



Essays

875TH ENGINEER BATTALION

Smoothing the way and leaving our mark

Rapid Crater Repair essential to convoy safety

- ◆ *Operation Restore Hope kicks off*
- ◆ *1st Army commander gets tour of 875th equipment*
- ◆ *Battalion crosses 1,000th IED mark*
- ◆ *Two Purple Hearts and five new Sergeants*



“Let us try”

Essayons

Vol. 2; Num. 7, 2007

875th Engineer Battalion

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Above: Sgt. David C. Burbo expertly maneuvers a bobcat fitted with a forklift attachment during a recent Class I resupply run for the 131st Engineer Company. Burbo is from Colechester, Vt., and is an electrician and locksmith for the Burlington school system in his civilian life. He has a wife and 2 children, and has been in the Vermont Army National Guard since 1974. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)

On the cover: A special stencil is used to mark a newly patched blast crater on a roadway near Logistics Support Area Anaconda during a recent 4th Platoon, Charlie Company Rapid Crater Repair mission near Logistics Support Area Anaconda. Each concrete cap is marked and painted with a special pattern so future patrols and convoys can tell if it has been tampered with. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)

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6 Engineers smooth the way for patrols and convoys

The mission is called Rapid Crater Repair and it's a critical component to the 875th assured mobility mission in Iraq. 4th Platoon, Charlie Company shows how it's done near Balad.



9 'Operation Restore Hope' kicks off with recon visit

Soldiers of the 875th got a glimpse of the light at the end of the deployment tunnel recently when the leadership of the replacement battalion made a recon visit to Iraq.



10 Honerè gets a first hand look at 875th equipment

The U.S. Army commanding general, famous for his leadership during the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, greets 875th Soldiers and tours route clearance equipment.

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Questions, comments or submissions to the Essayons should be directed to Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney at christopher.durney@us.army.mil. All submissions will be cleared of OPSEC violations and edited to Associated Press standards. Photos and stories from home are welcome and encouraged. Please look for issues of the newsletter to be published about every three weeks.

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FROM THE TOP



Battalion Commander

Greetings, I hope this newsletter finds everyone healthy – physically, mentally, and spiritually. It is the heat of the summer and we are all doing very well to overcome its potential threat. The Soldiers have put away their sodas for bottled water and Gatorade. They are also back in the gym staying in shape so they can withstand the rigors. This should mean that will be back in the fall looking better than ever.

It has been a very busy month for the battalion. Our embedded reporter Amy Schlesing and photographer Staton Breidenthal are back in the U.S. They did a tremendous job of telling our story to the folks back in Arkansas. There were 14 front page stories in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette about the wonderful things the 875th Soldiers were doing here in Iraq. We cannot thank them enough for their professionalism and friendship. Amy also maintained a blog while she was here and you can read about her adventure at <http://www2.arkansasonline.com/blogs/notes-from-a-war/>. She is a great story teller so please take the time to read it if you have not already.

I also want to thank the Soldiers and families of the 875th from all three states who have decided to stay Army Strong. It is a tremendous testament to a Soldier's dedication and sense of duty to re-enlist during combat operations. I am extremely proud of the 83 Soldiers who have raised their right hand again during our deployment and pledged a commitment to this nation and our States. Of those Soldiers who have reenlisted, 49 have already received a \$15,000 bonus, and 34 will receive it tax-free when we return and they reach their original enlistment date. We are still working with 32 more we hope will stay strong too. I am extremely proud of all who have served and are willing to continue to serve – the nation and state still need us.

Besides celebrating Independence Day on the 4th of July, we also had the pleasure of celebrating several promotions the last month. I love getting the opportunity to welcome a new member to the Non-Commissioned Officer Corps. It is a fantastic milestone in a Soldier's career and a great event. The NCOs are the

backbone of the Army and we would not have a winning Army without them. 875th has the best the Army has ever known and we are glad to welcome Sergeants Erin Sulham, Joshua Beasley, Steve Beck, Jerry Dement, ST Jonathan Griffey, Shannon Kender, Benjamin Robinett, and Gregory Sutton to those ranks.

Thank you for all that you do, every day. God bless Indiana, Vermont, Arkansas and the friends and family of the 875th Engineer Battalion.

Essayons – Ready and Willing!

COL Patricia Anslow

Battalion celebrates CSM Ward's Birthday

Command Sgt. Maj. Billy Ward is on leave this month, but his column will be back in August.

On June 16, the battalion celebrated both the Army Corps of Engineer and CSM Ward's birthdays. Ward was surprised when Headquarters, Headquarters Company 1st Sgt. Michael Sims showed up with a birthday cake. After the obligatory song, Ward opened several gifts, including a mobile DVD player and a case of popcorn - one of the Sergeant Major's favorite foods.



131st Engineer Co.

Well, a very important holiday has passed for the United States, the 4th of July - Independence Day. The Constitution gives us the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Regardless of anyone's political view of this war on terror, we as Soldiers have sworn an oath to defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign or domestic.

Over the years many Soldiers have fought for our freedom, or for others to have a chance at freedom; this year it is our turn.

We are fighting an enemy that potentially could take our freedom, and they are surely attempting to take away the Iraqi peoples' freedom. I am proud to say that I am here with the best Soldiers that the United States has. It takes a special person, like a Soldier, to give up some freedoms to guarantee freedom for family and friends. It takes equally special people to support and live by those Soldiers. So, I hope for everyone that Independence Day takes on a whole new meaning. It has for me

Capt. Jacob Roy



HHC

For members of the 875th, the 4th of July will never be the same. We have been blessed because so many sacrificed so much for us, and we continue to be blessed by those who serve today.

It's easy to think of the Soldiers who are sacrificing and serving, but we are just as blessed by our military families. You send us letters, emails and boxes of goodies, and you support us in our mission here in Iraq. Thank you.

This month we have been extremely busy supporting surge operations while maintaining our original mission. We were thrilled to be visited by the leadership of our replacement unit. It lets us know that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

It's strange to look back and realize how far we've come since taking over this mission. We were quickly schooled and have become proficient. Soon we will

get the chance to share our knowledge with our replacements.

In some of our limited down time this month we were able to celebrate 1st Sgt. Sim's birthday and take advantage of a 4th of July cookout thrown by the 131st. The burgers are always best when cooked by someone you know. Also, Sgt. Goza took part in a special Independence Day re-enlistment ceremony at Al Faw Palace.

Capt. Joshua Simmons

Alpha Co.

This month has continued to be an exciting time for Alpha Company. Amy Schlesing and Staton Breidenthal from the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette spent several weeks with members of the company and did a great job reporting on, and capturing pictures of the life in a combat zone. They did a great job and I hope that all of you enjoyed their work as much as the Soldiers here.

Fitness continues to be one of the focuses of the company. Several members recently participated in a bench press exhibition. 1st Sgt. Walter Holloway lead with a 395 pound lift, followed by 2nd Lt. Stephen McCulley's 345 pounds and Sgt. Shannon Kender's 315 pound lift. Congratulations to everyone who participated, and who continue to focus on their fitness and well-being.

The company held a promotion ceremony recently for the newest non-commissioned officers in the unit. Those promoted from Specialist to Sergeant are Steve Beck, Jonathan Griffey, Jerry Dement, Shannon Kender and Benjamin Robinette. Congratulations to these fine gentlemen for their entrance into the Corps of Non-commissioned Officers.

Thank you for the continued support from the home front. 1st Lt. Daniel Tyrrell shared maple syrup he recently received from Vermont. The company continues to enjoy letters, cards and care packages. Thank you for your continued support.

Capt. David Moore

See Charlie Co. Page 17

SMOOTHING THE WAY

Rapid Crater Repair part of critical mission

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney

Charlie Company engineers are filling a critical role in the fight to keep roadways in and around Balad safe for logistics convoys – literally.

The mission is called Rapid Crater Repair, and it has proven to be an effective method of denying insurgents convenient IED emplacements. Engineer units use concrete and rebar to fill in bomb craters and potholes in the road surfaces along major arteries around Logistics Support Area Anaconda. Necessary speed and skills honed in civilian careers contribute to the ‘rapid’ aspect of each mission, highlighting strengths that National Guard troops bring to the mission.

On a recent pre-dawn morning here, troops from 4th Platoon, Charlie Company prepare for one such mission. Armored construction vehicles and gun trucks are gathered along with mission supplies and weapons under the watchful eye of Staff Sgt. Mark Dailey, the mission non commissioned officer in

charge.

“This is just one of the ways we help keep the roadways safe,” says Dailey. “It helps us be more productive by eliminating the insurgent’s ability to use a hole again and again. It’s good for the convoys and it’s good for the battalion.”

Dailey and platoon commander 1st Lt. Stephen Spencer, pace back and forth between groups of vehicles and Soldiers to ensure everything is ready to head outside the wire. According to Spencer, missions like this involve dismounted operations and begin well before the hot Iraqi sun can take a toll on the hard working troops.

The Jonesboro, Ark. based 875th is a keystone in the Army’s assured mobility mission in central Iraq, which is divided into three critical sub missions: route clearance, route sanitation and rapid crater repair.

Just as the first rays of dawn break over Route Heather, one of the main roads leading in and out of LSA Anaconda, the patrol pulls up to the first blast

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Members of 4th Platoon, Charlie Company, 875th Engineer Battalion begin to unload equipment to begin filling a large blast hole on Route Heather near LSA Anaconda. Rapid Crater Repair is a critical part of the battalion’s assured mobility mission in central Iraq.



Left: Spc. Brad Buehler maneuvers a nimble bobcat with a jackhammer attachment to even out the edges of a blast hole. Below left: Spc. Chris Fitzsimmons uses skills learned as a civilian equipment operator to deftly manipulate a backhoe. Below: Cement is poured into the former blast crater. Bottom: Sgt. Jason Bolin puts some muscle into smoothing a patch of concrete poured over a blast hole on Route Heather. Once the patch is dry insurgents will have one less place to hide IEDs.



hole and sets into motion. Hands skilled from working in the civilian construction industry man graders, bobcats, backhoes and a host of hand implements. Daily, who normally works as a supervisor for a Vermont construction firm, directs people and machinery with speed and precision. Nearby, Spencer uses a hand held radio to make sure that the area is properly cordoned, and that everyone is keeping an eye out for potential threats.

“Rapid crater repair, route sanitation and route clearance are equally important,” says Spencer. “All three are critical to our mission success and the fight for assured mobility. Every time we fill a series of blast holes out here, other route clearance teams and convoy drivers come up and thank us.”

Spc. Brad Buehler, who normally works as an equipment operator at Camp Atterbury, Ind., handles the nimble bobcat, which is fitted with a hydraulic jackhammer. He quickly evens out the edge of the large crater while other platoon members partially fill the crater with dirt, rocks and broken pavement.

Spc. Chris Fitzsimmons pulls up with the unique SEE truck, a small bug-like vehicle that is a combina-



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Rapid Crater Repair continued from page 7

tion of front-end loader and backhoe. The plumber and equipment operator from Columbus, Ind., deftly employs the controls to help fill the crater, and to compress the dirt and rock. When they are done, the once deep crater is only a shallow hole.

Spencer speaks quietly into his radio and a few minutes later a large cement truck backs up to the hole. Dailey uses a combination of simple words and hand gestures to communicate with the non English speaking driver. A grid of thin rebar is fitted into the expanse and a torrent of concrete is poured. Once enough aggregate has gone into the hole, the team uses a combination of hand trowels and a large pole trowel to smooth the cement.

The Soldiers make sure that the new road surface is smooth, level and dry before loading up the equipment and moving on to the next crater.



Staff Sgt. Randy White pushes a metal stencil of the familiar engineer castle with '875' cut out of the center into the semi-hard surface, and spray paints around it. He then spray paints a unique number on the patch using a series of metal stencils, and finishes his work by spraying a web-like design around the edges of the new concrete. The painting alerts any future patrols or convoys if the concrete has been tampered with.

The team is able to fill two more massive blast craters before they use up the entire truckload of concrete, about seven cubic meters.

"This is a very effective and important part of our mission," explains Dailey, "it gives our convoys and patrols a secure feeling when they see that we're mitigating and filling blast holes. We actually have other units come up and thank us, which makes us proud to do the work."



Top left: Sgt. Jason Bolin and Staff Sgt. Randy White use a little old-fashioned elbow grease to smooth out and level the edges of freshly poured concrete. Once the patch is dry, insurgents will have one less place to easily place IEDs. **Left:** Staff Sgt. Randy White of 4th Platoon, Charlie Company, 875th Engineer Battalion, puts the finishing touches on a fresh patch of concrete. **Above:** Each concrete cap is painted with the stencil, numbered and finished off with a web design along the edges to keep insurgents from tampering with the concrete. Seven cubic feet of concrete was used to fill three massive craters on Route Heather, outside Logistics Support Area Anaconda, near Balad.

'Operation Restore Hope' kicks off with 1203rd Engineer Battalion leadership visit

'Operation Restore Hope,' as it is being called around the battalion headquarters, kicked off June 20th at Camp Striker.

Light was finally showing at the end of the deployment tunnel for the 875th as leaders from the 1203rd Engineer Battalion of the Alabama National Guard arrived from their mobilization station at Fort McCoy, Wis. The 1203rd is scheduled to take over the 875th's critical assured mobility mission sometime in September.

Company commanders, section heads, and Lt. Col. Tommy Vickers and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Baer met with their counterparts over 10 days to get a first hand look at what they will be doing when they deploy to Iraq.

The 875th mobilized in June 2006 and deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom in September 2006. To date the 500-man battalion has found and cleared over 1,000 improvised explosive devices along a major logistics and transportation artery in central Iraq.

*Right: Lt. Col. Tommy Vickers and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Baer of the 1203rd Engineer Battalion are briefed by Col. Patricia Anslow and the 875th staff.
Below: Company commanders and section heads of the 1203rd during their recon briefing at Camp Striker.*



General famous for Hurricane Katrina work meets with 875th Soldiers, sees equipment

Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honorè, U.S. First Army commanding general, visited with members of the Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion July 29, and got a close up look at equipment used to keep Iraqi highways safe.

Honorè is best known for commanding Joint Task Force Katrina, and leading the Department of Defense response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

After meeting with the command group of the 411th Engineer Brigade, to which the 875th is attached, Honorè and First Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald T. Riling were given a tour of route clearance

vehicles from the 875th's Charlie Company.

Sgt. 1st Class Johnny McCarroll, Spc. Johnny Cartwright, Spc. Jeremy Householder, Sgt. Michael Sanders and Spc. Jeremy Jaques showed off an RG-31 gun truck, a Huskey and a massive Buffalo. Each Soldier received a First Army coin from Lt. Gen. Honorè as he conveyed his pride in each man.

The 875th Engineer Battalion is over 10 months into a yearlong deployment in support of operation Iraqi Freedom. Many members of the 875th deployed to Mississippi and Louisiana as part of the National Guard response to the devastation wrought by the hurricanes.





*Page 10: Lt. Gen. Russel Honore greets Spc. Jeremy Householder along with other members of the 875th's Charlie Company. **Top:** Lt. Gen. Honore talks with Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th battalion commander, after meeting with the staff and leadership of the 411th Engineer Brigade. **Left:** Lt. Gen. Honore inspects a Charlie Company Husky. The U.S. First Army commanding general also got a first hand look at an RG-31 gun truck and one of the battalion's massive Buffalo route clearance vehicles. **Above:** A Husky sports a familiar Arkansas symbol.*

1,000!

131st Engineer Company Soldier makes historic find - battalion passes 1,000 mark



Story on page 13

Sgt. Joshua, "Eagle-Eye," Beasley is congratulated by Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th Engineer Battalion commander, for making the battalion's 1,000th IED find and clear. Beasley is a member of the 131st Engineer Company's 2nd Platoon, and was in command of a Buffalo during a route clearance patrol near Baghdad, Iraq Friday, July 13 when he spotted the roadside bomb. (U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney.)



***Left:** Staff Sgt. Jason Hood is congratulated by Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th Engineer Battalion commander, for his role in helping make the battalion's 1,000th IED find and clear. Hood was patrol leader for the July 13 mission. **Bottom left:** Col. Anslow congratulates the 2nd Platoon, 131st Engineer Company leadership of Sgt. 1st Class Joe D. Jordan and 1st Lt. Jeremy L. Howard. **Bottom right:** Sgt. Beasley and Col. Anslow with the 1,000th IED find and clear tally sheet. Beasley sighted the potentially deadly roadside bomb during a night mission near Baghdad, Iraq, Friday, July 13.*



The Arkansas Army National Guard's 875th Engineer Battalion has found and cleared over 1,000 improvised explosive devices since deploying to Iraq last September, saving countless civilian and military lives.

Friday, July 13 proved to be a lucky day for Sgt. Joshua R. Beasley and 2nd Platoon, 131st Engineer Company. The eagle-eyed Soldier spied an IED along a portion of a major military supply route and civilian commerce artery in central Iraq. The 25 year old native of Cardwell, Mo., was serving as truck commander of an armored Buffalo when he spotted the potentially deadly bomb.

The 875th deployed to Iraq in late September 2006, and is tasked with a critical assured mobility mission that includes route clearance, route sanitation and rapid crater repair. The 500-man battalion includes troops from Arkansas, Indiana and Vermont National Guard units. The battalion's Alpha Company, 2nd Platoon, made the 500th find and clear in March of this year.

"We take great pride in being the company to find and clear the 1,000th IED," said Capt. Jacob Roy,

131st company commander, "we take our mission very seriously and head out every day to do the best job possible. I couldn't be prouder of 2nd Platoon and our guys."

Once Beasley identified the IED, the patrol moved to a safe distance and called in an explosive ordnance detachment to render the bomb harmless. The patrol then continued on with the late night mission that lasted over eight hours. The 131st operates out of Camp Striker near Baghdad. In the vehicle with Beasley was Staff Sgt. Jason Hood, the patrol leader, Spc. Stephen Gillespie, the driver, and Spc. Samantha Gibbs, the patrol medic.

"This is a real milestone for the 875th and for our assured mobility mission," said Col. Patricia Anslow, battalion commander. "Sgt. Beasley's eagle eyes saved lives; I'm extremely proud of him and all of the incredible Soldiers of the 875th. These men and women have done an outstanding job and are making a difference every day."

Anslow presented Beasley with the 1,000th find and clear tally sheet that hung in the battalion tactical operations center, and a battalion coin.

More new troops added to 875th numbers, replacements receive their combat patches



Top: Pvt. Paul Caldwell receives his 411th Engineer Brigade combat patch from Col. Patricia Anslow, 875th Engineer Battalion commander after she welcomed nine new Soldiers to the unit. Above: Spc. Tommy Fitzgerald has his new combat patch 'seated' by the battalion commander.

The 875th Engineer Battalion welcomed another round of new troops June 19 at Camp Striker, Iraq.

Nine Arkansas Army National Guard Soldiers were in-processed, briefed and given their assignments after arriving in Iraq from Kuwait.

The last order of business was a welcome briefing from Col. Patricia Anslow, the 875th battalion commander, followed by a combat patching ceremony in the Morale, Welfare and Recreation room at Camp Striker. Each Soldier received a 411th Engineer Brigade patch for their right shoulder - officially known as the right shoulder sleeve insignia.

Spc. Tommy Fitzgerald, Spc. Marcus Keller, Pvt. 1st Class Bryan Hulett, Spc. Randal Coggins, Pvt. 2nd Class Gregory Rogers, Staff Sgt. Kevin Massey, Pvt. Paul Caldwell, Pvt. 1st Class Brandon Mallard and Sgt. Robert Todd are all new members of the 875th family.



Battalion carpenters build new welding area at Anaconda, old structure lost to dust storm

A strong dust storm in early June managed to remove or damage several light structures on Logistics Support Area Anaconda. The Charlie Company welder's tent next to the battalion's maintenance bays was one of the storm's victims.

According to Spc. Curtis Wilson, who has been a welder for over 29 years in Bogalusa, La., and owns his own welding business, the powerful winds picked up the large tent and sent it crashing into the adjacent maintenance building. "Pieces were all over the place, some on the roof and some across the street," said Wilson.

When it was decided that a stronger, more permanent structure was needed, the battalion carpentry team of Sgt. 1st Class Joe Hyde, Spc. James Carpenter and Spc. Lannie Collins were called in to do the job.

The trio flew from Camp Striker to Anaconda and took about a week to build the tall wood and metal welding bay. "It was designed to be big enough to fit any of our larger vehicles," said Wilson. "It's big enough and stout enough to do what I need it to do."

According to Hyde, the structure is often described as, or called, a pole barn. Round or square poles are set in deep holes and held in place by concrete. The roof and walls are built on and around six strong poles. A metal corrugated tin roof reflects the hot sun away from the work area. The battalion carpentry team is well known in both locations for their excellent work.



Top: The damaged welder's tent and the new pole barn. **Middle:** Spc. James Carpenter works on the tin roof. **Above:** Spc. Lannie Collins puts some finishing touches on the new structure.



From the Chaplain

By Capt. (Chaplain) Mark Golaway

One of the responsibilities I have as Battalion Chaplain is to provide information to help your soldiers cope and adjust. These briefings take place monthly and focus on a variety of topics. One such recent briefing looked into the future at the day when we redeploy and are rejoined with our loved ones. We are still a ways out, but some preparation thinking is required to get us ready and to make sure our expectations are accurate and realistic. I asked the soldiers five questions, and with your permission, I would like to take you down the same road of preparation by asking them of you as well.

First, what do you think has changed about you? Assessing how you have grown and matured during this past year is important to prepare you to be seen through your loved one's eyes. Please don't automatically run to the negative when you consider change. Many changes you and the family have gone through are positive. You may find yourself far stronger and self-reliant than you once were.

Second, what do you think has changed about your soldier in the past year? Notice I asked you what you think has changed since you haven't spent much time together. However, if you take time to think about the mission your loved one has been assigned this year, you may draw some conclusions about how they might have grown.

These questions are intended to help you see that the "home" that existed when we deployed no longer exists, and never will again. This has nothing to do with the deployment, as the same would be true if we had been home all year. In a year's time, every member of a family grows and matures, so any family in any situation changes over time. The home you had two years ago was not the home you had when we deployed, and the home a year from now will be different from the home when we return. Again, the focus is to form realistic expectations and not to mentally create something that isn't realistic, plausible, or attainable.

Third, which of the changes will you want to keep,

and which ones will you want to change into something else? Since all of us have grown while we were apart, it will be necessary to re-evaluate those changes in light of how we would like the family to be when it is reunited. Some of your soldiers are in better shape than they have been in years and may want to keep the habits that helped them get that way. You may have taken some of the responsibilities at home and realized you like them and aren't in any hurry to give them up. It is important to isolate what you like and what you don't like regarding the changes of this year, and to spend the time talking through as a family where you will change together in the days to come.

Fourth, what is a realistic time frame for effecting the changes you have decided to shift? It is unrealistic to assume that things will automatically change the moment we walk through the door. Some of the things you may be ready to hand off, we may not be ready to pick up immediately. Some of the things we might plan to take charge of, you may not be willing to give up. How soon should each change be made? Will you change these things in a week, a month, six months? What expectation for change will be healthy to everyone in the house? Remember, there is no "right" answer, and each family will solve these difficulties differently to find peace and harmony in the home.

Finally, there have been a lot of experiences we have had apart from one another. Some we may choose to share in graphic detail, some we may never mention. The same is true for you. In order to encourage each other throughout the year, many families have only shared the "sanitized" version of what has really happened. When you come back together, there will be questions you will have of each other. Begin to think through now what you want to answer. If one person doesn't choose to fill in all the blanks, it is because they feel it best, and have given thought to it. Soldiers fight to protect their families from harm, so they may not want to bring those harmful memories home with them to share at the end of the battle. Take time to catch up, but spend the majority of your time looking to the future together.

As I mentioned before, we are still a couple of months from this becoming a reality. Let this note be a seed in the back of your mind. Don't spend a lot of time on it now. Let it germinate so that it actually grows into a thought by Fall. Just remember that the more realistic your expectations of the reunion, the less strife and conflict will result. Let us work together to be successful in reuniting families in love and consideration.

Blessings!

Sulham promoted

Erin J. Sulham joined the ranks of the noncommissioned officer corps when she was promoted from Specialist to Sergeant June 1.

Sulham lives in Newport, Vt., and is a six year veteran of the Vermont Army National Guard. She works in the 875th Engineer Battalion's Headquarters, Headquarters Company maintenance section at Camp Striker Iraq.

Below: Capt. Joshua Simmons, HHC commander congratulates Sgt. Sulham at her promotion ceremony. (Photo provided by HHC.)



Clark re-enlists for six

Spc. Kenneth W. Clark signed up for six more years in the Arkansas Army National Guard June 14.

Clark, 25, lives in Little Rock, Ark., and is a signal systems support specialist in the communications section of the 875th Engineer Battalion's Headquarters, Headquarters Company. Clark's oath of enlistment was administered by Capt. Joshua Simmons, HHC commander, at the battalion headquarters building on Camp Striker, Iraq.

Above: Spc. Kenneth W. Clark takes the oath of enlistment at Camp Striker, Iraq. Clark is deployed with the 875th Engineer Battalion.

Charlie Co.

I hope everyone is doing fine on the home front. Everything here is picking up, or should I say "packing" up? Some may say that we are short timers, but it's not time to pack up the war quite yet. That will happen when we get state side. For now we are working twice as hard and wearing out our knees in prayer. This is our most critical time, both here and at home. Your support is important to us and I ask that you keep the rumors down and the prayers up.

The guys continue to work hard despite the hot weather, which is a concern. It's hard to believe that we're looking forward to 95 degree days!

From what I hear, it is all of the small things that your loved ones miss the most. All of the little "take for granted items," such as fresh bread, real milk, mowing the yard and even a nagging or two have been missed.

I thank you all at home for picking up the torch

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and carrying on with your home lives without us. This year has been hard for all of us, but I think you've had it hardest of all. You have picked up the extra burden, extra worries and responsibilities, and have put up with so much more than we may ever know of. I thank each of you for that.

We have all grown, both here and at home (including some of our kids). In different ways, life has changed us all. As we finish our mission I encourage all of us to look back and remember the good times, and the incredible contribution we have all made for our country. Mostly I ask that we all embrace the opportunity and the challenge of reuniting with each other when we get back home. It will be important to take some time to get to know each other once again, and to bond with a newness of love for one another.

Capt. Timothy P. Norman

Two receive Purple Heart, five promoted

Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Greg Murray, 411th Engineer Brigade

White and Hancock receive Purple Hearts

Spc. Jeremy White and Sgt. Brandon Hancock of A Company, 875th Engineer Battalion, were each awarded a Purple Heart at a ceremony June 16 at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq.

White, a resident of Stilwell, Okla., and Hancock, a resident of Jonesboro, Ark., were injured in separate actions while on route clearance patrols near Balad. Both men were treated and returned to duty.

White is a 1999 graduate of Stilwell High School. Hancock is a 1992 graduate of Valley View High School, and has a wife and son.



Col. David Weeks, deputy commander of the 411th Engineer Brigade congratulates Spc. Jeremy White and Sgt. Brandon Hancock after awarding them Purple Hearts.

Five make Sergeant

Five Alpha Company, 875th Engineer Battalion, Soldiers were promoted at a ceremony held June 16 at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq.

Steve Beck, Jerry Dement, Jonathan Griffey, Shannon Kender and Ben Robinett, all of Jonesboro, Ark., were each advanced to the rank of Sergeant. The 875th is nearly 10 months into a yearlong deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and is tasked with a critical assured mobility mission.



Above: 1st Sgt. Walter Holloway, Alpha Company 1st Sergeant congratulates Jerry Dement after pinning him as a new Sergeant in the Arkansas Army National Guard. Right top: Sgt. Jonathan Griffey has his new rank "seated." Right middle: Steve Beck receives his new rank. Right bottom: Holloway pins Sergeant stripes on Shannon Kender.



JULY BIRTHDAYS

Kyle Beasley, SPC	01	C Co.	Brian Presson, SGT	19	C Co.
Leslie Benoit, MSG	02	HHC	Adam Edmonds, SSG	20	A Co.
Patrick Hart, SGT	02	A Co.	Teri Scroggins, CPT	20	HHC
Jimmie McClain, SPC	02	131st	Robert Ashmore, PFC	21	131st
James Stacy, SGT	03	C Co.	Mark Glasgow, SPC	21	A Co.
Robert Anderson, SPC	05	131st	Gregory Beeler, SPC	22	A Co.
James Smallwood, SPC	05	A Co.	Winstan Decker, SGT	22	A Co.
Jeffrey Linker, SPC	07	A Co.	Brian Farris, SPC	22	C Co.
Brad Holcomb, SSG	08	131st	Timothy Honea, SGT	22	HHC
James Holm, SSG	08	131st	Mark Dailey, SSG	23	C Co.
Brian Johnson, SPC	09	A Co.	Ronald Griffin, SGT	23	C Co.
Jeremy White, SPC	09	A Co.	Brandon Hancock, SGT	23	A Co.
Scottie Cathey, SPC	10	C Co.	Bryan Hulett, PFC	23	A Co.
Stephen Thomas, SPC	10	131st	Jason Hill, SGT	24	131st
Michael Tollette, SPC	10	HHC	Joseph Livesay, SGT	24	HHC
Shane Basrow, SGT	11	A Co.	Deangelo Scales, SPC	24	HHC
Daniel Wilkerson, SPC	11	131st	Brian Odom, SPC	25	C Co.
Tyler Keller, SPC	12	C Co.	Leonard Sprouse, SPC	25	C Co.
David Quintin, SGT	13	HHC	Shawn Winspear, SSG	27	131st
Benny Golden, SGT	14	131st	Robert Causey, SPC	28	131st
Christopher Phillips, SGT	14	131st	Kevin Curtis, PFC	28	C Co.
Christopher Clements, SPC	15	C Co.	Gary Ellison, SPC	29	A Co.
Michael Hopkins	16	C Co.	Joseph Middleton, SGT	29	HHC
Nathan Lewis, SPC	17	HHC	Phillip Hodges, SPC	30	C Co.
Robert Mills, SGT	17	C Co.	Glen Lester, SSG	30	HHC
Henry Blackman, SSG	18	131st	Joseph Bateman, SPC	31	C Co.
Michael Henderson, MAJ	18	HHC	Shea McClure, SSG	31	131st

*An Iraqi dawn, photographed outside of Logistics Support Area Anaconda, near Balad.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Chris A. Durney*

SGT ShannonKender

ARMY STRONG

Photo feature by Sgt. 1st Class Greg Murray,
411th Engineer Brigade



*Soldiers from Alpha Company are staying Army Strong while on deployment in Iraq. Sgt. 1st Class Greg Murray of the 411th Engineer Brigade Public Affairs Office recently caught some of the guys, and one company commander, working out at the company headquarters on Logistics Support Area Anaconda. **Top left:** Sgt. Shannon Kender. **Top middle:** Capt. David Moore enjoys some ice cream in front of the guys. **Top right:** Pvt. 1st Class Bryan Hulett. **Middle left:** Staff Sgt. David Turpin. **Middle right:** Spc. Justin Kirk and Sgt. Alen Massey. **Left:** 1st Sgt. Walter Holloway.*