

MOSAIC

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO'S SOCIAL JUSTICE MAGAZINE

WAR AND PEACE

2010 - 7th Edition



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

The wars in the Iraq and Afghanistan are certainly not the first military conflicts to divide the United States. Over the years, the conflicts U.S. soldiers and civilians alike face every day at home and abroad have produced a varied discourse on “right” and “wrong” and “good” versus “evil.” Bearing this in mind, we still chose to make the theme of Mosaic’s seventh issue “War and Peace” so that our class could define for itself what war is really about.

We believe this publication couldn’t be more timely, given that soldiers are beginning to return home from Iraq and Afghanistan. The students working on Mosaic wanted to add our own voices to this chorus, especially since our generation has been so deeply affected by these conflicts. Many of us have been forced to grow up too soon, make decisions we weren’t ready for and face difficult decisions.

The stories contained within these pages can only begin to form a picture of the men and women who serve and have served our nation, each with their own unique and compelling story. Together, these stories only begin to paint a picture of the human costs of combat.

You will read about regular people and servicemen who have gone overseas, and the experiences they had that changed their lives forever. You’ll also read about the people back home whom oppose war, and what they are doing to bring about peace.

This is truly a student-run publication. Loyola students are responsible for the writing, editing and layout. This is also the first truly multiplatform Mosaic Magazine. Readers now have an opportunity to follow us on Twitter, @loyolamosaicmag or, visit our website, www.loyolamosaic.com.

We encourage you to log on and give us your input as we work to tell the story of a country fighting in a world struggling for peace.

If you have any comments or questions, please email our faculty adviser, John Slania, at jslania@luc.edu.

Your Editor,

Emily Jurlina



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War wounds a family affair

Military families struggle to care for loved ones



Photos courtesy: Aimee Zmysly

Images of Yiury Zmysly and wife, Aimee, as he struggles to recover from war injuries.

CHELSIA MARCIUS

Yiury Zmysly survived two military deployments, first in Afghanistan and later Iraq. He spent the Christmas after his second tour making plans to rent a small apartment and finish college.

But after a series of complications during an emergency appendix operation at a North Carolina military base, Zmysly suffered a stroke, less than five months after his return home and just days before his wife Aimee's 20th birthday.

Diagnosed with anoxic brain injury that has impaired his ability to see, walk and talk, Zmysly, 25, of Oak Lawn, now depends on his spouse for assistance.

"We're not living the life of average 20 somethings and we're not living the life we thought we were

going to live," said Aimee Zmysly, now 23. "It's a roller coaster of emotions- there's sadness, depression. You're thankful that he's still alive and with you and that he's improving, but it's something I wish we never had to go through. I would give anything to just to have our old life back, any amount of money, it [wouldn't] matter."

The couple's struggle illustrates the challenges facing both disabled military personnel and the loved ones who care for them.

With two Congressional bills and a host of medical studies in the works, caregiver physical and mental health has received an increasing amount of national attention since the beginning of the war in Iraq.

Passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in July 2009 and awaiting Senate approval, the

Caregiver Assistance and Resource Enhancement Act would offer educational sessions to "teach techniques, strategies and skills for caring for a disabled veteran," including soldiers from the recent Middle East conflicts who suffer from traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and other debilitating injuries.

The bill also would provide caregivers monthly stipends to cover veteran medical costs, a clause that could help spouses such as Zmysly pay for exorbitant or unforeseen expenses without the constant hassle of paperwork and signatures.

"Because Yiury can't speak, they don't think that he can take care of his money," she said. "I'm the guardian [of his earnings] and I have to ask permission on what I can use his money for, which



adds one more level of stress. And I can't get a job [to have my own income] because what would my hours be? One hour a day?"

The Zmyslys live in the back room of Aimee's parents' split-level house. The bed, covered by a camo-comforter, also serves as a desk where Aimee researches new treatment options that might improve her husband's quality of life.

"We're in the van a lot," Aimee said as she leafed through the pages of her planner, glancing at last week's completed itinerary. The couple travels to Willow Springs for physical therapy, Bolingbrook for hyper baric oxygen treatment and other towns outside Oak Lawn to strengthen Yiury's vision, speech and cognitive abilities. "Amazingly that's our schedule cut down, because I had to say no, we can't do this much because I can't drive this far. But you have that whole 'I have to do it because he has to get better' [mentality]. You just learn to pace yourself."

Penny-pinching and endless doctor appointments on top of a disabled veteran's compromised condition quickly deteriorates caregiver health said Karen Saban, Ph.D., a former trauma nurse who is completing her postdoctoral research at the Veterans Association of Illinois. Saban has recently finished a Chicago-based study to evaluate the stress response of female family caregivers of stroke survivors.

"Within the year, 50 percent [of stroke caregivers] are clinically depressed [or have] anxiety disorders," she said. "I am concerned that there are some increase risks for developing stress, inflammatory related diseases and any number of psychological problems. I'm more focused on how we can relieve some of that stress so that they can stay healthy enough to do [the] work we're asking of them."

Although the study is not yet complete, Saban said "initial findings point towards caregivers being under significant amounts of psychological stress," affecting their sleep patterns, coping abilities and mental well-being.

While there is a general increase in the number of caregivers for veterans since U.S. military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, a trend that has driven national campaigns to protect caregiver rights, the final numbers remain inconclusive.

"The V.A. is in the midst of conducting a research [project called] The Impact of Veterans' Mental Health on Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Caregivers, but it is not complete," said Stephanie Ross, program manager of the Veterans Association California Offices on Caregiving. "It is a work in progress. I think that for now, everyone in the V.A. is struggling to define [the word] caregiver with regard to these recent veterans."

Establishing a more clear-cut meaning of the term could help push legislation through Congress.

The Wounded Warrior Project, a non-profit organization lobbying on Capitol Hill for severely injured service men and women, aims to push the Caregiver and Veterans Health Services Act through the Senate.

According to the pending legislation, charges would be waived for humanitarian care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to family members, offering more comprehensive support coverage to a wider population of caregivers.

Aimee Zmysly has backed the bills via cyberspace. She posts links to legislation news through Caring Bridge, a social networking site offering free personalized profiles to people facing serious medical conditions. She tells readers that this "bill needs to be passed to

make our lives better."

"Yiury's story went to Washington," she said. "A few [supporters] have actually gone there, and said yes, the family caregivers need this because they're wearing out. It's like an all day, 24 hour, seven day a week thing. Some days are better than others. It's not easy and it's not going to be easy for a while."

Writing more than 193 pages worth of online journal entries since May 2007, Zmysly also includes updates on Yiury's progress throughout her weekly posts as well as the challenges she faces as his caregiver. "It feels good to write, to get it all out there," she said, and occasionally readers respond with a few words of comfort.

Online support groups offer an alternative for caregivers like Zmysly, who temper emotions that are not conducive to jammed-packed schedules.

"[Traditional] support groups don't work for these people," Saban said. "They can't even get away to go to them; it's a different generation than what people are used to working with. They started some support groups at the V.A. but nobody was going. My whole issue is how we can develop something for these people to get [them] together to support each other and keep track of [their progress.]"

Zmysly welcomes conversation with those in similar circumstances, particularly when her neighborhood friends and high school classmates have left the area, earned their degrees and started families of their own.

"It's hard to stay in contact with everybody because everybody's life is moving forward in a different way, with marriage, with kids," she said. "It's hard to find people that do what we want to do, or what we can do. The hardest part about this is moving on with normal life. This is our new normal."



Out of Service

Gay soldier copes with discharge and disgrace

MITCHELL DRINKARD

On a bookshelf in Emily Scott's home are awards she has received for her service in Iraq and a canteen with a handwritten note her father sent to her while she was there.

The note reads, "I had this canteen when I was in the Navy at the end of the Vietnam War. I hope you can use it. Love you, Dad."

But in 2009 Scott stopped earning accolades, for her military service no longer had a positive meaning. Staff Sgt. Scott found out just what the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy means.

"I'd never really tried to hide my homosexuality to the close people I worked with," she said. "And they didn't really seem to care or think any different of it."

No one in the military asked her if she was gay during her nine years in the United States Army. And she didn't tell anybody in the military she was gay.

"It didn't make a difference in my ability to serve my country."

-Emily Scott

But in August 2008, a Chicago National Guard lieutenant informed Scott that she was being investi-



Photos courtesy: Emily Scott

Discharged soldier Emily Scott with a weapon in Iraq.

gated for homosexual conduct after a female civilian co-worker said she had seen Scott kissing a woman in the checkout line at a Target store.

From the moment the co-worker made her statement, Scott's performance record and the sacrifices she had made to serve her country in Iraq no longer mattered. Scott was eventually discharged by mandatory force in April 2009.

"I was not separated because of any type of misconduct but plain and simply because someone else had a problem with my sexuality," Scott said.

Scott was given a dishonorable discharge because she was caught in a homosexual act.

Friends of Scott believe her discharge to be unjust.

"Her professionalism, hard

work, and dedication to her country were un-matched. Emily was the ideal representation of the United States Army," said Staff Sgt. Jonathan Craftman. Craftman, 30, is a close friend and served with Scott in Iraq.

Scott, 33 of Albany Park, joins more than 12,500 other lesbian, gay and bisexual service members who have been discharged by the Pentagon from 1994 through 2007.

Scott's life since her military discharge has been stressful. She went without work for two months and dipped into her 401(k) savings to get by. She couldn't finish her master's degree because she had lost her educational benefits.

Most of all, she has had a difficult time rectifying the discharge in her mind. She said she served with heterosexual soldiers who



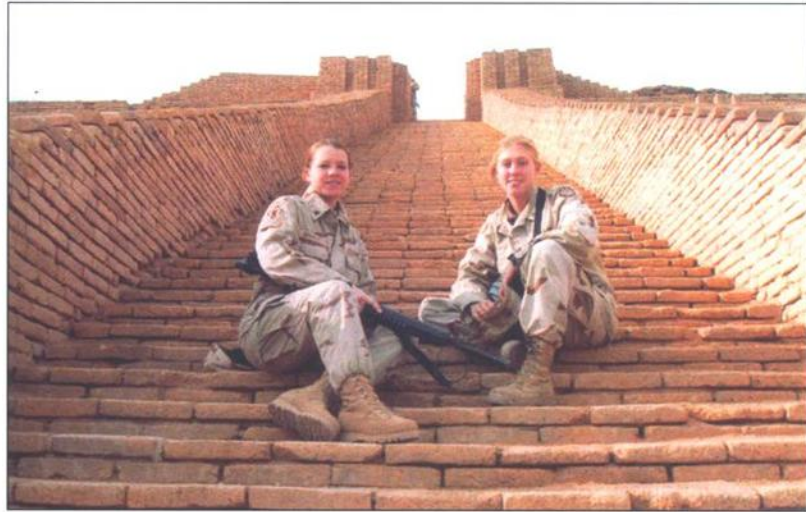
were found guilty of sexual harassment, adultery and fraud but had received disciplinary actions instead of discharges.

She worked with civilians, including her accuser, whose jobs were protected by laws guaranteeing they couldn't be fired because of their sexual orientation.

Scott said "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was originally implemented to protect military personnel who are homosexual, but instead has paved the way for the discharge of many good soldiers.

During her first six months in Iraq, where she was stationed at Camp Bashra, Scott was part of the maintenance crew and worked 12-hour shifts alongside American troops and civilians from other countries. Later, she was tapped to narrate award ceremonies, write evaluations and do office work.

"It didn't make a difference when I went to Iraq," Scott said of her sexual orientation. "It didn't make a difference when I drove that truck.



Photos courtesy: Emily Scott

Emily Scott, right, with fellow soldier in Iraq.

It didn't make a difference in my ability to serve my country."

Scott said she will not bad-mouth her commanders or the Army for following military policy. She looks forward to the day when the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is voided.

President Obama has said he

generally opposes the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and can "reasonably" see it being repealed. More than a hundred retired U.S. military leaders have signed a statement calling for the policy to end.

"Someday," Scott said, "that policy will change."



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The Cost of Pride

Students Challenge "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

**JAKE GILES &
MITCHELL DRINKARD**

When Northwestern University senior Rob Fojtik attempted to enlist with the Army Reserve in August 2006, one would be hard pressed to find a reason to turn him away. The Palos Hills-native was fluent in three languages, played sports, and was active in a fraternity. On paper, he is the perfect candidate for a soldier.

However, when Fojtik, then 21, along with his friend Kelsey Pacha, a junior at Northwestern at the time and an out lesbian, entered the recruitment station in Cabrini-Green in Chicago, they knew their request to enlist would be denied before they even spoke to a recruiter. Along with being overqualified, the students all identified as gay or lesbian.

Their attempts were part of a campaign called Right to Serve, a

civil action project by the nation's gay youths to expose the injustice in the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

"We gave a little press conference outside, then went in to enlist," Fojtik said. "We were called in one at a time, asked the basic questions about enlisting, then we each told [the recruiter] that we were gay and that that was something we weren't willing to conceal as a condition of service."

With their disclosure, the students left the recruitment office and refused to leave until they were allowed to enlist. As a result, Fojtik and Pacha were arrested on the grounds of trespassing. The Chicago Police Department handcuffed the students, and carted them away to the station, but no formal charges were pressed.

"We knew it was coming; we had prepared for it," Fojtik said. "It was exhilarating, really. At the

same time, it definitely made clear my second-class status in America. For the first time, I was denied something because of who I am."

As the debate over "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" receives a new perspective during the Obama era, advocacy organizations and U.S. citizens alike continue to protest the policy, which mandates the immediate discharge of openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) service members. According to the Service Members Legal Defense Network, more than 13,000 citizens have been discharged since the Clinton Administration introduced the policy in 1994.

The legislation, grounded in beliefs that open homosexuality is damaging to unit cohesion and morality, stipulates that gays and lesbians must serve in silence and abstain from homosexual activity. Furthermore, recruiters and commanders may not ask about sexual orientation in the absence of convincing evidence that homosexual acts have occurred.

The push for repeal follows years of legal setbacks, as well as discord among gay rights groups about how, or even whether, to address the issue. Now, rather than rely on the courts, advocates are focusing on drumming up support in towns across the nation, spotlighting the personal stories of former gay service members and pushing a Democratic bill in the House that would eliminate the policy.

"It is clear that national attitudes toward this issue have evolved considerably in the last decade," said Dr. Jose Zuniga, executive director of the International Associa-



Photo courtesy: Windy City Times/Nick Infusino

Gay activists Rob Fojtik and Kelsey Pacha were arrested for trying to enlist.



tion of Physicians in AIDS Care. "This has been led by a new generation of service members who take a more relaxed and tolerant view toward homosexuality."

The move to change policy faces stiff resistance from the Pentagon and Republicans in Congress, who have no longing for another debate about gay troops. The House bill, introduced last year by has picked up 119 supporters, but only five of them Republicans.

"I fear the House bill has a slim chance," said Dr. Jose Zuniga, formerly of Chicago and a discharged soldier under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. A 2004 report by the Urban Institute concluded that at least 60,000 gay people were serving in the armed forces, including the Reserves and the National Guard.

Gay rights groups, gay veterans, and analysts say much has changed since the policy was adopted. A Gallup poll in 2004 found that 63 percent of respondents favored allowing gay troops to serve openly. This year, the Pew Research Center put the number at 60 percent; that majority did not exist in 1993.

To add to the debate over "Don't Ask, Don't Tell", the military has lowered its standards by allowing more convicted criminals and high school dropouts to enlist instead of homosexuals.

"Would you rather have a felon than a gay soldier?" said Capt. Charles Thompson, a Chicago native and heterosexual National Guard commander of a headquarters company who returned from



Photo courtesy: Windy City Times/Nick Infusino

Gay activists Rob Fojtik and Kelsey Pacha staged a sit-in at a recruiting center.

Iraq in July. "I wouldn't."

More than 15 years after "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was implemented, President Barack Obama promised to repeal it. Recently, however, the issue has been put on the back burner as the administration focuses on health care reform and the economy. As recently as June 2009, the U.S. Supreme Court denied to hear an appeal by an Army captain dismissed under the policy.

"Eighteen NATO countries allow LGBT people to serve without any problems. Unit cohesion, troop morale, security and all the other arguments are baloney," said James Darby, president of the American Veterans for Equal Rights. "Gay people have always served this country, since 1776, and we always will. The time to change is long past; too many gay Americans have already died for a freedom that they never had."



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LOYOLA STUDENT DISPATCH
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WAR & PEACE





Virtual Iraq

Photos courtesy: U.S. Army

The video game 'Virtual Iraq' helps soldiers cope with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Virtual therapy helps veterans coping with stress

SHRAVAN KRISHNA

David Palmer remembers patrolling a U.S. Air Force base at Joint Base Balad, Iraq in March 2008 when the windshield of his Humvee was cracked by bullets and a soldier sitting next to him was shot dead.

The memory triggers his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For service men and women like 24-year-old Palmer, a new program funded by the Office of Naval Research called "Virtual Iraq," helps PTSD diagnosed veterans use 3-D glasses and motion controlled seats to simulate the traumatic events they experienced in the Middle East.

"Therapists place patients inside a personal event from their tour of duty by recreating it in the game," says Dr. Bhaskar N. Sripada, 56, who currently practices psychiatry at the University of Illinois in Chicago. "Since many soldiers are accustomed to playing video games, the procedure is much easier for them to undergo, rather than having to use their imagination to revisit haunting memories."

"Virtual Iraq" depends on multi-sensory inputs by a therapist so that veterans feel as if they are back on the battlefield. The treatment requires the patient to stand on a platform with a bass shaker underneath. When the therapist, who controls the program, sets

off a virtual explosion, the bass shaker quivers. The patient then experiences sounds and smells of the battlefield, which stimulate memories linked to their PTSD.

The Veterans Administration reports that about 12,000 Iraq and Afghanistan vets attempt suicide every year and more than a third of Iraq's veterans have PTSD, according to American Forces Press Services (AFPS)

Yet most vets do not receive any treatment or find their treatment plans beneficial. According to Sripada, because "Virtual Iraq" uses new video game technology, it is more accepted than traditional therapies and results are far more impressive than past simulation



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techniques.

"Veterans who were diagnosed with PTSD are now doing things that they were not really able to do before, like going to the movies, going out to dinner, and going to athletic events with large crowds," he said. "As a therapist, you want them to tell their whole story as vividly as possible."

"Virtual Iraq" is modeled off a similar program called "Virtual 9/11." Sandra Bonnadonna, 41, who survived the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, underwent the treatment after being diagnosed with PTSD.

"The moment I put the head-mounted display on, I could see the virtual simulation of lower Manhattan," Bonnadonna said. "I felt the shaking and explosions of the towers on my platform, smelt the fire on the scene coming out the odor machine, heard people screaming, and even cabs honking."

The multi-sensory environment input in "Virtual 9/11" gave people like Bonnadonna an alternative PTSD treatment plan.



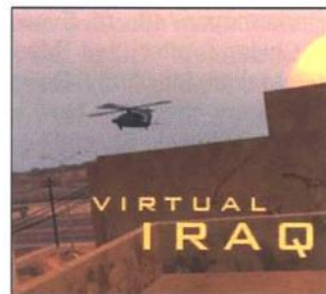
Photos courtesy: U.S. Army

A soldier dons 3-D glasses to play 'Virtual Iraq.'

While it is still too early to call "Virtual 9/11" or "Virtual Iraq" a cure for stress and depression, more studies show the positive effects of playing.

"It was not a typical revenge fantasy or cathartic game or anything like that," said Hayley Bonnadonna, 17, daughter of

Sandra Bonnadonna and forensics psychology student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "My mom's therapist had a goal in putting her back in an environment so she could aid them in processing her emotional memories. I am glad she has recovered."



Photos courtesy: U.S. Army

A psychologist tests out the latest version of the video game.

WAR & PEACE



In the Trenches with God

Military chaplain discusses life on the front line

GRACE PEKAR

It was one of the last Masses the Rev. John Barkemeyer celebrated for the children of St. Cajetan School in Chicago's Morgan Park neighborhood. Kneeling at the altar and signaling the sign of the cross were performed like they had been hundreds of times before.

But throughout the Mass Barkemeyer wore camouflage Army fatigues underneath his vestments. Toward the end of the service, he removed the vestments and finished the Mass solely in his uniform. Afterwards, Barkemeyer showed the children his army helmet and other equipment.

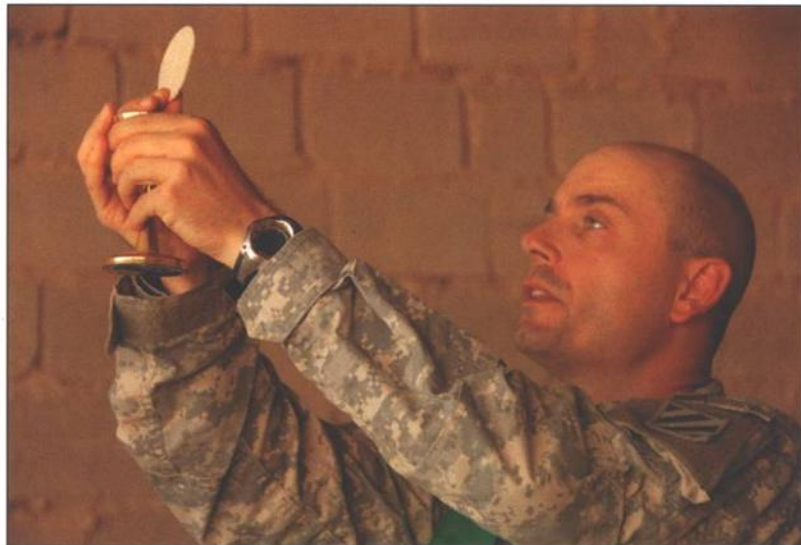
"It was just a moving—and also a very scared—moment," said St. Cajetan parishioner Tim Treynor, 62, of Palos Heights. "Just showing the school children what commitment, dedication, sacrifice and faith were all about."

Barkemeyer, 46, of Evanston, left Chicago after that Mass in 2003 to join the Army Reserves as a military chaplain. Now in his third tour of duty in Special Forces, Barkemeyer continues to serve thousands of troops in Iraq during the war with spiritual support and material goods.

"Many of the young people in my parish entered military service, and I wanted to do what I could to support them," Barkemeyer said via e-mail from an Army outpost in Balad, 50 miles north of Baghdad.

His family thought he was crazy for joining the Army when the war started but Barkemeyer, who became a chaplain candidate in the United States Navy in 1986, was not scared.

"Fascinated is a better word," he



Photos courtesy: John Barkemeyer

The Rev. John Barkemeyer blesses the eucharist.

said. "This is such a surrealistic experience that largely defies description, at least any description that is relatable to folks back in the states."

Surrounded by 15-foot blast walls to protect from indirect fire, he performs Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation for battalions of soldiers. He also provides spiritual support and counseling for troops throughout Iraq.

"Fr. John is unique among Army chaplains," said Capt. James Gonzalez, 26, of El Paso, Texas. "He has an uncanny ability to make a soldier forget about rank and circumstance that seems to be such a great stumbling block between chaplain and soldier."

Gonzalez met Barkemeyer in the winter of 2007 when both were deployed to Ramadi, Iraq's al-Anbar province, as members of 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. Gonzalez said Barkemeyer counseled him through many emotional difficulties, such as being separated

from his wife and two daughters.

"John helped me remember that God had put me in a place in my life to help me grow and that He knew that I could handle it," Gonzalez said.

Barkemeyer helps soldiers overcome mental trauma after battle, but the chaplain never sugar-coats situations.

"You need that in a combat zone," Gonzalez said. "You need a man that will look at the car-wreck you just went through and be willing to dissect it completely and without cutting any corners."

Soldiers are either closer to God after dealing with the trauma of war or further away from religion. It's a test, Gonzalez said, but Barkemeyer benefits both groups.

"John encourages everyone he meets to always explore their own emotions and intellectual reasoning," Gonzalez said. "He brings that out in the people he interacts with because it's never about him, it's always about you."

Traveling is part of the job description of a military chaplain—especially a Catholic chaplain. There are currently only 100 priests on active duty, but Barkemeyer said the Army needs 350. “We are kept busy,” he said.

Danger lurks for so many chaplains traveling the country to serve troops. During the first week of his second Iraq tour in Ramadi, an improvised explosive device struck Barkemeyer’s military vehicle. Barkemeyer was “shaken up” but not hurt.

“Just because you’re a chaplain doesn’t mean you’re still back at base camp where troops come to

you,” Treynor said. “You need to go to them. As a chaplain, you put yourself at risk.”

In the wake of Barkemeyer’s calling, a group of his parishioners started a non-profit organization in late 2004 called ComPadres.

This organization supports Barkemeyer and other military chaplains serving troops and provides them with material goods soldiers request. Items range from Bibles, crosses and statues to gift cards, snacks, toiletries, computers and video games.

“They have been extraordinarily helpful, sending thousands of dollars of supplies to soldiers, Ma-

rines, and airmen,” Barkemeyer said.

Upon initially leaving, he told parishioners he had some reservations about the war but knew the troops needed him overseas. As he joked with the St. Cajetan children playing with his Army helmet, his parishioners of 13 years, including Treynor, reluctantly recognized his calling.

“There was a solid, deep understanding what he was doing was a tremendous gift and sacrifice,” Treynor said. “That was a bitter-sweet time, but we understood it.”

Chaplains Come from all Creeds

JOHN BUSCEMI

U.S. Army military chaplain the Rev. Michael Dory was not prepared to give spiritual guidance on his first day of duty near Al Taqaddum Air Base in Iraq.

So when an American soldier, covered with the blood of a wounded comrade, sought his help, Dory did what he knew best: he prayed.

Chaplains must learn how pray with soldiers despite religious diversity within the military, he said.

“If you want to give everybody a hug, become a campus minister,” Dory said. “If you don’t want to go to war and take care of warriors, don’t join the military.”

Unlike his duties as a Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisc., Dory, 60, has a choice among troops to say either a pluralistic or Christian prayer.

Although the U.S. Code, Title Ten – Section 6031 states that “An officer in the Chaplain Corps may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a mem-

ber,” Dory said it is more effective for chaplains to take the military’s religious diversity into account.

A study released by The Christian Science Monitor in September 2007 reported that more than 3,800 military chaplains serve in the U.S. armed forces.

About 2,500 of these chaplains are in the Army, Army Reserve and National Guard.

About 30 percent of the chaplains come from the Roman Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist Church. An additional 120 religious denominations are represented within the U.S. Army.

Rabbi Irving Nelson, 50, served as a chaplain in Iraq. He agrees with Dory when it comes to prayer among soldiers of different faiths.

Nelson believes chaplains must understand that the armed forces



Photos courtesy: John Barkemeyer

The Rev. John Barkemeyer reads from the Bible.

have a diverse spiritual audience. “You have to be sensitive to where other people are at religiously,” he said.

The Rev. John Barkemeyer, 45, a Catholic priest in the Archdiocese of Chicago, currently serves as a military chaplain in Iraq and tries to make sure the content of his prayer can be appreciated by people of various faiths.

“When I pray in a group setting, where soldiers are mandated to attend, I always try to be as inclusive as possible,” Barkemeyer said. “I don’t close my prayer in Jesus’ name.”



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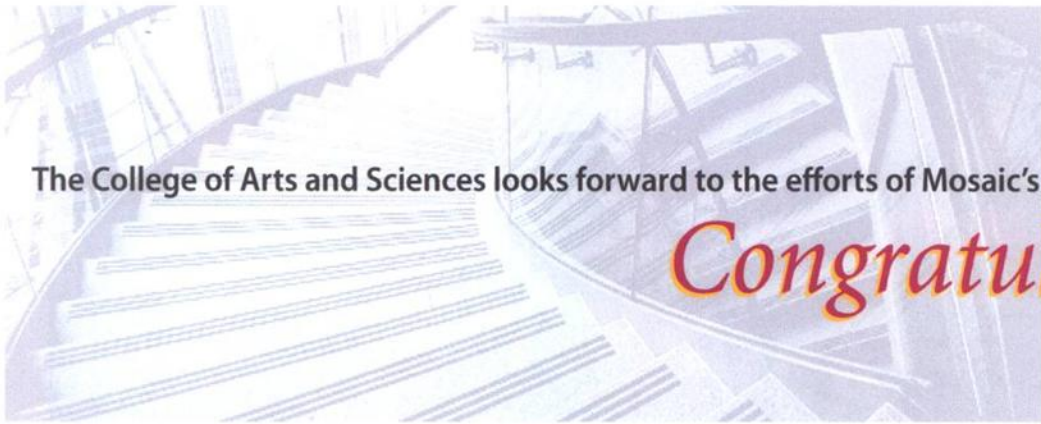
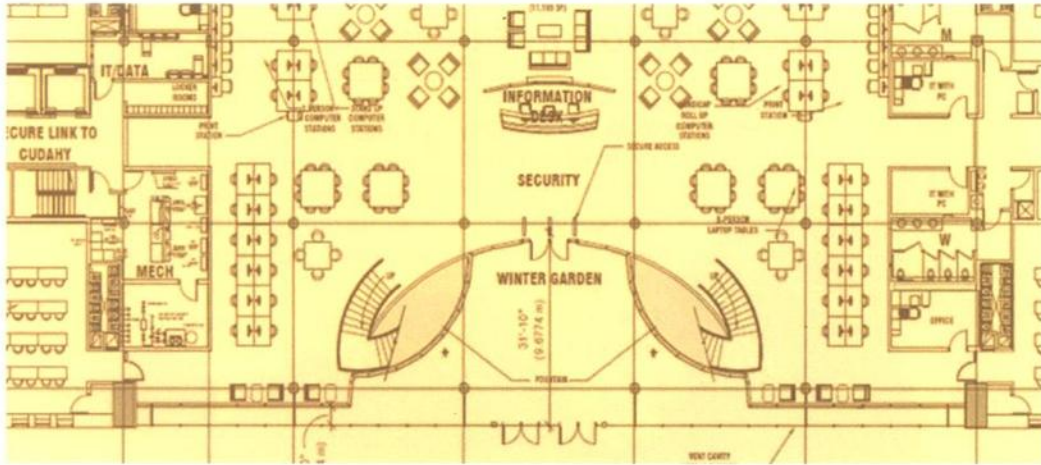
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Thinking Pink

Chicago women in the fight for peace



Photos courtesy: Code Pink
Code Pink members stage protest against war.

MOLLY ARONICA

Pat Hunt is not a typical activist. Before she founded the Chicago area chapter of Code Pink in 2004, the Niles native had never taken part in the peace movement.

"I really did not have any real strong opinion about war other than that it was bad," she said.

Although Hunt, 50, always had an interest in politics, rallying to enact change was a desire that did not strike her until much later.

"There are some people doing this who have been doing it forev-

er, they have been involved since Vietnam. I am not one of them," she said.

Susan Eleuterio, 57, is one of them. Becoming co-founder of the Northwest Indiana chapter of Code Pink in the spring of 2007 was a long time coming for the Delaware native, who has been an active member of the anti-war movement since the 1960s.

Eleuterio was introduced to Code Pink just before the U.S. invaded Iraq. The chapter, which is located south of the Loop, works so closely with the Chicago area chapter that some Code Pink

members living in Chicago's South Side attend meetings in Highland, Ind. because it is more convenient for them.

Although it began as a volunteer organization dedicated to protesting the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Code Pink has become a widespread movement that calls for the elimination of war and the promotion of social justice. The name is inspired by the Department of Homeland Security's color-coded terrorism threat advisory scale. Pink, which is not on the scale, is meant to symbolize a peaceful approach to war.



For Hunt and Eleuterio, sentiments not always associated with the anti-war movement like a sense of compassion and hope are at the heart of Code Pink.

"Being an activist gets frustrating. I don't want to be mad all the time," Eleuterio said.

Hunt researched a number of peace organizations before deciding to get involved with Code Pink. She found that many organizations had a dark message, instead of lobbying for a peaceful resolution to the war.

At Code Pink, Hunt and Eleuterio were able to creatively demand change in a positive way.

"People are smiling when they see us. Something about seeing a bunch of women wearing pink boas sets them at ease," Eleuterio said.

During the Republican National Convention in 2004, the members of Code Pink caught the eye of Rae Abileah, 26, a graduate of Barnard College in New York City. After joining in the protest, Abileah hitched a ride back to California in a bright pink Code Pink truck.

**"My hope is that
a women-led
movement will
resist violence."**

-Susan Eleuterio

By the end of 2005, Abileah became a full-time employee of Code Pink, serving as the National Coordinator for Local Groups, one of only three paid positions in the organization.

It is her job to "make national causes work on a local level," she

said. Abileah travels to Chicago as often as possible to support local action and ensure that they have needed resources.

All it takes to become a member of Code Pink is to show up to an event.

"There are no membership fees or membership dues or anything and it's really grassroots," Hunt said.

The relationships that Code Pink has with other groups in the area, such as the Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism and Near North Neighbors for Peace, are vital to making many of the Code Pink actions come to life. Since 2004, Code Pink has been a member of the coalition that organizes an anti-war rally on every anniversary of the Iraq war.

"We are part of the coalition that has put on anti-war marches since 2004. Every year on anniversary of the Iraq war there is a huge demonstration in Federal Plaza. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people typically show up to protest," Hunt said.

Hunt defines a successful event by the impact that it has, not by the number of people that show up in support because Chicago tends to be a more "conservative" city when it comes to protesting, Hunt said.

"So where national would interrupt Senate hearing, that would be seen as rude here. We did go in to federal buildings to hold sit-in's protesting the war and some of us got arrested," Hunt said.

The relationship that the local chapters have with the national organization is an important part of the Code Pink philosophy. Hunt



Photos courtesy: Code Pink
One Code Pink member's sign.

describes it as having a bottom-up mentality.

Instead of the Code Pink founders telling the chapters what to do, they make an effort to ask local chapters about what is important to them.

With a new president in the White House, the Chicago chapter is struggling to get people to stay involved with the organization.

"A lot of people really do think the war is over, and our next challenge is to try and convince them that that may not actually be true," Hunt said.

Julia Field, 45, co-coordinator of the Chicago chapter agrees.

"A lot of people are dropping off now that Obama is in office. We need to keep him honest and hold him to the promises he made," Field said.

Above all else, it is a commitment to preserving a non-violent way of life that connects the members of Code Pink.

"Women do things differently," Eleuterio said. "My hope is that a women-led movement will resist violence."



Anti-war Apathy

War protests on the decline

**ADAM DEROSE AND
JENNIFER BURGESS**

At the beginning of the U.S. War on Terror, an estimated 15,000 protesters packed the streets of downtown Chicago.

Since that time, Chicago has never seen an anti-war protest with this many demonstrators. The following year, only 5,000 protesters participated in the same march.

Within the last 18 months, anti-war and peace organizations alike have seen a sharp decline in active membership and a lesser presence at demonstrations against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In 2008, the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, about 60 Code-Pink anti-war activists protested in Chicago. One year later, nearly 14 people were protesting the same war, according to Pat Hunt, co-coordinator for the Chicago-area organization.

Many people, concerned with U.S. troop presence in the Middle East, left the peace and anti-war movement to focus on Barack Obama's presidential campaign as a peace candidate and later dropped out of the movements altogether after his election in November 2008.

"Getting rid of [President George W.] Bush didn't solve anything, but people did have that illusion," said Bob Schwartz, a member of the Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism. "The problem is with the use of the American military."

Schwartz, 70, of Edgewater, suggested anti-war and peace groups cannot unite because of political differences.

"The problem is not one of who

occupies the White House in D.C., or who controls the Houses of Congress." Schwartz said. "It's a process of educating people and rallying people to oppose the war."

Some activists have confidence in the Obama administration, while others remain doubtful of the President's promise to end U.S. involvement in the Middle East.

Schwartz is not the only anti-war activist who has seen Obama supporters leave peace groups after their candidate was elected.

Code Pink has fallen victim to the same phenomenon, as members who worked to get Obama elected feel that his presidential actions have not lived up to their expectations.

"It's very difficult to put a different hat on and take a hard look at somebody who you just campaigned for," said Pat Hunt, who co-founded Code Pink. "Many Chicago-area Code Pink activists campaigned for Obama."

Andy Thayer, 50, Co-founder and Organizer of Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism, agreed. During the primaries, the public wanted an anti-war president and after Obama's election, fewer protesters started coming to anti-war events.

"The Iraq war, in some respects was an easier argument because over and over again we were able to show that the Bush administration was just pedaling a whole tissue of lies," Thayer said. "The problem that many people don't realize here is that the Obama administration has broken its own promises about withdrawal from Iraq. It's completely a go-slow approach and it hasn't even met



Photos courtesy: Danielle Ezell

An Iraq veteran at a war anniversary protest.

those targets."

Julia Field, 45, of Oak Park, is a co-coordinator for Code Pink. She was one of the peace activists who campaigned for Obama in 2008. But, unlike those who moved away from the movement after his election, Field said she is disappointed Obama has not kept his promises.

"We're trying to end war on all fronts, and trying to keep President Obama honest is turning into a full time job," Field said. "All of these things he's promised would be changed, shut down, ended and run differently are coming very quickly not to pass. So we find a real need, just as much now, to be out there."

After almost a decade of U.S. involvement in the Middle East, protest organizers now face the challenge of rallying the public to support the anti-war cause. Many



protest groups feel that Americans suffer from what could be described as participation fatigue.

"Unfortunately I think that the one of problems with the anti-war movements is people get really tired of rallying and they get tired of marching at antiwar marches," Clark said.

Yet some organizations are bucking the trend.

Aaron Hughes, the team leader for the Chicago Chapter of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), says that this group is experiencing an increase in membership. The suspected cause: members

of IVAW are soldiers who are invested in the movement to bring the troops home.

"What it is, is that soldiers, GIs and veterans are fed up with [the wars]," said Hughes, 27, of Chicago. "They want to begin the fight against it."



Photos courtesy: Danielle Ezell

Loyola University Chicago students at the 7th anniversary protest of the Iraq invasion.



Photos courtesy: Danielle Ezell

Members of Iraq Veterans Against the War at an anti-war protest.

ROTC in the Chicago Public Schools

Military using high school programs for recruitment



Photos courtesy: Yuliana Moreno

One Lane Tech High School JROTC student rappelling.

MARIAM PERA

The orders "Columns left! Flanks! Rear March!" can be heard from Chicago's Lane Tech College Prep High School stadium, where students in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) are marching.

Such sights and sounds are not uncommon in the Chicago Public School system, which has the largest JROTC program in the nation. Branches of the military are represented in more than 30 of the 400 CPS high schools.

Anti-military recruitment groups suggest that, given Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's support of military academies, the military is able to

use these programs to drive up teen enlistment.

While Lane Tech is not a military academy, 300 of its 4,200 students are enrolled in the JROTC program. According to the "Truth For Recruitment" Campaign by the American Friends Services Committee, Lane Tech has the highest number of CPS students who enlist after graduation.

Lane Tech Senior Army Instructor, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Kochheiser fully rejects the idea that the JROTC program is used for military recruitment.

"The misconception is a natural thought," he said. Kochheiser argues that JROTC is merely teaching teens a military leadership

style and that the program doesn't assume teens will enlist.

"Our program is not a military service prep program as some people assume; it is a citizenship program," he said. "We teach our students to be critical thinkers and hope they will demand accountability from their elected leaders in all aspects of governance, whether that is foreign policy or domestic issues."

Yuliana Moreno, 21, a DePaul University senior, graduated from Lane Tech in 2006 and was in JROTC all four years. She joined JROTC because she didn't want to have to swim in physical education classes and because of her brother's participation in the program.



"I think being in JROTC prepared me to become a better person," said Moreno, who is studying accounting.

Moreno estimates that while 95 percent of her JROTC class went to college, the following year 60 percent ended up enlisting.

Matt Powell, 21, a senior at West Point, also graduated from Lane Tech in 2006. While he said West Point wasn't exactly what he expected, Powell has had an overall positive experience.

"One thing that I got out of JROTC I think that really carried over was the skills to try to encourage people how to get stuff done that they do not want to do," he said. "I was able to see styles of leadership that suited me."

But not everyone at Lane agrees that the JROTC program is the best option available to students.

Natalia Santillan, 20, a Lane Tech alum and junior at University of Illinois-Urbana, expressed her concern over what she sees as JROTC's ulterior motives.

"Why is JROTC so well funded? Why are they so prominent in undeserved schools?" Santillan said. "For me, it serves as breeding ground for students to join the armed forces. Students should be aware of this and understand the expectations behind this program."

Of the six military academies in Chicago, one is on the far South Side, one on the North Side and the other four are on the West Side.

The idea that JROTC programs are targeted toward lower-income and/or lower-performing schools seems to be something on which both sides agree. The proponents for JROTC say those are the areas that need the most help, and the counter-recruiters say the military is picking the poor to fight wars.

Joshua Noehrenberg, 27, is an organizer for Iraq Veterans Against



Photos courtesy: Yuliana Moreno
Yuliana Moreno, right, and another JROTC member in summer camp.



Photos courtesy: Yuliana Moreno
Members of Lane Tech High School's JROTC at Military Ball.

the War Chicago Chapter, an organization actively working in counter-recruitment.

"You can find a ton of programs instead of JROTC to help underperforming schools," he said. "There are no real statistical differences in terms of improved graduation rates or lower dropout rates,

in schools with JROTC programs."

But Kochheiser says the JROTC acts as a way of helping kids get into college.

"My goal is to prepare kids to be successful in what they choose to do," he said. "If a student comes to me tells me they're interested [in the military] I help them."

Reading, Writing... and Ammunition

Activists opposed to military programs in high schools



Illustrative photo by Cassie Gonzales

MOLLY ARONICA

With the opening of Air Force Academy High School this past September, Chicago now has at least one public academy for each branch of the armed forces - making its public school system the most militarized in the country.

As the presence of military programs in the Chicago Public School system increases, the number of counter military recruitment organizations continues to rise.

Counter recruitment is not an entirely new concept. Organizations

like the American Friends Service Committee, a national peace organization, have promoted the effort in public schools since World War II.

"Counter recruitment has always been part of organization because our purpose is to counsel young people about resisting war and wanting to be conscientious objectors," said Darlene Gramigna, the program director for American Friends Service Committee in Chicago.

Andy Kroll, a San Francisco journalist, has written extensively

on the militarization of the Chicago Public School system. He believes that the combination of needed reform in Chicago's public schools and the city's large urban landscape have contributed to the increase in counter recruitment initiatives throughout the past decade.

"The military has found in Chicago, a group of leaders who have been really willing to accommodate programs like the JROTC and help fund military academy high schools," Kroll said.

Chicago has struggled to pro-

vide students with a good public school system, yet the prevalence of gangs and drugs has stalled reform efforts.

In an attempt to test alternative education models, Chicago turned to the Department of Defense for financial support and leadership.

"What really happens is that the Army gives money to these programs for a couple of years and then the Chicago Public Schools support them," Gramigna said. "I think deeper than that there is some plan to dismantle public education."

Unlike many U.S. cities where constituents elect board of education members, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley appoints individuals to serve.

"I believe that a lot of this started when Daley took over and started appointing people to run the public schools who have no background in education," said Libby Frank, co-founder of the Northwest Suburban Peace and Education project.

There are 54 military-related programs in the Chicago Public School system: six military academies, four schools within schools, 30 traditional JROTC programs and 20 junior cadet programs (in middle schools), according to the Chicago Public Schools. The American Friends Service Committee estimates that one out of every 10 Chicago public school students wears a military uniform to school.

The presence of military recruiters in public schools has extended beyond the city borders and into the suburbs.

The Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project is an organization that started in the spring of 2004 when Frank's son, who was in high school at the time, expressed concern about military recruiters at his school.

Frank, 60, organized other parents and reached out to her friends in the Chicago peace movement. The group convinced the principals of School District 214 in Arlington Heights to allow for counter recruitment information tables at schools every month.

One of the main efforts that the counter recruitment organizations promote is the "opt out" choice. Under the No Child Left Behind Act, military recruiters are granted access to the contact information of public school students unless the student's parents present at "opt out" form to the school.

"I'll just be walking past and the recruiters will call me over to try and get me to give them all of my personal information," said Andrew Lahum, a senior at John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights. "I have flat out told them that I am uncomfortable with it and they just keep pushing me by saying things like, 'Oh come on, it's just your phone number,' when they're in their uniforms they can be intimidating."

When the Northwest Suburban Peace and Education Project began the "opt out" initiative in District 214, which covers six high schools, they were able to get 1,301 forms submitted. This past year, 5,971 "opt out" forms were submitted.

A current development in the counter recruitment trend is the increase in proactive action from parents, teachers and veterans.

"You had third-party organizations that were traditionally talking about the military in schools, but now you're actually seeing teachers get involved, which is huge," Kroll said.

Gramigna added that, "The veterans are able to tell the students about what its like to actually deal with the realities of war, and their parents are interested in making sure that other parents and kids know what is going on before they

enlist."

The purpose of the counter recruitment organizations is not to tell students that the military is "bad." Their goal instead is to provide students with adequate information on the pros and cons of enlisting.

"They have a pretty unbiased approach, and they tell you to just think it over before you make such a huge decision," Lahum said. "They are not trying to convince you not to join the military, just to consider your options."

One reason for counter recruitment organizations is to dispel misconceptions that they believe recruiters tell potential recruits.

"The recruiters will have kids to push-ups in exchange for a gift," Lahum said "They will tell them that this could pay for your college tuition and you can see the world, they conveniently leave out reasons why it would be a bad idea."

When it comes to job placement, Frank said that within the military there are 150 job classifications, and recruiters make it seem like students will have the job of their choice.

"If you think about it, you can't fight a war with everyone deciding what they want to do," Frank said. "How many wars could we fight if everyone decided they wanted to be a guitar player in the military band?"

Counter recruitment organizations pledge to continue showing students that they have other life options than just joining the military.

"I think that Chicago has been a really interesting micro model of this debate," Kroll said. "I can't imagine having these schools without having organizations that are representing the other side of it. The role that they play is very important."



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Marine Blues

Photo courtesy: Pawel Szczesny

Soldier struggles with return from front

KAMIL ZAWADZKI

Pawel Szczesny was on a joint military exercise in Europe when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. He remembers watching the footage with top NATO commanders. Their curiosity about the young Pole serving the Americans was replaced by a fear of World War III.

A U.S. Marine since 1999, Szczesny said his birthplace was never an issue; he was "just doing his job." By the time he became a U.S. citizen in January 2003, he had already completed a deployment in Afghanistan and was about to ship out to Iraq.

"When my dad and I came to the U.S. from Poland in 1991, the first Gulf War was starting up," Szczesny said. "I never expected that just over a decade later, I would be directly involved in the second."

Szczesny, 32, of Chicago's Jefferson Park neighborhood, is proud of his service in the elite 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, but lives with lingering anxiety. The sounds and smells haunt him; the Fourth of July still has him on edge years after his combat missions have ended.

Szczesny's unit was one of the first U.S. forces deployed in Afghanistan in December 2001. It

was a point at which the anticipation was still more intense than combat itself. Training, he said, was thorough in preparing him and his comrades to keep their wits about them "when the bullets started flying."

"Being in a war zone for more than 12 months will change you...you're detached from humanity for too long."

-Pawel Szczesny

After leaving Afghanistan, the unit went through a full year of re-supplying and re-training before being dropped in Mosul, Iraq, in early 2003. During this assignment, they prevented the Kurdish militia from storming and massacring the city's Shiite Arab inhabit-

ants.

"It was tough when we had to do crowd control and prevent panics," Szczesny said. "Even though not everyone wanted to hurt us, everyone had a weapon and all it could take was one person to shoot and start a firefight."

Despite such challenges, Szczesny still smiles as he clicks through more than 300 digital photos from his time spent overseas, which reveal fond memories and no regrets. He acknowledges that there are those that succumb to the stress, but credits his survival while sailing point-to-point during his tours of duty with "not taking it so seriously."

Szczesny said that the Marine deployment cycle was better-suited for people's well-being.

Marines are deployed for six months at a time; the U.S. Army was known for 18-month deployments. That alone, according to Szczesny, is a critical yet seldom examined factor in a person's experiences during a tour of duty.

Even so, the limbo between war and peace still took its toll on the soldiers. Szczesny's unit suffered no casualties in combat, but there were incidents of some servicemen trying to "end it" by jumping overboard.

"Being in a war zone for more than 12 months in a row will change you," Szczesny said. "You're detached from humanity for too long."

After ending his last deployment in 2004, Szczesny returned to the United States with a more acute awareness of his own capabilities, but also an inflated sense of self. He said it was common for returning service people like him to behave as if they were untouchable, what he calls a "God complex."

"When Pawel got back, he took a turn for the worse," said his father Piotr Szczesny, 57, of Des Plaines. "But he's always been hard-working, and has been on a good path for the past year."

The younger Szczesny realized the potential consequences of his own reckless mistakes and regained control of his life.

He enrolled at Wilbur Wright College and began a software design and installation business with a friend. Szczesny looks ahead to a civilian life, military gear replaced by textbooks and papers scattered throughout his living room. The Marine motto, "Semper Paratus" is nowhere in sight on his computer desktop; instead, there's the reminder: "Do your work! Don't be stupid!"

Still, even as he checks his BlackBerry for new messages, Szczesny maintains contact with some of his Marine buddies. He believes in "finishing the job" in Afghanistan and Iraq in the name of all those who died fighting for it.

Szczesny's memories of his time as a Marine are bittersweet. He is proud of serving and says he would do it again, but admits to occasionally sleeping on the couch in his living room.

"I feel safe here because I have a complete peripheral view," he said, laughing his jitters off. "But it's just like everything else in life. You just have to take it as it is and move on."



Photo courtesy: Pawel Szczesny
Marine Paul Szczesny on patrol in Iraq.

Agent for Change

Activist fights for peace and gay rights



Photos courtesy: Grace Sutherland

Andy Thayer at an anti-war protest in Hyde Park.

COURTNEY HANSON

Andy Thayer's faded jeans and denim jacket alone did not make him stand out against the gray horizon on a dreary October day. What really made Thayer stand out was the steady stream of people coming up and wanting to talk to him.

It was Oct. 3, 2009; the eighth anniversary of U.S. involvement with the War in Afghanistan and a crowd had assembled in Harold Washington Park, President Obama's home in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood.

A fellow protester, a speaker at

the rally who lost his soldier son, a police officer concerned about the protest—Thayer handled the motley crew with the ease and compassion of a veteran organizer.

"It is just like second nature at this point. I think he knows how to get people involved so it isn't just him. He has a very engaging personality and that helps with leadership," said Bob Schwartz, 70, of the Gay Liberation Network.

Thayer, 48, Co-Founder of the Gay Liberation Network and Chicagoans Against War and Racism, has used his gay rights, anti-war grassroots activism efforts to gain

publicity for peace worldwide.

Thayer's career as a fighter for justice started long before he first set foot on a picket line. He grew up in a household where his mother smuggled Vietnam draft evaders into Canada. Thayer's parents gave him and his two brothers freedom to express their own views.

As a student journalist at his high school in Holland, New York, he did just that. In the 1970s, Thayer did a story on a faulty generator his school district continued to use. The backlash from the story got the newspaper shut down.

When he was in college at



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Northwestern University in the early 1980s, Thayer was arrested during a protest. The demonstration ultimately led to his fellow students being exposed for supporting Anastasio Somazo Debayle, the leader of the Nicaraguan Contras, a group guilty of wholesale murder.

As an adult he's faced felony charges over an anti-war protest, been arrested at a gay rights rally in Russia, and organized countless demonstrations. One such event shut down Chicago's Michigan Avenue way before the thought even crossed Oprah's mind.

"I've been about to see this very grassroots way of organizing change things. You don't need tons of bucks to make this sort of thing happen and be effective and make a real change in the world," Thayer said.

Fellow activists say Thayer's success is a result not only of his methods but also of his years on the protest scene.

"What makes him a great leader is that he's very experienced. He looks much younger than he is," said protester Betty Resnikopff, 72.

Thayer is focusing energy on keeping President Obama from slipping into the bad political patterns of the past. His is urging the president to stop the war and encouraging people not to be silent just because of a new commander-in-chief.

"It's very important to protest from the left against this president," he said. "If we want to achieve the things like universal healthcare, like an end to the war and occupation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we need to be pushing from our side. These politicians have never done anything of their own volition for us. They've always had to be forced."

That fight, for Thayer, has always been from the ground up. He says historically, it has been non-partisan grassroots movements

were most effective.

Thayer says that these campaigns might not be putting huge social issues to bed, but they are a step in the right direction. Even more, they are a source of hope and inspiration as people realize that most victories do not require much more than a crowd of willing, concerned citizens.

"You could see that people were finding skills and talents that they didn't realize they had, that they were blossoming personally through the course of fighting for their own rights. That was a very beautiful thing to witness," he said.

For Thayer, fighting for basic freedoms means fighting for the rights of all oppressed peoples.

Thayer's fight will not be over, he says, until the world is liberated. So for now, it goes on.

"Unless we fight back and organize," he said, "most people don't get even a small measure of justice."



Photos courtesy: Grace Sutherland
Anti-war protest in Hyde Park.

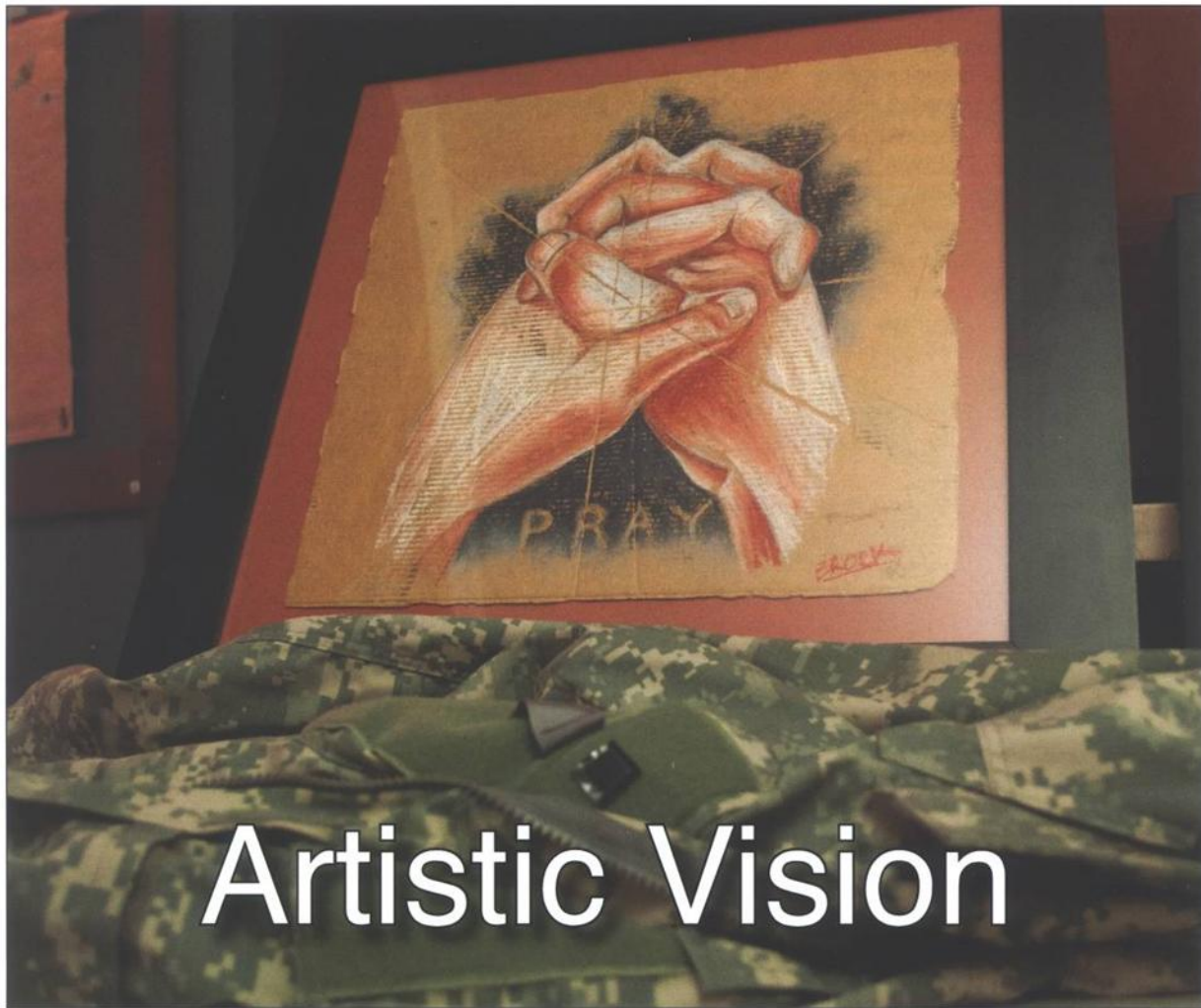


Photo by Cassie Gonzales

A sample of the work by the Vet Art project.

Artistic Vision

Veterans tell their stories through Vet Art Project

CASSIE GONZALES

Four years after being discharged from the United States Army, Adam Navarro-Lowery of Chicago reached out to the Vet Art Project to reconnect with his military experience.

Navarro-Lowery, 31, served as a military police officer in Kosovo from 2000 to 2003 and said the Vet Art Project benefited him.

"It filled in the gaps in my military experience. Hearing other vet-

erans talk about their military conflicts and struggles with terror and post traumatic stress syndrome and depression helped," he said.

The Vet Art Project's mission is to give veterans a new voice for their experiences by enabling them to create collaborative art with local artists. As part of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs' Theater Initiative, the Vet Art Project was given use of The Studio Theater for the month of February. Thirty veterans, 60 artists and more than 240 participants took

part in the first month of workshops and events hosted by the Vet Art Project. The month culminated in a community performance and showcase of the collaborations at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Navarro-Lowery collaborated with a local painter, who is creating a series of veteran portraits. Other veterans in the Vet Arts Project collaborated on performance pieces, poetry and music.

In a theater filled to capacity with veterans, artists and their friends



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and family, John Fisher, 62, a Vietnam Veteran, sat next to his wife and watched a man he had never met re-enact a moment from Fisher's military career. He watched a friend die in the jungle in Vietnam and, 40 years later, he wrote about it and watched as a young actor performed his words.

"It was pretty heavy stuff," Fisher said.

The Vet Art Project found a local actor, Demetrios Troy, to do a dramatic reading of the essay during the showcase.

"He was great, we became instant buddies," Fisher said.

"They need to share their stories with the community. Artists can build that bridge to reconnect veterans to the community, and that was the birth of the Vet Art Project," said Vet Art Project Founder Lisa Rosenthal.

Fisher said he spent many years trying not to think about his time in Vietnam. He submersed himself in his career and didn't know any other veterans. In 1991, Fisher was forced to confront his old memories.

"My nephew in 1991 deployed in the Persian Gulf War, and that's when all hell broke loose for me. I started having nightmares again," Fisher said.

He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and reached out to veterans organizations and wrote about his experiences in Vietnam. Eventually he met Rosenthal and participated in the Vet Art Project.

"I've done a lot of things to work on my veteran healing," he said.

The artist participants say they learned a lot from their collaborations with the veterans.

Cameron Robbins, 31, a writer from Mount Prospect, collaborated with Matt Ping, an Army veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

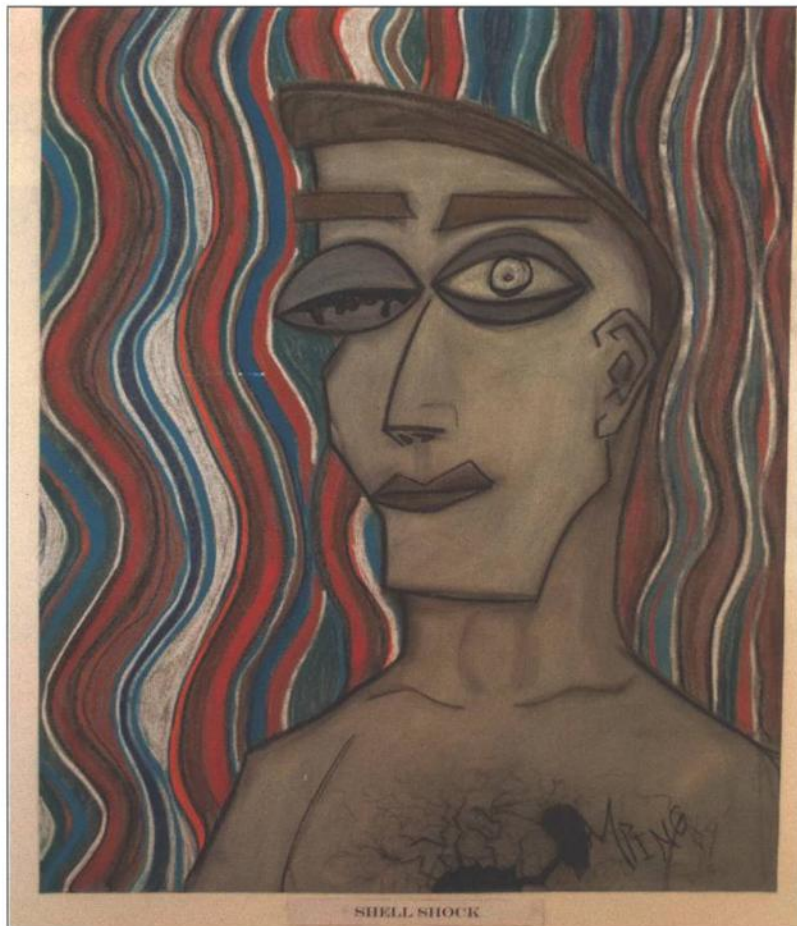


Photo by Cassie Gonzales

A sample of the work by the Vet Art project.

"He told me about his homecoming and his experience of people reacting to his uniform. It was very warm and people were offering to buy him a beer. He thought people didn't understand what was going on over there and people were too happy about it," Robbins said. She wrote a poem based on Ping's story, which was performed by an actor.

Robbins said she learned a lot from the experience and said she hopes to work with the Vet Art Project in the future. She said that getting some of the veterans to open up about their experiences had been difficult, and not all of the collaborations could be completed.

"If friendships are built, relationships are built and no art comes

of it, that's OK, it's still a success," Rosenthal said of her project's ultimate goals. "This is an opportunity for veterans, to help them reconnect with their loved ones and help heal that soul wound."

The Vet Art Project has other workshops and collaborations on the horizon. It has six offshoot organizations growing across the country from Washington to Texas.

Upcoming events in Chicago include a discussion group for women veterans, play readings and other family oriented events.

Story telling is important for veterans and their families and communities, Fisher said. When a veteran tells their story, "they become your stories too," he said.

Portrait of an Artist

Former Gitmo guard expresses himself through art



Photos courtesy: Drew Cameron

Soldier-Artist Christopher Arendt at his craft.

MARIAM PERA

As Christopher Arendt adjusts the banjo in his hands, he finds a comfortable position and begins to strum. His hands are a little shaky, but they hold the instrument with determination.

For just a moment, he closes his eyes, lets out a sigh and reaches for a cigarette, taking a slow drag.

Sitting in his friend's Humboldt Park apartment, dressed in skinny jeans, a white T-shirt and suspenders, Arendt is tall and thin. He has an easy smile, but often apologizes for "being nervous" and "rambling."

His hand—now steady—moves back to the strings of the banjo. On the front of the instrument, the words "M16: Iraq Veterans Against the War" are painted in red.

"This is what I've been doing for days," he said. "Just playing my banjo and thinking about things."

Arendt, 25, a native of Charlotte, Mich., served in the U.S. Army National Guard from 2001 to 2007, and is a former guard at the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In March 2008, commemorating the five-year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, Arendt participated in "Winter Soldier," an event where

veterans testified about the things they saw and did during their service.

Arendt testified about torture and abuse he witnessed and was even ordered to tape.

"I've heard a lot of speculation as to what torture is considered. First and foremost, I would like to ask... whether or not living inside of a cell for five years, away from your family and your friends, without ever being given any answers as to why you're there, asking... why they're there... I consider that torture," he said.

Arendt recalled times when he would arrive on duty as Escort

Control at 4:30 a.m. and "there would be a piece of paper with a number... representing a detainee. A detainee in an interrogation room ranging anywhere from 10 to 20 degrees in temperature, with loud music playing."

The detainee, who had been in the interrogation room for an undetermined amount of time, often would stay in the interrogation room, shackled to the floor by his hands and his feet. Often, he would have nothing to sit on and loud music playing would be playing in the freezing cold.

"I guess that's torture too. Depends on who you ask," he said. "I hear that there is an official list of things that are and are not torture. Waterboarding is. This is not... I can't believe that a human being could even write a list like that."

Arendt agreed to testify at "Winter Soldier" after becoming acquainted with fellow veterans involved with the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). He said it gave him a sense of purpose.

"Human hands weren't meant to do such ugly things."

- Christopher Arendt

"When I met the guys from IVAW, they saved my life. Because if I don't funnel my thinking energy, it becomes destructive, and I spiral out of control," Arendt said.

Since his discharge from service, Arendt has traveled across the U.S. and to Europe to talk about his experiences at Guantanamo Bay, documenting all the veterans he met along the way.

"We [the new veterans] don't want to go down the same path many of the Vietnam veterans went down," Arendt explained. "We are trying to channel our stories into something productive."

Arendt has been an artist and writer for most of his life, and enlisted in the Michigan National Guard at 17, with the intention of going to college. He joined the 119th Field Artillery Unit, which arrived at Guantanamo Bay in January 2004. Arendt served in the National Guard for six years.

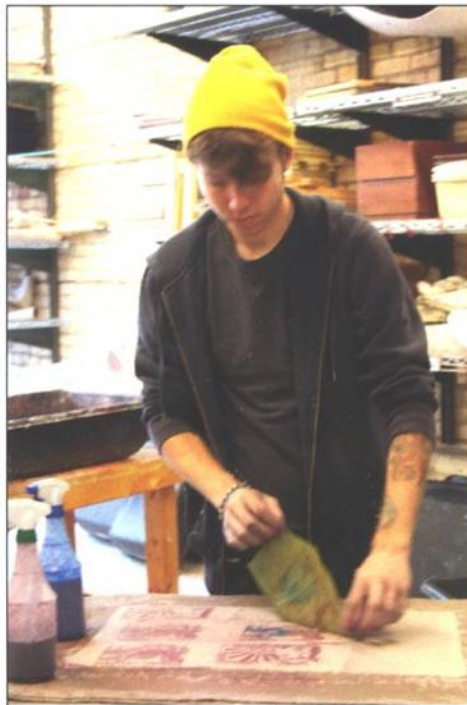
"My ethical philosophy is that of a beautiful life; I see actions as beautiful or ugly," he said. "In Gitmo, there were a lot of things that were horrible, that were ugly, not clean, not pure."

Arendt moved from Michigan to Chicago in 2005 and for the past three years has had no legal place of residence. He hitchhiked to Portland, Ore., and got involved with that chapter of the IVAW. Together, they protested at both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

"Basically, the military has been my primary education. I know I couldn't have done any of the things I have if I hadn't been in the military," he said.

As part of his own form of therapy, Arendt uses his art to express much of his trauma. Most of his artwork is housed at various friends' homes.

Arendt recently became involved with "Combat Paper," a project based out of Vermont, designed to bring artists and veterans together. In the project, the veterans destroy their military uniforms and turn them into paper, which they later use as canvas for their artwork.



Photos courtesy: Drew Cameron
Artist Christopher Arendt.

"The story of the fiber, the blood, sweat and tears, the months of hardship and brutal violence are held within those old uniforms. The uniforms often become inhabitants of closets or boxes in the attic," said Drew Cameron, one of "Combat Paper's" initiators. "Reclaiming that association of subordination, of warfare and service into something collective and beautiful is our inspiration."

Arendt has yet to complete his undergraduate degree, because he finds it difficult to focus in school.

"It's just hard being in class, listening to people on their cell phones complaining about silly things," he said. "I mean, I'm sitting there looking at my hands, thinking about the things they're capable of. And I can't help but think that human hands weren't meant to do such ugly things. They are capable of making so much beauty."

"I view myself as my primary art form," Arendt said. "I am a vessel."

Walking the Highway of Death

Soldier struggles to cope with aftermath of war



Photo courtesy: Joe Stranski
Joe Stranski on the front lines in Iraq.

CHRISTINA HILL

Between Kuwait and Basra, the Highway of Death eerily lies. Hundreds of Gulf War vehicles line the street, corpses left from the past war still inside.

Alfa Company 1-178 Infantry were working their way to Kuwait when the unit came across the battlegrounds in July 2006. Positioned as lead gunner, Joe Stranski saw the wreckage up front.

The 22-year-old Lombard native was new to Iraq and the experi-

ence of war had never hit harder.

Insurgents along the route noticed the freshness of the unit and shot at them from the roadsides. Stranski immediately realized the reality they had stepped into.

"It was a hell of an entrance," Stranski said.

Always wanting to be part of the Army, Stranski handed his parents the reserves paperwork to sign him up at the age of 17. He spent the summer before his senior year at boot camp in Georgia.

When he returned to high school

for his senior year, Stranski realized his friends looked at him differently.

They did not understand his decision to enlist and became distant. Stranski found others in his school that had also made the choice to enlist early and effortlessly formed bonds with his fellow cadets.

This army camaraderie was enough to make Stranski sure of his decision to enlist.

"When you get to Iraq, it is all about your unit," Stranski said. "You are not fighting for Bush. You



are not fighting for America. You are fighting for the man to the left and right of you... you are there for your buddies."

Stranski trained with his unit for 2½ years just outside of Chicago, but after just a week, he considered them his best friends. Sergeants encouraged the unit to go out to the bars and watch football together to strengthen these bonds.

"If you are not close with your unit, if you do not mesh well with them, you will not be successful over there," Stranski said.

When the infantry unit finishes their training together in Georgia at Fort Benning, they are put through a 14-mile, 16-hour march with their equipment. They finish their walk at Honor Hill, the most sacred spot of the fort. Infantry veterans line the sides and the new members shake each of their hands as they walk up the incline.

They then circle around a bonfire together and each drink a specially mixed beverage. The grog mix is made up of multiple ingredients each with a special meaning to the infantry. The closeness of the en-

tire infantry becomes deeper.

Once Stranski had arrived at the base in Kuwait, these bonds only grew.

Starving for a meal, with only five minutes left before close, Stranski and three of his friends raced to the dining hall. The unit had a long morning during which one of their soldiers had been hit by a bullet. Stranski entered the dining hall, with bloodstains on his pants and an etching of dirt around his eyes from his uniform goggles.

He handed over his ID to the dining hall attendant, anxious for food, and was refused entrance because of his stained ensemble.

Stranski left hungry and vented his frustrations with his squad. They, in turn, expressed their sympathy and shared similar stories.

Stranski returned with his entire squad to Chicago in November 2007 after 18 months of being in Iraq together. He decided to attend school at Wright College for Criminal Justice in hopes of joining the Chicago Police Department after graduation.

The call to return overseas

came again in the middle of October 2008, but this time it was to Afghanistan. Only a few in Stranski's squad volunteered to go back and Army Sgt. Robert Weinger of Round Lake Beach was one of them.

During Weinger's duty in Afghanistan, he encountered a roadside bomb and was killed. The news devastated Stranski and his entire squad.

On his wrist sits a constant memory of his good friend, a silver bracelet with Weinger's name and date of death.

The importance of friendship and camaraderie is one of the most memorable aspects of being at war according to Stranski. The bonds made and the relationships with fellow unit members carry on past the battlegrounds. They are ties that last long after duty is complete.

"Some people think that once you are back home, you are out of the war. They talk about how nice it must be," Stranski said. "But you are still in it even if you are home because your friends are still there and it is still always on your mind."

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-Edward R. Murrow

WAR & PEACE



Waging War on War

Activist breaks law to promote peace

ALYSSE DALESSANDRO

Kathy Kelly, 57, has not paid federal income taxes since 1980 and has spent a year in federal prison. She is the founder of the Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness, which opposes economic sanction laws in Iraq by breaking them.

As a result of its actions in Iraq, the U.S. government gave the organization a \$20,000 fine. In an act showing what Kelly deems a "skewed economic relationship," the organization paid 20,000 in Iraqi dinar (only about \$17). The full fine was never paid.

This type of civil disobedience characterizes Kelly's resistance to the mainstream in order to inspire social change.

"I don't want my life to be a collaborator with the U.S. war-making and policy and the creation of so many unfair relationships

with other countries," she said.

With the sense that war efforts were being broadened, Kelly ended Voices in the Wilderness in August 2005 and began the organization Voices for Creative Nonviolence to use civil obedience to oppose war-making practices.

The office for Voices for Nonviolence is based in the Uptown home of co-coordinators Kelly, Jeff Leys, 45, and Gerald Paoli, 50. With a messy ponytail of long gray, curly hair, Kelly sometimes remains in her pajamas for the afternoon.

"I like the idea, besides not having to get dressed in the morning, of working in the place that I live and working with a community of people that are dedicated to not only ending war but in seeing our own complicity based on lifestyle," Kelly said.

Practicing civil disobedience is part of that lifestyle. Kelly spent

a year in prison for planting corn on nuclear missile silo sites. She recalled that time as one of the most educational experiences of her life.

"I don't want my life to be a collaborator with the U.S. warmaking policy..."

-Kathy Kelly

"I learned how to overcome some of my own fears and anxieties and learned who goes to prison and about the poverty in this country," she said.



Photo courtesy: Kathy Kelly

A Voices in the Wilderness march to oppose war.



MOSAIC 2010

Voices for Creative Nonviolence organizes programming to raise awareness and Chicago's January temperatures are no deterrent for the group. In the 17 days before President Obama's departure for the White House, Voices set up a vigil called Camp Hope in front of his Hyde Park residence. According to Kelly, they intended to remind Obama of promises he made during the campaign and to "not to leave us out in the cold."

Michael McConnell, 62, serves as the regional director for the American Friends Service Committee and partnered with Voices for Camp Hope. He admires Voices' "willingness to take on hardship to make a statement against war."

Voices not only works for peace on U.S. soil, but its members also travel to different countries to understand how those people are affected by war. Kelly traveled to Pakistan with fellow Co-coordinator Dan Pearson, 29, in the summer of 2009.

"I feel like I have a pretty big responsibility to raise my voice about the utter and total dismay



Photo courtesy: Kathy Kelly

Kathy Kelly visits with women in Pakistan.

of what human beings can do to other human beings," Kelly said. "You see children whose bodies are ripped apart and people staring bewildered at their houses and their neighborhoods completely destroyed."

McConnell values Kelly's dedication to educating people about Iraq.

"No one can compare to Kathy's

experience in Iraq," he said. "She is able to bring back the heart and soul of people [and] she gives people a sense of what it's like to live in a war zone."

Although society may not understand Kelly's commitment to civil disobedience, fellow co-coordinator Leys cites the importance of this kind of action for social change.

"We almost never hear about the sharecroppers in the 1920s who were being lynched for standing up for basic human dignity and yet, without those sharecroppers there would have been no basis for Rosa Parks to refuse to move to back of the bus," he said. "Using every non-violent tool at our disposal is how change has always come about in this country."

Although legal, legislative and social barriers may stand in their way, Kelly and Voices for Creative Nonviolence remain faithful to their mission.

"I don't have any doubts where my life should be headed in order to oppose war," Kelly said.



Photo courtesy: Kathy Kelly

Kelly, right, protests military weapons.





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Heavy Medal

Marine reflects on experience of war

ANTHE MITRAKOS

Growing up in a traditional Italian-American family, Joseph Inendino is no soft-shell, and when on September 11, 2001, terrorists compromised the safety of the American people, he wanted to show them who's boss.

"At that moment I wanted to serve my country," he said "I wanted to get them."

A Chicago native residing in Libertyville, Inendino, now 27, was then fresh out of high school. His parents, he recalls, were unhappy with his decision to join the military.

"I had never seen my father cry so much," he said.

Both family and friends shared



Photo courtesy: Joseph Inendino
Inendino and prisoner of war.

a concern for Inendino's safety, considering the timing of his interest in joining the armed forces, but they supported his beliefs and felt a sense of pride.

"A couple of my friends actually died out there...This was the real deal. I am just happy to have both my arms and legs."

-Joseph Inendino

"At first I was shocked but then I realized what it meant to him, and it meant a whole lot," said Niko Gountanis, 26, of Libertyville, who has known Inendino since high school.

Nonetheless, by November 2001, Inendino had enlisted in the Marine Corps, and by November 2005, had served two 6-month terms in Iraq, and one in Afghanistan. He spent a 1 ½ years in Okawana, Japan, and served on a ship off the coast of Korea. His service granted him honors and the title of corporal.

While stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan, his typical day consisted of driving 7-ton trucks, handling 50-caliber machine guns, and "a lot of kicking down doors."

"You're always scared something's going to happen," Inendino said, "but then the adrenaline kicks in and it feels like a rush."

The slight hearing loss he suf-

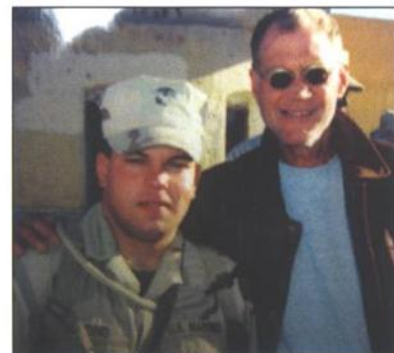


Photo courtesy: Joseph Inendino
Inendino and David Letterman.

fers today takes him back to a terrifying moment he experienced in Afghanistan.

"We were blown up," he said, describing the day when his truck unit ran over a large land mine. On another occasion, one of the trucks he was riding on rolled over, sending Inandino off a steep 40-foot cliff.

"It was dark," he said, "around three or four in the morning, and all we had was night vision goggles."

Inandino suffered a concussion and wrist wounds after tumbling down the cliff side, but those are minor things, he says, compared to what could have happened.

"I'm just happy to have both my arms and legs," he said.

Apart from the life-threatening moments, Inandino described the daily grudge of a soldier's life. "The longest I went without a real shower was one month," he said.

"Our MREs (meals ready to eat) were gross. I would look over to see what the Italians were eating and they had wine. The Australians had beer," said Inandino. "But that's nothing."

Fighting alongside fellow marines, Inandino recalled the serious reality of warfare.

"A couple of my friends actually died out there. This was the real deal," he said "I'm thankful I made it."

Inandino now looks forward to finishing school, which he has not attended in 2½ years. He plans on graduating from the College of Lake County with a bachelor's degree in administration and management.

His service contract may be extended, but Inandino feels confident that we won't have to go back anytime soon.

"I pretty much feel like I did it, so I'm moving on with my life," he said. "And if someone else has to fill my shoes well then that's OK."



Photo by Anthe Mitrakos

Inandino is proud to have served in the armed forces.



Photo courtesy: Joseph Inandino

Inandino passes out candy to Iraqi children.

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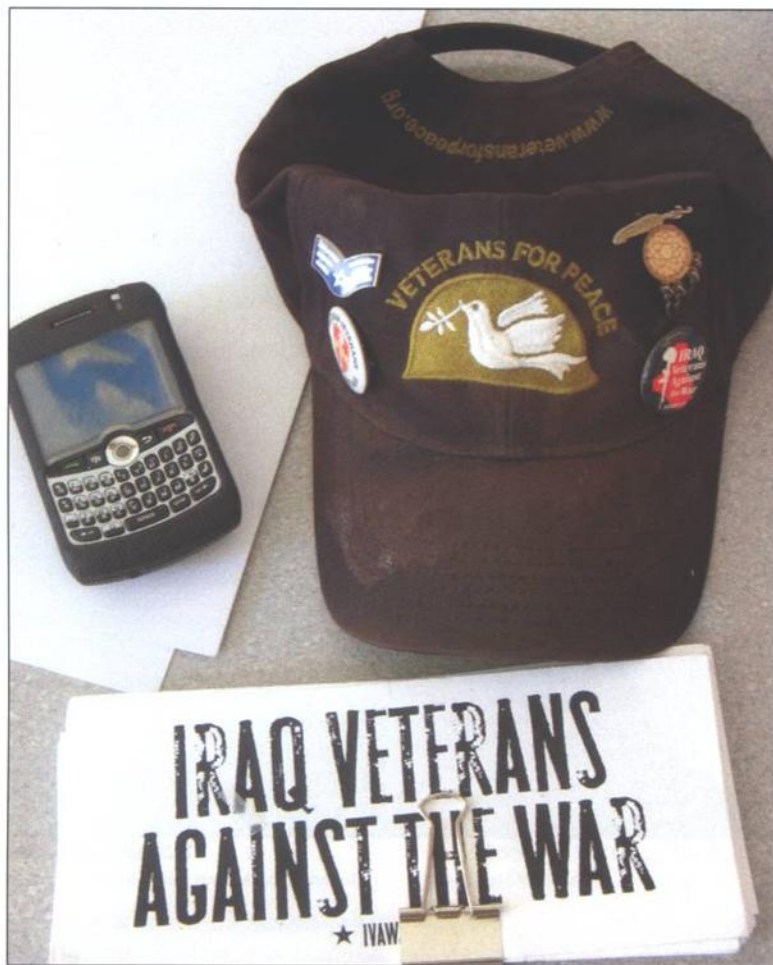
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WAR & PEACE



Vets Fighting for Vets

GI Counselor on-call 24/7 for fellow veterans



Photos by John Buscemi

Left: The tools of a GI counselor's trade.
Above: Iraq Veteran's poster.

JOHN BUSCEMI

Holding his Blackberry to his ear, Ray Parrish is not having an ordinary conversation. He is using his central tool to assist dozens of war veterans who are desperate for help.

Parrish's phone or "hotline," as he calls it, is never turned off or silenced. Stationed in Chicago, he is the Vietnam Veterans Against the War's only GI counselor and receives calls from veterans deal-

ing with post-traumatic stress disorder from around the world.

Parrish, 56, has been counseling vets for 30 years. He began to direct his efforts towards helping veterans from Iraq in 2003 after the first time he saw a young veteran living in a Chicago homeless shelter.

Since then, Iraq Veterans Against the War has been his primary source of former soldiers who need counseling.

"We're going to accomplish our

goal of not creating more disabled veterans and, more importantly, stop the creation of war victims because post-traumatic stress disorder is part of the reason for violence all over the world," Parrish said.

Parrish has been the GI counselor for Vietnam Veterans Against the War for six years, but his experience in helping the mentally impaired and veterans started as an adolescent.

When Parrish was in 7th-grade in Harrisburg, Ill., there was a boy who lived nearby who was not always mentally up to speed with the rest of his classmates, and Parrish looked out for him. "Ray was the protector of someone at a young age," his mother Glenna Lee Parrish, 83, said.

After his father, Chief Master Sgt. Virgil Parrish, finished his second tour in Vietnam, he moved the family to Tachikawa Airfield in To-

kyo, Japan in 1969 where Parrish completed his last 2 1/2 years of high school. He peer counseled other veterans' children and listened to the stories of veterans as he worked with them at the base's warehouse.

This was where he began to believe that the war in Vietnam was based on a lie. This led him to enlist in the Air Force as a way of avoiding combat in Vietnam. He worked as an intelligence analyst for the National Security Agency until he served his time and was discharged in 1976.

Parrish cites the more severe post-traumatic stress disorder of Iraq veterans' as a result of multiple deployments.

He counsels Iraq veterans who constantly deal with the fear of being called back to active duty and avoid having a mailing address so the government cannot mail them their callback letter to Iraq.

"They are waiting for their eight

years to be up before they stick their head up," Parrish said.

Many veterans from the Midwest who are in this situation cannot go to governmental organizations for help, and Parrish's number is the first they call.

Chris Arendt, a 25-year-old veteran from Guantanamo Bay and Midwest regional coordinator for Iraq Veterans Against the War, has worked with Parrish many times.

"He is 100 percent dedicated to the health and well-being of vets," Arendt said. "He is the first point of contact that most Iraq-era veterans have with nongovernmental assistance in the Midwest."

The psychological and financial strains that come with worrying about being deployed again often cause family problems for traumatized veterans.

In October 2009, Parrish received a call from a soldier who, like many other veterans who en-

listed after 9/11, had finished his eight years. The veteran finally felt free to begin the recovery process of going to counseling groups, apply to college and live in a post-war reality.

Some of those young veterans who are now able to live without the fear of being called back co-host Parrish's TV show, Veterans Helping Veterans, which airs at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays. on Chicago Access Network Television.

Eugene Cherry, a 26-year-old former combat medic in Iraq, has dealt with nightmares, thoughts of suicide and much anger. Parrish has been counseling him for three years.

"Ray's been a great inspiration and good friend," Cherry said. "He's really helped me adjust to life after Iraq. He's one of those people who you can call at three in the morning and he'll pick up his phone."

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Navy Seal

Athlete leaves the pool, heads to sea

LAUREN KRAUSE

Zoellick first learned about the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., because he spent his summers there at a water polo training camp. He loved the time he spent there in the pool so much, he decided to enlist in the Navy.

"I remember spending summer there and my friends would say, 'Could you ever be a plebe—a freshman in the military?' I could never do that," Zoellick, 22, said.

But Zoellick, originally from Mokena, Ill., spent the next four years at the academy earning a degree in political science and playing on the water polo team. Zoellick's team qualified into the NCAA water polo finals three out of the four years he was there.

"The most I learned about leadership was in the pool with the team," Zoellick said.

When it came time to choose where he wanted to spend the next five years of mandatory service Zoellick opted for the Navy SEALs program—sea, air, and land forces.

"A lot of the guys on the team went to be a SEAL, every year at least one goes. Being a pilot would be great, but SEALs was playing a more important role," said Zoellick.

Zoellick's father, Roy Zoellick, 49, a project engineer, said that when his son went to college to play water polo, he never thought he would be interested in joining the military.

"We were surprised when he chose SEALs but his system has the mental toughness to handle it; they put the human body through

such vigorous testing, hopefully his system will hold out," Roy said.

Zoellick credits his time spent at the academy as a learning experience that helped him enter into the SEALs program.

"The education surprised me. The mentality is if you're a naval officer you need to know how all this stuff works. It was pretty rigorous. I learned a lot. The basic training was a sprint, the academics were a marathon," Zoellick said.

**"I'll probably
be going to war
one day, but
I know I'll be
ready."**

-Dan Zoellick

Upon graduating in May, Zoellick has been taking Pashto, or Afghani, language classes. He will begin his SEALs training this fall.

The training consists of a year to two years of both vigorous physical and mental tests.

Zoellick says he can handle the strenuous training.

"I love challenges. It feels good and I'm not scared, I know I can do it," Zoellick said.

Zoellick said he has a great family and support system. His girlfriend Mollie Stemper said she worries about Zoellick's safety but knows he can handle the training.

"I think Dan is taking on a big challenge, and he loves physical

and mental challenges. It is really a great fit for him," Stemper, 21, from Minneapolis, said.

Zoellick's father agrees and continues to offer his support.

"We never want our kids to live a dream other than their own. We wanted our kids to blaze their own



Photo courtesy: Dan Zoellick
Navy Seal Dan Zoellick.

trail, that was the support we gave them," Roy said.

As far as his future in the Navy, Zoellick says he can definitely see himself staying and continuing to serve the country.

"Life after training is hard to imagine. Before I joined the academy there was always that thought, 'I'll probably be going to war one day,' Zoellick said. "But, I know I'll be ready."

He compares his time spent training in the SEALs program to his time playing water polo.

"Even when you're done with the training, you're still the fresh-

man and you're on the JV team without playing time," Zoellick said. "Basically, you've got to do your time and gain experience to be a starter."

Despite having a daunting two years ahead of him, Zoellick is focused on what he believes is most important about his service.

"I really feel like I'm doing something and I'm making a difference," Zoellick said. "That I'm different, that there's a higher purpose. You've got to question all the time why people in our government make decisions. Is what you're doing worth it? I think it is."



Photo courtesy: Dan Zoellick
Dan Zoellick meets President Obama.

Zanzibar

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WAR & PEACE



Semi-Tough:

War helps soldier overcome fears

IGA BABINSKA

On a sunny day in Poland a 9-year-old girl, deathly afraid of spiders and mice, was returning home from school.

Since nobody was home, she reached for a key hidden above the doors, in a tiny slit between two bricks. Instead of the cold metal, she felt a little spider move underneath her fingers.

Piercing screams alarmed a railway woman sitting at a nearby station. She grabbed a large bat and came running and prepared to fight, just to find the panicked girl desperately trying to chase away the spider.

Fourteen years later, that same girl, now an American soldier, was sitting in a small room at an Army base near Baghdad. On a summer day she spotted a spider climbing up the wall.

She knew that her roommate, also being afraid of spiders, wouldn't be able to fall asleep with one of them in their room. So, she fearlessly crushed it.

"After returning from Iraq, I fear spiders much less," said Agata Cebula, 23, from Gurnee, a member of military police.

Cebula returned from her year long tour in Iraq in September. She worked there as a military police officer, helping build a jail and taking care of convicts.

She was born and raised in Poland. Along with her mother and a younger brother, she moved to the U.S. in 1997.

Cebula was educated in the northwest suburbs of Chicago and graduated from Vernon Hills High School in 2004. Over the next two

years, she took criminal justice classes at the College of Lake County.

At the age of 20, Cebula started working as a dispatcher at the Mundelein police station after completing a program for future police officers.

"I wanted to be a police officer since I was a little girl," Cebula said. "I started this program at Mundelein police when I was 18. They taught us how to do traffic stops, domestic [battery calls] and write tickets."

Although Cebula enjoyed working at a station and taking 911 calls,

she didn't feel ready to stay. Her co-workers suggested she joined the Army and then come back to work as a policewoman.

"I looked at them and said, 'Me? Army? Are you kidding?'" Cebula said. "I never planned on joining the Army. I always thought it wasn't for me."

However, in January 2007, Cebula enlisted. A couple of months later she went to Missouri to do her 19-week basic training. Later, she was assigned a home base in Fort Polk, La. From there she was deployed to Iraq.

"In the beginning it was very hard for everyone," Cebula said. "During the first weeks there, we were bombarded once a week. Then, it happened once in two weeks. Alarms went off and we had to hide in bunkers."

Once in Iraq, Cebula worked 12-16 hours a day building a jail and transporting Iraqi prisoners from the old facility to the new one.

"During the first missions, the prisoners were calm," Cebula said. "Later, people were much more agitated and violent. They didn't listen to us."

All of the prisoners were Iraqi citizens; a few were educated abroad and spoke English. Some of them were sentenced to prison for filming American convoys, while others were heads of terrorist groups.

"We didn't know who committed what crime," Cebula said. "Sometimes we would get a warning to watch out for someone because they're violent or they bite everyone. However, we treated them all the same."

In addition, Cebula with her unit built schools and water plants. She also trained Iraqi professional offi-



Photo courtesy: Agata Cebula

Agata Cebula poses in an Iraqi palace.

cers to run these buildings.

"We are not in war with Iraqi people but with terrorists who live in Iraq," Cebula said. "We don't really fight anymore. We construct new buildings, do repairs and calm people down. We get ready to leave."

Since the soldiers worked together and spent most of their free time with one another, many of them formed very close bonds.

"We both were deployed together. We were also roommates for four months so we shared a lot. Agata helped me get through some rough times. She's a wonderful person," said Stacey Schell, 22, a military police member from Sharon, Penn.

Cebula's stay in Iraq changed her and made her more open to different things.

"I think she's even more responsible. She wants to help people even more. She also learned to appreciate her family," said her mother, Teresa Parzygnat, 46, of Gurnee, an early education teacher.

Although Cebula is not planning an Army career, she would like to go back to Iraq to help. She fondly remembers the time when, along with her unit, she gave away Beanie Babies to Iraqi children to cheer them up.

"I'm tired of carrying guns. I'd rather dress nicely and finally go out with the girls."

-Agata Cebula

"However you look at it, we help them a lot and I like it," Cebula said. "And when a child smiles at you and says thank you, you get chills down your spine. You feel better because you know you helped someone."

Cebula is now at her home base in Fort Polk, La., finishing her five year service. She is also working on getting her bachelor's degree in criminal justice from an online university and plans to studying photography. Above all though, she wants to have her own family.

"I don't like war and I don't like fighting," Cebula said. "I want to be a mother and I can't imagine myself being an Army mother, always waiting to be deployed."

On a warm day in Poland, small Cebula yet again went outside with her 10 cousins, all boys, to play soccer and climb trees. Her hair was short and she was wearing a simple T-shirt and jeans.

Fourteen years later, on a nice fall afternoon in Gurnee, Cebula was asked by her cousins to go paintballing with them. Painting her nails, she thought of the whole year she spent wearing the hot army uniform and dealing with prisoners.

"I'm tired of carrying guns," she said, smiling. "I'd rather dress nicely and finally go out with the girls."



Photo courtesy: Agata Cebula

Agata Cebula, second from right, poses with fellow soldiers outside a palace in Iraq.



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Inside Abu Ghraib

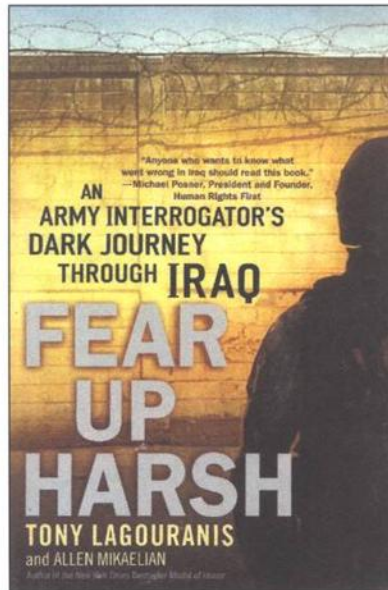
Author Tony Lagouranis discusses book on torture

ADAM DEROSE

Tony Lagouranis served in the U.S. Army from 2001 until 2005. He was stationed in Abu Ghraib when reports of prisoner abuse first surfaced. He also served on a mobile team as an Army interrogator. While Lagouranis did not take part in the Abu Ghraib scandal, he believes he and other interrogators unlawfully abused detainees. Lagouranis, and co-author Allen Mikaelian, wrote *Fear Up Harsh: An Army Interrogator's Dark Journey Through Iraq* about his time in Iraq. He talked to Mosaic about his experiences and what made him decide to write the book.

Q: You've criticized the Bush Administration regarding "legal" interrogation methods. Where do you stand now regarding those methods and the Geneva code?

A: It was a really horrible failure with our leadership. They took away the restrictions we were trained with, to sort of make the rules and the law fuzzy. They deliberately made it unclear what our limits were, and in fact, encouraged us in the abuse of detainees. Not only at the highest levels, coming out of the Pentagon and the White House, but also with the units on the ground. I worked with different units, and if a unit commander said torture was not allowed in the prison or in the field, it didn't happen. There were far more tolerant commanders and abuse always happened in those places.



Photos courtesy: Tony Labouranis

Cover of Tony Labouranis' book.

Q: Can you give an example of when you were encouraged to abuse detainees?

A: They were telling us that Geneva [Convention] didn't apply legally to whom we were talking with. It seemed to be a consistent message. Our leaders encouraged us to use military-working dogs, sleep deprivation, inducing hypothermia, extreme heat, isolation, and stress positions. All the time we believed that what we were doing was legal and sanctioned by the Pentagon and by our rules of engagement.

Q: Can you give an example of something you refused to do?

A: They wanted to hook one of our translators, who was a native Iraqi, to a mock electrocution device and so he would pretend that he was being tortured by electrocution and allow other prisoners to

witness this.

Q: At the time you were in Iraq, how did you feel morally?

A: I think it was designed to alleviate the guilt of the torturer, because I was never asked to strike anybody or break somebody's bones. It was all without marks. If I put somebody in a stress position, it wasn't me causing him pain; it was gravity. I could tell myself that these guys weren't getting any lasting harm from this. But I'm sure they did have lasting psychological affects. You could just see physically the break down, and the mental breakdown of the detainees.

Q: What made you decide to write the book when you got home from Iraq?

A: Think back to 2005, nobody was stepping up and taking responsibility for failures in Iraq. The administration refused to admit any culpability or even admit that mistakes had been made. It was all about bad apples. I felt like someone needed to frame the debate.

Q: Have you seen any impact from the book?

A: A guy in intelligence said that people going through the intelligence school now talk about [the book]. Many of them had read my book, and he said that my book is on the bookshelves at many facilities. It's widely known, and that's enough. At least, if people who are coming in and doing interrogations now are aware of these things. They're going to hold themselves accountable from the start. They're not going to be put in the same position I was.

Dateline: Iraq

Reporter reflects on covering the horrors of war

EMILY JURLINA

On James Janega's first day covering the battle of Fallujah in Iraq for the *Chicago Tribune*, a rocket-propelled grenade landed near where he and a fellow correspondent were interviewing a soldier. Janega was standing near an armored ambulance, which partially shielded him from the shrapnel. His colleague wasn't so lucky.

"[Someone I knew] got blown up right next to me and his blood was in my notebook," Janega, 36, said.

It was November 2004, and this was Janega's second overseas assignment. For the past three years he had been working as a *Tribune* obituary writer. He volunteered to take his first trip to the front lines in 2003 to cover the conflict and chaos in the Middle East.

Indeed, it's a world that was a far cry from Janega's upbringing in the suburbs of Chicago's North Shore where he and his younger sister, Jessica, attended New Trier High School. The son of a former Marine turned lawyer, Janega spent what he refers to as his "formative" years at Camp Lejeune, near Jacksonville, N.C. until his father was discharged and moved the family to Wilmette, a Chicago suburb.

It's a world Janega didn't think he'd ever see when he enrolled at Northern Illinois University as a saxophone performance major. Janega considers his switch to journalism a "complete accident," the result of a suggestion from his roommate.

Janega graduated from NIU in 1995. In 1996 he married his college girlfriend, Sarah Brady, and



Artwork by Anthe Mitrokos

the couple moved to Chicago where Janega worked at the City News Bureau until it folded in 1999.

One week after City News closed, Janega started working at the *Chicago Tribune* as a one-year resident and was officially brought on as staff obituary writer in January 2000.

**"If you're dead,
the story will
not be told."**

-James Janega

In 2002, when the first murmurings of a potential Middle Eastern invasion began, Janega set to work calling different armed forces'

bases finding out if troops were getting ready to be deployed. He credits this initiative for getting him his first correspondent job.

Janega's first trip overseas was to Bahrain in February 2002. In March 2003 he got the first byline of the war in the *Chicago Tribune*, covering an air assault over Kuwait City. It is a night he won't soon forget.

"It was like the last scene from *Star Wars*. There was a whole different vibe in the room with everyone watching the raids going on," Janega said. "You could almost hear hair going up on the backs of everyone's necks. No one was joking and everyone was really serious. It was just surreal see to that."

In 2006 Janega and his wife had a daughter, Lillian. Since her birth Janega has gone overseas less



frequently. His last trip was to Afghanistan in July.

The frequent trips cause Janega's wife, Sarah, to worry, but she knows that stories he reports need to be told.

“For the first time there is no immunity for journalists [covering war]... You are in fact hunted.”

-James Janega

“I'm not the kind of person who frets and worries over big things that are out of my control; I think it's a waste of energy,” Sarah said. “But now that we have a child, and I know how maddeningly hard it is

to parent her by myself, I am not as nonchalant about the prospect of more trips. I accept them, and I'm proud of him for going there to help tell those stories, and I still believe it's useless to worry, but there is a small catch in the back of my heart at the possibility of the big ‘what if.’”

Though Janega says he does not suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, he admits that what he witnessed in the Middle East have left an indelible impression on him.

“We all saw some horrible things. It was terrible, unbelievable really. I saw dogs fighting over a human forearm in Fallujah and developed a very deep hatred for blue bottle flies after seeing them incubating on human corpses. I'll never be the same again after that,” Janega said.

But it's a job someone must do.

“If you're dead, the story will not be told,” Janega said, adding that

the rules for war correspondents have changed now, making it more dangerous than ever for them to report. “For the first time there is no immunity for journalists [covering war]. The objectivity that you are working for is not presumed on the part of the locals and you are in fact hunted.”

Spending so much time amidst the harsh realities of the Middle East has left Janega with no illusions about war.

“I know what it's like to have friends who are kidnapped. I know what it's like to have people who were sources of mine... be killed,” he said. “I was proud of some of my reporting... that gave a clear-eyed look at the way things really were when a different picture was being painted in Washington [D.C.]. It was a critical mass of those types of stories that moved public opinion but I was part of that. I felt very proud to be part of that.”



Photo courtesy: Chicago Tribune

Chicago Tribune reporter James Janega (left) reports from Afghanistan.

WAR & PEACE



One-Man Army

Loyola ROTC leader enlists his wisdom

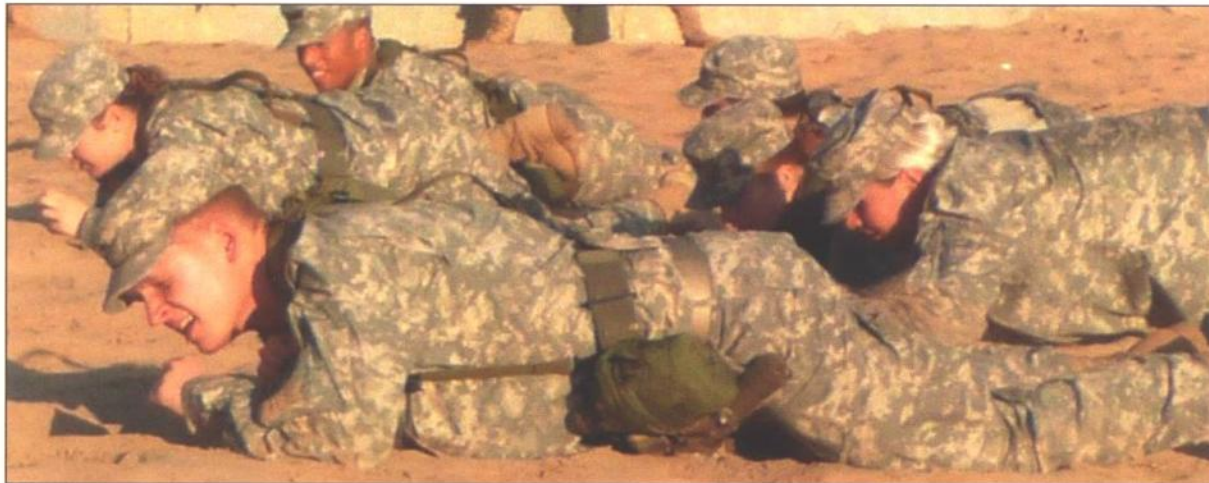


Photo by Meg Mathis

Thomas MacMillin trains with the Loyola University Chicago ROTC.

MEG MATHIS

Wearing a gray sweat suit, Thomas MacMillin could blend in with the thousands of people who file through Rogers Park.

However, this wardrobe choice provides him with a different sort of camouflage.

After all, any other day, Maj. Thomas MacMillin, 37, can most likely be spotted in an army uniform that helps him stand out at Loyola University Chicago's Lake Shore Campus.

"There are a lot of people [who] say 'thank you' and things like that, so it's nice," MacMillin, a native of suburban Northbrook, said of his otherwise daily khaki and green duds. "I feel proud."

Pride has been a reoccurring theme throughout MacMillin's life. Following his graduation in 1990 from Glenbrook North High School, MacMillin made the decision to enlist in the U.S. Army.

"It was always something that interested me," MacMillin said of his

decision to join the army. "My dad was a major in the reserves before I was born . . . and, of course it was going to pay for school."

He spent two years driving an M1A1 Abrams tank before enrolling at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During his senior year, MacMillin realized that the university's school colors, orange and blue, could really complement camouflage, so he joined the University's ROTC program. He later commissioned as a second lieutenant and reinstated his army career as an armor officer.

MacMillin describes the year he spent in Iraq in 2005 simply by saying, "It was hot, it smelled and things went, 'boom.'"

A matter-of-fact MacMillin characterized his tenure in Iraq as "fairly calm."

"I didn't lose any of my soldiers which is very fortunate. My good friend, who was the other company commander in our battalion, lost a handful of soldiers," MacMillin said, his voice beginning to waver.



Photo by Meg Mathis

Thomas MacMillin

He paused for a moment, looking downward.

Looking up, MacMillin said, "I think what we did was pretty important, too. For about a month and a half while I was in command, we secured a water treatment plant which supplied about two-thirds or maybe a half of the water supply to that area," MacMillin said, eyeing the tank renderings that line the walls of his office.

"It's a pretty amazing machine," MacMillin said of the 70-ton M1A1 Abrams in which he has spent a better part of his career.

"He sets the path, and we know what we need to do from there."

-Thomas Pina

"[The tank] can go well over 40 mph, it can shoot on the move [and] it can gauge targets out to six kilometers," he added.

What excites MacMillin more than driving tanks is working with up-and-comers in Loyola's Army ROTC program, which was established in 1947. As assistant professor of Military Science, MacMillin works alongside Master Sgt. Thomas Pina to train future army leaders.

Pina, 50, enjoys working with MacMillin, who he describes as a "levelheaded, straightforward individual."

"He sets the path, and we know what we need to do from there," said Pina, a native of Schaumburg.

Both MacMillin and Pina work closely with the 36 cadets who come from Loyola, Northeastern Illinois University, North Park University and Northwestern University.

Lieutenant Scott Tuttle, 23,

is one of those cadets. He went through Loyola's Army ROTC program while as student at Northwestern University.

"Ours is a mentoring and personal relationship," Tuttle, a Sheboygan, Wisc. native, said of his experience with MacMillin, whom he refers to as "Major Mac."

"He's imparting a lot of the wisdom to us, and at the same time he's a really friendly guy."

MacMillin has carved a career from his decision-making skills. Preparing his students for life in such places in Iraq and Afghanistan comes naturally.

"We try to give them as realistic a training as possible within the realm of what we have available," MacMillin said. "A lot of them signed up after 9/11, so they know what they're getting into."



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Seeking Refuge

Organization reaches out to help Iraqi refugees



Photo courtesy: Code Pink

Members of Code Pink protesting the war in Afghanistan.

MELISSA WEINMANN

Imagine you are forced to leave your home and move to a foreign country where barely anyone speaks your language. Imagine that you only have enough money with you to cover living expenses for two months. Imagine that some citizens are prejudiced against your race, making it difficult to find a job.

This is reality for many Iraqi refugees living in Chicago.

"We got a call once about an Iraqi refugee family who had just come from Syria with no clothes, not anything... We decided that we needed to do something more to help more people," said Julia Field, 45, executive director of Refugee Center for Hope (ReaCH) in Chicago.

Originally a co-coordinator in national anti-war group CodePINK, Field began ReaCH in 2009 to respond to many refugees who were in desperate situations. ReaCH works for and with Iraqi refugees to help them earn money or learn skills that will help them in the business world.

After spending most of her childhood life traveling, Field became exposed to different situations that inspired her work in human rights.

"I always traveled with an eye towards not just doing touristy things, but seeing local people," Field said.

After traveling around the continental U.S., she went to Canada, Thailand, China and Mexico.

"That was my first view of real world poverty," Field said, referring to the stark contrast between

the resort area and the plastic or tin huts she saw on the streets in Mexico during the 1980s, when she was in her 20s.

When she began her work with CodePINK in late 2004, Field had the idea for an organization to further assist Iraqi refugees after their move to the U.S. The resettlement agencies leave the refugees with only two or three months rent, usually underestimating the cost, she said. The refugees often lack proper skills to obtain a job, yet they do not have the resources to go to school either. She said the agencies provide "run down" apartments.

"I consider it criminal how the U.S. Government treats refugees," Field said.

Field began selling holiday greeting cards with original Iraqi art

for \$15 each, giving all profits back to the refugees. She also collected food, dishes and clothes to give to refugee families in need. After the success of both programs, Field expanded her work by creating the organization ReaCH.

Field met Fatima (who prefers to keep her last name private due to dangerous circumstances) through a mutual friend who worked in another activist group, Voices for Creative Non-Violence. While Fatima, 40, needs one more level of English to continue working on her degree, Field decided to help her get work. With experience as a professor at the University of Baghdad for nine years, Fatima honed her abilities to teach Arabic classes through the organization.

"It's been a big, big help for me, giving me a chance to teach Arabic classes," Fatima said.

Field explained that there are two money tracks for the refugees. The "fast cash" track, comprised of selling homemade trellises, plants and clothing, allows the families to get money in short-term projects.



Photo courtesy: Code Pink

Code Pink protestors in Washington D.C.

refugees, and locals (in Chicago and Evanston) hire them to cook a meal, paying by the hour. Each session can pay around \$70 per cook. The cooks reimburse Field for the supplies, keeping the rest.

The other is the "teach a man to fish" track, as Field calls it, that

computer abilities. The program they use, Joomla!, trains them on basic computer skills for Web site building. After the training, other non-profits hire them for \$25 an hour.

Farooq Abraham, 24, is now on his third paying project after training with Joomla!.

"I felt I had the skills and knowledge, but ReaCH helped me manage them," Abraham said.

Despite all the help ReaCH has provided, Abraham believes with a little assistance from other groups, it could do more.

"I notice the situation with the financial crisis and how it impacts the refugee agents and organizations, but they could do better if they got help from others," Abraham said.

"The only thing anyone ever wanted was work. We knew we'd have a difficult time with this," Field said.

Despite the obstacles, the organization has been a success.

"When I see money in people's hands," Field said, "that's when I can tell I'm making a difference."

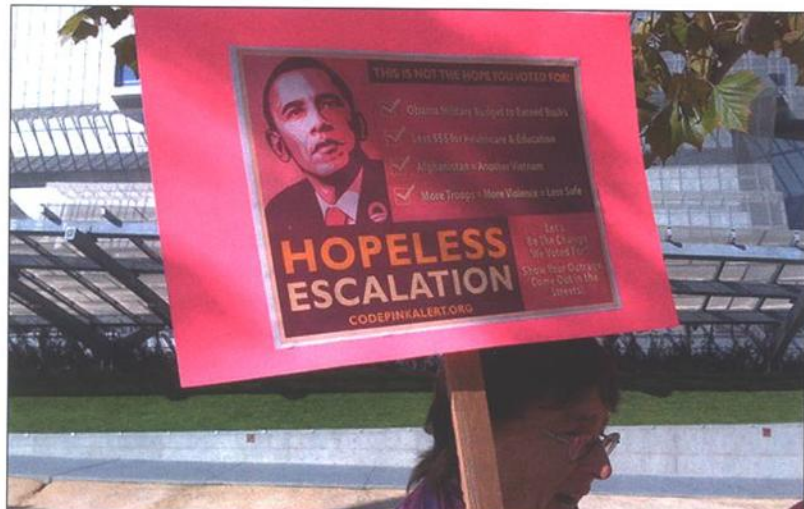


Photo courtesy: Code Pink

A Code Pink protestor expresses anti-war sentiment.

Another project in this track is a chef-for-hire program, where Field purchases cooking supplies for the

focuses on a slower paced skill-building process that eventually leads the person to improve their



Witness to War

Ron Haviv Discusses His War Photography

JAKE GILES

When photojournalist Ron Haviv closes his eyes, you have to wonder what images he sees. Maybe it's the final facial expression of a helpless civilian as he meets the bottom of the enemy's boot. Perhaps Haviv smiles as he thinks about people working to put back the pieces of their life after an attack. Whatever the case, Haviv is responsible for some of the most heart-wrenching and inspiring conflict photographs of the past decade.

After getting his bachelor's degree in journalism at New York University, Haviv took unpaid photography jobs until his talents were called upon to cover the 1989 Panama elections. The photograph he took of the Panamanian Vice-President Guillermo Ford made the covers of Newsweek and Time magazine. Since then, the award-winning photojournalist has co-founded VII Photo Agency and published collections of his work. Haviv's war photography recently was displayed as part of a Red Cross exhibit at Loyola University Chicago. He sat down with *Mosaic* to discuss his work and how war impacts photojournalism, as well as the rest of the world.



Q: What led you to choose the devastation of war as a topic?

A: My early experiences in Panama showed me that the civilians at the front of conflict are most often ignored, no matter what side they're on. Their experiences often lead the next generation to continue the fighting. It is extremely important for people to galvanize and to protect these people, not only to help them in the immediate sense, but to stop the cycle of war.

Q: What, in your opinion, is the importance of documenting war and brutality?

A: I've had the unfortunate distinction of photographing three different genocides – Bosnia, Darfur, Rwanda – and more often than not, the photographs don't have the effect the photographer desires. They become a body of evidence and documents that exist to hold people accountable. Because these genocides are happening live on television, they also hold leaders of the West accountable. People know what's going on, and now no one has the excuse to say, "We didn't know."

Q: How do you view your role as journalist within the politics of war?

A: My goal is to document what I'm seeing and be fair from all sides, to be objective. It's my job and my responsibility as the eyes of the public to photograph these things and show the world what's going on.



Photo courtesy: Clay Enos
Ron Haviv pictured above.

Q: What have you learned about conflict during your travels and experiences?

A: One of the things I've learned is that all of these conflicts, whether it be Rwanda, Asia, Afghanistan, Russia – the themes are very universal and very human. Something that is both heartbreaking but also promising is that we are all very close together, and solutions can be made by understanding the person you're fighting against is very much like you. Their main concerns are about their family, economic

security. If people could come to a common understanding, a lot of these conflicts could be prevented.

Q: What coping methods do you use after witnessing tragedy firsthand?

A: I don't think you can completely separate the personal from the professional. It's important to have interactions with what you're feeling so you don't become emotionally overwhelmed in terms of the situation. However, you also need to make sure that there is some emotion. It's a matter of finding a balance.

Q: What advice would you give to young people interested in your particular area of photojournalism?

A: Journalists have died in the last 10 years during the Balkan conflict, in Iraq, and around the world, so you don't go rushing to the front line. The most impactful and important pictures happen when the guns are being fired. Recently, the Red Cross reunited a family separated during the Rwanda conflict. Those are stories people identify with and still have an understanding of the conflict that goes on. As a journalist, you have to find different way of telling the same story to get people to pay

attention to it.

Q: Is there a certain photograph during your career you've taken that stands out?

A: The photograph recently from Darfur of the three girls going out to pick firewood is one; people seemed to really resonate with it. It's important to have your work humanize the conflict. That's one of reasons why the exhibit at Loyola is so important. Taking photographs beyond the headlines to make people understand that even when the headlines are gone, the effects of war continue. These people are human beings just like you and I.



Photo courtesy: Ron Haviv/VII www.viipphoto.com

Haviv's photos captured some of war's atrocities in Bosnia.

WAR & PEACE



Iraq's Dark History

Human rights victims give testimony to terror

CHELSIA MARCIUS

When scores of Iraqi interviewers set out four years ago to gather testimonies of human rights abuses, they had no idea if survivors would talk about murder, sexual violence and torture.

"It's not entirely clear why a Shi'a woman from the same tribe as the interviewer would necessarily want to speak about being raped," said project coordinator Daniel Rothenberg, managing director of International Projects at DePaul University. "It's not clear why she would want to speak when the information could conceivably get out to people she knows."

Yet nearly 9,000 Iraqis did talk to dozens of interviewers for the Iraq History Project, an Iraq-based initiative supervised by Chicago's DePaul University to document human rights violations between 1968 and 2007.

The project is one of the largest independent human rights data collections worldwide and is now available online at www.iqhp.org.

Rothenberg said gathering testimonies is essential to understand the impact of Dictator Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime and that violence continues post-U.S. invasion.

"One thing our project shows is that the vast majority of violations by the state were committed by a small number of state actors," he said.

Today a multiplicity of parties is now responsible, he said, including criminal gangs, al-Qaida terrorists, Sunni or Shi'a militias and even U.S. and coalition forces.

"People often don't know who the perpetrators are [anymore],

whereas if they were hauled into the security director [during Ba'athist control], there was no question," Rothenberg said.

Jasim, whose name has been changed by the Iraq History Project, was appointed to a security directorate Ba'athist government agency in 1977.

Desperately in search of work to provide shelter for his family, Jasim said the directorate created a torturer out of him in a matter of weeks.

"[An] officer ordered me to torture a man who was a member of the insurgents," he said. "The officer asked me to use electricity. I connected his penis to very high voltage. When he fainted, I disconnected the wires and he urinated. His urine was mixed with blood."

"I saw that I had become addicted to violence [and] I spent my nights crying for what I did."

While Iraqis may no longer have to fear detention, displacement, massacre and rape associated with the previous regime said project member Sami Waseem, Ph.D., a new source of terror has taken its place, one of ransom, beheadings, car bombs and kidnappings.

To chronicle both the systematic repression and the erratic abuses that followed, he said, interviewers must listen to victims tell complex, appalling narratives of personal experience.

Known as an oral history approach to historical documentation, the methodology is a widely



Photo courtesy: Sam Waseem

One Iraqi being interviewed for the Iraq History project.

accepted practice to record past atrocities according to David Scheffer, director at the Center for International Human Rights at Northwestern University's School of Law.

"This is sometimes the only accurate way to obtain evidence as victims will not be in a position to record their experiences in writing," he said. "[They] will often demonstrate their emotional reaction to their past far more comprehensively with a recorded oral testimony."

Documentation of abuses from 1968 to 2003 is now available online, Rothenberg said, but how Americans will respond to the project's most recent findings remains uncertain.

"As for the release of the material to the larger world, we'll see what happens," he said. "Americans still have not acknowledged the severe suffering of Iraqis. And I think we should. Not just to feel bad, I don't think that's the point. When you get engaged in a country with that level of intensity it's important to know as much as possible of what's happening there and to respect suffering of its people."



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Young Warrior

Teen a veteran of war

LAURA BRACHMANSKI

A war zone is a place that turns old men older, and teaches lessons that people would never learn back home. It's a place that makes the even the bravest quiver. But for 17-year-old Christopher Warren, it's just another day on the job.

The Roselle teenager went through two tours in Iraq and will return for two more tours serving with the Naval Special Forces 101st Engineer Battalion. Although undoubtedly young, his commanding officers considered him one of the most advanced members on his team.

"I'm all about the military. I love it," Warren said. "Kids in high school made fun of me, but I don't really care because most of the people today don't respect the military."

Currently a student at ITT Technical Institute, Warren began his military career after enlisting in a training program at Schaumburg Airport when he was 16. He then was stationed at the McGuire Air force Base in New Jersey where he still continues to train, forcing him to take time off school and work.

After a special request from a captain of the Naval Special Forces and a parental waiver form, Warren was on his way to a war zone.

Coming from a military family with a strong knowledge of military history, Warren had some sense of what to expect from his first tour. His uncle was killed eight years ago in Iraq while serving in the Army. But nothing could prepare him for what he would experience.

During a training activity in the

desert with the rest of his team, Warren was shot on the left side of his chest, just under his heart, when a group of insurgents started attacking. The soldiers immediately went into active fire until finally moving into a safe zone. There were some fatalities and many injuries.

It took more than 11 hours to complete the surgery, which involved a plastic surgeon removing skin from a cadaver and placing it over the wound.

Warren finished his last few weeks of training and returned home where he recovered for 10 months.

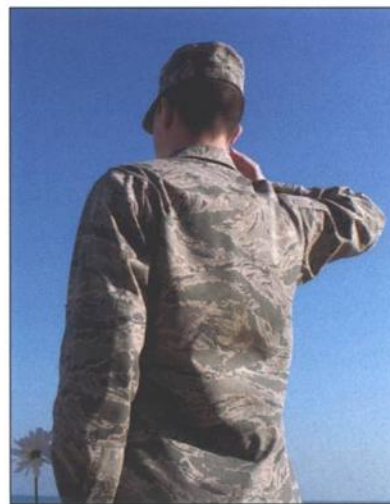
"The most traumatizing thing wasn't being shot or seeing people getting torn up by bullets and bombs," Warren said. "It was the little 6-year-olds carrying around AK-47s and shooting American soldiers."

After returning home from his first tour, which lasted from March to July 2008, Warren would wake up in the middle of the night with cold sweats, sometimes screaming. He was diagnosed with insomnia and at one time went five days without sleep.

Despite what happened to him and what he saw on his first tour, Warren was more than willing to return.

"I was one of the only soldiers there who had no problem being there," Warren said. "But it made it a lot more difficult knowing that I already got shot."

Luckily, Warren was not injured during his second tour in Iraq, which lasted from November 2008 to July 2009. He spent most of his time traveling and raiding homes



Illustrative photo by Cassie Gonzales

in search of potential threats, spending no more than a day and a half at each location.

"When we were traveling through the towns, most of the people were happy to see us because they thought we would save them," Warren said. "Ninety percent were happy."

During moments of free time, Warren and his comrades would play soccer with the Iraqi children.

Warren is scheduled to return to Iraq this November. Despite all the optimistic talk of withdrawing troops, he knows an end is nowhere in sight.

"The media creates a false hope that the troops are coming home," Warren said. "But once we're done with tours in Iraq, we'll get stationed in Afghanistan since that's the next target."

Warren strives to lead a normal life and intends on keeping the military a large part of it.

"I'll be in the military until I'm about 30 or 40," Warren said. "I don't plan on leaving until they kick me out."





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