

Katy Soldiers



WRITTEN BY LEE BUTLER

Weekend WARRIORS

A Tribute to Katy's Military Reserves

The worker looks at the clock in the busy office as he finished work of a sensitive nature with a client. In just a few more minutes and the transformation would begin.

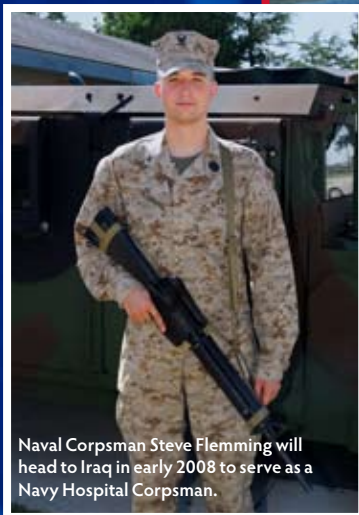
He (or she) will leave the office, go home and change clothes. Soon, he would emerge dressed in the uniform of a member of the United States military, be it Army, Navy, Marines, or Coast Guard. From a member of this area's work force, to a member of the armed services. Another weekend has begun for some of Katy's "weekend warriors".

The military reservists, under control of the Federal Government, and the National Guard, under state control until activated for active service, are our nations fighting-force-in-waiting. They are spending their weekends preparing to serve our country if called upon. Literally hundreds (the exact number is classified) of Katy area young men and women periodically train to, if necessary, fight to defend our country, or protect us in case of a national disaster. In some cases, they have already been separated from civilian life and professions and are either on active duty or preparing to be activated.

Leaving Home

One local Naval Reservist in particular is heeding the call. Steve Flemming, 21, just a few short weeks ago was an employee of the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center. Now, he is HM3 Steve Flemming, and he will soon be leaving his wife of just a year, Lauren, and his baby girl, Avery, born in September. He will be on his way early in 2008 to Iraq, where he will serve on the front lines as a Navy Hospital Corpsman, attached to the ground forces of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Flemming is a 2004 graduate of Cinco Ranch High School, where he and his wife were childhood sweethearts. While he will miss his young family, Flemming said his reserve duty has led him to what he hopes is his future career. "I want to go to medical school," he said. "And I want to make the Navy my career." He had no interest in medicine until he started serving in the Navy Reserve two years ago. His wife and daughter will remain in the Katy area near the Park Row Post Office, while he serves.



Naval Corpsman Steve Flemming will head to Iraq in early 2008 to serve as a Navy Hospital Corpsman.



Naval Reservist Steve Flemming with his wife Lauren and new baby daughter Avery born in September.

Active Duty Calls

Another area reservist who is currently on active duty for at least the third time is S/Sgt Eric Wilson, United States Marine Corps. Called to active duty again just a few short weeks ago, Wilson, 35, had just recently been released after serving as a combat infantryman in Iraq. He was getting adjusted to his civilian employment with Car Financial when he was reactivated for a six-month tour of duty. His job is to help prepare several hundred other Marine Reservists, some of them local, for active duty in Iraq.

Sgt. Wilson has spent 12 years in the Marine Corps Reserve. "I have no regrets," Wilson said of being recalled

to active duty. "I am proud of my service and, like all Marines, proud of the Corps. I will be a Marine the rest of my life," he proclaimed. "I am a highly trained infantryman," the sergeant said. "And, I will go when and where I am called upon to serve. That's what Marines do," he commented.

For his service in Iraq, Wilson has received the Navy Unit Commendation, the Naval Achievement Medal, the War on Terrorism and Expeditionary Medals, as well as the Iraq Campaign medal. Wilson is the father of an 8-year-old daughter, Brooke. He does not expect to get back to being a civilian again until after the start of the new year.



Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson off duty

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Katy Weekend Warriors Marine Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson and Lcpl Marcus Payton with Navy Corpsman Steve Flemming.



Army Reservist Sgt. Bill Jackson with his family

Committed to His Country

S/Sgt. William D. Jackson has spent his entire life around the Army. First as an Army "brat" (his father was a soldier), then in the Regular Army, and currently a member of the National Guard. The 47-year old Katy area resident has most recently been on active duty in Iraq with the Texas National Guard when it was activated.



Sergeant Jackson in Street Clothes

As a member of the Texas National Guard, Jackson was called to active duty by the state twice during the month of September of this year. He was on Hurricane Watch on the Texas Coast. National Guardsmen may be called to active duty by both the federal and state governments. Jackson married a soldier. He met and married his wife, Carlene, while both were on active duty with the army. They have two daughters, Ashley, 19, and Heather, 14. The long-time soldier says he has considered it an honor to serve his country as a "weekend warrior." "I have no regrets on the disruption of my civilian employment," he commented.



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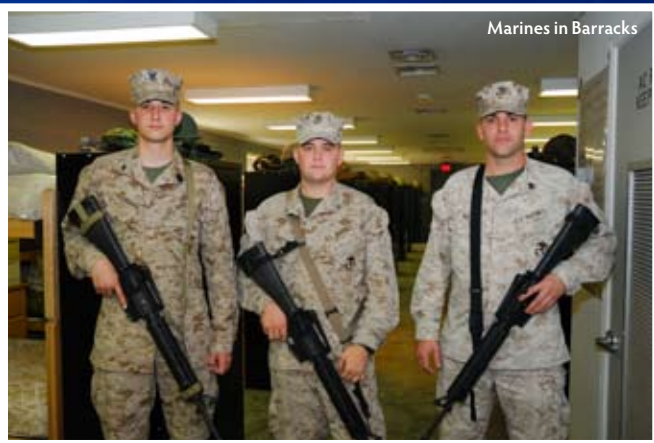
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Sgt. Jackson taking required Physical Training Test to stay active in reserves.



"I have very much enjoyed my commitment to the military. Jackson has won five Army Commendation Medals, plus many other decorations during his years of service. These three men are typical of the many Katy men and women who serve as weekend warriors. As can be seen, they are always subject to being ordered to leave home and family and be sent many miles away, and sometimes

Marines in Barracks



placed in great danger. As was pointed out by one reservist, "We are volunteers. When we volunteered, we were well aware of what could happen. We went into it with our eyes open." ★

Lee Butler is a former news reporter in Houston and throughout the country, a veteran of the Marine Corps, and the father of five sons. He is retired and lives in the Katy area.

Staff Sgt. Wilson shows us how he spends some down time while on duty - "I will go when and where I am called upon to serve. That's what Marines do."



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