

death of her oldest to a brain tumor when he was 19. "It kind of helps me to know what these mothers are going through, and I try to watch over their children as they head home," she said in an interview conducted by telephone and e-mail.

Silicio, who grew up in Seattle and Edmonds, is used to hard work. After a decade of events-decorating work in the Seattle area, she went to war-torn Kosovo, where she worked on the transportation crew for a contractor during the NATO peacekeeping mission in 1999.

"Nothing scares her," said Silicio's mother, Leona Silicio.

Tami Silicio first went to work at the Kuwait airport in March 2003, before the start of the war. She then returned home but found it tough to get a job in an economy still sour from the recession. So by last October, she was back in Kuwait and her airport job for a contractor that works with the military to coordinate and process airport cargo.

The crews help move thousands of tons of supplies onto the Iraq-bound flights that support the U.S. military forces. Much of Silicio's job is handling paperwork to track the cargo. But she also might drive equipment to help load cargo, or make a quick run to a Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet to secure a few savory buckets to offer a soldier just in from Iraq.

Around Christmas, she helped handle a rash of incoming cargo from the United States—candy, shaving cream, razors, baby wipes and other items in care packages headed to Iraq. "Thank God, no fruitcakes," she e-mailed her mother. "The soldiers would just give it to the Iraqis, anyway."

Just after Christmas, there was a marathon of work as medical supplies to aid Iranian earthquake victims moved through Kuwait.

And now, the crews are helping to coordinate the departures of dozens of U.S. civilian contractors who, with the recent violence and kidnappings, no longer want to risk being in the region.

More time also is devoted to the dead. The fallen come into Kuwait on flights from Baghdad. Before they are loaded onto the outbound aircraft, soldiers in full uniform form parallel lines along the tarmac. There is a prayer. Then loaders lift up the coffins, which are joined on board by soldiers who share the final journey. After going first to Germany, according to the military, they fly to Dover Air Base in Delaware.

Since the 1991 Gulf War, photographs of coffins as they return to the United States have been tightly restricted. And few such photographs have been published during the conflict in Iraq.

On the April day depicted in the photograph that accompanies this story, more than 20 coffins went into a cargo plane bound for Germany. Silicio says those who lost loved ones in Iraq should understand the care and devotion that civilians and military crews dedicate to the task of returning the soldiers home.

Silicio says she shares her motto, "Purpose and Cause," with colleagues who appear worn down from the job: "We serve a purpose and we have a cause—that's what living life is all about."

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 24, 2008]

WHAT THE FAMILY WOULD LET YOU SEE, THE PENTAGON OBSTRUCTS

(By Dana Milbank)

Lt. Col. Billy Hall, one of the most senior officers to be killed in the Iraq war, was laid to rest yesterday at Arlington National Cemetery. It's hard to escape the conclusion that the Pentagon doesn't want you to know that.

The family of 38-year-old Hall, who leaves behind two young daughters and two stepsons, gave their permission for the media to cover his Arlington burial—a decision many grieving families make so that the nation will learn about their loved ones' sacrifice. But the military had other ideas, and they arranged the Marine's burial yesterday so that no sound, and few images, would make it into the public domain.

That's a shame, because Hall's story is a moving reminder that the war in Iraq, forgotten by much of the nation, remains real and present for some. Among those unlikely to forget the war: 6-year-old Gladys and 3-year-old Tatianna. The rest of the nation, if it remembers Hall at all, will remember him as the 4,011th American service member to die in Iraq, give or take, and the 419th to be buried at Arlington. Gladys and Tatianna will remember him as Dad.

The two girls were there in Section 60 yesterday beside grave 8,672—or at least it appeared that they were from a distance. Journalists were held 50 yards from the service, separated from the mourning party by six or seven rows of graves, and staring into the sun and penned in by a yellow rope. Photographers and reporters pleaded with Arlington officials.

"There will be a yellow rope in the face of the next of kin," protested one photographer with a large telephoto lens.

"This is the best shot you're going to get," a man from the cemetery replied.

"We're not going to be able to hear a thing," a reporter argued.

"Mm-hmm," an Arlington official answered.

The distance made it impossible to hear the words of Chaplain Ron Nordan, who, an official news release said, was leading the service. Even a reporter who stood surreptitiously just behind the mourners could make out only the familiar strains of the Lord's Prayer. Whatever Chaplain Nordan had to say about Hall's valor and sacrifice were lost to the drone of airplanes leaving National Airport.

It had the feel of a throwback to Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon, when the military cracked down on photographs of flag-draped caskets returning home from the war. Rumsfeld himself was exposed for failing to sign by hand the condolence letters he sent to the next of kin. His successor, Robert Gates, has brought some glasnost to the Pentagon, but the military funerals remain tightly controlled. Even when families approve media coverage for a funeral, the journalists are held at a distance for the pageantry—the caisson, the band, the firing party, "Taps," the presenting of the flag—then whisked away when the service itself begins.

Nor does the blocking of funeral coverage seem to be the work of overzealous bureaucrats. Gina Gray, Arlington's new public affairs director, pushed vigorously to allow the journalists more access to the service yesterday—but she was apparently shot down by other cemetery officials.

Media whining? Perhaps. But the de facto ban on media at Arlington funerals fits neatly with an effort by the administration to sanitize the war in Iraq. That, in turn, has contributed to a public boredom with the war. A Pew Research Center poll earlier this month found that 14 percent of Americans considered Iraq the news story of most interest—less than half the 32 percent hooked on the presidential campaign and barely more than the 11 percent hooked on the raid of a polygamist compound in Texas.

On March 29, a week before the raid on the polygamists' ranch, William G. Hall was riding from his quarters to the place in Fallujah where he was training Iraqi troops when his vehicle hit an improvised explosive

device. He was taken into surgery, but he died from his injuries. The Marines awarded him a posthumous promotion from major to lieutenant colonel.

Newspapers in Seattle, where Hall had lived, printed an e-mail the fallen fighter had sent his family two days before his death.

"I am sure the first question in each of your minds is my safety, and I am happy to tell you that I'm safe and doing well," he wrote, giving his family a hopeful picture of events in Iraq. "I know most of what you hear on the news about Iraq is not usually good news and that so many are dying over here," the e-mail said. "That is true to an extent but it does not paint the total picture, and violence is not everywhere throughout the country. So please don't associate what you see on the news with all of Iraq. 'Love you and miss you,'" he wrote. "I'll write again soon."

Except, of course, that he didn't. And yesterday, his family walked slowly behind the horse-drawn caisson to section 60. In the front row of mourners, one young girl trudged along, clinging to a grown-up's hand; another child found a ride on an adult's shoulders.

It was a moving scene—and one the Pentagon shouldn't try to hide from the American public.

REAL HEALTH CARE SOLUTIONS FOR AMERICAN FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Americans remain frustrated with the cost of health care. As costs rise, fears grow that they'll lose coverage and even fall into bankruptcy. Americans face this anxiety every day. But it doesn't need to be that way. We can give all American families confidence in a health care system.

Americans deserve more affordable and more widely available health care. Americans deserve real access to health care, not just health care coverage that doesn't lead to access but real access to health care. That's why we must modernize our health care system and learn from other sectors of the economy where competition has driven down costs, particularly in the insurance arena, so that we can drive down those premium costs and make it more affordable for all American families.

When addressing health care, Washington fails to put the needs of the patient first. I know this as a physician. I was in private practice for 14 years and saw how policies really drove a wedge between the patient and their doctor.

Patients want personal, quality, high-value health care. That's what we all want. That's going to be the way that we get true quality in health care. We must focus on what patients most want and need: prevention, early detection, early diagnosis, control of chronic illnesses, enhancing the quality of life, and wellness programs.

I know as a physician that trying to get a patient to quit smoking takes a

lot of work. Simple television commercials and public service announcements, while they help, won't do the job. But if you have a doctor-patient relationship where the doctor knows the patient and that trust develops and a doctor supports the patient in their effort to quit smoking, it's much more likely to be successful.

The same thing with dietary measures. These are the kinds of things that we need to do that will help reduce the cost of health care and will help make Americans more healthy. These are the kinds of solutions that will help Americans stay out of hospitals and avoid other expensive institutional forms of treatment.

Just yesterday, my colleagues and I across the aisle debated these very issues at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital. It was a great debate. But let me say that Republicans focused on strengthening the doctor-patient relationship that is fundamental to good quality health care. As I said before, we can't expect good quality health care to come about without this fundamental relationship between a doctor and a patient.

We think back to the old days, of Marcus Welby and how a physician portrayed as Marcus Welby on television had that relationship with the patient and their family. We think back to Norman Rockwell paintings that depict this type of relationship that patients had with the doctor, of mutual trust that focused not just on sickness but on health, not just on the disease process but how the disease affected the entire patient's well-being and their family circumstances.

These are the things that we as Republicans want to focus on as we try to introduce information technology into health care, a wide range of choices for families to pick a good health care policy that meets their specific needs, not somebody else picking what they need, let families pick what they need and put families back in control of their health care destiny.

Our opponents on the other side of the aisle have suggested a one-size-fits-all program, something like you see in Canada or in England where there are waiting lists for care. I know as a physician that when I was in Rochester, New York, we had patients who were being told they couldn't have heart surgery for 18 months and they were coming across the border into the U.S. to have their heart surgery done. A friend of mine who is a heart surgeon in England was told 6 months into the year that he couldn't do any more heart surgery and when he attempted to do so, his superiors threatened to fire him. Think of the patients that suffered because of this type of rationing of care. That's not what Americans want. Americans want a health care system that provides access and that's affordable and available.

I know, I think everyone knows, that Americans deserve better than what we're getting, and I know and I'm very

confident that we can make it better if we adhere to those principles I outlined earlier, of information and choice and patient and family control. We can create a health care system that meets patients' needs and allays Americans' anxieties, a health care system that gives all of us confidence that our health care needs will be taken care of. And we can do this by putting in place new policies that respond to consumer needs, individual needs, and the demands for more available and affordable health insurance and for more control over our health care decisions. That's what we all want. We want a health care system that provides real access to care, not just coverage on paper. There are far too many examples of where folks have coverage but not real access. We want access.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 48 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BLUMENAUER) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Dr. William Lloyd Birch, retired Baptist minister, Florence, South Carolina, offered the following prayer:

We are so grateful for the blessings You have given to us. But the blessings of the past will not suffice for the needs of today. We know that if we commit ourselves to You, You will help us to focus on the needs of our Nation.

We confess that so often we fall short of the expectations You have for us. We are tempted and so often we succumb to these temptations. We put ourselves before others. We fail to show our brothers and sisters the love that You want us to demonstrate by the quality of our lives.

As we face this day, help us to be honest, unselfish, compassionate people. What have we gained if we obtain success in the eyes of the world and yet lose the sense of Your presence and Your will among us?

May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done. We pray in the name of our Lord, the God of our Nation.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. CLYBURN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 2929. An act to temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965.

WELCOMING DR. WILLIAM LLOYD BIRCH

(Mr. CLYBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to welcome and thank the gentleman and scholar who provided us with today's invocation. Dr. William Lloyd Birch hails from my congressional district. He is an ordained minister in Florence, South Carolina.

Over his illustrious ministerial career, Dr. Birch has served as interim pastor in more than 42 churches. Dr. Birch is the founder of the Sociology Department at Francis Marion University, and chaired it for over 30 years. Prior to his retirement, Dr. Birch was a family therapist, and chaired the South Carolina Board of Licensing.

Dr. Birch is known by many in the Pee Dee area of South Carolina as their professor, as the minister who baptized their children or performed their son's or daughter's weddings, as the interim pastor at their church, or as the counselor who guided them through a family crisis.

Many have also seen him riding his horses, fox hunting or playing the bluegrass music he loves. Many of us are grateful for his work throughout the Pee Dee communities in South Carolina.

He is joined here today by his wife of 57 years, Jean, and I thank both of them for their daughter Lindy's work in my office on behalf of the people of South Carolina and the Nation.

BLACKBERRY CAPER

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, last week, President Bush and President Calderon of Mexico met in New Orleans to discuss mutual concerns of both nations, such as trade. Electronic devices by staff are not permitted in these meetings, and are left on a table outside the room.