

842nd Engineer Company Soldiers save lives of Iraqi boys



842nd Soldiers who helped save the lives of four Iraqi boys on Aug. 13, 2003. Front row from left; Spec. Robert Carr, Spec. Jay Burns, Private 1st Class Ryan Batt, Spec Tyler Lusk; back row from left, Spec. Bryan Batién, Spec. Fredrick Maseman, Sgt. Nathan Hedin, Staff Sgt. Timothy Mercy and Sgt. John Heinert.

Today's history is a reprint from "THE BLACK HILLS PIONEER/842ND HOME AT LAST" published July 2004. The story, "HEROS WITHOUT HESITATION" by 1st Lt. Tom Nelson.

BAGHDAD - They are trained to build roads, but quick reactions by several South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers helped save the lives of four Iraqi children.

On August 13, 2003, the soldiers in 1st Platoon of the 842nd Engineer Company used their lifesaving skills to help four Iraqi children who were wounded by an unexploded ordinance that detonated when the children attempted to move it. At approximately 9:30 a.m. on August 13th a Soldier from the 1st Armored Division (1st ID) asked Spec. Jay Burns of the 842nd if he could assist in retrieving some children injured by an explosion on the other side of the wall that surrounded them. Without hesitation, Burns drove over to the location of the wall where the children waited for help. Burns later said, "It felt good to actually do something for the people."

After waiting for clearance to cross over, Burns lifted the 1st Armored Soldier up on the wall. He grabbed children, one at a time from the 1st ID Soldier and handed them to other soldiers that had arrived at the scene. Spec. Bryan Batién and Spec. Robert Carr of the 842nd were next to arrive at the wall. Both soldiers had training as combat lifesavers. Batién took the first child and started to administer first aid. The child was suffering from severe wounds to his entire body. This child was by far

the most critical. The blast had taken away flesh and muscle from his leg, torn flesh from his face and created a large abdominal wound. Dressing to the abdominal wound had already been applied, so Batien proceeded to treat his remaining injuries.

Sgt. Nathan Hedin, 842nd assisted him. He applied numerous pressure dressings to the wounds to slow the bleeding. While Batien and Hedin treated the wounds, Carr ran to the nearby medical aid station to notify the ambulance of the incident. As the wounds of the first child were being treated, the remaining children were brought over the wall one at a time. Sgt. John Heinert, Spec. Fredrick Maseman and Spec. Tyler Lusk, offered their help to get the children to a shaded area to be treated. "When I saw the first child, I thought he was going to die right there in his father's arms," Maseman said. "I'll never forget the way the kids were looking at us as we helped them."

The second child over the wall had a punctured lung. This child was also brought to Batien who immediately treated the wound. The child also had extensive cuts and was suffering from shock. Before the ambulance arrived, the soldiers from the 1st ID took the most severely injured child in their vehicle to be evacuated by air. Without a chance to focus completely on the care of the first two children, the third child arrived. Batien quickly assessed the child's wounds and found multiple wounds throughout his body. He was also suffering from shock. The fourth child arrived with one entry wound and some minor cuts. Even though his injuries were minor, he was extremely terrified by the incident. The Soldiers tried their best to calm him down and assure him that his friends and siblings were going to be safe. The ambulance finally arrived and took the second and third children to the aid station to be evacuated by air. The vehicle that took the first child returned and took the last child to the aid station.

Batien remarked later that he often wondered if he would ever remember the training that he received if he ever encountered something like this. "It was probably one of the worst things I've ever seen and was a reality check for me," he said. Now, he no longer has those doubts, nor do any of those involved wonder how they would react to a life-threatening situation. "It was a real eye opener. It's all for real. It's still a dangerous place." Said Private 1st Class Ryan Batt. The incident impacted everyone involved in the rescue efforts. "When you see kids like that you realize kids are kids wherever they are. It makes you glad that our kids do not have to live in condition like this," Carr remarked.

The last report received on the children stated that they were all alive and recovering at home. The parents were grateful that the Soldiers of the 842nd Engineer Company were there to help care for their children.

Duke Doering
CW5 (ret.)
Historian