

PREMIER



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Greetings from Premier Boys State Governor Jacob Becraft



Welcome to Premier Boys State. On behalf of my fellow citizens from the 73rd session of Premier Boys State, 2008, I would like to extend our greatest congratulations on your acceptance and participation in the 74th annual session of Premier Boys State, the first Boys State program ever in America.

By now you have begun to settle in and meet your fellow citizens; I would encourage you to branch out and meet other people that you did not know before your arrival here. Your experience here depends solely on how much effort you put into it. I am sure most of you are confused as to what will be happening this week. I encourage you to trust in your counselors to "show you the ropes," but then to reach out on your own and create your own unique experience. Last year, everyone I spoke to at the end of the week found something that they enjoyed throughout the week, and I would like to encourage you to find that thing or things.

Leadership is contagious, and just by just walking through the campus and conversing with your fellow citizens, you just might catch it. Take a chance and see what happens, who knows what people you will find the most interesting here. Most importantly: Have a great week!!!

Governor Jacob Becraft will serve in office until Thursday when his successor is chosen as will the following elected officials who will also serve on our counseling staff this week: Alex Dunn, Attorney General * Peter Kehr, Treasurer * John Tienken, Comptroller * Trevor Paul, Boys Nation Senator from Illinois * Kevin Dore, Boys Nation Senator from Illinois

A friendship forged in fire: Young officers from Central Illinois fight side by side in Iraq, Compilation from an article By: Huey Freeman, Staff Writer, Herald & Review

When they met at Fort Carson, Colo., before shipping out for Iraq together, the two young officers discovered they had a lot in common.

John Feeney, a 2000 graduate of Monticello High School, and Dustin McWhirter, who graduated the same year from Meridian, grew up in the country, played sports in the same conference, joined the military shortly after high school and attended Illinois Boys State together in 1999.

Capt. Feeney, 27, who recently was awarded his second Bronze Star for his actions in Iraq in October, has completed two tours there. A member of the 75th Ranger Regiment, based in Fort Benning, Ga., Feeney was honored for heroic actions during raids against al-Qaida leaders that resulted in the death of six and capture of 30 enemy fighters.

"His unflappable leadership in the face of an imminent threat enabled his platoon to fix, finish and exploit



the enemy, resulting in the confirmed death of a significant enemy leader," the citation states.

Feeney said the worst part of his most recent tour was the death of Sgt. William Patrick "Ricky" Rudd during the mission.

"Ricky was the first soldier I lost," Feeney said during an interview at his parents' home near Ivesdale, where he was visiting while

on leave. "All around, he was a great dude and an outstanding junior noncommissioned officer and team leader."

Feeney also earned a Bronze Star during his first Iraq tour, in which he served with the Army's C Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. Feeney said he could speak openly about that tour but was unable to talk about the more recent one because of ongoing operations. One of the highlights of his first tour was developing a close friendship with McWhirter.

.....CONTINUED on PG 4 — A friendship forged in fire

Leadership of Boys State 2008 — 2009



GOVERNOR
Jacob Becraft
Metamora, IL



LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
Jorgin Jose
Niles, IL



SECRETARY OF STATE
Nicholas Smith
Edwardsville, IL



ATTORNEY GENERAL
Alex Dunn
Danville, IL



STATE COMPTROLLER
John Tienken
Clarendon, IL



STATE TREASURER
William Kehr
Lake Forest, IL



BOYS NATION SENATOR
Kevin Dore
Naperville, IL



BOYS NATION SENATOR
Trevor Paul
Godfrey, IL

2008 — 2009
MODEL COUNTIES

OVERALL — SAVAGE

EAST WING — HAYES

WEST WING — STELLE

2008 — 2009 *SPORTS CHAMPIONS*

Basketball — Savage

Volleyball — Hayes

Football — Savage

Softball — Geiger

Soccer — Keller

In pursuit of pirates: Mattoon sailor helps US catch Somali raiders,

By: Herb Meeker, Staff Writer, Journal Gazette / Times-Courier

Sean Purdy attended Illinois Boys State in 2000 where he was elected President of the Boys State Senate. During his time at The United States Naval Academy, Purdy returned to Boys State nearly every summer to serve as a City Counselor. Purdy is a member of the Illinois Boys State Alumni Association.

MATTOON — U.S. Navy officer Sean Purdy beat the rush on pirate hunting off the African coast.

The chopper pilot was involved in an anti-pirate operation earlier this year that captured 16 pirates in the Gulf of Aden, between the coasts of Somalia and Yemen. Lt. J.G. Purdy, a 2005 graduate of the Naval Academy, was shocked when the pirates were brought in from their fishing craft.

“They were pretty much my age,” Purdy said of the pirate crew during an interview this week while he was on leave visiting his mother, Nancy Purdy, in Mattoon. “We found them and hovered over and they put their hands in the air.”

Surrender was the better part of valor for the pirates. They were mainly armed with submachine guns, while the Naval helicopters in Purdy’s squadron were armed with heavy machine guns and Hellfire missiles. The capture include the drama from a recent ship capture that involved an American ship captain, but for Purdy and his squadron, Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron 3 of Carrier Air Wing 8 of the U.S.S Theodore Roosevelt, the incident was a dream come true.

“It was great to do something this unique. Anti-piracy missions are something everyone wants in the Navy. It’s a great mission for helicopter squadrons,” he said.

Though the pirates are gaining a fearsome reputation worldwide, especially after recent ship captures, Purdy learned they have a less-than-romantic existence.

“Tuberculosis was a problem for them,” said Purdy, whose squadron also assists with search and rescue missions when jet pilots go down in the ocean.



The possibility of more extensive pirate hunting in Purdy’s future, the young officer said, hinges on the pirates and Somalia.

“It just depends. Look at what happened with Captain Phillips. In my opinion, the threat of retaliation might lead to significant responses,” he said.

Purdy said the Persian Gulf is like a highway with huge freighters and tankers cruising in line two miles apart, seven days a week, hour after hour. Any disruption of that flow could have a terrible effect on the global economy, he noted, which explains why the United States and many other countries are concerned with fighting piracy in that part of the world.

Purdy noted the Navy’s deep sea roots go back to fighting the Barbary Coast pirates 200 years ago.

“We’re going back to our roots against the pirates. The Navy will probably help with protecting vessels if needed,” Purdy said.

Purdy is not just concentrating on going back into the ring again with Somali pirates. He has his mind on a set of rings next year: He is engaged to marry Sarah Botelho of Pensacola, Fla.

Their first meeting sounds like a typical sailor tale. They met in a bar and he offered her a drink. But there’s more to this romance. “She was in scrubs from a hospital and had a water bottle in her hand. So I was joking when I offered her a drink,” Purdy said.

Botelho, who is completing a medical-related degree at the University of Florida in Gainesville, later accepted his proposal of marriage on a beach under an Arabian moon during a December trip to Dubai.

For now, Purdy’s pirate-battling days might give him one up on his two military veteran brothers, Ryan and Neil. But that could change with any future operations, since his siblings are still serving.

“For the time being I have bragging rights with the pirates, but we all have our own stories to tell,” he said.

Continued — A friendship forged in fire

CONTINUED from PG 1

"I don't remember when we found out we were both from Central Illinois," Feeney said. "I found out he was a Cardinals fan. I'm a Cardinals fan."

When Feeney attended the American Legion Boys State as a high school junior, McWhirter also was there. It was at Boys State that Feeney began thinking about joining the military. Feeney also represented Illinois Boys State that year as a delegate to Boys Nation. While there he was elected Vice President, only the third Illinois Boys Stater to have attained national office.

When they were deployed together in Iraq, from October 2006 to December 2007, Feeney and McWhirter's bond was forged through firefights, unique triumphs and tragic losses. While all the soldiers in Feeney's platoon survived, there were 18 soldiers killed from 2nd Battalion, with 206 soldiers (about 25 percent) receiving Purple Hearts.

Feeney recalled that he was glad that McWhirter was his company's executive officer, second in command for the company, in charge of supplies, support and maintenance. Feeney, a West Point graduate, served as leader of the 3rd Platoon. When the company was posted to the Dora neighborhood, a Sunni enclave in southern Baghdad, it was one of the most violent places in Iraq.

Feeney said McWhirter frequently volunteered to go on patrol with the platoon. "He was definitely a fearless dude when the bullets were flying, so he was a good guy to have around," Feeney said, adding that his soldiers did not immediately like the idea of having "an extra" along. "But after the first scrape we got into, they loved having Dustin along."

"Over the winter, we saw a distinct shift in enemy capabilities and tactics. Instead of sporadic small-arms fire, we encountered precision sniper fire," Feeney recalled, adding that the roadside bombs increasingly were more powerful and better hidden.

However, by the time they went home, the neighborhood had been restored to relative peace. According to a USA Today article, there were nine attacks in Dora, compared to 271 in June 2007.

Feeney credits the surge of additional troops into Iraq with helping to quell the violence. Before the rein-

forcements came into the area, Feeney's platoon was covering too much territory.

"I needed three platoons to do what my platoon was doing," Feeney said. "If you own a piece of ground, you've got to own it 24/7, or at least the enemy understands that you threaten to be there all day. If you're not, you've lost that piece of terrain."

Because of the surge, which meant a strengthened commitment to defeating the insurgency, many soldiers, including Feeney and McWhirter, had their tours extended.

Feeney said he was thankful he was able to stay, because the improvements in the neighborhood largely were made in the last few months.

"Had we left on schedule, I don't know that I could have said we left this area better than we found it," Feeney said.

McWhirter credited Feeney with leading the effort to reopen a church, which had been closed for a couple of years. "The church was in the worst part of our sector," McWhirter said. "Most of the Christians in the area had been pushed out. John took it upon himself to get to know the people and, with the battalion's help, to reopen the church."

McWhirter said the key to Feeney's success was that he gained the respect and trust of many neighborhood residents.

"I could walk into any house and ask them if they knew Lt. Feeney, and they would smile and say, 'I know Lt. Feeney; he's a great guy,' and they'd go on and on about him," McWhirter said.

"John was able to do better than anyone I saw over there, from his level up to full-bird colonels. He made promises he knew he could keep but would not promise something he couldn't come through with. If we were working on a power station to get them power, John was able to keep their hopes up."

When they first met and discovered how much they had in common they also discovered that they had attended Illinois Boys State together in 1999. "I was lucky enough to be elected Governor that year," Feeney said. "Oh I remember you now," McWhirter declared. "I voted for the other guy."

