

OREGON SENTINEL

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

Oregon Guard Welcomes Home Soldiers from Task Force Defender

*Story and photos by John Hugel,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs*

FOREST GROVE, Ore. — The Oregon National Guard officially welcomed home the 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment during a demobilization ceremony on Nov. 16, 2025, held at Neil Armstrong Middle School in Forest Grove, Oregon.

The 2-218th mobilized about 230 members in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, designated Task Force Defender, while conducting Short-Range Air Defense operations at eight separate, geographically dispersed sites in Jordan, Iraq, and Syria during their year-long deployment.

"On behalf of Governor Kotek and the entire Oregon National Guard, it is my honor and privilege to officially say, 'Welcome Home,'" said Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard.

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Oregon Army National Guard soldiers assigned to 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment render a hand salute during their formal demobilization ceremony held in their honor on Nov. 16, 2025, at Neil Armstrong Middle School in Forest Grove, Oregon.

Guardsmen Enhance Drone Capabilities with new Training Systems



From left to right: ORARNG Sgt. Christopher Ferranti, Staff Sgt. First Class Gregory Mannen, and Staff Sgt. Michael Kimmel demonstrate ground control station operations during Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems training at the 249th Regional Training Institute, Rees Training Center, Hermiston, Oregon, on Sept. 4, 2025.

*Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs*

HERMISTON, Ore. — The Oregon Army National Guard is transforming its unmanned aircraft systems training at the 249th Regional Training Institute, introducing advanced platforms while developing innovative solutions to meet evolving battlefield requirements.

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Oregon Nat'l. Guard Honors Soldiers Deploying to U.S. Southern Border



ORARNG Capt. Timothy Gildea, commander of A Company, Forward Support Company, 1249th Engineer Battalion, stands in front of his formation during a mobilization ceremony on Oct. 14, 2025, at the Anderson Readiness Center in Salem, Oregon.

*Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs*

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon Military Department honored approximately 60 soldiers from A Company, Forward Support Company, 1249th Engineer Battalion during a mobilization ceremony on Oct. 14, 2025, at the Anderson Readiness Center as they prepare to deploy in support of security operations along the U.S. southern border.

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The 173rd Fighter Wing graduates the last three F-15C Eagle fighter pilots before transitioning to the new 5th generation F-35 Lightning II. *See Page 6*



Oregon National Guard Assistant Adjutant General – Army, Col. Philip R. DeMontigny is officially promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. *See Page 2*



"Brothers in Arms" Three brothers carry on a family tradition of service as they turn preparing the Wing's fleet of F-15 Eagles into a family business. *See Page 14*



The Oregon Military Department

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The Oregon Sentinel is distributed to members of the Oregon Army and Air National Guard, and other interested persons by request, free of charge. Circulation 13,600. The Oregon Sentinel is published by Eagle Web Press, a private firm in no way connected with the DoD, Departments of the Army or Air Force, or the State of Oregon, and is under exclusive written contract with the Oregon Military Department. The Oregon Sentinel is also distributed electronically, and can be found online at: www.oregon.gov/ODM/AGPA/publications.shtml and at: <https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/ONGPAO>

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COMMAND

Looking Back at 2025 and Looking Ahead to 2026 Challenges

As we close out 2025 and look ahead to 2026, I want to reflect on what makes the Oregon National Guard exceptional—and ensure every member knows that support is always available when needed.

This past year has reinforced that our Oregon National Guard is made up of remarkable Soldiers, Airmen, and Civilians who continually answer the call to support. Whether here supporting our communities, deploying overseas, or conducting training to remain ready, you have consistently shown the professionalism and dedication that define us. Your service exemplifies why we are indeed Oregon's military service of choice.

As your Adjutant General, I am incredibly proud of what we've achieved together. I also understand that military service—balancing civilian careers, family responsibilities, and mission demands—presents real challenges. You are never alone in facing them.

The Oregon National Guard ensures every service member and their family have access to full support. Military OneSource is your main resource, available 24/7 at no cost. This Department of Defense program, staffed by master's- or doctoral-level mental health professionals, offers confidential counseling for relationship issues, stress, parenting, grief, deployment, and more. You can

contact them at 800-342-9647 or MilitaryOneSource.mil.

Additionally, our Service Member Religious Support Program has chaplains available. They offer confidential counseling and spiritual support and are trained to handle a wide range of personal and family issues. Your chaplains are there to listen and guide you, regardless of your (or their) faith background and beliefs.

If you're in crisis or having thoughts of self-harm, immediate help is available through the Military Crisis Line—dial 988 and press 1, or text 838255. These services are completely confidential and staffed by professionals who understand military culture.

Your chain of command is also dedicated to your well-being. If you're struggling with any issue affecting your readiness or quality of life, reach out to your leaders. They have the resources and authority to connect you with the support you need. Asking for help shows the same courage you show in wearing the uniform.

As we move into 2026, I am confident in our path forward. The Oregon National Guard continues to strengthen across all lines of effort in our Strategic Guidance 2030. We're building a culture where every member feels connected, competent, and committed. Most importantly, we're taking care of



**Brigadier General
Alan R. Gronewold**
Adjutant General,
Oregon National Guard

our people—our #1 priority.

To the families and loved ones supporting our service members: thank you. Your sacrifices enable our Soldiers and Airmen to serve. The support services I've mentioned are available to you as well.

Remember that strength isn't just physical readiness or technical skill, but also knowing when to seek support and having the courage to do it. Whether facing personal challenges, family issues, or just needing someone to talk to, resources are available. Please use them.

Thank you for your exceptional service to Oregon and our nation. I'm honored to serve alongside you and look forward to our successes in 2026.

Be connected. Be competent. Be committed.

Always Ready! Always There!

ORARNG Col. Philip R. DeMontigny Promoted to Brigadier General

*Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Dept. Public Affairs*

PORTLAND, Ore. — Oregon Army National Guard Col. Philip R. DeMontigny was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Oregon National Guard during a ceremony held in his honor at the W.D. Jackson Armory in Portland, Oregon, on October 19, 2025.

The Presiding Officer for the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon, described a long list of DeMontigny's accomplishments with family, friends, coworkers, and other guests in attendance.

"Phil, your promotion to Brigadier General represents the culmination of nearly three decades of exceptional service, but it also marks the beginning of new responsibilities and opportunities," Gronewold said. "You have earned this rank through your dedication, your courage, and your unwavering commitment to those you lead."

Describing a long list of DeMontigny's military accomplishments, Gronewold touched on his role as Joint Task Force Assurance commander during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Perhaps most notably, Phil's leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated his exceptional ability to adapt and lead during the crisis," Gronewold said, describing the assignment. "He directed over 2,600 missions, delivering more than 46 million pieces of personal protective equipment to all 36 Oregon counties and nine Tribal Nations – a mission that undoubtedly saved countless lives."

Following this assignment, DeMontigny assumed command of



ORARNG Col. Philip R. DeMontigny is officially pinned to the rank of Brigadier General with the assistance of his son Alek and daughter Grace, also joined by his wife, Dr. Amanda Bielawski, during his official promotion ceremony held at the Jackson Armory in Portland, Oregon, on Oct. 19, 2025.

the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team in October of 2020. Over the following three years, he led the brigade through domestic missions and major training events, as well as multinational exercises such as African Lion in North Africa.

"I have a particular appreciation for Phil's leadership," Gronewold said. "Having led the 41st IBCT myself, I can personally attest to the challenges and responsibilities that come with commanding this storied formation. Phil not only met those challenges but exceeded every expectation."

DeMontigny currently serves as the Assistant Adjutant General – Army for the Oregon National Guard and has served in the Active Duty Army, the Army Reserves, and the Army National Guard. He began his military career by enlisting as an infantryman in March of 1996, assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York.

As an avid distance runner throughout his life and an advocate

of fitness, DeMontigny holds the 10th Mountain Division 10-mile run record of 52:49 and the 12-mile road march in 1:47:00.

"No one plans to become a general officer; if they did, they possibly wouldn't become a general officer," DeMontigny said. "In my humble opinion, all you can do is be a good soldier and a good person. Do the job, stay in shape physically, mentally, and spiritually."

In attendance for the ceremony were many of his friends, work associates, and family members, including his wife, Dr. Amanda Bielawski, and his son Alek and daughter Grace, who pinned his new Brigadier General stars.

"Our families remind us of why we want to serve and why we work hard and why our people always want to be part of something bigger," he said.

Leading up to his promotion to Brigadier General, DeMontigny touched on three simple lessons he had learned along the way during his career.

"Keep learning, treat people right, and remember to say 'thank you' to those who made a difference in your life along the way."

In his civilian career, DeMontigny retired in 2024 after 23 years serving with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. He now works as the Agency Risk and Emergency Manager for the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services.

DeMontigny's military education culminated with a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. War College in 2019, and he currently resides in Olympia, Washington.

COMMAND

Oregon Military Department Sponsors the 2025 Labor Summit

Story and photos by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. — The Oregon Military Department sponsored the 2025 Oregon Labor Summit on October 10, 2025, held at the Oregon Army National Guard Aviation Support Facility in Salem. The event brought together service members, educators, industry partners, and community leaders to strengthen connections between military training and civilian workforce opportunities.

The Labor Summit served as a bridge between the Oregon National Guard and Oregon's business community, showcasing how military training translates directly into valuable workforce skills through hands-on demonstrations and static displays highlighting the diverse specialties available in the Guard.

Senior leaders and service members from both the Oregon Army and Air National Guard participated in presentations demonstrating the jobs, skills, and benefits the National Guard offers to employers in the local business community.



Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek shakes hands with ORARNG Sgt. Michael Martin, a CERFP team member, is in front of an equipment display during the 2025 Oregon Labor Summit on October 10, 2025, in Salem.

"This summit links education and workforce pipelines with Oregon National Guard talent, turning military training into apprenticeships and career pathways



Participants gather for a group photograph inside the hangar during the 2025 Oregon Labor Summit at the Oregon Army National Guard Aviation Support Facility in Salem, Oregon, on October 10, 2025.

that bolster Oregon's economy and communities," said Col. Philip DeMontigny during his remarks to attendees.

The event featured extensive participation from career and technical education organizations, with Skills USA and the Oregon Career and Technical Education Student Leadership Foundation playing significant roles alongside the Oregon Department of Education. Representatives from Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), including Skills USA, Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA), DECA, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and the Technology Student Association (TSA), attended the summit.

Industry partners from healthcare, construction, aviation, logistics, information technology, and public service sectors explored how Guard members bring valuable leadership skills, technical training, and strong work ethics to civilian workplaces.

Gov. Tina Kotek addressed attendees, emphasizing the partnership between the state and private sector in supporting

Guard members. "Beyond supporting careers and filling critical workforce gaps, we are proving that serving your country and building your future are not separate paths. They are part of the same mission, and I fully support that," Kotek said.

Jeff Rhoades from the Oregon Department of Education's Office of Education, Innovation & Improvement also spoke, thanking educators and CTSO advisors for their dedication to empowering students and preparing them for future-ready careers.

The Oregon Military Department's sponsorship of the Labor Summit underscores its commitment to community partnerships and workforce development, aligning with the organization's strategic vision to be "the partner of choice within our communities, state, nation, and internationally," said Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General of Oregon.



ORARNG Staff Sgt. Mahnesmith, an infantryman, helps Coral Smith with the Oregon Department of Corrections recruitment try on a combat load of equipment during the 2025 Oregon Labor Summit in Salem, Oregon.

Task Force Defender Demobilization

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"During Task Force Defender, you took on one of the most demanding and technically complex missions in modern warfare. Every single day, American forces, coalition partners, and local populations relied on you for their protection."

Their mission was to provide capabilities to counter rockets, artillery, and mortars, and to fight unmanned aerial systems using both kinetic and non-kinetic methods, while issuing warnings of incoming threats.

"This was not an easy deployment. As Lieutenant Colonel [Manuel] Lobledo noted before you departed, you were dispersed across a wide geographical region, requiring leaders at the lowest levels to operate independently and with initiative," Gronewold said, describing some of the complexities of the assignment. "You adapted to the extreme heat, austere conditions, and the constant threat of attack."

Before deploying overseas, the Soldiers underwent specialized training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. This training aimed to improve their skills in operating essential

equipment and systems for their role as primary air defenders, which American and Coalition partners depend on for force protection.

"You spent the better part of two years preparing yourselves and your families for this mobilization. You trained at Camp Roberts [California], endured the joint Readiness Training Center in Louisiana, and conducted additional training at Fort Sill before heading down range," Gronewold said, recounting the long training cycle. "That preparation paid off, and your performance in theater has brought great credit to our

National Guard, and most importantly, to yourselves."

Earlier this year, on Aug. 2, most of the members returned to Oregon and were welcomed back at an assembly held at Camp Withycombe in Happy Valley. The ceremony in Forest Grove marks the official end of their deployment and provides an opportunity for dignitaries and leaders to honor their accomplishments.

"Throughout this deployment, you upheld the legacy of those who came before you," said Col. Paul Dyer, Commander, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team. "Look at your right shoulder, you are now part of a very, very special group of



Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Manuel Robledo, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment (left), uncases the unit colors during the demobilization ceremony held for the unit on Nov. 16, 2025, held at Neil Armstrong Middle School in Forest Grove.

people with the 41st Brigade...we're talking World War I in the trenches of France, and we're talking about World War II in the South Pacific."

The 2-218th has a long history of answering the State and Nation's call for service. Since 9/11, they have deployed to the Middle East supporting Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, Spartan Shield, and now Task Force Defender.



Oregon National Guard Col. Paul Dyer, the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team Commander (left), and Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General, Oregon National Guard (right), greet and congratulate members of the 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment following their formal demobilization ceremony held at Neil Armstrong Middle School in Forest Grove.

In closing, Dyer challenged the group to draw lessons from this entire mobilization process.

"Look at the growth that you made and remember your success too," he said, drawing from his own past mobilizations. "This is a building block, and take that and be a better spouse, a better father or mother, sister or friend, or even a battle buddy. Thank you and your families for a job well done."

LEADERSHIP

1249th Engineer Battalion Mobilization

Continued from front page

The soldiers will deploy to Texas, where they will be assigned to the 104th Military Police Battalion, 10th Mountain Division, providing critical logistics support, including vehicle recovery, maintenance, refueling, and parts distribution.

"Today we gather to honor dedicated citizen-soldiers undertaking a mission at the southwest border," said Col. Philip DeMontigny, assistant adjutant general of the Oregon National Guard. "You represent the best of Oregon. A Company, Forward Support Company, has a proud history, and once again, you have stepped up."

The Forward Support Company will operate in two platoons – one focused on distribution and the other on maintenance – supporting military police operations along the border. Soldiers will receive mission-specific training at Fort Bliss, Texas, including logistics packages, refueling operations, vehicle recovery, and security procedures before beginning their mission.

Oregon Army National Guard Capt. Timothy Gildea, commander of A Company, Forward Support Company, and a police officer with the Medford Police Department in his civilian role, emphasized his unit's readiness despite the rapid timeline.

"We were notified of the deployment within the last four months," said Gildea. "I have an all-star staff who worked incredibly hard to get everybody spun up and ready to go. I'm incredibly proud of everybody."

The ceremony recognized several soldiers for their exceptional support during the mobilization preparation, including Sgt. Massey, who served 515 days, including 75 days before the mobilization order, to ensure proper training and equipment readiness.

DeMontigny also recognized 11 soldiers who recently returned from previous deployments yet volunteered for this mission, including several who volunteered within 10 days of returning home from the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team's recent deployment to the Middle East.

The 1249th Engineer Battalion traces its roots to the 249th Coastal Artillery, established in 1908. The unit is notable as the only U.S. military unit fired upon on American soil during World War II, when a Japanese



Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, The Adjutant General, Oregon, shakes hands with deploying soldiers alongside other senior leaders following a mobilization ceremony on Oct. 14, 2025, at the Anderson Readiness Center in Salem, Oregon.

submarine shelled Fort Stevens in 1942. The Oregon National Guard has a long history of supporting southern border security dating back to the 1800s.

Many of the deploying soldiers recently served with the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and some members of A Company and Forward Support Company previously deployed to Afghanistan in 2010.

"You share a long history of service," DeMontigny told the soldiers. "Your experience stabilizes the formation. Your resilience is evident."

DeMontigny encouraged the deploying soldiers to use their time intentionally, set professional and personal goals, and maintain strong communication with their teams and families throughout the deployment.

"The standards you're well aware of – respect everyone we meet, disciplined execution and teamwork," said DeMontigny. "To those deploying for the first time, we're proud of you. To those on your second, third or fourth deployment, your experience stabilizes the formation."

The colonel also thanked families and employers for their sacrifices and support.

"You manage the worries, you keep calendars, classrooms and workplaces running smoothly," DeMontigny said. "You do it with quiet strength that allows the soldiers to focus on the mission. You serve too."

Gildea emphasized that families will remain connected to their soldiers throughout the deployment.

"I don't want them to feel like they are going to be separated for that extensive amount of time," said Gildea. "We fully support having families come down to visit. We are here for you just as much as we're here for your soldier."

The mission, conducted in support of federal agency partners and coordinated through the Department of Homeland Security in cooperation with the Department of Defense, represents a unique opportunity for the Guard soldiers to work alongside active-duty forces and interagency partners.

ORANG Colonel Shares Leadership Lessons with First Responders

Story and photo by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs

WILSONVILLE, Ore. – Oregon Air National Guard Col. Ryan Barton delivered an engaging leadership presentation to the Wilsonville Police Department at Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue Fire Station 56 on October 8, 2025, focusing on practical leadership principles drawn from his extensive military and personal experience.

The hour-long session was part of an all-staff training initiative organized by Wilsonville Police Chief Rob Wurpes, a former Army forward observer who served four years of active duty and three in the National Guard. Chief Wurpes emphasized the importance of leadership development at all levels and sought to bring fresh perspectives to his team through outside partnerships with military leaders.

"Leadership is important at all levels," explained Chief Wurpes before the presentation. "The Air Force has a long history of leadership. They train for it, they invest in it, and I think it's important for our folks to hear about leadership from different perspectives."

Rather than focusing solely on military doctrine, Col. Barton emphasized three core principles that transcended his military career: physical and mental fitness, emotional

intelligence, and competence. He stressed that these foundations proved equally valuable in his family life and professional organizations.

"When you're leading right, this is what I've seen," Barton explained to the assembled officers. "I have been in small teams where everybody was good at their job, fit, healthy, and crushing the mission. Then a poor leader would step in, and the whole dynamic would change."



ORANG Col. Ryan Barton presents a leadership class to the Wilsonville Police Department at Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue Fire Station 56 in Wilsonville, Oregon, Oct. 8, 2025.

Barton shared candid stories from his personal life, including challenges with his two daughters, to illustrate that effective leadership often means making unpopular but necessary decisions. He recounted leading an organization through significant changes, during which some team members resisted pressure to perform, despite overall mission success.

"There were some folks that

didn't like the pressure to perform," Barton recalled. "What we were doing wasn't wrong – it was the right thing. But that's when leadership gets really hard."

Barton emphasized that effective communication forms the foundation of good leadership, though he cautioned against over-communication that drowns important messages in excessive information. He stressed that leaders must clearly explain what their teams are doing, why they're doing it, how they're executing the mission, and what the future holds.

"Communication is not about what you're saying, it's about how it's received," Barton told the audience. He illustrated this principle with everyday examples of how well-intentioned words can be misinterpreted, emphasizing the importance of considering both the message and how the listener will perceive it.

Barton also challenged attendees to adopt a "bigger picture" mentality, acknowledging that leadership can often feel isolating but becomes less lonely when teams support one another. He reminded the officers that everyone has unseen struggles

beneath the surface, and understanding those hidden challenges makes leaders more effective.

The presentation included practical tools for decision-making, encouraging officers to balance training and rehearsals with visualization techniques while avoiding "paralysis by analysis" in critical moments. He emphasized personal accountability, asking leaders to reflect on what they did or didn't do, and what they said or didn't say, to influence outcomes.

Chief Wurpes noted that the training aligned perfectly with his department's philosophy of continuous improvement and team building, particularly given that many officers rotate through Wilsonville assignments from the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office for approximately one-year terms.

"We like to take the opportunity to give some cool training," Wurpes explained. "I personally believe leadership is important at all levels, and the Colonel's got a great resume related to leadership."

The session concluded with Barton reminding attendees that true nobility lies not in superiority over others, but in becoming superior to one's former self – a principle of continuous personal growth that resonated with the first responders.

LEADERSHIP

Oregon ESGR Honors Cunningham, Welcomes Owens as New State Chair

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan,
JFHQ Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. — Oregon Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is honoring Brig. Gen. (ret.) Jim Cunningham, U.S. Air Force and Oregon Air National Guard, as he completes his service as the state chair and welcomes retired Sgt. Maj. Cecil Owens, the current director of the Oregon National Guard State ESGR Committee, as the incoming chair. The transition marks the continuation of a strong legacy in Oregon of volunteer leadership supporting Guard and Reserve members, their families, and the employers who stand behind them. Cunningham will continue to serve Oregon at the national level on the ESGR Outreach subcommittee.

Cunningham, who lives in Sisters, Oregon, began his military career with eight years of active duty in the U.S. Air Force as a pilot during the Vietnam War. He later served with the California Air National Guard before joining the Oregon Air National Guard in 1979. Rising through the ranks, Cunningham became the first wing commander of the 142nd Fighter Wing in Portland and served in other top leadership roles including Commander of the Oregon Air National Guard.

After decades of military service, Cunningham received a call from a former colleague about ESGR.

"They asked if I wanted to learn more, and before I knew it, I was the Central Oregon chair," he said.

In 2022, Cunningham agreed to serve as Oregon's ESGR state chair. The ESGR state chair is the top volunteer leader in Oregon, appointed by the Secretary of Defense to guide the state committee. The chair oversees



U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. (ret.) Jim Cunningham, Outgoing Oregon ESGR State Chair

outreach, recognition programs, and volunteer efforts, and serves as a bridge between Guard and Reserve members, their employers, and military leaders.

"It's about relationships," Cunningham said. "You have to build them with employers, unit commanders, and volunteers. That's how ESGR makes a difference."

During his tenure, Cunningham said he worked closely with ESGR program coordinator Cecil Owens and Volunteer Support Technician Andrew Philpott, ensuring the organization had the right people in place. He also highlighted the importance of collaboration, including with the Oregon National Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold.

"He really values ESGR, and we need to do everything we can to support him," Cunningham said.

That philosophy aligns with Gronewold's vision, who has made developing relationships with Oregon employers a key part of the Guard's mission, recognizing that strong employer support is vital to military readiness.

"The Oregon National Guard depends on the commitment of our employers just as much as we depend on our Soldiers and

Airmen," Gronewold said. "When employers support service members, they strengthen not only their communities, but our state's overall readiness."

Cunningham said he is proud of Oregon's nationally recognized ombudsmen program, which helps resolve workplace conflicts related to military service.

"Oregon has one of the best ombudsmen programs in the country," he said. "It's a critical link between employers and unit commanders, making it easier for all three to be connected."

Reflecting on his military service and time as chair, Cunningham said Guard and Reservists are reliable, show up on time, follow orders, and bring leadership skills employers can use.

"I'm proud of what we accomplished. My greatest achievement was leaving it better than I found it, with great people to carry on," said Cunningham.



U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. (ret.) Cecil Owens, Incoming Oregon ESGR State Chair

Owens, a retired sergeant major in the Oregon National Guard, takes over as the new Oregon ESGR state chair. He brings experience to the Oregon ESGR team. In addition to his role as program coordinator Owens has also served as ESGR outreach subcommittee vice chair and as a national ESGR

state chair emeritus, making him uniquely qualified to step into the leadership role.

"Cecil is the right person for this job," Cunningham said. "He's been at the heart of ESGR in Oregon, and he understands what it takes. I know the program will continue to thrive under his leadership."

Owens will lead Oregon ESGR's mission of promoting cooperation and understanding between Guard and Reserve Component service members and their civilian employers. He will also oversee the outreach, awards, and volunteer programs that help build and sustain critical employer support.

"After 30 years of military service, where my purpose was mentoring and caring for Soldiers and Airmen, ESGR gives me the chance to carry that legacy forward. I volunteer because I believe in honoring those who serve and ensuring they have the support they need from their employers. This mission is personal, and I'm proud to continue serving those who stand for us," said Owens.

Owens explained that as part of the Department of Defense, ESGR relies on a team of trained volunteers who dedicate their time to advocating for Guard and Reserve members and their employers.

"At ESGR, our mission is to champion employer support for the men and women serving in the National Guard and Reserve. Supportive employers are an integral part of our national defense. They play a vital role in readiness, retention, and recruiting. When employers stand behind their Guard and Reserve employees, they strengthen not only our service members, but our nation," Owens said.

Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program Celebrates the Graduation of 160 Cadets

Story and photo by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs

REDMOND, Ore. — The Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program (OYCP) held its graduation ceremony for Class 70 on Dec. 10, 2025, for 160 cadets who completed its 22-week program. The graduation ceremony took place at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center. OYCP is an alternative high school operated by the Oregon National Guard, located in Bend, Oregon.

"Today, 160 cadets will walk across the stage thanks to the collaborative effort of the Youth Challenge staff, the Oregon National Guard, the Department of Education, the Oregon Legislature, the Governor's Office, our advisory board, and the Deschutes County community," said Frank Tallman, Director of the Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program. "The growth and transformation you see in the cadets over these past five months is no accident. It's a direct reflection of their connection,



Frank Tallman, Director of the Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program (left) and Oregon Army National Guard Assistant Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Philip R. DeMontigny (right) pauses for a photo with Cadet Julissa Espinoza Gonzalez as she received her award for Overall Outstanding Cadet of the Company during the OYCP Graduation of Class 70 on December 10, 2025, held at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center in Redmond, Oregon.

passion, and commitment."

The program offers at-risk students a second chance to earn credits. It also lets participants re-enter high school, graduate on time with their peers, or graduate from OYCP with a

state-accredited high school diploma.

In delivering his welcome message to the Cadets, Oregon Army National Guard Assistant Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. Philip R. DeMontigny congratulated them on their journey over the past five months, but also addressed their future.

"Today is not the end. It's a transition point. It's an important transition point; nevertheless, academically, each of you follows the pathway in your past in your own situation, and each situation is unique," he said, reminding each cadet of the road that brought them to OYCP. "Whether rebuilding credits, or accomplishing a GED certificate, completing your high school graduation, or following other academic plans...you did the

work, you met the requirement, and earned being here today."

The mission of the Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program is to provide opportunities for personal growth, self-improvement, and academic achievement for high school dropouts, teens who are no longer attending school, and those who are academically struggling. This is achieved through a highly structured, non-traditional environment that integrates training, mentoring, and a variety of educational activities.

In 1999, the Oregon National Guard established the Oregon Youth ChalleNGe Program (OYCP) in Bend, Oregon, as an intervention initiative aimed at helping teens who had either dropped out of high school or were at risk of not graduating. The term "at-risk" refers to students who might not complete their high school education. To support these at-risk students, the Department of Defense invested in the OYCP's challenge model, which focuses on youth development and community outreach.

NEWS

End of an Era: Oregon Air Guard Graduates Final F-15 Eagle Fighter Pilots

Story by Maj. Chris Clyne,
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — The Oregon Air National Guard's 173rd Fighter Wing made history Thursday, Sept. 26, 2025, as it graduated the last three F-15C Eagle fighter pilots before transitioning to the F-35 Lightning II. The graduation marked the end of a decades-long training mission that has produced some of the nation's most skilled fighter pilots.

Lt. Col. Tom McGee, commander of the 114th Fighter Squadron — the formal training unit for the F-15C Eagle — presided over the final class at Kingsley Field. The unit is scheduled to stand down its F-15C fighter training mission on Sept. 30, just four days after this historic ceremony.

"These are the last three," McGee said earlier, referring to the basic course students who represent the final graduates from one of only a handful of Air National Guard units entrusted with training both active duty and Guard pilots.



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
(Left to right) 1st Lt. Dustin Kopp, 1st Lt. Jared Piubeni, and 1st Lt. Aaron Zedella stand together during the final F-15C Eagle graduation ceremony at Kingsley Field, Klamath Falls, Oregon, Sept. 26, 2025. Piubeni holds a commemorative patch created by Class 25-ZBK/YBK for the faculty of the 114th Fighter Squadron to honor the last F-15C B-Course before the unit transitions to the F-35 Lightning II.

McGee emphasized the weight of responsibility the Oregon Guard has carried: "The active duty Air Force counts on you guys to train the pilots. We're good enough to turn out active Air Force fighter pilots that can go in and engage and destroy the enemy anywhere in the world with any adversary."

What Makes a Fighter Pilot

During the graduation ceremony, McGee delivered a powerful message to the new pilots about what it truly means to be a fighter pilot — a message drawn from years of mentorship and experience.

"Being a fighter pilot has nothing to do with the model of aircraft that you fly," McGee told the graduates. "It is an attitude and determination

to do your best at whatever you're presented, whether it's a close air support mission, whether it's getting ready for the next deployment — you're going to figure out how to crush it every single day."

McGee emphasized that fighter pilots must rise to meet challenges independently. "No one's going to solve your problems for you. You're going to solve them yourself," he said. "You're going to be given problems where future commanders will say, 'I have this problem for you,' but they're not going to tell you how to fix it."

He reminded the graduates of the oath they took: "A fighter pilot does not accept a job from an employer. They swear an oath to the service of their country, and the fighter pilot makes a commitment to their squadron and its mission."

Eagle Driver Heritage

The F-15 Eagle has served as an air superiority fighter since its first flight on Jul. 27, 1972. With an unmatched combat record of 104 kills and zero losses, the Eagle has proven itself across multiple conflicts, including Operation Opera (Israel), the Lebanon War, Operation Mole Cricket 19 (Israel), Operation Desert Storm, Northern/Southern Watch, Operation Allied Force, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and ongoing on-call air superiority missions.

McGee spoke about the significance of the Eagle Driver patch — the red, white, and blue insignia now worn on his left shoulder. "I think it's probably one of the most famous ones," he said. "But the only way you ever get the right to wear this patch is if you



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Jared Piubeni (right) is presented with a Top Book award for academic excellence from Oregon Air National Guard Lt. Col. Tom McGee, commander of the 114th Fighter Squadron, during the final F-15C Eagle graduation ceremony at Kingsley Field, Klamath Falls, Oregon, on Sept. 26, 2025.

A Rare and Critical Mission

What sets the Oregon Air National Guard apart is its unique training mission. Unlike most Guard units that maintain operational readiness for their own pilots, the 114th Fighter Squadron trains pilots who will deploy to units across the country and around the world.

The three graduating pilots from Class 25-ZBK/YBK are 1st Lt. Jared Piubeni (who earned top academic honors), 1st Lt. Dustin Kopp (who earned Top Gun for excellence in tactics and airmanship), and 1st Lt. Aaron Zedella. They hail from Guard units in Portland, Oregon; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Barnes, Massachusetts — representing the remaining F-15C squadrons before their own transitions to newer aircraft.



File photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Penny Snoozy, 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Oregon Air National Guard Col. Jason Nalepa, 173rd Fighter Wing Operations Group Commander, flies the 173rd FW "Heritage Jet" in formation with F-15s after refueling during the Sentry Eagle Open House event June 24, 2022, near Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

graduate from the B-course. It takes some time, and you'd better wear it every single day while you're still here."



File photo by Master Sgt. Jeff Thompson 173rd FW ORANG Col. Geoff Jensen, the 173rd Operations Group commander at the 173rd Fighter Wing in Klamath Falls, Ore., signals the crew chief that he is about to fire the engines on an F-15C Eagle aircraft during DACT operations at the 162nd Fighter Wing in Tucson, Ariz., Jan. 21, 2020.

Looking to the future, McGee acknowledged that the graduates would move on to different aircraft, with F-15EX and F-35 platforms on the horizon. "When you go off to fly the F-15EX, and you go to be an F-35 guy, you'll be an F-35 guy," he said. "But there's a certain level behind you in your background that is never going to leave you, and that's going to be you're an Eagle Driver. People are going to know that based on your attitude."



File photo by Staff Sgt. Riley Johnson, 173rd FW Public Affairs
ORANG Col. Jeff Smith, 173rd Fighter Wing commander (right), helps Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson strap into an F-15D Eagle before a familiarization flight on Nov. 4, 2018, at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

The Most Rigorous Training in the Air Force

The F-15C B-Course at the 173rd Fighter Wing is recognized as the most robust formal training course in the U.S. Air Force. The curriculum includes 295 academic hours, 32 exams, 41 programmed simulator events, and 42 syllabus sorties. Students complete an average of 15 aerial refueling missions and fly missions that include 14 Basic Fighter Maneuvers, 6 Air Combat Maneuvers, and 10 Beyond Visual Range engagements.

The training day runs from 6:30 a.m. to well past 4:30 p.m., every single day. Students must master single-seat mentality in a high-G, high-threat environment. The wing entrusts them with aircraft worth more than \$40 million and with sorties costing \$40,000 per hour — not to mention their own lives and those of their instructors.

Story continued on Page 7

NEWS

While the standard course typically runs for seven to eight months, the final two classes were compressed into just five months – a testament to both the urgency of the mission and the students' capabilities. "It was a pretty high-pressure cooker," McGee explained in an earlier interview. "It's one of the hardest F-15 courses you can go to."

The F-15C Eagle, despite being an older airframe, remains in service due to its exceptional performance characteristics. "The only limitation in an Eagle is the pilot, not the airframe," McGee said. "It looks strikingly similar to the airplanes that were in Desert Storm. But it didn't need to be changed that much because it was created back in the day to take out Russian bombers – high speed, so it can go fast and go high, and turn really well."



File photo courtesy of 173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

ORANG Senior Airmen Jarod Biele, a member of the 173rd Fighter Wing's jet engine intermediate maintenance shop and Rogue Valley, Oregon, native, shows off the surprisingly simple tools used to repair the engines of the F-15C at Kingsley Field in Klamath Falls, Oregon, October 17, 2020.

The Eagle can pull nine Gs and reach 50,000 feet – capabilities McGee noted with pride during the ceremony, comparing them favorably to "lesser fighters out there that aren't nearly as cool, with only one tail or one engine."

be preserved in the desert climate for potential future use or parts.

A Legacy That Continues

McGee concluded the ceremony by thanking the graduates' families and emphasizing that

A Shrinking Mission

The drawdown of the F-15C training mission reflects broader changes across the Air Force and Air National Guard. In previous years, class sizes ranged from four to eight students, supporting four full active duty squadrons and five Air National Guard squadrons flying the Eagle.

As units transition to the F-35, including Barnes and Jacksonville, and as overseas squadrons like Lakenheath in the United Kingdom and Kadena in Japan shift to newer platforms, the customer base for F-15C training has steadily declined.

Historic Aircraft Finding New Homes

The retirement of the F-15Cs at Kingsley Field also means finding new homes for these combat veterans. Aircraft number 114, which scored two kills during Desert Storm, has recently been flown to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Another jet with distinctive invasion stripes is also hoped to join a museum.

The majority of the remaining aircraft will be flown to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona over the next three months, where they'll



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
ORANG Lt. Col. Tom McGee, commander of the 114th Fighter Squadron, presided over the graduation of Class 25-ZBK/YBK – the final class to complete the rigorous F-15C B-Course at Kingsley Field. The unit will stand down its F-15C fighter training mission on Sept. 30, 2025, ending a decades-long legacy of training some of the nation's most skilled fighter pilots.

the connection to Kingsley Field doesn't end at graduation.

"There's absolutely no way that they would have ever gotten to this point if it wasn't for all of you," he told the assembled families and wing personnel. "When you leave here, you're never done being Kingsley guys. I still find out what B-course graduates from seven years ago are doing, whether they're deploying, they're going to Weapons Instructor Course, doing great things."

His final message to the last class carried both pride and responsibility: "Watch out. You have a reputation to carry with you as the last guys to graduate."

The 114th Fighter Squadron operated as one of only three Air National Guard training units in the country. McGee

acknowledged the unique position the Oregon Air National Guard occupied: "We live in three different worlds at one time. We have three different bosses." The unit produces pilots for Air Combat Command, Pacific Air Forces, and U.S. Air Forces in Europe while being part of the Air National Guard, which is not traditionally a training command.

As the 114th Fighter Squadron prepares to transition to the F-35, this final graduation on September 26, 2025, represents not just the end of an aircraft era but the culmination of a proud legacy of training excellence that has helped maintain America's air superiority for decades. The Eagle Drivers who graduated that day carry forward a tradition of excellence that will continue, regardless of which aircraft they fly.



File photo by Senior Master Sgt. Mysti Bicoy, 154 Wing Public Affairs
Air National Guard and Active-Duty participants of Exercise Sentry Aloha 25-2 gather around 173rd Fighter Wing's heritage F-15 Eagle April 17, 2025, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. The uniquely designed aircraft is adorned with a memorial paint design, paying tribute to the legacy of Lt. David R. Kingsley, a World War II Medal of Honor Recipient.

Kingsley Field's Inaugural Elephant Walk: A Testament of Unit Strength

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Daniel Reed,
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — On July 14, 2025, 16 F-15C/D Eagles thundered down the runway at Kingsley Field in a tight, unyielding formation. This commanding display of air superiority and combat readiness marked the 173rd Fighter Wing's inaugural "elephant walk" — a historic testament to the unit's unrivaled strength and its critical role in forging the nation's elite fighter pilots.

Home to the Air National Guard's and U.S. Air Force's premier F-15C/D pilot training program, Kingsley Field plays a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of fighter pilots. The "elephant walk" — a tightly coordinated taxi formation of multiple aircraft — served as both a visual demonstration of strength and a testament to the wing's ability to generate combat power at a moment's notice.

"No other base can do what we do here at Kingsley Field, and we prove it day in and day out through our actions," said Col.



The 173rd Fighter Wing conducted an elephant walk, lining up sixteen F-15C/D model Eagle aircraft down its runway on July 14, 2025, at Kingsley Field, in Klamath Falls, Oregon. This was the first-ever elephant walk conducted at Kingsley Field.

Adam Gaudinski, 173rd Fighter Wing Commander. "From the skies over our homeland to missions abroad, the superior pilots we produce embody our unwavering commitment to defending our borders and allies."

Coordinating the event required precision teamwork from hundreds of personnel across multiple squadrons. Every aircraft launch, every movement on the flight line, was executed with exacting detail — a clear sign of the wing's

operational readiness.

"Bringing together so many aircraft in such close formation takes flawless communication and teamwork," Gaudinski said. "Every pilot and ground crew member had to be perfectly synchronized to ensure a safe and powerful demonstration of our combat readiness."

The milestone was more than a ceremonial first for the 173rd Fighter Wing; it was a statement of capability. With its proven training program, skilled Airmen, and unmatched focus on readiness, Kingsley Field continues to stand as a cornerstone of the nation's air defense, ready to the call — anytime, anywhere.

"Kingsley Field serves as the heartbeat of a mission that resonates worldwide, preparing Airmen to deliver combat power across the globe," Gaudinski said.

NEWS

Oregon's 102nd Civil Support Team Covers Hazmat, WMD and CBRNE

Story courtesy of HasmatNATION,
Published in the November
Newsletter, 2025

National Guard Bureau, Washington, D.C. — There are 57 National Guard Civil Support Teams across the United States. Each state and territory has one team; California, Florida, and New York each have two teams. The 102nd CST is based in Salem, Oregon, and covers the state and other areas as needed.



Photo by Maj. Leslie Reed, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon National Guard Spc. Maximus Reischke (left), a survey team member, and Capt. Anthony Bernabo (right), nuclear medical science officer, both with the 102nd Civil Support Team, takes imagery and measurements of a suspicious material during a scenario-based training exercise at the federal building in Bozeman, Montana, on April 23, 2024. Part of the larger Joint Training Exercise Yellowstone, planned and hosted by the Montana Nat'l. Guard.

The teams are interoperable with other first-response agencies, as well as with the FBI, the DOE, and other federal agencies. All personnel are trained to hazmat tech level and receive more than 650 hours of training.

The 102nd trains at least twice each week. They attend dozens of out-of-state training sessions and classes at laboratories, military installations, and through agency partnerships. They provide support for CBRNE incidents and for significant events.

One of those significant incidents came in 2022 when the Eugene Police Department called upon the team to provide 24-hour Joint Hazard Assessment Team Operations for the World Athletics Championships, June 15-24, 2022.

The Championships, dubbed "Oregon 22," were held at the University of Oregon's Hayward Field, and were the first time this event has been hosted in the United States. Approximately 2,000 of the best track and field athletes from more than 200 countries competed during the event.

The team says its biggest wins are completing various missions that have built the trust to host trainings and presentations for their partner agencies. But to get there, they had to earn their wins along the way.

The 102nd CST was authorized to become a full-time team on



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Travis Benton (left) and Staff Sgt. Juan Avila (right), assigned to the 102nd Civil Support Team or CST, conducts a security sweep along the Linn County Veterans' Day parade route in Albany, Oregon, on November 11, 2025. Working with local law enforcement and safety agencies, the 102nd security sweeps help ensure the safety of those attending and participating in the annual Veterans Day parade.

March 9, 2004. After a thorough screening and selection process, the first members of the full-time squad started duty on June 1, 2004.

U.S. Army North externally evaluated the 102nd CST in October 2005. The unit received federal certification by DOD on July 24, 2006. In addition, DOD certification means the



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Amy Elker, Oregon National Guard Joint Force HQ
Oregon National Guard Staff Sgt. Kayla Smith (center), Survey Team Chief, 102nd Weapons of Mass Destruction - Civil Support Team, Oregon National Guard, patrols the grounds of the World Track and Field Championships, University of Oregon, in Eugene, Ore., on July 16, 2022. The team is composed of members of local, state and federal agencies who stand ready to prevent and respond to hazards, including Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) materials. The other members of the JHAT team includes, from left to right, Officer Eric Dinnel, Bomb Technician, Portland Police; Curtis Richards, Contractor, Washington State Department of Energy; Matthew Atwood, Owner, Tactical K-9 Services.

Celebrating the National Guard's 389th Birthday

Story and photo by Maj. Chris Clyne,
OMD Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. — Brig. Gen. Jenifer E. Pardy, Director, Joint Staff for the Oregon National Guard, officiates a ceremony celebrating the 389th birthday of the National Guard at the Maj. Gen. George White building in Salem, Oregon, Dec. 12, 2025. The National Guard, which traces its lineage to Dec. 13, 1636, when the Massachusetts Bay Colony organized militia companies, continues to serve as a vital component of America's defense and homeland security.

The ceremony featured a traditional cake-cutting by the

youngest and oldest Oregon National Guard members in the area, with Brig. Gen. Pardy joined them as all three held swords to cut the cake, symbolizing the passing of tradition and a shared legacy across generations of Guardsmen. Oregon National Guard members, family members, and civilian employees gathered to honor the Guard's proud heritage and the men and women who have served in its ranks for nearly four centuries. The ceremony highlighted the Oregon National Guard's commitment to its dual federal and state missions while celebrating its role as the *Service of Choice for Oregonians*.

Season of Giving: 2025 Charity Fund Drive

**Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs News Release**

**Photos provided by Cherie Cline,
Agency Coordinator for 2025 CFD**

SALEM, Ore. — State employees with the Oregon Military Department capped off their 2025 Charitable Fund Drive on Dec. 17, 2025. Leading the pack was the Oregon Youth ChalleNGe program's 160 participating cadets from Class 70, who brought in nearly 2,800 pounds of food, which was donated to Neighbor Impact in Central Oregon. Valued at \$1.25 a pound, the donation was estimated to be equivalent to \$3,485 in non-perishable food.

Oregon Military Department employees at the Maj. Gen. George White Building and Anderson Readiness Center also raised contributions through their Can and Bottle Drive,



which was matched by the Brenden Family Foundation's Gift Grant, resulting in nearly \$670 contributed to the Marion Polk Food Share in Salem, a member of the Oregon Food Bank Network...*Every Little Bit Helps Our Families In Need!*

Thanks again to everyone who contributed to this year's Charitable Fund Drive.



TRAINING

Drone Training Enhances Capabilities

Continued from front page

In September 2025, the Regional Training Institute at Rees Training Center hosted two distinct training events that showcased Oregon's expanding role as the state's drone operations center. A specialized Master's Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems pilot course focused on the Flightwave Edge 130 system from Sept. 3-5, followed by the broader Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems course running Sept. 3-12, 2025.

The training represents a significant evolution from the RQ-11B Raven systems that were divested in March 2024. Students now learn on the RQ-28A Sky Ranger, officially designated by the Army for Short Range Reconnaissance missions, as well as the more advanced Edge 130 platform.

"The course itself is 10 days, but with optimal weather conditions and smaller class sizes, we could potentially complete the comprehensive training in about five days," said Staff Sgt. First Class Mannen, the course manager. "That includes all the classroom instruction and flight operations, which allows me to give students more hands-on flight time."

The Edge 130, manufactured by Red Cat Holdings' Flightwave division, represents a significant upgrade in capabilities. The aircraft features vertical takeoff and landing, transitioning to fixed-wing flight, providing 60 minutes of flight time in vertical mode and 90 minutes in fixed-wing configuration.



Peter DeJoseph, left, a Red Cat flight trainer, observes as Staff Sgt. First Class Gregory Mannen, center, and Staff Sgt. Timothy Powers operate the Flightwave Edge 130 unmanned aircraft system during training at the 249th Regional Training Institute, Rees Training Center, Oregon, on Sept. 4, 2025.

"The edge 130 has three different payloads on it right now," explained Peter DeJoseph, a Flight Trainer Three with Red Cat Holdings. "You have the gimbal 360 payload that can

gimbal 360 around, has 10 times zoom, and has electro-optical infrared functionality on it. And then the other payload is the mapping array where you can set a survey of an area."

The training methodology has also evolved. Red Cat's approach includes a Learning Management System that student's access two weeks before arrival, allowing them to complete theoretical modules at their own pace.

"They get two weeks and go through each module and learn," DeJoseph said. "When they get through a module, they can take a 15-minute practice, take out that part of the system, build up the aircraft, go through the ground control station, build missions, download maps, and be all hands on with that learning module system."

The most innovative aspect of Oregon's UAS program is the development of custom-built aircraft designed to supplement expensive commercial systems. Lt. Col. Mark Timmons, RTI commander, initiated this effort after recognizing the financial constraints of relying solely on \$45,000 commercial platforms.

"These systems cost \$45,000 apiece, so talking with Sgt. 1st Class Mannen, where do we go once we get them here and we want to loan these out to various UAS operators? Well, what's going to happen? We know what's going to happen. They're going to crash," Timmons explained.

Working with Echo MAV, a company that specializes in NDAA-compliant components, Oregon has developed prototypes that cost between \$2,000-\$5,000 including ground control stations. The initiative draws inspiration from similar programs at the 101st Airborne Division and 25th Infantry Division.

"The opportunity for us to be able to essentially design and build by 3D printing our own aircraft, partnering with a company who are experts in the technology piece of it and the compliance piece of it, putting those two efforts together gives us an Oregon-made, essentially US-

made system," Timmons said.

Oregon's UAS training builds on infrastructure established through partnerships with the U.S. Navy. The state operates the Unmanned Aerial System Operating Facility in Boardman, a \$13 million, 12,400-square-foot facility that opened in April 2023. While the RQ-7B Shadow Tactical UAS no longer operates from that facility, it established Oregon as a significant player in unmanned systems training.

Rees Training Center now serves as the primary hub for Oregon Army National Guard drone operations, with capabilities extending beyond basic flight training to include intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance applications, mapping surveys, and potential support for environmental monitoring missions.

The versatility of the new systems opens possibilities for diverse mission support. Plans include using the Edge 130's mapping capabilities to conduct environmental surveys of the Rees Training impact area to locate burrowing owl habitats for the Oregon National Guard's environmental office.

"With the edge 130, we could task the platoon to do a map survey with the mapping payload, and we can get a high fidelity aerial photography of that impact area for environmental, which is super cool," Timmons noted.

The training also addresses modern operational challenges, including electronic warfare considerations and fiber optic drone flight capabilities, preparing soldiers for the evolving nature of unmanned operations in contested environments.

As the Oregon Army National Guard continues to develop its UAS capabilities, Rees Training Center positions itself not just as a training facility but as an innovation hub where soldiers learn to operate, maintain, and even build the unmanned systems that increasingly define modern military operations.

The September training courses represent another step in Oregon's journey from traditional UAS operations to a comprehensive program that combines commercial systems, custom-built platforms, and innovative training methodologies to prepare soldiers for the future of unmanned warfare.



ORARNG Staff Sgt. First Class Gregory Mannen operates an RQ-28A Sky Ranger unmanned aircraft system on the parade field at Rees Training Center, Oregon, Sept. 4, 2025.

Pacific Friendship 2025: Emphasizes Medical Readiness and Humanitarian Aid

*Story & photos by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Hughes
18th Medical Command Public Affairs*

QUANG TRI, Vietnam — People's Army of Vietnam soldiers and Oregon National Guardsmen increased their ability to jointly respond to manmade and natural disasters during Pacific Friendship 2025 in Quang Tri, Vietnam, from Sept. 7-12, 2025.

The Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief military-to-military exchange was facilitated by members of the Oregon National Guard, the U.S.-based partner state to a nation of more than 101 million citizens.

"We're teaching the concepts and the basics of those concepts for lifesaving abilities," said 1st Sgt. Angel Payne, a senior enlisted advisor with the Oregon Army National Guard's Medical Command.



Members of the People's Army of Vietnam and the Oregon Army National Guard conduct joint trauma treatment-medical lane training during Pacific Friendship 2025 on Sept. 12, 2025, in Quang Tri, Vietnam.

Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Day, a readiness noncommissioned officer with MEDCOM, Oregon Army National Guard, said U.S. Soldiers were "ensuring that when the Vietnamese soldiers walk in, they understand the scene must be safe before they treat the patient."

Members of the PAV with advanced knowledge of lifesaving medical procedures helped the U.S. Soldiers and Airmen train the PAV soldiers attending the class.

"Mil-to-mil training is important because we can cross-level our knowledge base to help save lives in the event there's ever an emergency that needs to be used," said Payne. "We want to share lessons learned and



Members of the People's Army of Vietnam and the U.S. Army, Oregon Air National Guard, and Oregon Army National Guard conduct joint trauma treatment-medical lane training during Pacific Friendship 2025 on Sept. 12, 2025 in Quang Tri, Vietnam.

good practices for survivability."

Whilst the training directly benefits both partner nations, it can also have an impact beyond Vietnam's borders.

"In a response to natural disasters and humanitarian services that happen in the Indo-Pacific region," said Day, "this training will help the Vietnamese military act as first responders and assist other countries that are suffering from the same situation."

TRAINING

102nd CERFP Supports Two Regional Hospitals' Mass Casualty Training Exercises

**Story and photos by John Hugel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs**

PORLAND, Ore. — The Oregon National Guard's 102nd Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) partnered with two regional medical centers over a four-day training period, bringing their expertise and capabilities to enhance the effectiveness of a multi-agency response to a mass-casualty event.



ORARNG Sgt. Charles Russell and Spc. Daniella Terawaki, both assigned to the 102nd Oregon CERFP, discuss exercise objectives before a mass casualty training event at Oregon Health Sciences University, Portland, on Sept. 14, 2025.

On Sunday, Sept. 14, 2025, four members of the unit with expertise in chemical and biohazard decontamination techniques, as well as Incident Command Center experience, worked with Oregon Health Sciences University, or OHSU, during a four-hour training event. By midweek, the 102nd team had five members on site for two days of training at Kaiser Permanente Sunnyside Medical Center in Clackamas, on Sept. 16-17, engaging staff across two shifts to refine decontamination procedures and actions. The overall goal in both exercises was to help identify and develop responses to real-world incidents, recognize gaps, and enhance response procedures.

"For both of these exercises, our unit was requested to take part in the training, focusing mainly on the decontamination process," said Staff Sgt. James Saechao, assigned to the 102nd CERFP as the Command-and-Control Liaison Officer, and active as the unit's community outreach Noncommissioned Officer. "Mostly what we're doing is observing and taking notes, but we're answering any questions that come up from members of the hospital staff in real-time."

By the end of each of the two exercises, Saechao and other members on site will

draft a full after-action report focused on improvements and procedures. This can include a full range of aspects, including communication procedures, staffing, equipment, weather, staging areas, site locations, safety, security, and patient delivery traffic flow procedures.

"Every hospital has a different SOP [Standard Operating Procedure], and they have to figure out what works best for them," Saechao said. "The difference between the two hospitals we are working at this week is that they have very different physical entry points and staging areas."

At OHSU, the entry drive to the emergency room and entrance was smaller and more compact. There is a series of winding, tight roadways that lead uphill from Terwilliger Boulevard to the hospital, and the emergency entrance is currently undergoing construction. With a more suburban location, Sunnyside Medical Center has a larger parking lot adjacent to the emergency entrance and is accessible to Interstate 205 on Portland's east side.

"During COVID, we set up a large blue tent in the parking lot, and it changed our mindset on how to keep contamination out of the main hospital," said Mercedes Burley, an emergency medical nurse and member of the Emergency Preparedness Committee for Kaiser Permanente Sunnyside Medical Center. "Nobody on staff knew how to set up those tents, so now with this training, it helps us understand right away what we initially need to do to prepare for future events."

After the first day of training at the Sunnyside Medical Center, Burley said that people were "excited to get their hands on the equipment," as most of the previous training had been conducted through online modules.

"Seeing things on a screen versus having hands on the actual equipment is the biggest payback in our training this week," she said. "It gives us a sense of scale and confidence once we are actually moving through the stations... especially the PPE [Personal Protective Equipment] stations, as the National Guard is the expert in this area."

Service members of the 102nd are accustomed to working with a variety of procedures, protocols, and equipment on site, as their ongoing training and direct support to multiple civilian hospitals and other first responders are continuing processes. In August, the unit conducted a full-scale CERFP joint training exercise with Air and Army Oregon National Guard personnel at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center in Warrenton. In March, members conducted a classroom presentation and demonstrated many decontamination processes to civilian medical staff at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center in Portland, Oregon.

"Working with our civilian counterparts, there is a great deal of 'Train the Trainer' on best practice procedures and making the use of the equipment you have on hand," Saechao said, referring to the assortment of training events and actions they encounter. "If COVID taught all of us one thing, it's to keep the hospital as clean as possible. That's why decontamination training is an important part of all of these mass casualty training events."



The 102nd CERFP, along with staff from the Clackamas Fire Department, conducted an assessment of the decontamination training site at Sunnyside Medical Center, Clackamas, Ore., on Sept. 16, 2025.

At both hospital locations, the training was conducted. At the same time, patients arrived with real-world medical conditions and injuries, using the same emergency entrances and adding to the workload and pressure of an actual mass-casualty event. The one additional challenge factored into the OSHU model was standing up an Incident Command System and testing multiple levels of a scenario-driven exercise. These levels of multiple complex challenges heightened participants' expectations.

"I think we're pretty close to what I expected," Burley said, as the final day of training was winding down at Sunnyside Medical Center. "What has been one of the biggest takeaways is how we will set all of this up – the space and procedures. That's what made this training so timely."



ORARNG Spc. Daniella Terawaki, assigned to the 102nd CERFP, takes notes while observing an inflatable tent used in the decontamination area by an OHSU medical staff member during a training event on Sept. 14, 2025.

Guardsmen show off culinary skills at "Taste of Trades"

**Photos by John Hugel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs**

OREGON CITY, Ore. — High school students from around the metro region experienced hands-on exploration of career paths at "Taste of the Trades," held at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City on October 3, 2025. The event focused on exposing students to various vocational opportunities, with the Oregon National Guard showcasing culinary careers through demonstrations in its mobile kitchen. Serving meals to over 1,000 attendees, they illustrated food service in a military training setting



while students engaged directly with educators from numerous manufacturing trades.



Hot off the Grill! Sizzling hamburgers and hot dogs—freshly prepared by Army Guardsmen—were served with all the fixings, fueling over 1,000 hungry guests at the "Taste of Trades" career day.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Veterans Day 2025: Oregon Soldiers Lead through Action and Example



ORARNG Sgt. Ashley Berg renders a hand salute during the Veterans Day Assembly hosted by Crosser Middle School in Salem, Oregon, while posting the Colors to begin the event on Nov. 7, 2025. Berg is a teacher at Crosser Middle School, specializing in Reading and Learning Resources, while also serving in the Oregon National Guard.

Veterans Assembly at Crosser Middle School



ORARNG Staff Sgt. Fillis and other members of the Oregon National Guard help students take part in a military relay race, just one of many events featured during the Veterans Day Assembly hosted by Crosser Middle School in Salem, Oregon, on Nov. 7, 2025.



The playing of Taps is performed by Crosser Middle School band member Israel Sadler as part of the Veterans Day Assembly hosted by Crosser Middle School in Salem, Oregon, on November 7, 2025.



ORARNG Color Guardsman Sgt. Wyatt Wampoer renders a hand salute after posting the colors to start the Veterans Day Assembly hosted by Crosser Middle School.



ORARNG 1st Sgt. Angel Payne discusses the order of events for students attending the Veterans Day Assembly hosted by Crosser Middle School in Salem, Oregon, with a reminder to observe respectful behavior during the posting of Colors, the playing of the National Anthem, Taps, and other parts of the ceremony on Nov. 7, 2025. **Veterans Assembly photos by John Hughel, OMD Public Affairs**

74th Annual Linn County Veterans Day Parade in Albany



ORARNG Sgt. 1st Class Travis Benton and Staff Sgt. Juan Avila, assigned to the 102nd Civil Support Team or CST, pause for a photo after a security sweep along the Linn County Veterans' Day parade route in Albany, Oregon, on Nov. 11, 2025. Working with local law enforcement and safety agencies, the 102nd security sweeps help ensure the safety of those attending and participating in the annual Veterans Day parade.



ORARNG Staff Sgt. Juan Avila, a member of the 102nd Civil Support Team or CST, conducts a security sweep along the Linn County Veterans' Day parade route in Albany, Oregon, on Nov. 11, 2025.



Participants, vendors, and spectators enjoy the festivities of the annual Linn County Veterans' Day Parade winding through the downtown streets of Albany, Oregon, on Nov. 11, 2025. The Oregon National Guard's 102nd Civil Support Team, working together with local law enforcement, conducted security sweeps before the parade to ensure the event was safe for everyone.



Above photo: Oregon Army National Guard Maj. Gen. (ret.) Julie Bentz takes part in the Linn County Veterans Day Parade in Albany, Oregon, on Nov. 11, 2025, as a special guest. **Right photo:** Oregon National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Travis Benton, a member of the 102nd Civil Support Team or CST, conducts a security sweep along the Linn County Veterans' Day parade route in Albany, Oregon, on Nov. 11, 2025. **Veterans Day photos by John Hughel, OMD Public Affairs**



Participants, vendors, veteran's groups, and spectators enjoy the festivities of the annual Linn County Veterans' Day Parade winding through the downtown streets of Albany, Oregon, on Nov. 11, 2025.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Camas Third-grader Demonstrates that Heroes Come in All Sizes

Story and photos by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

CAMAS, Wash. — Only a few weeks into the new school year, as the warmth of summer slowly fades, Woodburn Elementary School third-grader Shelbie McQueen was eager to get off the school bus and enjoy some time outside on the afternoon of Sept. 9, 2025. She didn't get far from the bus stop before she heard someone calling out for help.

Following the voice, Shelbie would soon find one of her neighbors, Roger Rosenberry, lying in a thick area of grass and rocks near his home.

"He was in a deep swell, like a ditch area in our backyard, and it's all overgrown with grass at this time of year," said Tannis Mittelbach, describing the location where Rosenberry had fallen nearly 20 feet from a ladder at his home. "It's quite a bit of distance from the bus stop. That she would hear something and then go investigate, as she did, really impressed me."

Mittelbach, a Colonel in the Oregon Army National Guard, serves as the Director of Logistics and has gotten to know many of the kids in this area near the banks of the Columbia River in Camas, Washington, as they often use her driveway as a turnaround point when riding their bikes.

According to Mittelbach, the greenway area where Rosenberry, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, had fallen was between her backyard and Shelbie's neighborhood. It was Shelbie's quick thinking after finding him that led her to run home to alert her parents, who called 9-1-1 for immediate medical help.

"It's an area where nobody goes, especially in hot summer periods," Mittelbach said. "He (Rosenberry) could have easily been there for a long time and gone into shock and died because he had multiple fractures from the fall."

Her decision to act right away and take the appropriate action made a difference, but Shelbie's heroic actions for the week were only partially completed. By the week's end, she would come to the aid of another military veteran in Camas.



ORARNG Lt. Col. Eric Christensen presents a medal to Shelbie McQueen at her school, Woodburn Elementary in Camas, Washington, on Dec. 3, 2025. Shelbie was honored for her exceptional bravery and prompt actions in helping two community members in distress last summer.

On the afternoon of Sept. 12, just three days later, while riding her bike in Camas, she noticed an older gentleman slumped over the handlebars on a three-wheeled bicycle along the riverfront. Trusting both her instinct and her growing confidence in identifying emergencies, Shelbie understood he needed immediate assistance. She quickly made her way home, where her parents contacted local first responders — the second time in just four days.

"It must have just happened because the Camas police and fire departments got him into a stroke center," Mittelbach said, reiterating how the timing was critical in saving Dick Fournier, a veteran who served in the Army during the Korean War era.

Mittelbach noted that he has made a complete recovery after receiving care in the critical 60 minutes of his symptoms, often called the "Golden Hour."



Community leaders, first responders from Camas and Washougal, Washington, along with International Miss Oregon, Amber Rosenberry, and members of the Oregon National Guard, gather for a photo with Woodburn Elementary School third-grader Shelbie McQueen, in Camas, Washington, on Dec. 3, 2025.

made a significant impact."

Not long after both instances, Mittelbach wanted to acknowledge Shelbie's actions, especially since both men were veterans who had served their country and now live in the Camas community. She began organizing a ceremony after calling the City Council to recognize Shelbie's valiant actions, with support from the City of Camas, the Camas-Washougal Fire Department, police departments, and her elementary school.

"I wanted to have as many people in uniform as possible so kids could see what all the different kinds of helpers look like," Mittelbach said. "This included some members of the Oregon National Guard who live on our (north) side of the Columbia River here in Washington (state)."

The event also featured Rosenberry's daughter, Amber Rosenberry, who is the current titleholder of International Miss Oregon. While certificates were being prepared and community members' schedules coordinated, Mittelbach made sure the ceremony on December 3 at Woodburn Elementary School remained a surprise for Shelbie, allowing her classmates to join in the celebration as well.

"Having a National Guard presence was important because these were veterans that his little girl saved, Mittelbach said. "It's a pretty big deal what this eight-year-old did."

With the arrival of Fire engines and police vehicles at Woodburn Elementary at 10:00 a.m. for the December 3 celebration, Mittelbach introduced many members of the Camas community to the cheering kids in attendance. This also included Shelbie's parents, who met while serving in the Navy, as well as other family members.

As Shelbie stood in the middle of a long line of civic leaders and first responders, it didn't take long for her to realize she was the reason why everyone was gathered and cheering for her.

Once the introductions were made, Mittelbach used the Bluetooth adaptor on her mobile phone with an audio speaker to play

a recording made for the occasion by Roger Rosenberry, who was still recovering from multiple medical procedures.

"On September 9, I had a tremendous accident while working in my backyard, and I fell about 20 feet, bounced a few times on the fall on granite rocks before reaching the bottom of what we call a swell," Rosenberry described as he narrated the accident.

His injuries were such that he was unable to reach his phone, which was hidden in the grass, and wasn't sure how he would be found or rescued.

"Luckily, I heard a great sound, a Camas school bus coming down my street. I knew the kids that I saw each day would be departing the bus," Rosenberry said, with his voice keeping the kids gathered for the event mesmerized. "I yelled 'Help,' and there was a response. Thanks to Shelbie, friends, and family, my rescue began."

Rosenberry was rushed to Southwest Washington Trauma Center, undergoing multiple surgeries during a week of medical care before being released to a rehabilitation center. In closing his message, he thanked those who rescued him and the medical staff for "making this 74-year-old man still have some good years to enjoy."

With that, a series of presentations began with the reading of three separate awards.

"It is with great admiration and gratitude that we present this award to Shelbie McQueen, a remarkable 3rd-grade student whose extraordinary actions exemplify bravery and selflessness beyond her years," said Oregon Army National Guard 1st Sgt.

Amber Erwin, as she recited the list of actions in The Certificate for Outstanding Heroism. "She has shown that no act is too small when it comes to helping others, and her actions have made a lasting impact."

When a "Hero's Medal" was presented by Oregon Army National Guard Lt. Col. Eric Christensen, Shelbie, along with her classmates, gasped as the Gold Medal, adorned at the end of a Blue Ribbon, was placed around her neck.

Then Cliff Free, Fire Chief of the Camas-Washougal Fire Department, presented Shelbie with an "Honorary Member of the Camas-Washougal Fire Department T-shirt," noting the theme that has become prominent among the kids at Woodburn Elementary School.



ORARNG Col. Tannis Mittelbach, Director of Logistics for the Oregon National Guard, awards a Certificate of Outstanding Heroism to Shelbie McQueen during a ceremony at Woodburn Elementary School in Camas, Washington, on Dec. 3, 2025.

"Never believe that you are too small or too young to 'Say Something - When You See Something,'" Free said, as the group repeated their shared chant in unison. "That's what Shelbie did, and we would all like to thank her for that."

It was fitting that Amber Rosenberry present the final award, as she was dressed in royal purple and wearing her Ms. Oregon crown.

"Now, all these awards are really nice and Shelbie, you should be very proud, but why do we do kind things? Amber Rosenberry said, asking Shelbie's classmates. "To help others is the most important reason."

With that, she gave Shelbie a framed thank-you certificate from her father, saying, "We do these things for people who live near us, the people we meet every day, and help other people we may not know."

As it became time for the students to return inside, Shelbie absorbed one final moment of cheers, then shyly blended into the procession with her classmates, knowing that one of their own had risen to become the newest hero in the city of Camas.

FEATURES

Oregon ESGR Volunteers Strengthen Employer Support for Guard and Reserve Members

*Story by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan,
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs*

SALEM, Ore. — For Leanne Babcock, balancing a demanding schedule and a deep commitment to serving veterans is second nature. Like many Guard and Reserve personnel, Babcock wears many hats in the civilian and military world. Babcock is the Oregon ESGR's Employer Outreach Director, the Oregon Air National Guard's Director of Logistics, and a part-time employee for the City of Hillsboro Parks and Recreation Department. Babcock lives the mission she promotes every day.

In 2021, Babcock returned from deployment, and her job, with the City of Hillsboro, bringing her experience as a "citizen Airman" into her community by forming an Employee Affinity Group for Veteran and Military-Connected personnel. She said the transition from military to civilian work highlights the value Guard and Reserve members bring to Oregon's workforce.

"If you've spent time in uniform, you know the challenge of balancing military and civilian life," Babcock said. "It's important to be represented in your community as the kind of valuable asset any employer would want to hire and retain."

Guard and Reserve members bring leadership, discipline, and problem-solving skills to their civilian careers. Qualities that benefit workplaces across the state.

The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense program, depends on volunteers like Babcock to build relationships with employers and ensure that service members are supported at work.

"The volunteer force is what gives ESGR its reach," Babcock said. "We build relationships in every community where Guard and Reserve members live and work."

Her outreach includes working with human resources teams and local employers to resolve potential workplace concerns early and promote understanding of military service obligations.

"My hope is that when employers are hiring, they recognize the value of military experience," she said. "If they take the time to ask about it, they'll see how much it benefits their organization."

That message was reinforced at the 2025 Oregon Labor Summit, hosted by the Oregon Military Department at the Oregon Army National Guard Aviation Support Facility in Salem. The event brought together service members, educators, and industry partners to strengthen connections between military training and civilian workforce opportunities.

The summit highlighted how Guard and Reserve members bring high-value skills to Oregon's economy through hands-on demonstrations and partnerships with career and technical education programs, including SkillsUSA and the Oregon Department of Education.

During the event, Gov. Tina Kotek praised the Guard's role in bridging the gap between military service and civilian careers.

"Beyond supporting careers and filling critical workforce gaps, we are proving that serving your country and building your future are not separate paths. They are part of the same mission, and I fully support that," Kotek said.

Oregon ESGR Chair Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Cecil Owens, who officially assumed leadership



ORANG Maj. Leanne Babcock serves as Oregon ESGR's Employer Outreach Director, the Oregon Air National Guard's Director of Logistics, and in addition is a part-time employee with the City of Hillsboro Parks and Recreation Department.

on Oct. 1, said the summit reflects ESGR's purpose connecting employers and service members for mutual success.

"Oregon ESGR exists to make sure service members can focus on their mission without worrying about their jobs," Owens said. "Employer support and volunteer outreach are the backbone of what we do."

Babcock also works for the veteran-owned Dauntless Wine Company and runs their non-profit arm, the Dauntless Veteran Foundation. From her hometown to the Guard, her message remains the same: strong employer relationships are essential to supporting those who serve.

"At the end of the day, this work helps everyone — the military, employers, and Oregon communities," Babcock said.

High-Performing Oregon Guard Soldiers Attend "Lt. Dan Band" Concert

*Story and photos by Maj. Chris Cline,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs*

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — Four high-performing Oregon Army National Guard soldiers traveled to Kingsley Field, Oregon Air National Guard Base, on September 26, 2025, to attend a "Lt. Dan Band" concert honoring the 173rd Fighter Wing.



The "Lt. Dan Band" performs at Kingsley Field, Oregon Air National Guard Base, Ore., Sept. 26, 2025. The concert, sponsored by the Gary Sinise Foundation, honored members of the 173rd Fighter Wing and their families.

Oregon Army National Guard Sgt. Kalee Berg, Spc. Bryan Ryan, Spc. John Frazier and Pfc. Katie De Lorenza Velez departed from Salem aboard an Oregon Army National Guard C-12 aircraft for the special event sponsored by the Gary Sinise Foundation.

Before departure, Brig. Gen. Alan Gronewold, Oregon's adjutant general,

visited the soldiers at the Charles L. Deibert Flight Operations Facility to congratulate them on their selection.

"These soldiers represent the very best of the Oregon National Guard," Gronewold said. "Their dedication and performance have earned them this well-deserved recognition."

The Gary Sinise Foundation, founded in 2011 by actor and advocate Gary Sinise, serves America's defenders, veterans, first responders and their families.

Sinise, best known for his role as Lt. Dan Talyor in the film "Forrest Gump," and has dedicated decades to supporting those who serve.

The foundation has helped thousands of military members and their families through various programs while the Lt. Dan Band has performed hundreds of

concerts for troops worldwide. The concert provided entertainment and appreciation for the 173rd Fighter Wing personnel and their families, continuing the foundation's mission to honor and support military communities across the nation.



Oregon Army National Guard members Sgt. Kalee Berg (left), Capt. Derek Claridge, Spc. John Frazier and Spc. Bryan Ryan, stand in front of a C-12 aircraft in Salem, Ore., on Sept. 26, before departing for Kingsley Field Air National Guard Base to attend a "Lt. Dan Band" concert.

National Guard members typically serve part-time, one weekend a month and two weeks a year. They stand ready to help the communities in which they live during disasters, while remaining prepared to defend the nation.



Left Photo: Actor Gary Sinise plays the bass guitar with the "Lt. Dan Band" at Kingsley Field, in Klamath Falls, Oregon, on September 26, 2025. The Sinise Foundation, established by Gary Sinise in 2011, has a mission to serve America's defenders, military veterans, first responders, and their families.

FEATURES

Strength in Service: Oregon Air Guardsman's Unstoppable Rise to Powerlifting Nationals

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Frank,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTRALD, Ore. — In October of 2024, Oregon Air National Guardsman Master Sgt. Stepfanie Glidewell was preparing for surgery. For years, Glidewell had struggled with a debilitating pain that made even walking a challenge. For years, the cause had remained a mystery. Still, the reality was that she had tumors growing up and down her sciatic nerve, caused by stage four endometriosis, a significant diagnosis. These tumors severely limited her capability to move. For Glidewell, an avid powerlifter, it meant she could not compete in the sport she loved.

After her procedure, Glidewell made a promise to herself: if doctors could help her, she would return to her passion for powerlifting with a renewed intensity.

"I kind of made a deal with myself that if we ever figured out what was wrong with me," said Glidewell. "I would never look back and take my health for granted as much as I was."

Fast-forward to September 2025, less than a year after that same procedure, and Glidewell is on track to compete in the U.S. Military Powerlifting Nationals, in Killeen, TX, slated for March 2026. It's a remarkable turnaround that exemplifies Glidewell's mental, spiritual, and physical resiliency.

Glidewell is the definition of a multi-capable Airman. In addition to her incredible physical ability, she works full-time as the Unit Deployment Manager (UDM) for the 142nd Maintenance Operation Flight, participates in the Unit Self-Assessment Program, and works as her Unit Health Monitor (UHM). While these various responsibilities might seem daunting, they illustrate Glidewell's determination to do her absolute best.

It's no wonder that Glidewell was drawn to competitive powerlifting. Powerlifting is a sport in which three lifts are performed: a squat, a bench press, and a deadlift.

The weights of the lifts performed by the competitor are tallied to determine their final score. The slow, grueling movements of the squat, bench press, and deadlift that encompass competition exercises require a mental focus that mirrors her military training.

"You only get to attempt your heaviest lift three times for one lift, and if you're stuck in your emotions... you're just going to keep messing up your next lift," explained Glidewell. "Learning how to keep your bearing, maintain bearing, and learn from your mistakes, I think, is super vital to the sport."

Glidewell's training schedule is not for the faint of heart; she trains six days a week, often twice a day, and wakes up at 2:30 a.m. for a cardio workout before her work day begins. The demanding regimen is a reminder of how far Glidewell has come in her recovery, which, at times, has been slower than she'd like.



ORANG Master Sgt. Stepfanie Glidewell prepares to perform a back squat on Aug. 30, 2025, in Vancouver, Wash., for the summer's End powerlifting competition, where she took first place in her weight class.

At the state championships in November, her goal is to bench press 210 pounds. Looking ahead to military nationals, her sights are set on an even bigger milestone: breaking a 950-pound total across her three lifts, putting her close to the significant 1,000-pound club for female lifters.

The most challenging part of her journey has been managing her expectations and learning not to compare herself to the person she used to be.

"Prioritizing my health and mobility, that's been really challenging for me, because I can't compare who I was five years ago to who I am now."

Glidewell's journey isn't just about the physical feats of strength. It's a testament to the powerful connection between physical health and personal growth. That devotion to growth has not only propelled her to compete on a national stage but also forced her to reflect on maintaining balance in life.

"It's forced me to take more time for myself," said Glidewell. "I was out here probably working six or seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day. Now I'm taking care of myself, and I'm able to balance everything a little bit more."

October 1, 2025, will mark the first anniversary of Glidewell's life-altering surgery. While she's still recovering, she's already proven that her journey has made her stronger than ever.



ORANG Master Sgt. Stepfanie Glidewell, assigned to the 142nd Maintenance Operations Flight, rests on the edge of a bench press on Sept. 6, 2025, at the Portland ANG Base gym, and is on pace to compete in the U.S. Military Powerlifting Nationals.

"I'm getting over the mental aspect that I had a significant injury," said Glidewell. "There was about a three-inch shift from my left leg to my right leg, where I didn't have much muscle."

For now, Glidewell is focused on her goals for the upcoming competitions.

The Triple Threat: Three Brothers Powering Oregon's F-15 Eagles

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Alexander Frank,
142nd Wing Public Affairs

PORTRALD, Ore. — The saying "Brothers in Arms" is a proud military tradition, but for three members of the Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd Wing, the phrase is quite literal. Senior Airman Eithan Rush, Airman 1st Class Wyatt Rush, and soon-to-be Airman Jayden Mancilla have turned preparing the wing's fleet of F-15s into a family business.

It started in 2021 when the oldest brother, Eithan, joined the 142nd Maintenance Squadron (MXS) as a munitions Airman. Since then, each brother has taken on key roles working on different parts of the 142nd's F-15 aircraft. In 2023, Wyatt joined the 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron (AMXS) as a weapons loader, and recently, Mancilla joined the propulsion shop in the 142nd MXS and is awaiting training.

This shared path wasn't accidental. Their call to service runs deep: with a grandfather in the Air Force and a father in the Navy.



Three brothers: Senior Airman Eithan Rush (right), 142nd Maintenance Squadron, Airman 1st Class Wyatt Rush (left), 142nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, and Jayden Mancilla, a new recruit coming into the propulsion flight, pause for a photo at the Portland Air National Guard Base, Portland, Ore., Dec. 6, 2025.

For these brothers, military life is a proud family tradition.

"We have a long lineage on my father's side of military men," Eithan explained, "and we were very passionate about serving our country."

While military service was in their blood, Eithan chose to serve specifically in Oregon. After high school, he explored active-duty options but ultimately decided to serve his home state.

"I realized that Oregon was a great place," said Eithan. "After getting flown to a few places to see some things, and realizing that Oregon is genuinely a beautiful place, unlike anywhere else."

The choice affected his two brothers. After Wyatt joined the 142nd AMXS a few years later, seeing his brother in uniform was a different but welcome experience. "It still caught me by surprise," said Eithan. "It [was] like that Spider-Man meme where everyone's pointing at each other."

Now that all three brothers are drilling at the wing, they navigate not only family ties but also working together in different roles to keep the F-15s ready and lethal.

Being brothers provides a strong foundation for wingman ship. "As a brother, you're around each other a lot and help each

other out," Wyatt said. "As a wingman, you do the same thing, but we're just wearing a uniform now."

During my interview with them, it was apparent how close they are. That's not to say there's no friction; they are brothers, after all. When I asked whether there was any competition between them, they all laughed and quickly agreed.

"I can't tell you how devastating it would be if you guys passed me up in rank," Eithan admitted. While Wyatt works to arm the F-15 Eagles, Eithan ensures munitions fire as planned, and recruit Jayden prepares for technical school as a propulsion mechanic, eager to serve and continue his family's legacy.

"My stepdad, their father, really influenced me to join, and I'm excited to learn more about engines and expand my mechanical knowledge," Jayden said. For these brothers, family bonds are the ultimate force multiplier. Their shared heritage underscores their commitment to each other, making the military motto — Brothers in Arms — a literal truth at the 142nd Wing.



Senior Airman Eithan Rush (left), Airman 1st Class Wyatt Rush (right), and Jayden Mancilla, a new recruit pose in the famous "Spider-Man meme" at the Portland ANG Base, Dec. 6, 2025.

FEATURES: Revisiting 2025

Oregon Guardsmen Put Their Stamp on the Quarter-Century Mark

Feature story by John Hughel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. —Without a doubt, 2025 stands out as one of the Oregon National Guard's most productive and impactful years. Over twenty-five years into the new millennium, Oregon's Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen continue to make historic contributions.

Over the past year, the Army marked its 250th anniversary. It supported U.S. allies while maintaining peace and security at home and abroad. In October, nearly 200 Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, were mobilized to join the Multinational Force and Observers Mission in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. Their primary duty was to oversee the security provisions of the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace and to prevent violations.

With this mobilization, these Soldiers continued the efforts of nearly 230 members of the 2nd Battalion, 218th Field Artillery Regiment, who had deployed just two months earlier to the Middle East for OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE. During their deployments, the 218th assisted partner forces in working toward a lasting defeat of terrorist groups in Central Command's Area of Responsibility. By late September, both units had completed their year-long missions and, upon return, were welcomed home as we celebrated their achievements.

Shifting focus to air operations, over the summer, a seasoned group of 35 Airmen from the 116th Air Control Squadron returned after supporting USCENTCOM air and space operations. Their homecoming not only marked the end of their mobilization but also the transition from an air control mission to a new cyber mission. Time and again, this unit has proven to be one of the most respected command-and-control organizations in the Air National Guard and the U.S. Air Force.



Photo by Sgt. Hannah Hawkins, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers with 821st Troop Command Battalion set up a decontamination tent during a (CBRN) Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) joint training exercise with Air and Army Oregon National Guard units at Camp Rilea in Warrenton, Ore., on Aug. 13, 2025.

To meet current operational demands, the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team mobilized nearly 220 Soldiers to the Horn of Africa in May. They joined Task Force BATAAN for OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE and now serve in Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia, supporting CJTF-HOA and JSOTF-SOM in security and base defense operations. Meanwhile, as this deployment began, over 300 Soldiers completed a year-long mission in Kosovo in July as part of the NATO-led Kosovo Force, continuing a crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in the Balkans since 1999.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Staff members and key volunteers with the Oregon Military Museum gather for a photo during the grand re-opening ceremony on July 11, 2025, at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon. The museum has undergone upgrades and changes since it was closed nearly 15 years ago.

The 142nd continues to support the NORAD no-fail homeland defense mission with the new F-15EX model. On April 30, General Steven Nordhaus, Chief of the National Guard

Bureau, visited the 142nd Wing for a familiarization flight in the new jet. Additionally, nearly 140 Airmen from the 142nd attended the United States Air Force Weapons Instructor Course at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, and flew the F-15EX for two weeks of training.

While the 142nd's "Redhawk" Guardsmen trained in Nevada, about 120 Airmen from

the 173rd Fighter Wing in Klamath Falls finished two weeks of training at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii, during the Sentry Aloha exercise 25-2. Dissimilar Air Combat Training allowed pilots to practice combat scenarios against aircraft with different capabilities and performance.

Over the past year, aviation missions have become more vital, with fighter jets and drones enhancing the effectiveness and reach of military operations.

Army combat medics now use new drone training to improve battlefield medical skills for large-scale combat. In a two-week course at Camp Rilea this past spring, Soldiers practiced injury treatment, took tests, and completed a field training exercise. Legionair Tactical provided drones to deliver medical supplies for the training. At the Rees Training Center, the 249th Regional Training Institute used unmanned aircraft systems, including the new RQ-28A Sky Ranger. The Army uses this short-range drone for scouting missions. This change from the RQ-11B Raven addresses new battlefield challenges as drones become more common in combat.

While renovations continue to shape the Rees Training Center, we recently celebrated three significant ribbon-cutting ceremonies for projects that have been underway for the past several years.

In April, the restored W.D. Jackson Armory in Portland was formally completed. The \$9.4 million project extended the armory's

lifespan by 25 years. Improvements included new water lines, seismic upgrades, energy-efficient windows, new flooring, fresh paint inside and out, and updated bathrooms.

On July 11th, we reopened the Oregon Military Museum at Camp Withycombe. The museum had been closed for nearly 16 years, shutting its doors in 2008 to expand exhibit space and build new galleries. The updated museum also showcases its extensive artifact archive. With this reopening, we look forward to sharing Oregon's military history with future generations.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new Army National Guard Hillsboro Readiness Center was held on August 21.

This project will enhance the Oregon National Guard's capabilities in Hillsboro for the next 50 years. These ongoing projects are part of our commitment to Citizen Soldiers and Airmen who serve now and in the future.

These upgraded facilities ensure hands-on training develops the critical skills our workforce needs for mission readiness and mentorship of recruits.

Oregon Soldiers and Airmen joined the annual Cyber Shield exercise in Virginia Beach this June. They worked together as a team. More than 900 military and civilian cyber professionals built defensive cyber skills and practiced responding to network incidents. Participants included members from 42 states and territories, 15 partner nations, industry partners, and other government agencies.

This summer, real progress was made with MEDAVAC technology through hands-on training.



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard 1st Lt. Ian Namu administers the oath of reenlistment to Sgt. Cruz Lopez aboard a CH-47 Chinook helicopter with an American flag as the backdrop during MEDEVAC 101 training near Grants Pass, Oregon, on July 13, 2025.

Oregon Army National Guard flight medics from Golf Company, 189th Aviation, trained with the Future Medical Evacuation Cabin Technical Demonstrator. They gave feedback on its MEDAVAC features. Medics examined the litter setup, ease of patient loading, and equipment organization. The new modular rail system lets medics move patients away from cabin walls for easier access.



Photo by John Hughel, Oregon Military Dept. Public Affairs
Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers and Airmen took part in the Mogadishu Challenge event at the urban training village at Camp Rilea, near Warrenton, Oregon, on March 15, 2025. The annual three-day event was held from March 13-15, 2025.

Regiment, to practice proper patient loading. The training explained key differences between cold and hot loading procedures.

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FEATURES: Revisiting 2025



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Oregon Army National Guard Col. Russell Gibson, 82nd Troop Command Brigade Commander delivers remarks to attendees during the 2025 ODVA Statewide Memorial Day Ceremony at the Oregon State Capitol grounds in Salem, Oregon, on May 26, 2025.

Both exercises strengthen first responders' critical skills, which are essential in life-or-death emergencies.

In August, members of the Oregon National Guard's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package conducted a large-scale mass casualty exercise at Camp Rilea. This joint training allowed participants to apply their skills in a realistic disaster scenario. It also promoted teamwork and trust among Airmen and Soldiers, while encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration.

This training also benefits our civilian partners and members of the 102nd, who collaborated with Oregon Health & Science University and Kaiser Permanente Sunnyside Medical Center in Clackamas in mid-September. Both exercises aimed to improve responses to real-world incidents, identify gaps, and strengthen procedures.

The annual Best Warrior competition was held at Camp Rilea in mid-March. Soldiers and NCOs pushed themselves for three days, testing their physical and mental strength. Army Specialist Justin Slothower from the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, took first place in the Soldier category. In the NCO category, Oregon Air National Guard Master Sergeant Daniel Gardner made history as the first Airman to win in any category. Competing for the second year in a row, he used what he learned last year to earn this year's victory.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Emily Simonson, 115th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, the Adjutant General of Oregon, and his team gather for a team photo during the two-day Adjutant General "TAG Match" Marksmanship competition, on May 16, 2025, at Rees Training Center near Hermiston, Oregon.

Maintaining marksmanship skills requires dedication and a willingness to keep improving. The annual Combat Marksmanship Training Exercise, or "TAG Match," in May brought the state's best shooters to compete this year at Rees Training Center. The competitive spirit was inspiring. Many of the winners and 'Governor Twenty's' advanced to the Regional at Camp Guernsey, Wyoming, in August, where they faced teams with multiple national titles.

As the training year concluded, the first Oregon State Sniper Qualifier took place at the Rees National Guard Training Center and Boardman Training Area. This comprehensive, multi-stage competition prepared local sniper teams for national-level tournaments.

These events are crucial to building resilience and readiness for our infantry and warfighters. As the saying goes, "Iron sharpens Iron." Their success today echoes our commitment to strength and unity as a team.

The Norwegian Foot March is a century-old test of grit that is growing in popularity among NATO and American troops. This demanding 30-kilometer trek unites Soldiers, Airmen, and adventurous civilians. Each participant carries a 24-pound rucksack and races against the clock, with time limits tailored to age and gender. To mark the Army's 250th birthday, the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment hosted a spirited march in Medford on June 8th. Participants came from across the Pacific Northwest, including Oregon's 142nd Wing and 173rd Fighter Wing. As the training year ended on September 27th, National Guard members volunteered as scorekeepers at another march near Cottage Grove. ROTC cadets from Oregon State University and the University of Oregon battled for bragging rights and camaraderie.

Throughout the year, several "Boss Lifts" were held, giving civilian employers firsthand insight into their employees' roles during training or mobilization. The annual Labor Summit brings together service members, educators, industry partners, and community leaders to highlight how military training translates into civilian workforce skills and trades.

Governor Tina Kotek and senior military leaders have emphasized the importance of partnerships between the Guard and the Oregon business community to strengthen our workforce.

In Oregon, Guardsmen go the extra mile to connect with the next generation. Through four STARBASE Academies across the state, students from underserved communities get the opportunity to discover Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Design, and Math. The Department of Defense's year-round STEAM program encourages students to learn by doing, using creative problem-solving, experimentation, and scientific innovation.

The Oregon National Guard Youth Challenge program in Bend is dedicated to transforming the lives of high school dropouts, teens who have disengaged from education, and those facing academic challenges. OYCP offers a highly structured, non-traditional environment that actively promotes personal growth, self-improvement, and academic achievement. The commitment to these students helps empower them to overcome obstacles and achieve their full potential.

Camp Rosenbaum is another way our members support the next generation. For more than 50 years, this summer camp has given children ages 9 to 11 from underprivileged backgrounds a chance to enjoy being kids. They learn to fish, ride

horses, and make art, guided by mentors who are Guardsmen, police officers, and firefighters from our Oregon communities.

This past year, Oregon Guardsmen took time on Memorial Day to honor their fellow service members who made the ultimate sacrifice nearly twenty years ago—speaking at the Memorial Day ceremony at Willamette National Cemetery, Brig. Gen. Alan R. Gronewold, Adjutant General of the Oregon National Guard, remembered the ten Oregon Citizen-Soldiers who did not return from Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005.

Although the war was distant, its effects were deeply felt at home. Teachers, first responders, and other community members served as Citizen-Soldiers, and their loss was felt throughout Oregon. They served with dedication, courage, and a strong sense of purpose.



Photo by John Hugel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
ORANG members from the 173rd Fighter Wing work together with State Partnership Program members from Vietnam during the Cyber Shield 2025 exercise at the Virginia National Guard State Military Reservation in Virginia Beach, Virginia, on June 9, 2025.

When Guardsmen take part in ceremonies or community events, they have a chance to share our story. This year, the Oregon National Guard held several Armed Forces Day celebrations across the state. These open house events let our members meet community members, discuss their military skills, share experiences from past deployments, and explain how they manage both military and civilian careers.

At the end of this past year, two important milestones were recognized. The 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment completed its final mission as an armored unit before becoming an infantry unit. This change brings the unit full circle in its long history. The battalion began as militia cavalry companies in 1888, served as infantry in World War II as the 2nd Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment with the 41st Infantry Division, and later returned to cavalry after the war.



Photo by Maj. Chris Clyne, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
Tank crews from Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry Regiment, and mechanics stand on an M1A2SEP tank following the last round ceremony on July 30, 2025, at Orchard Combat Training Center, Idaho.

On September 26th, the Oregon Air National Guard's 173rd Fighter Wing graduated its last group of F-15C Eagle fighter pilots as the Wing moves to the F-35 Lightning II. This graduation marked the end of a decades-long training mission that produced some of the nation's most skilled and combat-ready fighter pilots, serving both in the National Guard and on active duty.

As 2026 begins, fresh challenges will demand renewed commitment, innovation, and the latest training, with a focused understanding of each new mission given to Oregon Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen.

AZUWUR

“YANK, THE ARMY WEEKLY” – FORGING THE SOLDIER’S PERSPECTIVE IN WORLD WAR II

1945-2025: Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the end of World War II, Part four and final segment of the series

History feature story by John Hugel,
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. – *YANK, the Army Weekly*, was a catalyst for storytelling during World War II and quickly became a sensation after its initial publication, offering enduring insight into the character of the American fighting soldier. The magazine provided a candid, often irreverent perspective from the front lines – detailing harsh conditions, grueling battles, and the frequent mundane annoyances of a service member’s daily life.

“Yank was, in every sense of the work, a medium ‘by and for the enlisted man,’” wrote former Army Col. Franklin Forsberg, Commanding Officer of Yank. “Much of the credit is due to the intrepid, enterprising, courageous, and hard-working G.I. writers, editors, artists, photographers, production, circulation, and administrative staff.”

The first issue of Yank was published on June 17, 1942, and was 24 pages long, costing only a nickel. From 1942 to 1945, it was a global operation, with 21 weekly editions printed in 17 locations. During the war, it distributed over two million copies worldwide and became the most widely read publication in U.S. military history. The final issue was published on December 28, 1945.

Looking back 80 years to the conclusion of World War II, many of the war’s stories and accounts are not only found in press reports, newsreels, and the magazine’s archives but also in the work of service members who captured imagery with their own cameras. Oregon National Guardsmen stationed around the world would return home with photographs and artifacts, providing a living history and personal insight into the war fought on multiple fronts worldwide.

The creation of YANK Magazine

American journalist Egbert White, who had worked for *Stars and Stripes* during World War I, proposed the idea of Yank magazine to the Army in 1942, and General Frederick Osborn approved it, with the intent that enlisted men would cover and write the stories.

In May 1942, the magazine opened its headquarters at 205 East 42nd Street in New York, New York. It was assigned under the direction of the Army Information and Education Division of the War Department’s Army Service Forces.

Yank operated its production workflow like a regular newsroom in civilian life, with officers serving only in an administrative capacity. By contrast, *Stars and Stripes* had an established editorial style for copy and news reporting, all overseen by officers. “Yank doesn’t want the kind of news copy a *Stars and Stripes* editor demands, and the *Stars and Stripes* isn’t interested in Yank’s type of lengthy illustrated magazine articles,” said Joe McCarthy, Yank’s managing editor.

To make the point, an editorial in the first issue of Yank stated its purpose for the readers. “Here’s the YANK brother. This is our newspaper, solely and exclusively for us in the ranks and for nobody else. It’s not G.I., except in the sense we are G.I. It’s ours alone...Because it is ours and because we are fighting men, it is here to reflect pride when we are proud, and anger when we are sore. It is OUR record of what we’re doing – in black and white.”



Image courtesy of YANK, the Army Weekly archives

YANK, the Army Weekly, cover for the December 10, 1944, British Edition. The United States military published the magazine during World War II. The magazine correspondents, photographers, and artists were primarily enlisted soldiers, with a few officers as managers, and were initially made available only to the U.S. Army in overseas theaters of combat.

Over time, Yank’s workforce of 127 staff members would include correspondents, writers, photographers, editors, and artists dedicated to telling the stories of ordinary Soldiers during World War II.

How the War Influenced the Changing Media Environment

In many ways, establishing a new approach to journalism and storytelling with Yank mirrored the evolution of communication across various media during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Throughout the Great Depression years between 1933 and 1944, millions of Americans tuned in to radio broadcasts of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “Fireside chats,” in which he spoke with apparent familiarity about issues ranging from the New Deal and bank reform to Civilian Conservation



Image courtesy of YANK, the Army Weekly archives

Sketch artist renderings were an important editorial component of each issue of *YANK, the Army Weekly* magazine, during World War II. The United States military published the magazine during the war to enhance morale and help tell the war from the ‘Fighting Soldiers’ point of view.

Corps projects and America’s involvement in World War II. Through these direct conversations, Americans were part of the conversation about current affairs as the United States entered the war.

The Armed Forces Radio Services were established in the early days of World War II to meet the needs of American troops stationed around the world. Recognizing the importance of keeping service members informed and connected, the War Department began short-wave radio broadcasts as early as 1940. By 1941, entertainment programming was introduced to boost morale and provide comfort to those serving far from home. Service members could also receive special records called “Victory Discs” – featuring music, news, comedy, and talk, all recorded specifically for military personnel stationed overseas. The V-Disc program was launched in 1943 and was exclusively for service members, not sold commercially. For the fighting American G.I., every effort was made to fortify the mission.

For Americans at home, newsreel footage shown in cinemas brought fierce battles across six continents directly to civilian and troop-support audiences. Fox Movietone, Universal Newsreel, and British Pathé captured gripping combat scenes and home-front efforts – highlighting rationing and war bond drives. These reels brought the war’s intensity to life, and when paired with patriotic voice-overs, they brought iconic battles such as D-Day, The Battle of Midway, and the Guadalcanal campaign to life.



Image courtesy U.S. Department of War/Department of Defense historical archives

Newsreels and other current war commentary films, such as the “Why We Fight” series, gave viewers a comprehensive look at the events leading up to and during World War II, focusing on the United States entering the war and on significant battles. While some focused on combat, others depicted War Bonds efforts and the sacrifices made on the home front.

Despite taking weeks to be approved and released due to military procedures, newsreels steadily evolved into a powerful communication medium, with much of their footage shot by dedicated military photography units.

A distinct voice and a flair for impact

As a magazine, Yank covers were gallant with a poster-like presentation. On most covers, there was a single still, black-and-white image with a bold red banner featuring the YANK typeface in white lettering.

Yank magazine and the legendary The Saturday Evening Post shared editorial connections, evident in their publication styles. Egbert White, one of Yank’s founders, had previously worked at The Post, bringing his magazine experience, and was joined by Robert Martin Fuoss. Yank’s final editor, Scott Corbett, would later contribute to The Post, helping revive the periodical after the war. Combined with the Soldiers’ production work, these influences helped give Yank a distinct look and voice. Over time, they have become collectors’ items.

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Right away, service members had a connection to the magazine because its writing style was both traditional correspondence reporting and G.I. – conversational in tone and vernacular.

In his article "Nightmare Job in Italy," published on April 30, 1944, Army Sgt. Burtt Evans vividly described what the 36th Infantry Division faced in the early going during the Invasion of Italy.

"Italy wasn't what the travel posters had cracked it up to be, all blue skies and crowds of pretty girls coming down the streets singing opera. It rained and kept raining until the weather got too cold for rain, and then it snowed. There was mud and slush everywhere, and men went around in the mud up to the tops of their leggings and sometimes up to their belly-buttons."



U.S. Army Cpl. Ragnvald B. Ryan, of Alamo, North Dakota, assigned to the Fifth Army, Castelluccio Area, Italy, warms his cold feet by a fire as he looks at a few of 'Yanks' Pin-up girls, on Nov. 28, 1944. He was a member of a close support 105mm artillery unit on the Fifth Army front. (Photo by the 3131 Signal Service Company)

Weaving himself into the operation, Evans kept the reader engaged with details he observed, the impact of the Americans' actions, and his own diligence amid persistent enemy threats.

"I crossed the main highway, nicknamed 'Hitler Road' in the briefing, and joined a squad searching one of the large resort-type homes," Evans reported. "Writing this story, I have dived dozens of times for shelter from the Jerry bombers hitting the beaches, but our air force is also much in evidence. Outside is a sign pointing to Rome."

The terms "Jerry" and "Jap" were consistently used in Yank storylines as standard references for enemy combatants, with "Jerry" referring to Germans and "Jap" to Japanese. Long before social media postings and blogging became part of our daily interactions with current events, Yank was the authentic voice of Soldiers who were on point – in the thick of the action.

Attribution for individual Soldiers was another style consideration, with hometown recognition and unit assignments interlaced into stories and accounts. It was during a lone armed reconnaissance mission aboard a B-24 Liberator assigned to the 43rd Bomb Group, 403rd Squadron, Fifth Air Force that Army correspondent Sgt. Dave Richardson flew with the crew, colorfully recounting the mission and the men's unforeseen actions over the Japanese-held Solomon Sea, published in the September 24, 1943, edition of Yank.

"As we are sailing over St. George's Channel near Rabaul, we spot a tiny dot in the water off the cape. Lt. Francis E. Haag, our pilot and former Rutgers University student from Pelham, N.Y., changes course and descends to identify the vessel. It's a 4,500-ton Jap freighter-transport heading north. Now Lt. William H. Spencer Jr., ex-telephone man

from Roanoke, Va., takes over the command of the bomber from his bombardier's perch. We make a bomb run at medium altitude. Two bright yellow demolition bombs tumble out of the bomb racks. Beside me, S/Sgt. Mike Nesevitch, a former coal operations manager from Olyphant, Penna., keeps his aerial camera clicking. The bombs describe a graceful, lacy curve at the ship below swerves sharply to the right," Richardson wrote.

The magazine fostered a sense of global affiliation among Soldiers, allowing them to relate to shared experiences regardless of their individual roles – where sales associates now found themselves as aircraft crew chiefs, and carpenters as infantrymen. It helped them connect on "the ache of loneliness, the 'ache of exhaustion, the kinship of misery," wrote Sgt. Debs Myers, a reputable staff writer at Yank. "Maybe he was white or black or yellow or red, and if he was on the line it didn't make much difference, because a soldier on the line was so dirty you couldn't tell his color anyway."

Along with the writing and photography, each copy of Yank featured a comics section that presented the everyday woes soldiers faced, often transformed into military humor, as in the "Sad Sack" Soldier, created by Sgt. George Baker for Yank, depicting many of the absurdities and awkwardness of military life. It debuted as a comic strip in the first issue of Yank in June 1942 and was so successful that it ran as a syndicated feature in newspapers until 1958, long after the war ended.

Drawings and sketches by artists appeared regularly in the magazine. Yank staff often created illustrations for specific stories or battle series, and the magazine also published artwork submitted by soldiers from the field. Many of these images showed intense battles or moments that cameras and words could not fully capture. Almost every issue of Yank included renderings like these.

Amid the stories and artwork, it was the pin-up photographs that sparked a much-anticipated sense of optimism, intended to boost morale among soldiers serving far from home. The Yank Pin-Up Girl featured Hollywood celebrities and famous models, giving a connection to home and the world they left behind. These images would make their way to barracks walls and into G.I. footlockers.

Photographers created images that were both playful and aspirational in style, taking service members back to a summer day at the beach or evoking nostalgia for a time before the war. The women photographed were depicted as "Strong yet approachable, glamorous yet relatable," as noted in a 1945 Parade Magazine article about this feature in Yank.



One of hundreds of classic "The Sad Sack" comics by Sgt. George Baker, for Yank, the Army Weekly, humorously illustrates the everyday challenges soldiers endured during World War II.



Eugenia 'Jinx' Falkenburg, featured as one of the "Pin-Up Girls," in the April 27, 1945, issue of Yank, the Army Weekly. Before her appearance in YANK, she had been traveling globally, visiting military service members in various locations in the China-Burma-India Theatre of Operations.

Where Yank, the Army Weekly, met the Oregon National Guard

One of the many Yank Pin-Up Girls was Eugenia 'Jinx' Falkenburg, featured in the April 27, 1945, issue. Before her appearance in Yank, she had been traveling internationally, visiting military service members in various locations. During her tour supporting the war effort, she spent time with members of the 35th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, including Oregon National Guard personnel from the 123rd Observational Squadron.

Jinx's modeling career took off after she met Paul Hess, a well-known advertising and motion-picture photographer, in 1937, and he photographed her for the cover of The American Magazine in August 1937. This led to other modeling offers and advertising campaigns, during which she graced the covers of over 200 publications in the 1930s and 1940s. Hess said that she was "the most charming, most vital personality I have ever had the pleasure to photograph."



Actress Jinx Falkenburg entertains members assigned to the 35th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron during her visit to the unit in China in late 1944. From left to right are Jinx, Lt. Morris, 1st Sgt. Flavin and Sgt. Shaylor.

"The United Services Organization managed to send entertainers out to entertain troops far all across the CBI (China, Burma, and India Theatre), which was the furthest theatre of war from the United States," said Lt. Col. (ret.) Terrance Popravak, Jr., is the volunteer historian for the 142nd Wing. "It was a tortuous route; they would leave from New York to Kunming (China), which is like 10,000 miles. Jinx was traveling with Hollywood actor Pat O'Brien, a troop of USO entertainers in the CBI, covering nearly 42,000 miles – getting out to the CBI and then within the CBI to all the military bases, making an extensive effort."

That extra effort went well beyond the scheduled 54 shows, Popravak said, and they ended up performing 84 shows, including hospital visits that were not part of the agenda.

"Jinx was perhaps the most recognized female face in the United States, even before the war began, because she was photogenic – dynamic, attractive, athletic, and vivacious," Popravak said. "She had played tennis both as an amateur and as a professional."

On October 25, 1944, the USO troop performed at the U.S. Army Air Force Airfield in Yunnanyi, China, where Soldiers could also interact with the entertainers before and after the shows.

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"Once you get going out there and see the guys, you want to stop and do a show everywhere, for everybody," Jinx said in an interview published in *Yank*'s Feb. 16, 1945 edition. "The men were wonderful to talk to and easy to talk to, and we tried to talk to everyone who wanted to talk or take a snapshot or play ping-pong."

One of "those guys" was Sgt. Hank Larsen from Brookline, Massachusetts, was with the photographic reconnaissance section and had the chance to watch her play an exhibition tennis match against a Chinese girl. "Wow, she was beautiful! The Public Relations people moved her around a lot, but I was able to get a photo of Jinx and I together," said Larsen. That photo would find its way to Larsen's hometown newspaper, *The Brookline Citizen*, making the front page on January 11, 1945.

"So there were about four or five guys who had their own cameras, capturing the experience of Americans sent far away to war in the China, Burma, India Theatre...they recorded the people, village life, and their own photographic tasks," Popravak said, describing the wartime conditions and the mission of the 35th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron. The 35th flew the Lockheed F-5E photo-reconnaissance airplane, a modification of the P-38 Lightning fighter, in combat aerial reconnaissance operations in the CBI from September 1944 through August 1945.



Yank, the Army Weekly, April 3, 1943 edition, featuring a story on the 41st Infantry Division, written by Yank Correspondent Sgt. Dave Richardson. The United States military published the magazine during World War II, from 1942 to 1945. The magazine's correspondents, photographers, and artists were primarily enlisted soldiers, with a few officers serving as managers, and it was initially available only to the U.S. Army in overseas combat theaters.

perimeter with a supply squad and bumped into a Jap machine-gun nest. He was shot through the helmet, but the bullet just grazed his head. He motioned his squad to make a wide detour and go on as he drew fire from the nest by tossing hand grenades at the gun slits," Richardson noted in his article, "Sunset Division eclipse The Rising Sun."

Sgt. Owen, who was assigned to the 163rd Infantry Regiment under the 41st Infantry Division, was listed as killed in action on Jan. 6, 1943, and received the Silver Star and Purple Heart posthumously. He is buried at the Manila American Cemetery, Manila, Philippines.

Another hero Richardson reported for the story was Cpl. Carlton O. Tidrick of Belton, Montana, had been severely injured. He had been hit three times by machine gun fire and helped another Montana soldier, Pvt. Kenneth E. Paul returned to the unit's position to receive life-saving medical treatment and report on the squad's contact with the enemy lines.

"Concerning the rest of the team, Tidrick said, 'If the others aren't hit as badly as I am, they can wait and get back afterwards. If they're hit worse than I am, they're dead.' Then he collapsed. Tidrick's commander recommended him for the DSC (Distinguished Service Cross) and Silver Star," Richardson wrote.

Cpl. Tidrick, also with the 163rd, would survive the war and was awarded both recommended honors, and after his passing at age 89 on July 7, 2011, he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia.



A fine study of the 35th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, "G" Flight Lockheed F-5E Photo Lightning at Yunnanyi, China. George Flight deployed to Yunnanyi in mid-September 1944 and, in late October, moved to nearby Beiting Airfield, perhaps where this picture was taken. It shows the distinctive original "Redhawk" emblem on the nose, a mountain symbol for the flight from India over "The Hump" [Himalayan Mountains] into China, and 32 photo recon mission symbols as the number of which suggests this photo was possibly taken before the flight's next move in Feb. of 1945. (Photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing History Archive)

While many from the Oregon Guard's 123rd Observational Squadron were assigned to the redesignated 35th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, others were reassigned as early as 1942 and made their mark across the Pacific or in the European Theater. By the end of the war, the 123rd earned recognition for seven World War II campaigns.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, the 41st Infantry Division was making inroads in New Guinea when once again, Yank correspondent Sgt. Dave Richardson caught up with the unit. In the April 3, 1943 edition of *Yank*, he found the Soldiers describing the battle up Sanananda Trail during the rainy season.

"Getting supplies through to the American infantry in these positions was a major problem. Sgt. Owen D. Gasall, a husky supply man from Oregon, met his death this way. He had waded through the water skirting the Jap



Members assigned to the 35th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron take a photo with a young Chinese friend during the squadron's service in China from September 1944 to September 1945. (Photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing Office/Roy Wolford estate)

On the Vanguard of History

"In telling and showcasing the amazing intricacies and Pacific Northwest representations in World War II that we have in our collection, we have such a surface level of information," said Kathleen Sligar, Museum Director and Curator for the Oregon Military Museum (OMM), located at Camp Withycombe, in Happy Valley, Oregon. "We have excellent records up to mobilization of our service members, but then what's missing is the stories and experience that we are constantly filling in, even now, after more than 80 years."

Oregon is not alone in this ongoing quest to tell the stories of WWII and the conflicts that preceded it. Yet with the grand reopening of the OMM, the artifacts and displays help convey a significant chapter of that history. "Oregon had a huge representation (in the war) and a greater level of participation than other states per capita," Sligar said. "I feel like the 41st is a significant component of World War II because we covered a huge swath in the Pacific Theatre."

The 41st campaigns stretched across Papua, New Guinea, the Southern Philippines, and other island battlegrounds, where the "Jungleers" confronted the unforgiving conditions of the Southwest Pacific. Originally known as the Sunset Division, the 41st earned the nickname "Jungleers" for its relentless combat in the tangled jungles of World War II.

The 41st Infantry Division was also the first American Army Division sent overseas in World War II and served longer than any other. When the new Armed Forces Reserve Center at Camp Withycombe, adjacent to the Museum, opened in September 2011, it now houses the most extensive collection of 41st Infantry Division artifacts and displays.



*Photo by John Hugel, Oregon Military Department Public Affairs
World War II displays at the Oregon Armed Forces Reserve Center at Camp Withycombe tell the story of the 41st Infantry Division, featuring key battles, campaigns, and details of its service in the Southern Pacific Theater of Operations.*

"The Adjutant General at that time, Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees wanted not only to preserve the items and lineage of the 41st but also to tell their distinguished story to currently serving soldiers," said Lt. Col. Stephen Bomar, Public Affairs Director for the Oregon Military Department. "Tracy Thoennes, who was the director of the Oregon Military Museum then, facilitated the displays and artifacts that are placed throughout the building. Each classroom is named after a significant battle, with a detailed display in each of those rooms."

Yet in many ways, the intricate stories of Soldiers who served in World War II came home in personal photographs, journals, and souvenirs, or were sent home in postcards and letters. The OMM is continually adding to its collections from these sources as well.

"As we have been rotating out artifacts and images in the broad display at the museum, 'We Our Oregon,' this exhibit connects people and stories to these images and items," said Katrina O'Brien, Director of Programs and Services for the Oregon Military Museum.

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"So two years from now, new stories will be added to the display as we go through photos, private donations, people's papers, and new records that come to light. That's where we got a lot of the current display, not from administrative records, because once they are federalized, we don't get those records."

This is where the collection of photographs and letters, like those from Oregon National Guard Sgt. Fredrick Hill of La Grande and Staff Sgt. Ray Wolford of Roseburg became an indispensable asset, preserving important images as historical records during WWII.

"We look at the unit's official history for that time, which is more of a summary because it didn't start for a couple of years. So it was up to those still in the unit to remember what they had done, and where they had gone," Popravak said, while going over his detailed files, articles, and imagery at the 142nd Wing's history office. "But we have photos, we have some information that tells us the story about the unit and how the war developed."

In between missions, the photographers, photo lab technicians, and other camera enthusiasts of the unit produced images around the communities they worked in and details of everyday Soldier activities, from card games to print and darkroom procedures to aircraft maintenance.

Around 2008, a collection of photographs from the estate of Staff Sgt. Roy Wolford was donated to the 142nd Public Affairs office by his family during his time with the 35th PRS. The collection included original prints, some larger negatives, and in some cases – penciled notes written on the backs of prints. Over the years, many have been scanned, and Popravak has written new accounts of the unit while publishing some of these treasured pieces of WWII history.

"They are captivating because they are so well preserved and give viewers a first-hand look at the everyday life of our (Oregon National Guard) service members and their contributions to the war," Popravak said, but noted that having the proper film size and format was also an issue. "Because many of the men had their own cameras, they often relied on family members back home to send them film that would work with the commercial cameras they brought to war."

From October 1943 to October 1945, Sgt. Hill served as the Photo Lab Chief for the 17th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, part of the 5th Air Force. The squadron was responsible for delivering vital photographic imagery of ongoing combat operations in the Southwest Pacific.



Charter members of the ORNG's 123rd Observation Squadron, designated as the 35th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron in 1943, enjoy a native meal in China during the unit's service in the China-Burma-India Theatre of Operations from Sept. 1944 to Sept. 1945. (Photo courtesy of the 142nd Wing History Office/Roy Wolford estate)

Due to the scarcity of extra film, Hill and his fellow soldiers devised a method to salvage leftover reconnaissance film, cutting it and repurposing it in film magazines for handheld cameras.

In his book, "Darkroom Soldier: Photographs and Letters from the South Pacific Theater, World War II," Hill described how the photographic team repurposed the discarded film at the end of a spool. These pieces, too short for a whole mission, allowed them to document various aspects of war as they moved from location to location over the next two years.

Hill took hundreds of photographs during his two years overseas, and his lens captured everything from battle-worn aircraft and tattered ships to the faces and stories of his fellow service members, expansive landscapes, native communities, and animals in their natural environments.

On Jan. 14, 1945, Hill began a two-part letter home. "Hello, my Precious, I have been playing chess much of late. We have a heavy board and some of those neat molded plastic chessmen pieces on a conventional pattern," he wrote, describing his leisure time. In the following paragraph, he jumped ahead to the mission. "I had to help Bernardo get the cameras ready for tomorrow's mission, and when I got back, the lights were out. Oh well, I was nearly through writing anyway."

These images, paired with personal letters sent home to his wife Martha, became the essence of his book, which was eventually published in 2009. Together, they offer an intimate portrait of a soldier's experience far from home and add another layer to the history of the 123rd Observation Squadron.

"Soldiers like Fred Hill and Roy Wolford did a lot of work to capture so many aspects of their duty locations, while still doing their mission work that turned aerial imagery into topographical maps," Popravak said. "It's important to remember how well they performed their duty and how important the daily work was to the war effort."

A reporter's retrospect

During World War II, soldiers who carried a camera or a reporter's notepad created work in combat, camp life, or downtime that helped fill in the collective story of American service members during the world's most significant conflict.

Many Yank staff correspondents who were on assignments during World War II were wounded or killed in action, including Cpl. Robert 'Bob' E. Krell, along with three other soldiers from the 17th Airborne Division, was killed in action after coming under small arms fire near Wesel, Germany, on March 24, 1945. He had filed his final story about the base camp in France just hours before departing to cover the "Talon Division's" jump across the Rhine River. He was buried at Mount Carmel Cemetery, Glendale, New York, and was awarded the Purple Heart Medal posthumously.

On assignment in the Marshall Islands, *Yank* correspondent Sgt. Merle Miller and photographer Staff Sgt. John A. Bushemi, both of whom had opened *Yank*'s Pacific Bureau, came under mortar fire on February 19, 1944, at Eniwetok Atoll.



File photo by Tech. Sgt. John Hughel, 142nd Fighter Wing Affairs
Former U.S. Army Sgt. Fredrick H. Hill of La Grande, Oregon, addresses those in attendance at the 70th Anniversary of the formation of the ORNG's 123rd Observation Squadron, held on April 15, 2011, at the Portland Air National Guard Base. At this time, Hill was one of only 11 surviving members of the unit, established on April 18, 1941.

After the shelling stopped, Miller found that Bushemi had been hit with shrapnel and had already lost a lot of blood. "Johnny was conscious, joking with all of us until after he reached the transport [to the USS Neville]. He died less than three hours after he was wounded while Navy surgeons were tying the arteries in his neck. His last words were: 'Be sure to get these pictures back to the office,'" Miller wrote of his comrades passing. He was the second of four Yank staff photographers killed during the war. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart for his actions during the war and is buried at Mount Mercy Cemetery in Gary, Indiana.

Fred Hill, along with Fred Parish, was the last surviving service members of the original Oregon Air National Guard to attend the 75th Anniversary celebration of the 123rd Observations Squadron's formation, held at the Portland Air National Guard Base on April 18, 2016. Fredrick H. Hill passed away on July 24, 2016, at the age of 96, three months after the 75th historic milestone ceremony. He had donated more than 20,000 negatives to the Eastern Oregon University library in La Grande six years before his passing. The collection included approximately 1,000 World War II images.

The images provided to the Oregon Air National Guard's 142nd [Fighter] Wing Public Affairs Department in 2008 from the Estate of Roy H. Wolford have become one of the best-preserved photographic archives from the early training periods of the 123rd Observation Squadron and the redesignated 35th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, as many members were to serve in the China-Burma-India Theatre of Operations during World War II.

Today, one can travel over the Cascade Mountains from Portland to Seaside, Oregon, on the *Sunset Highway*, named in honor of the 41st Infantry Division and serving as a reminder of the division's campaigns, not only for its service in the South Pacific during World War II but also for its mobilization with the American Expeditionary Force in France during World War I under the command of General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing.

With the final issue of *Yank* published on December 28, as the final hours of 1945 wound to a close, Joe McCarthey, who had been with *Yank* from the beginning, would be the last person on staff as the magazine's office officially closed on New Year's Eve. And with the stroke of midnight, an extraordinary era of military storytelling came to a close.