

Redstone Rocket

VOL. 50 No. 44

Published in the interest of personnel at Redstone Arsenal, AL

November 7, 2001

Veterans parade Monday honors Redstone's 60th birthday

Several activities planned to honor those who served

By SANDY RIEBELING
Staff writer

Because of the terrorist attacks Sept. 11 and heightened security of our military around the world, there was talk that Redstone soldiers would not be marching in the annual Veterans Day parade set for Monday.

"Our soldiers will participate in it in spite of world events, you could say," Ed Banville, veterans activities co-chairman, said. "We're going to be there, and march to defy those terrorists. This is a day to honor our military personnel who are now serving or have served this great nation."

Redstone contributed more soldiers, Marines and rolling stock in last year's parade than ever before. This year, with the addition of the newly arrived National Guardsmen, it promises to be even bigger.

Since Veterans Day falls on Sunday, events and activities are scheduled on Saturday and Monday.

Saturday's schedule includes the opening of the new Veterans Memorial Museum on Airport Road with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 11 a.m. Later that evening the Redstone chapter of the Association of the United States Army will host a reception at 6 p.m. with a dinner following at the Huntsville Hilton.

Monday's activities kickoff with a VIP breakfast hosted by the City of Madison at the Hilton. At 10 a.m. in Big Spring Park, Congressman Bud Cramer, with the assistance of Maj. Gen. Larry Dodgen, commander of Aviation and Missile Command and Redstone, will present the French Normandy Invasion medals to more than 100 Alabama veterans. Special music will be provided by Carol Kaye and Sheena Robinson.

The parade will begin at 11 a.m. starting from Big Spring Park with a reading of the proclamation signed by Huntsville Mayor Loretta Spencer, Madison Mayor Jan Wells, and Madison County commissioners. Retired Maj. Gen. Al Sullivan, former commander of Redstone, is the parade grand marshal. The theme promotes the 60th birth-



Courtesy photo

IN STEP— Redstone soldiers march in last year's Veterans Day parade in downtown Huntsville. Soldiers and Marines from Redstone are expected to participate in big numbers again this year. The parade will be Monday at 11 a.m.

day of Redstone Arsenal.

"We're very excited and grateful to the support of WAFF Channel 48 who this year stepped in and basically handled the parade setup for us," Banville said. "They are taking the applications for people to be in it and organizing the lineup. Not only are

they televising it live but they are taping it and selling copies with the proceeds going to the victims of the Pentagon fund. They've given us fantastic support."

The Hall of Heroes induction ceremony

See Parade on page 5

New commanding general's expectations of post exceeded



Photo by Beth Skarupa

HEADS UP— Although Maj. Gen. Larry Dodgen is gradually replacing coins from his collection with aviation coins and others that are AMCOM-related, he says his LSU Tigers coin won't be moved from its prominent position. He assumed command of the Aviation and Missile Command and Redstone Arsenal Sept. 10.

Dodgen appreciates community despite demands of first month

By BETH SKARUPA
Staff writer

He may be a LSU Tiger at heart, but the new commander of AMCOM and Redstone Arsenal is happy to make Alabama his home — no matter what happens on the football field.

Maj. Gen. Larry Dodgen, a native of New Orleans and a Louisiana State University alumnus, took command here Sept. 10. Despite a hectic first month due to the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., he's already developed an appreciation for what he calls this "great and prosperous, caring community."

He admits that he and his wife Leslie had high expectations for Huntsville, spurred on by the high praise given by several former Redstone commanders and others who had been assigned here.

"My wife and I were very excited to get down here to Huntsville and I can tell you that all that excitement has been fully borne out with what we've seen and what we've

experienced here," Dodgen said. "It's a friendly city — a supportive city, county and friends — even at the roughest time, and there's no rougher time than what happened on Sept. 11."

Although they haven't been able to explore Huntsville and the surrounding communities as much as they would have if these had been "normal times," Dodgen said he and his wife love it here and were happy to get back to the Army after five years in Joint assignments.

He had served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for policy and missions from 1996-98 and director of the Joint Theater Air and Missile Defense Organization prior to this assignment.

Dodgen did have some firsthand knowledge of AMCOM before he came here. As a commander of an air defense battalion in Desert Storm, operating Patriot and Hawk weapon systems, he was familiar with the key role played by what was then the Missile Command in getting that technology and "know-how" to the field as soon as possible.

"I had the Patriot in Germany and didn't have missile

See Dodgen on page 7

Supervisor gets logistics award

Runner's high

4

PAC-3 missile enters new phase

Leader of pack

10

Workers dress up for Halloween

Hot costumes

14

Community impresses post commander

Dodgen

continued from page 1

defense capability a month before I deployed to Desert Storm," he said. "And in that month, trainers and technical people came out and installed our capability and showed us how to use that capability. I think that's a pretty powerful example of how having this command and its relationship to operations can be very, very important and valuable to our nation."

Now that he's been commander of AMCOM for more than a month, he said his view of the command has only been enhanced. The events of Sept. 11 did turn his attention away to security issues, but now that his schedule is balanced again he's had the chance to concentrate on the command and its mission.

"I'm just really excited and very pleased with the quality of the work force that's at AMCOM. I've met a lot of people that really know their job, know what they're doing, and are doing that job and working hard - and that's, for a guy that's spent a lot of his career out in the field, that's pretty gratifying to tell you the truth," he said.

He sees AMCOM's biggest challenge as maintaining the readiness of the Army with various levels of funding. His chief concern is the level of funding needed to do the materiel management work that AMCOM needs to do, making sure the Army has all the repair parts needed for the helicopters and the aviation and missile systems that are out there.

Another big challenge he sees for AMCOM is being the research and development base for missiles and aviation systems in Army transformation. He wants to ensure that AMCOM is providing some mature technological ideas that can be integrated into the force. He said we have to "make sure our Army's the best, by far the best, not just a little bit better, but by far the best. And that's something we've done pretty well for decades now and it's something we need to continue doing."

What would he like to say to the soldiers that are deployed today who are deal-

ing with aviation and missile systems?

"I would tell them that AMCOM's not going to let them down. AMCOM's going to give them what they need to be a success. They're always going to have, based on what we do here at Team Redstone, they're always going to have the best systems."

"They're never going to have an inferior system to anything else that's out there, I'm convinced of that," he said. "And the second thing is, they're going to have enough, they're going to have enough stuff. That's a commitment that we're going to make to the Army and the force."

Dodgen's come a long way since he earned his bachelor's degree in chemical engineering at LSU in 1972. Back then he decided to join the Army for a few years because he thought engineering work didn't seem exciting. The few years turned into 29 as his commitment to his fellow soldiers grew and although he did find the Army exciting, he found that engineering work could be exciting, too.

Now he's making his home in Alabama, but his hometown will always be New Orleans. That's where he grew up, that's where his parents still live and that's where he goes to get a taste of home - his mother is Cajun and she always manages to cook him his favorites when he visits, things like gumbo, shrimp and butter beans or chicken fricasse. That's why, although he's happy here, he'll never trade the LSU Tigers coin from his collection for one from Alabama or Auburn.

Still, he and his wife plan to enjoy their time here. They're both avid tennis players and have been able to play a few times together despite Dodgen's hectic first month. Dodgen also enjoys a "social round of golf every now and then" and Leslie, an art major, has recently taken up rubber stamping as a hobby.

"Regardless of the things that have happened out of the usual since I've been here, and I'm talking about Sept. 11, all our expectations have been met with Redstone and the community and we're just very happy to be part of it," Dodgen said. "Too often expectations aren't always exceeded, but in this case, they're exceeded."

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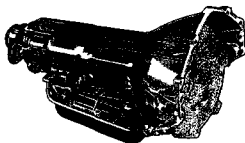
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