

## Red River sends Lt. Col. Yarbrough off with Texas Salute

### Toft assumes command of DDRT

By Stacy L. Umstead, DDC Public Affairs

Army Lt. Col. Betty Yarbrough relinquished command of Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas, to Lt. Col. Steven Toft, in a ceremony July 26.

With more than 200 employees and guests attending the ceremony, DDRT bid farewell to Yarbrough and welcomed Toft with a traditional Texas salute. Cheryl Yount, and her horse Sammy, and David Morris, and his horse Oreo, paraded the flags of the United States and Texas honoring the official party. In addition, Yount and Morris, along with their horses, presented gifts to the Yarbrough and Toft families.

The ceremony was presided over by Army Brig. Gen. Lynn Collyar, commander of Defense Distribution Center, headquartered in New Cumberland, Pa. In his opening remarks, Collyar thanked the Texarkana community and specifically the Red River Army Depot for their support to DDC and DDRT, "Red River is a great place to work. Everyone here

is a part of 'the team' and that doesn't happen everywhere. I really commend the Red River Army Depot employees and their leadership for making that teamwork a way of life."

Collyar continued his remarks by highlighting the accomplishments of the DDRT team, and Yarbrough, during her tenure as commander, "The DDRT tire and wheel assembly operation produced over 60,000 assemblies for use by the war fighter. In addition, DDRT's consolidation and containerization point shipped over 13,000 463L pallets and almost 4,000 seavan containers," said Collyar.

During her two years, Yarbrough re-engineered processes to better serve DDRT's customers. Efficiencies in the distributions operations center and supporting facilities were gained by realigning operations, instituting Lean principles, and enhancing material flow to accommodate an increased workload, expanded mission and change in commodity mix.

In addition to commanding DDRT, Yarbrough was instrumental in formally standing up DDC's deployable distribution center, and subsequently became the deployable center's first commander. "Through her efforts, DDC's deployable distribution center is positioned to respond to the next national emergency. We will be ready to operate alongside other federal agencies providing

humanitarian assistance and disaster relief services here at home," said Collyar.

Collyar also presented Yarbrough with the Defense Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of her accomplishments as commander of DDRT.

During the change of command segment, Yarbrough passed the colors to Collyar and relinquished command of DDRT and addressed the audience and the hard working men and women of DDRT and



Army Lt. Col. Betty Yarbrough, right, is awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by Army Brig. Gen. Lynn Collyar, commander, Defense Distribution Center. Yarbrough was awarded the medal in recognition of her accomplishments while in command of Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas.

the deployable distribution center, "Being a part of DDRT has been an awesome experience. In most assignments, it's the people that make it worthwhile. Here, it was not just the people; it was also the critical mission of supporting the war fighter every day. I am humbled and extremely proud to have been a part of this team of professionals and for being given this great opportunity of command."

As he accepted the colors, Toft acknowledged his responsibility of command of DDRT, and addressed his new workforce, "DDRT is a first class organization with a talented workforce that always accomplishes the mission regardless of how large, diverse or complex it is. In the short time I've been here, it has become clear that this is truly a special place with special people. It is no wonder that the United States Army and the Department of Defense continue to give their most important work to Red River."

Toft, is a native of Osseo, Wis. He served five years prior enlisted service in Air Defense Artillery culminating as a Staff Sergeant. After leaving



Cheryl Yount and her horse Sammy parade the Nation's colors to open Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas's change of command ceremony. Parading flags on horseback is a traditional Texas salute at official ceremonies.

active duty, he received a direct commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps while serving in the Tennessee Army National Guard.

He is a graduate of the Army Medical Department Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, and the Command and General Staff College. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a master's degree from Austin Peay State University.

Toft's past assignments include Stinger Missile Crew Chief, 1-32 Field Artillery, Fliegerhorst Caserne, Hanau, Germany; Stinger Missile Squad Leader, 2-44th Air Defense Artillery, Fort Campbell, Ky; Medical Platoon Leader, 2nd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Cookeville, Tenn.; Ambulance Platoon Leader, 25th Medical Battalion; Medical Platoon Leader, 4-22 Infantry Battalion; Executive Officer, C/225th Forward Support Battalion and Deputy Support Operations Officer, 225th Forward Support Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; Commander, C/99th Support Battalion, 9th Separate Infantry Brigade, Fort



*Lt. Col. Steven Toft*

Polk, La.; Commander, Medical Troop, Regimental Support Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Polk, La.; Reserve Component Advisor, Readiness Group Fort Riley; Battalion S2/3, 125th Forward Support Battalion, 1st Armored Division, Fort Riley, Kan.; Commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 31st Combat Support Hospital, Fort Bliss, Texas; Chief, Division Medical Operations Center, 101st Airborne Division; Executive Officer, 86th Combat Support Hospital, Fort Campbell, Ky.; S2/3, 1st Medical Brigade; Executive Officer, 1st Medical Brigade; Deputy Surgeon, III Corps, Fort Hood, Texas. His operational and combat deployments include Haiti in 1995, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq and Kuwait.

Toft's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Meritorious Service Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Achievement Medal with Silver Oak Leaf Cluster, the Expert Field Medical Badge, the Parachutist Badge and the Air Assault Badge.



*Army Lt. Col. Steven Toft, right, accepts the colors from Army Brig. Gen. Lynn Collyar, commander, Defense Distribution Center, during the Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas, change of command ceremony. Passing the colors from the outgoing commander to the incoming commander is a long-standing tradition in the military that symbolizes the transfer of command from one officer to another.*

## DDRT Idol winner sings National Anthem at change of command ceremony

*By Stacy L. Umstead, DDC Public Affairs*

Melba Thurston, secretary for the Distribution Operations Branch of Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas, sang the national anthem during Red River's change of command ceremony July 26.



*Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas's 2007 "Idol," Melba Thurston.*

Thurston competed in Red River's 2007 DDRT Idol contest for the honor of singing the anthem during the ceremony and was selected as the winner by U.S. Army Lt. Col.

Betty Yarbrough, DDRT's outgoing commander.

Thurston, who has been with DDRT for more than 25 years, has a strong singing background. At the age of 7, she made her debut singing with her local church youth choir. Throughout her school years, Thurston performed at many events to include black history programs, proms and her own graduation ceremony.

Although the competition brings no global fame, Thurston wanted to win for a different reason.

"I wanted to sing the National Anthem during our change of command because within the last few years, the song has taken on a whole new meaning for me," Thurston said. "My son is one of the war fighters that DDRT supports. He is preparing for his third deployment to the war."

"Somebody once said that the hardest part of being a mother is the labor and delivery -- that somebody never watched their baby board a plane headed to war," Thurston explained.

The competition, hosted by DDRT employee Carol Wright, coordinator for the change of command, included a panel of three judges—minus the infamous Simon Cowell—who judged the performance of Thurston and two other contestants.

"I am honored that I was chosen to sing the National Anthem at this year's ceremony," Thurston said. "As I sing it, I won't be singing it for recognition, fame or glory; I will be singing it because I am proud to be a part of DDRT and the Defense Distribution Center's mission to support our sons, daughters, nieces and nephews, the war fighters who, too, ask for no recognition, fame or glory."