

The DALLAS POST

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"At times it was not so much physically exhausting, but to see our soldiers and the kids, it does take a toll on you."

Dr. Brett Schlifka
Neurosurgeon



Dr. Brett Schlifka, 37, Lehman Township, spent six months at Balad Military Hospital in Iraq as a neurosurgeon with the U.S. Army. He is now an associate neurosurgeon at Geisinger Wyoming Valley and Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre. Schlifka is board certified and specializes in brain, spine and trauma surgery.

He's seen wartimes first hand

By REBECCA BRIA
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When Dr. Brett Schlifka arrived in Iraq, the Intensive Care Unit where he would be stationed was filled with Iraqi children who had been shot.

That was just one of many horrific acts of war Schlifka would see during his time as a neurosurgeon at Balad Military Hospital from November 2005 to May 2006.

At Balad, Schlifka was part of the 207th Head and Neck Team that included two neurosurgeons, an ear nose and throat doctor, an ophthalmologist, an anesthesiologist, a nurse anesthetist, two nurses and three technicians.

ON THE WEB

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There, he saw about three or four cases a day and performed between 220 and 250 craniotomies. The majority of injuries at the hospital were orthopedic, concussions, blast injuries and mild trauma to the brain.

Some of the patients on whom Schlifka and his partner operated suffered from injuries that would, most likely, not be treated surgically in the United States. In cases where the patients recovered, Schlifka found himself re-evaluating his own standards. "My partner and I took the position we would be more aggressive, especially with the Americans," the doctor said. "I think we were more aggressive than not."

Not all of Schlifka's patients survived, though. In one instance, an American soldier in his 30s was brought in with a severe brain injury and died in the Intensive Care Unit. The man's fellow soldiers and military officials conducted a prayer service in the hospital chapel, something Schlifka remembers as a very emotional experience.

"At times it was not so much physically exhausting, but to see our soldiers and the kids, it does take a toll on you," he

See WARTIMES, Page 8

Memory quilts serve as lasting reminder of loved ones



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Lynda Hunter, of Dallas, displays one of her homemade memory quilts. Hunter first crafted a memory quilt of a late relative using pieces of his clothing to deal with her grief. Now, she is making the quilts for profit.

Preserving memories

By REBECCA BRIA
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Lynda Hunter is proof that every cloud has a silver lining.

After an immediate family member died last year, Hunter began the difficult task of sorting through his belongings. Because she wasn't ready to give away his clothes, she cut them up instead.

The Dallas woman crafted a homemade memory quilt of her late relative using pieces of his clothing to deal with her grief. Now, she is making the quilts for profit and trying to turn a negative experience into a positive one.

"The idea of creating a memory quilt came to me after I suffered the loss of a loved one and needed a way to preserve the memories of our time together," Hunter said. "This became an outlet for me to express my

grief as well as provide the much-needed healing. These quilts offer comfort when we need that special connection with someone who isn't with us anymore."

About 30 years ago, Hunter started showing horses and needed blankets for them. Since horse blankets were expensive, she decided to sew one. She enjoyed it and became hooked on sewing, later making clothes for her own children, Jennifer, 25, and Michael, 22.

"The fact they grew so quick and the clothing was so expensive, I decided to try my own hand at it," she said.

Having started Cloth and Needle Creations in her home 11 years ago, Hunter sewed draperies and custom clothes and performed alterations. Seven years ago, she began making children's clothes in place of draperies and took her business online. The business is now expanding to include memory quilts.

See MEMORIES, Page 8



Lynda Hunter's memory quilts can include a photo like this one of a late relative. Hunter does this by printing a digital photo onto the fabric.

BACK MOUNTAIN MAN RESTORING DIESEL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE

Bringing Vulcan Engine No. 4385 back to life

By REBECCA BRIA
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It's only a matter of time until Vulcan Engine No. 4385 once again roars in its birthplace.

The very last known Vulcan diesel electric locomotive is in the Wyoming Valley. And after years of standing dormant, the engine will stay here and be restored to its original condition — thanks to George Spohrer, of Dallas.

The 81-year-old Spohrer is serving as project coordinator for the restoration of the Vulcan "Iron Hammer" Engine No. 4385. The retired attorney has experience in restoring train engines and will oversee fundraising and revivification efforts for the Vulcan engine.

"I wanted to preserve it, at least the memory of it, because for 105 years Wilkes-Barre produced a product found throughout the world," Spohrer said.

Vulcan Pride, Ltd., affiliated with the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority, is holding the "Spotlight on Pride: A 1940s Gala" from 5 to 10 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, at Best Western Genetti Hotel and Conference Center in Wilkes-Barre to raise money for the restoration of the Vulcan "Iron Hammer" Engine No. 4385. The gala will feature



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

George Spohrer, of Dallas, with a painting of him as engineer of his Henschel and Son anthracite coal engine built in 1936 in Germany. Dallas artist Sue Hand painted the work. Spohrer and his six children operated the engine at Marney Railroad at the site on weekends from 1963 to 1972.

food and 1940s music from "The Statesmen" and a "Boogie Woogie" dance competition. Though not required, attendees are encouraged to wear 1940s-era attire. Spohrer's love for trains began when

HOW TO HELP

"Spotlight on Pride: A 1940s Gala," a benefit for Vulcan "Iron Hammer" Engine No. 4385

When: Saturday, April 12, 5 to 10 p.m.

Where: Best Western Genetti Hotel and Conference Center, Wilkes-Barre

Cost: \$60 individual, \$100 couple, \$30 student with valid college ID. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Call 408-4162 or 408-4158.

Tax-deductible donations may be sent to Vulcan Pride Ltd., 16 Luzerne Ave., Suite 202, West Pittston, PA 18643.

he was a boy. His uncle, William Baker, worked as a foreman of engines for the Lehigh Valley Railroad and took his young nephew for rides around the local railyards, thrilling the young Spohrer and heightening his interest in trains.

In 1960, Spohrer purchased a Henschel and Son anthracite coal engine built in 1936 in Germany. He restored the engine and bought one mile of railroad track near the Susquehanna River in Plains Township. He then built an engine house and a station and acquired two passenger cars. Beginning in 1963,

See VULCAN, Page 6



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