

Clear The Way

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As I make my way around the Regiment, one of my key messages is that this Regiment of engineers is both a profession and a family—driven to serve the maneuver commander and solve his most complex problems as engineers. The holidays in November reminded us of the importance of family on many levels. From Veterans Day to Thanksgiving, we began the month by honoring our special family of veterans ... and ended it by celebrating the blessing of our immediate family at Thanksgiving.

At the holidays, the sense of family drives us to extraordinary measures. We travel great distances to regain that sense of belonging that only comes with being around family. Kids travel home; parents travel to see the kids. Leaders within our formations—and their families—put personal plans aside to be with their Army family no matter where... from our major Army installations to the most remote combat outposts in-theater. As I visited the mess halls on Fort Leonard Wood and served heaps of turkey, ham, and roast beef (I only do the meat) to the youngest members of our profession, it struck me that they have no idea where they will be spending the next Thanksgiving. That's the uncertainty and the excitement of our profession. But, there is an equally exciting and reassuring constant. No matter where a Soldier will be next year, they will be with family...if not with blood relatives, then with their Army Engineer Family. As one young AIT Soldier said, "That is what makes this bearable. I know that these guys (his 21B OSUT buddies) will be with me no matter where."

Achieving and sustaining that sense of family is vitally important to this Regiment and, frankly, we have faltered a bit in the wake of modularity's reorganization and restationing of forces. The fractured manner in which we have had to deploy units to meet demands—breaking apart our battalion formations—adds incredible friction to our efforts to maintain that sense of family, particularly among our young engineer Soldiers. It is time for extraordinary measures!

The Army enjoys the support of many fine private organizations. In particular, for many years our Regiment has received outstanding support from the Army Engineer Association (AEA), who has informed me they are shifting their focus in the future to the following areas:

- Providing programs and information geared toward young Soldiers.



- Studying how to better recognize outstanding performance inside our platoon and company formations. One option is by perhaps adding a level of de Fleury below the bronze award that battalion leaders can use to recognize excellence among our youngest Soldiers.
- Exploring ways to take care of our wounded engineers by searching for potential future employment opportunities that capitalize on their engineer skills.
- Exploring ways to take care of the families of our Fallen Engineers by keeping them connected to regimental and unit events, and act as a conduit for getting them any support they need from existing Solider and family support organizations.

I'd like to turn now to a second vitally important initiative designed to honor our family of engineers in a profound way...by honoring the sacrifice of our Fallen Engineers from OEF and OIF. The AEA is proposing, and offering to donate to the installation, a beautiful monument to be erected to honor those engineers who gave their all in support of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The monument will be made of "Missouri Red Granite" fashioned in a T-Wall design that will bear the names of our Fallen Engineers. This project has received initial approval to be placed in the Engineer Memorial Grove where our Sapper Statue and our tribute to engineer Medal of Honor recipients now stand. Engineer Memorial Grove is where our youngest Soldiers—new entrants into our profession—come to get pinned with the Regimental Crest. It is where many reunions gather to pay tribute to their own...it is a place that I consider the headwaters of our Regiment and profession. This monument has been specifically designed so that additional sections can be added as this war continues; each year at ENFORCE the new names will be added and the Soldiers memorialized. While support for such worthy goals is always voluntary, I am confident the mainstay for support to this effort will come from the Regiment—vice corporate or private sponsorship.

See page 5 for an artist's rendering of the proposed monument. The goal is to unveil the first sets of T-Walls at ENFORCE this April. Essayons! Lead to Serve!