

Chapel Hill Veteran Collects Books For Soldiers In Iraq

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CHAPEL HILL, N.C. -- Robert Patton is a veteran on a mission.

"My adrenalin is running like it was when I was in combat," said Patton.

His volunteer tour of duty as a book collector falls in line with his World War II job as an operations sergeant. To him, it's just like the old days. Patton said it all started when he got a call from a colonel friend of his, stationed in Iraq.

"He said, 'I just need help,'" he said.

Patton found out that reading materials were scarce -- just 50 books for some 30,000 troops in one Iraqi camp.

"Boy, if you had a book in your hip pocket, you can read to help pass the time away," he said.

Patton put the word out, and the books poured in -- close to 4,000 in just three weeks.

"I feel for these people who are in danger all the time," said Patton.

Patton said if soldiers can take the books and pass the time more quickly, it'll be mission accomplished.

"I can't think of anything more satisfying than to know that in two week or so, these books would be in use in Iraq," he said.

Patton said his hope is when American troops return home from Iraq, the Iraqi people will use these books to start an American library in Iraq. Saturday is the last day people can donate books at the American Legion Hall in Chapel Hill. Patton said the library idea is patterned after an American Library started by some G.I.'s in Passau, Germany after WWII.

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