

## Baghdad Bears

As I write this Bear Note, half of our hospital personnel are located just a few miles outside Baghdad. In the next few days, we'll jump forward and set-up one of our hospital companies. In the meantime, the remainder of our hospital personnel are preparing to move forward.

The drive to Baghdad will be the source of many interesting stories. We departed Camp Victory early in the morning, refueled, and crossed the border before noon. Shortly after crossing the border, we were greeted by waving and cheering children. As we drove north, our forward speeds were limited by rough roads. The last hospital that moved on these roads was plagued by 17 flat tires. Our first flat tire occurred within the first hour after crossing the border. However, the combination of a helpful Marine convoy and quick maintenance team had us back on the road within 20 minutes. Rain clouds appeared and it rained for our first fuel stop in Iraq. I asked the refueler how often it rained; he said this was the first he had ever seen rain. Most times rain would be unwelcome, but on this day it helped keep our engines and tires cool. There were cheering crowds and signs of support all along our drive. We were greeted by a beautiful sunset as we drove north ward, but this was followed by a handful of problems. One Dolly set (pulling a large MILVAN with hospital equipment) developed brake problems which required us to replace it with our spare Dolly. Just as we finished this operation, another Dolly had a catastrophic problem - a wheel broke off! Through resourceful and imaginative problem-solving, the brakes were removed from the first dolly, it was used to replace the broken dolly, and we were ready to roll. We drove through the night and finally arrived at an intermediate point for several hours of sleep. By mid-morning our fuel tanks were full and we drove along the Euphrates River to Baghdad.

After driving over 500 miles of rough roads and through several urban areas, we safely arrived at a forward base with all of our personnel and vehicles. Our tally included only 3 flat tires and the broken dolly. I am very proud of the "Bears" and how well they executed this difficult movement.

The nights are cooler here in the vicinity of Baghdad. Our first night was cool and clear, but last night brought a sand storm. Everyone woke with sand everywhere. It looks like our experience with sand storms at Camp Victory will continue.

I also want you to know about an update to our mailing address. For HHD and A Co soldiers, continue to use the previous address. For BCo, the new address is Rank nd Name, V Corps, 21st Combat Support Hospital, APO, AE 09303-1275. (Drop Camp Victory and change zip code) Mail to the previous address will continue to be forwarded, but this new address will allow faster delivery for B Company soldiers. Phones and email from this location are very difficult. I don't expect much improvement for the next couple weeks, so I'll ask you to keep writing letters. Many soldiers have already written letters that describe their experiences over the past several days and they're on their way. Let me reassure you that the Bears are safe and continuing to set the standard. We'll set-up the hospital in the next couple days and bring the remainder of our soldiers forward.

Stand tall and speak proudly of your "Bear." To an individual, they are performing above all expectations. Thanks for your support and sacrifice.