

Burelison, Dallas

Piqua Daily Call, January 16, 2009

By Melody Vallieu, Staff Writer

A hero among us

Burelison helps save fellow servicemen

Covington: Covington High School graduate Dallas Burelison joined the navy to help pay for college expenses and see the world while serving his country.

Little did he know, he would become a hero in the process.

Burelison, now on his second tour of duty, first deployed to Camp Fallujah in Iraq with a medical team attached to the Marines. During a mission to pick up a marine who was killed in action, Burelison said on the return trip, the first vehicle in their group hid an improvised explosive device, or "booby trap", injuring two. Burelison assisted both men with their injuries – the Navy Corpsman's injuries were substantial – and both men survived the attack.

The seriously injured man, HM2 Patrick McElhinney, who was trapped in the vehicle, said he owes his life to Burelison.

"Without the actions of one man, I would not have lived to be a Wounded Warrior," McElhinney wrote in his personal newsletter. "He acted quickly and with the utmost bravery to save the lives of all involved."

Burelison, who also received minor injuries during attack, received the Meritorious Mast for his bravery.

"During the deployment we encountered three IED's were mortared and sniped on one occasion, and many other things. We had 17 men die on the deployment," Burelison said by e-mail. "It was one of the hardest things I ever endured in my life, but from the support from my Marines and from home it was easy to overcome. It's hard to explain everything that went on."

Hospital Corpsman Third Class Petty Officer Burelison currently is deployed on the Mediterranean Sea for seven months aboard the USS Iwo Jima LHD-7. The LHD's mission is to conduct prompt sustained combat operations at sea, as part of the Navy's amphibious strategy. Burelison's job on the ship is to assist doctors with "everyday tasks with patients," from routine medical treatments to emergency room-type procedures.

"This is my second deployment and compared to the first one, this is a breeze. I don't mind deploying. It's why I joined," Burelison said, "It's something that I understood could happen anytime."

Burelison, the son of Thomas Wayne Burelison of Covington and Rhonda Burelison of Versailles, has been in the Navy for 4 ½ years and in October will have achieved his college degree and plans to attend Officer Candidate School to be a U.S. Naval Officer.

"My plans may change but that is my decision for right now," said Burelison, who when stateside, is stationed at Norfolk Naval Base in Virginia.

Burelison said what he misses most about being back in the states is seeing grass and his family and loved ones. He also can't wait to make a stop at a favorite eatery, P.F. Chang's.

The serviceman said while being away from home too much is the hardest part of his service, "being a part of history and traveling the world," make his journey well worth it.

"I feel that we've had a great impact on the war on terror but there's a long way to go...", he said.