

# SOLDIER

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he got home was to get some pizza from Pizza Perfect, and go home and relax," he said.

"I'm glad he's home. I'm proud of him. He did what he was supposed to do. There were many times that I wished I could have taken his place. He's my little brother."

Kohli enlisted as an engineer eight years ago. He was called up full-time with the 277th Engineering Company out of San Antonio, Texas. He operated a concrete and asphalt plant and helped repair the U.S. occupied Balad Air Base, living in the old Iraqi barracks on the base.

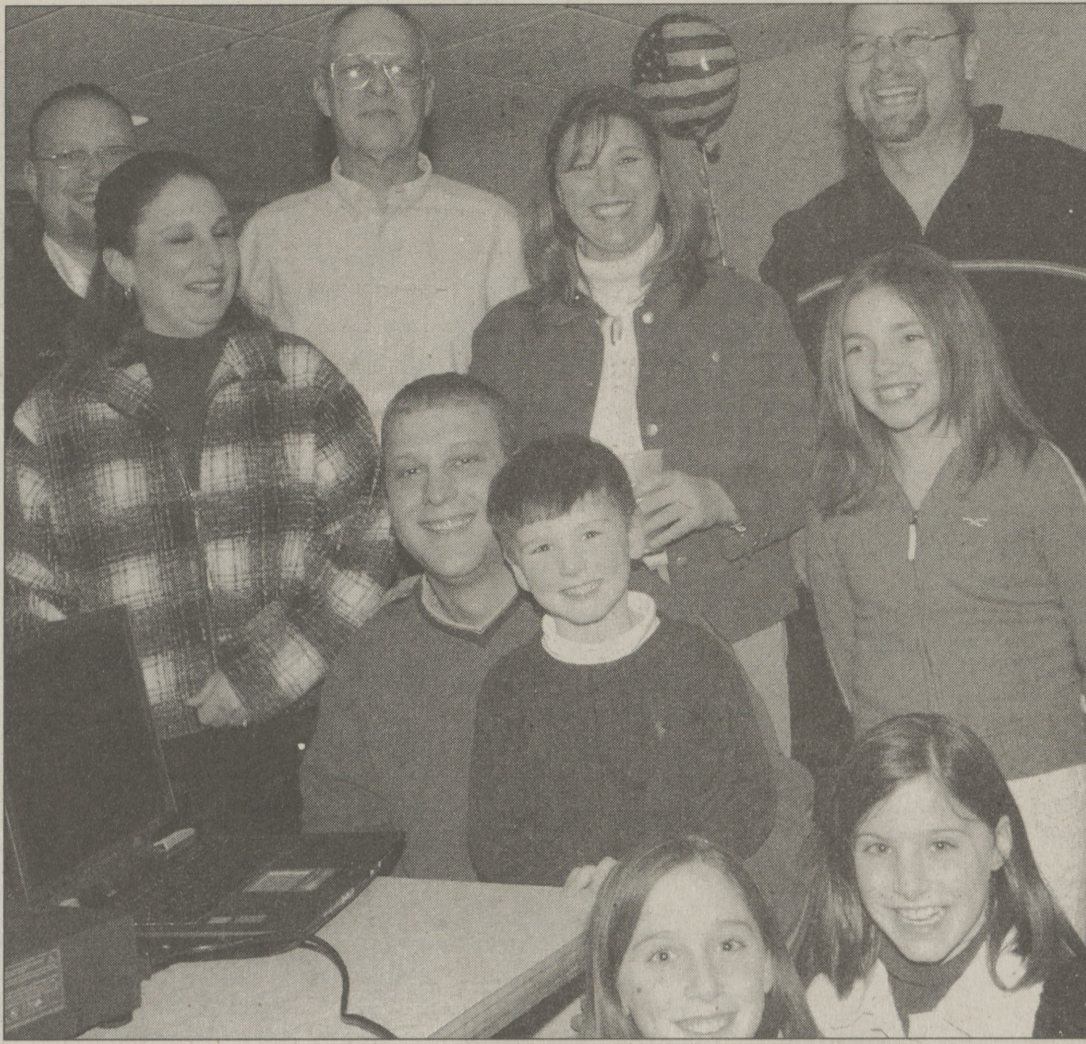
Kohli stayed connected to friends and family through the Internet and e-mail's "instant-messaging" feature. "We found an Iraqi civilian that put a wireless Internet system in our barracks for us," he said. Most of the soldiers had laptops and would share them with those who didn't.

"I don't envy the folks that didn't have the ability to communicate with their kids as we did," said Rob's dad Gary. "I got so used to hearing from him, that whenever I heard on the news about American casualties, and then all of a sudden I didn't hear from him, my heart was in my throat," he said. He eventually would get an e-mail or call from Rob, saying he was all right.

In Rob's honor, his mom Becky and the rest of the family put together a Christmas party in early December at his house in Pringle. They decorated the inside and outside of his house.

"It was just a hodgepodge of everybody's little Christmas decorations," Becky said. They put up an artificial tree with presents for him to open when he got home. They videotaped the party, which included a skit of the Kohli family version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," downloaded it to a DVD, and sent it to him. He received it on Christmas Eve.

Kohli's sister, Melissa Pruden, is a kindergarten teacher in Bloomsburg. She showed her students pictures of Iraq that Rob had sent to their mom. She pointed out the differences in our environments. Her own children have become more aware of political events recently, she said. "This has become a real learning experience, with a happy ending."



Rob Kohli is surrounded by his family: brothers Brad and Greg Kohli, father Gary Kohli, sisters Shellie Roosa and Melissa Pruden, nephew Avery Pruden, nieces Lauren and Olivia Pruden and Sara Kohli.

FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

## Danger was all around

For Rob Kohli, a typical day in Iraq averaged about 14 hours and started at sunrise. Kohli would either perform maintenance on equipment or produce asphalt. "We did a lot of paving for runway repair. We did some off-post missions, such as paving some bridge approaches off the Tigris River."

He regularly came in contact with Iraqi civilians. An Iraqi contractor brought materials daily to make asphalt. "For the most part, the feelings of the Iraqis was that the Americans needed to be there. They appreciated our help. They wanted to do whatever they could to help us."

The insurgents, however, thwarted much of the progress. "I actually had a couple of contractors that would show up for work one day, then the next day they wouldn't — because they were dead. They had been shot because they were found out to be helping Americans."

There is one incident Kohli will never forget. "We had a couple of soldiers on a convoy, to retrieve vehicles in Kuwait. We were called into a platoon meeting around 6 o'clock in the evening, and were told that the convoy had been hit in Iraq." Six trucks were destroyed. Two soldiers were killed, and two good friends from his unit were missing in action.

Around midnight, they were told that the soldiers, who were missing, had been found alive. "They were trapped in a village for six hours fighting against insurgents."

— by Camille Fiotti

The care packages were over-abundant but very much appreciated, Kohli said. "I actually had to call home and tell them

to stop sending stuff, because I didn't have room for any more." The soldiers received them not only from family and friends,

but organizations as well. "The best one we got was from Middleswarth Potato Chip Company. They sent over a big box of barbecue potato chips."

Kohli's sister Shellie Roosa, of Mountaintop said the siblings now are closer than they have ever been. "I made it a point to talk to him on-line every day. It felt like he was only a couple of doors away," she said.

The oldest of her three sons is thinking about joining the National Guard. "It's scary to me," she said. "But we need those kind of people that want to dedicate their lives to protecting our country. If that's what he wants to do then I need to support him."

Brad, 26 and the youngest of the Kohli children said, "we're all very happy that he's home. Rob and I don't show a lot of emotion, but deep down, he knows it's there."

"It's a good thing that we were there," Rob said. "I feel that it had to be done. I think there will always be an American presence there. The American armed forces have done a wonderful job."

# SADDLE RIDGE

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mended two independent points of access, in case one is blocked.

Township engineer Tom Doughton agreed with Halbing that "a fully improved second entrance is impossible." But, "It's got to be a fully usable road," accessible to ambulances and fire trucks in case of emergency, in all kinds of weather.

The plan calls for Gypsy Lane, a private road that connects to Wyoming Road, to be widened and made less steep for that purpose. Doughton thinks that will work, as long as maintenance is assured.

Halbing said access to the road would be restricted by a gate, but keys would be provided to the township and all emergency departments. Covenants on individual property deeds will include a maintenance agreement for the road.

The biggest hurdle now seems to be what township ordinances call excessively steep road grades. A resolution passed in 2004 requires grades to mostly be 7 percent or less, allowing up to 10 percent for "short distances."

A 7 percent grade is one in which the road rises or falls seven feet in that distance.

Doughton pointed out that, even after Halbing's engineer George Albert redrew the layout, more than half the 8,500 feet of roadway shown was steeper than 7 percent.

"We discussed this with legal counsel. There's no way we can sign off on anything that's 50 percent over 7 percent," Doughton said.

Halbing and Albert protested that they had been led to believe getting below a 10 percent grade was the goal. After initial complaints about the grades, they discussed the situation with a supervisor, Doughton and a county engineer, and came away with that impression.

Albert contended that the 7 percent standard is extreme, and up to 12 percent is allowed in many communities. He said to meet the required grade, driveways would have to be steeper.

The layout is made more difficult by working around a natural gas transmission line that runs through the center of the 73-acre development, Halbing said. "If there's an exceptional circumstance, that's it."

Township regulations allow exceptions to specific regulations when conforming would create a hardship.

Doughton warned that if the planning commission allowed the roads to be built with excessive grades, it was possible the supervisors would not take them over, leaving maintenance up to the developer or eventual property owners.

Commission Chairman Jack Dodson suggested that Halbing go back to the supervisors and engineers for clarification on what would be acceptable.

"If it was short areas, we could understand it," Dodson said. "I think you need to keep as close to the ordinance as possible."

Other points of contention include moving manhole covers completely out of the "cartway," the paved portion of roads, and reducing the depth and width of some drainage swales.

Bernadette Rushmer, who owns property in Kingston Township near Saddle Ridge, asked about the effect of water runoff on wetlands, some of which flow onto her property. Halbing said the mandated storm water plan reduces the rate of runoff by half. "In reality, we should help avert flooding."

The impact on wetlands still must be analyzed by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Luzerne County Conservation District.

Resubmissions must be received at least seven days before the next meeting. "That's over," Doughton said of accepting them past the deadline. "The rule is going down for everybody."

At the March 8 meeting, the commission was faced with a resubmission for the proposed Saddle Ridge subdivision, including nearly 30 drawings. Doughton said he did not receive until March 3. Consequently, he had not had time to review them all.

— Ronald Bartizek

## Police racked up more than 200 responses in February

By CAMILLE FIOTTI  
Post Correspondent

JACKSON TWP. — One thing Fred Murray remembers that his eighth grade arithmetic teacher always told him was to look at the answer. "Does it seem reasonable?" she would ask. Murray asked the supervisors the same question after hearing last month's police report read by Chairman John Wilkes Jr. at Monday's monthly

meeting. "I've listened to a laundry list of stuff, and I can't believe I live in Jackson Township," Murray said. "The answer to the problem just doesn't make sense, based on what they're reading here, because you never see anything in the papers."

The police report stated that there were 73 traffic citations, 81 traffic complaints and 70 non-traffic related criminal

arrests last month. Supervisor Al Fox told Murray that the police department is responsible for notifying the newspapers. The report is on file in the municipal building for public inspection.

In other business: Resident Edward Chesnovitch, Crime Watch member, announced that the deadline for applying for Camp Cadet has expired, and the

group has raised enough money to sponsor a child this year. The Pennsylvania state police sponsor the camp, which is for children ages of 12 to 15, interested in a career in law enforcement. The next Crime Watch meeting will be on April 28 at 7 p.m. in the municipal building. Special guest will be Luzerne County Sheriff Barry Stankus. Crime Watch signs are available for a \$15 donation.

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