



Essays

875TH ENGINEER BATTALION

Hoosier Heroes

Indiana troops help keep roadways safe

- ◆ *Flat Stanley joins the 875th*
- ◆ *Top General visits Alpha and Charlie*
- ◆ *"My Dad's a hero"*
- ◆ *A wife writes about coping*



"Let us try"

Essayons

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875th Engineer Battalion

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On the cover: Spc. Aaron Hooten, 23, of Fort Ville, Ind., climbs into his armored grader during a recent route sanitation mission on a section of a main Iraqi highway near Baghdad. Hooten and 41 other members of the Indiana Army National Guard's 1313th Engineer Company are deployed with the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.

Above: An Iraqi girl watches as Arkansas Army National Guard troops perform a route sanitation mission on a section of highway outside of Baghdad. Several young Iraqi children gathered behind the safety fence to get a glimpse of the American Soldiers. An Iraqi farmer and his two sons worked the field behind the children, occasionally taking time to talk to the Americans. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.

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Indiana Army National Guard “Hoosier Heroes” work along side Arkansas and Vermont Soldiers to help keep Iraqi roadways safe, proving that diversity makes the 875th strong.



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‘Angels’ across the United States have adopted Soldiers of the 875th, providing much needed moral lifts and many basic necessities. One young angel sent the 875th a new troop.



12 Navy + Army equals the Narmy

For one U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer, life in the U.S. Army is pretty interesting, and for the 875th the “Chief” is a welcome part of the ongoing fight against terror in Iraq.

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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.

Essayons

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131st Engineer Co.

Hello Everyone.

May has arrived and it brought the heat with it. We are looking at temperatures in the 90s to 100s in the near future.

Well, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that Spc. Zac and Karen Farley had a baby boy on March 5. His name is Lawson Alexander Farley.

Our work load has not slowed down at all. Aside from our route clearance missions, we are now working diligently to clean up the roads of Iraq. This work has a two fold effect. One, it takes away trash and junk that hinders the movement of military and civilian traffic, and, secondly, it gives the highway a better appearance. It is kind of like an adopt-a-highway program. Not only does it look good, but other units in the area have also commented on our fine work.

All in all, everyone is doing okay. I hope that everyone back home is doing well too.

Capt. Jacob Roy



HHC

Seven months in this country have come and gone! According to Pastor Ralph J. Mineo of North Baltimore, Oh., "The quickest way for a mother to get her children's attention is to sit down and look comfortable." With a wife of three boys, all under five, I have a true appreciation for what a mom does. I wanted to say thank you for our Soldiers' mothers, the Soldiers who are mothers, and the mothers of our children. I know this Mother's Day is harder than most; you have earned a day to be appreciated. Thank you!

This past month went by extremely fast. As April flew by, so did the cooler days of the desert. We are looking forward to the heat; it is a great sign of how long we have been here, with only five months to go. That is truly a blessing in itself. We are now digging our feet in, and driving home our mission! This is the hardest time, and we are up for the challenge.

Thank you Moms, and Happy Mother's Day!

Capt. Joshua Simmons

Alpha Co.

The temperature is starting to rise and the days are getting longer. It will be summer before we know it.

The health kick has officially started in Alpha Company. It seems everyone wants to make sure they are fit when they come home to their loved ones. 1st Sgt. Holloway continues to lead the pack with his 350 pound bench press. Fitness is not the only area Soldiers are improving. Several are enrolled in the tobacco cessation program and are making great progress.

We continue to enjoy the care packages sent from the caring and generous supporters on the home front. I know many of you are responsible for getting the packages to us, and I want to thank everyone for their continued support.

Ninety-three years ago, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the first national recognized Mother's Day, and it has grown ever since. I want to take this opportunity to thank all mothers on your special day and wish each of you a Happy Mother's Day.

Capt. David Moore



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COMPANY
CORNER

HOOSIER HEROES

Indiana Soldiers help keep Iraqi Streets safe

By Staff Sgt., Chris A. Durney

Working and fighting alongside Vermonters and Arkansans are a little over 40 Indians, and they're helping the 875th Engineer Battalion make a difference in Iraq.

According to Col. Patricia Anslow, the battalion commander, diversity is one of the strengths of the 875th, and this is never more evident than with the integration of Soldiers from three very different parts of the country. Over 140 Green Mountain Boys (and women) from the Vermont Army National Guard's 131st Engineer Company, and Hoosier Heroes from the Indiana Army National Guard's 1313th Engineer Company have become an integral part of the 875th's critical mission in central Iraq.

Over half of the Indiana troops are with Alpha and Charlie at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, leaving the rest stationed at Camp Striker with Headquarters, Headquarters Company and the 131st. Each Hoosier Hero has brought with them their strong Midwest work ethic, and a dedication to the mission.

Some are showing their dedication for the second time, like Sgt. Jeff Foster of Indianapolis, who is on his second deployment in three years. Foster, along with Spc. Aaron Hooten and Spc. Joey Ward, transferred into the 1313th from the 1413th Engineer Company and volunteered for the yearlong deployment with the 875th. "It's how I give back to my country," says Foster, who's already spent a year in Afghanistan.

Hooten is from Fort Ville, 15 miles east of Indianapolis, and is a third generation Soldier. His grandfather fought in World War II, and his father is a Vietnam veteran. "Dad didn't want me to sign up,



Above: Sgt. Jon Kiefer of Columbus, Ind., expertly maneuvers a heavily-armored bulldozer during a recent mission with the 131st Engineer Company of the 875th Engineer Battalion. Kiefer is normally a member of the Indiana Army National Guard's 1313th Engineer Company, and has deployed with the 875th on a yearlong route clearance and route sanitation mission in central Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)



but he understood that I wanted to serve my country,” says the 23 year old Hooten. “It’s the same thing he did with his dad. He said it was karma.”

For 27 year old Ward, from the south side of Indianapolis, it was a matter of a little catch up. “My unit (the 1413th) deployed in 2004, but I missed out because I was at Army Initial Training,” says Ward. “I wanted to serve just like those guys, so I volunteered with the 1313th.

“I love this stuff,” says the wide-grinned Ward, “doing what we do, it’s rewarding. We’re saving lives.”

Most of the Indiana troops have come about 6,500 miles to be a part of the 875th, but one has traveled even farther to serve his adopted country. Spc. Albert Jaspe is a native of La Guaira, Venezuela, and has served in the Indiana Army National Guard for seven years. The shy technical engineer became a U.S. citizen just three weeks prior to deploying to Iraq.

“We’re doing a good job, I think,” says Jaspe. “For me, it feels a little weird because I’ve never been away from my culture for so long. But, everyone is treating me very well and I’m making it.”

Please see ‘Heroes,’ page 8



Top: Sgt. Jeff Foster of Indianapolis drives an armored dump truck. **Middle:** Spc. Joey Ward of Indianapolis in the cab of an armored front end loader. **Below:** Spc. Albert Jaspe, a native of La Guaira, Venezuela, lives in Indianapolis and became a U.S. citizen three weeks before deployment.



'Heroes' from page 7

For Ward, the Hoosier spirit runs deep. The National Guard electrician has worked as a carpenter for the University of Indiana in Bloomington for over six years. "I'm going back after this deployment," says Ward. "It's just like a family there. I wouldn't say that I'm a hero, though, but I'm willing to fight for everybody back there."

Columbus, Ind., native Sgt. Jon Kiefer talks about deployment in more practical terms. "It's been very good, so far. It's been hard being away from my wife and kids, but in some ways it's been easier. You don't have to buy gas for your car for a year, and the food is free." Kiefer, 33, re-enlisted in the National Guard in December, 2006, and will have 20 years of service at the end of his current contract. "This is my first deployment in all of those years," he says, "and I'll probably see one more."

According to Foster, the 1313th and 1413th drill at Camp Atterbury, located about 30 miles south of Indianapolis. According to an internet distance calculator, Camp Atterbury is about 350 miles from Jonesboro, Ark., where the 875th is headquartered, and just

about 750 miles from Colchester, Vt., where the 131st drills. But in the confines of Camp Striker and LSA Anaconda, these distances between Arkansas, Indiana and Vermont Soldiers have shrunk considerably.

"I wasn't sure what we were getting into with the Arkansas and Vermont guys," says Ward over the loud rumble of an armored front-end loader, "but from day one they have been great. We fit right in with them now, which is making for a nice smooth year."

"All of these Soldiers have become a close knit family," says Capt. Timothy Norman, who commands the highest number of Indiana troops at Charlie Company. "We've got guys from Indiana and Vermont, and now I have to ask them 'are you from Arkansas, Indiana or Vermont? I can't tell them apart – that's how close they've become to each other.'"

The Indiana Soldiers may be the smallest group representing the three states that have contributed troops to the 875th deployment, but they continue to live up to their Hoosier Hero moniker every day.



Spc. Aaron Hooten from Fort Ville, Ind., works an armored road grader along a main supply and commerce route near Baghdad, Iraq. Hooten and over 40 other Indiana troops are deployed as members of the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875h Engineer Battalion.



MULTI-NATIONAL CORPS - IRAQ TOP GENERAL STOPS AND LOOKS IN ON ALPHA AND CHARLIE



Above Left and Right: Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, Commanding General of Multi-National Corps - Iraq, talks to troops from the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion, A and C Companies during a recent visit at Logistics Support Area Anaconda. (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. James C. Stacy, C Company, 875th Engineer Battalion.)

The Commanding General of Multi-National Corps - Iraq, recently stopped in on the 875th Engineer Battalion's A and C Companies to talk with Soldiers on the front lines of the battalion's critical mission.

Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, and MNC-I Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola visited Alpha and Charlie Companies April 23 at Logistics Support Area Anaconda. The general talked with many of the battalion's troops about their experiences on route clearance and route sanitation missions in central Iraq. He and Ciotola spent about a half hour with crews prior to their evening route clearance mission along a major highway near Balad.

MNC-I is part of Multi-National Force - Iraq, and is the tactical unit responsible for command and control of operations throughout Iraq. According to

the MNC-I website, the Iraq theatre of operations is divided into six major areas of responsibility maintained by forces from 26 countries.

After meeting and talking with the troops, Odierno wished them well.

"I appreciate your efforts, and your sacrifices," said Odierno. "Keep up the good work and good luck on your mission."

Odierno, a native of New Jersey, took over command of MNC-I in December 2006. He is also the Third U.S. Corp commander and a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

"I think he was pretty impressed with our guys," said Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th battalion commander. "I'm pleased that he got to talk to the Soldiers who actually do the missions."

Taking care of Soldiers

Angels Indeed

by Capt. Amy Bell

Some of us have the pleasure, through various ways, of becoming an “adopted” soldier. Many programs exist where Soldier’s names can be submitted with a profile, and people interested in adopting a Soldier scan the Soldier’s profiles and choose a soldier to adopt. The soldier’s profiles tell some about the soldier and any requests or needs the soldier may have. Volunteers then pick a soldier and begin to write, email, and/or send packages to their soldier. Soldier’s Angels (www.soldiersangels.com) and Any Soldier (www.anysoldier.com) are a couple of web-based examples of such organizations; there are many others to choose from as well.

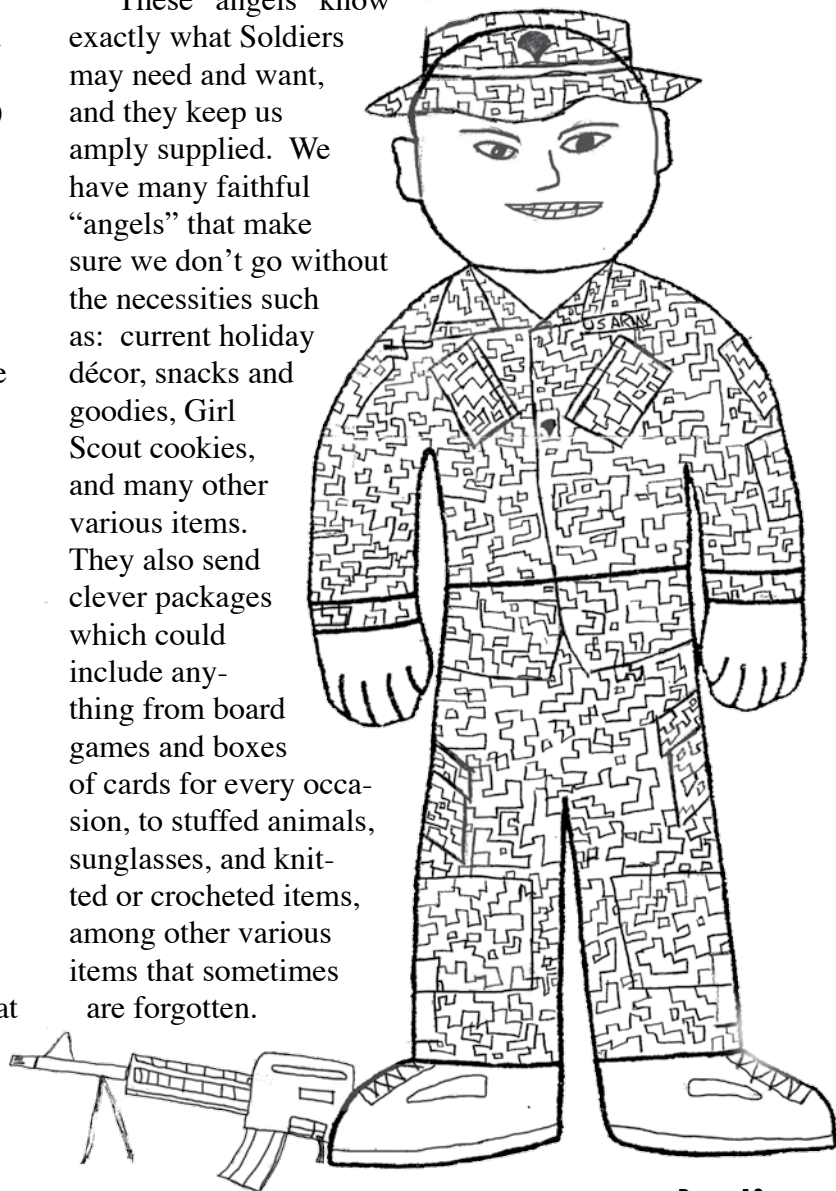
There are many ways in which our soldiers can become recommended to these organizations. Friends, family members or other Soldiers can submit a profile and request in for another Soldier, or the Soldiers themselves can post their own profile.

Reasons to recommend a Soldier may come in various forms; for example I heard one Soldier bragging about the fact that he “might just go the entire deployment without getting a piece of mail.” I just couldn’t have that, so I entered him on various websites to ensure that he gets plenty of attention. Trust me, he is very grateful. Other Soldiers are entered because their friends, family members or fellow Soldiers just know that a morale boost could be exactly what they need.

These volunteers take their jobs very seriously, and they provide a much needed morale boost at the most appropriate times. I don’t think that these angels even understand how special a letter or a box in the mail can be for a Soldier. Sure, we get emails daily from our family and friends back home, and that technology is vital in keeping us in touch with our loved ones, but there is nothing in this world like a good, old-fashioned, piece of mail or care pack-

age, whether it is from a friend or loved one, or one of these special “angels.” It doesn’t even matter what is in the box; it matters that someone, somewhere, thought about me today, and wanted me to have something special to make my deployment a little easier to bear.

These “angels” know exactly what Soldiers may need and want, and they keep us amply supplied. We have many faithful “angels” that make sure we don’t go without the necessities such as: current holiday décor, snacks and goodies, Girl Scout cookies, and many other various items. They also send clever packages which could include anything from board games and boxes of cards for every occasion, to stuffed animals, sunglasses, and knitted or crocheted items, among other various items that sometimes are forgotten.



Angels, continued from page 8

We have so many donated items from various organizations that we have wooden bins to separate the items by category. Soldiers do not even have to spend a dime on personal hygiene products because we have so many varieties here through donations and care packages.

Luckily, I recently was adopted by one such faithful “angel.” She is a wonderfully interesting woman from southern California, and she was dying to buy items and send care packages to our Soldiers. I submitted a shopping list from our females, and she and her other friends could not have gotten it soon enough.

As a favor to her, she wanted me to help her nephew with his school project. She sent a folded piece of paper with “Flat Stanley” on it. There is an outline of a person that you are supposed to clothe according to what he sees and does, and send back with souvenirs of his travels. The story of his travels will be recounted with various visual aids when he returns back to southern California for Nick to share with his class.

Flat Stanley traveled the over 7,000 miles to Iraq, and became a soldier for a little while with the 875th before returning home to his family. He ate at various restaurants here including Taco Bell, Burger King and Popeye’s Chicken. He also saw some of the equipment and met many soldiers. He even had time for a few photos with troops. I am grateful to Susan for letting us help her out for a change while having a little fun showing Flat Stanley around Iraq. I hope Nick is pleased with Flat Stanley’s accomplishments.



Above: *Spc. Stanley Lambchop, better known as “Flat Stanley,” tries out an armored front end loader.*

Right: *Flat Stanley takes a turn as a .50 Cal. gunner in an up-armored humvee during a recent route clearance mission with the 875th Engineer Battalion.*

Many thanks to the following 875th Angels for their support:

- Manda Whittle Crisp, Springdale, Ark.
- Gary and Jan Chapman, San Jose, Calif.
- Patricia Schmeling and the Test Kitchen at Taste of Home Magazine
- Dan and Rosemary Vinson, San Diego, Calif.
- Chaplain (Maj.) Phillip Pringle, Smithville, Mo.
- Tricia Woodward, Oceanside, Calif.
- Helen Marshall, Richardson, Texas
- Mt. Nebo Baptist Church, Lockwood, Mo.
- Marybeth Woodward, Oceanside, Calif.
- Linda Reeves and Betty Golaway, La Mesa, Calif.
- Jim Bowen and Marilyn Schiff, Henderson, Nev.
- David Briggs, Waverly, N.Y.
- Diana Sauls, Spanaway, Wa.
- The Ladies of Elegant Stitches, Miami, Fla.
- Hoxie Elementary School, 4th Grade
- Our Lady of the Holy Souls School, Little Rock, Ark.
- Soldiers’ Angels, northeast Arkansas chapter
- The people of northeast Arkansas
- The Adopt a Soldier program
- The Adopt a Chaplain program

We are so lucky, blessed and grateful to have people willing to support us faithfully like some of these “angels” have. We grow by learning their stories and becoming intertwined in their lives as they are with ours. The people that do this are such unselfish and genuinely compassionate people, and we want all of our “angels” to have the credit they deserve.



NAVY + ARMY = the...

NARMY

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

One of the greatest rivalries in college football is played out each fall when Army meets Navy, pitting the Midshipmen of Annapolis against the Cadets of West Point. But in Iraq, the lines between the services is blurring, resulting in a unique relationship between the Soldiers of the 875th Engineer Battalion and one Sailor.

"Yea, I'm in the 'Narmy' now," chuckles U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Chad Fluharty as he points to a physical fitness uniform T-shirt, hanging on the wall in his office, with the word NARMY in place of the usual 'ARMY.'

Chief Fluharty is the 875th's electronic warfare officer, and, despite being a 15 year veteran of the Navy, he wears the familiar Army Combat Uniform. When he arrived in January, many of the battalion's Soldiers had to look twice at his rank, some not being familiar with the traditional anchor and USN symbol. The best clue that he is different is the stitched 'U.S. NAVY' tape on his uniform where the 'U.S. ARMY' usually sits.

"It's a little strange being attached to an Army unit," says the moustached Fluharty, "but everyone in the 875th has treated me really well, and taken me in as one of the guys. In some ways, it's been easier working with the Army instead of the Navy, especially when it comes to the 875th.

"I think the only issue that has come up is the

rank structure," he continues. "Every once in a while I'll catch myself wanting to call the [battalion] commander 'skipper.' And I'll still address a captain as lieutenant now and then, but they seem not to mind so much."

So, why is one 'squid' working with a battalion of 'sappers?' "The Army hasn't kept up with the world of electronic warfare like the Navy has," explains the 'Chief.' "The Navy is still very active in this field, and we're able to bring our expertise to the fight here in Iraq."

According to Fluharty, the military's aggressive electronic warfare program has been able to effectively block insurgents' ability to remotely detonate improvised explosive devices. "We call it dominating the electronic warfare spectrum," says Fluharty. "It's definitely effective."

The Chief is active-duty Navy, and left his position as Instructor Coordinator at the Naval Avionics Technical Training Center in Pensacola, Fla., to volunteer for a tour in Iraq. The divorced father of two daughters is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, and lives in Pensacola.

Fluharty's influence is most notably felt during the battle update briefs with the commander and the staff. The Chief ends his brief with some sort of naval trivia, or a description of a type of ship. Fluharty is just one of the many Sailors, Airmen, Marines and

Soldiers located on Camp Striker, where it has become common to pass someone with either an eagle, star or crossed rifles in their rank.

“I’ve had over 14 years of sea duty,” says the Chief, “and this is something really different for me. We wear the Army uniform so we don’t stand out, but I’m proud of my role with the 875th. Everyone here has been really nice, and great to work with.”

The Navy Chief Petty Officer is equivalent to the Army Sgt. 1st Class, E-7. The breakdown of ranks in the Navy differs from the Army in that there are three distinct divisions. E-1 through E-3 are junior enlisted, and are addressed as a Seaman. E-4 through E-6 are considered non-commissioned officers, and are addressed as either Petty Officer 3rd, 2nd or 1st Class.

Once a Sailor makes E-7, he or she becomes a Chief, and is considered a senior enlisted. The service uniform for Chief, Senior Chief and Master Chief is also different from the other enlisted ranks, and is similar to that of a commissioned officer.

Fluharty arrived in Iraq in January, replacing a Navy Chief Warrant Officer whose tour of duty was complete. He will remain in Iraq as the electronic warfare officer for the 875th’s replacement battalion.

U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Chad Fluharty serves as the 875th Engineer Battalion’s electronic warfare officer, and is stationed at Camp Striker, Iraq.

Navy Term	Army Term
Bulkhead	Wall
Overhead	Ceiling
Deck	Floor
Head	Latrine
Ladder	Stairs
Swab	Mop
Seaman Recruit	Private
Seaman Apprentice	Private E-2
Seaman	Private 1st Class
Petty Officer 3rd	Corporal/Specialist
Petty Officer 2nd	Sergeant
Petty Officer 1st	Staff Sergeant
Chief Petty Officer	Sergeant 1st Class
Senior Chief	Master Sergeant
Master Chief	Sergeant Major
Ensign	2nd Lieutenant
Lieutenant Jr. Grade	1st Lieutenant
Lieutenant	Captain
Lieutenant Commander	Major
Commander	Lieutenant Colonel
Captain	Colonel
Admiral	General





From the Chaplain

By Capt. (Chaplain) Mark Golaway

I am an Army National Guard Chaplain by choice, not by default. I chose the Guard because of the people who serve there. Unlike the Regular, or full time Army, the Guard soldiers are comprised of individuals usually farther along in life, with life skills and trade skills outside their military training. They have more mature families and deeper roots within their communities. Guard soldiers respond to any and all national and state emergencies, always ready for the call to arms, assistance, or simply as a calming presence in times of turmoil and confusion. They are an incredible group to be associated with.

The American people have done a remarkable job of honoring this group of soldiers, quite unlike those in previous generations. We have learned the lessons of previous conflicts, whether popular or not, and have chosen to support those that serve. As a unit deploys, it is often inundated by support packages and cards. As the deployment continues, the pain of deployment amongst the community subsides, and the packages reduce to a trickle. (Thankfully, you all are an exception, for which we are each grateful!) Then, just before redeployment, the hearts and minds of the citizens at home returns to the plight of their neighbor Guardsmen and women, and the support again escalates to the pre-deployment level, this time focused on welcoming the warriors home.

Yet there is a group of warriors who receive no such awards. They get little to no recognition, praise, or support. While it is easy to send care, concern, and love to soldiers far from home, the ones who stay behind are sometimes out of sight and out of mind. These individuals who serve their nation in an equally compelling role are never fully given the credit they are due. I'm not speaking of the Rear Detachment soldiers in uniform; rather, I speak of the wives, husbands, parents, and children of those deployed.

There is no system within the military to award a wife, a husband, a mother, a father, or a child for their service to their country. They receive few care pack-

ages, and few calls regarding their health or welfare. Oh the calls come in, but often times the questions are, "How is your spouse," or "When are they coming home?" All too rare are the calls that ask, "How are YOU," or "Is there anything I can do?" Certainly, invitations are made to join in with family and friends at events, but without the soldier in the room, all too often the conversations turn and leave those already dying of loneliness outside the group, though they sit in the same room. For the months of deployment, the family left at home has to struggle to cover for the missing soldier. The family can't really adapt to the new system, because the loved one isn't out of their lives, just gone for a time. New routines are formed, but they never become comfortable. The ache of separation is ever present; the little things take on huge meaning.

When soldiers leave home, promises of support abound, and are overflowing. The soldier will see more of the support than the family in most cases. The family is still at home, but are seen only as a reminder of the soldier who is not. The soldiers can shut out reality and focus on the mission. They escape the pain by doing the job, missing home and hearth only when back in the rear at the end of the mission. The family is reminded daily by the pity in the passing faces of their position in society. They answer the same question for the hundredth time and try to smile. Then, they look for retreat at the end of the day, but find only the empty house, full of responsibilities, laughing at their misery. A soldier's immediate family is made up of individuals of a stronger thread than any who have worn the uniform. The real heroes are those who stay behind and mind the home. The true heroes are the ones who endure daily concern for their soldier, wincing at every news report, standing tall while finding themselves at a loss as to know how to stand at all.

I ask you to join me in honoring them. I know many soldiers' families read this, but I know there are also many readers in a position to reach out and impact every family member of every deployed soldier with care for these faithful Americans. Don't just recognize them on patriotic occasions, but bring them a meal, so they can sit around the table and talk without spending time having to cook and clean. Take the younger children so Mom or Dad can have an afternoon out, free from the double responsibility they took in marrying a soldier. Offer the things you can to ease their burden, and don't wait to be asked. Mark

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Chaplain, continued from page 14

their special days on your calendar, and don't miss them. Treat them with the dignity and respect you would a Medal of Honor winner, for they too pay the cost of war. Treat them not as those associated with a soldier, but as heroes in their own right, for that is what they are.

Blessings!



FROM THE TOP

Continued from page 4

with the simplest things – like notes in your lunch bag, hours of taxi service, and a hug. I want to especially acknowledge our many new and renewed mothers who have brought a new life into the world since our deployment. Your strength is a true inspiration to us. Your unyielding support provides us all with the ability to persevere. I want to give a big thanks to my Mom for always showing me the way. Happy Mother's Day!

Thank you for all that you do, every day. You are all patriots and warriors. God bless Vermont, Indiana, Arkansas and the friends and family of the 875th Engineer Battalion.

Essayons – Ready and Willing!

COL Patricia Anslow

Company Corner from page 5

Charlie Company

Hotdog, it's a great day to be in Charlie Company.

I just want to continue to thank you for all of the support that you are giving us. Everyone is rolling right along on the mission, and we are well known over here. When something needs to be done and 875th is involved, you know great things will happen. Of course, this is no surprise to any of us.

We as men have heard all of our lives that "behind every good man is a great woman." That has been proven true many times, and you will not get any argument from me. Many of us have been richly blessed by what we have learned at our mother's side. Mothers are always there when no one else is, and it is the mother who has the deepest concerns, worries and daily prayers. Proverbs 31 says that her children will rise up and call her blessed.

Military life can be a challenge for all of us. When we train, we train hard to get through the fear, sweat and tears. We often do this with no worries of paying bills, cleaning house, fixing toilets, fires, floods, vehicle breakdowns, sick kids, goats, dogs, cats, and fixing meals. These are just a few ex-

amples that I have heard from the guys over the past day or so. And that's not mentioning the mowing and painting, and the cuts, stitches and tears that you tend to. I want to thank each of you for taking care of the daily headaches that we have forgotten. We all talk about the honey-do list that will be waiting on us, but I don't believe any of us will mind.

I want to thank each of you for taking care of us while we are here; we have been richly blessed by what you have done for us. We honor each of you for your support, and for being a mother. You're the great woman behind us. You are the true backbone of the military, as I don't believe any of us would be here if it was not for your support and love. You are the rays of sunshine that I see in the eyes of the guys when they talk about home.

I pray that we see you all soon, and that each of you have a wonderful Mother's Day. We will stop what we are doing and send up a prayer for you all. "Of all the earthly things God gives, there's one above all others: It is the precious, priceless gift of loving Christian mothers." -Anonymous.

Happy Mother's Day from Iraq.

THANKS FOR BEING YOU!!

CPT Timothy P. Norman

"My Dad, my hero"

Soldier's daughter writes essay for contest



Lori Lynn Sims, 19 year old daughter of Headquarters, Headquarters Company 1st Sgt. Michael Sims, (left with her father), wrote and submitted the essay below for a chance to win one of 25 \$1,000 scholarships to military dependent children, offered by Homefront America, Inc.

The Piggott, Ark., native submitted her essay to the 2007 "American Patriot Freedom Scholarship Award" through the state Family Readiness Group. According to Homefront America's internet site, student essays are to address one of four categories, with winners to be announced on May 21. Lori's essay is being submitted in the "My Dad/Mom, My Hero" category. She is currently a student at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

Everyone has his or her own description of a hero. Some people may have immortal heroes; the kind of heroes that are shown on television that have super strength, the ability to fly, and x-ray vision. In my personal opinion, a hero is someone that displays bravery, courage, and thinks of others before they think of their self. The person in my life that has these characteristics is my dad. My hero is mortal and an influential part of my life.

My idea of bravery is facing danger without showing fear. My dad displays this characteristic. He is currently serving in Iraq. Last year in July, he left to go train. A few months later, he went to Iraq. I think it took a great deal of bravery for him to leave his family behind and go to a foreign country. I know he really did not have a choice, but the attitude he displayed during this time was one of bravery. He did not show any fear as he left, and I think that helped my mother and I to deal with this transition. I know that it was not easy on him, but he didn't make it obvious to us. He appeared strong, and made us believe he was invincible. As unrealistic as it seems, it helped.

I once heard that courage is the ability to confront fear, pain, danger, and uncertainty. My dad definitely displays these qualities. He had to deal with the fear

of possibly never seeing his loved ones again. He dealt with the pain of leaving us here without him for the first time in my eighteen years of life. He also dealt with the uncertainty of what Iraq would be like. He deals with not knowing what tomorrow will bring, and when he will see us again.

My dad is the type of person that thinks of others before he thinks of his self. He has always been the type to be considerate of my feelings and my mother's feelings. He still worries about us even though he is the one in the dangerous place. He also focuses on caring for his troops more than his self. He makes me aware that I should be considerate of other's as well. Another way he displays this characteristic is by getting up early every morning in Iraq to talk to my mother and me before we go to bed. He does not do this just for his benefit. He does not want us to worry about him, so he makes time for us to check on him.

I think my dad is the prime example of a hero. He is brave, courageous, and thoughtful. He instills these values in me, and sets an example for me. He is not the type of hero some may believe in, but that does not matter to me. Even though he has no super powers, he is still my hero and will be for the rest of my life.

Lori Lynn Sims

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Clifton Wright, SPC	01	C Co.	Kevin Horn, SPC	14	A Co.
David Harrison, SPC	03	A Co.	Timothy Doyle, SSG	15	131st
Tony Maddox, SGT	03	A Co.	Kenneth Baker, CW4	16	HHC
James Munch, SGT	03	131st	Jeremy Qualls, SGT	16	C Co.
Rudy Rivas, SGT	03	C Co.	Dwayne Somers, SFC	16	C Co.
Robert Emmons, SPC	04	C Co.	Aaron Shreeves, SPC	18	C Co.
Jonathan Eggerman, SPC	05	HHC	Kenneth Ray, PFC	19	A Co.
Nicholas Johnson, SPC	05	HHC	Jackie Davis, PFC	20	131st
Jason Wise, SPC	06	A Co.	Erich Smallwood, SPC	20	A Co.
Joel Boyett, SGT	07	A Co.	Bradley Buehrer, SPC	21	C Co.
Telly Lawson, SPC	07	A Co.	James Harmon, SPC	22	C Co.
David Turpin, SSG	08	A Co.	Jacob Cox, SGT	23	131st
George Collins, 1LT	09	A Co.	Brian Massey, SSG	23	A Co.
Vance Combs, SGT	09	C Co.	James Duggan, SSG	24	131st
Tyler Fisk, SPC	09	131st	Rusty Fontenot, 1LT	24	HHC
Gideon Grissom, SPC	10	A Co.	Ricky Massey, SPC	24	131st
Mack Thompson, MSG	10	HHC	Charles Tucker, SGT	25	C Co.
Daniel Bulkley, SPC	11	C Co.	Steve Beck, SPC	27	A Co.
Barritt Ruffin, PFC	11	A Co.	Christopher Caughron, SPC	27	131st
Dustin Stinson, SSG	11	131st	Jason Davis, SPC	28	HHC
John Askins, SPC	12	131st	David Gross, SPC	28	C Co.
Bradley Ingle, SPC	13	C Co.	Kevin Vines, MAJ	28	HHC
Scott Carruthers, SGT	14	A Co.	Candance Dobbin, SPC	29	HHC

*Master Sgt. Leslie Benoit of Colchester, Vt., operates a grader on Camp Striker, Iraq.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney*

Surviving a husband's deployment

One wife talks about coping

By DeAnna Lewis

Survive. By the dictionary's definition, it means to remain active; endure. That is what I have been doing since this deployment began – I have been finding ways to survive until this is all over with.

Having never been separated from my husband for more than six weeks, and having never been through a deployment, I really didn't know what to expect. I am a reader, so I got online and started looking up all sorts of information that is offered from those of previous deployments. But nothing could prepare me for the experiences that my family and I would face.

I guess of all the emotions that one feels in times like this – frustration, anxiety, elation, depression, guilt – the one that has been most overwhelming for me is the feeling of loneliness and the feeling of losing time. Even though others have stepped in to go places with me and help keep my mind off things, I still find myself wishing my husband were here to share in the events. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think of the occasions and precious memories that he has missed and even though I have tried hard to take pictures and videos to chronicle the year, nothing will ever be able to give us back the time we have lost together as a family. For us, time moves on, although slowly and in different time zones.

There is a huge hole in our family and each one of us is trying to deal with it in our own way. My oldest son, age 11, likes to talk about all of the things he and his dad will do when he gets home like hunting and camping trips that were missed out on this year. My middle son, age 4, began this journey throwing tantrums and crying uncontrollably. After a few months, those incidents lessened and now he talks about our family vacation last year that we took right before the deployment. For him, that is probably the last times he remembers us being together as a family and he just wants to hang on to it. And then there is the youngest, age 2. She just goes around, saying, "I miss my daddy. You miss my daddy?" She repeats

this statement until you acknowledge that yes, you miss her daddy, too.

However, all is not bad. It has been a proud and humbling experience to be the family member of one serving our country overseas. People always talk of the soldiers that have gone before, so that we might have a better life. There have also been families that have waited for them and kept things moving along until they come home. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve my country in this way and to give back to the families that have sacrificed so that we can have a better life. Now, I am a member of this group, and I have a job to do. I take very seriously the picture that I portray of this deployment to others. I try never to be negative of military issues when others comment. I simply state my support for those answering the call to duty. I have to fight to keep myself and my family moving along, fighting, enduring until our soldier comes home.



DeAnna Lewis' husband is Spc. Alvin Lewis, the Chaplain's Assistant, who is deployed with the 875th Engineer Battalion. (Photo provided by Spc. Lewis.)



Tollette agrees to six more as Guard Soldier

Spc. Michael B. Tollette, Jr., raised his right hand and took the oath of enlistment for six more years as an Arkansas Army National Guard member April 30.

The 24 year old Tollette is a native of Albion, Mi., where his father, Michael, Sr., and his mother Lourdes reside. This is his second enlistment.

Tollette is deployed with the Arkansas Army Na-

tional Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion as a member of the Headquarters, Headquarters Company support platoon. Capt. Joshua Simmons, HHC commander, and HHC 1st Sgt. Michael Sims administered the oath to Tollette outside of the support platoon building at Camp Striker, Iraq.

The battalion is over half way through a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Middleton takes the plunge, re-ups for six



Sgt. Joe Middleton of Headquarters, Headquarters Company of the 875th Engineer Battalion re-enlisted in the National Guard April 30 at Camp Striker, Iraq.

Middleton, a native of Chicago, Ill., lives in Jonesboro, Ark., with his wife Creola and their six children. He has spent seven years with the 875th, which is on a yearlong deployment to Iraq, and re-enlisted for six more. He serves as a driver for HHC's support platoon and is a cook for a Jonesboro area non-profit organization in his civilian life.

Capt. Joshua Simmons HHC commander, and 1st Lt. Mark White, support platoon commander, administered the oath of enlistment to Middleton in front of the up-armored humvee that he drives on support platoon missions.



Arkansas Democrat Gazette reporter Amy Schlesing, and photojournalist Staton Breidenthal have arrived in Iraq and are embeded with the 875th Engineer Battalion through July 1. Ms. Schlesing spent a year embeded with the Arkansas Army National Guard's 39th Brigade Combat Team while the unit was deployed to Iraq.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette news team embeds with engineers through June

The 875th Engineer Battalion will be in the headlines of the largest daily newspaper in Arkansas.

Amy Schlesing and Staton Breidenthal from the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette are embeded with the 875th through July 1.

The pair arrived at Camp Striker on May 4, and have already begun work on several story ideas. While both were embeded with the Arkansas Army National Gaurd's 39th Brigade Combat Team during a 18 month mobilization two years ago, Amy spent an entire year with the unit in Iraq. Staton was embeded for four months.

Schlesing is a 1995 graduate of the University of Arkansas and has been working as a print journalist since 1994. She joined the Democrat-Gazette in 1999 and has covered the military beat since 2002.

"My intent is to tell the stories of the Soldiers,

both as they patrol, and as they go through day-to-day life in a war zone," said Schlesing on her embed application.

Breidenthal is a 1989 graduate of Kansas University, and has been a photojournalist since 1991.

In addition to sending stories back to the newspaper for publication, Schlesing keeps an online blog about her experiences in the Iraqi theatre of operations. Anyone interested can go online to: www2.arkansasonline.com/blogs/notes-from-a-war/ to keep up with her writings.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette is also available online with a subscription to the newspaper. More information can be found at: www2.arkansasonline.com.

The news duo are also planning on covering deployed troops from the Arkansas National Guard's 77th Aviation Brigade.

Happy Mothers' Day



From the 8th