

I got some sad news yesterday. Ken's father died Monday and he left Iraq on Tuesday. For those of you that recall, Ken is from New York and one of my workout buddies. Ken had recently written a letter to the editor of his hometown newspaper about the sacrifices people make to come over here. In the letter, Ken talks about a co-worker here that recently lost a nephew in a tragic accident back home. Ken discusses the helplessness evident in this man halfway around the world in obvious pain from his loss made worse by the anxiety of not being able to immediately get to his family and loved ones. Ken was moved by that image to the point of wanting to explain to the world through his letter, the sacrifices, known and unknown, that people make in this effort. They sacrifice parts of their lives every single day that they are away. They give up pieces of the essence of what makes life special. The cherished everyday moments with your family and friends. The cost of being here is higher than the body count, higher than the number of wounded or injured or the dollars spent. You cannot count what Ken wrote about or what Ken is going through. My heart goes out to Ken, his wife and family.



So today is Ground Hog Day back in the states. I guess it would be here to except I am not sure they have ground hogs or if they celebrate it. Ground Hog Day does have a special meaning to people working in Iraq however. The meaning is more tied to the movie "Ground Hog Day" than it is to the holiday. If you will recall in the movie, Bill Murray plays this news reporter that some how gets stuck in a time warp and he re-lives the same day over and over again. Well it is kind of like that here. Everyday seems just like every other day. There is no weekend; there is no Monday, no Friday, no Hump Day (Wednesday), no Thursday night bar night, no Saturday night out on the town or quite Sunday evening at home. Everyday is exactly the same as the next. We work seven days a week 12-hour days. No days off. War does not take a day off. The only way I can tell it is the weekend is I get significantly less e-mail. Most people e-mail me from work and on the weekends, less e-mail. I have started to dislike weekends because e-mail has become the highlight of my life. Oh my God! It just occurred to me, I have officially become pathetic. Happy Ground Hog Day from your pathetic friend.

I do have something to celebrate today however. I was officially given a new responsibility today. I am not quite sure it qualifies as a promotion but it certainly is more responsibility. I am now responsible for burning the trash. Yep. O.k. so I was responsible for burning the trash when I was 12 but this time it's a lot more trash and I get to use gasoline to set it on fire. When I was 12, no gasoline. That was probably a good idea.



Anyway, I am now responsible for what we call “The Burn Pit”. I have six guys (Turks) working for me running this trash dump operation. They bring the trash in and the Turks have to go through it (yes it's very gross) and look for hazardous materials. Not your typical hazardous materials, we are talking bullets, bombs and other explosive devices. Not a day goes by we don't find something and I mean it, every day for the last three months they have found something. Today we found about 20 M-16 rounds (bullets). If you do not pull them out, they will go off during the fire and believe me we do not get everything. Monday some type of military flare went off during the fire and shot up over by the guys near the office. They all ran for the bunker thinking it was some misfire from a helicopter near by. The helicopter people explained to us that it came out of the burn pit.



My crew is pictured above. It is the four guys in the back row. The guy second from the left and the guy on the right. The other three guys drive the garbage truck. I am not in charge of them.

This is glamorous stuff here people I am telling you. I am in one of the dirtiest countries in the world and if that is not enough, I am hanging out at the dump. Aim High People! Unbelievably however, I like it. It gets me out of the office more. I do not have to actually touch anything. I am just the “manager”. We all know manager do not work. Right managers?

The other day I had to survey all the generators on base. I was looking to see if the fuel tanks associated with the generators had the appropriate secondary containment in the event of a leak. There are over 50 operational generators on the base so I was all over the base. I kind of like doing that kind of stuff. Getting out and meeting people. Anyway, during my travels I had to go to parts of the base I had not gone before. I thought I would share some of those pictures.



You may recognize the dog. He is the dog that hangs out at the Global Security base camp. I had a picture of him in a previous journal. He followed me around the whole afternoon. It was kind of nice having a dog hang out with me for a while. I think he appreciated it also. I do not know what they were calling him but I was calling him Global.



For Sale: 300 plus room hotel. \$60,000 USD. It is a bargain people. At this price, it will not last long.

Seriously, it is for sale. The hotel picture above was once on the base and was utilized by the army for housing of soldiers and civilians. It had its problems in that it was an easy target for snipers and rockets but it also had many benefits, namely housing. Well some one in our government in there infinite wisdom decided it would be a good idea to return this hotel to the people of Iraq. Well now instead of snipers and rockets being fired at it, snipers and rockets are fired from it. Brilliant! What tactical genius thought this one up? I am sure the people of Iraq appreciate the nice little perch they have now, I mean the insurgents. Special Forces routinely have to sweep the building to clear out snipers and spotters. I am sure that the building is thoroughly trashed now and stripped of every piece of usable material in it. Who ever came up with that brilliant idea should be fired. Some entrepreneurial Iraqi could fix this place up, probably rent it back to the Army, and make millions.

So I had my first MRE (meal ready to eat). It is what the Army feed the soldiers when they are out in the field. They are not too bad but not to worry they will not be putting any restaurants out of business. It is about like eating food out of a can only it is in a Bag.

