



Jesse Albrecht

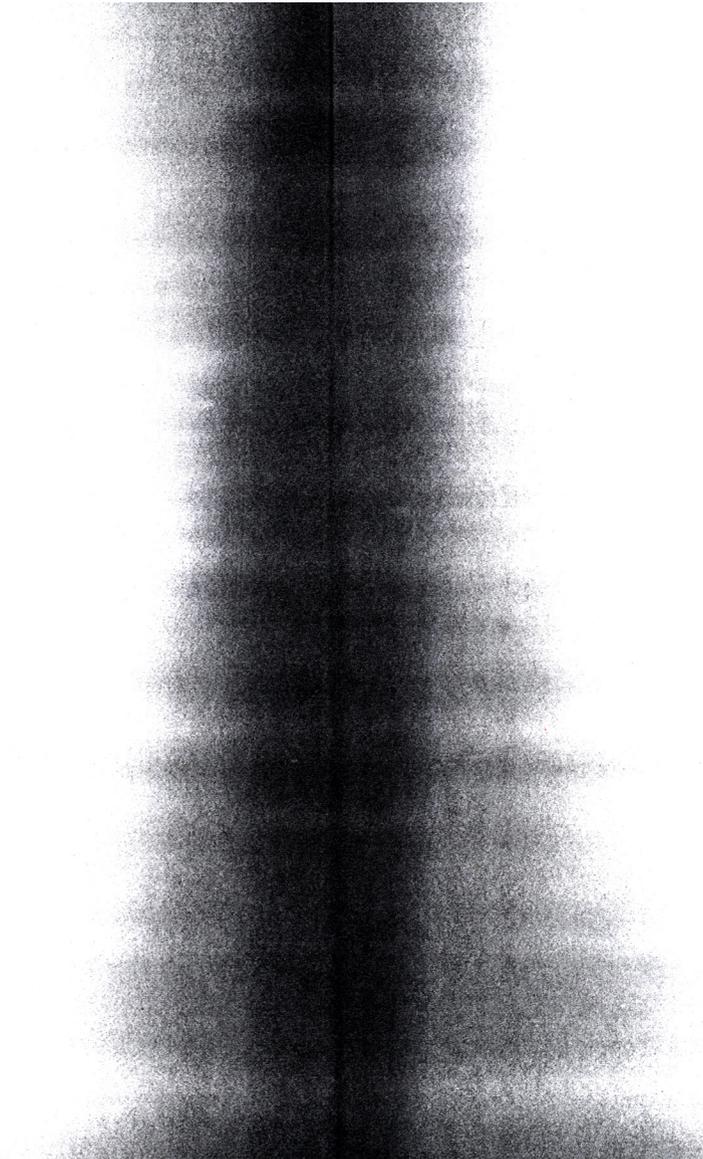
Objects for Deployment

Jesse Albrecht

Objects for Deployment

veteransbookproject.com

I grew up believing there was good and evil in black and white terms. We were good - those who my great uncles, grandfather and uncles who fought in WWI, WWII and Vietnam were evil. So I assumed joining the military and fighting a war was a good thing to do. I assumed killing was a natural thing to do in certain situations and that it wouldn't be a big deal. Everyone knows you kill people in wars, and you might get killed yourself. But being there, seeing it, living it on a daily basis - it isn't that straightforward. I never saw the people who were shooting the rockets and mortars and setting off IEDs; I wanted to kill that person but I never saw him. I never saw the "evil."



The pictures, aside from being objects themselves, return me to the stories of the places, the days, the people. The memories are fleeting; the objects and images slowly get moved and hidden in my storage shed.

Here I am. I have opened it.

HEADQUARTERS IOWA NATIONAL GUARD
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
CAMP DODGE, 7700 NW BEAVER DRIVE
JOHNSTON, IOWA 50131-1902

ORDERS 054-020 HQ IA NG, OTAG, 23 February 2003

ORDERS 054-020

23 February 2003

ALBRECHT JESSE A
(QBAAO-L16) 925 S DUBUQUE

SGT CO A 109TH MED BN AREASPT
IOWA CITY IA

52240

You are ordered to active duty as a member of your Reserve Component Unit for the period indicated unless sooner released or unless extended. Proceed from your current location in sufficient time to report by the date specified. You enter active duty upon reporting to unit home station.

REPORT TO HOME STATION: 4 February 2003
925 S DUBUQUE IOWA CITY 52240-4297

REPORT TO MOB STATION: 27 February 2003, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin
Period of active duty: Not to exceed 365 days

Purpose: Operation Enduring Freedom

Mobilization Category Code: G

Additional instructions:

- (a) You are hereby ordered to Active Federal Duty under Title 10 USC Section 12302 by Presidential Executive Order, as well as the consent of the Governor, State of Iowa. Security clearance has been verified by Personnel Security Manager, Iowa Army National Guard, commercial (515) 252-4374.
- (b) Early reporting, rental vehicle & transport of personal weapon(s) is NOT authorized. This is NOT a Permanent Change of Station (PCS). Normal PCS entitlements, allowances & relocation of family members are NOT authorized.
- (c) Bring only items specified by Commander, PERSCOM or other appropriate authority, to include: copies of rental/mortgage agreement, marriage certificate, birth certificate or documentation of dependency or child support, family care plan, wills, powers of attorney & any other documentation affecting pay or status.
- (d) Household goods storage may be auth as specified in JFTR U4770. Shipment of Temporary Change of Station (TCS) weight allowance (HHG/Unaccompanied Baggage) NOT auth. to the AOR. POV storage IS auth. for reserve component units. Preferred place of storage is a secured area in reserve unit area. If not avail, personally procured storage auth w/subsequent reimbursement. USPFO or RSC should provide these costs. Movement of family members NOT auth.
- (e) You will deploy with complete Organizational Clothing & Individual Equipment (OCIE). Soldiers requiring eye correction will bring 2 pair of eyeglasses & eye inserts for protective mask.
- (f) Soldier will be excluded from Active Army end-strength per section 138, Title 10, USC & will NOT be placed on active duty list (sections 641(1)(D) & 620(A), Title 10, USC).
- (g) Interim travel voucher may be submitted if otherwise entitled to per diem &/or travel. Keep all required documents that substantiate reimbursement.

Additional instructions (cont):

- (h) Soldiers are deployed in a TCS status. Government quarters will be used at replacement activity & during deployment if/when available. No government quarters available en route. Nonavailability statement required for per diem entitlement. OCONUS per diem will be charged to USAREUR fund site as stated on this order.
- (i) Soldiers auth. \$2.00 per day for incidental expense CONUS; \$3.50 per day OCONUS.
- (j) Commercial air is authorized for emergency returns.
- (k) Family members may be eligible for TRICARE (military health care) benefits. For details, call 1-888-DoD-CARE (1-888-363-2273), go to web address www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/ or e-mail: TRICARE_help@amedd.army.mil
- (l) For questions regarding employment/reemployment rights, call 1-800-336-4590: (National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve) or check on-line at www.esgr.org

FOR ARMY USE

Auth: Permanent Orders 49-31, HQ, FIFTH U.S. ARMY, FORT SAM HOUSTON,
TX 78234-7000 dtd 18 Feb 2003

Acct clas:

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Enl tvl/pd: 2132020.0000 01-1100 P135198 21**/22**/25** VTER F3203 S99999

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Enl tvl/pd: SEE ABOVE

Sex: M

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INDIVIDUAL (7)

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// HQ, IAARNG //

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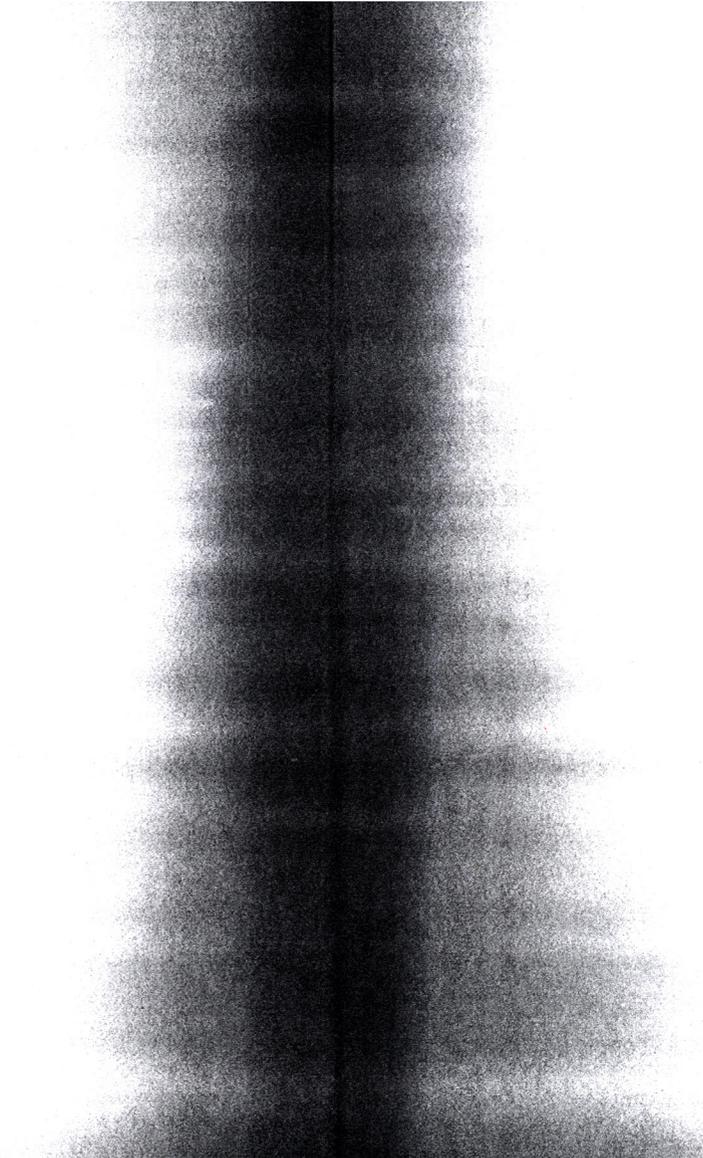
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TRACY T. WARNOCK

COL, FA, Iowa ARNG

Deputy Chief of Staff Personnel

Descending into the darkness. I find this war and violence and its resulting loss of moral compass changes perspective on everything. With each mortar, rocket, IED, and random spray of AK, a little bit of you gets filed down, worn away. Eventually, it is more acceptable to shoot at something, someone, than wait to get shot.



With the ambiance of burning trash and shit and the lack of ceramic plate inserts for my body armor (the plates that help stop bullets and shrapnel) translates to this: my life isn't worth much to the people on up the line from me.





NT&T

ing Center

CALL HOME











งานบวช • Enter a monkhood

THAILAND

Hi Jesse.

Andrew and I are gearing up
for a trek into the Mountains
to stay with the natives I hope
I don't melt. Watching the bombs
over Bagdad on CNN... Have been
visiting some Amazing temples.

Peace out - 

Hey Jesse! This perhaps is
redundant. (Already sent one)
Nailand is spectacular. Everything
has been great. Adrian has been
quite a celebrity with his size!
Hope to tell you more soon

บวชพระ

ENTER A MONKHOOD AT WAT BECHAMABORPITH, BANGKOK.



Sgt Jesse Albrecht
A.Co 109th Med BN
Bldg. 722

2665 W. 12th St
Fort McCoy WI
34656-5240

These post cards make me think about the wars effect on my family.

I remember my girlfriend throwing up in the car because she was so nervous about me leaving.

I remember getting into a fight with my brother. I didn't punch him but beat him in a wrestling-type bout. This was when it was pretty clear the war was starting, so he made a special trip down. We were drinking whiskey all day. He got really upset. I switched into aggressive violent mode. I still feel horrible about that. We haven't talked about it since.

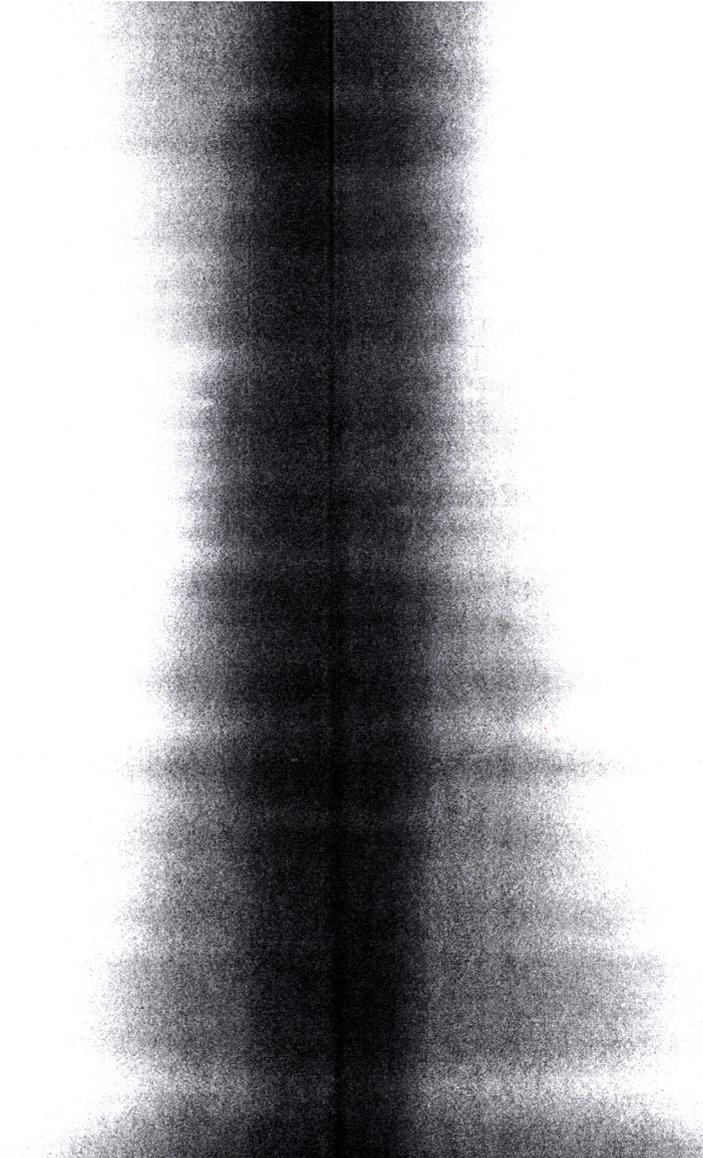
Looking back, he didn't know how to express the fear of his little brother going to war. I didn't either. He always looked out for me, we skateboarded together, he included me in parties and hanging out with his friends (he was two years older than me in school). He is a great guy - I couldn't ask for a better brother.

So there I was, jacked up, mentally gearing up for war, testosterone and whiskey and aggression. . . He referred to me as "government cheese" and something flipped. I wrestled him down on the bed and put him in a version of a headlock, pushing his face down. I am so embarrassed as I write this - it is a low point.

My brother was in Thailand for the going away ceremonies, I think. He didn't attend the coming home ones, either. I don't know if it stems from our fight. I can't remember if I asked him not to come, I didn't want a coming home party or anything.

I apologized profusely for that night. He apologized for not attending more of the ceremonies. I think we both realized we were drunk and it was an emotionally charged time. But it's still painful.

My parents did everything they could to keep me from joining the military. My mom kicked the Marine recruiter out of our house the summer before my senior year. When I told them I was going to enlist in the National Guard after my freshman year of college, they offered to match any fiscal benefit the military had to offer. I joined anyway and they supported me.



Re-visiting the pictures, cards, and memories makes me realize I brought my family to war through me, and I am responsible for that.

















الأمير
RESTAURANT

الأمير

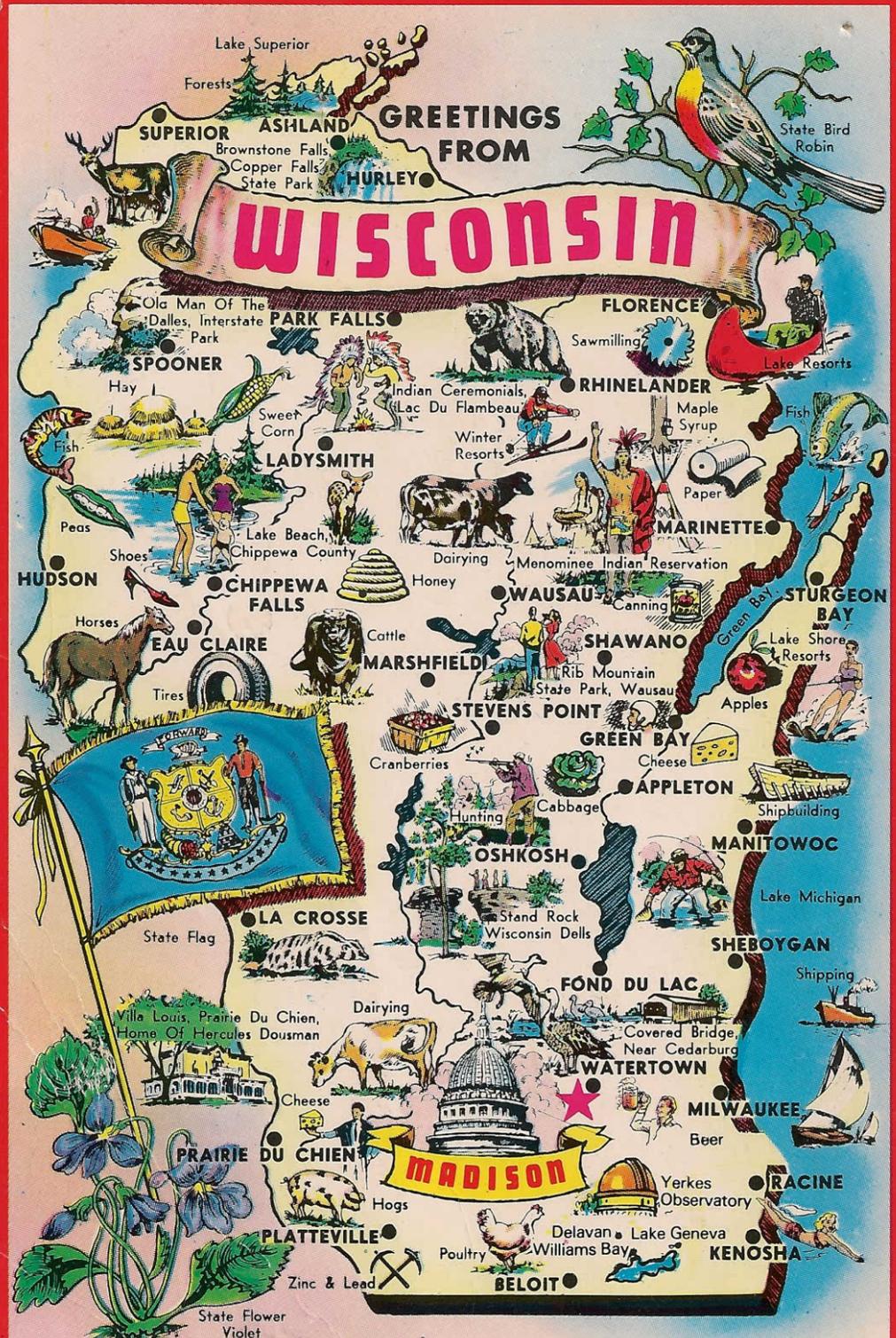
الأمير

الأمير

Three days after we got to the Palace, a truck came flying up to us with three soldiers full of shrapnel. I was working on the guy who had shielded his face with his arm, so his arm was barely hanging on his body.

The two younger guys were fucked up the most; their platoon sergeant had a small gash in his leg and was sitting and crying while we worked on them.





GREETINGS FROM
WISCONSIN



State Bird
Robin



State Flag



State Flower
Violet

Iowa City

**Greetings from
WISCONSIN**

Nickname: The Badger State. 1992 Population:
4,968,000. State Capital: Madison. Entered the
Union: May 29th, 1848 (30th). *Area: 56,154 sq. mi.
Finland 130,128 sq. mi.*

*A few statistics on
land areas you might
be interested in.*

Iraq 167,924 sq. mi.

Iowa 56,290 sq. mi.

Minnesota 84,068 sq. mi.



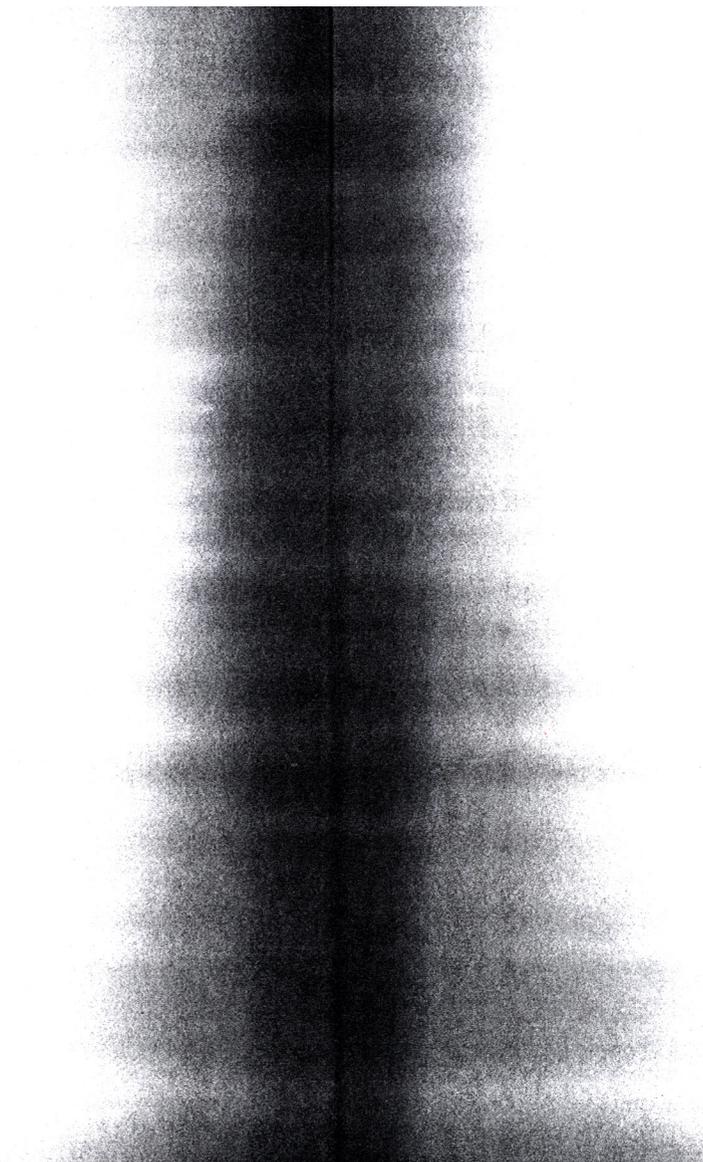
Scofield Souvenir & Postcard Co., Box 402
Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin 53051-0402



SPACE RESERVED FOR U.S. POSTAL SERVICE



We lived in a tent under the entryway to Saddam's palace in Mosul. The Palace was the division headquarters for the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division.









POSO

bercrombie & Fitch

ARMY

Two enemy guys with AKs jumped the perimeter wall one night into the base. So we were up all night searching for them.





ARMY

Abercrombie & Fitch

ARMY

BORBORNE

RIVERSIDE

LA

Some guys set booby traps inside our perimeter.





Prayer against a Hostile Alliance

Psalm 83:1-7

God, do not be silent; God, be not still and unmoved. See how your enemies rage, your foes proudly raise their heads. They conspire against your people, plot against those you protect. They say, "Come let us wipe out their nation; let Israel's name be mentioned no more." They scheme with one mind, in league against you. The tents of Ishmael and Edom, the people of Moab and Hagar, for all the soldiers fighting for us



There were reports of little girls throwing grenades in trucks while we were in town.



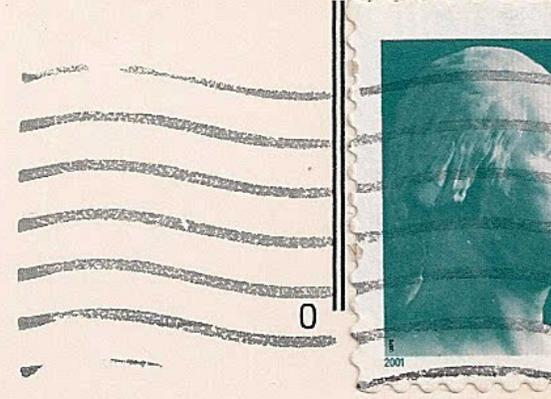
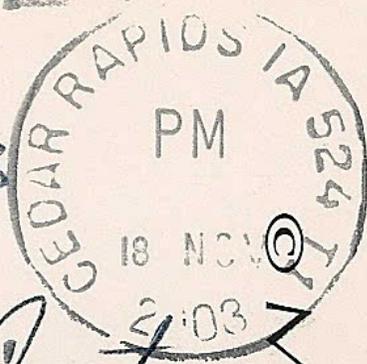








The Little Matterhorn surrounded by clouds
from the book: Rocky Mountain National
Park, a 100 year perspective, by John Fielder.



Dear Jesse -

16 NOV 2003

I love you! How are you? Just
some motivational pictures on
places we can drive to on the
motorcycle. We can be
watching sights like this
in six months, far, far away
from the places we are now.
It will be beautiful to see
these wonderful places with
you - to be with you again.
I'm thinking of you all the
time. We have a lot of good to look
forward to - always miss you

© Mountain Sights Inc. (970) 926-4500

SGT. JESSE ALBERT

A. Co 109TH MED B

AFPO: AE 09325-1





I was part of a medical battalion.

Our squad had two types of security missions: medical and religious.

Our battalion was intended to be medical support for the 4th Infantry Division for chemical and biological warfare. We spent a year and a half prior to the war training for that purpose.

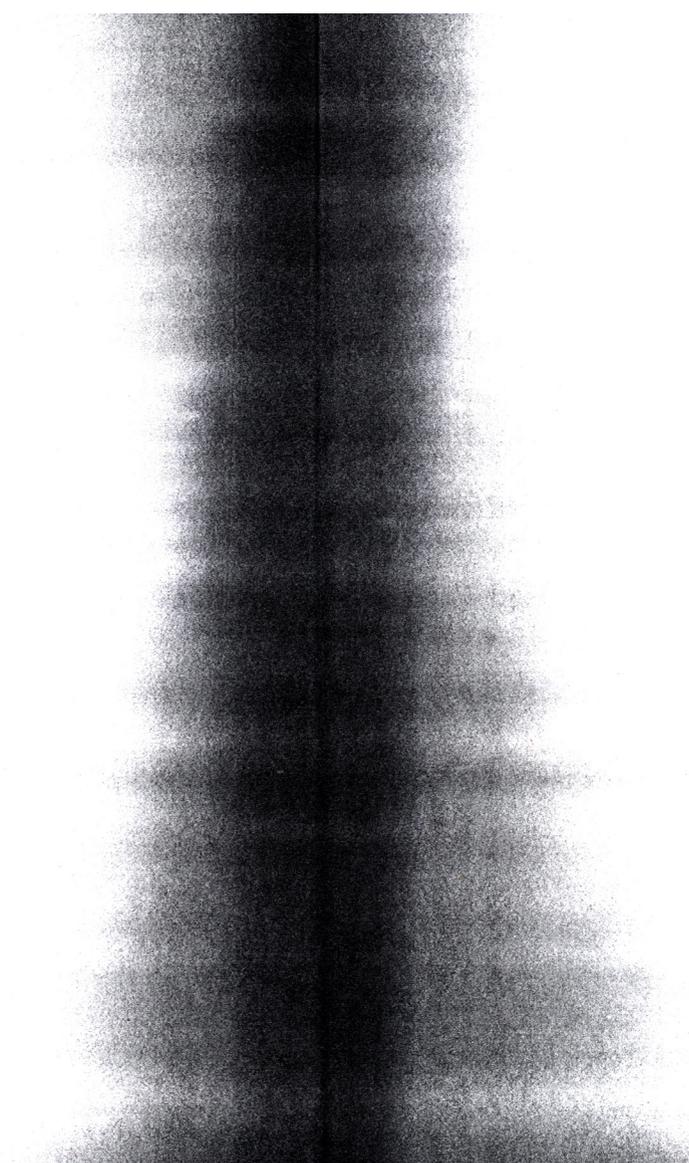
In Iraq our squad (called a jump team) would set up an aid station. We offered level-one medical support and ground transport. We were trained to do that. Then, as an add-on we became security support for the 101st Airborne's top medical officer and the chaplain. (Both were more administrative positions than performing surgeon and chaplain positions). They would go have meetings, and we would be their security.

We didn't have any combat training, aside from basic training; we had no training for convoy operations, security work, or urban combat training. Our training was focused on treating chemical warfare patients, conventional casualties, and ground patient transport.

People at the pentagon, military, or whoever must have believed in the threat of NBC (nuclear, biological, chemical) enough to have us trained for it.

But when we asked the Iraqi civilians, "What about weapons of mass destruction?" They said, "Oh, they all got trucked to Syria." They all said the same thing, like it was a silly question because everyone knew it.

We didn't have any training or equipment for security work. But, a lot of people didn't. For the security missions we got a name and a location. A lot of our missions hinged on extremely vague information. But, we were just the security and their ride. We would provide support for the officers, the "warlords," Iraqi doctors and civilians who went to have their meetings. Their meetings were about important stuff like rebuilding the civilian hospitals and religious events.



At the beginning of the war, we could get away with just one or two vehicles driving around, not knowing anything, and not having a plan. As the attacks intensified and became more organized, we needed to develop a plan and become better organized. But almost the whole time we didn't have any crew served weapons, or body armor, or vehicle armor. I mean, at that point in the war a lot of people were in the same boat.

It was fear that drove me to become educated about convoy operations and security. I made friends with a dude who previously fought in Afghanistan as a Ranger, a squad leader for a joint special operations team.

I would ask him, "What should we be doing here? How should we do convoy briefings?" This guy knew his shit, he was the real deal. He was a good guy to know.



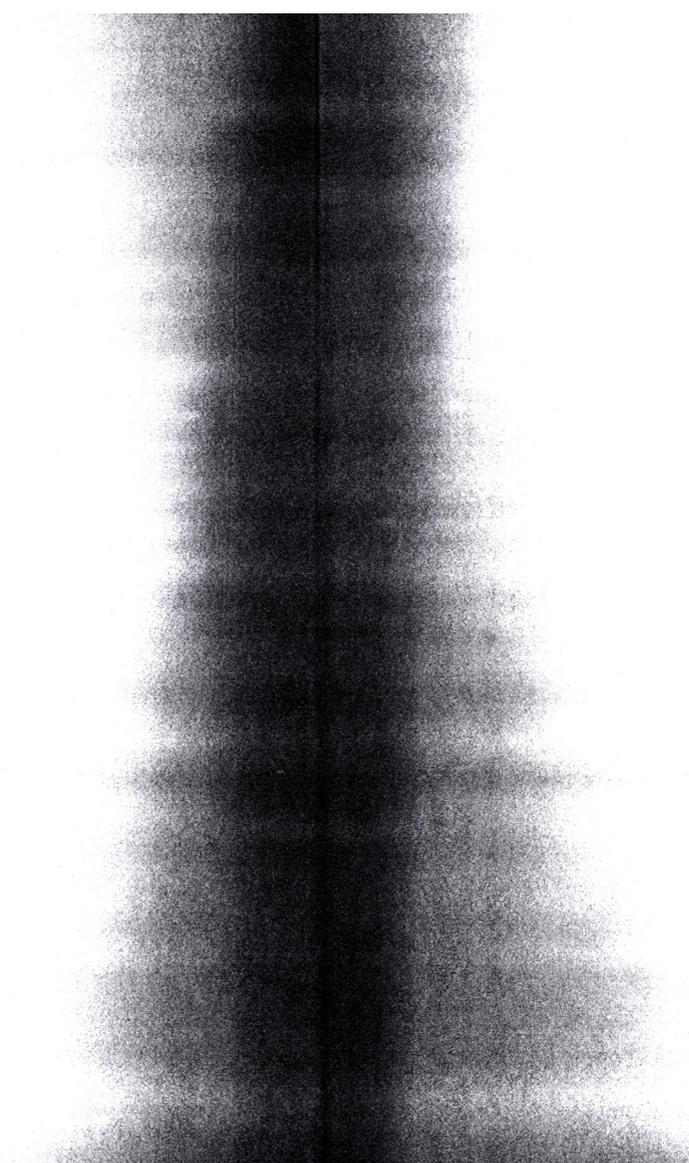




As the 101st was getting ready to redeploy, Iraqis at the Monastery and Orphanage were nervous about what would happen when the next batch of Americans came to their country.

The Division chaplain needed another truck and people for security for the convoy to the Monastery, an hour and a half north of town. The people who ran the Monastery and Orphanage wanted to show the appreciation for the 101st. (I don't know specifics. Maybe their appreciation was general: these Iraqis were Christians who were persecuted as the minority there. We offered relief from that).

This was one of those cases when we, as medics, got tacked on the mission as security.



It was an amazing scene when we arrived; the kids ran out to greet us, we gave them gifts. We had a meal with priests who spoke in French. The age and beauty of the grounds was amazing.

It turned out, ultimately, our mission was a result of miscommunication. But since it was uneventful, that was fine.

It was a great experience to see the place, the kids, the priests, the grounds.

Driving through the scenery of northern Iraq is like driving through the Dakotas, or maybe Wyoming. There are rolling fields of wheat, green high planes with some little mountains in the distance. Very beautiful.

The Chaplain usually drove because he didn't carry weapons. But he was coached on combat driving, which involved running people over if needed.













الهيئة الوطنية
الشمسية الكلدانية
مهر السيد



الجامعة
القديسية
الشمسية

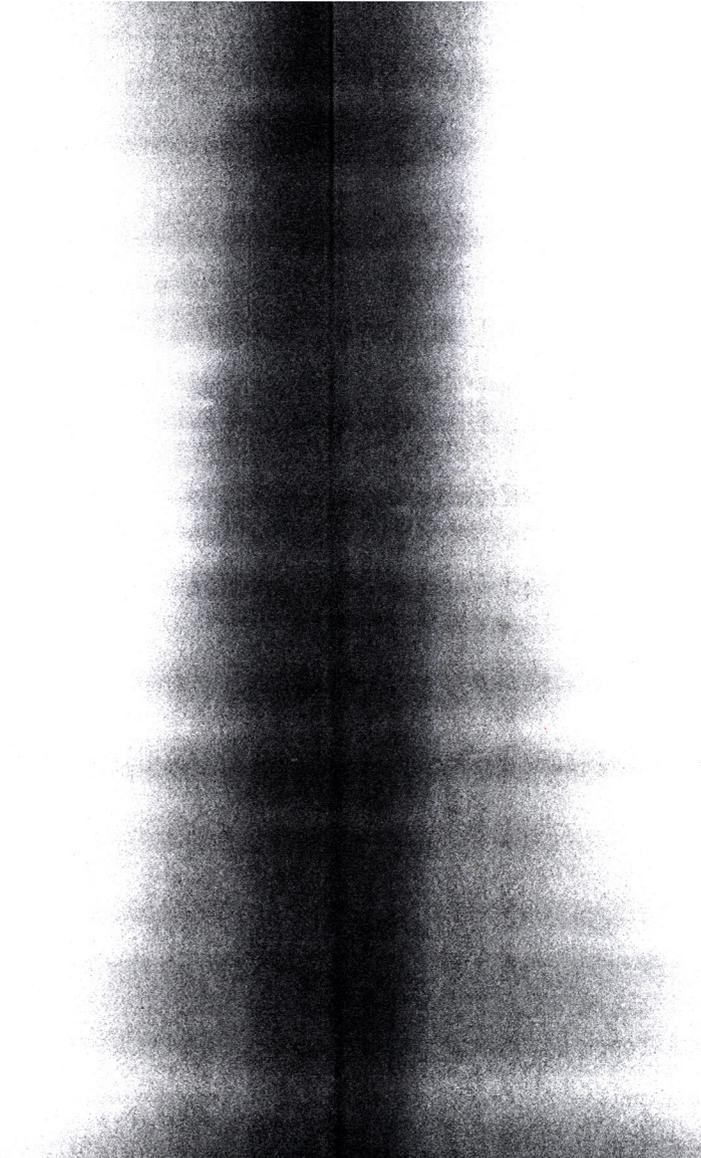
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
WELCOME TO DEA QUÉLO
WELCOME TO DEA QUÉLO

Arabic text on a stone plaque to the left of the main archway.

Arabic text on a stone plaque to the right of the main archway.

These next pictures show a panoramic of a typical mission day. We were running the Division Surgeon to a meeting somewhere in the hospital district of Mosul. The winter is versions of gray and brown. It rained a lot. And it was cold as fuck. Just next to the river there was a giant trash pile going right into the Tigris River.

To enjoy the Army, I am convinced there must be a part of you that enjoys misery, and there was plenty of it riding around exposed in the back of a humvee in Northern Iraq's winter rains. But always, goofing around and trash talking was a way to get through the misery. It was often best to make light of a fucked up situation.



The whole place turned into a mud pit when it rained. After this particular mission I was chilled to the bone and the power was out in our tent, so we had no heat. We cleaned our weapons in the dark, and everyone fell asleep while I was still cleaning the two-four-nine (the light machine gun).

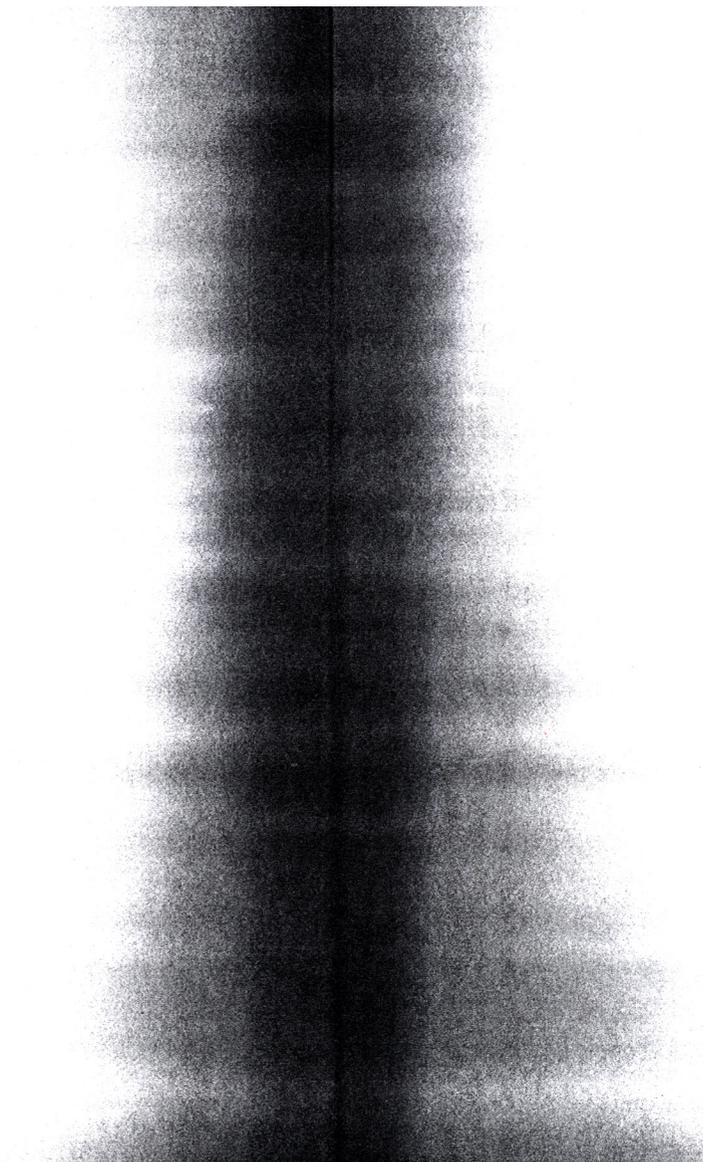








I took cigars to represent the good life; you could enjoy a smoke, like you were a big deal or something. At the Palace I would often sit outside the pool house and drink chai and smoke a cigar and look at the roses, write and think. Tobacco was a big part of the deployment to pass the time and stay awake.













I never saw the people shooting at me.

Eventually, I became so pissed off and frustrated that I couldn't kill the guys. You just wanted to go after them, but it never happened - that wasn't my job. I just felt like a sitting duck.

That's the stuff that after a while grinds you down. The shooting goes on and on and on and on... Eventually, you just don't care any more. You just want to kill the guy who is trying to kill you.

You begin to feel in your heart that violence is the only way to survive; if I didn't have my foot on someone's neck and a gun to their temple, then they would have me in that exact same position.







يا صديقه
يا سلطنة الشام
انتقى العراق والبلاد

صلاة امام جواد عليه السلام
الذي ياترجم القول الرفيع انه لم يبق قلب الا احيا



One time in traffic an Iraqi came right up to our vehicle. This guy had his hands in his pockets. He wouldn't listen to us and he wouldn't stop. One guy went over and muzzle punched him. I'm glad he did, because I was going to shoot the guy.

In the end, he wasn't a bomber. I think he was just slow or something.









There were three of us in Mosul from Amherst, WI (population 700). I ran into Terry Favire as I was working on a traffic jam outside of the airfield.



The other guy from Amherst, WI was Eugene Uhl, who died in a helicopter crash in Mosul.

The media stated, "...an Amherst man was killed in a helicopter crash in Mosul." My parents thought it was me, because I was flying around the same time.



A friend visited the crash site when they were removing the bodies, and sitting in the DFAC (dining facility) he showed me pictures of the bodies, but I didn't want to see.

Eugene's helicopter was a QRF (quick reaction force) chasing bad guys. One of the helicopters, while evading enemy fire, crashed into another.



My friend Marcus was at the airfield. He sat with their bodies waiting for the death registry guys to pick them up. He waited a long time.

I would visit Eugene's grave whenever I returned home.

















LANDRYE

U.S. ARMY

A 20

11-14-03

Dear Jesse,

Merry Christmas! By the time you get this, will have snow & much colder weather. I suppose you will, too.

It will be strange not to have you home this year. We will be thinking of you and missing you (but know that you'll be home safe and sound soon after the holidays). I know that time will go fast after the holidays because we'll make it do so!

I hope you will enjoy some of these gifts and that they will help you pass the time in Iraq.



We'll keep you in our thoughts and prayers & wait for your return home. Love, Mom



of our house - don't you think? Let's hope you have less stressful days & nights ahead and that the new year is peaceful.



14 Nov. '03

Dear Jesse,

Holiday Greetings to you!

The end of year observances, winter solstice, Christmas, Hanukkah, New Years etc. are very old celebrations. So even in time of war and great stress it is a time of hope.

By the time you get this, hopefully there will be less terrorists to contend with. In response to your "genius" remark of Nov. 14TH, the Germans said of the British troops during the first world war, they were "Lions being led by donkeys". You and the other soldiers are up to the task if they let you do it.

Keep your attention focused Jesse and may 2004 be better than 2003.

P.S. The jeans, hammer,
and a ^{an} older Indian
Sigh than you have,

Love,
Dad





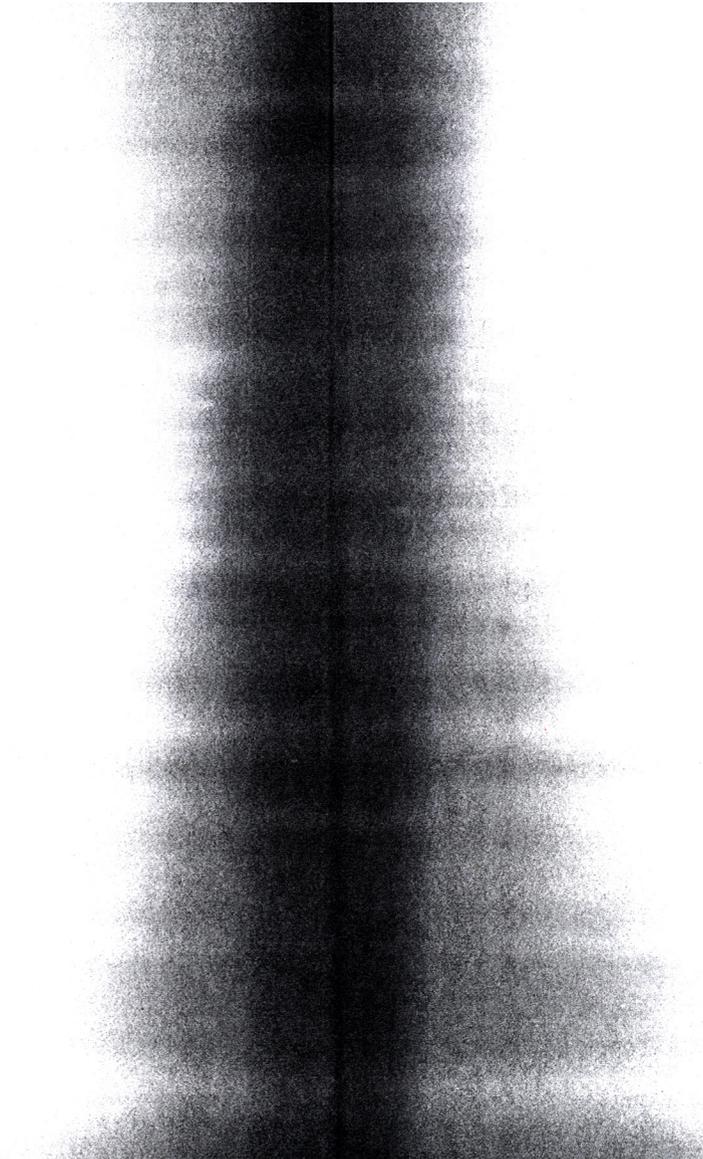
I saw pictures of guys who were disemboweled. Those pictures drive you nuts because it is yet another option for what can happen, and you wonder. And there is nothing you can do about it. You can't tell who's a friend or an enemy. Everyone looks the same from that perspective.





HEINEKEN LAGER BEER
Heineken
BREWED IN HOLLAND

In the previous picture I was excited to be drinking beer, on a plane, going home for leave. I was excited to get the fuck out of Iraq. For the moment, I had it made.



Looking back now, I thought I was cool. In the picture I'm wearing sunglasses on a plane, which is pretty much an asshole move. All I cared about was drinking and taking any drugs I could get my hands on. This picture pretty much sets the stage for the next four years of my life.



HELLO FROM IOLA, WI



Of all the woodland animals, none attracts more human admiration than young deer. They are cautious, alert and graceful—they are the "Sweethearts of the Woods."

Dear Jesse,

Remember the
summer when we
kicked up the fawns
along one of our
woods roads,

Love,

Dad

Published by G.R. Brown, 2329 Kane Rd., Eau Claire, WI 54703-9689
(715) 832-5973



J9483

POST CARD

Address



الموصل
ALMOSUL

مطار
AIRPORT



عزفة
المرح

هل قياقعي بمبيرة

ماتجرفي انشاء الله صابرا ولا

لا تخربنا اليه يظنك قنقره

الاسمي لك امرا



سلا حك شرفك فافط على









MARTIN
09

LAWRENCE
3

ROBINSON
13

NATHAN
8

NO
DUNKING



A rocket blew up above our company area shredding our vehicles with shrapnel. The porta-john had a hole through the back of the seat, right where your head would be if sitting. I didn't want to die in a porta-john.



COGEM

2000

LSU

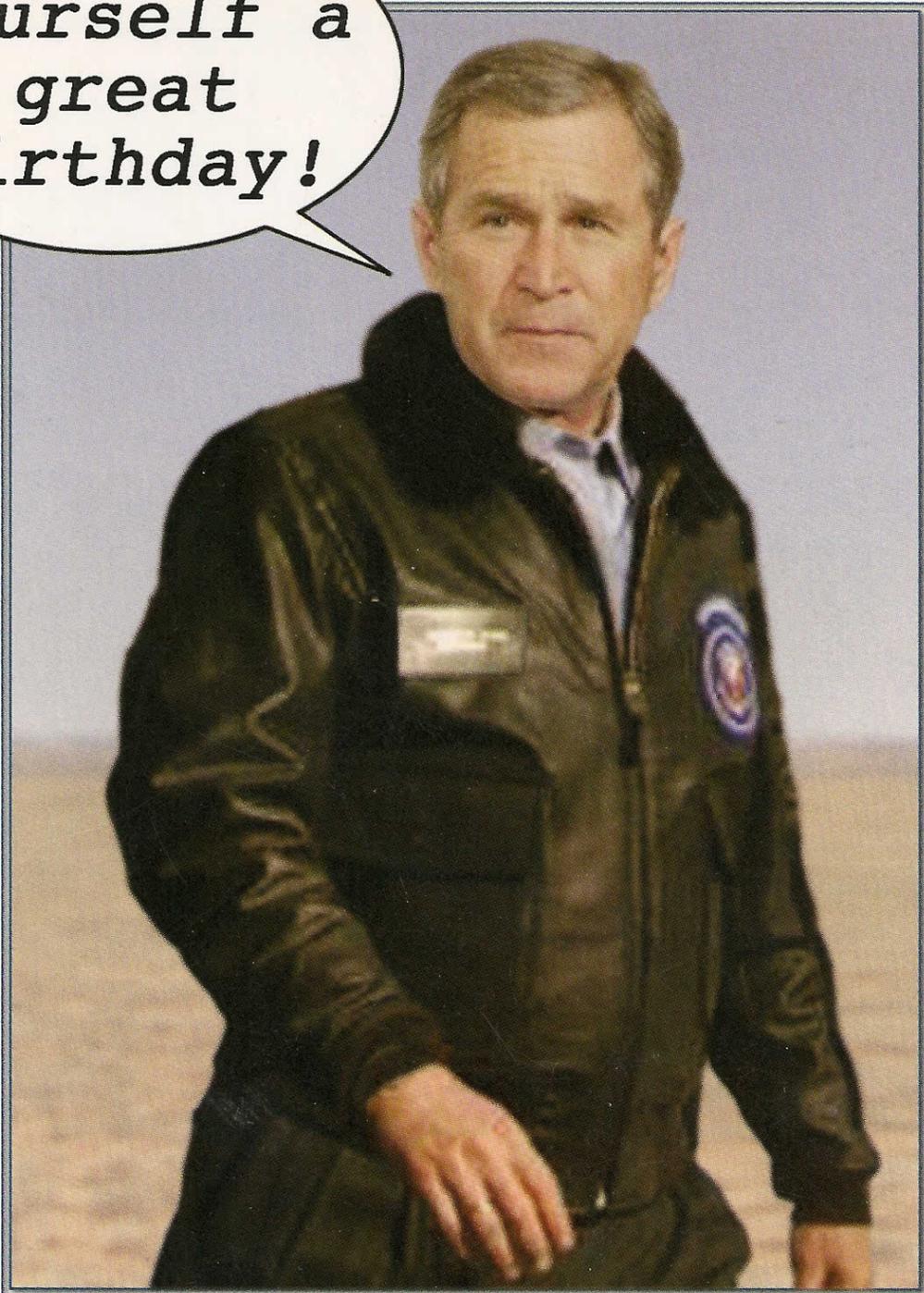


Every 24 hours about 15 mortar rounds would land inside the wire. My friend's trailer had some shrapnel through it. Just down the line a 121 mm mortar hit a trailer after noon. The round apparently didn't detonate but it fucked up a couple trailers pretty good. The girl inside lived but was evacuated to Germany.

Every night we'd play the game "medal of honor" - four people on the thirteen inch TV. Four people, chewing, drinking and taking pills.

One of our guys would get whiskey from the dude who filled the water tanks for the showers. So we called our guy the "water boy" and thankfully drank.

Have
yourself a
great
birthday!



Consider this an **Executive Order!**

Flwg,
Happy Birthday Buddy!
Hope all is well and you're being safe.
Make sure you put sunscreen on that pecker
of yours. It's hot over there in the deserts.
Take Care.
Hope you like the Enclosed shirt.
See 'The Jackhammers' Axe + Meg









Two 101st soldiers got shot in the face during
drive bys. They were at a gas station we'd often
pass on convoys.

But you weren't supposed to have a round
chambered.











Company C returning from World War I.

POST CARD

Place
Stamp
Here

Dear Jesse,

24 June '03

Address

Mom & I were shopping for things for you in Waupaca today. I think we managed some gift that will be to your liking. The card shows a happy return of soldiers in 1918. We all are looking forward to the same for you, the 109TH and all our American and British soldiers. In the mean-time be careful Jesse. Love, Dad

We hope to send you a postcard from all our great travels! This is # 2!

Modern Postcard 800/959-8365



Love, Mom





A week after Eugene died a mortar attack came in and landed almost right on top of us. I'd say it was less than 20 meters away. It killed a soldier who was walking by. I was the first one on the scene after someone screamed, "medic".

He was in agonal breathing when I arrived. Apparently a piece of metal went right into his heart. Once we got him to our aid station we intubated and bagged him, started a chest tube. But nothing. I tried to put an IV in him at the end, but he was dead. There was no blood circulating.



Two years after Iraq I was living in Arizona and working as an assistant for a world-renowned ceramic artist, Don Reitz.

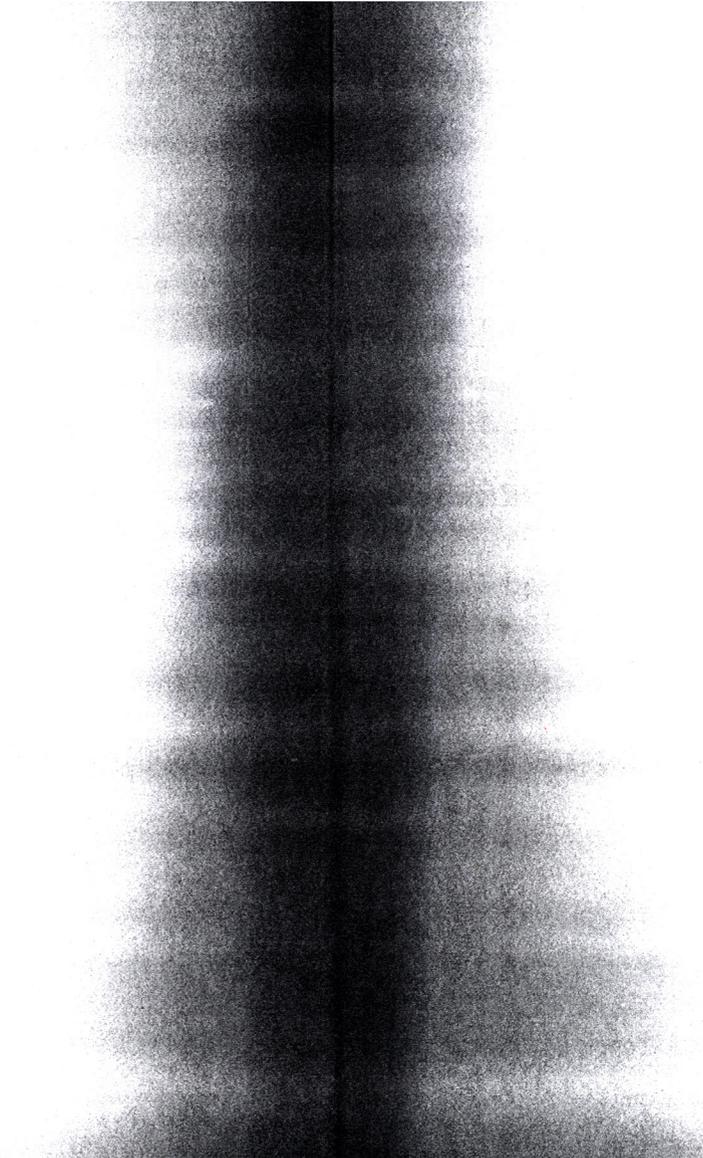
One day I passed a rattlesnake on the gravel road a short distance from my trailer. I called Don and he came with a .38 and handed it to me. He said snakes were territorial and therefore dangerous because of the amount of running and walking on the road. So I shot the snake 3 times in the head. I felt sick about it. It felt like I shot myself. The snake, a Western Diamondback, was so beautiful and so dangerous. But the snake was just being himself.

I still feel sick about shooting him, but that was when I understood I had revulsion to killing. That was when I said I would never do it again.

Learning about the history and philosophy of yoga brought me to the teachings of Pantanjali and the 8-limb path. Ahimsa, non-violence/non harming, is the first Yama. It resonated with me right away. Killing and war sets a dark cycle of violence in motion.

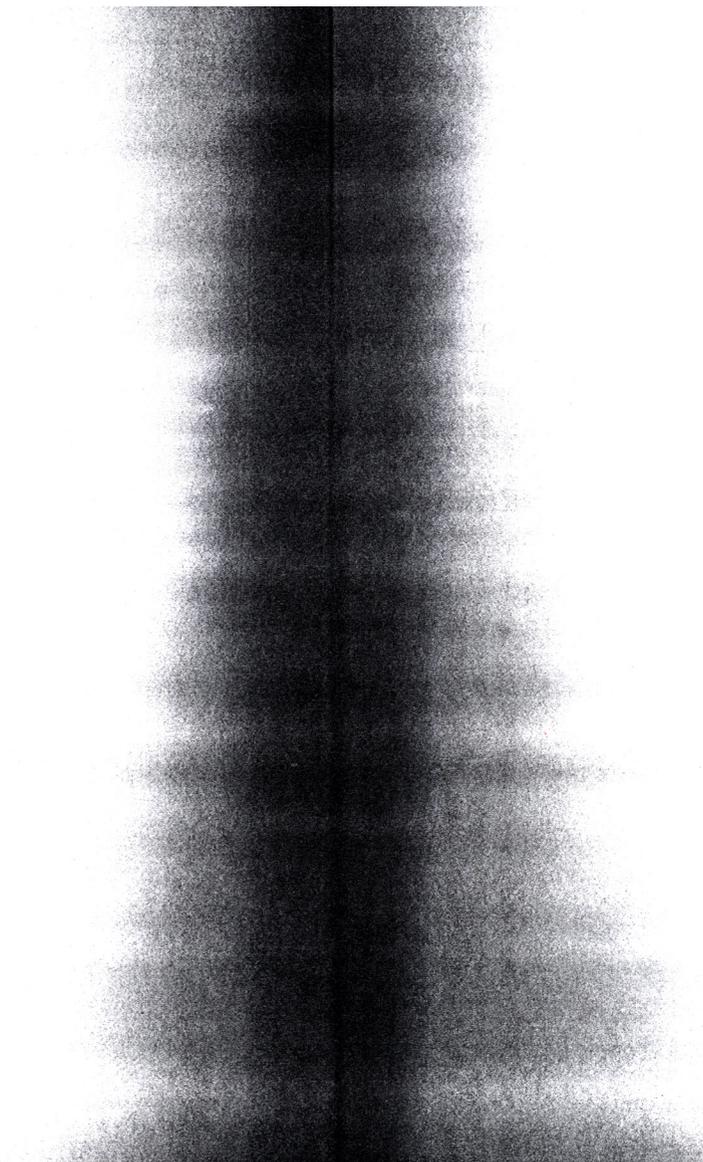
Back in Arizona I ran across the desert in the evenings, dodging cactus and sort of hoping I would get bit, just to know what it was like. Later on, while coming out of river after a swim I almost stepped on a big green rattlesnake right in the path. He was coiled up and rattling. My heart was pounding. It was about to storm with dark thunderheads, and lightning. He chose not to bite me.

During that time I received a phone call from a reporter at the "Milwaukee Journal Sentinel." He was checking to see if I was the Jesse Albrecht from Wisconsin who was just killed in Iraq. I told him I didn't think I died in Iraq. But I stepped outside of the bunkhouse, and in the soft Arizona early evening light, honestly wondered if I had died.



Sometimes the pain creeps back into my left scapula...deep under the bone. There is darkness in there. In savasana (corpse pose) in yoga I used to have visions of rattlesnakes and vipers being released from the areas of tension in my shoulder and hip. I am working to find peace within myself.

I have to go now - pack up my computer and footlocker and head down to Iowa City. I need some hot yoga to help sweat out my self-pity and dig out the imaginary pain in my shoulder. It helps throw the memories a bone, because they can gnaw away at me if I let them.



Music played an active role in my deployment. These songs are forever interwoven in the complex experience and the memories of Iraq. Nostalgia, joy and a touch of sadness mix with the beats as I move and sing along. I don't care who is watching because I am in my own world; in Iraq — in my humvee with Brian riding shotgun, in the tent playing cards and video games, getting ready for missions, seeing patients in the aid station. The songs sooth the darkness of the memories, the songs soften the screams of the wounded. The music helps find joy in living. This music is my soundtrack for my war.

Fugees, The Score—Was playing the morning Brian and I drove into Iraq with our company on a little boom box in the humvee. The sunrise was beautiful as we drove on a curvy road through the desert. It is such a clear memory, still sweet. It also played daily in the aid station during sick call.

Pearl Jam—Multiple albums were also on all time repeat. The running joke was Brian would always ask who was playing and I would respond, "Pearl Jam." It was perfect for whatever we were doing at the time (sick call, cleaning weapons, working out, working on vehicles, playing cards/video games).

Henryk Goreki—The Polish Composer was on a compilation CD my brother made for me and I was paralyzed by the beauty and pain in the woman's voice. I listened to the song over and over.

Outkast—Speakerboxxx/The Love Below. I remember watching the “Hey Yeah” video at the chow hall and thinking, what the fuck is this? It became an instant hit and both CDs got lots of play. “Toom of the Boom,” by Big Boi was my pre-mission song. After the convoy brief I would step in our tent and crank it as I put on my body armor, did a last function check on my M16, threw in a big chew, and made my peace and prepared to never return.

Eryka Badu—I would listen to her at night as I fell asleep. Focusing on her voice and the beat helped me forget a little bit where I was, drifting into a dream world.

Stone Temple Pilots—Associated with the end of my deployment I was fixated with the song “Vaseline” that I picked up their greatest hits CD at a PX in Kuwait. It became the anthem for the convoy back north with 26 vehicles filled with our replacements. Turkish Diet Coke, Chewing tobacco, Newports, and Snickers were the fuel for the long, cold, boring, and dangerous convoys.

Counting Crows—On repeat while playing video games and hearts as our deployment wound down and we cleaned gear and dodged mortar rounds during the day and played medal of honor four player on a 13” TV at night while the Water Boy scored Grants and Dad got pissed at us for staying up late carrying on.

Lil’ John and Usher—It was the coming home song, in the club or bar in Iowa City, and it got us dancing and singing, in between rounds of shots and lines of cocaine. It was an all out celebration for a year of war and coming back alive.

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Jesse Albrecht served in the Wisconsin and Iowa National Guard from 1996 through 2006, when he was honorably discharged. He enlisted and served in Charlie Battery, 1/120th Field Artillery as a cannon crew-member in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

He was deployed with Alpha Company, 109th Area Support Medical Battalion, to Iraq and Kuwait from April 2003 – 2004 where he was a combat medic with the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division. Jesse currently lives in Iowa City, Iowa where he works as an artist, yoga and ceramics instructor, and janitor at the VA hospital.

