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# THE POST

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SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF THE DALLAS & LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

## From the frontline In Iraq, jubilation, but caution

Editor's Note: Eric Pimm, a 1999 graduate of Lake-Lehman High School, is serving as crew chief for an AH-64D Apache Longbow attack helicopter, based at the Quyah West Airfield in Iraq. We have asked him to keep our readers posted on goings-on there. He sent this e-mail Wednesday.

NEAR MOSUL, IRAQ — There are no words to describe the whirlwind of emotions we felt when we turned on CNN Monday morning. Almost the entire company was huddled around the TV waiting for Mr. Bremer and Gen. Sanchez to give the details the capture of the man we most sought after.

When we heard the words "We got 'em" applause and yells filled our company area. We were so excited to know that someone who has caused not only the Iraqi people but people around the world so much pain and suffering, would never again be able to shower without being watched let alone ever kill again.

With all the celebration by Iraqis and GI's alike we know this is far from

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## For Reservist, sense of pride and vindication

By ERIN YOUNGMAN Post Staff

JACKSON TWP. — The news of Saddam Hussein's capture has quieted growing questions in the mind of local surgeon and Army Reservist Juan DeRojas.

After two tours of duty in Iraq in the last year, DeRojas said he had grown disillusioned with the American effort. As he sat in his Plains Township office last week, an American flag proudly displayed atop his desk, he explained how all of that changed when Hussein was captured.

"We kept asking ourselves, 'Did we do all of this in vain?'" he said. DeRojas said a feeling of pride washed over him when he turned on the television Sunday morning.

"It made my sacrifice — which was small — worthwhile." DeRojas got back from his last tour of duty in October. It was his second tour in 2003 and third since 9/11.

As a Forward Surgical Team member, the Jackson Township father of five served on the ever-changing front line. DeRojas accompanied the Fourth Infantry Division, 2nd Brigade, on one, two and three-day missions in search of Hussein. He said he is proud it was the same division that last week finally captured the dictator.

DeRojas said it was not uncommon for the group to be ambushed while en route. The ever-present danger didn't dampen troops' excitement.

"You'd always tell yourself, 'Jeepers, it would be great if we were the ones to capture Saddam.' We were always wishing that it were one of us."

However, as weeks turned into months and casualties and injuries continued to climb, DeRojas said he and others began to lose faith.

"We had not located weapons of mass destruction, or Saddam Hussein.

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## 'I've been good' is letters' theme



Anna Chinikaylo, a third grader at Wycallis Elementary School, didn't leave anything out of her drawing of Christmas Eve. More children's artwork on pages 3-5.

Each year, The Post asks teachers at local elementary schools to submit letters the children have written to Santa Claus. Space does not allow us to publish them all — there are hundreds — but here's a selection from six schools. They are printed as written, without correction.

### Wycallis Elementary

#### Mrs. Faerber's 2nd Grade

Dear Santa, I want to see my uncle Gary because I only got to see him once. Is Rudolph the Red Nose reindeer really a true reindeer? Nicholas Fields

Dear Santa, I want two things for Christmas. My thing I want is there to no more wars. My second one is I want something called a for real kitten. I think I deserve it because I am friendly and kind. Lily E. Amadio

Dear Santa, I want a game it called Fit finder. My mommy said that I was a good girl lately. I hop0 you have a safe trip on Christmas Eve. What does Mrs. Claus do when you are giving toys to every little boy and little girl? Sara Kerdesky

Dear Santa, I want no more war because people get hurt. I hope you and Mrs. Claus and the elves have a happy holiday. Sydney Butwin

#### Ms. McCarthy's 3rd Grade

Dear Santa, I know you like milk and cookies. They make you have energy. Then you can get around the world to deliver the presents to kids who are good on Christmas Eve night. I hope you leave my little brother and me something. We have been trying to be good. Thank you. Amanda Judge

Dear Santa, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I have been trying to be a good girl this year but it is

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## Customers' tips buy toys for teens

By SANDY PEOPLES Post Correspondent

DALLAS — For the past seven years the employees and management of J&J Deli in Dallas have saved all of their tips all year long to participate in a big way in the annual Toys for Tots campaign conducted by the Marines.

This year when they called the Marines to ask what was needed, they were told there was a desperate need for toys for children in the 12- to 16-year-old range.

"We knew that toys for kids in that age group would cost a lot more," said John Wertman, owner of J&J Deli, "but due to the overwhelming generosity of our customers this year, we had almost twice as much money to spend as any previous year. Our catering customers have been very kind, and our eat-in customers have continuously put their change in our large plastic jug near the cash register in our store."

At the end of November they had \$3,000 to spend on toys. "We were all surprised and thrilled to have collected that much money," he said.

The particular irony of this story is that many of Wertman's employees are teenagers themselves. They attend Dallas and Lake-Lehman high schools and will probably never know



POST PHOTO/SANDY PEOPLES

John Wertman and Bill Cuff made the big toy delivery to the Marine Corps in Wyoming. From left: Lance Corporal Steve Stojanovic, Lance Corporal Robert Morris, Corporal Roberto Alvarado, and John Wertman and Bill Cuff from J&J Deli.

or meet the children who are recipients of their good deeds.

"We are grateful to K-Mart in Edwardsville for helping us stretch our dollars again this year," said Wertman. "And they helped us focus on what teens buy. We were able to purchase four bicycles, CD players, skate-

boards, snowboards, bats and balls, games, puzzles, phones, alarm clocks, radio-activated cars, and more. They even helped us load our van for the drive to the Marine Headquarters at the airport in Wyoming the next day."

Several Marines greeted Wertman

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## Stax & Co. closing date is uncertain

By RONALD BARTIZEK Post Staff

DALLAS — Stax & Co., the unique restaurant in the Twin Stacks Center on Memorial Highway, will close sometime after January 1, although a specific date has not been announced.

The business, without real estate, is listed for sale at \$250,000 with Four Star McCabe Realty of Shavertown. According to the listing, the price includes the liquor license, equipment and inventory but no property.

Stax occupies leased space in the former power house of the Native Textiles building, which was renovated into the Twin Stacks Center by Lynn Banta and Richard Haas of Harveys Lake.

Both Banta and Scott Snider, a co-owner of the restaurant, emphasized that Stax is a viable business, but the two parties could not agree on a new lease. The expiring lease was extended through January so that holiday parties would not be dis-

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