

## GI SPECIAL 2#C42

From hEkLE, U.S. Soldier Iraq 12.6.04



# U.S. Army Reservists Escape Court-Martial

Dec 6, By PAUL GARWOOD, Associated Press Writer

"I'm glad it's over with. I don't care if he comes back as a private or a general. I just want him to come back."

BAGHDAD, Iraq - The U.S. military said Monday it will not court-martial any of the 23 Army reservists who refused a mission transporting fuel along a dangerous road in Iraq, instead planning less severe punishments such as extra duties or reduction in rank.

The reservists from the 343rd Quartermaster Company are being disciplined for failing to follow orders under Article 15, which means no court proceedings will be held and

**the identities of the soldiers involved will not be released**, Lt. Col. Steve Boylan said.

**They said they balked because the vehicles were in poor condition and did not have armor. They also said complaints to their commander went unheeded.**

Boylan said 18 of the soldiers had been punished and the others would face reprimand this week.

**While most had been expected to face administrative punishment, officials had said earlier that courts-martial were possible for some of the reservists. Refusal of orders during a time of war can be punished by death, discharge, forfeiture of pay and benefits or confinement.**

The father of one of the reservists said he expected his son to receive a pay cut and a reprimand.

"This was about as lenient as possible. I think it's fair," said Rickey Shealey of Quinton, Ala., whose 29-year-old son, Scott, is a private with the unit.

**"I'm glad it's over with. I don't care if he comes back as a private or a general. I just want him to come back."**

Brig. Gen. James E. Chambers, commanding general of the 13th Corps Support Command, which manages the provision of fuel, food and ammunition across Iraq, decided to deal with the reservists under Article 15 proceedings rather than by courts-martial based on "evidence and recommendations," Boylan said.

**Boylan declined to comment on the quality of the evidence.**

**Military investigators found that some of the complaints raised by the soldiers, including concerns over vehicle maintenance and protection, were credible and actions were taken to address the issues.**

Boylan said the soldiers were expected to remain in Iraq until their 12-month tour of duty ends in March and that most were continuing to perform the same duties, but some have been assigned to other units.

**One of the reservists, Spc. Major Coates said he and his fellow soldiers had not banded together to refuse to perform their duties, but had chosen individually to do so.**

**If soldiers act as a group in what the military considers a mutiny, they could receive a more severe punishment than if they acted individually.**

**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.

# Sailor Refuses War Duty: “They Can’t Throw Us All In Jail”



December 6, 2004 10News.com

**SAN DIEGO** -- About 6,000 Marines and sailors from Expeditionary Strike Group 5 departed from the 32nd Street Naval Station San Diego Monday aboard six ships bound for the Western Pacific.

**One sailor assigned to one of the ships refused to board the vessel to protest the U.S. presence in Iraq.**

**"I just want people to see how people feel about this. It's not just a few crazy liberals talking to the media to make money. I'm not making any money, I'm going to jail for a year for this. I want to do because I feel that strongly about it and I know a lot of people feel this way," Petty Officer Third Class Pablo Paredes told 10News.**

Paredes, 23, wore a T-shirt that read: 'Like a cabinet member, I resign.'

He acknowledged that the action he is planning could result in a court martial and imprisonment.

**"I know other people are feeling the same way I am, and I'm hoping more people will stand up," he said. "They can't throw us all in jail."**

Meanwhile, the San Diego-based amphibious ships Bonhomme Richard, Duluth and Rushmore, the guided-missile cruiser Bunker Hill, guided-missile destroyer Milius and guided-missile frigate Thach began departing at 8 a.m.

Millions of dollars worth of fighting equipment, including helicopters from Marine Corp Air Station Miramar, were loaded aboard the ships on Thursday in preparation for the deployment.

### **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](http://www.ivaw.net))

## **IRAQ WAR REPORTS:**

### **WELCOME TO HELL**



Baghdad 12.6 (sheek abbas)

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## **5 Marines Dead**

12.6.04 AP

**The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force also released a statement saying three soldiers attached to the Marines died in two incidents Sunday in the western province, which includes the battleground cities of Fallujah and Ramadi.**

**Two more U.S. Marines have been killed during military operations in Iraq's volatile Anbar province west of Baghdad, the military said Monday.**

The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force released a statement saying two of its Marines were killed in action Friday "while conducting security and stability operations" in Anbar province, a vast region which includes the battleground cities of Fallujah and Ramadi.

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## **No-Armor Strykers Kill Again; Two Dead In Mosul**

December 6, 2004 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1255-04

The Department of Defense announced today the death of two soldiers.

**They died Dec. 4 in Mosul, Iraq, when their Stryker military vehicle received enemy fire during convoy operations.** Both were assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), Fort Lewis, Washington.

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## **GI Killed On Way Home**

(New York Post, December 6, 2004)

A soldier from upstate New York was killed when the convoy that was starting her on her journey home from Iraq was hit by a roadside bomb. **Sgt. Cari Anne Gasiewicz, 28, of Cheektowaga, was traveling to Kuwait, where she would have spent Christmas before returning home after the first of the year.**

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## **Baghdad IED Wounds U.S. Soldier**

12/06/04 CJTF7

An improvised explosive device detonated on a Task Force Baghdad patrol at about 11:45 a.m. Dec. 6 in western Baghdad, wounding one Soldier.

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# Baghdad Resistance In Streets 3 Blocks From Green Zone, Collaborator Shot Dead

12.6.04 AP & Keralanews

U.S. troops fought a gunbattle with insurgents along a busy street in Baghdad on Monday, sending passers-by scurrying for cover, witnesses said.

The latest fighting in Baghdad broke out after armed rebels appeared on the busy Haifa Street, saying they were hunting for Iraqis collaborating with U.S.-led forces.

**Witnesses said they shot and killed a man on Tahrir Square working for the Americans. The fighters were also seen on Mathaf Square, just three blocks from the heavily fortified Green Zone that houses Iraq's interim government and the US embassy.**

Haifa Street, a thoroughfare running through central Baghdad, has been the scene of frequent clashes between U.S. troops and resistance fighters.

U.S.-led troops and Iraqi security forces have yet to secure areas surrounding the country's most vital facilities.

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## 2 Filipinos Hurt In Attacks

Dec 06, 2004 Globe

TWO Filipinos were injured following mortar attacks on US camps in Iraq in November and December, officials of the Departments of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Labor and Employment told INQ7.net Monday.

In Iraq, Ludwig Mark Reyes, a worker in Camp Anaconda, was hit in the arm, following a rocket attack by militants in November 22, said Asuque and labor undersecretary Manuel Imson.

**Adulfo S. Abrea, 25, employed as a mechanic in Camp Victory, was hurt in the left (not right as earlier reported) thigh when a separate attack was launched on his camp in December 1, they said.**

**Ricardo M. Endaya, chargé d'affaires of the Philippine Embassy in Baghdad, said in the statement that on December 3, he visited and ascertained the condition of Abrea at the Prime Project International (PPI) compound inside Camp Victory. Abrea told Endaya then that he felt a little numbness and discomfort in his left thigh.**

On the other hand, Reyes, who was injured by shrapnel after a barrage of mortar attacks on Camp Anaconda in Balad around the last week of November, "is now recovering from the injuries and is set to be repatriated to the Philippines as soon as he is able."

**Abrea, 25, unmarried and a native of Samar province, was hit by a shrapnel on his lower left thigh when a rocket exploded in the PPI campsite, where he works as a mechanic.**

**According to the PPI incident report, Abrea was doing maintenance work on generator when the rocket exploded at around 9:30 a.m.**

**The DFA said Camp Victory is one of the largest US military facilities in Iraq, housing about 3,000 overseas Filipino workers, 1,700 of whom are employed by PPI.**

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## TROOP NEWS

# How Hard Up Is The Pentagon??

**From:** [deleted]

**Sent:** Monday, December 06, 2004 3:29 PM

**Subject:** REALLY FUCKED UP

Dude,

Hey-it's X. I haven't been around campus much due to work and some personal health issues

**My mom just told me that someone's been trying to re-enlist her in the fucking Marines...my mom's 50 years old!!!**

**She's having to go through welfare offices because she can't find a job, and they're making her fill out old paperwork to see if she can possibly be called back.**

I'm kind of worried.

V

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## **Military Bosses Think Troops Paid Too Much**

(Air Force Times, December 13, 2004, Pg. 22)

**Senior Pentagon officials have complained about the generous pay-and-benefits mood of Congress since the start of the war on terrorism.**

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## **Give Troops A Gift They Truly Need: Bring Them Home Alive**

(Washington Post, December 6, 2004, Pg. B1)

Visit the Web sites of some private, nonprofit organizations that support the troops in Iraq, and you'll have to wonder whether we've deployed soldiers-or orphans. They include pleas for bug repellent, boxer shorts, vitamins, sun screen, gum . . .

But against a backdrop of more than 1,200 U.S. troops killed, sending candy canes to soldiers for Christmas just won't cut it.

"By all means, keep donating those frequent-flier miles. But if we really want to support the troops, make their airline tickets one way and bring 'em all home-alive."

### *The* **DEAD** *and the* **WOUNDED**





**"I want a better education than Dad," Gordon Angell remembers his son saying. "I don't want to bring home sardines."**

**[This is very, very long. But those who die in war had lives, worth remembering, each one a story of its' own, and people who knew and loved them, and who can't ever forget. This story brings three troops to life again and.]**

12/1/04 By Beth Hawkins, Minneapolis, City Pages Media, Inc. *City Pages intern Em Murphy contributed reporting for this story.* PHOTOS BY RAOUL BENAVIDES

**At the time, and to this day, Gordon treasured the courtesy and dignity of the Marines who spoke with the Angells and helped them make arrangements. But even that memory has been sullied by reflection. Why was Levi's body returned so damn conveniently under cover of darkness?**

**This is one question Gordon feels able to answer, but there is no consolation in it. "If I only knew then what I know today," he says, "I would have called all the media. They want to keep everything so hush-hush. They don't want the public to see *those* pictures."**

**Last spring three soldiers from northern Minnesota's Carlton County died in Iraq in one month's time: Matthew Milczark, 18; Moises Langhorst, 19; And Gordon Angell's son Levi, 20.**

Gordon Angell answered the phone and heard the voice of his son's sergeant on the other end. **He handed over the receiver, watched as his boy's face crumpled, and didn't even have to ask why. In two days Levi was to have headed back to Camp Pendleton in California, and the phone call could only mean the plan had changed, and Lance Corporal Levi Angell was going back to Iraq for a second tour.**



Levi Angell, 20

**Things were bad over there. Levi had told Gordon so during a father-son road trip before the holidays last fall. While stationed in San Diego, Levi bought a Ford Explorer, and he wanted to store it at home. So Gordon flew out to meet him and they drove the truck across the country together, back to Cloquet.**

"Dad, I'll tell you what," Levi had said. "I'm worried about my friends over there."

**The troops kept waiting for bulletproof glass, for armored panels for their vehicles, hell, for something as low-tech as sandbags to line the floors of the truck cabs in case they rolled over a mine. Body armor was scarce. Some of the**

**other guys in his unit, the First Marine Expeditionary Force, had asked their families for bulletproof vests for Christmas.**

One night shortly before Levi left the last time, the family held a going-away party in the garage. Levi--20 years old, and already the survivor of one harrowing tour in Iraq--danced and partied. At the party, Levi's grandmother Lila teased the girl who lived across the gravel road about her prospects. "I'm not getting married unless it's to Levi," the girl teased back.

The next night there was an ice storm and Levi smashed up the Ford. So in the morning Gordon drove him to Moose Lake to catch a ride with a friend. The two had lunch and then Levi said, "Take care of yourself, Dad," and he was gone. Or so it seemed. Gordon had barely gotten home when Levi called on his cell phone from Forest Lake. The engine in his friend's car had burned up.

**"Levi," Lila told him, "somebody doesn't want you going back there for some reason." To Gordon she said, "Build him a shack and hide him back there," in the woods behind her house.**

**Two months later, on April 8, 2004, a rocket-propelled grenade hit the Humvee Levi was driving and the explosion ripped open his left side.**

**The Marines told Gordon his son died instantly. It happened during the first siege on Fallujah, when the Marines stormed the city, realized they were outgunned, and retreated. Levi was killed during the retreat, on the outskirts of Baghdad in a place called Abu Ghurayb. All told, the convoy only had to make it 20 miles or so, about as far as from the Angells' house to Moose Lake.**

**This is one of the questions that will not let go of Gordon to this day: How did his son come to be so exposed? Why weren't there planes or helicopters to reconnoiter that road and provide cover fire?**

**The day after Gordon got the news, the phone rang again. This time it was the guy from the body shop. "Your kid can come get his truck out of my yard," he said. "It's done." Gordon blurted it out: "Levi got killed yesterday." On the other end of the line, he could hear the man fumbling not to drop the phone.**

**Levi's grandmother, Lila Angell, is almost 80 and lives in a tiny house encircled by a junkyard full of old vehicles and machines and engines in no discernible arrangement, almost as if they just grew there among the grass and weeds and the Angells happened along one day and found a way to harvest them for modest profit.**

The family business has always been resourceful by necessity. Gordon, age 62, and his brother do remodeling jobs; they move houses and buildings--sometimes the whole structure, lifted from its foundation, sometimes only the contents. For a while they had a contract to bury cable in Cloquet and communities to the west. Levi would have been welcome in the business, but it was never any wonder to Gordon that Levi wanted something more. Gordon wished that for him too.

"One day we went to empty out an old store in Cloquet," Gordon recalls. "We found a case of sardines, and I brought them home." Later on he found out that Levi had told his mother, "I want a better education than Dad. I don't want to bring home sardines." And he understood.

There's a small patch of lawn in front of Lila Angell's house, and a pole flying a flag at half-staff. Inside, the tiny living room is a riot of figurines and demitasse cups and doilies. Every remotely flat surface in her kitchen is covered with family photos, whole and cropped. There are pictures of Gordon's eight kids--the five he had with Levi's mother, Loretta, and three from their previous marriages. There's Levi, of course, his fleshy face and rounded nose so much like Gordon's, minus the wild white hair and beard.

Gordon says his wife wants to move on, to go back to living, but Gordon just can't. And it is hard to listen to him. Fifteen years ago Gordon lost half his throat to cancer, and the synthesizer he uses to talk renders his voice a low monotone that clashes sharply with the hurt, enraged content of his words.

**So he comes here. In Lila's kitchen there are shots of Levi and Gordon's brother Donny Angell--who died at 49 from cancer caused by Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam--standing over a buck Levi shot.** Levi saved up the money to buy that hunting rifle working a summer job at Dairy Queen. He rode his bike nine miles each way, and by winter the manager liked him so much he'd drive out to fetch him when it snowed.

There's another picture of Levi in his orange hunting jacket, this one of him and his cousin Jordan, Donny's son. The two boys were good buddies; Donny liked to take them hunting together. Jordan was in Bosnia with the National Guard at the same time Levi was in Iraq. He made it home just in time for Levi's funeral.

Donny's and Gordon's brother John had gone to Vietnam, too, with the Air Force. All told, four generations of Angell men have done turns of military service. Levi's great-great-uncle was in the First World War, and his grandfather, Gordon Sr., served in the Army in New Guinea in the Second. Gordon Jr. was one of two men of his generation not to enlist (Lila's fourth son, Dennis Angell, is a school teacher). He got drafted for Vietnam, and even took the bus to the Cities for his physical, but when they found out he had a baby on the way and a bride-to-be with a child from a previous marriage, they sent him home.

When Levi was a kid, he liked to go along with Gordon on the job, whatever it happened to be, and make lunch for his father and uncles on a little grill they'd take. Gordon remembers this as a time of perfect freedom. They'd stop when they were tired or hungry, start late if they needed to, or maybe find a bar and buy a couple of drinks.

Sometimes Gordon feels guilty about indulging his desire to take Levi along so much. That's where the boy came to love heavy machinery. Later, Marine Corps aptitude tests confirmed the affinity. As a result, Levi was trained to operate 17 different kinds of vehicles, including the Humvee in which he died. So there's another question: Did Gordon himself set in motion the chain of events that killed his boy?

Levi was never a great student. He thought nothing of cutting school to go deer hunting. He was the kind of kid everyone loved to have around. He had a sweet smile and good

looks, but most of his magnetism came from his charm and wit. He liked to party and got away with a lot, but he was also very involved with the youth group at his church and close to his pastor.

Amy Olson met Levi in choir in the seventh grade. She's a soprano and Levi was a bass and they were both tall, so they ended up standing next to each other in the back row all the way through high school. Amy was the better singer. "He knew it, but he didn't care," she says. "Levi stuck with it because so many of our friends were in it, and the teacher was so encouraging." One time in their senior year they smuggled vodka-7s into choir in their water bottles.

Their graduating class never really divided off into cliques. "The so-called preps were friends with the drama geeks and the jocks," says Amy. "A lot of the people in our class were the middle child, like Levi and me, and we used to joke that the whole class had middle-child syndrome." Levi was particularly popular with the girls, who looked on him as a brother figure. His best friend had to work on prom night, and asked Levi to take his girlfriend for him.

He was a bit of a good old boy in the making, but he didn't care, she says. "He always had kind of shaggy hair. And right before prom our senior year, he cut it into the perfect mullet. Everyone thought it was hilarious and great, but he wouldn't have cared if they didn't. He didn't care what anyone thought."

For a while the gang of friends Levi and Amy belonged to would sneak into Jay Cooke State Park and go "cliffing," jumping into the water from an old railroad bridge or one of six cliffs. It was illegal and dangerous, and Amy couldn't bring herself to jump unless there was someone in the water below waiting for her, "just in case." And that someone was invariably Levi.

The summer between their junior and senior years, an acquaintance jumped and got tangled in some debris underwater. It took a couple of hours to locate the body. After that, park officials began patrolling more and the kids mostly stopped going.

They went once more, though, at the end of their senior year. They had been at an all-night graduation party, which wound down at 5:00 a.m. Nobody wanted the night to end, and they decided to jump one last time. "It was cold and there was steam coming off the water," says Amy. "I kept saying, 'That means the water is warmer than the air, right?'" Yes, Levi told her, now just jump.

**It was right after** September 11 that Levi said he wanted to enlist in the Marines. Gordon knew that there was going to be a war, although at that point he thought it would be in Afghanistan. **Gordon could understand a war in Afghanistan, after what had just happened. But why Iraq? This was not one question but a kaleidoscope full of them, and you no sooner answered one than another tumbled into view, questions about the good or bad faith of the government, the planning and equipment and objectives in the field, the pure vagaries of chance: Why his son?**

For his own part, Levi had wanted to travel, "to Europe, Mexico, anywhere," according to Amy Olson. He had plans that would take money--going to school, buying a house with his girlfriend, Tiffany Klass--but he didn't have any idea what to do. It's the same way for a lot of kids from Cloquet High School. Four of Amy and Levi's other classmates joined

the National Guard under a program that allows friends to stay together for a while after enlisting. They are in an infantry unit that's headed to Iraq after Christmas.

**Military recruiters are frequent visitors to the high school, and Amy guesses a quarter of each class enlists. The recruiters set up tables in the counselor's office or in the hall and kids can get passes to leave class to talk to them. "When you go down and talk to the recruiters, they set up a time to take you to the Twin Cities for a medical exam, to test your eyes and ears," and to administer vocational tests, she says. "You're sworn in down there and you pick a ship-out date, which could be 18 months away. It's easy to get people because they don't ship out right away."**

**After the swearing in, the recruiters stay in contact. There are fitness drills and social activities. "They go bowling, play pool, go camping," Amy says. "They make it look so fun. And it's not."**

A boy in the class ahead of Levi's had joined the Marines, and he talked up the service to Levi and took him to meet recruiters. Levi enlisted in February 2002 and started boot camp in September of that year.

**He had just finished training when George Bush landed on an aircraft carrier to speak against a backdrop that declared "Mission Accomplished."**

**A few weeks later, Levi shipped out to Iraq, where his commanders swore reconstruction would be the only thing going on. It wasn't, and he was horrified to discover how poorly equipped U.S. forces were.** When he came home the following Christmas, Levi was happy to know he would be sent somewhere stateside after the holidays.

At home, he listened to Amy's problems, just like old times. She was working at a gas station, a cleaning company, and a bar. She still had too little money and no time for herself at all. Maybe the Marines could help her, too, Levi said. "He brought me down to the recruiter. They made it look like it was going to solve everything," she recalls. "They do provide decent pay, and they give you insurance." Amy signed up.

**Everything changed after Levi learned he was going back to Iraq. The night before his going-away party, he came over to watch a movie with Amy and her roommate. The three stayed up all night talking about boot camp and their futures. Amy didn't ask about the war, though. "I didn't want to know," she says. She could see a change in his eyes.**

**When Levi died two and a half months later, Amy tried several times to get out of going into the Marines. Once the recruiter read her the paragraph she'd written at the start about why she was enlisting. Another time he said that Levi would want her to go. Halfway through basic training in Texas a few weeks later, she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and offered a health-related discharge.**

**Gordon was at Lila's house** working in the junkyard when Loretta called on April 8. Loretta told Lila to send Gordon home right away. "Something's up with Levi," Lila remembers saying to Gordon as he left. "I've felt it all day."

Gordon knew it, too, although he tried to fend off the thoughts until he saw the two vans in front of his house: "I turned the corner and said, 'God, don't let those be military vehicles.'" When he got closer, he saw the Marine Corps insignia emblazoned on each of them.

The officers said someone from the family could fly to Dover Air Force base in Delaware and accompany Levi's body on the trip home. Gordon wanted to go, but somehow things turned chaotic and he wasn't able to make the trip. Instead, on the afternoon of April 17 he received a call saying his son's body was in Minneapolis and would be flown up that night.

The Marines from Fort Snelling came back to escort the family and two of Levi's ministers to Duluth around 10:30. As they were driving along the frontage road at the airport, a commercial jet whooshed overhead. "There he is," one of the Marines said. "He's on that flight."

The van drove through some gates into a restricted area and straight out onto the tarmac. When the casket was unloaded, there was a small flag, about the size of a place mat, draped over the seam between the two halves of the lid. A single Marine, detailed to stay with the body at all times until it was delivered to the next of kin, walked alongside.

At the funeral, the casket was draped with a much larger flag. The nave of the church could not hold the thousand people who came, and arrangements were made to broadcast the service into other rooms. Levi's pastor and confidant, Tom Brinkley from St. Matthew's in Esko, spoke at the service. Levi had written the minister a month before his death, and Brinkley felt terrible that he hadn't had time to write back.

He has since offered to show Gordon the letter, but Gordon feels torn. It seems too private. He knows only what everybody else knows about it, which is what Brinkley said to the newspaper: Levi was worried about his faith and about other things people worry about when confronted with the thought that they may die.

Outside after the service, there was a color guard and a 21-gun salute and a horrible, heartbreaking ritual where a Marine commander begins taking roll call. When he gets no response from Angell, he calls again a couple of times, louder. This is the moment in the funeral video that turns the slow, rheumy trickle from Gordon's eyes into flat-out crying. **"A man to the world," he says, "but my little boy."**

Levi was buried the following day at Fort Snelling. "Levi Tuddy Angell, LCPL, Iraq," his tombstone is inscribed, "Until We Meet Again." Tuddy was Gordon Sr.'s nickname, and Gordon Jr.'s. When Levi was born, Gordon figured they might as well put it on his birth certificate.

Levi was the third Marine from Carlton County, population 32,000, to die in Iraq in a month. On the day of the funeral, TV cameras sprouted up in the Angells' front yard. The families of the two boys from Moose Lake killed in the war had people to talk to the media for them, but Gordon already knew he would have to speak for himself. **"I told them that that morning I turned on the TV and learned that seven more Marines**

had been killed," he says. "I said I also saw that Bush was on his ranch that day, and it wouldn't have hurt him to pick up the phone and make a call."

At the time, and to this day, Gordon treasured the courtesy and dignity of the Marines who spoke with the Angells and helped them make arrangements. But even that memory has been sullied by reflection. Why was Levi's body returned so damn conveniently under cover of darkness?

This is one question Gordon feels able to answer, but there is no consolation in it. "If I only knew then what I know today," he says, "I would have called all the media. They want to keep everything so hush-hush. They don't want the public to see *those* pictures."

When Levi died, the minister asked what music he would want at his visitation, and Gordon named his son's favorite song, the Charlie Daniels Band's 1979 hit "The Devil Went Down to Georgia." "You probably wouldn't let us play it," he said.

"No problem," the minister replied. "You can play it 10 times if you want to. I don't care."

Gordon had been crying for a week, but that broke him up anew, made him feel bad for grouching at Levi for playing the song over and over during that cross-country trip in the Explorer.

Later, Gordon heard that Charlie Daniels was coming to Grand Casino in Hinckley. He had someone e-mail him and ask if he would play the song for Levi. Daniels personally e-mailed back that morning and said he'd be proud and honored. "I want to see you there," he instructed Gordon. Gordon went, and had Daniels sign a photo Amy Olson had taken at prom of Levi playing the air fiddle to the song.

The prom photo is in a file of pictures Gordon carries around, right on top of a newspaper photo of the memorial service Levi's unit held in Iraq. The latter is an iconic image, a man's service rifle stuck into his boots and topped with his helmet so his comrades have something to salute. In this picture, to the right of Levi's empty boots, there's a friend of his named Nolan Peterson. When the two met in Iraq, Peterson said he was from a little town called Barnum. Levi laughed, cutting off his explanation. "I have two brothers who live in Barnum," he said.

Every time Gordon looks at the picture of the Marines saluting Levi's gear, he has the same thought: "You travel thousands of miles and meet someone who's from 19 miles away."

Peterson was home in the fall and brought Gordon a flag signed by all the guys in Levi's company. He brought a videotape of the overseas memorial, too, but it got wiped clean by the airport x-ray machine.

During the summer and fall, Gordon kept busy driving everywhere he could manage to Kerry-Edwards campaign rallies. He'd talk about the war and about "Bush's damn lies," to whoever showed up--twice he got to talk to Edwards privately--but he was most interested in the young people. Levi never got to vote in a presidential election, he'd tell them, so they should make sure to.

**He spoke in Moose Lake at a DFL rally. Afterward, he says the uncle of a 19-year-old Marine from that town who died in Iraq the same week as Levi told him he had guts to be speaking out, that a lot of people wouldn't do it. He also spoke at an antiwar rally in Duluth when Dick Cheney was in town. That time he got a phone call from an anonymous woman who said she was sorry about his son, but wouldn't Gordon please support the president?**

**"A lot of people say I'm exploiting my son's death, but I'm not saying anything my son didn't tell me," he says. "If a football coach put his men out on the field without helmets and pads and everything, how long do you think it would be before people said something's wrong and he wouldn't be the coach anymore?"**

**Among Gordon's pictures there** is a snapshot taken at a Flag Day ceremony in Alexandria that depicts a handful of fuzzy orbs against a blue sky. The blips are gold balloons released as part of the ceremony, one for every Minnesotan killed in this war. There was a lady there whose son died in Kuwait just before Levi was killed. She sobbed as the organizers read her son's name and let his balloon rise.

Her name is Mary Nordlund, and she lives about 20 miles south of the Angells in Kettle River, a speck on the map just outside Moose Lake, which is itself a town of only 2,100 people, not counting those confined at the prison, where Mary works, or in the sexual psychopath confinement center. Mary's son, Matthew Milczark, was just 18 when he died in what the newspapers initially called a "noncombat shooting in a chapel in Kuwait."



Matthew Milczark, 18

In October the Marine Corps formally ruled it a suicide, but Mary, like many of Matt's other relatives, disputes this. His grandfather and uncles all served, so Matt knew what he was getting into, they say. Plus, he was a go-getter--homecoming king and a hockey, football, and baseball star. When the ruling came down, Mary and Vern Nordlund, along with Matt's father and stepmother, Greg and Linda Milczark, gave the Duluth News-Tribune a prepared statement.

"To now learn the U.S. Marines have ruled the death a self-inflicted wound before all information has been made available to us is devastating," the family wrote. "With all due respect to the Marines, we will continue to pursue with our congressmen all the information that the U.S. Marine Corps has gathered and which led...to this determination.



"Our son...was a very proud Marine. We all supported and respected the choice he made to defend his country. We will always carry him close to our hearts and keep him in our prayers."

The Flag Day ceremony was staged by the Blue Star/Gold Star Mothers of America, an organization started in 1942. Mothers with sons or daughters in the service are Blue Star mothers; Gold Star mothers are those who have made "the ultimate sacrifice." After Mary watched Matt's gold balloon disappear, she tried to join the group. Instead the organizers encouraged her to start a Moose Lake chapter.

Blue Star bylaws say you can't have a chapter without officers, so in July Mary dragooned three other military moms into serving as vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Within four months, they had enrolled 55 women (including state Sen. Becky Loury) and packed the calendar with events. They've solicited donations of toiletries and other sundries and sorted them into care packages for the troops. They've made up T-shirts and ordered pins, although those haven't come yet.

Matt was deployed first to Camp Victory, a big base in Kuwait that served as a clearinghouse for troops arriving and departing from all branches of the service. Two weeks after he got there, he was selected as Echo Company's radio operator and informed that his unit would enter Iraq shortly. On March 6, commanders staged a simulation drill, complete with a wounded Marine. According to a letter Mary got from Matt's commander, the new arrivals didn't know it was a drill. "Matt grabbed the radio and rattled off stuff from memory," Mary says. "He called in the med-evac chopper to get the Marine who was down. 'I would trust him with my life,' is what [the commander] said." Matt's body was found two days later in a chapel, with a gunshot wound to the head.

The Blue Star mothers tell the tale of the day they found out about Matt as a group, gathered around Mary at a table in the high school library. Treasurer Inez Syrett heard from her son Derek, who walked through the front door, fell to his knees, and started crying. Secretary Carla Giersdorf's boy, Matthew, got the news while instant messaging. He got up from the computer, told her, and went straight to the Syretts'. His mother wanted him to call first, but he just left. Vice President Cathy Nummela's son, Jason, answered the phone and started to cry.

A teacher drifts by while they're talking and hands Mary a black-and-white picture of Matt taken in a photography class. She had just found it. The young man in the picture is disarmingly handsome, and the mothers huddle up and try to identify the two girls flanking him. Mary tries to figure out when it was taken. "He has his muscles there, so he was already training to go in," she says, running a nail over his biceps.

Matt Milczark was one of three members of the class of 2003 who enlisted together. He and his friend Moises "Moy" Langhorst had been planning to join for a long time. Derek Haugen, the son of a teacher at the school, was supposed to go too, but he injured his knee after he signed up. He eventually made it into the reserves.

One day, Inez's son showed up with Matt in tow and asked if he could go to Duluth with Matt to a Marine training exercise. No, Inez said, she needed him that day. "And Matt looked at me so sincere and said, 'Mrs. Syrett, are you ever going to let Derek go with me?' I said, 'He can go, but not this weekend.'"

Mary thanks her for the story. "Mrs. Syrett," she repeats proudly. "He was so polite."

The following year, Derek Syrett joined the Air Force, along with Jason Nummela. Matthew Giersdorf joined the Army. Altogether five young men from Moose Lake's class of 2004 signed up. **Carla and Inez say that one of the first things they did when they heard Matt had died was try to talk their sons out of going through with plans made months earlier to enlist.**

"I grabbed my son and I said, 'Matt, you can't, you can't,' and he said, 'Mom, I have to,'" says Carla Giersdorf. He had already been told that he would be trained to be a medic. "He grabbed my face like this"--Carla mashes a palm into each cheek, explaining that this was how she got his attention when he was little--"and he said, 'Mom, you told me I'm a caring person and who better to be with someone when they die, to hold their hand? I know that I will never be alone, and that God will always be with me.'"

Across the table, Mary nods. Crying, she reaches across the table and takes Carla's hand. "I'm so proud of him," she says.

Inez's son had the bad luck to draw the dangerous specialty of combat controller, the first troops sent into any area to clear it out. She did *not* want him to go, she says, and she starts recalling out loud the things she said to try to convince him.

Mary waves her arms in a gesture that says "Stop!" and slaps her palms down on the table. The other mothers look a little startled, and Inez stops talking. The boys were right to go ahead and join up, Mary says. "I took such comfort in that," she says. She closes her eyes and draws a deep breath. "Such comfort."

**Right from the start**, the Blue Star mothers put Judy Langhorst on their membership roster and gave her a T-shirt. Mary refers to her as a Gold Star mother even though, as she adds sadly, Judy hasn't paid her dues or come to a meeting yet. Matt grew up with Judy's son, Moy Langhorst; the two boys served as soldiers in each other's made-up war games as children.

**After Matt died, Moy wrote a letter home to his congregation saying he was as torn up as anyone, but he was trying to keep focused on the job at hand and would mourn later. His letter arrived shortly before the news that he had been killed by hostile fire on April 5, during the same siege on Fallujah that would cost Levi Angell his life three days later. Moy was 19.**

Although the Langhorsts have preferred to do their mourning in private, a few details have emerged in news reports. Moy's father, George Langhorst, is an ex-Marine. The family is very active in the Lutheran church. Moy was at the top of his class academically, and a member of the school Knowledge Bowl team.

"When it happened a second time, I said, 'It can't,'" recalls Carla Giersdorf. "Everyone was in shock all over again, and they didn't have time to grieve." Both funerals were held in the same church, something Carla wasn't so sure about at first. "I was afraid since they were both military, they would be the same, but they weren't," she says. "Matt's was very Matt, and Moy's was very Moy."

In a way, Inez Syrett thinks Moy's funeral was tougher for their friends, because his casket was open. "The kids from the high school, you could see them come in and stop, shocked," she says.



Moises Langhorst, 19

On Mother's Day, Matt's classmates went out to Mary Nordlund's house and planted two flowering crabapples in her yard, one pink and one white. Later they brought a garden bench engraved in Matt's memory. They made another for Matt's father and one for Moy's parents.

"They just took it upon themselves to do that," Mary says. Carla nods. "That's the caliber of kids we have," she adds.

There were other tributes, too. One girl wrote a poem called "The Blue Slip," a reference to the note dispatched from the principal's office when there is this kind of news for teachers to read to their classes. And on Memorial Day, Mary discovered the message "Milly we love you" written on a stone on Matt's grave in a cemetery just north of town. Later she heard that the kids were surprised there was no headstone yet. Of course, she adds, there wasn't even grass yet. When it finally did sprout, she let it grow up around the stone.

**In World War I**, Carlton County lost 27 soldiers and one Marine, according to Minnesota Historical Society records. Sixty-six died in World War II. And although it's known that the county lost men in the undeclared wars after that, it's not clear how many.

Up through 1950 or so, the Carlton County numbers are not anomalous; most Minnesota counties sent and lost high numbers of men. But service levels have stayed relatively high throughout Carlton County, which stretches from Moose Lake on the south almost all the way to Duluth on the north. Partly it's a matter of the National Guard base in Cloquet, and partly it's the lack of ready opportunities for the area's high school graduates.

But in relatively prosperous Moose Lake, there's one more factor. In 1923, after World War I, the precursor to the federal Veterans Administration (which wouldn't be created until 1930) helped 800 disabled Minnesota veterans resettle on tracts of land in a handful of places throughout the state. The agency helped the men figure out what kind of crops would thrive on each plot, and how to clear the land gradually. About 50 men were set up in Moose Lake, where it was thought that berries and poultry held the most promise. The Moose Lake "trainees" were well received, so well that some of the veterans actually voiced concern that the banks were being too lenient with them.

**Today, military recruiters begin visiting Moose Lake High School (which graduates about 60 students a year from small surrounding communities) and cultivating relationships with students in the ninth grade. With parental consent, kids can pre-enlist in the 11th grade. "Quite a few go to college, but the number going into the military is increasing," says Tim Caroline, the superintendent of Moose Lake's schools. "It's just scary, plain old scary. It seems like they just graduate from high school and they're over there. Just real quick."**

This high school is the alma mater of the only Carlton County resident to die in Vietnam: Merrel Sarvela, class of 1967. His picture hangs in the library in the basement. This year, the Blue Star mothers have arranged to hang Matt's and Moy's photos alongside Sarvela's.

At 8:55 on the morning of Veteran's Day, students clatter into the school auditorium and go through the intricate dance of figuring out who's going to sit where. The girls favor low-cut hip-huggers and bangs curled under with a curling iron, à la 1972. The boys are the height of men, but skinny and weedy. Some appear to have just discovered grunge; others wear navy-colored jackets with red sports letters.

The entire hall could fit inside a movie theater balcony. There are maybe 200 seats, arranged in long, shallow rows to accommodate a nearly full-sized proscenium stage. On it there's a podium hung with a garland of red, white, and blue stars, a dozen folding chairs, and a bevy of Blue Star mothers in Operation Enduring Freedom T-shirts silk-screened with images of the flag. Mary Nordlund has brought along a Beanie Baby bear in Marine fatigues and looks for a suitable place to prop it.

The two front rows are reserved for adults from Matt's and Moy's families, who slowly fill them. After everyone's seated, two men in white gloves, spit-polished boots, and gold braid enter from the rear of the hall bearing flags. There's a pause as the men, a color guard from the local VFW post, realize that the ceiling is too low to accommodate the flags. They make their way to the front of the auditorium and onto the stage.

One of these men makes a few thoughtfully composed remarks about what it means to be a veteran. Then Carla Giersdorf and Cathy Nummela present the high school principal and superintendent with the formal dress blue Marine portraits of Matt and Moy taken when they graduated from basic training.

A female student with a cordless mic takes the stage and, in the voice of a much older chanteuse, belts out Billy Ray Cyrus's "Some Gave All."

*All gave some and some gave all  
And some stood through for the red, white, and blue  
And some had to fall  
And if you think of me  
Think of all your liberties and recall  
Some gave all*

The adults are bawling and the girls are passing Kleenex around. The boys just look stunned. The color guard wrestles the flags back out of the auditorium and the halls are silent as the students walk back to class.

Downstairs, the grownups hang the two 8-by-10 portraits. Moy's parents, who are both dressed in fatigues, take off pretty quickly, as does Matt's father. But Mary and her Blue Star cabinet stay for a while. They're going to Willmar on Sunday to attend a statewide Blue Star/Gold Star Mothers' meeting. Mary offers the use of her car, which would be no trouble to gas up on Saturday night. She doesn't want to drive, though. Then there is the next local chapter meeting, on Tuesday.

**On her way out, Mary rubs a smudge from the glass over Matt's picture and mentions that he didn't even own a dress uniform like the one in the picture. He told her once that all the photos were of the same hat and coat. Someone held the jacket in front of each recruit in quick succession. Matt did own a dress coat, Mary hastens to add, but he hadn't gotten together the money to buy the slacks.**



Surprised that there was no headstone right away, Matt Milczark's classmates left this marker on his grave

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## Two Funerals At Arlington

December 3, 2004 By Rebecca Dana, Washington Post Staff Writer

The medals and the American flag were almost too much for Kiona Bryant to hold as she sat yesterday at the grave of her high school sweetheart.

So she bundled them together, the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star and the flag that once draped the coffin of her husband, Jack, and turned her head away from the scene.

One by one, the soldiers who conducted the service touched her arm, whispered condolences and marched off across an open field at Arlington National Cemetery.

It was a scene that would be repeated later in the day. Bryant's husband was one of two soldiers killed in Iraq who were laid to rest yesterday in the cemetery, hours apart, in nearby graves.

Army Sgt. Jack "Jay" Bryant Jr., 23, died Nov. 20 in Muqdadiyah, Iraq, about 60 miles north of Baghdad, when an improvised explosive device detonated near his military convoy, followed by a rocket-propelled grenade attack. Bryant, of Dale City, was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, based in Vilseck, Germany.

Lance Cpl. Dimitrios Gavriel, 29, a native of Haverhill, Mass., was killed a day earlier a result of enemy action in the Anbar province. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The men were the 98th and 99th service members killed in Iraq to be buried at Arlington. The long, slow sound of taps rang out for both men on the crisp, clear day.

Bryant had begged his parents not to worry when he was deployed to Iraq and promised them he would be fine. "He would often tell us that he's immortal," his father, Jack Bryant Sr., said in an interview shortly after his son's death.

Just before he was killed, Bryant had a two-week leave in Germany with his wife and their toddler son, Keshawn James. Together, they celebrated an early Thanksgiving, far from their home in Dale City, and far from the uncertain battlefields of Iraq. They took a seven-day tour of Paris, and then Bryant returned to combat.

Bryant graduated from Hylton High School just over five years ago and went straight into the Army with dreams of seeing the world -- which he did -- and taking some time off before coming home for college. Recently, he had taken some computer science courses through the University of Maryland.

Endlessly optimistic, quick with a smile or a joke, Bryant's real passion was music, his father said. He sang in the choir at Star Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church in Triangle, where his father is an associate minister. Shortly before his death, Bryant had taken to writing rap songs.

At 10 a.m. yesterday, the soldier's friends and family gathered around his grave. There, before burying his son, Jack Bryant Sr. somberly received an American flag from Lt. Gen. Larry J. Dodgen, commanding general of the Army Space and Missile Defense Command. Kiona Bryant accepted one as well, along with her husband's medals.

An Army firing party fired into the air a final salute of three shots, sharp and quick.

Three hours later, Gavriel's family and friends arrived, as did Massachusetts Sens. Edward M. Kennedy (D) and John F. Kerry (D), both of whom carried small yellow flower arrangements to place on the casket. Gavriel's mother accepted a flag from Staff Sgt. Charles Dorsey of the Marine Corps Barracks in Washington. A Greek Orthodox chaplain, the Rev. Father Nicholas Manousalas, finished the ceremony.

Two weeks before his death, Gavriel told reporters he was "locked, cocked and ready to rock," the Boston Globe reported.

Like Bryant, Gavriel had a thing for rhymes.

The high school wrestling champion and former Wall Street analyst, began keeping a journal of poems and thoughts after he graduated from Brown University in 1997, which his parents, Chris and Penelope, found only recently, according to media reports. In one piece, published in the Boston Herald shortly before his funeral in Haverhill, he wrote:

*And then there are the dreamers  
Who see beyond the shroud  
Distinct are they among us  
They shuffle through the crowd  
Hope lives among so few  
Yet strong it is I know  
For I am still a dreamer  
Along the track I go*

After he died, friends and family remembered Gavriel as an idealist, a 270-pound giant of a man who quit a high-profile job in finance to do what he believed was right, according to accounts in the Massachusetts newspapers. On Sept. 11, 2001, during the moments before the attacks on the World Trade Center, Gavriel had been on the phone with a friend working in one of the towers, according to the news stories. That made it clear: He would go to Iraq.

What became clear only later, on two, dark November days, was how he and Bryant would come home.

So yesterday two families paused, at different times and in different ways, on the same small patch of grass at Arlington. They said prayers and stood in silence. And they honored two very different men, a pair of dreamers.

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## **Pentagon Bigots Challenged; Ex-Military Gays Sue**

(Washington Post, December 6, 2004, Pg. 9)

The Pentagon's "don't ask, don't tell" policy is being challenged by 12 gays who have been separated from the military because of their homosexuality. **They intend to file a federal lawsuit today in Boston that would cite last year's landmark Supreme Court ruling which overturned state laws making gay sex a crime.**

**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.  
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- Christian Parenti** ■ Travelled to Iraq and Afghanistan as a journalist whose articles appear regularly in *The Nation* magazine.
- Pat Gunn** ■ Served in the US Navy from 1972-78 and joined Military Families Speak Out after her son Jason was sent to Iraq.
- Job Mashariki** ■ Executive Director of Black Veterans for Social Justice, a multi-service organization based in Brooklyn, NY
- Michael Hoffman** ■ Was a Marine artilleryman during the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and is co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War

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## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**

### **Insurgents Attack Oil Pipeline**

12.6.04 AP & Energy Security

SAMARRA, Iraq -- Insurgents blew up part of a domestic oil pipeline in northern Iraq early Monday, sending flames and black smoke billowing into the sky, police said.

Col. Mahmoud Ahmed said a bomb struck a section of a pipeline some 10 miles south of Samarra, which is 60 miles north of Baghdad.

**The pipeline transports oil from the Beiji refinery to the Dora refinery in Baghdad for domestic use.**

**Oil supply to the pipeline has been stopped to enable the fire to be extinguished. The extent of the damage was not immediately clear.**

Last week, two additional pipelines were attacked:

November 29 - two blasts, one at 8:40 am and the other at 8:50am, on the oil pipeline that runs from Bayji to Daura refinery.

November 30 - blast on the oil pipeline that connects Daura refinery and the Musayyib power station south of Baghdad, **cutting power to the Babil area.**

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### **U.S. Translator Captured In Ramadi**

12.6.04 AP By PAUL GARWOOD

Police said an Iraqi translator working for U.S. forces in Ramadi, Bashar Mohammed, was kidnapped by militants Sunday.

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