

Precision and Pride: Honor Guard pays tribute to those who served

by Lorna Schuster
Sunburst staff writer

Driven to excel, an elite group of airmen can be found crisply performing ceremonial honors for fallen airmen and veterans across a large range of southern New Mexico. These airmen, Holloman's Honor Guard volunteers, represent the heart of Air Force tradition and devotion to duty by dedicating their time to honor military members who have served their country proudly.

"You have to be motivated by a deep sense of patriotism in order to be a guardsman," said Staff Sgt.

John McIntosh, Holloman Honor Guard head trainer. "It's important for us to show the community in a positive way what the United States military is all about."

To maintain this positive display, an official board carefully screens Honor Guard applicants for their ability and physical condition. Only airmen who are highly motivated and who maintain a high standard of appearance, conduct, and talent for ceremonial duty are considered.

Once new volunteers are accepted they begin a four-week training program.

"We teach the basic movements, how to handle the weapons and the

Honor Guard creed," said Staff Sgt. Travis Jalaliddin, Holloman Honor Guard NCOIC. "The creed is what we live by."

According to McIntosh, the Honor Guard creed motivates the ceremonial unit to adhere precisely to traditional military customs and courtesies. The unit performs these refined movements and customs for military honors, wedding and VIP cordons, parades, retirements, change of commands and in support of the local communities.

Their area of responsibility stretches over nine counties in southern New Mexico and three counties in West Texas.

"We recently had the honor of performing at General Hunt's promotion," Jalaliddin said, "but funerals are our main priority and are congressionally mandated."

Though the creed and experience of Honor Guard duty motivates the unit, personal reasons can motivate the guardsmen as well.

"My father was buried at Fort Bliss and he was buried with military honors," McIntosh said. That really gave me a lot of pride. If I can give that feeling to others, then I've done my job."

Any airmen interested in becoming a member of the Holloman Base Honor Guard can call the Honor Guard office at 572-2777.



Photo by Senior Airman Heather Chalmers

Team Holloman's Honor Guard stand at port while preparing to perform a 21-gun salute during an honors funeral.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Left to right: Senior Airman Carlos Rivera and Staff Sgt. John McIntosh practice for an honors funeral.



Courtesy Photo

Holloman's Honor Guard dresses right during an honor's funeral. The honor guard performs honors funeral throughout the Tularosa Basin.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Staff Sgt. John McIntosh prepares the casket to be carried by other Honor Guard members during a mock honors funeral.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Honor Guard members prepare to fold a flag during a mock funeral.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Left: Honor Guard members Staff Sgt. Travis Jalaliddin and Staff Sgt. John McIntosh toss rifles over Senior Airman Arturo Castro-Vazquez during a drill team practice.

Honor Guard Creed

Hand picked to serve as a member of the Base Honor Guard, my standards of conduct and level of professionalism must be above reproach, for I represent all others in my service.

Others earned the right for me to wear the ceremonial uniform, one that is honored in rich tradition and history. I will honor memory by wearing it properly and proudly.

Never will I allow my performance to be dictated by the type of ceremony, severity of the temperature, or size of the crowd. I will remain superbly conditioned to perfect all movement throughout every drill and ceremony.

Obligated by my oath I am constantly driven to excel by a deep devotion to duty and a strong sense of dedication.

Representing every member, past and present, of the United States Air Force, I vow to stand sharp, crisp, and motionless, for

I am a ceremonial guardsman