

Operation Soccer Ball

Operation Soccer Ball is a program started by Daniel Merritt, currently in Iraq serving with the 511th Military Police Company. As a platoon leader, he is in charge of 30 Iraqi Police Stations and has constant interaction with the citizens of Iraq, proud people who want the same things for their kids as we do for ours.

In Dan's words, "We have many roles in Iraq, and one of the biggest is to rebuild this country and help its people get back on their feet.

Most of the citizens living in this area are so poor they don't have many of the daily amenities we take for granted. While they rebuild their country, the one constant source of enjoyment, of hope, is soccer. When they play soccer it consumes them, it builds

them into a team, it keeps them out of trouble, it makes them forget how hard their life can be and, most of all, it gives them hope for a better tomorrow, a hope all Americans should help to build.

Operation Soccer Ball is something I have started in order to do two things. One, keep these little guys and gals here in Iraq smiling by giving them the means to play soccer. Soccer is simply the best thing since sliced bread for the little ones over here. Since I have been deployed here I have learned many things about Iraq and its people. As a Platoon Leader for Military Police platoon I am constantly outside the wire, moving from town to town, training Iraqi Police and working with the people. These people are good people, the kids are good kids and they deserve to smile and play like all kids around the world. We have the ability to make these kids smile in the simplest of ways. Soccer is our tool to brighten their lives, build positive relationships and make small but positive impacts every chance we can. Operation Soccer Ball is my tool and it is working; I see it.

Secondly, this program promotes a positive relationship between Iraqi and US Troops here in Iraq. It is hard to comprehend but this program has the ability to save US Soldiers' lives. As Military Police we are constantly ex-

posed to a very dangerous threat. This treat is the diminishing 1% of Iraqis that want to hurt US troops and stop the unstoppable positive progression I see happening here every day. As the 1% continues to diminish and the other 99% see we are here to help, here to build, and here to stay until it is finished, we stay safe through our positive image and our ability to constantly build productive and healthy relationships with the future of Iraq, its people."

What Dan and Operation Soccer Ball is asking is for people to donate deflated soccer balls to be distributed throughout the area that his platoon serves. A small investment (by our standards) can have a powerful impact on the lives of Iraqi children. Hope is a powerful thing.

To send soccer balls to Dan you can do one of the following: 1) Ship deflated

soccer balls directly to Dan at: **1LT Daniel Merritt, 511th MP CO, FOB DELTA, APO AE 09317** 2) You may donate funds through PayPal on his website, or 3) Send a check to his family, Cary & Gloria Ostrow, 84 Jacob Road, Southbury, CT 06488

Go to Dan's website OperationSoccerBall.org to see how a soccer ball really can make a difference! **The Digital Alumni** has supported this initiative with a donation for additional soccer balls. We urge anyone who is interested in supporting Dan's efforts to do so. This initiative sounded so DEC-like that we wanted to bring it to your attention. There is so much bad news in the air these days that it is great to have an uplifting, good news story to tell. Thanks to **Jeannie Koushouris** for bringing this young man and his efforts to our attention.



BC Student Thesis Update

Several months ago we helped enlist support from DEC alumni for Ian Walsh, a Boston College student in the process of writing his graduate thesis on the demise of Digital Equipment Corporation.

The response has been phenomenal. He reports that he has received responses from 2200 former DEC employees from 30 different alumni organizations and 32 different countries. In addition, we have provided him with copies of all the DEC Alumni newsletters dating back to 1993, the year of our founding, to "data mine" all of the cultural tidbits that may be contained therein. The very rich responses he has received from so many different people will make his thesis fun reading!

Ian expects to have his thesis completed by January 2009 and has agreed to make it available to us when it is published. We will see if we can provide a summary for those that do not wish to read through the entire document.

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L. Paul Suten, Ph.D., Professor, Criminal Justice, San Diego State University wrote a review of "Doing Time" and concluded with the following: This is a book about more than religion, more than prison. In the end, it is an inspired and inspiring account of the human condition, replete with telling insights into the rainbow of hate, violence, intolerance, racism, cruelty, despair, intimacy, strength, weakness, humor, love, and hope that define us all.

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Tricia Baglio, President

71 Country Club Way Ipswich, MA01938 Tel: 978-356-7144
Fax: 978-356-8365 Email: tricia_baglio@yahoo.com

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