

CBS 2 Chicago WBBM-TV: Wounded Heroes Given VIP Treatment In Chicago

Top News

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Wounded Heroes Given VIP Treatment In Chicago

VIDEO: Jay Levine reports.

(CBS 2) CHICAGO More than a dozen soldiers who were badly wounded in Iraq were honored with a special presentation in Chicago Thursday night. CBS 2 chief correspondent Jay Levine reports their bravery on the battlefield and courage during painful physical therapy provides a lesson for all of us.

The cavalry hats and ceremonial swords presented to the sixteen wounded heroes -- most of them brought directly from hospitals for a week of R&R -- were symbols of a nation's gratitude.

"These kids have given everything to us and we want to make sure they get the best of what America has to offer," Anna Sherony of Operation Wounded Heroes said.

Sherony has gotten to know each of these soldiers and Marines whose tours of duty were ended by terrorist attacks that nearly killed them.

Sgt. Dusty Hill of Wyanet, Illinois said, "Everybody at the hospital told me I shouldn't have made it. I was one of the guys in the ICU and everybody was just waiting for the day I finally gave up."

Hill lost both hands to a suicide bomber's attack. But he never gave up. Neither did Sgt. Gabe Garriga of Aurora whose Humvee was hit with a grenade.

"I flipped from the top of the turret -- from the top of the Humvee -- into the fire," Garriga said. "About a month later I woke up in San Antonio... during the whole time I was in San Antonio they were telling my family that I wasn't going to make it, that I had a very low chance of living, and might as well start

making the funeral arrangements."

Garriga returned home, not for a funeral, but to throw out the first pitch at Monday's Sox game.

Illinois Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, who's traveled to Iraq and has been a huge supporter of Illinois' troops there, was here to salute the men whose perfectly pressed uniforms covered bodies now far less than perfect. Their futures clouded by their injuries. But their attitudes, for the most part, as clear as can be.

"I can't be bitter about it, and I can't hold it and be down about it. It is just something you deal with, you move on. You don't look at what can't do, you don't look at what you used to be able to do, you just look at what you still can do and move on with life, and be as happy as possible," Hill said.

Many of these men face long months -- even years -- of recovery and rehabilitation. But for this week, anyway, they'll be treated to limo tours of Chicago, skybox seats at a Sox game, and lots of great food. As Operation Wounded Heroes says, its the least we can do.

Jay Levine (http://cbs2chicago.com/team/local_bio_092161315.html/)

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