

REDHORSE RALLY RED HOT!

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By SSGT Bill Nicholls, 202nd RHS

--Fort Walton Beach, Florida--"You have a proud heritage and a promising future--to the Horse!" That was the message from USAF Brigadier General Timothy A. Byers at the REDHORSE Association Convention October 30, 2007.

General Byers said REDHORSE (Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer) will continue to grow: "When you look at what the warfighter needs today in Iraq and Afghanistan, they need fighting platforms. Those platforms--whether it's for our bombers or fighters or our new UAV's (unmanned aerial vehicles)--they need platforms, and those platforms are airfields. We need to increase our airfield and ramp capacities, so they need engineers." General Byers is the Senior Civil Engineer in Air Combat Command, and believes more REDHORSE Airmen will be needed for both warfighting and quality of life challenges, "We need more facility and hangar space, so they need engineers to build them. The quality of life as we go from our initial beddown with tents, into temporary facilities, into more permanent-type facilities--we need engineers to do that development, so using REDHORSE and PrimeBEEF (Prime Base Emergency Engineer Force) is the answer."

Founded in 1965 by then-Colonel Thomas Meredith, REDHORSE was initially activated to fill a void in heavy engineer runway capability for the Air Force. Brigadier General (retired) Meredith said REDHORSE is here to stay: "...that need is set into the current philosophy and doctrine. Wars as I knew them--where you go in with massed armies and artillery--don't exist anymore. There are going to be limited wars and skirmishes, and with REDHORSE having proven what we can do, and by putting in paratroopers, REDHORSE is going to be a part of the Air Force for a long, long time to come." REDHORSE recently initiated airborne elements capable of parachuting into hostile territory, to assess and prepare landing strips.

General Meredith is no stranger to fighting behind enemy lines. In November 1942, he served as a guerrilla scout, leading local tribesmen to provide terrain reconnaissance for northern Burmese supply routes. By March 1943, General Meredith was escorting senior U.S. leaders when they were ambushed and surrounded by Japanese forces: "I was out there. I was classified as Missing In Action for a year and a half. I lived off the land. When I went in (enlisting as a private), I was a former professional baseball player, I was a happy-go-lucky guy, liked the girls. When I came out of there, I was a cold-blooded killer. They opened up on us with mortars. We ran out of ammunition and food. Someone had an old crank radio and they got out the word that we needed food and ammunition. We had eight guys in our party, against 150 Japanese." General Meredith credits his survival to native scouts, who provided intelligence on enemy movements: "I was especially fortunate to have a scout named Abdul. He took attachment to me, and had a tremendous sixth sense, wasn't afraid of anything, and saved my life a dozen times." General Meredith received a battlefield commission for engineering the group's escape on a 127 mile trek to friendly forces.

Retired USAF Colonel Bud Day, another guest at the five day REDHORSE Convention, came within two miles of a U.S. Marine outpost before being shot and recaptured during the Vietnam War: "I was shot down August 26, 1967, and I escaped on September 3rd. I had gone through 45 miles of jungle. I was out about two weeks. My guards were just young kids--very careless. I was injured pretty badly, and they were sure I couldn't possibly escape. My arm was busted in three places, my knee was injured, and one of my eyes was blinded temporarily." After fourteen days of freedom, Colonel Day spent six years as a Prisoner of War: "You had to be a positive thinker, be optimistic. Luckily, when I wasn't in solitary, I tried to make sure I was dealing with positive people. John McCain was one of those guys. I got to be extremely good friends with him. We lived together early on when we were both injured real bad. Then he came back into my squadron again in the summer of 1970. He lived either in my squadron or in my room until we were released in 1973." Colonel Day received the Medal of Honor for his actions in Vietnam. Now a practicing attorney in Fort Walton Beach, Colonel Day successfully sued the U.S. government to protect the rights of veterans, "I was outraged that Bill Clinton would think that we would just lay down and do nothing when he took our lifetime medical care away. That was part of the deal--do twenty years, get free lifetime medical care, have a base available, have a commissary--that was part of the package. So I was really outraged, and after a lot of research I decided it was possible to sue them. I sued them and lost, and then won, and I've got a bill passed also."

The REDHORSE Association passed a measure at the Convention that will keep Colonel Jack Paschal (commander, 202nd REDHORSE Squadron, Florida Air Guard) on the Board of Directors, and passed a motion allowing a new

member on the Board, Captain Christina Cox, also of the 202nd RHS. Association President Greg MacDougal was re-elected to another two year term. His first order of business--the unveiling of a +25 foot REDHORSE statue, bound for REDHORSE troops in Qatar, paid for with \$3,500 in REDHORSE donations. Another appointment at the Convention: Secretary/Treasurer Paul Sattler was inducted into the Royal Order of the Crimson Plume, for his work on the REDHORSE web site, and his administrative experience.

Colonel Paschal commanded a composite group of active duty, Air Guard and Air Reserve units from September 2006-May 2007 in the Middle East, and completed \$20 million in wartime engineering projects, including a warfighter beddown tent city near Baghdad, erecting A-10 platforms at Al Asad, Iraq, and an ammunition storage facility in Kuwait. Colonel Paschal said REDHORSE manning is on the rise: "We know the active duty is plusing up 318 people, almost a whole squadron. Reserves are plusing up a whole squadron of 404, and Guard is plusing up 404--so it's three equivalent squadrons, about a 33% increase."

While REDHORSE Squadrons are increasing, REDHORSE Association President Greg MacDougal said attendance at this year's Convention left something to be desired, "This was a let-down for us in membership attendance. We felt our members would support us a little better than they did. We were expecting about 200. Two years ago we had about 175. This year we ended up with about 75, so we took a dive there." President MacDougal said by popular demand, the 2009 REDHORSE Association Convention will be held in Branson, Missouri, due to its central location.

The REDHORSE Association was started in 2002, and now has more than 500 active members. General Meredith directed Association members to recruit new members from civilian and military sectors, including Air Force PrimeBEEF engineers: "Go to Rotary, go to Kiwanis, go to church, go anywhere--and if a REDHORSE troop ever looks down his nose at a PrimeBEEF troop, I hope he knocks him on his ass!"

Two new twists to the 2007 REDHORSE Association convention: karaoke the first three nights, and a Halloween costume party with "live" band. To learn more about the REDHORSE Association, contact President Greg MacDougal at president@redhorseassociation.org or Secretary/Treasurer Paul Sattler at admin@redhorseassociation.org