

# Fallen Hero Honored by Engineer Regiment and Soldier-Artist

By Mr. Christian DeLuca

**D**uring ENFORCE 2007, the Engineer Regiment honored one of its own by dedicating the new state-of-the-art Counter Explosive Hazards Center (CEHC) to Sergeant First Class (SFC) Paul R. Smith, an 11th Engineer Battalion Soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice when his task force was violently attacked by enemy forces near the Baghdad International Airport on 4 April 2003. Hastily forming a defense with the men and equipment he had available, Smith braved hostile enemy fire in order to engage the attacking force and evacuate wounded Soldiers. Two years later, on 4 April 2005, SFC Smith was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for "...acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty..."<sup>1</sup>

It seemed appropriate to Fort Leonard Wood officials to dedicate the CEHC facility, which is "designed to find solutions to the most prolific and dangerous threat to our Army,"<sup>2</sup> to SFC Smith, "who epitomizes everything we look up to in a Soldier, sapper, and leader and who all of the Engineer Regiment looks up to as a hero."<sup>3</sup>

During the dedication ceremony, a Medal of Honor flag, presented by President George W. Bush to SFC Smith's widow Birgit, was on display. In addition, she unveiled two paintings dedicated to the building. One of the paintings, entitled "The Firefight in the Courtyard," depicts the battle that took Smith's life. It was painted by Patrick



**An oil painting of SFC Paul R. Smith by military artist CW2 William Smock was dedicated to the CEHC, Fort Leonard Wood, during ENFORCE 2007.**

Haskett, an Army veteran and military artist, and dedicated by BAE Systems, a contractor that produces defense systems for the military. The second is a portrait of Smith in his desert camouflage uniform, painted and dedicated by Chief Warrant Officer 2 (CW2) William Smock, 1-163d Field Artillery Battalion, Indiana Army National Guard. Smock presented a second portrait to Birgit Smith.

The Chief of Staff at the United States Army Engineer School had met CW2 Smock while deployed to Iraq, and when the idea came about to hang a portrait of SFC Smith in the CEHC building, Smock's name was the first to come to

mind to paint it. An e-mail was sent to Smock, asking him if he would be interested in painting SFC Smith's portrait. After reading what had been written about Smith, Smock responded saying that he would paint two portraits—an oil painting to hang in the CEHC building and a watercolor painting to be presented to Birgit Smith.

Although Smith's was the first portrait Smock has done to honor a fallen Soldier, the National Guardsman—who is an elementary art teacher in civilian life—has been painting for Soldiers for some time now.

Smock has been a part of the Indiana Army National Guard since he joined the 113th Engineer Battalion in 1971. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1976 and worked his way up the ranks to lieutenant colonel. Unable to progress from there—and not ready to get out

of the military—Smock decided to resign his commission as a lieutenant colonel in April 2004 to become a warrant officer to deploy to Iraq. He had friends who were deploying overseas, and he wanted to go too. As a radar warrant officer, he could stay in the Indiana National Guard and deploy with his unit to Iraq.

Smock was finally scheduled to be deployed to Iraq at the beginning of 2005, with the 139th Field Artillery. So at Christmas in 2004, he told his children not to buy him anything because he wouldn't be able to take it with him. But they got him something anyway—a calendar, filled with family pictures.



**This watercolor portrait was painted by CW2 William Smock and presented to SFC Paul R. Smith's wife Birgit Smith.**

When he saw them, he started to cry. He turned to January and saw a picture he hadn't seen in 20 years. And as he flipped through the months, tears were streaming down his face as his mind replayed the events in the photos.

In Iraq, CW2 Smock ran a Q 36 radar at night to locate enemy mortar and rocket positions. And during the day, to help pass the time, he began painting landscapes with a small watercolor set that a teacher friend had sent him. He looked at his paintings of Radar Hill, where his unit was located, and he looked at the calendar his children had given him, and he decided to make a calendar for each of the 15 Indiana National Guardsmen. After finishing the first 12 paintings, he sent them to his daughter to have the calendars made. (As it turned out, he not only painted calendars for Soldiers in his unit but also for Soldiers from the five battalions and the firemen stationed in the same area.)

CW2 Smock painted the calendars for Soldiers to have for their enjoyment, as a memory of a part of their life they will not forget. It was his way of saying thank-you to them for serving our country. His dedication to his country,

as well as to his fellow Soldiers, make him an inspiring example of what it means to be a citizen-Soldier. 

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*Photos by Christian DeLuca.*

#### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> SFC Paul R. Smith's Medal of Honor citation. See *Engineer*, July-September 2005, back cover, for complete citation.

<sup>2</sup> CEHC building dedication remarks by MG William H. McCoy, Commanding General, U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center and Fort Leonard Wood/Commandant, United States Army Engineer School, 23 May 2007.

<sup>3</sup> CEHC building dedication remarks by LTC Kent Savre, CEHC director, 23 May 2007.