



The Long Knife



A magazine by and for the Soldiers of the 4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division

December 1, 2006

Volume 1, Issue 1



**First Team
Medics 'stickin'
it to dummies**

SEE PAGES 8-9

Inside this Issue

3 BCT arrives at Kuwait, begins training



Troops move into tents at Camp Buerhring,

7 Troops attend IED 101, fratricide classes

8 CLS, Medics train together
cover story

4 Rock band performs for troops



Shinedown performs at Buehring

10 Holiday Spending Blunders

12 Notes from Home

13-15 Photo pages

6 2-7 Cav trains for Iraq

The Long Knife Staff

Col. Stephen Twitty
commander, 4th BCT

Command Sgt. Maj. Stephan Frennier
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.

Maj. Roderick Cunningham
4th BCT Public Affairs Officer

Sgt. 1st Class Brian Sipp
4th BCT Public Affairs NCOIC
senior editor, *The Long Knife*

Sgt. Paula Taylor
4th BCT Public Affairs
editor, *The Long Knife*

2nd Lt. Joseph Perry
2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment
contributing writer

The Long Knife is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense. Contents of *The Long Knife* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government or Department of the Army. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the 4th Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs Office. This magazine is published by a private firm, which is not affiliated with the 4th BCT. All copy will be edited. *The Long Knife* is produced bi-monthly by the 4th BCT Public Affairs Office.



From the desk of Col. Stephen Twitty, commander, 4th BCT

November was a very busy month for the Soldiers of the 4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division as we conducted additional training in Kuwait to help further prepare us for our movement into Iraq.

We attended classes, practiced Humvee roll-over drills, spent time on the small arms ranges and conducted squad-level training exercises to enhance our war fighting skills.

Now that we have arrived in Iraq, we have settled in to our new living quarters and are getting ready to take the reigns from the unit we are here to replace.

Our main focus here will be maintaining security and training the Iraqi forces stationed throughout our area of operation.

I am confident in our troops' abilities to succeed in any type of mission they are asked to complete.

The forward operating base here offers many luxuries of home and provides several services to keep morale high.

The dining facility here is outstanding with nearly every type of meal imaginable. We also have a movie theatre, a community center, telephone call centers, internet cafes,

coffee and donut shops, a PX and much more.

Our priority to our family members is to ensure all of you have access to the latest information on our brigade and are kept informed while we are deployed.

To do that, we arranged for the El Paso Times newspaper's online Web site to post a Weblog. Currently, we are posting new blogs every week. The link is: <http://elpasotimes.typepad.com/longknife>

I encourage everyone to stop by the site and check it out. The purpose of the blog is to provide insight as to what it is really like here in country from very unique perspectives. Please feel free to leave a message or post a comment or question on the blog site.

We will also continue to publish *The Long Knife* on a monthly basis, which will be available electronically from the brigade Web site: http://www.hood.army.mil/1stcavdiv/4th_BDE.htm

As the Christmas holiday season approaches, know that you are all in our hearts and on our minds. We thank you for your continued support.



Troops prepare to head north to begin year-long missions

SGT. PAULA TAYLOR
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

The final flight of troopers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division arrived in Kuwait Nov. 3 and have already begun final preparations for their rotation into Iraq. Their flight completes the movement of the 4th BCT from Fort Bliss, Texas to Kuwait, which began with the first flight Oct. 25.

“We got here on Oct. 31 and started our small arms weapons training on Friday [Nov. 3],” said Spc. Joshua McVickers, military police officer, 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion. “We showed up to the range for small arms gunnery. We verified our zero and were allowed to re-qualify. We also did the 9mm [pistol] familiarization.”

In addition to going to small arms ranges, the troops have also been keeping busy by attending medical classes, rehearsing vehicle and individual search procedures, participating in improvised explosive device training and conducting close-quarter battle drills.

“Close-quarter battle teaches you how to enter and clear a room or building. It teaches you how to hold your weapon when you shoot, how to acquire a target and muzzle awareness,” said Sgt. Shicana Morant, supply sergeant, 4th BSTB.

During the Soldiers’ personal time, the camp offers a wide variety of activities to keep them occupied and in touch with loved ones back home.

“There’s a [Morale, Welfare and Recreation] and a USO here that offer free phone [usage], free internet, a nice place to relax and watch movies, play video games, read a book or take a nap,” said Staff Sgt. Tammy Tucker, intelligence analyst, 4th BSTB. “They



(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Paula Taylor)

Spc. Clyde Harris, a Chicago native, searches Spc. James Durden, both of B Company, Special Troops Battalion, during a vehicle and person search class at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

also have a gym, a movie theater, and volleyball and basketball courts. The gym is really nice. I’ve been going there every day and taking full advantage of the free phones and internet.”

While there are seemingly plenty of activities to keep the Soldiers busy during their down time, the focus remains all business and the continued reinforcement of basic Soldier skills. The 4th BCT’s concept of “every Soldier a rifleman” is practiced daily.

“We are continuing to conduct individual and squad-level training as we prepare to assume our battle space in Iraq,” said Col. Stephen Twitty, commander, 4th BCT. “The Soldiers are motivated, physically fit, and anxious to get to work doing exactly what they have trained for since our activation over a year ago,” added Twitty. 🇺🇸

ROCK BAND 'SHINEDOWN'

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. 1ST CLASS BRIAN SIPP
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

The crowd, bundled up for an uncharacteristically chilly night in the desert, pulsed with anticipation as they eyed the stage. Wisps of smoke from flavored tobacco and the unique smell of Clove cigarettes rose upward, mixing with the multicolored lights and creating a surreal ambiance. Digital cameras clicked on, the amplifiers crackled to life, and the assembled throng of rock fans erupted in collective cheer as the band took the stage.

What could have been a concert scene from Anytown, USA, was, in fact, the setting for Soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division, awaiting deployment north into Iraq. They were among the many Camp Buehring occupants, Soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, treated to a free concert by the band Shinedown at the Camp Buehring amphitheater Nov. 8.

Kicking off their second Kuwait and Iraq tour for the troops, and sponsored by Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) and the United Service Organization (USO), the band stirred up the emotions of the troops by masterful renditions of Lynyrd Skynrd's 'Simple Man,' a tribute to Darrell 'Dimebag' Abbott, former Pantera guitarist and an inspiration and friend to the band, who was gunned down in a Columbus, Ohio nightclub by a deranged fan

December 8, 2004; as well as 'Heroes' and 'Save Me,' two songs from their new CD 'Us and Them.'

'Heroes' is frontman Brent Smith's tribute to 'bad asses' throughout history, according to a Shinedown website; and 'Save Me' poured directly from Smith's own head and heart.

"At the time when I got off the



Lead singer of the rockband Shinedown, Brent Smith, sings to the crowd as drummer Barry Kerch plays in the background during a USO concert tour in Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Nov. 8.

road, I wasn't necessarily in the most positive situation," Smith confessed. "I dealt with a lot of problems. I'm not really talking about drugs and substances; I'm talking about all the demons that you hide in your closet, the things you have to go through in life. And it's more of a cry for help; it's basically saying, 'You know what? I'm a strong person. I can deal with a lot, but at this very moment I need someone to help me. I'm having a hard time being a strong person.'" It was that type of candor and honesty, reflecting on, in many instances, their own situations, and identifying

with Smith, which the assembled troops were drawn to, said Spc. Aaron Giannini, an infantryman working in the brigade operations section and New York City native, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Interspersing songs from both their platinum 2003 debut album 'Leave a Whisper' and their latest release, with personal reflections and prose, Smith took the crowd on a journey of introspection and pulled on the extremes of emotion, ranging from anger to patriotic fervor. Interweaved, he had a special message for the assembled troops.

"I see more pride, more dignity, and more honor, looking into your faces here tonight, than I've ever seen in my entire life," said Smith, emotionally pointing to the crowd. "You are all an inspiration to us, and the reason we

are here." "It's cool that they came all the way out here to see us," said Pvt. Sandy Ackerman, brigade signal systems support specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, who was attending her first concert. "It definitely was a boost in morale to all of us who are getting ready to head into Iraq," added the 20-year-old native of Guam.

As the night wore on, Soldiers took to crowd surfing, holding up lighters during the slower melodies, as well as engaging in friendly verbal

JAMS FOR TROOPS

jousting between the Army and Marines that typifies many of the events where both services intermingle.

The one point of agreement they both conceded to be, was that Shinedown rocked, and this temporary escape from the daily grind was both very welcome

and much appreciated, according to the majority of the crowd.

“For this moment, and ever after,” said Smith, to chants of “USA, USA, USA” from the crowd, “we are all family!” 🇺🇸



Shinedown frontman Brent Smith sings to the crowd as drummer Barry Kerch plays in the background during a USO concert tour in Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Nov. 8.



Shinedown frontman Brent Smith entertains the troops during a USO concert tour in Camp Buehring, Kuwait.



Members of the rockband Shinedown perform at Camp Buehring, Kuwait to a crowd of troops during a USO concert tour.



Lead singer, Brent Smith, of the band Shinedown rocks the stage for troops at Camp Buehring, Kuwait during a USO concert tour. The group is expected to tour four camps throughout the country and Iraq.

Garryowen troopers prepare for Iraq mission

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
2ND LT. JOSEPH PERRY
2-7 Cav. Public Affairs Representative

For the second time in three years, the Soldiers of the 'Garryowen' Battalion boarded planes and flew from the plains of Texas to the arid, sandy deserts of the Middle East. Nineteen

hours and two layovers later, they landed in Kuwait, which had a heat reminiscent of El Paso.

As they disembarked, the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment Soldiers were greeted with sand, wind, bottled water covered in strange writing, and buses waiting to take them north to Camp Buehring. A couple of hours later, they finally arrived at their destination, to be welcomed by rules of engagement, finance, and camp orientation briefings.

Finally, after all is complete, the Soldiers made their way to the tents and grabbed a cot, their home away from home for the next two weeks. Some went to bed, exhausted after 24 hours of traveling. Some tried to find the phones to call their loved ones, to let them know they made it to Kuwait. Others went to the dining facility, hoping to get other-than-airplane food in their bodies. But for all, they had the day off to adjust to the time and recuperate from the travel.

After this brief respite, the Soldiers began training, focusing on the basics before pushing north into Iraq. Classes on first aid, improvised explosive devices, medical evacuation,

and room clearing have been held throughout Camp Buehring. Outside of the camp, Soldiers zeroed their weapons, conducted drivers training, and practiced close quarters marksmanship.

"While here we have been taking advantage of any available time to conduct training, ranging from weapons-related training to cultural awareness training to counter-insurgency classes," said Lt. Col. Eric Welsh, commander of the 2-7 Cavalry. "From

Fort Bliss to Kuwait, Soldiers and leaders are focused on honing their skills in preparation for onward movement into Iraq."

"Morale of the Soldiers and leaders is high as we prepare for our mission in Iraq. We are a professional organization filled with Soldiers and leaders who understand their mission and train for it all the time," added Welsh. "Our returning combat veterans have been a great resource, providing lessons learned as they share with and teach our newer troops. Our Soldiers are confident, well led, and their families are being cared for. We're ready."

During a drivers training course, Staff Sgt. Darren T. Starling, battalion master driver, stressed the importance of the training and its applications to combat in Iraq.

"This training is important because it teaches the Soldiers how to avoid possible IED sites, convoy procedures, security halt postures, such as the box method, and reacting to contact, whether it is from an IED, a sniper, or an ambush," Starling said. "It not only enhances their driving skills during combat operations, but also teaches them how to maneuver and operate an up-armored Humvee."

Starling also emphasized the need to maintain vehicles while in Iraq.

"Maintenance is very important in theater," said Starling to a group of approximately 50 Soldiers.

"Whenever you get the opportunity, conduct a PMCS [Preventative Maintenance Checks and Services] on your vehicles. Before you go out on patrol, check your vehicles. After you get back, check your vehicles."



(Photos clockwise from top):

Soldiers from B Co. 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, conduct close quarters battle training Nov. 2 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, prior to deploying north.

Troops from 2-7 Cav. practice training on medical evacuations on the flight line Nov. 2 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.

An M1A2 SEP Abrams tank and crew from B Co. 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, pull security during convoy training Nov. 2 at Camp Buehring, Kuwait.



STORY AND PHOTO BY SGT. PAULA TAYLOR
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Soldiers of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division received instruction on how to counter the biggest threat to troops serving in Iraq, improvised explosive devices, and coalition forces fratricide Nov. 11.

The basic counter IED class, taught by Sgt. Reynaldo Berrios, counter IED instructor, 115th Engineer Battalion, opened the session with shock videos that demonstrated the severity and danger of the devices being used that have taken the lives of hundreds of coalition troops to date.

"I like that the videos showed the truth," said Pfc. Guadalupe Forcado, supply specialist, 27th Brigade Support Battalion. "They were a hard thing to see, but I like that they were specific about what really happens."

After the videos, Berrios explained the three types of materials used to make IEDs: military ordinance, homemade explosives and incendiaries, and commercial explosives.

One 4th BCT Soldier said during his tour in Afghanistan, he saw first-hand incendiaries and military ordinance. "I've seen a soda pop can with a fuse coming out of it that would probably just burn someone and I have seen a 155mm round used," said Sgt. William Fitzpatrick, howitzer and humvee gunner, 5th Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment.

The three types of IEDs, Berrios

said, are victim operated, command operated and timed. In one video example he showed, several people were gathered around a wounded insurgent. When they tried to turn him over, the IED exploded. "The victim operated are the most dangerous," said Berrios. "You set them off. They are booby traps." Unlike the victim operated IEDs, the command operated IEDs are set off by the enemy. These are in the form of suicide vests, radio



Liaison and trainer, Sgt. Maj. Lee Middleton, 40th Regiment, Royal Army, takes time to answer questions after teaching troops of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division a class on fratricide Nov. 11

controlled, cell phone controlled or controlled by key fobs or car alarms, he said. "The use of cell phones to detonate IEDs are the most common right now," he said. The final type Berrios discussed was the timed IEDs, which use devices such as washing machine timers or alarm clocks.

Other topics covered in the class were the placement of IEDs, concealment methods, and what to do if you discover an IED.

"I learned IEDs are a lot more

sudden than I thought they'd be," said Pfc. George Marinakes, wheeled vehicle mechanic, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion. "It was a wake-up call for those of us who have never been to Iraq before, someone who's never seen it happen in real life."

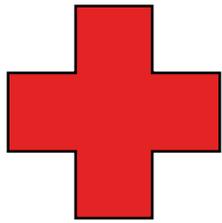
The IED training was followed by a fratricide class, taught by British Sgt. Maj. Lee Middleton, liaison/instructor, 40th Regiment,

Royal Artillery. Middleton said this was his second tour in Iraq, the first being in 2003. He has served with the 7th Armor Brigade and a Marine Expeditionary Force.

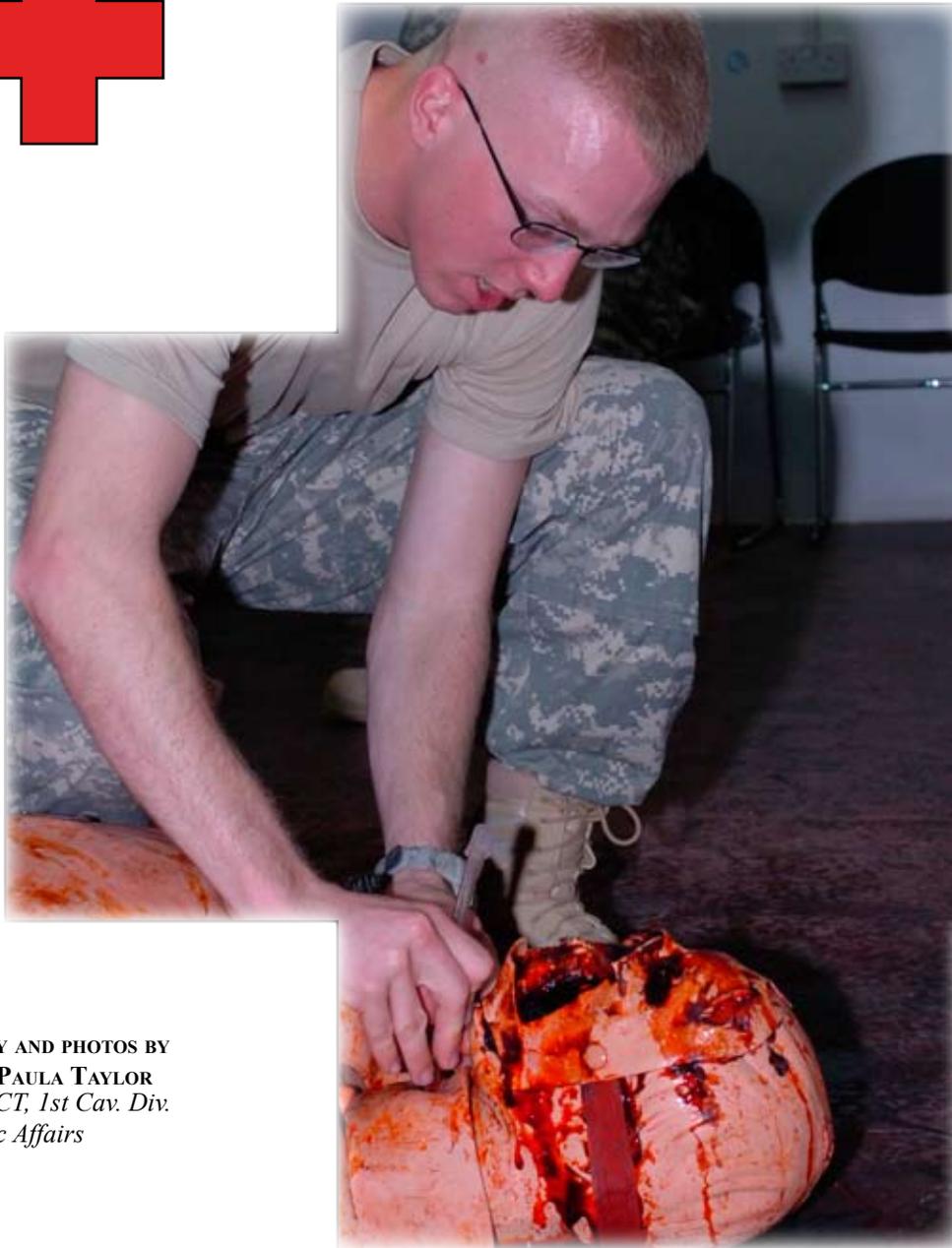
The main focus of his class was to "teach tactics, techniques and procedures of coalition forces to prevent fratricide so troops will have an understanding of the military fleet in Iraq," he said.

He began by showing the numbers of forces from each of the coalition countries serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. "There are a total of 154,000 coalition forces in Iraq. Of those, 133,000 are American forces."

Soldiers were shown several slides and videos during Middleton's presentation of coalition vehicles and uniforms. He also taught how to identify friendly forces, how to reduce the risks of fratricide, what to do if a Soldier is engaged by friendly fire and what to do if a Soldier observes fratricide. 



Medics, combat lifesavers train Cavalry troops



Pfc. Patrick Dukovac, infantryman, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., inserts a breathing tube for a mannequin who was hit by a mock improvised explosive device Nov. 14 at Camp Beuhring.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. PAULA TAYLOR
4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div.
Public Affairs

Several troops from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division attended an advanced medical course Nov. 14.

The course, which uses realistic mannequins to simulate medical emergencies, is designed to provide new techniques to medics and combat lifesaver-certified troops based on real scenarios.

“The mannequins were very realistic,” said Pfc. Patrick Dukovac, infantryman and native of Cleveland, Oh. “They talked to you, they had fake blood pumping through them and their chest would raise up like they were breathing.”

The course was taught by an instructor, Brent Cloud,

from the Medical Simulation Training Center.

“The only thing I care about is saving lives,” said Cloud. “That’s why I do this.”

Cloud began the class with medical refresher questions and an introduction about himself and his experiences as a medic in the Army.

“The course was very well taught,” said Dukovac. “The instructor was a special forces medic for 14 years. The scenarios he used were from people he saved in combat. There was one with his jaw completely torn off; from his eyes to his neck.”

Dukovac also said one of the Sim Men scenarios was the patient had been shot by an AK-47 rifle round and

Train for battlefield emergencies Troops learn new medical techniques



Pfc. Sophie Marinakes, a Hawaii native, practices on a Sim man finding the exact location to place a breathing tube Nov. 14.



Sgt. Jessica Muller, combat medic, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., watches over Soldiers to ensure they are taking the proper steps to save a mock casualty who suffered multiple traumas.

another Sim Man was injured from an IED.

“One mannequin hit an IED with the front left tire of his Humvee and got his left leg blown off,” Dukovac explained.

The main point of the course was to concentrate on the three most critical factors between life and death: hemorrhaging, a compromised airway and tension pneumothorax.

“If a person has tension pneumothorax, you’ll know it as soon as you see it,” said Cloud. “The chest will be swollen. It will look like he has a basketball inside his chest.”

Tension pneumothorax is caused when a lung gets punctured. The troops were taught how to tell exactly which lung was injured and how to treat that type of injury.

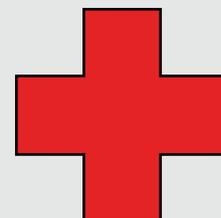
Learning how to properly perform a cricothyrotomy for a Sim Man who couldn’t breathe was invaluable, said Dukovac. “We didn’t learn that in the [combat lifesaver course].”

“A lot of it was stuff we already knew,” said Pvt. Logan Bayless, a native resident of Great Bend, Kansas.

“Getting an actual chance to work with the dummy and stop the bleeding was great. I think that everyone who’s combat arms should go through that course. Working on a mannequin is realistic, invaluable. It was great training,” said Bayless.



A troop from the 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div. inserts a knife into the throat of a simulation mannequin during an advanced medical course for combat lifesaver qualified Soldiers Nov 14 at Camp Beuhring, Kuwait.



Holiday Insight

By MP DUNLEAVEY
MSN.com

The holidays are just around the corner, so start the guilt and self-deception now! Which strategies are yours? Last-Minute Guilty Excess? Manic Martha-ism?

As soon as you finish that last mouthful of pumpkin pie, whip out your credit card, because the official Holiday Spending Season begins the minute Thanksgiving dinner dishes are done.

Feel the pressure? Some of us felt the squeeze as early as the day after Christmas last year, when stores had their 75%-off sales and we felt compelled to buy gifts a year in advance. Not that we'd admit that in public. Yes, pressure makes you do strange things, and let's face it, we've all done very strange things under the influence of holiday gift-giving angst.

I speak from personal experience. For years, I think I believed that I should buy whatever struck me as the most perfect present for someone (i.e. everyone) -- and Santa would reimburse me afterward. Either that or I thought that somehow holiday money flowed from a separate, more abundant source than everyday cash.

So think of this as the holiday equivalent of a tornado alert. No, you don't have to hide in the basement (although some people do). Just stay calm, cultivate a rational approach as the high-pressure front moves in -- and keep reading.

Don't 'misunderestimate' what you spend

Barbara Steinmetz, president of Steinmetz Financial Planning in Burlingame, Calif., is quite familiar with watching her Silicon Valley clientele get into hot water around the holidays. "The more money you have, the less you keep track of it," she notes.

While most of us don't have that problem, Steinmetz says many people seem to have temporary financial blindness when the time comes to purchase presents. She asks her clients to estimate what they spend every year on all their gifts, including weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, baby gifts and the like. "They usually say between \$1,000 and \$4,000 a year, which tells me they have no idea what they really spend," she says.

Did you ever stop and add it all up? Sally's bridal shower, Dad's 70th birthday and so on? Neither did I. Steinmetz says that's why so many of us get into spending trouble over the holidays: "The biggest problem with holiday gift giving is a massive misconception of how much you're spending."

Most common holiday blunders

So it may seem too basic to bother with, but sit down now and draw up a holiday budget -- yes, right now. This helps for two reasons:

- It will give you some perspective on what you think you spend versus what you actually do.
- You can panic now before you actually go out and spend the cash.

But even careful spenders can find themselves in post-holiday hell when the January credit-card bills roll in. The holidays are an emotional minefield, and one misstep can blow your budget to smithereens. After months of careful research, calling all our relatives, we've identified the most insidious blunders so that you can venture forth into the malls forearmed.

Guilty gaffes

Not surprisingly, guilt seems to be the biggest source of overspending.

- **Homemade gift guilt:** Take the year my Aunt Ginny decided to make everyone a special basket, packed with treats she'd made herself: "Oranges with cloves, homemade flavored coffee, my own home-baked cookies -- even homemade dog biscuits." Then, because she felt like it wasn't enough, she went out and bought everyone a "real" present. "I was crazy that year," she says.

- **Equalizing to excess:** You get each of your kids (or parents or siblings) an equal distribution of presents. Except . . . maybe you should get Mom a couple of extra little things, since Dad's cashmere sweater obviously cost a bundle. But now Mom has three presents and Dad only has one, so the least you can do is get him a book . . . repeat until broke.

- **Surprise-gift guilt:** Your boss, friend, co-worker or neighbor gives you an unanticipated gift. D'oh! You should have anticipated this! You dash out to the store and add yet another item to your overwhelmed holiday budget.

- **Reciprocal retaliation:** This game is deadly and has



a way of snowballing before you realize it. Three years ago, you and your mate gave a couple of your friends a dinky coupon for a free night of baby-sitting. They gave you pricey Broadway tickets. The second year, you ramped up and took them out for a swell dinner. They gave you a case of wine. This year, you just want to win, so you're planning to give them an all-expense paid trip to Guadalajara -- just so they'll back down, and next year maybe you can get back to giving baby-sitting coupons. Won't happen.

- **Rejection rebound:** In order to save money, you gave someone a gift that you got from someone else, forgetting it was the recipient who gave it to you last year. To make up for this offense, you overcompensate, now and possibly for years to come.

Clearly the issue here is that we think money speaks louder than our intentions. It doesn't. Really. So before you hit the store, delete the guilt files from your operating system.

Procrastination problems

Putting off holiday shopping may cost you.

- **Last-minute largesse:** It's the night before Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa and you are out cruising the stores that are open until midnight trying to get all your shopping done in one furious frenzy. But because you realize that this blows the whole "thought that counts" thing, the thoughtless gifts you buy are also wretchedly expensive.

- **FedEx folly:** You bought your niece in Nebraska a great new CD but waited so late to mail it that you're spending more on shipping than the gift cost.

Really. Why do you think we are publishing this column now, except to give you a shot at shopping in a timely fashion? As Steinmetz points out, "Those who celebrate Hanukkah at least have some excuse -- those holidays move around. But, hello, Christmas is always on the 25th. So what's the problem?"

Holiday spirit overdrive

It sounds like a '70s lounge band, and maybe it should have been. In reality, it's a financial crime of passion. An insane impulse overcomes you --- holiday joy? The spirit of Santa? Your medication is off? --- and you find yourself committing one (or all) of the following:

- **Debt of 1,000 gifts:** Getting everyone, I mean everyone, a little gift: all of your co-workers, the woman who cleans your house, the neighbor who jump-started your car in 1986, your baby-sitter, your dentist, etc. -- to the tune of \$4,876.

- **Parental panic:** You lay out all the gifts you got for the kids, and suddenly it's just not enough. You love those kids so much. You can't let them limp into January so deprived. What were you thinking? Back to the mall!

- **Manic Martha-ism:** For once, you're going to celebrate the holidays in style. You're going to throw that holiday party, take the kids to the "Nutcracker," the Ice Capades and the "Clifford the Big Red Dog Live!" show. You're going to cater a big holiday dinner and fly your parents in, and pay Martha Stewart to inject some holiday cheer into your décor.

Plead guilty, because there are too many witnesses. This year, when you sense an attack of holiday spirit coming on, send a card.

Eggnog wishes, caviar dreams

These are amazingly silly, but common, miscalculations in terms of volume, time or value.

- **Shopping by the truckload:** You go to Costco or the mall and buy everything in sight, simply because there's so much to buy.

- **The 12 days of shopping:** You haven't found the perfect gift for her yet. You know you will. Meanwhile, you'll just pick up a pair of these earrings. And a little scarf. . . . And by the time you reach the end of your "Quest for Perfection", you have 27 gifts, none of them quite right, except maybe the pear tree with the partridge in it.

- **Art fair amnesia:** December is upon you, so you dash out and do all your shopping -- completely forgetting that you already bought half the presents at that crafts fair in July.

These costly little slip-ups can happen in a variety of ways. How to prevent them is unclear. If only we could get them on video. At least you'd get a laugh out of yourself.

The 'unreturnable' impulse

This one deserves its own category, because of all spending blunders, it is the most preventable. Every year countless people fall into a stupor as they enter one of those vile shops full of ceramics, glass and twisted bronze ballet sculptures -- and accidentally buy one for someone they love, who will inevitably hate it. Two words on this one: Just don't.

GETTING FIT DURING DEPLOYMENT

PART II: ACADEMIC FITNESS

STORY BY MRS. K. TWITTY

4th BCT FRG leader

Dear Long Knife Family Members,

A few months back I began discussing some coping strategies with you to help us make it through the deployment. I told you about the personal five point fitness plan that I would be starting and shared my first goal, Financial Fitness, with you. I hope you found the information to be helpful and have begun working towards the goal of financial fitness while your soldier is away.

The next goal, Academic Fitness, occurred to me when I realized I've not been reading as much as I should since our little one came along unless you count board books from the Baby Einstein series. My first thought was once the baby is asleep I can devote some time in the evening to reading a good book. Then I thought, what a perfect opportunity to improve myself! If I can read for enjoyment, I can read for information and learn something new while my soldier is away.

For our purposes, think of Academic Fitness as any activity that involves learning. You may choose a craft like quilting or needle point. Perhaps you are interested in music or art. Why not take piano lessons or an art class? I've spoken with several spouses who want to finish a degree. This is a great time to finish high school or get a GED. You can take college level courses, finish a Master's degree, or even a PhD program. UTEP has a lot to offer as do the other area colleges and universities. You could take a class somewhere in El Paso or go on line and find something that interests you.

I've had several ideas about things I'd like to do. I could take a Spanish class goodness knows that would come in handy here in El Paso. I could get a teaching license for the state of Texas or finish getting a realtor's license. Maybe I should take up playing the guitar again. I've heard there are great music teachers here. So much to choose from and time is winding down. Most schools start the new term in January so I need to make a decision soon. How about you? Do you have an area of interest that you can pursue over the next year? Let me hear from you if you have an idea that you would like to share.

As I write this, my 18 month old is pulling on me, snatching the pen out of my hand, and trying to type on the keyboard.

If you have little ones too, the idea of working towards an academic objective may not appeal to you, but please consider it. It gives you something to focus on for yourself. It also sends a powerful message to our children that learning is a lifelong commitment.

My next article will focus on Physical Fitness. Now remember! I'm no expert. My only wish is to share what works for me in hopes that it will help some, if not all of you. Until next time my friends!

Best regards,

Mrs. Twitty



Notes from home

The staff of the public affairs office, 4th BCT, 1st Cav. Div., has been posting a Web log (blog) in the El Paso Times newspaper's online Web site since our arrival in Kuwait. So far, we have recieved hundreds of 'hits' on the counter. As with all blogs, anyone can post a response. We have recieved comments from family members and friends of the brigade and will use this page to post their messages to our troops. To visit the blog site: <http://elpasotimes.typepad.com/longknife>

We are proud parents of one of the soldiers in the 4 BCT 1st Cav. We are so grateful for this blog. It helps to know whats going on over there. The pictures are great. Please keep the blogs going.

Thanks

Posted by: Michel and Marcia taylor

Hi everyone,

My name is Doug Bunting and my son PVC Adam Bunting is serving with the 27th support Battalion for the 1st Cavalry.

I also appreciate the fact that I can keep track of the brigade while it's in Iraq. My prayers and thoughts go out to all of the soldiers there and I thank them for what they are doing.

Adam, if you happen to see this message,Liz and I are thinking about you, and we're proud of you.

Dad

Posted by: Doug Bunting

Thank you for all the hard work and we will see you when you get home.

Posted by: Nicci Olenkiewicz

Great post look forward to seeing more. Take care. Thanks Brian.

Posted by: Jason Root

May God Bless You All! We love you Spc Teon A Gudina, the love of my life:) All of you are in our prayers.

Posted by: Karina Gudina

Our prayers are with you all. We miss you all back home. We love you very much SGT Robert Laurendine! We are very proud of all of you!

Posted by: Joann Laurendine

Thank you so much for the updates. These updates help so much. God Bless you all.

Mom of a 1/9 Soldier

Posted by: Terry (Burluson) Walls | November 20, 2006 at 07:28 AM

Love the updates. So good to hear everyone has made it safe.

God bless all the soldiers.

From a proud family of a 2-12 soldier.

PS please send pictures

Posted by: michel and marcia taylor | November 20, 2006 at 06:34 PM

Another proud 2-12 family here. We would LOVE to see some pictures also.

Thanks for the updates! (2-12 Fox Co. Recovery Section was today's "Shout Out" on Good Morning America)

Posted by: Annie | November 20, 2006 at 11:06 PM

My husband, Spc Terry is with the 4-1 Cav!! I am glad to know everyone made it safe!! Thanks so much for the updates and photos, keep em coming!! God bless.

Posted by: Brooke | November 21, 2006 at 12:46 PM

Some things never change in the military, "Hurry up and wait". We continue to lift all the soldiers in 4-1 Cav in prayer. Thanks for all you have done and all that you will do before this is over. Stay strong and focused. Proud Parents of a 2-7 soldier, Father and Husband. We Love You Rich.

Posted by: Rich & Sue Hall | November 21, 2006 at 01:28 PM

thanks so much for keeping us updated. i cant wait to see more pictures of the guys hopefully one tim eit will be my husband.

Posted by: beth lowe | November 21, 2006 at 02:49 PM

We are proud parents of one of the soldiers in the 4 BCT 1st Cav. We are so grateful for this blog. It helps to know whats going on over there. The pictures are great. Please keep the blogs going.

Thanks

Posted by: michel and marcia taylor, proud army parents | November 15, 2006 at 08:23 PM

Hi everyone,

My name is Doug Bunting and my son PVC Adam Bunting is serving with the 27th support Battalion for the 1st Cavalry.

I also appreciate the fact that I can keep track of the brigade while it's in Iraq. My prayers and thoughts go out to all of the soldiers there and I thank them for what they are doing.

Adam, if you happen to see this message,Liz and I are thinking about you, and we're proud of you.

Dad

Posted by: Doug Bunting | November 16, 2006 at 08:11 PM

Hi Sgt. Taylor,

Thanks so much for keeping us updated as to what is going on over there. It sure seems like the living quarters are decent(other than the showers) and that they feed you guys well over there.

I know that will make my Son, PFC Adam Bunting happy.

He works with the 27th Support Battalion, Company B as a power generator repairer,and he always has had a good appetite!

I'll be keeping all of you in prayer as the days, and month go by.

Posted by: Doug Bunting | November 24, 2006 at 03:00 PM

Once again thank you so much for the updates. Sending my best wishes.

Keeping you all in our thoughts and prayers. To SPC Pat McCoy, sending all our love! -Mom

Posted by: Karen Gay | November 27, 2006 at 04:23 AM

Thanks for all the news. God bless you all. We love you PFC Ryan Kitchens, 2-12. Mom and Pops

Posted by: michel and marcia taylor | November 27, 2006 at 07:06 PM

Photos from Kuwait



Soldiers of the 27th BSB clean their M-249, squad automatic weapon.



Capt. Paula Schemmel gets help installing her side plates for her body armor from Lt. Brandon Fredricks, both assigned to the 27th BSB.



Private Joshua Beegle, and Pfc. Cole Grunsfelder, 2-12 Cav. return to their rifles after inspecting their targets during weapons zero in Kuwait.



The 2-12 Cav. colors are cased for movement to Iraq during the Long Knife Brigade color casing ceremony.



Soldiers from the 1-9 Cav. at the range in Kuwait Nov. 11.



Soldiers of C Company, 27th BSB take a bus ride to their convoy training in Kuwait.

Photos from Iraq



1-9 CAV(ARS)
"Head Hunters"



2-7 CAV
"Ghost"



2-12 CAV
"Thunder Horse"



5-82 FA
"Black Dragons"



4th BSTB
"Vigilant"



27th BSB
"Rough Rider"

Thanksgiving day at the dining facility



Around the FOB



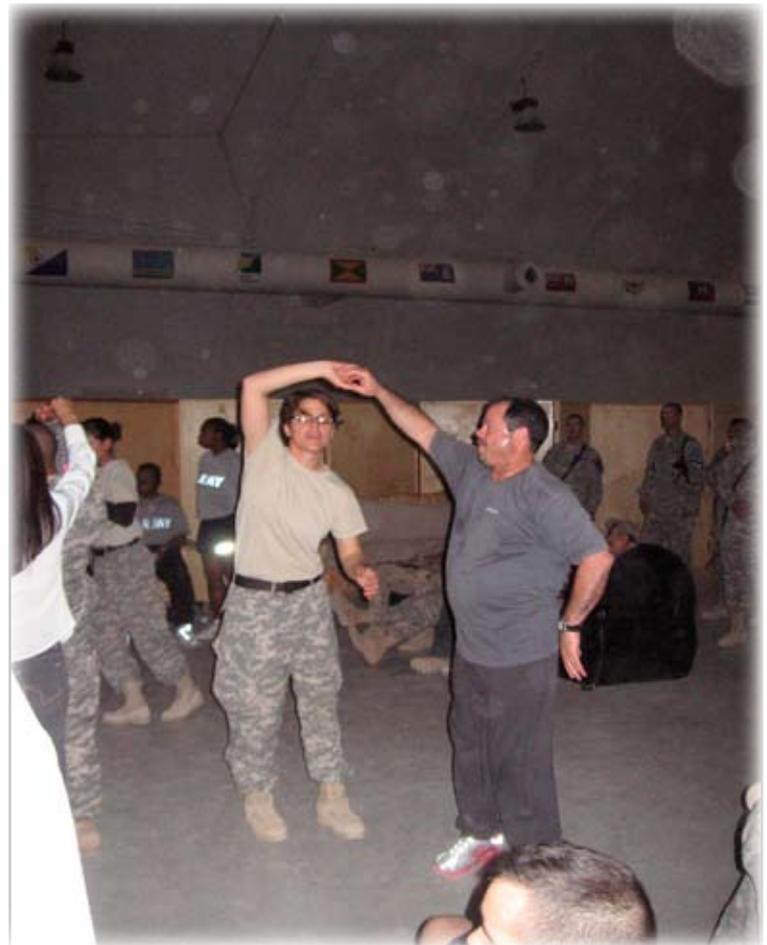
Pvt. Michael Tunilla, infantryman from Anchorage, AK., dances during Latino Night at the community activities center.



Troops take time to Email loved ones at the 27th BSB internet cafe.



Capt. Keary Johnston, physician assistant from Biglerville, Penn., goes for a run at the gym.



Pfc. Venessa Bessa, a Maryland resident, has fun dancing during Latino Night at the community activities center.



Spc. Hector Vicenty, infantryman from San Antonio, Texas, spends time at the brigade gym to help stay in shape.