

Friday Mornings at the Pentagon

By Joseph L. Galloway
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Over the last 12 months, 1,042 soldiers, Marines, sailors and Air Force personnel have given their lives in the terrible duty that is war. Thousands more have come home on stretchers, horribly wounded and facing months or years in military hospitals.

This week, I'm turning my space over to a good friend and former roommate, Army Lt. Col. Robert Bateman, who recently completed a year long tour of duty in Iraq and is now back at the Pentagon.

Here's Lt. Col. Bateman's account of a little-known ceremony that fills the halls of the Army corridor of the Pentagon with cheers, applause and many tears every Friday morning. It first appeared on May 17 on the Weblog of media critic and pundit Eric Alterman at the Media Matters for America Website.

"It is 110 yards from the "E" ring to the "A" ring of the Pentagon. This section of the Pentagon is newly renovated; the floors shine, the hallway is broad, and the lighting is bright. At this instant the entire length of the corridor is packed with officers, a few sergeants and some civilians, all crammed tightly three and four deep against the walls. There are thousands here.

This hallway, more than any other, is the 'Army' hallway. The G3 offices line one side, G2 the other, G8 is around the corner. All Army. Moderate conversations flow in a low buzz. Friends who may not have seen each other for a few weeks, or a few years, spot each other, cross the way and renew.

Everyone shifts to ensure an open path remains down the center. The air conditioning system was not designed for this press of bodies in this area.

The temperature is rising already. Nobody cares. "10:36 hours: The clapping starts at the E-Ring. That is the outermost of the five rings of the Pentagon and it is closest to the entrance to the building. This clapping is low, sustained, hearty. It is applause with a deep emotion behind it as it moves forward in a wave down the length of the hallway.

"A steady rolling wave of sound it is, moving at the pace of the soldier in the wheelchair who marks the forward edge with his presence. He is the first. He is missing the greater part of one leg, and some of his wounds are still suppurating. By his age I expect that he is a private, or perhaps a private first class.

"Captains, majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels meet his gaze and nod as they applaud, soldier to soldier. Three years ago when I described one of these events, those lining the hallways were somewhat different. The applause a little wilder, perhaps in private guilt for not having shared in the burden ... yet.

"Now almost everyone lining the hallway is, like the man in the wheelchair, also a combat veteran. This steadies the applause, but I think deepens the sentiment. We have all been there now. The soldier's chair is pushed by, I believe, a full colonel.

"Behind him, and stretching the length from Rings E to A, come more of his peers, each private, corporal, or sergeant assisted as need be by a field grade officer.

"11:00 hours: Twenty-four minutes of steady applause.

**Sky from Jan. '08**

As I said in my last article or two my Lady and I went to Jamaica for our Christmas gift. Before we left everyone told us the Jamaicans hated Americans, WRONG. We had a great time. I would suggest it to anyone.

The only problem was civilians are only allowed a 600 cc motorcycle, due to the police only being allowed a 650 cc. Harley is working with the country trying to get Harleys there, I hope it works out. The other problem is they drive on the left. We took an Apple Tour which was great because everything was included, flight, dinners, drinks and shows every night. The only thing you paid extra for were exertions you wanted to take. We decided to go horse back riding, where you actually ride the horse into the ocean and a Booze and Cruise to Dundee Falls. It just went by to darn quick. When we flew out it was like 85 degrees and when we got to BWI it was a brisk 18 degrees. Talk about jump starting your heart. Next year I think we are going to save up for a Cruise they have eleven port of calls.

I could live down there with no problem and one dollar is seventy of their dollars. Well till next month be safe and may the Great Spirit be with you. "KEEP ON TRIKEN" Please pray for our POW~MIA, their families and our Troops deployed through out the world. Remember we have five Missing from Iraq now.

**Sky April '08**

Well here it is in the cold parts of the states to get that Iron Horse out and get ready for riding. Although with the way Mother nature has been acting it's colder in some places, where it never thought of being cold before.

You want to make sure with getting the dust off to check your Bike out from front to rear and make sure all your equipment is safe and ready. Remember your Bike can be fixed if something happens, but like me (my age) it takes a lot longer to fix up then what it used to be.

One thing I'd like to ask is that clubs, organizations and just friends that get together to ride have a ride for those who can't, Our POW~MIA. These people fought for our freedom, we should not forget theirs. Also remember our troops deployed throughout the world for their quick and safe return, so they to can get out and enjoy the open rode. It looks like H.RES 111 bill has a very good chance of passing. Over the last couple months a lot of representatives from many state have join in getting this bill passed. My state had nineteen representatives and all of them have sign up. This has all been due to your hard work making phone calls, writing those letters and going out to actually talk to your people. For that I say THANK YOU.

Well until next month be safe, may the Great Spirit ride with you and "Keep on Triken". God Bless The USA and our Troops.

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