

Award-winning screenwriter visits post on book tour

By Don Kramer
Northwest Guardian

A line of fans awaiting book inscriptions May 4 in the Fort Lewis Post Exchange curled from a small desk in front of cosmetics all the way to sporting goods. More than 300 people came to chat with Mark Bowden and have him sign a book. Many brought multiple copies of one, others brought all of his three books.

Bowden is an author and journalist in demand among military crowds ever since he helped write the screenplay for an adaptation of his book, "Black Hawk Down," an Oscar-winning movie directed by Ridley Scott.

The author said since he was a student at Loyola College in Baltimore, writing for a living was all he ever wanted to do.

Born in St. Louis, Bowden's family eventually settled in Maryland. After earning a bachelor's degree in English literature, he was hired by the Baltimore News American. After six years, he moved to the Philadelphia Enquirer, which he called "the first big break in my life."

He published "Black Hawk Down" in 1999, after which in 2001 he wrote "Kill-

ing Pablo" about the pursuit of drug lord Pablo Escobar, and last year, "Guests of the Ayatollah."

Exchange manager Patrick McGhee said the number of patrons there to see Bowden was about six times the normal crowd at surrounding book stores, but disappointing by PX standards. He said the Friday afternoon time slot and the 10,000 Soldiers deployed from post had a negative effect on turn out. Despite deployments, the signing brought in enthusiastic customers.

Bowden was on tour promoting the paperback release of "Guests of the Ayatollah," a comprehensive history of the Iranian hostage crisis that paralyzed the country and President Jimmy Carter for his final 444 days in office. Though the book has received national acclaim, most Fort Lewis customers wanted to talk about "Black Hawk Down."

A congenial Bowden listened to former Rangers' stories, wives of 4th Squadron, 160th Aviation Regiment pilots, whose predecessors flew into Mogadishu, Somalia, and the chaos he described in "Black Hawk Down."

The author said he had little military background, but ended his research for the book with healthy respect border-

ing on reverence for the Rangers, Delta Force Soldiers, their pilots and Soldiers who fought the Battle of Mogadishu.

"I think that anyone who has had a chance to meet them and studied what they've done can't help but be impressed with what they do," Bowden said.

He flinched at a general attitude in the media that Somalia was a military defeat for the United States in view of the accomplishments and sacrifices of American Soldiers.

"The Battle of Mogadishu was a success in terms of what the task force Rangers set out to do," he said. "They accomplished their mission against tremendous odds and overcame great difficulty to do it. I think it's just a damned shame that people remember it as a failure when it wasn't. The Rangers were successful and very courageous in the process."

With American Soldiers engaged in Iraq, Bowden stayed close to the story. He published an article in May's "Atlantic Monthly" called "The Ploy" about the U.S. unit that tracked and brought down the Jordanian butcher who rose to the head of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

"Today's Soldiers are as brave as



Don Kramer

Author Mark Bowden signs copies of his book at the Fort Lewis Post Exchange.

American Soldiers have ever been," he said, "better trained — a remarkable generation of young people who are being asked to do a lot more than any of us will be asked to do. I hope that the country will appreciate it, not just now but for the rest of their lives. I think



Barbara L. Sellers

Sgt. 1st Class Bonnie Holtz, left, and Staff Sgt. Angela Spicer, both of MAMC, talk about cakes with Fort Lewis Commissary bakery manager Kim White.

Post commissary a repeat winner

By Barbara L. Sellers
Northwest Guardian

The Fort Lewis commissary is apparently on a roll.

They had already won the Defense Commissary Agency Director's Award for best superstore in 2005, and now they won it again for 2006.

Gene Lantz, store director, received the three-foot tall trophy April 24, during DeCA's 2007 Conference and Training Event in Richmond, Va.

"I am just the guy who received the trophy, but we got this award because of teamwork," Lantz said. "We have many great teams of people working at the commissary, and we have a great management staff."

The 263 commissaries worldwide come under one of five categories, and each category has one winner.

As the fourth-largest commissary in the world, with 43,000 square feet of sales space, the Fort Lewis store competes in the best superstore category. The U.S. military's largest commissary, with

126,000 square feet, opened April 20 at Naval Base San Diego.

The other four winning commissaries were:

- Marine Corps Air Station, New River, N.C. — Bill Nichols Award for the best large commissary in the United States;
- Rock Island Arsenal, Ill. — Richard M. Paget Award for the best small commissary in the United States;
- Camp Humphreys, South Korea — Dan Daniel Award for the best large commissary overseas;
- Izmir Air Station, Turkey — L. Mendel Rivers Award for the best small commissary overseas.

According to a DeCA news release, the awards are named in honor of legislators who protected the commissary benefit and championed quality-of-life issues for the military and their families.

Likewise, the 135 DeCA employees at the Fort Lewis store strive to maintain excellence in commissary benefits for patrons.

"We have many contract stocking employees, too, and they all do their jobs

extremely well," Lantz said. "They are the ones who make our store really tough to beat. Having great teamwork is what it takes for the whole store to operate successfully."

Regardless if people stock shelves, receive goods, do paperwork, or work on accountability, they all have to do their jobs right, because the judges check to ensure proper procedures are followed in all of those areas.

Four criteria the judges focus on most are accountability, unit cost, customer service surveys and sales.

Following a couple major deployments and 1st Brigade's move to Germany, sales actually went down at the Fort Lewis store, from more than \$72 million in 2005 to about \$70 million in 2006.

"The reason that didn't hurt us is because we were rated extremely high in everything else," Lantz said. "We were rated very high in accountability, and we had an excellent inventory. Plus, we always provide outstanding customer service."

Although quality is important, it

doesn't mean much without good customer service, he said.

Initially, the store won best superstore in the West. Then it competed with the best superstore in the East (Scott Air Force Base, Ill.) to win the overall Director's Award for best superstore.

"Commissary personnel work hard around the clock and throughout the world to provide service to our customers — the men and women working for the best military in the world," said Patrick Nixon, DeCA director and chief executive officer, in an April 26 news release. "Each of the winning commissaries stood out among the rest for their customer service, work environment for employees and sustained savings for our customers."

According to the DeCA Web site, authorized patrons purchase items at cost, plus a 5-percent surcharge, and shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent.

"This year's winning stores represent the best of the best, and I salute them for a job well done," Nixon said.

New respite care program available to Fort Lewis families

By Barbara L. Sellers
Northwest Guardian

A new Respite Care Program now available at Fort Lewis could provide some needed relief.

Qualified families can receive some free respite care, so the primary care givers can take a break. For each child or adult family member enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program, the family will get 40 hours of free respite care per month.

"This is the first time anything like this is being offered at Fort Lewis," said Mary Herrera, EFMP manager, Army Community Services.

Under the new program, respite care providers receive \$15 an hour or more, depending on how many children or adults are receiving care, and what kind of credentials the caregiver is required to have.

Usually, parents of exceptional family members are able to provide the majority of the training that a respite care provider needs, and no other special training is required. Therefore, most providers will receive \$15 to \$20 per hour, she said.

In rare cases, however, where a licensed

practical nurse might be required, payment would be higher.

"If a family is already using an agency that pays \$20 per hour, we will match what that agency pays," she said. "The program is set up to make it as easy as possible for EFMP families to get the care they need."

To participate in the program, however, there are some specific requirements. Families must have at least one child or adult family member enrolled in EFMP. Additionally, they must be able to show that the exceptional family member has at least one of the following:

- Little or no age appropriate self-help skills;
- Severe, continuous seizure activity;
- Ambulation with neurological impairment that requires assistance with activities of daily living;
- Tube feeding;
- Tracheotomy with frequent suctioning;
- Apnea monitoring during hours of sleep;
- Inability to control behavior with safety issues requiring constant supervision;
- A current individualized education

program;

• A current individualized Family Service Plan.

Although staff members cannot refer, recommend or endorse specific respite providers for the EFMP families who qualify for the program, they could help in other ways, like letting them know about various resources they could use to conduct their search.

"It's up to each family to decide who will provide the kind of care they need," Herrera said. "They can use somebody they already know and feel comfortable with, or they can go through an agency."

One especially good thing about the program is that the families are not limited to using just one provider.

"That's good because a specific provider might not always be available," said Nancy Dozier, EFMP coordinator. "Some providers might be available during the weekdays, while others might be available during the weekends or evenings."

The program does, however, have a few drawbacks.

"It has been set up for families of the active-duty Soldiers only, but does not include the Reserves or National Guard," Dozier said.

Additionally, the program has been funded for fiscal year 2007 only, so it will not be available after Oct. 1, unless it gets extended.

"We would love to see the Respite Care Program be extended because we want to support the families," Herrera said. "When we support the families, we support the Soldiers, and this is definitely a program where everybody wins — the parents benefit, the Soldiers benefit and even the special needs members receiving care benefit."

As it stands now, the EFMP families who have already been notified are just anxious to take whatever relief they can get, Dozier said.

Application forms are available at the EFMP office in Waller Hall. Families with a child or adult who has a chronic medical condition or physical challenge that requires special care or special educational services would most likely be qualified to apply.

"The forms are very simple to fill out, and the program involves very minimal paperwork," Herrera said.

Those who believe they might qualify for the program should call Herrera at 967-9704, or Dozier at 967-9705.

the young people today who are serving all over the world are going to be the leaders of this country in the future and they'll have a better understanding of the world and how it works. They're becoming internationalists."

The nature of the books he writes requires international travel to research. At 55, Bowden doesn't anticipate slowing down for at least 10 years. His next project, he said, will be a change of pace. He hopes to publish a historical novel in two or three years, but refused to elaborate.

Meanwhile, Bowden said the country appears condemned to relearn the lessons of the Somalia episode.

"I hope we learned that before you deploy American forces on a mission, you need to think through the importance of that mission and how much you're willing to hazard for it, because in this case, the Clinton administration didn't do that," Bowden said. "So they ended up throwing a lot of good men out to accomplish a very difficult mission, which they accomplished, lost a good number of men and then decide it wasn't really worth the effort. It doesn't do honor to the people who risked their lives."

Post program honored for 'outstanding achievement'

By Rachel Young
Northwest Guardian

The Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation presented the 2007 Historic Preservation Officer's Award for outstanding achievement in historic education to Fort Lewis Cultural Resources Program for the Fort Lewis Division Area Barracks multimedia CD May 8 in Olympia.

For a product to win such an award, "it has to demonstrate exemplary effort in interpreting history," said Russell Holter, awards coordinator for the State Historic Preservation Office. "We try to acknowledge the best efforts put forth in the spirit of preserving our state history."

The CD-ROM, fully titled "Fort Lewis Division Area Barracks: Meeting the Challenges of the Cold War Era," contains a wide array of information in several media depicting life on Fort Lewis in the 1950s. The CD includes music, news articles, films, photos, and interviews with people like Lee Burnett, who served as Fort Lewis Real Property Officer from 1958 to 2005 and Col. Thomas Morgan, whose unit was housed in the division area from 1959 to 1961.

"The Fort Lewis Division Area Barracks is practically a self-contained curriculum," Holter said. "We were very pleased with just how much information there was in that CD and the use of a variety of multimedia to be able to give people an example of what life was like... when (the division area barracks) were first constructed."

The unique CD-ROM project came about as part of the Cultural Resources Program's everyday responsibilities. The program is part of the environmental division of Fort Lewis Public Works. One of the program's tasks is managing historic buildings and structures on Fort Lewis.

"All Federal agencies have a responsibility under the National Historic Preservation Act to identify, evaluate and document historic buildings and structures," said Bret Ruby, Ph.D., cultural resource manager for Fort Lewis Public Works. "This effort was really part of that larger responsibility to identify historic properties."

Ruby began studying the barracks to determine their historic significance because they may not be there much longer. The barracks in the division area require major changes to meet quality-of-life standards for today's Army because they were built for a different era of Soldiers, Ruby said. For that reason, the buildings may eventually be torn down or significantly altered.

Normally, this kind of study results in a technical report that sits on a shelf and collects dust, Ruby said. But the staff of the cultural resources program wanted to design a more innovative product. They had in mind something that "would be interesting to a more general audience," Ruby said.

Beginning in 2005, Ruby and the rest of the staff worked with EDAW, Inc. and Sparkworks Media to create a product that would transport people back in time and give the flavor and feel of the Cold War era to people of all ages, said Dale Sadler, assistant cultural resources manager.

Upon final approval of the CD-ROM, Ruby hopes to distribute the final product to schools and libraries to give people an opportunity to explore the history of the division area barracks and the Army at Fort Lewis during the Cold War era. "We know a lot about how Soldiers lived in World War II, but this period is not very well documented," said Duane Denfeld, architectural historian for the environmental division of Public Works. "This documents life in that period."

For more information on "Fort Lewis Division Area Barracks: Meeting the Challenges of the Cold War Era," e-mail bret.ruby@us.army.mil.