

**Armory Transfer Ceremony
City of Allen
Oklahoma Army National Guard
1330 Hours Thursday
5 June 2008**

Heritage of the Allen Armory – COL Brown

The town of Allen, Oklahoma built the first part of this facility in 1946 as an Armory for their citizen-soldiers. It consisted of the drill floor, or the large garage portion that you see now. Until then, National Guard soldiers use to meet in school buildings and trained in open fields outside of town.

In 1946, World War II had just ended only months earlier and Harry Truman was President of the United States at the time. Frank Capra's movie, "It's a Wonderful Life" starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed was just released. Future presidents, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, were both born in 1946. You could fly across the Atlantic Ocean in a Lockheed Constellation four engine prop plane in only twenty hours with refueling stops in Newfoundland and Ireland. A First Class Postage Stamp cost 3 cents and the price of gasoline was only 21 cents a gallon.

The engineers tell me that this building has almost 10,000 square feet of space and they can provide volumes of details about its construction. But this building is more than the simple sum of concrete, mortar, blocks, and wood. It has a heritage that I would like to review with everyone here today.

To the citizens of Allen and of this Great State, this Armory represents much more. To the soldiers who were assigned here, this building was their home base. From here, National Guard soldiers went forth in times of flood, tornados, and other natural disasters to answer the cry for help from the citizens of Oklahoma.

Countless lives have been saved throughout Oklahoma because of the actions of the soldiers based in this Armory. Individuals and families in desperate straits have been rescued. Those in need of

food and water have been fed and taken to shelter. Lost children have been found and returned to their loved ones. Homes and businesses have been guarded and protected following natural disasters until their owners could safely return.

This armory belonged to the First Battalion 180th Infantry Regiment which traces its historical lineage to the First Infantry Regiment of the Oklahoma Volunteer Militia which formed in 1890, seventeen years before statehood. This organization served in the Spanish-American War, chased Poncho Villa into Mexico, and also served in the First World War.

In 1921, it became part of the famous 45th Infantry Division. During World War II, the soldiers from Allen, Oklahoma served in North Africa and then landed in Sicily as part of General Patton's Seventh Army. From Sicily, they landed on the beaches at Salerno and Anzio, Italy.

In August of 1944, they landed on the beaches of Southern France and once again joined General Patton as part of his Third Army in its race across Europe and into Germany. After the end of World War II, the Division returned home to Oklahoma only to be called upon again to fight in Korea during the Korean Conflict.

In 1949, the Township of Allen sold their armory to the State of Oklahoma for \$1. The administrative wing of this building was built in 1957 and untold numbers of citizen-soldiers from Allen and the surrounding area continued to drill and train here. The soldiers from this armory put down the 1973 prison riot at McAlester, returned to Europe in REFORGER training exercises, kept the peace as United Nations Observers on the Israeli-Egyptian Border, and were among the first National Guard troops to see combat in Iraq. They have served in Afghanistan and even now, many are now serving in Iraq as part of the Oklahoma National Guard's 45th Infantry Brigade, the present day descendant of the 45th Infantry Division.

The heritage of community service that surrounds this facility is the result of the exemplary actions of these citizen soldiers who answered their community's, their state's and their nation's call with hard work, sacrifice, dedication, and compassion for those in need.

It is more than appropriate, if not fitting, that this Armory, with its heritage for service to the community, be returned to the community, so that it may continued that tradition and history of service.