



SON OF A JAZZ MAN
Ravi Coltrane follows
in footsteps of a legend

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Sunday

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NEWSPAPER

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Fall styles get
a taste of Hitchcock

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Chicago Tribune FINAL

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CHICAGO

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JOHN KERRY'S WAR RECORD

**Swift boat skipper:
Kerry critics wrong**



John Kerry (left) and William Rood on a barracks barge with a rocket launcher and an automatic rifle seized in a raid on Feb. 28, 1969, in southern Vietnam in which swift boats charged ambush sites.

Tribune editor breaks long silence on Kerry record; fought in disputed battle

By **Tim Jones**
Tribune national correspondent

The commander of a Navy swift boat who served alongside Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry during the Vietnam War stepped forward Saturday to dispute attacks challenging Kerry's integrity and war record.

William Rood, an editor on the Chicago Tribune's metropolitan desk, said he broke 35 years of silence about the Feb. 28, 1969, mission that resulted in Kerry's receiving a Silver Star because recent portrayals of Kerry's actions published in the best-selling book "Unfit for Command" are wrong and smear the reputations of veterans who served with Kerry.

Rood, who commanded one of three swift boats during that 1969 mission, said that Kerry came under rocket and automatic weapons fire from Viet Cong forces and that Kerry devised an aggressive attack strategy that was praised by their superiors.

He called allegations that Kerry's accom-

plishments were "overblown" untrue.

"The critics have taken pains to say they're not trying to cast doubts on the merit of what others did, but their version of events has splashed doubt on all of us. It's gotten harder and harder for those of us who were there to listen to accounts we know to be untrue, especially when they come from people who were not there," Rood said in a 1,700-word first-person account published in Sunday's Tribune.

Rood's recollection of what happened on that day at the southern tip of South Vietnam was backed by key military documents, including his citation for a Bronze Star he earned in the battle and a glowing after-action report written by the Navy captain who commanded his and Kerry's task force and is now a critic of the Democratic candidate.

Rood's previously untold story and the documents shed new light on a key historical event that has taken center stage in an extraordinary

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Documents describe the battle, Rood's citation for Bronze Star. **PAGES 20,21**

CAMPAIGN 2004

Obama holds 41-point lead over Keyes

Democrat solid among blacks, independents

By **Bob Sexter**
Tribune staff reporter

Alan Keyes said it would be an uphill climb when he agreed this month to be the emergency candidate for Illinois Republicans in the U.S. Senate race, but he may not have realized just how steep the ascent will have to be.

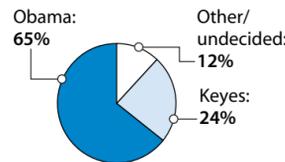
The nation's first Senate contest featuring two major party African-American candidates is beginning in lopsided fashion, with nearly two-thirds of voters indicating support for Democrat Barack Obama and less than one-quarter backing Keyes, according to a new Tribune/WGN-TV poll.

The poll suggests that Keyes' candidacy could hurt other Republicans in local and legislative races. Nearly three in ten voters said they were less likely

Obama leads Keyes

A new Tribune poll shows Democratic Senate candidate Barack Obama with a comfortable lead over Republican Alan Keyes.

VOTER PREFERENCE



Source: Chicago Tribune poll of 700 Illinois likely voters conducted Aug. 13-16. Margin of error is ±4 percentage points. Total exceeds 100 due to rounding.

Chicago Tribune

to back GOP candidates because of the way party leaders went about settling on Keyes as their candidate, though 59 percent said it would make no difference.

Although Keyes came late to the race, a sizable number of voters said they had heard of the

PLEASE SEE **SENATE**, PAGE 22

ATHENS OLYMPICS

Truly the strokes of a swim genius

American Michael Phelps balances record-setting performances with a relaxed approach to life

By **Skip Myslenski**
Tribune Olympic Bureau

ATHENS—The medal ceremony for the 200-meter butterfly was over, and it would be only 20 minutes until Michael Phelps, the event's winner, would swim the opening leg of the 800-meter freestyle relay.

Despite the obvious press of time, he refused to hurry. Phelps remained on the podium and posed for photographers with the other medal winners.

He smiled and waved and held up his medal before stepping down to begin the parade along the pool deck with Takashi Yamamoto of Japan and Stephen Parry of Britain.

Escorts dressed in traditional Greek garb were there to move them along quickly, but they wouldn't influence Phelps anymore than the quick turnaround he faced.



Tribune photo by Scott Strazzante
Michael Phelps (right) hugs Ian Crocker after the U.S. victory in the 400 medley relay Saturday.

He was intent on enjoying the moment and stopped to pose with the others for a group of photographers at the far end of the pool. After a few more steps they stopped again to acknowledge the fans calling to them from the poolside stands.

PLEASE SEE **PHELPS**, PAGE 16

Full Olympics coverage. **SPECIAL SECTION**

FEB. 28, 1969: ON THE DONG CUNG RIVER

'This is what I saw that day'

By **William B. Rood**
Chicago Tribune

There were three swift boats on the river that day in Vietnam more than 35 years ago—three officers and 15 crew members. Only two of those officers remain to talk about what happened on February 28, 1969.

One is John Kerry, the Democratic presidential candidate who won a Silver Star for what happened on that date. I am the other.

For years, no one asked about those events. But now they are the focus of skirmishing in a presidential election with a group of swift boat veterans and others contending that Kerry didn't deserve the Silver Star for what he did on that day, or the Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts he was awarded for other actions.

Many of us wanted to put it all behind us—the rivers, the ambushes, the killing. Ever since that time, I have refused all re-



Rood

quests for interviews about Kerry's service—even those from reporters at the Chicago Tribune, where I work.

But Kerry's critics, armed with stories I know to be untrue, have charged that the accounts of what happened were overblown. The critics have taken pains to say they're not trying to cast doubts on the merit of what others did, but their version of events has splashed doubt on all of us. It's gotten harder and harder for those of us who were there to listen to accounts we know to be untrue, especially when they come from people who were not there.

Even though Kerry's own crew members have backed him, the attacks have continued, and in recent days Kerry has called me and others who were with him in those

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Q Hamstrung



Health and fitness columnist Julie Dearnorff on dealing with

those troublesome injuries.

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Bear of a deal

Chicago trades Booker for Miami's Ogunleye. **SECTION 3**

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Weather: Sunny; high 83, low 64.
Monday: High 80, low 65.

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