

Drumming, vibrance defined lost soldier's life, character

I wrote this column to honor a good friend of mine: 21-year-old Travis Bradach-Nall of Portland, a U.S. Marine who died in Iraq July 1, 2003.



Ali Shaughnessy
Blond on blonde

When I first sat down at the computer to compose a symphony of words that would flow together in perfect harmony and tell the world who Travis was, I found myself at a loss. It took me a long time to realize why: Travis' story can't be told through a symphony. It can, however, be told through a drum line.

Travis had a passion for drums, which in turn led to his involvement with the high school drum line.

Within a drum line there are many people playing different drums to create a rhythm, including the underlying thump of the base drum, the filling pulse of the tom-tom drum and the driving beat of the snare drum.

Those three drums not only helped create the music in football games and parades; they also created the music of Travis's life.

The base drum, steady and strong, is representative of Travis's love for life. Whether he showed it by blowing up firecrackers at 4 a.m. or by giving bear hugs to his friends, the constant beat of Travis's heart will always re-

mind me to love life the way he did. It was because of his big heart that Travis chose to stay in Iraq — Travis had the opportunity to return home after major combat ended May 1. His love and compassion compelled him to remain in a foreign country and help protect the Iraqi citizens. It also compelled him to volunteer for one of the most dangerous missions: land mine excavation.

Travis's life was also filled with hundreds of stories, the same way a tom-tom will fill a drum line with hundreds of notes. Some of the stories are funny, some nostalgic. But each one gives Travis's life a little more "oomph."

Even though I only knew Travis for six years, he filled my life with more memorable moments than I know how to describe. One of my favorite Travis moments was when he showed up to his senior prom in his shorts, tank top and Hawaiian shirt. He decided it was pointless to rent a tuxedo, so he went as himself and had more fun than I thought possible. Another time, he came running into our choir class and yelled at the top of his lungs, "I got a tattoo!"

Many drum lines have more than one snare drum, just as Travis had more than one driving force. He was driven by his family, by the Marines, by his love for drumming and by his love for tattoos.

It isn't until the three different drums of Travis's life are brought together that a true beat for him emerges. That beat shows Travis to be kind and compassionate, mischievous and creative, brave and noble. But above all, the beat that played in Travis's life was a beat of love.

In the six years that I knew Travis, the most important lesson he taught me was to smile. To smile at life, to embrace it and to love it. And so, Travis, as I finish this column there's one thing I want you to know: I'm smiling.

Ali Shaughnessy is a freelance reporter for the Emerald. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Even if U.S. administration lied, America still freed Iraqi populace

I've been breaking my anti-consumerist ethics as of late with all the tissue I've been using, drying my tears for the crushing defeat of Saddam Hussein. I lay awake at night staring at the glow-in-the-dark-dots that the former tenant of my apartment painted on the ceiling, asking why our president had to overthrow a sovereign foreign government that posed no threat to the United States.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Sure, Hussein ran a brutal dictatorship, committed acts of genocide on numerous occasions, invaded another country, brutally crushed a few revolts, buried people in mass graves and suppressed bread crumb freedoms — oh, I mean civil liberties — but he didn't deserve to be overthrown by the imperialist beast.

The people were perfectly capable of carrying out a successful revolt against him, without U.S. intervention. OK, you got me, that's bogus. If the people of Iraq would have risen up, they would have been stomped in the ground and buried in mass graves. What if they succeeded? Total chaos may have erupted — with Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites all possibly waging a bloody civil war to gain power and settle old scores — and possibly more may have died in that uprising than Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Another reason I'm saddened by the war is the loss of American lives: 220 dead so far, according to the U.S. Department of Defense. Sure, it's probably the same percentage who would have died to car accidents, gun shots or various other non-combat deaths if they were here at home, but they should be dying here, not there. As for Iraqi

deaths, an equal or greater number may have been killed in an Iraqi uprising against Saddam, but I'd prefer they die in the glory of revolution.

But to break from sarcasm, let's go with a worst-case scenario and say that Bush and the rest of the administration lied, used bogus intelligence and waged an imperialist oil war. Fewer Iraqis died than if there were a real revolt against Hussein, fewer or the same number of soldiers would be dying if they were average civilians in the U.S. population, and a brutal — if not dead — dictator is at least ousted. Iraqi citizens no longer have to be ground under Hussein's heel (although they have a foreign army occupying their country, which is an issue for next time). Boo hoo, let me get a tissue.

Lucas Szabo is a junior majoring in political science.

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