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PLUS

How I Learned to Hate the War
An army interrogator’s eight demoralizing months in Iraq
By Tori Marlan

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CHICAGO READER

A Strong Finish
How I Learned to Hate the War

Jake's job was to interrogate the enemy. But it was the U.S. Army he began to question.

By Tori Marlan
Photographs by Stephanie Sinclair

Two months after he got home from Iraq, Jake pulled his green dress uniform out of the basement closet and prepared it for the Memorial Day parade. He sewed his new combat and service stripes onto the jacket's sleeves, and above the left breast pocket he pinned his 12th and 13th ribbons, which represented his new army commendation and global war on terrorism medals.

On the morning of the parade he put the uniform on for what he expected would be the last time. Back in 1990 Jake's decision to join the army had made perfect sense. His father died when he was nine; his mother, a clerical worker, never remarried. The macho warriors in 80s Hollywood movies were the closest things Jake ever had to male role models. And he revered them—especially Rambo, whom he saw as a "lone-wolf type of guy who kicks ass, rescues people, and becomes a hero." Jake felt like a lone wolf too. He had no siblings. And since he wasn't popular or athletic or the kind of kid who had hobbies, he never belonged to any of the clubs or teams his northwest-side high school offered. He was often lonely and bored, and the army filled the emptiness in his life, giving him something to do, providing him with friends and father figures, and conferring upon him instant membership in a group—a group that could get him as close as possible to his ass-kicking Rambo fantasy. He enjoyed being in the army, and for the next 14 years he felt proud to be associated with it.

Now, standing in front of the mirror, with decorations that traced his career in the military, Jake looked the part of a dedicated soldier. At 32, the staff sergeant was boyishly trim and fit, with a narrow face, soft blue eyes,

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Harry Belafonte and Danny Glover announce Vanguard Public Foundation’s contribution of $200,000 to the Higher Ground Hurricane Relief Fund at nationally televised benefit concert

Danny Glover:

John Coltrane once said "the main thing a musician would like to do, is to give a picture to the listener of the many wonderful things he knows of and senses in the universe." When Miles Davis asked him why he played so long, Coltrane answered, "It took that long to get it all in."

New Orleans is the site of so many "wonderful things", the city being a great crossroads of diverse peoples, languages, architectures, cuisines, and rhythms through the centuries. But it has also been the site of shameful things - slavery, exploitation and neglect.

It is a tribute to jazz musicians that they sought to "get it all in". The music itself - vital, transformative, seductive, subversive and often improvised - provided the record that tied each generation to the next. Out of suffering and hardship, we have heard time and again jazz artists rediscover possibility. Such is the power of imagination. And hence, the critical importance of this evening’s effort.

When the hurricane struck the Gulf and the floodwaters rose and tore through New Orleans, plunging its remaining population into a carnival of misery, it did not turn the region into a Third World country - as it has been disparagingly implied in the media - it revealed one. It revealed the disaster within the disaster: grueling poverty rose to the surface like a bruise to our skin.

But the storm not only revealed the poverty of those most vulnerable, those left behind. It revealed the poverty of skewed priorities that put the shoulder of technology to the wheel of death rather than life, creating killing machines that are now called "smart" and surveillance systems that, in the words of the great Guyanese poet Martin Carter, "are watching you sleep and aiming at your dreams."

Mother Nature revealed the poverty of a mindset that narrowly views security as a military issue. That is blind to the role of culture in sustaining the mental health and social wellness of people, which is also the basis for economic productivity. Blind to the role of culture in education, through which we are prepared for our responsibilities in a democracy. And hostile to the role of culture in the search for truth.

Hurricane Katrina revealed, more than anything else, a poverty of imagination.
Harry Belafonte:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "True compassion is more than throwing a coin to a beggar. It demands of our humanity that if we live in a society that produces beggars, we are morally commanded to restructure that society."

Let us challenge what we have been told was inevitable: Katrina was not "unforeseeable", the loss of life and suffering was not "unavoidable". It was the result of a political authority that sub-contracts its responsibility to the private sector and abdicates responsibility altogether when it comes to housing, health care, education and even evacuation.

As New Orleans rebuilds, let us also ensure that reconstruction does not result in further victimization. Let us support the efforts of those people in the Delta who have stated that they "will not go quietly into the night, scattering across this country to become homeless shadows in countless other cities while federal relief funds are funneled into rebuilding casinos, hotels and chemical plants..." Let us ensure that those victimized by this tragedy will be empowered to actively participate in the reclaiming, rebuilding and improvement of their communities.

The gift of music is to bring people together, to create not only a shared identity, but to embrace a shared humanity. To truly know ourselves is to realize how we are connected to each other.

Many people this evening have described the beauty, the Creole and spice, the gumbo that is New Orleans; the African roots, blues, gospel and many other musical traditions that have come together to create that uniquely American art form: jazz.

And the meaning of jazz, is life. Whether we receive it as a blend of many notes reflecting diverse traditions, or as John Coltrane might have it: as one note, played in endless variations.

Let us commit ourselves to the service of life.

The Vanguard Public Foundation, which Danny Glover and I serve, has a long history of social justice philanthropy and activism, and has established a People’s Hurricane Relief Fund. And tonight, on the occasion of this inspiring benefit convened by Wynton Marsalis, the Vanguard Foundation is making a donation of $200,000 to the Higher Ground Hurricane Relief Fund.

“The Vanguard Foundation strives to eradicate racism in all its manifestations and promote civil rights, economic justice, gender equality and community empowerment.” --Hari Dillon, President, Vanguard Public Foundation

To donate to the People’s Hurricane Relief Fund, and/or for more information about Vanguard, call (415) 487-2111 or visit www.vanguardsf.org
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and sandy brown hair that he'd cut in anticipation of the parade. They divorced him well, but he felt all at ease in it.

Later that morning, while waiting for the festivities to begin downtown, he stopped for a cup of coffee. He sat on a bench on Wacker Drive and noticed a middle-aged man sizing him up.

“What are you?” the man asked.

Jake was taken aback. He thought the question seemed better suited to Halloween. It was absurd—stupid even. A year ago, it might've made him laugh. Now it infuriated him. “I'm a human being,” he snapped.

“What are you?”

He walked away and joined a hodgepodge of veterans on a float. As it made its way down State Street, he scanned the crowd, noting his wife and toddler son, who called out to him. It was the only moment of the parade he enjoyed.

The other spectators upset him. Their waving, their hollering, their clapping—everyone was acting as if it was the first time they'd ever seen a soldier. Jake secretly believed it would be their last.

He prepared as best he could for the job ahead, reading books on Islam, terrorism, and Arab culture. At one point Beth asked if there was any way he could avoid being shot at—because then they'd be sick of selling, he knew. He was asking them to put themselves and their families at great risk. He applied to the Chicago Police Department and worked for a public relations firm until the city called.

In December 2003 he was 31, a Chicago police officer with a wife and a three-month-old son. His national guard unit turned to Iraq in the first place, but they hadn't liked Iraq the first time around, and they hated him of his last trip to the Middle East, during the first gulf war, it came as a surprise when he got called up for it. He had supported sending troops to Iraq in the first place, but they thought the jest seemed better suited to Halloween. It was absurd—stupid even. A year ago, it might've made him laugh. Now it infuriated him. “I'm a human being,” he snapped.

“What are you?”

He walked away and joined a hodgepodge of veterans on a float. As it made its way down State Street, he scanned the crowd, noting his wife and toddler son, who called out to him. It was the only moment of the parade he enjoyed.

The other spectators upset him. Their waving, their hollering, their clapping—it all struck him as foolish. Looking at them he couldn't help but think, “They have no idea what they're cheering!”

Jake had arrived in Kuwait almost a year earlier, ready to serve his country. The pale blue sky, powdery white sand, and dusty smell of the air reminded him of his last trip to the Middle East, during the first gulf war, when he was a skinny 18-year-old kid at Camp Guام. He'd come back from that war without a scratch, with a single chipped tooth and a broken thumb. He'd break his hand in a car accident.

When he returned from Iraq, he got married. Jake and Beth also took a family portrait. They also took a family portrait. Jake secretly believed it would be their last.

He prepared as best he could for the job ahead, reading books on Islam, terrorism, and Arab culture. At one point Beth asked if there was any way he could avoid going to war. Though he had a possible out—an old back injury, a ruptured disk that had never properly healed—he said no. He wasn't going to waste out of his commitment. And besides, he told her, if he didn't go, someone would have to go in his place. If he had the same decision to make today, Jake says, “I'd break both my legs if I had to.”

The linguists spent a month at Camp Doha in Kuwait getting acclimated to the Middle East and taking convoy and weapons training. They were attached to the Third Mountain Division, Second Brigade, and in July the brigade drove to Camp Victory, an enormous base near the Baghdad airport that was under the command of the First Cavalry Division. Camp Victory housed 12,000 soldiers behind a brick wall that was secured with barbed wire and perimeter towers. It was an intensely hot, dusty place with gravelly roads, relentless noise from vehicles and traffic generators, and perfectly lined rows of prefabricated aluminum trailers.

Those who lived there came to think of life in Baghdad in simple terms: there was inside the wire and outside the wire. Jake was assigned to a three-room trailer with five other soldiers. Each room contained two small beds and wall lockers. He spent the first few weeks getting oriented and tagging along for “right-seat rides” with soldiers charged with showing him around.

Jake hated being there. He hadn't liked Iraq the first time around, and he blamed Arabs and “their nonsense” for making him come back.

In his downtime he got to know his roommate, read more on Islam and Arab culture, attended movies, wrote in his journal, and visited Camp Victory's PX, the biggest post exchange in Iraq, where merchants sold everything from baby wipes to big-screen TVs and bootleg DVDs under tents the size of aircraft hangers. There was even a Pizza Hut, a Burger King, and Internet cafés—“drinks only, to protect the computers”—where soldiers e-mailed friends and family, surfed the Web, and downloaded online dating sites. Friends and family back home sent soldiers basic items like toothpaste and deodorant, but nearly anything could be bought at the PX or was only a click away. Deliveries from Victoria's Secret, Amazon, and eBay regularly arrived at Camp Victory. Jake even contemplated buying a satellite TV with 900 channels for a one-time fee of $200.

“Satellite TV in a war zone,” he marveled in his journal.

But Camp Victory was still a far cry from home. Every day insurgents fired rockets and mortar rounds inside the wire. Jake quickly learned to distinguish them from each other by the sounds they made on impact. Though the explosions from these attacks made soldiers scatter or hit the ground, Jake tried to ignore them. He'd simply turn up the music or try to go back to sleep or continue reading. He'd decided there was nothing he could do to protect himself.

He wondered what it would be like if a rocket or mortar round sliced through his trailer while he was in it. “Would I even know it?” he wrote to himself. “Would it be a white flash, a heat wave, concussion? Or would the world just end? Just think, in some farm field five or ten kilometers away, some rag bag insurgent is setting up a rocket—a against a pile of rocks or dirt . . . setting the fuse and running away. And that same rocket could be in the air right now, climbing in a burning street up into the sky; then the fire goes out and the rocket just coasts up and settles into the trajectory that it will follow. And that same rocket is just coasting down to earth, destined to either hit me or miss me, or hit someone else or miss someone else. How the hell am I going to go back to a normal life after having come to terms with the madness of this place?”

It was far more dangerous, he knew, outside the wire. As a counterintelligence specialist, Jake was expected to cultivate informants and gather information about the insurgency. The job required venturing out into the streets of Baghdad a few times a week to accompany GIs on missions and patrols. These usually took place in a farm area on the southwest side of the city, where amid the gunfire and explosions Jake could hear frogs and crickets and howling dogs.

He decided that nothing—not democracy in the Middle East, not political gain, not cheap oil—was worth the feeling he experienced before each trip outside the wire, the near-crippling fear that he'd never see his wife or son again. “If everybody back home could feel like this there would never be war again,” he wrote.

He felt alone in his fear. The GI's, most of them barely out of high school, seemed eager for action. Jake noticed that some even seemed to look forward to being shot at—even because they could shoot back.

On missions they sometimesordained off whole villages, harring along anyone coming or going, and then raiding people's homes. The common practice. Jake says, was to break in doors with battering rams and point guns in everybody's faces. They'd search everybody, including children, and then “tear up the house and detain all the males.”

With interpreters, or “terps,” in tow, Jake tried to form connections with the locals, giving them his phone number and encouraging them to turn in anybody they suspected of having ties to insurgent groups. It was a tough sell, he knew. He was asking people to put themselves and their families at great risk.

The other linguists from Jake's national guard unit turned to him for advice because he was older and could draw on his experience as a police officer, and also because their training had left them feeling ill prepared. “It was outdated and geared toward Bosnia and Korea,” says Nhu Tran, a Vietnamese linguist from Carol Stream. They'd been trained to question people on a battlefield, where innocence wasn't a factor, rather than civilians, who got rounded up every
time an improvised explosive device (IED) or car bomb went off. The intelligence agents, says the 20-year-old girl who had been yanked out of their regular lives, trained for six months, and then “thrown into Iraq and expected to produce high-level intelligence.” If any of the training was relevant, Sergeant Mike Komorowski, a 24-year-old Polish linguist from Schaumburg, says he missed it. “It was an accelerated training program—we rushed through it.” While the linguists were still in Arizona, photos of hooded prisoners at Abu Ghraib being abused and humiliated made their way around the globe. When Jake saw them, he thought it was crucial for the U.S. to “win the hearts and minds” of Iraqis. On trips outside the wire he took the hearts and minds of Iraqis. Jake says that on patrols and raids he often found himself trying to persuade his fellow soldiers not to do unnecessary harm—not to derogatorily refer to Iraqis as hajjis, or bring a dog into someone’s home without reason, or confiscate an antique rifle that was a family heirloom, or detain people solely for having unlicensed AK-47s—“an offense as common as double-parking in Chicago,” he wrote in his journal. When U.S. troops descended on someone’s home “SWAT-team style,” or when the soldiers overlooked the oldest male in a house and addressed his sons instead, Jake got the feeling that Americans were making enemies—that the soldiers were either blind to or disrespectful of cultural differences. He worried that such misteops would damage the overall mission in Iraq. He worried that they created a more hostile environment, making the soldiers’ jobs even more dangerous. And he worried that they would ultimately create new terrorists whose handiwork would someday be seen on U.S. streets. The hostility brevity in the local population was palpable, Jake says. Sometimes when he caught Iraqis gawling at him, he was reminded of the four-year-old girl in Chicago who had taken one look at him in his police uniform and declared: “You’re bad.” He remembered stepping out of his squad car on west-side streets, only to see the young males on the corner suddenly start spitting. The police in Chicago had a bad name in certain circles, but he was starting to think it was nothing compared to how Iraqis felt about Americans.

Jake figured his chances of getting injured or killed increased with every trip outside the wire, that it was simply a game of odds. After an IED hit a Humvee he was waiting for, a month after he arrived in Baghdad, he requested and received a transfer. He began working inside the interrogation facility, leading a four-person team of interrogators who questioned suspects and then recommended they be released or sent to Abu Ghraib for further questioning. While their fates were in limbo, suspects stayed four or five men in a cell in a prison near the facility. They were given a blanket, a mattress, the Koran, and one meal a day, along with fruit and a bottle of water. Jake says.

The interrogations took place in a former government building. Each interrogation room had one desk and three chairs—for the suspect, the interrogator, and the interpreter. After the Abu Ghraib revelations, the army had implemented strict rules of conduct, says Jake, including a ban on tactics requiring physical contact, stressful positions, and sleep deprivation. “Our team followed that by the book,” he says. Still, one of the interrogators on his team had an approach that he felt left much to be desired. She would shout and swear and try to humiliate suspects, calling them pieces of shit, calling their mothers and sisters whores. There was no nuance to her style, no psychological insight. She yelled so loudly the other interrogators could often hear her through the walls. The terps complained to Jake about her and one even threatened to quit, he says, so he sat her down and talked to her about her approach. “Giving her criticism was extremely unproductive,” he says. “She threw a fit and had to take three weeks off.”

Jake worked 16 to 18 hours a day to process the suspects being rounded up. In a way, he says, it was good. It kept his mind off home. Before questioning a suspect, he liked to read reports from the field and examine the evidence. Interrogations ranged from one hour “for a blatantly innocent person” to eight hours for the most difficult cases. He says he usually began by greeting the prisoner and uncuffing him. Then he’d offer him something to drink and the opportunity to use the Porta-John. “He would make the person comfortable to talk and give him an opportunity to talk,” says an Egyptian-born American interpreter who worked closely with Jake (and doesn’t want the army to know he talked to a reporter). “He was not arrogant, and he didn’t come across as a weak person. He was firm.” He also describes Jake as intelligent, fair, and open-minded—someone who “wouldn’t rush to judgment.” Jake often told the suspects a little bit about himself, and sometimes he even showed them a photo of his son. He figured...
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didn’t use his interrogations to push for ad-
vises, or his dialect indi-cated that he’d been from a region
he said he’d never been to, or he’d claimed to be Sunni but was in the habit of saying, “I swear by Ali”—a very Shia thing to say—Jake wanted to know.

In Chicago, if suspects hesitate or clam up when Jake asks their date of birth, he assumes they have something to hide. In Iraq, he learned, the suspects didn’t know when they were born. They don’t always know their address either, he says. “They just know, I live across from the market.” Jake says the more he learned about Iraqi and Arabic cultural norms—from reading, from long talks with the interpreters, and from hearing about the suspects’ lives—the better he was able to think on his feet and to modify his questioning.

One rural farmer Jake ques-tioned not only didn’t know his address, he didn’t know how to estimate miles or kilometers. The farmer claimed to know the loca-tion of an IED stockpile, but he was unable to describe how to get there. He smoked, so Jake asked him how many cigarettes he could have while walking between a cer-tain point and the stockpile. From the answer—three—Jake figured it took the man about ten min-utes, and from that he estimated that the distance in question was about a kilometer.

Among the prisoners, miscon-ceptions about U.S. motives and capabilities abounded. Many people Jake questioned thought Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who claimed responsibility for deadly insurgent attacks and behead-ings, was a fiction created by the Americans to justify linking the war on terror to Iraq. Many, protesting their innocence, implored Jake to “check with the satellites”—as if U.S. satellites kept tabs on everyone.

Suspects often flattered Jake, and they offered preposterous answers—that they’d never set foot in a mosque or that they didn’t know what an AK-47 looked like. Telling the interrogator what they thought he wanted to hear was a survival tactic during Saddam Hussein’s regime, Jake says.

Despite the difficulties of the job, Jake was buoyed by early victories. The biggest came one night at the tactical operations center. While he was turning in his team’s reports, he learned that a couple of suspected insurg-ents had just been caught with a truckful of artillery rounds weighing about 25 pounds each. The men sat in the back of a Humvee, blindfolded, waiting to be processed. Jake says he was told the interrogation could wait until morning, but he decided he and his roommate should get started on the spot. At first the suspects tried to pass off the artillery rounds as scrap metal, but upon further questioning they provided the name and location of the person who’d hired them. This led to the cap-ture of a “big arms dealer.” He says, “That was potentially

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1,500 IEDs that we stopped from going out on the streets—that was like the best thing that I’ve ever done.”

Jake felt “on top of the world that night.” Such moments, he learned, were rare.

Many suspects were brought in for possessing electrical wires or light switches. While such materials could be used to make IEDs, Jake acknowledges, sometimes “there’s no dubious explanation for this stuff.” Wires and light switches are common household items owned by people who use generators.

“You have to look at the totality of the circumstances,” he says. If someone caught with a coil of wire is “90 years old, decrepit, and he’s got one leg,” chances are he’s not a danger. “If he’s a 20-year-old guy with a Wahhabi beard and a bunch of jihad literature, that’s a different story.”

Sometimes the evidence brought in with a suspect contradicted the written reports. Jake interrogated a man who was suspected of funding the insurgency because he allegedly was found with a bar of gold. But Jake says that when he examined the evidence the “gold” turned out to be lead. Another man was brought in for possession of artillery shells, but photos from the scene confirmed the man’s story: he’d been using them as flowerpots.

Jake grew frustrated by what he saw as the GIs’ inability to consider benign explanations. “They were never trained to think,” he says. “They were trained to follow orders. They were trained to go into a building and shoot people and blow the building up or whatever. That’s combat.”

In his journal he describes interrogating a man who was “completely overwhelmed with shock and grief.” The man told him he’d seen a soldier shoot his brother to death. According to the report from the field, the brothers had been preparing an ambush and one was killed while resisting arrest. But the suspect, a potato farmer, said he and his brother had been irrigating a field when a helicopter swooped down on them. He said that they ran because they were terrified and that his brother had been cuffed when he was shot. If the suspect’s story was true, the killing would constitute a war crime. Jake asked to see the dead body—he wanted to check its wrists for cuff marks. He was told no.

What was needed in Iraq, he realized, was good law enforcement—people with investigative skills and common sense, people adept at judging continued on page 24
human behavior. He began to continued from page 23

During a raid of his home, Jake says, soldiers turned up a paper where he was going to come from, they’d begun to see every- body as the enemy. One interrogator on Jake’s team questioned a political science professor who’d criticized the American invasion in class. During a raid of his home, Jake says, soldiers turned up a paper arguing that the coalition had invaded Iraq for its oil. The inter- rogator had recommended that the professor be released, but her superiors were troubled by the paper on the war and they sent the case back for reinterrogation. It was assigned to the interrogator who screamed at her charges. Jake says, the paper “was nothing you probably wouldn’t find in like the Utne Reader, but this guy actually went to jail for it.” And that really frustrated me, because I was like, “How can we call this Operation Iraqi Freedom if we’re arresting people based on what they write?” Maybe the guy’s wrong, maybe he believes in the Baath party. So what? Does that mean he’s an insurgent? Did he have any weapons in his house? Did he have any bombs? No? Then why are you arresting him?”

Soldiers, he says, were kicking down doors on the basis of the flimsiest of accusations. For an Iraqi, having someone arrested was as easy as telling a U.S. soldier that that person was a terrorist. “Nobody ever asks these informants ‘be more specific’ or ‘how do you know that?’” says Jake.

Jake believed that American soldiers were regularly being manipulated by informants. Iraq is a country with immense poverty, and Americans paid for information, which created an incentive to lie. It is also a country with bitter tribal divisions, and Jake thinks Americans were being used to set the streets the better. After an explosion wasn’t a response to Saddam’s intelligence service, but there was a valid comparison there. We’d go out in the middle of the night and take people away from their homes. We didn’t execute them like they did, but still.

He noticed that information provided by an informant with the code name Bonsai never checked out. Even so, soldiers kept using Bonsai as a source until they intercepted his calls one day and learned he was actu- ally working for the insurgents. Jake says he got the distinct impression that the commanders thought the fewer Iraqi males on the streets the better. After an IED injured six marines, Jake says he overheard a captain tell his men to go to the village where it happened and “burn the whole place to the ground.” Jake knew the captain was exaggerating, but he wasn’t sure by how much. When bombs went off soldiers rounded up everyone in the vicinity. The interrogators under- stood that running from an explosion wasn’t a response exclusive to terrorists, and their task was to single out those who were responsible for the attack. “Most of the time it’s none of them,” says Shaefer. “But commanders would say, ‘You gotta pick one.’ What we started noticing was that the evi- dence didn’t matter. If there was an attack, if an American soldier died, someone was going to jail.”

But worse to Jake than a wrongful arrest was the pressure to adjudicate people, he felt to overlook it. He says one of his superiors to go to Abu Ghraib prison, regardless of innocence or guilt, says Jake. He began to wonder if the reason he was constantly being asked to reinterrogate people was that his recommendations for release made it difficult—at least on paper—for his superiors to transfer prisoners to Abu Ghraib. (The army declined my requests to speak with three of his superiors.) Eventually, Jake says, it became clear to him that his rec- ommendations were being disre- garded. He knew that it could take two months to interrogate someone sent to Abu Ghraib. If they were innocent, it would probably take two or three more interrogations to finally clear them. A wrongful arrest would have turned into a four- or five-month ordeal.

Apart from the psychological damage, false imprisonment for even a few days in a country as poor as Iraq could have a devas- tating impact on a person’s liveli- hood: “People over there live hand to mouth,” Jake says. “Detain someone for a weekend, they might lose so much money that they lose their home.”

Jake came to believe the war was radicalizing people. The people he recommended be sent to Abu Ghraib were nationalists, he says, not religious fanatics. Though the Pentagon had initially blamed the resistance on Saddam Hussein and on Al-Qaeda’s recruiting of foreign fighters, a few weeks before Jake arrived USA Today reported that only 2 percent of those in U.S. custody in Iraq were foreign. “I never inter- rogated a foreign fighter the whole time I was there,” Jake says.
Jake's disillusionment peaked in the months leading up to last January's Iraqi elections. In November the battle became personal. A terp Jake sometimes worked with, someone he considered a friend, was killed by an IED during the crackdown on insurgents in Fallujah. In December he came home on two weeks' leave to find the tsunami of people back home would rise up and demand an end to the U.S. occupation, but he knew it wasn't going to happen. He asked a military doctor about antidepressants. "The doctor doesn't even raise an eyebrow, doesn't even hesitate..." Jake wrote in his journal. "He doesn't even need to ask you what's wrong because he already knows— you're in Baghdad, of course you need antidepressants, son." U.S. and Iraqi officials anticipated increased efforts by suicide bombers, kidnappers, and assassins bent on disrupting the elections, which were scheduled for the 30th. The Bush administration needed the elections to be a success, and at the beginning of the month the army launched Operation Clean Sweep. "They just went out and grabbed any 18-year-old-or-above male they could find and brought them in," Jake says. The brigade's prison population swelled to more than four times capacity. There were old men, sick men, men who were missing arms and legs. "People accused of ridiculous stuff," he says. "Mostly accused by other Iraqis who had some vendetta." An officer told Jake there was a new rule: "We wouldn't release anybody until the prisoners be freed, he says they weren't. "I was basically told by several commanders if we get ten and nine are innocent and one is guilty, then it's worth turning the nine innocents—and their families—into enemies.

Jake vented his frustration to his roommate both say they would take things too much to heart," says his roommate, who noticed that it deeply bothered Jake to see prisoners he'd already recommended for release. "He'd say, 'Why's he still here?' and get worked up."

"He understood that not everyone was a criminal or a terrorist," says Chapman, that many of the detainees "were victims of circumstance"—people, for example, who happened to be standing near a bomb when it exploded. At nightly meetings, Jake's ideas for changes—even small changes, like giving suspects more time in the Porta-Johns because they needed to remove their jumpsuits—fell on deaf ears. Jake says that one day a major asked him why of the last hundred interrogations he'd done he'd recommended only five suspects go to Abu Ghraib. He says he told the major he believed the men were innocent, yet the major insisted they were guilty. Jake says he explained that the informants and the evidence were bogus, but "he just gave me this lecture about being too sympathetic." He says the major accused him of not understanding how high the stakes were and said, "These guys are killing us, they're our boys." And then, Jake says, the major suggested he "go to the morgue and view the dead American bodies to realize how bad the situation was." To someone who'd just lost a friend in battle, the remark cut deep.

Jake's morale, already in precipitous decline, sank even lower. It was one thing to have ill-prepared 18-year-olds wrongfully detaining people; it was another to have commanders away from the battlefield making decisions that could devastate people's lives. Jake wasn't the only interrogator to voice concerns about the army's methods. His roommate says that he complained too much. "Jake wasn't the only interrogator. Komorowski respected him, though. "He always thought of them as criminals, and that their concern for their own careers sometimes trumped "doing the right thing—professionally, morally, ethically." Jake and his

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE
She says the two highest-ranking officers in her midst didn’t hide their feelings about Jake: “They weren’t very fond of him.” Tran says they made a bar graph comparing the number of releases he wanted, and wrote a four-page letter to the brigade’s executive officer. He says he made suggestions for improving conditions at the prison and explained why he thought an “incentive based interrogation approach” was more effective than a confrontational one. He says he also wrote about why he thought treating detainees better and giving them a more positive view of Americans would deter future attacks. Jake, while forging his own relationship with the boy, unwittingly undermined child-rearing steps and spoken his first words. Jake found himself easily agitated, his irritability enraged him. His irritability seemed like a different person. They began counseling, hoping to head off a divorce. At work Jake got sucked into frustrating conversations with fellow cops who asked about Iraq and were unable to hear what he had to say. They suggested nuking the whole country; they spoke to him with authority about a place they’d never been. After a while he felt so bitter that talking about the war at all was like scratching a scab off a wound. Every time he turned on the news Jake learned of more deaths in Iraq. One day an e-mail from Tran informed him that an interrogator and border patrol agent he’d worked with had been killed in an explosion a day before he was scheduled to return to his wife and son in Texas. Jake began spending an inordinate amount of time in the backyard tearing out weeds and clearing brush. He disappeared inside the house too.“He went a little nuts rearranging and rearranging the basement,” says Beth, who understood his new obsessions as attempts to regain control of his life. In Iraq he’d had none. Even the smallest decisions—what to wear, what to eat, when to go to sleep—had been made for him by the army. For the first time since 1999, the army will fall short of its recruiting goals this fiscal year. With a month to go in the year, which ends September 30, it was off by about 7,000—and by about another 3,000 in the army reserves. A spokesman for the army’s recruiting command attributes the disappointing numbers in part to “the ongoing war on terrorism and the impact that the fear of bodily injury and death is having on people.” But the war on terrorism is not the reason the army is losing a skilled and experienced soldier like Jake, someone who’d looked forward to being a lifelong reservist. The reason is Iraq. “I believe in what America stands for,” he says, “and that’s exactly what we’re violating over there.” The sacrifices made by his and other soldiers’ families are too great, Jake believes, because they were ultimately pointless. He decided to sever his ties with the army when his national guard contract expires on October 31. “I feel really betrayed by the military,” he says, “I don’t want to be part of this organization any more.”

**Compassion: You In Me, Me In You**

Saturday, October 1st 5 – 6:30p.m.
Talk and book signing by Marc Ian Barasch, author of *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life*

Sunday, October 2nd 10:30a.m.
World Wide Community Sunday
Interreligious Worship Service: The public is invited to join us on World Wide Community Sunday for a service featuring eight diverse religious communities. The service will open with African dance as a celebration of indigenous spiritual traditions and communities throughout the world.

Lake Street Church of Evanston
607 Lake Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201 (NW Corner of Lake and Chicago)
For more information call (475) 841-2149. Child care for children ages three and younger will be available on Sunday, October 2, 2005. Free parking on Sunday on the Lower Level of the Best Western, directly west of Lake Street Church.

**Barkin’ At The Blues!**
A benefit to launch *New Lease on Life - Chicago*
House of Blues Foundation Room
Thursday, October 6, 2005 6-9pm
$30 tax-deductible donation includes beer, wine and hors d’oeuvres. Silent auction to include rock’ n roll memorabilia, Cubs items and more!

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