PRAIRIE SOLDIER SPECIAL FEATURE

PATRIOTS in Stripes

The Nebraska Army National Guard simply couldn't do its mission without the hundreds of professional noncommissioned officers that make up its ranks. From the command sergeants major who are responsible for looking out for the morale and welfare of their troops, to the supply sergeants who makes sure that Soldiers have the equipment they need, to the medical sergeants who maintain Soldiers' health and treat their wounds, to the drill sergeants who ensure that Soldiers start their careers on the right foot, the Nebraska Army National Guard depends on the quality and professionalism of its NCOs to make sure that the hard jobs get done right the first time. They literally are the backbone of the Army.

As part of the Army's continuing Year of the NCO observance, the Prairie Soldier spotlights the work that Nebraska Army National Guard NCOs do on a daily basis to ensure that the Nebraska Army National Guard is ready, trained and capable to do its mission.

Following in his father's footsteps

■Nebraska Army Guard first sergeant filling same role in same unit as father

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Steve Harris is a busy man with a lot on his mind.

As the first sergeant for the 1075th Medium Truck Company, which is split between York and Columbus, his drill weekends literally keep him hopping.

One moment he's confirming to see if his Soldiers' rations are ready and in place. The next he's talking with one of his platoon sergeants about the progress of the weekend's training. Then he's on his cell phone, checking on the location of one of the unit's convoys.

Along the way, he chats with his Soldiers who are also busy at work. How's college going? How's your family? Have you filled out this or that paperwork yet? When are you going to reenlist?

It's about caring, says Harris during a rare break at the end of his May drill. It's about caring for your Soldiers by giving them the right training, the right counseling and more importantly, the time to help them become the best they possibly can be.

It's also about being honest with them about what the future holds.

"Don't try to pull anything over on them," Harris says about his leadership philosophy. "Be honest and upfront with them. I believe right there, that is the key. You instill their trust and they will follow you."

"Take care of your Soldiers," he adds, "and they will take care of you."

For most Soldiers in Harris' position, such a philosophy is built up over time, the result of countless mentoring sessions with noncommissioned officers they've served with over their careers.

In a way, Harris is no different. He, too, says his philosophy was developed by watching and learning from the sergeants he's worked for since enlisting into the Nebraska Army National Guard in 1980. Not the least of which was a first sergeant who early on helped teach Harris the value of caring for Soldiers and mentoring them for the future.

That first sergeant was Harris' father, Jack R. Harris, who served as the senior sergeant for the York, Neb., company from 1984 until his retirement in 1989.

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

1st Sgt. (Ret.) Jack R. Harris
Hometown: Fairmont, Neb.
Job Title: Retired First Sergeant, York, Neb.
Years of Service: 23
Family: Wife: Loris K.Harris; Sons: Jeff, Doug, Dave, Steve, Mike.

1st Sgt. Steven T. Harris
Hometown: York, Neb.
Job Title: First Sergeant, 1057th Transportation Company (Columbus, York)
Years of Service: 29
Family: Wife: Barb J. Harris; Sons: Andrew, Cory.

The same community where Harris also now serves as first sergeant.

"I learned everything I know from him," said Harris, who is responsible for approximately 180 1075th Soldiers. "If it wasn't for him, I don't know if I would've got to this spot."

Jack Harris' military career began in 1954 when he joined the Air Force as an aircraft mechanic. The son of a fighter pilot who won a Silver Star in the Pacific during World War II and fought again during the Korean War, Jack said military service was already coursing through his veins when he began a career that would take him from Detroit, Mich., to Alaska and finally York, Neb.

"There's a lot of military background in our family," said Jack, whose uncle served and died in Vietnam when his special operations unit was ambushed.

Jack served in the Air Force until 1964. After moving to central Nebraska, he decided to enlist into York's Company A, 67th Support Battalion, in 1976 to complete his military career and earn a retirement.

Serving with the Nebraska Army Guard for 13 years, Harris moved steadily up the ranks in the unit, which was responsible for providing groceries, fuel and ammunition for the rest of Nebraska's 67th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized). He also helped recruit many of the members York's current Detachment 1, 1075th Medium Truck Co., including four of Jack's sons. Steve, the youngest of the four, was the last to join in 1980.

Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Like Father, Like Son: Retired 1st Sgt. Jack Harris and his son, 1st Sgt. Steve Harris, show off their first sergeant stripes while standing in the motorpool at the York armory. Both Soldiers served as first sergeant in York, Neb., Jack Harris for Company A and B, 67th Support Battlion, and Steve for the 1075th Transportation Company, which also includes Soldiers based in Columbus.

Jack said his son was pretty much like any other new Soldier.

"He was apprehensive," Jack said. "I think they all were. You don't know what's going to happen at basic training. You don't know what to expect."

Harris said it was difficult being both a young Soldier and the son of his unit's senior sergeant. "Through my eyes I honestly have to say that he was harder on me than anybody else because he didn't want me to fail," Harris said. "It was hard not only as a young Soldier, but as his son. Sitting there with dad saying, 'You are going to do this or else,' is hard for a son to follow.'"

"You're like, 'You're family, what the heck are you doing?'" he added, laughing. "It's hard enough being young and not knowing anything about the military. It becomes, 'I guess I have to follow along because you're the first sergeant.'"

Jack said all of his sons became good Soldiers. The older three, however, had other career goals they wanted to pursue, so they left the Guard.

Not Steve, though. "I could see that he was taking an interest," Jack said. "He's a Soldier… a Soldier's Soldier."

Harris said serving in a unit with his father helped him develop a better understanding of the military and himself.

"As time went on, I grew," said Harris, who, along with the rest of his Columbus and York unit, deployed to Iraq for a year-long mission in 2004. "I got to understand why I was serving. It wasn't for myself…it was for my country and other people… to serve for them."

Jack said the unit he helped lead in the late 1980s was different from the one his son now helps lead. Back then, as the primary support unit for a Nebraska infantry brigade, Soldiers from York spent much of their drills and annual training "out in the field" setting up bivouac sites where they helped distribute food, ammunition and petroleum products to the rest of the brigade.

Still, his duties as a first sergeant weren't that much different than the ones his son now has.

"My biggest worry was personnel, making sure they were taken care of, especially in the field; making sure they got their rations, everything like that," Jack said.

It wasn't just a part-time job, either.

"I was up here (at the York armory) every day even though I wasn't a full-timer," he said, adding that his philosophy was pretty simple: "If you didn't take care of your people, the job wouldn't get done."

Jack said he also quickly learned that he couldn't do it alone. He needed to trust the NCOs under him to do their jobs well. "When I was the first sergeant I tried to give people the authority and then held them accountable," he said. "There was no way that I could have my finger on everything, but I put people in place where they could tell me what was going on."

"I had a good bunch of people," he said. "My NCOs were good."

Probably the best part of the job, Jack said, was the times he got to spend working one-on-one with the individual Soldiers.

"Mentoring to me was probably the

See FIRST SERGEANTS on 10.

Helping people find right path driving Wayne-area recruiter

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. 1st Class Dale T. Alexander Jr.
Hometown: Emerson, Neb.
Job Title: Recruiting and Retention Sergeant, Detachment 1, 189th Transportation Company (Wayne, Neb.)
Years of Service: 21
Family: Wife: Stacey Alexander; Daughters: Jordan, Jacie.

Dale Alexander Jr. faced a difficult decision.

About two years ago Alexander, who had recently returned home from Iraq after serving a year in the Middle East as a platoon sergeant with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 189th Transportation Company, was approached by Sgt. 1st Class Brad Wieland about becoming a recruiter for the company's detachment in Wayne.

Wieland, who had served as the Wayne recruiter for more than two decades, was about to retire from the Guard and thought Alexander would be a good fit to replace him.

Alexander, who had recently been promoted into an office career as a northeastern Nebraska probation officer, wasn't sure, though.

Could he step away from a career where he was responsible for helping troubled youth find a different path? Was he recruiter material?

He just didn't know.

Wieland, ever the recruiter, finally got Alexander to promise to at least consider the possibility.

"I decided I'd take a serious look at it. (I) did some soul-searching and realized that I wouldn't be where I'm at today without the experiences and schooling and everything that the Guard has done for me," said Alexander, a native of Emerson, Neb., who had served in the Wayne unit since joining the Nebraska Army National Guard in December 1987.

Alexander said he suddenly realized that becoming a recruiter similar to the work he did as a 16-year veteran probation officer: helping young adults find what interests them and giving them an opportunity to pursue their dreams.

"Basically, all I want to do is see these kids become productive people in their communities and not be a burden on the community," he said. "To get them headed into the right direction."

In December 2007 Alexander formally became the recruiter for Detachment 1, 189th Trans. Co. Since then, he has logged nearly 28,000 miles in his official car while making weekly visits to 19 high schools spread across a wide swath of northeast Nebraska ranging from West Point to Wynot, from South Sioux City, Emerson and Bancroft to U.S. Highway 81.

Alexander said a typical day usually starts at the Wayne armory. He then points his car north or south and begins the work of finding people interested in joining the Nebraska Army National Guard, visiting school guidance counselors, recently enlisted recruits and people looking for more information about the Nebraska Guard.

He quickly learned that it's a tough, tough job.

Days often extend well into the night, which often means missing one of his two daughters' school activities. It also means relentlessly maintaining a positive attitude in the face of adversity.

"You have to be able to take 'no' for an answer and not be devastated," he said. "I think for some people, for some recruiters, hearing 'no' over and over again is very discouraging. But you have to come at it with the thought process that the military is not for everybody."

"Those kids have plans of their own," he said.

Alexander credits Wieland with helping him get started on the right foot. "I learned a lot of my stuff from Wieland," he said, adding that the veteran recruiter gave him several pieces of advice that he carries with him each day.

The first is that he's responsible for making sure the Wayne detachment and the 189th Trans. Co., as a whole, are staffed with good, quality Soldiers who want to make an impact on the organization's mission. The second is that before enlisting any new Soldier he has to talk to the parents first.

"One of the guidelines he had for himself was, you will not enlist someone until you meet the parents," Alexander said. "It's a good philosophy because then you go over it again with Mom and Dad and they have a full understanding of what their child is about do."

"And they ask a lot of the hard questions that kids don't ask," he added.

For example, questions about deployments always come up. Alexander said he's always honest any questions he receives.

"I go over the good and the bad," he said. "I talk about my experiences in Iraq."

He said he always makes sure the potential recruit and his or her parents realize that deployments are now a very real part of a Guard Soldier's commitment.

"They can't join the military thinking that they will not be deployed," he said. "It's going to happen. That's the mindset that they need to come in with."

"And if they're not comfortable with being deployed then that's okay because the military isn't for everyone," he added.

Honesty, he said, is extremely important.

"If you B.S. them, they are going to at some point say, 'I don't think I want to do this,'" he said.

Since becoming the recruiter for Wayne, Alexander has enjoyed considerable success. His unit is currently over-strength, which means he has relatively few positions to offer to people interested in joining his detachment.

He also recorded a rare feat when he enlisted a total of 12 seniors from nearby Wakefield Community School's graduating class into the Guard, the largest amount of recruits by both number and percentage from a single high school class in Nebraska this year.

He said he's also learned that he loves the challenges of being a recruiter.

"I love this job," he said. "I like the social aspect of this job. I think that's what I liked about probation – always meeting new people."

"I work with my mind and my mouth," Alexander said. "That's just the way I've always been."

Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On The Road In Search Of Tomorrow's Guardsmen: Sgt. 1st Class Dale Alexander, recruiting and retention sergeant for Detachment 1, 189th Transportation Company, poses in his staff car along a road near Wayne, Neb. Since becoming a recruiter in December 2007 he has logged nearly 28,000 miles in his car.

> "Basically, all I want to do is see these kids become productive people in their communities and not be a burden on the community. To get them headed into the right direction."
>
> **— Sgt. 1st Class Dale Alexander**

FIRST SERGEANTS continued from page 9.

thing that I looked forward to doing the most," he said. "If I saw a troop in trouble, I tried to him out. Sometimes I failed, but most times I achieved it."

His son said after returning from Iraq he began thinking more about his future and his career in the Guard. He also started dreaming about someday becoming a first sergeant in the same unit his father had once served as the top sergeant.

In April 2008 that dream became a reality. After learning that he'd been selected to become first sergeant for the 1075th, Harris said his first thoughts were of his father.

"It was overwhelming for me. It was like, 'I finally caught up to him,'" he said with a sparkle in his eyes. "I don't know if I'll ever surpass him, but I finally caught up to him."

"I was just so excited and thrilled. I couldn't wait to call him and tell him. I just wanted to hear his voice and listen to his response."

His response?

"He called me 'Top' right away and said, 'That's just outstanding.'"

Jack said he too felt overwhelmed knowing that his son had just become first sergeant of the unit that still meant so much to him.

"I get shivers up and down my spine that my son has become the first sergeant that I used to be in," he said, adding: "I didn't say anything to anybody, but I was tickled pink. I was totally excited. I was hoping it would happen because I knew he was first sergeant material."

Harris agrees that the 1075th is a different unit than the one his father oversaw in the 1980s – not better, just different.

"I wouldn't say it's a better Guard, but rather a different Guard in the aspect that we're going all different directions whereas back when he was the first sergeant we were all together training," Harris said.

He said convoy missions, training support requests and preparing for the unit's homeland defense mission often takes up much of the company's drill weekend and annual training. "The Soldiers accomplish everything 100 percent. They'll do whatever we throw at them."

"What they don't always accomplish is taking care of themselves, to be blunt," he added, saying that getting his Soldiers to maintain their physical fitness and personal training, completing military schools on time and ensuring that they are administratively ready, is a constant worry.

Taking care of Soldiers is a philosophy he carries with him to each and every drill, Harris said. It's something that he learned from his father that is still as valid today as it was 20 years ago.

"This man here taught me everything I know today as far as taking care of your Soldiers, knowing where they're at, accountability, making sure they're fed, making sure that they're getting paid because they've got families at home who are depending on them," said Harris.

"Come out and guide them in the right direction," he added, "and those Soldiers, if you take care of, they'll come back and take care of you."

Soaring Job: Sgt. Beth Ramsey, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief with the Lincoln-based Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, stands next to one of the helicopter she and other unit crew chiefs are responsible for maintaining.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Helicopter crew chief loves job that keeps her away from desk

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

Always the first one to the aircraft and last one to leave it.

Responsible for the maintenance and up-keep of a medical evacuation UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, a crew chief's job is never truly complete.

Lives literally depend on the medevac helicopter being ready to fly at a moment's notice.

Sgt. Beth Ramsey is one such crew chief. A member of Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion in Lincoln, Neb., this nine-year veteran was once an unlikely candidate for the position, let alone the military.

The daughter of "hippies," Ramsey said she always had the desire to join the military and do something completely different than anything she could do as a normal citizen.

"When I picked the job, I wanted it to be something that I'd never do in the civilian world," said Ramsey. "I wanted it to be something completely separate, something that I would never do, something that only the military could give me the option to do. So I became an aircraft mechanic."

As an aircraft mechanic, Ramsey's military job is quite a departure from her civilian career goals. She graduated from Doane College in Crete, Neb., May 17, with a degree in Environmental Science and hopes to work outdoors as a field biologist.

Although Ramsey's military and civilian careers may take different paths, the reasoning behind her choices is the same.

"Me and offices don't get along," said Ramsey. "I just like being out there and getting my hands dirty."

As far as the Black Hawk helicopter is concerned, "I can't get near the aircraft without getting my hands dirty," she added.

Mechanics new to the Army start as general mechanics, but aspire to become crew chiefs, said Ramsey. Crew chiefs must possess many skills that only come with hard work and experience, thus it's typically a job reserved only for noncommissioned officers.

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. Beth Ramsey
Hometown: Lincoln, Neb.
Job Title: UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief, Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, (Lincoln, Neb.)
Years of Service: 9
Family: Single

"It's an NCO role simply because you have a lot of responsibility as a crew chief," said Ramsey. "It does take a lot of leadership. It takes a lot of responsibility to be in charge of this multi-million-dollar aircraft and keep it up and running."

"Also, during medevac missions you need to be able to keep your head," she added. "Some situations get hairy and you need to have that leadership role of being able to take charge of the situation."

Ramsey received first-hand experience with those hairy situations when she deployed to Kosovo in 2003-04 and then to Iraq as a crew chief from 2006-07.

Working as a crew chief instilled a strong sense of pride and ownership, said Ramsey. It wouldn't be the same sense of pride and joy if she worked behind a desk in an office.

That sense of pride shows in the work Ramsey and the rest of the medevac teams have accomplished.

"We don't just save U.S. Soldiers, we don't just save Iraqi soldiers," said Ramsey.

"We moved a lot of Iraqi civilians. We are doing good over there and I think we have some good stories as far as improving the quality of life of the civilians, not just the Soldiers."

Photo by Mark Roland

Proud Beat: Sgt. Darrin Fulford, an assistant platoon sergeant with the Omaha-based 402nd Military Police Battalion, stands next to the American and his unit's colors during a recent drill weekend. Fulford joined the Guard shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Military police sergeant says life experiences help him become good leader

By Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

The attacks on the World Trade Center activated patriotism in many Americans.

For Sgt. Darrin Fulford the feelings were enough to cause him to pursue a career in the military.

Fulford was born in North Chicago, Ill. and raised in Milwaukee, Wisc. His abilities in football and track at Alexander Hamilton High School earned him a scholarship to Mankato State University in Minnesota.

Later Fulford transferred to Wayne State College in Nebraska where he earned bachelor of Science degree in Broadcast Communication Arts in 1990.

After the 2001 attacks, Fulford began talking with his wife about joining the Army. He also discussed the idea with recruiters from the National Guard.

"9/11 became the emphasis for me to join the Army. After 9/11, a few years later the Army raised the age limit (to join the service), so I enlisted into the Army on April 27, 2005."

Fulford was 39 when he enlisted. A week later he turned 40. A week after that he left for basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C.

"At basic training I was older than the battalion commander and everyone," Fulford said. "The first four weeks were really the toughest. With my age I had to get into the routine of getting up and the running."

"It was different, but it was one hell of an experience," he added.

When Fulford completed supply technician advanced individual training and returned to the 267th Maintenance Company he had no idea how fast his military career would take off. Five months later he was transferred to the 867th Quartermaster Battalion and deployed to Iraq.

Fulford was quickly able to apply his civilian experience to his new military position.

"When I was in Iraq I was the (Unit Level Logistics System) clerk in the supply room. When I took it over it was in such disarray that I thought 'Holy cow!' I fell back on my civilian employment (experience) knowing that things are supposed to be in order. Using what I know from my work on a civilian job, I used a lot of those skills to get that room in order."

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. Darrin Fulford
Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisc.
Job Title: Assistant platoon sergeant, 402nd Military Police Battalion, (Omaha, Neb.)
Years of Service: 4
Family: Wife: Christine Fulford; Children: Andrew, Ashley, Noel, Kaleb, Lucas

Much of the strength Fulford had during the deployment came from his wife Christine, whom he refers to as his 'hero.'

"She had to fight the battles back here," he said.

"I always told her that her job was way harder than my job. I was gone 15 to 18 months without her love, support, courage and selflessness... because she gave up her husband up to the military. That's a big commitment on both our hands, but a bigger commitment for her than it is for me."

When the unit returned from its deployment, it was re-designated as the 402nd Military Police Battalion. Fulford quickly jumped at the opportunity to become a Military Police officer.

Last September Fulford deployed to Louisiana for hurricane relief support duties where he applied his new training while assisting local law enforcement protect civilians.

After returning from Louisiana Fulford was selected to become an assistant platoon sergeant.

"What an NCO brings to the Army is knowledge and experience," he said. "I always looked up to the NCOs and I always wondered what type of responsibilities they inherited. When you have to perform that job, now you can see the difficulties they have to go through."

Fulford knows the importance of the role of an NCO in the military and constantly applies himself to accomplishing the mission.

"The NCOs lead the way. I truly believe in that," he said. "When NCOs are tasked with a duty, we get the job

See MILITARY POLICEMAN on 12.

Sergeant major strives to keep Soldiers supplied

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

When Boyd Navratil joined the Nebraska National Guard 27 years ago, he joined to serve his country, learn a new specialty as a logistician and make a little extra cash.

What he didn't know at the time was that he was on a road that would eventually take him to an Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) full-time position with the Nebraska Army National Guard where he recently became the senior logistical noncommissioned officer in the state.

As the logistical sergeant major for the Nebraska Army National Guard, Navratil is now responsible for ensuring the state's Soldiers have the tools, equipment and supplies they need to accomplish any mission.

That means he currently oversees logistical support and services for approximately 3,800 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers.

"It goes all the way from equipping our Soldiers with clothing to the major end items like trucks, helicopters, weapon systems, communication systems and everything in between including rations, ammo and fuel. If the Soldiers need it, it's logistics." said Navratil.

"I believe there's a lot of reward and gratitude when you look back after a successful training event, mission, or mobilization knowing it couldn't have happened without the Quartermaster Soldier," he added. "Logisticians are usually the first in and the last out in supporting the force and victory. This requires Soldiers who are committed, resourceful and innovative in providing 100 percent Soldier support."

Today's Army National Guard logisticians are part of a long line of Quartermaster Soldiers that stretches back to the earliest days of the Army when Gen. George Washington appointed the first Continental Army quartermaster in 1775.

Today's logisticians are responsible for a huge array of missions ranging from unit supply operations to such fields as food services, petroleum operations, laundry services and grave registration.

For Navratil, a 46-year-old native of Crete, Neb., who now lives in Lincoln with his wife Sanda and their daughter Alaia, 17, and son Seth, 14, the opportunity to learn a trade "on someone else's dime" and working with numbers and accounting are what initially drew his interest when he joined the Nebraska National Guard 27 years ago as a supply specialist.

2009 YEAR OF THE NCO
Strength from within

Sgt. Maj. Boyd L. Navratil
Hometown: Crete, Neb.
Job Title: State Logisitics Sergeant Major
Joint Force Headquarters (Lincoln, Neb.)
Years of Service: 27
Family: Wife: Sanda Navratil; Children: Alaia, Seth

"Inventory management and accounting for equipment seemed like a natural fit out of high school and one year of college," he said. "When you're 19-years-old and looking to join the military, you look at yourself and make a decision based upon strengths and interest. This career field appealed to me 27 years ago and it still does today."

"I really wasn't mechanically inclined – and I'm still not today – so logistics was one avenue I could go," he said.

Navratil started his AGR career January 1986 in the Nebraska Army National Guard in the state's Class IX warehouse.

Navratil initially worked in a variety of logistical jobs, primarily in the state Property Book Office, before transferring to the 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) at Camp Ashland to serve as the Senior Logistics NCO for the National Guard school house in 2000.

While there Navratil and his team of supply specialists struck gold, winning the prestigious U.S. Army Chief of Staff Supply Excellence Award five consecutive years from 2002-06 after taking the runner-up award in 2001.

Navratil also spent a year in Afghanistan when he deployed with the 209th RTI to help establish a training program for the new Afghanistan National Army.

He said the experience he received in Afghanistan was probably one of the most defining periods of his military career.

"True colors of an individual are shown during a mobilization," he said. "The technical and tactical proficiency along with the capability to execute any given task in those conditions separates the weak from the strong."

Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Ensuring Soldiers Have What They Need: Sgt. Maj. Boyd Navratil conducts an inventory of unit supplies and equipment at the Penterman Armory in Lincoln, Neb. As the state logistics sergeant major, Navratil is responsible for overseeing logistical support and services for 3,800 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers.

"I was outside my comfort zone, just like most others. I've never been a patient person or a person who got overly excited about transition," he added. "That deployment taught me more about patience and transition than I'd gotten in my entire military career," he said.

Probably more influential, however, were the words of advice Navratil's father, a retired Air Guard sergeant, gave him earlier in his career.

"I give my dad a lot of credit for the advice he gave very early in my military career: 'Do your job. Do it well. Have a great work ethic. Take care of the service member regardless of rank and people will recognize your efforts and potential,'" Navratil said. "I hope that is the case for why and where I'm at today. I've tried to do my job to the best of my abilities no matter what job I was assigned."

That's especially important in the logistics field, said Navratil. "We are a service-oriented branch and if we need to measure our logistician's success, ask our greatest customer… the Soldier."

Customer satisfaction, he added, is a must.

"We are stewards of all government resources and actively practice supply economy and discipline," he said. "We must maintain 100 percent accountability of all resources at all times."

"Some people have called me anal-(retentive) while fulfilling my duties. In this field it's called attention to detail," he said. "Two critical skills sets to succeeding are attention to detail and organizational skills… if you lack in either you're not going to succeed."

As the new state logistics sergeant major, Navratil is now responsible for developing a state-wide team of logisticians capable of equipping and sustaining the transformation of the operational force.

Navratil said it's a huge challenge, but one he's ready to tackle.

"We need to understand that we're in this together," Navratil said. "In this state, with 40-plus units, our success will be measured by the level of logistical readiness at the unit level."

Navratil said he hopes to accomplish this by working hard to establish new standardizations based primarily on the Army's Command Supply Discipline Program while helping reinvigorate the Army Chief of Staff Supply Excellence Award for those individuals and units that "like to compete and separate themselves from their peers for extraordinary efforts that serve as examples to all others."

He also is looking to develop more state-wide training designed to not only develop standardization, but also statewide team building.

In achieving a professional milestone, Navratil said he's amazed at how far he's come. He's also realistic that he did not achieve his present rank on his own.

"I didn't do it myself," he said. "I have a great faith in God. I've (also) been truly blessed having the best logisticians in the Nebraska Army National Guard to mentor, coach, and challenge me in my professional development. They always showed me what right looks like with high regulatory standards."

"The unsung hero making this military milestone is my family – they provided the support, encouragement and purpose. "

MILITARY POLICEMAN continued from page 11.

done correctly and get it done within the time constraints."

Fulford said he also believes another responsibility of an NCO is to develop subordinate Soldiers.

"The NCO has to mentor the lower enlisted Soldiers. That within itself is a major job. Lower enlisted (Soldiers) learn by watching the NCOs. Part of the NCO's job is to task out duties and responsibilities in order to get the job done, but you also have to talk to the lower enlisted to let them know whether they did the job correctly or they did the job incorrectly," he said. "You have to guide them, too."

"When you're passing down responsibilities (you're) preparing them for an NCO position, to become a leader," Fulford added.

"As an NCO, if you do not task down those responsibilities to lower enlisted, or give them a sense of being, sense of responsibility, a sense that they are worth something, you as an NCO are not doing your job."

The function of the chain of command that the Army uses is one of the components of the military life that Fulford tries to most apply in his civilian career.

"In my civilian job I am a lab technician. I have a team leader and a supervisor. If I have a problem I take it to the lead person and I let the lead person take it to the supervisor," he said.

"I try to instill that in (my fellow technicians). It's a systematic way that things should run. It's so efficient that it's difficult for me not to bring it over to the civilian world and apply it," he said.

Getting his co-workers to understand why the military chain of command system works well, said Fulford, is often a challenge.

"They are not in the military, so they don't understand a chain of command," he said.

"A lead person is trying their best to take care of their people like an NCO takes care of (Soldiers). When you have something and you jump over the lead person and take it straight to the supervisor, when the supervisor comes to the lead person and says 'What about this?' that lead person has no clue. I just think it is so unfair that the lead person has no idea what is going on."

Solving problems, he said, is simply part of being a good leader. "That is one of the major jobs of an NCO… putting out fires and making sure that Soldiers have what they need," said Fulford. "One of the biggest parts of my day is making sure that everyone is present, making sure that everyone has everything that they need and taking care of personal issues that they have."

"The most rewarding part of the day is to see a smile on my Soldiers' faces at the end of the drill weekend when it's time to go. It's nice to know that the Soldiers are taken care of."