



PF LIFE ON THE LAND

Well Done

"I can think of no greater thrill than cooking steaks for these guys," says Kansas cattleman Bill Broadie, pictured with the Marine Reserves Company D Anti-Terrorism Battalion at the second steak feed in Billings, Mont.

War veteran and fourth-generation cattleman Bill Broadie is working to support troops and beef up morale—one savory steak at a time. **BY CLAIRE VATH**

Last spring, 59-year-old Bill Broadie traveled from his Ashland, Kan., home to Colorado on a business trip for Superior Livestock Auction. As he wound through rural roads, the fourth-generation cattle rancher had some time to reflect on his service as a Marine in the war-torn jungles of Vietnam.

"I didn't want these kids treated the way we were; hopefully they'll be saluted, not spit on," he says of today's troops serving in Iraq. "What better way to support the troops than with U.S. beef?"

Weeks later, Broadie stood in the middle of a Kansas feed pen when his cell phone rang. The phone call was from two friends who had connections in Washington, D.C. They gave the Marine's big idea an enthusiastic thumbs-up. All systems for Broadie's All-American Beef Battalion were a go.

The Beef Battalion has several goals, says Broadie. "We want to hold homecoming or deployment steak feeds for troops and their families. We'd also like to identify families whose main breadwinner is in combat and give them a sort of beef debit card with a little money to help them out." His long-term goal? Broadie wants to feed troops in combat zones.

LIFE OF SERVICE. Broadie joined the Marines at 18 and served in Vietnam at 19 with the 3rd Marine Division. After six-and-a-half months in the hospital with a near-fatal leg wound, Broadie was medically retired.

He went to college and finished his degree, "but I didn't fit into the college scene," he says. Instead, he headed back home to the cattle business. After his father's death in 1982, Broadie quit ranching and joined Superior Livestock Auction as a field representative.

As Broadie traveled those country roads between

Kansas and Colorado, he called longtime friend and Superior Livestock Auction cofounder Jim Odle to relate his idea about forming the Beef Battalion as a way of boosting troop morale. “We can do this,” Odle told him encouragingly.

After all, say Broadie and Odle, farmers dedicate their lives to feeding the world, and troops dedicate theirs to defending our freedom. What could be a more natural link?

FIRING UP THE ORGANIZATION. After the initial green light, the group hit bureaucratic stone walls left and right as they tried to establish the nonprofit. But the war-hardened Marine wasn’t deterred. “The public wants to be behind the kids,” Broadie insists. “We don’t care where you stand on the war. Where do you stand on the kids?”

Establishing this caliber of nonprofit wasn’t easy. But some quick-thinking friends swooped in. As a result, letters asking for support made their way into



Families enjoyed their last supper together before the Marine Reservists left for additional training and then deployment to Iraq.

President Bush’s hands, and into the Secretary of Ag’s office as well as to the Department of Defense.

Broadie is still not sure exactly how it happened, but 35 days later, the All-American Beef Battalion got its nonprofit status. “It was crazy quick,” he says of their

PHOTOS: ADAM JAHIEL

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(Above) Jim Odle of the Beef Battalion serves steaks and potatoes to deploying Marine Reservists and their families.



Oct. 15, 2007, approval. “We had to get busy fast.”

And they did, setting up tax-exempt status, getting their web site up and asking for donations. As the ball rolled along, Broadie got a call in late February from the Kansas National Guard’s 731st Transportation Company asking if they could be the recipients of the first steak feed. “When the steak feed was set up,

I called Creekstone Farms [in Arkansas City, Kan.]; they donated about 420 pounds of rib-eye steaks.”

SIZZLING WITH PRIDE. Early on the morning of April 26, bleary-eyed cooks got busy in the Olathe, Kan., armory. Thick slabs of meat sizzled on the grills and potatoes baked, but the hungry guardsmen back from a long deployment and their families took center stage.

“It was a really great day,” says Odle. American flags decorated the inside of the armory, and “the group was led by 50 VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] motorcycles with American flags.”

The guardsmen being honored by the All-American Beef Battalion had been overseas 18 months. In that time they lost two members of their unit and traveled more than a million miles, checking for roadside bombs, guarding food supplies, “and going over and above their duties,” adds Odle proudly. “The people who have built the USA, it’s not politicians or actors. It’s our troops who have built this country.” ●

For more information on the All-American Beef Battalion, or to donate, visit www.steaksfortroops.com. You can also write to All-American Beef Battalion, P.O. Box 458, Ashland, KS 67831 or call 620-635-5870.