

(Tue) July 19, 2011

Hello world,

Just had a birthday a few days ago. Tend to lose track of time in here so for 4 months I've been telling people I'll be 47. The morning of my birthday I had to stop a moment and do the math and discover I'm actually 46. I feel like I just received a whole year back for a birthday gift?

I'm grateful for the cards I received in the mail. It's nice to be remembered. Some books and magazines were sent in which keeps me connected to current events. By the time I finish reading them there is always a line of guys who want to read them next. Afterward I'll take them to the Library so they can be checked out by others.

Sometimes magazines are used to "hustle" for commissary goods (noodles, candy etc.), but I don't do this. It's strictly forbidden by the rules and a "ticket" can be issued if a person is caught trading. I don't condemn the guys that do so because 20-30% do not have any money at all and it is the only way they can make any. The most valued are Sports, National Geographic, work out or Men's Health, cars and the "gold standard" are any skin mags (maxim, playboy etc.).

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Receiving a little birthday cash on my personal funds account allowed me to stock up on some toiletries for the next 3 months. A new pair of running sneakers to replace my 18 month old torn ones. But even my torn shoes and broken shower shoes are needed by someone who has nothing. Clothes and shoes are stitched and taped together and passed down from one person to another until they're only scraps left. Clothes, T-shirts and towels that become scrap are still used as cleaning rags. Nothing is wasted, it's like living in a third world country.

I bought a few snacks, a coca-cola and enough chili, cheese, noodles and tortilla shells to feed 7 men with a big birthday meal to celebrate.

When people said, "happy birthday", I asked if they would try not to cuss all day, and that would be a great gift to me. About 10 minutes into my day and I was jumped from behind and put into a bear-hug. The first words out of my mouth were, "OH SH--!" So much for keeping my own birthday wish...

Turns out, it was a birthday "beat down" like we did in the Marines (I knew I'd regret telling that to someone), and I wasn't really "being jumped" as my first thought was. We all had a pretty good laugh about that.

Bye, ... 