

Camp Slayer tour draws hundreds

By Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

Surrounded by mounds of rubble and rising clouds of stirred dust, Sgt. Madison Garey gathers a crowd of camera-wielding onlookers to point out the highlights and tell the history of the grand ballroom inside the Victory Over America palace.

The ballroom is just one of many rooms inside the VOA palace, which is just one stop on a tour of Camp Slayer that Garey offers weekly.

The residents of Victory Base Complex come to see, first hand, a small piece of an Iraqi era gone by the wayside. They come to hear the tales of an eccentric leader bent on portraying opulence and power. They come to see a slice of history that they helped shape. Whatever reason they come though, they come in droves.

"We see several hundred people at each tour," said Garey. "I think they come because it's not something you can see in the U.S. It's an interesting piece of a completely different culture."

Filling the corridors and never-ending rooms, tour-goers push through piles of broken marble, twisted steel and shattered concrete to see what

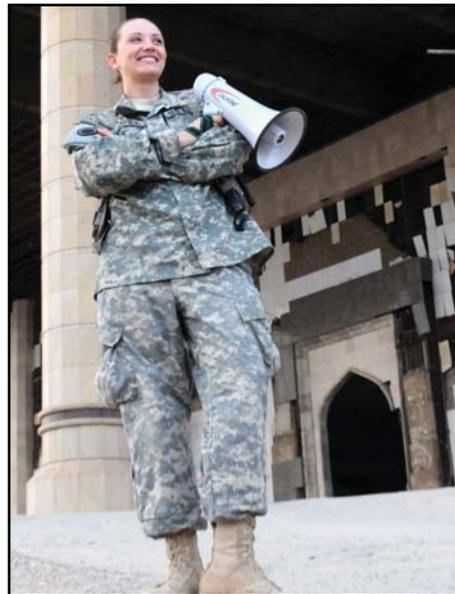


photo by Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

Sgt. Madison Garey outside the entrance to Victory Over America palace. Garey offers a weekly tour of Camp Slayer which includes VOA palace.

secrets they'll discover just around the next corner. All around, the evidence of Operation Iraqi Freedom can be seen. Craters and collapsing walls harken back to the missile strikes of 2003, while writing on the walls serve as the fingerprints of the clearing teams who entered these buildings before anyone

else.

Garey said one of the main draws to the tour is the damaged buildings hit early in the war. That, and the opportunity to get a snapshot with one of the last remaining murals of former Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein.

"They all gather around the mural and pose for pictures," said Garey. "Some of them more colorful than others."

Warrant Officer Ragene Warner said her favorite part of the tour was the mix of history and tall tales.

"It's really impossible to tell what happened exactly," said Warner. "But that's what makes it even more interesting."

She joked that the only thing that could have made the tour better would have been a gift shop at the end.

"People are always telling me what they've heard about the tour and it's hard to know when you're hearing fact or fiction," explained Garey. "It's usually a mix of both, and that's fine. The mystery of this place is what makes it so popular."

The tour is offered weekly on Sundays at 12:45 p.m. Link up time is 15 minutes prior to the tour at the Camp Slayer PX parking lot.

Spotlight On: CW4 Scott Monzon

Take the time to listen and you'll find that all Soldiers have a story. A story about joining the military or why they stayed or just what pushes them through the next day. CW4 Scott Monzon's Army story started in 1983.

He says he joined because he wanted to do something different, and he has stayed all these years because he enjoys working with Soldiers. Monzon served in the enlisted ranks until 1992, when he accepted a commission as a

warrant officer.

In that time he served in one previous combat deployment to Camp Bucca, Iraq in 2003.

"That first deployment was a lot more difficult," Monzon explains. "We lived in tents without air conditioning, we had no floors, and we had to build everything ourselves."

He goes on to explain though that the hardest part of deployments isn't where you live or

what you do at all. It's what you leave behind.

"One of things I miss the most is just being there," says Monzon. "Back home I just like to spend time with my family, watching my kids play soccer or volleyball."

When he is home, Monzon works as a military technician in Omaha, NE. Sgt. 1st Class David Reilley also serves in Omaha. He says when you're

around Monzon every day; it's easy to see what's important to him.

"Family, friends and doing the right thing, even if it's hard," explains Reilley. "It's not so much what he says, but watching what he does and seeing how he treats other people."

Monzon agrees that those things are important to him, but says he's really just an optimist who wants to have fun and try and stay light-hearted.

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The Ministry Message

An example to follow

By Sgt. Michael Heuertz

The state of Kansas is honoring another one of its brave war heroes.

Chaplain Emil J. Kapaun has been recommended for the Medal of Honor by former Secretary of the Army, Pete Geren, and Chariman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen. Chaplain Kapaun was initially recommended for the award in 2000 by U.S. Representative Todd Tiahrt of Kansas. The award is not, however, for actions rendered in recent campaigns, but for his sacrifice nearly sixty years ago in the Korean War.

After serving in the Burma Theater during World War II, Chaplain Kapaun re-enlisted in the Army in 1948. He was sent to South Korea in 1950 as the chaplain for the 8th Cavalry Regiment. He was awarded the Distinguished Cross for his bravery on the battlefield,



Courtesy Photo
A statue of Chaplain Emil J. Kapaun stands outside St. Nepomucene Church in Pilsen, Kans.

rescuing a wounded Soldier who was facing execution by the North Koreans. That November he was captured by Chinese forces and became a prisoner of war. While in captivity, Chaplain Kapaun continued his work by providing support to wounded and dying Soldiers. He often hid food in his pockets to give to the starving men and shared his tobacco pipe while visiting fellow prisoners. He also performed baptisms and celebrated mass with a make shift altar using the hood of a Jeep. He did not discriminate against any Soldier's religion and

many referred to him as "The Father."

The good deeds to his fellow Soldiers were seen by the prison guards and Chaplain Kapaun received beatings as punishment. After seven grueling months in a POW camp, CH Kapaun died and was buried in a mass grave near the Yalu River. His brave work was seen and experienced by many in his camp and his story is a legacy that many today still recognize. Memorials have been dedicated to his legacy and his MOH award will be reviewed by Congress later this year.

Chaplains are in the Army to "nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the dead." Chaplain Kapaun did just that. Make the work that you do here in Iraq the best it can be for each other. You may never see the fruits of your labor like Chaplain Kapaun, but you will know in your heart that you gave it all you had. Keep up the good work TF Twister and may God continue to keep us safe.

Monzon:

"I like to treat people right and be treated right in return," he explains.

He says one of the things that help him stay positive is the support he gets from back home. His wife Terri and their three children have all been through a deployment before, and he says they are all very supportive.

His eldest son Cody is a 22-year-old welder living in Minden, Nebr. with his wife Melissa. Then there is Collin, 17, who graduates high school this year and is looking forward to attending the University of Nebraska.

"I've planned my leave so that I could be there to see him cross the stage and graduate," says Monzon.

The youngest is his 14-year-old daughter Madison. He says he looks forward to seeing her running all over the soccer field again.

When he gets back home, he says he hopes to just get caught up with his family and then help his son get off to his first year of college. Until then he plans to do what all Soldiers must do on deployment.

"It's not easy," says Monzon. "But we have a job to do. I'm going to do mine, and then soon it will be time to go home."



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Country music star Chris Young poses for a photo with his biggest fan, Sgt. Michael Heuertz. Submit your best guess as to just what Sgt. Heuertz is thinking to the RING staff at karl.johnson@iraq.centcom.mil by Nov. 20, 2009. The Soldier with the best caption will win an amazing prize and be recognized in the next issue of the RING.



Top Left: Celebrity cartoonists said they were all about giving back. Everyone just assumed they were talking about their USO trip to meet with Soldiers. Top Right: Country musicians Craig Morgan and Chris Young look on while Joe Bowser, a retired Soldier returning to Iraq as a wounded warrior, describes some of the features of his prosthetic leg. Bottom Right: That's right Sgt. Thomas, it's really free, courtesy of your Garrison MWR section. Bottom Left: Turnout for the Cornhusker "shout out" was good. Unfortunately, the football team decided they didn't need to show up that week. Hopefully they have better luck against Oklahoma on Nov. 7, when the Task Force Twister Shout Out is played at Memorial Stadium. Middle Left: Capt. Ken Kalsem meets with Mad Magazine cartoonist Tom Richmond after getting his picture drawn. Richmond said it was the most lifelike caricature he had ever drawn.



Twister Pics



The Fridge

A Task Force Community Bulletin



have something for the fridge? send it to karl.johnson@iraq.centcom.mil