

Deployments close to home for 1/398

By Maj. Quentin FUSSELL
1/398 Bn. Executive Officer

In the past few months, the 1/398 has had several soldiers mobilized to support "Operation Iraqi Freedom." These soldiers are: 1st Lt. Elaine Bower, Spc. Sarah Lomax, Spc Jill Schrieber, Sgt. Joshua Tong, Spc. James VanFleet, Sgt. Jason Saeger, 1st Lt. William Board and Capt. William Wilkerson (pending)

Bower is in Kuwait providing administrative support for incoming soldiers. Her husband is an active duty soldier assigned to the 101st Division. Tong, and Lomax are in Kuwait and are assigned to the 340th MP Co. Tong called home a couple of weeks ago and his mother asked him for his address. He didn't know it and referred her to Lomax's parents. After Tong's mom got the address, she said to Mrs. Lomax, "It's just like a man to forget the address!"

He probably won't stop and ask for directions either, Mrs. Tong.

Schrieber is also assigned to the 340th MP Co. and said that she's, "already tired of the sand and dust." I bet those sandstorms didn't help adjust her attitude. Board is still at Ft. Stewart, Ga., and is about to be shipped to Kuwait. VanFleet was

injured during training at Ft. Dix, N.J. and is awaiting the results of his MRI.

Saeger is with the 360th Transportation Co. His departure had a more personal affect on me because, unlike most of the other soldiers who had departed as a group from Evansville Regional Airport, he departed alone from Nashville International Airport. Because I live in Nashville, our commander, Lt. Col. Ostrowski, had asked me if I would meet him at the airport as the unit's representative. As I drove to the airport, I realized that this soldier was heading off to war, but I didn't know what to do or say. I remembered looking at the pictures of four of our soldiers being sent off by other members of the unit in January, but I never dreamed that I would be in the same position a few weeks later.

Once I got to the airport, I decided that anything that I say needed to be short and sincere. Short because, like a lot of people, the more I talk, the more I get into trouble. Sincere was a given. Saeger was a soldier leaving his family and traveling thousands of miles into harm's way, facing an enemy that has shown time and again no limits to its ruthlessness. Going into an unknown situation knowing that someone cares about

you and your family's well-being is a tremendous morale booster, and I wanted to assure him that his old unit would do everything to help him and his family (we got an opportunity quickly: he had pay problems after he was mobilized and the chain of command resolved it). As I walked with Saeger to the ticket counter, I asked him if there was anything that his unit could do for him. He said no, but I got information so that our unit could stay in contact with his family. Before he departed, I thanked him on behalf of our unit and grateful nation for returning to duty (he had been in a non-active status) and that I pray that he and all of the soldiers make it back safely and quickly. As he walked toward the gate, I couldn't help but wonder if someone would be saying those words to me or to other soldiers of 1/398 anytime soon.

A couple of weeks after the departure of Saeger, Wilkerson received notification that he was being mobilized and was assigned to a unit in Minnesota. As of this writing, the unit that Wilkerson has been assigned to is on stand by. Since the unit is still drilling, they invited their newest soldier to attend drill in April. Needless to say, Wilkerson has decided to do an RST with his former unit in Owensboro, Ky.

Reece

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JoNell, last summer, couldn't be happier with his choice to pursue a military and public service career path over that of the corporate world.

"People ask me how the new job is, and I tell them it's not work, it's exciting getting to help people on a

daily basis, and getting 'bad guys' off the street," said Reece.

Reece's sentiment of service to country and community echoes that of many of the soldier's that he serves side-by-side with in the 100th Division. He's happy to be able to do his part as America moves forward in this tumultuous time.

"I have regained a sense of purpose," said Reece. "We were on our way to being a 'we' generation. After September 11 the country was galvanized, with most everyone looking for a common cause... I know I'm on the right track now in life, with the police department and in the Army Reserve."