A Warrior Speaks

Gungho Marine from Duke City talks without apology about leading men into harm’s way in Iraq

By Tony Perry

In Iraq, Capt. Doug Zembiec of the U.S. Marines has built a reputation as a fearless and uncompromising leader who has guided his men through some of the fiercest fighting of the war.

Strong kid who led by example

By Tony Smith

Doug Zembiec adopted his gladiator spirit at an early age. To correct a crushed left leg that Zembiec was born with, his pediatrician placed him in a Dennis Browne bar, a heavy metal brace thatbridled his orthopedic baby shoes.

The Zembiecs — Doug’s father, Donald, worked for the FBI — moved to Gallup from New Jersey in 1982. Two years later, the family relocated to Albuquerque, where Donald Zembiec continued his career and a few years ago the couple made Albuquerque their retirement home.

As a La Cueva High School wrestler, Doug Zembiec, left, rarely met an opponent he didn’t defeat.

Jay Leno stands up at benefit

It was a busy Saturday in Albuquerque with more than 2,700 people spread between two big public events. One was the grand-opening of the Roy E. Disney Center for the Performing Arts at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. Almost 700 people attended that sold-out gala, which, also, your Inside Source couldn’t attend.

The other was a benefit performance by Jay Leno for the Presbyterian Healthcare Foundation’s annual “Laughter as the Best Medicine” event. Leno’s show was the least advertised happening in town that day, but the no-contract not to advertise the show to the public, so many Albuquerqueans didn’t even know the funny man was coming.

Still, the performance sold 2,060 tickets months before the show, about 130 volunteers also worked the event, said Aurora Bachicha, the foundation’s special events coordinator. At least, the Albuquerque Convention Center seemed packed.

Leno kept his show clean and nonsensical, so the most fiery portion was a bantering introduction between Leno, M.S.G. Diana Deahl and Lt. John Elston, president and CEO of Presbyterian Healthcare Services, as they speculated on what Jr. would have said about Donald Trump if he were an Albuquerquean.

For his part, Leno spent much of the show wincing about the difference between cats and dogs. He seemed to be enjoying himself much more than his opening night audience minutes more than his contract stipulated.

As always, the silent auction preceding the show was spectacular, with more than 300 items, from sports memorabilia to jewelry. Jeanne Stonestein, owner of Jeanne’s Cosmetics & Gifts, and gallery owner Jean Macaluso, were the silent auction committee’s spirit leaders.

The event is a huge money-maker, Cézanne “Zizi” Fritz, the foundation’s executive director, said final numbers haven’t been tallied, but she expects the sale between $140,000 and $200,000. Proceeds go to Presbyterian Healthcare’s Children’s Center.
Marine calls war role noble

Douglas Zembiec, front left, used cross-country running at La Cueva as a training for his real sport, wrestling.

La Cueva wrestler led by example with ethic

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