

Today's Issue...

- ▶ [Page One](#)
- ▶ [City](#)
- ▶ [Regional](#)
- ▶ [Sports](#)
- ▶ [Weather](#)
- ▶ [Obituaries](#)
- ▶ [World News](#)
- ▶ [Entertainment](#)
- ▶ [Town Hall](#)
- ▶ [Stock Quotes](#)
- ▶ [Health News](#)
- ▶ [Classifieds](#)
- ▶ [About Us](#)
- ▶ [Archives](#)
- ▶ [Illinois Lottery](#)
- ▶ [e-mail](#)

Star Courier
[White Pages](#)
 directory

Search The Web

[Web Directory](#)
[Yellow Pages](#)
[White Pages](#)
[Meet Someone](#)
[My Page](#)
[City Guide](#)
[Lottery Results](#)
[Weather](#)
[Movie Listings](#)
[Maps/Directions](#)
[Horoscope](#)
[Greeting Cards](#)



Battery F rolls into the history books

By DAVE CLARKE Regional Coordinator

They were bluntly told when they left the odds were that at least one of them -- at least -- would not come home.

The "Boys from Illinois" were bombed, blown up and bullet-ridden, but here they are a year later, all still alive. Certainly an answer to prayer some would say is nothing short of a miracle arriving, it so happens, on the second anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Battery F, 1st Battalion, 202nd Air Defense Artillery was scheduled to land at the Quad City International Airport at 7:45 this morning flying from Fort Sill, Okla., where they have been demobilizing since last Sunday, and are hopefully to arrive at their home armory in Galva at around 9 a.m. today, about an hour and 15 minutes earlier than announced Friday.

With the arrival time changing twice early Friday afternoon, unit commander Maj. Mike Kessel explained to increasingly frustrated families that the unusual number of time changes were apparently due to commercial flights used to transport troops were being shuffled around to accommodate people traveling to and from NCAA basketball tournaments currently under way across the nation, including Oklahoma City.

At last report, buses carrying the returning troops should pass through Annawan at about 8:30 and Kewanee at about 8:45, arriving in Galva around 9 or 9:15, according to the latest information.

We said farewell to these 120 men in a moving ceremony Nov. 1, 2003, on the Galva High School football field. They trained at Fort Hood, Texas, where

they took part in a halftime show with the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders, then at Fort Polk, La., where they had lunch with President Bush. Arriving in Iraq in March of 2004, they patrolled the most dangerous highway in the world near the Baghdad airport, and protected a police station from insurgents. They agreed to watch each other's back "and they'd all come home alive." And they did. They became brothers bonded for life by a common life-and-death experience.

Any soldier, whether they served in Baltimore or Baghdad, deserves a special homecoming, if only for the time they have taken out of their life to serve their country. This homecoming is special, however, because they are a group representing almost every town in the area and the first local soldiers to be called up as a unit for combat in more than 50 years. In the Civil War, the 112th Illinois Volunteers were mustered out of Kewanee and in World War I and the Korean War, Kewanee's Company K was sent to serve, but in World War II, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, soldiers either enlisted or were drafted and went away to join a unit stationed elsewhere.

These are our kids, our neighbors and our coworkers.

They were attached to the 39th Infantry Brigade and the 1st Cavalry and were replaced by the 3rd Infantry Division, now on their second tour on the "Baghdad beat." The unit comes home with its share of well-deserved honors including two dozen Purple Hearts, and many Commendations for Valor and Meritorious Service.

Many have asked lately "Will they have to go back?" Who knows, but hopefully not. The Iraqis are taking more control of their country and their destiny every day. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said Friday for the first time that the number of U.S. troops in Iraq will gradually be reduced in coming months.

If things are getting better, it's due, in part, to the job done by the tired guys riding those buses today.

The image I will always carry from this experience is the photo of the little Iraqi boy -- maybe 10 years old or so -- walking down a dusty street holding the hand of an Illinois National Guardsman from Kewanee named Nathan Kull. It was taken on the Iraqi Fourth of July -- June 28, 2004, the day sovereignty was turned over to the new interim government.

I wonder if, when he is an adult, will his recollection of the day Iraq became a free nation be that soldier who held his hand?

Politicians and historians will defend and attack the War in Iraq for generations to come, but through the exemplary actions and bravery of these young men we welcome today, we all had a rare hand in making history.

[[Home Page](#)] [[City News](#)] [[Regional News](#)] [[Sports](#)] [[Obituaries](#)] [[Weather](#)] [[Editorial](#)] [[Classifieds](#)] [[Archives](#)] [[Illinois Lottery](#)] [[About Us](#)] [[Email Us](#)] [[Health](#)] [[Entertainment](#)] [[Town Hall](#)] [[World News](#)] [[Stocks/Market](#)]

