

THEOUTPOST

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From Motown to Y-town: Combat Automotive Systems test officer had long road to YPG

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's mission of testing nearly every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal requires the skill of hundreds of talented engineers who hail from all parts of the country.

Many rise to distinction within the test community and spend entire careers here, even if they never imagined working and living in one of the world's most extreme desert environments.

An example is Rob Fillinger, a test officer in the Combat Automotive Systems Division who enjoys the variety and importance of YPG's workload.

"There's no such thing as a typical test, and that's one of the beauties of working at YPG, especially in the automotive branch. There are so many different platforms that we encounter, and many in a different phase of their acquisition cycle, from prototypes to legacy programs."

In nearly 10 years here he has worked on virtually every platform the branch has tested, but is particularly proud of his work testing the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle.

"I like that platform just for the fact that it has saved so many lives. It was crucial for our Soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's near and dear to my heart."

Born in tight knit Livonia, Michigan, Fillinger's father worked for the local school system and his mother had a dog grooming business. About fifteen miles northwest of Detroit, the auto industry was everpresent in the community.

"I thought for sure I'd be working for one of the Big Three. I didn't have any one particular car company in mind: it wasn't who I was working for, it was what I was doing that I was interested in."

Fillinger was always mechanicallyminded.

"Growing up I always wanted to know how things worked. At an early age I was taking things apart and putting them together again."

In high school he ran on the track team and played basketball

COMBAT **SYSTEMS** DIRECTORATE COMBAT & AUTOMOTIVE SYSTEMS DIVISION

Michigan native Rob Fillinger, a test officer in the Combat Automotive Systems Division, has worked at YPG for nearly 10 years. He is a former civilian of the quarter and has been awarded two Army Achievement Medals for Civilian Service. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

THEOUTPOST

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News may be submitted to:

The Editor, Outpost, Yuma Proving Ground, Yuma, AZ, 85365.

Phone: (928) 328-6149 or DSN 899. Visit our website at: www.yuma.army.mil or email to: mark.a.schauer.civ@mail.mil



Commander: Col. Ross Poppenberger Public Affairs Officer: Chuck Wulleniohn Public Affairs Specialist/Editor: Mark Schauer

Technical Editor, Cold Regions Test Center: Clara Zachgo

Marketing Specialist: Teri Womack

Visual Information Manager: Riley Williams

and football, where future NFL linebacker Tim Shaw was one of his teammates and friends. He worked through school, too.

"I was always a really hard worker growing up. I would scavenge broken lawn mowers, fix them up.

and sell them."

After high school, he got his degree in mechanical engineering from the regarded Lawrence Technological University and worked in a fabrication lab there concurrently. Several months after

he graduated, he landed a job at Chrysler's Technology Center doing vehicle emissions testing, and thought he had finally arrived. Then fate intervened: it was the autumn of 2007 and the economy was on the cusp of what ultimately became the Great Recession.

"It was a really tough time to be an engineer in the auto industry when I graduated. The week I got there they announced 17,000 layoffs: it took about three months to reach me."

He lost his job less than three weeks before Christmas.

"I had a good friend who grew up across the street from me who was a foreman at a construction company. That kept me on my feet for a few months while I was on my job hunt."

Meanwhile, the housing market was collapsing as well. He knew that whenever the auto industry eventually began to recover, he would be competing against a glut of former workers with more experience in the industry than he had. Some of his friends had moved to Arizona seeking other opportunities, and he posted his resume in one of the major regional newspapers. A job recruiter found it, and called him with information about Yuma Proving Ground.

"I had never even heard of YPG," Fillinger said with a laugh.

He started here in March 2008 and quickly distinguished himself as the Combat Automotive Systems Branch racked up record-breaking levels of work; well over one million direct



Fillinger has worked on virtually every platform the Combat Automotive Systems Division has tested in the past decade. Though he never dreamed of working in such a place, Fillinger has no plans to leave. He calls his co-workers his "Yuma family." (Photo by Mark Schauer)

labor hours in a single year at its peak. His workload tended toward performance and environmental testing.

"To me, those types of test are more interesting and dynamic. There is a lot more data to go over and analyze."

He has been civilian of the quarter for the proving ground and, so far, received two Army Achievement Medals for Civilian Service. He even occasionally finds himself testing Army vehicles at the General Motors Desert Proving Ground located on leased land within YPG.

"I've been over there several times and it was always a good experience testing there. The size of their dynamics pad alone makes it a great facility." Though he never dreamed of working in such a place, Fillinger has no plans to leave. He calls his coworkers his "Yuma family."

"There's a lot more money in private engineering, but I think the

work here is a lot more fulfilling. When you drive out of the gate and past the Big Guns at the end of the day, you know you did something good for our country and our Soldiers."





A view without a point

Up, up and away in a beautiful balloon

By Teri Womack

For many years, the YPG Meteorology Team has supported the Colorado River Crossing Balloon Festival by providing wind data from the ground up to around 5,000 feet with several weather balloon launches that ascertain wind direction and if the wind speeds are decreasing or increasing.

This year, I was able to see for myself just how important that wind information really is when I was invited to take part in a balloon ride with the media sponsored by the Caballeros de Yuma. Real-time winds at the surface are critical in determining if the hot air balloons can take off. Zero mph is great, five mph is ok, and 10 mph means the hot air balloons will bounce all over the place and are considered unsafe to fly. Luckily for me, the wind gods were smiling that morning and I was over-the-top excited to be able to go up, up and away in a beautiful balloon!

If I had any illusions about channeling my inner Glenda the Good Witch persona and daintily stepping into the basket of a brightly colored hot air balloon and gracefully ascending skyward, I wasn't even close. First, you have to put the balloon together! And as a first time balloon flyer, I was initiated as part of the crew.

Our pilot, Tom, was from Albuquerque, N.M. and had many years of experience under his belt-- and a quick sense of humor to boot. He gave us a safety briefing and introduced us to some of the customs and traditions of riding in his balloon. (I think he may have made some of them up!)

Now, don't quote me as this being pure fact here, but from what I can recall (and a quick search on Google to be sure I wasn't totally off base) there are three parts to putting a hot air balloon together. The balloon part, which is called an envelope; the fire part, which is called a propane burner; and the wicker basket which is called... well, actually, it's just called a wicker basket.

With instructions through every

step of the process and a few pop quiz questions thrown in to make sure we were paying attention, the balloon was unfurled out of a bag that reminded me of the magician's trick where the brightly colored scarves just keeps coming and coming out of a box. I couldn't believe that big balloon was going to fit back in when we were done when I have trouble stuffing a pillow into a pillowcase! The balloon was carefully laid out on the field, the propane burner was attached to the wicker basket and tested and finally the ropes were attached to the basket. I did have a tiny moment of concern there – ropes are going to hold us up? Wouldn't a bunch of titanium steel cables do the job better? I decided I would just have to trust my pilot on that one.

Next, a big gas powered fan was set up at the mouth of the envelope, the balloon quickly filled up with cold air and the propane burners were used for final inflation. I soon found out that there is no dignified way to get into a wicker basket. It was a little tricky and the landing wasn't pretty, but once I was finally in, we were ready to go airborne.

I'd been forewarned that lifting off in a balloon feels like the ground is falling out from under you and since I seem to have a bad habit of forgetting that I am afraid of heights until I hop on a helicopter, jump screaming out of a plane, or uncoordinatedly tumble into a wicker basket with a balloon attached, you can bet I didn't look down.

But, I did look out... and it was



Marketing Specialist Teri Womack was invited to take part in a balloon ride with the media sponsored by the Caballeros de Yuma. It was an unforgettable experience with breathtaking view of Yuma from the air. (Loaned photo)

breathtaking. In between snapping photos, reminding myself to not drop my camera over the side and realizing that the propane fire blasts above my head had no chance of setting my heavily hair sprayed hair on fire, I was able to relax and enjoy our city from above.

I wish I could give you stats and figures like how high we went or how the balloon is controlled, but I found myself lost in the view of seeing Yuma from 360 degrees. And as I floated above what looked like a speeded up world below me, I felt like my own world up in the sky had slowed way down.



Munitions and Weapons Division Chief Kermit Okamura (left) helps inflate the envelope of a hot air balloon at the annual Colorado River Balloon Festival. YPG's Meteorology Team has supported the annual Colorado River Crossing Balloon Festival by providing wind data for many years. (Photo by Teri Womack)

Next Outpost deadline is noon, December 28th

Sexual Assault Hotline: 920-3104

Report Domestic Violence: 287-3361

The ties that bind

Submitted by Melissa Gomez, Family Advocacy Program Manager

Holiday traditions are a great way to create lasting family memories. Holiday traditions help families create shared meaning. This shared meaning builds bonds that last a lifetime. Families have the amazing opportunity of creating new traditions or sharing in old traditions with one another.

There are plenty of ways to create brand-new holiday traditions regardless of what kind of holidays you grew up with. Try to create unique opportunities to share during this special time of year that fit your family's wants and needs.

Below are tips on how to start new holiday traditions for your own family.

Try ideas that appeal to you You're not likely to stick with a tradition that you're not interested in yourself. If you love decorating for the holidays try decorating as a family. Make a day of shopping, or unpacking decorations and putting them up together. If baking is for you, try letting the kids help or deliver baked goods as a family to neighbors, friends and loved ones.

Consider giving back

It's always a good idea to instill the holiday spirit of giving; bringing children on community-service outings is a great idea. Try creating a calendar with family activities and charitable or donation-based activities on it to complete with your family. Giving back helps make an impact and strengthen communities, while teaching children to care about others. Consider helping a single Soldier with a Christmas meal or baking cookies for First Responders who work on holiday evenings.

Keep it simple

Get the family involved in nostress activities like singing carols, decorating or even just wearing matching pajamas. Anything that fosters family bonding is a great idea. Whatever tradition you decide to start with your family, make sure everyone is on board. Successful traditions are those that your family look forward to and that can be shared for years to come. Take into special account your kids' input and



interests, because these traditions will likely make up a big part of their childhood memories.

Presented by the YPG Family Advocacy Program: Army Community Service, building 309. (928) 328-3224. 24/7 Domestic & Child Abuse Helpline (928) 287-3361.

Chaplain's Corner -

Yuletide is not fool-tide

By Maj. Ronald Beltz

Did you know that many years ago the Puritans thought that they were ruining Christmas with all their pagan rituals? They especially objected to the fact that the holiday usually came on a week day, therefore distracting people, they thought, from the Lord's Day of Sunday. But they did more than annually complain about it as we do-- they took action and got rid of Christmas altogether. In Puritan settlements across 17th century America, a law was passed outlawing the celebration of Christmas. The market place was ordered to stay open for business as though it were no special occasion and all violators were prosecuted. It was against the law to make plum pudding on December 25th. The celebration was not referred to as Yuletide, but as fool-tide.

So we want to reform Christmas and clean it up. Well, is this how

far we want to go? Do we really want to be rid of it altogether? Then will Christmas, as the Puritans thought, be saved from us and our sinful ways? So what if we spend \$40 billion annually on presents? Can you think of a better way of spending all that money than on gifts of love? And most of them are just that. And so what if all the lights and tinsel does create a fairy tale setting that soon disappears as does the so called Christmas spirit? At least it lets us know, if only for a brief time, what life can be like if we only try.

So let the message ring out this Christmas, not that we are destroying this holy day, but rather, that we can never destroy this day. Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be for all generations. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord.















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6 DECEMBER 11, 2017

Keeping the season merry and our turkeys edible

By Chuck Wullenjohn

No sooner did the summer end and the Halloween pumpkin came off the windowsill, when garlands of holly, strings of multi-colored lights, wreaths, Christmas trees, and decorations of all other sorts sprang up in stores around town. This seems to occur earlier and earlier each year.

I always keep an eye open each year for the first holiday television commercial begging me to spend my dollars on some gizmo or doodad I can't live without, and in 2017 it happened in early September. Based on past experience, though, that was somewhat late. I often see the first commercial while sweltering amid Yuma's summer weather in August. That always presents an odd picture visions of cold weather and snow broadcast to a television viewer in one of the country's hottest regions. It's a special moment that only a Yuman can fully appreciate.

The holiday season is fun for lots of reasons. One of the biggest is that people go out of their way to be friendly. Walkers wave to each other on the street, office workers beckon you to share cookies or candy (homemade fudge is my downfall,) and everyone seems to have a smile on their face. It's a special time of year, there's no doubt about it, and almost everyone honors the spirit of the season in one-way or another.

Take the roasting of holiday



turkeys. To me, nothing beats fresh roasted white meat, and I love the aroma and flavor of dressing baked inside the turkey's cavity. I can always tell the difference when dressing is roasted outside the turkey, for it isn't as moist and doesn't have the depth of flavor. In fact, I think I

enjoy dressing more than the actual turkey. Plus, it's great the next day in sandwiches made with sliced turkey, dressing and cranberry sauce. It makes me hungry to think about it.

Of course, the stories about the trials cooks have gone through in roasting holiday turkeys are legion. Just about everyone, once in their life, has left the little plastic package containing the neck, liver and gizzard inside the bird while it cooks.

I remember the first time I baked a turkey back in college. We stuffed it with croutons, cut up apples and celery and baked it for about four hours. We searched for the package inside the cavity before baking it, but could not find it, so assumed this turkey just didn't come with that stuff. Well, we were wrong. We never thought to look in the neck area. It was there,

all right, but the gods smiled on us that day -- the turkey was still good.

At least I wasn't the guy who thought a self-basting turkey meant that you could leave on the plastic wrapper while the turkey roasted in the oven, so it would self-baste.

His decision does make some degree of sense, however. Aren't plastic-looking cooking bags sold in grocery stores to make beef stew? That man's turkey turned out to be an inedible disaster, but that's an error that only happens once.

I remember another group of guys who walked to the store Thanksgiving morning with a hankering to roast a turkey that afternoon. The store carried only frozen birds, so they picked one out and carried it to the checkout stand. They mentioned to the grocer that they intended to eat the turkey that day. The grocer patiently explained that, as a frozen bird, as hard as a bowling ball, there was no way they could cook it that day. Disappointed, they had to make do with cold cuts.

Then there is the story about the man who roasted a turkey the day before Thanksgiving, then to keep it fresh and succulent for his guests the next day, tightly wrapped it in foil while still hot from the oven. What this caused was a true disaster. Wrapping the bird while hot served to insulate it within the refrigerator. When served the next day, bacteria growth had exploded and everyone got sick.

A health advocate once made a notably wise observation about eating turkey. "You are what you eat. Do you choose to become a butterball?"

Well, like I said, this is a great time of year – and I WILL celebrate it with turkey. The entire YPG Public Affairs Office staff – Mark Schauer, Riley Williams, Teri Womack and myself – sends best wishes to you for a great holiday season. Merry Christmas

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A very YPG Thanksgiving





6AM-8PM **Christmas Day** 6AM-8PM

Representatives of American Legion Post #19 came to YPG days before the holiday to distribute Thanksgiving baskets with all the trimmings to about 20 Soldiers and their Families as a small token of appreciation for their service. YPG employees Almina DeWitt and Bambi Graef are among the American Legion volunteers who help make the annual effort possible. On Thanksgiving Day, the more than 100 patrons who had dinner at YPG's Cactus Café had surprise tableside visits from YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and Command Sqt. Maj. Christopher Prosser wishing them the best compliments of the season and ensuring their food was delicious. (US Army photos)



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Technical director retirement imminent

By Mark Schauer

When Julio Dominguez started as a test engineer at YPG in 1985, the new employee assumed he would soon return to the field his life and education had prepared him for: mining engineering.

Then life happened.

He and his family liked the Yuma community, and become prominent and respected members of it. Professionally, Dominguez, a proud Marine Corps veteran, thoroughly enjoyed meeting the challenge of testing much of the equipment within the ground combat arsenal to ensure it worked wherever in the world a Soldier or Marine might depend on it, and rose through the civilian ranks to become the proving ground's technical director since 2009.

Now, after a more than 32-year career here, he has announced his retirement effective the first week of January.

"To me it is kind of bittersweet. I'm happy to be entering the next phase of my life, but I am not overjoyed about leaving YPG. It's been a great place to spend a career, more than anything because of the people I have had the privilege of working with. If I had to do it all over again, I would do it, gladly."

A significant portion of Domin-

guez's time at the proving ground was during the most dire days of combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan, where Soldiers and Marines saw threats first from rockets and mortars, then from devastating improvised explosive devices. The Department of Defense rapidly tested technologies to defeat these threats and rapidly fielded armored vehicles to mitigate their destructive power: YPG testers and supporting personnel routinely worked 60 and 70-hour work weeks over the course of years to meet the critically tight schedules.

"We're one big team," he said of the proving ground. "I grasped the true importance and value of that teamwork during the busy war years, from 2003 until a few years ago. Even though I already knew this, this workforce's performance during the conflict demonstrated often that these people will do absolutely anything to support warfighters well. The things that we were asked to do quickly and the rapidity and effectiveness with which we did them were absolutely magnificent."

In one example he cites, when corrosion pitting within the gun tube of a self-propelled howitzer threatened to take a significant part of the fleet out of commission, YPG personnel fired thousands of rounds on a twenty-four



YPG Technical Director Julio Dominguez addresses members of the workforce at the Kofa Firing Range. "We're one big team," he said of the proving ground. "I grasped the true importance and value of that teamwork during the busy war years, from 2003 until a few years ago."



Dominguez escorts then-Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Peter Chiarelli (right) on a tour of a YPG gun position in 2011. That year, the YPG workforce gave a record 2.8 million direct labor hours to the Warfighter. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

hour basis for over two weeks to verify the true state of the guns in the force and to validate potential fixes to the problem.

There are literally thousands of American Service members who saw combat in Iraq and Afghanistan and survived their multiple tours—and were more lethal to the enemy—thanks to technologies and improved equipment tested at YPG. To Dominguez, however, this was all in a day's work to the proving ground's dedicated professionals. In his mind, striving to make YPG's procedures the gold standard in test safety and workforce professionalism were his most important accomplishments.

"My proudest achievement has been my role in improving safety. I brought an 'outside eye' for safety to the proving ground because of the places I'd been and the things I'd done before I came here."

While working as a miner prior to entering the university, Dominguez was impressed by the rigorous safety culture that existed in an underground mine he worked in. Employees were encouraged to carry paper "safety grams" on their person or in their lunchboxes, then fill them out and turn them in whenever they encountered something they felt could be a

safety hazard.

"The company promised you two things: that the suspected shortfall would get inspected by a competent individual and fixed if deemed necessary, and that you would get feedback within two days."

Noting that testing munitions was potentially even more inherently dangerous than underground mining, he brought the Safety Gram to YPG. While working as the Director of Ground Combat, he also spearheaded YPG's procedures regarding range incident reporting (RIR).

"I said, 'let's look at every accident and near-miss as a learning opportunity.' The goal of the RIR process is not to punish; it is to learn lessons and determine what we need to do to prevent a similar accident or hazardous situation from occurring again, or at least minimize the effects if it does happen. Through the process, we have fixed hundreds of things, everything from installation of steps and handrails to test procedures for working with explosive items."

Both programs exist to the present day, and Dominguez credits them with contributing to YPG's sterling safety record, but he is quick to state that what truly keeps people out of harm's way is a safety culture, one in



Dominguez's 32 years with YPG will draw to a close in early January. "It's been a great place to spend a career, more than anything because of the people I have had the privilege of working with," he said. "If I had to do it all over again, I would do it, gladly."

which everyone is looking for ways to make processes safer.

Dominguez is also pleased with the results of efforts to professionalize the workforce and create a standard training program for new test officers.

"When I first got here, they didn't have a formal training program or certification like we do today. They assigned you to shadow a person for four to six months, then they would let you go out and start conducting tests."

When Dominguez started, he noticed that there were not enough engineers in the mission area he worked in.

"We had, and still have, very highly qualified technicians, people who really know their test items and the technical aspects of testing them. But we also needed more people with knowledge in technical areas that engineers are trained in."

In the early 1990s, he began to systematically hire more engineers.

"The level of technical competence increased dramatically as we kept our good techs and also hired people who had technical credentials."

His advice to current test officers out on the range?

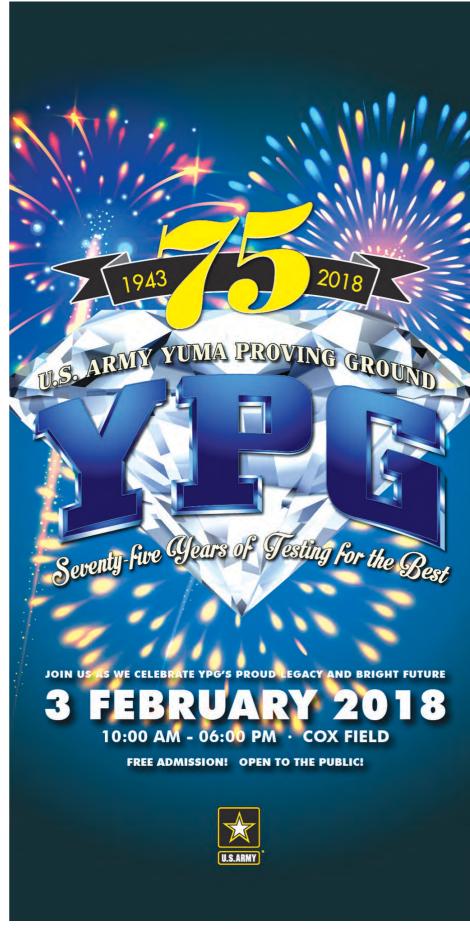
"Never sacrifice safety for efficiency. Remind everyone on your test that everyone is responsible for looking for potential hazards. And watch out for complacency. If your test is running so smoothly that it seems like it is on automatic, it could very well be on automatic—that's when people start doing things without thinking. Do anything to bust the rhythm and re-focus everyone. Remind your teams that you are not just firing 30 rounds, or running a vehicle for 20 miles. Every round fired and every mile driven can kill someone who is not focusing on the job."

As for the proving ground as a whole, Dominguez is confident the installation's combination of infrastructure, vast range, and institutional knowledge, all coupled with a "cando" attitude to get the mission done will keep it viable into the distant future.

"Keep pushing safety and quality. YPG gets a lot of work because we have established a reputation as a flexible organization that delivers quality products. That and our cream-of-the-crop workforce is what helps keep YPG thriving."



A significant portion of Dominguez's time at the proving ground was during the most dire days of combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. There are literally thousands of American Service members who survived their multiple tours—and were more lethal to the enemy—thanks to technologies and improved equipment tested at YPG during that time.



YPG Command Sgt. Maj. invites community to YPG 75th Anniversary Party



YPG Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Prosser (right) took time from his busy schedule for a one hour interview with Yuma radio personality Russ Clark and retired YPG meteorology team member Mel Melchionne in early December. Though the conversation primarily highlighted the free fun open to the public at YPG on Saturday, February 3, 2018, Prosser also discussed current YPG test activities and various experiences from his military career. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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Christmas truce comes to blasted landscape of World War I

By Bill Heidner

They were the enemy, the Hun, and senior Army commanders encouraged an attitude of hatred toward them, but for a relatively brief period of time during Christmas 1914, impromptu tree-lighting ceremonies and the singing of Christmas carols ushered in a holiday truce. In some instances, this truce lasted well into January.

This truce was unofficial and those same senior commanders who preferred a hateful attitude toward the enemy were not at all pleased. Officially, the situation along the Western Front was thought to be so bad that when the Pope proposed a Christmas truce, it was deemed impossible to carry out, and, therefore, rejected. But to common soldiers occupying their muddy trenches, in some cases only 60 yards apart from their enemies, it went from the realm of impossible to improbable and finally to a wondrous historical footnote to a war that created 8.5 million dead among the combatants. (The total death toll for World War I, including civilian deaths, was well over 20,000,000.)

It began in many areas with impromptu tree lighting ceremonies held by the Germans. British troops, in particular, had been told to be wary of a possible attack, and at first the appearance of small lights above the parapets of the German trenches were taken as signs of impending combat action. In many cases, British soldiers fired at the twinkling lights and were surprised when return fire didn't come. Often what they received in return were renditions of Silent Night or O' Tannenbaum sung by German soldiers in their front line trenches. Although the words were unknown,



the melodies were familiar, as was the tradition of the decorated and lighted tree. While there are many legends regarding the tradition of the Christmas tree, almost all of them point toward Germany. The custom became the rage in Victorian England when Prince Albert, a German, decorated Buckingham Palace with a candle-lit tree for his wife; Queen Victoria.

Little by little soldiers from both sides of the deadly trenches exposed themselves and came forth into the deadly no-mans land to exchange Christmas greetings and goods. Each side had received Christmas boxes from their governments and loved ones, which were shared between the sides. In one exchange, a heated discussion arose over the virtue of British cigarettes made of fine tobacco from Virginia (USA) versus the German preferred Turkish tobacco. Onlookers from both sides laughed as they smoked each others offerings.

What began on Christmas Eve blossomed to a wide-spread truce by

Christmas day. Each side took advantage of the peace to recover and bury dead comrades who had been left in the deadly no-mans-land. In one sector, a keg of beer was traded for plum pudding. When writing home, a British soldier remarked that he knew who had received the best exchange on that deal. In some areas, impromptu soccer matches occurred. The scores vary depending on who is telling the story, although in the more organized of these matches it is reported by both sides to have been a German victory.

For the most part, the truce ended on Christmas day. In one case, company commanders from the two sides had agreed on an appropriate signal. On the British side, they unfurled a sign that said Merry Christmas. The Germans unfurled a bed sheet that said thanks. The British commander fired three shots in the air. The two commanders saluted each other and exchanged bows. When they had each descended back into the trenches, the German commander fired his pistol twice. The war was "officially" back on. In most sectors the immediacy of death to anyone exposed above the trench lines was back in full effect.

The truce would have more lasting effects in some areas. One British soldier wrote home that he wished every day could be like that Christmas day. Some sectors reported a complete lack of the back and forth sniping that had occurred previously. But the memories would have even farther reaching effects. The few survivors of the war who witnessed this remarkable occurrence all remembered the sad irony of the night and day when "peace on earth - goodwill towards man" poured forth from the deadly landscape of "the war to end all wars."



YPG is all about ensuring weapon systems function in the real world

By Chuck Wullenjohn

Army senior leaders have long made it a practice to employ weapon systems and munitions that function properly in four climates: moderate; desert; arctic; and tropic. Of these, the three temperature extremes (desert, arctic and tropic) fall under the management authority of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground, an Army Test and Evaluation Command organization.

The three extreme weather test centers are operated by the proving ground's test experts at three widely dispersed locations experts to ensure military equipment and munitions function reliably on the battlefield. These test centers are: Yuma Test Center at Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona; the Cold Regions Test Center at Fort Greely, Alaska; and the Tropic Regions Test Center that operates at a number of tropic locations, depending on the needs of each test – Hawaii, Panama, Honduras, and Suriname.

The history of armed conflict is

littered with the debris of military equipment that worked fine in fair weather, but failed when the going got rough. Whether it was Napoleon's forces driven back by the sub-zero temperatures of winter Russia in 1812 or the communication gear issued to American troops on Guadalcanal during World War II that failed due to tropical humidity, realistic natural environment testing is something military equipment and ammunition developers ignore only at the peril of American lives.

Extreme environmental conditions, ranging from extreme cold and high heat to salt spray and humidity, have been artificially created in environmental chambers over the years. These chambers, however, do not duplicate the synergistic effects of temperature, wind, snow, solar radiation, insects, fungus, and more, in a large enough arena to truly represent the challenge of extreme environments in their potentially devastating totality. Realistic testing is essential because these effects

can quickly degrade the performance of man, machines, and materials. Simply stated, testing in the natural environment remains as meaningful today as in the past.

Since World War II, the three Yuma Proving Ground test centers have performed work critical to ensuring the success of equipment and munitions issued to America's military forces. Through periods of both contraction and expansion, natural environment testing has saved lives and ensured battlefield success. Today, nearly every item of ground combat equipment goes through testing at the proving ground. Yuma Proving Ground itself is one of the largest installations within the Army.

Much of the nation's environmental test expertise resides at Yuma Proving Ground and its test centers. Yuma Proving Ground is recognized as the Army's natural environment test expert. The three test center's mutually support each other throughout the year to maximize the use of personnel, technology and

expensive equipment, as well as to share critical expertise. This saves taxpayer dollars and ensures efficiency.

The three YPG test centers are known for their flexibility and customer-focus, and directly support American forces deployed overseas with fast turnaround tests. Major test areas include: artillery and mortars, tracked armored vehicles, automotive equipment, cargo and personnel air delivery systems, unmanned aerial systems, aircraft armament and target identification systems, countermeasures used to defeat roadside bombs, and more.

The Yuma Test Center at YPG is the largest of the three test centers and, though desert environmental testing is a critical component of its mission, a wide variety of tests are conducted throughout the year. About 2300 people work at Yuma Proving Ground, most of whom are civilian, and has an economic impact to the local community of about \$450 million each year.



Since World War II, the three Yuma Proving Ground test centers have performed work critical to ensuring the success of equipment and munitions issued to America's military forces. Today, nearly every item of ground combat equipment goes through testing at the proving ground (Photo by Mark Schauer)



The Yuma Test Center at YPG is the largest of the three test centers and, though desert environmental testing is a critical component of its mission, a wide variety of tests, such as this parachute evaluation, are conducted throughout the year. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



Artificial conditioning chambers cannot duplicate the synergistic effects of temperature, solar radiation, insects, fungus, and more in a large enough arena to truly represent the challenge of extreme environments such as this tropical road course. (Photo by Carlos Mora)



Military history is littered with the debris of equipment that worked fine in fair weather, but failed when the going got rough. Realistic natural environment testing is vital to ensure American Soldiers' equipment works as it should wherever in the world they are called on to serve . (Photo by Sebastian Saarloos)



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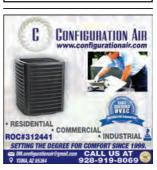


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YPG hosts first tour of the 2017-2018 season







In cooperation with the Yuma Visitors Bureau, YPG held the first of seven public winter tours in early December. After a welcome from YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger (top photo), tour attendees visited two test facilities: at the Air Delivery Complex, test officer Keith Allen (left, second photo) shows the visitors mannequins used in personnel parachute testing; while turret mechanic Gabriel Arzola (third photo) discusses armored vehicle testing at the proving ground. The tour guests also visited the YPG Heritage Center and had lunch at the Cactus Café. (Photos by Teri Womack)



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