

January 28, 2008

Dear Joan,

I want to thank you and your class for taking the time to load up those boxes with so much stuff. Everyone in my platoon really appreciated it a lot. We had just got out of the field on Jan. 18th. That's when I got your boxes the reason I did not receive it for so long I was at a new camp that was closing down. We were there for X-mas Day but left 12:30am the next day. So I was able to get a decent meal for Christmas. But we left the 26th of Dec. not to return to a different camp until Jan. 18, 2008. So that's why I didn't get your packages for so long. It was good though because it was like have 2 Christmas's.

We are out a lot. We don't have a camp to call home. But when we do get to a camp or base we get mail, shower, good food and a trip to the px (store). Out in the field consists of driving around in our vehicles (LAV's 25 is what they are called. LAV means Light Armoured Vehicle with a 25 mm Canon). We have 3 crewmen, a driver, a gunner and a vehicle commander and 4 scouts that go in the back. This hunk of metal looks like a tank but has wheels instead of tracks. We travel a lot and I would say about a third of the Iraq we have covered.

We are very busy all the time. I'm really squeezing this letter in. But I really want to say thanks. We travel the desert clearing abandoned buildings, talking to Iraqis and seeing if they are good or bad guys or not.

The weather has been very rainy lately. Cold, so cold it snowed one night. That was early January. We just got a tent a week or so ago. So when we are out we actually have a little shelter. I have been here for 5 months since Sept. 15. I am on a two month deployment as long as the army decides because we don't get R and R half way through and I go back for a year and get deployed again for another 7 months somewhere else. So I am happy to say I have 2 months left. Then I get to go back to my wife and daughter and my son I have not yet met.

I can't wait to get home, missing Thanksgiving and all my family even my brother with that bushy goat thing on his face. I missed a lot and I'm thankful for you and the kids from your school are thinking of others that are far away and not just of themselves.

Thank you,

Joey L. Eckert USML