

## War is bad, but shouldn't be used as an excuse

Maybe the next soldier who wants to beat or humiliate a prisoner will think twice.

Ten years is a long time in Leavenworth, where the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks is the polite name for the Army's penitentiary.

Ten years is how long Specialist Charles Graner Jr. will have to think about his sins.

Ten years for abusing prisoners in the now-infamous Abu Ghraib jail in Baghdad. An Army jury could have given him 15, and maybe they should have.

Graner didn't sound too contrite after the sentencing. "There is a war on," he said. "Bad things happen."

That's true. War, in the words of W.T. Sherman, is hell. It makes men do things.

But in this country, we care. We know right from wrong, and we expect our soldiers to remember the difference. We always have.

Now that Private Graner has been judged, though, Americans should make some distinctions:

First, though he claims intelligence agents put him up to abusing prisoners to soften them up for interrogation, the jury did not buy it. He'd still be guilty, even if someone put him up to it. He did it willingly. He was having fun.

Second, though the media likes to talk about what he did as "torture," it is not. Abuse, yes. Torture, hardly.

Making people do things to embarrass them for sport is crude and reprehensible, but it's not torture. Graner and his pals force people to strip, took their pictures in sexually embarrassing poses, had them masturbate, forced devoted Muslims to eat pork and drink liquor.

It's all disgusting, but in Iraq, there are many who know torture. Saddam Hussein and his minion were experts. Women were raped, men hooked up to electrodes, interrogators had many and worse methods.

That makes no difference, either. Our country is not going to tolerate soldiers who abuse prisoners, local citizens, or anyone else. Just because there's a war on, we're not going to abandon our principles.

We hope Mr. Graner will not be the last convicted in the Abu Ghraib scandal. If intelligence agent put these soldiers up to abusing prisoners, we'd like to see them in court, too.

And we hope the whole world is watching, because people should know not only that Americans can make mistakes, but that we can and will make them right.

War is never pretty, but it can be decent and honorable. That's our commitment. That's what this trial was all about.

Many nations wouldn't bat an eye at the type of behavior Charles Graner was convicted of. But this is America, and we like to think we are different.

— Steve Haynes

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## A spoon can be a very serious offense

Have you ever had something happen that, if the situation hadn't been so serious, it would have been the funniest thing in the world?

I've told you before that Jim and I, along with another couple, go into the state prison every Sunday for chapel services. Jim preaches the sermon, Ila plays the piano, Bob delivers one of his cowboy poems and I shake hands and remember names.

Each Sunday, we go through the security check. Our bags and Bibles are searched, we go through the metal detector and then we are "wanded" with a body scanner. It's a necessary step for everyone's security and we understand it and respect the seriousness of the situation. Bringing contraband into a prison is a serious offense, and we could lose our volunteer status.

To speed up the checking-in process and simplify things, we leave everything we're carrying on our persons in the gatehouse in a locker. That includes keys,

### Out Back Carolyn Plotts



coins, folding money, wallets and cell phones. We — literally — empty our pockets.

Now that I've laid the ground work, I need to back up a little. You see, Sunday was a fellowship dinner at our church and we had eaten there before going to the prison. Like most men, Jim stuck his silverware in the pocket of his jacket while he filled his plate.

Following dinner, we went directly to the prison, where we followed our usual routine. We signed in, stowed our personal things in the locker and started through the metal detector. The detector is so sensitive that it picks up metal belt

buckles, zippers or buttons.

Bob, Ila and I had all stepped through and it was Jim's turn. He had taken off his sport coat when we first got there and he carried it through with him.

You can imagine everyone's shock when, as he swung the jacket around to put it on, a spoon went flying across the floor. We all gasped as the officer in charge of our screening looked at the spoon, looked at Jim and then back at the spoon. We knew what he was thinking:

"Aha. Contraband."

Jim had a stricken look on his face, and I know we shouldn't have, but the rest of us burst out laughing. Jim began explaining about the dinner and how he had only used his fork. The officer knew it was unintentional, but needless to say, the spoon did not go in with us.

Poor Jim. He is normally so careful.

On the way home, I said, "Let's see you dig your way out of this one."

To which he replied, "If I still had the spoon, I could."

## In-laws make an occasion interesting

My father-in-law had four brothers and in Junior's generation there were three girls and eight boys.

They are all mechanically inclined, could engineer about anything and loved cars.

Picture "Tool Time" times eight. A fun and interesting group to be around.

The older generation is all gone except for Uncle Clyde.

Uncle Jim had a machine shop in Kirwin and was well known around the area as a guy who could fix anything.

Jim and his wife Doris did not have any children but all the nephews are pretty good at fixing things up. Jerry farms and runs a repair shop, Roger has a shop in Agra, Rod is an engineer for Krauss Plow. As to Junior — well some days it takes all his time and a lot of welding rod to keep one of the girls or me in the field.

Jim was very exacting about what he did, as was my father-in-law.

Junior is more of a "whatever works" kind of guy. It drives his brother Rod crazy. But really how much difference can .0025 inch make? You can always cut it off if it is too long or solder it back if it is too short, right? And if it works who cares what the specifications say.

I think some of this mechanical inclination may have come from the Grandma Hagman who was a Wiehl.

One of the Wiehl cousins once let it slip that he had done inside home renovations with a chain saw.

I thought that was funny until Junior admitted that he had considered it. (I was assured that they changed to a finer chain for finish work.)

Recently Aunt Doris died so we had a funeral. The death of someone who has lived a good life but failed toward the end is not a bad thing. And funerals are important rituals for the living. We remembered Doris and caught up on what every one was doing.

Several years ago I talked with Doris about marriage. We were talking about a

### Back Home Nancy Hagman



much-married woman we knew and I expressed the opinion that I thought being married was sort of like having the chicken pox. You only had to go through it once and then you become immune.

Doris got a gleam in her eye and said, "Well, we were lucky women because we had Hagman men and you would never want another after that."

When I dressed for the funeral I decided to wear a scarf I knitted. I made several this fall for Christmas presents and every time Junior saw me knitting he would ask, "Are you making another one of those rats?"

I thought he was just joking around, but when we got to the church he suggested I leave the scarf in the car.

His exact words were "It looks like something crawled around your neck and died."

I guess he really doesn't like the things. It kind of hurt my feelings but I stood firm, "I'm wearing it."

Almost immediately we saw Bev and bless her heart — she had an almost identical scarf. I started feeling better. We sand-

wiched Junior and showed him how soft the scarves were to the touch. To escape, he agreed we were true fashion mavens.

Later I was visiting with a niece and Preacher Dave; both were quite taken with my scarf.

"Thanks," I said, "I've made about a dozen of these," I replied.

Preacher Dave (an avid hunter) asked, "You made that?"

"Yeah!"

"How do make something like that?"

I explained. Turned out he also thought it was something that might have once lived, not a rat, but maybe some kind of a bird.

He thought Junior hunted it down and plucked it or something. At least he liked it. But then he just married into the family so he can like something even if it did not require a cutting torch in its construction.

When we marry we wonder how we will fit in with the in-laws.

I did not really know my husband's family all that well before we were married. And as time passed we had to adjust to the spouses of siblings who bring new things to the family. But we learned to make allowances for what we perceived as other's shortcomings and in the end mostly enjoy each other.

You just never know. But I hope you find yourself as lucky as Doris and I — you have something special that keeps you from ever wanting anything else.

## WRITE:

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