

# Duty, Honor, Profit

One Man's Struggle with the War in Iraq

A One Act Play  
by  
D. Richard Tucker

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## Duty, Honor, Profit

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On June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Colonel Ted Westhusing became the highest ranking officer to die in the Iraq war. The army's investigation attributed his death to suicide, but a large amount of evidence pointed towards conspiracy and murder. As Ted's friends attempt to uncover the mystery, they come to even more disturbing conclusions. This is a true story.

### CAST of CHARACTERS (4 M, 2 F)

JOE, (M), 40's

Colonel Ted WESTHUSING, (M), 44

PROFESSOR, (M), civilian, 35-55

MICHELLE Westhusing, (F), 40's, Ted's wife

CARRIE, (F), Civilian contractor in War Zone, 30 - 40  
also plays

Dr. BREITENBACH, (F), Army psychologist, 30 - 40

INFORMANT, (M), Contractor in War Zone, 30 -50  
also plays

Arnold DENNY, (M), Contractor in War Zone, 30-50

Off Stage voices: NEW CADETS (multiple voices in unison – can be recorded)

Time: 2003, 2005

Place: Various locations, most of which are designated only by spots of light.

Set: One side of the stage includes a table and two chairs used by JOE and the PROFESSOR. A small desk and chair sits on the other side of the stage and is used by various characters. Lighting is used to differentiate scene and location changes.

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The stage is almost bare. On one side is a small desk and chair. On the other side, a table with two chairs for JOE and the PROFESSOR. Lighting effects are used to separate scenes and locations. In darkness, SOUND: Snare drums. A small patch at downstage center is illuminated as the West Point Alma Mater plays. WESTHUSING marches into the small patch of light. He is an Army colonel in desert camouflage uniform, complete with beret on his head and a 9mm pistol holstered on his hip. WESTHUSING salutes as the last few strains of the Alma Mater are played faintly, underscoring during the upcoming announcement.

JOE (in darkness)

June 5, 2005. Colonel Theodore S. Westhusing, 44, of Dallas, Texas, died in Baghdad, Iraq, from non-combat related injuries. He is the highest ranking officer to die in the Iraq war.

WESTHUSING drops his salute, performs and about face and marches out of sight. Blackout. Lights up on JOE. The music continues playing softly under the following narrative until it fades out completely.

JOE (cont'd)

Colonel Westhusing had deployed to Iraq in late 2004 and was scheduled to return to a teaching assignment at West Point next month.

Now go back a few years. Twenty-six years. July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1979. Colonel Westhusing was merely a teenager, standing on the parade field at West Point, where he raised his right hand and swore the oath of allegiance along with the rest of the Class of 1983. That afternoon, no one stood prouder than Ted Westhusing. No one took that oath more seriously than Ted Westhusing. Ted was the epitome of the West Point motto: Duty, Honor, Country. I know. I was standing right behind him, with my right hand raised, repeating those same words.

Lights up on PROFESSOR at the table.  
JOE approaches.

JOE

Professor?

PROFESSOR

Joe? I didn't expect you to get here so soon.

JOE

I ...couldn't wait.

PROFESSOR

Well...fine. You knew Ted at West Point?.

JOE

We were in the same squad during Beast Barracks.

PROFESSOR

Beast.....?

JOE

Cadet Basic Training. I really appreciate your help.

PROFESSOR

Oh, of course. So pardon me for asking, but you came a long way...just to look through these records. What seems to be....?

JOE

You said that you taught him in grad school....before he deployed to Iraq.

PROFESSOR

Yes, his doctoral dissertation in philosophy. Ted submerged himself in ancient Greek texts, focusing on honor and ethics in warfare.

JOE

I'm sure he was a great student.

PROFESSOR

He was a hard worker –hungry to learn, to discover. We remained friends after he'd completed his degree. I often sent him email, debating popular issues of the day.

JOE

You said you had information?

PROFESSOR picks up folder and hands it to JOE.

JOE (cont'd)

Where did you get these?

PROFESSOR

Freedom of Information Act....a few phone calls. I have ..some connections.

JOE digs through the folder and produces one report.

JOE

(reading)

“On June 5, 2005, Mr. Arnold Denny, Civilian Contractor, U.S.I.S., Camp Dublin, Baghdad, reported a US soldier, later determined to be Colonel Westhusing, was found dead with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. A full investigation established probable cause to believe Colonel Westhusing committed suicide by placing the barrel of his government issued 9mm pistol to his head and pulling the trigger.”  
That’s not right. That’s not Ted.

PROFESSOR

You don’t think he could have –

JOE

It doesn’t make sense. . He was due to leave Iraq in a month – why would he kill himself?

PROFESSOR

Maybe he-

JOE

Not Ted. He was third in our class – and only because the two guys ahead of him were Rhodes scholars.

PROFESSOR

Intelligence doesn’t-

JOE

He had a wife and kids back in the States. Ted had too much to live for.

PROFESSOR

Then what happened?

JOE

Well....I think Ted "knew" something or "discovered" something ...something illegal...unethical...and he was murdered in an effort to "keep him quiet"

PROFESSOR

A conspiracy theory?

JOE

Ted was a devout Catholic - he took his wife and kids to Mass every Sunday. Suicide wasn't an option.

PROFESSOR

Well, look through the files. Maybe you'll find what you want.

JOE digs into files.

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

Joe?

JOE

(without looking up)

Hmm?

PROFESSOR

You realize that you might not get the answer you want.

JOE looks at the PROFESSOR briefly, then turns back the folder.

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

You may get no answer at all.

JOE

(ignoring him, locates a document)

An anonymous letter .... Ted got this two weeks before his death.

Lights up on WESTHUSING at his desk reading a letter. The INFORMANT appears. He is backlit, or wearing sunglasses – something to hide his identity.

INFORMANT

Colonel Westhusing,

I write you this because I'm concerned about the activities at the Training compound. I don't know if I should trust you or not. I get the impression that you are good friends with U.S.I.S. Management and not an objective person. I send this to you, hoping that I'm wrong. The basic U.S.I.S. attitude is that there are no rules they have to go by. They say that you aren't very bright concerning the training and contract requirements. They think that you're so enamored by them being former Navy SEALs that you will believe anything they tell you.

## INFORMANT (con't)

Their only goal is to make as much money as they can, doing as little work as possible. They shortchange you on almost everything and try to add to the contract to increase profit every chance they get. The classes in the contract aren't even being held. It's a mess. U.S.I.S. is billing you for a force of 700, but there are less than 500 here. If you ask for anything, they'll say it's going to cost you extra and then add that to the contract. Either way, they make money, and you still don't get what you paid for. We're missing more than 200 weapons and more than \$200,000 worth of Motorola radios, but they won't tell you that. We were told to say that the Iraqis stole them. It's all screwed up – and the government is getting the bill. The trainers are going into combat.. They say they had to, because the Iraqis won't go into battle without them. If a photo of a U.S.I.S. trainer shooting Iraqis gets on the web, things will be bad. The training contract is a total scam. If you think you're going to make a unit out of this group, then you have failed miserably.

Lights out on INFORMANT.  
WESTHUSING stares at the letter as the lights go down on him.

JOE

See? That tells you that something was wrong.

PROFESSOR

What did Ted do about it?

JOE hands PROFESSOR a document.  
Lights up on WESTHUSING who recites the contents of his letter.

WESTHUSING

28 May, 2005

Major General Fil,

Attached are the documents received thus far concerning allegations against U.S.I.S. Enclosed is the anonymous letter that first reported these allegations. My review of the alleged discrepancies and response is that U.S.I.S. is complying with its contractual obligations. The evidence suggests that these allegations are untrue. I have found that the Security Training contract is well supervised. I have personally attended briefings, conducted inspections and audited the records. I can discuss this matter with you further at your convenience.

Respectfully,

T.S. Westhusing, Colonel, US Army

Lights out on WESTHUSING.

PROFESSOR

So, then....everything was okay.

JOE

Then why is he dead a week later?

PROFESSOR

If these allegations weren't true, then no one would have reason to kill him.

JOE

But if everything is going just fine, why would Ted kill himself?

PROFESSOR

Joe,....why are you struggling with this?

JOE

I just want to know what happened.

PROFESSOR

When was that last time you saw Ted.

JOE

....Graduation.

PROFESSOR

Twenty-four years ago? You came all this way, to check on-

JOE

Look, I appreciate your help, Professor. I couldn't do this alone. I just..... I..... it's very important to me.

PROFESSOR

All right. Maybe Ted discovered it after his report to the General. Or maybe he felt pressure to uphold the Army's reputation, but then killed himself out of guilt.

JOE

Or he may have been coerced into reporting that the allegations were false, and then he was going to blow the whistle, so somebody killed him.

PROFESSOR

(hands JOE a document)

Here. From his wife.

Lights up on MICHELLE, at the desk.



PROFESSOR (cont'd)

Mrs. Westhusing..... How often did you speak with your husband?

MICHELLE

About once a week. We also emailed each other.

PROFESSOR

How often?

MICHELLE

The same...in the beginning, then after toward the end, every day, because I heard something in his tone of voice during that last phone call. Something that...scared me.

Enter WESTHUSING. MICHELLE gets up from the desk and talks to him as though they are in the same room.

WESTHUSING

I just can't take this any more.

MICHELLE

Sure you can, Ted.

WESTHUSING

I don't know. I think I should just go to General Patraeus and quit.

MICHELLE

Ted – you've never quit anything. Just finish the tour and come home. It's only a few more weeks.

WESTHUSING

Honey, I've completely lost control. The contractors are just greedy money grubbing... Nobody cares about doing the right thing – it's all about how much profit they can make.

MICHELLE

What about Iraq? What about the people?

WESTHUSING

They're just as bad – they're hostile to each other. You give them a little authority and they use it against their own people. The way they treat the insurgents – it's deplorable... I just can't rein them in.

MICHELLE

But you're doing what you can-

WESTHUSING

Michelle, I can't trust anybody here. I can't trust them any farther than I can spit. How are you supposed to work with people you can't trust?

Lights out on WESTHUSING. MICHELLE returns to the desk.

MICHELLE

I think I talked him out of quitting, but I could tell there was something wrong. I emailed him every day after that, and I even called his family and asked them to help.

PROFESSOR

When was the last time you talked?

MICHELLE

That phone call was the last time. It was two weeks to the day, a Sunday, that the chaplain informed me of his death.

Lights out on MICHELLE.

PROFESSOR

Well, Ted's letter to the General doesn't match up with what he said to his wife.

JOE

Ted would never make a false statement. It's not in his character.

PROFESSOR

I wasn't trying to-

JOE

You don't understand. Ted was deeply committed to the West Point Honor Code. No matter what he found out about these allegations, he wouldn't be able to lie.

PROFESSOR

I know that, Joe. Ted spent forty hours a week studying Greek, just to research the ancient texts on military honor, especially what the Greeks called "Arete" – skill, excellence, virtue. He was wrestled with the meaning of honor for today's American soldier.

Lights up on WESTHUSING holding a binder. PROFESSOR approaches him.

PROFESSOR

Well, Ted, you've got 352 pages about ethics, honor, and the military, but I'm not sure I get where you're going with this.

WESTHUSING

(with enthusiasm)

I'm trying to classify the spirit....the ideal of the modern day soldier. I've picked specific examples from history and then exposed their flaws in search of the ideal warrior.

PROFESSOR

Go on.

WESTHUSING opens binder and points out examples.

WESTHUSING

Achilles was fierce and determined.... a perfect physical specimen, highly skilled with his weapons....but he showed dishonor toward Hector's corpse.... and selfishly moped behind the battle while the Greeks nearly lost to the Trojans.

PROFESSOR

So he falls short of the ideal?

WESTHUSING

Definitely. Then look at Ridgeway. An amazing leader, but he was overly ambitious and catered to his own glory.

PROFESSOR

Too competitive in a profession that requires cooperation?

WESTHUSING

Exactly. Competition and cooperation are often in conflict ....and the bridge between the two is honor.

PROFESSOR

So a military hero who lacks honor can't be an ideal warrior. Tell me, Ted, is there a drawback to such strict ethical guidelines?

WESTHUSING

Yes. Look at the Victorian British infantry. They emphasized "regimental honor" to such extremes that even the slightest moral failing would cause an officer to commit suicide, rather than face disgrace.

PROFESSOR

So where did this regimental system fall short?

WESTHUSING

The British system relied only on rules and tradition, overlooking the spirit of honor. It stifled greatness of mind and benevolence, which are crucial to true honor.

PROFESSOR drifts away as lights shift.  
Lights out on WESTHUSING.

PROFESSOR

Ted saw things as black and white, good or bad, right or wrong. Some were moved by his steadfastness to his convictions. Others found him inflexible, rigid. Ted felt that patriotism could not be questioned. He deeply loved his country – he loved serving and defending it.

WESTHUSING approaches PROFESSOR.

WESTHUSING

Thanks for everything.

PROFESSOR

Congratulations, Ted – what’s next for you?

WESTHUSING

I’m returning to West Point ...as a permanent professor.

PROFESSOR

That’s very prestigious – again, congratulations. But...won’t you miss working with soldiers in the field?

WESTHUSING

Yes, but I feel like I can have more impact by training cadets – the next generation of officers.

PROFESSOR

So...in these bright young minds, you can instill your devotion to honor.

WESTHUSING

I can teach them that honor gives purpose to the soldier and strength to the military.....and structure to society.

PROFESSOR and WESTHUSING shake hands and WESTHUSING exits.

PROFESSOR

Ted seemed to regret that he’d never been in combat. He was earning his master’s degree during the Gulf War.

JOE

He volunteered for Bosnia and Kosovo, but wasn’t deployed.

PROFESSOR

That must have been frustrating for him. The true test of ethics comes on the battlefield, not in the classroom.

JOE

Iraq was his last chance.

PROFESSOR

He came to see me before he left.

WESTHUSING enters.

PROFESSOR (cont'd)

I got your message.

PROFESSOR and WESTHUSING shake hands

WESTHUSING

I thought you should know.

(pause)

You're not happy for me?

PROFESSOR

I know this is important to you, Ted.

WESTHUSING

You're wrong about this – The U.S. is doing a great deal of good in Iraq.

PROFESSOR

I hope it turns out that way.

WESTHUSING

I don't see why you're so opposed to the war.

PROFESSOR

Ted, I don't think it's as black and white as you think. I feel that we've made a grave mistake.

(pause)

I wish you safety, Ted...and success.

WESTHUSING exits.

To read the rest of the play, contact [Dave@drichardtucker.com](mailto:Dave@drichardtucker.com)