



The Mountain View

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Soldier Edition

December 11, 2008

An issue dedicated to Soldiers' stories

Comic performs for full house of fellow Soldiers

By **Sgt. Allison Churchill**
41ST FIRES BDE.



FOB DELTA – Nearly 300 Soldiers and civilians packed into the pavilion on Forward Operating Base Delta Dec. 6 for an evening of comedy.

The comic, Sgt. Ben Downing, 3-142nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division, New York National Guard, has been building his stand-up comedy career since leaving active duty in 2000 and hopes to use his skills to entertain his comrades throughout Iraq.

During his show, Downing made light of life on FOB Delta. The Brooklyn, N.Y. native and the rest of his battalion have been in country for less than a month, but his take on several facts of life earned loud laughter and applause.

“Being able to find common ground – that’s the art of stand-up comedy,” said Downing, a communications noncommissioned officer.

His first attempt at stand-up wasn’t so successful, Downing said. While stationed in South Korea, Downing participated in a talent show.

“I got booed off the stage,” he admits. “Looking back, I was horrible.”

As he was in the process of leaving active duty, several buddies encouraged Downing to try again. His girlfriend at the time knew people in the comedy business and helped him get a two-minute spot at a club.

“It wasn’t that bad,” said Downing. He kept going and started getting to know other comics.

He eventually became friends with a group of comics that included D.L. Hughley, Tracey Morgan and Dave Chappell, earning opening spots on their shows and on *Comic View* in 2003 and 2004.

He also earned a small part in the movie “I Am Legend,” starring Will Smith. Downing joked about his very small part and the difference between “rich thinking” and “broke thinking” during his FOB Delta performance.

After building up to performing almost nightly, when his battalion mobilized to deploy at Fort Sill, Okla., he put together a show – partly to keep his skills fresh and partly to give his battle buddies something to do.

“They need comedy,” said Downing.

Downing said he plans to capture one of his shows in theater and send it to networks in the U.S. in order to share his “skewed

sense of humor” and life as a Soldier with a larger audience.

He noted that his command has been supportive of his comedy efforts.

“There’s no other comic who’s been a Soldier in Iraq before,” said Downing. “As long as I do my job well, they let me do this.”



Photo by Sgt. Allison Churchill

Brooklyn, N.Y., native **Sgt. Ben Downing**, communications noncommissioned officer, 3-142nd Assault Helicopter Battalion, performs his comedy routine for Soldiers at The Pavilion on FOB Delta Dec. 6.

Army brings couple together

By **SPC. TIFFANY EVANS**
MND-C



CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – Every couple has a story about how they met. Two Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division have the Army to thank for each other. Without the Army, they may have never met.

Privates Andrew and Katherine French, topographic analysts, met at Advanced Individual Training at Fort Belvoir, Va. During their 6 months at AIT, the couple became friends and as their relationship grew, they discussed marriage.

“Most of our time together was spent on the weekends,” said Katherine, 26, a native of Prior Lake, Minn. “When you know, you know. One weekend toward the end, Andrew proposed.”

There was only one slight kink in this love story. The Soldiers were projected assignments in much different places: Katherine had orders for Colorado, and Andrew had orders for Hawaii. Katherine found herself praying for her assignment to change to Hawaii.

“Much to our surprise, the week after I proposed to Katherine, my orders changed to Fort Carson, Colorado,” said Andrew, 21, a native of Denton, Texas. “After graduating and getting to Fort Carson, we learned that we were assigned to the same unit.”

On April 28, the couple married; soon after, they met each other’s families for the first time.

Katherine, who said her decision to join the Army was harder for her



Photo by Staff Sgt. Carlos Burger II

Privates Andrew and Katherine French, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division topographic analysts, spend their overlapping two hours at work together.

parents than her decision to get married, said they just adore Andrew. They agreed the young couple was made for each other, and they had never seen their daughter happier.

“My parents see her as a daughter and a great addition to the family,” Andrew said. “They think this marriage is very good for us and (are) happy for us.”

Through AIT the couple learned how to walk the line between the professional and home atmosphere. This paid off because they were able to show their new section how well they

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Christmas Day I Studied War

By **STAFF SGT. WILLIAM VAUGHAN**
MND-C

*On Christmas, Rome,
the terrorists struck*;
that I wasn't there
I thank my luck!
Those losers won,
so what's the score
if Christmas day
I studied war?
The night before,
my love said, "Yes!"***
I'll live my life
for her to bless,
regretting oaths***
I greedily swore,
as Christmas day
I studied war!
Cold blood to blister,
nerve to choke**** --
rank after prank --
not one a joke!
I'll do my best
to serve my Corps*****;
on Christmas day
I studied war!
My country's arms
are in a race,
to all the world
perhaps erase.
There's too much candy
in our store,
if Christmas day
I studied war!
When I finally
meet my god,
I'll give him thanks
with prostrate laud,
forgetting then
all death and gore,
though Christmas day
I studied war!*

* Terrorists attacked the Rome airport on Dec. 25, 1985, the day I wrote this poem.

** I proposed marriage to my ex-wife on Dec. 24, 1985.

*** ...of enlistment...

**** Subtle references to types of chemical and biological agents I studied in a correspondence course...

***** The United States Marine Corps - I was in their Infantry Reserve at the time.

THE Mountain View

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Task Force 449

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COUPLE

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work together without allowing their personal relationship to interfere.

"We are a great team at work even if we only work a couple of hours together every day," Katherine said. "We've only been deployed about three months and are very blessed to be deployed together."

Their deployment together keeps

their morale high, but they do not flaunt it in front of their fellow Soldiers who are not so lucky to have their spouses with them.

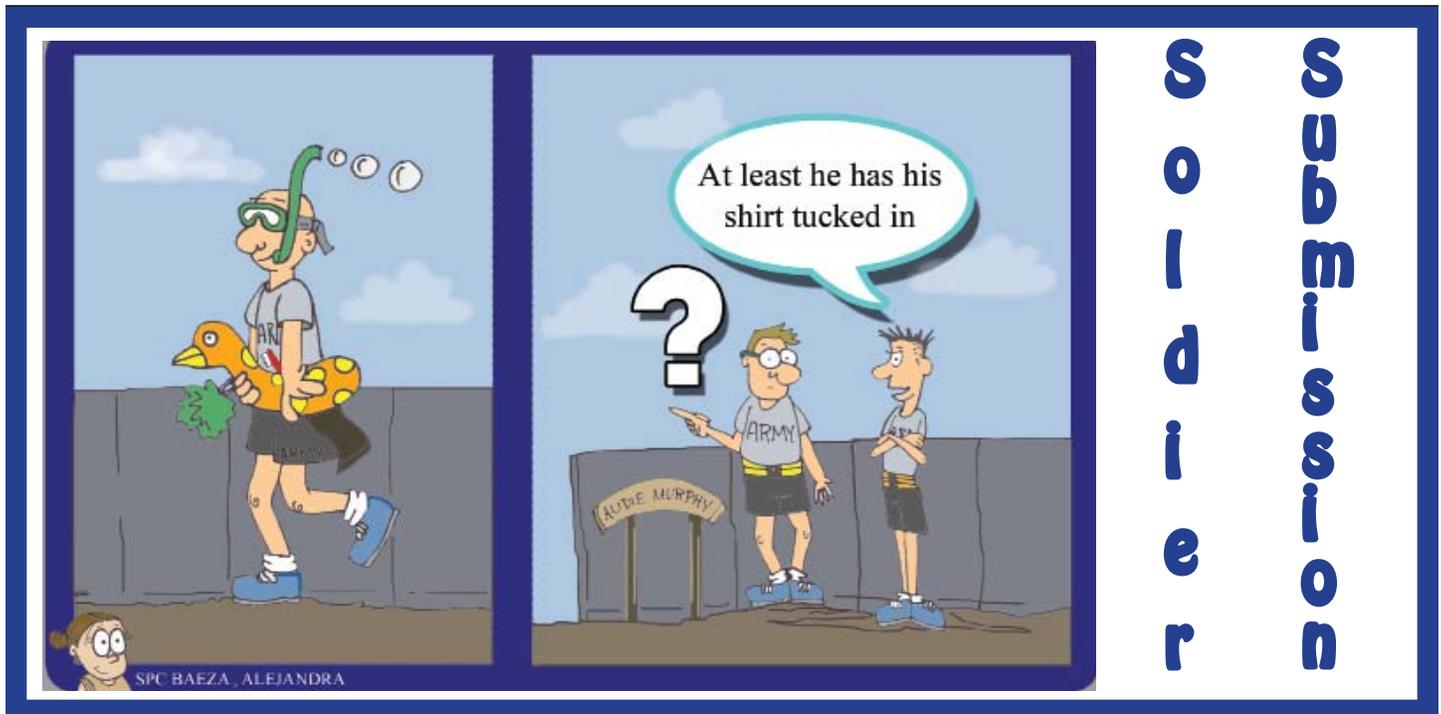
"We know how rare it is to be deployed and in the same unit as your spouse," Andrew said. "God has a plan for us, and we are doing our best to be modest about our blessings."

Before joining the Army, both Soldiers said their lives were going nowhere fast. Each wanted a new career, to work on college, gain benefits, do

something for their country and better themselves.

"The Army has been great for me and introduced me to my wife, who changed my life for the better," Andrew said. "Neither of us would have believed we'd meet our spouse in the Army."

"Being together on this deployment has helped us to grow closer mentally, emotionally and spiritually," Andrew and Katherine said. "God gave us the greatest gift... each other."



Shopping List: DVD treats sure to brighten Christmas morning

As we inch toward Christmas, movie and television studios are busy pumping out DVDs of anything from the Philadelphia Phillies World Series win to cult movies no one has ever heard of; from blockbusters to music concerts; from beloved children's classics to collections of television classics. Here is a selection of five DVDs that shine a little brighter this holiday season.

"Wall-E" is the latest masterpiece from Pixar Studios. The tale of WALL-E, a waste disposal robot in the early 22nd Century, focuses on the emotions of love and loneliness in a mature manner not often seen in children's movies. The most-critically acclaimed movie of the year, "Wall-E" is a sure-fire winner this Christmas.

Batman's saga continues in the "Dark Knight," which has drawn comparisons to the Godfather Part 2 in terms of character development and greatness. Much more than a normal "superhero" movie, the "Dark Knight" features stellar performances by Aaron Eckhart and the late Heath Ledger that will resonate in your imaginations for ages to come.

HBO's history of fantastic mini-series continues with the epic John Adams, which highlights one of the founding fathers of our country who is often overlooked by historians – and average citizens. Adams isn't as heroic as George Washington or as dignified as Thomas Jefferson. This series will show him in all his "glory" – from his darkest moments, to his greatest triumphs.

Fans that fell behind or missed out on the phenomenon that was the "Sopranos" can now watch the entire series, one whack at a time, with the new complete series DVD set. Containing 33 discs, the mammoth set will create hours of entertainment and unnecessary back pain – it weighs 10 pounds!

A show unfamiliar to many U.S. fans, "Spaced" revolutionized British television and made household names of Simon Pegg and Nick Frost (who starred in Hot Fuzz and Shaun of the Dead). This set contains both series, along with commentaries from numerous television and film stars that love the show. Definitely a hidden treat that will draw in many new fans, as well as help older ones remember the magic.

Deployed Soldiers receive financial peace of mind



Photo by Spc. Sophia R. Lopez

Chaplain (Capt.) Mike Jones, the DSTB chaplain, informs Soldiers about the Financial Peace University course offered at Hope Chapel on Camp Victory.

By Spc. SOPHIA R. LOPEZ
MND-C



CAMP VICTORY – “I spoke to another Soldier who was kind of new in the Army, who was way overdrawn, and his bank had called. He said, ‘First sergeant, I can’t be overdrawn, I still have checks,’” said a former Army first sergeant about one Soldier’s financial situation.

Many Soldiers are uneducated when it comes to good financial principles. This is where Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University can help.

FPU is a tool to help military members strategically and effectively remove debt and save for their futures. FPU trains thousands of U.S. service members every year with its informative video-driven courses. It provides a sound financial plan during activation, deployment, temporary duty or permanent change of station.

“It is important to offer this course to service members because sound financial principles are readiness issues,” said Chaplain (Capt.) Mike Jones, the Division Special Troops Battalion chaplain for 10th Mountain Division.

The program covers areas of personal finance, such as budgeting, paying-off debt, saving for emergencies and retirement, and giving to worthy causes. It also discusses cash flow planning, real estate and school loans to name a few.

The course is 13 weeks long and free to military members. On the outside, this course would cost a person approximately \$150. The course starts Dec. 12 with two classes, one at 10:30 a.m. and one at 7 p.m. to accommodate Soldiers’ differing schedules. Each class is approximately one hour 40 minutes.

Ch. (Maj.) Paul Ramsey, the deputy division chaplain, led the course at Fort Drum, N.Y. He and Jones will lead the course on Camp Victory through DVDs and offer a forum for group discussion and activities to help Soldiers

connect and help each other keep accountable for the program.

Soldiers that may be out on missions, on leave or redeploying early while the course is in progress can talk to the chaplains to reschedule classes. Eighty course kits and seats are available, and another course is scheduled to start in February. Married couples will receive one kit.

Those who enroll in FPU receive a kit that includes the DVD sessions instructed by program creator, Dave Ramsey, his financial peace book, a workbook and financial snapshot worksheet, which monitors progress quarterly.

It also includes Dave Ramsey’s envelope system to help service members better manage their budget; two CDs, a preview CD to pass on to others and one containing financial forms that will assist their plan; business card-sized tip calculator with the seven financial steps or tips on the back.

Members will have access to an online support system in which changes in life can be accommodated to manage each person’s plan. This course offers a lifetime membership.

This course has been specially designed for service members to aid in battle readiness.

“What we’re finding as we are interacting with the military and teaching people in the military about money is that this money issue is becoming a readiness issue,” said Dave Ramsey. “We can put on the military face; we can be battle ready; but when back home, (credit) cards are racking at mom or racking at dad or where the house is in foreclosure, it’s a major problem. We’re going to come alongside and continue to come alongside the military Families as best we can in a very unique, very targeted, very specific way,” he said.

According to the Military Family Research Institute, 56 percent of enlisted service members report difficulty

“It is important to offer this course to service members because sound financial principles are readiness issues.”

– Chaplain (Capt.) Mike Jones
DSTB, 10th Mtn. Div.

with their finances, and 47 percent say they are in “over their head” with their expenses.

In Seapower, June 2006, it was reported that financial difficulties are the number one reason Sailors lose their security clearance.

Financial difficulties can revoke or deny security clearances throughout all the services.

Unfortunately, many service members don’t know how to rectify their situations or are being taken advantage of by businesses offering loans or quick fix solutions.

“This (course) is a tool that assists you to secure you financially for your future,” said Ch. Ramsey. “There are all too many predators out there waiting to take whatever money you (have).

Word Search

A K Y E K N O D P M B I S O N E F O X
 T E W I P R B E A R O T A G I L L A T
 O S W A I A L V U L T U R E N A W S U
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Aardvark
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 Barracuda
 Bear
 Bison
 Camel
 Chimpanzee
 Chinchilla
 Cobra
 Cougar
 Crow
 Donkey
 Dove
 Eagle
 Elk
 Ferret
 Fox
 Gecko
 Goat
 Gopher

Animals

Hamster
 Hawk
 Heron
 Hippopotamus
 Jackal
 Jellyfish
 Kiwi
 Leopard
 Lion
 Llama
 Macaw
 Meadowlark
 Mink
 Moose
 Nightingale
 Otter
 Panther
 Parrot
 Peacock
 Pelican
 Pig
 Porcupine
 Quail
 Raccoon
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 Reindeer
 Roadrunner
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 Wren

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	6						1		

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ACTIVITY HERE TO UNWIND?



Photo by Spc. Sophia R. Lopez
 "I like to lift weights because it's fun," said Lance Cpl. Zachary Peterson, of Rupert, Idaho, Multi-National Division – Center National Point of Entry Advisor team personal security detail gunner.



Photo by Spc. Sophia R. Lopez
 "I do aerobics," said Sgt. 1st Class Randy Reed, of Fayetteville, N.C., Multi-National Corps – Iraq frequency manager.

Do you have an idea for the Soldier Issue?

The Mountain View staff would like to showcase your photos, drawings, poems, funny stories, favorite quotes and whatever else you'd like to share with our readers.

Send all submissions and ideas to Spc. Sophia Lopez at sophia.lopez@iraq.centcom.mil

For the answer to today's puzzles, go to:



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Trivia of the Week

In what year did rookie receiver Bill Groman gain 1,473 yards?