

Publication:The State;**Date:**Jun 8, 2009;**Section:**Front Page;**Page Number:**A1

A DESIRE TO GIVE BACK

Widow honors late husband with clothing project

By **CAROLYN CLICK** cclick@thestate.com

When Lt. Col. Albert P. Barry died of brain cancer in December 2007, he was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery and eulogized in the Congressional Record as a "true American Patriot" and a man "unselfish in service."

Even on his deathbed, after battling a relentless and devastating cancer known as glioblastoma, the retired 71-year-old Marine wanted to give back.

In true military fashion, he gave his wife, Liz Taylor-Barry, the assignment.

And so BarryBasics was born.

The soft cotton-blend clothing pieces are part of Taylor-Barry's new line of "modular medical apparel," meant to reduce discomfort for critical care patients.

Clemson University and South Carolina companies figure prominently in the design and manufacture of the new line, which will be available for public sale in July through the Internet.

"There are times in life when you do things from necessity and times you do things from the heart," Taylor-Barry said. "This is strictly from the heart."

GIVING PATIENTS

COMFORT AND DIGNITY

Taylor-Barry hopes the clothing — with a chest snap opening for monitors and tubing, side and front snap openings, and removable sleeves — will alleviate the suffering of recovering soldiers. She calls her effort

the Wounded Warrior project.

"The whole idea was to give the patient dignity and comfort," she said.

Taylor-Barry speaks from experience.

During the last five months of her husband's life, while he was under hospice care, she struggled to find soft, comfortable clothing that he could change out of during bathing and medical procedures.

Finally, she began adapting sweat pants, boxers and T-shirts to accommodate her husband, whose skin was so fragile it would peel.

Now, she is bringing that same kind of determination — and love — to BarryBasics and the foundation she has set up in Al Barry's memory.

Through the Al Barry Foundation's inaugural fundraiser, she has distributed 300 gift boxes of BarryBasics to wounded patients at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

She included in the gift boxes several pieces of clothing, including short-sleeve or three-quartersleeve shirts, boxers and pants. A card from the person who funded the gift is included.

Next, she plans to provide BarryBasics to injured members of the South Carolina National Guard. About 70 guard members are recovering from wounds received in Iraq and Afghanistan, she said.

At the urging of friends, she has established Lizbeth Inc. for public retail sales that will soon include a line of women's and children's medical clothing.

"When I first started I really didn't look beyond the gift program for the wounded warriors," she said. "As I developed the product, people said there really is a need for this."

Last month, she came to the aid of Lucas Honeycutt, the teenage son of her pastor at Ebenezer Lutheran Church, after he was

severely injured in a car accident. Lucas was the first civilian to wear BarryBasics.

A GUNG-HO APPROACH

Taylor-Barry, a former Capitol Hill staffer and U.S. Small Business Administration director, tapped her own institutional knowledge and the S.C. Women's Business Center to clear the way for BarryBasics.

But it wasn't easy.

She worked with the Greenville-based OOBE Inc. to design the pieces. The Women's Business Center led her to Clemson Apparel Research which developed the patterns and sewed the first run of BarryBasics that went out to the military hospital patients.

She found two North Carolina companies, Domestic Fabrics and Alamac Fabrics, willing to help her select suitable materials, with properties such as wicking and anti-microbial properties.

The biggest hurdle was finding a domestic manufacturer.

I want to keep it U.S.," she said. "When I was on the Hill that was one of the first issues I fought."

She discovered Hemingway Apparel in Hemingway, which will begin cut-and-sew operations once patterns for all of the modular pieces are complete.

Darlene Burdette, research associate at Clemson Apparel Research, said many entrepreneurs walk through their doors seeking help to launch a product.

But Taylor-Barry was unusual in that she was not seeking a profit.

"Liz's product is a bit unique and different because she is doing it .æ.æ. not to gain profit but in honor of her deceased husband," Burdette said.

"We are just thrilled to be working with her. She's really, really gung-ho and wholeheartedly put herself into it."

She said Clemson is completing the final sewing on the pieces that will go to the National Guard members.

ALWAYS A MARINE

Through it all, Al Barry is not far from his widow's mind.

The flag of the Marine Corps hangs outside the couple's Spring Valley home as a reminder of the 21 years he spent in active service, including two tours of duty in Vietnam that earned him a chestful of medals.

After he retired, he remained in Washington working on Capitol Hill, in the Reagan Administration Defense Department and, later, in defense-related industries, commuting back and forth to Columbia rather than retiring completely.

They shared a vibrant, happy life dashing from D.C. to Columbia, and she misses him terribly.

But as Taylor-Barry brings healing to wounded soldiers, she is also, perhaps, healing her own heart.

During his final year of life, he was buoyed by the support of his family, which includes his eight children and her two from previous marriages. He especially loved the hundreds of letters and cards sent to him by the military men and women he counted as friends during his long career.

She smiled at that memory.

"Once a Marine," she said, "always a Marine."

Reach Click at (803) 771-8386.





GERRY MELENDEZ/GMELENDEZ@THESTATE.COM Liz Taylor-Barry fits Lucas Honeycutt with one of her BarryBasics shirts, which she designed to allow hospital patients to easily slip in and out of the garment. Honeycutt used the shirt while recovering from a car accident.



Liz Taylor-Barry put together BarryBasics clothing in honor of her late husband, Albert P. Barry, above.



Liz Taylor-Barry designed BarryBasics medical clothing with hidden snaps so hospital patients can get in and out of the garments with ease.

