

# THE TATTOO

THETATTOO@GMAIL.COM

MAKING A PERMANENT IMPRESSION SINCE 1994

VOLUME 11 No. 15

## Hometown school shooting stuns soldier

By ALKHANSA EL-BEDAWI  
The Tattoo

From his U.S. Army post in "the center of chaos" in Iraq this spring, 26-year-old Jake Schmidt was stunned to learn of the school shooting back home in Red Lake, Minnesota.

"These things just don't happen this close to home," Schmidt said, referring to 16-year-old Jeff Weise's March 22 rampage at Red Lake High School.

Weise murdered nine people, including his grandfather, his grandfather's girlfriend, five fellow students, a teacher and a school security guard before turning the gun on himself. He left 14 other students wounded.

"I'm used to seeing things like this on the news and seeing a school I don't recognize behind the reporter," said Schmidt.

Red Lake lies 30 miles north of Schmidt's hometown of Bemidji and is located on the Red Lake Indian reservation which, Schmidt said, "is one of the poorest reservations in the country and hard times are aplenty."

But Schmidt considers the Red Lake group of Chippewa Indians a proud people.

"Traditions and tribal pride play large roles in their everyday life," he said.

Still, Schmidt said, the people on the reservation have a lot in common with the rest of the nation.

"The people of Red Lake seem like anyone else in America," Schmidt said. "They wear what's in style, 'pimp out their rides' and listen to popular music for the younger generation. You wouldn't be able to see their heritage

**'I'm in the most hostile region of this country and I haven't seen a bloody incident for a few weeks, and then this happens 20 miles from my house in Minnesota.'**

**- Jake Schmidt**

unless you live so close to them, as I have."

According to Schmidt, the people of Bemidji and the Red Lake reservation are such close and compassionate neighbors that it's hard to see much of a difference between them.

"So the shooting obviously comes as a major shock to everyone," said Schmidt.

"Then there's the irony of it all,"



Photo courtesy Jake Schmidt

Tanks near Jake Schmidt's living area

said Schmidt. "I'm in the most hostile region of this country and I haven't seen a bloody incident for a few weeks, and then this happens 20 miles from my house in Minnesota."

In a series of e-mail interviews from Iraq,

Schmidt reflected on the bloody March 22 shooting spree at Red Lake High School where he occasionally had spent time with kids making dream catchers or playing lacrosse, which he said is popular in Red Lake.

"It's not fair this happened while they were in an environment where they are to learn and feel safe and I'm in the center of chaos," said Schmidt. "I can feel the ripple

of shock and pain that my community and the proud Red Lake Nation are experiencing, even all the way over here."

He described his hometown as a quiet, but rapidly growing community with big city amenities and the feel of a small town.

Although there are problems in town that need to be fixed,



Photo courtesy Jake Schmidt

Jake Schmidt

Schmidt said, "Bemidji is a wonderful area to raise a family."

"You always think that 'stuff like this doesn't happen where I live,'" Schmidt wrote. "But unfortunately, it can happen anywhere, even in the small, beautiful community of Bemidji/Red Lake."

Born and raised in Bemidji, Schmidt was deployed to Iraq for the second time in early January.

A specialist with the 22nd Signal Brigade, Schmidt works on military phone and computer networks.

For Schmidt, his current home base in Kitzingen, Germany "is like a second home. I love the sights, people and of course, the beer."

Since joining the military, Schmidt said, he's less afraid to take risks.

"And when I fail at any of those risks, which I have, I have been able to learn from those mistakes," said Schmidt.

Life in the Army has given him travel opportunities, too, he said.

"I've been all over Europe, spending a weekend in the Austrian Alps or

sleeping in a hotel a few blocks from the Eiffel Tower."

But he added, "After joining the military, I have come to recognize and respect the need for one's individuality, which the Army violently tries to rip away from you day after day."

Returning home to Germany after his first stint in Iraq, Schmidt said he noticed things that he'd taken for granted in the past.

"Stuff like a cool, steady rain, or driving down the Autobahn at 150 mph with the windows rolled down in the Mustang, or just viewing Germany's beautiful countryside from atop a large hill, listening to the sounds of nature seemed more significant because we missed it while in Iraq," Schmidt said.

"It's hard for me to speculate how this will affect me in the long run, but I know that our family members do notice a change in us when we return."

When he goes home to Germany on leave, Schmidt said he'd like to see more of Europe on his 30-day break, but he said he must also prepare to get out of the Army three months later.

His expected March 1 discharge date came and went while he was in Iraq, Schmidt wrote.

"I was stop-lost, which prevented me from getting out on time," said Schmidt.

When he returns to Minnesota, Schmidt said he will go back to his old job and build his house, but won't lose his ties to Europe.

"But I will never make Germany (or Europe) just a memory," Schmidt wrote. "I will always go back to Germany."

## Senior journals

Follow our members of the Class of '05 as they travel the emotion-filled path toward graduation.

### Only a month left to prepare for the real world

By DANIELLE LETOURNEAU  
The Tattoo

I hate when time flies.

Everyone says senior year is the best. You're at the top of the school, have senior privileges, have your last prom, and last of all, the year ends in graduating and jumping out into the real world on your own.

They never said it goes by so fast.

I can't even savor a moment before it's gone, two or three months in the past.

As the days near for my high school graduation, my emotions become mixed; I am filled with fear and excitement.

Day by day, I become impatient for the opportunity to burst out of this hellhole! I have dealt with 12 years of school with its

7-hour days, five days a week, 180 days-a-year crap. I can finally leave all of this with graduation!

It's the moment I've been waiting for... and I am afraid.

The more I say it, the stupider it sounds. I am afraid of what lies ahead of me - the future.

I have a future, a plan of what I will do once I step off that stage. I am going to Central Connecticut State University to become a child psychologist.

It sounds easy, but there is so much to worry about! What happens if my plans fail? What happens if I don't succeed?!

I will be an adult, relying on myself and my own thoughts and decisions, with no high school walls to protect me any more. It's life, I guess. I'll get over it.

In the next month, I must accomplish a great task - preparing myself for the real world and creating a person that can support herself, mentally, physically and economically.

Yeah, I'll still have my friends and family there, but after graduation you're pretty much on your own, making your own decisions.

This will be one challenge for me.

I love challenges, so I await the ones that lie ahead of me, but I also fear them.

In one month I must walk across that stage, filled with determination, courage and confidence, prepared to climb the next step in life: college.

I may not be entirely prepared now, but I still have 30 days left!

### A different kind of diploma

By ERIC SIMMONS  
The Tattoo

Some students feel that senior year is stressful and some think it's a breeze.

My senior year has been really different.

This year started normal: same school, same friends and some of the same teachers I'd known before.

I passed through the year with flying colors and made the honor roll during the first two quarters. I was enjoying school and my friends.

By the time the third quarter came, I began having some family problems.

My parents are split and have been for many years. I have been living with my father and stepmother in Connecticut for 10 years.

The problems deal with my mother in Florida. For many personal reasons, in the second week of March we decided it was better for me to move in with my mother.

Within that week I withdrew from school, left my part-time job of three years at Bristol Ten Pin, and said goodbye all my friends to move in with my family in Florida.

My friends picked me up at my house

on the morning of March 14 and brought me to the airport - and I was on my way to begin my new life.

I arrived a little skeptical, but as the days went on I got more and more confident this was going to work.

The public school system down here is horrible, so my mother and I decided I had to do something else to finish high school.

Indian River Community College in Fort Pierce has an adult high school program for free. Students take the classes they need to finish and the required classes that they need in order to graduate in the state of Florida.

When they're done, they get their high school diplomas. I thought this was great so I started classes there.

Well, it's been almost two months since I moved here and now I am almost done with school. I bought a car and got a part-time job at Best Buy.

I can say that I have had a pretty interesting senior year. It is definitely a new experience that not a lot of people get to enjoy.

Life has been rolling and it only gets better from here.

I can't wait to begin the next part of my life - college.



Tyler Wentland / The Tattoo

### Sorting a jumble of memories

By TYLER WENTLAND  
The Tattoo

Senior year. Senior struggles. Seniors freaking out like there's no tomorrow, cause in a way... there isn't.

This year has gone by faster than I could have ever imagined.

I made a lot of changes in the last few years. I lost my first dog, a pain I don't even want to describe, and I gave my pet snake to a family who could take better care of him than I could.

I settled for my second choice of colleges, but felt like it was the best choice for me and my family.

I long for those nights when I drove home with the gas gauge past the empty line and a smile on my face about it.

The same goes for the mornings when I was able to sleep in due to a school closing but a note would greet me along with a shovel just outside the door.

My three years of wrestling flew by, but each practice seemed like a lifetime.

While my only symbols of wrestling success are a second-place medal and a plaque, it was never the competition that made me love the sport, it was the life lessons I learned through sacrifices and from my coach.

I remember staring at the phone, waiting for the girl of the moment to call.

There are too many thoughts, flowing too fast to recall, and too many feelings welling up to describe them all.

WWW.READTHETATTOO.COM

The best teen journalism in the world. For questions, comments or to join, contact advisors Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus at (860)523-9632.