



From Somewhere Outside Baghdad

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Dear Noernetters,

Hey guys, greetings from the desert and dust storms of Iraq. I finally got access to a laptop and I can respond to the messages that have piled up until now. Those who sent mail and packages will hear from me too, as soon as we secure our AO and have some resemblance of routine. There is so much chaos and confusion on the ground right now that I cannot promise how soon that will be.

We got our first mail call just a few days ago, so all the troops in my company are savoring every word from home. Me, too.

We've been in Iraq for something over a month now. Our Army Reserve MP Company came over together as one unit on an Air Force transport. We landed in Kuwait and were assigned equipment once we got there. We arrived with our personal gear and weapons (M-16 rifles and 9 mm pistols) but vehicles and light armor apparently had been stored here for a while before we arrived.

Almost immediately we went to work. Military police are usually the first into an area of operations and the last to leave. We started out with a few days of local military traffic control, discipline, law and order at the staging and replacement area, and we provided perimeter security to keep locals out of these places.

Shortly after that we moved north with the Third Infantry Division and all the support units with them. In the Army we hear about how tough the Fourth Mech is, but after seeing the 3rd ID in action, I can't believe that they aren't the best.

You would have to see it to believe it. The amount of machinery and material, the huge number of GIs, and the organization defies description. I've been in the reserves over ten years, and to this day I am overwhelmed with the Army's organization and ability to gear up for an operation like this in such a short period of time. Soldiers like me are the ones in shock and awe of our effort.

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I wouldn't want to live in this part of the world. It is desolate mostly, although the sand would make a good golf course if you also had lots of water and fertilizer!

Our personal hygiene circumstances aren't very good, but it has never been any different in a war. It has been about 30 days since we had a shower and clean uniforms. At least we all stink.

Maybe you have heard about MREs - meals ready to eat. For you older veterans, they are the replacements for C and K rations. MREs are actually pretty good although nobody's getting fat on them. Everybody in my company could use a cold Wisconsin beer - a frosted mug of New Glarus Spotted Cow would really hit the spot!

The airport in Baghdad has been taken over by our forces and we are going to provide security, or at least help with those responsibilities. That is what we were well trained to do. It is tough to separate the citizens from the enemy at times. The Iraqi soldiers often shuck their uniforms and melt into neighborhoods. My dad was an MP in the Vietnam War - 716th MP Battalion in Saigon during the Tet Offensive in 1968. So many times I have heard him tell about door-to-door and room-to-room fighting to roust the VC and NVA from the city. There is a chance we may face the same job here.

I can't say enough about the professionalism of all the U.S. soldiers. We are so well trained, so disciplined and so motivated that I am humbled to be part of this great U.S. military.

But I miss home so much. I have my pictures of Caroline and the kids to keep me going, but the lonesomeness at times is overwhelming. It is actually a blessing to work 20 hours a day; like the Army Rangers cadence run goes - all day, all night. We are so exhausted when we do get a chance for shut-eye that it comes easily.

And I miss my golf course. There was snow on the ground when I shipped out, and now the aeration job is done. You should all know that the generous and wonderful golf club that employs me has continued my salary during my absence. Talk about supporting our soldiers - there it is, folks.

And to all of you who have pitched in with machines and manpower to help aerify - deepest thanks from me and from our golf course staff. I will thank each of you personally when I return, God willing.

I predict our U.S. forces will make short work of the vaunted Iraqi military. We dream of how happy these people will be when they are free. It inspires us to keep going.

I have to close now. I recognize the peculiar sound of the 50 cal. on one of our Humvees. It could be trouble.

Thanks for thinking about me and my family and my golf course. Hopefully I'll be home in time to see you at the WTA fundraiser at the Bull in October.

God bless the U.S.A.

Love to all,

John H. Tallman

*Golf Course Superintendent
White Tail Ridge Golf Club, and
Captain, U.S. Army Reserves
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