

**INSIDE**

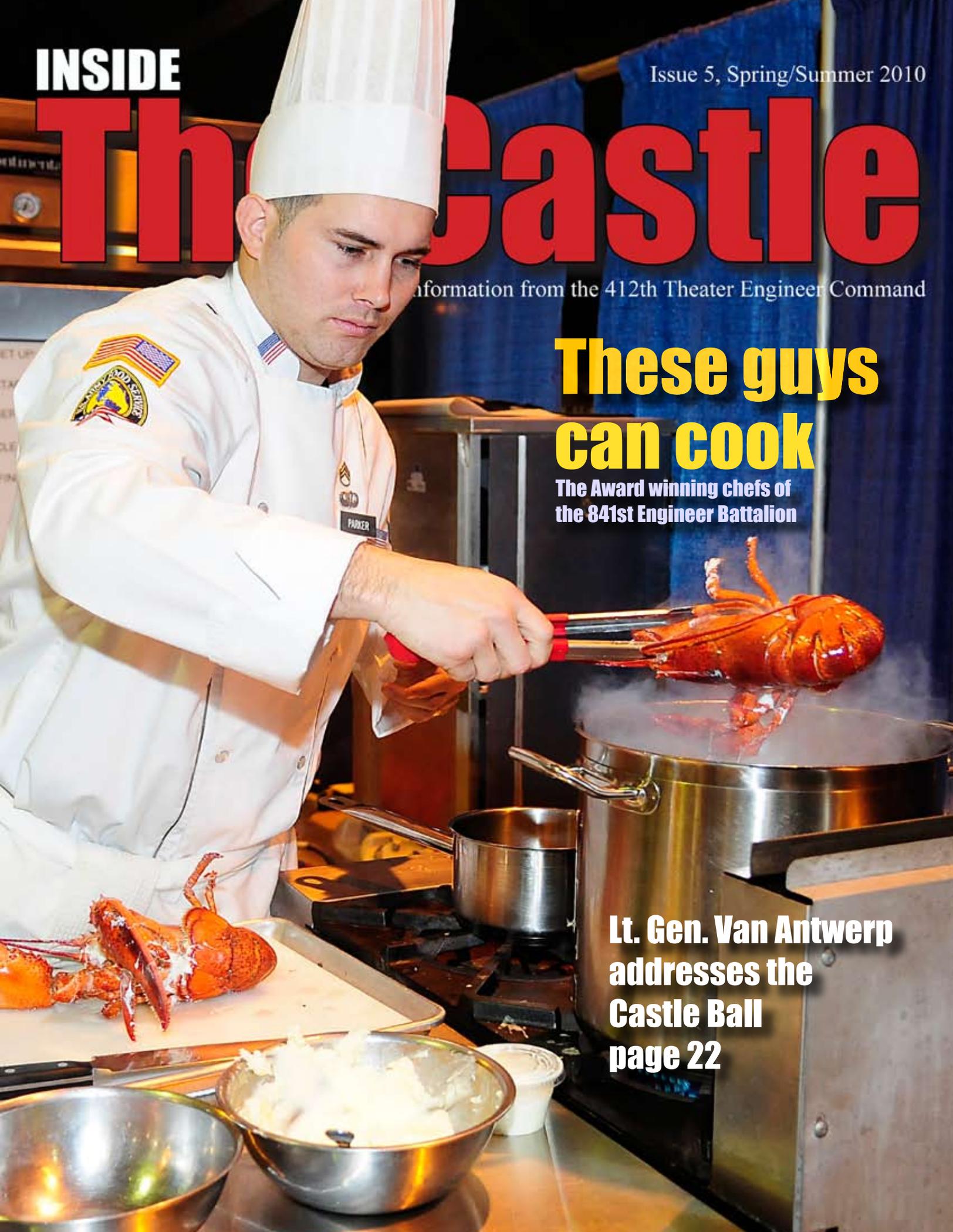
Issue 5, Spring/Summer 2010

# The Castle

Information from the 412th Theater Engineer Command

## These guys can cook

The Award winning chefs of  
the 841st Engineer Battalion



**Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp  
addresses the  
Castle Ball  
page 22**



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## Inside the Castle Spring/Winter 2010

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Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Eugene, 412th TEC Public Affairs Office

(Opposite page, from L-R) Sgt. Kelly Vrana, Sgt. 1st Class Arnett Wilson, Spc. Paul Henson III, Staff Sergeant Tamela Strong-Foster, and (rear) Staff Sgt. Timothy Lovato, Soldiers of HHC 412th Theater Engineer Command, march in Vicksburg, Mississippi's 31st Memorial Day parade, May 31, 2010. Other activities included a Memorial Day service at the city auditorium featuring keynote speaker Col. William C. Schneck, (not pictured) the 412th's deputy Chief of staff, and a wreath laying ceremony at the national cemetery. The theme of this year's activities was "Lest We Forget."

# A Word from the Commander

There is much activity going on within the Command and I want to highlight a few of them during the summer of 2010.

Deployable Command Post 1 (DCP 1) from the 412th Theater Engineer Command returned to Vicksburg on July 22, and we conducted a Welcome Home Warrior Citizen Ceremony for them. It was an emotional, classy, and impressive event for the Soldiers, their Families, and the 412th TEC. I was elated over how well it went and the tremendous turnout of Families, unit members, and dignitaries.

The DCP1 achieved tremendous results during its tour in Afghanistan. Each Soldier and his/her Family Members should be very proud of the accomplishments made and the many obstacles overcome by all. By successfully completing their mission, The (DCP) left a legacy of historic proportions throughout Afghanistan. Their superb work is directly attributable to their leadership. Brig. Gen. Bill Buckler, Col. Dan Prine, and Command Sergeant Major Guy Taylor provided the oversight and expertise to ensure that the mission was accomplished. They took care of their Soldiers and provided advice on engineer matters to the theater commander. The entire DCP1 is to be commended for a tremendous job and a legacy that will influence doctrine at the theater level for many years.

Upon arriving in October 2009,

the Joint Force Engineer Command- Afghanistan (JFEC-A) was officially activated. It integrated the combined effort from the Army, Air Force, Marines, Navy, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to coordinate all engineer



Maj. Gen. Paul F. Hamm

operations in Afghanistan. The DCP1 was integrated into the JFEC and provided the majority of support to its operation. The JFEC provided oversight to the construction of bases in the Kandahar area to facilitate the 30,000

increase of service members for the surge, processed over 1,326 total joint force projects worth over 1.5 billion dollars, conducted the development of water wells, the demining efforts, and the tracking of engineer assets such as float bridge equipment. It would take a very long time to list all of the outstanding accomplishments of the DCP in support of the JFEC, but suffice it to say, that it was a truly monumental effort, and one for which we should all be proud.

On several occasions this past year, Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp, the Chief of Engineers and Commander of the US Army Corps of Engineers, complemented our Soldiers and their efforts. As many of you know, this was the first time that the DCP was used as it was doctrinally designed. I am proud to be able to give you a direct quote from General Van Antwerp. In his own words, he said, "The 412th TEC and the DCP did it right!"

Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald

Flubacher and I visited many of the battalions as they conducted their Extended Combat Training (ECT). I wish that we were able to visit more of our units, but conflicts evolve that prevent us from visiting everyone. We visited the 926th Engineer Battalion as they were the C2 (command and control) headquarters for River Assault at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. Lt. Col. Donna Williams led the battalion as they bridged the Arkansas River on July 21.

We made several trips to Fort McCoy. We visited the 479th Chemical Battalion during the Red Dragon Exercise, and the 467th Engineer Battalion during the Es-sayons Exercise on the same trip in June. In July, we visited the 302nd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, 533rd Brigade Support Battalion, and the 841st Engineer Battalion all participating in WAREX and doing very well.

Command Sgt. Maj. Flubacher and I also visited the 458th Engineer Battalion in the Yuma, Arizona, area, as they provided engineer support to NORTHCOM and the Border Patrol. They constructed a road adjacent to the border fence on the Mexican border, and bolstered the vehicle barriers at a very remote section of the fence.

I appreciate the service of all of our Soldiers, Families, and Civilians. As I travel around to visit our units, I am constantly impressed with the dedication, motivation, and professionalism of our force. It is truly awe-inspiring to witness our great Army Reserve.

Building Strong! Essayons!

# Command Sergeant Major's Corner

The past few months have been hectic, as always. At this year's Best Warrior Competition at Camp Smith, N.Y. we saw some of the best Soldiers from most of the battalions in the command giving their all. These great Soldiers competed in day and night Land Navigation, they qualified with the M-4 rifle at night and in the day, and they endured a 10k road march with their Individual Body Armor, their weapon, and a 35 pound ruck. They also competed in Warrior Tasks and appeared before a board. The winners were Staff Sgt. Eric White and



Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Flubacker

Spc. Robert Busch. Both Soldiers spent two months preparing for the United States Army Reserve Command competition at Ft. McCoy, and in July I was proud to have them represent the 412th Theater Engineer Command. I am also proud of all of our competitors as they pushed each other and made this event special.

Congratulations to the culinary artists of the 841st Engineer Battalion. Collectively, they earned nine medals at the Army's 35th Culinary Arts Competition at Ft. Lee Va. Staff Sgt. Joseph Parker, Sgt. Patrick Alvarenga and Spc. Daniel Arshadnia helped the USARC culinary team to finish in the top five. Parker was selected to the Army Culinary team. He's one of the first members of the Army Reserve to make the team. Parker and two other Reservists will join other active duty Soldiers when

they compete in Germany for the World Culinary Cup in October 2010.

Congratulations also to Spc. Donnie Palmer of the 368th Engineer Battalion for making the all Army Boxing team. At 6'8" and 246 lbs., he fights in the super heavy weight category, and is 16-4 in his boxing career.

The 412th's Deployable Command Post returned from Afghanistan on July 15 at Fort Sill, Okla. They returned to Vicksburg for their Welcome Home Warrior Citizen Ceremony on July 22, where they were greeted by families, friends,

fellow Soldiers and local government officials. I was at Fort Sill to welcome them back to the states as they stepped off the plane. I was honored to thank them for their service and to welcome them home. There were a many happy faces stepping off that plane.

USARC has initiated its "Shaping the Force" policy where any colonel, lieutenant colonel, sergeant major, master sergeant or first sergeant who's in a position where they are not MOS qualified, or in a special category will have to find a position where they are qualified by both MOS and rank. If those individuals are not in a qualified position by Sept. 15 then USARC will transfer them into the Individual Ready Reserve, or take some other action. We are currently working to place Soldiers in positions they belong. We will be using the Regional

Support Commands as well as the Recruiting and Transition Soldiers to assist with this Policy. The Army Reserve is over strength by over 3000 Soldiers, so the policy's intent is to address that issue. The Force needs to be re-shaped so that there is a qualified Soldier in each position on the Unit Manning Roster. This will assist in reducing the number of cross leveled Soldiers that are transferred into mobilizing units. These fully manned units will be able to train together as they prepare to deploy. It is important that we start with senior ranks and continue with all ranks over time. If you are in one of these positions and need help finding a position that you are qualified for then ask your Command Sergeant Major or Commander.

We must continue to follow our "Conditions of Employment" where it's each Soldier is responsible to take and pass the Army Physical Fitness Test, meet height and weight standards, qualify on their assigned weapons, conduct the annual Periodic Health Assessment and other on-line requirements.

Command Sgt. Maj. Guy Taylor soon returning to his position as the 412th TEC Command Sergeant Major and I will be returning to my position as the 411th Engineer Brigade Command Sergeant Major. It has been an honor serving the 412th this past year. The 412th continues to improve by providing trained and ready Soldiers and units to the war effort and will continue to improve as we move forward.

# Soldier from Lexington, Ky. named Best Warrior

Story by Karla Ward. Reprinted with permission from the Lexington Herald-Leader, Lexington, Ky.

Specialist Robert Busch has never been in combat, but he's probably the kind of Soldier his buddies would want next to them if they ever were.

Busch, a 23-year-old medic from Lexington, was named Best Warrior last week in a competition designed to identify the most well-rounded of the 12,000 Soldiers in the Army Reserve's 412th Theater Engineer Command.

During the competition at Camp Smith, N.Y., Busch did about 100 push-ups in two minutes and about 95 sit-ups in the same length of time. His time on a two-mile run was 12:55. He ran a 10k while loaded down with about 80 pounds of equipment in an hour and 25 minutes.

He aced a series of other tasks, including marksmanship, drill and ceremony, land navigation and first aid. The competition also involved a written test and a question and answer session with a panel of superiors.

How did he get ready for all that?

"A lot of the preparation of it really didn't take place," Busch said in an interview.

He works more than 50 hours a week at Kroger in Versailles, so he said he just didn't have the time to do much prep work.

But he went to the gym anytime he could, and once he arrived in New York, Busch said he buckled down and studied.

It all worked out. He beat the other 15 contestants from around the country, who were considered the best in their battalions. Busch was representing the 478th Engineer Battalion in Fort Thomas.

He now moves on to the next level, which will determine the Best Warrior in the U.S. Army Reserve. That competition takes place at Fort McCoy, Wis., in July. The winner there will compete for the overall title of Best Warrior in the Army.

Busch said he was initially entered in the competition when the other Soldiers in his company



Photo by Maj. Jesse Stalder, 412th TEC Public Affairs Office

Spc. Robert Busch, 478th Engineer Battalion, winner of the 412th Theater Engineer Command's 2010 Best Warrior Competition in the junior enlisted category.

chose him to represent them.

They knew he scored well in physical fitness, and "they thought I was smart because I'm a medic," he said with a laugh.

For Busch, the most nerve-racking part of the Best Warrior contest is being quizzed by superiors on topics ranging from military knowledge to current events.

"One of the biggest things is learning how to control your nerves," he said. "They're like your boss's boss's boss. They're extremely intimidating."

# Dormont Pa. Soldier advances to national competition

Story by David Whipkey. Reprinted with permission from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Dormont's Eric White is a special kind of strong. White, 29, is a staff sergeant with the Army Reserve's 458th Engineer Battalion and won the title Best Warrior during a Soldier competition at Camp Smith, N.Y., April 16, 2010.

The annual contest is designed to identify the best competitors from among the 12,600 Soldiers within the 412th Theater Engineer Command. Sgt. White's battalion in New Kensington is part of that Command.

He will now advance to the U.S. Army Reserve Command 2010 Warrior Competition this summer at Fort McCoy in Wisconsin.

"It felt amazing," Sgt. White said. "It was one of, if not the

toughest physical and mental challenge I've ever faced."

The Army Reserve's 412th Theater Engineer Command is headquartered in Vicksburg, Miss. It was originally established to support theater-level military engineer operations for the U.S. Army in Korea, the Pacific and Europe. Since the inception of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 412th has become an operational command responsible for 15 Army Reserve engineer battalions and for rotating teams in and out of the Persian Gulf area.

The competition combined physical fitness, weapons handling, firearms marksmanship, drill and ceremony; land navigation and first aid. Competitors also submitted a written exam and reported before a panel of their superiors on topics such as military knowledge and current events.

White said he credits his win to his vigorous training and attention to detail when working with the Reserve and as a track and field coach at Duquesne University.

"I am fortunate to have a job in which I can train as hard as I do," White said. "I am able to take advantage of my career and have a strong focus on my fitness and stay in shape."

White, a 1999 graduate of Baldwin High School, earned a bachelor's degree in business management from Robert Morris

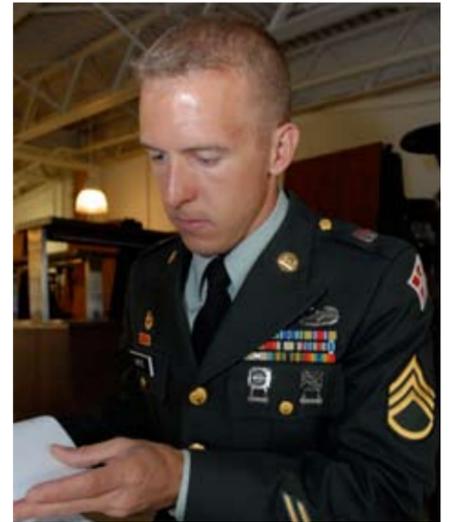


Photo by Spc. David Thompson 326th MPAD

Staff Sgt. Eric White, 458th Engineer Battalion, studies material ranging from Army knowledge to current events before reporting to a board of his superiors during the 412th Theater Engineer Command's Best Warrior Competition at Camp Smith, NY April 13, 2010.

University and a master's degree in employment labor relations from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He also competed on the Colonials' track and field team and was Northeast Conference champion in the men's pole vault.

He joined the Army Reserve after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

"It was one of the best decisions I ever made," he said.

White was deployed to Iraq in December 2003. There, he worked to dismantle obstacles on roads his colleagues traveled over.

At the competition at Camp Smith, White walked more than 10 kilometers carrying 80 pounds of gear, demonstrated a high level of competency with his firearm and showed the depth of his knowledge regarding military history and the events of today. "I wanted to show what I've learned while serving my country," he said.



Photo by Maj. Jesse Stalder 412th TEC PAO

Staff Sgt. Eric White, 458th Engineer Battalion, prior to the 10k ruck march during the 412th Theater Engineer Command's Best Warrior Competition at Camp Smith, NY April 15, 2010.

# Fair judging, HHC 412th TEC Soldiers

Story and photos by Maj. Jesse Stalder, 412th TEC PAO

**M**aster Sgt. James McClure did not expect to see the same type of engineer work that he did in the Middle East at the Vicksburg, Miss. School District Science Fair on Feb. 24, 2010.

Charlie Dove, a sixth-grader at St. Francis Xavier Elementary School won first place in the Earth Space and Environmental Science category for his soil and rock sampling project.

“The process that he used in developing his hypothesis and conclusion pretty much followed what I did as a member of the soil and survey section in Iraq and Kuwait,” said McClure. “They’re doing things



Mast. Sgt. James McClure judging a project during the Vicksburg School District’s Science Fair in Vicksburg, Miss.

that I didn’t do until I was like in my high school years.”

McClure and three other Soldiers from the 412th Theater Engineer Command’s headquarters company, volunteered for two days to judge 160 projects in 20 categories at the city auditorium. Lt. Col. Michael Bryant and Master Sgt. Terry New were judges on day one, and McClure teamed up with Lt. Col. Daniel George on day two.

Last year George was one of two 412th Soldiers who helped judge the science fair. The committee was impressed with the Soldiers’ “efforts,” so this year’s organizers again requested assistance from the unit.

“They work in the field, they know the field and for them to see what the kids are doing is great, and

it gives the students positive feedback,” said Terry Guynn, a Bovina Elementary School teacher and a science fair coordinator.

During the judging process each contestant explained their hypothesis to the judges, an interaction the students and the Soldiers seemed to enjoy.

“I feel great about having Army judges here, because my brother is in the Army,” said Jasmine Elma a science fair participant.

“I believe in taking care of the youth and the elderly and this is where the rubber meets the road, McClure said. “This is where you help develop young kids.”

The 412th donated two trophies to the event as they’ve done in past years. McClure presented one of the trophies to Rett Verhine the overall winner of the event. The 6th grader from St. Francis Elementary won in the zoology category. His project demonstrated how crawfish depend on their antennas for direction. When Verhine taped down the crawfish’s left antenna it walked to the right, when he taped down the right antenna it walked to the left.



Lt. Col. Daniel George discusses a project with one of the contestants during the Vicksburg School District’s Science Fair in Vicksburg, Miss.



Mast. Sgt. James McClure operations NCO of the 412th TEC’s headquarters company, looks over a project during the Vicksburg School District’s Science Fair in Vicksburg, Miss. Feb. 25, 2010.

**They work in the field, they know the field and for them to see what the kids are doing is great...**

# 926th Engineer Brigade Soldiers Build Strong Bonds

## at S.C., Resort

Story and photo by Maj. Jesse Stalder, 412th TEC PAO

### The Army Strong Bonds retreat is a no brainer.

**Soldiers are being paid to attend, they stay at a beautiful resort, and receive world class instruction on communication, intimacy, and conflict management skills**, according to Chaplain

Col. Steven Dyess, the 81st Regional Support Command Chaplain.

More than 70 married couples and approximately 30 single Soldiers took part in a Strong Bonds retreat for Army Reservists at a hotel resort in Hilton Head, S.C., hosted by the 81st RSC, Feb. 19-21.

Strong Bonds is a chaplain led program designed to help Soldiers improve their relationships and, in the end, increase the Army's overall readiness rate.

Capt. Jared Corsi, a civil engineer with the 926th Engineer Brigade and his wife, Katherine participated in the retreat.

"It has been very surprising so far, I honestly did not think the Army would send us to a place like this," said, Corsi. "This is one of those places you want to be able to see at least once in your lifetime."

The Corsi's reflected on their own marriage while interacting with other couples during the classroom portion of the retreat.

"It was nice to know that you are not the only couple going through different issues in your marriage," said Katherine Corsi. "It is nice to see that they have had the same feelings or thoughts as you. It was helpful being seated next to other couples."

The retreat allowed Corsi and his wife to focus on



Chaplain Col. Steven Dyess, the 81st Regional Support Command chaplain, talks to more than 70 Army Reservists and their spouses before facilitating a vow renewal ceremony at a hotel resort in Hilton Head, S.C. Feb. 19 -21.

each other and forget about their everyday life challenges.

"I enjoyed the sessions; I never really get to sit down with my husband that long. We were holding hands and learning together. It was nice to see that we have a good marriage," said, Katherine.

The program also helps single Soldiers establish relationship goals and gain the skills needed to help make better choices when picking a partner.

"I think the Army has matured. I am very pleased where the senior Army leadership is at today in support of Army Family Programs," said, Col. Marvin Benton, the 302nd Maneuver Enhancement Brigade commander, a single Soldier taking part in the retreat. "Fifteen years ago we never had a program like this."

A booklet in the course literature titled "How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk or Jerkette" introduced single Soldiers to the Relationship Attachment Model. Conceptually; the model protects the individual from blinding love, and provides a map for pacing the relationship.

"I've been able to sit back and listen to other people's experiences and their beliefs and their feelings on relationships and I've been able to share some of my own," said Sgt. Autumn Hope; a single Soldier with the 314th Public Affairs Operation Center, Birmingham, Ala. "It is nice just to be in this environment where we're all here kind of for the same reason and it is safe."

"I am going to spread the word to the rest of the Soldiers of my personal experience here," said Corsi. "We are very thankful and I think it is an effective program."

*Soldiers interested in attending a Strong Bonds retreat are encouraged to contact their unit chaplains. Information is also available online at [www.strongbonds.org](http://www.strongbonds.org)*

# Father of the 412th

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Eugene, 412th TEC PAO

**G**race Morris Spears celebrated the end of World War II in 1945 by walking around her block in Vicksburg, Miss., beating on an old metal pan with a wooden spoon. “I beat on it till I beat a hole in the bottom,” Spears said. “Of course there weren’t good pans back in those days.”

Spears was eight years old at the time, and she was more excited about her dad coming home from France than she was about the war being over. Her first memories of him are from his time in the war, according to Spears. His letters home talked about a French family he stayed with that included a little girl who was the same age as she was.

“I was so jealous because he was around her... I didn’t have him,” Spears said. “He’d write home about her not knowing how I felt.”

Spears’ father was Brig. Gen. George A. Morris, the first commander of the 412th Engineer Command. She visited the 412th headquarters with some friends on Jan., 22, 2010 at the reserve center in Vicksburg which is named after him. The group came to see a painting of Morris by Marshall Bouldin, a National Portrait Artist Hall of Fame inductee. Spears’ mother commissioned Bouldin to paint the portrait of Morris as a gift to the 412th when the unit relocated from Army Navy Drive to the current location on Porters Chappel Road in 1993.



Contributed photo

A young Grace Morris Spears with her dad, then Lt. Col. George A. Morris. Morris later became the first commander of the 412th Engineer Command.

During a second visit to the unit in February 2010, Spears shared some stories of her father, one of which included how Morris, who was a colonel at the time, became a member of Gen. George S. Patton’s staff during the war.

“He didn’t want to be on Patton’s staff, because he wanted to stay with his men. They were building bridges across the Rhine,” Spears said. “He sent word back to Patton, ‘thank you, but I want to stay with my men.’”

According to Spears, Patton got word back to Morris with some expletives saying, “that’s great, stay with your men tonight, but I’ll see you at eight o’clock in the morning.”

Spears said Morris mentored a lot of young men in Vicksburg who lost their fathers in the war.

“They came to our house, he brought them along...he’d talk to them like a son, like part of the family,” Spears said. “There were a lot of them, many of them my age.”

In 1963, the French family Morris stayed with in France during the war visited him and his family in Vicksburg.

Spears said she remembers the 412th being a significant part of her childhood.

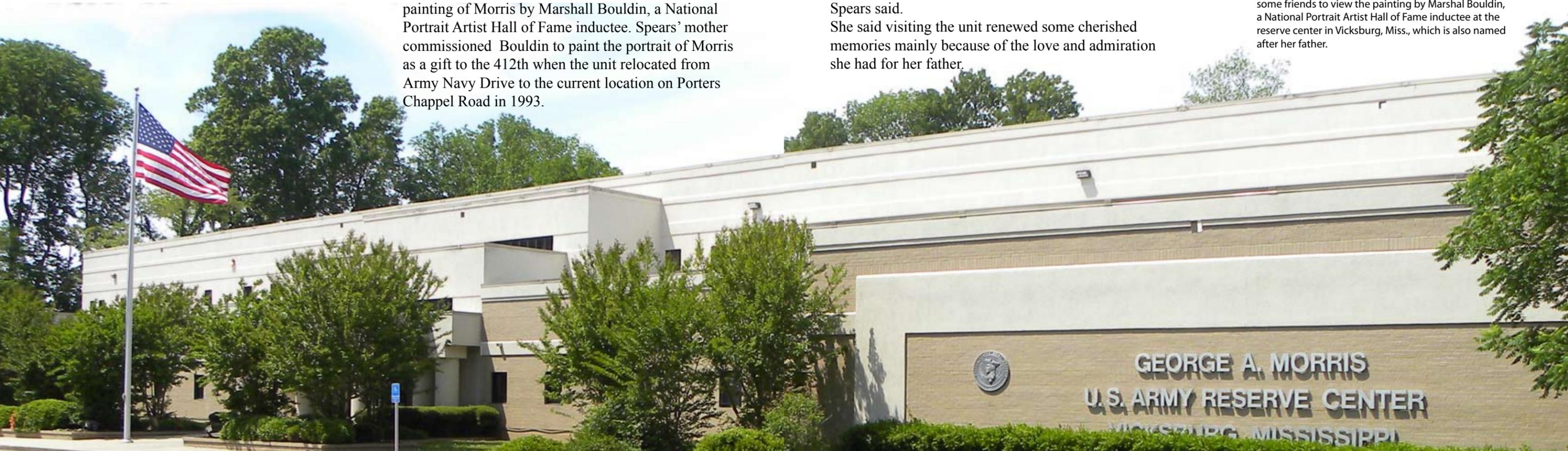
“At that time the 412th met every Monday night, one weekend a month, and two weeks in the summer,” Spears said.

She said visiting the unit renewed some cherished memories mainly because of the love and admiration she had for her father.



Photo by Lt. Col. Doril Sanders, 412th Public Affairs Office

Grace M. Spears stands next to a painting of her father, Brig. Gen. George A. Morris, the first Commander of the 412th Engineer Command. Spears visited the unit with some friends to view the painting by Marshal Bouldin, a National Portrait Artist Hall of Fame inductee at the reserve center in Vicksburg, Miss., which is also named after her father.



# Medaling chefs

Iron



*Story by Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Eugene 412th TEC PAO*

**Three gourmet chefs from the 841st Engineer Battalion collectively earned nine medals while competing against more than 200 other military culinarians in the Army's 35th Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va., March 2010. In the process they helped the Army Reserve finish in the top five out of 24 teams. Besides their accomplishments in the contest, these Reservists each have something else in common. They were meddling in the kitchen long before they were medaling at the contest.**

*Continued on next page.*

The award winning culinary artists of the 841st Engineer Battalion. Left to right- Sgt. Patrick Alvarenga, Staff Sgt. Joseph Parker, Spc. Daniel Arshadnia

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Eugene 412th TEC PAO



Photo by Timothy L. Hale, USARC

Sgt. Patrick Alverenga, right, gives instructions to his apprentice, Spc. Paul Harmon, Jr. during the Military Chef of the Year event at the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va., Feb. 28, 2010.

## Medaling chefs

**Sgt. Patrick Alverenga** says his earliest culinary experience, which was far from award winning, took place in his family kitchen when he was 12.

One day his mom had started cooking a pot of brown stew chicken for dinner, and she asked him to turn the stove off once he knew that the food was cooked. Such a task may seem beyond the abilities

a 12 year old, but Alverenga says he's a product of Caribbean culture in which young men are required to be self sufficient at an early age.

Though he assumed responsibility of the family dinner, Alverenga's mind was elsewhere.

"I was trying to go out and play with my boys," Alverenga said. "She kept saying, 'are you watching the stove?' and I'd say yes mummy, but I wasn't."

Alverenga's negligence caused the chicken to burn, because he did not turn the stove off in time.

His mom was upset, but she was determined to make sure her family had dinner that night, and at the same time teach her son a lesson in diligence.

"She said, 'you have to buy back this chicken, and cook it before your dad gets home,'" Alverenga said. "There went my piggy bank; I was saving up for Christmas to get something good."

He bought the chicken at the neighborhood grocery store, took it home, and then cooked it with no help from his mom.

"I always watched what she did while she cooked," Alverenga said. "I had to remember everything she did, so it forced me to pay attention."

His dad came home and the family sat down to dinner, but in the midst of his disappointment, and at such an early stage of his life, Alverenga didn't realize that he had started on his career path. He was an adult when a relative, who enjoyed his cooking, suggested that Alverenga pursue a career in the food industry.

Now at 33, he's a graduate of the Robert Morgan Vocational Technical Institute, with a degree in Commercial Foods and Culinary Arts.



Photo by Timothy L. Hale, USARC

Sgt. Patrick Alverenga puts the finishing touches on his Bone-In Veal Loin of Rack during the Contemporary Category event at the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va. on Wednesday, March 10, 2010.



Photo by Timothy L. Hale, USARC

Sgt. Patrick Alverenga plates up his dish during the Contemporary Category event at the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va. on Wednesday, March 10, 2010.

During the Army culinary competition he earned a silver medal in the Field Kitchen category, where as a member of the Army Reserve team, he helped prepare a three course meal for 60 people using equipment from an Army field kitchen. He also won a bronze medal for preparing a five course meal in the Cold Table Display category, and a second bronze for a Bone-In Veal Loin of Rack in the Practical Cooking category.

A chartered member of the Army Reserve 2006 Culinary team, Alverenga said he is proud of the 2010 team.

"It's almost to tears that I'm proud," Alverenga said. "The first year we were sucking air, we didn't even know what we were getting into."

In hindsight, he said the incident in his family kitchen was a practice opportunity that helped him get where he is today, and yes, his mom is proud his accomplishments.

*Continued on next page.*



## Medaling chefs

**Staff Sgt. Joseph Parker** remembers trying to cook in his family kitchen when he was three years old. He was at home one day with his baby sitter while his mom was at work, but the baby sitter was pre-occupied and she didn't realize that Parker was hungry.

He says, his memory of what happened next is vague because of how young he was, but he remembers pushing a chair to the front of the stove, climbing on top of the chair, and trying to cook some eggs that he had gotten from the refrigerator.

"I blew those eggs up all over the kitchen," Parker said. "There was a big air pocket in the eggs, like there was too much heat. The bubble kept getting bigger and bigger, then I started hollering for my mom."

The debacle occurred right around the time his mom normally came home from work. That day, she arrived on schedule, just in time for the mess that resulted from the eggs exploding.

The incident did not keep Parker's mom from letting him and his siblings help her in the kitchen during his pre-teenage years.

"She'd let us mix the batter when she made crêpes or hot dog pancakes," Parker said. "And we'd get to lick the spoon afterward, and the bowl."

His dad taught him how to smoke and barbecue meat; skills Parker says are still part of his cooking style. Those same skills helped him get a job as the head of catering functions at a water park in Kissimmee, Fla. while he was a junior in high school. During his freshman year, at age 13, he got his first cooking job preparing side dishes like coleslaw and macaroni and cheese at a restaurant in St. Cloud, Fla.

"I also took culinary classes in high-school, and I worked at a few other fast food restaurants," Parker

said. "I always knew that I wanted to be a cook."

After high school, he earned an associate degree in Culinary Arts, and a bachelor's in Culinary Nutrition from Johnson Wales University in Rhode Island.

Now at age 28, Parker is the captain of the Army Reserve culinary team, and an original member, like Alverenga.

During the Army Culinary Arts Competition he scored a silver medal in the Nutrition Hot Food Challenge which tests a chef's ability to prepare and present a meal created from a mystery basket. He got a second silver medal for preparing a lobster dish



Photo by Timothy L. Hale, USARC

Army Reserve Staff Sgt. Joseph Parker's main dish in the contemporary category of the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va. on Friday, March 5, 2010. Parker prepared butter poached lobster with braised kale, sweet corn spoon bread, lobster & scallop sausage, seafood cracker topped with a lemon butter sauce.

(opposite page) Army Reserve Staff Sgt. Joseph Parker prepares his main dish in the contemporary category of the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va. on Friday, March 5, 2010.

before a live audience. He also earned two bronze medals. The first bronze was for a Cold Poultry Platter and the second bronze when he tried out for the U.S. Army Culinary Team.

Parker is one of three Army Reservists selected to the U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team. They're the first Reservists ever to make the team. All three will compete with other active duty culinarians in Germany for the World Culinary Cup in October 2010.

Individual accolades aside, Parker says the dishes, and different techniques, that he and the other cooks learn at the competition help them exceed the Army standard when they cook for Soldiers back at their unit.

"Ask any of the Soldiers...how they eat when we go to the field," Parker said. "It always says you can add to, but never take away from, the recipe cards."

Parker says the memory of his first cooking attempt is fresh in his mind because he has heard his mom tell the story many times over the years. However, the cause of the baby sitter's inattentiveness at the time of the incident remains a mystery.

"I was cooking my eggs man, I was hungry that's all I know," Parker said.

*Continued on next page.*



Photo by Timothy L. Hale, USARC

Spc. Daniel Arshadnia, plates up during the Student Team Skills event at the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va., Wednesday March 10, 2010.

## Medaling chefs

**Spc. Daniel Arshadnia** was 8 years old when one day, in his mom’s absence, he decided to make chocolate and vanilla pretzel cookies using the recipe from a book.

This was his first time trying to cook, and his mom came home to what Arshadnia calls a huge mess.

“There was flour all over the counter top, my mom freaked out.” Arshadnia said. “She was upset, and she wouldn’t let me cook in the kitchen ever after that. Even like, when I was going to culinary school, she wouldn’t let me cook when I came home.”

Arshadnia is a 2008 graduate of New York’s Culinary Institute of America. The school thanked

him in a letter for the attention the institution received when, as an alumnus, he was featured in media for winning a gold medal in the Culinary Arts Competition.

“How often do you get a letter from your school thanking you?” Arshadnia said. “They usually send letters asking for money.”

His gold medal was the Army Reserve teams’ first, for his Sautéed Airline Chicken Breast with Portobello Mushroom and Truffle Oil Risotto. He also won a silver medal in the Student Team Skills Competition, which tests young chefs’ basic culinary skills and ability to execute a four course menu.

During the time leading up to the competition, Arshadnia was at a point in his life where he no longer wanted to be a culinary artist. He had worked in

the culinary field as a civilian, and he lost his job eight days before getting union holdings. He was still new to the Miami area, having moved there May 7, 2009, and he hardly knew anyone.

## Once I finished my first dish I knew I was coming back next year

“It made me feel different about my field,” Arshadnia said. “I can be worked to death with little to show, and no appreciation for what I’d done, and they just let you go.”

He said being a food service specialist in the 841st helped him rekindle his passion for cooking, and he credits Staff Sgt. Parker for recruiting him onto the Army Reserve Culinary team.

It took some “warming up” on Parker’s part, since

Arshadnia “didn’t want to see another chef in the kitchen.”

“Even after we got to Fort Lee I hated it, I didn’t want to be there, but once I finished my first dish I knew I was coming back next year,”

Arshadnia said. “I’ve learned so many different culinary techniques...and I’ve learned so many ways to perfect things that I’ve already been doing.”

If only he had learned those techniques before he attempted to make the pretzel cookies.

“My mom thought they were disgusting because they came out hard as a rock,” Arshadnia said. “I threw them out; I think my dog got a hold of one of them.”



Photo by Timothy L. Hale, USARC

Cpl. Karah Williams, 414th Military Police Company, Joplin, Mo., left, and Spc. Daniel Arshadnia prepare a dish during the Student Team Skills event at the 35th U.S. Army Culinary Arts Competition at Fort Lee, Va., Mar. 10, 2010.



Photo by Spc. Lisa Soule, 326th MPAD

Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp delivers the keynote address to the Vicksburg, Miss. engineer community during the annual Castle Ball at the Vicksburg Convention Center, June 5, 2010.

# A word from the Chief

*Lt. Gen. Van Antwerp delivers the keynote address at the 2010 Castle Ball*

Story by Maj. Jesse Stalder, 412th TEC PAO

**W**ith a comedic style reminiscent of a Bob Hope USO tour, the 52nd Army Chief of Engineers, Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp, delivered the keynote address during the annual Castle Ball at the Vicksburg Miss. Convention Center, June 5, 2010.

The ball, which consisted of Vicksburg engineer community members and 412th Theater Engineer Command Soldiers, culminated the 412th's Warfighter Seminar which started on June 2.

Van Antwerp used his keen sense of humor to highlight some of the significant events currently in progress in the Corps of Engineers.

For example, he talked about the Asian Carp, a

type of fish that engineers in Illinois are trying to keep from getting into the great lakes.

"I am waiting for some chef to figure out just how to cook this thing just right," Van Antwerp said. "It eats everything and starves the rest of the fish out."

He also talked about the 8, 213 individuals the Corps of Engineers hired from the private sector at the end of 2009.

"There was an incredible amount of talent out there and we got a ton of it," Van Antwerp said. "We are going to hire 8,000 people this year and we are on track to actually exceed that ... we have never hired on this scale in my lifetime."

He then talked of modifications currently being

**We are going to hire 8,000 people this year and we are on track to actually exceed that**

done to the Panama Canal that will change economies in the world. A new lock system scheduled for completion in 2014 will have a major impact on the 928 deep-water ports in the United States, according to Van Antwerp.

"That lock is 1600 feet long and it is going to be about 120 feet wide," Van Antwerp said. "The current Panamax ship carries 4,600 containers... the Panamax ship of tomorrow going through the new lock system will carry 12,500 containers, it is that much bigger."

In the future, Ship designers will only design vessels that will fit the new Panama Canal lock

system. The New Panamax ships must have a hull that is deeper by five feet, and all ports will be 53 feet deep, according to Van Antwerp.

He said, most Ports in the United States which are 52-feet deep will need to increase their depths by one foot.

At the start of his presentation, Van Antwerp assigned an audience member to be his time keeper. He coached her on how she should tell him that his time was up. When the time had elapsed she stood up and said, "Chief, thank you for your general remarks, you are generally out of time."



Photo by Spc. Lisa Soule, 326th MPAD

Lt. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp interacts with audience members during his the keynote address to the Vicksburg, Miss. engineer community during the annual Castle Ball at the Vicksburg Convention Center, June 5, 2010.

**Col. Kent Goff took some 412th Soldiers and families on...**

# A walk through history

*Story and photo by Spc. Lisa Soule 326th MPAD*



Col. Kent Goff (L), the 412th Theater Engineer Command's intelligence and security officer, explains the intricacies of the Civil War era uniform and equipment to a group of 412th TEC Soldiers and families prior to taking them on a tour of the Vicksburg Miss. National Military Park on June 2, 2010. Lt. Col. Bernard McIntosh (R), 926th Engineer Brigade, examines an Enfield rifle musket while modeling a Union Army jacket with cap and canteen.

**W**hen Col. Kent Goff isn't sporting his Army Combat Uniform during weekend battle assemblies, he is likely decked out in a military uniform from another era. The 412th Theater Engineer Command's intelligence and security officer is also a military history buff who participates in civil war re-enactments.

Goff shared his Civil War knowledge with nearly 30 Army engineers during a tour of the Vicksburg Miss., National Military Park on June 2, 2010. The tour was a prelude to the 412th's annual Warfighter Seminar.

Before the group entered the site of the Civil War's most epic battle, Lt. Col. Bernard McIntosh, 926th Engineer Brigade, modeled a uniform from Goff's collection of military memorabilia. Wearing a blue Union jacket with cap and canteen, McIntosh resembled a Civil War Soldier, except for his shorts and tennis shoes, as he grasped an Enfield rifle musket.

Touring engineers looked on as they crunched down on hardtack biscuits which were a Civil War-era staple. Goff called the biscuits the MRE of that era.

"They used the technology of the day to make this hardtack, which is really dried bread with salt," Goff said.

The hardtack's lack of variety and nutrition became one of the Civil War's biggest discipline problems, according to Goff.

"Hardtack was not the soldiers' favorite food, so they would 'appropriate' chickens or whatever they could find," Goff said. "Civilians were pretty well cleaned out by hungry soldiers."

As the tour traced Confederate lines and Union

emplacements, Goff used his 20 years of re-enactment experience to explain the intricate details of the scenes that once played out in Vicksburg. He also drew attention to the role of engineers during the Civil War. He said the U.S. and Confederate armies had highly professional engineer officers, but few non-commissioned officers.

During the last years of the war, the need for professional combat engineers increased. As a result, engineer units like the 1st Michigan and 57th Indiana were formed from infantry ranks.

Goff then drew parallels between the Civil War and modern day operations, particularly as it pertained to logistics.

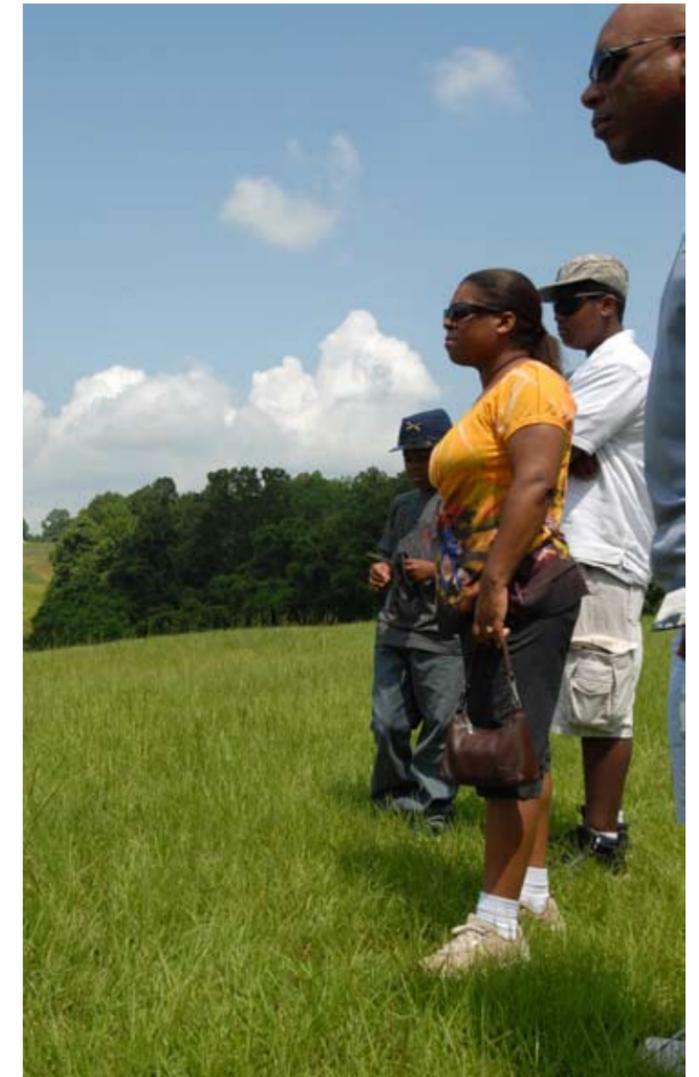
"People don't realize that contractors were instrumental in every big war except World War II," Goff said. "We even had armed contractors in the Battle of Nashville, something that would cause crisis of conscience today."

Self-described history lover Chief Warrant Officer Trevor Cameron, 479th Chemical Battalion, said he was impressed by Goff's knowledge and perspective.

"It's good to hear this information from somebody who has studied it for most of his life," Cameron said. "This is someone who has acted it out...lived it out. You don't get that from a normal tour guide."

In his civilian capacity, Goff works as an adjunct professor at Eastern Arkansas Community College, and he's also president of the Mississippi Valley Educational Program. As a result, his audience usually consists of young college students as well as fifth graders.

"This is different," Goff said of his military spectators. "They know what you're talking about and they're ready with good questions."



412th Theater Engineer Command Soldiers and families tour the Vicksburg Miss. National Military Park on June 2, 2010. The tour was a preliminary to the command's annual Warfighter Seminar.

# Surprise shot

Story and photo by Maj. Jesse Stalder, 412th TEC PAO

**M**aj. Tim Gothard entered the Army Small Arms Championship competition at Fort Benning, Ga., prepared to compete using the M-16 rifle and the 9 mm pistol, Feb. 22, 2010.

Gothard was pleasantly surprised when he saw his name on a list of 300 Soldiers selected to compete with the M-24 sniper rifle as an added perk.

Col. Kent Goff, the 412th Theater Engineer Command Marksmanship team captain, submitted the names of all five team members to the event committee hoping they'd get to fire the M-24.

"There was a limited amount of ammo and resources at the competition to allow all 300 participants to shoot the sniper rifle... I'm pretty sure I was selected at random," said Gothard. An avid hunter, Gothard is familiar with different rifles, but that day he fired the M-24 for the first time.

"It turned out to be a lot easier than I thought it was going to be. The accuracy that is built into the weapon makes it a lot easier to be successful," said Gothard.

He fired the M-24 during the long range matches at targets ranging from 800-1,000 yard distances.

"I could hit a target, but there is so much more that goes into being a sniper," said Gothard. "There is a lot of math and technical knowledge that you have to know and have to recall instantaneously to be a sniper."

He also competed with his teammates against other Soldiers in separate classes based on each individual's competition experience. They fired the M-16 at distances between 25-500 yards and the 9 mm between 7-35 yards. The team came away with prizes based on their overall combined scores.

The Army Small Arms Championship competition is a one week long event open to all Soldiers each year in February.



Maj. Tim Gothard, Operations Officer, 412th TEC

"To succeed in the U.S. Army Small-Arms Championships, you must effectively employ the range of individual weapons from pistol, to rifle, and even to sniper rifle," said Lt. Col. Daniel Hodne, Commander, United States Army Marksmanship Unit. "Doing so with precision while under the stress of competition will challenge even the most experienced of shooters."

The 416th Theater Engineer Command leadership in Chicago has issued a friendly challenge to the 412th TEC's marksmanship team, to help both units prepare for next year's competition.

Gothard said it was a lot of fun being able to shoot a weapon that he probably will never get to shoot again.

*Soldiers looking to join the 412th TEC's marksmanship team should contact Maj. Timothy Gothard at telephone number (601) 631-6168.*

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