



## ***Any Soldier: Providing a Way to Support American Troops-Even from France***

**By: Priscilla Lalisce**

I just came back from the U.S.-the trip that set off what I like to call my *Mid-Life French Crisis* (read about it here <http://www.bonjourparis.com/publications/premiumarticles.php?articleId=2020>). I flew in and out of Atlanta's airport-Hartsfield International, where I couldn't help but notice the many servicemen walking around in desert-color fatigues, headed for Iraq or Afghanistan. Mind you, I've always had the men and women who serve our country in mind, but when the war kicked off, I was expecting my first child and then was up to my ears in diapers. Along with the diapers, I also had my book to wrap up. I know, excuses, excuses! But up until now, I hadn't done anything other than send prayers and warm wishes their way. So when I found myself face to face with soldiers at the airport, I wanted to go up and ask: "What Can I do?" and let them know that Americans everywhere support them...but I didn't know where to begin. Finally, after arriving back in France, I decided to go online and search for support groups. This is what I found: [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com), and I can't stop singing its praises.

I'm guessing that back in 2003 when Marty Horn and his wife Sue said goodbye to their son, Sgt. Brian Horn, an Army Infantry Soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, they probably had no idea that in addition to their *own* son, they would later be heading up an organization that supports *thousands* of military personnel. Any Soldier has become one of the leading efforts in making sure the men and women who've been deployed for the war are cared for, via letters and packages from "home." In other words, it's our link to them, and their link to us, no matter where we are in the world.

How does it work? Any Soldier provides a *Where to Send* page, which features emails from different military personnel regarding the type of support they're looking for, be it a simple letter or package. Right now, there are over 3,000 names on this list. You address your snail mail to the writer using his name, but also adding the words "Any Soldier" on the second line, and that person shares the mail with his fellow servicemen. If there's someone in your addressee's group who isn't getting a lot of mail from home, he'll be the first person the letter goes to. The *What to Send* and *How to Send* pages are equally helpful, and the site, built and maintained by Marty Horn himself (a retired military man) is amazingly complete. You won't have any problems getting the information you need. There is one *potential* problem however, as Horn warns: You might become addicted to the site.

I spent quite awhile clicking on several names and reading the emails, which are better than any news story I've ever seen. You feel like you're "in touch" with some of your compatriots who are serving in the war, and you glimpse a little of what life might be like over there. Another cool thing about the site is that all branches of the military are covered as well, just in case you have a preference and/or personal attachment to one in particular. Some of the writers tell stories, share pictures, and mostly *all* of them thank the American people (and people from all over the world) for their support. Sometimes you want to cry, sometimes you want to laugh, and quite frankly, sometimes you want to do both. The emails are indeed that touching.

Afterwards, I ended up at *La Poste* with an armful of letters and packages for our troops. I've been assured by Any Soldier that the men and women are indeed receiving mail from all over the world, including FRANCE. Being an American over here, we often feel far away from home and what's going on there, but Any Soldier and Horn (whose email signature lines reads: *Freedom isn't free...Just ask my son*) gives us a chance to feel like we too can be a part of the support effort for our troops who are in harm's way. If you wish to support them, visit Any Soldier online at [www.anysoldier.com](http://www.anysoldier.com)

Priscilla Lalisce moved to Paris from Manhattan in 1999. Along with *Bonjour Paris* you can read her articles at *Paris Woman Journal* and *Cafe De La Soul*. Priscilla just finished her first novel, a work of fiction. You can read an excerpt (or contact her) at [www.priscillalalisce.com](http://www.priscillalalisce.com).