

YANK

THE SPARTAN



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*By the Soldiers... for the
Soldiers in the service*



SECOND HEAVY BRIGADE



DOGFACE SOLDIERS LEAD THE WAY



APRIL 22, 2010

YANK

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COVER

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division grace the cover of the **YANK** between completing missions providing security for the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team.

PHOTO BY **SPC. GREGORY GIESKE**



COMMANDER

We have hit the half way mark in our deployment and your performance has been nothing more than phenomenal. You have accomplished every task that has been asked of you in a manner that has far exceeded all expectations. We are at a point in the deployment where we may begin to question things that we used to take for fact: Is the mission working? Is it worth the time away from our loved ones? Is what we are doing worth the sacrifices we are making? Is my relationship with my family going to be as good as it was when I left? And on, and on, and on... I would not try to put words in your mouths and only you can truly answer those questions, but what I can say is that what you have done thus far are the labors of heroes. You are sacrificing your time and yourself for others whom you don't know and noble ideas. Here are some definitions for hero, and you tell me if you think they apply:

-A man/woman distinguished by

exceptional courage and nobility and strength

-Champion: someone who fights for a cause

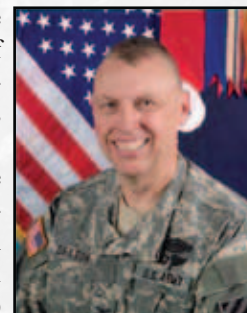
-A being of great strength and courage celebrated for bold exploits

In my mind you have met all these criteria. You have shown your courage by standing toe to toe with the enemy in Mosul, against RKG throwers, against IED emplacements on Route Tampa and Minneapolis, and against mortar and rocket strikes on your COS/LSA/JSS, by defending the border of Iraq. You have championed causes: the cause of freedom, democracy, and self-determination by your support of the elections. You have shown your strength and courage by your bold exploits in the building and manning of Combined Check Points which have brought together former adversaries unified in a common cause to fight against violent extremists. The last thing we need you to do

is to continue to take care of each other unified as heroes in our cause.

If you see one of your brothers or sisters in psychological trouble, help them by getting them the help they need. If you see someone wearing our uniform doing something against the Army Values that may hurt one of us like using or selling drugs, or abusing detainees, stop them. If you hear or see someone trying to prey on one of us because they may be physically stronger; join together to stop them and report them. Double your efforts to bring us home safe and by maintaining our honor and dignity. You are all heroes, live up to the legend you have already written.

Spartan 6



COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR



The Spartan Brigade Combat Team is rich with talented Noncommissioned Officers who are living the NCO creed and performing their duties with distinction every day in Iraq. One in particular is Sergeant Matthew Soto of Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery. Sergeant Soto, a native of San Gabriel, Calif., enlisted in the U.S. Army on Oct. 12, 2005 as a 13B, Artilleryman. Throughout his short military

career, he has made a significant impact in the Army and positively influenced those with whom he has served as a result of his brilliance and professionalism.

Sergeant Soto is always looking for ways to improve as a Noncommissioned Officer. In September 2009, he competed in the Division NCO of the Quarter Board and placed second. His success at the NCO of the Quarter Board propelled him to compete for the Sergeant Audie Murphy Award in January 2010. To no one's surprise, he became the first Noncommissioned Officer in the United States Division – North, Iraq to be selected for mem-

bership into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club.

During an interview with two of his Soldiers, Spc. Mertz Goodwin and Pfc. Paul Garcia, I was amazed by some of the comments they made while describing him. They described Sergeant Soto as an extraordinary leader who channels most of his energy toward training Soldiers, and fosters a climate where they can learn and grow. They also described him as a leader who leads by example and is a role model for Soldiers. Sergeant Soto is unequivocally a true representation of Dogface Soldiers, past and present.

Spartan 7

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SCOPE

NEWS, SCOOPS, AND THE FRONT AT A GLANCE



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REDUCING THE RISK: ONE DRILL AT A TIME

BY CAPT. JONATHAN FREDRITZ



ROLLOVERS ARE DANGEROUS incidents, which have a higher fatality rate than other types of crashes. Reducing the risk of a rollover begins with a good understanding of what rollovers are, and how they can affect personal safety in vehicles. The 26th Brigade Support Battalion recognizes that rollovers are dangerous, and is taking the necessary steps in minimizing the chances of being injured or killed during a rollover or crash.

The 26th BSB put together a training exercise that combined several different drills in order to familiarize and sharpen our Soldiers' skills during a possible vehicle rollover. The training started with Soldiers receiving briefings and hands-on training on rollover drills; calling nine-line MEDEVACs, reviewing proper methods for wearing the MRAP-safety belt and gunners restraints, loading casualties into a MRAP, verifying load plans, and reviewing past Marne Safety Alerts.

The final test consisted of Alpha Company's security platoon properly moving a casualty from the point of injury to a medical-platform for medical evacuation. All 26th BSB company's played a role in this life-saving training. Bravo Company set up all the training lanes, evaluated the training, and provided valuable feedback to the security platoon's leadership. Charlie Company provided training on the nine-line MEDEVAC, as well as the loading and unloading of casualties into the Heavily Armored Ground Ambulance (HAGA).

"The intent for this exercise was to slow our OPTEMPO enough to focus on the basics and reinforce safety standards at the Soldier and leader level. I think we met that goal today due to the great participation and hard work of the Soldiers and leaders involved," said Maj. Fred Maddox, 26th BSB, battalion operations officer.

"Now the battalion can feel confident and reassured in our Soldier's preparation to react to any challenge they face," said Maj. Maddox.



SPARTANS CELEBRATE WEST POINT FOUNDER'S DINNER

BY CAPT. JOSE MEDINA

ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 12, over 40 members of the Long Grey Line gathered to celebrate the founding of their "rockbound highland home," the United States Military Academy at West Point, during a dinner held at the Forward Operating Base Marez dining facility.

The Founder's Day Dinner, hosted by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team "Spartans" of the 3rd Infantry Division, traces its roots to the first Founder's Day Dinner in Manila, Philippines, to mark the Academy's 100th birthday in 1902. For years, dinners held in New York City on Founder's Day were considered "the" West Point dinner for Old Grads.

The Spartans invited West Pointers from all over northern Iraq to join them for the dinner. Officers in attendance represented West Point graduating classes from 1978 to 2008. Some Old Grads flew in, others convoyed, but they all came for a night of fellowship, tradition, and speeches.

The dinner began with 1st Lt. Alexis Myers, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID, leading the assembled graduates in the Cadet Prayer. Toasts to the president, the Army, the Academy, the Corps of Cadets, and our fallen comrades followed.

Major General Anthony Cucolo, 3rd ID Commander, and West Point Class of '79 graduate, was the guest speaker for the dinner. He opened his speech by praising all Soldiers in Iraq for their efforts. He then centered on two main topics: "quiet pride" in all we do and always striving for and maintaining a higher standard than required. He reminded everyone that the "harder right" is always the mark to hit and that while none of

us is perfect, we should always strive for perfection.

The highlight of the evening was the entrance of 1st Lt. Earnest Smith Jr., West Point Class of 2007, the youngest graduate in attendance; 1st Lt. Smith had his complete, full dress cadet uniform shipped to Iraq for the dinner. When announced as the youngest graduate present, 1st Lt. Smith marched into the room, saluted the head table with his cadet saber, and opened his speech, "Now that I have your attention..."

Poking fun that the truly "old grads" were forced to "wield the highly advanced mathematical tool known as the slide rule," 1st Lt. Smith concluded that while many things have changed at the Acad-



emy over the years, three things will always remain the same: "duty, honor, and country."

As tradition demands, the Founder's Day Dinner ended with the singing of the West Point Alma Mater. Before the Old Grads parted for the night to return to their units and duties, they took the time to separate into their West Point classes for photos to commemorate the night.

GROWING THROUGH ADVERSITY

BY SPC. JASON AGLIETTI / 1ST LT. ANDREW HIGGINS



FOR THE SOLDIERS OF 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment manning the small combined checkpoints throughout Ninewa Province in northern Iraq, overcoming language barriers, limited facilities, and ever-present danger makes the mission a tough task to complete. However, for one 1-36th Soldier, the task presents the opportunity to grow as a leader.

Private First Class Brandon Sims, Company D, 1-36th INF., assigned as part of a unified checkpoint effort between United States Forces in Iraq, Iraqi Army, and Kurdish Soldiers, requires that he and his Iraqi counterparts regularly spend 12 hours a day providing security and assisting Army engineers improve the checkpoint.

Checkpoint operations are integral to U.S. Forces phased withdraw of troops to 50,000 by August. They are setup to allow safe and secure passage of civilians throughout the Mosul area and create a unified security front.

Private First Class Sims, like many other

Soldiers in the battalion, is successfully “advising and assisting” Iraqi Soldiers with daily operations, said Sgt. 1st Class John Fernandez, who serves as Pfc. Sims’ platoon leader.

To many of his peers and platoon leadership, Pfc. Sims acts more like a non-commissioned officer than a private, said Sgt. 1st Class Fernandez.

“I think his potential is to become an NCO and lead Soldiers...he will be a great leader,” said Sgt. 1st Class Fernandez.

Private 1st Class Sims and his Iraqi Army and Peshmerga counterparts, conduct several tasks jointly throughout the day. They man guard towers, conduct local patrols, and Pfc. Sims provides security while the Iraqi Soldiers search vehicles. While embracing the U.S. military’s position as an assist and advisory element for the checkpoints, Pfc. Sims is mentoring and coaching his Iraqi peers toward success.

“Language barriers with local civilians



have been tested, especially whenever “Danger” Company needs to close down the checkpoint,” said Pfc. Sims.

For maintenance or construction reasons. Just like in the United States, Iraqi civilians become frustrated with the delays. However, as Sims points out, the locals understand the need for the checkpoints and appreciate the combined efforts of all the security forces involved.

“We really built this place up and we are really aggressive at building and defending, and I think it says a lot of who we are,” said Pfc. Sims.

“Pfc. Sims is wise beyond his years,” said Sgt. 1st Class Fernandez. “He represents himself, “Danger” Company, and the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment to the best of his abilities.”

1-9 AND PRT SUPPORT IRAQI ELECTION PROCESS

BY 1ST LT. WILLIE CARNES



THE SEVENTH DAY OF MARCH MARKED A historic day for the people of Iraq during the country’s National Parliamentary Elections.

The election was only the second time in the country’s history where citizens, both men and women, could choose their leaders in a democratic manner.

Eight members from the U.S. Embassy and the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) were tasked to observe the elections at several polling stations throughout the province. These members, named “Team East,” were sent to ensure correct voting procedures and an accurate assessment of seven different polling stations northeast of Mosul.

Red Platoon from Battery B., 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, was selected to support Team East during the elections. Red Platoon has been working exclusively with the Provincial Reconstruction Team since their arrival at Forward Operating Base Marez

in November. The platoon, led by 1st Lt. Willie Carnes and Sgt. 1st Class Joseph McEady, had the task of providing security for Team East and transporting them to each polling station.

Soldiers from the Iraqi Army’s 2nd Division joined the team to escort and provide additional security, if necessary.

“What made the mission different from previous PRT missions was the fact that no U.S. Forces were allowed within 300 yards of the polling sites. This meant the Soldiers of Red Platoon had to wait at their vehicles while the eight members of Team East went inside alone,” said 1st Lt. Carnes.

This was to prove to the Iraqi people that Iraqi Security Forces were fully capable of handling the security of their country without assistance from U.S. Forces.

“Voters appeared enthusiastic throughout the province,” said Sgt. 1st Class McEady. “Despite several IEDs that were defused by the Iraqi Security Forces in the city of Mosul, the overall security across Ninewa Province was similar to what we saw throughout the day.”

The net result was that roughly 70 percent of the registered voters in the Ninewa Province made it to the polls to cast their vote.

“Overall, the day of the elections was a great success for Iraq; the Soldiers of Bravo Battery and 1-9th Field Artillery were proud to play a small, but significant part in this historic day,” said First Lt. Carnes.

THE OUTKAST: READY AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE

BY 1ST LT. NORIAN MEDINA



EVERY MORNING, 10 Soldiers assigned to the Base Defense Quick Reaction Force (QRF) take over the daily task of protecting COS Marez/Diamondback. They serve as the base defense's first line of deterrence, conducting daily security patrols around the outside perimeter of the COS to ensure the safety of all service members and civilians.

The QRF element, with an appropriate call sign of "Outkast," is comprised of an array of Soldiers ranging from Infantry, Military Police, Armor, Engineer, Chemical, Calvary Scout and Medical Service. However, thanks to this diversity, the range of experiences and training has helped them adapt to the ever-changing threat.

Having never trained together prior to this deployment, the relatively smooth transition to a unified, cohesive element is a great credit to the NCOs that lead these Soldiers.

Some of their missions in the past have included apprehending personnel at a gate, chasing off personnel near the perimeter, escorting trucks through Iraqi Police/Iraqi checkpoints, confirming or denying Improvised Explosive Devices and verifying indirect fire positions. They are on call 24/7, with missions ranging all hours of the day and night. They are always ready at a moment's notice to respond.

"Moving out to investigate a bag that's possibly an IED is annoying, but it's that kind of unpredictability that makes my job exciting," said Pfc. Christopher Hinsdale, who is a gunner and driver for the Outkast element.

The Soldiers in the Outkast element represent the essence of what being a Marine Soldier is about: flexible, competent, and ready for anything. Even as "Outkasts" from their respective branch missions, they are executing this mission to the highest standards and are relied upon to safeguard all the service members and civilians at COS Marez/Diamondback.



IRAQI SECURITY FORCES CONDUCT JOINT TRAINING ON FOB SYKES

BY STAFF SGT. JASON BARCKLAY



IRAQI SECURITY FORCES, including Police, Army, Border Patrol and ERB personnel from around the Ninewa Province have been attending courses at the Iraqi Security Forces Continuing Education Center (ISFCEC) provided by the 855th Military Police Company since December 2009.

Multiple levels of course instruction are provided in all aspects of law enforcement and security training, including Basic and Advanced Investigator Training, Criminal Intelligence and Train the Trainer Instructor Courses.

The multiple-day courses, which average five days in length, cover topics in depth regarding tactical questioning of suspects, proper checkpoint and patrol techniques as well as detailed vehicle and personnel searches.

Criminal Intelligence Course instruction focuses further on investigative case development regarding the proper use of sources of information and proper evidence collection at major crime scenes.

Each day of training has practical, hands on, scenario-based events that substantially incorporate all of the course attendees, including having previous graduates of ISFCEC return as instructors.

Heavily involved with planning and instruction are Provincial Reconstruction Team personnel and State Department Law Enforcement Advisors. These teams directly assist in developing and identifying areas of the Iraqi Judicial system that can be improved to have less remands of serious cases, which result in suspects

being released from custody or case dismissal.

Key leader engagements are conducted weekly at Iraqi Police Station and District Headquarters level with 855th MP Co. personnel, along with members of the Stability and Transition Team and Border Patrol Teams.

Building and strengthening the relationships at the local police level are one of the many keys to success in enabling the Iraqis to fulfill their efforts to follow the Rule of Law and progress away from the conflict and suffering of the citizens of Iraq.

A great example of this type of recent engagement was the completion of Station Security Assessments, which identified potentially serious security issues at the police stations. These assessments greatly improved station security in preparation for major events, such as the Provincial Elections, which may change the future political climate of Iraq and have lasting national effects.

"Hosting the classes with the ISFCEC on FOB Sykes affords the class participants the opportunity to capture valuable training essential to their duties as members of the Iraqi Security Forces, without being distracted by the demanding and sometimes hectic activity at their local police stations, border forts and other investigative duties," said Staff Sgt. Chad Dixon of Phoenix, Ariz., who was the host of the current graduating class.

"It also helps different groups of the security forces, such as the IPs, ERBs and Border Patrol, working together to build friendships and network with each other from neighboring towns," Staff Sgt. Dixon said.



CINNABON TO COMBAT KITCHEN:

APACHE TROOP ADJUSTS TO LIFE ON A COMBINED COMBAT OUTPOST

BY 1ST LT. KYLE ROBINSON



THE AMENITIES OF Forward Operating Base Sykes are now a distant memory for Apache Troop, 3rd Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, as Apache Paratroopers have moved to an area where Kurdish, Yezedi, and Arab populations intersect.

They now find themselves living on a combined combat outpost, operating a combined checkpoint and conducting combined action with Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, Iraqi Border Patrol, and Peshmerga Forces. The living may be primitive, but the mission is second to none.

The transition to the new area of operations occurred at a very busy time for Apache Troop, as they prepared for upcoming elections throughout the Ninewa Province. The election period was a very intense time for all Apache paratroopers, as the entire troop and equipment was moved to the combined combat outpost and the operational tempo remained very demanding.

"There was about a three-week period where everybody in the Troop was experiencing late nights in preparation for the big move," said senior scout, Staff Sgt. Adolf.

Elections ended on a positive note, with no security issues occurring in Apache's area of operations. "This year's elections were a major step forward for the Iraqi Security Forces and the country of Iraq," said Platoon Leader 1st. Lt. Tucker. "The ISF were completely in charge of election security and they did an excellent job."

1st Platoon Apache Troop assumed control of operating the Combined Check-

point with the Iraqi Security Forces. The combined checkpoint was developed to bring Peshmerga, Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police and American Forces together to work as a unified team of brothers rather than three separate security forces.

"The checkpoint is keeping the area safe and working with Americans is always a good experience," said Areef (Sgt.) Hassan, a Peshmerga Soldier working at the combined checkpoint.

Strong bonds have already been formed between the Iraqi Security Forces and the 1st Platoon Soldiers in the short time the combined checkpoint has been operational. Anyone visiting the checkpoint can see how closely the Soldiers are working together, learning from each other, and even finding time to joke around from time to time.

The combined checkpoint has experienced its share of growing pains, however, as the local populace has adjusted to the rules and regulations of the checkpoint.

"The biggest struggle at first was explaining to the civilians and Iraqi Security Forces traveling through the checkpoint that everybody would be treated the same,"

said Iraqi Army Jundi (Pvt.) Ibrahim. "They are slowly learning that nobody receives special treatment coming through."

Combined patrols are also conducted on a regular basis throughout the area and small villages within the Combined Security Area. The combined patrols continue to secure the Combined Security Area and allow the local populace to see the Iraqi Security Forces and the American forces working together outside of the checkpoint.

Second and 3rd Platoons of Apache Troop have also adjusted to a new area of operations, as they have shifted to securing the border between Iraq and Syria.

"The change of mission has been a great opportunity to operate as a scout platoon," said Platoon Sergeant Sgt. 1st. Class Kinard.

The border mission gives platoons the opportunity to work with Iraqi Border Patrol to deter and detain smugglers and foreign fighters entering into Iraq. As part of the fight to secure the border, Apache Troop is building on economic initiatives along the border villages to prevent the need for the villages to smuggle to survive including assisting locals in starting new businesses, or expanding existing ones.

Apache also continues to assist in the development of the Combined Security Area by helping the local government operate independently, ensuring all Iraqis have freedom of movement, and the area is able to move forward without U.S. assistance. With the scars of attacks in years past, residents are sometimes wary of outsiders, but with the area secured by the combined forces and the country on the right track moving forward, the freedom of movement is ever increasing, giving "outsiders" access to population centers fostering a symbiotic relationship between many different communities.

As Apache Troop's deployment to Iraq continues, paratroopers remain ready and willing to adjust to any mission that comes their way. The days are numbered to a time when no American Soldiers are operating in Iraq. As that time draws near, the combined operations conducted every day continue to have a major impact on the future of Iraqi Security Forces as a legitimate security force capable of providing security for the people of Iraq.

"The checkpoint is keeping the area safe and working with Americans is always a good experience."

SOLDIERS AWARDED FOR COMBAT SERVICE, VALOR

BY 1ST LT. RYAN GREER



MEDALS AWARDED WITH valor are becoming fewer in the Iraqi Theater: a testament to the changing security situation. With Iraqi Security Forces taking the lead more and more, American troops take an ever increasing position on the sidelines of the battlefield.

In the five months 3-7 CAV has spent in Iraq, the Squadron has awarded only two medals with Valor. Spc. James Hicks, from Apache Troop, received an Army Commendation Medal with Valor for his actions after his vehicle was struck with a RKG-3 grenade, and Staff Sgt. Kelly Young of Bone Troop received the Bronze Star Medal with Valor for his participation in the

destruction of an IED cell operating in the vicinity of MSR Tampa several kilometers South of Mosul.

3-7 CAV's first award for Valor was given to Spc. James Hicks of Apache Troop. On Dec. 1, 2009, Apache Troop was conducting a project oversight patrol in the Al Hadba neighborhood of Mosul. While travelling through the city, the Apache patrol was ambushed with a RKG-3 anti-tank grenade. The grenade struck the MRAP driven by Spc. Hicks and he took glass shards and metal fragmentation to the arm as the grenade's penetrator exploded through his window, shot through his left and right thighs and then exited through the vehicle floor.

Spc. Hicks, continued to drive the MRAP out of the attack zone and was able to tourniquet his left leg while still driving the vehicle. His actions demonstrated his commitment to his unit and showed selfless service in removing his comrades from the

kill zone.

For his actions during the attack, Spc. Hicks was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, the Purple Heart, and the Combat Action Badge. Spc. Hicks was evacuated to Germany for medical care, and is now back at Ft. Stewart, recuperating from his injuries.

Staff Sergeant Kelly Young was the second Trooper from 3-7 CAV to receive a medal with Valor. On Jan. 7, 2010, Bone Troop's Red Platoon conducted counter-IED operations South of Mosul on Route Tampa. Around 10 p.m., one of the observation posts (OPs) observed four persons with rifles carrying a heavy object toward the MSR and a section of two M3A2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles were sent to investigate. The individuals began firing and throwing grenades when the Bradleys closed on their position.

One of the Bradleys experienced a weapon malfunction and the section had to reposition out of the line of fire. The Bradley section handed the targets off to Staff Sgt. Young and he maneuvered his HMMWV section to the area.

He then led a five-man dismounted team into the ditches the insurgents were using for cover and concealment. He used his flashlight to draw the attention of the insurgents away from his Soldiers and proceeded to neutralize the remaining threat.

For his actions on the ground and placing himself in the line of fire, Staff Sgt. Young was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor. Exploitation of the site concluded the personnel were a highly-trained and experienced IED cell, highlighting the significance of their destruction.

During the afternoon of March 12, the SABER Squadron came together in Diamondback Theater to honor the Soldiers that distinguished themselves through their actions. The event was made more special by the appearance of Maj. Gen. Anthony Cucolo, Commander of the 3rd Infantry Division and United States Division – North (USD-N). Maj. Gen. Cucolo attended the ceremony to award Staff Sgt. Young the



Bronze Star with Valor he earned for his actions on the night of January 7th.

Maj. Gen. Cucolo also presented Cpl. Jordan Hunter, another Soldier from Bone Troop's Red Platoon, with a Certificate of Achievement for being the TF Marne Hero of the North, and a coin for his participation in the same fight., on the night of January 7th.

When asked about his feelings toward this honor, Cpl. Hunter replied, "I wasn't doing anything special. I was just doing my job; that's how scouts roll, although, it was pretty cool to get my first coin ever from Maj. Gen. Cucolo."

Staff Sgt. Young's comments echoed the same sentiments Cpl. Hunter espoused. "I was honored to be given such an award, but it was the people on the ground next to me that earned it. They did the work, so they deserve it more than I do," Staff Sgt. Young stated.

Other SABER Soldiers were standing by to receive their awards as well. Cpl. Aponte of Desperado Troop, and Cpl. Morris, Sgt. Thow, and Staff Sgt. Toole of Bone Troop all received Combat Action Badges. These soldiers were in the direct vicinity of a 107mm rocket that exploded in the Bone Troop motor pool, damaging several of the Troop's vehicles. All escaped the blast uninjured, but Bone Troop's sole RG-33 absorbed the brunt of the blast.

After all the awards were issued, Maj. Gen. Cucolo gave praise to the Squadron, approving of the "Hell No" attitude the Garry Owen Soldiers have taken in dealing with the insurgency.

This attitude will carry the SABER Squadron through the rest of the deployment and continue to be taken by the Iraqi Security Forces as they take over on the front lines to secure their country.



ACCOMPLISHING THE IMPOSSIBLE:

TASK FORCE MARNE SOLDIERS PUSH TO COMPLETE MISSION

BY SPC. CRYSTAL M. O'NEAL

AS EARLY AS BASIC COMBAT training, U.S. Soldiers are trained to be tough – both mentally and physically. Endurance is a must and completing tasks that may seem impossible to most, have earned them the title as “the best Soldiers in the world.”

Staff Sergeant Bryan Lightfoot and Spc. Joe Winebarger, Company C, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion attached to 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, together, are doing what Soldiers do best – making a challenging task seem like a piece of cake.

The two Soldiers are in the process of composing contracts for renovations to approximately 150 schools throughout Ninewa Province in just 100 days.

Staff Sergeant Lightfoot said getting the contracts done so the schools can be upgraded, providing better education facilities for Iraqi children, is no doubt a priority.

“All across Ninewa Province there are a lot of infrastructure-like schools that have been neglected for years and need to be refurbished,” he said. “After these contracts are finished, new wiring, playgrounds, running water, and more efficient classrooms

will be something Iraqi children in Ninewa Province can look forward to.”

Before the two Soldiers were assigned to generating the contracts on March 5, they were on the ground almost daily, going out with teams to school renovation sites.

They both have seen, first hand, the bad shape the schools were in, making it easier to understand the importance of the mission.

“We’ve seen bullet holes in the windows of the schools. We’ve known personally how hot it gets in those buildings. They are often overcrowded and unsanitary,” said Spc. Winebarger. “Having seen all this, it definitely gives a somewhat personal sense of urgency and makes us even more dedicated to the job.”

The staff sergeant said once the Ninewa Directorate General of Education and the Provincial Reconstruction Team provided him and Spc. Winebarger a compiled list of estimated costs for each school to be renewed, they had everything they needed to execute their mission.

“Right now we have generated about 100 contracts and we have about 50 more to do. Once all the contracts are approved,

we are hoping that contractors can be on the ground in six to eight weeks, putting the plans into action,” said Staff Sgt. Lightfoot.

The Iraqi Commander’s Emergency Response Program will fund the renovations and local Iraqi contractors will provide labor for the project, providing an economic stimulus for local Ninewa residents.

“Not only will the renovations provide much better learning facilities for the children, but this project is also pumping money into local communities,” said Staff Sgt. Lightfoot. “That’s killing two birds with one stone.”

Specialist Winebarger said that he feels truly honored to be a part of it all.

“Altogether, this is a very original approach to civil military operations. No one else has accomplished a feat like this before. All the long, late nights of working are totally worth it,” said Spc. Winebarger.

“Doing this makes me feel as if I have contributed to the welfare of the Iraqi people and things like this definitely put a very positive spin on Operation Iraqi Freedom,” he said.

SADDLE UP:

A RIDE WITH THE 278TH ARMORED CAVALRY

BY CAPT. KEVIN D. LEVESQUE



AS THE IRAQI SUN SETS on Mosul, Soldiers from “G” Troop of Regimental Fires Squadron fervently get ready for a busy night.

As a part of a Convoy Security Company, they are assigned with an all-pervading task of keeping the flow of goods moving safely in and out of Mosul. The sound of the heavy metal and a well-oiled 50 caliber machine gun being tested and purposely placed on her mount is a reminder that they are always at the ready for tonight’s mission. Their personal equipment is pre-combat checked and their heavy body armor strapped on for a last minute inspection.

After recent attacks on sister platoons and company’s, they know the reality they face outside the safety of the base. However, the look of nervousness is not on any of the faces because this is not their first rodeo. Now it is the look of deter-

mination and concentration that replaces any pre-mission jitters. As a part of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, they have an equestrian lineage but today they ride in Mine Resistant Ambush Protection Vehicles or MRAPs. This 12 ton high tech beast is no burden as it can roll down the road at over 40 miles an hour while delivering real firepower.

Sgt. 1st Class Edward Mosher from Nashville, Tennessee one of the squad leaders and assistant convoy commander for this convoy stated, “The MRAP is one of the best pieces of equipment they can issue us over here. It’s worth the money and it’s saving lives!”

This giant armored-plated vehicle is also equipped with some of the latest communications equipment, known as the Blue Force Tracker (BFT). These computers are electronic burst transmitters able to communicate the MRAP’s exact location

CONT. ON PG 12

CONT. FROM PG 11

via satellite, thus providing visibility of every vehicle to their higher headquarters. It provides a real-time map, not only to the commanders far away, but also to the team on the ground and provides invaluable situational awareness of friendly and enemy activity in their area.

Staff Sgt. Brian Goode from Columbia, Tennessee is the communications supply sergeant in charge of maintaining this gear and makes sure that all the communications equipment is in top operating order before they pull out of the gate.

"The electronic equipment is some of the best," Staff Sgt. Goode said with a grin. He walks from truck to truck making sure there are no last minute issues.

"I feel that the men and woman serving under me are some of the best in the U.S. They train hard and take their job very serious," stated Staff Sgt. Morehead.

Specialist Michael Hall from Fayetteville, Tennessee said, "I feel that our job as a scout truck is a key element of the convoy and we have to look out for things and make the rest of the convoy safe. I feel great about my teammates. We have been together since we started this deployment and I don't ever want to be split up!"

Once the sun has completely set, the convoy commander gives the command to "Saddle Up!" and the team rolls out to pick up their semitrailers and head out of the city. The dusty trail they leave behind is a reminder that these 'riders in the night' are gone but, not far away from returning home.

DESERT ROGUES PREPARE FOR MOVEMENT TO MOSUL

BY 1ST. LT. JOE STANGER



1ST BATTALION, 64TH Amored Regiment is preparing for the largest base closure and relocation event since our arrival in Iraq. The Desert Rogues are preparing to move the entire Battalion to Mosul as FOB Q-West prepares to close. This marks a landmark event in conjunction with the US drawdown of forces in Iraq. While the Desert Rogues remain busy with normal, day-to-day-operations, they have shifted the main operations center to COS Marez as Soldiers at Q-West pack up and prepare all of the Battalion's supplies and vehicles for movement to Marez.

FOB Q-West's closure is a result of the responsible transfer of authority to the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces. Q-West was once a major base for American operations and a logistical hub for northern Iraq. Now, American Soldiers are moving off the base. As Americans leave, the Iraqis will take over the base. Soon, the FOB will be completely handed over and become a major base for the Iraqi Air Force.

Upon arrival to Iraq, 1-64 AR was the only 2nd Brigade unit living on FOB Q-West. With movement to Marez, the Des-

ert Rogues will rejoin the rest of our Spartan Brigade counterparts for the remainder of our mission in Iraq. This will present a challenge to the Desert Rogues as we conduct the move while still conducting full spectrum operations in an area the size of Connecticut. Just like if you were moving from one house to another, everything on Q-West has to be packed up and moved from one location to the other. This sounds easy until you consider the fact that 1-64 AR has over 1000 Soldiers and almost half a billion dollars worth of equipment and vehicles to move.

Between the hard-working Soldiers on Q-West and the mission focus of the 1-64 Soldiers who advanced early to COS Marez, the move will be conducted without issue while still maintaining our focus on day-to-day operations. The Soldiers of the Desert Rogue Battalion have proved time and time again that they can successfully accomplish even the most difficult of tasks. The handover of Q-West and the drawdown of US forces in Iraq represent the success of 1-64 AR and all American military forces in transforming Iraq from a dictatorship in 2003 to a fully functioning and self sustaining democracy in its infancy.



TRULY A SAINT

BY CHAPLAIN (MAJ.) SID TAYLOR

"A man can be as truly a saint in a factory as in a monastery, and there is as much need of him in the one as in the other."

-- Robert J. McCracken

Likewise, a man can be as truly a saint in combat as in a church, and there is as much need of him in the one as in the other. A saint in combat is courageous, disciplined, moral, yet lethal. They fight, if they must, for liberty and justice for all. Their might is reinforced by the heavens. Ultimate victory is certain.

There are many saints with me in Iraq. I see them in chapels, at meals, in staff meetings. I so admire their goodness and the positive influence they have on the people around them. They are proud, selfless Americans. "...the salt of the earth."

We are the Spartans

2010

HISTORIC LANDMARK

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

➤ MOSUL ♦ MAREZ ➤

REFLECTIONS OF EASTER

COMMENTARY BY
CH (CAPT.) HAL BARKER



Al Kisik. This was part of the Brigade's plan for religious support to Soldiers who are in locations where religious services and visits from Chaplains are less frequent than on larger FOBs such as COS Marez/Diamondback or Q-West. Our team spent about one hour at each of the five locations. Even though our ministry team technically brought a service to these hard-working Soldiers, I was the one who left these security stations in awe of the service they provide to the Brigade and Iraq's future.

As a Soldier, flying to these different locations in Iraq had me thinking about many different things. As I reflected, I realized once again I have much to be thankful for, much to appreciate. I thank my Lord for so many, my family, and my country, and all the blessings He provides. I am especially thankful too for the hard work

This Easter, I had the opportunity to fly with two UH-60 crews to provide Protestant services at IMN, Al Khaser, As Shura, Tal Abtah and

of so many of our Soldiers.

As we went from place to place, I thought more about the Soldiers who do maintenance on vehicles, the Soldiers who "routinely" conduct their missions, man checkpoints, man operations posts, provide logistical support, do route recons, QRF missions, help with chow, and a host of other duties, along with the countless hours, every single day. The men and women at these locations are doing so much. Much of it, no one will ever see and most will keep to themselves. Many tasks will only be known to the Soldiers who have worked so closely during this deployment.

I also reflected on the things that had to happen for this mission to be complete.

The men and women at these locations are doing so much. Much of it, no one will ever see. Much of it, they will keep to themselves.

The Brigade approved the time for the helicopters—a precious limited resource—to be available. Since I currently do not have a Chaplain's assistant, 26 BSB generously offered their assistant, Spc. Drake, to accompany me on this important mission. Furthermore, all of the unit's Chaplains and Operations Centers had

to coordinate and time the arrival of the ministry team to all of the JSS' to synchronize this effort with current operations. These efforts reminded me of the teamwork and fellowship throughout the

Spartan Brigade.

So, as I reflect upon this Easter, I am thankful for the Soldiers who perform their duty without accolades, often without acknowledgement from others. It all makes a difference. It is because of such action, many had the opportunity to continue their own spiritual resiliency, which in this environment is very important. It is because of Soldiers doing their duty, that Spc. Drake and I could fly from one location to another, to see Soldiers, to hear Soldiers and encourage them on Easter Sunday.

Can you imagine what would happen without the Soldiers who do logistics? Can you imagine what would happen without the Soldiers who check their equipment, just like the pilots and Soldiers did before, during and after our flights? Can you imagine what would happen without 7diligent service daily? Can you imagine what would happen without a Soldiers understanding of the importance of worship and faith. All of us working together is so important. We could not do our mission effectively without one another.

It is a special honor to see the results of such action across the Brigade, working together to complete a common mission. By their service, I was given the opportunity to serve and worship, which I am so thankful. It is always special to see Soldiers helping their fellow Soldiers. On Easter there are many who demonstrated selfless service to their fellow Soldiers that I am so thankful for, I believe it is a testament to the character of those throughout the Brigade.

BG PHILLIPS SPEAKS TO LIBERTY CO. CHAMBER

BY PAT WATKINS

Special to Fort Stewart's *The Frontline*

Fort Stewart's 3rd Infantry Division is possibly on the dawn of a time when its Soldiers will be spending more time on-post than on deployment or training up to deploy.

"We are not looking at these deployments ad infinitum," Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Phillips, 3rd ID deputy commanding general-rear, told the Liberty County Chamber of Commerce at the Econo Lodge in Hinesville, Ga. March 25. "It may seem like it because we've been through so many years of it."

At the chamber's March Progress Through People luncheon, he said events could change his forecast. "The enemy always gets a vote." But, he said he expects a time similar to when he first entered the service when Soldiers could expect to spend entire enlistments at one duty station, serving in their military occupation. That has not been the case here during the past decade.

The 3rd ID has been in the forefront of U.S. efforts in Iraq since the 2003 war that toppled Saddam Hussein and the subsequent Operation Iraqi Freedom deployments that have been rebuilding that country's government and security forces. But a confluence of events there and emerging

philosophies in the Pentagon make it likely troops will get more at-home time. Iraq events include a drop in violence that has allowed U.S. troops to change their combat role to what they now call "advise and assist."

"We are now working with Iraqi authorities in what we really think is the end of operations there," Brig. Gen. Phillips said.

President Barack Obama has also said troops will be out of Iraq by August 2011.

The general said the Army sees itself focusing more on Afghanistan. But the 3rd ID will not routinely roll into deployments there because of a philosophy commander, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, has developed what he calls "continuity," Brig. Gen. Phillips said.

Continuity means divisions that have been serving there will continue to bear the brunt of deployments because of their make-up and familiarity with the people and terrain of Afghanistan. Those units are light infantry fighters.

"Most of our forces here are heavy units ... those units will start staying home much longer because they will not have orders to deploy. In fact, by 2012, we're looking at, out of the 45 active Army brigades, only 15 will have deployment orders or a date

to deploy," Brig. Gen. Phillips said.

Calling it a radical change from today, the general said, "As we hit 2014, the Army is hoping to achieve the vision of three units to dwell at their home station for every unit that is deployed."

The absence of troops here will get worse before it gets better. At this time the division is in the middle of a deployment with more than 15,000 troops gone. More than 12,000 of them are in Iraq. And the area will actually say goodbye to more through the summer. Parts of the division's sustainment brigade leave in April and will be gone a year. And the 4th Brigade Combat Team leaves in July for a year in Iraq.

In the fall, however, units that deployed last fall will start returning and welcome home ceremonies will run through July 2011, when the 4th is expected to return.

That is when Brig. Gen. Phillips expects the area to notice the change in deployment routines the most because, besides having the current troop strength home more, the post is likely to see a 1,000 troop increase. Growth will continue on post, he said.

"What we see here is a very robust construction budget," which the general compared to as what is being spent at the massive Fort Hood in Texas.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH OBSERVED AT CLUB STEWART

BY RANDY MURRAY

Fort Stewart Public Affairs

Soldiers, Army Civilians and local leaders gathered in Club Stewart's main ballroom to celebrate Women's History Month, March 29. This year's observance was themed "Writing Women Back into History," and featured Maj. Gen. Gina S. Farrisee, director of Military Personnel Management, Army G-1, as the featured speaker.

"I had the opportunity to be successful because of the people who came before me," Maj. Gen. Farrisee explained. "Without them, I probably wouldn't be standing here today."

She said it was important to celebrate women's history and to remember the contributions women have made throughout this country's history.

In addition to Maj. Gen. Farrisee's remarks, the observance included three special presentations. Supported by a big screen that displayed prints, paintings, photographs or portraits of women, several ladies presented brief summaries of the lives of historic women in a presentation called "Who Am I?"

Some of the women mentioned included Col. Oveta Culp Hob-

by, the first director of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps; Sally Ride, the first American woman to become an astronaut; and Capt. Linda Bray, the first woman to lead Soldiers in combat. A second presentation included even more historic pictures on the big screen as Sgt. Kristina Doolittle, who had begun the ceremony by singing the national anthem, sang a moving song about heroes.

She said currently 14 percent of active duty Soldiers are women, who now serve in nearly every military occupation specialty. Despite all the great women of history mentioned and honored during the observance, when asked what woman she looked up to most, Maj. Gen. Farrisee said her hero is her mother.

"She's one of the strongest, most courageous people I know," Maj. Gen. Farrisee said, and then added, "but I look up to all women who have taken risks."

Following her remarks, Maj. Gen. Farrisee was presented a Sgt. Rocky statue by Col. Louis Lartique, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Jerry Ashmen, 3rd Infantry Division command sergeant major-rear.



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All is fair in LOVE and WAR

By Spc. Crystal M. O'Neal
Spc. Dustin Gautney

Photos By
Spc. Gregory Gieske

While marriage holds its distinct opportunities, adventures and difficulties, being a dual military couple offers its own unique set of challenges. Just ask two couples from 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division serving and living together in northern Iraq.

Spartan Soldiers Sgt. 1st Class David Denson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, his wife, Staff Sgt. Jacqueline Denson, HHC, 26th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd HBCT, as well as Chief Warrant Officer Eliud Santiago, HHC, 2nd HBCT, and his spouse, Chief Warrant Officer Doris Santiago, 26th BSB, 2nd HBCT are two married, military couples, deployed to Contingency Operating Site Marez in Mosul, Iraq.

"Dual military couples face many challenges. You have to be an expert at balancing two very important parts of your life – your career and your marriage – in a vocation where you are on-call 24 hours a day," said Sgt. 1st Class Denson.

Staff Sergeant Denson said throughout the years, the call of duty has come at times others may find inconvenient, but she and her spouse have always coped and understood it's all a part of being a

Soldier, as well as being married to a Soldier.

"I remember back in the rear, we were at church and David got a call saying he had to get a Soldier from the hospital. I didn't fret or get mad. I know this career is not a traditional nine-to-five job, so as his wife and a fellow Soldier, situations like this are easy for me to adapt too," said the staff sergeant.

For both Santiago's, this was their first deployment with a dual military spouse and having that spouse deploy with them. "We've both been previously married, but having a spouse that's a service member has been a blessing," said Chief Warrant Officer Doris Santiago.

"Oh, definitely," agreed Chief Warrant Officer Eliud Santiago, "It's the small things. We both understand what we go through on a daily basis, whether it's work issues, or things like military jargon. We can easily relate to each other,

and it's a good thing she's also my best friend."

The Denson's also noted this was their first chance to live together during a deployment. On previous deployments, they were in different places and only got to see each other as time allowed.

"Once, we were both deployed to Korea, but she was on a different post than me. We tried to see each other on weekends, or whenever possible," said Sgt. 1st Class Denson.

Both couples agree communication is a key element to their relationship. Communication is what maintained the couple's strong bond, according to Staff Sgt. Denson, when they were deployed separately to Afghanistan.

"It was hard, but communication is definitely the key. You have to talk as much as possible – on the phone, e-mail, however you have to do it, it just has to be done," she said. "David and I would have

Bible study over the phone. One week he would lead, the next week I would lead. It was just something to keep us connected and keep the love fresh despite the distance.”

“Well it definitely saves you money off the cost of internet,” Chief Warrant Officer Doris Santiago said jokingly. “When you want to unwind after work, or just need to talk to someone, my husband is there, unlike other deployments.”

For the Santiago’s, communication and faith has been their strength, both for the children and themselves.

“We are a Christian Family and thank God for all that we have and the blessing of being able to stay together during the deployment,” said Chief Warrant Officer Doris Santiago.

“We find strength through each other and God to keep our children safe,” said Chief Warrant Officer Eliud Santiago, of the couple’s four children, all of whom are staying with Family back home.

Both Santiago’s agreed the most prevalent benefit of being deployed together was the strength and support their spouse can give each day.

“There are still hard times. With both of us here in Iraq, it’s difficult for our children not having a parent with them,” said Chief Warrant Officer Doris Santiago.

Both Densons agreed, even though they’re together now, keeping their love alive and blossoming while putting out 100 percent toward the mission, is still a day-to-day challenge.

“We are a very silly couple. We constantly laugh and joke around. You have to. You must be best friends so

when tough times come along, whether it’s because of our careers, distance, or anything, you still have to be able to be friends and get through it together,” said Staff Sgt. Denson.

Originally meeting only three-years-ago, the Santiago’s, through online military connections, the couple quickly found their soul mates within each other.

“Well she was stationed in Savannah and I was at Fort Stewart; after talking to each other for awhile online we thought it would be fun go on a date, from there we

just hit it off,” said Chief Warrant Officer Eliud Santiago. The Santiago’s both agree they are privileged to have been deployed together.

“We count our blessings. We’ve had the privilege of being deployed together because it might not be that way next time we deploy,” said Chief Warrant Officer Eliud Santiago.

Sergeant First Class Denson said despite the long separations and other hardships they face, he’s happy to be part of a dual-military couple because his wife understands and supports what he does to the utmost and vice versa.

“When I talk to my wife about what I do, or tell her when I’m concerned about my Soldiers, or even when I want to turn in early because I have PT (physical training) in the morning, she truly understands,” he said.

“She knows what it’s like. We both believe we’re touching people and changing their lives for the better through our career. It makes it even better that we can do it as a team – together.”

“We are a very silly couple. We constantly laugh and joke around. You have to. You must be best friends so when tough times come along, whether it’s because of our careers, distance, or anything, you still have to be able to be friends and get through it together”





Spartan Soldier strives for excellence

By Spc. Crystal M. O'Neal

For many American children, parents are often their first role models. As early as the age of two, little girls stick their toddler-sized feet into their mother's oversized heels and lots of dads find their large baseball caps swallowing their sons' little heads, revealing only tiny smiles.

These acts of kids imitating their parents are often the spark of something more.

For Pfc. Walter Jones III, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, and namesake of his father and grandfather, imitating the men in his Family, walking around in combat boots, and wearing an U.S. Army uniform was not just in imitation- it was the continuance of a legacy.

"My father and my grandfather, as well as one of my uncles, are veterans; my grandfather served in the Korean War and my father and uncle served in Desert Storm. I've always looked up to them," he said.

The private first class said although being a part of a "military family" was enough to make his decision to join the

Army concrete, having a little one of his own hurried the decision.

"I was in college playing football and studying to be a teacher when I found out my first daughter, Kaylee, was going to be born. I had given a lot of thought to joining the Army before, but at that moment, I knew it definitely was my next big step. I knew it was a solid man's decision and my Family would definitely be proud," he said.

Private First Class Jones left Montgomery, Ala., his home town, for basic combat training at Ft. Knox, Ky., and advanced individual training at Fort Jackson, S.C. He later became a part of the

Spartan team at Fort Stewart, Ga. as a paralegal in January 2009.

About 10 months later, after the required tactical training and preparation, the Soldier packed his Army Combat Uniforms, boots and all his gear for his first deployment, based at Contingency Operating Site Marez in northern Iraq.

As he got ready to leave, Pfc. Jones said he remembered thinking how it was going to be tough leaving his pregnant wife, who was also a Soldier stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., but he knew he had a job to do.

"I had known we were going to be deployed for quite awhile, so I began to

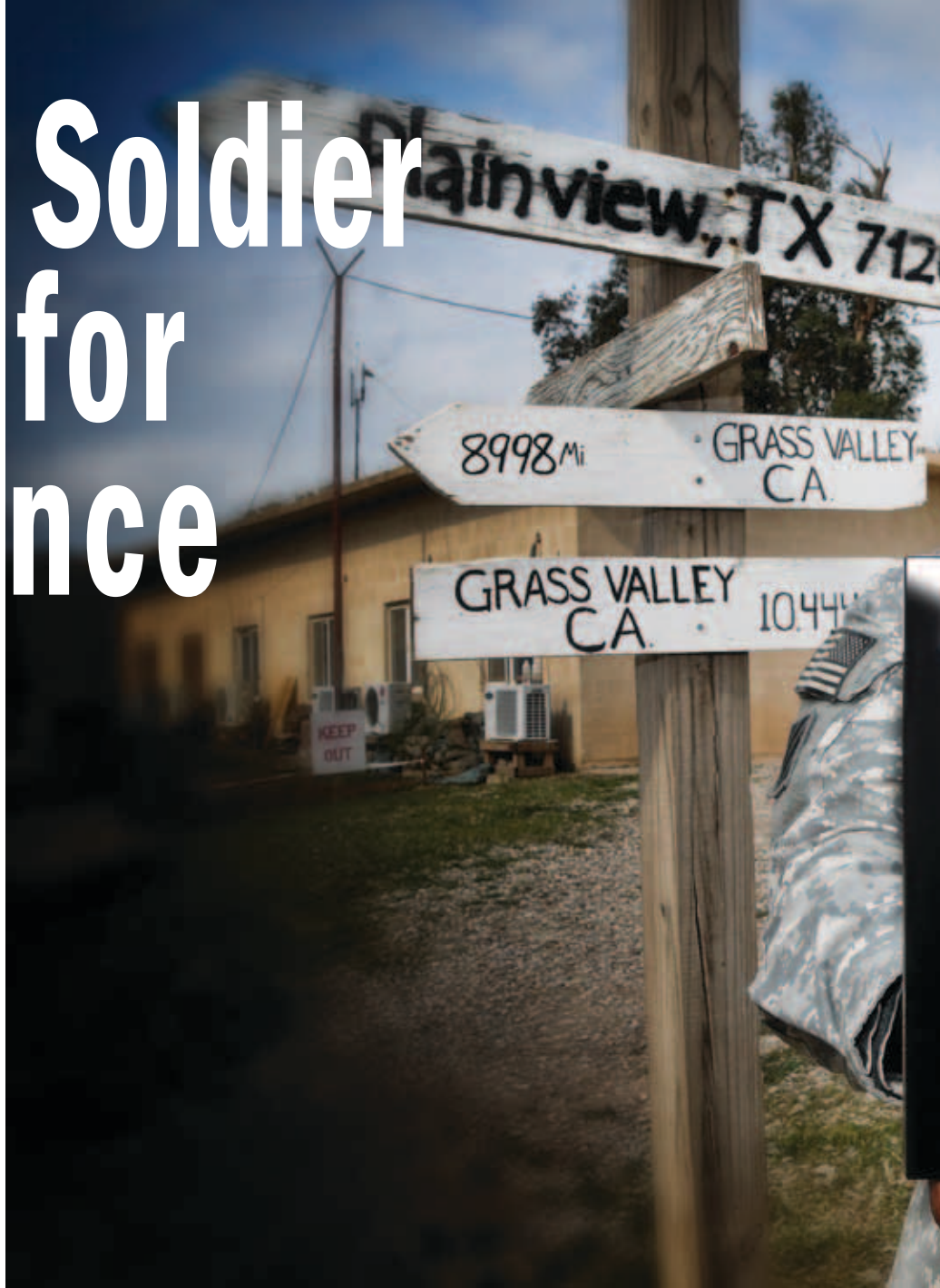




PHOTO BY SPC. GREGORY GIESKE

“I had given a lot of thought to joining the Army before, but at that moment, I knew it definitely was my next big step. I knew it was a solid man’s decision and my family would definitely be proud.”

prepare myself mentally for a long time before we left. As I got on the plane, I remember thinking that I probably would miss my daughter’s birth, but I knew I would stay strong to make sure she was definitely taken care of after she got here,” he said.

Worried about the home front or not, according to Sgt 1st First Class Michael Kolb, HHC, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID, Pfc. Jones has been very focused and is doing an extraordinary job.

“He’s a very good Soldier. You can give him a task and with little supervision, he’ll make it happen,” said the sergeant first class. “He also made the effort of assisting all the other Soldiers in the section with signing up to take college courses while we’re deployed. He made sure everything was squared away.”

While he enjoys being a Soldier, Pfc. Jones says his heart is still focused on teaching.

“My recruiter told me about the Troops to Teachers program and I was intrigued. I knew it would give me a chance to serve my country and prepare myself to teach. I love helping people and both careers, in that sense, are very fulfilling,” he said.

Private First Class Marketta Jones, 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division and Pfc. Jones’ wife, said she is proud of herself and her husband and takes the sacrifices they make for their country with grace and honor.

“It was difficult for me, because he was gone for most of my pregnancy and missed the birth of our daughter, Breanna. But we understand what we are doing is very important in all aspects; this time apart definitely builds character and trust,” she said. “Knowing he’s over there doing great things makes it a lot easier.”

Private First Class Walter Jones said he’ll never forget earning an Army Commendation Medal after his participation in the Spartan Black History Program, held in February at COS Marez, in which he sang solo, “The National Anthem.”

“I just wanted to do whatever I could to help out. After the program everyone showed me a lot of love. Col. Sexton (2nd HBCT, 3rd ID commander) even told me it was the best rendition of the song he had heard in a long time,” he said. “That was priceless.”

Forever a Soldier...

STORY BY SPC. CRYSTAL M. O'NEAL

PHOTOS BY SPC. GREGORY GIESKE
and SPC. CRYSTAL M. O'NEAL



Colonel Charles E.A. Sexon, commander, 2nd HBCT, 3rd ID, greets Wounded Warriors visiting COS Marez/Diamondback as part of Operation Proper Exit V



The roaring of a Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft growls to a stop. A warrior unfastens his seat belt restraints, removes his assault pack from his lap and slings it onto his back as he exits the plane.

He climbs down the ramp, oblivious to the weight of his helmet and body armor, although it's been about four years since he's worn one. He was a Soldier then and he is a Soldier now.

As he steps off the plane he is greeted by a full bird colonel. He quickly salutes. Neither four years, nor the memory of the explosion resulting in his Wounded Warrior status, is enough for him to lose his military bearing. He was a Soldier then and he is a Soldier now.

Recently, eight wounded combat veterans came back to Iraq as honorees in Operation Proper Exit V, to be recognized for their sacrifices made in the name of duty



and the American mission.

One of the visiting Soldiers, Staff Sgt. (Ret.) Brian Neuman, was injured while deployed to Fallujah, Iraq by an explosion, causing him to have his left arm amputated above the elbow.

The Soldier said the trip back reminded him he was still, and always would be, an American Soldier.

"Being here is truly wonderful. It's just awesome to be here, among other Soldiers and know even though I'm wounded, I'm with those who understand me, respect me and still consider me as one of the family," he said. "I get to be a real staff sergeant again – even if it is for just a week," he added with a wide grin.

According to Staff Sgt. Neuman, being there to talk to the Soldiers on the ground was extremely important and very necessary.

"This is what being a Soldier is all about. I get to talk to Soldiers and share my experiences with them. God forbid anything like this happens to any of them, but if so, they'll see that it's not impossible to keep living and still have pride," said Staff Sgt. Neuman.

The staff sergeant said being able to link up with an old comrade, Staff Sergeant John Nelson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, while visiting COS Marez in northern Iraq added an even more intense sense of camaraderie to the occasion.

"We haven't seen each other in years. We used to be in the same battalion, so just being able to talk to him and tell stories and joke like the old days was awesome," said Staff Sgt. Neuman.

Staff Sergeant Nelson said when he saw his battle buddy, Staff Sgt. Neuman, he was excited and proud because he knew the Army's long-standing belief "No warrior is forgotten" was being proven as they spoke.

"After getting over the initial shock of seeing him in Iraq, Neuman and I began to joke and laugh as if five years had not passed. He was very high in spirits and seemed like the same Brian Neuman I had always known," said Staff Sgt. Nelson.

Because events like this reminds Soldiers like Staff Sgt. Neuman no matter how much time passes, their sacrifices will always



be important Staff Sgt. Nelson agreed these events are very important.

“Now, I know my friend will never have to wonder and ask himself if what he has gone through matters; he’ll already know we care,” said Staff Sgt. Nelson. “He and other Wounded Warriors will know they are still our brothers, brothers to those of us serving now, those who served before us and those who will come after us. And we will always remember them and look out for them.”

Staff Sergeant Neuman said despite all the adversity he had faced, his visit back to Iraq, as well as his entire Army experience, were both very fulfilling.

“Even though I got hurt that day when I went out, I wouldn’t change it for the world. I would do everything in my career exactly the same,” Staff Sgt. Neuman said. “Even though I’m no longer serving, I’m still a Soldier and the Army will always be in my blood.”

(above) Staff Sgt. John Nelson (right) speaks with long time friend Staff Sgt. Neuman as well as seven other Wounded Warriors visiting COS Marez as honored guests in recognition of Operation Proper Exit V.



Only a letter aw

By Maj. Stephen Holt
Photos By Spc. Gregory Gieske



In each of our Nation's wars, communication with loved ones and Family helps strengthen morale and lift the spirits of Soldiers fighting in places far from home and those they love. Correspondence spans the miles by bringing them together through communication, smiles, and words of endearment.

Throughout history, from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terror, Soldiers have relied on correspondence with loved ones to keep up morale. Letter writing was the original form of communication that relieved boredom. Soldiers described battles and fighting, but more often they wrote about daily existence in the field.

Soldiers wrote their letters while lying on hospital beds, on guard duty, huddled under a blanket, by the light of a candle, seizing every occasion. If there was no paper available they wrote on butcher paper or newspaper. It did not matter if a Soldier could not write; for a few favors, a third party could be enlisted to write one's letter.

If a Soldier had no one to write to, then one had to be found for him. This was the purpose of "war god-mothers" in France, who assumed the role of paternal pen-friend to a lonely individual, wrote to him, raised his morale and fighting spirit, and gave him regular solace in the form of food parcels.



Receiving a letter gave Soldiers a piece of home, something they could touch and feel in their hands. And for the Families at home, the importance of a letter was not so much in what it said, but the mere fact of its existence was a sign of life. It let them know their loved one was alive and well.

For Soldiers serving now, it is the same. Opening a letter or care package is like Christmas morning as they hurriedly cut the tape to discover its contents. Words of encouragement found inside, or a gift from home, let them know the service they are doing, the job they do every day, matters: they're making a difference.

Butch Hemmingway, veteran and president of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 789, Hinesville, Ga., wrote a letter to his wife every day while he was deployed. In fact, he started his first letter as soon as he took his seat on the plane leaving for Vietnam.

"Receiving a letter was very important back then because Soldiers looked forward to mail call," Hemmingway said. "When I received a letter, I knew my wife back home was waiting for me; it gave me a reason to fight and return home."

Hemmingway fought for two years in Vietnam and a year in Thailand. He credits the communication established during these deployments through regular correspondence as the reason he and his wife were married for over 40 years.

"Before I left, she gave me a letter that I wasn't allowed to read until I was on board the plane," Hemmingway said. "Being a Soldier was a career I had chosen, and she stood by me: wherever I went she went with me."

From Vietnam to Desert Storm

and Shield to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, letters have been a way for Soldiers to communicate with loved ones back home.

“Letters in the mail were very special because you received something from your Family,” said Daryl Lusk, a retired command sergeant major who served 31 years in the Army. “I remember when passing out mail seeing the enjoyment from those who received mail. I would also see the disappointment.”

“Sometimes when guys got a letter they would smell them because their loved one had sprayed it with perfume,” Lusk said. “The easiest way to get a letter home was to find someone leaving country. I had to put stamps on it so all they would have to do is put it in the mailbox.”

As time progressed, Soldiers used the telephone to call home to make morale calls. Soldiers were given a time limit of 10 to 15 minutes to talk. Operators only worked during the daylight hours, so they dealt with having to make their calls at odd hours to correspond to the time back home.

“The first time I did a teleconference was during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. My Family drove to Fort Stewart,” Lusk said. “If someone was late or didn’t show up, I was able to get more time to talk.”

Another means used to communicate, instead of writing letters, Soldiers used voice recordings. They used plastic cassette tapes to let their Family hear their voice and describe every-day life while deployed.

“It used to be the only way to reach me in 2003 was a Red Cross message,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Campbell, 2-3 Brigade Troops Battalion, 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team. “Now I can log into an email terminal and get an instant message. Now Soldiers have phones where they can call back home.”

Traditional mail systems have been slowed by a heightened level of security at mail sorting locations. Since

the September 11 attacks, every package that goes through military mail has to be carefully screened for explosives, weapons and chemical biological agents.

The means of correspondence has kept pace with changing technology, enabling Soldiers to enjoy instant communication with loved ones through phones, internet, and video teleconferencing. Instead of writing letters, Soldiers may now use internet, instant messaging, Skype, or readily available cell phones to connect with home.

Staff Sgt. Andrew Debastiani, HHC, 2nd HBCT, Topographical Engineer, uses Skype to talk with his wife and 3-year-old daughter every day, an improvement from his first deployment to Iraq in 2003, when he could only talk with his wife once a week on the phone.

“I talk to my wife and daughter about an hour every day. It’s my calm down time from all the hectic things that happen during the day,” Staff Sgt. Debastiani said. “When I was here in 2003 we had a five-minute phone call each week. Half way through the deployment contractors came in and put in a MWR tent where you could send emails and instant messages.”

“I get to watch (my daughter) grow up even while I’m gone. She gets to hear my voice while I interact with her,” Staff Sgt. Debastiani said. “She’ll color pictures and show them to me, sing songs, say her ABCs - it’s fun to watch.”

Little has changed through the years for Soldiers and their Families. Communication, whether through letters or the telephone or over the internet, keeps morale high and Families together.



“When I received a letter, I knew my wife back home was waiting for me; it gave me a reason to fight and return home.”

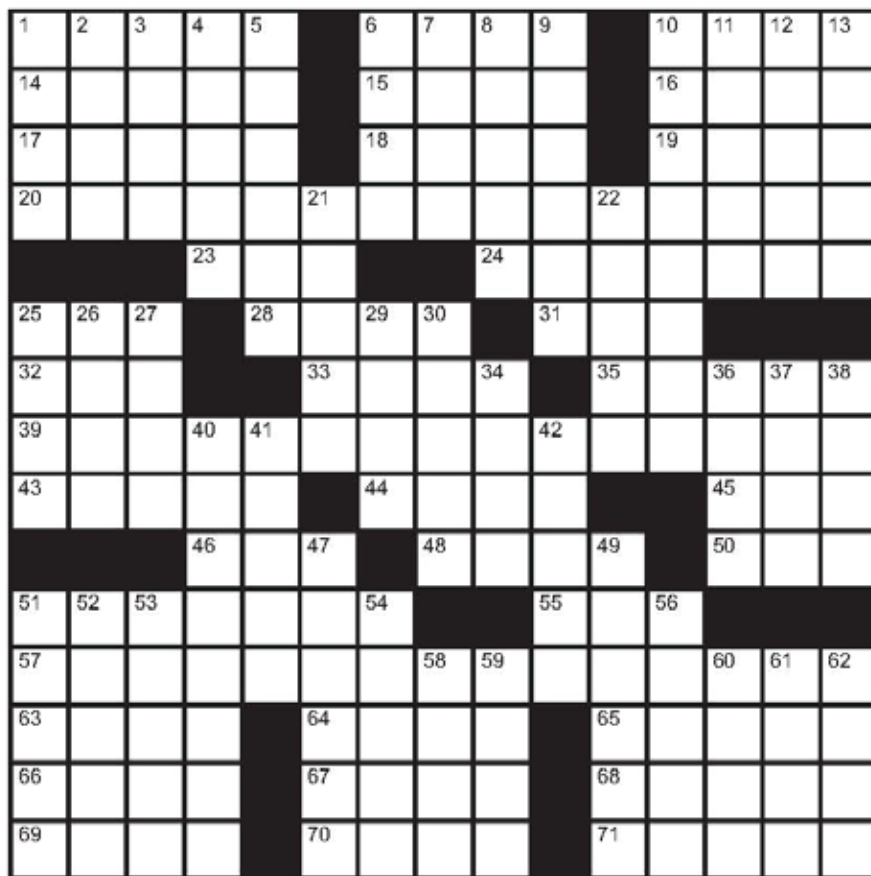


Across

1. With 71-Across, sort of person who might enjoy this puzzle?
6. Narrow cut
10. Like show horses' feet
14. Make up (for)
15. Comfort
16. Voice quality
17. Person in a polling booth
18. Good for what ___ you
19. Not written
20. Saying about the heart
23. One of the Kennedys
24. Hot to the tongue
25. ___ Four (Beatles)
28. Shuffles off this mortal coil
31. Bad-mouth
32. Wonder
33. Sonja Henie's Norwegian birthplace
35. Clamor
39. Crazy
43. Collect
44. It can sense scents
45. Pie ___ mode
46. Size above sm.
48. Campaign pros
50. Singer Rawls or Reed
51. Was patient for
55. Suffix with meteor
57. Outcast
63. Decorate again
64. Letter-shaped girder
65. Pertaining to warships
66. TV's "American ___"
67. Demolish
68. Songstress Baker
69. Instrument that's plucked
70. Elevator pioneer Elisha
71. See 1-Across

Down

1. Volcanic discharge
2. Part of a molecule
3. "The Wizard of Oz" dog
4. Unmoving
5. Strengthened
6. Actor Penn
7. Secular
8. Waterfront Long Island town
9. Tried out
10. Crushes with the feet
11. Lena who sang "Storm Weather"
12. Walking ___ (happy)
13. What rain may cause
21. Expression
22. Think out loud



- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 25. Werewolf's tooth | 37. Building beside a barn | Bull" | the |
| 26. G.I. no-show | 38. Jacob's twin in the Bible | 49. Cue | corner of one's eye |
| 27. The "B" of N.B. | 40. Woman's sheer undergarment | 51. First full month of spring | 56. Popular pipe clearer |
| 29. Channel for armchair athletes | 41. ___ a customer | 52. Overrun with dandelions and such | 58. Ultra-authoritarian |
| 30. Single-masted boat | 42. Cantaloupe, e.g. | 53. Passion | 59. Mined rocks |
| 34. ___ buco | 47. Robert of "Raging | 54. Touch lightly, as | 60. Tel ___ |
| 36. Leaning, as type: Abbr. | | | 61. London museum |
| | | | 62. Wing-shaped |



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