

# Concern for loved ones invades lives of sailors' families

■ Jennifer Forehand, whose husband is aboard the nuclear submarine USS Providence in the Middle East, with sons Joshua, 4, left, and Caleb, 2, outside their Groton home on Thursday.



SUZANNE OUELLETTE The Day

From A1

That the Providence can perform its duty so far from the war front provides comfort to some of the crew's family members and friends. But others say they still can't help but worry.

"Yes, I'm worried," Vanessa Rinaldo said. "I know he's probably safer than the guys on the ground crawling on their bellies, but it doesn't help. I'm still worried."

Holly Trahan of Groton, whose boyfriend, Chris Rogers, is a nuclear mechanic on the Providence, said she's had an easier time mobilizing for war the second time around. With the Afghanistan experience still fresh in their minds, she and Rogers had more time to prepare for his deployment this time.

"Last time, they were right at the beginning of everything," Trahan said.

Like many others with loved ones on the Providence, Trahan looks forward to the e-mail messages she receives

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Jennifer Baker of Mobile, Ala., sister of USS Providence crewman Craig Forehand

from Rogers. They marvel at how their counterparts could have fared in previous wars with no e-mail or cell phones.

"I'll be just fine," Jason Rinaldo, 25, wrote March 12 in an e-mail to his father, Larry Rinaldo. "I'm not scared, so none of you should be. I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Say 'hi' to everyone. Take care and no worries. J."

Larry Rinaldo was a Vietnam veteran before he met his future wife. Infrequent letters were his only communication with his family. Vanessa's father served in World War II as a young man and had the same infrequent and unreliable way of contacting home.

Access to the outside media can have its drawbacks for the troops, said Jen-

nifer Forehand, wife of Craig Forehand, a machinist mate on the Providence. Jennifer Forehand said she "feels ashamed" when she sees reports of anti-war protests. She said she knows the troops are troubled by the protests and wonders whether they, too, will be targeted when they return home.

Forehand's sister, Jennifer Baker of Mobile, Ala., said she has mixed feelings about her brother's involvement in the war. Baker said she is proud of her brother, as she herself prepares for her commission in the Air Force in May. But she also is worried about his safety, and how the war protests will affect his morale.

"I worry about him, and pray that he'll be safe," Baker said. "He's doing his civic duty, and I admire that."

The Forehands, who live in Groton, have two sons, ages 4 and 2. Jennifer Forehand said the boys keep her busy so that she doesn't worry too much about her husband. She has been watching CNN too much, she said, adding, "I'm getting sick of it."

The boys know that their father is far away, she said. The youngest walks around saying, "I miss Daddy," she said, echoing his older brother's sentiments. The boys think their father is on a great adventure, but one that is very different from his actual duties.

"What they think he's doing is finding new sharks," Jennifer Forehand said. "I have to find some sharks on the Internet to show them."

"Even if I did tell them, they wouldn't understand."

c.bessette@theday.com

# Veterans see war with Iraq as inevitable, predict decisive victory

From A1

"As far as going to war, it's more than video games," said Bob Kopley, 69, of New London, who served on a Navy destroyer in 1953 during the Korean War. "It's very serious business. There's no music playing like in the movies."

Kopley and dozens of other veterans who popped in the club for lunch or a quick drink were confident and relaxed. War was inevitable, they said, because Saddam Hussein's regime had to be toppled.

They agreed, too, that a U.S. victory would be both swift and decisive and that, regardless of personal politics, all Americans should support the troops. After the war, they said, the real challenge would be rebuilding Iraq.

Patrons' opinions varied about the true motivation for the U.S. attack. And, despite their confidence in America's military might, some veterans were anxious. They had seen war and could empathize with the soldiers facing battle in Iraq.

"I think everybody's nervous, but it has to be done," said Joseph Radecki

Jr., 51, a Navy veteran from Norwich who served on submarines as a storekeeper. His father served in World War II, his grandfather in World War I.

Radecki held a bottle of beer at the bar and glanced at a television. The headline "Smoke rising from three locations in Baghdad" flashed across the screen.

"They smacked us on September 11<sup>th</sup> pretty hard," he said, linking Saddam and the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. "We should have smacked them September 12<sup>th</sup>."

The submarine veterans club has about 1,550 members who either served on a submarine or have a strong tie to the military. Patrons come for beer, \$3 hamburgers, chili so spicy that "it will make you sweat" and the camaraderie they found in the service.

That military bond brought John Casey, 56, of Groton City, in for a beer Thursday with his wife. Wearing a blue cap that read "Vietnam Veteran," he divided his attention among a touch-

screen video game, television news reports and his drink.

Casey supports President Bush's military action and was troubled by growing anti-war protests in the last few months. Activists often overlook the price of liberty when they are picketing the military, he said.

"The freedom you have, it was earned by a veteran," said Casey, who served in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969. "Some people forget that."

At a table in a back room, two bulky men lingered over empty lunch plates. They sipped beers and poked fun at politicians. Wednesday night, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-South Dakota, went too far in criticizing Bush, they said.

"Is Daschle French?" asked Jim Keefe, 63, playing on France's opposition to the war.

Across the table, Ross Cowan, 53, laughed. He served in the Army's 9th Infantry Division for almost two years during the Vietnam War. He said he supports the war but is wary that politics could prolong the con-

flict the same way it did in Southeast Asia.

"It'll take as long as politicians want it to," he said of the fight in Iraq. "If they're serious about regime change, let the soldiers do their jobs. If not, let's pack up and go home."

After listening to Bush address the nation Wednesday night, Cowan felt confident that this wasn't going to be another protracted war, such as Vietnam.

In the opposite corner, Kopley and three other veterans passed around a pitcher of beer. They joked that people's perception of war has been distorted by television and movies. Most viewers see war as another episode of reality TV or an action movie.

"If Bruce Willis was there, we'd be out in two days," quipped Rob Davis.

Joking aside, Davis, 55, a retired Naval engineer, questioned the United States presence in Iraq.

"I think we're doing the right thing, but I don't think we're doing the right thing for the right reasons," he said, adding that other countries — such as

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North Korea — pose a more imminent threat to the United States. "If this was Ethiopia, it wouldn't be happening. They don't have oil."

A few of his friends grumbled to show their disagreement. They talked about the speed of the first Gulf War

like kids reciting big leaguers' batting averages.

"One hundred hours," said David Lees, 51, a retired Naval engineer from Ledyard. "That's all the ground war took in the Gulf War."

This time is different, someone pointed out. The United States is trying to eliminate a single man, Saddam Hussein. Even if Baghdad falls in two days, Saddam could hide for months.

"They haven't found Jimmy Hoffa yet," said Kopley, finishing the last bite of his hot dog.

"They haven't found Osama, either," Davis said.

No one laughed. When a waitress brought another pitcher of beer, Bob Scent, 52, had a dark thought.

"It makes you wonder," he said. "Didn't Nostradamus say the end of the world was supposed to come from the Middle East?"

Everyone at the table paused. "Yeah," Lees said, "but he said it was supposed to come at the millennium." a.ryan@theday.com

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