

Soldiers’ sacrifices not in vain

Would you care to guess who said this: “To the courageous men and women of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, who have changed the city of Tall Afar (Iraq) from a ghost town, in which terrorists spread death and destruction, to a secure city flourishing with life?”

Is this an excerpt from a Pentagon or presidential citation? Nope.

“To the lion-hearts who liberated our city from the grasp of terrorists who were beheading men, women and children in the streets for many months.” Was that on a plaque from the local Kiwanis Club? Wrong again.

“To those who spread smiles on the faces of our children and gave us restored hope, through their personal sacrifice and brave fighting, and gave new life to the city after hopelessness darkened our days and stole our confidence in our ability to reestablish our city.”

Give up? That is a letter from the mayor of Tall Afar in the Iraqi province of Nineveh. Mayor Najim Abdullah Abid Al-Jubouri wrote it to express his gratitude to American soldiers. Chances are you have not read this letter. I have only found it in a few small-circulation U.S. newspapers. It certainly conveys an impression opposite what much of the mainstream media and some politicians have been telling us.

Tall Afar was the main base of operations for the terrorists Abu Musab al-Zar-qawi. The mayor says his city was held hostage by al-Zarqawi. “Our schools, governmental services, businesses and offices were closed. Our streets were silent, and no one dared to walk them. Our people were barricaded in their homes out of fear; death awaited them around every corner. Terrorists occupied and controlled the only hospital in the city. Their savagery reached such a level that they stuffed the corpses of children with explosives and tossed them into the streets in order to kill grieving parents attempting to retrieve the bodies of their young.”

The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) arrived in Iraq in 2003 and began attacking insurgents in Fallujah. Last year, they went back for a second tour, this time in Tall Afar. The mayor’s letters sums up the result: “This was the situation of our city until God prepared and delivered ... the courageous soldiers of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, who liberated this city, ridding it of al-Zarqawi’s followers after harsh fighting, killing many terrorists and forcing the remaining butchers to flee the city like rats to the surrounding areas, where the bravery of other 3rd ACR soldiers in Sinjar, Rabiah, Zumar and Avgani finally destroyed them.”

One of the returning soldiers from this regiment is Chief Warrant Officer Roger Wood of Fort Carson, Colo. Wood, a helicopter pilot, who arrived home last weekend. He tells me, “There’s a lot of good going on in Iraq,” adding that “negative stories” he’s seen on the news “are discouraging.” Wood says he’s noticed a “big difference” since his first tour in 2003 in the way Iraq soldiers and police operate. He says they are increasingly confident and able to operate independent of American forces. “Iraq will come around,” Wood predicts. “Baghdad will take a little longer, but as people see change and acquire hope, we’ll see a new Iraq.”

The mayor of Tall Afar concludes his letter: “God bless this brave Regiment; God bless the families who dedicated these brave men and women. From the bottom of our hearts we thank the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones.

“This sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead, but alive, and their souls hovering around us every second of every minute. They will never be forgotten for giving their precious lives ... Let America, their families and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life.”

The U.S. Conference of the World Council of Churches recently condemned U.S. policy in Iraq for “raining down terror” on helpless Iraqis. They should talk to the mayor of Tall Afar and tell him to his face that they think al-Zarqawi’s “reign of terror” should not have been ended.

(Editor’s Note: The preceding, written by syndicated columnist Cal Thomas, is used with permission, and as a paid advertisement.)

Honor is simply the morality of superior men. - H. L. Mencken



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Letters to the Editor

(Continued from page 3)

proximately \$140 the first year with a 3 percent increase annually.

Let’s remember that the library director’s annual salary of approximately \$76,000 has been eliminated, as was the position, last year. The ex-director’s budget continued giving salary overages, one for a retired employee, which were rectified by the commissioners. Those savings are being realized this fiscal year and bring relief for years into the future.

I e-mailed a library advocate in Grants Pass last year who was initially helpful and informative. However, my suggestions to amend our state’s law, which prevents our libraries from charging any usage fees, met with complete silence. Library cards and associated fees are patrons would certainly take up the lion’s share of funding shortfalls they anticipate.

Southern Oregon is totally saturated with property owners on fixed incomes. They already absorb the annual 3 percent increase on existing tax districts and cannot take on one more special interest.

I think that we should vote “no” on the library tax district.

One man’s ode to old-growth
From Chris Matthews
Cave Junction

I doubt that I shall ever see/An old-growth forest left to be/A ravaged stumpland left for me/And all of our progeny.

God made creatures great and small/Lord I hate to see a giant fall/On forestland owned by all/If only Congress could hear the owl/ Instead of selfish loggers howl.

More than trees will disappear/If all is cut so very near/I should like my child to hear the screech of owls, it sounds so dear/Possibly never to be heard around here.

If owls were hunted like the deer/their extinction sparking outrage clear/Owls have reasons to be here/Fish and trees and owls have much to fear/Kill them all, the loggers’ creed/So sad man’s ignorance, arrogance and greed.

Citizens of Illinois Valley should arise and say nay to BLM’s plans to log 30,000 acres.

Planned logging strongly protested
From Lisa Rohde
Selma

The forests of Illinois River Valley are targeted by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service for logging. The 28,000-plus forested acres targeted for logging by BLM in the Illinois River Valley are some of Oregon’s last remaining low-elevation old-growth forests.

As though the logging threats from BLM facing our valley were not enough, the Siskiyou National Forest recently announced its plans to log inventoried roadless areas. One of the proposed roadless areas happens to be Mike’s Gulch, which is completely visible from our valley’s main corridor, Hwy. 199.

The valley forests and adjacent hillsides provide important wildlife habitat and connectivity for species migrating to and from the East and West Siskiyou, and lower elevation forests host greater biodiversity than way up in the mountains. These forests are the very watersheds from which our source of clean water springs forth.

The interior valley and adjacent hillside forests of Illinois River Valley are our “view shed.” People come from near and far to recreate in these magnificent forests. Our forests are the very reason for our ever-increasing Nature-based tourism that Illinois River Valley has to offer for future generations.

USFS, BLM objectives on logging questioned
From Guenter Ambron
Cave Junction

Most of my family has lived in Illinois Valley since 1969; the older ones grew up

in a forested German community and moving here was like a homecoming for them after living in Southern California.

We believed what BLM and the forest service said about themselves. (Their mission statements) “to sustain health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for present and future generations” and “caring for the land and serving people.”

In July 2004, I was invited to a Biscuit Alliance meeting and therein was another reality. The group took me on trips to the Kalmiopsis, the timber sales, and they talked about the different sciences being used, politics, and some of the agency practices hidden from public view.

I participated, learned, and stayed open to all perspectives, but the stark fact of the evidence of what I saw spoke for itself. Just visit Baby Foot Lake for a start.

Also in 2004-2005 I participated with the Deer Creek Valley Association, which was working with BLM to introduce its Natural Selection Alternative, a practical approach to restoration, fire, and an ecologically accountable extraction process supported by the community in the Deer Creek Watershed (Lake Selmac).

After two years of exhausting work with BLM, the

association was awarded just 500 acres of severely cut-over lands of the 7,500 acres available.

Recently, members of the Takilma community also rose to address matters of commercial logging and management in their community, formed a committee, developed an action alternative, and worked closely with BLM staff. Then they were told by Abbie Jose that there will be no compromise regarding the 1 mbf of commercial extraction and the helicopter logging in their neighborhood.

Furthermore, BLM and the forest service do not work together on adjacent land, discuss forest health or accumulative effects. Both agencies have a high rate of forest liquidation, and their field practices differ sometimes considerably.

The ball is in the court of corporate politics, and for us I believe this is a significant quality-of-life issue in our valley. What these agencies portray and what is really happening -- well, I wish many more had the time to see it for themselves.

Is it the nature of human kind to swallow the natural world? And are our agencies trying to serve two masters? Do others have thoughts about this?



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