



KEYSTONE

Aviation

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TRADING A GUITAR FOR A GUN



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KEYSTONE Aviation

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Sgt. Nicholas Raia of Altoona, Pa., strums his guitar on top of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. Raia, who performs in the Pennsylvania National Guard's 28th Infantry Division Band, volunteered to deploy as a door gunner with the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade. (Photo by Sgt. Neil Gussman)

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Mentors in Violence Prevention

Story and Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Dale Shade

Jeff O'Brien and Daryl Fort may be the last guys one would ever expect to instruct a violence prevention program. The former college football players look like they could dish out their fair share of violence themselves.

The Mentors in Violence Prevention program, which was held in late October at Contingency Operating Base Adder, was originated in 1993 by Dr. Jackson Katz.

"It started out as a program working almost exclusively with professional sports teams and has expanded significantly from there to where it is today, working with many different organizations, and institutions," said mentor Darryl Forte of New Haven, Conn. Forte is a former University of Maine football player and he now resides in Portland, Maine.

Mentor Jeff O'Brien of Rochester, N.Y., a former Canisins College football player, described the pro-

gram as "a leadership program that focuses on the prevention of sexual violence and violence in general against women." Shannon Spriggs of Houston, Texas, a former University of Texas at Arlington basketball player got involved for just that reason.

"As a woman I felt as though I needed to become involved in something that takes a proactive approach to the problem of violence against women," she said.

Approximately 40 students participated in the program at COB Adder, including Sgt. Ciera Hamme, a 28th Combat Aviation Brigade intelligence analyst, from York, Pa. "I would say the most important concept is the fact that our actions and the things we say in normal life are directly related to violence against women," said Hamme, who cited popular music as a contributor to the objectification of women. "Violence against women is a huge problem, especially women in the military."



TRADING A GUITAR FOR A GUN

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Neil Gussman

Seven years ago, then 18-year-old Nicholas Raia of Altoona, Pa., brought his trumpet to an audition for the Pennsylvania Army National Guard band. He aced the audition and until last summer was a member of several performance groups within the band. Over those seven years he performed more and more with the band and ensembles playing the guitar for recruiting events and celebrations. For more formal military ceremonies he now plays the baritone—a small tuba.

After seven years in the band, Raia, now a sergeant, decided to take a year away from performing and volunteer for a combat tour. Since mobilization in

January, Raia has served as a door gunner on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 104th Aviation Regiment.

“I felt that after 7 years in the Guard, it was my turn to do my part overseas,” said Raia.

To get ready for the transition from full-time student and weekend band member, Raia volunteered for additional training in weapons. In June 2008, Raia attended the Small Arms Master Gunner course at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa. To prepare for hand-to-hand combat he completed the week-long Level One Combatatives Course in July. At the end of September, he

was one of 10 Soldiers in the first class trained in the new Live-Fire Shoot House, also at Fort Indiantown Gap.

His transition from band member and college student to door gunner had difficulties training could not help.

“It was a decision that I struggled with for a while,” Raia said. “It’s one thing to tell your loved ones you are being ordered to leave and a totally different animal entirely when you are trying to explain to them that you are voluntarily leaving.”

Over the years he was in the band, Raia came to believe he should deploy with a combat unit.

“Our job (in the band) is unique in that we are in the public eye often, and we often get thanked for our service by people in our audiences,” Raia said. “I would find myself conflicted, because while it is true that we, as a unit, were serving our country in the way in which we were meant to serve, I also felt as if I should be doing more.”

Raia had several friends in the Guard who deployed overseas at least once in their careers. He said he felt those were the Soldiers who truly deserved to be thanked.

“I felt that after seven years in the guard, it was my turn to do my part overseas,” he said.

His final decision to deploy was met with mixed emotions.

“My unit could not have been more supportive of my decision,” Raia recalled. “They helped me get everything on the military side of the house in order prior to my deployment and have made it a point to ensure it would not affect me negatively upon my return.”

His friends, on the other hand, were confused by Raia’s decision. “Many of my friends are not in the military and I think that makes a big difference,” he said. “People in the military think a little differently than those who are not and most of the Soldiers in the military today could probably easily understand the feeling of responsibility that compelled me to deploy.”

“My family worried about me and they were not

real thrilled that I would volunteer to leave them for a year to go to a combat zone. Raia continued. “My family has been super supportive of my decision. Any previous uncertainty or worries has given way to pride in what I am doing.”

Before deployment, Raia completed all the requirements for a bachelor’s degree at Penn State with a double major in Criminal Justice and Psychology. He plans to bring together all of his training, experience and education by becoming a police officer after deployment—except on National Guard weekends when he will be back on stage or in formation at ceremonies in the 28th Infantry Division Band.

Sgt. Nicholas Raia of Altoona, Pa., strums his guitar on top of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq. Raia, who performs in the Pennsylvania National Guard’s 28th Infantry Division Band, volunteered to deploy as a door gunner with the 28th Combat Aviation Brigade.



Sgt. Nicholas Raia of Altoona, Pa., checks his weapon in a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Contingency Operating Base Adder, Iraq.



KEYSTONE VIGNETTES



Sgt. Jose Perez, or Captain America as his peers sometimes refer to him, is a wheeled-vehicle mechanic serving with the 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment.

Perez serves his country at home as well. He is a fire fighter in his home town of Belleville, N.J., where he lives with his wife Maritza and their two young children. Prior to his current assignment, he served as a police officer in Newark, N.J.

Perez has been with the unit for nine years and is on his second tour of duty in Iraq with the 1-150th, and he continues to have a huge impact on the unit's mission accomplishment. Perez is a true leader and always displays a positive attitude and is eager to pass on his knowledge to other Soldiers.

While at Fort Sill, Okla., training for deployment, it was no surprise to see Perez leading his squad in Army physical fitness training after work. His training helped two of his Soldiers improve their APFT scores and get promoted during this deployment.

As the assistant to the unit movement officer, Perez took the reins during the unit's load out at Fort Sill, ensuring all of the unit's equipment was accounted for and was packed and ready for shipment downrange.

With his extensive knowledge in fire safety and prevention it was a no-brainer to select Perez as one of the battalion's fire wardens. As a fire warden he schedules and conducts routine fire extinguisher and smoke detector inspections. He also ensures that Soldiers' containerized housing units (CHUs) are free of all potential fire hazards. Perez is also the unit safety sergeant and prepares presentations for his unit's monthly safety stand-down days.

On his first deployment to Iraq Perez became famous for his wood-working skills, earning himself the nickname, Bob Villa. This deployment is no different and the demand for his craftsmanship keeps growing.

Perez takes odds and ends of plywood, two-by-fours and whatever he can get his hands on and works his magic. He's fashioned everything from weapons racks, to desks, to radio mounts, and even body armor stands and weight-training stations. You name it, he's built it, and he hasn't had an unsatisfied customer yet.

He really has a knack for creating those creature comforts that you take for granted until you find yourself in a combat zone. His fellow Soldiers are glad to have him on their side. (Photo by Sgt Edward Smith)



Spc. Jeffrey Garcia is a standout soldier in Company E, 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment, where he serves in the maintenance control section. He hails from Morrisville, Pa., and works at Field Maintenance Shop #6 full time back home.

Garcia has been with the 1-150th for the last three years and prior to that he served six years in the U.S. Marines. This Soldier truly loves his job and takes pride in his work. He is one of those Soldiers that you can rely on to get the job done every time. Garcia may not have the most glamorous of jobs but if it didn't get done the results would be disastrous.

The MCS is the main hub for all the Battalion's logistical ground assets. Garcia's job consists of ordering parts and tracking them from request to receipt. Once the parts arrive, the MCS pulls them and enters them into the system after which they notify the customer that their part is available. It may sound fairly simple, but there are countless factors that impede this process. Knowing the supply system is important for the success of any unit, especially in a deployed environment, and this is what makes Garcia so invaluable. He furnishes daily, weekly and monthly reports to the 28th Combat Aviation, giving them visibility on the Battalion's ground equipment readiness. He has never missed a deadline and this allows the command to focus on other issues. Garcia's section also dispatches all tactical vehicles, so he makes himself available pretty much around the clock.

From the onset of the deployment, Garcia has dedicated himself to his work and putting time in at the gym. He has lost more than 50 lbs. since the start of the deployment and is in the best shape of his life. He can't wait to blow his family away with his new trim physique at his younger sister Christina's wedding this September. He has trained his team on all aspects of maintenance control functions and feels confident that his team will maintain their high standards when he returns home on leave for the big event.

Garcia's impact on the Battalion's ground asset readiness has not gone unnoticed and he has received coins from the 1-150th Battalion commander, Lt. Col. John Scannell as well as the 28th CAB commander, Col. Teresa Gallagher. He credits his success and drive to his family, who he describes as his "rock." His mother, his two older brothers and his younger sister all help to keep his spirits up while here on deployment. They are a very close-knit family and are all anxiously awaiting their hero's safe return home. (Photo by Sgt Edward Smith)



Sgt David J. Bickowski is from Mahanoy City, Pa., where he resides with his wife Lori and their three children. He has been in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard for 11 years and works in transportation. Bickowski works as a prison guard for SCIF in Frackville. Bickowski is scanning weapon qualification cards while on Charge of Quarters (CQ) Duty for Company A, 628th Aviation Support Battalion. (Photo by Sgt. James Waltz)



Staff Sgt. Rodney Prys is scanning leave forms while on CQ duty. Prys is from Zeeland, Mich., where he resides with his wife Regina. Prys is an aircraft hydraulic mechanic for Company B, 628th Aviation Support Battalion, but at home he works as a robotic tech programmer.

"During this deployment I have learned to change what I can and accept what I can't," he said. (Photo by Sgt. James Waltz)

Staff Sgt. Scott Sassaman, a machinist for Company B, 628th Aviation Support Battalion, is creating a special tool that will be used to fix a Blackhawk Helicopter. Sassaman is from New Ringgold, Pa., where he resides with his wife Amanda and their son Zach. Amanda has retired from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and Zach has just joined the Guard. Sassaman has been a sheet metal technician at Fort Indiantown Gap for the last 18 years and has served in the military for 23 years, has had four deployments, including two in Iraq.

"I have really been able to concentrate on our mission knowing that I have a strong support from my family. I am especially proud that my son has chosen to follow in his mother and I footsteps. (Photo by Sgt. James Waltz)



Keystone MWR Events at FOB Delta

Submit your events to
TFKeystone@gmail.com

Sgt. Victor Hernandez

Salsa Lessons
9-11 p.m. Weds. nights

Latin Night DJ
8-11 p.m. Fri. nights

At The Theater

Classes and Tutoring with
Sgt Geneshan Harichandran
at the Education Center
Math classes, preparation for
the JAST and ACT
and more

P 90X Exercise Class
by CW3 Tim Lelie

Every day!
6 a.m.
2 p.m.
8 p.m.

Keystone MWR events at Camp Adder

Financial Peace University

Financial Peace University is a life-changing program that teaches you how to make the right decisions with your money. You'll be empowered with the practical skill and confidence needed to achieve your financial goals and experience true financial peace!

When: Fridays, 4 Sept 09 @1900 Hrs
(13 weeks)
Where: Post Chapel

Who: Anyone who desires to improve their financial situation with some time proven principles

Cost: Normally this will cost \$100 per person but you are receiving this course ABSOLUTELY FREE!

Guaranteed: To save you money and make you money if you follow these principles!

POC: Chaplain (LTC) Douglas Compton
28 CAB, Brigade Chaplain 833-5865

Submit your events to
TFKeystone@gmail.com



Volleyball with
SFC Dale Shade

Fridays at the
House of Pain
volleyball court

1800-2100

28th CAB Game Nite
Building 713 w/ CPT
Suzanne Williamson

Rummy, Spades,
Pinochle, Dominos,
Chess, Scrabble...

Wed. 2000-2200

Beyond Narnia
with SGT Neil
Gussman

MWR Library
Mondays at 2000

ngussman@gmail.com

Tallil Dead Poets
Society with SGT Neil
Gussman

MWR Library
Tuesdays at 2000

ngussman@gmail.com

Power Yoga by Dave Kocian

Tuesday, Thursday
1800 at The House of Pain

Saturday
0900 at the South Gym

Sunday
1600 at the South Gym

Please bring a mat, blanket or towel
for floor exercises.

POC: david.e.kocian@us.army.mil

South Side Salsa

Saturdays at Bldg. 713
behind Warrior DFAC

Music starts at 1930
Lessons from 2000 to 2100

POC: WO1 Jesse Lonon
jesse.lonon@iraq.centcom.mil

Weight Watchers – Momentum Plan

NOW on COB Adder



Mondays - 1900
Warrior Medical Training Site Classroom
Bldg 307, Across from the Post Office

Wednesdays - 1030 and 1900
Bldg 7449D, Rear Door

POC: SFC JoAnn Tresco, DSN 833-5840

Filipino & Okinawan Martial Arts

HOUSE OF PAIN FITNESS CENTER
SUN. & TUE. 1900-2000

POC: Glen Valencia
glen.valencia@us.army.mil

CORRECTION:

-Keystone Aviation's editor incorrectly identified the organizer of South Side Salsa in the Nov. 2 issue. Actually, SPC Jeffrey Oakley was responsible for starting South Side Salsa

HALLOWEEN AT COB ADDER

Photos by Sgt. Matthew E. Jones and Sgt. 1st Class Dale Shade

