

# Native American tribes and Army build relations at YPG

#### **By Chuck Wullenjohn**

The Army has been regularly firing weapon systems in Southwest Arizona for nearly 70 years, which seems like a long time. But this record pales when compared to that of Native Americans who began visiting the Yuma Proving Ground area 11,000 to 18,000 years ago.

Though these long-ago visitors did not leave a written record, modern day humans know they were here because of what they left behind. Tucked away amidst the proving ground's vast ranges are jaw-dropping, virtually inaccessible Native American cultural sites, running the gamut from simple trails with scattered debris, like arrowheads and pottery sherds, to canyon campgrounds covered with scores of rich artifacts of a bygone time. Tribal elders tell evocative stories of these visits even today.

Yuma Proving Ground officials are well aware of this cultural legacy and have taken steps to preserve it. The proving ground performs detailed surveys of several thousand



Everyone walked softly and kept their eyes glued to the ground while visiting a well preserved archeological site at the proving ground. The visitors picked up rock flakes and stone tools, but carefully replaced everything in the exact location it had been found. When they departed, no one could tell the site had been visited.

acres each year and, if necessary, takes steps to protect significant sites by erecting signs and gates.

Trespassing on military land is unsafe, particularly so in YPG's case, and a violation of federal law.

Tribal consultation meetings are held on an annual basis with the 14 tribes of Native Americans claiming historic connections to the proving ground, as well as frequent mail communications.

K.D. Tyree is YPG's Cultural Resources Manager and leads the proving ground's efforts in working with the various tribes. She says her job is challenging but extremely interesting and defines it as "awesome."

During the formal two day tribal consultation meeting that took place early this month, six Native American tribes sent representatives to the proving ground -- Gila River Indian Community, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Yavapai-Apache Nation, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Cocopah Indian Tribe, and Quechan Tribe.

"Gathering everyone together offers the opportunity for face-to-face communication, a real one-on-one experience," she said. "It was definitely a good will, good faith

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#### THE OUTPOST

### RELATIONS

effort on YPG's part showing that we work hard to protect cultural resources."

And the benefits go in both directions. Tribal consultation meetings ensure meaningful and timely input by tribal officials, which leads to better understanding. The consultations help create a dialogue in which information and opinions are respectfully exchanged by all involved.

Tyree, who has worked at YPG for over two years, points out that too many non-Native Americans are of the opinion that Native American tribes throughout the nation can be treated as a homogenous whole, when, in reality, each differs.

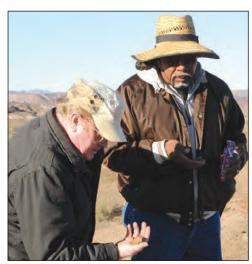
"Each tribe is a distinct and unique cultural group," she maintained. "Each has different customs, traditions, religious beliefs, and more, besides having a distinct past. We make a mistake when looking at each tribe in the same way."

The federal government formally recognizes 565 Native American governments and Alaska native entities, 22 within the state of Arizona.

Barnaby Lewis, a representative

of the Pima tribe, located south of Phoenix on a 373,000 acre reservation, attended both days of the consultation meeting. He says many Arizona tribes, including his own, visited the area of Yuma Proving Ground frequently throughout past millennia to trade, hunt or seek mineral resources. He spoke highly of the proving ground's consultation efforts.

"Talking face-to-face helps everyone know what is going on," he said. "We appreciate YPG for hosting these meetings."



Carefully examining rocks to see how they had been chipped hundreds of years ago by persons fashioning arrow, spear tips or other tools is an, obviously, fascinating pastime.

# Wellness Expo attended by YPG's workforce



The 2016 Yuma Proving Ground Community Safety & Wellness Expo highlighted informative exhibits and displays at the Fitness Center along with helpful participants to answer questions about resilience, state of mind and way of life. Bottom photo: Doug Sorenson a member of the YPG workforce, visits with a vendor from the Navy Federal Credit Union. (Photos by Teri Womack)



## **THEOUTPOST**

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News may be submitted to:

The Editor, Outpost, Yuma Proving Ground, Yuma, AZ, 85365. Phone: (928) 328–6143/6189 or DSN 899–6143.

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Commander: Col. Randy Murray

Public Affairs Officer: Chuck Wullenjohn

Public Affairs Specialist/Editor: Yolanda (

Public Affairs Specialist/Editor: Yolanda Canales Public Affairs Specialist: Mark Schauer

**Technical Editor, Cold Regions Test Center:** Clara Zachgo

Marketing Specialist: Teri Womack

Visual Information Manager: Riley Williams

# A lifetime of service, in and out of the military

#### **By Mark Schauer**

In the United States military, all who serve give some.

But some give more than others, and continue doing so long after they have taken off the uniform.

Some do it by distinguishing themselves as civilian employees for the military: In Navy veteran John Bacon's case, it is overseeing the maintenance of some of the ground combat arsenal's most depended-upon combat vehicles as they undergo punishing testing at Yuma Proving Ground. His performance in this capacity recently earned him recognition as one of YPG's Civilian of the Quarter.

"We were lucky to pick him up," said Phil Rojas, maintenance group supervisor. "He's just as focused at work as he is in his outside activities. He's very dependable and job-first."

Some do it by participating in groups like the Patriot Guard Riders, motorcycle enthusiasts who volunteer in a variety of ways to assist veterans and the families: Bacon is a proud member of the local chapter.

But a select few give back to their community by dedicating countless hours to the youth of their community. Bacon devotes at least 30 hours a week as operations officer of Yuma's chapter of the United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps, a program for youth between the ages of 11 and 18 interested in a career in any of the nation's sea-faring branches of the military. Nonetheless, Bacon feels youth who don't intend to serve once they become adults can still benefit from the program.

"Even if you don't want to join



YPG Civilian of the Quarter and Naval veteran John Bacon (center) spends much of his spare time as operations officer of the recently founded Yuma chapter of the United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps. For two weeks in December, he served as a recruit division commander for a cadet corps boot camp, which his unit completed as honor division. (Loaned photos)

the military, this is a place to learn structure, discipline, bearing, and physical fitness," he explained. "The cadets use their minds in the STEM program and cyber team."

The depth of Bacon's commitment is exemplified by his taking two weeks off from work during the holiday season to serve as a recruit division commander—the Navy equivalent of a drill instructor— at a Sea Cadet boot camp in Phoenix's Papago Park. The training the teens experienced was rigorous, and for good reason: if they intend to join the services once they reach the age of majority and have completed boot camp and all other requirements of the program, they can enter the Navy or Coast Guard as a Seaman, and the Marine Corps as a private first class.

"It has a lot of advantages," said Bacon.

Having only been in existence for seven months, the Yuma cadets had a rocky start against other statewide units at the boot camp. In the first week, for example, eight recruits failed a physical training test, and none of the cadets did better than an eight minute mile. This set-back only motivated Bacon more, who led his cadets in extra physical training.

"We don't cuss at or physically touch the kids. I told them, 'I'm not here to break you, I'm here to push you and make you succeed."

In large part, Bacon did so by subjecting himself to everything he asked of the recruits, and then some. Bacon's duty day began and ended at least two hours before the cadets'. Twice he was officer of the deck and had to pull all-nighters on top of his other duties. He came down with a cold during his time there, but had to persevere.

"You always have to be squared away, top notch: your hair needs to be cut a little shorter, your boots have to shine like glass. You can't show the cadets you are tired or sick: you have to keep going and going."

By the end of the two weeks, Bacon's cadets were the camp's honor squad: every single cadet graduated, two with honors.

"It is just overwhelming to see

them getting excited and doing well, whether they are going into the military or not. They're a good group of kids that do a lot of service in the community on their own."

Back in Yuma, the cadets continue their monthly weekend drills at Castle Dome Middle School, and conduct a variety of community service projects: sometimes front and center in a parade, sometimes behind the scenes helping out at the Crossroads Mission and other local charities.

"This unit has been extremely successful. We are a year ahead of where they projected us to be now. They didn't project us to have any cadets ready to go to boot camp until this July."

Bacon expects to participate in the group for the foreseeable future, and finds the experience is its own reward.

"I love working with children. I think troubled kids need structure and opportunity. The Navy gave me the structure and tools I needed, and my family gave me the drive to succeed."



During the sea cadet boot camp, Bacon subjected himself to everything he asked of the recruits, and then some. Bacon's duty day began and ended at least two hours before and after the cadets'.

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## YPG archeologist lives, breathes job

#### **By Teri Womack**

The phrase "Archeology is not just a job, it's a lifestyle" certainly rings true for YPG's newest archeologist, Erin Goslin.

Sitting down to interview her feels like meeting a new friend. With her engaging smile and down to earth demeanor, she clearly has a knack for putting people at ease. She admits that as part of her job, she is used to being the interviewer versus being the interviewee. As it turns out, she is pretty good on both sides of the table.

Born in Mississippi, Erin didn't put roots down there for long and is a self-described Navy brat who spent her childhood bouncing around the United States and Puerto Rico. Eight months ago, all that bouncing around brought her from Vernal, Utah, to YPG where she definitely doesn't have a use for the below 40 degree boots or long down skirts she brought along. Goslin has the soul of a gypsy and gets antsy when she stays in one place too long. So far, the year round sunshine is one of the things she loves about the desert southwest.

At a very young age, her interest in the field of archeology was sparked while learning about ancient Egypt and found that she liked the cultural history aspect of the job as well as just digging in the dirt. She gained her undergraduate degree from Oregon State University and her graduate degree from Eastern New Mexico University, and has worked 10 years in her chosen career field including two tours with the Bureau of Land Management in Utah and New Mexico.

Her love for reading was instilled early in life -- all the way back to when her parents read her bedtime stories. She continues to enjoy escaping into many types of books, especially fantasy, mystery and romance. This gives her a little time to build up energy for some of her other interests, including hiking, backpacking and travelling which seem to be a perfect fit with her career in archeology.

A large aspect of her current position is to insure that tests or activities that touch the ground at the proving ground adheres to environmental compliance policies focused on protecting our cultural resources. Her recent participation in the YPG Tribal Consultation Meeting on the National Historic Preservation Act/National Environmental Policy Act included open discussions and forums on natural and cultural resources and concluded with a successful field trip to sites near Martinez Lake.

"I enjoy working with all the culture groups that have a sense of



Showing infectious enthusiasm, Archeologist Erin Goslin points the way to a well preserved archeological site at YPG during the early-February Native American Tribal Consultation meeting. Goslin guided meeting attendees to two sites filled with artifacts from a bygone age. (Photo by Chuck Wullenjohn)

identity and place in our nation," she said. "They offer a different way to view the world." She is a big believer in a much-repeated quote from George Santayana – "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Working with project proponents and dealing with push back to make sure the right things happen can be a challenge, but Goslin says those instances have been minimal in her eight months at the proving ground.

When asked if there were any misconceptions about the field of archeology, she references the Indiana Jones movies, and says with a laugh. "It's not all bullwhips and fedoras." She definitely doesn't need either one.



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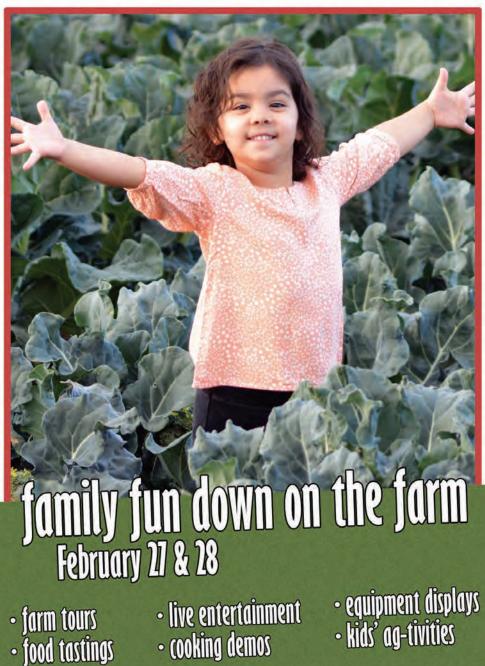
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## Washington, D.C. officials visit YPG





Key staffers from Sen. Jeff Flake's office stopped by before the start of the 2016 legislative session to get an up close and personal look at tests taking place. Besides getting an in-depth briefing from YPG Commander Col. Randy Murray and riding an armored vehicle, they took a look at unmanned aircraft testing taking place.

Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) visited the proving ground last month, his focus being on learning about YPG test programs and their importance to ensuring a healthy defense posture. A highlight of the visit was getting the opportunity to ride an M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank, the mainstay of America's tank strength. (Photos by Mark Schauer & Chuck Wullenjohn)



Jeff Rogers, engineer, explains technical details of test programs taking place at Yuma Test Center's Air Combat Test Directorate to Rep. Gosar (right).

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## YPG hosts Boy Scout leader training

#### **By Mark Schauer**

For over a century, the Boy Scouts of America have relied on adult volunteers to inculcate young boys in values like trustworthiness, loyalty, thrift, and reverence.

YPG Munitions and Weapons test officer Jonny Clark knows this first hand. Associated with the program in some way since he was eight years old, Clark eventually became an Eagle Scout.

Today, Clark has four sons in the scout program and in his spare time, serves as venture crew advisor for Crew 8004 in Yuma.

"I love everything about the scouting program," said Clark. "It teaches the youth values and skills, and good leadership traits."

Clark volunteers at least 20 hours per week to the program, from attending weekly meetings in the evening to activities weekends. The scouts he advises go on at least one camping trip per month, meet local professionals in their workplace for mentoring opportunities, and perform service projects big and small. One recent weekend, for example, the scouts helped an elderly neighbor remove a downed tree from her yard.

Clark's commitment to the program extends beyond volunteering hundreds of hours per year devoted to his sons' crew: he recently took time off from work to serve as a senior patrol leader for a Wood Badge training patrol that spent two long weekends in and around YPG's Cox Field.

Wood Badge is the training course for all manner of adult scout leaders, from scout masters to troop committee chairs. During the course, instructors assume the roles of young Scouts to model the behavior an adult scout leader should expect from their young charges.

"A big part of this training is teaching the leaders that that the



Yuma Test Center Commander and former Eagle Scout Lt. Col. James DeBoer (right) addresses a Wood Badge training course hosted by YPG and led by YPG test officer Jonny Clark (center, standing). Wood Badge is the training course for adult leaders of Boy Scouts of America. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

youth should lead the troop," Clark explained. "It's all about what the youth are capable of."

Though the erstwhile scout leaders committed six days to the training, the staff leading the course had to volunteer even more time.

"The staff has been training since September," said Patti Pace, course director. "We've been getting ready for this, learning what we need to learn, and now we're putting it into action."

In the first week of training, the prospective scout leaders engaged in a variety of classroom training activities and slept in two large tents on Cox Field. Outdoors skills such as fire starting were a prominent part of the curriculum, but Clark says the most important aspect is teaching the adults to facilitate leadership amongst their young charges.

"A big part of this training is teaching the leaders that the youth should lead the troop," Clark explained. "It's all about what the youth are capable of."

YPG employees Quentin Sorenson, Adrian Groggett, and Kevin Crookston were among the staff led by Clark. "He's a good guy," said Pace. "I had been in another course out here with him when he was a scribe. With the responsibility he took then, I knew I could trust him."

During the training, the group also had a surprise visit from another former Eagle Scout, Yuma Test Center commander Lt. Col. James DeBoer. Among other things, DeBoer credits Scouting with allowing him to be accepted into the U.S. Military Academy.

"It was a great experience for me," said DeBoer. "When I applied to West Point, one of the things worth the most points was to be an Eagle Scout. They told me that, statistically, Eagle Scouts had the lowest dropout rate."

For his part, Clark seconds the beneficial aspects of scouting for children.

"The leadership I learned in my youth has definitely helped me in the workplace as well," said Clark. "The things you learn in scouting apply in all aspects of life."



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**Soldiers** 



**Soldiers from Yuma Proving Ground's** Airborne Test Force took part in Yuma's annual Silver Spur Rodeo Parade on Feb. 13th, driving both a Humvee and marching alongside. These specially-trained Soldiers count themselves among the Army's most knowledgeable and experienced cargo parachute riggers and test parachute jumpers. (Photos by Yolie Canales)

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# YPG range photographer dines with the dead for charity



YPG range photographer Randy Smith (right) portrays Yuma pioneer Jose Maria Redondo at the Colorado River Riders' annual "Dining with the Dead" event at the Yuma Pioneer Cemetery. The group, for which Smith is chairman of the board, donates proceeds from the event to Saddles of Joy, a foundation that provides equine therapy to children. (Loaned photo)

#### **By Mark Schauer**

One evening per year, the dead in Yuma's Pioneer Cemetery speak.

Stroll across the grass-patched dust among the humble marble crosses and slabs and you'll see them.

Here real as life stands Sheriff James T. Dana, wearing a badge and a holstered Remington revolver. He boasts that he is the only elected sheriff in Arizona history killed in the line of duty, done in by an obsidian arrow that perforated his liver as he and his posse hunted down a murder suspect in 1871.

Further down is Mary Elizabeth Post, who left a broken relationship behind in Iowa to start Arizona's third school in a former saloon in Ehrenberg, then migrated down to wild Yuma back when it was still called Arizona City. She felt a calling to be here, she says, even with inconveniences like having to cancel class because a hanging was taking place across the street from the school.

It isn't Halloween, it's the last Saturday in January. The famous personages are all being portrayed by members of the Colorado River Riders, a Wild West reenactment group headed by YPG range photographer Randy Smith, and the crowd-pleasing annual event is called Dining with the Dead.

"We're real people," said Smith.
"Our whole idea is to entertain and educate about the very, very rich Wild West history. Contrary to what some think, Yuma was involved in the Wild West."

Early Yuma had its share of colorful characters, and for the past 14 years Smith has played a number of them, from Mulford Winsor, pugnacious founder of the Yuma Sun newspaper to Frank Ingalls, superintendent of the

Yuma Territorial Prison. Even rancher and territorial legislator Jose Maria Redondo, the Father of Yuma, is in Smith's repertoire, yet he refuses to call himself an actor.

"I have never had an acting class in my life," laughs Smith. "I just have fun with it."

Addressing hundreds of people in character may be the most fun aspect of the event, but hundreds of volunteer labor hours go into making the phantasm-haunted feast possible.

"Logistically, it takes five to six people 45 to 70 hours each. It's a lot of work, but it's worth it. We send people home with a different look at Yuma: a lot of the people who show up are snowbirds, and most of the time they are aching to learn."

The proceeds from ticket sales for the catered barbecue dinner goes to a worthy cause, too: Saddles of Joy, a nonprofit group that provides therapeutic horseback rides for children.

The Colorado River Riders perform Wild West reenactments at various venues throughout the year, and have room for additional Western history enthusiasts.

"We're always looking for new members. There are no dues, but you have to have a true love for what the Wild West was."

It is free to join, but members of the group are responsible for their own wardrobe and weaponry, and duds that look authentic to the period are a specialty item. Likewise, prices for working reproductions of iconic firearms like the Colt Peacemaker or Hawken Plains Rifle are not for the faint of heart.

"It's not a cheap hobby, but it's rewarding. To see the smiling faces, especially on the kids, makes it worthwhile."

#### **Greetings from Cold Regions Test Center**



The M109 Self-Propelled 155mm Howitzer has been the mainstay of America's self-propelled howitzer fleet for several decades, undergoing significant upgrades over the years. Affectionately known as the 'Paladin,' today the newest upgrade to the system is undergoing extreme cold weather testing at the Yuma Proving Ground-managed Cold Regions Test Center, Alaska. This photo taken by Sebastian Saarloos, shows it ready to start a day of negotiating mountain test courses.

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## Outstanding YPG employees get recognition

#### **By Yolie Canales**

Three Yuma Proving Ground employees were recognized Thursday, Feb.11, for their work that helps make YPG the Army's busiest test center. Juan Elizarraras, who serves as a lead test officer in the Munitions and Weapons Division, was selected as YPG's Civilian Employee of the Year for 2015 for the consistent high caliber of his work. Robert Clark, quality inspector for the Air Combat Flight Services Division, received the Commander's Award for Civilian Service for his zero defect record. Robert Dillinger, test engineer in the Combat Automotive Division, was presented the Army's Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for his work in becoming an expert on electronic stability control testing, in addition, he was selected as YPG's Civilian Employee of the Quarter for the first three months of fiscal year 2015.

Left to right: Lt. Col. James DeBoer, Yuma Test Center commander; Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Ward; Col, Randy Murray, YPG commander; Robert Clark, YPG 2015 Civilian of the Year; Robert Fillinger, Civilian of the Quarter; Juan Elizarraras, YPG Civilian of the Year for FY15; and Julio Dominguez, YPG technical director. (Photo by Yolie Canales)





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