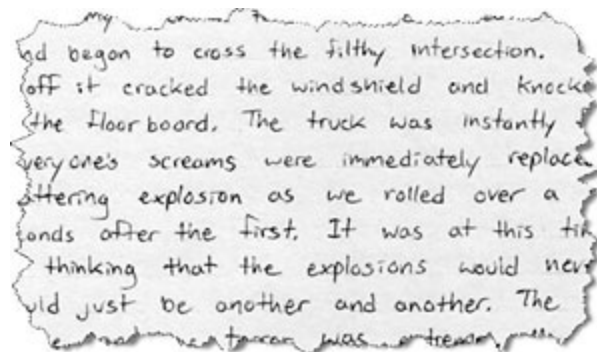


Excerpt: Jonathan Norrell's Journal

In October of 2006, I was [REDACTED] personal medic and dismount. We were the Personal Security Detachment for the executive office of the [REDACTED] squadron [REDACTED] Cavalry Regiment, [REDACTED] Infantry Division. We were the Spur Team. Our team consisted of 3 1114 Humvees with 4 personnel in each vehicle, including 1 interpreter. In the lead vehicle was Spc. [REDACTED] driving, Major [REDACTED] was Truck Commander. Spc. [REDACTED] manning the 240 in the turret, Spc. [REDACTED] was the XO's dismount, and our Terp, [REDACTED]. In the middle vehicle was Spc. [REDACTED] driving, Staff Sergeant [REDACTED] as the TC, Spc. [REDACTED] was the dismount, and Spc. [REDACTED] in the turret with the 50 cal. The rear vehicle had Spc. [REDACTED] driving, Sgt. [REDACTED] as TC, Spc. [REDACTED] as the 250 gunner, and myself, Spc. Jonathan Norrell as medic and dismount.

Our mission on this particular day was simple, command and over watch of a raid be conducted by Apache Trp, in Ahmariyah, Baghdad. Major [REDACTED] moved our patrol to the top of an overpass that overlooked a highway, and much of the surrounding area. There was only one way up this overpass and that was on the south side, the north side was blocked by debris and rubble. We went



ed began to cross the filthy intersection. off it cracked the windshield and knocked the floorboard. The truck was instantly everyone's screams were immediately replaced with a deafening explosion as we rolled over a second after the first. It was at this time I was thinking that the explosions would never end just be another and another. The sound of a tank was extremely

through on intersection at the base of the bridge and made our way out into the middle of it. From there, Maj. [REDACTED] said, we would have good com's with Alpha Troop and would have a good vantage point of the neighborhood where the raid was to take place. Since the way we came up was the only way back down, the major said he would have his gunner keep an eye on the intersection the whole time. At around 1030 hours the raid began and I listened to all of the traffic on the radio while keeping a look out my rear left window. During this time I noted that there was very little traffic on the road below us, and hardly any civilian activity in the surrounding neighborhoods.

After being on sight for about 30 minutes or so, the silence was broken suddenly by a hiss and a deafening explosion that rocked the bridge beneath our trucks. By the time we realized what had happened a few seconds later, two RPGs had been fired from a nearby rooftop and struck the side of the overpass right next to our trucks, within moments we were taking small arms fire from 4 or 5 different rooftop positions. They seemed to be focusing their fire on the doors of our truck, and our turret. Several times Spc. [REDACTED] tried in vain to reach the 240 and return fire, but there was a constant barrage of bullets hitting both the inside and outside of the turret, sending chipped glass and paint fragments raining down on us from above. It was at this time that my driver, Spc. [REDACTED] began freaking out. Screaming at the top of his lungs he threw open his door and began to get out of the vehicle. Sgt. [REDACTED] and I both grabbed and restrained Spc. [REDACTED] while the gunmen on the southeast side began focusing their fire on the now open door. This distraction allowed our gunner to reach his weapon and begin returning fire.

For a few minutes it was total chaos, orders were being shouted over the radio and bullets were still nailing the side of our truck. SSg. ██████'s vehicle moved along side ours and began returning fire as well. After another few minutes the gunfire began to die down and then cease all together. Spc. ██████ in the Major's truck said that he could see at least one dead AIF soldier and he said that another had scramble inside the building he was on top of. By this time we had Apaches flying over head for support and we were informed that Alpha troop was on its way to assist us in finding the gunman. Major ██████ then gave the order to move off the bridge, go through the intersection and head east towards where the last of the insurgents had been spotted.

With my truck in the lead we moved off of the overpass and began to cross the filthy intersection. When the first IED went off it cracked the windshield and knocked my gunner down to the floorboard. The truck was instantly filled with smoke. Everyone's screams were immediately replaced by another earth shattering explosion as we rolled over a second IED only seconds after the first. It was at this time that I remember thinking that the explosions would never end, that there would just be another and another. The air was thick with smoke and my terror was extreme. My ears were ringing so badly that I could barely hear the screams of my gunner who was lying next to me.

We managed to push the truck further out into the street and to my extraordinary relief there we no more explosions. The front right of the truck was shredded and that whole side looked like Swiss cheese. Thankfully the only injuries we sustained were minor concussions, except for Spc. ██████ who had a bad concussion and in the end was evaced to Balad for a neurology test. Alpha troop found two insurgents KIA and signs of a wounded third. Spc. ██████ the driver and Spc. ██████ the gunner, never went out on another patrol.

To this day I can still hear our screams and recall the feeling of the truck being lifted and shaken with every explosion. I'll always remember the horrible feeling that the explosions would never end and that my life was soon to be over in a flash of smoke and fire.

15 Feb 2008 Friday

In Sept. of 2006 I was a combat medic on patrol with Major ██████ personal security detachment. It was one of the hottest days of the year, and our trucks A/C was going on and off. We were all a little weary from a firefight/IED combo that had happened earlier in the day, and because we had recently lost a couple of our battle buddies from ██████. At around 1230 hrs. we pulled a local national over to search his vehicle for any weapons/devices. I was standing alone, scanning my sector, when from down the street a young girl who had to be around my age, came running up with her elderly mother. The girl spoke a little English and I a little Arabic. Between sobs and moaning I discerned that the girl was looking for her father. The mother, who was really quite hysterical by this time, was searching with her daughter for her husband. They had apparently gotten a phone call from a stranger using their man's phone, saying that he

needed help, and what street he was on. The women were begging for us to help so I walked over to the Major and told him what was going on.

He agreed to help them and moved the trucks around as Major [REDACTED], a dismount and I walked out to the main street with the two Iraqi women. They began asking passerbys if they had seen their Father. Eventually someone pointed to the other side of the street and south a ways towards a cement pillar which was lying on its side along the street. From where I was I could already see half of his body lying supine. Immediately the two women started screaming and running towards their loved one.

I started running after them with my aid bag on my back thinking that perhaps I could help the fallen man. When I got to him I knelt over him and before I could pull my aid bag off my shoulder, I knew there was no use. The women, who had been shaking and clinging to the old man on the ground, now turned to me and began pleading with me to help him. The young girl, who was really quite beautiful, face though distorted with pain, started grabbing me and shaking me before finally collapsing in my arms as she begged me to save her father. Her mother thought I was some kind of doctor or holy man and pleaded with outstretched arms to save her husband.

By this time Major [REDACTED] had caught up with us and he asked me, he actually asked me, if there was anything I could do for the old man. The man on the ground had been shot in the mouth and fact at least 8 or 9 times. There was absolutely nothing I could do for him. I tried to console the women who were shouting and tearing at their clothing wildly in a language I didn't understand. It was around this time that the Major ordered me to retrieve one of the body bags out of the back of the truck because we couldn't just leave the man out on the street. Our terp had walked up then and began asking bystanders on the street if they had seen what had taken place. Apparently a couple of young men tired to force the old man into their car and he refused. I had to hold the back of his head together as I lifted him into the plastic body bag to keep his brains from falling out onto the ground in front of his family. As we were getting ready to head back to the FOB, the young girl began asking questions. Her father was a local teacher and he was an Atheist.

The old man was neither Sunni, nor Shiite, and they killed him anyway. The girl grabbed me then and began asking where we were at, when the AIF soldiers shot her father, and why we were unable to help him. Before I zipped up his new bag, I closed his eyes forever.

Meaning of Trauma

I have realized that I have been focusing on all the traumatic experiences from Iraq and not thinking enough about the good things that I did.

I realized now that perhaps the young woman whose father had been killed will someday realize that I was trying to help and console her and her grieving mother while also showing their father's remains respect. I did my best in that situation to be a good man, as well as every situation I found myself in.

Around the same time in the deployment we were conducting a dismounted patrol through a crummy ramshackle village and while I was handing out some candy to the filthy children I noticed an Iraqi child who was only 4 or 5 and had an obvious mental handicap with a cut on the side of his foot that was crammed with dirt. I spoke with the boys father and was invited into his families home. While one of the TC's stood watch, I cleaned the boys wound and left his family with bacitracin and bandages.

I think now that the meaning is this: even though I was witness to many atrocities and my mind has been broken, that I still am a good person who gave 100% when helping casualties of war. Most meaningful I've realized is that life goes on, I can use these experiences to better myself, and perhaps teach and help others down the road.

I found myself still trying to be a medic. I still want to help people. I don't know if I could ever work as a medic again because of the way I react to the trauma now, but I know that for the rest of my life that whenever I see someone hurt or in need of assistance I will stop and do all I can.

I did my job well in Iraq and was calm and collected throughout the whole deployment. Not until I was back here for a few months that I started having problems with stress and anxiety. Now almost a year and a half later I have become more accustomed to it. Some people have called me a coward or a killer, there was a time when I would flip out over such an insult, but I know what I did. I will always remember how hard we fought, and how I tried to save every casualty regardless of race, religion or color. I'm through being sorry for myself for being who I have become, I know now that I am better than that. Here is a quote from T. Roosevelt that really put things in perspective for me:

“The credit belongs to those people who are actually in the arena... who know the great enthusiasms, the great devotions to a worthy cause; who at best, know the triumph of high achievement; and who, at worst, fail while daring greatly, so that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory, nor defeat.”