

## Local Soldier in Baghdad

By Cathy Tyson

While the average Lamorindan is watching the war play out on television from the comfort of their home, one area young man is serving his country as an Army Ranger.

Kyle Soler, a graduate of Campolindo High School, class of '01 is in Iraq, bravely defending the country. After Campo, he attended and graduated from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. I "spoke" to him via e-mail while he was home on leave for the first time in 7 months. His parents Pat and Jeff Soler say they may get a call only once a month because of the intermittent phone service, e-mail is mostly unavailable because the land-lines go down frequently and there are usually long lines when it is available at his base. They are able to keep track of his unit stationed at Forward Operating Base Falcon, just outside of Baghdad with Dept. of Defense automated press releases that identify casualties. "I think any parent is concerned about their child, but when you have a son serving in the military in a time of war, those concerns are multiplied, I am definitely aware of the danger," says Pat Soler.

Kyle has been hit by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and has lost 19 of 31 close friends in a 6-month timespan. "Bad things happen to good people," Mrs. Soler reflects on lessons learned the hard way by her son. Despite all of the hardships he's endured, Kyle signed up for another 2-year term after his current stint of 5 years and 19 weeks is complete. In his own words, Kyle Soler: **Why did you enlist?**

Simple roots are back to 9/11 and thinking that there was always more that someone should do. But I was a freshman in college when 9/11 happened and I completed my degree and enlisted nearly the next day. It came down to here I was in control of my life and around me people were still

dying in a far off country. I figured that it was time to stop thinking that other people should do something, and go out there and do it myself - and maybe along the way bring back some of our men safely.

**What do you do on an average day?**

Our days vary in length and work. Often we run one mission a day whether it be at night or during the afternoon. We wake up, grab our gear and head down to the trucks. Receive our briefing on the drive to our patrol base and leave the FOB (Forward Operating Base). Whereas a lot of other units spend most of their time patrolling in vehicles, we just go to our patrol base then start our actual missions on foot. We tend to walk anywhere from four to fifteen kilometers before we arrive at our objective. Some days we are meeting with locals and trying to slowly build their trust in us, and other days we are detaining suspected insurgents or searching for weapons caches. Either way as the temperature gets higher it makes for long hot days, with the ever-present shadow of danger. (Up to 120 degrees.)

**Where are you stationed?**

I'm stationed out of Ft. Richardson, Alaska. I am part of the 4th brigade, 25th Infantry Division, an airborne Brigade Combat Team that stood up in October of '05. When I return to Iraq, I will be at FOB Falcon.

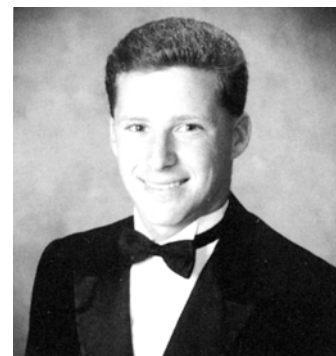
**Do you get homesick?**

We all get homesick in our own ways. I am very close to my family and we send letters and I try to call at least once a month when I'm over there, if simply to hear a welcomed voice. It's hard to grasp though just how strong of a family the men you work with over there create for each other. They really are like brothers to you, so it helps a lot.

**What do you do on leave?**

On leave I've done everything and nothing. I've been able to just sit quietly or go for walks and 'decompress' everything over the last 7 months. I've also traveled throughout the East Bay and will be heading up to Oregon for a week. You just want to see family and friends but you don't want to feel obligations on you because that's all that you've been dealing with is stressful obligations for the past seven months.

Jeff and Pat said a final farewell to Kyle at the airport last weekend, as he headed back to Baghdad. The Transportation Security Administration (and airlines) have loosened their rules and now allow families to say goodbye at the gate, rather than curbside. Pat: "Just sitting next to him, waiting for the airline to call his group to board was fantastic, but sad as well. Just being able to touch him, words aren't necessary, meant a lot to me. It was at least a three-hankie good-bye, but he only saw a few tears. And yes, it was a long, lonely ride home."



Kyle Soler Campo Class of 2001

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