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April 2, 2009

An issue dedicated to soldiers' stories

Purple Heart recipient saved by helmet



Photo courtesy of Co. E, 2-8 Inf. Regt. The bullet hole in the Army Combat Helmet of Staff Sgt. Matthew Harvey, construction supervisor with Co. E, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., and attached to STB, shows how his helmet saved his life on Feb. 10 when he was shot during a route clearance mission in Najaf.

Photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Staff Sgt. Matthew Harvey, construction supervisor with Co. E, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., and attached to STB, stands in front of his vehicle recently at Camp Echo. The vehicle was the same one he was next to when he was shot Feb. 10 during a route clearance mission in Najaf.

SGT. RODNEY FOLIENTE
2ND BCT, 4TH INF. DIV.



CAMP ECHO – A 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Soldier, whose life was saved by his Advanced Combat Helmet, received a Purple Heart and Combat Action Badge here recently.

Staff Sgt. Matthew Harvey, construction supervisor

with Company E, 2nd Combined Arms Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, and attached to Special Troops Battalion, received the awards after being shot and continuing to return fire during an enemy attack in Najaf Feb. 10.

The attack came during a route clearance mission when Harvey, who was truck commander of the lead vehicle, dismounted to clear debris that became tangled underneath

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West Point priest deploys with Long Knives

SPC. CREIGHTON HOLUB
4TH BCT, 1ST CAV. DIV.



FOB HUNTER – The United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., sent one of its own, a Catholic priest, to the front lines to minister to the border-watching Long Knife Brigade.

Chaplain (Capt.) Timothy Valentine is the only Catholic priest assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division to provide spiritual fitness to Soldiers at the many bases and outposts in the tri-province areas of Dhi Qar, Maysan and Muthanna.

“I have a great relationship with the chaplains out here,” Valentine said. “The (battalion-level) chaplains have to be all things to all people. They take care of not only their (denomination) but all other denominations.”

Forward-deployed battalion chaplains provide religious services, which are open to troops and civilians of all denominations.

However, when Valentine is expected to arrive, the word is quickly spread throughout the remote bases because he conducts a bi-weekly Mass for Soldiers.

Valentine commonly encounters a familiar face during his visits. He worked at West Point while 2nd Lt. Walter Gradzik was a student there, and was happy to see his old friend at the forward outpost.

“I was wondering what services I could get out here,” explained Gradzik, new platoon leader of B Troop, 1st Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. “It was extremely refreshing for me to see him.”



Photo by Spc. Creighton Holub

Chaplain (Capt.) Timothy Valentine, the Long Knife Brigade's Catholic chaplain augmentee, pose for a photo after Mass with 2nd Lt. Walter Gradzik, platoon leader of B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment at Forward Operating Base Hunter's Solid Rock Chapel recently. Valentine said he befriended Gradzik at West Point while still a cadet and was surprised to meet his former chaplain in Iraq.

THE Mountain View

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172nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team
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4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division
41st Fires Brigade
343rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
793rd Military Police Battalion
Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mtn. Div.
Task Force 449



KEVLAR: *Purple Heart recipient saved by helmet*

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his vehicle.

“As I was leaning forward, I saw three rounds hit by my feet,” the Houston native said. He added that he quickly turned and identified the enemy shooter partially concealed behind a berm. “I returned fire and yelled back up to my driver and gunner.”

He continued to return fire until he saw the enemy go down. He then stood up and scanned the area.

“I saw something to my five-o’clock and called up to the gunner. As soon as I turned, I got hit. The round went through my Kevlar,” he said, pointing to a point above and behind his right ear.

The Kevlar altered the course of the bullet, channeling the bullet around his head and down the back of his neck.

Harvey said the force of the impact slammed his head into the vehicle, cutting a gash on his cheek. He went down and noticed blood flowing from his left cheek. In his shock, he said he thought the bullet had passed through his face.

“I yelled up that I was hit,” he said.

As Harvey lay on the ground, he said he continued shooting at the enemy while becoming increasingly disoriented.

“I was trying to shoot the guy. (All of



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, deputy commanding general for operations, MND-S, recloses the top part of Staff Sgt. Matthew Harvey's uniform after pinning a Purple Heart on him during an award ceremony recently. Harvey, a construction supervisor with Co. E, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., and attached to STB, a Houston native, was awarded his second purple heart after being shot in the helmet and suffering a wound to his left cheek from sniper fire during a route clearance mission in Najaf Feb. 10.



Photo by Sgt. Rodney Foliente

Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, deputy commanding general for operations, MND-C, shakes hands with Staff Sgt. Matthew Harvey, construction supervisor with Co. E, 2nd Combined Arms Bn., 8th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 4th Inf. Div., and attached to STB, after pinning a Purple Heart and Combat Action Badge on him and presenting him with a commemorative coin during an award ceremony March 20.

a sudden) I thought I was at a pop-up range, because I couldn't hit the target,” he said.

“I could see my rounds impacting. Pow! Pow! Pow! I remember thinking: Man, this pop-up target won't go down. I'm going to get a bad score,” he shook his head with a laugh.

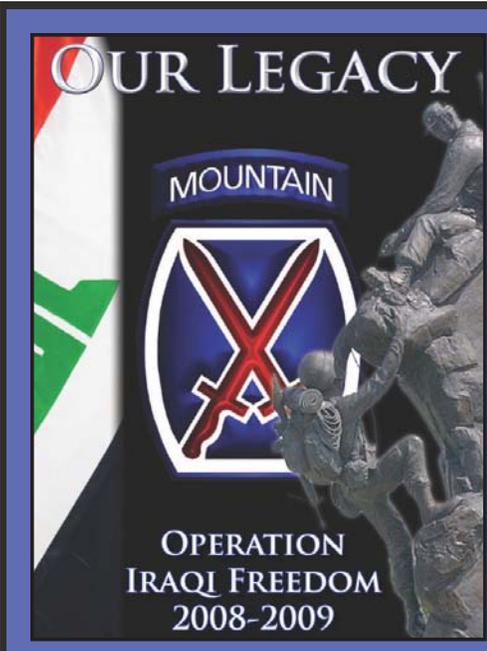
“I thought, ‘this is probably it.’ I kept shooting and shooting and yelled up to my dudes and told them, ‘Sorry’ and told my wife, ‘I'm sorry,’” he reflected with a smile.

His Soldiers continued engaging the enemy while another vehicle in the convoy pulled around to cover him and load him into their truck.

“They pulled off all my gear and the medic came up and checked me out,” he said.

Other than minor shrapnel wounds, cuts and a possible concussion, the medic told him he was fine. The other Soldiers downplayed the incident and

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KEVLAR

From page 3

told Harvey that he was probably just hit with shrapnel from bullets striking the vehicle and ground.

"I told them, 'No, I'm pretty sure I got hit,'" Harvey said. "That's when their squad leader picked up my Kevlar and said, 'Hey man, you've got a bullet hole through your Kevlar!'"

"I still had my adrenaline going, so I wasn't really in that much pain," he continued. "I still wanted to (command) my truck."

However, his platoon leader made him try to relax and rest. They limped the vehicle back to Forward Operating Base Endeavor on a flat tire.

"I smoked a cigarette and drank a Rippit. By that time, my adrenaline stopped and I started puking and got dizzy," said Harvey. "I was kind of going in and out of it. The (medical evacuation helicopters) came in and medics checked me out and gave me (intravenous fluids)."

"I came to as I was going into the hospital at Balad. They checked me out and told me I was lucky," said Harvey. They gave him additional tests and treated him for minor shrapnel wounds, cuts and a severe concussion.

After a few days of tests and evaluations, he was sent back to Camp Echo to see his Soldiers for a day before going on his pre-planned environmental morale leave.

"I was already scheduled for leave, so

I went home and hung out there," said Harvey. He said his wife Crystal, whom he has been married to for more than a year, was shocked when she found out, but also strong and supportive.

"She's pretty strong. She got through it and understands ... but she told me to stop getting hurt," he laughed. "I get hurt too much," he added with a shrug.

About a month after the attack, he said his headaches began to subside and have now almost completely stopped. But the headaches are a small price to pay for his life, thanks to his helmet.

Harvey has been in the Army for more than seven years and has deployed to Iraq four times. He said he has been shot at or hit by roadside bombs during each deployment and has been saved a number of times because of the equipment and armor provided to him by the Army.

This is Harvey's second Purple Heart. He received his first during a deployment to Iraq in 2003 after a roadside bomb explosion injured him in the head and neck. In that incident, his older-style helmet stopped or hampered the destructive passage of shrapnel. He said his helmet helped save his life then as well.

He said the incidents increased his confidence in the equipment he uses. Members of his command and his fellow Soldiers are also more confident after seeing the deadly effects of a bullet thwarted by the helmet that many of them once complained about having to wear.

"You guys looked at that Kevlar and saw the direction that (round) was going and where it went out. It did exactly what it was designed to do," said Lt. Col. Leo Caballero, commander, STB, to the company formation during the award ceremony.

Harvey received his awards from Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan, deputy commanding general for operations, Multi-National Division – South.

"(The Purple Heart) is a significant award," said Buchanan during the award ceremony. "It's in recognition of the American people and the sacrifice that you personally made. It's in recognition of your selfless service."

For Harvey, his Purple Hearts are reminders of the sacrifices he has made and is willing to make for his country and his people.

They are also reminders of how close he came to dying and how precious life is.

"I feel lucky. This wasn't the first time I've been hit, but it kind of opens my eyes a little more," he said."

He said he appreciates life and what he has more than ever.

"I wasn't married for my other deployments. We've been married a little while and are trying to have kids," said Harvey. "It kind of made me think more, but I still plan on staying in. This is what I do. They'll probably have to kick me out after 30 years."

However, he said he hopes, as does his family, that he receives no more Purple Hearts.

Headline Round-up

World News:

THE HAGUE, Netherlands - The phrase "global war on terror" is finished, at least as far as U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton is concerned. The top U.S. diplomat told reporters Tuesday that the Obama administration has quit using that line to describe the effort to fight terrorism around the world. "The administration has stopped using the phrase and I think that speaks for itself," Clinton said. Clinton spoke as she headed to Europe for a week of diplomatic meetings. The phrase "war on terror" is widely disliked in Europe and elsewhere overseas, where even close U.S. allies suggested it was overly militaristic and perhaps counterproductive.

U.S. News:

LAWRENCE, Mass. - Two men were being hailed as heroes by police on Monday for catching a toddler who fell 40 feet from a home's third-story window. Robert Lemire told the North-Andover (Mass.) Eagle-Tribune newspaper that he was talking on his cell phone Sunday evening outside a pizza shop in Lawrence, about 25 miles north of Boston, when he saw the toddler dangling from a window across the street. The 45-year-old father of two bolted across a busy street, where he met 23-year-old Alex Day, who had been inside the home at a Bible study meeting. Together, they caught the 18-month-old before she hit the ground. "These guys are heroes, no question about it," Police Chief John Romero said.

Odd News:

DALLAS - An NFL player said Monday he accepts the apology offered by a Dallas police officer who stopped him with a drawn gun in a hospital parking lot while his mother-in-law was dying inside. Houston Texans running back Ryan Moats said on ABC's "Good Morning America" that he hopes Officer Robert Powell was sincere in his apology. Powell stopped Moats' SUV outside Baylor Regional Medical Center in suburban Plano on March 18 after the vehicle rolled through a red light. Moats' wife, Tamishia, and other relatives were also in the car. The officer pulled out his gun and threatened Moats with jail as the player pleaded to be allowed to go inside the hospital. Moats' mother-in-law, 45-year-old Jonetta Collinsworth, died before he got there, while Powell wrote Moats a ticket and lectured him.

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For the answer to today's puzzle, go to:



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AROUND THE COMMUNITY

Fishbowl Gym

April 11
Pirate's Cove Run 5K/10K.
Registration begins @ 7 a.m.,
race begins @ w8 a.m.
T-shirts awarded to top finishers.

Freedom Chapel

Sundays
Protestant (Traditional) @ 10 a.m.
Roman Catholic Mass @ 12 p.m.
LDS service @ 2 p.m.
Eastern Orthodox @ 4 p.m.
Protestant (Contemporary) @ 12 p.m.
Mondays
A History of Christianity @ 7 p.m.
Tuesdays
God & the Military @ 6:30 p.m.
Wednesdays
Guitar Lessons @ 7 p.m.
Thursdays
Catholic Choir practice @ 5:30 p.m.
Fridays
Catholic hour @ 6:30 p.m.

The Norris Roundhouse
Chuck Norris' hand is the only hand that can beat a Royal Flush.

