

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association



June, 2007



Cover Page

FROM THE TC HATCH

Jimmy Segars, President

I'm not sure I have the words to express how I felt at this last reunion. All our reunions have been great, but there was something about this one that set it apart. I think it was that we all bonded totally not only with each other but with the current troops as well. "The Turning Blue ceremony did it for me," said my wife. "I feel the same way," I said.

There we were on the lawn of the 1/50th Headquarters—one moment paying tribute in a solemn ceremony to our fallen comrades and the next acting as proud surrogate parents placing on the uniforms of those young troops their blue cords. At that moment, they became our kids. They were no longer troops we admired and prayed for but troops that we also had a personal, parental interest in. We walked away knowing that we would never be the same, and we truly felt a part of what happens at Ft. Benning. Ft. Benning also represents every soldier that shoulders the responsibility of protecting us all. Thank you, brave men and women. We love you all.

And to all of you who train those soldiers, we in the Association salute you. You took time out of your busy schedule to make us feel as if we really belonged there. You had organization down to a science, courtesy mastered up front and forward, and friendship as a wonderful by-product of the closeness that we feel to all of you. I cannot say enough about the effort that you put into making our reunion a time in our lives that is a cut-above most experiences. I guess the best description of your kindness and professionalism is summed up in the words "true Americans." We all owe you a debt of gratitude that we can never repay. We love you.

And to our veteran members, "You are family." Every time we get together, it gets even better than before. It doesn't seem possible, but that is exactly what happens. As we sit around and share combat incidents and humorous side stories, we add another layer to that bond that we call a Band of Brothers. Even before the last activity closes, we are all already looking forward to the next time that we meet. And every activity is filled with fun and meaning. The times that we share are healing. And our wives mean a great deal to us, especially so in this setting as they understand what we went through and how we feel. They have mirrored our feelings and taken on the military persona as well. It felt good as we all settled into a comfortable atmosphere in which we knew for certain that we all were the same—at least for one week—and I think forever.

All the activities were outstanding from the hospitality registration to each function on post, to the banquet, and to the last good-bye. Thank you, Lt. Col. Humphreys and your staff, John Topper, Jim Sheppard, Randy Smith, and all the officers and others who did so much to make this reunion the success that it was. If you did not get to attend this past reunion, be sure to attend the next one that will again be at our home base, Ft. Benning. It appears likely also that we will have get-togethers in the in-between years from time to time. Check the newsletter for mention of those. In the meantime, it is a pleasure to serve you as your new president. Please feel free to contact me at any time.



During the 2007 Reunion at Ft. Benning, GA, the Battalion dedicated its new "Regimental Room". Pictured are Jim Sheppard (left) and Paul G. Humphreys, the current Battalion Commander. The Association proudly donated several items including this large photo of the 50th Infantry Regiment shortly after its' formation in 1917 in Syracuse, New York. Association members were invited to participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony.

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John Topper, Editor
Billie McGregor, Editorial Assistant

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Thurman Pike's Promotion**Dick Guthrie**

It must have been in July of 1967 when Dick Guthrie was put in command of B Company at Fort Hood. He was moved to the S-3 Air position in early January of 1968. The following story of Thurman Pike's promotion to 1/LT is taken from the memoirs titled "Gone to Soldiers, Every One" that Dick has been writing for several years.

Several weeks later I took a landline call from Ron Dennis. I assumed he was calling from An Khe where B Company minus weapons platoon was securing highway bridges along Route QL 19. It was after 2200 and the call was so static-plagued that it must have been routed through too many switchboards and microwave transmitters.

"Hey, Dick, you know Thurman Pike ... Sssshhhhh... promoted ... Sssshhhhh... 28 April."

"Ron, that's *tomorrow!* I'd forgotten just when he was due. I think his platoon is on *stand-down* at LZ ENGLISH. They airmobiled out that 173d Company he was OPCON to. Want me to try and get him back your way so you can do the honors?"

"Nah, Dick, I already tried. We can't make that work. ... Sssshhhhh... think you could get up to ENGLISH to do the promoting? Sssshhhhh... Pike would love that. ... Sssshhhhh... checked with the Silver Fox; he's OK with ... Sssshhhhh..."

"Ron, I'd be *honored* to do *those* honors, man. Let me run it by Major Hattersly. Tell you what: if you *don't* hear from me, assume I'm going to make it happen!"

Understanding my fierce loyalties to B Company, the S-3 willingly loaned me his jeep and driver, Spec/4 Helms to make the trip the following afternoon. We bounced on to Route #1 and headed north around 1500. I'd prepared myself for the trip: in my pocket were Thurman's promotion orders and a pair of shiny silver First Lieutenant's bars. The back of the jeep was stacked high with essential provisions. I'd wheedled two cases of beer from the Battalion Sergeant Major, and Bravo's mess sergeant was happy to pony up a case of steaks for one of his company's own. I packed a few of the beers against the cardboard box with the frozen beef, to cool them. Finally, I procured a bag of charcoal from the EM club. I also brought my guitar and sleeping gear.

Three quarters of an hour after we pulled out of UPLIFT, the jeep crossed the Bong Son Bridge and I had the driver turn right and head to the open-air market. We stopped long enough for me to buy two dozen rock lobster tails and a block of ice big enough to keep them and the rest of the beer cold.

It wasn't hard to find Pike's platoon once we got to ENGLISH; the firebase was by then the home of the 173^d Airborne Brigade, and there are no Mechanized vehicles in that organization. The four APC's lined up near the airfield could only belong to a platoon from 1/50th. We spotted the tracks lined up beyond the runway just as we passed through the MP checkpoint at the gate. The weapons platoon soldiers were naked to the waist, cleaning rifles and mortars and maintaining their tracks. They obviously were long overdue for a stand-down. A grinning Thurman Pike trotted up before Helms had flipped the ignition switch off.

"Hey, Cap'n G, what brings you up *here?*" He held his salute until I returned it, then dropped his hand smartly. I tried to put on a stern, dissatisfied look, and snapped at him.

"I'm on an important mission, Pike. Where's your platoon Sergeant?" It seemed my feigned gruffness was convincing and he looked puzzled.

"**Platoon Sergeant,**" he shouted, and several of the men echoed the call. Staff Sergeant Orbanic arrived on the run.

"Get this raggedy-ass outfit in uniform and gimme a formation of *soldiers*, Platoon Sergeant; we've got important business to conduct." Turning to shield my face from Pike, I winked at Orbanic and handed him the promotion order. "You're gonna be *Adjutant.*" He glanced down, grinning when he spotted Pike's name underlined in red on the mimeographed page I thrust at him.

"I brought some steaks and lobster and beer and we'll party afterwards," I said in a whisper.

"Yes *Sir!*" He did a smart *about-face*. "Squad Leaders!" he bellowed, "Platoon formation on me in zero-three. Getcha' men in uniform... Web gear... Under arms... Move 'em out!!" Sergeant Orbanic raced off to get himself dressed, and Thurman Pike cocked his head to one side and looked quizzically at me.

"Go get your helmet and web gear on, Lieutenant, then come back here with me."

"Yes *sir.*" At this point I thought I saw a first glimmer of understanding flash in Pike's dark eyes.

In less than five minutes the platoon was assembled in three ranks on Sergeant Orbanic. Standing at rigid attention as on a parade-ground, he commanded:

"*Dress-right... Dress!*" He marched to the end of each rank and called out corrections to get the men in a line straight as a taut string. Then he marched to the front and commanded:

"*Ready... FRONT!*" He put them *at ease* and had the men adjust their uniforms, blousing their trousers and rolling up all the sleeves one turn above the elbow.

When he *fell* them back *in* and took a report from the squad leaders, it was obvious that several had never before rendered a *report*. That was a peacetime garrison sort of procedure and the men in authority hadn't been squad leaders the last time B Company had held a *veillee* or *work call* formation. The platoon Sergeant executed a sharp *about-face* and snapped a salute:

"Sir, Weapons Platoon is present-and-accounted-for with twenty-one men." I returned his salute and raised my voice.

"Men, you all looked pretty raggedy when I pulled in here today," I said in the harshest tone I could muster, "I guess we aren't paying Lieutenant Pike enough to keep you *straight*. I don't know what the Hell this Army's coming to. All I can think of to do is... give him a *pay raise*... promote him! *Maybe* that'll help. I sure *hope* so... Platoon Sergeant, *Publish the order!*"

"*Attention to orders:* Headquarters, Department of the Army, First Battalion, Fiftieth Infantry (Mechanized), twenty-eight April, nineteen hundred sixty eight. The following officer is promoted, with date of rank twenty-eight April, to the rank of First Lieutenant: Thurman O. Pike. Official, Signed Walter Gunn, Captain, Adjutant."

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As Sergeant Orbanic read, I pinned the silver bar directly over the cloth subdued gold bar sewn to the right collar of a beaming Thurman Pike's fatigue jacket. When I had the clips secured I shook his hand and clapped him on both shoulders before I turned to the assembled platoon.

"Men, you can be as proud of this Lieutenant as he is of each of you. Officers don't get any better in our Army. He kicks ass and takes names on the VC out there, and he cares for his men. I don't remember *ever* seeing a promotion that was more deserved than this one right here!" I wanted to say volumes, but my voice started trembling. I *did* think the world of Thurman Pike, yet in front of the men, I couldn't allow my emotions to take over.

"Platoon Sergeant, take charge of the platoon and dismiss them for the promotion party." He saluted and did an *about-face*:

"Lissen up: promotion party right here. *First squad* is detailed to cook, *Second squad* tends bar. *Third* polices up. *FDC*, man radio watch. Questions? Squad leaders, take charge of your squads!" The men cheered when released by their squad leaders; they broke ranks and hustled on their assigned missions. Many stopped to shake Thurman's hand.

In three-quarters of an hour the coals were glowing and the steaks and lobster tails were sizzling. The two cases of cold beer had been expended and Helms had gone off for two more. The ice lasted long enough to cool that wave of replacements, and after that, the temperature of the beer didn't seem to matter much. If you'd brought a blindfolded civilian to that gathering and let him sit in the shade and listen, he might at first have guessed he was at a lakeside picnic somewhere in America's Heartland on a balmy summer evening, surrounded by a group of recent High School graduates. The joking and kidding would come across much the way members of a winning football team might carry on. When our imaginary visitor followed the conversations though, he'd quickly grasp that these men were engaged in a game with stakes higher -- by far -- than the All-Conference Championship.

The NCO's had sent most of the men to bed down by nine o'clock when I pulled my guitar out of the jeep, unwrapped it from the poncho liner, and sat on a five-gallon water can as Pike and a couple of hangers-on sang with me through my very limited *Kingston Trio* repertoire. I passed the battered instrument around to anyone who knew a chord or two, and was not surprised there were several whose musical talent far exceeded mine. Our chorus got smaller as more men drifted off to get badly needed sleep. One who stayed with us was Specialist Bob Knightly, who'd played in a rock band before he was drafted. He knew chords for just about any song that drifted into our minds.

"Boss, that was a *cool* promotion. I'll never forget it," Thurman said.

"Shit, Pike that was the *least* I could do for you..." I was on the verge of going maudlin on him and I felt we should get the party away from the men, who needed their sleep.

"Hey, let's go for a convertible ride!" Knowing Helms was a teetotaler made this a less bad idea than it might seem.

"Helms, crank 'er up! *You... First Lieutenant Pike... hop in the seat of honor... up front there!*" I nearly toppled as I clambered unsteadily around the spare tire to get myself into the back of the Jeep. I propped myself atop the radios bolted to the fender. Knightly climbed aboard as well. As Helms cranked the jeep, I strummed the four chords to our favorite Kingston Trio song.

*"Where have all the flowers gone,
Long time pa-a-ssing,
Where have all the flowers gone,
Long time ago..."*

Helms eased out the clutch and we moved out. He had only the slit of dim light that the *Blackout Drive* beam cast a few feet to our front, so he took it slow. We inched along the asphalt runway and bellowed out our anthem for at least the third time that night. Only Knightly could sing on key and there was not a trace of harmony. The cheap guitar was chronically out of tune, and the warped neck guaranteed it would stay that way no matter how often you tightened or loosened different strings. But we loved that song and nothing was going to stop us from getting through it. When the Jeep reached the runway's end Helms did a U-turn to chug back up the other side.

*"Where have all the young men gone,
GONE TO SOLDIERS, EVERY ONE..."*

As we shouted the last word of that line, we suddenly were dazzled by flashes from the high beams of a Jeep tailing ours. Simultaneously a low three-second moan from the siren filled the balmy night air.

"Oh... *shit...*"

As Helms braked to a stop I quit strumming and my stomach tensed. In the dark I could make out the white letters "MP" on the armbands of the two men flanking our jeep.

"Fellers, it's time to shut down this traveling music show and go hit the sack," the Sergeant said good-naturedly. Thurman started to protest, but I cut him off.

"Roger that, Sergeant. Helms take us back and let's get this new First Lieutenant some Z's." I turned to the MP.

"Thanks, we're outta here."

"Airborne, sir."

The following morning Helms and I were rolling south just minutes after the engineers completed their minesweeping run along Route #1. I squinted in the blazing sun and sweat already dripped from me. My head throbbed, and I wondered why I'd failed to tuck a couple of Alka-Seltzer in my pocket before I left UPLIFT.

"I'd be feeling a lot worse if I hadn't gotten that steak in me," I reflected, "But man, it sure was worth it."

With the presidential campaign for 2008 already in gear, a couple of quotes from Will Rogers may be in order:

"A fool and his money are soon elected" and, "Be thankful we don't get all the government we pay for."

The Editors Page**John Topper**

Reunion 2007 is now behind us – it took a long time to arrive but it occurred suddenly and was over before I was ready for it to be. Others have described their thoughts, remembrances and impressions of the reunion elsewhere in this newsletter, so I won't recount all that. Just know that there were a lot of cigars smoked, beer consumed and lies told. Most of the lies took some form of the phrase, "Gee, you're looking good."

I must express my extreme gratitude to the leadership team of the "Play the Game" battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Humphreys and Command Sergeant Major Mike Kauffman. Their support was not just praiseworthy; it was generously given with a sincerity and professionalism that exceeded expectations and standards for any army, anywhere in the world. They are both infantrymen of great character.

They were ably assisted by their staff, in particular Major James Britton Yount who was the "behind-the-scenes-without-which-nothing-happens-guy" who indeed made things happen in an organized, timely fashion. The depth of planning and execution by great soldiers was evident – and seemingly effortless.

Our deepest appreciation for her splendid support, insight and gracious ways goes to Tammy Humphreys as our hostess for the event. She made this a most memorable occasion with her inspired rendering of the Play the Game crest formed into a brooch and given to all the ladies present. She blessed us all with her genteel manner and delightful wit. Thank you Tammy.

I am personally pleased with the reunion and will welcome any feedback as to how to make the next one even better. It's your reunion so let me know what you would like – I will begin planning for 2009 next summer at the change of command ceremony when Paul Humphreys passes the torch to Tony Benitez.

The response to my request for stories and articles for this newsletter has been good. The September edition is already forming but I will need more stories – please send them. This is your newsletter and your stories need to be told so the rest of us can hear them.

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT**Ron Leraas**

So, this is what happens to someone who misses a reunion? My apologies for not being there this time, if for no other reason than to discover if the stories I heard during the last reunion had grown or changed. From all indications, it appears that this one was a total success and I hope that each of you had the opportunity to get fully involved with the activities.

My time with the Battalion came at the end of its deployment. As a (relatively) old First Lieutenant, I was handed a map and thrust upon the fine young men of 2nd Platoon Charlie Company with orders to not screw up; guess we'll have to ask around to get an assessment of my performance on that one. I'm assuming my standing orders for this new assignment are the same.

I've been lurking around the Message Board and at the Association site for quite a few years and get especially interested with the postings and thoughts regarding our unit history and the individual personal experiences. Because I feel it is important that we pass on our personal experiences, I encourage each of us to write down our memoirs / remembrances for our families. One of my uncles spent WWII with the flying Tigers in the CBI Theater and has written an interesting history lesson; my father, who was with the 84th Infantry Division from the Normandy beaches to the Rhine never documented his experiences, and now that part of his life is irretrievably gone due to the effects of a series of strokes. My kids brow-beat me into writing my experiences -- which I initially thought would be about four pages long, but turned into approximately 100 pages and gave me a good excuse to make a trip to the National Archives, meeting Jim Sheppard and following him through the bureaucratic maze.

Editors Note: Ron Leraas is the new vice-president for the Association, replacing Jim Segars who is now president.

CHAPLAIN'S**Parker Pierce****O
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Greetings to all the 1/50th family. I pray that everything is going well with every member and their families. We had an exceptional bi-annual reunion at Ft. Benning, Ga. a couple weeks ago. It was one of the more fulfilling and enjoyable reunions of any I have attended and they began in 1999 for me. All the hard work that went into organizing and coordinating the '07 reunion most definitely resulted in one of if not the best we've ever had. I personally want to thank and congratulate each person that put forth the effort, hard work and time to put this year's reunion together - it was a success! I got to meet some of the 1/50th men and family members that I had never met before, and I also got to get reacquainted with a few that I haven't seen since 1968 in Vietnam - what a special blessing. With all the fun all of us had, it was only dampened by learning of several deaths of our 1/50th members and their loved ones since our last reunion in '05. I may not be exactly accurate on the number, but I'm thinking there was at least thirteen - that's a lot! Let's all pray for God's comfort for each of these families. Prayer for our President, our soldiers, and our nation is becoming more and more crucial as the days, weeks and years go by! I am honored and humbled again to carry on as chaplain for our wonderful 1/50th organization through 2009. Please inform me of any sicknesses, deaths or any special prayer requests. Please contact me at (904) 396-6121 or my email at pbpir@bellsouth.net. May God continue to bless each of you!

1/50th Infantry Reunion, 2007**Dick Guthrie**

"Hey, Doc!" "Jim! Hey, there's *Eil-Teel*!" "God, it's good to see you again!" "How's that *grandson* of yours?" "Your wife doing OK?" "Your son get back from *Eye-Rack* all right?"

Each new arrival was warmly greeted, I'm sure of that. Otherwise, the opening reception was a blur. The space throbbed with words, a confusion of boisterous greetings, snatches of four-decades-old stories about near misses, unexpected tragedies, and chance victories. Each was unpacking his duffle bag and men rushed at each other anxious to blurt their recollection of the last time they'd met or to provide the answer to one of the countless riddles our shared history condemns us to wrestle. Hugs and slaps on the back punctuated each new encounter. Draft beer coaxed from the keg lubricated tongues until the hard stories came out as often as the funny or happy ones.

Travel-weary and jet-lagged I broke away from the habitual crowd assembled on the front porch and headed for my room. Washing up and climbing into my pj's I felt I was winding down and groggy, plenty ready for sleep. Once the lights were out though, my head swam with the continuous loop of scenes inspired by the conversations. I'm still fighting battles four decades old when dawn lightens the Georgia skies.

At the future National Infantry Center's WWII Company Street, eyes welled up in tears as we heard how future generations will pay tribute our America's Infantrymen. Somewhere, Walt Tracy pulled me aside. "You know, a story I always meant to tell... it was back in 'Nam in December '67. As the Support Platoon Leader you know, I never really knew where our companies were operating or what exactly they were doing. Anyway, I was up at ENGLISH doing S-4 work and ran into an Australian Lieutenant Colonel there. He was all excited when he found out I was from First of the Fiftieth. He couldn't wait to tell me about being in a helicopter above B Company. He said he'd seen armies from all over the world operate, but he's *never* seen a mechanized company that could function like that!" "Walt, we had the greatest soldiers *in the world*." My throat tightened and I was unable to say more. I suspect that the Australian may have been watching on that terrible 10th of December that ever since has been the heaviest boulder in my duffle bag.

That evening we're flattered beyond words when the Major General, Commandant of the infantry Center greets each of us with a handshake and warm words. *Friendly's* BBQ is better than ever. We solemnly toast Johnny Johnston more than once. Back at the motel, the old front porch crowd welcomes new reinforcements, and "lights out" comes late.

The following morning we feel the full weight of our duffle bags as "Taps" plays for our dead and we put a wreath at their monument in front of Battalion Headquarters. We marvel at the new conference room today's Fiftieth Infantry has built to honor our shared history. Some of our members leave mementos for display there.

We learn about Fort Benning of tomorrow, and marvel at the quality of the officers briefing us. Watching *Foxtrot Company* come in singing cadence for their "turning blue" jerks us decades back to our own youth. And the mess hall conversations with today's trainees keep us back there. We're especially touched when a lad tugs his "Legacy Card" from his breast pocket and we discover the name he's memorized is of a friend, another rock in our duffle bag. The *crack-crack* of M-16 firing triggers images of other days and sends some of us looking for a change of subject. We find relief in conversation with the youngsters on the ammunition detail. They're happy to talk nonstop about their training adventures and Drill Sergeants as they fill magazines.

The bus rides begin to feel routine once again and each trip is a chance to catch up with an old friend, strengthen ties all around.

The banquet includes the habitual silent auction and 50-50 raffle. The certificates we present to members of the current battalion staff seem inadequate in light of the terrific support they've given us, but I can't imagine what else we might have done. I'm left choked speechless with emotion when Jimmy Segars surprises me with a guidon of Company B, 1/50th Infantry. I had admired it at a concessionaire's shop, and was going to go back and buy it later.

The gang is reconvened on the front porch. A few bars of impromptu *Doo-Wop* music taper off: "Hey Walt, tell these guys the story you told me about the Australian Lieutenant Colonel..."

Friday's Graduation ceremony is a bittersweet climax. The announcer acknowledges old vets, and the crowd's applause eases the weight on our shoulders as we stand and swell with pride. Then come gripping music, dazzling action, startling pyrotechnics, and stirring speeches. Parents and wives, sweethearts, little brothers, Drill Sergeants, commanders all celebrate. Those civilian kids have been transformed and they're proud of it. The unspoken damper on the celebration is the knowledge that some of these magnificent youngsters -- trained, motivated, conditioned, and indoctrinated as they are -- soon will pay dearly to keep our nation on its current course.

The regulars of the late-night front porch crowd are joined by one of the morning's strapping young graduates. He tells us how he completed the 48-hour forced march despite a stress fracture in his foot and it's clear he still limps. His wife is excited to move from Peoria to Fort Riley (I can't make this up).

I have a plane to catch on Saturday morning and check out before the coffee dispensers in the lobby are filled. A new friend asks: "Dick, you be back next time?" "As long as I can walk I'll be back."

On the Interstate to Atlanta my head spins as I try to process the reflections triggered over the past three days. It'll take weeks, months. I figure my duffle bag is no lighter than when I arrived there. I may have sifted through some of its contents, but everything it held when I arrived at Benning seems still to be crammed in there. At the same time I feel the time spent with my brothers brought me some soothing. Lugging their own full bags, they *understand*. Maybe mine *did* get lighter.

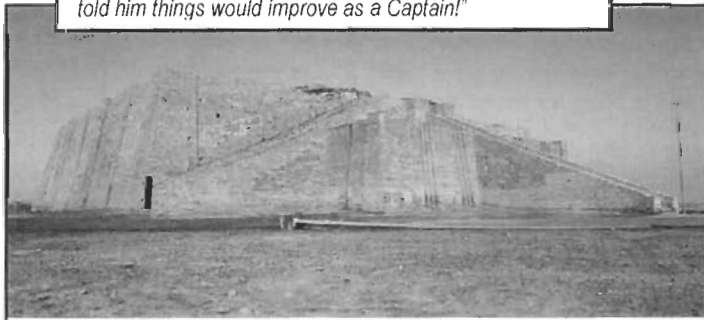
No doubt about it, as long as I can walk I'll be back.

It's a Family Affair!



Here you can see Shane Sarlin getting a happy snap taken with John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia.

"I had told him to suffer through the Lieutenant years and that good things would happen when he was promoted to Captain, but I didn't anticipate that he'd meet the Aussie PM the first month and receive a medal, go figure. Well, I told him things would improve as a Captain!"



"By the sheerest of coincidence, Shane's handle is 'Buzz'. Unbeknownst to he or his mates, Buz along with Uz and six others were nephews of Abraham (or Abram as he was know then) through his brother Nahor. Buz was also the uncle of Rebecca. (Genesis 20-24) "So what?", you ask. Well, Abram came from Ur of the Chaldeans and his ancestral home has been excavated (Shane's comment on visiting it, "Gosh, his dad must've been rich!"). Troops at Tillil Air Base near al Nasiriyah where Shane is stationed can also see the Ziggurat of Ur from the base (Ur.jpg). Some of his Iraqi counterparts like to use his handle as his name during introductions to other Iraqis."

Ray Sarlin



Randy Smith and LTC Humphreys laying wreath at memorial service under the watchful eye of CSM Kauffman Reunion 2007

Association member, Ray Sarlin, submitted these pictures of Captain Shane Sarlin, Infantry, Royal Australian Army in Iraq as part of the Australian Army Training Team - Iraq charged with coaching and mentoring the Iraqi trainers of the Iraqi Army.

Photos & quotes courtesy of Ray Sarlin



Accidentally caught at work Sarlin is seen training Iraqi Marksmanship Instructors on a range that he and his NCO's designed and built.

"He has some funny stories about this, including one of the Iraqi Captains challenging Shane to a shoot-off, not knowing that Shane qualified as a Top-100 marksman in the Aussie Army (similar to the President's 100)... with predictable results. He and his team have recently designed and constructed an Urban Combat Training Area (also on zero budget) and run the first instructors through that as well."



Two unnamed thugs played an April Fool's Day trick on the HQ (TOC), turning the room completely upside down (note chairs on ceiling and bulletin boards turned upside down).

"It's not true that Shane is there... he doesn't even know where there is! Hmmm, nothing like this ever happened in OUR war! As an aside, Shane was accompanying an Iraqi Army patrol outside the wire with a television crew attached and brought the TV people back near the TOC to debrief, when they caught a view of the inside and shot the rest of their film on it. He warned me to look out for the shots on TV (believing that HE might be the next thing hung from the ceiling), but he didn't need to worry, the media is only interested in presenting the dark side of Iraq."

3 JUN 07 – From Frank Burns

All,

Thoughts and prayers seem to be assisting my mom in her recovery. Thanks for all of them.

For significance this week, we may have seen a "Tipping Point" in a section of Baghdad called Ameriyah. Once an affluent Sunni neighborhood just outside of the large Victory Base FOB, its residents and their homes have been kicked out by Al Qaeda. This week, a Sunni group who called themselves the Baghdad Patriots (I didn't name them) really took the fight to Al Qaeda there. Earlier this year the same thing happened out west in Al Anbar, where Sunni groups have taken up arms vs. Al Qaeda. Lieutenant General Odierno gave a press conference this week, and spoke of the situation in with insurgent groups, and views this as a positive sign towards progress.

The fighting in Amariyah comes just as Lieutenant General Ray Odierno, the commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, discussed the prospects of reconciliation with insurgent groups, with the exclusion of al Qaeda. "I believe there are elements [of the insurgency] that are irreconcilable, but I believe the large majority are [reconcilable]," said *LTG Odierno* in yesterday's press briefing. "The figures I use, I believe, about 80 percent are reconcilable, both Jaish al-Mahdi as well as Sunni insurgents. I believe little, very few of al Qaeda are reconcilable, but there might be a small portion."

There is quite a bit of memorization in the Arab culture when it comes to Islam and the Koran – as young children memorize the book. It has carried over into the military intelligence as well. Most of what is briefed is just facts on what happened, with absolutely no analysis of what's going on in their area. It's a lot of fluff, but **not stuff. It seems to serve no carry over purpose** to their thinking. I know, we're not supposed to make them just like us, but we have to try to improve their military while still respecting their culture.

My counterpart, the one who likes coffee, just left yesterday – I assume that he went on leave. I don't know his whereabouts, will work with his temporary stand in who works in the division HQs. Just odd, tough to figure out what he's doing.

Sox-Yankees this weekend –split so far...All the best.



Reunion 2007 - Chief of Infantry, Major General Wojdakowski and his wife, Candy, were invited to the BBQ. He very graciously greeted everyone at the door, welcoming us to Fort Benning and thanking us for our service.