

Remembering the veterans killed in TX train crash

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MIDLAND, Texas (AP) - With the thunderous crack of a freight train slamming into a parade float, instinct kicked in for Sudip Bose.

A front-line physician in Iraq, Bose and other veterans instantly tended to the injured after the train traveling more than 60 mph in West Texas crashed into the float. It was carrying wounded war veterans and their spouses.

Four veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan were killed, including an Army sergeant who'd pushed his wife off the float to save her. Sixteen people were injured.

Bose said Friday that the aftermath reminded him of a combat triage situation.

Investigators are still trying to determine whether the small parade had been given enough warning to clear the tracks. They hope that cameras on the train and a sheriff's vehicle provide some answers.

The four veterans killed when a freight train barreled into the parade float they were riding on were decorated military men who served on the front lines multiple times in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They survived gunshots, explosions and grenade attacks that left some with brain injuries that slurred their speech and made it difficult to walk.

One had a wife back home battling cancer while he fought through a brain injury in Iraq after an improved explosive device hit his truck.

Another was starting a new career with a defense contractor after more than two decades of military service.

They were husbands and fathers -- Soldiers and a Marine -- and they made sacrifices for those

they loved, including at least one who died after pushing his wife to safety.

The men had traveled to Texas from all over the country for a hunting trip organized to honor their service and to spend a weekend with those who would understand them best - their fellow veterans.

Here's a look at them, compiled from interviews with friends and family, along with autobiographies they wrote for the website of Show of Support, the group that organized the parade and hunting trip.

Army Sgt. Joshua Michael, 34, was coming off a shift as a paramedic in Amarillo, Texas, when he heard about the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"I knew what I had to do," he wrote for Show of Support's website. "I come from a long line of military and public servants; this was my calling."

Michael also knew what to do Thursday. As the train hurtled down the tracks, he pushed his wife, Daylyn, off the float so she wasn't injured, said a close friend, Cory Rogers.

Michaels described his wife as "amazing to say the least." They had been through much together.

He was on his second tour of duty in Iraq with the 101st Airborne Division in December 2005, when Daylyn gave him bad news: their infant daughter's tear ducts hadn't developed normally, and she needed surgery.

In January, there was worse news: Daylyn had thyroid cancer.

"During her radiation, I was injured for the first time," Michael wrote. He suffered a traumatic brain injury when an IED hit his truck, but he wasn't allowed to go home.

"We were too short manned," he wrote, "and I had to just recover in theater under the supervision of a neurologist."

Another IED hit Michael's truck in April, breaking his ribs and rupturing his spleen. In September 2006, he was wounded a third time - another traumatic brain injury that sent him back to the U.S. for care at Fort Sam Houston and forced his retirement from the military.

Michael and his wife, who lived in the San Antonio area, dealt with their illnesses "like they were in the room together," said Rogers, their friend. "You never would have known he was deployed overseas."

Daylyn recovered from cancer, and the couple celebrated their 15th anniversary this year. Along with their daughter, Maci, now 7, they had a son, Ryan, 14.

"We have struggled together, laughed together, cried together, but most importantly stayed together," Michael wrote.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gary Stouffer, 37, joined the Marines in college and served in Albania, Kosovo and twice in Iraq. He was injured during a tour in Afghanistan when an IED hit his vehicle during a resupply mission.

Stouffer was thrown inside the vehicle but didn't realize the extent of injuries until he returned to the U.S. After nine months of tests, he was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury, anxiety

disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder and compression fractures in his neck and lower back.

Two years after the explosion, he was still undergoing speech and physical therapy, while waiting to find out if he had to take a medical retirement or could stay in the Marines on limited duty.

His dream was to serve for 30 years, he wrote for Show of Support. But, "after 17 awesome years, right now I will be happy to just see my way to officially retiring at 20 years."

Stouffer, who lived in Newport, Pa., also was waiting for approval for a Purple Heart. He had been married to his wife, Catherine, for 16 years and had two children, Shannon, 16, and Shane, 12.

He particularly had been looking forward to the hunting trip.

"I have always enjoyed the outdoors and how it makes me feel," he wrote, adding that, "It has always been a dream of mine to hunt in Texas."

Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Boivin, 47, had started a new career with a defense contractor in North Carolina after his retirement from the Army.

He had served for 24 years, including a decade with special operations forces and tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He was wounded in April 2004 while helping train Marines in Iraq. Attacked from several directions at once, half of the Marines were wounded within the first few minutes. Boivin was hit by shrapnel but continued to fight until he was wounded again by a grenade. Still, he managed to provide cover so the Marines could evacuate their wounded. His valor earned him a Silver Star and a Purple Heart.

His mother, Lucette Boivin, of Fayetteville, N.C., said she had worried about him when he was overseas but not when he headed to Texas for a pleasure trip. He planned to be in the parade, go hunting and visit one of his stepdaughters before returning to North Carolina on Monday, she said.

Instead, his younger brother, Danny, a sergeant major at Fort Bragg, was sent to Texas to pick up his body, Lucette Boivin said.

The Boivins moved to the U.S. from Canada 49 years ago, and Larry Boivin grew up in New Hampshire. He had wanted to be a soldier since he was a little boy, his mother said.

Along with the more recent wars, he served in the first Iraq war, earning a Bronze Star.

Boivin's wife, Angela, an intensive care nurse, was with him in Texas. She suffered a back injury in the crash and was heavily medicated because of shock, said his niece, Felicia Wickes.

Sgt. Maj. William Lubbers, 43, spent 21 of his 24 years in the military with the U.S. Army Special Forces.

He was wounded in a 2005 ambush in Afghanistan, while on his second tour of duty there. Shot in the arm, he was sent back to the U.S. to recover.

He spent a month in the hospital and another 15 months in recovery at Fort Bragg, N.C., according to his autobiography for Show of Support. He had 13 surgeries.

When he was better, he went back to Afghanistan for two more tours.

Lubbers also spent a year on duty in Pakistan, according to his Show of Support autobiography. He earned a Purple Heart, three Bronze Stars and numerous other awards.

Lubbers and his wife, Tiffanie, had been married for 19 years. She also was on the float and was in serious condition Friday at University Medical Center in Lubbock, the Midland Reporter-Telegram reported.

The couple, who lived in Fayetteville, N.C., had two children, Zachary, 18, and Sydnie, 11.

Topics: MIDLAND, Texas, AP, parade, train crash, veterans killed, Sudip Bose, Iraq, Afghanistan, Show of Support, Army Sgt. Joshua Michael, 34, Amarillo, Texas, 101st Airborne Division, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Gary Stouffer, 37, Newport, Pa., Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Boivin, 47, Silver Star, Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Fayetteville, N.C., grew up in New Hampshire, Sgt. Maj. William Lubbers, 43, U.S. Army Special Forces, Purple Heart, three Bronze Stars, Fayetteville, N.C., News 5, KOAA

Reference: <http://www.koaa.com/news/remembering-the-veterans-killed-in-tx-train-crash/>