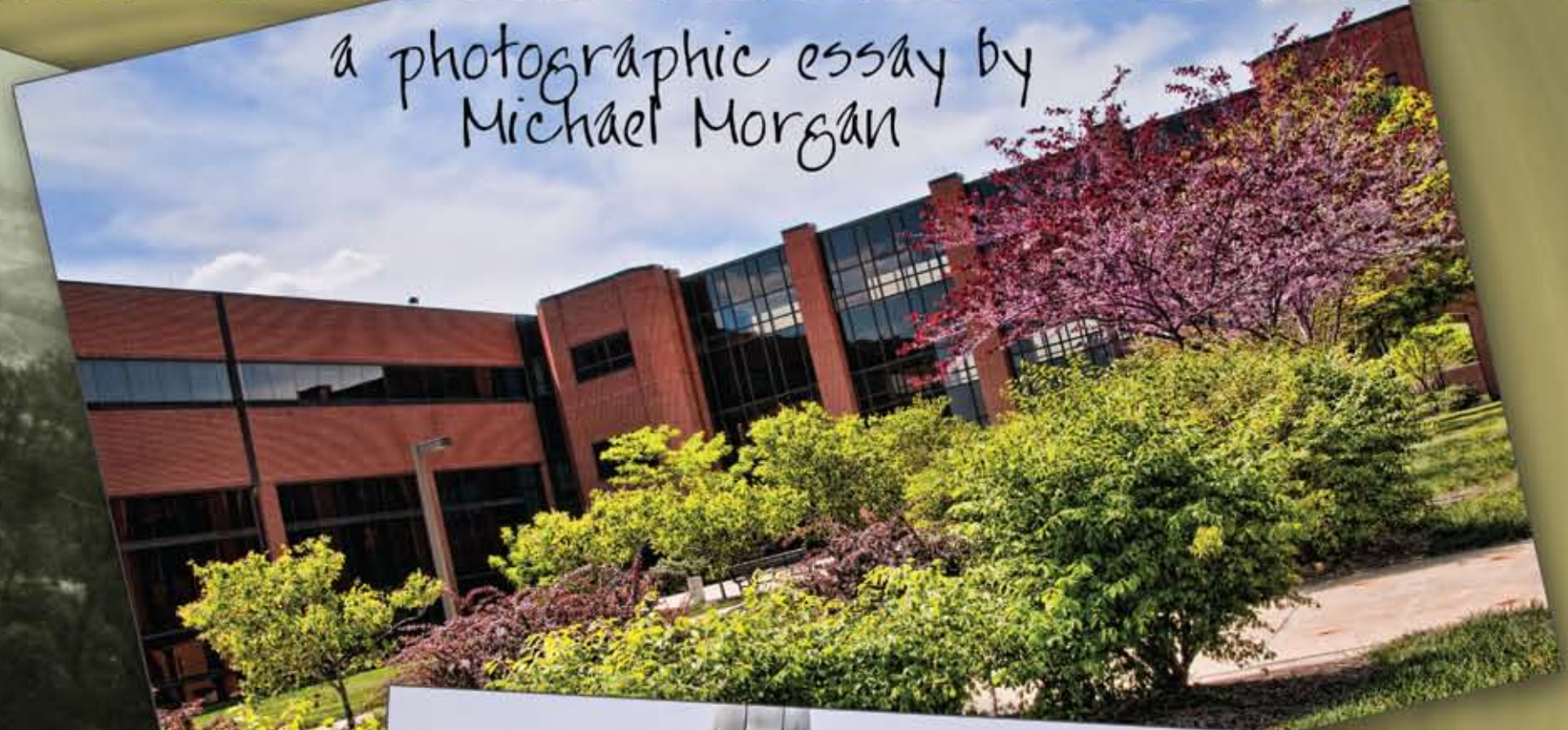
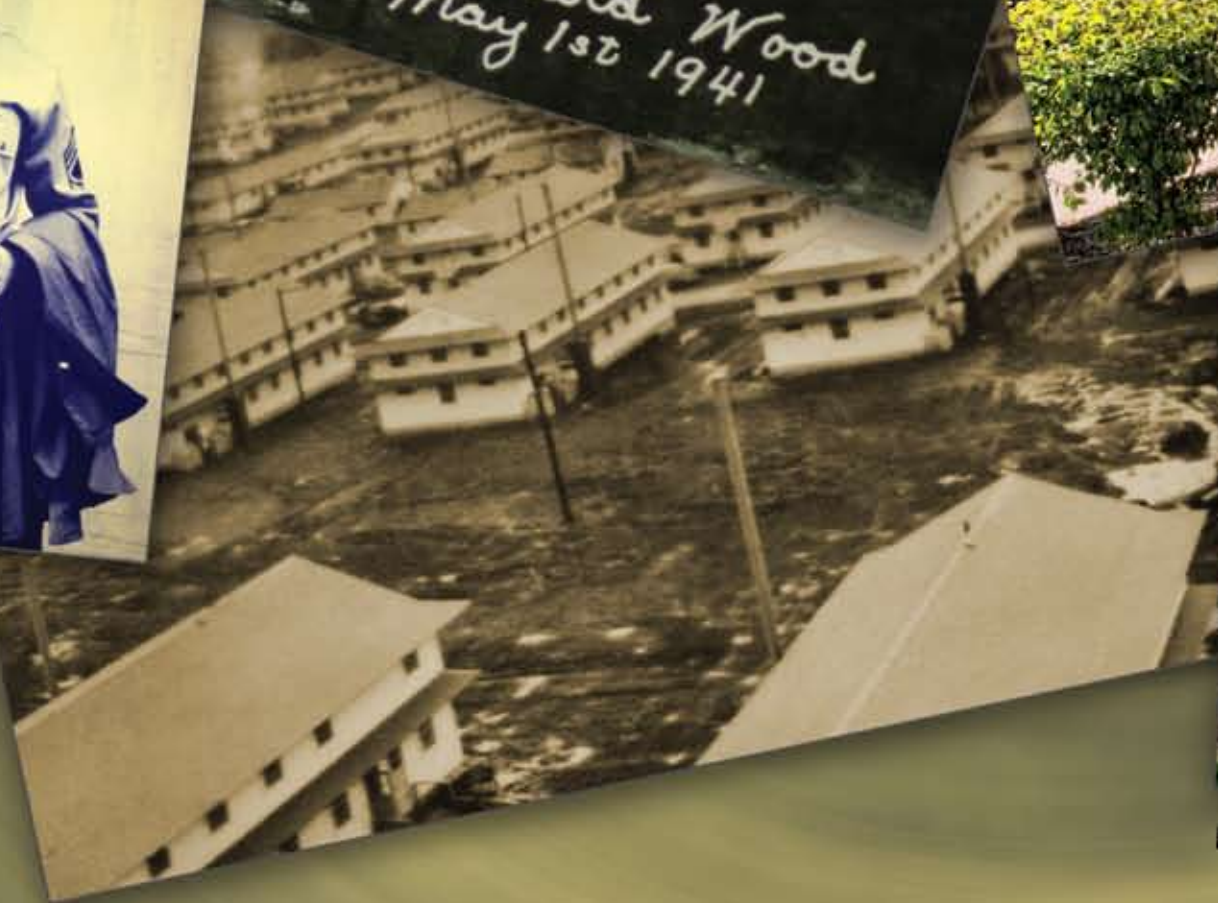


2010 CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

a photographic essay by
Michael Morgan



*Ft. Leonard Wood
May 1st 1941*



photographs by Michael Morgan

Fort Leonard Wood today is a far different place than it once was. Home to the U.S. Army's Maneuver Support Center—a joint service training installation of excellence—including the Army's Engineer School, Military Police School, Chemical School and various supporting units and organizations.

The mid-Missouri post was born as a rough-hewed camp just prior to the Second World War as the country began to expand the size of its armed forces, with a resultant need for large, open-space training areas. The rugged nature of that region of the Ozarks made construction of the post a challenge, but by mid-1941 around 1600 wooden buildings had been constructed. During the war, more than 300,000 soldiers mobilized and trained there. After the war, the post population declined significantly and soon ceased to function officially, with a small caretaker unit being assigned.

As the Korean War began, the Department of the Army announced that Fort Leonard Wood would be fully reopened to provide initial entry training primarily for engineers destined for combat overseas. The **6th Armored Division** was given the cadre training mission for the post, and as the Korean War ended, there was once again discussion of curtailing training operations such as had been done following the end of the Second World War.

However, military requirements related to the Cold War, plus concerned actions on the part of local community leaders, ultimately led to a decision to make Fort Leonard Wood a permanent training installation. In 1956, the post was designated as the U.S. Army Training Center–Engineer.

Construction on the post during the late 1950s and 1960s was massive and included modern (for that time) brick troop training complexes, family housing units, recreational, health, and morale support facilities. All this helped the post accommodate the large number of engineers who trained there during the Vietnam War era. In 1967, for example, the post trained more than 120,000 soldiers—including engineer and other military occupational specialties.



Perhaps the most significant change for Fort Leonard Wood occurred in 1985 when the decision was made by the Army to move the Army Engineer School from Fort Belvoir Virginia to Missouri. That move would combine engineer officer training which had been conducted in Virginia for decades, with enlisted engineer training that had always been accomplished at Fort Leonard Wood. Senior engineer leaders at that time saw numerous benefits of that combined training, and their vision was quickly realized.

With the move of the Engineer School, the post was once again renamed—U.S. Army Engineer Center and Fort Leonard Wood. This was a period during which many new and more modern facilities would be constructed—mainly a new Engineer School building, complete with large library, and a nearby complex of multi-story quarters to support the influx of engineer officer students.

Within a few years following the move of the Engineer School, and as a result of a DoD Base Realignment and Closure round of decisions, it was decided to move the Military Police School and Chemical School to Fort Leonard Wood, and as a result the Army's Maneuver Support Center was formed. These monumental moves created a need for a tremendous amount of new construction, similar to that which had occurred with the relocation of the Engineer School. A significant difference, however, was that many new **community** facilities were planned, designed and constructed to support the large increase in the number of families and others who would live and work at the much enlarged installation.

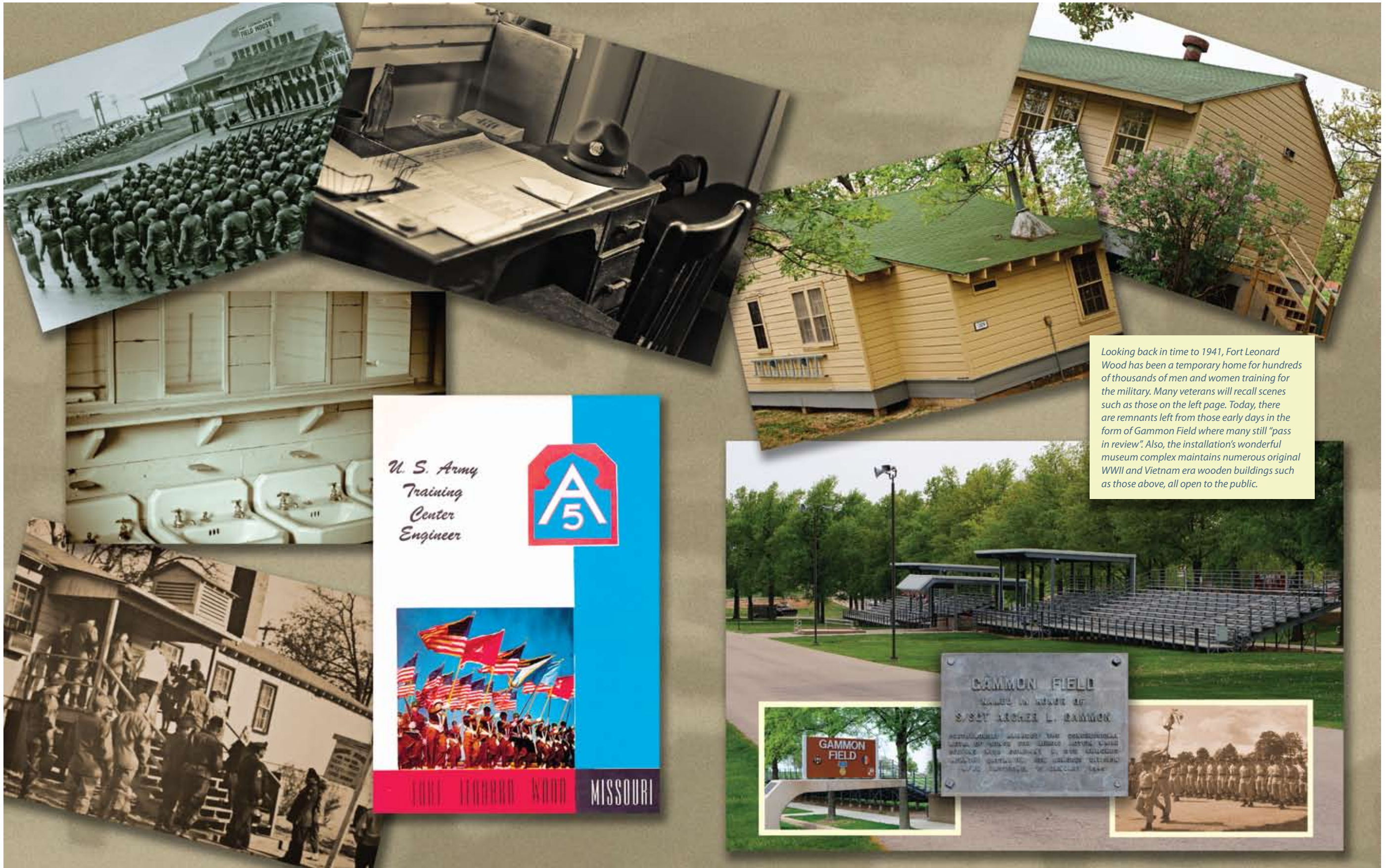
Today, Fort Leonard Wood, as well as the commercial and community regions adjacent to the post, which lies directly along well traveled I-44 passing through the heart of Missouri from points east and west, hardly looks like it once did. The following pages reflect photographically how the installation has evolved since its earliest days. Looking at the "old" versus "new" easily validates the vision and faith of hundreds of military, civilian, and elected officials who planned for and supported the growth of Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. AE

Information for portions of this historical overview were obtained from an original 2008 article, "History of Fort Leonard Wood", written by Dr. Larry Roberts, the Historian of the Army Engineer School.



*The "old" post headquarters was used as such until 1989 when the new installation HQ and Engineer School building was completed (below). Today, the MANSCEN HQ occupies that building, with newer separate but interconnected facilities for the Engineer, Military Police and Chemical Schools. Those in training come from **all** military services, and that gives the post a completely different "look" than it once had.*





Looking back in time to 1941, Fort Leonard Wood has been a temporary home for hundreds of thousands of men and women training for the military. Many veterans will recall scenes such as those on the left page. Today, there are remnants left from those early days in the form of Gammon Field where many still "pass in review". Also, the installation's wonderful museum complex maintains numerous original WWII and Vietnam era wooden buildings such as those above, all open to the public.

U. S. Army
Training
Center
Engineer



MISSOURI





The primary mission at Fort Leonard Wood has always been focused on training men and women for the military. Over the years that mission has evolved to such that today all services are represented. Housing those individuals while in training has also evolved significantly. From WWII era wooden barracks, to 1960s style multi-story brick structures, to renovations of existing structures, and most significantly to the present-day construction of multi-purpose "starship" (as they are referred to) barracks and headquarters complexes. Looking from above upon such a complex, one sees an L-shaped barracks and company headquarters building located at each corner of a square, with a large open training area in the center, complete with a somewhat cushioned red-colored running track and cushioned exercise area surfaced with composite rubber materials. Each building has a wide open area underneath, so as to facilitate outside training during inclement weather. One of the biggest changes, however, involves how single, enlisted permanent party Soldiers assigned to the installation are housed today. Only a year ago they were housed in 1980s style dormitory-type buildings located in the Specker Barracks area of the post. Today, individuals in training from other services are housed in those facilities (photo bottom right with an Air Force flag flying). The installation's enlisted permanent party now live in community neighborhood-style housing—looking more like family quarters than single Soldier housing (bottom right photo).





Facilities to house and support the Army's Engineer, Military Police and Chemical Schools are not only impressive in their design, but in function as well. Fort Leonard Wood has additional training programs with equally outstanding new facilities such as for transportation and equipment operation and repair that involve all military services. Guiding all these complex operations is the role of the Maneuver Support Center, with headquarters in the building in the bottom right photograph.



Were it not for the "military" environment, it would be hard to tell the difference between Fort Leonard Wood and any mid-size family community in America. New shopping areas are all over the installation, new and renovated family housing exists and more is planned, recreational areas for servicemen and women and their families are abundant, and medical / dental facilities are superb—including ongoing construction of a new primary care clinic adjacent to the main hospital. Anyone who served at Fort Leonard Wood even just a few years ago would be astounded at all the improvements that have been made. EXCELLENCE IS EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK! AE

