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Rosenbaum Hangar / A-641 mobilization

By Mike Francis, The Oregonian

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Saturday was a good day at the Portland Air National Guard Base, where families and guests honored a terrific person, Fred Rosenbaum, a Holocaust escapee, WWII veteran and retired Brigadier General of the Air National Guard. At the same time that Gov. Vic Atiyeh, Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Supreme Court Justice Wally Carson, TAG R. Fred Rees and others paid tribute to Rosenbaum, they also honored the 14 soldiers who are heading to Iraq to fly Sherpas for in-country transportation. It was a fascinating way to draw a line between generations of military men and made for a moving day.

Gen. Rosenbaum told his story and if you've never heard it, it's an amazing one. When he was a 12-year-old schoolboy in Austria, he and his Jewish classmates were herded into a basement room to await the Nazi storm troopers. But before they came, he scrambled out of a raised window and ran down the street. He never went back. His family sent him off to England, which welcomed hundreds of children as part of Europe's Kinder Transport program. Eventually he and his parents were reunited. When WWII came, he lied about his age and joined the National Guard at 16. "I wanted to get revenge for the fact that half my family was killed in concentration camps," he said Saturday. "I wanted my hands on an M-1 rifle."

Ultimately, he was sent to the Philippines, despite his fluency in German. After the war, he came home to Oregon and embarked on a remarkable career as a philanthropist and activist. He headed Portland's Housing Authority. He launched a summertime kids' camp at Camp Rilea for urban kids who never get outdoors experiences. (The camp is now known as Camp Rosenbaum.) And now, even in retirement, he is a tireless supporter of veterans and children. It's nice to know that the former 939th hangar will now be known as the Rosenbaum Hangar.

A Company of the 641st Aviation Regiment will include 14 Oregonians under the command of MAJ David Doran. He, along with MSG Scott McCoy, SGT Jed Ball, SSG Chris Brown, SSG Javier Ingles, CW3 Mike Jolma, CW4 Dan McCarron, 1LT Adam McCarthy, SFC Marcus Merrick, SGT Alesandair Miner, CW2 Shaun Lazier, SGT Amit Ranadey, SGT Anthony Rhoden and SGT Jeremiah Williams will fly troops and cargo around Iraq in those ungainly C-23 Sherpas. As Gov. Kulongoski put it Saturday, "Complete the mission. Take care of each other. And always remember Oregon misses you."

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