



The Rail Gunner Newsletter

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THE RAIL GUNNER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 2

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Pfc. Anthony Salas, a food service specialist, grills mushrooms and peppers that will be served during lunch. The Food Service section of the 67th Field Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, was selected to compete in the III Corps level Philip A. Connelly Award program, of which the winner will go on to compete at the U.S. Army Forces Command level (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

67th FSC dishes up excellence

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade, Public Affairs

As dawn breaks on a cool spring morning, Soldiers in their outer tactical vests and advanced combat helmets with assigned weapons form a staggered line outside a Mobile Kitchen Trailer. These Soldiers are waiting to do their part in a competition. This competition is not about how well the waiting Soldiers will do tactically but how well they are fed.

The Food Service section of the

67th Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, was selected to represent the 1st Cavalry Division in the Philip A. Connelly Award program, March 20, and competed against other units within III Corps.

The Philip A. Connelly Competition was started in 1968, back then it was known as the "best mess" competition, to recognize excellence in the Army's Food Service.

According to the Quartermaster School website, the late Philip A. Connelly



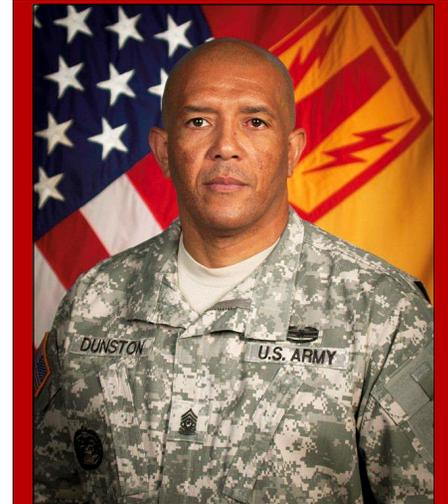
The Rail Gunner Monthly Staff

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RAIL GUNNER 6 & 9 SEND



**Colonel
William E. McRae
41st Fires Brigade CDR**



**Command Sergeant Major
Antonio Dunston
41st Fires Brigade CSM**

pians don't stop training once the gold medal is earned; they continue to sharpen their skills. We must have the same mindset. The Soldier's Creed says, "I will never quit. I will never accept defeat." We all aspire to be a part of an elite, professional organization, and creating such an organization requires a relentless pursuit of excellence every day.

Finally, Command Sgt. Maj. Dunston and I urge you to take advantage of the beautiful weather we've been enjoying and spend time with your family and friends. Without the love and support of those who are closest to us our chosen career would be that much harder on us. As always - Be safe! There is no sadder occasion than losing a friend, family member or teammate. Look out for one another, have fun, and enjoy the amazing state of Texas.

- Rail Gunner 6

It is an honor and a privilege to see our Warriors, day in and day out, continue to set new standards in our profession of arms. As a professional organization, we must continue to raise the bar in everything we do. Excellence and a strict adherence to standards and discipline are of utmost importance.

There are two Soldiers in this brigade that have exemplified this commitment to excellence of which I speak and I want to let the brigade know how proud I am of Spc. Lyka Cabigon, the brigade Soldier of the Quarter and Sgt. Marcella Hunt, the brigade NCO of the Quarter.

These two Soldiers epitomize who we are as Rail Gunners and I thank them for their dedication to duty and upholding the Army values.

- Rail Gunner 9

Hello Rail Gunners and Rail Gunner Family,

Spring is here and it has brought some excellent weather for training; not too cold and still not too hot. Despite current budget restraints and a climate of fiscal uncertainty, we will still continue to train. We will train, both here at Fort Hood and at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. Additionally, nicer weather brings with it the chance to finally enjoy many outdoor recreational activities.

As Soldiers, it is important that we be ready to answer our nation's call to defend freedom anywhere in the world. We can't wait until we're on the plane or standing in a combat zone to do our best; that effort must be made now - every day. We must give 100%, dig deeper, and give some more, before we find ourselves in harm's way.

If you know you need improvement, take whatever measures necessary to improve. If you are good at what you're doing, get better. If you have achieved excellence, continue on your path and reach for greater things. I urge everyone to be vigilant against complacency. Olym-

Dishing up excellence continued



In the grey morning light just before the sun rises, the Soldiers are fed in preparation for the morning meal before they begin training for the day. The Food Service section of the 67th Field Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, was judged for the 1st Cavalry Division level of the Philip A. Connelly Award program and was selected to compete at the III Corps level, March, 20 (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

started the competition with the goal to improve the quality of Army food.

"I'm just happy to compete and show off my skills against other units in the Army," said Pfc. Anthony Salas, a food service specialist and Baltimore native.

The Soldiers were judged in a number of areas to include sanitation, food presentation and field site setup. The team received high marks in these areas despite the challenges of the field environment.

The night before the 67th FSC was to be judged, high winds and rain threatened to delay the morning's breakfast meal.

"High winds took down our

dining tent but with help of the unit, we got everything up by serving time," said Sgt. 1st Class Helena Mahkee, senior Food Service Operations Sergeant, 67th FSC.

After the dining tent was set back up, the only sign of the previous night's bad weather was the mud left by the rain. Following breakfast the food service team moved into preparing lunch. On the menu was steak, grilled mushrooms and peppers and boiled corn.

The 67th FSC food service section claimed the 1st Cavalry Division win on March 20. The section competed at the III Corps level but was unable to bring home a second

victory.

In the end, 4th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) was selected as the III Corps champions.

The Rail Gunners look forward to next year's competition and will take the lessons learned this year to heart in preparation for next time.

'Deep Strike' Bn spares time for student bowlers

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade, Public Affairs

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment "First Strike," 41st Fires Brigade, helped coach and chaperon students from the unit's adopted school, Manor Middle School, while the students bowled March 4 and 6 in Killeen, Texas.

The students took a break from their typical physical education class to apply what they have learned in the gym to the bowling alley. The middle school students have been learning about the sport of bowling at school and were brought to a local bowling alley to utilize their new found skills.

"It's a great way to stay physically active. It's a sport that all ages can do, anybody can do it," said Tarsha Graves, head of the school's physical education department.

Students from the sixth and seventh grades, 160 total, took turns bowling while the Soldiers from the First Strike Battalion gave pointers on form and technique.

"It was fun and exciting," said Spc. Tyler Ferguson, Multiple Launch Rocket System crewmember, A Battery, 1st Bn., 21st FAR, 41st Fires Bde. "The kids had fun and I had fun, everyone had fun."



Spc. Tyler Ferguson, Multiple Launch Rocket System crewmember, A Battery, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, helps a student, from Manor Middle School, bowl during a school field trip to a local bowling alley, March 6 in Killeen, Texas (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



Spc. Christopher Brown, a Multiple Launch Rocket System Operations and Fire Direction Specialist with A Battery, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, helps a student from Manor Middle School with his bowling technique March 6, at a Killeen, Texas, bowling alley (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

Black Knights exercise their MLRS muscles

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade, Public Affairs

The late winter's morning started with heavy clouds hanging in the sky. From across the valley a loud mechanical noise could be heard as a Multiple Launch Rocket System moved to the point from which it would fire. Once at its assigned area, the MLRS positioned its deadly cargo toward the enemy. Then, suddenly, a tremendous boom rocked the valley.

Soldiers from B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, conducted a live fire exercise, Jan. 29 on Fort Hood.

The battery, known as the Black Knights, had eight MLRS crews participate in the exercise. The exercise was designed to qualify and certify each of the MLRS crews on their assigned weapon system. An MLRS crew must qualify once every six months to stay proficient.

This exercise was a special one for Cpl. Chad Arredondo, a Multiple Launch Rocket System operational fire direction specialist with the Black Knights, who was the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Jump Battery Operation Center. This was the first time the battery has placed a corporal in this position, said Capt. Hector Cantillo, the battery commander.

"It lets me know that my leadership has the trust in me to perform this job at the standard that they need," said Arredondo.

Arredondo a Waxahachie, Texas native, was promoted to corporal during the third week of January.



Cpl. Chad Arredondo (left), Spc. Rudy Gastelum (center) and Spc. Derrick White (right), Soldiers from B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, pose for a picture outside their Battery Operation Center during the battery's live fire exercise at Fort Hood, Texas, Jan. 29. These Soldiers are responsible for running the Jump Battery Operation Center (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

During the exercise Arredondo's section was responsible for relaying the fire missions to the crews within the MLRS.

"The biggest difficulty ... is having to separate yourself from the Soldiers and learning that you now have that leadership position," said Arredondo.

The Battery Operation Center is responsible for tactical movements and positioning of the battery, it maintains all tactical data such as maps and

metrological data, and provides fire direction for the battery.

The Jump BOC acts as a mobile Battery Operation Center should the situation call for such a need, Arredondo said.

The battery safely and successfully certified all crews during this exercise.



Soldiers from B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, participate in a live fire exercise at Fort Hood, Texas Jan. 29. The exercise was designed to qualify and certify each of the MLRS crews on their assigned weapon system. An MLRS crew must qualify once every six months to stay proficient (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

Rail Gunners finish strong in combatives tournament



Spc. Micah Barro (black shirt) from 41st Fires Brigade, goes on the offensive by throwing a right jab at his opponent. Barro took first place for his weight class at the 2013 Fort Hood Combatives Tournament, Feb. 23 (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

Story and photo by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade, Public Affairs

During the four days of the 2013 Fort Hood Combatives Tournament, 228 Soldiers competed against each other in eight different weight classes, and of those, 11 belonged to the 41st Fires Brigade "Rail Gunners" Team.

For those 11 Rail Gunners, the pressure was on. Training started in November for this year's combatives tournament.

The 41st Fires Bde. took first place in the 2012 tournament and runner-up honors in the 2011 tournament.

"I believe we trained the hardest out of every one on post. We trained every day since November," said 2nd Lt. Terrence

Green, the boxing coach for the Rail Gunner combatives team.

Out of the 11 that started the tournament, five made it to the final day of competition, three of which battled for first place in their weight class. One Soldier, Spc. Richard Cole, last year's welterweight champion, was eliminated early in the tournament due to a cracked rib.

Coming into the championship rounds, Sgt. Simon Pequeno, Spc. Micah Barro and Capt. Nathan Thobaben fought for first place in different weight classes. Both Pequeno and Barro took the win in their class.

"We came in here with two-thirds of a team ... and we still took second," said Sgt. Maj. Timothy Wayne, the operations sergeant major for 1st Battalion,

21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Bde.

Leading into the championship bouts, 3rd Cavalry Regiment was in first place and 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, was second overall in the team standings, while the 41st Fires Bde. started the night off in third.

"We were down by 10 points yesterday," Green said.

As a whole, the Rail Gunner team finished second in the tournament – no easy feat, when, according to the rules, a full team can consist of 16 Soldiers.

"Maybe next year we can have a full team and get that trophy back where it belongs," Wayne said.

41st Fires Bde integrates combatives; sets example

Story and photos by
By Daniel Cernero
Sentinel Sports Editor



Sgt. Justin Smith, in the black shirt, winds up a punch directed at Sgt. Richard Lee during a 41st Fires Bde. combatives practice the morning of Jan. 29, as the unit prepares a team for upcoming Fort Hood Combatives Tournament (U.S. Army photo by Daniel Cernero, Sentinel Sports Editor)

In being a Soldier of the U.S. Army, one must “stand ready to deploy, engage and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat,” as stated in the Soldier’s Creed.

It also references, among other things, how a Soldier must adopt a never-quit attitude, while being “disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in ... warrior tasks and drills.”

In just over three week’s time, the annual Fort Hood Combatives Tournament will commence once again as Soldiers showcase a very visual display of the above characteristics.

But to get to that level – competing and excelling in the post tournament – requires commitment and training, said Sgt. Maj. Timothy Wayne, the operations sergeant major for 41st Fires Brigade’s 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, as well

as the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the brigade’s combatives team this year.

“When I got here, it surprised me that the brigade as a whole was still pushing the combatives program,” Wayne said, who arrived in June, “turning it around and sending Soldiers to Level 1 if they didn’t have it already, making sure that each battalion had a certain amount of Level 2s and Level 3s, so that they had certified instructors throughout the battalion, to go around to the units, the companies, to ensure they were doing the proper training when the combatives training was on the training calendar.”

It’s this type of incorporation of combatives, Wayne said, that naturally translates into the brigade’s success in the tournament. The 41st Fires Bde. team followed up a second-place finish in 2011 with an outright victory last year.

As of November, a group of 41st Fires Bde. Soldiers had already been identified to start training for the Fort Hood tournament. But even across the entire brigade, on a unit-by-unit basis, combatives is something regularly rescheduled on the training calendar, Wayne said, whether it be once a month, where it is now, or as frequently as once a week as in the past.

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Farris, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Fort Hood Combatives Training Facility, said this implementation is exactly how they’d like to grow the combatives program heading forward.

“They need to integrate it into everything that they’re doing,” Farris said, referring to units and Soldiers across the board. “So for PT (physical training), after we do a run, we could do some drills and do a combatives portion, and then we could do our stretching. Or if we go to the field, there’d be a portion of combatives we

could do before doing each different field exercise.”

There’s currently a misconception, Farris said, that combatives and the benefits of this training only apply to Soldiers with a combat arms military occupation specialty.

“(The benefits apply) for any MOS – truck drivers, cooks – anything that you do in the Army,” he said. “Even if I’m a computer-analyst guy; how many times have people gotten onto the FOB (forward operating base)? All they have to do is be in the same room with you, and if your rifle was five feet away from you or 10 feet away from you, it’d probably be good for you to know how to defend yourself with your hands.

“Is it a stretch? Yes, but how many people go into combat and never end up firing their weapon? A ton,” Farris added. “Infantryman will go to combat and sometimes not fire their weapon. Does that mean that they shouldn’t practice firing their weapon? No, you still want to have that tool in your kit just in case.”

Spc. Richard Cole, one of the 41st Fires Bde. instructors, and the reigning champ at the welterweight division from last year’s post tournament, has the MOS of a mechanic. He said the usefulness of combatives extends past being down range and into having basic self-defense for when Soldiers are at home.

“Down range, yes, you’re clearing rooms and you have to use combatives,” Cole said, “but stateside, you don’t have your M16 on you or your IBA (interceptor body armor) and ACH (advanced combat helmet) on you. (With training), you have a better chance of defending yourself and helping keep the community safe.”

Farris stressed that as a Soldier, regardless of MOS, combatives helps make Soldiers warriors.

41st Fires Bde integrates combatives continued

“What kind of people do you want around you in the Army?” he asked. “We talk about people being a warrior, a warrior-this or a warrior-that; fighting should be one of the main things that we focus on, in my opinion. It’s a basic of a warrior.”

The training also has natural ripple effects in a Soldier and in the unit.

“It goes into all of the things that we want guys to do – be active and not be sitting in your barracks room; talking about the Warrior Ethos, esprit de corps,” Farris said. “All of those things, you get a portion of it doing combatives, and they all transfer into their regular jobs.”

Sgt. Justin Smith, who is Level 3 certified in combatives and is another of the 41st Fires Brigade team leaders, said he ends up seeing Soldiers who are much more confident.

“They’re not scared to fire. It comes from the same thing as fighting; people will hesitate,” he said. “You don’t hesitate anymore after doing these programs; you don’t get scared, because you know what you’re doing. Training with these guys had gotten me thinking on my feet more than I ever have as an NCO.”

It’s also serves as something positive for Soldiers to invest their time into.



Sgt. Justin Smith, a coach for the 41st Fires Bde.'s combatives team, oversees a portion of practice the morning of Jan. 29, as the unit prepares a team for the upcoming Fort Hood Combatives Tournament (U.S. Army photo by Daniel Cernero, Sentinel Sports Editor).

“I was on my out the door, on my way out of the Army,” Smith said, “but combatives was a way to save me, a way to keep my interest going, to keep me happy in the Army and motivate me. It’s a whole new motivation.

“At the time, I wasn’t getting the challenge I needed,” he added, “and this provided the challenge I needed to stay.”

To get to the level where combatives can be used safely within a unit, Farris said the focus should not be on just sending all of a unit’s Soldiers to the fight house to become Level 1 certified in combatives. That’s a foundational element units can take care of on their own.

“We’d rather them get certified down at their unit level,” he said. “And then here, at the fight house, they’ll be doing tactical, scenario-based training – clearing rooms, taking people out of humvees, or any type of scenario-based training, whether we’re doing it out at their unit with them or they’re coming here.”

For a unit to be able to certify Soldiers in the Level 1 of combatives, they must have a Soldier who is at least Level 3 certified.

After the proper combatives certifications are in place, both Wayne and Farris agreed that it all boils down to senior leadership as to how much combatives would continue to be implemented after that.

“As long as your leadership is involved with the combatives program, you’re going to have combatives successfully incorporated in your unit,” Wayne said simply. “If you don’t have the senior leadership involvement, then you’re not going to have it.”

“It’s a different mindset across the board – there are some people that are doing it and there are some that aren’t doing it,” Farris added. “It just all depends on where the priority is for combatives. And a lot of people just don’t know how it fits in. That’s the

piece that I feel like we’re kind of missing.

He continued, “Commanders make the training schedules, so it all depends on if the commander is into combatives or not. If they deem that something else is more important than combatives, then that takes priority.

“Soldiers can affect the guys they’re in charge of. So even if my commander doesn’t like it, I can take my group of guys and make them awesome. But beyond that ... it takes guys being higher ranking to enforce.”

As a way to reward the Soldiers’ hard work and training, these combatives tournaments come in as motivation, Farris said.

“They are a good thing to build esprit de corps within a unit, to allow Soldiers to become champions and to hone the warrior skills in an environment that you’re able to maintain the safety,” he said.

It’s important for Soldiers to learn how to take a hit, Wayne added, here in a safe, controlled environment, rather than down range.

“For those that have grown up fighting, they can take a hit,” he said, “But for those that have never been hit before, when they actually get hit a few times going through the clinch drill, it wakes them up, and it builds their confidence, because they realize that I’ve been hit, but it really didn’t hurt that bad.”



Spec. Richard Cole maintains the top position while grappling with Pfc. Christian Vazquez during a 41st Fires Bde. combatives practice the morning of Jan. 29, as the unit prepares a team for upcoming Fort Hood Combatives Tournament (U.S. Army photo by Daniel Cernero, Sentinel Sports Editor).

Army North senior enlisted leader encourages mentorship for female Soldiers



A group of female Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, gather round at the close of the day and enjoy a treat to cap off the battalion's Women's Mentorship Day, March 25, at the Oveta Culp Center on Fort Hood. Sgt. Maj. Linda Kessinger, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the personnel section for U.S. Army North (Fifth Army), made the trek from Fort Sam Houston to serve as the guest speaker for the event (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sheena Ferrell, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment)

Story by
Army North, Public Affairs Office

As the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of U.S. Army North's personnel office, Sgt. Maj. Linda Kessinger was an excellent choice to speak at the Women's Mentorship Day for 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade at Fort Hood.

Having served at all levels of enlisted leadership, she has spent her career mentoring and leading, female and male Soldiers alike: first as a drill sergeant, then as an equal opportunity representative and now as a sergeant major.

"I love what I do," said Kessinger. "I feel like I have more mentorship to give. I love the Soldiers, and I am addicted to the Army."

Kessinger was asked to make the trek from Fort Sam Houston to Fort Hood to speak

with the command's female Soldiers by Sgt. 1st Class Sheena Ferrell, who serves as the battalion's Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention program coordinator. Ferrell said Kessinger is a great example of a successful senior enlisted leader.

"My command team is starting a quarterly Soldier development program, and this quarter the focus is on mentorship," said Ferrell. "Since it is Women's History Month, we decided to have a Women's Development Day; my step-mother, retired Lt. Col. Tonya Bryant, who worked with Sgt. Maj. Kessinger at Fort Bliss, suggested I call her and ask her to speak to the group."

Ferrell said it was great to have Kessinger help kick off their program.

"Future Soldier development sessions will include

all of the Soldiers in the battalion," said Ferrell, adding that the Mentorship Day also included yoga and other team-building exercises.

According to the Army's Leadership manual, to answer the challenges of today's military environment, NCOs must train their Soldiers to cope, prepare and perform no matter what the situation. In short, the NCO of today is a warrior-leader of strong character, comfortable in every role outlined in the NCO Corps' vision.

Kessinger, who embodies the strong and agile character required to be successful as a modern senior enlisted leader, spoke to the group about the importance of finding a mentor as well as being one to someone else.

"When I came into the Army 28 years ago, I don't remember seeing female first sergeants or sergeants major,"

Senior enlisted mentorship continued

she said. “As a junior Soldier, I don’t remember having a “woman leader” to look up to – but I had some great male leaders and mentors.

“Today, you’re lucky – you have many senior role models, any of which I bet will take you by the hand and lead you wherever you want to go. There is no limit.”

Kessinger also counseled the Soldiers to believe in themselves and to not listen to naysayers.

“The only difference between you and me is that I have been in the Army longer than you,” she said. “If you put your mind to it, you can be the Sergeant Major of the Army.”

Kessinger has mentored people throughout her life – even before joining the Army.

“My mother worked three jobs when I was a kid,” she said. So, when I first joined the Army, I sent my paycheck home to her so she wouldn’t have to work so much and so my younger siblings could have the things they wanted without having to resort to stealing.”

When she joined the Army, Kessinger said she, like many other Soldiers in her shoes, was unsure as to whether she had made the right choice. She shared some of her initial concerns with the group.

“I was that Soldier out there, like many of you in the audience, who had doubts, who was scared,” said Kessinger. “The pressure of trying to make it through basic training took a toll on me.”

She said being able to draw on the experience and

guidance of her mentors over the years helped her to succeed in her career, which, she added, really took off when she pinned on sergeant rank and met her husband, retired Sgt. Maj. Daniel Kessinger.



Female Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, assemble a puzzle together as part of the battalion’s Women’s Mentorship Day March 25 at the Oveta Culp Center on Fort Hood. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Sheena Ferrell, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade)

“He is my best friend,” said Kessinger. “We had only been dating for a few months when I came on orders for drill sergeant school and he came on orders for recruiting school. We wanted to stay together, so we got married and his orders were changed to drill sergeant school.

“After that, our careers mirrored each others: drill sergeants’ school, equal opportunity, I was addicted to the Army.”

While meeting with the Soldiers, Kessinger engaged in a question and answer session.

Afterward, Spc. Laura Lefler, a human resources specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Bn., 21st FA Rgmt., 41st Fires Bde., asked Kessinger if she could transfer to Army North to serve with her. Lefler said she was motivated by Kessinger’s words and asked for advice on what opportunities existed for her.

Kessinger told the Soldiers that her opportunities are limitless and, as a personnel sergeant, she has an opportunity to serve pretty much anywhere in the Army. One of the great things, she added, is that you have the opportunity to move on to a new mission every two to three years so you can expand on your career experiences.

“While the grass isn’t always greener on the other side, you are only going to be at a unit for a relatively short amount of time,” she said, adding that it is important for Soldiers to take an active interest in their careers and to understand the assignment process.

“Sometimes you have to say ‘hoohah’ and drive on – even if you are a sergeant major,” She said. “I am proud to be a female Soldier at this time.

“When I came in, the burden of proof used to be ‘why should a woman serve in a particular military occupational specialty?’ Today, it is why shouldn’t women serve in this MOS? Let us continue to break down barriers and pave the way for the men and women who will walk in our boots.”

Rail Gunners welcome home local vet.



Soldiers from the 41st Fires Brigade lead a procession down a residential street in Morgan's Point Resort, Texas in honor of Marine Staff Sgt. Jack Pierce, Feb. 9 (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs)

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade, Public Affairs

A small group of Soldiers from across the 41st Fires Brigade marched down a residential street in Morgan's Point Resort, Texas, while still more Soldiers lined one side of the street holding American flags, Feb. 9 in honor of Marine Staff Sgt. Jack Pierce.

Pierce was left paralyzed from the chest down after his vehicle was hit by a 300 pound IED in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on Jan. 9, 2010.

The parade and following ribbon cutting ceremony were held for the Pierces, who received the keys to their new home.

Through a charity organization called Homes for our Troops, the Pierce family received a house that was built to give Jack the freedom of movement to allow him to live more

independently.

Many of the Rail Gunners participating in the ceremony volunteered time to help create the landscaping for the Pierce home.

"It is extremely rewarding to see all of these people and city come together to take care of this Marine and his family," said Sgt. 1st Class Elbert Powell from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Bde.

In September of 2012 Powell helped put in the landscaping around the Pierce's new home. "I felt good knowing that I was able to help."

Construction began on June 15, 2012 and eight months later the Pierce family is excited to move into their new home.

"This home, it means a lot to us. Number one, I can access everything. I can get to the cabinets, I can get to the sink, I can utilize the stove without burning my arms or my

hands," said Pierce after cutting the ribbon to the newly built home.



Staff Sgt. Akeem Stalling shakes hands with Marine Staff Sgt. Jack Pierce. Pierce was left paralyzed from the chest down after his vehicle was hit by a 300 pound IED in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on Jan. 9, 2010 (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

A Battery, 2-20th FAR deploys to Kuwait

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade, Public Affairs

Soldiers from A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade deployed to Kuwait in the early morning hours of Feb. 2.

The Soldiers will spend the deployment training and standing ready in case the Army calls the unit into action in that region of the world.

"We are going to get some good training while we are there," said 1st Sgt. Christian Bellota, first sergeant for A Battery, 2nd Bn., 20th FAR, 41st Fires Bde.

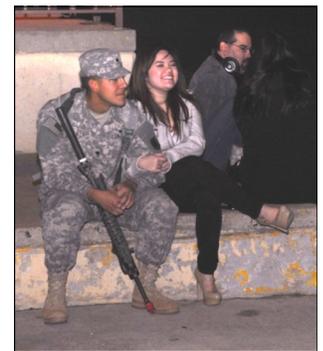
The event started with a barbecue for all of the Soldiers and their families and friends on the evening of Feb. 1. After the Soldiers were issued their weapons they were able to spend time with family and friends. The mood was somber throughout the night despite the upbeat music playing throughout the battalion area.

"I'm glad that I have the opportunity to serve my country," said Spc. Matthew Garza, a Multiple Launch Rocket System crew member. This is Garza's first deployment.

All too soon it was time for the battery to load on to buses to depart the battalion area for the airport. Hugs and kisses were given quickly as Family members said their final goodbyes before the Soldiers got on the bus and soon after the airplane that will take them on their journey half-way around the world.



Soldiers for A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, give their final goodbyes to their spouses as the battery prepares to leave the battalion area and head to the airport Feb. 2 (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



Soldiers from A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade spend a few more minutes, here at Fort Hood, with loved ones before loading the buses that will take them to the airport Feb. 2 (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

Small Texas town celebrates veterans

Story and photos by
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez
41st Fires Brigade, Public Affairs

The small town of Centerville, Texas, a town of about 900 people, held its annual veterans' appreciation day celebration April 27 here.

Centerville adopted the 41st Fires "Rail Gunners" Brigade through the Association of the United States Army adopt-a-unit program. Located in Leon County, Texas, the town is no stranger to giving back to the military.

Leon County has been generous when it comes to America's armed forces, having donated turkeys for Thanksgiving and toys for Christmas to the Soldiers of the Rail Gunner Brigade.

The celebration started off like many military ceremonies with the posting of America's Colors, provided by the Palestine, Texas chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America.

Col. William McRae, 41st Fires Brigade commander, was the first guest speaker to address the audience. Before McRae could start his speech, he was surprised by three Rail Gunners who marched up and presented him with a saxophone. McRae proceeded to play "America the Beautiful" for the crowd's pleasure.

"I didn't know the colonel could play the saxophone," said Sgt. Jonathan Garcia, a transportation operator with 67th Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires.

Also addressing the crowd of approximately 200 people was



Col. William McRae, 41st Fires Brigade commander, plays the saxophone for the crowd April 27 at a veterans' appreciation celebration in Centerville, Texas. The town of Centerville invited Soldiers from the 41st Fires Bde. and veterans from the surrounding areas to join the town as they show their appreciation with a luncheon, guest speakers and door prizes. (Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

Congressman Kevin Brady, who represents Texas' 8th Congressional District. Brady talked about the expanded health clinic for the local veterans and the plans of expanding the health care system even more in his district.

Once the keynote speaker had finished, the Soldiers and veterans were treated to a barbecue lunch donated by businesses throughout Leon County. There were also door prizes given away to a few lucky individuals.

Along with the festivities, several organizations were on hand to provide information to veterans about the benefits they earned through their military service.

"Everybody needs to remember their veterans ... we

really need to pay our respect to our veterans," said former Marine and Vietnam Veteran Steve Severn.



Command Sgt. Maj. Jennifer Love, command sergeant major for the 589th Brigade Support Battalion, 41st Fires Brigade, looks over the traveling Texas Fallen Heroes Memorial that made a stop April 27 at the veterans' appreciation celebration held in Centerville, Texas. The town of Centerville invited Soldiers from the 41st Fires Bde. and veterans from the surrounding areas to join the town as they show their appreciation with a luncheon, guest speakers and door prizes. (Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

Throughout the Brigade



Philip A. Connelly Competition



2013 Fort Hood Combatives Tournament



After 41st Fires Brigade run



Easter Egg Hunt



1st Cavalry Division run



Houston Live Stock Show and Rodeo

Rail Gunners

NCO of the Quarter



Sgt. Marcela Hunt
575th FSC, 1-21st FAR

Soldier of the Quarter



Spc. Lyka Cabigon
67th FSC, 2-20th FAR

REENLISTMENTS

153 Rail Gunners reenlisted during the months of January, February, March, and April:

1-21st FAR

Spc. Abad, Jonas Carino Jr
 Spc. Alexius, Ren Andrew
 Spc. Alviar, Christopher Lee
 Spc. Armentareria, Anthony
 Spc. Axtell, Brennan D
 Spc. Barnes, Corey Alan
 Spc. Bergan, Anthony Francis
 Spc. Bitz, Jesse Douglas
 Spc. Burrows, Nicholas Leslie
 Spc. Casillas, Alejandra
 Spc. Colemire, Curtis Dale
 Spc. Devoue, Darren Tyler
 Spc. Dubois, Seth Gabriel
 Spc. Groves, Adrian Lamar
 Spc. Hall, Blaine Robert
 Spc. Harris, Shawn Temple
 Spc. Hinkley, Kendall Tague
 Spc. Hoyt, Michael Robert
 Spc. Hubbard, Dominique Chavez
 Spc. Irwin, Jeremy Brian
 Spc. Johnson, Taneisha Marquinez
 Spc. Linares, Elsa
 Spc. Lopez, Adrian Manuel
 Spc. Martinez, Eric Frank
 Spc. McKinney, Kyarra Chanta
 Spc. Mena, Carlos Luis
 Spc. Pappas, Kyle David
 Spc. Ralston, Jared Coley
 Spc. Sdelamora, Alberto Jr
 Spc. Seely, Richard Guy
 Spc. Siler, Marquez Maurice
 Spc. Sorm, Dalyson Lear
 Spc. Stewart, Kevin Nicholas

Spc. Tribble, Johnathan Randall J
 Spc. Wallace, John Darrin
 Spc. Wichman, Sarah Michelle
 Spc. Williams, Bobby Gene Jr
 Spc. Williams, James Matthew
 Sgt. Davis, Antonio Darius
 Sgt. Felts, Christopher Michael
 Sgt. Ferguson, Jacob Darin
 Sgt. Galvan, George
 Sgt. Harper, Jacques Zenas
 Sgt. Hernandezayala, Oscar
 Sgt. Hunt, Marcela Veraly
 Sgt. Jackson, Dalmar Patterson
 Sgt. Lamb, Bo Austin
 Sgt. Patterson, Joseph Alan
 Sgt. Pennington, Joshua Downey
 Sgt. Poveda, Erik J
 Sgt. Quarles, Dezmond Terrell
 Sgt. Rodriguez, Nelson Jr
 Sgt. Smith, Orlando Staubyn Auby
 Sgt. Southwick, Daniel Parr
 Sgt. Towns, Cassius Devonta Dere
 Sgt. Young, Travais Warren
 Staff Sgt. Borja, Travis Ivan Stol
 Staff Sgt. Ferrell, Tommy Wayne
 Staff Sgt. Fuller, Noah Tremayne
 Staff Sgt. Gehrke, Joshua Allen
 Staff Sgt. Jackson, Anthony Ray
 Staff Sgt. Mack, Casey Benjamin
 Staff Sgt. Salazar, Johnboyd Faisao
 Staff Sgt. Starling, Thomas Norman Jr
 Staff Sgt. Traxler, Randell Max Jr

2-20th FAR

Spc. Arredondo, Chad Eric
 Spc. Baker, Jeremy Houston
 Spc. Brisell, Brandon Matthew
 Spc. Carlton, Kyle Wade
 Spc. Gabriel, Marlon Chris
 Spc. Garza, Matthew Eugene
 Spc. Halona, Jeffery Pete
 Spc. Hughes, Marvin Fitzgerald
 Spc. Johnson, Terrence Dewayne
 Spc. Keller, Justin Randalwayne W
 Spc. Munoz, Jorge Antonio
 Spc. Pape, Andrew Thomas
 Spc. Phillips, Ashlee Murigha
 Spc. Schaefer, Eugene Jon
 Spc. Valentine, Sheryl Annette
 Spc. Whately, Dennis Lamar Jr
 Spc. Winemiller, Justin Brett
 Sgt. Buffum, James Erickrobert
 Sgt. Conwell, Keith Dontay
 Sgt. Jean, Gersone
 Sgt. Laplace, Jeremy Joseph
 Sgt. Lisowsky, Steven Charles
 Sgt. Mattick, Keegan Joesph
 Sgt. Mitchell, Denise Marie
 Sgt. Nelson, Wykeese Jamal
 Sgt. Willis, Shane Wesley
 Staff Sgt. Cookman, Jefferson Ernest
 Staff Sgt. Elam, Landre Kenpa
 Staff Sgt. Mcquesten, Jason Ray
 Staff Sgt. Thiers, Ryan Francis
 Staff Sgt. Waycaster, Dennis Robert
 Staff Sgt. Young, Alex Lee
 Sgt. 1st Class Moody, April Tamara

589th BSB

Spc. Buettner, Brendan Michael
 Spc. Dayes, Caleb Emmanuel
 Spc. Dunbar, Joseph Nathaniel Ii
 Spc. Gellys, Marcus Antonio
 Spc. Hall, Nicole Michele
 Spc. Hardin, Virgil Edgar Iii
 Spc. Higgins, Jasmine Antionette
 Spc. Javaine, Mark Arnold
 Spc. Langarica, Gregory Anthony
 Spc. Miller, Christina Marlena
 Spc. Prich, Jessica Marie
 Spc. Rivers, Sean Renard Jr
 Spc. Threat, Justin Antoine
 Spc. Wessel, Justina Jenise
 Spc. Wheelock, Owen Cedric
 Sgt. Acevedo, Laura Raeann
 Sgt. Barreto, Gadiel
 Sgt. Barron, Luis Alberto
 Sgt. Dean, Casey Lee
 Sgt. Ford, Rashad Andre
 Sgt. Galvan, Mirisa Renay
 Sgt. Gonzalez, Emily Selena
 Sgt. Hawkins, Calvin Dewayne
 Sgt. Kopakowski, Michael David
 Sgt. Maza, Reyes Manuel Iii
 Sgt. Pettigrew, Chermak Joseph
 Sgt. Robinski, Shawn Michael
 Sgt. Villafane, Luis A
 Staff Sgt. Campos, Jesus Guzman
 Staff Sgt. Carter, Byron Lee Smith
 Staff Sgt. Hagler, Felisha Juvole

HNB

Spc. Bennett, Robert Donato
 Spc. Caward, Gaige Michael
 Spc. Frauenfeld, Edwin Bennett
 Spc. Jeterperry, Terrance Montrel
 Spc. Kinsey, Tylor Patrick
 Spc. Lattner, Steven Andrew
 Spc. Moore, Tia Jene
 Spc. Pellegrin, Michael John
 Spc. Rivas, Samuel
 Spc. Todas, Lindon Jason Manuel
 Sgt. Diaz, James Edward
 Sgt. Guardado, Raul Jr
 Sgt. Jackson, Yolanda Marie
 Sgt. Mclemore, James Carroll
 Staff Sgt. Anderson, Fernandez Dominic
 Staff Sgt. Britton, Exie Melinda
 Staff Sgt. Brown, Lavaris Terrell
 Staff Sgt. Stjoy, Alex
 Sgt. 1st Class Oros, Israel Perez

A/26

Spc. Derrington, Melanie Jeannine
 Spc. Martin, Shaeyne K
 Spc. Parker, Keisha Monique
 Spc. Pilling, Thomas Jon
 Spc. Priestler, Marquis Davon

324th NSC

Spc. Shelton, Allen Gean

PROMOTIONS

We would like to congratulate all of the Rail Gunners that were promoted during the months of January, February, March, and April:

January

PFC Heather J. Huber
 SGT Delaina R. Daley
 SGT Joseph W. Lee
 SGT Nicholas A. Sawyer
 SGT Michael Z. Zhangzhu
 SSG Irma L. Johnson
 SSG Archie A. Mitchell
 CPT William J. O'Neal

February

SPC Kevin L. Fisher
 SGT John G. Barber
 SGT Jesse D. Bitz
 SGT Seth G. Dubois
 SGT Gregory A. Lanagarcia
 SGT Ryan L. Lourde
 SGT Eric F. Martinez
 SGT Eric P. Turner
 1LT Christopher Robinette

March

PV2 Christopher B. Maxwell
 SGT Zacchary T. Eason
 SGT James C. Mclemore
 SGT Gregory D. Smith
 SSG Jacob D. Ferguson
 SSG Rashad A. Ford
 SSG Keegan J. Mattick
 1LT Terrence J. Green

April

SGT Jorge Horta
 SGT Andrew Sullivan
 CPT Rex Gotchy
 CPT Bermeshia E. Thomas

The "Rail Gunner Monthly" is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the "Rail Gunner Monthly" are not necessarily official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 41st Fires Brigade.

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Check out the unit's Website at www.hood.army.mil/41stFires, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/41stFiresBrigade, or Flickr at www.flickr.com/41stfiresbrigade for additional information.



To send your story ideas and pictures to the 41st Fires Brigade
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