

DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS



FEBRUARY 2, 2011

Airman marches, low-crawls and sweats her way into history: Part two

By Staff Sgt. R. Michael Longoria, 9th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force - Iraq Public Affairs

BAGHDAD -- The grueling day begins... The alarm rang and the clock read 2 a.m. Senior Airman Courtney Beard, a New Jersey Air National Guard member, got out of bed and readied herself for the day's events.

As her wristwatch showed 2:30 a.m., the intelligence analyst with the 467th Expeditionary Intelligence Squadron was now gathered with her Spur Ride team outside the motor pool on Camp Victory, Iraq. The team waited patiently, wearing their body armor and helmet. The Spur Ride could begin at any moment.

"Standing around waiting for everything to begin was torture," Airman Beard said. "It was even more torturous when they began to play music that was more suited for a haunted house."

At 3 a.m., a group of first sergeants walked up and instructed them to gather their gear and proceed to the pad. Once they were herded toward the pad, the calisthenics began. For the next 90 minutes, the group of 73 participants did jumping jacks, ran in place while holding their rifles over their heads, sit-ups and push-ups.

"They smoked us for about an hour and a half," Airman Beard said.

Now it was time to pack their rucksacks. This was a difficult task by its self. The rucksacks were located 100 yards from the pad and they had to pack each item one by one; low-crawling, duck-walking or lunging back to the pad between each item. At this time, the participants were given a chance to fall out and enjoy a delicious treat.

"It was during this time that the sergeant major was going around with a box of Krispy Kreme donuts," she said. "He kept putting them in our face and telling us we could have a donut and some coffee if we quit now."

After some more running, each team had to fully inspect their military vehicle before pushing it around the motor pool. But of course, it wasn't as easy as they thought it would be.

"The first sergeants enjoyed making it harder for us by standing on top of the hood and jumping up and down to put more weight on it," Airman Beard said.

The second station began at the bottom of communication hill on Camp Liberty, Iraq. The task was simple; run up and down the hill as a team within 5 minutes and 30 seconds. If the team didn't succeed, they had to do it again but had an extra minute to complete the run.

"We did not succeed as a team on either of the first two tries," she said.

However, they were given a third chance to complete the run and move onto the next stage. This time it was based on each participant's individual time but with some added difficulty.

"I was already exhausted from running up the hill twice and the third time seemed like it would be impossible to complete," Airman Beard said. "And of course it was at this time that they made us put on our gas mask and run up the hill that way."

People started passing out and hitting the ground. As medics tended to the fallen, those still standing moved on to the obstacle course. The obstacle course consisted of climbing over high walls, maneuvering across wooden planks, and low-crawling through mud and under barbed wire.

In addition, they had to do more push-ups, flutters kicks, mountain climbers and jumping jacks in the dirt as well as demonstrating proper room clearing procedures. They had to complete the course three separate times, low-crawling, duck-walking or lunging back to the beginning.

Completely soaked in muddy water, the



Senior Airman Courtney Beard, 467th Expeditionary Intelligence Squadron intelligence analyst, duck-walks her way back to the start of an obstacle course Nov. 21 on Victory Base Complex, Iraq. The Brooklyn, N.Y., native and a N.J. Air National Guard member was the first female Airman to complete the 18-hour Spur Ride, a series of mental and physical tests, held by the III Corps, Task Force Phantom. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kelly K. Morehouse)

participants proceeded to the next station. They had competed against their own minds and bodies all day. Now it was time to go against others.

"We had to see who could fill the most sandbags and carry them to a location about 100 yards away," Airman Beard said.

The next station required even more teamwork. One person lead the entire team through a pitch black building after getting a quick glance at the route on a map.

"They had about five seconds to look at the map," she said. "Communication was very important during this portion in order for everyone following the leader to know

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what was ahead of them including stairs and turns.”

The teams then had to clear the Bath Party House and march to the range for another competition. The objective was to obtain the best score by shooting targets in the kneeling, prone and standing positions.

“While each of our team members shot, the rest of us had to stay in the front leaning rest position,” she said. “We also had to do push-ups as directed.”

Now it was break time, for the first sergeants at least. As they pulled out their lunches, the participants had to don their gas masks again and march a mile and a half to the abandoned Victory Over America Palace, which was used by Saddam Hussein. Once they got there, they were allowed to remove their gas mask but had to clear the palace.

“Soon after that, we heard ‘gas, gas, gas’ and had to put our gas masks on again,” Airman Beard said. “This was the first time in 14 hours I was pulled out of my world of feeling good.”

They were once again marching to another palace near sniper hill on Camp Slayer, which was another mile and a half away.

“They tried to get in our heads,” she said. “They told us it was going to be another 4-mile march. It sure did work on me.”

Editor’s Note: This is part two of a three part series about Airman Beard and her Spur Ride experience.

Discounted tickets for play

The George Street Playhouse is providing discounted tickets to all Veterans for their upcoming production of “The Subject Was Roses.”

The play is a Pulitzer prize-winning family drama about a young World War II veteran’s homecoming and his complex relationship with his parents – particularly his father – as he makes the transition back to life at home.

The play will run from Feb. 8 through March 6 at the George Street Playhouse located at 9 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick, N.J.

Tickets may be purchased online by visiting www.GSPonline.org or by phone by calling 732-846-2895 ext. 134 or 155. Use code: VETERAN to receive \$8 off each ticket.

For more information contact Kelly Ryman, director of marketing and public relations, at 732-846-2895 ext. 131 or via email at kryman@georgestplayhouse.org.

Email your Highlights submissions to wayne.woolley@njdmava.state.nj.us OR armando.vasquez@njdmava.state.nj.us

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Veterans Outreach Schedule

February 8-10

Quaker Bridge Mall

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

Medal Ceremony at 10:30a.m. on Tuesday, February 8 – Kiosk hours 10:00a.m. – 8:00p.m. daily

150 Quaker Bridge Mall, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

March 1-3

Jersey Gardens Mall

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

Medal Ceremony at 10:30a.m. on Tuesday, March 1 – Kiosk hours 10:00a.m. – 8:00p.m. daily

651 Kapowski Road, Elizabeth, NJ 07201

April 7

New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland

Medal Ceremony only in Auditorium starting at 1:30p.m.

524 North West Boulevard, Vineland, NJ 08360

State employee retirement news

Attention DMAVA state employees: Mike McConnell, Retirement Consultant, of Prudential Retirement who administers the New Jersey State Deferred Compensation plan will be here on Monday Jan. 31, starting at 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., for 30-minute individual meetings.

To assist you in planning for this coming year we have pre-arranged specific meeting dates for the Prudential representative. They are: May 30, Aug. 29 and Oct. 31.

Please contact: Paul Serdiuk, Human Resources, to reserve a place.

Free Battleship NJ tours for all veterans

The Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial is providing to all veterans a free Fire Power, City at Sea or General Quarters Audio Tour of the Battleship.

Guided tours are subject to the availability of volunteer museum guides.

It is their way of giving back to all veterans who gave their time to serve our nation, and to thank the state for continuing to support the nation’s most decorated battleship.

The Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial is located at the Camden Waterfront, 62 Battleship Place, Camden, N.J.

For more information, visit the Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial Web site at www.battleshipnewjersey.org, or call Mr. Jack Willard at 856-966-1652 ext. 144.

New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth – The Adjutant General

Brig. Gen. James J. Grant – Director, Joint Staff

Raymond Zawacki – Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs

CW2 Patrick Daugherty – Public Affairs Officer

Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez - Public Affairs Specialist

Sgt. Wayne Woolley – Public Affairs Specialist



Gov. Chris Christie, left and Judith Tapper, President of the N.J. Gold Star Mothers, stand next to a larger than life version of the Gold Star Family license plate on Jan. 31. The governor, flanked by war veterans and families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice, signed legislation bill S-2192 that clears the way for the first Gold Star Family license plate to be issued in New Jersey. The bill authorizes the special license plates for any motor vehicle owned or leased by a family member of a member of the armed services who lost his or her life while on active duty for the United States. Photo by Mark C. Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA



Maj. Gen. Glenn K. Rieth, left, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, briefed Brig. Gen. William J. Gothard, Deputy Commanding General – Support/Chief of Staff, United States Army Reserve Command, about the Seven Seals Assistance Center at the Joint Training and Training Development Center in Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., on Jan. 27. Photo by Mark C. Olsen, NJDMAVA/PA.

VHP keeps stories of veterans alive for future generations

Story by: Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, NJDMAVA/PA

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” said George Santayana, a famous Spanish-American philosopher from the early 20th Century.

And with that famous quote from Santayana, Rutgers University president Richard L. McCormick addressed the Veterans History Project (VHP) training workshop held at Rutgers University Student Center on Jan. 31.

With veterans from past and present wars in attendance, New Jersey Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg urged N.J. veterans to share their stories and spoke about the importance of recording their history.

He was instrumental in organizing the event along with Rutgers University to train interviewers to record oral histories from New Jersey war veterans.

The Library of Congress VHP was started in 2000 and its goal is to record and preserve the stories of veterans from all wars. The project mirrors Rutgers Oral History Archives, which was started in 1994.

So far, the VHP has collected more than 70,000 entries from veterans all over the United States, including 1,000 from New Jersey.

Rutgers Oral History Archives is an enterprise to record the personal experience



New Jersey Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, Raymond L. Zawacki, discusses the importance of recording the stories of N.J. war veterans at the Veterans History Project training workshop held at Rutgers University on Jan. 31. In collaboration with the Rutgers Oral History Archives, Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg kicked off the project to record N.J. veterans' history. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, NJDMAVA/PA)

of Rutgers University alumni and/or New Jersey residents who served on the home front or overseas during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Cold War, and it includes more than 1,000 interviews with veterans.

“Our country owes them their gratitude,” said Lautenberg, 87, a veteran of World War II.

“The best sources possible are those who lived the experience,” said N.J. Deputy

Commissioner for Veterans Affairs, Raymond L. Zawacki, who also is a Vietnam veteran. “There is no better teaching than experience of those who were there.”

As an additional VHP contributor, the National Guard Militia Museum of N.J., with locations at Sea Girt and Lawrenceville, has a mission of preserving and explaining the military heritage of New Jersey, and enhancing the public understanding of how armed conflicts and military institutions shape our state and national experience.

Furthermore, the museum collects, preserves and displays artifacts and related memorabilia that have specific historical significance within the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard, and the Naval Militia of New Jersey.

Present at the workshop to tell their stories were Justin Sasso from Holmdel and Joe Nyzio from Bordentown, both Iraq War veterans; Danielle Peloquin from South Brunswick, a Vietnam War veteran; and Arthur Seltzer from Cherry Hill, and Tom Mahoney from Union Township, both World War II veterans.

“I’ve never had the opportunity,” said Sasso, 32, realizing that he had never sat down and told his story from start to finish.

“It’s kind of hard to look at the present and call it history,” he said.

NJ National Guard recruiters share recruiting techniques

Story by: Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, NJDMAVA/PA

JOINT BASE McGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST -- Looking to create an all-volunteer military force similar to that of the United States, Albanian officials met here with New Jersey National Guard recruiters at the Military Entrance Processing Station on Jan. 26.

Albania has been affiliated with the New Jersey National Guard since 1993, through the National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP), which seeks to advance security and stability around the globe.

Since becoming an all-volunteer force in September of 2010, the Albanian military has turned its attention to recruiting and retention, said Air Force Maj. Joseph Stewart, the New Jersey National Guard SPP coordinator.

"This is a great opportunity to see the process that we have heard so much about," said Lt. Eugert Hoxha, marketing officer for the Albanian military Personnel Recruiting Center.

With a tour of the MEPS station and the recruiting offices of the 108th Wing, the Albanian recruiting team was able to see and experience the recruiting process from beginning to end. The Albanians are particularly interested in developing a plan to expand their simple ASVAB test process, said Marsela Sinjari, an administrative testing specialist at the Albanian military Personnel Recruiting Center.

The goal of the Americans was to show the Albanians the whole recruiting process, from contact to contract, said Army Maj. Lonell Jenkins, a strength manager and recruiting and retention officer at the N.J. National Guard Joint Force Headquarters.

"Give them recruiting techniques," Jenkins said. "The long



Members of the Albanian recruiting team pose for a group photo with recruiters from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces at the Military Entrance Processing Station at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Jan. 26. The Albanian recruiting team visited the MEPS station through the National Guard State Partnership Program. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Armando Vasquez, NJDMAVA/PA)

term goal is to start an ROTC program, and show them how that works."

The recruiting visit is among the many manifestations of the partnership New Jersey and Albania formed nearly two decades ago as the former communist dictatorship began the transition to a democracy. The partnership helped Albania meet the rigid criteria for NATO in 2009. Later this year, as part of the partnership, a team of New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers and Airmen will deploy to Afghanistan with a contingent of Albanian troops.



Celebrating Black History Month

Robert Trott, seen here in charge of the kitchen car of the NJ National Guard's Essex Troop on the way to the Mexican border in 1916, later became a captain in the 1st Separate Battalion.

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Furthermore, the museum collects, preserves and displays artifacts and related memorabilia that have specific historical significance within the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard, and the Naval Militia of New Jersey.

The National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey will open from Feb. 1 until Feb. 24 a Black History Month exhibit at the National Guard Militia Museum in Sea Girt, N.J. celebrating the service of New Jersey's African-American soldiers, Marines, sailors, and Airmen.