



LA District helps Luke prepare for F-35 arrival

Daniel J. Calderón

LUKE AFB, Ariz. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District is working with Luke Air Force Base to prepare for the arrival of the new F-35 fighter planes which are due to arrive in 2014. Luke will serve as the bed down base for the incoming squadrons.

“The Corps has never let us down,” said Tauny Woo, engineering flight chief for Luke AFB. “The relationship with the Roadrunner Resident Office is great. The support we get and the level of personal support makes me feel like a valued customer and user. The team here listens to us and moves to resolve any issues that might come up during a project. It just doesn’t get any better.”

The District has four military construction projects currently underway to support the six squadrons which are due to arrive with two MilCon projects about to advertise this coming year, two more under design and three coming this spring for concept development. One project under construction is the Aerial Maintenance Unit #1/Squadron Operations Building project.

“This facility is for the storage of aerial maintenance equipment,” said Clinton Griffin, the District’s construction representative for the project who works at the Roadrunner Resident Office on Luke AFB. “We’re at around 80 percent right now.”

Griffin said the project, which was originally only the AMU building, now integrates both buildings into one construction assignment which is due for turnover in December. Both buildings are being constructed to meet Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design Silver standards as set by the U.S. Green Building Council. The AMU will contain approximately 12,500 square feet of space and the Squad Operations Building will encompass approximately 30,000 square feet. Royce C. Morton,



Workers lay in underground utilities for the Academic Training Center the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District is building on Luke Air Force Base. When it is completed, the ATC will enclose 145,000 square feet of training area with an administrative side, which includes a large auditorium, and a simulator side, which includes 12 simulators and associated control facilities for the pilots. (Daniel J. Calderón)

project manager for the joint venture of the Renew Group and Mason & Hanger, said the facility is designated as the flagship of its kind since it will be one of the first to go in.

“A lot of the items are very specific to the F-35 program,” Morton said. “The project is designed to be the tip of the spear in terms of overall support for the Air Force program. A lot of the protocol we’re using here is being established for the construction methods for future buildings.”

The project was originally sched-

uled to take 540 days from start to finish; however, Griffin and the rest of the District team worked it down to 365 days. Royce said Oct. 8 marked 365 days without a recordable accident.

“It’s a milestone for us,” he said. “All the subcontractors and the Corps worked together to make it possible.”

In order to meet such milestones, District team members had to engage in coordination meetings to meet the deadlines for the various construction



Bill Peters, a fire prevention specialist with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, spoke to Corps employees about the dangers of wildfires during a lunch and learn session at the District’s headquarters Oct. 16. (Photo by David A. Salazar)

Wildfire preparedness helps Corps employees

David A. Salazar

LOS ANGELES—Corps of Engineers employees have a number of duties related to the safety of life and property in communities across the nation.

The ability to provide disaster relief assistance when duty calls requires that employees be prepared for disaster when it strikes near their homes as well. Bill Peters, a fire prevention specialist with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, gave Corps employees the information they need to prepare themselves in the event of wildfires during a lunch and learn session held at the Los Angeles District headquarters Oct. 16.

Peters, a 22-year veteran of CalFire, spoke to attendees about the dynamics of wildfires most often seen in Southern California and offered tips on how people can mitigate risks to life and property in anticipation of wildfires as part of National Fire Prevention week.

Although the fire prevention discussion was pertinent to people from all walks of life, it was particularly important to Corps employees because of the roles they often play in responding to emergencies.

“It’s very important that as Corps professionals we are vigilant about how susceptible our homes and families are to

disasters,” said Anne Hutton, chief of the District’s emergency management office. “Due to the fact that our jobs require many of us to be in the emergency operations center or on disaster sites when those events occur, we need to make sure that our personal disaster plans are in order so that we can focus on what we’re here to do.”

The learning session was timely for Southern California residents, as the autumn cold fronts bring with them dry, windy conditions, which help fires spread more rapidly over a larger area than in spring and summer, Peters said.

“The Santa Ana winds in Southern California are the driving engine of our fires,” Peters said. “They’re what really push fire out of control. Regular wind will help to move a fire, but if you have a fire with 60 to 80 mile per hour wind behind it, it becomes a screaming blowtorch and it can run hundreds and thousands of yards very quickly. It’s one of the key factors of our catastrophic fires.”

Another factor that makes the area vulnerable to wildfires is the lack of moisture in the air, Peters added. “You also have extreme dryness because it’s warm and you have single-digit humidity. Everything’s going to burn at that point. And that’s going to fuel the fire,” he said. “That

makes everything more susceptible to ignition, to burning, and to burning more ferociously.”

Peters gave Corps employees tips on decreasing the risk of their homes catching fire through landscaping and switching out flammable roof material with more fire-resistant options, such as metal or tile. He also discussed the importance of communications and evacuation plans and familiarizing more vulnerable family members, including young children and elderly people, with the plans.

Peters said he was honored to discuss fire prevention with such an esteemed group of professionals, but to him the talk was just as important as if he were addressing elementary school students or elected officials, due to the common bonds shared by all Southern California residents.

“Everyone here is much smarter than I am,” he said with a chuckle. “It’s a privilege to get to speak with them. But engineers and other responders live in houses like we all do. Everybody needs to be reminded of what’s at stake and shaken up a little bit just to get out and do it. We all live in California; we all share the pain of the disasters. We need to get to a mindset of sharing in the success of the defense, too.”

To learn more, go to <http://www.ReadyForWildfire.org>.

District teammates:

Do you know about the about the USACE campaign plan? As I look at all of the prospective work we’re planning to undertake in the coming months and years, I see several projects and activities that come to mind when I think of the Corps’ campaign plan #4 goal of “Preparing for Tomorrow.”

Lt. Gen. Bostick details the objectives for this goal as:

1. Building strong people and teams through leader development and talent management.
2. Streamlining USACE Business and Governance processes.
3. Developing a USACE 2020 Vision and Implementation Plan by the end of CY 2013 that nests with (or complements) Army 2020.
4. Improving strategic engagement and communications to build and maintain trust and understanding with customers and teammates.
5. Ensuring we can maintain and advance DoD and Army critical enabling technologies.

I’m proud to say that the Los Angeles District is already meeting several of these objectives.

On Oct. 21, we announced the application period for the District’s Leader Development Program courses for fiscal year 2014. For those who are not familiar with LDP, it’s a program that helps us by developing the future leaders who will run our business at all levels. This is an important program for our District, and although there have been and still are budget constraints and restrictions, we are going to continue to invest in our people and leadership development is one of those investments that I believe will pay back big dividends in return.

Graduates of LDP go on to work on important District initiatives, including process improvement projects and many other activities that strive to improve District, Division, and USACE-level business and governance procedures.



I give LDP my full support. The suspense for LDP I, II and III--yes, the division is sponsoring an LDP III program--is Nov. 15. Sign up or refer someone to sign up if you have already completed an LDP track.

On Oct. 17, the District hosted a public meeting on the Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study and heard more than 50 comments from members of the public before an audience of more than 500 people. Aside from voicing their opinions on the study, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the District’s work and its value to the community. This indicated to me that those in attendance were attuned to the complexity of the study and the collaborative effort it required on the parts of the District and the numerous stakeholders involved. This was largely due to an effective strategic communication and engagement plan, which ensured broad dissemination of timely, accurate information regarding this project.

Do you know we streamed the public meeting live on UStream to more than 3,000 people? You can still watch the entire meeting at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/usace-la>. I applaud those on this project delivery team and those countless others who incorporate comprehensive communications efforts in everything they do. These efforts help us build and maintain the trust and understanding with customers, teammates, and members of the public that are absolutely vital to everything we do.

I’m proud of what we have accomplished for the Corps goal of “Preparing for Tomorrow” thus far. I look forward to our continued work toward meeting and surpassing Lt. Gen. Bostick’s expectations for this goal and all of the others.

I wish everyone a safe and happy Veteran’s Day and Thanksgiving! Let’s keep BUILDING STRONG!

ESSAYONS!

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- LUKE AFB from Page 1 -

projects. They have to juggle multiple schedules and timetables so each project will be ready for the end user – the U.S. Air Force – at the proper time. Another project on base is the Academic Training Center. Currently slated as a \$43.3 million project, including additional modifications on the original plans, the ATC is a two-story building enclosing 145,000 square feet with an “administrative side” and a “simulator side.” The District and the contractor, Archer Western, made extensive use of structural steel for the building.

“One of the reasons a lot of the structural steel was used for the roof was the winds in this area,” said Bruce Payne, the District’s field construction representative for the ATC project. “We know the roof covers such a large area, so the wind load would be a factor. The interior can be changed to suit the needs of the Air Force without having to demolish the building.”

Archer Western began the project Nov. 5, 2012. In the beginning, Payne said there were some difficulties with underground utilities not being located according to available maps. The team worked with the base civil engineers to resolve those issues. Also, the District needed to ensure the utilities for the building were both accessible and unobtrusive. So, the contractor buried them in a corridor between the buildings and off set them so they could be accessed more easily. The delay did result in a need for the District to request an extension beyond the completion date. The Corps and the contractor are coordinating that together.

“The relationship between us and the Corps of Engineers is fantastic,” said Bill Barsella – Senior Project manager for Archer Western. “Whenever there is a problem, everyone gets together and the Corps is ready to come in and help with the resolution. The Corps has a great team and we’ve got a good group of subcontractors.”

Payne said the classrooms, offices and an auditorium are located on the facilities administrative side. On the simulator side, there are 12 Full Mission Simulators and associated control facilities for the pilots. The facility has three different types of ceilings – Gypsum, Acoustical ceiling and a cloud or



The “weathered steel” look of the framing outside the Squadron Operations Building being built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District’s Roadrunner Resident Office at Luke Air Force is an architectural feature designed to help ease the cost of maintenance because it does not need to be repainted over and over. The building is part of a project in which the District is constructing both it and the Aerial Maintenance Unit #1 and is due for turnover to the base in December. (Daniel J. Calderón)

“floating” ceiling. Payne said the “floating” ceiling is, “a great architectural feature,” because it gives the impression the ceiling is higher than it actually sits. Barsella said there has been no lost time and no reportable accidents since the project began. Almost directly across from the ATC and next to the AMU#1/ Squad Operations complex is Building 431. There, the District is working on a hangar upgrade to accommodate the incoming F-35 squadrons.

“I’m very excited about the project,” said Joel Rodriguez, the District’s construction representative for the project. He said the contractor, KWR Construction, is “installing a new design with the pop-up pits. It’s a prototype for the Air Force.”

The pop-up pits will hold an array of necessary tools and diagnostic equipment to service the incoming F-35 aircraft. The design of the pits is unique to KWR construction. Scott Zimmerman, superintendent for KWR, said his team visited bases across the country to research existing service pits in order to come up with a new design to accommodate the new aircraft.

“These guys did a lot of research with the other bases that had pop-up pits,” Zimmerman said. “They looked

at a lot of bases and met with representatives from across the country. We’re trying to do everything we can to meet the Air Force’s requirements for these planes. We’re excited to be the first to get this implemented.”

Each of the towers in the new pits has multiple failsafe devices to help maintain the safety of the individuals working on the planes. Faris Mohamed, the project manager for KWR, said the design of the pop-up pits will likely be used for future projects. He is excited about the flexibility and the ease of use it will give the Air Force for future maintenance of their aircraft. Mohamed and the team are humble about the project’s scope.

“I know it [a hangar upgrade] doesn’t sound like a big project; but, this is important for the people who work here,” Mohamed said. “If there are any other systems like this that need to be built in the future, we will be the experts. We’ve worked through each challenge and we’re ready for new systems in the future.”

Rodriguez expects to have the hangar ready to turnover before the deadline in January. He said it has been a pleasure to work with KWR.

“KWR’s knowledge of our three-

phase inspection and their familiarity with our processes has been helpful,” he said. “They are always responsive and ready to help whenever it’s needed.”

A very new project at Luke is AMU#2. The project has recently broken ground and Speegle Construction, Inc., the District’s contractor for the project, has cleared away the concrete for the work site. This project is the first of multiple two-story constructions projects of the Squad Ops AMUs.

“The design portion is currently underway,” said Jeff Page, vice president and director of operations for Speegle Construction, Inc. “Right now, we’re going through the review with the customer to ensure all expectations will be met.”

The cost for the project is almost \$12.5 million. The facility is approximately 42,500 but it has flexibility for expansion due to the equipment. The work location is adjacent to the flight line so Speegle had a concrete apron that had to be demolished and removed. Stephanie Morgan, project engineer with the LA District, said the project is being designed to meet LEED Silver standards and is vital for upcoming AMU/Squad Ops buildings.

“This project is the prototype for future AMUs,” Morgan said. “We’re using lessons learned from AMU 2 for AMU 3 and AMU 4.”

The Design-Build project is scheduled for completion in September, 2014. Page said the subcontractors for the project are from the Phoenix area because it is important to the company to help stimulate the local economy. The AMU Squadron Operations building #2 is the first for the company at Luke AFB; but they have completed a number of projects with USACE across the country.

“We focus on military construction,” Page said. “This is our way to give back. We do projects we feel are important to us. This project is important for us as a company and for us as individuals; and, we have the greatest project engineer that the Corps could ever offer us.”

More projects are planned for the future and Griffin said the District is ready.

“Anything that relates to the F-35 taking off or landing will go through this area,” he said.



Clinton Griffin, construction representative at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District’s Roadrunner Resident Office at Luke Air Force, inspects the Aerial Maintenance Unit #1 project. The project involves construction of the AMU#1 combined with the construction of a Squadron Operations Building immediately adjacent to it and both are due for turnover to the base in December. (Daniel J. Calderón)



At some point in the past twenty years, every county in California has been declared a federal flood disaster area. Residents should prepare by finding out whether or not they live within a flood plain and engage their local emergency management organizations. The objective of California Flood Preparedness Week is to make residents aware of the numerous resources available to them at the federal, state, and local levels. (File photo)

Preparedness week warns of flood dangers

David A. Salazar

LOS ANGELES—The webpage for California Department of Water Resources' California Flood Preparedness campaign poses a simple yet important question: "Do you know that every county in California has been declared a federal flood disaster area at least once in the last 20 years?"

For many Californians, the answer is no. California Flood Preparedness Week, a statewide awareness campaign which takes place the week of Nov. 4, hopes to change this lack of awareness.

"California Flood Preparedness Week is essentially an awareness week," said Anne Hutton, chief of the District's emergency management office. "It tries to make all people aware of flooding in California and the types of flooding

and what they can do to prepare so that they're less affected in the event of a flood."

Flood season in California begins Nov. 15, when cool autumn temperatures bring increased precipitation to the area. Flood preparedness week precedes the flood season to help those at risk become aware of resources available to preserve life and property.

"It's the perfect time to get the public thinking about floods and preparing themselves," Hutton said. "If someone determines that they're in an area of concern and find themselves in a position where they need sandbags or something like that, we encourage them to talk to their local emergency management agency because those resources may be available."

The DWR's website has numerous

tips and resources for preparing for floods, including links to checklists from the American Red Cross, flood risk assessment tools, family communication and evacuation plans, and the National Weather Service's "Turn Around, Don't Drown" campaign.

In December 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the emergency response contingents of the Los Angeles District responded to flood sites in Los Angeles County after severe rainfall caused flooding in numerous areas across the region. Floods caused tens of millions of dollars worth of damage to homes, office buildings, and infrastructure.

Visit http://www.water.ca.gov/floodsafe/ca-flood-preparedness/reducing_your_flood_risk.cfm for more information.

District employee quits smoking with a little help

Cecy Ordonez

The American Cancer Society will be celebrating their annual Great American Smokout on Nov. 21. This day is used to encourage smokers to quit smoking for one day.

Quitting smoking is arguably the single most important choice to improving your health. Smoking has been known to cause heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure, kidney failure, lung cancer, throat cancer, mouth cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, cervical cancer, cancer of the pancreas, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, macular degeneration, and many other ailments. Regardless of whether people already know the effects of smoking, it is the hardest habit to break because of the addictive qualities of tobacco and the additives used in cigarettes. Here is an insight story about one of our own who is successfully kicking the habit: Michele Denham, Workforce Management Administrator.

How long have you smoked?

Off and on for many years.

Why did you start smoking?

Well, I guess it must have been peer pressure in the very olden days when lots of people thought smoking was cool. I can't remember that far back.

How has your smoking progressed or worsened over time?

It hasn't really. It's just been a really long time.

Why did you decide to finally quit?

My niece died of Cystic Fibrosis this year on her 23rd birthday while waiting for a lung transplant. She spent her entire life doing everything right for her health in order to live as long as possible and here I was smoking and ruining perfectly good lungs for a stupid reason. During her last hospitalization she designed a logo and planned to raise funds by selling merchandise with the logo to raise awareness for transplants after she got one. That was a dream she would not get the chance to fulfill because she didn't get a lung transplant in time. I decided that maybe sometime later on, if I quit smoking and got healthy, I will have organs and other body parts and tissue that still work to donate to people like my niece and help save someone's life.

How did you do it?

I went to see Cecy. She spent a great deal of time with me discussing my goals and offering great ideas and constant support. She designed an exercise program for me and has been an inspiration. I started yoga classes here, which I was surprised to find that I really love (bring back the yoga class!) My husband who has never smoked is also a great support. I keep active doing things I enjoy like gardening and photography, walking, swimming, and arts and crafts.

How has quitting benefitted your life?



Smoking cessation requires a lot of determination and a little help from a support network of family, friends and co-workers. Michelle Denham, (inset photo) the District's Workforce Management Administrator, quit her years-long habit and made a positive change for her health as a result of the loss of a family member. (File photo)

Now that I quit smoking and I am losing weight, my bad knees are much happier. I spend more time doing things I enjoy (and have more money to do them – it costs a lot to smoke and eat too much). I feel better in total and enjoy the extra time and energy I have.

Do you have any tips for our readers who may want to quit?

Know going into it that it will not be easy. I heard somewhere, probably from Cecy, that it takes six weeks to develop a habit. That's a short enough period of time to handle in order to develop the habit of not doing something as well as the other way around. Keep busy. Just go see Cecy, she'll fix you right up! Seriously. It's worth the effort.

A great big thanks to Michele for sharing her story. Michele started our Fit to Win program in April 2013 and since then has began moving more, attends our Yoga class, has quit smoking, has lost 38 lbs (25% of her starting weight) which has propelled her from a high body mass index to a healthy weight for her height. Michele is paving the way to building wellness and most importantly has significantly improved her quality of health and life...now and for her future.

November is American Indian Heritage Month

Linda McCart
Special Emphasis Program
Manager

During the month of November we celebrate National American Indian Heritage Month. The month of November was chosen by Congress to recognize the Native American culture since it concludes the traditional harvest season and was generally a time of thanksgiving and celebration for Native Americans. Our 2013 national theme is “Guiding our Destiny with Heritage and Tradition.” We pay homage and focus attention on the contributions that Native Americans have made to strengthen and build our nation. Many of these contributions are not well known, but they are invaluable to our nation and have helped preserve and protect the freedoms we all enjoy.

Throughout history, there have been individuals who believed that the Native American population deserved to be recognized and celebrated for their contributions. One early proponent of an American Indian Day was Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca and Director of the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, N.Y. He persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the “First Americans” and for three years they adopted such a day. In 1915, the annual Congress of the American Indian Association formally approved a plan endorsing “American Indian Day.” It directed its President, Rev. Sherman Coolidge, to call upon the nation to observe such a day. Coolidge issued a proclamation containing the first formal appeal for recognition of Indians as citizens. A year prior to this proclamation being issued, Red Fox James, a member of the Blackfoot tribe, rode horseback from state to state seeking approval for a day to honor America’s first citizens. On Dec. 14, 1915, he presented endorsements from 24 state governments at the White House. However, there is no record of a national day ever being proclaimed. In 1990 President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November as “National American Indian Heritage Month.” Presidents Clinton, George W.



November was first proclaimed American Indian Heritage Month by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. (Photo courtesy of Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute)

Bush, and Obama also issued proclamations designating November as National American Indian Heritage Month. These proclamations celebrate the contributions of Native Americans to our nation, and urge people of the United States to learn more about the Native American cultures.

Native Americans have a long history of serving the United States through their participation in the military. The history of Native Americans’ participation in conflicts between the United States and other countries goes back before there officially was a United States. In the earliest conflicts between European and burgeoning U.S. interests, tribes split their loyalties, especially during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. During the Civil War, Native Americans fought for both the South and the North as auxiliary troops. For Native Americans, serving in the military has been about volunteering. At the time President Woodrow Wilson declared a draft in 1914 when World War I began, Native Americans were not eligible for the draft – they were not considered citizens of the United States. However some 12,000 volunteered for military service in that war. Native Americans have volunteered to serve the United States in conflicts from World War II to Iraq.

American Indians have given distinguished service in all branches of the military from the very first. The Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest honor given by the United States was established in 1861 for the Navy and

expanded in 1862 to the U.S. Army (and later other branches.) The first American Indian to receive the medal came in 1869, when it was awarded to a Pawnee member of the U.S. Army’s Indian Scouts unit (discontinued as a separate element of the Army in 1947). Since 1869, 27 servicemembers of American Indian/Alaskan Native heritage have received the Medal of Honor, some of whom died protecting their comrades in combat.

In addition to their many contributions in the military, Native Americans have made significant contributions in the fields of engineering, science, and medicine. For instance, one-third of the world’s most important economic plants are Native American in origin. Native Americans of North and South America domesticated and cultivated many food plant staples now grown in various parts of the world, including maize, peanuts, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and cassava. Accomplishments in the field of engineering include development of hydraulic techniques for the collection, transport and management of water as a resource for agricultural and urban use.

Please join the Los Angeles District in celebrating the Native American culture and the many contributions throughout our nation’s history. You can learn more about the dedication and contributions of Native Americans to our nation and the Federal Government by supporting the American Indian and Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Program.

Be thankful for the good, the bad and the somewhere in between

Daniel J. Calderón

Yep. It’s November. Believe it or not, 2013 is almost at an end. I, for one, can’t fathom just how quickly this year seems to have gone by. “Old tyme is still a’flying” is as appropriate a quote today as it was when Robert Herrick first penned it. It seems like only yesterday I was somehow messing up Valentine’s Day and now we’re about to celebrate Thanksgiving Day. So, it seems only fitting to take a few minutes and reflect on what I’m thankful for.

First, I’m thankful for our system of government.

I know that’s probably not a popular sentiment; but, I am. I think we have one of the best systems of government in recorded history. If you look at the structure of it, it’s really pretty brilliant. Theoretically, no one branch has superior authority over another. If implemented properly, the three branches of our government should keep each other in check and be able to work for the best outcome for the people of our nation.

Granted, most of the people we have in office are probably lacking in more ways than one. But, what we have to realize is that we, the people, put them there. We, the people have allowed them to remain in power and to pass the laws that have been passed. If we, the people are ready for change, then we, the people, have to do everything we can to effect that change. If we want term limits, then we, the people, have to demand them of whoever is elected into office. And, unfathomable as it may seem, we’re still moving forward as a nation.

Some people feel their representatives don’t represent them properly.



Some people feel the government does too much and others think it doesn’t do enough. We seem to be caught up on a sort of societal Moebius Strip where we really don’t know how to orient ourselves since we can’t really agree on too much. And I think people feel trapped by that indecision. Instead of compromising and finding common ground, people want to feel like they are getting everything they want. If they don’t have that, then they feel their elected officials are misrepresenting them. A lot of people seem to forget we were built on compromise; on give and take; and on finding a middle ground.

On that note, I’m also thankful we have the right to disagree with whoever is in charge and that we can petition for a redress of those grievances. It’s amazing just how much we can do with the power of words. I just wish people learned how to use some better words and weren’t so prone to hyperbole. If we, as a country, could find a way to actually speak with each other with respect, the things we could accomplish would be nigh-on limitless. There are letter-writing campaigns (for people who still know how to use “snail mail” – Yes, I’m a big proponent since there is just something powerful about receiving an actual hand-written letter in the mailbox), email, online videos and assorted other social media venues we can take to if we wanted to get the word out.

I’m also thankful we’re in an era of near-constant access to communications. I know that I will be able to keep in touch with my kids and, when they eventually come along, my grandkids a lot better than I have been able to keep in contact with my parents and, when they were alive, my grandparents. I can do video calls from my phone right now if I wanted and I’ve seen advertisements for video phone watches. I don’t think I’d want one of those, though. It’s a cool idea and one that’s been around science fiction for a long time; but, I don’t think I’d really ever use something like that.

Using a phone for a video call seems futuristic enough for me.

I’m thankful I’ve lived to see “the future.” I see it in the faces of my kids. And that future is full of possibility. I listen to people who bemoan the current generation for their propensity to play video games instead of kickball or tendency to watch TV instead of going out to play with their friends at a park or in the street in front of the house. I don’t understand those tendencies myself since I remember many days where we did things that looked like fun because they looked like fun. Were we careful about it? By today’s standards, probably not. I know if I looked back at my younger self, I’d probably wonder how that gangly kid ever ended up as the skinny fat man sitting at my desk today. But, you know what? I had fun.

And I think my kids, today’s kids, will look back at their childhood with much fondness. It’s going to be a different kind of fondness. I can’t look back at the same kind of growing up as my grandfather or great-grandfather because it’s a different world. I remember playing outside when I was very young and I also remember riding my bike to the mall to meet friends at the arcade as a teenager. I remember that and so much more when I delve into my memories. They’re going to look back and remember when cars were limited to rolling on the ground, when space travel was the sole domain of governments and the ultra rich, when we thought ours was the only planet that could be inhabited.

I’m thankful for my kids. I’m thankful every morning when I’m getting ready to leave and I peek in on them sleeping. I’m thankful for their messy rooms. I’m thankful because it tells me they really live there. They are comfortable in their own spaces and they know they are safe. Granted, they aren’t allowed to have their rooms a total wreck; but, they have individualized their own room. They have their knick knacks on shelves or on the wall and their dirty clothes are (usually) in a pile in a corner

— see FINAL WORD Page 13 —

LA District has long history with Fort Irwin

David A. Salazar

LOS ANGELES--The National Training Center was officially activated on Oct. 16, 1980, making the current incarnation of the sprawling Fort Irwin 33 years old. But did you know that the Los Angeles District worked under the direction of Gen. George S. Patton Jr. to procure the land to build an early and more vast version of NTC—then known as the Desert Training Center-California-Arizona Maneuver Area—in 1942?

“Patton in his characteristic flamboyant style, informed Lt. Col. Edwin C. Kelton, (then) District engineer of the Los Angeles District, that he would return with his division and its support personnel, consisting of approximately 60,000 Soldiers, in 40 days, by which time he expected facilities ready for quartering and messing these men,” according to “Did You Know? Vol. II,” a historical guide written by Dr. Anthony Turnhollow, who served as the District’s historian from 1966 to 1998.

True to his word, Patton’s troops began to arrive on April 11, 1942, to find the facility fully-annexed and ready for training. Patton went on to use the dry, rugged terrain to prepare Soldiers of the I Armored Corps for battle during the opening salvoes of U.S. involvement in World War II in French North Africa.

The official history of the 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, which was among the first units to train at DTC-CAMA, described the area as: “The world’s largest Army post and the greatest training maneuver area in U.S. military history. Eighteen thousand square miles of nothing in a desert designed for hell.” More than one million men experienced the Desert Training Center’s version of “hell” before the post was closed in 1944.

The original Desert Training Center spanned 350 miles from Pomona, Calif., to the Arizona Desert, and 250 miles from Yuma, Ariz., to Boulder City, Nev. Today, despite its dramatically decreased size to its present 996 square miles, the National Training Center at Fort Irwin is regarded as the nation’s premier training center.

The Los Angeles District has continued its



General George S. Patton worked with the Los Angeles District in 1942 to develop the first iteration of the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, then known as the Desert Training Center-California Arizona Maneuver Area. The official history of the 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, which was among the first units to train at DTC-CAMA, described the area as: “The world’s largest Army post and the greatest training maneuver area in the U.S. military history. Eighteen thousand square miles of nothing in a desert designed for Hell.” More than one million men experienced the Desert Training Area’s version of “hell” before the post was closed in 1944. (Illustration by Bill Fleming)

partnership with the National Training Center in recent months, having broken ground on a new hospital and water treatment plant for the post. In August, an emergency contingent of engineers and other responders were deployed to assess damage and begin reconstruction efforts after a monsoon-like storm flooded much of the training center, causing an estimated \$50 million in damage.

Commander honored by LA County



Los Angeles District Commander, Col. Kim Colloton, was presented with a scroll by Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina Oct. 22, as a welcome to Los Angeles and in recognition of becoming the District’s 60th commander. (Photo by Kristen Skopeck)

— FINAL WORD, from Page 11 —

just waiting to be washed. But they are there. All too soon, the time where I have them all under my roof will be gone and I will look at the empty rooms and wish I still had their “mess,” their stuff, their presence. But, when they leave, they will be making their own

lives and their own memories and I am thankful for the ones we had the chance to make together.

I am thankful for all of this and for more. I am thankful for the ability to see these things and the ability to seize the time in my mind and with my words. I am thankful for all I can speak about and for all that I can’t. After all,

this is a column of limited size so I can’t really include everything. What are you thankful for? What makes your world at this time and what are you grateful for having in your life? It can be big or small; but, take time to recognize what it is. Time is the one thing we can never get back. Use a little bit to say thank you. Just a thought...

[illegible]

“Guiding Our Destiny with Heritage and Traditions”