

# 'They need a lot of health care'

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as suppressing the dictator who "cleared the dates and palm trees and what we know as the Garden of Eden in southern Iraq where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers joined," Hostler said. "So people had to rely on him, the state; so he had them; women couldn't drive or work.

"I know what it is to be suppressed; what it is to rub dinars together to feed the family; and so it wasn't OK to kill people with illegal gases and experiment on them. The Shiites and Sunnis have been duking it out for thousands of years, but my understanding of God is a loving and compassionate god, not about blowing people up."

Both men received injuries that have left them disabled, but both are anxious to continue working.

"They need a lot of health care," said Elder and Navy veteran Gene LaBonte, referring to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in general. LaBonte was named chair of the Governor's Veterans' Advisory Committee in 2009.

One of the obstacles to getting that care, LaBonte added, is that, "When they come back from Iraq, they get back to the states and meet with military people here and instead of going to a hospital right away, or saying there's anything wrong, they say nothing so they can visit their families first."

"There is a lot suffering from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and TBI (traumatic brain injury)," said Jerry Wilson, Yamhill County Veterans Service Officer. "Usually guys that had TBI suffer from memory loss, headaches, a lack of concentration, and it is really horrible because they forget to go to appointments, or how to go places. It affects the brain really bad. The most common side effects are increased headaches, headaches that don't want to go away.

"One of the most sorrowful things I've seen is when you look in their eyes and their eyes are really glassy. They're here, but they're not here. They say, 'What am I doing here?' And I say, 'How can I help you?' They don't have a clue. They say, 'Somebody told me I had to come here.'

"You try to dig out that information from them, but one thing about those guys, they are very, very guarded about their information."

For Quenelle, some or maybe most of his disabilities come from the last time he survived an improvised explosive device. Quenelle served with the Scouts, the 3-116th Cavalry Brigade out of eastern Oregon.

"I remember clear as day, the date was the 22nd of August, 2005," he said. His group included five Humvee gun trucks and one interpreter. He was driving the lead vehicle.

They saw a flare go up in a nearby "mud hut village" and soon received radio communication from up the chain of command that there was a possible high value target ahead. They moved onto the main supply route.



Contributed photo

Frank Quenelle stands in front of his Humvee after it hit an improvised explosive device in 2005.

"We were approximately a mile away from our objective when we came across a patch of road that was prone to recent IED activity," he said. "As we came to a certain spot in the road where a previous IED had went off in the past weeks, my TC (truck commander) had ordered me, and he was very firm about it at the last second, to veer left.

"I jerked our steering wheel with pretty good force to steer us in the direction I was ordered, and less than a second later the right side of our vehicle was struck by the blast." (Later, he was informed what kind of IED it was — three 155mm rounds.)

The official report credited Quenelle's quick action with saving the lives of his fellow soldiers.

Two of the three rounds went off and the third round was thrown from the hole and found about 250 feet away in a field.

"After the IED struck us, the right front of my vehicle was utterly destroyed," he said. "Both passenger-side doors were partially hanging from the hinges and shrapnel

blasted across the whole right side of the vehicle as well as the majority of the windshield."

The blast sent the five-ton vehicle sliding "for about 1,000 to 1,200 feet at about 60 miles an hour doing a 180 until we came to a stop."

The blast lifted the vehicle off the ground and when it came slamming back down, the back right wheel broke off.

"I remember my vision not coming back for about 10 seconds. Then I blinked, and my vision was there again."

Everything turned very quiet.

"Shrapnel had cut across my left elbow," he said. "My ears were ringing. It was hard to hear."

Then he stepped out of the Humvee.

"At first my legs wouldn't work and I fell onto the left side of my body."

The vehicle's radios and even a "man pack" radio in the back of the vehicle were inoperable.

When the rest of the convoy caught up, they set up a security perimeter and "lit up the reed line (the bushes) with bullets in case

somebody was hiding."

For Hostler, the main source of his continuing injuries came from an incident on Jan. 20, 2010. Hostler served as an engineer sapper. He worked with mines, explosives, route clearance, disarming and/or blowing up weapons, offensive and defensive, he said.

He was in Baghdad and had just come back from a mission when he was given authorization to start building an awning. As squad leader, he had many projects going. He had interviewed people to work on the awning, but when he came back there were different people up on the awning that was 120 feet long, 30 feet wide and about 30 feet tall.

"I climbed up on the awning," he said. "I remember wondering why these people were up there. When I climbed up, they started lobbing mortars at me. I started to run. The whole awning caved in on me. I had bones in my spine broken in half. I had metal run through my hand and my foot. Local civilians — they were there from all over, but these were Hindus from India — pulled me out of it. I was a hurtin' puppy. I limped around for a couple days, then started getting headaches."

The Army flew him to Germany and then to Walter Reed Army Medical Clinic in Washington, D.C. He had three operations during that time.

Hostler also participated in the firefight that killed two of Saddam Hussein's sons.

"It was very intense. We traded fire for eight hours," he said. "We had to blow some walls up."

Throughout the war, Hostler found the Iraqi people to have much in common with Native American communities in the states.

"They're common people like you and me," he said, "trying to feed their family and have an education. They're just trying to make it."



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Specialist Frank Quenelle, once a .50 caliber Gunner/Driver with the 3-116th Cavalry Brigade, back home in Grand Ronde.

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