

# Guard families anxious

**As March nears, they hold out hope, and long for unit's return**

**By Jamie Theesfeld**

While most family members of the Galva National Guard unit are ecstatic about the unit's "tentative" return from Iraq in March, many aren't planning homecoming celebrations just yet.

"We're really praying that it's going to happen," said Pat Peterson of LaFayette, father of soldier Ryan Peterson. "We have heard the end of March, but things can change."

Meanwhile, Peterson and other family members continue to live knowing their sons remain in harm's

way.

"There is not a day we don't think about it," said Peterson, who like his wife, the former Leslie Kegelbein, is a Galva native.

"But then we know things will work out," Peterson added. "It's simple for us, it's our Christian faith."

Ryan Peterson escaped injuries during an attack in Iraq last April. He was credited with saving the life of an injured comrade while fending off enemies in the incident.

Pat Peterson said he is extremely proud of not only his son and the other Galva unit members, but all U.S.

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# Families

soldiers.

"It's about freedom for the Iraqi people," he stated. "I hope our guys appreciate the freedom they have here more."

Although Peterson said a "big bash" might be in the works in celebration of his son's return, he is instead looking forward to a four-wheeler quad-trip with Ryan, another son, Travis, and a friend of Ryan's.

"It's going to a simple 'guy trip,' Peterson explained. "We'll go for three or four days at a time and visit three or four states."

Rita Burrows, Galva, sister of Guard member Jim McGovern, is hoping for the Guard's return next month.

Burrows and her two sons, Joseph and Christopher, are hoping to go skiing with the McGovern family over Easter break. They hope Jim's home to join them at the Marquette, Mich. slopes, which are near where the McGoverns, formerly of Nekoma, now live.

"We're really hoping they will be home from Iraq before then," said Burrows.

"I've heard many different stories, so until we know exactly, I guess we wait and play it by ear."

Ed Malcom of Woodhull is also anxiously awaiting the return of his son, Seth, and the rest of the Galva unit.

"I can't wait," he said. "It will be nice to have all of them home, where they belong."

Malcolm said he is "real proud" of his son, an AlWood High School graduate, as well as the rest of the Galva unit.

"This unit has been pretty well thought of over there," Malcolm said.

That includes Iraqis, Malcolm said.

"Most of the people want them over there," Malcom said his son reports.

Seth Malcolm enjoys talking to the Iraqi people, especially the children, his dad said.

"They are good people over there and deserve the freedom they do not have," Malcolm said.

Malcolm is planning a "big" hog roast in the back of his garage in honor of his son's return.

"I always cooked hogs and that's something Seth likes to do also, so that's what we're eventually going to do," he said.

Zach Cantwell, 3½, son of Guard member Shawn Cantwell, has a "big day" planned with his father when Shawn returns home.

According to Shawn's mother, Sandy Lucas of Oneida, Zach says he and his father, a ROWVA High School graduate living in Galesburg "are going to McDonald's, then to Wal-Mart and then to the Thomas train (at the Target store)."

Zach can't wait for his father to come home, Lucas said.

"When someone mention Shawn's name, Zach runs to the window to see if he can see his daddy."

Shawn's wife, Kelly, said the family is "holding our breath" about the unit's return.

"Until we know for sure, all we can do is wait," she said.

When her husband does return. fun times in a newly-painted game room is awaiting the family.

"I think Zach knows we painted the room in preparation for his dad getting home," Kelly said. "He thinks his daddy should be here."

A big homecoming party is being planned by Galva's Ron and Vicky Werkheiser on their son Eric's return, but Ron admits the waiting is tough.

"We're kinda lost right now," Ron said of details about the unit's return.

"We usually go to the FRG's (Family Readiness Group) meetings but last month's one was cancelled due to the weather. So we're

looking forward to the February meeting so we can get up-to-date on things," Werkheiser explained.

"A lot of people are in the same boat as us — just waiting. "

Werkheiser said he doesn't receive much information from his son.

"Eric just doesn't say much about what goes on over there. He pretty much sticks to the rules.

"Even when he was home for R & R at Thanksgiving, he didn't have too much to say. He doesn't want to get our hopes up."

Werkheiser, however, says he is optimistic about the Guard's hopeful return next month.

"We hope and pray for not only our guys, but all our troops," he said.

"I think everyone is so anxious to get everybody home."