



VANGUARD POINT

Volume II, Issue 12
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Operation
Thunder
Goodwill
rolls . . .



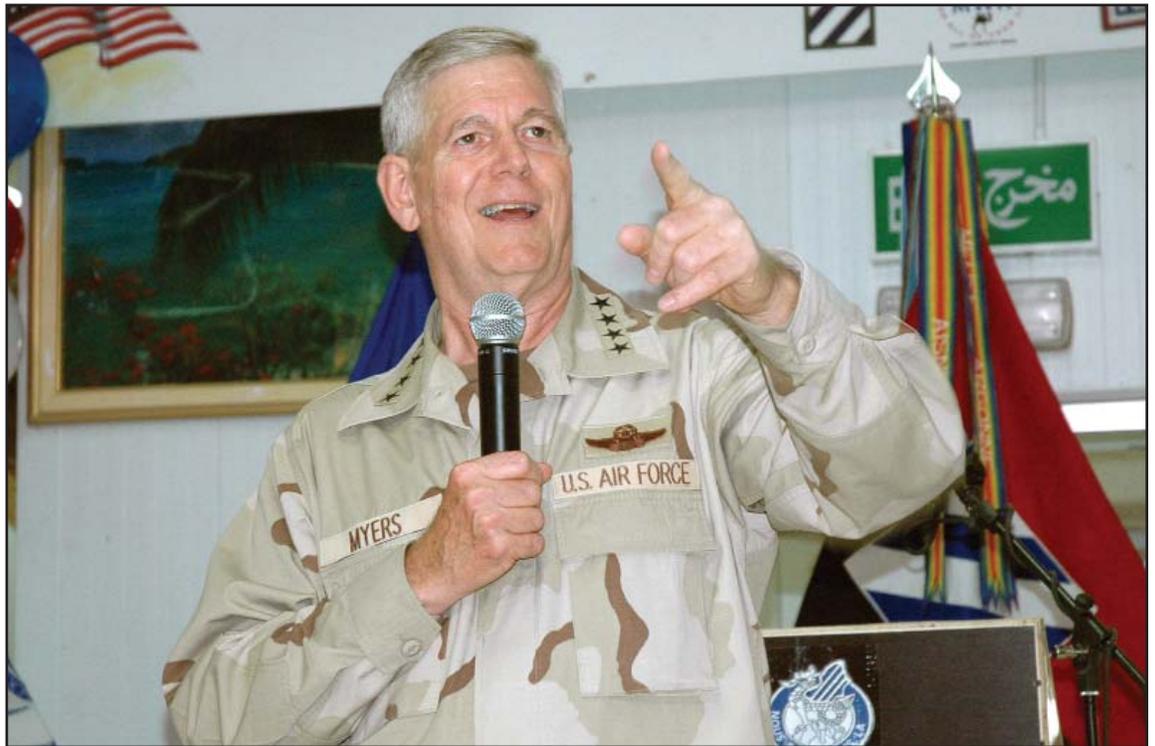
USO visits Camp Liberty to maintain morale, smiles.



Chef takes dinner serious: keeps his Soldiers' bellies full, spirits up at Camelot.



Fallen Soldiers remembered by comrades.



Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff thanks Task Force Baghdad Soldiers Aug. 17 at Camp Liberty. For the story by Spc. Erin Robicheaux, see Page 6. (Photo by Sgt. Thomas Benoit, 256th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

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“Spread the good news”

4BCT Public Affairs wants to highlight our efforts here in Iraq by showcasing soldiers from every state in the United States.

Please contact your Brigade Public Affairs representative if you are interested in doing an interview with a local television station near your hometown. (VOIP 242-5269)

Around the Point: Stories from around the Brigade

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4th Brigade Commander
Colonel Edward Cardon
4th Brigade Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj Louis Torres
4th Brigade Public Affairs Officer
Maj. Alayne Conway
4th Brigade Public Affairs NCOIC
Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper
Staff Writer
Spc. Dan Balda
Broadcast Journalist
Spc. Nakisha Fonoti

On the cover:
A little girl clutches gifts received from Iraqi Security Forces and Soldiers Aug. 17 during Operation Thunder Goodwill
Photo by Spc. David Kobi



Chaplain's corner ... 'A Remedy for the Blues'

Chaplain (Maj.) Blake Bowers
4th BCT Chaplain

Have you ever felt lonely? Do you feel like you're the only person left in the world or say to yourself, 'why should I care since no one else does'? Do you ever give yourself a pity party or want others to feel sorry for you? Do you ever feel empty or not felt hungry one day and on the next day go on an eating binge to make yourself feel better? Well, you're in good company because thousands of people get the blues every now and again. It is a little more normal on a deployment because we are away from those we love and the comforts we like and those things that are familiar to us.

There were plenty of people in the Bible who had the blues. Jonah sat under a juniper tree that dried up. He was pouting because God

sent him on a mission that he was hoping would destroy a lot of people. Instead the people were redeemed. Elijah sulked in a cave because he was tired, thirsty, and out of food while running from a threat on his life by the queen. This was after he had seen God do wonderful things but in spite of it all he had a pity party for himself.

Moses wanted God to feel sorry for him because he thought he did not possess the skills for what God was asking him to do.

So from time to time we do get the blues. What do we do to get over those difficult humps or keep those dark days from permanently sticking around? Here are a few tips to keep those blues minimal during your deployment.

Keep your spiritual perspective. Jesus told us to seek the kingdom of God first

and the little things will take care of themselves. (Matthew 6).

Never lose sight of God. No matter how bad you think it is, God sees a different picture. Stay your spiritual course, worship, and pray, even though you may not feel like it. Sing songs, play or listen to spiritual music. King David on his blue days sometimes sang songs and played his harp to console his spirit.

Sometimes you need to seek out a counselor. Proverbs says there is much wisdom in counsel. Sometimes you just need to seek out a friend. Talk things over with someone if you can to get things out of your system. We are encouraged in the Christian community to bear each others burdens. Just telling someone your burden can ease some of the frustration you feel, lessen the anxiety or help you see a different point of view.

Continued next page

Vanguard 7 sends: Keep up the hard work

Command Sgt. Maj. Louis M. Torres Sr.
4th BCT CSM

Greetings to all Soldiers, comrades, friends, and especially families of the Vanguard Brigade Combat Team. It is truly an honor and privilege for me to be aboard as your Brigade Command Sergeant Major. As we forge forward into another month, I continue to be impressed by the hard work, and valorous deeds that our soldiers perform on a daily basis. They alone, through their actions, engagements with the local populace, and dedication, are bringing to life a new and free society for all Iraqis. Be assured, all your great soldiers are not only heroes to America, but to the Iraqi people too. You can be proud of your soldiers, sons, daughters, husbands and wives, for they are making history in the place where history began.

As I travel around throughout the Vanguard sector of operations, Soldiers are conducting themselves in a high state of police and conduct. Everyone must remember that the United States forces are the most disciplined organization in the world. We have established high standards in all our soldiers. Standards of appearance, discipline, conduct, and accomplishment of the mission. We must never forget that discipline is an individual responsibility that should not require attention or supervision. It only requires a sense of pride and satisfaction in everything you do, whether for yourself or your unit. We are all standard bearers, we are all believers in what we are doing here, and we are all Soldiers and defenders of peace for our nation.

Leaders, do your part, set the example and the standard. But most importantly be the standard; the standard that every Soldier wants to emulate. Our Soldiers need and deserve great leadership.

They put their lives on the line everyday to accomplish the mission set forth by their leaders. Do not fail them, do not cut them short. Be a leader twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week

through actions, motivation, attitude, conduct, and character. Live the Army Values, believe in them, preach them to your soldiers, and keep them close to your heart. They are the standard by which all leaders are judged.

Finally, to our families back on the home front, especially our great family readiness group leaders, thank you! Thank you for your sacrifices, and selfless service to your nation, and our soldiers. We could not do it without your heartfelt support for our mission, and the love and affection you consistently provide us

everyday, through letters, e-mails, media, and care packages for our soldiers.

Yours is a job that only the most special, one-of-a-kind, important person in our lives, could ever handle, and you are performing it admirably. Please continue to write, and maintain contact with your Soldiers, correspondence is still the greatest individual motivator of a soldier.

I have no doubt, we will be successful in our mission, because we have the world's best Soldiers, leaders, and families that stand behind there mission.

Families you can be assured that the Vanguard family is strong and determined to accomplish this mission, and upon accomplishment of the mission, to return back home to you safe, sound, and heroic.

Make no mistake, your Vanguard Soldiers are doing everything right, and our resolve and prayers will get us through the rest of this mission. We will not fail you!

Thank you, Godspeed, VANGUARD! 





Photo by Spc. Dan Balda

Scalzo prepares prime rib for the Soldiers stationed at Camelot. He was sent to the base to replace the mermited chow.

Cook spices up deployment for hungry Soldiers

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

While deployed to Iraq, some Army cooks are handing their spatulas over to civilian cooks.

Enlisted cooks here perform other duties to support multiple missions—such as riding in convoys or working in orderly rooms—while civilians step into the kitchen to support sustainment of Army forces.

Sgt. Antonio Scalzo is one cook holding on tight to his spatula. Scalzo is an Army cook as well as one back home in California in his civilian life.

However, if Scalzo had stuck to his original plan, he would probably be elbow-deep in a radio, bringing it back online so the next patrol has communications capabilities.

He originally enlisted as a radio repairman, but "failed miserably" in class.

"They gave me a list of Military Occupational Specialties to choose from, and I thought, 'Well, I've always liked to cook, why not?'"

His love of the culinary arts stems from two things: his Italian heritage and his maternal grandmother.

"She was Scottish-German and just an awesome cook," Scalzo said.

Not so coincidentally, German and Italian dishes are two of his favorite things to prepare. He also enjoys cooking traditional cuisine from Thailand, Malaysia and California, which makes sense since he was born and raised all over the Golden State.

After attending the Quartermaster Center and School at Fort Lee, Va., he entered the civilian workforce 15 years ago, immediately found a job cooking and has been in the kitchen ever since.

He is assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 184 Infantry Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division; but he is currently attached to E Battery, 216th Air Defense Artillery, out of Cloquet, Minn., to cook for the unit while it's stationed at the Dora Oil Refinery, affectionately called "Camelot" by those who live there.

They were having their meals trucked in each day, much to the chagrin of the Soldiers working there.

Once "Chef," as Scalzo is affectionately called, was assigned to Camelot, the meals improved astronomically. They went from having unidentifiable chicken dishes every day for four months, to eating gourmet meals.

Scalzo said instead of baking or boiling the main courses like many military dining facilities, he uses the open flame of a barbecue to bring out the flavor in the food. One night, Scalzo cooked crab legs, marinated T-bone steaks and seasoned lobster tails.

Scalzo said the only complaint heard after this meal was that Soldiers had eaten too much and were going to have to exercise harder to work off the extra calories.

Scalzo has one Soldier who helps him prepare at least one meal (dinner) a day for about 70 Soldiers stationed at Camelot. At least every other day he cooks omelets for the grateful Soldiers.

One day, the battalion chaplain, Chap. (Maj.) Robert Blessing, was scheduled to preside over a service for the Soldiers. Scalzo cooked prime rib and garlic mashed potatoes to add to the communion meal. Blessing was so impressed with the meal, the food made its way into his sermon.

Where most Soldiers receive care packages filled with chips and candy, Scalzo receives spices and hot sauce he uses to dress

CHEF continued page 11

ICE makes electricity improvements in Jihad

Story and photo by Maj. Alayne Conway

4th BCT PAO

In recent surveys conducted by Task Force Baghdad, the top three priorities for the Iraqi population have been electricity, security, and water. Electricity is crucial as it is needed to keep families cool during the hot summer months and provides a sense of security when light is brought to street lamps on a dark roadway.

When the 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division deployed to Iraq in Jan. 2005, they assumed the mission of setting up an Infrastructure Coordination Element (ICE) that would oversee essential service projects such as electricity for the 4th Brigade Combat Team area of operations.

"One of our main missions is to manage electricity for approximately 400,000 people in the Baghdad area," said 1st Lt. David Cox, the projects manager for electricity from 4-3 BTB. "We are dealing with a number of different entities including the Ministry of Electricity and the Ministry of Municipalities, all of which are local national organizations that work to keep things running and try to keep power to the people."

Cox, a native of Winchester, Va., and members of the ICE visited Jihad and evaluated progress for an electricity project in two

separate neighborhoods Aug. 17. Jihad is made up of approximately 10,000 homes and is located in the Al Rashid district where a lot of efforts have been placed on improving electricity distribution.

Generally, electricity in Baghdad averages two hours on and four hours off but Jihad has not always fared that well said Cox. Iraq has not been receiving any power from Iran or Syria and some of its larger network lines are down which affects the power in Baghdad.

With 32 mahallas, the Al Rashid district represents the third most densely populated region of Baghdad. "The new electrical system in Jihad is replacing an old, unreliable system that was disrupted by years of neglect and insurgent activity," said Cox. This coupled with tremendous unchecked urban growth in Baghdad makes it more of a challenge.

Rehabilitating the networks for Jihad was deemed priority for 4th BCT a couple of months ago and work in mahallas (neighborhoods) 889 and 891 began three weeks ago. The local networks will receive power from a substation in west Al Rashid which is being built now said Cox.

The team visited mahalla 889 first where they saw a tangle of wires between the homes looking like a bowl of spaghetti. Cox said that residents try to tap into whatever wires they can find in attempts to get some electricity. Joining efforts with the Al Rashid Essential Services Committee and other Iraqi ministries, the ICE is repairing the network and hired local contractors to replace the old system which consists of installing new poles, wires and transformers.

The rehabilitation of mahalla 891 is a little further along and the team saw poles standing tall along the roadways with power lines spanning the gap. There was also a group of local workers standing on ladders connecting those power lines to the individual homes.

"We deal largely with local workers and local contractors so not only do we provide power to the local residents in the community but also provide jobs and work for them so they can take a sense of pride in what they have and what we are building for them," said Cox.

Cox said that the new system replaces the old, unreliable system but will also take into account the increased electricity demand of the future. He said that rehabilitation in mahalla 889 and 891 should be complete by the end of Sept. with a completion date of mid-Nov. for the substation. Rehabilitating the electrical network in Jihad cost approximately \$150,000.

Improving the electricity is a slow process but Cox's work gives him a sense of accomplishment.

"When we go around at night and see lights are on and people are able to have...refrigerators to keep their food cool and stoves to get their food cooked, all the essential electrical items, so they can conduct their daily business, it makes me feel really good that I am helping them get these lights turned on." 



Continued from previous page

Pray. Yes I know this seems cliché. Yet this is precisely what the Apostle Peter is indicating when he says to cast all your anxiety on Christ because he cares for you. (I Peter 5:7).

Prayer gives us an opportunity to cry out to God and allows us to put our problems in his hands.

Through prayer and scripture we may

even find a remedy to our problem or God will take care of our needs. Other things that may help is to keep a diary or sketch book.

I see this as another creative way to say what is in our hearts and let God see what we are going through thus communicating with him in a different form of prayer.

Find a way to help someone who has it tougher than you.

This often gives us a better perspective of our own situation.

Get involved in a cause that has purpose and meaning.

Lose yourself in something or someone. This is a form of Christian love. The giving of yourself unselfishly builds healthy perspectives that alter our mood to a better channel.

So the next time you have the blues for a short little while. Try some of these tools and see them change your blues to songs of harmony. 

Iraqi Security Forces partner up with U.S. Soldiers bring goodwill to Horajeb

Spc. Christopher Mallard, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion

U.S. Army trucks loaded with humanitarian assistance supplies left their forward operating base in Southern Baghdad before dawn to link up with their Iraqi counterparts to provide Horajeb residents with basic food staples, medical supplies, and recreational items Aug. 17.

The convoy grew to 29 vehicles as the U.S. Soldiers linked up with the Iraqi security forces. The convoy passed through the southernmost limit of the Al Rashid district and made its way along streets with names like Toyota, Chicken, and Bulls that the U.S. Army has named to help guide American soldiers through the often sign-less streets that they have become familiar with over here.

The patrol was made up of Soldiers from 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment; 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regt.; and Iraqi forces from 1st Battalion, 4th Public Order Brigade.

"Expect to see the Army increasingly hand authority and responsibility over to Iraqi Security Forces, as part of the overall picture, to allow citizens to see and feel more comfortable with many of the new faces," said Capt. Darrell Retherford, a team leader with the 490th Civil Affairs Battalion during a briefing to his Soldiers.

Pointing to Iraqi Soldiers unloading supplies into the rear of a blue-and-white utility pickup, the Abilene, Texas, resident continued, "They are the ones who will be here long after we leave and when that happens the people here need to know who is responsible for them, doing the patrols and protecting them."

On this day it was not U.S. Soldiers but Soldiers from the POB, commanded by

Lt. Col. Hasan, who distributed the goods to the people. Hasan will soon become responsible for security in this area as Americans begin to limit their presence following the elections later this year.

The town sits removed from the steady stream of images coming out of more familiar parts of Baghdad. It is a few miles south of the city and west of the Tigris River—a postcard image of what one might imagine the Fertile Crescent to be with rows of orchards, date trees and watermelon fields.

This southern-most area of Al Rashid is generally considered an agricultural area, but lately there has been less of a presence of Coalition Forces and ISF, which has some authorities concerned. They fear the area, being so spread out and with a high incidence of poorer Sunnis, has made it home to increasing numbers of terrorists.

That's one reason why Retherford helped orchestrate this mission named appropriately Operation Thunder Goodwill, a gesture toward entrusting local authorities and showing they are in charge here.

The local Imam of the town, Sheik Jasim, met with Hasan for the first time Aug. 17 and the two exchanged a warm greeting as they stood near a table next to the trucks with several green burlap bags zip-tied and filled with food staples.

Hasan's Soldiers were in the background shouting "Emshee, emshee," as they tried to run off the hordes of smiling children, hands clutching soccer balls and T-shirts. Jasim offered to work with the new POB to keep terrorist activity away from Horajeb, which has been without major incident for nearly five months.

The operation was conducted during the early-morning hours as Soldiers delivered rice, canned chicken, tomato sauce and medical supplies put together by organizations in the United States. The toys and soccer balls were donated by friends and family members of the 3/3 ACR and collected by the 490th CA Bn. for distribution.

"Our operations are not always about cordon and searches or raids," said Maj. Eric Carpenter, chief of plans for 4th BCT. "Operation Thunder Goodwill allows us to support the ISF and get them on the streets, so they can talk to the residents and let them know we are working to make their neighborhoods safer."

Retherford commanded the humanitarian mission and began by contacting friends from a local non-profit organization back home in Oklahoma City.

Many Americans would be surprised to learn how scarce many of these basic resources are and how difficult they are to get through normal Army supply channels.

"You can see that much of that early effort of what we did here back in Operation Iraqi Freedom 1 had a significant impact on the daily lives of Iraqis living in the area today. The food distribution today is mostly a goodwill gesture," said Sgt. First Class Vester Bland, also from the 490th CA Bn. and an Abilene, Texas, native.

Coalition Forces understand that to beat back terrorism, humanitarian assistance operations like the one that occurred Aug. 17 must go forward as part of a larger strategy of using generosity to encourage peace. 

"They are the ones who will be here long after we leave and when that happens the people here need to know who is responsible for them, doing the patrols and protecting them."



(Above) An Iraqi Soldier hands a woman a bag of food while her children excitedly cluster around her. "Operation Thunder Goodwill allows us to support the ISF and get them on the streets, so they can talk to the residents and let them know we are working to make their neighborhoods safer."



(Left) A Soldier assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team hands a group of Iraqi women foodstuffs. (Above) A Soldier assigned to the 1st Battalion, 4th Public Order Brigade delivers donated items to the residents of Horajeb. Soldiers delivered rice, canned chicken, tomato sauce and medical supplies put together by organizations in the United States. The toys and soccer balls were donated by friends and family members of the 3/3 ACR and collected by the 490th CA Bn. for distribution.

USO brings entertainment to Task Force Baghdad

Spc. Erin Robicheaux

256th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - It was a star-studded day for Task Force Baghdad Soldiers.

Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, brought an unforgettable USO Show to Soldiers on Camp Liberty Aug. 17. NBC-TV's "Today Show" co-host Matt Lauer also broadcast live from the Tigerland Dining Facility.

Myers was accompanied by Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq; Leeann Tweeden, from Fox-TV's "The Best Damn Sports Show Period;" comedians Jeffrey Ross and Colin Quinn; and NFL Chicago Bears football Hall of Famer Gayle Sayers.

"One reason I do this is to thank you," Myers told the troops. "I know it's tough. We've lost a lot of really good men and women, and we're grateful for their sacrifice."

Myers singled out the reservists, and recognized the lives they left behind in the United States.

"You left jobs, schools, families, and both you and your families are making great sacrifices," he said.

Tweeden, acting as the Mistress of Ceremonies, told the Soldiers how the USO always made a great impact on her



Photo by Sgt. Thomas Benoit

The "Mistress of Ceremonies", Leeann Tweeden kept the Soldiers riveted.

life, even as a small child. She said her father was an Air Force pilot in Vietnam, and when she was a little girl she found an autographed photo of Raquel Welch made out to her father. He told Tweeden he met Welch when she visited the troops on a USO tour.

"My dad told me that for one afternoon, she made him feel like he was normal again," Tweeden reflected. "When I got invited a few years ago to be part of the tour, I felt like my life had come full circle."

This is Tweeden's seventh tour with the USO, and she hopes she is making a difference in the lives of the troops.

"My father still talks about meeting Raquel Welch, and maybe 20 years from now, one of you will be telling your children about me, and I'll know I've made an impact," she said.

Tweeden also took the opportunity to thank the female Soldiers for their service. She said she admires their perseverance and dedication and said they make her proud to be a woman.

In addition to two comedy routines by Jeffrey Ross and Colin Quinn, Sayers spoke on the value of teamwork and counting on your fellow man.

"You can't do it by yourself, you have to rely on your team members," said the former Chicago Bears running back and current motivational speaker. Sayers told the Soldiers to put everything they could into this experience and hold onto it for all that it's worth.

"Winston Churchill once said, 'You make a living by what you make, but you make a life by what you give,'" he said. "You Soldiers are making a life right now. Life is measured by donation, not duration."

As the USO events took place, Lauer interviewed Soldiers from Task Force Baghdad, including Spc. Steven Tschiderer of the 256th Brigade Combat Team.

Nearly two months ago, a sniper shot Tschiderer in the chest, but he survived thanks to his armored vest. After a chase which resulted in a few gunshot wounds to the shooter, the terrorist was captured by Tschiderer and his unit. Tschiderer, a medic, started giving medical care to the very terrorist who had tried to take his life.

Lauer interviewed Tschiderer about his story and asked him to explain the functions and aspects of the body armor. Because Tschiderer wore his ballistic vest and helmet the day of the attack, he only sustained a large bruise on his chest, rather than the fatal alternative.

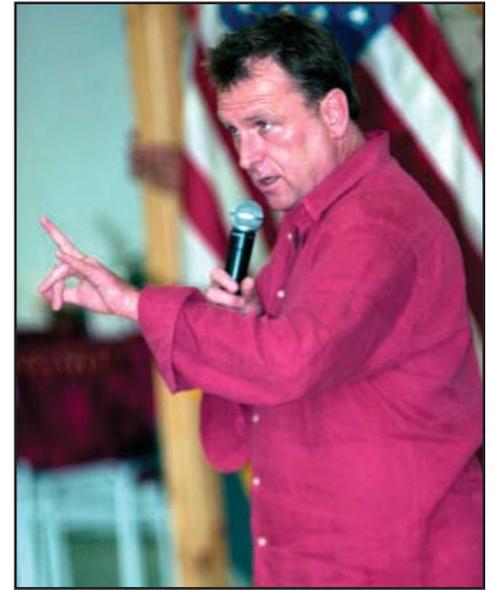


Photo by Sgt. Thomas Benoit

Comedian Colin Quinn kept the Task Force Baghdad Soldiers in stitches.

Tschiderer, a native of Mendon, N.Y., with E Troop, 101st Cavalry attached to 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, 256th BCT, said meeting Casey was a highlight in his day.

The feeling seemed to be reciprocal.

"You're not just a hero, you're my hero," Casey told the overwhelmed Soldier.

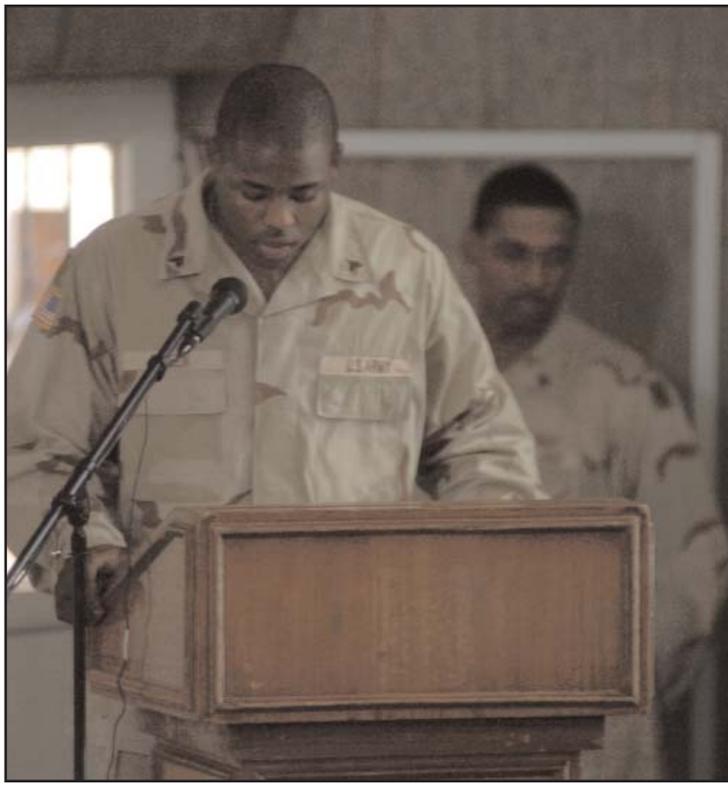
Lauer also interviewed Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Wells, from Newark, Ohio, about his two tours in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Wells, a platoon sergeant with 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, conducted operations during OIF 1 and said over the course of the last two years, the situation greatly changed.

"It's a complete difference in the way we conduct combat operations," he said. "Before, if you saw the enemy, you shot the enemy, but now it's so hard to tell who the enemy even is."

Capt. Sherman Powell from Newport, R.I., agreed with Wells' assessment. He was also interviewed about his experiences during OIF 1. During his last tour in Iraq, as a company commander with 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, Powell and his troops fought in central Baghdad and captured what is now the International Zone. Today, he conducts operations in southeast Baghdad and said the focus right now is building up the Iraqi Army, and essentially, the Iraqi government.

"The last time we were here, the government and the military basically

Continued page 11



Photos by Spc. Dan Balda

(Left) A Soldier stands "at ease" during the memorial service. (Center) Sgt. Tobias Green shared his memories of his "little brother." (Right) A Soldier comforts his friend after the service.

Patriots remember "Skee-lo" as friend, hero, brother

Spc. Dan Balda

4th BCT PAO

The Patriots of 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery have driven hundreds of thousands of miles so far as part of their escort mission here in Iraq. It is one of the most dangerous missions a unit can undertake, and they have taken to it with aplomb.

But that mission is not without its dangers, and the members of 1-76 came together Aug. 13 at Forward Operating Base Union III to remember one of their own who fell prey to those dangers.

Spc. Miguel Carrasquillo, B Battery, 1-76 FA, was killed Aug. 9, when his vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device.

Maj. Bill Howard, the battalion executive officer, began the ceremony with a quote from Gen. Stonewall Jackson.

"God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself with that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me. That is the way all men should live, then all men would be equally brave."

Howard chose the quote because he felt that it personified Carrasquillo and his bravery should be what his brothers should remember him by.

"He was the type of person you would find in the middle of chaos who would immediately take charge, and make sense of it all," Howard said. He was known as "Skee-lo" to his friends and was a "person who would make you enjoy life and tell it like it is."

Carrasquillo left his persona behind when it came time for the mission. When he arrived in Iraq he let his platoon mates know that henceforth he would be known as Spc. Carrasquillo.

He volunteered to be the lead gunner, despite the dangers, because he knew it was the most pivotal job in the platoon

"The result of Miguel's final brave act ensured that the broth-

erhood will live on, not only for 6th platoon, but for the brave members of Patriot Battalion, and all the dedicated people here today that represent and fight for freedom," Howard said. "Whether military or civilian, American or Iraqi, we have embraced the influence of our brother Miguel."

Capt. John Ripa, the B Btry. commander, told the assembled mourners that Carrasquillo was cut out to be a leader of men.

"He did what few could do; demanded the respect of his peers," Ripa said. "Miguel's true colors came out during this deployment. His care for the Soldiers, attention to detail, tactical instincts and most of all his selfless service to his fellow soldiers. He started to not only meet the standard but to enforce the standard. Spc. Carrasquillo was on his way to becoming a great noncommissioned officer. One I wish with all my heart was still here to serve this great nation."

Sgt. Tobias Green shared his memories of his "little brother." Memories that dated back to the time that Green first met Carrasquillo, when he was a private, fresh out of basic training.

"He was the hardest-working, determined, and strong-minded Soldier I have ever known," Green said. "There was absolutely no task too great for him. He was always up for a challenge. He would not let anything stand in the way of mission accomplishment."

Green was grateful for the experiences he shared with Carrasquillo and truly honored to have soldiered next to a great young man, friend, Soldier and hero.

Howard said that Carrasquillo's selfless service has, "renewed our drive, stiffened our resolve and will enable us to succeed in our mission."

"He has helped to shape a future for the Iraqi people who will soon live under the blanket of freedom and the American people will continue to live in. Thank you Miguel, we are eternally grateful." 



Photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper

A Soldier assigned to 4th BCT says good bye to Guerra. According to one Soldier, Guerra was "Always joking around with other Soldiers, picking on them to keep them laughing."

Soldier mourned, celebrated by fellow Sentinels

Spc. Dan Balda
4th BCT PAO

Soldiers assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division came together Aug. 3 at Forward Operating Base Prosperity, to remember a fallen Soldier.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Piper

Soldiers assigned to the 4th BCT salute Guerra's memory.

Pvt. Ernesto Guerra, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Troops Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, "G" to his friends, perished in a non-battle related injury July 29.

According to Maj. Matthew Tyler, the battalion operations officer, "G" as he was known to his friends, was remembered as an energetic Soldier, filled with spirit and ready to experience everything the world had to offer.

"I enjoyed the youthfulness he brought to our team and the lighthearted side he would display when others would be overstressed," Tyler said. "I think what stands out the most is that when it was time for the mission he was eager to go and primed to ensure the safety of his fellow Soldiers."

Guerra's unique ability to protect and defend his teammates was a reoccurring theme during the ceremony.

"As a gunner he really knew what he was doing," said Sgt. Nicholas Campos, G's squad leader. "If you were in his truck you really felt safe. His discipline and professionalism were outstanding."

"He was a warrior in every sense of the word," said Spc. Robby Bruni. "He set out to be the most outstanding, proficient Soldier on the job. There was never a time we went into the Red Zone that we didn't feel safe because he was our lead gunner."

According to his fellow Soldiers, G could be the most dedicated Soldier during a mission, but as soon as his convoy

was safe inside the gates of the FOB, his sense of humor was what made him near and dear to their hearts.

"He was always joking around with the other Soldiers, picking on them to keep them laughing," said Capt. Robin Mooney, the HHC company commander.

"He loved to laugh and crack jokes," said Pfc. Vanessa Verhaar. "He was like our younger brother, he loved to pester us."

Like any Soldier, Guerra hit his rough spots, but he was steadily improving.

Verhaar likened his growing maturity to a butterfly breaking out of its cocoon. "He hit a few bumps in the road but was growing into a better Soldier everyday," she said.

Campos bemoaned the loss of an integral part of his team.

Courtesy photo



Guerra in an undated photo.

"This team is like a family," Campos said. "Not only did we lose a Soldier, we also lost a brother in arms. It has been an honor and privilege to work with him. This team is going to miss you. You will always be in our hearts and minds, we could never replace you."

Bruni chose not to dwell on the tragedy but look skyward for Guerra's influence.

"Without him by our side we will never be the same," he said. "If I could go back in time, I wouldn't change a thing. I know that was the path the God chose for him. You will always remain in our hearts and prayers. All I ask of you is that you watch over us during these difficult times." 

Woman loses her ring in Iraq care package

Special to the Vanguard Point

Associated Press

ROSWELL, N.M. -- Among the candy, shampoo, bandages and snacks, Nicole Vargas accidentally packed a pricey surprise in her care package for soldiers in Iraq - her wedding ring.

Vargas, who runs the Roswell Rocha and Vargas Adopt-a-Soldier volunteer program, said the diamond-and-gold ring slipped off her finger while she was packing a box of treats several weeks ago.

Vargas' husband Ralph recently purchased the ring in honor

of the couple's 16th wedding anniversary. Nicole Vargas decided to wear the ring right away, even though it was a bit loose.

So far, Vargas, a stay-at-home mother, has shipped 4,100 pounds of goodies and toiletries to U.S. soldiers in Iraq with the help of donations from local businesses.

Vargas is hoping a keen-eyed soldier will find her ring and send it back.

"I'm gonna send the soldier who finds it a major package, like 100 pounds. I'll put a crock pot in there and some dry beans and all sorts of stuff. It will be my best care package ever," she said.

Chef continued from page 5

up the meals he prepares for his Soldiers. Sometimes his expertise and training doesn't mesh too well with his Soldiers' Midwest palettes.

"When I do my southwestern style, the Soldiers tend to get a little afraid," Scalzo said. "We did fajitas the other day and I put a little more chili powder in it than these guys are used to. These guys are from Minnesota, I don't think they are too used to this kind of food."

Either way you cut it, both Scalzo and the Soldiers he serves are happy with having the chance to cook to order.

"I love doing this. This is what I've been trained to do. I'm not one of those shoot 'em up, gung-ho guys. I'm too old for that," said the 35-year-old food connoisseur.

Some people use the adage, "Those who can't do; teach." Scalzo can definitely "do," and his future plans include both cooking and teaching.

He is currently enrolled at the Art

School Los Angeles, chasing a bachelor's degree in the culinary arts. He plans to finish his degree once the deployment is over and continue what he knows best.

"I'll keep working in the industry to gain some more experience and then in about 10 years I will probably go into teaching," Scalzo said. "There is nothing else for me to do. I don't know what else I would want to do. This is all I've known for the last 15 years and I wouldn't have it any other way." 

Continued from page 6

collapsed, and this time around, the country is getting back on its feet," he said.

Powell said he is a first-hand witness to the progress Iraq has made in the time since the war began.

He said one large improvement is the presence of the Iraqi Security Forces.

"When we were here before, there were no Iraqi Police or Iraqi Army Soldiers, there wasn't even anyone to collect the trash," he said. "This time instead of being the government, which we were before, we're helping build it."

Lauer also interviewed Chief Warrant Officer Randy Kirgiss from Hector, Minn., with C Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Assault Helicopter). Kirgiss founded Operation Teddy Drop, which has brought more than 5,000 teddy bears to children in the Baghdad area. A recent donation of 15,000 are still awaiting distribution.

Kirgiss and his crew receive donations of teddy bears and parachute material from people throughout the U.S. The bears are rigged with parachutes and dropped out of aircraft during routine missions.

"We began taking donations in January and made our first drop in April," he said. The idea was based on humanitarian missions he performed while deployed to Bosnia.



Photo by Sgt. Thomas Benoit

Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., commander of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, checks in with a couple of Soldiers eating chow.

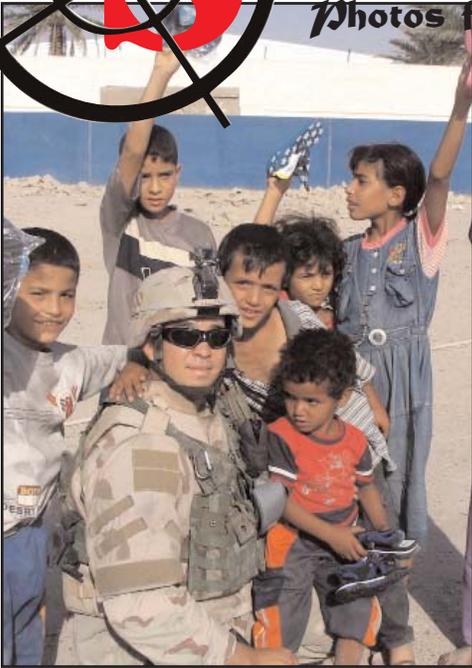
"We do this just about each time we fly, as long as it's not a combat mission," Kirgiss said. "We can get into areas a lot of the ground troops don't get to, but we do try to stay out of the urban areas so the kids don't run into streets."

Task Force Baghdad Soldiers enjoyed the day's events, and Tweeden had a few parting words for them just prior to leaving the dining facility: "I know that there's a lot of negativity in the media and the message you guys are getting probably isn't the greatest, but please know that the people back home love you and support you. You are our heroes." 



HARPshooters

Photos from around the brigade by the Soldiers of 4th BCT



Capt. Ike Sallee, A Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, poses with Iraqi children and their new gifts.



Spc. Trace Mowers, E Battery, 1st Bn., 216th Air Defense Artillery, stands atop his vehicle at the al Dora oil refinery during the last big sandstorm.

Sgt. Victor Avilla, B Co., 4th Battalion, 64th Armor stages for a patrol at the 14 July Bridge.



(Above) 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regt. Soldiers enjoy breakfast at an undisclosed location. (Right) Cpl. Gerrit Hylkema, D Co., 4-64 armor conducts a dismounted patrol to assess polling sites.

