

YPG Command Sgt. Maj. exudes selfless service

By Mark Schauer

With more than 30 years of service and multiple deployments overseas, Command Sgt. Major Jamathon Nelson is well aware of the immense importance of Soldiers having the best equipment possible.

“I’ve seen Strykers bent in half and every Soldier walk out the back,” he said. “They were hit with scores of pounds of explosives and the only injury was a Soldier who sprained his ankle jumping out of the wreckage. I hadn’t heard of YPG yet, but now I know that what YPG tests today saves lives tomorrow.”

Since arriving at YPG early this Spring, Nelson has made his presence felt here in a big way, not least by visiting civilian and military personnel in their workplaces.

“I don’t care if you are a green suiter, a government civilian, or a contractor. We are one YPG. Your work tells me who you are, not your title.”

Nelson has also appeared in every public event YPG has participated in during his tenure. YPG’s Soldier strength at the recent Yuma Veterans

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Yuma comes out strong for Soldiers, veterans



The citizens of Yuma packed Fourth Avenue on November 12 to honor the nation’s veterans, and more than a dozen uniformed and civilian YPG personnel were in the vanguard. Organizers say the parade was one of the largest in recent years. For more photos and a recap, please see page 8. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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People make the place: Winter visitors love YPG's travel camp

By Casey Garcia

The old adage says that people make the place, and winter visitors at YPG's travel camp wholeheartedly agree.

Customers of the YPG Desert Breeze RV and Travel Camp come from all across the United States to spend six or seven months of the year. With room for 104 residents the camp provides full hook ups that include water, sewer and electricity. Customers also have the added bonus of mail services, free cable, Wi-Fi and laundry on site. The prices have been the same now for a few years, coming in at \$385 a month.

The on post amenities travel camp guests can enjoy include a bowling alley, a swimming pool, the Cactus Café, a gym to stay fit, a commissary to shop, an onsite police department, and a fire and rescue team that make the travel camp a safe and secure space for YPG personnel as well as retirees.

Travel camp patron Mary Cissel said, "there is nowhere else we would want to be." Zo Sandercock

agreed, saying "Desert Breeze is quiet and safe." Al Fox, a World War II veteran and retired Command Sgt. Maj. said he has been coming for three years now and enjoys the camaraderie he feels with his fellow campers.

The staff at Desert Breeze provide camp engagement opportunities and activities weekly to ensure the campers have plenty to do. Many campers agreed that travel camp manager Teresa Day and her staff are another reason they keep coming back year after year.

The campers and staff alike at Desert Breeze would like to send a heartfelt thank you for all that Mark Sandercock, nicknamed "Mr. Awesome," does for his neighbors. Campers say he is the go-to guy for everything around camp, from RV repairs to grilling and amazing conversation. He is described by many as the kindest, most generous, and genuine person you will ever meet.

Just like changing duty stations while in the uniform, you look back and say that place wasn't so bad after all, forgetting all about the



YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger (right) lunches with winter visitors at the proving ground's Desert Breeze Travel Camp in early November. The camp provides customers with full hook ups that include water, sewer and electricity, and repeat customers are commonplace. (Photo by Casey Garcia)

scorching heat because none of it really mattered in the grand scheme of things. It was the people that made the place.

THE OUTPOST

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Shootin' the Breeze

You heard it here first...

By David J. Horn

One of my jobs here at YPG is to mentor the new employees coming into our branch. None of these kids took the class "YPG 101" when they were in college, so I have to teach them the YPG culture, plus whatever I can teach them regarding their individual jobs within the organization. Remembering back to my first engineering experience a long time ago, I walked into an office staffed by guys wearing dark suits, narrow ties, and black horned-rimmed glasses... all smoking. There was a rotary dial telephone, a pad of paper, and a No. 2 pencil on my new desk.

Because I've seen so much change during my 40+ year career, usually after I'm done prepping our new YPG employees for their daily tasks at hand, I usually conclude the training by sharing some insight on how they too, will witness incredible changes over their upcoming 40 year careers. So, rather than only the new employees of our branch getting all this great pontification, at this time I'd like to share some of it with new employees across the proving ground. Here you go:

When I first started YPG, we did productive work about 75% of the time, and dealt with red tape maybe 25% of the time. Twenty years ago, it was about 50/50. Now, it's about 75% red tape. By the time you young folks retire, I'm sorry...it will ALL be red tape.

More and more, we will be slaves to our computers and the systems they control, both on and off the job. But before you lament that all us humans will soon just be rats running around a maze controlled by artificial intelligence, the bad news is...and the good news is...all that stuff will still continually break down.

Years ago at YPG, people actually talked to each other a lot. They

built what we used to call "professional business working relationships." Now, maybe 50% of our communications is with our virtual devices. By the time you young folks retire, you will no longer know how to verbally communicate with the irrational, unpredictable hairy life forms you might encounter during your day.

Just like back in the 1970s when we couldn't imagine something like GPS or smart phones coming onto the scene, you too will experience the emergence of several new and exciting technologies that will change the way you live your lives. A couple of these might be eating 3-D printed food that is created in an edible container. But, unlike yesterday's soggy soy burgers, this new stuff will really taste great! Another new thing might be transportation devices that instead of operating on gasoline, will be powered by a kind of "liquid electricity." Folks, you heard it here first.

You'll have a communication event with

someone that goes something like this, "Back in the olden days, can you believe that we actually had to carry around this little box that we had to look at, poke at, and talk into?"

And last, but not least, a comment on something that will not happen in the future. No, I don't mean time travel or anything like that. To explain, I have to go back to a conversation I had with my son 10 years ago. I said, "Son, for generations it

has been the job of young people to create a new style of music (such as when Rock & Roll first came out), that the earlier generation of music aficionados absolutely couldn't stand. Thus, one of the jobs for your generation is to invent a style of music that the Rap and Hip Hop crowd will find revolting and disgusting." After 10 years, I've decided...nope, ain't gonna happen.

Anyway, get out there and enjoy your "Good Old Days."



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Chaplain's Corner

Adverse circumstances can be blessings in disguise

By Maj. Ronald Beltz

We don't often thank God for our trials, heartaches, and difficulties.

Although we are willing to praise Him for His goodness, we sometimes fail to realize that even adverse circumstances are blessings in disguise.

Scottish preacher George Matheson had that

problem. He realized that he was not as ready to praise God when things went wrong as he was when they went right.

However, after he began to lose his eyesight, he changed his thinking. He struggled for some months with this weary burden until he reached the point where he could pray, "My God, I have never thanked You for my thorn. I have thanked You a thousand times for my roses, but not once for my thorn. I have been looking

forward to a world where I shall get compensated for my cross, but I have never thought of my cross as itself a present glory. Teach me the value of my thorn."

When we count our blessings, we should include the weaknesses, the hardships, the burdens, and the trials we face. If we do, we might find that God has used

our difficulties more than the "good" things to help us grow spiritually. Why is that? Because it is in those difficult places that we discover the sufficiency of His grace. In our trials, we turn to God. As we depend on Him, we find that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

Take a moment and think about the way God has led you. When you praise God for your blessings, do you remember to thank Him for the thorns?



YPG Cub Scouts give to homeless veterans

By Yolie Canales

As our nation prepared to celebrate and honor Veterans Day with an array of parades and other special events earlier this month, the Boy Scouts of America Troop 8003 of Yuma Proving Ground took it upon their young little hands to do something extra special to honor veterans in the Yuma community.

The Wolf Den Cub Scouts, along with Cub Scout leaders and parent volunteers, embarked on the "Operation Blessing Bag" project. Their goal was to fill 150 bags with personal hygiene items and provide them to local homeless veterans. On Wednesday, November 7th, the Wolf Den's project came to an end at their Fundraiser Spaghetti dinner held at Price Elementary School, where they successfully topped their goal and proudly presented Barbara Rochester, director of Yuma's Crossroads Mission, with approximately 150 bags filled with love for our local homeless veterans.

"This was such an outstanding and amazing project put together by this scout troop," said Rochester. "The detailed work these children put into making and filling the bags which contained items such as shaving razors, shampoo, toothbrushes, socks and so much more, will be greatly appreciated by every homeless veteran who comes through our facility on a daily basis."

"If any bags are leftover, they will be shared with other homeless individuals who live along the river and wherever. The items in the bags will surely help these homeless individuals, feel better about themselves," she said smiling.

"These little young Cub Scouts are changing the world with their kindness and deserve a great big 'shout out' from our community," said Amanda Quintero, den leader with Troop 8003, who spearheaded the project. "We surpassed our goal, and have many amazing people to thank. I couldn't be prouder."



Yuma Proving Ground's Boy Scouts of America Troop 8003 went the extra mile to honor veterans this year by filling 150 bags with personal hygiene items for local homeless veterans. "These little young Cub Scouts are changing the world with their kindness and deserve a great big 'shout out' from our community," said Amanda Quintero, den leader. (Photo by Yolie Canales)

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SERVICE

FROM PAGE 1

Day parade, led by Nelson, was the largest in many years.

He exudes Army values, so much so that many folks are surprised that this Soldier's Soldier actually began his military career as an infantryman in the Marine Corps.

"My original thought was that the Army was for people that couldn't make it through boot camp in the Marine Corps," he said with a smile. "From the time I was seven years old, I knew what I wanted to do—I was the easiest recruit ever."

He was proud to serve in the Marine Corps, and enjoyed serving in England and Camp Pendleton, but forces beyond his control threw his intended career plans a severe

curveball when his first enlistment expired.

"At the time, I could not re-enlist as an infantryman. The LAV has just come out, and they were pushing everybody into a brand new MOS: they wanted everyone to be an LAV crew man."

Nelson felt being an infantryman was part of his identity, and plans to reenlist as a mountain warfare instructor were stymied by a change in the minimum qualifications, so he reluctantly left the Corps. He didn't stay out of uniform long, though: shortly after returning to his native Pacific Northwest, he moved to southern Oregon and enlisted in the Army National Guard.

"In hindsight, I was in probably one of the best platoons of my life in the National Guard," he recalled. "Our platoon sergeant was a gunny out of the Marine Corps, we had a Marine force recon guy, a guy from the 82nd Airborne, and the 101st Airborne. Most of our privates had been from the local wrestling team."

Meanwhile, he worked in a lumber mill, working his way up to the business' highest position within five years despite a catastrophic leg injury while logging in the field. He felt accomplished in the job, but not fulfilled.

"I didn't see myself working there for the next 40 or 50 years," he said.

As fate would have it, in the mid-1990s he received an unexpected call from an Army recruiter with a limited-time offer to bring former uniformed personnel of any service back in. As was true in his original enlistment, Nelson was an easy sell.

"I said, 'Let's do it!'"

His prior service meant he didn't have to re-do basic training, and soon he found himself in both Airborne School and Ranger School in rapid succession.

"I ended up in a really good unit on day one. I really didn't know anything about the Army when I came in. I thought I was a Private 1st Class: it was very unclear."



Since arriving at YPG early this Spring, Nelson has made his presence felt here in a big way, from visiting civilian and military personnel in their workplaces to representing YPG at community gatherings like the Getting Arizona Involved in Neighborhoods event and the Veterans Day parade. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

After graduating Airborne School, he found out while attending Ranger School that he had actually been brought into the Army as a Cpl. and was about to be promoted to Sgt. He became a Staff Sgt. within two years of his enlistment, and a Sgt. 1st Class four years after that.

As the years passed and his accolades and promotions piled up, so did his deployments overseas at the height of American involvement in Southwest Asia. In between deployments, he served in teaching billets in some of the Army's most elite and difficult courses. He credits his superiors with encouraging him to be the best he could be—and his willingness to try every opportunity he had to the utmost of his ability.

"In the Army I've always had really good leadership that put me through every school that was available. One of my teaching points to all of my Soldiers is to never say no to an opportunity to attend school."

Nelson feels this example inspired him and continues to influence his own leadership style.

"If you actually care about your Soldiers, wrong is the last thing they want to do. They'll go the extra mile to make a person who cares about

them proud. I've had an awesome career, done a lot of things, and gone a lot of places, but it's not about me. In 10 years, where will the Soldiers who were below me be? If they've done well, then I did well: judge me on those who worked for me."

Having mentored hundreds of subordinate Soldiers in his career, Nelson says he is proud of the caliber of young men and women rising through the NCO ranks in today's Army.

"There's a big misperception with some people that young Soldiers just play X-Box or are weaker than they used to be. That is absolutely not true. I have full confidence in America's youth: kids today adapt and are agile thinkers.

As for his impression and message for all personnel at YPG, Nelson has this to say:

"I hope everyone understands how important the work done here is. If you work here and feel that what you're doing isn't meaningful, you need to come talk to me—I've picked up just about everything we test here and fired or rode in it knowing that it was going to work when I needed it. That's thanks to the people at YPG sweating in the sun, coming in at 5:00 in the morning every day."



With more than 30 years of military service and multiple overseas deployments, YPG Command Sgt. Major Jamathon Nelson says testing military equipment in the natural environment is vital for Soldier success. "I've picked up just about everything we test here and fired or rode in it knowing that it was going to work when I needed it," he said. "That's thanks to the people at YPG sweating in the sun, coming in at 5:00 in the morning every day."

Latest and greatest M1 tank tested at YPG

By Mark Schauer

What has outstanding offensive and defensive capability and represents the tip of the spear in a major land war?

It's the M1A2 Systems Engineering Plan (SEP) version 3 (v3) main battle tank, and right now it's being put through its paces across the more than 200 miles of rugged road courses at U.S. Army Yuma Proving

Ground, all to ensure it functions as it should wherever in the world it could be called on to serve.

"This is a tried and tested piece of military hardware that has been battle proven in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere," said Greg Duda, Abrams test lead. "The Abrams is extremely lethal, survivable, and reliable."

Except for the exterior, today's SEPV3 would be almost unrecogniz-

able to the tankers who served on its earliest incarnation. YPG testing has touched virtually every aspect of this behemoth, and the initial reviews about the latest iteration's performance are good across the board.

"We've been proving this through testing for the past two and a half years, and it's proven to be the most amazing variant of this platform yet," said Duda. "It's a feat of

engineering that touches on many different disciplines: software engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering."

The list of improvements is lengthy: improved fire control electronics mean the SEPV3's gun can shoot faster and more accurately; the engine, drivetrain, and tracks have been updated for higher performance and to support the platform's weight



The M1 Abrams is America's sole main battle tank and is considered the best tank in the world. It sports a 120 mm main gun and is powered by a 1500 horsepower turbine engine that makes it highly maneuverable. The M1 has been consistently tested at YPG since its first development in the late 1970s because it is being constantly improved. There are some 8,000 Abrams tanks in the inventory. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



Except for the exterior, today's SEPv3 would be almost unrecognizable to the tankers who served on its earliest incarnation. YPG testing has touched virtually every aspect of this behemoth, and the initial reviews about the latest iteration's performance are good across the board.

increase; it may even sport hubcaps and road arms manufactured by way of 3D printing, a facet that is under test here at YPG.

"As the technology advances, the tanks have to advance as well," said Martin Velazquez, test officer. "The SEPv3s have a lot more onboard diagnostics than earlier iterations: they have removable screens that carry the tech manuals that can accomplish a lot of diagnostics on the vehicles without taking it to the shop."

"A lot of people don't realize the amount of software in this platform," added Duda. "There are over 1.4 million lines of code on this tank."

The newest Abrams is also more heavily armored than previous versions, which necessitates improvements in the power system and suspension.

"A lot of the extra weight is from the kits that get installed, such as the Abrams Armor Reactive Tiles that are installed in close-combat situations," said Velazquez.



For all its dazzling technology, the newest Abrams remains true to its original conception: overwhelming power and overmatch against any adversary. "This is a tried and tested piece of military hardware that has been battle proven in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere," said Greg Duda, Abrams test lead. "The Abrams is extremely lethal, survivable, and reliable."



The list of improvements is lengthy: improved fire control electronics mean the SEPv3's gun can shoot faster and more accurately; the engine, drivetrain, and tracks have been updated for higher performance and to support the platform's weight increase; it may even sport hubcaps and road arms manufactured by way of 3D printing, a facet that is under test here at YPG.

For all its dazzling technology, however, the newest Abrams remains true to its original conception: overwhelming power and overmatch against any adversary.

"The Abrams is the best main

battle tank on Earth," said Duda. "The raw mobility that gets you from point A to point B is amazing. The dynamics on the turret, the fire control, and the range it can engage the enemy is phenomenal."



The newest Abrams is also more heavily armored than previous versions, which necessitates improvements in the power system and suspension. YPG's more than 200 miles of road courses are vital for rugged mobility testing.

Yuma thanks veterans, Soldiers in annual Veterans Day parade



Yuma always has a large Veterans Day parade, and YPG personnel supported this year's in full force. Led by YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and Command Sgt. Maj. Jamathon Nelson, nine Soldiers from YPG's Airborne Test Force marched and drove a M-ATV through the crowded streets. Special guests of Col. Poppenberger were YPG Technical Director Larry Bracamonte and Chief of Staff Minerva Peters. Serving as co-Grand Marshal of the parade was Sgt. 1st Class Trevor Oppenborn of the Military Free Fall School, who also gave keynote remarks following the parade. "It's weird to hear people thank me for my service," he said. "To me, it's like thanking me for loving my brother, or my country." (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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A Thanksgiving thank you to YPG's Soldiers



Representatives of American Legion Post #19 came to YPG on November 19 to distribute about 20 Thanksgiving baskets with all the trimmings to YPG Soldiers as a small token of their appreciation for their service to the nation. Here, the employees of YPG's Army Community Service office distribute the baskets, an undertaking that requires thoughtful coordination to ensure a fresh delivery. (Photos by Teri Womack)

November is Month of the Military Family

By Melissa Gomez

Each year in November, communities observe Military Family Month. It is a time to celebrate the contributions of military families and express to them our appreciation for the sacrifices they make to support their active duty service members.

Military Family Month was first celebrated in 1993. The following year, a presidential proclamation was established to honor National Military Families Recognition Day. Subsequent presidents have issued similar proclamations designating November as Military Family Month.

During Military Family Month, we honor and thank military families for their sacrifices and dedication to our country. Being part of a military family is a demanding lifestyle and one that requires a strong sense of resolve. Military Families face fears associated with the dangers of combat endured by their service member, separation during holidays, tumultuous work/training schedules, major life milestones, and manage to

endure these conditions with courage and poise.

Military families strengthen the military community by volunteering and providing support to others when they need it most. They step in to create a sense of "family" with those in their units and local areas ensuring that no important moment is missed. They work in our cities outside of the gate and bring a unique perspective to any workplace, religious organization, social club, or school they are a part of. Most importantly, they bravely cope with the loss of troops who have made the ultimate sacrifice and keep their memory alive.

During Military Family Month, we acknowledge our responsibility to honor and support the family members of military personnel, who also serve. As we approach the holidays, a season of gratitude, consider ways that you can honor and thank the military families in your community.

Here are ways to show your thanks to military families:

1. Share your time. "See a need, fill a need." Spending money on a gift isn't the only way to show appreciation. Time is valuable and to some, the gift of time is the best thing you could give them. Honor a family by offering to run an errand for them, or babysitting their kiddos, or scheduling a play date. Go to an event together with another military family or just schedule a movie night at your home or community center. Either way, spending time together or giving someone else the gift of time is a great way to show your appreciation.

2. Share their passion. Military families often align with organizations they feel enrich their lives. Spend some time volunteering next to them as a way of showing that

you care too.

3. Listen. Take the time to find out what the family needs. By listening we can figure out the best way to help. Maybe the lawn needs a touch-up and you can help mow. Maybe the family is new and needs someone to talk to about the area/unit. Listening is a great way to show you care.

4. Just say "Thanks!" More often than not a military family is thrilled to hear just a thank you from those they interact with. Saying thanks is an easy way to convey your appreciation.

For more information or resources, please contact the YPG Family Advocacy Program at (928) 328-3224 or come see us at Army Community Service in Building 309.



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DEC
7



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DEC
31



New Year's Eve
With DJ Knobs
Monday, December 31st | 9PM
Rivers Edge Bar | No Cover

JAN
4



Dog & Butterfly
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JAN
11



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