

U.S. fights Iraq's quagmire

By: John Stengel
Feature Columnist

On March 19, 2003, a greedy nation attacked a peaceful nation. The United States invaded Iraq based on false accusations. Our Commander-in-Chief, George W. Bush, convinced Congress and most of America's citizens that Iraq was going to wipe us off of the map.

Four years have passed, and we are beginning the fifth year. Blood has been shed, buildings destroyed, no weapons of mass destruction found, billions of dollars spent incorrectly, and the former leader of Iraq captured and brutally and unjustly put to death. What have we really accomplished?

Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced with "Operation Shock and Awe." Essentially, we launched a mass number of multi-million dollar bombs focused on places Saddam could be hiding. We wound up murdering thousands of Iraqi men, women, and children with misguided bombs.

On May 1, 2003, Bush announced "Mission Accomplished" aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*. He declared, "Major combat operations in Iraq are over."

What? Major combat operations were over? In May of 2003? Yet another one of Bush's lies we believed. Now, we realize the major combat operations were just beginning. In December 2003 we captured Saddam.

In 2004 the Battles of Fallujah began. 600 enemies were killed that April, along with 40 U.S. Marines. Then again in November, the coalition forces attacked insurgents in Fallujah. 1,200 insurgents were killed and nearly 600 U.S. Marine Casualties. Among the insurgents and coalition forces killed, there were hundreds more innocent citizens of Fallujah killed.

2005 was all about turning Iraq into a democratic government. They held their first democratic elections in June of 2006, but their government is still divided between Shiite and Sunnis.

Saddam was hung in December of 2006, but what did his hanging accomplish? It did not accomplish anything but vengeance. He was just another number added to the Iraqi citizen death toll, which happens to be estimated at 59,000 dead.

Unfortunately, the prices we are paying for this war are piling up high and higher every day. The cost of the war is now nearly \$410 billion. We have 3,218 U.S.

troops dead and 24,000 wounded. 500 of those soldiers that were wounded are now limbless (not including lost fingers) and most are returning with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Is this the price we want to pay? Believe it or not, both you and I are paying for this war. The war affects every single person. For me, I have several relatives who have served or are serving in Iraq, one of which has been in 4 IED explosions since he deployed late this summer.

For others, the price they are paying is the heightened price of gasoline. Or the taxes our generation will be paying off for the war in Iraq.

Luckily, people have stood up and stated that enough is enough. A majority of citizens oppose the war, as well as many congressmen, both Democratic and Republican affiliated.

The Democrat majorities in Congress have proposed pull out dates. On the other hand, you have Bush placing 30,000 more troops in Iraq. It is a vicious cycle of which many people see no end to. Hopefully we can peacefully solve this conflict of opinion with a decrease in death rates.

Just another Saturday night with your hamster

By: Karin Scott
Feature Reporter

There is nothing like a good pet. Someone to keep you company on a rainy day or through heartache. Someone to keep you warm on those cold winter nights. Someone to wake you up in the morning with a big wet kiss. A pet is the true best friend of a man.

For example, you can take a dog on a long stroll through the park on a green summer afternoon. You can teach a bird how to sing "Mmm-bop" by Hanson. You can cuddle with a cat while reading a good book. You can spend time teaching a rabbit how to get the ultimate vertical jump or you can teach a mouse how to do acrobatics. You could even teach a squirrel how to water ski.

One pet many people find useless is fish. However, having a fish can be exhilarating. Fish are extremely good listeners. You will find that they enjoy in depth discussions on things from the latest fashion don'ts to competitive baton twirling. They are also exceptional at making faces and blowing perfect bubbles.

Along with your average pets such as dogs, cats, fish, etc. there are many unique pets. In the swampy villages of the South there have been alligators found swimming in the bathtubs. Also, animals normally found in zoos like

tigers and monkeys have been found in homes across America. Different species of spiders have been kept as companions, the most popular, tarantulas. Snakes are also a common sight in homes nowadays. Who would think that something that in

many cases can be deadly would be kept as a loyal friend.

While there are many things to do with your pets there are many things you should avoid. Hamsters, for example, should not be left outside all night. This results in them being sent to a special farm where children are not allowed to visit. If a pet has a disability, such as being blind, try to keep it on the first floor. There is nothing worse than hearing your dog fall down the steps while you are trying to sleep.

Some people have questioned the humanity of keeping a pet indoors and taming it. Should dogs be treated equally as humans or merely as a pet which we own? Some have wondered if it is healthy to form such a strong bond with something you cannot relate with. Decide for yourself, but many people have found something in a pet that they could not find anywhere else.

Someone to keep their deepest secrets. Someone to always be there after a rough day. Someone to always be a true best friend.



Katie Carson, Divesh Patel and Kara Duquette show proper dog biscuit receiving form. (Photo By: Yada)