

Selections from a Field Guide, 1943*

Paul Wasserman

You have been ordered to Iraq
(i-RAHK)
An experience few Americans
Have been lucky enough to have
You will enter Iraq as a soldier
And as an individual
On our side a man can be both
It is what you do on your own that counts

One of your jobs
Is to prevent their dirty work
Common horse sense
And the peace after it
You as a human being
You'll be telling your children
"Now when I was in Baghdad..."

Blazing heat
And dust
Black blisters and possible fever
Yet the nights are uncomfortably cool

You have seen moving pictures
About the colorful life of the desert
You will look in vain for the things
You have been led to expect
You will smell and feel what the movies
Didn't warn you about

That tall man in the flowing robe
You are going to see soon

Eden was located in this
Here it was
Babylon and Nineveh (NI-ne-ve)
You will very likely see their ruins
The great ruins of the world

Tigris (TAI-gris) and Euphrates (yoo-FRAY-teez)

Empty into the Persian Gulf
Through one mouth

There is the month of fasting
(ra-ma-DAH-N)
All hesitations and refusals at this period
Should be accepted
Without attempts at persuasion
To them you are an unbeliever
Keep away from mosques
Any drawing of blood at this period
May have serious consequences
Don't put in your two cents

Unless you are ordered to Samarra
It is advisable to stay away
This isn't preaching

That tall man in the flowing robe
You are going to see soon

Some of the Iraqis
Think the lens of a camera
Is an evil eye
You will make enemies
By taking close snapshots
And possibly wind up
With a knife in your back

Bargaining takes time
One dinar is worth \$4.00
The price first quoted is two-thirds higher
You need to know the numbers

The main thing
Is the spirit of politeness
Good - ZAYN
Bad - MOO-ZAYN

Avoid the native oaths
Do not stare or smile at her
Leave some food in the bowl
What you leave

Goes to the women and children

The third glass of tea
Is the signal to leave
Don't overstay your welcome.

*From a field guide written for the sake of those U.S. service members sent to Iraq during WWII.