

by Marilyn_Beck_ & Stacy_Jenel_Smi

Soldier-turned-reality-TV-star-turned-soldier Ryan Conklin is adjusting to life on the base where he's tried to keep his TV experience under wraps.

"Being back in the Army, I didn't want people to think of me as a guy on 'The Real World' because we're all in this together. I would rather them look at me as a soldier and respect me for my knowledge and experience, but obviously I couldn't keep it a secret forever," he notes. "I went about two weeks without anyone knowing but then an interview popped up in the 'Army Times.' They're like, 'You were on a TV show?' I'm like, 'Yeah, and look where it got me!'"

In the episode that aired last week, Conklin got a phone call in which he was told he was being recalled into the Army. It also meant he'd be returning to Iraq. Now, he admits to this column, it's tough going back to a war he believes should have been over a long time ago.

"Even when I was in Iraq in '05 I didn't think we were doing a whole lot. I thought we were doing a lot of driving around and getting blown up and then reacting to that, which I thought was stupid. This many years in, I don't know how much it's changed since then," says Conklin, who had hopes of going to school for filmmaking before getting the news.

While he is grateful for his time on the long-running MTV show, he admits it was hard enjoying the last month of filming. "I tried to make the best of the worst situation and have fun, but it was constantly running through my head. Hearing all the other roommates tell each other what they were going to get involved with after the show was a bummer because I couldn't do any of that."

THE VIDEOLAND VIEW: Cynthia Stevenson, who plays Bob Saget's wife in the forthcoming ABC series "Surviving Suburbia," believes that the comedy premiering April 6 is the ideal intersection between Bob's nice guy TV dad persona and his edgy 'n' salty stand-up mien. "That's why I think he's so happy to have this role. This is the perfect role for him," she claims. "He's so not sweet in this show. His character drinks a lot and he's always lying to me. He tries to get out of most of his commitments in the relationship. He's not a very involved dad. But somehow he's still a really loveable person. If he were an actor that wasn't a loveable actor, it'd be a tough job to pull off."

In fact, Stevenson tells us the show is something that many people will relate to. "I think the show is so powerful in that it really explores relationships. They dissect what an 18-year marriage looks like and I find it to be very truthful," she says. "Maybe 15 years ago people didn't really care if the relationship on a show was as truthful, they would rather go for the joke perhaps. Our creator Kevin [Abbott] goes for the truth of the relationship. I was actually surprised when Kevin told us, 'I don't care if you get a laugh. Just play the story.' That's heaven to hear as an actress. I just hope that it finds an audience because I think it's such a worthy TV

show."

FAMILY AFFAIR: Oscar winner Patty Duke takes to the San Francisco Orpheum Theatre stage tonight (3/24), joining the cast of "Wicked" there in the role of Madame Morrible just vacated by Carole Kane and son Sean Astin is glad. "My mom is never happier than when she's working. It's a great piece, and it's a good long run, too." Sean and family will be on hand to see Patty perform, and then, he says, "We may stay an extra day and take a look at Stanford." His 12-year-old daughter Alexandra is proving to be quite the stellar student, and even though Sean doesn't want to turn into a hyper-pushy parent "I'm not Rick Moranis in 'Parenthood'" he and his wife Christine like the idea of "those moments when you look seriously at the future and make it more real."

HERE 'N' THERE: Barbra Streisand was a visitor on the set of hubby Jim Brolin's forthcoming comedy "The Goods: The Don Ready Story" with Jeremy Piven and Will Ferrell. Jordana Spiro, who plays Brolin's daughter in the flick, tells us with a sigh, "I didn't get to meet her which is probably a good thing. I would have been too tempted to ask her to sing 'Hello, Dolly.'"

With reports by Stephanie DuBois and Emily Feimster.

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Hollywood Exclusive: Soldier, "Real World" star Conklin: tough returning to Iraq; "Suburbia" ideal situation for Saget by Marilyn_Beck_&_Stacy_Jenel_Smith