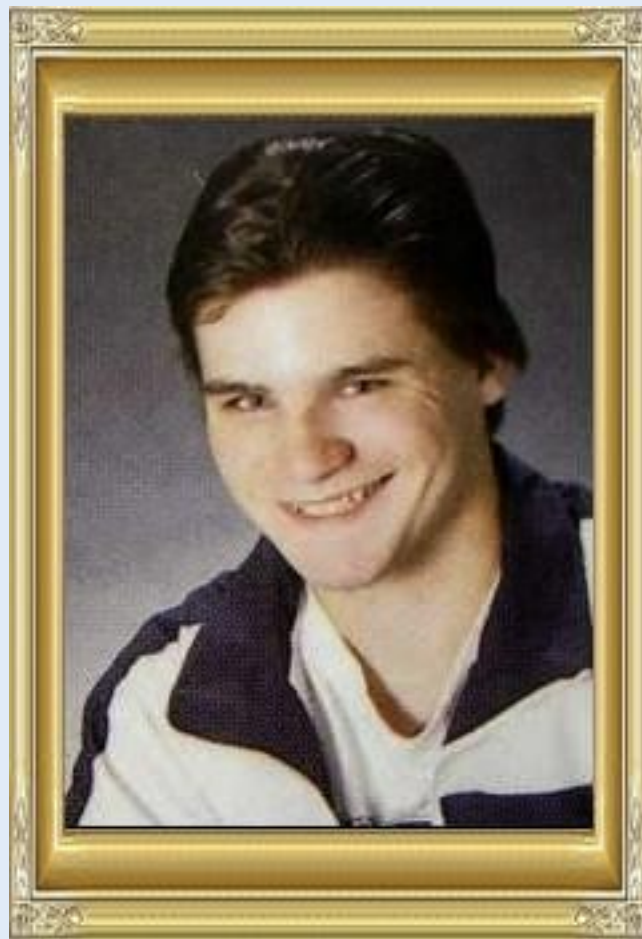


# *Rose is Sad Tonight*

*by Frederick Wickert*



Rose is the daughter of my oldest sister. She raised five sons and a daughter. Four of her sons have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Three of her sons are in the army now. One of her sons dreamed of being in the navy, but was rejected due to his asthma and is now in college.

All of her sons were, as children, in the Boy Scouts. Rose became a Cub Scout leader as one of her sons became a Cub Scout during second and third grades. She was leader for another of her sons through second and third grade, and then became leader for a third group of Cub Scouts in the second and third grades. Charlie was one of that group.

Charlie was the oldest child in his family. He had two sisters and then a younger brother. His father became disabled and unable to work, and the mother, a nurse, became the sole breadwinner.

Charlie's family attended the same church as Rose and her family and Charlie and Rose's sons grew up in the Boy Scouts together. There were always things going on that included Charlie and he was like family.

The boys grew up and went through school together. Charlie loved to read, and during the summer between second and third grade, read a two-volume encyclopedia. Charlie was always polite and respectful to Rose and he and Rose were always glad to see each other.

Ron Pierce, Principal of Owego Free Academy in Owego, New York said of him, "he was actively involved in sports, clubs and student government. He was a natural born leader, always full of respect, and one of the most patriotic students I have ever met. If there was anybody you wanted on your team, it would be Charlie. He'd give you a hundred percent on anything he ever did."

In January, 2005 Mark and Paul, sons of Rose, joined the army. They have both served a tour of duty in Iraq. Charlie's dream was to be an Army Ranger and he joined the army right after he graduated in 2005. Rose heard from Mark or Paul occasionally where Charlie was, but had heard nothing about him recently, until today.

Charlie (Charles E. Bilbrey, Jr.) was killed in action in Iraq early today, July 27, 2007. Rose is sad tonight. She wrote the following to the family:

"Please remember to pray for all of our troops. Mark and Paul expect to be deployed again soon. Mark and Paul are part of our family, but all of our soldiers are someone's son or daughter, someone's brother or sister, or someone's niece or nephew, or someone's mother or father. They all deserve our prayers and our support. Thank you."

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UPDATE: The following information was received tonight from Rose:

Charlie's wake was today, and the funeral is tomorrow. There were many veterans, inside the funeral home and out, holding flags and some standing guard. There were many beautiful flowers, but his family has asked people to contribute to a scholarship fund that has been started at the Owego-Appalachian high school. Many members of Troop 38, his Boy Scout troop, were there in uniform, and were assembling in a second room.

Mark has arrived back at Fort Campbell, and was able to call the Bilbrey's last night. He spoke to Charlie's sister Brianna, who told him yesterday was the most difficult day so far, as they went to the airport when his body was returned home.

According to the Binghamton Press, at 9:20 am yesterday, a small charter plane landed, and was met by about 75 veterans, from World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. The 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum in New York sent representatives. There were two chapters of Patriot Guard Riders

(veterans on motorcycles) as well as Broome and Tioga sheriff departments, state police, and Owego police, who escorted Charlie and his family back to Owego.

Tomorrow morning there will be a funeral mass at St. Patrick's. Following the mass, he will be buried at St. Patrick's cemetery, which is just west of the village of Owego. Charlie will be transported in a horse-drawn carriage, and two friends from the New York Skyliners Drum and Bugle Corps will be playing Taps on a soprano bugle and snare drum This is really a reminder of scouts, as Taps is played at the end of every Boy Scout meeting.

### TAPS

Day is done, gone the sun,  
From the hills, from the lake,  
From the sky.  
All is well, safely rest,  
God is nigh.

Go to sleep, peaceful sleep.  
May the soldier or sailor,  
God keep.  
On the land or the deep,  
Safe in sleep.

Love, good night, Must thou go,  
When the day, And the night  
Need thee so?  
All is well. Speedeth all  
To their rest.

Fades the light; And afar  
Goeth day, And the stars  
Shineth bright,  
Fare thee well; Day has gone,  
Night is on.

Thanks and praise, For our days,  
'Neath the sun, Neath the stars,  
'Neath the sky,  
As we go, This we know,  
God is nigh.

ADDITIONAL UPDATE: On the evening of August 4, 2007 Rose writes:

Brigadier General Robert Caslin, Jr awarded Charlie the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart at the end of the funeral mass this morning, and presented it to his parents, along with other medals. He then read comments from people Charlie served with that had been e-mailed to him. There was also a medal awarded him at the cemetery from Tioga County - something this county has done since WWI.