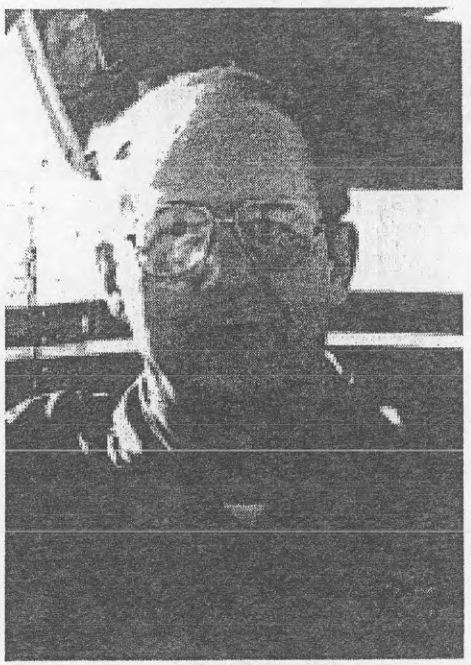
Dedication Ceremony



Kentucky Army National Guard

Colonel David F. Fleming

Hangar

Boone National Guard
Army Aviation Support Facility
May 20, 2000

COLONEL DAVID F. FLEMING

28 January 1932 - 21 September 1999

BIRD DOGS TO BLACKHAWKS

Within just a few days after Col. David Fleming officially retired on January 31st, 1988 as State Aviation Officer for the Kentucky Army National Guard, word was received from Washington that the 28-year old, twin-engine Cessna U-3B airplane, Col. Fleming's plane, was also being retired.....A fitting end to a 38-year aviation career of flying Bird-dogs to Blackhawks.

A native of Fleming County (and a descendent of its founder, Colonel John Fleming) Col. Fleming enlisted in the Kentucky Army Guard in October 1949. In 1953 he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the 149th regimental Combat Team (now the 149th Armor Brigade) where he was assigned as a platoon leader in the Heavy Mortar Company. Finally, in 1956, when the unit changed its mission to artillery, Fleming attended Army flight school and returned to the Kentucky Guard. "When I started out," Fleming recollected, "we had two airplanes, two mechanics and six pilots tucked in a back corner of a hangar in Lexington. Back then we had an L-19 and an L-17 (which was later traded for an U-6A Beaver), and in 1957 we received our first helicopter, a Bell OH-13."

"I went to helicopter flight school in 1960....it was an Air Force flight school for Army pilots at Gary Air Force Base in San Marcos, Texas.....and not long after that, the Kentucky Guard got some more OH-13's, followed by a few OH-23 Hiller's."

Shortly after Col. Fleming was appointed commander of the Army Aviation Facility in 1970, Kentucky's first UH-1 Huey landed at Frankfort. During his tenure, Kentucky Army Guard aviators flew 74,352 accident-free flying hours in a fleet of military aircraft that grew to include the U-9, T-42, UH-1B, UH-1D, UH-1H, UH-1V and finally, the first entire company of UH-60 Blackhawks to be fielded in the National Guard of the United States. When asked how the KYARNG aviation program had changed over the years, Col. Fleming replied, "It started out as a small section that provided an aerial observation platform for the ground commander....now it's evolved into the aviation brigade—the fourth combat brigade of the modern Army division. The advent of the Aviation Branch in April of 1984 really had a lot to do with that....now I think that while aviation continues its mission as a division combat element, it will also have to turn its attention to air-to-air combat in order to survive on the battlefield."

While he claimed the Bell OH-13 was "the smoothest flying aircraft we ever had," the U-3 was still known as "Colonel Fleming's plane" in the Guard aviation community, even though he admitted he felt the U-3 had some inherent flaws....."It works you hard because it is basically unstable, and anyone who's ever flown one will agree with me, but it has a pretty decent speed of 185 knots and good range...I enjoyed flying it."

And what *if* the Army had said he could keep the U-3 to fly in his retirement? "I'd take it," Fleming chuckled. "I've flown in every state of the continental United States but Maine, and I wouldn't mind taking the U-3 up there!"

Godspeed, Dave Fleming

Order of Events

Welcome and Introductions	MG John R. Groves Jr. *The Adjutant General* *Kentucky National Guard*
Invocation	Reverend Jana Hall *First Presbyterian Church*
Massing of the colors	Kentucky Army and Air National Guard Color Guard
Memorial Plaque Presentation	COL (ret.) Roger Green *Military Order of World Wars*
Remarks	MG (ret.) Richard Frymire *Adjutant General (1971-1977)* *Kentucky National Guard*
Unveiling	
Reception	