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From the Editor

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Adam Cote '95 reminded me of my father.

Not that there is a great resemblance, though Cote seems like a good guy and my dad was a heck of a good guy, too. But it was while corresponding with Cote, a lieutenant in the Maine Army National Guard based in Mosul, Iraq (see page 36), that I thought of my father doing the same from Navy ships in the North Atlantic, and later, the South Pacific.

My father's wartime correspondence, like that of Colby alumni from "The Greatest Generation," took place during World War II. He wrote about his shipmates and their diversions, about being hunted by U-boats, about the varied expressions on the faces of young Marines about to hit the

deadly beaches of Iwo Jima and Guam. When he finished his letters, typed on a manual Underwood on onion-skin paper, he stuffed them in envelopes and dropped them in a mailbag. My mother would get them weeks and even months later, often in bundles. She'd try to read them chronologically, like chapters in a book.

Enter Cote, a Portland lawyer in civilian life, now assigned to a construction unit working in northern Iraq. Cote's battalion has seen its share of combat, from snipers and roadside mines to a suicide bomber who blew up the base cafeteria in Mosul, killing two Guardsmen and injuring about 100. Cote was sitting down to lunch at the time; he survived because he was protected from the brunt of the blast by a salad bar.

I know this because Cote said so in an e-mail he sent, subject line: "Answer to Questions." This was followed by two e-mails with photos attached. Cote apologized for taking a few days to get the photos from Iraq to Mayflower Hill. He said he had trouble finding a high-speed Internet connection.

How technology has changed since this country learned of its soldiers' lives—and deaths—from the dispatches of Ernie Pyle. We see our wars live on CNN. Our soldiers, fresh from combat, are able to send home "real time" reports. Cote, a compassionate can-do guy, also reports on his unit's efforts to rebuild rural villages. (Read more about it at his organization's Web site, www.adoptaniraqivillage.org).

It all makes one wonder. Would World War II have unfolded differently if we'd received digital photos from the front? E-mails from Verdun or occupied Poland? If there had been real-time reports, even Web sites, detailing the horrors of the Holocaust?

Of course, history can't be rewritten. And even if it could be, we'd find some wartime experiences are universal. My father, thousands of miles away from the States, longed to get home to see his young sons. Cote's and his wife Paulina's first child, Anna, was born in November, six months after Adam Cote left for Iraq. Cote's last e-mail ended with words any soldier of any generation would echo: "I can't wait to get home."

Gerry Boyle '78, P '06
Managing Editor

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