

OCCUPATION: DREAMLAND

The day by day story of a platoon of Airborne soldiers on duty in Falluja, Iraq.

I saw this very honest film through the eyes of one who lived, for a short time, the intimate life of soldiering.

Fifty-five years has changed none of the essential dynamics. I met again the thoughtful ones, the ambitious ones, the closed up ones, the hard-cases. I noted the changes that happen when innocence is stripped away suddenly, in a fire fight, and worn away by all that rubbing together.

I watched young men grow close in a vacuum -- the vacuum left when there is no sustaining conviction other than; "we fight to survive".

The politics? They are secondary. These young men understand they are what they are. They accept their own ignorance and powerlessness..

Each person is there for reasons having everything to do with the uncertainty of their young lives and little to do with bringing to Iraq the golden gift of democracy.

There is little illusion, a growing cynicism and an absolutely dangerous, unreasoning, thoroughly understandable hate when IEDs explode without warning and the next thing seen is smiling Iraqi faces.

I applauded when the Iraqis let the young soldiers know exactly, mano-a-mano, how they felt about the indignities they suffered during the raids on their homes.

I also applauded when some young soldiers, after months of dodging bullets, RPGs and IEDs, were still able to walk in the shoes of the occupied and understand why they, themselves, are hated.

I worried when I listened to feeble attempts to ward off the pangs of conscience by invoking the deity of duty. I know what lies ahead. I know how hard it is to achieve forgiveness of self. I know how important it is to do so. I know that it is possible.

However, these young men have not yet been challenged and know nothing of that form of combat. That battlefield lies ahead, when they come home.

I worried not only for the men, but for their families.

For all these reasons, I think this film deserves and should serve well a wide audience here at home.

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