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Tuesday 4/10/2012

Hello friends,

It took longer than I thought to get back on my feet after the disappointing news from the U.S. Supreme Court. Thank you for the encouraging posts and letters. Especially Dave S. very timely advice "to get up that next hill Marine!".

Holidays are easily missed as they are just like any other monotonous day. Fortunately "music" is really helpful. At least once a day or when I grow weary of hearing the constant cursing and "criminal", "thug" attitudes I can lay in my bunk and listen to some calming music. Christian, Jazz, Latin, Classical, Gospel or Country. While I also like Rock, hip-hop and Pop it's not very relaxing. Once you get yourself all hyped up there's very little opportunity to "vent" all that energy.

I was blessed to have 4 visits since January. My Brother Marine from Pakistan Embassy duty came all the way from Tennessee! It was so refreshing. He's older, but just the same and now his son is also a Marine.

My Brother in-law, a former Co-worker and his wife and daughter who just returned from the Ukraine. Also some other family.

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web site to look at about a veteran and his family. Sgt. Dan Hamilton (K.I.A.) at "BATTLESAINT. com"

Maybe some one can let me know what it's about? There was a great news interview with his parents a couple weeks ago.

Last week I decided to get a summer hair cut when the temperature broke 90 degrees a bit early. Then last week we're back into 60's and 40 at night. We do not have access to the Barber shop since the Barber retired. So I have to use a battery operated trimmer. There are a lot of bald-shaved heads around. I prefer a little longer though. Fortunately we have a couple of guys that can do a pretty good haircut on the deck.

Can someone find me the mailing address for IAVA.org (IRAQ + AFGHANISTAN VETERANS of America)? I've been thinking of writing for a year now, but never got around to finding the address. Thanks...

We have been going to work at the Chapel for 3 days a week this week and last. It helps to keep busy and have a "purpose" in helping others. They (state) have

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not hired a new Chaplain yet. Having 3 days to do admin frees me up to participate in Sunday worship. I never think of Sunday's Chapel as a work day, but it was for a few months.

Sunday 4/15/2012

Wonderful Church worship, praise and preaching this morning. We had 88 men in attendance. The numbers are going up again. Last Summer each service reached 100-110 men. Each service is similar to an Assembly of God or Baptist style. I've seen very few churches in the civilian world where 90% of the congregation is enthusiastically singing, clapping and praising God. There is so much insult and stigma in prison about going to church that it requires a greater courage for a person to openly show their faith. Visit a prison Chapel Christian service if you want to see how suffering and praise looks.

Monday 4/16/2012

Today I get to go to the Commissary. It's amazing how having just a little something in your box can give you a sense of "control" in your day to day life. When nothing is within your personal control, and dinner is dry bread and green bologna it is comforting to know you can break out

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something a little more solid, like a pack of Tuna, crackers and coffee. It has an amazing way of restoring your sense of independence. My Celle, Bobby, and I get along well and have agreed to chip in for a weekly Friday evening meal. We usually have enough extra to share some with one or two other guys. My favorite for the past few months is Pinto Beans cooked all day into a thick stew. Add some flavoring from left over noodle spice packs, some dried vegetable flakes, Jalapeno pepper, cubed summer sausage and placed on a bed of instant rice. It's nutritious and enjoyable at less than \$3.00 for 2 people or about \$5.00 for 4.

I joke with Bobby that he's a pig because he'll eat every day. He's as skinny as a rail, although strong, and I don't know how he burns it all off. I'm very content with one special meal a week. Not only to avoid bad habits of using food for comfort, or addiction, but I prefer not to become a huge couch potato. There's so little movement and activity I see a lot of guy pack on 100 lbs of fat in 6-months. A few are solid muscle if they eat right and work out, but its mostly carbs and fat calories not protein.

There have been a few fights

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in the camp since I last wrote an update. Only 3 were nearby my area. The workers housing area generally has less problems anyway. Many fights are between Cellies who just get tired of each others bad habits. They punch it out in the cell and if there's not a lot of visible damage (blood, black eyes, broken bones) they get away with it. Of course the 2 kids (everyone I see under 30 I call a kid) who decided to duke it out in the chow-hall will be shipped off to a prison where they can fight every day until they learn a card game, or Basketball team is not that important. After six officers jumped on them, the brilliant one who decided to bite the arm of an officer will face "assault" charges and probably receive 2 more years in prison.

About once every couple months I have a run in with some "kid". Three weeks ago a young guy grabbed my property. One of the cardinal rules in prison is you don't touch anyones property for any reason, unless you know them personally. If he just put it down when I told him we wouldn't have had a problem. He was most likely looking for something to steal and he saw what looked like a mail package full of magazines. Most likely he hoped they were porn mags.

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Nope, it was my legal work as I was waiting to go to the law library. Important to me, but meaningless to him. He started to mouth off and get loud, and threaten that he could touch whatever he wanted. These young kids work out a few weeks and think their Superman. They see an "old" guy with graying hair and assume they can bully him.

His look of shock and disbelief was enough for me to see he was just a young punk kid with no sense. I ran up on him into his cell and he backed into the corner. He wouldn't swing so I told him to keep his hands off my property in the future and left.

I didn't have any more problems from him and noticed he calmed down a lot. Less mouthy with people and not strutting around like a Rooster. After a few days I could relax seeing he wasn't going to try and jump me with his buddies. I really hate the idea of losing my job and getting shipped to a more crappy place. I'm too old for this drama... bunch of teenagers stuck in men's bodies.

Here's how great God is... I did pray often for that kid and a week later bumped into him visiting the Chapel. Just^{as} I had prayed for and hoped... He spoke, found forgiveness, understanding and reconciliation.

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We were able to shake hands and go on our way with a mutual respect. Instead of enemies, we became friends. It was a good reminder that prayer is powerful, God can bring peace to any situation and there is hope even for these confused, wayward men in prison. Just like me : ...

Every 6 months or so there is a big shake up and "drama". But in only 3 months it's happened twice. First, 6 Maintenance workers lost their jobs when their Tobacco smuggling scheme was discovered. Then last week 4 Commissary workers got popped off for the loss of \$180.- worth of summer sausages. Some guys just can't help but to do criminal things. Even when they have the best jobs, best housing and plenty of money. I just don't get it sometimes. It's sad though when there is always one or two guys that do nothing wrong, but end up catching flak any way.

That's enough for now. Hope you enjoyed this update.

David

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These were a few great days to remember and great conversations.

We have our monthly veterans group meeting (GrahamVets) and Easter Weekend had a guest speaker. Eddie Price is a Navy Nam Vet and reminded us that our service is still important to each other, our families and in the future to other vets. Even in prison we try to help other men to change their attitudes of rebelliousness and violence to be better men and fathers.

There are more nicknames to keep up with than even in the military. Names like "Fresh", "Chino", "Snoop", "Cartoon" and "Juice" as a small sample. It gets confusing if you're trying to find someone...

"Hey, you seen Timmie?"

"Who?"

"Timmie! You know, white hair, curly, droopy eyes."

"Oh, you mean "silver Fox"?"

"Maybe. I don't know. He's in cell #12."

"No", someone else jumps in, "That's "silver Back"!"

"You're all crazy", a third chimes in, "That's West".

"West goes by "Old Gray", adds a fourth.

By then I just smile and walk away, more confused than ever. That conversation will go on for 15 more minutes as they debate what the guy's name is.

I heard what sounds like a good