

Abraham-Lincoln wins lottery

By Sgt. Betty Dodd-Rogers, 372nd MPAD

Claude Abraham was born in Ghana, Africa, in 1974, and lived in the small town of Tema, working as a quality control officer in the local flour mill. After graduating from college, he grew tired of his job and wanted to go to America, so he entered the visa lottery.

The Diversity Visa Lottery Program is a congressionally mandated program that offers up to 55,000

diversity visas annually. The lottery winners are randomly selected from a pool of candidates from countries with low immigration rates to the United States who meet strict eligibility requirements.

Although he did not win on the first or second try, Abraham was determined to get to America. He entered a third time and finally won. As part of the conditions to enter the lottery, an applicant must meet certain educational or work experience requirements; Abraham met both, but he said that he could not have done this by himself – that God had truly blessed him.

When he first arrived in the U.S., Abraham stayed with friends in Pennsylvania. Unable to find work, this resourceful, young man broadened his search and found work in Boston, Mass., as a banquet supervisor at a local hotel.

The hotel director was over-working the employees and treating them unfairly, frequently extending the employees' eight-hour shifts to twelve hours. Some workers quit, but most could not. A group of employees complained to the union; they wanted to work the hours they were promised and receive the benefits they deserved. During the tug of war with the union, Abraham, then 36, decided to join the Army and departed for Basic Training Jan. 5, 2009.

"Those days were terrible," he said with a heavy accent. "On the first day I could only do five sit-ups."

Abraham knew he had to stay motivated to make it through training. Most of the other Soldiers were younger than he and could do the required push-ups, sit-ups and run. He would not let this defeat him; he became even more determined to pass the Army Physical Fitness Test. On the last APFT before Basic Training graduation, Abraham did more than 60 push-ups and sit-ups. He views his performance as one of the biggest accomplishments of his life.

When Abraham went back to work in the Boston hotel, he used his motivation, new-found courage, and support of his fellow workers to fight the director for employee rights and file a grievance against him. Because of his brave actions, employees nicknamed him "Abraham Lincoln."

Abraham's parents moved from Ghana to Europe several years ago, and at one time, he was thinking of joining them there. His father had encouraged this idea because his son did not know anyone in the U.S., but Abraham told him he would make friends. In September 2010, beside 5,000 other people at Fenway Park in Boston, Claude Abraham was sworn in as an American citizen. At that time, he officially changed his name to Claude Abraham-Lincoln.

Spc. Claude Abraham-Lincoln is currently a transportation management coordinator assigned to the 822nd Movement Control Team in Boston, Mass. Now he knows a lot of people who not only live in America, but who also fight for her freedom. And not only does Abraham-Lincoln know them – they have become part of his family.



The 89th Sustainment Brigade uses a Deployable Rapid Assembly Shelter during CSTX 91 11-01.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Betty Dodd-Rogers

Shelter above the rest

By Sgt. Betty Dodd-Rogers, 372nd MPAD

Often, the fielding of new equipment can be a trying, stressful time for a unit and its Soldiers. For the 89th Sustainment Brigade on FOB Schoonover at CSTX 91 11-01, however, the adjustment to their new fielding has been quite easy. The 89th is the only unit participating in the exercise that utilizes the Deployable Rapid Assembly Shelter. This DRASH is an easily erected tent system that is equipped with generators, light sets, internal climate control systems, cutting-edge audiovisual displays, communications technology and its own mobility platform.

Col. Mikel Burrows, commander of the 89th Sustainment Brigade in Wichita, Kan., said there is no comparison to their old tent system. The unit can now run 24-hour operations easily and can configure the DRASH any way it wants.

The beauty of this shelter system is certainly its versatility; the numerous, small pieces can be joined together in a variety of ways, or they can remain separate, based on the needs of the mission. For this mission, the brigade chose to provide every staff section with its own wing; one wing was also designated as a briefing area, preventing the typical interruption of ongoing operations during daily meetings.

Upon receipt of the DRASH system last year, the 89th went through Army Battle Command Training net fielding to learn how to assemble and maintain the tents during annual training. The Army even sent contractors to the unit to train the Soldiers, who learned everything from driving the first stake to running the communications wire.

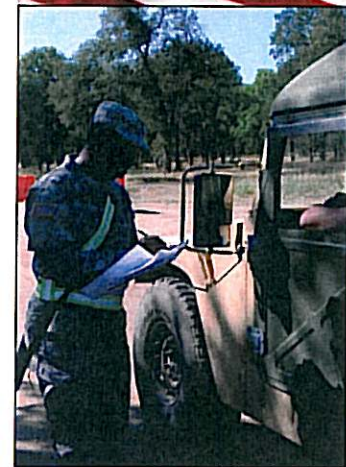
1st Sgt. Steven Kennel, the first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 89th Sustainment Brigade, said it takes at least eight people to set up a DRASH tent, but it is still a lot less intensive to assemble than a regular tent.

"The set-up for the command DRASH usually takes a couple of days, but the tear-down is usually done in one day because the Soldiers are ready to go home," Lt. Col. Clinton Williams, the operations officer for the 89th, said.

When the unit arrived at the Combat Support Training Exercise, one of the chief concerns was weapons storage. Sgt. Brian Brigman, the supply sergeant, came up with a plan. Brigman attached two medium DRASH tents together, then secured one shelter entrance to the door of the connex containing the weapons. This arrangement afforded the 24-hour weapons guards more security and comfort than guards traditionally experience in a field environment.

Each DRASH Utility Support Transport Trailer holds a generator, a heating/cooling unit for the tent system, and a storage compartment for collapsed shelters. The trailers are secured to military vehicles during movements and can traverse even rugged terrain.

The Soldiers of the 89th Sustainment Brigade are definitely content with their DRASH system, its state-of-the-art technology, and its climate-controlled environment. Shortly after their arrival at Fort Hunter Liggett, the maintenance section crafted a sign for the main tent entrance that displays their unit patch and their motto, "Above the rest." Certainly, their new shelter system meets their high standards.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Betty Dodd-Rogers

Spc. Claude Abraham-Lincoln checks paperwork at the gate on FOB Schoonover during CSTX 91 11-01 at Fort Hunter Liggett Calif., June 15.



Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.



Combat Support Training Exercise 91 11-01 13