

1st Armored Division soldier doubles as author



Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Sherman explains the importance of an inventory sheet during 1st Brigade's deployment to Kosovo.

Story by Michael Nowinski
Task Force Falcon PAO
Photos courtesy of
Task Force Falcon PAO

CAMP BONDSTEEL, Kosovo – As he directs his crew with a confident mid-western voice, one would never suspect that Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Sherman, 1st Brigade maintenance supervisor, is an author of a book and an outstanding member of his German community. Seventeen years ago neither did he.

After being in the last graduating class of his Franklin, Minn., high school, he joined the Army as a 45E tank mechanic in 1984. Following his six-month training at Fort Knox, Ky., he was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 69th Armored Regiment, at Fort Benning, Ga., for four years, where he quickly moved through the ranks to sergeant.

When he was assigned to the 3rd Armored Division in Gelnhausen, Germany, the young sergeant suffered a bit of culture shock. “When you think of Germany, you think of small villages and farmland, but instead you find a mix of the old country and modern America like you see in Frankfurt.”

During his time with the 3rd AD he got a sense of pride for the unit that he said “...held high expectations and carried them out.” The unit also had a good sense of community, which would be important for Sherman since during his time with the 3rd AD, he would marry his wife Stefanie, a German local.

Only six months after he married, he was called up to deploy to Operation Desert Shield, which totally caught him off guard. “We found the call to deploy somewhat surprising, since the Iron

Curtain was our recent threat,” he related. During his deployment to the Persian Gulf, he kept a daily journal of sights and events he witnessed as a soldier and tank mechanic during the ground campaign. He was never very far from the action, only a couple of kilometers behind the front lines. “It felt like a rush to see a whole division roll through the desert.”

Shortly after the occupation phase of Desert Storm, he returned to Germany. Pretty soon everyone in his hometown wanted to hear about his time during the war. So, with his wife's encouragement, he turned the writings in his journal into a book.

“I wanted to share my experience with my friends and relatives, but it got bigger than that. Everyone wanted to hear about it. I wanted to let everyone know about my experience there,” Sherman explained.

He submitted the final product to the Library of Congress and they gave him a card catalog number. Considering he wanted to distribute the book to the people back home, only a limited number was printed. At his hometown library and city hall, 600 copies of “A Storm Watch” were sold.

Writing a book about his Gulf War experience wasn't the only landmark decision he made after Desert Storm. He decided that Germany would be the perfect place to raise a family. He bought a house in a mostly German neighborhood. “When I go home at night, I'm surrounded by the German community, so I turn into a German and speak my Deutsch. I like the culture and the people there. They're courteous, and the school system there is great... I liked Germany so much that when I

bought my home, my wife and I planned on a European retirement.”

Retirement for Sherman is still a ways off, so for now he'll stick to raising his two boys, Danny, 7, and David, 6, both of whom are students in the German school system and bi-lingual, speaking fluent English and German. “They picked it up pretty well. When I call them up they switch from German to English right away,” said Sherman.

German and English are not the only things his boys are learning. They're picking up on soccer. Although his boys are learning soccer in a country known for its fanaticism for the sport, Sherman said he's trying to instill a little bit of America's pastime in them.

“I'm trying to fill them in to the baseball point of view, see if I can get them to be Little Leaguers.”

Besides the culture and people of Germany, Sherman says there is one other thing he likes about the Friedberg area. There's space to participate in one of his

favorite hobbies — horseback riding. He likes the hobby so much he owns a stable and a brown Norwegian horse that is “...almost as big as a Clydesdale.” The area near the woods of the Mussenberg Castle close to Friedberg gives him the room to ride horses with his wife and sons.

Sherman, the family man and 17-year veteran, said he would never have made it this far without his family and great soldiers. He said he is proud of the 14 soldiers he now supervises in the 1st Brigade Headquarters maintenance platoon. He said, “These guys are the backbone and moving force for Task Force Falcon Headquarters. They have to keep the command group and its elements rolling. These guys are great.”

With a loving family and a supporting chain of soldiers and command, the Gulf War veteran from Franklin, Minnesota, hopes to someday achieve his career goal of making first sergeant.



Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Sherman takes pride in his work and pride in the 16 men and women he works beside. Back row(l-r): Sgt. Mallory, Spc. Thompson, Sgt. Karriker, Pvt. Brown, Spc. Reader, Pfc. Whitbread, Spc. Ward Spc. Stringer, Sgt. Moore and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Cummings. Front row(l-r): Spc. Grimaldi, Pvt. McCalister, Sgt. 1st Class Sherman, Spc. Santiago, Sgt. Evans, Pfc. Rogers and Spc. Urquiza.