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January 18, 2005

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I WANT YOU

by [Christina Attardo](#) January 18, 2005

You are the 98 person to read this article.

I suppose I dug my own grave here. I have stigmatized myself as "that girl who only dates West Point guys."

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Not true. I only went out with about three of them, I swear.

That is beside the point. With 150,000 active duty soldiers currently in Iraq, what is more important to know about our troops is what it means to be one...not what it's like to date one.

My ties to the military far outreach how dashing they look in their dress uniforms. I have quite a few friends - yes, just friends - who serve our country with extreme pride and self-sacrifice. There is an entirely separate advantage to knowing so many of these soldiers. Talking to them is literally hearing about history as it is being made. The political livewire in me is simply fascinated by the evolution of our military in both form and function.

Our country also happens to be in the midst of a war. It is our right to know what is being accomplished in the name of every soldier who has given their life since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The goings-on in Iraq have been both controversial and costly since the first troops rolled in nearly two years ago. Particularly after the offensive to retake Fallujah, the number of US casualties has continued to climb - with the sum total exceeding 1360 soldiers.

That is not counting injuries. That is not counting the young men and women who will never be the same again.

I know this is Hoboken and not Fort Benning, and many here have no connection to anyone overseas. But this is our world, our times. And these are the men and women

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The Why Chromosome

The I's Have It

Jan 14, 2005

Some readers complain that Joe Concha doesn't write enough about the shore scene or the technicalities of relationships that singles, and those going steady, experience. So in an...[more](#)

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Jan 01, 2005

New Years Eve



making history in both. There are so many soldiers, so many experiences, so many stories...

They are, quite simply, connected to us all.

One such soldier currently on the front lines is Brian, a Sergeant in the US Army. This is his fourth trip to the Middle East and second tour in Iraq since the beginning of OIF.

To me, Brian is not a nameless, faceless soldier we think about when we see a yellow "Support Our Troops" ribbon. He is a real person - a typical guy who loves baseball and travel and his family. He has the same dreams of greatness for his future that we all do - only his cannot be realized until he returns home from war.

All those images we see on television are Brian's every day reality in what he calls "the sandbox."

"When I am asked what it's like over here, a couple thoughts come to mind. First thought is that it sucks. No friends, no family, no freedom to do even just the little things that you get to back home. It's dangerous because we are getting mortars fired at us every day and we get shot at all the time. The morale of the soldiers varies among units over here. For the most part, I would say it is pretty decent. It really depends on how your chain of command treats you and how they are about keeping you informed.

"From being here last time and having the opportunity to go on patrols downtown and around the city and see all the positive things we have done, then I say it is worth it. I have seen first hand the help and the freedom we are giving these people. Most are glad that we are here and happy Saddam is out of power.

"I remember clearly going to one dance school that used to be a nice building, but they had to close after insurgents bombed it. Well when I was there it had just re-opened and that was because of the funding and support we gave them to get it up and running again. There are countless projects like that going on all over the city. We are not only down here patrolling the streets as security, but we are also helping to rebuild the city that had been destroyed over the years. Most people treat us like celebrities when we are passing by - waving and wanting to shake our hands, saying thank you for what we have done."

While serving in the Army is a tremendous part of Brian's world, the true love of his life is his two-year-old little girl. He talks about her with such pride and animation that you can almost hear her sweet laughter in the background.

"It's funny that no matter how bad my day could have gone or how sick I may be feeling, just the sound of her voice alone makes everything go away. I was getting out the pictures that I brought of her so that I could put them up in my room here, and I just couldn't stop smiling."

Brian shipped presents home to his daughter for Christmas, but was not there to see her open them. His job in this war keeps him away from the most precious thing in his life. His daughter is constantly on the move, getting bigger, and learning all sorts of new things. And Brian, thousands of miles away, is missing out on so many of these moments that can never be recaptured.

Yet he continues to stand behind our country and willingly fulfill his duty to its military.

"I have a little girl back home and being here takes me away from her and puts me in harms way with the potential of her not having a father when she grows up. But even though I am a father, son, brother and friend, I am still a soldier and I chose to be that.

"It makes me damn proud to say that I am soldier. I know deep down that I am doing a great thing. The last time I came here I volunteered to go with another unit because they needed the people. This time I was asked if I wanted to stay back, and I told my commander that if my soldiers were going then I was, too. There was no way that my unit was going to deploy over here and not have me there with them helping in any way I can.

"It's my job."

I have the great fortune of keeping in daily contact with Brian through this wonderful technology called email. Not long ago, however, a stretch of a few days went by where I did not hear from him at all. Not a big deal, considering he is in the middle of fighting a war. Yet a very big deal, considering he is in the middle of fighting a war.

Sure enough, I got a note from Brian shortly thereafter stating that his convoy had been hit by a roadside bomb. No one had been injured. I was taken by the calm demeanor in which Brian informed everyone that he had almost made the news - as though it was just another day in the sandbox.

Actually, that's precisely what it was. And it is a frightening reality that our soldiers never know what each new day will bring.

I do not want Brian's little girl growing up without a father, either.

Elections in the free Iraqi state are slated for January 30, and the US is in the process of sending 12,000 additional troops to prepare for an increase in violence. Thirty five thousand will be patrolling the streets of Baghdad on Election Day, of which Brian may likely be one.

There will be backlash. There will be insurgents blowing up Improvised Explosive Devices. There will be suicide bombers blowing up themselves and anyone within range they can take down with them.

There will be more lives lost too soon.

One thing that continually strikes me about the military personnel in Iraq is how young so many of these troops are. Nineteen and twenty-year-olds who have barely begun their lives are putting them on the line. Far too many have already sacrificed them in the name of freedom.

From a political standpoint, there are numerous opinions justifying why the current administration decided to go into Iraq - and just as many opinions denouncing that choice. Regardless of what you feel about the war, regardless in what direction you lean politically, there are men and women out there supporting your right to do that.

They are not asking for gratitude. They are not asking for glory.

For them, it is their duty.

For me, it gives me the opportunity to go on Hoboken.com and write whatever is in my thoughts.

For you, it allows you to read and believe whatever your heart and mind tells you is right.

Our military is overflowing with stories of troops like Brian. They are the heroes who stand up for us all without hesitation; the heroes who defend what it means for us to call this great country our home.

Come home safe, soldier. Your daughter is waiting for you.

If you would like to help those who fight for our freedom, click on www.ansoldier.com to find out how to support a military unit in Iraq with care packages from home.

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