

A member of America's greatest generation, Mr. Pulver was a U.S. Army veteran who served our great nation in Germany during World War II.

Mr. Pulver is survived by five daughters, two brothers, 10 grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Edward B. Pulver: a seaman, labor rights organizer, philanthropist, community activist, father, grandfather, great-grandfather and friend. Mr. Pulver, we will miss your kindness, but your memory will live on in the hearts and minds of everyone you have touched with your generosity and friendship.

HONORING THE 367TH ENGINEER BATTALION

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 9, 2004

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, almost every Member of Congress has constituents who are honorably serving overseas in Afghanistan or Iraq. Many are regular military personnel, while others are serving in the National Guard or Reserves. They are all to be commended and thanked for their dedicated service to our nation.

Today I would like to recognize the service of one particular group of Minnesota soldiers in the 367th Engineer Battalion. The 367th Battalion is currently serving in Afghanistan where they are helping to clear Afghanistan's minefields of the millions of explosive devices left over from decades of conflict. Donning body armor, protective boots and face shields, the men and women of the 367th canvass the countryside looking for unexploded ordnance and other remnants of past battles in Afghanistan. Their work is dangerous and difficult, but they are doing a tremendous job.

All too often, the hard work of our military personnel in Afghanistan is overlooked and unknown to the American public. Unfortunately, many remarkable stories, like the story of the 367th Battalion, are never told.

I am pleased that a local paper in Minnesota has highlighted the work of the 367th and put the article on the front page. I mailed this article to the soldiers of the 367th in Afghanistan, so they are reminded that the families they protect back home in Minnesota are thinking of them and are thankful for their service. I would like to include this article ("A delicate and dangerous job"—July 7, 2004) in the RECORD following my remarks.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan will take many years and require a sustained U.S. commitment. Much more work needs to be done before the Afghan people can truly begin rebuilding their lives and providing for their children and families. I am proud that men and women from all across Minnesota—including those of the 367th Battalion—are playing an important role in this process.

[From the Star Tribune, July 6, 2004]

A DELICATE AND DANGEROUS JOB

(By Sharon Schmirckle)

BAGRAM AIR BASE, AFGHANISTAN.—Inviting the danger that Afghans dread every day, Sgt. Gary Feldewerd manipulated a control panel inside his armored cab and started slapping the ground with chains in search of land mines and other unexploded weapons.

As the resulting dust plume drifted, Feldewerd, from New Munich, Minn., saw that the flail had uncovered a mortar shell and a battered explosives box.

The work that Feldewerd and other Army reservists in Minnesota's 367th Engineer Battalion are doing to help clear Afghanistan's minefields came too late to save Parwana Meer's right leg and Gulmarjan's life.

Gulmarjan, 13, was herding goats near his village, Lalander, in May. One goat strayed off the path. The boy ran to fetch it. And suddenly, his lower body exploded in a cloud of red vapor, his cousin said. A pile of stones marks where his family buried what was left of his remains.

Meer, also 13, was cooking rice in her family's mud and stone house near Bagram when an explosion shattered one of her legs below the knee and severely burned the other.

Sitting by her bed at a U.S. Army field hospital in June, her brother told a story that is all too familiar in this war-ravaged land where weapons continue to kill and maim long after the clashing armies have left.

Meer and her family returned this year to the village they had fled when it became a battleground between the Taliban and rival northern tribes, Naseer Meer said. What the villagers didn't know is that the retreating Taliban forces had booby trapped their houses—in the Meers' case, planting a mine under the kitchen's dirt floor.

Such tragedies are everyday occurrences in Afghanistan, one of the world's most heavily mined nations. Blasts from land mines and other ordnance kill or maim dozens of people every month.

No one knows how much unexploded military junk remains strewn around Afghanistan. By any estimate, there are more than 10 million explosive devices in a space the size of Texas, said Maj. Paul Mason of the Australian Army. He coordinates the Minnesota battalion's mine-clearing projects under the United Nations' larger effort in Afghanistan involving work by military and civilian groups from many nations.

CHILDREN VULNERABLE

In Afghanistan, where women have been secluded, three out of four victims are male. The blasts have been most deadly for children, however, because their vital organs are closer to the explosions. And children are more likely than adults to pick up strange objects. Especially tempting were toy-like "butterfly mines" the Soviets dropped from aircraft.

Most of the mines uncovered in Afghanistan were laid by Soviet forces and their supporters from 1979 to 1992, according to Human Rights Watch. But the United States provided mines to anti-Soviet mujahedeen fighters in the 1980s.

The United States is not known to have used anti-personnel land mines since the Gulf War in 1991. Still, it is sharply criticized by groups working to rid the world of land mines because it hasn't signed a mine ban treaty, ratified by 142 other nations, including Afghanistan.

Beyond mines, cluster bombs are a major concern because they scatter explosives that often lie in wait rather than going off on impact. Many remnants of the bombs the U.S.-led forces dropped during 2001 and 2002 were designed to deactivate after a set period, Human Rights Watch said, but critics aren't satisfied that the feature works.

The United States has paid for a good share of the land mine removal in Afghanistan, along with European nations, Japan and Canada.

Despite the global cooperation, no one expects Afghanistan to be mine-free anytime soon.

To understand why, join the Minnesota teams as they clear a patch of land near Bagram Air Base. The area is to be used for military operations now and eventually turned over to the Afghan people.

THE HYDREMA

Climbing into the Hydrema, the mine-clearing vehicle, is like getting into the cab of a construction crane, except instead of a long arm, this beast has a turntable holding a steel blast shield and a 72-chain flail. The cab's windshield is pocked and battered by blasts. The last battalion to use these machines set off an anti-tank mine. It blew out an engine and rear axle, but the soldier inside the armored cab survived.

There will be no stepping out of the cab, Feldewerd orders. Sometimes, he'll scramble over the top of the Hydrema to handle a problem. Feldewerd is operating one of three Hydremas working together to clear a lane just over 3 yards wide.

Bounce. Jolt. Slap. Slap. Slap.

Each of the 30-inch chains is spun into the ground with a force of 2,000 pounds per square inch. The dust is so blinding that Feldewerd has no idea what's being unearthed. The other two Hydrema operators spot for him. As the dust clears, they see an artillery casing from a tank round and a lot of other debris that may or may not blow up.

Whenever possible, the soldiers try to spot explosives without detonating them. When Feldewerd saw the mortar shell, he fixed its location with a global positioning device and reported it to explosives teams for disposal.

Since beginning work in late April, the Minnesota battalion and a private contractor working with the troops at Bagram and another airfield near Kandahar have uncovered hundreds of bombs, a dozen anti-tank mines and more than 200 anti-personnel mines. They also have unearthed a well-fortified Soviet fighting position with a steel roof that was covered by dirt.

Scary stuff? Maybe. But Feldewerd is a study in cool control.

"I like the minefields," he said. "Mostly because there isn't anybody out here bothering you."

Indeed.

Once the heavy equipment operators have flailed a safe lane through a minefield, they hand off to a team that works the ground much like archeologists on a dig, probing and sifting dirt cupful by cupful. Except, of course, relics here are more volatile than dinosaur bones. This is slow, dusty work, much of it done while crawling or lying belly down.

Sgt. Steven Tyler from Sleepy Eye, Minn., is training others to use a device that resembles a beachcomber's metal detector. Only this gadget also has ground-penetrating radar capable of sizing up objects as deep as 8 inches.

Because this ground is littered with metal shrapnel and trash as banal as old sardine tins from Soviet mess kits, a metal detector alone would give so many false positives that the job would never get done, Tyler said. Further, some mines are mostly plastic and give only a weak hum on the metal detector.

"Ground-penetrating radar is a lifesaver out here," said Tyler, who learned to clear mines in Korea in 1988 and took extra training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri before deploying to Afghanistan. More than 100 troops are getting their first hands-on intensive training here in the minefields.

Donning body armor, protective boots and face shields, they work in pairs to clear branches off the safe lane. First the soldiers check a patch of soil for visible debris, then scan it with the metal detector/radar gizmo, marking suspicious spots. Finally, they get down on the ground and gingerly dig around the marked spots with a probe and garden trowel.

The hard-packed dirt is not helpful. A little left behind the probe is needed to break the soil. Push too hard, though, and there's a danger of setting off a blast. The point is not to blow anything up but to mark the hot stuff for explosives teams.

Inching forward hour-by-hour, the manual detection teams clear criss-crossing lanes through the field, leaving large patches in between.

NEXT STEP: CANINES

Now come the dogs, pacing each uncleared patch, nose to the ground. They belong to RONCO Consulting Corp., a Virginia-based contractor working with the Minnesota battalion. The military also owns dogs the troops will use after the teams are trained.

The dogs are trained to smell explosives, plastics and metals, said Joel Murray, RONCO's program manager, and to signal a find by sitting in a certain way and looking at a handler. Trust between dog and handler must be unshakable, Murray said, and it takes months of training to develop.

"You have to trust the dog because you have to walk through the areas the dog has proofed," Murray said.

Even so, the soldiers use a two-dog test before they trust a patch of land. And they're careful to work under conditions that are ideal for the dogs—never when the wind is behind the dogs or when the dogs are tired.

When a dog makes a hit, the manual detection team follows through to size up and carefully uncover the find.

Mine-clearing has become one of Afghanistan's largest industries since the United Nations began coordinating the effort in 1990. The work has been paced by fits and starts because Afghanistan has been so politically volatile.

During the 1990s, the Taliban and other warring factions raided de-mining project offices, seizing equipment and assaulting staff members. Operations were sharply curtailed in 2001 as it became clear the United States would attack Taliban and Al-Qaida forces in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Since then, insurgents have plagued mine-removal teams. Last year, the United Nations suspended operations in eight provinces because of threats against workers. Assaults who ambushed their vehicle, shot and killed four U.N. de-miners in Farar Province in February, the Associated Press reported.

MANY CASUALTIES

Despite the attacks, there is little doubt that most Afghans are deeply thankful for the effort. Almost every family has suffered the casualties seen at an orthopedic clinic in Kabul run by the International Committee for the Red Cross. Nine in 10 of the workers and most of the patients are mine victims, said the director, Najmuddin, who like many Afghans goes by a single name.

He lost both of his legs 22 years ago while hauling sand from a riverbed near Kabul. His truck hit a land mine, knocking him unconscious for five days. When he woke, his life seemed to be over at age 18. After five empty years at home, he found the Red Cross clinic and a new life.

"I got prosthetics and they pushed me to walk," he said.

Deeply grateful, Najmuddin volunteered to work for the clinic for free. Instead, the clinic hired him and educated him as a physical therapist. In the 16 years since then, Najmuddin has seen a heartbreaking parade of mine victims: "I have seen many who lost one leg to a mine, then hit another and lost the second leg. I have seen one man who survived a third encounter. His wheelchair hit a mine, and he lost a hand and an eye."

For land mine victims, this clinic offers physical rehabilitation—new feet, legs and

hands, along with lessons in using them. It also provides social rehabilitation, from processing the emotional horror of the blast to learning work skills.

Like Najmuddin, everyone has a story. Paranz Spandiyar, a 12-year-old wisp of a girl with haunting eyes, believed the pasture where she was herding goats had been cleared of mines. It wasn't. She lost her left leg below the knee in April.

Abjalal Hormat was a soldier when he lost a leg 12 years ago.

Fahim, 15, was walking near an abandoned Soviet checkpoint last year when a blast took one leg and severely burned the other, damaging his nerves. He dropped out of school after fifth grade.

Nasir, also 15, took one step off a well-worn walking path in his village in Parwan Province and lost one leg above the knee.

These are the lucky ones, Najmuddin said. They survived.

Any rewards the Minnesota troops gain from mine-clearing come from a sense of duty and humanitarianism. They get hazard pay for being in Afghanistan, a war zone, but nothing extra for hunting mines. Many of them will leave Afghanistan with skills they don't expect to use in the mine-free Midwest.

Specialist Douglas McLellan from Carlton, Minn., joked that the proof of his expertise will be going home in one piece: "Ten fingers and 10 toes, that's my resumé." Seriously, McLellan said, the mines are "all the proof I need that the work we're doing here is important."

HONORING VICTORY GARDENS THEATER

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 9, 2004

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Victory Gardens Theater of Chicago for their twenty-eight memorable seasons of excellence and artistic achievement on the occasion of the world premiere of *The Family Gold* by Annie Reiner.

Since 1974 Victory Gardens Theater has flourished in its mission to support some of Chicago's most talented playwrights. In only a few years time, the theater became a major staple of the Illinois performing arts community, producing such successes as Stacy Myatt's *The Velvet Rose*.

In 1977, Dennis Zacek was recruited as the theater's new Artistic Director. Nationally renowned for his 150 productions, Zacek quickly moved the theater in many new innovative and creative directions, meriting the prestigious 1997 Sidney R. Yates Arts Advocacy Award.

Over the years, the Victory Gardens Theater has allied with several established production companies, most notably the Body Politic Theatre, as well as emerging groups including MPAACT, Roadworks Productions and Remy-Bumpo. These collaborations have brought to Chicago the finest and most imaginative on-stage productions available. Featured playwrights have included Steve Carter, whose drama *Pecong* went on to productions in London, Newark, Minneapolis and San Francisco, and James Sherman, whose *Beau Jest* went on to become the longest-running show in the history of the Lambs Theatre in New York and has subsequently been translated into four different languages and performed in eight countries.

In 2001, the Victory Gardens Theater was globally honored with the Tony Award for its continuous level of artistic achievement in the development of playwrights and their work.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the high level of creative writing and acting consistently produced by the Victory Gardens Theater. I join with the people of Chicago in congratulating Victory Gardens Theater on their numerous achievements both on and off the stage, and wish them continued success with *The Family Gold* and all of their future productions.

HONORING MARGRIT BIEVER MONDAVI

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 9, 2004

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker I rise today to honor my good friend Margrit Biever Mondavi, a woman whose name is synonymous with good food, fine wine and great art the world over.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Napa Valley know that wine and food, like music and art, are sensory experiences meant to be savored. When these elements are combined, the result can be a masterpiece. We owe much of our appreciation to Ms. Mondavi's pioneering efforts in uniting these elements and in sharing her vision with us.

She joined the Robert Mondavi Winery in 1967 and created a showplace for artists, musicians, great chefs and winemakers. She also paired cooking classes with fine wine in the Great Chefs of France and the Great Chefs of America series at the winery. This internationally respected culinary series is now simply known as Great Chefs at Robert Mondavi Winery.

In 2003 she and her daughter Annie Roberts, the Executive Chef at Robert Mondavi Winery, earned the "Best in the World" distinction at the Gourmand World Cookbook awards for their collection of recipes and stories, "Annie & Margrit: Recipes and Stories from the Robert Mondavi Kitchen."

With her husband Robert Mondavi, whom she married in 1980, Margrit realized another dream with the opening in 2001 of COPIA, the American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts in downtown Napa. This was followed the same year with a gift to the University of California at Davis to seed the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science and the Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts.

Ms. Mondavi was also instrumental in rebuilding the original 18th Century Opera House in Napa and helped raise funds to restore this community treasure.

As a working artist herself, Margrit Biever Mondavi has created a line of home accessories for the Mondavi Winery. She is also an accomplished linguist and often translates her husband's speeches when they travel the world together promoting wine, food and the arts.

Mr. Speaker, Margrit Biever Mondavi is one of a kind, a pioneer and a visionary who has taught us all to love life a little bit more and to embrace the richness of our culture. Napa County is honoring our First Lady of wine, food and the arts for her many accomplishments and it is appropriate that we also recognize her here today.