

Fan of Country Music Sees Star in Baghdad

A local attorney serving in Iraq had at least one star-studded encounter.

Maj. Mathew B. Tully of Niskayuna, a partner in the Albany law firm of Tully, Rinckey and Associates, is serving in Iraq with the 42nd Infantry Division from Troy. An avid country music fan, Tully met Aaron Tippin, a country music singer and songwriter, after a show in Baghdad late last month.

Tully spoke with Tippin about how to making wine at home and guitar playing, hobbies for both men. Tippin also thanked Tully for his service, especially during the holiday season.

"It was somewhat emotional to be standing in Baghdad during a war and having Aaron singing his hit songs," Tully said, in a press release issued by his law firm. Although disappointed that he could not spend Thanksgiving with his friends and family, Tully said the concert was a morale booster for the troops. "As a country fan, I had a great time."

A concert in Iraq is not like a show at one of the local performance venues, Tully said. Because of logistics, the band consisted of only two people with acoustic guitars and the stage was a camouflage net. Everyone in the audience was fully armed and concrete shelters were nearby, in case of insurgent mortar or rocket attacks, said Tully.

After the show, Tully said that one of the biggest differences between a show at home and in Iraq was the parking lot. All of the vehicles were armored and had machine guns on the top of them.

"It was a bit different from trying to leave from the top floor of the parking garage at the Pepsi Arena in downtown Albany," Tully said.

Tully is expected to return to his law firm in January. He will be one of the last members of the 42nd, also known as the Rainbow Division, to leave Iraq.