

75th anniversary gala was a home run

By Chuck Wullenjohn

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground celebrated its 75th birthday in style — a party attended by over 11,000 well-wishers from throughout Yuma County, nearby areas and even further.

In the planning stage for months, the birthday began early Saturday Feb. 3 and concluded after darkness fell that evening with a stupendous aerial fireworks display. Events included a massive, fun-filled kid-zone that attracted huge crowds of the younger set, a large display of the most spic and span military weapon systems you'll ever come across, lots of vendors, great food, parachutists, antique cars, and a slate of tuneful

live musicians offering musical entertainment covering standards from the 1940s to today.

Thousands of vehicles crowded the roads leading to YPG for hours, leading to congestion that stretched several miles, causing some frustrated drivers to turn around and go home. Yuma County Area Transit (YCAT) buses arrived at YPG crammed with riders, leaving some stranded behind at the bus stops. Despite these hurdles, the vast majority persisted and were rewarded with an exciting day.

"The takeaway from the huge crowds is that Yuma supports our

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ATEC Commanding General visits CRTC

By Clara Zachgo

Maj. Gen. John Charlton made his second trip to the US Army Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) on February 7.

He spent the day taking a close look at some of the ongoing test efforts and meeting numerous employees.

The first stop at CRTC's Mobility Test Complex (MTC) highlighted the ongoing Bradley test, along with the facilities at the MTC that not only support military testing, but commercial automotive testing as well. From there, Charlton made

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The Military Free Fall School thrilled the audience at the opening ceremony of YPG's 75th Anniversary celebration with a precision parachute exhibition that featured a rousing patriotic finish as instructor Jose Reyes jumped in the American flag. The event, the largest party in the proving ground's history, drew over 11,000 attendees throughout the day. (Photo by Chuck Wullenjohn)

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GENERAL

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his way to the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) Test where he rode in the vehicle across some of CRTC's cross country trails.

The JLTV tour ended at the Bolio Lake Complex for lunch at the Warren Randall Dining Facility. But first, since temperatures were hovering around a frigid -35 degrees Fahrenheit, it was a great time to demonstrate just how cold it was! When it is extremely cold outside

you can throw very hot water into the air and it will freeze before it hits the ground, creating a dramatic cloud of steam and frozen droplets.

After lunch at the dining facility, Charlton made stops at various downrange facilities and test sites, including the newly-named Storey Test Site (after a long time CRTC test officer who recently passed away) and the upcoming Joint Effects Targeting System (JETS) Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E) setup. The final stop was at the Soldier Protection

Systems Test where a group of Soldiers were being put through a new obstacle course fabricated by CRTC's Allied Trades, the Load Effects Assessment Program (LEAP)

course. The Commanding General took some time to go through part of the LEAP course himself and learn about some of the new SPS test items.



Russell Hollembaek shows Maj. Gen. John Charlton and Col. Ross Poppenberger equipment used to groom snow fields for tests. Charlton made his second trip to CRTC earlier this month. (Photos by Sebastian Saarloos)



Charlton took a firsthand look at the newly-constructed Load Effects Assessment Program (LEAP) obstacle course fabricated by CRTC personnel as YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger (left) and CRTC Commander Col. Gina Adam look on.

THE OUTPOST

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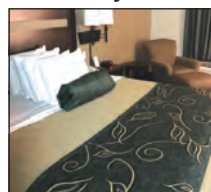
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Shoot'in the Breeze

Geese

By David J. Horn

It's amazing how some of the lessons we learn early in life, can have an impact on us for the rest of our lives. For the folks that were fortunate enough to have gone to a kindergarten with a playground, a lot of lessons were learned there. The little school that I attended didn't have kindergarten. So, for better or worse, some of my first life's lessons, came off the farm. Here's one of them.

When I was about five years old, we had a variety of animals around the farm, including a flock of Canadian geese. There was one huge dominant male, who was not only taller than I was, he was mean. If I ventured too close to his flock, he would stretch out his wings, start snapping his beak, and run right at me. I'll be honest about it...I was scared to death of that thing.

Later in the summer, I learned how to ride a bike. I thought it was pretty cool, that I could ride so fast around the farmyard. It wasn't long, before I started to mess with that big goose, coming in fast and close, and then riding away all excited because he couldn't catch me.

Getting up a little earlier than usual one morning, I headed out the door of the house, grabbed my bike, and headed off toward the geese and my arch enemy. Since it was early, they were all still sitting on the grassy area where they had spent the night.

Now, if anybody of you readers out there have raised geese, you know that you don't walk on that grassy area where the geese spent the night, or you might have to clean your shoes off. As a five year old, I hadn't quite connected

those dots yet. Anyway, as I came flying in, just as I got to the part of my little strafing run where I was planning on turning a hard left and pedaling fast out of there, my tires hit that slippery stuff and down I went.

The next thing I knew, I was laying on the ground looking over my shoulder, and all I could see was this huge set of outstretched wings, fiery eyes behind that madly snapping beak, all coming straight at me. All I thought was...I'm gonna die.

It's funny what people do in situations like that, even five year olds. I was actually thinking at that moment, that if I'm now going to die, I have nothing to lose. I stood up. I outstretched my arms. I yelled at the top of my lungs. And, I ran straight at him.

What happened next, caught me totally by surprise. Heading at each other at full speed, all of a sudden the wings went down, fear filled its eyes as its head pulled back, and to my complete amazement, that huge goose that I had been scared of my entire life, started running away in the other direction! I couldn't believe it! I WAS IN CONTROL OF THIS SITUATION! What had been my biggest fear, turned out to be nothing. It was only a paper tiger!

Over the years, I've run into several more "geese" along the way. Almost every time, I overcame the problem by running straight at it. There have been those daunting projects here at YPG that had to be completed before a deadline. There was that difficult math class in college. There was the bully I left all bruised up, when I ran straight into him and left him flat on his back... on the first grade playground.

Chaplain's Corner

Take something up for Lent

By Maj. Ronald Beltz

A Catholic priest working in an inner city was walking down an alley one evening on his way home when a young man came down the alley behind him and poked a knife against his back. "Give me your money," the young man said.

The priest opened his jacket and reached into an inner pocket to remove his wallet, exposing his clerical collar. "Oh, I'm sorry, Father," said the young man, "I didn't see your collar. I don't want YOUR money."

The priest removed a cigar from his shirt pocket and offered it to the young man. "Here," he said. "Have a cigar."

"Oh, no, I can't do that," the young man replied. "I gave them up for Lent."

Did you know that the city of New Orleans has been celebrating Mardi Gras for over 200 years? The party starts on January 6, the Epiphany, and ends on Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. I only learned recently that every

year the Fat Tuesday partying comes to an abrupt end at midnight. New Orleans police shut down the festivities promptly at midnight in reverence for Ash Wednesday. At the final stroke of midnight, the party is over and Bourbon Street partiers must give it up!

We always think of 'giving up' something for Lent. Some people give up meat on Fridays. Others give up soft drinks, or chocolate, or alcohol, or TV. If you want to face a real Lenten challenge, try giving up your cell phone for the 40 days of Lent!

I like to think that the season of Lent offers us an opportunity not to give something up, but perhaps take something up-- something new, different, or challenging. Maybe an opportunity to serve in our community? Maybe crossing something off your 'bucket list'? Maybe trying to mend a broken relationship? Maybe forgiving someone? Maybe forgiving yourself?

Whatever your Lenten Journey brings, may God bless you!

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Rapid Equipping Force conducts electronic warfare assessment at YPG

By Capt. Dustin Gabus

Against the stillness and quiet of the desolate Yuma desert, an invisible battle raged. However, instead of bullets and bombs, these combatants harnessed the power of electromagnetic waves to disrupt their opponent.

The U.S. Army Rapid Equipping Force (REF), along with the Georgia Tech Research Institute, conducted an electronic warfare test exercise here to assess the capabilities of multiple systems against a series of communication and data threats.

"As technology accelerates, the Army must continue to innovate faster than current and potential adversaries across multiple domains—including the electromagnetic spectrum," said Lt. Col. Scott Schumacher, a REF

solutions team chief. "This is why the REF exists. We seek to provide the latest technology to the Warfighter as new threats emerge downrange."

Dubbed Desert Burnoff, the event was one of the first test exercises in recent years by the U.S. Army to evaluate the offensive capabilities of multiple electronic warfare platforms, according to Schumacher. The test accessed each vendor's ability to detect, identify, geolocate and disrupt targeted systems. While 15 industry and military organizations submitted applications, the REF selected six vendors that met preferred specifications.

Established in 2002 at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, the REF provides innovative material solutions outside the standard U.S.

Army supply chain to meet the urgent requirements of deployed U.S. Army units.

As of 2015, the REF became an enduring program under U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.

Since 2015, the REF has received an increase in electronic warfare equipment requests originating from several U.S. Army service component commands. In response, the REF has equipped deployed units with multiple electronic warfare systems.

Along with the recent uptick in submitted requirements, interest in electronic warfare capabilities has increased with the U.S. Army's emphasis to develop capabilities exploiting potential vulnerabilities across multiple sectors of warfare. The emerging Multi-Domain Battle Concept calls for U.S. Army elements to fight across multiple domains and contested areas, including the electromagnetic spectrum. According to the concept, this synchronization of capabilities across joint and

multinational forces will create windows of domain superiority and preserve joint forces' freedom of movement.

"The REF is always looking for the latest, cutting-edge, overmatch materiel solutions to support Soldiers deployed overseas," said Maj. Keith Muehling, acquisition officer. "While we first look in the government supply pipeline to meet a requirement, we often depend on our industry partners to provide innovative solutions."

The REF periodically plans tests like Desert Burnoff to access various government and commercial off-the-shelf equipment. The results will inform future REF equipping decisions and other military agencies conducting similar research.



YPG's Electronic Warfare (EW) Branch's mission is to plan, execute, and analyze data from tests of systems in a realistic Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) test environment. The branch supports both developmental and operational testing by generating thousands of simultaneous radiofrequency signals designed to replicate specific real-world areas. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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'Harlem Hell Fighters' proved their mettle, patriotism in World War I

By Col. Richard Goldenberg

When the African American National Guard Soldiers of New York's 15th Infantry Regiment arrived in France in December 1917, they expected to conduct combat training and enter the trenches of the Western Front right away.

They could not have been more wrong.

The troops were ordered to unload supply ships at the docks for their first months in France, joining the mass of supply troops known as stevedores, working long hours in the port at St. Nazaire.

More than 380,000 African Americans served in the Army during World War I, according to the National Archives. Approximately 200,000 of these were sent to Europe. But more than half of those who deployed were assigned to labor and stevedore battalions, assigned to tasks that many Army leaders saw as most appropriate. These troops performed essential duties for the American Expeditionary Force, building roads, bridges, and trenches in support of the front-line battles.

In St. Nazaire, the New York National Guard Soldiers learned they would work to prepare the docks and rail lines to be a major port of entry for the hundreds of thousands of forces yet to arrive in France.

The African American regiment was a quick and easy source of labor, according to author Stephen Harris in his 2003 book, "Harlem's Hell Fighters."

But officers, leaders, and the combat Soldiers had not signed up for labor. They were committed to fighting the Germans and winning the war.

"They had no place to put the regiment," said infantry Capt. Hamilton Fish, according to the



Soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment man a trench in France during World War I. More than 380,000 African Americans served in the Army during World War I, approximately 200,000 of which were sent to Europe. (Loaned photo)

Harris book. "They weren't going to put us in a white division, not in 1917, anyway; so our troops were sent in to the supply and services as laborers to lay railroad tracks. This naturally upset our men tremendously."

The regiment's best advocate was their commander, Col. William Hayward. He argued his case in a letter to General Pershing, outlining the regiments' mobilization and training, and followed up immediately with a personal visit to Pershing's headquarters. He would bring with him the regiment's most formidable weapon in swaying opinion: the regimental band, lauded as one of the finest in the entire Expeditionary Force.

While the regiment literally laid the tracks for the arrival of the two million troops deploying to France, the regimental band toured the region, performing for French and American audiences at rest centers and hospitals. The 369th Band was unlike any other performance audiences had seen or heard before, noted Harris. The regimental band is

credited with introducing jazz music to France during the war.

After some three months of labor constructing nearby railways to move supplies forward, the Soldiers learned that they had orders to join the French 16th Division for three weeks of combat training.

They also learned they had a new regimental number as the now-renamed 369th Infantry Regiment. Not that it mattered much to the Soldiers; they still carried their nickname from New York, the Black Rattlers, and carried their regimental flag of the 15th New York Infantry everywhere they went in France.

While the 369th Infantry would become part of the U.S. Army's 92nd Infantry Division, it would be assigned to fight with French forces. This solved the dilemma for Pershing and the American Expeditionary Forces of what to do with the African-American troops.

The black troops would see combat, but alongside French forces, who were already accustomed to the many races and ethnicities already serving in the ranks of their colonial troops. After learning valuable lessons in trench warfare from their French partners, the Soldiers of the 369th finally had their chance to prove their worth as combat troops when they entered the front lines, holding their line against the last German spring offensive near Chateau-Thierry.

Their value was not lost on the French, and the regiment continued to fight alongside French forces, participating in the Aisne-Marne counter offensive in the summer of 1918 alongside the French 162nd Infantry Division. The regiment would go on to prove itself in combat operations throughout the rest of the war, receiving the French highest honor, the Croix de Guerre, for its unit actions, alongside some 171 individual decorations for heroism.

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ANNIVERSARY

FROM PAGE 1

volunteers, came together as a team, and I'm really proud of the hard work I've seen," said Rick Bassett, Director of DFMWR. "The only real problem I came across was the clogged traffic on Highway 95 that caused some to turn around and go home. This was a disappointing development we'll discuss in the after action review."

The interaction between members of the public and YPG subject matter experts was remarkable to see. People closely inspected military systems, crawling inside and climbing atop armored vehicles. Questions came fast and furious, with test officers responding as quickly as they came.

Combat Systems Test Officer Charles Frost, an eight year YPG veteran, spent the day supervising activities around an M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank, which proved a popular attraction. Many had only seen the tank on television or in movies, so were impressed to view the steel behemoth in person. They peppered Frost with questions.



Children of all ages loved the static displays, but nothing captivated the imagination like the gear used every day by YPG's Airborne Test Force. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



During the opening ceremonies, YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger was proud to induct Yuma-area recruits into the Army as a crowd of thousands cheered them on. Poppenberger gave the selfless young recruits his very best wishes as they embarked upon their Army service. (Photo by Chuck Wullenjohn)

"They wanted to know how fast it goes, how large the crew is and questions like that, but they also asked about what takes place at YPG regarding testing," he said. "People were extremely interested. Many said this was the first time they had ever had the opportunity to see these

items up close."

YPG's workforce is used to working with military hardware as part of the job and it is easy to forget that the public does not have this access. Seeing it and touching it at YPG's anniversary gala was special.

"The public has few chances to see some of these platforms, so it was rewarding all around," said Frost.

He had more to say, but was forced to quickly conclude when several families walked toward the M1 and began climbing aboard. Taking his work seriously, Frost moved toward them, maintaining a close watch to ensure safety.

Many people worked behind the scenes performing chores crucial to the event. Billy Taylor, engineering



Ground Combat team leader Marco Nixen gives a television interview during the event. The 75th anniversary celebration received extensive coverage in the local media, both before and during the event. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



The Manhattan Dolls delighted the crowd performing standards from the Big Band era. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

technician in the Department of Public Works, worked the entire day and spent an intense two weeks beforehand. DPW contributions included installing fencing, making provisions for 40 portable toilets, arranging for generators to produce electricity, numerous power extensions, and much more.

"There were many challenges, but the YPG team was positive, knowing this event was definitely going to happen," said Taylor. "We just worked through the issues one by one and experienced many successes along the way."

He felt a personal sense of satisfaction as the day wound down. "People around me were predicting an attendance of 3000, a number exceeded early in the day," he said. "When I saw the parking lots filling up, the presence on Cox Field, all the traffic, I knew we would exceed that number handily. Our challenge was to sustain our high level of performance all day long."

Taylor's job was to coordinate FSI

contractors providing electricians, grounds people, trash pick-up and many more services. "These guys were great," he said during the event, "with a great spirit of cooperation. Like me, many of them probably won't be going home until midnight."

Taylor and his crew worked six hours the day after, too.

Though supporting the event diverted him and those he works with from the day-to-day test mission, he feels it was worth it.

"The positive public relations we created was great, but the spirit of comradery I felt with the entire team made me proud," said Taylor. "This has been a great experience."

One of the interesting aspects of the event was that it brought three past Yuma Proving Ground commanders back for a day. They were Col. Robert Filbey (ret) who commanded the proving ground between 1996 and 2000, Col. Steve Kreider (ret.) who commanded between 2003 and 2006, and Col.



YPG Family, Morale, Recreation and Welfare Director Rick Bessett (right) knows a stunning classic car when he sees one, and made sure YPG's 75th Anniversary extravaganza had a number of them on display, alongside contemporary military vehicles like the Bradley Fighting Vehicle over his shoulder.

Reed Young (ret.) who commanded between 2011 and 2014.

Kreider says serving as proving ground commander was the highlight of his military career. "YPG performs a critical mission that doubled in size while I was commander," he said, "but it was the people who really stand out. Today was a great opportunity to return to

see many old friends and thank them for their efforts each day."

The YPG Heritage Center Museum directly benefited from the influx of people. The museum set an all-time visitation record by welcoming 2,089 visitors in a single day. The previous record was 752.

"We attracted constant crowds throughout the day," said Heritage



Ground Combat team leader Issac Rodriguez spent the entire day fielding questions about the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle from curious attendees. YPG's people made the event a great one.



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ANNIVERSARY

FROM PAGE 7

Center curator Bill Heidner. "The museum was packed."

There was no single point of interest in the museum. Veterans from the 1960s hovered around the Vietnam War exhibit. Others were fascinated by YPG's role in the development of the Global Positioning System (GPS.) The training of military working dogs at YPG attracted others. Some relaxed while watching the film "Sands of War" about the California-Arizona Maneuver Area training camps of World War II, of which YPG's Camp Laguna was one.

"It was a crazy day at the museum, but in a good way," said Heidner.

Local media played a key role in the weeks prior to the gala event in providing information to the public. For a while, it seemed like YPG was appearing on television and discussed on radio every hour. As the event took place, multiple media outlets spent hours at YPG making numerous news stories that were broadcast live.

KBLU radio broadcast its morning talk program for three hours each of the two days prior to the event, interviewing 11 different people in the process, including two past proving ground commanders. Radio host Russ Clark reported that he was happy with each interview and received outstanding comments from listeners. He estimates that

over 60,000 people tuned in each morning.

YPG's impressive 75th anniversary gala is now history and everyone involved dubbed it an unqualified success. If you played a role in setting it up or staffing a booth or exhibit, you richly deserve thanks for doing a great job and a hearty pat on the back. It was the largest public event in the proving ground's history – YPG's workforce should look back on it with pride.



Roger Clyne, lead singer of Roger Clyne and the Peacemakers, sings "Hello New Day" in the headlining band's first-ever appearance in Yuma. Local favorite Downtime also performed at the event. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



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See you at the rodeo



YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Prosser saddled up to participate in Yuma's annual Silver Spur Rodeo Parade on February 10th, accompanied by Soldiers from the Airborne Test Force. No one in this posse carried a six-shooter, but the M119 105 mm howitzer they towed behind a M-ATV was the biggest gun in the parade! (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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