

Army's UXO-busters 'fire in the hole'

Story and photos by
Pvt. 2 Terri Rorke
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — Looking off into the distance, an anti-tank landmine disintegrates and giant mushroom cloud forms.

The 705th Explosive Ordnance Company, Fort Polk, La. sees this daily. The company uses two of Bagram's ranges to explode landmines, rockets and bombs.

The company is always on call and waits for word of suspected unexploded ordnance and incidents, reporting to the site within 30 minutes. A team leader and member will arrive at the scene, to remove the UXO.

During off-duty hours, the company has one to two hours to report to the scene. Someone is always on stand-by to answer a



"It takes a lot of coordination," said Sgt. Cesar Soto, 705th Explosive Ordnance Detachment, Fort Polk, La., about detonating UXOs.

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Gardez PRT gets quality of life improvements

By Pfc. Christina Carde
11th Public Affairs Detachment

GARDEZ, Afghanistan — "When we arrived here there was close to nothing. It was dark, cold, muddy, there was no running water or electricity, and our team of seven was alone, on a compound practically in the middle of nowhere."

This was life for Sgt. Maj. John, Provincial Reconstruction Team sergeant major, 1st Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group, and his team, during their first days in Gardez.

Even though they were thrown into austere conditions with not much to work with, the PRT in Gardez has made many

accomplishments in the past few months, to improve soldiers' morale and their quality of life.

"Providing force protection was one of our first priorities because the base was out in the open and we were basically defenseless if attacked," said John. "We began to make plans to erect HESCOS around the entire base."

For the PRT's first week in Gardez, they could do little more than plan since guard duty was one of their main priorities.

"For about a week after our arrival, we were the only people occupying the compound," said John. "My team was pulling at least two guard shifts a night for about seven days so naturally,

we were very happy to see the 82nd (Airborne Division) arrive."

With the arrival of the 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., the PRT had more time to focus on their mission.

"Along with the erection of the HESCOS we also built frames for tents and dug wells for running water," said John.

"To start with, the well was no more than a pump that drew water from the ground, but it was a foundation for other luxuries to come," he added.

Some of these luxuries such as flush toilets, showers, a new dining facility, and washing machines and driers have been the

PRT's latest improvements.

"The showers and latrines have only been up and running for a few days now," said John. "The water isn't always hot and sometimes we have low pressure, but we make do."

The dining facility is one of the newest additions that makes life a little easier for the soldiers.

"The old DFAC was just a tent and there was no place for the troops to sit down and enjoy their meals," said John. "The new DFAC just recently completed is hard structured and much larger with tables, benches, heat and electricity so troops can sit down and relax."

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)

Baghdad being bombed

CNN — With U.S. boots on the ground at Saddam International Airport, sustained explosions rocked Baghdad Friday morning, illuminating the darkened capital where the electric power is off and the power of the regime may be fading.

The bombardments came in waves, sometimes with explosions rocking the capital one after another for minutes on end. The bombing began around 2 a.m. Friday (5 p.m. EST Thursday) — one explosion was so powerful it lit up the blacked out capital and a fire then engulfed a structure.

Three hours later, the city shook from more multiple explosions and anti-aircraft fire shot into the sky.

American armored divisions launched the assault on the facility 12 miles from the center of the Iraqi capital as U.S.-led coalition troops advanced on the city.

Isolating Baghdad a possibility

WASHINGTON — Pentagon officials raised the possibility Thursday that coalition forces might try to isolate Baghdad and render the regime of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein “irrelevant,” avoiding urban warfare within the city to topple the government.

Asked at a Pentagon briefing whether coalition forces were gearing up for an urban conflict within Baghdad, Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, suggested that might not be the case.

“The tactical situation could be very different from what we suppose,” Myers said. “And so, I mean, you’re just going to have to be ready for lots of things.”

Other Pentagon officials said the U.S. strategy was not to occupy the entire city, but to seize key objectives.

As for Saddam’s regime, Myers went on to say that “you may have a regime; you may not.”

That, he suggested, was not a pivotal point.

“I use the term irrelevant because at this point, they’re not going to be able to communicate with the people of Iraq; that will all be shut down,” Myers said. “They won’t be able to communicate within certain parts of Baghdad.”

Pentagon: Saddam’s TV spots taped before war

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon said Thursday a U.S. intelligence analysis has concluded that all the appearances of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein shown on Iraqi television since the war began were taped before March 19.

But a spokesman for the CIA said, “The Central Intelligence Agency has not come to that conclusion.” The spokesman added, “We think it is quite likely, but we have reached no such conclusion.”

A senior defense official said the Pentagon analysts said their conclusion was an educated guess that included a careful analysis of tape background, speech patterns and other factors.



Marines take cover Thursday during a battle near Kut, south of Baghdad.

Marines secure key sites on Tigris

KUT, Iraq — The 1st Battalion of the 7th Marines secured two sites Thursday on the outskirts of Kut, an ancient city whose location on the Tigris River about 40 miles south of Baghdad makes it strategically important.

The two locations were a suspected Republican Guard post and an Iraqi air base.

The attacks began Thursday morning, with C Company leading an assault supported by artillery fire on the suspected Republican Guard base and its bunkers.

As they approached the post, the Marines came under small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire.

The Marines responded with even heavier fire from their Mk-19 automatic grenade launchers and .50-caliber machine guns.

Eight Iraqi soldiers, including one de-

scribed as a local commander, were taken into custody, and a number of them were treated for wounds.

From there, the company known as “Suicide Charlie” approached the Iraqi airfield and found it abandoned. Inside, they found a huge cache of weapons, including hundreds of AK-47s.

In addition, they found enough uniforms, backpacks and other gear to outfit hundreds of troops, along with documents, ledgers, notebooks and records.

Rescued POW has first surgery

PALESTINE, W. Va. — Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, rescued early Wednesday from an Iraqi hospital where she was being held prisoner, underwent a successful surgery Thursday on a fractured disc in her back at a hospital in Germany, her parents said.

“They have released the pressure on a nerve and realigned all the discs and put plates and stuff in it; that was because she didn’t have any feeling in her feet,” said her father, Greg Lynch Sr., from his home.

Lynch said that despite reports to the contrary, his daughter’s doctors told him they found no evidence of gunshot wounds or stab wounds.

“There is no injury whatsoever,” he said, adding he did not know how both her legs and her right forearm were broken.

Greg Lynch Sr. said Jessica will have surgery Friday on her arm and legs.

Complex found bulging with food in hungry city

BASRA, Iraq — A giant food distribution complex seized Wednesday by U.S. and British forces in this city grappling with hunger contained massive amounts of food.

A walk through only about 20 percent of the warehouses in the complex revealed that tens of thousands of tons of supplies — including huge quantities of baby milk — were being stored in Iraq’s second-largest city, which has been wracked by a food shortage.

There are vast amounts of food staples, tea, sugar, tires, car batteries and sewing machines in the warehouses.

Critter of the Week:

Baluch Stone Gecko

By Capt. Cory Campora
791st Preventive Medicine Detachment

The Baluch Stone Gecko, *Bunopus tuberculatus*, is a small lizard that is widespread throughout Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. These geckos are nocturnal — hunting at night for insects and hiding by day in rodent burrows, under rocks, or in vegetation. Because they feed upon insects, Baluch Stone Geckos are considered beneficial and should not be harmed. They are not venomous. While Afghanistan has its share of venomous snakes, the country has no venomous lizards. There are only two species of venomous lizards in the world — the Gila Monster and the Mexican Beaded Lizard — that both live in the deserts of the Southwest United States and Mexico.



Baluch Stone Gecko.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR Building: “My Big Fat Greek Wedding.” A young Greek woman falls in love with a non-Greek and struggles to get her family to accept him while she comes to terms with her heritage and cultural identity.



Tomorrow night: Talent Show/Dance at 1430Z.

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
Bagram:	Dust H: 63F L: 44F	Mostly cloudy H: 54F L: 39F
Kandahar:	Dust H: 79F L: 52F	Partly cloudy H: 82F L: 50F
Kabul:	Mostly clear H: 63F L: 39F	Fog H: 55F L: 36F
Uzbekistan:	Mostly cloudy H: 66F L: 36F	Isolated showers H: 69F L: 37F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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Norwegian soldiers prepare an old rifle for explosion here Thursday. C4 is plastered on top of it to help detonation.

EOD, from Page 1

call, and the quick reaction force waits to be tasked.

Two nights ago, the unit was called to get a 120-millimeter rocket launcher.

Once the company retrieves a certain amount of UXOs, they proceed to one of the

two ranges to detonate the ordnance. After a safety briefing is given and the blasting caps, are in place, the team puts in a demolition request.

They then warn all aircraft and the entry check points so they know they are not under attack.

When the demolition request is given,

the team waits 30 minutes before blowing up the ordnance. Thirty minutes is enough time to inform everyone of the scheduled explosion.

The team leader then waits for a final okay to explode the UXO.

Even though the coalition forces here have EODs, 705th is the primary asset.

“Even though (the Estonian EOD) aren’t part of our battalion, they come with us on missions,” said Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Brown, EOD section non-commissioned officer, 705th Explosive Ordnance Company, Fort Polk, La.

The Estonians were out on the range Thursday when Norwegian soldiers set off a series of three UXOs to try out different techniques on exploding mines and rockets.

Team leader, Brown, said this was the first time the coalition forces used the range. They will possibly use it in the future.

“Everybody can use the range, but we are more familiar with it, so we supervise.”

Some coalition forces arrived at Bagram a short time ago including the Royal Thai Army. The Norwegians only arrived here about a month ago. Even though detonating a few UXOs may not seem like much, it fosters alliance between nations.



Photos by Pfc. Christina Carde

Washing machines and dryers are other luxuries the soldiers in Gardez have been able to enjoy lately as part of the improvements the Provincial Reconstruction Team has made to Gardez.

PRT, from Page 1

Aside from a place to eat, the dining facility serves other purposes.

“The DFAC has a television and DVD player so troops can come at the end of the day and enjoy a movie,” said John. “It really contributes to morale.”

Troops in Gardez are also happy with the new DFAC, because it gives them a place to wind down at the end of the day.

“Now that the DFAC is open we have a

place to watch movies and play some cards in the evening rather than just staying in our quarters” said Sgt. Imari Allwood, supply specialist, 2nd Core Material Management Center, Core Support Command, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Now that the basics have been established, the PRT is focusing on improving mobility.

“Mud has been a big problem here because it slows down mobility and hurts morale,” said John. “Soon we will begin to work on a drainage system for the rainfall, and use granite and rocks to build walkways and better parking lots.”

As the PRT continues to make improvements to their base camp, John said he’ll always remember the help the team has received along the way.

“The troops have contributed tremendously to the improvements made here and they have been very patient in waiting for things to get better,” said John. “We are happy to do whatever we can to make life at least a little bit easier for them.”



Lt. Col. Christopher Allen, commander, Provincial Reconstruction Team, Gardez, enjoys a hot meal in the new dining facility.



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)

Slowly but surely



Harvick is currently 10th in points.

ESPN — After placing two drivers in the top-six of the season-opening Daytona 500, Richard Childress Racing is only slightly better now than it was a year ago.

For Childress, however, any improvement is good news. And reason to believe that improvement will continue throughout the 2003 season.

“We’ve made some changes and things seem to be falling into place,” Childress said. “We’re getting there.”

One year ago, through seven races in 2002, Childress had drivers at 22nd,

28th and 31st in the standings. Now, seven races into 2003, he’s got guys in 10th, 19th and 27th.

But even as RCR drivers Robby Gordon, who is in 19th and was 31st last year, and Jeff Green, who is 27th and was 28th last year, are still looking for the vast improvement they were optimistic of at the season’s start, Kevin Harvick has given Childress a contender again.

And Harvick sounds like a competitor again.

“It’s important for me to do well in every race, not any one in particular,” Harvick said. “We still want to win each weekend and we think we can, but we’re also looking at the big picture and the championship. We’ve got to do well and finish well in all the races in order to be at the head table at the end of the year.”

Dale Jr. has dominated Talladega

TALLADEGA, Ala. — Dale Earnhardt Jr. is keeping quiet at Talladega Superspeedway.

After winning three preliminary races in the seven days before the Daytona 500, a failed alternator eliminated him from the main event. Earnhardt Jr. now has little to say before Sunday’s race and his attempt at a fourth straight victory at Talladega.

“They can say or write whatever they want, but I’m not going to talk about winning four in a row,” he said. “I talked too much at Daytona and it jinxed us. Our record speaks loud enough at Talladega.”

That it does.

In six career starts at Talladega, Earnhardt has led five races for 392 laps. He dominated both events a year ago, leading 240 of the combined 376 total laps. No one in the field could catch him in the spring, when he led 133 of 188 laps to earn a \$1 million bonus.

Now the only real question is whether all the parts and pieces on the No. 8 Chevrolet will hold up through the entire Aaron’s 499.

“The Daytona race still bothers me, but we’ll have a new alternator in the car,” he said. “I promise.”

Broken parts are about the only thing that can slow Earnhardt when it comes to restrictor-plate racing.

He inherited his father’s ability to master drafting through traffic on the 2.66-mile oval and is chasing the late Dale Earnhardt’s mark of 10 Winston Cup victories on NASCAR’s longest and fastest track.

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Sports on local Armed Forces Network TV

Saturday’s schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ Houston Astros @ St. Louis Cardinals (live: teams subject to change) 0100Z
- ❖ Totally NASCAR (live) 0600Z
- ❖ SportsCenter (live) 0700Z
- ❖ Boxing: Friday Night Fights - Heavyweights (tape delayed) 0800Z
- ❖ Baseball Tonight (tape delayed) 1100Z
- ❖ MLB: Boston Red Sox @ Baltimore Orioles (tape delayed: teams subject to change) 1300Z
- ❖ Motorcycle Racing: THQ World SuperCross GP (live) 1700Z
- ❖ NASCAR Busch Series: Aaron’s 312 (live) 1900Z

Sunday’s schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ MLS: Los Angeles Galaxy at Columbus Crew (tape delayed) 0000Z
- ❖ ISU Figure Skating World Championships (live) 0200Z
- ❖ SportsCenter @ The Final Four (live) 0400Z
- ❖ Baseball Tonight (live) 0530Z
- ❖ SportsCenter (live) 0600Z
- ❖ ESPNNews (live) 0700Z
- ❖ NFL Europe: Amsterdam Admirals @ Rhein Fire (tape delayed) 0800Z
- ❖ Baseball Tonight (live) 1730Z
- ❖ MLB: Chicago Cubs @ Cincinnati Reds (live: teams subject to change) 1800Z

"Hey Marine, I need to use your hand as a surface to air missile."



kevin_kilgore@hotmail.com

By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support

SPORTS, from Page 5

NASCAR botched Gordon's pass

ESPN — In a surprising admission, NASCAR President Mike Helton acknowledged Tuesday that the sanctioning body erred in scoring one significant and controversial part of Sunday's Samsung/RadioShack 500 at Texas Motor Speedway.

While the gaffe did not directly affect the outcome of the race, it was disconcerting enough that Helton took the unusual step of appearing on Tuesday's weekly NASCAR media teleconference to admit the mistake.

To reconstruct the incident, just short of the race's halfway point, Elliott Sadler spun and crashed on lap 168, bringing out the caution flag. As cars roared off Turn 4 and headed to the start/finish line, race leader Matt Kenseth slowed his No. 17 Ford to allow teammate Kurt Busch, in the No. 97 Ford, and Ricky Rudd, in the No. 21 Ford, to go past him, allowing them to remain on the lead lap.

In the midst of all that, however, the No. 24 Chevrolet of four-time champ Jeff Gordon came through, passed Kenseth and crossed the finish line ahead of Busch and Rudd in an attempt to prevent them from keeping their laps. But, Gordon promptly fell back behind Kenseth and the pace car on the track, thus "giving back" the lead he had taken just seconds before.

NASCAR scored the situation as if Gordon never held the lead, a decision Helton said in hindsight was incorrect.

"Once the 24 crossed the start/finish line, and before being picked up by the pace car, he fell back into line behind the 17 car," Helton said. "As it unfolded, it appeared that the 24's intent was to keep lapped cars down more than to be the leader of the race. So, we were faced with mostly a scoring issue at that point," said Helton.

Newman's late charge enough at Texas

FORT WORTH, Texas — Things finally went right for Ryan Newman on Sunday.

First, he caught a break when half the drivers on the lead lap made green-flag pit stops before a caution flag allowed Newman to make his stop without losing ground.

Then, on his final stop, the 25-year-old racer gambled on changing only two tires, lost the lead to Dale Earnhardt Jr. on the ensuing restart but was able to retake the lead from the crowd favorite with 11 laps to go.

Newman pulled away at the end to win the Samsung/Radio Shack 500 by half the final straightaway.

"It was great when all those lead cars got caught in the pits," Newman said. "I was worried for sure when Junior passed me after the last stop. I thought for sure they would have made their car a little bit better, too."

The tire gamble by last year's top rookie paid off with his second career victory and first since Sept. 15, 2002, in New Hampshire.

"Tires and track position were key, for sure," Newman said. "We didn't think four tires were going to make that much of a difference and we needed to get to the front some way."

Newman, who led four times for 77 laps, appeared to gain con-

trol when he took the lead on lap 224 of the 334-lap event. That came during a caution period — one of 10 in the race — in the middle of a series of green-flag stops.

Tough day for Labonte, Stewart

FORT WORTH, Texas — On the same lap pole-sitter Bobby Labonte was black-flagged Sunday for driving too slowly, something broke in Tony Stewart's engine.

Labonte and Stewart rolled into the pits together after 293 laps of the 334-lap Samsung/Radio Shack 500, ending what was a strange weekend for the Joe Gibbs Racing teammates.

Stewart was in a backup car after the Winston Cup champion's primary No. 20 Chevrolet failed inspection Friday. That car didn't meet exact specifications for an area on the back and was impounded by NASCAR.

Labonte, who won the pole Friday and was among the fastest in practice Saturday, dropped to fourth place on the first lap and never led. Then he ran into real problems.

After initially damaging the No. 18 Chevy in contact with Rusty Wallace earlier, Labonte spun on the backstretch and slid into the wall on lap 251. Even after extended repairs, Labonte couldn't maintain minimum speed and was black-flagged.

"It just wasn't our day," Labonte said. "We got a couple of laps down after getting down with the No. 2 car. We got one of them back and then lost it off of Turn 2."

2003 NASCAR Winston Cup Series standings

Winston Cup Points

1. Matt Kenseth	1090
2. Kurt Busch	935
3. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	924
4. Michael Waltrip	898
5. Jimmie Johnson	885
6. Jeff Gordon	864
7. Tony Stewart	849
8. Ryan Newman	848
9. Ricky Craven	840
10. Kevin Harvick	802
11. Bobby Labonte	784
12. Ricky Rudd	780
13. Mark Martin	773
14. Rusty Wallace	771
15. Dale Jarrett	752
16. Johnny Benson	748
17. Joe Nemechek	741
18. Jeff Burton	740
19. Robby Gordon	737
20. Elliott Sadler	725

2. Greg Biffle	60
3. Casey Mears	56
4. Jack Sprague	50
5. Tony Raines	45

Manufacturers' Championship

1. Ford	45
2. Chevrolet	37
3. Pontiac	27
4. Dodge	23

Top 10 Owner Points (Car No.) Points

1. Mark Martin	935
2. Georgetta Roush	797
3. Joe Gibbs	788
4. Teresa Earnhardt	786
5. Teresa Earnhardt	749
6. Jeff Gordon	743
7. Calvin Wells II	735
8. Joe Gibbs	732
9. Glen Wood	695
10. Rick Hendrick	694

Money

1. Michael Waltrip	\$1,896,856
2. Kurt Busch	1,584,081
3. Jimmie Johnson	1,134,726
4. Dale Earnhardt Jr.	1,116,568
5. Kevin Harvick	1,083,280
6. Matt Kenseth	995,730
7. Mark Martin	951,318
8. Tony Stewart	944,199
9. Jeff Gordon	897,613
10. Bobby Labonte	892,684

Rookie of the Year Points

1. Jamie McMurray	61
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Point System

Points are awarded from 175 for the winner down to 34 points for 43rd place.

Five bonus points are also awarded to the driver who led the most laps during the race.

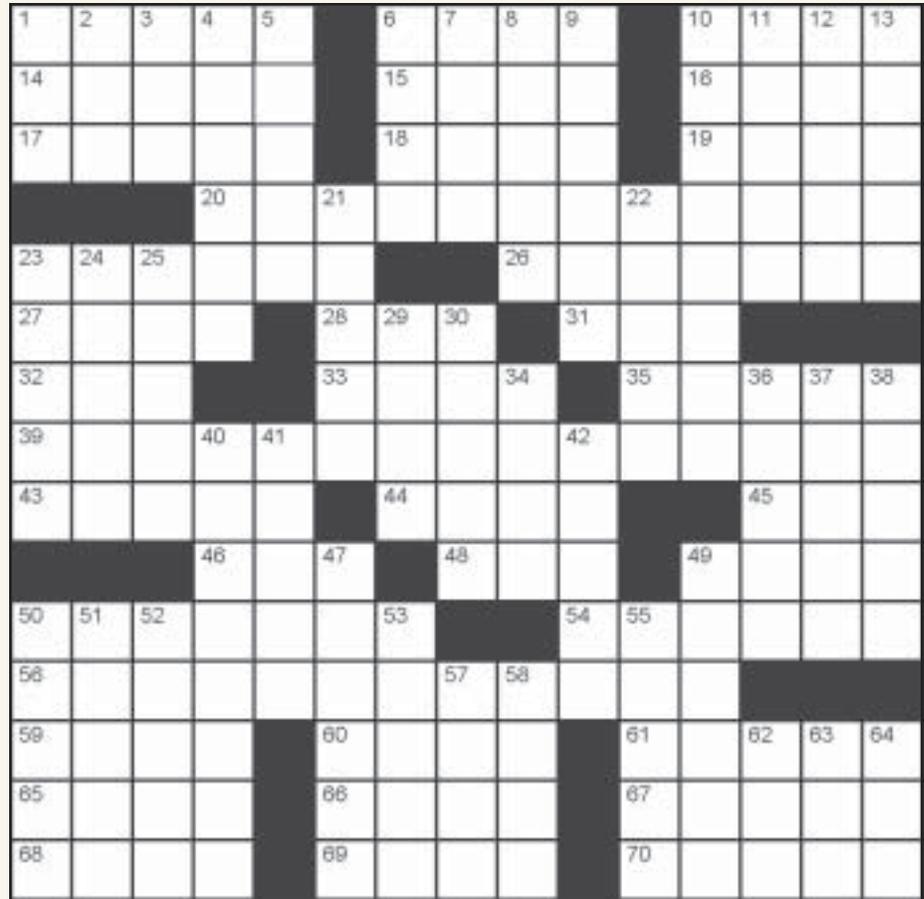
Another five points are awarded to each driver who leads at least one lap during the race.

'60s British Invasion crossword

(Courtesy of QUIZLAND.com)

Across

- 1. Take in or let out
- 6. Dalmatian's marking
- 1. Like two peas in ___
- 14. Swiss miss
- 15. Walk off with
- 16. Burn a bit
- 17. Savory jelly
- 18. Nation in an '80s war
- 19. ___ d'Azur
- 20. Clams for '60s British invaders?
- 23. Yachter's lodging
- 26. Sunday speeches
- 27. Car loan figs.
- 28. Tick off
- 31. Eminem's genre
- 32. President pro ___
- 33. A Ponderosa son
- 35. In the vicinity
- 39. Clear of difficulties, like '60s British invaders?
- 43. One of the Carpenters
- 44. Billing unit, for some
- 45. Grab a bite
- 46. Matterhorn, e.g.
- 48. Javits Center architect
- 49. Cracker spread
- 50. Algonquian language
- 54. Pianist's exercises
- 56. Some frat boys for '60s British invaders?
- 59. Polynesian carving
- 60. Trig ratio
- 61. Lagoon's boundary
- 65. Author Bagnold or Blyton
- 66. Keynesian subj.
- 67. Brown tone
- 68. Baseball's Sandberg
- 69. Tear to pieces



70. Nursery purchase

Down

- 1. "Gotcha!"
- 2. Bandleader Brown
- 3. Bellboy's bonus
- 4. Formal decrees
- 5. Nouveau ___
- 6. Use a swizzle stick
- 7. Catherine ___ (Henry VIII's sixth)
- 8. Signs off on
- 9. Less at ease
- 10. Fait ___
- 11. Record player, for short
- 12. Like Cheerios
- 13. Get decked out
- 21. Philanthropist Yale
- 22. Sprinter's milieu
- 23. Dyeing method
- 24. "Pagliacci," e.g.
- 25. Strong suit?
- 29. ___ IRA
- 30. Block, legally
- 34. Andrew of "Melrose Place"
- 36. Hoopster Shaq
- 37. Do figure eights
- 38. ___ Park, Colo.
- 40. Semimonthly ocean phenomenon
- 41. Dental restoration
- 42. IRA-establishing legislation
- 47. Sci-fi weapon
- 49. Soft hue
- 50. More fitting
- 51. Like much Seattle weather
- 52. Alan of "Catch-22"
- 53. Getting chilled
- 55. Envelope closer
- 57. Barge ___ (interrupt)
- 58. Patch up
- 62. ___-Locka, Fla.
- 63. Writer ___ Yutang
- 64. Long. crosser

Solutions will be posted in Saturday's Freedom Watch