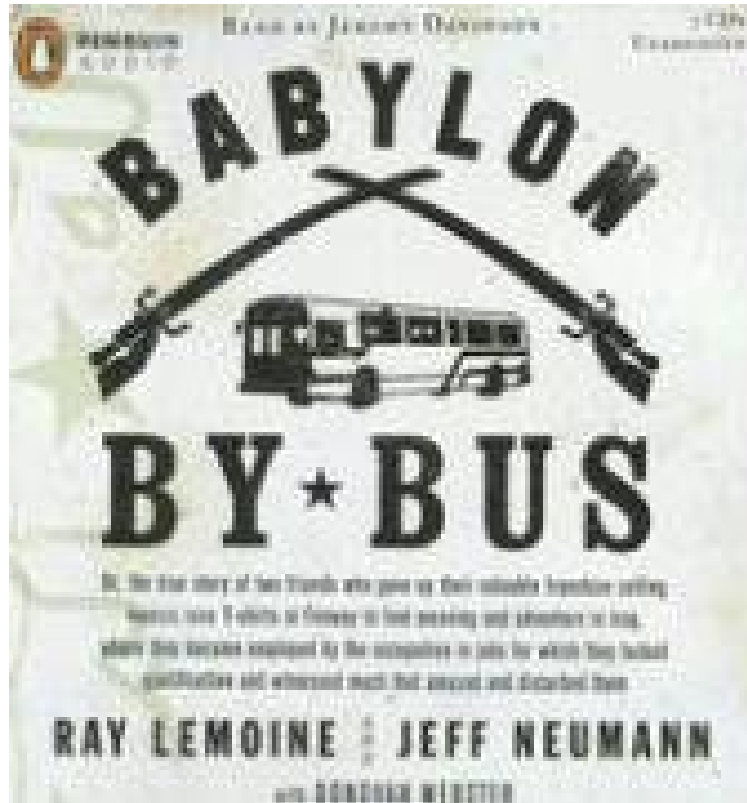


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Babylon by Bus: Or, the true story of two friends who gave up their valuable franchise selling YANKEES SUCK T-shirts at Fenway to find meaning and adventure in Iraq,

Ray LeMoine, Jeff Neumann, Donovan Webster
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Ray LeMoine, Jeff Neumann, Donovan Webster : Babylon by Bus: Or, the true story of two friends who gave up their valuable franchise selling YANKEES SUCK T-shirts at Fenway to find meaning and adventure in Iraq, before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Babylon by Bus: Or, the true story of two friends who gave up their valuable franchise selling YANKEES SUCK T-shirts at Fenway to find meaning and adventure in Iraq.:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Review of "Babylon by Bus"By Alan L. ChaseIf you have visited Fenway Park in the past decade, then you are well aware of the colorful T-shirts that are hawked outside the Park. The "YANKEES SUCK" T-shirts are part of the soft underbelly of the culture of Red Sox Nation. I find the phrase and Red Sox fans' continued use of the phrase to be sophomoric, at best. But, it is what it is, and it is part of the Fenway experience.The two young ne'er-do-wells who conceived of the T-shirt franchise are Ray Lemoine and Jeff Newman. They made a lot of money selling those souvenirs of the Red Sox-Yankees rivalry, and decided to travel the world. If

you are a rich, young Red Sox fan, what constitutes the ultimate "Road Trip"? Their peregrinations led them eventually to Iraq in 2004, in the early days of the U.S. occupation of Baghdad. They found work volunteering for a non-government agency that was set up to serve as a liaison between the Coalition Provision Authority (CPA) and the Iraqi people. From their unique perspective, they observed and wrote about the initial stages of the U.S. efforts to bring order out of the chaos of the post-Saddam era. In collaboration with Donovan Webster, they assembled their thoughts into the book, "Babylon by Bus." Their account provides an interesting counterpoint to the memoirs I have read and recounted in the pages of *The White Rhino Report*. These hard-drinking sons of the counter culture offer their unique perspective on what they observed on the ground in Baghdad. A quotation on the book's dust jacket sums up very well the zeitgeist of this book: "If Iraq is a Shakespearean tragedy, 'Babylon by Bus' is its *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, without the funny ending." Their route to Iraq took them through Israel and included dangerous encounters with Israeli security officials as they attempted to visit Nablus in the Palestinian West Bank. Their brief sojourn in Israel was memorable and prompted an observation that I found intriguing: "This experience was about as far away as a person could get from the Israel Jeff had experienced with his grandmother and her church tour group. His three days with them in Jerusalem and over to Qum'ran and Ein Gedi hid many truths about this place and its always rolling conflict. In the American Church Tour Version of Israel, a strange fusion of evangelical Christianity and Zionism, all Arabs are reduced to being street peddlers, friendly waiters, and the smiling face of 'Holy Land' souvenir shops." (Page 21) Ray and Jeff eventually made their way via Amman, Jordan to Baghdad, where they were offered lodging and an opportunity to volunteer for a fledgling NGO called the Iraqi Assistance Center (IAC). For these "Kings of New England" living in Baghdad's Green Zone, Red Sox sensibilities would often obtrude themselves upon the dusty landscape of daily living: "The Green Zone was a constant reminder of 9/11, right down to the offices and desks of soldiers and civilians. Among them, 'Wanted Dead or Alive: Bin Laden' posters were the most popular. Jeff hung up a picture of Sox slugger Manny Ramirez to lighten the mood." (Page 68) A case of Manny being Mahdi! The book is a loosely woven fabric that highlights massive confusion and bureaucratic gridlock interspersed with inspiring vignettes of individual courage, humanity and good will. Ray and Jeff at one point were responsible for overseeing the distribution of a warehouse full of items intended to help the Iraqi people to improve their quality of life. Their stories of adventure and quixotic misadventure in trying to find the right allies in setting up this distribution network are among the most entertaining and the most disturbing in the book. Their non-profit endeavors led them to the boiling cauldron that is Fallujah. I will share their commentary on their experience of Fallujah as a way of summarizing their overall thesis for this book: "In 1920, Fallujah had provided the spark in Iraq's nationwide uprising against the British, with the initial fighting costing five hundred British lives and six thousand Iraqi ones, prompting Arabist T.E. Lawrence to later write: 'The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap . . . it will be hard to escape with dignity and honor. Things have been far worse than we have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than the public knows. It is a disgrace to our imperial record and may soon be too inflamed for any ordinary cure. We are today not far from a disaster. Our unfortunate troops . . . under hard conditions of climate and supply are policing an immense area, paying dearly every day in lives for the willfully wrong policy of the civil administration in Baghdad. Did America's leaders think she was exempt from history?" (Page 137) If Lemoine and Neumann were to design a T-shirt that would succinctly offer their commentary of the mismanagement of resources they observed in Baghdad during the inchoate stage of the occupation of Baghdad, the T-shirt might read: "YANKEE IMPERIALISM SUCKS" We might not agree with their assessments, but through their sweat and months of volunteer activities on the ground in Baghdad, Lemoine and Neumann have earned the right to offer their experiences and observations. 10 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Waste of time. By Greg L One of the most convoluted, boring, and meaningless books I have ever tried to read. I think I read 20 pages, skimmed the rest, and threw it away. I was embarrassed to give it to someone I knew or even drop it off at Salvation Army. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. learn how to write By Jesse Great story, terrible writing. I only made it about a third of the way through because I couldn't take the amateurish writing any longer. The story is fascinating, and I was very excited to read this book after listening to an interview with the authors on NPR; it's just a shame that they couldn't find someone better to tell their story.