

# The Highlander

Volume 1,  
Issue 5  
Dec. 24, 2008

## *Soldier's Night Before Christmas*

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,  
In a one bedroom house made of plaster & stone.  
I had come down the chimney with presents to give  
And to see just who in this home did live.

I looked all about a strange sight I did see,  
No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.  
No stocking by the fire, just boots filled with sand,  
On the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.

With medals and badges, awards of all kind  
A sober thought came through my mind.  
For this house was different, so dark and dreary,  
I knew I had found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly.

I heard stories about them, I had to see more  
So I walked down the hall and pushed open the door.  
And there he lay sleeping silent alone,  
Curled up on the floor in his one bedroom home.

His face so gentle, his room in such disorder,  
Not how I pictured a United States soldier.  
Was this the hero of whom I'd just read?  
Curled up in his poncho, a floor for his bed?

His head was clean shaven, his weathered face tan,  
I soon understood this was more than a man.  
For I realized the families that I saw that night  
Owed their lives to these men who were willing to fight.

Soon 'round the world, the children would play,  
And grown-ups would celebrate on a bright Christmas day.  
They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year,  
Because of soldiers like this one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone  
On a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.  
Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye,  
I dropped to my knees and started to cry.

The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice,  
"Santa don't cry, this life is my choice;  
I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,  
my life is my God, my country, my Corps."

With that he rolled over and drifted off into sleep,  
I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.  
I watched him for hours, so silent and still,  
I noticed he shivered from the cold night's chill.

So I took off my jacket, the one made of red,  
And I covered this Soldier from his toes to his head.  
And I put on his T-shirt of gray and black,  
With an eagle and an Army patch embroidered on back.

And although it barely fit me, I began to swell with pride,  
And for a shining moment, I was United States Army deep inside.  
I didn't want to leave him on that cold dark night,  
This guardian of honor so willing to fight.

Then the soldier rolled over, whispered with a voice so clean and pure,  
"Carry on Santa, it's Christmas Day, all is secure."  
One look at my watch, and I knew he was right,  
Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a good night!

*(unknown author's adaptation of LCPL James M. Schmidt's  
"Merry Christmas, My Friend")*

## *Highlander 6 sends:*

**M**erry Christmas Muldoons!  
Can you believe it's already the holiday season? It seems like yesterday that we just got here. Okay, not so much, but still, time is flying. You guys are continuing to do great things so keep up the good attitudes and definitely the hard work, it's paying off. We've surpassed the 250 mission mark and over 300,000 miles and I can assure you that the OPTEMPO will not slow down once the New Year begins.

**O**n a somber note, we suffered our first major injury due to an IED, but hopefully with godspeed, SPC Will Johnson (C Co) will have a successful recovery and will be able to continue his military career. Like the other 1,100 soldiers assigned to this battalion, Will is a true warrior and his presence will be definitely be missed.

**A**s much as I want you all to always focus on the mission, I also know this is an extremely hard time of the year to be away from our loved ones, especially for some of our young soldiers who have not spent that much time away from home. For as hard as this may be for us, it's that much harder for our families back in the States. They are the forgotten heroes that are taking care of our children, our homes, bills, etc... Please be sure to contact your family and tell them how much you love them and appreciate them for what they are doing. That's an order!

See you down range, hooah.



## Highlander 8 sends:

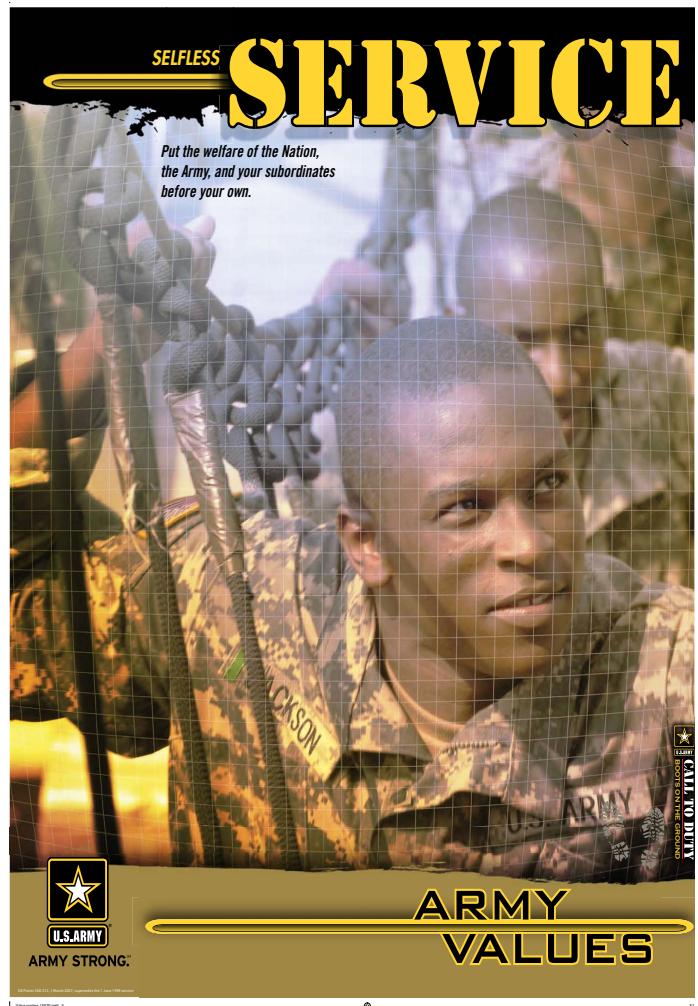
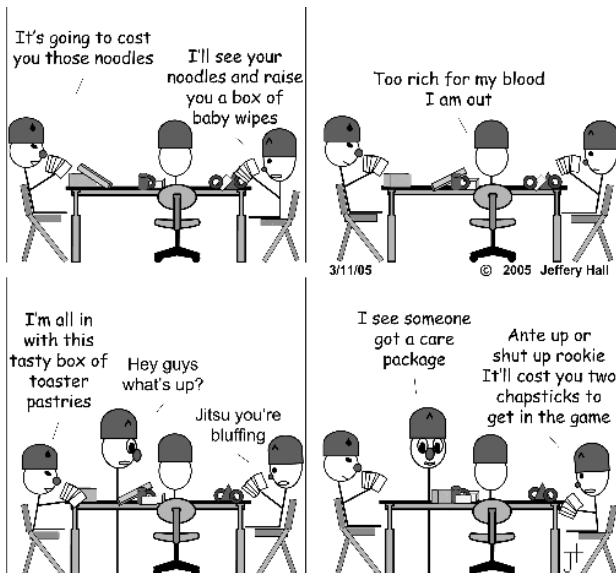
Christmas 2008 marks the first Christmas time away from home for many of us. For others, this is yet another Christmas away from home. Such is the life of the Soldier. Still, we need to do our best to connect with our families and those traditions we hold dear at this time of year. Make the effort to call, write, e-mail those we love and re-assure them that we're doing well. Lift your spirits by lifting theirs. Continue an old tradition in a new place or start a whole new tradition. In my office stand a small artificial Christmas tree. This same tree decorated my TOC during the last deployment. I kept that tree and had my family send it to me this time. That little tree connects me to my family and to those I served with on our last deployment.

It's true we can't be with our families but we have a family right here. Look to your left and right and you'll see your family. By the

end of the deployment you will be closer to many of your fellow Soldiers than you are with some of your family. These friendships and bonds formed in combat and hardship will last a lifetime.

The last thing we need to do is sit in our CHUs feeling sorry for ourselves. There are many things going on here at JBB as well as in each company area. On Christmas Day Operation Ho Ho Ho kicks off with a 5k walk/run followed by a float parade at 10:00 and a Santa Reception and Talent Show at 20:00. Get out and enjoy the things that JBB has to offer, enjoy the companionship of fellow Soldiers, and enjoy this holiday season.

In closing, I want to pass on my personal wish to the Soldiers of the 1-161. It has been my very remarkable pleasure to serve with this battalion and I wish each and every one of you, every one of us, a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year.



## Angry Tom's Book Review - MSG Tom Bigley

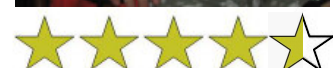
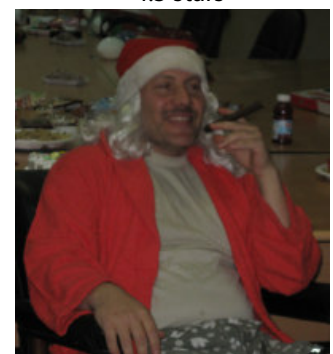
### The Republic of Nothing By Lesley Choyle

The Republic of Nothing, no it's not about Iraq, but close. It's about Canada's Nova Scotia, to be specific. An interesting story about Whalebone Island and it seceding from Canada via anarchist Everett McQuade or at least in his mind when he symbolically blows the bridge (only the guard rail) connecting the island to the mainland.

The tale follows Ian and his perspective of life growing up on an isolated island, then seeing the world through his travels to Boston and New York, the real world. The book covers Canada's role as a safe haven for draft dodgers during that period and Whalebone Island as a safe haven within one. A gentle up-lifting story about life's challenges and strange events, certainly not typical, but entertaining in a time that may be more similar than not.

Set in the sixties, the story is about Everett's son Ian and the turmoil of the 1960's Vietnam War, Nuclear destruction and his attempts with adolescent relationships. The Island is separate from the rest of the world and Everett wants it to stay that way, but a twist of fate throws him into the public eye and politics which is a hard thing to do as an ardent anarchist. Dorothy, his wife, is a mystical character with no memory of her youth. She was saved by Everett after a shipwreck off the coast and has seemingly special powers.

A good read, highly recommend.  
4.5 stars





## Chaplain's Corner

It's amazing what an important role light has played so far on this deployment. Our convoys traveling in darkness have a brilliant array of lights that practically turn the shadows into dazzling daylight, and help them complete their mission successfully. The gunners on the convoys have powerful spotlights that illuminate the darkness and help eliminate potential threats against us.

When we first arrived at Joint Base Balad (JBB), our housing area was very dimly lit. It felt a bit unsafe given the assaults that have happened even here on JBB. Then lights were installed and suddenly we have a greater feeling of security - even in the wee hours of the morning when we old guys pay our mandatory tribute to the porcelain thrones. Even my bicycle has lights (front and rear) to help keep me safe in the dark.

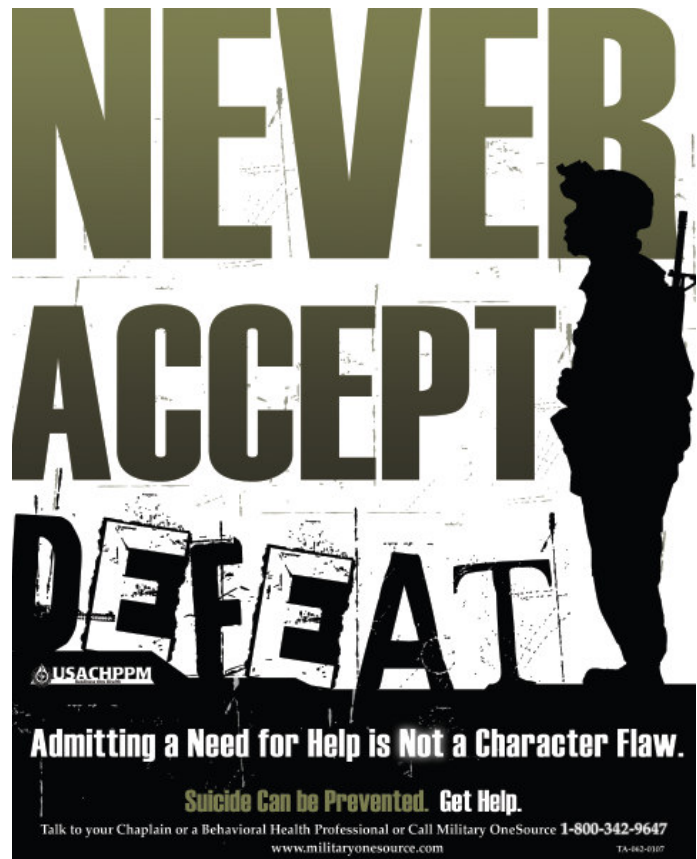
Have you ever noticed how brightly one little light can shine in the darkness - how even the smallest flashlight can help us see dangers in front of us and navigate our paths through the night? With Christmas upon us,

it reminds me that some 2,000 years ago, another Light shone in the darkness and led a group of Persian wise-men to the birth of a King. This King would forever change the way human-beings could relate to God. The Prophet Isaiah writes:

*"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. . . . For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. (Isaiah 9:2-7)"*

So this Christmas, as I stare up into the Heavens at the beautiful stars adorning the middle-eastern night sky like so many millions of fire-flies, I will remember that not far from here, the Baby who cried in the darkness of a common stable, came to be the Light of the world, and to make a way for us out of the darkness and into God's Light. May God's light shine in your hearts this Christmas - Merry Christmas!

CH (MAJ) Joe Hammiel



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The Unit Ministry Team is located in the small building inside the fence south of battalion HQ

## Army National Guard (ARNG) Scholarship Information

**G**uaranteed Reserve Forces Duty (GRFD) and Dedicated Army National Guard (DEDNG) scholarships are available through the Army Reserve Officers' Training Course (ROTC). These scholarships guarantee that commissioned cadets serve in the ARNG. GRFD scholarships are available for up to two years and allow simultaneous use with the Select Reserve Montgomery GI Bill ("Guard" GI bill, chapter 1606 or 1607).

**T**he DEDNG scholarship is available for up to three years but does not allow simultaneous use with the Guard GI bill. Major scholarship qualifications include: US citizenship, 2.5 GPA, under 31 years of age for the entire year of commissioning, pass the Army Physical Fitness Test, meet Army height/weight standards, full-time student, and be of good moral character. Your local WAARNG Officer Recruiter will assist in setting up a meeting with the Professor of Military Science to ensure you meet the standards for enrollment.

**T**hese scholarships pay 100% tuition and mandatory fees, or can pay room & board (up to \$10,000 per year). Room & board payment is for on campus (pays actual cost, up to \$10,000) or off-campus (pays the average R&B plan for the university, not up to \$10,000). All scholarships come with a \$1,200 per year book allowance paid directly to the student. National Guard scholarships for room & board can be used with federal and/or state tuition assistance to cover all major college expenses (tuition & fees, room & board, books). Cadets are also paid a monthly stipend in the following amounts: \$350 for the sophomore year, \$400 for the junior year, and \$500 for the senior year. If eligible for Chapter 1606 Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) the student may qualify for an additional \$350 per month MGIB "SMP" kicker. For soldiers on the GRFD scholarship attending the following schools, both tuition AND room and board is paid: PLU, SU, Gonzaga and Northwest (Northwest attends UW Seattle ROTC).

**A**ll ARNG scholarship students must participate in the Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP) with an ARNG unit while in school. Cadets drill with an ARNG unit and paid at the rank of E-5, approximately \$250 per month, unless already in the ARNG and hold a rank higher than E-5. You are also non-deployable until completing BOLC III after graduation. You can also accept the GRFD while working on a Masters degree!

Contact your WA Army National Officer Strength Manager more information.  
[NGWAosm@ng.army.mil](mailto:NGWAosm@ng.army.mil) <http://officer.washingtonarmyguard.org>



**ABOVE:** Bad Santa, MSG Tom Bigley of Shelton, Wash. and the Angry Elf, SGM Darrell Weaver of Spokane, Wash., enjoy cigars before presenting stockings at the battalion staff Christmas party. The stockings were gifts from the third graders at Northshore Christian Academy in Everett, Wash.

**BELOW:** LTC Greg Allen, TF 1-161 Commander of Tacoma, Wash., shares a laugh and a "near" beer with Bad Santa as he sits on his lap at the battalion staff Christmas party.



## ***From the field -- Highlanders in "action"***

**RIGHT:** A snowman, a gift from the parents of H Co commander, CPT Clayton Colliton, stands atop his company's maintenance building. (photo by SGT Monette Wesolek, 123rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, AZ Army National Guard)



**BELOW:** Fourteen soldiers from TF 1-161 reenlisted on December 13th, the 372nd birthday of the Army National Guard, in one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces in the International Zone, or Green Zone, in Baghdad. (photo by CSM David Windom, TF 1-161 Command Sergeant Major)



### ***Write a "LETTER TO THE EDITOR"***

- story ideas   - announcements
- suggested changes, additions

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*The Highlander* is published semi-weekly as a command information resource for the soldiers of 1-161 Infantry.

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