

Perspective changes idea of what's important

It seems perspective often comes and goes like troubled ocean currents trying to become a calm sea again. Lately, there has been way too

much going on to find much calm, and by the end of last week I was convinced that I must be the busiest and most stressed woman ever to live.

My house was on pile overload. There was enough laundry back-ordered in my basement to keep me creatively clothed in whatever is left over for more than a week. My neglected car had issued a severe clutter alert. The final research paper I had been trying to complete for months was both overdue and very weak. My classroom list of things to catch up on was so long it's almost caught up with my home list of things to do. Deadlines lingered, cluttered

and haunted my consciousness. It was survival of the fittest around here for the cat, the kid and the non-plastic plants.

Unfortunately, I'm not unusual. We all have many roles and many irons in the fire. Seeing the world through all those eyes can be overwhelming and taking care of all the details in those many worlds can be exhausting. It seems our culture not only accepts the idea that we're all too busy, sometimes I think it absolutely thrives on it.

Just as my spinning world was about to get the best of me, the news came on. Before I could realize I was procrastinating, the face of Pfc. Keith (Matt) Maupin appeared on my television screen ... scared, somber and surround-

ed by masked men with big guns. Though it was a man dressed in fatigues, the expression on Maupin's face seemed more

like that of the worried boy next door. The brother of a marine, Matt is a reservist who has been in Iraq only for a couple of months.

Immediately I became humbled by the thought of my rambling "to do" list vs. what the week of capture must have included for him.

I wondered what he was thinking about right now. As scared as he was, he had to know that the image of him was going to cause a pain for

those who loved him unlike they had ever experienced. Was he trying to look brave? Trying to seem OK for the cameras?

Next up on the news was the scene from the funeral of Army Specialist Michelle Witmer. The news clip showed the soldiers' two sisters, Charity and Rachel, who also serve in Iraq, kissing the casket. The pictures flashed of the three girls growing up, smiling, and enjoying life together. Even dressed to serve, the girls' images conveyed a contagious and fresh optimism and devotion to each other, as well as their mission of peace.

One story that didn't seem to make the news this week-end was the fact that the temperatures in the Middle East

are way above comfortable. It's already hot, and by June, they will regularly experience temperatures of 100-120 degrees. Last August brought record-breaking temperatures of 135 degrees!

Perhaps it's the fact that I once lived in Kuwait and endured the heat myself for a short span of my life that I feel the average American needs to be reminded how incredibly uncomfortable the summer weather is over there. Those men and women are not only serving their country, they are literally sweating their tushes off in the name of freedom. They are surviving day after day, in extreme heat and dirt, for meager wages, without any guaranteed return date.

And I thought my week

was tough.

The good news is that the sad images brought a welcome perspective before it was too late to enjoy our wonderful weather. I used my freedom to head out into the sun to play. I used my new perspective to appreciate the wonderful life we enjoy here in this great country.

And now I hope to use my words to remind everyone else that perhaps it's our patriotic duty to enjoy each day of freedom for ourselves, for those who are protecting us, as well as for those who have never had the luxury of getting completely stressed out by having so many incredible opportunities.

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