



A periodic look at Eastern Region happenings



Heroic Acts

Fla. JROTC cadets to be honored for roles in saving lives

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Sgt. 1st class named region's top NCO

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High school marksmen zero in on shooting titles

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Region profile: Mark Fox

Title: Recruiting operations officer for 6th Brigade headquarters at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga.

Hometown: Macon, Ga.

Residence: Savannah, Ga.

Family: Wife: Shirley
1 daughter: Victoria, 9
2 sons: Joseph, 7;
Thomas, 5

Hobbies: He is a salt-water fisherman.

Tenure with Eastern Region: Has been with 6th Brigade for one week

Something few people know about him: He enjoys an occasional good cigar.

Life before Eastern Region: Spent five years as an OIC for the ROTC program at Mercer University in Macon, Ga., and spent nine months as a senior Army instructor for JROTC



Faced with potentially tragic situations, two Florida cadets took charge and became

Life Savers

Gates, Keyes to receive program's highest honor next month

By **STEVE AREL**
Editor

Don't call Gina Keyes or Evelyn Gates heroes. They don't refer to themselves that way.

Instead, they reserve that term for people they see as having more courage or demonstrating more bravery.

But in the eyes of those in the Pinellas County (Florida) School District, and especially in the eyes of those whose lives they saved, Keyes and Gates are heroes, even if they don't accept the title.

The two JROTC students will be recognized jointly in March with JROTC's highest honor, the Medal of Heroism. Four have been award in Eastern Region in the last year.

The medal is a Department of the Army award that goes to cadets who perform acts of heroism that "must be an accomplishment so exceptional and outstanding that it clearly sets the individual apart from fellow students or from other persons in similar circumstances."

Keyes, a junior at Dixie Hollins High School in St. Petersburg, Fla., will be honored for her role in saving a



Photo by retired Master Sgt. Rob Hockman

Gina Keyes stands in front of her platoon prior to an inspection this week at Dixie Hollins High School in St. Petersburg, Fla.

drowning man. Gates, who graduated last year from Boca Ciega High School in St. Petersburg, is credited with saving a fellow cadet who suffered a life-threatening seizure during a JROTC competition.

For Keyes, the Medal of Heroism is the latest in a list of honors she has collected, including recognition from

the city and local emergency services groups.

Even today, a little more than a year after her heroic act, Keyes doesn't believe she did anything extraordinary.

"I just did what I thought was needed," she said. "It was faith for me to be there."

Keyes and her mother were at their apartment complex's pool Oct. 4, 2004, when Keyes' mother noticed a man who had been wallowing near the bottom of the 9-foot deep end for several minutes. She urged her daughter to dive in after him while she ran for a phone and dialed 911.

Without hesitation, the 123-pound Keyes leapt in, followed by another woman who was at the pool. The two struggled to lift the 250-pound man, but eventually raised his body enough to where another woman and Keyes' mother standing on the edge could pull him out.

As Keyes came to the man's aid, she said he was so blue, she knew he was dead. But as her mother prepared to administer CPR, the man began spitting water and breathing on his own.

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**On
the
cover**

Britton Watson of Sarasota Military Academy in Sarasota, Fla., won the precision class during the JROTC Eastern Marksmanship Competition earlier this month at Fort Benning, Ga.

Civilian Marksmanship Program

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"I just reacted," Keyes said. "I can't believe I did that. It surprised me."

Keyes' JROTC instructors learned of her heroism by chance. They were teaching cadets about first aid one day when they asked students if they had ever had reason to dial 911. Keyes raised her hand and began telling her story.

Her instructors were amazed, but said they weren't surprised Keyes took charge. She's a leader in their program.

"You shouldn't do something because you think it'll result in an award," said retired Lt. Col. Joe Hunt, Dixie Hollins' senior instructor. "You should do it because it's the right thing to do. That's exactly what she did, and that's what we teach them.

"We tell the kids that we're teaching you these things (in first aid) so hopefully if you're called upon to use these skills you can use them. But that'll be your decision at the time something happens. You never know how you're going to react. We ask them to make believe it's them in that car or being swept out to sea, and what would you want people to do?"

Evelyn Gates and other Boca Ciega cadets were at the Florida Raider Challenge Feb. 12, 2005, when a fellow cadet collapsed and begun convulsing from a massive seizure. Gates, the battalion commander, ran to the girl's aid.

She immediately placed a stick in the girl's mouth to prevent the girl from swallowing or biting off her tongue, and then gripped the girl tightly to avoid injury as the convulsions became more violent.

"I felt I would do that for anybody," Gates said. "It's a natural thing to do."

The incident marked the girl's first seizure. She now takes medication to control them, and doctors believe they could go away altogether with treatment, said retired Lt. Col. Wayne McGlamry, Boca Ciega's senior instructor.

"We tell the kids that we're teaching you these things (in first aid) so hopefully if you're called upon to use these skills you can use them. But that'll be your decision at the time something happens."

Retired Lt. Col. Joe Hunt,
*senior JROTC instructor at
Dixie Hollins High School
in St. Petersburg, Fla.*

For Gates, now 19, the situation left a lasting impression on her life. She said she is more attune to things going on around her and has enrolled in a junior college with a goal of becoming a nurse.

Gates' former JROTC instructor later asked her where she learned her life-saving treatment techniques. Her answer: his first aid instruction block.

"You have a lot of young leaders, and you expect them to do the right thing," McGlamry said, adding that several people stood around as Gates took action. "She dove right in and started doing something. That's what makes people remarkable."

Keyes thinks a lot about the day she helped save a life. She thinks about how the man could have latched onto her and kept her under. She thinks about how she could have become a victim of the tragedy herself.

Mostly, she thinks about doing it again if faced with a similar situation.

"I would think somebody would do it for me," Keyes said. "I don't think of myself as a hero. A hero is someone who drives an ambulance and firemen. I just did what I felt was appropriate."

At a glance

A look at other recent JROTC Medal of Heroism honorees:

Jacklyn Crittenden

Cadet Capt. Jacklyn Crittenden of Mount Pleasant High School in Wilmington, Del., had just finished swimming a relay race July 12 as part of the aquatics phase of the JROTC Cadet Leadership Challenge Camp Adventure at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa. Suddenly, she noticed a fellow cadet who had been swimming as part of a competing squad slow down in the middle of the pool. Her arms began failing her.

Though lifeguards were present, they weren't immediately aware of the troubled cadet. So Crittenden, seeing the cadet bob under the water, dove in toward her. Crittenden swam underneath the cadet in such a way to lift the cadet's head out of the water. When the cadet was able to catch her breath, Crittenden used her strength to propel her to the edge of the pool.

Crittenden was credited with saving the cadet's life and was honored earlier this month.

William Baker

Cadet William Baker of Ooltewah High School in Ooltewah, Tenn., was honored in June for his role in helping save an infant from drowning. Baker, a fellow cadet and his 10-year-old cousin had been in a local park May 1, 2004, when they noticed a stroller carrying the infant plunge into a rain-swollen, snake-infested creek.

As the stroller submerged, Baker, with disregard for his own safety, raced into the turbulent water. Fighting a current and water over his head, Baker managed to pull the infant to safety.



Photo by Steve Arel

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Lilly flashes a smile after he was named Eastern Region's NCO of the Year Thursday at Fort Knox, Ky.

Va. State newcomer earns region's top NCO recognition, advances to CC event

By **STEVE AREL**
Editor

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Lilly joined Eastern Region barely two months ago. Already, he's making an impact.

The operations noncommissioned officer for Virginia State University is this year's region NCO of the Year. He picked up the award Thursday, beating Sgt. 1st Class David Kusko Jr. of Wright State University.

Even though the region put Lilly on a pedestal, he downplayed the victory, saying he just happened to be at the top of his game over the three days of competition at Fort Knox, Ky.

"To say we're the best NCOs Cadet Command has to offer in this region, I'm not confident with that," Lilly said. "For this day and for this time, we're on top."

Lilly advances to the Cadet Command NCO competition to be held April 4-6 at Fort Lewis, Wash. Kusko is an alternate if Lilly is unable to participate.

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Photo by Steve Arel

Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Dodson took aim during the rifle qualification portion of the region NCO of the Year competition. Dodson finished fourth overall with 377 points.

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Five of seven brigades were represented in the region event. The group, all of which were sergeants first class, squared off in six events: written exam, physical fitness test, rifle qualification, day and night land navigation and a board.

Region Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Peters called the group a collection of quality Soldiers. In running down the scores of each participant at the awards ceremony, he referred to each place as a "winner."

Peters said that what he likes about the competition is that it tests the complete Soldier.

"Just because a guy's good answering questions (before a board) but isn't physically fit ... he wouldn't have made it here," he said.

Lilly, who ended up earning a collective score of 399 points of a possible 480 to Kusko's 385 points, said he wasn't pleased with his performance entering the final day of competition. He admitted being nervous and felt he could have shot better during rifle qualification.

"No matter how many times you take a PT test, you have butterflies," he said. "That just compounded everything at the board."

The board, Lilly and Kusko said, was most challenging. Not because they were unsure of how they would perform but because they felt in less control than they did running two miles or firing a rifle.

But Lilly's outlook changed when he walked out of the board that included Peters, Sgt. Maj. James Anderson of 7th Brigade and Sgt. Maj. Brian Wallace of 2nd Brigade.



Photo by Steve Arel

Region Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Peters, foreground, offers words of encouragement to the five who competed for region NCO of the Year.

"Once you start talking, things start to go your way," Lilly said. "I walked out of the board pleased. My goal is to do as well as I can and leave the rest to the people who tabulate the scores. I had no control over that, so I didn't stress."

Peters said Lilly made up ground with his performance in the board. He was running third entering the final event.

Peters said what made the difference for Lilly was he spoke with confidence and knew the answers to questions.

"I kept telling them, 'Continue to do your best. When you get to the board, that can make the difference,' " Peters said. "This was a perfect example."

Lilly, 42, and Kusko, 37, are career Soldiers. They, like the other three region competitors, also have combat experience.

Lilly, who has served 15 years, grew up in a military family. His father is a retired sergeant major and serving is all he has ever wanted to do because the Army is the life he has always known.

He found out a week after he arrived at Virginia State

that he would represent the school in the 3rd Brigade NCO of the Year competition. He immediately began studying, because, being new to Cadet Command, he knew little, if anything, about the organization's history he later would be quizzed on.

"That was a real challenge," he said.

Kusko said, being with Wright State a short time, he encountered the same hurdle. But he didn't let it be a roadblock to representing his school and brigade admirably.

Kusko has been in the Army almost 13 years. He saw the Army as a path to maturity. Growing up in Southern California, he said he had no real goals or direction when he graduated high school. The Army gave him focus.

Now Lilly is focusing on the Cadet Command competition. He said he already feels pressure to step up his performance.

"There's going to be more pressure as you go up," he said.

Peters for one is confident Lilly will make a strong showing.

"His experience in the military will carry him," he said.

The results

Final point totals from the Eastern Region NCO of the Year competition:

399 points



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Lilly
Virginia State University

385 points



Sgt. 1st Class David Kusko Jr.
Wright State University

379 points



Sgt. 1st Class Jackie South
University of Central Florida

377 points



Sgt. 1st Class Jerry Dodson
Marshall University

358 points



Sgt. 1st Class Lee Morales
Princeton University

Region's top shooters now put national meet in crosshairs

By **STEVE AREL**
Editor

Retired Sgt. 1st Class Larry Aldridge figured his training as an Army infantryman would only get his cadets to a certain level of marksmanship. So last summer, he brought in a big gun.

Rich Castle, a former member of the all-Army marksmanship team.

Castle, who has two daughters on Aldridge's squad at Craigmont High School in Memphis, Tenn., teamed with Aldridge to get the cadets more in tune with their rifles and the art of shooting.

Weeks of rigorous training and focus resulted in a championship for Craigmont as it won the sporter team division of the Eastern Marksmanship Competition at Fort Benning, Ga., earlier this month. The group beat out a host of other teams from around the region, including the highly-decorated Ripley High School, which is just 30 miles from Craigmont and won last year's national event.

Ripley finished second behind Craigmont.

Craigmont's success went beyond the team category. Senior Derric Lee took first in individual sporter shooting.

"When we went into the match, we figured anyone of them could step up and win first," Aldridge said. "They've been that good this year."

Fifteen teams and 15 individuals competing as at-large entries took part in the second annual region

competition. They represented schools from throughout the region and Germany.

Competitors vied in two categories as teams and individuals: sporter and precision. Sporter involves the use of most any type of stock performance air rifle, while precision shooters fire more expensive, more specialized and more accurate equipment.

The top two four-person sporter and precision teams and the top three individuals who are not part of a team in each category earned berths in the national meet March 23-25.

Besides Craigmont and Ripley, teams from Wuerzburg High School in Germany and Fitzgerald High School in Georgia will be representatives as precision team winners. Individual sporters advancing are Stephan Smith of Pelion High School in South Carolina and Rustin Ault and Amanda Garlitz, both of Preston High School in West Virginia. On the precision side, berths went to Britton Watson of Sarasota Military Academy in Florida and Kaitlin Chaffin and Jon Meyer, both of Siegel High School in Tennessee.

Watson switched from sporter to precision shooting a little less than a year ago at the urging of his coach, who felt Watson had virtually mastered sporter marksmanship. Despite the relative inexperience in precision, Watson, who is 17 years old, said he wasn't too surprised at his region success considering he has been shooting rifles since he was 6.

He has helped build his skill by practicing upward of 15 hours a week with his school team and a more competitive squad in Tampa, Fla.

As the national meet nears, a confident Watson said he's focusing on refining his technique.

"What I've been doing is working so far, so I don't want to change it that much," said Watson, who will attend the University of Memphis next fall on an ROTC scholarship and who plans to be part of the school's marksmanship team.

Members of the Craigmont team will be fine-tuning their craft as well in the coming weeks. The squad is slated to compete just prior to the national meet in the Tennessee Junior Olympics, which will also include Ripley High School.

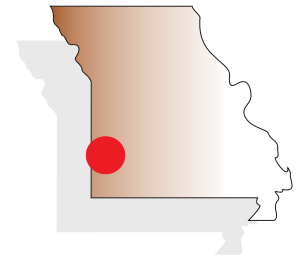
Aldridge said his shooters improved their skill by honing their mental approach to the sport and maintaining focus.

"You can see it on their faces," he said. "They block out everything around them. ... Things have just clicked."

Region representatives will find themselves facing stiff competition from competing services at the national event. But Eastern Region officials who organized the region matches are optimistic about the chances of region entries.

Shooters moving to the national level "were competitive across the board," said Carl Filip, marksmanship meet coordinator for Eastern Region.

At a glance



WHAT: National JROTC Air Rifle Championship

WHEN: March 23-25

WHERE: Fort Benning, Ga.

THIS YEAR'S REGION ENTRIES:

Precision

Teams:

Wuerzburg High School, Germany
Fitzgerald High School, Ga.

Individuals:

Britton Watson, Sarasota Military Academy, Fla.
Kaitlin Chaffin, Siegel High School, Tenn.
Jon Meyer, Siegel High School, Tenn.

Sporter

Teams:

Craigmont High School, Tenn.
Ripley High School, Tenn.

Individuals:

Stephan Smith, Pelion High School, S.C.
Rustin Ault, Preston High School, W. Va.
Amanda Garlitz, Preston High School, W. Va.

MacArthur Awards for excellence go to 3 Eastern Region programs

U.S. Army Cadet Command Public Affairs

FORT MONROE, Va. – Headquarters U.S. Army Cadet Command, the parent organization of the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, in conjunction Norfolk's General Douglas MacArthur Foundation, recently announced the Army ROTC battalions which received the MacArthur Award for 2005.

The ROTC units recognized this year from the Eastern Region are Bucknell University, in the small category, Wake Forest University for the medium size group and Rochester Institute of Technology was best for the larger battalions. The Western Region units honored were California State University, Fullerton in the small unit category, Wheaton College in the medium category and Arizona State University was the top large school within the region.

The MacArthur Awards were instituted in 1989 to honor the top Army ROTC units from around the country, said retired Marine Corps Col. William J. Davis, executive director of the General Douglas MacArthur Foundation.

"The awards recognize the individual units within the Army ROTC program that have achieved the standards that

best represent the ideals of the watch words of 'duty-honor-country' as practiced by General MacArthur," Davis said.

The Army ROTC battalions selected for the awards were the most successful of the command's 272 units in accomplishing their mission of training and commissioning the majority of the lieutenants entering the Army each year.

Army ROTC teaches students how to succeed in today's competitive world by providing them with leadership and management skills, which last a lifetime. Many graduates attribute their success in careers in government and industry to the training they received while ROTC cadets. Among the distinguished graduates of the ROTC program are former Secretary of State Colin Powell and Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton.

ROTC units are at 272 colleges and universities throughout the country. Students at nearly 1,200 other institutions of higher learning can also participate in Army ROTC training through partnership agreements with nearby schools. Since the establishment of the program in 1916, more than 500,000 men and women have gone on to become Army officers through Army ROTC.

Central Florida flexes muscle against Scottish Team of cadets notches second straight tug-of-war win

By Capt. JIM NELSON
*University of Central Florida
Army ROTC*

For the second straight year, cadets from the University of Central Florida Army ROTC Fighting Knights are tug-of-war champs.

At the Highland Games held Jan. 21 at Winter Springs, Fla., teams from various clans and families wore kilts. Others, including the cadets, were invited to compete in the tug-of-war.

The Scottish American Society of Central Florida sponsors the annual

Highland Games. The event promotes cultural heritage and consists of a number of competitions and feats of strength and a program of arts, bagpipe music and food.

In its match against a Scottish team, UCF cadets were called up first and were applauded and cheered. Members of the favored Scottish squad were introduced one by one.

Despite the odds and experience of the Scottish team, eight UCF MS I and II cadets and one cadre member took the field and developed a plan.



Central Florida cadets pull against the Scottish team.

The teams lined up at the rope's center line. The tug-of-war commenced as the referee yelled "pull."

The first 30 seconds proved exhausting. The crowd cheered and traditional bagpipes played.

One thing the Scottish team did not take into account was the cadets' endurance, teamwork and will to fight. That was where PT and discipline paid off.

The trophy won was placed in a case for all to see.

Back home

Cornell ROTC helps return dog tags of N.Y. man, Vietnam casualty to his family

By **JESSICA LIEBMAN**
Cornell Daily Sun

Thirty five years after Douglas Crawford's ID tags went missing, they were discovered in July. On Thursday, the Cornell University Army ROTC department held a ceremony in the Military Museum to return Crawford's tags to his remaining immediate kin: his brother Franklin and his sister Roberta.

"Thirty five years is a long time to wait," Franklin Crawford said.

Douglas Crawford was 20 years old when he was drafted for the Vietnam War from his home in Bay Shore, Long Island, N.Y. Shortly after joining the 7th Battalion, 8th Artillery Regiment, Crawford was killed Feb. 23, 1971, at an American artillery base in South Vietnam's Tay Ninh province, near the Cambodian border. He died a month before his 21st birthday.

For Franklin and Roberta, the homecoming of their brother's dog tags offered a sense of closure. The intimate ceremony allowed family, friends and war veterans to pay tribute to Crawford's bravery and sacrifice.

"I met Franklin in December," said Maj. Rich Brown, a Cornell ROTC operations officer. "He wanted to take pictures of the museum, and while he was here he told me that his brother lost his dog tags."

Brown promised Crawford he would assist in the investigation immediately after returning from winter recess. Coincidentally, an Army genealogist discovered the tags in a file belonging to the deceased in Washington, D.C., and contacted Franklin and Roberta.

"We received a letter from a genealogist working for the Army seeking next of kin of my brother, and it turned out to be about returning the

tags," said Franklin. "(It) was an uncanny coincidence because my father had died just a month earlier, in June. He was a veteran of World War II, and the lack of my brother's tags really caused him anguish."

After Franklin and Roberta heard the news, they contacted the Cornell University Army ROTC for assistance. As Army officers, the Cornell ROTC is responsible for carrying out casualty assistance duties for people in the Ithaca area. Those duties include making house calls to families of Soldiers who have been killed or wounded while serving in the Army.

In Crawford's case, the Cornell ROTC was obligated to honor the discovery of his ID tags, a physical object significant to Franklin and Roberta, both longtime Ithaca residents.

"Private Crawford is one of our own," Brown said. "Even though he died 35 years ago, he is one of our own."

The ceremony marked the first time the Cornell ROTC has presented dog tags to a family.

"(This ceremony) gives a feeling a closure, particularly for my father who died in June," Roberta said. "It would mean a lot to him."

Several ROTC students were in attendance to pay homage to Crawford, a Soldier who died years before they were born. For the students, the ceremony held special relevance.

"It reminds me of the sacrifices so many people are making right now and have made," said Mike Kim, who graduates this spring. "It's an honor to be part of it."

The ceremony began with the posting of the colors, conducted by

the ROTC color guard with Cadet Web Beary as commanding officer.

Shortly thereafter, Lt. Col. Glenn Reisweber, Cornell's professor of military science, took the podium.

"I am charged with telling an Army story, a story of a young man who answered a nation's call to duty and never returned, the story of Private First Class Douglas Crawford," he said.

Reisweber introduced guest speaker retired Lt. Col. William Huling Jr., a Vietnam veteran. Huling, a senior development officer at Cornell, is one of the few remaining Vietnam War veterans on campus. He was stationed during the war on Fire Support Base Barbara, a base comparable to Crawford's Fire Support Base Blue.

For Huling, the recovery and return of Crawford's tags was a time for reflection and celebration.

"We are not here to solve a mystery," he said. "We are here to focus on who (the tags) represent. They represent Douglas Crawford's spirit. I want to take this opportunity to welcome him home."

Huling spoke about Feb. 23, 1971, as it was described in a news article by then-Army journalist Al Gore. According to Gore, it was a day of bravery, courage and chaos for the Soldiers who died.

"It will always be yesterday for those of us who fought, and for those of us who lost loved ones," Huling said.

Before presenting Franklin and Roberta their brother's tags, Huling reflected upon what Douglas might have wanted to be said at the ceremony.

"He would want us to remember his

UMass cadets raise money for children

UMass ROTC

AMHERST, Mass. —

Cadets at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst raised more than \$2,000 recently to help buy local children Christmas gifts.

The Minuteman Battalion cadets raised the money for the non-profit Amherst Family Outreach, a local community organization. The UMass ROTC and Amherst Family Outreach have worked together on the Christmas Toy Drive for more than 15 years.

The effort is a joint operation as the Army cadets work with the UMass Air Force ROTC cadets to organize, promote and staff the fund-raiser. This year, MS IV Cadets Will Noyes and Tim Hunt from the Army and Cadet Michael Morand from the Air Force were in charge of this year's effort, and MS III Cadet Clair Bateman was also instrumental in its success.

The toy drive takes a lot of hard work to pull off each year. Planning starts in early November. Posters and flyers are made by the



UMass ROTC photo

Cadets Tim Hunt, Will Noyes and Clair Bateman stand among some of the items purchased with money they helped raise for the Christmas toy drive.

cadets and hung around campus to promote the event.

Beginning the week before Thanksgiving and continuing into the second week of December, cadets stand at different locations around campus collecting money from students, faculty and anyone who wants to contribute.

"I think we have become a part of the holiday season

tradition on campus, and that helps us to raise a lot of money for such a great cause," Hunt said.

After the money was collected and counted, the cadets presented a check to Amherst Family Outreach.

"It really put it in perspective when we presented the check and we saw all the toys that we had helped buy through our fund-raising," Bateman said.

Lt. Col. David Vacchi, the professor of military science for UMass Army ROTC, said the fund-raiser has widespread benefits. Amherst Family Outreach gets help from the cadets in raising money, the two ROTC programs get to work together to be involved in the community and be visible on campus and local children have a happier holiday than they might otherwise have had.

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sacrifice and to recognize and thank his family, whom he loved so much," he said.

Witnesses watched silently as Huling then presented Crawford's dog tags to Franklin and Roberta: "I present these ID tags which Douglas Crawford wore in battle to your family. On behalf of a grateful nation, I present these to you."

Franklin Crawford acknowledged that his older brother's missing tags left unhealed wounds for him and his family. Franklin remembered Douglas as someone who took his duties in Vietnam seriously.

"I can't help but think that he believed he was there to help," he said.

Franklin commented on how closely the photos of the men and women serving in Afghanistan and Iraq resemble the faces of those who fought in Vietnam.

"Such commitment deserves to be acknowledged in its own time," he said. "Not 35 years hence."

Georgetown group finds success in German training

By Cadet **BILL LANE**
Georgetown University ROTC

American and German flags fluttered in front of Georgetown University's historic Healy Hall one bright December afternoon. A formation of seven Georgetown cadets, members of the Hoya Battalion, stood at attention.

Close by, a formation of German Soldiers did the same.

The young men and women were gathered for the presentation of the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency, an honor many cadets worked to obtain in the fall 2005 semester. More than 20 cadets began the competition, and seven successfully balanced the requirements of academics and Army ROTC while simultaneously competing for this prestigious award.

The German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency, or *Leistungsbzeichen* in German, signifies that its bearer has completed a series of rigorous and physically demanding tasks consisting of a 30k ruck march, swimming, various track and field events and a pistol marksmanship assessment. The badge, created in the early 1970s, was intended to recognize those members of the German armed forces from all branches of their service who display a high level of athleticism, physical strength and military skills proficiency.

The award has three levels of recognition — gold, silver and bronze. Though officers and enlisted men in the United States military have been able to participate and compete for the German badge, especially when assigned to units in Germany, ROTC cadets are rarely able to develop a relationship with members of the

German armed forces who have the resources to conduct the competition.

The Hoya Battalion was fortunate to develop such a relationship when, at the commencement of the fall semester, Lts. Hans Domrich of the German Mountain Infantry, Aaron Fassbender of the Airborne Infantry and Konrad Rogler, a logistics officer, joined the battalion as part of a joint effort between the Hoya Battalion and the German Armed Forces Command in the Washington, D.C., area.

The German officers attended Georgetown MS IV classes, selected FTXs and other ROTC events. It was not long before Domrich began organizing what would be a demanding, yet highly rewarding challenge for his newly adopted ROTC battalion.

The cadre of the Hoya Battalion offered the opportunity for cadets with high PT scores to enter the competition. Those who accepted quickly learned competing for the badge was not easy; the first event was a 30k foot march (18.7 miles).

"The 30-kilometer ruck march was certainly the most taxing event in the proficiency test," said Cadet Pfc. Tim Mastrogiacomo, one of seven cadets to eventually earn the badge. "Being the first event completed, we knew right away that proficiency would not be easily achieved."

At the urging of Domrich, all 17 of the Georgetown cadets who joined in the march aimed for the male gold standard: 30k (18.7 miles) in less than five hours. With sore backs from the 22-pound ruck sack and aching feet, the Hoya cadets marched together across the finish line. The cadets, all of whom passed the first event, knew they had accomplished something real

and demanding, and yet they still had a long way to go.

The next challenge was a series of athletic events to test physical endurance, quickness and strength. Forgoing sleep on a Sunday morning, the cadets awoke early and made their way to a local swimming pool to complete the next event: a timed 200-meter swim. They then traveled to an athletic field to attempt the running events, soon followed by the shot-put and stone throw.

Though many found events like the swimming or the ruck march grueling, the cadets' journey to the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Va., was perhaps the most enjoyable. At Quantico, the Hoya team completed the pistol marksmanship assessment, which would determine for each whether he or she would receive the gold, silver or bronze awards.

Some of the cadets who participated had never fired a weapon, other than the M16.

"Not only did I have a great time doing that ...," said Cadet Lt. Col. Scott Eshom, the Hoya Battalion cadet commander, "doing as well as I did was extremely rewarding, seeing as that was my first time firing a handgun."

With the badge officially awarded by Col. Hans Altmeyer, chief of staff and deputy commander of German Armed Forces Command based in Reston, Va., the participating cadets of the Hoya Battalion could claim more than a badge for their Class A uniforms.

"I think we're taking advantage of our location here in Washington, D.C., and of the resources that our nation's capital provides ... and we also made some good German friends," Eshom said. "It's a great start to our careers as Army officers."

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