

GI SPECIAL 5L22:

The Warrior Writers Of Iraq Veterans Against The War: “Move, Shoot and Communicate”



L To R: Joe Hatcher, Jeff Englehart & Garrett Reppenhagen: On Leave 2005
[From GI Special]

This was, perhaps, the most radical thing a Southern California boy had ever done in order to see a Bouncing Souls concert.

It's almost certain that at some later moment, Joe Hatcher looked back and thought to himself, "That was so punk rock!" But here, bundled in a sleeping bag under a pile of clutter in the trunk of his friend's car, a border guard clenching his shoe, Hatcher was not feeling so triumphant.

Thankfully, the guard was oblivious.

Garett Reppenhagen, Jeff Englehart and Ben Schrader, all feeling the rush that accompanies improbable luck, were freed to cross the border from Germany into the Czech Republic, with Hatcher safely snuggled in the back. There would be no arrests today. No charges of international body-smuggling.

A few miles down the road, Hatcher was freed from the trunk, and immediately told his Army buddies something to the effect of, "I've never been so terrified in my life."

Reppenhagen, Englehart and Schrader — who, along with Hatcher, were stationed in Germany — had actually met the members of the Bouncing Souls the night before. The band had invited them to the next night's gig in Prague. Hatcher wanted to go, but didn't have a passport. It seemed like an OK idea to shove him in the trunk and bring him along.

"We had nothing to lose," Englehart says. "We were going to Iraq."

The guys, facing a yearlong deployment in 2004, were blissfully unaware that these two days would help launch a chain of events that would nearly land them in military prison — not for body-smuggling, but for name-calling.

Here's the story: The guys really liked the band. So much so that, when they later were in Iraq, they decided to write to the band members. As the soldiers grew weary and began to react to the violence of their situation, the e-mails became more personal. Some began to include poetry.

"It just seemed like a necessity to do it," Reppenhagen says. Reppenhagen, a high school dropout, never imagined he'd be drawn to reading books, let alone writing.

"The stuff that I wanted to express," he says, "didn't come out any other way than poetry."

The Bouncing Souls were so impressed they began posting the e-mails on their Web page.

Then, in 2004, Hatcher set up a blog for the four friends, called "Fight to Survive," at ftssoldier.blogspot.com.

"We were opposed to the war before we went," Englehart says. "And we got together and said, "You know what we should do? We should write about this shit."

The posse of four began posting to the blog, using pen names. They wrote whatever they felt: the good, the bad and the "Bush is a fascist."

The latter got them into trouble.

"They threatened to court-martial us," Englehart says.

The Department of Defense doesn't allow soldiers to call Bush the f-word. Other words on the no-no list for presidential name-calling apparently include "Fight to Survive" favorites like "Nazi" and "gangster."

But the men got lucky (again). An investigation revealed they had not violated "operational security," and in a don't-rock-the-boat move, they were released from military service in 2005 without being charged.

They dispersed across the country, but the blog kept going.

Reppenhagen was quickly drawn into activism. He took a job in Washington, D.C., with Veterans for America. In his spare time, he volunteered at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and for Iraq Veterans Against the War, a national support, advocacy and education organization.

In 2006, Reppenhagen was at the Vans Warped Tour with the Bouncing Souls, introducing the song "Letters from Iraq" — one of Reppenhagen's poems, set to music.

Coincidentally, a young soldier named Jared Hood was in the audience that day. Hood later told Reppenhagen that the Warped speech helped him decide to go AWOL.

In 2007, Reppenhagen moved to Green Mountain Falls and started attending Pikes Peak Community College, studying to be a history teacher. Slowly, he began gathering his old friends. Schrader lives in the Fort Collins area.

Hatcher lives in Cascade with his girlfriend and her 5-year-old son; they are expecting twins. Englehart moved to Denver at Reppenhagen's urging, bringing his wife.

The friends are all active in IVAW. And they've found others like them. Hood is now the Denver chapter president. Another friend, Mark Wilkerson, runs the Colorado Springs chapter. Wilkerson started writing in earnest while he was locked up for deserting.

"In prison, I really started to find myself," he says, "and this stuff just started to spew out of me."

Across the country, veterans are writing and blogging.

IVAW has locked into the growing interest that veterans have in poetry, by launching the Warrior Writers Project. It has since hosted five workshops, where vets share ideas and write poetry, across the country. (There has yet to be a workshop in Colorado.)

Green Door Studio, in collaboration with People's Republic of Paper, has printed one compilation book, *Warrior Writers: Move, Shoot and Communicate*. L. Brown & Sons

Printing, Inc., is putting out a new book, Re-making Sense, in January. Colorado Springs vets are featured in both.

The local veterans' writing community continues to grow, through open mikes and advocacy groups.

Here are some of the poems coming out of it, along with authors' introductions.

"Lemmings"

Jeff Englehart July 29, 2004

This was written at a time when, in America, dissent was highly discouraged and Bush's popularity rating was sitting somewhere in the high-70 percentile.

Seeing how I wrote this poem while I was sitting on a machine gun, in a sweaty Humvee during the hot Iraqi summer, I felt I was entitled to be a little nasty.

Back then, I just simply could not imagine that, despite all the lies and hate-talk and hysteria going on, a majority of Americans either steadfastly supported such an illegal and immoral war or were flatly apathetic toward it. I got a lot of negative responses after I passed this poem around to friends and family back home.

Looking at it now, I do admit that it is somewhat callous to the American people. But then again, I'm not as angry as I was while I was deployed in Iraq. That, and much has changed in our support for the war and our national psyche toward it since 2004.

"Lemmings"

Boys, oblivious to their own mortality,

Marching in rank and file

To meet their demise.

While ravenous swine pull the strings

To defend their posh social standings.

On the home front,

In front of TV's,

Cheers of victory!

For 1,000 dead

Places carved in history.

The patriotic blind:

Their faces clad in Red White

And Blue,

To hide their pain,

To mask their pride.

Rest assured 1,000 died

To save Amerika.

The ultimate sacrifice,

The perfect disguise.

"Letters From Iraq"

Garett Reppenhagen May 2005

A group of soldiers and myself met the Bouncing Souls in Germany one month before we deployed to Iraq. While in Iraq, we wrote the band and they decided to post our e-mails on their Web site on a page called "Letters from Iraq."

I wrote the poem about our shared experience; us in Iraq writing letters to our friends that missed us.

(Editor's note: The poem has since been adapted into a song of the same name, which is on the 2006 Bouncing Souls album The Gold Record.)

"Letters from Iraq"

The hot Sunni sun

passes Moaning Mosque Spire.

B-company's pinned down

and under heavy fire.

Underneath the palms

there's improvised bombs.

Because, Jihad Johnny

knows Yankee is a liar.

On Euphrates east bank

where the desert winds blow,

M 1 Abe

keeps his head down low.

Smoking up Joe,

With a front back go,

Is General Hash,

And his puppet show.

They lost another friend today.

It's getting rough over there.

They say the food tastes like shit.

They miss the pussy, drugs and beer.

They say the whole things fucked.

I wish the boys were back.

At least I know they're still alive.

Another letter from Iraq.

Police Call Kilo's

marching double time.

While, the grease monkeys

sweep the motor pool line.

On guard is Shaming Jay.

Rolls his own every day.

Lifer Lenny's getting fitted
for new box of pine.
On an empty cot,
Presents full of Christmas loot.
All that's left of Bullet Billy
is a pair of bloody boots.
His mom is on the phone.
His girl is all alone.
We all stand in the rain
for a twenty-one gun salute.
They lost another friend today.
It's getting rough over there.
They say the food tastes like shit.
They miss the pussy, drugs and beer.
They say the whole things fucked.
I wish the boys were back.
At least I know they're still alive.
Another letter from Iraq.
Ramadan Rebel
Is in the holding cell.
The brass looks away
while MPs give 'em hell.
Guantanamo rulebook.
From Basra to Kirkuk.
Beat 'em in a bag,
and drop 'em in a well.

Iron Mike's on patrol
his weapon status red.
He rolls out the gate
with a foot full of lead.
Tango's on the hill,
looking for a kill.
Mohammad's got him convinced
he'd be better off dead.
They lost another friend today.
It's getting rough over there.
They say the food tastes like shit.
They miss the pussy, drugs and beer.
They say the whole things fucked.
I wish the boys were back.
At least I know they're still alive.
Another letter from Iraq.
Ali Baba's on the offense
picking up the beat.
Delta needs an e-vac,
but the bird's outta seats.
There's a four man stack
outside the Hajji Shack.
Bradley's zipped in
calling Willie Pete.
There's celebratory fire.

And a purple thumb vote.
Tom cruise is on a sortie
from a gulf love boat.
Smart bombs are a coming.
See the children running.
The dead are all laughing,
but we don't get the joke.
They lost another friend today.
It's getting rough over there.
They say the food tastes like shit.
They miss the pussy, drugs and beer.
They say the whole things fucked.
I wish the boys were back.
At least I know they're still alive.
Another letter from Iraq.
An eye for an eye.
And, blood for Texas Tea.
At the call to prayer
Al Qaeda's on his knees.
Isaac versus Ishmael.
Allah versus Christ.
Basic Training to Route Tampa
rolls in the F-N-Gs.
Marines say Semper Fi
as they cross Highway Ten.
Uncle Sam's in High School

Seeking a "few good men".
Rummy's in the Green Zone.
We'd all rather be home.
Where we can watch the war
On C-N-N.
They lost another friend today.
It's getting rough over there.
They say the food tastes like shit.
They miss the pussy, drugs and beer.
They say the whole things fucked.
I wish the boys were back.
At least I know they're still alive.
Another letter from Iraq.

"The Manifesto"

Joseph Hatcher Date unknown

"The Manifesto" isn't the name of the piece; it's just what my friends at home called it before I joined the Army.

I wrote it while working graveyard in a 4-by-6-foot bulletproof kiosk in the deep valley industrial district of Oceanside, Calif., long before Sept. 11, back when I was considering the military as an escape from the poverty and debt cycle that Southern California is notorious for thriving on.

This is my analysis of the system, my consideration of what I would have to become in order to see the inside of a college classroom.

Obviously, I knew what I was doing when I joined on Sept. 10, 2001.

In basic, I received this poem with some of my other writing with a note to "never forget myself."

Once Jeff and Garrett heard it, they forcibly made me repeat it until it was memorized.

It became my bedtime prayer. It's still a crowd-pleaser.

Can it all be so simple, wrong, evil, corrupt, consume and waste, affiliate, hate, ostracize and merge? The world was balanced once and it will balance again but the ends of the extremes seem poised to clap like cymbals after this fuck all crescendo.

"The Manifesto"

**"Why me?" the conglomerates scream at the machine, with green greased palms
and I'll fuck you last smiles.**

False idols, every one.

Angry fathers.

**Man the son who created Him. And He begot the government and government
begot business and business bought the government and He was replaced with
the angry white Jesus and outer space exploration.**

**A nation deprived dives deeper in debt and waits for one third-world misstep to
cue the waking of the wartime economy.**

Killing the poor and boosting the DOW.

They sleep so well under the blanket of technology, on the pillow of progress.

We'll regress, dumb and lame.

Grins and yellow ribbons.

**Sons in boxes priority mail home for Big Brother's burden of deception and
deceit.**

**So: Stand on the sidelines or step in line to die. When the brainwashing's done no
souls will survive.**

**My dirty mind fears the brand name bleach clean that serves to set lead in brass
shell casings.**

**Chain yourself to the trees and they'll nuke you up too. With TV dinner
convenience.**

Two birds, one stone.

Endangered species taste so great with mustard gas clouds.

**The man standing on your neck says "swallow it, and pay sixty percent off
through six PM friday!"**

And you do it. It wasn't you who blew it.

Through it all you knew if you did what they asked things would go back to normal. You folded to the bully.

He gets your lunch money on thirty-nine cent Wednesdays that pay for slash and burn third-world dreams of vaccines for the diseases we introduced, vomiting induced, we produced more waste than anyone.

First again!

Don't forget those vehicle emissions! Look at you with your Valdez SUVs. The Jones are jealous, I'm sure.

Missionaries praise television evangelists.

"Eternal salvation for nineteen ninety-five or your money back!"

And you're submerged in this shit, but your Lord will keep you sterile. He'll wash your sins away. One quick pass of the collection plate and then we'll start to pray.

Not for peace in Israel, no.

That's not a priority.

Daddy's team needs to win the big game and Jenny needs a pony.

I hope you die the way you're killing the earth.

A slow suffocation.

Oil coated seas like the bloody afterbirth of industry.

Choking black clouds of soot consume the sky.

The phoenix was stillborn.

From the ashes nothing rise.

So get on your knees and pay.

Redemption comes at a price.

And they'll tell you what it is. It's your sacrifice; this world that was intended for your children ...

When mushrooms of radiation and light fill the sky, I've got a fallout shelter in my mind.

When you die, you deal with God.

But I will go in(to) Peace.

Amen.

"Duffle Bags"

Garett Reppenhagen Feb. 1, 2005

This was written on my last day at my forward operating base after cleaning out my quarters, a metal shipping crate called a "connex."

It was strange to put away my equipment and wonder what it was like to be in the real world again. Wonder where I would be and what it would feel like, unpacking these bags.

"Duffle Bags"

As I leave my metal box, that I have called home for the last year, I carry two duffle bags.

The first is full of the gear and clothing that has offered me survival and protection.

The other bag is harder to see with the uncompassionate eye. I have filled the second with guilt. The shame for the part I have played in this campaign in Iraq. It is more useless than the first. However, it is a burden I must carry.

The ritual a soldier goes through to fill a duffle with the maximum amount of gear is a wrestling match. It took every trick in the book to fit all my soul debt into the long green bag.

First I rolled everything tight and squeezed it down pinching and tucking to wedge it in. As it filled I punched the sides. I held the edges and smashed my foot into the opening. I dropped it again and again like packing cigarettes. After fitting all my bad karma inside I had to sit on it while pulling and straining to clip the top closed. Out of breath I finally collapsed on top of the bulging bundle.

The duffle will be dragged around with me perhaps for the rest of my life. From home to home. Town to town. Until I am too old to lift it. Then I will lay down beside the large duffle and crawl inside to die.

So when you see a soldier returning home with a duffle bag at a bus stop, an airport baggage claim, or being stuffed into a taxi, think about what is inside the bag. It might be rolled clothing of browns and tans. Or, it could be dark secrets that he will never reveal to his family.

The soldier will not put his burden upon you.

But if you feel any responsibility for the weight of it you may carry it for a while if it would make you feel more decent.

And if you forced him to open it perhaps every one can take a little with them to relieve the strain of those who served.

It might be a reminder that we are all at fault for America's role in the violence in the Middle-East.

However, a soldier is trained to sacrifice.

He will take the burden to the grave or make a grave out of it if he must.

"The Pen"

Brad: Early 2005

(Editor's note: As an active-duty soldier, Brad did not want to use his last name for fear of reprimand.)

I wrote this poem after the first time I stared at a human being through my sights with the intent to kill them. They were acting suspiciously and right before I pulled the trigger, I realized they weren't a threat like I initially thought.

It was at that point I realized how influential and destructive a 21-year-old kid from Anywhere, USA can be. We could play judge, jury and executioner.

Only our conscience and values stand between Iraqis and their death.

"The Pen"

My pen is my sword

My rifle my saber

Both lead charges of murder and death

One to take lives, the other to mourn them

One to pontificate, the other take breath

Both of them black

Made of plastic and metal

Both of them equally lethal

One denies God and all he intended

The other it bows to his steeple

"Broken Toy Soldiers"



Mark Wilkerson

Mark Wilkerson January 2007

This poem was written when I had turned myself back in to Fort Hood. I was with some friends driving in the town of Killeen, and we drove by a pawn shop.

On a sign outside the store, it said, "We buy broken jewelry." I don't know why that affected me so greatly. Just the fact that "why does jewelry get broken"?

So I thought of an image of a husband or wife throwing their rings, or breaking them out of anger. I pictured broken homes, broken hearts and this pawn shop was taking advantage of that, like it was profiting off others' pain.

So I went back to my barracks room and wrote this.

"Broken Toy Soldiers"

We buy broken hearts, and boil them in white pots
We mix 'em up, cook 'em up, and feed them to our dogs.
And when the dogs have had their fill, and say they've had enough
We wait until they shit 'em out, and gather up the stuff.
We put the hearts in buckets, and give 'em to the chefs,
Who roll them out on baking sheets, and stick on top the chips.
Then they throw them in the oven, and cook them till they're well
Then we feed them to the kiddies, who say "Gee sir, they're swell!"
Then we hand the kids a little flag, which they begin to wave
Stick 'em in the audience of a Veteran's Day Parade.
As the troops go marching by, with flashbacks in their eyes,
They see the bright-eyed angels, and they begin to sigh.
For once a long, long time ago, they stood on the side,
Till a recruiter came to them and told them all his lies.
Then they're standing in an office, standing proud and tall
They look all around 'em, see a hundred others in the hall.
They hold up their right hands, they say they'll do it all,
Then we send them off to war, they see all around them fall,
Kids, soldiers, dreams, hopes,
Till all that stands are broken toy soldiers.
Yes we buy broken hearts of now-childless moms,
And sell them in ribbons in booths at strip malls.
We buy broken hearts of now-widowed wives,
Who work hard everyday to keep her kids alive.
We buy broken hearts of now-broken men,
Then make them re-enlist, for heartless men will do it again.

**We buy broken hearts of now-fatherless sons,
Wait till they grow up, and sell them all our guns,
Send them off to fight in a different-but-same war,
Tell them "Hadji killed your dad," so they'll kill more and more,
Yes, we buy broken hearts and stick 'em in our songs,
We buy broken hearts and insert 'em in our speeches,
We buy broken hearts and stick 'em on the back of our pickup trucks,
We buy broken hearts to help our war machine go round,
And soon one day we'll buy yours, and throw you in the ground.**

"One Of Us"

Mark Wilkerson Feb. 11, 2007

This was written soon after I saw a recruiting commercial on the TV. This was just a week before my court-martial, and I was upset about the production quality of the recruiting commercials, and I felt (and still do) that the commercials paint a pretty picture over a very dangerous, sometimes very ugly career: that of a soldier.

"One Of Us"

One of us, one of us,

Do you really want to be one of us?

Look at where we're at, look at how we live.

A never-ending rush, anything to add that edge

To a life that is all but failed already.

Dead at 20, nothing to fill the void after the spirit left.

Oh so long ago ... oh so long ago ...

Oh so long ago we died trying to find a way to live,

Trying to find a way to justify just what we did.
The what, where, why, and how we got here is irrelevant, long forgotten.
Forgotten in a river of booze and broken bottles.
To dream what we dream, to feel what we feel, would make you dead too.
So come to our side, live as one of us.
Dream our dreams, sleep our sleep.
Come and be whatever the hell you want to be, in the army
Join the army, join the army
Fill the ranks, you're fresh meat for their grinder,
You're fresh blood for their veins.

"Passage of Time"

Ben Schrader Date unknown

This one I actually wrote while I was on an airplane headed back from a Vets4Vets workshop in Miami. It was an amazing experience, but I was confused about how or what I needed to do to help those in need.

I was still very bitter with the attitude of the country at the time, and frustrated that things weren't changing and Bush wasn't behind bars. FYI: This was written after I was out, but looking for a way to help end the war!

"Passage of Time"

Flying high above the cities,
All the little lights.
People sleeping, dreaming, making love.
Fighting, living, dieing.
It makes me question what to do,

Do I live a good life?

Am I a good person?

I know I try!

But I see so much pain as I look down.

Is it just in me or can everyone feel it?

Hunger, War, Violence.

Where does it end?

I tell myself that I can make a difference!

I can change the world!

But can I?

How many before me have said the same?

How many feel the way I feel?

Are there others like me?

Or am I alone?

I hope not ...

Where do I go,

Do I try to find love?

Try to find peace?

Money, prosperity, what's the answer?

I'm a hopeless romantic, in search of true love.

I want truth, peace, and equality!

Will I ever find any of these things?

I can only pray.

But to whom do I pray?

God, Allah, Buddha?

All stories of man.

All filled with hope, lies, and deceit.

So much blood and agony.

So many tears.

Lives and loves lost,

Friends and families torn.

When will it end?

I will never know.

For I am a pebble in the passage of time.

All I can hope for is a peace of mind!!!

"Machine, Mechanism ...Parts"



Jared Hood

Jared Hood July 2007

What was going through my head when I wrote it ... was recovery, plain and simple. I had just gone through quite an ordeal, as in June I had gone AWOL from my National Guard unit and been arrested at my work on June 23.

I felt like they didn't care about me as a human being. I had asked for a leave of absence from our two-week annual training due to the death of an immediate family member in June; I mean, I had broken down crying on the phone with my squad leader when I spoke with him about it.

I gave four years of my life to the Army, one of which was spent on active duty. I had never been given a bad conduct discipline, and I was loyal.

Then, when something profoundly troubling had happened in my life that severely affected my mental state, they did not care one bit.

In fact, they might as well have spit in my face.

So for me it felt as though I was just part of the machine, not a human, not a valued employee of the Army, just a piece of metal and gears that provided to a machine that carried out war.

I have really never felt as humiliated, and humbled at the same time, as I did after that event. It was truly a moment of clarity and self-purification, and that's what the poem represents.

"Machine, Mechanism ...Parts"

I am a hero if I kill other men.

I am a coward
if my conscience keeps me from killing other men.

What sordid brutal excuse of a world is it
that we live in
when this WARPED version of reality is acceptable?

The machine runs
with the sole purpose
of inflicting destruction, death, racism and false authority.

And when one mechanical part of the machine
ceases to operate properly
(as with myself)
the machine
does not care about the human value
of that mechanical part (me).

Nor does it care what human reason
caused the part (me) to fail to operate any longer
and contribute to the machine.

I am that mechanical part,
not a human.

Bottom line ...
that's all the Army has
is a bottom line.

There is no value
for life
in the Army.

No one is equal.
No one is free.
No one has the right to think for themselves.

Iraqi civilians are not people.
They do not work
to provide nourishment for their families
like Americans.

And when they strap a bomb to their chest
or set off an IED
they are terrorists,
not humans that are defending their homeland
from a brutal occupation force.

Hajjis,
camel-jockeys,
towel heads
and sand niggers —
that's all they are;
these names
are used to measure their worth,
to dehumanize.

The machine convinces me,
so that I will shoot at them,
kill them
and then laugh at them
as I walk past their mutilated corpse.

Then there's the award ceremony,
medals for killing. I return home a ...
hero?

This machine ... is nothing more than glorified organized crime.

They used me,
used me as a mechanism to contribute to a selfish machine
of incomprehensible malice.

I am not a mechanism ... parts.

I am taking back those parts,
all of them,
the parts of my soul
that contributed to the machine.

I am leaving the family never to return.

I have had enough of organized crime.

Recovery and self-discovery are what I face.

But slowly,
Steadily
and hopefully
I will be whole again.

I will take back who I am
at my core,
a human being
with a soul

and I will stop acting for and thinking like the machine.



DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE SERVICE?

Forward GI Special 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, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: **The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657**

ACTION REPORTS

Received by mail 12.22.07

From: Comrade Tribune, VVAWAI (Vietnam Veterans Against The War Antilmerialist) member and chapter organizer for World Can't Wait

A 'free' newspaper box, with revolutionary lettering has been placed in a public area near a military airbase in Ohio where there is heavy military personnel traffic.

About 30 copies (to start) will be made of every issue of the GI Special and placed in the box.

Bundled with the GI Special will be: the World Can 't Wait call, with the local chapter website on it; the NION (Not In Our Name) Pledge of Resistance in English; Arabic; Farsi; Spanish, and documents furnished by the Military Project that will tell the soldiers what their rights are; gives them the DoD Directive Sections; contacts to get help for military Counseling.

MORE ACTION REPORTS WANTED: FROM YOU!

An effective way to encourage others to support members of the armed forces organizing to resist the Imperial war is to report what you do.

If you've carried out organized contact with troops on active duty, at base gates, airports, or anywhere else, send a report in to GI Special for the Action Reports section.

Same for contact with National Guard and/or Reserve components.

They don't have to be long. Just clear, and direct action reports about what work was done and how.

If there were favorable responses, say so. If there were unfavorable responses or problems, don't leave them out.

If you are not planning or engaging in outreach to the troops, you have nothing to report.

NOTE WELL:

Do not make public any information that could compromise the work.

Whether you are serving in the armed forces or not, do not in any way identify members of the armed forces organizing to stop the war.

If accidentally included, that information will not be published.

The sole exception: occasions when a member of the armed services explicitly directs his or her name be listed as reporting on the action.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Two U.S. Soldier Killed, Three Wounded In Ninewa

December 26, 2007 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20071226-04

TIKRIT, Iraq – Two Multi-National Division – North Soldiers died from wounds sustained from small-arms fire while conducting operations in Ninewa Province Dec. 26.

Additionally, three more MND-North Soldiers were injured in the attack and evacuated to a Coalition hospital.

NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: PACK UP GO HOME



U.S. soldiers wait for their helicopter in Baghdad November 6, 2007. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT 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.org/)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Friends Remember Soldier Killed In Blast



Michael Gabel, shown here as an Army sergeant, served four combat tours — three in Afghanistan and one in Iraq — before he was killed Wednesday by a roadside bomb. Photo provided by/GABEL FAMILY

Dec 18, 2007 By DAVID J. MITCHELL, Advocate Florida parishes bureau

Relatives, former teachers and coaches on Monday remembered a 30-year-old Baton Rouge Army sergeant killed last week in Afghanistan as a determined youngster who turned himself into a proud soldier and man.

Staff Sgt. Michael J. Gabel, who was on his fourth combat tour since joining the Army in 2000, died Wednesday leading a convoy back from a patrol searching for roadside bombs, said Gabel's older brother, David, and the U.S. Department of Defense.

A roadside bomb hit his vehicle, instantly killing him and another soldier stationed with him at Forward Operating Base Curry, Afghanistan. Nearby soldiers were unable to pull Gabel and the other man free after the vehicle caught fire and ammunition began exploding.

Gabel served in the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade based at Camp Ederle, Italy.

Family members and former teachers recalled Michael Gabel's determination, love of life and sense of calling and purpose in the military:

He struggled to overcome dyslexia to learn to speak and read Arabic and French after graduating from high school.

He pushed himself, an asthmatic, so hard to be a wrestler at Lee High School that teachers worried how much weight Gabel lost as a freshman to make the team and his weight class.

He used his skills as a chef to put on parties for friends and family to spread his zest for life.

He saw a sense of purpose in the Army and, in particular, in helping the Afghani people to understand the United States and to bring themselves up.

“He was one of those guys that just kept plugging and plugging and plugging and made himself into something,” Lee High School head wrestling coach Bill Bofinger said.

Family members noted Gabel was riding in the lead vehicle when he was killed, although as a staff sergeant he could have been in the rear.

“The danger that was in front of him was less important than the men behind him,” said Mike’s father, John Gabel, who is finance director for Livingston Parish government.

Gabel said his son gave the eulogy for a friend killed in early November in Afghanistan, saying his friend “would not want us to be bitter or blame others for his death, but to simply be glad for the time that we shared.”

John Gabel said he would fulfill his son’s promise to his friend to ensure the man’s 3-year-old daughter goes to college. Gabel said he is setting up a fund to make that happen.

David Gabel, who also was in the military and, like Michael, is part of long family tradition of military service, said Michael struggled to get into the Army.

Michael Gabel had to train for months to make it, but his time in the Army became another test that shaped him into a man.

“It really was another crucible that made him into a self-confident individual,” David Gabel said.

Shirley Harmon, a retired teacher, said she helped Gabel overcome his dyslexia for four years in high school. Harmon, 61, said Gabel was “a dear, dear boy” whom she viewed as another one of her children.

She said he mailed her letters from the Middle East on cardboard containers from his meals-ready-to-eat.

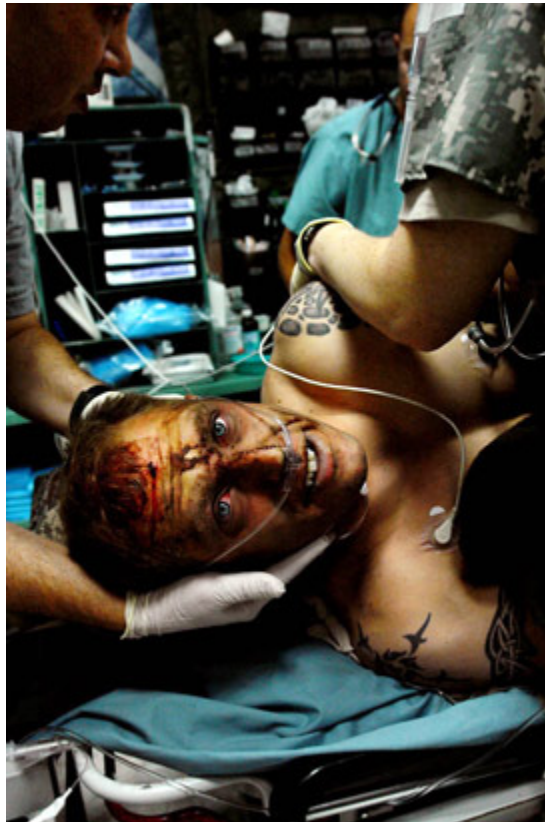
Harmon said Gabel still showed signs of fighting with his dyslexia, switching around the correct positions of her address and his return address on that first cardboard letter he sent. She said she knew he died doing what he wanted: “He believed 100 percent in

what he was doing, and you can't ask for much more than that. That is some consolation, not much, (but) something."

Michael Gabel has already received a Bronze Star and will receive a second Bronze Star and a Purple Heart posthumously, David Gabel said.

TROOP NEWS

**NOT ANOTHER DAY
NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR
NOT ANOTHER LIFE**



A soldier wounded by an IED impacting on his Humvee outside Baghdad. He was brought into the 10th Combat Support Hospital Emergency Room with a shattered leg and burns on his hands and face. Nov. 23, 2007 Peter van Agtmael, ABC News

OCCUPATION REPORT

U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR; RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



A U.S. army soldier from Blackfoot Company, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment guards a family as other soldiers search their home during a clearance mission on the outskirts of Muqdadiyah, in the volatile Diyala province, about 90 kilometers (60 miles) north of Baghdad, Iraq, Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2007. (AP Photo/Marko Drobnjakovic)

Iraqi citizens have no right to resist home invasions by occupation soldiers from the USA. If they do, they may be arrested, wounded, or killed.

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

[But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]

"My sons and wife were very terrified," complained Muhannad Mihbas, 30, who said his brother and six cousins were taken in the sweeps. "Does the security plan mean arresting innocent people and scaring civilians at night?" BRIAN MURPHY, AP, Feb. 27, 2007

"You go up the stairs. You grab the man of the house. You rip him out of bed in front of his wife. You put him up against the wall.

“You have junior-level troops, PFCs, specialists will run into the other rooms and grab the family, and you'll group them all together. Then you go into a room and you tear the room to shreds and you make sure there's no weapons or anything that they can use to attack us.

Sgt. John Bruhns

“In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit,” said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay’s Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday’s raid. “Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead.”

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