WADS own shine at Safeco

By 2nd Lt. Casey Robbins
Public Affairs Officer

The Seattle Mariners showed their appreciation to military members and their families on April 18, 2009. The Mariners afforded military families inexpensive tickets to the baseball game against the Detroit Tigers that created a fond night of memories.

Photos by 2nd Lt. Casey Robbins

Five members of the Western Air Defense Sector were invited to participate in the pregame ceremonies during the Seattle Mariners' Salute to Armed Forces Night at Safeco field. The WADS members, standing alongside the third baseline during the pregame festivities, from left to right are Staff Sgt. Ericson Cereno, Airman First Class Jordan Schaefer, Master Sgt. David Rock, Master Sgt. Tammy Weber, Capt. John Weldon.

In attendance for the game were 31,966 fans, including many servicemen and women from the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard active duty, National Guard and Reserve.

The Seattle Mariners went above and beyond to show their appreciation by allowing military members that were recognized for outstanding performance in 2008, to participate in the pregame activities. This included five members from the Western Air Defense Sector (WADS). Pregame activities included plaque presentations, a

During the seventh inning stretch, Master Sgt. Marvin Shields, Jr. performed "God Bless America" in front of 31,966 fans. The performance capped a night of recognition and acclamation for military members and their families.

ceremonial drill and admittance on the field during the thirty minutes prior to the Mariners taking the field.

The military participants were called out by group, allowing WADS its own distinguished entrance onto the field. Representing WADS were many of the Sector's 2008 award state award winners:

Airman First Class Jordan Schaefer, Airman
Master Sgt. David Rock, NCO
Master Sgt. Tammy Weber, SNCO
Staff Sgt. Ericson Cereno, Honor Guard
Capt. John Weldon, Company Grade Officer

"My favorite part was the feeling I got when all the fans were standing up applauding us for our service," said Airman 1st Class Jordan Schaefer. "It sent shivers down my back."

Once the acclamation subsided after formal introductions, WADS members took their place along the third baseline where they were met by the visiting Tigers.

"It was really cool to see the players' reaction to us," said Airman Schaefer. "They were very thankful for what we're doing and seemed very appreciative."

Athletes from both teams greeted the men and women in uniform along the baselines and socialized for about five minutes, which led up to the Joint Forces Color Guard performance. This experience, along with the constant cheers of the fans, was a special moment for the military participants.

"I really appreciated the fact that the public was there at Safeco to support us," said Master Sgt. David Rock. "That was a rewarding feeling."

WADS members stood shoulder to shoulder with the Tigers while the Joint Forces Color Guard performed in center field. As the colors and flags of each service were ushered onto the field, the fans rose to their feet to pay their respect. The Joint Forces Color Guard's awe-inspiring demonstration was a technical drill which consisted of flawless marching. Following the performance was a moment of silence, taps, and the National Anthem.

When the National Anthem was finished the military participants were prompted to clear the field and make their way to their seats. Most of the seats that WADS members enjoyed were generously donated to the unit by the Pierce Business Military Alliance - an indispensable partner within the Sector's community.

A special event that took place during the game was the singing of "God Bless America" by WADS' own Master Sgt. Marvin Shields, Jr. Preceding the typical seventh inning stretch routine of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" and "Louie, Louie," Master Sgt. Shields eloquently sang "God Bless America" which was well received by the fans.

"The opportunity to sing in front of thousands is a blessing," said Sergeant Shields. "I love to sing and represent the military. It is rewarding to be patriotic and inspiring to others."

After all of the military recognition and special tributes were completed, it still wasn't enough to help the Mariners defeat the Tigers. The Mariners lost the game 0-2 and also lost the three game series, two games to one. Although the Mariners were short of offensive firepower it didn't prevent WADS members from a having fun experience and making fond memories.

"My favorite part of the night was seeing all of the different services together in one place and knowing that we all have one common goal: defend our nation," said Sergeant Rock reminiscently.