



Training center named after Fairbanks soldier

*By Trish Muntean
Fort Wainwright Public Affairs Office*

FORT WAINWRIGHT, Alaska - Before his final mission, March 13, 2010, Sgt. Joel Clarkson of Fairbanks gathered with his fellow soldiers to pray. The members of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, asked for a successful mission and a safe return. Clarkson's request was a bit different. He also called for a successful mission, but if someone had to be taken, that it be him.

His supplication was not a surprise to anyone who knew him. It was for that and many other reasons his family, friends and fellow soldiers gathered for the dedication of the Sgt. Joel Clarkson Training Support Center on Fort Wainwright Jan. 5.

The \$11.6 million project was managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District and built by Doyon-American Mechanical JV. Completed in September 2010, the 24,100 square foot center replaces an older and smaller facility.

It is a customer-focused facility that provides training resources and services to Army units assigned to U.S. Army Alaska, Alaska Army National Guard and Army Reserve, said Arlie Nethken, training support officer.

"We work with commanders, and plans and operations
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Photo by Doug Hart

Maj. Gen. Raymond Palumbo, U.S. Army Alaska commander, and Col. Ronald Johnson, Fort Wainwright garrison commander, unveil the memorial plaque dedicating the Fort Wainwright Training Support Center building in honor of Sgt. Joel Clarkson Jan. 5. (From front left) Clarkson's family attending the event is his mother, Karen; widow, Cassandra; and father, Steven, who is holding Joel and Cassandra's son, Orion. (Back row) Also attending are several of Clarkson's fellow Rangers, who traveled to Fort Wainwright for the occasion. Originally from Fairbanks, Clarkson served with distinction with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. Clarkson was wounded in action in Afghanistan and died three days later.

Division commander speaks to work force

*By Curt Biberdorf
Public Affairs Office*

The Pacific Ocean Division commander spoke to the district work force for the first time since taking command in June during town hall meetings at headquarters Jan. 9 and the Northern Area Office Jan. 10.

Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens discussed a number of topics and answered questions from attendees in a crowded atrium annex at the headquarters building.

Announced Jan. 5, the nation's new defense strategy is focused on the Asian-Pacific region because of the U.S. economic and security interests in that area. The emphasis strengthens the purpose and future of the district, but "that doesn't sugarcoat the fact that

we are in very austere times," Stevens said.

The Department of Defense is committed to saving \$489 billion in the next decade, and there is the possibility of another \$500 billion being cut from future budgets.

Despite any financial setbacks, the Army is committed to retaining its capability as a decisive land force. Its chief of staff said the service branch has to sustain readiness, develop clear military-to-military interaction that builds relationships and win when challenged by an enemy. The district's involvement in the Humanitarian Assistance Program in Asia is an example of fostering such relationships.

Meeting those objectives should be easier now that the Army is "back in

balance" with the end of the Iraq war. The high operational tempo strained soldiers, family members and the civilian work force, Stevens said.

Programs to support them were enhanced, and the level will be sustained, he said. For the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the future of family support groups is unknown because of funding, but Stevens said he thinks it's a resource worth keeping.

Opportunities

The district's diverse workload—more than 340 projects at nearly \$600 million last fiscal year—is executed at a high level despite the challenges of climate, terrain, remoteness and size that would "bring others to their knees," Stevens said. "You are building stability and security in the Asian-

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Commander

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Pacific region. I'm convinced of that."

Furthermore, the district improves people's lives through disaster preparedness and response teams, field force engineering teams, humanitarian assistance projects and regulatory program.

He said the district is on the leading edge of developing the skills and engineering techniques for construction in an Arctic region and believes the district has many best practices to share with the rest of USACE.

However, defense budget reductions might mean a declining workload for the Corps. Funding for the military construction program in Alaska will remain "solid" this year and next, but decreases significantly in future years, he said.

At Pacific Ocean Division, one approach to lessen the impact of a potential downturn is to share the workload regionally where possible. Stevens said the basic challenge is to sustain a steady level of technical competency in order to provide the required oversight.

It also may be a time for employees to seek more education or broaden their core competencies within the division or the Corps, Stevens said.

"We have very robust programs in Korea and Japan with the host nation funding," he said.

Stevens wants to ensure nobody is surprised as POD assesses workload and believes more work is available, whether by expanding the international security cooperation accord or with other customers, as long as the division stays within USACE core competencies.

The Humanitarian Assistance Program has already grown from one or two projects a few years ago to about 50 projects at \$40 million annually now. These small projects, such as schools and cyclone shelters, "pay a tremendous dividend in our ability

to shape future adversaries, to shape regions," he said.

Outputs

When Stevens took command, he inquired about the division's identity and purpose in order to sustain its relevance and abilities. He discussed several outputs the nation expects from the division.

He sees a competent and diverse work force that brings various perspectives to its customers.

It is a fulfilled organization balancing work and life. Family is his No. 1 priority followed by work.

The division works collaboratively with its customers and provides programs, projects and studies that are delivered on time, under budget, to scope and safely to meet the customer's needs.

Each district should be focused regionally and understand how the work in its state or country affects the greater Asian-Pacific region.

Stevens emphasized the importance of training, equipping and staffing the field force engineering and emergency



Photo by John Budnik

Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, Pacific Ocean Division commander, answers a question during a town hall meeting at district headquarters Jan. 9.

response teams for wherever they are needed around the world, and that these they successfully turn over their mission to teams replacing them.

In addition, regulatory decisions must balance reasonable development with the protection of aquatic resources and the environment.

"The program is a little bit different because it's an output not tied not to a budget or beneficial occupancy date but to getting (the decision) right," Stevens said.

Principles

Stevens stressed the importance of principles based on Army values. He discussed the organization's operating principles beginning with trusted engineering.

"When they give us a job, they have to trust that it's going to get done and going to get done right," Stevens said. Competence and leading the engineering world in techniques and designs all help to create that trust, he added.

Performance is another principle. He said a methodology for measuring performance is necessary to survive. His team is examining how well the division is assessing itself.

The principle of service excellence raises the issue of customer feedback, which is currently gathered once annually. Stevens said he thinks the division has no reliable way of measuring service excellence and is looking at ways to improve customer relations because it ought to be important.

The last principle he discussed is culture. It's ensuring a more productive organization. "Team members can work hard, but they can still have fun. I think that's critical," Stevens said.

Professional development opportunities besides the USACE Leadership Development Program and internship program need to be publicized and encouraged to grow leaders, and employees should have the option to telework if it makes sense for their position, he said.

GOLD NUGGETS

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Editor

Curt Biberdorf

Public Affairs Student Intern

John Budnik

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E-mail inquiries may be sent to: public.affairs3@usace.army.mil or Curt Biberdorf. View the Alaska District Web site at www.poa.usace.army.mil and Facebook page at <http://facebook.com/AlaskaCorps>.

Center

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officers to provide transparent and safe training support requirements that allow leaders and soldiers to train as realistically as possible. These requirements may be a temporary loan of specialized equipment, special effects to replicate explosives, simulators to train high-risk scenarios and more," he said.

The energy-efficient facility has two classrooms, a student break area and administrative offices as well as a warehouse for supply and distribution of training equipment and space for equipment repair and fabrication. Room is available on the site for future facility expansion and the addition of training simulators to supplement the classrooms.

The center has been certified as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Silver rated project.

Clarkson's parents, Steven and Karen, said they knew he was going to be a soldier from the time he was about eight years old when he and a bunch of buddies consumed a case of military rations. Not only did they eat them all, they suffered no known ill effects that his mother could recall.

His folks knew military life would be a good for him because he had no

self discipline and needed external controls. He respected military authority, Clarkson's mother said.

"He was kind of a wild child," his mother said.

Clarkson ran away from home a couple of times, started to run around with some "undesirable" people and didn't graduate from high school. He later received a GED.

His father said Joel was probably the only person he ever knew to return from basic training complaining it was not tough enough.

Joining the Army was not enough to satisfy him. Once he learned about the Rangers, he set his sights on becoming one.

In fact, his mother said he would not even allow her to take his photo upon completion of basic training because he had not yet earned his Ranger tab.

He was on his fifth deployment at the time of the injury that eventually took his life. He completed three tours in Iraq and was on his second deployment to Afghanistan. His parents said he could have declined this assignment to attend school or become a recruiter, but he believed he needed to go on one last mission.

"He felt that someone needed to

watch out for those boys," his father said. "The new ones that were going out there, someone had to watch out for them."

"He worried about them. He talked about them all the time," his mother said.

On the night Joel was injured, Steven came home to find Karen crying. They made the decision to fly to Joint Base Lewis-McChord to be with Joel's wife, Cassandra, and their grandson, Orion.

Once they learned he was being sent to Landstuhl Hospital in Germany, they decided to fly there, stopping in Washington, D.C., to get passports for Cassandra and Orion, who was eight months old at the time of his father's death.

When they arrived at the hospital, they were told he was brain-dead and nothing could be done for him.

He lives on through other people though, as seven people have a second chance at life through the donation of his organs. His wife also asked the people who knew him to write letters for their son to read later in his life so that he may know his father.

She said it was an honor not just for Joel's family to have this building dedicated in his honor, but to the Ranger battalion as well.

Three services were held in Clarkson's honor following his death. The first was at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the second was his burial at Arlington National Cemetery and the third was a celebration of his life in Fairbanks.

Maj. Erich B. Schneider, Clarkson's commander at the time of his death, said he was definitely deserving of having the training support center named after him.

"I think the world of Joel and what he represents," he said.

"He was an uncommon guy," said Capt. Brian Kitching, Clarkson's platoon leader at the time of the injury that led to his eventual death. "Very tough and at the same time very caring to the men that he led. He was detail-oriented and trained very hard. At the same time he was concerned about the welfare of his men."

"He was a true American hero," Joel's wife Cassandra said.

"He loved what he did," Karen Clarkson said. "Army life was him. He had no fear."

Alaska District Public Affairs contributed to this story.



Ken Graham Photography

The \$11.6 million Training Support Center project at Fort Wainwright was managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Alaska District and built by Doyon-American Mechanical JV. Completed in September 2010, the 24,100 square foot center replaces an older and smaller facility. The center's warehouse handles supply and distribution of training equipment, such as special effects to replicate explosives, and has space reserved for equipment repair and fabrication.

District employee plays reporter in whale movie

By John Budnik
Public Affairs Office

Beth Beardsley received an opportunity that is a dream for many people: She was selected for a small speaking role in “Big Miracle,” a Hollywood movie filmed in Alaska.

Beardsley, a program and reports specialist for Army projects, said it was an experience of a lifetime and overwhelmed her with so much excitement that she couldn’t sleep at night.

“This is going into my baby book,” Beardsley said.

Actress is one more job she can list on her resume, which includes a degree in business management and experience in the airline industry, European Chamber of Commerce and Missile Defense Program.

She moved to Alaska from the Philippines to live closer to family, and stays connected to her heritage in various ways.

Beardsley is the district’s Asian-Pacific Islander special emphasis program manager, and outside of work, she stays busy as the Alaska Federation of Filipino Americans vice president. In this role, she helps Anchorage’s Filipino youth get involved in the community, promotes the awareness of their heritage and teaches elderly Filipinos how to send emails to relatives in the Philippines.

In 2008, Beardsley received an award for her volunteerism with Bridge Builders of Anchorage, a program aimed at creating a “community of friends among all racial and cultural groups in Anchorage,” according to its mission statement.

Beardsley’s social network, developed through her participation in numerous fundraising events for organizations she is affiliated with, led to her acting part. A friend involved in the Anchorage arts community referred her name to the company filming the movie, and a representative called her at work. When she answered the phone and heard the proposal, she didn’t pay any attention.

“I thought it was a joke,” Beardsley said.

The company sought an Asian woman who could speak dialects native to the Philippines to play a news reporter. She told them that she could speak three dialects and was offered the part.

Her instructions before appearing at the Port of Anchorage to film the scene were to wear her favorite boots and jacket, no makeup and to “be you.” When Beardsley arrived, she quickly noticed the luxuries of being in the movie industry, including an espresso cart for production staff and open buffet.

When the movie extras were called, she followed, unbeknownst that she would soon be called by name for her part. After the crew found Beardsley, she was introduced to a personal assistant and told to follow her.

“It was overwhelming,” Beardsley said.

This was an unexpected detail for Beardsley, but more was still more to come. Her assistant led her to a trailer with a door label “Beth Beardsley – Foreign Press 1.”

“I had my own trailer, and it’s starting to scare me now,” she said.

Beardsley’s assistant told her to relax in the trailer and fill out a form that was actually a thick movie contract for her role.

The contract included restrictions on taking photos, said



Photo by Pat Richardson

Beth Beardsley (right), program and reports specialist, is joined by Jackie Purcell, KTUU Channel 2 chief meteorologist. Both played television reporters in the movie “Big Miracle,” which was released to movie theaters Feb. 3.

Beardsley.

Inside the trailer was an extensive wardrobe for her to choose from, but most of the clothes were too big. Her assistant coordinated with the wardrobe staff to help her find one, although she couldn’t wear her own jacket because it clashed with one of the stars.

After receiving her clothing, makeup was next with the artist applying an extra touch of rouge on her cheeks for the outside scene. Her 1980s hairdo was styled to match the time for when the movie takes place. All the while, Beardsley watched the stars enter and exit the makeup room.

Beardsley and the rest of the movie’s foreign press actors were then driven to the set, which was also stocked with plenty of amenities.

For the part, Beardsley was asked to research “Operation Breakthrough,” an international effort to free three gray whales trapped by rapidly-forming sea ice near Barrow, Alaska, in 1988, which is the basis for the movie.

The director met the star-struck Beardsley on set and asked her to translate the information she found into one of the dialects she could speak. The director chose to use his own research, and all Beardsley needed was to understand the story to effectively interpret it. They began framing her and filmed her scenes in several takes.

“It’s probably seconds of fame in four or five hours of work,” Beardsley said with a laugh.

About a week after her scenes were done, she attended the cast party when all filming was completed. Again, cameras were not allowed.

Beardsley isn’t ready to pack up and move to Hollywood or hire an agent just yet, but this small acting role has potential to bring her future opportunities. Her name has been placed on a referral list for upcoming projects to be filmed in Alaska.

Around the district

Quality Management rep announced



Diana Gerland is the new Quality Management representative after serving as a project manager in the Environmental and Special Projects Branch. She also has experience with the Corps in construction, operations, and engineering in previous positions at the Los Angeles District and Jacksonville District. Gerland was assigned to USACE Headquarters as

a special assistant while completing the CP-18 Leadership Development Program. She started her career as a naval architect for the Navy in California and Washington D.C., after earning a bachelor's degree in ocean engineering from the Florida Institute of Technology.

Pre-retirement seminars set for 2012

The Federal Executive Association has announced its pre-retirement seminar schedule for FY2012. The free benefits training sessions for CSRS and FERS employees fill up fast,

and seating is limited. Classes are from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

In Anchorage, dates for FERS employees are Feb. 8, April 11, June 13 and Sept. 12. CSRS dates are Feb. 9 and June 14. Sessions are conducted at the Federal Building Annex, 222 W. 8th Ave., Mod G, Conference Room A, B, C.

In Fairbanks, the FERS date is April 20 and CSRS date is April 21. Sessions are conducted at the Westmark Hotel, 813 Noble Street.

In Juneau, the FERS date is March 9 and the CSRS date is March 10. Sessions are conducted at the Federal Office Building, 709 W. 9th Street, Room 285.

For enrollment forms and information, visit this link on the shared drive <http://www.fea.gov/Documents/Training%20Documents/FEA%20FY-12%20Pre-Retirement%20Schedule.htm>

Voting assistance offered

Do not guess about voting or let someone else guess for you. Get an answer from an expert: the district's voting assistance officer. The primary officer is Herschel Deaton at 753-5588 and alternate officer is Ray Lammon at 753-2517.

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Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Casualty drill

Kris Stoeher (second from right), family readiness coordinator, leads a casualty notification and assistance exercise with senior leaders and support staff at district headquarters Jan. 20. The "rock drill" reviewed the steps necessary to be taken when an employee needs to be moved from one place to another under emergency conditions. Tiny plastic toy soldiers on a world map were used to simulate the movements employees would make throughout the process.

Upcoming events

- Feb. 1-29** Black History Month
- Feb. 6-13** Alaska Shield Cold Weather Exercise
- Feb. 6-10** Regulatory NEPA Training
- Feb. 17** Bring Your Youth to Work Day
- Feb. 27** Operation Crossroads Town Hall Meeting
- March 21** Small Business Conference in Anchorage

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Bring Your Youth to Work Day set

Bring Your Youth to Work Day is scheduled for the district headquarters Feb. 17 from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Because of limited space, registration is restricted to 48 youths. Employees' children, grandchildren and mentored youth have enrollment priority, and all others will be placed on a waiting list. Register with LaQuida Barlow at ext. 2540 by Feb. 8. Check-in time will be 8:15-8:30 a.m. in the Talley Room. Youths in grades 1-12 will be divided into four groups by age and escorted to stations on cost engineering, construction operations, computer-generated projects and breakwater modeling in the headquarters building during the morning. For lunch, pizza for \$3 per slice and soda for \$1 per serving will be on sale in the atrium from 11:45 a.m.-12:20 p.m. In the afternoon, tours of the JBER Wildlife Education Center and William Jack Hernandez Sport Fish Hatchery are reserved for third-graders and higher, and more activities are scheduled for all. Youths 16 years or older must have a picture identification card to enter the base after visiting the hatchery.

Study developed for shoal near ports

The district is developing a feasibility study under the Alaska Regional Ports authority to analyze the hydrodynamics of the Point MacKenzie shoal. The shoal has grown to the point where it is adversely affecting the navigational approach to both the Port of Anchorage and Port MacKenzie. The State of Alaska has granted funds to both ports to be used to cost-share the study, which could begin this fiscal year. Cost is estimated to be more than \$2 million for an effort that could last three years.

Proposed pipeline under review

A notice of availability on the draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Alaska Stand Alone Gas Pipeline was published in the Federal Register for a 45-day comment period ending March 3. The project is to build a 24-inch diameter, 737-mile long pipeline with a 34-mile lateral line into Fairbanks from the North Slope of Alaska to the Cook Inlet area. The statement evaluates project alternatives and potential impacts to the environment that may occur from the applicant's proposal to construct, operate and maintain the pipeline.

Deployments

Afghanistan—Juliet Brown, Theodore Champine, Warren Colburn, Annette Crerend, Leanna Dagley, John Keys, Patricia Lora, John Mitzel, Heather Moncrief, David Purdy, April Shepherd, Gary Weiler, Jim Wolfe

Kuwait—Laura Sheldon



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Farewell

Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, presents an Army certificate of retirement to Kris Stoechner, family readiness coordinator, during a ceremony at headquarters Jan. 31 recognizing her 24 years of federal service. Her many contributions toward improving the quality of life for soldiers, civilian employees and their family members enhanced the capability of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Army to accomplish its mission in a timely manner.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Power up

Reynaldo Singson, electrical engineer with the 62nd Engineer Detachment (Forward Engineering Support Team-Advance), receives an Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at the headquarters building Jan. 9. Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, Pacific Ocean Division commander, also congratulated him. Singson's efforts as technical team lead for the FEST-A helped to rapidly and efficiently restore electricity to the Republic of Palau after a Nov. 5, 2011, fire damaged the Aemilik Power Plant.

Accolades



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Chelan Schreifels, project manager in the Regulatory Division, receives an Army certificate of achievement from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at the headquarters building Jan. 9. Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, Pacific Ocean Division commander, also congratulated her. Schreifels examined administrative and supplemental information provided by ConocoPhillips Alaska Inc. and other parties during the remand process, which led to her recommendation to issue a permit to develop the CD-5 oil field project.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Glen Justis, policy and administration branch chief in the Regulatory Division, receives an Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at the headquarters building Jan. 9. Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, Pacific Ocean Division commander, also congratulated him. Justis oversaw editing of the CD-5 oil field project decision document, which was instrumental in the Regulatory Division's ability to produce a well-written document in accordance with regulation and policy.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Col. Reinhard Koenig (left), district commander, and Brig. Gen. Richard Stevens, Pacific Ocean Division commander congratulate recipients of the 2011 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Learning Center certificate of appreciation at district headquarters Jan. 9. Those receiving certificates are (from left) Craig Lance, civil engineer in the Construction Operations Division; Andy Sorum, project engineer at the Elmendorf Resident Office; Michiel Holley, team leader in the Regulatory Division; Sara Gray, assistant district counsel; Hank Baij, project manager in the Regulatory Division; Jerry Ouzts, civil engineer in the Engineering Division and Bruce Sexauer, supervisory civil engineer in the Engineering Division. They were honored for contributing distinguished services in support of the Army Corps of Engineers command goals by serving as instructors during fiscal year 2011 in the Proponent Sponsored Engineer Corps Training Classroom Program.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

'Good to great'

Alaska District's Senior Leaders Conference was conducted at the JBER-Elmendorf Arctic Warrior Events Center Jan. 24-25. The goals for the conference included reviewing the district's FY2011-2012 operations plan, determining the FY2012-2013 plan and approving the FY2012-2013 strategic communications plan. The district will be publishing its OPLAN and "piece of the puzzle" for the work force in the coming weeks. Participating in the event are (from left) John Poll, Information Technology chief; Jackie Leseman, executive assistant; Tom Kretzschmar, Real Estate Division chief; Karen Farmer, Resource Management Office chief; Chris Tew, Contacting Division chief; Diana Gerland, Quality Management representative; Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander; Terri Stinnett-Herczeg, Regulatory Division deputy chief; Lt. Col. Bobby Stone, deputy district commander; Larry McCallister, director of Programs and Project Management; Pat Coullahan, Construction and Operations Division chief; Dave Frenier, Engineering Division chief; and Anne Burman, Office of Counsel.

Mission complete



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Capt. Daniel Fox, project manager in the Humanitarian Assistance Program, receives an Alaska District certificate of appreciation from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at district headquarters Jan. 23 for his service in Afghanistan from Sept. 3-Oct. 6, 2011.



Photo by Curt Biberdorf

Scott Haan, structural engineer in the Structures and Architecture Section, receives an Alaska District certificate of appreciation from Col. Reinhard Koenig, district commander, at district headquarters Jan. 23 for his service in Afghanistan from Dec. 5, 2010-Dec. 21, 2011.