

## (FIELD TRIP)

fall on deaf ears. The audience lights into her: “We don’t need policies that invest in war or weapons.” “War erases completely the rights of women.” “In every photo that comes from Iraq, there’s a look of fear in the eyes of women and children.” “This war is really, really bringing all your positive efforts to the level of zero.”

To Karen, it’s predictable liberal pacifism—“if I’d gone to a NOW meeting, I’m sure I would’ve heard the same thing,” she later says. Not much she can do but respectfully disagree and run out the clock—though she can’t resist a dig when one woman protests that the White House hasn’t done enough to crack down on Turkey’s PKK extremist group. “There’s something of an irony,” Karen observes. “You’re concerned about terrorism and

so are we...” Even so, she’s the gracious Sunday-school teacher of years past—betraying no edginess, not even when one of the women expresses sympathy for antiwar mom Cindy Sheehan, whom the cameras caught grinning as policemen arrested her during a protest in Washington a couple of days ago. And after the final question, Karen assures her interrogators, “I very much appreciate your candor.” Then accepts her door prize, a handmade Turkish scarf: “This is beautiful,” she says. “Matches what I have on!”

On the flight to Istanbul that afternoon, one of the reporters confronts a State Department staffer. Why, he wants to know, has Undersecretary Hughes met with only the well educated, the genteel, the unhating?

“I think she’s met people with a diversity of views,” says the staffer.

Really? presses the reporter. What about someone who might resort to suicide bombing? Has she met any of them?

The staffer is momentarily speechless. “Uh, no,” he says. “The undersecretary has not met with any suicide bombers.”

Suspicion nonetheless lingers in the rear of the plane that what’s transpired does not quite qualify as reality. After all, this might be Karen’s first trip to this part of the world, but it’s not theirs. They’ve covered protests, heard the chants of “Death to America!” and witnessed the burning of Bush effigies. None of that here. In fact, when asked whether anyone in her private meetings has shown even a glimpse of this region’s animosity toward the president, Karen replies, “I haven’t really heard a lot of that.”

What she *has* heard, everywhere and often, is displeasure about Iraq and about the Bush administration’s coddling of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. And at every opportunity, Karen has delivered this unequivocal sound bite: *President Bush is in fact the first American president ever to call for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.* Which, when uttered the first time, the press sort of let slide, like maybe they didn’t hear it right or maybe Karen didn’t quite mean it, as when she said “one nation, under God” was in the Constitution rather than in the Pledge of Allegiance.

But when the statement keeps coming up, the reporters finally call her on it. What about the Clinton parameters laid out in January 2001? Karen holds firm: “I just checked with David Welch, who is our policy expert,” she says on the plane. “And he confirmed absolutely that President George W. Bush is the first president to make it a matter of United States policy that we support two states living side by side in peace and freedom, and specifically called for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.”

MEN OF THE YEAR  
GREAT PERFORMANCES / 09.21.05



### JetBlue 292

In which **Scott Burke**, a low-key commercial pilot, nails a high-pressure landing and keeps quiet about it

As soon as they took off, they knew their landing gear was shot. It should have been disastrous. A plume of smoke, a trail of flames, the end of life 146 times over. Another reason to mourn. But the pilot saved the day, and in a move that seems increasingly rare, he’s not even talking about it. In fact, no one even knew his name until the mayor of Los Angeles blurted it out to reporters.

Scott Burke piloted that plane, JetBlue flight 292. He taxied, took off, and reported the malfunction. He calmly flew around L.A. for three hours, burning off fuel until the plane was light enough to land. He shared news with his passengers, left no one in the dark, eased tensions, and even expressed a little levity.

He gave instructions to brace for landing. The passengers, watching accounts of their flight on those famous DirecTVs, held on tight. Finally, Burke touched down. Flames rooster-tailed, but only briefly. Cheers erupted. And then everyone, shaken as they were, quietly deplaned: utterly safe, perhaps upset most by the images seen later on the news.

Conspicuously absent from those broadcasts, however, was Burke. No statement. No appearance with Anderson Cooper; no recap on Larry King; no yuks with Leno; no self-congratulation; no platitudes about ice in the veins or guidance from the good Lord. No book deal. He just went home to his wife and his beagle and moved on.—HOWIE KAHN