



# Essays

875TH ENGINEER BATTALION



**Dedicated to the memory  
of Sgt. Erich Scott Smallwood**



“Let us try”

# Essayons

**Vol. 2; Num. 6, 2007**

**875th Engineer Battalion**

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**Above:** Spc. Albert Frye, Sgt. James Gregory and Sgt. James Lee perform maintenance on a 131st Engineer Company humvee at the 875th's battalion motor pool at Camp Striker. Maintenance teams at Camp Striker and Logistics Support Area Anaconda help keep the battalion's patrol vehicles battle ready. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.

**On the cover:** Erich Scott Smallwood, 23, of Truman, Ark., died May 26 near Balad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle while on patrol with 1st Platoon, Company A, 875th Engineer Battalion. A memorial ceremony was held May 29 at Logistics Support Area Anaconda's Provider Chapel, where Erich was eulogized by the battalion commander, his company commander and two of his platoon mates. Photo provided by 1st Platoon, Alpha Company.

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Spc. Clayton Shelley, who served with Erich Smallwood in 1st Platoon, Company A, provides a personal picture of a big-hearted man, a Soldier's Soldier and a good friend.



## 10 Is it Colonel or Sergeant? Most just call him Coach

Colonel, Coach or Sergeant, Alpha Company's Gary Vest answers to all three. The former U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard officer resigned his commission to deploy with 875th.



## 12 Technology keeps home close for 875th troops

From cell phones to email to webcams to blogs, 875th Soldiers enjoy keeping connected to home through modern technology and a variety of communication channels.

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*Questions, comments or submissions to the Essayons should be directed to Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney at christopher.durney@us.army.mil. All submissions will be cleared of OPSEC violations and edited to Associated Press standards. Photos and stories from home are welcome and encouraged. Please look for issues of the newsletter to be published about every three weeks.*

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# FROM THE TOP



## Battalion Commander

Greetings, I hope this newsletter finds everyone healthy – physically, mentally and spiritually. I realize that right now the above statement may be easier said than done for some of us. Sgt. Erich Smallwood's death over Memorial Day weekend has created an indelible memory of the great sacrifices hundreds of thousands of men and women have made to their country. Memorial Day is a day of remembrance not for all those that are serving, but for all those that can no longer serve because they have already made the ultimate sacrifice. Erich will never be forgotten and we will continue this mission in his honor.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with the Smallwood family and also Spc. Marco Robledo and his family as they all heal from the wounds of May 26, 2007. I cannot thank the communities of Arkansas enough for their overwhelming support during this difficult time. I know that the Smallwood and Robledo families are touched by everyone's compassion and generosity. Your kindness has been very comforting at this difficult time.

June is also the month we traditionally honor our fathers. We have many new and old fathers in the Battalion and fathers at home deserving of a word of thanks and praise for their love, support and dedication. Being away from home on Father's Day can be especially difficult for some of our newest dad's like 2nd Lt. Dean, but we will do our best to honor all those fathers who sacrifice so much for their families. I especially want to thank my dad for his always present advice and love. We owe our dad's so much and can barely thank them enough.

Thank you for all that you do, every day. God bless Vermont, Indiana, Arkansas and the friends and family of the 875th Engineer Battalion.

Essayons – Ready and Willing!

Col. Patricia Anslow

## Command Sergeant Major

Greetings from Iraq. We are now entering our eighth month in Iraq and all continues to go well with the 875th. We continue to work hard, remain diligent and to stay focused on the mission at hand.

We took a hard hit last month with the loss of one of our brothers in arms, and a medical loss of another good Soldier. The emotions are somber at times, but we continue to support each other as we attempt to get through this very trying and difficult time. One thing is for sure, our Soldiers are dedicated to each other and to the mission. It is my duty to make sure my senior NCOs refocus our Soldiers, and that we continue with our marching orders until completion.

The weather is now constant, and we are adjusting to the rising temperature; we are prepared and trained for any situation that may occur. The spring is here and summer is on the way, but we are prepared and ready. Our motto is Ready and Willing. All soldiers have the necessary items for their missions. Your Soldiers continue to keep the enemy on the defensive, and we strive daily to improve our skills and training.

We are much closer to the completion of our mission but we are still a long way from home. It is my responsibility to assess and maintain the highest standard of military bearing for every Soldier of the 875th Engineer Battalion. We are maximizing every skill that we have to accomplish this very vital mission. We understand what is at stake, and we thank God for the freedom we have in America, so be assured that we will not fail and that the mission will be completed.

Finally, continue to keep us in your prayers and continue to keep your loved one abreast on their families. Our children are out of school now so please help keep them safe and healthy. Continue to send email and attend video teleconferencing opportunities. Please continue to send care packages. I am so very thankful to have this opportunity to send words of encouragement, and to thank you for your hard work. **READY AND WILLING!**

**HOOAH!!**

Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward

# 131st Engineer Co.

Hello Everyone.

First off I want to say Happy Father's Day to all the fathers out there. I know that there are several new fathers in the unit, and like all of the mothers, it is very difficult to spend your special day away from loved ones. But, knowing that our loved ones are there to support us makes it a little easier.

In the last couple of weeks the 131st has done some remarkable things. Besides the efforts to keep everyone safe on the highways of Iraq, we also were called to support the 10th Mountain Division while they searched for their missing soldiers. It was a small part of the overall operation, but it was important. It meant a great deal to the soldiers of 10th Mountain that we were there to do what we could to help. It is a very proud feeling to know that you are part of an organization that will rest at nothing to ensure that no one is left behind.

Speaking of being proud of my company, the soldiers of the 131st were recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation from COL David Elicerio, the Brigade Commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, for their exceptional efforts to ensure that their convoys had safe passage on the highways of Iraq.

Capt. Jacob Roy

## HHC

Hard work and keeping as cool as possible in this heat is the order of the day for Headquarters, Headquarters Company. The staff has been doing a great job behind the scenes making sure that the battalion continues to run at peak performance.

The support platoon continues to be very busy with their crater repair missions, and they are doing an excellent job. This is some of the most physically demanding work, but they hit it hard. Speaking of hard working folks, I'm really proud of our carpenter team of Sgt. 1st Class Hyde, Sgt. Jaeger and Spc. Carpenter for receiving an award for work they did for the 74th Military Police Battalion here on Striker.

Finally, on behalf of HHC, I extend our sympathy to the Smallwood family for the loss of Erich. He was a great Soldier and will be missed by everyone.

Capt. Joshua Simmons

# Alpha Co.

The soldiers of Co A will not forget May 26, 2007. That is the day that Sgt. Erich Smallwood gave his life in the line of duty for his country. Sgt. Smallwood was liked by everyone who met him. He had a great personality and wanted to make a difference in the world. He touched many lives each day, and truly made a difference for his squad, platoon, and company. Erich may be gone, but he will never be forgotten.

I want to thank everyone for their continued support, especially during our difficult time. I also ask that you remember our other Soldiers who have been injured, and who are recovering back home or in military medical facilities. Keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

I reported last month that several Soldiers had started a health kick. I'm glad to report again this month that almost everyone is still onboard. I can tell you from experience that it is hard to run two miles in 110 degree heat. With that kind of heat you are almost guaranteed to lose weight, so you can expect to see some slimmer Soldiers when they return.

Capt. David Moore



*Maj. Gen. James Simmons congratulates spc. Michael Tollette for re-enlisting in the National Guard. See story on page 18.*

**See Charlie Co. Page 15**

COMPANY  
CORNER

# Erich Smallwood brought smiles and a big heart to 1st Platoon, Alpha Company friends

By Spc. Clayton Shelley, 1st Platoon, Company A

When I hear the name Erich Smallwood, a smile comes to my face. That is the way that he would have wanted me to remember him. The great life he lived rather than how the lord took him from us. I met Erich in June of 2006. I didn't know many Soldiers in the unit, and seeing as how Erich knew everyone, he took it upon himself to introduce himself to me. Even though I only had known Erich for a couple of minutes, it seemed that I had known him for much longer. Maybe it was his outgoing personality, or his uncanny ability to make anyone laugh.

Upon arrival at Fort McCoy, Erich Smallwood, Steven Woodall, Walter Rau and I bunked next to each other. We instantly became best friends. We were always involved in numerous card games, as well as sports competitions. He loved video games and dominated most of people that he played against. He was deceptively fast as well as athletic, and in-

credibly witty. He could have been a great politician if he had chosen to be. Erich was also quick to tell a new joke if he had one, or would tell you a Chuck Norris joke that you have heard 30 times. Somehow it got more hilarious every time he told it.

Smallwood cared a great deal about his friends and family. He loved his friends, brother, sister and niece more than anything in this world. There was nothing that he wouldn't do for any of them. When we received our [Army Combat] uniforms at Fort McCoy, we received all the patches that we were supposed to, except for our name tapes. We were instructed not to wear the new ACU unless we had the name tapes. The name tapes took approximately a week for the PX to make. Smallwood, being the ahead of the curve guy that he was, had already purchased a couple of sets of name tapes. Woodall had been wearing the old [battle dress] uniforms and

**Continued on page 7**



*Erich Smallwood stands behind fellow members of the 875th Engineer Battalion during pre-deployment training at Fort McCoy, Wis. in 2006.*



wanted to wear the new ACU a great deal. Erich being as crafty as he was said, “hold on Woodall, I will cut up one of my name tapes, rearrange the letters, and glue it back together so that you will have a name tape ‘till yours comes in.”

We traveled overseas and into Kuwait before we flew on to Iraq. On the plane from the U.S. we received an in flight meal. Smallwood, being as persuasive as he was, talked Woodall out of his dessert, suggesting that the rye bread we also received was a brownie. Woodall, thinking we had two desserts, traded Smallwood a pie for the rye bread. Smallwood and I were trying not to laugh as Woodall bit into the rye bread and spit it out. It was one of the many funny memories that I was privileged to share with such a great man.

Smallwood became very close with just about everyone in the platoon, especially Sgt. 1st Class Mays and 1st Lt. Collins. Erich liked to argue his point of view, even if it was against the whole platoon. He always stood up for what he believed, even if it was against Collins or Mays. They had numerous playful verbal disputes, and the Lieutenant and Sergeant

***Above:** Erich Smallwood, far left, hugs a fellow member of 1st Platoon, Company A, 875th Engineer Battalion prior to a route clearance mission in Iraq. A sharp wit and big heart were Smallwood’s hallmark.*

1st Class loved every minute of it. It seemed to keep them on their toes, figuring how to outwit Smallwood. I suppose that is why Erich drove one of them most of the missions.

We have now been in country for almost 10 months. Smallwood and I have spent many a night watching movies or working out. We also spent a lot of time at the pool. It helped to relax us. When he was off he was off, but when it came to the missions he was golden. He was very focused and always placed the mission first. He spotted several IEDs, and kept us out of danger numerous times because of his quick actions. There was no one better on the route. He cared a great deal about his fellow soldiers. He once said, “I would rather get hit myself than watch

**Continued on page 8**



*Above: Erich Smallwood, right, and 1st Lt. George Collins, platoon leader for 1st Platoon, Alpha Company, prior to a route clearance mission. Bottom: Erich Smallwood in barracks at Fort McCoy, Wis., during the battalion's predeployment training.*

**Continued from page 7**

any other vehicle in my patrol get hit.”

I could write a book on all the fond memories and the great times that I have had with Erich Smallwood. I have only known him for about year, but I thank God for every second that I was blessed with Erich’s presence. He always made me laugh, and still does even though he has passed on. I have looked at several pictures and videos that I have of him numerous times. When I think of him, I smile because that is how he would have wanted to be remembered, with a smile.







**Top:** Erich, second from right, and his brother James, also a member of the 875th, at a pre deployment event with members of the Smallwood family. **Above:** Erich enjoys playing a video game with one of the many friends he made during pre deployment training.

Erich Smallwood was born in Blytheville, Ark., on May 20, 1984. He attended and graduated high school from Trumann High School where he enjoyed playing football for the Trumann Wildcats. Upon graduation, he furthered his education by attending both Arkansas Tech University and Arkansas State University. Smallwood enlisted in the Arkansas Army National Guard in the summer of 2003. As a member of Company A, 875th Engineer Battalion, he completed Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mis. His decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, two each Army Commendation Medals, one with valor, National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Army Service Ribbon. He was also awarded the Combat Action Badge for his actions on Nov. 27, 2006.

Smallwood was posthumously promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

He is survived by his parents, Jimmy and Pam Smallwood, his brother James Smallwood, also a member of Company A, 875th, and his sister Terah Redman of Jonesboro, Ark.

# Former O-6 crowns career as enlisted with Alpha Company

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

“Are you driving the Buffalo tonight, Colonel?” asked the young man. “Yea, I sure am,” said Sgt. Gary Vest as he clambers up the ladder on the back of a massive armored vehicle.

Vest, 56, shrugs off being addressed as a high-ranking officer although he wears sergeant rank as a member of the 875th Engineer Battalion. “I get that a lot,” he says in his quiet southern draw.

Vest spent of 30 years as a U.S. Army officer before joining the Arkansas Army National Guard’s 875th in 2004 to be with his engineer son Randy. The two deployed together with Alpha Company on an Operation Enduring Freedom security mission in Oregon. But the former Colonel has found himself alone during the battalion’s yearlong deployment to Iraq. Randy was accepted to officer candidacy school just as the battalion was mobilized in 2006.

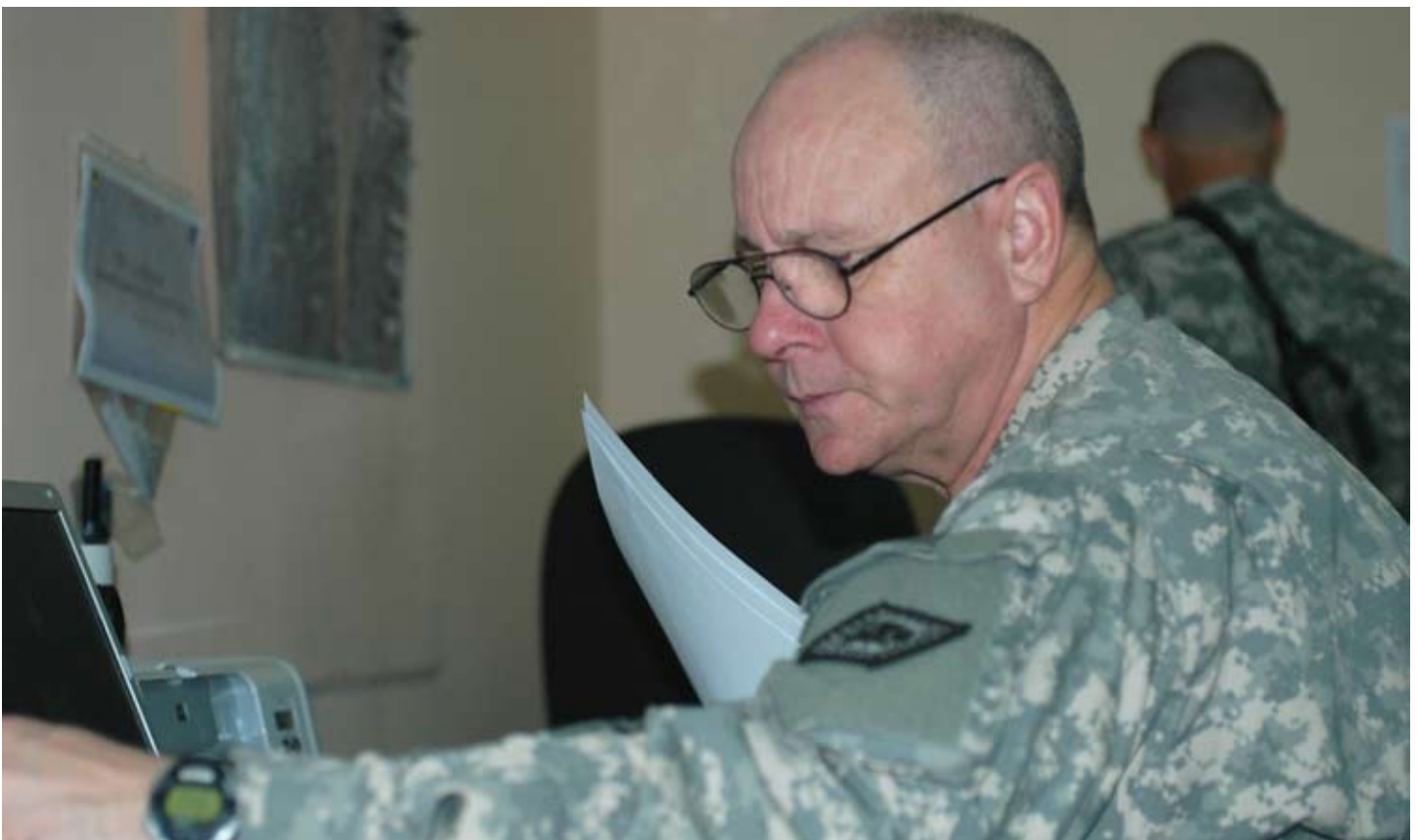
“For the most part, the guys treat me like an offi-

cer,” says the Balk Knob, Ark., resident. “I try to get them to not do that by getting involved, and by doing the work with them.” The grandfatherly Vest serves as the Alpha Company deputy operations sergeant, stationed at Logistics Support Area Anaconda near Balad.

On a recent hot evening he took the wheel of one of Alpha Company’s route clearance workhorses.

Once Vest is in his body armor and helmet, the only tip off that he may not be one of the younger troops is the pillow carefully positioned in the Buffalo’s driver’s seat. On this particular patrol he experiences his third improvised explosive device detonation in over 20 missions. He comes away with nothing more than a dull headache, and the Buffalo receives only minor damage.

Vest’s long career began with his commissioning as a 2nd Lt. in July, 1974, and culminated when he was pinned a full-bird Colonel in the U.S. Army





of 60. “My son’s going to be an engineer so I’ll go wherever he goes, and when I retire I’ll still get 0-6 retirement.”

Just as often as ‘Colonel’ or ‘Sergeant,’ Vest is called ‘Coach.’ He has spent most of his civilian career as a high school baseball and football coach, and as a teacher. He coached at Balk Knob High School until 2000. “I dropped coaching seven years ago, and taught Social Studies and Health until mobilization,” explains Vest.

Reserve. He served in the 39th Infantry Brigade and with the 233rd Regional Training Institute at Camp Robinson as a member of the Arkansas Army National Guard. He resigned his commission in 2004 to join his son in the 875th.

“As soon as my 30 years were up I resigned my commission so I could deploy with Randy,” says Vest. Following the Operation Enduring Freedom deployment Randy decided to go to OCS, then the battalion was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2006. “At first he was going to drop out, but I told him ‘no you’re not, you’re getting your commission.’ I’m honored that he’s following in my footsteps.”

Vest plans to take leave in July so he can attend his son’s graduation. “I’m going to pin on his bars, and I’ll be wearing my uniform [with Sergeant rank] so I can render his first salute,” he says, beaming with pride. According to Vest, he plans on staying with the 875th until he reaches the mandatory retirement age

Back in the Alpha Company tactical operations center where Vest normally works, a large photo of a pretty little girl is prominent among the cards, letters and snippets of home that hang above his desk. “That’s my granddaughter,” says Vest as his cherubic face breaks into a wide grin. “I’m looking forward to seeing just how much she’s grown when I get home.”

Vest is philosophical when comparing his time as an officer with being enlisted. “As an officer you’re always going, and doing something. You’re responsible for many, many people,” he says. “Now, I’m only responsible for myself and my duties.

“Sometimes I wish that I was a company commander or a platoon leader. I would like the challenge of being out there everyday with the guys,” explains Vest. “I’d like to be a full colonel, pay wise, but I’m not in it for the money. It’s a part of my life, and I’ll miss it when I go to the barn. This is the crown in my career.”



**Page 10:** Sgt. Garry Vest at work in the Alpha Company Tactical Operations Center. **Above:** Vest drives one of the battalion’s massive Buffalos. **Here:** Sgt. Vest makes sure the Buffalo is ready for patrol.

# The shiny ring

## Modern technology keeps home close for deployed Soldiers

By Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney



CAMP STRIKER, Iraq – On a recent day here the sky was laden with the russet hue of an impending dust storm. I was walking to the dining facility with a group of fellow Soldiers; all of us were hunched over in a futile effort to keep the swirling sand and dirt from our faces. One man in his thirties, and happily married like me, commented, “Hey, I just noticed that my ring is all shiny, probably from all of the dust.”



I looked at my own gold band, and noticed that the 20 years of grime, human oils, pollution and such had, indeed, been “sanded” away. My ring looked like the day it was



purchased in 1987, and it immediately made me think of home. Later that same day I used a donated calling card to phone my wife just to tell her that I love her. The fact that I was able to connect to her so quickly, despite the nearly 7,000 miles that separate us, is an impressive aspect of modern warfare.



In old war movies, the hero is usually handed a well-traveled and worn letter from his sweetheart that may be weeks or months old. Today, the deployed men and women of the Arkansas Army National Guard’s 875th live in a world of instant messaging, electronic mail, internet video chatting and 24 hour news. According to Chaplain (Capt.)



Mark Golaway, this nearly constant connectedness with home is both a blessing and a curse.

“In the past, there was a disconnect with home spanning days and weeks; now it’s a matter of nine hours,” says Golaway referring to the time difference between Iraq and Arkansas. “And these Soldiers are now connected in a more vibrant way. If the toilet at home in the U.S. backs up today, the Soldier in Iraq knows about it tonight.”

For the modern Soldier, this level of connectedness manifests in a myriad of technologically powerful ways. The Internet and email have revolutionized the dissemination process well beyond what 24/7 news channels have done for the information age. Today it’s not uncommon for Soldiers to have pages on websites such as Myspace, or to maintain a web log, or blog, on sites such as Blogspot.

Spc. Hunter Shumard of the 875th’s Charlie Company is one such Soldier blogger. “I use my blog to offer news and opinion of what’s going on in my life,” says the Paragould, Ark, native. “I try to blog every five days, which helps to let everyone back home know I’m safe.” His blog has had over 1,500 hits since he began keeping the online journal last September, when the 875th deployed to Iraq.

Shumard also emails his girlfriend every other day, and calls his family with a calling card every few days. “For me, it keeps me more connected, so I can have a closer relationship. I think it will help me adapt quicker when I get home.”

Most in the 875th don’t know a deployment without the Internet or email, or what it’s like not to be in contact with your family for large chunks of time. But some of the older members of the 875th have seen the revolution in progress, and can remember a time without instant messaging. “In Vietnam, it took three to three and a half weeks for letters to get to me,” says Sgt. Guilford Forney, one of the over-50

home



Soldiers in the unit. He rejoined the military after a long break in service.

“Back then I wrote home every day, and I still do; I write a letter home every day,” says the tall, stately looking Indianan. “Twenty years from now, my family will still have that mail, but email is here and gone.”

Forney also phones home to his wife every day. “It lets her know that everything is okay; it gives her a sense of security as far as everything she reads [in the newspaper] and sees.”

Other over-50 members have learned to embrace the technology, such as Master Sgt. Leslie Benoit, a Vermont Army National Guard troop who last saw Iraq during Operation Desert Storm. “Back then all we had were phone tents or letters,” says Benoit in a New England accent. “It took quite a while, sometimes a week to a month, for letters to get to us.

“Now, there are so many ways to communicate that you can talk to home any time you have a free moment,” says Benoit. “I call home at least three times a week, and I email every other day.”

At Charlie Company, located at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, near Balad, Soldiers can connect with home via a common use computer in the Morale, Welfare and Recreation room, or they can purchase a share of a group internet access in their rooms. Sgt. Yousef Fahoum administers this in-room access for one of the company living pods. According to Fahoum, each of the 14 members of the Pod C group pay about \$160.00 for three months of access. The money helps pay for the equipment and the satellite connection.

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*Master Sgt. Leslie Benoit takes advantage of the computer in Charlie Company's morale, welfare and recreation room to email his family in Colchester, Vt. (U. S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)*

# The shiny ring

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U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

*With modern satellite communication, news reaches families almost as quickly as events happen. Here photo journalist Staton Briedenthal of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette sends photos back for publication.*



“It’s important to have it; it provides us an opportunity to connect with family,” says Fahoum. “But then again, if I don’t connect for a period of time, they think there’s something wrong. In a way, it’s become an obligation.”

“And, I like to webcam,” he says. “I get to watch my kids grow up, and I’m able to discuss issues on a day to day basis, and provide instant support. It also lets them ‘see’ that there’s nothing wrong.”

Chaplain Golaway says that the immediacy of modern communication has created a good level of morale in the troops. “It lessens some of the disconnectedness we feel being away from our loved ones. If there’s a decision that needs to be made, it doesn’t need to take weeks to be made. It facilitates the whole ‘absent in body, present in spirit’ thing.”

Golaway is quick to point out that, in the age of 24/7 cable news channels, the ability to pass information back and forth so quickly can create additional stresses for modern troops.

“More than ever before, families are doing a ‘CNN check,’” says Golaway. “The Soldier is almost obligated to call home and, although not violating (operational security), let his family know he’s alright. Also, communication blackouts in the face of these news reports can put Soldiers in uncomfortable positions,” he says, referring to the military practice

of blocking internet access and cell phone use on forward operating bases following the death or injury of a resident Soldier.

One of the most dynamic and growing methods of modern communication available to Soldiers is also one of the most controversial. Internet video download sites continue to proliferate at a head spinning pace. Youtube, Liveleak and other video sites have become the new 24/7 information outlet for Soldiers and insurgents alike.

During World War II families had to go to a theatre to see newsreels of the war. Vietnam brought war into living rooms through television. Today, anyone can log on to popular video sights and see war up close and personal. And they can see it from several points of view.

Log onto Live Leak and there will be videos uploaded by many deployed U.S. Soldiers. But terrorists are also uploading their own version of events, including attacks on American patrols. It’s a disturbing use of a medium that is meant to give voice to the world.

Through modern technology and the proliferation of the Internet, the Soldiers of the 875th are part of an exciting and sometimes stressful ring of connectedness to our families and the world around us. For most of us, it’s a bright part of our lives in Iraq. And like the shiny gold band on my finger, it’s a constant reminder of what we miss most.



U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

*Spc. Hunter Shumard finds a quiet place at Charlie Company to call home.*

# JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Tod Granger, SGT	01	131st	Jeremy Howard, 1LT	17	131st
Michael Shook, SPC	02	C Co.	Billy Ward, CSM	17	HHC
Christopher Duran, SPC	03	A Co.	James Nothern, SPC	18	A Co.
Justin Kirk, SPC	03	A Co.	Stanley Jones, SFC	19	HHC
Reddi Parker, SPC	05	A Co.	Don Moore, SSG	22	A Co.
Randy Gladish, SGT	07	HHC	Joshua Wheeler, SFC	22	C Co.
Billy Rucker, SSG	07	C Co.	Tony Wyatt, SFC	22	131st
Cody Gentry, SPC	08	131st	Paul Burns, 2LT	24	A Co.
Bret Holder, SPC	08	A Co.	Aaron Norman, SSG	25	HHC
Clayton Shelley, SPC	08	A Co.	Timothy Allen, SPC	26	A Co.
Stephen Astbury, SPC	09	131st	Aaron Hooten, SPC	27	131st
Russell Dean, SPC	09	131st	Lemuel Nott, SGT	27	A Co.
Burley George, SPC	09	C Co.	Zackary Mullins, SGT	28	A Co.
James Munch, SGT	09	131st	James Wylie, SGT	28	C Co.
Kenneth Clark, SPC	10	HHC	Johnny Mitchell, SPC	29	131st
Mike Willfond, SPC	10	C Co.	Christopher Kallen, SFC	30	HHC
Bradley Brewer, SGT	11	C Co.	Jeremy Orchitt, SGT	30	C Co.
Randal Clark, SGT	15	C Co.	Michael Sims, 1SG	30	HHC
Phillip Jordan, SGT	15	A Co.			
John Thompson, SSG	15	131st			
John Kipp, 1LT	16	131st			





# *Running with the Big Dog*



U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

**T**here's a famous saying that goes: If you can't run with the big dogs, stay on the porch. On June 1, Spc. Albert Frye got a chance to get off the porch and run with the U.S. Army's big dog in Iraq.

Frye is a member of the Arkansas Army National Guard's deployed 875th Engineer Battalion who wanted to expand his military coin collection to include one from Gen. David Petraeus, commanding general of Multi-National Force-Iraq. So he sent an email directly to the four-star general.

Petraeus, who said that Frye "had some guts to email me," emailed the young Army mechanic back and told him that he'd have to earn the coin by joining the general for a morning run and physical training session.

Petraeus also told Frye that he could bring along another member of his unit, so he invited Spc. Candance Dobbins, who, despite her small stature, thought it would be fun to run with the big dog.

Dobbins' demure frame hides a big personality,

***Above:** Gen. David Petraeus, commanding general of Multi-National Force-Iraq, with the 875th Engineer Battalion's Spc. Albert Frye before an early morning run at Camp Victory. **Below:** Spc. Candance Dobbins meets the commanding general.*





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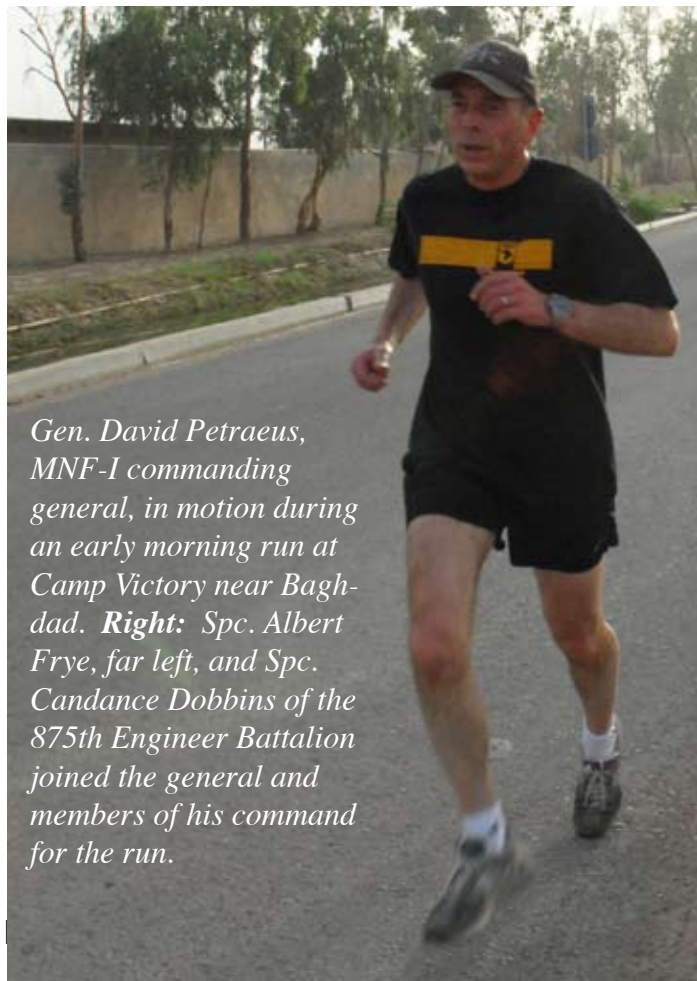
which is in stark contrast to Frye’s quieter nature. The two have become friends working together in the Headquarters, Headquarters Company maintenance section at Camp Striker near Baghdad.

Frye, a native of Ludlow, Vt., wrote a paper on Petraeus in 2000 when he was a student at Ohio Technical College in Cleveland.

According to Maj. Everett Spain, aid to the general, Petraeus likes to run and work out about three times a week, “as his schedule permits.” On the morning of June 1, Petraeus, Spain and about 15 various Soldiers, officers and MNF-I staff members greeted Frye and Dobbins in front of the general’s quarters on Camp Victory. The group then set off on a five mile run, with Gen. Petraeus setting the early pace.

The lean commanding general arrived back at his quarters ahead of all but three other runners. Petraeus then led the entire group, including Frye and Dobbins, in a PT session that included a set of slow and difficult push ups, leg lifts and other exercises. Afterward, he congratulated the two 875th troops, and handed each an MNF-I coin.

“I’m very, very proud of you both,” said Petraeus to Frye and Dobbins. “It’s great to run with you, and it’s great to soldier with you.”



*Gen. David Petraeus, MNF-I commanding general, in motion during an early morning run at Camp Victory near Baghdad. Right: Spc. Albert Frye, far left, and Spc. Candance Dobbins of the 875th Engineer Battalion joined the general and members of his command for the run.*

# Charlie Co.

Since Cpt. Norman is on leave, I have been tasked to give everyone an update. We are all doing well here and counting down the days until we are at home with our families and friends. We have missed many holidays, birthday, anniversaries, etc., and look forward to making up for lost time.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize some promotions. 2nd Lt. Michael Aufdermauer is now 1st Lt. Aufdermauer. For those of you who don’t know him, we call him “BUL,” short for “Big Ugly Lieutenant.” Also, Spc. Guilford Forney is now Sgt. Forney. And, Sgt. Jeremy Qualls was recognized by 411th Command Sgt. Maj. Knox for his outstanding work as the liaison officer between the 2-82 Field Artillery, and both Alpha and Charlie company tactical operations centers. He was awarded a 411th brigade coin and a well deserved pat on the back.

These and all of the Soldiers of Charlie Company work hard and put forth their best efforts on a daily basis. I can’t stress enough that they do a tremendous job day in and day out. This also extends to our family and friends back home. Without you, we cannot do our jobs. The strength of your love and prayers keeps us able to do what we need to do. As you see each other in passing, give each other a pat on the back for the work you do back home.

We love and miss each and every one of you. Keep up the prayers and keep each other company for these last remaining months; we will be home before you know it. For those of us that have kids, remind them for us that we will be home before long and they won’t get away with as much, especially my daughter.

1st Lt. Bradley Smart





U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

*Maj. Gen. James E. Simmons, deputy commanding general Multi National Corps - Iraq, administers the oath of enlistment to (from left to right) Spc. Michael Tollette, Sgt. Joe Middleton, Spc. Erin Sulham, Staff Sgt. Aaron Norman, and Spc. Dennis McGinnis, all of the 875th's Engineer Battalion's Headquarters, Headquarters Company. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)*

## Deputy MNC-I administers oath of enlistment to 875th Soldiers

**M**aj. Gen. James E. Simmons, deputy commanding general Multi-National Corps - Iraq, administered the oath of enlistment to five 875th Engineer Battalion Soldiers May 10, at Camp Striker near Baghdad.

The five Headquarters, Headquarters Company Soldiers stood in front of one the battalion's route clearance vehicles and held up their right hands as Simmons administered the oath. Spc. Michael Tollette, Sgt. Joseph Middleton, Spc. Erin Sulham, Staff Sgt. Aaron Norman and Spc. Dennis McGinnis each recently re-enlisted in the Army National Guard for

six years.

Sulham and Norman are members of the Vermont and Indiana Army National Guard, respectively, and are deployed with the 875th. The others are all members of the Arkansas Army national Guard.

Simmons was at Camp Striker to visit with the staff and Soldiers of the 875th, and to commend them for their critical role in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"You have played a major part in setting the conditions for bringing peace to this country," said Simmons. "And, you're writing an important chapter in the history of this operation."

# Battalion carpenters nail down awards

The 875th Engineer Battalion carpenter team of Sgt. 1st Class Joe Hyde, Sgt. Eric Jaeger and Spc. James Carpenter nailed down major kudos May 30 from a military police unit they did work for on Camp Striker, Iraq.

Hyde, Jaeger and Carpenter were each awarded the Army Achievement Medal for a string of carpentry projects they completed for Headquarters, Headquarters Detachment of the 720th MP Battalion between March 30 and May 19. The 875th and HHD, 720th are both currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

According to their citations, the engineer trio volunteered personal time to construct several needed walls, doors, shelving and desks at the MP detachment headquarters on Camp Striker. They also built two large picnic tables which are popular with the off duty military policemen.

Hyde is from Paragould, Ark., and Carpenter is from Springfield, Vt., and each have their own civilian construction companies. Jaeger, of Marshall, Ark., is a member of the 875th's Headquarters, Headquarters Company maintenance section.

Capt. John Brunofski, the MP detachment commander, presented Hyde and Carpenter with the medals during a unit formation, and thanked them for their hard work. "These guys really came through for us, and they did a great job. We appreciate the engineers," said Brunofski. Jaeger was on a mission the morning of the ceremony.



U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

**Above:** Members of Headquarters, Headquarters Detachment, 720th Military Police Battalion, enjoy a picnic table built by the 875th's carpentry team. **Below:** Capt. John Brunofski, detachment commander, pins Army Achievement medals on Sgt. 1st Class Joe Hyde and Spc. James Carpenter, who, along with Sgt. Eric Jaeger, donated their personal time to finish several construction projects for the MPs.

The 875th's carpentry team has gained quite a reputation around the forward operating base near Baghdad with construction projects for the battalion and several resident units. In addition to desks, shelves and tables, they built an impressive gazebo for the 875th headquarters compound. According to Brunofski, he found out about the team through the Camp Striker Mayor Cell.



U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

# Charlie Company's Forney makes Sgt.

**G**uilford H. Forney, of Company C, 875th Engineer Battalion, was promoted from Specialist to Sergeant June 1, at Logistics Support Area Anaconda.

Forney is from Edinburgh, Ind., and is a member of the Indiana Army National Guard. He is currently on deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom with the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th.

Fellow Indianan Master Sgt. Mack Thompson pinned the E-5 rank on Forney during a ceremony at the Charlie Company headquarters on LSA Anaconda, which is near Balad, Iraq.

Forney, 54, had a long break in service after serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. He works in the Charlie Company tactical operations center.

*Right: Charlie Company's Guilford H. Forney is pinned a Sergeant by fellow Indianan Master Sgt. Mack Thompson at a ceremony June 1.*



*U.S. Army photo by Sgt. James C. Stacey.*

# Dean family grows by one with new arrival

**A** new member of the 875th Engineer Battalion family arrived in the world May 21.

1st Lt. Timothy Dean celebrated the birth of Zaniel despite being deployed with the 875th's operations section in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Dean's wife, Ashley, gave birth to their second child at the Northeast Arkansas Medical Center in Jonesboro, Ark. He measured 19 1/2 inches, and weighed seven pounds, 15 ounces. Zaniel joined his sister Evie, 2.

1st Lt. Dean went on leave May 28, and flew home to Arkansas to meet his new son. The 875th is over eight months into a yearlong deployment to the Iraq theatre of operations.

*Zaniel Dean was born to Ashley and 1st Lt. Timothy Dean at the Northeast Arkansas Medical Center in Jonesboro, Ark., May 22. He weighed in at 7 lbs., 15 oz., and measured 19 1/2 inches.*

