

**JOHN J. KOLDUS III
FACULTY/STAFF ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD**

Recognizes an outstanding faculty/staff member for his or her interest in student growth, education and unity through student organization work. Any student, student organization, faculty, or staff member may nominate. For more information or an application, contact Patty Kelley, Office of VP for Student Affairs, 845-4728.

Nominations due **Friday, February 27, 2004**, MS 1256 or delivered to Patty Kelley, 10th Floor Rudder Tower

Sandia Day

**February 20, 2004
MSC 206**

9:00 a.m. Welcome
Richard Ewing, Vice President for Research, Texas A&M

9:15 a.m. Keynote
Alton Romig, Jr., Vice President for National Security, Sandia
"From Systems Engineering to Nanotechnology,
Impacting National Security"

10:30 a.m. Panel Session
"Research at Sandia National Laboratories"

**Student Opportunities at
Sandia National Laboratories**

**February 20, 2004
Richardson 101, 2-3 p.m.**

A special presentation by representatives from Sandia National Laboratories highlighting internship, co-op and fellowship opportunities for engineering and physical science majors.

<http://sandiaday.tamu.edu>

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The TAP
WOODSTONE CENTER

FRIDAY

Tap O'Briens

WEEKEND BASH
starts with the
CRAWFISH BOIL
5:00pm - ?

with Happy Hour prices
9:00pm - Midnight

\$1.00 bar drinks • \$1.00 pints

\$2.00 Hurricanes
\$1.00 Tap Cherry Bombs
ALL NIGHT

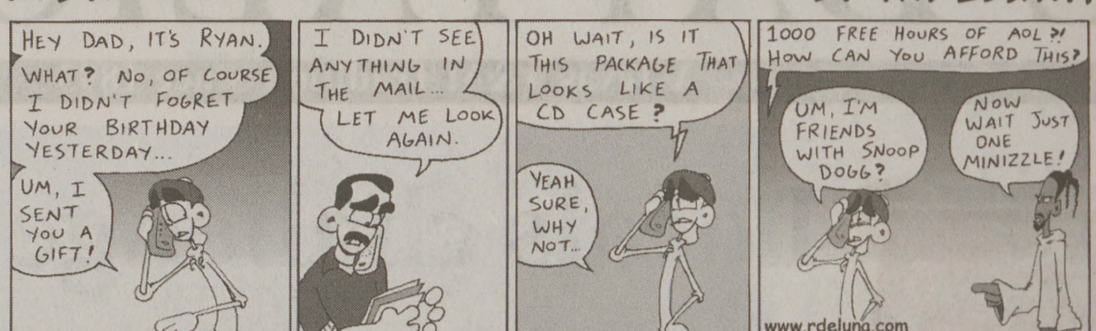
then SATURDAY.....

Live music w/ FEEDING 5000
and special guest WIDEAWAKE

696-5570
Party Safe and Designate a Driver

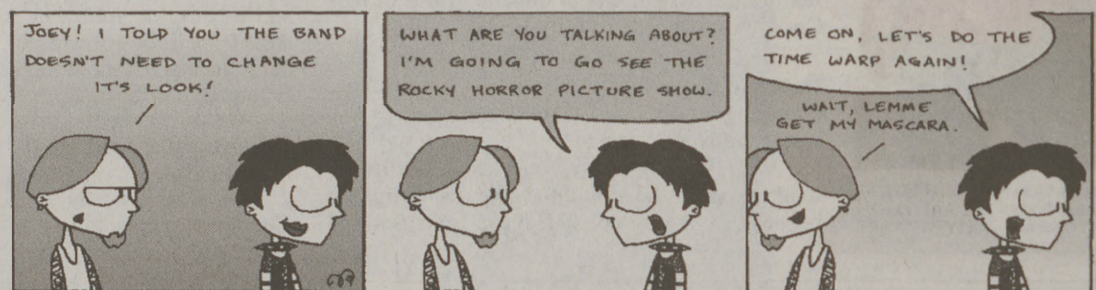
FISH

BY R. DELUNA



NOISE + POLLUTION

BY JOSH DARWIN



DUNNBOYZ

by Will Lloyd



U.S. troops going home after nearly a year in Iraq

By Jim Krane
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ON A C-130 OVER IRAQ — The throb of the engines of the C-130 Hercules is deafening, but the soldiers laugh and joke. A few nap. One soldier totes her unit's banner, a sure sign this is more than a temporary jaunt.

After almost a year in Iraq, these members of the Army's 32nd Signal Battalion are going home. More than 100,000 other weary Americans and their battered equipment are doing the same, being replaced by fresh forces in a massive rotation — the biggest since World War II — playing out until May.

"I'm floating on cloud nine," said 25-year-old Staff Sgt. Joe Luna of Visalia, Calif. The moment a U.S. soldier pines for is saying goodbye to Iraq, where a brutal insurgency has confounded troops who thought they'd be hailed as liberators. On bases across Iraq, stores cater to that longing by selling coffee mugs emblazoned with the words "Happiness is seeing Iraq in my rearview mirror."

The units trickling out of the country are many of those who joined the March invasion. Some have seen combat and lost members. All faced tough living conditions.

The Darmstadt, Germany-based 32nd Signal Battalion hit the ground in Kuwait on March 5, setting up communications networks as the invasion force rolled into Iraq, Luna said. The group was sent south when mortar fire killed a soldier.

"It was rough. It seemed like a race to get to Baghdad, then we ended up going backward," Luna said as his unit piled green duffel bags near a tent at the Army's Camp Anaconda near Balad, Iraq.

Now, Luna said, going backward — to home base in Germany — sounds just fine.

It's been a long wait. Soldiers spoke of the frustration of counting the days to an expected departure only to be told they would have to stay on. All said

they wanted to hug parents and children, sleep without being woken by explosions, or stroll without a rifle.

"I want to get drunk," blurted out 26-year-old Spc. Yvette Inocencio of Miami, waiting with friends from her unit, the 864th Engineer Battalion, for their flight.

The weeks before departure are rife with fears, especially about being killed.

"A lot of civilians don't understand. It's not us we're doing it for, it's them (the Iraqis)."

— Charles Guess
U.S. soldier

Camp Anaconda is regularly pounded by rebel mortars. Since June, dozens of U.S. soldiers on the base have been wounded and a few have been killed by the shrapnel-spewing blasts.

Overall in Iraq, 545 U.S. troops have been killed and 2,700 injured since combat began March 20.

"We're always sitting here worried about mortars, since we're so close to going home," Inocencio said.

Another soldier, Spc. Charles Guess, 21, of Springdale, Ark., said he was driving a bulldozer last month when a mortar blast sent him six feet into the air, dislocating his shoulder and tearing a rotator cuff.

Inocencio voiced another universal worry. Even though the soldiers have loaded their bags onto pallets to be hoisted onto a C-130 transport plane, and even though their names have been called and their redeployment orders checked and reconfirmed, the Army could still reverse course.

"This is the worst part,"

Inocencio said as her group waited to fly out of Camp Anaconda, headed to Spain and then to Fort Lewis, Wash. "Things always seem to happen just as you're getting ready to leave."

Many soldiers heading home, like Luna, say they've had enough of the military.

"I'm going to transition to civilian life in three months," Luna said, rubbing his hand over his shaven head. "You get a lot better picture of the military when you're deployed. It's been an enlightening experience."

Few regret leaving. Some will miss friends. Luna is sorry he won't get a chance to see firsthand the results of America's effort to reshape the Middle East.

"It's like we're leaving before the job gets done," Luna said.

Others say they're ready for civilian life, even if it means dealing with those who don't appreciate the work they've done in Iraq — or those who opposed the war to oust Saddam Hussein.

"No matter what was said, we're all going to be heroes," Guess said confidently. "A lot of civilians don't understand. It's not us we're doing it for, it's them (the Iraqis)."

Before boarding the plane, the 35 soldiers made their way through the Army's version of customs: an "amnesty booth" where they are ordered to discard pornography, alcohol or unauthorized weapons. In the discard bin were a few belts of machine gun rounds.

In a short while, the soldiers were strapping themselves into the cargo plane's red mesh seats. The Georgia Air National Guard C-130 roared skyward, then banked hard and dipped — maneuvers aimed at evading any shoulder-fired missiles. In an hour and a half, the soldiers stepped out into the Kuwaiti sunshine.

"Happy? I'm ecstatic," said Capt. Will Stanley, 33, of Fresno, Calif. "But the excitement won't quite hit until I'm on U.S. soil."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Memorial being held for Lawler

A memorial service for Christopher Anthony Lawler, sophomore petroleum engineering major who died Tuesday morning, will be held at 7 p.m. Friday at St. Mary's Catholic Center.

Friends of Lawler and residents of Appelt Hall, where Lawler lived, will be meeting at the Appelt Hall TV lounge at 6:15 p.m. to walk to St. Mary's together, said Daniel Jones, a sophomore business major and Appelt resident.

"We know it's been a tough time for his family," Jones said. "Anyone who knew Chris or anyone who wants to celebrate the life of a fellow Aggie is encouraged to attend."

The service is scheduled to last one to two hours.

"The service will be dedicated to celebrating (Lawler's) life and the contributions he made toward each of (his friends') lives," Jones said.

Marriage

Continued from page 1

this amendment, and what it means to them."

Lucas Kramm, traditional family values chair of A&M's Young Conservatives of Texas, said he believes the rally is being held in response to recent events in Massachusetts and San Francisco involving the legalization of same-sex marriages.

"Marriage is an institution between a man and a woman," Kramm said. "Everyone has the equal right to marry (someone of the opposite sex)."

David Fisher, a senior electrical engineering technology major, said he believes same-sex marriages should be legalized. He believes the constitution grants the right, and also doesn't believe that marriage is sacred anymore.

"If marriage (between a man and a woman) is so sacred, then explain the high divorce rates," Fisher said.

Jennings said if an amendment to the U.S. Constitution does occur, that it will take time before society accepts the concept.

As the ongoing debate continues on whether or not to legalize same-sex marriages, people such as Kramm hold steadfast to the belief that the issue is unconstitutional.

Cadets

Continued from page 1

speech "Conflict in Iraq: A War fighting Perspective," Caudle said.

"Moseley told about his experience with the war in Iraq," Brown said. "He talked about what the mission was, how it was implemented and the results."

On Friday, Gates will speak about the intelligence community in Iraq, and Meigs will discuss the Iraq conflict from a geopolitical perspective.

A&M also sends cadets to leadership conferences at other schools, including Virginia Tech, but Caudle said A&M holds one of the best in the nation.

Cadets are attracted to the event by the issues discussed and A&M's reputation for conducting a good conference, Caudle said. They also like the friendly Aggie community and the Corps' military leadership, he said.

"The reputation is growing among the schools," said Joseph "Doc" Mills, media relations for the office of the commandant. "This thing is getting bigger every year."

Wild Man's Military Surplus
Fishing, Camping & Hunting

Friday, Feb. 20
Saturday, Feb. 21
Sunday, Feb. 22

2 locations:

- Easy Travel Motor Inn
2007 Texas Ave
College Station
- The Preference Inn
1601 South Texas Ave
Bryan

THE BATTALION

Elizabeth N. Webb, Editor in Chief

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