

Seabee

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she said. Judi said Christopher was a reservist long before they met and is going on his 14th year with the Navy.

He received orders January 31 and left February 5 for Mississippi, where he received final training. From there he went to Germany, then to Kuwait where he stayed for a month.

While in Kuwait, Judi said she and the kids received calls from Christopher. Not long ago, however, he was sent to Iraq where, she said, communication with home was cut off.

Christopher works with a naval mobile construction battalion (NMCB21 battalion). Since he left Kuwait, Judi doesn't know exactly what he's doing or where he is.

Now the family communicates primarily through mail, which, she said, can be trying, partly because by the time he receives the mail, often the news has changed.

She said last week she received an e-mail from an imbedded journalist within her husband's battalion. Although brief, the e-mail assured her the battalion was fine and doing well. He also attached a current photo of the group.

"I could see he was O.K. and it kind of eased my mind," she said.

While Christopher took the news that sent him to the Middle East well, Judi said she reacted



Christopher Ross is second in from the right in this photo he transmitted from aboard a ship in the Persian Gulf.

differently. "Oh no, I was a mess. I was very upset. It was very hard to accept," she said.

"I had all the questions; 'Why you? Why do you have to go?'" She said there came a point, though, when she realized she

had no control over the situation and that her two children, needed her to be strong.

"I go day by day. Some days

are all right. Some days I fall apart," she said.

It's not one particular thing she said, that is hard about her

husband being gone, but, rather, everything.

"You kind of turn into a single parent when they leave and it's hard," she said. "The kids, they're really missing him."

She said she has a lot of family and friends that are helping her through and helping to keep the children busy.

With her children being 4 and 6, she said they aren't old enough to fully understand the amount of time their father will be away.

"We tried to explain it in terms they could understand," she said, like that he wouldn't be there for their birthdays and some holidays.

The children created a poster board with the months February through August to keep track of the days Christopher is gone and to mark major milestones. She said she didn't want to put the whole year on it because it would seem too overwhelming. The next highlighted milestone is April 16, 40 days from the date he left.

With her husband's achievement medals in front of her, Judi beamed with pride as she talked about Christopher's sense of duty and work ethic.

"That's one thing about him, he always tries to be the best at what he does. He goes out of his way for people," she said.

"I know I'm his wife, but you can go ask anyone."

Legion collecting items for troops

Dallas American Legion Ladies Auxiliary Post 672 is preparing to send packages to our troops overseas. They are seeking donations to help fill the packages. Donations may be dropped off at the Dallas American Legion Post lobby by April 25. Non-perishables only will be accepted. Some suggestions are: heavy black socks, eye drops, lip balm, sunscreen, baby wipes, stationary, pens, envelopes, stamps, calling cards, tissues, tooth brushes, nail polish, deodorant, hard candy and jelly beans. Questions, call 674-4908, 477-2611 or 287-9946.

Brownies

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what the servicemen would be most happy about receiving.

"I think they would like the Kool Ade and cookies," said Ashley Rood. Rebecca Rosser thought the flea collars would be especially appreciated.

"For the most part it's the fact that they (the children) know soldiers are away from home. That's what instills us to make the boxes — to do something good to make someone else's life more comfortable," Maccarone said.

The idea to get the girls involved came from the family of Sgt. Ned E. Walsh, who attends

Maccarone's church.

Soon the girls started corresponding back and forth to Walsh and other servicemen, six in all.

"It's fun getting the letters, they just brighten right up," said Maccarone.

The group just recently received four more names and addresses of servicemen.

Asked if the correspondence would continue, Maccarone said "the letters will definitely continue. They are the easiest thing for the little brownies to do and to understand."



Brownie Troop 600 from Ross Elementary are pictured holding letters they received from American servicemen in Kuwait.

From left, front row: Emily Kropp, Meghan Maccarone, Evie Whittaker, Felicia Nevel, Brinley Williams, Kaitlyn Mitchell.

Second row: Sarah Stacey, Katrina Patla, Sierra Pall, Laura Casterline, Rebecca Rosser, Ashley Rood.

Sarah Bedford was absent. POST PHOTO/ERIN YOUNGMAN

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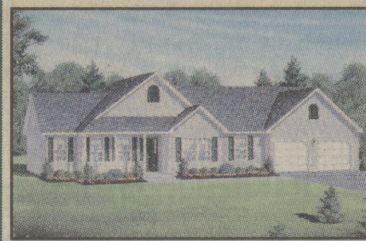
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