

Be Thankful!

November 23, 2004

Family and Friends,

As Thanksgiving approaches we wish we could be close to family and friends for the holidays. After an especially long year, this is something we were looking forward to. Unfortunately this will not be possible for about 140, 000 troops who will remain in Iraq through the holiday season. This has been an extremely challenging year for us and many more challenges await us. However, this year has been very enlightening as well. In spite of the current situation, I find that this year I am probably more thankful than ever for what I have. I would like to share some of the things I am thankful for this Thanksgiving season:



Life. This nearby cloud of smoke from an explosion reminded me once again that, yes, it could be worse! After a year of avoiding mortar rounds, rocket propelled grenades, machine gun fire, and bombs I am thankful for bad aim!



This piece of shrapnel in my left hand is from an improvised explosive device that hit the window of our humvee. I cared for two soldiers who were injured as a result. Thankfully, they will recover fully. After every convoy on the harsh streets of Baghdad, Najaf, Fallujah, or elsewhere I am thankful for a safe trip.



I am thankful for tents. As pictured above, not every place is equipped with them. It is hard for me to believe that just a few months ago I was roasting in the 140 degree summers. Now I find myself extremely thankful for a warm sleeping bag and any sort of roof over my head as the temperatures drop.



I am thankful for showers, hygiene, and the other daily comforts I once took for granted.



I am thankful for good food (not pictured)-as scarce as it may be!

It is uncertain how long I will remain here. In the next few days we will most likely head out of Fallujah to the next "hot spot" in Iraq. This is part of being a doctor for a front line unit rather than for a support hospital. You will probably find out about the same time I do by watching the news. I have had my share of excitement for this year. Hopefully soon enough I will return to a land of peace and quiet. For that I will be very thankful!

Happy Thanksgiving!

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