

MIDDLETOWN

A hero's welcome

Allan Posadas was greeted by dozens of veterans upon his return home from Iraq.

By MANASEE WAGH
STAFF WRITER

After spending months serving in Iraq, Army Spc. Allan Posadas was eager to return home. Wearing his Army uniform, he joyfully met his family at Philadelphia International Airport, expecting a quiet ride home.

But as the family got ready to go, Allan was surprised to see dozens of military veterans waiting to escort him to his Middletown home. Warriors' Watch, a national coalition of troopsupport groups, wanted to give him a hero's welcome. The coalition provides motorcycle escorts for active duty military members returning home or deploying to a mission.

Accompanied by the entourage of supporters, including Philadelphia and Middletown police officers, Allan arrived home to see a Pennel Fire Co. truck flying an enormous American flag high from its extended ladder. The roar of around 40 Warriors' Watch motorcycles announced his arrival.

"We have the soldiers' backs," said Grease, a member of Warrior's Watch and a resident of Sharon Hill in Delaware County. He said the organization was started principally by Vietnam War veterans who didn't receive a warm welcome home after serving their country.

"That's why they make a big deal about welcoming soldiers home and treating them like rock stars," Grease said. The coalition includes police officers, firefighters and EMTs and offers resources to help families while their loved ones are deployed.

Greeted by the warm scents of a home-cooked feast when he walked through the door of his parents' home, Allan, 24, could finally stow his bag and relax.

"This is unexpected," Allan said. "My mom didn't say anything about the veterans. It was a real honor to be escorted by them. These were the real heroes."

His parents, Santos and Luz Posadas, wore matching T-shirts bearing a photograph of their son in his combat helmet.

"We haven't seen him for more than a year," said his mother.

Allan's younger sister Joyce, 19, was ecstatic to see her brother.

"The house would feel so empty without him. I would feel like an only child while he was serving," she said. The siblings are graduates of Neshaminy High School.

Allan's aunts gushed about him and showed off his awards and recognitions. One award is a U.S. Army Combat Action Badge for ground combat action.

"We're very proud of this young man. We're just happy he's safe," said Nora Posadas.

She and Jill Posadas, another aunt, said they were touched by the procession that escorted Allan home.

He was deployed in November 2007 but returned to his family for a brief visit in February last year. A specialist in the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Allan was a tank crew member in various parts of Iraq.

"We were near the Syrian border disrupting the smuggling of weapons and anything that buys weapons," he said.

What was tough was the constant stress of not knowing what to expect each day. The platoon had specific missions but circumstances could change at any time, and they had to be ready for anything, Allan said.

One of his troop members was killed in action.

"I tried to call home as much as I could, whenever I had a free moment," he said. E-mail was an easier way to keep in touch, he said.

Allan will be home for 30 days. Then he's going back to his Fort Hood, Texas, base for training and to help train new soldiers. He might be deployed to Afghanistan next, but he's not sure.

After his contract with the Army is over in June 2010, Allan plans to take advantage of GI Bill benefits for veterans by completing his college education. He'll probably study business, he said.

He interrupted his education to join the military because he couldn't sit back and do nothing while other Americans were serving their country, he said.

"I knew what I was getting into when I raised my hand and signed that paper," he said.

Sitting on the couch in his living room, Allan looked utterly content but wasn't sure how to express how he's going to spend the next month.

"I don't know how to explain it," he said. "I don't have anything planned. Just really relax. Fifteen months of straight work is a long time."

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U.S. Army Spc. Allan Posadas is greeted by his aunt, Jill Posadas, Saturday upon returning to his Langhorne home. Posadas, 24, a Neshaminy High School graduate, was deployed to Iraq in 2007.
KIM WEIMER / **STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**