



# The Old Ironsides Report



Thursday, December 25, 2003

## David Letterman visits Task Force 1 AD soldiers

From AP and CBS reports

BAGHDAD, Iraq -- With shouts of "Dave, Dave!" U.S. soldiers greeted the American late night TV show host David Letterman as he visited troops in central Baghdad on Christmas Eve.

Letterman, the host of CBS' "Late Show," chatted with wounded and sick soldiers in the military's main combat hospital and met soldiers at one of Saddam Hussein's ransacked palaces that now serves as part of the U.S.-led coalition's headquarters.

He also stopped at the Baghdad International Airport and met with soldiers in the Bob Hope Dining Facility. The talk show host and his entourage signed autographs and posed for snapshots with Task Force 1st Armored Division soldiers.

Soldiers said the visit was an important boost over the holiday spent far from home.

Arriving at the hospital, Letterman emerged from a car wearing dark sunglasses, smoking a cigarette, holding a cup of coffee and casually taking a phone call.

Snapping a picture, 1st Lt. Michael Gerstmyer, 24, from Baltimore, Maryland, said he was surprised at how relaxed the TV star appeared in a battle zone.

"He acts like he's been here for years," Gerstmyer said.

Last Christmas, Letterman visited troops in Afghanistan.

Letterman - who brought along his comedy sidekick Biff Henderson and the show's musician, Paul Schaffer - toured the hospital and stopped at the bed of Pfc. Jacob Dominique, 20, of Archbold, Ohio.

"We took his appendix," a nurse said.

Letterman's reply - "I saw it downstairs in the gift shop" - won a roomful of laughs.

"I've been watching him since I wasn't allowed to watch him," Sgt. Jesse Hazelet, of the 1st Armored Division told CBS News Correspondent Thalia Assuras. — "This is really cool."



David Letterman poses for a snapshot with SPC Amy Padilla, Operations Section (G3), Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st AD, during dinner at the Bob Hope Dining Facility Dec. 24. Letterman visited soldiers in several locations throughout Baghdad. Photo by SPC Shauna McRoberts, 1 AD PAO.

In a routine that Letterman is famous for on the show, he read out a "top 10" list written especially for the soldiers: the top 10 signs you've been in Iraq too long.

"No. 9: you've heard a crazy rumor that Arnold Schwarzenegger is the governor of California," Letterman said.

Number two was, "Camel: it tastes like chicken."

Number one was aimed at the soldiers running the hospital:

"And the No. 1 sign you've been in Iraq too long: Dave's heard about our outstanding health care and came to us for his hemorrhoids," Letterman said to loud applause.

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## *News...*

### **U.S. Probes How Cow Contracted Disease**

WASHINGTON (AP) - Federal officials raced on Wednesday to find out where a Washington state cow, apparently infected with mad cow disease, was born and may have been infected. Even as the investigation continued, officials sought to reassure Americans about the safety of the nation's food supply. That didn't stop several nations from banning U.S. beef, including Japan, Taiwan and Mexico, the three largest importers.

### **Palestinians Mark Christmas in Bethlehem**

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP) - A diminished crowd of a few thousand people gathered in Bethlehem's Manger Square on Wednesday for Christmas Eve festivities that have been overshadowed by three years of violence in this West Bank town. Palestinians and a smattering of tourists - most visitors have stayed away due to the Israeli-Palestinian fighting - watched as the convoy of Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, arrived in Bethlehem.

### **Court Blocks Changes to Clean Air Act**

WASHINGTON (AP) - A federal appeals court on Wednesday blocked new Bush administration changes to the Clean Air Act from going into effect the next day, in a challenge from state attorneys general and cities that argued they would harm the environment and public health. The Environmental Protection Agency rule would have made it easier for utilities, refineries and other industrial facilities to make repairs in the name of "routine maintenance" without installing additional pollution controls.

### **European Space Probe Descends Toward Mars**

DARMSTADT, Germany (AP) - European space officials on Wednesday tensely awaited the landing of their first probe on Mars, sending final commands to prepare its accompanying mother ship to enter Martian orbit as the Beagle 2 probe plunged toward the surface. Beagle 2, turned loose on Friday from the larger Mars Express orbiter, was expected to enter the Martian atmosphere and land at about 3:45 a.m. (0245 GMT) Christmas morning using parachutes and gas bags to cushion the impact.

## *Chaplain's thought for the day...*

### **Our Duty**

"Our duty is to stand at our post however difficult our surroundings and unfriendly our company, and if we are sure that He has set us there, we may be sure that He is with us there and that there we can live the life and witness to His name" From Maclaren's expositions of the Holy Scriptures Volume 15 Pg 80.

## *More reindeer games...*

### **Reindeer Tackles NBC Reporter in Alaska**

FAIRBANKS, Alaska (AP) -- A reporter for the NBC television station KTUU in Anchorage, found her way into the national spotlight while taping a scene with a young reindeer named Blitzen at the Santa Claus House in North Pole.

Just as the Santa hat-clad Meghan Stapleton knelt down with the reindeer's leash in hand, a spooked Blitzen leaped at the reporter, knocking her down in a manner one witness described as a "tackle."

Stapleton was not injured and even managed to hold on to the leash to keep Blitzen from running away, though he did drag her a couple feet.

"I thought the last thing I wanted to do was let Blitzen get away, especially two days before Christmas," Stapleton said.

Paul Brown, the Claus House sales manager who was handling Blitzen before giving Stapleton the leash, said the reporter quickly regained her composure.

"She had a good time with it. She ended up popping right up and laughing about it," Brown told the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. The holiday-theme store and attraction is about 10 miles south of Fairbanks.

Stapleton said she didn't immediately realize that the entire incident Monday had been caught on tape, considering the crew wasn't prepared to go live yet when she approached the reindeer.

But as soon as crew members saw the footage, they used the satellite truck on scene to send the blooper around the nation. Several NBC affiliates showed the tussle on morning news shows, including Tuesday's edition of "The Today Show."

Stapleton, who was part of a crew that travels to the Fairbanks and North Pole area every Christmas season to film live broadcasts around the world, said her parents in New York state learned about the incident on the news. An NBC affiliate there interviewed her parents.

"What's surprising is you can do what you feel are impactful stories, but the biggest one is where a reindeer runs over you," said Stapleton, who added that she's received e-mails from friends she hasn't heard from in years.

Brown said he thinks that Blitzen, who is 8 months old, simply got uncomfortable around so many people, especially when he was handed over to an unfamiliar person.

But Brown said Santa Claus House benefited from all the national publicity.

"That was a good thing for us," he said. "We definitely saw a spike in our Web site traffic."

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December 25, 2003

myafn.net TV SCHEDULES: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2003

As of: Wednesday, December 24, 2003 8:01:45 AM

Start Time	SPORTS	ATLANTIC	SPECTRUM	PACIFIC	NEWS	Start Time
00:00		HEADLINE NEWS		TODAY		00:00
00:30	ESPNEWS	TONIGHT SHOW WITH JAY LENO			YOUR CORPS	00:30
00:45			WHITE CHRISTMAS			00:45
01:00	AROUND THE HORN				LESTER HOLT LIVE	01:00
01:30	PARDON THE INTERRUPTION	THE LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN				01:30
02:00	SPORTSCENTER			US NAVY BAND'S: HAPPY HOLIDAYS CONCERT	HEADLINE NEWS	02:00
02:30		ACCESS HOLLYWOOD			NBC NIGHTLY NEWS	02:30
03:00	NFL LIVE	COLLEGE GAMEDAY	RUGRATS : - THE SANTA EXPERIENCE (PARTS 1 AND 2)		ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT	03:00
03:30	GRAVITY GAMES	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2003 LAS VEGAS BOWL: NEW MEXICO VS OREGON STATE	WINNIE THE POOH AND CHRISTMAS TOO	ST. OLAF CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL	CBS EVENING NEWS	03:30
04:00			ARTHUR'S PERFECT CHRISTMAS		THE NEWSHOUR	04:00
04:30				BUGS BUNNY-LOONEY CHRISTMAS TALES		04:30
05:00			THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL	CHRISTMAS AT THE CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL	HANNITY & COLMES	05:00
05:15	GRAVITY GAMES					05:15
06:00				NBC NIGHTLY NEWS	THE NEWS WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS	06:00
06:15	GRAVITY GAMES					06:15
06:30				ACCESS HOLLYWOOD		06:30
06:45			ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS PRESENT			06:45
07:00		HEADLINE NEWS		WALT DISNEY WORLD'S VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS PARADE	BET NIGHTLY NEWS	07:00
07:15	GRAVITY GAMES					07:15
07:30		ESPNEWS			NIGHTLY BUSINESS REPORT	07:30
08:00		HEADLINE NEWS			LARRY KING LIVE	08:00
08:15			MARVIN HAMLISCH'S CHRISTMAS SALUTE TO THE TROOPS			08:15
08:30		HEADLINE NEWS				08:30
09:00	NFL TOTAL ACCESS	US NAVY BAND'S: HAPPY HOLIDAYS CONCERT		A CHRISTMAS STORY	NEWSNIGHT WITH AARON BROWN	09:00
09:15			HOME ALONE			09:15
10:00	SPORTSCENTER				PAULA ZAHN NOW	10:00
10:30		BUGS BUNNY-LOONEY CHRISTMAS TALES				10:30
11:00	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2003 LAS VEGAS BOWL: NEW MEXICO VS OREGON STATE	CHRISTMAS AT THE CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL	RUGRATS : - THE SANTA EXPERIENCE (PARTS 1 AND 2)	JEOPARDY!	NIGHTLINE	11:00
11:30			WINNIE THE POOH AND CHRISTMAS TOO	HEADLINE NEWS	ARMY NEWSWATCH	11:30
12:00		ST. OLAF CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL	ARTHUR'S PERFECT CHRISTMAS	ESPNEWS	HARDBALL WITH CHRIS MATTHEWS	12:00
12:30				HEADLINE NEWS		12:30
13:00		WALT DISNEY WORLD'S VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS PARADE	THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL	REEL TIME	THE O'REILLY FACTOR	13:00
13:10				HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE		13:10
14:00					60 MINUTES II	14:00
14:30	SPORTSCENTER					14:30
14:45			ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS PRESENT			14:45
15:00		TODAY			GOOD MORNING AMERICA	15:00
15:30	ROME IS BURNING					15:30
16:00				HEADLINE NEWS		16:00
16:15			MARVIN HAMLISCH'S CHRISTMAS SALUTE TO THE TROOPS			16:15
16:22				PACIFIC REPORT		16:22
16:30	SPORTS SPECIAL - BEST OF SPORTSCENTER			WWE SMACKDOWN!: HOLIDAY IN IRAQ		16:30
17:00		A CHRISTMAS STORY			HEADLINE NEWS	17:00
17:15			HOME ALONE			17:15
17:30					ABC WORLD NEWS THIS MORNING	17:30
18:00	INSIDE THE NFL				THE EARLY SHOW	18:00
18:30				ACCESS HOLLYWOOD		18:30
19:00	SPORTSCENTER	JEOPARDY!	RUGRATS : - THE SANTA EXPERIENCE (PARTS 1 AND 2)	MY DOG SKIP		19:00
19:30		HEADLINE NEWS	WINNIE THE POOH AND CHRISTMAS TOO			19:30
20:00	NFL LIVE	ESPNEWS	ARTHUR'S PERFECT CHRISTMAS		FOX NEWS LIVE	20:00
20:30	SPORTS SPECIAL - BEST OF SPORTSCENTER	HEADLINE NEWS				20:30
20:45				BLAST FROM THE PAST		20:45
21:00		REEL TIME	THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL		60 MINUTES II	21:00
21:10		HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE				21:10
22:00	NFL FILMS PRESENTS - GAME OF THE WEEK				FOX NEWS LIVE	22:00
22:30				NBA - CLEVELAND CAVALIERS @ ORLANDO MAGIC		22:30
22:45			ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS PRESENT			22:45
23:00	COLLEGE FOOTBALL - 2003 BLUE-GRAY ALL-STAR CLASSIC: BLUE VS GRAY				CNN SPECIAL:	23:00
23:30					INSIDE POLITICS	23:30

**December 25, c. 6 B.C.  
CHRIST IS BORN**

Although most Christians celebrate December 25 as the birthday of Jesus Christ, few in the first two Christian centuries claimed any knowledge of the exact day or year in which he was born. The oldest existing record of a Christmas celebration is found in a Roman almanac that tells of a Christ's Nativity festival led by the Church of Rome in 336 A.D. The precise reason why Christmas came to be celebrated on December 25 remains obscure, but most researchers believe that Christmas originated as a Christian substitute for pagan celebrations of the winter solstice.

To early Christians (and to many Christians today), the most important holiday on the Christian calendar was Easter, which commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, as Christianity began to take hold in the Roman world, in the early fourth century, church leaders had to contend with a popular Roman pagan holiday commemorating the "birthday of the unconquered sun" (*natalis solis invicti*)--the Roman name for the winter solstice.

Every winter, Romans honored the pagan god Saturn, the god of agriculture, with a festival that began on December 17 and usually ended on or around December 25 with a winter-solstice celebration in honor of the beginning of the new solar cycle. This festival was a time of merrymaking, and families and friends would exchange gifts. At the same time, Mithraism--worship of the ancient Persian god of light--was popular in the Roman army, and the cult held some of its most important rituals on the winter solstice.

After the Roman Emperor Constantine I converted to Christianity in 312 and sanctioned Christianity, church leaders made efforts to appropriate the winter-solstice holidays and thereby achieve a more seamless conversion to Christianity for the emperor's subjects. In rationalizing the celebration of Jesus' birthday in late December, church leaders may have argued that since the world was allegedly created on the spring equinox (late March), so too would Jesus have been conceived by God on that date. The Virgin Mary, pregnant with the son of God, would hence have given birth to Jesus nine months later on the winter solstice.

From Rome, the Christ's Nativity celebration spread to other Christian churches to the west and east, and soon most Christians were celebrating Christ's birth on December 25. To the Roman celebration was later added other winter-solstice rituals observed by various pagan groups, such as the lighting of the Yule log and decorations with evergreens by Germanic tribes.

The word *Christmas* entered the English language originally as *Christes maesse*, meaning "Christ's mass" or "festival of Christ" in Old English. A popular medieval feast was that of St. Nicholas of Myra, a saint said to visit children with gifts and admonitions just before Christmas. This story evolved into the modern practice of leaving gifts for children said to be brought by "Santa Claus," a derivative of the Dutch name for St. Nicholas--*Sinterklaas*.