

VOLSTATE GUARD

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Airmen of the
241st EIS return
home just in time
for the holidays

Members of the 105th Personnel
Co. Spread Christmas Cheer to
Franklin Boys Home

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On the Cover:

Staff Sgt. Joshua Haveman, 241st Engineering Installation Squadron, Tennessee Air National Guard, meets his son for the first time after returning home to Chattanooga from a deployment to Afghanistan on November 17.
(Photo by: Tech. Sgt. Robin Olsen.)

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Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Creecy retires after 42 years in military

Story and Photos by: Nate Crawford

It seems like a long time ago since 18-year-old Dennis Creecy raised his right hand to join the military as a lowly private. But then again maybe it wasn't all that long ago.

Richard Nixon was the new president, *True Grit* was a smash hit in theaters, the first ATM machine had just been installed, a new Toyota Corolla cost \$1,900, and military pay for a new enlistee was \$115 per month.

The year was 1969 and young Creecy had just graduated from Wayne County High School.

He was drafted in November that same year. It was during the Vietnam era. At that time he was living in rural Wayne County where he and his wife, Janice, still make their home today.

It was after Vietnam that the still-fresh-faced Creecy decided to continue military life; he joined the Tennessee Army National with Lawrenceburg's old Charlie Company, 473rd Support Battalion. From there he served in Waynesboro's Detachment 1, 1176th Maintenance Company for 17 years. Then it was two years in Pulaski with the 1175th Quartermaster Company followed by one year with Headquarters Company, 194th Engineer Brigade, in Nashville.

His final move was with that same Engineer Company when it relocated to Jackson in 1996. There he remained until last September when 60-year-old *Command Sergeant Major* Dennis Creecy put on his uniform for the last time and

retired from the Tennessee Army National Guard with 41 years, eight months of service to his country.

"It's been a long and winding road," Creecy told a large gathering of family and military friends at his retirement luncheon at National Guard Headquarters in Nashville. I wouldn't take anything for the journey.

"In addition to making thousands of friends for life, I was able to do things and accomplish things that would have never been possible except for the military. You hear it said often and I can vouch for it, 'It's a great big family.'"

His daughters, Leanne Gordon, from Pulaski, and Andrea Woodall, from Collinwood, shed tears at the retirement luncheon as their daddy reminisced about days gone by and treasured memories from the military.

"Many opportunities opened up for me and I tried to take advantage of them all," he recalled. "One of the most important things I learned was that it's not the power of the position you hold, it's the relationships you develop as you become a team. And it's not about *coaching* young people, it's about *mentoring* them.

"I would encourage any young man or woman today to join the military. It's a good way to grow up in a hurry and to mature while you're doing something for your country, but sadly, it's an opportunity most people never avail themselves of."

Right: Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Creecy delivers an emotional final salute to military friends on hand for his retirement ceremony last month at National Guard Headquarters in Nashville.



National Guard Liaison team returns home from Afghanistan

Story and Photos by: Nate Crawford



Above: Tennessee National Guard Operational Mentor Liaison Team member Chief Warrant Officer 2 Thaxter is welcomed home by Tennessee National Guard Assistant Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Robert Harris at the Nashville International Airport Nov. 17, 2011.

A group of 12 Tennessee National Guard soldiers from various parts of the state returned home Nov. 17, 2011 after serving for almost a year in Afghanistan. They assumed the role as an Operational Mentor Liaison Team.

The OMLT Team members were welcomed home at the Nashville International Airport.

An Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) provides training and mentoring to the Afghan National Army. It also serves as a liaison capability between ANA and ISAF forces, coordinating the planning of operations and ensuring that the ANA units receive support, including close air support, casualty and medical evacuation.



Left: Eight members of the 12-member Tennessee National Guard's Operational Mentor Liaison Team pose with Brig. Gen. Harris.



Members of the 241st EIS return home just in time for the holidays

Story and Photos by: Tech. Sgt. Robin Olsen

It was a day of celebration at the Chattanooga Airport, as members of the Tennessee Air National Guard were reunited with their families.

With sign in hand, 4 year-old Mack Grisso and other family members gather with anticipation to welcome home the 241st Engineering Installation Squadron.

The excitement builds as soon as their plane lands and the servicemen step on to the tarmac, followed by applause and cheers.

"Hey guys! Welcome back! Glad to have you home! You did a good job, well done," says Major General Max Haston, the Adjutant General, who was on hand to welcome home his Airmen.

"Being able to get them home before the holidays is always very special," says Haston.

"It's the best feeling ever. I missed him really bad," says SSgt. Elijah Grisso.

"My little one ran up to me, 'Daddy, I love you, I miss you.' I almost shed a tear. I had to hold it

back," says TSgt. Carvin Russell.

Russell says the show of support is overwhelming and he is so glad to be back with his family.

"Words can't explain what it's been like. It's been hard. It's been really hard," says Tjuania, Carvin's wife.

For SSgt. Joshua Haveman, it is a very special day, meeting his son Lucas for the first time.

"I got to see him on Skype for 11 hours while he was being born. But I've been looking forward to this. Words can't describe it. It really can't," he says.

"It's a really big challenge to do so many things by yourself, that you maybe didn't even realize your husband did before he was gone, it's given both of us an appreciation more for each other," says Tracey, Joshua's wife.

"Glad to be back home. Ready to go and enjoy the time with my family," says Haveman.



134th ARW Operations Center dedicated facility named for late Maj. Gen. Fred Forster

Story by: Bob Norris

At the dedication of the Major General Fred Forster Operations Group Building on Thursday at McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base, the folks in attendance knew one thing for sure.

If Fred Forster was alive today and speaking at the dedication ceremony, he would have had plenty to talk about — he was particularly fond of and adept with a microphone — and every word would have been appropriate. He certainly would not have named the new 134th Air Refueling Wing's operations center after himself, but Forster would have been bursting with pride over the new \$5.9 million facility.

And he wouldn't have minded that Maj. Gen. Terry

“Max” Haston, adjutant general of Tennessee and an Army man, was more than a little jealous of it.

Haston praised Forster for his service to his community, state and country, and especially for his work as commander for over 10 years as commander of the 134th and the air base.

“McGhee Tyson, because of Fred Forster, is the gold standard of the Tennessee Air National Guard,” said Haston, who went on to reveal his admiration for the quality of the new ops center.

“I had the privilege of coming out here about two or three weeks ago — to the chagrin of Tommy Cauthen (Col. Thomas Cauthen), the current commander. I said, ‘Tommy, I



want to see the building.’ And he said, ‘Can’t you really wait?’ I said, ‘Nope, I want to see it.’

“I think they didn’t want me to see how nice it was. The Army Guard doesn’t quite live that nice.”

The auditorium filled with laughter.

“The next time we design something, we’ve got to get the folks that designed this building here and built it to do it for the Army Guard. I’ll tell you, this is the state of the art. This is the way it should be done,” Haston said.

“Its professionalism, its quality is a direct reflection of Fred Forster, so we’re very proud to have his name on the front of it.”

The 28,000-square foot facility was designed by C2RL Engineers and built by Hickory Construction, both of Alcoa.

The facility provides critical functions for the 134th’s



flying mission, which includes the command post, flight operations, flight scheduling, intelligence and other support functions.

It is under review to receive LEED Gold designation for meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design criteria, and is one of the most energy efficient buildings in Tennessee.

Cauthen, commander of the 134th and the base, lauded Forster for his leadership from the time of the invasion by Kuwait by Iraq, through the Gulf wars, and operations in Bosnia and Kosovo.

“It was his leadership during that transitional period — when we changed from a strategic reserve force to an operational force — that he was instrumental in us being able to sustain the ops tempo that we have today,” Cauthen said.

The commander also shared some advice he’d received from Forster.

“He liked to talk about servant leadership. ... He said as commanders and leaders we actually serve the people that we are leading — not the other way around. Some people get that confused,” Cauthen said.

“He was the icon of servant leadership as far as I’m concerned.”

State Sen. Doug Overbey presented Cauthen with a Senate proclamation honoring Forster for his volunteer service to the Volunteer state and stating it is fitting that he be memorialized by naming the building for him.

A testament to the occasion is that six generals were in attendance as well as six colonels and local, state and federal officials, some who flew in from as far away as

Washington, D.C.

Forster’s family was present, too — wife Carolyn, daughters Rebecca Forster and Joy Carver with her husband Will and their children.

Carolyn Forster was asked if she wanted to say a few words. Choking back tears, she stepped to the lectern.

“Fred was always so good at this (public speaking), and if he could see all these familiar faces and those that he loved so much — what a beautiful tribute and a first-class building. You don’t do it any other way than first-class,” Carolyn Forster said.

“I can’t think of anything else that would honor Fred any more. On behalf of our family, thank you.”

The scores of people in attendance — military, former military and civilians — rose as one to their feet and applauded.



105th Personnel Co. delivers holiday spirit

About 60 Soldiers of the Tennessee Army National Guard's 105 Personnel Company spread some holiday cheer this past weekend on what seemed like a mission to make Christmas complete, as part of the unit's holiday community outreach program.

On December 4, two busloads and humvees full of Soldiers arrived at a home for troubled teens in Franklin, Tn. The home is managed by My Friend's House Family and Children's Services, a non-profit organization that houses boys between the ages of 12 and 18 who are from broken homes and a variety of backgrounds.

"We want to make them feel like this is the holiday spirit and we are here for them," said Sgt. Alyssa Vasquez.

"I think it would be a good thing to interact with the kids and show them that there's still hope after this, and this is an opportunity for them to make a next step in life and to grow," said Spc. Bryan Haskins.

Aside from hanging wreaths and Christmas lights, the troops passed out Christmas cards and toys.

"We had gifts, basketballs and footballs, and just wanted to give these kids a bright future," Haskins said.

"They had a lot of love in their faces and just seemed like this was a very big thing for them," said Vasquez.

The Soldiers spent time getting to know the teens, while also building relationships and acting as positive role models.

"Doing these holiday activities, as many families in America are experiencing, may be the first time that they're involved in this sort of a happy holiday experience," said Kim Helper, My Friend's House Board President.

"For various reasons, now is just not a good time in their lives for them to be home with family. There can be very many reasons why that is



and what we do at My Friend's House is provide a home environment for them," she explained.

It's also an opportunity to see the softer side of the Guard-- as a service to the community.

"We're patriots and we want to be able to give back to our citizens and our community, and provide holiday spirit and make sure people are feeling that love from us," said Vasquez.

"I am just delighted to have the National Guard come here and share their leadership with these young men," said Helper.

Founded in 1982, My Friend's House provides a variety of programs and services to help youth recover from adverse situations and to become successful young adults. It is the only private residential program serving young men in Williamson County. For more information, please call (615) 790-8553 or visit myfriendshousetn.org.



Gov. Haslam Veteran's Day celebration

Story and Photos by: Capt. Darrin Haas



Governor Bill Haslam and First Lady Crissy Haslam joined Maj. Gen. Mike Maloan, Staff Judge Advocate, Tennessee National Guard, and Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs Many-Bears Grinder for a Veterans Day event at the Tennessee Tower Plaza Nov. 7.

The Tennessee Army and Air National Guard posted the colors for the event and music was played by the 129th Army Band.

During the event, Governor Haslam highlighted the military service of five state employees and thanked veterans all over the state for their service and sacrifice to their country.



269th MP Co. conducted individual weapons qualifications Nov. 18-20



The 269th Military Police Company conducted individual weapons qualifications 18-20 NOV 2011. The unit fired over 24,000 rounds of M9 ammunition, 21,000 rounds of M4 ammunition, and 10,000 rounds of M249 linked 5.56 ammunition. The unit accomplished 95% qualification on assigned weapons systems. The unit also completed M9, M4, and M249 night fire familiarization and a NVG driving course. There were heated tents available for warming and meals were served out of the MKT in support of IWQ.

