

WARHORSE



RIDER

Serving the Soldiers, Civilians and Families of 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Vol. 1, Issue 4

Jan. 2009

*Warhorse Brigade
builds relationships
with Iraqi people*



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On the Cover:

1st Lt. Matthew Rorebeck and "Skeeter," walk hand in hand down the market street during a patrol in Afak Dec. 19.
photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente,
2nd BCT, 4th ID PAO

Warhorse Sends: Death of three Warhorse Soldiers



Warhorse Family, it is with a heavy heart that I tell you that we lost three of our brothers on Christmas Eve. These brave Soldiers were killed as a result of a vehicle accident in Babil province while on patrol.

SSG Christopher Smith, SPC Stephen Zapasnik, and SPC Stephen Okray were all members of Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery. They were crossing a bridge over a canal when the bridge collapsed rolling their vehicle upside down into water and mud.

Their fellow Soldiers, platoon medics, local Iraqis, Battalion Recovery and Command assets, and Air MEDE-

VAC crews all worked feverishly to do everything they could to rescue and revive the Soldiers, tragically they were unsuccessful.

SSG Smith served for seven years in the United States Army, this was his second deployment in support of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. SPC Zapasnik served almost two years and SPC Okray served for three years. This was their first deployment.

We will conduct a memorial at the Convoy Support Center Scania here in Iraq on December 28 at 7:30 pm. There will also be a memorial held at Fort Carson, please contact your Rear Detachment chain of command or your FRG for further information.

I ask for each of you to place the families of SSG Smith, SPC Zapasnik and SPC Okray in your prayers.

We are Warhorse!

HENRY A. KIEVENAAR, III
COL, AR
Commander

WARHORSE RIDER

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The *Warhorse Rider* is produced in the interest of the Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

The *Warhorse Rider* is an Army-funded newsletter authorized under provision of AR 360-1.

Contents of The *Warhorse Rider* are not necessarily the views of, nor endorsed by the, U.S. government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 4th Infantry Division.

All editorial content of The *Warhorse*

Rider is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 2nd Brigade Combat-Team Public Affairs Office.

Do you have a story to share? The *Warhorse Rider* welcomes articles, commentary, and photos from readers.

The *Warhorse Rider* reserves the right to edit submissions selected for the paper.

Submissions and requests for further information should be emailed to the editor: carlos.burger@iraq.centcom.mil.



Photo by Maj. Tanya Bradsher, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO

Father, son spend holidays together in Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Carlos M. Burger II
2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div. PAO

Being away from home for the holidays is a difficult experience for Soldiers and their Families. One father and son, however is making their holiday season the best they can: by spending their time together in Iraq.

Dr. Rick Brennan Jr., a Multi-National Forces-Iraq counter-intelligence contractor and his son, 1st Lt. Richard Brennan III, executive officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, are making time to see one another and enjoy the holidays while deployed.

"It's a nice piece of home, a break from the everyday events and an uplift to see a Family member," said Richard.

The Brennans are natives of Tempe, Ariz., and haven't seen each other since Richard deployed last August. He couldn't be happier to see his son.

"It's good to see my son doing something for his country; it makes a dad proud to see his son doing good

stuff. I'm proud he's doing what he wants to do," Dr. Brennan said.

Dr. Brennan, a retired Major and holds a PhD in Political Science, volunteered to deploy through the company he works for, something he didn't get a chance to do while he served in the Army.

He informed his bosses of his son's whereabouts and made the necessary arrangements to see him this Thanksgiving.

The father and son talked, played darts, had dinner, and watched football on Thanksgiving.

While he was pleasantly surprised by his dad's appearance, Richard believes he knew his father would one day step foot onto a combat zone.

"I wasn't surprised he came to Iraq. I know he felt he missed out on being able to deploy so he was finally able to fulfill that piece," said Richard.

Dr. Brennan said that his choice to deploy came from a different source; Richard's mother.


"She said to me, Richard is over there, why don't you go? It would be

nice to have someone on that side of the world to talk to," he said.

Both father and son will spend a lot of time in country; Richard is on a 12-month tour and his father has already spent more than 15 months in Iraq. Their close proximity to one another makes the tour easier, especially since they know they either one is just a phone call away.

"It's great to be able to pick up a phone and call my son and chat for a little bit," Dr. Brennan said.

The two have plans to get together again for Christmas. Richard said that for those few individual who have Family members who are in country, being able to see them, even briefly, is good for the spirit.

"It's a great morale booster. (Being deployed) is not the easiest job. Even being able to communicate with Family over the phone can be difficult at times. Having my dad here, for anyone to have Family here is great to have that bridge back home," he said. 



Construction proceeds on a new patrol base in Hillah Dec. 4. The 1-10th Cav. Regt. will move its forces to Hillah in the coming weeks where they will partner with 31st Bde., 8th Iraqi Army Div.

1-10th Cav. Regt. sets stage for move to Hillah

By Sgt. David Turner
4th BCT 3rd Inf. Div. PAO

The commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division visited Hillah Dec. 4 to see the construction of a new patrol base in the capital of Babil Province.

Col. Thomas James met with Lt. Col. William Benson, commander of the 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, whose troops will be moving to the new base in the coming weeks. Patrol Base Hillah is co-located with the headquarters of the 31st Brigade, 8th Iraqi Army Division, as well as a military transition team, which works closely with the IA brigade.

“Living at the patrol base, embedded with the Iraqi Army, is exactly the

right way to foster relationships and promote security,” said Benson. “We are always safer when we are embedded, and it makes the service in Iraq much more rewarding.”

“Living at the patrol base, embedded with the Iraqi Army, is exactly the right way to foster relationships and promote security,”

*Lt. Col. William Benson,
commander, 1-10th Cav.*

The 1-10th Cav. Regt., currently deployed in both Babil and Wasit Provinces, will concentrate its forces in Babil to partner with the 31st IA Bde. Benson said his Soldiers will work closely with the Babil Provincial Reconstruction Team, based in Hillah, as well as local Iraqi Security Forces

and Coalition military trainers.

Benson, whose troops currently work with the 32nd IA Bde., said he is looking forward to working with his new partners.

“The 31st IA Brigade is already recognized as one of the best brigades in the Iraqi Army. The officers and Soldiers of the 31st (IA) Brigade prove this every day,” said Benson. “It makes it enjoyable to come to work when you are working with a professional organization and we look forward to continuing to support the people of Hillah and Babil Province.”





Spc. Maurice Leon Oldham Jr., plays foosball with the members of the Iraqi Security Forces during a recent patrol. Oldham is a fire direction specialist in Bravo Battery, -16 FA, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

3-16 Soldier balances family with job, deployment

By 1st Lt. Matthew Bauer
3-16th FA, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Spc. Maurice Leon Oldham Jr., has experienced much since April 18, the day when Oldham and his wife, Erica, gave birth to the couple's first son, Keiandre.

"It was hectic, but it was a good day. My son is beautiful," said the 23-year-old Oldham.

Since then, they have been learning the trade of parenthood together and at a quite rapid pace. With this new addition to the family, Oldham has felt the added weight.

"I have mastered the art of prioritizing. I am able to go to work and finish it all there, and then come home to my family," the St. Louis native said.

Oldham comes from a military family. His father is currently serving as the Noncommissioned officer in

charge of the Chaplains' Assistants for Fort Carson, Colo., which Oldham is also stationed.


In April, Oldham was acting as the senior fire direction specialist in Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. At the time, he was busy computing firing data to ensure the safe and accurate shooting of M109A6 Paladins, which he did quite professionally. Eight months and an Iraq deployment later, Oldham is now the "fix-it" man for his platoon. He normally is the dismount for Sgt. 1st Class Micheal Perkins, his platoon sergeant.

"Oldham is crucial to our platoon. When he is not my dismount, he is either driving a vehicle or acting as the gunner. He can gun on either the M240B or the 50 Cal. The younger guys in the platoon look up to him,"

said Perkins.

With both a growing family and growing responsibilities, Oldham is determined to get promoted. He said he would welcome the greater responsibilities, as well as the nice pay raise to take care of his family. He hopes the next month's promotion cutoff scores will be low enough for him to advance. But Oldham doesn't plan on stopping there.

"E-6 in the next year and a half, that's my short term goal in the Army. My long term goal is to achieve the highest rank I can and take care of Soldiers," said Oldham. "I just can't wait to get home and watch my son grow!"

With a family support system at home that gives so much, it is not surprising that Oldham is able to balance it all and be the best Soldier he can be while away from home. 

Soldier Spotlight



Photo by Staff Sgt. Carlos M. Burger II, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO

Pfcs. Andrew and Katherine French, topographic analysts, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., spend their over-lapping two hours at work together.

Army brings two STB Soldiers together

**By Spc. Tiffany Evans
MND-C PAO**

Every couple has a story about how they met. Two Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, has the Army to thank for each other. Without the Army, they may have never met.

Privates Andrew and Katherine French, topographic analysts, met at Advanced Individual Training at Fort Belvoir, Va. During their 6 months at AIT, the couple became friends and as their relationship grew, they discussed marriage.

"Most of our time together was spent on the weekends," said Katherine, 26, a native of Prior Lake, Minn.

"When you know, you know. One weekend toward the end, Andrew proposed."

There was only one slight kink in this love story. The Soldiers were projected assignments in much different places: Katherine had orders for Colorado, and Andrew orders for Hawaii. Katherine found herself praying for her orders to change and say Hawaii.

"Much to our surprise, the week after I proposed to Katherine, my orders changed to Fort Carson, Colorado," said Andrew, 21, a native of Denton, Texas. "After graduating and getting to Fort Carson, we learned that we were assigned to the same unit."

On April 28 the couple married, and soon after, they meet each other's families for the first time.

Katherine, who said her decision to join the Army was harder for her parents than her decision to get married, said they just adore Andrew. They agreed the young couple was made for each other, and they had never seen their daughter happier.

"My parents see her as a daughter and a great addition to the family," Andrew said. "They think this marriage is very good for us and (are) happy for us."

Through AIT the couple learned how to walk the line between the professional and home atmosphere. This paid off because they were able to show their new section how well they work together without allowing their personal relationship to interfere.

"We are a great team at work even if we only work a couple of hours together every day," Katherine said. "We've only been deployed about 3 months and are very blessed to be deployed together."

Their deployment together keeps their morale high, but they do not flaunt it in front of their fellow Soldiers who are not so lucky to have their spouses with them.

"We know how rare it is to be deployed and in the same unit as your spouse," Andrew said. "God has a plan for us, and we are doing our best to be modest about our blessings."

Before joining the Army, both Soldiers said their lives were going nowhere fast. Each wanted a new career, to work on college, gain benefits, do something for their country and better themselves.

"The Army has been great for me and introduced me to my wife, who changed my life for the better," Andrew said. "Neither of us would have believed we'd meet our spouse in the Army."

"Being together on this deployment has helped us to grow closer mentally, emotionally and spiritually," Andrew and Katherine said. "God gave us the greatest gift... each other." 🇺🇸



photo by Air Force Senior Airman Eric Harris, 1st ComCam Sqdn.

1st Lt. Mark Finley, fire support officer for 2-8 IN, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., shakes the hand of an Iraqi child during the humanitarian aid mission.



photo by Air Force Senior Airman Eric Harris, 1st ComCam Sqdn.

An Iraqi child walks home with a blanket given to them from 2-8 IN, and the Diwaniya Police.

2-8 IN give humanitarian aid in Diwaniya

By Maj. Tanya Bradsher
2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div. PAO

Iraqi Police officers and U.S. Forces delivered humanitarian aid packages to needy families in Diwaniya Dec. 9.

Ad-Diwaniya police officers, along with Soldiers from 'Beast' Company, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, and Women's Hope and Children's Future, a non-governmental organization, conducted the operation to give food and supplies for the Eid al Adha, a holy celebration.

More than 60 selected families received bags of meat and supplies, such as blankets and water, from the IP and WHCF. The 8th Iraqi Army Division will also participate in the aid drop, giving the families more supplies from their compound.

Humanitarian supplies will also be distributed to 30 additional families who can benefit the most from them, said Hiba A'aiyd Najem, WHCF representative. 🇮🇶

2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Div.



Stolarcek gazes past the box at distant memories after unpacking a sentiment-laden Christmas tree at Camp Echo Dec. 2. The tree was first sent to his father during a deployment to Vietnam in 1970, when Stolarcek was a little boy and is now on its third deployment to the Middle East with him.

Combat Christmas Tree: Family tree bears wealth of Christmas history

By Sgt. Rodney Foliente,
2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO

He carefully opens the package sent to him by his mother, saving the address label to add to the others that chronicle the history and many destinations the contents have travelled.

Smiles of anticipation and flickers of various emotions flit across his face as he describes the family history of what lies beneath the brown paper wrapping.

"This is the box," announced

Maj. Bo Stolarcek, the communications officer-in-charge for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. He pointed to the original shipping label on the unwrapped parcel, dated December 1970 and addressed to his father, William, a captain and pilot with the 242nd ASH "Muleskinners" Helicopter Battalion, 1st Armor Division, deployed to Vietnam.

Cradled inside the vintage box was an artificial Christmas tree with the original star, ornaments and garland. Also in the box, was a history of the

tree with deployment letters, previous shipping labels, some newer ornaments and two strands of newer lights.

The tree was originally purchased from a J.C. Penney's mail order catalogue by the family and shipped to his father during his second tour in Vietnam.

"I was a year old at the time, and my brother was 5 when my mom sent this to my dad," he said, looking far away to memories of his father and Family.

He, his mother, Rose, and his brother, Billy, were at Fort Hood,

Texas, at the time, thinking of their Soldier in Vietnam. Stolarcek was too young at the time to really remember that Christmas, but the tree and the ensuing tradition and traditions mean a great deal to him.

Every Christmas since then, the tree was set up as a reminder of what the Family endured in service to their country and of the familial bonds that distance could not sever.

“My mom puts the tree up every Christmas ... when it’s not deployed,” he said with a laugh.

Stolarcek’s father passed away 12 years ago. During the holidays, his memory is kept vibrant and honored with the tradition of the sparkling Christmas tree.

Stolarcek fondly joked that the tree is similar to that featured in “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” In the animated movie, the Peanuts gang scoffed Charlie Brown and his little tree as pathetic, but in the end, the tree proved special to everyone.

The deployment tree stands at less than three feet, but to the Stolarcek Family it towers, built up with their own private thoughts and sentiments.

When Stolarcek, from Dover, Fla., got older and followed in his father’s footsteps by joining the Army, he also faced deployments, each time receiving the tree by mail from his mother, who also calls Dover home.

The first Christmas it was sent to him was in 1990, during Operation Desert Shield/ Desert Storm in Iraq, where he served as a specialist with the 160th Military Police Battalion, 16th Military Police Airborne Brigade, based out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

“When Desert Shield/ Desert Storm came around, she thought it was appropriate to send it to me,” he said, sending it back after the holiday season.

“Things were a lot different during Desert Shield/ Desert Storm. We didn’t have a lot of the modern conveniences that we now have (during deployment). At the time, it was the only tree that we had in my battalion, so it

was something nice to brighten up the Soldiers.”

His mother sent the tree to him again in 2005, when he deployed as a captain with the 160th Signal Brigade to Kuwait, where the tree spread its cheer in the tactical network operation center.

“Everyone thought it was pretty cool,” he said, especially after he shared its history with the Soldiers. “I sent it home then, not knowing that a couple of years later, we’d be back here again.”

His father also served as an infantry platoon leader with 4th Inf. Div., with whom Stolarcek is currently deployed. And now, the tree is back in Iraq, four deployments tucked beneath its belt of garland; once to Vietnam with his father, and three times to the Middle East with Stolarcek.

“It will hopefully brighten the spirits of the Soldiers here who get to see it every day and remember what time of the year it is,” he said.

He decorated the green tree with a shiny red, silver and gold star; garland and gold-colored ornaments; and garland of red, green, blue, silver and gold. Adding to the original decorations, he wreathed the tree in a new strand of colored lights, newer ornaments from previous deployments and a brand new ornament from a Family friend.

“It’s been around the world. It may not be the fanciest-looking tree, but it certainly has some character, and it’s special to our family,” said Stolarcek proudly. “It’s kind of a family heirloom, which certainly will be passed down from me to my children.”

He said this tradition is special for him, as is Christmas time, sharing that his favorite childhood memory of Christmas “was racing down the stairs and seeing the presents under the tree. Those memories are burned and engraved in me, and now, I get to see the same expressions on my kids’ faces.”


Except for this year. The same duty that called him to deploy before, and his father before him, requires one

more Christmas apart.

“I’m not going to be with my Family this year, but a part of them is with me,” he said with a thickening voice and the marks of that sacrifice written across his face.

He stares at the tree, losing himself to memories of past and present. With a swirl of thought, he thinks perhaps of his father, mother, brother, himself as a little boy and now a man with his wife, Laura, his children; 12-year-old daughter, Sarah; 9-year-old daughter, Caroline; and his 8-year-old son, William, named after the tree’s original keeper.

To many people, the Christmas tree is an icon to spark a bedecked wreath of Christmas memories of Family and friends. It is symbol of goodwill and generosity as it livens up a room.

Where a living tree requires earth, water and sunlight, the tree of aluminum and plastic has been nurtured with love and sacrifice, fed with memories and shines with its own light to Stolarcek and generations of his family. Imbued with heritage and tradition, its future remains open and untold. 



Sgt. Cole West, team leader, Co. A, 2-8 IN, laughs with Iraqi boys during a market patrol in Afak Dec. 19.

2-8 IN JOINT PATROL BUILDS RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE OF AFAK

By Sgt. Rodney Foliente,
2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO

Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 8th Iraqi Army, and Company A, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, conducted a patrol in the market streets of Afak Dec. 19.

Iraqi and American Soldiers conducted the mission to build a greater relationship with the citizens and learn more of the area.

"The patrols are good. We learn from (the) people what they need," said Mahmoud, an Iraqi Soldier. He said he enjoys getting out and interacting with the citizens, letting them know the Iraqi Security Forces are there for them.

"Relationships are definitely built between ourselves and the people who are living in the towns by our going out and visiting them in their markets and in their towns and talking to them about what is important to them," said 1st Lt. Matthew Rorebeck, platoon leader with Co. A, 2-8 IN.

"The importance of bringing the Iraqi Army out is to help to professionalize them out in the (area of operations) so that the people in the cities and villages can see what they are doing. It helps to give the people more confidence in what the ISF is doing," said Rorebeck, who comes from Norwalk, Iowa.

"It's important to interact with the people. If you had someone else in your country, you'd want to know what they're all about and what they're doing," said Sgt. Cole West, team leader, Co. A, 2-8 IN.

“This is their town, they know where everything is and how everything operates. If there’s something going on in your town, you’re going to know about it. If we build a steady relationship with them and a good foundation they’re going to be more willing to trust us. If they need something, they’ll tell us. They’re just more trusting overall,” said West, who hails from Arnold, Mo.

“I like the Soldiers,” said a young boy named Safi. “I may be Soldier. I like to talk (with) them.” He walked off and spoke to an Iraqi and American

Soldier, asking questions in English when he could, in Arabic, when he couldn’t find the right phrase or word.

“I love going on these missions. I love to interact with people. Interacting with the kids is the best part of it. They’re crazy and a lot of fun. A lot of them are trying to learn English in school and they come up to you but it’s nice to hear your own language from somebody else,” said West, adding that he also gets to help teach them more English.

As if to emphasize the point, Safi said, “I know some English (which)

I learn from school. I learn also from Soldiers.” The 4th grade student also offered his services to some of the U.S. Soldiers, teaching them phrases in Arabic, as the relationship between Americans and Iraqis, Soldiers and civilians, deepens and takes root. 🇺🇸



Spc. Thomas Anderson, medic with Co. A, 2-8 IN, gets a high-five from “Skeeter” during a market patrol in Afak Dec. 19.



Around AO Warhorse



U.S. Army Spc. Chris Caldwell of Oklahoma City, Okla., and Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, talks to Iraqi children during a visit to the Babylon Center for Economy Development in Iskandariyah, Dec. 3. U.S. Navy photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class James Wagner, Combat Camera



Miami Dolphin cheerleaders (from right to left) Lilly Robbins, Kayla Patterson and Ariana Aubert, sign autographs and meet with Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, at Camp Echo Dec. 20. Photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div. PAO.



A little boy puts on a Warhorse Soldier's boots as he proudly bears the Iraqi flag in Diwaniya Dec. 14. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mark Glaze, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.



Spc. Joshua Swankier, gunner, Co. D, cuts a piece of wood for a project in his room at PB Howell Nov. 21. The Dog Crib Competition spans the month of December and the winning room will receive internet connection wired directly from the patrol base's Morale, Welfare and Recreation Center. Photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO.



Carolers from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., sing at the Brigade headquarters at Camp Echo. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO.



Pvt. Christopher Brown, combat medic with HHC, 1-67 AR, gives an anthrax shot to a Soldier at FOB McHenry in November.

1-67 AR medics keep Soldiers in the fight

By Sgt. Rodney Foliente
2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO

Soldiers have a reputation of being rough and tough, able to withstand the rigors of battles, the elements and anything else that stands in the way of mission accomplishment.

But even strong and determined Soldiers get sick or hurt, and when that happens, it is other Soldiers that patch them up and get them back into the game.

At the forefront of that medical treatment for 1st Combined Arms Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th

Infantry Division, are the combat medics of Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

Some of the medics work at the battalion aid station at Forward Operating Base McHenry, while the remaining HHC medics are attached to each of the battalion's companies, serving at the various locations each unit currently calls home.

"Combat arms (units) can't go anywhere without a medic," said Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Bethea, medic platoon sergeant, HHC, 1-67 AR. Medics have been around as long as the Army has, he said.

"We take care of the sick and the wounded," said Bethea, adding that

it does not matter if they are treating someone in an aid station or on the battlefield with bullets flying; taking care of the Soldiers is what medics do.

For the sick and wounded that come to the aid station, the medics most often do the initial assessment, take vital signs and prepare the patient for the physician's assistant and doctor. As the PA and doctor treat patients they also typically involve their medics, teaching them as they go along, added Bethea, who comes from Laurinburg, N.C.

After aid station medics have learned more about assessing and treating patients and prove capable to take the next step, they become line

medics attached to the companies and platoons.

“When they get their skills up and running and if we assess they can handle the mission outside the aid station, then we send them out to the line companies,” said Bethea. Those medics need to know how to improvise on the spot, taking charge of the situation without the benefit of a doctor looking over their shoulders.

“Being in an aid station, you learn a lot, but now I want to go to the line,” said Pvt. Christopher Brown, combat medic, HHC, 1-67 AR, who is slated to possibly switch over to a line medic this month. “You’ve got to be prepared to see anything that comes to you.” He said he is eager for the opportunity and ready for the responsibility.

“I chose to be a medic because I’ve always wanted to be in the medical field, working on patients to help them,” said Brown, who calls Ceres, Calif., home. “I want to be a paramedic in the trauma field, so I figure if I can fix a guy here, I’m pretty sure I can fix a guy anywhere.”

The work of both the line medics and aid station staff complement each other, said Brown. When a line medic treats a Soldier on the battlefield, that Soldier is later assessed by the aid station staff and if necessary, given additional treatment. Also, if a Soldier is treated in the aid station, some of the follow up treatment and monitoring is conducted by the line medics.

“For the line medics, their job is to provide the immediate care that the Soldier needs. Here or there, the line medics provide care for their Soldiers,” said Maj. Sean Thomas, battalion surgeon, 1-67 AR.

“The medics make it so I can do my job. Without my medics, there’s no way I would be able to do my tasks. The medics at the aid station ... they run the show,” said Thomas, who is a member of the teaching faculty at Womack Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg, N.C. He calls Warminster, Pa., home.

As a whole, most medics will say



Spc. Allen Fong, combat medic with HHC, 1-67 AR, uses a gravity pressure wash to clean a Soldier's hand injury at FOB McHenry in November.

they enjoy their jobs, which offers great job satisfaction.

“It makes me feel good as a medic to know that the Soldiers of the (unit) that I get attached to rely on me for their problems,” said Sgt. Raymond Voitik, combat medic, attached to Company D, currently located at Patrol Base Howell. Voitik hails from Joliet, Ill.

““If you get hurt or get sick, we’re here 24 hours a day to take care of you,” said Bethea. “When I patch

somebody up and they come back and say ‘Hey doc, thanks,’ it makes me feel good; I did my job, my medics did their job and he’s back here with us and ready to do his mission.”

Brown said he too enjoys taking care of Soldiers, but he added that some medics do have a dark side. He admitted that he gets a twisted sense of pleasure when he has to give a shot to someone who is afraid of needles.

“It’s kind of funny,” he said with a defensive shrug. 🇺🇸



Two faces of music: Music's past, future shape 204th Soldiers lives

By Staff Sgt. Michael Rivas
204th BSB, 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div.

Capt. Robert Crandall was not always a night shift physician assistant for Charlie Co., 204th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Back in the day, he was a music thief.

Not actually a thief, but more

of an authorized borrower of music. While a child, Crandall was mesmerized by his brother's "White Album," by the Beatles. While he was not the first fan to feel the pull of the 'Fab Four,' Crandall's devotion to the songs on the album resulted in the album's demise.

"I listened to 'Black Bird' over and over. I grabbed a guitar and played a couple of notes, hundreds of times,

until I ruined the record," he said. "I put it back (in his brother's room), but he figured out that I learned to play 'Black Bird' by using his record."

Twenty-three years ago, Crandall walked into a guitar center in Santa Ana, Calif., and purchased the guitar that he still uses today. He paid a modest \$750 for the Guild guitar; the same instrument that would fetch as high as \$2,000 today.

Crandall didn't name his guitar, as some of the greats once did, and years later it still has no name.

"I haven't (name the guitar), but we have been through a lot together.

Today, he has started leading the worship at FOB Kalsu's contemporary service. He works alongside Chaplain David S. Dennis, coordinating music to go along with the chaplain's Sunday message.

Crandall still plays and says that playing the guitar is a way to bring calmness into his life. He likes the blues, which helps him process life's daily stresses. He lists blues icons Monty Montgomery, Tommy Walker and Eric Clapton as his musical inspirations.

"Blues represents a style. It is a style with simple messages about the ups and downs of life. It is a way to relate to life," he said.

He does note how music has changed since he grew up listening to it.

"The blues will make you feel better for a while, but listening to Christian lyrics; those words are things you can hang your hat on," said Crandall. "There are truths that do not change; I have learned to give thanks to our Lord, our God and King. His love endures forever and that truth never changes."

Looking beyond the words

"...Wild as the Taliban, Nine in my right, 45 in my other hand."

At first glance, the words of rapper T.I.'s song, "Rubberband Man" don't seem out of place in a country like Iraq.

A person first introduced to the music of the Atlanta-based rapper might be distracted by the harsh words and ideas, but to Pfc. Cornelius Johnson, a cook with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 204th BSB, the artist legally known as Clifford Joseph Harris, Jr., is a juggernaut of inspiration.

It is Johnson's dream to become like the actor, music producer and television star. The 25-year-old Johnson has already begun the journey to follow his 26-year-old idol. The St. Louis native has already stepped into the studio and donned the over-sized headphones to make his music magic.

"'Rubberband Man' was so amazing to me, it drew me in. As the song progressed, I became a fan. The next day, I bought him album. I became an actual fan," Johnson said.

Johnson doesn't hear the songs references to large wads of money, guns, drugs or alcohol. What reaches out to Johnson is the message that an urban youth can become successful without a falling into the cycle of violent life that plagues parts of urban America.

Johnson looks at T.I. and sees a family man with a list of accomplishments taller than most of the buildings in the city the rapper hails.

"We both are from the urban community," Johnson said. "We both seek to educate the urban and African communities. In his later career, he has strived to be more of an inspiration to others."

While internet sites list T.I.'s legal issues, Johnson believes that T.I. now represents a troubled youth gone good.

"I have little cousins and I want them to avoid the problems (of the streets)," Johnson said. "T.I. shows youth that you can do other things to take care of your families. He uses youth as a factor and his voice through music."

While music may be Johnson's inspiration, he is clearly become one to his own family and friends. His brother is also a cook at Fort Drum, N.Y., and another relative is becoming a military interrogator at Fort Hua-

chuca, Ariz.

Despite all the bravado of hip-hop music, Johnson's words make him sound more like Horatio Alger than Snoop Dogg.


"Live your life, don't try to emulate the pimps or the drug dealers," Johnson said. "Look at (President-Elect Barack) Obama, if you strive to do your best, you can succeed. That is what (T.I.) give me. (Music) is so life-like and real, it's captivating; it's the truth."

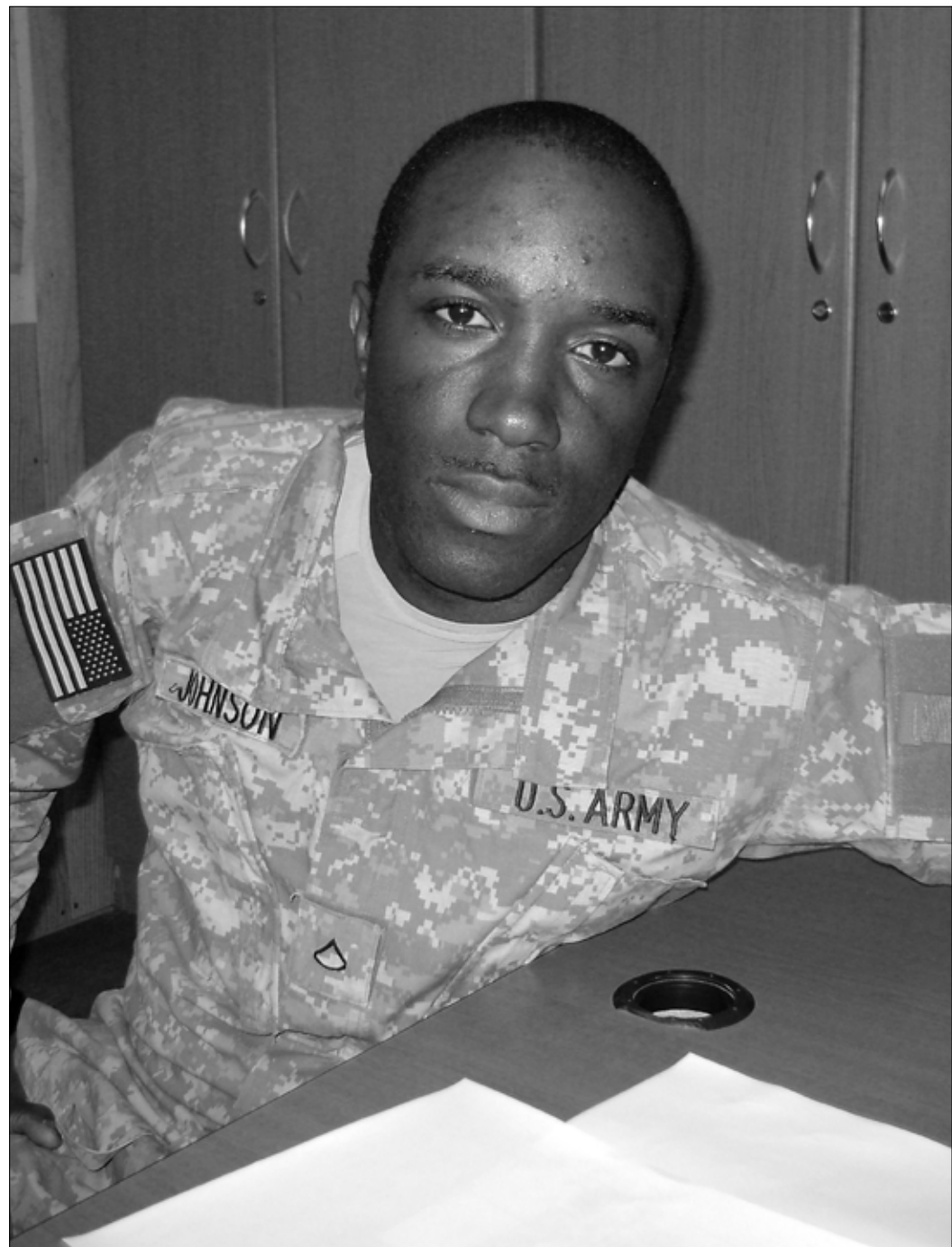
The one desire Johnson holds close to his heart is to one day see people of

all creeds and colors coming together and enjoying his music.

"No matter what walk of life people come from, there is some good to be gained from anybody and anything if you give it a chance," he said.

As Johnson leaves to conduct maintenance on a water buffalo and a containerized kitchen, the mind wonders to the day when his voice rapping about those vehicles and his time deployed ending up on a local radio station.

Now, that would be wilder than the Taliban. 





Iraqi children smile at an Iraqi Policeman and Soldier as they receive their backpacks laden with school supplies at Allahwas Elementary School in Diwaniya Dec. 22.

IP, IA help to build a brighter future for children

By Sgt. Rodney Foliente
2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., PAO

When much of the world thinks about the future of Iraq, the focus is more on the near future, rather than the long term. For those within the country, they must think about both.

As Iraqi Security Forces work on a daily basis to improve their country, they also show that they work towards the distant future through the Iraqi children and their education.

Iraqi Policemen and Army

Soldiers gave approximately 1,000 backpacks with school supplies to the children at Allahwas Elementary School in Diwaniya Dec. 22.

As the IP trucks pulled up, laden with backpacks, children struggled for a peek, volunteering to help unload, as the ISF laughed with them while they worked.

Before the bags were handed out, the Iraqi National Anthem was belted out by hundreds of lungs.

Afterwards, the ISF began stacking the bags for distribution, as the children started whispers which quickly grew to an eager cacophony.

The children were then lined up and

the distribution began in earnest. They responded with laughs, smiles and wide eyes.

They gave high-fives and thumbs up to the Policemen and Soldiers, many clutching their bags like hard-won prizes. Their excitement also carried over to the ISF.

“(The school supplies) make them very happy!” exclaimed Ali, an English teacher at the school.

He said that receiving backpacks loaded with school supplies from the ISF was a good experience for the children.

An Iraqi Soldier, Bah, said he felt proud to be able to help the children

and that education is extremely important.

He said he enjoyed spending time with the “babies” and was glad for the opportunity.

Many of the IP and IA participants said they also have children, and that the event drove close to home.

“Yes, I have babies,” said an IP, holding up two fingers and describing them as being in 1st and 4th grades. “This is good. They (are) like my babies.”

Teachers were hard pressed to keep order in their classes after the gifts were handed out, as children bounced around and voiced their excitement.

“(The IP and IA) handed them out to the kids to build a better relationship amongst them,” said Staff Sgt. Adam Martinez, section sergeant, Company C, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, part of the small group of U.S. Soldiers there to observe the event.

He said that the event went well and will not only impact the children, teachers and ISF, but the Family members as well.

“It helps the Families see that (the ISF) are trying to do their part in Iraq. It may lead towards the Families coming to the (ISF) and tell them what’s going on, sort of like a neighborhood watch deal and build more trust,” said Martinez, who comes from Brownsville, Texas.

“It’s a trust issue. They’ve got to be able to trust the (IP and IA) with the security around their neighborhoods, just like we do back home. It’s a big thing to have their face out there so the people know that their people are taking care of them. (The ISF) have been taking initiative and doing a good job,” continued Martinez.

As the ISF and the local citizens continue cultivating their relationship, Iraq is headed in a more prosperous direction with a brighter future, said Martinez.

For now, the event brought happi-

ness and excitement to the children. For the future, only time will tell, but the optimism and hope grows for many of those involved.

“I saw them joking around with the kids and the kids were giving them the

thumbs up,” said Martinez. “Maybe one day those kids might want to be an IP or IA and protect their town.” 🇮🇶



Two little girls clutch their backpacks as they shyly say thank you after receiving the bags from an Iraqi Policeman during an ISF school supply drop mission at Allahwas Elementary School in Diwaniya Dec. 22.

Gone but never forgotten...



*Staff Sgt. Christopher G. Smith
Sept. 1, 1980 - Dec. 24, 2008*

*Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion,
16th Field Artillery Regiment*



*Spc. Stephen M. Okray
Apr. 1, 1987 - Dec. 24, 2008*

*Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion,
16th Field Artillery Regiment*



*Spc. Stephen G. Zapasnik
Apr. 18, 1989 - Dec. 24, 2008*

*Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion,
16th Field Artillery Regiment*