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May 22, 2014



DMAVA OBSERVANCES

Brig. Gen. William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery

Boy and Girl Scout Flag Placement
Friday, May 23, 5 p.m.

Memorial Ceremony
Saturday, May 24, 10:30 a.m.

We are a nation that remembers its heroes

On November 19th, 1863, a tall, gaunt figure stood on a farmer's field and dedicated a battlefield where nearly 8-thousand Soldiers had given their lives.

President Abraham Lincoln spoke for less than three minutes that day. And he cautioned that the world "will little note, nor long remember what we say here."

That prediction, of course, was wrong. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address came to be regarded as one of the greatest speeches in American history.

Lincoln's 272 words became timeless for their powerful summation of American ideals – and because of the moving tribute he made to the men who died to preserve those ideals. Lincoln's words made sure the men who died at Gettysburg will never be forgotten.

Memorial Day stands as a testament to America's continuing commitment to honor the more than one million men and women who have laid down their lives to preserve our freedoms.

One of America's greatest strengths is our ability to remember these men and women.

We are a nation that remembers our heroes.

That may be because there are those among us who will never let us forget.

People like Christine Hamilton Wescott. She was only 3 when her father, Sergeant First Class Robert Wescott Junior, died in Vietnam.

But she spent the next 46 years making sure no one forgets Sergeant Wescott and the love he had for America.

Wescott grew up in Teaneck and graduated from Lodi High School. He enlisted in Newark in 1953. He saw combat in Korea and decided to make the Army his career. He deployed to Vietnam with the storied First Cavalry Division and was out front, leading Soldiers when he was killed on April 29, 1968.

Because Wescott's home of record was Philadelphia at the time of his death, his name was not initially included on New Jersey's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Holmdel.

Christine Hamilton Wescott worked tirelessly to correct that error of omission.

Last August, an engraver sandblasted the name Robert H. Wescott Junior into the black granite. Sergeant Wescott finally took his place among the 1,562 New Jerseyans who never came home from Vietnam.

It was all thanks to one woman's desire to make sure her father's sacrifice is never forgotten.

Last month, Christine Wescott accepted the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal on her father's behalf.

After the ceremony, Wescott noted that while her memories of her father are limited because of how old she was when he died, she knows this: "I know he loved his country and all the Soldiers he served with."

Wescott's devotion to her father spanned years.

Devotion and remembrance of our veterans here in New Jersey also spans generations.

Every year over Memorial Day weekend, hundreds of young people from the Boy and Girl Scouts fan out across the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Cemetery in Arnetown. In less than an hour, these motivated young people manage to place an American flag on the graves of more than 40-thousand New Jersey Veterans. If you have not taken the opportunity to witness this, I highly recommend it.

These young people are carrying on a tradition that began at the end of the Civil War, when General John Logan, the Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, ordered flowers to be placed on the grave of every Union and Confederate Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Today, flowers have given way to flags at Arlington. Members of the Army's Old Guard now place a flag on each of the more than 250-thousand graves at Arlington on the Thursday before Memorial Day.

The Soldiers of the Old Guard then patrol the grounds for the next 72 hours to ensure that all of the flags remain upright. They will ensure the flag remains straight over the grave of New Jersey Army National Guard Sergeant Ryan Doltz of Mine Hill.

Sergeant Doltz died in a two-day spate of violence in Iraq in 2004 that also claimed the lives of three other New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers: Staff Sergeant Frank Carvill of Carlstadt, Sergeant Humberto Timoteo of Newark and Specialist Christopher Duffy of Brick.

The names of the fallen National Guard Soldiers are etched in a granite marker on the grounds of the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs campus in Lawrenceville. The name of a fifth Soldier, Staff Sergeant Jorge Oliveira, has since been added.

Oliveira died in Afghanistan in 2011. He was serving on a mission to provide security for forces that were helping that nation rebuild.

On May 21, a statue in Oliveira's likeness will be (was) dedicated in Newark. It was the city where Oliveira grew up, and the place he helped keep safe in his civilian job as an Essex County Sheriff's officer.

We remember men like Jorge Oliveira and Ryan Doltz because they were heroes.

And we are a nation that remembers our heroes.

They were heroes to us because they believed in America and they were willing to sacrifice themselves to preserve all it stands for.

They were willing to die for what Abraham Lincoln talked about in those brief remarks on that farmer's field 150 years ago.

They helped ensure that a nation of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from this earth.

Jersey Guard medic brings big voice to Soldier Show

By Master Sgt. David Moore, JFHQ PAO

The 2014 U.S. Army Soldier Show is coming to Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst Friday May 30 and for one cast member, it will be a homecoming.



New Jersey Army National Guard Pfc. Melinda Douglas, of Salem, N.J., will take the Timmermann Center stage at 7:30 p.m., with fellow cast members comprised

of active-duty and Reserve component Soldiers from around the U.S. and overseas assignments.

This year's annual Army Morale Welfare and Recreation sponsored touring entertainment program theme is "Stand Strong" and includes live Broadway style performances depicting the lives, strengths and character of Soldiers and their families.

Douglas, a health care specialist with the Army National Guard's Medical Command and a 2000 Park Bible Academy, Pennsville, N.J., graduate, said last week she is looking forward to returning to New Jersey.

"The Army's Soldier Show combines the two things I love the most -- singing and being in the military," she said.

Williams first came in contact with the Army Soldier Show last year when she was attending advanced individual training at Fort Same Houston, Texas. When she watched the show despite being far from home and family, she felt the need to keep pursuing her love of music.

So the Soldier, who performed at her local church and her high school's chorus, band and drama club, began to investigate the possibility of joining up with the prestigious troupe. As a result of a family having a fondness for karaoke, she linked up with her father and she submitted Pink's song titled "Perfect" and 4 Non Blondes' "What's Up" to fulfill some of the online audition requirements.

Being a part of the group isn't just about performing; the entire cast also has the responsibility of helping set up and tear down for each show.

"Setting up and tearing down for each show is a good thing and it motivates you for the show. It is also a learning experience taking the show from the ground up to the performance," Douglas said.

By the time the cast and crew of more than 20 Soldiers arrive at the joint base, they will have already performed 10 shows since starting the road trip April 18 Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston April 18.

Douglas said she is looking forward to the homecoming performance since her family will be able to see her, as well as her fiancé.

"I love what I'm doing and everyone who has the chance should come out and see the show.

THE 2014 U.S. ARMY
SOLDIER SHOW

When: Friday, May 30
Time: Show starts 7:30 p.m.
Where: Timmermann Center
ASA Fort Dix/JB MDL

Get there early doors open 6:30 p.m.

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DMAVA honors Ocean County Veterans



Spec. 5 Robert Hill II of Englishtown, a Vietnam veteran, left and Master Sgt. Patrick Gongora of Eatontown, who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, pose together for a photo after receiving their state service medals at the Ocean County Mall in Toms River. Below, Tech. Sgt. Gordon J. Pingicer's medal for service in World War II was presented osthumously to his wife Mary by Al Bucchi, director of Veteran Services. Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General, New Jersey National Guard, presented state military awards to 12 veterans from Monmouth and Ocean counties on May 20 in the center court of Toms River mall. Photos by Kryn P. Westhoven, NJDMAVA-PA



For 108th Wing, inspection shows: 'highly effective'

By Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen

"I am not going to keep everybody in suspense any longer. The bottom line is the 108th is deemed highly effective."

Col. Robert A. Meyer Jr., 108th Wing Commander, announced the Air Mobility Command Inspector General team inspection results this morning to a packed hangar. Airmen from every squadron, flight and shop were there to hear the results of the Wing-wide Unit Effectiveness Inspection, which began on May 14 and ended May 18. Highly effective is second highest grade a unit can receive in a UEI.

"We are the only unit, not only in the active component, but the reserve component as well, to get this grade," said Meyer. "It is due entirely to the hard work and effort by this team out here. We should all be very proud of ourselves."

The UEI is part of the new Air Force Inspection System, which

places a priority on continuous unit readiness verified by self-inspection and wing-based inspections.

Members of the AMC IG team examined the processes of the entire Wing, from operations to finance. As part of the inspection, Airmen across the Wing were observed doing their duties by the IG team.

As a result of this observation, the AMC IG coined six unit members and recognized three individuals and seven teams.

"I can't recall the last time we had two pages of outstanding performers," said Meyer. "My hat is off to you."

Brig. Gen. Robert C. Bolton, commander, New Jersey Air National Guard, coined several 108th Airmen.

"It is important to keep this momentum going," said Meyer. "This is going to be the way of the future."