



**Maj. Bentley G. Williams**  
 '88 B.A. communications  
 Army National Guard  
 248th Rear Area Operations Center  
 currently deployed to Mosul, Iraq

**B**entley Williams came from his home in Tacoma to play football at Eastern. Recruited as a defensive back, he played 1984-86 and was on the first Eastern team ever to go on to Division I-AA postseason play (in 1985, beating Idaho 42-38, losing to Northern Iowa 17-14).

At Eastern, Bentley found a role model in Dick Zornes, who was then head football coach.

"He was hard but passionate, and he believed in me," Bentley said. "He had been a defensive back also, and we had a rivalry going. I wanted to excel at anything I did, especially if he had done it. He challenged me constantly. He had gone

through ROTC but didn't finish, so I knew I had to do it – and finish it."

And so, he did.

"I dreamed of playing in the Canadian Football League, but it never happened. ROTC did, and it made a difference."

Bentley now lives in Puyallup, Wash., with his wife Cindy and children, Karli, 5, and Caden, 4. He works as a pharmaceutical representative for Aventis Pharmaceuticals and is a major in the 248th Rear Area Operations Center of the Army National Guard, which is responsible for base defense and force protection. He likes serving in the Guard, he said, because it's a chance to work on leadership and influence young people.

"I enjoy belonging to a team still," he said. "Football never lets you get away from team concepts. I grew up in a single parent environment with my mom Frances Williams, who is now deceased and who was my biggest fan. I consider that being in the Guard, I can be a role model myself now for young people who may not have had all the benefits and advantages growing up."

His unit was activated in 2003 and deployed to Iraq. He is scheduled to come home this winter. "I did not imagine as a National Guardsman, I would be put into a position overseas, but like other families, we are coping," he said.

Bentley knows first-hand the high price of service in Iraq. He was stationed at Forward Operating Base Marez in Mosul this past Dec. 21 when a noontime suicide attack at the mess tent took 24 lives. "I was one of the responders to the situation," Bentley said. "Unbelievable, we lost some young people with all the promise in the world."

Much of his commitment to service in

the Guard has to do with his love for his community and how the Guard helps in times of emergency in the state.

"Washington is my home," he said. "If there are fires or riots, if Mount St. Helens erupts or things like that occur, I feel the responsibility to be there to help."

None of this surprises Dick Zornes.

"Bentley was a really, really good football player on a really, really good team, and a heck of a good student besides," Zornes said. "He was also a person who came here on scholarship and got a few breaks along the way. It's very much in his character to want to serve in the Guard and give back like this."



In Iraq – (above left) inside one of Saddam Hussein's palaces and (right) at a tank graveyard at Forward Operating Base Marez.