

Vol. 2 Num. 1 2007



# Essays

875TH ENGINEER BATTALION

## Marching into 2007

**The 875th stays on mission, no matter the day, or the weather**

- ◆ *The faces of Christmas shine at Alpha and Charlie*
- ◆ *School kids ask the darndest things*
- ◆ *Maj. Gen. Simmons visits 875th*
- ◆ *Re-enlistments and promotions; Petersen makes Captain*



“Let us try”

# *Essayons*

**Vol. 2; Num. 1, 2007**

**875th Engineer Battalion**

*Battalion Commander*

Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow

*Command Sgt. Major*

CSM Billy Ward

*Executive Officer*

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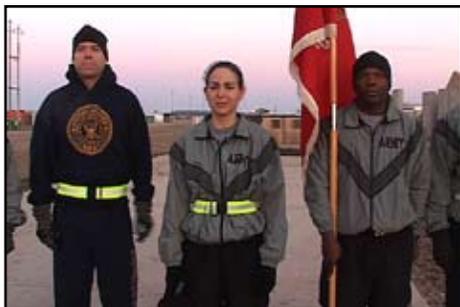


***On the cover:*** It's the rainy season in Iraq, which creates a sticky, dirty challenge for 875th Soldiers living and working at Camp Striker near Baghdad. Capt. Eric Lothian of the 131st Engineer Company, Vermont Army National Guard, marches on despite whatever stands, or lays, in his way. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.

***Above:*** 1st Lt. Bradley Smart, Charlie Company executive officer, sports a stylish holiday chapeau on Christmas Day eve during the Alpha and Charlie joint party at the Charlie Company headquarters building at Logistics Support Area Anaconda. See pages 8 and 9 for more photos from the celebration. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.

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A few brave souls greeted 2007 with a dawn 5k run, welcoming the New Year in high spirits. But the battalion mission never takes a day off, so after marking the special day, Soldiers got down to work.



## 8 The faces of Christmas light up A and C companies

Soldiers of Alpha and Charlie companies gathered at the Charlie Company headquarters to celebrate the holiday, and share in some fellowship. Here we feature a gallery of elfish behavior.



## 10 Kids adopt Soldiers, and ask the darndest things

School children in Little Rock, Piggot and Jonesboro have adopted members of the 875th while the Soldiers are on deployment. Letters and cards are filled with wonderful sentiment, and some interesting questions.

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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 in the new year. The new year has already witnessed some historic changes here in Iraq. We have seen the fulfillment of the Saddam Hussein sentencing and President Bush is laying out his plans for change, hopefully leading to Iraqi government stability, which is necessary for them to complete their destiny.

The unit has set equally high goals for the upcoming year. We also realize we have numerous challenges while we continue to perform our critical mission of route clearance. For Staff Sgt. Moore, Spc. Parker, and Spc. Phillips of 2nd Platoon, A Company, those challenges were realized in the form of an attack on their route clearance patrol on the 2nd of January. What I need to relay back to each and everyone reading this newsletter is that the patrol reacted with bravery, valor and the leadership required to ensure the entire patrol's safety after the attack. The soldiers reacted properly in accordance with their training, and the safety measures, like vehicle protective armor and individual body armor, prevented much more serious injuries. As we continue our mission, we will continue to confront these challenges and work as a team to combat the forces that are working against us and the government of Iraq.

I respectfully ask that all the family members do the same. I ask that you work as a team to strengthen our family members when they need help. I ask that you do not foster the spread of rumors and that you do all you can to protect the privacy of soldiers and their families if an incident like this should happen again. This battalion leadership's first priority is the medical care of an injured soldier. We then work diligently to ensure that the injured soldier gets the opportunity to call home and inform his or her family of their condition. The official notification is given within 24 hours of a serious incident. We restrict email and phone communications of our soldiers until we know that the injured soldier has spoken with their family. So, in this case no news is good news. I realize that an article in the newspaper not giving an injured soldier's name can cause tremendous stress. However, I re-iterate that if your soldier is injured you will be notified by the soldier and or an official source before it is published by the media.

We work very hard everyday to practice and refine our procedures to emphasize safety and protection of our soldiers, so if an incident occurs we are well pre-

pared and protected. Everyone should be very proud of the accomplishments of the soldiers of the 875th - we are well respected and well appreciated. 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!

Lt. Col. Patricia M. Anslow

## Command Sergeant Major



Greeting from Iraq, Happy New Year. I hope this editorial finds you and your families doing well. It is again another pleasure and opportunity to send greetings from Iraq from the CSM point of view. We are now in our third month in Iraq and all continues to go well with the 875th. We continue to stay diligent and focus on the mission at hand.

Your soldiers continue to stride daily to improve their fighting skills and humanitarian aide assistance. We are grateful so many of you are continuing in the fight with us with prayers, care packages, telephone calls, adoptions of soldiers and everything you are doing back in the states. We again say thanks to all of you.

There continues to be changes to assist our unit in the success and preparation of our mission. We continue to train, train and more training to better understand all the equipment and to become more proficient.

We have come a long way since leaving Jonesboro, Ft. McCoy and arriving in Iraq but yet still we have so much more to learn. We are visitors in a country with so many different and amazing cultures so we are on a daily mission to better understand the do's and don'ts.

Finally, each of us are finding our place and performing our duties at the highest level of professionalism. So I pray that this New Year enclosed you with joy and happiness in the absence of your love one. But remember we are only a telephone call and email away so keep in contact with your families. HOO-AH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward

# 131st Engineer Co.

I hope that everyone has had a good start to the New Year. I would like to thank everyone for their support to the Soldier's over the holiday season. There was a tremendous amount of support from people and groups that just wanted to say thank you. That is what makes this country great. Everyone is doing well. The recent rain has turned our area into a slippery, wet, mud pit. We had two Soldiers that have new additions to their family this year. Spc. Kevin Jarvis's wife had a baby girl, and Pvt. 1st Class Peter Thompson's wife had a baby girl as well. Congratulations to both families.

Capt. Jacob Roy



# HHC

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! December was another busy month for HHC. Thanks to all of the support from home, we had more Christmas letters and packages than we had room. Even though not being home for the holiday was tough for each of us, we found our own ways of celebrating the season. Some of our Christmas activities included decorating our offices, watching Christmas themed movies, attending candle light Christmas Eve services and, of course, the anticipation of receiving Christmas packages from home. The Christmas holiday was topped off with a Christmas Party in our MWR room, complete with singing of Christmas carols.

Although Christmas is always an enjoyable season, we are excited to see 2007 on the calendar. We are anticipating having a great year, and look forward to returning to our families. As we all know, this is the year we come home. All of HHC is working diligently each day and performing their missions with success and enthusiasm.

As you can imagine, each day in Iraq is always something new and challenging. Please know that we are facing and meeting the challenges in front of us. We will, with your continued support, find success in this new year, and we look forward to seeing you all soon.

Capt. Joshua Simmons

# Alpha Co.

I want to thank everyone for the Christmas cards and many packages that we received during the holiday season. Your generosity is overwhelming and greatly appreciated. The passing of Christmas brings a New Year. Each year we make our New Year's resolutions and try our best to change something in our life. This year is no different. I have heard several Soldiers discussing their resolutions. They want to lose weight, get in-shape or continue their education. I'm happy to report they are still on track and look forward to this New Year.

I would like to challenge spouses, family members and volunteers to become involved in the Family Readiness Group (FRG) during the upcoming year. The FRG is a vital part of our mission. They provide mutual support, assistance for family members and a network of communication between family members, the chain of command and the community.

Communication is essential for any relationship to be effective. The FRG provides a link for effective communication. Misinformation and rumors can be very damaging and cause stress upon family members. For your New Year's resolution consider becoming an active member of the FRG.

Essayons!!!

Capt. David Moore



See Charlie Co. Page 16

**F**or Soldiers of the 875th Engineer Battalion serving at Camp Striker, Iraq, the New Year dawned cold and clear, and full of promise worth running for.

Even though the Arkansas Army National Guard unit never takes a day off from its critical mission to clear commerce routes in central Iraq, a few dedicated souls welcomed 2007 with an early morning run.

“Members of the 875th Engineer Battalion, and the Navy warrant officer attached to us, have come out this morning, on the first of January, 2007, to make sure that we start the new year running,” said Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, battalion commander, before she and the others began the dawn run.

“It’s a mental and physical attitude about making sure that when you start a new year, you start it running.

“It’s similar to the story of the lion and the gazelle,” she explained. “Every morning the gazelle wakes up and knows that it has to run faster than the fastest lion in order to not get eaten. And the lion knows that it has to run faster than the slowest gazelle in order to eat and not starve. The moral of the story is that it doesn’t matter whether you’re the lion or the gazelle, every morning you better be getting up ready to run.”

According to Anslow, the run was conducted early enough to let everyone make it into work, ensuring that the

mission goes on as usual.

Of course, “as usual” means battalion route clearance teams head out, just as they did on Christmas Day, and as they will do every day of the unit’s year long deployment.

“Today, we’re going out on our first day mission of the new year,” said Sgt. 1st Class Ron Mafnas, B Team leader, 1st Platoon, 131st Engineer Company. “We’re going out there to clear the roads of IEDs.”

Spc. Shannon Reed of Jonesboro and the other members of B Team spent New Year Day on a 10 hour patrol south of Baghdad.

“We’re protectors of the protectors. We go out and clear the highways for our troops so they can get from where they are to where they need to be. It’s a great thing,” he said.

“It’s going to be a great year,” said Reed. “I’m working with a great bunch of guys and I’m enjoying my job. It’s going to be a great year for me, hooah.”

As for New Year resolutions, Reed voiced a common theme among member of the 875th. “Make it home alive and see my family when I get there,” he said. Spc. Dustin Stinson of Jonesboro says he’s resolved to get home safe to see his wife and three children.

*Continued on page 7*

# Marching into the New Year

**The 875th welcomes 2007 with a run, stays on mission**

By Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

Page 7 photos from video



*Left: A few brave souls ventured out early New Year Day to welcome in 2007 with a 5k run. Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, battalion commander, lead the contingent that included Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward. Below left: Spc. Shannon Reed of Jonesboro, Ark., was looking forward to his first mission of 2007. Below right: B Team, 1st Platoon, 131st Engineer Company, led by Sgt. 1st Class Ron Mafnas, heads out on their New Year Day Patrol. The mission goes on, no matter the holiday, or the conditions.*



*Continued from page 6*

Stinson's youngest was born November 5.

Members of Alpha and Charlie Company, stationed at Logistics Support Area Anaconda near Balad, also headed out on missions on the first day of 2007.

"It doesn't matter what day of the year it is to us," said Capt. David Moore, A Company commander. "We celebrated the new year with sparkling grape juice and near beer, then got back to work. We have a critical mission to do, and we're going to do it to the best of our ability, no matter what," he said.

For those living and working at Camp Striker, the clear New Year day was a welcome respite from the rains that often turn the forward operating base into a muddy mess this time of year.

The next evening the rain began with a drizzle, then became a steady shower. When troops headed out to their missions and to work on the 3rd, they had to trudge through a sticky mess.

Capt. Eric Lothian, 131st executive officer, was philosophical about the mucky situation.

"For us, walking in the mud is no big deal, just like with our missions, no matter what lies in our way, we continue forward. We'll have time to clean our boots when we get home," he said.

Before briefing his team on New Year morning, Ron Mafnas took some time to consider what the day meant to him.

"It's just another day in our tour, with nine months to go. Hopefully we get through it all ok and make it home to see our families," he said. And his resolution?

"I'm going to bring my 25 guys home safe."

Anslow echoed his sentiments. "We're going to be, obviously, maintaining our mission here in Iraq. It will be a great challenge, I think," she explained.

"We have to do everything we can to make sure that we can safely execute our mission and get all of us home safely."

# The faces of holiday spirit shine at Alpha and Charlie

Photos and story by  
Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

**S**oldiers of the 875th's Alpha and Charlie Companies celebrated the holiday season with a joint party at C Company headquarters Christmas Day eve.

The party kicked off after a day of route clearance patrols, and a normal work schedule, and was attended by Brig. Gen. Michael Silva, the 411th Engineer Brigade commander, who thanked the men of Alpha and Charlie for their dedication and hard work.

Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th battalion commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward toasted the troops with grape juice, and shook as many hands as possible, before heading to the spread of goodies and food in the hallway.

Decorated live Christmas trees provided bright holiday spirit, as did the many elfish headgear sported by Alpha and Charlie Soldiers. Just about everywhere were examples of the season, including Christmas cookies, treats, presents, and cards and letters taped to the walls.

Sgt. Maj. Ward spoke to the troops, encouraging them to keep up the good work, and to always think of their families back home. But he also reminded them of the critical mission the men of Alpha and Charlie perform every day, telling them to remain vigilant, focused and sharp while they are on patrol.

Later, one talented Soldier appeared with a guitar, and starting an impromptu sing-along.

*Right: Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Wheeler shows his spirit for Christmas, and hunting.*





*Top left: Sgt. 1st Class Paul Jaques looks ready for the party. Top right: Sgt. Michael Tyner. Above: One of the live Christmas Trees brighten up the celebration. Middle right: Staff Sgt. Lucas Jennings looks like he's ready to guard the reindeer. Bottom right: Pvt. 2nd Class Joseph Bateman entertains after the party.*

# Kids adopt Soldiers, ask the darndest things

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

Dear Soldier:

How are you doing? Is your team winning? I hope you come home safely and soon. I want to be a Soldier when I grow up.

Love, Ethan

Age 6

So reads a crayon-decorated letter from young Ethan Flint, written to one of his fellow Vermonters who spent the holidays in Iraq.

Ethan is just one of hundreds of school children who have "adopted" Soldiers of the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion. Members of the Vermont Army National Guard's 131st Engineer Company, and the Indiana Army National Guard's 1313 Engineer Company, are attached to the 875th, which is on a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Dear Troops:

I know you are probably having a really hard time over there, but I'm just hoping that this will cheer you up a little!

Caroline

For the men and women of the 875th, letters like Caroline's do, indeed, cheer them up.

"It makes you feel good, that's why I sit back and read them all," said 1st Sgt. Michael Sims of Headquarters, Headquarters Company. "It's a good thing, all of the cards and letters, it's nice."

"I have a couple of boxes of letters from kids in my room," said Capt. Jacob Roy, 131st company commander. "I'm trying to read all of them, they're so cute. A lot of them are pretty funny."

Boxes of Christmas cards from school children have made their rounds throughout the battalion headquarters at Camp Striker, near Baghdad, and many more have lined the walls at Alpha and Charlie companies, which operate out of Logistics Support Area Anaconda near Balad.

"Oh yea, the kids have really taken care of us this Christmas," said Capt. David Moore, A Company commander. "It's amazing the amount of support we're getting from the folks at home, especially children."

Thank you for fighting for our country and I hope you be careful out there.

Jacob

All of the cards and letters are hand written, and hand decorated. Green, red and white construction paper seem to be the preferred medium, each card filled with crayon, marker, and pen artwork and sentiment. And it's not just children from Vermont, Arkansas and Indiana sending their cheer, though; kids from all over the country took time to write to the Soldiers of the 875th.

Dear troops in Iraq,

My name is Claudia and I live in Kansas City, I'm 9 years old and I'm in 4th grade. I really thank you right now as you read this letter. You protect us and the United States so we can have liberty and freedom for all, justice and the right to be free.

Claudia

P.S.

You guys are awesome

For some members of the battalion, the relationship goes beyond just holiday greetings. Sims maintains an on-going relationship with three 4th grade classes at Piggot Elementary School in his hometown of Piggot, Ark., and I have regular correspondence with a class at Forrest Park Elementary in Little Rock.

"When I went home on block leave from Fort McCoy in September, the three 4th grade classes adopted me," said Sims. He said each of the elementary classes at the school adopted a deployed Arkansas Soldier.

"The Forrest Park class adopted me because several of the students live in my neighborhood, and know that I am a Solider."

Recently, the Forrest Park class sent me a list of questions, which ranged from personal to Soldier issues.

Have you used guns? - James

Did you want to go to Iraq? - Victoria

Are we winning the war? - Henry

Did you cross the ocean by plane or boat? - Will

Why did you join the National Guard? -- Eron



*The class at Forrest Park Elementary School in Little Rock, Ark., who regularly correspond with me, sent me a wonderful Christmas greeting.*

The children in Piggot have been more creative with Sims. He was sent a spiral-bound booklet decorated with a large blue star, a red silhouette of a Soldier, and a photo of Sims standing in the classroom at the adoption party in September. On the back, each child has signed his or her name. Inside is a collection of wonderfully decorated letters from each child describing themselves and their favorite school subject, and asking some very interesting questions.

Dear Sergeant Sims,  
Hello! My name is Kayla Bellers. I am 9 years old. Do you ever feel sad and worried about your family? Is it hard to leave your family? Do you get yelled at in the face a lot, or do you have to get up early? Do you know that everyone is wanting you to come home safe?  
Kayla Bellers

Sims was back in front of the children when he went home on his 15 day rest and recreation leave recently.

“On the Monday after I got home, I went in to see the kids,” said Sims in his Arkansas draw. “I talked to them, showed them some pictures and answered a bunch of their questions.

“I got all kinds of questions, anything from what kind of weapons I’ve used, to what’s the weather like over there, have I been in a tank, and if I’ve rode a camel,” he explained, grinning.

“Piggot’s a small town, so either I know some of their parents or some of their kin folk,” said Sims.

“And they know guys other than me. There were a lot of questions about other Soldiers in their area who are serving with the unit.”

For members of the 875th who are living and serving so far from home and loved ones, emails, cards and letters are always welcome and encouraged. But the sentiments of children from all over the United States are a special morale boost, and occupy a place in our hearts.

Dear Soldier,  
Thanks for serving our country. I hope you’re ok. I am praying for you.  
Love,  
Benjamin Paladino



*1st Sgt. Michael Sims of Piggot, Ark., shows off the creative talents of Piggot Elementary School’s 4th grade classes who sent him a spiral bound notebook containing hand-decorated letters from each of the children. Sims’ picture is featured on the front cover.*



# Multinational Corps – Iraq two-star looks in on 875th, likes what he sees

**M**aj. Gen. James E. Simmons, deputy commanding general, Multinational Corps -- Iraq, visited the 875th Engineer Battalion headquarters at Camp Striker, Iraq, Dec. 29, 2006, and said he liked what he saw.

Simmons serves under Lt. Gen. Raymond Odieno at MNC-I, which is part of Multinational Force - Iraq, and is the tactical unit responsible for command and control of operations throughout Iraq.

While at the 875th, Simmons visited with Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, battalion commander, before sitting

down with the battalion staff to talk about the war effort, and take questions.

Simmons, who is a native of Newport, Ark., and graduated from Arkansas State University in 1974, said it was nice to be around so many Arkansas troops.

“You’re doing a great job here, I like what I see,” said Simmons to the gathered staff. “You’ve got a great outfit here, and you have built an incredible reputation.”

*(U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney)*



*Above: Maj. Gen. James E. Simmons, deputy commanding general, Multinational Corp -- Iraq, is greeted by the 875th’s Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward as he arrives for a visit with the deployed Arkansas Army National Guard engineer battalion. Top right: Maj. Gen. Simmons takes time to shake hands with 875th troops. Simmons is a native of Newport, Ark., and graduated Arkansas State University in 1974. Bottom right: Maj. Gen. Simmons met with the battalion staff at the 875th headquarters building at Camp Striker, Iraq, Dec. 29, 2006, and complemented the unit for having “built an incredible reputation.”*



# JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

William Newcom, SPC	01	C Co.	Matthew Reed, SGT	19	131st
Shawn Danaher, SPC	02	131st	Jason Allen, SPC	19	A Co.
Kenneth Ervin, SGT	03	C Co.	Melissa Turner, PFC	19	HHC
Jonathan Bowers, SGT	04	C Co.	James Lee, SGT	20	HHC
Michael Hatley, SSG	04	C Co.	Steven Joyal, SSG	20	A Co.
David Tarantino, Spc	06	131st	Jerry Spears, PFC	22	C Co.
Chad Harbison, SPC	06	HHC	Brian Smith, SGT	22	131st
Shaunta Johnson, PFC	06	HHC	Jonathan Harris, SGT	22	A Co.
John Jordan, SGT	07	A Co.	David McElhaney, SGT	22	C Co.
Justin Qulliam, SPC	07	131st	Marshall Hier, SFC	23	131st
Jonathan Bricker, SPC	10	C Co.	Jeremy Jaques, PV2	23	C Co.
Jeremy Ard, SGT	14	131st	Marco Robledo, SPC	24	A Co.
Michael Antonacci, SPC	16	A Co.	Zachary Farley, SPC	27	131st
Allen Massey, SGT	17	A Co.	Tamara Marcoe, SPC	29	HHC
Michael Raney, PV1	19	A Co.	Anthony Carter, PFC	29	A Co.

## Re-enlistment has palatial flair

Spc. Alvin Lewis, 875th Engineer Battalion Chaplain Assistant, wanted his re-enlistment to have a palatial flair. He took the oath of enlistment in the Army National Guard at Saddam Hussein's former residence, Al Fawl Palace, at Camp Victory in Iraq.

The native of Hoxie, Ark., stood with 875th battalion commander Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow in front of Saddam's throne chair made famous worldwide in news reports and photos, and pledged to serve another six years in the Guard.

Lewis and his wife DeAnna have three children, and live in Smithville, Ark., where he is a Freewill Baptist minister.





## From the Chaplain

By Chaplain (Capt.) Mark Golaway

Aesop tells us that there were four bulls which were great friends. They went everywhere together, fed together and laid down to rest together, always keeping so close to each other that if any danger was near they could face it all at once.

Now there was a lion which had determined to have them, but he could never get at them singly. He was a match for any one alone, but not for all four at once. However, he used to watch for opportunity and, when one lagged the least bit behind the others as they grazed, he would slink up and whisper that the other bulls had been saying unkind things about him. This he did so often that at last the four friends became uneasy. Each thought the other three were plotting against him. Finally, as there was no trust among them, they went off by themselves, their friendship broken.

This is what the lion wanted. One by one he killed them, and made four good meals.

The families of deployed Soldiers live in a constant information vacuum. Even when communications are possible, because of operational concerns, there is a lot of information that can't be exchanged. With the advent of the internet and satellite and cellular phones, we have more communication home than any generation of Soldiers, but with that comes the instant rumor mill. Loved ones, who are simply trying to fill in the blanks left by partial information, guess instead of waiting for the complete story, and more often than not those guesses are wrong. Thus, gossip is born. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines this as retailing private, scandalous, or sensational and often inaccurate information.

Each family should keep private those things held in private conversation. Each Soldier and their family have decided what aspects of this separation they will share with each other during the deployment. My assistant and I go everywhere together, much like the four bulls. It would be insensitive and unkind of me to share through my wife to his an event or incident

he had chosen not to share with her. They have a relationship which doesn't include me or my wife, and they know best what to tell and when to tell it. Therefore, my wife and I should only talk amongst ourselves and leave others to share with their own families as they choose.

In closing, here is a story that we would all do well to lay to heart. It has been told before, but will bear repetition. A farmer's wife had spread a story about her pastor through the village, and soon the whole countryside had heard it. Sometime later the woman became sick and confessed the story was inaccurate. After her recovery she came to the pastor and craved his pardon. The old pastor said, "Of course I will gladly pardon you if you will comply with a wish of mine." "Gladly," replied the woman. "Go home, kill a black hen, pluck the feathers, and put them in a basket and bring them here."

In half an hour she was back. "Now," said the pastor, "go through the village and at each street corner scatter a few of these feathers, the remaining ones take to the top of the bell tower and scatter to the winds, then return." She did so. "Now go through the village and gather the feathers again, and see that not one is missing."

The woman looked at the pastor in astonishment and said, "Why that is impossible! The wind has scattered them over the fields everywhere!"

"And so," said he, "while I forgive you gladly, do not forget that you can never undo the damage your words have done."

Blessings!



# New Year Resolutions

## Three 875th Soldiers show their motivation

### Sgt. Jeremy Ervin

The beginning of a new year brings with it new goals to strive for. Almost every American sets at least one goal to obtain at the beginning of a new year.

I am no exception, and have set several goals this year. Tobacco cessation, on-line education and personal fitness are my top three goals. Smoke-less tobacco is a vice I have had for several years. After marriage and children, the use of tobacco is a bad habit that I do not want my children to accept as normal.

I personally believe that education is a life long endeavor. College was one part of my life I left behind because of deployment to Iraq. I look forward to on-line education as a way to continue learning, even away from home.

Tobacco cessation goes hand in hand with personal fitness. I am going to spend more time in the gym this



### Spc. Ryan Lawrence

My New Year's resolution is a little different from most people. I am not going to tell you I want to lose weight or exercise more. I feel I do that enough.

My new year's resolution is to make contact with my family more often. As things are now with my schedule, I call home about once a week and email about two times a week. I know they are worried about me and my safety, and any contact they get from me puts their mind at ease. They support me in every way they can, so the least I can do is make the extra effort to get word to them that I am doing fine.

So, to make my New Year's resolution happen, I am going to make contact with my parents at least five times a week. I know by doing this, it will make life on my parents a lot easier, and also make being away from home more bearable on me.



### Sgt. Zachary Mullins

My New Years resolution this year is to make a better life for me and my family. Not just financially but, physically, spiritually and mentally. After this deployment comes to an end, I am going to set aside more time to spend with my family. Being in Iraq, away from "my normal life," has made me come to realize all the little things in life that I have taken for granted. You never realize what you have, until it's gone.

# Charlie Company promotes two - last of 2006

Two C Company Soldiers were promoted just before the new year, becoming the last 875th troops promoted in 2006.

Joshua Wheeler of Nashville, Tenn., was promoted from Staff Sgt. to Sgt. 1st Class December 30. Wheeler is Platoon Sgt. of Charlie Company's 2nd Platoon.



*Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Wheeler of Nashville, Tenn. is congratulated by Capt. Tim Norman, C Company commander.*

Jesse Blomgren of Whitehall, N.Y., was promoted from Sgt. to Staff Sgt. December 31.

Blomgren moved to the headquarters platoon as the night operations sergeant, and also assumed the additional roll of retention NCO. He is a member of the Vermont Army National Guard, and came to Charlie Company from the 131st Engineer Company.



*Capt. Tim Norman, C Company commander congratulates Jesse Blomgren of Whitehall, N.Y. following his promotion to Staff Sgt.*

## Charlie Co. Company Corner, continued

I just wanted to start out the New Year by thanking everyone for all the support we have received throughout this holiday season. It was hard for all of us to not be at home, as I am sure it was just as hard if not harder for you. We made the best out of it and manage to get through it. I will say though, that we are the envy of many and are well known at the post office here. It is hard to believe we are so blessed and that many of the other units here do not have the same support we do. THANK YOU ALL!!

The weather here has been very cool, much like the weather back home in March. It has been surprising how cold it gets out here, especially at night, considering it will soon be in triple digits. We have received some rain. I can understand how it could flood when God let it rain for 40 days and 40 nights. The water here does not soak into the ground, it merely forms puddles. Everyone is staying focused on our mission; their level of dedication amazes me every day. The positive attitudes and outstanding work ethic displayed by your loved ones, help to brighten every circumstance. Rarely do I look around and not see a smile on their faces, no matter the situation.

Several of the guys have made it home for leave in the past month. Their return is bitter sweet; on

one hand they are glad to be back to help their fellow soldiers but on the other hand it is hard on them to leave their families one more time. For those of us who have not had the joy of going home for leave yet, it is always great to listen to their stories from home. I guess it just brings us that much closer to our families. The biggest thing I consistently hear from those who have returned is that it was the "fastest 15 days of our life." Well, before long we will be setting around back in the states telling stories and reminiscing on our experiences in Iraq. I look forward to that day!

It is hard to believe it is 2007!! We will be home this year!! I know everyone will be happy to see come that day; it will be here before we know it. I ask that you keep us in your prayers and remember we all love you. We often get in that old "RAT RACE" and forget to call home or write. I once heard "why do we stay in the rat race for I have never seen anyone win." We must try and remember to take time out to hear how everyone is doing. Keep fighting the fight on the home front. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and don't forget your New Year resolutions!

Thanks again. God Speed, and have a CHARLIE of a Day!!

Capt. Timothy Norman

# Kovar Petersen promoted to Captain

One 875th Engineer Battalion officer formally changed his “first name” from Lieutenant to Captain in a promotion ceremony at Camp Striker, Iraq, January 9.

Kovar Petersen, the battalion communications officer, is the 875th’s newest Captain.

Petersen is a resident of Blytheville, Ark., where his wife and four children wait for his return from de-

ployment. He enlisted in the Arkansas Army National Guard in 1997, and was commissioned in August 2002.

Petersen was pinned by the communications Noncommissioned Officer in charge, Sgt. 1st Class Stanley Jones. Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, the battalion commander, “seated” the new Captain’s bars on his uniform.



*Capt. Kovar Petersen is pinned by communications NCOIC Sgt. 1st Class Stanley Jones.*



*Lt. Col. Patricia Anslow, battalion commander, congratulates the unit’s newest Captain*

# Gladish pinned NCO, promoted to sergeant

Randy Gladish, battalion leaves clerk for the 875th Engineer Battalion was promoted to Sergeant at a ceremony at Camp Striker, Iraq, Dec. 12, 2006.

Gladish, who works in the personnel section, has a 42A, administration, military occupation specialty, and is a resident of Paragould, Ark.

Gladish has been in the Arkansas Army National Guard for two years, and is a 1990 graduate of Paragould High School. His mother Lula lives in Paragould.



*Randy Gladish of Paragould, Ark., is pinned a Sergeant December 12 by Maj. Michael Henderson, the battalion personnel officer.*