SPRINGFIELD, IL (12/26/2012)(readMedia)-- Col. Robert J. Mayberry Jr., of St. Charles, Mo., will retire from the Illinois National Guard on his 60th birthday, Jan. 2, 2013.

"It's natural for me to be in the service," said Mayberry. "My dad led the way and I appreciate what I've been able to do and where I've been placed."

Mayberry followed in a long line of family members serving in the military, but only he and his father made a career of it.

After moving every couple of years growing up with his father in the Air Force, Mayberry enlisted in the active Army in 1972 as a wheel and track mechanic and was stationed in Kitzgingen, Germany. After serving four years he returned to Illinois and started a brake and front end alignment business, where he worked until he joined the Illinois National Guard in 1982.

"He doesn't mind getting his hands dirty and doing some heavy lifting," said Col. Fred W. Allen of Delavan, Illinois Army National Guard chief of staff. "He is a common sensed, hard working, outspoken officer and because of those qualities this organization is better."

Mayberry was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1985 through the Illinois Military Academy Officer Candidate School. In 1989 he accepted a federal technician position with the Illinois National Guard surface maintenance shop and has continued to serve the maintenance community ever since.

"He is one of the most dedicated and passionate guys I have worked with in the Illinois National Guard," said Col. Eric K. Little of Springfield, deputy United States Property and Fiscal officer. "He set the standard for field maintenance shops. He equipped them to be stand-alone units that have their own property and tools that stay even during mobilization."

Having a dual-status position, Mayberry's first command position was with the 1244th

Transportation Company in Cairo. After that, he held battalion commands with the 733rd Quartermaster Battalion and the 65th Troop Command Battalion.

"I had great mentors who gave me good guidance," said Mayberry. "I've been lucky to have really good people around me the whole time."

Mayberry deployed to Iraq twice. From 2005 to 2006 he deployed as the deputy director of logistics maintenance in Diwaniyah, Iraq with the Multi - National Division, which comprised of 18 countries. He deployed again from 2007 to 2009 as the commander of the Tallil Logistics Military Advisor Team in the 10th Iraq Army Division in Ur, Iraqi.

One thing Mayberry said he learned from his combat experience is to trust the training.

"Pay attention to the training you receive throughout the year," he said. "When faced with a scary situation, you don't think, you just do it and that training is very valuable."

Along with overseas deployments, Mayberry worked many state active duty missions throughout Illinois. From flood duty to winter storms, he advised the Adjutant General on logistical requirements, supporting procedures and accountability.

"I have loved this job the entire time I have been here," he said.

Mayberry celebrated his retirement with friends and family at the Field Maintenance Shop on Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Dec. 8.

Looking into retirement, he said he plans to work with Habitat for Humanity and organizations to prevent suicide. He also plans to fish and work on his antique vehicles while spending time with his family.