

# Sandsporter

## 143<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Command

December 21, 2003

### Transporter helps to reopen school

From Camp Arifjan Public Affairs

The good feeling may not last forever once school-aged children near Tallil Air Base in southern Iraq figure out what U.S. soldiers have done for them, but it was all smiles recently as a group of more than two dozen children joined soldiers and community leaders as they opened the renovated Zahour Elementary School.

Maj. Bobby Hart, public affairs officer for the 143rd Transportation Command and a teacher at West Nassau High School in Callahan, Fla., was one of the soldiers helping to reopen the new school.

"This is really one of the highlights of my deployment over here," said Hart, who has been in deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since March. "No matter where I go with the military, I always try to visit schools. This was special because the school had been shut down and we were able to reopen it."

Hart was with soldiers from the Army Reserve's 486th Civil Affairs Bn. and 171st Area Support Group who teamed up to rebuild the

school that had fallen into disrepair near the city of An Nasiriyah-site of some of Operation Iraqi Freedom's most fierce fighting and where 17 Italian peacekeepers were killed recently.

Samira Raysan Atya, headmaster for the school, praised the efforts of the Coalition troops and said the reopening of the school will provide area children a chance to learn the skills necessary to succeed in life.

"We are very happy to have a new school," Atya said through an interpreter. "Our children need to go to school."

The children seemed to agree with her as they lined the walk leading to the school and applauded as soldiers and leaders from the surrounding community came in for the ribbon cutting ceremony.

The school has five classrooms, restroom facilities and an office area. Atya said she hoped as many as 60 children would eventually attend and based on what happened at the reopening, her wish will most likely be fulfilled.

When the ceremony began, 12

children greeted the soldiers. By the time the speeches ended the number of kids had swollen to nearly 30 as more arrived from the nearby homes and sat in desks in the classrooms.

Hart, a former board member on the Baker County School Board, said one of the surreal things about the school opening was the prevalence of weapons in and around the rebuilt facility.

"We are always so concerned about weapons in our schools, but here we were all armed, and had 50-caliber machine guns providing force protection," Hart said. "It was sort of reassuring because most of the people in the community were carrying AK-47s."

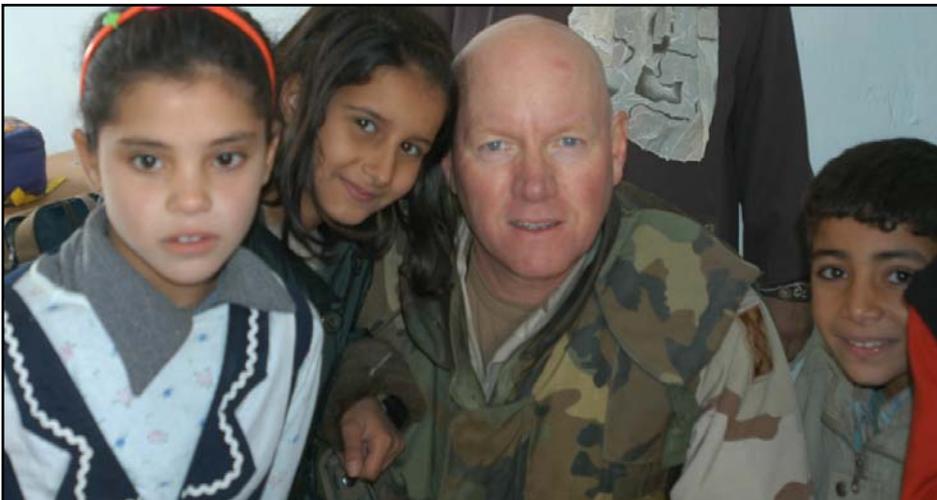
Following the school ceremony, guests moved across the road to a fest tent set up by Sheik Ali, a local tribal leader, who treated the attendees to a traditional Arab lunch to thank the soldiers for their efforts.

Hart, a geometry teacher and coach, had the opportunity to teach a group of children in a math class.

"It was great to see how excited the kids were about learning," Hart said. "It did make me realize how much I miss my own kids and teaching. I do wish I could bring back some of these kids' enthusiasm though."

Hart said he first had to go through some training before stepping into the small, freshly painted classroom.

"I had to ask the teacher how to say, 'Be nice' in Arabic," Hart said. "It was really a thrill. As an educator, I firmly believe the answer to most of our problems in the United States lies in a sound education and here we were able to give some kids half a world away a good start."



Hart poses with Iraqi children at the school reopening ceremony held near An Nasiriyah (Photo by Sgt. Maj. Larry Stevens)


**Spotlight**

A holiday message from the CG

*As the New Year approaches, I would like to wish you and your family best wishes for this Holiday Season. To all of us living in Kuwait, we understand that Christmas and Hanukkah are something Christians and Jews celebrate during this time of the year and that Muslims also celebrate a gift-giving time called Eid at the end of Ramadan. Regardless of your religion, this is a very special time for us all. This is also a very special Holiday Season for us this year because we are so far from the friends and family with whom we would normally share our celebrations. Because we are away from family, I encourage you to give your fellow soldiers the best wishes of the season and celebrate this special holiday season with them. Although we all miss our families and friends back home, let's help each other make the most of the Holidays. My wife, Susan, and I want to wish you and your family the best of Holidays.*



**Brig. Gen. Jim Whitehead**

## Soldier Talk

*If you could give your spouse anything for Christmas, what would it be?*



**Probably comfort...peace of mind with this whole deployment.**

**Capt. Allen**  
1083rd Trans. Co.



**My return...I would wrap myself up under the tree.**

**Capt. Frank Copeland**  
475th Trans. Det.



**Christmas with our whole family together, including my new son.**

**2nd Lt. Lee Herriage**  
1083rd Trans. Co.



**My being home would be more important to her than any gift.**

**Spc. Ivory Hart**  
419th Trans. Bn.



**That's not a problem for me...my wife is here with me.**

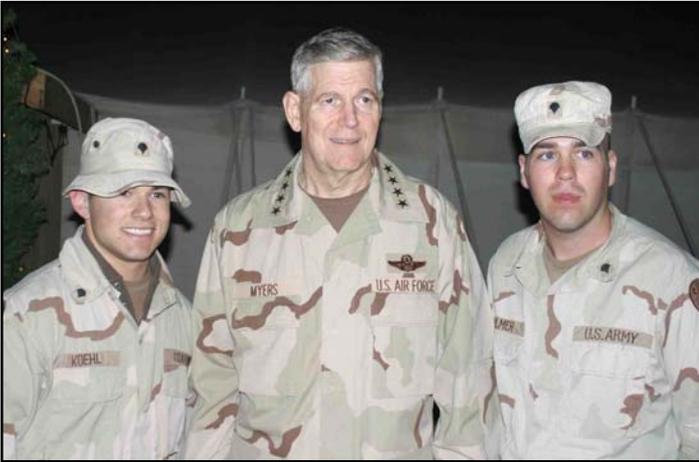
**Sgt. First Class Ricky Bicknell**  
1175th Trans. Co.



**Just for me to be home with him for Christmas.**

**Spc. Jennie Hancock**  
419th Trans. Bn.

## News Briefs



**The Stars were out in Arifjan** on Tuesday as Air Force Gen. Richard Meyers, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented a USO show featuring comedian/actor Robin Williams, WWE wrestler Kurt Angle and NASCAR Driver Mike Wallace. The "Chair", pictured here with soldiers attending the show also paid visits to troops in Baghdad and Camp Doha.

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme)

## BOG'ers must renew ID, DEERS

By Sgt. Maj. Ron Castine

If you happen to be one of the soldiers or units that's designated to remain in theater for 365 days, stop your moaning for a minute. There are a couple of issues that you will need to address.

Those affected by the mandated personnel extensions for mobilization, infamously known as "Boots On the Ground" (BOG), are required to have their mobilization orders amended. Next, the in-theater Commander must ensure that each soldier has an Armed Forces Identification (AFID) or Common Access Card (CAC) that reflects the new extension dates. The nearest personnel service unit will issue the new cards, once contacted by the Commander. When this is completed, the Human Resources Command (HRC)-St. Louis will input the soldiers' extension dates to Finance and any changes in their Defense Enrollment and Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). For National Guard soldiers, the State Area Reserve Commands (STARC) are responsible for DEERS.

After the soldier gets "squared away", his eligible family members can obtain their AFID or CAC cards. They may go to the nearest reserve unit with a Realtime Automated Personnel Identification System (RAPIDS) or go to the website ([www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl)) to find the closest one. If that fails, the family members may contact the HRC's Reserve Component Personnel Services Support Division for Family Assistance at commercial (703) 325-0083 or toll free 1-800-833-6622 during the hours of 0800- 2000 hours EST.

## Movement control MAJ wins poetry contest

By Sgt. Maj. Ron Castine

Espousing moving words just as he moves soldiers and their equipment, Maj. Theodore Lockwood II, 450th Movement Control Battalion, won the Christmas poetry contest on 2 December 2003. The major's poem, "The Watch", was the unanimous selection among a panel of judges who reviewed numerous entries.

Sponsored by Kellogg Brown & Root's MWR Branch, Lockwood will have his winning piece published in the "Stars and Stripes" and "Desert Voice" newspapers.

The contest began 1 November 2003 and was open to all military personnel and holders of military identification cards. Poems were limited to no more than 800 words and the deadline for submission was 30 November 2003.

### The Watch

**No Christmas tree adorns my tent.  
No Advent candles burn.**

**I stand my watch beneath the stars,  
From just inside the berm.**

**No Christmas lights flash tonight.  
No snow will coat the sand.**

**No carols sung or church's bells,  
Will echo in this land.**

**I pray my kids are tucked in bed,  
At Home all safe and warm,  
And hope they know why I can't come,  
With presents in the morn.**

**For here I stay upon my watch.  
My buddies count on me.  
But I am willing to pay this price,  
'Cause Freedom isn't free.**

Theodore E. Lockwood, II  
Major  
450th Movement Control Bn



Country singer Mark Wills "confronts" WWE wrestler Bradshaw about a remark



Singers with the "Pershing's Own" band open the show at Arifjan

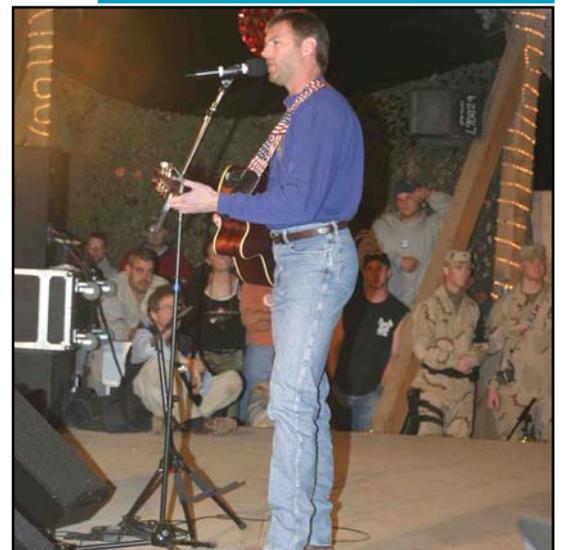


Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack L. Tilley takes "the point" on the USO's "Hope and Freedom" tour leading the way for a host of entertainers visiting a number of military facilities throughout Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

(Photos by SSG Nate Orme)



Female vocal group, No Illusion, pose for the camera and prepare to sign autographs for fans after their performance at Camp Arifjan



Darryl Worley belts out his country hit "Have You Forgotten?" dedicated to deployed military forces



TV star Karri Turner interviews "Sadaam", as portrayed by SNL comedian and author Al Franken, about his recent capture and plans for the future



Surprise! NFL Washington Redskins cheerleaders

## The Sandsporter

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