



Engineers dedicate memorial, headquarters to fallen

By Heather Graham, Sentinel News Editor

A granite memorial and blocks engraved with their names and dates of death stand as witness to the sacrifices 11 engineers with the 20th Engineer Battalion made for their country.

On Friday, Family members, friends and Soldiers remembered the high cost of freedom as they dedicated the memorial and renamed the battalion headquarters after Capt. Dennis L. Pintor. Pintor was killed Oct. 12, 2004 when a roadside bomb detonated near his vehicle during a patrol along Route Predator in Iraq.

Specialists Michael Weger and Jaime Moreno also were killed in the incident.

Battalion commander Lt. Col. Pete Andrysiak called the memorial and rededication “a lasting tribute to those who served and paid the last full measure.”

The purpose of the ceremony was to remember the sacrifice of these Soldiers, provide a dedicated place and build esprit de corps, Andrysiak said.

The idea for the memorial developed after Andrysiak saw Sgt. Luke Boatright’s father at the 1st Cavalry Division Memorial rededication in May. The commander wondered how many other Lumberjack Families were there.

“I knew this battalion needed a memorial,” he said.

Before becoming the Army’s first combat engineer battalion under the Army’s modularity concept, the 20th Engineer Battalion was part of the 1st Cavalry Division.

Lumberjack Soldiers served with the 1st Cav. Div. in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

The new memorial is a large granite stone engraved with Isaiah 6:8 and set in the courtyard at the battalion headquarters. Each fallen Soldier receives a granite block with the Soldier’s name and date of death. The blocks were placed in front of the memorial.

The first 11 stones were set on Friday and honored Staff Sgt. Abraham Penamedina, Sgt. James Faulkner, Weger, Moreno, Pintor, Boatright, Spc. Joshua Sheppard, Cpl. Jason Beadles, Staff Sgt. Alicia Birchett, Spc. Johnathan Lahmann and Pfc. Theron Hobbs, all of whom lost their lives in the Global War on Terrorism.

Former 1st Cav. Div. 1st Brigade Combat Team commander Brig. Gen. Robert Abrams told the Soldiers they are now part of something special.

During OIF II, Abrams led the 1st BCT to which the 20th Eng. Bn. was attached in Iraq.

“This memorial recognizes heroes from today,” Abrams said. “These are American heroes.”

The general remembered Pinto as “an example of what right looks like in a leader.”

He said the company commander clearly had all the requisite skills of a leader, as well as intangibles – infectious enthusiasm, a love for his Soldiers and he loved being part of a team.

When Pintor, Weger and Moreno were killed, it left a hole in the unit, but the Soldiers rallied and fulfilled their mission.

“The loss was immediately felt,” Abrams said.

Pintor’s Co. B was pulled offline for 24 hours following the incident.

“They went back into action 24 hours later with broken hearts and a little less pep in their step,” Abrams said.

For Abrams, the ceremony and rededication was more about the legacy left behind that is reflected in the memorial and the renamed headquarters.

“This is not about how Dennis died,” Abrams said. “It’s about how he lived.”

Pintor's widow, Stacy, attended the ceremony and thanked the Soldiers for their actions when her husband was killed.

"You reacted, secured the site and retrieved the fallen," she said. "Thank you for your bravery and your courage."

The Gold Star widow offered encouragement for those grieving their losses.

"When we live in the past where we think they are, we miss the present," she said. "The present is where they wait for us."