



Fort Riley Community



In Step on Channel 2

6:30 a.m. In Step
8 a.m. In Step
Noon In Step
6 p.m. In Step
10 p.m. In Step

May 30, 2003

America's Warfighting Center

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Concert series hits post

By Kim Levine
Staff Writer

The weather held up this past weekend, while Night Ranger and Cheap Trick rocked the Fort Riley community outdoors at Marshall Army Air Field.



Rick Nielson, guitarist, and Robin Zander, lead singer and guitarist, with Cheap Trick sing together.

The concert brought around 2,500 people to the post Saturday night. Soldiers and their families and people from hours away, came to watch the bands perform.

Night Ranger took the stage at 8 p.m., with lots of energy and enthusiasm.

"We love Kansas and the military here," said Jack Blades, guitarist and vocalist, while rallying the crowd. "The five-man band played popular hits such as "Sister Christian" and "You Can Still Rock in America," while the crowd cheered with arms in the air.

Honoring the military and Fort Riley soldiers, Blades dedicated "The Secret of My Success," in support of the troops overseas, stressing how successful they have been.

"Night Ranger on song, and Fort Riley on attitude," screamed Blades while Night Ranger left the stage, preparing the crowd for Cheap Trick.

Opening traditionally, with "Hello There," and storming on stage with bright suits and colorful instruments, Cheap Trick was quick to pump up the crowd.

Playing a mix of old and new music, their popular hit "I want you to want me" went over well with the audience, who sang and danced along.

Among the crowd were soldiers from the 156th Signal Battalion, a National Guard unit from Michigan, who have been mobilized to Fort Riley for over a month.

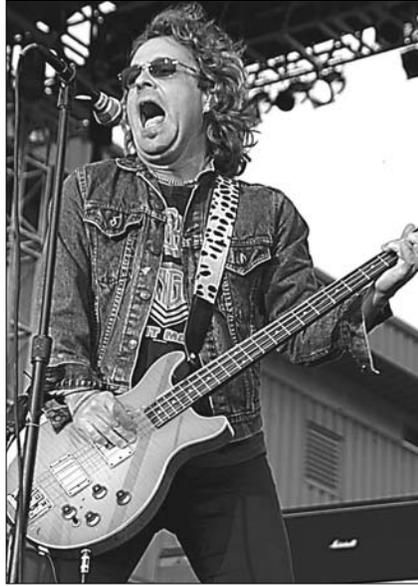
"I felt like a kid again after seeing Night Ranger," said Staff Sgt. Brian Anderson, 156th Signal Bn.

Anderson said the concert was a great morale booster.

"I think for the unit and everyone here, it's a fantastic venue," said Sgt. Kenneth Robart, also with the 156th Signal Bn. "The concert is great for morale, it helps friendships build and gives us confidence before we go overseas."

Robart said he was excited to see the outside community enjoying the concert as well.

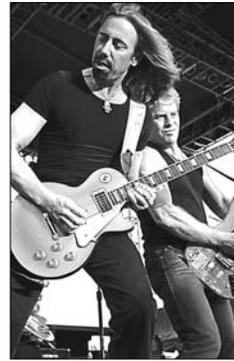
"The purpose of having the concert series is to provide good entertainment to soldiers, families and communities, and to get people out of the house," said Chad Baldwin, event coordinator, Directorate of Community Activities. "We want to make people's life enjoyable."



Jack Blades plays lead guitar and sings for Night Ranger at a concert held on Fort Riley May 24. The band opened the show for Cheap Trick.



Fans cheer as Night Ranger takes the stage during the Army Summer Concert Series stop at Marshall Army Air Field, Fort Riley.



Jeff Watson and Brad Gillis of Night Ranger play to the crowd. See page 10 for an interview with the band.

Local scholarship recipients honored

By Jamie Bender
Staff writer

Sixteen scholarships were awarded and handed out by Brig. Gen. Dennis Hardy, commanding general, 24th Infantry Division, (Mechanized) and Fort Riley, in an informal ceremony last week at the home of Brig. Gen. Frank Helmick, assistant division commander (maneuver), 24th Inf. Div.

After presenting the scholarships, Hardy addressed the students. "I would like to congratulate all our scholarship winners," said Hardy. "You really do represent our future. Whether you are in the college, the high school or the v-tech side of things, you have a lot of hopes and dreams, and obviously you are working on bringing them alive and that's important."

Hardy also thanked everyone involved in the process of selection of the winners.

"These folks have contributed so much time, over and above in many cases," he said. "They have

families and responsibilities, and that's pretty significant.... You are touching our future."



Su Hui Grondski accepts a scholarship certificate from Brig. Gen. Dennis Hardy, commanding general, 24th Infantry Division (Mech) and Fort Riley.

There were four categories of scholarships awarded. Four were awarded in the spouses' category.

Shanna Lawson took home a \$500 scholarship. Lawson is attending Washburn University and is majoring in human services.

Melissa Darroch was also awarded a \$300 scholarship. Darroch is attending Cloud County Community College and is majoring in Nursing.

Dana Ward was awarded a \$750 scholarship. Ward is also attending Cloud County Community College and is majoring in accounting.

Su Hui Grondski took home a \$1200 scholarship. Grondski is attending Upper Iowa University and is majoring in business.

There were two awards in the category for those attending Vocational/Technical schools.

Evon Bennet was awarded a \$500 scholarship. Bennet is attending Manhattan Area Technical College and is majoring in nursing.

Ellen Merrell was awarded a \$800 scholarship. Merrell is also

See Scholarships Page 10

Campaign successful

By Kim Levine
Staff Writer

The Fort Riley Army Emergency Relief fund drive ended May 13, bringing in an unexpected amount of donations.

The AER monetary goal for the drive was \$30,000, said Sgt. Maj. Larry Adams, Directorate of Community Activities. The goal this year was lower than other years because of the current deployments of Fort Riley soldiers. During the Desert Shield/Storm deployments, Fort Riley's AER drive brought in around \$12,000.

But deployments did not stop the soldiers at Fort Riley this year. The campaign collected over \$83,000, and the generosity of the soldiers resulted in the goal being nearly tripled, said Kaye Moseley, AER program coordinator.

"The unit project officers put forth a tremendous effort to reach every soldier and give them an opportunity to donate to the AER fund, and the soldiers responded to this worthy project," said Moseley.

The money collected will go into a central Army fund, and will help soldiers with emergency leaves and other unexpected expenses. "I am proud to see soldiers care for a program that allows them to help each other out in times of emergency," said Adams.

Last year, Fort Riley's AER helped 367 soldiers, and dispersed over \$176,000, said Moseley. Army-wide, AER helps an average of 10.5 percent of the active force each year.

"The hard work, extra efforts and generous contributions epitomize the caring spirit of the soldiers and the Army's tradition of taking care of its own," said Moseley, who considers the drive a tremendous success.



Summer safety imperative on Fort Riley

By Kim Levine
Staff Writer

The Directorate of Environment and Safety has kicked off their annual 101 days of summer safety campaign.

"The campaign is an in-depth assessment of the hazards that face our soldiers and families," said Paul Inman, chief, DES Safety Division.

Inman said safety is important during the summer months

because adults and children will be participating in more outdoor activities, and will be prone to more hazards.

"Exposure to the sun has the potential to cause serious health issues, such as dehydration, sunburn and ultra-violet exposure to the eyes," said Inman.

Kansas summers tend to be very hot, and heat injuries are the primary concern in this area.

Inman said everyone should remember to provide adequate water and shade during all out-

door activities.

Other potential summer hazards include spider bites, ticks, vehicle accidents, water-related accidents and grills.

The Army has a Risk Management Model, and Inman suggests using the model to plan activities.

"When planning summer activities, evaluate the activity for potential hazards, implement controls to make the activity safe and discuss concerns with family members to ensure the activity will be fun and safe," said Inman.

Families can get more information, including detailed summer safety tips, on the Fort Riley website, www.riley.army.mil. Click on the link to command safety, and then to summer safety.

Other websites with summer safety information include the Army Safety Center, <http://safety.army.mil>, and the National Safety Council, www.nsc.org.

Anyone in the Fort Riley community can also visit the DES Safety Division, located on Main Post, building 407.

Safety Tips for Summer

- * Drink plenty of water.
- * Always use sunscreen while outdoors, and reapply frequently.
- * Wear seat belts while driving, and never drink and drive.
- * Be a courteous driver, and don't drive when you are tired.
- * Wear bright colored jackets or shirts on motorcycles.
- * Always warm up before playing sports and exercising.
- * Always wear approved helmets while biking, rollerblading or skateboarding.
- * Headphones are prohibited while jogging, biking and skating on public roadways.
- * Do not swim alone, and do not drink alcohol while swimming.
- * Only dive in approved areas. Obey 'no diving' signs.
- * Wear life jackets while boating or participating in water sports.
- * Use insect repellent while outdoors.
- * Always check the weather forecast before participating in outdoor activities.

Night Ranger members have military ties, support Iraq efforts

By Ryan D. Wood
Staff Writer

The soldiers of Fort Riley traded in their BDU's and berets for



Brad Gillis, lead guitar and vocalist for Night Ranger, plays at a concert on Fort Riley. Gillis said he always chooses to play at military installations, if given the choice.

T-shirts and rock and roll on May 24, as Night Ranger and Cheap Trick came to town as part of the Army Summer Concert Series.

Night Ranger opened the show

with a blistering rendition of "Touch of Madness" then moved through the rest of the night with such hits as "Sister Christian" and "Secret Of My Success."

"We do the songs that the people love the most — get the most reaction. Sister Christian, 'Don't Tell Me You Love Me,' 'Rock In America,' 'When You Close Your Eyes' — those are the ones that started us," said Brad Gillis, lead guitar and vocals for the group.

"We just put in the movie soundtrack, Secret Of My Success. The other night we just started playing it and it was so great to have a reaction from a song we haven't played in 15 years," said Kelly Keagy, the band's drummer and one of the lead singers.

The crowd reaction to the songs was electric and the band reacted to the energy of the heavily military audience. According to the band, Night Ranger's ties to the military run deep, and they make room for military shows every year.

"All of our parents, they fought in WWII or the Korean War. We grew up like that. I know that Brad's (Gillis) father was a pilot, so we're kind of connected to the military in a lot of ways," said Keagy.

"If they let us know it's a choice, we can play here or there, and it's a military base, we've got to do that. The military is so great and so efficient and they have

everything so together," Gillis said.

Acknowledging the soldiers and other servicemembers still serving around the world, the band dedicated songs and pumped up the crowd with shouted tributes and praise in-between numbers.

"We've been over to Japan and done a few military bases over there and it turned out real well, so it is a regular thing for us every year... Especially with what's going on now, we feel like we are giving something back to them," said Gillis.

"We're very proud of them (servicemembers). I know that they feel good about what they're doing over there and we feel good about what they are doing over there. After knowing what all those people have been through under that regime. We were looking for chemicals, but now it doesn't even matter. Those people need some help, and I'm glad that we have Americans there to help them, no matter what they say in Hollywood," said Keagy.

"It wasn't long after they went over there that they were starting to see how those people were living. I didn't think twice about it. It needed to happen," he said.

Night Ranger says they plan to do as many shows for the military as they can, while starting work on a new album and working on numerous individual projects.

Scholarships

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attending Manhattan Area Technical College and is majoring in nursing.

Five scholarships were awarded in the college category. Stephanie Kliebert was awarded a \$750 scholarship. She is attending Salem College and has a double major of international relations and German.

Brandon Converse was also awarded \$750. Converse is attending Kansas State University and is majoring in industrial engineering.

Katie Kennedy was awarded \$1000. Kennedy is also attending Kansas State University and is majoring in chemical engineering.

Callie Sexton was awarded \$1200. Sexton is attending Kansas State University and is majoring in architectural engineering with a minor in business.

Robert Lloyd was also awarded \$1200. Lloyd is attending Fort Hays State University and is majoring in business administration and management.

There were also five scholarships awarded in the high school category.

Charles Sexton was awarded \$600. He is a graduate of Manhattan High School and has been accepted to Kansas State University, where he will major in mechanical engineering.

Christina Paul was also awarded \$600. She is a graduate of Junction City High School and has been accepted to North Park University, Chicago and Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Okla. She will be majoring in nursing.

Adrienne Carraway was awarded \$1000. She is a graduate of Hayden High School and will be attending Kansas State University, where she will major in pre-law, broadcast journalism or foreign affairs/political science.

Jocelyn Mattoon was awarded \$1200. She is a graduate of Council Grove High School and will also be attending Kansas State University. She will major in anthropology.

Lindsey Converse was awarded \$2000. She is a graduate of Manhattan High School and has

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Fort Riley Sports

May 30, 2003

America's Warfighting Center

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Fairway green, ready to play

By Michael Watson
Staff writer

The fairways at Custer Hill Golf Course are turning green, and that makes a round of golf much more enjoyable, said Amanda Schable, assistant manager at the course.

"The fairways are Bermuda grass, which stays green from May to September," she said. "So now is the perfect time to play because the fairways are nice and green. The course is really in excellent condition."

Activity at the course is starting to pick up, Schable said, but it is slow enough during the week that golfers can play whenever they want without needing to schedule a tee time. However, on weekends golfers should call and make a tee time before 10 a.m. on the day they want to play.

Rental clubs and carts are available at the clubhouse, and that has been good news for many soldiers in the Army Reserve and National Guard.

Sgt. 1st Class Raymond Reynolds, 234th Signal Battalion,

said he really enjoys playing golf at Custer Hill, but when he was mobilized to Fort Riley from the Iowa National Guard he was not able to bring his clubs.

He said he is glad clubs are available, because playing golf has helped him relax and have fun on post.

"There is a lot of stress on deploying troops," Reynolds said, "and golf is a good way to relax and relieve some of that stress. We are deploying soon, and where we are going there are no golf courses, so we are trying to play as much as possible now, during our free time."

Schable said the golf course has definitely seen an increase in club rentals because of reservists and guardsmen.

Because of the high demand for equipment, she said anyone needing rentals should get them by noon.

Custer Hill is a tough golf course, but Schable said it is not only for the experienced golfer. There are even clinics available this summer, for both beginners and those who just want to sharp-

en their game. There are programs for both juniors and adults.

A junior clinic is already scheduled for June 12, 19, 26 and July 3 and 10.

"During those five days, children will learn the fundamentals and etiquette of golf," Schable said. "Then, toward the end of the clinic, they will be playing a full round of golf to use the tips that they learned. For lessons, call and sign up - space is limited."

Custer Hill will also have its Luncheon Ladies program in June.

From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on June 10, 11 and 12, ladies can hit the links and get free golf tips.

And while golfers are at the clubhouse on their lunch break, they can eat at the snack bar. It is temporarily open while the Strike Zone Pub at Custer Hill Lanes is being renovated. The snack bar is open Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., for anyone wanting to grab a bite to eat.

For more information on golf clinics or to reserve a tee time, call the Custer Hill Golf Course, 239-5412.



Annual membership
E1-E4 \$250 single/\$350 family
E5-E9 \$350 single/\$385 family
O1 and up \$385 single/\$485 family

10-play punch card \$90
Golf cart rental \$14 single/\$20 for double
Club rental \$5 for a full set
Pull cart rental \$2

Soldiers E1-E4 play free on weekdays and \$7 on weekends.

Army NASCAR driver recovering

CHARLOTTE (May 27, 2003) - U.S. Army/MB2 NASCAR driver Jerry Nadeau was discharged Monday from Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center in Richmond, Va. and was transferred to North Carolina where he will continue his recovery at the Charlotte Institute of Rehabilitation.

At the time of discharge, doctors at VCU Medical Center said Nadeau was improving daily and is on an excellent recovery path.

Nadeau's rehabilitation will continue to consist of physical, recreational, occupational and speech therapy.

Upon discharge, Nadeau's wife, Jada, said, "We are thankful and very appreciative for the excellent medical care that Jerry received at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center. It is a facility of the highest standard and everyone affiliated with the hospital was compassionate, professional and truly wonderful to work with."

"We look forward to returning to North Carolina as Jerry continues his recovery. He is doing great and we know that we are going to another excellent facility at the Charlotte Institute of Rehabilitation."

"I join Jerry and all of the Nadeau family in extending a sincere thank you to the fans and everyone in the racing community for the heartwarming support that we have received. Your thoughts and prayers are being answered and it is so difficult to put into words how much this has meant to the family."

Nadeau, 32, was admitted to the VCU Medical Center May 2, after an accident during a practice session at Richmond International Raceway. He suffered a moderate to severe head injury, a fractured left scapula (shoulder blade) and lung and rib injuries.

Nadeau was transported from Richmond to Charlotte by MedCenter Air, provided by Carolinas Medical Center.



NASCAR driver Jerry Nadeau with the Army sponsored racing car.

Post pools open for summer with new slide, youth lessons

By William Biles
Staff Writer

Custer Hill Swimming Pool opened this past weekend with a new addition for pool goers to enjoy. A new double slide has been added to the pool, where people can slide their way into the water side-by-side.

Another exciting addition, which will be shared between Custer Hill and Eyster Pools, is a 20-foot long inflatable obstacle course.

As the swimming season begins, so do the swimming classes at Eyster Pool.

Registration for the classes began Tuesday, with classes beginning June 9 and going until June 20.

There will be several levels of instruction, ranging from the youngest class, Infant Preschool Aquatics Program, to three different levels of instruction based on

the students swimming strength, said Hedy Bailey, swimming program manager, Eyster Pool.

"The first day of each session, the instructors will do an assessment for each of the swimmers," she said.

In addition to those classes, there will also be a Guppies class, which is a spin-off of the IPAP, said Bailey.

"This session is more of a class oriented session without the child's parents in the water, unlike the IPAP class," she said. "The class will focus on kicking and getting comfortable lying on their backs and getting their faces wet."

The class will also teach the children water safety by showing them how to properly fasten and wear a life jacket, she said.

The Guppies class is for children ages four to six, and the IPAP are for children from ages six months to four years.

IPAP classes are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10 - 10:30 a.m.

Guppies' classes are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10:30 - 11 a.m.

Levels I to V are held Monday - Thursday, with each class being a half hour long. Level I class begins at 2 p.m. and the Level III class ends at 3:30 p.m.

The registration fee must be paid before a child is placed on the roster sheet.

Class registration fees are \$15 for the IPAP and Guppies' class and \$20 for the Level I - Level III classes.

To kick off summer fun at Eyster Pool, the pool will be having a Teen Fun Night tonight, 7 - 10 p.m. Cost for the event is \$1 per student.

The Custer Hill Pool's hours for the summer season are 11 a.m. - 8 p.m., May 25 - Sept. 1.

Osage orange trees, rock walls, barbed wire all found on post

By Alan Hynek
DES Biologist

The Fort Riley landscape is typical Flint Hills prairie, dominated by rolling meadows with gallery forests along the streams and rivers. The Flint Hills were shaped by decades of erosion, drought and floods. The native vegetation evolved to withstand extremes in temperatures and heavy impacts by large grazers. Early settlers though brought many changes to the vast sea of prairie. Some of those are still visible on Fort Riley. Most notable are permanent structures that were meant to contain livestock or, in some cases, to keep them out of crop fields. Most soldiers and outdoorsmen on the fort have probably noticed long rows of gnarled and twisted Osage orange trees, complete with a few strands of rusty old barbed wire. An occasional rock wall is apparent, stretching across the grasslands of Fort Riley.

Osage orange is not native to Kansas, but is well adapted to the area. The natural range for these fiercely armed trees extended north from Texas to central Oklahoma. Before the invention of barbed wire, these living fences

were the most practical solution for corralling livestock. When planted close together, these trees become entangled to form a nearly impenetrable barrier. Osage orange is long lived, with many trees approaching the century mark. However, after the invention of barbed wire, these living

fences were no longer needed. The stems of the trees continued their contribution to ranchers in the barbed wire age as an excellent source for fence posts. The wood of Osage orange is hard and durable and can stand for decades.

Stone walls are not as common as hedgerows on Fort Riley, but evidence of these structures still remain. While the material to create a stone wall was almost limitless in the Flint Hills, the time and energy to create them was intense. The history of using stone walls for livestock fencing came from Europe, where use of them continues today. Although initially building the walls was labor intense, they could stand for generations with little maintenance. Some walls were elaborately built, with several layers of horizontally laid rock and a single layer of flat limestone on top, laid

at an angle to dispel water.

Within many hedgerows are a few strands of rusted barbed wire. The barbed wire industry began in 1872 when three men, Joseph Glidden, Jacob Haisch and Isaac Ellwood, decided they could improve the current standard of livestock fencing. The first strands of barbed wire were created on a DeKalb, Ill. farm. Using parts of an old coffee grinder, the three men fashioned "S" shaped barbs. Then two strands of straight wire were attached on one end to a tree and the other end to a grinding stone and twisted, securely attaching the hand-fashioned barbs. Although the process is much more efficient today, the same method is used.

The popularity of barbed wire boomed in the late 1800's. Farmers, ranchers and blacksmiths tried their hand at creating the perfect barbed wire. Hundreds of patents were developed and even more wire was created and sold locally without legal protection. After much trial and error, the seemingly endless varieties of barbed wire have been reduced to only a few patents currently in use today. However, with the many styles of barbed wire created over the years, collecting became a common pastime.

Please note that it is illegal to remove any artifacts from federal property, including barbed wire.



Permanent structures of rock, Osage orange trees and barbed wire were built to house large grazing animals in Kansas during the 1800s.

On the Wildside: News About Nature

Health

Know Point of Service health benefit rules before traveling

By **Emilie Howe**
MEDDAC PAO

With children out of school for the summer, there may be soldiers and families planning a trip to grandma and grandpa's home far far away from Fort Riley and the TRICARE Central Region. Point of Service may be an option to know about in case there is a need for medical care while away.

Point of Service is a benefit for TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Prime

beneficiary who sees a healthcare provider who is not part of the TRICARE network. There are no enrollment fees or copayments for active duty Prime and their families or TRICARE Prime Remote for active duty family members beneficiaries. "However, all TRICARE Prime beneficiaries are responsible for associated costs when using the Point of Service option," according to TriWest. The Point of Service option is intended for a one-time visit to a non-network provider

where preauthorization wasn't secured by the beneficiary. Point of Service cost sharing should be expected when a TRICARE Prime beneficiary seeks urgent medical care and hasn't obtained authorization or permission from the person's assigned Primary Care Manager. Point of Service cost sharing will also apply when TRICARE Prime beneficiaries have their prescriptions filled at a non-network civilian pharmacy. In cases where a TRICARE Prime beneficiary uses the Point of Service

option, the annual deductible of \$300 for an individual or \$600 for a family is the Prime beneficiaries' responsibility. After meeting this deductible, the cost-share for Point Of Service is 50 percent of TRICARE's maximum allowable charge. Additional charges from non-network providers are the beneficiaries' responsibility and Point Of Service related out-of-pocket expenses do not apply to the annual enrollment year catastrophic cap.

For more information about TRICARE's Point Of Service option, visit the TriWest website or call 1-888-874-9378.

Decontamination team volunteers, practice skills during exercise

By **Emilie L. Howe**
MEDDAC PAO

In the hot zone of contamination, Irwin Army Community Hospital's Decontamination Team had prepared for their first-time participation in this year's Mass Casualty Exercise. The faces seen inside white decontamination hoods, suits and tape-wrapped yellow boots are volunteers from the hospital staff.

There's a push toward non-medical persons, such as house-keeping or warehouse employees, to be active participants of a hospital's decontamination team,

according to Ron Phillips, Safety Officer, IACH.

Fourteen staff members went through the Hazardous Material course and have given their consent to be on-call 24 hours. Phillips said their training has come from Lt. Paul Wilson, Fort Riley Fire Department, who is qualified in Hazardous Materials and as a First Responder.

"From what I saw, the decon team's morale was very high and had people from a lot of different work's areas in this hospital," he said.

Richard L. Jones, a team leader who works in Medical Materiel of

IACH Logistics, is also a volunteer firefighter. The second team leader is 1st Lt. Brenda Rudyk, Environmental Science Officer, Preventive Medicine.

"This Safety Office tries to make it so our team leaders go through the 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Responder course at Barton County Community Junior College," Phillips said.

IACH is required to have a decontamination plan as well as a person's trained for decontamination, by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

IACH Briefs

Breast-feeding Classes

The Women and Infant Care Center of Irwin Army Community Hospital offers free classes on Breast-feeding Babies on the third Wednesday of each month. A dietitian will address the nutritional requirements for breast-feeding moms and a Lactation Educator will talk about the advantages of breast-feeding and how to prepare for successful nursing. Breast-feeding techniques, troubleshooting advice and where to find support will also be offered. Classes are held in the Obstetrics classroom on the third floor, 1 - 2:30 p.m. Everyone is invited and walk-ins are welcome. For more information, call Maj. Susanna Itara, 239-7434.

New OB Class

The New OB Class is held every Tuesday

morning, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m., on the 4th floor of Irwin Army Community Hospital. A positive home pregnancy test is required before scheduling your attendance of the New OB Class. Spouses, or men and women who are the support persons for the pregnant soldier or military dependent, are welcome to attend. The New OB Class is not a labor and delivery class.

Expectant mothers will be introduced to the IACH OB/GYN staff members; fill out their OB charts, review medical and genetic history with an OB/GYN staff member, and will also be given a copy of "Pregnancy and Childbirth." This is a three-ring binder with information about appointment schedules, facts about pregnancy, childbirth, infant care and a local resource directory.

To schedule your attendance of the New OB Class, call the TRICARE Service Center, 784-1200 or toll-free, 1-888-874-9378.

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Travel

State capitol filled with history, open to visitors

By Justin Vinje
129th MPAD

Goods from around the world, a mixture of old-world innovation and modern high-tech, and one fierce abolitionist all vie to greet visitors exploring the Kansas Capitol in Topeka.

Three one-hour tours are given before and after lunch Monday through Friday, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., and admission is free.

Tours begin with a ride up to the third floor of the capitol in a fast-moving Otis cage elevator, installed in 1923. The 1995 film, Truman, set in Washington, D.C., was partially filmed at the capitol because the lift is quite rare, according to Jerry Gerard, tour guide.

"The elevator is so old, some replacement parts must be hand-made," Gerard said.

Construction on the capitol building itself began in 1861, but was quickly interrupted by the Civil War, according to Gerard. Thirty-seven years later, it was finally ready for use.

Exiting the elevator on the third floor, tour groups are led to the legislative chambers in the east and west wings of the capitol. When the Legislature is not sitting, typically from sometime in May through December, tour groups are allowed to enter the chambers. The Senate chambers in the east wing are first on the tour.

A large room, last remodeled in 1885 according to Gerard, accommodates Kansas' 40 senators. Gerard said that white onyx detailing from Mexico, Belgian marble walls, stained-glass windows from France and bronze supporting columns hand-worked

by Italian craftsmen were all imported to complement the American woodwork. Rows of cherry wood desks seat senators, while their president works at an elevated desk, lit by green lamps that are never shut off, representing everlasting peace, said Gerard.

Modern touches to the chambers include upper gallery seating for the public and special guests of the Senate. Jury-box style seating for the media hugs a corner of the room, while water coolers near the doors provide refreshment for the parched. The wooden chandeliers in the room are from Kansas and have been modified so that they can be raised and lowered electronically, which means no more death-defying aerobatics on ladders when lights need to be changed, according to Gerard.

The west wing, home to the Kansas House of Representatives, is a bit less roomy, accommodating 124. A large electronic box, resembling a scoreboard, dominates the room. The device actually allows representatives to call roll, vote and signal for assistance from pages at the touch of a button, lighting up colored bulbs when a request is made, according to Gerard. Rows of desks line the floor, decorated with the occasional Far Side cartoon.

Overall, the west wing is similar to the east, but a striking difference is the ceiling, according to Gerard. An \$800,000 restoration in 1993 revealed original artwork painted high overhead near the turn of the 20th century. Gerard said that back then members of the House were allowed to smoke while in session, leaving a film on the ceiling that yellowed with age. This marred the artwork and lead the House to have it painted over. During the restoration, the layers of paint were chipped away, down to the original artwork, which was then restored and detailed with 23-carat gold leaf, said Gerard.

Next on the tour is the state library, full of sturdy metal shelves laden with nonfiction. Spiral staircases lead upward to more rows of books, a three-quarter-inch translucent glass flooring

underfoot. Designed to shed more light, the floors were an idea borrowed from Kansas University in Lawrence. Gerard said no one has fallen through to date, adding that suspect floor tiles are replaced immediately.

Across the hall is the governor's office. Upon entering the spacious lobby, a receptionist's desk faces the door, while the governor's ceremonial office occupies the lion's share of the room. An Indian rug bearing Kansas' state seal fronts a double-sided partner's desk, though the governor actually uses a secure room as her main workplace.

Wall murals dominated the focus of the tour's remainder. The dome of the capitol is lined with artwork representing such concepts as temperance, religion, plenty and power. A source of much detraction over the years, however, is John Steuart Curry's Tragic Prelude, painted on one of the main lobby walls in the late 1930s, according to Gerard. Famed abolitionist John Brown is the centerpiece of the mural, wild hair framing a howling face, rifle in one hand and Bible in the other. Curry, who painted several of the capitol's murals, eventually left after painting skunks into a night scene. The skunks were decorated with names of several of his prominent detractors, and such a stink was raised that Curry departed, leaving his work unsigned and unfinished, only to be resumed many years later, Gerard said.

Gerard, who's been leading tours at the capitol for two years now, admits that before he came to work there, he'd never been to the capitol before, though now he says he swells with pride at the magnificence that lies at his fingertips.

"It's really something, how they've been able to maintain and retain the look and history of the building," he said.

To reach the Kansas Capitol, take exit 362B off I-70, following signs to 10th Street and Jackson. For more information, call (785)296-3966.



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Jerry Gerard, tour guide at the Kansas Capitol, Topeka, talks to visiting students about the history of the building.

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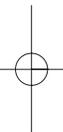
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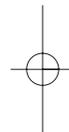
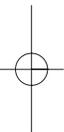
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