

Jerry Newberry: A Confidant

Ask them and they'll tell you all about it...

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One thing I learned from previous embeds is you can't avoid getting into some interesting conversations with the troops. They are almost always willing to engage and generally aren't shy about providing their views on the world at large. Ask them and they'll tell you all about it.

Since our military is virtually a microcosm of America, you just can't spend time with our service members without being educated on a vast variety of things; you'll receive a full gamut of responses on any given subject you choose to throw out there, be it sports, politics, the war or the quality (or lack of) of the evening meal just served up at the DFAC.

Sometimes their conversations will make you bust out laughing, other times it can be dead-pan serious and deep. Once you have earned their trust, some will even confide in you. They'll share the most private of personal affairs and unsolicited truths, their words hitting you square in the gut and in the heart, forcing you to abruptly curse and turn away because the damned blowing sand ALWAYS makes

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your eyes water.

They do talk about the war and are vocal when expressing frustration with the media; that for the most part the media either "doesn't get it right," or has all but forgotten the war in Afghanistan. What is "reported" either totally ignores the many accomplishments and gains they have made on behalf of the people of Afghanistan or gets lost somewhere amongst the filler on page 16 of the newspaper. They simply can't compete with stories about philandering politicians, psychotic and/or addicted actors and musicians who don't know how to behave.

It's hard to argue their point. After ten years of war, the eyes of the media and most Americans are elsewhere. They sure as hell aren't focused on the people fighting the war.

In spite of this, they continue to do what they were trained to do. They work long, arduous hours and put their asses on the line every day in Afghanistan. And as they continue to do what they are tasked to do, they still fight and train and mentor and protect all of us who are living pretty damn good back home. They worry for their families who are still sacrificing and continuing to live through the deployments and the fear and the waiting.

Yes, they are volunteers and, yes, they enlisted or re-enlisted knowing that we are at war. But, that doesn't mean that all of their effort, sacrifice, and dedication should go unnoticed. America needs to

know ... and you would think citizens SHOULD want to know the full depth and scope of what America's sons and daughters are accomplishing in Afghanistan.

Our service members NEED TO KNOW that what they are achieving in Afghanistan is at the very least understood. They NEED TO UNDERSTAND that they ARE appreciated and not forgotten. And WE need to remember whom it is that keeps the bad guys away from our back door.

Like I said before, spend any time at all with 'em and they'll educate you ... in a most profound and unimpeachable way.
—Jerry Newberry