

Soldier serving in Asia touches base with home

By **SCOTT ALDIS-WILSON**

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It's ironic that Red Boultinghouse had to travel to the other side of the world to be reminded of Garden City.

Nearly 30 years since he graduated from Garden City High School and began a career in the military, first in active duty then the reserves, he said the 90- to 106-degree temperatures in his current deploy-

ment are much more like his old home in southwest Kansas than his more recent home in Tacoma, Wash.

"It's like a July night in the evening," he said.

Making a call from his current location and only allowed to specify that it is somewhere in southwest Asia, the master sergeant in the Air Force Reserves' 446th Air Evacuation Squadron talked about life in camp during the war on Iraq and

roots he still has in southwest Kansas.

As an emergency medical technician in the unit, he said, he typically flies with a nurse and a couple of medics, sometimes a doctor or specialist, to transport injured personnel to safety. In fact, he said some of the figures seen unloading U.S. POWs on national television last week were from his unit.

He's been in the area since about mid-February, he said, leaving his job as a civil-

ian emergency medical technician Feb. 12 at Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma. Though he knew his annual tour was coming up more than year prior, he was activated March 25 and could be



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in place for as long as a year.

"Actually, I was kind of prepared for it," he said.

It's a long road, in time and distance, from the city he moved to at the age of five, within a week after the Clutter murders and lived until he was 18. He said he grew up delivering The Telegram, and it was during his senior year of high school he began his medical career as an orderly at St. Catherine Hospital.

The most obvious links he still has to Garden City though are the ones he contacts with his two 15-minute "morale calls" each week — his brother and dad.

One of his younger brothers, Kevin Boultinghouse, said he was glad to get one of those calls last week.

"He sounded pretty upbeat," he said. "I'm not much of a writer, so I call Rod a lot."

Though it is a little tougher to get back to Rod on the phone, he said he still prefers it over letters.

In the meantime, he said he watches the news of the Persian

Gulf war more closely than the last one in 1991 when Rod Boultinghouse was stationed in Germany.

"Before I didn't pay as much attention as I did this time," he said. "We're pulling for them all over there. I think it's 100 percent right."

Their father, Lou Boultinghouse, said he feels the same way.

"I'm so thankful that the present administration did what they did because now we're on the backside of it," he said. "I feel like he's doing a valuable service."

Another thing he said he is thankful for is the ability to make and receive those calls to his son, something he couldn't do when he was in the Navy during World War II. Right now, he said he is planning to get his own computer next week to begin learning e mail and receiving messages from his son personally.

"I'm slowly getting organized," he said.

Rod Boultinghouse said electronic mail is something he did-

n't have the last time war came to the gulf, but it is a very welcome addition.

"E mail's made a world of changes," he said.

Rod Boultinghouse said sending messages to brothers, Monte and Craig Boultinghouse, and his sister, Michelle McMillan, in the Kansas City allows them to keep the rest of the family up to speed.

Sometimes, he said trying to get a little time on the unit computer or helping in the mail call is the best way to cope with the restrictions of living in a tent city.

"If you're not on alert for that particular day, you have to stay busy," he said.

With a little luck, he said he might be back in the U.S. by the Fourth of July, maybe even watching a NASCAR race in Kansas City, Kan., by October. In the meantime, he had a simple message for those in his old hometown.

"Tell everybody in Garden City hi, and enjoy the Best Empire Days," he said.