

Leslie has come a long way since her first venture into recording at the “hear-your-own-voice” attraction on Music Row and in front of audiences at the Bluebird Cafe. The Dallas Morning News has described her as “one of the most in-demand tunesmiths in Music City.” And her personal, painful and poignant compositions have been covered by a wide-range of artists including Reba McEntire, George Jones, Vince Gill, and Randy Travis.

Most recently she has concentrated her efforts on not only penning some of today’s top hits, but singing some of them, too. In fact, she’s in Washington, DC this week to give a special performance to honor our Nation’s injured troops at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

Mr. President, Leslie Satcher is a self-made music success story. She is also one of my most favorite artists—and that’s saying something coming from Nashville!

One of her sayings is that “you don’t decide to be an artist, you are an artist.” I could not agree with her more. She has much to be proud of—and it’s evident in her songs and lyrics that she not only remembers but cherishes her roots. I am proud of all she has accomplished and honored to call her a friend.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT MICHAEL BARKEY

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise this evening to pay tribute to a young Ohioan who lost his life while serving our Nation in Iraq. PFC Michael Barkey was killed on July 7, 2004, when enemy fire caused the vehicle he was riding in to overturn. He was 22 years of age.

I had the opportunity to meet Michael’s family and to talk to them about their extraordinary son. They shared their memories with me—memories of Michael lighting up the room with his infectious smile and causing others to laugh at his antics. An editorial in the Canton Repository from July 9, 2004 says it best:

Michael Barkey’s family and friends have a long time of mourning ahead of them. But it is a testament to his vibrant personality and strong character that as the news of his death began to sink in, their memories of him made the people who loved him smile and laugh.

Michael’s vibrant personality, touched the lives of all who had the privilege of knowing him. As the fourth of six children of Hal and Julie Barkey, Michael learned at a young age that he loved to make people laugh and that he was good at it. When his older sister Jennifer had her first child, eight year-old Michael quipped that since he was an uncle at 8, he would be a grandma before age 30. His mother Julie could only laugh at her young son when he flubbed his words. She liked to call him a ham.

Every member of Michael’s family has fond memories of him. Growing up, Michael and his brother John loved to

wrestle each other and—though he wouldn’t do it for anyone else—sister, Therese, remembers how Michael would dance around for hours to entertain her and her friends. Youngest brother Tony recalls a time when Michael popped out his false tooth in church to shock a small child. Cousin Joe Mitchell remembers when they went to Myrtle Beach together and saw an attractive woman. Michael and another man argued for so long about who would speak to her first that she walked away. All who met Michael were touched by his witty humor.

At Canal Fulton Northwest High School, Michael excelled both academically and athletically. He loved to play basketball and football. High school football coach, Vic Whiting, remembered that after their last game, Michael—then a senior—couldn’t bring himself to take off his uniform. High school friends said that “Mikey,” as they called him, was always the center of attention and a natural leader.

After high school, Michael enlisted in the National Guard so that he could pay his way through the University of Akron, where he earned an associate’s degree in fire technology. His dream was to become a firefighter, but his unit was called to go to Iraq. Michael believed strongly that he was needed to secure freedom for others, that he was needed to help the Iraqi people.

Answering the call of duty was not new in the Barkey family. Michael’s grandfather, Edmund, served in Europe during WWII; father, Hal, is a Navy veteran of the Vietnam war; brother, Todd served in Operation Desert Storm; and brother, John, was an Air Force firefighter stationed in Qatar during Operation Enduring Freedom. Michael was proud to follow in what had become a family tradition.

Michael and the rest of the 1484th Transportation Company trained in Indiana before being sent to Kuwait and then on to Iraq. Michael had been in the National Guard for 4 years. Soon Michael developed the reputation of being able to lighten the mood despite the chaos around them. Captain Curtis Brown, commander of the Company said that Michael was “a remarkable young man who had the gift of making you see the good in a bad situation. He was a master of the gift of laughter.”

One young soldier, in particular, can attest to that. Specialist Jesse Hensel was Michael’s bunkmate and best friend. The two were inseparable—whether they were lounging in their room or lifting weights. Jesse and Michael were like brothers and they argued like brothers. The only thing they agreed on was that Jesse was better looking and Michael was the better dancer.

Michael knew that his family worried about him while he was away. He sent home recordings and pictures—all of which Hal and Julie treasure. One picture in particular always brings a smile to the Barkey family’s faces. In it, Michael is lying on the desert, pull-

ing up his shirt to reveal grains of sand arranged in the shape of a smiley-face on his stomach.

Jesse accompanied his best friend on his final trip home. He said that Michael was everything he wanted to be—as a person and as a soldier. Jesse noted at a service honoring his friend that during the trip home, “I sat by Mike the whole way home and I did a lot of talking. It was the first time Mike didn’t talk back. I love him with every piece of my broken heart.”

In Michael’s hometown of Canal Fulton, OH, thousands of residents came to show their support for the Barkey family. Some waited nearly two hours to pay their respects to Michael. The funeral mass was a celebration of the life of this extraordinary soldier—and Julie Barkey would have it no other way for the son who brought so much light into the world.

Jennifer Barkey, Michael’s older sister wrote the following remembrance letter to provide comfort to the family:

Know that [Michael] was truly an uncommon man. Grieve for the incredible man, husband, and father he would have become. Know that following the example of our father, he stood up for what he believed. His conviction was such that he was willing to die for it.

We know that Michael is in heaven, continuing to spread the laughter he did while on earth. And perhaps the Barkey family is right—Michael is still cracking jokes, exchanging war stories with his grandfather, and is now the patron saint of Cheetos or hamburgers, which were his favorite foods.

Michael will never be forgotten.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF JOHN GREENO

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I speak to honor the memory of the late John Greeno, Bald Mountain heliport manager with the Mi-Wok Ranger District of Stanislaus National Forest. Mr. Greeno was a 21-year veteran of the U.S. Forest Service who dedicated his life to his family, community, and Nation. He was killed in a tragic helicopter crash in Texas on March 10, 2005, while on volunteer assignment to conduct a prescribed burn in Sabine National Forest.

John Greeno was born on June 2, 1952 in Redwood City, CA, and was raised in the town of Independence, CA. He embarked upon his career with the U.S. Forest Service in 1979 as a temporary employee on the Inyo National Forest. His love for firefighting and the U.S. Forest Service led him to the Stanislaus National Forest where he would eventually rise to the position of Helitack superintendent. During his 21 years of service, John earned the respect and admiration of those with whom he worked for consistently going above and beyond the call of duty. He led by example and was considered a mentor by subordinates. John regularly volunteered for assignments like the one that claimed his life in Sabine