

- Adaptation. In the world that I see from behind my eyes, I notice that all things are in a current state of change. Realization of this has me wonder in awe of how great human nature is to have the unique ability ^{for only} to intelligently reason with one self.
- In the last four years, from the time I've joined the Army to the time ~~of my separation~~ that I write this now, I look back on to the two years that I actually served. During those years (2004-2006), my thought processes and ideas of combat have radically changed, - especially of the Iraq "war".
- In 2004, I began my ~~new~~ job as an infantryman. At the time, I wanted to experience combat. My father had a humorless joke he would always repeat: "Why did the man climb the mountain? Because he could". Those words have been with me for most of my life and are the reason I live without regret. I wanted to go to combat because I could. Despite having a few mental health problems and knowing that the horrors of combat would not help them, I did not allow anything to stop me from getting what I wanted at that time. Was it a wise decision to enlist? Probably not. However, I don't regret anything because all the events that have led up to this moment have changed me into who I am as I write this, and I could not trade it for the world.

- Basic training ~~is a~~ was ~~a~~ brainwashing that will probably never completely leave me. Infantry basic training is ~~only~~ in a single 14 week course that does not require AIT (advanced individual training). Throughout this time, the ~~recruit~~ ^{recruite} learns to be a soldier then an infantry man. Every ~~aspect~~ ^{part} of the schooling is filled with both subtle and overt messages ~~to teach the recruit~~ ~~that~~ that mold a recruit's mind and body into a methodical killing machine. ~~No~~, I will admit that I was seduced by this way of thinking. ~~and~~ When I ~~got~~ finished the course, I was ready as ever to "kill kill kill with cold blue steel." Though pumped up, I learned in dismay that I would be deployed to Korea and not a ~~dep~~ combat deploying unit in the US.

- I reported to duty to the 1/506th Infantry Battalion. ~~They were notorious for~~ The soldiers in that unit were notorious for their hard training in the field and harder attitudes ~~in their~~ towards other soldiers in other units. We were separated on our camp with little to do except train and drink. As I was settling in, I received the news that the brigade was deploying to Iraq. We felt like the ugly girl in school who just got asked to the prom by the football captain. We couldn't say "no", and our nerves were stretched.

with fear, anxiety, and giddy excitement. After a couple of months of training, we were on our way.

- We flew into Bahrain and were taken to camp Udari ~~to~~ by bus. There we did some last minute training and prepared our minds for the loss of our friends that may be killed in combat; ~~the loss of~~ the life of ~~a~~ a comrade (as we were taught) is more important than one's own. This twisted compassion mixed with fear spawned a feeling of anger that is undescribable. The anticipation and apprehension of the unknown is painfully stressing.
- ~~At Iraq~~ Al Tagaddam (sp) was the Marine air field that we ~~entered Iraq~~ landed to enter Iraq. Our battalion outpost was called Camp Habaniyah and was located near the ~~to~~ Marine Camp ~~to~~ from which we came. The first few days of the tour were easy. We did "ride-along" missions with the outgoing unit who were ~~tasked~~ a tank unit and learned the ins and outs of the land and maps of the locals. Everything was going smooth until the harsh reality of our livelihood hit us - death.
- Our first experience with death was ~~was~~ with our company medic. He was ~~was~~ a friend to

all. His ~~death~~ death not only exemplified our ~~own~~ mortality, but it magnified the worries that all of our minds were not as strong as we thought they would be. There's a ~~old~~ Military saying: "War is Hell". When a suffering soul goes to Hell, one will find torment or one will find peace. My medic found torment; I found peace.

- To me, Iraq was a desert island. It was a suicidal psychopath's haven where all of his dreams could end and be fulfilled at once in an instant of an IED's flash. As a single soldier without any dependants, life was carefree. I survived three IED blast while on the HMV's gun turret, and just thought of it as another day at work. When one feels the concussive force of an IED, one does not care about anything else in the world except if ^{self} one is dead or not. ~~It's not~~ Everyone says that I'm blessed to be alive, but after experiencing the IEDs and my medic's ~~death~~ suicide, all I could think about was: "Why did the man climb the mountain?"
- My tour wasn't the most action packed year in comparison to others that have been there. However, I feel that I've had a fair share of fire and lead come my way. With that, I'll say that I am ~~surpr~~ surprised at how combat has calloused the

the minds of fighting warriors, and, at the same time, has created a terrible, unfillable ~~void~~ sucking void inside that hardened shell. Some may not understand this; for that, they are fortunate.

- Returning to the US. was not as shocking as I thought ~~it~~ it would be. I still knew how to drive, order food, and enjoy the company of friends on leave, or at least that is what I thought. Everyone got thirty days of leave to see their family. I ~~didn't~~ have any real family, but I did have adopted parents that I love. It was hard to even come home and accept smiles and hugs from them, I didn't know how I could share my experiences with them, or even if I should. ~~I got~~ Confused, I got a room on the beach at a nice hotel and spent the time staring into the ocean while smoking marijuana and drinking ~~some~~ single malt scotch. This was my torment. This was my Hell of Heaven.

- ~~Ft. Carson was a nightmare, Colorado itself was a~~
- Colorado was ^{my} dream. It is such a beautiful place and the girls here are ~~so~~ equally as beautiful. Ft Carson was the nightmare I had to wake from. ~~After~~ ^{Before} my redeployment back to Ft. Carson, I developed a herniated disc in my back

from what I thought at first to be only ~~simple~~ simple back pain. While in Ft. Carson, I found out the hard way during PT when the disc pressed against a nerve and caused crippling pain. My unit leaders thought that I was exaggerating the pain and it took ^{over} three months to finally get an MRI test to prove my problems. During that time, I relied on unprescribed drugs to ease the pain. ~~After a surgery was finally done, I ran to Canada and abandoned my unit. They had already abandoned me.~~ ~~During~~ While all of these things were happening, I tried to kill myself a few times but failed miserably. After a surgery was finally done, I ran to Canada and abandoned my unit. I felt as if they had abandoned me.

- In those two years, political reasons for the U.S.'s involvement ^{with Iraq} were always secondary to my selfish own. I did not join with a sense of prideful duty; if I did, I would have learned that the Iraq conflict was wrong way before I enlisted. I brought myself to the Army to do what I wanted to do - that was to cast my life into the wind of the fates. The only patriotic business in Iraq is the soldier's duty to make sure that he and his battle buddy get home. Besides that, it is an immoral and illegal war without a victory for any one (especially the soldier). While many will

argue that ~~we~~ our country is in Iraq to secure our interests in natural resources, or to "liberate" the innocent people (who are also victims from both sides of the conflict), I believe that the main interest is position. Not political ~~posit~~ position, but geographical position. Though the U.S. doesn't conquer as the British empire once did, ~~its~~ its position in Iraq (if it were to establish a semi-permanent base after the ~~the~~ proverbial dust clears) would be in the center of the world. The next unpredictable "war" could be anywhere - Africa, Asia, or in the middle east again. If so, American forces would be ready in quick notice. Though the idea is very far fetched, It is my crack-pot notion that the Americans are ~~putting~~ setting themselves up for another ~~conflict~~ strife. I believe that greed and avarice ~~are~~ ^{were} second to the secret, paranoid ideals that ~~the~~ conservative leaders were harboring at the time we wrongfully invaded Iraqi soil. Position is strategically paramount in any war-present or future.

- Of all the wrong doings that the U.S. has engaged, apathy is, ~~the~~ in my opinion, the greatest of all its sins. Soldiers that come home are the most tragic casualty of war. They come home killing themselves intentionally and unintentionally (drinking and driving, drugs, ~~reckless~~ and

recklessness). They come home ~~to~~ broken families, debt, and most of all ~~to~~ ~~themselves~~ themselves. Although knowing these things, the ~~the~~ Military's efforts are still too little after seven years of foreseeing these very problems coming. I find it a damnable shame that the U.S. government has the money to fight an illegal war and not the money and ~~the~~ resources to take ~~the~~ care of the individual soldier that fights that war.

- In an overview, it is all wrong. The military's actions have given the term "total war" a whole new meaning. We are engaged in a "total war" ~~with~~ ourselves by way of political differences, ~~with~~ the individual soldier with the enemy and himself, and our future that becomes decidedly more unpredictable as our conflicts drag on.

- As I said before, human nature is unique. As it adapted in me to realize my surroundings, I am glad to know that its awesome change is never stopping. It does not make man superior, but makes a superior man.