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November 15, 2008

Evolution of Victory: How a hunting ground became a base for restoring freedom

STAFF SGT. MICHEL SAURET
MND-C PAO



CAMP VICTORY – When Soldiers first arrive at Camp Victory, it’s impossible to miss the 20-foot, concrete walls surrounding every inch of the base – or the miles of barbed wire running on top of them like hollowed snakes. Date trees line the streets, which wind around bombed-out buildings and palaces on large, man-made lakes.

The base is a 20-minute drive from downtown Baghdad. Soldiers live in trailers known as containerized housing units, and the entire Victory Base Complex supports the population of a small town. It has become one of the largest overseas American military bases built since the Vietnam War.

“I was actually surprised at that,” said Capt. Lucas Sparks, of Camden, Tenn., a key leader engagement officer for the 41st Fires Brigade, who was stationed here once before in 2004. “Coming here, I thought it was going to be desert and sand and nothing. What’s really surprising, especially in this area, there’s always something blooming or producing fruit. Always green. Really surprised about that. And still am.”

If this place reminds anyone of a resort – with its swimming pool and lake-side views – it’s because, once, it was just that.

Prior to the invasion, Camp Victory, which received its name from V Corps (5th Corps) – nicknamed

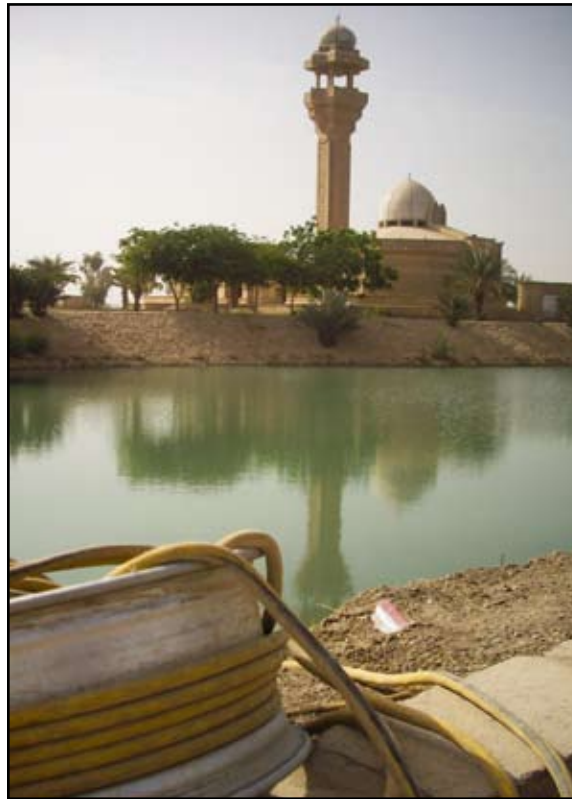


Photo by Staff Sgt. Michel Sauret

A mosque still stands on the grounds of Camp Victory.

Victory Corps – was a resort used for hunting and recreation by Saddam Hussein, his family and Baathist Party members. Both sons, U’day and Qu’say had villas on the artificial lake, which is still surrounded by guest houses. There were houseboats to move them around, and they would often cruise the lake and take tea at one of the islands.

The land behind Camp Liberty – which used to be known as North Victory – was a former hunting re-

serve for Saddam. He had quail and other exotic game imported to the resort for his hunting pleasures. The best view is from a man-made hill – now known as Signal Hill because of the massive array of antennae covering it – created from the soil removed to create the large artificial lake.

The lakes were filled with thousands of gallons of water to beautify the area. Today, it still holds carp and other fish, some as big as small sharks.

“He basically built the area – particularly the water – at the expense of the Iraqi people and the economy because obviously, the water center here could have benefitted the economic and agricultural ministry within the area,” said Lt. Col. Brian White, commander of the 317th Military History Detachment here on Victory.

The construction of Al-Faw Palace, which is also on the lake, began in 1989 to commemorate the sacrifices made by the Iraqi Army during the Iran-Iraq War in regaining the Al-Faw Peninsula, located in southern Iraq. The palace’s interior is constructed in Italian marble with expensive glass and other gaudy decorations.

Some historians believe Al-Faw was a hunting lodge, which housed eight suites on three floors, with horse stables, a zoo, pools, a cinema and walking paths. Early during the Coalition invasion,

See HISTORY, page 3

Mahmudiyah Sons of Iraq paid by GoI

LT. COL. WAYNE MAROTTO
2ND BCT, 1ST ARMD. DIV.



CAMP STRIKER – The Sons of Iraq in Mahmudiyah Qada received their first paycheck from the Government of Iraq Nov. 11.

The 17th Iraqi Army facilitated the payments at Patrol Base Lion's Den and several other locations south of Baghdad.

The GoI assumed responsibility for the SoI program Oct. 1. The program began in fall of 2007; members were previously paid by Coalition forces.

Soldiers from Company B, 3rd Platoon, Task Force 1-63 Armor, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, monitored the activities as the IA paid nearly 2,000 SoI.

"This is just another great example of the Government of Iraq coming together to give the people what they need," said 2nd Lt. George Schwartz, a platoon leader for Co. B, TF 1-63 Armor. "The fact that they were able to facilitate this event without incident is extraordinary."

Many Coalition leaders attribute the decrease in violence in Baghdad and other areas of Iraq to the SoI program. Coalition forces continue to work closely with the SoI and facilitate



Courtesy photo

SoI wait in line before receiving their first payment from the GoI at PB Lion's Den.

their transition to the security forces or other non-security sector jobs.

The SoI payday activities are planned to continue for another week to ensure all SoI personnel are paid for their valuable service and contributions to the security of Iraq.

Salvadoran soldiers pass food to widows, orphans, needy



Photos by Sgt. Daniel T. West



(Left) A woman waits with her son for soldiers of El Salvador's Battalion Cuscatlán to distribute humanitarian aid packets. The soldiers distributed 300 packets containing food staples such as beans, rice, sugar and canned tomato paste to women during the activity.

(Background) Women reach out to take a humanitarian aid packet from a soldier of El Salvador's Battalion Cuscatlán at the Numaniyah Widows and Orphans Center Nov. 12.

THE Mountain View

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41st Fires Brigade
354th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
793rd Military Police Battalion
Division Special Troops Battalion, 10th Mtn. Div.
Task Force 49



HISTORY

From page 1

bobcats and other wild animals were found inhabiting the palace.

Columns, walls, ceilings, stairwells and other interior designs were engraved with Saddam's initials or images. Some of the inscriptions read, "God will grant us victory" and "God will make Saddam victorious."

Many of the architects were trained in Europe. White said evidence shows one of Saddam's palace architects was executed for bragging too much about his work.

Saddam had images and statues of himself shaking hands with historical figures like Nebuchadnezzar to reshape his historical importance in the people's eyes and to give the people the sense that Saddam was always around, always watching.

"I think it's emblematic of any dictatorship, where people try to ... tie themselves to history, and, doing so, the less-informed people are only given one image of what the authority figure is," said White, of Dayton, Ohio.

Another palace on Camp Slayer – known as Perfume Palace by some and the Muffin Top Palace by others because of its blue dome – was a Baathist government complex. It was also known to serve as a brothel where mistresses were kept for Saddam's personal use.

Saddam also had a "Flintstone Village" built on Slayer, a huge playground in the form of a cavernous village meant for his grandchildren.

"It's an artificial cave for his grandchildren to play in," White said. "I guess they were fond of the Flint-



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michel Sauret

Schools of carp and bass fish specially bred for Saddam Hussein still swim in the lake surrounding the Al-Faw Palace on Camp Victory.

stone cartoon, and that was the birth of (it)."

A tall, cone-shaped structure stands on Victory with holes cut into it and perches at each hole. Some say it was built for birds, others say it was for bats. It's more likely that it was intended for birds, but a widely-populated story tells Saddam once had bats imported into the resort to diminish the insect population. The bats imported, however, ate only fruit and soon starved to death. The insects remain today.

In 2003, U.S. forces dropped bombs over Baghdad starting Operation Iraqi Freedom. The bombing and ensuing attacks destroyed and damaged some of the buildings and palaces on Victory. During the first few years of the war, Camp Victory was a sprawling place that looked like a perpetual construction site. Loose gravel lined the paths between long rows of dusty trailers. Force protection measures were less established, and the base did not have the massive number of T-walls securing the area like now.

"Lots more concrete now," said Sparks, whose first deployment here was with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team,

1st Armored Division.

"I mean, we've been putting some of that stuff in. When I was in the (International Zone), we lived in one of Saddam's old buildings. It was a guest house or a hotel or something, and we lived in that. We were crammed in, but it was a hard-side building, air conditioning, electricity for the most part."

Today, the Al-Faw Palace serves as an office building for Multi-National Corps – Iraq personnel. Early in the war, Soldiers displaced goats and other animals when they arrived. They lived and slept on the third floor – 30 to a room – where they hung their underwear and socks on the windows to dry.

A building once used for minting coins and later, for housing Iraqi Special Forces, now serves as the headquarters for the 10th Mountain Division and Multi-National Division – Center. Today, the VBC hosts one of the largest Post Exchanges in Iraq, with a food court, small shops and a bazaar of local vendors.

Most of the forward operating bases and combat outposts near Victory are transitioning to the Iraqi Army. Citizens living in the villages surrounding the base have good working relationships with Coalition Soldiers, and as provinces continue to transfer back to Iraqi control, a land once monopolized for private use and hunting will be returned to its appropriate owners – the people of Iraq.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Michel Sauret

A chandelier hangs over a spiral staircase made of Italian marble inside the Al-Faw Palace on Camp Victory.

The Mountain Soundoff

The place to voice your thoughts

Simple reminders:

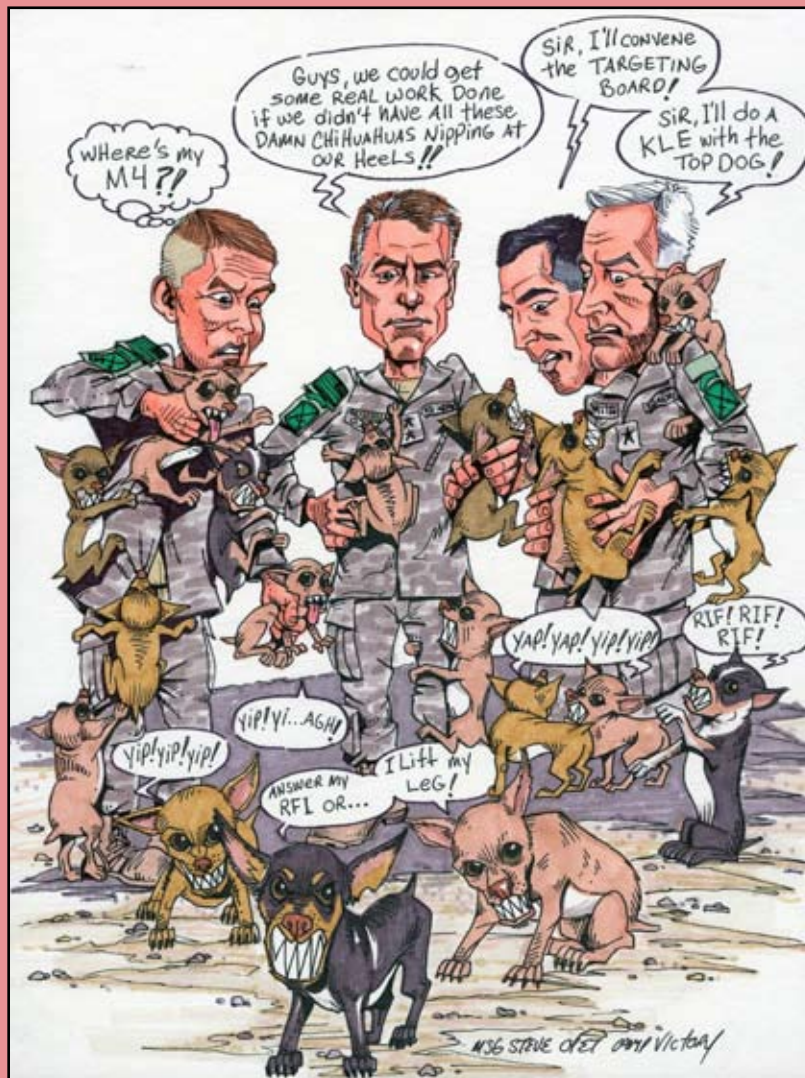
- 1) The speed limits, especially on Arizona Rd, are there for a reason. Too many times I have seen drivers going faster than the 20 mph limit.
- 2) There are new stop signs near the Paul R. Smith fitness center that need to be adhered to. I was almost hit this morning when the driver did not stop, and the driver only noticed the stop sign when I pointed it out.
- 3) Bicyclists need to heed the same rules as vehicles. I've seen too many bicyclists blowing through stop signs.



Thank you,
A concerned Soldier

This column was submitted by a Task Force Mountain Soldier. If you would like to submit your ideas, please email 1st Lt. Julie Glaubach at julie.glaubach@iraq.centcom.mil.

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Staff Section Round-up

Chaplain's Family Life Minute

Now that we have been here for a length of time, and we continue to experience the full impact of family separation, be encouraged. We must embrace activities that enable us to have a positive focus. Anything that enables us to focus on something positive and not on a perceived plight enables endurance for the remaining time of our deployment.

Being there for those who may be struggling and being an example of endurance may go further than you can imagine. It may enable you to find friends you never thought you would have, as well as create a sign of hope to others that they can have what it takes to make it through. It often pays to look around yourself as opposed to inside yourself to be in a position to serve the

greater good.

We all know some family who may need our assistance. As an act of good will and enabling good family life, see what can be done to help that family. The time is always right. So, let us look beyond ourselves to enable the best to happen for others as we "Climb to Glory."

Chaplain (Major) Paul Ramsey
MND-C Family Life Chaplain



HONOR CHAPEL SCHEDULE	
SUNDAY SERVICE TIMES	
0900	COMBINED PROTESTANT
1030	ROMAN CATHOLIC MASS
1200	GOSPEL SERVICE
1900	CONTEMPORARY PROTESTANT SERVICE

Sports Talk

By Spc. JOSH LECAPELAIN

Free agency kicks off as general managers feel sticker shock

After acquiring him in a late season trade, the Milwaukee Brewers and their fans fell in love with CC Sabathia.

A man after their very hearts, Sabathia took to the Wisconsin culture like sauerkraut to a bratwurst. Last season's American League Cy Young Award winner quickly picked up where he finished 2007, propelling the Brewers into the playoffs with an 11-2 record and an unbelievable earned run average of only 1.65.

While the Brewers lost to the eventual world champions, the Philadelphia Phillies, the shine on what Sabathia and the Brewers accomplished remained. So much so that as soon as they could, the small market Brewers offered the hefty 300 pound lefty a five-year, \$100 million plus contract to remain in "America's Dairyland." After a moment of deliberation, CC said "no."

Big dollars await Sabathia, as the New York Yankees have said they will go way above everyone to sign him, making him the Bronx Bombers new ace. Sabathia has stated a preference to stay close to his home in California, but when does the heart ever really beat the almighty dollar in today's sports economy? A small market team like the Brewers can't afford to compete with the juggernauts of the game – it took creative posturing to be able to offer \$20 million a year to Sabathia – a number he laughed off.

If you look at the recent World Series, or even the last few, a predominant trend is emerging: teams that are

built from within and have players that grow together (rather than stolen stars) are the ones advancing further and further. Falling in love with the quick fix often leads to a poor fit, with a different dynamic surrounding the player – thus, different results.

If I were the general manager of the Brewers (or even the Cleveland Indians, who traded Sabathia before the season's midpoint, as they knew they would lose him to free agency), I'd be doing cartwheels to celebrate his departure. Not because he's not a very good pitcher, but because he is a humongous man who will likely have health issues down the road, while commanding millions and millions for cheering his teammates on from a bench or, even worse, a hospital bed – either way, something neither team could overcome.

So let the Yankees sign him. Give them Mark Teixeira, the marquee hitter on the market. They can afford to pay these gentleman whatever they want and get whatever results happen; the Yankees are always going to have fans spill off the subway and into new Yankees Stadium.

Until baseball institutes a salary cap of some kind, the economic differences between the top-market clubs (the Yankees, the Chicago Cubs, the Los Angeles Dodgers, etc.) and their smaller colleagues (Kansas City Royals, Tampa Bay Rays, Oakland A's) will continue to grow. Luckily for the small-market clubs, they'll just have to find a way to continue beating their rich rivals.

Headline Round-up

U.S. News:

Former Border Patrol agent Ignacio Ramos was resentenced to 11 years and a day in prison in a case involving the shooting of a fleeing drug smuggler. Two years ago, Ramos and his partner, Jose Alonso Compean, were both convicted for the shooting of Osvaldo Aldrete Davila, an admitted drug smuggler. Compean was given his original 12-year sentence Tuesday; both men have been in prison since January 2007. Ramos and Compean's supporters continue to hold out for assistance from President Bush. A clemency petition is pending with the Office of the Pardon Attorney. The case initially prompted a massive outcry from the agents' supporters, who argued U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton should have focused his office's efforts on prosecuting Davila for his drug-smuggling activities.

California News:

A wildfire in the Montecito community just southeast of Santa Barbara, injured four people and destroyed 70 homes Thursday. The fires spread throughout 800 acres of land, which is more than a square mile. Leslie Hollis said, "It looked like lava coming down a volcano." Montecito and its multimillion-dollar homes with ocean views have long attracted celebrities such as Michael Douglas, Rob Lowe and Oprah Winfrey, who owns a 42-acre estate there.

Science News:

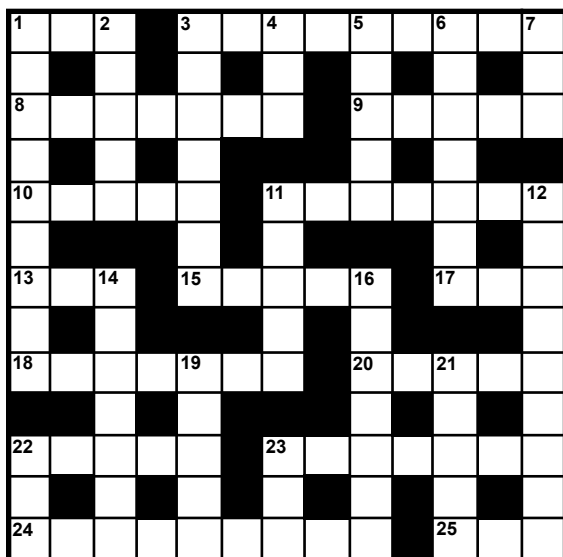
Two teams of astronomers captured pictures of four likely planets that appear as nearly indecipherable specks of white. The possible planets are trillions of miles away, and three of them orbit the same star, while the fourth circles a different star. None of the gaseous planets are habitable.

Odd News:

An Arizona mother grounded her son after he was hit by a police car while riding his bike with his sister. The police car was driving slowly through an apartment complex when he saw the kids. The boy's sister turned to avoid the car, but the boy sped up trying to get past the cop car. His mom said he is "grounded until he gets his bike fixed or starts wearing a helmet."

Quote of the Day

"The story of America is the story of expanding liberty: an ever-widening circle, constantly growing to reach further and include more."
 – President George W. Bush



DOWN:

1. Courgettes
2. Strain and blend
3. Enemy
4. Mountain range pass
5. Walkway
6. Deadlock, stalemate
7. Time period
11. Finnish bath
12. Pajamas
14. Canadian reindeer
16. Scottish musical instrument
19. Beaver-like mammal
21. Illusory legerdemain
22. Stupid person
23. Wisconsin

ACROSS:

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|---------------------|
| 1. Zero. Nothing. | 11. 10-gallon hat | 20. Entire scale |
| 3. Stone fruit | 13. National Occupational Classification (abbr.) | 22. Elliptical path |
| 8. Cooked sugar | 15. Young pigeon | 23. Squirm |
| 9. Brown-toned | 17. Energy unit | 24. Exhibit light |
| 10. Listens | 18. Tumour | 25. Mean dog |

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SCARY MOVIE?

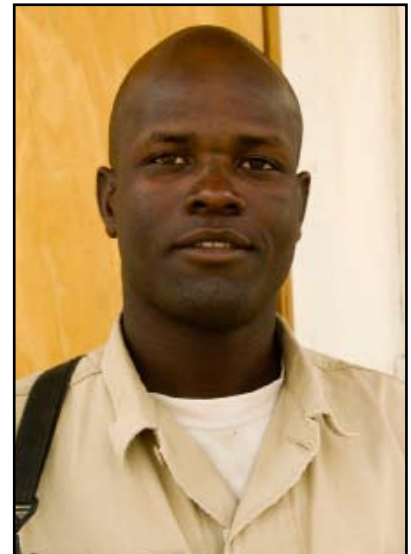


Photo by Spc. Sophia R. Lopez

"Hotel Rwanda.' (It was scary) because there was a lot of killing of innocent people; women and children," said Raymond Serumaga, specialist for Explosive Ordnance Device Technology, Inc.



Photo by Spc. Sophia R. Lopez

"The Shining.' It was a good book and a good movie," said Maj. Rick Nelson, of Beloit, Wis., deputy G-1, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 10th Mountain Division.

Solution Saturday

Saturday, Nov. 8

S	A	L	O	O	N	S	S	T	A	I	R	
H		O		R		I		P		L		E
E	R	A		I	M	P	R	I	S	O	N	S
B		D		B				G				P
A	U	S	P	I	C	E		O	U	T	R	E
		T						L		T		O
S	E	A		D	E	E	D	S		L	A	T
P		R		I		C				E		
E	A	R	N	S		T	A	N	T	R	U	M
C				M			A		A			E
T	A	N	G	I	B	L	E	S		N	E	E
R		A		S		E		A		C		T
A	R	E	A	S		T	E	L	L	E	R	S

from Puzzler's Cave: The Online Crossword Community

Monday, Nov. 10

4	3	9	7	5	8	6	1	2
7	2	5	1	6	9	4	8	3
6	1	8	3	4	2	9	5	7
8	5	1	2	7	6	3	4	9
9	4	6	5	1	3	7	2	8
3	7	2	9	8	4	5	6	1
5	6	7	8	3	1	2	9	4
2	8	3	4	9	5	1	7	6
1	9	4	6	2	7	8	3	5

from Sudoku Easy Presented by Will Shortz

Tuesday, Nov. 11

3	8	4	9	1	3	2	8	6
7	1	2	7	5	2	9	1	4
5	9	6	8	6	4	5	7	3
1	4	8	2	3	8	7	6	5
2	3	7	6	9	5	1	4	2
6	5	9	4	7	1	8	3	9
9	6	1	3	2	7	4	5	1
8	7	3	5	8	9	6	2	7
7	2	5	1	4	6	3	9	8

from Sudoku Easy Presented by Will Shortz

Wednesday, Nov. 12

1	5	3	6	9	2	4	8	7
4	6	8	5	7	1	9	2	3
2	9	7	8	3	4	6	1	5
9	4	1	3	2	8	5	7	6
7	2	5	1	4	6	8	3	9
8	3	6	9	5	7	2	4	1
5	1	2	7	8	9	3	6	4
6	8	9	4	1	3	7	5	2
3	7	4	2	6	5	1	9	8

from Sudoku Easy Presented by Will Shortz

Thursday, Nov. 13

C	H	I	C	A	G	O	L	A	R	K	S	
H		S		I		F	R	O		U		P
O	A	S	I	S		F		O	I	L	E	R
I		U		L	E	I		F		E		I
R	E	E	V	E		C		A	P	R	O	N
	W					E		E				G
A	E	R	I	A	L		K	O	A	L	A	S
B			C			A					C	
A	R	I	E	S		B		P	A	P	E	R
N		R		E		S	P	A	H			U
D	R	A	I	N		O		T	H	O	N	G
O		Q		S	I	R		I		T		B
N	A	I	V	E		B	I	O	L	O	G	Y

from Puzzler's Cave: The Online Crossword Community

2	8	5	7	3	4	6	1	9
7	6	9	1	8	2	4	3	5
3	1	4	5	6	9	7	2	8
6	9	8	3	4	1	5	7	2
4	5	2	9	7	8	3	6	1
1	7	3	6	2	5	9	8	4
5	3	1	8	9	6	2	4	7
9	4	6	2	1	7	8	5	3
8	2	7	4	5	3	1	9	6

from Sudoku Easy Presented by Will Shortz

Friday, Nov. 14

5	4	7	1	6	8	3	2	9
9	1	6	2	3	7	4	5	8
2	8	3	4	9	5	1	7	6
6	2	4	7	5	9	8	1	3
7	9	8	3	1	4	5	6	2
1	3	5	6	8	2	7	9	4
3	7	9	5	4	6	2	8	1
8	5	1	9	2	3	6	4	7
4	6	2	8	7	1	9	3	5

from Sudoku Easy Presented by Will Shortz

Trivia:

Dancer and actor, Fred Astaire, narrated the cartoon "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" by playing a mail carrier.

To find out the answer to each day's puzzle right away, go to:



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