

Joseph Brese  
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Composition II

### “A War Story”

In August of 2003, I got off of a plain in Kuwait as a part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. When September 11<sup>th</sup> happened, we got the call to war, but it took two years to get there. Me and all of my buddies spent a lot of time talking about it and imagining what it was going to be like. We trained day and night, and when we wasn't training, we were drinking and having a good time. We didn't ever think that the time would come; but it did. We were all scared, but we refused to show it, and then we got on the plane. Once we were in Kuwait, we set up our forward operating base, and there we stayed for 2 or 3 months or so. Once again, we were back to waiting.

My unit was an infantry unit, so before this we trained hard, and we partied hard. Now we were the tip of the spear pushing into Iraq. At this time, it wasn't hard getting through, what we later knew as the Sunni Triangle, until we got into Tikrit. Our orders were to take Tikrit, and we did.

The first day of the assault was probably the longest day of my life. We pushed in, and my unit started taking alleys on the outskirts of the city first. We fought through what seemed like endless streets, and people were everywhere. It was hard to tell who was who, even after the shooting started. We came to the edge of a building, and I turned and took a knee to watch our six. The fighting had almost entirely been in the front up to that point. I saw a couple of people run by in the street that we had just came from, so I was watching. Nervously watching. A door in the alley swung open about 15 meters from me, and a man ran out, and I shot him.

I was 20 years old when I killed my first man, and I don't think it ever even registered. I haven't even thought about it in a very long time. Many more followed him; I went on and received a Bronze Star with Valor for a 24 hour firefight in a police station, two Purple Hearts, and a bunch of lesser medals. I was in the Army until November 2011, and I am now medically retired.