

Disabled Veteran

Ben Huot

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1 First Things

by Ben Huot

1.1 Logo



I should explain what the logo is meant to be representing. The guy is a pen, which is me, which comes from my first poem in Philosophy Core, called Creative Process, where I refer to myself as doing Tai Chi, with my pen being my body. The idea is based on "the pen is mightier than the sword" so I created "the Bible is mightier than the pen".

The Bible is shooting out flames because in Ephesians it talks about spiritual warfare and the Bible is the only armament that is offensive. (It means offensive instead of defensive. These are common terms used in combat. The sword is the only spiritual weapon. All the other armaments expressed in Ephesians are protective and defensive in nature like a shield, a helmet, a breastplate, etc.) The flames are meant as in James when it talks about being purified by fire or struggles with temptation in our lives. Isaiah also was purified by a live coal to his lips by a Seraphim. So the usage of fire is not evil or anything violent. Think of it as purifying.

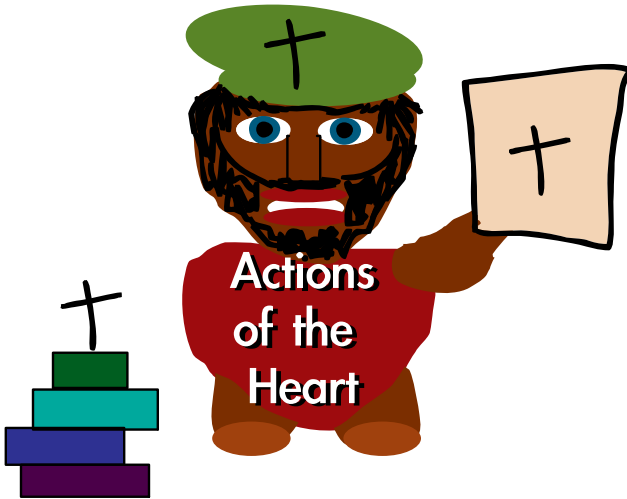
I would ideally like it to show the sword turned inward to his chest, symbolizing like in many fantasy books that when they defeat the great evil force in the world,

they are left with the greatest task, which is to defeat the evil within. The Bible is said to be a 2 sided sword, with the ability to cut between bone and marrow, and show the truth. Christ's tongue is said to be a 2 edged sword in Revelations, to defeat the Devil with. The reason I didn't show this is it looks like he is committing suicide.

The spiritual warfare is not against people, ideas, or even spirits. It is about fighting for the purity of our own minds. It is an internal thing. Like the Native American proverb "my greatest enemy is myself." This purity is in regard to our own sins and does not refer to purity in any other sense. But this is a process, not an outcome, as it is not possible for us to live without sin.

This warfare is only spiritual in the sense that it is not militant, social, economic, or political. This is for my own moral and ethical development and consists of practical qualities I try, with Christ's help, to cultivate like humility, compassion, kindness, and seriousness and do not correspond to anything supernatural.

1.2 Other Books



My text books and picture books contain most of my work over the past 10 years. These include my reading of

some 235 books containing the philosophical and religious thinking of the worlds cultures for several thousand years and the application of the main themes of some of the major Old Testament Prophets and major works of the New Testament.

The main point of this work is to get people to stop living their lives with their minds, but instead follow their hearts. I bring a radically different combination of viewpoints that you have not heard of before. I am not asking people to follow what I have written, but rather let the words stir up some sort of emotional response in your heart.

I challenge my readers to come up with their own unique ideas and that can lead the world in a new direction. We need a much broader diversity of ideas in our culture to deal with the problems we are facing in America and throughout the rest of the world.

1.3 For More Information

For more books and information, visit me on the web at <http://benjamin-newton.com/>

Feel free to send me e-mail regarding the books and website at <mailto:ben@benjamin-newton.com> I even enjoy constructive criticism

1.4 Cover Graphic



1.5 License

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1.6 Introduction

Did you ever wonder what the military is like? Don't believe your recruiter - check out my actual experiences. Did you ever wonder what it would be like to be mentally ill? You won't learn this in psychology. Do you have someone you care about who was in the military or who has a mental illness?

This book is my autobiography, describing my experiences in the Army and as a person with Schizophrenia. I have drawn these articles and poems from 8 of my others books. I have also added all new material from the recently discovered letters I wrote home during Basic Training plus a comprehensive set of vocabulary definitions describing almost anything I refer to in the letters.

This book is designed for those not interested in or those who would have a hard time understanding my academic books or the political or religious ideas they contain.

2 Becoming a Soldier

2.1 Non Exclusive Patriotism

I voluntarily served my country and am permanently disabled because of my service. This is why I am receiving funds from the Veterans Administration. I am a disabled veteran. I served my country, because it is a beautiful country and it is my country.

Many people see America as being an offshoot of England and based on the Enlightenment and that our closest allies are England and France. They see American history and culture as that of rich white men, as taught in history books and the mass media, that is accepted by the mainstream of opinion leaders. The mass media, called popular culture, is all over the world and is developed by a couple of rich white men, who don't even pay taxes in the United States. These multinational corporations have nothing to do with America.

I see America as reflected, by the people who live here, currently and I see America as an immigrant nation, except for the Native Americans. The only thing that is exclusively American is Native American culture. When I study about the culture of historic and ancient Asia, this is as American as studying about the the American Revolution, the American Civil War, or World War II. I think that people, who got into America legally, from any other nation and follow the laws are just as much American as people who came over on the Mayflower who follow the laws. Not just those who sell out their culture for popular culture, but keeping their customs, from the countries they came from are just as American.

The really unique thing about America as I have, come to realize, after my service in the military is that we have a goal of toleration for people of different backgrounds and especially of other religions. That is one of the major things I seek to further, in my writings and artwork. This is often referred to as multiculturalism. I don't see why we need to put up artificial boundaries between us and other countries around the world. We can be seen as doing the right thing, as well as they can be, even if we order our society in different ways, or that they may ap-

pear farther ahead than us in some areas doesn't make us less of a nation. We don't need to think of ourselves, as the best nation on earth. We are one, among a number of great nations, and we don't need to be culturally exclusive to prove it.

2.2 Letters from Basic Training

2.2.1 Terms Defined

Air Assault: school where you learn to repel out of helicopters as a way of delivering soldiers into combat. It is like Airborne but with helicopters instead of airplanes.

AIT - Advanced Individual Training. This is the training in your job you signed up for when you joined the Army. You often go to another base right after graduating Basic Training and the training can be anytime from 4 weeks to a year, depending on the job. You get more and more freedom as time passes and you pass tests successfully. Drill Sergeants are here as well.

Article 15: You can get an Article 15 for almost anything from having food in your locker, smoking, or violating almost any minor rule. You can get them for just not doing something correctly too many times. The punishment is that you are fined about \$150 out of your \$600 for the whole month and you have to do 2 hours extra duty every day for 2 weeks. Meaning, you will only get a maximum of 5 hours sleep a night.

Basic Training: This is the initial training in the Army which trains you to be an infantry soldier. Every soldier must complete this training first, as we are considered first and foremost infantry soldiers and the Army wants the option of using any soldier in the infantry, if they feel they need to. There are 3 things you need to do to graduate: go through the gas chamber (unless you are on KP that day), qualify at BRM, and throw a live grenade. Basic Training is almost exactly 8 weeks long.

Battle Buddy: another soldier in training you are assigned to to work with for the entire training. It can also refer to any one in your platoon.

Bivouac: Army version of camping

Bolo: when you don't qualify at the BRM qualifications the first time.

BRM - Basic Rifle Marksmanship. You learn to shoot your M-16, also referred to as rifle or weapon, but never as a gun. The point of the rifle is to be very accurate a kill someone with just one bullet. This rifle didn't even have fully automatic mode with the model we were using. This training lasts about 2 weeks. You qualify at the end by shooting enough targets that are silhouettes of other soldiers and they are up for only 3 seconds and they pop up and down at one of 3 different lengths away - one is at 50 meters, one is at 200 meters, and the other one is at 300 meters. You have to shoot in a foxhole and laying on your stomach (in the **prone**)

Cadence: singing while marching, The songs follow at the same time as you move your feet.

Chow Hall: where you eat

Claymore Mine: This is a directional mine that shoots out shrapnel when activated. It has to be unpacked and set up. You test it first, to make sure it is not defective. It is used to protect foxholes from attack. The shrapnel should all go forward towards the enemy if you point it in the correct direction.

CO - Commanding Officer: this is generally the officer (a Captain in rank) at the head of your company. He or she signs off on most paperwork as is the one ultimately responsible for anything anyone does in their unit.

Counseling Session: If you are not doing something correctly, then the Drill Sergeant gives you a counseling session which can be deducted from your sleep time. They tell you what you did wrong and often give you extra time to practice it which is taken out of sleep or free time. You can get these for not shining your boots properly, not ironing your clothes properly, or not marching properly. If you get more than a few of these, you get an Article 15.

Cycle: this refers to the particular interval in which you have completed Basic Training.

Drill Cadet: a cadet is an officer in training, but these ones were called Drill Cadets because they were working with the Drill Sergeants

DS - Drill Sergeant. The basic unit during Basic

Training is the **platoon** and it is headed by 2 to 3 Staff Sergeant or Sergeant First Classes in rank and will be a mixed combination of races and genders. They are each a Non-Commissioned Officer which you have to follow every command they give. You finish every thing you say to a Drill Sergeant with **Drill Sergeant**. If you don't, then you are "**dropped**" and required to do 20 push-ups and this number increases as you progress through Basic Training.

E-3, E-4, etc. This is the pay grade of an enlisted soldier and is used to identify what rank someone is no matter what the name for the rank across different services. You start out between an E-1 (Private) to an E-4 (Specialist), depending on how much college you have or how many people you have got to enlist.

Fighting Position: this can refer to a foxhole or another type of protected fighting position.

Fireguard: Every one does a shift of watching for fire, so there is someone watching the entire time every-one is asleep. You do this as in every thing else in groups of two.

Formation: when your entire unit is standing out in line

Fragmentation Grenade: This is what most people refer to as a grenade - it shoots out shrapnel, a few seconds after you pull the pin. It has a very high angle of fire, so you are generally safe if you are laying down or in your foxhole.

FTX - Field Training Exercises : where you train for combat with all the equipment and in simulated battle by role-playing. It is the equivalent of a dress rehearsal for combat.

Gas Chamber: This is a small cabin you are taken into about half way through Basic Training. A stick of slowly releasing gas called CS which is from 10-100 times stronger than tear gas is placed inside. The Drill Sergeants are standing in there in full protective gear (MOPP4). You go in with your mask on, take it off and stand there. There are Drill Sergeants blocking both the doors on the outside. If you say anything or try to leave early, you are thrown back in for a longer period of time. You will start

BRM shortly afterwards.

Go/No-Go: you either pass most tests in the Army and get a "go" or you fail and get a "no-go"

Hurry up and Wait: tendency of military to get you all ready for something a long time before they are ready to use you

KP - Kitchen Patrol: You get assigned KP every so many days. When you get this job, you go with another member of your platoon, you wake up before everyone else, and go in and help the cooks who are all civilians all day long. The Drill Sergeants smoke you if anyone does something wrong. You should be woken up by the fire guards.

Leave: time off from the military

LES - Leave and Earnings Statement: this is your paycheck and it also tells how much vacation you have accumulated.

Low Crawl and High Crawl: The low crawl is where you lay flat on your stomach and push forward with your helmet and your arm. The high crawl is where you crawl on your knees and elbows. The point of keeping low is that we are trained to hit and kill a soldier in 3-5 seconds of even seeing their helmet. It is no secret that American soldiers are poorer shots than most our enemies. So if we can hit them in that time, they definitely can hit us. The only way to protect against machine gun fire is by being as low as possible.

Montgomery GI Bill: a law passed by congress where you get money for college after serving in the military

Manual of Arms: This is where you learn to march with the rifle in ceremony and to move it safely while loaded in formation

MOS - Military Occupational Specialty. This is the job you signed up for when you first go to your regional MEPS. You are guaranteed this job as long as you pass the school. Since you get your first choice of available jobs, if and when you fail the school, the Army re-assigns you to their first choice, which is usually something in the combat arms like Tanker or Air Defense Artillery.

MREs - Meals Ready to Eat: pre-packaged and par-

tially de-hydrated meals that don't have to be cooked by cooks, but taste better, and are more expensive.

NBC - Nuclear Biological and Chemical: You wear a protective suit and a protective mask to protect you from poisonous chemical gases, nuclear radiation, and biological germ attack. It is called a pro mask or protective mask and never gas mask, because a gas mask would give you gas, not protect from it.

Personal Hygiene: brushing teeth, shaving, showering, etc.

Phases: You go through Red Phase, Blue Phase, and White Phases in the Army Basic Training. As you complete a phase, you get more privileges and you move up phases by passing your PT tests and learning basic combat survival skills.

Protestant: other - This is what was printed on my dog tags. The Army has several major groupings for religion - Protestant and Catholic, so there are always a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest for each unit. There might be others as well, but these were the only I knew of.

PT - Physical Training. Exercise. PT tests involve a 2-mile run, followed by 2 minutes of sit-ups, and 2 minutes of push-ups. You have to meet a certain standard or you have to do extra PT and can get other penalties as well.

PX - Post Exchange. This is like a drug store or other general store without groceries. These are stores on Army bases. You have to be in the military to go to them.

Range: where you practice shooting your rifle or other weapon

Ranger School: elite training where you learn how to take command posts in front of the regular Army. It is very difficult but not as advanced as the Green Berets.

Reception Battalion: This is where you arrive first after you leave the regional MEPS you were shipped from. This is your first experience in the Army. I was there for 11 days. You are usually only there for 3 days. You get issued your first gear here, you are taught how to do basic marching, and do basic processing like getting ID cards.

Riot Grenade: grenade filled with CS tear gas

ROTC - Reserve Officer Training Corps: This is a program where the military pays for college and you train in the summers and at the end, you serve as an officer, usually for 6 years.

Smart Books - Soldiers Manual. This is a very thick but small book that is camouflage covered and tells you everything that you will learn during Basic Training.

Smoked - This is generally done as an entire platoon. When the Drill Sergeant is unhappy with the performance of one or more of your platoon, you are made to do push-ups as well as any other exercises for as long as they want. The most strenuous one is getting up at attention and down into the push-ups position and back and forth really fast. One of the other platoons in our company were always smoked with their entire MOPP4 gear on (rubber chemical suits).

Sound Off - You have to yell out loud your rank, last name, and social security number followed by Drill Sergeant in order to get served food.

SPORTS - an anachronism for how to clear a rifle if the bullet gets jammed into the rifle and you cannot fire it.

UCMJ - Uniform Code of Military Justice. These are the laws you are under as a member of the military. Whenever you get in trouble, you get the civilian penalty plus the military one which is usually much worse. For not obeying one order, you can be sentenced to one year in a military prison after which you will get a dishonorable discharge, which disqualifies you for any type of assistance from the Veterans Administration or any other benefit veterans get. You can also be sentenced to death for rape, and receive prison time for adultery.

Weapons Ready: marching while you are holding your rifle in your hand with your finger on the trigger, ready to shoot

Zeroing. This is the process of firing at a target and then adjusting your rifle sights, so that everything lines up correctly. This is why you are assigned a different rifle for each person.

2.2.2 11 Jul 96

Dear Mom and Dad,

I have just finished my first day of Basic Training and it is not fun in any sense. I am writing this letter during fireguard - I got the best shift (9-11pm). I have to have it in by 04:35 hours tomorrow morning. Reception Battalion was boring but this is a nightmare. Once I get through the Red Phase - the first 2 weeks - my platoon will move on to Basic Rifle Marksmanship and I won't be so stressed (maybe). The main part of our training is on marching, Physical Training, and lectures. I was called a "smart ass" for some unknown reason - I think I was misunderstood but I should have thought quicker so that I didn't slip up even the slightest bit that I did. I am "Protestant: other" because the Army doesn't know anything about any kind of Quakers. My head has been throbbing ever since the Drill Sergeant started getting annoyed, because people didn't speak up at the right instance when they had a problem. I can kind of empathize with how the Drill Sergeants must feel about us, when we are so stressed out we become paralyzed to reason about little things, but it is hard to focus when you get so little sleep (9 pm to 3:45 am minus - usually - a 2 hour watch) and you can be dropped for push-ups if the Drill Sergeant thinks your question is dumb. The training I can stand the significance of even from my warped perspective. In order for us to win wars in the Information Age, all 250 MOS's must perform their duties perfectly accurate in instantaneous speeds and be able to work together as a team to win because there is no second place in war. They want us to work harder than we ever had before so that we can develop a work ethic. They want to be in our face enough to unite the platoon into one cohesive unit. I am so glad I am not E-3 or E-4, because I think someone would have to be supernatural to lead others right on track, while not slipping up themselves. The privates are all very different from each other, but there is already a strong brotherhood forming - and that is what will build the momentum to carry us on through the next 8 weeks. There are only 55 days to go and counting, which is sev-

eral eternities, when you can barely plan ahead enough for the next day, if you're lucky. We did some push-ups already for not making our beds quick enough, but it hurt much more to think that maybe I was holding up the platoon than the pain of the physical exercise. Being embarrassed in front of your buddies is an effective motivator, because you have to fall back on your buddies, when you cannot carry on some other time, and you want to make sure you'll be ready to catch them when they fall, and how can you, when you can't even keep your own self in order. Most punishments involve the whole group, but this develops teamwork, not persecution, as you might expect. I found some Bible verses that were helpful to me: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Galatians 6:9-10, and Psalm 90. I was concerned that my Reception Platoon would make Basic a living Hell, but they got split up and no one would dare to screw off even though the DS can only punish you with physical exercise. Our platoon must have finished dinner in 10-15 minutes (including the time we stood in line) because you cannot even lift your head while eating let alone talk. No one messes around with the women or the weapons, because you can be fined hundreds of dollars for carrying one round off range by accident, or by saying one word a female might choose to use against you. I can get up to one year in prison and thousands of dollars in fines and a dishonorable discharge for not following any order, no matter how inconsequential, under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I hope I don't ever make one wrong step in line, forget 1 item of gear, or misunderstand any one word the DS says or s/he will "smoke" my whole platoon. I've been having a little trouble with my allergies, but I don't want to get an Article 15 for having non-prescription drugs in my possession. Please pray for me. I am continually tempted to try to get kicked out, but I am going to follow the DS's advice and follow through my decision like a man, because although I made a good choice, my choice now calls me to a higher standard of everything. The "Hurry Up and Wait" system of the military program is very distracting and disturbing, but you would be surprised at how careful soldiers are monitored for and how well they prevent needless red tape. I found out

that one soldier was a so stressed that he had to throw up and I felt better. You wouldn't believe how little time we have to keep clean shaven, sanitize ourselves, get into correct uniform (incl. polishing our boots), keep our barracks and latrine in immaculate cleanliness, read our "Smart Books" and keep remembering everything the DS tells us about even once - in such a way that if you ask him to repeat it, he won't believe that you can't remember his assignment/lesson. I have already memorized my General Orders and Rank Insignia. I feel like I am hallucinating often on watch. Once I woke up sure that the DS was screaming in our faces and soon learned that no one was up and that the DS wasn't even there. The Bible luckily is always the only acceptable reading material besides our "Smart Books." I hope we can keep the DS from raising his voice for most of tomorrow. The first time they "smoke" us will be the worst and I am sure it will be soon. Push-ups are really one of the hardest physical exercises. I'm glad I stuck to the list I was given to pack for Basic verbatim because I just barely got by doing push-ups for it (as it was I had to buy quite a few items at the Reception Battalion PX, to complete the official list of required items. We finished our showers a few minutes late - 64 people through 6 showers in less than 20 minutes - but the DS did not get up to check on us, so we didn't get smoked. We are getting plenty early tomorrow, so we will have a reasonable chance to not louse up for a while. I can barely fight off the sleepy headedness as my shift comes to close. Hopefully I will be able to fall asleep soon. 3:45 am comes around to early. Please write soon.

Your Son,
Benjamin

2.2.3 20 Jul 96

Dear Parents,

There is so much to say and I don't know where to start so I'll just start in the middle. My first letter was fairly morbid, but I have relaxed manifold since then. My Drill Instructors are fair and reasonable for the most part for their kind, but one of them is being replaced in a few

days and he (the replacement) is much stricter (but this will help me on my PT test and help my platoon pull together more). I have already past my 2-mile run and 2-minutes sit-ups test with scores of 71% (14.44) and 55% (47) - you need 50% to pass (60% for airborne). I was only able to score 38% with 20 pushups, but they make you go much lower than I practiced for, and within a two minute limit and I used a mat, which I had to keep my arms in, so I had to go down farther. Next time I won't use the mat, so I can spread out my arms farther and now that I know how far to go down I will waste less energy, so I should be able to do more. If I just do a few more, I will qualify for the phase change so I will get more privileges and will get shouted at less. We have already done Bayonet Training, Marching Practice, Manual of Arms (marching with rifles), Basic Rifle Orientation, lectures on the UCMJ (laws), Personal Hygiene, Sexual Harassment/Equal Opportunity, HIV/AIDS, Sabotage and Subversion, Code of Conduct, Military Customs and Courtesies, Fire Guard, and Kitchen Patrol. We have been issued most of our gear and learned most of the marching formations and maneuvers. I have memorized my Chain of Command, Phonetic Alphabet, Ranks and Insignia, and General Orders. I attended the Protestant Church Service the last couple Sundays. The service was very refreshing and I was encouraged to hear other soldiers who were excited about Christianity - their testimonies helped me relax. I was also good for my heart to hear some music. I decided I would try to be a Chaplain's Assistant, if my job with computers doesn't work out for me for some reason. I might be able to be a Chaplain in the Army Reserves, after I graduate from college, if I can get registered as a minister, with the Friends Church even though I won't get a religious major. That way, I start out as a Captain, instead of a 2nd Lieutenant and I would like to work with soldiers through their spiritual problems - I like their attitudes. We had several locker inspections so far, but I wasn't checked because I had KP one time and the other we were randomly checked and I wasn't selected, but my locker would pass any check anytime. Hospital corners and locker organization are not hard if you are a perfectionist and take the

time to check and re-check until it is perfect. I am slow on some of my marching maneuvers and my manual of arms, but I am the best by far in memorization. I feel like I never get quite enough sleep (about 7 1/2 hours), but the PT, although intense, doesn't require an unreasonable amount of effort, and even when we get smoked, although we are in pain at the time, we usually feel better after having done it. Just today, I got angry at someone, but I feel justified for having felt that way. While I was walking across the Chow Hall to clean my tray, I overheard a Drill Sergeant ridiculing a female private, for being too heavy and threatened to smoke her until he broke her and she would stop eating so much. I glared at him for a while, stunned, and had to exert an extreme amount of effort to keep from beating the living crud out of him. Definitely an injustice, but the private was being a glutton and had volunteered for serving the Army knowing it would entail those kinds of things. Later on, I found out that Army regulations require commanders to promote a specified percentage of white female, black female, other female, white male, black male, and other male soldiers from each category, even if some of the candidates aren't as qualified as the ones s/he wanted to promote. This is the end of my 10th day, I have 46 more to do, but they keep on going faster each day. My battalion graduates on the 4th of September. I ship off to my advanced training on the 5th. My advanced training starts on the 13th. I get 2.5 days leave a month which I can save up to 60 days worth of. Please write if you have time. I have to take a shower and shine my boots now. Luckily our HIV/AIDS presentation didn't spark many questions, so we finished early and so I had time to write this letter to you. Don't expect telephone calls - I only have between 8 and 11:30 am EST on Sundays to call - the lines are 3 hours long and I go to church, clean my boots, and do my wash, during that time.

Your Son,
Benjamin

P.S. I will be purchasing pictures with my uniform on (with all the badges), a Cycle Book (memory book) and a video of the highlights of Basic Training, so you can see

what I did. I found out that Victory Towers is on the 24th of July (that's a cool high ropes obstacle confidence course) and the Gas Chamber is on August 1st (which is not fun, but will at least clear my sinuses). So far, I have managed not to go on sick call once, even when I didn't feel very good. We haven't had to do push-ups for mail yet, but I don't know if we will be able to eat cookies without PT to burn the calories off.

2.2.4 28 Jul 96

We are halfway through our third week and we have experienced Drill Sergeant Pelehach for about a week. Pelehach reminds me of Lieutenant Commander Queeg in *The Caine Mutiny* (by Herman Wook), He always has this smirk on his face, he is paranoid, and he drops us for push-ups for no other reason than he just feels like it. He did drop down and do push-ups with us the first time and he does explain why he does the seemingly irrational things he does. He wants to give us stress, so we learn how to deal with change, as modern warfare is so fluid. He wants us to work as a team, so he makes himself the common enemy, so that we would have the opportunity to unite against him. Other training we have been through recently, not mentioned in earlier letters or postcards, include: rifle aiming, function check, foxhole and prone firing positions, environmental awareness, ethics, rape prevention, family planning, rescue breathing, and applying a pressure dressing. Several negative things happened. Private Cruise (a member of our platoon still here after several cycles for getting injured and not taking care of the injury and deciding to try Basic again) attempted suicide, so they put her in the psychiatric ward in a padded cell. Lesson: Don't just attempt to commit suicide - either go all the way or just carry on. \$13 dollars was stolen from me - I left my locker unattended once when I had to go down to formation and didn't have time to lock it - the rest was luckily in money orders (my cash advance), but most people lost a lot more. I found out that I am left eye dominant, which means I have to fire my rifle as a left handed person would, which makes it harder to hold it

steady for long periods of time. I signed up for an 11" x 14" of my platoon and an Annual of my graduating class and pictures of some of the training we underwent. We are just starting cadence, which makes marching more fun, especially the other day, when it rained for the first time while we were outside and not told to put our rain gear on - I became very emotional, as I was reminded of running back in Oregon. I also found a way to get a lot of leave very early. Ask SSG Rodriguez to sign me up for the *Hometown Recruiting Program*. The Hometown Recruiting Program would allow me to receive up to 40 days "leave" as long as I work for the Springfield Recruiting Station immediately after AIT, before I ship off for permanent duty station and this "leave" would not be deducted from the 30 days authorized per year. I would like to use the time to ask SSG Rodriguez about how good a shape you need to be in to go to Air Assault School (repelling off helicopters) and describe what happens at Ranger School in more detail. I would also like some time to pack up some of my belongings and several other things.

Your Son

Benjamin

P.S. Please send Rebecca's address. Please pray for me when I go to the gas chamber on August 1st.

2.2.5 11 Aug 96

Dear Parents,

This week we started Basic Rifle Marksmanship on Range 1 "South Carolina". I zeroed my rifle and I grouped my triangulations. I have learned to pick out human silhouettes from the tree-line, and I have shot at single and multiple targets that come up and down at random distances, along a specific lane, for only a few seconds. A few weeks ago, when we were driven past the BRM ranges, I was impressed with how beautiful it was under the little trees, but now I know how penetrating the heat can be and how long a day at the range can be, or how frustrating it can be to be ate-up and be told you are letting the entire team down, by being clueless, even though you are doing your very best. Tuesday night, we were on Bivouac

(camping) out near the BRM ranges. I was one of the fastest to both set up and take down my tent. We had a camouflage demonstration - all you need is light green and loam. We practiced noise discipline and used only red flashlights. The sandy soil worked great for the tent stakes. I was impressed with how adaptable and durable the military gear issued to us as privates. We were only smoked once and didn't have to march far. Thursday, we marched 4 miles with rucksacks to Range 12. My knee cramped up and gave me some trouble towards the end, but I stayed in step and in formation. Thursday night I had to be a buddy for another one of the battle buddies, so he could go to the hospital, which cut down on my sleep even further. Friday I was able to keep my rifle up the entire time that we did rifle PT, even though I did 100 sit-ups and 400 push-ups the day before (for leaving my night sight up instead of my day sight - I forgot to slip it back after cleaning it). I am also improving significantly at my Manual of Arms (rifle drill and ceremony). At the single and double targets range, the NCOIC of the range - the sergeant giving the commands from the tower - sounded like an auctioneer and I had a hard time not laughing, because there was a sergeant with a Marine Corps tattoo, who was just appalled at how stupid we were - we were so nervous, we went the wrong direction, and the "auctioneer" told the DS over the loudspeaker which lanes to watch well, which when you looked over there, you could tell they were missing all the targets and were behind a few commands. Saturday, we started double targets in the BRM range. I was so tired from fire watch the night before, but I still did much better. And as the targets become more and more lifelike I do better and better. My platoon does the best on Manual of Arms now and we are the only ones in our company who knew the counts to the 15-count Manual of Arms, so we can live up to last cycles "2nd to none" reputation. Our platoon is re-adjusting its pecking order, as we are half way through our 5th week. After BRM qualification on the 14th, I will be able to relax a little. It is very hot out on the range and we have virtually no time to get our personal hygiene and weapon cleaning done. I am going to try to call once

a week to keep my sanity. This Sunday, I am waiting in line, during the service and hopefully I will finish in time before Bible study, but I may have waited too long for either.

PAST EVENTS

We now have a Drill Cadet named Saban. She is really cool. She wears a silver circle mirror on her cap to denote her rank, which is roughly equivalent to that of our Drill Sergeants. She is in the ROTC program (probably she will be going into her junior year in college as she has just completed her 6-week Basic Course - ROTC Basic Training). She dropped with us when DS Pelehach smoked us and she only drops us for 5 push-ups when we do something really stupid. She isn't arrogant like the other Drill Cadets. She doesn't do very well at cadence calls and she won't let us use sexual or dirty words or phrases in our cadence. I have received my first Leave and Earnings Statement: I have 25 days leave accumulated and \$514 deposited in my account not including \$200 Casual Pay, but without the Montgomery GI Bill money or laundry fees taken out (they will probably be deducted from my LES that I will get on the 15th). On my last PT test, I improved my push-ups from 20 to 30, my sit-ups from 47 to 70 and my 2 mile run from 14:44 to 13:03. That bumped me up from the "B" to the "A" running group and kept me from passing the final PT test by 2 push-ups. I will probably get about 40 push-ups, 80 sit-ups, and about 12:30 this Saturday on my PT test, which will give me enough points to pass my AIT PT tests, I passed into White Phase, by scoring high enough on my PT test and stayed off my DS's Sugar Honey Ice Tea list by passing my communications, map, rifle function check, first aid, rank identification, and saluting an officer tests. I decided not to try for any Military Combat Training like Air Assault or Ranger Schools and instead get as much leadership and academic schooling as possible to avoid being drafted for infantry, even though that is fairly unlikely. I have come to realize that I would learn how to survive in combat better by learning Jiu-Jitsu (the martial art developed from Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do concepts) as I would like to train gradually over a long pe-

riod of time, so I can really understand what I am learning. Jiu-Jitsu covers fighting in all situations as in it has no fixed fighting stance and would prepare me for combat without making it more likely for me to be sent to combat. Some of those in the Rangers and the Airborne think that they are so bad that they "never die, they just go to Hell to regroup" and that they don't need help from anyone, even God. I took communion for the first time this last Sunday in I don't know how many years. It was more special to me as I had been through Hell in my own mind's eye in the gas chamber a few days before. We have also been pre-trained in Claymore Mines, how to respond to NBC attack, and how to identify Soviet weaponry.

Your Son,
Benjamin

2.2.6 19 Aug 96

Dear Parents,

Much has happened in the last week. I'll go chronologically this time. I ordered several platoon t-shirts with our insignia and motto on them. We did some push-ups, where we dipped down between two chairs - 3 sets of 30. They really build muscle tone and endurance in the entire arm, especially the chest and shoulders. We now get to eat frozen yogurt on Sundays. I don't miss candy much. We get candy in our MREs, that we can eat, but it is usually too rich for me, since I haven't had it for so long. It's hard to get a good balance of food, as we have so little time to pick up what we want in the chow hall, but I get plenty of fruit, grain, and dairy. I thought that I might miss not knowing what's going on in the world, but I don't waste time on newspapers, because it is all the same anyway. I do miss music though. My creative side lies dormant in my sleep. I have had some weird dreams lately. There is so little time to appreciate nature and to stop and think out alone. We did our first 5 mile tactical road march, with weapons ready, like the Roadrunner Battalion in Vietnam. The day before the Final BRM Record Qualification Day, my whole platoon with our Drill Sergeant Roberts and my battle buddy led the prayer. We even had

2 privates from the platoon we bunk with join. We prayed that we could win a ribbon for DS Roberts and work as a team, so we could all qualify the first time. On Final BRM Record Qualification Day, we started doing push-ups as a platoon, when just one person was dropped, this time DS Roberts dropped with us. As my firing number came up, I walked up singing "Rushing Wind" to myself out loud. I missed too many, from the foxhole, because our site posts were blackened by the DS as we walked in so it took me too long to realize that I was aiming for the bottom of the blackened part on the sight post. When I went to the prone unsupported firing position, I hit almost every target - 1 shot/1 kill every time. My DS thought I would bolo, so the 250 and 300 meter targets went up and down for me and counted as if I shot them every time. My DS Roberts put her thumb up and smiled and the Tower announced that everyone in my firing order qualified. The CO pinned the badge on me. My Company was best in the whole battalion and my platoon was the best in the company at BRM. We are still waiting for DS Pelehach to do 200 push-ups for our platoon guide when she qualified as an expert. We did night fire later that day. It is so dark that most people didn't even bother to sync their sights. We were told to shoot the wrong targets, so I shot enough targets for both me and the guy next to me to get a go, by switching back and forth between both targets that could be mine. The tracers were beautiful though. I was lucky enough to shoot while it was still light enough to get a go (7/30) but the DS didn't even keep track of who was on what lane. We got to bed by 11:30, and were up by 4:30 the next morning for PT. I also had fire guard for someone on KP the next day. The next day, we fired with our NBC Pro masks on, and I freaked out, because I couldn't get it on quick enough and I could still smell CS gas in it. We also fired on burst this time, with my right hand, which was much easier. In fact, I hit every target and DS Pelehach asked me why I didn't fire right handed before. I answered - I was told to fire left handed, because DS Evans said that I was left eye dominant. It won't be too hard to qualify as a sharpshooter, after AIT, right handed. We also had a Health and Welfare inspection ordered by

my CO to find who had condoms, cake, pornos, and other contraband. Drill Cadet Saban inspected my locker, so my gear was not thrown around. I also found out that if I am stationed with a Light Infantry Regiment, life will be very hard- 25 miles a day with 100 lb. pack over rough terrain and sheer cliffs at quick time in step - but that is unlikely to happen to me as I will be working with computers. We went back to the Reception Battalion and were issued our Class "B" and "A" Uniforms. Everyone looked better in a uniform and I was able to sneak in a little contraband sleep. We had our 3rd PT test. I got 12:42 on my 2-mile run, 84 on my sit-ups in 2 minutes, and 43 push-ups in 2 minutes. I passed the Basic and AIT standards already, and I phased into Blue Phase with the rest of my company. My platoon lost the Drill and Ceremony Competition by 1 point. We fired an M-60 Machine Gun with live ammunition, M-203 Grenade Launcher with paint balls, and an AT-4 Anti-Tank Round with 9mm tracer ammunition. The M-60 was too loud and jammed into my shoulder uncomfortably. The Grenade Launcher was a glorified paint-ball gun and was almost impossible to aim with the funky sight. The AT-4 was too light to balance, when you couldn't put the back blast area into the pocket of your shoulder, and was too much weight in back, compared to the weight in front. The Battalion Commander walked by me and tested me to make sure I was watching to make sure my back blast area was clear. We learned how to administer a nerve agent antidote to our body and started reviewing for individual proficiency tests at the end of the cycle. Two members of my platoon were flirting, so DS Pelehach gave them a nice "evening out" in the chow hall, after they paid \$189 for an Article 15. Only 2 weeks left. Please send me pictures of family and my checks.

Your Son,
Benjamin

2.2.7 25 Aug 96

Dear Parents,

Basic Training is tougher than ever before and it is so hard to see the end of the road, as I get more and more

depressed each day thinking about FTX and being gassed with CS out in the field. We learned how to low crawl, high crawl, and 3-5 second rush for our basic Individual Movement Techniques. This is to minimize the amount of time that you give away your position and expose yourself to sniper fire. Low crawl is the most tiring and the most dirty IMT besides being the slowest, but your profile is so low that it is almost impossible to be hit and your kevlar helmet protects your entire body. Low crawling can also be used to get under barbed wire. Low crawling isn't too bad in the sand, but hurts a lot over roots. We also learned how to signal for Set, Moving, Hold, and Danger Area. That night, we started learning how to use Interlocking Fire to defend a position. This emphasizes the necessity of teamwork out in the field. You cannot defend yourself. You have to cover your buddy and let him cover you, so your lines of fire criss cross to form a wall of hot lead. We saw a demonstration. When the enemy came too close, they set off claymore mines, threw hand grenades, had the M-60 machine gunner fire across the length of their positions, to create a very dense and deadly wall of lead, while tying up only one gunner. Then the rifle bearing soldiers were freed up to aim for and pick off the enemy one by one. Flares were sent off to signal major themes of the battle. White flares illuminated the battlefield, green meant start firing, and red means cease-fire. The next day, we qualified for grenades and threw 2 live M-69 Fragmentation Grenades. We were shown what an Incendiary, White Smoke, and Colored Smoke looked like when employed. I freaked out, so they didn't throw the CS Gas grenade (8-10x as strong as the gas chamber), even though they would throw it far enough that it wouldn't drift over towards us. I qualified as a Marksman on the Grenade Qualification Course. As I realized the power in the Fragmentation Grenades and was let go to the live fire range before I felt like I knew what I was doing, I started freaking out. They made me go first, and let the best instructor talk me through it. We put on our Kevlars and put on a Kevlar jacket and we were behind a concrete wall with reinforced steel, but that still isn't comforting when you don't know how much power

the grenade has. The instructor told me how it must not be dangerous as he did it every day and he was sane. I looked up and saw only little craters and couldn't see any shrapnel in the sand and the target didn't even appear scathed. I was more calm, when I picked up the live grenade, then when I used the practice ones, because it was easier to use and felt the right weight. I aimed and threw as far as I could and dropped my head and arms between my legs, as I squatted down in less than a split second. Luckily my instructor was holding me down, because the time delay was so long (3-5 seconds) that I almost stood up, to see if I remembered to pull the pin. When I went back into the protection area and looked through the 5 panes of bullet proof glass, the grenades didn't seem to blow up too large an area (5-10 feet) and all you saw was sand kicked up in the air, but the shrapnel must have been sent far, because shrapnel penetrated up to 4 panes deep. I sat down immediately, when I noticed this, so I was protected by even thicker concrete and steel. The next day, I KPD'd for another battalion, so I got out of low crawling all day. The last few days, we have been going through all the Individual Proficiency Tasks in our assigned groups (1/2 platoon size) to make sure we are so thoroughly brainwashed with the correct answers that we can't possibly screw up, even if we sound off as a group. We took our final PT test and I did 53 push-ups (70%), 85 sit-ups (92%) (both in 2 minutes) and 12:45 (93%) on my 2 mile run (I would have ran faster, but my battle buddies kept on yelling CS gas, so I lost my concentration). We can now drink soda and eat cake when DS Roberts is on duty (she smokes us before we eat to burn off the calories). I finally got my NBC Protective Mask to seal and will practice getting it on in less than 9 seconds, so I won't get a mouthful of CS, when they drop it on us at FTX. I passed everything required, so I will not be held back unless I go insane or go on profile, when it is time for me to ship off. I talked to the DS, the Chaplain, and my battle buddies about the CS - I almost quit over it, but they have helped me and will not gas us bad, because they don't want me to go insane and kill someone. I think my DS is reassured, because I told him I will forewarn

him, before I do something stupid. It seems you have to learn to speak, to walk, and to think all over again in the Army - I forgot everything I ever learned and lost all my self-confidence but it will come back after FTX. Just pray that I make it that far. If I do make it that far, I made plans with one of my battle buddies. His parents will sign me out and take me out to dinner (and I will have more than 5 minutes to eat, I can talk, and don't have to sound off and stand at ease in line). I will be able to relax tremendously after FTX, but the depression may be much worse during AIT, as I am away longer and longer from Oregon and the people I am used to. 5 days of training, 4 days of cleaning and out-processing and 2 days of graduation left. I am going to ask the chaplain to pray for me for the first time. I hope I break my back or the pain in my ears turns out to be an ear infection so I can get out of FTX. I have to wake up my relief so I can get off fireguard and get a couple hours sleep. Oh, we got our platoon t-shirts in - they are beautiful - I might frame one.

Your Son,
Benjamin

2.2.8 1 Sep 96

This Monday, we completed the End of Cycle Individual Proficiency Tests, otherwise known as "Super Bowl." There were 10 stations with 20 or 30 tasks. I passed (got a "go") on 8 of the stations. At the claymore mine deployment and recovery, I left the test set in when I fired it, so I got a no-go. At the rifle malfunction clearing station, I performed SPORTS (slap magazine, pull the charging handle back, observe the chamber, release the charging handle, tap the forward assist, and squeeze the trigger) wrong, because I used the wrong hand and the 2nd time because I switched the 2 S's. On Tuesday, we went to the confidence course. We climbed towers and ropes and went down a command wire. We also low crawled under barb wire and mounted various obstacles. On Wednesday, we left for Field Training Exercises (FTX) - this was by far the worst "camping" experience I have ever had. They only gassed us once, but they threw a lot of smoke

grenades very close to my fighting position. The first time one of the Drill Sergeants set off a white smoke grenade 20 ft. from me, I hesitated for a split second, because I didn't think riot grenades made a "snap-crackle-pop" sound, but I still managed to get my mask cleared and sealed and run down the hill in 4 seconds. No one else had gotten their mask out of the carrier. Then we realized that the wind was blowing the opposite direction and that it wasn't CS. We were just below the grenade range and a rifle range and my battle buddy kept coughing, so I was always ready to put my mask on. I found out that CS doesn't "boom" and is grey, and wispy so I could identify it before I totally freaked out. I knew we would not be gassed at night, but I still slept with my mask right on my left leg in its carrier. When they called us out to form along the main road, Thursday night, I knew we would be gassed. They always gassed the road and they wanted to make sure everyone was gassed equally. The CO gave us a lecture on lightening safety procedures, as the DSs were tying CS canisters on the end of their staffs. They started at the other end of the company formation and my mask was cleared and sealed long before the gas got near. There first was a smoke bomb and then we were told "All Clear" then came the real gas and I got mine on in time again. Some guys said "all clear" and some morons took off their masks and were hurting bad. The DS made us take off our masks before it was really all clear, but my battle buddies helped keep me from running. I threw dirt on my hands and kept my eyes closed so it wasn't as bad. It took us all day Wednesday to dig and camouflage our foxhole. We had to clear 6 ft. in all directions around the fighting position. The hole had to be 2 kevlar helmets long, 2 M-16 rifles wide, and arm pit deep of the tallest buddy (me). We then had to arrange some 80 odd sandbags to cover our position and we covered all that with sticks, leaves, needles, and small bushes to conceal it. On of my DS's (DS Pelehach) took me out on a mission. We were to assault an "enemy" position demonstrating our: map, first aid, communication, perimeter security, and out individual movement technique skills. My DS had a simulation fragmentation grenade and a white smoke grenade with CS

riot grenade markings on it to see if I would run when he threw it. He threw it fairly far away and the wind blew it the other way, but it was too dense and the people running through it too calm for it to be CS. My DS Roberts took me on a night raid with flare for illumination. It was fun. The march back was between 4-6 miles with full combat gear (carrying our rifles at ready arms) but I was relaxed and I started to remember our training and back at high school and see them both as real at the same time. We are cleaning and turning in all our gear we used in Basic. I probably don't owe any money for anything. We went to a concert on post with All 4 One and Planet Soul which was really relaxing although late at night. I am looking forward to graduation, AIT, and home more and more as I can finally see the end of the road.

Your Son,
Benjamin

2.3 Military Poetry

2.3.1 Memories of a Soldier

The Dark

Is is dark now
And I fight to stay awake
I never was this tired before
But my time in the Army
Sure was exhausting
And many things I still remember
Happened at night
The night of our arrival
At Reception Battalion
Lasted far past midnight
It took us hours to get into formation
And to stop talking
I don't remember
What processing they were doing
That took all that time
The night watch was so long
I read my green Gideon's pocket bible
And scoured its indexes

Finding helpful verses
I still don't know
What we were watching for
At Basic Training
Day started in a flash of light
The light switch was flipped
And we jumped out of bed
And ran into formation
Then we ran out into the dark
And stopped under stadium lights
My arrival to my Duty Station
Was in the deep of night
So idyllic with the palm trees
And the fresh sea air
I was lost of course
Following Drill Sergeants orders
I didn't get on the bus
With the rest of the soldiers
But I found my way to my unit
With a lot of help
Ironically the cab dropped me off
Within feet of my assigned battalion
I walked to and from my job
Usually in the dark of dawn or dusk
And I wore my sleeves long
And wore mountain boots
Because it can get chilly
With the air conditioning so high

Fear and Excitement

My experience in the Army
Was full of fear and excitement
I was terrified of being tortured
But I was thrilled beyond imagination
At being part of history
The risk is beyond human
But with the adrenaline going
You forget all the problems that could arise
I knew what I was doing was important
And it was exciting work

For someone just out of high school
Hawaii was a dream on earth
And the activities were plentiful
The land and ocean are breath taking
But the people are what keep you there
One bus travels the perimeter of Oahu
From North Shore to Waikiki
By Scofield Barracks and Pearl Harbor
Location is everything
And that was perfect
But my mind was tormented
With long bouts of depression and paranoia
In my barracks
I was kept awake
With fear of deployment
And fear of chemical attack
I had no trouble at work
My supervisors were amazed at my performance
I tested out of a year of college
And maxed out my sit-ups portion of the PT test
But worries worked at my stomach
And I could never relax
I saw the island
But had trouble enjoying anything
It was not that I was just negative
But my mood kept me on a bad course
When I went in for counseling
They knew something was wrong

Churches Numerous

God was very real to me
When I was in the Army
And the church was the safest place for me
A place where little was expected
I went to church during Basic Training
There were no Drill Sergeants there
And there were no orders to follow
At Advanced Individual Training

I attended a Methodist church
A block from our barracks
The other soldiers wondered why
I went every week
But that was all I had left of myself
When I arrived at my Duty Station
I tried a number of churches
I found a church next to my barracks again
But I was the only white person there
It was full of excitement
And people even danced in church
It was Church of God in Christ denomination
But I don't remember their theology
My roommate drove me to his church
At the other end of the island
This was the best church in Honolulu
It was Word of Life Christian Center
Or something like that
This was the First Charismatic/Pentecostal
church
I attended regularly
It was a great place to meet
Nice young women my age
And they had activities for 20 somethings
Another church I went to was called
Oahu Church of Christ or something like that
They met in the form of potlucks
At a different place every time
And there were always outdoor baptisms
At every service
The final church I went to
Was just outside the base
Every Sunday was a salvation message
And members were expected to come
Other times of the week as well
Saturday nights the preacher answered ques-
tions
And there was prayer and speaking in tongues
Every other night throughout the week

2.3.2 Safe and Sound

The Recruiter

I took a long time deciding
Whether or not to join the military
One of my interests in it
Was that I could do something
Interesting just out of high school
And go to a much better college
And not be in debt from student loans
I was also stressed out with all the reading
We did my senior year and I was looking
Forward to have some time away
From a rigorous academic program
I chose to go enlisted because I wanted
To get my military service out of the way
Before I went to college
Because even then I didn't
Think it would be very enjoyable
I found out later that there is little
A person can do to prepare for Basic Training
Except getting into good over all physical shape
I had run most years of high school in
Cross Country and Long Distance Track
And my senior year I worked out all summer
And took an intensive conditioning course
The last half of my senior year
I signed up a whole year in advance
So I got an interesting job in the Army
Working with computers
I remember asking my recruiter directly
About the NBC training
And whether or not our enemies would be
Using chemical weapons in combat
He directly denied it
I wasn't afraid of being killed
But I didn't want to be burned alive
The brochures painted one side of
Someone's imagination of military life
But being in the Army is very different
The only thing I had really known

That was correct was that it didn't
Require much brain power even for
The most advanced engineering job

Basic Training

The first thing that shocked me
Was how much easier the physical training
And how more friendly my fellow soldiers were
Than I had expected
The downside was that I didn't
Rise to the occasion as much as I had hoped
The first 2 weeks of Basic Training
You get yelled at a lot from the Drill Sergeants
And you learn to march
As well as watch films on all sorts of things
Like the military judicial system (UCMJ)
And a scare film about STDs
You also get issued gear during this period
It is really easy to get out then
But there is nothing very stressful yet
Next you learn the Manual of Arms
How to move the rifle in ceremony and safely
I had to drop and do push-ups
Each time any procedure was explained
As I seemed to keep on getting it wrong
Then we had a confidence building course
That we had to repel and climb through
Various towers somewhat like an obstacle course
Then they do pictures and no one is allowed to
smile
Of course that wasn't hard as we were to go
To the gas chamber in a few days
I was told the gas chamber didn't cause any
pain
And that you only had to
Hold your breath for a few seconds
You go in this small dark room
With your mask on and you feel
Your hands are burning painfully
Then you are told to take off the mask

Not only can you barely breathe
But it feels like your
Lungs and eyes are on fire
We were kept in there for at least 5 minutes
And we were the last platoon in
So we had much more of the CS gas
In the room at the time
As they put another stick in each time
Another platoon went in
This is when I realized the
Risks I was taking by enlisting
After that, we spent 2 weeks
Learning how to shoot the M-16 (BRM)
I thought I would never pass
But the drill sergeant gave me a lane
Where the 300m target jumped up
And down and counted for me
No matter if I hit it or not
We then trained with a live grenade
I freaked out about this
Until I got the live grenade and then
It just felt like throwing a baseball
Except after you throw it you dive
Down in your foxhole and put
Your head between your legs
For training we didn't have a foxhole
But we had a cement wall
We stood behind, we wore a kevlar
Helmet and vest and the sergeant
Jumped on us to make sure we were down
These grenades are safe as long as you aren't
Standing up as they explode at a high angle
Then we went to field training exercises (FTX)
I didn't do very good at digging a foxhole
But my battle buddy slept while I
Watched for the Drill Sergeant
One time, the Drill Sergeant pulled my rifle
Out of my hands, so I had to low crawl
In the dirt, but later I gathered
That she was saving me from the
Other Drill Sergeant who was going to throw

CS gas into my foxhole
I slept with my protective mask on that night
Then we did a big test on everything
We learned for combat survival
I failed the clearing a rifle from a jam test (SPORTS)
And I left the test button connected when
I set off my claymore mine and yelled "clay-
more"
I was supposed to be punished for that
But it didn't happen for some reason
During the last week, the head Drill Sergeant
For the platoon announced in front of everyone
That if I wasn't already promoted as high
As she could promote, then she would have
Chosen my above all the other soldiers
The only thing that happened the same every
day
Was that we woke up once the lights were turned
on
We jumped out of bed and ran into formation
When we finished training under the football
lights
We went to breakfast as it was getting light
And this was in the middle of the summer
On Sundays we got a few hours off to write let-
ters
And we could go to church or we could do chores
We were also allowed a little time to call home

Advanced Training

Going to advanced training was a big relief
(AIT)
I was shocked to see my roommates
Watch TV and play video games
I was also shocked that we had Drill Sergeants
In advanced training as well
And these ones were out of uniform
The first month or two we did details (chores)
We went to school in rotating schedules
We had morning, swing, and graveyard shifts

Every few months, our class rotated
I went to school with all the other services
I developed allergic pink eye (Conjunctivitis)
Which I continued to have for 3 more years
I think I was more stressed out by
Having to identify who are the officers
And who are the NCOs and their ranks
Than I was afraid of the real potential
Of being exposed to chemical weapons
Going to advanced training was a big relief
(AIT)

I was shocked to see my roommates
Watch TV and play video games
I was also shocked that we had Drill Sergeants
In advanced training as well
And these ones were out of uniform
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I think I was more stressed out by
Having to identify who are the officers
And who are the NCOs and their ranks
Than I was afraid of the real potential
Of being exposed to chemical weapons
We had much better food as we were on
A Navy base and after the Air Force abandoned
Their "dormitories" we inherited them
They were like the Hilton to us
But they were not up to Air Force standards
The Marines really hated us
As they trained on an Army base before
And they didn't have a good experience
We gradually got more and more privileges
After every few months
We were eventually allowed to leave the base
When I shipped off, everyone was being sent to
Hawaii

People graduating a month or 2 before me
Were sent to Bosnia and Korea
We had much better food as we were on
A Navy base and after the Air Force abandoned
Their "dormitories", we inherited them
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When I shipped off, everyone was being sent to
Hawaii
People graduating a month or 2 before me
Were sent to Bosnia and Korea

Permanent Duty Station

I graduated on Valentine's Day
And arrived at the air port
In the middle of the night
I took a taxi as the Drill Sergeant told me
On arriving to the base
I did not know where to go
Ironically, I was dropped off in exactly the right
spot
I had to do details my first few weeks
After doing processing at the base
There was a bus that drove
All around the island (Oahu)
So I could see all the sites on my days off
We worked on a rotating swing and graveyard
So I would always have different days off
I attended different churches on the base
In town nearby, in Honolulu, and across the
island
It was so beautiful even in the winter
After working a few months, I got mononucleo-
sis

I also got staff eye infections
One day, half delirious
I went to the commanding officer
And asked to get out of the military
I didn't even care if it was honorable or not
I was referred to the counseling center
They determined that I had a personality disorder
I never even saw anyone other than NCOs
A psychiatrist (a Major) signed off on it at the end
Later I found I had Schizophrenia, but that
The military wanted to save money,
So they didn't diagnose me properly
Before I left, I ran a half marathon through
Kole Kole Pass to a Naval Seal base
I also took some tests that got me credit
For a year of college
And a few months before took some classes
Which in combination, gave me
An entire year as transferable credit later on
So I never was a college freshman
I also had seen most the major tourist sites
Before I left the military
I got out in 5 weeks after talking to the CO
And I got an honorable discharge
This never happens that fast
Even with a dishonorable discharge
God was sure looking out for me

2.3.3 Duality Poetry

A Man, Nothing More

Could a broken soldier be the same man
As a tormented artist and suffering writer
Whose sleep comes harder?
A soldier longs for home
An artist longs for something to hold
In a flash of the camera
A lifetime of experience

A pace that never lets up
A falter in the climb
The fire devours the heart
The heat consumes the poetry
A timid laugh
Shame and disappointment disguised
Too long a Soldier Artist
A pawn of no one
A disfunctioning wheel in the corporate machine
If only my mind would turn off
Like the light switch
Belief without doctrine
Names without distinctions
A word created man
A man uses words for the Creator
My heart may be an invention
But my art is not
In plain clothes
I don't disguise my uselessness
Without personal transportation
Or protein that comes with a face
Too soon a Peasant Scholar

Like a Peasant

A soldier preparing for battle
Smelling a stench that burned the nostrils
I bravely entered into a little room
In the span of several minutes
Eternity passed five times
Alone in hell
I was paralyzed with fear
Compassion was never present
I left with an anger that could not be quenched
Prophet of God
Called to a sacred mission
The only one who could stop the tribulation
Taking the pain upon myself
The suffering of 3-1/2 years in a matter of minutes

The other half as a lonely wanderer
The sun came up and the wind became lively
One life sacrificed for billions of others
I was led by others to a place I did not want to
 go
Hitting rock bottom
Waking up in a room locked from the outside
My life began again I could not advocate for
 myself
Hours went by like weeks
Time was playing tricks on me
One freak in a million who lives by himself
This is truly something
Someone who dared to challenge society
To hold himself accountable to both reason and
 faith
Who challenges himself to create more intelli-
 gent pieces of art each time
Who expands to different disciplines as he breaks
 into one at a time
A happy child with control over his destiny I
 return to the joy of my youth
Now more thoughtful in word and action
A handicap that I struggle with daily
But without pain

Like a Soldier

Fighting all our lives
For just a moment in time
For that natural high
That reflective sigh
For that minute of silence
When the world stops
And you keep going
That sweet sorrow
Comes when we look back
Nothing will be repeated
A feeling that never ends
The moment will fade
But the silence I will keep

And the tune will play in my head
Humor comes in such surprising moments
But the pain lingers on and drags into hours
What will stop the deep sorrow
From penetrating my bruised heart?
We are most alone
When the other first closes the door
Pain is deeper than a bullet wound
When we have a sorrow that can't be resolved
How do we fight
With just one step in front of the other?
Sometimes it is harder just to keep standing
We are not defeated when we fall down
Or fall short of our expectations
And death need not be a defeat
But that is not the worst fate
Some fight with paper
It is not how many balls that land in the trash
That measures their success
It is not the expected outcome
That foreshadows loss
Every moment we breathe with a sigh
That is how we know we are alive
Through the hours that never let up
We do our work with less and less hesitation
But it is not what defines us
It is in the all nighters
And the long evening talks
That we remember

Life's Parallels

Setting down my protective mask
And logging off my workstation for the last
time
My duty done
Someone else will save the world tomorrow
I heard God on the radio
Leaving the fantasy world permanently
The world is no longer a projection of my mind
I swallow the red pill

And wake up outside the protective matrix
I followed God through the start of the millen-
nium
Sitting at a table in a local deli
The radio was on for the first time
Reality comes crashing down
Our nightmares are played on the black box in
our living rooms
God kept me from sinking into my sorrow
Taking a good look behind
I see some of the past in my future
The old world that my ancestors came from is a
news flash away
We are part of them and they are part of us
Time places no limits on God
What separates us from madness and violence
is a very thin line

2.3.4 Other Poetry

Commitment and Freedom

A perfectly made bed
And a perfectly pressed uniform
A hard run across the pavement
And push-ups on the living insect ground cover-
ings
A breakfast of hard grits
And salty juice
A bleached protective mask
And a lubricated rifle
A rotating shift
With different days off every week
Are far from a perfect way
To get an edge on life
Running is the only freedom
When you are being put under combat stress
You're only break is when you are in church
service
When the drill sergeant is always breathing
down your neck

Over 5 years later
Outside the grip of Uncle Sam
There is a calm deep inside
A feeling of silence never leaves
There is no reason to always be alert
There is no threat of attack
There is no one to make all your decisions for
 you
There is a freedom in being done with war
There is no allegiance that you have to die for
No commitment that might end your life
There is an excitement that comes
When you can go anywhere tomorrow
There is a contentment that comes
When you know you are working for peace
There is a way that you can relax
When you will not be insulted for slipping up
There is a confidence that comes
When you can plan your own day
War brings nothing good
And being done with it is the greatest relief
Why should we sacrifice
For decisions others have made?
What war ever brought less war to follow?
And when will they ever end?
Maybe if they stop enlisting
The Army will have to cease hostilities

Desert Mist

My eyelids are heavy as depleted uranium
My heart is burned with radiation
In a flash of the flares
And in the yellow smoke
My mind turns to my childhood
To others taken away
In the silent night
Fire-fights lit up the sky
One side obliterated in hours
Burning carcasses littered the desert
The Army goes rolling along

Over barricades at 40 mph
Pausing only seconds between firing
The young knights barely of age
Trampling the cavalry of years gone by
I dream of a time
When my boots were always polished
And my shirt ironed flat
Of fears lived
And hopes vanished
The god of war is steel
And the protector is a rubber mask
In danger I plead with logic
And critical time slips by
There is no escape
From the grips of Uncle Sam
This is a time
That I remember all too well
When staying awake
Is the least of your worries
When hitting the target is an empty goal
And clearing your rifle seems unimportant
There are times when you want to fly away
And now I can
But when you are in the middle of the beast
There is little you can do
Suicide seems rational
But that would bring little relief
When you hear "Gas! Gas! Gas!"
Two and half seconds is not fast enough

Reflections on Soldiering

The room is glowing red
We are convulsing in the furnace
Within a crematoria though alive
We gasp for breathe as though drowning
Little chamber filled with fire
How long will we be locked within your walls?
Large beady eyes glare at us
Telling us to surrender our eyes to the flames
Behind the masks and beneath the suits

Our leaders show no sign of care
No understanding
Of the corrosive atmosphere
Bound within the gates of Hell
We are paralyzed with fear
After spending several ages in fire
The door is flung open
We are allowed out one by one
The burning gradually decreases
And we can begin to breathe again
But at any moment
We may be forced back in
Next time it will be longer
And there is no end in sight
Each day we spend in training
We lose a year's memory
Our days before we went to war
Fade to be nothing more than a dream
There is no time to enjoy life or relax
When every waking hour must be devoted dis-
cipline
Our music is the orders of the Drill Sergeant
And our dance is the manual of arms
Our only realm for expression is in our dreams
And our only book is the Soldiers Manual
We believe in the claymore and in our protec-
tive masks
They are all that watch over us
We are free when we are running
As long as we are fast enough
How can I live any longer
With the threat of drowning in fire?
I never would have chosen this road
If I knew what war was like
If a POW camp is harder than this life
And combat is both more boring and more ter-
rifying than training
How will I withstand the reality of war?
How will I become a soldier?
There are no more choices to make
After the one that got me here

There is no independence in the Army
There is no justice in what we do
How can we defend others rights
When we have none?
Drill Sergeant says I am now a soldier
That I have been transformed
That there is nothing but shame in turning
 back
That there is hope in what lies ahead
That I will not have to face the same realities
The others will have to face
But I for the first time understand fear
And I cannot trust anyone to save me
I am on my own with no one looking over me
Yet I have no freedom and no escape
I feel like an infant
I feel weak and powerless
But there is no guardian
There is no one I know
Dying doesn't scare me
But the possibilities of suffering do
I see no meaning
Except in avoiding pain
There is no reason to live
And no protection except in death

Total Isolation

When you enlist in the Army
Your life is no longer your own
Joining is the last decision you make
Your intelligence is of no use
And your training a waste of time
There is no way you can get prepared
For a life without freedom
When you lived a life with
Choices for everything
There is only one way to march
One way to shoot a rifle
There is one way to make your bed
And there is only one way

To don your protective mask
There is one way to throw a grenade
And one way to dig a foxhole
There is no time to think about
Theories of war or the Geneva conventions
There is never a time when you
Can let your guard down
Your life is totally committed
You have your reasons for enlisting
But they matter less and less
Enlistment is a one way tunnel
And there are no stops or ways out
You can shoot yourself in the foot
But then your job will just be harder
You can follow your job to the letter
And yet be valued the same
As the biggest screw-up
You could follow directions exactly
And still get captured
The others fail you all the time
But if you ever fail them
The cost is enormous
If you fail to listen to instructions
You could be the next victim
Of the war on terror
You could pay attention to
Every last detail
And still end up needing to be
Identified by DNA

2.4 Considering Military Service?

I served in the Army and here are some of the things I found to be both good and bad about the military. I also worked with the other services too, so I know something about them.

2.4.1 Good Points

You can feel confident that you are doing something important and something that not everyone can do. You also

feel like you are accomplishing something important. Remember, whether or not you agree with what the government has sent you to do, you are still being a great help. And you don't have to feel responsible for what your country decides, because the military does not decide when and where to go in.

You meet some great people in the military that you will remember your whole life. They often have strong personalities and are not always friendly at first, but these guys will save your life even by sacrificing their own. The military does a background check on all recruits before they can join and checks for personality defects, by putting recruits through stress during initial training.

Military service looks great on your resume and if you pick the right job you can get some very valuable training. Look into something that you can do that has a civilian equivalent. There are a lot of good engineering and mechanical related jobs that you can be trained in that will translate into good jobs when you get out of the military.

2.4.2 Bad Points

Very few people get the college money they are promised. The government is not going to give you hundreds of thousands of dollars for college if they can avoid it, so they put many restrictions on it like you have to start within 2 years of leaving the military, you can't change majors (unless enough of your credits apply to the new major), you only get it if you have an honorable discharge, etc. Going to college in the military is not usually an option, because the military is too understaffed to spare service members.

You don't get paid that much during your service. In fact, if you have a wife and a kid and have a college degree, but want the military to pay back the money, you will be under the poverty level and receiving food stamps. You can also get an Article 15 for even very minor infractions, and be penalized with a hundred dollars taken out of your pay check and get a few weeks of extra duty every day.

You might be expected to risk your long term health or life. There is a reason why they send you through a

gas chamber, while you are in basic training in the Army, Marines, and sometimes in the Navy and Air Force and it isn't just a right of passage. The countries the US fights have not signed the Geneva conventions and it is very common for them to torture prisoners and to use chemical weapons. Being exposed to chemical weapons like mustard gas and chlorine is like being burned by battery acid in your lungs and eyes.

2.4.3 Recommend

Realize that the military is very stressful and if you are struggling with psychological issues or are a sensitive person of any kind, joining the military will just exasperate your problems and the military is not set up to do everything for you and take care of things if you can't.

First, consider if joining Americorps or the Peace Corps will satisfy what you are looking for. In Americorps, you help Americans in America, without the high risk of personal injury. You also have many choices on what you can do and who you work for.

Look into joining the Air Force, if at all possible. The Air Force has few of the downsides that the other services have. The one downside to the Air Force is that it is hard to advance very far in rank, because people stay in so long.

Choose the shortest length of service possible. It is very easy to be accepted back into the military for another enlistment, but very hard to get out, while you are still under your tour of duty.

Join the Reserves or Guard first. There are some very interesting jobs that the Reserves and National Guard can do if you are willing to move to another state. If you really enjoy military life, you can very easily change to Regular enlistment, but it is much harder to go the other way around.

When you have joined, always give 150 percent and be a team player all the time and you will avoid 99 percent of the problems most people encounter in the military.

2.4.4 Specifics

If you are considering the Army or the Marines, go play paint ball and go camping with your recruiter; this will give you somewhat of an idea about some of the things you will do in the military.

If you are thinking of joining the Navy, really think carefully what it might be like with a bunch of high school age kids on a little ship in the middle of the ocean. Find out exactly how much space you have and some of the things you might have to do there.

If you have joined in the Delayed Entry Program and have changed your mind, it is very easy to get out and does not count against you in the civilian world or even to the other services. If you show up to your swearing in and shipping date, then it is very hard to get out, until your enlistment is up.

3 Transition

3.1 College

3.1.1 Going Home

I am going home today
This home is like a dream
Away in the Army
For just over a year
I feel great excitement
And serious relief
Today is the anniversary
Of when World War 2 ended
I shall never forget today
August 15, 1997
Everything is surreal
And I do not believe
Anything is real
With the awesome release
I feel a failure
I did not serve my full tour
I did not know now
That I was mentally ill
Or that this was why
I was given a discharge
All I knew
Was my eyes burned
And I would have this condition
Indefinitely
I met people from my home church
And I heard of others
Triumphs and failures
I was introduced to a girl on the phone
Who was a few years younger than me
When we talked I realized
I had no hobbies or interests
I don't know how it was for others
But the military life
Did not allow me time for leisure
Or maybe it was just the mind set
That I could never let my guard down
Or ever relax

I was told by my CO
That I should enroll in college
And I did so that fall

3.1.2 Community College

A few days
After I came back
I bought my first computer
I was going to major in business
So I bought a PC
I had saved 5,000 dollars
Of my military income
And I got 10,000 dollars
For college expenses
Because of my service
I realized that I had enough for tuition
But not enough for housing
So I stayed at my parents' house
I did ok in calculus
I excelled in economics
But I had to take accounting
5 times to pass
I missed so many French classes
Because I was using the Internet
With the free hours from AOL
I started out researching my pink eye
But got diverted to finding
A different way to be Christian
Later on I would realize
That the answers lay in the church
I grew up in
Despite those attitudes were the ones
I was trying to escape
I didn't study much
And slept as much as possible
As the pink eye never relented
That summer I took several required
English courses
And started my website
This was the first time

I was introduced to Postmodernism

3.1.3 Community College 2

I tested out of my first year in college
While still in the military
So I started out at Community College
In town as a sophomore
I had even got money from the Army
For college but the biggest financial aid
Came from not counting my parents income
Against me so I could get grants
Grants don't have to be paid back
I had to live at home because I only
Had enough money for school
I started out with a Business Major
I took Calculus and Economics
I had a lot of trouble with Accounting
I took it 5 times before I passed it
I learned about Postmodernism
In my required English class
I hated Business but I was trying
To be practical about my major
I wasn't able to study much
Because I was in so much pain
From the allergic pink eye

3.1.4 University

Not only did I have a Community College
In the town I grew up in
We also had a University
And there are several other colleges there too
Besides my business courses
I took History of Philosophy
And Chinese language course
Both these fell through
For different reasons
The philosophy course required
Weekly papers
And I missed the first

So I had to audit it
As I missed the deadline to withdraw
I stopped going as I thought
Socrates was a smart ass
In my Chinese class
I couldn't learn as fast as they taught
So I had to drop out of it too
But I stayed in my Chinese Literature class
And I really enjoyed it
This is how I was introduced
To Chinese philosophy
That spring I had to find an apartment
And I switched to Linux
Cold turkey
After researching it for 6 months
I was trying to figure out
How to get Microsoft applications
From crashing
So I looked into programming
And all roads led to Linux
That summer I went back
To stay at my parents house
And I took summer courses again
For the credits I missed
During the school year
I took several electives
One was Existentialism
One was about Ecofeminism
I switched my major
To Journalism
Which made much more sense
As I have always been
Good at writing
I took business initially
As my dad recommended it

3.1.5 University 2

The next year I attended the
University in town as a Junior
I continued studying business

I took a Chinese Literature class
As my business breadth requirement
And I enjoyed it immensely
This was my first introduction
To Eastern Philosophy
I also started several other classes
But had to drop out
As I was still in so much pain
From my allergic pink eye
This was about the time
When I started my website
I had to move out that Spring
And lived in a fixed up garage
For a few months
And this was when I first
Installed Linux
After reading about it for 6 months
My motivation was to try to
Fix Microsoft Office so it would
Crash less and all programming roads
Seemed to lead to Linux
I had to attend summer school
As I didn't complete enough courses
I took an Existentialism and an Ecofeminism
Course that summer
As that was all that was left
This was my first introduction to
Existentialism
The end of that summer I worked
At a phone survey company
Previously I had tried selling
Long distance phone service
And doing canvassing for
Our local Public Interest Research Group
I changed my major to Journalism
I took a grammar course
And a graphic design for journalists course
As well as a class in mass media
And a philosophy course about Beauvoir
Someone told me she was the lover
Of Foucault which is not true

3.2 Journey

3.2.1 Generations

Like Abraham's call by God
So I believed I was called away
To another land
With my enlistment in the Army
Like Jacob's wrestle with God
I started to fight with God
About why He allows suffering
During college
Like Moses liberating his people
From the land of the Pharaohs
So I was liberating from paranoia
After my stay in a psychiatric ward
Like Joshua leading his people
Into the land of Canaan
So I fought to stay as independent
And rational as possible
Like Israel under Solomon
God blessed my work and I flourished
In my writing and artwork
Then I lived like a prophet
In the wilderness of the retirement home
Fighting for justice
And feeling I lived in the shadow
Of many old people's wrath
Now my desire for justice and freedom
Has been fulfilled with my return
To my own apartment
Like the Israelites came back to the land
After their years of captivity
Under the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians,
etc.
In my life I have lived many generations
Like being reincarnated
My situation changed each time
And my life was different at each stage

3.2.2 Clarity in Conviction, an Epic Poem

I am a rock crushed and beaten to dust
I am a clay jar wet with rot, pried and pulled
to disfigurement
I am rushed by in shrieking winds of light
I am filled with void and darkness
I stand at the edge of human thought and rea-
son, quivering uncontrollably
I am surrounded on each side
To the right, pain
And to the left, despair
Behind me, fear
And death alone stands before me
All was biting flames and smothering fog
Dancing and laughing sadistically
Drowning in this red hot furnace
I was bound and gagged with pure terror and
relentless pain
Nothing existed but pain and terror
But for a single ray of light immortal
After eternity passed five times
I passed through the iron doors of night impen-
etrable
Still choking and burning on the rot and char
within
Pain and not pain were all that existed
I am part of nothing
And nothing is part of me
Having rejected everything
And everything having rejected me
I am a man, a soldier
And nothing more
And madness did but all consume me
If not for many a labor of love
So once fully alone and silent still
I did let the sun shine in and heal the rot and
char
Within the daily fears and petty tribulations
that did haunt me
And in the midst of the multitudes busy

Did He, in the humble summer day breeze,
Find I to be wanting and unworthy
So in the cool of the day
With the entire continuum of time and space
 shuddering
Did my Savior present Himself
As the only worthy sacrifice
Obedient to even death, He did defeat
That which did seek to torment me most eternally
As God raised Jesus from the dead
From there I venture as a simple pilgrim, asking for directions as I go
Finding in the Word He had left me
A map to discern the directions to be trusted
 from that which should not be
At times outrunning my companions
And at other times standing almost completely still
I find clarity in the conviction of this truth
That God raised Jesus from the dead
And so I go ever on
As He walks humbly by my side
The living flame imperishable walking
To the pace of a mortal man
My companion, my Lord, as my real Father
He who created me is not yet finished
He turns the circle of life, the potter's wheel
To mold my empty and disfigured thoughts into
 the pure and noble thoughts of His Son
Making me into the likeness of the real Son of
 Man
From the inside out
I am baptized in His Grace, so
That He can make me a new creation
Making me again with fresh clay and water
And filling the emptiness with His love and His
 peace
And now my eyes are more fully opened
And I now see the unending power and goodness of Christ within me and the truth of

His Word all around me
I am no longer male or female, white or black,
young or old,
But bought at the highest price and no longer
my own
I now call myself after my master, Christian
He that I may serve and in so doing be free
from my most eternal enemy, myself
And as the road goes ever on and on,
And I stumble along the way, from time to time
And as I return to the foot of the cross each
day
And learn again why I cannot master myself
And I realize each time more and more
How amazing was that grace that saved a wretch
like me

3.2.3 Spirits Follow

Alone in a crowd
All cramped in a tiny room
Locked in from without
All I could see is red
Shivering in torment
Like a doomed soul
Baptized in hellfire
Will they ever let me out?
Alone in my bed
All warm and well fed
A dark cloud rises from the vents
And shakes the window
My soul shivers
And I lay motionless
A wicked voice whispers
My worst fears
There is a danger that is greater than death
There is a fear greater than going mad
There are times when you wish you could hide
Under the shadow of the Lord
There is a way that you could escape
If you locate your enemy

Left hand betraying the right
Your heart revealed secrets to your mind
A dislocated soul
And a warped spiritual dimension
What sword can penetrate to the heart
Dividing the bone from the marrow?
Fighting for peace
Is a delicate struggle
When your home is booby trapped
And your foe looks like your friend
Nothing is sacred
And you are never really alone

3.2.4 After All These Years

The fight is still in me
And I still remember
Dreams of success
Adventure and excitement
What is easy to forget
Is the training
The pain and the struggle
To build strength of mind and body
I still focus on the result
But the process is equally important
A soldier struggles in each task
Of his necessary skills
The most important ones
Are the least glamorous
The hardest ones
He forgets easiest
The ones he never did
Are recalled most often
I can imagine parachuting
Over hostile territory
But the voice of the drill sergeant
Continues to fade over time
My protective mask
Is not my greatest defense
Now I rely on freedom of religion
And the uselessness of my work

I am still a soldier
But my pictures are my rifle
And my words are my bayonet
I am determined to build my body
To the level of my mind
But I now know
That it is equally hard
As the piles of books
I struggled to understand
There will be years of work
And I will fail for most of it
But one day
Everything will come together
And I will be stronger
To face my greatest enemy
My paranoid mind
And deluded consciousness

3.2.5 The Forest

My time in the forest was predestined
There was a reason for my forest years
But I was not cheated
And was not a victim of a petty game
The forest is a time of building character
And learning life lessons
I learned new ways to fight
I found weapons more powerful than a pen
The forest is filed with trials and traps
Mine were paranoid and obsessive compulsive
I feared things that are irrational
And was obsessed with the least important
I learned that play is as important as work
And that relationships with people are as important as ideas
I learned that I can survive things
Most people will never have to go through
The only way to learn is trial by fire
And the only way to live is with wisdom
God watches over me
As I am one of His children

And is ever ready especially in the deep forest
When it is common for the details to be violent
To help my character
As He writes the story of my life
With special powers I can do more good
The special power I want is to be normal
But unlike the epic hero
My forest journey is always with me
Because it is a part of who I am
And I am willing to go the distance
With my tribulations
If I can learn from each challenge
So that I suffer less each time

4 Having Schizophrenia

4.1 Introduction

Dealing with Paranoid Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a disease that encompasses a wide range of different problems, like the disease Cancer. Not all people with Schizophrenia hear voices or have paranoia. Paranoid Schizophrenia is the worst, by far.

Schizophrenia is caused by a stressful event, which is most often caused by the military, but only in people who have a genetic predisposition to the disease, which is hereditary, occurring usually only once in a generation. Drugs do not cause Schizophrenia, but can make it worse and harder to diagnose. Schizophrenia is caused by the brain not developing normally in adolescents. It affects the frontal lobe which is responsible for fear, anger, and other primordial emotions.

Men usually get diagnosed in their 20s and women in their 30s. The illness is generally not caught until there is a paranoid episode and medicine is usually not started until a (non-violent) crime is committed, as it is hard for a person to accept that they are out of their mind. Staying on the medicine regularly is the key to living a semi-normal life. 1/3 of people with Schizophrenia just stare at a wall all day, one third are semi-independent, and 1/3 are almost fully independent.

There is a similar disorder that is less disabling called Schizoaffective disorder and people who have this disorder are often under the false impression that they have Schizophrenia plus Mania or Depression, and that they have a tougher time than people who "just" have Schizophrenia. This is not true. Schizophrenia as a whole is much more severe than Schizoaffective disorder and Paranoid Schizophrenia is the most disabling mental illness, by a long shot.

Many people also are difficult to diagnose, because they have taken drugs before to self medicate. Also, many psychologists or counselor diagnose people and often give incorrect labels, because they are not qualified to diagnose. To diagnose, you must be a psychiatrist, not a psychologist.

A psychologist or counselor may have anywhere between a one year certificate to a doctorate in psychology. Most have a bachelors or a masters degree. A psychiatrist has a full doctorate in medicine, plus a doctorate in psychology, plus an internship, etc. Most psychologists have no training in mental illness at all.

I have Paranoid Schizophrenia and that is what 3 independent psychiatrists diagnosed me with, all whose interest would be best served if they didn't diagnose me. Those who diagnosed me were: the admitting psychiatrist for a mental ward of a local private hospital, one working for the Social Security Administration and one working for the Veterans Administration. It cost them all a lot of money for their organizations to diagnose me, so my case is very well founded. Also, no one who was qualified to diagnose me ever thought I could have any disorder other than Paranoid Schizophrenia and I have never been diagnosed as anything else.

The first thing to get started, after being diagnosed with any major mental illness, is the medicine. This is even more true for Schizophrenia. There is no cure yet for Schizophrenia and it cannot be treated effectively by religion, diet, herbs, meditation or counseling alone or in combination. The primary treatment for Schizophrenia is a tranquilizer (also known as a sedative). The discovery was made in the early 50s that tranquilizers would blunt the voices, delusions, and paranoia.

Many people do not want to take the medicine, because of the negative side effects. This medicine causes tremendous and rapid weight gain almost always, as it numbs the nerves in the stomach, so you never feel full no matter how much you eat. Many people feel less creative with the medicine and feel that it is given just to get the person to follow orders better. The medicine can also cause diabetes, due to the high weight gain. The medicine also make people very tired and that is why many people who have Schizophrenia drink large amounts of coffee and other caffeinated beverages and smoke cigarettes.

There are some other common symptoms to Schizophrenia, that the experts have not been able to pin down to the illness or the medicine. These symptoms include: de-

pression, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, difficulty with short term memory, lack of appropriate facial expressions, lack of emotion, etc. These are the most disabling aspects of Schizophrenia, for most people.

The other negative aspect is that most people with Schizophrenia receive money from Social Security Administration, which is much less than minimum wage and so they are often the victims of crime. It is also hard for people with Schizophrenia to make friends. Although it is common that someone is not treated, until they commit a minor crime like vandalism or stealing, people with Schizophrenia are not any more likely to commit violent crimes than anyone else. I have never committed any crimes.

Although medicine is the primary treatment, secondary treatments help with some of the other symptoms that are often the most disabling for people living with Schizophrenia. Some of these secondary treatments include revealed religions, especially Christianity, as it offers the most comfort and has the least amount of obligations of these religions. Counseling can be helpful, especially as obsessive compulsive behaviors/addictions are common with people who have a mental illness. I have never taken any drugs. Another good secondary treatment is to find a hobby or something constructive to do. Some people, who have Schizophrenia, can work a part time job.

4.2 Breakdown

4.2.1 Jesus Won Paranoid Episode

I had been having some problems with spiritual warfare. I had written some stories that I merged my life with Middle Earth. I accidentally put myself under a Witchcraft spell. I walked out of my house that day with my Army jacket. I was ready for warfare. I rushed around downtown. I dropped off my books, that were loading me down in my pack, by the side of the street and an angel flew off with it. I went to the Church and knelt down before the crucifix and prayed to God to spare me. I took my web site off line with the offensive material. I saw "Jesus loves

you” engraved in the side of the street that I didn’t see before or afterwards. I saw a double rainbow when I went home.

I made an altar out of our fireplace. I piled in it all my Buddhist, Feminist, and Atheistic books and lit it on fire. I kept loading books in for several hours. Some that I was unsure about I took to the fire place and, if they survived the flames, I kept them. I tore down the Buddhist goddess of mercy down from the wall and our black cat meowed out side. He was in cohorts with the Devil. I threw in the plastic snake in the fire and commanded evil out in Jesus name and turned my back to the altar. I laid on my bed and weeped for the suffering of the Church during the tribulation. I saw a vision of Star Trek as the future. I started singing “Joy to the World” as my eyes were moisturized with my tears. My eyes had hurt for 3 1/2 years before. They needed the salt they weren’t getting from flushing them out several times a day for that time. I looked down at my Bible. It was the Parallel New Testament. We were in a parallel time kept that way by people making the Bible into too many versions.

My parents put out the food for the homeless for the postman to deliver. They spoke to me in code that I was the homeless person this Christmas. I walked out of the house when my parents left. I stood on the porch walking back and forth. The radio dial spun out of control. Many years now went by.

I stood on the porch, until my parents came back. I saw them come back with the dog. I had to decide whether I was going to go out and marry my friend’s sister or go down to the Church to pray. I looked at my bank receipt and then put it in my pocket. I knew when I took it out again there would be enough for my marriage. I headed down the grocery store to buy a paper and look for a job. The paper had on it the story of how the world fell apart.

Only Eugene and Springfield were left. On the front page, they said we decided not to hire you (I had been interning down at the Comic News). I went down to the corner and saw the number to the Comic News on a sign. I tried to hang myself on the sign. I was unworthy.

I saw the parents of my friend whose sister I was go-

ing to marry aged years and they drove off angrily when they saw me. I should have gone down to marry her. I walked along the sidewalk. I knew I couldn't go back home. Everyone had banned Christians from their houses. I looked for a sign. I picked up a wooden sign that said "777 indoor sale". It was a secret code. I covered up the Bible so the devil didn't know about the parallel time as I walked along. I got on the bus. I shared to them that I was a Christian and I was kicked off the bus with a scornful look.

I saw the devil car pass by, all red with antenna on the top, like horns. I turned aside and continued quickly. I continued up to the church. I stopped, where two ladies were talking. All men were now kicked out of their houses. The world was controlled by radical feminists. I asked them, if I could go in where it was warm. I told them I was the prostitute. I asked if they were Christians. One lady tried to trick me into thinking that I should go to Eugene to the Mission. The other who was Christian told me there was a Bible study at the Church. It was the only one left. The other church had slipped into just doing good works and lost their faith. I came to the Church and I started to read my Bible.

I sat with my back to the world so no one could see the Bible. I picked a version and read it all the way through the book of John. It sounded a lot like Revelations. I was going to wait 3 1/2 years feeding off the Bible for food. I would have to wait for my sister as the only other Christian on earth. As I prayed I turned and saw the sky change color and sunlight came out and I was warm.

I was happy once I finished reading the Bible and knew things were ok. Everyone was racing into the city as they had been racing out before. Everyone was relieved. God played jokes on me with the signs to relax me. I was too tense. As I walked by now with the wooden sign up for everyone to see I smiled and yelled out "777 Jesus won". A motorcycle gang fled from me as I walked by with the police following them. The same police I heard before.

I returned to the store and picked up a copy of the newspaper. I showed a woman everything happened like in the paper. I also offered one to one of the bikers. I went

back home and picked up the mail. All the letters were filled with the number 7. I went down to my friends house and dropped off the newspaper and the jam for the homeless person. I was accepted into the American Legion. As I walked down Main Street I noticed that the wind had blown away large clumps of trees and trash. The city was being cleaned up and there were red bows on all the city for me. I was welcome at any hotel.

I saw my parents and they picked me up.

4.2.2 Poetry

My Breakdown

At the end of the winter semester
I had an emotional breakdown
I thought I was dealing
With spiritual warfare
I tore up my copy of the Second Sex
And I burned a bunch of my books
I thought I was a prophet
And ended up in the local
Private hospital's mental ward
I tried to take courses that Spring
After I was released for several months
In programming and social science
But that didn't work out
I started reading philosophy again
Starting with Existentialism
And Zen Buddhism
Along the way
I spent about a year in a group home
With 8 other mentally ill men
I spent a couple years in a retirement home
And had in home care a number of years
I now am completely independent

Descent into Madness I now know the horrors exist
That are worse than we can imagine
I am now in constant pain
I carry in my eyes the unquenchable fire

The one that never stops burning
I am injured beyond repair
But my country says its not that bad
I cannot study for long
Nor can I concentrate
I manage to pass enough classes
By learning quickly and a good memory
I try to meet others
But I am too tired to extend myself
No one will hire me
Except for a phone survey place
I cannot work with chemicals
My eyes burn even worse in their presence
My paranoia continues to grow
I think I am growing a third eye
Spiritual warfare seems to make sense
But I end up in the hospital
And the doors lock behind me
I am now in Hell again
But only my mind burns
I cannot escape
But time passes by more quickly
I move out to the outside room
And am allowed to have some freedom
I go home
And continue to sleep for long time periods
I struggle to get on my own
And get acknowledged that I am ill
I struggle to read again
And am finally able to write again

Schizophrenia

When school let out that winter
I thought I was wrestling with
Spiritual warfare
But as I found myself
In the mental ward of a local hospital
I knew I was having emotional problems
I didn't know until a month later
That I had Schizophrenia

My parents came to see my all day long
But I only remember them
Coming in the evening
I was explaining trigonometry
We were all afraid of one of the guys
He was big and not very nice
And he controlled the TV
I remember how excited we got
When we realized we could order
More than one of the food items
To one of the residents
My pastor came to see me
And said he could get me out
I knew better for some reason
I was so excited to leave the first room
Which they called Hell
And to go out into the next area
In the hospital ward
I remember we got to do
Group activities there
One guy showed me how to dance
I was hyper-religious
According to my psychiatrist
Who kept asking me if I heard voices
He didn't introduce himself
So it was a few days later
Before I realized he was my doctor
I remember how hard it was to sleep
The dementia patients next door
Kept screaming all night
To get out
I had to under go an MRI
Which was very scary for me
But my mom was there for me
And I was given a mirror
So I could see out
When I left the hospital
I watched TV most of the day
And I slept a lot too
I finally decided to read and write
Which was very difficult at first

I was only able to
Write after 4 months
It was hard for me
To even ride across town
At first
I remember when I got back
From the hospital
I threw out
Everything sharp in my room
I was afraid to be alone
For several months
I started attending
A local recreation group
For the mentally ill
I also worked on learning Javascript
And eventually started
On my website again

Total Isolation

When you are committed
Even when voluntarily
There is no escape
From the terror
Your days pass by
With hours of no memory
The pain takes weeks
To lessen noticeably
You must stay in Hell
And there is no quick way out
You are not informed of your rights
But it would not matter
You still could never understand
You are not in your right mind
The doctor controls your fate
You can be sent to the state hospital
And never be released
Or get out in a couple weeks
You have no choice
What really scares you
Are others like yourself

You are all in the same boat
You cannot get out
Until you are scanned
You are crammed into
A small tunnel
And you cannot leave
Until they are done
You cannot see out
And they cannot give you
Enough tranquilizers to calm you
You want to return to normal
But you cannot work
For at least a year
Or you will never get
Your state pension
You have to wait another year
For low income housing
If you are lucky
You have family
Who can and will take you in
And who will do your paperwork
None of it starts until
You know about it and register
If you live on the street
You are stuck being homeless
And there is little hope
Of being able to get out

Group Home

That fall I entered
A group home
I shared the house
With 8 other men
With mental illnesses
And there was a staff person
There at all times
They basically ignored us
We had to clean and cook
All by ourselves
There was no help in this

They just required that we did this
The TV was always on VH1
And we had to leave the house
For at least 1 hour at 11am
I started volunteering
At a local Internet Service Provider
Doing tech support
I also volunteered at a local music hall
Taking tickets and checking IDs
We had to be in
By a certain time each night
And had to stay inside until
A certain time in the morning
They wouldn't let me go to bed
Before a certain time
And I had to get up by a certain time
The reason why I was here
Was because I started out with only
200 and some dollars a month
From the state agency
And this was the only place that would take
me
I visited my mom once a week
She was on the other side of town
And I got 20 dollars a week from her
Which I spent mostly on books
I kept writing poetry and reading
Mostly about Buddhism at this point
And I continued to work on the website
I started on a new medicine
Which made me less tired
When I was on the previous medicine
If I didn't fight to stay awake
I would always be asleep
Then my money came in
From the Veterans
And I moved into my own apartment

4.3 Limitations

4.3.1 Articles

What is it like? What is it like to not have control of your mind - to lay awake at night afraid of things that will never happen - to believe that your loved ones are against you - to not know the difference between what is fact and what is fiction - to fear the police will arrest you for how you were born - to not be able to handle the stress of meetings - to not be able to be consistently on time - to not be able to sit through a play or a movie - to find it stressful to listen to music - to not have the motivation to take care of yourself - to have to rely on others for your income?

Thought Control I am very self-reflective and find meaning in every part of life. But I am not just a philosopher because many of my thoughts are not rational and I do not have control over my thoughts. I keep busy to distract myself from voices and paranoia. Quiet times like when I fall asleep at night are when my paranoia and voices are the most intense. When someone makes a comment in general and it could apply to me, I take it as a personal attack as I am suspicious that others are against me. It is impossible for me to still my mind enough to meditate.

Daily Activities Not only do I not have control over my thoughts, but I find it impossible to take care of the daily activities that are necessary to survive in the modern world. I understand technology, philosophy, and can write and draw on a level that few can surpass, but I can't wash my clothes once a week, clean my bathroom, recycle, or show up at a set time. The modern world is based on the clock and on facts and that is how we deal with other people in our society. This is completely foreign to my way of thinking.

Responses I developed my own subculture, as I was unable to find my place in society. Basically, I have to

find time to rest in order to deal with my illness, to avoid going back to the hospital. But even the rest can cause me mental pain: paranoia and auditory hallucinations. It would be good for me to have more interactions with people, as they help bring me into the modern world, but they also cause me a great deal of paranoia and many things they carelessly say cause me to suffer mentally.

Schizophrenia This is the situation I am in, and modern science calls it Schizophrenia. I am very intelligent and good at writing and being creative, but this has nothing to do with Schizophrenia. Is a person with diabetes any different except for their illness? I am no different in that way too. I know many other people who have Schizophrenia and they are no more or less intelligent or think differently than anybody else.

Schizophrenia is a broad term like cancer where many different illnesses fall under the same umbrella. Some people with Schizophrenia can complete distance education or work a part time job, but I cannot. My main obstacle is dealing with time and facts - dealing with other people and taking care of my basic needs.

Why Cows? Cows have been abused throughout history for labor, meat, milk, leather, and manure. The related words in Chinese are "jail" and "complain."

Discrimination of the Mentally Ill I identify with cows because I am mentally ill. The mentally ill have been the most targeted group of people for persecution, discrimination, marginalization, segregation, isolation, and more. Even as late as the 50's people were locked up for being mentally ill and even today they still receive electroshock therapy against their will.

Personal Discrimination I have been denied several volunteer jobs because they knew I was mentally ill although definitely qualified and have no criminal record nor have ever been institutionalized, I have not received federally mandated equal access to education which my

only request that required effort from the instructor was oral test or test by paper, I have not been given a case worker because the county did not have any more available although I qualified, as a veteran I still have to travel hundreds of miles for dental treatment and have to pay for many medical expenses upfront, and to even get my disability I had to wait a year and a half which is not uncommon which if I worked in that time I would be disqualified, and I was not told about services available in my community and had to find them on my own.

Son of Strength I have developed the idea of raising the bar, once I reach the level that was once my goal, for a higher goal and then on and on until I die. I think I reached rock bottom recently. I have developed the ability to understand philosophy despite having Schizophrenia and with it the near impossibility of understanding abstract thought.

Based on this insight, I surmised that I could do the same thing with my physical body. I would strengthen my will to the point that I could force my body to do what it couldn't physically much as Special Forces do. The problem is that in the Special Forces, when the training is done, that at some point the service member gets to rest. They don't tire out the service members to the point that they have no energy, before they drop them onto classified missions.

So for me to assume that I could will myself into mastering my body is a flawed assertion at best. But that was very arrogant to assume that I could reach that level of intensity, without having even attempting that kind of training. Anyway, when I came back from my run, which I was able to push myself past more pain than I was able to do in any of my cross country running, I tasted blood in my lungs and at the point when I got back to my retirement center, one of the managers thought I was having a heart attack.

This showed me that I need to slow down and be aware that although I can dream of saving the world, I do not have the energy to. In addition to never being able to

feel fully rested no matter how much sleep I have had, I can't push past it with greater mental strength, as I don't even have the control over my mind as a normal person does. What the Apostle Paul said in Romans is at the heart of (Christian) Existentialism. We cannot do what we want to. We are not strong enough mentally to reach our goals. We must leave saving the world to God and just help in small ways or else we will not survive long enough to see the fruits of our efforts.

I have finally realized that having Schizophrenia is not just a mental illness; it is a physical one as well. If your medicine is being effective on giving you some control of your thoughts, then you will have no energy to do anything.

I have recently arrived at the conclusion that the increased suffering of the world recently is the direct fault of Christians not following what God has called them to do, and in response to the fact and because I am in the wealthiest nation on the earth and because of my gifts of intelligence and creativity that I should be able to make a measurable dent in the amount of suffering that the sentient beings of the earth must feel. But the problem is I don't have the strength to have the reach that I believe I should have. Many of the problems of the world, if they are to be solved by people, need more resources than I have been given. I will just have to accept that there is some reason that God is allowing this to happen by conscious choice alone.

I have had to struggle with whether to say I believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he was both man and God or that that is a fact. I have recently come to understand that belief is stronger than facts. Similarly to how I said when we had to mark opinion as false and fact as true that opinions could be truths but facts are not consequential enough to be truths. So it shows more certainty to say that I believe in Heaven and Hell than to say flatly that there is a Heaven and Hell and that is the truth whether you agree with it or not you will go to one, because of course its true to the limits of my knowledge which is all I can guarantee by saying it is the truth, but to say I believe something to be true means that I haven't

just proved it intellectually, but it is so true that I risk eternity on it.

4.3.2 Poetry

Frustration

Struggling to lift the heavy lids
My eyes burst open
And I stagger to the other room
With immense effort
I live in a dream within a dream
My paranoia within God's thoughts
My will is strong
And my spirit unbreakable
But my mind only controls
Some of my thoughts
And my body is weak
And continually asleep
My burden is not light
As Jesus said for those
Who walk with Him
And its shadow is ever before me
When your mind cannot cease
From racing at full speed
And your body is heavily sedated
Everything is a battle of will
And your spirit pushes your body
My heart is pressed on all sides
By my unquenchable emotions
And unmovable flesh
But my heart is still wild and unwavering
How will I complete the contest?
How many years will this situation last?
When you are dead tired
And you are nowhere near the finish
You must slow down and keep going
When you would much rather lie down and die
How will I summon the energy
Without the strength of mind or body?
Will I be able to survive by spirit alone?

Do I know how to achieve solely by will?
Each day we wake up and begin
Before even thinking about “what next?”
But at night we worry over
What has and hasn’t happened
If only my spirit could know the rhythm
And my will the attitude
That can harmonize with the Way
And outlast the disease
We can only hope
And pray without ceasing

Naked Mind

Like a devout monk
My mind operates
In transparency and nakedness
As there are no obstructions
Between me and my feelings
For others they see life
Through filters
To keep their minds
From every emotion
That flies by
For me I am naked
And there is not
Even a thin white robe
Between me
And the thoughts
That race by
I feel deeply about injustice
And people hurting others
For any reason
I struggle to be balanced
And to keep my mind clear
Of the paranoid conclusions
My mind makes from
Reflection on the situation
I have to guard my mind consciously
As the normal controls and safeguards
Are not present

4.4 Religion

4.4.1 Frustration

Struggling to lift the heavy lids
My eyes burst open
And I stagger to the other room
With immense effort
I live in a dream within a dream
My paranoia within God's thoughts
My will is strong
And my spirit unbreakable
But my mind only controls
Some of my thoughts
And my body is weak
And continually asleep
My burden is not light
As Jesus said for those
Who walk with Him
And its shadow is ever before me
When your mind cannot cease
From racing at full speed
And your body is heavily sedated
Everything is a battle of will
And your spirit pushes your body
My heart is pressed on all sides
By my unquenchable emotions
And unmovable flesh
But my heart is still wild and unwavering
How will I complete the contest?
How many years will this situation last?
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You must slow down and keep going
When you would much rather lie down and die
How will I summon the energy
Without the strength of mind or body
Will I be able to survive by spirit alone?
Do I know how to achieve solely by will?
Each day we wake up and begin
Before even thinking "what next?"

But at night we worry over
What has and hasn't happened
If only my spirit could know the rhythm
And my will the attitude
That can harmonize with the Way
And outlast this disease
We can only hope
And pray without ceasing

4.4.2 FAQs

Is there an effective treatment of Schizophrenia without medication? Schizophrenia was not treated effectively by society until anti-psychotic drugs were created from sedatives in the late 1950's. The medication has been modified to remove most of the sedating attributes by the first part of the 21st century, so that many people with Schizophrenia are able to live outside institutions. Anti-psychotic medications are able to blunt the effects of paranoia, delusions, and hallucinations enough, so that people can distinguish between them and reality. But there is not a medication that will completely eliminate those symptoms or the lethargy that comes either from the mental illness or as a side effect of the medication. To help deal with remaining symptoms, religion in moderation can be helpful. Religion can provide stability, answers, and useful ideas for secondary treatments.

Why is religion rejected by psychologists in their treating mental illness? Many hallucinations, paranoid thoughts, and delusions have religious components to them and sometimes the rituals of religion can contribute to Obsessive Compulsive behaviors. This shows that there is a relationship between religion and mental illness, but it doesn't mean that religion in all its aspects does nothing but hinder the treatment of Schizophrenia.

Can an atheist apply ideas from religion into their treatment? One of the reasons why I incorporate Chinese philosophy into my treatment of Schizophrenia, is

because although the Bible tells a person how to live ethically and how to have an appropriate relationship with God, it doesn't tell you everything you ever need to know. Not all problems are entirely spiritually based. A person can definitely learn how to think rationally without using the Bible, but to get the full comfort from religion, faith is a vital component.

4.5 Counseling

4.5.1 The Appointment, an Epic Poem

Waiting

I walk in and sit down
I am there a half hour early
I pull out my magazine
I finish it in ten minutes
I began to think
My mind starts to wander off
How will I interpret the psy babble?
How will I stupefy my ideas?
I keep looking up
As I hear what could be sounds
Will he repeat the same ideas again
Or will I get some gem of useful thinking?
A calm passes over me
I can survive without him
The room is cool
And it is bright outside
What a nice day
It took me an hour to get here
I had to take the bus
Then walk a half a mile
It is always easy to think on the bus
When people aren't making annoying sounds
And walking always makes me feel good
At first, before I start questioning my every
 action
Last night it took a while to fall asleep
But it was early when I laid down
I woke up early and still felt tired

The sun wasn't even out yet
I watched some news
I looked up - I missed the sunrise
I remember now about my chi
I wonder if he will like that
It must seem strange to a doctor
How people could know so much before science
How they used food for medicine
How doctors eventually became politicians
And how complex the diagnosis could be
When everything boiled down to either yin or
yang

Preparation

Good - he's not in the office yet
Don't need another one of those
So much paper work
I wonder if I really need to give him this test
Like I'm going to come up with a different diagnosis
I wish I could get this damn computer to work
I guess I'll have to call the maintenance guy
tonight
No test today, I guess
Is my tie straight?
He probably doesn't even care
Where is my coffee?
I guess I'll have to call up my receptionist
Bring me up my cappuccino!
Thanks
Will I take wifey out to the opera tonight?
I hope I still have the tickets
She probably already found them
And has bought a new dress for it
I can finally sit down
Gee that was a long weekend
Why does my daughter always ask for money
Right at first?
I wonder what job she will get with a major in
dance

And when will she actually start
She is going to be 25 before she starts again
At this rate
I forgot to polish my shoes
Not again!
I hope I get some wealthy clients
When I can only charge them 100 an hour
I can barely pay for my SUV
And second home on the beach
I think I hear the client
I should greet him
No, that would be unprofessional
Come in, now
I'm ready to see you

Hot and Cold

Like the crests of the ocean waves
My emotions rose and fell
As he tried to comprehend my ideas
And I sought to apply his suggestions
Like the calm of the lake
I kept an inner confidence
Not merely a master of intellectual wit
But one who has the benefit of powerful experi-
ences
Like a river high in the mountains
I am always near my source
Speaking rapidly and in sudden bursts
I exude a passion for my case
Like a salmon tasting sea water for the first
time
I interpret my background in new ways
Each sentence never spoken before
Each thought given a new life
And each idea connected differently
Than even the session before
Like the taste of French fries
The conversation had a familiar flavor
Addictive and satisfying
There was a depth opened up by a true desire

The darkness clear as day
By the light of knowledge
And a peace illuminated
The mystery of the night
For in the middle of my winter
I burned inside like an ember
Like the heat of the midday sun
Blood hot and palms sweaty
This was another time
Where I was really there
In the heat of the conversation
From my heart came laughter
And I was truly happy
A cold resilience
And a warm character
Both analytical and creative
I seemed unsure of which direction
Should I go
A deep set fear and a hearty laugh
Each aspect showed up the other

Black and White

My voice soft and child like
My inexperience showed through
Like my bright blue bow tie
And my beaming smile
I was outspoken and competent
But inside I felt too soft and easily swayed
I try hard to not be self-conscious
To be nothing if not proud
Of my pear shaped figure
And my big feet
Black and white
Red and blue
I am consoling yet firm
Sympathetic yet bold
What am I to make
Of this deafening quiet
And silent screams
With each word I say

He expands to a paragraph
With each inflection of my voice
His mind is stirred
He is interesting and dynamic
Trapped yet freeing others
What can I say
To one who already has the answers?
If he could just listen to himself
And remember my main point
That it is not a race for an answer
But rather a way of sitting
Not a method of thinking
But a way of seeing
A new twist on his broad background
An open window into his soul
A silence in his racing mind
A soft touch with a strong hand
Something to blend the fire and water
That consumes his heart and mind

4.5.2 Other Poetry

Taming the Mind

Waves lap at the edge of my mind
The interior is a vast expanse of sand
Torn by raging waters
And rugged mountain peaks
It is anything but calm
This is not the sound of silence
Messages fly like carrier pigeons
Familiar with the terrain
The ravens out fly the pigeons
The buzzards peck at the fallen ones
Overgrown brush covers the mountains
And the ocean is covered in algae
Voices from far away echo off the mountains
Voices from within get muffled by the vegeta-
tion
Dark clouds cover the sky
And settle down like a mist over the rivers

Lightning bolts across the sky
And knocks the ravens dead in their tracks
Stunned, they fall below
And become entangled in the flora
A thought travels across the expanse
Self awareness occurs
Swift and majestic an eagle soars
Crying out thoughts from the heart
The mist lifts and little villages become visible
The people burn back the overgrowth
Fish team up in the ocean and finish off the
algae
The waves subside and gently rock the fisher-
men's boats
The people build roads that connect the vil-
lages
They send out horses to hurry the mail along
Farms now occupy the land where there once
was desert
The rivers are directed to irrigate the land
The natural chaos is contained and settled
There is freedom from random deaths
Each thought now travels in a caravan
With guards patrolling all sides
The eagles still patrol the skies
And the buzzards clean up the fallen ravens
The inhabitants for now have tamed the land
But whenever the sky becomes dark
They remember what it was like to be isolated
and alone

Heaven and Earth

There is a rhythm that exists
Deep inside your spirit
When all you hear is breathing
And your mind is all alone
Thoughts take flight
And you see nothing
Returning the power to Heaven
And the ten thousand things

Follow your mind
Liberation is a subtlety
And freedom comes from control
The hierarchy reflects nature
And the order is transparent
Within an instant
Everything fades away
The mind is ruler
And the body follows
When the mind is empty
The body is fully alert
With each breath
Heaven takes more territory
And the Earth longs
For heaven's leadership
A unity exists
When Heaven is patriarch
And his rule is sage-like
And shows perspective
The Way leads to your heart
And is illuminated by your breath
Heaven leads the Way
And each member settles in
For a long peace
And a stable rule
The Way is narrow
When your mind is a casualty of war
It broadens
As Heaven is seated on your throne

4.5.3 My Experiences with the Mental Health Establishment

Not a Good Day June 6th, 2006

Today was not a good day. I was the victim of an abusive mental health worker. I have experienced the same thing, with many other people, who work with the mentally ill. They assume that they are always right and the consumer is always wrong. I continue to have to hold my tongue and not say how I feel out of fear of retaliation, but they say whatever they feel like, regardless of my feel-

ings and no one stands up for me. The workers bring up very divisive topics, like politics and religion, and usually say some very negative things about Christianity. Then, when I try to respond, they say I can't talk about religion or politics. Basically, they are saying only their opinion counts. What I believe is not important, because I was born different than them. I was even told by one of the managers that I know more about mental illness than they do.

Typical Conversation "What is Buddhism all about?"

Aside: I only have time for a one sentence answer, but I won't communicate that to you

"Well, first of all, Buddhism is a form of atheism and is nihilistic. In Buddhism all deities are illusions and..."

Aside: Why are they giving me a blank stare? They must not comprehend, but are unwilling to ask the needed question.

"I need help with my VCR; you are good with computers" Aside: I don't understand him but I don't want to look stupid, so I am just going to cut him off, in mid-sentence.

"Actually I don't know much about VCRs. What is your problem?"

"I can't get the TV back on."

"Just hit the input button or tv/video button several times, until you see the TV show."

"I don't know how to do that." Aside: I am not really listening to you because I don't want to learn how to do anything new. I would rather depend on other people, to fix my problems for me.

"I can hit the button for you then, but watch so you can do it next time." Aside: I just explained it to you. I guess you weren't even listening.

"I am so busy with work that I need you to do that for me, but I won't be around." Aside: I have no intention of doing that. That would be learning and that scares me.

"Ok." Aside: I wonder what she does at work. All I see her do is talk to the her co-workers and play games on the computer

Resolution I am no longer going to answer any questions about philosophy to anyone who hasn't first read through Philosophy Core curriculum and answered the questions at the end. Then after looking at the answers, I can tell if they are serious about studying philosophy. Then I will have them read books from the Recommended Reading List and I will answer questions about the books, only after they have read them. The Philosophy Core is based on my reading from 165 mostly classical philosophical texts and my conversations with people of various levels of education over a period of 7 years. I have finally simplified and explained it to the point, that if a person cannot understand it, they are most likely not making the effort, second most likely, they need to learn how to read better, or else they don't have the ability (the third possibility is very rare).