Sgt. Maj. Doris Wollett said that, even though this year is her fourth visit, she is still amazed at how much the Luxembourgers love the American military and at their generosity.

"Every year I've come to this, it's really sad when I return home, because I've made such great friends here, and they are truly grateful to our 80th Division for liberating them during the war," said Wollett. "To be freed from the Nazis is something we will never be able to truly understand, but these people here do."

The 80th command team and color guard consisted of Commanding General Maj. Gen. John McLaren, Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Riggs, Command Sgt. Maj. Doris Wollett, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Angela Robey, Master Sgt. Denise Chavis, Sgt. 1st Class Scott Kallio, Sgt. 1st Class Richard McKenna, Staff Sgt. Gerrol St. John, Staff Sgt. Robert Ashley, Staff Sgt. Esmeralda Lopez, and trumpet player Staff Sgt. Simon Garza.

His first time to Luxembourg, Ashley said he was thrilled to be chosen to be part of the command color guard for the international event.



Rain did not deter the 80th Training Command (TASS) Color Guard from honoring the veterans and their loved ones at the memorial services during the 2009 Luxembourg American Friendship Week this past summer. Photo by Staff Sgt. Anne W. Lewis

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Many of the memorial services during the 2009 Luxembourg American Friendship Week brought back strong and mixed feelings. They embraced, shed tears, told stories, and created lasting bonds. Veterans and their loved ones expressed how grateful they are for all those who, for their freedom, had laid down their lives in World War II. Yet, the grief and sorrow of their losses never truly went away. The ceremonies and special services held in honor of both the deceased and the living continue to tell the stories of the struggles and eventual triumphs our 80th Infantry Division Soldiers, and the Luxembourg, French and German people shared during this time in history. Photo by Staff Sgt. Anne W. Lewis

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Friendship Week article continued

"I loved Luxembourg and the people there," said Ashley. "The countryside is breathtaking. Their hospitality is incredible. It was a very humbling experience to see that the people's gratefulness transcends generations."

World War II veterans of the 80th Division who were part of the Luxembourg liberation, and their families, came from across the states, including Massachusetts, Kansas, Ohio, California, Virginia, New York, Florida and New Jersey. Both German and Luxembourg WWII veterans and their families also participated in the Friendship Week. Some of them met for the first time, and others shed tears as they reminisced over past Friendship Weeks they'd shared.

More than 40 attendees - Americans, Germans, Luxembourgers, and French citizens - enjoyed numerous ceremonies and activities. They visited such historical sites as the Fondation Pescatore, Gen. George Patton's former headquarters; the Villa Pauly, former Gestapo headquarters; and the monument at Tom-Meyers-Square in Weiler. The commemoration ceremonies included the American military cemetery in Hamm, the Jewish deportation memorial in Cinqfontaines, 80th Infantry Division memorial at Pintsch, and the

monument at Aasterterhof in Dahl. Dinners and chapel services were held in their honor where medals, awards, ribbons, plaques, books, and other gifts were presented.

An 80th Division Veterans Association Executive Council trustee, Virgil Meyers has been a key player in coordinating this event for many years. Speaking of his WWII experiences at the ceremonies, he expressed his gratefulness for "just being alive and being able to make this trip every year."

"You oughta' be playing the lottery every day," Meyers said to the 80th veterans. "Because you're darn lucky to be here."



Command Sgt. Maj. Doris Wollett and Virgil Meyers reunite on just arriving for the 2009 Luxembourg American Friendship Week. Photo by Staff Sgt. Anne W. Lewis

Foreign exchange students tour the Gap

By Staff Sgt. Anne Lewis

The Regional Training Site-Maintenance at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., recently had no scheduled classes, but took the opportunity to teach anyway.

Recently, a group of nine foreign exchange students from Spain and France visited the RTS-M as part of a scheduled tour that RTS-M Commandant MAJ James Craig had the privilege to lead.

"Friends from my church sponsor the children for four weeks and while they are here in America, they hone their English-speaking skills as well as visit numerous sites in the local area to gain American cultural awareness," said Craig. "This was the first time we've had foreign exchange students come to our RTS-M."

Ranging in age from 13 to 17, the exchange students learned from Staff Sgt. Charlie Howell, Wheeled Vehicle Maintenance (63B) Instructor, how a HMMWV diesel engine works as he demonstrated using a portable, cut-away engine trainer. Senior Power Generation Maintenance (52D) Instructor Sgt. 1st Class Gary Howe explained the importance of generators on the battlefield. Several other NCOs participated in teaching and giving demonstrations.

The RTS-M at Ft. Indiantown Gap provides training for Military Occupational Specialties 63B Wheeled Vehicle Maintenance, 63H Tracked Vehicle Maintenance, and 52D Generator Maintenance.

The students were given the opportunity to climb into an M88 Tracked Recovery Vehicle and an M1A1 Abrams tank, the highlight of the tour for many of students. The off-days provided the perfect opportunity for the Soldiers to continue to showcase what the RTS-M offers. Craig said that the language difference didn't seem to hinder the students' curiosity.

"They loved it," said Craig. "They were very excited to see the vehicles and be able to climb around on them."

According to Craig, the students and Soldiers quickly became friends and benefited from the visit.

"It was great for the students because none of them had ever seen military equipment like this, especially not American equipment," said Craig. "For them, this was all new, and to see U.S. Soldiers helping them around and taking the time to show them these things, it meant a lot to them. As for the NCOs, this was the first time most of them had ever interfaced with foreign exchange students, and they loved seeing the excitement on the kids' faces when they got to climb into the tank and the M88."



(Left to right) Maria B. and Beatriz M. sit in an M88 recovery vehicle during a visit at the RTS-M at Ft. Indiantown Gap, Pa. Photo by Master Sgt. Wayne Dietrich

Soldiers take staff ride to Gettysburg

By Sgt. Maj. Dennis J. Lewis, Chief Operations NCO, Ft. Indiantown Gap, Pa.

A group of 20 Soldiers of the Regional Training Site Maintenance, Ft. Indiantown Gap, Pa., visited the American Civil War National Battlefield at Gettysburg, Pa., in October to conduct a military staff ride. Unit Soldiers were assigned points on the battlefield to research and then presented an information briefing that included what occurred at their assigned point, who the major players were in the actions there, how the actions at that point fit into the overall battle, and what specific Army values were displayed by the leaders and Soldiers involved. The unit also visited the Gettysburg Battlefield Visitors Center and Cyclorama, a nineteenth century 360-degree painting of the battle.

The Soldiers were assigned to teams of eight to 12 people who briefed the three days of the battle in chronological order. The Soldiers all had access to large maps of the day's events to orient the audience during their briefing. They put a tremendous amount of effort into their briefings and the top three, of thirteen, briefers were awarded prizes for the best briefings. Best briefers were determined by unit voting at the end of the staff ride.

The military staff ride provides a great opportunity to share knowledge and study military history. A staff ride also provides an excellent team-building activity. Staff rides have been used in our military since the early 1900s to develop military knowledge and serve as a way to link battlefield experiences from our military history to today's army. While about half of the Soldiers assigned to the RTS-M had visited Gettysburg prior to the staff ride, none of them had ever been part of an actual military staff ride. This experience will go far toward furthering their understanding of the military events that helped shaped the future of America.



Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Williams and Sgt. 1st Class Richard Fifer enjoy the view from the highest point on Little Round Top at Gettysburg, Pa. Photo by Sgt. Maj. Dennis Lewis

Yellow Ribbon offers deployment resources to Soldiers, families

By Lt. Col. Janice Shearin-Smith, Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Manager, 80th Training Command (TASS)

The Secretary of Defense initiated the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program with the intent to provide information, services, referral, and proactive outreach programs to Soldiers of the Army Reserve and their families through all phases of the deployment cycle.



An 80th Division Soldier embraces his daughter upon his return from Iraq. The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program helps Soldiers and their families with pre and post-mobilization issues. Photo by Staff Sgt. Anne W. Lewis

The Yellow Ribbon program prepares Soldiers and families for mobilization, sustains families during mobilization, and reintegrates Soldiers with their families, communities, and employers upon redeployment or Release From Active Duty. The training allows for small group interaction and discussion. The tools and techniques taught help mitigate the stressors associated with extended separation and combat.

Commanders will provide Soldiers, who are preparing for deployment of 90 or more days, and family members the opportunity to attend a day-long event after alert and again at pre-mobilization. Additional requirements include one-day Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program activities for family members twice during the mobilization, provide two-day reintegration activities for Soldiers and their family members at 30 and 60 days after redeployment or REFRAD, and a two-day event for Soldiers only 90 days after redeployment or REFRAD.

Please contact the 80th Training Command's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Manager Lt. Col. Janice Shearin-Smith at 804-279-7157 for guidance on how to register for additional information or for guidance on how to register for an event.

News

Goochland Courthouse honors Veterans Day

The American Legion Post 215 will present a Veterans Day program at the Goochland County Courthouse Green on Nov. 11 at 11 a.m. Guest speaker will be retired U.S. Navy Capt. Catherine Wilson, who currently serves as the Executive Director of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program. The program will include a Marine Color Guard consisting of veterans who have served in WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. For more information, call Richard Cobbs at 804-784-4252.

Sea 2 Shining Sea offers online volunteers

80th Training Command's Virtual Volunteers (vVolunteers) are volunteers specific to the command's virtual installation website. Working with Sea 2 Shining Sea staff, our vVolunteers provide an important service by donating time, providing referral service, directing problems or crises of a Soldier's family in need to Sea 2 Shining Sea. This is a customer service approach where the needs of the family are identified and Sea 2 Shining Sea works to solve the problems. vVolunteer involvement may be as simple as someone on stand-by, in case a crisis arises in the vVolunteer's community, or as a first responder. A first responder will become immersed in finding and securing community support, as a community connections volunteer, for our Soldiers and families, before a crisis occurs. If you would like more information or want to make that virtual commitment to become a Sea 2 Shining Sea vVolunteer, simply send an e-mail to Sea 2 Shining Sea at www.s2ss.org, or call 804-377-6428. Soldiers, active or retired, family members, or friends of the military can be vVolunteers. For more information, please contact the 80th Training Command's Family Readiness Support Assistant Jody Humphries at 804-377-6429 or AFTB AFAP Program Manager Brian L. Casserly at 804-377-6430.

Army All-American Bowl wants Soldier Heroes

If you served in OIF or OEF and received an ARCOM with V device, Purple Heart, Bronze Star or Silver Star, you are invited to represent the Army Reserve as a "Soldier Hero" at the 2010 U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio, Texas, Jan. 5-10. Selected Soldier Heroes will participate in various game-week festivities, interact with the nation's top high school football players, talk about their Army experiences and enjoy the game—all at no cost to the selected Soldier Heroes. For more information or to nominate a Soldier, go to <http://www.usar.army.mil/arweb/soldiers/Pages/AAB.aspx>.

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



When you think of Hanukkah, do pictures of menorahs and dreidels come to mind? The following is a brief history of one of the oldest religious celebrations in world history.

Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days and nights, starting on the 25th of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar (which is November-December on the Gregorian calendar). In Hebrew, the word "Hanukkah" means "dedication."

The holiday commemorates the rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem after the Jews' 165 B.C. victory over the Hellenist Syrians. Antiochus, the Greek King of Syria, outlawed Jewish rituals and ordered the Jews to worship Greek gods.

In 168 B.C., the Jews' holy Temple was seized and dedicated to the worship of Zeus. Some Jews were afraid of the Greek soldiers and obeyed them, but most were angry and decided to fight back.

The fighting began in Modiin, a village not far from Jerusalem. A Greek officer and soldiers assembled the villagers, asking them to bow to an idol and eat the flesh of a pig, activities forbidden to Jews. The officer asked Mattathias, a Jewish High Priest, to take part in the ceremony. He refused, and another villager stepped forward and offered to do it instead. Mattathias became outraged, took out his sword and killed the man, then killed the officer. His five sons and the other villagers then attacked and killed the soldiers. Mattathias' family went into hiding in the nearby mountains, where many other Jews who wanted to fight the Greeks joined them. They attacked the Greek soldiers whenever possible.

Judah Maccabee and his soldiers went to the holy Temple, and were saddened that many things were missing or broken, including the golden menorah. They cleaned and repaired the Temple, and when they were finished, they decided to have a big dedication ceremony. For the celebration, the Maccabees wanted to light the menorah. They looked everywhere for oil, and found a small flask that contained only enough oil to light the menorah for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days. This gave them enough time to obtain new oil to keep the menorah lit. Today Jews celebrate Hanukkah for eight days by lighting candles in a menorah every night, thus commemorating the eight-day miracle.

Upcoming Events

2010 Army All-American Bowl

San Antonio, Texas
Jan. 5-10, 2010

80th Training Command (TASS) Combined Conferences

Virginia Beach, Va.
Jan. 24-Feb. 5, 2010

Strong Bonds Retreats

Couples
Newport, R.I.
Feb. 19-21, 2010

Galloway, N.J.
Mar. 5-7, 2010

Families

Hyannis, Mass.
March 19-21, 2010