

GI SPECIAL 4C24:



March 18 and 19, 2006. New Orleans: Walkin' to New Orleans. A coalition of veterans and military families and Hurricane Survivors walked from Mobile to New Orleans for the 3rd Anniversary of the war in Iraq. Photo by Diane Green Lent: dianegreenelent.com

**Pentagon Traitors At It
Again:
Army Making Wounded Iraq War Vet
Repay Enlistment Money:
They Confiscated His Pay Check;
Sent Collection Agency After Him**



March 24, 2006 By SHEL SEGAL, Fontana Herald News

Uncle Sam giveth, and apparently Uncle Sam can taketh away.

When Fontana resident and 2001 Fontana A.B. Miller High School graduate Kevin Stonestreet joined the U.S. Army in the summer of 2001 as a member of the infantry, he was given a \$20,000 bonus to be paid out over his six-year enlistment.

However, when Stonestreet was honorably discharged from the Army in 2005, he found out he needed to repay \$3,800 of that bonus because he did not complete his six years.

But Stonestreet, who is now 23, said he was kicked out of the Army because he was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression from serving in Iraq.

In addition, Stonestreet, who was awarded the Purple Heart and was considered for the Bronze Star for bravery in combat, said the amount he was to pay back was originally \$6,000, but the government repossessed his final paycheck of \$2,200.

"They were nice enough to take out the \$170 for my child support," Stonestreet said, laughingly.

Stonestreet added his unit was referred to as an "inconvenience to the government," probably because of my condition, a personal disorder."

STONESTREET JOINED THE ARMY right out of high school and was first stationed at Ft. Benning, Ga. He said he was first attracted to the infantry because of the kind of work it did.

"We did raids, searches, observations, all the good stuff," he said.

He received his first installment of his bonus -- \$7,000 -- in February 2002, he said, adding the rest of the money would come over time.

However, in September 2003, he was sent to fight in Iraq, and that's when everything changed for him.

STONESTREET WAS STATIONED near Fallujah, Iraq in April 2004 when an insurgency was being put down by U.S. military personnel.

On April 6, 2004, Stonestreet said he was riding in a Bradley fighting vehicle, which can seat up to 13 soldiers -- albeit not comfortably -- when it was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

"We were providing security for the Marines as they were pulling out (of Fallujah) when they just got ambushed," Stonestreet said. "My platoon leader lost his leg and his gunner lost his right hand."

Stonestreet also was wounded. He was hit by shrapnel in his neck and was grazed by a bullet on his left arm. The shrapnel is still in his neck.

"I was a centimeter away from bleeding to death if it had hit my jugular," he said.

He was later recommended for the Bronze Star as he gave up his machine gun to a buddy when he went to get first aid for the injured -- but that's now all but forgotten, he said.

"I went on top of the Bradley to give them first aid," he said. "We were apparently under heavy fire, but because of the blast, I didn't hear anything. I was surprised there wasn't a fire, just a lot of smoke -- a lot of smoke -- and our uniforms smelled like ammonia for days."

STONESTREET CAME BACK to the States in September 2005. Now stationed at Ft. Riley, Kan., he came back to Fontana where he was welcomed with a big party, he said.

But his world had been turned upside down by the war.

"When I first got home I had insomnia," he said. "When I could sleep, I had flashbacks, nightmares and cold sweat.

"I'm a world better being away from the Army. I miss my friends, but they'll be all right, hopefully."

THE GOVERNMENT IS still interested in recouping its \$3,800 it believes it is entitled to. Stonestreet, who works as a clerk at Pep Boys in Rialto, said he has

been contacted by a collection agency on the government's behalf and will soon be owing interest on that amount if something isn't done soon.

He added while he feels he shouldn't have to repay the money, he doesn't have it in the first place.

"They ended my contract for me and I'm being forced into paying this," Stonestreet said. "I tried to hold up my end of the bargain."

In addition, while Stonestreet said the government contends it paid him his entire bonus, Stonestreet said he never received the final payment and his bank has no record of ever receiving it.

Stonestreet said he has written a letter to Congressman Joe Baca (D-Rialto), but hasn't heard anything back. In addition, Baca's office did not return phone calls from the Herald News to discuss this issue.

Stonestreet added he has also written letters to Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, with no one getting back to him.

[Of course not. Why should they give a shit? They have more important business, like sending troops off to die for their wealthy and powerful campaign contributors. What good is a soldier who can't fight for the Empire any more? Just an annoyance, if that. Maybe Stonestreet will figure out who and what the enemy really is. Maybe he already has. Big clue: the only enemy worth going to war with is not in Iraq. The weapons are pointing the wrong direction.]

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 inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. 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)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Pike Graduate Is Killed While On Patrol In Iraq



SGT ANTOINE J. McKINZIE: 1981-2006

March 22, 2006 By Robert King, Indianapolis Star

When Army Spc. Antoine J. McKinzie called home from Iraq last week, he mentioned to his stepfather how glad he was that his unit had received a new armored Humvee.

But while patrolling the streets of Baghdad on Tuesday, McKinzie was manning the machine gunner's position on the Humvee's roof -- unprotected by the vehicle's armor.

When the unit came under attack, McKinzie, a 2000 graduate of Pike High School, was fatally shot.

He is the fifth soldier or Marine from Marion County to be killed in Iraq.

McKinzie, 25, was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq. He had come home to his family in Pike Township at Christmas for a three-week stay. He spoke to his stepfather, Dwight Adams, on the phone a week ago today.

"He was doing great. He had just gotten a big care package from us," Adams said. "He was a big New England Patriots fan, and he had gotten a Patriots hat, a Sports Illustrated, some food he liked and some pictures of the family."

The next word about McKinzie came Tuesday from an Army sergeant who appeared at the family's home with a chaplain to deliver the words no military parent wants to hear: "The secretary of the Army regrets to inform you . . ."

"It seemed like a scene in a movie," said Adams, who called McKinzie's mother, Zyvonne Adams, at work and told her to come home without explaining why. When she arrived and saw the uniformed military men in her living room, she didn't need to hear them speak to know the message they were about to deliver.

McKinzie was born Feb. 25, 1981, in Des Moines, Iowa.

His family lived in Rhode Island and Connecticut before moving to Indianapolis in 1994, when his stepfather took a job as an editor with The Indianapolis Star.

McKinzie attended Guion Creek Middle School and graduated from Pike High School, where he had been best friends with Jerry Henson.

Henson described his fallen friend Tuesday as "one of the best guys I've ever known."

The two of them walked everywhere together, including frequent visits to Lafayette Square Mall. Henson, who now lives in Corpus Christi, Texas, said McKinzie was quiet, well-spoken and intelligent. He could be somewhat reserved -- until you got to know him, Henson said.

"I just remember his laugh. He had one helluva laugh," Henson said. "He had a hearty, tall-guy laugh. It is one of those things that I will miss a lot."

After high school, McKinzie got an associate's degree in computer-aided drafting at ITT Technical Institute, his stepfather said. He wanted to design computer games. Not finding work, wanting to do something special with his life and enticed by a military signing bonus, he joined the Army in 2003. His friends, including Henson, threw him an induction party.

It was the last time that many of them ever saw him.

McKinzie served in Iraq for more than six months in 2004 before spending most of 2005 in Germany. He returned to his family at Christmas -- the first they'd seen of him since he graduated from basic training more than two years before.

"He looked great. He was healthy. He was happy. He felt like he was doing an important job," said his stepfather, who had helped raise McKinzie since he was 4. "He was proud to serve his country."

McKinzie never talked much with his family about the war. But it was clear to them that his unit, which frequently patrolled the Baghdad streets in Humvees and other armored vehicles, was in the middle of the action. After the Christmas visit, he was back in Iraq by January.

Soldier Died Days Away From Home:

Turlock Ranger Had 2 Weeks Left In Iraq, 3 Months In Army



Brehm

3.22.06 By GARTH STAPLEY, BEE STAFF WRITER

One: The number of Bill Brehm's children.

Two: The number of weeks left before his only child, an Army Ranger, would return from war-ravaged Iraq after enduring a half-dozen missions there.

Three: The number of months remaining in Sgt. Dale G.M. Brehm's enlistment. Although he loved the Army's elite forces, Brehm had decided to leave for another life, his stepmother said Tuesday.

Zero: The number of people who expected him to leave this life altogether.

"We thought, 'He's made it this far; he's going to survive this,'" his stepmother, Linda Brehm of Turlock, said Tuesday, which would have been Dale Brehm's 24th birthday. "We got used to him going back, coming home, going back, coming home. So we're just blown away. It's devastating."

Brehm and Staff Sgt. Ricardo Barraza, 24, of Shafter, near Bakersfield, died Saturday after they "came under small arms fire by enemy forces during combat operations" in Ramadi, Iraq, according to a brief Department of Defense statement released Tuesday.

Brehm's widow, Raini, a Modesto native, said Army Special Operations "don't like to Hollywoodize what they do." She spoke in a brief telephone conversation from her home near Fort Lewis, Wash., where her husband's 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment is based.

Memorial services, initially slated for later this week, have been put on hold, Bill and Linda Brehm said.

An additional service is to be scheduled at Fort Lewis, the Brehms said, and Dale Brehm is to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C.

Bill and Linda Brehm had celebrated the wedding of her daughter March 12, she said. A week later, they were enjoying the Sunday morning newspaper and coffee when two uniformed officers approached their Turlock home.

"It was our normal morning routine," she said, "except that morning we had some visitors. I looked out the window and saw these guys walking up, and as soon as Bill opened the door I knew."

But they didn't know much about it for more than two days, when the Department of Defense issued a few details.

Dale Brehm graduated from Turlock Adult School in 2000 and joined the military the next year.

Bill Brehm, in a 2002 letter to The Bee, described himself as "apprehensive" about the war but "very proud of my son for he is well-trained, ready and willing."

"His ultimate goal in life was to be an Army Ranger," Linda Brehm said. "The Army was his life; he was very proud of what he did and he fulfilled his dream."

Brehm was the 14th service member from the Northern San Joaquin Valley to be killed since the war on terrorism began. He was the third from Turlock to die since October.

Brehm's airborne qualification meant he jumped out of planes and helicopters.

TROOP NEWS

Pentagon Fools At It Again: Marines Try To Recruit 78-Year-Old Woman

March 25, 2006 Associated Press, SAUGUS, Calif.

Sonia Goldstein was flattered by the nice recruiting letter asking her to consider becoming one of "the few, the proud." But at age 78, she believes she's just a little old to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps.

"I couldn't believe it," Goldstein told KCAL-TV on Friday. "My girls were sitting here ... we were in hysterics, we laughed so hard."

The letter told her the corps could use her unique language skills, but also warned that life as a Marine would test her physical and mental abilities "beyond anything you've ever known."

"There I am with my walker. I can't maneuver from here to there without it," said Goldstein, who added that her only language is English.

"I'll do whatever I could for this wonderful country we live in," she said. "But you know, this is kind of stretching it a bit."

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



The casket of U.S. Marine Sgt. David Coullard is carried from St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church in Glastonbury, Conn., Aug. 11, 2005 after funeral services. Coullard was killed in Iraq. (AP Photo/Bob Child)

“Recruiters Ought To Be Treated As We Treated Liars And Cheats In

The Old Days: Run Them Out Of Town On A Rail”

[Thanks to Paul Dean, who sent this in.]

March 24, 2006 Letters To The Editor, The Oregonian

Dennis S. Winningstad wrote a letter with a generalized tale of how good the military recruiters have been to him and his son ("Recruiters maligned," March 20).

I have a different story to tell.

My youngest son was a nursing major when he was recruited by the Army two years ago. As the recruiting officer told him, the Army needs nurses to care for the thousands of wounded solders returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Army, right out of basic training, made him a medic. When we complained (and the only person able to get any information out of the Pentagon was Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore.), they stuck him on the front lines in Iraq, under Marine command, where he is right this minute.

So, our son now goes out on daily patrols, surrounded by snipers, armed with only a 9 mm handgun, dressed in an Army uniform among a squad of 11 Marines, sticking out like a sore thumb: a target simply because his mother and I were dumb enough to speak up.

So much for free speech.

So much for "building democracies."

So much for patriotism and God and country.

Only a complete idiot would allow his children to join any branch of the military.

Recruiters ought to be treated as we treated liars and cheats in the old days: run them out of town on a rail.

MIKE BROOKS, Coburg

“I’d Like To Take My Bronze Star From ‘Nam And Tell ‘W’ Where To Stick It”

“They Only Care About How Profitable The War Is For Their Stock Portfolios”

[Thanks to Paul Dean, who sent this in.]

March 24, 2006 Letters To The Editor, The Oregonian

As a Navy Vietnam veteran, I want to thank The Oregonian for running the tremendous article about Sgt. William R. Stout Jr. and his struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder ("Wounded Lives," March 19).

The reporter "Bush gang cares not for vets" deserves to be nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

It saddens me to think that George W. Bush and his gang of misfits will never see this article. Even if they did, none of them cares a bit about any veteran. They only care about how profitable the war is for their stock portfolios.

I'd like to take my Bronze Star from 'Nam and tell "W" where to stick it.

My war was based on a bunch of lies, and so is this one.

MIKE MATTINGLY Gresham

“\$50 Billion More Than The Vietnam War's Total Cost In 2006 Dollars”

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

March 26, 2006 By Eric Margolis, Toronto Sun [Excerpt]

What was to have been a jolly little war to "liberate" Iraq's oil has cost over \$500 billion so far.

That's \$50 billion more than the Vietnam War's total cost in 2006 dollars.

Clearly, the U.S. armed forces are too expensive to send to war lasting longer than a few months.

Update On Repression Of Student Anti-War Activism At Pace University: Students Not Expelled, But Face Discipline If Violate School's Repressive Policies

I would like to publicly state that I shall continue to refuse to follow any rule or regulation that abridges my constitutional rights and liberties.

I will not be intimidated by the Dean of Students, student activities or Campus Security officials. My struggle will continue until the University's unconstitutional ban on student activism is overturned and students are allowed to organize, operate free press, and meet freely on campus.

From: Charles Jenks, Traprockpeace.org
To: GI Special
Sent: March 24, 2006
Subject: Update on Repression of Student Activism at Pace University

March 24, 2006, By Brian Kelly, joe-kel@hvc.rr.com, Pace University student

First, I must to apologize for getting this letter out so late, after having our disciplinary hearing with the Dean of Students (Pace University) Friday afternoon, Lauren had to begin packing for a relief trip to New Orleans and we were both stuck trying to make sense of the outcome.

I have spent most of my spring break trying to digest the hearing, the student handbook, and the events of the past several weeks.

The hearing was shrouded with the same methods of intimidation and deception that Pace has been using against us the last few weeks.

We entered Dean O'Grady's office with one of our attorneys, Gideon Oliver, and then the Dean informed us we would have two separate hearings.

Lauren and I were forced to sit next to the University Attorney. Lauren and I elected to pursue an "informal resolution" as outlined in Pace University's student handbook.

While this waived our right to appeal, the Dean agreed to drop the expulsion charges against us in return for meeting with the Dean to discuss "university policies and guiding principles of conduct."

Before the university agreed to these terms however, the Dean attempted to make Lauren sign a statement waiving her right to appeal the decision of resolution, and leaving blank the punishment section, which would have enabled the Dean to take any action, up to expulsion without the ability to appeal the decision.

The hearings were conducted very paternalistically, in keeping with the total control over university affairs that they are accustomed to and in clear retaliation for the protest at the Clinton event.

The good news is that the University has backed off its threat of expulsion for “incidents” we allegedly participated in leading up to the date of the hearing.

This was not surprising, as the University did not have its facts straight, and the “charges” were all related to first amendment issues.

This is not even mentioning the pressure exerted by students, professors, and the anti-war community on University officials since Lauren and I received the written threat of expulsion.

The bad news is that Pace has reaffirmed their ban on student freedoms of speech, press, and assembly.

Pace believes that students need permission to attempt to do any organizing on campus. We were charged with violating three rules, one of them little more than two-years old (only approved flyers can be posted on campus), and none of them enforced for right-wing groups or fraternities/sororities (meeting informally in the student union, holding peaceful protests, and flyering).

While the threat of expulsion was temporarily removed from the table, the university has promised to seek harsher punishments (though I have trouble finding something harsher than the threat of expulsion) should either of us continue to organize on campus in violation of their draconian bureaucratic procedures.

Since I called Clinton a war criminal when he came to my school, the university had been constantly harassing us.

The level of security was increased on campus in the previous two weeks, including an increased presence of top-level Pace security officials, patrols by University Deans, and monitoring of all student activities.

When we attempted to table for our two student groups, after being authorized by Student Activities, our organizers were harassed by several Campus Security officials, Student Activities, and patrolling university officials.

On Monday, March 13, during our press conference on the steps of City Hall (New York City), three heads of Campus Security left the campus and followed us to monitor our activities and press conference.

I thank everyone who signed our petition (and a huge thank you to Elizabeth Wrigley-Field for creating the online petition).

The university has been actively monitoring the Campus Antiwar Network's national website and Pace chapter of Students for a Democratic Society's website. The petition and letters of support clearly played a huge role.

I am eternally grateful to all of the activists and public figure of peace and justice that wrote letters of support to our university on our behalf.

We could not have fought our expulsion without the tremendous help of the national Campus Antiwar Network who helped stage a national call-in during our protest, and Traprock Peace Center's Charlie Jenks who worked tirelessly on Traprock Peace Center's blog against repression at Pace.

The national call-in also had a huge effect on the Dean of Student's office and the President's office. When I attempted to make my appointment for my hearing it took almost two hours before I could get my call through (instead of answering the telephone during normal office hours, they were allowing it to go through to voicemail). The Dean and top university officials also had several "emergency meetings" including the day of the call-in and the day of our rally.

I would like to publicly state that I shall continue to refuse to follow any rule or regulation that abridges my constitutional rights and liberties.

I will not be intimidated by the Dean of Students, student activities or Campus Security officials. My struggle will continue until the University's unconstitutional ban on student activism is overturned and students are allowed to organize, operate free press, and meet freely on campus.

If the university's repression has reaffirmed anything in my mind is it that battles are won through direct struggle and unified efforts of a strong, grassroots, and democratic anti-war and progressive movement.

Those that control society divide us and repress us because they know we have the truth on our side. It is their fear of that truth that is our greatest strength.

We must remain united against repression and continue to seek common ground in our struggle to end the war on Iraq, and prevent future atrocities of the American-led, corporately funded war machine.

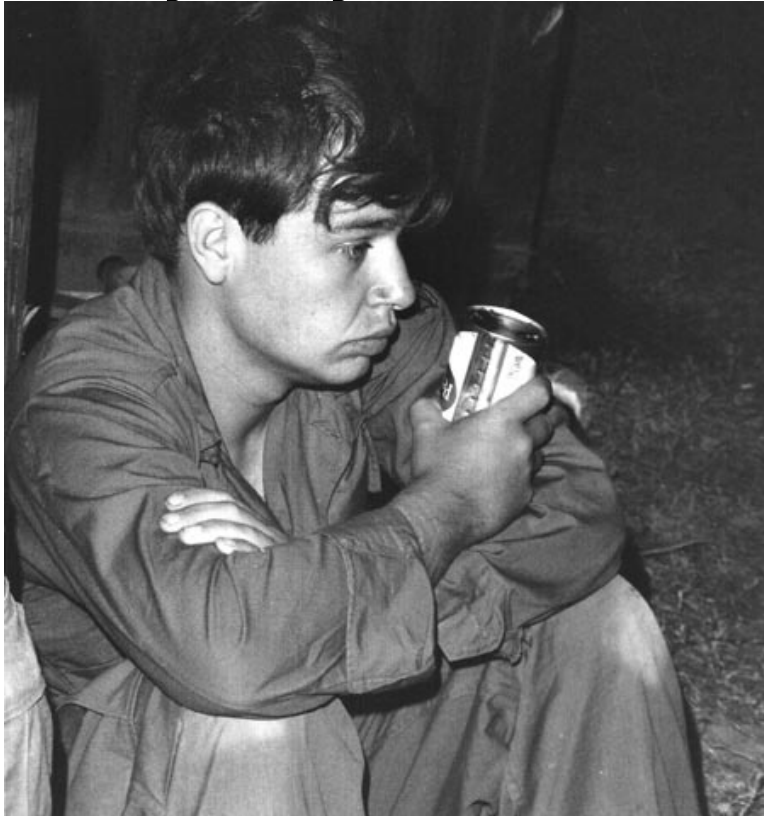
Thank you for your continued support in the fight for free expression and student activism. We will have updates soon on the coming battle to change the university's policies on student activism.

College Not Combat! Relief Not War! Education Not Occupation! Troops Out Now!

In Solidarity and Struggle,
Brian Kelly
Pace Chapter of the Campus Antiwar Network

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Goodbye My Sweet Friend”



This is not Sean Daily, but it represents all those who have taken their own lives. Prolonged silence is the state of mind that leads to suicide.

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: March 26, 2006
Subject: Fw: Sean Daily: A Veteran For Peace

This was a big loss for me, and the Peace Movement in the Pacific Northwest.

He was a rock, that I was not ready to lose.

Now, I move on with more conviction than ever.

Without people like Sean, we would all be prisoners of insanity.

To all members of Chapter 72 [Veterans For Peace]

I just found out today that a Vietnam Veteran friend of mine committed suicide last month.

He was the founding member of the VFP chapter in Colville, Washington.

His name was Sean Daily.

Sean was a very kind and gentle man. His history goes back to the 1980's, when he and Brian Willson were doing peace work together in Central America. They were helping to rebuild the chaos that Ronald Reagan was destroying.

For me, Sean Daily represented the heart and soul of the peace movement in America.

In many ways, he was the glue that kept so many of his fellow veterans together.

I truly believe that bearing witness about our own pain is one of the most important things we can do as veterans. Silence is the real killer.

Sean is the third close friend I have lost as a result of the Vietnam War.

Two medics I served with in Vietnam died as a result of being in Vietnam.

One was killed in a head-on collision with another car. His mother told me he had been very depressed.

The other friend died on the streets in Charlotte, North Carolina.

I had another medic friend who attempted suicide in Vietnam. Over the years, I have not been able to contact him.

The war in Iraq is taking its toll on many veterans around the country. Maybe one of the only ways to stop it, is to stay close. Sean Daily was too quiet for me. So many people saw him as a pillar, and that may have put too much pressure on him.

There are no heavy weights in the peace movement.

The best thing we can achieve is to be a worker among workers. That way, it is easier to keep tabs on our friends.

The people who know us, are our greatest resource for survival.

Sean Daily is gone, but what he stood for will never be gone.

I will carry his energy inside of me for the rest of my life.

Goodbye my sweet friend.

When you take your last breath, your eyes open to a new world.

Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
March 26, 2006



Photos and caption from Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

Major GI Special Fuckup Corrected

From: Ward Reilly, Veterans For Peace: wardpeace@hotmail.com
To: GI Special
Sent: March 26, 2006
Subject: RE: GI Special 4C23: "A Scar That Will Never Heal"

Hey T....I took the picture of Garett [Mobile To New Orleans March] that you ran, funny how that shit works.....

I have several excellent shots of IVAW members en masse, along the route, during Veterans-Survivors march, and also a simple article I wrote for The Veteran, VVAWs quarterly, if you wish the article (can be excerpted, it's 1000+ words) just say the word...the march kicked-ass....and the descriptions you ran are great...

IVAW is coming into its own...

peace from Ward

REPLY: Yes please send, and apologies for the bad photo ID. T]

Clarification Requested

From: C
To: vice_president@whitehouse.gov
Sent: March 24, 2006 7:41 PM
Subject: clarification requested

Dear Richard Cheney,

In order to have an intelligent discussion about current events, mr. bush may wish to explain for us his definition and understanding of some words; like "terrorist", "democracy", and "freedom".

It appears that his perception of these words may deviate at least slightly from global norms.

While he's at it, he may also wish to define for us some other new words he's added to his lexicon recently; like "islamofascist."

What exactly are "islamofascists", and how exactly do they pose a threat to the lives and belief systems of the vast majority of Americans?

Sharing American citizenship with you;

C

WHAT THE MEDIA TOLD YOU ABOUT IRAQ

Compiled by FAIR Fair.org

"Iraq Is All but Won; Now What?" (Los Angeles Times headline, 4/10/03)

"Now that the combat phase of the war in Iraq is officially over, what begins is a debate throughout the entire U.S. government over America's unrivaled power and how best to use it." (CBS reporter Joie Chen, 5/4/03)

"Congress returns to Washington this week to a world very different from the one members left two weeks ago. The war in Iraq is essentially over and domestic issues are regaining attention." (NPR's Bob Edwards, 4/28/03)

"Tommy Franks and the coalition forces have demonstrated the old axiom that boldness on the battlefield produces swift and relatively bloodless victory. The three-week swing through Iraq has utterly shattered skeptics' complaints." (Fox News Channel's Tony Snow, 4/27/03)

"The only people who think this wasn't a victory are Upper Westside liberals, and a few people here in Washington." (Charles Krauthammer, Inside Washington, WUSA-TV, 4/19/03)

"We had controversial wars that divided the country. This war united the country and brought the military back." (Newsweek's Howard Fineman--MSNBC, 5/7/03)

"We're all neo-cons now." (MSNBC's Chris Matthews, 4/9/03)

"The war was the hard part. The hard part was putting together a coalition, getting 300,000 troops over there and all their equipment and winning. And it gets easier. I mean, setting up a democracy is hard, but it is not as hard as winning a war." (Fox News Channel's Fred Barnes, 4/10/03)

"Oh, it was breathtaking. I mean I was almost starting to think that we had become inured to everything that we'd seen of this war over the past three weeks; all this sort of saturation. And finally, when we saw that it was such a just true, genuine expression. It was reminiscent, I think, of the fall of the Berlin Wall. And just sort of that pure emotional expression, not choreographed, not stage-managed, the way so many things these days seem to be. Really breathtaking." Washington Post reporter Ceci Connolly, appearing on Fox News Channel on 4/9/03, discussing the pulling down of a Saddam Hussein statue in Baghdad, an event later revealed to have been a U.S. military PSYOPS operation.

"The war winds down, politics heats up.... Picture perfect. Part Spider-Man, part Tom Cruise, part Ronald Reagan. The president seizes the moment on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific." (PBS's Gwen Ifill, 5/2/03, on George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech)

"We're proud of our president. Americans love having a guy as president, a guy who has a little swagger, who's physical, who's not a complicated guy like Clinton or even like Dukakis or Mondale, all those guys, McGovern. They want a guy who's president. Women like a guy who's president. Check it out. The women like this war. I think we like having a hero as our president. It's simple. We're not like the Brits." (MSNBC's Chris Matthews, 5/1/03)

"He looked like an alternative commander in chief, rock star, movie star, and one of the guys." (CNN's Lou Dobbs, on Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech, 5/1/03)

"Why don't the damn Democrats give the president his day? He won today. He did well today." (MSNBC's Chris Matthews, 4/9/03)

"If image is everything, how can the Democratic presidential hopefuls compete with a president fresh from a war victory?" (CNN's Judy Woodruff, 5/5/03)

"I doubt that the journalists at the New York Times and NPR or at ABC or at CNN are going to ever admit just how wrong their negative pronouncements were over the past four weeks." (MSNBC's Joe Scarborough, 4/9/03)

"This has been a tough war for commentators on the American left. To hope for defeat meant cheering for Saddam Hussein. To hope for victory meant cheering for President Bush. The toppling of Mr. Hussein, or at least a statue of him, has made their arguments even harder to defend. Liberal writers for ideologically driven magazines like The Nation and for less overtly political ones like The New Yorker did not predict a defeat, but the terrible consequences many warned of have not happened. Now liberal commentators must address the victory at hand and confront an ascendant conservative juggernaut that asserts United States might can set the world right." (New York Times reporter David Carr, 4/16/03)

"This will be no war -- there will be a fairly brief and ruthless military intervention.... The president will give an order. (The attack) will be rapid, accurate and dazzling.... It will be greeted by the majority of the Iraqi people as an emancipation. And I say, bring it on." (Christopher Hitchens, in a 1/28/03 debate-- cited in the Observer, 3/30/03)

"I will bet you the best dinner in the gaslight district of San Diego that military action will not last more than a week. Are you willing to take that wager?" (Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly, 1/29/03)

"It won't take weeks. You know that, professor. Our military machine will crush Iraq in a matter of days and there's no question that it will." (Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly, 2/10/03)

OCCUPATION REPORT

2003: Sowing The Wind 2006: Reaping The Whirlwind



U.S. soldiers put a bag over the head of an arrested man at Khaldiya, Iraq June 16, 2003. Hundreds of U.S. troops backed by tanks and helicopters raided several cities and villages on the second day of 'Operation Desert Scorpion.' (AP Photo/Saurabh Das)

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqis over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain" anybody who doesn't like it in some prison without any charges being filed against them, or any trial.]

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab their country. What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

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

Washington's Good News In Iraq Isn't Quite What It Seems:

“‘I’d Say That Zero Percent Of Bush's Talk About Tall Afar Is True,’ Said Ahmed Sami”

April 3, 2006 By Rod Nordland, Newsweek International, With Ayad Obeidi in Tall Afar

At last, President Bush had news he could use from Iraq.

He devoted an entire speech in Cleveland last week to the story of how the town of Tall Afar was wrested from Qaeda control and has become a model for defeating the enemy.

Praise came not just from the administration; CBS's "60 Minutes" ran a glowing segment on what had been accomplished under Col. H. R. McMaster and his Third Armored Cavalry.

McMaster, author of a celebrated book, "Dereliction of Duty," a critical look at how the U.S. military and its leaders got it wrong in Vietnam, made the rounds of the airwaves about how they're now getting it right in Iraq. Tall Afar, said the president, "is today a free city that gives reason for hope for a free Iraq."

He showed off a letter to prove it.

It was from the city's mayor to Gen. George Casey, the U.S. military commander in Iraq, calling American troops "our lion-hearted saviors."

In Tall Afar last week, however, things weren't that clear-cut.

U.S. troops were able to take a small group of American reporters on a foot patrol through several neighborhoods, rare these days in central and western Iraq, and unheard of in Baghdad.

Iraqis along the way were full of praise for their liberators, many of whom they recognized by name.

But just in case, two squads of heavily armed troops kept watch, front, rear and flanks, rifles at the ready, and wouldn't let the group linger more than a few minutes in any place; a helicopter gunship shadowed us overhead.

In another part of town, police later reported that an insurgent mortar attack wounded six children.

A second NEWSWEEK reporter, visiting Tall Afar independently, found other neighborhoods barricaded; Iraqi police warned that he might be killed by insurgents or their supporters if he went any farther.

President Bush extolled Tall Afar as proof of the success of America's new strategy, "Clear, Hold and Build."

McMaster's Third Cav was replaced this year by a brigade of the First Armored Division.

The new commander, Col. Sean MacFarland, is the first to admit Tall Afar is still a work in progress.

"What's it look like to you—Stalingrad in 1944?" But he ticked off the reconstruction projects in the pipeline and the dramatic drop in insurgent activity—now only a couple of minor incidents every day or two, down from 10 a day only a month ago. "Clean it up, get the infrastructure back, and people will regain their confidence," he said. "It's not Camelot, but it's not Gotham either."

What it is, though, like so many places in Iraq now, is a city increasingly divided along sectarian lines.

The neighborhoods we patrolled were largely Shia; those our reporter found barricaded and dangerous were mostly Sunni.

"I'd say that zero percent of Bush's talk about Tall Afar is true," said Ahmed Sami, 45, a Sunni laborer.

"They turned Shiite neighborhoods into havens, and Sunni neighborhoods into hells."

Even in the Shia neighborhoods, people were far from satisfied.

"This is all just an outdoor prison for us," said school teacher Abu Muhammed.

"We can't even go as far as the market street up there."

He gestured to the top of his road, where the Ottoman fortress that dominates the town is located (and which we couldn't visit due to a security scare, even though it holds the mayor's office).

"We know the American Army and the Iraqi Army are working and doing their best," said Bakr Muhammed Bakr, a dressmaker whose shop, like most others on the streets, was open for business. "But what are they going to do, put a soldier in front of each Sunni house?"

To Sunnis, that's often what it seems like.

"After the battle, resistance became very low, because the city was turned into a military camp," said a Sunni doctor at the Tall Afar General Hospital. In fact, at all times at least 3,000 Iraqi Army, police and U.S. soldiers are on duty inside the city, stationed at a welter of police stations and camps and on checkpoints.

Most are Iraqis. They patrol by foot and vehicle constantly. Thousands more are at bases outside the city. Tall Afar's population is only 150,000. (As many as 100,000 people, mostly Sunni, fled during last year's fighting and most have not returned.)

That's at least one armed man for every 50 residents, more if reinforcements are used. "That's a pretty high ratio," acknowledged MacFarland, "which is why the enemy is having a hard time.

"It would be pretty hard to replicate that in a city like Baghdad or Mosul."

The rise of sectarian feelings, after the terrorist bombing of the Shia shrine in Samarra, has complicated matters in Tall Afar as well—though protests there remained peaceful, and there were no reprisal attacks on Sunni mosques, as elsewhere in Iraq.

The president's speech suggested Tall Afar was on the verge of being handed back to the Iraqis, but no one on the ground now expects that to happen soon.

"There will be American troops in and around Tall Afar at least for the better part of the coming year," said Col. MacFarland.

That's good news to Mayor Najim Abdullah al Jubori, who said he was so proud to hear President Bush mention him and his letter that "I could have flown without wings."

But to be honest, he went on to explain, the point of his letter was actually a plea to Casey to keep American troops here even longer, not proof of a strategy that will, sooner or later, allow Americans to pull out.

All The 'Good News' From Iraq? "The Reality Created By Our Moron President And His Mad Hatter's Tea Party Gang"

March 25, 2006 By Stephen Pizzo, News for Real [Excerpts]

I bet you guys didn't really listen to President Bush this week. Too bad, because for once he told the truth. I listened, heard the truth and checked it out. And, as he promised, it was a real eye-opener.

It happened at one of Bush's fake "town hall meetings" this week. An Army wife asked Bush why the mainstream media only focuses on "the bad news" from Iraq and never reports "the good news." Bush furrowed his brow and nodded in agreement.

He sympathized with her distress and suggested (pay attention -- here comes the truth part) that she should turn to alternative sources for news, "like the internet." (He used to call it the "internets" until his handlers informed him that, like God, the internet is not plural.)

Whoa! When I heard Bush say that, it struck me.

Of course! The internet!

Why have I been relying on the New York Times and Washington Post and CBS, NBC, CNN to tell me what's really going on in Iraq.

Hell, they don't even speak the language.

And, of course, we learned four years ago we can't believe anything the U.S. government says about the war.

So I took the president's advice. I logged right on to the internet and spent the rest of that day reading firsthand reports posted by for-real Iraqis.

Who would know better what life is like today in Iraq? Is there a civil war brewing or not? They live there. They should know. Are things getting better or worse? If I wanted to know if things were getting better or worse in my hometown, would I check with CNN or the White House?

So I checked with Iraqis to see how much "good news" I could find.

I read dozens of March postings by folks living in U.S.-'liberated' Iraq.

Bush was right. It was time well spent. CNN, MSNBC, FOX, eat your hearts out. These postings are a revelation. And, hey, big dude -- thanks for the tip, George. Now I suggest you take your own advice and do the same.

Here's a sampler and some links to get you started on your search for all the "good news" from Iraq that the scheming evil U.S. media is hiding from you.

From A Star from Mosul:

March 9: It was about 6 p.m. last night when dad's mobile rang, dad was in the mosque, my aunt was calling him and so mom picked up the mobile instead. Mom's emotions on the phone only led to one conclusion: Someone is dead. ... Mom put the mobile aside and said: "Uncle S is dead." ...

Yesterday he was shot by Americans on his way back home, and he died. Like many others, he died, left us clueless about the reason and saddened with this sudden loss. He was shot many times, only three reached him: One in his arm, one in his neck and one in his chest. But they said they're sorry. They always are.

From Healing Iraq:

March 16: Black-clad Mahdi army militiamen drag the body of Sheikh Ghazi Al-Zoba'i, the imam and preacher of the Al-Sabbar mosque around a street in Husseiniya, a mixed suburb north of Baghdad. ... Someone shouts: "Drag the Wahhabi," while another describes him as a "bastard." ...

Then they dump him on the side of the road. Another militiaman suggests they bury him.

"What do you mean bury him?" the gang leader snaps back with indignation. "Leave him here to the dogs." Then they joke about his underwear and cover the corpse with a cardboard that life looks absolutely normal in the surroundings. You can see children running about, stores open, religious holiday flags and even a traffic jam.

Perhaps Ralph Peters will happen to drive by with an American army patrol and enjoy the scene of children cheering for the troops, while wondering where his civil war is, dude.

I see people blown up to smithereens because a brainwashed virgin seeker targeted a crowded market or cafe. I see all that and more. ... Don't you dare chastise me for writing about what I see in my country.

From A Family in Baghdad:

March 14: The situation in Iraq now is the worst that can be, since Baghdad fell in April 2003, meaning three years passed since the war, and the results we reaped were destruction, ruin, killings and bloodshed ... billions of dollars were robbed, thousands of souls perished, our cities and villages destroyed, and there are some who are pulling the people apart, pushing them to a sectarian civil war.

There is an occupation army filling the streets, doing what?

We do not know ... they build military bases which spell the message -- they want to remain forever, that they do not care for our souls, and that everything that is happening to us pours into their interest and is a reason for them to stay ...

**Iraq is torn apart ...
Iraq is ruined ...
Iraq became a heap of debris ...
Is this what they want?
Was this their aim in this war?**

This is what I want to say to the American people, I want them to know the real story of the war, not the story they hear in their biased media, financed by the government and its friends ...

I want the people here to stand up and face their responsibility for what is happening in Iraq ... Do they join their government in its crimes against the Iraqi people?

Or are they against her?

From Hammorabi:

March 20: Death and killing in Iraq become a daily event and apprehension of death is a concomitant issue with every person.

The Iraqi politicians who fight for the power, their hands are stained with the blood of the innocent Iraqis ...

Iraq, as the rest of the world, is much better without Saddam but much worse in every other aspect, especially the security.

From: Riverbend:

March 19: I don't think anyone imagined three years ago that things could be quite this bad today. The last few weeks have been ridden with tension. I'm so tired of it all -- we're all tired.

Three years and the electricity is worse than ever. The security situation has gone from bad to worse. The country feels like it's on the brink of chaos once more -- but a preplanned, prefabricated chaos being led by religious militias and zealots.

I'm sitting here trying to think what makes this year, 2006, so much worse than 2005 or 2004. It's not the outward differences -- things such as electricity, water, dilapidated buildings, broken streets and ugly concrete security walls. Those things are disturbing, but they are fixable. Iraqis have proved again and again that countries can be rebuilt.

No -- it's not the obvious that fills us with foreboding.

The real fear is the mentality of so many people lately -- the rift that seems to have worked its way through the very heart of the country, dividing people. It's disheartening to talk to acquaintances -- sophisticated, civilized people -- and hear how Sunnis are like this, and Shia are like that ... To watch people pick up their things to move to "Sunni neighborhoods" or "Shia neighborhoods." How did this happen?"

I could fill hundreds of web pages with snippets like those above. What I couldn't find was any of the good news Bush suggested the mainstream media is supressing and that the nice Army wife might find if she looked at "alternative sources of news."

Oh, there were postings by U.S. service members serving in Iraq, and some of them had nice things to say about the job they were doing there.

But as a member of the U.S. Marines during the Vietnam War, I recall that back then you could throw a dart at a company of Marines serving in the war zone and get opinions that ranged from "We should nuke these little bastards" to "Get me the hell out of here" to "Hey man -- got any weed?"

Back then the government also assured us they "had a plan." (Nixon even had a "secret plan.") And at any point during the dozen years that war raged, whatever plan was in effect was always "working."

Some 30 years later, historians got around to hearing from the Vietnamese themselves, particularly the North Vietnamese.

And, had we known then what we know now about how that enemy saw the war, how they were surviving day to day and how they viewed us, we would have known that the so-called plan was really just a monumental fool's errand.

Had we realized that early on, hundreds of thousands of lives would have been spared.

So, by all means, follow President Bush's suggestion.

Ignore the weekend talk shows, the editorial pages, the news.

Instead do as Bush suggested and turn to the hundreds of blogs posted daily by Iraqis who are actually living the reality created by our moron president and his Mad Hatter's tea party gang.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to thomasfbarton@earthlink.net. Name, I.D., address withheld unless publication requested. Replies confidential.



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

<http://www.williambowles.info/gispecial/2006/index.html>;

http://robinlea.com/GI_Special/; <http://qi-special.iraq-news.de>;

http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/; <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>;

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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