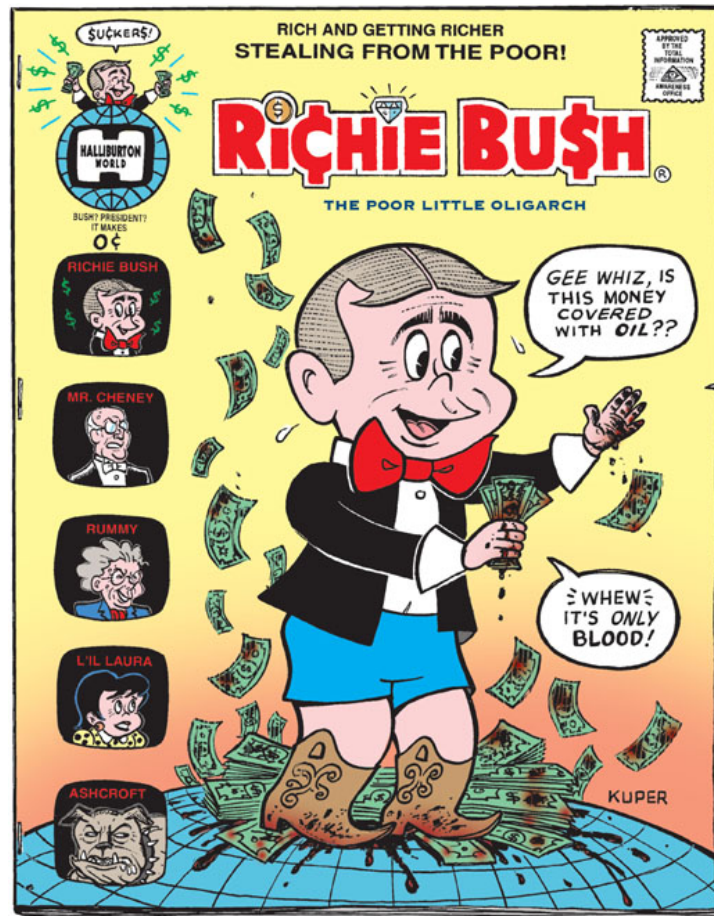


GI SPECIAL 2#C33



A Young Marine Vet Now Fights Against Iraq War

November 23, 2004. Alexandra Zabjek, Seven Oakes. Seven Oakes is a weekly, online magazine based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Ryabov's voice rises slightly as he describes inadequate gear given Americans fighting in Iraq. At the war's start, he had just one of two ballistic plates - bullet-proof shields inserted in the front and back of a flak jacket - and felt unduly exposed to enemy fire. "That's why I get pissed off whenever they show stuff about \$87 billion," he scowls. "It did not get to us."



Alex Ryabov Speaking Against The War

http://homepage.mac.com/union_county_labor/Veterans_for_Peace/PhotoAlbum89.html

Iraq Veterans Against the War: <http://www.ivaw.net/>

On his first night as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Alex Ryabov watched orange lights streak across a black desert sky.

The glowing tracers sped through the night, illuminating the darkness. Sometimes they converged into one bright line; other times they collided, sending the orange streaks in new directions. It was mid-March 2003, and Ryabov's artillery unit was stationed in Kuwait, launching shells over the Iraqi border.

Working furiously on the sandy ground, surrounded by shell casings and debris, Ryabov thought about the devastation the American firepower could yield. As he helped load more shells into the cannons, he waited for return fire. It never came.

A year-and-a-half later, Ryabov is home in the United States, protesting his former job in Iraq. The Brooklyn Marine is co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War, which opposes America's actions in Iraq and the president who initiated them. After a contentious election, the veteran's group is appealing to a divided country that has long revered its military.

With tightly cropped, curly brown hair, and neat sideburns that frame his young face, Ryabov, now 21, still looks like a kid. Sitting in a Manhattan restaurant, wearing an immaculate, white Nautica sweatshirt, and equally pristine white sneakers, he hardly looks like the unruly anarchist sometimes portrayed as the face of the protest movement. In fact, Ryabov, a novice but committed peace activist, is a bit surprised himself.

"Before I got involved in protest movements, I had no idea there were so many different types of people who had the same ideas," said Ryabov, who'd recently returned from a Washington vigil for those killed in Iraq. "I'll see punks with Mohawks and stuff, and at the same time, have anti-Bush pins."

"I'm glad to see that," he concluded. "It's good to see people voicing their opinions."

Speaking over a plate of sushi that he dots with small green blobs of wasabi, Ryabov meticulously outlines his arguments against the war. In a soft voice, almost drowned out by restaurant chatter, he affirms the claims of an anti-war camp that insists President Bush was wrong to start a war.

Iraq was not, Ryabov argues, an imminent threat: " How could Iraq be a threat if we took the capital in just three weeks?" And the oil industry's powerful hand influenced this war, he thinks: "We're taking oil that's been formed over millions of years. corporations are putting that money into their pockets."

But unlike most young, anti-war protesters who voice the same arguments, Ryabov brings a four-year military record to the table.

His experience resonates both with a public that might otherwise dismiss youthful discontent, and with political leaders who ultimately call the shots. **"I might not know the exact names of certain laws," he said, recalling an exchange with a senator's aide about funding for US troops in Iraq. "But he hasn't seen the stuff first hand."**

Alex Ryabov was born in Kharkov, Ukraine, but his family left the country soon after the Soviet Union's collapse. Settling in East Brooklyn, his parents - a homemaker and a maintenance manager - raised Ryabov and his two younger siblings. Today, the young vet still lives with his mom; at one point in the interview she calls his cell phone and he quickly switches to Ukrainian, his words peppered with the low "dzh" and "k" sounds of Baltic tongues.

As a Midwood High School student Ryabov did well until 10th grade when, "everything went downhill," and his grades dropped. He was bored with school, and when military recruiters visited Midwood, he filled out an application. They returned two years later promising money for school, health benefits and a steady job. Not feeling ready for college, Ryabov signed a contract in January 2000. He was 17.

His parents were divided about the decision; his mom accepted his resolve, but his dad objected - after all, they had come to the United States from a country where military service was mandatory. Looking back on it, Ryabov says he was "nave," but at the time he was looking forward to the work. It was almost two years before 9/11 and he never thought his stint in the Marines would land him in a war.

Early the next year, Ryabov's first sergeant gathered his battalion at Camp Lejeune, South Carolina and he delivered this shocking order: **"We're not going there for weapons of mass destruction or to topple Saddam Hussein," Ryabov remembers. "We're going there for one reason alone, and that's oil."**

The blunt words disturbed some younger troops but Ryabov had three years service under his belt, and shrugged off the sergeant's assessment. He'd grown used to the hypocrisies of the military. Besides, he had to think of his fellow Marines. "I wasn't going to abandon my friends," he says, unapologetically. The kinship that develops in the military is strong, Ryabov explains. You're not going to let down the guys who share your work and life.

Ryabov's voice rises slightly as he describes inadequate gear given Americans fighting in Iraq. At the war's start, he had just one of two ballistic plates - bullet-proof shields inserted in the front and back of a flak jacket - and felt unduly exposed to enemy fire. "That's why I get pissed off whenever they show stuff about \$87 billion," he scowls. "It did not get to us."

Following the orange tracers they launched their first night in the desert, Ryabov moved with his battalion through Iraq, where he witnessed chaos and destruction first-hand: twisted metal, shards of skin, dead corpses, leveled homes. He talks openly about entering areas devastated by American artillery fire, often grilled about the subject by reporters.

Ryabov also had a close call on his own life in what he describes as "the artillery unit equivalent of a fender bender." Traveling along a dusty road early one morning, his truck - which luckily had its windshield blown out - rammed into a cannon being pulled by the truck ahead of it. Half asleep in the passenger seat, an M-16 cradled in his arms, Ryabov jerked awake to find the cannon just six inches from his tired body.

"I'm not very religious," Ryabov says. "But I kinda thought that God had spared me." He untucks a small, silver Star of David from his white sweatshirt, an icon he put on when he went to Iraq and has not removed since.

Ryabov returned from the Middle East in May 2003, disturbed and exhausted. He was sent back to Camp Lejeune and was frustrated to learn his battalion could soon be thrown back into the fray. "They expect us to pick up where we left off with training," he remembers, clearly annoyed. "We fought; we deserve six months without regular training."

"Each person needs time to sort stuff out."

But worse than the military's demands was watching television coverage of the war he'd just left. Every day, more troops died, faceless numbers in television reports. Every day, he thought the media sensationalized the conflict, even endowing it a Hollywood moniker, "Showdown in Iraq." Every day, Ryabov became more convinced the war was a mistake.

"We're going into countries under these false pretenses of WMD's and saying the country's an imminent threat," he says. "These reasons didn't hold much weight to begin with, and now they're completely falling apart." He felt powerless, however, to speak out until he'd finished active duty.

Through a friend from his unit, Ryabov got in touch with Veterans for Peace. Not knowing what to expect, he showed up at a meeting and was surprised to stumble on a group of men more than twice his age.

Ryabov appreciates his predecessors' contributions to the veteran's peace movement and he lists their endeavors in learned detail: World War II vets who fought against the spread of fascism; men sent to fight wars in Korea and Vietnam; and now men and women who have returned from Iraq. "I had no idea people had been doing this for 20 or 30 years," he says.

Soon after that first Veterans for Peace meeting, Ryabov and four others launched Iraq Veterans Against the War. The group made its first public appearance in July at the national Veterans for Peace convention, just weeks after Ryabov completed active duty. Since that time, IVAW has swelled to almost 60 members. The group organizes rallies and protests, brushing shoulders with high profile progressives like Howard Zinn, Daniel Ellsberg and Jesse Jackson. Ryabov is one of the group's youngest members.

"He's kind of known as the humble and quiet guy," says Tim Goodrich. Goodrich, an IVAW member who was honorably discharged from the Air Force in April, 2003, has known Ryabov since the group's inception. "He's already spent four years in the military. He had a near death experience in Iraq," he says, endorsing his friend's credentials.

The veteran's group has allowed Ryabov to express his emerging political views at a turbulent period in American history. He remembers being too young to vote in the last election, and caring little about its outcome. "But now people are talking about politics at the dinner table," he says - even his 20-year-old brother. "It seems to me that now people are more likely to question things."

It is November 11, and New York City is hosting its Veterans Day parade under velvety gray clouds. By 11:30 am the biggest military groups and loudest marching bands have already walked up 5th Avenue cheered on by a thin, but enthusiastic crowd standing on the perimeter of police barricades.

Ryabov, however, remains stationary on a feeder street, along with another Iraq war vet and about 40 members of Veterans for Peace, mostly older men who'd fought in Vietnam. The group has been given one of the last spots in the parade. They stand in front of a high school marching band from Connecticut and not far from a float called "The Glory Girls," featuring flag-draped pre-teens, and a massive, spinning globe.

"The people who organize this parade 'welcome us' with quotation marks," says one vet.

As the sun appears unexpectedly through the clouds, the vets merge onto 5th Avenue, looking slightly haphazard - their clothes don't match, they carry handmade signs and they don't march in unison.

Ryabov, dressed in a desert camouflage shirt and hat stands up front, carrying one end of a banner for IVAW. In solidly Democratic Manhattan - where John Kerry received 82 percent of the vote in the presidential election - the group mainly receives cheers, peace signs and applause from the crowd. But even in this cradle of anti-war sentiment, support is not unanimous. "That's John Kerry's group," mutters one pedestrian to a friend as they move between the towers of concrete on 5th Avenue. Louder hecklers also call out to the group.

"Give it up - Kerry lost!" yells one.

"The Iraq war was started so we could stand here and stand for peace!" shouts another.

At the end of the parade, Ryabov seems unperturbed by the comments. He's surrounded by a small media scrum that asks about his experiences in Iraq, his activist efforts and the presidential election that's still fresh in everyone's mind. "I feel really let down that Kerry gave up so easily," Ryabov says.

After four months with IVAW, he's grown used to microphones and television cameras, and he takes time to speak to all journalists who request an interview. Ryabov insists IVAW is making progress.

At some protests, vets who'd fought in Iraq approach the group, asking to join the peace movement. "They had never been part of any protests before," Ryabov remembers.

Hoping to start college in January, Ryabov now keeps busy with Veterans' Associations meetings, speaking engagements and interviews for Iraq Veterans Against the War.

The schedule is busy and draining.

When he sees parents carrying pictures of their deceased children, he feels distraught. He can't help but think, "That could be me in the picture they're holding."

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and in Iraq. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

M1 Taken Out, U.S. Soldier Killed By IED In Duluiyah

Nov 27 SAMEER N. YACOUB, BAGHDAD (AP) & cjtf7 Release #041127A

A U.S. soldier was killed when a roadside bomb exploded near a patrol near Duluiyah, about 65 kilometres north of Baghdad on November 27 at about 7:28 a.m. The explosion also damaged a M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank.

IED Damages U.S. Armored Bus On Airport Road

Baghdad, Nov. 27 (AP)

A US military vehicle was damaged by a roadside bomb on the highway near Baghdad International Airport, eyewitnesses said.

US troops cordoned off the scene, police Lt Saad al-Azzawi said. A US military spokesman said he had no information about possible casualties.

The rear of vehicle, an armoured military bus, was badly damaged, al-Azzawi said.

500 In Resistance Force That Took Mosul

27 nov04 AFP

Ahead of the November 10-11 revolt, ***during which an estimated 500 insurgents overran more than a dozen police stations in Mosul*** and then...burnt and in some cases demolished them, repeated verbal threats were made against the police.

Former Hurricanes Football Player Dies On Thanksgiving



Marine Lance Cpl. Jeffery Holmes in his dress uniform. (Family Photo)

11.27.04 By Jodie Tillman, Valley News Staff Writer

Hartford -- Two Marines and a chaplain came to Scott and Patti Holmes' door yesterday morning bearing devastating news: Their 20-year-old son, Jeffery, had been killed in Fallujah on Thanksgiving Day.

“Part of you is gone,” said Patti Holmes. “It can't be replaced.”

West Manheim Tank Driver Hit

November 27, 2004 By NANCY POSTER For the Daily Record/Sunday News

A West Manheim Township man wounded earlier this month in Iraq is recuperating in the Walter Reed Army Medical Center near Washington.

Spc. Justin Henke, 20, a tank driver who has been serving in the war-torn nation since February, was shot in the thigh by an Iraqi sniper, said his mother, Cheri Henke.

Wednesday, Justin's grandmother, Carolyn Byers of Hanover, said he was brought from Germany to the medical center near Washington on Saturday. "He's doing well," she said.

While Byers has not seen her grandson, she said he had additional surgery on his leg Monday. Cheri Henke is at his bedside, Byers said.

Last week, Cheri Henke said the bullet fragmented and spread through a large portion of his body. While no vital organs or vessels were damaged, doctors placed pins in his femur because it was fragmented, she said.

It was his second injury during his tour of duty. In an earlier attack about a month ago, a rocket-propelled grenade exploded in front of Justin and another soldier during one of their missions. Justin was struck in the upper thigh by shrapnel, his mother said.

Henke graduated from South Western High School in 2002. He enlisted in the Army in June 2001.

Force Of 100 Resistance Partisans Attacks Khalis; U.S. Vehicles Burning; U.S. Forces Kill Their Own Collaborators

Nov 27 SAMEER N. YACOUB, BAGHDAD (AP) & Aljazeera & (Reuters)

Clashes have erupted between American forces and anti-US fighters in al-Khalis in the province of Diyala, north of the capital.

American 1st Infantry Division said the insurgents attacked before dawn with AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades. **Local police said three people were wounded among the Iraqi police and National Guard.**

About 100 insurgents attacked a U.S.-Iraqi base, a police station and a National Guard post said municipal official Saad Ahmed Abbas. "They occupied the City Hall for awhile," Abbas said, adding that **U.S. soldiers and Iraqi security forces regained control after a two-hour exchange of gunfire.**

An official for the Islamic Party in al-Khalis city, Husayn al-Zubaidi, told Aljazeera: "We heard gun shots and artillery in the early morning.

"Resistance elements controlled, the area for some time, the city but the US and the Iraqi civil defence got them out."

The official said clashes were continuing and that US forces had surrounded and cordoned off the area.

Al-Zubaidi said two US vehicles were seen on fire.

"The forces attacked the centre using small arms and rocket-propelled grenades from the vicinity of a nearby school," the U.S. military said in a statement.

The U.S. military said six roadside bombs had also been found and defused around the town.

The deputy governor of Diyala province said two of his bodyguards were killed and three wounded when they went to Khalis to investigate what was happening and were shot by U.S.-led forces. He said the men may have been mistaken for insurgents.

Soldier With Randleman Connection Loses Legs

11.27.04 By Kathi Keys, Staff Writer, The Courier-Tribune

RANDLEMAN - A soldier with Randleman ties was critically injured this week during a roadside bomb explosion in Iraq.

"Grandmother, he's alive," Myrtle Hollingsworth of Randleman was told on Wednesday about her granddaughter's husband, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jay Fondren.

The family was not sure when the explosion occurred, but they have learned Fondren lost both his legs and a right thumb, due to the injuries he received near Baghdad, Iraq. He may also lose his right hand.

His wife is Anne Hollingsworth Fondren who lives in Killeen, Texas, but has been spending the Thanksgiving holidays with her in-laws, David and Bobbie Fondren in Corsicana, Texas. They all learned about the accident Wednesday afternoon.

Jay Fondren, based at Fort Hood, Texas, was in an armored military vehicle which was hit by an explosive device on the right side of the vehicle, where he was sitting.

Hollingsworth was told, as of Friday afternoon, that Fondren has undergone at least three sets of surgeries, the initial medical treatment occurring in Baghdad before he was flown to Germany where he was listed in critical condition Friday.

Jay and Anne Fondren have several ties to Randolph County. They spent the holidays in Randolph County last year with Hollingsworth and other local relatives. "I had the whole family here last Christmas," Myrtle Hollingsworth said.

Ken is a former Randleman resident and a graduate of Randleman High School.

Anne Fondren is also the sister of Nathan Hollingsworth, the Randolph County deputy sheriff who was wounded in May 2003 when he and Deputy Toney Summey went to serve warrants against a Franklinville resident. Summey was shot to death when the suspect allegedly resisted arrest, wrestled Summey's weapon away and opened fire on the two officers.

Fondren has been in the U.S. Army for four years; he was deployed with the 10th Cavalry to Iraq in March 2004.

Their son, Micah, was born on July 11 this year; Fondren was able to see him when the soldier returned from Iraq to Texas for two weeks in September.

The tragedy has shocked family and friends.

"No one was killed, but Jay got the worse of the blow," Myrtle Hollingsworth said Friday afternoon, shortly after hearing the latest developments from Fondren's father in Texas.

"It doesn't sound good."

TROOP NEWS

No Help On The Way: Multiple Combat Tours Hammer One Third Of Troops

November 27, 2004 By Bryan Bender, The Boston Globe

Nearly a third of the one million U.S. military personnel called to duty in Afghanistan and Iraq have served two or more extended tours in combat zones, according to figures compiled by the Defense Department.

The data demonstrate the extent to which **the missions have placed enormous strains on soldiers and their families** and how the frequent deployments are threatening the Pentagon's ability to retain veteran soldiers in the future, according to military officials and specialists.

"Our research indicates that deployment is a big influence on people's commitments to military service," said Harold Weiss, a psychology professor and co-director of the Military Family Research Institute, a government-financed center at Purdue University that is conducting a study on how military deployments affect families.

"Both spouses and members are part of the decision-making process when a family decides to stay in the military," he said. **"It's a family decision because the military is not a job; it is a life. Multiple deployments will make it harder to stay in the military."**

The Pentagon's longtime goal has been to deploy individual soldiers overseas only once in a four- or five-year period so that the troops and their families can fully prepare and adjust for extended duty away from their home base.

But the war in Afghanistan and the larger war in Iraq have stretched the military so much that the Pentagon cannot predict when it will again be able to stagger deployments over several years. Ground forces have been particularly affected.

Some worry they may be forced to leave military service if they are not confident that the Pentagon is doing everything possible to look after them and their families.

The breakdown indicates that as of Sept. 30, there were 955,609 members of the armed forces, including active-duty and reserve personnel, who had been deployed for operations in Afghanistan or the Gulf region since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Of those, 303,987 had been sent overseas more than once.

The U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps have carried much of the load abroad. Of about 500,000 members in the active army, 279,393, or more than half, have been sent overseas in the past three years. And of those, 34.6 percent have served multiple tours, some for a year or more and others several months at a time.

For the Marine corps, the percentage of the total force dispatched to Afghanistan or the Gulf is greater: 98,979 of about 120,000 marines. **Of those, 27.6 percent have done multiple tours, according to the Pentagon's count.** The corps will be adding about 3,000 marines to reduce the burden.

For part-time soldiers who leave jobs as well as families behind, the percentage serving multiple tours is even higher. **Of the 90,649 Army National Guard soldiers deployed, 35.9 percent have been called up more than once.**

For the U.S. Army Reserve, 34.6 percent of the 64,978 that have served since the Sept. 11 attacks have returned home, only to be redeployed within months.

U.S. Casualties Running At 9%

11.27.04 Critical Montages

The total number of casualties is about 25,000, plus the more than 1,200 killed. Since about 300,000 men and women have served in Iraq, it makes for a casualty rate of about 9%. (emphasis added, Editor & Publisher, "Press Routinely Undercounts U.S. Casualties in Iraq," November 25, 2004)

In other words, US soldiers deployed in Iraq have nearly a one-in-ten chance of getting killed, physically wounded, or psychologically traumatized.

Wisconsin Death Trip

November 27 News-Chronicle, BEAVER DAM, Wis.

A Marine reservist who had already lost two friends in the Iraq was killed on duty there, the fourth member of a Madison-based unit killed this month.

Ryan Cantafio, 22, of Beaver Dam, died at about noon CST Thanksgiving Day or about 9 p.m. Iraqi time when his Humvee hit in a remote-controlled roadside bomb, family members said. Others were also injured, the family said.

Cantafio was with the Madison-based Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines.

His father Joe Cantafio said his son, who would have turned 23 on Dec. 17, recently e-mailed the family and said he was in a dangerous area last week.

"The last we heard he was up for a Purple Heart because his troops had been ambushed and he had to shoot four Iraqis but he saved his troops," said Ryan Cantafio's stepmother, Bobbie Jo.

Ryan Cantafio had already lost two close friends since the war in Iraq began.

Lance Cpl. Branden Ramey, 22, of Belvidere, Ill. was in the same unit and died earlier this month and Marine Sgt. Kirk Straseskie, 23, of Beaver Dam, died May of 2003.

Straseskie was the one who encouraged Cantafio to join the Marines and went with him to sign up after he graduated from Beaver Dam High School in 2000, Joe Cantafio said.

Ryan Cantafio then helped at his father's business, Joe's Auto Body, for three years. In February 2003, Ryan Cantafio married Amanda and bought a house in Beaver Dam four months later, his father said. Amanda works at the Piggly Wiggly in Beaver Dam, where the flag was at half staff Friday.

"She's not doing well at all right now," Joe Cantafio said about his daughter-in-law.

He last spoke to his son was on Labor Day.

The Cantafios were notified of his death at about 10 p.m. Thursday when two Marines arrived at their front door.

"I just had a bad feeling this week," Joe Cantafio said.

Moments after Joe Cantafio told WISC-TV of Madison that he would like to meet Straseskie's father, John Straseskie arrived at the Cantafio house to comfort them.

Straseskie was visibly shaken after his meeting with the family, WISC-TV reported.

Ryan Cantafio was due to return home from Iraq in April 2005 and had planned to return to the auto body shop, his father said.

Ryan Cantafio's grandmother Rose Cantafio said her grandson had a dry sense of humor and that he had many friends in the Marines.

"He was also very caring, especially with older people," she said.

Others in the same unit who died in Iraq this month were: Lance Cpl. Shane K. O'Donnell, 24, of DeForest and Cpl. Robert P. Warns, 23, of Waukesha.

Cantafio was the 29th member of the military from Wisconsin to die in the war in Iraq.

Wounded Soldier Improving; Facing Opposite Personality

November 26, 2004 Hood County News

Jeremy Chad Snowden was in the best physical condition of any in the Baghdad hospital, according to the last update from his family before Thanksgiving.

Doctors told his parents he was the luckiest and healthiest, but everything is not rosy.

Doctors told them that where he got hit, would change his personality opposite to what it was.

His mother said that is good for he did get mad and was irritated easily.

He is now able to move both sides of his body. He has not walked yet, but doctors predict that he will.

He could possibly always need help and not be independent, but his mother does not believe that. His mother is turning to her faith for him to have a complete recovery and asking all to pray for the same for her son.

The soldier was wounded in the battle for Fallujah, Iraq. He was riding in a Humvee when a sniper's bullet hit him in the left temple and exited his right temple.

He survived a two-hour ride in the Humvee from Fallujah to the Army hospital in Baghdad. He was in surgery for five hours.

He has been in Iraq five months and had served in Korea a year before being transferred to Iraq.

He is the son of Vicky Field of Granbury and Mike Snowden of Waco.

Casualties Overwhelming Hospital; Elective Surgery Cut



Jose Pascual, a medical corpsman, helped fill Lance Cpl. Philip Schermer's plate during a holiday meal at the San Diego Naval Medical Center. Schermer's heel was shattered in Iraq. RONI GALGANO / Union-Tribune

November 25, 2004 By Rick Rogers, UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Pfc. Roberto Cisneros and Lance Cpls. Philip Schermer and T.J. Yonan are spending Thanksgiving recovering from physical wounds that might never heal completely. The Marines' will, however, remains unshaken.

A tank mine in Iraq shattered Schermer's right heel so badly Oct. 12 that doctors had to fuse his foot to his ankle. A month later, a bullet fractured Cisneros' spine in three places and left his legs weak. On Nov. 15, a bullet blew a hole in Yonan's left wrist large enough to obliterate a tattoo of the Chinese character for trust.

The three are among 18 service members, mostly Marines from Camp Pendleton, being cared for in two wards at the San Diego Naval Medical Center. The hospital in Balboa Park held a holiday meal for them yesterday, **with family members in attendance for a few of the Marines. [Why "a few"? Because the same asshole politicians that**

sent them off to this war for Empire and corporate greed won't pay family transportation money. Who is the enemy? Where is the war?]

At one point, a patient from another part of the hospital came by to thank Schermer for his service in Iraq.

But not all the Marines felt up to enjoying fruit punch and candy canes.

Here, war-torn Marines can be found filling beds with white blankets pulled up to their chins or walking the halls connected to IV drips or in white casts, their fingers stained brown by anti-bacterial scrub.

It's been like this for months. Some weeks there are more Marines, some weeks there are fewer. These days, with offensives being launched by U.S. troops across Iraq, it's more.

Sixteen patients arrived Friday alone. Most had been wounded during recent house-to-house combat in Fallujah.

Navy Capt. Amy G. Wandel, who heads the center's plastic surgery department, said most of the 50 or 60 patients she's seen since June had suffered blast injuries to their arms and legs severe enough to retard movement or feeling.

With about 20,000 Marines from Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar serving in Iraq, coupled with Marine-led offensives in that country, there is no shortage of patients.

"When I read ... that there's been more fighting, I know we are going to see more injured Marines seven to 10 days later," Wandel said before heading into the operating room. **"There have really been a lot more wounded in 2004, and the majority are from Pendleton."**

So many, in fact, that the medical center has curtailed elective surgery and occasionally has opened a new ward for the injured from Iraq. Hospital officials are also looking to add a plastic surgeon to the staff.

Pig Rehnquist Denies Vets Medical Care He Takes For Himself! Chief "Justice" Practices Injustice

Letter To The Editor
Army Times
Nov. 29, 2004

Isn't it ironic, Chief Justice William Rehnquist being given medical treatment in the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md. — but military retirees over 65 are not welcome there?

In June 2003, the Supreme Court rejected a legal appeal from Col. Bud Day, a Medal of Honor recipient and former prisoner of war, on behalf of military retirees over 65 who are refused earned medical care at military facilities. Yet Rehnquist, while not authorized care in a military facility as a result of military service, is afforded VIP medical care while military warriors who paid a huge price are rejected.

Lest anyone think the chief justice is being singled out, all other government elites, and some not so elite, in Washington get the same red-carpet medical treatment while military retirees, spouses and widows beg.

The wrong thinking becomes apparent when our warriors must settle for medical crumbs.

Col. Harry Riley (ret.)
Crestview, Fla.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans' benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

Combat Injury Means Family Poverty; Wife Fears Bonus Recall

Letter To The Editor
Army Times
Nov. 29, 2004

My husband is about to deploy to Iraq again, and I am troubled by the treatment of our disabled veterans.

I am so afraid of him getting hurt and, adding insult to injury, being financially devastated because of that. I have tried to find supplemental disability insurance

for him, but no company is “stupid” enough to give an active-duty soldier during wartime this kind of protection.

We all know soldiers and their families do not live on their base income alone. The combination of base pay and allowances, is how we make ends meet.

Should our family member be injured in this war, we will get a percentage of the base pay from Social Security and that is all.

I am also very fearful that if he is injured, my husband’s bonus could be recalled because he was unable to fulfill his contract. As outrageous as that sounds, it has happened. This would amount to a \$7,000 debt for my family; a debt we surely would not be able to pay off with one of us injured.

Tara Sexton-Oller
New York City

IEDs From Home Hit Marines

Nov 24 By Michael Georgy, NEAR FALLUJA, Iraq (Reuters)

U.S. Marines thousands of miles from home in Iraq face ruthless insurgents, a debilitating desert climate and tasteless food. But they dread nothing more than opening the Dear John letter.

"It's so hard when your girlfriend sends you that letter and says goodbye. It just shatters all your childhood notions of romance," said Corporal Samuel Shoemaker, 22, of Shelton, Washington.

"She wrote me a vague letter about our future but I had no doubt about what she meant. It's the last thing I needed out here. I first met her in grade school. I don't have the stamina to chase her anymore."

"Man I can't believe it. I was engaged to a woman who I raised our child with for three years," said an infantry Marine who asked not to be named.

"She wrote me a letter to ask whether we could put it on hold so she could have sex with another man. Then she asked me if I could accept her having sex with another woman if I reject the man."

Strict rules of conduct have not stopped Marines from seeking love on base. But it is not always easy and dating Iraqi women is prohibited.

"They hit on us all the time. It is really annoying and we have enough to worry about out here," said Corporal Ann Gorecka, 23, of New York City as she and a woman comrade looked at compact discs at the base PX store.

Some Marines do everything they can to avoid the Dear John letter, even if it means being lonely in a country gripped by suicide bombings and kidnappings.

"I planned for it all along by making sure I was single before I came to Iraq. That way it can't happen," said Captain Oscar Marin, 28, of New York City.

But Antonio Figueroa spread the risk.

"I have never been in love so I am safe. But I have about three girlfriends so that if one sends bad news that is fine with me," said the 19-year-old native of Long Island, New York.

Lance Corporal Joc Sims was not so lucky. His girlfriend ended it when he was still in boot camp.

"It just stinks when you get the letter. She was my best friend," he said.

A married officer who asked to remain anonymous said he would welcome a Dear John letter. "That would be great. God I would be free."

Corporal Madison Saba, a 22-year-old Marine of Iraqi origin, said she could not understand all the fuss about goodbye letters.

"This is part of life. People should just get on with their work," said Saba, who is single.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Mehdi Army In Baghdad Fighting

November 27, 2004 4:54 PM, By shailmanman

A particularly interesting event that went unnoticed in the media, and by those not very familiar with Baghdad, is the participation of Al-Shaab district of Baghdad in the general unrest that accompanied the Falluja attack.

It is a well-known forum for Mehdi army activity. This district can be considered an extension of Sadr city, which is closer to the central areas and borders Audhamia. Fighters on the streets of Al-Shaab must be Sadr's people with reinforcements from Sadr city itself. This is one way of joining in without endangering the peace deal in Sadr city itself.

Roadside Bomb Injures Cop Officer

Baghdad, Nov. 27 (AP)

A roadside bomb in the neighbourhood of al-Saydiyah in South Baghdad killed a bystander and injured a police captain, hospital sources said. The explosion occurred as a US military convoy drove past, witnesses said. No American casualties were reported in the attack.

IED Gets 3 Occupation Cops

28th November, 2004 Big News Network.com

A roadside bomb exploded in southern Baghdad, killing three Iraqi police officers.

Bomb At Central Bank Wounds Guards

Baghdad, Nov. 27 (AP)

On central al-Rasheed Street, two people were killed and at least 10 injured when **an explosive device concealed in a pushcart went off near the Central Bank as two US Humvees drove through the area**, police Lt Col Jamal Abbas Abd, said.

The two who died were passers-by, while **most of the injured were guards at the bank, he said.**

Four stores adjacent to the bank were damaged, Abd said, adding the bomb was hidden underneath old electrical appliances in the cart.

U.S. Agent Assassinated

Nov 27 SAMEER N. YACOUB, BAGHDAD (AP)

In the town of Buhriz north of Baghdad, Jabbar, an official in the Iraqi Communist party was assassinated by unidentified assailants, a party spokesman said Saturday.

Iraq's Communist party - which was banned under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship - **co-operated closely with the U.S. occupation authorities and is now part of Allawi's interim government.**

Jabbar was the head of a committee responsible of coordinating with other political parties in Diyala province.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE

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FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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Hawks Push Deep Cuts In Iraq Force

November 22, 2004 By Bryan Bender, Boston Globe Staff, WASHINGTON

A growing number of national security specialists who supported the toppling of Saddam Hussein are moving to a position unthinkable even a few months ago: that the large US military presence is impeding stability as much as contributing to it and that the United States should begin major reductions in troops beginning early next year.

Their assessments, expressed in reports, think tank meetings, and interviews, run counter to the Bush administration's insistence that the troops will remain indefinitely to establish security. But some contend that the growing support for an earlier pullout could alter the administration's thinking.

Those arguing for immediate troop reductions include key Pentagon advisers, prominent neoconservatives, and some of the fiercest supporters of the Iraq invasion among Washington's policy elite.

The core of their arguments is that even as the US-led coalition goes on the offensive against the insurgency, the United States, by its very presence, is stimulating the resistance.

"Our large, direct presence has fueled the Iraqi insurgency as much as it has suppressed it," said Michael Vickers, a conservative-leaning Pentagon consultant and longtime senior CIA official who supported the war.

Retired Army Major General William Nash, the former NATO commander in Bosnia, said: "I resigned from the 'we don't have enough troops in Iraq' club four months ago. We have too many now."

Nash, who supported Hussein's ouster, said a substantial reduction after the Iraqi elections in January "would be a wise and judicious move" to demonstrate that the Americans are leaving. The remaining US forces should concentrate their energies on border operations, he added. "The absence of targets will go a long way in decreasing the violence."

The view that it would be dangerous for the United States to pull out soon and that it may even need more troops is becoming another casualty in this war -- a war that has taken the lives of more than 1,200 Americans and shows little sign of abating.

The best strategy is to substantially reduce the number of American forces after the Iraqi elections, according to the specialists, who say maintaining the large occupation could be as dangerous to long-term American interests as a precipitous pullout.

"I have seen a metamorphosis," said Robert Pfaltzgraff, president of the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis in Cambridge and a vocal supporter of Bush's Iraq policy, referring to debate both inside and outside the halls of government. "We should not be there with a large force. We should be there with a force that begins to quickly diminish."

A report completed over the summer calling for a complete pullout next year has struck a chord.

"The end of the foreign occupation will seriously undermine the terrorists' claims that their acts of violence against Iraqis are somehow serving the interests of Iraq," according to "Exiting Iraq," published by the conservative-leaning Cato Institute. Moreover, "The occupation is counterproductive in the fight against radical Islamic terrorists and actually increases support for Osama bin Laden in Muslim communities not previously disposed to support his radical interpretation of Islam."

"Staying on the current course, looking at the trends, is not going to work," said the report's chief author, Christopher A. Preble, Cato's director of foreign policy studies.

Some specialists say the increased sentiment in think tanks for an expedited Iraqi pullout will spread to the administration, despite its tough rhetoric.

"Bush will surprise his opponents by disengaging from Iraq," predicted Edward Luttwak, a longtime Pentagon consultant who has argued that the push to create a democracy in Iraq will prove futile.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

OCCUPATION REPORT

The Great Iraq Training Fiasco;

A 1st Lt. Humiliates A “Sovereign” Major

November 29, 2004 By **Gordon Trowbridge**, ARMY TIMES STAFF WRITER
FALLUJAH, Iraq [At last, a talented reporter.]

The crowd of chocolate-chip desert camouflage uniforms clustered around the shattered door of the shop as the Iraqi commander made his way back across the street to his Marine watcher.

In one hand, *the major* — a former Iraqi air force jet pilot — carried a box of Metro candy bars, in the other a can of orange drink.

“Metro,” he said to *1st Lt.* Ed Han, handing the Marine the candy bars and beverage, pleased with the find.

Han took the booty, paused for a moment, and then, exasperated, tossed them into the street.

‘We don’t need them!’ Han yelled as a puddle of carbonated orange liquid sprayed across the pavement. He gestured back to the command post of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, where the Marines and their Iraqi allies had enough MREs for days. [Let’s see now, he’s saying that MREs beat soda and candy bars? Marvelous appreciation of reality. More to the point, he’s doing his little number on a Major in what is supposed to be a “sovereign” country, and he’s the lowest form of life, a 1st Lt. Well, so much for “sovereignty.” Someday, down the road, when he’s looking at the Major from the wrong end of a .50, maybe, in his last seconds, he’ll remember this little street scene.]

“Clear the rest of those buildings! Go!” Han ordered.

“It’s just going to take some time,” said Marine Capt. Brian Mulvihill, an adviser from Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq, the military organization charged with bringing the Iraqi military and police forces into line.

Mulvihill, of Rockaway Beach, N.Y., watched, resigned, as the Iraqis tried to imitate their Marine counterparts in clearing a long row of shops near a suspected insurgent safe house. **Despite the backing of Han and the Marines’ assortment of assault rockets and machine guns, the Iraqis looked slow, confused, unfocused.**

One banged with a sledgehammer on the locked door of a shop as the others stood watching, eyes on the building instead of watching outward for enemy forces.

As they moved down the street, the Iraqi soldiers seemed to peel off, one at a time, as if they’d lost interest in the task. One sat down on a curb and stared at his American advisers. [With love, no doubt. “Oh, thank you for invading my country. Soon I hope to find a way to express my appreciation.”]

Another — the Marines called him Roger, one of the handful of Iraqis they'd placed much trust in — aimed his machine gun down the street, but he seemed alone.

Two of the Iraqi soldiers were ordered to keep watch down the road, though they occasionally turned their heads back toward the shops behind them.

The Iraqis lack many of the basics — including communications gear, intelligence-gathering and operational experience — needed to plan and carry out operations such as Alpha Company's sweep through insurgent safe houses, Mulvihill said.

A unit of about 40 Iraqis arrived at Alpha Company four days before the Marines entered Fallujah. By the time Alpha set foot in the city, the number had shrunk to around 20. Of 650 soldiers in the Iraqi force that left its training site at Taji to take part in the Fallujah campaign, about 320 remained in uniform, Mulvihill said.

“That’s not a sign of lack of willingness to kill their brother Iraqis,” Mulvihill said. “That’s fear of getting killed.” Still, he said, “I’d rather have 325 that are ready to fight than 650 you can’t trust.” [Really? Now how would he know that? Did he find the deserters and take a poll to find out what their motivation was? Or is this just bullshit happy talk to please command? Could it be?]

U.S. Offensives Create Flood Of Prisoners

November 27, 2004 By Bradley Graham, Washington Post Staff Writer

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq, Nov. 26 -- More aggressive U.S. military operations in Iraq over the past two months have generated a surge in detainees, nearly doubling the number held by U.S. forces to about 8,300, according to the U.S. general in charge of detention operations.

Since early October, the number of detainees in U.S. custody has grown by about 4,000 as a result of assaults on insurgents in Samarra, Fallujah, Mosul, north Babil province and elsewhere, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller said Friday. **With additional U.S. raids being planned as part of a stepped-up effort to crush the insurgency ahead of national elections in January, the number of detainees is expected to continue to grow in coming weeks.**

The large influx of prisoners is putting stress on U.S. detention operations, providing the biggest test yet of new facilities and procedures adopted in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal this past spring, Miller and other officers said in interviews here. So far, the flow has been manageable, they said, but many detainees have not yet made it through the system.

Of the 8,300 detainees, about 4,600 are at Camp Bucca, a U.S. detention facility in southern Iraq that held 2,500 two months ago. The total here at Abu Ghraib is about

2,000, and about 1,700 remain in the custody of field commanders, whose troops are conducting initial screening interviews.

Detainees of particular interest to military intelligence are kept at Abu Ghraib. Many of the rest are sent to Camp Bucca. At Abu Ghraib, the pace of interrogations has picked up, from 180 a week to 210.

"The troops have been working around-the-clock, but we've been able to manage the influx," said Col. Ron Black, who heads the Joint Interrogation Debriefing Center here.

To prepare for more detainees, new wooden facilities are being constructed at Camp Bucca that will expand capacity to 6,000 by January, Miller said.

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

Latest Occupation Goatfuck: Sunni Politicians Harassed By Iraqi Resistance And U.S.

26 November 2004 By Anthony Shadid The Washington Post

Baghdad - Instilled with an engineer's precision and an idealist's defiant optimism, Saad Abdel-Wahhab looks out at the campaign trail that begins at the headquarters of his political party, one of the few Sunni Muslim groups that have chosen to defy a boycott and take part in Iraq's nationwide elections in January. Along the way, he sees a gantlet.

In the northern city of Mosul, the stronghold of his Iraqi Islamic Party, insurgents overran a government warehouse and torched hundreds of boxes of voter registration forms. The party's candidates in the city begged Abdel-Wahhab and other election organizers not to print candidate addresses on applications, fearful their houses would be bombed.

One of the party's candidates for a local council was slain this week, and a militant Sunni group, the Ansar al-Sunna Army, has warned it would attack candidates as well as voters. That's from the insurgents.

Abdel-Wahhab said he has to contend, too, with U.S. forces and their Iraqi allies, who in a pre-dawn raid last week arrested one of the party's most prominent leaders at his home in Baghdad.

By Abdel-Wahhab's count, U.S. and Iraqi forces have raided five of the Iraqi Islamic Party's offices. He fears another raid on the white stucco, two-story headquarters in Baghdad. His response: He and others copied campaign documents and dispersed them for safekeeping in colleagues' homes.

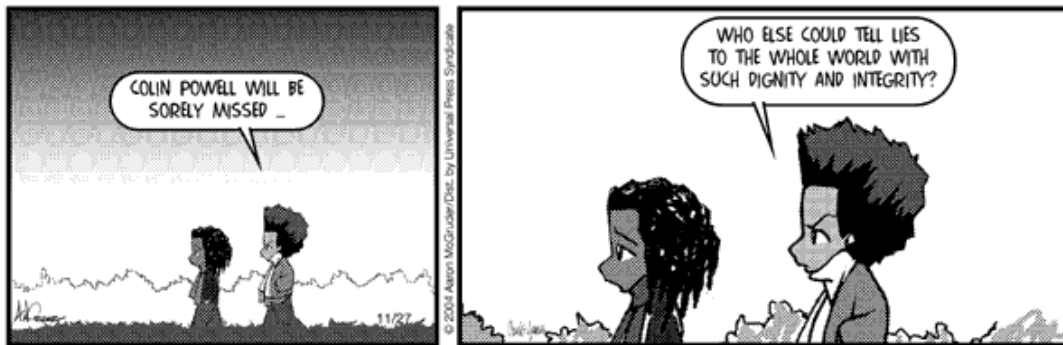
"We're between the hammer and the anvil, between Ansar al-Sunna and the Americans," said Abdel-Wahhab, a stocky man in a blue three-piece suit with a trimmed beard and a cheerful mien, as he sat at the party headquarters.

"The resistance considers us agents of the Americans, and the Americans think we're working for the resistance."

He shook his head, then turned his palms upward. "We're stuck in the middle," he said.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

The Boondocks by Aaron McGruder



Americans Flee to Canada: CANADA BUSY SENDING BACK BUSH- DODGERS

From: Liz Burbank November 25, 2004

The flood of American liberals sneaking across the border into Canada has intensified in the last week, sparking calls for increased patrols to stop the illegal immigration.

The re-election of President Bush is prompting the exodus among left-leaning citizens who fear they will soon be required to hunt, pray and agree with Bill O'Reilly.

Canadian border farmers say it's not uncommon to see dozens of sociology professors, animal rights activists, liberal Quakers and Unitarians crossing their fields at night.

"I went out to milk the cows the other day, and there was a Hollywood producer huddled in my barn," said Manitoba farmer Red Greenfield, whose acreage borders North Dakota. The producer was cold, exhausted, and hungry. "He asked

me if I could spare a latte and some free-range chicken. When I said I didn't have any, he left. Didn't even get a chance to show him my screenplay, eh?"

In an effort to stop the illegal aliens, Greenfield erected higher fences, but the liberals scaled them. So he tried installing speakers that blare Rush Limbaugh across the fields. "Not real effective" he said. "The liberals still got through, and Rush annoyed the cows so much they stopped giving milk."

Officials are particularly concerned about smugglers who meet liberals near the Canadian border, pack them into Volvo station wagons, drive them across the border and leave them to fend for themselves. "A lot of these people are not prepared for rugged conditions," an Ontario border patrolman said. "I found one carload without a drop of drinking water. They did have a nice little Napa Valley cabernet, though."

When liberals are caught, they're sent back across the border, often wailing loudly that they fear retribution from conservatives. **Rumors have been circulating about the Bush administration establishing re-education camps in which liberals will be forced to drink domestic beer and watch NASCAR races.**

In the days since the election, liberals have turned to sometimes ingenious ways of crossing the border. Some have taken to posing as senior citizens on bus trips to buy cheap Canadian prescription drugs. After catching a half-dozen young vegans disguised in powdered wigs, Canadian immigration authorities began stopping buses and quizzing the supposed senior-citizen passengers. "If they can't identify the accordion player on the Lawrence Welk Show, we get suspicious about their age," an official said.

Canadian citizens have complained that the illegal immigrants are creating an organic broccoli shortage and renting all the good Susan Sarandon movies. "I feel sorry for American liberals, but the Canadian economy just can't support them," an Ottawa resident said. "How many art history majors does one country need?"

In an effort to ease tensions between the United States and Canada, Vice President Dick Cheney met with the Canadian ambassador and pledged that the administration would take steps to reassure liberals, a source close to Cheney said. "We're going to have some Peter, Paul and Mary concerts. And we might put some endangered species on postage stamps. The president is determined to reach out," he said.

CLASS WAR NEWS

THE SAME THE WHOLE WORLD OVER

Most Workers in Asia Distrust Bosses

By CRIS PRYSTAY

SINGAPORE—Most Asian employees have a low level of trust and confidence

spondents at more than 500 companies in 11 Asian countries in August. The study included multinational and large local companies. TNS surveyed 8,000 people in

the gap between employees and managers, according to Mr. Orbeta. American managers, he said, often are quick to praise or point out mistakes, but in Asia,

Wall St. Journal 11.24.04

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