ANSWERING THE CALL TO DUTY

Pennsylvania College of Technology
TRAINING LEADERS

ADDING A RIGOROUS CHALLENGE

to their already-demanding course schedules, seven Pennsylvania College of Technology students participated in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps at Bucknell University in Lewisburg in 2005-06, with several more planning to enroll in Fall 2006.

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Through ROTC, students learn leadership skills in military-science courses on Bucknell’s campus, taking part in classroom learning, physical training, hands-on learning labs and weekend field exercises.

The battalion earned the MacArthur Award in 2004 and 2005, designating it the best Army ROTC in the Eastern Region and one of the two best in the nation.

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Pennsylvania College of Technology became an affiliate of The Pennsylvania State University in 1989. Prior to the affiliation, it was known as Williamsport Area Community College (1965-89) and Williamsport Technical Institute (1941-65). Programming was first offered on the campus site in 1914, under the auspices of the local school district.

Today, Penn College is a special mission affiliate of Penn State, committed to applied technology education. More than 6,000 students are enrolled in bachelor-degree, associate-degree and certificate majors, relating to more than 100 different career fields.

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Sgt. James D. Kash, left, spent 14 months with the Army National Guard in Iraq before returning to his civil engineering technology classes.

War Zone to
Students return to classes with new perspective

by Julie M. Reppert, student writer/photographer

Facing the potentially difficult transition from military orders to homework assignments, a few determined Pennsylvania College of Technology students are continuing their education after putting their classes on hold to serve on active duty in Iraq.

Sgt. James D. Kash, 21, of Tamaqua, serves in the Army National Guard and was in Iraq for 14 months starting in January 2004. Kash started his education at Penn College in the fall of 2002, pursuing a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering technology. He began attending classes again in the fall of 2005 and plans to graduate in the fall of 2007. Kash said coming back to school wasn’t as hard as he thought it was going to be, but is still a bit of a challenge.

“It was frustrating at first,” he said, “but I learned a lot about myself, my country, other people and other cultures – lessons that I would not trade for anything in the world.”

Sgt. Daniel S. Krause, 23, of Lebanon, is still anticipating his return to the routine of everyday college life. He began his education at Penn College in the Spring 2002 semester, studying networking, and left for active duty just before midterms in the fall of 2004. He plans to resume classes this summer after his return from Iraq in January.

Interviewed while still in Iraq, Krause expected some adapting after coming off active duty, and “a period of time where I feel almost lost, because there will be nobody above me telling me what has to be done, and no one below me to direct anymore.”

“I learned to appreciate everything, especially my family and friends.”

continued next page
“When I was coming home, I had a lot of choices to make, and one was to return to Penn College,” Spc. Dusty J. Brooks said. “It was not an easy decision. I felt like I had forgotten everything that I learned up until the point when I left. I was in my junior year with only three semesters left, so I figured it would be in my best interest to return. I knew that, if I needed help with anything, there were many resources available to guide me.”

Brooks, of Renovo, withdrew from her classes at Penn College in January 2003 and served for nine months in the Army Reserves. Her jobs in Iraq included helping to set up shower and laundry sites, and then staffing one of the laundry facilities. She sewed uniforms for several months, but, when she developed tendinitis in both arms, she was selected to take radio calls, pick up battalion orders and transport her unit’s commander and first sergeant. After returning from active duty in Iraq, Brooks, now 24, resumed classes and graduated with her bachelor’s degree in legal assistant/paralegal in December 2005.

While their jobs in Iraq varied, students say they have gained life lessons through their active duty.

“The good outweighs the bad tremendously,” Kash said. “I learned a lot about myself and can see outside of the tunnel vision of everyday life. I made friendships like I have never made before. I learned to appreciate everything, especially my family and friends. I also learned that life does not have to happen in a sequence all of the time. Everything you do in life makes you a more well-rounded, educated person, and no one can take that away from you.”

“It was easier to leave classes than it was to come back,” Spc. Daniel T. Dengler said. The 26-year-old Lebanon resident was in Iraq for one year starting in September 2003, serving in the Army Individual Ready Reserve. He began his education at Penn College in the fall of 1998, studying computer information technology, and left for military duty at the end of the Fall 2001 semester. He resumed classes in Spring 2005 and expects to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in August.

“AFTER WHAT I HAVE BEEN THROUGH, I HAVE A MORE POSITIVE OUTLOOK ON LIFE,” he said. “The best thing to come out of the experience was the friends I made and all the good times we had. No matter how bad things would get, we always found a way to make the best out of the situation.”

Krause said the support from the American people for the soldiers was tremendous. “I can’t thank everyone enough for the support we receive from back home,” he said. “Every week I was receiving care packages from people I never met, as well as letters from students and families. Also the Iraqi people. I’ve made a few good friends over here. They are very good people. I am glad I had the opportunity to befriend a few of them.”

Krause serves in the Army Reserves and served in Iraq for one year. “I think having to come over here (Iraq) has forced me to grow up a bit,” he said. “It gave me more of a sense of urgency in everything I do and helped me become a little more responsible for myself, as well as people below me.”

Krause, of Lebanon, returned from duty in Iraq in January and plans to resume his studies this summer.
Two classmates of the physician assistant Class of 2005, which graduated in August, will graduate on a later schedule, but deserve honorable mention.

Jennifer C. (Reed) Renninger, of Hegins, and Yidrisca M. Vargas, of Lock Haven, were part of the Class of 2005. Early in 2005, each received a call to serve with their respective reserve troops in Iraq. Even though both Renninger and Vargas were just starting their clinical and final year of training to become physician assistants, they put their education on hold to serve our country.

Renninger was the first to deploy as a specialist serving in a medical unit. Officially, her position put her in charge of triaging for a medical command post.

Vargas deployed several weeks later as a sergeant for her unit; however, after completion of testing in Mississippi, she was able to be placed in a medical position for another unit.

Both women began their training in Mississippi in early January and February 2005 to build their endurance and technical skills. They later were moved to Arizona, where they endured training in the desert. After this, both were deployed with separate units to Iraq during the summer. While both are in Iraq, in relative proximity, they do not see each other.

"It is not easy seeing other soldiers wounded, but that is the reason why I am here."

“I have learned a lot,” Vargas said. “It is not easy seeing other soldiers wounded, but that is the reason why I am here. I am here for the wounded.”

Before leaving for their deployment, both young women met with Penn College’s physician assistant program director and clinical directors to put together a plan to complete one or more of their clinical internships during deployment. Both young women continue to correspond with the clinical directors by e-mail.

Both Renninger and Vargas are performing medical exams under the supervision of certified physician assistants and physicians. They have seen a wide range of medical presentations, from trauma involving our soldiers to chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension among the civilians of Iraq.

“I believe my experiences in dealing with (the wounded and sick) will greatly benefit me in my career,” Vargas said. “I am using my emergency-medicine skills to help our wounded soldiers, as well as the wounded Iraqi civilians and even the (insurgents) themselves. In this case, sometimes it is hard to give care to someone who tried to kill American soldiers, but in medicine, one cannot discriminate. I have learned many medical skills here, and I have learned many ethical lessons, as well.”

She added, “I have learned to appreciate the little things in life, like ice in my soda or the taste of real orange juice and butter.”

Physician assistant students practice on a mannequin in the college’s laboratories the same skills they will apply in real-world emergency medicine.
Following news of devastating damage caused when Hurricane Katrina made landfall along the Gulf Coast in August 2005, more than a dozen Pennsylvania College of Technology students received calls to report to their Pennsylvania National Guard units. From there, they were sent to the affected region to help with cleanup and recovery.

Among the group was Joshua T. Fox, 22, who was telephoned on Thursday afternoon, Sept. 1, and left campus Friday morning. He had completed just two weeks of his Fall 2005 classes – the startup to his final year of study in the civil engineering technology major – before reporting to his unit in Ridgeway.

Brian R. Kane, 19, a freshman in the paramedic major, reported to duty in Lewistown at 7 a.m. the same day. Both spent the weekend with their units, preparing supplies and receiving instructions before heading south on Sunday.

Both students’ units were sent to Louisiana, where they spent most of their hours distributing supplies to hurricane victims. Fox said this was his first real-life mission as a team leader, and he was most surprised by how quickly the operation came together.

“The damage done by the water and wind wasn’t a surprise. It was still breathtaking, but not surprising,” said Fox, who had watched television reports beforehand.

Both units set up and staffed points of distribution, or PODs, located strategically for residents to walk or drive to as they returned to their homes. The PODs included nonperishable food, water, ice and tarps, Fox said.

Kane, a health-care specialist who, in addition to distributing supplies, helped to vaccinate troops, said roofs covered with the tarps they handed out became such a common sight during his monthlong deployment that it seemed unnatural when, on his trip back to Pennsylvania, he began seeing homes not topped in blue plastic.

“It’s interesting how ‘normal’ can change in such a short period of time,” he said.

Kane and his unit, the 2nd 112th Infantry, 56th Striker Brigade Combat Team, stayed with about 1,000 other troops in the Riverdale High School-Middle School complex in Jefferson, just south of New Orleans. He said that, while carrying a weapon near school grounds would, under everyday conditions, feel strange, it was just part of the routine.

“These things that sound weird, they weren’t,” he said, adding that residents seemed unfazed by having their school and park occupied by military vehicles and armed soldiers. “It was very surreal, at points.”

His group was assigned to cover PODs in Jefferson Parish, which, on the north, borders the south shore of Lake

by Jennifer A. Cline, writer/editor

A Refuge in the STORM

National Guard members leave classes to help hurricane-battered region
Pontchartrain and, on the south, borders the Gulf of Mexico.

Headquartered in Hammond, La., Fox’s platoon was part of a 400-person contingent that stayed in a tent called Camp Keystone. His group staffed PODs and provided a security presence at local businesses as they reopened.

His platoon rotated among several PODs, many on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, with some on the southern border of the lake – the suburbs of New Orleans. They went as far north as Franklinton and Bogalusa (on the Mississippi border) and Slidell, all hit hard by Katrina’s winds.

“The people were very happy to have us there,” Fox said. “It felt great to help our own people, and they made it easy for us to want to be there.”

As a platoon leader, Fox made hourly reports detailing which commodities were running low and how much traffic had come through the POD. The National Guardsmen and Guardswomen gathered important intelligence from drivers as they handed out supplies, asking whether their homes had electricity and clear running water and where they bought gasoline to drive to the POD.

“(The information) showed people were getting back on their feet,” Fox explained.

At each day’s end, Fox took that information back to brigade headquarters in Hammond. At the beginning of each day, he met with the Texas Forest Service, the link between his platoon and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. From these reports, officials determined whether a POD should remain open.

“As soon as it subsided, we moved to Lake Charles, (La.),” Fox said. His was the first unit on the ground in Lake Charles, where he said some of the wind damage was worse than he had seen near New Orleans, but was less widespread. Kane’s unit remained in the New Orleans area.

“Lake Charles was very important for infrastructure,” Fox said. “Because of the oil refineries, it was crucial for the rest of the nation.” The refineries survived the storm, but the people who worked for them were left devastated. “They didn’t have houses or food, so we tried to get them set up,” he said.

When they arrived in Lake Charles, Fox’s unit set up a forward base of operations before the main body of his brigade arrived.

Despite missing a month of class work, Fox expects to graduate as planned in May. With faculty cooperation, he was able to finish missed work and complete nine credits for the Fall 2005 semester. He was allowed to take his other fall classes as independent-study courses during Spring 2006.

“After this experience, I’m more confident in being able to talk to any person in a positive and constructive way,” he said.

Kane returned to classes for the spring semester. While he might not have chosen to miss a semester of school, he said: “We are the sum of our experiences. It gave me a different perspective on dealing with people.”

He added, “We helped a lot of people; I can still picture some of their faces.”

As the commander on the ground during his platoon’s operations near New Orleans, he communicated with other military units, the American Red Cross, local volunteer groups, local sheriffs’ and fire departments, Louisiana State Police and many other agencies.

Kane said that, on a daily basis, “You might see New York State Police, then Massachusetts State Police, then the New Orleans Parish Police. It was a very different experience.”

He was also struck by the diversity of people who visited the PODs for supplies, including some who did not speak English (“It made for some interesting sign language,” he said.) and some driving luxury cars, who he wouldn’t have typically thought of as needing help.

When Hurricane Rita stormed through the area in mid-September, both Kane and Fox found their units battening down until it left the region.

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“It’s interesting how ‘normal’ can change in such a short period of time.”

Troops distribute humanitarian supplies to Gulf Coast residents affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
In the late summer of 1990, as my father lay dying of cancer in a hospital bed, I received word that my Naval Reserve Unit would be recalled to active duty, mobilized and deployed to an unspecified location in support of Operation Desert Shield for an indeterminate period of time. Our oldest child had just begun his senior year of high school; his sister, our youngest child, had just begun kindergarten.

The news of my impending deployment could not have come at a more inconvenient time. Within four months, I would find myself fully immersed in a military environment. The last time that had occurred, the United States was engaged in armed conflict in Vietnam; I was in my early 20s and not yet a father.

For anyone serving in the armed forces, the call to duty is seldom convenient, always disruptive and never an option. Members of the Reserve Force, the National Guard and those serving on active duty all belong to units that may be necessary to fulfill operational requirements or meet objectives decided upon by the Department of Defense. While mobilization and deployment are disruptive and unsettling for family and friends of the service member, the displacement from the comfort and familiarity of predictable routines is challenging on many levels for the service members themselves.

Military life is rigorous, regimented and alien to those unaccustomed to uniform dress codes, the hierarchy of a chain of command and a language that comprises unfamiliar acronyms like “UCMJ” (the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which guides the behavior of all military personnel). Stripped of the anchors of a relatively constant rhythm fluctuating between work and/or school and leisure, the freedom of choosing one’s clothing,
privacy at mealtime, in the bedroom and at the toilet, men and women in the armed forces, mobilized to active duty, relinquish the options enjoyed in their personal lives.

Units and individuals designated for deployment report to facilities like Fort Dix, N.J., for pre-deployment screening and pre-operational briefings and preparations. Pre-deployment screening involves a combination of health-status evaluations, immunization updates and assessment of training readiness relative to the impending mission. Pre-operational preparations include familiarization with mission-specific equipment and outfitting with MOPP gear – mission-oriented protective posture gear – including gas masks and chemical suits.

Pre-deployment preparations may be completed in a matter of days or extend for weeks, depending upon the availability of clothing, equipment, vaccines and flights to airlift personnel to the designated theater of operations. Frequent delays during my unit’s deployment caused us to adopt “hurry up and wait” as a mantra.

All branches of the armed forces publish pre-mobilization manuals and organize pre-mobilization information packets that are distributed to active members as guidance while they prepare for the possibility of mobilization and deployment. The manuals apprise service members of their rights and emphasize specific responsibilities and tasks to be assumed and completed should mobilization orders be received. The pre-mobilization requirement to execute last-will-and-testament and durable-power-of-attorney documents serves as a disquieting reminder of one’s mortality and of the potential for being positioned in harm’s way. Should an individual receive orders and report to a pre-mobilization processing facility without having executed these important documents, military lawyers and civilian notary publics are available for assistance.

Pre-mobilization packets contain important information about ombudsman, American Red Cross and family services. Self-help is suggested for the families of those deploying. Families are encouraged to connect with one another, meet periodically during the deployment, develop phone chains and designate a contact person who will receive official military releases about the deployment and relay that information to the other affected families. The intent in these efforts is to establish clear channels for communication and ensure its accuracy during a time in which families are particularly susceptible to rumors and misinformation.

The Army encourages family readiness groups, which meet regularly to provide mutual support and maintain “normal” routines during the service member’s absence. Understandably, mobilization and deployment are significantly stressful events for all involved.

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Medical professionals erect the hospital they would staff in Al Jubayl, Saudi Arabia, during Operation Desert Shield.

Fleet Hospital 15 in Al Jubayl, Saudi Arabia
Following my return in 1991 from deployment to Saudi Arabia, my wife described how she had discovered our middle child, then 11, coming to the family room at 2 and 3 a.m. to watch CNN in hopes of either seeing me on television or hearing a report about our fleet hospital.

During the deployment, cadres of military mental-health specialists are dispersed throughout the theater of operations to assist combat and support personnel in meeting the demands of their respective assignments. Psychiatrists, psychologists and neuropsychiatric nurses and technicians are assigned to field medical facilities, battalion aid stations and, occasionally, individual combat units with the express purpose of assisting with stress management and limiting the number of psychiatric casualties.

Uniformed chaplains and other religious personnel are similarly allocated and perform parallel duties. The goal is simple: Keep everyone functioning at or near his or her optimal level to ensure individual and unit safety and mission success despite the stresses and potential trauma he or she may encounter.

Anticipating anything and expecting nothing serves those deployed well because it reduces the likelihood of experiencing surprise and disappointment. Exposure to and rehearsal of responding to known threats familiarizes personnel with the characteristics of the threat situation, reduces performance anxiety and smooths acquiring the skills necessary to overcome the threat. (In preparing for deployment to Operation Desert Shield, we rehearsed donning and sealing our gas masks ad infinitum.)

Preparing and rehearsing coping strategies for dealing with limited opportunities for conveniences we enjoy as civilians – like warm water for bathing, warm meals, comfortable bedding, news, entertainment diversions and easy access to loved ones – is critical. Cold water definitely facilitates learning to shower in three minutes; it takes a certain amount of ingenuity and a lot of Tabasco sauce to make MREs (meals ready to eat) interesting.

Theater-specific challenges must be addressed. In 1991, as today, one of the main challenges confronting deployed troops was acclimating to the desert, where temperatures can range from 40 degrees at night to 120 degrees during the day. Managing clothing and hydration becomes exquisitely critical.

Anticipating and appropriately negotiating cultural differences likely to be encountered during foreign missions is essential. In 1990, it was a distinct advantage to have had individuals in the Williamsport community who grew up in the Middle East and Islamic societies visit our detachment and brief us on the language, culture, customs and traditions that we would encounter.

A clear sense of self, coupled with the bonds of unit loyalty and a team-player mentality, seem to be the psychological equivalents of body armor. We learned in the Vietnam experience that life expectancies for replacements in infantry platoons and similar small units were abysmally short, in part because they had little time bonding with their new unit; similarly, the veteran members of the unit were absorbed with grieving their lost comrades. A sense of humor and a willingness to laugh at oneself are valuable personal psychological assets.

For the fortunate majority, deployment, regardless of duration, ultimately ends in a return “home.” Following the conclusion of the active ground-war phase of Operation Desert Storm, much of my responsibility shifted to overseeing “return/reunion briefings” for thousands of Marines, many of whom had been deployed for eight to 10 months in Saudi Arabia along the Kuwait and Iraq borders. The briefings focused on relinquishing the roles and routines embraced during the deployment,
recognizing that spouses may have assumed domestic and financial responsibilities that they may be reluctant to relinquish, being patient with children, etc.

One continuing issue for those deployed, first observed in the Vietnam era, is the speed of return from combat and rapid re-entry into the civilian world. Attempts have been made to extend the time allotted for out-processing activities to provide for more thorough post-deployment health assessments and psychological debriefings. Most branches of the armed forces now mandate comprehensive reintegration programs. In 1991, I was out-processed in Philadelphia and recall vividly the jolt of urban activity following months of minimalist tent and desert living.

My deployment, disruptive and inconvenient as it was, was not catastrophic. I was able to participate in my father’s funeral service before I deployed, and I returned to Williamsport in time to be a guest in our daughter’s kindergarten class and a proud parent at our son’s high-school graduation. Making my deployment tolerable were courageous and talented “shipmates,” the love and understanding of my supportive family and friends, the assistance my family received from our caring neighbors, and the kindness of the Pennsylvania College of Technology family who protected my faculty position, sent me plenty of mail and care packages, repaired our furnace, and watched over and reassured my wife and children during my absence.

I’d like to dedicate this article to four Penn College students whom I have known during the past three years and whose lives have been interrupted by their respective deployments in support of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Two are women and two are men; two completed more than one tour; two have terminated their military affiliations and no longer occupy billets, and two continue to wear a uniform; all four made sacrifices and served honorably.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
Zimmerman enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserves in 1970 while a graduate student in psychology at Bucknell University. Following completion of Recruit Training and Hospital Corps School, he was assigned to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, where he was commissioned as a Medical Service Corps officer in the summer of 1971. He served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm with Fleet Hospital 15 in Al Jubayl, Saudi Arabia. Zimmerman retired from the Naval Reserve Force in 2001 at the rank of captain following 30 years of service as a Navy psychologist.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

STUDENT GUSTON J. BIRD, an information-technology specialist for the Army National Guard, shared a typical day in his basic-training experience:

› Out of bed: 4 a.m.
The day began with personal hygiene, cleaning the barracks and getting ready for personal training.

› Shape up
Personal training included running four to five miles every other day and push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, dips and sprints on the other days.

› Practice, practice
The rest of the day might include basic rifle marksmanship, practicing military operations on urbanized terrain, bayonet training, grenade training, drill and ceremony, “and whatever else the drill sergeant felt like we needed to do.”

› Three squares
Mealtime came about 8 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 5 p.m., featuring “just about anything when we weren’t doing field exercises. Anything from barbecue ribs to fish to chicken.”

› Free time
“Free time?” Bird asked. “We had approximately one hour of free time every night, but that time was to be used to shower, polish our boots, clean our weapon, straighten our wall locker, etc.” After lights out, most read or wrote letters by flashlight.

“Sundays were our ‘day off,’ ” Bird said. “They never were. Sundays were spent cleaning the barracks: dusting off the top of the wall lockers, cleaning the bathrooms, cleaning the drill sergeant’s office and waxing the floor.”

› Lights out: 9 p.m.

› Share your space
Sixty-six beds in one barrack, with four barracks per company and six companies per building (battalion).
Bird’s building had five toilets and eight showers per barrack.

– Jennifer A. Cline
CONQUERING THE ATLANTIC

On the 10th of April, we departed Port St. George (Bermuda). Here we rendezvoused with a large convoy sailing east. It was a great sight to see all these ships. There were over 100 ships: troop transports, freighters, and oil tankers ... eight destroyers and 12 destroyer escorts that flanked the convoy. ...

At times the weather would get sloppy, with strong winds and heavy seas. ... It was like climbing up a snowy mountain side and then sliding, losing your balance and falling down, then climbing up again and falling down again. I’d go below from watch on the bridge, feeling like a tennis ball bruised from the bounces. ... You couldn’t imagine what it was like in an Atlantic storm on the LCI. Roll! Pitch! Listen to the water as she shuddered and creaked. The guys would chant, “Roll and pitch you S-O-B! Old washboard’s starting up again.” That’s exactly what it was like – a washboard.

As we approached the Canary Islands one night, we had a U-boat attack ... Two subs ... had gotten under the convoy. They torpedoed two of the merchant ships. General quarters! We jumped out of our bunks. The alarm woke (a) feeling of excitement mixed with possible danger. As I got to my 20 mm gun, I could see the destroyer’s silhouette from the blazing ships dropping a barrage of depth charges. It was a long night. We stayed at general quarters until daylight. ... This was our first encounter with the war. It was for real. Our training was put to the test. I could still feel the excitement. We wondered what happened to the crew aboard the ships torpedoed, if the destroyers destroyed the U-boats. Due to radio silence, we never knew what happened.

We finally arrived on the North Africa coast off Casablanca, Morocco, on 29 April, after a long 19-day voyage. ... Churning up the Wadi Seba River to Port Lyatey, we put aside our distrust for our ship, LCI 89. (We had called her) “One Way Ticket,” “Trolley Car,” and “Coffin.” We now appreciated her, a “Swell Gal,” with confidence as veterans of the seas. We conquered the Atlantic!
TUNISIA CAMPAIGN

(On) the morning of 8 June, we took on a battalion of rangers and transported them to Bizerte, Tunisia. (We arrived) at Bizerte on 11 June, and the rangers disembarked. Bizerte became our base of operation. ...

... Many ships were at anchor in the bay, maybe 100 of different classes. ...

Here, (on the) first night we experienced our first bombing raid. They had large search lights to spot the bombers. The “ack-ack” (anti-aircraft) guns filled the air with tracers and explosive projectile shells. Some of the planes would be hit, burst into fire and fall pluming down to earth. Others would be flaming and smoking flying off. Their bombs did very little damage. My helmet was not large enough to protect me from the falling metal shrapnel fragments falling back down. ...

We would be at general quarters during these raids. The metal falling was a problem. You could hear it hit the water, ca-chunk! ca-chunk!, and bang! hitting the ship. Sometimes someone would get hit. It was mean stuff.

On the morning of 6 July at 0400, we had one of our biggest bomber raids. Seven German bombers, JU88s, were shot down. They did some damage to some of the ships. These air raids were nightly occurrences.

On 3 July morning, we left Port Bizerte, six LCIs with a battalion of British soldiers transporting them to Sousse, Tunisia. ...

SICILIAN INVASION – OPERATION “HUSKY”

The morning of 8 July we received troops. …

Boarding were the (Big Red One) 3rd Infantry Division. They had their full equipment with them. We helped them get settled into the troop compartments. … I was thinking, this could be the real invasion, but where? Later, we were briefed on the invasion attack force. It was Sicily’s south shores in the Gulf of Gela ...

... This (would) be the largest amphibious-force landing to date.

I could hear gunfire as we moved toward the beach. I heard the stern anchor being dropped and the cable running out. The 89 slid nicely up on the beach and up far enough that the surf was not a factor. Ramps down, the soldiers (got) off successfully and disappeared into the darkness. The landing went smoothly. Retracting off the beach, we received some machine-gun fire; fortunately, we escaped unharmed. You could hear heavy gunfire inland.

... Into our return trip 0915, 11 July, we sighted one of our bombers, B-24 Liberator, returning from a bombing mission. They were flying low over the water. It was being shepherded by a fighter plane, P-41 Thunderbolt. The bomber was limping home. It finally ditched into the sea several miles from us. …

... The water was choppy, about 2- to 3-foot waves with a strong breeze. The captain was having a hard time trying to get close enough for us to get a line to them. I shouted up to the captain, “Let me swim out to get them.” He gave me the OK ...

continued next page
I tied a heaving line around my waist. ... As I got to the first raft, one of the airmen injured lay in the raft. His legs were torn up from the shrapnel, bleeding with the flesh floating with the movement of the water in the raft. It made me sick, but I got control of myself and pulled the raft over to the other raft. There was another airman badly injured in this raft. I got hold of the rafts with my hands. Lying on my back, I hollered to Karner to pull me in. ... When I got to the ship, the crew had the rope ladder over the side. Doc had the litter ready to pick up the injured men.

0930, 12 July: We arrived at Port Licata and unloaded the troops and their cargo. I had the crew cleaning up after the troops left. Robert Herring and I were in the bulwarks when the enemy air raid came. Six ME 109 Messerschmitts, dive bombing and strafing, attacked the harbor. We scrambled up to the bow 20 mm gun. I got hold of the gun, pulled it down and swung it around when the last plane flew right over us. I had a straight-away shot at the ME 109. As I was shooting at the plane, the pilot turned his head to the left to see where his bombs were falling. My gun blazing away, (I saw) the bullets hitting the bottom of the plane’s fuselage, a sudden burst of flames; the plane crashed into the water. ... At the time I was proud of myself for shooting down an enemy plane. You know, to this day, I can see that pilot turning his head, looking back as he flew over us.

SALERNO, ITALY – OPERATION “AVAILANCHE”

0500, 8 September: Under the morning darkness, we departed from Port Palermo, Sicily ... No troops! Have no idea where we are bound.

1100: Our small convoy was spotted by an enemy reconnaissance plane, which promptly departed. The escort destroyer fired a few rounds at the plane.

1300: Four FW-190s swooped down low, approaching our flotilla, their guns blazing. No LCIs fired for fear of hitting each other. As they flew over us, dropping their bombs, we let loose our fire power. One plane was damaged, smoking as it headed off. Six crew members on the LCI 319 were injured by the planes’ gunfire. No bombs hit the LCIs ...

That evening we were briefed on the invasion taking place in Salerno Bay, some 40 miles southeast of Naples.

9 September ... The first wave landed amid heavy gunfire. ... Bitter fighting took place. The rocket-launcher boats silenced the gunfire ... directed at the landing boats. It contributed to the safe landing of the assault boats’ first three waves. However, the lull didn’t last. The Germans offered strong resistance.

... 0455, 10 September: A big air raid. They dropped flares all over the area. It sure lit up the area. (Because of) the reflection of the flares and darkness, you could not see the planes. The planes were too high for us to shoot at them with our 20 mm guns. They hit one Liberty transport, setting it on fire.

As we weighed anchor at 0545 to look for the Carrol, the Liberty ship was still burning. After returning a landing boat we had salvaged from the beach to the Carrol, we sailed over to a transport Jefferson to pick up a Navy beach platoon.

0915: (We) landed them on the beach. Still heavy fighting inland. Lots of supplies and vehicles being landed on the beach.
Capt. Fabian sent me to find the beach master to let him know we had become the traffic-control vessel. We could not make radio contact. … I did not get very far when I was challenged by a military policeman. He had no idea where the beach master was. He offered to help me find him. Hustling down the beach, we heard the antiaircraft guns shooting. Turning around, here came four ME 109s over the mountain, out of the morning sun. Just that quick, one swooped down on the beach, gun blazing, the shells hitting the sand. I hit the deck in a … rut in the sand. I yelled to the soldier to get down. I laid flat with my face in the sand. I could hear (the pilot’s) guns and the bullets hitting. I tried hard hugging down tighter. Now, I could hear the whine and thud of the bullets hitting, kicking up sand stinging me. At first, I thought it was the shrapnel from the bullets hitting me. Then the roar of the plane as he flew over us. They were gone! I survived and was relieved that I was saved.

Someone shouted, “They’re coming again.” … All I could think was to get … off the beach. I jumped up, yelled to the M.P., “Let’s get out of here.” I looked at him lying there. He was trembling. God! He’s been hit. “Are you OK?”

“Yeal!”

I helped him up. “Run for the sand dune.”

I picked up his rifle and ran after him. We got to the dune and climbed over it, into a fox hole with a couple soldiers. Someone said (the planes we were hearing were) ours, P38s, six of them. They were in hot pursuit after the ME 109s. As we took account of ourselves, we found three soldiers in the fox hole. We laughed and talked a bit. The M.P. was still shaken up. He told us this was the first time he was under fire. … We assured him he would get over the shock. I often think I should have asked that soldier his name.

1435: Another dive-bomb attack. Four FW-190s. This time I was able to get to my 20 mm gun and shoot back at them. They were after the cruisers. I watched several bombs hit the Savannah. … One of the planes was shot down; another smoked flying away. Later, we heard there were (more than) 200 sailors killed on the Savannah.

12 September: We witnessed a historical event: The Italian Navy on the horizon sailing into Palermo – battleships, cruisers, destroyers, aircraft carriers and special-type ships surrendering under the American flag. The Italians signed an armistice on 8 September. The Italian Navy had slipped away from the Germans. … What a sight. …

13 September: Our group received troops of the 58th Division. … 1000: Under darkness, we sailed out of Port Palermo with their three destroyers.

0630, 14 September: We arrived at the Salerno beach and disembarked the troops. The Germans (were) still holding the Americans down with those hidden artillery still pouring fire onto the beach. … Even the concentrated fire from the ships could not blast them out. Even the Luftwaffe seemed to be doubling its efforts, subjecting the invasion forces to repeated bombing and strafing. …

… About 1300: Two British battleships sailed into the bay, the Valiant and the Warspite. Shortly afterwards, they were shooting their 16-inch guns at the Germans’ hidden artillery. … The concussion was terrific. It shook the dust in the ship’s compartments. It was like a fog. … You could not think with the noise and concussion under such conditions. …

… 2300, 23 September: We weighed anchor and sailed out of Salerno Bay, bound for Bizerte, Tunisia. The seas were kicking up, making the voyage rough.

0900, 26 September: We arrived at Port Bizerte. On 29 September, we saw Frank Knox, secretary of the Navy, making his tour of the fleet. (At the time, Knox described the beachhead at Salerno as the most hotly contested landing in which American troopers had ever participated.)
On television, the Korean War goes on and on, helicopters ceaselessly airlifting the wounded into M*A*S*H operating tents for a dose of strong medicine and battlefield humor. Real life isn’t reruns, however, and the war’s end more than 50 years ago left its veterans with lives challengingly beyond the safety of syndication.

For some, as for their World War II counterparts, Williamsport Technical Institute (a forerunner of Pennsylvania College of Technology) provided a training ground as they emerged from military service and re-entered civilian life.

Donald H. Keener, now 72 and back in Pennsylvania after nearly 40 years in the airline industry in the Washington, D.C., area and California, was among those veterans of “The Forgotten War” who made memorable sacrifices in finding their way through the world.

Drafted in April 1953, he attended “helicopter school” in Texas, then was sent to Korea – serving above the 38th Parallel that divided north from south, about eight miles from the demilitarized zone. There, he worked on the H-13 helicopters “that ferried generals around” and were more familiarly used for medical transport by the Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals depicted in movies and on TV.

After his return home, Keener recalled, when spotted eyeing a helicopter at W.T.I., it was suggested, “Why don’t you come to school and get your ‘A&E’?” (Today’s Airframe and Powerplant certification was Airframe and Engine at that time.)

So he enrolled, little realizing the juggling act that lay ahead: working the “swing shift” at a nearby plant, “eating lunch on the fly” and running coils of steel through a “bonderizing” solution before they were painted and fashioned into Venetian blinds.

“It was eight hours of work and six hours of school (a day) for two years,” said Keener, who – with his wife, Shirley – also had two sons by that time. “It was a chore.”

The drudgery had faded from memory when Keener and two other alumni toured Penn College’s Lumley Aviation Center in Montoursville in September 2004, focusing instead on the marked changes since their decades-earlier graduation from the aviation mechanics program.

Visiting with their spouses were Keener; George W. Gemberling, of Copperopolis, Calif.; Walter V. Gower, assistant professor of aviation; Donald H. Keener, of Watsontown; and Charles M. Starr, of Montoursville.

The group toured the well-furnished laboratory areas and spacious hangar, a far cry from the timeworn, leaky structure of their own college years. In a career that stretched from graduation to retirement (1957-95), Keener had seen a lot: working line maintenance, to the sheet-metal crew, to the machine shop, to tearing down exhaust cases – “at the back end, where all the soot is.”

He admittedly wasn’t prepared for the profound improvements at Penn College and its Aviation Center.

“Things have changed a lot,” Keener said, from the building itself to the engine test cells and other equipment housed inside. In looking back on his own education – when Piper Cubs offered students a close-up look, and float planes landed alongside the old Maynard Street bridge near main campus – clearly, not everything is different.

Just as today’s Penn College students apply their classroom training to real-life situations, Keener said, “It was nice to have the hands-on experience.” The connection between today’s modern campus and his long-ago alma mater – and the reconnection during his visit – has left him with a nostalgic desire to come back more often.

“There’s something about the smell of an aircraft hangar that just does something to me,” he said.

Marlin E. Merrell, ’57, waves from the cockpit of a Piper Cub that offered hands-on education to Williamsport Technical Institute students in the mid-1950s. Merrell, who, with Keener and several other classmates, worked for Capital Airlines in Washington, D.C., and then United Airlines in San Francisco, died April 14 in Fremont, Calif. He returned to visit the college’s Aviation Center in 2001.
Dennis R. Williams, associate professor of business administration, was awarded an “Entrepreneurship 101” plaque during the 23rd Annual Entrepreneurship Education Forum in Orlando, Fla. The award honors him for “outstanding leadership in the field of business creativity and entrepreneurship.”

SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Joseph Miletto Jr., director of the physician assistant program, authored an article that was published in the December issue of Advance for Physician Assistants magazine. The article shows that the elevation in the serum high-sensitivity C-reactive protein concentration is a strong independent predictor of future risk for sudden cardiac death among apparently healthy people.

SCHOOL OF INTEGRATED STUDIES

Vinay Bahl, associate professor of sociology, recently had two articles published. “The House of Tata” was published in the book “History of World Trade Since 1450,” published by Macmillan Reference USA. Another article, dealing with a critique of recent Indian historiography, was translated into German and published in “Sozial. Geschichte,” a German journal of social history. The article was titled “Subaltern Studies – Was ist schief gelaufen?”

Bryan R. James, Edwin G. Owens and Curt E. Vander Vere, assistant professors of mathematics, presented a talk titled “Assessing Student Attitudes/Confidence Levels as Related to Placement” at the 31st annual conference of the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges. Also attending the conference, held Nov. 10-13 in San Diego, were Sandra Carlson, instructor of mathematics, and Diana L. Kuhns, assistant professor of mathematics.

William Ma, associate professor of mathematics, presented “Euclidean, Spherical and Hyperbolic Properties of Hyperbolic Polar Coordinates” on Dec. 30 at the International Workshop on Quasi-conformal Mappings and Their Applications in Chennai, India. On Jan. 2, he presented an invited talk at the International Conference on Geometric Function Theory, Special Functions and Applications held in Pondicherry, India. His talk was titled “Convexity Properties of Metric Density.” In addition to the India conferences, Ma attended the Annual Joint Meeting of the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America in San Antonio from Jan. 12-15.

Abdul B. Pathan, professor of economics, wrote an article, “Assessing Student Learning in Macroeconomics,” which was published in the proceedings of Teaching Economics Conference: Instruction and Classroom-Based Research. The conference was held by Robert Morris University, Moon Township, and McGraw Hill/Irwin Publishing.

Shahin Shabanian, assistant professor of physics, was selected to review the textbook “College Physics” by Alan Giambattista, Betty Richardson and Robert Richardson. The book is published by McGraw-Hill, and Shabanian will be acknowledged in the new edition.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & CONTINUING EDUCATION

Frederic G. “Rick” Terry, director of the Factory Built Housing Center, presented to a group of builders, manufacturers and other industry attendees at the 20th Annual National Association of Homebuilders’ Building Systems Council Showcase in Louisville, Ky. Terry’s session featured examples of training, education and research that the FHBC at Penn College provides to the building systems industry. He also offered a live demonstration of a new online course offered by the center’s Modular Training Institute.

C. Hank White, director of the Plastics Manufacturing Center, conducted a workshop to introduce Nylene 494, a new nylon polymer for rotational molding, and its availability in the marketplace. The September workshop was part of the joint meeting of the Association of Rotational Molders and the Society of Plastics Engineers in Chicago. The polymer was developed by White and the PMC with Custom Resins, a Henderson, Ky., resin manufacturer, which is marketing the material worldwide.
Penn College Awarded $250,000 Keystone Innovation Grant

Pennsylvania College of Technology, in coordination with the Williamsport/Lycoming Keystone Innovation Zone, has been awarded a $250,000 state grant to promote new business opportunities for students and entrepreneurs through business-plan contests.

The Keystone Innovation Grant—a companion to the Keystone Innovation Zone program announced in 2005—also will fund a new full-time position to provide plastics-related research and technology-transfer services on a statewide basis.

Administered by the state Department of Community and Economic Development, the Keystone Innovation Grant provides additional resources to the Williamsport/Lycoming KIZ and the statewide network of 16 KIZs.

The college will partner with the Williamsport/Lycoming KIZ and Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Central and Northern Pennsylvania’s Venture Investment Forum to co-sponsor four business-plan contests over an 18-month period.

The funding also provides for the establishment of the Pennsylvania Plastics Resource Network. The PPRN will consist of a network of technical and business-related providers to deliver technical and educational services to Pennsylvania’s plastics industry. The primary partners will be the Plastics Manufacturing Center at Penn College and Penn State Behrend’s Plastics Technology Center in Erie.

For more information, contact Workforce Development & Continuing Education at Penn College at (570) 327-4775.

Plastics Manufacturing Center Introduces New Material to Market

For the first time in its 14-year history, the Plastics Manufacturing Center at Pennsylvania College of Technology has introduced a new commercially available material. The material was developed in partnership with Custom Resins, a Henderson, Ky., resin manufacturer.

The new material, called Nylene 494, is a variant of nylon suitable for rotational molding. Only one company previously produced a nylon for the specialized molding process.

The PMC and its Rotational Molding Center of Excellence have helped several other companies develop new materials for their own proprietary uses, but this is the first time the Plastics Manufacturing Center has developed a material that is being marketed worldwide, said C. Hank White, director of the PMC.

Health Science Students Administer Free Flu Shots

Students in the School of Health Sciences at Pennsylvania College of Technology administered free flu shots at seven locations Nov. 16-18 in cooperation with the Lycoming County Health Improvement Coalition and the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Students in the paramedic, nursing and physician assistant academic majors gave approximately 300 flu shots, as well as some pneumonia injections, under the supervision of Penn College faculty and a state Department of Health nurse. The student volunteers also distributed information regarding the vaccines.

In addition to providing student volunteers to staff the clinics, Penn College also supplied syringes and the printed materials to promote the events in each community.

The vaccines, given on a walk-in basis, were supplied by the state Department of Health’s Division of Immunization through funds from State Health Improvement Plan partners.
Students Make Statement and Help Area Homeless

While frigid December winds gusted, whipping snowflakes against their faces, students enrolled in the human services major at Pennsylvania College of Technology alternated shifts to spend 24 hours outdoors at Market and West Fourth streets in Williamsport to call attention to the number of people who are homeless in Lycoming County and the surrounding region.

Fourteen students enrolled in the Community and Organizational Change course worked together to form a service-learning project. Focusing on homelessness, they held hot-dog sales on campus, through which they collected money and outerwear to be donated to St. Anthony’s Center.

The students held the camp-out to raise awareness outside the college. An average of four students at a time held signs at the corner from noon Dec. 2 to noon Dec. 3. They explained statistics regarding local homelessness to passersby who approached them, with some promising to return with outerwear donations.

According to Elizabeth L. Meyer, associate professor of human services/social science, the course’s goal is to help students understand that helping others sometimes involves not only bringing services to people, but also requires creating social change, which often begins with community awareness.

“I think this experience also raised students’ awareness of the experience that homeless people who are on the streets have when the weather turns cold,” Meyer said. “The temperatures were in the 20s, and in the teens with the wind-chill index. We were freezing, and yet we were dressed far more warmly than most persons who are homeless can dress.”

Students’ Efforts Aid Proposed Muncy Nature Trail

Forestry students in Dennis F. Ringling’s timber harvesting and equipment lab at Pennsylvania College of Technology recently completed a project that combined civic service with a respect for local history.

The class helped the Muncy Historical Society remove diseased, unsafe and storm-felled trees from the site of its proposed Heritage Park and Nature Trail along the old West Branch Canal.

“Dr. Ringling and his students cleared all of the identified trees that posed an immediate hazard or would have impeded our ability to proceed with the project itself,” said William J. Poulton, society president. “This project will involve a variety of organizations, and we are delighted that Penn College has partnered with us in these early stages.”

Development of the historically and environmentally significant property is a multi-year endeavor that ultimately will showcase Port Penn, the commercial and residential center that grew up around the canal. The Historical Society is developing the site off Pepper Street (in conjunction with an archaeological dig around the canal lockmaster’s 19th-century well and home) to showcase the diverse wildlife and plants along the old canal and to share with visitors the importance of the waterway to the region’s growth.

The students were split into work crews, fanning out across the 11-plus-acre site to clear, haul and pile timber for disposal or transport back to the college’s sawmill for processing.

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in Bedford and is retired.

Charles A. Berninger, business administration, received a bachelor’s degree in social science from Lock Haven University in 1970, a master of education degree from Wayne State University in 1975, and a master of science degree in management from Troy State University in 1978. He lives in South Williamsport and retired from the Air Force at the rank of lieutenant colonel.

William R. Bierly, sheet metal, retired as an equipment operator after 32 years of employment with the state Department of Transportation. Bierly, who resides in Loganton, is a past councilman for that borough and is past president and chief steward of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 2118.

R. Douglas Johnson, architectural technology, earned a bachelor’s degree in business/marketing from Elmira College in 1984. He is a customer-service representative for Anchor Glass Container and resides in Horseheads, N.Y.

Michael P. Whalen, engineering drafting technology, earned a bachelor’s degree in materials engineering from the University of New Haven in 1992 and a master of science degree in management from Albertus Magnus College. He is manager of airframe design for Sikorsky Aircraft Corp. and resides in Bloomsburg.

William Joseph Cusatis, automotive technology, is southeast regional sales manager for Mazda North America Operations and resides in Jacksonville, Fla.

Karla J. Brown, accounting, is a human-resource assistant for Bellefonte School District and resides in Pleasant Gap.

Stephen Reeser Theal, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, resides in Camp Hill and is a refrigeration mechanic for the state Department of General Services.

Amy Force, culinary arts, resides in Lock Haven.

Jennifer Marie Hawley, early childhood education, resides in Muncy and is a preschool teacher at Watsontown Christian Academy.

Leon F. Haydt, diesel technology, is a technical mechanic for Penske Truck Leasing and resides in Waltonport. He participated in the Penske Technical Challenge and is currently working on his Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification in diesel repair.

Patrick Michael Teefy, computer-aided product design, is a computer-design engineer for Chester Valley Engineers and resides in Aston.

Robert L. Kirkner, right (home remodeling, Class of 1988) served 13 months in Iraq with the 112th Infantry unit from Bradford, returning home in late 2005. The photo, taken when Kirkner was on a two-week leave, was submitted by Randy T. Gillespie (left), also a 1988 graduate of the home remodeling major. Gillespie calls Kirkner a lifelong friend since the two met at Williamsport Area Community College. Kirkner lives in Danville, while Gillespie resides in Whitehall.
Help the Alumni Relations Office honor worthy graduates from Pennsylvania College of Technology and its predecessor institutions (Williamsport Area Community College and Williamsport Technical Institute) by nominating someone for an alumni award.

The college accepts public nominations for three of its annual awards:

1. **Distinguished Alumna/Alumnus Award**
   - Presented each May for significant contributions in one’s chosen field, as well as for leadership roles within the community and a commitment to college and community relations.
   - **Nomination deadline is March 1.**

2. **Alumna/Alumnus Achievement Award**
   - Presented each May to a fairly recent graduate for noteworthy professional or career accomplishment or dedicated volunteer service to the college or one’s community.
   - **Nomination deadline is March 1.**

3. **Alumni Citizenship/Humanitarian Award**
   - Presented in December to two alumni who demonstrate distinguished community or volunteer service.
   - **Nomination deadline is Oct. 1.**

A nomination form and the full criteria for each award are published on the Alumni Relations Web site: [www.pct.edu/alumni/alumni_awards.htm](http://www.pct.edu/alumni/alumni_awards.htm)

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**Alum’s Hobby Offers Rare Private View of History**

Carl F. McDaniel, a 1943 graduate of Williamsport Technical Institute, a Pennsylvania College of Technology forerunner, took hundreds of photos while an Army X-ray technician in Berlin in 1945-46.

McDaniel was among the U.S. troops who, together with the British forces, marched into Berlin at the end of World War II. He had been a member of a medical unit tasked to establish the U.S. Military Hospital.

In his spare time, he moved around what had been left of the once-glorious capital of Nazi Germany. Constant air raids by the U.S. Air Force and the Royal Air Force of Great Britain, as well as the final battle of Berlin, had turned the place into a surreal war landscape. Not one building had been left standing intact. Its 4 million inhabitants were squatting in ruins.

As a technician, McDaniel had an interest in still photography and bought a Kodak Retina camera on the black market. “A few packs of cigarettes” did the job, he remembers. From then on, he began to document the city and its people. His intention was to show the folks at home that he was all right – and what he was doing.

Today, these photographs present an extraordinary historical source, according to Helmut Trotnow, director of the Allied Museum in Berlin. More than 300 of them can be found on McDaniel’s Web site ([http://macswitch.tripod.com/berlin/index.html](http://macswitch.tripod.com/berlin/index.html)), and that is where the Allied Museum found them. Together with pictures taken by British and French soldiers, they form the basis of a special exhibit titled “Berlin 1945: The Private View,” which ran May 3 to Sept. 4, 2005.

The front cover of the 125-page book the Allied Museum printed after the exhibit. The cover photo was taken by McDaniel in 1945 and shows three of his friends coming home from the black market. In the background are the Reichstag on the left, the Brandenburg Gate in the center and the old American embassy on the right.
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During Williamsport’s annual God, Country and Community Flag March, a community group carries the Stars and Stripes toward the college’s Student and Administrative Services Center, where dignitaries and patriotic music honor America’s armed forces.