

Subject: Yet again, a thank you from Owen  
Date: Thu, 29 Jan 2009 12:29:55 +0430  
From:  
To:

Dear Serena -

Thank you again! You are a truly driven person! Yet again a wonderful, and incredibly thoughtful package has arrived. The MP3 players are enjoyed by those that didn't bring any music with them, and the goodies are always enjoyed by anyone that stops by our shop. I think what I'll do with this latest one (the red one), is label it as the Leopard Dets MP3, and leave it here, so the ensuing crews can load it up, and bring it to the shop. We have a small stereo out there that has provisions for an external device. It can then be set up to rotate through the workers, and each day a person can put what they want on it, without having to mess about with iTunes and such. You have really gone over the top. I've said it before, but your contributions make such an incredible difference here.

Thank you as well for the journal! I've tried over the years to keep journals of different experiences. I have a few kicking around, but it always ends up getting set aside, never to be revisited. I'm going to try this time, and hope that I can maintain some continuity with this venture. I've been toying with the idea of writing for years, however, I've never had enough motivation, or material, to put pen to paper. Now, I think I may be ready. I'm not sure that I've experienced enough in Afghanistan to truly write about it, however, my career so far could be a good start...

I think that this place has changed me quite a bit. A lot will have to do with the response we get (as a military) from back home. I've never felt so much pride in my country as I have from the "Chosen Soldier" project. It has turned into a deeply personal thing for me. I have received wonderful packages from all over the country, from individuals such as yourself and Kate, from kindergarten classes, from schools... It's simply amazing. This also strengthens my resolve as a soldier, as a technician, and as a Canadian. It makes me believe more and more that we are the right people for this job, not just in Afghanistan, but with every country that we have given aid to, and for all those that we will help in the future. I'm not going to get all weird and say that we're blessed, as I'm not particularly religious, but we are very fortunate as soldiers. We experience things that many can't fathom. We see horrors. Many of us lose a part of ourselves here. But I truly do believe that we all grow as humans, that our collective, shared experiences, as horrific as they may be, enlighten us with an understanding of people, and the world, that many will never know. I will come away from this with a profound respect for the Afghan people, their resourcefulness, their determination. But I will also come away from this with a deeper respect for my fellow soldier, and my countrymen, who have shown me that in spite of the horrible mess that this place is, there is a laugh to be had, and many, many lessons to be learned.

Thank you for all of this Serena. You have helped me grow as a person, as a soldier, and as a Canadian.  
Owen