

Viet Nam Combat Veteran Making a difference in Iraq!

As Printed in the Community Journal in January 2008

By Chuck Gibson

The 101st Airborne was an all volunteer combat trained, highly skilled unit of professional soldiers placed directly in “harm’s way” in Viet Nam. Chuck Donabedian served as a proud member during 1965-1966. Forty years later, in 2005, the men of the 101st Airborne were again placed directly in harm’s way; this time in Iraq. The Loveland man adopted them and made it his personal mission to make their mission a little more comfortable.

“I thought: Oh man we’re in this thing. What can we do to make things a little easier,” said Donabedian.

He went on-line and found *Anysoldier.com*-a site dedicated to identifying the needs of soldiers so citizens can help. Donabedian located a soldier named Josh Walker, who had written on behalf of his platoon. His platoon was the 101st Airborne. He wrote to him and sent a care package.

“I sent a pile of snacks like comfort food and individual wrapped hard candies for them to give to the kids,” he said. “I started trying to send something on a monthly basis.”

He did this out of his own pocket without reaching out to the community to raise funds. Walker had some limited e-mail access and they continued to communicate as often as possible. They built a personal relationship and when the platoon returned

home to Ft. Campbell, Kentucky in 2006, Donabedian was there to welcome them. He took the whole troop (18 guys) out for steak dinner.

“Those guys can eat,” he remembered without mentioning how much it cost him. “I was really impressed. These were proud young men, very high morale; a very tight, cohesive unit. It made me want to do more.”

He promised a Christmas party for them and their spouses, or girlfriends. When he delivered on the promise, he was told they already had a warning order to ship out to Iraq again in 2007. They had been gone for one year, home for two months and would be leaving again for a 15 month assignment in Iraq-back in harm’s way!

“Being a combat veteran, I feel it every time,” he said. “If you don’t have empathy for another person going into combat, you must be missing a gene.”

Taking action to help others is not new to Donabedian. As a pilot for more than 10 years, he volunteers his flying skills with “Life Flight” to help patients get the medical care they need. He once disarmed a “misguided” protester who threatened corporate board members with a hand-grenade. Now his primary focus is to help the fighting men in Iraq.

“It’s all about helping solve problems they can’t really solve themselves,” he said. “Like communication with family, or something as simple as a granola bar. The purpose of www.det3.us is to do everything possible to support the brave young warriors of A-Troop.”

They’ve been deployed and are in Iraq again. He already sent packages at the end of the November and again on the 14th and 21st of December. He’s living up to his personal commitment to do more to make things easier for them! He formed the DET 3 Foundation to honor the men he served with in Viet Nam and subsequently established the web site to support the men of A-Troop in Iraq.

“Boots, socks, basic meals and weapons; that’s what the military does,” he said. “We have to keep sending them human touches. Half a world away from your family with your life at risk-thinking about family-you don’t know if you’ll ever hold them again.”

His plan is to pay to establish wireless internet access at their site in Iraq so they

If you wish to donate please make check payable to:

**The Det 3 Foundation, Zimmerman& Co., CPA’s,
1080 Nimitzview, Suite 400,
Cincinnati, OH 45230**

More information at: www.det3.us or www.anysoldier.com

You can also make a difference by sending cards and letters to the men.

ADDRESS THEM TO:
1SG MICHAEL A. MAGNUS (D3F)
HHT 1-75 CAV
2BCT, 101ST ABN DIV (AASLT)
UNIT # 43485
APO AE 09344-3485

can send e-mail home and get a quick reply. Human touch. Besides simple needs, like moist towelettes, munchies and phone cards, he is working on providing several computers and some exercise equipment to use when they are not on patrol.

“Bumper stickers are really nice, but they can’t eat them,” says Donabedian. “Here’s a way to really support them. Every penny goes to the troop.”

A note in every package says: “Thanks for all your doing. Let us know what you need.”

“These are our kids. It’s a way to say there are a lot of people back home who care. You are not alone,” he said. “We sure as hell didn’t get that message during Viet Nam!”

Like everybody else, he’s concerned about what will happen when the holidays are over. He’s asking for your help, but he’s committed to getting something to them all year.

He told them: “You’ll be getting something all year long, if I have to hand carry it.”