

July 2009

The ORION GALLIVANTER

1917 - 1919

Dickebush Sector
Mount Kemmel
Vierstraat Ridge
East Poperignhe Line
Hindenburg Line
LaSelle River *St. Souplet*
Meuse-Argonne *St. Mihiel*



1940- 1945

Makin
Majuro
Eniwetok
Saipan
Okinawa

2001- Present

Enduring Freedom,
Afghanistan
Iraqi Freedom
Noble Eagle

Orion Soldiers Train with the Tai Army

PHITSANULOK, Thailand - Approximately 275 Soldiers and Airmen from the New York National Guard deployed to Thailand, departing from armories across the state. The overseas troop deployment supported the U.S. Pacific Command Cobra Gold 2009 training exercise in Thailand alongside members of the Thai army.

The annual exercise brought together forces from the United States and Pacific Rim nations to train together for combat operations, military planning, humanitarian assistance or disaster response missions and civil affairs operations. Cobra Gold 2009 included service members from the active, Reserve, and Guard components of the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps to work with their Thai army counterparts. The main focus was to maximize Joint and Combined Operations in order to develop and enhance interoperability and capabilities of military forces.



This deployment for the New York National Guard also marked 26 years that the Kingdom of Thailand has hosted Cobra Gold. The exercise is important to maintaining military to military relations with forces in the Pacific Rim region. While Cobra Gold is a military training exercise, it provided unique opportunities for service men and

women from the U.S. to work with neighbors and allies in Asia to develop friendships that improve understanding beyond military operations.

“This kind of training really strengthens the camaraderie for when we may have to do any joint exercises with them,” Capt. Frank Washburn said during training. “It’s always nice to have these guys on the same page as our military.”

The task force included elements from across the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Joseph Biehler. The 2-108th Infantry, based in Utica, N.Y. also
(Continued on page 4)

THE ORION GALLIVANTER



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VOL. XLVI July 2009 NO. 11

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Commander's Message

Hello again to everyone,

As I stated in the March edition of the Gallivanter, A committee has been set up to organize the 2009 reunion.

From what I saw in the March Edition of The Gallivanter, the committee has done an excellent job. The Doubletree Inn is located on State Route 298 near the Carrier Circle. I was in the area in May, so I stopped to see what the facilities were like and I feel we will be very pleased with committees efforts.

I hope to see an excellent turn out for the reunion and to welcome the troops back from their deployment.

Make sure to complete your reservation information and send it in so it will be received no later than September 1, 2009.

Please notice the address on the information cards.

Remember the dates September 25-27, 2009

I hope to see all of you at the reunion.

Until the next edition,

I remain yours in the 27th.

Raymond E. Swift

National Commander



Editor's Corner



Mailing Addresses:

27th DIV ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

- Unit & Personal Remembrances
 - 80 Plus Club to the Editor
 - Historical stories
 - Reunion Notices
 - Mailbag items
 - Taps
- New Membership application
- **Membership Dues—\$15.00**
- Memorial Fund Donations
 - Gallivanter Donations
 - Change of address

(The Post Office does not tell us you have changed address, you must let us know.)

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P.O. Box 2522
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Email:

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Fellow Orion Veterans,

Thank you all for your patience as the 27th settles in to “normal” life again. As we transition back, we are reminded of the sacrifices that all of us as veterans—regardless of the year of service, have had to go through.

The locations and timeframe may be different, but the experiences will have more common themes than differences.

As we get ready for our Division Association Reunion Weekend, we should continue to remember this: that our history encompasses all of our brothers and sisters who have served under the Stars of Orion. Soldiers who have served during peacetime, those who served during the “Great War” and in the island campaigns of the Pacific. Those who served in Korea or Vietnam and returned to serve in the NY Army National Guard. And of course, most recently, those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our patch continues to show the honor, strength and fortitude around the world to those who would doubt that we are up to the challenge.

We are all recruiters for the Association. We must remind those who have served, yet who haven’t joined, of the honor and history we carry by being a part of this organization. (I even tried to recruit two Navy Petty Officers who were assigned to my section in Afghanistan as associate members!)

I mention this with the understanding that just recently we have been notified of a “NOS” or “Notification of Sourcing” which is basically a warning order or “head’s up” that we are “in the hopper” to return to Afghanistan in the near future. We’ll certainly keep you informed of this situation and as you can certainly imagine, we will serve as you would expect from one of the strongest and most honorable National Guard units to have served our country.

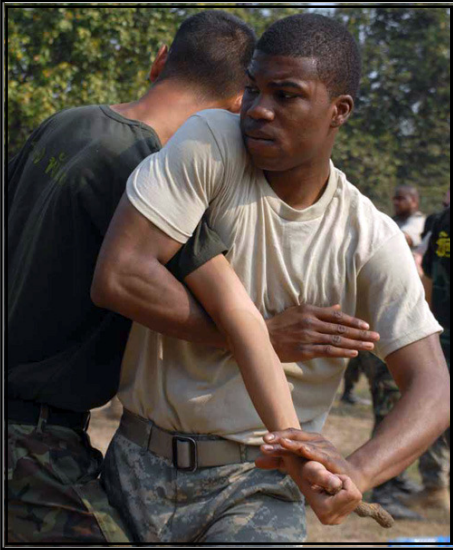
See you all at the reunion!

Sincerely,

Your Editor

(CPT) Robert Romano

led elements of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry from New York's Hudson Valley and the 2nd Squadron, 101st Cavalry from Buffalo, N.Y. Cobra Gold training included small unit tactics, live fire exercises, communications and employing close air support and artillery fires; land navigation and reacting to combat scenarios such as ambushes and Improvised Explosive Devices.



Soldiers from the Thai army also instructed their U.S. guests in hand to hand combat and jungle survival skills. The New York National Guard infantry Soldiers, known and respected for their effectiveness and use of technology, in-turn demonstrated several emerging weapons such as unmanned aerial vehicle systems. In the end, Cobra Gold shared military knowledge and cultural understanding among the two forces. "We get to work with another army across the world and we get something out of it to take home," Spec. Terry Mitchell said during the survival training.



Artillery Unit Honors Fallen Comrade

JAMAICA ARMORY, QUEENS -- A painted portrait of the late New York Army National Guard Sergeant First Class Joseph McKay of Queens was presented to his family at a special ceremony at the Jamaica Armory on Friday, 10 July.

Mrs. Rose McKay and members of the McKay family were joined by friends and dozens of Soldiers of the 1st Battalion 258th Field Artillery, for a special presentation and remembrance.

"That's my Joseph," said Rose as looked on the painting through tear-filled eyes with her son Shane, age 15 and daughter Tanisha, age 23. "Thank you. This means so much to us," she said.

Texas artist Phil Taylor and his wife Lisa of the American Fallen Soldiers Project came to New York to personally present the portrait to the family. At the family's request, a ceremony was organized at McKay's former armory so that friends and fellow soldiers could attend.

The American Fallen Soldiers Project is a non-profit organization committed to honoring the memory of fallen military personnel by presenting the next of kin with custom portraits of their late loved one at no cost. The project is supported by American Airlines which transports the portraits and the artist free of charge from Texas to locations around the country for in-person presentations. For more information go to www.americanfallensoldiers.com

Joseph McKay was among 1700 members of the New York National Guard's 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team that were mobilized and deployed to Afghanistan in 2008 as Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix VII. Sergeant First Class McKay, Specialist Mark Palmateer from Poughkeepsie and Sergeant First Class Matthew Hilton of Livonia, Michigan were killed in an ambush on their convoy on June 26th 2008 when an Improvised Explosive Device struck their vehicle in Eastern, Afghanistan.

McKay was a career New York National Guard Soldier who first joined in 1977 and served continuously until his death last year. He was a naturalized American citizen from Guyana, South America and lived with his wife and two children in Queens.

He was called to State Active Duty following the 9-11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and continued to serve as a volunteer with the Guard's Task Force Empire Shield providing security support to the civil authorities at New York City's airports, train stations and other sites until his mobilization and deployment last year for Afghanistan.



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Paying Tribute to Maine Troop Greeters

Film highlights special patriotism of elderly volunteers

Troop Greeters

A movie now running in New York City tells the story of the Maine Troop Greeters who met members of the 27th Brigade Combat Team during their deployment to Afghanistan in 2008.



"The Way We Get By" tells how the group, which operate at the Bangor Maine Airport, got started back in 2003. These volunteers have welcomed, supported and cheered more than 900,000 U.S. military personnel coming to and from the combat zone so far and they are still at it.

The film focuses on three elderly charter members -- Bill Knight a World War II Navy veteran, Jerry Mundy a Marine Korean War veteran, and Joan Gaudet a grandmother with two grand children deploying with the Maine Army National Guard.

The action follows the three as they juggle separate schedules to greet planes of hundreds of troops who arrive at various times around the clock. The movie is built around a series of interviews and events woven together in a tapestry of inner strength, concern, vulnerability and patriotism. It provides a unique and special view on "what it means to grow old in America."

It also shows the bonds built with service men and women and the mostly elderly veterans and others from the community. While the troops wait for their plane to be serviced they are offered the free use of cell phones and the com-

pany of their hosts in the Troop Greeters' welcome center.

"The Way We Get By" is the creation of director Aron Gaudet, whose mother



Joan is in the film. Producer Gita Pullapilly led the interviews and film sequences which were done over a 3-year period.

"Witnessing first hand how her life changed in such positive ways, while at the same time touching the lives of troops from all over the country, convinced me this was a special story that could inspire people," wrote Aron Gau-



det about his mother's role as a troop greeter. "This is a unique film, encompassing important social issues and controversial topics, while remaining a story that every American can support."

The film has already won a dozen awards at independent film festivals around the country. "We need a good box office showing in New York City and in Los Angeles in order to get more

theater showing opportunities," explained Gita Pullapilly. The production team has launched a dual promotion program offering free tickets to veterans and elderly through a "Bring a Vet" and "Battle Buddy" campaign.

Story by LTC Paul Fanning

Editor's Note: On the pages of the Gallivanter I've mentioned the Bangor Maine, "Troop Greeters". Regardless of the day, the time or the weather, these volunteers show up at the Bangor Airport for every military flight stopping over for refueling before heading to or returning from theater. Even the most hard hearted soldier would be hard pressed not to smile on seeing these folks cheering, clapping, smiling and thanking you as you walked down the ramp into the terminal. On Christmas Day evening, we were met by these lovely people, sharing their day with us. Whole families were there singing carols, handing out snacks and directing us toward the free cell phones and urging us to call home. Even as we were delayed, late into the night, they refused to go home, waiting for our flight to finally be called to leave for Fort Bragg. As we headed out to Afghanistan, I wrote these words home to my family...

"...An interesting sight greeted us as we wound our way through the maze of hallways into the terminal. A long line of friendly, smiling people of varying ages were waiting along the last hallway shaking out hands, thanking us for our service and handing out little snacks or toiletries. They were part of a veterans group that would check with the airport and find out when military flights were coming in. Regardless of the time or the day they would meet each plane and give them a warm send off or a happy return. Each of us had to smile at the warmth and genuine emotion from these total strangers who just wanted us to know they appreciated our service."

If you get a chance to see this film, do so, and maybe you'll know why these folks are always remembered by the troops.

Orion Afghan Veteran Authors Book

Stories from Afghanistan due to be published in August

Captain Benjamin Tupper, 1-108th IN veteran now assigned with the 42nd ID, served as an Embedded Trainer for the Afghan National Army in 2005. His stories, journals and numerous vignettes will be published this August in a book titled, "Welcome to Afghanistan—Send More Ammo". An intelligent, friendly, quiet man of distinction, Tupper also spent several months in Afghanistan as a civilian advisor. Below is a sample of his work from the book. Those wishing to purchase a copy will be able to do so via Amazon.Com in August. More information is available via the web at: www.welcometoafghanistansendmoreammo.com RR-Editor

THE FLIP- FLOP ARMY—Benjamin Tupper

The Afghan National Army is a work in progress. It has lots of potential, but it also has great deficits that it must overcome in order to reestablish itself as a credible national security force. As I see it, the ANA has two primary missions: defeating domestic enemies and protecting against international adversaries. Both are currently unreachable and unrealistic without continued U.S. and Coalition support. The ETT mission was created to help speed the ANA's development along, but I'm finding that despite our best efforts, old habits and deficiencies die hard.

First, I'll start with the good news. The average ANA grunt is as brave as, if not braver than your average American soldier, or any nation's soldiers, for that matter. The aggressive pursuit of the enemy, even at great personal danger, is a trait found among many in the ANA. At the first shots fired, the ANA are like hunting dogs anxious for the chase. Sometimes they break and lose their combat effectiveness, but on the whole, they are more likely to aggressively react to enemy contact than not.

The second positive aspect of the ANA is that, despite low pay, poor living conditions, and chronic lack of supplies, the morale of the ANA is high. ANA soldiers regularly go out on missions without enough food, ammo, or water, yet do so without hesitation and still succeed. When it's fighting time, all the shortages and problems cease to be an issue.

Another positive aspect is that Afghanistan is not Iraq, and Afghans are not Iraqis, and the problems in Iraq with enemy infiltration and manipulation of the armed forces are not as serious here. It would be naive to say there are no enemy infiltrators in the ANA's ranks, but their number and influence is barely measurable. Perhaps the best proof of this is the fact that I have never, in the dozens of missions out with the ANA, hesitated to turn my back on any ANA soldier. I trust them with my life daily, and to date, it's been kept in good hands.



Lastly, I have never ceased to be amazed at how well the ANA soldiers understand their role as low-level representatives of the Government of Afghanistan. They go out of their way to talk to civilians about building a new country, free from the violence and corruption and the warlordism of the past. These soldiers form an army that is a melting pot of tribes, languages, and sects, and they perform as a team time and time again. Their example to the civilians they interact with must leave an impression that gives hope for the future.

But it's not all peaches and cream. The ANA, despite these positive attributes, has serious problems. The chronic shortages previously mentioned are in part due to corruption at higher levels. Senior officers, NCOs, and common soldiers have stolen, pilfered, and sold Army property, and do so at times with impunity. Even at the lowest levels, underpaid soldiers frequently take newly issued items to the bazaar to sell. When you ask them the next day where these items are, they will insist they were never issued to them. While wrong, theft at this level is more understandable because the soldiers barely make enough to feed a family.

As for the ANA being a "flip-flop army," it is not for the reason you may assume. The ANA does not flip-flop its loyalties. From top to bottom, it's firmly committed to fighting and destroying Al Qaeda and the Taliban. No, the flip-flop refers to footwear. Yes, that's right, the cheap plastic sandals that are a beachgoing standard in the States.

The flip-flop is a preferred choice of the ANA for daily soldier life. Sure, they have boots, but flip-flops are so much more comfortable in formation, or even when meeting with your commander. And if flip-flops are out of season, basketball sneakers will do just fine. Sneakers are as common on the battlefield with the ANA as combat boots. Comfort apparently trumps uniformity!

MAILBAG

— TAPS —

A lifelong resident of New Rochelle, he is survived by two sons and five grandchildren.

— Information —

The Annual 27th Division Association Reunion
 SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2009

Doubletree Inn
 6301 State route 298

East Syracuse, NY 13057

FOR TOTAL PACKAGE RESERVATIONS

Total Package Includes:

- Lodging Friday & Saturday night
 Dinner Friday, All meals Saturday &
 Breakfast Sunday
- \$315 for a single (includes room, all
 meals & gratuities for one person)
- \$435 for a double (includes room, all
 meals & gratuities for two people)

Schedule of Events:

- Friday: Board of Director's Meeting at
 4pm, followed by "Blinger" (Buffet)
- Saturday: Breakfast, static displays at
 the armory, a memorial service followed
 by a General Meeting & Commander's
 Luncheon in the afternoon. Reunion
 dinner Saturday Evening (Buffet with
 chicken, Pasta and carved sirloin.)

Room and Meal Payments: Make checks payable to the 27th Division Association. Room reservations will be made by Paul Hernandez, Treasurer 27th Division Association as per the RSVP card received below. The Division Association will handle payment due to the Doubletree Inn. A special registration table will be set up by the hosting Reunion Committee. For Registration, meal tickets and program package.

There will be NO \$10 Registration fee this year.

Total Package Reservation Card

Please print and complete all appropriate information and return this card with a check payable to "The 27th Division Association". Mail to HQ's 27th Brigade Combat Team Attn: CPT Paul Hernandez 6900 Thompson Road Syracuse, NY 13211. PH (315) 438-3009

ACCOMODATIONS INFORMATION

27th Division Association National Reunion 25-27 September 2009

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Spouse/Guest Name: _____

Street: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: () _____

Number of Rooms: _____ Number of Persons: _____ Number of Nights: _____

Two Double Beds smoking non-smoking OR One King Bed Smoking non-smoking

RSVP Must be received No Later Than September 1, 2009

The Annual 27th Division Association Reunion
 SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2009
 Doubletree Inn
 6301 State route 298
 East Syracuse, NY 13057

FOR MEALS ONLY RESERVATIONS

Meal Package Only Prices:

Friday Night Blinger: \$27/Person
 Saturday Morning B-Fast: \$16/Person
 Commander's Luncheon: \$26/Person
 Banquet Dinner: \$40/Person
 Sunday Morning B-Fast: \$16/Person

Indicate Required Meals by number of
 People in each box below.

Schedule of Events:

- Friday: Board of Director's Meeting at
 4pm, followed by "Blinger" (Buffet)
 - Saturday: Breakfast, static displays at
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MEAL INFORMATION

27th Division Association National Reunion 25-27 September 2009

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

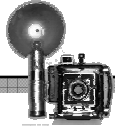
Spouse/Guest Name: _____

Street _____ City _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: () _____

Friday Blinger \$27 each Saturday B-Fast \$16 each Cdr's Luncheon \$24 each Reunion Dinner \$40 each Sunday B-Fast \$16 each

RSVP Must be received No Later Than September 1, 2009



THE SHUTTERBUG PAGE



Have a picture you want to submit for the Shutterbug Page? Mail a copy of the photo to the Editor's Home address (See: Masthead) or E-Mail a scanned copy to the Editor at: Robert.romano@us.army.mil

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VOL. XLVI July 2009 NO. II

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Post No. _____ or Check if member At Large _____

Unit Served _____

Date: From _____ To _____ Rank (Optional) _____

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Send to: Attn: Sec/Treasurer; P.O. Box 2522, Syracuse, NY 13220*

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P.O. Box 2522

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Age Please check <30 \$200 ___ 31-40 \$190 ___ 41-50 \$170 ___

51-60 \$150 ___ 61-70 \$120 ___ 71-80 \$90 ___ 81 & up \$60 ___

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