

# BLACK JACKS ROUPE

March 2010

## DISMOUNT!!! Cavalry Returns Home

Last flight home

Thinking outside the box

SHARPENING THE TIP OF  
THE SPEAR

INSIDE.....



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**2nd Brigade Commanding Officer**

**Col. Ryan Gonsalves**

**2nd Brigade Deputy GO**

**Lt. Col. Hugh McNeely**

**2nd Brigade XO**

**Lt. Col. Lance Moore**

**2nd Brigade Command Sgt. Maj.**

**Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery Hof**

**2nd Brigade Public Affairs Officer**

**Maj. James Rawlinson**

**2nd Brigade Public Affairs NGOIC**

**Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas**

**Round Up Staff Writer**

**Spc. Justin Naylor**

**Round Up Broadcaster**

**Spc. Jessica Hayes**

Welcome back!

Last year was a busy one, and one that I'm very proud of. We made some meaningful contributions during our time in Iraq, improving the quality of life for people throughout Kirkuk, Baghdad and the Kurdish Regional Government and helping to improve the stability of the country as a strategic partner to the United States. The work this Brigade did will be remembered for a long time; by our partners, by the people of Iraq, by our peers and by those who will write the history of Iraq years from now.

Our families, who waited patiently for our return and who did an absolutely wonderful job back here, should also be proud. Your dedication and support to our Soldiers and ability to manage careers, families and homes was critical to our success. We owe you all more than we could ever hope to repay.

Now that we're all back together, take time to use some of the resources available to ease yourself back



into life at Fort Hood.

Spend some time with your loved ones. The operational tempo right now will allow Soldiers to spend time with family and ease back into getting ready for future deployments, whether it is with the Black Jack Brigade or another unit.

Prepare now, because you never really know when the Army may ask you to deploy again. We have to be as ready as we can be at all times,

and I will do everything I can to help you get there. Your selfless service is what makes this Army great, and this Army is one of the many things that make this nation great.

Since returning from Iraq, we have been steadily working getting our people and equipment ready for a potential future deployment. We are stabilized for at least 12 months, and in that time the brigade is going to train and prepare for the next deployment. Using our experience, we are sending Soldiers to weapons ranges, planning future gunneries and even looking at what we'll do at a Combat Training Center at some time in the future.

Your dedication inspires me, and hopefully it inspires each of you. Iraq is a little better place because of us. Whatever the future holds in store for us, if our past is any indication we will face it head on with the vigor and tenacity of true Cavalry Soldiers. God bless you all.



# LAST FLIGHT HOME

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Kap Kim



*With more than half of the formation wearing Santa hats, Col. Ryan Gonsalves, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, brings his last group of soldier from their deployment to Iraq, Dec. 26, back to Fort Hood, Texas*

Although the last of 1st Cavalry Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team members missed Christmas by a couple of hours, not one single Soldier or Family member seemed to care as they walked across Cooper Field, most donning Santa Claus hats, at 1:45 a.m., Dec. 26, on Fort Hood.

The 200 on the morning's flight was the last of the "Black Jack" Soldiers deployed to northern Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Amongst the passengers were the rest of the brigade leadership.

Many of the families spent a good portion of Christmas day either on the road or waiting at a local hotel room waiting on the flight to arrive. Yet, for Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Edwards, a platoon sergeant assigned to Company A, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd BCT, of Bakersfield, Calif., who showed up to welcome back her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Jerald Edwards, also a platoon sergeant, she has been waiting since, Dec. 17, when she returned from Iraq.

During the mad rush to find family members and friends, most people get lost in the scramble for a few minutes. Yet, now on their second deployment to Iraq, the Edwards knew exactly how and where to meet on the division's parade field where the welcome home ceremonies are held.

"We have a system now. Isn't it sad that we have a system where we'll meet on the field,"

Jennifer joked.

The two deployed together for the year. Jerald, of Bloomfield, Ind., serves in the 2nd BCT Headquarters.

As the two career soldiers were about to enter another deployment, they decided that they should get on the same deployment cycle. Jennifer, who was assigned to the 20th Engineer Battalion, 36th Engineer Brigade, on Fort Hood, decided to be reassigned to 2nd BCT to deploy with her husband.

The Edwards, who have two, school-aged boys, thought it would be the lesser of two evils. When the two deployed, they left Hunter, 12, and Rylee, 8, with Jennifer's parents in Bakersfield, Calif.

"Rather than having one parent gone for a year, every other year, we thought it would be better on them for both of us just to be gone for one year," Jennifer said.

She's spent the last week making sure their home in Killeen was ready for her husband, their children and their pets. "She's a part of the family care plan," she said laughing.

Being the one back early, Jennifer said it fell upon her to make sure their cars, which were both dead, could start again, make sure she had some food in the fridge, and to clean up.

"There were a bunch of huge, dead spiders ... our house was cold, dusty and there was a lot of dead spider and crickets," she said. "My focus was on cleaning, getting food and getting it livable for everyone."

The two plan on going to California to get their children and to come back to Fort Hood to get them ready for school after the winter break. The last time the two saw their children was during their Rest and Relaxation vacation where they spent it with their children in Southern California back in August

Although there were separation issues, Jennifer said her did children well, and she added that the first deployment helped them ease into the second one.

"I mean, what kid is happy with both their parents gone," she said of Hunter and Rylee. "I think they did well; they're tough cookies ... and they had their grandparents help them out."



*Sgt. 1st Class Jennifer Edwards, of Co. A, 15th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, kisses her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Jerald Edwards, of 2nd BCT Headquarters, as he and more than 100 others returned, Dec. 26, from their deployment to Iraq.*

# BLACK JACK SOLDIERS HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas



*Soldiers march in formation before a 2nd Brigade's return home run. The Soldiers in this formation recently returned from a yearlong deployment to Iraq and are beginning to settle back in.*

After nearly a year of fighting insurgents and enhancing relations between Kurds and Arabs in the contentious northern Iraq province of Kirkuk, the Soldiers of the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division returned to Fort Hood and uncased their colors at a ceremony Feb. 2, 2010.

"The uncasing ceremony is significant because it shows the official return of the unit," explained Lt. Col. Hugh McNeely, the deputy commanding officer of 2nd BCT.

A unit cases its colors before departing for an overseas deployment, and is subsequently uncased when the unit arrives at its deployment location, McNeely explained. The unit will then repeat the process of casing and uncasing their colors when preparing to, and finally returning to their home station.

The 2nd BCT's deployment is atypically noteworthy because of the nature of the deployment.

"When we left last year, we were trained for a counterinsurgency fight in Baghdad," explained Lt. Col. Christopher Norrie, the 2nd BCT Operations Officer. "After we left, our mission changed to Kirkuk, which really is the tip of the spear for Iraqi Kurd-Arab tensions."

However, explains Norrie, the brigade took the change in stride and made significant contributions in the north. "I was amazed by the flexibility and professionalism of our Soldiers and officers."

However, after the long, demanding deployment, the colors are back at Fort Hood. "This signifies to everyone that 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., has returned," said McNeely.

With the colors uncased, the brigade resumes its garrison responsibilities from the rear

detachment.

The rear detachment prepared the unit's buildings, equipment and tasks for the return of 2nd BCT, explained Lt. Col. Tim Prater, 2nd BCT's rear detachment commander. "We made sure everything was good-to-go for the returning unit to take back over."

The rear detachment was minimally staffed by brigade Soldiers, and with the brigade back, they are reintegrating into the battalions, explained Prater.

"It's nice to have our brigade all back together," said Col. Ryan Gonsalves, 2nd BCT's commanding officer.

And while the brigade is reuniting with rear detachment Soldiers; it is also reintegrating with the 1st Cav. Div. During the deployment, 2nd BCT operated under the command of Multi-National Division North, first led by the 25th Infantry Division and then the 3rd Infantry Division.

"It's great to see the 2nd Brigade Combat Team back with the 1st Cavalry Division," said Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger, the commanding general of 1st Cav. Div.

"This brigade did stuff in Iraq that no other unit has done during this Iraq campaign," said Bolger. "You guys did it well...You've continued to add to the heritage of this great brigade and the division."

According to McNeely, the brigade will continue to prepare over the next few months in "reset mode" as it gets ready to resume full combat training in preparation for future deployments, which will include additional equipment and personnel.

"We have got to get back into the swing of our daily business here," said Gonsalves.

As Soldiers leave and new Soldiers arrive, this brigade will develop its new team and bring in new commanders and command sergeant's major and continue to build and ready itself for the next deployment, explained Gonsalves.



Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger, the commanding general of the 1st Cavalry Division, speaks to Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cav. Div. during the brigade's color uncasing ceremony on Fort Hood, Feb. 2. Bolger thanked Soldiers for all they did in Iraq and welcomed them back to Fort Hood.

# NCOs and officers test their skills on the field

Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor



*Sgt. Nicholas Lombard, a Westhills, Ca., native and fire support NCO with 4th Squadron., 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, takes the football to the ground with him during a Turkey Bowl game on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 5. The Turkey bowl is an annual event that pits officers in the squadron against enlisted Soldiers.*

Turkey—the symbol of the beginning of the Winter holidays—and Football—the American harbinger of Fall sports—are traditionally brought together at military installations worldwide in unit gridiron rivalries dubbed the “Turkey Bowl.”

However, sometimes deployments can get in the way. Despite the lag in time, Soldiers from 4th Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry “Dark Horse” Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, decided to honor the tradition anyway upon returning from Iraq with a “Turkey Bowl (Belated)” February 5, 2010 at Fort Hood’s Hood Stadium.

The game pitted officers against enlisted Soldiers and was an opportunity for Soldiers from 4-9 Cav to test their mettle on the field, and even get a nice—if unconventional— mud bath.

“The game is an annual event where the Cav officers and non-commissioned officers challenge each other in a game of football,” said Lt. Col. Andy Shoffner, the commanding officer of 4-9 Cav.

Although the squadron was too busy for the game while they were serving in Kirkuk, Iraq last year, they now have a chance to catch up, according to Shoffner.

With many new Soldiers arriving to the unit, this game was also a chance for team-building.

“We use this as an exercise to welcome the new guys on-board to the ‘Dark Horse’ team,” said Shoffner.

“The new guys incorporated nicely,” he said. “It’s great, because you see all ranks and lev-

els of the chain of command out there having a great time together.”

The conditions on the ground weren't great because of the mud, but it was still an excellent game, explained Staff Sgt. Nicholas Lombard, a Westhills, Ca., native and fire support NCO with 4-9 Cav.

“This event is a good example of building a good friendship, family-type atmosphere,” said 1st Lt. Seth Luhan, an Elkheart, Kan., Platoon Leader with 4-9 Cav.

“It was a great game for the officers and NCOs to come out and play,” said Lombard.

It was easy for Lombard to enjoy the event, though, because his team won 36-0.

“The NCOs once again soundly defeated the officers,” said Shoffner. “They’ve got bragging rights for about two years running now.”

The game was also a chance to bring out families so they could see their Soldiers in action.

“It’s a good opportunity to have the families see the strong camaraderie and the bonds we formed over the last year in combat,” said Shoffner.

According to Shoffner, the squadron tries to invite families out to events whenever possible.

“It’s another way we can reintegrate anytime; anytime you get a couple together or families together it helps,” he said.

Shoffner hopes the game will continue on next year, although hopefully the field is a little less muddy next time.



A non-commissioned officer slaps the ball out of the hands of an officer during a Turkey Bowl game on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 5. The game was a chance for Soldiers and officers from 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, to test their skills on the field and build their team spirit.

# SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor



Soldiers from 2STB donned their stetsons and mounted traditional cavalry steeds during a photo shoot on Fort Hood.

As an organization, mounted cavalry dates back to the earliest days of warfare. Through its history, it has evolved to encompass new and innovative equipment and practices while holding firm to its roots. Some of the traditional roles of cavalry in support of larger formations were in reconnaissance, command and control, screening and forward security. Even though the cavalymen of today may not look or act like the Roman cavalry, its spirit continues.

Conversely, one of the newest organizations in the United States Army, the Brigade Special Troops Battalion—which came into being near the dawn of the new millennium—has meaningfully integrated into the historical ranks of the cavalry and consolidated many of its functions.

For Soldiers from the 2nd STB “Spartans”, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, this meant working side-by-side with infantrymen, artillerymen and cavalry scouts in the most contentious region of Iraq—Kirkuk province—ensuring that communications, military police operations and aerial reconnaissance supported the diverse fight throughout the 2nd BCT’s deployment in 2009.

“The 2nd STB represents MPs, chemical, signal, military intelligence, cooks, fuelers, mechanics...we have over 60 different enlisted military occupation specialties in our battalion,” said Maj. Kimberly Bennett, the 2nd STB operations officer. “Our diversity is what makes us great.”

The 2nd STB “Spartans” played a critical role in ensuring troops throughout the 2nd Brigade Combat Team’s area of operations were able to communicate.

According to Bennett, elements within 2nd STB were responsible for establishing commu-

nications to and from the brigade's headquarters, as well as to and within outlying bases.

"Without our systems in place, the brigade would not be able to talk with any systems other than FM [radio], and even that would have been limited to Forward Operating Base Warrior," said Bennett. FOB Warrior was the location for the brigade and many subordinate battalion headquarters. While the base was relatively large, it was miniscule in relation to the geographic area the brigade was responsible for engaging.

The BCT also conducted around-the-clock Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle flights in support of numerous operations across the AO, providing key intelligence to forces on the ground, explained Bennett.

Another important responsibility managed by 2nd STB Soldiers was the Brigade Detainee Holding Area Annex, where former detainees were held while they were out-processed for release back into society, said Bennett. Hundreds of detainees were processed through the facility during the brigade's deployment, many released as part of the historic transfer of responsibility of the nation's security from U.S. to Iraqi Security Forces.

Overall, the mission taken on by 2nd STB was a unique one, and "the battalion stands ready to conduct a variety of full spectrum operations in order to assist the 'Black Jack' Brigade with its mission," said Bennett.

In addition to their mission, the "Spartans" also assumed geographic

oversight responsibility for three provinces in the Kurdistan Regional Government—Irbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah—during a crucial and potentially volatile election period in the semi-autonomous area, explained Maj. Kimberly Bennett, the battalion's operations officer.

"The 2nd STB, along with elements from Multi-National Division-North, contributed to operations to facilitate the people of the KRG in holding internationally-recognized elections for the KRG," she said. "There were no major incidents during the distribution of ballots, voting and the transfer of ballots to the Parliament in Baghdad."

And now that the battalion is back in the states, it is continuing to support the cavalrymen and merge into their traditions, adding their own distinct flavor to the "cavalry legend."



*A group of Soldiers from 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, line up with horses from the Horse Cavalry Detachment, 1st Cav. Div. during a photo shoot on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 17. Although the STB is one of the newest units to join the cavalry, it is already working hard to fit in with the*



*Soldiers from the 2nd Special Troops Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and horses from the Horse Cavalry Detachment from 1st Cav. Div. line up with the help of troopers from the HCD during a photo shoot on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 17. Although troopers from the STB come from many different fields, they are incorporated into the rich traditions of the cavalrymen.*

# Second jobs for first sergeants

Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor



A significant source of stress for any organization follows a change in leadership. Getting to know the new “boss” requires time and patience, and a new leader who defines his relationship with his organization early is generally considered more effective.

However, some have the advantage of familiarity with incoming leaders. For two senior non-commissioned officers, 1st Sgt. Hector Flores, the former Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, and 1st Sgt. Michael Williams, the former Alpha Troop, 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt., they have only to exchange office keys.

These two 1st Sgts officially assumed responsibility for one another’s Troops during a ceremony on Fort Hood, Texas Feb. 12, giving them the chance to stay in the same squadron while progressing their careers at the same time.

In the Army, the opportunity to be in a key leadership job like First Sergeant is reserved for the most talented, according to Lt. Col. Andy Shoffner, the commander of 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. “This is about making sure we have the right leaders at the right place for the right unit.”

“Most of the Soldiers in the Squadron already know how I am as a leader,” said Flores. Now the Soldiers in his new unit get to see it firsthand.

It is rare to get to stay in the same squadron as a 1st Sgt, explained Flores. Although 1st Sgt’s switch around quite often, they usually switch to different units, so it is unique to get to stay here with this squadron.

“I had hoped to be able to take the HHT 1st Sgt. position, and fortunately it worked out,” said Williams. “While the decision to allow me to stay was not mine to make, I definitely wanted it to work out that way.”

“You don’t see this every day,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Agueda, the senior NCO of 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt.

“I am blessed that everything worked out like it did, and that I have the opportunity to continue to serve in this great squadron,” said Williams. “I have served in many units throughout my career, but 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. is clearly the best unit I have ever been in.”

“It’s very special,” joked Agueda. “We don’t have to be sad to see them go, because they are staying right here.”



*1st Sgt. Michael Williams, the former Alpha Troop, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, speaks with troopers after he assumed responsibility for Alpha Troop, 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 20.*



*1st Sgt. Hector Flores, the former Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, talks with his former troopers and his new troopers after assuming responsibility of Alpha Troop, 4th Sqdn., 9th Cav. Regt. after a change-of-responsibility on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 20.*

# CHANGE IN POCKET AND IN LIFESTYLE



Story by Maj. Scott Rawlinson

Military members have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure they manage their money properly, which could include everything from using credit responsibly to putting money away for retirement. To assist in financial management, DoD provides resources and information to assist.

Most in the military are relatively young. A practical question may be why it would be necessary to worry about investing at such a young age.

“Achieving your long term financial objectives is not about education, luck, work ethic or level of income. It is all about putting together a simple plan, getting started, and sticking to it. I encourage everyone to seek help and do that as soon as possible,” said Michael R. Molosso, a financial planner and retired Army officer.

According to Edward A. Zurndorfer, a certified financial planner, a 25-year-old who contributes \$2,000 a year to a retirement program, with an average rate of return of 8 percent, will have \$345,000 at age 60. At 10 percent, the amount would be \$542,000.

Therefore, by putting away less than \$167 a month, someone young could have nearly half a million dollars by age 60. As for the rate of return, now would be an ideal time to begin investing because of the poor market performance. In other words, stocks purchased now will be of greater value as the market recovers.

However, many Soldiers see the 50-percent retirement as an excuse to not think about their financial future.

While the retirement program certainly is robust, it can be supplemented. There are programs already in place to assist Soldiers financially after they get out of the military.

The Thrift Savings Plan is a Department of Defense program begun in 2001 for military members to invest a portion of their income toward retirement, similar to a 401-K.

According to the TSP web site at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov), the TSP allows any and all contributions to be tax-deferred, meaning any money contributed is deducted from adjusted gross income when filing taxes. For example, someone who earns \$50,000 and contributed \$2,000 to the TSP would pay taxes for \$48,000.

While managing income is important, another consideration is how to manage the amount of taxes paid each year. The Fort Hood Tax Center offers tax services year-round, according to Capt. Andrew Corimski, the officer in charge of the Tax Center.

“The actual Tax Center is open in its full capacity until 16 April,” said Corimski. After the Tax Center is closed, tax services are available at the Client Services Building at building 4617, 72nd and Santa Fe.

For Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans, they are exempt from paying federal taxes on pay and bonuses and get an automatic 180 day extension to file taxes for being in a combat zone plus an extra day for every day deployed during the filing season, 1 Jan to 15 April.

Additionally, according to Corimski, to encourage potential homebuyers, the US government is offering the First Time Homebuyers Credit and the Long Term Homebuyers Credit. To qualify as a first time homebuyer, someone must buy a first home as a main residence—not rental property—between 1 Jan 2009 and 1 May 2010. Those who qualify receive an \$8,000 credit. Soldiers deployed for at least three months during 2009 until 15 April 2010 get an automatic extension to purchase a home, until 1 May 2011.

For the long term homebuyer’s credit, a home owner who owned for any five consecu-

tive years during the previous eight which was sold or converted into a rental property—who then purchased a new home between November 2009 and May 2010—can qualify for a \$6,500 credit.

Corimski added that there is also a new car purchase credit. A buyer who purchases a new car between 16 Feb and 31 Dec 2009 can receive a credit for the state sales and excise taxes paid.

Using the services is as simple as scheduling an appointment and ensuring the proper paperwork is available. In general, said Corimski, any W-2, 1099, 1098 or any other tax document must be present when filing the paperwork. For the purchase of a new home, the filer must have the HUD-1; for a new car the filer must bring the sales receipt that shows taxes paid. If in doubt on whether to bring a document or not, bring it.

In addition to managing taxes, many servicemembers must also contend with debt management.

Credit cards are available and plentiful. They have allowed people to live well beyond their means, but interest adds up quickly. A credit card with a 16 percent annual percentage rate with a balance of \$5,000 would take over 26 years to pay off if only the minimum payment is made each month, which is typically about 2 percent of the balance. That same credit card with a 10 percent APR would only take 17 years to pay off.

Presumably, poor management of credit cards is so ubiquitous that last year the U.S. Congress passed the Credit Cardholders Bill of Rights, which reportedly addresses practices “including retroactive changes in interest rates, excessive fees and penalties, short payment windows, and other practices,” according to a release issued by the U.S. Congress. The new act goes into effect this month.

In fact, debt management is something more Americans are learning about every day; Soldiers are no exception. While Soldiers are deployed, they have the potential to amass a great deal of money. To help Soldiers manage this newfound wealth, the Army has embedded Personal Financial Counselors to provide information and advice on financial and consumer related concerns, according to Casey Jackson, a Personal Financial Specialist.

Jackson says the PFC assists Soldiers with understanding how to manage their spending habits, offers classes on buying privately-owned vehicles and provides information on credit monitoring.

According to Jackson, many commands had noticed their Soldiers were experiencing financial issues as a result of not changing their spending behavior following a deployment.

“Evidence shows that those who attend the financial training and follow-up with individual one-on-one counseling with one of the program’s financial advisors tend to make positive changes in behavior,” said Jackson.

Jackson recommends that Soldiers returning from a deployment not make any major purchases or financial decisions immediately. “It seems all too easy to make that impulse buy as soon as you touch down.” He also recommends Soldiers ensure that the deployment entitlements are stopped and that they track and ensure that all casual pays received have cleared and processed.

Prior to any deployment, Jackson says a common oversight among Soldiers is to ensure they have a plan to take care of all financial responsibilities, and that there is an emergency fund available for unexpected events, without significantly changing their financial lifestyle.

Most are not in the military for the money. What money Soldiers do get is their responsibility to manage responsibly. If invested and managed wisely, and with a little restraint and forethought, military salaries can provide a comfortable lifestyle now and later in life.

# FAMILY MATTERS



Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor

As some Soldiers and their families rack up second, third and even fourth deployments, the Army is continuing to adapt new ways to help them cope with the increased operational tempo and the stop-and-start transitions between life deployed and life at home.

One example of this effort to help the Soldiers and families of the 2nd “Black Jack” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has been the use of Military Family Life Counselors to help married and single Soldiers adjust to life following a long deployment. 2nd BCT Soldiers recently returned from a year-long deployment to Kirkuk, Iraq.

“A year of separation from loved ones creates challenges,” said Maj. James Lee who helped coordinate the family life counselors for the brigade. “Soldiers and families are the Army’s number-one resource, it is imperative that we assist the Soldiers and families through the reintegration process.”

Many challenges await Soldiers freshly returned from deployment.

“There are strained marriages, financial difficulties, or even just difficulty adjusting back to the mainstream after a year deployed,” he said. “A Soldier may have valued their mission in theater... to such a degree that they have difficulty letting go of that identity and returning to what they may perceive as a mundane life.”

“Maybe a Soldier or their family has a situation, and they can go to these [counselors],” said Diane Ross, the chief of the Soldier and Family Readiness Center at Fort Hood.

These are people that Soldiers and families can go to with any issue—whether it is related to deployment or just normal daily stresses—and talk about anything, she explained.

According to Ross, this program is not mandatory for all returning units, but it has increased dramatically in popularity as more units see the benefit.

The program is Department of Defense-wide, with counselors moving between bases to supplement that garrison’s family life staff.

“The DoD realized that we were in need of more behavioral health assistance, especially with all the deployments,” said Ross.

This program is distinct from previous ones in that it doesn’t just focus on the well-being of Soldiers but also encourages families to participate.

Counselors are willing to meet with family members on and off-post and are very flexible with their schedules, said Ross.

As the program continues to grow in popularity, the negative association often attached to Soldiers seeking mental health assistance is fading fast.

Soldiers see their commanders, platoon sergeants and leadership going through the same counseling, and that helps them understand that everyone needs a little help sometimes, according to Ross.

“The Army is a big family...it is refreshing to see how we are caring for one another without a stigma associated,” said Lee. “Let’s face it. We all have problems in our life, and all too often, we feel we are the only ones. That makes us afraid to talk about it. There is goodness in confession...to share and open up and care for one another.”



Decked out in a Santa hat, Capt. Scott Goodroad, of 2nd Brigade Combat Team 1st Cavalry Division, gives his wife, Lisa Goodroad, of Philadelphia, Pa., a kiss as he and approximately 200 others returned, Dec. 26, from their deployment to Iraq.

# Thinking outside the box

Story and photos by Pfc. Spec. Justin Naylor



George Prado, a Killeen, Texas, native and novice boxer, spars with Sgt. 1st Class Armando Rivera, a Brownsville, Texas, native and a fire support non-commissioned officer with 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, at the Miracle Boxing Club in Killeen Feb. 18. Rivera has helped train more than 50 boxers.

In an out-of-the-way shop behind a local mechanic's garage in Killeen, Texas, gathered inside a single, dimly-lit room, young men jab at punching bags, run in place and pummel speed bags as coaches demonstrate techniques honed by years of training.

For the last nine years, one of these coaches, Sgt. 1st Class Armando Rivera, a Brownsville, Texas, native and a fire support non-commissioned officer with 4th Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, has provided guidance to young men and women, training the next generation of boxers and mentoring those who might otherwise be vulnerable to the temptations of street life.

"One of the reasons I do this is because me and my coach love the sport," said Rivera.

"Those of us who have been boxing for a while have a lot to offer this young generation of boxers," he said. "We help them with conditioning, technique and practice".

This is an activity that can teach young people to defend themselves, as well as getting them in excellent shape, explained Rivera.

Rivera now works with a local club called the Miracle Boxing Club, under the supervision of Coach Frank Hall.

“Armando [Rivera] helps out a great deal,” said Hall, who has been boxing for nearly 40 years. “He helps me out, especially on days where we get a lot of people. He helps teach them on the bag the technical stuff.”

Rivera has already been working with Hall at this gym for several years.

“When he is here, he helps us out a lot,” said Lanardius Palmer, one of the many boxers at the club.

According to Palmer, Rivera helps young boxers practice their techniques with punching mitts, and he helps them improve their conditioning and develop sound nutritional plans.

Rivera said his time in the Army has helped him develop the physical fitness regimen he passes on to young boxers.

In addition to teaching at stateside boxing clubs, Rivera has also coached approximately 50 Soldiers over the course of three deployments.

“This is something I do because I love it,” he said. “Once you become a boxer, you want to continue the sport.”

Pending future deployments, Rivera hopes to continue coaching at the Miracle Boxing Club for as long as possible.

“This is something that I do that can help keep kids of the street and build the youth of the community,” he said. “It teaches young people discipline.”

But it’s not all as selfless as it sounds.

“It feels good for me to see my help progress young boxers,” he said. “If they win, then we accomplished what we wanted; we did our jobs.”



Sgt. 1st Class Armando Rivera, a Brownsville, Texas, native and a fire support non-commissioned officer with 4th Squadron, 9th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, talks to a young boxer at the Miracle Boxing Club in Killeen, Texas, Feb. 18. Rivera has been teaching young boxers for the last nine years, both in the U.S. and while deployed to Iraq.

# SHARPING THE TIP OF THE SPEAR



Story and photos by Spc. Justin Naylor

Leading troops, guiding training and maintaining standards are only some of the responsibilities of today's Army Non-Commissioned Officers, and as the Army has continued to grow and engage in evolving conflicts, the need for them has also grown.

For the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, the NCO ranks were ceremonially increased by 100 sergeants during an induction ceremony on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 22.

The induction ceremony is a time-honored tradition, where recently-promoted NCOs are recognized in front of their peers, subordinates and superiors.

"The Army does these to show the importance of crossing the line from an enlisted Soldier to an NCO," said Sgt. Maj. Christopher Frediani, a brigade operations Sgt. Maj.. "[This ceremony] shows these newly-promoted NCOs how important it is to join the ranks of an NCO."



Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery Hof, the brigade Command Sgt. Maj. for 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, presents the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club Medallion to Sgt. 1st Class Melinda Thai, the brigade intelligence NCO in-charge for 2nd BCT during a Sgt. Audie Murphy Club induction on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 22.

"This is a symbolic transitioning from the 'tip of the spear' follower to the 'tip of the spear' leader," said the brigade's senior NCO, Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery Hof.

During the ceremony, the deeds of these NCOs—and others like them—during a recent tour to Iraq where honored by Hof.

"I'm here to tell you we would not have been successful in combat if it were not for the focused guidance provided by our commanders, and the sergeants who seamlessly executed that guidance in an extremely complex fighting environment," said Hof. "A system of simple guidance is not going to succeed unless a sergeant is at the 'tip of the spear' implementing it on a daily basis... this is when we succeed."

For one young NCO, this induction ceremony was particularly important.

"Becoming an NCO is a big step," said Sgt. Levi Bannigan, a Cincinnati, Ohio, native and a cavalry scout with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd BCT and Sgt. Maj. Hof's driver. "This

ceremony shows my peers that I made it. It was pretty awesome to be there in front of them.”

“Working with Command Sgt. Maj. Hof was like working with a walking encyclopedia; he helped me get to the point where I am today,” said Bannigan.

In addition to the induction ceremony, a small group of NCOs were also inducted into the elite Sgt. Audie Murphy Club.

Murphy was the most decorated Soldier in the Army’s history. He served 27 months in the European Theater during World War II, and received 33 awards and citations; including the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross and multiple Silver Stars, as well as numerous foreign medals and citations. The Sgt. Audie Murphy Club was established in 1986 at Fort Hood.

To become a member of the club, Soldiers must complete a set of rigorous evaluations and be approved by their Division Command Sgt. Maj.

For Sgt. 1st Class Melinda Thai—a Houston, Texas, native and intelligence NCO in-charge for 2nd BCT—the process of becoming a member has been eight years in the works.

She attended her first board as

a corporal eight years ago, and was not selected. She then continued studying and competed in promotion boards along the way. During the unit’s most recent deployment to Iraq, she competed in the Brigade’s Sgt. Audie Murphy Club board and was accepted as a member.

“It was a good moment to be inducted into the club,” she said.

And Thai finds herself in good company.

“There are a lot of good NCOs in the Black Jack Sgt. Audie Murphy Club,” she said. “I find myself humbled at times, because I always thought I was a good NCO; however, I stand next to some of these guys and sometimes they surprise me when it comes to things I don’t know. It feels good to know that I can turn to the folks in the club if I need help and, in turn, I feel even more willing to help any of them out if it comes down to it.”

After being accepted, these Soldiers are now authorized to wear a special medallion, which was presented to them during the ceremony, around their necks while in dress uniform.

Between the NCO and Sgt. Audie Murphy Club inductions, it was a busy day for Black Jack NCOs.

“Thank you for your dedication to success, your care for each other, and, most of all, your shining example of excellence to a grateful nation,” said Hof to the NCOs.



Sgt. Levi Bannigan, a Cincinnati, Ohio, native and a cavalry scout with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd “Black Jack” Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, is inducted into the non-commissioned officer corps at an induction ceremony on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 22. Bannigan was promoted while in Iraq, like many of the 100 other NCOs inducted during this ceremony.

# STICKS & STONES

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Douglas



Capt. Cha putts one in during a golf tournament on Fort Hood, Texas.



Staff Sgt. Gordon with Bravo Company, 4-9 tees off during a golf tournament on Fort Hood, Texas.



A 4-9 Soldier gets ready for a close putt during a golf tournament on Fort Hood, Texas.



Pvt. James Sarquiz eyes his golf ball as it makes its way down-range during a golf tournament on Fort Hood, Texas.



2nd Lt. Manny Fandino gets ready to tee off during a golf tournament on Fort Hood, Texas.



**SP4 CARMEL BERNON  
HARVEY JR.**

**B Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment  
21 Jun 1967  
Posthumous Award**

Rank and organization: Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Place and date: Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam, 21 June 1967. Entered service at: Chicago, Ill. Born: 6 October 1946, Montgomery, W. Va. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. SPC4 Harvey distinguished himself as a fire team leader with Company B, during combat operations. Ordered to secure a downed helicopter, his platoon established a defensive perimeter around the aircraft, but shortly thereafter a large enemy force attacked the position from 3 sides. SPC4 Harvey and 2 members of his squad were in a position directly in the path of the enemy onslaught, and their location received the brunt of the fire from an enemy machine gun. In short order, both of his companions were wounded, but SPC4 Harvey covered this loss by increasing his deliberate rifle fire at the foe. The enemy machine gun seemed to concentrate on him and the bullets struck the ground all around his position. One round hit and armed a grenade attached to his belt. Quickly, he tried to remove the grenade but was unsuccessful. Realizing the danger to his comrades if he remained and despite the hail of enemy fire, he jumped to his feet, shouted a challenge at the enemy, and raced toward the deadly machine gun. He nearly reached the enemy position when the grenade on his belt exploded, mortally wounding SPC4 Harvey, and stunning the enemy machine gun crew. His final act caused a pause in the enemy fire, and the wounded men were moved from the danger area. SPC4 Harvey's dedication to duty, high sense of responsibility, and heroic actions inspired the others in his platoon to decisively beat back the enemy attack. His acts are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the U.S. Army.

