

Brigade spouses earn their spurs

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In an open field overrun by tall grass a "Soldier" thrusts a bayonet through a cut out target. As the blade finds its mark the bayonet wielder cries out "kill!" She then draws the rifle mounted bayonet back and positions herself to punish the target again, this time with a butt stroke to the head.

The bayonet wielder was not really a Soldier but a Soldier's spouse who was participating in Baumholder's first Spouses Spur Ride conducted by D

Troop, 5th Cavalry. The Spur Ride offered spouses an opportunity to experience first-hand what their husbands do on a day to day basis.

The bayonet assault course was one of eight stations in the Spouses Spur Ride that 38 spouses participated in to earn the Order of the Spur June 16. They were also presented with a spur pin that can be worn to formal events, cavalry or otherwise. The Order of the Spur and spur pin proves they successfully completed the Spouses Spur Ride.

The eight stations were set up at two sites, behind the D

Troop, 5th Cavalry headquarters and at the indoor range area. At one site spouses had to drive a Hummvee, complete the bayonet assault course, learn how to clear a room and actually perform the operation and practice donning and removing MBC gear.

To earn their spurs they also had to complete an M-4 live fire exercise, a hand grenade assault course, and fire M-240 and 50 caliber machine guns mounted on Hummvees. They also had to fire a 50 caliber machine gun mounted on a tank.

"We wanted to give the spouses a taste of what their

husbands go through when they compete for their spurs," said Capt. Allan Carroll, D Troop, 5th Cavalry commander.

"Overall I think the event went phenomenal. We ended up having 38 spouses that started and finished and nobody got hurt. They were able to experience a lot of events that in any other scenario they would not be able to perform and they were able to see what their husbands do every day," said Carroll. "We even had spouses out there who were pregnant. We were able to take care of them and let them do everything," said Carroll.

Carroll added that he has had nothing but positive feedback about the Spur Ride. "I have an email from a woman who says her husband has been in the Army for 20 years and she has never seen an event like this and been able to do that many things. That (the Spur Ride) was one of the most fun things she's ever done."

"We're getting a taste of what our husbands do when they're out in the field," said Maria Rodrigues, whose husband is assigned to B Company, 4-70th Armor. "It's been a lot of fun. It's kind of tuff but it's a lot of fun. "We have practiced grenade throwing and we've shot guns and rode in a Hummvee. I'm just really glad that I got the chance to come out here and do this," said Rodrigues.

"It's a chance for several of the spouses in the battalion to get together and see what our husbands do for a living," said Jordan Carroll, whose husband is the commander of the unit. It's been a blast.

"We've been able to actually shoot a few live rounds at the indoor range on the M-4. We just shot a 50 caliber from a tank and mounted on a Hummvee and we were also able to shoot an M-240, mounted.

"It's actually more fun than I expected. I was a little nervous at first but it's been a great time. I'm looking forward to the road march next," said Carroll.

Putting an event like this together and ensuring everything goes smoothly requires some logistical support and Carroll had just that from the Soldiers

who were there every step of the way, ensuring all the spouses received thorough instructions at each station and that no one got hurt.

"I was very pleased. The Soldiers had a great attitude and were able to see the joy from the spouses – to just be able to do the stuff that we take for granted every day – and how much fun they were able to have," said Carroll.

The order of the spur goes back to medieval times. When a squire completed his formalized training to become a knight he was christened by the king and awarded his silver spurs. The first time the knight went into combat he was awarded his gold spurs, showing that he was successful in combat.

"So when the cavalry came into being, silver spurs held that tradition. Of course we don't have the squire or anything like that, but to show that you are an established cavalryman, you earn your spurs by going through a spur ride, which is normally a very rigorous training event where you test all the different cavalry traits that are required," said Carroll.

"We just completed a Spur Ride a couple of months ago. That was a three-day long event in which the Soldiers went without sleep and performed many different tasks in very harsh conditions to earn their spurs. We actually had 55 men who went through and 48 actually passed. Through tradition, you hold a Spouses Spur ride following a regular spur ride, where the spouses are able to perform many of the same tasks," said Carroll.

Standouts in the ride were shooting live ammunition and driving a Hummvee. "Those are the two big ones I thought stood out, actually driving the Hummvee and actually shooting live rounds.

"I was just very pleased that the spouses had a great time and were able to perform all these tasks that our battalion had allowed, to include shooting live rounds. I think everyone of them now appreciates better what her husband does on a day to day basis," said Carroll.



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Above, a spouse pulls back on the charging handle of a 50 caliber machine gun as she prepares to fire off a few rounds during the first ever Spouses Spur Ride.



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A spouse strikes her target and cries out, "kill!" as she makes her way through the bayonet assault course portion of the Spouses Spur Ride. The 38 spouses faced eight different stations and a road march before earning their spurs, a cavalry tradition that dates back even before the cavalry, to the middle ages, to a time when knights ruled the battlefield and squires strived to prove their worthiness on the field of honor.