



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

For the Week of:
April 17, 2006

Contact: Aaron Baker
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Honoring a True American Hero

Cindy Sheehan asked President Bush, "Why did my son have to die in Iraq?"

Another mother asked FDR, "Why did my son have to die at Iwo Jima?"

Yet another asked Abraham Lincoln, "Why did my son have to die at Gettysburg?"

And yet another asked George Washington, "Why did my son have to die near Valley Forge?"

Then long, long ago, another mother asked, "Heavenly Father, why did my son have to die on a cross outside Jerusalem?"

The answers to all these are similar: that others may have life and dwell in peace, happiness and freedom.

Author Unknown.

I recently had the honor of attending the memorial services of a fallen soldier. CW3 Michael Lee Hartwick Jr. was raised in the Orrick area, married a local girl, and fathered a daughter and a son. CW3 Hartwick piloted an AH-64 Apache Helicopter for the U.S. Army in Iraq. He was buried on Good Friday.

Regardless whether you are a "hawk" or a "dove," we can all agree Hartwick and those that have fallen before him are all American heroes.

Orrick is a town of 922 people; 14 young men from this community have served or continue to serve in Iraq. Many of our communities in Rural Missouri proudly have similar records of service in this and other military operations.

It has been said that roughly 43 percent of the Armed Forces are people from towns with populations less than 5,000. This group represents just 19 percent of the U.S. population. It's my feeling that these young people grow up defending their communities, their faith, and their values and naturally grow into defending our country. They make us all proud of where we're from.

To say that CW3 Hartwick's memorial service was both heart-warming and gut-wrenching is an understatement. It was an amazing celebration of his life and passion for God and country.

Afterwards, Patriot Guard Riders, a diverse group of motorcyclists from across the nation helped lead the funeral procession to Orrick. Nearly 250 riders joined the 2 ½ mile funeral procession from Liberty into Ray County. They passed by cars stopped alongside the road — men, women, and children silenced in respect. American flags blew in the spring wind throughout the entire town.

After the playing of Taps at the burial, three Apaches flew over the grave, hovering overhead. In a flash, the two flanking choppers left the center. The remaining chopper, moved skyward, hovering over the grave. Slowly, the remaining Apache joined the others in the far distance.

The Highway Patrol, Liberty Police, and the sheriff's departments of Clay and Ray counties did an excellent job of providing for the needs of mourners. I commend local law enforcement for assisting with the needs of these fellow heroes.

Afterwards, the Major General turned to me and said he had never experienced anything like this before. All I could say is, "Welcome to Rural Missouri."

If you would like to support a benefit for Haley and Tanner Hartwick, write to "The Michael Hartwick Family Account," c/o Bank of Orrick, PO Box 199, Orrick, MO 64077. Contact Patricia McQueen (816) 770-3311 for more details.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by email at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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