

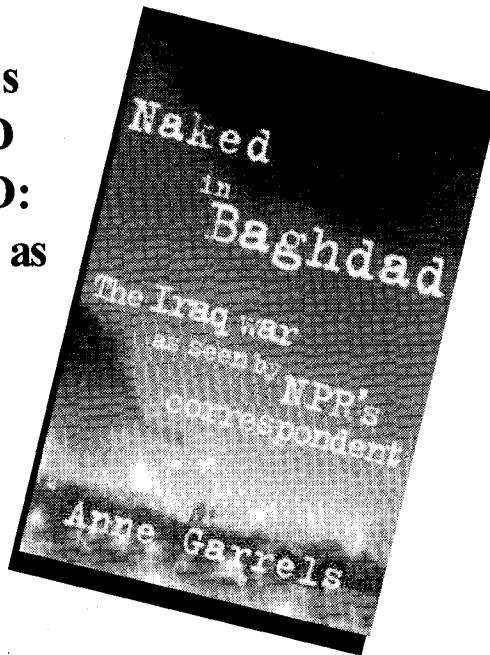
## Semester's opening convocation, "A Look at Iraq," expands on 2004 summer reading selection

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More than six hundred Meredith students and staff packed the Jones auditorium on Monday August 23, 2004 to take "A Look at Iraq". Most of the students attending had participated in the Summer reading program, and had read Anne Garrels' "Naked in Baghdad". This convocation presented additional views of what goes on inside Iraq.

Invited to speak were Dr. Randall W. Williams MD, J. Scott Merrill, Captain Jennifer Vault, and Jay Price. Dr. Williams, whose obstetrics and gynecology practice is here in Raleigh, volunteered alongside 30 American and British physicians assisting Iraqi physicians to rebuild their health

**This Summer's Read: NAKED IN BAGHDAD: The Iraq War as Seen by NPR's Correspondent by Anne Garrels**



care system. Dr. Williams indicated that Iraq has the highest infant mortality rate outside of Africa. As part of his presentation, he brought photos of some hospitals he had visited, and emphasized the lack of basic supplies even within the "better" hospitals. Infection is prevalent amongst mothers giving birth, in large part due to poor disinfection

of medical instruments. Whereas in the United States, medical institutions sterilize instruments in cavalades and utilize single-use disposable equipment, disinfection in the maternity wards of some Iraqi hospitals amounts to a bowl of Betadine.

J. Scott Merrill did not visit Iraq personally, but brought with him the story of what his

company, RTI International, is doing to help Iraqis establish their new system of governance. RTI's current project involves restoring basic services, and facilitating participation of the Iraqi people. Some Iraqis have lived most of their lives under the rules of a dictator. Decisions made prior to the war were made at the top, and RTI is working with Iraqi officials to establish new decision processes at the local and neighborhood levels. RTI is also working to establish the ground rules for a process we often take for granted in our democracy: Voting. Hopefully the Iraqi people will soon be able to choose officials that represent their interests and goals for the future.

Captain Jennifer Bault served as an Air Force intelligence Officer in Qatar. Her duties involved the briefing of C130 pilots before and after missions to Iraq and surrounding countries. Her unit also provided supplies and transportation for soldiers, political figures, and journalists. Back-to-back deployments for herself and her husband meant that her son had only one parent at home for the first year of his life.

Jay Price brought us the news from Iraq as an embedded reporter for the Raleigh News and Observer. During his first trip he reported on the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division in

central Iraq, and later returned with another unit to the town of Fallujah. He parallels the thoughts of Anne Garrels with the reminder that when reporters are embedded, they can only report on what they see. He shared the day-to-day stories of the soldiers and the conditions under which they serve. The heat, the dust, and the non-stop level of awareness become a way of life for many.

Overall the convocation was well received and offered students individual views from people in the Raleigh community who had visited Iraq. However, feedback from students indicates that respondents were looking for a more interactive discussion of issues surrounding the war in Iraq. A Meredith senior, (name withheld), majoring in Pre-Law and English, took exception to Captain Bault's assertion that most Iraqis like us, and that terrorists come from outside Iraq. Said this senior, "Muqtada al-Sadr is from Iraq. He's a Shiite. He has thousands of followers and they're not all coming from outside Iraq". Most Meredith respondents would have liked to have had more of an opportunity for questions and discussion, and look forward to Anne Garrels and her visit to the Meredith campus later this semester.

### Become a Part of MeredithREADS Literacy Program

- What?** You are invited to join this read-aloud story sharing Program! Share multi-cultural children's books with the same child each week
- Where?** On-site at local elementary schools (Powell, Washington; Olds, and Joyner) or childcare centers
- When?** Choose a 2-hour block of time between 9:00 AM-3:00 PM, Monday and Friday
- How?** *Training by Motherread is required.*  
Student Training:  
Wed., Sept. 1, 2004, Common Room  
**or**  
Thurs., Sept. 9, 2004, Dogwood A  
5:30-7:30 PM

**Register online at:**

<http://www.meredith.edu/students/volunteer/meredithreads.htm>