

SGT Sarah Haskins



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Unit: 4th Space Company, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

Job: 35S – Signals Analyst

Education: Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts – Community College Allegheny County; pursuing Bachelor's Degree in Criminology – Colorado State University.

Hometown: Howards Grove, Wis.

SGT PARSONS

Unit: Echo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, Okinawa, Japan

Job: 25S – Satellite Network Controller

Education: 32 semester hours – University of Maryland University College – Asia.

Hometown: Columbia, S.C.

A member of the Fort Lee team (center) directs competitors to a laptop for instructions on their next event. *Photos by Dottie White, USASMDC/ARSTRAT*



SGT Travis Parsons



USASMDC/ARSTRAT NCOS

BRING THEIR BEST TO DA

By Dottie White, USASMDC/ARSTRAT

FORT LEE, Va. – Two of U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command's Warriors were among 24 who competed in the Department of the Army's Best Warrior Competition here Sept. 28 through Oct. 3.

The event, in its eighth year, pitted top noncommissioned officers and Soldiers from 12 commands against each other in the quest for the titles of Department of the Army Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year.

SGT Sarah Haskins, a Signals Analyst with 4th Space Company, 1st Space Battalion out of Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., represented USASMDC/ARSTRAT as Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

SGT Travis Parsons, a Satellite Network Controller from Echo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion in Okinawa, Japan, competed as the command's Soldier of the Year.



Competitors march to their next event during the 2009 Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition at Fort Lee, Va.

Haskins, the only female Noncommissioned Officer competing, said, “I decided to participate because [USA]SMDC has never won the competition before, and I thought I would give it my best try to be the first.

“I enjoyed showing that I knew how to do all the skills and tasks required of me and proving that I can do anything any other Soldier can do,” she said.

The week began with the Command Sergeants Major Board appearance. The Warriors were expected to have command of their appearance and knowledge of the Army. Each competitor faced the board individually and was required to answer a variety of questions related to the Army.

The following day included distribution of equipment and safety briefings. Warriors had an opportunity to check over their equipment and make sure they had everything they needed for the week. Haskins found the issued equipment to be one of the most challenging parts of the competition.

“The gear that I was given was too large for me and therefore very heavy,” she said. “My challenge was supporting all that weight for 14-hour days if not longer. It was very challenging, but I was able to do it.”

Early the next morning, the competition kicked off with an Army Physical Fitness Test consisting of sit-ups, pushups and a two-mile run. Both Haskins and Parsons did exceptionally well on this portion of the competition.

The APFT was followed by a written exam. Later, the competitors gathered for the daytime urban orienteering course. The Soldiers were required to navigate on foot to various points of Fort Lee and were faced with resolving scenarios such as hostage situations. That evening, they completed the nighttime urban orienteering course.

Day four consisted of Warrior tasks, battle drills and range qualifications. The competitors were required to work through battlefield scenarios including: Individual Conduct and the Laws of War; Combat First Aid and Unexploded Ordnance.

Competitors were also required to fire the M4 rifle, the basic weapon of today’s Warrior, at a set number of targets under timed conditions during day and night operations.

After an exhausting week for the competitors, the final day arrived. Another early morning after little sleep began with the mystery event. This event was designed to see how well the Warriors could think on their feet while under physical and mental stress.

Soldiers dealt with emergency trauma, hostage rescue, uniform inspection, a humvee rollover and a combatives tournament to finish the competition.

Today’s Soldiers must be versed in a variety of Warrior tasks outside of their primary military occupational skill. “Out of the 24 competitors, there were 19 different occupational specialties that were represented,” said Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston. Haskins and Parsons both represented USASMDC/ARSTRAT with true class, courage and integrity throughout the week.

Haskins gave credit to her sponsor SSG Derrick Gibson. “I couldn’t have done it as well without my sponsor and mentor Staff Sergeant Gibson. Most things I learned about being a good noncommissioned officer, I learned from him. He really helped me out when I needed it and prepared me very well for the competition.”

At the end of the weeklong competition, SFC Aaron Beckman, U.S. Army Europe, was named the 2009 Department of the Army Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, and SPC Clancy Henderson from U.S. Army Forces Command won the 2009 Army Soldier of the Year.

“What I want to say about all the Warriors is that I am very, very proud of all of them,” said Preston. “They are all winners. Now when they go back, I want them to be the subject matter experts in their units and organizations and pass all the things that they have learned on to the Soldiers who work for them.”