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NOTE TO THE SECRETARY

Attached is a summary of a good news story about an Army Reservist who got it right in her treatment of detainees in Southern Iraq. Maj. Garrity is from Athens, PA – not far from where our farm is located in the far north of the state. Since all we hear from ICRC and the press is bad news about U.S. treatment, this is a story that ought to reach beyond Northern Pennsylvania.

I am copying this to Richard Boucher.


Gene Dewey

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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A GOLDEN HEART: ATHENS SOLDIER BELOVED BY IMPRISONED IRAQIS
(summarized from *The Sunday Review*, July 4, 2004)

Pictures from Camp Bucca, a U.S.-run detention center near Umm Qasr in southern Iraq, show a very different picture of prison life than the images of Abu Ghraib that have saturated the media. Notably, the pictures show American soldiers and Iraqi prisoners smiling together. Most of the pictures include Major Stacy Garrity, an Army Reservist from Athens, Pennsylvania.

As Major Garrity used to walk through Camp Bucca, children would chant: "good, good major!" They would give her a small, braided "friendship bracelets." At least one detainee wrote to her that "when we see you, we feel hope." Iraqi generals at the camp called her "Golden Heart." To others, she was "The Angel of the Desert."

Garrity served at Camp Bucca for one year, keeping life flowing for the masses of Iraqi detainees. Garrity handled processing at the prison, interacting with everyone who came in and out. She was also responsible for family visitations and interpreters, and she served as a Red Cross liaison.

Garrity took her mission to watch and care for the Iraqis very seriously. Often, she told detainees: "You will never be mistreated while you are here." It was her conviction that anybody who came through the gates at Camp Bucca would be treated with dignity as a human being. She followed the Geneva Conventions, looked out for the detainees and treated everyone with respect and dignity. Iraqis under her care lived in large tents, got water from water buffaloes, and received ice two times a day from the U.S. soldiers. The Iraqis showered twice a day, received extra clothes and blankets, and got cigarettes twice a day.

Garrity also took on projects that were not in her job description. She procured soccer balls, volleyballs, chess, checker and domino sets, and newspapers. She set up a post office system where families could leave letters for detainees. She helped a Christian orphanage nearby get money, toys, clothes and food. She helped design a family visiting system, arranging schedules and organizing bus drivers.

Her attention to prisoners' well-being earned her affection, as evidenced by the gifts and thank-you cards given to her by Iraqi prisoners. One detainee in particular didn't want to leave Camp Bucca. A young Iraqi who speaks three languages kept committing minor crimes so he could keep coming back to Camp Bucca. Each time he would be released he would say "Major Garrity, I'll see you in two days!" And in two days he would return.

When Garrity received word this spring that she was going home, the detainees were very upset by the news. Many of the detainees invited her to visit their families -- they think of her as a sister. It was because she cared. And she helped. Helping was her job, Garrity insists. Most of all, it makes sense. One of the most important things, she believes, "is to win hearts and minds." If Iraqis like Americans, they won't hurt Americans.

Garrity has also served in Haiti six times for short-term missions and in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War as an administrative officer. Garrity graduated from Bloomsburg University, where she joined the ROTC, with a business administration degree.

Heroes

A golden heart

Athens soldier beloved by imprisoned Iraqis

BY NANCY COLEMAN

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The Daily/Sunday Review

Stacy Garrity used to walk through camp, under the stinging sunlight. Her boots crunched the sand.

Dark-haired kids would see her. "Good, good major!" they'd chant. Perhaps one would run up with a small, green, braided object like a rope. He'd give it to her.

It was called a "friendship bracelet."

And she was their friend.

This was Camp Bucca, a southern Iraq detainee center. Stacy, from Athens, a U.S. Army Reserve officer, served there a year, keeping life flowing for its masses of Iraqi prisoners.

"Golden Heart." That's what some Iraqi generals there called her. To others, she was "The Angel of the Desert."

"When we see you, we feel hope," at least one person wrote to her.

It was because she cared. And she helped.

Why?

Well, there's the Geneva Convention. And issues of dignity and respect. And good common sense.

But for this young woman with blue eyes and golden curls ... who travels the world ... who's gone to Haiti six times on short-term missions ... who wears a small cross ring ... who likes to smile — there's some-



Submitted photo

Maj. Stacy Garrity of Athens stands with some young friends during her recent year in Iraq. Garrity, a member of the U.S. Army Reserve, served at Camp Bucca detainee center in southern Iraq.

thing more. "Something that has to be inside you," she says.

"I genuinely like people," she states simply.

"It's easy for me ... it's not a burden."

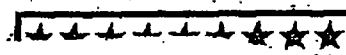
Stacy graduated from Sayre High in 1982. At first interested in political science, she finally earned a business administra-

tion degree from Bloomsburg University. Today, she's product marketing manager at Oram-Sylvania in North Towanda. Her father and his wife, Howard and Tammy Lynn Garrity, live in Waverly, and her mom, Beverly Arbie, and her husband, John, in Scranton. And — Stacy doesn't want to

miss anyone — she has three sisters, Maureen, Paige and Jennifer; one living grandmother, June Garrity of Sayre, and a fiancé, Dan Gizzi of Elmira.

Years ago, her parents joined the Navy Reserve. Try it!

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Heroes

HEART

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Howard urged Stacy. So in college she joined ROTC and took basics at Fort Knox, Ky. — "The most difficult eight weeks I've ever experienced!"

But she learned self-confidence. She's been in the Reserve ever since.

During the Gulf War she served five months as an administrative officer in Saudi Arabia. She returned home and all was quiet.

Then came 2003. That January she and the 800th Brigade headed for Iraq.

Stacy praises Oaram's support. "They were just wonderful!" (David Vine's her boss, she wants you to know.) She never worried about her job. "Come home safe!" they said.

By the end of March, she was at Bucca. The land was flat desert that coughed up sandstorms. "No green!" Stacy says. Temperatures averaged 110 to 115. "The highest it got was up over 140." It hurt to breathe.

Several miles around, the camp held enemy prisoners of war, criminal detainees (Iraqis who committed crimes against other Iraqis) and security detainees. All ages. "Kind of a broad spectrum," Stacy comments. The population varied, but at one time Bucca held more than 8,000 detainees, and 2,000-plus soldiers.

At first, soldiers' facilities were simple. Tents. Barrel latrines. MRAs (meals ready to eat).

Later, they improved: Trailers. A dining hall. An MWR (morale, welfare and recreation) tent. In the MWR tent, they watched movies, played ping-pong and used the Internet. MRAs gave way to eggs, burgers and chicken. People who'd lost weight gained it back, Stacy notes.

And — Abhh! — sighing through rest shelters was ... air conditioning!

"I was in a tent," Stacy says. Maybe 8-by-5 feet, her section held her mattress, fan, family photos and some books. — though she never had time to read.

Their job was to watch, and care for, the Iraqis. And during this ugly and controversial conflict, Stacy took her mission seriously. Often, she told detainees: "You will never be mistreated while you're here."

It was her conviction. "Anybody that came through our gates would be treated with dignity as a human being."

She can't praise her fellow soldiers enough. "I've never seen so many good soldiers that try to go out of their way. They followed the Geneva Convention. They looked out for detainees."

"They treated everybody with dignity and respect."

Iraqis lived in big tents, too. They got water from water buffaloes, and the soldiers brought them ice two times a day. They showered twice a day, Stacy says, and later got extra clothes and blankets.

They also got cigarettes twice a day. It calmed them.

One U.S. officer, a smoker, asked why they didn't help Iraqis kick the habit.

"Because I don't want 1,500 people like you to stop smoking all at the same time!" Stacy kidded him.

Detainees' breakfast was bread and cheese or hard-boiled eggs, with milk or juice and tea. Dinner was a big plate of rice with chicken, beef or vegetables, and bread and tea. "So their food was not bad," Stacy says. She knows. She tried it.

At Thanksgiving detainees had fruit and at Christmas, soda. "Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!" the Iraqis wished the soldiers. During Ramadan, the Americans served meals before sunrise and after sunset, and gave out dates in the daytime, following Muslim practices.

"I think in general, we respected each others' cultures," Stacy says.

Her job was to process all detainees going in and out, arrange family visits, oversee interpreters, work with the Red Cross and do huge nightly reports. Her days were long.

She saw detainees every day.

"They all wanted to tell you their stories." A sick mom, two wives, eight kids. I HAVE to go home!

"We listened to as many as we could," Stacy says. All detainees had the chance to appeal their cases.

She still remembers Sam. A Syrian, Sam had gone to Baghdad to protect the mosques from coalition forces. Instead, he found Iraqis looting them. "This is messed up!" he thought. He headed for home but was captured by the coalition.

They brought him to Bucca. He was taken care of. He worked as an interpreter, helping the Americans, and even became a Christian.

Stacy helped Sam get released and even saw him off at the Barrs airport. Today, he's home in Syria.

One general spoke perfect English and drew cartoons. Not a fan of Saddam Hussein, he'd surrendered the first day of the war. He was released while Stacy was there.

She later learned he'd died. "I'm really sad about that."

And then ... "there was one detainee who loved it at Camp Bucca and he didn't want to leave!" Young Saad was brilliant — spoke three languages — but kept committing minor crimes so he could come back. Had some mental problems.

"You need to go home to your mother!" Stacy tried to tell him.

So he'd get out. "Major Garrity, I'll see you in two days!" he'd declare.

"And I'd see him in two days!" Stacy says.

There were minor incidents ... but usually all was calm. "I never had a problem," Stacy states. "I never had a problem."

Maybe because she was kind.

The Red Cross urged camps to give Iraqis recreational items. So Stacy got soccer balls, volleyballs, and chess, checker and domino sets, donated by the Kuwaitis.

One compound even had a week-long soccer tournament.

The Americans provided newspapers. Stacy and some others set up mailboxes, where families could leave letters. She helped a Christian orphanage nearby get money, toys, clothes, food.

And they designed a family visiting system, arranging schedules and organizing bus drivers. On visitation days, they set up lines: people looking for detainees, scheduled visitors, women and kids, and walk-ins. If someone had traveled far, they tried their best to get them in, Stacy says. And if a lady cried — We'll get you in! We'll get you in!

Stacy loved meeting families. Two young women brought their father's college books, so he could study. They were "so sweet," Stacy says. "Loved their father." Others tried to bring the soldiers gifts, an Iraqi custom. (Soldiers, of course, couldn't accept them.)

"They really appreciate the United States," Stacy says. Under Saddam, "they said they were in prison." Now, they were happy. They were free.

And when the U.S. caught Saddam — the detainees celebrated. "They were chanting," Stacy says. "U.S.A! U.S.A!" And: "George Bush!"

Helping was just her job, Stacy insists. Most of all, it made sense. One of the most important things, she believes, "is to win hearts and minds," she says. If Iraqis like Americans, they won't hurt Americans.

"This is no lie," Stacy declares. "Eighty-five percent of the detainees that left thanked me for the good treatment (of the guards)."

They invited her to visit. "You can come to my family any time!" they declared. "We think of you like a sister!"

And again and again, they'd stop, and put their hand over their heart. "And God bless your mother and your father."

The hot months passed. Stacy worked hard. Prisoners came and prisoners left, and soccer balls scuttled over the dirt. The desert sun crushed the earth.

Then, this spring, Stacy got word. She was coming home.

"They were very upset," she says of the detainees. No, don't go! Who will listen to us?

It was hard for Stacy, too — there was so much left to do.

But she made sure those appeals were filed. All the cases would be reviewed. "Things were going well when I left," she packed. And she came home.

Today, she's back at work. She can walk on green grass instead of sand, lives in a house instead of a tent. She's near her family.

But she remembers another family far away. Comrades in boots and khaki, kids with bracelets. Saad, seeking mischief. Old and young. And the generals, who loved her. ...

Stacy, their Golden Heart.