



and

SCRANTON/LACY FILMS

Present

the war tapes



Directed by
Deborah Scranton

Produced by
Robert May & Steve James

A SenArt Films Production
and Scranton/Lacy Films Production

www.thewartapes.com

Running Time: 97 minutes

Producer Contact:

SenArt Films
Robert May
Allyson Bari
(212) 406-9610
rmay@senartfilms.com
abari@senartfilms.com

Press Contact:

SenArt Films
Anastasia Kousakis
(212) 406-9610
akousakis@senartfilms.com

THE WAR TAPES

Table of Contents

Synopsis	pg. 3
About the Film	pg. 4
Director's Statement	pg. 6
Filmmakers FAQ	pg. 7
Main Credits	pg. 9
Filmmaker Bios	pg. 10
Soldier Bios	pg. 12
Military Terms	pg. 15
Quotes from the Film	pg. 16

PRESS NOTE:

THE WAR TAPES was a uniquely collaborative movie made with Director Deborah Scranton and a team that includes Producer Robert May (THE FOG OF WAR) and Producer/Editor Steve James (HOOP DREAMS). The filmmakers request that all three filmmakers be considered for interviews and that all three be mentioned in press coverage and reviews.

THE WAR TAPES

Synopsis

Straight from the front lines in Iraq, THE WAR TAPES is the first war movie filmed by soldiers themselves.

This is Operation Iraqi Freedom as filmed by Sergeant Steve Pink, Sergeant Zack Bazzi and Specialist Mike Moriarty. Steve is a wisecracking carpenter who aspires to be a writer. Zack is a Lebanese-American university student who loves to travel and is fluent in Arabic. Mike is a father who seeks honor and redemption. Each leaves a woman behind – a girlfriend, a mother and a wife. Through their candid footage, these men open their hearts and take us on an unforgettable journey, capturing camaraderie and humor along with the brutal and terrifying experiences they face.

The film, directed by Deborah Scranton, and produced by Robert May and Steve James, recently won the award for Best Documentary at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival.

THE WAR TAPES

About the Film

In March 2004, just as the insurgent movement strengthened, several members of one National Guard unit arrived in Iraq, with cameras.

THE WAR TAPES is the movie they made with Director Deborah Scranton and a team that includes Producer Robert May (THE FOG OF WAR) and Producer/Editor Steve James (HOOP DREAMS). Scranton worked with the guardsmen from her farm house in New Hampshire, guiding their filming through instant messaging and email. It's the first war movie directly filmed by soldiers themselves on the front lines in Iraq.

This is first person war. This is the story of Operation Iraqi Freedom through the eyes of SGT Zack Bazzi, SGT Steve Pink, and SPC Mike Moriarty. Zack is a Lebanese-American university student who loves politics and traveling. Steve is a young carpenter with an incredible sense of humor, who signed up for college money and lives a double life as a tough jock and poetic writer. Mike is a father of two who is wracked by desire for honor and redemption. All of them leave women at home – a mother, a girlfriend, and a wife.

This is not reality TV, and it's not mainstream media war coverage. This is real war. You can feel the difference from the first frame of The War Tapes.

The War Tapes is filmed by citizen soldiers telling their own stories, and it captures the everyday aspects of war in a way only a soldier could communicate.. During the bloody April uprising, the soldiers have an argument about what kind of meat a severed limb most resembles. Before the second siege of Fallujah, Steve gets an "adult" magazine from his girlfriend with all the heads of the models replaced by her head.

The unit, Charlie Company, 3rd of the 172nd Infantry (MOUNTAIN) Regiment, was based at LSA Anaconda in the deadly Sunni Triangle, under constant threat of ambush and deadly IED attacks. They traveled, as a unit, 1.4 million miles during their tour, and lived through over twelve hundred combat operations and two hundred and fifty direct enemy engagements. That's almost one a day.

The soldiers were not picked by casting agents or movie producers. They selected themselves. One hundred and eighty soldiers in Charlie Company were given the opportunity – 10 chose to take it on, choosing to open up their hearts, their midnight thoughts and fears, sharing their eyes with America, aware they did not know where this experiment in citizen-soldier, citizen journalism would take them. The families and girlfriends and mothers also signed on. The War Tapes – like any true story about war – is not just about life inside the war, but the life left at home, and the always difficult and sometimes beautiful way the relationships develop and change.

In part, the internet made this film possible. Through instant messaging and email, the soldiers would talk to Deborah about how best to tell the story, THEIR story.

It took approximately two weeks for tapes to get from Iraq to the US. Five soldiers filmed their entire year's deployment with one-chip Sony miniDV video cameras. They mounted tripods on gun turrets, inside dashboards and used POV mounts on their kevlar helmets and vests. They filmed all of the footage in Iraq, over 800 hours of tape. They became cameramen and journalists and did it together.

THE WAR TAPES

About the Film – continued

As Deborah says, “it was like we were sitting around a virtual campfire chatting on IM together in the middle of the night - this film is not about the internet, but it could never have happened without it.” It shows how the intimate power of the internet can help communicate the overwhelming power of war in a way never seen before.

Producer Robert May continues, “These soldiers were doubly courageous – as soldiers at war, and as ‘citizen journalists’ willing to share that experience in an honest, powerful and personal way.” Back home, the filmmaking team shot an additional 200 hours of tape documenting the impact on the soldiers’ families, both during deployment and after the soldiers returned home.

Finally, the prodigious task of distilling over 1,000 hours of tape into the finished 97 minute film took an entire year. Says producer and editor Steve James, “We had to figure out how to preserve the complexity and rawness of their experience in the course of telling their story – a story we truly believe has not been told before.”

The War Tapes is not a political film in the usual sense: but in honestly bearing witness to these soldiers’ experience, it reveals their politics and opinions candidly, whether they support or oppose their mission. The War Tapes is magical, heartbreaking, and completely unique – a modern Iliad and Odyssey that can bring millions of Americans an experience we have not had – the experience of war, and the experience of homecoming.

THE WAR TAPES

Director's Statement

We all have pivotal defining moments in our lives. For me, one of those was stumbling across James Agee and Walker Evan's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Agee's philosophy of "living journalism," of getting close enough to hurt, of investing to the core of your being in the lives of those you are documenting, became my mantra. To get their stories, you have to give of yourself – confront the wall of "objectivity" and smash through it. It's about being human first, a journalist and filmmaker second. And it is only when we are human beings first that we approach truth.

February 12, 2004, I got an offer from the New Hampshire National Guard to embed as a filmmaker. I called the public affairs officer and asked if I could give cameras to the soldiers instead. He said yes...but it would be up to me to get soldiers to volunteer to work on the project.

Less than two weeks later I was on a plane down to Fort Dix, NJ. I stepped out in front of those 180 men and told them of my vision. I was met with a hailstorm of questions.

Are you for the war,
Are you against the war,
What are your politics,
How are you going to take and twist our words,
What do you want us to film,
Why should we believe you....

At the heart of their questions was - why should we trust you with our experiences? My reply was, we would do this together. We would tell the story, their story, wherever it took us, no matter what. Ten soldiers volunteered – five soldiers, Zack Bazzi, Mike Moriarty, Steve Pink, Duncan Domey and Brandon Wilkins would end up filming the entire year.

Each was given a one-chip Sony miniDV camera, tripod, microphone, various lenses and piles of blank tape, as well as my instant message handle. The tapes on average took two weeks to get from Iraq to New Hampshire. In the meantime, the soldiers uploaded quicktime files of scenes, explosions and ambushes. We chatted on IM about what had happened, together refining how best to tell the story. The experience was a mesh of interplays of present, future, perspective and reverberating memories. We filmed events in real time. We conducted interviews 24 hours later. These interviews were followed by more interviews months after incidents. This became a mutual journey.

I believe the power of film, image and sound, lies in its ability to evoke empathy. If war negates humanity, then film – maybe especially film that shows war from the inside – can ensure that even when we fight, we hold on to and bear witness to our humanity. We found a way in this film to smash through that wall. We found the possibility of empathy in the middle of war.

THE WAR TAPES

FAQ with the Filmmakers

How did this filmmaking team come together to make the film?

Robert May (Producer): I met Deborah and Chuck Lacy at the Sundance Producers Conference where I told them I wasn't looking to produce another documentary as we had a number of narrative projects in development. Then I heard the concept and saw some initial footage. I was impressed and excited by Deborah's idea to give cameras to the soldiers. She had met Chuck in a writing class at Dartmouth, and they knew they had something potentially remarkable on their hands. Our first big challenge was securing the best editor possible for such a massive project. That's when I called Steve James. I couldn't imagine a better character-based narrative documentary director/editor. We'd worked together on STEVIE, and although Steve initially told us he didn't want to edit a project he wasn't directing, when he saw the footage, he was sucked in as well. What resulted was an amazing collaboration with a wonderful team of loggers, editors and producers all totally committed to taking these soldiers' 800 hours of tape and turning them into the film we have today.

Given how controlled journalists' access to the war is, why did the military allow this film?

Deborah Scranton (Director): It has been my experience that, despite preconceptions to the contrary, many in the military want their stories told. Public Affairs Officer MAJ Greg Heilshorn of the New Hampshire National Guard contacted me with the invitation to embed. When I came back with the idea to give the soldiers cameras instead, he responded immediately. Of course, we had to ensure that cameras would not interfere or endanger soldiers during missions, but the New Hampshire National Guard was supportive throughout our process. On our blog, MAJ Heilshorn describes his job as "to tell the story of our citizen-soldiers." About the project, he writes, "Charlie Company took a monstrous leap of faith by committing to the project. We had no idea how it would turn out. The soldiers who stuck with it demonstrated the same unflinching approach to their filming as they showed in their daily infantry missions. As the public affairs officer, I could not ask for anything more than that. They gave us an honest portrayal of the citizen-soldier through his own eyes."

Was any footage censored or denied to the filmmakers?

Steve James (Producer & Editor): The only footage denied us was the footage that Steve Pink tells us about in the film – the video he shot of the dead insurgents after the firefight was kept by their commander in Iraq. That's pretty amazing when you think about all that got into this film. We knew this scene would raise other questions about censorship and the film, but felt it was important to include it for several reasons: First, Steve's account reveals some of the contradictions soldiers experience in war, where they are asked to be a "killing machine" in battle and sensitive and humane afterwards. Secondly, Steve courageously reveals how profoundly he's been impacted by the horrors he has witnessed and experienced during the deployment. It's why we decided to put in digital photos of dead insurgents. We debated among ourselves about how little or much viewers should see, but firmly believe that we needed to stand by Steve's intention of showing the horrors of war.

Were there other soldiers in the footage whose stories you had but left out?

Robert May: There were absolutely other soldiers and stories that don't appear in the finished film. We wanted to tell a compelling, cohesive story – to focus on just a few soldiers so that, most importantly, audiences will truly get to know the soldiers seen in the film. After watching this film,

we want people who don't know soldiers in their personal lives to feel as if they know Zack, Mike and Steve. And to accomplish that, we all had to cut scenes and characters that we loved.

Chuck Lacy (Executive Producer): However, on our website, we now have the opportunity to showcase great footage that didn't make it to the final cut. We have Mike's visit to a storeroom full of Saddam's treasures, soldiers burning a dead cow on the side of the road, a hilarious definition of a "REMF." We also plan on releasing a companion DVD that will feature more with our main characters along with other characters who have their own fascinating stories.

How did you distill 1,000 hours of footage into a 97 minute film?

Steve James: It's never easy, especially with such provocative and compelling footage. For me, the subjects of your film are always the most important. The film needs to tell their personal stories set against the larger backdrop, not the other way around. Deborah was on the "front lines" with the guys, so she would often alert us to compelling material headed our way. Our loggers, co-producer Adam Singer and associate editor Aaron Wickenden also made great discoveries in the footage, alerting me and fellow editor, Leslie Simmer. We spent an entire year editing this film – challenging each other's assumptions, arguing passionately, rearranging sequences, trying different openings and endings. Late in the process Chuck Lacy and especially Robert May and co-producer Lauren Timmons played key roles in helping us to get the film down to 97 minutes. If the story we ended up with works, it should seem obvious and self-evident. But, believe me, it was anything but.

What's the point of view of the film? Are the filmmakers for or against the war?

Deborah Scranton: For me the point of view of the film was always about the soldiers' point of view. From the beginning, I promised them that we would tell the story, their story, wherever it took us, no matter what. And I promised them we would not twist their words. What I was interested in was their interpretive framework, to get as close to the experience of war as possible, to climb inside and feel it all around. By giving the soldiers the power to press record on those cameras in Iraq, we were able to move one degree closer to the essence of what it is like. They did an amazing job of it. Finally, as for the politics of the film, our film is passionately political in that: soldiers think. They're in Iraq to carry out a mission, but they have political beliefs just like the rest of us, and they were constantly processing, questioning and debating.

Robert May: For me, it was extremely important that this film *not* make one political argument. The power of our footage was the personal stories, the chance to experience three men's very personal footage of their year in Iraq. To interject the political views of the filmmakers would have destroyed this unique opportunity to see what these soldiers saw, and to hear what *they* think. However, I do think that the film is organically political.

Steve James: In many ways, Mike, Zack and Steve each embody a lot of the contradictions and conflicts that America struggles with about this war, with one important difference: they're fighting it too. Similarly, the filmmakers had differing feelings about the war and we struggled to make sure that the film remained true to the tensions we felt as well. This film is political in the fullest sense, not polemical. We do not avoid or soft pedal our subjects' feelings and differences. We embrace them. There's a lot to learn from this film, whatever your political orientation.

**A SenArt Films Production
and Scranton/Lacy Films Production**

THE WAR TAPES

Soldiers with Cameras

Zack Bazzi

Michael Moriarty

Stephen Pink

And

Duncan Domey

Brandon Wilkins

Directed By

Deborah Scranton

Produced By

Robert May

Steve James

Executive Producer

Chuck Lacy

Co-Executive Producer

Dal LaMagna

Co-Producers

Lauren Timmons

Adam D. Singer

Edited by

Steve James

Leslie Simmer

Associate Editor

Aaron Wickenden

Composer

Norman Arnold

Music Supervisor

Tracy McKnight

THE WAR TAPES

The Filmmakers

Deborah Scranton / Director

First time feature film director, single mother, and former U.S. ski team member Deborah Scranton lives on her farm in the mountains of New Hampshire with her six-year old son Benjamin.

THE WAR TAPES grew out of her locally acclaimed WWII television documentary, STORIES FROM SILENCE, WITNESS TO WAR – and her own commitment to using new technologies to give people the power to create their own media, and to tell their own stories. Declining an offer from the New Hampshire National Guard to embed herself in Iraq, she instead gave the soldiers cameras and trained them as cinematographers. She directed THE WAR TAPES using near-perpetual instant messaging and email to answer questions, share techniques, and explore stories with the soldiers as they filmed their very personal experiences.

Scranton and Executive Producer Chuck Lacy co-founded Scranton/Lacy Films, LLC to produce THE WAR TAPES and other films about everyday Americans telling stories.

Previously, Scranton spent 15 years working as a special assignment television reporter and freelance producer at MTV, ESPN, CBS Sports and the ABC and FOX affiliates in Salt Lake City, Utah. She graduated from Brown University with a degree in Semiotics.

Robert May / Producer

Robert May was Executive Producer of Errol Morris' Oscar® winning film THE FOG OF WAR: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara (acquired by Sony Pictures Classics), which premiered at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival. THE FOG OF WAR has also won numerous awards for Best Documentary including: The National Board of Review, the Chicago Film Critics, the Los Angeles Film Critics, the Washington D.C. Area Film Critics and the Independent Spirit Award.

May produced THE STATION AGENT (Miramax Films) with director Tom McCarthy. The film won the Audience Award, The Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award and an Acting Award for Patricia Clarkson at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival. Appearing on over 60 Critics Top Ten Lists, THE STATION AGENT tied MYSTIC RIVER for the most Screen Actors Guild award nominations, was nominated for a WGA, and won a BAFTA for Best Original Screenplay.

May also executive produced STEVIE (Lions Gate Films), a critically-acclaimed documentary by Oscar® nominated HOOP DREAMS director Steve James. STEVIE won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2002 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and the Excellence in Cinematography Award at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival.

May's most recent production is BONNEVILLE, a film starring Jessica Lange, Kathy Bates, Joan Allen and Tom Skerritt. Currently in post-production, BONNEVILLE is the story of a woman and her two best friends on a reluctant road trip that becomes the ride of their lives.

May formed SenArt Films in August of 2000. Prior to the formation of SenArt, May was President of a nationally recognized security firm.

THE WAR TAPES

The Filmmakers – continued

Steve James / Editor / Producer

Steve James is the award-winning director, producer, and co-editor of HOOP DREAMS, which won every major documentary prize in 1995, including the Peabody and Kennedy Journalism Awards. James was nominated for an Academy Award in Editing, the only time a documentary has received a nomination in any category other than “Best Documentary.” Recently, HOOP DREAMS was named to the Library of Congress’s National Film Registry, signifying its enduring importance to the history of American Film.

James’ next documentary, STEVIE, won major festival awards at Sundance, Amsterdam, Yamagata and Philadelphia, was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award and landed on more than a dozen “Top Ten Films of the Year” lists for 2003. James was also an executive producer, story director, and co-editor of highly acclaimed PBS series, THE NEW AMERICANS, winner of two Chicago International Television Festival Golden Hugos, a Christopher Award, and the prestigious 2004 International Documentary Association Award for Best Limited Series for Television.

James’ dramatic films include the feature PREFONTAINE, which premiered at Sundance, the TNT movie PASSING GLORY (1999), and JOE AND MAX (2002), which premiered on Starz and was nominated for an ESPN Espy Award. James’s newest documentary is REEL PARADISE, on former “indie film guru” John Pierson, who took his family to Fiji for a year to run the world’s most remote movie theater. REEL PARADISE was James fourth film to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival.

Chuck Lacy / Executive Producer

Chuck Lacy is co-founder of Scranton/Lacy Films, LLC and an experienced entrepreneur and historian. Currently, Lacy is the President of the Barred Rock Fund, a venture capital fund he founded in 2000. He is the former President of Ben & Jerry’s.

This is the first major project for the Scranton/Lacy partnership. He and Deborah Scranton started Scranton/Lacy Films, LLC to make films about everyday people in New England. His other current interests as Partner or Director include: Gonofone Inc., founder of GrammenPhone, the largest wireless phone company in Bangladesh; Bakewell Reproduction Center, breeder and marketer of the world’s best cattle for grass-fed beef production; Hardwick Beef, the largest distributor of grass-fed beef in the Northeast, Guayaki Yerbe Mate, tea produced in Paraguay for the American market; Vermont Mystic Pie Company; and others. He has Undergraduate and Graduate degrees from Amherst College and Cornell University, respectively, and is currently a graduate student at Dartmouth College.

THE WAR TAPES

Soldiers with Cameras

SERGEANT STEPHEN PINK, 24, was born and raised in Kingston, Massachusetts. He went to BC High in Boston, and got his BA in English from Plymouth State College, where he wrote for the school paper. He joined the military to help pay for college. Here are excerpts from an email he sent Deborah just after deployment.

I joined the National Guard during my second year in College at Plymouth State, because of money. If it weren't for the National Guard, I wouldn't have been able to finish school, so in that lies my allegiance to the New Hampshire NG.

While at Plymouth I worked as a ski instructor at Tenney and Waterville Mountains, and hiked all around: the Lafayette loop and Presidential range are some of my favorites. I ski Tuckerman's every year.

After college, I briefly worked for a local paper in MA. I moved to Cape Cod to take care of my grandmother's house, working as a subcontractor framing houses. You can't beat fishing the canal and living less than a mile from the beach. Although I believe I will end up teaching someday, right now building houses outside satisfies me and is more beneficial, financially. I write and keep a journal regularly. I read a lot of Bukowski, Tom Robbins, Vonnegut.

My girlfriend Lindsay was finishing her last year at Plymouth when I left. She wasn't expecting the deployment but is being strong nonetheless.

Hopefully I will perform well as one of your cameramen and after viewing my footage, please send criticisms. Time is up at the computer lab. 1 tape done. Thanks for the labeling recommendations, otherwise you would have been in "editing Hell"

Best of Luck, SGT Stephen Pink

SPECIALIST MIKE MORIARTY is a Harley-Davidson mechanic who lives with his family in Windsor, New Hampshire, population 201. He is married with a 4 year-old son and a 1 year-old daughter. Here are excerpts from an email he sent to Deborah on February 29, 2004.

I am very excited about getting the story to you from our eyes in the real world fashion you are looking for. Thank you so much for providing us with this opportunity to document our experiences for the sake of history.

I am 35 years old, born in Beverly Ma on Dec 1 1969. I joined the Army in 1988 as a Combat Engineer and entered the NG with the 101st Engineers in Ma.

In the process of growing older and having come so close to being deployed during the first Gulf war I reached my 34th birthday and could not stand to see another soldier die without being able to do my part. I made the decision along with the amazing love and support of my beautiful wife that I was going to reenlist and volunteer to deploy to Iraq. After thoroughly searching for a unit whose mission was applicable to my military skills I learned that the 3/172nd Mountain Infantry was activated for duty serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. I immediately contacted the unit and became a member that week.

THE WAR TAPES

Soldiers with Cameras – continued

All of this is motivated by the common cause of defending our great country and the freedoms that we as Americans live by. It is something I absolutely have to do to ensure the future safety of my 2 perfect children. I love them more than life itself.

On September 11th 2001 I was a changed man. This I will NOT EVER forget. I appreciate my parents. I appreciate my health. I appreciate what I do have. I appreciate every single soldier who has done what I'm about to do. I hope to relieve a soldier who can go home and enjoy life with his wife and children. Whoever he will be, he is my hero.

I will write again soon, Mike Moriarty

SERGEANT ZACK BAZZI is a University of New Hampshire student studying International Affairs and Psychology and a Lebanese-born American who escaped from the Lebanon Civil War with his family at age 8. Bazzi joined the military to travel and see the world, and has been deployed overseas twice before – in Bosnia and Kosovo with the 101st Airborne. Here are excerpts from an email he sent to Deborah on March 3, 2004.

My original name is Zaher Bazzi. I was born in Lebanon, where I spent the first few years of my life. My family immigrated to the US when I was 8 years of age. My mother and I moved to Watertown, MA where I attended middle school then high school. After a mediocre high school career, I joined the Army in 1997. After the completion of Basic Training, I was assigned to the one and only 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

After four great years in the Army, I decided to get out and go to school. I traveled around for a while, and then I lived in Chicago with an Army friend of mine, but eventually ended up back home in Watertown. I worked as a security guard until I got accepted at The University of New Hampshire. I began my current tenure at UNH in the fall of 02. It was then that I found out about C co. Not long afterwards, I decided to join the NH guard and was assigned as a team leader in C co. One year or 12 drills later, we received activation orders to go to Iraq.

I see this deployment as another part of my job and not as this super patriotic struggle to protect “our freedom and our way of life.” Being a soldier is a fundamental part of my identity. It is something that I love and enjoy doing. Being deployed to go to war that is being questioned back home does not affect my passion for the job. I will do my professional duty regardless of the political context or my personal feelings on the matter.

For hobbies, I enjoy running, working out, hiking and camping and reading a good book. My greatest passion is traveling. I spent last summer in Quebec, Canada where I was able to do a good amount of hiking, canoeing, biking and the highest bungee jump in North America-very fun. For books, my preferred genres are History and Biographies. I recently finished The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt by Edmund Morris--good read.

Upon my return, I will take some time off and travel and maybe take a couple of odd jobs just for the novel experience. Once I finish my travels, I will return once again to school at UNH and hopefully and finally graduate.

THE WAR TAPES

Non-Featured Soldiers with Cameras

These soldiers, though not featured, filmed their entire deployment and their footage plays a crucial role in the film.

SERGEANT DUNCAN DOMEY, 32, grew up in the Netherlands with a Dutch mother and American father. He came to the US when he was 18 and was deployed to Afghanistan after 9/11. Here are excerpts of an email he sent to Deborah March 2, 2004.

From: Currently Londonderry, but moved there in Sept. Before that 3 years at Ft Drum NY in the 10th Mountain Div (active duty).

Family: My father piloted B-52's and Vulcan's in the USAF, leading him to Europe. He was out of the service when he met my mother over there.

Sports: Target/Tactical Shooting, hiking, skiing

Read/Think: Military history, the Economist, fantasy/sci-fi

After 9/11: By the end of September we were in Uzbekistan guarding K2 airfield while the Special Forces did their now infamous housecleaning in Afghanistan. My old unit, and the guys from my squad are now back in Afghanistan for a second rotation. When I found out they were going I tried to extend my contract, but was refused. So now I get an all expenses paid trip to Iraq with the National Guard instead. I feel like I am on a grand tour of the Muslim part of the world. When not in the guard, I was working on a graduate degree from Texas A&M (online) in Advanced International Affairs.

SPECIALIST BRANDON WILKINS shot some of the most dramatic combat footage in THE WAR TAPES. He had just turned his camera on when his squad was attacked by insurgents in Fallujah, capturing the extreme chaos of the moment. He is from Brunswick Maine. These are excerpts from an email he sent to Deborah on the 28th of May, 2004.

So, about me. Well, I was born in Brunswick, ME on Dec. 6th, 1977. It was a blizzard the night I was born. Actually it was almost on the 7th. The doctor actually asked my mom if she didn't want to wait about 15 min, then I would be born on Pearl Harbor day. She didn't find that too amusing at the time.

I was involved in Scouting since I was 10. During high school, I was highly involved in the theater. I started out with acting. But soon after that I discovered my true love of the theater... Lighting and Tech. After high school, I joined the Army. I wasn't going to. I would never join the Army. If I joined anything, it would be the Coast Guard. But I joined the Army. The 101st. Airborne (Air Assault) Div.

When my enlistment came up, I decided that it was time to move home. I missed Maine too much. I had just finished my training at Barber Foods in Portland, ME. I got out to my Jeep, and had a message from Maj. Slaytor from the NH National Guard. I was being activated, and assigned to C Co. 3/172nd. IN (MTN). That came as a bit of a shock to me and my family. But being the tough Mainers that we are, we have all moved through this very well. The company was very good to me. I've met some life long friends in C. Company. I couldn't think of anybody else that I would rather have to go to war with.

THE WAR TAPES

Glossary of Military Terms

Charlie Company	(C Co). The unit that Moriarty, Pink & Bazzi are in. Their unit – C Company, 3 rd of the 172 nd Infantry (MOUNTAIN) Regiment is one of only four MOUNTAIN Infantry units in the entire U.S. Army.
Haji	An Arabic term of respect for someone who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Often used as slang by American soldiers to refer to all Iraqis.
Hooah	US military slang referring to or meaning anything and everything but no.
Humvee	Wide-bodied Army vehicles that replaced the jeep as the all-purpose military ground transport. Humvees have a gun turret outfitted with either/or both a .50-cal. machine gun and a MK-19 automatic grenade launcher. In a Humvee there are three assigned positions. The Gunner, the Driver and the Team Leader. Squad Leaders were in charge of three Humvees. Bazzi and Pink were team leaders. Moriarty was a gunner.
IP	Iraqi Police
IED	Improvised Explosive Device. A roadside bomb.
KBR	Kellog, Brown & Root, defense contractor, subsidiary of Halliburton.
LSA Anaconda	LSA Anaconda is one of the largest US bases in Iraq. Located near Balad, approximately 45 miles northwest of Baghdad in the Sunni Triangle. Nicknamed "Mortaritaville" because of the frequency of mortar/rocket attacks on the base.
MK19	(Mark 19). A belt-fed grenade launcher mounted on vehicles. Rapidly fires armor-piercing 40mm rounds.
MSR	Major Supply Route
Outside the wire	Outside the base.
REMF	"Rear Echelon Mother Fucker." Term for those who work "inside the wire." Often held in low regard by those who go "outside the wire."
RPG	A Russian made Rocket Propelled Grenade fired from the shoulder, used by insurgents.
SAW	Squad Automatic Weapon. A hand carried, belt fed machine gun.
TCN	Third Country National – an employee who is not a citizen of the home or host country. For example, a Turkish national working for a US company in Iraq. Many KBR convoy truck drivers are TCNs.
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device – a car bomb.
.50 CAL	Machine gun mounted on vehicles. Can poke a grapefruit-sized hole in a cinderblock wall.

THE WAR TAPES

Quotes

JOURNAL ENTRY STEVE PINK

Every once in awhile as we're driving down the road or creeping along a patrol, I have a reoccurring epiphany – this is happening and will have a lasting impact on me for the rest of my life. A debate we had earlier in the day over the consistency and texture of a severed limb was not some far off grotesque assumption. It was a genuine argument between the guy who swears it resembles hamburger, ground up but uncooked and the guy who believes it looks more like a raw pot roast. There is no argument, however, that human intestines are pink pork sausage links, if of course you imagine a butcher's block as the background instead of the screaming then soon quietly moaning casualty.

BACK HOME:

SANA BAZZI (ZACK'S MOTHER)

I love my son's name. "Zaher" means blooming. When the flower blooming in the Spring, so...He's 25, 26 years old and I still believe like he's like a little baby in my eyes.

We live civil war 20 years. I hate war. One time Militia shoot from the street at my house and the Army shoot back from my bathroom window. Zaher was a very, very little boy, and we stuck in the bathroom, four of us, and my kids just so scared. I never thought he was going to be Army man. He felt the Army give him discipline and make him man, more than raised by woman. I feel the Army's his family. I begged him not to be in National Guard. He didn't even listen. Life no sense for me anymore, because I have my shop, I have my car, I have my house, here I am, I came, I want to save these kids and I bring my kid to be in the worst place in the whole world.

LINDSAY COLETTI (PINK'S GIRLFRIEND)

In the beginning he was like, write something dirty. I couldn't write something dirty. Me and my girlfriend got like a Hustler magazine or something, and I went through the magazine and put a picture of my face over every girl's body. So I was like, you want dirty?! You've got it!

Steve just liked to laugh, just have a good time. He doesn't really like to let people in. He thinks his feelings are his problem, and he doesn't want to burden anyone else. Steve's way of getting emotions out is his writing. I don't think he really told me exactly how he felt about me until he was over there.

RANDI MORIARTY (MIKE'S WIFE)

When Mike first went over there, we just told Mathew he was going to go and beat up the bad guys. And then at day-care one day a little girl there said; "You know, people get killed over there..." It just completely freaked him out, like; "Is daddy gonna die?" And you know it was really, really hard for him.

But I'm afraid. I'm afraid for Mike. You hear the horror stories of people from Vietnam that come back. He likes to play macho sometimes like it hasn't really affected him, but I know that it has. He has seen so much.

**IN IRAQ:
THE APRIL UPRISING:
STEVE PINK'S JOURNAL**

Today was the first day I shook a man's hand that wasn't attached to his arm. I was the first one there and immediately clamped Reggie's brachial artery. I looked down and he had his hand dangling from the exposed bone that used to be his elbow like a child's safety clipped mitten dangling from their winter coat.

If I play the odds one of us will die before the tour is over. It's something that I don't like to think about.

**TAJI CAR BOMBING:
STEVE PINK'S JOURNAL**

I remember giving three IV's, bandaging several wounded. Soldiers sitting in the corner of a sandbag wall shaking, screaming. Medics who were terrified and couldn't perform. I later heard that Iraqi casualties were not to be treated in Taji. They can work on the post for pennies but can't die there. They've got to die outside. If one of those incompetent medical officers told me to stop treatment I would have slit his throat right there.

We made the news today. I feel exploited and proud at the same time...I have lost all faith in the media, a hapless joke I would much rather laugh at than become a part of. I should really thank god for saving my lucky ass. I'll do that. Then I'm gonna jerk off because these pages still smell like Lindz and there won't be any time for jerking off tomorrow. Another mission at 0600.

**THE TRANSFER OF POWER:
MIKE MORIARTY & KEVIN SHANGRAW**

MM: Iraq as a sovereign nation. What is your take on the whole thing?

KS: Well, I think it's a fantastic opportunity for the Iraqis to establish a, a new history in the country and be able to ah...be a free and democratic society, which in turn should stabilize the whole Middle East and create a freer and more stable earth as we know it.

MM: Tell me how you really feel.

KS: Then after that happens maybe we can buy everybody in the world a puppy.

**NIGHT ENGAGEMENT (AFTER TRANSFER OF POWER):
MIKE MORIARTY**

MM: Come on motherfucker! Keep going brother! You want to play?

Bowen: I think those are IP's, Mike.

MM: They're shooting at me. I don't give a fuck if they're the pope.

(The Humvee drives away).

Baril: We know you like the Army. We're tired, we're so cynical right now, man.

MM: You know I supported the mission and I support a lot of things, but I'm starting to say to myself; 'What the fuck? Shit or get off the pot! If the problem is not going away then kick it up a notch! And I don't give a fuck if that means nuking this fucking country! Meanwhile there are fucking innocent fucking US soldiers getting killed.'

**ON INSURGENTS:
ZACK BAZZI**

People say they're evil and they hate our way of life and they don't see that we are trying to liberate them. Well, if Canada invaded tomorrow and they said, you know; 'We're here to liberate you guys from Bush because we think Bush is bad for you....' There's gonna definitely be some people who take to those mountains and do some serious guerilla fighting. The insurgents got their principles and we got ours. You gotta respect that...

On a practical level when I'm on the road, it's my guys versus them. The hell with the immorality of it, I want one thing and one thing only-- combat.

**ON TRAINING IRAQI POLICE
SSG GERALD DURGIN**

I'll bet you couldn't hit a bull in the ass with a fucking barn shovel.

**IN FALLUJAH:
ZACK BAZZI**

Soldier: Can we just build a wall around the country and leave?

ZB: A wall? Let's just leave it alone and leave. Fuck the oil man. Fuck that. It's not worth it. I'll walk everywhere in the US. I'll recycle everything, damn it. I'll even drive a Honda Insight. You know one of those Hybrid thingys?

Bower: Fuck that.

ZB: See, look it-- you're the reason we always go to war, Bower. You and your little Ford F1000's. Redneck fuck!

Bower: I can't haul anything with a Honda Insight.

ZB: How often do you got to throw all 16 bags of fucking Budweiser cans out? Everybody wants safety right? "Oooh, my kids, I want 'em safe." So they buy more SUVs. Well then the

people without SUV's say; "Holy Shit, if I get hit by an SUV, my kids are going to be crushed." So, "I want safety so I'm going to buy an SUV."

Bower: Buy a Volvo if you're worried about safety.

ZB: Everybody's worried about safety.

Bower: I'm not. As long as I have a full sized truck with a frame, I'm not scared.

ZB: In fact, we're so worried about safety that's why we're here. Make sure we have safety in the US.

**IRAQI CIVILIAN ACCIDENT:
JON BARIL**

As I opened my door to get out quickly, opened up the back door to get my CLS bag, the worst thing of my life, I saw, I'm like "Oh my god." The convoy trucks barreling at 50 miles an hour. They didn't even see us pull over, coming up the line, and this woman was lying directly in their path and she was unconscious.

I remember looking down and seeing crumbled cookies. Oh god. She was carrying cookies and it was spread all over the MSR. I thought of my mother.

It will be a better country in 20 years because we were there. I hope.

**IRAQI CIVILIAN ACCIDENT:
KEVIN SHANGRAW**

I'll remember that for the rest of my life. That guy, rolling the body onto the body bag and zipping her up. The Iraqi people are who we are there to help and we just killed one of them.

**POST IRAQ
RANDI MORIARTY (MIKE'S WIFE)**

He so badly wants me to understand what he went through. I will never understand, just as he will never understand what I went through. Sometimes I feel like he doesn't live in reality. He so badly wants to be okay that he's just gonna believe that and everything will be fine. I took a vow with him for better for worse, in sickness and in health, till death do us part. I don't want to get out of that. There are days that I don't like him. Absolutely there are days that I don't like him, but I still love him. I just can't imagine my life without him. I just can't.

SANA BAZZI (ZACK'S MOM)

SB: He's not emotional like me. Especially lately. He doesn't like me to be emotional too. I think the Army has to do something with it. He was a soldier for too long and he saw a lot.

Interviewer: Do you think he'll go back to Iraq?

SB: I hope not. Just young people get killed for nothing. Nothing gonna change.

LINDSAY COLETTI (PINK'S GIRLFRIEND)

Stephen has changed a lot since he's come back from Iraq. I don't know why he says everything is fine because it's not. He can't sleep at night. He won't say it's nightmares but I know they are. He doesn't like to talk about it. I feel like he thinks if he doesn't talk about it then he'll forget about it. It's still there, and it still hurts. And I still feel it, and I wanna cry, a lot.

MIKE MORIARTY

I'm so glad I went. I hated it with a God awful passion and I will not go back. I have done my part and I feel like it's someone else's turn. My views of the war haven't changed. You've heard people say, you know, "We're over there for the oil." You know. "It's the only reason we're over there in Iraq. It's oil, it's oil, it's oil." Well listen, no. We're not there for the oil. If it *were* for oil, would that not be enough reason to go to Iraq? You bet your ass it would be! If you took oil away from this country tomorrow, what do you think would happen to this country? It would be, it would be devastating. So let's all stop crying about whether we had reason to go in there or not because we can fight about that forever. It's a done deal. We're in Iraq. Support what it takes to make this thing work, or shut-up!

STEVE PINK

Why the fuck are we there? We better get that oil, right? The US Army is not the fucking Peace Corps. The Marines are not the Peace Corps. That's not why we're in Iraq. We're in Iraq for money and oil. Look at any other war in the history of the world and tell me it's not about money. This better be about money and if we don't get that oil and that money then all the lives that are gone right now, what is it? 1800 it's at, something around there? They're all in vain. You don't put 150,000 troops from all over the country in there and say we're there to create democracy. We're there to create money, you know? We're there to make money for us, you know. Somebody other than Dick Cheney better be getting their hands on it pretty soon.

ZACK BAZZI

Most soldiers, they want to think that they're there for a good cause, something noble. You're fighting for freedom and everything that's right. It was tough, because you have to do some not so nice things sometimes. I remember one time...My platoon became attached to a different military police battalion and the order was nobody is allowed on this road. There's like a hospital on one side, a lot of people live on the other. Obviously it became very apparent that I was the one who spoke their language. This guy comes up and he's like, "I got a sick baby, can I just cross the road to go to the hospital?" We're a disciplined army, so I had to say "No." But it didn't make any tactical sense. It got to the point where I stopped translating, because the squad leader would come up to me and say "Hey, well tell this guy here that he can't take a sick baby to a hospital." Well, you know what, I'm just not gonna do that.

I love being a soldier. The only bad thing about the Army is you can't pick your war.