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Phone/Fax:  
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publish@justthefacts.net

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## Returning soldier tells Neighborhood Watch of in Iraqi war

Despite the horrors, a Hoopeston man said his time in serving in the Iraqi war was "the most enriching experience of my life."

Sgt. Nathan Wells spoke at the April 4 Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting after having spent more than a year training and fighting in the war.

"It was the most awakening year of my whole life," Wells said. "I would do it again."

Wells, a member of the 1544th Transport National Guard unit stationed in Paris, enlisted in 1998, following in the footsteps of his grandfathers, one who served at Normandy and the other who fought in the Philippines.

Like many other young enlistees, Wells thought the service offered good benefits, especially for college. The education he got far exceeded book learning.

Before going to Iraq, Wells trained in Paris, Marseilles and at Fort McCoy in Wisconsin. His unit's first stop overseas was Italy. "That was the first wake-up call because no one spoke English over there," he said. The next stop was Kuwait for a month of training. Looking at the large expanses of sand dotted with oil refineries, "you knew you were in a whole different world," he said. As different as that world was, "once you go to Iraq, Kuwait is a



Sgt. Nathan Wells, center, talks with Ted Morris and John Hanson following last week's Hoopeston Neighborhood Watch meeting.

cakewalk."

Short of armored vehicles, Wells' unit created makeshift armor of plywood and sandbags and as they crossed the border from Kuwait into Iraq, soldiers saw oil refinery fires on the horizon - "kind of like you're going on a little trip through hell," he said.

The day after their arrival, Wells' unit underwent their first mortar attack and learned that evening that a fellow soldier died in the attack. "That was a very poignant wake-up call," he said. "You do everything you can in our power to bring everybody back alive."

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That was the first time Wells had to deal  
with the

See **SOLDIER** on other side

## **Soldier** continued from other side

death of a fellow soldier. There would be others. On May 23, a car bomb killed another comrade. "September was a particularly bad month" with two soldiers killed in a mortar attack. On Oct. 6, the group lost their fifth soldier when Jessica Cawvey

was killed by a roadside bomb.

Coping with the loss of fellow soldiers, sometimes seeing them vaporized, was difficult to cope with but provided a united goal. "We all had a common struggle there - stay alive," he said.

While in Iraq, Wells said his unit did not interact much with the citizens there. Wells and his unit would see children on the roadside wanting

candy and the unit would use locals to do jobs like running garbage trucks and other labor.

Wells declined to state his position on the war but said the battle has helped the Iraqi people. "It's helping the Iraqi people, the disenfranchised Shiia people," he said.

Beside learning skills from his military training, Wells has brought home other skills, including not taking things for granted and worrying less about some things. "There are some small things you don't need to worry about and things you need to appreciate," he said.

While Wells would return to Iraq, his immediate plans do not include that. Wells has reenlisted for three years but plans to attend the University of Illinois-Chicago where he will major in political science

## ★ Police News ★

No tickets or injuries were reported in an at 4:38 p.m. Saturday at Sixth St. and East Penn.

The incident was first considered criminal damage to property but after further investigation found that it was a hit-and-run accident.

Bradley E. Thompson of Hoopeston, in a 1989 Chevrolet, was southbound on sixth, turned too sharply and hit an electric pole. Thompson continued westbound and did not report the accident to police.

**Kathy J. Stahl**, of Hoopeston, was treated and released from Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital after an accident at 4:33 p.m. Sunday.

Police said Stahl, in a 1996 Jeep, backed from a driveway into the path of a 1998 Dodge Ram driven by Aaron K. Totheroh of Wellington. Totheroh told police he stopped at the intersection of Seventh Ave. and West Main, turned to go eastbound and stopped while Stahl continued backing up.

No tickets were issued.

A cell phone was brought to the police station at 8:30 p.m. Sunday. The phone was later identified and claimed by the owner.

## Unidentified man dies in crash

A 21-year-old man was pronounced dead at 6:14 a.m. Monday at the scene of a collision between a car and a semi. The crash occurred on State Route 49 south of Rankin.

The name of the victim is not being released pending notification of next of kin.

An inquest will be scheduled at a later date.

## New Books at the Library

### Non-fiction:

The Last Ridge: the Epic Story of the U.S. Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division and the Assault on Hitler's Europe by McKay Jenkins

Pearl Harbor by National Geographic

World War IL, the Allied Counteroffensive 1942-1945...the Documents, Speeches, Diaries and Newspaper Reporting that Defined World War II - Times Books

Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War by Douglas Brinkley

Reflections; Life After the White House by Barbara Bush (large print)

Sylvia Browne's Book of Dreams by Sylvia Browne

Forever Ours: a Forensic Pathologist's Perspective on Immortality and Living: a Collection of

## Obituaries

**JAMES** - Elizabeth Jean Ross James, 92, of Rossville died at 4:27 a.m. Sunday, April 10, 2005 at Provena United Medical Center, Danville. A celebration of life service will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday at Rossville United Methodist Church. Burial will be in Jordan Cemetery, Pence, Ind. Visitation will be 4-8 p.m. Tuesday at Sunset Funeral Home, Danville and 10-11 a.m. Wednesday at the church.

## Weather

Showers likely today and tonight. High 62, low 45. Tomorrow, chance of rain. High 60, low 46.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service, (217) 283-6221.

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