



# Essays

## 875TH ENGINEER BATTALION



### 875th hits the six month mark in yearlong deployment

- ◆ *HHC and 131st Soldiers welcomed into NCO Corps*
- ◆ *Charlie Company puts the Quick in QRF*
- ◆ *Alpha Company Soldiers find 500th IED*
- ◆ *Twenty-one page issue!*





"Let us try"

# Essayons

**Vol. 2; Num. 4, 2007**

**875th Engineer Battalion**

*Battalion Commander*

Col. Patricia Anslow

*Command Sgt. Major*

CSM Billy Ward

*Executive Officer*

Maj. Kevin L. Vines

*Public Affairs NCO/Editor*

Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

The *Essayons* is an unofficial publication of the mobilized 875th Engineer Battalion of the Arkansas Army National Guard. This newsletter does not represent in any way the opinions of the 411th Engineer Brigade, the U.S. Army, the Army National Guard, the Arkansas National Guard, the Vermont National Guard, the Indiana National Guard or any command within Operation Iraqi Freedom. This publication is distributed in electronic (PDF) form for the entertainment and information of the Soldiers and families of the 875th Engineer Battalion, and all interested parties in Arkansas, Vermont and Indiana. All photography and articles are cleared for public release. High resolution copies of photos may be obtained by emailing a request to: christopher.durney@us.army.mil.



**On the cover:** An array of photographs in the shape of the battalion shield represent the first six months of the 875th's deployment to Iraq. The unit is halfway through a yearlong mission to clear the roadways of IEDs, and keep them sanitized. See page 10 for a roll-up on how the battalion is performing. U.S. Army photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney, based on an idea by 1st Sgt. Michael Sims.

**Above:** Sgt. Zachary T. Mullins of Alpha Company wears over 50 pounds of body armor as he gets ready to head out on a route clearance mission with his patrol team at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, near Balad, Iraq. The quiet-spoken Mullins sighted the battalion's 499th IED on a March 6 patrol. See page 12 for the story. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.

# INSIDE ISSUE EIGHT

---



## 6 HHC, 131st Soldiers join NCO Corps at Striker ceremony

New Headquarters, Headquarters Company and 131st Engineer Company NCOs walk through the Arch of Leadership and join their Alpha and Charlie brethren in the ranks of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers.



## 8 On recovery duty with Charlie Company QRF

Charlie Company's quick reaction force recently headed outside the Logistics Support Area Anaconda "wire" to recover a non-operational vehicle.



## 10 875th looks at where we are at the six month mark

The Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th is half way through a year-long deployment to Iraq. The company commanders and Lt. Col. Anslow take a look at how the unit is doing at the six month mark.

<b>Alpha Company's Edmonds makes 500th IED find</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Battalion Commander is promoted to Colonel</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Alpha Soldiers thanked for quick reaction</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>News and promotions around the battalion</b>	<b>20</b>

*Questions, comments or submissions to the Essayons should be directed to Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney at christopher.durney@us.army.mil. All submissions will be cleared of OPSEC violations and edited to Associated Press standards. Photos and stories from home are welcome and encouraged. Please look for issues of the newsletter to be published about every three weeks.*

## DEPARTMENTS

<b>Commander's Message:</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>From the Command Sgt. Major:</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Company Corner:</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chaplain Message:</b>	<b>14</b>



COL Patricia Anslow

Command Sgt. Maj. Billy



# 131st Engineer Co.

Hello Everyone.

I want to start out by congratulating Staff Sgt. Henry Blackman for being the Mechanic of the Month for the 131st Engineer Company. And I want to recognize Sgt. Chris Phillips for his achievements as a nighttime Battle NCO. Also, I would like to send a special congratulations to Chris Anderson and Lori Sims on their recent engagement.

These recognitions are just a few out of the company. As a whole, I am very proud of these Soldiers. The reputation that they enjoy with other units, on the road or back at base camp, is immeasurable. They are completely dedicated to the mission and their fellow Soldiers. It is a great feeling not to just command, but to serve with the Soldiers of the 131st.

I hope that this letter finds everyone in good health. Take care and God Bless.

Capt. Jacob Roy

## HHC

Six months in this country have come and gone! I look back over the past six months and I can see just how much we have to be thankful for. It hasn't always been smooth -- we have had our trials and tribulations -- but we are still performing to standard, and are actively engaged in supporting a battalion committed to making a difference in Iraq. We are in the process of leaving our mark on history in the global war on terror, and ensuring a safer world for our future generations.

This past month we held a NCO induction ceremony for the three Sergeants that we promoted earlier in the deployment. It gave us a chance to go back and congratulate them once more, and to educate others on what it takes to represent the backbone of the Army. I would like to thank everyone who orchestrated and participated in the ceremony.

We continue to receive letters and packages from home -- thank you for all your support! Your blessings are greatly appreciated. I also want to personally say thank you to our Family Support Group, I appreciate all that you do.

Capt. Joshua Simmons

# Alpha Co.

It is hard to believe it is already spring time. Our surroundings are starting to turn green and the temperature is starting to rise. Farmers are planting their fields. Sheep and cattle roam the fields grazing on the fresh green grass. There is a new sense of urgency among the people of Iraq. You can tell when you go out that the country is starting to emerge from years of war and chaos. Several construction projects are ongoing along our routes, and it is good to see Iraqis working and building infrastructure for their country. It is quite refreshing.

The Soldiers of Alpha Company continue to do great things. We recently celebrated the 500th IED find for the battalion, and have had many other great successes. We will continue to excel and make the citizens of Arkansas, Vermont and Indiana proud.

Essayons!!!

Capt. David Moore



*Sgt. 1st Class Jerry W. Greenwood was in full battle rattle March 19 during a road grading mission at Camp Striker, Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)*

**See Charlie Co. Page 15**

COMPANY  
CORNER

## Battalion welcomes 16 more into NCO ranks



Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

**T**he ranks of the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers swelled by 16 at an 875th Engineer Battalion induction ceremony at Camp Striker, Iraq, Mar. 8, 2007.

Three from Headquarters, Headquarters Company, and 13 from the 131st Engineer Company recited the Creed of the Noncommissioned officer before walking through the Arch of Leadership and receiving the Charge to the Newly Promoted Noncommissioned Officer. These NCOs join the 17 Soldiers from Alpha Company and Charlie Company who were inducted at a 411th Engineer Brigade ceremony February 3 at Logistics Support Area Anaconda.

Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward conducted the ceremony at the Camp Striker dining facility, and introduced Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Rickey Knox as the key speaker. Knox explained the importance of the Noncommissioned Officer's role as the backbone of the Army.

Each new Sergeant had a battalion senior NCO as a sponsor, who introduced the candidates at the ceremony. Then, one-by-one, they stepped through the arch. Each NCO

was greeted by Knox, Sgt. Ronnie Taylor, 131st first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Michael Sims, HHC's first sergeant, Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th battalion commander,

and Brig. Gen. Michael Silva, 411th brigade commander.

The tradition of commemorating the passing of a Soldier into the ranks of Noncommissioned Officers can be traced to the Army of Fredrick the Great. Today the U.S. Army commemorates this rite of passage as a celebration of the newly promoted joining the ranks of a professional corps, emphasizing and building on the pride of belonging to that corps.

Since the earliest days of the Army, the NCO has been recognized as one who instills discipline and order within a unit. In his instructions for the "Sergeants and Corporals," Baron Freidrich von Steuben, the U.S. Army's first "drill-master," listed in his Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, that "Each Sergeant and Corporal will be answerable for the squad committed to his care. He must pay particular attention to their conduct in every respect and that they keep themselves and their arms always clean. In dealing with recruits, they must exercise all their patience, and while on the march, the Noncommissioned Officer must preserve order and regularity."

Silva presented each new NCO a brigade coin following the ceremony, vigorously shaking each

After a group of the Soldiers and were treated to a cial cake decorated with the battalion patch.

photo, guests spe-







## Inductees into the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers

Sgt. Stephen Astbury (131)  
 Sgt. Joshua Beasley (131)  
 Sgt. Andrew Bippus (131)  
 Sgt. Eric Bouchard (131)  
 Sgt. Cindy Evins (HHC)  
 Sgt. Wesley Gautreaux (131)  
 Sgt. Randy Gladish (HHC)  
 Sgt. Timothy Goldman (131)  
 Sgt. Megan Grauer (HHC)  
 Sgt. Jason Hill (131)  
 Sgt. Adam Holcomb (131)  
 Sgt. Cory Huckabee (131)  
 Sgt. Christopher Phillips (131)  
 Sgt. Edward Roach (131)  
 Sgt. Russell Stemmons (131)  
 Sgt. Steven Ward (131)



**Page 6 top:** Sixteen battalion Soldiers are inducted into the ranks of the NCO Corps. **Page 6, bottom:** Sgt. Randy Gladish and fellow members of the 875th recite the Charge to the Newly Promoted Noncommissioned Officer with Command Sgt. Maj. Ward. **Top:** A specially decorated cake is ready for cutting. **Left middle:** Sgt. Stephen Astbury of the 131st is welcomed into the NCO corps by 411th brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Ricky Knox. **Left bottom:** Brig. Gen. Michael Silva, 411th Engineer Brigade commander shakes Sgt. Timothy Goldman's hand. **Right:** 1st Sgt. Michael Sims helps with the cake.

# Charlie Company puts the

# Quick

Story and photos by  
Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

## in Quick Reaction Force



*A Charlie Company HEMTT wrecker is ready to roll out on a recent recovery mission at LSA Anaconda. A fresh RG-31 hangs from the armored truck's hooks.*

The radio crackled to life in the Charlie Company operations center, quieting the normally loquacious morning crew. It was a 3rd Platoon route clearance team reporting that they had a vehicle down “outside the wire.” Without hesitation, the operations NCO reached for his hand held radio and began assembling the on-duty Quick Reaction Force. It wouldn’t take long for the team to prove just how quick they are.

Within minutes, members of 4th Platoon began to show up in the Charlie Company motor pool at Logistics Support Area Anaconda. Sgt. 1st Class Johnny McCarrol, the platoon sergeant, quickly organized everyone and began handing out assignments. The Soldiers swarmed into action assembling vehicles, body armor, weapons and mission supplies as quickly as possible.

Inside of an hour, the QRF was ready to roll with an impressive column of armored humvees and RG-31s, and a special armored wrecker called a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck, or HEMTT. A

reserve RG-31 armored gun truck hung from the wrecker hooks, ready to replace 3rd Platoon’s inoperable vehicle.

The QRF mission leader, Staff Sgt. Brian Lynch, called the Soldiers together for the mission briefing, and to make sure everyone knew which vehicle they were assigned to, including an Army photojournalist tapped to drive a humvee for the mission. The men slipped into their body armor and helmets, and clambered into their vehicles.

Sgt. Christopher Henick and Spc. Daniel Bulkley pulled themselves into the cab of the hulking HEMTT, closed the heavy armored doors and made a final check that every thing was good to go. “QRF four one, QRF wrecker is ready to roll,” said Henick as he keyed the radio microphone.

The column of vehicles lumbered along the Iraqi countryside until they spotted the waiting 3rd Platoon patrol, a few kilometers outside of Balad. “Keep a tight cordon, and your eyes peeled,” came Lynch’s voice from our radio speaker. “QRF wrecker, move into position.”

The HEMTT rolled to a stop next to the downed 3rd Platoon vehicle, where Bulkley and Henick were greeted by 2nd Lt. Johnny Douglas, 3rd Platoon leader, and the happy faces of the idling route clearance team. The rest of the QRF took up protective positions around the site, keeping sharp eyes on the surrounding terrain. The “fresh” RG-31 was quickly lowered and released from the wrecker hooks, and pressed into service.

With practiced expertise, Bulkley and Henick had the HEMTT positioned in front of the out of service vehicle, and began the recovery operation. Before long, the front end of the downed RG-31 hung from



the wrecker hooks, and the QRF was ready to head back to Anaconda. After a round of hand shakes and smiles, the 3rd Platoon team reset their column of vehicles, and resumed their critical route clearance mission for the day.

Back in our humvee, we listened to the radio as Lynch gave the order to move out, “alright QRF, Charlie Mike, Charlie Mike.”

“Roger, four-four on the move,” said our truck commander, Staff Sgt. Randy White as we took up our position at the rear of the line of armored vehicles. On the way back to Anaconda, the local farmers barely took notice of our passing column, but groups of Iraqi children stood along the roadway, gesturing for food, candy or whatever they could get. Members of the team tossed several bottles of water to eager

hands as we passed through the countryside.

Back in the Charlie Company motor pool at Anaconda, the team ended the mission just as quickly as they had started, parking vehicles, unloading and reorganizing supplies. After all of the vehicles, body armor and weapons were secured, Lynch and McCarol gathered the men together for a quick after action report, and to note any significant events during the mission.

“This is what it’s all about,” said Lynch afterward. “We’ve got to be ready to go at a moment’s notice all day today, and be ready to go on a route clearance patrol tomorrow.”

“It’s hard sometimes, but we keep going, knowing that what we do is important,” said Lynch.



**Top Left:** Spc. Daniel Bulkley gets ready to hook up a downed vehicle. **Top right:** Staff Sgt. Randy White commands a humvee. **Left:** Sgt. Christopher Henick makes sure the vehicle is hooked up properly. **Above:** Iraqi children stand along the roadway gesturing for food, candy or water.





# 875th hits six month mark!

*We look at where we are, where we've been and where we're going*

By Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

Six months ago this week, Soldiers of the 875th Engineer Battalion stepped off their busses at a sprawling military base in the desert of Kuwait, and were quickly herded to a nearby tent. There, each Soldier presented his or her military ID card to a clerk, who ran it through what looked like a credit card reader that could be found in any retail outlet. Three hundred sixty-four days, 23 hours and 59 minutes to go.

Since that seemingly long ago night, the 875th has moved to two forward operating bases in central Iraq. There the Arkansas, Vermont and Indiana troops took up the reins of a critical route clearance and route sanitation mission along a major commerce and military artery. They constantly perform above expectations for a group of engineers who, a year ago, had no concept of what a route clearance operation entailed. The men and women of the 875th continue to endure long days, tiring patrols, the threat of injury or death, military living conditions, boredom, and separation from loved ones, all while building an impressive portfolio.

"You're doing a great job here, I like what I see," said Maj. Gen. James E. Simmons, deputy commanding general of Multinational Corps – Iraq. "You've got a great outfit here, and you have built an incredible reputation."

According to the battalion Operations section, the three line companies have found and cleared over 550 improvised explosive devices, spent over 10,000 hours on over 1,200 patrols, and

have covered over 150,000 kilometers of roadway in central Iraq. "I've heard that you could roughly say that 1.2 lives are saved for every IED found," said Col. Patricia Anslow, battalion commander. "So, one measure of success is in the fact that we've saved at least 550 lives, both military and civilian."

So, after six months in a foreign land, fighting in the global war on terror, how is the battalion doing?

"I think we're further along in six months than I expected to be, both in terms of our effectiveness on the battlefield, and in rendering IEDs safe, as well as our understanding of the enemy and the terrain," said Anslow. "We're getting a really good feel for what we're up against, and what we have to do out there."

"There are so many things that have changed so rapidly over the last six months," said Capt. Jacob Roy, commander of the Vermont Army National Guard's 131st Engineer Company, which is attached to the 875th for the deployment. "Two months ago, I would have said that we're at the beginning stages of finding our peak, getting settled in, getting our routines down, and really starting to make an affect out there on the road."

"Now we're doing a great job. We're meshing very well with everybody else out on the battlefield, and we've really thrown a wrench [into the insurgents'] works, I think," explained Roy.

"A lot of times you see people after six months into the ball game get complacent," said Capt. Timothy Norman, Charlie Company's high-energy commander. "Not with our guys, they're doing a great job, and continue to figure out how to beat the bad guys."

"Our motivational level is extremely high," said Norman. "The men do team building exercises at the platoon level. As a result, we've become a close knit family."

Capt. Dave Moore, Alpha Company commander, describes his unit in terms of change and growth.







“Our personnel have evolved to the point that they’re more responsible, no matter what position they’re in,” he said. “I think the biggest change is that we’re more cohesive. We’ve got people in the right positions and we’re doing the good job that we’re supposed to be doing, and we’ve become a better unit.”

While Roy, Norman and Moore command line companies, Capt. Joshua Simmons is charged with leading the unique Headquarters, Headquarters Company, which includes the battalion staff elements and the support platoon. “I would say that we’re almost at a pinnacle,” said the tall Simmons. “We’ve been doing it for six months, so we now understand our roles completely, and we continue to get better at what we do.

“As for the staff, I think they truly understand that they are supporting the line companies, and what that means,” explained Simmons. “It’s sometimes frustrating for them because nothing ever stays the same when you’re trying to order stuff and get paper pushed out. For the most part they’re doing a great job, and learning every day.”

The closest element HHC has to a line unit is the support platoon, led by 1st Lt. Mark White and Sgt. 1st Class Neil Hall. “They’ve done 18 to 19 missions ‘outside the wire,’ now,” said Simmons, “and they’ve actually been to the green zone. They are on top of their game.”

Each of the commanders are quick to point out that the unit success they enjoy may be attributed to how well individuals work together. The 875th is an Arkansas Army National Guard battalion, with units in Jonesboro, Paragould, Marked Tree, Harrisburg and North Little Rock. But for this deployment, troops from the 131st out of Vermont and the 1313th Engineer Company of the Indiana Army National Guard, have brought the battalion’s deployed strength to over 500 Soldiers. And it has brought three very different cultures together in the fight against terror.

“The integration has been great between Arkansas, Indiana and Vermont,” said Anslow. “The three states have worked extremely well together.

“I’ve always been of the mind set that diversity creates a stronger unified team. We’re able to parlay off of each other’s strengths, and by doing so we have created a great team,” she explained.

“To be honest with you,” said Moore, “our outfit

has always been a strong family-, team-oriented company, and that has spilled over to the Vermont and Indiana guys who have integrated with us.

“I think we’ve integrated folks in here to where you really can’t tell the difference between an Arkansas, Vermont or Indiana Soldier unless you’re listening to their accent,” said Moore.

“I can give you [over 140] things that are best about Charlie Company,” said Norman in his normally enthusiastic tone. “It’s the guys, the camaraderie. We’ve become very tight knit.”

Roy, a native of Vermont, offered the perspective of an integrating unit: “It’s definitely been a change for us, and a learning experience because we’ve never worked with a battalion before. We’re used to doing things on our own,” said the affable ‘Green Mountain Boy.’ “All in all, I think the integration has gone relatively good; it’s worked out in our favor. We’ve got a group of guys who have overcome something that’s incredibly remarkable, and are doing a great job.

“Six months ago we were pretty new,” continued Roy. “Everybody was still trying to get to know each other. We picked up a lot of new people from across the battalion and from other states that had never even seen each other before. Now, we’re a very tight organization, and we’ve definitely gotten to know each other, and we’ve grown to trust each other.”

According to Anslow, the battalion enjoys its good reputation because each of the companies, and the Soldiers themselves, are set up for success at all levels. “I think the two most important keys to our success are leadership empowerment and flexibility,” said Anslow. “Everybody is a leader, and everybody has a

**Continued on page 21...**



# 500

## 875th Engineer Battalion hits milestone

Photos and information provided by Alpha Company



Less than six months into a yearlong deployment to Iraq, the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion has found and cleared its 500th improvised explosive device.

The 875th deployed to Iraq in late September 2006, and is tasked with a critical route clearance and route sanitation mission along a major military and Iraqi commerce artery in central Iraq. Staff Sgt. Adam Edmons of Floral, Ark., made the historic 500th find while on patrol Mar. 6, 2007, with 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company. In the vehicle with Edmons was Sgt. Alan Massey, Spc. Chris McCormick and Spc. Jeffrey Linker.

According to Capt. David Moore, Alpha Company commander, the 500th was significant, but the 499th was a more difficult find due to the way it was concealed. The sharp eyes of Sgt. Zachary Mullins, of Cherry Valley, Ark., were able to spot the dangerous roadside bomb before it could be detonated by terror-

ists.

Each of the IEDs were rendered harmless by an explosive ordinance detachment before the patrol continued on with a mission that lasted over eight hours. Alpha Company and Charlie Company operate out of Logistics Support Area Anaconda, near Balad. The battalion headquarters and the 131st Engineer Company are located at Camp Striker, near Baghdad.

"We honor all 499 finds and clears that got us to 500," said Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th battalion commander, "but we are especially proud of the 500th because it is a significant milestone in the battalion's fight against IEDs."

Over 400 Arkansas troops are deployed with the 875th, which is also made up of over 100 Soldiers from Vermont and Indiana Army National Guard units. The battalion mobilized in March, 2006, and is slated to return from Operation Iraqi Freedom in the fall.





**Page 12:** Staff Sgt. Adam Edmonds, Spc. Chris McCormick, Spc. Jeffrey Linker and Sgt. Alan Massey of 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company celebrate their achievement of making the 500th IED find. **Top:** Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, battalion commander, recognizes Staff Sgt. Edmonds and patrol leader Sgt. 1st Class Joe Shelby for the historic 500th find. **Above:** An Alpha Company route clearance team patrols a major artery near Balad, looking for improvised explosive devices. The 2nd Platoon team was riding in a RG-31 when they made the historic 500th find. **Right:** Staff Sgt. Adam Edmonds holds a battalion coin presented to him by Lt. Col. Anslow, and a reminder of his historical accomplishment.





## From the Chaplain

by Capt. (Chaplain) Mark Golaway

Proverbs 24:32 (NIV) I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw:

Spring is upon us. The rains are coming to an end, and the dust and winds are growing. As the remaining mud holds small puddle reminders of what has come to pass, these pools reflect the light that surrounds them. As we reach the six month mark, we have an opportunity, like the puddles, to reflect on life, our mission, and the ground we've covered getting where we are.

Where have we been?

The simple and obvious answer is from Indiana, Vermont, and Arkansas through Wisconsin and Kuwait to Iraq. But the real answer is that we have been to Iraq. The name itself now has meaning to us. The people, the sights, the smells, and the land all evoke memories and emotions. We have seen war in all its detail. Some stories we may be willing to tell, others, you may never hear. We have met an enemy who prefers not to stand and fight, but to attack their innocent neighbors, their fellow man, and American soldiers with explosives, not caring who is hurt or injured, seeking only terror and disruption, all with no hope of really winning. Our enemy is a mercenary hiding behind politically aimed sound-bites, dressed up in religious rhetoric, rejected by their own people.

Yet in all of this, we have stood strong. We have found a commitment to principle and a sense of duty to get us through. We arrived unsure of what we would find, expecting the worst, and instead found the best our fellow soldier had to offer. We came because we received an order; we stay because of our responsibility to the soldier standing by our side; nothing more, nothing less.

Who have we become?

In short, we have become a team. We have created a functioning unit out of personnel from a variety of units. Where once we stood as the 131st, 1313th,

or 875th, we now stand together. While we wear the moniker of the 875th or the 131st, we are really both and neither. The unit that exists is not the 875th that was, or ever will be again. We are a varied people, from varied communities, with varied skills and abilities. We will return to our homes at the end of this tour and not see many that we have lived 24 hours a day with again. Yet for this time, we focus on what each soldier brings to the team, and we make the best of our mission and the most of our friendships, new and old. Our different origins give us different viewpoints, which make for lively conversation over meals and on patrols. Our military training helps us take these differences and find the best solutions for the missions we are assigned. Our various faiths and our conversations with the Divine give us strength, peace that overshadows fear, and the ability to survive the ungodly.

We are changed by our time here. We are more self-reliant. We are more confident in our knowledge and our abilities. We are stronger and matured in ways we could not have anticipated. Yet, we are also exposed to others who think in ways completely foreign to us, and we are shaped by our trying to understand. Our horizons have been broadened, and in so doing, we are surer of some of our positions, and less dogmatic about others.

We have formed relationships, alliances, and unions with those we deployed with and from which we gain strength. We have found the wisdom to find



*An Iraqi boy gives the thumbs up sign to a passing Charlie Company patrol. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)*

**Please see 1st column, page 15**



## Chaplain, continued from page 14

ways to work along side those we differ with and focus on the task at hand. We have become a combat battalion.

What have we accomplished?

We have prepared for battle, and found ourselves ready. We have gained confidence in our teams, our equipment, and our training. We have faced IEDs emplaced by those who know the terrain better than we do, and yet we have successfully and repeatedly prevented their terror and destruction from taking countless lives. We have frustrated the plans of those opposed to a free Iraq, and supported the units who depend on us for safe roadways. We adjust daily and force the enemy to keep up or be destroyed. We prefer they don't keep up.

We have survived the pains of separation from family and friends. We have overcome the difficulties of being distant during times of financial planning, parenting, birthdays, anniversaries, special events, and tragic illnesses and deaths back home. We have created and established an abnormal routine, developing habits and thought patterns which will only ever be useful in this situation. We have shaped our thoughts to the mission while grasping and holding to the reality that is home with you. We have accommodated that which will keep us alive here, without losing that which we are when we are home. We have altered our habits without reducing our person.

We have put ourselves in a strong position to complete the mission. We recognize the intent and tactics of our enemies, and we are constantly discussing how to beat them. We are shifting our thought patterns from looking back to see those we love, to looking forward to handing off this mission to our replacement unit, and coming home.

The lesson learned.

In the past six months, we have grown both individually and corporately. We have discovered techniques to help us survive the emotional issues of family separation and the tactics to overcome the ploys of our enemy. We have become a unified force, focused on completing the mission in the most effective way possible so we can return to home and hearth, our job complete. We stand ready and competent, acknowledged by our fellow soldiers as well as our enemy. We recognize our part in this historical time, and are honored to serve, but we will rejoice when we again receive orders, this time to come home.

Blessings!

## Company Corner continued from page 5

# Charlie Company

Hot dog, it's a great day in Charlie Company. Everyone here seems to be rolling right along with the training and mission at hand. I am amazed at the hard work everyone continues to do.

I grew up always hearing that behind every great man is a great woman. I can honestly say that there are over 140 GREAT women back in Arkansas, Indiana, Vermont and other various states. I often tell others that the reason we have been so successful is because I am surrounded by excellence. I honestly do feel that way, and I thank you all for each of your loved ones. I will say that YOU are truly the real "American Patriots!"

I know that the men here are among America's best, and everyone wants to do a great job. We often sit with each other and discuss the issues you are having. I have talked about the joys of home, and the joys that we all look forward to. I heard someone just yesterday say they are sending their sheets home to have their wife wash them and spray them with her perfume. Why, you ask, just because you're missed. It is for the smell of home and the reminder of you!! I thank you once again for your love and support. Until we meet again, have a CHARLIE OF A DAY!!!!

Missing you all.

Capt. Timothy P. Norman



# Battalion Commander promoted to Colonel

In the shadow of Baghdad, Iraq, Patricia Anslow, commander of the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion, was promoted to the rank of Colonel on Thursday, March 23.

Brig. Gen. Michael Silva, 411th Engineer Brigade commander, presented Anslow with her new rank at a ceremony just outside of the battalion headquarters on Camp Striker. The 875th's Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward was given the honor of pinning the "full bird" on her patrol cap. The 500-man 875th is six months into a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Anslow began her military career as a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., in 1989. The 40-year-old native of Troy, N.Y., has been a member of the Arkansas Army National Guard since 1993, and took over the reins of the 875th in October 2003. She served as an officer in the active component Army from 1989 to 1992, and deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

In her civilian life, the avid runner is the Chief of

Planning and Environmental Office for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers in Arkansas.



*Top: Newly pinned Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th Engineer Battalion commander. Above: Col. Anslow is congratulated by members of the battalion. (U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)*



# APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Jason Finney, SGT	01	131st	Robert Martin, SGT	13	C Co.
Mike Jenkins, 2LT	02	A Co.	Scott Sheeley, SPC	13	131st
Joshua Patterson, SPC	04	131st	Guilford Forney, SPC	14	C Co.
Joshua Qualls, SPC	04	A Co.	Carl Beattie, SFC	15	131st
Jason Bolin, SGT	05	C Co.	Mark Golaway, CPT	15	HHC
Russell Crawford, SFC	06	HHC	Dustin E. Miller, SPC	16	HHC
Neil Hall, SFC	06	HHC	Jimmy Adams, PFC	18	131st
Perry Maier, SPC	06	A Co.	Stephen McCulley, 2LT	18	A Co.
Jason Rinehart, SPC	07	HHC	Timothy Norman, CPT	19	C Co.
Mathew Richardson, SPC	09	C Co.	Robert Smith, SPC	20	C Co.
Jerry Lee, SSG	10	A Co.	Keith Arnoult, SGT	21	A Co.
Richard Chastain, SPC	11	C Co.	Robert Blume, SGT	21	C Co.
James Ewald, SSG	11	C Co.	Samuel Isom, SSG	23	C Co.
Franklin Householder, SPC	11	A Co.	Ronnie Copeland, SFC	24	A Co.
James Stanley, SPC	11	131st	Timothy Dean, 1LT	25	HHC
Michael Kirk, PFC	12	A Co.	Dennis McGinnis, SPC	25	HHC
Dean MacDonald, SFC	12	C Co.	Richie Hall, SPC	26	HHC
Stephen Cunningham, PFC	13	131st	Brian Tarmy, SGT	30	A Co.

*A Charlie Company Husky is fired up and ready for a night mission near Balad, Iraq.  
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney*

# Alpha Company team recognized for role in capturing insurgents

Ten members of 4th Platoon, Alpha Company, were recognized for their role in capturing a terrorist IED placement team while on patrol March 5.

2nd Lt. Kevin Jenkins, Spc. Jeremy White, Spc. Michael Wiley, Spc. Ryan Lawrence, Spc. Shannon Kender, Spc. Billy Dever, Spc. Robert Towne, Spc. Brian Jillson, Staff Sgt. Christopher Weaver, and Sgt. 1st Class Malcolm Warner each received a certificate of appreciation from the 2nd Battalion of the 82 Field Artillery at a ceremony March 15.

According to the certificates, and battalion reports, the 4th Platoon route clearance patrol was in the process of investigating, and finding, an improvised explosive device along a roadway near Balad when they sighted the terrorist placement squad in a nearby civilian vehicle.

The quick-thinking team detained the four individuals until an element of the 2nd of the 82nd could arrive and take custody of the suspected insurgents.

“Your role in capturing an improvised explosive device (IED) team and subsequent disposal of an IED contributed to the security of the Steel Dragon area of operations,” reads each of the certificates. “Your efforts are in keeping with the finest Steel Dragon and Calvary Traditions. Job Well Done”

The certificates were signed by Lt. Col. John M. Kolessar, 2nd battalion commander, and 2nd battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Willie B. Jones.



## Two thanked by KBR for conducting classes

Alpha Company's Staff Sgt. Kevin Turner and Staff Sgt. Kurtis Holloway were presented certificates of appreciation on behalf of a military contractor in Iraq.

Turner and Holloway received the kudos from KBR for conducting improvised explosive device awareness classes for KBR convoy commanders March 6 at Logistics Support Area Anaconda.

“We are honored to present this certificate of appreciation for your dedication to KBR convoy commanders,” reads the certificates. “Your professional attitude and dedication in sharing your knowledge as a subject matter expert is exemplary.”



Top: Staff Sgt. Kevin Turner accepts his KBR certificate from Alpha Company 1st Sgt. Walter Holloway. Bottom: Staff Sgt. Kurtis Holloway receives his certificate from 1st Sgt. Holloway.





# Delph and Navarro awarded Purple Heart



*Pvt. 1st Class Jeremy Delph, left, and Spc. Richard Navarro with their Purple Hearts.*

Pvt. 1st Class Jeremy A. Delph and Spc. Richard L. Navarro of the 875th Engineer Battalion's 131st Engineer Company each received the Purple Heart medal at a ceremony at Camp Striker, Iraq, March 22.

Delph, a member of the Indiana Army National Guard, and Navarro, of Leachville, Ark., received the medals for injuries sustained while on route clearance patrols with the 131st's 3rd Platoon. Each Soldier was treated and returned to duty.

Brig. Gen. Michael Silva, 411th Engineer Brigade commander, pinned the medals on Delph and Navarro while Col. Patricia Anslow presented each with their citation.



*Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th Engineer Battalion commander, administers the oath of enlistment to Spc. Dennis R. McGinnis III at Al Fawl Palace, Iraq.*

## McGinnis re-enlists

Standing in front of Saddam Hussein's former throne chair March 7, Spc. Dennis R. McGinnis III promised to serve in the Arkansas Army National Guard another six years.

McGinnis, of Swifton, Ark., is a member of the 875th Engineer Battalion's Headquarters, Headquarters Company, and serves as the commander's driver.

The 875th is on a yearlong deployment to Iraq.

His military occupation specialty is combat engineer, and he has served in the National Guard for five years. His wife, Stacy, and three children wait for his return to Swifton.

"I do my job, and they I try to assist in areas all around the battalion headquarters," said McGinnis. "I truly enjoy serving our country and being in the Army National Guard."

## Forbs earns Army Achievement Medal

Staff Sgt. Wendy Forbs of the 875th Engineer Battalion's Headquarters, Headquarters Company, was awarded the Army Achievement Medal at a ceremony at Camp Striker, Iraq, March 1.

Forbs works in the battalion personnel section, and received the award for "outstanding leadership during pre-mobilization and mobilization." The 875th is six months into a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Your outstanding leadership brings great credit upon yourself, the Arkansas National Guard and the United States Army," reads the citation.



*Staff Sgt. Wendy Forbs receives the Army Achievement Medal from Capt. Joshua Simmons, HHC commander, and HHC 1st Sgt. Michael Sims during a ceremony at battalion headquarters March 1.*

# Two from Charlie Company hit road to re-enlist

Sgt. Rudy Rivas, Jr., and Sgt. Ronald S. Griffin decided to hit the road and re-enlist in the Arkansas Army National Guard.

Rivas and Griffin are members of the 875th Engineer Battalion's Charlie Company, and were recently on a route clearance patrol near Balad, Iraq, when they took the oath of enlistment.

While on a short stop along a main supply route, Capt. Timothy Norman, C Company commander,

administered the oath to Rivas and Griffin as 411th Engineer Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Knox looked on. Knox was riding along with the 3rd Platoon patrol as an observer.

Once the two took the oath, the team returned to their route clearance vehicles and the patrol pushed on in the critical search for improvised explosive devices. The 875th is six months into a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



*Left: Sgt. Rudy Rivas, Jr., takes the oath of re-enlistment from Capt. Timothy Norman, Charlie Company commander along a main supply route in Iraq, as 411th Engineer Brigade Command Sgt. Maj. Ricky Knox looks on. Right: 411th Command Sgt. Maj. Knox congratulates Sgt. Ronald Griffin after Capt. Norman administered the oath of re-enlistment to Griffin while Charlie Company's 3rd Platoon conducted a route clearance patrol.*

## Curtis promoted to E4

Kevin Curtis of Paragould, Ark., was promoted from Pvt. 1st Class to Specialist at a ceremony at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq, March 18.

Curtis is a member of the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company. The 875th is six months into a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Wheeler, Curtis' platoon sergeant, pinned the 20 year old Soldier with his new E4 rank in the Charlie Company headquarters.

Curtis has one son, Conner, and is a member of one of the battalion's critical route clearance teams.

"Charlie Company would like to congratulate Spc. Curtis and wish him all success in his military career," said Capt. Timothy Norman, C Company commander.



*Kevin Curtis of Paragould, Ark., is pinned a Specialist by Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Wheeler during a promotion ceremony at LSA Anaconda March 18. Curtis is a member of 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company, 875th Engineer Battalion, and is serving a yearlong deployment.*



## Six months, continued from page 11...

role to play inside and outside the wire. We also have a backup plan to the backup plan. I think those two things have put us in a position where we're setting ourselves up for success."

Even so, some of the battalion's success may be attributed to the changes the men and women have gone through during the taxing deployment.

"I think some of our younger guys have grown up a lot," said Norman. "Our biggest change is with the maturity of the younger guys. It's a serious game out there, and they realize that. I think that when we get home, the families will see a seriousness in the guys."

"The families might see somebody who's a lot more confident," added Roy. "They'll definitely see someone who won't drive the same way."

"We didn't know what we were getting into when we left," said Simmons, "but now we have a lot of pride because we've actually been over here, in a combat zone, and have done our jobs. I think people will see a lot of pride when we return home."

"We're definitely more experienced than when we left home," said Moore. "But we're still beautiful Alpha Company, as we always have been," he added with a laugh.

So, how far has the 875th come in six months?

Col. Anslow put the answer in academic terms: "I think we're approaching graduate-level work at this point in time. We're now at the point where we have developed our own techniques, and we're manipulating and utilizing equipment in ways that weren't anticipated when they were designed. We're now designing and evolving the techniques and tactics we use, as opposed to just going through the rote manner of performing a day-to-day mission.

"I think we're a mature organization that has found ways to be efficient and effective in the utilization of our resources," she explained.

"On a scale of one to 10, in unit performance, I'd give us a nine, an eight or nine out of 10, based just on what we've been able to accomplish out on the road," said Roy.

"We've asked these Soldiers to do things that they've never had to do before, and never thought of doing before. They have already superseded their predecessors by a long shot," he continued.

"I think that the families will see, when we get back home, a Soldier who is more mature, and challenged in ways that they hadn't thought they would be when they started their military careers," explained Anslow. "But these men and women have wonderfully stepped up to the challenge, and have done a fantastic job, proving that they are capable and worthy of doing whatever the nation needs of them."

## Peters promoted to Master Sergeant



*Edward Peters, center, is pinned as a Master Sgt. by Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow March 9, while Capt. Joshua Simmons, HHC commander, updates the rank on Peter's hat.*

Edward R. Peters was promoted from Sgt. 1st Class to Master Sgt. March 9 during a ceremony at Camp Striker, Iraq.

Peters, a native of Burlington, Vt., is deployed with the 875th Engineer Battalion, and serves as the battalion motor sergeant. He is normally a member of the Vermont Army National Guard's 131st Engineer Company, which is attached to the 875th during the battalion's yearlong deployment to Iraq.

Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th Engineer Battalion commander, presented Peters with his new rank as Capt. Joshua Simmons, HHC commander updated his uniform hat.

Peters is a 1975 graduate of Winooski High School in Winooski, Vt., and is married to Debra M. Peters. He is a 31 year veteran of the Army National Guard.