

# Registry Report

a bimonthly e-newsletter

*Stoicus communitas*  
*Stoikos koinonia*

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**SEP/OCT 2007**

**Issue #3**

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CONTENTS:

- The News
- Archives Activity
- Spotlight
- The Porch

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## THE NEWS

[Note: if you change your e-mail address, contact [cyberstoic@aol.com](mailto:cyberstoic@aol.com) to continue getting the newsletter.]

- Many thanks to Dr. William O. Stephens and the Rev. Dr. James Rigby for finding the right ancient Greek word for community. As you may have noticed in the subheading above, the Registry Report “motto” now reaches back to our earliest origins. I thought if I asked an academic scholar and a Biblical scholar for assistance I could expect some help in finding the most appropriate Greek word for our community. Independently, both men e-mailed the word, “koinonia.”

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## ARCHIVES ACTIVITY

[Note: if you change your e-mail address and/or life status, contact [cyberstoic@aol.com](mailto:cyberstoic@aol.com) to keep your Stoic Registry Archive entry current.]

- Steve Marquis has been a member of the Stoic Registry for many years but wanted to update his Archive information. The following is what he provided:

STEVE MARQUIS (1958- ) is a structural engineer for new homes living in the California foothills east of Sacramento with his wife and daughter. He said, "I have been applying Stoic principles in my life for about 10 years now and find Stoicism to embody the most effective combination of empiricism, psychology, and spirituality to the task of living well and being a complete human being."

### New Entries

- ARTHUR KELDERMAN (1977- ). Arthur lives in the Netherlands and has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. He said, "Some ideas of Stoic philosophy were already present when I started and came natural. Other concepts added interesting new views. There is not a day that I do not read, learn, or think about the Stoa." Arthur indicated he was "very interested in getting to know other Stoics, share ideas and learn from each other."
- R. KEVIN HILL, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Portland State University

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## SPOTLIGHT

### On a Contemporary Stoic

Camp Victory, Baghdad, Iraq. **Jonathon Nagel** is a US Army Sergeant in a camp next to the Green Zone where it's 122 degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime and 106 degrees at night. Heavy mortar shelling pretty much every day. Occasionally he has to drop and duck for cover as they whiz right past his ear. They don't sound like they do in the movies, he says. Jonathon is with Reserve Unit 324 MP Detachment, military police, attached to TF 134 Multi-National Force, Iraq. He is a member of an assessment team that tracks every detainee in custody in Iraq and reports directly to General Petraeus, the 4-star General in command of all military operations. He's not allowed to discuss his job in any detail. Jonathon has been there for about a year.

He was born the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 1983, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. His father is employed in the trucking industry, and the Nagel family moved around the Midwest several times as his dad worked his way up from the loading docks to Vice President of International Sales and Marketing for Vitran Express. Now, when he is not at war, Jonathon lives in Indianapolis, Indiana. He has two older brothers – one is a pitcher for the Red Sox farm team in Indianapolis and the other is also in the Army, but stationed stateside. Jonathon graduated from Indiana University, Indianapolis, where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy. When he completes his tour of duty in Iraq, he plans to take a direct commission as a Second Lieutenant and attend Indiana University law school in the Fall of 2008.

Jonathon said, "I am married to a very wonderful woman who has been more supportive than I could have ever hoped. We have been married for 15 months and I have been gone for 13 of it! She is the light of my life! Believe it or not, this deployment has made my wife and I closer than ever. We talk often and know that if we can make it through this deployment so early in our marriage, then we can make it through anything!"

When he is not on duty, he reads a lot, and he works out every day. Jonathon said, "I must tell you, running at 1:00 in the morning when its still 106 degrees outside is terrible! But my thoughts are: sound mind, sound body. I usually keep myself busy with reading various philosophical and historical works. But recently I have been preparing for the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) I am taking in December. When at home, on top of the above mentioned activities, I love to go shooting at the ranges with my unit, and I even bring my wife along to a private range and fire off a few rounds. I find it very therapeutic."

### **The Interview**

ERIK: Before I begin the interview, I should remind you that I don't know what questions are OK and what are not. So, I'm going to have to rely on you to keep me out of areas where I don't belong. That being said, is "Detainee Operations" Army speak for working with Prisoners of War (POWs)? Do you have POWs in this war? Do you ever work with local police on general criminal matters; or, are your detained people only suspected terrorists and their sympathizers?

JONATHON: In relation to POWs... in this war we have taken only one true POW. The rest we call Civilian Internees (CIs). The distinction being that POWs are *uniformed* fighting men fighting for a recognized country. CIs wear no uniform and fight for no recognized country. I have had very limited interaction with the Iraqi Police (IPs). My main area of responsibility is gathering the data coming in from the different camps around Iraq, organizing it, and putting it all together and sending the finished reports to the Pentagon and Gen. Petraeus. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you the nature of the crimes of the people we detain. It's classified. Sorry.

ERIK: OK. From what I've read about Commanding General Petraeus, it appears he is very bright, intensely ambitious and focused. He doesn't appear to have the usual doubts and uncertainties of normal human beings. Do you actually interact with General Petraeus? When you say you report directly to him, what does that mean? Who reports to the General?

JONATHON: Gen. P, as we call him around the office, is indeed a very focused individual. I have had the pleasure of sitting in on a few teleconference meetings and every time I hear the man speak I am in awe of his grasp of the situation here in Iraq. You may be right, he may not be entirely human. Maybe the Army has finally developed AI [artificial intelligence]? Ha, ha. Anyway, being an enlisted man I do not often get to speak directly to Gen. P. I have had to brief him on certain issues dealing with detainee affairs, but these are in extreme cases when our unit commander is off duty, and it's a last minute thing. We have our own Major General (2 stars) who reports to Gen. P. My section briefs our General and he briefs it up the chain of command.

ERIK: Here's a really sticky question. As you may be aware, the House of Representatives recently voted in favor of pulling most combat troops out of Iraq by April of next year. If the Senate comes up with a similar bill, Bush will veto it of course, but the question I need to ask is: Does this political maneuvering back home personally affect you at all — emotionally, intellectually, glad, sad, angry, indifferent? Then, I want to expand the question to get your assessment of how your comrades feel: Do you hear any strong opinions voiced around you about this kind of Congressional activity?

JONATHON: Our mission here in Iraq is not finished. Like the Spartans of old we are taught to never accept defeat. In fact, in the Army, its part of our creed. The warrior's ethos: I will always place the mission first, I will never accept defeat, I will never quit, I will never leave a fallen comrade. The members of Congress place their own careers and politics above the mission in Iraq. If we leave now we are accepting defeat, we are in essence quitting before the mission is done, and we are leaving our fallen comrades, the Iraqis, to civil war and infiltration from Iran and Syria. As you can see, a pullout now is contrary to *everything* we are taught to believe in the Army. I think its time to let the military fight this war and not the politicians. But again that is just my opinion and not that of the Army. I cannot stress that enough!

ERIK: OK. I'll make a note of it in the newsletter. Now, I'd like to see your world from a different perspective. It seems that all we ever hear and all we can imagine is that where you are and what you are doing is rather unpleasant. Is there anything pleasant about your life in Iraq right now?

JONATHON: There are several things over here that are pleasant! I get to interact with soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines from all walks of life. This includes Active, Reserve, and Guard from every part of the country. I have talked to soldiers from England, Australia, Macedonia, Turkey, the Czech Republic and the list goes on. I've talked to local nationals during guard duty and to men and women that live out in Baghdad and come on base every day to work. I've talked to workers brought in from India, Pakistan, Nepal, et cetera. I've spoken with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Eastern Orthodox Catholics. I've gained a world of experience while over here. Made great friends that I will have for the rest of my life.

ERIK: Thank you for that. Speaking of different religions, I'd like leave Iraq for a moment and go back to your childhood, if I may. Were you raised in a religious family? And if so, were your religious beliefs fundamentally strict, or more oriented to holiday events, such as Christmas and Easter?

JONATHON: I was born and raised Roman Catholic. Up until about the age of 12 or so, every Sunday I would attend mass with my parents. They made it a mandatory event. But then once I started being old enough to explore religion for myself my parents backed off and let me find my own path to God — for which I am forever grateful!

During high school, I was a professed agnostic, not truly knowing what I believed but open to exploration. My last two years of high school, when my family moved from Minnesota to Indiana, I attended a Catholic High School — even though I didn't consider myself Catholic. I still found it an amazing school! While there, I was able to get into many theological discussions with priests and nuns and other faculty, basically anyone I could trap long enough to talk about the subject.

In fact, I remember an instance when I was in Theology class having silent study time, and I pulled out a copy of *The Antichrist*, by Nietzsche. I was a bit of a rebel in high school. I essentially went through this phase of not knowing what I believed until I started college and had a few Philosophy classes. So, to try and make a longer story a little less long... too late I think.... Right now my religious beliefs are most similar to those of our Founding Fathers. Sort of the Clock Maker that created the clock, wound it up and let it go. I believe that everything is made of energy and when we expire we return to the source of that energy. (I never knew how difficult it would be to describe my religious beliefs until now!)

ERIK: When did you first realize you were a Stoic?

JONATHON: I was first attracted to Philosophy when my older brother, Mike, gave me a copy of Plato's *Republic* for Christmas my senior year of high school. I had been reading the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and different Greek works in Literature class, and he knew how much I enjoyed it. Little did he know he was opening up Pandora's Box! Since then I knew I wanted to study Philosophy!

I first realized I was attracted to Stoicism when I was in my first year of university enrolled in Philosophy 101, basically just an overview of the history of Philosophy. I was interested in Stoicism's restraint, the discipline it demanded of its followers, its lack of attachment to unnecessary things – those things beyond one's own control. I loved its emphasis on discovering truth and living the virtuous life. It was at that time I picked up a copy of *Meditations*, by Marcus Aurelius, and knew that Stoicism was the path for me. Since then I have been doing my best to stay on "the porch," as it were!

No one in my family has studied philosophy past Philosophy 101 or basic logic. However, my Father majored in Sociology and was in the Seminary during college, so he knows a lot about Christian Philosophy, Aquinas and such. I love having discussions with my father about religion, ethics and religious philosophy, the similarities between Christianity and the eastern philosophies such as Buddhism. He has been a great influence on my life and his religious beliefs now mirror mine more than Catholicism.

ERIK: It appears the relationship you have with your father is of the sort many would envy. To wind up this interview, I want you to think about the future of the Stoic community. That is, do you have a vision for our future? Twenty-five years from now, when you're pushing fifty, and I'm pushing up daisies, where do you think the community should be?

JONATHON: That is a very good question. I feel that Stoics have always been an important minority throughout History. Sort of the invisible hand behind the scenes influencing some of the greatest leaders of the past and present. I believe that if we can keep in touch through emails and different methods of correspondence, and if we can keep the flow of information and ideas free and open, then we can, as a society, achieve great things. I truly believe that there is a great lack of morality and virtue in the world today, and if we, as Stoics, can work together to influence those in power, or come into power ourselves, we can help restore the morality and virtue that is waning in the world. I would like to see the Stoic society develop into a network of friends working together to help make a better world. That's my idea! Sort of the brain trust of society.

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## THE PORCH

*In May 2004, a report by US Army General Taguba cited "egregious, sadistic abuses, and grave breaches of international law" at the Baghdad Central Confinement Facility known as Abu Ghraib prison. Gen. Taguba made the investigation following allegations of abuse made by a military police guard inside Abu Ghraib, a soldier whose life has been subsequently threatened repeatedly by his exposure of the prisoners' treatment. The incidents cited in Taguba's report included punching and kicking inmates, slamming them against a wall, stomping on their bare feet, intimidation and attacks by guard dogs, sexual humiliation and abuse, forced nudity, sodomizing with a broomstick, and on and on. There were a number of deaths directly attributed*

*to these tactics. The military police were encouraged in this behavior in order to “soften up” the inmates for the interrogators. Jonathon was in no way connected to the events at Abu Ghraib, of course, but because of the nature of his current assignment, it was thought he could speak to this issue as a Stoic.*

ERIK: As part of an assessment team that goes to other detention centers you are no doubt familiar with the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. Are you familiar with the attitude towards prisoners that a Stoic is supposed to have? And, do you ever have difficulty being a Stoic when interacting with the detained?

JONATHON: Everything we currently do in the Army having to do with detainees and POWs stems from what happened at Abu Ghraib. There are systems of checks and balances, inspection teams and standardized operations in place that ensure abuse and corruption do not go on. Detainee Operations, the Military Police Corps in particular, is under the microscope. Any mistakes we make are immediately scrutinized and punished harshly by the Military. In the media we get even worse treatment. Any claim of detainee abuse is immediately blown wide open world wide by the media. Our soldiers are painted as torturers, thugs, brutes, people that spit on the Koran and flush it down toilets (which is impossible if you’ve ever seen the size of the Koran), feed Muslims meals containing pork products... and the list goes on and on and on. There is no end to the names we have been called by the media around the world.

But here is what people don’t see: On a daily basis our military police (MPs) safeguarding and feeding the thousands of detainees in our custody (I can’t tell you the actual number, because it’s classified) are routinely spat on, pissed on, hit with human feces and semen, hit with rocks, punched, kicked, scratched, bitten — all without being able to retaliate. You see, in US detention facilities the only MPs with weapons are tower guards while the men and women on the ground in the facilities carry no weapons. Under all these conditions, the treatment of detainees in our custody are fed three meals a day, showered, given religious freedoms, and treated with dignity and respect. The detainees actually *fear* being transferred to Iraqi custody. I’ll give you one guess why.

As a Philosopher, and a Stoic to boot, I find myself of two minds when it comes to our detainees. On the one hand I know we have a duty to treat enemies in our custody with the dignity and respect that all human beings deserve. We are to treat them fairly and with justice. On the other hand, and remember I speak only for myself and not for the US Army, it would seem that our mission here in Iraq would go much smoother if we were not as kind to those we take prisoner. It seems to me that our enemies no longer fear us, which as a member of the military is disconcerting. From the time of our inception in basic training we are taught to strike fear into the hearts of our enemies.

Fear is a powerful weapon in warfare — whether it’s through vocalization while in combat or through visual means, such as camouflage paints and the like. Fear through swift neutralization of the enemy is another way we are taught to instill fear in combat. Another good way of instilling fear in an enemy is by showing no fear. Fear is contagious, and if you can make one enemy fear you the rest will soon follow.

Now, the above is what we are taught in Basic Training, which deals with combat scenarios, not necessarily detainee operations. With detainees, it’s a bit more tender subject because we have the Red Cross coming in and inspecting us, and if a detainee makes a claim of abuse it shuts down the entire compound and every guard in it is interviewed. To me, this makes no sense. The Red Cross needs to let the Military conduct its own investigations internally so that the detainees

cannot supercede our authority. One way to instill fear in the detainee population is by making them *know* our authority is absolute. Now, as an ethical society, we will not abuse that authority and treat every human with respect. But they must know that their lives are in our hands.

I am not an expert in how to handle detainees or how to instill fear in them. As I said before, with all of the checks and balances we have in the Army right now it makes it rather difficult for something like that [Abu Ghraib] to happen again. I think the best tool we have right now is the Iraqi prisons. That seems to be what the Detainee fears the most. So if we start shipping out all the "bad seeds" to the Iraqis and keep the ones that are more docile, it could be possible to reintegrate them back into society. But that goes into areas well above my paygrade!

I think it would be important to say that just because you make someone fear you doesn't mean you are going to treat them any less humanely. The majority of our detainees don't necessarily *hate* Americans. They are just victims of the circumstances of their poverty. (It's hard to explain without going into much detail, which I cannot do unfortunately!). The ones that do hate us will always hate us. It is rooted in their upbringing and their culture. Which is fine. I believe it was the Roman Emperor Caligula [12-41 CE] who said, "Let them hate us, so long as they fear us." Granted, he wasn't the best role model, but before he went insane Caligula was quite intelligent.

I would appreciate it if you could add a disclaimer at the end of the newsletter stating that the above expressed views are my opinion alone! I can't be seen as making official statements. In any case, I thank you for your gratitude and understanding of what our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines are going through over here. I have many friends that don't get the chance to get online like I do. I have friends that shower but once a month and are rationed 3 bottles of water a day. They sleep in ditches dug in the sand and pull 12 hours on and 4 hours off everyday with no days off. A dear friend of mine has seen his friends killed before his eyes. There are things going on over here that people back home will never be able to grasp, and by all accounts wouldn't want to even know.

ERIK: I'm sure you're right about that, which brings us to the last question. When do you get to come home?

JONATHON: I can't really tell you when our unit is going to demobilize. Should be before Halloween however. Keeping my fingers crossed for that one!!

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Thank you for reading,  
Erik