

# 'Screaming Eagle' in Desert Storm

"The Air Force and the armor were the thunder of Desert Storm," General H. Norman Schwarzkopf stated, "while the 101st Airborne Division was the lightning."

G-Day, the day selected to commence the ground war in Iraq and Kuwait, was so secret that it was not transmitted by even the most secure means. It happened on Feb. 24, 1991, and Brian Lesslie was driving his HUMM-V vehicle as part of a convoy spearheading a drive deep into Iraq to establish a refueling point for the aircraft of the division.

Brian S. Lesslie was born in Trenton on May 14, 1969, attended Hamilton Township schools, graduating from Nottingham High School in 1987. In May, 1989, he enlisted in the U.S. Army for a four-year hitch. After basic training and mechanic school at Ft. Leonard Wood, he was assigned to A Battery 2nd Battalion, 44th Air Defense Artillery attached to the 101st Air Assault Division at Ft. Campbell, Ky.

The "Screaming Eagles," as the 101st was known, had distinguished itself at Normandy and Bastogne in

---

## VETERAN PROFILE

### Nicholas Loveless

---

World War II and had a reputation for its fighting ability. Brian was in charge of the vehicle maintenance of his unit in addition to being capable of all the duties of a combat infantryman.

On Aug. 2, 1990, Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait and quickly pushed their way to the Saudi Arabia border. On request for military assistance from Saudi Arabia, President Bush ordered combat forces to the Arabian Gulf, and Operation Desert Shield was under way.

The 101st Airborne was placed on the alert, and on Sept. 18, 1990, left its base at Ft. Campbell for the Persian Gulf. It arrived at Bahrain and then went to King Fahd International Airport, where it established a base camp and prepared for whatever lay ahead.

Brian recalls, "When we got off the

planes at King Fahd Airport the ground temperature was 112 degrees and it felt like being in front of a hair blow dryer. It was a dry heat, and even though we perspired, it would dry right away. We did get relief when it would cool down to 75 degrees. Our camp was adjacent to King Fahd, and consisted of about 2,000 tents that had been put up by the Arabs, and was known as "Fort Camel," and we were there for the next few months."

Between September and January, 1991, negotiations between the United Nations and Iraq continued with little progress, and Saddam Hussein refused to vacate Kuwait. U.N. forces in the meantime were building up troops and supplies in the event of an outbreak of war, which was beginning to appear imminent.

On Jan. 12, Congress adopted a resolution allowing President Bush to go to war, and on Jan. 15 the U.N. deadline expired. On Jan. 17, President Bush announced that Operation Desert Storm had begun, and the air attacks against Iraq began as eight Apache helicopters of the 101st penetrated Iraq's airspace to knock out Iraqi radar around the capital of

Baghdad, paving the way for bombers.

"In the meantime," Brian continues, "we had moved from Camp Camel to a tactical assembly area called Camp Campbell near Rafha on the border of Iraq in Saudi Arabia. The Iraqis were being pounded by our air forces and I don't know how they could have held out for so long. We knew that sooner or later we would be going into Iraq.

"Water was no problem, as we always had plenty of bottled water, and our meals were MREs three times a day (meals ready to eat). They weren't too bad and I'm sure were an improvement over the old World War II K-rations. We would drop the vacuum-packed bag into hot water to heat it up, and there was dried fruit and even chewing gum in the pack. We never had any beer or alcohol because we had to abide by the country's custom, which prohibited alcohol."

By the end of January, there were more than 470,000 UN troops in the Gulf and 40,000 sorties had been flown in the air campaign. General Schwarzkopf intended to reduce the effectiveness of the Iraqi army by 50 percent before the ground war began. As a ploy, the Navy sailed within firing range of Kuwait to appear that an amphibious landing would take place there.

The role of the 101st Division would be to use its fleet of helicopters, Cobras, Kiowas, Apaches, Black Hawks and Chinooks, to spearhead into Iraq and cut off Saddam's main supply route between Baghdad and Kuwait, and to isolate the Republican Guards in Kuwait.

Thursday, May 18, 1995



Brian S. Lesslie in his HUMM-V on the first day of the ground war, near the border of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, in February of 1991.

Thursday, May 18, 1995

"When the ground war began," Brian continues. "I drove my Hummer in a convoy from Camp Campbell across the border into Iraq and 90 miles north toward Baghdad. Our objective was to set up a refueling point for our aircraft. The Marines moved into Kuwait, and we were preparing to head northeast to cut off the Republic Guards from retreating to Baghdad.

"The cease fire came on the fourth day and that mission was aborted. We spent three weeks in that same spot, which was a forward operating base called Cobra. Our infantry also captured some Iraqi soldiers, who

didn't really appear that they wanted fight.

"When we left Cobra we went back to our base camp at Camp Camel near King Fahd airport, and from there we could see the oil well fires burning in Kuwait. The Republic Guards had set fire to them after the ground war started. We were at our base camp until May 2 when our division went back to Ft. Campbell. We just missed General Schwarzkopf by an hour when we returned to the base camp."

Brian is the first Desert Storm veteran to join VFW Post 3022 in Lawrence. His grandfather, Alvin Shel-

hammer, is a life-long resident of Lawrence and a Navy veteran of World War II. His mother, Beth Ann Lesslie, has been active in the Ladies Auxiliary of the VFW Post, and the county and state levels. In 1990, she served as department president, and at the height of her homecoming celebration in September, 1990, she received the shocking news that the 101st Division was ordered to the Gulf War.

Among Brian's military awards are the Army Commendation Medal with one cluster, Southwest Asia Campaign Medal, Liberation of Kuwait Medal and National Defense Medal. In May, 1993, he was discharged

See PROFILE, Page 4A

## Profile

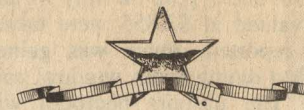
Continued from Page 2A

from the Army, and on Oct. 8, 1994, was married to Wray Anne Mosley of Palmyra, MO, who he met while he was stationed at Ft. Leonard Wood. They currently reside at 330 Sandalwood Avenue in Hamilton Township, and Brian is employed at Trap Rock Industries in Kingston.

Brian is active in sports and particularly enjoys fishing and street hockey. He feels strongly about the VFW organization and its ideals and objectives and regrets that time does not permit him to be as active with Post 3022 as he would like.

Reflecting back over his military experiences, Brian feels that the Gulf War was won so quickly by our superior technology. He is proud to have served, and believes that the interests of the United States and our UN allies would have been better served if UN forces would have been permitted to go on to Baghdad and secure all of Iraq. If there is ever a time in the future when it again becomes necessary to serve, he has no second thoughts about doing so.

*The Veterans Memorial Committee is asking veterans from World War II and other conflicts to provide a photograph in uniform, along with their name, present address, branch of service and unit, where and when they served, their principal assignment and summary of their service. Their individual experiences or unusual stories are also welcomed. All photographs will be returned. Families of deceased veterans are also encouraged to submit articles. All materials should be sent to The Lawrence Township Veterans Memorial Committee, P.O. Box 55966, Trenton, N.J. 08638. Inquires may be made by calling 882-9108.*



### WEEKLY ROLL OF MEMORIAL DONORS

Marian and Salvatore Morreale, Sr.  
Edna and Lester Reed  
Charles M. Stackhouse  
Ruth and Sidney Banach  
Robin and Gary A. Karpf  
Clair V. Canavan  
Frank J. Novatkowski  
Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Wilson  
Peter O. Lawson- Johnston  
Muriel and John Murphy  
Robin and Bruce Bedford III  
Jacqueline and Michael O'Connor-  
Beverly and John Kearns  
Groendyke Associates, P.C.  
Ann and William Walker  
Margaret and Joseph Miale  
Theresa and John Drytrow  
Dorothy and Thomas BartarisvRobe  
rt J. Bugdal  
Lawrence OB/GYN Associates, P.A.  
The Grossi Family  
Irene and Lester Hohman  
Aldo A. Micai  
Donna and Thomas Macheda  
Patricia and Paul McNelly  
Robert B. Martin  
Lily and William Brown  
Beverly and Vincent Lombardo  
Irene P. Kovacs  
Joyce and Donald B. Krause  
Grace and Harold Lanzoni  
Dr. Robert L. Ceci & Susan Ceci  
Kathleen D. Kinka  
Paul and Gretel Gatterdam, Council-  
woman  
Dorothy H. Smith  
- In Memory of CPO C.J. Smith  
Betty H. Gronikowski