



# Proud Burden

NEBRASKA GUARDSMEN CARRY ON A UNIQUE LEGACY FORGED ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND FURTHERED IN WASHINGTON

BY MAJ. KEVIN HYNES

On June 5, 1994, a group of Nebraska Army National Guard soldiers—both current and retired—stood in silent salute near a small church in the tiny French village of St. Georges-Montcocq. They were there to pay homage to the memory of the Nebraska Guard soldiers who fought and died there five decades earlier while opening the road into the critical nearby city of St. Lo.

“We will never forget the sacrifices

you made here,” Mayor Pierre Drouet said to the members of Nebraska’s 134th Infantry Regiment, including a former National Guard Bureau chief, retired Maj. Gen. Francis S. Greenlief. “In the name of the inhabitants of St. Georges-Montcocq, we thank you for being the soldiers of liberty.”

It was a small ceremony during a week filled with major celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of D-Day. Yet, it

was a significant ceremony for those who attended as it acknowledged a tradition of service before self that has been the hallmark of the Nebraska National Guard.

“Nebraska Guardsmen carry with them a legacy of commitment, selfless service, courage and sacrifice forged and earned by those who came before us on the prairie of Nebraska and the battlefields of World War I and World War II,”

## 1899 Company G, 1st Nebraska fords the Marilao River while chasing insurgents in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War.

Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, said recently.

While many states can make similar claims, the tradition of military service in Nebraska has evolved in different ways, according to retired Capt. Douglas Hartman, author of *Nebraska’s Militia: The History of the Army and Air National Guard (1854-1991)*.

“The primary differences,” he says “are the strength of the individual Nebraskans who served, the performance of the units and the great individual stories of service to community and nation.”

An example, he cites, is Greenlief, who enlisted into the Hastings, Neb., unit as a private in 1939. By the end of World War II, he was an experienced company commander who later rose through the ranks to become the chief of staff of the Nebraska National Guard.

In 1960, he transferred to NGB, serving as chief from 1970 to 1974. He followed that with a decade as president of NGAUS, where the same lead-from-the-front style that earned him battlefield decorations helped the Guard win battles on Capitol Hill.

He died in December 1999, serving the Guard and NGAUS even in his final years.

## Early Days

The Nebraska National Guard traces its roots to 1854 when Acting Governor T.B. Cuming issued a proclamation “urging the citizens of the Territory of Nebraska to organize their respective neighborhoods into volunteer companies.”

The first two units organized were the Fontanelle Rifles in Fontanelle and the Otoe Rifles in Nebraska City.

More than 3,300 Nebraska militiamen served in seven different Union Army units during the Civil War. Many Civil War soldiers re-enlisted into the 1st Nebraska Veteran Volunteer Cavalry and spent the next two years protecting settlers in western Nebraska. Pvt. Frank Lohnes received

the Medal of Honor for his actions against the Sioux on May 12, 1865.

During the Spanish-American War, Nebraska furnished 4,016 men, including the 3rd Nebraska Cavalry Troop commanded by Col. William Jennings Bryan.

During the subsequent Philippine Insurrection, Brig. Gen. R.H. Hall, commander of the U.S. 3rd Brigade, observed the Nebraskans advancing through furious fire to rout a Filipino position on the Marilao River and commented, “There goes those First Nebraskans again, and all hell couldn’t stop them.” A motto was born.

The Nebraska Guard was called up

the 110th Medical Quartermaster Regiment. All of Nebraska’s units served as part of the 35th Division.

Among those mobilized was Greenlief, who was playing football for the University of Nebraska. Rather than preparing for the 1940 Rose Bowl, Greenlief prepared for war. (The jersey he would’ve worn and several other personal mementos are on display in a room dedicated in his honor in the National Guard Memorial in Washington, D.C.)

In 1941, Nebraska’s 2nd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, received special



1944 Some of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment pose for a picture in France. Then-Capt. Francis S. Greenlief is far left in the back row.

again in June 1916 after Pancho Villa raided several towns along the Mexican border. President Woodrow Wilson mobilized the 4th Nebraska, 5th Nebraska and Company A, Signal Corps.

Wilson later mobilized more than 5,000 Nebraska Guardsmen for World War I. All of the Nebraska units, except one, became part of the 34th Division.

As another world war loomed, President Franklin D. Roosevelt mobilized the Nebraska National Guard on Dec. 23, 1940, including the 134th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Col. Butler B. Miltonberger; the 110th Medical

orders to participate in America’s Aleutian Islands campaign, serving there until early 1944.

The reorganized 134th Infantry Regiment and 35th Division departed for England in May 1944. The 134th landed on Omaha Beach on July 5, 1944, and received four Presidential Unit Citations during 10 months of combat. Greenlief himself earned two Silver Stars.

Miltonberger, a native of North Platte, Neb., was appointed by President Harry S. Truman at the urging of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to serve as the first post-war NGB chief in 1946. He is credited

## GUARDROOTS

This revives a continuing series of articles on the significant people and events that comprise each state and territory’s unique National Guard history. The entire series to date is available in the “Magazine Archives” area of the NGAUS Web site at [www.ngaus.org](http://www.ngaus.org).



**1991** Chief Warrant Officer Ken Merlin, of the 24th Medical Company, stands by his UH-1 Huey, which was also his quarters for the first Persian Gulf War.

with the Guard's rapid and successful reorganization after World War II.

He resigned from the position due to ill health in 1947, but, in 1949, the secretaries of the Army and Air Force chose Miltonberger to head a select panel, popularly referred to as the "Miltonberger Board," to study NGB's organizational structure and internal operating procedures.

Instead of recommending the creation of a separate bureau for the Air Guard—as desired by the Air Force—the board suggested the implementation of procedures that would ease tension between the two services. That decision was felt in Nebraska, which was forming its own Air Guard unit.

The Nebraska Air National Guard is the second oldest Air Guard unit, beginning with the federal recognition in 1946 of the 173rd Fighter Squadron in Lincoln, Neb. The unit mobilized for the Korean War in 1951 and served as a training squadron in Maine and Texas.

Since then, the Nebraska Air Guard has flown many different aircraft in support of an array of missions, including aerial intercept, air defense and air reconnaissance. In 1960, the 173rd became part of the 155th Fighter Group. It later

served as an aerial reconnaissance group until 1992 when the 155th began flying the KC-135 Stratotanker.

In 1995, it was designated as the 155th Air Refueling Wing and has supported many missions, such as Operation Allied Force, the bombing campaign of Kosovo and Serbia in 1999. The Nebraska Air Guard also supported the Hurricane Katrina relief effort.

### Army Guard

The Nebraska Army Guard went through a similar evolution. In April 1963, the 67th Separate Infantry Brigade formed in Nebraska out of the remnants of the 134th Infantry Regiment. The unit was the Army's first separate mechanized infantry brigade.

The 67th was designated as a Selected Reserve Force (SRF) in 1965 because of the nation's involvement in Vietnam and remained on SRF status until May 1968.

In 1984, the 35th Division reactivated with units from Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri and Nebraska. The 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) became the 67th Brigade, 35th Division (Mechanized).

Two Nebraska National Guard units

mobilized in 1990 for service in the first Persian Gulf War. The 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) and Detachment 1, 1267th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) both served in Saudi Arabia, where they flew more than 100 missions.

The 1990s and early 2000s ushered in an era of force restructuring and greater participation in global missions. The first of these major shifts took place with the deactivation of the 2nd Battalion, 134th Infantry, in 1996, and the deactivation of the 1st Battalion, 168th Field Artillery in 1997.

Replacing these units were a variety of support units including Headquarters, 168th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Battalion, the 1057th Light/Medium Truck Company and the 1074th Transportation Company.

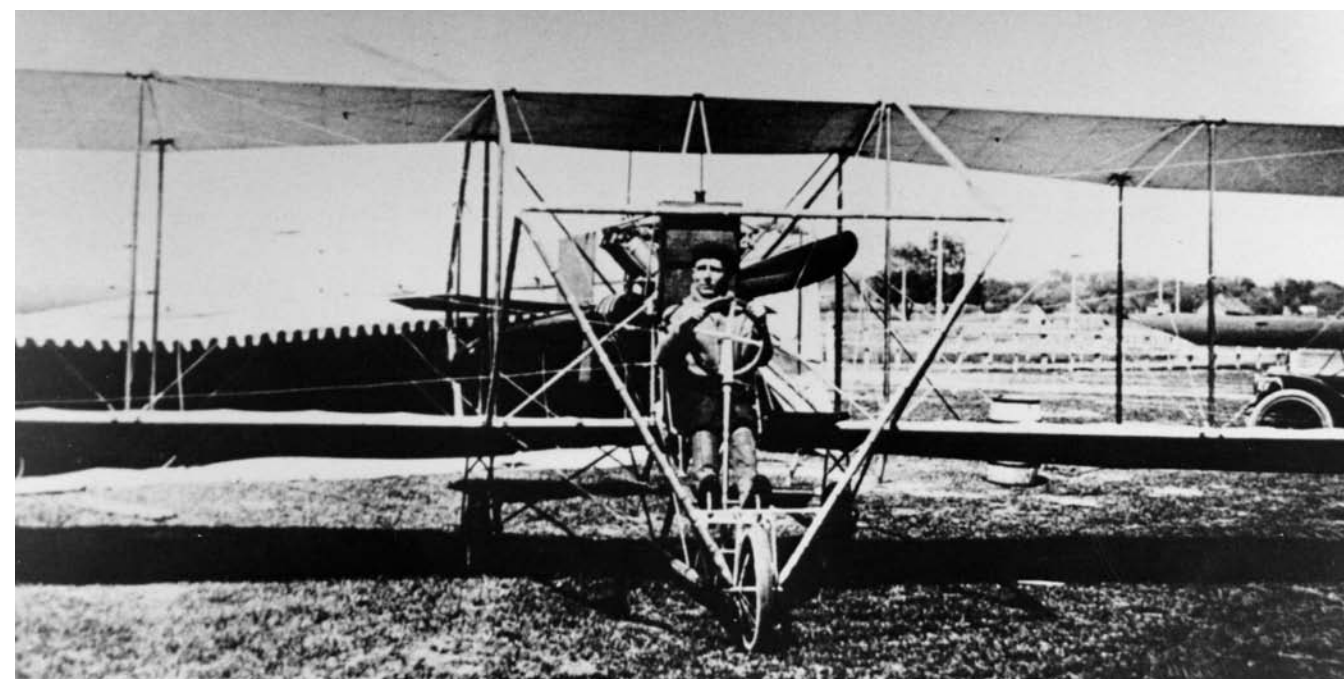
In 1998, transformation spread to the entire state with the deactivation of the 67th Brigade as part of the Army Division Redesign Study, which concluded that the Army lacked sufficient numbers of support units.

The decision affected the vast majority of combat forces in Nebraska and included the deactivation of the 1st Battalion, 195th Armor; the 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry; and the 67th Forward Support Battalion.

As part of the transformation, the Nebraska National Guard gained a force that was more relevant to the needs of the Army with the activation of the 67th Area Support Group and a variety of other units involved in transportation, maintenance, public affairs, chemical reconnaissance and decontamination, firefighting and aviation.

Nebraska soldiers became involved in relief and peacekeeping efforts including the mobilizations of several units for duty in Bosnia; and the 41st Rear Area Operations Center, the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), the 192nd Law and Order Detachment and the 111th Public Affairs Detachment for duty in Kosovo.

Approximately 300 soldiers deployed to Honduras in 1999 as part of the Hurricane Mitch relief efforts and nearly



**1916** Capt. Ralph E. McMillen, of the Nebraska National Guard Aviation Corps, sits in his Model D Curtiss aircraft.

200 soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 167th Cavalry deployed to Kuwait in 2001 to protect Patriot missile batteries. Hundreds of Nebraska soldiers also joined the Hurricane Katrina relief effort.

Following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the Nebraska Air Guard refueled the first-ever combat air patrol over the United States as part of Operation Noble Eagle. A few weeks later, members of the unit deployed to Spain to support the aerial bridge that would become Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Nebraska Army Guard's mission expanded in October 2001 when President Bush requested National Guard help with airport security while more civilian security personnel were trained.

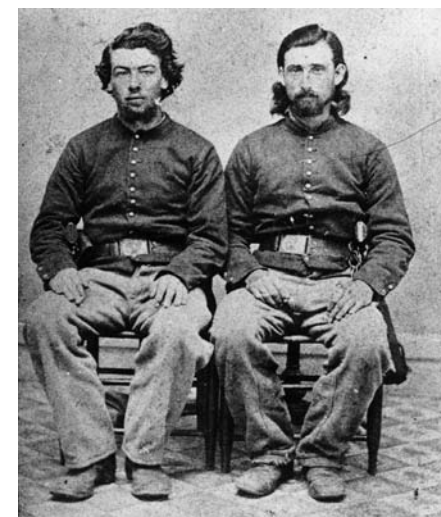
During the next six months, nearly 500 soldiers from across the state were stationed in 10 Nebraska airports. In addition, Nebraska soldiers provided security at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Nebraska's first activation for the Global War on Terrorism took place in October 2001 when approximately 50 members of the Lincoln-based Detachment 2, Company D, 109th Aviation spent a year on active duty at

Fort Campbell, Ky., and Fort Gordon, Ga.

A number of the soldiers also deployed to Afghanistan, the first of 3,200 Nebraska Army National Guardsmen called so far to support operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Along with these mobilizations, nearly 200 Nebraska soldiers were called up in 2003 as part of Operation Armored Falcon. Nebraska soldiers helped bolster




**1864** First Nebraska soldiers, Pvt. William Powell (right) and George Donivan, pose for a picture in Helena, Ark.

security at Offutt Air Force Base and the National Guard Air Base in Lincoln, Neb.

Since 2001, 10 Nebraska Army National Guard soldiers have lost their lives, while more than 60 have received Purple Hearts. More than 330 have received combat action badges and more than 110 have received the combat infantryman badge.

In addition, more than 220 soldiers have been awarded the Bronze Star, including more than a dozen for valor. Of these awards for battlefield heroism, two have been presented to Nebraska Army Guard women: Sgt. Jennifer Bos, 1075th Transportation Company; and Sgt. Heather Springer, Company C (Air Ambulance), 2nd Battalion, 135th General Support Aviation Battalion.

Today, the Nebraska Army Guard consists of nearly 3,800 soldiers in 26 communities. The Air Guard includes nearly 950 airmen located primarily in the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing and the 170th Group, which supports the 55th Wing at Offutt Air Force Base. 

*Maj. Kevin Hynes is the Nebraska Guard's deputy state public affairs officer and the editor of its official newspaper, Prairie Soldier.*