



Serving in Kyrgyzstan

By Lt. Darryl Moore

When Sr. Agent Channing Duvall asked me to write an article on my deployment to Kyrgyztan, I told him I would, but down inside I was a little hesitant. After some consideration and thought I realized I would not be writing about what SSgt. Darryl Moore did while deployed, but what God had done in my life before and during my trip to Manas Air Base Kyrgyzstan. It was my duty not to just write the article on our military, but to provide testimony.

In 1994 I had completed my tour of active duty with the U.S. Air Force. I had returned to Louisiana and landed the job I had wanted since a child. As anyone who has served in the military knows, it is quite an adjustment to civilian life, especially after serving for a length of time. If you had told me almost ten years later I would have the opportunity to serve again I would have said that was impossible, but with God all things are possible. In December 2002, just a few months before

the start of the war, I found myself standing in front of the Flag taking the oath to serve once again. I was so extremely proud and humbled to have the chance to serve my country again. I had trouble getting through the oath.

Three short years later and one already cancelled trip to Iraq. I found myself and four of my unit members with orders bound for a country I had never even heard of before. I was heading to Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, a mountainous country a

few hundred miles north of Afghanistan and just to the west of China. It was a former Soviet Bloc country. We each knew it would be a learning experience. After getting settled into the job and adjusting to full time military service, I decided I would use this time to learn more of the people and the country.

Our primary job was air base protection for a forward operating base into Afghanistan. In addition to conducting

Continued on page 14

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Serving in Kyrgyzstan

Continued from page 13

my normal duties, patrol and base security, I joined up with the Manas Air Base Outreach Society (MABOS). MABOS is a volunteer group of military members that would go out to the local cities, villages and rural hamlets on our off time to try to help those in need. I had no idea of the poverty and misfortune I would see. My perspective of life's troubles would soon change.

My first trip into the city of Bishkek was to a handicap orphanage. It wasn't a trip for everyone or the faint of heart. After arriving at the orphanage we handed out candies and small

toys to many of the few hundred orphans. Many of these first orphans had slight mental and physical handicaps. After visiting with these orphans, we were then taken to other rooms where the more severe handicap children were housed. Only a few of us decided to go into these rooms to hand out toys. They tried to prepare us, but stepping into the rooms and seeing the children took the speech right out of my mouth. I do not have the adjectives to justly describe the situation. I knew it was not my place to show emotion, but a sense of peace and love for these kids came over me. I have no doubt

it was my Christian walk, the spirit of God that prepared me for this moment.

Handing the kids the small stuffed animals, sent from churches in the United States, many would try to speak or laugh in their own way. Some started crying and some tried to communicate. I will never forget the one little girl, severely handicapped and bedridden, grabbed my pants leg and would not let go. I stopped and made it a game until she laughed so hard I was afraid she would roll out of her bed. My heart breaks till this day. Our units on base built a playground for those that

could walk and wooden outside beds so the severely handicapped could be carried outside to lay in the sunshine. Churches from back home also sent monies for medicines and clothing items. The workers were very grateful and were not hesitant to express it. I was humbled by their gratitude.

We, my comrades, would visit three other orphanages during my stay. Each one was special in its own way. Each had hundreds of kids looking for homes and attention. At the last one we visited, our unit decided to "adopt" this orphanage. It was an orphanage/school with a



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Serving in Kyrgyzstan

Continued from page 14

couple of hundred kids. Most were mentally and physically fit, they just didn't have parents or their parents could not afford to raise them. The school had rudimentary electricity, but no refrigeration for food, meals were cooked over a wood stove, and the kids were "hosed" down once a week in a dungeon type room located away from the main buildings. We raised monies as a unit and bought them two new electric stoves, a refrigerator and TV's for use in educating the kids. The adults were so appreciative they cried and gave us hugs. Churches again from the U.S. sent school supplies

and outside games and toys.

Our unit not only helped the orphanages, but also cancer centers, burn centers and elderly homes. Members from other Louisiana Reserve units built playgrounds for a local village. We renovated a village's day care/Christian Church. The church/school had no indoor plumbing or running water. We helped build additional buildings and provided the church with running water. The local village kids would entertain us with Russian plays and skits in traditional Russian attire. The one thing that sticks in my mind, is although the

kids literally had no material items, they played and laughed like any kid in America. Instead of candy treats they would have fruits that grew from the gardens as a mid day snack. We attended the church with our Russian translators and joined hands in prayer with our new Christian brothers and sisters. They asked that we pray for them on our return to the states. It was then I realized that God's spirit knows no boundaries. We are all one in the same.

There is so much more I will remember of my trip to Kyrgyzstan. I will never forget the friendships formed with

our translators like Savva, the journalist, Mooki, the "comedian", and Esson my newborn Christian friend who was more knowledgeable on specifics on the Bible than I hoped to be. I will never forget my Kyrgyz guard Muslim friend Devron. He learned English from the American troops. Who after not seeing me for a couple days would holler my name "SSgt Moore" and greet me with a handshake and a hug. Then there was Nicolai, a Russian on base bus driver who could not speak English, but would teach me Russian

Continued on page 16

Serving in Kyrgyzstan

Continued from page 15

words each time we would meet. Each talked about traveling to the United States, and each one I would welcome at my table at any time.

I will always remember loading the plane to return home with bitter-sweet feelings. As excited as I was to return home, I stopped and looked back at the mountains that border the airfield. I realized a small part of me will always remain with the mountainous and tenacious country for which I had grown fond.

Landing back in the United States is always a special feeling, but this instance was even more special. When we

stepped off the plane in our desert gear at Baltimore's International Airport, the people clapped and voiced their appreciation. I see vividly still in my mind, walking down the ramp at the New Orleans Airport and seeing our friends and family members waving at us from afar. As we approached some of the smaller kids broke from their Mom's grasp and ran to meet their Dads. A classic scene repeated daily across America.

I write this because it gives me the chance to voice another side of the war most Americans will never hear of. As you watch the news and are constantly bombarded

by "bad news" and as some choose to focus on the negative and declare the war "lost", remember what our nation's military members are doing worldwide. I firmly believe God created this nation for a specific purpose. It is not only our duty, but our responsibility to take the blessings we have been given and try to help those who

have not been blessed to live in a country as ours. We cannot hide behind our borders and refuse to lend a hand to those in need.

Please remember our military members who are serving worldwide, protecting freedom, even in countries you may not have ever heard of.

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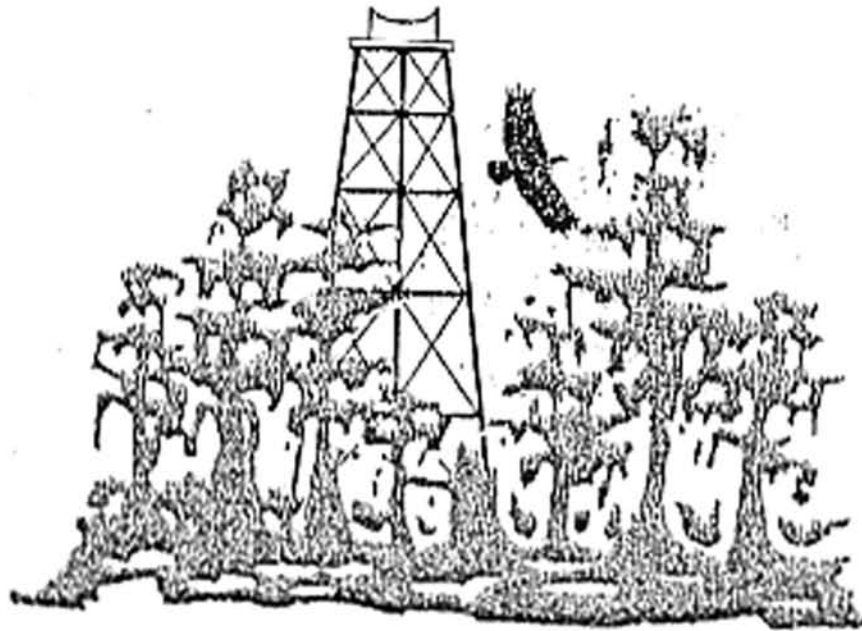
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