

## The University of Wyoming's Mounted Color Guard

Almost a year in the making, this Saturday 2 October 1999, at the football game between Wyoming and Idaho State at War Memorial Stadium, the University of Wyoming's Mounted Color Guard will make their inaugural performance. The idea for a mounted color guard originated with University of Wyoming Army ROTC cadets David Kenney and Todd Wise. Both students recognized the strong historical ties between the U.S. Army in the late 1800's and the state of Wyoming.

During the late 1800's infantry and cavalry units were stationed all across the Territory of Wyoming performing several very important missions. These missions included protecting the settlers moving west over the Oregon and Overland Trails, protecting prospectors over the Bozeman Trail, and protecting the Union Pacific Railroad as it moved through the territory. In addition to those missions, the Army units stationed here built and repaired telegraph lines, protected the U.S. Mail, and attempted to control the "hostiles" in the territory. The successful completion of all these missions by the U.S. Army helped the Territory of Wyoming earn statehood in 1890. One of these forts from this era is Fort Sanders, which is located just south of Laramie on Highway 287. Fort Sanders was established in 1866 and was abandoned in 1882. Over the years, units from the Second and Third Cavalry Regiment were stationed there. In December of 1873 the fort reached its largest size totaling 576 soldiers.

The uniforms and equipment that are used by the mounted color guard are on loan from Ft. Laramie National Historic Site. Mr. Rex Norman, of the National Park Service at Ft. Laramie loaned the cadets the circa 1870's equipment including the cavalry uniforms, boots, caps, 45/70 Carbines, and McClellan saddles. The famous McClellan saddle was invented by General George B. McClellan in 1856 and later adopted by the U.S. Army and was used by the cavalry units until 1941. General McClellan a brilliant organizer and administrator, suffered from what President Lincoln called "the slows" and was relieved of command of the Army of the Potomac by the president in November 1862 after failing to destroy General Lee at the battle of Antietam.

The technical advisor and trainer for mounted color guard is Mr. Walt Reuland, an author and expert on the U.S. Cavalry in the late 1800's.

Future plans for the University of Wyoming's Mounted Color Guard include appearances at the homecoming parade and game, the Border War game against CSU, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Veteran's Celebration in Laramie on 11-13 November 1999. The unit also hopes to perform in Frontier Days next summer. To keep this unit alive and part of the proud tradition of the university we need your help. If you would like to be a sponsor of the Mounted Color Guard, please call Captain Brian Bowen at 766-3390/3391.

Historical Note: UW does have another strong link with the U.S. Cavalry. Captain Charles Varnum was the head of the School of Military Instruction at the University of Wyoming from 1895-1898. Ironically, he was also the Chief of Scouts for Col. George Armstrong Custer on 25 June 1876 at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. He was wounded twice in both legs during the battle on Reno-Benteen Hill. In 1890, he was awarded the Medal of Honor based on his actions at the Battle of Wounded Knee.