

The Walter Reed Story, some background...

Because this news story is a few years old, here is some historical context. When this story ran in February 2007:

- George W. Bush had been re-elected to his second term as President.
- The U.S. economy was robust.
- The war in Iraq had lasted longer than expected.
- The death toll for the U.S. military had just passed 2,000.
- Even people who didn't support the war displayed "*We Support Our Troops*" bumper stickers and sent care packages to strangers deployed in Iraq.
- Because of new techniques and technology, the survival rate for injured troops was much higher than it had been during the last lengthy U.S. war: Vietnam.

Sometime in 2006, Washington Post reporter Dana Priest got a call from a friend, asking her to have lunch with someone who had a news tip. This friend of a friend told Hull about unsanitary, overcrowded rehabilitation centers in the U.S. military health care system, plus bureaucratic mishandling of disabled veterans that, if true, was extreme. Priest and another reporter, Anne Hull, spent months following up on the tip and went to the medical center, a 110-acre campus, to observe conditions and to interview soldiers and their families on-site.

What the reporters found ran as a series of Washington Post articles titled "*The Other Walter Reed*." It won U.S. journalism's highest public award, the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service Journalism.

At a speech in Boston in 2008, Priest said she remembers that first lunch clearly: "*My brain was saying, 'This is too good to check,' and the other half was, the jaw-dropping, 'How can this be true?'... Right from the start I was thinking of the contrasting worlds: the world of everyone supporting the troops and the world of troops being mistreated and not being able to get medical care.*"

What follows is one of the articles from the series. At 5,000 words, it should take the average college student 15 minutes to read. Using your newly-learned vocabulary for judging evidence and evaluating sources, it should take you a little longer. As you read, you'll come upon questions embedded in the story.