

deek

the
WAR

incident

VETERAN OF A
FOREIGN WAR

HOW TO KILL OR MAYBE
NOT KILL

CAPTURING THE SPIRIT
AND STRENGTH OF
AMERICA

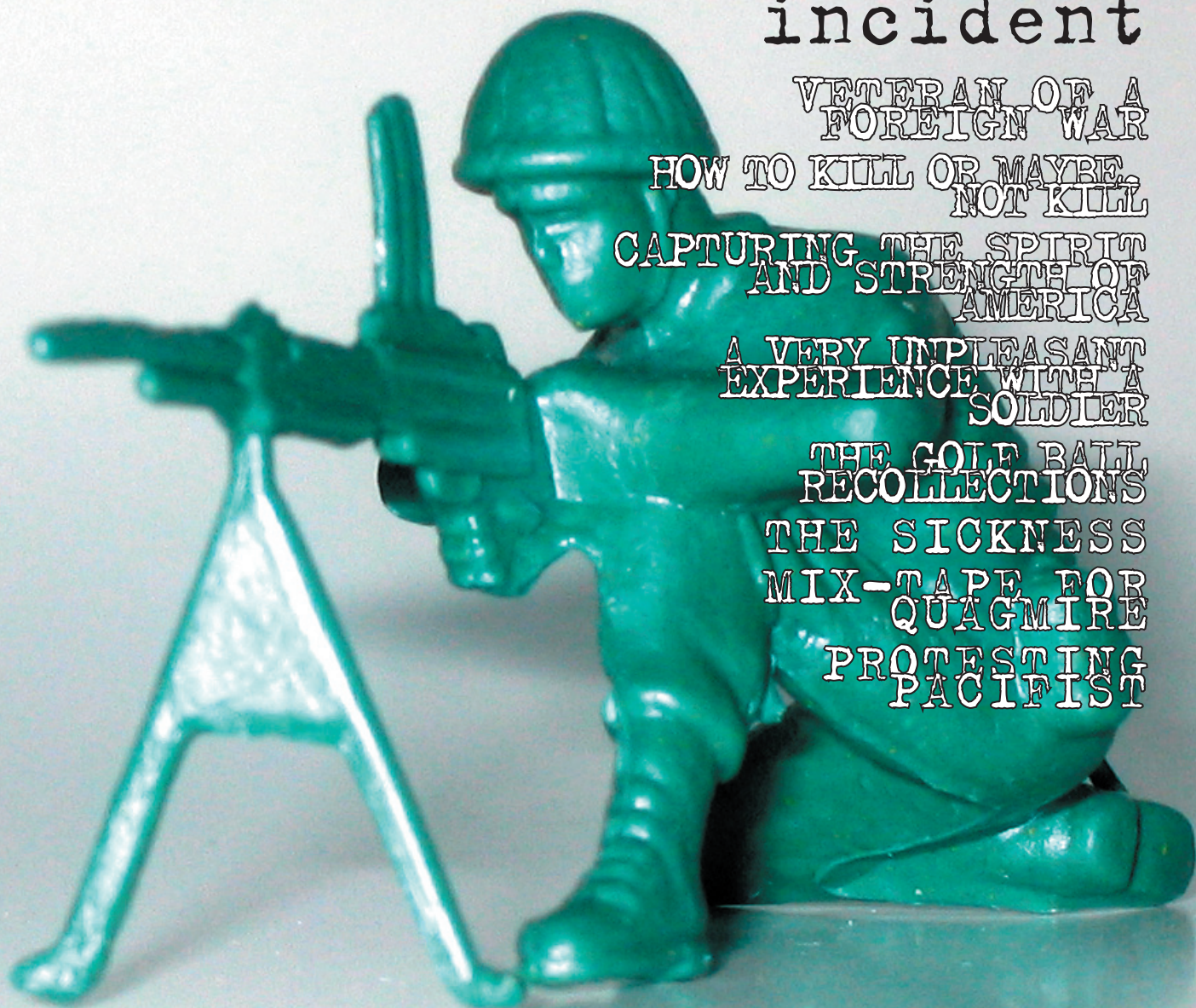
A VERY UNPLEASANT
EXPERIENCE WITH A
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THE GOLF BALL
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THE SICKNESS

MIX-TAPE FOR
QUAGMIRE

PROTESTING
PACIFIST



FREE

a forceful unbound distraction

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Gentleman, ladies:

You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices today than any of you to secure peace. The United States must assert its authority, wherever it once had power; for, if it relaxes one bit to pressure, it is gone, and I believe that such is the national feeling.

(Allow me to interrupt General Sherman for a quiet moment. No preaching... Just listen:

What you hold in your hot little hands is the War Incident -- a successful transmission; a collection of perspectives seething with anger, sympathy, hilarity, confusion, electricity and distraction...

See, this month, some of the best writers and artists in Pittsburgh have used Deek as a platform to speak out about the war on Terror, the war in Iraq, and some of the ludicrous battles we fight each and every day. And, well, expression is good. Read on. You might start thinking about things in a new way. Or you might just laugh or cry. Anyway, go on, General)

We don't want any thing you have, but we do want and will have a just obedience to the laws of the United States. That we will have, and, if it involves the destruction of your improvements, we cannot help it.

You have heretofore read public sentiment in your newspapers that live by falsehood and excitement; and the quicker you seek for truth in other quarters, the better.

Now that war comes home to you, you feel very different. You deprecate its horrors, but did not feel them when you sent car-loads of soldiers and ammunition, and molded shells and shot, to carry war into hidden places, to decimate the homes of hundreds and thousands of good people who only asked to live in peace at their old homes, and under the Government of their inheritance. But these comparisons are idle. I want peace, and believe it can only be reached through war. I will ever conduct war with a view to perfect and early success.

But, my dear sirs, when peace does come, you may call on me for any thing. Then will I share with you the last cracker, and watch with you to shield your homes and families against danger from every quarter.

Now you must go, and take with you the old and feeble, feed and nurse them, and build for them, in more quiet places, proper habitations to shield them against the weather until the mad passions of men cool down, and allow the union and peace once more to settle over your homes.

Yours in haste,

W. T. SHERMAN
Major-General commanding
September 12, 1864

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Deek:

Dig it: In Thailand of all places, the war seems fairly well supported. I think it's because they love America and American culture so much... maybe too much. In fact, I even saw some t-shirts here that you'd laugh at -- you might've even tried burning them if you saw them. They looked like a poster board for a movie: "America Fights Back," showing Bush, Saddam, terrorists, 9/11 pics, et cetera. Funny, strange, semi-creepy shit all over the place -- like every tenth person I see. My cousin says that once Thai soldiers start dying in the war in Iraq, Thai people's reactions will be different. (The first Thai soldier was killed in Iraq on Sunday, December 28th, 2003 - Ed.). Nothing crazy has happened involving that -- like being mobbed or chased or stoned just for being an American like you hear about in Pakistan and Indonesia and such. If there's any reason why crime might be high regarding Americans and Europeans as victims, it's because they have a lot of money and are clueless about this country and its people. There are lots of Muslims here, but very few are fundamentalists or radicals, from what I can see. They seem complacent, really. Mostly because their government treats them well and allows them to live in their own separate, private communities by their own choice. But I don't know. More to come later, I guess.

Neil Yodnane,
Bangkok, Thailand

Dear Deek:

So I'm sipping from a cup of vodka the other day, not really paying attention to the drink, more watching the Newlyweds than anything else because Jessica Simpson... is very stylish. Anyway, I look up into the vodka because something grabs my attention and, plain as day, there's this giant fucking cockroach swimming around in there, lounging in my beverage like he's on a vacation or something. So, yea, I'm curious, so I look at it, kinda confused. Then I look around to see if anyone's there and no one is -- just Jessica and Nick on the tube -- so I say, to the cockroach, "road trip," and gulp him up real quick, enjoying the sensation of his crunchy frame sliding down my esophagus. Then I start having second thoughts. I ponder for a second, try, without success, to gag myself, then go quickly to bed hoping that after a nap, I'll digest that little fucker and shit him out in a matter of hours.

I, uh... didn't, though. Should I be worried? Should the cockroach?

Arthur Face,
Ssssspringdale

Dear Deek:

I don't know what I would do without you.

Molly Angst,
North Versailles

Dear Deek and friends:

People in the punk scene may not run up to you and hug you and welcome you to the scene (I have no idea what kind of people DO do that... cult members maybe?), but despite our scary band logos and frightening hairdos, we are mostly decent people.

Rachel Courtney,
Hell

POETRY:

1) TURMOIL TIMES
Kofi Outlaw

I love that cycle birth
"change with
spring"
but blooming never fully.
Green
garden dancing on winter rain,
do you live?
Or must our summers fall
like night winds collecting?

2) STORM FRONT
Kofi Outlaw

I love you bad sky
Lighting season thought beautiful dream.
Winter garden could never vision rain
to live by.
A squirrel gathers dead spring
Watching, as cold cloud eclipses flower month bloom;
Snow dances
Celebrating the hibernate holiday between
Green moons.
There comes the after dawn--west ended east:
"Make it always summer beneath every turned sun."
Animal language we speak too universally.

HAVE SOME POETRY (or anything else) FOR US?

Send that shit. And send your art and your fiction and your true tales and your power and your money and your fame and your brilliance and your _____

(add your own)

send works to

words(at)deekmagazine.com

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PUNK / COUNTERPUNK

Punk:

On the subject of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, what do the following Democrats have in common? WJ Clinton, Madeline Albright, Sandy Berger, Carl Levin, Tom Daschle, Nancy Pelosi, Bob Graham, Al Gore, Ted Kennedy, Robert Byrd, John Kerry, Jay Rockefeller, Henry Waxman, and Hillary Clinton. Answer: Prior to Gulf War II, each of them publicly made statements of their firm belief that Saddam was holding, and if not prevented, intended to use weapons of mass destruction on the United States or its allies.

And now, because they have not been found in Iraq, these people all claim that President Bush was wrong to believe that Saddam had them.

These are the same people who insisted that the President go through a six month long Kabuki dance with the United Nations to get its permission to invade Iraq, giving the deposed dictator half a year to hide, destroy, move, or give away the weapons he had. Gee, I wonder why we haven't found them.

These are the same people who say that the President lied about an "imminent threat" in his 2002 State of the Union address, even though the President specifically told us that we had to take action EVEN THOUGH THE THREAT WAS NOT IMMINENT. The point was (and is) that terrorists don't declare war, they don't play by the rules, they don't recognize the Geneva Convention. And besides, it was an untenable situation to have, on the one hand, a Muslim dictator in possession of lethal, portable WMDs and in need of cash, and on the other hand, a coterie of terrorist groups with lots of cash, looking for portable, lethal weapons to use against their common enemy, the United States of America.

And these are the same people who whine that the President didn't plan adequately for the governance of Iraq after our inevitable military victory. This is total bullshit. NOBODY knew how the end of the hostilities were going to go down. NOBODY knew the condition of the Iraqi infrastructure. NOBODY knew how the various factions were going to react to the American occupation. The Democratic harping is a lot like talking to a stock broker about your investment portfolio -- they are just loaded with information on stocks they would have put you into three years ago if you had only come to them then. Bullshit.

Killing people and destroying property are things not to be done lightly. But in an era when small, portable weapons exist that can kill tens of thousands, and when the world is filled with hateful terrorists who have no compunctions about killing and terrorizing civilians, President Bush has rightly concluded that we must treat the regimes that tolerate and harbor these groups in the same way as we would treat the killers themselves.

Thank God we have a President who has the courage to act decisively rather than just enduring an attack, promising to "get those responsible," and doing nothing. We had one of those already. How many more terrorist attacks would we have experienced since 9/11 if Al Gore were our President? I shudder to think of it.

Ronald Mislin,
Bloomfield

Counterpunk:

Like most cry-to-war rhetoric easily dispensed by the political "right" in the United States, the oversimplification of complex foreign policy combined with the ignorance of recent history has allowed another praise for George W. Bush to permeate in the mind of an angry voice. The list of "offending" Democrats published serves as nothing more than a reflection of the political climate in the United States. Both Democrats as well as Republicans have proved historically that they both are interested in war as long as it secures foreign markets for their respected private interest funding. As the approval rate of George W. Bush slips with election time around

the corner, it's a logical conclusion for members of the Democratic Party to exploit the anti-war sentiment that is threatening the reelection of the Bush Regime. It has always been a common tactic employed by Democrats to assimilate radical resistance in order to receive votes for a term that will ultimately become moderate if they are victorious. The phenomenon described does not prove the veracity of Bush; it proves the chameleon nature of political platforms in search of self preservation.

George W. Bush did in fact proclaim during his State of the Union Address in 2002 that some military actions should be taken even if the threat was not imminent. While the Democrats may have had a convenient oversight of these words, Bush insulted the nation's intelligence with them. Iraq is not an imminent danger to the United States of America; Iraq is no danger to the United States of America. Since such threats are hard to prove to thinking minds, the common trend is to make a leap of logic connecting Al Qaeda to Saddam Hussein based upon their hatred of the United States. Again, there is no proof of such a conspiracy. The most tangible links between Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein would be the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA spent large amounts of time and resources training Osama Bin Laden during the Soviet battle for Afghanistan. In addition, the CIA financed the murderous Ba'ath Party of Saddam Hussein in an effort to extend U.S. interest through militant puppets. If Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are to be accurately described as terrorists, how do you describe a nation that backed them?

Defining terrorist is complex process unto itself. According to this particular pro war argument, a terrorist is defined as people that don't recognize the Geneva Convention and that have "no compunctions about killing and terrorizing civilians." In both situations, the U.S. could be put into the same category. In a similar situation to Iraq, Ronald Reagan took major military action against the potential threat of Nicaragua in the 1980s. The severity of his actions prompted Nicaragua to take the United States to World Court. The results were largely in favor of Nicaragua. The United States was convicted of "unlawful use of force," which in essence, translates into international terrorism. In actuality, how is a nation that has been convicted of international terrorism expected to be taken seriously when fingering another individual they maintain is doing the same thing?

In the dynamic of civilian casualties, it is important to note that the current low estimate of the reported Civilian death toll in Iraq currently stands at 7950 souls. The high estimate is as large as 9781 people. As Abby Hoffman proclaimed regarding past inconsistencies of this nature, "The forces of terror destroy from the ground; the forces of freedom destroy from the air." The reality is that the United States is partaking in tangible killing of civilians in an effort to end potential threats with weak evidence. The United States government definitely fears another government using a weapon of mass destruction. This is in an area in which they are very familiar to this day; the only nation to use a nuclear weapon against another is Uncle Sam's.

Still the war mongers rage on, thanking God we have a President "Who has the courage to act decisively rather than enduring an attack." Perhaps we have all misanderestimated his courage. Bush orders men to die in the name of Global markets the same way he boldly protected the skies of Texas during the Vietnam War. While poor citizens with less prestigious last names died in a far away land, George boldly patrolled Texas from threats that were less than imminent, and a world away. History will continue to repeat itself under similar dichotomies until political and historical events are understood within the context of human rights.

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This discussion will continue at the FORUM at
www.deekmagazine.com. Join in.

the
WAR
incident

NONFICTION:



1) VETERAN OF A FOREIGN WAR David George

I was an Army personnel specialist in 1970, having spent the first 16 months or so of my three-year enlistment wasting time at stateside military bases, filling out self-explanatory forms, inserting documents and information into peoples' personnel files (back when files were made of paper and cardboard), and basically waiting for orders that would send me someplace overseas to serve a year or so doing real Army stuff. There was a possibility of going to either Germany or South Korea, but I volunteered to go to Vietnam. I probably would have been assigned to go there anyway.

There was no way to know exactly what service in Vietnam would be like. Would I work in an office or in a tent? Would I have to stand guard duty at night? Would I be dodging bullets? As a personnel specialist, I hoped to avoid most of the unpleasantness, but you never know. At that time, your initial assignment was to a "transfer station" in Vietnam, and from there, where you went was pure chance. You would be sent out to replace someone who was coming back home. It might be working in your specialty, or it might be doing something similar to your specialty that some sergeant thought made sense. You might piss somebody off and end up in a bad situation. You might be working in an air-conditioned office, or in a tent-city (like on M*A*S*H).

To my amazement, I and 200 other soldiers and sailors flew from the military base at Oakland, CA, to Ton Son Nhut airbase in Saigon, Vietnam, in a commercial jet. It was a Boeing 727 with stewardesses, bad airline food, and tiny bathrooms -- just like we were going on vacation, except that we were all wearing jungle fatigues.

With a couple short re-fueling stops, the flight took about 16 hours, all at night, arriving at sunrise. As we approached the airfield in the pre-dawn darkness, I looked down into the jungle and saw the red tracers of an ongoing firefight. My God, I thought. Here we were in what was supposed to be the safest part of the country, and people were shooting at each other. How rude.

By the time we landed and got to the terminal, the shooting was so far away it might have been in a different country. The atmosphere was pretty much what you would expect in a crowded, smelly, third-world airport at dawn: Semi-organized chaos. Nobody was carrying a gun or wearing a helmet (other than a plastic helmet liner). It struck me odd; what happened to the war?

I don't remember much about my few days in Saigon. My main recollection is of being tired as hell due to a combination of jetlag and not being able to sleep much in the days leading up to my arrival. There was initially some hint that I might be permanently assigned in Saigon. The military offices there were almost indistinguishable from similar offices at military bases in the U.S., except for the Vietnamese secretaries, the combat uniforms, and the yellow water in the water coolers. But my orders directed me a couple hundred miles northward to the city of Danang, forty or so miles from the demilitarized zone.

The flight to Danang was not quite as comfortable as the one to Saigon. It was on a military transport plane (C130 "Hercules") with no windows, no toilet, and seats made of canvas webbing. But the airbase in Danang was amazingly clean and organized. It was an Air Force base like you might find anyplace else in the world -- a small, military city, complete with barracks, recreational areas and facilities, offices, a library and movie theater, bars (NCO club, and Enlisted men's club), and mess halls. The attitude at the air base was, to me, amazingly nonchalant. Nobody was carrying any weapons, nobody was wearing any sort of combat gear, and there were very few Vietnamese people visible, other than housemaids. It was not what I expected, but the Air Force is known to bring a little bit of home wherever they go.

My instructions were to take a courtesy bus from the air base to the "Danang Hotel," and make my presence known to the First Sergeant. I pondered the name of this Danang Hotel. It was undoubtedly steeped in irony, describing some god-forsaken hell-hole of a jungle barracks. "Hotel," indeed.

But when I got there, it was pretty much... a hotel. In fact, before the Unpleasantness it was exactly that, a hotel. It was a five-story "walkup" constructed of reinforced concrete, built in a square, with a center courtyard containing a fountain (now in disrepair) and some decorative statuary. The first floor contained the cafeteria, the mail room, some offices (supply sergeant, first sergeant, etc.), and a few of the nicer living quarters. The second floor rooms were fitted with window air conditioners and housed the upper-level enlisted men. The privates, PFCs, corporals, and specialists (like me) lived, two in a room, on the third, fourth, and fifth floors, which were all identical and Spartan. On the roof, there was a movie theater set up with benches and galvanized steel. For the sixteen months while I lived in the Danang Hotel, they replayed a library of 8 or ten films until we had the entire dialog memorized. "The Sterile Cuckoo" was a particular favorite, featuring Liza Minnelli as a horny college freshperson.

Each room was basically a concrete cube, 10 feet on a side. There was a little alcove containing a refrigerator, and each room had a full-length balcony about 3 feet wide. Weed connoisseurs found the balconies a perfect spot for tokin' and jokin'. Lacking air conditioning and being in the tropics, windows and doors were rarely closed. Protection from biting insects at night was afforded by netting draped over our steel bunk beds. Each pair of rooms shared a bathroom, with inside locks to provide privacy. Hot water was rarely available, but in those hot, sticky conditions, one quickly got used to taking cool-water showers. We, the inhabitants, furnished each room with enough stereo equipment to cause instantaneous deafness to anyone over the age of 25. The concrete walls provided excellent acoustics.

-- "You Number 10 mama-san
Laundry look like shit!"

Old Vietnamese women who chewed beetle-nut came in every day, dressed in black pajamas to do laundry and cleaning; they were usually long-gone by the time we returned from our office jobs. (Did I mention, we all had office jobs?) We paid three dollars a month to the head Vietnamese woman, who paid the maids whatever she had to. We supplemented the maids' income with a monthly box of Tide, a couple packs of Salem cigarettes, and large quantities of Wrigley's Juicy Fruit gum. Their brand loyalty was intense; any other detergent, cigarettes, or gum were accepted grudgingly, with the Vietnamese equivalent of the "hairy eyeball."

The English vocabulary of the maids was pretty much limited to four words: me, you, "Number 1" (meaning very good), and "Number 10" (meaning very bad). Our "Vietnamese" was limited to "Lau dai!" (come here), and "mama-san." And of course, "Boom-boom" meant sexual intercourse -- not that any of us would ever contemplate doing The Nasty with any of these old crones. It was amazing the conversation one could hold within these confines. "You Number 10 mama-san -- Laundry look like shit!"

I found that being a personnel specialist in Danang was pretty much the same routine as being a personnel specialist at Fort Lee, Virginia, except there were no women in the office (thus much, much more profanity) and the hours were longer. We were required to be at our desks from 7am to 7pm, seven days a week. Every other Sunday afternoon was free time, not to be squandered. The long hours made the time go by more quickly.

Our office was in a military compound, just outside the city limits. Along with our windowless, one-story office in this large, walled compound was a motor pool and a colonial-mansion-styled command center (built by the French, or so I understood). My unit was called MAC-V Military Advisory Command -- Vietnam. Our mission was to work with the Vietnamese army to kill as many of the enemy as possible.



A Vietnamese battalion was headquartered at the same compound, and there was a parallel command structure with each Vietnamese officer having an American counterpart of a comparable rank (actually, the Americans were one grade below their counterparts).

Still, many families were fed with American dollars paid to hookers.

As a personnel guy, of course, I didn't do any advising. I just handled transfers, promotions, award citations, reassignments, and crap like that for the American soldiers within MAC-V.

Between 5 and 6 PM every day, we played pick-up games of volleyball, with Americans and Vietnamese intermingled. It was a diversion that we all looked forward to. The Vietnamese taught us how to insult our teammates in Vietnamese, and we did the same for them. After a time, the worst insult in either case was calling a player a "dead chicken." It took us quite a while to get the drift; when an American would foul up a shot the RVNs would yell, "Chicken die!" But eventually we sorted it out (dead chicken in Vietnamese is "Nga chet!").

The weather for most of the year was quite hot, but we got used to it. Jungle fatigues, loose clothing with the shirts worn outside the pants, were ideal, provided you weren't wearing any underclothes. Rain was rare but heavy, except during the monsoon season. I was there for one monsoon season, and it rained from the beginning of September until the middle of December, without stopping. Ever. Day and night.

The Vietnamese people in Danang were generally great. We were treated courteously (almost obsequiously) everywhere, and we tried our best to be good visitors. Prices were ridiculously low. Hookers were plentiful, relatively cheap, but rather unattractive to American tastes. Still, many families were fed with American dollars paid to hookers.

Money was a funny thing in Vietnam. American soldiers were prohibited from carrying US currency ("greenback"), and were paid in "MPC" (Military Pretend Currency?). Vietnamese piasters were constantly devaluing, so the Vietnamese wanted to be paid -- both in employment and in transactions -- in MPC rather than piasters. But Vietnamese nationals were prohibited from having MPC, so you had to be discrete in purchasing anything or paying any money to the locals.

Every 6 months or so, the American military would issue new MPC, making all the old MPC worthless and leaving all the Vietnamese who were holding it with worthless paper. The MPC exchange days were bizarre times. GI's had to turn in all their old MPC for new MPC, and if you had more than a month's pay in old MPC you had to come up with a plausible explanation of where you got it (to prevent black-marketeering). Panicked Vietnamese surrounded American military installations, trying to get GI's to take their old MPC and exchange it, but you could only take so much of it before drawing unwanted attention to yourself.

The value of greenbacks to the Vietnamese was absurdly high. The official exchange rate of piasters to dollars was about 120:1 while I was in Vietnam. The rate for MPC was maybe twice the official rate, but greenbacks could get 400:1.

Other than work, GI's passed their time listening to music, drinking, smoking, writing letters, and talking about what they were going to do when they got home -- mainly talking about the intense sexual encounters they planned for their homecoming: either with their wife, girlfriend, future wife, or "the first fucking American girl I see." It was amazing how focused the GI's became on sex after several months with no "outlets."

I spent a lot of my free time at a gymnasium, playing basketball and occasionally lifting weights. Soldiers from all around Danang who were lucky enough to have access to a jeep would congregate there. We had all four American service branches represented, plus Aussies, Koreans, and the occasional American civilian. The facility was very primitive by American standards, but very much appreciated under the circumstances.

The hallways of the Danang hotel were unadorned, undecorated concrete. The ceilings were ten feet high and the hallways were about 5 feet wide. Someone who got there long before me devised a Frisbee game in which two-man teams would toss a Frisbee back and forth from about 20 feet apart, trying to make the other team miss it. You could throw it as hard as you could, throw it along either wall, or throw it above their heads (one side had an end wall about 10 feet back and the other extended for another 50 feet or so). If the Frisbee touched the ground, the thrower's team got a point. We all had skinned, bloody knuckles and "stoved" fingers for basically our whole time over there from catching Frisbees along the walls. My own inability to throw a Frisbee very well was an advantage; my throws were hard and wobbly, very difficult to catch.

The military Establishment occasionally used the Julian calendar to plan coming events. More often it was the traditional Gregorian calendar. For us, there was only one measure of time: the "Short-timer's Calendar." The Short-timer's calendar was, for most of us, an imaginary calendar we kept in our heads which kept track of how many more days we were condemned to spend in Nam. The customary answer to the question, "What time is it?" was, "Who gives a fuck? I got 186 days and a wake-up." You could also buy Short-timer calendars, which were generally drawings of naked women, divided up -- jigsaw puzzle-like -- into 365 pieces, which you filled in one day at a time until your 365 days were up.

For the record, I spent about 16 months over there. I had a three-year enlistment but under the Army's guidelines, if you ended your tour in Vietnam with 150 or fewer days left in your enlistment, then they wouldn't send you to another stateside assignment, they'd just let you out. When I went to Vietnam, I had about 21 months to go, and since my assignment was relatively easy, I volunteered to stay in RVN for an extra four months. That way, I got out when my assignment was up in April of 1971 (and shortened my enlistment by 5 months).

The fact of the minimum-one-year assignment, coupled with the fact that most enlisted men would be finishing their enlistments at the same time, made the whole time over there little more than a waiting exercise. You were consumed by the countdown until you could go home and get out of the Army. And because of that, we didn't try to make the most of our time over there. We just counted the days and came home. And then, finally, we did.

Coming home from Vietnam, by military standards, sucked. When you come home from a war there are supposed to be parades and celebrations; women are supposed to run up to you on the streets and kiss you in gratitude for your brave, honorable service to The Country. When we came back to the States from Vietnam we were given our shots (immunizations), our final paychecks, and told to go home. Our contemporaries were more likely to call us idiots, fools, or "baby killers," than to congratulate or thank us for what we had done and endured. Women shunned us for our short hair, and the airwaves and newspapers were full of talk about how the whole Vietnam episode was pointless and disgusting (reinforcing the point of how stupid we had been to voluntarily go over there). Not surprisingly, many of my veteran comrades carried a chip on their shoulder for years afterward.

But aside from all that, in every measurable way my experience in Vietnam was positive. I got myself into good physical condition, got a nice tan, and put a lot of money in the bank. I had some good times, met some very interesting people, earned some recognition as a pretty good soldier (Bronze Star, Army Commendation, etc), and matured a little bit.

And did I mention I didn't get shot or killed? Or get the clap. In fact the closest thing to illness or injury I experienced was a rash in my crotch, which quickly went away when I stopped wearing undershorts.

During the time I was over there, four people died in my unit, and none were wounded. Three of the deaths were from self-inflicted gunshot wounds (I wonder if their names are etched on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington). The Army's term for people like us was "REMPs:" "Rear Echelon Mother Fuckers." Our infantry "brothers,"

with whom we had almost no contact, were wandering around in jungles and rice paddies being shot at. Some of them were serving just a few miles from the little city where I was working in an office, playing volleyball, listening to my stereo, and generally goofing off.

Like everyone else in this country, the only time I hear anything about Vietnam Vets is when it is a reference to some guy or some group of people who are still suffering some negative effect from combat or exposure to disease or what have you. Compared to these guys, I feel like I was almost a draft dodger. My experience was no more dangerous or demanding than a couple semesters at WVU.

I was completely apolitical at the time when I enlisted in 1968. I had fouled up my first try at college, and although I could have tried a couple strategies to stay in school and avoid the Army, I simply felt that my generation was going to be defined by the Vietnam War, and I wanted to be part of it. I was completely disgusted by the spoiled, self-righteous jerks who were populating the antiwar scene (many of whom are teachers, professors, and politicians now), and wanted to live it rather than just talking about it.

As I follow the political and military developments leading to, and continuing during our current Adventure in Iraq, it strikes me that American society -- and especially politicians -- are trying in a way to apologize for how badly Vietnam vets were treated. Every statement of opposition to the war is accompanied by a pro-military caveat: "Even though I think GWB is an idiot and a scumbag for prosecuting this war, I REALLY SUPPORT OUR TROOPS AND PRAISE THEIR DEDICATION AND BRAVERY!" It rings hollow to me. If the mission is flawed or misguided and our soldiers are all volunteers -- well, you can keep your praise or give it to someone else who gives a shit.

For the soldiers, I see a lot of parallels with Vietnam. They are in a God-forsaken country, fighting an enemy that they cannot distinguish from indigenous "friends." Battles in which you see your enemy and try to kill him are relatively rare. In Vietnam, our soldiers feared mines and booby traps, which killed and maimed soldiers at random; in Iraq, they are facing unseen snipers and suicide bombers who do the same thing. In both cases, achieving the ultimate objective is by no means certain, regardless of how well our soldiers, sailors, and airmen do their jobs. And some back home question whether the objective is vital to our national interests.

I'm also sure that most of the troops we have over there are REMFs like I was. They are cooks, paper-pushers, supply sergeants, personnel specialists and mechanics. They carry guns but God help them if they have to use them ("Which end does the bullet come out?") One big difference with the "all-volunteer Army" is that these guys are older than we were. Most of the soldiers actually fighting in Vietnam were kids (18-19 years old), and very few of them had wives or kids. Now we have soldiers in their early and mid-20's, many of them are married, and a significant number of them have breasts. I can't even imagine how that affects the experience.

2) ARRESTED FOR PEACE: THIRTY-SIX HOURS IN JAIL AFTER MARCHING AGAINST THE WAR IN IRAQ

Chris Ammons

There is a protest downtown tonight because war has been declared against Iraq. I rush to the streets with my girlfriend Analena; we get there just as it all begins.

A lot more people show up than I imagined would. It's not all university students, either -- a lot of the people here are adults. They are as pissed about this war as we are.

The rainy, pale, cold feeling of the morning passes with hours of the day. The sun is coming out and there is a good, warm, soon-to-be-night windy breeze. It's a perfect day to see downtown Pittsburgh.

"Spring has come and now god has turned against the war."

There are balloons and noise blasters. Lots of people drumming. When a car "honks for peace" a ripple of cheers passes through the crowd.

People get angry, people block cars and sometimes tensions can really rise, but the protest has the spirit of a parade.

"Bush is a uniter, not a divider" -- how true that is.
"Whose streets - our streets!"
"No blood for oil!"
"This is what democracy looks like!"
"1-2-3-4 we don't want your racist war!"

Most people watching our civil protest do not look very annoyed; they just look confused and sometimes they stare in amusement, like we are circus troops or something.

I am beside Ana. We our are own contingent. We see direct action. We see a lot of kids having a good time. We are caught up in ourselves. We talk about tactics and we brush our hands together in overflowing affection. We are awash in Pittsburgh's nighttime beauty together.

The march goes on across the bridge.

There is no traffic and we are taken with a feeling of grand celebration.

The police are barely there yet. But once we are out of downtown and onto East Carson Street they are amassing a presence.

They demand everyone to stay on the side walk. The Paddy-wagons and guys in riot gear come up. They are getting bolder. It's dark. There are no witnesses. They force us onto the sidewalk.

I am in passive, nervous civil disobedience with most everyone else. I only dare out into the streets with clusters of other people. I am careful not to be too far in front or behind.

I race ahead of Ana running around a parked car. I get slammed in the back by a policeman. He screams, with his large build and graying mustache "STAY ON THE SIDEWALK!"

It's the first time I've experienced police violence. It's almost an honor. I expected it to happen eventually. My back hurts. It keeps hurting for half an hour. It makes me really angry inside to be hit like this. It's the type of hurt I felt as a kid when I felt so wronged inside that I wanted to burst out in angry tears. But these feelings are easily put aside.

I'm there on the street with some kids from (the Pittsburgh Organizing Group (POG)). We are ahead and cut off from everyone else.

Police are getting more aggressive, shaking batons and cans of mace.

Everyone around us is really scared.

Someone, with great fear in his voice, starts singing the national anthem.

We split, then regroup together on a back street. Confrontation seems imminent. This protest will turn out different than the other ones did. Moments pass and, as we reemerge, it is the police who decide to answer us with violence. They are the ones who escalate.

We move across the bridge into the city. This time everyone is obediently on the sidewalk. Almost everyone.

There is a lone girl who defiantly walks on the bridge. She is roughed up and arrested. She is screaming "PEACE!" as they handcuff her.

A few momentes later her girlfriend comes out into the mass of the police to defend her. Her face is slammed into the pavement. She is arrested too.

And we chant:



“Shame-SHAME!”
“This is what a police state looks like!”

The police are getting really pissed off.

There are large, scary police dogs.

The march continues on downtown. Most of the people who were with us on East Carson Street are gone. We are much smaller now, more militant and younger. Only a few people have the guts to go on the street; they go in groups, and instantly get back on the sidewalk as policemen approach.

The police close in.

We cross a street, waiting for the walk sign, and are on a sidewalk again.

We are cornered. Police start grabbing signs from us.

Someone gets pulled out and beaten on the ground with a baton.

Police start coming onto the sidewalk. They charge after the people they want, knocking everyone down who gets in their way.

More violence. More people on the ground being beaten. Ana is crying.

Days later, I read that they wanted to use tear gas on us, which they would have if the police were equipped with gas masks.

Finally all order breaks down and they tell us to get against the wall. They tell us we are all under arrest.

I am with Ana. Our hands are pressed to the walls.

We kiss before she is taken away. We are in good spirits. I am put in handcuffs. I don't see any point in resisting and I try to be polite. My arresting officer asks me why I'm out here; I mumble something about civil disobedience.

Next I'm in a paddy wagon with three other guys. We are friendly. We are talking. We are all wondering what is going to happen. Everyone is in great pain as the plastic handcuffs tear into our wrists.

They take us to the county jail. They take our names and frisk us. They take my backpack and tell me that I can't have it back again until I'm released.

We are put into cells, twenty or thirty in each one. There are one hundred and twenty two arrests -- we are dubbed “the Pittsburgh 122.”

One of the kids in the cell with us is a “young democrat.” I think he is still in high school. He talks with a certain respect and is dressed a certain way. It's clear that he doesn't belong with us. He says he knows Governor Rendell. He brags that he will be able to get out of there in five minutes. A cop pulls him out of the cell and tells him not to get caught up in this sort of trouble. It ends with the cop screaming, threatening to beat him.

The police are ready to let out all their anger on us. Another cop comes in and threatens us with a good thrashing. He says we are going to have a very difficult night if we aren't well behaved. He looks like he is about to explode at us, but one of my peers can't help giggling at him. The cop pulls him up and slams him against the wall “I'll tear your fucking throat out if you mess with me. Now sit down and be quiet,” he says. We all sit down and we stay very quiet. No one says a word.

There is another person in our cell that doesn't belong. He's Hispanic and he looks much more working class than the rest of us. I'm not sure if he was caught up and arrested with us, or if he was already rotting in there before we came.

His face is all red and swollen. He has a black eye. He was maced by the police before we got here. He rubs his eyes and gets mace in them again. He begins to thrash around violently demanding to see a doctor.

We call the guards, but they don't give a shit about him.

I tell myself that after this I will join the ACLU.

Eventually, the guards leave us alone. We start talking again.

There is an older man there, arrested with his son. He is very calm and controlled and I wonder if the police put them in there to spy on us. I find out later he is from Iran. He was in the protest with us, marching with his son. An undercover cop (dressed as “one of us”) asked him where he was from; he said he was from Iran. They arrested him right there. It is something that scares all of us.

I'm not really interested in knowing anyone here. There are a few people who I really admire, but I'm too shy to introduce myself.

You don't get tired when it's impossible to sleep.

They pass out bail bond forms for us. Everyone fills one out. I keep the little shabby pencil they give us. I get a few pieces of paper from the young Rendell democrat and I start trying to write about the day.

When I run out, I start writing on toilet paper. There is plenty of time to write but, mostly, I don't use it. After a few hours in there I am too drained and dead to attempt to do anything creative.

They split us up (after some indescribable amount of time) and move us around into new groups. I move from cell to cell and see the guys I protested with (the girls are on the other side of the jail). This continues for a few hours and then finally stops late at night. Eventually I am settled down with about a dozen other kids in cell H17.

Everyone is still optimistic. We all believe we will be out in a few more hours. No one expects that we will still be there when the sun rises.

By now it's past midnight and we are alone. The guards stop coming by our cells. All knowlege we have is speculation. It's clear that we are going to be in here longer than we thought -- for the night -- but everyone still believes we will get out in the morning.

The worst part about being in a jail cell is that it's hard concrete. You can't sleep on concrete. I get about an hour's sleep. Very shitty worthless sleep. When I wake up my leg is asleep, my back is sore, my hand is red.

There is also no real food to eat, either. For breakfast we get cornflakes and milk. The worst possible cornflakes and milk. For lunch and dinner we get baloney sandwiches and orange juice. The sandwich I get smells like plastic. I bite into it; it is devoid of taste. I give my second one away.

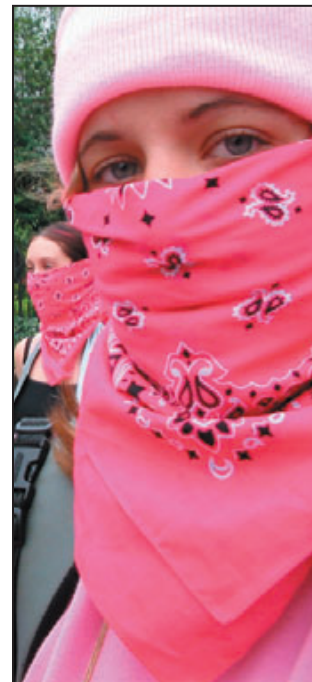
Everyone I talk with is starving for food. I am not. I am not sleepy, either... You don't get tired when it's impossible to sleep.

I listen to everyone talk. I am one of the quieter people in our cell. I pace around in circles and drink lots of water at the water fountain. Music is playing over and over again in my head: Bruckner and Mahler. I have my very own private, heavenly symphonies in this hell.

I spend time wondering how Analena is doing. I suspect the girls won't be as shy and restrained as we are. Through all this shit, she will probably make a few good friends.

Time wears down everyone's shyness. Eventually we are all talking to each other. We are angry, complaining. About the police brutality. The shittiness of jail. Wanting to contact loved ones. The injustice of this whole god damned thing...

Sometimes I want to take initiative and try to start a grand



conversation about politics and ideals. I’ve been out marching with these guys for a long time. I really want to know what they think. I wish I had more courage and ability to initiate conversations. Are they socialists? Anarchists? Any writers or young scientists? What do we have in common besides the obvious disgust for Bush, War, and the direction in which this country is headed?



Cops will never look the same.

Jail is intensively inhumane. Civilized society has no place for prisons. I am never convinced more of that than I am now. I imagine all the other prisoners in this jail who don’t get to leave in a few days. They can’t just return to their lives. This is a house of pain where lives are destroyed.



Nothing is as potent as seeing something with your own eyes. Of course I know most people in jail are black -- who doesn’t. But you feel it on a different level when you a group of prisoners led out in red suites and nine of them are black and only one of them is white.

They start moving us around again. I am moved to two different cells, then returned to where I was. Back home to H17.



By mid morning they start calling names and taking people out of cells. Every twenty minutes or so, a new name is called. They bring a public defender in. He tells us they are going to try to get us a mass arraignment, but, chances are, that won’t happen. In a few hours it’s definately clear that it won’t. Two or three people are called out of our cell every hour. We don’t know how they are making their choice of who gets to go, or where they are taking them. Everything is still a big mystery.

It’s clear that we are going to be here another night. This is the most frustrating and painful part of our jail experience. Some people start crying. Someone bashes his fists against the door demanding to see someone. A lot of the people who are breaking down are scared because their loved ones don’t know where they are. Someone pleads to be able to make a single call to his family.



The prison guards won’t tell us anything. The only thing they do when we demand our rights is to lecture us and say that we shouldn’t have been on the streets protesting. “This is a prison and not a playground,” one of them says. Another one calls us “sons of the rich.”

Three hours after “dinner” everything stops. They stop taking people away and the guards stop coming by periodically. The cell is set up so we can’t see anything that is going on further down the hall.

I become very numb. I am deteriorating mentally and physically. I pace around in circles; I can barely think. When my feet hurt, I sit down. Sometimes I can get a few minutes of very light sleep. When my feet stop hurting I keep on walking. It feels like my IQ has dropped twenty-five points. My piss gets clearer and clearer and someone tells me that I am probably getting dehydrated. I stop my frequent trips to the water fountain. I start to get a headache.

My face is a horrible mess. My face broke out and got infected a few days ago. I just went to the doctor about it. I can’t stop picking off my scabs. My infection crawls all across my face and onto my chin.

However, I feel calmer than most of the other people here with me. I try to keep a long-term mindset. It helps.

People are slowly getting taken away from our cell. When it gets down to around ten people we set up a pot: last one out gets five dollars.

After pleading with a guard we get some information and, more importantly, a paper to read. We learn that there have been protests outside the jail all day. Our friends are marching around, chanting “let our friends go!” It’s a tremendous boost to our morale and the next few hours are much easier to take.

We are reading the Post-Gazette. What they write about the arrests is full of lies and half-truths. We are passing parts of the paper



around, reading about the invasion with intense interest (remember that this is the second day of the war -- no one really knows how it is going to come out. Do we know now?) We laugh at all the anti-French venom in the paper and at an editorial that ends with the words “Thank God for George W. Bush.”

More people are getting filtered out, then finally they call my name. It’s about eight o’clock in the evening. There are eight people still there when I’m gone.

They get my finger prints and take a photo. I’m feeling like a walking zombie by now.

What is next isn’t freedom, but another cell. This one has “real prisoners” in it. There is a self-described gangster from the hill district. Someone with a DUI. A few people who are drunk. We don’t mix real well with them -- it feels like we have nothing to say to each other.

These are some of the hardest hours because it feels like freedom is just around the corner. We are stuck in here for more than four hours. My feet really begin to hurt from all of the walking.

It goes on past midnight. Past 2:00. Past 4:00. I pace around and around and just try to keep pacing. That is all. My feet hurt from all the walking.

After everyone from the old cell gets taken into this new one they start moving us again. It’s painfully slow again. It looks like they are picking people at random. In the early morning they finally take me away. I am put in handcuffs again and also foot cuffs. There is one final holding cell, but we are only in this one for a few minutes. Finally I am up in front of the magistrate with a few other kids. It’s very brief. He reads us our charges and gives us papers to sign. That’s it. We are finally free to go.

There are still “friends” outside waiting with blankets, food, and rides home. I find out later that Analena got through it alright. I am grateful at all the human compassion I see. I walk off alone heading up Forbes to Oakland. In a few hours I’ll be in a deep sleep.

The “Pittsburgh 122,” myself included, went to trial about three weeks later. Legal representation was provided free of charge by the Thomas Merton Center and a team of attorneys from the ACLU. The trial was anticlimactic. The deliberation lasted for little more than an hour and only three witnesses were called up to testify (one protestor, one witness, and one cop, who, if it matters, lied.) A backroom deal had already been made. The police did not want a civil suit against them, and the city, near or at bankruptcy at the time, did not want to spend the time or resources prosecuting all of us individually. We pleaded guilty (but were not given a criminal record) and were all given 80 hours of community service (I did mine in the food pantry at Northside Common Ministries) and an eighty-dollar fine. Our attorneys said it was a great deal and we should all accept it, so we did. No one wanted a criminal record. Only two people refused on moral grounds and pleaded not guilty. One “leader” was not allowed to plea bargain and was given a stiffer fine.

There were no more big protests after the one that ended up in our arrest. Undoubtedly a major factor contributing to this was that many people either felt helpless once the war began or felt a need to “support the troops.” I am convinced, though, that fear of arrest and violence was also a cause of the decline. No organizers wanted to risk being blamed for getting people in jail. About three weeks later another march was held in Regent Square and the police used violence again to break it up -- using pepper spray and the threat of arrest. Only two marches against the war have been held in Pittsburgh since, each attracting much fewer people than the ones that took place before the war. Stronghand police tactics had, in a very real sense, been successful in breaking Pittsburgh’s antiwar movement.



3) HOW TO KILL OR MAYBE, NOT KILL

Matt Stroud with the unknown marine

Deek Magazine Says: What would they teach you, specifically, before the war?

Marine, eating, sitting across a restaurant table from the Deek representative, chewing with his mouth full, says: Well, 'ey'd 'ell 'ou what (he swallows) a bad guy is, what to do... rules of engagement.

D: What, uh... what is a bad guy?

M: Well, they gave us an official... I guess you'd call it a Bad Guy Identification Card, describing what and who you were allowed to shoot and so on. But, what it said was, basically, Aim for anyone in an enemy military uniform... which was brown, obvious looking. And the card described the uniform in useless detail... It basically said, Shoot any Iraqi that presents any threat to you.

D: What does that entail?

M: If they have a gun, shoot 'em.

D: No shit?

M: No shit. If you ask someone on high if that's how they worded it, they'll deny it till they're blue in the face, but that's what they said. If you see a gun in someone's hand, shoot that person.

D: Fuckin' crazy.

M: Yeah. And they had these white pickup trucks that they told us to shoot no matter what. Because that's what Saddam uses like Hummers. Our original rules of engagement before we crossed the border were, if you see a white pickup truck, blow the fucker up. For real. But, when we crossed the border, we were up shit creek, cause everybody and their fucking brother drives a white pickup truck.

D: (laughs)

M: So that went right out the fuckin' window. You gotta realize, the war did not happen how it was supposed to. They can have Plan A through D through Z through a hundred twelve, but they never really know how anything's going to happen. They just never know. The white pickup truck thing: I mean, if we would've shot everyone in one of those trucks -- if we would've followed commands exactly, we would've been killing men, women, children, dogs, you name it. But we didn't.

D: Did someone in your unit have to fuck up before they realized that?

M: Well, I know the first white pickup truck I saw had twelve women in the back, in the bed... So it was kinda obvious from the beginning. Someone else may have (fucked up), but no one from my unit.

D: Alright, you were in Iraq when the war started. Let's hit that.

You say and write the craziest things before you go to war.

M: What do you want to know?

D: I want to know the first moment in the desert when you pointed to God and said, It's your show now.

M: (pauses, smiles) Okay... dramatic. I'll tell you how we got the wakeup call. So, we're sleeping in these big tents -- the whole company's in there -- and, uh, they wake us up at like three in the morning... And we knew this was coming, mind you, but, uh... Here ya go -- this is the line. Listen: You say and write the craziest things before you go to war. People were writing death letters next to me, black jackets... If I die, tell my parents so on. Death letters; people writing letters to girlfriends and wives and saying things you normally wouldn't or shouldn't say. Like telling girls that are going to have kids in 5 months that you love them, or that you cheated or... stuff like that. It was tense. A lot goes through your head when you know it's coming.

D: What did you write?

M: Well, just letters really. Telling people that I don't know when I'll be able to write again. Cause we didn't know. But I wasn't being fatalistic about it. I had some faith that we'd be alright. But after all, we didn't know what the war was going to be like, or what we'd see or run into. We didn't know how fast we were gonna be moving or if we'd even get another chance to write, so...

D: Write to your mom?

M: Yea. My mom, Christine... Your mom. I wrote one to work saying, uh, well, I'm going to war today, so I won't be in on... Saturday.

D: Yea, uh, could you guys pick up my paycheck for me?

M: (laughing) Yea. Fuckin weird. I got a prior engagement shooting people in hot sand. Incredible... But anyway, it's three in the morning, right? And they call Revile Revile Revile; and they say You are now on Zulu Time -- which standardizes everything so the president can say, you know, hey Marines, at... I don't know, 5 o'clock in the morning, bomb the fuck out of this spot. And you other Marines bomb the fuck out of this spot. It's just to keep everything synchronized.

D: Right.

M: So, we crossed the border after eating chow and packing up all our shit... we didn't cross till like 9 a.m. The grunts crossed at, like, three. We spent about 6 hours just packing, getting ready. I mean... we knew that Iraq was one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. There's just fucking mines everywhere. So the bulldozers and the grunts went in and plowed through all that shit. And we, uh... well, we followed, taking the prisoners they captured, putting them into custody. You should've seen the fucking border, man. Just a giant hole forty feet deep around the entire border. Fucking amazing. And inside the border, the grunts had plowed a lane in the sand, real narrow... and if you went outside that lane, chances are you were going to hit a mine and blow up. But, so anyway, we head in and there are DANGER signs everywhere and then we hit the demilitarized zone. And we just plowed right though that shit, no problem. But... where was I?

D: I was wondering that, too. You were talking about the first trek over the border.

M: Oh, right. So, we follow them in and it was just fucking incredible. The oil fields as we entered Iraq were lit on fire. Giant, unbelievable... like, spouting fire just fucking erupting hundreds of yards into the air. So we cross into this little town... and one of the first things we see is this crowd of probably fifty Iraqi soldiers held at gunpoint, walking with their hands above their heads toward a base that had been set up by MPs that went in a few hours before us. We kept driving, and, I didn't see any bodies yet... not at that point, but you see carnage -- blood on the ground, parts of uniforms, and piles of ammo casings -- the brass -- and weapons and piles of clothes and other stuff that lets you know that, I don't know... That this is serious. And this is war.

D: So, just a quick question before you go on. Did you, uh... Did you kill anyone?

M: Dude, you know I can't tell you that.

D: Why not?

M: Does it really matter?

4) CAPTURING THE SPIRIT AND STRENGTH OF AMERICA

Lucy Leitner

So I'm in a bed with three other people who I, in the state that I am in, cannot identify. This guy who is kissing me must be the Yankees hat guy because I remember sharing a couple moments with him in the kitchen earlier. I guess he doesn't realize my ailment. Just days ago my strep throat landed me in the emergency room where the white coated Saviors of the Sick stuck a tube in my arm and told me to take some medicine that left my skin dry and peeling. But I guess this man with the hat has no inhibitions about running his tongue over Vaseline-coated sandpaper. So I'm with this apparent Yankees fan -- whose name I don't know -- and there's Steph... And who the hell is this Puerto Rican kid? I haven't even seen him yet. Vague recollections of how I came to arrive in this predicament fade in and out of my mind as Yankees guy and I relocate to the floor to escape the two sexual predators who jumped on us in the bed. We have one hell of a way of serving our country.

It has been a mere two days since the infamous kamikaze terrorists devastated several symbols of American culture -- one of which had existed in my hometown -- throwing the former quasi-idyllic state of the nation into an uproar. My family and friends stand five minutes from ground zero -- the Pentagon -- but here I am, 400 hundred miles away, involved in a bizarre pseudo-menage-a-quatre. Thousands of

people dead and I'm drunk. Here is our patriotism -- existing in the all-American Yankees hat and those many cans of American Ice beer "quality brewed to capture the spirit and strength of America." Our diversity lies in this bed, a microcosm of liberal ideology where two white kids, a Jew, and a Puerto Rican are all brought together. Dipsomaniacs of the University of Pittsburgh unite!

Finally Steph and the Puerto Rican leave the room, abandoning me with the mysterious and newly hatless Yankees fan, whose name has still not resurfaced. I remember meeting a Milo earlier, but I also remember an Otis, so I may be slightly confused or... drunk. There was a blond kid in a hockey jersey, but... Damn this drink! Who are you people? My extensive knowledge of these new friends were collected after Steph and I wandered into this house on the sewage corner after sober, beer-anxious Steph spied the silhouette of someone drinking a beer through the window. So, naturally, she and I, drunk, are drawn toward the men with the beer. I don't know these people, do I? I don't believe so. Do they know me? We seem to have hit it off very well. Confusion envelops me, but the alcohol has served as an elixir of poise and composure and I am able to deliver my incoherent sentences with the utmost confidence.

But now in this bed, my mind has begun to wander in circles, searching for answers, digging up potential reasons for me to have arrived in such an interesting state of affairs when I was supposed to have gone home to witness the damage inflicted when Muslim martyrs kicked the shit out of Arlington. Party! Keg party -- yes, I remember that. Ran out of beer -- sacrilegious! And this issue with this guy's name is not alleviating the bewilderment. I know that he has four years of college experience over my two weeks of school so far. And no, he does not have any Guns N' Roses in his CD collection. Harassing the deejay has recently become my M.O. Disappointed by the lack of good rock music that I heard upon my arrival, I showed no fear and strode confidently into their midst as I, in about fifteen seconds, had infiltrated their home, drank their beer, and was on my way to insulting their musical taste! Then talking, dancing, and American Ice ensued.

Yes, I am on my way to entering life in the "real world." I have learned how to use both the washer and dryer, and in the past few days, I have actually turned on CNN. But my knowledge of two weeks pales in comparison to the experience of my newfound baseball-loving friend in his fifth-year of life in this jungle inhabited by the small and scattered, but loyal society of raging "social drinkers." On a night when those responsible for the fate of our country have pooled their knowledge to create the most acceptable national reaction to this impending crisis, the University of Pittsburgh's membership of this intoxicated subculture have displayed their loyalty by saluting with our most patriotic beer in hand. Tonight, we the students have explored the glories of American decadence, flamboyance and diversity. The members of this eclectic group of new friends have bonded intimately as exhibited through the potentially strange adventure in this dark bedroom that my new friend and I now exit. This may be my initiation into true dipsomania, as I appear to have survived the night relatively unharmed, excluding a new fear of strange Puerto Ricans leaping on me in bed.

As I reapply my Vaseline to my ailing lips, the Puerto Rican has reappeared in the kitchen with a pen and he inquires the phone numbers of both Steph and me. And I, in my position in the spiraling depths of oblivion, ask who he is.

There is no turning back now. We have all laughed in the face of sobriety, subconsciously defining our next four years as a search for ourselves for which we must amass an extensive bottle collection on the way. These twisted children of America will show their patriotism to their nation by pounding on the ceiling and chanting "Fuck Bin Laden" while coating their throats with the bitter taste of American Ice. I'll never be drafted, but, god damn it, I feel for my country! Give us all the cheap beer we need to prepare us for this time of crisis... but we may require Everclear for a special occasion like Armageddon. The hammer has descended! We have been struck, destined for the next four years to purge ourselves of tragedy through relentless partying, celebrating both victory and annihilation. We

have attained our status as semi-dignified citizens in training and, in the meantime, we have explored the facets of American ideology that are so often overlooked. We're drunk, we're becoming "aware," and we're living through our parents' achievement of the American Dream.

5) A VERY UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE WITH A SOLDIER. Matt Novak

Drinking at a gay bar, I'm here to be entertained by a friend's variety act on Casio keyboard. There's a nonchalant, laid back sort of verve, but it's not as if flamboyancy has no place; the way these guys are swinging their hips when they walk, tick-tock, back and forth like a pendulum timepiece, is making me... aware. One guy stands out from the others, obviously straight -- crew cut, buff (as in bulk and not sculpture). He's having a hell of a tete-a-tete with the keep, demonstrative and voluminous, flushed, rousing himself to guffaws. So I needle in a little. I'm drunk on special L.I. Ice-T's and gin.

There is a softness about him from the start, but he is contrary and abrasive with a grating voice and glare. We get to talking. "I just got back from Iraq," he says to me. Repoire develops by degrees. "This guy," he testifies, motioning the keep, "is one of my best friends. He's one of the greatest guys in the world. See, I don't care if you're gay, or straight, or Puerto Rican... whatever the hell, it's the same." Equanimity. He tells me he's come from a strip club across the street.

"You mean in the back of that magazine shop?," I ask, ignorant, enticed.

"My girl," he continues, "she strips over there...sits on my lap. Head like you wouldn't believe." He pauses to sip his drink, a vodka and juice. I suppose I looked scandalized. "I take what I want. Fuck you."

I try not to let on anything, move on. "So you were..."

He ignores me, shows me a scar on his forearm. "Have you ever been shot?," he fires at me. "I was shot. Killed twenty-seven men." It's a nasty, drawn-out tissue, lots of curlicued hair lapping the outline. I must say no, I've never been shot. I'm about to tell him I've shot a gun when he interrupts me. "Are you gay or straight?," he asks.

"I thought that didn't matter," I contend. "All the same." It pisses him off when I quote him. He presses me, menacingly. "Straight," I say, loudly, eyes on the plain, featureless drywall behind his head.

He asks me again. By this time there is a smile in his eyes and a gut punch in my heart. "You gonna go over there?" He gestures at the strip club -- at his girlfriend. "You want some of that?"

I nod, acquiescing, merely retreating from this unsolicited onslaught. "Then I'll see you tomorrow night over there. And if I don't see you...." he leaves off.

"I just never heard there was a place there," I say weakly.

"We'll see then if you want it," says he. "I take what I want. I do what I want." He lifts his shirt to show me the scar in his belly. "If someone threatens me, I'm not gonna cross myself and pray to God," he illustrates; "when someone stabs you in the belly, you shoot him. I nailed him." He smiles pleasingly. "Killed twenty-seven men."

I wonder if he'll ask me if I've ever killed somebody. I've often wondered on it. I've been made to wonder on it. Clint Eastwood, Luke Skywalker, Bruce Lee. It is the measure of a man. I still don't know if I could do it if I was thinking. If I didn't feel anything, as that seems best, would it be because my heart had been seized in the vice of my iron will, or because I was simply paralyzed, my mind crippled by whatever ran rampant through its fickle trenches?

“You won’t show up tomorrow night. And I know that,” he reports. “You probably like computers,” he waves, reducing all information, all stories and reports and studies and pictures and digitally conveyed art, and the so-called power to the pen to a single, impotent meme. “Just stick to your computers and wacking off.” He makes the up-and-down claw with his hand.

“There’s a lot of that,” suddenly wistful, distant, I admit, trying to hold with truth, brazenly denying shame.

“Yeah,” he affirms, and runs his rough digits through the shroud on my scalp. Toussels my hair, petting me on the head. Who does this guy think he is? I shrug and laugh it off.

Here I toss out my last chance at egalitarianism, that even-handedness laudable in so many estimable journals of the literate and reasonably liberal, lending respect, and believability, hell, likeability; gently encouraging discourse, bestowing responsibility as a gift on the reader to make up his own mind. Here I pick up my stick and start beating with it. So I’ll borrow a trick from those hypocritical bastards O’Reilly and Limbaugh, and those cursed sons of bitches in Washington, consummate professionals all, and lay down a disclaimer before I go on tirade, which nonetheless I don’t mean to be entirely insincere: I fight all the time with notions of stereotype and hold no court with didactic reductions and the epidemic of oversimplification. I believe in the notion of the individual, and the variety of the species. That said:

This is precisely the profile of the American civilian in the New World Order. Peckless, feeble-minded, indifferent. Unable to concentrate. Morally ambiguous. Tired, tired all the time, watching the TV. Vegging out in front of the tube. There is no memory of what was watched the night before, and there likely will be none after tonight is over. Why bother? People know disposable. Nothing is said, and there is nothing done. All’s done is done, papers filed, bills filed, interest calculated, paper clips squirrelled away, untangled, neat in a scrap of Chinese plastic, stapler filled, pencils sharpened, calendar on the close wall in the office, desk Windexed, porn in the bedroom, bed made, ready for bed. Kids washed, fed, in bed, sleeping, dreaming of getting things, how childish; adults get what they have; tired of desire, tired. Gotta get up early, do it tomorrow, fight traffic.

This is precisely the problem with the American soldier. Trained to kill, to hunt, not as an instance, as a practice, but drilled, drilled and cursed, so that it is a way of life. Sent to die, oh vanity, oh vain, glorious valor. These men and women do not think of themselves as sacrifice, trained to consider killing in terms of numbers, death in terms of bland euphemisms and double-speak, stripped of this patriot poesy bullshit bandied about on the nightly news by cush cush patsy anchors with wet dreams of tear-jerk emotional rhetoric, looking down on journalistic integrity as the dreams of an insouciant, naive child. Discouraged from a humanities education, equanimity, enlightenment, sense of history, consideration fomenting dissent, soldiers are trained, trained and built, tough and taut, in using tools and technology of war, without remorse. Hunters. Not Seals, really. Wolves, spiders, snakes. These are mascots of our boys’ divisions; these are creatures of prestige, shock, and awe. Stalked, stung, bitten, our enemy, beaten. What of the civilian? What of this faithful, this hopeful, this patriot, sentimental, model of civilized restraint, Protestant self-control, carefully tallied expenses, morally rationed appetites? What of the good flock under President, under God, under Rule of Law? What of these, sheep?

Which is to say that I’m there in a gay bar sipping Long Islands on special and watching a middle-aged funny gal play with electric keys and stuffed animals, and the American soldier’s tossing back a Coke, showing me scars, and then marching off across the street to pick up his blond, pert-titted stripper and fuck her senseless. After petting me on the fucking head. Bring our boys home, all right.

FICTION:

1) THE GOLF BALL RECOLLECTIONS Robert Isenberg

Myrtle is thinking only about sunbeams through the fronds of the palm trees that line Franco Drive -- the way each beam looks like a delicate sheet of gold-speckled silk stretched from the rubber edge of her car door into infinity--

When suddenly: Wham.

The windshield is cracked by a momentary black spot; Myrtle yelps.

Harvey yells: Damn! What the heck--?

(And then the sunbeams vanish behind the grassy bluff, and all Myrtle can hear is the chorus of young women singing in boisterous untrained voices:

A man’s blood-let
is from sun to sun
but a nurse’s needle
is never done.)

Myrtle presses her hand against her blouse, the glass pearls of her necklace grinding between her fingers, and she feels elated -- seasick with the sense-memory of a rocking transport truck -- she can even see, as the sun-spots dwindle in her eyes, the dust-matted stencil on the transport’s driver’s side door.

Some dummy, Harvey groans. Some dummy thinks we’re the fifteenth hole. I swear, Myrtle...

He pulls the car over, and when the engine dies, the road is silent, except for the swishing of water-sprinklers in the distance. (For a moment, Myrtle can see the fallen-over wooden road sign that gives some directions in Italian; the white arrow points downward, into the ditch. When she blinks, the sign is gone -- it’s just a forgotten traffic cone, also overturned, pointing nowhere.)

Harvey rounds the hood and presses a finger against the tiny crystal bruise, then traces the line that extends like a rainbow-edged stream down to the windshield wiper; he shakes his head and sighs, his shoulders sagging.

When he ambles behind the car, walking down the undivided, newly paved road, Myrtle rolls down her window and says, Harvey, where are you going?

Sitting alone in the car, Myrtle feels the air-conditioned cool seep out; she doesn’t sweat, but she feels a pocket of moistness in the fleshy part of her neck -- the folds of age that she most resents.

(But her skin recalls the dry heat of a Sicilian highway; she can feel the pebbles embedded in her forearms as she lay down in the dirt, praying for the silence to continue; crisp, unfaithful silence; of all the photographs she took, the exotic things she saw -- oh, the Pieta, so sublime! -- the image of the bullet-punctured glass is the most vivid; the way the driver’s seat let out a silver string of smoke; the sniper taught her this: a bullet burns. It sears and smokes, white hot with its shooter’s rage, eating -- incinerating the thing it invades; that bullet, even now, never seems to cool. Myrtle is still waiting for the second shot; she’s hearing Esther sob into her armpit as a paratrooper tells her to shut up; does she want to get them all killed?)

Harvey thrusts a golf ball into Myrtle’s field of view; she yelps again; she breathes, holding fingers to her cheek. Jesus, Harvey, you scared the daylights out of me.

Some joker, Harvey declares, adjusting his horn-rimmed glasses in the side-view mirror. People need to know where the road is. I swear,

somebody could start an accident.

Can we just drive, Harvey?

Scared the beejesus out of me, Harvey says. Give me a peck, Myrtle. Calm me down.

(Ordinarily, yes, she would kiss him on the cheek; but instead Myrtle looks at him severely). Let's go, Harvey.

He frowns, nods his head, shrugs, and slips behind the wheel. The roar of the engine is like a tank; the crunch of gravel reminds Myrtle of treads on unknown roads.

Chipper's country club approaches -- the wooden double-doors with the faux-stone awning. Two giant five-irons cross above the doors like marines' swords. When Harvey parks, he yanks the emergency brake, though the parking lot is flat. By the time he's lugged his clubs from the back seat onto his shoulder, Myrtle is already standing on the curb, hugging herself. She feels chills; she longs for Sicily's warmth.

(Where has Tanya gone? Did Susan marry that boy from Brooklyn? What happened when Dessie was carted off on a stretcher, screaming from the shrapnel in her breast, the great splotch of blood extending like a maroon shadow down to her knees?)

Harvey lugs his clubs to the front desk, but Myrtle never sees him reach the smiling young woman with the rose-like white blouse and the phony gold name tag. She just watches Harvey move, his old man waddle makes her sputter; his belt clenches his khakis so tight that the seam curls like a flag; his cuffs are rolled above his dress shoes (so ridiculous for walking in moist grass). He's already too late, the sunlight is gone, and he'll be whacking balls for hours beneath the giant stadium lights, a cloud of moths following the tan of his fisherman's hat.

Myrtle turns, swallowing her amusement, but when she reaches the club's restaurant, she laughs out loud -- a high-pitched giggle that hasn't been heard in forty years. The funny little accountant that she married -- the boy with the broken wrist who asked her to a dance and then, only months later, bought her a prim little house with hedges -- his rosy cheeks and alarmed brown eyes vanished behind the restaurant's glass wall. (Now she was walking, full confidence, into a little cafe in Milano, the simple glow of candles so relieving after the harsh electric lights of mess halls and cantinas; she finds a bistro table and claps for service; a young girl rushes in, but Myrtle tells her not to hurry; Myrtle has a long leave; she's seen action and she has all of sixty days off with her girlfriends).

The bartender says, Hi, can I help you?

Myrtle says, still giggling: Do you have dell'Antonio?

One of my favorites, says the svelte blonde bartender; he flips the bottle in the air and pours the red wine into a glass.

(The bartender doesn't look anything like Niccolo, who had long black hair and a permanent shade of scruff along his jaw; the bartender isn't weathered like Niccolo, who had leathery skin, pouches beneath his eyes; this bartender could not talk like Niccolo could -- about politics, about the fragile parchment of tulips; Niccolo with his perfect Italian, who never stumbled over words; he'd been interrogated by the Gestapo, but never broke, even when they claimed to have fucked his wife; Niccolo was alone when he came into the cafe, a Lugar tucked into his belt; Myrtle remembers only a smoking bullet and the man who took her home one night writhing -- weeping on the straw mattress, then smoking unfiltered cigarettes and squishing mosquitoes; Niccolo stroked her curls, recounting the last time he saw his wife -- waving frantically from a train, both of them screaming; Niccolo kissed Myrtle on the back of her neck and said, We have to go, Myrtle, you aren't safe here. Niccolo was the war to her... Niccolo and the sound of a sniper -- and the taste of red wine, warm and sweet and so bold after so much choking fear).

Everything all right? the bartender asks.

Perfect, Myrtle says.

2) THE SICKNESS Ferris Harris

One day before the trip, I woke with a sore throat, like a piece of food was caught in there. I coughed a few times and drank some water, but nothing helped. I had maps laid out along the backseat of the car, directing my way along the coast with only an X at my starting point. I was feeling tired already. The night before I hit the road, after I loaded up the trunk with "make your own watch" kits, I found some evil looking yellow spots on my tonsils. I drank some cough syrup and set out. It was late.

The first few days weren't so bad. I was exhausted, but I maintained some professionalism and made some difficult sales, which lifted my spirits. The trip along the coast is a nice one, lots of fish joints, some right up against the ocean. By the end of the first week, though, I was having a tough time swallowing cod -- the fried edges cut my throat.

Around the fifth afternoon, I had to pull over on the side of the road, sweating and trying to use the moments of lucidity to figure out what to do. At a pharmacy, I got a bottle of pink pills that made my wallet a bit lighter and helped me not care so much about sweating. By nighttime, I was merely coasting, thinking more about the white lines than the road itself.

My tonsils had grown. It felt like I was trying to breathe through a coffee straw. The stretch of road had no streetlights or mile markers, not even a shoulder or road signs. I could have been anywhere, in any state, bumping along wasted at the submission of the vehicle. My throat had been keeping me up -- every time I dosed off, a pained swallow would jolt me awake again. I was nauseated from not eating. There were at least fifty chances to accidentally kill myself in this car before I found an exit, and I had no recollection of having touched the steering wheel for a good twenty-five miles.

I must have been on a steady incline, because all of the sudden a light appeared by the side of the road, as sad and beautiful as a picture of home. As I got closer, I could see that it was a diner -- the long kind like a hollowed out bus; and though all the shades were down, it was really hopping. I was going too fast coming into the lot and almost ran the place down, spraying gravel back onto the blank highway and into the machinery on the underside of the car.

The place was a long shaft, the walls lined with booths, most of which were empty -- only five or six customers in the joint, and they were all staring at me. I, a traveler, had interrupted their evening. I looked at one of the waitresses -- Maggie, her name tag read -- who had an order pad folded in her fist and her shoes undone. I stared at her until she responded.

"Would you like to sit down, sir?"
"That would be lovely," I said.

The entire place turned in unison as I walked the length of the floor, heads swiveling and cushions squeaking with the sound of people turning slowly in their seats. I sat, put my hat down, undid my scarf and picked up a menu. I didn't know what I'd be able to get here that I could eat. My head rolled back and forth and I stared down at the menu trying to read through the mist in my eyes.

The place was still focused on me. One man, with a large mustache and thin hair that stuck back on his head stood up from his booth, red-faced, and ran to the bathroom, pushing my waitress aside and slamming the door behind him. She started to cry, but didn't lose it. She came to take my order, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand, starting her script by rote, with a smile.

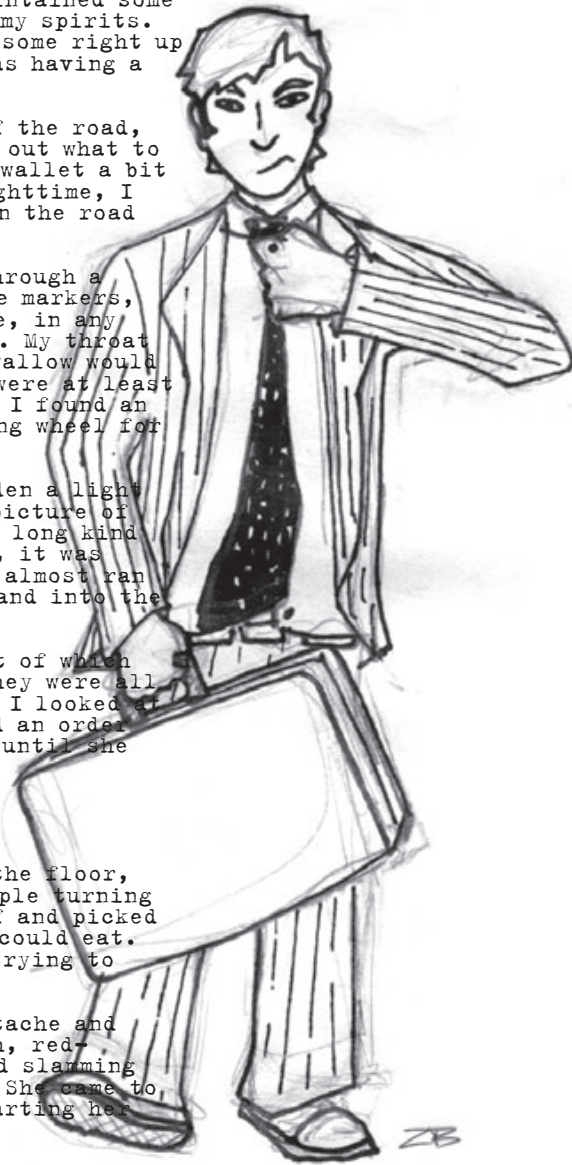
"Now what can I get for you today sir?"
"How easy can I get an order of fried eggs?" I asked.

She started to laugh and told me as easy as I wanted them. Her face was fighting back and forth, trying to hold on to the absurdity of my question but noticing the stares of the other customers and the unseen threatening one from the man in the bathroom, who she kept looking over her shoulder for.

"Juice?" she asked.

"Milk, please."

She took a long time to write out the order, stopping to scratch out a word every so often and retrace it in with precision. She turned and started walking back to the kitchen.



“Ma’am?” I said.

“Hmm?” she said turning back around and brushing some hair out of her face.

“It’s just that your, uh... Your zipper’s undone.”

She blushed and started to reach behind her like she was chasing her tail, turning to find a way to grab the thing, looking up at the other customers.

“Here,” I said, holding the zipper with one hand and her hip with the other, pulling it up so that every tooth and rung snapped together, trying not to catch her shirt or her panties in the grooves. She turned back around, still red and holding onto the tears a bit harder.

“Don’t be embarrassed,” I said. “It’s happens to everyone.”

She nodded and went back into the kitchen. The man from the bathroom came out following her, his pants soapy and wet. They began talking, but too softly to understand. There was the sound of metal snaps coming apart and a plate dropping to the floor, shattering. It was quiet for a few minutes and I watched the other customers, who only now started turning back to their business. The man from the bathroom came out of the kitchen and swore, dropping my meal in front of me as he walked back to his seat.

I punctured the yoke and let the eggs run all over the plate, amazed, in my tiredness, at the precision with which they ran and surrounded everything. I tore off some toast and dropped it in, trying to moisten it enough to swallow. I chewed slowly until I could almost drink the eggs like I did the coffee. It hurt so bad I wanted to cry.

My waitress came out of the kitchen with her hair falling out of the ponytail and her face redder than before. She was looking for something to do, something to wipe or clean or serve, but the place was satisfied and quiet. One of the men sitting down, a shifty man who had been sweaty and distraught since I came in suddenly threw up all over his plate and lap. I called the waitress over and she watched the man as she walked.

“Would you mind sitting down for a minute?”

She slid in the seat across from me, pulling her skirt in with her and sliding all the way against the wall. I saw now that her top button had been torn off, leaving two symmetrical holes in her shirt against her freckled collarbone.

“Now what can I do for you, sir?”
“Just sit.”

She was uncomfortable, looking back at the vomiting man who was now assessing the damage and vomiting and sobbing as a result. The mustached man from the bathroom got up to make the long walk to our table. She jerked and went to stand up. I put my hand on top of hers, pushing her back. I couldn’t tell who was colder.

“Maggie,” I asked under my breath. “Do you need a ride somewhere?”
“No, I still have to work a few more hours.”

I swallowed and felt the pain again -- its pathetic, fading apology becomes more familiar. I was still sweating and dreaming and wondering who she’d be in trouble with if she ran now and never came back. The mustache came up to us, landing at the edge of the table, his soapy pants pressing moisture onto the Formica.

“I can’t say no to pie,” I said.

“Is there a problem here?” he asked.

“No sir,” I said. “I was asking this lovely lady if she would sit here and keep me company and she talked me into having a slice of pie. Is she needed somewhere?”

He shook his head and walked away adjusting his underwear. I looked at the waitress and noticed for the first time that she had a red ribbon in her hair. She sat back and fiddled with the pages of her note pad. I leaned my head against the window to get its wetness and coolness against my temple. It stunk in there, of grease and disorder, but I was sinking slowly into some sort of comfort. My eyes were closed, and I felt her hand lose tension in mine, relaxing, turning, cupping. So I started.

“Ma’am, have you ever wanted to make your own watch?”

The Sickness is the second installment in a monthly series of Pulp fiction called Tales From the City.

MUSIC:

1) MIX-TAPE FOR QUAGMIRE Jesse Hicks

At the tail end of George W. Bush’s 2000 campaign for President, his underlings decided to play a prank on their fearless leader. As Bush made his way to the podium at an Arkansas fundraiser, some wag at the soundboard cranked up Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t Stop,” the theme song of Bill Clinton’s 1992 campaign.

Ah ha ha. There’s nothing like the humor of dyed-in-the-wool political insiders. It’s like the humor of Dungeons and Dragons aficionados, or those jokes CMU students tell -- the ones that require you to convert them to binary to really savor the hilarity.

But it didn’t stop there, oh no. The scratching sound of a record player’s needle being pulled off led into Bush’s real rock-and-roll anthem: The Who’s “Won’t Get Fooled Again.”

“We better get on our knees and pray - we don’t get fooled again....”

Oh, delicious, unconscious irony.

This little nugget of political theater made its way to the media -- a ready-made bit of fluff for the anchor-people to chortle over. And yes, it’s funny in a very lame way.

Funny how, for example, the Fleetwood Mac song was about looking to the future with something like hope, while Bush’s chosen theme is about the futility of revolution, about how the status quo always reasserts itself, with the same people running the show no matter what color their party affiliation. Team Bush wisely cut the song’s closing line, “Meet the new boss; same as the old boss.” That might’ve seemed too obviously cynical, a prompt for ugly questions about the lineage of the boy who would be king.

But since then, we haven’t heard much of the musical side of the Bush White House. Maybe they’ve been busy not planning the war in Iraq, planning a fiscal train wreck for the national budget, or just ropin’ steers down in Crawford. Whatever the reason, they just haven’t had time, and that’s where I come in. As a good patriotic American like you, I’d like to offer my own political mix-tape, specially tailored for the war. Here goes:

I Heard It Through The Grapevine - The Slits (Rare Vinyl)
Ahmed Chalabi has been saying for years that Saddam has a plan to make us blue. Chorus: Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Dick Cheney (whose theme is Cover You in Oil, by AC/DC.) Now’s our chance to get them, before they, possibly, in a matter of years, given our most pessimistic estimates, have the ability to think about planning to get us.

Macho Insecurity - Dead Kennedys
After months of American debate, Colin Powell presents to the United Nations his argument for war. The UN remains unconvinced, but appreciates the balls it takes to suggest that artillery tubes are really uranium-enrichment tubes.

Use Your Fist and Not Your Mouth - Marilyn Manson
The time for (sham) diplomacy is over.

The Only Way (Is the Wrong Way) - Filter
The only way to make Iraq comply with UN rulings is by ignoring UN rulings.

Don’t Worry About Tomorrow - Van Morrison
Plan for a post-war Iraq? That’d be a big waste of time, since “there is no question but that (American troops) would be welcomed,” according to Donald Rumsfeld. The real question is: do we have enough wheelbarrows to deal with all the flowers our boys overseas will be showered with?

Bombs Over Baghdad - OutKast (Rage Against the Machine Mix)
Ok, that's way too easy. Possible substitutions include Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries, with voice-over by a breathless, exhilarated Brit Hume or, possibly, the sound of Henry Kissinger climaxing.

Blitzkrieg Bop - The Ramones
Shock and awesome!

TV Party - Black Flag
Embedded reporters bring you all the facts the Pentagon needs you to know! Sure, some people might sheepishly suggest that, um, you know, isn't the military sort of a biased source? But you won't worry about that when you see our computer-generated graphics and thrill to bandanna-clad Geraldo Rivera's revealing of troop positions.

Waving My Dick in the Wind - Ween
On May 2nd, President Bush landed a Navy S-3B Viking jet aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln. In what some Democrats complained was a publicly funded campaign commercial covered live on television, the President emerged from the cockpit labeled, "George W. Bush, Commander-In-Chief," clad in a full flight-suit and helmet. In addition to dressing up, he'd also taken underwater survival training in the White House pool to prepare for the ten-minute flight. When the former Texas Air Guard pilot wants to play soldier, he goes all the way.

Republicans were eager to showcase their war president, and apparently wanted to show off the little Commander-in-Chief: AP photos of the event show Bush sporting a suspiciously large package. Richard Goldstein of the Village Voice wrote, "I can't prove (Bush's media handlers) gave him a sock job, but clearly they thought long and hard about the crotch shot."

Given the premature "Mission Accomplished" banner hung above the President's photo-op, "Waving My Dick in the Wind" takes on a whole different meaning.

Fishing with a Man for a Shark - Billy Mahonie

The Bravery of Being out of Range - Roger Waters
In July, with over 65 soldiers dead since the "Mission Accomplished" banner first flew, Bush emphasized his dedication to the new class project in Iraq. "There are some who feel like that the conditions are such that they can attack us there. My answer is bring them on." Twenty-five percent of Americans respond, "Holy fucking God, did he really just say that? That seems rather callous. Kinda like, you know, slapping a big target on your troops while you sit safely at home." The remaining seventy-five percent realized that they had, once again, slipped into Bizarro-world. Downing several handfuls of Prozac and sleeping pills, they planned to "hibernate like a drunken bear until this whole thing blows over."

(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction - The Rolling Stones
Where, exactly, ARE those Weapons of Mass Destruction?

Nobody's Perfect - Madonna
Alright, I admit the Iraq thing didn't go as unplanned. We promise to do better with Syria or Iran, whichever, depending on how the coin lands. Call it in the air!

2) RANT: FROM ANTI-FLAG TO TOBY KEITH Bob Gavel

On Toby Keith's new album, he takes a break from driving around in his Ford (purchased for him, loaded -- every option imaginable, by executives at the Ford Motor Company) to bash us around with some sweet nationalistic tunes. For a country singer, this is relatively predictable. But is that all he's selling?

In the very pro-war dogma of his song "American Soldier," he says wherever liberty is threatened he will "proudly take a stand..." And he says this like he knows what he's "standing" against, but he really doesn't. In the very next song he says "if I was Jesus, I'd be crucified by politicians and preachers who got something to hide." In this, we see a contradiction, no? But, then again, this kind of confused, strangely motivated poetry ain't nothing new.

During the Second World War when Adolph Hitler acted as Saddam Hussein, we fought fascism instead of terror. But you'd be amazed at the number of folks I've encountered that know don't know why their pappies spilled their blood in that war. And even then, there were Toby Keith's running around stirring up pro-war banter. "America, I Love You," a song performed by the American Quartet, which boasts "America, I love you and there is a hundred million others like me."

Now look, the world is fucked. War, like the war that happened sixty years ago, sometimes happens. The thing is, I am just not convinced that the one we're fighting now is a just one. Look, we have an incompetent in office -- one who can't even form a sentence without fucking it up -- and what scares me most about all the nationalism sprouting up in songs, television commercials and peoples' voices is that, essentially, nationalism is what led to Nazi Germany in the first place. So next time, you hear a "U.S.A. All the Way" type song, just remember what makes this country so great: the fact that we don't wage wars because we can, but because we have to. And if we want to hold up our voice and sing in protest, we can do that without getting struck down. Right?

Anyway, as the pro-war banter of Toby Keith is pumped through the speakers of Ford trucks up and down the streets of Pittsburgh Pennsylvlucky, and, as Godsmack is compelling you to join the Marines, wait and think for yourself for a minute. The anti-war sentiments of many o' rocker -- and at least one country star -- are still prevalent on the airwaves; you just have to know where to look. For example:

Punkers like Anti-Flag take a cue from the Clash and mix a little old punk rock rebellion and political jesting to fan the flames of revolution. In the song "Operation Iraqi Liberation (O.I.L.)" (from *The Terror State*, 2003) they speak against President Bush and his hunger for oil.

In a time when most of our youth are worried more about who's going to win on Average Joe, bands like Anti-Flag show us that apathy only leads to conformity and bad mustaches. They remind us that just as the sixties were a time for change and rebellion, the early part of the twenty-first century should be, too. This time, let's not follow in the footsteps of the generation before.

3) 80S LOST Bob Gavel

Moving on, perhaps the sixties were a starting point for protest in music. But what about the 80s? In the 80s, it was okay to be conservative (much like now), and it was okay to walk the status quo (much like now); but that decade gave birth to a ton of antiwar songs hidden in tracks that you thought were mindless...

You probably realized that Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." was an antiwar protest against Vietnam. And you probably recognized that Metallica's "One" was an indictment of the horrors of war. But did you know that happy little number by Nena, "99 Luftballons," was, in fact, also an antiwar protest? Take a listen: "99 Knights of the air/ Ride super-high-tech jet fighters/ Everyone's a superhero/ Everyone's a Captain Kirk/ With orders to identify/To clarify and classify/ Scramble in the summer sky/ As 99 red balloons go by." You may not realize when you're listening to that song with its original German lyrics, but nonetheless it was a hit that many folks didn't realize was trying to say something.

Don Henley's "All She Wants to Do is Dance" was a protest against the U.S. involvement with the Contras in Nicaragua. Summed up by Art Finkelwall, "all Americans wants to do is dance, while sales of guns and drugs are going on around her. And the boys -- the CIA, NSA, etc. -- are making a buck or two." Everyone from the obvious -- i.e. Public Enemy and U2 -- to the more obscurely curious like "The Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades," by Timbuk 3, which was allegedly an anti nuclear war song, had their day in the sun when it came to protest.

So there.

PROTESTING PACIFIST: FROM HIPPIES TO GUNS. SOME HISTORY.

Zach Braden

Let's say you're a time traveling pacifist, fighting the good fight, trying to bring peace to the world by protesting throughout history. Where would you go? And more importantly... what would you have in your Discman?

Let's start with the obvious.

"What the hell are we fightin' for? Don't ask me I don't give a damn. Next stop is Viet-nam." Those lyrics are from a tune by Country Joe McDonald called "Fixing to Die Rag" -- a funny, biting, satirical tune... can't miss.

This song is considered one of the first to inspire music as major voice of protest. Throughout history, music had been used primarily as a tool for war, not against it. Whether it was soldiers marching in time with fife and drum, or Nazi propaganda songs, music was used to keep the dogs of war rolling on. But in the early '60s, those wacky hippies rejected the idea of war, and along with a rising tide of anti-war sentiment came new music for anti-war politics to be expressed. Early post-nuclear apocalypse songs like Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction" and Bonnie Dobson's "Morning Dew" became popular protest songs during the Vietnam War. Other key songs of the Peace and Love movement included "Uncle John," by Pearls Before Swine, Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," and "Freedom," performed live at Woodstock by Richie Havens. But perhaps the one song that best relates the youth uprising against the government and their ongoing campaign in Southeast Asia is Buffalo Springfield's "Ohio," penned after the shootings at Kent State University in 1970 that killed four peaceful student protestors. In this song, Neil Young captured the feelings of a generation with the lyrics, "Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming, we're finally on our own. This summer I hear the drumming, Four dead in Ohio."

Oh, and there was that Bob Marley guy, helping to bring reggae to the masses. And along with the music came his anti-war statements like "No More Trouble," and "war," in which Marley sings "Until the philosophy, that holds one race superior and another inferior, is finally and totally discredited and abandoned, Everywhere is war." And Marley wasn't alone. Songs from other black artists, like Hendrix's "Machine Gun," Sly and the Family Stone's "Stand!" and Edwin Starr's rousing "War (What Is It Good For?)" helped bring black point-of-view into the mainstream. And this leads us to the guns:

As a polar opposite to the hippie movement, The MC5, with manager John Sinclair (leader of the radical White Panther Party) began pushing for revolution in the streets. "Kick Out the Jams" and "Come Together" were call-to-arms songs. How often do you hear that today? On the radio? In the late 1970s and through the '80s, punk rock was the staple of political outcry. From The Clash and "Rock the Casbah" to The Dead Kennedys' "California Uber Alles" punks called for social revolution around the world. Numerous punk bands kinda spoke out about politics, but most focused on bringing down social establishments and challenging mainstream culture.

If the nihilistic, counterculture attitudes of punk were reacting to the impending doom of the Cold War and a total dissatisfaction for government, then they did the job to pave the way for many bands in the 1990s and today that make their beliefs and opinions known. Post-hardcore geniuses Fugazi preached on the evils of capitalism on their first full-length, Repeater, with songs like "Merchandise." "KYE0," from Steady Diet of Nothing, is a subtle statement on self-awareness,

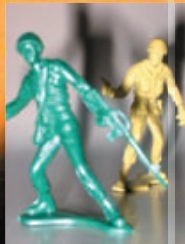
either in battle or just in life. There's so much more. Where do I go from here?

Well, with the rise of hip-hop in the early '80s, urban and black ideas were once again brought to the forefront. The rap group that bridged the gap between young black angst and politics was unquestionably Public Enemy. With "Public Enemy No. 1," "Louder Than a Bomb," and "Fight the Power," Chuck D helped to bring an intelligent and worldly view to hip-hop.

One of the first heavy-metal bands with political undertones was Sepultura, a band that formed in Brazil while the country was fighting back against a military dictatorship. Their personal history never came across stronger than on "Refuse/Resist" and "Territory," from the Chaos A.D record. Another band: (duh) System of a Down, which is comprised of four ethnic Armenians. On their 1998 debut, the band carried the torch with a song aptly titled "War." With lines like "We will fight the heathens!" and "Beliefs, they're the bullets of the wicked," S.O.A.D channeled (and continue to channel) the sarcasm and wit of The Dead Kennedys. The final song on the album, P.L.U.C.K. (Politically Lying, Unholy, Cowardly Killers) is directly linked to their Armenian heritage, the Armenian Genocide by Turks, and Turkey's denial of the incident to this day. System continues their political activism with global action campaigns on their website, as well as numerous anti-war songs like "Jet Pilot," "BOOM," and an unreleased demo song about the first Gulf War. Probably the band with the highest level of recognition for their politics was Rage Against the Machine. Spouting from Mexican frontman Zack de la Rocha's family history and cultural ties, combined with guitarist Tom Morello's Harvard-schooled political science, Rage combined their supersonic sounds with some of the most defiant music ever. While the group's politics are far-ranging, they devoted many songs throughout their career to anti-war sentiment. Off of their 1996 self-titled debut, "Killing in the Name" contains de La Rocha's lyrics "Some of those than run forces, are the same that burn crosses." On Evil Empire de La Rocha delves more deeply into the Zapata rebellion in Mexico on tracks like "People of the Sun" and "Bulls on Parade." The last video that Rage ever made, for "Sleep Now in the Fire" was directed by Michael Moore, and attacks not only American capitalism, but the compromised and middle-road stances taken by both George W. Bush and Al Gore during the 2000 presidential campaign. Although the band is no longer together, they set an example and pushed the envelope for music and politics.

Among the larger campaigns right now is a coalition called Musicians United to Win Without War. Many different musicians are included, from all ranges of the music community. They include Roseanne Cash, Lou Reed, David Byrne, hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, Jay-Z, OutKast, Zap Mama, Busta Rhymes, Sheryl Crow, Massive Attack and R.E.M. Simmons himself has been particularly outspoken about the war. He has promised to get more members of the rap community involved, citing that rappers are more popular than politicians are.

However, world leaders and certain presidents of the United States probably don't give a shit what musicians have to say anyway. And they will probably continue to act in their own best interests whether or not Russell Simmons thinks it's alright.



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The Underappreciated Scholar

How to beat the Lie Detector

To the extent that the polygraph works at all, it works because people believe it does. Many criminals confess during polygraph examinations. Many employees are more honest for fear of periodic screenings. But a dummy polygraph that hummed and scribbled pre programmed tracings would be no less effective in these instances.

David Thoreson Lykken estimates that lie-control polygraph tests are about 70 percent accurate. (Remember, though, that choosing "heads" or "tails" of a flipped coin can be accurate 50 percent of the time.) Accuracy of 70 percent is not impressive, but it is high enough to talk meaningfully of beating a polygraph test.

Just by having read this far, you stand a greater chance of beating a polygraph test. You won't be wowed by the card demonstration. You realize that the polygraph's powers are limited. There are two additional techniques for beating the polygraph. The more obvious is to learn how to repress physiologic responses to stressful questions. Some people are good at this one; others are not. Most people can get better by practicing with a polygraph. Of course, this training requires a polygraph, and polygraphs are expensive.

The opposite approach is to pick out the control questions in the pretest discussion and exaggerate reactions to these questions during the test. When the control-question responses are greater than the relevant-question responses, the polygrapher must acquit the subject.

Because breathing is one of the parameters measured, taking a deep breath and holding it will record as an abnormal response. Flexing the arm muscles under the cuff distorts the blood-pressure reading. But a suspicious polygrapher may spot either ruse.

A more subtle method is to hide a tack in one shoe. Stepping on the tack during the control questions produces stress reactions with no outward signs of fidgeting. Biting the tongue forcefully also works.

Sincerely,
William Poundstone

This piece is an excerpt from a book called the Big Book of Big Secrets: The Uncensored Truth About All Sorts of Stuff You Are Never Supposed to Know. William Poundstone wrote it; it is freely distributed online and, now, in Deek Magazine for entertainment purposes, it is distributed to you. This is not for profit.

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END

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Deekmagazine is a Limited Liability Corporation that produces artistic material and publications distributed in Pittsburgh, PA. Conceived in 2001, Deek has grown from a dinky web-resume to a magazine that puts out damn interesting stories and art each month. In print and online, Deek features work ranging in scope from the ludicrous and the experimental to the poignant, argumentative and sometimes even classy. Funded in part by the Student Activities Fee at the University of Pittsburgh, Deek wishes you a happy New Year and many, many incidents of extraordinary proportions in the future.

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