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## **Fred Rosenbaum, again**

**By Mike Francis, The Oregonian**

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I wrote a brief essay for our editorial page today on the Fred Rosenbaum Hangar dedication, and on the mobilization of the 14 soldiers of A-641.

Fred Rosenbaum's long life of honor

Fred Rosenbaum left the hospital Saturday and went to the Portland Air Base, where he stood with governors, generals, soldiers and their families gathered to honor his long life of duty, as well as the 16 Oregon National Guard soldiers who are headed to Iraq to do theirs. The 81-year-old Rosenbaum, whose doctors released him for five hours before ordering him back to the hospital, rose to give a short speech that illustrated why the National Guard was naming the aircraft hangar after him.

He spoke in a weak voice that many of the hundreds in the audience strained to hear. Only once did it ring out, clearly and strongly, when he explained why he lied about his age to join the National Guard at age 16. "I wanted to get revenge for the fact that half my family was killed in concentration camps," he declared. "I wanted to get my hands on an M-1 rifle."

Among the people listening Saturday -- in addition to such notables as former Gov. Vic Atiyeh, Supreme Court Justice Wally Carson, Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Adjutant General Raymond F. Rees and former regional FBI director Robert Jordan -- were 14 members of the National Guard's A Company of the 641st Aviation Battalion. Their next stop is Iraq, where they will fly and maintain the ungainly C-23 Sherpa aircraft that ferry troops and cargo around the country. Perhaps during lulls in the action in Iraq, they will cast their minds back to the sunny afternoon at the Portland Air Base, when a refugee from the Holocaust explained why he was determined to serve his adopted country of America.

And serve it he surely did. After escaping Nazi storm troopers in his hometown of Vienna, Austria, he sheltered in England and eventually relocated with his family in America. He didn't see much action in World War II, when he was stationed in the Philippines, but when he came home, he embarked on a long and distinguished career. For years, he was the public face of the Oregon Air National Guard, retiring with the rank of brigadier general. He was chairman of Portland's Housing Authority. He was a trustee at Reed College. He was president of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. The camp for disadvantaged youth he started at Camp Rilea continues to this day, except now it's called Camp Rosenbaum. He has been honored by groups as diverse as B'nai B'rith, the Department of Defense, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the state of Oregon, the Veterans Administration and the World Arts Foundation. He still advocates passionately for better care for veterans and for at-risk children.

Now battling cancer, he is surrounded by a loving family and affectionate friends. He expresses appreciation for those who shower him with tributes, marveling, as he did Saturday, "Who knew I would find heaven on earth in America?"

When those 14 soldiers return from Iraq, their home facility will be the Fred Rosenbaum Hangar at the Portland Air Base. They will see his name on the plaque that was unveiled Saturday and perhaps they will remember that he told them they live in the greatest country in the world.

-- *Mike Francis*

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