



A Mile Wide and an Inch Deep



The Powder River, Sheridan County, Wyo., July 1950



Hope on the rise for unemployed deployed Soldiers

CAMP VIRGINIA, Kuwait — What Rebecca Hunter represented to hundreds of Wyoming Soldiers at Camp Virginia was a chance to return home to hope. Like the rain shower that began during her meetings, Hunter started to wash away the lairs of despair and gritty uncertainty plaguing hundreds of National Guard Soldiers, in the middle of the Kuwaiti desert..

See EMPLOYMENT Pg 5



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

HELP— Pfc. Christian McClune, A Battery, right, seeks employment advice from Rebecca Hunter, Wyoming National Guard jobs coordinator, Jan 20.

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High Marks for Marksmanship Instructors

CAMP VIRGINIA, Kuwait -- 1st Lt. Oliver Gooden, Headquarters Battery, right, receives a challenge coin from 2-300th Field Artillery Battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Tory Guimond for leading a team of battalion Soldiers on a mission to train Kuwaiti Army special forces in long range marksmanship. The 2-300th has participated in multiple joint training missions.

“The Powder River, a mile wide and an inch deep, too thick to drink and too thin to plough.”

- An old timer from Cowboys' past

Soldier in the Field:

What would you change about Camp Virginia?



Spc. Matthew McKee,
Headquarters: Dining
facility open 24 hours.



Sgt. Robert Morgan,
A Battery: More
laundry facilities.



Spc. Jeffery Brooks,
A Battery: More
shower facilities.



Sgt. Russell Hopman,
A Battery: If they
had some structures
that had indoor bath-
rooms.



Sgt. Tyler Redding,
Headquarters Bat-
tery: More relocat-
able barracks (less
sleeping in tents).

Notes from Powder River 6



Lt. Col. Brian Nesvik
"Powder River 6"

I'll begin by sending out a big "thank you" to all of you who continue supporting us with your care packages, well wishes and prayers. These next couple of months is a critical time for our Soldiers and this mission. Remaining focused and finishing our task at hand to the high level of the

Powder River standard is key to our overall success. Your support and kindness during this period means more than you may ever know.

All of us are counting down to the time we hope to be back with you. I hear Soldiers counting down days, while others count months. Some count weeks and I am even aware of a few Soldiers who are counting hours and minutes.

When it comes to actually coming home, I will tell you that nothing is set in stone right now. This will be my second homecoming from a deployment and, just like the first time, there are a lot of pieces that have to fall into place before we will know dates and times.

See POWDER RIVER 6 Pg 3

Chaplain's Corner

As we enter into the home stretch of this deployment we have a tendency to lay back and let our guard down and just want to relax. Our hearts and minds are on home and all the events we want to do when we get back.

The word for this is complacency and we have been told over and over "let's not get complacent we still got a job to do." Great advice and as Soldiers we need to lean forward in the saddle and finish the job we came to do.

If we look at our spiritual life as a deployment, we too can get complacent with our faith. We just want to put our faith on cruise and lay back and take a spiritual nap.

Our spiritual enemies would like nothing better than to see us asleep at the wheel. Not realizing that by taking our faith lightly, or not taking it seriously at all, we invite bad habits to form. We stop going to church, stop going to bible study, and our bibles have so much dust on them that they reflect the owners' faith "dusty." So as we get ready for this deployment to be over let us keep ourselves in the game, both in the Soldier world and the spiritual world as well.



2-300th FA Chaplain
(Capt.) Randy Sawyer

A Shout-out to Wyoming's Lawmakers



CAMP VIRGINIA, Kuwait — Soldiers with A Battery, 2-300th Field Artillery, prepare to record a video message with Wyoming National Guard public affairs specialist Brandon Quester for the Wyoming State Legislature, Jan. 21.

POWDER RIVER 6 continued from Page 2

Things can change rapidly, just ask the Soldiers of Headquarters Battery. They were the first group to fly out of Fort Hood to Kuwait. Problems with the plane turned into a two-day stop in Germany. They ended up being the last battery in the battalion to arrive in Kuwait.

What I can tell you is that when you all are reading this, we should have the first few Soldiers from our replacement here on the ground in Kuwait. The remainder of those Soldiers will arrive within a few weeks. Based on the information available now, we will be home somewhere between early and mid-April. We're shooting for Easter, but we simply can't make that promise right now.

When we do arrive, we will have some Soldiers that

don't have the kind of family support so many of us are looking forward to. For those Soldiers, it falls to all of us to welcome them home.

We are blessed to live in a state where hometown patriotism is the norm and caring for our veterans is one of our highest priorities. That includes looking after our sons and daughters as they transition into their civilian lives. Some will go to school, others will go back to their jobs and still others are looking for jobs.

Our veterans are experienced leaders who are used to high levels of responsibility. They understand deadlines and prioritization, and many are trained in a variety of skills – perfect for the Wyoming workforce.

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I have been able to keep up on Wyoming and America's current economic conditions and realize that jobs are tight right now. However, I am hopeful that employers will look hard at what veteran applicants bring with them in quality and skill.

We have had a busy month planning for our redeployment and the events that will follow in the first few months after we return.

Part of that planning involved a small group from our state headquarters who were able to come here and help us coordinate our efforts for our return and our participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program. They brought with them, Becki Hunter, the Wyoming National Guard's jobs coordinator. Becki was able to meet with well over 150 of our Soldiers to help them with finding jobs upon their return. After her visit, many of those Soldiers expressed hope that they'll be able to find work when they get back.

You will see a story in this newsletter regarding a Wyoming effort to send us a "taste of Wyoming hunting season" spearheaded by Wyoming's Gov. Dave Freudenthal.

It seems that the governor, after hearing Soldiers talk about missing hunting season when he was here in November, figured out a way to send us a couple hundred pounds of elk jerky. This couldn't have come at a better time and I am very grateful to



COURTESY WYOMING GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

SPECIAL DELIVERY — Wyoming Game and Fish game wardens unload boxes of elk jerky to mail to Soldiers of the 2-300th Field Artillery, at Camp Virginia, Kuwait. The packages are the result of a combined effort of Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal, multiple government and private enterprises in an effort to show support of the deployed Soldiers.

those who participated in this effort. According to the governor's office, participants included Gov. Freudenthal, the NX Bar Ranch (who donated the elk), Pearce Processing in Casper, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Wyoming Game Warden's Association and the Wyoming Biologists Association.

I can tell you that Powder River Cowboys are crazy about hunting, especially elk hunting, and this gift is greatly appreciated.

The Powder River Team's battle cry "Powder River, let'r buck" is a testament to how we look after each other. While serving in the Philippines, Wyoming Soldiers who found

themselves out numbered, or out gunned, sounded off with "Powder River!" It was never long before a reply of "Let'r buck!" was heard and within moments a barrage of Wyoming might fell upon the offending parties.

We are still answering the call today, but in a slightly different way. Our fellow servicemen still in Iraq depend on us for supplies. Our bases and convoys throughout the region are also under our umbrella of security. We will finish our missions with the dedication and pride that our service brings.

Powder River, let'r buck!

EMPLOYMENT continued from Page 1

Hunter, the jobs coordinator for the Wyoming Army National Guard, helped more than 200 Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery and the 960th Brigade Support Battalion to start finding answers and new inroads about their employment statuses when they return home in April.

The Wyoming Army National Guard's jobs department helps Soldiers build resumes, prepares them for job interviews, works with employers and other government employment services, and provides career counseling. Hunter is the primary jobs coordinator.

Hunter was among the staff of Wyoming Army National Guard Soldiers and civilians visiting the two units based at Camp Virginia, and

other Wyoming units deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. With less than three months before the Soldiers redeploy to Wyoming, Hunter's mission was to find Soldiers that need help finding work after a year in service to their nation.



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

JOBS CLASS — Soldiers from A Battery, 2-300th FA, listen to Rebecca Hunter, jobs coordinator for the Wyoming Army National Guard, Jan. 20. Hunter was sent to Kuwait to help Soldiers have the tools in place to succeed in finding civilian jobs when they return home.

"You're supporting us over there, so what can we do to support you when you come home," Hunter said of her mission to help Soldiers find employment. "You can't help, but really endear yourself to every one of those individuals."

"It gives me hope," said Pfc. Christian McCune, of Sheridan, Wyo., assigned to A Battery, 2-300th Field Artillery. McCune is among the Soldiers returning without a civilian job lined up. Until Hunter arrived, he said he wasn't holding out too much hope for finding a quick resolution. "We're (in Kuwait) and we don't have much contact back (home)."

For some Wyoming Soldiers, the trouble began before they deployed in April 2009. Now, it's a matter of matching up Soldiers with the available jobs, or job training and education.

See JOBS Pg 6



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

JOBS CLASS — Wyoming Army National Guard jobs coordinator Rebecca Hunter works with Soldiers from the 2-300th FA at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, Jan. 20. Hunter provided assistance with resumes and worked one-on-one with individuals preparing to return to civilian lives in April.

JOBS continued from Page 5

“There were a lot of them that came off the oil fields when they left and a lot of them were laid off before that,” Hunter said, noting many of these Soldiers qualify for 10 semesters at a Wyoming college or university, the GI Bill, and state and federal military tuition assistance.

Going back to school, or even taking another job is not always an easy sell. “It’s a little tough to go from an \$80,000-a-year job to a \$30,000-a-year job,” she said.

Career counseling, or helping the Soldiers find the right job, is also something Hunter is helping with. “Some of these individuals don’t know what they want to be when they grow up,” said Hunter. Her office provides personality and aptitude testing at no cost to the Soldier. “Which way should we go. What avenues should we go down.”

McCune said he’s willing to take the steps needed to improve his shot at success when he competes for jobs back home. “Don’t be afraid to get help, on anything really,” he said of his approach. “The military is a big family. They’ll help where they can.”

While McCune is 38 years old, many of the other junior enlisted Soldiers in the ranks fall into the 19 into 25-year-old age range. Some are in the process of earning a college or



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

HELPING HANDS — A Soldier with A Battery, 2-300th FA, based at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, takes a look at a CD containing resume writing formats and other products to help him prepare for a job search.

technical degrees; others are looking at their options.

“Why not go back to school and get a degree,” Hunter said. “Help me to help you.” Not only does a degree open new job opportunities, but it buys time for greater economic recovery before the Soldier returns to the workforce.

Hunter is also looking out for those that are aiming to come back to work after their tour is over. She is in preliminary talks with different employers and employment services, both private and public. “There have been several around the state that have called and want to know how our Soldiers are doing and how they can help,” Hunter said.

Legislators are also being briefed by Hunter, during the legislative ses-

sion, and some have expressed interest in creating public service announcements to encourage employers to hire Wyoming veterans.

Already, she is working with the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services and both have Facebook and organizational websites. The Wyoming Military Department also advertises available jobs online, which her office helps deployed Soldiers piece together the required paperwork to submit.

As the 2-300th’s deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom comes to a close, a rain storm of employment resources for Soldiers is on the horizon. Hunter hopes to have most of those resources in place by the time the units return from Kuwait to Fort Hood, Texas, in April.

Wyo. Army Guard leaders visit deployed troops

CAMP VIRGINIA, Kuwait — “Your communities are ready for you to come home,” Maj. Gen. Ed Wright, the adjutant general for Wyoming, said to his Soldiers based at Camp Virginia, Kuwait, Jan. 20.

With approximately three months or so before the Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery hope to arrive home, some of the state’s senior officers and key

staff visited with the Wyoming Soldiers in Kuwait.

Wright explained some of the future plans for the state’s infrastructure and outlined the Wyoming Military Department’s budget proposal to the Wyoming Governor’s Office.

Col. Greg Porter, the Wyoming Army National Guard chief of staff, assured the Soldiers they are on the minds of the sup-

port staff back home. “Your leadership’s intent is to bring you home spiritually, mentally and physically intact and that’s our intent as well,” he said.

Col. Richard Knowlton, 115th Fires Brigade commander, encouraged his Camp Virginia Soldiers to help each other ease back into civilian life. “Lean on your brothers and sisters beside you because there isn’t anyone who knows your story better than them.”

2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

TOUR — (Left) Maj. Gen. Ed Wright, Wyoming’s adjutant general, is given a guided tour by 2-300th commander Lt. Col. Brian Nesvik, Jan. 20. (Below) Wright and shakes hands with .Sgt. David Roberts, right, and Sgt. Allen Price, at Camp Virginia, Kuwait. (Bottom) Wright and Nesvik meet with Soldiers from the 2-300th who are preparing for a convoy escort mission into Iraq.



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All contributions, questions, comments and suggestions should be submitted via e-mail to: christian.venhuizen@us.army.mil. All materials submitted will be screened for security, accuracy, policy, clarity and space.

Battalion Commander: Lt. Col. Brian Nesvik
Public Affairs Officer: 2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen

Commander-in-chief provides a taste of the hunt with a little bit of help



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th Field Artillery

A TASTE OF HOME — Pictured, top, from left, with the elk jerky sent from Wyoming are Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Lengerich, of Cheyenne, and Sgt. 1st Class James Keller, of Sheridan. Pictured bottom, from left, are Pfc. Troy Shelinbarger, of Rock Springs, Pfc. Austin Brookwell, of Worland, and Spc. Christopher Bybee, of Cheyenne.

letter to his troops overseas, was not his kill.

“While I might have wanted to share some of my own jerky with you, the elk in the Laramie Peak area weren’t cooperating,” he wrote. “In all seriousness, I hope you enjoy the jerky and remember that folks back home are thinking of you. We appreciate all you are doing for our state and our country.”

The effort to get the treats to the Soldiers from the state was a state effort that ran from the northern edge of the state to the southern border.

Two cow elk were harvested by the NX Bar Ranch in Sheridan, Wyo., who also skinned and quartered the elk for the Soldiers, at no cost. Pearce Processing, in Casper, Wyo. Processed the jerky, vacuum sealed the meat and packaged it and 45 pounds of pepper sticks for shipping, also at no cost.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department coordinated the efforts, which culminated in the Wyoming Game Wardens Association and Wyoming Biologists Association providing for the shipping costs. Game Wardens transported the packages to have them shipped off to Kuwait.

CAMP VIRGINA, Kuwait — Wyoming Soldiers with the 2-300th Field Artillery had to leave their hunting rifles behind, during this past elk season. However, Wyoming’s governor made sure they didn’t miss out completely.

Approximately 200 pounds of elk jerky, harvested and processed in Wyoming, made it’s way to the mouths of 2-300th Soldiers in February. Gov. Dave Freudenthal helped coordinate the combined effort of state agencies, non-profit groups and private companies to make it happen.

The elk, noted the governor in a



PICK UP — 1st Lt. Victor Flores, with B Battery, secures his unit’s portion of elk jerky sent from Wyoming.

DAVE FREUDENTHAL
GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
CHEYENNE, WY 82002

Office of the Governor

February 5, 2010

Dear Wyoming National Guard Troops:

Since I visited Camp Virginia in November, I often think about the Wyoming troops stationed there. I think about your sacrifice and that of your families, friends and employers. I wanted to do something to let you know that people back home are thinking about you and that we appreciate your service. Lucky for me, there are great people in Wyoming who quickly joined this effort. We thought that sending you a little piece of elk season might ease some of the aches associated with missing hunting season.

I'd like to recognize the people who contributed to this effort now weighing over 200 pounds. Two cow elk were donated by the NX Bar Ranch in Sheridan, Wyoming. The NX Bar Ranch harvested, skinned and quartered the elk free of charge. NX Bar Ranch is a great supporter of the military and the folks there were excited to participate in this unique endeavor.

Pearce Processing in Casper, Wyoming processed the jerky. Pearce Processing also vacuum packed it and packaged it for shipping. This was all done free of charge because Pearce Processing wanted to show its support for our troops. Willard Pearce even threw in 45 pounds of pepper sticks.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department, specifically, Scott Edberg, Tim Thomas, Matt Withroder, and Jay Lawson were instrumental in the coordination of this effort. The Wyoming Game Wardens Association and Wyoming Biologists Association took care of the shipping costs. I have included the contact information of everyone involved just in case you want to let them know you enjoyed the jerky.

I know that it is hard to be away from Wyoming, especially during hunting season. You have to settle for enjoying someone else's game instead of being able to bring home your own. Well, I can assure you that this year I have to do the same thing, even though I finally drew a tag and had the chance to hunt with my son for a few days. While I might have wanted to share some of my own jerky with you, the elk in the Laramie Peak area weren't cooperating.

In all seriousness, I hope you enjoy the jerky, and remember that folks back home are thinking of you. We appreciate all you are doing for our state and our country.

God bless you and return home safely.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature of Dave Freudenthal in black ink, written over a white background.

Dave Freudenthal
Governor

DF:MA:pjb



A Battery

BOHICA (Because of Honor I Choose Alpha)

From Capt. Kevin Messamer, commander, A Battery, and 1st Lt. Jason Ruff, platoon leader, A Battery

We can officially say Happy New Year, and, by the time most of you read this, it will be six weeks, or less before we re-unite with friends, family, and loved ones. I don't have to tell you that the Soldiers are excited and at times spend many hours of the day dreaming about where they are going to go and the fun things they will be doing once back home.

The sustainment missions haven't changed much other than trying to change our travel times to give Soldiers a regimented sleep schedule. This has been met with an overwhelming positive attitude. Your Soldiers continue to do a phenomenal job in all their tasks and we look forward to meeting our replacements in a few weeks and training them.

Second Platoon picked up a force protection mission in Qatar this month and went through all the hoopla to get moved. Despite having a very mundane mission, they have been able to offset the boredom with some interesting Morale, Welfare, and Recreation trips and events that are not available in Kuwait. Second Platoon Soldiers do receive quite a bit of heckling from the other Soldiers in the battery, but are looking forward to the completion of that mission so they can return to Kuwait.

I look forward to seeing you all again soon and truly appreciate the support you have provided throughout this deployment through prayers, care packages, letters, and conversation. I can't imagine how difficult it would be to endure this time away from home without the encouragement of those we love.

God Bless,

CPT Kevin Messamer



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

JUST MAKING SURE — Spc. Jesus Aguilera, of Casper, Wyo., with A Company, 960th Brigade Support Battalion, assigned to A Battery, 2-300th FA, cleans and prepares his M240B machine gun during mission preparation time before the unit escorts logistical support convoys into Iraq.

A BATTERY continued from Page 12

The beginning of the New Year has finally come and gone for the Soldiers of Alpha Battery. Every new year brings with it the unique opportunity to reflect on lessons of the past year and use those lessons to forge a path forward toward the promises that the new year has to bring.

As professional Soldiers we've learned the importance of good leadership, forming unity within a team, taking care of our equipment and taking care of each other. As mothers and fathers we have learned the importance of savoring every moment that we have with our kids.

As sons and daughters we have learned the importance our parents have in shaping our lives, and how much their support means to us. As husbands and wives we've learned to navigate the challenges of a long distance relationship. As members of the Wyoming National Guard we have learned that we have a state full of family, friends, and employers that truly appreciate and support our troops.

These lessons have given us strength, comfort, and optimism while moving through the beginning of the year. Not much has changed for the soldiers of 1st and 3rd platoons. It's still the same daily tasks with the same stretch of road to cover when going on mission.

There were still a few firsts as several Soldiers we're promoted to a new rank. Congrats to newly promoted Staff Sgt. Patrick Mulcahy, Spc. Geoffrey Hodges, and Pfc. Cody Alexander from 1st Platoon; Sgt. John Kangus, Sgt. Jonathan Graf, and Staff Sgt. Michael Carmenaty from 2nd Platoon; and Sgt. James Lyons, Staff Sgt. Daniel Lee, Staff Sgt. Jose Jacoboblas, and Sgt. Brendan McDonald from 3rd Platoon.

We had to say our goodbyes to 2nd Platoon as they hopped on a jet to take on a new security mission in Qatar. It wasn't easy to see them go, but David Hasselhoff called and demanded that somebody come and guard the beaches down there, and as we all know you don't hassle the Hoff.



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

JUST MAKING SURE — Spc. Jesus Aguilera, of Casper, Wyo., with A Company, 960th Brigade Support Battalion, assigned to A Battery, 2-300th FA, cleans and prepares his M240B machine gun during mission preparation time before the unit escorts logistical support convoys into Iraq.

So as we tear off the first page of the calendar in 2010, the new month leaves us in suspense as we await the near arrival of our new replacements. For now, our soldiers will remain diligent in their duties and finish the mission we have been charged to complete. We thank you for all your support back home and look forward to seeing you soon.

BOHICA.

1st Lt. Jason Ruff

B Battery

Reup!

Capt. Fred Nasredine, commander, B Battery

In a country where the population is nearing 305 million, where about 144 million men and women are available for military service, just fewer than 3 million serve in both the active, as well as the reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces. Why so few are willing to serve, and so many are clamoring to opine? Frankly, I don't know, and that's not what I'm writing about.

What I am writing about is the reason, or reasons that propel these few men and women to volunteer to serve, in wartime no less! Many join to secure college money, or the extra paycheck (for those in the reserve components). For others it's a career choice, or an adventure...the reasons are aplenty. But there has to be a fundamental common denominator that would make someone put their life on the line!

A question was posed a few days ago as to what makes an Army organization (say a battalion or a

battery) different from that of a corporation (say Wal-Mart)? In unison, the response echoed in the room, "the Army Values." Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless

Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. Does it boil down to a value-based organization versus a profit-based one?

There is no one answer, or one little neat story that could capsule why these young men and women join the Army. But I do know one thing, these guys and gals are willing to step up and say yes, I am



COURTESY B BATTERY

SWEARING IN — Sgt. Brian Parrish, facing forward right, and Spc. Quincy Morrell, facing forward left, both with B Battery, re-enlist with the Wyoming Army National Guard during a ceremony in Iraq.

willing to serve, I am willing to be away from loved ones and home, I am willing defend my way of life, and I am even willing to give up all I ever had and all I'll ever have! If you think that this is something that could be assigned a monetary value think again!

These last few days I had the honor and privilege of swearing-in a few Sol-

diers that decided to re-enlist. One Soldier wanted a memorable swearing-in, he wanted to raise his right hand and take the oath in Iraq. To you all out there, parents, grandparents, significant others, siblings, and friends...be proud of these Soldiers' service! To borrow the motto from the U.S. Marines, they truly are the few, and the proud!



Wardog Bite

2nd Lt. Marcus Neiman, platoon leader, C Battery

When most people think about the desert, they envision an endless sea of sand stretching as far as the eye can see. Gentle rolling sand dunes, an occasional herd of camels, and the ever present sun. They imagine the heat, inescapable, and ever-present, beating down on the sandy earth and engulfing everything that dares to call the desert home.

And while we may not wish to label this place as our home, we are inhabitants of this land. For the most part, it fits the stereotypes described above. However, the month of January has brought us new experiences. The desert is a harsh environment and, truth be known, it get's cold in the desert.

We were issued a full set of the Army's newest cold weather gear while undergoing pre-mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas. At the time, receiving such equipment seemed a little excessive for Soldiers bound for the Middle East. Yet, after the 120 degree days of summer had faded away with the fall, we found ourselves digging out our cold weather clothing.

Initially, the gunners were the first to notice the welcomed change in temperature, but by the time winter was in full effect, the complete absence of desert heat was no longer



COURTESY C BATTERY

GUNNER'S VIEW — A gunner's view behind a M2 .50 caliber machine gun watching the flare gas flames of an oil refinery in the distance.

appreciated.

Some nights are worse than others and many Soldiers have discovered that, in the winter, no amount of clothing can keep you comfortable in the gun turret. Rolling down the highway on top of these modern-day chariots, the wind-chill factor is never far from the minds of those who control the vehicles' weapon system. The gunners are the most

crucial element to the team. They are directly accountable for the security of not only their team, but also for the trucks and supplies which they escort.

Also, while they perform their duties, gunners are continually subjected to the elements of Mother Nature.

See CHARLIE Pg 14

CHARLIE continued from Page 13



COURTESY C BATTERY

ALMOST READY TO GO — Spc. Shawn Coe, Sgt. Drew Cotton and Sgt. Aaron Leonard preparing for a southbound convoy escort mission.

Rain is another aspect of winter in the desert. Thunderstorms have the ability to roll in unexpectedly. Often with little warning, you can find yourself in a torrential down pour. Then, just as quickly as it came, the storm can be gone. The

high winds that are frequently created by the desert are capable of moving massive amounts of weather through our location.

At times, the conditions are severe enough to halt ground movement operations. When this happens, Soldiers often find themselves waiting. Relying on their creativity to pass the time, Soldiers can be found throwing a football kept in the trunk of a Humvee, or the traditional gathered circle where jokes are made and stories told.

For the most part, the Soldiers of Charlie Battery have grown accustomed to the unexpected changes in their everyday lives. They are well aware that deteriorated weather conditions can clear up just as quickly as happen, and they may very well be traveling the Iraqi highways in short order.

Part of the mission takes our Soldiers from the arid desert through another type of land found in Iraq that is best described as a marsh. After the rain, this land remains wet, long after the sands of Kuwait have dried.

This mud has the exceptional ability to find its way into every aspect of your life once you've reached your destination. It manages to get everywhere. It covers the trucks, the tents, the chow halls, little pieces of mud find their way into your sleeping bag, and inevitable will somehow manage to climb into your rucksack and return with you to Kuwait.

This is but a brief insight into one aspect of what Wyoming's Soldiers experience in the desert. All in all, the conditions we live in are fairly hospitable and far from unbearable. We appreciate the thoughts, prayers and support from our friends and family back home. As this deployment draws to a close, I anticipate that the next time I drive down a winter highway, it will be from the comfort of my truck in Wyoming. I'm sure this statement is true



Notes from Alpha Company, 960th Brigade Support Battalion

Capt. James Ezell, commander, A Company, and Sgt. 1st Class Julie Wilkes, operations sergeant, A Company

As we all eagerly wait for our replacements to touch down in Kuwait, we began the process of preparing for our departure home. We are taking this opportunity to send some of our Soldiers home early for military schools. We'll meet up with them once we touch down in Fort Hood, Texas.

Currently, the Blackhorse Gateway mission has completed almost 10,000 missions, driven over 700,000 miles, and transported almost 450,000 Soldiers and Department of Defense civilians! This is a testament to the dedication and professionalism of all the Alpha Company, 960th Brigade Support Battalion Soldiers.

We'll soon be saying goodbye to all of our Inactive

Ready Reserve and Contingency Operation Active Duty Operational Service Soldiers that have been a part of the Alpha Company, 960th BSB family while in Kuwait. They have all done a great job in executing their assignments in support of the Blackhorse Gateway mission. We wish them "GODSPEED" as they make their journey home. They will always be a part of the Alpha Company, 960th BSB, family.

I would also like to give out a special Wyoming Thank You to Karyn Palminteri ("Miss K") from Pompano Beach, Fla., for sending us popcorn, granola bars, and lots of other goodies over the past several months

and for the Super Bowl. You rock Miss K!

Congratulations to Staff Sgt. Lowen Lewi, Spc. Eric Ohlrogge, Spc. Karl Ayers, and Spc. Katherine Jordan on their promotions! Well deserved!

As our tour comes to an end, we would like to thank all those folks in the great state of Wyoming for all the care packages, cards, e-mails, and letters that you were so gracious to send to all our Soldiers. We couldn't have done it without your support. Thank You! We can't wait to get home to all of our family and friends.

— Capt. James Ezell



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/2-300th FA

MISSION PREP — Sgt. Dominic Hideo, A Company, prepares his vehicle for a mission to escort Department of Defense personnel and equipment in Kuwait.

See BLACK HORSE Pg 16

BLACKHORSE continued from Page 15



2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen/ 2-300th FA

PREMISSION INSPECTION — Sgt. 1st Class Julie Wilkes, Headquarters Platoon, A Company, 960th Brigade Support Battalion, attached to the 2-300th FA, inspects a vehicle to ensure safety and effectiveness for the convoy escort mission ahead in Kuwait..

Greetings from Headquarters Platoon, Alpha Company, 960th Brigade Support Battalion. Our platoon of 15 Soldiers is made up of many pieces that help keep our company running.

The commander, first sergeant, and executive officer have kept us all moving in the right direction, and are making sure we all get home safe and sound.

The operations section does an excellent job of planning and coordinating the Gateway escort missions. They work behind the scenes to make sure all our Soldiers throughout Kuwait get to where they need to be. The work they're doing is completely different from the jobs the Army trained them for, but they picked it up quickly and now run it like they own it.

The Supply section hit the ground running in Fort Hood, Texas, and hasn't slowed down since. Between the two of them they've kept us provided with beans and bullets and everything in between, while keeping track of all our equipment. No small task with the way our company is structured.

The administration section made sure we had all the proper paperwork to get us out of here for some much needed R&R. They've been extremely busy during the whole deployment, making sure all of our Soldiers' pay, promotions, awards, and documents needed to go home are squared away and ready to go.

Our one-man maintenance section has kept us rolling. He works with the civilian contractors here, in Kuwait, to ensure our 25 vehicles are always ready to accomplish the company's multitude of missions.

We've also had several well deserved promotions in Headquarters Platoon.

— Sgt. 1st Class Julie Wilkes, Headquarters Platoon



Let'r Buck!

2nd Lt. Christian Venhuizen, executive officer, Headquarters Battery

Weapons qualifications, physical fitness tests, and the daily grind. It seems like we did them just a short time ago.



NEW NCO — Derek Santos is 'pinned' as one of the battalion's newest noncommissioned officers by Lt. Col. Brian Nesvik, the commander of the 2-300th, in January.

We did, but we're doing it again to set ourselves up for success.

We have opportunities to take care of some of the little things while we're in Kuwait, as opposed to back in Wyoming. We are making sure our Soldiers are current for their weapons qualification, and are trained to a higher standard. We have time, rounds and the Soldiers with the skills. Not to mention, the weather has been cool, but not bone chilling cold.

We also have a chance to knock our record Army Physical Fitness Test out of the water. There is something to be said about testing at sea level. There is also something to be said about gaining thousands of feet in elevation and having to acclimate before testing.

Sometimes it seems like we repeat a lot of what we do. It's sometimes necessary, but for reasons that aren't always clear. Take me for example. I asked our first sergeant why we were testing. He explained about setting Soldiers up for success.

Besides being at sea level, most of our Soldiers are working out and running daily. Some are in the best physical condition they've seen in the last 10 years, but what about when we go home.

We plan on taking a break mentally and possibly physically when we finally come home. Some have sports type injuries we sustained since being here and plan to use the down time to recuperate instead of preparing for combat. Many Soldiers have a large number of parties and gatherings with family and friends to attend to when we come home. After all that, can we still say we can beat where we are physically right now?

We all are pulling our boot laces a little tighter these days. Keeping our heads in the game, setting each other up for success and setting ourselves up for success is critical to finishing the mission strong.