

TENN. SERGEANT HELPS COMRADES BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD

THE VOLUNTEER STATE GUARD MAGAZINE

TECH. SGT. ANGIE JOHNSON

A BIG VOICE FOR THE GUARD

PLUS:

MISSION READY

THE TENN. UNIT
THAT IS UNIQUELY
PREPARED FOR
DISASTER RE-
SPONSE



THE VOLUNTEER STATE GUARD MAGAZINE



VOLUME 14
ISSUE 5



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TENNESSEE SNAPSHOT

AIR ASSAULT TRAINING

TRP D 1-230th ACS conducts an air assault training mission with DET 1 TRP E 2-278th ACR from the TNARNG Armory in Livingston, Tenn. to LZ Sharp at VTS-Tullahoma on Oct. 18, 2014.

PHOTO BY: CW2 Emily Wiest

LCHS 818 West Main St.
Hohenwald, TN, 38462
September 19, 2014

Dear National Guard,

Thank you. Thank you for your service to this country. Thank you for all that you do and have done to keep this country safe. You are one of the reasons I can go to school and have an education, and I can believe in what I want to believe in. I want to thank you for everything you do because I feel as if you don't get told thank you enough. I hope that you stay safe wherever you are and that you will be able to see your family. Just knowing that somewhere out there someone is protecting this country and its people makes me feel safer. I hope the rest of your life is prosperous and that you will be safe wherever you must go.

Sincerely,

Kasie Barber, Student of
Lewis County High School, TN

TENNESSEE SNAPSHOT

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

The Tenn. National Guard received this letter on Oct. 23, 2014. It was sent from Kasie Barber, a student at Lewis County High School, Tenn. The message serves as a reminder the Tenn. Guard is making a difference in people's lives.

LETTER BY: Kasie Barber, Student Lewis County High School



TENNESSEE SNAPSHOT

PAYCHECKS FOR PATRIOTS

Veterans from all over Tenn. arrived at LP Field for the Paychecks For Patriots event on Oct. 9, 2014. This hiring event matches Veterans with employers who are looking for the valuable skills that Veterans can bring to the workplace.

PHOTO BY: Lt. Col. (Ret) Niki Gentry



TENNESSEE SNAPSHOT

COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SGT. CODY

Command Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James Cody discusses current issues impacting the Air Force and the National Guard with Airmen of the Tennessee Air National Guard's 118th Wing, based in Nashville. - September 6, 2014

PHOTO BY: Tech. Sgt. Lenny Hamm



TECH. SGT. ANGIE JOHNSON:

A BIG VOICE FOR THE GUARD

STORY BY **MSGT ROBIN OLSEN**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **TECH SGT BENNIE J. DAVIS, III**

You may recognize Tech. Sgt. Angie Johnson from her viral YouTube video singing “Rolling in the Deep”, or even from her appearance on *The Voice*. Since she joined the Tennessee Air National Guard earlier this year, we took this opportunity to get to know her better.

She joined the Active Duty Air Force in 2000. “Mostly because I was at a transitional place in my life and wanted to venture out into the world. I was proud of my father’s 27 years of service and I wanted to make a difference, like I felt he had. The military felt like a calling,” said Johnson. She transferred to the Missouri Air National Guard in 2006 and to the Tennessee Air National Guard in 2014.

Johnson says her fondest memories in the military have been doing shows for troops during eight separate tours in the Middle East.

“The military has enriched my life in so many ways,” she said. “Joining the military was the best decision I have ever made. It has always helped me keep my priorities straight. It’s hard to let your head get too far in the clouds when you are constantly reminded that your comrades are off fighting a war.”

Her most memorable moment was when she traveled to Israel in 2010 and was baptized in the Jordan River. “It felt like such sacred and holy ground. I was overjoyed and couldn’t hold back my tears.”

“It’s hard to let your head get too far in the clouds when you are constantly reminded that your comrades are off fighting a war.”

Singing isn’t the only thing Johnson likes to do. “I hike a lot, do yoga, read, and hang out at my church,” she explained. I have a great group of friends in Nashville. We sit around bonfires and solve all of the world’s problems one s’more at a time. Good friends, who really know you, are very important.”

She is also excited about volunteer work.



Johnson in front of the Ziggurat of Ur, in Iraq during her 2nd tour in the Middle East in November 2005.

“Most of my volunteering is focused on Veterans. I’m passionate about the sacrifices they made and how we can repay them for their service,” she said, adding “I’m crazy about servicemembers and what remarkable and selfless people they are. I never want them to feel forgotten or unseen.” So who exactly is Angie Johnson and where did she come from? She grew up in Missouri and didn’t leave there until she joined the military. “Go Cards!” she exclaims.

“My earliest memory was when I was about three years old. My Dad had gone into an old supply closet to get something and found a slew of baby sparrows all over the floor. The parents had found a tiny hole in the roof and made a nest. My Dad got a couple pieces of bread, dipped it in water, and fed the babies with a pair of tweezers. He showed me how and we fed them for at least an hour. His love of nature definitely rubbed off on me,” she recalled.

This love of nature is also evident in her childhood nickname, which was given to her by her dad, ‘Squirrel’s Tail.’ “He said I was fidgety like a squirrel’s tail.”

Johnson was the youngest of five children growing up and says she spent a lot of time alone when she was the last one left in the house.

“I had a big imagination and loved to pretend. I would write songs and stories and read them to my parents. I also wrote scripts and made all of my stuffed animals actors. I loved making my parents laugh.” She added, “My Dad would say I’m the best at everything, my Mama would say I have a big mouth. So there’s balance there.” Growing up, Johnson always knew she wanted to perform.

“There was a smidgen of time when I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian, but that was only if I couldn’t be a singer first,” she said.

Johnson even remembers her first concert, “Alabama,” when she was eight years old.

“I was in love with Randy Owen. My Dad took me and we had third row seats, but we made some friends with some people in the front row and they let me sit on their shoulders. I nearly started crying when Randy wiped the sweat off his forehead with a towel and threw it right at me! He was my version of Justin Bieber. I still have that towel.” Johnson kept busy all the way through high school.

“I ran track, sang in choir, was on the cheerleading squad, student council, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I was also



Angie Johnson works with sound engineer Daewoo Kim at Studio 78 in Nashville, Tenn.

the president of my class my junior year. I lived every bit of my high school experience and loved it!"

Her favorite music then was country. "I loved, and still love, Alabama. Their music takes me to a happy place." She said that her favorite subjects were music and English. When asked how she would describe herself as a student, her response was "Diligent. I got distracted at times, but I always pulled my focus back to what needed to be done." Eventually, she had to get a job.

Johnson said "my first job was a hostess and server at an Italian Restaurant called The Pasta House Company. Mmmm, spaghetti..."

Johnson can't say that she has ever had a bad job. "I try to make the most of every situation, and also try not to employ myself with doing things I hate." This is only one of the lessons she has learned in life, so far.

"We are human, and we need to allow ourselves room to be human. We are not in control of anything," she explained. "We are each uniquely gifted and beautiful, and our gifts are best used when shared. I can't

believe what the world would be like if everyone dared to believe in and seek out their true calling."

Reaching her calling, several people had an influence on her career choices. Her father had an influence on her military career, but others influenced her music. "All of the female country artists of the 90s: Reba, Wynonna, Trisha, Martina, Faith, Shania, have all had a big influence on my career," she stated. "Then there's Patsy and Dolly. Elvis was a big influence during my formative years. Outside of country music, I was hugely inspired by Whitney, Mariah and Celine."

She added, "they have all managed to maintain sparkling reputations while having mega careers that could have easily driven them over the edge. Not to mention they all have incredible vocal talent and ability. I admire those women immensely." She said that what she liked the most about singing was "Being able to be the narrator to a story. I get to be an interpreter of emotions. That's really awesome!"

We also reached out to our social media

audience to see what they wanted to know. When asked if she used music to relate or deal with stressful situations in life, she said "Absolutely, music is much cheaper than therapy! Sometimes the process of writing or singing can draw out emotions you wouldn't have otherwise let come to the surface."

If she had to trade singing for one thing in life, she said "I would go around healing the sick and brokenhearted. I suppose I could live without singing, but it is my way of doing just that."

Her super-human power would be mind control. "I'd go around hypnotizing everyone to have more compassion, and just be nicer to each other overall."

Just in case anyone was wondering, she did find out who posted the viral video. "I found out a few days after it was posted. He was one of the logistics troops who helped us palletize our gear. We are Facebook friends now!"

"I like being able to be the narrator to a story. I get to be an interpreter of emotions. That's really awesome!"

As a final point, Johnson explained how singing and music make her feel compared to other talents she has.

"Singing gives me comfort, and I believe it lets me bring comfort to others. People go through pain every single day. The struggle of life is real. Being able to sing someone out of a negative place gives me the most incredible joy." - **MSGT ROBIN OLSEN**



MAJ. GEN. ROBERT HARRIS

The Tennessee Military Department congratulates Maj. Gen. Robert A. Harris, Sr., the Tennessee Assistant Adjutant General, Army, and his family upon the occasion of his retirement in September 2014. Maj. Gen. Harris enlisted in the Army in 1974 and the Tennessee Guard in 1977. He was commissioned as an officer in 1978 and served in numerous leadership positions prior to becoming the Assistant Adjutant General in 2011.

Harris was deployed in support of Desert Shield / Desert Storm in 1990 and served two combat tours in Iraq between 2004 and 2010.

He served with great distinction in the field artillery and engineer branches, displaying a selfless dedication to the service of his state, nation and care of the Soldiers he commanded. The members of the Military Department shall always be indebted for his steadfast leadership, patriotism and the enduring "Volunteer Spirit" he personified.



LIFE SAVING TRAINING

Moms Put Guard Training to Work in Saving Woman at Local Park

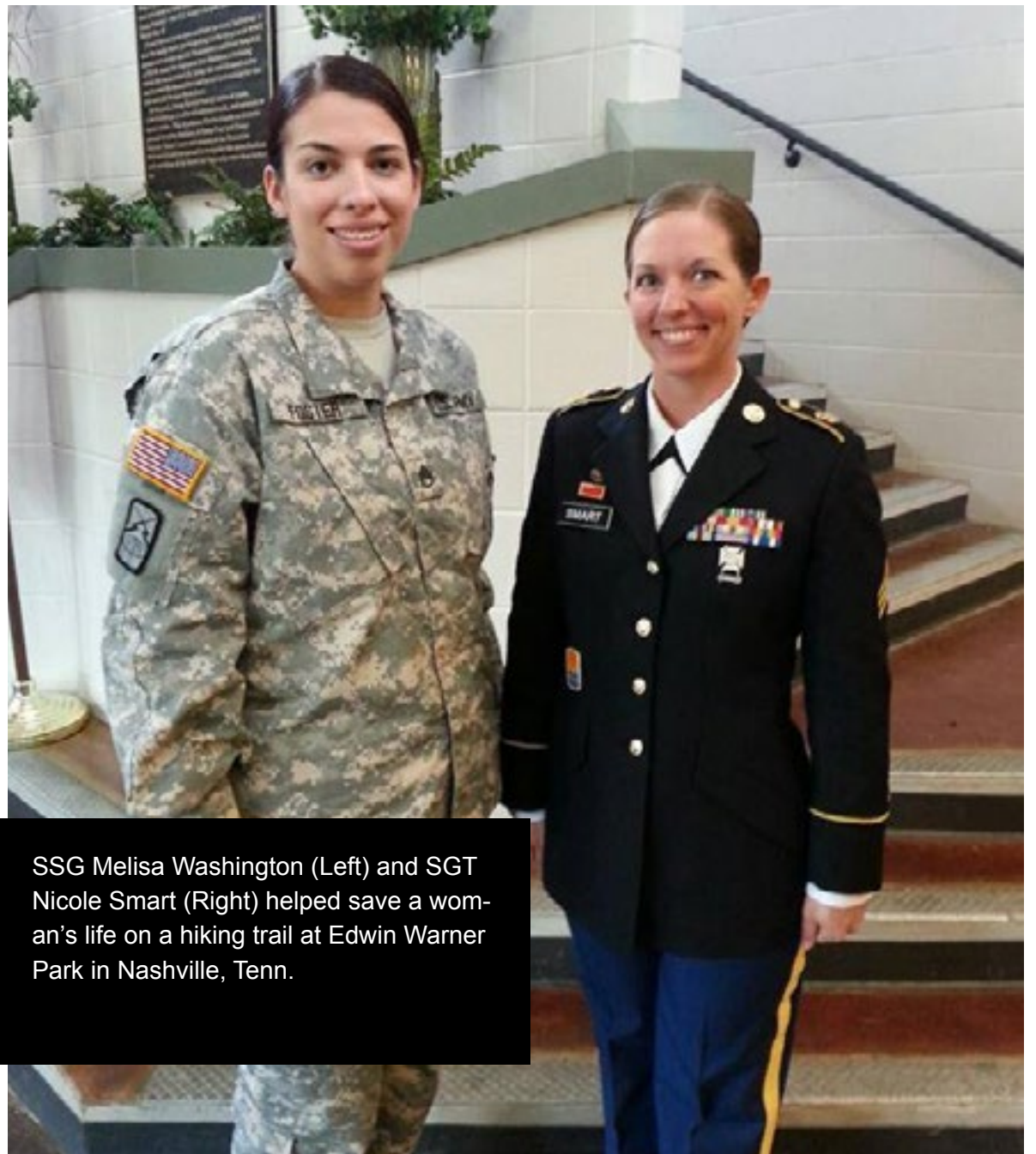
NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Melissa Washington and Nicole Smart were out for a walk with their children at Edwin Warner Park on Sunday afternoon. They never expected to save a life.

On Monday, a midstate woman is alive, thanks to the quick action of the two Tennessee National Guard Soldiers.

The two moms had created a make-believe adventure to rescue a special doll for 5-year-old Carter and 4-year-old Juliet. Not far down the trail, all the fun quickly changed. "We were out trying to save this Lalaloopsy doll," said Washington. "Then we came upon something very important."

Suddenly the mission changed for Washington and Smart from a make-believe to a real-life rescue. "The vegetation is kind of sparse," said Smart. "So through there we saw somebody start to take a tumble. I heard somebody say 'Honey, honey, are you OK?'" These Tennessee National Guard Soldiers quickly put their training into action.

"Lisa was her name," said Smart. "She was about to fall down rock steps, I was able to catch her. She was convulsing." Smart said Lisa's boyfriend explained she was having a seizure. At the time, they were about a quarter-mile from the trail head. "Lisa's body was very rubbery, very limp," said Smart. "She couldn't hold on to us."



SSG Melisa Washington (Left) and SGT Nicole Smart (Right) helped save a woman's life on a hiking trail at Edwin Warner Park in Nashville, Tenn.

Other strangers stopped to help them. One step at a time, the group slowly carried Lisa toward the parking lot and emergency care. "One guy was wearing sandals," said Smart. "There were a lot of roots on the ground. So I was watching the ground and telling everyone 'watch left' and 'watch right.'"

A Soldier's training in action on a park

trail isn't a place both moms ever expected they'd use it.

"I think it was a really good lesson to them, to see their moms in action and helping somebody out," said Washington.

The women said Lisa was treated at St. Thomas Midtown and is back home in Dickson.

Article from wsmv.com WSMV Channel 4 News
Photo by Asset

MISSION READY

The image shows two soldiers in full white protective suits, including hoods and respirators with large filters. They are standing in a hazy, smoke-filled environment. The soldier on the right is holding a handgun. The background is dark and smoky, with some structural elements visible.

This Tennessee National Guard unit is uniquely prepared for disaster response: The 45th Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team is ever vigilant and always ready.

Photo by MAJ DARRIN HAAS

Headquartered in middle Tennessee resides a unique National Guard unit consisting of 22 Soldiers and Airmen prepared to place their lives on the line during times of unprecedented civil emergencies. The 45th Weapons of Mass Destruction- Civil Support Team (WMD-CST) was qualified as “mission ready” by the Department of Defense in 2003, and is tasked to support civilian authorities when a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) or natural disaster incident occurs in Tennessee or throughout the nation. The 45th WMD-CST is one of over 50 similar Guard units nationwide trained to respond within minutes to highly dangerous incidents and assist in mitigating the loss of life and destruction of property.

WMD-CST units are funded by the Department of Defense and unique to the National Guard. A key aspect of their mission is the ability to bring sophisticated detection equipment and interoperable communication systems to an incident site while delivering critical assessments for emergency and law enforcement personnel during various phases of a local, regional or national CBRN response. The 45th WMD-CST is constantly in a real-world operational mode while also training for various scenarios to maintain their essential state of readiness.

They are 22 individual “Jack Bauers,” just like the key figure in the “24” television series.

“While working with civilian partners, we bring robust HAZMAT expertise, communications support, and medical assistance to an event,” said Lt. Col. Jeff Brown, Commander of the 45th WMD-CST. “All team members are full-time Tennessee National Guard personnel from both the



A member of the Tennessee National Guard's 45th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team (WMD-CST) uses specialized monitoring equipment to identify an unknown liquid as part of a performance evaluation of their mission capabilities.

Army and the Air Force, and receive hundreds of hours of training per year. Tennesseans should be very proud of the 45th, for it is recognized as one of the top teams in the nation.”

The 45th WMD-CST has attained numerous accolades during its time as an operational unit. During October, 2013, the unit concluded a biennial inspection from National Guard Bureau for readiness and was recognized as being among the top five teams in the nation, receiving the prestigious “Band of Excellence” award. The 45th completed a Training Proficiency Evaluation in October 2014, from Army North to evaluate the skills, competencies, and overall team performance. The results of the last inspection once again demonstrated the team was more than prepared for all of their evaluated tasks and received high ratings in all areas. The 45th was also awarded in September 2014, the first Tennessee Annual Unit of Safety Excellence Award and the Safety Excellence Guidon Streamer. The unit reached this safety benchmark after

conducting 17 missions while successfully driving over 100,000 accident free miles in 13 very specialized service vehicles during a two year period. The consistent excellent performance of the 45th WMD-CST during the conduct of their real world mission illustrates the dedication to the mission and level of preparation they undertake to meet the challenges they may face during very unique and dangerous situations. “The 45th WMD-CST is a little known, yet critical asset available to the citizens of Tennessee and the nation. They are 22 individual “Jack Bauers,” just like the key figure in the “24” television series,” said Maj. Gen. Max Haston, the Adjutant General of Tennessee. “The WMD-CST personnel are technically proficient and highly trained to identify nuclear, chemical and biological hazards then recommend a response to eliminate the danger. These Soldiers and Airmen are true professionals and we are fortunate to have this force structure available.” - **LT. COL.**

(RET) NIKI GENTRY

GIVING HOPE

Tenn. Sergeant helps comrades beyond the battlefield



Staff Sgt. Pamela Pugh, a Veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and 14 year member of the Tennessee National Guard selflessly assisted two homeless Soldiers in her unit get a new start in their lives. *(Photo by SPC Chris Daley)*

LOBELVILLE, Tenn. – Staff Sgt. Pamela Pugh, a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and 14 year member of the Tennessee National Guard, was contacted during the late summer of 2014 by two of her fellow soldiers who found themselves homeless and in dire need of aid. While serving as a Platoon Sergeant for her unit in Lobelville, Tenn., she immediately took the initiative to assist her comrades in arms

and help them gain assistance not only by her own actions, but also with help of numerous resources now available to military personnel, Veterans and their families.

“These are my Soldiers. I take care of them every month and they know I care about them whether on or off duty. They know they can call me anytime, especially when they are having difficult moments in their life,” said Pugh. “I take extreme pride

in helping these Soldiers, they are like my family, like my kids and I feel an obligation to assist them as best I can.”

The issue of homelessness among military members currently serving, and other Veterans, has become a priority in the United States, particularly as the war against terrorism continues. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs published a study identifying nearly 58,000 homeless

Veterans nationally on one single night in January of 2013. The Veterans documented in the study had served in some capacity among all the branches of the uniformed services. According to Lori Ogden, Director of Development with Operation Stand Down Tennessee, the average unemployment rate among Veterans in the state is 6.9 percent and one in five homeless persons are Veterans. The Veteran's Administration and other agencies continue to develop programs to reduce the number of homeless who have a military background, yet they emphasize the need for further support within Tennessee and across the country.

Staff Sgt. Pugh's story began when she was contacted by a young Soldier in her platoon who was living in a rescue shelter in Nashville, Tenn. Pugh quickly heeded the call and intervened in the pressing crisis. Using her knowledge of resources available through the Tennessee National Guard Family Programs section, The Enlisted Association of Tennessee, a local chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and other agencies, she was able to find financial assistance, temporary lodging and full-time employment for the Guard member.

Pugh's aid did not end with the one homeless Soldier. Shortly afterward, she helped another member of her unit in a similar situation. The second Soldier had sought refuge in a rescue shelter during an interim period prior to attending a state educational program. Staff Sgt. Pugh was contacted by the Soldier and once again took the initiative to help the member obtain lodging and financial aid until the member was in a stable situation. Beyond the resources accessed during the first Soldier's issues, Pugh was able to get other members of her squadron to assist in moving the second Soldier's personal belongings during the transition to her school.

"The actions of Staff Sgt. Pugh are keeping with Army Values, the Non-Commissioned Officer's Creed and are a true reflection of the nature of the Tennessee National Guard. Not only are our Soldiers and Airmen assisting their nation, state

Command Sgt. Major Terry Scott with Staff Sgt. Pamela Pugh at Joint Force Headquarters in Oct. 2014. (Photo by SPC Chris Daley)



and communities, but they are dedicated to their fellow team members as well," said Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Scott, the Senior Enlisted Leader for Tennessee.

He added, "the example set by Staff Sgt. Pugh, members of her unit and the Tennessee National Guard's varied Soldier and Airmen support mechanisms worked seamlessly to help those encountering difficult times in their lives. Our National Guard is a family and when any of our own are in need of assistance we come together to support each other. It is with great pride that I was allowed to witness the functioning of our internal support network to assist one of our own. Staff Sgt. Pugh is a credit to her unit, as well as her fellow service members. She recognized a need and proactively sought out the necessary resources to take care of our Guard personnel." - **LT. COL.**

(RET) NIKI GENTRY

6.9%

Unemployment rate among Veterans in Tennessee.

1 in 5

Homeless persons in Tennessee is a Veteran.

58,000

Homeless Veterans nationally on one single night in 2013.

GUESTS OF HONOR

Haston, Rogers & McKeen Highlight Medal Of Honor Luncheon

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. - Maj. Gen. Max Haston, Capt. Stephanie McKeen and former Guardsman James Rogers were featured at the Veterans Appreciation Luncheon during the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's Annual Conference in Knoxville.

Capt. McKeen, who serves as the Wing Executive Officer for the 134th Air Refueling Wing performed an outstanding rendition of the National Anthem to open the luncheon where more than 50 Medal of Honor recipients were assembled.

Maj. Gen. Haston, Tennessee's 75th Adjutant General, was the keynote speaker for the event. Haston began by asking the question, "What do you say to a collection of the greatest heroes that this country has?" Haston went on to recognize and honor the recipients as, "the greatest treasure that America has." He recounted his recollection as a military child, and his first realization of the impact of the Medal of Honor on a community when one of McMinnville's own received the award. A Warren County native, that just a few weeks before Haston and the community had sent a comfort package, Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class David Robert "Bobby" Ray was killed in action while serving in Vietnam. Corpsman Ray's actions that day merited the posthumous presentation of the Medal of Honor to Ray's mother. He went on to laud the service and sacrifice of the Veterans in attendance and what it means to be "in the service", and encouraged the assembled to "let the voices of our Veterans be heard in Washington". Haston concluded



(Top) Maj. Gen. Max Haston delivers the keynote address. (Bottom Right) Former Tenn. Guardsman and renowned singer/songwriter James Rogers performs for Medal of Honor recipients. (Bottom Left) Capt. Stephanie McKeen sings the National Anthem.



ed by again thanking the Medal of Honor recipients for their service to our nation by being "ordinary people doing extraordinary deeds".

The luncheon concluded with a musical performance by renown singer/songwriter,

and former Tennessee Guardsman, James Rogers who performed some of his signature patriotic ballads. Rogers is well known from his years at Dollywood and Music Mansion Theater. His song "I Guard America" has been recognized as the official song of the National Guard.

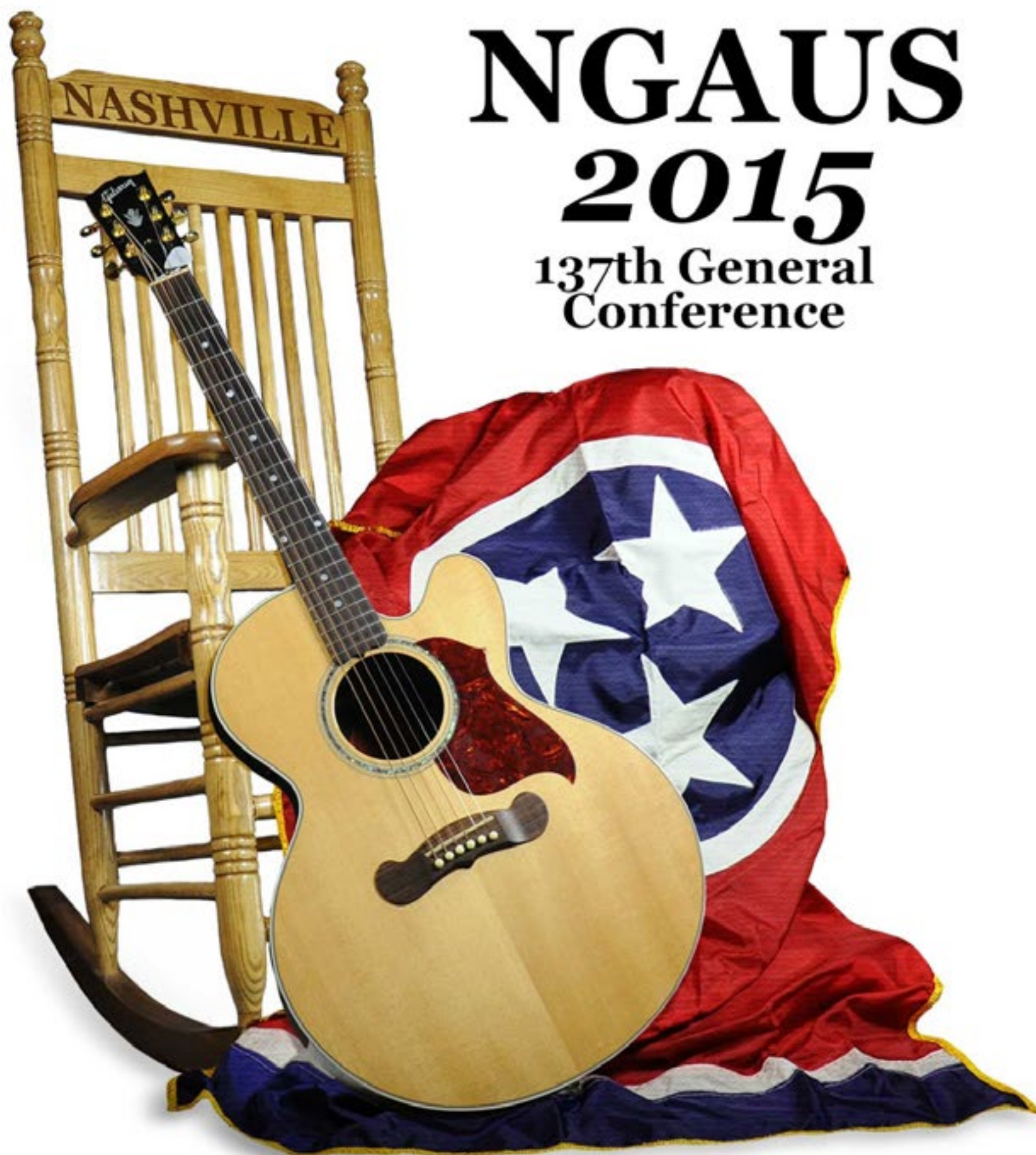
- MAJ (RET.) RANDY HARRIS

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NGAUS

2015

**137th General
Conference**



September 10 - 13, 2015 Nashville, Tenn.