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Soldier Edition

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An issue dedicated to soldiers' stories

Camp Slayer tour divulges Baghdad's history

SPC. SOPHIA R. LOPEZ
MND-C



CAMP VICTORY – Camp Slayer is home to a variety of historic sites: the Victory Over America and Victory Over Iran Palaces, the Ba'ath Party House and Flintstone Village.

The history of these sites intrigues Soldiers of the Coalition and Iraqi forces alike. One man is responsible for sharing these sites with the service members, Coalition partners and contractors here. That man is Sgt. James Lee, the Morale, Welfare and Recreation noncommissioned officer-in-charge with the 2145th Garrison Support Unit, 81st Regional Readiness Command.

Lee, of Clarksville, Tenn., guides the Camp Slayer tour every Sunday and occasionally upon request by small groups for private tours.

The Sunday tour includes the Victory Over America Palace and Ba'ath Party House. Lee compiled information from the internet, through DVDs and from those who guided the tours before him. He uses his research to guide eager listeners through the sites.

The private tours include the Victory Over Iran Palace and the former house of Uday, Saddam Hussein's oldest son.

"I knew very little about Saddam," said Lee about his knowledge prior to directing the tours. Providing tours helped him to learn more about the history around Baghdad. "I didn't know how he paid for palaces and treated people," he added. Lee discovered the structures were paid for with money from the oil for food program.

"I learned one of the reasons we came



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michel Sauret

Sgt. James Lee, of Clarksville, Tenn., directs a tour at the Victory Over America palace on Camp Slayer.

to this country; why we did what we did," he said. "(I learned all this) through the atrocities of Saddam Hussein. It's kind of sad when you think about it."

Baghdad, a city of seven million people, has seen quite a change since Coalition forces began operations here.

"We helped the people of Baghdad by taking (Saddam) out of power, giving the people back their water and helping them get food and medicine," said Lee.

Lee, who was born and raised in Miami, looks at Baghdad as a completely

different side of the coin. Compared to Baghdad, Miami, a city of four and half million people, has a broader range of culture and religious groups.

"When people think of Miami, most people think of the beaches, South Beach," he said.

With Baghdad, Saddam comes to most people's minds, said Lee. Unfortunately, Saddam used much of Iraq's money to build the lavish palaces, guest houses and lakes around what is now Victory Base Complex, instead of getting food, water and medicine to the people.

All these facts Lee learned during his tour research adds to his military experiences - in a positive way. Lee now serves in the Army Reserve, and he believes his military career and experiences like these helped him become a better person.

"I wasn't always a good guy... I would have ended up being a non-contributor to society," said Lee. "(The military) definitely changed my life." The military gave him more discipline, purpose and drive. "It got me out of Miami." Lee said Miami was a place where a young

person could easily find trouble.

Lee has been in the military since enlisting immediately following high school in 1992. After spending some time on active duty as an artillery Soldier, he joined the reserves as a finance Soldier. Then, in 1999, he joined the Air Force Reserves as a medical technician. He wanted to try something different, Lee said. However, he realized he missed the ways of the Army and returned in 2003.

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Soldier looks beyond the words to help shape Soldiers' lives

STAFF SGT. MIGUEL A. RIVAS
2ND BCT, 4TH INF. DIV.



FOB KALSU – At first glance, the words of rapper T.I.'s song, "Rubberband Man" don't seem out of place in a country like Iraq.

A person first introduced to the music of the Atlanta-based rapper might be distracted by the harsh words and ideas, but to Pfc. Cornelius Johnson, a cook with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 204th BSB, the artist legally known as Clifford Joseph Harris, Jr., is a juggernaut of inspiration.

"'Rubberband Man' was so amazing to me; it drew me in. As the song progressed, I became a fan. The next day, I bought his album. I became an actual fan," Johnson said.

It is Johnson's dream to become like the actor, music producer and television star.

The 25-year-old Johnson has already begun the journey to follow his 26-year-old idol by stepping into the studio and donning the over-sized headphones to make his music magic.

While Johnson's quest to make the big time as a successful rapper has just begun, he plans to use his voice to send a different message to America's youth.

"Live your life, don't try to emulate the pimps or the drug dealers," Johnson, a St. Louis native, said. "Look at (President Barack) Obama, if you strive to do your best, you can succeed. (Music) is so life-like and real, it's captivating; it's the truth."

Despite all the bravado of hip-hop music, Johnson's words make him sound more like Horatio Alger than Snoop Dogg. The one desire Johnson

holds close to his heart is to one day see people of all creeds and colors coming together to enjoy his music.

"No matter what walk of life people come from, there is some good to be gained from anybody and anything if you give it a chance," he said.

Johnson doesn't hear the songs' references to large wads of money, guns, drugs or alcohol. What reaches out to Johnson is the message that an urban youth can become successful without falling into the cycle of violent life that plagues parts of urban America.

"We both are from the urban com-

munity," Johnson said. "We both seek to educate the urban and African communities. In his later career, he has strived to be more of an inspiration to others."

Music may be Johnson's inspiration, but he is clearly becoming one to his own Family and friends. His brother is also a cook at Fort Drum, N.Y., and another relative enlisted in the military intelligence field and is training at Fort Huachuca, Ariz.

"I have little cousins, and I want them to avoid the problems (of the streets)," Johnson said.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Miguel A. Rivas

Pfc. Cornelius Johnson, a cook with HHC, 204th BSB, looks at the hip-hop artist T.I., as a juggernaut of inspiration. It is Johnson's dream to become like the actor, music producer and television star.

THE Mountain View

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343rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
793rd Military Police Battalion
Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mtn. Div.
Task Force 449

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Rail Gunners on VBC enjoy options, miss friends

SGT. ALLISON CHURCHILL
41ST FIRES BDE.



FOB DELTA – Separated from the rest of 41st Fires Brigade by nearly 100 miles, approximately 20 Rail Gunners accepted unique missions while deployed.

The Soldiers, working as representatives of the brigade at Multi-National Division – Center headquarters on Camp Victory, said there are benefits and disadvantages to being away from their Rail Gunner comrades.

“Ensuring that the people of Iraq have electricity, clean water, medical care and a decent job helps to ensure the long-term stability of the country,” said Maj. Jason Kalainoff, of Clarksville, Iowa, governance and economy planner.

“Although you don’t see drastic changes in these areas overnight, Iraq is improving little-by-little each day, and it’s rewarding to play some small role in that process,” added Kalainoff, who is on his first deployment in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

“The living conditions are amazing compared to previous deployments,” said Sgt. 1st Class James Cookman, Rosebud,

Mont., division counter-fire noncommissioned officer.

“We’ve got sun, sand, palm trees and all the ... ice cream you can eat. It’s like a vacation,” he joked.

Cookman and others agreed that with the luxuries of having “everything you could possibly need” on the Victory Base Complex come inconveniences such as longer lines and traffic.

“I miss out on my old friends’ shenanigans,” said Capt. Kevin Ross, economics officer, from Jarrell, Texas. He balanced the complaint with being able to speak to his wife often, which he didn’t get to do on his last deployment.

And while the Soldiers don’t always enjoy working in an office setting, they said they do enjoy being Rail Gunner representatives.

“It shows the great amount of trust and confidence the brigade has bestowed upon us to represent them here,” said Staff Sgt. Kory Ferris, division sensor manager, a native of Windsor, Conn.

Cookman agreed and said, “It’s always great when you have the chance to represent the rest of your unit. Since there are so few Rail Gunners here, we get to stand out from the usual shoulder patches on the VBC.”

SLAYER

From page 1

This is Lee’s first deployment, and he has been in Iraq since April. Lee said he has learned much about the history here and how the Iraqi people feel about the military’s presence.

“Not everybody hates us. When I did the tour one time, I had an Iraqi special operations group here and their commanding general,” said Lee.

“They didn’t know about the lakes. They had no clue about the water. I explained to them how he (Saddam) got the water here and how he paid for the buildings,” he said. The lakes around Camp Slayer were all man-made under Saddam’s instruction.

“You could see in some of their faces, they were saddened. They knew family members that died in hospitals with no medicine, but he had the palace.”

“I now have a better understanding of why we are here,” he said. “But maybe we should have done it 10 years sooner to alleviate all the suffering.”



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michel Sauret
Sgt. James Lee, of Clarksville, Tenn., the MWR NCOIC with the 2145th GSU, 81st RRC directs a tour at the Victory Over America palace on Camp Slayer.

Camp Slayer
Tour Victory
over America
Palace & Baath
Party House



Every Sunday at 1245
Meeting at the Slayer PX parking lot
Bring your own transportation &
a bottle of water.
POC is SGT Lee at DSN 835-1544
james.lee@iraq.centcom.mil

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Word Search

Valentine's Day

P	I	H	S	D	N	E	I	R	F	D	I	P	U	C	A	L
V	D	H	S	U	R	C	A	C	F	B	A	L	E	N	D	O
N	Y	N	T	I	A	E	A	S	O	L	C	T	O	Y	M	V
S	R	N	E	N	S	N	L	Y	E	H	O	I	E	R	I	E
T	L	E	D	I	D	S	F	A	O	N	T	W	S	A	R	B
R	E	Y	S	L	R	R	E	C	T	C	T	L	E	U	E	I
A	W	S	E	R	I	F	O	N	A	I	A	I	C	R	R	R
E	E	S	E	E	E	L	L	R	D	S	O	O	M	B	S	D
H	J	C	N	S	A	V	T	R	O	N	U	N	T	E	D	S
T	G	D	N	T	O	T	O	P	I	P	O	A	S	F	N	A
E	N	Y	E	A	A	R	O	L	L	G	C	F	E	H	I	T
E	I	S	D	U	M	R	B	E	L	O	V	E	D	B	I	G
W	L	O	D	R	P	O	A	F	F	E	C	T	I	O	N	P
S	R	E	M	A	L	F	R	R	E	N	T	R	A	P	A	R
E	A	Y	C	N	A	F	O	R	E	V	E	R	L	I	K	E
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Admirer
Adore
Affection
Attraction
Beau
Beloved
Boyfriend
Candles
Candy
Chocolates

Couple
Crush
Cupid
Darling
Date
Dear
Devotion
Fancy
February
Flame

Flowers
Fondness
Forever
Friendship
Gift
Girlfriend
Hearts
Jewelry
Like
Lovebirds

Lovers
Partner
Proposal
Relationship
Restaurant
Romance
Roses
Sentiment
Suitor
Sweetheart

AROUND THE
COMMUNITY**Lion's Den**

Feb. 5

Pool class @ 3 p.m.

Karaoke @ 8 p.m.

Fridays

"Gospel Hour: Moments of Joy"
@ noon**Fishbowl Gym**

Feb. 5

Full Body Aerobics @ 6 a.m.

March 27

Relay for Life HOPE Ceremony
@ 2000 hrs**Freedom Chapel**Violin teacher needed. Contact
Col. Andrew Baan (Andrew
baan@iraq.centcom.mil) for
more information.**Slayer**

Feb. 7

R & B group "FRESH" is
performing on Slayer's
gazebo in front of the
fishbowl gym @ 7:30 p.m.**Liberty**

Feb. 5

10th Mountain Division Salsa
Band in concert at Morale,
Welfare and Recreation C-10.
@ 9 p.m.

Feb. 22

Sweet 16 5 K Run. Race begins
at "Z" Lake @ 7 a.m. FREE
T-shirts to the top 115
finishers. POC: Spc. Daniel
Balderas 485-0411 or
daniel.balderas@iraq.cent-
com.mil**Babylon Theatre**

Feb. 17

Fire Warden Course @ 1 p.m.

Feb. 18

Fire Extinguisher Class @ 1 p.m.

*The Norris Roundhouse**"Chuck Norris invented black. In fact, he invented the entire spectrum of visible
light. Except pink. Tom Cruise invented pink."*