

Corpsman Up!

**A Marine Medic
Struggles with War,
god, and Patriotism**

David Doc Johnson



Contents

CHAPTER ONE: Early Influences

In The Beginning: Early childhood and Social Class
Early Religion: Confirmed Lutheran, early Beliefs, early Questions
Race: Racist? Who me?
Commercialism: Advertising and its Effect
Navy Davy: Proud of my new Navy Uniform at the Age of Four
Violence as seen through a Child's Eyes
Pop Music: The Music of my Generation
The Bomb: Life on Earth in the Hands of Man
The Protests Begin: Ban the Bomb, Stop War
The Rise of the Antihero: The Assault on Liberalism
A Hero's Lament: Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient commits
Suicide
Vietnam: As seen from High School

CHAPTER TWO: Growing Up in the Fifties

We See Only What Our Eyes See
History in High School: What was not told us
Prayer in Public School: A good Argument Challenges My
Religious Belief
The Russians are Coming: Forrestal cracks
To Scare the Hell out of People takes a Preacher

The Russians are Coming! Hell, they are already here:
The John Birch Society: The Right's Blueprint for Political Takeover
The Tainted Color of Communism: Not Red, instead more like Pink

CHAPTER THREE: The Military Prior to Vietnam

Boot camp: Race in my Face: A Black Superior
Corps School and Camp Pendleton: Corpsman Training

CHAPTER FOUR: Hello Vietnam

Da Nang: My Arrival, Black Teeth and Blank Faces
A Shot in the Dark and a Marine Dead
Tara Revisited: As Atlanta after Sherman
Jim Groth: A Hometown School Friend Killed in Action
Regiment: Poker and Beer
Medcaps: To Win the Hearts and Minds of the Vietnamese
Chieu Hoi: An Open Arms Program; Friends or Foes?
The Bridge: A Questionable Summer Vacation Spot
George Gallagher

CHAPTER FIVE: Quang Tri, A Life Transformed

Quang Tri 101: Half our Company gone
The Quick and the Dead: A Sergeant's prayer goes unanswered
Else Where the War Goes on
Quang Tri 201: Life and Death
Communist Chess Moves: Despite huge Losses the North Fights on

CHAPTER SIX: In the Crosshairs of North Vietnamese Gunners

Yankee Station: Prisoners of Wilderness
Joel R. Koester: The Death of an Unintentional Friend
Dirt and Grime: Unimaginable Filth
Con Thien: "The Hill of Angels:" Yea Though I Walk Through the Valley
of Death
A Marine's Recollection of January 22nd 1968: A Fire Fight as seen by a
Combatant
Elsewhere

CHAPTER SEVEN: The Calm before the Storm

Phu Bia: Out of the Bush or so I hoped
Hue: Forgotten Graves
Back at Con Thien: Under Heavy Fire
Charlie II: Two Doctors attempt Suicide
Innocent Civilians? Are There Really Innocent Civilians?

CaLu: Staging for Khe Sanh

CHAPTER EIGHT: Khe Sanh

Charlie Med: Khe Sanh's Medical Center
Graves Registration: Bags of Heroes
A Word about Fear: No Where to Hide

CHAPTER NINE: Welcome Home --- Or Not

On Looking down on the California Coastline from my Plane Returning
from Vietnam
A Not so Welcome Home:
Enderlin 1968: My Hometown and Veterans
The VFW: Hell, You should have been in the Real War
MCAS Yuma AZ: Punished by the Military for being a War Veteran
Arizona Western College: An Influential Professor
Antimilitary Sentiments: Give Me Hair
Glenwood Minnesota: Pot, Mad Dog, and the Death of a Life Long Friend
Yearning for Freedom:
Music Then: Be a Working Class Hero and Love it or Leave it
Atrocities in the News: On my Mind
On The Home Front: Four Dead in Ohio, the War comes Home
St Cloud VA Hospital: We don't need any Medics

CHAPTER TEN: Refilling the Void

St. Cloud State University: A lesson in "Mental Isometrics"
Journalism: Never Mind the Truth, Sell --- Sell --- Sell
Biology: Life through Different Lens
Truth: What is "Truth"?
A Word on Theory: Only as Good as the Evidence
My God: Time is Greater than I
Christianity verses Science: Are They Compatible?
Shadows on the Wall:

CHAPTER ELEVEN: Clash of the Titans

Biological Fundamentalism:
Does Anyone Care?
Draft Dodgers: Cowards or Heroes?
Evangelicalism Rising: Woe to Ye Liberal

CHAPTER TWELVE: Like a Phoenix from the Ashes

The Political Wheel: The Right and Left as seen on a Wheel
Totalitarianism:
Fascism: The real Danger in American
So what is Fascism? Fascism Explained
Arms Full of Money: The Military Complex's Bank Account
Stolen Words: What's in a Word?
The Myth of Liberal Controlled Media: The Big Lie

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: How Evangelical Christianity Buttresses Fascism

Is god's Word True?
The Authors of the Bible: The Elite
Who is really in Control: Some all Knowing god or the Privileged Elite?
Predestination: Everything as it should be
The Biblical Value of Human Beings:
Purpose: To Everything There is a Purpose --- unless no god Exists
Darwin's Evolution verses Biblical Creation:
School Vouchers: Sailing around Galapagos
Home Schooling: For the sake of Mosaic Law
Charter Schools
Discourse over Population: Is the World Overpopulated?
Population: As I understand it
Empire Building: Religion's Reason to Promote Population Growth
The Environment: Where was god before Green was fashionable?
War: Kill Em All --- Let god Sort Em out
The Use of Intimidation and Fear: Woe to unproductive Fig Trees
The Rich and the Poor: You reap what You sow
Women Know Thou Place: Home Barefoot and Pregnant
Health Care: Who needs it?
Labor: Whistle while You Work
Be Content with your Wages however Paltry
Shun Unions: Don't Rely on Earthly Institutions
Education: Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic and that's all Please
Possessions and Inheritance: Render unto the Wealthy all Wealth
But Right-Wing Christianity is dying out You Say: Falwell Rises from the
Grave

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: AND IN THE END

Once Upon a Time

CHAPTER ONE

Early Influences

In The Beginning: Early Childhood and Social Class:

My story begins on my grandparents' couch, July 4th, 1946, in Enderlin, North Dakota. There I was born to Dorothy and Perlin Johnson. As mundane as the event must have been to the rest of world, never having experienced the physical world before, being born was obviously life changing for me. This event did not go unnoticed by our pastor who just coincidentally showed up the same day, praying over me and wishing my parents well. That our minister just happened to show up that day, thinking back on what normally is taken as a gesture of good will, I would later find out was his job. Unbeknown to me at that time, my indoctrination into Christianity had begun that very day --- and as this book will reveal, this indoctrination was by design.

My grandparents on my mother's side were the only real grandparents I knew because of a family entanglement on Dad's side that has never been fully resolved. It seems Dad never actually knew who his parents were, and I know so little more now that I hardly feel qualified to address the issue. Anyone who might know Dad's actual parents have been unwilling to talk to this day. Rumors, of course, hold many theories but all I know for sure is my lineage stops at my father. Dad's birth certificate, dated September 19th, 1922, claims he was born in Lisbon, North Dakota. No parents, unlike Mother's birth certificate, were listed. I also have a certificate of Holy Baptism dated December 21, 1922, which claims Dad's mother was Martha Erickson. Why she should have a different last name than Dad is unknown. The door to speculation opens wider.

My best guess is Dad's so-called half-sister, born a good decade and a half before him, ended up carrying a child out of wedlock. Prior to the current trend where having a child out of wedlock is fashionable and even viewed as a source of income; any child born out of wedlock at that time was a bastard, not a designation most children or single mothers relished. Back in the twenties, child support was nonexistent and the care for a young, contested child usually fell on the immediate parents of the single mother. Being young, unmarried, and pregnant was seen as disgraceful to the family. As such young pregnant ladies were often briskly shipped off to an out of sight location to deliver their child. The child was then either given away for adoption, stuck in an orphanage, or returned to the family, assuming the family had the resources to care for the child. The child was then raised by grandparents and called the grandparent's son or daughter. The grandparents would claim the child was a late sparkle in Dad's (being the child's grandfather) eye. This most likely was Dad's case. That however is pure conjecture.

Dad's history is mentioned for the social and economic implications his childhood had upon my family. Dad, having no father that claimed responsibility for him, was not in line for any inheritance nor was his father around to support either Dad or Dad's mother economically. As such Dad was forced to quit school in the eighth grade to join the labor pool, working numerous low paying odd jobs like gardening, mowing lawns, raking, rock picking, haying, or whatever else he

could find in his early teens. In time, he would graduate to an unlicensed plumber, well digger, painter, electrician, carpenter, and butcher. He, as an old cliché has it, became a jack of all trades and a master of none. While he lacked any certificate to qualify himself for any of these tasks, he remained in demand right up to his death largely because he could do the same job as any professional but only received a dime on the dollar. Often his reward was no more than a six pack of beer.

Later in life, Dad ended up as a laborer on the railroad, working in the roundhouse maintaining and repairing steam engines. Even that, being one of the best paying jobs anywhere around for an unskilled laborer, did not provide the income required to feed his family. Hence when Dad was not working on the railroad, he was subsidizing his railroad income with the handy work already mentioned.

On the railroad Dad worked evenings so when I was home after school, he was at work. Even if I was at home while Dad was off, Dad was doing something else. I cannot remember a single event that Dad attended on my behalf in my school years, swimming events, baseball, football, or school programs. As such, I grew up lacking a coach, a cheerleader, and most importantly a father with any influence in the community like a businessman or professional. The title of a child's father carried in small town North Dakota often exerted a disproportionate amount of influence on what activities any child got to participate in during his school years. Who got to play first string did not always depend on a child's talents.

In any event, Dad and I can be seen in front of what was our house that over the years Dad and Grandpa remodeled several times. The two times I remember the most were when the new addition was added to the front, replacing the porch pictured behind us. As



it could be afforded, that tar siding on the older portion of the house was removed and replaced with wooden siding that made the house appear nearly new. The other project was the garage which Dad built from 2X6 interlocking boards torn out of boxcars at the rail yard. For a couple of dollars, the Soo-Line would sell their employees outdated or wrecked boxcars for the wood. The buyer would have to remove the wood himself. The steel remained railroad property. 2X6 interlocking planks for siding and roofing material, to say the least, made a very sturdy garage.

In my early years, we never had modern conveniences such as indoor plumbing. I remember Dad pulling me sitting in a wagon or shed, depending on the season, to the railroad round house about a half mile away. There Dad would fill



five-gallon containers with hot water and pull them and me back home so his family could enjoy a warm bath.

A bath, being one bath, best describes it too. The whole family shared the same bathwater. As for the bathtub, pictured below is Mom giving my sister Missy a bath with me, the foreman, looking on. Nice bathtub wouldn't you say?

With no running water, we relied on an outdoor toilet not to mention the outdoor solar clothes drier, both of which are pictured behind Mom and the tub. Unlike television, having an outdoor John was something of an un-status symbol. The fewer outdoor Johns in the neighborhood, the higher on the social ladder your neighborhood was perceived as being. Our lift to the bottom rung of the working middle

class, which included an indoor bathroom, came somewhere in the late fifties.

So, what did my family history and economic status have to do with Vietnam? Vietnam was very much a class war. If a child was raised living within the class level I describe in my early childhood, that child was far more likely to end up cannon fodder in Vietnam than anyone coming from an upper-level social class. One dividing point between those who found themselves cannon fodder in Vietnam and those who did not was college. If those better off could afford to send their children to college, those children could often land a college deferment and avoid the military altogether. If not, those children going from college to the military were able to enter the military with a bargaining chip, a chip they could play when military occupations and rank were handed out. Many former college students ended up in officer's training or performing the task in which they were educated for which often took them out of harm's way. At the very least, the elite were shoe-ins for military academies, graduating as line officers or pilots. Nepotism

is common amongst the elite. Rarely were any of these options available to any of a lower social class.

I must admit however this class barrier was not beyond breaching. Two children from my neighborhood did exactly that. One was a Fritz, Bud if I remember correctly, and the other was Marshal Larson, an early childhood friend. Both went from high school to military academies and neither had, that I can recall, any higher social class status than I. What they did have that I lacked was the will to do their very best academically at a young age, a value driven into them by a watchful parent. I am therefore unable to blame all the problems and failings that I have occurred for myself over the years on class status alone. Some responsibility for that failing ends right here.

**Early Religion:
Confirmed Lutheran, early Beliefs, early Questions:**

My religious upbringing was largely European Protestant, which is to say, at the time, I saw the world through Christian lenses provided me by my Caucasian European ancestors. Public school often began class with a prayer, praising god for all we had (or hadn't depending on an individual's perspective) and no one gave the matter a second thought --- at least in our closed environment. We, in grade school, recited, never questioning, the Pledge of Allegiance's words "*under god*" as we were not aware, nor did it matter to any eight-year-old at the time, that "*under god*" was inserted in the Pledge in 1954. To eight-year-old Christians knowing little more, the words were seen as always having been there. My parents never took the effort to point out when those words were not included for it probably never mattered to them one way or the other. Even if any child had the thoughtfulness to notice this seemingly inconsequential change, what would the words "*under god*" matter anyway given our belief that all people were under god? Well, that was the way it all seemed then anyway.

But as I come to understand in my later years, those words did matter. Unbeknown to me, rightwing capitalists, using "*under god*" as a bulwark against ungodly atheists and Communists, felt inserting "*under god*" into the pledge was important enough to change this bit of historic prose to wording less inclusive. Atheists, often equated with Communists, were not welcome by our capitalistic Christian dominated government for reasons which will become obvious later in this writing. For now, I will only say, I had no idea, nor did I care at the age of eight what those rightwing capitalists may have had to gain by inserting "*under god*" in the Pledge. But that was then. Now at sixty-five, having read the Bible three times cover to cover and by focusing on those verses repeatedly quoted by the religious right, I believe I figured it out. What capitalists and industrialist have to gain by adopting the Bible will become the central theme of this writing.

Not having come to this enlightened point in life by the age of eight, however, I attended Sunday school every Sunday at the First Lutheran Church. I also attended Bible School at our public school every summer after the school year let out. I was not only baptized Lutheran but confirmed a Lutheran, an oath that later in life I would renege on.

I did not give the matter any thought then as Confirmation was just something every kid I knew attended. Not everyone attended my Lutheran Bible School, but they attended one or another Bible school just the same. As far as I was concerned Bible school was for learning the Bible. “What did it matter if Methodists, for example, had their own Bible school? Didn’t everyone attending Bible School read the same book? Didn’t we end up all Christians” I reasoned --- unless of course, they were Catholic. If they were Catholic, I had no idea what that meant except what Mom told me which was very little. All I really knew was under no circumstance was I supposed to marry one.

Being Christian in the fifties, at least around Enderlin, lacked much of what many Christians today claim being a Christian requires. I did not require being “Born Again” or “Slain in the Spirit” to be considered a Christian. I never had to believe that Biblical stories such as Adam and Eve or Jonah and the Whale were actual history. Either I missed some-thing or the church which I attended was far more liberal in their interpretations of the Bible than more funda-mental and Evangelical sects are today. Even if these fables were mostly taught on Sunday and Bible School as history, most the higher ups in my church held the opinion that these tales were worth more for their moral value than actual history. But what or

whose moral values? Even as a child it did not take too long to conclude that the moral of any of these stories was dependent on who was asked. My minister, my mother, my Sunday school teacher, and Bible school teacher all seemed to have different versions of what these so-called



Morals were teaching. I did pick up on that very early and as such my attention during Sunday school was often more on other distractions, like girls, rather than Bible studies.

Whether or not I believed these fables was largely unimportant however for I fairly well bought into everything else Christian --- and I am only beginning to find out exactly what that means. For example: I believed our leaders could be trusted to do the right thing. I believed in a just god, that the Mounties always got their man, and Perry Mason (the legal system) always protected the innocent. The bad guys always got what was coming to them. In those days, my thoughts were, lawyers cared more about guilt and innocents than money as half the time legal services viewed on TV were offered free – or at least money was never discussed. How times have changed.

I believed in an unseen hand that guided the world. I believed one should love his neighbor as himself. I believed that it was more blessed to give than

receive. I believed that the world was how the world was because god wanted it that way. God's Will shall be done even if the world often seemed to go against god's will, at least god's will as I understood it.

I believed the world and its resources were created for man's use and enjoyment. I believed hard work would be rewarded and the cream always rose to the top. I believed our leaders were ordained by god and in power because of their god ordained intelligence. I believed our leaders would do the right thing; whatever that was. But if I was unsure what the right thing was, how could I judge whether they did the right thing or not? It all somehow made sense even if no sense could be made from it. Even if obvious contradictions were pointed in the Bible, I had the perfect response. I figured if god had the intelligence to could create the world and universe, he could certainly write a book I could not understand.

Of course, it never occurred to me then that if I could not understand the Bible that probably no one else could either. Over the years I have come to learn that people are much closer in intelligence than most the elite would like us to believe. They like to think of themselves as superior somehow and most people, like I did, swallowed it. But as I shall point out, this is taught probably more indirectly than directly. After all, for anyone to stand before us and state that "I'm better than you" would repulse most people so these things are never said outright. They are fed to us piece by piece which when linked together can only result in one conclusion, the conclusion which the hand that leads us wants us to believe.

But problems did exist for me with religion even at an early age. For example, how could perfect god create such an imperfect world? I wrestled with that. Perhaps the world was perfect, and these imperfect eyes could not see it. But, if the world was good in god's eye as god claimed in Genesis, why were all these ministers, god's voice here on earth, screaming about all the evil in the world? Why would a loving god allow suffering? When I'd ask these questions the answer, I usually received was always something like "*god works in mysterious ways.*"

"Oh," was my usual perplexed response. The mystery of god, for then, remained safe.

And I had another problem. Science was seriously calling into question many religious views and stories from the Bible. Not only was science challenging religious theories like earth's position in the universe or if the human race evolved from other forms of life, but science was also replacing god's importance in matters like healing turning people away from long held traditional religious views. For example: consider the supernatural origin and cure of disease. Advances in medicine were being accepted more and more by a public who witnessed the miracles of modern medicine, vaccines warding off diseases such as smallpox, rabies, and polio; antibiotics curing what before were deadly plagues, iron lungs keeping polio victims alive, and surgeries that saved people from abnormalities that not too long ago were fatal such as a ruptured appendicitis or a broken femur.

Until modern medicine was proven effective to the general population, many religious institutions and theologians regarded diseases as "*God's punishment for sin.*" Vaccines were at one time denounced as "*flying in the face of Providence,*" and "*endeavoring to baffle a Divine judgment.*"⁰⁰¹ Disease after all was,

“a judgment of God on the sins of the people,” and that “to avert it is but to provoke him more”; that inoculation is “an encroachment on the prerogatives of Jehovah, whose right it is to wound and smite.”⁰⁰²

Such interpretations of the Bible were supported by verses like *“Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.”* To battle these diseases therefore was to battle the Lord’s Will.

Side Note:

Today is October 20th, 2021, about two decades after I wrote what lies above. COVID is upon us, and it is interesting to find that Evangelicals are a large part of the antivaccine movement.

“There’s several different religious beliefs and doctrines associated with evangelicals, especially the belief in inerrancy of scripture, which is the belief that the bible is the literal word of God,” Campbell explained. “There’s also a general kind of theological belief in the sovereignty of God, that He is the one who knows best. So, if you get sick, it’s because you don’t have faith in God and that you’re not living a holy life, so God isn’t able to protect you.”

In addition to spreading anti-vaccine ideology in America, this belief in the supreme authority of God has also affected vaccine efforts abroad. For example, a hospital in Uganda recently received 5,000 doses of a vaccine, but was only able to administer about 400 doses because of vaccine hesitancy among a heavily evangelical population.

“According to evangelical groups in other parts of the world, taking the vaccine is like saying ‘I don’t have faith and I’m not holy,’ and it’s challenging their faith in that way,” Campbell said. “And that’s one reason why the vaccine debate is not about personal health, but about freedom, since it questions their religious identity and their right to practice it in a certain way.”

***Why Evangelicals are Encouraging the Anti-Vaccination Movement* May 4, 2021**

I feel safe in saying that given the success of many medical advances, the churches of the late 19th Century were forced to make a few controversial and embarrassing choices. Either go with and accept many modern medical advances and change their rhetoric about science, medical science for sure, or lose much of their congregations. God’s word needed redefined to be become more compatible with the science of public health care. Many churches were sent scrambling 180 degrees, therefore, to make modern advances in medicine seem more in line with god’s Will. In short order, medicine went from *“flying in the face of providence”* to evidence of god’s tender mercy and love. Had religion not taken this route, religion, along with god, would have likely died a century before the present. Religion, although still clinging on, was on the brink of falling into an abyss.

And science was not religion’s only challenge. Philosophers such as Carl Marx could be heard shouting in the wilderness, growing stronger with every

listener. Something was radically wrong with the idea that a few people should live the lives of nobility while those who labored had to endure squalor and homelessness and were often reduced to begging for meals.

THE WHITE SLAVE

By Joe Hill

One little girl, fair as a pearl,
Worked every day in a laundry;
All that she made, for food she paid,
So she slept on a park bench so soundly⁰⁰³

Something was wrong when most of the people had to suffer for the comfort of a small elite few. Workers were dying daily due to poor and unsafe working conditions. Is this what god wanted for his people? Already weakened and staggered by science, religion had to rise to those questions also if it was to endure. And so it did.

Fundamentalism, conservatives unwilling to change, was falling by the wayside while more mainstream churches were creating what became known as the “*Social Gospel*.” The Social Gospel, as shall be shown, was an interpretation of the Bible that enraged the political right to the point that they often referred to the Social Gospel as communism. The political right claimed the Social Gospel was attempting to create a heaven on earth, to rid children of disease, to redistribute wealth in an effort of creating better living conditions for the majority rather than just a few social elites. My church, the First Lutheran, was one in the forefront of this thinking, preaching a Social Gospel, a “*We are all in this world together*” mentality. Be careful how we treat others for someday the power may be on the other foot. “*Remember,*” we were reminded that “*the first now will later be last* (Matthew 20:16).”

I was raised to believe in social equality, and I still cling to these beliefs today --- although I have lost faith in god. One does not need a god to feel empathy for his fellow human beings. No one, I believe, should have to live without health care. A safety net is needed to catch those falling into poverty and a system needs to be in place to pull those in poverty out. Why wait for heaven to be fed asked Joe Hill in his song “*The Preacher and the Slave*”? Why not be comfortable and healthy now? My church supported labor unions as many of its congregation were union men. Many older railroad men remembered the days when brakemen injured on the job were simply thrown from the train, or that was the story they often told.

Race: Racist? Who me?

My parents were 100% unapologetic racists. To them – Blacks were all “NIGGERS” and should be sent back to Africa. Blacks were not simply lazy and low achievers; Blacks were a drain on society. Blacks were a threat to the American Dream, to be exact --- a real danger, the enemy. To my parents the American Dream

was only meant for Whites. One Black in town would threaten everyone's property value. For my parents, race was an "Us or Them" issue. White America had two choices. Either White America had to keep Blacks in their place (on the bottom) or risk having Blacks in their faces giving orders and replacing White's at what my parents believed were white's traditional jobs. "*Everyone knew*" my dad would say that "*Blacks everywhere would like my (Dad's) job as my (Dad's) job pays far more than anything Niggers were accustomed to. Niggers would not know how to deal with all that money.*"

I remember one time Dad came home with the rumor that some Black was being transferred to the roundhouse as Dad's supervisor. After half a life's work, Dad was ready to quit that day. Dad would say that he would stand in an unemployment line before taking orders from "*some damn Nigger.*" While to state this race hatred of my parents tends to contradict my statement that I was raised to believe in equality, my parents were not the only influence in my life.

As a child, I was not sure how my parent's paranoid (paranoid best describes it) racist sentiments never rubbed off on me. That's not to say I did not have a number of prejudices to deal with but unlike my folks, I never recall thinking of race in terms of "*Them*" or "*Me.*" I never could understand my parents' stance on race – then at least - but that was before reading the book "*On the Laps of Gods*" and viewing the movie "*Birth of a Nation*" by D. W. Griffith that "*On the Laps of Gods*" kept referring to. Viewing those two things was like opening my eyes for the first time. Now I believe I understand.

Prior to my being born, Jesse Owens became the pride of America in 1936 at Summer Olympics in Berlin. Owens took home four gold medals, the 100 meter race, the 200 meter race, the 400 meter relay, and the long jump. During those Olympic Games, Owens went from just another Nigger to a national hero honored in New York by a ticker tape parade, an honor normally only reserved for elites like conquering generals. Back in America, however, after having served his purpose for American propaganda, Owens was still a "Nigger" forced to take a freight elevator to his own celebration at the Waldorf-Astoria.⁰⁰⁴ Being black, he could not ride the hotel's elevator. That elevator was reserved for strictly whites.

While white America may have rather had a White American beat the German's master race in the 1936 Olympics, that America took the gold was good enough for many. Beating Fascism's master race must have been laughable to many Americas who viewed themselves as superior to Blacks --- but over time, slowly, it was the Blacks who had the last laugh however small the snicker. To many more liberal Americas it began to appear that one could be an American and Black. Furthermore, Owens's performance provided any white supremacist with a mental challenge "*How could any substandard inferior take four gold medals against a superior white race?*" Owens did not only beat Hitler's master race that day. Owens, a Black, beat the world's fastest Whites and in doing so chipped into the myth of White Superiority, a fact that did not go unnoticed by many of my baby boomer generation, myself included.

By the time I was well on my way to becoming a young man, Black names, slowly but surely with ever increasing intensity, were becoming household names; Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron, Louie Armstrong, Sammy Davis Jr. Many of my

rock and roll heroes were Black, Chubby Checkers, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, Ray Charles, Little Richard, The Platters, Coasters, and Drifters. If this was “*Nigger Music*” as my father called it, I wanted more. Enough of those crooners (Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin), oompah-pah, Glen Miller big band, and Lawrence Welk’s accordion noise. Let’s “Rock and Roll” and if it took Blacks to “*Let the Little Girl Dance* (A favorite song title of mine)” so be it.

The evening news was reporting on racial violence in the South nearly every day. I could not help feeling sympathy for children in particular no matter what color they were, being murdered in their own churches by bombs planted by hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Watching from the sidelines (North Dakota), I could not help but feel empathy for groups of Blacks being blown down by water cannons, police and National Guard mobbing Black people for doing nothing more than wanting into a school or walking down the street. This was after all America, the melting pot. Whoever said that all that melted in America had to be White? I believed what was preached to me, that in this nation, all men were created equal.”

I did not linger on the original intent of the words “*All Men*” as at the time those words came into being slavery existed --- when slaves were thought of as property (livestock if you will). Slaves were not included in the Constitution’s meaning of the word “*Men*” Their title was “*Boy*.” I missed this during the sixties when Blacks would parade around with signs proclaiming “*I’m a Man*” not to mention their singing about being one, as in Big Bill Broonzy’s “*When Do I Get To Be Called a Man*.” The significance of this escaped me never having lived in an environment where such simple terms were twisted to define a person’s social status.

My response to all this man stuff was some enlightening phrase like “*So! Why of course you’re a man! I mean how revolutionary was that?*” While I did not consider myself a racist, I obviously lacked knowledge of what a racist was. What I thought before was a ridiculous statement makes me now feel --- well --- ridiculous.

History class, unfortunately, always attempted to avoid controversy and for that matter unfortunately still does. Never discussed in history class was what the phrase “*All men*” meant to our founding fathers. If Blacks were to be viewed as men, then “*All Men*” would have applied to them which obviously it didn’t. In fact, too many educational entities avoid the all-important discussion of what a given word or phrase might mean to different people and how it can be used to manipulate people.

Redefining words to mean different things to different people for political gain or misrepresentation is an art fundamentally lacking in our school system. For example, when Ronald Reagan speaks of the “*American People*” if you are not on his side or belong to his social class, the elevated upper status quo, my hope is you do not feel like you were included in his use of phrase “*the American People*.”

Anyway, over time, original meanings often are changed. In my era, left to the average student, “*All men*” came to mean all men, Blacks included. Unlike America’s past, Blacks became citizens and were no longer thought of as property by those I associated with. They were humans, with rights. In my time, “*All men were created equal*,” “*All*” was not followed by “*White*.” “*All*” was followed by the

word “*Men*” which in the twentieth century’s definition of “*Men*” included adult Blacks. There will be more on this in the upcoming discussion of what’s in a word.

I did wrestle with prejudice, however. Small in comparison to my ancestry, I feel it safe to say that in terms of race, I was the product of the propaganda to which I was subjected. For example, consider the movie “*Gone with the Wind*.” I recall the language of Blacks on that film.

Prissy: Mammy, here's Miss Scarlet's vittles.

Scarlett: You can take it all back to the kitchen; I won't eat a bite.

Mammy: Yes'm you is, you's gonna eat every mouthful of this.

Scarlett: No... I'm... NOT⁰⁰⁵

Prissy was played by Butterfly McQueen, a fearful pathetic little Black woman that knew nothing about birthing when it mattered. Mammy, Hattie McDaniel, was overweight and dressed like Aunt Jemima from the Uncle Mose salt and pepper shakers.⁰⁰⁶ Blacks were always bastardizing the English language with slurs like “*Yes ’m*.” Blacks were almost exclusively cowardice, always the first to run whenever danger approached, the whites of their eyes bulging out of their sockets. They were always cast in service positions, elevator operators, butlers, waiters and waitresses, janitors, and maids. But a threat? Blacks may have lacked in intelligence and ambition, an attitude I likely picked up off the silver screen, but they always were faithful and polite; for example, Buckwheat from “*The Little Rascals*” or Jack Benny’s Rochester. Thinking back of Blacks as portrayed on the silver screen or television, as prejudicial as I may have seemed, in my lifetime I do not recall anywhere where Blacks, as a group, were portrayed as a threat to my wellbeing.

Casting Blacks in the faithful and polite category had not always been the case, however. To my grandparents and parents, Blacks were oversexed, raping white women whenever an opportunity arose, out to take over Whites’ jobs, and cease political power by any means possible. Their prejudicial views came from movies such as the 1915’s “*Birth of a Nation*” by D. W. Griffith which Robert Whitaker claims “*invited all of America to join a lynch mob.*”⁰⁰⁷

“*Birth of a Nation*” took its history from Dixon’s “*The Clansman*” which told of life in the South before and after the Civil War. After the Civil War, Southern Whites, as shown by “*Birth of a Nation*,” were under siege attack by Blacks. “*See! My people fill the streets. With them I will build a Black Empire and you as a Queen shall sit by my side*” the powerful mulatto, Silas Lynch, attempting to force Elsie, a white woman of course, to marry him decrees.⁰⁰⁸ The longest cinema feature ever produced during the silent movie era, “*Birth of a Nation*” told of armed Blacks rebelling against whites and imposing themselves forcibly on white women. One woman, pursued alone through the woods, was forced to jump to her death to escape the clutches of a Black. In the end, under siege, outgunned and desperate, hapless White’s waited their rescue by none other than the Ku Klux Klan with Jesus. in a final scene, appearing as a hologram blessing those robed warriors.⁰⁰⁹



Suggestive Ending From Birth Of A Nation

“*Birth of a Nation*” was not just some KKK propaganda film limited to KKK members. “*Birth of a Nation*” was the silent movie era’s “*Gone with the Wind*” When this movie first showed in Grand Forks, North Dakota, an old gentlemen informed me that a special train ran from Grafton to Grand Forks to make sure anyone who

wished to see this film could. The movie was at the time (and for that matter still is) considered a masterpiece. “*Birth of a Nation*” lies within Public Domain and may be viewed at: www.archive.org.

According to Robert Whitaker, the film “*Birth of a Nation*” opened the door to the unpunished genocidal slaughter of Africa Americans that followed. These murders included such medieval atrocities as publicly burning people at the stake, a fate reserved for Negroes in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. Robert Whitaker reminds America of its own not too distant dark past listing several public burnings in which THOUSANDS of Whites gathered to watch Blacks publicly roasted alive ⁰¹⁰ in the same manner as witches and scientists, skeptical of religion, were during the Middle Ages. In both cases, these burnings were carried out by Christians. ⁰¹¹

At the same time the Ku Klux Klan was not simply limited to a few radicals from the South. Active chapters existed in Northern States also. For example, Paynesville Minnesota; a stop on the railroad that my grandfather, uncle, and dad all worked for, had an active KKK group. According to literature located in the Museum in Paynesville, cross burnings were a common around the turn of the Twentieth Century on the hill south of town at what is now the golf course.

Side Note:

Listed in the Enderlin Diamond Jubilee book (1891-1966) is this note at the bottom of page 27 and continued page 28:

“The Roaring Twenties were marked on a smaller scale, by the same absurdities that illuminated the national



scene ... the short skirt and shorter "bob," the Charleston, the bootlegger, bell bottomed pants, the miniature golf craze and the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.

Enderlin had its own local Klan, the motivation apparently being a fear that the Pope was about to take over the country. Like most such anonymous groups, they also felt competent to guard the community morals as well, and one or two crosses were burned to warn local sinners to repent."

Why this is important is Paynesville, as priorly noted, was just down the tracks. As such it is fair to assume, given the racism exhibited by the Klan (past and present) that any Black who may have wondered into town was dealt with harshly and any Black with ambitions of working for the railroad, the area's largest employer, was only a pipe dream.

To think my grandfather may have belonged to the KKK --- I have no way of confirming that at this date; however, fair to say, a member or not, his view of Blacks and Catholics were likely swayed by the Klan which he likely passed along to his offspring, namely mother. It might also help explain why my parents held such an animosity for Catholics, not to mention Blacks. Forgive me grandfather if this is not true but it is difficult not to speculate that this early bastion of hate did not influence the views of those alive then or their children to come.

Commercialism: Advertising and its Effect:

Alongside religion, another form of propaganda, advertising, was targeting my generation. We were literally immersed in commercialism. Advertisements and enticements were everywhere, on radio, television, billboards, baseball outfield fences, painted on buildings and grain elevators, race cars, windows, or anywhere a bare spot existed. Humphrey Bogart always had a cigarette in his mouth. Cigarettes added to coolness. The Marlboro man was free, independent, and masculine. Before I could recite the musical scale EGBDE as "*Every Good Boy Does Fine*," I could have told you that L-S-M-F-T meant "*Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco*." Frosted Flakes were "*GREAT*" and Wheaties reined as the "*Breakfast of Champions*." Long before I drank a beer, I knew that Hamm's beer came from the land of sky-blue waters and was "*the beer refreshing*" and Schlitz was what made Milwaukee famous.

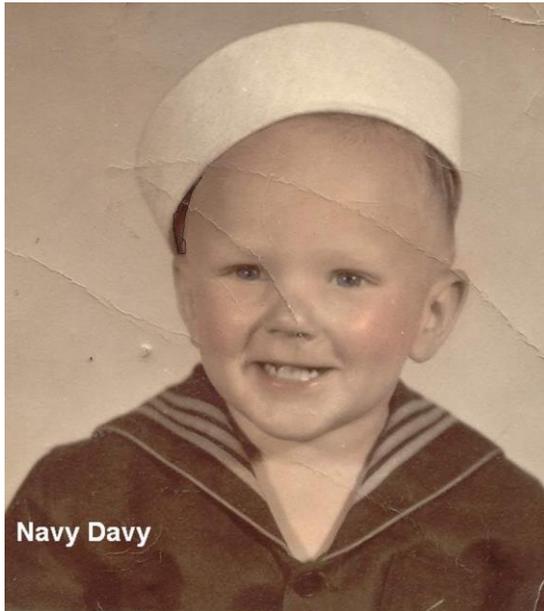
Commercialism crept in completely unquestioned adding a never ceasing aspiration for more and more. It started with childhood things; toys, erector sets and Lincoln Logs, Monopoly games; Hershey kisses and Coca-Cola, Campbell's soup, and Frosted Flakes; and graduated to more adolescent desires such as the current dress styles, pop music, the right deodorant and cologne, the hottest car, and on and on.

I, like anyone else, simply took all those commercials for granted. Somehow, we reasoned, we were entitled to all these things. No one gave any thought at all to what affect all these advertisements had on our values. No one gave any thought to whom these advertisements were directed or who the benefactors were or what those benefactors had to gain by throwing their propaganda out there.

I never really gave any real serious thought to advertising until its negative effects began affecting my pocketbook later in life. My teenagers were demanding

Guess Jeans, blue jeans not much different than the jeans I bought for seventeen dollars other than the label that proudly proclaimed “*My family can afford to pay*

sixty dollars for a seventeen-dollar pair of jeans” whether their family could or not.



Then one day I found I had become the ogre for not stopping at McDonalds or not buying some sugared cereal with a superhero on the box. Not a day goes by without the media’s mention of the epidemic of obesity in America’s young adults and children. Is there any doubt what is causing this problem? Human genes have not changed that much in the last couple decades. What has changed, commercials are now targeting youth more than they ever did in the past. If it were up to my children, all we would eat would be

pizza, French fries, tacos, and hamburgers, sugar fortified cereal, and grease soaked, salt smothered potato chips. We’d dine at only those facilities that offer a free plastic likeness of Buzz Light Year, has Aliens hanging from the walls and ceiling, or childhood playgrounds. Of course, in each hand there would be a quart sized sugared drink of empty calories fortified with who knows what to replace all the perspiration lost by fingering the controls of a video game.

My message here: Advertising works. Propaganda, particularly advertising in a political and religious realm, will become an important theme of this writing. A recent movie claims, “*If you build it, they will come*” and sure enough as the stadiums and tents went up, they were filled. This writing will document Evangelical and Fundamental churches going up all over the nation. And the question that will need to be asked and attempted answered is “*Why.*” Who are building these churches, for what reason, and who is the chief beneficiary?

**Navy Davy:
Proud of my new Navy Uniform at the Age of Four:**

My military indoctrination began at a very early age. Mom’s family was a Navy family long before I had even been thought of. Uncle Kenny, Mom’s brother, served in the Navy during WWII. I remember being told how Kenny left Enderlin this little whippy kid to return this rough and tough man all due to his military experience. No one messed with Kenny.

My Aunt Doris’ husband, Dan, made the Navy a career. Both wanted their sons and nephews to carry on their Navy tradition and brought home children’s Navy hats and clothing to help make that a reality. I was proud of my Navy uniform by the age of four.

I really do not know exactly what effect my uncles' gifts had on me joining the Navy but I will say this; nearly all their siblings also joined the Navy, Ken's son, Doris's son, Dan's nephews all ended up joining the Navy. It was not peer pressure that moved me to the Navy for after high school as nearly every one of my best friends joined the Marines. James Clark, Barry Schonteich, Mike and Jim Flatt (the sons of a Marine Officer), Gary Sperstad, and Bill Jorgenson (the young brother of two Marines) all joined the Marines and encouraged me to do the same. Despite their encouragement and pressure to join the Marines, in my subconscious was this recording from the past, playing over and over in my head, "*Join the Navy, son. At least at the end of the day you'll have a warm bed to sleep in and a roof over your head.*" As I shall discuss later, early indoctrination is an important force in forming a person's beliefs and his life's choices. Once indoctrinated, beliefs, behaviors, and life choices usually last a person's lifetime. We will return to this later.

And then there was Dad. As a child sliding down a slide in grade school, Dad ran a metal object into his abdomen and ended up with what he was told was TB of bowel. As such, come time to sign up to fight the war to liberate the world, Dad did not pass the physical. Instead, he ended up at a Conservation Corps (The CC's) Camp in Montana as a medic. I never knew Dad was a medic until a few years before he died. "*The world is truly small!*" I thought given I ended up as a medic in Vietnam.

Anyway, being a non-veteran, Dad could not belong to groups such as the VFW which next to churches was the largest social activity around my small town. Called a draft dodger once, Dad openly cried which was the only time I ever saw him cry. He looked at me with his eyes swelling up from tears and told me that when it comes my turn to serve my country, do it or I'd regret not having served in the military the rest of my life.

Hollywood also did its part to reinforce and glorify the military. "**To Hell and Back**," "**Midway**," "**The Guns of Navarone**," "**Sergeant York**," "**Remember the Alamo**," "**The Bridge on the River Kwai**," "**The Fighting Seabees**." Superman was fighting for "*Truth, Justice, and the American Way.*" Audie Murphy was a household name. Comic book heroes like Sergeant Rock and Charlie Cigar defended America from Japan's advance. And who could forget those great crime fighters, Spiderman, The Green Lantern, the Fantastic Four, Captain America, and the American League defending the free world from unscrupulous madmen bent on world domination. Amazingly figures like the short stocky baldheaded Lex Luthor, Superman's archenemy, amazingly just happened to resemble, Khrushchev, who we were constantly reminded was out to bury us. I had made that connection early in life as I remember asking Dad once if Superman could do all the things television and comic books claimed he could do, why we (being the United States) don't just send him to Russia and clean up all that evil in the world. That of course is laughable now --- but I was serious then.

And who from my generation had not seen hundreds of reruns of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Holocaust, or had not watched what Turner Classic Movies now refer to as "*One Reel Wonders*," played at the theater prior to the main feature or for intermissions, patriotic films as the 1956 "**Sentinels in the Air**."

Stressed during this film clip was at any moment America could itself come under attack, or worse a bomb could just drop out of the sky.

I remember one of my next-door neighbors, a just turned teen-age kid only a year older than myself, claiming he was a member of civil air patrol and his duty was to report any objects he saw flying overhead to his commander. And who could not recite JFK's words "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country?" Contrary to the publicized, often dramatized, antiwar sentiment of the sixties and seventies, heroism and devotion to duty was being marketed to my baby boomer generation on a grand scale.

*Fighting soldiers from the sky
Fearless men who jump and die
Men who mean just what they say
The brave men of the Green Beret*

*Silver wings upon their chest
These are men, America's best
Sgt Barry Sadler
The Ballad of the Green Berets*

Violence as seen through a Child's Eyes

The children in my neighborhood were for the most part two to three years my senior. That meant if I wanted to play with them, I had to be able to compete on their level. I had to run as fast, catch as well, and in softball, at least, be able to hit as well and as hard as they could. If I could not do these things, I would not get to play. So I played as hard as I could and as it turned out I was able to perform near enough their level even if two years their junior. In terms of getting to play in my neighborhood, my performing above what would be considered my age level was a good thing. In terms of playing with those of my own age level at school however my attempting to be two to three years advanced in the sport was often seen as egotistical and self-serving. I, not surprisingly, never saw this at the time. In my mind, to play, I had to put all I could into every play.

What I could not compete with however was size. When it came to settling an argument with my neighbors over important childhood issues like was I safe on first base, I nearly always lost. The referee was always on their side since the referee just happened to be half again my size and doubled as the first baseman. Should I protest a call, either I came to see it their way or I went home with a swollen eye unable to see anything. While I may have been able to hit a ball and run well enough to stay in the game, the twenty pounds these guys had on me was next to impossible to overcome. Right or wrong, true or false, mattered little to nothing. The biggest guy usually got his way. I came to see violence therefore as having the ability to nullify facts. Violence, I learned at an early age, did not prove anything other than who was the biggest.

When I think back on my childhood and how my views on violence were shaped, aside from the discussion above, I immediately think of two events that

turned me even further against the use of violence as a method of settling disputes. The first came from my home.

My father early in his marriage was a wife beater. I remember one evening being awakened by Dad yelling and banging things around my parent's bedroom over a condom that he claimed he found in the driveway. Too young to know what condoms were used for I really had no idea what the fight was all about. Looking back however it is quite possible I may have dropped it there. Condoms were, after all, usually available on my folks' dresser. I of course thought they made great balloons; something I found out when a local drug store burned down. I found a case full of them lying amongst the ashes. I made quite the impression on my grade schoolteachers blowing condoms up on the playgrounds. It is not hard to imagine that this innocent infatuation with condoms had something to do with one showing up in the driveway.

I never got a chance to inform Dad that it all might be a mistake, however. Even if I may have known how that condom ended up in our driveway, considering his tone, I figured I'd probably be wise to pretend I was sleeping. I was not supposed to go in their bedroom. So, I pretended to be asleep even when this loud crash came from the bedroom and Dad left, slamming the door behind him. I listened for some sound from Mom, but none came. Worried, I opened Mom's door to find her in a piled up against the dresser, not making a sound. I thought she was dead. I went over and shook her after which she began to come around. I've never forgotten that night. I'll never forget what it felt like to wonder if my mother was alive or dead. I've never forgotten how senseless the whole act of her beating was. What did it prove? Did it prove that condom in the driveway was anything more than a balloon in the hands of a child? Violence to me seemed only a method of control with little regard given to finding out the truth. All violence accomplished was hurt people. It rarely brought out any truths that I could see.

My second eye opening brush with violence came a few years later. Gangs, if you could call them that, were forming throughout the town inspired by the 1961 film "West Side Story" The Riverside gang was made up of a number of boys who lived close to Enderlin's City Park and the ball diamond on the northwest end of town. Although these groups liked to think of themselves as gangs, the groups were really nothing more than local budding males watching out over their turf.

My imaginary nemesis was the "Curb Dusters." These boys made up the central portion of town close to downtown where we often played "Ditch" a game very much like "Hide and Go Seek" only in Ditch we had teams. One person of small frame from the "Curb Dusters" was particularly aggressive. He seemed to like fights and inflicting pain on others. He loved to intimidate people. He often appeared at hangouts like the Grand Theater showing off things like brass knuckles or switchblades but, I believe these weapons were more status symbols than serious weapons. I never heard of anyone being stabbed with his knives or beaten severely by his brass knuckles. That however did not prevent him from being mean spirited and threatening.

I later associated his aggressiveness to what I called the "*Small Guy Syndrome*" also referred to as the "*Napoleon Complex*," small framed short males with an ego to fill. They had to prove they were tougher than they appeared to be

and what better way than to beat up or intimidate someone larger? Fights for them, whether physically won or lost, were a win-win deal. If they lost, they were praised for their bravery for going up against someone larger. If they won, they were seen as superhuman for beating someone larger.

I was often one of his victims. He would wait for me after school normally with a few others of his Curb Dusters friends for back up. Outnumbered and less experienced at fighting, I'd end crawling home with a black eye or numerous other bruises whining to my parents that they should do something about putting an end to that bullying. The answer I always received however was "*Why don't you fight your own damn battles?*" Boys, after all, were supposed to be able to take care of themselves. So, one day I did. I took care of myself. I cannot remember the exact circumstance; all I remember was he was giving me his usual bad time on the playground, pushing me around, and harassing me when I decided I had enough. I wound up and let him have it, right on the end of his nose with the same ferocity I put into a baseball bat when playing ball with my older neighbors. Down he went. Blood flew everywhere.

I received a lesson in fighting that day. Not only do I get hurt in fights, but I was capable of inflicting some serious damage to others --- and I did not like that. I took no gratification in the fact that I probably broke his nose. The bleeding couldn't be controlled. For the rest of the evening, I laid awake worried that he might bleed to death. Mom kept me updated as to his condition. If I did not like fighting before this event, I sure as hell did not like fighting afterward. While I could handle getting wailed on from time to time, I was, after the incident with him, as afraid of what I might do to the other guy as what he might do to me. What if he died? How would I feel? And what punishment might it bring? Would I end up in prison if the punch I inflicted caused his death? From that day forward, I avoided fights even if it meant being called a chicken.

Pop Music: the Music of my Generation

My generation's choice of pop music was considered nothing but noise by our music teacher. One day our teacher walked into the room, placed a vinyl record on the turn table, and cranked up the volume. Out came "*Surfing Bird*" sung by the Trashmen. Raw, gruff, with few words more than "*bird*" and "*word*" and fewer notes, the song is best described as a lip flapping string of babble that sounded more like flatulence than a melody. The instructor then shut off the player, folded his arms around his chest, and asked "*Does anyone dare to call this music?*" No one did --- at least in his class.

Outside of class however and what many critics missed was our music wasn't all about noise. Within its beat was a craving for a good time, "*Let's Have a Party*." Dances were being invented to get that party on the floor; like the Twist, the Swim, the Mash Potato, the Limbo, the Locomotion much of which was being spurred on by thoughts like "*I May Not Live to See Tomorrow*." Time as the next segment will express was ticking down and running out --- so "*If you can't be with*

the one you love, love the one you're with." There was this urgency to live life now and now is all that mattered:

Today

The New Christy Minstrels. 1965

*"Today, while the blossoms still cling to the vine,
I'll taste your strawberries, I'll drink your sweet wine
A million tomorrows shall all pass away
'Ere I forget all the joy that is mine today"*

Our music was hope of things to come. Our music challenged the conservative status quo calling for good times, personal liberation from long established norms, civil disobedience, racial equality, and the end to war. Unfortunately, the ideas of the sixties would be short lived. Rumors now have it Bob Dylan has been seen waiting for a "Slow Train" and Cat Stevens went into hiding in a "Moon Shadow." Some-time around the mid-seventies all those antiestablishment lyrics seemed to have simply faded into little more than advertisements while some "Spirit in the Sky" descended on pop culture like a thief in the night stealing whatever originality and purpose the sixties had brought us. It was sad watching Beatle boots and lyrics like "*With a little help from my friends*" turn into cowboy boots with lyrics like "*If I can't get it on my own.*"

The Bomb:

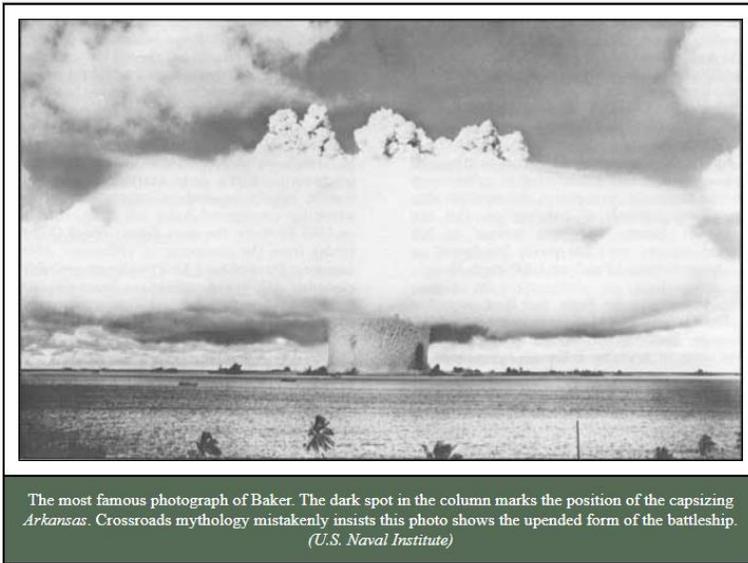
Life on Earth in the Hands of Man

I did not think of it much then but looking back the rise of Rock and Roll largely paralleled the rise of a huge mushroom shaped cloud which lingered in the minds of my generation and cast a shadow over nearly everything we did. The world, as Barry McGuire blurted out in his "The Eve of Destruction," seemed on the eve of destruction. We, the baby boomers, were convinced that at any time, on any day, the end would come. Consider "The Merry Minuet" as sang by the Kingston Trio:

"And we know for certain that some lucky day
Someone will set the spark off
And we will all be blown away."⁰¹²

The key word in those lyrics is "**CERTAIN**." Not maybe. Not possibly. But "for certain" we would all be blown away. In the 1960 movie "The Time Machine" (based on an H.G.Wells novel) Rod Taylor, as George, builds a time machine. The story begins in 1899, with Taylor climbing into his time machine and ending up 800,000 years into the future saving the Eloi from the Morlocks, both the result of human evolution. The Eloi, looking like modern-day humans, were largely grown as cattle for the cannibalistic Morlocks, bluish colored and hairy humans of the underworld. The Eloi are called to their fate in the underground, where their ancestors went to protect themselves from the bomb, by wailing sirens.

Once enough Eloi enter the underground world of the Morlocks to satisfy their taste for flesh, the door to the Morlock's world would close and the all clear is given. The remaining Elois then return to their pasture, sort of speak, where they reproduce more Eloi for the next time the sirens sounded. No elderly Eloi existed as all the Eloi are eaten long before ever getting old.



The plot of the movie was more about war than what happens to the Eloi and Morlocks, however. George's stops along his way to the year 800,000 AD included a stop during World War I where George discovers that his friend from 1899 had been killed in the war. The news of George's friend's death comes from George's

friend's son. George's house, where he started his trek into the future, is all boarded up and abandoned. The second time George stops was during World War II. England was being bombed by Germany, an air raid in which George's house was destroyed.

George's third stop, his last before reaching 800,000 AD, was on August 16, 1966. People were scrabbling about attempting to hustle George into an underground bomb shelter as sirens were blaring foretelling the arrival of incoming Atomic bombs. Human civilization as it was known ended that very day. Civilization did not end off somewhere in the distant future. Civilization, predicted by this movie, would end in 1966, only six years after the movie's opening. The message being relayed to my generation, the world was about to end --- and soon.

My generation, as adolescents, had all seen Baker, the Tilapia Bomb,⁰¹³ played over and over on newsreels at the Grand Theater, not to mention the destruction caused at Hiroshima and Nagasaki⁰¹⁴ when America decided to drop the bomb on Japan. I remember the shadow of a man imprinted on a sidewalk, the only spot on the sidewalk that was not scorched by the flash of the blast. His body, vaporized by the heat of the blast, shielded the sidewalk from the full intensity of the flash's heat leaving only his shadow as the negative of a snapshot in time. There is no denying it --- as a child in my early preteens, these videos scared the hell out of me. Life was going to be short lived. Enjoy it now.

If the real scenes of atomic blasts weren't enough, the movie industry began to capitalize on uncertainties surrounding the Nuclear age, for example, the possible effects of nuclear fallout. Movies like the 1954 movie, "*Them*" featured ants affected by radiation by atomic tests mutating to become giant ants which ravaged

the southwest. Beginning as a mystery movie involving missing people, strange tracks are discovered that proves to be Them, giant Ants. The movie preys on man's worst fear, the fear of the unknown. Dr. Harold Medford makes the statement in the movie that "*When man entered the atomic age he opened a door to a new world. What we'll eventually find in that new world nobody can predict.*"⁰¹⁵

The same year a Japanese movie, "*Gojira*" (AKA Godzilla), exemplified the nuclear testing of hydrogen bombs as destroying a previously unknown aquatic dinosaur like beast's habitat. Having nowhere to live, the beast surfaces to ravage Tokyo. Empowered by radiation generated by H bomb tests, Godzilla possessed amazing nuclear generated powers and strength including a radioactive breath ray capable of setting buildings and people on fire. No known weapons could stop Gojira.

The beast Gojira was seen as an analogy to the atomic bomb. Any Japanese having survived those atomic bombs or for that matter firebombing likely had no problem linking the terror and horror, the despair and hopelessness those bombings created to some imaginary indestructible monster. Being a perfect myth to describe what Japan had endured, the movie was a phenomenon in Japan. People, it seems, are more willing to accept a myth than reality if reality happens to be unpleasant.

Anyway, faced with the possible utter destruction of Japan by Gojira, the only option, ironically, was for the Japanese to build a bigger and more horrendous weapon. The weapon created to destroy Gojira was, like Gojira, a fictitious weapon; the Oxygen Destroyer.⁰¹⁶ Its creator however questioned the value of this atrocious weapon's use given its capability of unmanageable destruction just as Oppenheimer questioned the development of Hydrogen bomb. The movie raises the question the free world feared the most. What if this new awesome weapon fell into the hands of war lords and hostile nations? The question however came too late for the West. By the time the movie was released, the bomb had already been acquired by the Soviet Union. The arms race, as the movie suggests, was on. The Cold War had begun.

Evening television also stepped into the fray. Rod Sterling's "*The Twilight Zone*" featured Burgess Meredith as Henry Bemis. "*Time Enough at Last*" tells the story of a bank teller and bookworm who could not find enough time to read all the books he wanted. One day Henry slipped into the vault to read a book as nuclear war, unbeknown to Henry, destroyed the world around him. When Henry emerges from the vault, he realizes he is the sole survivor. What happens in the rest of the story line is not nearly as important as the question that the movie left hanging in every viewer's head. What if nuclear war really happened and I ended up as the sole survivor? Would I really want to live or would I really be better off dead? Bemis offers his audience an insight into that question. Happy about the fact that he now could take time to read all the books he wanted, upon attempting to pick up a book, Henry's bottle neck glasses fell off and shattered on the stairs. All those books, all the time in the world, and Henry is left alone with no glasses.

Sputnik was launched October 4th, 1957⁰¹⁷ and proved to the world everyone was vulnerable to nuclear attack. I remember Mom herding us children outside to look for this new star cross the sky. We watched and watched and then there it was, passing on its route directly over our house. I remember my grim-faced

mother as she uttered the words, trembling and clearly frightened “*That could just as easily be a bomb.*” I was only eleven at the time but even then, I had no qualms about what Mom’s statement meant. Bombs simply dropping out of the sky could liquidate us at any time. Nowhere was safe. Not even America which until this time always enjoyed the safety of having two oceans between America and its enemies. Not anymore.

On October 30, 1961, the Soviets detonated the largest nuclear device in history, the Tsar Bomba, tested on Novaya Zemlya, an island in the Arctic Sea. The blast yielded approximately 50 megatons of energy capable of generating third degree burns up to 100 kilometers. Although Tsar Bomba’s use as a weapon was questionable because of its size, for propaganda purposes it made its point.⁰¹⁸ I remember debating with my friends next door, age 15, whether we, at Enderlin, would survive a blast detonated over Fargo fifty miles away. It did not seem likely that Russia would drop a bomb on Enderlin, population 1500, but Fargo --- the largest town anywhere around --- maybe.

To think an explosion that far away would level everything within the radius of Fargo to Enderlin was indeed a horrifying thought. And if that was not enough to worry about, as prophesized in the movie “*Gojira*” every year up until that point, the bombs just kept getting larger. Where would it end? Well --- it ended that year, or so is the hope, but we had no way of knowing that for sure, do we?

Then came the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The Russians were stocking Cuba with offensive missiles armed with nuclear war heads.⁰¹⁹ President John F. Kennedy immediately responded with a Naval blockade of Cuba while the rest of the world trembled as the nuclear superpowers stood face to face, fidgeting with their fingers just above their six shooters waiting for the other to draw.

No one drew. Instead, the Russians put up their hands and walked away thereby avoiding a fight. Which were they, cowards for backing down or heroes for evading nuclear war, I could have cared less. I’m just glad they decided to walk away rather than reduce the world to ashes --- which apparently the U.S. seemed willing to do. The closest the world had ever come to a nuclear war, which I know about, had passed. That did little to console the Average Joe on the street, however. Although the threat of nuclear war for the moment had been silenced, the blasts from Trinity, Bikini, Japan, and Russia still echoed in everyone’s ears. For them, it was reasonable to believe that another Cuban like face-off was irrefutably just around the corner. This time however maybe the Russian’s cowardice or generosity, whichever the case was, might not save us.

This nuclear war scare led to the Civil Defense Industry, now thought by many influential sources as a propaganda agency designed to sell construction materials and survival supplies for fallout shelters. From Billy Graham to Nelson Rockefeller, support for the fallout shelter program was proclaimed as a program that could save millions of lives. Virtually every media source had images of mushroom clouds rising over United States cities while Civil Defense was being hailed as Americans’ only hope for survival. Everything had come together to make Civil Defense and the government spending that went into it one of the most perfect propaganda enrichment programs ever dreamt up by influential people with their hands in the cookie jar.

Side Note:

“Duck and Cover” was another Civil Defense film shown in schools across America during the 50s. Children during this era were exposed to the possibility that nuclear war might happen any day and some of the so called “ways to protect yourself” offered by these films were quite laughable, even to children. I remember one joke in particular as an adolescent: What do you do in the case of a nuclear attack? You bend over and put your head between your legs (in reference to protecting your head in this film clip) and kiss your sweet ass goodbye.

Not many children in today’s America have been exposed to these films as it is likely the fear these film clips generated was thought to be the reason for the peace movement to follow in the sixties. America since World War II has been a war nation --- with little sentiment for peaceniks.

Well --- anyway, people’s hands in the cookie jar were the better of two scenarios. The alternative thought was that people were being prepared for the unimaginable, a nuclear war. Kennedy openly pro-moted fallout shelters. For example, the September 15th, 1961, issue of Life Magazine featured a man in a civilian fallout suit on the cover. The issue made the claim that 97 out of 100 people could be saved in the event of a nuclear war by fallout shelters.

Inside this issue contained a letter by Kennedy encouraging the American people to do something to protect themselves⁰²⁰ which was taken by most people I knew as ‘*build a shelter.*’ Government publications to follow reiterated Kennedy’s overly optimistic survival rates. Not many people, at least those I knew, believed that humanity could survive a nuclear war, however. In fact, most people saw the message Kennedy conveyed as absurd. “*Why would Kennedy even make such a claim?*” most people I knew would ask. “*Were we being conned into thinking a nuclear war might even be an option?*”

No one I knew could afford to build one of those shelters to say anything about stocking it. My family could not afford such a luxury and mother was quick to point out that if a nuclear war did break out, our family, not having one of these shelters, surely would be all dead. As for the rest of the world, Mom continued, with or without a bomb shelter, life would end as we knew it. To believe otherwise, she would say, was total lunacy. Mom never was a military strategist or an authority on nuclear weapons, but she was still Mom and to my young ears her words stuck. Nuclear war was nothing short of worldwide suicide. I believed it then. I believe it now.

In the end, bomb shelters were never put to the test. Nonetheless, what bomb shelters did do was make several people rich selling fallout shelter construction materials and survival goods. I have not gone through the process to track this money, but my guess is many politicians and their constituents benefited greatly from their own government’s propaganda, propaganda they themselves put out.

The Protests Begin: Ban the Bomb, Stop War

Hopeful noises were heard shouting in the wilderness, however. Ban the bomb rallies were quickly becoming a worldwide chant. When I look back at the way the antiwar movement of the late sixties and early seventies developed, it is not hard to understand why they began and how they evolved. No one wanted a nuclear war and few, despite the propaganda, believed the world would survive one. In most people's mind, the best way to prevent a nuclear war was to prevent war altogether. No more war --- no more bombs.



None of this escaped the music industry, which had no problem converting clashing emotions, fear, uncertainty, and hope into cash. Bob Dylan's "*Blowing in the Wind*" said it all and was picked up and redone by anyone wishing to be a folk singer. Other songs such as Malvina Reynolds' "*Just A Little Rain*" about a boy standing in the rain laden with radioactive fallout and acid rain capitalized on the unknown dangers of nuclear fallout and pollution. Pete Seeger's "*Where Have All the Flowers Gone*" redone by the Kingston Trio, spun on every juke box, radio, and stereo across nation, played wherever peace conscience people gathered. Antiwar sentiment was strong and growing and music was a powerful tool aiding the

antiwar cause.

The argument that every person should put forth whatever effort was needed to end war was a pitch even this adolescent could understand. I, myself, took up writing a few poems about war that I shall offer here, not so much for their literary value (of which there is little) but as a snapshot in time to show what I was thinking around 13-15 years of age. From my poem "*This Villainous Worlds World*," written somewhere around 1961 just before or slightly after I entered high school, ended with:

But someday there shall come a day,
When almighty man will lay down his arms and walk away,
Leaving behind,
As we shall see,
A died still war-torn world, that he cruelly demolished due to his own self greed,
Due to his villainous play.

Or "*War*" which I wrote about the same time.

The fields did bleed, all tattered and torn,

The country's died, its love forlorn,
Due to someone's greed. Their worthless need,
The green is gone, this land once worn.

The profits of war were under scrutiny. No longer were we dealing with the lives of a handful of men. With the bomb at our disposal, we were dealing with species preservation, the survival of the entire human race if not, life on earth. War needed to end and end now.

While I felt strongly that every young man had a duty to his country, I also had this strong antiwar sentimentality. Somehow, for whatever reason, it never occurred to me that by joining the service I was violating my own antiwar beliefs. In fact, I saw the military as doing my part to end war as ironic as that sounds. We were the good guys, the guys in white, defending the world against the bad guys, the guys in black hats. Once we were victorious there would be no need for war as goodness, being American values, would prevail. I could not imagine anyone having a problem with that --- at least then.

Was I in for an enlightenment! Reflecting, don't ask me to explain how I figured fighting might end war. I now realize the absurdity of that thinking. I now have no idea how I could have rationalized this war to end war rationale. In fact, a war to end all wars, World War I, had already been fought but according to history, all that war created was a larger war, World War II.

It was all quite confusing to this young man who's only understanding of the world came from capitalistic supported and censored textbooks, the evening news, music lyrics taken exclusively from the top forty, and all the knowledge I acquired in my world travels from the plains of the Dakotas to the western shores of Lake Michigan. It never occurred to me that Russians might have had the very same thoughts, that they wore the white hats, that goodness might be the Russian way, and their possible victory was a way to end all war as only goodness would prevail. "*Who*" many Russians might have been asking themselves "*could have a problem with that?*"

Then one day, I came across a somewhat troubling protest song that has never left my memory. I first heard Buffy St Marie's "*The Universal Soldier*" one Friday hitchhiking back from New Effington, South Dakota where I worked on a railroad section crew. Sung by Donovan, it immediately grabbed my attention as a song with depth. As a collector of 45 records, I set out to find it. I never did until YouTube featured it. At any rate, because I never found it and listened to it long enough to learn the lyrics, I missed the table being prepared before me. Buffy's words were a prophecy of how war veterans; Vietnam Veterans in particular, were to be treated in the upcoming years. Buffy's lyrics placed the blame for the war directly on the individual soldier with the words "*he's the one that gives his body as a weapon of the war and without him all this killing can't go on.*" If its meaning was "*shame on veterans,*" it worked.

The Rise of the Antihero: The Assault on Liberalism

While heroes were everywhere, Batman, Superman, Jimmy Stewart, Randolph Scott, the antihero was rising during my later years in high school. To my youngest brother, Jim, these antiheroes were his idols. Every day I'd come home to Jim glued to Rocky and Bullwinkle attempting to disrupt the manufacture of counterfeit box tops by the notorious Boris Badenov and his lovely co-conspirator, Natasha Fatale. When Bullwinkle was not saving the world from the conspiracies directed by Boris' boss, Pottsylvania's Fearless Leader, Bullwinkle became "Mr Know-It All" which



I always saw as a shot at the intellectual liberal establishment of the fifties and sixties. It worked. In the years to come being knowledgeable earned you the title of being a Nerd.

El-Kabong picked a guitar to battle the forces of evil in the world, an interesting choice of weapons. Odd how some lame brained horse picked a guitar to battle the bad guys given folk singers like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Utah Phillips. Woody had "*This machine kills fascist*" painted on his guitar. Pete Seeger, another folk singer, and member of the Weavers

was banned from most concert houses in America for singing songs such as "The Hammer Song" (the Hammer taken by the rightwing conservatives as a Communist symbol). Seeger and Guthrie sang songs in support of labor unions, antiwar, and songs on other social conscience issues such as the government's treatment of Veterans.

One of my favorite songs even in my teen years was "Can You Spare a Dime," a song of social inequality which speaks to the nation's treatment of its labor force and veterans. After working to build society's infrastructure and fighting its wars, workers and veterans too often found their reward on bread lines and soup kitchens or begging for handouts largely abandoned by the very people they believed they were defending.

Folk singers and songs, many repeats from decades earlier, carried a strong message of socialism and humanism. Was El Kabong's guitar a propaganda symbol used to debunk the advances made by liberals, unions, and intellectuals? If so, should El Kabong's guitar be taken as those advancing social equality and protesting war with a guitar, Guthrie, Seeger, and Dylan as nothing more than asses with guitars? I cannot say --- but something to ponder.

While all this hero/antihero may have meant nothing, it is fun to speculate on how the rise of the antihero may have affected the thinking of those seven to ten years younger than myself. My younger brother, Jim, and his friends, whom I will refer later in this writing to as the perfect people, seemed to have a whole different

perspective on life, This younger group seemed to loathe any intellectual conversation, placed being machismo at about a 2 on a scale of 1-10, ignored all things political, and held this simple idea that anything humorous, even slapstick, was preferable to anything of a serious nature.



A Hero's Lament: Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Commits Suicide

Early in the sixties I worked for a farmer in Buffalo, North Dakota, summer fallowing and haying. One of the middle-aged gentlemen working on the farm was Art Beyer. For the most part, Art worked around the shop but drove the hay wagon during hay season while we younger folks loaded it. I came to work one day, and Art wasn't there, so I asked where Art had gone. Turns out, Art was in Washington D.C. for a

Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient reunion.

BEYER, ARTHUR O.: *Rank and organization: Corporal, U.S. Army, Company C, 603d Tank Destroyer Battalion. Place and date: Near Arloncourt, Belgium, 15 January 1945. Entered service at: St. Ansgar, Iowa. Born: 20 May 1909, Rock Township, Mitchell County, Iowa. G.O. No.: 73, 30 August 1945. Citation: He displayed conspicuous gallantry in action. His platoon, in which he was a tank-destroyer gunner, was held up by antitank, machinegun, and rifle fire from enemy troops dug in along a ridge about 200 yards to the front. Noting a machinegun position in this defense line, he fired upon it with his 76-mm. gun killing 1 man and silencing the weapon. He dismounted from his vehicle and, under direct enemy observation, crossed open ground to capture the 2 remaining members of the crew. Another machinegun, about 250 yards to the left, continued to fire on him. Through withering fire, he advanced on the position. Throwing a grenade into the emplacement, he killed 1 crewmember and again captured the 2 survivors. He was subjected to concentrated small-arms fire but, with great bravery, he worked his way a quarter mile along the ridge, attacking hostile soldiers in their foxholes with his carbine and grenades. When he had completed his self-imposed mission against powerful German forces, he had destroyed 2 machinegun positions, killed 8 of the enemy and captured 18 prisoners, including 2 bazooka teams. Cpl. Beyer's intrepid action and unflinching determination to close with*

*and destroy the enemy eliminated the German defense line and enabled his task force to gain its objective.*⁰²³

I couldn't believe it. Right there on the very farm I worked, the driver of my hay wagon was a genuine Audie Murphy. I was awed. The first question I had for Art of course upon his return was "What did you do in the war to earn that medal? Tell me."

Art however never mentioned anything about what he did to earn that medal, and in fact seemed very uncomfortable about even being asked. He just looked at me, turned around, put the tractor in gear, and headed for the hayfield. I did not understand at all why Art might not wish to speak of his part in the war. I thought he should have been proud of his action and probably, with good intentions, I made something of a nuisance of myself. At that time, to me, a hero's status was the greatest thing a human could achieve. I often visualized myself being awarded some high medal and for whatever crazy reason put it on one of my "to do" lists as if earning a medal of honor was like earning a Boy Scout merit badge. I quite clearly had much to learn about heroism.

That something was amiss about Art being a farm laborer did not take long to settle in either. A Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, Art was working, no doubt, for not much more than subsistence if his pay was anything like mine, five dollars a day from sunup to sundown. "Where was Art's reward?" I pondered. Murphy after all got his reward in show business starring in his own story "**To Hell And Back**" not to mention a host of numerous rough and rowdy cowboy movies where he was held up to the world for all to see what a true hero he was.

So why was not Art lifted? Art was a hero. How is it he ended up there, on that farm, in such a lowly position, entertaining high school boys while they loaded hay wagons? Was his position one of personal choice or was something else at work? Anyway, I never did get an answer until I had to struggle with war myself. But then it was too late to tell Art that I think I understood him. You see, one day, Art, as his story was relayed to me, went out in the barn, and hung himself. A hollow was created for me on that day that to this day has never been refilled. Was this how the United States treated its heroes? A ride on a hay wagon, a dollar's worth of ribbon to wear around their necks, and an occasional party? Was that all?

Vietnam: As seen from High School

As a young man growing up in the sixties, Vietnam was hard to avoid. Ever since around 1962 until the following decade, the evening news was dominated by scenes of battle and mayhem in Vietnam. The most memorable news event that seared an image in my mind like some cattle brand was the picture of a Buddhist monk publicly setting himself on fire in what I believed at the time to be a protest against Communism. I know now however it was not Communism that monk was protesting, rather it was Catholicism. While 70% of the population of Vietnam were Buddhist, the government, under Diem, was predominantly Catholic, the religion introduced and promoted by their captors, the French. In police forces, the upper positions of the armed forces, civil service, colleges, and trade unions, Buddhists

were being systematically replaced with Catholics.⁰²⁴ Although this fact was unknown to me at the time, I would during my tour in Vietnam pick up on the significance of this religious divide on my own.

As for Communism, history class commonly made the statement that, “*He who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it*” and “*What did we learn studying World War II?*” our teacher would ask. We learned that had we stopped Hitler when he began dissolving other nations into his Third Reich, World War II may have never happened. Remaining neutral to aggression (although we were never informed as to why the United States remained neutral) was a mistake we, the students, were reminded time and again. Blow out fires before they spread out of control. Communism, from World War II’s end in the middle 40’s to the 60’s, was deemed as one of these spreading fires. The free world watched as Communism occupied the Eastern Block, China, North Korea, Cuba, and now Vietnam was on their plate. Called the “*Domino Theory*,” it was projected that should Vietnam fall next would be Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and then Indonesia.

The time to stop the Communist’s advance was now --- before we were fighting the Communists on our own soil, which according to the House Committee on un-American Activity, we were already doing. Publishers, playwrights, song composers, movies stars, and directors that so much as questioned the morality of capitalistic rightwing interests or war all needed monitored, if not outright banned from the public eye. A number of these artists were accused of communist involvement of which none were ever proven to be. Even without being found guilty of any crime, several publishers and play writers were still jailed, not for being Communists but “*Contempt of Congress*” for refusing to answer the question, “*Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?*”

Dalton Trumbo, the author of the famous antiwar novel “*Johnny Got His Gun*” was one of those jailed.⁰²⁵ Even if any of these people, as Trumbo, should have been proven to be Communist, at no time before or since was it against the law to belong to the Communist Party. In fact, around the turn of the twentieth century, before the barbaric exploits of Stalin became known, it was not uncommon for intellectuals and idealists to be drawn to the idea of Communism⁰²⁶ which these intellectuals and idealists viewed as a safe harbor from the horrors and labor abuses of unregulated capitalism.

It’s difficult to remember exactly what was going through my mind watching Vietnam unfold. About my only source of information in the early sixties was the television and I feel safe saying how Vietnam was portrayed on television was how I saw it. Rather than attempting to educate its viewers with the sociological aspects and historical ramifications of this war, the media concentrated on small eye catching, sensational bits and pieces that to a large degree, early on, added support for the war effort. Those people heard on the news were always the leaders of the United States’ War Effort, Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, General Westmoreland, all giving their plugs for the reason why this war was important and needed to be fought. Never can I remember General Giap, for example, give his assessment of the war or explain his reason for fighting it. In short, the media coverage was very one sided, American sided. Taken a step further, it wasn’t just the American side; it was the prowar American side. And even if McNamara and

Giap would have been given the opportunity to openly debate the issues of concern with each other publicly via the media, it is likely no effort by the media would have been made to validate any claims made by either side. I would learn that bit of truth at St Cloud State College during a Journalism Class which I will speak of later.

It's important to realize that the media is or never has been in the business of education. In essence it is tragic for there is much opportunity to inform and educate the public using the media. The opportunity is there but far too often lost because of commercial interests. It is no secret that the television and radio stations, newspapers, and magazines are all subject to the scrupulous eyes of corporations or other supporters who maintain the power to extract their advertisements or donations. Any publication that these corporations and sponsors feel reflects badly on them risks losing their funding. The reality is media stations, papers, and magazines either put forth what these powers want known or cease to exist. This is the Capitalist system at work. Either the media does it the advertisers' way or no more money! It is not hard for me to believe that many thoughtful, truthful, informative editorials were and still are not aired because of the negative impact these editorials might have on any US corporations or their economic interest.

Edward R Murrow shares my view of the media. Speaking of his concern for what was and still is being offered on radio and television, Edward R. Murrow stated,

*"I am seized with an abiding fear regarding what these two instruments (radio and television) are doing to our society, our culture and our heritage."*⁰²⁷

Murrow goes on to say that the media, rather than telling what is really happening in the world, shields its consumers from the world's unpleasant realities. The nation, according to Murrow, is in mortal trouble for not addressing the demanding issues of the day for which, Murrow reminds us, our nation will end up paying an extreme cost.⁰²⁸ At any rate, Murrow's logic went right over everyone's head then. I was your average "if it is on the news, there must be something to it" buffoon. These were after all news people, anchors – reporters, attempt-ting to tell us the truth or so I thought at the time. I believed them --- until I went to Vietnam. Then all I believed prior to Vietnam would in time crumble.

What I was able to pick up from the media was Vietnam was different from any war experience previously fought by the United States. Vietnam had no fronts other than in isolated locations such as Con Thien and Khe Sanh. Chasing Vietcong was like chasing ghosts. Separating the civilian population from the enemy was next to impossible. An American soldier never really knew who the enemy was. Any Vietnamese swirling around any American at any given time could be on a mission to send that American home in a body bag. This lineless, invisible enemy, children dropping grenades in soldiers' laps, snipers in trees, booby traps, was not the Vietnam mainly presented by the media, however. The media tended to report on the major battles nearly all of which were ultimately won by the United States. We, according to the early media at least, were winning battle after battle.

And then there was this all-important body count, Vietcong's number dead versus America's number dead. It was supposed to display progress if we could show that we were killing more of them than they were us. This absurd idea occurred to me right off, due largely to my high school history teacher. Speaking of the waves of Chinese that threw themselves in harms-way by the tens of thousands during the Korean War, according to our instructor, China could have lined up its population up in single file and marched them straight into a machine gun with the net result being China's population would increase.

I have not done the math to know if my instructor's scenario is true, but the logic of his argument seemed sound and stuck with me. The more people you have, the more people you can stand to lose, and Asia represented the bulk of the world's population. Ho Chi Minh understood that stating: "*You can kill ten of my men for everyone I kill of yours. But even at those odds, you will lose, and I will win.*"⁰²⁹ And Ho did win the war --- even at a higher cost than ten to one odds.

I remember from my past a movie about Cuba's revolution. All though I cannot remember the name of the movie, I can recall one scene were a man runs out into the street and blows himself up taking with him his targeted group. "*Did you see that*" the star astonishingly proclaims "*Do you know what that means? That means they won.*" I've never forgot that. If people are willing to sacrifice themselves in such a fashion, unless you kill them all, you are likely going to lose.

CHAPTER TWO

Growing Up in the Fifties

We See only What Our Eyes See

One of the stories as told by my brother, Jim, was his view of the world before he received his first set of glasses. Jim was always pressed up against the television screen, eyes squinting, to make sense out of what everyone else in the house seemed to have no trouble understanding. Jim often had no idea of a movie's plot. He could hardly read. He was seen as clumsy, often bumping into inanimate objects and tripping over anything in his way. If an object, such as a bird, was pointed out to Jim, he often missed it entirely to the frustration of both the person pointing out the object and Jim. To say the least, Jim grew up non-athletic as in a sport like softball Jim had to be able to see the ball to hit it.

Then one day Jim had his vision checked. Jim could hardly see. Fitted with glasses, Jim walked outside to see for the first time in his life that trees had leaves and grass had blades. Until then, trees and grass were nothing but a green blob according to Jim. His retention of whatever he watched on television instantly improved. How could we, those with eyesight, expect Jim to comprehend what he could not see?

Growing up in rural North Dakota amongst the amber waves of grain, never did it enter my mind that the world was ever any other way, having lived no other way. Sure, I heard of the Indians, the bison, Custer, and cowboys but how much the world had changed since those days I just never truly comprehended. My friends and I would drive out in the country, hunting, killing time, and in all that time never did it occur to any of us just how little time the world existed as we were experiencing it. Only a century before, which now at the age of 60 no longer seems like a long time, the land we were driving through was all tall grass prairie, waist to chest high, with wildflowers and wildlife flourishing everywhere. Bison, wolves, bears, prairie chickens all existed in abundant numbers. Hardly any people lived there and if any did, they were not European in origin. More importantly, before Europeans with their Christian philosophy began settling this area and domesticating the wilderness, this land had been prairie, as described above for at least ten thousand years. It only took Europeans a short span of about 100 years to destroy ten thousand years of natural evolution. I never saw this however, until I tried on a new pair of glasses other than those provided for me by my European ancestors. The corrective lenses were to come later, after returning from Vietnam, in Biology class at St Cloud State.

History in High School: What was not Told Us

History was one of few classes in High School that I enjoyed. My theory has always been if I needed to read anything, I might as well learn something hence books on history were always high on my list to read when reading was required. My favorite subject was World War II. My favorite characters: Adolph Hitler. By my junior

year in high school, I had already read "*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*," an accomplishment even for an adult. How much I retained is questionable, but it did open my eyes to how damaging the use of propaganda and too much power in the wrong hands can be.

At any rate, given my reading and the history courses, I prided myself on my knowledge of history. Of course, I was judging myself by those around me, many who lacked any interest in history at all. I never was big on exact dates; in fact, I saw learning dates, generals, and politician's names as a distraction. "*As long as I knew what event came first, Pearl Harbor, D Day or the Battle of the Bulge, what did it matter if I could tell you the exact date?*" was my reasoning. And while this reasoning may run contrary to what is considered the established norm for teaching history, I learned in later years that my often implied "*negative attitude*" had some very good merits. A person can learn the exact date of any historical event but completely miss the importance of why the event happened in the first place. The media often reminds us that on this date forty years ago, this or that happened but does that really say anything other than some trivial point that on this date that happened? Rarely does it tell why it happened.

By stressing dates, names, and events, it is possible to miss the important lessons that history is telling us altogether. I did. I missed those lessons history was telling me in my early days anyway. I could tell you all sorts of trivia about history's main players, for example Hitler was a recipient of Germany's highest medal of valor, the Iron Cross, during World War I. I knew Carl Marx wrote the "*Communist Manifesto*." I knew Hitler wrote "*Mein Kampf*." Having never read either document (readings that should have been required in high school) I missed all the important history that emerged like some gruff beast from those pages. Despite all my history classes and reading, I could not tell you what the basic politics and economics of either Communism or Fascism were. Like someone suffering from autism, one that may be able to tell you on what day of the week any given date fell on (or will fall on) but cannot tell you which date came (or will come) first, I could tell you all trivia concerning battles or personalities but had no idea what those battles were over. All I knew was the Fascists were the bad guys. Why they were the bad guys, I had only some generalized stereotypical vague idea, for example, they killed Jews.

Like most I knew, I could tell you the two Japanese cities that the atomic bombs were dropped on. I believed, as most I knew, that those bombs were dropped to save American lives by avoiding an invasion of Japan. I could tell you that America held an isolationist view toward entering World War II but I had no idea why. I had mistaken America's isolationism as an attempt by America to remain neutral and to prevent American deaths again on a foreign soil. I now know different. American businesses were getting rich providing weapons and war materials to not only those who became our allies but Germany itself (more to come on this).

I believed America's goal was and has always been to set the whole world free against the forces of evil and tyranny. I now know I was wrong given America's support for the Shah of Iran, not to mention several brutal regimes in South America and Asia. I thought America was battling against rogue religious

and political ideologies, but I found out I was wrong again. In fact, except for Japan, America was largely battling Christians' fascists gone array --- and World War II would not be the last time given Srebrenica. In Srebrenica, as if their orders were taken directly from the Old Testament,

And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

(Deuteronomy 20:13-14)

an estimated 8000 Moslem men and boys from twelve years old to sixty were herded off and executed by Christians. The women, as if directly out of the Bible, were spared apparently for the enjoyment of male Serbs. By the end of the Serbs reign of terror, it is estimated that over 200,000 Muslim civilians were murdered in the greatest ethnic cleansing to hit Europe since World War II. This would be the second time American Troops during the twentieth century were deployed into Europe to defend an opposing religion from the wrath of a largely Christian population.⁰⁰¹ But "Oh" Evangelicals may try say "*Those people were not Christians*" to which I would reply "*Oh, yes they were*" by any definition other than your own.

Prayer in Public School: A good Argument Challenges my Religious Belief

Another issue of the early sixties that influenced my thinking was the day the United States Supreme Court threw prayer out of the public school system. Again, it was my history teacher, in a class entitled "*Present Day Problems*" that brought the matter to my attention. The year was 1963. The case was Murray vs. Curlett. While prayer was not a huge factor in my high school then, prayer was significant a number of years before in grade school. About the fifth grade, the day opened with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance directed by a woman teacher with an affection for Jesus Christ.

I considered myself Christian at this time. I wasn't the town's model Christian, however I still held most the Christian views beaten into my brain before I had developed any mental defenses to ward off the attack. What struck me about that Supreme Court ruling was the argument being used by those opposed to prayer in school. It made sense. Given the First Amendment:

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*⁰⁰²

I could not understand how promoting Jesus Christ in public schools could be seen as anything other than promoting Christianity in school. Those in opposition to prayer in school argued if Christian based prayer was allowed in the classroom, so should be the prayers of Buddhist, Hindus, Moslems, and Jains to name a few. Imagine, I remember the argument, sitting for hours as every religion in the world is allowed recognition. To most the students in school, the argument was absurd as none of these other religions had a presence in our school. But what if these other religions did have representation, I would ask myself. I would have hated to sit through hours of religious babble. I would have had to defend it as fair if other religious groups were present and demanded equal time. I agreed. If one religion was to be recognized, they all should be. To avoid all that, I would prefer not being forced to observe any.

While this argument did not change my Christian beliefs, it did weaken my beliefs by forcing me to consider opposing beliefs as being somehow equal to my own. It follows to any thoughtful mind that if other beliefs are seen as equal to my own, the question of whose faith is correct just begs to be asked. And ask I did but the answers I received were never to my satisfaction --- until my own unreligious awaking in Vietnam.

The Russians are coming: Forrestal Cracks

On May 22, 1949, unbeknown to me, James Vincent Forrestal supposedly climbed out his bedroom window while at Bethesda Naval Hospital and jumped thirteen floors to his death.⁰⁰³ Conspiracy theories abound from Russian agents, Zionists, to government agents' attempting to cover up what was known about UFOs, but none were ever substantiated. What was known, however, is both James Forrestal and his wife, Josephine, shared a paranoid fear that the Reds, being Communists, were out to get them.⁰⁰⁴ In fact, it was reported that shortly before Forrestal's death, Forrestal was seen wondering around outside in his pajamas calling out "*The Russians are Coming.*"⁰⁰⁵ The phrase outlived Forrestal. Upon being admitted to the hospital, Forrestal reportedly made statements about being stalked by "*Zionist Agents.*"⁰⁰⁶ It should be noted here, for the sake of clarity that Zionists and Russians are thought of as the same by people of fascist and neo-Nazi leanings.

*But they do not have the intestinal fortitude to tell you these **FACTS**
for fear of reprisals from the International Jewish Conspirators –
World Communism – they are **ONE** of the **SAME.***⁰⁰⁷

I have no evidence at the current time to suggest that Forrestal was an active member of the Nazi party or even a fascist for that matter. All I had go on is a definition of fascist, which I will get to, and what I know about Forrestal life. When the two, my definition of fascist and Forrestal's life, are laid side by side, many points can be found that overlap. I also know that several international American businessmen back in the twenties and thirties surely were sympathetic to Nazis and Fascists, if not actively involved in Nazi and fascist philosophy themselves. One

was Henry Ford (I will get to him). If Forrestal was not an active fascist, he most certainly made his rounds in a circle that was.

Somewhat off the topic, why is this important? Remember; we went into World War II to rid the world of fascism, not Communism. The Communists were our ally. Hundreds of thousand young American and Allied men died taking Europe back from the Fascists, hundreds of thousands of young who died not even knowing what Fascism was. All they knew was those in brown and Black shirts with swastika arm bands goose stepping around with their right arms extending straight out were the enemy. As such, it is therefore understandable how when these young men returned to America, they (as do most today) believed the threat of fascism was gone.

It was not. In fact, it was Fascists here in America, or those of a very similar philosophy, now pointing their fingers at the Fascist's greatest enemy, the Communists, as America's number one enemy just as Hitler did. Unfortunately, most Americans with very little thought and knowledge of what was occurring found themselves being conditioned to adapt the political ideology that just claimed thousands of their young men's lives, namely fascism. Fortunately, our democracy had barriers in place to prevent extreme ideologies and individuals from grasping power. Those barriers however have been gnawed at ever since however and on January 6th, 2021, nearly breached. Whether they will remain affective is unknown. We'll have to wait and see. This book will attempt to expose the vermin chewing away at the foundation of our democracy.

I'm not saying Communism is any better than Fascism or that Communism was never a threat. No! What I will say however is Communism is not near the threat Forrestal feared it might be. Also, in this time, two decades into the twenty-first century, Communism is not what may bring our democracy to it knees. That threat belongs to fascism and will become the theme of this writing.

So, returning to Forrestal, the name Forrestal until just recently meant absolutely nothing to me. In fact, the first naval supercarrier launched in 1954 that bears his name, the USS Forrestal, never rang my bell either, not even while I was in the Navy. I had only heard about the USS Forrestal, but not ever seeing the name spelled, I always thought the carrier's name was "The Forester" as if the Navy was honoring tree management. Embarrassingly, I must admit this displays the depth of my youthful ignorance.

John Forrestal came into politics under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who appointed him administrative assistant on June 22, 1940, and Undersecretary of the Navy about six weeks later. John Forrestal became the Secretary of the Navy on May 19, 1944. Forrestal would, according to James Carroll, make his mark by lobbying for larger and larger defense budgets⁰⁰⁸ by over exaggerating the Soviet Union's military capabilities while at the same time underestimating the abilities of the United States.⁰⁰⁹ The size of the military, it is worth mention, is an important element to the fascist mind set as will be pointed out.

After college Forrestal began as bond salesman for William A. Read and Company (also known as Dillon, Read and Company) which granted him a partnership in 1923. In 1937, Forrestal would become the president of the

company.⁰¹⁰ Forrestal as such was a true Red White and Blue true Capitalist and in the eyes of rightwing capitalists, communism was like a fire in an icehouse. If the fire is allowed to grow, all the profits will melt. Communism, to any capitalist, was just plain scary.

To what lengths were capitalists willing to go to battle the blaze of Communism? The debate is still on over what our intention was by dropping the bomb on Japan at the end of World War II. Japan, for all practical purposes, was defeated and had no internal resources to rebuild their war machine. Japan toward the end of WWII was dead in the water. America would have never needed to invade Japan to bring Japan to her knees. The Allied Forces simply could have established a naval barricade around Japan and sunk all of Japan's ships coming or going. Japan, with no sea access, would have simply withered on the vine like bindweed soaked in Round Up. A blockade of that nature would have required patience and time however, something America had little of.

And this is not only the opinion of some armchair general whose only knowledge of the bomb being dropping on Japan comes from history books, propaganda, and hearsay. Eisenhower writes in his book "Mandate for Change"

But the Secretary (Secretary of Defense), upon giving me the news of the successful bomb test in New Mexico, and of the plan for using it, asked for my reaction, apparently expecting a vigorous assent.

During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives.⁰¹¹

So why the rush to end the war --- with a bomb? The most likely scenario is that the United States wanted to limit the Soviet Union's influence in the Pacific. Having defeated Hitler in the west, Russian was moving east to enter the war in the Pacific which was unacceptable to American Capitalists with their eyes on Asia. Something needed to be done to end the USSR's involvement in Asia and needed done quickly. The longer it took to bring Japan to her knees, the more influence the USSR would gain in Asia.

So what would be wrong with that? The Soviet Union, after all, was our ally was it not? Well, not if you asked those in the White House or in other high government positions at the time including the then acting Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal. Forrestal had an influence on whether to use the bomb and it is fairly safe to state, while pondering whether to use the bomb, being a true red, white and blue capitalist, Forrestal's eyes were as much on the USSR as Japan.⁰¹²

As it turns out, the decision to drop the bomb on Japan according to several historians came because of a number of factors including racism and revenge. The United States fighting men, who according to their own propaganda painted on their

tanks, fuselages of planes, and helmets, saw themselves as the exterminator of Japanese rats⁰¹³ and were out to kill as many “yellow perils” or “yellow monkeys” as their weapons would allow. Down grading people to sub-humans is a common technique used to make killing other human beings much easier.⁰¹⁴ The bomb was the ultimate pest control and America, the real Orkin Man.

But even racism played second fiddle to the message being sent the Soviet Union. It was the Soviet Union that capitalists such as Forrestal feared the most. The Allies really had nothing to fear from the beaten island nation of Japan then adrift in the Pacific without a sail. The real target of the bomb was Russia. By dropping the bomb on a bunch of yellow monkeys, the message Russia would receive would be “*Stay out of Asia.*” Stay within your borders.

“*We, being the United States, have the bomb and here is the proof we are not afraid to use it.*”⁰¹⁵ Clark Clifford, special council to Truman, in his “**American Relations with the Soviet Union**” reporting to Truman put it this way:

The language of military power is the only language which the disciples of power politics understand. The United States must use that language in order that Soviet leaders will realize that our government is determined to uphold the interests of its citizens and the rights of small nations. Compromise and concessions are considered, by the Soviets, to be evidence of weakness and they are encouraged by our “retreats” to make new and great demands. The main deterrent to Soviet attack on the United States, or to attack on areas of the world which are vital to our security, will be the military power of this country. It must be made apparent to the Soviet Government that our strength will be sufficient to repel any attack and sufficient to defeat the U.S.S.R. decisively if a war should start. The prospect of defeat is the only sure means of deterring the Soviet Union.

*The Soviet Union’s vulnerability is limited due to the vast area over which its key industries and natural resources are widely dispersed, but it is vulnerable to atomic weapons, biological warfare, and long-range air power. Therefore, in order to maintain our strength at a level which will be effective in restraining the Soviet Union, the United States must be prepared to wage atomic and biological warfare.*⁰¹⁶

Dropping the bomb on Japan proved to any doubting onlooker that Clifford meant exactly what he said. Keep in mind that Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945, whereas this report by Clifford came out only a year later. It would be hard to believe that a trusted ally, if the USSR ever was, should be considered such a threat merely a year later. Indeed, the Soviets were considered the greater threat to the interests of United States and Christianity than Japan all along.

Before leaving this discussion, we should take a final look at James Carroll’s “**House of War**” and how James Forrestal fits into all this. What brought Forrestal crashing down from thirteen floors up is still debated. Maybe he was

thrown from the window by some Zionist Commie, not to imply as many Christian Patriots may claim that Zionism and Communism have anything in common. It is as likely that he became a victim of his own propaganda. We may never know the answer, but we know this; Forrestal was always lobbying for larger and larger defense budgets. Forrester was not below “*scaring the hell of the American people*” as his friend Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, Forrestal’s main ally on Capitol Hill, claimed Forrestal had to do to get his way with the national defense budget.⁰¹⁷

Anyway, the question to ponder is whether Forrestal’s intention for lobbying for bigger and bigger defense budgets solely based on national security interests or might there have been another more personal reason?” Keep in mind Forrestal’s former job as president of Dillon, Read and Company. Dillon, Read and Company was a company that profited heavily from investing in armaments. Might there have been something in those defense budgets that may have profited him, bonds, stocks, kickbacks? I do not know --but I do know it is not below those in government office to profit by selling war materials and services. Just ask Cheney. Well, no --- don’t ask Cheney. He’d probably deny he ever did.

Returning to my childhood, I had no idea at the age of two from where the words “*The Russians are coming*” came. I can remember them chanted wherever I went and could recite them as well as any nursery rhyme or Christmas Carol. I cannot remember where I picked this up, from the radio, television, hearsay, or a dream, but I remember a figure in public office preaching about being prepared to fight the Russian Invaders to the death, house to house, here at home because it was inevitable that they, the Russians, were coming.

I remember, as a small child, having dreams about battling the reds right in my backyard using my Daisy air rifle. Hence the Red Army and “*The Russians are coming*” was certainly on my mind and a heavy burden for a child to carry around. If I was an example of the American people, clearly someone scared the hell out of me. I however could not vote but my parents could. I wondered what effect all this had on my parents’ generation. Since my parents are dead and gone, all I have are the results of how much money for defense was appropriated. In terms of military spending, the two decades following World War II, the Pentagon spent \$100 billion dollars, ten times the federal spending for health, education, and welfare combined. Six million people worked for businesses linked to the Pentagon and American universities became increasingly dependent on research devoted to the military industrial complex.⁰¹⁸

To Scare the Hell out of People takes a Preacher

Stirring up people is one thing but scaring the hell out of them requires a minister capable of yielding fire and brimstone! One such minister was Billy Graham:

The Communist revolution that was born in the hearts of Marx and Engels in the middle of the nineteenth century is not going to give up or retreat. No amount of words at the United Nations or peace conferences in the Far East is going to change the mind of Communism. It is here to stay. It is a battle to the death - either

*Communism must die, or Christianity must die, because it is actually a battle between Christ and anti-Christ.*⁰¹⁹

Billy Graham 1954

Graham was not the only one preaching fire and brimstone against the Communist menace either. The airways were abuzz with fundamental rightwing preachers, Rex Hubbard, Oral Roberts, Jimmy Swaggart, Billy Hargis, and Carl McIntire to name a few which at the time were all spewing anti-Communist rhetoric, claiming Communism was Satan inspired. The Bible further establishes that in today's world Satan is (1) the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11); (2) the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4); (3) the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2); and (4) the prince of a realm of demons (Matthew 9:34; Luke 11:15).

If I accomplish anything in this book, I want to establish the fact that the Communist revolution didn't just happen, that Satan initiated, is leading and is responsible for its world success.

*Satan is indeed the prince of the unbelieving, Christ-denying, amoral, truce-breaking world in which we live. The clenched-fist fanatics (Bolsheviks) who are dedicated to bringing down the United States in order to build an anti-God, socialistic state are followers of the prince of this world.*⁰²⁰

Billy James Hargis

Even the pope, Pius XII, came out in stern opposition to Communism, putting into practice a prayer for the conversion of Russia into every Catholic mass around the world. In 1948, the pope excommunicated every Communist on earth, something the Pope had not done for either the Nazi regime or Hitler himself.⁰²¹ Normally, Vietnam is not considered a religious war in the same sense as the Crusades but when you figure moves such as these on the part of the church and various Evangelical leaders, perhaps the war in Vietnam needs rethought. Given that the American military was cast into a war to support a dictatorial Catholic minority, I find it hard to think of it as anything other than another religious war. While Vietnam lacked major religious denominations fencing off against each other as we have seen in Ireland for example, clearly many religious groups and their leaders saw Vietnam as a battle between god and the antigod. If that is not religious in nature, I have no idea what else to call it. And that does not even consider those Buddhist priests who lit themselves on fire or Buddhists who fought on the side of the Vietcong believing their mission was to liberate Vietnam from Catholic domination.

And since I have made the point about Christianity favoring fascism over communism, it may serve the interest of this writing to mention on August 4, 1934, the Baptist World Alliance chose Berlin as their gathering site. While in fairness many Baptists from the around the world spoke out against the Nazi regime in Germany, many Baptists were captivated by the Nazis. Dr. John W. Bradbury, delegate, and Boston pastor, after first expressing reservations about visiting Germany found himself "*delighted with the forced morality of the fascist.*"⁰²²

Germany's policy under Nazi rule would not allow women to smoke or wear red lipstick in public delighted Bradbury. Germany also opposed Communism as did Baptists the world over. In fact, Bradbury wrote in support of Nazi Germany's book burnings.

It was a great relief to be in a country where salacious sex literature cannot be sold; where putrid motion pictures and gangster films cannot be shown. The new Germany has burned great masses of corrupting books and magazines along with its bonfires of Jewish and communistic libraries

Watchman-Examiner XXII 37 (September 13, 1934).⁰²³

Given Standard Oil's presence in Germany and the fact that John D. Rockefeller donated billions of dollars (adjusted to today's money value) to the Baptist church, it follows that the Baptists should be hailing Germany, if for nothing else, as being a force against Communism which Rockefeller detested. It should also be noted that no sooner had Benito Mussolini assumed power in Italy than a deal between the Catholic Church and the state of Italy, known as the Lateran Pact of 1929, made the Catholic Church the only recognized church in Italy.⁰²⁴ Christopher Hitchens documents in "god is not Great" that an alliance formed between Nazi Germany and the Vatican effectively tied the hands of twenty three million German Catholics, many of whom personally opposed the Nazi Regime. "Their own Holy Father (the pope)" Hitchens wrote, "had in effect told them to render everything unto the worst Caesar in human history."⁰²⁵

Hitchens also exposes the Catholic Church's support for other fascist regimes in Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria. In Slovakia, the nation's leader was even a man of holy orders named Father Tiso.⁰²⁶ The Churches' support for fascists even outlived the Third Reich and assisted with the transporting Nazi War criminals, such as Klaus Barbie, via the Vatican's infamous "rat line" to safe harbors in fascist leaning nations of South America⁰²⁷ where many of these Nazi criminals lived out their final years protected from war crime prosecution.

A recent study entitled "Forced Labor and the Catholic Church: 1939-1945" revealed that nearly 6,000 people were enslaved by Church administered institutions such as hospitals, orphanages, and monastery farms during the Nazi era. Prepared by historian Karl-Joseph Hummel, the report downplays the churches responsibility by stating the Church leaders operated under the menacing eye of the Nazi regime and subject to hostility if orders from the Nazis were not followed. I guess the Nazis were more powerful than god himself.

The report further attempts to soften the news by pointing to the 13,000,000 forced into labor by the Nazi regime during the same years as if putting up a lesser number alongside a greater number makes the lesser number a lesser crime. Nevertheless, Hummel does state the Church should have condemned the use of forced labor but failed to do so.⁰²⁸ Clearly, Christianity and the capitalistic west lined up far more behind Hitler than Stalin. And I really do not care how evil and cruel Stalin was. Neither Hitler (fascism) nor Stalin (communism) deserved the

support of Christianity if Christianity is to attempt to claim that the Church stands for brotherly love and considers human rights important.

Side Note:

The date is December 11, 2021. In recent days I have been reading “*From Bible Belt to Sunbelt, Plain-Folk, Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*” by Darrin Dochuk and find it interesting how well his book and mine are merging into much the same thought. From the 1906 Azusa Street Revival founded by William Seymour came the Pentecostal revival that quickly developed into the Assemblies of God in 1914. From southern California came the likes of Billy Graham and his Hollywood Bowl Crusade, Bill Bright and his Campus Crusade for Christ, and Demos Shakarian’s Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International. It turns out the main fuel powering the economic machine of Southern California was the military industrial complex’s defense spending which Evangelicals heartily welcomed. These evangelicals spurred on by defense spending money argued “*that a powerful military was necessary to protect and advance democracy, and that big business was the engine in America’s war on global communism.*” (page 187)

It is worth mention at this point, you have just read four main factors near and dear to the heart of a fascist, a powerful defense, corporate power, god, and hatred for communism. I could also add personal ownership of property, sexism, and a distain for labor unions.

**The Russians are coming!
Hell, they are already here**

They (communists) have infiltrated every conceivable sphere of activity, youth groups; radio, television, and motion pictures industries; church, school”

John A Stromery⁰²⁹

Yelled from radios, televisions, and newspaper stands and booklets left in hospitals and barber shops across the country was Communists existed under every rock. According to Eisenhower, Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed he held a list of 215 card carrying Communists employed by none other than the U. S. State Department.⁰³⁰ Eisenhower never believed there were 215 card carrying Communists in the State Department. He was simply responding to what he, Eisenhower, viewed as propaganda put out by the McCarthy camp.

But that propaganda was just the tip of the iceberg. Eisenhower himself answered to Communist bosses according the John Birch Society’s founder, Robert Welch.⁰³¹ George Marshall was a dedicated agent of the Soviet conspiracy.⁰³² Marshall, Welch claims, wanted the United States fighting against Germany in World War II to take pressure off Stalin then facing Germany’s army.⁰³³ In fact, any organization whose mission was to make the average American’s life a little better via federally funded education, labor unions, unemployment compensation, social security, FHA, welfare, federal programs such as Soil Bank, were all guided by the hand of Communists.

Many Christians, ultra-fundamentalist preachers such as Carl McIntire and Billy Hargis, climbed on Welch's bandwagon for reasons which will be spoken about later. Any religious group or affiliation found to be liberal in their teachings, those that did not believe the Bible should be taken literally or dared speak a Social Gospel were quickly condemned. These ultra-fundamentalists attacked the National Council of Churches in 1950 as being Marxist and spreading Communist propaganda.⁰³⁴ Any idea that appeared to call into question private ownership and the profit motive was seen as Communist inspired such as employee-owned businesses as Hy-Vee grocery stores. McIntire writes cooperatives destroy private enterprise. This communal ownership McIntire claims is communism, pure and simple.⁰³⁵ Labor unions were attacked as interfering with private and free enterprise by McIntire. McIntire preached that the Wagner Labor Act needed to be revised to protect competition and a free economy. Also, according to McIntire, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act should have offered protection to corporations against the monopolistic activities of labor unions.⁰³⁶

The John Birch Society: The Right's Blueprint for Political Takeover

*The spearhead of the Radical Right movement is the John Birch Society, the large and monolithic organization of self-proclaimed patriots operating through some 4,000 semisecret chapters at the grass-roots levels in communities from coast to coast and boasting some 75,000 to 85,000 members spread throughout every state of the union.*⁰³⁷

For the record we are talking the fifties and sixties. While the John Birch Society (JBS) is currently thought of as ancient history it remains a force to be reckoned with. Furthermore, many of the original members are still funding rightwing causes such as Coors, the Koch Family, the Bradley Foundation, and the Pew Foundation.

The John Birch Society (JBS) was founded in 1958 by Robert Welch,⁰³⁸ a former board of director member of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) beginning in 1950.⁰³⁹ Welch served three years as NAM's regional vice president and two years as the chairman of NAM's Educational Advisory Committee.⁰⁴⁰

Worth mentioning is the fact that numerous high-level members of NAM also sat on the original Council of the JBS. Of these were John T. Brown, vice president of Falk Corp and former president of the J.I. Case and longtime member on the board of directors of NAM; Wm J. Grede, chairman of the board at Grede Foundries, former president and chairman of J. I. Case and NAM as well as the former president of the National Council of the YMCA; N. Floyd McGowin: former president of W. T. Smith Lumber Co. and NAM, former president of the National Lumber Manufacturing Association, as well as the regional vice president of NAM; Wm B. McMillan, former president of Hussman Refrigerator Co, on the board of directors of U.S.Gypsum Co, A.P.Green refractories, Studebaker Corp, Pet Incorporated, Mercantile Trust Co, and the American Investment Co. He also

served as the regional vice president of NAM and president of the St Louis Boy Scouts; and J. Nelson Shepherd, former President of the Midwest-Beach Company and board member of NAM.⁰⁴¹

Side Note:

At the time of my writing this book, it was obvious to me that the rise of Evangelical Fundamentalism was given a huge boost by the formation of the John Birch Society. Since then, Jeff Sharlet has published the book, “*The Family, The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*” which does not take away from my premise but does add some interesting facts unbeknown to me. The Family, an evangelical sect of which the books write, was founded by an antilabor evangelical named Abraham Vereide (pg 8). At the suggestion of a former military officer, Major Douglass, Vereide set out to bring the gospel to the nation’s elite (pg110). In a short time Vereide was surrounded by businessmen whose mission it was “*to take back first the city, then the state, and perhaps the nation from the grip of godless organized labor.*” (Pg 111)”

In 1942 a group of businessmen and congressmen was invited by Vereide to his weekly Prayer breakfast at the Hotel Willard in Washington DC. The speaker that day was Howard Coonley, the then president of the National Association of Manufactures (NAM) of which Robert Welch would later obtain board member status. (pg 138)

While overtime the JBS became often an object of satire, even excluded from the definition of conservative by what began as a faithful allegiance by conservatives such William Buckley,⁰⁴² I mention a few of these original founding members as they were not just simply some rednecks, gun touting, brainwashed, keg beer fly no minds protesting in the streets. These were powerful, influential CEOs of major corporations with considerable means at their disposal and they were willing to use it to suit their will. This redneck, hillbilly designation of John Birch Members came from propaganda created by once closely associated conservatives wishing to distant themselves from the JBS conspiracy rhetoric that has recently resurfaced with conspiracy weaving celebrities such as Glen Beck.

In any event, “***The Blue Book of the John Birch Society***” has become the new right’s and religious right’s blue print for a political coup d’état. The JBS’s mission; to reverse the advances made by liberals, labor unions, cooperatives, governmental regulation, socialism, welfare, and anything else that stood in the way of laissez-faire capitalism, private enterprise, and property rights. The influence of the JBS on later forming conservative groups has been noted and documented by Martin Durham also who writes that even after William Buckley’s and other conservatives’ condemnation of the JBS, the writings of the JBS have been adsorbed by the conservative right and often quoted. One such example is “***None Dare Call It Conspiracy***” by Gary Allen that sold over 3,000,000 copies influencing numerous conservatives and evangelicals and those who claim to be both.⁰⁴³

Welch understood the power of the pen. The written word was Welch’s favorite media form. Welch warned of the use of television and radio as resulting in nothing more than “*glancing blows*” in the battle to reestablish Conservatism.

Once aired, at a great cost, television and radio ads are gone, Welch wrote, unlike a great book that can be passed from hand to hand, read again and again, and lasts for years to come.⁰⁴⁴ As such, Welch instructed his disciples to fill doctor's offices, barber shops, dentist offices, and other waiting rooms where people congregate with conservative articles such as the JBS's "*American Opinion*", "*The Dan Smoot Report*", and ironically, since like a snake Buckley ended up turning on the JBS, William Buckley's own "*National Review*." This Welch states should be "*expanded as rapidly as it could be done without too much waste.*"⁰⁴⁵

Although Welch warned against the cost of radio and television as a propaganda medium, he goes on to state that conservative radio programs that attract large followings should be supported. The programs Welch mentioned in the *Blue Book* included Dean Manion, Billy James Hargis, Carl McIntire,⁰⁴⁶ Clarence Manion, and Felton Lewis.⁰⁴⁷ The JBS should help raise money whenever necessary to keep these programs on the air and expand their influence, Welch suggests, by getting those programs on more stations.⁰⁴⁸ They, JBS members, should seek to get as many commercial sponsorships for those broadcasts as possible "*to make the sponsorship a paying proposition so that they (the stations) would not ever think of dropping the program.*"⁰⁴⁹

Where I feel the JBS made its greatest lasting effect however was in the realm of religion and various other conservative think tanks that owe their beginnings and success to the money and tactics of former members of the JBS. Welch addresses the issue of religion in which he claims that fully one third of the Protestant Churches in America (being mainline churches attached to the National Council of Churches for example) give little more than lip service to Divine teachings, watering down the faith of their fathers. Welch attacks the "*Social Gospel*" as an advocacy of the welfare state, socialist politicians, and Liberal Theology as replacing faith with "*pragmatic opportunism with hedonistic aims.*"⁰⁵⁰ For religion to be an effective tool in stopping the spread of Communism or as Welch puts it the "*core of strength for all that we (the JBS) might to do*"⁰⁵¹ religion must be based on a bedrock of faith.⁰⁵² Man must believe in the Divine, a creator who created man with a "predetermined" purpose.⁰⁵³ Welch stresses that man must be instructed not to steal, to honor property rights, to not murder or harm his fellow man, to be industriousness, and accept responsibility for his trespasses.⁰⁵⁴ For all this Welch claims, the fundamentalists, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, are "*the moral salt of the earth.*"⁰⁵⁵ The result:

*Between 1960 and 1964, the subscriptions to Hargis's Christian Crusade grew from \$58,000 to 98,600 and McIntire's Christian Beacon from \$20,000 to \$66,500. While the Christian Crusade's (Billy Hargis) income floated along at \$800,000 over this period, McIntire's donations rose \$635,000 in 1961 to over \$3,000,000 in 1964. The JBS (John Birch Society) went from \$60,000 in 1960 to \$3,200,000. McIntire's radio ministry went from one station in 1958 to 540 in 1964 along with Lifeline (HL Hunt's propaganda machine out of Dallas Texas) which was carried in 42 states over 300 stations.*⁰⁵⁶

“We are fast coming to a point, Gentlemen” Welch writes “where we’ve got to offer something that people are willing to die for”⁰⁵⁷ to which I must ask throughout history what greater cause than religion have people been willing to die for?” Welch surely knew that answer.

The rise of Christian Fundamentalism is also mentioned by Lowell Streiker in his “***Gospel Time Bomb***”. Streiker claims that (what he refers to as) Ultra-fundamentalism rose in the fifties to combat communism. “It was fairly easy for Bible belt evangelists to regard the godless Marxists as pawns of Satan” Streiker writes and to picture “God-fearing Christian America” as the chosen instrument of God’s purpose.⁰⁵⁸ A god-fearing Christian America was exactly what the members of the John Birch Society wanted to create and poured millions of dollars into fundamentalist collection plates across the nation to help make that a reality.

Given Welch’s suggestion that fundamental and evangelical sects should receive the support of the wealthy members of the JBS, it follows that a dramatic increase in fundamentalist and evangelical religious sects beginning in the late 1950s should be seen if any credit is to be given to the JBS. As a child, I did not much care at the time about who was being featured on radio or television. Had I then, I may have noticed the inconsistency in religious programming that existed at that time or even today for that matter. Nearly every religious program was nondenominational, evangelical, or fundamental in nature whereas the majority of people at the time attended mainline denominational churches; Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist and liberal Baptist.

How many people attended the mainline churches however was about to change. Lowell D. Streiker points out that following the Scopes Money Trial, the type of Christianity that was dominating the media in the fifties, existed in the early thirties as little more than radical protest to ideas such as evolution or what was known as the “*Social Gospel*.” By the 1970s, however, one fifth of the American population, approximately 30,000,000 people would call themselves evangelical Christians.⁰⁵⁹

This conversion of the American sector from mainline denominational churches to nondenominational evangelism and fundamentalist churches, assuming the monies from the JBS and/or those of a close mindset had any effect on the overall American religious psyche, would not be complete if the money flowing into the mainline churches remained the same. But it did not. And leading the charge to cut the funds to mainline churches were again members or money recipients of the JBS. I could not find Welch in his ***Blue Book*** come right out and say to stop funding mainline churches. He left that to his supporters and those the JBS supported to surmise.

Cutting off supply lines can be just as important to winning a war as the grunts fighting and no one would know that better than a retired general. In 1965 Former Major Gen Edwin Walker in a speech to the Hargis Christian Crusade Convention in Los Angeles urged the audience to stop putting money in church collection baskets on Sundays and instead send it to the Christian Crusade.⁰⁶⁰ David Sheehan, a devoted John Bircher, while distributing leaflets in Chicago urged people to stop placing money in the offering baskets of churches connected with

the Chicago Archdiocese or the Church Federation of Greater Chicago.⁰⁶¹ Furthermore, a book sold in JBS book stores "*A Compilation of Public Records of 658 Clergymen and Laymen Connected With the National Council of Churches*" by Myers G. Lowman allegedly exposed Church groups and clergymen of other religions who were mixed up in Communist activities.⁰⁶² Keep in mind that supporting labor unions or government regulations were all seen as Communist activities by the right. The message being relayed in short was "*Do not support these groups as to do so is to support Communism.*"

The best example I found of calling for cutting off funds to any Church groups deemed as liberal or preaching the "*Social Gospel*" comes from Carl McIntire's sermon: "*Capitalism and the Bible.*" Blasting a Princeton professor's paper called the "*Ecumenical Social Ethics beyond Socialism and Capitalism.*" McIntire claims groups, in this case the Christian Peace Conference of Czechoslovakia (a Communist organization according to McIntire), come over to America only to learn Anti-capitalist sentiment from, as McIntire puts it, seminaries funded with capital from capitalist's pockets. McIntire states that some "*Dumb, blind, foolish capitalists*" are placing their money in collection plates of ecumenical bodies that believe capitalism should be a thing of the past. Rather than place money in these ecumenical bodies' collection plates, hold on to this money, McIntire states, so the devil doesn't get it.

one thing is we ought not to use it (*money*) to support Church bodies (*the National Council of Churches for example*) that are working against the system (*capitalism*) that gave it to us. God Bless.⁰⁶³

With money supplied from the JBS, McIntire's radio ministry went from one station in 1958 to 540 in 1964. That translates into 10 stations for every state in the union and wielded a considerable unchallenged influence.

Exactly how much influence the JBS had on the funds received by mainline churches is unknown. I do know this; however, fundamentalist groups such as Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Church expanded rapidly (key word – rapidly, suggesting a large sum of money had suddenly come their way) during the 1960s.⁰⁶⁴ This includes conservative Christian groups such as the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council, and Focus on the Family. Fundamental and Evangelical religious broadcasts dominated radio and television all through the 60s, 70s, and 80s and for that matter, still does. At the same time, mainline Protestant churches felt the pressure from declining financial support and had to scale back their operations from their national Washington offices.⁰⁶⁵

Religion after the formation of the JBS was clearly in transformation. A 2008 survey examining religious affiliations conducted by the Pew Foundation, assuming surveys by the Pew Foundation can be believed, bares out this transformation. The largest changes over the years according to the Pew Foundation have occurred in those people who claim no religious affiliation. This by no means, indicates Pew, points out that Americans are putting aside religion as important to their lives. While 16.1% of the people identify themselves as not affiliated with any religious sect, 5.8% of those claim religion is somewhat to very important in their

lives.⁰⁶⁶ The other big winner is nondenominational Protestants whose numbers have tripled over the years. The largest losers just happen to be the mainline denominational churches, Lutherans, Methodists. The greatest loser was the Catholic Church.⁰⁶⁷

Side Note:

The members of what has become known as the Family attempt to avoid not only titles such as religion denominations but even the label “Christian.” (pg 19) Religion, the current president of the Family, Doug Coe, states distracts people from Jesus. (pg 29) “We gotta take Jesus out of the religious wrapping” Coe states. (pg 30) This means that simply because someone does not identify himself with any religious sect, or even as a Christian, makes that person a skeptic, an agnostic, or atheist. Indeed, that person may belong to one of the most dangerous religious movements in America today.

Referenced from “*The Family*” by Jeff Scarlett

You might ask why a foundation based largely on oil and shipping revenue might be interested in what the religious trends of the day are. It turns out, J. Howard Pew, a Bircher himself and member of NAM, was a bit ahead of the JBS in supporting Rightwing Christianity. In 1950, after failing in an attempting to move the National Council of Churches to the right, Pew with a grant of \$50,000 created the Christian Freedom Foundation (CFF) which during the 60’s and 70’s was further supported with Pew’s money to the tune of 2.3 million dollars. Pew’s goal was to elect Christian conservatives to Congress in the hopes of making America a Christian Republic. By the 1960’s the CFF was mailing its magazine, Christian Economics, at no charge to clergy across the United States.⁰⁶⁸

I see no reason to challenge the Pew Foundation results as their findings in fact support my theory. I believe America is indeed turning right both politically and religiously. I do have considerable reason to be skeptical of any article published by the Pew Foundation as J. Howard Pew served on the editorial advisory committee of “**American Opinion**,” the official magazine of John Birch Society.⁰⁶⁹ That should send up a red flag to anyone seeking reliable information given the wild conspiracy tales known to have been spun by the JBS. Am I saying information put out by the John Birch Society is not reliable? Let me answer by saying their version of history and recorded history can often be found to be at odds. As such, any article published by the Pew Foundation, given the preceding, should be subject to scrutiny.

So why might the Pew Foundation wish to fabricate this information? The most obvious answer is image. You’ve heard the cliché that “*In America, the majority rules.*” That cliché, as we shall see, is one of the delusions most Americans mournfully accept as true. A politician may get to office carrying most of the vote but that does not mean that politician will honor the majorities’ wishes. None the less, the perception that any given political vision represents the majority’s is important enough that a group which represents only a small minority might choose to add to its image by calling itself something like “The Moral Majority.”

To give the appearance of being larger than one is an old frequently utilized propaganda technique. Grizzly bears are known to place scratches as high on a tree

trunk as he can possibly reach to announce to other bears “*I am this big. If you are not this big, stay out of my area.*” The spots on some butterfly’s wings appear to a predator as eyes which makes the butterfly seem to be much larger and threatening than it is. The appearance of size is important --- all the way down to the level of insects. Why should people see size differently?

The second and most obvious reason is money. After pouring millions, as already mentioned and as we shall see later, into the Religious Right, members of the John Birch Society (Pew) might want to know if their investment (not donation as a donor expects no return on his money) paid off. If it can be shown that money can lead religion off in some political direction that serves the investor’s (those who expect a return) interest is something New Philanthropists might wish to know. “A return?” you might ask. “What kind of return would those investors be looking for?” I’ll get to that later in my section on how Christianity supports fascism.

While about the JBS, I’d like to add a few surprising names to the alleged list of the JBS membership. One is Tim LaHaye. Tim was cofounder of the Council for National Policy and a member of the Moral Majority Board of Directors.⁰⁷⁰ In fact, LaHaye was listed in the February 7, 2005 issue of Time Magazine as one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America.⁰⁷¹ His greatest contribution to the Evangelical cause was his “*Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth’s Last Day*” which had eleven sequels, a series that sold more than 42 million copies not counting the spin-offs like kids’ books, CDs, and greeting cards.⁰⁷² Jerry Falwell claimed that LaHaye’s “*Left Behind*” sequel had a greater impact on Christianity in modern times than any other book outside the Bible.⁰⁷³ LaHaye places the membership of the JBS squarely within the evangelical camp of Christian soldiers; and not just on their sidelines either --- but as one of its top generals.

R. John Rushdoony is another former member of the JBS.⁰⁷⁴ Rushdoony is the author of many books and writings and considered the point man in the Reconstructionist movement. Reconstructionists believe that Old Testament Law, Mosaic Law, should be carried out to the letter. Homosexuality, for example, should be a capital crime as should being a rebellious son. To make matter worse, according to Reconstructionists, Jesus will return only after Old Testament Law has been enforced on earth for some time.⁰⁷⁵

Rushdoony has been credited with being the father of home schooling⁰⁷⁶ with the intended purpose of furthering his return to Biblical Law philosophy. To achieve that goal, Rushdoony believed a school system outside of government control was required. No government, no regulation. Home Schools would not have to follow mandates set up by the courts or government. For example, Creation could be taught without church state issues being brought against them. Home schools, unlike Public Schools, are privately owned and privately owned schools as well as religious based schools do not have to conform too many of laws that apply to public schools.

For Rushdoony home schooling was seen as a run around the end. If the idea was to return the government to Mosaic Law, given the ferocity of those laws, the fear of god would have to weigh heavily on a person’s mind. If god did not create people, rather people evolved, people might begin to question what else about the Bible should fall into question? Mosaic Law would likely be one of the

first items on that list --- and in fact, the ruling is already in. People rejected Mosaic Law centuries ago and to return to them now would be like backing off a cliff.

R. J. Rushdoony also founded the Chalcedon Institute which was largely funded by Howard Ahmanson Jr, heir to the Home Savings and Loan fortune.⁰⁷⁷ Ahmanson, like LaHaye, was listed in Time Magazine as one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America.⁰⁷⁸ It needs mentioned that at this time any direct affiliation with the JBS by Ahmanson is unknown. Worth mentioning however, the membership of JBS was to remain by design clandestine. Even if Ahmanson was not a JBS member, he walked beside and supported those who were.

I could go on and on exposing the tentacles of the JBS's hydra but I'm going to leave that up to interested readers. My point, which I hope I clearly made, is without the members of the JBS much of the conservative movement we are experiencing today would not exist. Martin Durham has said it better than I could have wished to,

*The John Birch Society is the most important example of the radical right, and the influence of some of its ideas is a good measure of the extent to which the Christian Right, in particular, can be said to have adopted a radical right frame work.....Indeed, the situation is complicated still further by the partial rehabilitation of the Society after the events of the 1960s, in which it both forged links with the New Right and, though a right-wing coordinating group, the Council for National Policy, can be found alongside Christian rightists and other prominent conservatives.*⁰⁷⁹

I should mention, quotes such as Martin Durham's above, did not influence my thinking on the John Birch Society. I had formed my opinions about the John Birch Society well back in the eighties, long before Durham's book, published in 2000, was ever in print. It is somewhat comforting however to realize that I am not alone in my thoughts.

The Tainted Color of Communism: Not Red, instead more like Pink

Communism, as it was portrayed, was gobbling up the nations of the world, one by one, all orchestrated, as the public was led to believe, by a cunning fiendish, demonist Kremlin intent on world domination. Propaganda had it that a Communist pandemic orchestrated by the Kremlin was set loose to infect and enslave the free world.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one

*form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.*⁰⁸⁰

Winston Churchill, March 5, 1946

In Asia, the Communists were gobbling up one country after another. As a result of Japan's surrender in August of 1945, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel into two occupation zones: one controlled by the United States and the other by the USSR. This division was meant to be only temporary until the USA, UK, USSR, and China could derive a workable trusteeship.⁰⁸¹ This trusteeship was presumably further frustrated when in 1949 China fell to the Communists. Perhaps egged on by the success of the Communists in China, North Korea launched a massive invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950, forcing the first collective action of the United Nations Command (UNC). War ensued; the south defended mainly by the US against the Chinese "People's Volunteers." In 1953 an armistice agreement was reached between the military commanders of the North Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and the UNC. Neither the USA nor South Korea were participants in the final armistice. A peace agreement has never replaced the 1953 armistice.⁰⁸²

In Southeast Asia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were all portrayed as being on the Communist's chopping block. In the spotlight was French Indochina, particularly Vietnam. The Communists under Ho Chi Minh had captured the city of Hanoi as early as September 1945.⁰⁸³ The Potsdam Conference however listed Nationalist China, not Communist China, as North Vietnam's liberator from the Japanese and as many as 200,000 looting, ravenous, and diseased Chinese poured into Hanoi that same month. Ho, sidestepping a conflict with China, attempted to placate the Chinese by dissolving his Communist party to appease Lu Han, China's commanding general. The general in turn would allow a coalition government of Viet Nam Quoi Dan Dang (VNQDD), a militantly anti-French Vietnamese group created by Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalists, and Vietminh members.⁰⁸⁴ Chiang Kai-shek however had other plans. He was prepared to allow the return of the French if the French were willing to give up their old concessions in Shanghai and other Chinese ports. In February of 1946 the deal was finalized⁰⁸⁵ and by March, 25,000 French troops were allowed to return.⁰⁸⁶

The return of the French pleased everyone but the radical Vietminh. Even Ho preferred the French to the Chinese. Countering charges by his critics that he was siding with the enemy, Ho made the statement that he believed the returned of the French was better than a Chinese occupation. The French, in Ho's view, were weak and their days in Asia numbered. If allowed to remain, Ho felt the Chinese would be in Vietnam forever. "As for me" Ho stated, "I prefer to sniff French shit for five years than eat Chinese shit for the rest of my life."⁰⁸⁷

But in the years to come skirmishes broke out between the French and Vietminh resulting in all-out war and the loss of 90,000 French troops, killed, wounded, or missing in action by 1952.⁰⁸⁸ Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles saw the French as vital to containing the Communist expansion throughout Indochina and by 1954 threw \$2.5 billion dollars toward the French military.⁰⁸⁹ All that monetary support would prove to be for no avail. On May 7th, 1954, the French

garrison at Dienbienphu fell.⁰⁹⁰ Shortly thereafter North Vietnam fell to the Communists.

I, of course, knew nothing of the recent history of Vietnam, the country that in the years to come would challenge all I had been taught and felt confident believing. Vietnam, in the fifties was to me nothing but a passing word thrown out from the evening news or radio. Assuming I even knew how to spell the word “Vietnam” to point it out on a map would have been impossible. In fact, I thought, or thought I knew, that spot on the map was French Indochina. At any rate, even after arriving in Vietnam, given the propaganda I was exposed to, I believed North Vietnam was largely merely a puppet of Communist China. To say the least, when I came to Vietnam, I was very naive. The fact is Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese Communist, was battling the status quo in Vietnam years before China went Communistic. Besides, Ho did not like taste of Chinese shit --- Nationalistic or Communistic.

Cuba, however, was different. Cuba was in terms of the world almost home and fell to communism under Castro in 1959. Cuba represented the first truly Communist government in the Western Hemisphere and in the minds of those around me, offered the Communists a steppingstone to Central American countries such as Guatemala and Honduras. Mexico was portrayed via propaganda as a fuse to the US with the match to light it in the hands of the Kremlin.

I really had no idea exactly what any of this meant. As previously stated, I did not have the slightest idea what communism was. The word “communism” meant nothing to me other than it was something no one, I knew, wanted. Why? -- - I wasn't sure. It had to do with basic human freedoms, or so I thought, the right of free speech, press, religion, to assembly, to protest, all of which we, the so-called free world, were told we'd lose should the Communists win. But that is all I knew. I would not have been able to describe the basic political theories of communism, nor did I know anyone who could, other than perhaps my history teacher, if he even could. It mattered little what he knew. If he could describe Communism, he wasn't sharing his knowledge with any of his students.

Of course, I thought I knew that all these alleged advances on the part of the Communists were instigated and directed by the Kremlin as some Russian plot to seize control of the world. This “*Communist Conspiracy Theory*” was shoved at me like some spoon-fed toddler. I gobbled it up. As it turned out what I was largely ingesting was nothing but empty intellectual calories. Ho Chi Minh's regime was neither indorsed by the Soviet Union nor did the Soviet Union so much as send an observer to aid Ho's early regime.⁰⁹¹ Dean Acheson, the developer of the so called “Domino Theory” naively saw Ho Chi Minh as a pawn of Russia and China. In-fact, Ho, like the Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia, was far more concerned about Vietnam's Independence from France and China than what he could contribute to global communism.⁰⁹²

As to the supposed American view that Ho Chi Minh was the USSR's Southeast Asian puppet, the Soviets proposed that both North and South Vietnam should be recognized as independent states. Both states, the USSR suggested, should be given representation at the United Nations. It was the good old USA that rebuffed the Soviet's suggestion. The United States, looking more to preserve and

spread capitalism worldwide, was unwilling to recognize a Communist nation in Southeast Asia. As Stanley Karnow put it, this rebuff from the USA turned out to be a “*Grievous Mistake!*”⁰⁹³

As for Cuba, the Soviets, in 1959, had no idea how Castro’s Cuba related to them. According to Sergei Nikitich Khrushchev (assuming he can be believed), son of the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, “*Neither the Communist Party Central Committee’s International Department, KGB intelligence, nor military intelligence had any idea who Castro was or what he was fighting for.*”⁰⁹⁴ When Nikita asked Cuba’s Communists who Castro was, the Communist Party of Cuba reported that Castro was “*a representative of the haute bourgeoisie and working for the CIA.*”⁰⁹⁵ Furthermore, the Soviet embassy in Cuba had been closed since 1952.⁰⁹⁶

Contrary to what was being preached by our political leaders about the Communist’s desire for world domination, the Kremlin did not have some master plan to enslave the world nor was it the instigator in the numerous Communistic uprising around the globe. According to Edward R. Stettinius (AKA Melvyn P Leffler) Professor of American History at the University of Virginia, the Soviet Leaders after World War II were not concerned with worldwide revolution, rather they were concerned with protecting their own country and preserving their rule. The Soviets had no preconceived master plan of worldwide revolution nor did they have any plans on making Eastern Europe, China, or Korea Communist nations. While it may be true Soviet clients, pursuing their own interests, did drag the Kremlin into several involvements, these over all were involvements the Kremlin did not want.⁰⁹⁷

CHAPTER THREE

The Military Prior to Vietnam

My Military Experience Begins

To keep myself as honest as possible when discussing my military service I shall offer my letters home, support via Marine Corps records, and chronological events as recorded in history while I was in Vietnam. I shall begin with my letters. Reading over my letters, the first thing that comes to my mind is how juvenile they are. If even I can get by my own spelling, about all I really seem concerned with is old friends (high school buddies), music, and cars, all childhood things. But then, I, like most veterans, was barely a man, a mucus covered butterfly emerging from its chrysalis, about to take flight – soon - but not yet. My wings were still wet and my exterior still elastic, yet enough of a man that I wanted everyone to see what a man I was. Hence, I had wings to unfold before all would know I was a butterfly, come of age. Remorsefully, for too many young men, those wings are supplied by the military. You enter boot camp in civilian clothing, a grub – commonly referred to by a drill instructor as a maggot, go through a pupil phase (boot camp itself), then --- Wahoo! You emerge fully attired, in your entire splendor, in your neatly pressed full dress uniform, an adult butterfly ready to take flight.

Well --- anyway, that is what young men are led to believe. But under that exterior, if you really look into the eyes of those in their later teens or early twenties, there is still this child, indestructible, naive, agile; yearning for childhood rewards; recognition, praise, love, belonging, adventure, all of which are skillfully manipulated by the powers that be (in this case the military) to serve their ends. Being elastic and fashioning themselves as indestructible is perhaps why nations of the world choose mostly boys when they require their soldiers to die like men.

My first real awakening that military service may be in my immediate future came in the summer of 1964. By law I was required to sign up with the selective service board which meant that soon I might be drafted. “Drafted!” The word rang out like “Incarcerated.” It wasn’t the military that I objected to. It was the idea that I would be forced into a branch of service not of my choosing that bothered me. A couple of my older friends felt the same and joined the National Guard to avoid the draft. Somehow however the National Guard did not fulfill my idea of service to my country as the National Guard was seen in the 60s as a way around military service. So, to avoid the draft I joined the Navy. I could after all – choose the Navy. It never occurred to me that in either event I was being forced into military service regardless of which branch of the military I chose. Given what I know today and the chance to do it all over again, I suspect the outcome would be quite different.

My first letter home begins with my April 3rd, 1966, letter from Milwaukee written prior to my joining the Navy. A few important items may be pulled from this letter. One has already been mentioned, I did not want to be drafted. The infantry did not sound interesting to me for a couple reasons: Call me chicken but assaulting machine gun nests did not sound like something I wished to do. I was interested in higher learning even at this point in my life. One of my main reasons for joining the service was the GI Bill. My parents surely did not have the means to

put me through college and I accepted that if I was going to make college, I would have to do it on my own. I saw the GI Bill as my only alternative. I already knew how to shoot a gun. I wanted to experience and learn more than just cleaning weapons and pulling a trigger. The Navy promised me all kinds of career training opportunities basically free. If I could learn a trade, I reasoned, that could also help me through college. College was to become my life's motivating force. I would never take my eyes off college from this point on in spite of all the pain and challenges college would inflict on me after the war.

Another issue exposed in this letter is the hernia I developed, no doubt, working on that farm outside Buffalo. Not only was my employer an exploiter of child labor, but he was also a slave driver. Although he had bail elevators to lift bails into his haylofts, he thought the elevators were too slow and too much bother to set up. He wanted us to throw the bails up into the loft using pitchforks to save time. It was in the process of lifting these eighty-pound bales at the end of

3367 So. 76th Street
Milwaukee, Wis.
April 3, 1966

Dear family,

Today a bunch of us boys are going over to Mike's and play basketball. That ought to be a lot of fun. If that game gets boring will play tennis then come back here and play poker.

I did clear over a hundred dollars this week too so I'm looking forward to Friday so I can collect it. That's a good deal. I put \$1.30 in the bank this week too and I aim to keep it there. That's good too. I figure I should be able to put \$60 in there next week too.

Daune, Carol, and I are coming home April 14. Daune and I are thinking about going to school when we get back but it all depends on a hundred different things. Have the Navy Recorder see if

I can get in May 1.

I got a questionnaire from the detective service too and I need a doctor's statement for my hypemia so could you get it and mail it to

Detective Service
Local Board, Kansas County
Hebron, North Dakota

as soon as possible. As for my physical goes I can take it here the 22 but I'll be home before that. So I'll have to stop in and see how.

Oh - I need the car April 15 to go to Hebron and Fargo so I wish you could work something out so I can have it.

P.S. Has Ron the
went in the
service yet.

Love
Dave

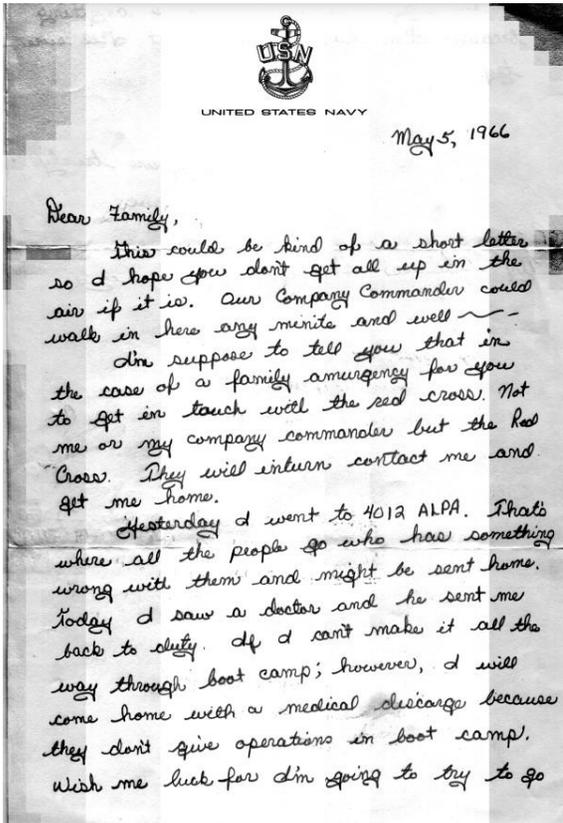
pitchforks that I first developed a dull pain in my right groin area later diagnosed as a hernia. I feared being rejected, like Dad, during my military physical but they took me. By the time I left boot camp, this hernia grew to the size of a softball and would speak strongly about my determination for staying in the Navy. I could have gone home at any time with a medical discharge had I wished to avoid my military obligation. To do that however meant no GI Bill.

BOOTCAMP

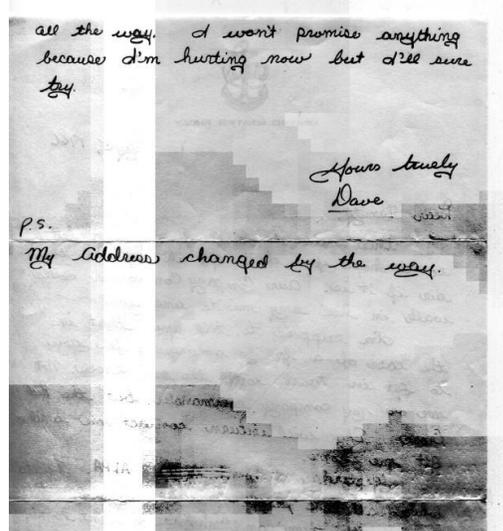
Race in my Face: A Black Superior

May 2, 1966 is my first letter home from the Navy, and already I am making reference to that hernia. What else might be picked up in this letter and the letters

that follow is my attitude. I saw boot camp, the hernia, and all the other garbage that the military could throw at me as simply something that I must put up with and get through. Later letters do mention my discontentment with other recruits that for reasons unknown to me were appointed my superiors. I did not see them as having anything special on me. It turns out, in the years to follow, I learned when one is dealing with class, most resentment is not leveled at others in higher classes (in this case regular Navy Staff or Commissioned Officers), rather resentment is normally leveled at one's own peers (recruits) who are seen as receiving favoritism.

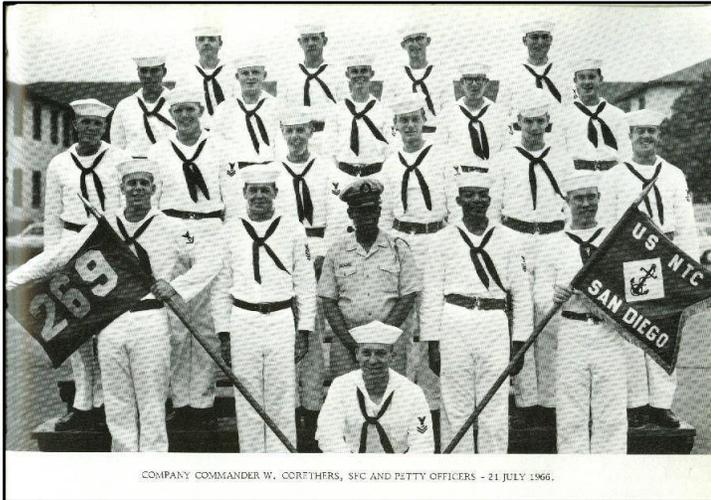


Of course, there was good old Mr Corethers, Company Commander of Company 269. Corethers would do about anything he could to get under your skin and humiliate you, but then I understood that was his job, getting under your skin to weed out questionable. Chief Corethers was a



larger issue than purely my CO and intimidator, however. He was Black --- and my superior. A Black---my superior, a man the same color my father claimed he would quit his job should a Black ever become his boss. And not only was he Black but he was also an in my face Black superior? I, by military standards, had to snap to attention every time he walked into the room and address him as "Sir."

Prior to this time, the only exposure I had to Blacks were those hanging out in front of liquor stores in Milwaukee. I always took notice of Blacks in front of liquor stores. Blacks, unlike whites, always made me uncomfortable when I, underage, stood outside those stores waiting for Roger, over 21, to return with the goods. Whites, like Roger, or so I reasoned, were probably there to buy something. Blacks just hung out looking for a handout probably. It never occurred to me that those Blacks out-side standing that liquor story may have been there for the very same reason I was. But I wasn't prejudice! Not me!



Then there were the Blacks who worked at motor castings, many of whom worked at that foundry for years. I could have only imagined working at that plant as a short term means of support before entering the service. Anyone, I thought, with any ambition in life certainly would not *stay long at Motor Castings.* *I never talked to any of*

these Blacks about why they might have remained there. I just thought they, given who they were, must not have wanted anything else or worse were incapable of anything more. But I was not prejudice. Not me. Prejudice people like my Dad would not even have worked here with Blacks. I wasn't like him.

At any rate, Chief Corethers challenged even my more liberal (relative to my parents) stereotypes of Blacks. The Chief spoke in clear fluent English. In fact, so did the other Blacks within our company. If anybody fouled the English language, it was Southern Whites with their Southern Drawls. I was expecting something different. Plain talking Blacks were not what I had imagined given Miss Prissy and Mammy. But then I had never talked to a Black before. Now having done that and having Corethers in my face, it did not take long to figure out I had a few things to adjust about what I came thinking I knew about Blacks.

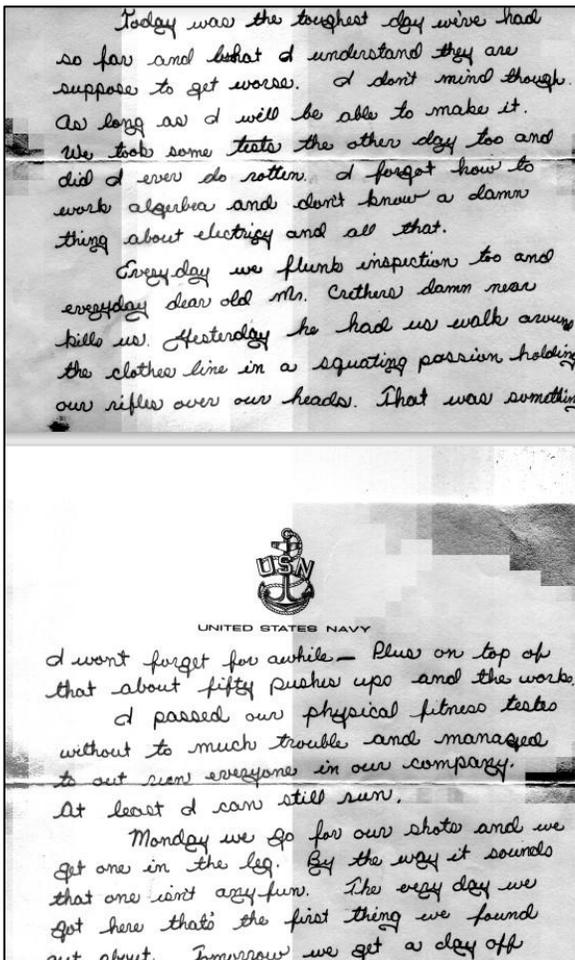
How society, particularly much of the South, treated Blacks was another matter. Not being able to use a public bathroom because of one's skin color was beyond my comprehension. I, being from North Dakota, had no idea that such segregation as a policy was even in existence. North Dakota was my reference point and North Dakota had no such a policy that I was aware of. But then, North Dakota did not have any Blacks either, at least that I was aware of. Blacks could not handle the cold I was told. They were after from the tropics. Anyway, even in Milwaukee, working at Motor Castings, white and Blacks shared the same restrooms and showers. In North Dakota the policy of segregated bathrooms was a sex thing? It never occurred to me that if Chief Corethers and I ever went out on the town together, we might require separate bathrooms.

As it was, this was California and the military. Segregated bathrooms were nonexistent here also. While Blacks and Whites sharing the same restrooms was nothing to be concerned for me, for some Southern Whites, sharing anything with Blacks was inimical. Their murmurings and objections could be heard anytime the smoking lamp was lit (cigarette break) in private conversations with other whites. As racism was prohibited by the military (at least openly), I do not remember any instance of race surfacing in joint company. Yet the undertow was always there. Whites gathered with Whites, Blacks with Blacks. I have no idea how Blacks talked

about Whites at that time, however I do remember the word “Honky” being used from time to time to describe Whites.

I do know when Whites, particularly Southern Whites, spoke of Blacks in the company of other Whites, Nigger was the term often. Whites did not address Blacks as “Niggers” without expecting a confrontation. Therefore, the word Nigger was used most often in the company of other whites only. Whites did not address other Whites as “Nigger.” I often felt peer pressure at times to side with my White counterparts who harbored this resentment of Blacks; however, I did not share their feelings. No Black I ever knew had ever done anything to me to deserve such slander. I may have had my prejudices and lacked knowledge of what it was to be Black, but I had no reason to slander them.

In my May 16th letter, I stated my disgust that we always flunked inspection.



As unjust, disappointing, and bogus as failing inspections seemed then, failing inspections, I was to learn, was by design. No level or preparedness would have passed inspection early in boot camp. Something was going to be found wrong no matter how trivial and we, the members of Company 269, were going to suffer for it.

I later came to understand it was not our bunks, our lockers, or floors that were being inspected. We were. Our reaction to what we might deem as an unjust call was really what was being watched. The worst thing a recruit could do was protest a call. For the intelligent, regardless of how trivial, unjust, or in error a call might be, the correct response was always “Sir! I will take care of it, Sir!” But for the poor boot that never seemed to figure it out, never able to figure out the only words out of his mouth should be “Sir!” there was Hell to pay. And Hell did not usually come from

Corethers. While Corethers punished everyone for the persistent errors of a few, he left what to do about it up to those who did not appreciate being punished for another’s mistakes. For those of constant mistakes, the blanket party was reserved. In the middle of night someone would throw a blanket over the offender’s head and the rest of the company would beat the Hell out of him with socks loaded with soap bars.

Corethers would always manage to show up shortly after the disturbance subsided and all the party goers were back in bed, demanding an answer to “*What the Hell is all the noise about? Is there a problem in here?*” Corethers knew what was happening. He did not come to break up the party or to catch and punish the partiers beating the hell out of their own members. He just wanted to give the impression he did. And again, the correct answer, from everyone --- even those left black and blue from the soap bars, was “*No Sir, No problem here, Sir!*”

Rethinking the ordeal, we were being conditioned to be our own police force, to demand perfection from everyone to prevent being the victim of someone who just, no matter what, could not pull the grade. At the time blanket parties seemed barbaric and brutal but then later we’d all learn one person asleep on watch could potentially cost the lives of everyone who depended on him being alert. Boyhood independence was over. Our lives depended on the performance of each other. The slackness of one was not to be taken lightly by the group.

One day we were rousted out of the sack early in the morning. We normally were up before sunrise but today there seemed to be urgency not experienced before. We were herded off in the dark to the chow hall earlier than any time I remembered in the past. Usually, we got to the mess hall around sunrise. Obviously, we were going somewhere, and no time was to be wasted, or that is what I thought. In the military we had this saying “*Hurry up and wait*” and today we were in for one of those days. Wait we did, standing at parade rest in front of an administration building in the dark until well after the sun came up.

When the time finally came to enter the building, I thought my knees were locked in place. We must have been standing at parade rest for well over an hour, maybe even two. I was ready to move. A series of tables were set up in rows with separate compartments made of plywood separating one man from the other. We were instructed to sit down and there in front of us was several folders, a set of earphones, and pencils. In the folders were a series of exams which over the course of the morning we spent filling out. Reading comprehension, writing, math, mechanical amplitude, and tone differential (sonar) were several the items tested as well as IQ. I cannot remember if some version of a mental aptitude test such as the MMPI was offered. Apparently being insane was not a reason to be rejected from military service.

With the morning over we were then herded back to the chow hall for lunch then back to the building and called back to parade rest once again. This time, when we entered the building, the center of the tabletop compartments were removed and on the other side, directly across the table from the recruit, sat a Navy petty officer pouring over the material and tests of whoever it was he, the petty officer, was going to interview. There must have been twenty-five of these makeshift compartments set up.

My name came up as it usually did, in alphabetical order, meaning I got to stand around at parade rest half the afternoon before being called into one of those compartments. When my time came, I planked myself down on a chair and pulled myself up to the table with my interviewer directly across from me. He liked my reading comprehension and math skills. While they were not outstanding, they were well on the high side of average even though I thought I did horrible. What really

caught his eye was my ear, my ability to distinguish one tone from another which came natural to me. I had a good ear for music.

“So,” the sailor sitting across from me asked, “What would you like to do while in the Navy for the next four years?”

Personally, I thought I had already answered that question. Part of the reason I joined the Navy in the first place was because the Navy guaranteed my choice of duty and my choice was deep sea salvage work, if not Underwater Demolition (UDT). Being a Fourth of July baby, I loved to blow things up. Bill Jorgenson and I were always making homemade pipe bombs capable of destroying 2X6 planks nailed together. We were not out to injure anyone. We just liked the noise. In fact, the math instructor at high school used to call me the “Bomber”.

“I wanted into underwater salvage work.” I answered, “If not that, then Underwater Demolition (not fully realizing exactly what UDT meant).”

“The Seal Team!” he answered which is what UDT meant unbeknown to me.

I had never heard of the Seal Team before. All I knew was the Navy had these so-called frogmen who swam around and blew things up and that sounded fun to me loving to swim and blow things up.

“You do realize,” the man continued, “that of those who enter the Seal Team’s boot camp, few make it?”

“Boot camp?” I exclaimed, “I thought I was in boot camp.”

“Look kid,” the man continued, “I know when you signed up for the Navy, the Navy guaranteed your choice of duty and I want to make sure you get that. But --- unless you have at least five choices, the Navy may not be able to provide you the choice you want. Didn’t your recruiter tell you that?”

“Really?” I responded, because I did not remember being told about five choices in my conversation with the recruiter. “Well,” I thought, “maybe I missed that.”

“So ---!” the sailor continued after a pause “What would you like to do?”

Hell, I did not know. All I thought of was demolition, four years of Fourth of July fireworks, fun and frolic. I really had no idea what else the Navy had to offer other than painting ships and mopping floors.

“Well, look here” the guy went on “You scored an almost perfect score on sonar. What would you think of going into something like submarines?”

“Submarines?” I thought --- “That would not get me in the water swimming, but it would get me under the water although I probably would not be able to see much of what was out there. But it might be interesting.” I nodded OK. Demolition first, then submarines.

I passed over a few other rates offered like pipe fitter. I did not see myself as a plumber. Plumbing was not one of my favorite activities with my father --- but we talked about it anyway. Then there were rates like being a shipmate, painting and cleaning. That did not seem like much fun either. Nor did working on a flight deck as a signalman. A radio operator sounded boring. There was one rate however that I qualified for that the sailor would spend considerable time explaining to me. That rate would go a long way to guarantee me work even after the service. That rate was Hospital Corpsman.

“Have you thought of going into medicine?” the guy asked. “Good field to get into. You would never have to worry about mopping decks or painting ships if you got a Hospital Corpsman rating. Hospitals always have the best food, the best beds, the best working conditions, and the work is not that hard. After the service you should have no trouble finding employment and if you wanted to go into medicine, this would be a good start.”

“Well, I did not know about all that, but it would beat mopping deck,” I thought. “Being a nurse of sorts could not be all that bad.”

“Well ---- how about it, kid?” the guy inquired staring at me like we had to get this over with “Should I put Hospital Corpsman down as one of your choices? You need five! This would fill the bill. I mean, if you did get the Corpsman rate and you did not like it, you could strike for something else later.”

“OK,” I answered, figuring that nothing was likely to come of it anyway. “You can put down Hospital Corpsman as my fifth choice.” Having been there for seemingly hours, I just wanted out.

That got me out of there alright, but it did not take too long before I learned what created demand for Corpsman. Most Hospital Corpsmen end up Marine Medics on the battle front and the prognosis of those did not sound encouraging. That petty officer, I just talked to, conveniently left that bit information out of our conversation. He made it sound like as a Hospital Corpsman, I would either be on a ship tending to the ill or stateside in some hospital.

I did end up taking the entry test for the seal team. Being a good swimmer, I took first place in a two-lap race back and forth across the swimming pool. I thought that would get me a serious look, so I put all I had into it. I had a few things going against me. One, I got into several scrapes with the law before joining the military, dumb kid stuff, like shooting ducks in the city lagoon. Then there was the Corpsman rating. That rating largely meant the Marines had their hooks in you and did not want to throw you back. Once a corpsman, as explained to me, always a corpsman.

The last thing explained to me was something of a surprise. My effort and beating everyone in the swimming pool may have worked against me. It seems, or so I was told, that the instructors of the seal wannabes weren't looking for the best, fastest swimmers. They were more interested in someone they figured they could improve upon with the least amount of effort on their part. If they took those who on the surface, like me, seemed to be good swimmers, not only would they have to train me to swim, but they would also have to untrain me. If they noticed in my swimming anything that they felt might inhibit me from becoming their kind of swimmer, the fact that I swam as well as I did mean I had been swimming my way for some time. That means they would have to stop me from using what worked so well for me in the past and then retrain me to do something else. Habits are habits and hard to break. Retraining, I was to learn, is often harder than training.

I left boot camp on the 21st of July with orders in hand to report to Hospital Corps School at Balboa Naval Hospital on the 18th of August. The rest of my letters from Boot Camp largely reinforce anything mentioned to this point. College was why I was doing this. Medically, given my hernia, I just make it through boot camp

which could not get over soon enough. I was beginning to hurt and was ready for lighter duty.

Corps School and Camp Pendleton

Entering Corps school, in terms of what my future held, I admitted to my family the inevitability of where my rating, Hospital Corpsman, was to take me, namely Southeast Asia. There was no reason to hide it anymore. I was very likely headed for Vietnam with the Marine Corps as their medic.

Some of the new corpsmen trainees who had some college behind them were surprised to discover just how intense the training was. We were, in no uncertain terms, being prepared to make house calls. I did not think much of the nursing aspect of the training. Emptying bedpans was not something I wanted to devote much time too but the rest of the training was quite interesting. One of my friends kept telling me that after this training I'd have no problem finding work in a hospital back in civilian life. To me that translated into a place to work while I was going to college. I liked that even if meant emptying a few bedpans.

The training we received at the hospital placed us somewhere in a grey zone, not nurses, not doctors. While we were not qualified for surgery as an MD, we were able to perform medical procedures that nurses, by Navy standards at that time, were not qualified to do; for example, suturing. We were being primed to make simple diagnoses and writing prescriptions, although I never did any of that until I reported to Yuma after my tour in Vietnam. Starting IVs and drawing blood, however, were standard procedures and we practiced those two procedures on each other all the time.

We also received all sorts of first aid training, learned CPR, and how to take blood pressure and pulse. We were taught how to stop bleeding by clamping off bleeders, splint broken limbs, and how to deal with the possibility of a broken neck or back. Sterile technique was always stressed. Use only sterile instruments, cloth, bandages, and gloves were stressed over and over. We even were taught to perform tracheotomies. We were only to use tracheotomies in the event of an absolute emergency where a clear airway could not be achieved; however, should that situation arise, we were not to hesitate. As our instructor pointed out, the man in the field without an open airway would die anyway. "If we did happen to cut into a person's vocal cords," the instructor asked, "would the person rather have a hard time speaking or a tombstone?" And if we did cut an artery, oh well --- the guy had a tombstone on the way anyway."

Stressed at corps school was the idea "The greatest good for greatest number." Anaphylaxis shock was always a possibility anytime vaccinations were given. The possibility of an allergic reaction by one or two was not reason enough to stop the vaccinations of the group, however, because not to give the vaccinations to protect the few was seen as detrimental to the whole. Cholera could take out the whole unit.

Many a war has been won or lost because of disease and our job was to not let disease become such a factor. In the event of mass casualties, we were instructed to overlook those most seriously wounded and concentrate on those who would benefit most from immediate first aid, namely the bleeders. Those missing limbs,

head injuries, sucking chest wounds, and exposed bowels probably would not be much benefit to the outcome of a battle even if saved. Controlling minor problems before they become major problems such as bleeding was therefore the priority. Get those back into battle that could still fight and afterwards worry about the more seriously wounded.

I came to believe in Vietnam, however, that this save the less wounded mentality was a military tactic left over from World War II when returning as many of the wounded to combat immediately may have been difference between winning and losing the battle. In Vietnam, few such long involved battles ever occurred. Most battles were over in a matter of moments. No battle's outcome that I was ever in depended on returning the wounded to battle.

My next duty station was the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton. There I was placed on the eyes, nose, and throat (ENT) ward taking care of Marines with tonsillectomies mostly. I was placed under the command of a lady nurse, which was a new experience. I did not get along with her very well. I felt she was trying to make me into a den mother for a group of boy scouts. I did not like her degrading me by performing what I considered women's work, chauvinistic for sure on my part. I did not see the Marines as incapable of waiting on themselves for such small items as getting a glass of water. There were a few in bed experiencing a lot of pain for whom I did not mind being a go-for but for the most part, most were up and around on the ward as much as me. She was the only one in my four years of military duty that gave me a poor job performance report. She also likely helped expedite my deployment to Vietnam. She was, after all, an officer.

On December 9th the Navy repaired my hernia. Not just the left side either, but both sides. The operation was a bit strange in that I got to watch the whole procedure via mirrors. They did a spinal tap rather than knock me out. After a happy injection, I got to watch the whole operation with a smile on my face. Everything was funny, even being cut open. A few days later, I returned to the ward, doing light night duty. This placed me in the position of being by myself most the time which at the time I did not like. I was a social animal. I liked being surrounded by friends, partying, and being the center of attention. The only good part was I did not have to deal with my female superior.

Something else happened that day unbeknown to me which would challenge my perspective on the military and Vietnam. The National Council of Churches, to which my hometown church belonged, voted to stop bombing North Vietnam.⁰⁰¹ I would not discover this for a while but when I did, it struck me as "Really!" First off, I did not think churches had any business in foreign affairs given the separation of church and state clause. Secondly, it brought me back to all our discussions from confirmation class about war. Since my church saw Vietnam, at least the bombing, as unjust, shouldn't I? And so began the paradox I was later to be completely immersed. Was Vietnam a moral war? Are those serving there good or evil?

On January 21st 1967, I was promoted to E3. The advancement really did not mean much other than I had made the grade despite my problem with my nurse supervisor. E3 also put me in line for E4, HM3. As it turned out, this wish for E4 was used to manipulate me and numerous other Corpsmen I suspect after learning how combat seasoned Corpsmen were to be treated by the military after returning

to the states. Anyway, now an E3, I was told by the powers that be that the next chance for advancement in rate would be in six months, or about July. If I'd think about volunteering for Vietnam, E4 would all but be mine in July. E4 now would mean by the time I returned from Vietnam, I could be up for E5, more pay, able to get into the NCO club and high enough in rank that I would not have to take crap from just anyone. If I did decide to make the military a career, E5 would put me in place to make E6 either prior to extending for another four years or shortly thereafter. In short, in career terms, Vietnam, it then appeared, would be a good move.

Worth mentioning here, at this time, I was contemplating making the Navy a career as did my uncle, Dan. Up to this point, life in the military was not all bad and I liked the idea of never having to worry about medical care. Retiring at 40 did not seem like a bad idea either given most civilians who I knew worked all their lives for a retirement never lived long enough to enjoy it. Either they died shortly before retirement or shortly thereafter.

Despite the advantages of going to Vietnam early in my career I was in no big hurry to get there. When I was pulled off ward duty and placed in the pharmacy, my hopes were that I'd become a pharmacy tech. Pharmacy was about the best duty a Corpsman like me could hope for --- but it was not to be. By the end of March, I knew that Vietnam was in the works all along. I did not volunteer for Vietnam but might as well have. My thinking is my favorite female superior volunteered me instead. I could not stand the thought of continuing to work for her. Vietnam as far as I was concerned would be, by far, less stressful duty.

But even then, events were playing out beyond the military that would really challenge my views of Vietnam. One challenge came from a most unlike source, a professional prize fighter. On February 6th, 1967, Cassius Clay defended his title against Ernie Terrell. The fight was broadcasted to our club at Camp Pendleton and nearly everyone I knew at the time, remembering Clay's defeat of Liston, was present, cheering or booing.

On April 22nd he beat Zora Folley and we were there again, in the TV lounge, cheering and booing. Those who jumped on Clay's band wagon, like me, were amazed by how he floated and danced around the ring. "*Fly like a butterfly, sting like a bee*" was Clay's saying, and he did just that. To Clay's opponents, it was his mouth and ego that they came to see knocked off. His opponents would just cringe every time Clay would stick his jaw out and brag about what a beautiful face he had. "*I'm the Greatest!*" Clay would shout, and the lips of those against him would just quiver. If the fight wasn't entertaining enough to watch, Clay made the people watching his fights just as interesting.

Then Clay pulled something that created a great deal of mental confusion for me. He, out of what seemed like nowhere, tossed his world title to the wind by announcing at great personal cost on April 28th less than a week after defeating Folley that he had no quarrel with the Vietcong and refused to be inducted into the Army. He was immediately stripped of his title. On June 20th, he was charged with draft evasion and sentenced to five years in prison. He was banned from boxing for three years and fined \$10,000.⁰⁰²

In March of 1967, offered these words to explain why he would not allow himself to be drafted:

“Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go ten thousand miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights?

No, I am not going ten thousand miles from home to help murder and burn another poor nation simply to continue the domination of white slave masters of the darker people the world over. This is the day when such evils must come to an end. I have been warned that to take such a stand would put my prestige in jeopardy and could cause me to lose millions of dollars which should accrue to me as the champion.

But I have said it once and I will say it again. The real enemy of my people is right here. I will not disgrace my religion, my people or myself by becoming a tool to enslave those who are fighting for their own justice, freedom and equality...

If I thought the war was going to bring freedom and equality to 22 million of my people, they wouldn't have to draft me, I'd join tomorrow. But I either have to obey the laws of the land or the laws of Allah. I have nothing to lose by standing up for my beliefs. So I'll go to jail. We've been in jail for four hundred years.”⁰⁰³

Had I been up on boxing history however I would have known this did not happen overnight. Earlier on March 9th, 1966, he announced to the world that as a back Muslim he became a conscientious objector and stated:

“My conscience won't let me go shoot my brother, or some darker people, or some poor hungry people in the mud for big powerful America. And shoot them for what? They never called me nigger, they never lynched me, they didn't put no dogs on me, they didn't rob me of my nationality, rape and kill my mother and father. ... Shoot them for what? How can I shoot them poor people? Just take me to jail.”⁰⁰⁴

I really (and I stress really) did not know what to think. Here was a man at the beginning of what seemed like a career that most fighters would die for throwing it all away; over what? Like Elvis, had Ali entered the military, he'd have no doubt been placed at some secure post teaching self-defense or something of that nature. Putting Ali in harms-way, given his popularity, would have been a risky political move to say the least. But where he might be stationed did not seem to be Ali's complaint at all. Ali was stating he would not support in any manner a white man's war.

“When did Vietnam become a race issue?” I wondered. Or was Ali's refusal to fight a religious issue? In either event, a boxer, an American Idol, was defying

the government of the United States over his own government's foreign policy and made it clear that he was willing to go to jail for his beliefs.

I could not help but respect this man much to the dismay of many of the whites around me. Cast into something of a quandary, I began to wonder if this war was something I wanted to do? And if not, which was the usual question I tossed around, what was I willing to do to defend my beliefs? Or did what I was experiencing have anything to do with beliefs at all? Maybe I was just afraid of going. If so, what's either say about me as a man?

Martin Luther King was also making some rather strange noises. Personally, I thought that all King did was make noise, but I've already stated all my qualifications for coming to that conclusion. Anyway, Martin Luther was calling Vietnam a blasphemy and was calling for an end to the bombing and a withdrawal of American troops.⁰⁰⁵ Alone, Martin Luther might have been easy to blow off, but he was not the only making such demands. Huge protests in New York and San Francisco, in these cases my peers, were calling for the same thing. Nearly two hundred draft cards were burned in a number of these protests.⁰⁰⁶ If that did not beat all, a group of Quakers on the so-called good ship Phoenix sailed to North Vietnam offering aid they brought from the United States.⁰⁰⁷

As for the war, the DMZ was heating up. Heavy fighting was being reported in the hills around Khe Sanh⁰⁰⁸ and along the DMZ, Con Thien, and Dong Ha.⁰⁰⁹ All were Marine positions which meant if I was headed for Vietnam with the Marines, I was likely headed for the hottest part of the war. While I had resigned myself to the fact that I was going to end up in Vietnam, realizing that I had a good chance ending up in the worst of it was not the news I wanted to hear.

I entered Field Med School at Camp Pendleton on the 26th of May 1967 and finished on the 27th of June. I spent most my time wondering why we were there at all, as it seemed we did nothing more than line up for roll call. In fact, I cannot remember anything I took from that school other than the saying, "*A dead Corpsman is no good to anyone. Never run through an ambush and wait for an area to be secured before entering.*" All those instructions would prove laughable once in Vietnam. Rarely were any areas I entered secured before I arrived on the scene or was security ever provided unless already in place. That is not to imply the Marines were not doing their best to protect me. I mean, how is security to be provided in a mine field in time to treat a Marine bleeding to death with a blown off leg? How can an area be secured to treat the wounded if it is being fired on by mortars and artillery from a foreign country? Not all situations in need of emergency medical intervention were under the control of the Marines.

I remember all the instruction we had on not moving the person until we could assess whether his neck or back might be broken. In actual combat, there he lies in the open, being fired on by automatic weapons and we're not to move him until we know whether his spine is severed? Leave him there, broken neck or not, he'll damn sure be dead, not to mention myself, before I got him strapped on a board. Besides, we never carried back boards or neck collars. But --- we were always told to make sure we knew if his spine was severed before moving him.

It was damned if I did; damned if I didn't. If I did run out there and pull the man back, I was left with the feeling that I should have spent a little more time

examining him in case he did suffer a back or neck injury. Leaving him there long enough to do that examination was unacceptable. He needed moved and moved now before someone pumped him, or me, full of lead. But what would happen if it was found out that I moved him with a broken neck and the man ended up paralyzed? Could I be held responsible? Once back in the States, if I came across this individual would he accuse me of negligence? This paradox, the feeling that I could be damned if I did or damned if I did not would haunt me throughout my tour in Vietnam and end up following me home. This same feeling exists to this very day in many things I must do to live and work in this society today and when experienced, I am transported right back to Vietnam. Call it one of those ghosts that can turn on combat veterans at any time whenever at home they themselves in vaguely similar situations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hello Vietnam

Da Nang: My Arrival, Black Teeth and Blank Faces

A July 3rd, 1967, letter places my arrival in country on July 1st, three days before my twenty first birthday. When the back of the C130 that brought us from Okinawa opened like everyone's jaw dropping at the Da Nang airfield, the heat and humidity of summer in Vietnam instantly glued my clothing to my skin. By the time I was down the ramp, my shirt was soaking wet from perspiration. I looked like I had just walked through a sprinkler. And there was this odor. The smell of spent jet exhaust, diesel fuel, night soil (soil fertilized with raw human waste), the smell of burning sulfur, and garbage decaying in the heat all blended permeating the air with a stench never experienced before or after Vietnam.

At the airbase in Da Nang, new arrivals such as I were warehoused under a tin roof pole barn with no sides. I did not know it at the time, but no sides were by design, offering a quick and easy escape in any direction should incoming mortars or rockets occur. I, at the time, figured it was the military just being cheap and not caring for the welfare of those under this pole barn's roof. Sides, after all, would have helped keep the mosquitoes at bay which were the immediate problem in my mind. The mosquitoes, come nightfall, were unrelenting. To provide us some relief we were given a repellent of pure DEET and even then, I had to completely cover any exposed portion of my body, including my head, with my vinyl poncho after the sun went down. Call enduring the additional heat by sleeping under a poncho blood conservation.

Inside the pole barn all there was to do was lie on or sit on the eight-inch wide twelve feet long wooden benches a little lower than knee high. Under the benches was sand. Anyone attempting to sleep on these benches usually ended up between them, on the ground with whatever called the sand home; snakes, spiders, scorpions, chiggers, ants, and an occasional rodent ranging in size from a shrew to a large cat; not to mention the creatures what did not live on the ground like mosquitoes, biting flies, and gnats.

The roof over the pole barn provided us also hinted at what we could be in for at any moment. A round hole about the size of a small dinner plate with the medal folded down toward three missing benches served as a grave prophecy that we may come under rocket attack at any time. The rumor was the missing benches and the rocket that took them out also claimed the lives of two Marines about to get on a plane and fly home. The message being conveyed by that story --- you are never safe while in Vietnam, no matter where you were or how little time you had left. The end could come anytime, anyplace, even here, surrounded by security --- right now.

The ride out to the Battalion Area a few days later was also a memorable event. Not only did it take me over and through some of the area that I would be operating in but it gave me a view of some places that would be frequently talked about by the Marines. Dog Patch was one such example, the red-light district of Da Nang where rumors abound of serviceman who went seeking sexual pleasures to

never return. The trucks took us right past Dog Patch where, standing in their doors like tellers at WalMart waiting for someone to check out, were the gals waving as we drove by. The district itself was something of culture shock but the real shock would be finding how young many of those girls were. As a few Marines would say, *“If they’re old enough to pee, they’re old enough for me.”*

Not everyone waved, however. As we headed for the gate along a chain linked fence separating the base from the city, stood numerous women, missing teeth or blacken by betel nut, with children hanging on their hips or standing alongside them. Old men also watched us with an expressionless face that in time I’d come to understand. Young men, those of military age, were noticeably missing. These expressionless faces were how most civilians, the poor, the field workers; the common villagers always greeted us. To them, we were the invaders. We never spoke their language. We did not look like them. We did not value the same things. Worse, we looked more like the Imperialist French that robbed them of their resources to profit France rather than their liberators. They, after all, had dealt with a capitalist white race before and I doubt their memories of doing so were very pleasant.

Another problem, overall; we saw ourselves not as their equals --- but as superiors. We were, or so many of us thought, the “Justice League” flying in to save the day. As such, passing that fence and looking into those stone sober faces was not what I expected. I expected an atmosphere of awe, people waving, cheering, and smiling, welcoming their liberators to their country. But there was none of that. Just stone-cold sober faces and the understood, non-verbalized, “Look --- There goes another truck of them.”

I reported to our Battalion area on July 3rd, 1967. By some twist of fate, a corpsman, Mike Hill, ended up not only spending our last month in the States together, we flew over to Vietnam together, spent most the year in Vietnam together, and on the end, flew back to the States together. Such a close association was almost unheard of in Vietnam. Most Vietnam Veterans went there alone and went home alone.

Upon entering the Second Battalion First Marines Battalion area, the Battalion Aid Station was about the first thing I saw after getting off the truck. In the first few days following our arrival, our only duty was giving immunizations, general office work, and cleaning the area around our tents and hooches. In the evening we had access to a club where they served beer and soda. An outdoor open movie theater also existed which rolled the film shortly after sundown. Sundown in July came early compared to North Dakota in Vietnam being nearer the equator.

The club was a typical hard back hooch with the entrance in the center rather than on the end. Stepping inside, you were right in front of the bar with wings of seating chairs and tables spreading parallel from the bar. The limit on beer was two each, but no one counted. One particularly unpopular beer was Ballantine. Because of its lack of popularity, it was not uncommon for all the other beers to be drank up leaving only Ballantine. When that happened, the word would come down, *“No more beer until the Ballantine is gone.”* Attendance at the club would always fall off during those periods. The good news was, if you could stand it, you could drink all the Ballantine you could hold.

The main conversation at the club, other than jokes and lighthearted jousting, was, of course, the war. Being there July 3rd to perhaps about the 5th, the topic of Con Thien was front and center in many minds. Only a few days before, the 9th Marines around Con Thien had taken a beating, 96 KIAs (killed in action) and 211 WIAs (wounded in action). Two battalions of the 3rd Marines were airlifted into the battle resulting in 159 KIA over the course of about two weeks.⁰⁰¹ The exact number of casualties was never made known to us however while we were still in Vietnam. All anyone knew was the Marines KIA around Con Thien and the DMZ were large numbers.

But there was reason to rejoice we were told --- the battle was estimated to have claimed the lives of 1300 Communists⁰⁰² as if that was supposed to offer some solace. I found this news hard for any reason to rejoice. I did not see any amount of dead Communists worth my life.

Other than Con Thien, the topic always being discussed at the club was Operation Independence, an operation carried out in late January 67 by the Second Battalion First Marines (2-1). Independence this, Independence that, “*You should have been here during Operation Independence*”. Operation Independence, by the Marines at the club, was talked about as if Independence was some defining point of the Vietnam War.

Sandy Carlson reports in “*We Remember*” that Hotel suffered 5 KIAs and 26 WIAs.⁰⁰³ Sandy’s numbers however do not match the actual record. The S-3 Journal, reporting on the events of the operation as they occurred, claims only two Marines died, Private first class (PFC) William Dumas KIA January 29 and 2nd Lt O’Conner, KIA January 31st.⁰⁰⁴ Furthermore, it appears the majority of medevacks suffered on Independence were heat casualties.

To a Marine lying in a rice paddy who gets shot at every time he pokes his head up to see what is going on around him, the battle likely seemed much more intense. To imagine any medevack going on during battle as a dead or wound comrade is not uncommon. Whether this affected Sandy’s recollection of this event is unknown.

In doing this research, I found myself often misinformed on several events that I wrote home about. I found that it is no discredit to any soldier who in the heat of combat believes the battle going on in front of his eyes was worse than it may have been. That’s not to say all war stories are intentionally inflated. Whether actual or imagined matters little to the person telling the story. He is likely convinced that what he reports is true; a burden, real or imagined, that he will carry around with him from that day forward.

Carlson also mentions that over the two days following Independence, Vietnamese peasants carried 22 dead Vietnamese and 18 wounded Vietnamese to the 2nd BN 1st MAR compound. The Vietnamese claimed these dead and wounded were civilian casualties suffered as a result of the Marines on Independence.⁰⁰⁵ Sandy believes those peasants were actually Vietcong attempting to obtain retribution.⁰⁰⁶

That Sandy believed those peasants were Vietcong was common thinking. I was to discover during the month of July 67 that almost any Vietnamese killed or wounded were labeled Vietcong whether combatants or not. Many Vietnamese

homes, built of grass and bamboo, possessed small bunkers and shallow caves which when discovered automatically received an M-26 grenade. When the remains were brought to the surface, the dead or wounded were nearly always listed as Vietcong, a conclusion I frequently questioned. Vietcong or not, I hurt in indescribable ways every time the remains were women and children.

Why these Vietnamese would hide in these bunkers and holes constituted no mystery to me either. Given the same situation the Vietnamese civilians were in, if I as they, had to live under the constant threat of being shot or mortared, it does not matter from which side the bullets and mortars came, I would have chosen to build a bunker or dug a small hole to take shelter in also. And given that we, the Marines, were the foreigners, if I as a Vietnamese child, saw a group of armed foreign combatants headed my way, I too would have hidden in one.

Those children were apt to be scared to death. As such it is understandable that these children would remain unresponsive to a command from a foreign language they did not understand. All they would have heard from above would have been this angry growl "*Get your ass up here!*" which meant about the same thing to any listener as the snarl of a pit bull. I understood if these children hunkered down and resisted coming out. Their crime however was often punishable by death.

Not many episodes of watching and listening to what I felt were largely just some blank justifications for the murder of women and children were needed before I made a promise to myself. I would not, in the future regardless of any negative impact to myself or the organization to which I was attached, make such blanket generalizations to defend either myself or the organization. I did not know whether these people were Communists. What I did know was they were woman and children. They were not Vietcong until proven otherwise unless Vietnamese deserved less rights than Americans. They were not gooks. They were not zippers. They were women and children. Since then, I have become very sensitive to government organizations, particularly military organizations, corporations, or individuals calling anything that which it is not. B-36's, for example, were not peacemakers as they were dubbed.⁰⁰⁷ They were bombers, war machines designed to kill. They were machines designed to wage war, not make peace. I began this day picking up on the importance of words and whose words they were.

On the other hand, these Marines were, for the most part, nothing more than elderly children themselves. In defense of the Marines, and the adolescent men in it, Vietnam was not some cops and robbers, cowboy, and Indian game we played as children with cap guns. If shot, you did not argue with the shooter whether you were hit or not. In Vietnam, the bullets were real and spoke for themselves. A few automatic weapons and machine guns can wipe out your entire group if given a chance to do its damage. The situation of being pinned down and taking casualties requires action unless you simply want to lay there and die. Hence action is taken, and people die.

And the people that die are not always those who you want dead, particularly when the enemy and civilians are a salt and pepper mix. As to the bunkers and the children and women that died in them, all it takes is one time for a real Vietcong to pop up with an automatic weapon to earn you and many of your comrades a trip home in a body bag. Given that, what's more important; you and

your friends --- or some unknown person in a pit? It's a tradeoff. Go ahead --- make the call from your comfortable chair in which you sit reading these some thirty years after the event. My guess is you are as qualified to make that assessment as well as those back in the States, having never experienced life and death that close up, labeling us "*Baby Killers*" at that time. And if that seems like a harsh statement on my part --- Gee! I wonder what makes me feel this rage.

The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) records the events of Operation Independence in their "*Vietnam, A Television History.*" On disk two under "*America Takes Charge (1965-1967): "A Village Raid.*" PBS pits the Marines version of what took place during Operation Independence against the villagers who suffered the assault. Interviewed by PBS were Captain Banks, Hotel's Commanding Officer (H-6), and Pvt. Jack Hill. While Banks lays out the grim military situation Hotel Company found itself in, Hill puts it on the gut level of a grunt Marine. Trapped with what he believes were Marines all around him being killed, Hill tells of wounded Marines crying for their mothers, asking to be shot because they could not take the pain of being wounded any more.

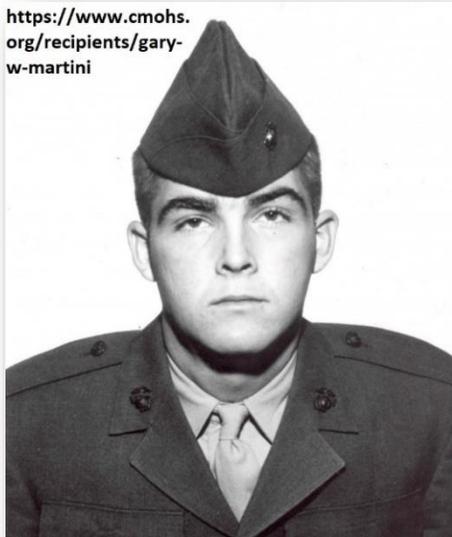
Hill goes on to describe assaulting the village and blowing up bunkers and tunnels, and how an eighteen old adolescent Marine machine gunner who just watched his buddies get blown away really has no mercy for whoever might be on the receiving end of his M-60. Keep in mind, by Hill's testimony, it could be surmised Hotel suffered numerous KIAs but only two KIAs were recorded by Marine records.

On the Vietnamese side are Nguyen Bay and Le Thi Ton. Bay tells of being a fourth-grade boy when the Marines came. According to Bay, the Marines came asking where the VC were and denies that anyone knew. He states that the Marines began killing his people and that he only escaped being killed by hiding under dead bodies. The Marines then proceeded to kill all their livestock, shot and killed those who were wounded and smashed people's heads in with their rifle butts. Le Thi Ton's testimony supports Bay's. When the Marines arrived, they seemed to hate the people she claimed. They just threw a grenade into her house and nine people fell died, one of whom was her own son. Then the Marines set fire to all their homes, so no one had anywhere to live.

Which is the correct version? There are likely elements of truths, errors, and exaggerations in both. I however clearly could see and understand both sides, a paradox that still haunts me today. I often spoke of the desperate position the Vietnamese people, children especially, were in. Imagine being a child old enough to understand what is going on around you. One day these foreigners, white and much larger framed than your people and armed with automatic weapons, come into your village and tell you that if it is found out you are talking to the VC, they (being the foreigners) will come back and burn your village down. To make their point perfectly clear, a Marine might even gun down a pig as a demonstration of what might be in store for the rest of the villagers should any of the villagers not to follow the Marines instructions.

Then just after these foreigners leave, the VC, who may even be living in your village, comes in and tells you that if you are ever seen talking to the Americans again, they will murder your mother. And just to make their point

perfectly clear, they may gun down a pig as a demonstration of what might be in store for the rest of the villagers should any of the villagers not follow the Vietcong's instructions.



The fact that Independence did not shape up to be the decisive battle of Vietnam as it often seemed at 2-1's club, does not mean that the 2nd BN 1st MAR did not participate in any large battles before my arrival. Fox Company, for example, during Operation Union suffered heavy casualties in one of the 2nd BN 1st MAR's heaviest battles of the war. Gary Martini was awarded the Congressional Medal Honor posthumously. Operation Union also resulted in one of two MIAs from the 2nd BN 1st MAR. The body of GySgt Roger Hamilton was never recovered. Lost forever that day were 32 Marines. The possibility of suffering

heavy casualties was always before us and always weighed on our mind.

A Shot in the Dark and a Marine Dead

The theater at battalion also had a story attached to it. A myth arose over the movie "*A Shot in the Dark*." As the story goes, some Marine about to rotate back to the States was shot in the head from a stray bullet during that movie. No one knew the Marine took a fatal bullet however until the end of the movie when the Marine, found in a pool of blood, did not wake up. A Corpsman was called and attempts to revive this Marine failed.

My reaction was the normal "Wow! What a coincidence." A shot, from who knew by whom or where during the movie "*A Shot In the Dark*" resulted in one dead Marine. Well, a coincidence I thought until I began rehearsing the story several times from different sources stating this incident happened at completely different times with the person killed belonging to different companies. Some had the event happening a good year before. Others had it happening in the early spring and a couple had it happening just before I got there. Even today this fable lives on with those telling it all swearing their version is correct. I therefore had this story and its tellers document their version of "*A Shot*

In The Dark" ⁰⁰⁸ in an earlier book "*We Remember*" that I helped compile and publish by the Vietnam Era Veterans of the 2nd BN 1st MAR.



Now the surprise of all surprises. The shot in the dark story, which was originally published in "*We Remember*" largely as rumor, turns out to be at least partially true. I believed this to be largely a myth right up until Robert Hughes, via a phone conversation on March 15, 2006, claimed he was reviewing the Command Chronologies of 2/1 when he came across the event. What movie was playing at the time was not mentioned nor was the man's name. The date however was. Since a casualty list exists which includes dates, it was simply a matter of comparing the date of casualty to the names of marines who died on that date. By doing so, I now know the man's name that gave rise to this story. The event is recorded in the December 1966 Command Chronologies of 2-1 with the death of Lance Corporal (LCpl) Howard Matson of Fox Company.

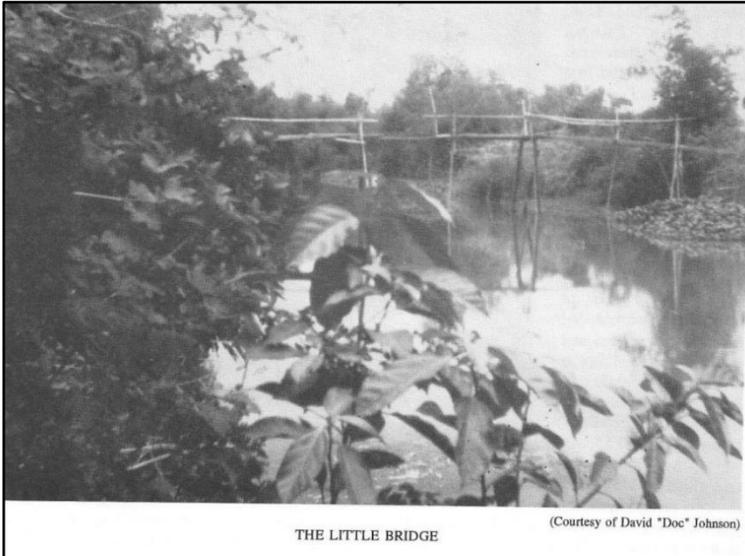
Tara Revisited: As Atlanta after Sherman

A few days after checking into battalion, I was assigned my new unit, Hotel Company 1st Platoon. The Marines always mustered to hear the orders of the day. Once the orders were given it was off to supply to gather up whatever gear was needed for that evening's patrol, after which it was down the trail we went. A street-smart observant Hispanic usually led the pack taking us to a hostile frontier area where gun fights usually broke out. Appropriately the area was nicknamed Dodge City. Other points frequently visited were the Tracks, an abandoned RR line, or the Anthill, an Arvin encampment on top of a dome shaped mound within walking distance from battalion.

The trip to the Anthill took us through a Combined Action Cadre (CAC) Unit, a defensive perimeter shared by Marines and ARVINs with the mission of providing a safe harbor to the civilians inside. Once passing through this CAC Unit, I stepped into an opening between two rows of hooches when this gun shot went off sounding like it was point blank in my face. I was the only one in our squad that responded. I instantly flattened out on the ground but at the same time I realized that I was the only one in the opening of those two rows of hooches. So I quickly crab crawled out of that firing lane. Nothing more occurred, other than people, Marines and Vietnamese both, laughed at me. I did not see it as a laughing matter. I was sure that shot was meant for me. I heard what I believed was the bullet sizzle by me. The blast was not directed away from me --- I've heard numerous shots away from me before, from childhood to the military but this one was different. It was too loud and sharp.

My thoughts instantly turned to what I've heard so much in the past that the Vietcong loved killing radiomen, commissioned officers, and Corpsmen. I was alone in that firing lane. If the bullet was not meant for me, it was likely meant for anyone packing a 45 pistol on their hip. As such to prevent being picked out of a crowd (if that is what I was) again, I traded off my 45 for an M16 the next time that I was back at battalion. From that day on, I wanted to look like everyone else. I carried a demolition bag rather than a Corpsmen's Unit One (medical bag), grenades, and machine gun ammo just like any other Marine. If I was going to die in this hell hole, it wasn't going to be because I looked important.

The area of Dodge City and the Tracks was much like I would have imagined returning to Tara, Scarlet O'Hara's legendary home from "*Gone with the Wind*." Gone was the agriculture that once flourished. Rice fields, now wild grass,

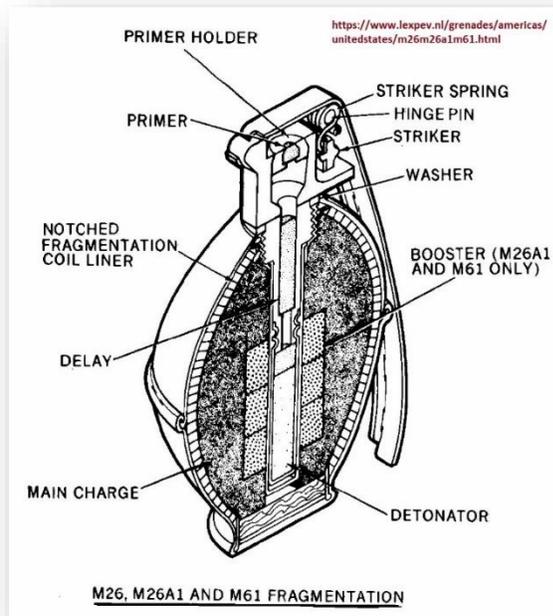


lay surround-ed by dikes now only used as cover during fire fights. Numerous bamboo containing tree lines sectioned off individual fields and provided cover for snipers and troop movements. At the end of many of these tree lines was a rectangular lot on which a home, many brick, once stood. Now these virtual

mansions, compared to the grass shacks of most Vietnamese, lay in ruin, collapsed, roofless with their sides riddled by bullet impacts. Their insides were burned out.

One of first places I remember going was across this bamboo bridge which took us into a no man's land on the other side. Often this bridge was booby trapped. If the bridge was not bobby trapped, the trail getting there or getting back for damn sure was. The S-3 Journal, pages 37-145, documents our movements in the month of July 67. Being found constantly were mines and bobby traps. Some were found and destroyed. Those not found before being detonated resulted in nearly daily medevacks.

Booby traps came in a variety of forms, the most common being the M-26 grenade. The delay fuse would be removed so that when the pin was pulled the resulting explosion was immediate rather than delayed. I remember a story told me by one of the Marines. Never trust a grenade found along the trail. A Marine sergeant out on one of these maneuvers found an M-26 grenade on the trail with the pin still intact. Not completely trusting the grenade, the sergeant decided to dispose of it in the river. He walked to the riverbank, pulled the pin, and went to throw it. As soon



as the grenade left his hand and the handle popped off, the grenade detonated resulting in the loss of his hand and his head.

As a booby trap, with the delay element removed, the M-26's pin could be loosened and attached to a string which when caught by a passing foot, the pin would be jerked out. The next sound heard was the ping of the handle flying off thrown by striker spring. The striker then sets off the primer, but without the delay element, the explosive ignites immediately --- and bang!

Another favorite method of rigging an M 26 grenade as a bobby trap was to pull the pin and carefully, not to let go of the striker handle, place the pin-less grenade in a can large enough to accommodate the handle but small enough not to allow the handle to lift and set off the striker. So, seeing a can lying on the path; what do boys do with a can? They kick it. Out rolls the grenade, the striker handle goes ping and the grenade goes bang! The can could also be laid sideways anchored to the ground or vegetation with a string attached to the grenade. Trip over the string, the grenade is pulled out of the can; ping goes the striker spring launching the handle, and bang.

With the bang of course came the blood and screams, and shrapnel wounds. These types of wounds however usually meant a ticket home as rarely were these grenade bobby traps fatal. Unlike the movies, grenades do not blow buildings down or flip cars over in the air. Grenades are for the most part simply large firecrackers with shrapnel. Common wounds inflicted by grenades were called "Husses" meaning not usually fatal but serious enough to get you a ticket home. "Husses" were by many considered a good thing. They got you home alive; moderately to seriously wounded perhaps, but alive.

For years after Vietnam, I considered empty cans dangerous. I still do not kick them or if driving, I will swerve to miss them or anything else that might conceal a surprise such as an empty box lying in the road. If a box, for example, did not have explosives in it, it could conceal a cement block. When I was with others after returning home in the seventies who would run out and kick a can or veered to flatten a box on the road, my instinct was to throw my hands around my head, duck, and brace myself. Occasionally I still do.

As common as these M-26 booby traps were, the question that had to be asked was how so many American made M-26 grenades ended up on the trails as booby traps? Theories circulated. Maybe the Vietcong had access to M-26 grenades. Or maybe these grenades were being stolen by the Vietnamese working at the Marine Bases. Worse, perhaps the Arvins, which America supplied with weapons, were using them against us. Or maybe, and I almost hated to think of this possibility, Marines were loading themselves up with ordnance going out in case we were attacked at night and then, not wanting to lug it all back in the morning, left part of their load there. Given what I know about the Vietnamese, every site we left was policed clean the very next morning for anything forgotten, lost, or just left. Ordnance taken out of battalion supply by the troops was never held to an accounting.

It goes without saying that the larger the ordnance booby trapped, the more destructive it was. Should an artillery round, a mortar, or bomb hit the ground and not detonate, sometime while on patrol along the trail, some Marine would either

be lucky enough to see it before stumbling over the trip wire or unfortunate enough to trip it. The resulting casualties, usually more than one, would often end up missing limbs or killed in action (KIA). Vietnamese were very efficient at converting any explosive device into a booby trap.

Not all booby traps were grenades, mortars, or some larger ordnance. Many were just long nails or sharpened metal objects like sharpened railroad spikes pounded through boards and placed upright in depressions along the trail or under the water of rice paddies. There were punji stakes pits and swinging logs with razor sharp stakes protruding from them. A similar trap was short punji stakes; bamboo cut to about 8 inches long and very sharp hidden in grassy areas just off the trail. As Marines would come walking along; some Vietcong would fire a few shots to get the Marines to dive for cover, right onto the stakes. Nearly all these stakes were soaked in Buffalo urine or some other fowl material to all but guarantee a severe infection should any unfortunate soldier be impaled by one of these.

Very simple mines were made with things like shotgun shells. A nail would be driven through a board so it just penetrated the opposite side on which would be placed the firing cap of the shell with the shell facing up. Should someone step on one of these, Bang! These were rarely fatal but very efficient at removing a foot.

Of course, every time a booby trap or land mine was set off, not only was there this big "Bang!" that everyone in the neighborhood heard but the call "Corpsman Up!" would announce that the very person the Vietcong supposedly loved to kill would pop up running. If the Vietcong enjoyed killing Corpsman nearly as much as I was led to believe, all they had to do was watch and wait. Some Corpsman was bound to flip up like a duck in a carnival arcade any time a Marine stepped on a mine. That thought was always in my mind each time I was the only person up and moving around following an explosion. All I could hope was no sniper was in the area.

When I think of my early trips to the bush, a few events come to mind immediately. On my very first trip to the field, we had just set in for the evening and were about to get some shut eye shortly after it became dark. Suddenly came this flash right above my head immediately followed by a deafening blast, the concussion of which caused my cloths and hair to flap in the down draft. That was close, very close --- but what do you do? I began scanning for better cover when another went off nearly rolling me over. I figured if I stayed where I was, I would die, so I retreated to the center of our perimeter.

To my surprise, no one did anything. No one returned any grenades. Nothing. Everyone just sat staring into the darkness. Wondering why we did not retaliate in any manner, I asked the Sergeant, "Why doesn't anyone throw at least a few grenades?" only to be told that no one was sure where the other squads were. "What?" was my reaction but I did not say anything. "I'm out here," I thought, "and someone is throwing grenades at me, and I'm being told we can't return grenades because we do not know where other Marine Units are? Or worse, we are not throwing grenades back because it might be other Marines throwing them at us." The thoughts that went through my head in the next few hours were far from comforting and did little for any security I may have felt being with America's supposed number one fighting force.

In the year to follow, knowledge of our and other's location was life or death knowledge. Lost in the night or the jungle, forward observers (FOs) often called in mortars or artillery not really knowing our or other's exact position. Often, we'd sit and watch where a given round would impact to help us determine exactly where we were before adjusting fire on the target. One of the places a round might land was right on top of us but we took the risk anyway. Today, GPS can give its operator his exact location to within a few feet. What we would not have given for that technology in Vietnam. Many lives would have been saved --- or in the case of the enemy, lost since the enemy would not be given the notice that death was about to come their way and thereby avoid it.

Later that night we had abandoned our position on the ground and took up positions in a destroyed brick home. I remember looking up at the sky from this roofless building thinking to myself what a large basketball hoop that was to anyone with a good long shot. Any resulting explosion would have been far more intense contained within those walls. That realization did nothing to help me sleep. I sat awake all night hoping no Vietcong would go for the three pointer.

The following morning, a group of us were sitting around, talking, and breaking into our C-rations for breakfast. One Marine sitting beside me wiping down his M-79 grenade launcher, stroking it like his favorite pet, began asking me if I had ever killed anyone. Strange question, I thought, but then we were in a war zone. "Maybe he had the need to talk about someone he killed." I thought "Maybe he felt a need to dump a feeling of his on someone." Being the corpsman, part of my duties included being the resident psychologist. Marines always dumped their inner most feelings and fears on their Corpsman.

As it turns out, he had not killed anyone to date --- but he was looking forward to it. Having that much power over another individual to decide the issue of life and death appealed to him. The whole conversation made me uncomfortable. Why would this guy be confiding his desire for killing someone with me? This was language that to this point in life I would have been considered totally repulsive. Never had I heard anyone claim that they would delight in killing another person. Sure, everyone used the phrase, I'd like to kill that ----, but this guy was serious. He just wanted to kill someone. Anyone.

Recently I was reading somewhere reasons why people kill each other. One of the answers that jumped out at me was "Because they enjoy it" and I believe that answer has a great deal of merit. Some Vietnam Veterans enjoyed their job. They saw killing as fun, the thrill of the battle exhilarating, and a kill as a trophy. My job however was not nearly as exciting. I found nothing exhilarating about zipping up some mangled body, some of whom I knew, in an army tank green body bag.

One day, very early in my tour of Vietnam, this Marine got his chance. A woman came down to the river to gather some water. Her basic need for water, however, cost this lady her life. To my knowledge she was doing nothing threatening nor did she possess any weapons. She was just there, by herself, and an available target for an M-79. His justification for blowing her away; "She was likely a Vietcong sympathizer. Most these people were Vietcong sympathizers" he claimed. As far as I know, the incident never was reported. She was just left there, face down in the river. Face down in the river, half blown apart, I suspect, is how

her family found her --- and likely they knew who to blame for her death. The thought of how events such as this might affect our peace effort (at least that is how I liked to think about my being there - as absurd as the thought was) from that day forward was always on my mind. If we were here to represent the USA, we were lousy ambassadors.

Having just arrived in country, I had really no idea how to deal with what just happened. I did not know if this was standard procedure, common practice, an isolated occurrence, or what. It seemed like murder to me but then I had never been a war zone before where outright murder and justifiable killing, if any killing can be justified, often becomes blurred. I did not feel that I was able to make such an assessment having just arrived. As my tour lengthened, however, I did come to realize that this event was not standard procedure nor was it common practice. What I would consider murder however did happen, and when it happened the individuals involved were likely protected by the group rather than punished. In Vietnam, the guy with the Black hat usually got away protected by an unofficial system. This, in my mind, did not speak well for military justice or our mission. I thought our mission was to protect these people, not murder them. And they were people, not some subhuman gook, zipper-head, or dink.

On a lighter side of my first trips to the bush is the story of the U-Mack Bird. We had just set up at the edge of a tall grass area which gave a fair view of a large open area. As a Corpsman, I did not have to stand line (hole) watch, but I did have to stand radio watch at some point during the night. About 0200 (2:00 am) my turn at radio watch came. Handing me the radio, the Marine just lay down and went to sleep. So, there I sat --- in the dark --- surrounded by complete alien noises. There was some cluck-cluck sound of who knew what and a shrill buzzing sound like cicadas chirping in the trees. There was the constant buzz of mosquitoes and flies, frogs croaking, but the one sound that really set me off was this auditable “Uck-Coo” “Uck-Coo” it went --- again and again. The more I listened, the more it sounded like “Fuck you.” “Fuck you” in broken English perhaps but clearly “Fuck you.” I heard of Vietcong shouting at troops just to freak them out so I thought I’d better wake the sergeant and let him know what’s going on.

“Sarg – Sarg! Wake up!”

The sergeant awoke with a “What? Huh? What’s going on?”

“There is someone out there yelling “Fuck You.”

The sergeant listened --- then laughed. “That’s just some damn lizard, Doc. We call him the U-Mack bird. Can I go back to sleep now?”

On another day we were set up in a tree line when I heard this “Hey Doc! Doc! What’s this?” Corpsman had no short list of duties and titles; doctor, therapist, confidant, but today my position became the resident zoologist. It often amazed me how much some of these Marines thought corpsman knew.

“What’s what?” I answered.

This snake moving along that rice paddy dike.”

Snake! I had to see that. I got up and jumped right into the machine gun hole. It was a snake alright, about a ten-to-twelve-foot-long snake and it was coming along the dike right in front of us. Then as if wanting to watch what was watching it, this huge cobra raised its hooded head right in front of the gun. We did

not want to shoot it and give away the machine gun position so we, the snake and us, just stared at each other until the snake lost interest, lowered its head, and continued down the dike.

Yes, snakes were a danger and yes, we lost people to snakes. For example, the S-3 journal records a poisonous snake bite at 0330 July 8th and on the 13th at 2045. An engineer was bitten by a poisonous snake right in the chow hall. The moral of this story: you are never safe in Vietnam, not even at the dinner table.

Danger just did not come from snipers, booby traps, and snakes either. Human error often cost lives. Mistaken for a Vietcong, two members of his own squad shot and killed a Marine on July 14th ⁰⁰⁹ Returning to the BN perimeter, particularly at night, was always serious business as at any time an uninformed, half asleep, or overzealous Marine might open-up. One recipe for disaster was two squads, losing track of each other, like we did the night I was awakened by that blast, and then spotting the movement of the other, would open-up. The result would be two Marine squads battling it out with each other until someone figured out what was really happening. When I think of any number of possible horrible events to take home with you, to mistakenly kill a comrade would have to be one of the most undesirable memories I could think of. I feel bad enough about not being able to save them. I can only imagine the torment one must feel knowing he mistakenly killed a comrade.

Up until the 16th of July, life in the bush was much as described. Daily, we were sniped at, members of our units either found or stepped on booby traps, or a few small fire fights broke out. Every other night I found myself out in some unknown location wishing for the morning to arrive. Too much time existed to think of the things that might go wrong and over time all this uncertainty began to wear on you. The ground you walk on may suddenly turn against you. A snake, seeking warmth, might curl up next to you as you slept. One evening, lying on the ground alongside a trail, grabbing some shut eye, I became aware of something on my chest. I opened my eyes to see two black beady eyes and nose with whiskers staring back at me not but inches away. It was a big black rat about the size of a cat --- nose to nose to me, twitching his nose as if it just found dinner. In the most coordinated move, I have ever made in life, before or after, my right hand came up, grabbed that damn rat by the scarf of its neck, and sent it flying in a throw that would have made John Elway envious. Pumped full of adrenaline for the remainder of the night, I just sat there and shook.

On July 15th the Da Nang airstrip was hit with rockets. I do not know if the events were related, but the following morning we were loaded on trucks and sent down the road on a company sized operation. I hated those convoys. What a target for any Vietnamese, anyone of which could have been the Vietcong, milling alongside our trucks. One satchel charge or grenade and a half-loaded truck of Marines would be on their way home. One or a couple automatic weapons hidden in any building or tree line could have produced mass casualties in a matter of seconds. I always felt like livestock on the way to market when cooped up in the back of one of those trucks.

All along our route, children, any one of which could deliver a bomb, ran out begging for food at any point the trucks slowed or stopped. Most Marines just

ignored their pleading hands outstretched in the air, however, one Marine stocked up on discarded C Rations for just such occasions. Anything thrown away, cocoa, bread, meals, that other Marines did not want, he'd stash away to give away anytime he was out among the general population. His favorite recipients were the children, as he felt it was the children that needed aid the greatest. Like some lone missionary, an angel among war gods, he dispensed whatever he salvaged.

Not all were so benevolently inclined. One Marine was brutal. He would sit at the back of the truck and lure the kids in closer with a can of Rats then instead of handing them the can, he'd haul off and throw it as hard as he could. As a can rebounded off a kid's chest or head, this Marine would bellow with laughter as the child staggered away often bleeding. In all my tour this is one event of only a few that I wished I had reacted to stop him. But like a sap I just sat there and observed, saying nothing, an inaction that I regret to this day. Who after all is worse, a lone perpetrator or the crowd which does nothing to stop actions they believe is revolting? While in Vietnam I could make all kinds of excuses for inaction, like being fragged (having a grenade rolled under your rack in the middle of the night by a disgruntled comrade). But now thirty years later, I cannot help but wonder how I could have let such actions occur on my watch. I always pictured myself as more courageous than my actions showed here.

Troops are often spoken of as "the brave" but I'd find it hard to describe my inaction in this case as having anything to do with bravery. Bravery, by my standards, is action taken without consideration for one's own safety or well-being. Inaction in the face of a reprehensible act can only be seen as consideration for one's own safety, in this case mine. What would have everyone else thought of my action had I attacked that Marine or reported him? What might be the group's response? What might his response, then or later, have been? I did not know, and I let that piece of the unknown rule my action. I often wondered afterwards what that said about me. I wondered about what my actions said about me that often. I wondered often if that was healthy.

We reached our objective early that afternoon. Unloaded from our livestock trucks we were sent on a sweep along a river when suddenly all hell broke loose. Small arms fire, like numerous strings of firecrackers going off, shattered the silence. Grenades were exploding; howling orders the Marines were charging this hedge row directly in front of us. One Marine jumped in the thicket and immediately unleashed a clip of ammo. There was an actual Vietcong (VC) in a shallow hole, shooting at us, and the Marine was making sure that Vietcong was not going to be a threat to anyone thereafter. Swiss cheese would be the best description of that man when he was finally dragged from his hole.

In the meantime, the fateful words of "Corpsman Up!" came from below along the riverbank. I jumped up and ran over to the bank to see about twenty feet directly below me two Marines, one of them clinging to a small sand strip at the river's edge. Climbing down the bank, it became clear I could do nothing for the injured marine other than help him up the bank when the shooting stopped.

The injured Marine was lying on his back at river's edge with no visible wounds. Fleeing a Vietcong, he had jumped in the river only to have a grenade follow him in. The concussion of the blast in water tore him up inside; hence we

needed to get him on a chopper as soon as possible. His only chance for survival was surgery, but, we had this twenty foot bank to haul him up and we were receiving fire from the opposite bank about 100 yards away. We laid there as little plumbs of water were thrown in the air by enemy fire impacting all around us. The fire ended with a roar of an angry god as this F104 spread a huge fire ball of napalm all along the other shoreline. With that, we were able to get the injured Marine back up the bank and on a chopper. And off he went --- with no news back if he lived or died.⁰¹⁰

After that we saddled up (Marine talk for getting ready to leave) again. With the events of the past couple hours fresh in our mind, we started down a trail when not in the too distant future a huge Black cloud rose from a group of trees followed immediately by a deafening blast. I was close enough to feel the concussion. Then came again those dreaded words "Corpsman Up!" When I arrived a few seconds later, Gallagher, the other Corpsman in my platoon, was already busily working away on one of the two WIAs, one marine and one corpsman (Cochran), both of whom had lost their legs. I quickly began doing what I could for the other.

I had not been in Vietnam but a couple of weeks and was completely unprepared for what I, with only two months of Corps School training and Hollywood's anodyne version of war to draw from, was now facing; two pieces of meat laying on the ground, barely alive. And I was supposed to save them? I could not help but remember in all those movie screen combat scenes, how people shot or hit by artillery rounds simply dropped over, dead perhaps but always intact.

As likely as not, their shirts never even got dirty. If they were left with their shirt still on, they were lucky. It was not uncommon for a blast to rip the cloths right off the wounded and unfortunately with those pieces of clothes went chunks of the individual. Looking at those two laying there, both missing legs, I had to wonder if they were not better off dead. Silently, I pondered putting them out of the misery like one might do to an animal – but I was never alone to have the chance of carrying out what was running through my head.

Instead, I did what I could after which we loaded them on choppers, and off they went --- again, with no news ever if they lived or died.⁰¹¹ In retrospect, I ruefully wondered whether these two survived for over two decades. They both did but for two decades that followed, I knew nothing. I found out about Cochran years later through Dave and Marian Novak who made the trek to Arizona to see Milt.



MILT COCHRAN--"DOC"
South of Da Nang, 1967
(Courtesy of Marguerite Cochran)

**From "We Remember" a book put
together for the Veterans of 2/1**

Until then, I simply had no clue if Milt lived or died. Until then, I did not know if my efforts mattered or if I did the right thing by not ending his misery?

I visited Milt in Arizona in 2005, twenty-eight years later. While still in a great deal of pain, getting through the day on a morphine pump, I found Milt matters to his wife, his children, and grandchildren. Given that, I can now say my actions did matter since it was Cochran (I believed) I worked on. When I think back about Vietnam, one of the experiences that stood out in my mind was loading someone of a chopper, someone who may have been a good friend or valued companion, and off he went with never any news back whether he lived or died. For days or months, if not forever after, I would wonder if those I loaded on choppers made it out alive. How could I find out? What if they did not? Where could I give my last respects?

I can relate to those parents who live with the pain and turmoil a missing child might bring? Where is he/she? Is he/she being cared for? In pain? If he/ she is dead, where is the body? Funerals are held for the living, not the dead. While nothing can be done for the dead, a funeral offers closure for the living, a final farewell. Never were we offered an answer to any of these questions. We were just left --- to wonder. And me – I wondered too much too often. And I wondered if that was healthy.

Anyway, back to July 16th, after returning to the battalion area, rumors had it Gunny Thomas wanted to press charges against Casanova after losing his weapon jumping in the river to save his fellow Marine. If anything, I thought, Casanova should have received some sort of medal, battling his way up to the Marine drowning, jumping in the river, and hauling the Marine from the river while all the time still under fire from the opposing shore. Casanova then, disregarding his own life, lay consoling the wounded Marine in clear sight of snipers from the other side of the river. Casanova's actions, in my mind, deserved a slap on the back, not a slap in the face. If I had any good feelings about the Marine Corps to this point, Thomas, a Marine fundamentalist, quickly set about destroying them.

July 16th was soon followed by July 18th, perhaps an even worse day. At 1050 an M-26 grenade booby trap was tripped resulting two WIAs. Two minutes later another M-26 is found. At 1325 two more Marines are wounded by another booby trap. Moments later more booby traps are found. At 1615 a Marine from the third platoon moved a chair in an abandoned house and if what the Corpsman, talking about incident, claims were true, the Marine watched as one of his testicles flew by his face in the resulting explosion. Then came my first known death. The third platoon of Hotel called for a medevack at 2300 for one WIA (Wounded in Action) only to change the call a few minutes later to a KIA (Killed in Action). Pfc Paul MacKay was shot dead by friendly fire, in this case by one of his fellow Marines.⁰¹² MacKay just happened to be black. I could not help but wonder some more given the racial tension I was aware of.



My July 19th letter admits that I ran into some action, but I gave no details, just a “Well, I expected that (the action).” Though out my tour, few details were ever given as to what we were up against as I did not want to worry my parents. None the less, booby traps, snipers, and accidents were always on my mind. The bridge just south of Da Nang is mentioned in this letter and will become an important part of my tour. From the time I arrived in Vietnam, bridge duty at the Cau Do Bridge was portrayed as the best duty anyone could wish for. Hotel Company was looking forward to bridge duty and getting out of what they called the bush. For now, however, the war continued to roll along with night patrols, ambushes, battling ghosts, dodging booby traps, avoiding snipers and trigger-happy Marines like the one that shot MacKay. The wounded and dead were beginning to pile up but never in my letters were they ever mentioned. Dead were Sgt Stephen Dibb of Foxtrot and LCpl James Huckabee of Hotel, both KIA July 21st.

**Jim Groth:
A Hometown School Friend Killed in
Action**

Approximately July 22nd my incoming mail caught up with me. Anxious to hear from home, the first letter I received told of Jim Groth. Jim was MIA (missing in action). This was news I did not want to get. Jim wasn't just somebody, another face in the crowd. Jim was close enough to me that he dated my sister. A good athlete, he frustrated me, normally known as a good hitter, at bat from his pitcher's mound, blowing curve and knuckle balls past me. I remembered his back yard basketball hoop where he almost always put me on the bench in the game of horse. He was a lifelong acquaintance but now he was missing in this hell hole. Dying in war was not something that only other people did anymore. War had come home and by taking a lifelong friend. With my tour only beginning, Jim's death represented a grim reality of what I might be in for.



I did get some good news the same day I learned of Jim's death, however, which helped to offset some of the bad news. I was up for E-4, just like it was explained to me at Camp Pendleton. Making E-4 now would put me right in line for E-5 upon my return to the states just as I planned. My military career, if that is what I chose, seemed right on track. Meanwhile, back in the world (the USA) a Roman Catholic archbishop appealed to President Johnson to withdraw from Vietnam. At the same time a Gallop poll reports that 52 percent of the American people disapproved of President Johnson's handling of the war. Over 40 percent of Americans felt that sending troops to Vietnam was a mistake. 56 percent Americans believed at best the United States is only treading water or worse; we, the Vietnam Veterans, not America, were losing the war.⁰¹³ America after all does not lose wars, or so it is said.

Regiment: Poker and Beer

My July 30th letter places me at the First Marine Regiment. Life, or so we thought, was about to get better. If nothing else, the area was more secure. We still had patrols at night but nothing overnight. Few, if any, booby traps were encountered or were we constantly harassed by snipers. Compared to the rest of our battalion, we were on vacation as our battalion's casualty records confirmed. While every other company of 2-1 was receiving KIAs, Hotel, now taking their turn at regiment, was not.

To compare the differences in lifestyles between Battalion and Regiment, I cannot, for example, recall simple things like where in battalion I hung my hat if I ever did. I do not recall if I slept in a tent with the Marines or up at the Battalion Aid Station (BAS) with the Corpsmen if I did either. At battalion, I do remember spending many nights with the Arvin's at the Anthill where we ran numerous night patrols. I hated the evenings when I had to go out on patrol with Arvin forces. I had often been told the Arvins were not much of a fighting force. Some were rumored to just run away should a fire (gun) fight break out. When on patrols with the Arvins, thoughts of infiltrators, Communists in Southern Uniforms, and cowards ran through my mind constantly.

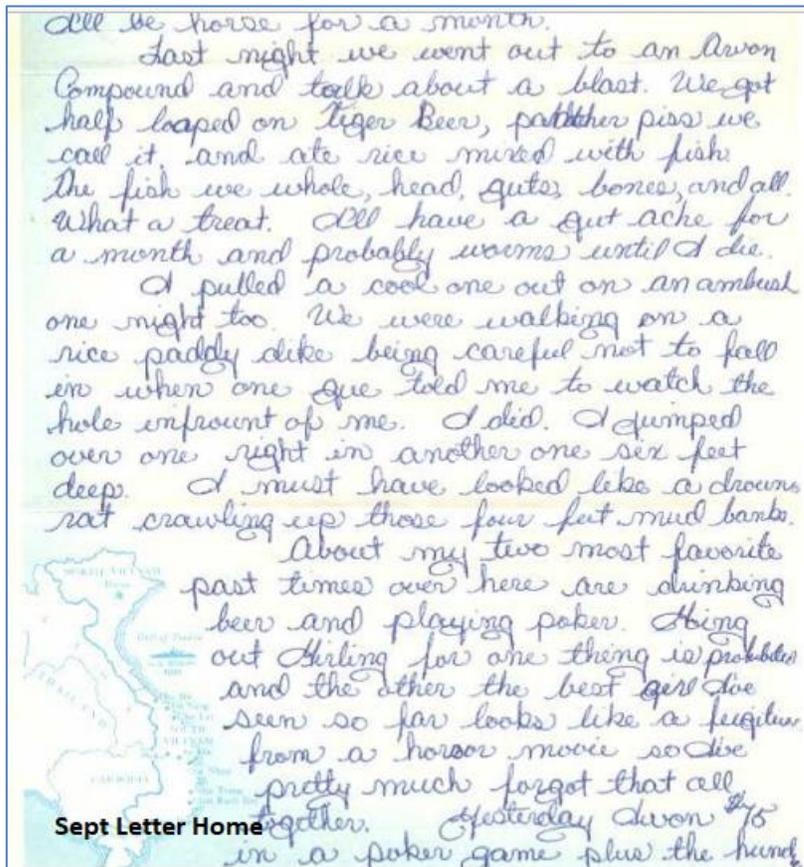
In fairness, the Arvins always got me back safely. In fact, I cannot remember a single casualty while on patrol with the Arvins, which to my untrusting mind raised a few questions --- like why not? I wondered about that. Why were these guys so good at avoiding contact with the Vietcong and booby traps?

The idea that Arvins were poor fighters had as much to do with Marine Corps vanity as anything else. I often heard the Army was not good fighters either. As for why the Arvins missed contact, so did the Marines. Rarely, if ever, did we make contact after dark hence wondering why the Arvins never made contact was perhaps more the workings of my insecure mind. Never did any Arvin that I ever served with dis-credit his country's war effort or deserve the negative connotations that were associated to them. I know that now. I did not know that then.

The other reason why I do not remember much about where I spent my time at battalion was quite likely because I spent very little time at bat-talion. A pla-toon of Marines consisted of three Marine squads but only two Corpsmen. Each night a squad of Marines rotated, one squad headed for the bush, the second squad to the anthill, while the third remained at batta-lion for a rest, a movie, a dinner and perhaps a couple of beers to wash it down. The problem for the two Corpsman was whenever a squad of Marines left, they took a Corpsman with them. So, do the math, the Corpsmen were either in the bush or at the Anthill. Therefore, any night I was out with the snakes, snipers, and grenade throwers in Indian Country or I was surrounded at the Anthill with people I did not understand or trust, the Arvins. In short, justified or not, I existed in a constant state of terror that I just resigned myself to.

Regiment changed all that. I remember where I slept at Regiment. I remember going to the club. I can recall events that were not related to the war in nature, like playing cards and chess. Mostly I remember the showers. I think back

to the day a squad of Marines and I were enjoying in a nice warm shower when some zapper opened-up outside perimeter and sent splinters of wood flying inward from the walls. Nothing but assholes were pointing up in that shower. As serious as the situation was then, it is just one of those things you remember and laugh about today when old vets gather.



While at regiment there was not much to keep us busy during the day. Cards was about it. The word got out that I liked a good game of poker so one day I was invited by a Hispanic to his tent. Why not I thought. The game was already in progress, so I sat down and shortly I was dealt in. The game was dealer's choice, the deal simply being passed around the circle. Seven-card stud, five-card draw, in between, black-jack. A few games were passed around

until it came to the Hispanic who invited me. It was about then that the talk turned more toward Spanish. I didn't give the matter much thought.

The game called was five-card stud. Around went the cards, one up, one down. Looking at my cards, I had a pair of kings. Not bad. What's the limit? Five bucks. Ok, I'll go a buck. I did not seem overly excited. Around go the cards. Now I have a pair of kings up. Three cards, three kings. By now I figured I had the pot --- but I did not want to scare everyone out so as top hand bets, I'll go three. A few threw in their cards but not the dealer. He raised me three back. Really? He had only an Ace showing. Ok, I call. Around goes the cards. Three kings up!

OK! Believing everyone would drop out anyway, I'll go a five. The dealer holds with a pair of Aces showing. He'll see my five and raise five. I'm sitting with four kings. Ok, I'll see that and raise you five back. He'll see that and raise me five back.

Around goes the cards. Another ace to the dealer. Really, I thought, what's the chance his hole card is an Ace? I'll go five. He'll see my five and raise me

five. And I'll see that and raise five. And he'll see that and raise me five more. Really? OK, I call.

Four Aces!

Really? The chances of that simply happening I knew was next to zero. It wasn't just he had four aces but I was also dealt four kings, three showing. But that didn't seem to worry him. I was about to jump up and declare him a fraud when it suddenly occurred to me, I was about the only Caucasian in the tent --- and I was surrounded by Hispanics. Armed Hispanics. Hmmm! Maybe I should just leave. And never come back.

And I had to wonder about that. Should I ever trust Hispanics again?

Medcaps: To Win the Hearts and Minds of the Vietnamese

While at regiment, part of my duties, as explained to me by the forces that be, was to win the hearts and minds of the local people. Twice a week or so, a squad of Marines would lead me off to some neighboring village where people would gather around me with their children and their assortment of ailments. There I, with my three months of first aid training, peroxide and bandaids, was supposed to take care of whatever ailed them. "Bac-si, Bac-si" (Vietnamese for doctor) they would chant, but I felt more like a witch doctor given the medical problems they brought to me. Fragmentation wounds, massive ear and eye infections, unimaginable skin rot, dysentery, parasites, malnutrition, malaria, broken limbs, puss oozing scabs, names just a few common problems.

On one of those days, in the mist of providing what treatment I was capable of, this lady, looking twice her age, motioned for me to follow her. I wasn't sure if I should go with, but she kept pleading with hand jesters that could not help revealing her pain. She led me to her grass hut where in a portioned off small room laid her son. His head appeared to be about twice the size of the infant he appeared to be. His abdomen bulged out like a huge boil. His arms and legs were hardly as big as round as my M-16's barrel. Today, I know that I was looking at a child on the brink of starvation but at the time I wasn't sure. Starvation was not something I was trained to diagnosis. I didn't know if I should touch him or not. Whatever he had, I did not want it. The child was sent to Da Nang, again with no news back of his prognosis. This child's condition again was left to my imagination, wondering if I had caught any disease or not.

As for the lady, she gave me a lesson in life I never forgot. Clearly, she felt shame for not being able to provide for her own child's welfare. Her son's condition was not something she wished to share with her fellow villagers. Ashamed of being unable to provide for their off-spring, parents, I learned, do not display their starving children in the public arena. To observe these children takes looking in the back alleys, secluded rooms, or other places hidden from the public eye. If starvation exists and is clearly viewable in the public domain, it is likely starvation is so widespread that no attempt to hide it could ever hope to succeed.

Sometime later another medcap, I was sitting in this village surrounded by a group of children and their mothers when down the trail came about a half dozen

Buddhist monks. All decked out in the orange robes and birthday shoes, these monks proceeded to the center of the village and began burning incense, chanting, and performing whatever hocus-pocus Buddhist monks do. It did not take too long before all the mothers began gathering up their children to join these monks.



I was told by a few bystanders that the monks were healing the children. From where I sat, it appeared more like a magic show, a side show that went on for fifteen minutes or so. Then bowing and passing out blessings like leaflets in a door-to-door campaign, the monks turned around and began to leave. Before they left however, they proceeded to help themselves to whatever these villagers had in the form of rice or produce. Then they were gone, and the children were no better off, at least that I could see,

than before they came. In fact, it could be argued the children were worse off since the Monks helped themselves to the very thing the children needed most, their family's food stock which was always in limited supply.

While it was easy to see the idiocy of the religion that I had just witnessed, a bunch of nonsense passed off in return for food and social status, I uncomfortably found myself making correlations to my own religion. A door was thrown opened to a room I had never seen until now. And I stood looking in. Wondering. Eating that bread, drinking the wine, muttering prayers, the music, the burning of incense, the bells and chimes, the choir --- was that just all show? I wondered.

CHIEU HOI: An Open Arms Program; Friends or Foes



A Chieu Hoi was in Marine language a Vietcong who had converted and came to the aid of American or Vietnamese forces. They supposedly offered information on enemy positions, troop strength, or just basic field knowledge like how to identify a booby trap or where a booby trap

most likely would be located. Often Chieu Hois were used as scouts both by the South Vietnamese and the Marines.

The Chieu Hoi program, the most expensive psychological operation of the Vietnam War was, according to Midshipman Jason Thomas Chaput in a 2000 AD thesis, the brainchild of Rufus Phillips and Sir Robert Thompson, head of the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam. Thompson has been credited with introducing the Chieu Hoi Program to Vietnam's then President Ngo Dinh Diem. In spite of this the United States wanted the credit for the Chieu Hoi Program and came out with the government booklet, Chieu Hoi and National Reconciliation, which claimed the Chieu Hoi Program was originated in the minds of the Agency for International Development in 1962.⁰¹⁴

The idea of the program was to attract Vietcong to what the propaganda of America and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) called "*the just cause of the RVN.*" The Vietnamese word "Chieu" means to appeal and "Hoi" means "to return." Taken together Chieu Hoi is a call for the Vietcong to return to their family, South Vietnam. The theme song of the Chieu Hoi translated into English lyrics reads "*Bird, fly home to your warm nest.*"⁰¹⁵

As it turned out, the program was hailed as a great success. On paper, in dollars alone, the Chieu Hoi Program saved the governments of America and Vietnam millions of dollars as the average cost to convert one Communist to the Chieu Hoi Program was figured around \$127 compared to the estimated \$300,000 it took to kill one Vietcong. By April of 1975 it was estimated that somewhere around 150,000 Vietcong and members of the Communist underground converted to the Republic of South Vietnam with as many as 15,000 being North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars. Many of these converted Communist fought bravely against their former comrades and one, Lieutenant La Thanh Tone, who defected to the Khe Sanh Military Base on January 28, 1968, is credited with saving the base by providing the Marines the NVA's battle plan.⁰¹⁶

Of course, none of the information given to me about the Chieu Hois mattered. If it could be said that I never trusted the Arvins, nothing needs to be said about how much faith and trust I put into these former Communists. They were trying to kill us once and still could be as Chieu Hoi infiltrators. And yet, on occasion I'd discover myself being led off to what I always feared was my life's end by Chieu Hois. On these occasions, I would not sleep all night. Rarely would my eyes be taken off them or my finger from the trigger. From my eyes, Chieu Hois were the most scrutinized people within the boundaries of Vietnam. They converted once --- why not twice?

On one of our visits to the anthill I did get into a conversation during a poker game with a Chieu Hoi who spoke fluent English. Vietnamese liked poker too and if they were not good at anything else they were good losers, always gracious. During the game, the topic turned to the war effort. I wanted to know how the Communists ever thought they had any chance against the United States.

This Chieu Hoi's answer surprised me. In his words, North Vietnam had no intention of defeating the United States on the battlefield. If victory meant having to defeat the United States on the battlefield, the North Vietnamese would have abandoned their war effort the instant it became clear that the United States was entering the war. "No," said the Chieu Hoi, "*the hope of North Vietnam winning the war relies upon the anti-war demonstrations developing on the soils of the*

United States and around the world. If the United States was to be defeated, the conquest would be on the political front, not the battlefield.”

Most importantly, the North Vietnamese reached out to the American people, making the distinction between the antiwar movement and our government. For a people facing American bombs, this was a heroic, calculated, and principled gesture. I realized how heroic it was when I met some of the victims of our own bombing and heard them transcend blind rage in order to send greetings to the American antiwar movement. Politically, the Vietnamese always believed in the importance of the antiwar movement as small and impotent as it may have appeared to some of its supporters. They encouraged it as best they could, knowing that creating a climate of hostility to the USA’s war effort would be one important way winning a favorable outcome for them.⁰¹⁷

Hearing the Chieu Hoi describe how the antiwar movement was inspiring North Vietnam to remain in the war was the first hostile feeling I felt against the antiwar movement. To that date, I had seen the antiwar movement as just that, a movement to end war, not as a movement to end the war in Vietnam. While I had reservations about Vietnam and my contribution to it, my thinking was more toward ending all war even if that meant fighting a few minor wars like Vietnam. I thought of Vietnam like back burning to save a forest from fire. Back burning is lighting a series of smaller easily controlled fires in front of the main fire to consume the tinder before the larger, much hotter uncontrollable fire arrives. I saw the United States’ effort in Vietnam as back burning.

This Chieu Hoi cast a very negative net over the antiwar protestors that increasingly seemed to be taking their eyes off war while glaring at us, the U.S. soldiers. Furthermore, now desperately attempting to save the lives or limbs of many of my comrades cast into the Vietnam War, those who willingly looked forward to a real cowboy and Indian game, those coerced like me who joined the service to avoid being drafted, or those forced by the draft or court committed, I



found it increasingly difficult to sustain any positive feelings about the antiwar efforts. If what this Chieu Hoi claimed was true, those in the United States screaming, “*Get out of Vietnam,*” were fueling North Vietnam’s fire by giving them hope that the United States commitment to South Vietnam would dissipate. Saying this, however, does not mean that I changed my mind on war. I still believed, and still believe, that humanity would be best served if humans

could somehow outlaw war and disarm all nations' militaries. The thought however that those protesting the war in the USA were causing the death of American here was a hard pill to swallow.

The Bridge **A Questionable Summer Vacation Spot**

An August 10th, 1967, letter home placed Hotel Company, at the Bridge, that theoretical tropical rest and relaxation resort just south of Da Nang on Hwy 1. And indeed, a resort best describes duty at the Bridge. There was swimming, beer, ice, Dolly's place at the south end of bridge where Marines fraternized with the local girls.

The map at the bottom of page 94 shows our area of operation. The arrow at the bottom leading off at about seven o'clock leads off to 2/1's regiment and Battalion area. The arrow pointing to the north side of the river was our position while at the bridge. Da Nang with its commissaries and clubs was just up the road to the north. In terms of what



I had seen in Vietnam up to this point, the Bridge, assuming all was secure, was the best duty a combat soldier could wish for. We were safe, at least we thought.

But I remembered being told right off, from Corps School to Field Med School "*You are never safe in Vietnam.*" All the training I had ever taken reinforced that and to date, I had seen no reason to doubt it. As such, anywhere I went I scrupulously examined the area for any weakness in security that might leave me vulnerable. The movie theater made famous by the shot in the dark, for example. It was open to a long-range sniper lying out in the rice paddies on the other side of our perimeter. The showers at Regiment were exposed to small arms fire, which we had already found out, if some shooter decided throwing a few rounds at it was worth the risk. Now we were at this bridge, a supposedly safe bridge where everyone celebrated. Life was easy. So why was I feeling so uncomfortable?

Two French bunkers sat at each end of the bridge. These were strong cement structures capable of withstanding considerable force from small arms, rifle grenades, or small mortars which most likely represented the armament that would be used against this position. Inside those bunkers could have easily supported several racks for those off watch duty and merely sleeping. But the Marines had some problem with fortified bunkers and protective perimeters. The Marines believed in being the aggressor, not the defender, and I think, given my limited military study, that their idea became something of an obsession carried to an extreme. They preferred a machine gun on top of the bunker giving a wider range of fire than firing through some small hole in the wall of a bunker might provide. That I could understand. What I could not understand was exposing the noncombatants to enemy fire when structures such as these bunkers could have proved far better security than the screen hooches we ended up sleeping in.

The hooches at the bridge were very similar to the wooden framed, screened hooches at battalion. The two hard back hooches at the bridge were built of 2X4 frames to which plywood and screens made up the sides, plywood made the floor, and tin sheet metal covered the roof. These were quite comfortable structures given that we had a cot to sleep on and protection from mosquitoes offered by the screening. They were, however, vulnerable to enemy attack. Small arms would have had no problem penetrating them and being up off the ground left them precariously susceptible to things like satchel charges being thrown under them.



Apparently these hooches, as was the area, were thought of as secure. In reality, they were a death trap that even I could see. A tree line existed right in front of those hard back hooches, close enough that a well thrown grenade could have easily reached those hooches, a sobering thought if you happened to be the Corpsman that slept in one. To add to our vulnerability, Highway 1 existed about 12 feet above those hooches forming a steep bank which required ascending should a

ground assault come from that tree line. Even if missed by a grenade or RPG, the fired round would detonate on that bank directly behind those hooches making any escape to the highway above extremely hazardous under fire.

To my knowledge, the other side of that greenery was totally unprotected. No known positions existed in front of those hooches and whatever protection offered them would have depended on Marines positioned above on Highway 1 or the gun site located atop the French Bunker. I shuttered to think how easy it would have been to sneak in under the cover of darkness and from that greenery just pick people off milling around. I was told that the bridge was perfectly safe, yet not once did I ever feel comfortable while there. "But hey, have faith;" I'd tell myself, "I'm sure those responsible for our safety have taken all these seemingly short-sighted breaches in our security into consideration."

My main job while at the bridge was caring for everyone's bumps and bruises, passing out Malaria tabs, med-caps, and determining who might need to be transported back to BAS or Da Nang for further medical treatment. Always a concern was venereal disease. Corpsmen were not known as "Pecker Checkers" for nothing. Rumors spread about a particular strain of syphilis, Black Syph, as being incurable; however, that rumor was pure myth. Gonorrhea was another matter. Some strains of gonorrhea had become quite resistant to anti-biotics. One urinary tract infection obtained through sexual intercourse, nonspecific urethritis (NSU), was beyond the reach of modern medicine although it was largely benign beyond a burning sensation on urination and a clear discharge from the urethra.

Venereal disease in a Marine combat unit in Vietnam? The question I would ask was "From where did these sexually transmitted diseases arise?" R&R was one source. Once during a tour in Vietnam, each soldier was granted R&R where he would be flown to some safe location as Australia, Bangkok, Taiwan, or Hawaii for five days of rest and relaxation (R&R). Many wild oats were sown during these short vacations often resulting in one parent Asian families with Asian-American offspring. The United States would discover this years later. Many of these racially mixed children were raised in extreme poverty. These children were also subject to racism, shunned by their peers, and refused equal stature by their government, in their case, the Asian governments. Efforts by the United States would be made years later to retrieve these children, but I suspect many died and many remained suffering the consequences of other human beings' misbehavior.

I was also no angel and am tortured from time to time wondering if there is a child, now a middle-aged adult, wondering the streets of Bangkok who looks a lot like me. I do not wonder about leaving a child in Vietnam. I stayed away from Vietnamese women. In fact, I stayed away from Vietnamese altogether. I did not trust Vietnamese. In Bangkok however, things were different. There in a relatively safe environment with five days to make up for what was lost in a half year, woman everywhere buddying up to any available American serviceman hoping for a ticket out of country, the temptation was too much for this sexually deprived young man.

Another source of VD and perhaps as great of problem was the local Vietnamese girls. I'd like to say women, but girls best describe those I saw. Marines often eloped at night to visit the local population, or these young ladies were secretly smuggled into the compound. I was invited on a number of these excursions however I declined for several reasons. Rumors circulated of Marines being murdered in those houses of ill repute. Rumors also circulated that woman were inserting razors into their vaginas. How? I had no idea, but I really had no desire to test whether the rumor was true or not.

Everyone knew these excursions into the night were occurring. When called into question, however, these excursions were justified with words like, "It's human nature, Doc," by those whose jobs should have demanded a closer attention to protocol. My declining these offers by those wishing to justify their own behavior by having everyone else around them involved in the same activity, like teenagers and cigarettes, was often challenged with comments like, "What, Doc, you gay?" No --- I was not gay but despite the homophobia displayed by the military. Homosexuality did exist as some dirty little secret among the ranks, however, and possibly contributed to several cases of venereal disease itself.

One day a Marine lured a young lady (12-13) into the French Bunker on the southeast corner of the bridge. I am unclear about the consensual nature of this ordeal, whether it was agreed among the participants, prostitution, or rape. In any case, with the two in the bunker, performing sex, another Marine decided to harass the two. A smoke grenade was tossed in and as the grenade detonated, considerable damage was done to the young girl's foot.

The Marines brought her to me. While they wanted me to help her out, they did not want news of this event getting out. They leveled the threat, which was not uncommon, at me that should command find out about this, things may not go very

well for me the next time we headed to the bush. I knew what that meant and was wise enough, or cowardly enough, not to take it lightly. So, I cleaned up the girl's wound the best I could with my bandaids and hydrogen peroxide, wrapped up her foot, and sent her on her way. To this day I wonder what happened to her. I wonder whether she made it or died of infection, tetanus, gangrene, or any number of things that my treatment did not cover.

When I reflect on Vietnam, this event stands out as one of those breaches of moral fiber I would like to believe I possessed. I tell myself regularly, I should have stood up and took the moral stand that I thought I was capable of and reported these individuals even it meant possible personal harm down the way. I'd like to believe that I was more courageous than I turned out to be. Oh, little girl, where and how are you now? And I wondered "What does this say about me?"

The treatment of these young Vietnamese girls does bring up a sexual incident that surfaced decades later after returning to the States. It turns out that a former Marine known to me in later years, ended up serving a prison sentence for child molestation. When I first got word of this, I had to wonder about the residual sexual mentality of those who, in Vietnam, sought sexual pleasures from these young ladies or watched from the sidelines as many did. Did some of this prevailing mentality, that age was not a consideration, come home with these veterans? If it was acceptable to sexually assault young girls in Vietnam, it really is not that far of a stretch to ask, "*What is wrong with having sexual relationships with children period?*"



GEORGE GALLAGHER

Then came the early morning of August 29th. This just happened to be my day at regiment. George Gallagher, the other Corpsman in my platoon, was at the bridge. I have no idea what I did the evening of the 28th. I likely played poker, hung out in the club, and climbed into the sack about 2200 like usual, but this was not to be a usual night. Unbeknown to me, at 0235 small arms fire was reported at the bridge but command did not believe the bridge was under attack at that time. No doubt,

command simply assumed the bridge was receiving a few harassing rounds. At 0245, First Tanks received about fifteen incoming 60mm mortar rounds. Then at 0255 a large explosion was reported at the Cau Do Bridge. The bridge was officially labeled as under attack at 0315.⁰¹⁹

Lt Dave Novak, asleep at regiment, wasted no time. The instant he had heard that the bridge was being assaulted, Dave ordered the Marines in his platoon to saddle up. A few moments later Dave and his platoon of Marines were on their

way to the bridge. A few mortars fell around them, but Dave states he did not know if it was “friendly fire” or not, nor did he care. Getting to the bridge was his objective. Then came a loud blast and the bridge was down. Arriving at the bridge a few moments later, a fire fight was in progress on the north side. Being there to reinforce his troops, Dave led his reinforcements to the north side by crossing the fallen twisted metal bridge. By then, however, the attack subsided.

I was awakened early that morning before sunrise and given the news. We were needed at the bridge. We saddled up and down the road we went, arriving at the bridge just before sunrise. We struggled getting to the north side of the bridge through the twisted steel and broken boards, but it was passable. About all we got to see of the fighting was what I was told was a dead Vietcong being loaded on a chopper. I often found myself wondering if that so called dead Vietcong was in fact George.

George Gallagher, HN, died that morning of August 29th. Several young men died that morning in the violence that ensued but most of them were Vietcong. No one seemed to care much about them. From where I sat, however, none of the dead were less tragic than the others. All were human beings. All had a family somewhere. All were likely being exploited by the powers that be regardless of which side of the



battle they were on. Only two months in country and already I was having serious questions about why and what we were doing there. Reverence for human life it seemed had been lost. Certainly here, in the place, life was not sacred.

My thoughts did not speak for most. One death was by far more significant than any of the others and that was George Gallagher. Gallagher was “Doc.” Every marine knew Doc. Even today if I happen to attend a reunion of my old comrades, people, faceless people, never realized people, walk up to me, and say, “Hi ya Doc. Do you remember the time that...” and I have to stop them and inquire who they are. It does not mean I was anything special in real life or unsociable. I just happened to be one of two corpsmen the Marines depended on to keep them alive. There were far more Marines for Corpsmen to remember than Corpsmen for Marines to remember. In fact, if you do the math, Marines outnumbered Corpsmen about twenty to one. To make remembering people more complicated, people were rotating in and out all the time. About the time you got to know anyone, he either rotated back to the States, was transferred to another unit, wounded and medevacked, or worse, dead. Then add about twenty years to that mix of things to remember and you are standing in my shoes.

What little I knew about George, as we rarely got to spend any time together, was that he was a likeable guy. He had this sense of humor to go with it,

able to make anyone forget for the moment the horrors of war. He was far more outgoing than me, able to slide into a group and make himself at home effort-lessly. In terms of his duties, he knew what he was doing. George could be depended on. With George in the squad or platoon, if it was your bad day, George was there to try keep “your” bad day from becoming “thee” day. George, many Marines felt, was not just “Doc.” George was a respected and valued friend.

To me, George was the other Corpsman. Given that two of the three squads in the platoon were usually out each night and each took a Corpsman, George and I, although in the same platoon, rarely saw each other. When we went to regiment later in July, the two of us rotated back and forth between regiment and the bridge. One night George would be at regiment and I at the bridge. The next night it would reverse, George would be at the bridge and I at regiment. We were very close in that regard, being the opposite hand of the same body. The night George died, sleeping in one of those hooches at the foot of Hwy 1, had it been the evening before or after, it would have been me who died that early morning --- a sobering thought for sure.

What George never was, however, was the marvel that through death he became. Have you ever competed against a dead person? It’s impossible. No matter how good or bad an individual may have been, after death they make no mistakes and any reference that he may have becomes taboo. We do not honor nearly as much those who survived war as those who died fighting it. How we ended up, dead or alive, is simply fate. We speak of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice as heroes whether they got shot in the back running away or not. Somehow, after being dead, none of that matters.

Who it may matter to however are those that survived and must live in the shadow of the dead. A common complaint of many who have lost a sibling, for example, is that suddenly in the eyes of their parents, they’ll never measure up to their dead sibling. This horrible weigh is too often hung around a surviving sibling’s neck who himself may be in mourning. And after the death of Gallagher, I found myself in the position of never being able to measure up to George.

While stating that I lived in the shadow of George may seem like a pathetic statement, the truth is I did, and for that matter still do. I have no argument with anyone whether George was a better corpsman than I --- such is simply an individual’s opinion. It’s the common often heard words like, “*If Dead X could have been here, things would have come out better,*” or, “*If Dead X would have been here, he would have done things a different way,*” or, “*You’ll never be another Dead X*” that over time begins to gnaw at the living’s self-image as it surely did mine.

More importantly, soldiers depend on the living, not the dead, to get them through. It would serve the survivors well to protect the self-image of their living comrades rather than comparing them to the dead. The dead are dead. Give them their burial and let them rest in peace. My advice to the troops: Support the living around you, even those abhorred, for your own life depends far more on the living than the dead.

The days that followed were mostly uneventful for Hotel Company. Other than a few booby traps, Hotel suffered no KIAs and received only a few WIAs

during the month of September. About the largest event recorded in the month of September, Hotel 3 reacted to rockets being fired at the Da Nang Airbase. Searching the area, several rockets tubes, seven still armed, were found before they could be launched. Only light damage to two aircraft and one Air Force KIA was suffered at the airbase that evening.⁰²⁰

By the beginning of September, Con Thien and the DMZ, by what little news we received, seemed to be the hot spots of the war, but between the 4th and 7th of September, one hundred and fourteen members of the 5th Marines were killed in the Queson Valley, the site of Operation Union where our Fox Company (2/1) took heavy casualties in April about twenty-five miles to our south.⁰²¹

At the same time, Thieu was elected to a four-year term as president of South Vietnam with only 35% of the vote. Two days before the election, Thieu, in spite his claim that he supported free speech and freedom of the press, suppressed two Saigon papers. Claims made by Thieu's opposition parties suggested the vote was rigged in favor of Thieu and by month's end large protests erupted in Saigon, Da Nang, and Hue.⁰²²

The rumor was out that the Vietcong would be out in force to disrupt the elections and that we would be called upon to defend the ballot boxes, but the call never came. At the club and card games, the election was perhaps the last thing on the mind of the average Marine; but for me, it recalled all the reasons that I was led to believe I came here to defend; free elections, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the right to assemble. If it turned out that the powers for which I fought did not honor these basic human rights, what was I doing there? What were we doing there? Does it really matter from which side totalitarianism comes?

And did anyone care? No evidence existed of anyone caring at the club. Maybe members of the upper class in larger Vietnamese cities thought the elections were important but all I saw were the common people, the peasant farmers, and villagers. No evidence existed to suggest that these little people we saw daily, planting rice, peddling makeshift waterwheels like bikes for irrigation, and laboring behind their water buffalo, cared at all. It seemed all they cared about was raising their crops to provide substance for their families. Under which political system they performed this basic survival task mattered little.

It should be noted that although Hotel did not take any KIAs during the month of September and for the most part enjoyed reasonably comfortable living conditions, we operated in an area where just a few weeks before the security at our bridge had been breached and our unit overran. Only a short distance away was Indian Country where Vietcong battalions roamed unopposed. To our south, the 5th Marines had just taken heavy casualties in Queson Valley; hence we had no reason to believe that we were operating in a secure area. Even if we were, that could change at any time given Da Nang, only a few miles north, was one of North Vietnam's primary objectives and we were positioned directly between them and Da Nang.

As many saw the war, it was as if us on the bottom, the grunts, were alone, fighting to safeguard our own existence against numerous foes. The war threatened our lives from both sides. On one side obviously was the Vietcong. On the other side was often some zealous US commanding officer asking us to perform life

threatening missions for causes that were becoming more and more obscure. I truly believe that for combatants to give it their all, they must either be in immediate peril or believe strongly in what they are fighting for. We, rarely around Da Nang, found ourselves in immediate peril in the days to come but when we did, we were a force to be recognized with. A fully armed fire team of Marines had at their disposal an amazing amount of fire power and could dish it out. As for believing in what we were doing; what were we doing and for whom were we doing it for?

Although many felt the same way I did, most never expressed their views. I was never much good at keeping my mouth shut and on occasion would get into a verbal exchange with those who fully supported the war effort, believed we were winning, or enjoyed the real game of cowboy and Indians. I did not believe, given the rules of engagement, that the war could be won and even if it could I wondered what kind of country we'd give back to the Vietnamese after the war was over. A bomb crater perhaps? What do you do with a bomb crater? Thousands of square miles of defoliated rain forest? A genetically deformed generation to care for their war mutilated parents. As for resources, maybe, if they could round up enough unexploded ordnance, they could make a living selling it for scrap metal.

Whether I won the argument or not, my opinion as viewed by gung-ho, kill a commie for mommy, Marines (not all Marines fit into this category) were taken as cowardice. Often their rebuttal was accompanied with threats on my life. "If you (being me) do not respond to the call of Corpsman Up," they would threaten "I'll shoot you myself" is the threat I normally heard. I was not alone in this. Numerous Corpsmen experienced that same.

To respond to the call of Corpsman Up" however, I did not have to believe in the war. A man was seriously hurt and whether ours or theirs, never did my feelings against the war prevent me from getting to a wounded man. It was not the support of the war I was responding to. In my mind, I was saving a human life. All those threats did was to strengthen my resolve against the war. If I had to keep one eye on those who were supposed to be covering my back, I did not want to be there at all.

In the coming years, speaking to other Corpsmen, it is not uncommon to hear the same complaint. Other corpsmen often operated under death threats from members of their unit. I doubt, however, that such threats were exclusively directed at Corpsmen. I suspect many Marines received the same threats by a handful of individuals, bullies for a lack of a better word, who assumed they were the only brave hearts fighting the war. Threats do nothing for morale and are, in my mind, completely counterproductive. I doubt any evidence would exist to support the idea that threats in any way improve performance. On the other hand, all threats achieve is added stress, an ingredient those in combat carry enough of. I would have no trouble coming up with reports on the negative effects of stress.

CHAPTER FIVE

Quang Tri, a Life Transformed

Quang Tri 101: Half our Company gone

On the 3rd of October, Hotel and Fox Companies along with the Battalion Command Group were loaded on trucks and sent north to Quang Tri.⁰⁰¹ Our Hotel accommodations were about to be redefined. Gone would be the hot showers. Gone would be evenings at the club. Gone would be swimming at the bridge. Gone would be sleeping on cots with rubber ladies (air mattresses). Hotel (H) Company found itself checking out of the **H**ilton and checking into **H**ell.



Our first night in Quang Tri was spent amongst the fallen bricks of abandoned brick buildings barely anything but a bullet riddled piles of stone. Rumor had it that these buildings were what remained of an overrun Arvin compound. Adding to the intensity was the constant rumbling of exploding ordinance within earshot to the north. Come night fall the

northern horizon became flashing domes of light. Someone to our immediate north was being bombed or shelled constantly. Who was being bombed or shelled was left to the rumor mills and our imagination. Were we, US troops, bombing them? If so, there must be a bunch of them. Or were they shelling us? If so, how far south could their guns reach? Were we in range? In either case, it was clear that our methods, Hotel 2/1's, of conducting this war were about to change.

The following day found us moving west and setting up our new battalion area on Hill 25 just outside of Quang Tri. Unlike Da Nang where we slept in JP tents large enough for half a platoon, three shelter halves covered by a foxhole cover became home for three. I shared my space with Wayne Baxter and



Andy Baker. Baker, to help make light of our situation, walked around half the time

with an inflatable rubber leg, claiming he got some leg last night. The days of getting some leg however were over for the Marines. Slipping off in the night to a close village was no longer an option. No village or civilian here was to be considered friendly. Perhaps a few resourceful Marines slipped in a lady here or there but if they did, I did not know about it. To say the least, the problem of STDs, venereal disease, declined remarkably.

As for our operations around Quang Tri, command wasted no time in ordering us into the field. One village targeted as a Vietcong stronghold lied within clear view of our parameter. Every time we walked through that village, we ended up in a fire fight. No fire fight was ever sustained. Whoever we were pursuing in that village did not want to engage the Marines when the Marines were setting the time and place. What the VC left to engage us however were booby traps. On October 7th at 1010 hours, Bob Hughes lost a leg to one.⁰⁰²

On October 11th Operation Medina began. We were loaded on choppers and flew off to some obscure position known as LZ Dove in the Hai Lang National Forest. There we bailed out into a clearing full of elephant grass. Once on the ground, we headed for the trees. What happened over the next few days was the greatest challenge I have faced during my life, both in terms of casualties and the beliefs I had come to this nation harboring.

While the first few days winding our (Hotel 2/1) way through the jungle was largely uneventful, Charlie Company 1/1 was not so lucky. One night we lay atop a hill within ear shot of shouts and screams. Charlie 1/1 was being overrun by NVA. All night we listened to gunfire, explosions, and screams of pain and commands in both English and Vietnamese. Thinking we'd be summoned to saddle up to go help 1/1, we stared into the blackness of the jungle expecting the worst at any time. A very unsettling night ensued for even though Hotel Company to date had little if any contact, the events witnessed that evening proved to me that our lack of casualties was just dumb luck. So far, we were simply in the right place at the right time.

Being lucky was to change. On October 18th we found ourselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. We were moving back to battalion, single file, along a narrow jungle trail when we were ambushed. In the few moments that followed, half our company laid along that trail dead or wounded. We never even had a chance to fight back. I was in the forward platoon of Hotel Company about ready to step out into the savannah when the shooting began. Two platoons and the command group of Hotel Company were behind me, the rear platoon being directly in the kill zone. As such, I found myself on the move, moving from the front of the company to the back, alone. No one followed me to help or cover.

The first seriously wounded casualty I came across was Henry Decker, a corpsman like myself. He was laying on his back on a mound alongside the trail. He'd been shot about three times in the chest, his chest still gurgling blood. It was his eyes, however, that really caught my attention, wide open, full of dirt, with this blank stare. For the moment I felt mesmerized. I felt I should wash them out. But then reality set in and I released I had more important things to do than repair a dead man's eyes – so I continued back.

On the way I saw a Marine off the trail below me suspended upside down in the brush above a small stream. He was missing both legs right up to his buttocks which appeared like a large chunk of raw meat hung there to dry. I figured the Marine was dead, so I continued back.

I soon found myself in the rear, alone, gazing down the empty trail from which we came, a blackhole in a universe of trees. The thought occurred to me that should any of those Vietcong remain, I would soon be dead along with the dead and dying which surrounded me. It took a moment to gather my thoughts but when I did I figured if I was going die here, I might as well die doing what I was trained to do, save those yet alive. So I began, alone.

The dead and critically wounded would have to wait for if we found ourselves in the position of having to fight it out, the dead and seriously wounded would be no help. The idea was those less seriously wounded, once cared for, could be returned to battle. Without the seriously wounded's aid, all of us might die. One extra gun might be the difference in who walked out of here.

Well, that was the theory anyway. Likely derived in earlier wars where two armies stood face to face and battled it out until the last man remained standing, I am not convinced this protocol applied to battle in Vietnam. Never did I encountered two armies facing off in such a manner. The Vietcong's tactic was hit and run as we, the Americans, had every implement of war available to us in a short period time. The Vietcong did not. If the Vietcong chose to engage us for any substantial period and gave us the time to muster all the fire power available, they'd lose --- and they knew it. Carbines, grenades, and small mortars were no match for jet fighters, Puff (a C130 with miniguns), the Missouri, and long-range artillery, not to mention the ability of helicopters to reinforce those on the ground with additional troops and supplies. All of this was usually available to us with only a radio call for help. The only advantage the Vietcong had was surprise and their only chance was hit and run. Hit undetected, hit hard, and then get the hell out of there or face the wrath of F104s loaded with napalm. The only time they did not retreat was when they were close enough to our forces that our supporting armament could not be used against them without causing our own forces heavy losses. This would have one of those cases, however, their numbers were probably less than a dozen, heavily armed with automatic weapons and machine guns. Against a battalion of Marines, there only chance after the initial ambush was to flee. And they did.

Anyway, after treating those who could be aided and returned to duty, I turned my attention to the more seriously wounded. It was then that I returned to the legless Marine I had noticed earlier stuck like a yard dart upside down in the brush above that stream. I climbed down off the trail and pulled him from the entangling vegetation, only to have him amazingly come alive in my arms. As I turned him over, he immediately wanted to know what the hell had taken me so long to get to him. The guilt I felt was crushing. Marines are told that should they ever become a casualty a corpsman would be right there by their side. I was not -- so what do I tell him? I was too busy? That everyone around us was in as bad shape, if not worse, than he was? I did not say anything.

The after a few moments that seemed a lifetime of staring me down, his tone changed. He wanted to know how the rest of his platoon was. Did his friends make

out OK? I didn't want to tell him what really happened, so I lied. I told him his friends were doing just fine. He didn't have to worry about them. He seemed relieved.

With that off his mind he laid suspended in my arms for a moment, as if reflecting on the events that had just occurred. Then he rotated his eyes up to meet mine and asked, "Why? Why did God let this happen to me?" God was supposed to protect him from harm. "Why, God? Why me?" he asked. I didn't know. I had no answer, but suddenly the saying "There but for the grace of God go I," took on a whole different meaning. I had often heard it said that God watches over us in time of need, but never had I given any thought to the other side of the same coin. Not only was this boy dying, but he was dying believing that God, whom he was taught loved and nurtured him, had now abandoned him. And that is how he died, held by me, abandoned by his God. Looking around at all the other dead, I had to wonder where god was for them. It is often said "God never gives you more than you can handle." Here, however, god it seems, gave many more than they could handle. God, for whatever reason, seemed to think those dead boys were not worth saving that day. What a horrible thought to die with.

For some time, I just sat there holding him, daydreaming, hashing over in mind what, if anything, all this meant. All my life I believed a purpose existed for everything. "Everything is as it should be," I believed, "or at least could be set straight." For the first time in my life, however, that belief was in serious doubt. How could anything set this straight? And what could possibly be the purpose of this? Nothing made sense at that moment. What I believed were reasonable answers before this ambush weren't working now and in this absence of any answers, I felt the very foundation of my beliefs tremble.

Then Hill appeared above me, yelling about cover for his Corpsmen. Spotting me below the trail, he jumped down, looked at the Marine and together we, at his direction, tried some last-ditch attempts to revive him, to no avail. Pronouncing him dead, Hill directed me to return to the trail that led out of the canopy. Together we began moving to the front of the column when we came upon the only dead NVA that I saw that day. He was lying face down on the trail, his head pointing to the front of our column. By the gaping hole directly in the back of his head, it could be surmised that he had been shot from the rear, perhaps by his own people, as he entered the trail. Regardless of who shot him, however, few Marines passing by missed the opportunity to kick him, pump a few more rounds into his bullet-riddled body, or in a few cases to take a souvenir such as an ear or a finger. "Fucking gook!" many Marines shouted as they directed their frustrations at him.

I understood their anger, but looking at him lying motionless on the trail, I never saw a "fucking gook." I saw a man, a man as any of us, dead like the rest. And if personal sacrifice, loyalty, devotion to duty were traits to be held in high regard, wasn't his sacrifice as great as any of ours? Wasn't his loyalty, to whatever he felt his purpose might be, as honorable, his dedication to service as great as any of ours? And if so, shouldn't we be honoring him as someone who made the ultimate sacrifice regardless of his cause? Once again, I didn't have an answer. But I had the question and it kept coming upon me like a crushing weight.

That evening, sitting alone in the elephant grass at the edge of the canopy, I couldn't put those questions out of my mind. Where was God? Why did He allow this to happen? What is purpose? What is honor? Why were we here? Why? Why? Why? The questions rattled directionless through my head as if lost in the abyss of my mind. I do not remember falling asleep, or even if I did. All I remember is suddenly it was morning, as if darkness had been chased away by flicking on a light. And just as remarkable, all the questions that seemed so important the day before lost their urgency. Not that those questions had been answered; in fact, a huge void now existed where answers once were. It was like someone took a huge eraser and wiped the slate clean, and for the moment I was content staring at an empty Blackboard. Now, at least, the board wasn't all cluttered up with frivolous scratching and smudges that before I was led to believe were something important.

I left that hill with a whole new awareness of the world around me. I couldn't explain it, but everything was different, new, and unexplored. Walking down that hill, I found myself going to wherever this new awareness might take me. Where didn't matter. I was just happy to be on my way if it was away from where I had been being what I used to believe. Little did I know how far the voyage was to be, but I was sure of one thing, I could never return to wherever it was I had been before.

Much has been written about the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) suffered by veterans that indicates we are suffering from some psychotic disorder brought on by the trauma of combat. As a PTSD impaired Veteran, I prefer to compare PTSD to a plate. Assume, for a moment, that the world, as it's known to you, is a plate of fine China. Imagine that since "day one" you were told that plate was the most important thing you possessed. Everything that you ever imagined was true and everything that you valued was imprinted upon that plate. Also, everyone you knew had a plate just like yours. Thus, to you and everyone around you, reality, that which is believed as true in the world, was inscribed on those plates.

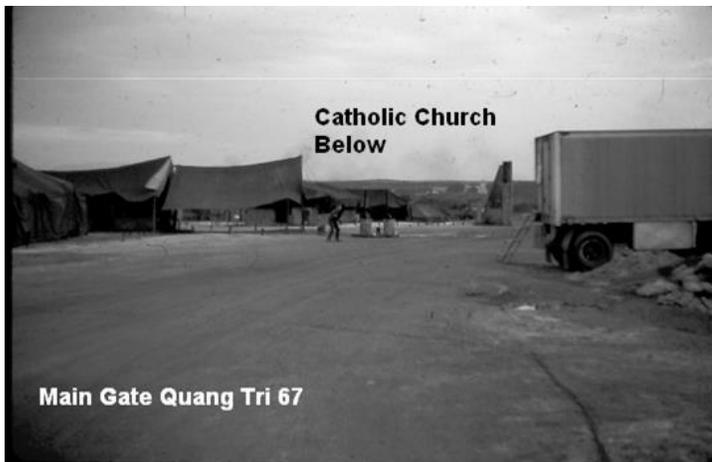
Now suppose a traumatic event occurred. Imagine someone passing by while you were examining your plate, your view of the world, bumped your arm and sent the plate crashing to the floor. You stand helplessly and watch in shock as your plate, everything you ever valued and accepted as fact, exploded into numerous little pieces. That would be bad enough for most people, but now comes the task of putting the plate back together again. In short order what you would also realize is no amount of glue will ever give you back the plate you once knew. To be exact, the very best that you could possibly hope for would be a cracked version of the plate that you once had. You might even be missing a piece or two. And you'd learn by dropping that plate, that's normal. When plates smash, they don't look like they did before, nor will they ever again. Therefore, you'd come to realize that a separate reality exists that wasn't included in your original plate. Only by having your plate broken, however, would you come to realize this truth.

So, what problem does that present to the man with the broken plate? The problem comes when he shows his plate to the people whose plates haven't been broken. To them the world still looks just like the plate he originally had, the plate that once looked like theirs. Their plate looks nothing like the plate he now has and

since everything they ever imagined was true looks like their plate, obviously his plate has to be something less than the truth. So now the question becomes, how long can this man with the broken plate endure, when the truth he holds in his hand is treated by everyone else as something less? And so it goes when one's life experiences force him to peer into his belief structure and he discovers that what he once thought was "truth" is only a figment of his imagination molded by the social sculptors of his time.⁰⁰⁴

The day following Medina's ambush, we walked from the edge of the forest back to battalion. The world, in particular the social world, was no longer as it had been up to this point in my life. The social forces shaping the human experience were now all in question as to motive. Why, for example, do I believe what I do? Do my beliefs make sense when compared to what my experiences have been? Who put those beliefs in my head? For what reason? And who benefits by the beliefs I harbor? --- Really? --- Me? --- Or the person or individuals that put their wishes in my head? Having just lost half my company, numerous friends, soak in sweat and lugging ammo it was hard to see how any of those beliefs benefited me.

With my brain shredding my beliefs like a blender might ice, our walk back to battalion took us right by this huge Catholic Church which could be seen right out the main gate of our battalion area. Had this walk occurred prior to October 18th, this church would have existed merely as part of the landscape and given no thought. But this was October 19th. Someone built that church. Obviously, judging by the natives wading around in the rice paddies with their bare feet and legs, planting rice, these people did not. They lacked the resources. So, who did? And for what reason? And who really was the intended benefactor?



Obviously, the French built that church. So did the French build that church for the benefit of the Vietnamese or the French or the Church itself? Was France's purpose for building that church to bring the Vietnamese salvation? Why should the French care if all these people were saved or not? Was

France being "Mister Nice Guy" here? Or was bringing the Vietnamese salvation just smoke? Did bringing these people salvation offer some benefit for the French? And if so, what?

Those questions would go unanswered for now, which surprisingly was alright by me. Up to this point in my life every question had an answer. Prior to today, to not know the answer to a question was considered a lack of understanding, an admission of ignorance --- but now, stripped of my old-world view, "I do not know" was an acceptable answer and carried with it no sense of shame or lack of intellectual achievement.

Instead, I was to discover that admitting “I do not know” did two things: one good and one not so good. On the good side “I do not know” was a door, a passage into the unknown which then could be investigated. Until then believing I knew the answer kept that door closed. One of the thoughts to enter my mind was if an answer is thought to be already known, why go looking for it? Didn’t the thought that the world was flat and had an edge to fall off inhibit early explorers from sailing west to get to the east? Only by rejecting that thought and admitting that they did not know what existed out there beyond the horizon, did sailors dare sail west. After all, nations had the means to sail to America long before Columbus finally did --- but what prevented them was myth, preconceived stories, falsehoods assumed true.

The second, the negative effect, “I do not know” was the challenge it presented to others. One of the titles that I have been ironically christened with is being a “know- it- all.” Odd --- I’ve always thought. If I admit that “I do not know” I get called a “know- it- all.” In fairness to others however, I probably did seem like a “know- it -all” in that if I did not know the answer to a question which in the past I thought I was sure was true, it follows that those who still retain the answer I once thought was correct, do not know either. The last thing people want to hear is they have no idea what they are talking about.

Anyway, sometime later, crossing these same trails at Quang Tri, I would come across a life changing pamphlet. It was a Christmas card I thought a Marine lost. I reached down and picked it up thinking of returning it to whoever lost it. On the front was the manger scene including Mary, Jesus, the three kings, and star of Bethlehem. I opened it up expecting to a Christmas caption, a handwritten note, and a name I might use to return it to its owner. As it turned out, the card contained none of that. In fact, it wasn’t even sent. It was placed there and meant for whoever picked it up, namely me. Opening the card, I was shocked to see the phrase in big bold print “*Christianity is merely the rich imposing their will upon the poor.*”

I was stunned! Up until this point in my life, I had always thought of the church as caring for, attending to, and assisting the needs of the poor. My instantaneous response was anger. “How could anyone make such a claim?” I thought crumpling up the card and discarding it. Now, however, I wish I would have kept that card for no other reason than it would have been a welcomed addition to this writing. Anyway, the card haunted me. Never in my wildest dream had I thought of Christianity as imposing the will of the most fortunate on those less fortunate --- but after being exposed to the thought and giving the matter some serious thought, the theory that Christianity might very well be the rich imposing their will upon the poor began seeming truer than not. Might the teachings of the church support French Imperialism?

In fact, today I believe exactly that having read the Bible twice since. Today when I asked how the French might benefit by building such a structure such as that church, this verse jumps right off the pages.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Romans 13:1-2:

Hmmmmmmmm! What powerful individual, god or no god, would not like those beneath them to conform to those verses? Is this the alternative motive the French had for building that church? I felt the need to sort that question out in my head. I recalled those Buddhist Monks. Whether they believed their religion or not, their reward for accepting it and having others accept it was social position. By becoming priests and ministers, nobodies are suddenly somebody of importance. Everyone would stop what they were doing and come to them anytime they walked onto the scene. Not only did they attain a social statue unlike those around them, but those around them also shared with them their profits, namely produce and rice.

Again, I could not just leave it there. A line had been crossed, a line that once crossed there was no turning back. Everything I had thought about the Buddhist Monks also applied to my own church. My church after all did not go out and earn, like the labors to whom they preached, their own wage. Instead, my church asked its members for their monetary support, money for which those church members labored in the form of a tithe. If my memory serves me correctly, the amount asked for is about ten percent of whatever a laborer makes which would translate into a fair amount of money increasing with each member of the congregation --- with the real labor done to earn that money done by someone else. Hmmmmmmmm!

In recent days, May 2007, I happened to pick up the Pulitzer Prize winning book "*Vietnam, A History*" by Standley Karnow. Since Vietnam up until looking at Karnow's book, I had always suspected the Church and the French Military were interwoven, but I had never seen it in the words of anyone else until now. According to Standley Karnow, the French Navy and Church teamed up during the later 1700s to mid-1800s becoming common allies with the common goal to convert the Vietnamese to Christianity and bring them under French rule. By the end of the Nineteenth Century, Vietnam was governed by French Navy Officers. "By no coincidence," Karnow writes, "the French high commissioner for Indochina as late as 1946, Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, was a Carmelite monk who had exchanged his cassock for a uniform during World War II."⁰⁰⁵

Karnow also notes that the Vietnamese emperors feared that this French form of Christianity might foreshadow European imperialism which, according to Karnow, is exactly what it did.⁰⁰⁶ In 1664, four years after his death (Alexandre de Rhodes, who once held a papal seat and is credited with opening Vietnam to French influence), French religious leaders and their business backers formed the Society of Foreign Missions to advance Christianity in Asia. In the same year, by no coincidence, French business leaders and their religious backers created the East India Company to increase trade. Their similar aspirations were apparent in their cooperation. A commercial firm established in Rouen at the time paid transportation for missionaries to Vietnam in exchange for their services as sales agents and book keepers.⁰⁰⁷ According to Karnow, all this led to an English

competitor to state, “we cannot make out whether they (the French) are here to seek trade or to conduct religious propaganda.”⁰⁰⁸

Up until October 18th, 1967, I largely defined the world in terms of god or his will. I had never really given any thought to what it might mean for humanity if god did not exist. Now I was being twisted into asking that question, “What if god did not exist? What would that mean?” I really had no theory about what the non-existence of god might mean. If god did not exist it would be absurd to believe I was here in Vietnam doing god’s will by fighting ungodly Communists or the Antichrist, which is what I, from many different sources, was led to believe. And what of god’s will? If I was not doing god’s will, whose will was being done? Not mine. So --- why was I here? And what got me here?

In an October 21st letter home, I wrote only three days after the ambush on Medina not one word is mentioned about our losses. Anguish over the future where we might be headed is there. The unsanitary conditions, the lack of personal cleanliness and the constant field maneuvers are all spoken of. What is missing however is any descriptive details, for example, Marines cramping up so bad from

October 21, 1967

Dear Mom & Dad,

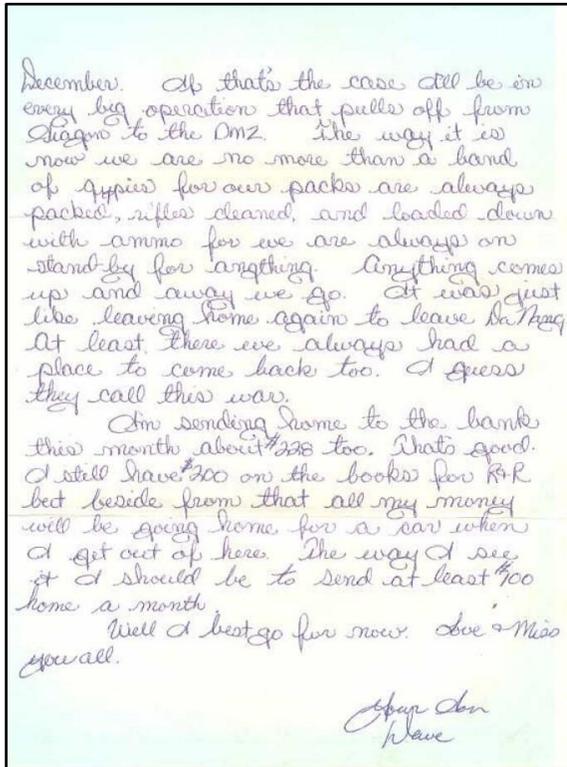
Here's a few lines to let you know how everything is in the Eastern Hemisphere. We have been living out of our knapsack now for the past month almost and by the looks of things it's not going to change for a long while. We got to sleep in a tent one night here but for the most part a poncho on the ground is our only home. Things like washing, brushing ones teeth, or showering is a luxury around here for the most part we don't get to. Dysentery is really a problem for we eat out of the same can for a few days plus drink black water you won't even think of washing your feet on in the States. This is the way we will live at least until December.

There are rumors we will be leaving from here to go back to ships around

dysentery on the way to the John that they end up defecating on themselves. So, suppose I throw in a few details I may not have mentioned at the risk of sounding melodramatic --- like the blood, fecal, and tissue stains from the wounded all over my clothes reminding me constantly of the trauma that I had just been through. Body odor, I found out, was not the worst thing clothes could smell like. Often my cloths smelled like someone died --- literally--- and no place existed to rectify the situation. Nowhere to wash. No change of clothing. If we were out, often as a week at a time, we'd simply have to live in those same clothes, wearing parts of the dead and wounded like some patch. Gory, for sure,

but that is the way it was and it represents some of the worst memories that linger from war.

I doubt Vietnam was special in regard to being sanguinary but the sanguinary reality of war is a reality withheld from anyone on his way to the induction center. Basic training does not prepare any of its recruits for this horrifying reality of war. When you enter an induction center what you see posted on the walls is clean cut well-dressed military personnel in their dress uniforms. You see smiling crews performing their duties or laughing with their comrades.



You see thoughtful servicemen being trained for the future duties. And if there are pictures of battle, it is some propaganda picture or statue like the Marine Corps Memorial, the raising the American flag over Iwo Jima. Imagine the impact on recruiting if instead a set of clothes covered in fecal material and blood were handed to potential recruits and they had to wear them for a week before signing up. My guess is the military would get few takers.

War aside, the Hai Lang National Forest was one of the picturesque environments I have ever walked into. Had it not been human activity, this would have been paradise.

The Quick and the Dead: A Sergeant's prayer goes Unanswered

One particularly sad story of Operation Medina was printed in Newsweek magazine about Lawrence Churchill. The article, entitled "*The Quick and the Dead*" tells the story of First Sergeant Vernon Churchill who at the age of 44, having 26 years with the USMC, began to worry about his son Lawrence, age 19, serving with Hotel Company 2nd BN 1st MAR. Figuring a First Sergeant had a better chance of surviving Vietnam than did a lowly grunt, as his son, and using the principle that only one family member needed to serve in Vietnam at any one time, Vernon decided to exchange positions with his son thereby sending his son home out of harm's way. Being a First Sergeant and able to pull a few strings, Vernon therefore volunteered for and received duty in Vietnam.



When Vernon arrived in Vietnam, he immediately put in for duty with Lawrence's unit, Hotel Company 2nd BN 1st MAR. Vernon arrived at 2-1's Battalion area in Quang Tri on October 18th. Naturally after traveling halfway around the world, Vernon asked about his son Lawrence's whereabouts. That is when he found out that Lawrence had just been killed in the ambush of Hotel Company earlier that same day. Lawrence was buried in Fairhaven Memorial Park in Tuskin, California with his father in attendance. The flag

that covered Lawrence's casket was given to his mother. Vernon, still on orders to Vietnam, had to return to Vietnam after the funeral leaving his wife at home.⁰⁰⁹

Else Where the War Goes On

On October 13, the outposts of Con Thien and Gio Linh were pounded by 350 plus rounds of artillery. The following day, Con Thien is again hit by 130 rounds of mortar and artillery fire followed by an assault by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) in an all-out effort to overrun the position.⁰¹⁰ On October 17th Hanoi radio, to which those with radios often listened, announced that the National Liberation Front (NLF), being the Communists, were developing a new organization to stir up the antiwar protests in the United States.⁰¹¹ Regardless if part of the NLF's strategy was stirring anti-Vietnam War sentiment or not back in world (the US), large demonstrations were breaking out in the streets of cities across the nation in hostile protest against the Vietnam War. From Oct 21-23 in Washington D.C., some 50,000 protesters held a protest in front of the Pentagon which in turn resulted in the deployment of 10,000 troops to defend the Department of Defense against its own people, the American People. The D.C. protests quickly become international in scope with demonstrations in Europe and Japan.⁰¹² From October 24-25 demonstrations were held by two college campuses against Dow Chemical, the maker of napalm used in Vietnam.⁰¹³

Not much, if any, of this news fell on deaf ears. What was happening in the DMZ was in effect just up the road. Furthermore, the rumor was out we were headed north once we were done with this Quang Tri stopover. Life Magazine, on October 27th, did a feature article on Con Thien entitled "*Inside the Cone of Fire; Con Thien.*"⁰¹⁴ This article circulated from hand to hand among our ranks leaving each to his own thoughts on where we might be going next. Con Thien did not look like any place I wanted to visit, judging by photos taken by David Duncan. I could not imagine anywhere worse to go and given my pessimism, I figured we were on our way there for sure. It was often said "Well, it could get worse" and it seemed in our case, it always did.

As far the protests went, they did nothing to help my state of mind about this war. These so-called protestors, referred to by many U.S. troops as Commie sympathizers, draft card burners, and draft dodgers were not just some handful of radical reactionaries. They were my peers, my classmates, and my family. They were speaking my thoughts and echoing my feelings. Many were even willing to go to jail in defense of their views rather than submit to the pressures of the selective service and government.

To defy the draft, I thought, took guts. To risk their future, to put aside all they had for a six-by-six jail cell and a criminal record for no other reason than being true to their political beliefs, I felt was commendable. I began to question who the real heroes in this war were; we in the military dying and bleeding, or those at home being beaten with night sticks, tear gassed, blasted by water cannons, and jailed for simply expressing their beliefs? Many were going as far as forsaking their homeland and moving to Canada. I could not help but admire their devotion even

if I knew the protests were keeping North Vietnam's hopes alive. I was caught between two walls --- and the walls were moving towards each other.

With these antiwar sympathies roaring through my mind, it became more and more difficult to keep at bay self-criticism and feelings that I did not have the backbone to stand up for my own convictions. How did I allow myself to get into this situation? What of those Vietnamese women and children I watched being dragged from their safe havens often in pieces? Was I somehow, someway, responsible? Even the thought that I might be somehow responsible was repugnant.

Quang Tri 201: Life and Death

After Medina, the war around Quang Tri went on much like Da Nang but with many more short fire fights and incoming grenades that harassed us nightly. Booby traps were less frequent, but those that some unsuspecting unfortunate Marine did trip were usually far more damaging. No longer was tripping a booby trap considered a Huss (a wound not life threatening but severe enough to return the person to the states), rather these were large, usually box type mines, that ripped limbs off victims, often blowing Marines apart like watermelons dropped from the third floor of a high rise building onto concrete.

Such was the case of Martinez, Muraco, and Lt Runnels. It was close to midnight and dark. We were moving up a trail when in front of me was a huge flash of light followed instantly by a thunderous roar. I could feel the concussion against my chest although I was some distance away. It did not take long for the dreaded "Corpsman Up" to rise above all other sounds. I was on my way, in total blackness.

I could not see exactly what I was dealing with. Whatever I was dealing with was wet, sticky, and warm. Not much was left, just pieces scattered wherever they happened to land.⁰¹⁵ I wondered later if we got all of them or if half of someone was left just lying on the side of that hill along the trail for whatever type of scavenger might come along to claim what we did not.

Sometime later in the same area, we were headed back to battalion along the same trail when we were broadsided by automatic weapons fire from a vegetated rise on the other side of a narrow rice paddy. We were on a ridge covered with trees. A browse line left open and clearly visible whatever happened to be on the ground below those trees, namely us. Several Marines were immediately wounded hence again came those dreaded words "Corpsman Up!" In this case however I was already there and one of the wounded was directly behind me. I found myself trying to drag and push this wounded individual to cover behind a tree as pieces of bark flew from its trunks and leaves were ripped from their branches by automatic weapons. Leaves were falling like they were blown from their limbs by an autumn breeze. Bullets were sizzling past, kicking up dirt on either side of us, but somehow, we came out unscathed other than those originally wounded. It did not seem possible that all those bullets landing around us and tarring the bark and leaves off the trees could miss us. I thought for sure I was going to die right there.

As strange as it may seem, how I'd be found if killed ran through my head as all those bullets zipped by. Would I be found to be a hero, sacrificing my body

sheltering this wounded Marine with my body as I tried to push him out of harm's way or would I be seen as a coward, being shot behind him, as if hiding under him, as I was attempting to pull him to cover? I did both, but why should I be pondering some philosophical question as how I might look dead? Why would how others might find me matter then?

Somewhere around mid-November things lightened up. The Marine Corps birthday, November 10th, something I could have cared less about, did offer some benefits like food other than C Rations. And beer! We have not had any beer to drink since we left Da Nang a good month earlier. By now, I would have savored even a Ballantine but for the Marine Corps Birthday, we got nothing but the best named brands. Thanksgiving was also spent at Quang Tri and although the Marines never went all out like they did for the Marine Corps birthday, the hot meal, one of very few we enjoyed since leaving Da Nang, was truly appreciated.

Having free time meant time to get into a few things that the Marine Corps disapproved of also. For example, the Black Market operated right on the other side of our perimeter where about anything shipped to Vietnam was for sale. The biggest item was perhaps soda. Rarely beer might be offered but beer was usually gone before ever getting to Quang Tri. What intoxicant was always available was marijuana. One of the stigmas we as Vietnam Veterans suffered was, we were often portrayed by media as nothing a bunch of dope heads. Perhaps in some cases that may have been true, but speaking for myself, I remember experimenting with marijuana about four times my whole tour and all four of those times were at Quang Tri. And maybe I missed something but those around me did not seem addicted or strung out either. Sure a few smoked a joint now and then but then so did those in the media who were accusing us of being drug addicts, not to mention the drug culture back home, many of whom were demonstrating against us. Marijuana's use by the time I tried it was so widespread that few existed anywhere isolated from it. Marijuana had become a cultural phenomenon, my generation's drug of choice.

I had never attempted the drug before Vietnam, but when I finally did, I was surprised to discover how benign the drug was. I, after all, was from North Dakota where marijuana was still the killer weed; one toke and you're hooked for life. I remember the day our high school called us all into the study hall to watch the movie, "Reefer Madness." I just knew after watching that movie, there could be nothing worse than a marijuana addiction. What follows is the caption at the beginning of the movie:

The motion picture you are about to witness may startle you. It would not have been possible, otherwise, to sufficiently emphasize the frightful toll of the new drug menace which is destroying the youth of America in alarmingly increasing numbers. Marijuana is that drug – a violent narcotic – The Real Public Enemy Number One – Its first effect is sudden, violent, uncontrollable laughter; then come dangerous hallucinations – space expands, time slows down, almost stands still...fixed ideas come next, conjuring up monstrous extravagances – followed by emotional disturbances, the total inability to direct thoughts, the loss of all power to resist physical

emotions...leading finally to acts of shocking violence...ending often in incurable insanity. In picturing its soul-destroying effects no attempt was made to equivocate. The scenes and incidences, while fictionalized for the purposes of this story, are based upon actual research into the results of Marihuana addiction. If their stark reality will make you think, will make you aware that something must be done to wipe out this ghastly menace, then the picture will have failed in its purpose....Because the dread Marihuana may be reaching forth next for your son or daughter ...or yours....or yours! ⁰¹⁶

After seeing that movie, this North Dakota boy was going to be damned if he was going to suck on the end of one those left-handed cigarettes. Life was too precarious without adding insanity for the sake of a high.

Well, that was a boy from North Dakota, age 14-15, when I was a very naïve, impressionable, and gullible young man. But I was in Quang Tri now, twenty-one, and beginning to question the propaganda placed before me as an adolescent. Others I knew were smoking marijuana and they did not seem to be having any real problems dealing with its effects. I might be dead tomorrow but for now I was relatively safe inside my tent --- so why not? Finally yielding to peer pressure “Pass me that smoke, will you?” And after a few puffs, and having “INHALED,” I found myself wondering when the affect was going to hit me. I did notice a few neat patterns form by the smoke of our candles on the insides of the tent. I had never noticed before. That was about it. The pot was probably fairly good stuff. In Vietnam it usually was, or so I was told. I know now, I just did not know what being high was. I was expecting a numbing sensation like alcohol that never occurred. No! This is more about sight and sound.

The taste wasn't that great either. It put me back in mind when as children; Jorgenson and I would roll Indian tobacco (curly dock) in newspaper and pretended we were smoking real cigarettes. We'd choke and gasp – burn our tongues, scorch our throats, and for what I never really understood. The stuff tasted like hell, but we did it anyway. Maybe we thought we were getting away with something. That we did it together however seemed to make up for all those negatives. Companionship! Maybe that was it, the idea we'd do anything together and smoking that horrible stuff somehow proved to both of us that we would really do anything for each other. I wondered if there wasn't a little of that in the pot I smoked. To sum up my new drug experience, I was unimpressed, disappointed. I would have preferred to forget where I was for a while, but smoking pot just did not do it for me. If anything, it made me realize where I was which I wanted to forget.

I woke the next day and to my surprise I really had no great craving for more pot. I had no hangover. I wasn't shaking. I had no violent thoughts like homicide or suicide. I remember asking myself; just what did my school try pass off on me. My government, given that film, flat out lied and that bothered me. If I cannot trust my government to be honest, who can I trust? And not only did my

government lie to me, but they also lied to their country --- and on a grand scale, given that “**Reefer Madness**” was played in many schools across the nation.

I now know that marijuana was not outlawed for its addictive properties, to save the children, or prevent the violence that smoking marijuana allegedly caused, or the cost it might cause society taking care of those who go criminally insane smoking it. In fact, when compared to alcohol or tobacco, I really do not know why marijuana was outlawed at all.

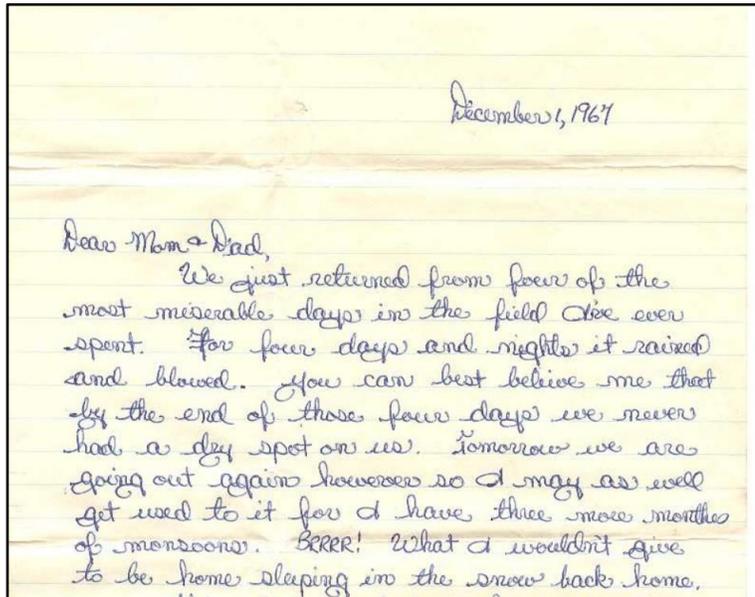
A few rumors, floating around, suggested that marijuana was outlawed to maintain several corporation’s bottom line. For example, one rumor is DuPont wanted hemp outlawed as the fiber derived from hemp competed with DuPont’s then newly acquired fiber, polyester.⁰¹⁷ Another rumor has it that the decision to outlaw hemp in 1937 was based on testimony from newspaper articles owned by William Randolph Hearst. Hearst. He had considerable amounts of money invested in the timber industry, the pulp from which was his source of his paper and did not want fiber from Hemp competing.⁰¹⁸

So, were these accusations true or false? I do not know. I do know however I can see no other reason for the degree which marijuana has been demonized by the government and bankrupting the legal systems by jailing users. For the record and to make this point perfectly clear, leaving nothing to interpretation, the preceding discussion of marijuana is not as much about the drug as it is about propaganda. I personally do not use the drug and have not in decades. I really am not as concerned about some benign drug affecting one’s mentality as I am about the lies and the length people and governments are willing to go to instill these lies in people’s heads. If as rumored Randolph Hearst truly was behind the current laws on marijuana, I am absolutely amazed that the government which claims to be of the people, by the people, and for the people, ignored the people and instead hooked their wagon to Randolph Hearst’s bottom line. I also know that far more money is being spent enforcing drug laws and incarcerating pot smokers than was ever spent treating and caring for those driven criminally insane by smoking it.

Laundry services were also offered by the Vietnamese that came to our perimeter. This however was not exactly your average state side laundry service. There was no assurance of clean clothes, as these uniforms were being washed in the same water that earlier that morning people were returning the rice ate the day before. Even so, it beat wearing the blood of yesterday’s casualties, and the uniforms returned green which at least gave the illusion that the cloths were clean. Is it any wonder why dysentery was a problem? Little did anyone realize that Vietnam Veterans were to be plagued years later by a much more serious problem, hepatitis C because of these paddies and the activities carried out in them.

While at Quang Tri the monsoons were settling in. One day it clouded up and for a few months it rained continuously, creating some of the most miserable days I have ever spent alive. Everything was wet, all the time. Every bare spot was mud. The only hope of being dry even occasionally was if the bedding inside the tent could be kept dry. In that effort, clothes and shoes were left at the door soaked by the rain, but at least for that night you had a chance to stay dry. Being dry was cherished. If the bedding ever got wet, there was no drying it out in the humidity and cool weather. Out on night maneuvers, staying dry was impossible. We were

wet from the time we left the gate until we got back, as chronicled in my December 1st letter.



With temperatures dropping into to low fifties at night, soaking wet, we laid on the ground numbed to the bone with literally nothing to cover us but our ponchos, often sleeping with each other to conserve body warmth. I especially remember one evening we were below the hill of battalion somewhere near the

village where we nearly always ended up in a fire fight. We were set up in a graveyard as the grave mounds, existing like islands, were the only points above water. You could see your breath. For whatever reason a GP tent was set up outside our perimeter with a heater. Returning to it, after some time laying out in that graveyard freezing, that tent broke all the rules about staying alive in Vietnam. I do not know what form of security was offered to those inside that tent but at that time, under those conditions, did I care. I found myself huddled around that stove expecting incoming small arms fire and grenades at any time. To this boy from North Dakota, that is the coldest, most miserable, closest to hypothermia I had ever been. In fact, I was so cold that this would be the only time risking life and limb for some comfort took precedence over security.

Back at battalion sometime in November, the decision was apparently made to trade cash, piasters, for ordinance. One less grenade to convert to a booby trap was thought of as a life saving measure for a Marine in particular. The practice got to be common, common enough in fact that I began to wonder where these Vietnamese, mostly children, were coming up with all that ordnance. For a Vietnamese child, four hundred piasters must have seemed like a fortune.

Then one day, at the back gate of 2/1's perimeter, disaster struck. A dud 81 mortar round being carried by three Vietnamese children exploded killing two and wounding the third.⁰¹⁹ We know of that case and its tragic outcome, of course, but we have no idea how many child-ren died attempting to retrieve this ordnance for the mere the pennies, by our standards, they were paid.

Communist Chess Moves: Despite Huge Losses the North Fights On

A word should be mentioned about the Tet Offensive. Officially the Tet Offensive began January 30, 1968, and ran through June 8th, although historians have debated exactly when the offensive truly began and how long it lasted. As early as the summer of 1967, Communists leaders were talking of a major offensive to throw the American and Saigon regimes into what the Communists termed the “*utmost confusion*.”⁰²⁰ Stanley Karnow places the actual beginning of Tet in September of 1967 when the Communists attempted to overrun the Northern Marine outpost of Con Thien. They failed, but not before U.S. planes dumped 22,000 tons, 550 semi-truck loads of bombs on the area,⁰²¹ which were those flashing domes of light to our north we watched from Quang Tri.

The Communists then shifted their attention to the south, the mountainous region above Pleiku, Dakto,⁰²² and Khe Sanh. At Khe Sanh, 6,000 Marines faced off against what was believed to be four NVA divisions supported by two artillery and armored regiments of 40,000 men.⁰²³ It was estimated that over the three months prior to the Official launching of the Tet Offensive, 90,000 Communist troops were killed, 10,000 around Khe Sanh alone. The Marines by comparison lost fewer than 500.⁰²⁴ Clearly, if the numbers dead were any indication who was winning the war; the U.S. was giving the Communists a thrashing. By the numbers, we were winning hands down. That, of course, was assuming numbers meant anything.

Why, on the eve of their main Tet Offensive, did the Communists allow this type of slaughter of their own people? According to Standley Karnow, every Communist official he asked claimed the whole idea behind those earlier battles was to pull American troops away from the populated areas, Hue, Da Nang, Quang Tri, Saigon, thereby leaving those cities susceptible to attack.⁰²⁵ While Westmoreland fell for this tactic hook, line, and sinker, other US officials, Major General Lowell English, the Marine commander at Khe Sanh declared the siege of Khe Sanh “a trap” to force an unreasonable amount of American troops and material into defending “a piece of terrain that wasn’t worth a damn.”⁰²⁶ And Khe Sanh must not have been worth a damn, other than Westmoreland’s vanity, as shortly after we, 2/1, relieved the Marines trapped at Khe Sanh, the base was abandoned. All those men, all those dead, for what?

Unable to see the tactics the Communists were setting up, the war for us on the ground began taking a different tone as Dakto became the focal point of the war. For the first time in my memory, the real action seemed to be shifting south of us.⁰²⁷ Strange, as these major battles erupted, I felt like I should be there. It seemed as if the real battles were always somewhere else. When we were in Da Nang, the big battles were north of us in the DMZ. Now that we were in the north, the big battles were in the Central Highlands. As contradictory as it seems, as much as I wanted to avoid battles, I felt I should be where the action was.

At the same time for reasons beyond me, Catholic Relief, of all things, was known to be sending medical supplies to North Vietnam.⁰²⁸ I felt betrayed. The former Commandant of the Marine Corps, David M. Shoup shot down the Domino

Theory as “pure unadulterated poppy-cock.”⁰²⁹ Again I felt my government lied to me. In Oakland, California, 268 were arrested for blocking the military induction center.⁰³⁰ I felt twisted --- in fact I did not know what to think. I was beginning to think of myself as the enemy of my own people; the very people I thought were worth fighting for. And while all this is going on, Marines were still dying.

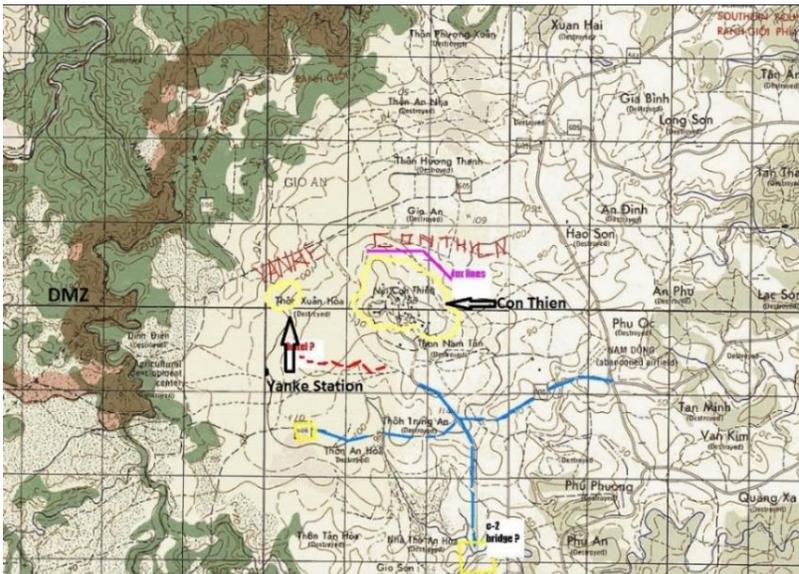
CHAPTER SIX

In the Crosshairs of North Vietnamese Gunners

Yankee Station: Prisoners of Wilderness

Hotel Company was moved north from Quang Tri on Dec 23rd, two days short of Christmas 1967 via a truck convoy that took us up through Dong Ha and Charlie II, a Marine outpost between Con Thien and Dong Ha. Once past Charlie II, we were on our own. I had no idea what sort of cover had been provided us. All I could think about was the tree line on either side of the trucks about 50 yards from the road where any amount of NVA might have been laying in ambush. We were also in easy range of artillery from North Vietnam. At any time, the NVA could pound us for certainly a NVA forward observer existed in the area somewhere, watching us. Why would the NVA gunners pass on a whole convoy full of Marines out in the open? But they did, and the trucks got through with no problems. All the way I imagined mass casualties, but none resulted. In my pessimistic thinking, we were done a favor.

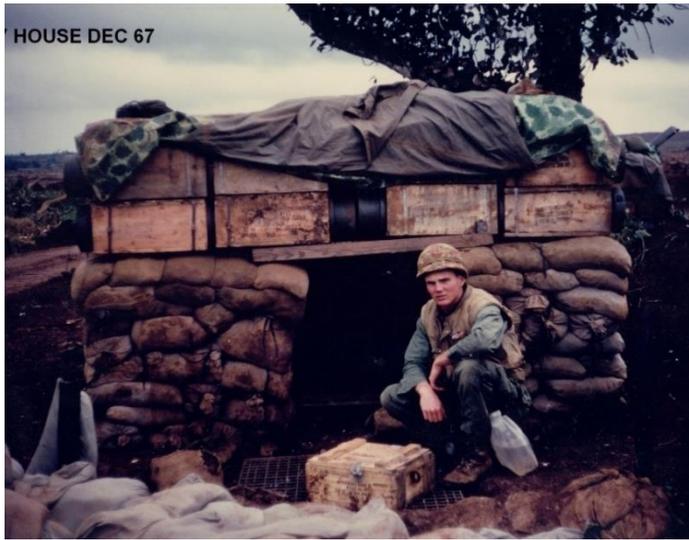
Yankee Station a company size position set off from the main battalion on Con Thien. We, Hotel Company, were put out there for any variety of rumors. The most worrisome rumor was bait. The second was if North Vietnam ever decided to overrun Con Thien from the west, the NVA would have to check into Hell's Hotel first. Yankee Station was located about two clicks east of the Southern Demilitarized Zone. If the NVA came, we, Hotel Company, about a hundred men, were on our own.



For simplicity's sake rather than jumping back and forth between Yankee Station and Con Thien as events unfolded, I believe it would serve history better if each position were treated independently. In short, I will first speak of Yankee Station, then Con Thien. The real difference in the two outposts, if any, was size. Yankee Station

was a small company sized outpost whereas Con Thien consisted of the rest of the battalion being three infantry companies, Echo, Fox, and Golf, plus the Headquarters and Supply. Con Thien was more strategically located, being the highest point anywhere around which gave its occupiers full surveillance over the land around it.

Yan-kee Station therefore generated less waste, warehoused less armament and supplies, contributed less information of the area around it, and therefore received



less incoming fire. Con Thien was a much bigger prize to Northern gunners.

When we arrived at Yankee Station, I had my camera in hand. I am pictured in front of my first poorly fortified shelter. No door for protection against the mosquitoes. No barrier wall in front of the opening for protection against detonating artillery and mortar shrapnel.

A foxhole cover served as a roof offering no protection should artillery or a mortar land on this bunker. Also noticeable is an ammo box, the type used to support my stretcher, which doubled as my bed, a water bottle, and a metal grate to keep out of the ever-present mud. I am dressed in my flak jacket and helmet. While at Yankee Station flak jackets and helmets were required any time a person was outside his bunker. And of course, mud, nothing but mud, no grass, just bulldozed dirt and water. This picture came to represent the living conditions during the entire monsoon season, dark days and wet everything.

I felt lucky to have had that stretcher for a bed. If not for that I would have had to sleep on the ground in the mud, cold and wet like many of the Marines on the perimeter. With the stretcher came a few unpleasant problems though, namely rodents. Rats did not like being wet and cold either. With every comfort came sacrifice and while at Yankee Station if sleeping somewhat warm and dry meant sharing the rack with an occasional rat, so be it. The rats after all were all well feed on discarded C-Rations. They did not have to gnaw on us for their livelihood.

Life at Yankee Station was much like I would imagine life in prison might be. I've never been in prison, but I cannot imagine basic freedoms being limited more severely. We were completely cut off from the world, limited in movement to only places within the razor wire unless on patrols or work details outside the perimeter. No club, no theater, no electricity, no library. If someone did receive a magazine in the mail, it was passed around like some sacred scroll. Nowhere existed to spend money. No communications of any kind. No phone or outside contact was possible other than letters that came infrequently. In fact, it could be argued that we were even more isolated than those incarcerated. Even if we did jump the wire, there was nowhere to go. It wasn't like you could walk out to the highway and hitch a ride or steal a vehicle to aid in your escape. An escapee, not knowing the language and being of a different race, could not simply blend into the general population. Like Blacks attempting to escape landowners in the South prior to the Civil War, so it would have been for an American deserter --- only worse. Nothing like an

underground railroad existed to provide shelter for those fleeing. There was only NVA in this area and the NVA had some very unpleasant ways to treat Americans or, so I was told.

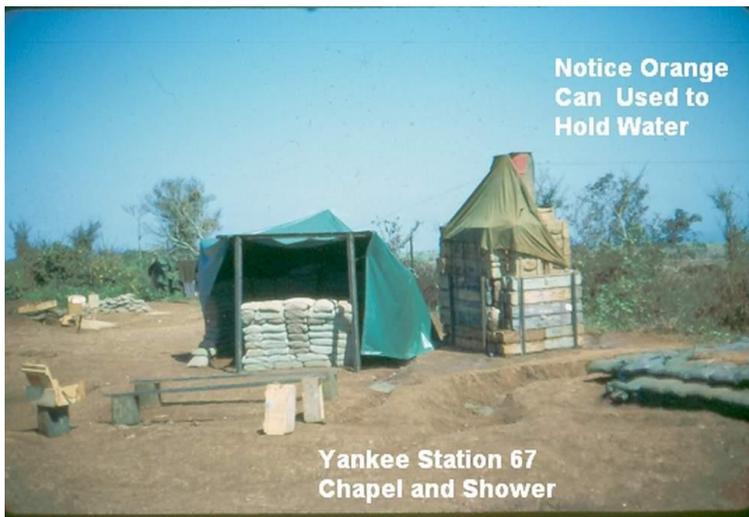
Being well within the range of North Vietnamese artillery, we tried to protect ourselves the best we could by building bunkers and digging trenches. Comparing it to prison as the metaphor above, call it breaking rocks. Building bunkers required filling sandbags and stacking them together like bricks to form a shelter with the finished product appearing not that different than any large dirt pile around it.



When we first began digging trenches, the labor was all by hand but shortly we received mechanical powered trenchers which accelerated our efforts twenty times over. Filling sandbags was simply holding them open while the trencher expelled the dirt extracted from the trench out the back. By the time we were finished, Yankee Station ended up as a maze of narrow,

nearly perfectly dug trenches and well-fortified sandbag bunkers. By the time the trenches were dug, and the new bunkers built, conditions at Yankee Station were not all that bad. Inside, the bunkers were dry, the racks were up off the floor, and the walls and ceilings were thick enough to absorb a direct hit from most the armament the NVA could throw at us. We even received heaters, a very welcomed comfort in the cold and rain of the monsoons. Keeping warm and dry was always a challenge.

At Yankee Station we also had a chapel alongside a shower. I do not remember anyone utilizing either all the time we were there. Water was always a



problem and I have been told that Agent Orange took its name from the orange barrel in which it came. The barrel on top of shower, holding the water, just happened to be orange. We also had a wash rack and a clothesline, though very few ever used it. Being out in the open at Yankee Station was not something most

Marines wanted to be. A mortar round could fall out of the sky at any time completely without warning.

As for the war at Yankee Station, action was far less than anything I had imagined before getting there, having been told to expect up to 2000 rounds of artillery per day. It was almost anticlimactic, but no one complained. I expected to get pounded by artillery at least once a week, but instead, the incoming we experienced at Yankee Station could only be called sporadic at best. In fact, what we did receive could have been largely friendly short rounds as many of the rounds that hit us came from an unknown location to our south.

On January 1st units of Hotel came under fire and were quickly called back inside the CP. One KIA resulted. Mortars and grenades followed the night patrol making their way back to the CP. Figuring we may be under attack, Yankee Station was placed on full alert. Orders came down to open-up with ten minutes of final protective fire on a tree line to the southeast. Tracers crisscrossed each other, mortars and grenades exploded, as the Marines opened-up with all they had resulting in a real fireworks display.⁰⁰¹ Maybe it prevented a NVA assault but who knows. All I could think was I would have liked to have the money that fire workers display cost.

Yankee Station on occasion did receive incoming but never on any scale of Con Thien. When Con Thien was shelled, we largely just sat and watched the fireworks realizing full well all that enemy artillery was exploding within our eye and ear shot. A small adjustment of the sights by the gunners of North Vietnam was all that was needed to hammer Yankee Station the same way.

On January 5th, Con Thien came under heavy fire. The call went out for Corpsmen but apparently all the Corpsmen on Con Thien were required in their own sector and could not be freed. I was doing my usual, observing Con Thien being shelled when Mike Hill came by sitting on a 106 mule. He was on his way to Con Thien. "They need Corpsmen up there," Mike yelled. With that said, I was on that mule and on my way to the source of those explosions.

The mule driver never took us all the way to Con Thien, however, and instead stopped and turned around about halfway. The driver of the mule claimed he had other things to do than to commit suicide, so Mike and I jumped off and proceeded on foot the rest of the way up the hill (Con Thien was called the hill), over the top, and across the Valley of Death to the COC bunker. All the time mortars were falling out of the sky all around us. Making it through that barrage made me feel almost invincible, a regular John Wayne.

At the COC bunker Mike and I split up. He went into the bunker whereas I ran around outside looking for casualties. This is when I found Carl Hixson to the southeast of the COC bunker sitting on the shitter, dead. I never attempted to remove him as rockets and mortars were going off all around me. Realizing he was dead, I headed for whatever cover I could only to have a sandbagged wall right in front me vanish with a deafening roar. The wall opened like a door, so I ran through it and continued to the COC bunker. By the time I had returned to the COC Bunker, Mike had Col Parker, the Battalion Commanding Officer, ready to transport to BAS (Battalion Aid Station). At the BAS the Battalion Doctor, Dr. Lee, awaited us.⁰⁰²

Side Note:

I recently received the publication “Hill of Angels, U.S. Marines and the Battle for Con Thien, 1967 to 1968” which to my surprise speaks to the above story I wrote about years earlier. Page 47 confirms Lt Col Evan I Parker Jr as the CO of Con Thien beginning in December of 1967. Then on page 49 it states:

“On 5 January 1968, the NVA gunners shelled Con Thien in groups of three to five bursts between 0945 and 1015. A total of 37 rounds, including five 120mm shells, fell on the Marine positions with a direct hit on the battalion command post. This act resulted in one Marine killed (Carl Hixson) and eight wounded, including Lieutenant Colonel Parker, the battalion commander.”

While it does not list Hill’s or my name, it was something of a surprise to read about this event in an official Marine publication knowing we were not only there; Hill and I were the first on the scene, all the way from Yankee Station.

A February 5th letter home tells of two events worth mention. One was R&R. I was leaving for R&R the next day which was an event I had looked forward to for some time. The other was the tale of two caves. We were out pounding the bush where we ran into two caves. Those so-called caves were straight down with flawless smooth round sides. They seemed like engineering marvels. How could Vietnamese or anyone with primitive equipment like shovels and picks make such perfect holes?

As it turns out, they didn’t. I know today what those so-called tunnels were. They were holes punched in the ground by dud 500-pound bombs dropped from B52s. I’m not sure where I heard it (a reunion likely) but I remember another story about those holes. A Marine, thinking he might shake up or even kill a few NVA, spoke about throwing grenades down those holes. Later, after finding out what caused those holes and what was at bottom, the Marine proclaimed, “Who says god does not watch over dumb shits?”



A group of pictures I took shows us heading for the bush (the bush meaning a patrol outside the perimeter of Yankee Station). That day we would be headed west toward the DMZ. A large area, that had been leveled and defoliated by caterpillars and agent

orange to give spotter planes an open area in which to report troop movements. For us while bunkered in behind the perimeter of Yankee Station, that clearing provided a free fire zone and hopefully made it difficult for the enemy to sneak up to our

lines. The downside was this same defoliated area exposed us to any NVA that might be hiding in the trees and brush on the other side. Just one NVA FO could bring the wrath of North Vietnamese artillery down upon us. These were not comforting thoughts as we were completely in the open wandered across that opening.

Once in the bush, the objective became getting back. Be observant both to what is on the ground and what the surroundings are. Always have an escape route in mind, a hole to jump in, or a pile of wood or dirt to hide behind should a firefight or incoming artillery erupt. Know what the others are doing, where they are headed as important, what is behind you. We could be attacked from the rear. Every detail was important.

In today's world, many veterans suffering from the adverse effects of war, normally referred to as Post Traumatic Stress, PTSD, still exhibit this behavior. Scanning, it's called --- always looking around, positioning oneself where everything can be observed. Normal civilians, those never having experienced combat, often feel like they are being ignored by Veteran's eyes that never focus



on them during conversations. The Vets eyes are looking past them and roaming from place to place. Behavior that once your life depended on is hard to overcome.

While on this trip to the field we came across several NVA bunkers. The most recent and best kept bunkers looked like just another clump of grass. No wonder we never saw any

targets as well as the bunkers were hidden.

Looking at those bunkers, I was put in mind of hunting pheasants. I often wondered just how many NVA, like pheasants, we simply walked by and never even knew they were there. Scary thought. We, like pheasant hunters, should have come armed with scout dogs leading our way. Lucky for us no NVA occupied those bunkers.



The greatest threat to my life found on this trip to the bush was a mine that existed in a shallow hole. I caught it out of the bottom of my eye just before setting my foot directly on top of it. To avoid landing my foot on it, I literary had to check my step and fall forward as I was too committed to the step to recover and remain

upright. The hole blown in the ground was about four feet deep and five feet across. Lesson learned: every detail about your surroundings was important.

SIDE NOTE:

From page 45 of “Hills of Angels, U.S. Marines and the Battle for Con Thien, 1967 to 1968”:

“The Con Thien area remained a grim place. The constant danger of artillery, rocket, and mortar fire, the massed infantry assaults, and the depressing ever present drizzle and mud combined to make life miserable for the Marines there. Neuropsychiatric or “shell shock” casualties, relatively unheard of elsewhere in South Vietnam, were not unusual.”

**Joel R. Koester
The Death of an Unintentional Friend**

As war rolls along and bodies pile up, building protective mental barriers is a common method used by individuals to help them cope with the loss going on around them. The term loss is purposely used indiscriminately here as exactly what is lost is often vague and far more than just the death of friends and comrades. Thoughts are being rearranged, long held beliefs are being challenged, and the value of life is being redefined. Purpose, self-image, and worth are all on the chopping block.

Barriers to minimize the effects of events, beliefs, or individuals lost could be heard to describe disastrous events in sayings like “*It ain’t no big deal*” or, “*It don’t mean nothing.*” These sayings were common among Marines and likely soldiers in general, having just lost a close comrade or experienced some other tragic event. It was his way of protecting himself from what otherwise would have normally resulted in an open emotional reaction, rage or crying.

Somehow the grief experienced had to be covered up to give an illusion that the loss could be dealt with. Grown men after all, do not cry. The worst thing a soldier could do was to discredit his manhood in the military was to break down and cry. Crying was usually reserved until later, in solitude, if even then. In fact, over time it got to the point where you could not cry. In fact, it got to the point where it was hard to feel anything at all.

In the years that followed back home, I had to be careful how I reacted to the death of a loved one, for example. Even there, “*It ain’t no big deal*” was my reaction to death, much to the disgust of those around me. “What, don’t you have any feelings?” I’d be asked. “Don’t you care?” Some protective layers are hard to shed. Some may never be. It’s too easy for me to just think people die. What’s abnormal about that?

To reduce the trauma of people dying, people killed in action are not called by name by the officers recording their deaths into the command chronology. The dead are not listed as “Joe Citizen” but instead are referred to only as a KIA, their name recorded as a service number. It’s far less emotional to see KIA, service number X435788, rather than the name Joe Citizen. The moment a name is mentioned, the dead take on human form. Joe Citizen has a genealogy and perhaps

could have been a husband and father. Maybe, had he lived, he would have made the world a better place for someone else, if not all of us. He might have been a teacher, a lawyer, a business owner, or a future president, but instead KIA SNX435788 is simply another statistic, a faceless number in a file full of others.

The people who died in my arms were not numbers to me. Whenever a friend was lost, being wounded, killed, or simply rotated back to the States, I'd feel the emptiness hard to fill. The problem was, unlike life as I knew it before, these events occurred on a near daily basis. Hardly had the tears been sucked up from the loss of someone, in some cases they were not yet when another would be lost. I recalled from high school when Kenny Kruger, a classmate, died at home due to what was believed to be a brain aneurism. Until now, Kruger was the only peer's death I had to deal with. I found myself from time to time nearly crying over Kenny's death years later. In this place, Vietnam however, one day the tears just dried up and never returned, replaced by rationalizations how fragile life is. It was good if anyone lived if they did, no matter how short.

Another method of self-emotional preservation is to isolate yourself by holding at bay anyone who might wish to get close. Do not get to know those around you. Avoid personal intercourse. The military realizes this. Officers are not supposed to fraternize with the enlisted because it is much easier to send a bunch of nameless faces to their grave than a friend. Hill was aware of this --- but like I stated before, Hill was too late for me. Marines, those I became attached to prior to Mike's taking over as Hotel's company Corpsman, were my friends.

Medina, however, changed much of that. Many of those killed or wounded in the October ambush were friends too. I had placed my hand on the stove and was burned. It hurt. Not wanting to experience that pain again, as FNGs (Fucking New Guy) filed in to replace those lost on Medina, I kept to myself. If I did not already know a Marine, I did not have the desire to get to know him. FNGs remained in my mind FNGs. No longer would I inquire where is Jack, instead it was likely I asked for the new FNG?

At times I even became hostile toward them, particularly if they thought they knew anything about war and the Vietcong. I remember challenging a few who believing themselves invincible and figured no one, without being noticed, could sneak up on them. "You sit right here," I'd argue with them, "and I'll tell you what. Sometime this month, I'll come wake you up." For Charlie, time was on his side. He lived his entire life right there. Charlie slept when and where he wanted. Charlie was in no hurry. He could just wait for us to fall asleep --- and only then would Charlie come --- like Freddie Krueger on Elm Street.

I did not know much about Joel. I did not know how long he'd been in country, where he was from, whether he was married or any of that getting to know you small talk. If I avoided small talk, I avoided the trauma of getting to know people on a personal level. The problem was, Joel did not respect fences. It did not seem to bother him if I wished to talk to him or not, or whether I was interested in anything he might have to say. It was always, "Hey Doc" this and "Hey Doc" that every time he saw me --- and he saw me frequently given our bunkers were about ten yards apart. Whatever the reason, he was not about to allow me to isolate myself

by just letting me slip into my bunker and go to bed without getting a greeting in somehow.

January 10th just happened to be an evening I was off - as if at Yankee Station anyone was ever "off." Being off simply meant I was spending this evening inside the perimeter rather than crawling around in the mud outside the wire and I had a dry bunk to sleep in rather than some wet spot on the ground. The evening was overcast but fair, misting a bit but not raining. Joel, of course, was there with his "Hey Doc --- What's happening?" Something must have been happening because we ended up spending a couple hours talking about Charlie II, a Marine outpost down the road to our south, popping off green and red flares along with a few illumination rounds. We speculated like armchair generals whether they were just shooting fireworks off or if something might be occurring. Whatever was happening did not seem like anything that might affect us --- but the fireworks were cool and provided something to talk about.

I forgot all the small talk we talked about that evening. With Joel small talk could not be avoided. All I remember for sure is it had been a while since I talked to anyone about anything other than duty, war, or cards. The evening had gone by too quickly. For a brief period, being at Yankee Station wasn't like being caged up. For a brief period, I did not feel alone. For a brief period, I felt my being there meant something to someone other than my being "Doc." Joel almost made me feel human again. We broke off about 2100. He went to his bunker, I to mine.

To prevent dragging a bunch of mud into my shelter, I did my usual and removed my boots at the door, climbed onto my stretcher and pulled my poncho liner over me, thinking all's well --- just another day to cross off on my calendar. No more had I made myself comfortable when a large explosion about knocked me out of my rack. Lumps of mud came raining down on the top of bunker like hail. My first thought was, "Holy shit!" followed by the instinct to hit the floor and brace myself as I was sure more were on their way. But none came. Instead, the dreaded call for "Corpsman Up!" broke an uncertain silence.

I grabbed my medical bag and backed out stocking footed. I did not even have to turn to see a Marine lying on the ground as others began gathering around. On hands and knees, I crawled over to the Marine. It was Joel. Body wise he looked intact, no missing limbs, no chunks of flesh dangling outside his uniform, no large pools of blood but he wasn't moving. Maybe he was just knocked out. Maybe he was alright, just unconscious. The explosion I heard could have easily knocked anyone unconscious. I felt for a pulse. No pulse. I listened to his chest for breathing. He was not breathing.

"Be OK, Joel. Stay alive. Please be alive." I begged of who knows who. I ran my hands over his legs and torso feeling for warm moist spots from bleeding but found nothing significant, until I came to his head. There I found what I was feeling for, something warm and moist. Oddly however the texture of what I was feeling seemed different than blood. I'd felt blood many times before and blood did not feel like this. This was greasier. I looked closer. It was grey matter --- his brains were running out in my hand. What do I do? All I could think was put them back -- maybe if I could just push his brains back in his head somehow his situation would correct itself.

I thought, "This can't be happening. Joel! Wake up! Joel! Hang in there. You're OK Joel. Get up!"

I'd lost it. For a brief period, it was like nothing was around me but funny little sparkly things floating in the air. What were they? Fireflies maybe? Where is this place anyway? And why isn't anyone else here? A feeling of incredible loneliness chilled me.

About then Hill tapped me on the shoulder and brought me back to reality. He ran up from CAS about 150 yards away. He did not take long to assess my loss of reality either. He ordered me aside and took over but there was nothing he could do other than to load Joel on a chopper and fly off with him as a medical escort.⁰⁰³

Soon after Hill flew off with Joel, I found myself feeling incredibly guilty about not being able to do more for Joel. That fact that nothing could have been done for Joel did not even enter my thinking. Somehow, if Joel died it was my fault. Me. If only I knew more. If only I knew as much as half these Marines seemed to think I knew, maybe then Joel would be still alive. That guilt laden reasoning as unreasonable as it was, did not take long to become accusatory anger. How the Hell could the Navy send me out here and expect me to deal with this? I should have been better trained, more prepared, more knowledgeable, and then maybe things would have come out different.

	JOEL FREDERICK KOESTER	
	DATE OF CASUALTY January 10, 1968	
	PANEL / LINE 34E/22	BRANCH OF SERVICE MARINE CORPS
	DATE OF BIRTH 01/12/1949	HOME OF RECORD PHOENIX
	STATE AZ	
	https://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/search/results/?search-term=koester	

My reasoning fell into a loop of guilt and anger. Some thirty years after the fact, I managed to take a square look at reality. Joel was dead -- and nothing I could have

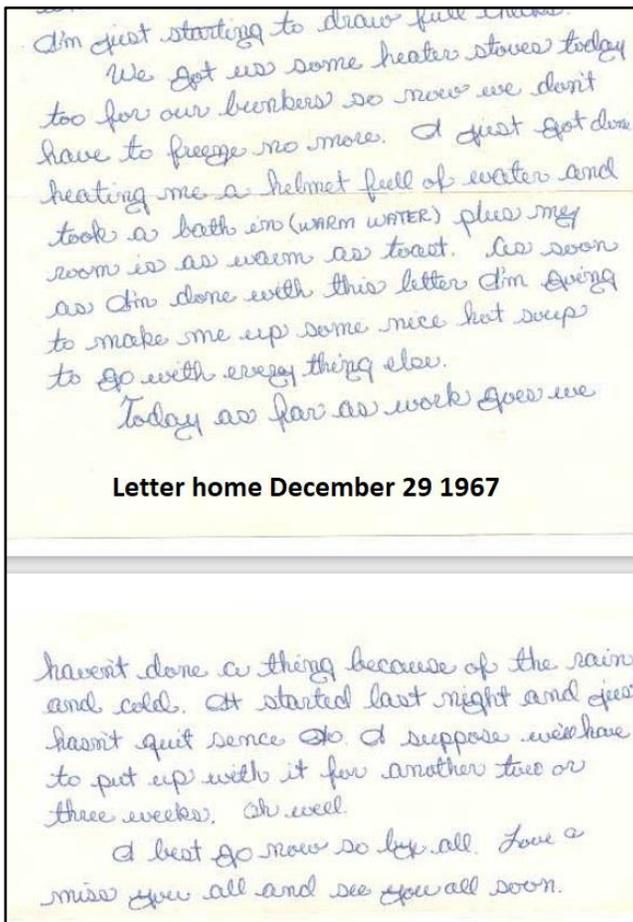
done nor could have any amount of training changed the outcome. Then, however, somehow, my lack of knowledge was responsible. I had to know more. But know what? And where is the material to learn this? How can anyone know anything if nothing is available to learn from? How could the military send me out here without making that information available?

I'd blame myself for not knowing. I'd blame the military for not providing me the material. Around and around, it went and all that ever fell out of that centrifuge was depression, an immense feeling that nothing mattered. "It ain't no big deal." "It don't mean nothing." I'd try to convince myself --- but then the idea would return "It does matter" --- and the whole damn process would start all over again.

I have no idea how the rest of the night went. All I really remember is waking up the next morning feeling really sticky. I crawled outside to see why my pants were sticking to my legs. It was blood mixed with grey matter. It was all over my clothes, on my hands, and in my hair. And there was nowhere to clean it off ---

so I ended up wearing it like a spilled lunch on my only shirt. “Maybe,” I thought, “if I was lucky, it would rain. Maybe the rain would wash some off.”

Joel’s death, while not nearly as traumatic as Medina, served to reinforce all the negative feelings I was having about religion up to this point. While Medina got me to seriously question any religious beliefs, Joel’s death illuminated them. Between Medina and Joel’s death, any religious thoughts I may have had could be compared to a buoy anchored on bottom by a long rope. Anchored still by the hope that some aspects of religion might be true, religion, in my mind, was being blown around by the winds of reason. Joel’s death cut the rope and set me adrift. Asking, hoping, and pleading for Joel to be alright from whatever might be out there to listen went unanswered. Joel’s prayer was the last prayer I made.



Dirt and Grime: Unimaginable Filth

Personal hygiene was always a problem largely because of the water issue. While we had a shower, I never saw it ever used for several reasons. One, it put the user out in the open where little shelter existed; two, water had to be trucked in over mined and insecure roads, and three, assuming getting water was not a problem, getting the water to the top of barrel which sat on top of the shower was a real challenge. Most Marines, like I did, settled for sponge baths using helmets for water basins. While these baths may have removed some dirt from people’s hands and face, they did nothing to cleanse the body. The clothes worn before

the bath were the same clothes worn after. Clothes, like skin, never came off.

In my January 16th letter home, protesting the sanitary conditions we were forced to live in, I make the statement that I had never been so filthy in my life. Six days after losing Joel, his brains were still clinging to my clothing. By January 21st after weeks with no shower and literally smelling like death, I had enough. I cut a fifty-gallon oil barrel in half and made a bathtub. In the two months that I was at Yankee Station, I got to use it once. The bath, even with hot water heated by burning wood, was great other than having to feel guilty about using the water. This bath is likely the only sit down bath ever taken, even if in a make shift bathtub, by anyone

Yesterday we kicked through the brush all day just to get our own artillery shot at us. It was no big deal or anything but it sure put a scare into some Marines. We figured for sure old Charlie had us pegged out and we were out farther than any company thus far had been.

We even got overrun once - by wild hogs once. About fifty of them with long empty tusks came charging right through our position like baby freight trains. It's a miracle no one was hurt. We also found a few what looked to be tiger tracks and all kinds of dud arty rounds and even one 250 pound bomb that never went off.

or who he is."

The remainder, the never discussed portion of our stay at Yankee Station, could best be described as mundane. While numerous contacts were made outside the perimeter, no real battle ever ensued. An occasional incoming round or two always got everyone's attention but never was the incoming sustained for any length of time or resulted in a large loss of personnel.

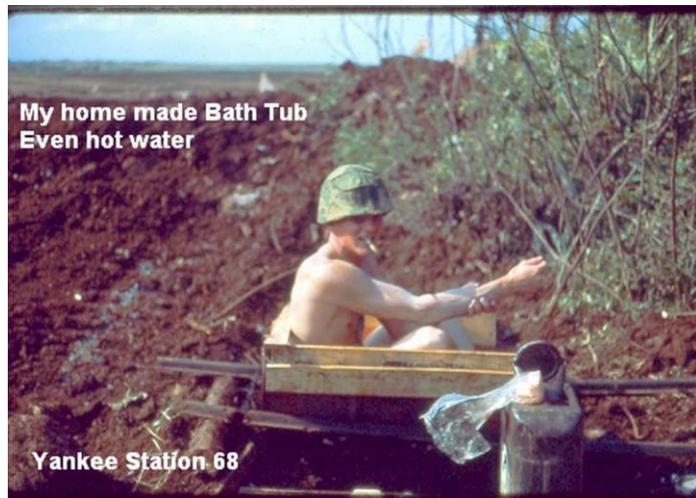
When writing my parents, I always attempted to minimize any concerns that we at Yankee Station might have had, either adding something humorous like being assaulted by wild pigs or talking about being shelled by our own artillery, as if being shelled by our artillery was less serious than being shelled by North Vietnam.

To my brother however, I often mentioned what was going on beneath the surface, boredom included. While we were not coming under attack, we all knew that could change in a heartbeat. We knew North Vietnam was on the move and moving in large numbers --- but they seemed to be going right by us rather than engaging us. For those who did not want the blood and gore on their turf, like me,

at Yankee Station, Con Thien, or for that matter the entire DMZ. I wonder if Guinness knows anything of this bathtub. My guess is this bath set a world record.

Worth mention, in my February 5th letter home is this note which would be important upon returning stateside:

"I'm also a member of the VFW now. I got a membership and everything from the VFW back home. They paid my dues and everything for 1968, wasn't that nice. Now I've been encouraged by their magazine to write my congressman about the war in Vietnam but believe it or not I don't even know his address



January 31, 1968

To Bob,

Life in the barrel, a one month wonder - seen all, known all - calls life at low their. Place of the Angels the Vietnamese translation is and to us, we just call it "the hell". Now candle light is almost a gift of God and the ink I write with is quickly becoming a luxury. Water is becoming a thing to steal and clean clothes is just a dream. Food, ammo, and work is about all we have in abundance.

Life here can best be described as a blank sheet of paper which really is about all my letters amount to anymore. We haven't had any mail for so long I'm out things to say. I could write eight letters at a time if I only had some carbon paper.

The only news I have to offer is the war is general. Secret meetings of General and Johnson in Saigon - moving 70,000 Army troops North - and the large NVA build up is leading to something. I guess it's for them to know about and us to worry about. What ever it is, it's good. Pray for peace.

For our area it seems we are surrounded by about 30,000 NVA who have been trying to take Ká Sơn for the past two weeks but gave up. The only problem is Ká Sơn has 7,000 troops on it and we have only about 1,500. There are strips for MiGs have been spotted North as well as the NVA are carrying gas and the masks to go with it. All we are doing now is waiting hoping nothing will come of it all. If it happens then maybe they put the lid on the barrel.

Out of all of this comes the ray of hope I won't be here if it does happen. The eighth I should be on my way to

the NVA's avoidance of us was good, sort of, until we realized that we were being surrounded. The threat of MiGs, Communist jet fighters, hitting us was a very real possibility, given we were only a stone's throw from North Vietnam. I could think of pleasant things to think about than being on the receiving end of napalm or large bombs. We even worried about poison gas.

Before leaving Yankee Station, needed added are all those days that we just sat and did nothing, much of the time in the rain. If it wasn't for poker there would have been nothing to do, but even poker in time becomes blah. You can only clean weapons so many times a day before it becomes impossible to believe that cleaning them once more will make any kind of difference. As for filling sandbags, you know you're bored when you look forward to filling them. No extracurricular activities existed, no basketball, soccer, or football. We existed largely isolated in our bunkers although we had the liberty of moving around if we stayed inside the razor wire. There was no intermingling with the opposite sex. We were totally isolated within our own little circle. Day after day followed the other, full of unfathomable boredom without much more to do than worry about what the day might bring or whether you'd still be alive at day's end.

In terms of the material world, the luxury of material

goods that Americans have grown to expect and demand, we had little if any.

Clothes were worn 24 hours a day for weeks at a time, muddy, bloody, torn, or in whatever condition they happened to be in. Personal items, toothbrushes, deodorant, soap, writing paper, were not replaceable on demand; and given we were at Yankee Station better than two months, most everyone ran out. No electric lights existed, only candles - assuming you did not run out of them also. Meals were eaten out of cans, cold usually, with the same plastic spoon saved and protected for months.

Yet out of that isolation and lack of material pleasures came an unexpected realization. Life under those conditions was livable. If we did not want to sit around and become completely depressed, it was up to us to do something about it. If we wanted entertainment, we had to provide it. Not the stereo, the television, the radio – but us. The result was closeness and togetherness never experienced before or after.

As for material goods, most of those material goods until that point I could not have imagined life without were not missed nearly as much as I figured they would be. Status wise, we were all equal. There was no keeping up with the Joneses at Yankee Station. Whether you liked everyone or not, you knew most everyone and where they lived, which is much more than I can say about most apartment dwellers in America. Half of America does not even know who lives across the hall. As to thinking travel is a necessity --- conditions proved it was not, although most would have gone somewhere else had they had the freedom to do so. But we did not have that freedom --- so we made the best of what we had by bringing to this boring existence a little humor. Mike Hill, my friend, always had some off the wall thing going:

“Say by the way, you’d never guess what we did? We took a picture of our company aid station and sent it to Playboy as the Playboy Club of Con Thien. I wonder if it will make the pages? Ha! What a laugh if it does.”

Personal letter to my brother, Bob
January 9th, 1968

Given a choice between the kind of life we led at Yankee Station and the one I lead now --- well, I was given that choice. I chose the life I live now. Like any other animal, I chose comfort after years of struggling with environmentalism and how I should live --- but my gut feelings are the world, if I can get by thinking of myself, would be much better off if everyone chose to do with **MUCH** less. And I know from experience that most people could tolerate it. In fact, **MOST** people do, given most people’s standard of living in the world is far below the enjoyment experienced by even the lowest waged Americans.

I often wrestle with what that says about me. I believe what I say when I say the world would be better off if everyone did with less, yet I exist in a lifestyle seen as extravagant by most the people of the world. I do not believe if I chose to live with practically no modern luxuries that my doing so would change anything. For example, if I chose not to drive a car and burn fossil fuel, I doubt anything would change regarding the overall consumption of fossil fuels. The reality is that

fossil fuel would be burnt anyway by others, and I would be forced to live with whatever the results of burning that fuel might be, not to mention the pumping, transporting, and manufacturing that oil. To believe the world would stand up and take notice of my sacrifice by not using fossil fuels and follow my example would be nothing but grandiose idealism. I tried that once after returning state side and found out I was a grandiose idealist.

I will return to this discussion in the section on environmentalism under Biological Fundamentalism.

Con Thien “The Hill of Angels” Yea Though I Walk Through the Valley of Death

While I personally did not spend much time at Con Thien, Con Thien is worth mention for it did differ from Yankee Station in several ways. One: Con Thien reminded me more of a landfill than a military outpost. Comparatively Yankee Station was much cleaner and better kept. Not that we at Yankee Station were better housekeepers. Con Thien had the trash of three companies and Headquarters to deal with as well as gun support. As such, Con Thien had a much larger problem with rodents, flies, and insects than did Yankee Station, not to mention was the target of constant bombardment from Vietcong rockets, mortars, recoilless rifles, and artillery. To NVA gunners, Con Thien offered much more to hit than did Yankee Station. Hardly a day went by without Con Thien receiving incoming (artillery, mortars, rockets) of some kind.

The living conditions by what I hear aren't very good for battalions rotate in and out all the time so no one cares too much about their up keep. It's just a maze of garbage, foxholes, bunkers, and with the constant shelling combined with the monsoon rains there is a new attraction, mud. The doctor, who just got back from there, said they had to use mules at times to pull the Marines out of some of the trenches because of all the mud. Just like World War I all over again – just sit and shoot arty (artillery) back and forth.

My job as a Corpsman, being the up keep of the Marines, will bring my attention to first shrapnel wounds from mortars and artillery. The second is to diseases like upper respiratory infections, dysentery, and a new growing problem at Con Thien, Rabies. Being the garbage dump of Vietnam, the asshole of the world, Con Thien attracts rats and with the steady growth of rats comes rabies so I will have my hands full. I have the feeling the next month is going to be an experience I shall never forget as long as I live.

Personal letter to my brother Bob;

December 16 1967

Con Thien also was the tactical position. “Take the high ground” is the conventional military wisdom. Con Thien was the high ground. Existing as a small elevation rise above a surrounding low lying plain, Con Thien offered full observation of the land

around it. For that, Con Thien's perimeter was always being probed, its perimeter wires cut, and mine fields investigated. A tribute exists to a Corpsman who lost his life coming to the aid of a wounded Marine who wandered out in the Marine's own mine field. Rumors had it, the VC were sneaking into the mine field perimeter and altered the routes through them so Marines would end up walking out into their own mine fields.

0144: Spot report #1, Carousel CP at 1023458 at CT (Con Thien). Platoon blundered into fr. (assumed Friendly) mine field, resulting in one KIA, 1 WIA, and 1 WIA minor.⁰⁰⁴

Spot Report #2, Carousel CP at 162340H at Fr. 111703 at En same. While unit was moving through minefield in safe lane to scorpion site. One carousel man stepped on M-14 mine, causing fracture or partial amputation of left foot. Man was taken to BAS treated, and then med-evaced to hospital.⁰⁰⁵

Translation: Carousel CP = 2/1 Command Post.

A carousel man = a 2/1 Marine.

BAS = Battalion Aid Station

Reading over the command chronologies for the days surrounding January 11th, it appeared that an assault was being prepared by the NVA. In the days to follow, numerous enemy sightings were reported as well as bunkers being found just outside of Con Thien. One enemy boot is found with part of a foot still in it.⁰⁰⁶

On 0130 January 14th an explosion was heard and turned out to be an NVA in the mine field. At 1445 boards are discovered laid over the barbed wire in a manner that made a good trail.⁰⁰⁷ At 0400 January 15th, a "large number of enemy" were believed to be in the area with dogs (time 1015). Why the dogs if not mine sniffing dogs? Later checking the perimeter at 1845, a six-foot hole is found in the wire with a well-defined path leading right to Golf's third platoon (G3's) position.⁰⁰⁸ January 22nd numerous bunkers were spotted by spotter planes. Air strikes with 250-pound bombs and napalm were called against suspected enemy positions resulting in reports of bodies flying through the air.

Later the same day, Fox Company ran into what was believed a company unit of NVA who initiated the fight, an act the NVA normally did not commit to unless they figured they had the upper hand.⁰⁰⁹ On January 23rd numerous holes in the perimeter wire are discovered, blown by what was believed to be a Bangalore torpedo.⁰¹⁰ The final support to an impending assault came on January 25th at 1400, an entry in the Command Chronologies notes that the mines in the mine field were apparently being removed.⁰¹¹ If the NVA's efforts were to divert Marines into their own mine field, why would the NVA remove the mines? I believe Con Thien bit the bullet here and avoided a major battle.

One event during this time worth mentioning at Con Thien was January 22, 1968. Incoming within the perimeter of Con Thien was noted as early as 0100 beginning with five 81 mortar rounds. At 0210 Con Thien received another twelve. At 0949 Fox Company on patrol received heavy small arms, automatic rifle, and

mortar fire. Con Thien received additional incoming shortly after 1000. At 1410 Con Thien received 100 plus rounds of incoming 81 mortars and artillery.

Fox Company's contact was with what was believed to be about a company of NVA. A large firefight broke out. Golf, on maneuvers with Fox, came to Fox's aid.⁰¹² Killed in the resulting action on the 22nd were four enlisted Marines. 40 were wounded.⁰¹³ Fox ended up taking two KIAs, Pfc David Bingham and PFC A. Tom Simmons, outside the perimeter. The other two KIAs, Cpl Richard Byars and GySgt Nathaniel Weathers, came from Echo Company who died from incoming within Con Thien's perimeter. The January 68 Com-mand Chronology (2/1 CC) is unclear about how many wounded Fox suffered. While the 2/1 CC claims 32 total Marines suffered wounds for the month of January,⁰¹⁴ the S-1 report to Division lists 40 WIAs for January 22nd alone.⁰¹⁵

Why this discrepancy? I'm not sure; however, it is likely that I do not understand exactly what is being reported by either of these recordings which are part of the same of document. For example, perhaps the 32 WIAs reported for the month of January were medevacked while the 40 reported for January 22nd included walking wounded who were treated and returned to duty.

A Marine's Recollection of January 22nd 1968: A Fire Fight as seen by a Combatant

The casualties suffered by Fox Company as reported in the Command Chronologies on January 22nd comes nowhere near what has been reported to me by a Golf Company Marine sent to aid Fox Company. This Marine remembers this event much differently.

While I was in the process of contacting former members of 2/1, I was contacted by this Marine who spoke of an event that occurred outside the perimeter of Con Thien in January 68. According to him, Fox Company was obliterated. Twenty to thirty dead Marines were just left on the battlefield for buzzard pickings as Fox retreated to Con Thien this Marine informed me. I could tell by his tone of voice that he was deeply distressed and believed his version of this event occurred.

Having some experience at researching Marine Corps records along with a few connections, I contacted the Navy Museum at Washington D.C. which at that time housed the Command Chronologies. There I found the Marine Corps' account given in the January Command Chronology. So which version is correct, the Marine's Corps version or a Marine's? I'd strongly side with the Marines Corps' version even after pointing out Marine Corp's records have been known to contradict itself. I believe it nearly impossible that had the Marine's version been true that we, Hotel Company sitting at Yankee Station, would have never known about it. If the Marine's higher ups did cover up an event as this Marine described, the Marine Command was potentially far more dangerous and intelligent than I had ever given them credit for.

So, is this a condemnation of this Marine? Absolutely not! If it's a condemnation of anything, it is a condemnation of the Marine Corps. In the confusion of battle, given this event, I am sure that the level of confusion that existed as a Marine company battled it out with a NVA company sized unit was

enormous. With mortars and artillery exploding within the ranks of the Marines, to an on looker, I have no doubt the casualties among the Marines appeared to him far more numerous than recorded by the USMC.

I have no doubt that this Marine firmly believed his version of this event. Not only did he believe his version was correct, but he was also haunted by his remembrance of this event for better than two decades following his release from Vietnam. His resulting belief influenced his views of the military, society, politics, and life in general. For years he fought the demons of all those bodies he believed were left to just decompose.

If I were to make a moral out of this Marine's story, I would advise the military to make it a policy to inform everyone involved in combat, as described above, exactly what happened. Command should have a sit down with the troops and discuss these events. Officers, Break Rake --- Talk to your men, Damn it! Do not assume that those who survived the confusion and horror of such an event knows what transpired. In their mind, hearing screams, bullets whistling by, artillery exploding, seeing body parts flying around, my experience is these soldiers often tend to think what happened around them was far worse than it was. Don't send these young men home alone in their thoughts. Don't let them go home believing what they believe they saw unless what they saw is fact. To leave such events to the imagination of individuals, formed in the confusion of battle, is nothing short of psychological torture.

The other alternative is how the military has dealt with their combat veteran's mental anguish for centuries. They simply send them home, tortured over something that may not have even happened as in this case. To do so is not good for the man involved nor his family, the military, or society at large, a society which likely will get stuck picking up the pieces if this individual falls apart. If the goal is to prevent young men from going home with their heads full of doubts and haunted for years, dedicate the time to make sure everyone involved in combat knows exactly what happened. Treat these boys sent to do a man's job like men. They earned it.

Side Note:

Addressing the idea that the military will never abandon a fallen comrade, is this note straight from a Marine Corps publication. From Hill of Angels, U.S. Marines and the Battle for Con Thien 1967 to 1968, pages 37-38, on the 21st September 1967, the 2nd Battalion of the 4th Marines set out on a search and destroy operation and ran into the 90th NVA Regiment. Quote: "The NVA force had killed 16 Marines and wounded 118; 15 of the bodies remained on the battlefield until 10 October when the 2nd Battalion 4th Marines returned and picked up its dead in a later operation in the same area."

Elsewhere

As to the war at large, the month of January brought the names of never heard towns and villages to the forefront, Khe Sanh, Kontum, Dalat, not to mention the old standbys such as Hue, Saigon, and Quang Tri. The village of Khe Sanh was overrun while the Marine base of Khe Sanh came under siege, pounded from Laos by long

range NVA artillery. 1500 tons of explosives erupted into a huge ball of fire at the Khe Sanh ammo dump. We at Yankee Station and Con Thien become aware of why it seemed that the NVA were going around us rather than engaging us when Hue and Quang Tri were overrun at the kickoff of the TET offensive.⁰¹⁶

Meanwhile at home, with the American casualties for 1967 higher than all the previous casualties combined since the beginning of the Vietnam War, the USMC to sustain their numbers had to rely on the drafting. Retaining qualified Marine officers and Non-commissioned officers was becoming increasingly difficult.⁰¹⁷ At fifty colleges and universities across the US, some 320 economists came out in opposition to the Johnson Administration's fiscal policies and blamed the war for America's economic problems.⁰¹⁸ A few weeks later, President Johnson asks for an additional \$26.3 billion dollars for the war effort to be financed by a tax increase⁰¹⁹ and earned the Democrats the title "Tax and spend" democrats.

Today, 2008, monetary lessons learned from Vietnam have been adopted by the Republicans. They now finance the war by borrowing and spending. In recent years, the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars are largely funded on borrowed money while at the same time, taxes to the rich, many making millions off the war, have been cut to the point of being nonexistent. Something is wrong about that picture -- Or, is it art, intentionally painted by wealthy human hands for their own satisfaction?

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Calm before the Storm

Bangkok

Sex, it is perhaps the greatest driving force in any young man's life. Poetically written:

*The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age
Dylan Thomas*

It is why young men dress the way they do, combs their hair, brushes their teeth, buys cool looking cars, attends parties and dances, competes in sports, and a big reason for many of the fights they may get into. All this to impress the opposite sex. Of course, this is an over statement. Reasons other than sex do exist for these activities but overall sex is perhaps the main driving force behind much of the behavior of any young man (not to mention females). It is also why most warriors during the Vietnam War went on R&R (Rest and Relaxation). As George Patton famously put it "*If the don't fuck, they don't fight.*"⁰⁰¹

A book is out there which exposes the sexual activities of soldiers entitled "*What soldiers Do, Sex and the American GI in World War II France*" by Mary Louise Roberts. It is worth the read. While the sexual activities of other armies such as the rapes committed the Soviets were used as propaganda against the Communists to make appear as the bad guys, rapes and whoring around by Americans is rarely mentioned for the same reason to make the Americas appear as the good guys. Roberts reports, however, the Americans were not much better than the Communist's. But this needs not stop with Robert's book. Sex has always been an important part of war. Often serving as one of the spoils of war, conquered young women routinely have been gather up as gifts and rewards to rulers and troops. Why, the practice is even Biblical:

*Deu20:13-14: And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: **But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself;** and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.*

Earlier, you may have noticed I left off the last page of my January 31st letter home. I saved it for here. Up until this time I behaved myself, unlike the behavior of several my comrades back south of Da Nang who often slipped off beyond the lines at night or lured local women into our perimeter. Personally, I did not trust any Vietnamese well enough to get involved with them for any reason.

Bangkok for R&R, if they don't cancel it. I sure hope not but I'm looking forward to it. If I do I won't be back here until about the 25th or so. On top of all that I may be getting out of the field but every time I say that I make myself sick. Stay in school is all I can say to you.

Oh I do luck out and get R&R will be a soozy right for about six days. I'm going to be so drunk that when I look at those about eyes, bitchin' all I see is leg. Might even have to escape some out. Might Ha! You know I will - who I'm trying to shit. Like Dr. Hena, our doctor, says most guys go on R&R take a bath, get a room, get some good show, point to the town and get drunk then look for leg. Not him - he'll look for some leg, get drunk, get something to eat, then he'll worry about a place to say.

Well I'm about out of things to say. All sign off for now so take care.

*Spur truly
Dave*

I am unaware of any of this activity at Quang Tri as the area was far most hostile and at Con Thien, it was impossible. It was at Con Thien, however, that rumors of homosexuality were being used to quest Marines of their sexual desires, a crime punishable of being dishonorably discharged by military standards.

R&R offered a retrieve from all the fears which might come because of fraternizing with the enemy. Not only that, the last few months of Quang Tri and Con Thien made it clear that if I did not live life to its fullest now, I might not ever get to. While not really a virgin, one who never had sexual inter-course, prior to Bangkok, I was a virgin if being virgin is taken to mean being naïve and inexperienced. I had no

desire of possibly dying before experiencing it all. So, I went and hired an instructor. I got my monies worth.

**Phu Bia:
Out of the Bush or so I Hoped**

Arriving back in Vietnam from R&R in February, I landed at Phu Bia, 2/1's rear area. Unlike Da Nang where the headquarters and supply (H&S) portion of 2/1 was housed within the battalion perimeter of 2/1, 2/1's rear and forward positions were split. 2/1's rear was located at Phu Bia while its forward position was at Con Thien. Finally, I thought, I was out of the field. No more mines and booby traps, being sniped at, nearly drowning falling into rice paddies, sleeping in the rain in mosquito infested darkness, and weeks without showers or a change in clothing. Life now should be somewhat reasonable in terms of comfort. About the only real threat was an occasional volley of rockets to wake us up and remind us we were still in a war zone. Life was much better --- relatively.



Hue Forgotten Graves

While at Phu Bia, the largest threat of ending up back in actual combat was Hue which was just up the road. The Battle for Hue was in full swing in February and we in the rear ran numerous convoys to Hue with supplies. My love for convoys had not improved either. Any Vietnamese milling around our trucks could flick a grenade, or worse a bomb, into the back of a truck at any time.



Worth mention is a Catholic Church again. One day a group of Corpsmen were loaded up and hauled out to inoculate several Catholic nuns against the plague, the medieval Black Death of all things. I could not help but wonder why those inoculations were being administered by us,

government employees of the USA. Wasn't this a breach of church and state? How about the Vietnamese civilians? Was the church offering them vaccines or were those civilians being instructed to rely on faith for their protection against the plague? If the church could not provide vaccinations for their own nuns and depended on the U.S. Military to do so, what was I to think? From where I sat, it appeared god's healing powers were good enough for the Vietnamese but not the members of the church.

On February 24th, the Imperial Palace of Hue was liberated from the North Vietnamese by South Vietnamese forces. Minor skirmishes continued for several weeks, however for all practical purposes, the battle for Hue was over. Missing were about 3500 Hue residents. What happened to these 3500 people came to a grim realization when on February 26th bodies were discovered buried in shallow graves immediately east of the Citadel. About 150 bodies were recovered from the first of numerous mass graves. Over the next couple of months nearly 24 sites would be found yielding 809 bodies. Many were found with their hands tied behind their backs with no noticeable wounds indicating that many of those found were literally buried alive.⁰⁰²

While the TET offensive, which included the Battle for Hue, was statistically a military defeat for North Vietnam; it was a huge psychological and political triumph for North Vietnam. For several years, both the military and US policy makers had been reassuring the American People that we were winning in Vietnam. To make their point, they'd pull out the infamous, inflated, body counts attempting to make the point that North Vietnam could not possibly maintain their losses and remain an effective fighting force. The problem with that logic was most Americans were led to believe the more Vietcong killed, the less their ability to

fight would be. It followed, therefore, that as the numbers of Vietcong killed mounted, the war should have tapered off.

But then came TET to completely discredit every optimistic prediction our military leaders and politicians were making. Out of the swamps and jungles emerged this raging monster, after America had been repetitively informed that we were winning. Rather than appearing to be losing, the Communists were devouring city after city in the largest Communist military offensive yet seen in the war. To make matters worse, On February 2nd President Johnson announced that the Vietcong have suffered complete military defeat, an appraisal which General Westmoreland parroted four days later. In a statement Westmoreland declared that allied forces have killed more enemy troops in the past seven days than the United States has lost in the entire war.⁰⁰³ Politically interpreted, more of the same old same old. Any real thinking person with an IQ higher than his age had already rejected any correlation between who was winning the war to and the number of enemy dead.

Back at Con Thien: Under Heavy Fire

On February 21st the National Council of Churches, to which my former church belonged, called for an immediate stop to the bombing of North Vietnam to allow negotiations to begin.⁰⁰⁴ For anyone still within range of artillery from North Vietnam or Laos that bombing was seen as a life savior. That bombing was our only defense against the shelling we suffered on a regular basis. Furthermore, I believed then that North Vietnam was not interested in negotiations. North Vietnam wanted the unification of their divided country and was not about to settle for anything less. Any attempt at negotiations, given that, was nothing more than lip service stalling for time.

Four days later, on February 25th, Con Thien came under heavy fire from North Vietnam. The shelling began at 1125. At 1320 Con Thien received between 200 and 215 rounds of heavy artillery of which 175 were 152s (heavy artillery). The shelling continued intermittently for the rest of day reporting an additional 50 rounds as late as 2210.⁰⁰⁵ While I was not at Con Thien at the end of February, all it would have taken to get me back would have been for a couple of other Corpsmen to be hit.

Charlie II: Two Doctors attempt Suicide

On the 9th of March, 2/1, under the command of the 3rd MARDIV, Hotel was pulled back from Con Thien to C2 just south of Con Thien.⁰⁰⁶ Doing the math that means 2-1 was at Con Thien for 77 days, 47 days longer than the thirty day rotation expected. C2 was a much less hostile base than Con Thien even if C2 was still well within the range of artillery from North Vietnam. From the 9th to the 23rd, C2 reported receiving only 15 rounds of artillery.⁰⁰⁷ Even at that, I remember not being too happy with leaving Phu Bia for some outpost once again gazing down the barrel of North Vietnam artillery. The good news was C-2 had well-fortified bunkers and was much closer to several other outposts, so we did not have to feel so alone.

Unlike Con Thien, if C-2 did come under attack, help was just down the road in about any direction.

One of the most damaging bomb shells dropped on me when I arrived at C-2 was an incident where a couple of doctors allegedly attempted suicide by choking down a bottle of Seconal, a potent sedative. I was not there when the incident occurred, nor can I locate any reference to it in the records; hence all I have to go on is what I was told and the fact that the two doctors who allegedly took the drugs were suddenly gone. I suspect the medical staff on duty took care of it and likely kept it off the record assuming, of course, the event even happened. Even the remote suggestion that members of our own medical group may have attempted suicide, after having survived two months at Con Thien, however, hit me hard. These guys were not some whacked out draftees who were given the choice between incarceration and the military. These were medical doctors, naval officers with a bright future ahead of them --- if, of course, they survived Vietnam.

Was getting out of Vietnam their goal? Did they actually attempted suicide, or did they just want to give the illusion of suicide to avoid going to Khe Sanh? I'm sure, they had good reason to suspect they were. They were, after all, military officers who were kept abreast on what to expect soon.

As for their attempt at suicide, being doctors, if suicide was their mission, they surely should have been able to come up with a more fool proof method. As far as I know, no charges ever came against these individuals, meaning they got away with faking a suicide for a plane trip home. I did not know whether to be disappointed at their cowardice or envious of their methods. Given the chance, I would have gone home also.

In later years, I understand that one of these doctors enjoys the prestige of being identified as a heroic veteran. The source of this information however comes from one that over the years I've come to doubt. But --- I did not doubt him then and whether true or false, I spent many days wondering how I might be able to pull off something similar. I wanted to go home. A few moments later I'd feel guilty for have such cowardice thoughts. I didn't know what to think. What I did have was plenty to wonder about --- like what the hell were we doing here? A war going nowhere, politicians seemed unable to understand the obvious, peace negotiators that were more interested in the shape of a table than the human lives being wasted of either side, conditions that drove well educated promising individuals to a suicide attempt, for a nation (Vietnam) that seems as repressive to its people as the enemy, and a bunch of peers (Americans) more concerned about what we were doing to the enemy than what the enemy was doing to us. Just what the hell were we doing here?

Innocent Civilians: Are There Really Innocent Civilians?

Antiwar protesters were handed a huge whip when on the 16th of March Lieutenant William Calley ordered Charlie Company of the 1st BN of the 20th Infantry to charge into the Mylia-4 hamlet with their guns ablaze. When all was said and done between 200 and 500 unarmed Vietnamese, mostly women and children, were dead. Some were executed gangland style, shot in the back of the head while on

their knees. At least one was raped.⁰⁰⁸ This whip would be felt by Vietnam Veterans for years to follow. This massacre would come to reinforce the views of numerous Americans, even beyond the protesters, that Vietnam Veterans were nothing but murderous villains, killers of woman and children, and drug addicted rapists.

At the risk of sounding as if I am attempting to defend the actions of Calley and Charlie Company, I will say while I believe Mylia was a monstrous act, I can understand it, being in similar situations. The area in which Charlie Company was operating was heavily booby trapped by a well-defended force of Vietcong that in the months leading up to this event maimed and killed numerous members of Charlie Company.⁰⁰⁹ I witnessed firsthand what affects these booby traps and loosing friends had on my own troops. Day after day we would go out and day after day loose friends and comrades to these invisible enemies only to have the local villagers go about their business around us like nothing happened. Sooner or later, one of these adolescent Marines was going to snap, and when he did, armed with M-16s, M79s, and grenades, it was not going to be good a day for any Vietnamese in the immediate area if they were the only ones around to blame.

Writing about women and children being killed for being guilty of nothing other than being afraid of heavily armed foreigners rummaging through their village, screaming orders these women and children did not understand, pushing people around, and perhaps even shooting one or two is as hard as watching it. By writing about these actions, I'm acknowledging that events such as Mylia did happen. I am grateful that at least in my outfit this behavior never approached that reported at Mylia. The most children I ever witnessed drug from bunkers and hideouts and killed, either mistakenly or as an act of vengeance, was perhaps five. That of course opens the door for all the usual attacks I have grown so weary of over the years --- like what kind of man was I to stand by and let this happen? Aren't five innocent children too many? To admit these things were happening just goes to confirm what anti-war protesters were accusing Vietnam Veterans of being --- baby killers.

But for sake of history --- these incidents need to be looked at in something other than purely emotional terms blurted out in the atmosphere of an unpopular war. Yes, women and children died in Vietnam but in what war haven't they? These atrocities are at least as old as the Old Testament assuming you believe the fables of the Old Testament:

And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

Joshua 6:21

And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did to the

king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho.

Joshua 10:28

And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.

Joshua 10:39

Not only were these atrocities committed according to Biblical myths, but they were carried out by people hailed by religious people as heroes, Moses, Joshua, and David to name a few. Furthermore, these Old Testament atrocities were committed at the orders of the very god Christians attempt to label “a loving god.”

World War II ended with two explosions over Japan that each individually, in a split second, took the lives of more innocent women and children than killed during the entire Vietnam War. The argument for the use of these bombs was to save thousands of American lives had America invaded Japan, a theory previously debunked by this writing. It is quite likely that if several high dignitaries from Japan were invited to a location like Bikini to watch Baker explode, the war would have ended with no invasion of Japan and no bomb dropped upon their soil. This simple bit of diplomacy was never attempted,

Dropping the bomb on Japan was not the only deliberate extermination of civilians either. The firebombing of Tokyo, claimed about 100,000 civilians, burnt to death by 1665 tons of “pure fire, referred to by James Carroll as “*the most efficient and deliberate act of arson in history.*”⁰¹⁰ Interviewed by James Carroll, Robert McNamara remorsefully referred to his own involvement in the firebombing of Japan as “*a war crime.*”⁰¹¹ Carroll states that the vast majority of deaths due to fire bombing, despite constant reassurances by President Truman that the only targets were military in nature, were civilians, women, children, and the elderly.⁰¹² In Tokyo and sixty five other Japanese cities, 900,000 people were incinerated, 100,000 more than all Japanese combat deaths.⁰¹³

Germany, it has been said, was firebombed back into the Stone Age. The attack on Dresden, known as the culture capital of Germany, targeted nothing but civilians as Dresden knowingly had no military establishments to attack. Packed with refugees fleeing the Soviets advance, thousands of tons of incendiary bombs were dropped on this unjustifiable target killing an unknown number of civilians. The dead numbered anywhere between 35,000 and 130,000 in Dresden alone.⁰¹⁴ Those numbers represent only those that died in Dresden and do not include the numerous other cities also firebombed. For those acts, the World War II generation and its veterans were hailed as “*The Greatest Generation.*”

Tens of thousands of innocent women and children are dead as the result of our invasion of Iraq, yet many of those who screamed “*Baby Killers*” at Vietnam Veterans now ordain their vehicles with “*Support our Troops*” magnetic ribbons and stand cheering their own son’s units return, proclaiming them as heroes. If you detect some bitterness in these words, I would hardly be surprised.

Beyond name calling and my struggle for justification for my participation in Vietnam, a much larger issue is going on here. On a national level, are there

really innocent civilians? Take us in America, for example. How is it we Americans can so easily overlook all the human misery our demand for cheaper prices is placing on third world nations? Shouldn't we, if innocent, be demanding fairer wages and better working conditions for those forced to produce our goods? Or is being forced to work next to slave labor alright by our standards as long as we are the benefactors? We would never stand to have our children working in sweat shops --- but it's OK if Indian children do?

Where is the rationale here? People of America ask themselves the question, 'Why do others in the world hate us so much' when the answer to that question is in their local supermarket, bananas at 29-49 cents a pound. "*Think*" how is that possible? How is it possible that bananas, raised in Central America, can be harvested, transported via ship to America, off loaded onto trucks and shipped all over the nation and yet sell for 29-49 cents a pound? Who is getting the money? Who is not? Rest assured the fruit companies, the ships, truckers, and supermarkets are getting their money --- companies almost exclusively owned by Americans.

If your child was forced to work nearly every one of his waking hours to produce tennis shoes for little or no personal gain so that some foreign child could afford the luxury of wearing brand named shoes endorsed by super sports stars, would you view those unarmed foreigners as innocent? While we might state that X thousand innocent people died in the World Trade Center, were not those people enjoying the benefits the World Trade Center's strangle hold had on the economies of third world nations? If you were one of those suffering from such international economic barbarism, would you see those enjoying its rewards as innocent?

CaLu: Staging for Khe Sanh

The 2nd BN 1st MAR's stay at C-2 was not long. By Mar 23rd we, the 2nd BN 1st MAR, were on our way to CaLu, a staging area along highway 9 for Operation Pegasus' thrust into Khe Sanh. Unlike Con Thien or C-2, CaLu was not an established base with bunkers, trenches, or sandbagged reinforced positions. We were in effect just dumped out somewhere along Highway 9 to fend for ourselves. As the medical staff, we were given a GP tent set up about fifty feet behind what we believed were the front lines. I had no idea where or what kind of perimeter had been established or if any line existed forward of our position other than what I could see. By what I could see, we, the medical staff, were far too vulnerable if the line located just in front of that tall grass of our Medical Aid Station was all that separated us from the NVA.

A favorite Marine saying is "*Marines always take care of their Corpsmen*" but if I had any feelings at CaLu, being taken care of was not one of them. The rest of the medical staff felt the same way. Not only were we still within the range of enemy artillery, it seemed by what I could see that we were in range of ordinance as simple as a hand grenade. Should the line come under attack, our tent was the largest target. And we were in it.

One evening we did receive incoming grenades and bursts of automatic weapons fire. All the old veterans jumped out of their racks and kissed the ground,

waiting to see what would happen next. Was this the beginning of an assault, something to be concerned with, or just some VC out there harassing us? Then came another grenade, then another and a few moments later, another. To those of us who had been in combat for some time, what seemed to be happening was some Vietcong out there was probing the lines, hoping to draw fire to pinpoint Marine positions, particularly a machine gun's position, but all he got back was a dozen grenades. The VC, likely one individual, backed off.

As things seemed to calm down, the older vets began climbing back into their racks believing the excitement was over. The excitement however was just beginning --- but not from anything the Vietcong had to throw at us. Instead, the excitement came from our chaplain. He was screaming at the top of his lungs for us to get the Hell out of the racks, get our guns, and get outside. The VC was coming, and he knew it. At first everyone just rolled over and pulled their poncho over their head thinking "This is a joke, right? A chaplain barking orders!"

But bark orders he did. He, by his standards, was the commissioned officer there and we, the enlisted, were to follow his orders. "*Get your guns and asses outside!*" he growled. "*Anyone not outside in the next few seconds will be written up. Move! Move!*" So, I rolled out of the rack, grabbed my gun, and walked outside. Locked and loaded behind our lines, I sat and wondered who I was supposed to defend myself against? That Marine over there? In terms of Vietnam, for some VC to lob in a few grenades at the perimeter was almost an every night ordeal. If we reacted to every time a few grenades came in like this, we'd never get any sleep. Furthermore, the officer calling the orders was the same one telling us to trust in god and want us to

mouth the verses, "*Yea thou I walk through the valley, I shall fear no evil.*" I could not help but see the hypocrisy here. Doesn't god protect us? Doesn't god have everything under his control? Apparently, god did not have it all under control --- tonight anyway. Tonight, the all-powerful god needed our help, an irony that I'm reminded of each time I'm asked to support the Christian Children's Fund.



Operation Pegasus kicked off on April 1st, 1968. The idea behind Pegasus was to liberate and relieve the Khe Sanh Base which had been under siege since the TET Offensive began. As early as April 5th units of 2-1 were discovering what military force the Khe Sanh Base had been up against. The NVA had been there in

large numbers and although now reduced in numbers still were. The sharks existed, out there somewhere.

Despite that NVA buildup, while at CaLu, most casualties did not come from enemy encounters. The main medical problem came from the sun, with heat exhaustion, followed by rare cases of heatstroke.⁰¹⁵ Stretchers of heat casualties were always surrounding the medical bunker. The heat at CaLu could only be described as horrific, but maneuvers in the field went on. Day after day Marines patrolled the area and day after day, we received heat casualties. The more serious casualties, combat casualties missing limbs or shot, were flown directly to Dong Ha or Phu Bia. We dealt largely with heat casualties. We returned those who after receiving some temporary intervention like an IV saline solution to the field. Infections and minor illness that could be treated with an injection, a dressing, or pills also were returned.

While at CaLu, another option existed for dealing with the heat. It was a mountain stream just down from our encampment. The water was good quality, cool, and supported any number of water related activities; swimming, bathing, and laundry. Personal hygiene was far better than any forward position of 2-1 held in the last six months. The stream also offered a reasonable source of drinking water, something often hard to find.

Don Dennis highlights the need for water in his diary published in "**We Remember**" a book of memories of former 2/1 veterans.

April 9

Today we were supposed to move off this hill, but we didn't for some reasons. Today was hot, and what little water we got was dirty. Water so cheap and for us so hard to get.

April 10

Today was hot and we were out of water. It took them all day to get water to us. We slept when we could--the sun was so hot and them damn flies made it hard. –

April 11

Today we got helicoptered off the hill at 1430 down to Ca LU. We took baths down to the river. Man does time like this make you feel good.----- We learn that the last helicopter was dropping its last load of the company that was replacing us and they get arty. One guy got a direct hit on his head and all they found was his dog tags and fingers. They had some WIA too. Man that's some feeling knowing we just got off and bang, they hit the hill.⁰¹⁶

The importance of clean drinking water can be seen in a later diary entry of Don Dennis. The dashed lines represent portions left out length's sake

May 11:

----- we moved out at 8:00 and had to climb a high hill. It took us hour & half and we had two heat casualties on the way up. We got them a medivac at 12:10, the gunners on the Ch34 had to get off because they couldn't get up, but another copter got them off. We walked along the hill tops, we passed some friendly troops. At 0615 we took a break for an hour then moved on. We drank some of the dirty water on the way but didn't care. We got in at 1420 after 31-1/2 hours without sleep or food & little water. We were dead on our feet. We got chow and hit the racks

-----,

May 15

Had a road sweep from 0630-0800. Went on a convoy to ca lu from 1015 to 1830. The Gook body we saw long side the road wasn't anything but bone. His head sat on a stick thanks to some Marine. We took a bath while at ca lu. ----

May 16

Cowboy went to PLT radioman. We were on a day long working party. we tore down buildings and burned up the woods. We got some incoming, nothing close. I got a letter from carol. we got SP's & bread. I'm at low spirits, I don't care anymore. In fact everyone seems this way. I'm thinking of going to guns. I don't feel too good. I've got the shits.⁰¹⁷

If no clean drinking water is available, people will drink whatever is available if thirsty enough. In Don Dennis's case "Dirty water" was all that was available, so he drank it. The result, after five to ten days of incubation, came "Ho's Revenge," dysentery. With proper medical treatment, dysentery is not usually a life-threatening disease left untreated. Life threatening dehydration can occur in a short time, particularly in the heat of CaLu.

Digging through all the literature I have collected over the years while forming the Vietnam Veterans of the 2nd Battalion 1st Marines, I picked up the Diary of Ivan Ellis that he sent to me some time before. Reading through it I came across another dirty water story as written about by Don Dennis. Here's how Ivan's Diary reads: Notice the timeline between water and disease:

30 AUGUST 1968 – FRIDAY

----- When we arrived at the bridge my tail was dragging. I did fill up one canteen at the house. Raw water, but was good through.

7 SEPTEMBER 1968 – SATURDAY

----- All day long I didn't eat anything since we have had nothing to eat. I really didn't feel like eating. At the compound, I started getting diarrhea, and as Beatle and Sgt. Holland started building us a shelter, I started running a temperature and getting chills. I started taking my temperature and it went from 100.6 to 104 degrees

in less than two hours. So he called in for a chopper and since it was around 1930 or 2000, it would be an emergency. I also vomited a good deal of fluids, and that seemed to drop my temperature a little and I told Glen to call it off and I will go in the a.m, but he said no. The chopper came around 2030, I think, and it took me to NSA. Not long after I got to Ward 4A, and my doctor is Dr. Cunningham, he checked me over and I showered and shaved. I left all my gear with the platoon except my rifle, flak jacket and helmet. I had to throw away all my clothes too. Slept good, temperature down to 102 degrees.⁰¹⁸

(Military time is a 24-hour clock: 0800=8am;
1400=2pm (12+2=14))

Before going on with the war, I should like to mention my rate advance as it will become an important issue after returning to the States. I made HN, E-3, on January 21, 1967. That should have made me eligible, or so I was led to believe, for Hm3 when, or shortly after, I entered Vietnam. Part of my reason for going to Vietnam was to obtain HM3. I was nominated for HM3 in August 1967 but for whatever reason was not given HM3 until April 16, 1968, nine months later. No entry in my service record up until that point should have prevented from obtaining HM3 so whether by design or things just happened that way, I do not know. All I do know is this will come back to haunt me after returning to the States.

Meanwhile back in the world, America's President Johnson on March 31st in a televised address to the nation, called for a unilateral halt to the bombing of North Vietnam as well as an increase in defense spending of 5.1 billion dollars for 1968 and 69. At the end of his speech, Johnson surprisingly acknowledged that his administration had become a casualty of the Vietnam War and assertively stated that he would not accept the nomination of his party for the president of the United States.⁰¹⁹ Four days later on April 4th, Martin Luther King, a harsh critic of the Vietnam War, was assassinated in Memphis Tennessee. Vietnam, it seemed to me, was tearing the fabric of our flag.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Khe Sanh

From my April 21 letter, on the 18th of April we were herded onto trucks for a trip up Highway 9. Another convoy! I, with my phobia for trucks, was now aboard a truck headed to the most dreaded area in Vietnam with only two months yet to go in Vietnam. Once again, I began to feel like I wasn't going to make it home standing up.

Reports coming in from the field were horrific. Hotel, early on, made a ghastly discovery while on patrol outside the perimeter. One report listed a boot with the foot still in it, a right hand severed at the wrist, pieces of intestine, a hat with bits of brains and scalp still in it, and what was referred to as other unidentified pieces of meat.⁰⁰¹

Echo Company was making even worse discoveries. On April 22nd, at 0900 while searching several bunkers, some with human parts scattered throughout, two USMC bodies, two to three days old, were discovered tied together. The bodies were believed to have been placed in the bunkers after the two were dead.⁰⁰² Discovering the remains of what was believed to be Americans was not an isolated case either. Golf Company on a mine sweep the morning of April 26th found portions of an American serviceman's head.⁰⁰³

"Whatever happened to "Leave no man behind?" I asked myself. I always wrestled with the question of what could be worse than being sent home in a pine box. Not being sent home ever was the answer. Up until this point in the war, we did send a few people home in what was not much larger than a sandwich bag. But, we always sent our KIAs, at least some part of them, home. Now we were discovering pieces of our own troops just left. I could not help but recall Martinez, Muraco, and Lt Runnels. I wondered if another American unit found a few parts of them we may have left.

I do not remember much about getting to Khe Sanh other than how the area looked. I was completely memorized and froze in time what I saw on 35mm slides. If what I have been told was true, orange barrels contained the herbicide "Agent Orange," I recorded hundreds of orange barrels just lying around inside Khe Sanh. Many of these barrels were filled with dirt for bunker construction. They were used for storing items like cloths, to hold water for showers, cut in half for grills, or any number of uses that could be found for 50-gallon drums. Years later Agent Orange was blamed for the high percentage of cancers found in Vietnam Veterans, not to mention the birth defects suffered by their offspring. We, Vietnam veterans, were told that we had nothing to fear from Agent Orange. In fact, it has been said that those promoting Agent Orange mixed it with water and drank it just to prove it offered no harmful effects. That however is hearsay.

Imagine my reaction in a weed control class years later when the instructor claimed that the herbicides agriculture currently is using offer no threat to the public. He even made the statement these herbicides were so benign they could be drank without any harmful effects. I walked out of class that day and overall did poorly in that class. Given the promise that I made myself watching women and children pulled from their bunkers, I could not allow myself to parrot back this

instructors' statements even if only for a test. I simply did not believe him nor trust him to tell us the truth given that he was obviously pro-herbicide and agriculture.

Anyway, the first day I spent at Khe Sanh we received incoming artillery all day and all night from what we called the Rock, a gun placement to the west in Laos. The incoming was slow but constant, a round here, a round there, just enough that in time my nerves were all nerved out.

All night I lay in a trench listening as one round after another whistled overhead. Some landed close enough that the dirt walls of the trench would cave in, half burying me. It never really occurred to me how little dirt it would take to bury me alive. I learned how little dirt it would take to be fatal some twenty years later during a soil science safety class. Should any of those banks caved in, with me or anyone else lying at the bottom, that is where we would have been found. At the time all that mattered was getting as low as possible and staying there – and maybe getting some sleep.

As I laid there in that trench, I could hear what sounded like digging. Was the NVA digging under us? I had heard of Vietnamese digging under the perimeter to emerge inside the lines to reap havoc on unsuspecting defenders. I could imagine how this could happen given that those on the inside of the perimeter would be caught totally off guard by assuming those within the perimeter were all friendlies. Just one NVA with a satchel full of grenades could have a field day launching grenades into bunkers, not to mention what a fully armed platoon or company of NVA might do. And given how dark the nights were, a NVA in the perimeter would have no problem running around largely undetected until it became obvious what was happening. The result would be unadulterated chaos. No one would know who was who, who was friendly. or who was foe. The digging continued --- as did the worry.

Later that evening, however, I was to discover what was causing that digging sound. It came with the pitter patter of little feet. I could hear them coming, brushing up against the wall, leaping over each other, squeaking and squealing. I lifted my head to see what the clatter was only to be overwhelmed by a tidal wave of rats. They were everywhere, running over me, getting stuck between me and the sides of the trench, squealing and struggling to get free, and slithering under me. "Get out of here! Get out! Get out!" was my instinctive response just as another artillery shell sizzled over, followed by an explosion which rained dirt down on me. "OK" I thought "Maybe, I'll hang out here for a while."

Charlie Med: Khe Sanh's Medical Center

The following day, as written about in my April 23rd letter, I flew out of Khe Sanh to CaLu but it was not long and I was right back at Khe Sanh. The second time my home was a bunker called Charley Med (C-Med). From the outside, C-Med looked something like a cave reinforced by sandbags but on the inside, compared to where I spent the first night at Khe Sanh, it was a resort Condo. The bunker could and did withstand a direct hit by artillery. The threat of the sides caving in was gone and

although an occasional a rat was seen, never was I going to experience rats again as I did in the frontline trenches of Khe Sanh.

I was assigned the position of managing sick call twenty-four hours a day. I ended sleeping in the sick call room of C Med, on stretchers supported from ropes from the ceiling. Many of the remaining Corpsmen slept in a narrow bunker near the supply tent. This meant that at any time should anyone walked in requiring treatment, I was there to check him in. I had to make the determination whether more skilled treatment than I could provide was required and if so, summon a doctor and additional staff.

Recorded in the Command Chronologies, Part II Narrative Summary, Item #20 910 sick call patients entered my domain. Divide 910 by 31 days and what you get is roughly 30 patients a day, most of which were minor bumps and bruises. That, however, does not include the 99 WIAs, usually seriously wounded because of artillery or the 28 KIAs for which you could do nothing but "*Bag and Tag em!*" and stash them in Graves Registration and wait for a non-emergency medevack. Waiting for a chopper to become available for a non-emergency medevacks in the DMZ and around Khe Sanh however was often like waiting for the Publisher's Clearing House Prize Patrol to knock on your door. By the time many KIAs were removed from Graves, their presence was evidenced simply by smell. That is not intended to put down those who risked their lives flying in to remove our KIAs. Those boys had plenty emergencies to respond to and put their lives on the line daily to assist the wounded and reinforce units in harm's way. I had great admiration for chopper pilots and crews.

At the sick call side of the bunker the sick kept coming. Sore throats, colds, minor cuts and bruises, shrapnel wounds, amputees that could not be immediately medevacked,

heat casualties, and an occasional case of gonorrhoea was our usual case load. We did vaccinations when required mostly for FNGs. On occasion, however, some smart mouth's shot record would just happen to mystically disappear and the poor guy would have to get all those shots over again. Strange how the shot records lost always seemed to be those that gave us at C-Med the most grief.

Side Note:

Today, 2021, COVID vaccinations, or the refusal of them, is a hot topic. One of the issues mentioned is whether service members have the option to accept them or reject them. Never, as long as I was a medic, were service members of my time frame given such an option. Wars have been lost because of disease.

One thing we did have, not common to any other sick bays that I ever ran, was the real threat of rabies. We gave many rabies shots. At times, a line would form outside C-Med by those waiting their turn to be called in. Rat bites, as might be expected from what I experienced my only evening on the lines, were common. And with rats as numerous as they were, plague was no longer thought of as something lost to the past either. I could see where plague was a real concern for any unvaccinated population.

For the benefit of those totally uneducated about plague, plague is spread from the host, a rat, to a person via the bite of a flea, the rat flea, very similar to how malaria is spread from host to victim via mosquito. The Black Death that crawled out of Constantinople during the Middle Ages claiming millions of lives in Europe still reached epidemic proportions in Vietnam. While plague is currently treatable with antibiotics, in those places where rodent numbers are high and sanitation is major problem, if a strain of plague should develop resistant to antibiotics, the world could see another large population die off.

FLASH: 25 March 1968: South Vietnam An outbreak of bubonic plague in Tayninh province has reached epidemic proportions and is beginning to spread toward Saigon.⁰⁰⁴

Plague is one of the bacteria being cultured as a biological weapon. Here stateside, in the twenty-first century, warnings still exist in western states to stay away from prairie dog towns. Plague is known to exist in prairie dog towns.

Speaking generally about C-Med, we had nearly everything we needed for emergency medical attention. We had the medical staff. We had equipment like surgical sets, oxygen, and IVs for about anything that required immediate medical attention. We had generators for electricity, one of a few places in Khe Sanh that did. We were prepared for patching a person up and passing him on to the next location. What we did not have was long-term holding capabilities such as hospitals. Our mission was to stop the bleeding, protect the airways, replenish vital fluids, and get the victim to the nearest facility that offered long term care or surgery. By what I saw, we were good at what we did given the training we had and conditions in which we worked.

One of the television shows that went to the top of the ratings after I returned to the States was "Mash." A favorite among the students I shared a house with at St Cloud, I could not watch it --- and when I did, I often got angry and hostile, or at the very least, unable to sleep. While I shared many of the same views of war as Hawkeye, to hear him come straight out with his slanderous sarcastic comments always left my head going over and over my war experiences. I suspect my war experiences were worse than his. My experience was not scripted. I was the first person on the scene, the first to look into the eyes of a kid who at about the same moment realized he'd never walk again, or worse. I remember those eyes, those dimming eyes that knew I would be the last person those eyes would ever see. I wondered at those times if he knew I was going to tell him the standard lie, like I always did, that he was going to be OK. You know that lie, like being told at the doctor's office; "Now this ain't going to hurt a bit." I have never felt good about telling those lies.

Of course, knowing I was the last person these dying would ever see, many told me their inner most secrets they'd tell no one else for fear of reprisal. It was here these dying would tell me what they thought of the war, the military, and their country. It was here these dying would express their disappointment that no god had stepped in on their behalf. It was here they would tell me their prayers went unanswered.

Christians often state that they have never seen an atheist on his death bed. I have never seen anyone on their death bed anxious or ready to meet their maker, as the saying goes. I've never heard one of them say "Well --- thank god for taking me now. At least, I will be safe in god's hands now." Those words are always left to their survivors and those who have something to gain by speaking for the dead. But those people do not know what the dying thought. They were not there. I was.

Graves Registration: Bags of Heroes



Enter here and you're on sacred ground. Grave's registration was where we ware housed the dead all dressed up in their Army tank green body bags. Here lay the remains of what were and still are today referred to

as "heroes" by the promoters of war --- but I did not see anything particularly heroic about any of those laying there. Most were exactly as I, only dead. I was just lucky enough to be where I was rather than where they were at the time their short life came to an end. I see nothing heroic about stepping on a land mine --- or to be where a random artillery shell just happened to impact the ground --- or being shot either by a sniper, a Vietcong, an overzealous Marine, an accidental discharge, or even a suicide.

As I piled them here waiting for a nonemergency medevack, all I saw were dead, decomposed remains of someone who, but a short time ago, was a high school football star, a boyfriend, a loved son, sibling, a father, or best friend. While those within these walls were covered so those passing by would not have to look on, they remained only as temporary holdovers. Their presence however left a permanent etching in my mind to review every time war would be glamorized in the future. If anything was glamorous about this place, I'd like to know what it was. If those decaying there could talk, I wonder if they'd say the reward, the bag that contained what remains of them we could recover, was worth its cost? I wonder if they would think the war that denied them raising a family and achieving whatever they may have after returning to the States, was worth the price they paid. And to those families whose son's remains lies within these hallowed grounds, I wonder if they felt properly compensated for their loss? I wonder if the children who grew up never knowing their father's felt the war was worth his absence. I did not know. All I know for sure was I did not feel that honored to be in their presence nor did I have any desire to share their glory.

While we will never know the true thoughts of those who gave their all, plenty of people exist who claim they do. Politicians, priests, and war hawks talk for the dead all the time perhaps because, as I remember reading from somewhere long ago, none of the dead can stand up and refute anything which is said about them. I believe most those who have went off to war went there believing they'd be coming home alive. They went feeling invincible. It was the other guy, the enemy, that was going die. But war teaches those who have spent any time in it, death is random and the more death one sees, the more fragile life, their life, appears. I knew very few short timers who were as ecstatic about jumping into battle as some (not all) of the gung-ho FNGs. In fact, the shorter (closer to going to home) most I knew became; the less likely they were willing to expose themselves to any danger.

You'd think that if dying was some desired end, just the opposite would be true. Having only a few more days to die, these short times should have been volunteering for everything, the more dangerous the better. My guess is, however, given the true behavior of most short timers, they favored living as opposed to being spoken of as a hero.

Dalton Trumbo once wrote:

*Nobody but the dead knows whether all these things people talk about are worth dying for or not. And the dead can't talk. So the words about noble deaths and sacred blood and Honor and such are all put into dead lips by grave robbers and fakes who have no right to speak for the dead. If a man says death before dishonor he is either a fool or a liar because He doesn't know what death is. He isn't able to judge. He only knows about living.*⁰⁰⁵

A Word about Fear: No Where to Hide

Being at Khe Sanh was far more than running a dispensary. Not only were the rumors flying around terrifying, but the artillery also shot at us was demoralizing. The NVA was estimated to have shot 600 medium to heavy artillery, rockets, and mortars at Khe Sanh in the month of May⁰⁰⁶ or about 20 rounds per day. Compared to Con Thien, I always thought Con Thien to be the worse of the two; averaging 30 rounds per day over a span of 22 January days⁰⁰⁷ Con Thien was considerably smaller in area than Khe Sanh. To the Marines who defended Khe Sanh during the siege, 20 rounds of incoming a day perhaps seemed like a day off, but to me, with less than two months left in country, 20 rounds of artillery was 20 more than I wanted. Every day I was within the boundaries of Khe Sanh receiving fire, it seemed the shells got larger and larger, closer and closer. Every shell that went off reminded me exactly how far I had to go to get home.

One day I remember I panicked. I was working in the sick call room of C Med. That day was not unlike any other day that I had spent under the fire of the enemy guns. The rounds were not any larger or were there any more than usual. But they just kept coming. One here - a pause - then one there - a pause - then

another --- pause --- then another. If you listened closely, the guns from Laos could be heard firing followed by a warning via the radio “Khe Sanh – you have incoming” followed by the scream of artillery overhead, followed by an explosion. This played out repeatedly like some broken record until I just could not take it anymore.

Anger first surfaced “Shut that Damn thing (the radio) off!” And when the incoming would not quit and the radio broadcasting “Khe Sanh – you have incoming” finally I just fell apart. My first thoughts were to get into the safest spot I could and stay there. But I could not just stay there. “What if someone outside gets hit?” That would mean I (being the Corpsman) would have to leave this spot of relative safety and run out and expose myself to that fire. I was too close to home for that --- so quit. I wanted that incoming fire to just quit.

But the shooting continued. Soon my reasoning went from “Don’t let anyone get hit” to “Don’t get hit” and suddenly no place I could hide or corner I could crouch in seemed safe enough. All I could think was I wanted it to stop but it just kept coming. I felt for sure I was going to die even though I was in perhaps the safest place on the base. Every shell seemed as if it were made for me. I guess after 4 to 5 months of this shelling, I’d had enough. I just wanted to go home --- in one piece --- and every time a round hissed past or exploded it just panicked me more. I was going to die --- I knew it. I just hoped it would be painless.

I’m not sure what pulled me out of it. Somehow, I came back to my senses. I envisioned myself as being stronger than to allow myself to fall into a Black hole of fear --- but I did. So, what does that say about me? Am I less of a man? Or am I normal? Is this something anyone exposed to this type of stress may at one time or another go through? If so, I’m sure no one ever talked about it. I never did. Instead, I hid it. I suppressed these feelings anyway I could. I locked them away in my subconscious where those feelings lingered like some caged wild beast waiting for the opportunity to escape --- and escape they would in the strangest places; bars, shopping centers, theaters, traffic --- anywhere, after returning home, that enough stress would drive these old demons to the surface.

And the war continued --- and the dead kept piling up as a constant reminder that their fate may yet be mine. With every day that passed my thoughts were becoming more and more selfish. Me --- Me --- save me! Get me out of here! Let me go home. Just let me go home. And all the time I wondered --- what does this say about me? Am I really a coward or have I been just here too long? Am I crazy or are these feelings normal? Am I completely selfish or is it time to begin thinking more about self-preservation? I never received any answers as these feelings were never talked about. And they really needed processing then, not thirty years after carrying them around.

Exactly when I returned to Phu Bia is not exactly clear. In my May 10th letter home, I state that I was still in Khe Sanh, not doing much but working on casualties. A May 21st letter though states that I was back in Phu Bia in a manner that suggests that I had been there at least a couple of days. In any event I missed Fox Company’s infamous mine sweep just outside Khe Sanh on Highway 9 on May 19th. I first heard of Fox’s plight back at the club in Phu Bia. Killed were eighteen members of Fox Company just outside the wire at Khe Sanh.



simply at the right place at the right time.

I snapped this photo on my way out of Khe Sanh. I have good reason to believe this was Fox Company's fateful convoy. If it was not for the chopper, I took this photo from, I likely would have been on that convoy. And quite possibly would not be writing this. But --- unlike those warehoused in graves, I was

CHAPTER NINE

Welcome Home --- or Not

On Looking down on the California Coastline From my Plane returning from Vietnam

By David L Johnson, 1968

Oh Lord, my year's prayer have now you blessed
Upon my doleful eyes shedding the same
Melancholy mist weeping to the breast
Of this longed-for shore below this plane I came
Winging back the day. Look upon its peers,
Sad Heart, as alone they brave the wave rolls;
Likewise you're alone for you know not where
Fall your tears, just these that burn your soul.
The left-behind fire still rages uncontrolled,
The leeches still grow fat feasting
Off the land. The dead, still dead, the young, the old.
The child still weeps, his father still deceasing.
So mourn, Sad Heart, this shore ends not your search,
As Ares' Vulture glides back upon his perch.⁰⁰¹

A Not so Welcome Home

I waited all year to be aboard this plane, often worried I'd be returning in the cargo section. Instead, there I was in the cabin section surrounded by others laughing and carrying on, displaying pictures of children and wives. Myself, however, I found I was not looking as forward to getting home nearly as much as I thought I would be. Instead, my mind seemed to be more on what I was leaving behind, a job undone. What was accomplished by all that pain and suffering? What did all those dead die for? It all seemed for nothing. I saw no reason to celebrate. The war was still being fought and those still dying were not all unknown faces. Many were people that I either knew or were at the very least members of my unit. And I was leaving them. I felt like I was running away.

What an irony. Here I was on my way home feeling guilty about leaving when the entire time I was in Vietnam I maintained that if given a chance to go home, I would. Why now should I feel bad about what I thought would make me feel happy for the past year? Strange thing, this mind of ours that one should have to feel bad about achieving what once was thought would bring happiness.

I had this very bad after taste in my mouth for exactly why we were in Vietnam in the first place. Not having anything else to blame or having any good explanation as to why we were in Vietnam, I, like numerous other Veterans, came home with the idea that the only reason we were in Vietnam was for the interests of big business, the munitions manufacturers, chemical manufacturers like the maker of Agent Orange, oil, and/or their stockholders. The idea that all those close to me died just so Colt and its stockholders could increase their bottom line was

outrageous --- but then America was warned against the military industrial complex and war profiteering.

“Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations. This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence -- economic, political, even spiritual -- is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”⁰⁰²

Had America forgotten the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower, America’s true warrior? Was his worst fear becoming reality? Given the law of supply and demand, with three and a half million men and women directly engaged in the defense establishment, it would stand to reason the only way to create demand is to use the surplus. What better way to lower inventory, in this case armaments, than to create a war --- and not just any war either, but an unbeatable war, a war that might last for ten thousand days or more. And Vietnam would not have ended there if not for the American protesters who themselves began dying on our campuses opposing this war.

Our plane, as I remember, flew nonstop from Da Nang to Travis Air Force Base in California. What seemed odd about crossing the International Date Line was we landed in California an hour before we took off in Da Nang on the same day? It seemed as stated in my poem that literally we “*winged back the day*” and in a sense, we did. If only I could have received the year back --- or better, my four years of military service time back as I was to discover down the road that those

who never served in the military, college students or laborers, all had four seniority on me at about anything I decided to do.

I was not sure what to expect exiting that plane. By what I was told, I would have to fight my way to the terminal, dodging spit and flowers but no protesters were seen there to greet us. In fact, no one greeted us at all, not so much as a small color guard, a salute, or handshake. Nothing. A home coming high school football player might have expected more of a reception. Even landing on a military base, likely the reason there were no protestors, we received not so much as a welcome home banner.

What I remember the most about the terminal was the restroom. Flush toilets! If you ever witnessed a cat watch the water swirl around a toilet bowl and then disappear down the hole, that was me, eyes wide open and simply amazed. I had to flush the toilet a dozen times in near disbelief that the thing worked. I was amazed that such things still existed in the world. I had not seen anything like one of those for a year.

Now on the ground, the race get to the San Francisco airport was on. A group of us, not wishing to wait for a shuttle, jumped into a cab. Splitting the cost of the taxi fare we barreled down the highway across the Golden Gate Bridge spreading its arms from shore to shore was as magnificent as ever imagined. The true yellow brick road was directing us home.

As the plane taxied up to the terminal at Hector Airport in Fargo, North Dakota, I could see Mom, Dad, and Hank, my high school best friend, waiting for me at the gate. The terminal at that time was not much more than a single-story block house with a lounge. As I neared, clearly, they must have spent some money and time while waiting for me in that lounge. Mom was drunk. My first family duty arriving home was to escort my mother to the car so she would not fall like I had so many other casualties of war.

It was a quiet trip home. About all that got said was Mom crying about the shape her son came home in. "It looks like you have been sick a very long time," she would say. I had in fact lost weight eating those C-Rats but otherwise I felt fine. "Everyone in town thought I should go over and comfort the Growth's (Jim Groth's Parents)" Mom blubbered, "but I couldn't. Not with my son still there! Oh --- David, I worried so much." I really did not want to hear that, not now. I just wanted to get home.

The following morning, Dad came up and told me we had to talk. With everyone else still in bed or gone from the house, Dad began telling me about the year and what my year in Vietnam had put my family through. The most effected, of course, was Mom. She hadn't quit drinking since the day I left. "I just did not know what to do" Dad said "I know this; however, we need to do something about your mother. I've made an appointment up at Jamestown (the state hospital) with the alcohol ward. Would you consider going with?"

As I saw it, I wasn't left much choice. When Mom got up, Dad had a drink waiting for her. A drink to help Mom wake up in the morning had over the year become something of a staple I was told. By the time we arrived at Jamestown, about a two-hour drive, Mom already had a good buzz going. For two hours, of course, I had to listen to how sick I looked and how she could not deal with the

death of Jim Groth. When we dropped her off at the State Hospital, I was remorsefully relieved.

Enderlin 1968: My Hometown and Veterans

With Mom in the hospital, Dad at work, Helen and Leroy in Fargo, and a slight animosity toward Hank, not much existed in Enderlin that summer of 1968 to keep a young man just returning from war busy. The place to be in my mind would have been Fargo. Given the fact that I had not yet acquired a vehicle and the family car was being kept busy with Dad working and running back and forth to Jamestown, I was for the short time fairly limited to what was going on in Enderlin. Having set aside childhood things such as catching turtles and building forts, all that was happening in Enderlin was bars or churches. So downtown I went. Given the choice between patronizing a church which I had come to believe was at least partially responsible for the war, or the bar, I'd choose the bar.

It was good to reminisce about my childhood walking the streets of Enderlin. The old tree fort down below the water plant still existed where young teenagers we would swing out over the terrain like Spiderman attached to a fifty-foot rope that kept us from being launched out into space at the other end. While Enderlin was not the spot to be for a returning warrior eager to get on with life, it would be hard to deny that Enderlin was just the place to rise up from childhood. The community was safe. Everyone knew everyone --- sometimes too well. Enderlin was as much of a large extended family as it was a city.

Walking around downtown, I had to wonder about where much of the old town went. Sam Bass's popcorn stand still stood on Railway Street between the White Tavern and what used to be Welch's Grocery. Gone however was Sam Bass himself, a short, stocky Greek who made his living selling popcorn, homemade wine, and fireworks. Cherry Bombs were illegal but any kid with a friendly smile and a few bucks could likely convince Sam that they could be trusted with his secret --- as if everyone in town did not know Sam had a stash of Cherry Bombs below his counter. Sam loved kids and what kid did not know what followed the words "*Hey --- Kid! Commeer. I give ya good deal.*" It was a grocery bag full of free popcorn and great popcorn it was, homegrown and popped by the resident popcorn expert.



And then there was Inga's Café, the Hilton House. The hotel served as the out-of-town residence of numerous railroad crewmen laid over until the next day when they would catch a train back to their hometown and families. What Inga's Café always offered was a pinochle

game with either laid over railroad employees or Inga herself. During high school, this was one of my favorite hangouts. Inga served as my second mother, always cheerful, loved to play cards and converse with anyone at any time. I often wondered if she ever slept. She was there serving breakfast to the early risers. She was there at any time we showed up after a night of prowling around. She just was --- always there. Living in the building no doubt had something to do with it but even then, when did she sleep?⁹⁰⁰³

But that was childhood, a time past when Enderlin was a booming little railroad community with a large switch yard and full switching crews, a round house with laborers and machinists, and a passenger train that we as a family would take to Minneapolis each Christmas to shop at Dayton's Department Store.

By the time I returned from Vietnam, Enderlin was not much more than a stopover, a quick replacement point for a train crew, and down the tracks the train would go. No switching, no repairs, no passenger train, no depot, all of which moved to Glenwood Minnesota. And as the railroad went, so did many families of Enderlin, including the Sperstads, Gary and Stuart being a couple of my best friends.

Replacing all that which was lost to Glenwood from the railroad were empty stores no longer able to carry on. For as long as I could remember, Ken's shoe store changed heels and replaced worn out soles but no more. The store now stood vacant, its windows shoeless. The Grand Theater motion picture house stood motionless. The Pure Gas Station, one of Enderlin's central landmarks, was now largely a parking lot for the VFW. The adjoining café was incorporated into the VFW on the opposite side. Cut off from the railroad's life blood, the town was slowly dying.

But the exit of the railroad did not seem to affect the bar business much. Minus a few patrons, plenty remained to keep the doors open. There was the Friendly Bar that in my view was anything but friendly. Family owned an unusual patron was often treated like an alien, an uninvited guest at their table. I never got along with the owner anyway even before entering the service. The White System had largely only booths and stools. It just did not have what I liked in a bar. The Trio Bar was a likeable bar but its clientele was largely all nonveterans. That's not to say the Trio Bar was anti-veteran. The bar was largely a homogeneous composite of the town itself which was not anti-veteran either. What both had, the bar and town, in the eyes of this veteran, was ambiguity and apathy toward returning veterans. If you mentioned that just a few days ago you happened to be in war zone, the answer you could expect was "So!" So --- where does a returning veteran go if he feels the need to talk to other veterans or the war? The VFW of course.

The VFW Hell, You should have been in the Real War

Remembering the membership to the VFW mailed to me while still in Vietnam by Kenny Bommersbock, a longtime family friend and my old railroad boss, I found myself headed for the VFW looking for a "How ya doing, Dave" or just something of a welcome home, at the least an acknowledgement that I had just returned from

a foreign war. That is not what I received. What I received was “Do you have an ID?” by the manager in charge. So, I dug into my billfold and pulled out my military ID and placed it before him. Picking it up, he studied it for a moment, looked at me as if comparing my face to the picture, and then replied “What will you have, Kid? You’re Sookie’s kid, aren’t you?” No comment was made about my military ID card.

I could see atop the back bar Bill Gilbertson’s crossbow that he, a green beret, had sent home from Vietnam. Below that I could see my stamps from North Vietnam with their picture of North Vietnamese gunners shooting at American airplanes. I had sent them home from Vietnam, yet not a word. I’m not sure what exactly I was expecting but it was not complete vacuity.

It was unlikely the person did not know me, guessing me to be Sookie’s kid. With my stamps right there in full view, it was hard to believe that he had no idea that I was in Vietnam. Hell, he probably posted those stamps up there himself and yet not a word. I left there that evening pretending and telling myself that what had just transpired really meant nothing. Perhaps I was expecting too much. Yet, the lack of any interest in what I had just endured bothered me.

This was my hometown, wasn’t it? Where everyone knew everyone else’s business? As I remember it, I could not walk downtown without everyone knowing but I could get shot at for a year and no one cared? And here --- in the VFW? Were not veterans what the VFW was all about? Was a simple welcome home too much to ask for? Better still, the bar could have bought me a beer. Would that have been too much to ask?

It did occur to me after thinking about it, or attempting to rationalize what just occurred, the bar was not necessarily the VFW. It, like any other bar in town, was a bar. The VFW was an organization of veterans brought together by the common thread of serving under hostile fire in a foreign war. Its purpose is to aid fellow veterans or so I thought. Perhaps, given my free membership, I thought, I should show my appreciation and show up at one of their meetings. So, I did.

Again, my expectations were not what I received. The meeting was called to order with the colors and the Pledge of Allegiance. I did not care much for the words “*under god*” having noticed how absent god was in Vietnam but I mouthed the words anyway. I was not prepared for the prayer and benediction that followed, however? While I saw the colors and pledge as forthcoming, I felt violated by being asked to stand to respect a god that I had come to believe was one of the main reasons all those young men were dying in Vietnam over. As for prayer, too many prayers had gone answered to believe prayer would change anything here. Besides, I reasoned, why should religion be any concern of this group anyway? Did not we all fight a war to defend everyone’s right to believe whatever they want? What if I was a Buddhist, a Moslem, or Jain? Would I be asked to forsake my own religious beliefs to belong to this group? Didn’t the freedom of religion claim that everyone has the right to believe in his own religion? What was a Christian minister doing here? Is the VFW’s true purpose to defend the constitution of the United States or is it some pseudo-religious arm of Christianity?

I brought these questions up at the end of the meeting only to be ignored. Those who did answer claimed that no one was required to believe in god to be a

member of the VFW. The application card, however, on which an individual applies for VFW membership, insists that those joining the VFW believe in god.

I attest that I am a citizen of the United States, that my U.S. Military Service was honorable, that I have never subsequently been discharged under other than honorable conditions, and that I believe in God ⁰⁰⁴

The answer I received was, “So! If it bothers you, just ignore it!” But why should I have to ignore it? I wasn’t exactly sure why I felt so uncomfortable with this at the time. All I knew was religion took me right back to those Catholic churches built by the French.

What really cast me aside from the VFW was the treatment I was to receive from several the members themselves. While Kenny, a WWII veteran who sent me the membership, supported Vietnam Veterans, many WWII vets did not. It went back to the definition of war. Was Vietnam even a war? Many WWII vets did not think so and displayed outright hostility about the fact we, Vietnam Veterans, were not able to wrap up that small skirmish in Southeast Asia long ago. They were, the greatest generation, after all. They fought and won a real war, the Big One, WWII. We, Vietnam Veterans, were a disgrace to veterans in general. Had the nation depended on us, Vietnam Veterans, to free the world some twenty-five years before, America, according to a number of these WWII vets, would have been speaking German. I did not need that treatment. I left and never looked back.

MCAS Yuma AZ: Punished by the Military for being a War Veteran

In July 1968, I reported for shore duty at the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) in Yuma Arizona. When I pulled up to the dispensary, I immediately reported to administration for check in. I had one thing in mind at that time and that was E5, HM2. Upon asking about E5 however, the first question put to me was “*Where were your (being mine) practical factors?*” Practical factors? I did not have access to Navy material such as practical factors while I was with the Marine Corps. None of my senior officers or petty officers offered us practical factors while in Vietnam. In fact, I was led to believe that while with the Fleet Marine Force (FMF), we were exempt from those practical factors, which amounted to basically a take home test to prime anyone for rate advance. And maybe those practical factors were not required if we were FMF. I was not sure. What I was sure about was surprise, surprise, a technicality now existed. Now that I was back stateside, I was no longer FMF. Now I was under the command of the Navy and subject to State side rules and regulations. I therefore was technically required to have in my possession those practical factors --- or no rate advance would be offered.

Over the years that have occurred I have forgotten what exactly transpired in the discussion about my future rate increase. I do remember that because I did not have those practical factors to turn in at check-in, I could not go up for E-5 until the next round of rate advances. That would have meant I could not be eligible for

E-5 until about November or December. But that too came with a hitch. To receive the rate of E-5 required at least a year and half left of military duty, hence, to qualify to E-5; I would have had to extend for about six months. A six-month extension would have placed me in the predicament of having enough time left in the service to be returned to Vietnam for a second tour.

I was not going back to Vietnam and if forced to return to Vietnam, I told myself that I would have gone to jail. Had the choice between jail and Vietnam been placed before me, however, it's hard to say exactly what would have transpired. I had learned not to theorize about if this happened, I'd do that having surprised myself by failing to live up to my own expectations many times in Vietnam. I am glad I never had to make that choice.

So, I turned down any chance of ever obtaining E-5 and told them I just wanted out. Once again, I felt lied to by my government; a government which I thought once was worth giving my life for. My views of my country and the value of nationalism were clearly in transition at this point in my life.

In the days that followed I learned numerous medical procedures, lab tests, X-rays, casting broken limbs, and minor surgery at the dispensary. By winter I was able to perform most laboratory tests done at our dispensary: complete blood counts, white cell counts, examine urinary discharges for gonorrhea, grow bacteria cultures, and test the cultures for antibiotic resistance. I could perform most X-Ray procedures. From Vietnam I brought with me suturing and a good knowledge of trauma procedures. Working directly under physicians, I emerged as the resident Physician's assistant.

While the medical end of my tour at Yuma was challenging and rewarding, the military end of my duty was pure monotony. I had not lined up for formation for well over a year and thought of it largely as a return to the harassment of boot camp. It could be argued that I was being unreasonable and arrogant, but I did not have to look very far to find a number of other Corpsmen stationed at Yuma that felt the same way. As it turned out, the others who groaned the most were all Vietnam Veterans. With the respect and treatment, the Marines gave their corpsmen, Yuma, now with the Navy, was a clear step backward into the realm of being treated like an invalid. I did not feel like I required inspected to conform to military rules. I was a man --- not some grade school child in constant need of supervision. I wanted to be treated like a man. As a seasoned veteran, I believed I earned status.

I then set about attempting college at Arizona Western College at Yuma. I began college by taking an evening English composition class, writing essays. I did manage to find a young lady to date but as it turned out she just mysteriously cut off our relationship for reasons only imagined. I think the words I heard uttered one evening to describe me while visiting her dorm was "Service Trash." It seems anyone with a white sidewall military type short hair cut was someone to be avoided. Perhaps the only reason I got the date in the first place was that I was a student --- but I can only guess her reaction when she found out where I lived.

That hurt! But rather than drive me away from the school, I wanted even more to remove myself from the military scene. I'd favor sleeping with nearly any young lady than with some rubber lady. As a young man I naturally wanted to

appear attractive to the opposite sex and having a military hair cut clearly was not attracting them. I wanted hair like the song "Hair" shouts "*Long as God can grow it*"⁰⁰⁵

I never really thought much about hair until returning from Vietnam and the hair explosion. I did know that the first thing the military does when you get to boot camp is to shave your head bald. I made the error of thinking having my head shaved bald was harassment, however. I've since learned the reason for those haircuts is twofold, cleanliness and defense. The cleanliness portion is obvious given the close quarters of a military barracks and headlice, but the defense portion required some thought. You see, in Biblical times if you had no hair in a battle, your opponent had nothing to grab onto. I suspect that primitive military rulers knew that also, particularly since most their battles were hand to hand, when having or not having hair would give one or the other an advantage over his adversary. It began to occur to me that if the Bible was written by the ruling class with the idea of getting subordinates to defend its authors, it follows that something like the length of one's hair should be important enough to be Biblical:

*Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair,
it is a shame unto him.*

1 Corinthians 11:14

If god wrote the Bible, you'd think if god wanted short hair, he would have simply created hair short and it permanent, unable to grow. Or he could create men without hair. But he didn't. Instead, he created a perfect head of hair that grew and that he himself described it as good. It would seem therefore, that by cutting god's perfect head of hair, which he in all his infinite wisdom made grow, that god would see cutting his perfect hair as a challenge to his will? Besides, if long hair was seen as a shame by god, why did he himself (Jesus) decide to let his own grow? Well anyway, I'm used to seeing Jesus with long hair. I've never seen Jesus with a butch cut or a mohawk. In addition, since Jesus, the Prince of Peace, chose to grow his hair long, peace advocates using him as a role model and singing "*My hair like Jesus wore it*"⁰⁰⁶ did the same. Should these people be damned by following Jesus' example?

The night corpsman at Yuma was an individual by the name of Day. His duty was from 2100 to 0700 every night, seven days a week. What made his position attractive to me, knowing he was rotating out of the service late in the fall, was he attended Arizona Western during the morning. He also bragged that he did not have to put up with the military BS during the day --- and he had hair. After I found out he was leaving, to get myself out of the military's eye, I decided to volunteer for night duty. I got it as no one else wanted night duty and by January of 1969, I found myself in college during the day carrying a full load of credits --- and growing hair.

My dream began playing out in Yuma. I was in college and loved it even if I had duty every night, seven days a week. My cholesterol must have been through the roof eating powdered eggs twice a day as breakfast was all the mess hall served during the night. To this day, I hate powdered and scrambled eggs.

Aside from that I did not have much to complain about. I was out of the military fundamentalist's eye. I was largely my own boss, having no one to answer to as long as I maintained the functions that I was responsible for. The doctors that had to spend the night on duty inside the dispensary loved me for I was able to handle just about any medical problem that came in during the night without having to wake them. One evening I put about fifty sutures into a Marine that got into a fight with someone armed with a box cutter. Marines falling off motorcycles were also a constant problem.

Arizona Western College: An Influential Professor

As for college, I really had not given much thought to exactly what I wanted to become. My going to college by now had become some vague search for meaning. I had this brain --- empty --- that needed to be refilled, only this time I would be more selective with what was going to go in it. Unlike childhood, I was going to have something to say about what was placed in my head. My head was not going to be a haven for whatever someone else wanted to stuff it with. English was a basic college requirement; hence English was deemed a class that would benefit me no matter what I decided to go into later. Not wanting to waste time or money, I decided to get English out of the way.

The English Literature class being offered that quarter was "*Major British Writers*." I had no idea how much influence the class was to have on me in the long run.

The instructor was a small, framed man, well-conditioned for his age somewhere around 40. His hair, his dress, his demeanor, all indicated that he was quite conservative, yet he had this remarkable liberal quality to his thinking. As for his enthusiasm for his subject, the man was obsessed. For him, poetry was the music of gods. Unlike any other instructor I've had since, what mattered to him was what the author meant, not what he or I or some other student believed the poem meant. He had a firm belief that these writers did not write just to see their words in print. They wrote to change the world from what it was to what they believed it was capable of being. He never assigned homework to be discussed the next day in class, instead he read each and every line, stopping either to relate a given verse back to a previous one, to point out the symbolism being used, or to throw in a bit of history or some other vital information to bring the poems meaning into clearer focus.

The poems I remember best from his class were the ones that either took me back to Vietnam, creating flashbacks like "*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge: "*Water, water, everywhere, Nor any drop to drink*" To anyone else these words would have nothing to do with war but then --- I was there. Water was everywhere, rice paddies, and none of it was drinkable. Out of necessity, we drank it anyway.

I also liked poems that spoke to my feelings of the world. "*Dover Beach*" by Matthew Arnold was one such poem. After building up this beautiful image of the world around him, Arnold goes on to say that all this beauty was now in a stage

of retreating like the tide. He ends with his poem with the lines that the world was “*Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, Where ignorant armies clash by night.*” I had everything I could do to remain in my chair. “Ignorant Armies --- Yes! ---- That is exactly what they are.” I nearly screamed but found myself too self-conscious to allow these emotions to come blurting out.

The writer with the largest influence on me however was William Wordsworth. According to this instructor, Wordsworth largely equated nature with god. I’d never thought of nature and god as being equal before. In fact, Christianity separates man from nature and puts before man the mission of subduing and conquering nature. I had no idea what a revelation the following words from Wordsworth’s poem “*The World Is Too Much with Us, Late and Soon*” were to become to me. According to Wordsworth, people rush around accumulating wealth and material goods while overlooking nature’s value --- and we certainly do. Truly “*We have given our hearts away*” and only time will be the true measure of the cost.

Antimilitary Sentiments: Give Me Hair

Having completed my first quarter of college successfully, my hope was to remain on night duty and perhaps get a year of college out of the way before being released from the service. Apparently however the chief had a different agenda. His task was to keep me military personnel, enlisted and uneducated. His duty was not to allow me to skirt my obligation to the military by attending a civilian college. When the chief informed me that I would be going back on days at the end of the quarter, intellectually I knew that decision would be coming. I did not like it but I understood it and offered no resistance.

Coming off night duty back onto days cast me back into the watchful eyes of the military fundamentalists. The first fundamentalist item to surface was the length of my hair, having had about six months of interrupted growth. The chief caught me in the hallway about my first day back on days and informed me that I “**WOULD**” get my hair cut. I told him I did not have any money (I did but he did not need to know) so he dug into his own pocket and pulled out a buck and said “Here, go get that mop cut off.” So, I went over to the barber and asked to have some cut off the sides and around the ears but to leave the top as it was. Returning to the dispensary, the chief did not seem to think my hair measured up to military regulation so after giving me this somewhat lengthy lecture about what a Navy cut should look like, the chief dug back into his pocket again, pulled out another buck, and sent me back to the barber. Again, I spared the top, not wanting to look like “Service Trash.”

When I returned to the dispensary this time the chief was waiting at the door for me to walk in. He took one look at the top of my head and blew his cork. He dug into his pocket once again and told me in no uncertain terms that he did not want to see any hair longer than two inches on my head when I got back.

So off I went, angry about the military appearance code being rammed down my throat. Instead of going to the barber however I went to the pub, downed a few good stiff drinks with my own money, then went back to my room where I got out

the razor and shaved my head bald. Returning to the dispensary, I thought the Chief was going to come apart. He ranted and raved loud enough that everyone in the dispensary could hear him --- but no matter what he said, it would take a couple of months for my protest not to be noticed.

While my little social protest did nothing for my standing with my superiors, it did gather some recognition from those with whom I shared the rate of HM3, namely the Vietnam Vets. It was unknown to me just coming off nights but the time for rate advance had come and gone. Everyone, other than one Latino straight out of corps school, were now E-5s; everyone that is except the Vietnam Veterans. You could tell every Vietnam Combat Veteran at the MCAS dispensary just looking at their rate. Every single Vietnam Combat Veteran, five if I remember correctly, were E-4 being told now by E-5s with no combat experience and less time in the military than the veterans. It was like we, the combat veterans, were being punished again for going to war but this time by our own military. The hostility that broke out over this injustice, as we veterans saw it, resulted in open fist fights in the dispensary and several Vietnam Veterans being brought up on charges of insubordination, disobeying the orders of E-5s. Life within the dispensary was nothing short of hostile between the Vietnam Veterans and what we, the Vietnam Veterans, saw as subordinate E-5s.

Without being cognizant of it at the time, the military was not all I wanted to separate myself from. I wanted out of society and life as I knew it. College was not my only reason for volunteering for night duty where I'd spend most my days alone and out of the eye of watchful military personnel. I wanted to be alone. I sought to be free.

The desert offered the illusion of being free. I remember spending many evenings just sitting on a summit of a hill, viewing an entire landscape without so much as a fence to suggest someone might have control over who or what chose to be there. Better still was the quiet. No horns. No planes. No one murmuring in the background. In fact, no background noise existed at all. Nothing but the wind, birds, and an occasional horn toad. And there I sat, considering the two worlds surrounding me. In front of me was the desert, where mother nature ruled all that entered, where all that mattered was shelter, food, and water, where purpose simply came down to surviving one more day. Behind me was a road that like a funnel gathered all and deposited it one spot, where property boundaries separated everyone into tiny compartments; compartments which often people separated by a mere six inches of wall were unfamiliar with each other, where people rushed to get where they just left, where civil rules directed your every move, and life had to have some purpose other than living. What a mess people have made of their world --- and for what? Purpose? Possessions? To be in control? I have all that right here, on this summit, if not for all time, at least the moment --- before the developers come.

Those were all good thoughts, I reasoned, but looking back on it all, I wonder if those thoughts were not all part of a rationalization scheme, I concocted to blanket my paranoiac subconscious? In front of me, I could see all --- the rocks, the cactus, the sage brush, an occasional predator after his lunch, nothing offered any threat to me. And in that view was no one; no one to lead me down the wrong

the path, no one toting guns. Was this in spite of all my intellectualizing the real comfort I found here on this spot?

Or maybe it was the drug, marijuana. Left-handed cigarettes nearly always accompanied me to spots as this sometime after coming off nights. Unlike alcohol, marijuana was more like I have always imagined a religious experience might be. It had this power to take this dreary landscape and reform it to a surreal landscape painted and sculptured as if by an artist's hand. Colors were enhanced, highs elevated, depressions deepened, and distances lengthened. Flowers were the desert's cologne and birds its flute. Sunsets were a collage of shades and colors, each different and unique. Each sunset was spectacular, awe inspiring, as if its beauty was being viewed for the first time. Who could have ever imagined euphoria could be found in this barren land, on this spot?

Was marijuana an escape? Of course, it was but then it was probably better than its alternative; suicide. I was growing weary of life. Everything seemed for nothing. I remember the long hours I spent on nights memorizing Beatle Lyrics, reading books such as the "*Art of Loving*" by Eric Fromm, working out with my weights, and growing my hair as not to appear as "Service Trash."

I also remember however the narcotics locker that stood facing me at the other end of the room. Occasionally it talked to me, "*I'm here to calm all your pain. Come in. Come in*" It wasn't the high I was looking for. A high could be found on any shelf of the pharmacy open to me, barbiturates, stimulants, pain relievers, sedatives were all there for taking --- but I did not. I was looking for a painless release from life --- and there it was, inviting me in on nights I felt particularly lonely. Most evenings the locker was silent but from time to time I'd begin thinking back to the year past, the war, those I left behind, all those dead, and when I did, it would tempt me, offering comfort. For whatever reason, I never accepted its offer.



Glenwood Minnesota Pot, Mad Dog, and the Death of a Lifelong Friend

I was released from active duty on January 23rd, 1970. At the same time my parents had moved down to Glenwood from Enderlin. Dad's job finally moved him like the Sperstads before. My

parents found themselves a nice little lake side house on Lake Minnewaska about seven miles outside of Glenwood. For me, that was good, no neighbors to speak of and a whole lake, being public land, on which to bide my time. Dad and I spent numerous hours fishing yellow perch, a small but good edible fish that Dad liked to throw in the smoker and dry. Even if Dad was busy, somewhere on the ice was where I could usually be found.

Gary Sperstad (left), having only a two-year hitch with the Marines, was home by now and often came out to see me. Gary was a lifelong friend going back to our childhood in Enderlin. He never made it to Vietnam however and remained the same old Gary that I knew before we entered the service. The problem was I wasn't the same old Dave. I couldn't quite put my finger on it. All I was sure of was we, Gary and I, as true with many of my previous friends, no longer saw life the same. The things we thought were important before, they, my previous friends, still did. Myself, however, I was uninterested. Cars, dances, group parties, rock and roll oldies, country music, hunting, guns, stylish clothing, just did not matter to me anymore. Gary just happened to be the first old friend that brought my new desires, or lack of old, to the surface.

I had not been home long when I landed a job as a railroad switchman. The pay was, at that time, the highest in the area. The problem was I did not get to work all the time. I was on the extra board, meaning that I filled in for someone else if he could not make it to work or wanted the night off. These conditions had been explained me when I signed on and at the time, they did not seem all that bad. Having been on nights for six months seven days a week before, I thought I could handle nights, but I was not quite prepared for the unpredictable nature of the job. About the time I figured I had the night off; I'd get called in meaning that I always had to be prepared to go to work. I was tied down all the time whether working or not. For someone yearning to be free, being tied down by the probability of being called to work was not a good thing. Being jailed to your own house was a way to describe the job. I could never leave. Worse, if I took a nap in the afternoon to prepare for the possibility of work that evening, I'd end up at home, not tired and up half the night by myself. If, however, I stayed up all day, I'd end up getting called to work at the last moment and have to stay up all night hardly able to stay awake. Switching was a dangerous job. A sharp mind was a necessity. Being half asleep walking amongst moving boxcars was not a good thing.

The other problem that surfaced after being around for a while and getting to know the personnel, those I was working under and covering for, were nearly all younger than me. None were veterans. Most managed to skirt the military and came to this job through their fathers or some close relative who also worked on the railroad. The problem this presented for me was these younger people got to choose their days and times to work, leaving me the task of filling in for them whenever they did not feel like showing up like holidays or important local celebrations such as Glenwood's Waterama. Furthermore, if I were to wait for things to improve, I was not looking at waiting for a few older ones to retire so I could move up. I likely, being the oldest, would retire before any of them assuming we all worked to retirement hence it appeared that I would be on nights and the extra board if I was on the job.

The old ghosts soon returned. Just like the dispensary where everyone made E-5 other than the combat veterans, I found myself in the same place, subordinate to those younger than myself who evaded the military. Once again, it was like being punished for joining the military. Granted some companies, even the railroad, credits military time as seniority on the job but that assumes you had the job before joining the military. Nothing existed or currently exists to help equalize the time

lost to the military by those who defend their country. In life's timeline, I found military time spent as largely time lost if one wishes to return to civilian life.

As it turned out, I ended up losing this switching job. Stuart Sperstad, beside his mother in the photo, returned from service in Vietnam and together we decided to go out and celebrate. Checking with the railroad, I was told there was very little chance I'd be called that evening, so we headed out to the American Legion to share a couple (dozen) drinks. Two hours later, the railroad called. Not one to lie about such things, I told them that I could not make it to work because I had been drinking. So much for that job.

Stuart, another lifelong friend, Gary's brother and one of the charter members of our Great Outdoors group from back in Enderlin, quickly became the person I spent most my time with. Not only did we have our childhood in common, but we also shared the experience of Vietnam. We never talked Vietnam. We just understood the effect Vietnam had on each other and let it go at that. We also found some solace in the fact that we both made it --- and were making it (at least we let ourselves believe).

Other than being friends in the first place, our relationship was probably as much to do with "Misery Loves Company" as anything else. While we entertained the thought that we were having a great time, what we were doing in fact was getting intoxicated or stoned. Stuart returned home with a sizable amount of marijuana that he shipped home in a television set. He had bought the TV set just for the occasion, removed all the insides, and packed the empty frame full of pot.

Our house with Mom, Dad, my two brothers, and me was located on a small bluff that rose about 50 feet above the lake directly below. At the water's edge was the boathouse, a small rectangular box building with a standard A-frame roof. At the end away from the lake on the left side was an average rectangular door but, in the front, facing the lake, the whole wall swung open to allow a boat to be winched in. We did not have a boat, but this entrance offered a wonderful place to sit just up off the water and watch the sun set over the lake. Watching the sun set was Stuart's favorite activity. He returned home with about a hundred pictures of Vietnam and half of those were sunsets. Down at the boathouse, he added a few more sunsets to his picture collection. Pot and sunsets go well together.

Reflecting, I must wonder what the crime was Stuart and I were committing. Watching sunsets? Listening to waves lap up on the shore? Who were our victims? When I think that our prisons are overcrowded with people whose only crime is smoking a joint, I am amazed at the legal system's failed effort to suppress the use of marijuana and the amount of taxpayer's money the legal system has spent in an attempt to do so --- but then if you stop to think of it, the legal system is something of an entity unto itself.

When the legal system spends money, lawyers make money. Anyway, aside from making sure lawyers make money, to date, I have not heard one good reason why marijuana should not be decriminalized at the very least. Those who are going to smoke pot can always find it and if allowed to grow enough for their own personal use, the money generated by the drug trade would drop off considerably. Myself --- one day I just quit. No withdrawals. I never killed anyone. I never ended up in some psycho ward. I just got tired of being stoned.

Over time, the boat house became a social hang out. Jim, my youngest brother, still in high school, was one of the instigators in making it so. Stuart and I were perfectly happy to sit down there by ourselves enjoying Stuart's pot, but Jim; he began to drag his school friends down there also. And they all smoked pot, a sign of the times, and they had been doing so for some time. Stuart and I kept our pot to ourselves, but these 15-17 old adolescents had no troubling finding their own. As they moved in however with their music and love for excitement in whatever way excitement might establish itself, Stuart and I began being slowly pushed out of our sanctuary of solace. These teens world was far too euphoric for us to fit in.

I called these young idealistic people, the perfect people. They subscribed to "Prevention" Magazine, drank chamomile tea which they collected from the wild, and loved everything although this spurious claim was discredited by their atrocious gossip they spewed about others that did not share their views. They wore patched clothing, tie dyed shirts, and old fashion dresses that made them look at times like they just arrived from the nineteenth century. They burnt hand crafted candles and the more innovative played acoustic guitar or attempted painting. They lived with a group of friends they referred to as family and claimed to be non-materialist in spite of the fact they all lived in houses with flush toilets, electric lighting, and possessed a rack of albums that they spun on their multi-hundred-dollar stereos.

The music they played was almost exclusively songs of peace, love, and antiwar. While much of this music I happened to like a great deal, Cat Stevens, Crosby Still Nash and Young, the Moody Blues, the Beatles, and CCR, much of it both Stuart and I found very distressing. One such artist was Johnny Prine with his song "*There's a Hole in Daddies Arm Where all the Money Goes*" about a cowardly, drug addicted, unable to take care of his family, Vietnam Veteran that died pumping his arm full of heroin. Another would be Country Joe McDonald. While he does not outright attack veterans in his famous "*I Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag*" he opens the wound of why the Vietnam War was fought in the first place. According to this song, Wall Street was getting fat "*By supplying the Army with the tools of the trade.*" Just the thought of Americans making money off killing other Americans made me fighting mad, an anger that would always deteriorate into self-destructing behavior like drinking myself into oblivion. True or not --- I did not want to hear about it. I did not want to think about it. And, I sure as Hell did not want to sing about it.

Before leaving these perfect people, worth mention at this point was their seemly outward tolerance, if not tendency toward, homosexuality. The argument coming from these perfect people that I frequently heard regarding homosexuality was homosexuals tended toward the arts, were more understanding and compassionate than their heterosexual counter parts and were less violent as a group. Furthermore, homosexuals were not, at least much less, likely to be veterans as if being a veteran was something to be ashamed of. Homosexuality, argumentatively, could also be viewed as an alternative to the world's population explosion which was a good thing to a population concerned generation.

As Stuart and I struggled to some meaning to life, over time, although we remained best friends, we began to drift apart. Stuart was more of society's child, a

member of the American Legion, a faithful Methodist, and railroad car man. I was none of these. I questioned the values of patriotism plastered all over Legion Club walls and their publications. I did not believe in a supernatural god nor did I belong to any church. I had been fired from the railroad. I doubt Stuart ever questioned his right to own a car, his belief in god, what the word “free” truly meant, or how he may have been manipulated into becoming the soldier that he became.

Stuart, however, was just plain angry, angry about what happened in Vietnam; angry about the way he was treated at home, and angry about the world around him that did not conform to his expectations. I am not sure what he was expecting, and I doubt he did either.

Stuart used to show up at my place with his usual quart bottle of Mad Dog (Mogan David 20-20) on the days we decided to spend together, usually fishing in the icehouse or at Torgy’s, Stuart’s favorite bar. Before we ever got to the bar, his jug MD20-20 would be gone with no help from me. His favorite saying was, “I’m off to see the wizard,” and he sure enough was. Yes, I got drunk now and again, flat out obliterated from time to time, but to Stuart, anything less than a stupor wasn’t worth going to the bar to get.

Stuart drank himself to death. In his later years, his first act in the morning was to take the cap off one of his quart bottles of peppermint schnapps, 80 proof, and his final act at the end of the day was to put it back on. The bottle the cap came off in the morning however was never the same bottle that the cap was returned to in the evening. Stuart died of a failed liver in the VA hospital at St. Cloud, Minnesota June 2001, still angry, another casualty of war.

In fairness to Stuart, despite his threatening, often over bearing persona, Stuart was one of the most compassionate people I had ever known. He’d do anything for a friend and had a soft spot in his chest that went all the way to his heart. Speaking to others of Stuart, I’d often describe Stuart as a “Hard Shelled Marshmallow” weathered tough on the outside by his life experiences but nothing but mush in the middle. No one could have asked for a better Friend. Stuart will be woefully missed. Did Stuart take his own life? It certainly could be argued that he did.

It seems suicide is a real issue in the lives of veteran’s and has recently come to the surface in a recent CBS investigation. Under the Freedom of Information Act, CBS requested from the Department of Defense all suicides known for the past 12 years. Four months later, CBS received a document that claimed nearly 2,200 soldiers had committed suicide. That rate however was limited only to active-duty personnel. CBS went further and requested suicide data from death records dating back to 1995 from 50 states. What CBS found in the 45 states that responded was at least 6,256 suicides by veterans were reported in the year 2005 alone. The largest number of suicides was between the ages of 20-24 of those who had served in the war on terror. Compared to their civilian counter parts of the same age, suicides among veterans were two to four time higher.⁰⁰⁷

The sad thing about veterans and suicide is this knowledge is nothing new. A preliminary study conducted by the Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis showed Vietnam Veterans who used drugs in Vietnam were nine times more likely than their civilian counter parts to have died by their mid-forties. Those

veterans with no confirmed additional problems were three times more likely to be dead than their civilian counterparts.⁰⁰⁸ Another study from the University of California in 1986 concluded that suicide among Vietnam Veterans was 87 percent higher than their civilian counterparts.⁰⁰⁹ The suicide rate among Vietnam Veterans has been the subject of speculation over the years. It has been estimated that three times as many Vietnam Veterans committed suicide as died in the war although that figure has been disputed by Federal sources,⁰¹⁰ which of course could be expected. When CBS asked the Veterans Administration about the possibility of a suicide epidemic among veterans, the VA claimed that no such epidemic had occurred.⁰¹¹ Myself personally, I am familiar with at least ten suicides committed by veterans from my old battalion in Vietnam, the most famous being Lewis Puller, the son of Chesty Puller and author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book, “Fortunate Son.”

Yearning for Freedom

Miles from nowhere, not a soul in sight
Oh yeah, but it's alright.
Cat Stevens, 1970 ⁰¹²

Many stories could be written about the summers of 1970 and 71 after I was discharged but for the purpose of this writing, they'd all come to symbolize what was going on in my head. I wanted to be free, unrestrained by any social structure around me. The only place that offered anything even relatively close to that type of freedom was the lakes and public land. Once entered, any spot was open for exploration. I spent many a summer just drifting around lakes with my canoe that I chose over boats which required gas. I was becoming environmentally conscientious. In fact, I was thought of as extreme according to most people I knew.

Public lands and lakes only served as a pacifier, however. What I really wanted was freedom from society and governments. I wanted to get lost and never found. I wanted to simply disappear in the woods and never come out again. This yearning led a few friends and me on several misadventures into the wilderness as I pondered and explored my escape. One of these misadventures took us to Lake Kabetogama in Voyageurs National Park. Five friends and I spent about a week on one of the many islands that dotted the lake. Another excursion took us to Glacial Park Montana where we spent about ten days attempting to live off the land. All we brought on this trip was an axe which was left somewhere along the trail, a small amount of food, cooking utensils, and bedding. The idea was to test our ability to get by on what we could catch (fish), trap (small animals) or plants we could forage for food. We nearly starved. I was learning something; my thinking had a few flaws.

One trip to the Beltrami National Forest in north central Minnesota took Steve, my brother Robert, and I to Lost Lake in the dead of winter when the temperature was well below zero. In the middle of a huge bog, an area completely unattainable in the summer, among the cedars, spruce, tamaracks, and pitcher plants, we stayed warm digging into snowbanks where we slept at night. Our effort to some seclusion from civilization was lost to a group of snowmobiles, however, who encroached into our domain. Instead of seeing snow buntings, Great Snowy

Owls, and hearing the howls of wolves, all we got was the tight shrill wail of snowmobile engines and questions about how the hell we got in there and if we needed a ride out. Still learning.

Mark and I headed out the northeast angle of Minnesota once, running up the Gun Flint Trail to its end where we dropped a canoe in the waters of Saganaga Lake and headed out around American Point to Red Rock Lake. In terms of food, we did quite well, catching fish and gathering berries to supplement the 25-pound sack of dried beans we had brought with. The only mistake we made was to mistake false morels for the real thing. They were good alright, downright tasty, but they sure cleaned out the plumbing. Mark thought he was going to die of defecation. Mark and I still laugh today about the poor suckers that moved into our camp just as we were moving out.

“Say” Mark pointed out “You guys see those mushrooms? Man, are they ever good.” We left them picking mushrooms but never hung around to see how things came out. I suspect things came out quite fluidly. And I suspect they are still looking for us wanting to get even.

**Music Then:
Be a Working-Class Hero and Love it or Leave it**

The seventies had arrived to the pop music culture. By this time in my life, I had given up on the songs of my past. Getting Around was no longer as important as it had been in the sixties. Drag racing and hot cars no longer mattered to me. In fact, I could care less. As for my 45 collection, most were loaned out and never returned while I was in Vietnam. 45s were now out however and albums were in, beginning with the Beatles who in the seventies, unlike the albums of the past, were creating whole albums of original music artistically laced together to drive home a political point. Those that spoke of freedom, peace, and discontentment with society were the ones that caught my attention. Cat Stevens, in my mind, was a phenomenon. Clearly here was a young man, like me, discontented with society and searching for a meaning to life. Songs like “***But I Might Die Tonight***” spoke directly to me, echoing my thoughts of the world around me. I had no interest in working my life away, doing what everyone thought I should do. I did not want to end up on the railroad like my father or work in some plant like that foundry in Milwaukee doing the same thing all day long. That’s not what I put myself in Harms-way for.

All my friends before Vietnam put jobs high on their priority list and it could be said over time, their jobs defined who they became. Leroy, my brother-in-law, worked the sign department for the North Dakota Highway Department. I could figure anytime that I spent with Leroy; the topic of signs would arise. Bob, my brother, got into manufacturing as a tool and die maker for Stieger Tractors, later purchased by J.I. Case. Whenever any amount of time was spent with Bob, I could figure the topic of tractors and machinery would be hit upon. Hank landed a grocery job working in a warehouse. I could figure that any time I spent with Hank, the topic of grocery distribution would come into the conversation. Gary Sperstad landed a job with the railroad as a carman as did both his two brothers, Sherman and Stuart. Railroading was often the topic whenever I was with them.

I do not wish to imply that by the social norms of the time these people did anything wrong. Indeed, they did what most people do. As most people grow up, some sort of labor becomes their life. With their earned money they buy a house, raise a family, and live out what they perceive as their American Dream. For me, however, returning from Vietnam, none of that mattered. In fact, I saw the so called "American Dream" as more of a self-imposed incarceration.

I had played the servitude game, serving who knows who for who knows what for too long. I wanted no part of this mindless servitude anymore. At best, after losing my Christian upbringing and it's so called "Work Ethic," Having deleted "Yes Sir" from my vocabulary, I viewed work as merely a necessary evil. While work kept food on the table, I thought it far too often reduced humanity to that of Skinner's pigeons, peck the button (punch in) and receive your reward (a pay check). I valued my intellect --- and wanted to culture it. Physical labor as I saw it was not a means to that end.

Also my friends of the past, rather than concerning themselves with the type of music expressed above, were turning to Country Western, if that is what it could be called. Merle Haggart was singing songs like "Okie from Muskogee", or "The Fightin' Side of Me" which was more than I could handle. In my mind, given the destruction we were causing in Vietnam with for what and for who unknown, I really was not certain that I loved my country. I was certain however I did not need some X-con telling me, a combat veteran who laid his life on the line for that country "*to love it or leave it.*" Any respect I had for my country, or lack thereof, I earned.

Atrocities in the News: On my Mind

Reports of war crimes were in the news daily during the early 70s. In March 1970, the US Army accused 14 officers of suppressing and falsifying information regarding a March 1968 incident that alleged soldiers committed acts of murder (200-500), rape, maimed, and sodomized civilians at Songmy. The report stated that the higher the official report went up the US Chain of Command, the more watered down and fabricated the report became. By the time it reached Americal Division Headquarters, the report contained no mention of the crimes committed by soldiers and claimed that only 20-28 civilians were killed.⁰¹³

On April 1st 1970, Captain Ernest Medina was formally charged with the murder of civilians at Songmy. Speaking at a news conference, Medina revealed that he was being charged with the murder of no less than 175 civilians. Medina denied any involvement.⁰¹⁴ Captain Medina was Lieutenant William Cally's superior officer when Cally assaulted the hamlet of Mylia-4 in Songmy Village.⁰¹⁵

As I stated before, the murder of civilians I could understand to "some" degree. For some soldier to just lose it after watching his buddies being maimed or killed and emotionally react by killing those he perceives as involved, real or imagined, I can understand and sympathize with --- but the murder of 175 civilians and the rape of any goes beyond anything I feel is defensible. These acts, committed by those to whom I might be associated with (in this case veterans in general), made me want to hide, to stick my head in the sand and deny I ever was

in Vietnam. These acts defamed me, in the eyes of others and myself. If a thousand reasons existed to feel good about my service in Vietnam, just one incident such as this, even though I was not involved, removed them all and left me scratching for some reason, any reason, to justify my involvement in Vietnam. Try as I did, however, I could not come up with any justification that could not be shot full of holes by the simplest of minds. Any simple mind could ask “Just how many kids is it OK to kill?” and I’d be trapped.

At about the same time, South Vietnamese and US troops entered Cambodia. Both Vietnamese and US commands denied any knowledge of the operation⁰¹⁶ resulting in a cover up further discrediting any information offered by US command. The public’s approval rate of Nixon’s policy in Vietnam dropped by 20 percent⁰¹⁷ as hundreds of ethnic Vietnamese, living within Cambodia, were murdered by Cambodian troops.⁰¹⁸ World opinion blamed the Cambodian murders as retaliation for the Vietnamese and US troops invasion of Cambodia. On April 30th in a televised speech, Nixon finally owns up to the invasion of Cambodia, declaring that he is sending troops into the Fishhook area of Cambodia some 50 miles northwest of Siagon.⁰¹⁹

On The Home Front. Four Dead in Ohio, the War comes Home

Protests over Nixon’s Cambodian Policy erupted nationwide with one memorable historical event occurring at Kent State University. On May 2nd 1970, National Guard troops and police intervened as rioting students attacked the ROTC building at Kent State burning it to the ground. Two days later, 100 National Guardsmen fired into a crowd of students. The result was four dead in Ohio. Violent protests spread like fire, shutting down more than 100 colleges across the United States. California Governor Ronald Reagan shut down the entire California college system until May 11th and the Pennsylvania State system of eighteen colleges closed indefinitely. In all, the National Student Association claimed that 300 plus campuses were closed nationwide.⁰²⁰ On May 9th somewhere near 90,000, plus or minus 10,000, students demonstrated peacefully in Washington DC with only a small segment of protesters getting out of line and threatened with tear gas.⁰²¹ On May 14th, Allied forces report that 863 South Vietnam forces, ARVN, died, the second highest death count for South Vietnam troops since the war began.⁰²² On May 20th antiwar demonstrations were countered attacked by approximately 100,000 construction, dock, and office workers in New York who supported Nixon and the Vietnam War.⁰²³

The war in my mind was entering a new and dangerous paradoxical phase. For many of us, we went to Vietnam believing someone had to keep the war off our soil. With each passing day, it seemed the war was coming closer and closer to our door but surprisingly, the aggressors weren’t the Vietcong. They were our own troops, armed in the name of our protection, and pitted against their own people. In fact, figuring in Kent State, they were killing their own people.

“I must be going mad” I’d tell myself. Now we have four dead and eleven wounded in Ohio. If that is not our soil, someone needed to explain to me what was.

Masses of opposing views were rattling sabers at each other however genteelly. One lunatic or person truly bent by his cause could toss a match in this powder keg with the resulting explosion, not beyond comprehension, having the potential of creating a war in our streets. Was that damn war, Vietnam, going to take us, America, into another Civil War? I was afraid of it but if a Civil War did break out, I wanted no part in it. Then on March 1st, 1971, a bomb exploded at the Capital building in Washington DC. A group that called themselves the Weather Underground claimed credit for the action in retaliation for the US involvement in Laos.⁰²⁴ The wilderness was looking more like more of a safe haven every day.

St. Cloud VA Hospital: We don't need any Medics

Remembering what that Navy interviewer in boot camp told me about employment opportunities in the medical field with my experience as a corpsman, it seemed to me that I should qualify for several jobs at about any hospital state side and the VA hospital. If my medical training was good enough for those in the military, it would seem it should be good enough for those released from the service. But that was not to be. It turns out I could have qualified for scrubbing bed pans, mopping floors, or mowing the grass, my medical experience was for nothing. Another lie!

So, I figured, well if I do not qualify for any work at the hospital, lab work, X-ray, suturing, Pharmacy, or assisting with sick call, all of which I have been doing for two years or better, perhaps I could get on ambulance duty. That did not work either. To qualify for ambulance duty, I would have to take numerous classes in emergency first aid, crisis intervention, and emergency procedures that in the last two years I put into practice daily. "Hell," I thought, "I should be teaching those classes, not taking them." I left angry and frustrated, asking myself how the hell I benefited at all, aside from the GI Bill, by my four years of military service. It seemed more and more that I just threw away four years of my life. None of the work I did daily while in the service transferred to civilian life. Everyone who did not join the service had four years seniority on me and those my age that went to college instead of the service were now graduating, locking up an ever-increasing tightening job market. I think about the today, a half century from then every time someone thanks me for being a veteran.

CHAPTER TEN

Refilling the Void

St. Cloud State University: A lesson in “Mental Isometrics”

In the fall of 1970, I entered St Cloud State with no real goal in mind other than sort out all the conflicting thoughts going through my mind. I remembered from Yuma my poetry class, the instructor's infatuation for writing, and a few quotable quotes which I had collected since high school such as “*The pen is mightier than the sword.*” “Maybe,” I thought “I should consider writing.” Given all the chaos in the world, I figured if the world ever needed a writer, now was the time. More than a writer, however, what the world needed was the “Truth.” Not someone's version of truth --- but “The Truth” however the truth worked out. So, I bestow upon myself the grandiose mission of finding the truth. What was this thing called “Truth?” How should my approach to the truth be conducted and how should the Truth be identified once found? Maybe, I thought, this institute of higher learning could help me sort all that out.”

So, with the thought of discovering “Truth” on my mind, what classes should I take? I wasn't sure. The required courses, Geography and Art, were no-brainers. To graduate, I needed to take these courses so it might as well be now while I was still looking around for the guidelines to direct my search. I can't remember if I learned anything in Geography worth taking home, but in Art, I learned an important inadvertent point. I learned that an argument could be made for calling anything art. Paint splattered on a wall by a blindfolded chimpanzee, people wrapped in cellophane, a junk pile that might spark a conversation about what the pile might look like, graffiti, a Campbell's soup can, even a cigarette butt lying beside the walkway could be considered be art. I really did not care.

I did learn something while sitting in on the argument whether everything/anything /nothing is or could be considered art. I learned where not to waste my time if my goal is to understand truth. In time, I came to call such arguments, whether something is or might be art, Mental Isometrics. I borrowed the concept of mental isometrics from physics class and its concept of work. Work, to a physic major, states that you can push on a mountain until you collapse physically exhausted but if the mountain did not move, no work was done. Since no definitive definition to art exists, at least no single definition upon which everyone can agree, no conclusion can ever be reached. The “What is or can be Art,” argument, I therefore concluded, was absurd. I could devote my whole life arguing whether something may, or may not be, art but nothing conclusive could ever be reached. Given that, if I devoted my whole life attempting to prove anything could be art, or everything is, or nothing is art, in the end how much could I expect to move the mountain? What, after all, would called be Art tomorrow? Hence, after all that, I still would not know what art is. Nothing therefore would have been learned. The mountain remains unmoved.

This was the beginning of my learning, learning what not to study if I was to learn anything. It occurred to me somewhere in all these so-called intellectual debates that nothing intelligent was being transferred from one mind to another.

**Journalism:
Never Mind the Truth, Sell --- Sell --- Sell**

Taking the lead from Arizona Western, at St Cloud State, I, thinking of writing, thought English might be an interesting major so I signed up for several English classes. Two, worth mentioning, were “Mass Media” and the other “Modern European Writers.” The Mass Media class was designed for journalists. I was very disillusioned, however, to discover “Mass Media” was a methods class, not a class on how to assess “Truth.” Rather than teaching a method to discover the “Truth,” the class was more geared toward how to entice a reader into an article to get people to buy it. First you begin with an eye-catching headline followed immediately by a strong topic sentence. Then you build your case using all the supporting material you can gather, being careful not to include any serious challenges to your basic theme. Reporting the “Truth” was not ever a consideration.

The second class I signed up for was “Modern European Writers.” One of the books I thoroughly enjoyed from that class was Günter Grass’ “*The Tin Drum*” and to this day I consider it one of the best books I have ever read. It tells the story of this individual born to the world with a full adult consciousness. At the age of three he decides he does not want to live in the adult’s world so he jumps down into a basement purposely to injure himself so he would never have to grow up. Based in Europe prior to and during World War II, Oscar (this child) then runs around with his little tin drum, painted in Poland’s national colors, drumming, challenging religion, the Nazis, and fascism. Great book and worth the read.

Where I ran into difficulty with this class was the introduction of existentialism. What I got out of the discussions on existentialism was the idea that man is basically free and ultimately responsible for “HIS” own destiny. Anything a man does is done out of freedom of choice, his own free will, and therefore, he alone is responsible for whatever results from his action. Buffy Sainte Marie’s lyrics were coming into focus.

*“He’s the one how gives his body as a weapon of the war,
And without him all this killing can’t go on.”⁰⁰¹*

Was I that Universal Soldier responsible for war? Me! Not my government. I after all went to war of my own free will. Never mind the argument that I went because I was forced to choose one of two options by my government, the military or jail. I chose the military. I could have chosen jail. But I did not. As such according to this thinking, I was responsible for any atrocities committed in that war that I might have been able to stop because I let them happen. It was not my social conditioning or peer pressure that brought me to Vietnam. I had the freedom to ignore them all. Even when in Vietnam, if I did not want to be a part of children drug from their bunkers, I could have simply laid down my weapon and refused to

partake anymore in what was being done in front of me. But --- I did not. What I did do was participate in the war effort and therefore whatever happened while on my watch was no one's responsibility but my own.

The instructor considered existentialism nearly sacred and did not refrain from asserting his views. The "perfect people" in his class lapped up every word, never having done any wrong themselves. One day, while sitting there, I made the statement that if I believed what I was being taught in that class that I'd jump off the fire escape outside that third-floor window that very day. All I got was this blank look. I could see the amazement in their eyes --- like where did that come from? I found no reason to enlighten them. I got up and walked out of class and did not stop until I reached the closest bar. I must have made it back somehow for I managed to finish the class. The cloud cast over me by this class nevertheless has never truly dissipated.

I have never been able to put the existential argument aside as complete nonsense. After all, look at Mohammed Ali. Did not he risk everything he had? Was not he willing to accept the threat of being locked in jail by standing up for what he believed in? And by doing so, did not he, rather than losing everything, gain favor in the eyes of the world. In fact, on November 9th, 2005, Mohammad Ali was rewarded the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom in a ceremony at the White House by President George W Bush.⁰⁰²

Had I done what Ali did, there is no doubt in my mind that I would have spent years in prison. The irony in all this has not escaped me; a prize fighter, one who earned his fame and fortune battering others and having his brains battered for cash, one who defied his country's call to fight being awarded one of America's most covenanted medals

It might be worth mention given many African American's resentment of being called to fight what they often called "The White Man's War," it is likely that a number of these African Americans did go to jail rather than fight. Those Blacks, not to mention several Whites, were locked up and the key thrown away for the crime of not being a public celebrity. They were only African Americans, not some world-famous professional prize fighter who made his living battering others. Is that "*liberty and justice for all?*" Or is liberty and justice just for the few who make it to the top?

At any rate, the question what kind of man does this make me again nags at my mind? Was it I did not have the guts to stand up for what I believed in or was it I didn't want to accept the responsibility for what I participated in? No Exit, pun intended, exists to this.

Biology: Life through Different Lens

One class that did raise my eyebrows was Biology as taught by David Grether. High school biology was taught largely as a taxonomy class or an anatomy class, learning little but Latin names for each family, class, phylum, and order. In the years to follow, I came to view diminishing biology to learning nothing, but Latin names may have been design. After all, teaching what is believed by most biologists, that man evolved from the same organic soup as anything else, dogs, mice, snakes,

slugs, earthworms, contradicts theology. The religious establishment would not like that aspect of biology taught nor would the elite, the wealthy, businessmen, or industry, I was to learn. That would mean man was not made special by a perfect god who bestowed man the mission of controlling all other life forms on earth. 003 After all, without such a belief, humans might not be able to justify normally taken for granted ideas such as agriculture.

Grether's class stressed field biology and how the environment impacts all life on Earth. While we were required to know which conifer tree a given conifer was, a pine, a spruce, a cedar, or a tamarack, learning the Latin name for each was unimportant. What was more important is whether you could tell a pine from a spruce if given the needles or which was which if viewed at a distance, then what the ecological niche which each could be found in.

We were taught where certain trees grew was not just some random event. They, like any other living thing on earth, grew in areas that most favored their growth or limited the growth of competitors. To dry, trees do not grow. Deciduous trees require warmer temperatures than conifers. This means if you wish to view northern conifers look in areas wet enough to support tree growth and cool enough to limit competition from deciduous trees. In short, if you want northern conifers, go north or higher in altitude if deciduous trees are the dominate species at your present location.

This niche concept was something I'd never really considered before. After experimenting with the concept what began emerging was one of those basic "Truths" I was looking for. All creatures have their own niche, including man, that to go beyond requires the ability to overcome the conditions offered by the new niche. In other words, if a given species does not have the ability to conserve or produce heat, it will be limited to live in warm environments. Coldblooded animals, crocodiles, or rattlesnakes will not be found in arctic environments. Humans can exist in arctic environments only because they have adopted methods that allow them to manufacture clothing capable of withstanding the cold. Left naked at any location where temperature drops below freezing, any person would survive only a short time.

More importantly, not only can these statements be proven, but they made sense. As I was searching for "Truth," I soon found myself as an unofficial biology major, taking as many biology classes as I could fit into a quarter.

It should be noted that "Truth" is a conceptual term itself. Truth, for example, to a Christian Fundamentalist is god's word, theoretically that which is written in the Bible. To me however, the Bible is a book a myth as is the Iliad. So --- which is it? Is the Bible myth or truth? Since "Truth" can mean different things to different people, the proper way to address this problem would be to create two different words --- one being "Truth" as defined by the Bible; the other being "Truth" as found through investigation, namely scientific investigation. The problem with the development of a two-word system however is it would not be long until someone would come up with a method to stretch the meaning of either these words to overlap each other. Then we'd back to exactly where we are today, the same word being able to fit over either barrel.

Since this is my book, I'll go with my version of "Truth" namely truth found through investigation. This truth would require supporting verifiable evidence that can be demonstrated. It should be repeatable and yield the same result each time it is tested. That water boils at sea level at 212 degrees Fahrenheit can be shown to be true via a thermometer set to that standard. Anyone should be able to test this, and everyone should receive the same outcome.

Science has several scientific laws, meaning no exception to them exists. One is gravity. Another is thermodynamics. There are Archimedes' principle, the Pythagorean theorem, Pascal's law, the law of superposition, and numerous trigonometry theorems. All are testable and all will yield the same result no matter who does the testing.

**Truth:
So, what is "Truth"**

So, how should "Truth be identified? Avoiding a lengthy explanation, the best way to truth is through a process known as the Scientific Method which can be found in any basic science book and hence, I will not repeat the scientific method of investigation here. I believe anyone reading this should have a basic knowledge of the Scientific Method, but I understand some people who might read this book will not. For those not educated in science, science may seem like a mystery. However, these people use science every day. Take a cookbook for example. I mix a little of this with a little of that, throw it in the oven and bake at a given temperature for a given amount of time and I should get whatever the recipe claims I should get. That is science. I did this and received that. If science, in this case a recipe, is true, if you follow what I did, you should get the same result. If you did not, say instead of casserole the recipe you followed called for, you received a plastic toy, you probably would not use that recipe again.

So, suppose you follow that recipe and it does not work. You should throw the recipe away. That too is science. I tried this and got something else. If it does do what is claimed, a good scientist will throw it out. This is important. Once shown to be unreliable, there is no need to dredge it up again. To do so is simply wasting time that could be best spent learning something else.

**A Word on Theory:
Only as Good as the Evidence**

Theory is exactly that, theory; a guess rendered based upon what is known or thought to be known. Theory is worth no more than the evidence which supports it. In today's world, the meaning of theory takes on no grandeur connotation that the conflict between evolution and creation. Christians are constantly claiming that evolution is taught in schools as fact. I, as a biology student, however, have never heard evolution referred to as fact or as the "Law of Evolution." I have always heard it called the "Theory of Evolution" and as long it is, the theory is no better than the evidence supporting it. And the theory of evolution just happens to be supported by a lot of evidence, too much to list here, and too much for any rational individual to believe otherwise.

I should like to add the “Theory of Evolution” just happens to have much better logical evidence supporting it than does the “Theory of Creation.” For example, given what I know about plants, chlorophyll, and photosynthesis, it defies logic to suggest that plants existed before the sun.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were **the third day**. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were **the fourth day**.

Genesis 1:11-19

Unless I accept the standard Christian apology that with god all things are possible, this verse would be extremely hard to accept as fact knowing what I know to be true of biological processes. In fact, it is what I know about biological processes that causes me to reject the Bible as anything other than myth.

My God: Time is Greater than I

To know what the strings are that when pulled make people dance would be nearly impossible without knowing something about their core beliefs. These core beliefs for most people are normally formed by the religion under which a given person is raised. Richard Dawkins offers an obvious insight into what rules and norms people will adopt in their lifetime. Dawkins points out that nearly all people adopt the same religious beliefs as their parents:

Out of all of the sects in the world, we notice an uncanny coincidence: the overwhelming majority just happen to choose the one that their parents belong to. Not the sect that has the best evidence in its favour, the best miracles, the best moral code, the best cathedral, the best stained glass, the best music: when it comes to choosing from the smorgasbord of available religions, their potential virtues seem to count for nothing, compared to the matter of heredity.⁰⁰⁴

I request now that you reconsider the words of Robert Welch “*We are fast coming to a point, Gentlemen where we’ve got to offer something that people are willing to die for.*”⁰⁰⁵ Granted, some people are able to escape the puppet masters that pull their strings but, truer than not, most people remain bound and shackled for life to the religion and its puppet masters under whose authority they are raised. The idea of capturing children young has always been a priority of the Church as once beliefs are instilled in a child’s mind, rarely do they change. The Old Testament reminds us:

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs: 22:6

And the people who have a political agenda and want to get their agenda into your kid’s head know this also. I got that verse directly off the JBS website; <http://www.jbs.org/node/1340>. Getting children into the church early is important enough to be repeated in the New Testament.

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein

Mark 10:14-15:

So suppose I back up some? Since nearly every religion assumes a god --- the question that needs asked is then “Do gods exist?” And if so --- which ones (the plural, ones, is no mistake)? Important to this discussion is what is meant by the word “god,” a word that without an agreed conscience means very little. It is therefore necessary to spell out exactly what I mean when I refer to a god. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines god as:

- 1: any of various beings conceived of as supernatural, immortal, and having special powers over the lives and affairs of people and the course of nature; deity, esp. a male deity: typically considered objects of worship
- 2: an image that is worshiped; idol
- 3: a person or thing deified or excessively honored and admired
- 4: [G-] in monotheistic religions, the creator and ruler of the universe, regarded as eternal, infinite, all-powerful, and all-knowing; Supreme Being; the Almighty ⁰⁰⁶

Adopting Webster’s definition, therefore, when I speak of god, I am referring to a supernatural, normally anthropomorphic, immortal being accredited with creating the universe or ruling over some other natural phenomena, the

weather, the sea, fertility, death. Normally, these gods, particularly those in authority, are male --- as in most cultures, males, being the stronger sex, are the authority figure. Female gods usually represent fertility like harvest.

These gods, it is often alleged, can protect its believers from enemies, often hear and answer prayer, reward our good deeds by bringing bumper crops to the faithful while punishing backsliders and heretics with natural disasters. These gods often exist beside the powers that be (the puppet masters) and help in establishing and enforcing the laws of the land. Stone statues, immortalized by artists' whose sculptures and paintings of these human formed gods, ordain the halls of government and/or public squares where they stand guard over the public sector. The gods, themselves however, are never seen which begs the question "From where these artists got their model to reproduce these gods if not human beings themselves?"

So --- given the above definition of god, does god exist? I'm going to be bold and come right out and say "No." No god of this nature exists nor can any evidence other than lip service, poppycock, and hearsay be offered as proof of their/its existence. Most religious people, who believe in the type of god described in the first definition, quickly reject all the other gods which do not suit their purpose. For whatever reason, they seem to lack the ability to see the correlation between the hundreds of gods they claim do not exist and the one or few they just hand pick from the enormous pool of these anthropomorphic mythological gods.

The third definition of god above does allow the reader some latitude to define god, however those gods that fall into this category most people reject. Included in this definition would be Confucius, Hirohito, The Reverend Moon, Adolph Hitler, Charles Manson, Jim Jones, David Koresh, or Jesus Christ for that matter although unlike the others, even Christ's physical existence has never been conclusively proven. In these cases, gods do indeed exist. However, to say that any of them control the weather, formed the universe, rules over the harvest, or the seas would be considered by most people as absurd. There is a message in this. People have been shown to see other people as god. Perhaps that is why most gods were created in the image of man which includes the god of the Bible.

At any rate --- I can undeniably say, I do not believe in god, any god. I do not believe in ghosts, witches, black magic, or any other thing associated with the supernatural, paranormal, or spiritual worlds. That however should not be taken as I do not believe in some form of "Higher Power" something greater than myself.

So, what do I mean by a "Higher Power"? Nearly every person, every civilization has a belief in what could be called a "Higher Power. Left to most people if they had the power to control the world around them, they would. They would not age, fall ill, become victims of natural disasters, experience crop failures, suffer pain, or die. Since they do age, fall ill, become victims of natural disasters, experience crop failures, suffer pain, and die, however, these people obviously (and correctly) realize that they don't have any significant control over these events. Something, they theorize, therefore must be a power greater than they. I believe everyone realizes this, even the most hardened atheists.

The idea of a Higher Power has also occurred to me. I grow old whether I want to or not. As much as I might like I cannot soar with eagles or dive to the

depths of whales. Winter comes as much as I wish summers (during which I must put up mosquitoes, those damn insects that if left to me would not exist) would last forever. A force, surely greater than I, prevents the solar system from just flying apart. A force, greater than I, can shake the earth with such violence that whole cities may be turned to rubble in seconds. Those things however have never been shown as too often claimed to be caused by any anthropomorphic god. The earth does not rest on the shoulders of some giant strong man who shrugs from time to time shaking the ground.

Gods (including the Christian god) do not exist until the story tellers and myth spinners attempt to explain these uncontrollable and powerful natural events and exploit them to their advantage. Then are born the gods just as and with no more evidence to justify their existence than Hairy Potter. I might also point out, people like Harry Potter. These people are willing to spend millions of dollars to read about and watch his escapades, myth or not. Unfortunately, given the choice between watching Harry Potter and Al Gore's "*An Inconvenient Truth*" most people would throw their money at Harry Potter. And that's too bad. People like to hear, read, and repeat fables, myths, and stories far more than they would like to know about the world in which they live. Given the choice between fantasy and reality, I feel safe in saying most people prefer fantasy.

I, unlike other story tellers, do not depend on myth and legend to uphold my belief. I have no idea what set the universe in motion; I only recognize that it was. I do not know exactly how life came to be; I only recognize that it did. How my conscience came to be, how it can analyze what the two holes in my forehead perceive, my hands hold, what touches my tongue, and makes my headache, is unknown. I only know it did and can. I do not know why I age; I only know I do. Time, to me, is a complete mystery. I wonder how there was a yesterday. I do not know. I only know there was.

If these unknowns are god then, I suppose, god exists, the old god of gaps theory. My gods, I am certain beyond any reasonable doubt, however, did not write a book. I am certain beyond any reasonable doubt that my time god, using time metaphorically as an example, does not care about my sex life. In fact, time does not care at all. Time, unlike anything living, lacks the ability to feel (that is I have not seen any evidence to suggest time feels) and as such time cannot experience emotions such as anger. Nothing about my behavior will bring time's wrath down upon me. Time does not grant social status, nor does it make exceptions for it. Time does not ask of me my time for either military or civilian duty. Time does not ask me for tithes. Time does not ask me to sacrifice. No alters require being built to time. Time will go on, however, and whatever consequences time's continuance means to me, I have no recourse but to accept it. I cannot stop it. Time, whatever it is, is greater than I.

Christianity verses Science: Are They Compatible?

We normally do not think of science as prehistoric however the manufacture of tools, the use of fire, and hunting techniques are all scientifically derived. Science says here is what I did, and this is what happened. It worked for me and if true it

should work again for you. If it doesn't work for you, then you must wonder if it is true or not.

Science is not some mystery hidden in the libraries of universities or in an obscure lab where some mad man is attempting to restore life to an executed criminal by implanting a new brain. That's not say science has not created a monster. Indeed, Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" is as much prophecy as a fictional tale. Automobiles, the great wolf in sheep's clothing, kills tens of thousands per year and pours out tons of exhaust, obstructing our horizons and choking the masses. Chemical factories crank out tons of poisons lethal to all life forms. Modern armament has reduced killing each other in mass numbers to simply pulling a trigger or pressing a button. If Shelley's monster is seen as a metaphor, rather than a literal figure, the true horror of Shelley's book may be some day fully realized, if it has not been already. Those monsters are, however, applied science; technology quite frankly (pun intended).

When most people think of science and its beginnings, they normally equate science with civilization, and indeed, if we knew no science, or very little, we'd still be sleeping on the ground in the cold with a watchful eye out for whatever passes in the night. Nearly every comfort afforded us is the result of applications of science. Wherever civilizations have flourished with inventions and buildings, science has left its signature.

When people think of science's beginnings, Egypt is likely the first place that comes to their mind. The Egyptians had to have some idea of engineering to build their pyramids, not to mention some idea of the technology required to cut and transport those massive rocks. The Egyptians manufactured clothing and jewelry of various types, constructed shelters and watercraft, and developed armaments beyond simple stones. They also knew enough about the earth's relationship to the universe to develop their own calendar. They embalmed their dead in ways that preserved cadavers four thousand years using methods modern science has struggled to duplicate. Egyptians also knew enough about human anatomy to develop some sound surgical procedures as early as 3000-2500 BC.⁰⁰⁷ Writing was being developed during the Egyptian era however Egyptian writing was complicated by numerous symbols and was limited to scribes in the priesthood who held writing and all other forms of learning as a virtual monopoly.⁰⁰⁸

Up until the time of the Greeks, science was mostly dependent on necessity. People required food so agriculture created methods and implements to provide it. The crops required water, so rivers were diverted into canals for irrigation. The Egyptians likely had no idea why plants required water. They only knew if the plants did not get watered, the plants shriveled up and died. Why plants shriveled up and died was left to the priests, who created gods such as bounty and harvest. This perhaps helps explain why generations of time would be required to learn exactly why plants required water? It is doubtful that priests liked others questioning their explanations for their explanations kept them in power.

Science may exist simply for the sake of knowing. When, for example, we think of the motivation for Pythagoras in 536BC figuring out the world was round, we do not think his aspiration for doing so was a desire for world domination. Pythagoras simply wished to explain the universe and earth's place in it. For many

of the Greeks, the matter of finding the truth seemingly was for truth's sake only. Offhand I cannot think of any useful purpose other than simply wanting to know why things were for them to devote their time to endeavors which offered no immediate economic or material application.

It was the Greeks who brought in science as we know it today. About 600-400BC the Greeks began developing natural science apart from philosophy and by 400-200BC were bringing about rapid advances in anatomy, math, and astronomy.⁰⁰⁹ Science in Greece was being carried to the next level, the desire to explain the world by establishing a working model.⁰¹⁰ Around 250BC, Aristarchus of Samos, having learned from his predecessor, Pythagoras (536BC),⁰¹¹ that the earth traveled around the sun, discovered that the earth laid at an incline of 23.5 degrees. They were therefore able to rationally explain the seasons of the year. They were also fully aware that night and day were caused by the earth's rotation on its axis. Day existed when a given point of reference on the earth faced the sun. Night was when a given point of reference was turned away from the sun.

More amazing, Hipparchus (160BC) was able to predict the "precession of the equinoxes" by noting that the North Pole did not point directly at the North Star and even changed from year to year. Take a top, for example, and set it up right on the floor and draw an imaginary line from its point on the floor (point A) to a point (B) in space, now the pinnacle of the top. Then spin the top in a manner that point A does not change. The top will rotate swiftly about its axis. As it does so however the pinnacle will leave point B and begin to wobble, spinning much slower around in space to form a circle around point B. If a line was drawn from point A through B therefore, line AB would come to represent a center line drawn through the center of the resulting cone. By applying this slight wobble to the earth, Hipparchus was able to demonstrate that the earth's equator would not be in same place each year and therefore, the equinoxes would not occur at exactly the same time from year to year. Hipparchus estimated this wobble by the earth would take 26,000 years to complete. The "precession of the equinoxes" remains one of the most profound discoveries ever made by ancient astronomers.⁰¹²

Other discoveries included the measurement of the circumference of the earth by Eratosthenes. Using shadows cast from the sun at different locations at the same time, Eratosthenes was able to estimate the circumference of the earth at 28,700 miles which was "not a very accurate result, but not a bad estimation for a first attempt."⁰¹³ If nothing else, it proves that as far back as Eratosthenes, the possibility of the earth being a globe was being considered.

Also getting its start was geology. Strabo (25BC), by comparing Mount Vesuvius to Mount Etna, predicted that Vesuvius may become a mountain of fire again. It did. Sixty years after his death, Vesuvius wiped out Pompeii and Herculaneum. He was also able to describe, from finding fossil shells miles from the sea, that the area where the shells were found must have been a delta of a great river many years before.⁰¹⁴

And then a huge surprise for me! Atoms! Democritus (420BC) developed a theory of atoms as micro-small pieces of matter consisting of different weights. Epicurus (306BC) begins to speculate about atoms and vacuums followed by Lucretius (60BC) who authored "*De Rerum Naturae*."⁰¹⁵ Atoms! Wow --- to think

anyone was considering atoms at this time was, --- well, a shock to me. In all my years of schooling up until right now, all I was aware of from this era was Empedocles' (440BC) four elements of fire, earth, air, and water.⁰¹⁶ Even though this atomic theory was far from our current atomic theory of today, had it went mainstream, it is hard to imagine where we might be today, either off in space somewhere boldly going where no man has gone before or simply another one of Frankenstein's victims.

Hippocrates (420BC) was the father of modern medicine. Anyone who has ever been in the medical field has heard the words "***First of all, do no harm***" or in other words as it was explained to me in Naval Hospital Corps School, if you do not know what you are doing, don't do it. You may do more harm than good. Do what you know will help, stop the bleeding, make the person comfortable, treat for shock, prevent the patient from harming himself, and then let the injury take its course while you seek professional help. Life is fragile. Don't, with good intentions, break it.

Aware of whom Hippocrates was and what he is famous for, I came across one of Hippocrates quotes that made me take notice. I shall quote it, not so much for its medical value but for the religious insight Hippocrates interjects into it.

"I am about to discuss the disease called 'sacred*'. It is not, in my opinion, any more divine or more sacred than other diseases, but has a natural cause, and its supposed divine origin is due to men's inexperience and to their wonder at its peculiar character. Now while men continue to believe in its divine origin because they are at a loss to understand it, they really disprove its divinity by the facile method of healing which they adopt, consisting as it does of purifications and incantations." (Sacred= Epilepsy)⁰¹⁷

It is worth mention at this time that Greeks and their wonder about the world existed in an environment where few, if any, religious barriers existed. Human thoughts, rather than the claimed mumblings of gods by priests, once planted were allowed to bloom. Pythagoras planted a seed and brought Aristarchus, Eratosthenes, and Hipparchus into flower years later.

When most people think of Greece, the people who come to most people's mind are regretfully Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Why regretfully? They were the philosophers, the beginners of mental iso-metrics. The social architects of the day likely wished to frame the world in a manner that benefited themselves and saw in these early philosophers' writings the means to do so. Personally, I am already more impressed with the scientists I've just listed. Those scientists, the exception being Hippocrates, most people have never heard of. Why?

I must wonder if this was not by design. The puppet masters (priests and ministers) threw away information about the universe and replaced it with myth would not be in their best interest, the Christian religion. Doing so made them instant authorities of all knowledge. It made their rule unquestionable. It guaranteed them wealth. That would also mean Christianity could not claim ignorance about the earth's position in the universe. Christianity created that

ignorance. Having cast aside prior knowledge, the Dark Ages could be laid right on Christianity's doorstep. And --- it has been.

the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system. There was more knowledge in the world before that period than for many centuries afterwards ⁰¹⁸

Thomas Paine

Something of a side note might be worth injecting here. With all the rhetoric by the right that America's founders intended America to be a Christian Nation, it is worth mention here that Thomas Paine was not the "*filthy little atheist*" Teddy Roosevelt claimed Paine was. In fact, in his widely proclaimed book "**The Age of Reason**" Paine states:

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make or fellows-creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish Church, by the Roman Catholic Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church, nor by any church that I know of. My mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

While Paine believed in a god, one god, clearly it was not the Christian god, a belief that many of his associates and friends such as Thomas Jefferson also agreed.

In every nation and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own.

Thomas Jefferson: Letter to H Spafford, 1814

On the other hand, nearly everyone has heard of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as they (by design) are/were the most studied. Priests, kings, and rulers (the puppet masters) all saw something to gain by getting the rest of society to adopt these people's principles. Unfortunately, what they did was to move thought away from the physical world to one of speculation and mysticism.

Plato, born 428BC, developed the “***Plutonic Theory of Ideas***” which held a World of Ideas exist apart from the natural world. Plato’s imaginary World of Ideas was thought to be far superior to the world of human experience. The Idea of Justice laid within this world perfectly, eternally unchangeable, and immortal. According to Plato, people took the world of their existence, what Plato calls a shadow world, too seriously for it is in the World of Ideas where the real world resides.⁰¹⁹ And how did this World of Ideas affect the future?

“There was much in the theory of Ideas that appealed to the first Christian philosophers. The emphatic affirmation of a supermundane, spiritual order of reality and the equally emphatic assertion of the caducity of things material fitted in with the essentially Christian contention that spiritual interests are supreme. To render the world of Ideas more acceptable to Christians, the Patristic Platonists from Justin Martyr to St Augustine maintained the world exists in the mind of God, and that this was what Plato meant.⁰²⁰”

354AD Augustine was born to Roman citizens in what is Souk Ahras, Algeria. In 386, Augustine read and was influenced by libri platonicorum and discovered the existence of incorporeal substances. He converted to Christianity that same year. In 395AD he was appointed bishop of Hippo Regius, the largest diocese in Africa, which he presided over until his death. According to Augustine, nature was not to be considered important; rather the spiritual world was (as Plato). The only truth by Augustine’s reasoning was that which could be supported by scripture which is why Ptolemaeus’ Geocentric Theory was adopted rather than Pythagoras’ Heliocentric Theory. Only scripture, God’s word, could explain the universe and anything that might be seen as opposing scripture, books and thoughts, was quickly banished.

Freedom of thought and written and oral expression is historically a relatively recent development. For those who were the shepherds of Christian souls and whose function it was to get those souls to heaven, the idea that anyone could think and say or write what he/she wanted was an absurdity. Moreover, it was dangerous because it might lead others into error.⁰²¹

Spirits and lost souls were everywhere. Behind every bush, tree, rock formation, building, animal was a higher meaning, a purpose to which only those in God’s service could hope to understand (which locked in their social status). Priests or those under them were the only ones to have access to scripture. Hence, before anything could be accepted as true; it had to go through them. And history stands as a testament to what happened next. A huge knowledge gap exists between about 100AD and 1500AD. Intellectual achievements virtually stopped in Western Civilization. If any advances in science or human intelligence were to be made, they had to come from nations to the east and free from Christianity, like Persia, like Mongolia, and India. Reading Plato’s writings, “(C) ***Ethics and Theory of the State***.” at the Catholic website, newadvent.org, I could not help but have scripture flashed through my head. Plato saw the state as “highest embodiment of the Idea.”

As such, the state should have absolute authority and unlimited power. ⁰²² If Plato's idea is equated with scripture, it would not be a long step to:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Romans 13:1-2

Personal property and family institutions, the author of the Catholic website writes, had no place in the Platonic state ⁰²³

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Matthew 19:29

Children should belong to the state and be taken for the purpose of education (education = indoctrination) as soon as they are born.

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Mark 10:14-16

According to Plato, the ideal state would exist in three layers, the ruling class, producers, and soldiers. While a short scriptural passage does not jump out at me for this one, clearly the Bible justifies a class system with the rulers at the top and the producers (landowners) held at a level above the serfs and soldiers. The rulers should be educated in philosophy (redefined in scripture) which Plato considered the love of wisdom. A world without wisdom, it was reasoned, was doomed to ongoing troubles. Keep in mind that the immortal Idea world, this perfect whatever it is off in Lala Land somewhere, would not be a far jump to heaven and god.

I have no physical evidence that Plato's thoughts were written into scripture as I surmise here; however, to deny Plato's ideas did not intertwine with Christianity would be ignoring the obvious. Nevertheless, the great majority of the Christian philosophers down to St Augustine were Platonists. They appreciated the uplifting influence of Plato's psychology and metaphysics and recognized in that influence a powerful ally of Christianity in the warfare against materialism and naturalism. ⁰²⁴

Aristotle, Plato's student, unlike Plato, took an interest in the natural world. His approach to the world, his philosophy, took on a much more scientific approach to natural phenomena. Even while a student of Plato's, Aristotle showed a marked interest in the study of facts and laws of the physical world. While Aristotle set

about to study natural phenomena like physics and motion, he apparently made the error of adopting the thoughts of others without checking out all other sources. For example, he believed the earth to be the center of the universe which he likely adopted from the myths swirling around him.

The earth according to these myths was stationary around which revolved the sun, the moon, and stars.⁰²⁵ Unfortunately Aristotle had not done his homework. Pythagoras some hundred years before (536BC) had already shown the earth orbited the sun. Aristotle, the intellectual praised as leading the world forward, instead took the world a giant step backwards.

The universe was thought of as some design, some intelligence which imparted circular motion to these heavenly objects. This idea that nature was due to some design, some purpose, was taken for granted right up until the time of Newton and Galileo⁰²⁶ and has resurfaced today with the “*Theory of Intelligent Design*.” The theory of Intelligent Design is in fact a far step back in history.

The idea that everything required a purpose, more specifically a human purpose, also existed prior to Christian doctrine Anthro-centrism, the idea that nature exists for human’s benefit. Normally thought of as a Judaea-Christian concept, this human centered egotism can also be found in Aristotle’s thinking and likely Christianity borrowed into it.⁰²⁷

In like we may infer that after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that the other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild, if not all at least the greater part of them, for food, and for the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now if nature makes nothing incomplete and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all the animals for the sake of man.

Aristotle, *Politics*⁰²⁸

Before moving on, I should mention Claudius Ptolemaeus. Ptolemaeus (140AD) was the originator of the Geocentric Theory of astronomy whose basic assumption placed earth at the center of the universe. Ptolemaeus was not known to be a scientist, but rather more of a recorder; hence it would be a guess whether Christianity barrowed the Geocentric Theory from Ptolemaeus or Ptolemaeus got it from the religious beliefs of his day. In either event, Christianity adopted the Geocentric Theory as the Geocentric Theory best suited scripture. Pythagoras’ Heliocentric Theory, like so many earlier discoveries, where simply put aside or outlawed. Shaded by the Cross, the Dark Ages began.

“As early as 170 CE, the Church promulgated a list of genuine books of the New Testament and excluded others from use in religious practice. In 405 CE, Pope Innocent I published a list of forbidden books, and at the end of that century issued a decree that has been called the first Index of Forbidden Books”⁰²⁹

And so, the civilized world would be lulled to sleep, a deep dark sleep that lasted better than a thousand years. The scientific advances of Greece were lost to the Romans who seemed to care less about science. Romans were too busy cheering for their favorite gladiators and defending their empire to care much about the earth's position in the universe or tiny atoms too small to see. As Neo-Platonism began to rise, mysticism invaded the natural world and science slowly succumbed to superstition and Christian mythology until:

After about A.D. 300 interest in natural science almost ceases; Christianity, new and living, was giving men what they had always been seeking, and in that new world of inspiration and love, nothing seemed important except to live well and know the Divine truth. So science almost disappears and for centuries the learned world is busy confuting heresies and defining exactly what a Christian can believe without fear of error.⁰³⁰

It's hard to imagine how many people died at the hands of priests for having nothing more than an insightful thought that challenged Christian mythology. By the time science was allowed to reestablish itself, it was some 1500 years later. Scientists, like Copernicus and Galileo, were in the 1500s reestablishing what was already known some 2000 years before. The earth was not a fixed object at the center of the universe; the sun did not revolve around it, rather day and night were caused by the earth's rotation on its own axis. Even at this late date however, to suggest such heresy had its punishments. Galileo, for example, was imprisoned and forced to recant. Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in the Campo dei Fiori in Rome on February 17th 1600.⁰³¹ Up until reading the Catholic Website "Newadvent," I had always been under the impression that Bruno was burned at the stake for spreading the Copernicus Theory, but the Catholics via their website have finally set me straight. It seems Bruno was not put to death for his defense of the Copernican Theory but rather for what was deemed "theological errors" among which was Bruno's insertion was that Christ was merely a magician, not a god.⁰³² I've been set straight at last.

"the Christian system, as if dreading the result, incessantly opposed, and not only rejected the sciences, but persecuted the professors.

Had Newton or Descartes lived three or four hundred years ago and pursued their studies as they did, it is most probable they would not have lived to finish them; and had Franklin drawn lightning from the clouds at the same time, it would have been at the hazard of expiring for it in the flames."⁰³³

I'm going to spare the reader a long boring chronological of Christianity and history of science from this point on as that is relatively simple to find and well documented. If dates and discoveries are what you wish to know, the library is full of books on the subject, so I suggest you go there. What I will say however is that Christianity and science, contrary to claims by religious leaders, are not, nor ever

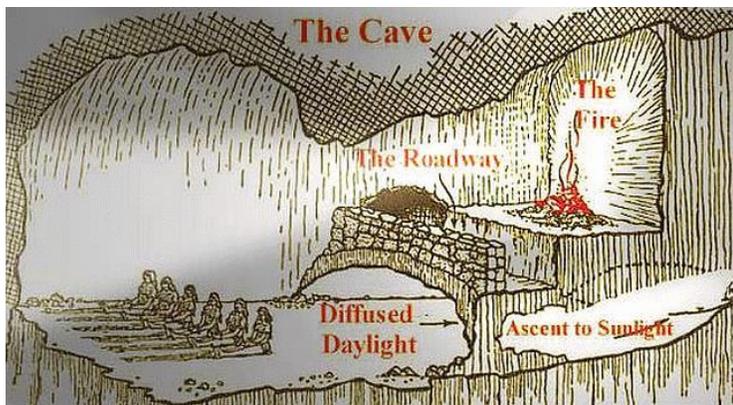
have been, compatible. Not only does Christianity contradict nearly every scientific theory ever proposed, but it also contradicts recorded history, Noah's Ark for example. People were writing history during the time Noah's Ark is claimed to have happened in the Bible and no one other than the authors of the Bible have recorded such an event.

Another dissimilarity between science and religion is how each approach what each perceives to be true. Religion makes a number of assumptions, god created the universe for example, and true or not throughout history has enforced these assumptions via intimidation, threats, and punishments going as far as capital punishment. It is forbidden for anyone to question the basic assumptions of religion." Popes have written,

"It is absolutely wrong and forbidden, either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Holy Scripture, or to admit that the sacred writer has erred."⁰³⁴

Under the religious paradigm, if data comes in that does not support the original assumption, the data is either thrown out or rationalizations are thought up to explain this data in such a way that still allows the original assumption to remain intact. Science, on the other hand, begs to be challenged. No scientist has ever been put to death for not conforming to another's scientific theory nor has any scientist been cast into prison for not supporting the current scientific theory, whatever that theory may be. It is not forbidden anywhere in science to claim any other scientist has erred. Science relies on skepticism whereas religion relies on conformance and faith. Science and religion, I will say again, are not compatible, not now, not ever.

Shadows on the Wall



I did borrow some of Plato's thinking, however. Speaking to my psychologist, Dr Paul Rentz – South Dakota VA, he came up with an interesting analogy of my perception of the world. Back around 360 BCE, Plato in Book VII of his "*The Republic*"

discusses perception and reality in what has become known as "*The Cave Allegory*." Since birth a group of individuals have been chained in this cave in a manner that does not allow them to turn around to see what is behind them. All they can see is the wall in front of them onto which is cast shadows from puppets operated by puppet masters behind and above them. The light to cast these shadows

is provided by a fire behind the puppets. Plato writes in the first and second person as if two are conversing:

(Person One) And if they (the prisoners) were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them (the shadows).

(Person Two) Very true

(Person One) And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passer-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow? No question, he replied.

(Person One) To them (the prisoners), I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.⁰³⁵

As the allegory moves to its conclusion, the question is asked if one of these prisoners were released of his restraints and turned around to view the entrance of cave, would not the released prisoner, adjusted to only the dim light of the cave, be distressed by the brightness of the light from outside.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light (the real world and sun), will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take and take in the objects of vision which he can see (the shadows), and which he will conceive to be reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?⁰³⁶

The light, however, that at first repelled the prisoner and caused his eyes pain, if forced to the outside world (reality), in time the prisoner's eyes would become accustomed to the light. He would eventually come to realize that what he now was viewing (the outside world) is reality. The question is then asked:

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?⁰³⁷

Then the scenario develops in which the prisoner, led into the light, is returned to the cave but rather than being seen as someone who has seen reality, he is seen by those inside the cave as having been blinded, his eyes now not accustomed to the dark.

And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he

came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.⁰³⁸

To sum up my take on this allegory and compare it to religions past and present, those chained would be those in the pews. Religion would be the fire casting the shadows on the wall giving those in the pew their manufactured world view. The prisoner that makes it out into the sunshine would be the scientists whose discovery is now based upon reality. And for that he is cast out and even killed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Clash of the Titans

Biological Fundamentalism

I was/am human and like any other human I longed for meaning, a purpose, something larger than myself that I could belong to, something to plant my foot on to give my life stability and meaning. Coming into Biology, I had none of that. All I had were voids, vast areas of nothing that before I thought meant something. Biology, like water into a hole, began to fill those voids. I did not need my thinking altered greatly to accept biological concepts. Recycling of life necessities such as the carbon or nitrogen is fundamentally important to sustaining life as we know it.

Upon realizing this basic truth, I no longer could see humans as anything particularly special anymore. We breathed the same air as any other animal. We require water, reproduce, seek food and shelter as does any other animal. In terms of what makes up an animal, we and dogs for example are far more similar than different. Most people I know would laugh about that statement --- but think about it. How are we different than dogs? Well --- dogs have a larger nose. You know -- - a nose larger than a human nose but a nose just the same. Dogs have four legs --- well until really examined. Then the front legs begin to look more --- well arms and hands --- but legs just the same. Dogs have hair all over their bodies --- you know, like people who have much less --- but hair just the same. Hmmmmm, so much for the differences.

After answering that question, then ask yourself how we are the same? Dogs, like people, have brains and since we do not know what goes through a dog's head, it cannot be said that people use that brain to reason while a dog does not. Dogs have a mouth, intestines, a heart, lungs, a liver, noses, eyes, and ears, feels pain, smells, sees, tastes, and experiences fear. Dogs have two sexes. Dogs form packs, hunt in cooperation, share food, and normally do not go around killing each other --- but will for reasons we do not thoroughly understand. So where did we, humans, get the idea that we were so different than any other species? Could it the mythological Bible tells us so?

Of all the ideas obtained from my Christian background, the idea that humanity was created above all other life was one I've always considered the most repulsive. As I could not remove Vietnam from my past nor could I find any reason to feel good about being part of it --- biology offered me a salvation of sorts. With the existentialist's philosophy, that each person freely chooses his niche in life and is solely responsible for whatever that choice might bring adrift in my mind, I could forsake my material comforts and opt for a lifestyle altruistically abandoning as many human comforts as possible in some vain attempt to save life on earth. To offset the day-to-day struggle of attempting not to utterly feel condemned or ashamed about being in Vietnam, Biology offered me a new face, a foundation on which to stand, one I could get my hands around and understand. Biology had the potential of reshaping my image. Within my twisted mind, condemning myself for not standing up for my beliefs in Vietnam led me to question my manhood ever since. Biology offered a cause against which I might be able to measure my own

worth. What could possibility be nobler than to stand like Don Quixote firmly against the windmills of progress and industry and the environmental polluters of the world? Everywhere I looked enemies existed, the discharge from Landry's Packing Plant just down the hill, the unrestricted use of fossil fuels, the paper mill at St Regis, cement parking lots, urban sprawl, the conversion of native lands by development and agriculture, litter along highways, snowmobiles, boats dripping oil and gas into lakes, on and on and on.

So I donned my shaving basin and decided not to drive or own a car. I would walk, from 33rd Ave four blocks north of Division Street to the college on 5th Ave four blocks south of Division, a total of 36 blocks across town. Nothing, not rain, snow, gale force wind, subzero temperatures, would prevent me from making my daily my trek. I could rival in the fact that the parking situation, always a problem and how to fix it constantly being hashed over by St Cloud State, wasn't any of my creation. If, after all, everyone followed my lead, St Cloud State would not have a parking problem. All that concrete could have been flowers. Every day I could bathe in the half gallon of gas I would have saved by walking past all those cars that were drove to school by people who lived much closer to campus than I.

At my apartment, I had no stereo or electrical appliances of any kind other than what was provided with the apartment. I stored food, soda, and beer between the outside windows in the winter to keep the refrigerator shut off. I stored and ate rice. All I had to sit on was a bed or the floor often propping myself against the wall for back support to read. No one needed to cut down a tree so I might sit in comfort off the floor in a chair. And there in the still of the night I'd dream of destroying automobiles with a sledgehammer and pushing them into holes in the ground. Automobiles were after all the main reason why roads and parking lots were built, not to mention the fact that they burnt fossil fuels --- which was part of the reason we were in Vietnam in the first place, to defend the Indonesian oil fields or so I was told. That the war was partly fought over oil was reason enough all by itself for me not to drive a car.

I'd been overseas and seen population at its worse, children starving, ill with diseases never thought of in the States, homes (if they could be call that) with no cooking or heating material, children drinking Black water hence I was emotionally susceptible to books predicting environmental disasters such as "*The Population Bomb*." I took such books to heart. I remember my sister, Helen, calling and telling me she was pregnant with her second child only for her to receive some off handed remark from me like "Just what the world needs, another mouth to feed." I mean, how bad was that? I cannot believe I made that statement, but I did.

Biology also fit into my desire to live apart from the world in which I was raised. By the spring of 1971, I had become well informed on wild edible foods. I'd bought all the books on survival I could; how to build traps and snares, shelters, what plants to avoid, which plants were edible, and how to build fires using only what existed in the wild. Looking back, all this effort I invested in moving to the wilderness was nothing but some implausible fantasy but even so, I was obsessed. I invested years learning how to survive the wilderness, for what? Never leaving and going there, whatever did I get back? So far, I've made one loaf of bread from cattail pollen. The yellow pollen turns blue upon cooking. Now there is a bit of

knowledge worth the wife I lost and the three or four years I spent learning it all. As much as I thought I could survive the wild, what I never would have been able to survive would have been the isolation as much as I would have liked to think otherwise. The evidence of that was apparent every day as I sat in my tiny shanty all by myself surrounded by nothing but concrete walls. I was going out of my head lonely. Attempting to attract friends by challenging their every thought is not the way to win friends and influence people.

And yet I dreamed of becoming “thee” Biology Messiah. I could move somewhere to the outskirts of town and live in a dirt house dug into the side of hill with a southern exposure to make the best use of solar power. I would have no modern conveniences, radios, televisions, automobiles, stereos, stoves, or running water. I could compost all my waste and use it to fertilize my garden. Drying food would be preferable to canning because canning required heat, utensils, and hardware such as jars. I could easily create a storage cellar for keeping vegetables all winter long. Fish were plentiful assuming I fished pan fish and settled for rough fish, those no one else wanted. I knew too to do so would be a lonely and unrewarding existence --- but I was sure twenty to thirty years down the road someone would come climbing up the side of my hill seeking knowledge and happiness. I also felt that down the road, should I undertake this style of living, the next generation would hail me as a prophet, someone years ahead of the times. But --- my dream of attaining Messiah status only remained a dream. I lacked the will. I simply did not have the guts. And I could not help but wonder, “What does that say about me?”

Today the trend is toward going green which is good. But --- I feel that going green today is too little too late. Although I do not know that for sure I support any effort to move toward green even if it is too little too late. I know however when the biggest environmental polluting vehicle I drove was a 10-speed bike, the only thing I got for my effort was hit by a passing car.

I have since reassessed my devotion to Environmentalism. I strongly believe that in order to save the Earth as we know it, sacrifice concerning the personal use of its natural resources will be required on a global scale, not simply mine. My error was taking this sacrifice on myself as few, if any, are willing to commit themselves to such personal renunciation of the comforts they’ve become accustomed. Personally, I doubt many will unless doing without is forced on them --- and someday it will be, either politically, to maintain the elite’s status quo if possible, or naturally, when the well goes dry.

Side Note:

In 2019 a new virus was first identified in Wuhan China. Whether it began there is a matter of conjecture. Anyway, it quickly spread around the globe to become a major pandemic killing to date more the 8,000,000 worldwide as of 2021. And it is teaching us much about the future. I have not changed my mind about what we as humans must do if we are to have any hope of saving the planet. The current lifestyle we enjoy is not sustainable. This means we must change. We have no choice in this matter if we are to survive. COVID however is showing us we won’t. Rather than trusting the expert’s too many will be turning to propaganda to maintain the status quo. If it means giving

up personal comforts for the betterment of all, COVID is showing us many will refuse to do what is necessary to alter the course of the path of destruction we are currently on.

Does Anyone Care?

With Vietnam only two years removed, a war of emotions was still raging in my mind. The war was still in full swing and although most veterans I left behind and knew were no doubt home, the fact that people were still there dying existed as visual images whenever a news article came out about Vietnam. At center stage was the ineffectiveness of the Paris Peace talks. On October 31, 1970, South Vietnam's President Thieu reconfirmed what I always believed; North Vietnam had no intention to negotiate. Thieu stated that the Communist would not settle for anything less than complete domination of South Vietnam. The Communists mission at the peace table, according to Thieu, was merely to stall to gain time and win victory gradually.⁰⁰¹

The second issue, front page, was the trial of Lieutenant William Calley. The trial was opened November 17th, 1970.⁰⁰² Calley made me want to hide under my desk. I wanted to pretend I'd never been in Vietnam. Every time Calley would come up at college, I visualized half the class turning around to see what a baby killer looked like. The class never knew I ever was in Vietnam. I kept Vietnam inside me like some dirty secret. Yet I kept imagining the class turning around anyway. I felt I was being judged but also felt that these people, having no idea what the stresses of battle were, had any business judging me or any other veteran. All this was simply in my head of course. That did not stop my opinion of these people from becoming less and less even though they did nothing to earn my displeasure --- directly anyway. Indirectly --- they were guilty of expressing an idealistic view of the world that I could not realize given my background. I wish the Summer of Love could have been --- but it wasn't. I wish the gentle people would have been --- but they weren't. I wish the world would have given peace a chance --- but it didn't. And I wasn't sure whether I should be mad or sad. I really had no idea what to think and all these conflicting feelings were eating me up.

This was the 70s of course. The very foundation of what America was built on was being undermined according to conservatives or being improved upon according to liberals. Whichever it was, everything was an issue. There was the sexual revolution, woman's liberation, coming out, environmental activism, cat litter boxes as art, the Indian Movement, the drug culture, hippies and acid, to name a few. I remember a political cartoon that about summed up the seventies as I saw it. A hippy like character was pictured holding a sign on which is printed the words "*Conform to Nonconformity!*"

For me, while I related to a number of these causes and inwardly at least supported many of them, the issue constantly tripping me up was Vietnam. While, as stated before, I was against war, I could never bring myself to publicly stand in opposition to Vietnam as did the "Vietnam Veterans against the War" knowing that by doing so I might be contributing to it. I often heard the communists were backing of the antiwar movement to insure their win. America would tire of the war and pull out if they, the communists, could hold out.

What bothered me the most however were not the antiwar protestors or being treated as Service Trash. What bothered me most was the oblivious attitude of the majority of students on campus. I could understand the protestors, those who scorned veterans, or those who were politically active attempting to bring the troops home. What I could not understand were all those with no opinion of the war one way or the other, who went about their business like nothing was happening, who just plain and simply did not care about what was happening as long it did not affect them. I wanted to scream “People are dying -- Damn It! Don’t you care? Doesn’t anyone care?”

Draft Dodgers: Cowards or Heroes?

Somewhere within this time frame, on his second day in office, January 21, 1977, President Jimmy Carter pardoned all civilians that sought refuge in Canada to avoid the draft.⁰⁰³ While numerous veteran organizations were enraged and objected to this pardon arguing that by doing so the American government would encourage further flights should national defense and social conscience again collide, I applauded Carter’s action. As stated before, to leave one’s country believing that you just gave up your whole way of life, friends, relatives, all over the belief that war is wrong in my mind took guts and conviction; both being admirable traits by my standards. If I felt bad about anything, it was that none of those returning was me. Carter did not pardon those 500,000 to one million who went over the wall, absent without leave (AOL)⁰⁰⁴ after joining the military. Those in this group, those that went AOL, I too had mixed feelings about. Going AOL, I largely saw as simply bad behavior, skirting the duties they agreed to. It was not like this group had any moral conviction against the military. They just wanted a vacation. In my mind, this is the group they build briggs for. A few days in the slammer might make them think about going on vacation again.

Desertion, however, I did not know what to think. Yes, it could be argued the deserter was living up to his beliefs, leaving the military with no intention of returning, but if he was truly anti-military to begin with, I reasoned, he should not have joined. Maybe he did not know what he was getting into before joining the service; much like me after watching children killed by members of my unit in Vietnam. I considered laying down my weapon and going to jail. This is a more difficult matter and may involve one’s basic moral values. The military after all is anything but honest about what a given person’s position might end up being or what duties a given person may be ordered to carry out. Furthermore, many join the service not old enough to enter any other contract, yet they are legally bound to the military, subject to criminal prosecution should they renege once their name is scribbled on the line.

Evangelicalism Rising: Woe to Ye Liberal

One problem that came with both my wives was religion. Marcia, my first wife, was Catholic which obviously created a problem for me the moment I stepped into her church. All those religious symbols, the church itself, the smell of incense, the

holy water, and all that magical mumbo jumbo I watched as those Buddhist monks filed through that village in Vietnam instantly came rushing back. It was like I never left that village, or the village followed me home. In any event, I had all I could do to keep from running out of that church the second the priest walked down the aisle swinging a pot of burning incense on a two-foot chain. All those hungry children came rushing back. And as the collection plate came down the aisles all I could see were the monks plundering the people's rice. It was all so vivid.

My second wife, Lynda was a member of the Assembly of God in Paynesville. Her family is devoted members of the Assembly of God; their social life is completely engulfed by the church. Numerous members of Lynda's family perform every Sunday on stage and the only college members of her family even have considered is Evangelical in nature. Even their music must be gospel. Secular music, the music I just happen to listen to, is largely outlawed from any music box in their homes. Even today after twenty-five years of being together, I hate the approach of Christmas as Christmas music is all I hear played from Thanksgiving to sometime into the New Year. While I can tolerate "Frosty the Snowman," after a month and half, over and over for twenty-five years, "Frosty the Snowman" is, at the very least, redundant. Christmas Carols, however, "Away in the Manger," "Oh Come All Ye Faithful," "Joy to the World" are extremely depressing. I find no joy in false philosophies designed to dumb down society being sung on my doorstep. I do have to admit, however, given my love for music "Oh Holy Night" sung well is one of my all-time favorite songs. Religious or not, Oh Holy Night is a marvelous song. Also much of my most cherished music is gospel in nature done by backwoods string bands (the Carter Family) or lone guitarists (Sam McGee) and African Americans such as Leadbelly or Sister Rosetta Thorpe.

Ironically, gospel music brought me into the light. Not the light of god, of course, but the light shining on the dangers of the current rising Evangelical movement. Not having cable television and with nothing to listen to other than what was on local television; I popped on the old boob-tube just for some noise early one morning. And noise is what I got. It was an evangelist, Jimmy Swaggart, hammering away at all the sin and corruption in the world and threatening his audience that if they would not step up to the television that instant and place their hands on that television to be "Saved" then and there ---- why --- just as sure as the sun would come up, the listener would be on a one way trip to Hell's fire.

I honestly could not believe what I was hearing coming from a loving god's messenger. I thought for moment that I was in a time warp --- back in Germany about 1930. Homosexuals, according to this minister, were worthy of death:

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

Leviticus 20:13.

"Hey!" I thought "I know a few of them, one being my own brother." I did not want any obsessed fanatical religious zealot rounding up my brother and hauling him off to some crematory.

Drug dealers, according to this minister should be lined up against a wall and shot. “Hey! I know drug dealers (This minister’s definition of drug dealers included anyone who so much as shared a joint with a friend) and none of them I knew deserved to be lined up and shot.”

Then he continued, ranting, and raving about Darwin’s evolution, science, secular humanism, atheists, and liberals while at the same time preaching some pre-millennial state that could have only existed in his head. Given my secular views of human sexuality, drugs, and my philosophy of the world that the wrong information is worse than no information at all, I called the station and asked if they agreed with this person’s views. I reminded the station that he was speaking from their stage.

“What views?” they asked.

“Well” set back over the fact they did not even seem to know what his views were “the views of this minister on your station this morning” I replied.

There was this calm.

I then asked the station if they ever listened to this minister, and they said no. But, they added, they were surprised that I did because they did not think anyone did.

“So why then” I asked, “was this person given more airtime than Dan Rather?” which he was. Why would a station air this person if the station believed no one listened to him?

Their answer was because “SOMEONE” paid the bill. Of course, they would not tell me who paid that bill for that airtime. So, I asked what I had to do to be aired so I could oppose this minister’s views. All I got was if I wanted something aired, all I had to do was come up with the money to buy the airtime. Knowing I could not come up with the money, I hung up the phone thinking “Talk about the freedom of speech --- here it is. If you have money, you can get your voice out to anyone who will listen, but if you do not, forget it.” Freedom of speech in America apparently comes with a price tag.

Anyway, the word “SOMEONE” flashed in front me like a large neon sign and rung in my ears like a muzzle blast. Someone aye? Not everyone. Not some large following. Not even a few. Just Someone. The question of who this someone was just begged to be answered.

I read once that Jimmy Swaggart got his start from H.L.Hunt, a billionaire Texas Oil Man. Although I have nothing to reference this, digging around in numerous books I did find one interesting coincidence. It turns out that Jimmy worked the oil fields around his home state of Louisiana, preaching whenever he was not working actively in the oil fields. He did this for five years between the age of 18 and 23.⁰⁰⁵ That would have given Swagger plenty of time to become known to H.L.Hunt. H.L.Hunt also began what was termed “LIFE LINE,” a rightwing “Educational” and “Religious” organization dedicated to spreading “Thee word.” The word of course largely was his own word via the radio. Half the show was purely political with a heavy mix of old-time religion. By the early 1960’s Hunt claimed his program was aired on 354 stations in forty-seven states and claimed to have a following of five to six million. The sponsor of Hunt’s program had one lone, soul sponsor: HLH Products.⁰⁰⁶

Again, I had been staggered, once drunk but now sobering up. In my head somewhere up to this point was this idea that if something was on the air, television or radio, it was because people listen and therefore was popular. I thought the more popular a show is, the more people listen, and hence, the more the broadcast is aired. Wrong! Although I had thought about and studied propaganda, I never given any thought to the fact (I just discovered) that any given show, Paul Harvey, Rush Limbaugh, Jerry Falwell, or Pat Robertson might be aired for no other reason than propaganda purposes, whether anyone listened or not, for the benefit of a single (person or corporate) supporter.

Returning to the discussion on the reach of the John Birch Society (JBS); in 1977, agreeing to help raise a billion dollars for “Here’s Life,” an affiliate of Bill Bright’s Campus Crusade for Christ, Nelson Bunker Hunt, a member of the JBS and son of H.L.Hunt, pledged ten million dollars of his own money. He further donated five million dollars for the filming of “Jesus” to be used by “Here’s Life” in their missions overseas. Bunker’s brother, Herbert, threw in another cool million. The Hunts also gave \$3.5 million for a new spire for the Highland Park Presbyterian Church in the memory of their mother⁰⁰⁷ and it does not stop there. The Ruth Ray Hunt Philanthropic Fund gave \$4.8 million to the Dallas Woman’s Foundation which in turn supports faith-based programs. The goal of the organization is to instill dignity, hope and faith to women who have been disenfranchised (or at least that is their claim).⁰⁰⁸ I doubt however the money has as much to do with helping women as it did about building support for Faith Based Programs. More on women and Faith Based Programs will come.

J. Howard Pew was one of Billy Graham’s main financial contributors.

Eventually, Dr Bell and I shared my vision with J. Howard Pew, chairman of the board of directors of the Sun Oil Company. I met him for the first time not long before conceiving the idea for Christianity Today. He had been asking me to come to Philadelphia to meet with him and spend the night. I had never heard of him, and I declined. Then he sent me a check for our work in the amount of \$25,000, along with a message:

“When you come and spend the night with me, I’ll have another check for \$25,000 for you.” Needless to say, that got my attention. After that (and my visit to Philadelphia; yes, I flew up there!), we got to know each other very well. I came to have great affection and admiration for him, not because he had a great deal of money but because he was a man of God and a man of wisdom who wanted to see his wealth used wisely for the cause of Christ”⁰⁰⁹

Pew also agreed to underwrite, if necessary, half the cost, \$50,000, of a live ABC Saturday night broadcast across the country, “**Hour of Decision.**”⁰¹⁰ Another \$500,000 contribution was made to the Billy Graham in 2000 “*For a conference to provide preaching evangelists with encouragement and training for their ministry at the start of the new century.*”⁰¹¹ Graham of course was not the only religious

group Pew donated to. A few others include the Young Scholars Program, a fellowship program for evangelical undergraduates and graduate students at the university of Notre Dame, Indiana, to the sum of \$2,080,000 over four years.⁰¹² Simply by totaling up Pew's donations at the Pew Foundations website, I found the Pew Foundation has given something like \$121,250,600 to various religious causes, most right wing in nature.⁰¹³

In 1975 Richard M DeVos, the president of the Amway Corporation and the 1981-82 finance chairman of the Republican National Committee along with John Talcott of Ocean Spray Cranberries and Arthur De Moss, chairman of the National Liberty Insurance Corporation, ceased control of the Christian Freedom Foundation (CFF) for the purpose of using CFF's tax exempt status to publish "*One Nation Under God*" in an effort to elect Christian conservatives to Congress in 1976.⁰¹⁴ In fact, Richard DeVos is one of the known largest contributors to rightwing religious groups. Just a quick look at a watch group that traces rightwing money, mediatransparency lists \$91,249,084 worth of donations by Richard DeVos to Christian organizations alone.⁰¹⁵

I have not even begun to mention the rightwing groups which were spawned by former members of the JBS. For example, the Heritage Foundation, the flagship of the conservative right founded in 1973, came into being funded by donations from JBS member Joseph Coors.⁰¹⁶ The Cato Institute and Citizens for a Sound Economy owes their beginnings to Charles and David Koch, sons of former JBS member Fred Koch and the Claude R. Lambe Charitable Foundation also in the Koch family. Together the Koch family donated \$6.5 million to the Cato Institute and \$4.8 million to Citizens for a Sound Economy between 1986 and 1990.⁰¹⁷

I would at this point like to mention two other television evangelists who, in their own words, apparently benefited substantially from sizable corporate contributions. From his book "*The Secret Kingdom*" by Pat Robertson, himself a lawyer of a major international corporation (pg 97), Chapter Four "*How God's Kingdom Works*," Page 60-61:

"How well I remember the day in the late sixties when God showed forth this favor in my life in a practical, workaday manner. CBN was in urgent need of \$3 million worth of modern equipment that would allow us to broadcast with the power and quality needed if we were to do what the Lord had called us to do. With absolutely no worldly credentials or the support that would normally be required to do business at this level, I began negotiations with one of the world's leading electronics manufacturers. There was no reason to expect a successful outcome.

But God had other plans. In the most remarkable, yet smooth and calm manner, I received favor from the giant company and arranged for our equipment needs to be met for a period of years at the finest terms imaginable. Others in the industry were envious, for I had received every concession in price, down payment, and credit terms that it was possible to get."

And from Kenneth Copeland's "*The Laws of Prosperity*", Chapter Three "**Your Heavenly Account**", page 95:

"Ten days later I had in my hands the exact amount I had confessed as my withdrawal. Someone I didn't even know said that God had told them to give the money. I was to put it into the ministry and not disclose from whom it came. This person wanted God to receive all the glory and He has! If you borrow from the bank, you have to answer to the banker; but when you get it from God, there are no strings attached!"

How much money did Copeland receive? Enough money to purchase an airplane, five times the cost of his former plane that he gave to another Evangelist plus enough money to finance his television ministry.⁰¹⁸ Although Copeland does not credit some industrial giant for the money he received, what's important here is that quantity of money all came from a "SINGLE" source. These people are not on tele-vision because of their following and popularity. They are on television due to the contributions of a very few who have much to gain by what these ministers preach. And I will get to that.

So what's the point? To completely understand what is going in the religious sector today, it is vital that we know who is giving to whom, how much, and what, if any strings, are attached. The full extent as to exactly how much a few very wealthy men may be propping up the Christian Right, we may never know. What we do know is vast amounts of money sent by a few wealthy individuals are finding their way to collection plates of right-wing ministers. This begs the question, "Why?"

Given that knowledge and the question such knowledge generates, I came across an interesting piece of information while sitting in the doctor's office. I picked up the December 2nd, 2002, addition of Business Week. In it was the story of "*The New Philanthropists*" beginning on page 89. To sum up the story, these so-called New Philanthropists are supposedly working about as hard to give their away their money as they are at earning it. The difference between the old Philanthropists and the new is personal involvement. The new philanthropists are far more involved, seeing that their money is going where it is supposed to go and expecting results if their good will is to continue.

I refer you back to that Pew Report examining the changing religious affiliations in American society. Two ways exist to think about these large sums of money finding their way into collection plates. The first, and of course the reason most people believe people give, is charity. This would be money given to a religious order normally to help the poor. Even if that money does not find its way down to the poor, most people, as did I, believe what is good for the church is good for the needy. No money would be expected back, directly or indirectly, from this gift I shall entitle a "*Donation*." This idea comes out of the Bible, the idea that the rich should give to the poor. For what reason is debatable, however, to believe that this money is largely being used to aid the poor, as I shall point out, is mostly nothing but smoke—which leaves the second reason.

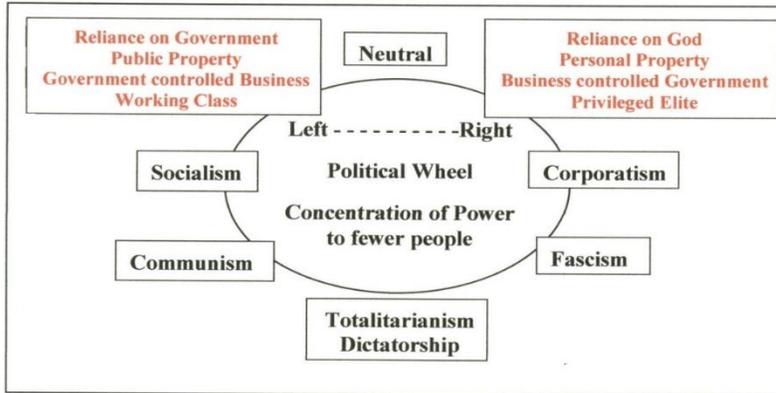
The second reason is anything but goodwill. This money I shall call an investment, an expected return on money borrowed. If money is being thrown at religion as an investment with some sort of payback in mind, an investor (not donor) might wish to know if his money is having the desired effect. So, let's back step to the new Philanthropists and look at where their money goes. Adjusted for inflation, an estimated 80.96 billion (with a B) dollars goes to Churches and Religious Groups. 31.84 billion goes to Education ⁰¹⁹ --- meaning that for every dollar education receives, religious groups get about two and a half. We of course can only guess at what part of that goes toward learning science (assume a third), which means that for every dollar spent learning how to scrutinize information and to question it, eight dollars goes to accepting what is handed down to the students via faith. As for the education portion, I do not know to which education facility this money goes but my guess would be public schools receive very little. My guess would be this money either goes to private or charter schools which can also have religious affiliations.

But it goes further. Human Service receives 20.71 billion, meaning that every dollar human services receive, religious originations receive nearly four. Health care receives a mere 18.43. ⁰²⁰ Uphta! But now comes the kicker. Of the money given up by the New Philanthropists, 6.41 billion goes to environmental issues. ⁰²¹ That means for every dollar that goes toward caring for the future and generations to come, nearly twelve dollars goes toward learning "*Take no thought of tomorrow*". For every dollar going for preserving endangered species, nearly twelve is going to subduing the earth and all that's in it. For every dollar going toward the teaching that only we, humans, can change the course of human destiny (not to mention life on earth), twelve dollars goes toward teaching that God is in control and that whatever happens has been preordained. In other words, everything is as it should be.

As inconceivable as it seems, tax exempt organizations do not have to report the money they receive, from whom they received it, or how it is used. Furthermore, being a tax-exempt organization, they can air views unabashed and unchallenged. The American taxpayers may also end up reimbursing part of the cost. Harry Hurt III, speaking of H.L. Hunts "Facts Forum," states that rather than running an educational or charity program as Hunt claimed, Hunt's "Facts Forum" was running one of the "most powerful private-propaganda" organizations in the United States. Because of the "Facts Forum" tax exempt status, not only did Hunt get to air his political views with his money, he also received about four million dollars' worth of air time free a year at the American taxpayer's expense.

CHAPTER TWELVE: Like a Phoenix from the Ashes

The Political Wheel The Right and Left as seen on a Wheel



Worth mention, the following discussion is not meant to be a course in political science. The graph is only to be thought of in general terms and is only designed to give those who have never given the matter of politics much

thought, a visual representation of my view (to which many political scientists and sociology majors agree) of the political world. I chose to use a circle to represent political stances as it is important to realize that whether a movement is to the right or the left, ultimately if carried to the end (in this case the bottom) both movements end up in the same place, totalitarianism. Does it really matter whether people's heads are being chopped off by those on the left or right? In either case, the people end up dead or enslaved with no rights or political choice.

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism can come from numerous philosophies but the only two this writing is concerned with is totalitarianism that comes from Communism or Fascism. Looking to World War II at the height of each, on the left were Communism and Stalin. On the right were Fascism and Hitler. Both represented the most brutal regimes known to the Twentieth Century. Both murdered millions. Both ruled with an iron hand, murdering millions, and imprisoning anyone that offered a challenge to the state. As such, this writer's purpose is not to enter a pissing contest over which state or dictator was the most ruthless. I would prefer to live under neither.

What I will do however is speak of fascism. At nowhere in this writing should that mean that I am deliberately picking on the right or suggesting Communism is in any manner the better of the two philosophies. Instead, I shall approach the subject exactly like I approach the issue of religion. I write of Christianity not so much because I believe it to be worse than any other religion. I write about Christianity because it is the religion that currently affects my life the most. I do not hear, for example, that America was founded on Buddhist principles nor has Scientology been jammed down my throat at public displays such as Memorial Day. Christianity holds a monopoly on those occasions. Currently I do not feel that Buddhism is about to take over the White House nor do I believe Scientology represents a major threat to science. I do feel, however, Christianity is

on the verge of both hence Christianity, not Buddhism or Scientology, is my greatest concern.

Communism holds for me the same threat as Scientology. I do not feel the United States is in danger of falling into the hands of Communists. In fact, Communism appears to be falling by the wayside. The Communist government in Russia has largely folded although recently it has been stirring. But you know, I would be a little uncomfortable too if I looked at my borders, borders which in the past have been crossed twice in recent history by the west (France and Germany), and saw it lined with missiles all aimed in my direction. Anyway, the Berlin Wall has come down and the Iron Curtain is gone. China is in the process of opening its doors to the western world more every day. Cuba, it is said, is the last true bastion of Communism in the world and even that, with Castro no longer at the helm, is leaning right. And while North Korea may represent a military threat now that they have come up with nuclear weapons and are experimenting with the means to deliver them, I do not feel that the Communists of North Korea are anywhere close to imposing their government on the rest of the world. As such, I see no reason to be immediately concerned with Communism.

I will make this distinction, however. My definition of Communism and Robert Welch's definition of Communism is as different as Stake and Steak. The extreme political right, including the John Birch Society, has been very successful in labeling any belief to their left as communistic. The right makes no distinction between socialism and communism, rather they lump to two together. Socialism and Communism are not equal but since I do not feel either is a particular threat; I see no reason to separate the two. If you, the reader, really want to know the difference between socialism and communism, my advice is to go to a noteworthy library and look it up. Know what you are talking about. Be careful of your source of information.

Fascism in America today, however, is a real concern of mine. Like Christianity, Fascism is what I feel is encroaching on the rights of my fellow Americans more every day. As America marches further to the right with every election, I find myself wondering just how long it be until a right-wing President, backed by a right-wing congress, numerous right-wing generals, and a right-wing court, will simply call off the next election and assume power. Politically, I feel the date is just a matter time until the Eagle flies again. I therefore will focus solely on fascism.

Side Note:

I wrote the preceding chapter "Totalitarianism" over two decades ago. On January 6th 2021 we watched as what I warned my readers about two decades before assaulted the nation's capital. We were that close folks. We were that close. And it is not over yet. Should the current administration lose its credibility (some believe it already has) or if the economy takes a sharp downturn due to the current COVID crisis, we will likely be looking at round two. And that one may not end so well.

Fascism: The real danger in America

“Antitrust laws do not just protect the marketplace, they protect democracy”

Paul Bigioni

I'm going to jump straight out with a huge supposition and state that the United States is well on its way to becoming a fascist state and before reacting emotionally and angrily, I should like inform the reader that I am not the only American who has that concern. Lewis H Lipham, for example, writing for Harper's Magazine states America is not on the road to becoming a fascist state but **ALREADY IS.**⁰⁰¹ When most people think of fascism what comes to their minds, if anything, is Nazi Germany, goose stepping, jack booted military displays. This view of fascism however has been skewed by images of World War II, namely Nazi Germany. In fact, many experts on fascism argue if what has been traditionally regarded as Nazism is fascism at all.⁰⁰²

It is probably safe to say not many people know what fascism is, a failing that could be placed directly on the education system. To place the blame on the education system, however, by no means implies that teachers are not doing their job. Their jobs are often defined, as well as the curriculum they teach, by school boards, churches, and politicians who have their own personal agendas. Many of these boards, churches, and politicians' idea of education is indoctrination, to instill in these students what they, these boards, churches, and politicians, deem as important to these boards, churches, and politicians. If these boards, churches, and politicians they do not wish students knowing certain aspects of history, it will not be taught. If science contradicts these boards, churches, and politicians want known, it will not be taught. And if teachers refuse to abide by the whims of these boards, churches, and politicians want taught, they will be removed.

When Paul Bigioni asked people to define fascism, he claims that most people answer by telling him how fascism was viewed during World War II, with as Paul states “an assumption that it (being fascism) no longer exists since the Axis Powers were defeated.”⁰⁰³ These same people, Paul writes, end up muttering when they realize that they know nothing of the political or economic attributes of fascism.⁰⁰⁴

To test if Bigioni statement was correct, I walked around Northern State University at Aberdeen South Dakota asking students or anyone I met if they could define fascism. I first asked if they were students, what year they were in, and if they had European History in either high school or college. Most I asked were sophomores but those asked spanned all four years of college, even including graduate students and professors. All had taken at least one history class in either college or high school. Out of thirty asked, only one had only a vague idea what fascism was, one remembered that fascism had it's beginning in Italy, 60-70 percent had no idea at all, and three, believe it or not, thought fascism had something to do something to do with a style of dress.

When I voiced my concern of the threat of fascism to a member of the faculty, a history professor mind you, his question was instantly a condescending

“Where are the brown shirts?” Granted this was not exactly a scientific survey, but the thirty asked did have at least ten years of schooling. Given they could not define fascism, it is reasonable to assume that the public, having even less education, knows even less. My conclusion: Bigioni is correct.

Bigioni believing “that North America is on a fascist trajectory”⁰⁰⁵ takes his observation to the next logical level by making the statement that unfortunately for the people of North America if fascism was to return, they would not even be aware it happened.⁰⁰⁶ Again, I place the responsibility for this lack of knowledge directly on how history is taught. In my school as stated before, we were introduced to World War II and its major battles, drew out the spread of the Axis powers on a map, listed the generals, dictators, presidents, and prime ministers, recorded the dates of the events, and all that other trivia that makes the study of history so boring. By stressing dates and personalities, the teaching of history misses nearly everything important; for example, an understanding of what fascism is and what conditions and methods brought it to power in the first place. I believe far too much credit is given to the actors (Hitler-Roosevelt-Churchill) and too little on the stage (living conditions and political methods used) from which they perform

By retrieving from our historical memory only the vivid and familiar images of fascist tyranny (Gestapo firing squads, Soviet labor camps, the chimneys at Treblinka), we lose sight of the faith-based initiatives that sustained the tyrant’s rise to glory.⁰⁰⁸

“Faith based initiatives” ---- Scary. I wonder if the author of those words was making a reference to the White House’s current “Faith Based Initiatives” or if those terms were used back in the thirties?

So, What is Fascism? Fascism Explained

Again, it depends on who you ask. I’ve seen the term fascist used to berate liberals, the women liberation movement whose members are called Feminazis by a prominent rightwing propagandist that doubles as a radio talk show host, and scientists, people I would not even consider under the umbrella of fascism. And then let’s not forget academia. Professors often approach topics such as fascism like some elderly drive, approaching streetlights with so much caution that the green light gets completely missed. By tweaking the definition of fascism to include this or exclude that, any important communication gets lost in a maze of Mental Isometrics. To be sure, however, fascism is a concept. It is not something we can pull down from the self and examine, measure, or weigh, hence, no definition will ever be definitive. That however should not mean that the term “Fascism” cannot be fit into a field of play.

So here we are again. Since this is my book, for this book and the fact that I feel it is more important to communicate with my readers rather than getting some philosophic debate over which definition of fascism is correct, I will use the definitions of fascism I happen to agree with. I believe that knowing my definition

will put you, the reader, in a ballpark in which most of academia would agree that the ball, fascism, would fall if I just tossed it in the air. From there, hopefully you will be able to see the rest of the game being played out.

So, let's begin. First, considering the barrage of misinformation about fascism, I'll begin with what it is not. It is not liberal as suggested by Jonah Goldberg in his book "*Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left, From Mussolini to the Politics of Change*" nor for that matter was Mussolini a leftwing politician as suggested by Goldberg's title. Fascism is not feminine as it has been suggested by conservative talk show host, now deceased, Rush Limbaugh. Fascism is not socialism as implied by the title of National Socialist by the Nazi Party. Fascism is not another name for Communism. Fascism is not the majority rule. Fascism is not democratic, nor does it represent the policies of the Democratic Party.

What fascism is, at least by my definition, corresponds with Dr Lawrence Britt's fourteen points of fascism. To list Britt's characteristics of **fascism begins with powerful nationalism**. Flags and national symbols are everywhere, displayed openly in public, pasted on cars as in bumper stickers, sewed into clothing, tattooed slogans, or sang about in songs, songs like "*I'm Proud to be an American*" not to mention the national asylum or "*America the Beautiful*."

Next up is a **disdain for human rights**. Abortion could easily serve to represent this. Upheld by Roe versus Wade, a woman has the right to do with her body as she wishes. What she did with her body was her right as a woman. Need I mention the disdain over this right?

Third up would be **scapegoating**. Blaming others for societies shortfalls and labeling others, a given race, religion, foreigners, or those of other political or religious affiliations as the enemy. Often the solution to these shortfalls according to a fascist is elimination. The idea is once these enemies are gone; things will be better.

Fourth up would be **a powerful military** to defend against invaders and protect foreign investments. According to numerous sources, currently the USA spends more on defense than the other top twelve nations combined. To verify this statement, all you must do is google America's defense spending compared to the rest of the worlds. The list is too long to footnote here.

Next up, number five, **rampant sexism**. A grab them by the pussy mentality where blaring out a statement such as that comes at no political cost. A woman's place is in the home, barefoot and pregnant. I already mentioned abortion, but this includes any sex act that is not able to result in a child. Contraceptives would be objected too, not to mention same sex encounters. Gays were one of Germany's first victims of concentration camps.

Number six would be **the control of mass media**. Although not mentioned yet, fascism is rule by the wealthy of society and it is the wealthy of society, corporations, who owns nearly all media outlets. According to Forbes, fifteen billionaires here in the USA own the media.^{008a}

Number seven is **the obsession with national security**. This parallels the fourth mentioned here but rather than focusing on foreign affairs, this focuses on local regions, police forces and national guard. Just across the street from where I

write this is a black and white flag with a blue stripe through it. A sign hanging on the deck declares “Blue Lives Matter!”

Number eight **merges government and religion**. Fascism is not atheist. How often are we reminded that America is a Christian Nation? And who do you suppose takes a photo opt holding an upside-down Bible? None other than the former POTUS. Evangelical Christianity has been holding hands with government ever since Billy Graham.

Number nine informs us that **Fascism protects corporations**. CEO’s of corporations are often appointed to high level positions such as the Vice President, Dick Cheney not to mention government agencies which are designed to regulate the industries from which that CEO came from.

Ten, fascism **suppresses the power of labor**, namely unions, for example the Air Traffic Controller’s Union.

Eleven mentions **distain for intellectuals**, like scientists for example. Also mentioned are the arts. In the last few decades both have suffered large government funding cuts.

Twelve brings us to **the obsession with crime and punishment**. That is particularly true if you happen to poor or black. Both can land you in prison for no reason more than being poor or black. One of the early groups formed by the John Birch Society was “Support the Local Police.” Fascism would proudly announce “Blue lives matter.”

Thirteen mentions **corruption**, appointing friends, associates, or family to high level positions within the government. Trump had no qualms against hiring members of his own family to positions for which those family had no experience or qualifications.

And finally, **fraudulent elections**; fraudulent elections like those heavily influenced by gerrymandering, limited polling places, or requiring things like voter IDs where obtaining those IDs are beyond the reach of those most likely to vote against you.⁰⁰⁹

Those are Lawrence Bitts fourteen points of fascism. So, suppose I sum these up somewhat and add a few not mentioned, like support of the elite, the wealthy, the professionals like doctors, lawyers, landowners, or businesses. That assumes that these wealthy, professionals, landowners, and businesses support or cause no problem for those at the helm. Fascism is antiunion, antidemocratic, antiliberal, antisocialist, anticommunist, opposes government regulations, opposes immigration, and suppresses intellectualism and individualism. Fascism supports authoritarianism, the military, law enforcement, religion, and the use of violence if necessary to achieve its goals.

One often misguided factor regarding fascism is big government. When most people think of fascist Italy or Nazi Germany, they tend to think of big government where government controls nearly anything that happens within those nations. Not true. Fascism favors limited government. Fascism opposes government regulations and largely allows the private sector a free hand provided that free hand supports the state. The function of the state, being government, is largely reduced to a police force to maintain order for the interests of the wealthy or the military to protect and secure national (again the wealthy) interests in other

nations. Protests, against the wealthy status quo are banned, one of which would be unions and their demand for better wages and safer working conditions. Environmental activism would never be allowed to get off the ground. Free speech, any of which would not support the status quo, would be stifled. Knowledge of historic and scientific events are discouraged and for that reason, religion and propaganda become homogenized into some fact lacking, fact altering concoction to sooth the population. It has been suggested that Goebbels, Nazi Germany's propaganda minister, used entertainment as his main source of propaganda.

Benito Mussolini has reportedly made the statement: "*Fascism should rather be called corporatism, as it is the merging of government and corporate power.*"⁰¹⁰ That quote has been rebuffed as a possible fraud however, as other researchers have been unable to track down the original quote's source. At any rate, the fact remains that fascism and corporate power fits very well together. Before fascism, the interests of big business were treated favorably over the interests of the citizens of both Italy and Germany, and it was big business that gave rise to the Fascist dictatorships in both countries.

Observing political and economic discourse in North America since the 1970's leads to an inescapable conclusion: the vast bulk of legislative activity favors the interests of large commercial enterprises. Big business is very well off, and successive Canadian and U.S. governments, of whatever political stripe, have made this their primary objective for at least the last 25 years. Digging deeper into twentieth century history, one finds this steadfast focus on the well-being of big business in other times and places. The exaltation of big business at the expense of the citizen was a central characteristic of government policy in Germany and Italy in the years before those countries were chewed to bits and spat out by fascism. Fascist dictatorships were borne to power in each of these countries by big business, and they served the interests of big business with remarkable ferocity. These facts have been lost to the popular consciousness in North America. Fascism could therefore return to us, and we will not even recognize it. Indeed, Huey Long, one of America's most brilliant and most corrupt politicians, was once asked if America would ever see fascism. His answer was, "Yes, but we will call it anti-fascism".⁰¹¹

I have before me two documents on fascism, "*The Doctrine of Fascism*" by Benito Mussolini (1932) and "*The Coming American Fascism*" by Lawrence Dennis. In these documents are several things I believe the average reader of this book, given that you are not one of America's privileged classes, should be aware of. First, I'll begin with "*The Doctrine of Fascism*" by Benito Mussolini. To the issue of religion Mussolini writes:

"The Fascist conception of life is a religious one (7), in which man is viewed in his immanent relation to a higher power, endowed with

an objective will transcending the individual and raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society.” Footnote (7) states: “If Fascism were not a creed how could it endow its followers with courage and stoicism only a creed which has soared to the heights of religion can inspire such words as passed the lips, now lifeless alas, of Federico Florio.”⁰¹²

Fascism is “a spiritual revolt against old ideas which had corrupted the sacred principles of religion, of faith, of country.”⁰¹³

Keep in mind Robert Welch’s and McIntire’s statements about modern day religion. The Social Gospel, by their standards, is “merely a watered-down faith of their fathers” if not outright Communism by promoting such ideals as wealth redistribution. Both Welch and McIntire, I feel safe in saying, would agree that the Social Gospel “corrupted the sacred principles of religion.”

“Fascism, in short, is not only a law-giver and a founder of institutions, but an educator and a promoter of spiritual life.”⁰¹⁴

“Peace will only come when people surrender to a Christian dream of universal brotherhood, when they can hold out hands across the ocean and over the mountains.”⁰¹⁵

“Fascist State sees in religion one of the deepest of spiritual manifestations and for this reason it not only respects religion but defends it. The Fascist State does not attempt, as did Robespierre at the height of the revolutionary delirium of the Convention, to set up a “god” of its own; nor does it vainly seek, as does Bolshevism, to efface God from the soul of man. Fascism respects the God of ascetics, primitive heart of the people, the God to whom their prayer are raised.”⁰¹⁷

Now here is the kicker to the last quotes. Does the propagandist, Mussolini, believe his own propaganda? Following his statement of the Christian dream and universal brotherhood, Mussolini states, “*Personally I do not believe very much in these idealisms.*”⁰¹⁸ As can be seen, however, regardless of whether he believed them, he saw value in these idealisms and used them. Mussolini was wise enough to know these idealisms were strings that if pulled could make his puppets move -- and that was good enough for him.

In matters of government, Mussolini states that the State is above all, a concept likely handed down from Plato to Christianity to Mussolini. Individual rights and liberties take second place:

“Anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State, and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State”⁰¹⁹

“The keystone of the Fascist doctrine is its conception of the State, of its essence, its functions, and its aims. For Fascism the State is absolute, individuals and groups relative. Individuals and groups are admissible in so far as they come within the State.”⁰²⁰

In matters of class, Fascism favors and supports the privileged elite class aside the idea that government should be ruled by numbers. Rule should come from the elite majority.

“Fascism denies that numbers, as such, can be the determining factor in human society; it denies the right of numbers to govern by means of periodical consultations, it asserts the irremediable and fertile and beneficent inequality of men who cannot be leveled by any such mechanical and extrinsic device as universal suffrage. ---- (deleted for sake of space) ---- In rejecting democracy Fascism rejects the absurd conventional lie of political equalitarianism, the habit of collective irresponsibility, the myth of felicity and indefinite progress.”⁰²¹

Fascism props up management, downplaying the working class and its complaints as nothing more than “class envy. Think about that the next time you listen to a conservative talk show host.

“We wish the working classes to accusation themselves to the responsibilities of management so that they may realize that it is not easy matter to run a business.”⁰²²

“Fascism believes now and always in the sanctity and heroism, that is to say in acts in which no economic motive, remote or immediate – is at work. ----- Fascism also denies the immutable and irreparable character of the class struggle which is the natural outcome of the economic conception of history; above it denies that the class struggle is the preponderating agent in social transformations.”⁰²³

If you listen carefully, you might hear in Mussolini words the Christian doctrine of suffering: Hard labor is expected from its working class. In fact, above the gate at Auschwitz were the words “*Arbeit macht frei*” meaning “*Work Shall Set You Free.*”

No action is exempt from moral judgment’ no activity can be despoiled of the value which a moral purpose confers on all things. Therefore life, as conceived of by the Fascist, is serious, austere, and religious; all its manifestations are poised in a world sustained by moral forces and subject to spiritual responsibilities. The Fascist disdains an ‘easy’ life.”⁰²⁴

Fascism openly opposes liberals:

“Fascism is definitely and absolutely opposed to the doctrines of liberalism”⁰²⁵ Mussolini writes.

So, what is liberalism? According to Webster’s New World Dictionary, politically liberalism is a philosophy that advocates individual freedom and democracy. In terms of religion, liberalism supports a broad interpretation of scripture free from dogma. In short, the Bible many have many interpretations and therefore it is safe to say is not to be taken literally. Fascism would oppose this idea.

Fascism also opposes worldwide organizations such as the United Nations.

“Fascism will have nothing to do with universal embraces; as a member of the community of nations; it looks other peoples straight in the eyes; it is vigilant and on its guard; it follows others in all their manifestations and notes any changes in their interests; and it does not allow itself to be deceived by mutable and fallacious appearances.”⁰²⁶

Worth notice, “*Get out of the United Nations*” was one of the John Birch Society loudest chants. Internationalists do not want individual nations, backed by other nations, influencing their actions.

And as for the military, dying fighting for fascists makes one a hero. “*Fascism is anti-pacifistic*” Mussolini asserts. “*There is some-thing more sacred and more important...death...Fascists knew how to die.*” Mussolini writes regarding the fighting spirit of Fascists.

Never before have the peoples thirsted for authority, direction, order, as they do now. If each age has its doctrine, the innumerable symptoms indicate that the doctrine of our age is the Fascist. That it is vital is shown by the fact that it has aroused a faith; that this faith has conquered souls is shown by the fact that Fascism can point to its fallen heroes and martyrs.⁰²⁷



Fascism is what I call business-controlled government. That’s not to say that business physically controls the government or that dictators take their orders directly from CEOs. On the contrary, under fascism large corporations may be

nationalized and brought under the control of the state in ways almost invisible to any casual onlooker.

The fascist State can easily convert the great monopolies and bureaucratically-managed large corporations into State-controlled enterprises, the present owners and creditors of which will receive income bonds or shares in a government investment company and never know any practical difference between their present capitalistic relationship to the property and the relationship which a fascist State will define and maintain for them.⁰²⁸

Through fascist eyes, the State is seen as the most important element of fascism. All things are viewed in terms of what value it offers the state. Industry is seen as vital to fascist nations. What's good for industry is good for the state; therefore, under a fascist state, the influence of industry on the political process far exceeds that of the common citizenry. A lost industry may be difficult to replace, but the common worker, thousands of them are at any time clamoring for employment, particularly in times of economic down.

The more desperate the labor force is the better. Low wages are good for industry; therefore, low wages also serve the interest of the state. The rationale of this thinking is not hard to derive. In fact, if enough people cannot be found to work at the wage scale offered, slaves and forced labor can keep the wheels of industry turning. Germany ran much of its war industry with forced labor. Oh, but you'd say --- slaves and forced labor are not used here in America --- but then American industries are not bound to exist within our borders, are they?

Take Unocal for example: Unocal, an American Industry, benefited from the forced labor imposed upon the Karen population of Burma by the Burmese army.⁰²⁹ Sweatshops exist the world over producing clothing once produced in the United States for a fraction of the wages. Child labor is commonly used to produce our goods and our military stands ready to intervene should any of these nations experience serious unrest and their military are unable to cope.

While Fascists may nationalize vital industries, for the most part, business under fascists nations were/are given a free hand provided they served the interests of the state. In neither Germany nor Italy were there any antitrust laws. Industry could grow as large as they were able. There were few if any regulations placed on industry in the form of environmental or safe working conditions. In Germany and Italy, economists and businesses constantly pressed for self-regulation.⁰²⁷ In modern American terms, self-regulation has been redefined as voluntary compliance. Under fascism, in both Italy and Germany, corporations were given "*massive subsidies*". Today here in the United States those subsidies are often referred to as "*corporate welfare*."

Under fascism, in both Italy and Germany corporations received enormous tax breaks.⁰²⁹ In recent times in the United States, George W Bush's tax breaks gave billions back to the nation's wealthiest individuals while at the same time creating the largest budget deficit in history, a whopping \$8,358,845,535,382.12 as of May 31, 2006; 3:56:47 PM GMT or \$27,973.06 for every citizen of America.⁰³⁰

Over the span of 2001-2010, the wealthiest one percent of Americans is destined to receive 477 billion dollars. In contrast, of those making less than 73,000 per year, if Bush's tax cuts were frozen at the 2002 level, 99 percent of the population would experience no difference in their taxes as whatever cuts they may have received were already in place before Bush's action.⁰³¹

Both Germany and Italy under fascism opposed labor unions and banned strikes as did Ronald Reagan during the air traffic controllers' up rising. That action by Reagan sent shock waves rolling through organized labor, encouraging industry challenges to labor the nation over. The biggest threat is perhaps that a company will just pull up stakes and move out of the country to an industry friendlier country such as Mexico where labor is cheap and few if any regulations exist. Forced concessions from labor, as a result, often include reductions in benefits, medical, wages, job security, and retirement. That money saved by corporations is then rerouted to shareholders. Once protected by unions, the middle class is being squeezed out in a very similar manner as it was during the fascist years of Germany and Italy. It should also be noted that Mussolini abolished the inheritance tax (in today's America, the Death Tax).⁰³² In recent days I have been inundated by advertisements calling for the repeal of the inheritance tax.

Some of the parallels between fascism in the first half of the twentieth century and today are horrifyingly similar, jaw dropping and awe inspiring, if one knows what to compare the current United States political direction with. One comparison I could not pass up was Paul Bigioni's quote:

“Hitler's economic policies hastened the destruction of Germany's middle class by decimating small business. Ironically, Hitler pandered to the middle class and they provided some of his most enthusiastically violent supporters. The fact that he did this while simultaneously destroying them was a terrible achievement of Nazi propaganda.”⁰³³

Compare that to Thomas Frank's “*What's the Matter with Kansas.*”

Thus the primary contradictions of the backlash (the revolt of industry against union gains and government regulations gained in the early twentieth century): it is a working-class movement that has done incalculable, historic harm to the working-class people.⁰³⁴

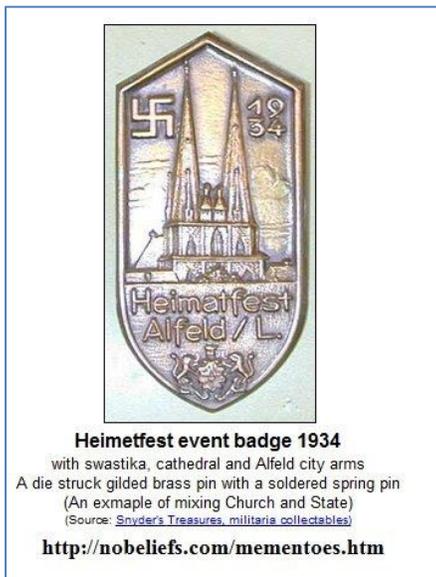
Really? A working-class movement that has done incalculable harm to itself. Carefully reread Frank's quote in the light of Bigioni's quote again “*The fact that he (Hitler) did this (destroyed the middle class) while simultaneously destroying them was a terrible achievement of Nazi propaganda.*” Franks continues

Like the French Revolution in reverse--one in which the sans-culottes pour down the streets demanding more power for the aristocracy—the backlash pushes the spectrum of the acceptable to the right, to the right, farther to the right.⁰³⁴

In 1934 the Baptist World Alliance was held in Berlin. While many Baptists were reluctant to enter Germany, once in Germany many Baptists were delighted witnessing a ruler who did not smoke or drink, a ruler who had restricted woman from wearing lipstick and smoking in public. One Baptist delegate, Dr Bradbury, was “delighted with the forced morality of the fascists.”⁰³⁵

It was a great relief to be in a country where salacious sex literature cannot be sold; where putrid motion pictures and gangster films cannot be shown. The new Germany has burned great masses of corrupting books and magazines along with its bonfires of Jewish Commu-nistic libraries.⁰³⁶

It should be further noted that Hitler, in his “*Mein Kampf*” referred to Martin Luther as one of Germany’s greatest religious reformers. In 1543, Luther wrote “*On the Jews and Their Lies*” calling for the burning of synagogues and Jewish schools, the deportation of Jews, and numerous other actions later attributed to the Nazis. Most Protestants remained tragic-ally quiet on the Nazis treatment of the Jews and fell in line with the Nazis against instability and Bolshevism. In fact, 3000 of the 17,000 Protestant pastors in Germany joined together in 1932 to form the Germany Christian Movement for the purpose of merging the Protestant Church with the Nazi State.⁰³⁷ Nazi Germany was a Christian nation.



One book worth mentioning when attempting to understand fascism is Lawrence Dennis’ 1936 “*The Coming American Fascism, the Crisis of Capital-ism.*” Do bear in mind; the views expressed below are that of a Harvard graduate who worked on Wall Street and later for international banking firms during the early years of the twentieth century. His views are his own and are only placed here to help you, the reader, better understand exactly what fascism is, the arguments fascists may make against the establishment, and the values fascists holds as true. You are not being asked to agree with any of views expressed below.

Dennis’ basic theory was that capitalism was doomed which left two choices; communism or fascism which W.A. Carto states in preface of Dennis’s book was “*laughably naive.*”⁰³⁸ Naïve or not however, Dennis is credited with raising serious questions about Capitalism and economics which have, as Carto points out, yet to be given their full consideration. Dennis, according to Carto, may have not had all the answers, but he knew which questions needed an answer.⁰³⁹

Over the course of the book, Dennis focuses on two important issues of fascism, the state and the elite. Meshed, the state and the elite form the body which

under fascism rules over the masses. The elite according to Dennis are those who earn most their income from property, business enterprisers and farmers, professionals, or those whose salaries exceed \$3,000 per year, or about \$125,000 per year adjusted at a straight 6% inflation rate over 65 years.⁰⁴⁰ Dennis makes it clear that “*a wise social philosophy, such as that of fascism, strives to make a place for all the members of the elite*”⁰⁴¹ because according to Dennis, if the elite are not satisfied, they have to power to challenge existing social structures and to create war. “*If the friends of peace, or the liberals of the Allied powers at Versailles thought more of the welfare of the elite of the defeated nations and Allied nations crushed by war and took careful measures to incorporate the elite into a peaceful scheme,*” Dennis writes, “*rather than leaving the elite unemployed and politically excluded, the elite may not have seen opportunities in war that were otherwise unavailable to them.*”⁰⁴²

One of the failings of liberals, argues Dennis, is their inability to grasp the idea that average men would rather go to war than to suffer the humiliation of defeat, starvation, and prolonged poverty.⁰⁴³ Fascism, Dennis asserts, recognizes that the elite rule all social structures whether Liberal, Communistic, or Fascist.⁰⁴⁴ The central point is that it is useful to think of government and management as being the function of a minority, and that it is not useful to any good social purpose to proceed on the theory that the people or the majority rule.⁰⁴⁵

I see in those words more of the current United States government than most people would wish to admit. While most in American holds the “*majority rules*” idea, let’s not lose sight of who rules and makes our laws. Many people running for a national office are millionaires. When is the last time that a person living below the national poverty level, or for that matter a member of the middle class, has had an actual vote on the senate floor? If it takes money to get a seat in Congress or the Senate, what difference really does it matter which millionaire is voted in? If all the majority of voters have to vote for are a elite minority, does the majority end up ruling? Voting in America only gives the illusion that the majority rules given the minority of Americas in power are members of the elite.

Dennis continues hacking away at of some very basic liberal assumptions; for example, that man is equal under that law. As known to anyone who has had the misfortune of dealing with the legal system in America, a two-tiered system of law exists, one for those who can afford it and one for those who cannot. Due process, according to Dennis, is bought, not given. The social plan, in this case the law, expresses “*the will and purposes of the dominate class.*”⁰⁴⁶

I remember being told to me by a law professor in a Criminal Justice Class that the legal system is basically set up to protect the interests of the upper classes. This, the professor stated, was by design. Had OJ Simpson remained any African American from a lower class; he’d likely have been toasted by today. The trial of OJ was not a race issue which Simpson’s lawyers attempted to make it. Simpson’s trial was a matter of class.

Fascism, in very simple terms, is the merger of government and business in a symbiotic relationship designed to serve the interests of each other. Businesses are encouraged, supported, and protected by the state while at the same time supplying the State with what is required to carry out the State’s plan. In America

that quest seems to be the accumulation of wealth, the preservation of wealth through inheritance and substitutes, and world dominance. With State support for industry and animosity for labor, the resultant gap between the rich and the poor will widen as we are seeing in the US economy today. And finally, the division of church and State may be breached, resulting in a theocracy or some form of government close to it. Worth mention, the fascist dictator of Slovakia was a Catholic monsignor.⁰⁴⁷

Arms Full of Money The Military Complex's Bank Account

Today, 2008, more American politicians are further into the pockets of the military industrial establishment than ever before. Granted, everyone thinks they know that politicians are in the pockets of money, for example oil, but few really have any idea just how deep into those pockets these politicians are or whose pockets they are into --- nor do they realize what it means to us, the common Joe's out fighting their battles either with our lives or lives of our children. I'd like to point out that the last three wars commenced during the last three Texas president's terms, a point also made by Kevin Phillips. Granted an argument could be made in Johnson's case, Vietnam dated back to the Eisenhower administration and persisted through the Kennedys, but it was not until a Texan, a Brown and Root recipient, stepped into office of the presidency, were the Marines, with guns ablaze, off loaded into Vietnam. Were three Texas presidents and three wars simply a matter of coincidence? Or is something else at work here?

Biographer Robert Bryce in his book, "*Pipe Dreams*," stated that "*if Lyndon was Brown & Roots kept politician, Brown & Root was Lyndon's kept corporation.*"⁰⁴⁸ Brown and Root is a subsidy of Halliburton, a Dallas based corporation, whose business just happens to be oil and the military industrial complex. Michael C Ruppert points out that "*everywhere there is war or insurrection there is Brown and Root*" offering "*logistical support for the U.S. military.*"⁰⁴⁹

Dick Cheney, formerly the defense secretary under George H W Bush, resigned as CEO of Halliburton to become the vice president of the United States under George W Bush. Just coincidentally even before the 2003 Iraq War began, Halliburton was awarded seven billion dollars in no bid contracts by the Pentagon to put out oil field fires and rebuild war torn oil fields. Halliburton, it was argued, was the only company prepared to deal with all those weapons of mass destruction claimed to be in Iraq at the time of the invasion.

But --- Cheney claimed, he had severed all ties with Halliburton before accepting the Vice-Presidential position. Not so, says Senate Democrat Frank Lautenberg. According to Lautenberg, Cheney still received hundreds of thousands of dollars in a deferred salary from Halliburton in his first two years in office and as of May 2007 still held close to a half million shares.⁰⁵⁰ Cheney in a back door admission to these charges later stated any profit from his referenced Halliburton shares would be given to charity. My problem with Cheney giving to charity is what charity? Christians United for Israel whose membership includes close associates

to the JBS such as Gary Bauer and John Hagee, an evangelical minister who refers to the Catholic Church as the “*Great Whore*”⁰⁵¹ and has been allegedly actively promoting war with Iran⁰⁵² to say nothing about suggesting Hitler was sent by god to force the Jews to build the state of Isreal.⁰⁵³

Cheney’s ties with Halliburton however are only the beginning of sorrows. The Bush clan has profited from America’s wars for over four generations. George Herbert Walker, George HW Bush’s grand-father⁰⁵⁴ for whom both George HW (Herbert Walker) and George W (Walker) Bush are named, made a good chunk of his fortune profiteering from war. During the WWI, Walker benefited from his connection with J.P. Morgan through whom wartime purchases came to \$3.2 billion dollars, four times the United States Federal budget in 1914.⁰⁵⁵ Prior to WWII, Walker became involved in investing in Germany and Russia. During WWII, Walker, along with Prescott Bush, George HW Bush’s father and George Herbert Walker’s son in law-maintained investments with Germany even beyond Pearl Harbor.⁰⁵⁶ Kevin Phillips points out that while not all Walker’s dealings with Germany may have been sinister in nature, Walker and Prescott Bush apparently had no qualms about trading with the enemy.

In August 1942, the property of the Hamberg-Amerika lines, for many years partly owned by the Harriman and Walker controlled American Ship and Commerce Corporation, was seized under the Trading with the Enemy Act. On October 20, the alien property custodian seized the assets of the Union Banking Corporation. Eight days later, with the UBC’s books in hand, the government acted against two affiliates, the Holland-American Trading Corporation, and the Seamless Steel Equipment Corporation. In November, the government seized the assets of the last major entity connected to Harriman, Walker, and Bush – the Silesian-American Corporation.⁰⁵⁷ Given that money was more important than national allegiance to members of the Bush family ancestry, I see no reason why national allegiance, other than what they can profit from it, should matter to them now.

While the Bush side of the Bush’s ancestry was not nearly as important to the status enjoyed by the Bushes as Walker’s, Samuel Bush, GHW’s grandfather, became wealthy as the president of Buckeye Steel Castings which manufactured railroad equipment. Later he became the director of Pennsylvania Railroad subsidiaries,⁰⁵⁸ which got entangled with John D Rockefeller in a kickback scheme dreamt up by Rockefeller. This assured Rockefeller a huge advantage over all other refiners and ultimately led to Rockefeller’s competitors’ demise.⁰⁵⁹ Samuel Bush also served on the War Industries Board in charge of forgings, guns, small arms, and ammunition. He later became the first president of the fascist organization, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM),⁰⁶⁰ which worth mention was the pool from which many of the original John Birch Societies Council Members climbed out of.

On March 2, 1938, evidence was presented before congressional hearings that NAM was controlled by 207 corporations of which General Motors, du Pont, Chrysler, National Steel, and Samuel Bush’s Pennsylvania Railroad were the most powerful leaders. It turns out that these businesses were also the leading contributors to pro-Nazi groups such as the American Liberty League, the

Crusaders, the Sentinels of the Republic, and the National Economy League.⁰⁶¹ Some of the biggest names and leaders of American industries pop up within the ranks of NAM, for example, Henry Ford. While I was in high school, Henry Ford was glorified as the designer of the assembly line and a thoughtful man who paid his employees a large enough wage to afford the Model T Ford that they, Ford's employees, manufactured. Ford, according to what I was taught, was an inspiration to all Americans, a true example of the American dream.

What I was not taught --- Ford also had an extremely dark side. I am talking fascism, Nazism, and anti-Semitism. What most Americans considered totally unacceptable and sent millions of their young sons to die fighting against, Ford openly supported. I always thought that it was scrupulous propagandists such as Joseph Goebbels who sat in neat little Nazi offices in Germany and spun monstrous lies about Jews and History. Well, I hate to admit it, but I was wrong. People like Henry Ford, a person thought of as an honorable American, also fell into this Nazi fray. Ford published of a four-volume set known as "*The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*".⁰⁶² Ford's Dearborn Independent, a newspaper also dubbed The Ford International Weekly, also published the "*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*".⁰⁶³ These publications became the inspiration for the Hitler's Final Solution and were taught as history in Nazi classrooms. Hitler, it is rumored, kept a copy of "*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*" on his desk. Henry Ford was awarded the "Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle" by Hitler in July 1938. The "Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle" was considered Germany's highest honor that could be bestowed upon a foreigner. Benito Mussolini was given the same honor a year earlier.⁰⁶⁴ Also within the top ranks of NAM were names such as du Pont and Rockefeller. Again, when I think of du Pont, I think of "*Better Things and Better Living through Chemistry.*" I got that of course from du Pont's own advertisements. Only later did I learn what better living that du Pont's chemistry brought the world. Since their first arrival in America, the duPonts were in the business of profiting from war. Historically they have been the main manufacturer of gun power in the world, often profiting from both sides of opposing forces.

The DuPonts have an even a darker side than Ford which I never heard about in my high school history class either. During the FDR administration, shortly after purchasing Remington Arms, considered a preparatory action by historians, du Pont and several other radical right industrialists came up with a plot to seize the White House via a military coup d'état. Approached to lead the charge was two-time Medal of Honor recipient Major General Smedley Butler who exposed the plot.⁰⁶⁵ Butler later gave a speech about war denouncing war's profiteers:

there is a way to stop it (war profiteering). You can't end it by disarmament conferences. You can't eliminate it by peace parleys at Geneva. Well-meaning but impractical groups can't wipe it out by resolutions. It can be smashed effectively only by taking the profit out of war.

The only way to smash this racket is to conscript capital and industry and labor before the nations manhood can be conscripted.

One month before the Government can conscript the young men of the nation – it must conscript capital and industry and labor. Let the officers and the directors and the high-powered executives of our armament factories and our munitions makers and our shipbuilders and our airplane builders and the manufacturers of all the other things that provide profit in war time as well as the bankers and the speculators, be conscripted – to get \$30 a month, the same wage as the lads in the trenches get.

Let the workers in these plants get the same wages – all the workers, all presidents, all executives, all directors, all managers, all bankers –yes, and all generals and all admirals and all officers and all politicians and all government office holders – everyone in the nation be restricted to a total monthly income not to exceed that paid to the soldier in the trenches!⁰⁶⁶

Personally, I've always felt the way to end war was to reinstate the Draft. Then for the criteria of who gets drafted first, those who have the most to lose should the nation fall should be drafted first and assigned to lowest level of enlisted positions of the infantry. You'd think they would fight like the dickens to preserve what is theirs. Why send away people who have little or anything to lose? Oh well --- I doubt neither Butler's nor my proposal will ever happen. As such, the elite will always be attempting to get their fingers into the war pie if those doing the dying are someone else or someone's kid.

Anyway, American business aiding and rearming Germany was booming and profitable. For example, Remington Arms (du Pont) was secretly shipping arms to Germany through Holland via the German Hamberg-Amerika line ⁰⁶⁷ which George Walker, the ancestor of two American Bush presidents, profited from. Standard Oil, Rockefeller's baby, was busy supplying Germany with tetraethyl lead which without the Luftwaffe could not fly.⁰⁶⁸ I wonder how many American lives that cost? Fritz Thyssen, hailed as Hitler's Angel, was channeling money thought to be for the benefit of "Nazi bigwigs" into the Union Banking Corporation (UBC). The director of UBC just happened to be Prescott Bush.⁰⁶⁹ Quoting "***The Splendid Blond Beast***" by Christopher Simpson, Phillips points out that between 1924 and 1940, the US Commerce department showed in 48.5 percent increase in U.S. German investments while at the same time declining nearly everywhere else in Europe.⁰⁷⁰ According to Phillips by 1939, American manufacturing was the mainstay of Germany's war machine. American profit was being made feeding the eagle.

Kevin Phillips points out that "*both Samuel Bush and George H Walker were present at the creation of the U.S. military-industrial complex and its intelligence-gather adjunct.*"⁰⁷¹ Their descendants are still making a fortune from the industrial military complex. In the last three decades, twenty of those years a Bush has held a seat in the White House. In that same time both Bushes have launched the United States into a war, a war which they themselves and close associates' profit from. Phillips also points out that by the 1980's, the United States

had become the largest arms dealer in the world.⁰⁷² Many of these arms went to the very countries we are currently engaging such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

I have of course only scratched the surface of the network of war profiteers currently in or swarming around the White House with their check books open passing out loans and investing for which they expect a good return. I am dismayed beyond any hope of ever feeling good about my government or for that matter my country again given what I know of the corruption and war profiteering that exists within it. People – hear me - you get what you vote for. If you vote for those with their hands in the pockets of the military industrial complex, don't be surprised when you end up in a war and your child ends up being offered up as some sacrificial lamb. Also don't be surprised should some lone military officer show up at your door unannounced offering you a folded flag.

Stolen Words What's in a Word?

Before leaving this discussion, Chris Hedges in his book “*American Fascists, the Christian Right and the War on America*” makes a point worth mention. He titles this section “*logocide*” meaning the killing of words. The traditional meanings of words are replaced with different definitions.⁰⁷³ I do not see this as much of a fascist's trait as a propaganda tactic in general. Groups whose mission it is to steal these words for propaganda purposes change the original meaning of the word to their advantage. Hedges uses the example of the Christian Right and its use of the word “*Liberty*.” Quoting “*Liberty*” from the Bible

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17

the meaning of liberty, according to Hedges, is twisted by those of the Christian Right to become a measure of how well America obeys Christian law. The radical Christian right is therefore able to speak of the importance of liberty and justice for all while at the same time condemning people such as atheists and secular humanists. By this definition liberty becomes liberation from Satan,⁰⁷⁴ a designation often bestowed on any person of different or no faith. Since those people of different or no faith are not where the Spirit of the Lord is, for them there can be no liberty and in the hands of a word trickster, you can hardly take liberty from someone who does not possess it. No liberty --- no need for justice.

Lincoln has a superb take on the same word:

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they

please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name——liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names——liberty and tyranny.

The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as a liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one. Plainly the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails to—day among us human creatures, even in the North, and all professing to love liberty. Hence we behold the processes by which thousands are daily passing from under the yoke of bondage, hailed by some as the advance of liberty, and bewailed by others as the destruction of all liberty. Recently, as it seems, the people of Maryland have been doing something to define liberty; and thanks to them that, in what they have done, the wolf's dictionary, has been repudiated.⁰⁷⁵

“Address at a Sanitary Fair”

Abraham Lincoln: April 18, 1864; Baltimore, MD

We let our politicians get away with words like Compassion, Freedom, Liberty, Independence, Sex (Clinton), the Dream, by never inquiring of them exactly what their version, of these words, mean. Is it any wonder therefore that in the political arena we never get what we thought we voted for? When I think of stolen words, a phrase that comes to my mind is “*The American People*.” I hear “*The American People*” harped on all time by politicians in general and by Ronald Reagan and George W Bush in particular. Exactly who are these “American People?” Are these “American People” considered the same American People by the political left as the political right? I doubt it. As an atheist, am I part of the “American People” in the eyes of those of the Christian Right? If America is a Christian Nation, am I even an American given I am not a Christian? And where does that leave me? A veteran --- A combat veteran? Did I fight for a nation that does not even recognize me as one of its citizens?

So why is this. Alan Greenspan made a famous quote about this once. It went:

“I know you think you understand what you thought I said but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant”

Alan Greenspan

Author of the Age of Turbulence

Goodreads.com

Some may mistake a quote such as Greenspan's as double talk but that misses the important message being conveyed. Return to the statement of the “American People” for example. As you stand listening to phrases like the

“American People” it is important that you understand the speakers meaning of the phrase --- because, as you are sitting nodding your head, you might want to know if that phrase includes you for if it does not, what you think you heard may not be what the speaker meant. Perhaps that speaker only sees the “American People” as those who own land, a business, or makes at least a six-figure annual salary. If that does not include you then the rest of the speech can take on a whole different meaning. If, for example, the word “Freedom” enters this speech and the importance of freedom is stressed for the “American People” their freedom may include restricting yours, you not being one of the “American People.”

When the constitution was written, it included the words “All men” and contrary to what people liked to believe “all men” did not translate into “all humans.” Women, for example, were not included in the original interpretation of “all men” nor were slaves, nor were Native Americans. Even today, it is probably safe to say, neither are immigrants.

The morale of this story, words are important, but they often do not mean the same thing to different groups. To understand what any group is saying when they use these words, it is important to understand their definition of that word. Not your definition, but theirs. Otherwise, what you think you hear may not be the message being sent.

The Myth of Liberal Controlled Media: The Big Lie

Somewhere it must have occurred to a few of these corporate giants that if you own the media, you control the media and the mind of most its listeners. It does not take government to censor what is heard or read in the news. All it takes is enough money to own it. I recall Ross Perot, speaking to his followers in Denver about a television station that declined to air a 30-minute Perot political advertisement in favor of Monday Night Football. Perot stated that if the station would not allow him to get his word out, he would buy the station.⁰⁷⁶ Perot did not buy the station that I know of but somewhere out there in LaLa land I am sure his message was heard loud and clear.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

How Evangelical Christianity Buttresses Fascism

Before jumping into this topic, a point of clarification may be useful. If fascism is truly the rule of the elite (the wealthy, upper classes, and nobility, being the political right) and Christianity is being accused of supporting Fascism then scripture should support the elite, those on the right while at the same time holding those on the left (peasants, laborers, the poor) to a position of servitude. Different rules should apply to those on the right (the landowners, professionals, and wealthy) to those on the left (peasants, laborers, the poor). Loyalty should be required to those who rule while disregarding the welfare, economic or physical, of poor or labor class. Also --- the last thing those on the right would like would be competition by those on the left for what the right claims as their own, namely wealth or social position. And with that said: Onward.

Is God's Word True?

Before diving headfirst into the subject of religion, I might ask the question: Is the Bible god's word or not? Christians of course would claim it is whereas I, on the other hand, would claim that the Bible is the work of man, most notably the elite, royalty, and nobility. Returning to my basic theorem that the box is either empty or it is not, only one of the two beliefs, theirs, or mine, can be correct. Exactly which theory is correct (in fact both could be wrong) has been argued for centuries and likely will not get settled here. I will put forth my concern, but I doubt anything will change the mind of many. Many Christians will simply ignore anything I have to say which can be expected since listening to anything I might have to say is considered by many Christians cause for being burnt in an eternal fire. You, the reader, of course probably knew that.

So, suppose I give you something that you really haven't thought of. The people who will be the most difficult to convince the Bible is anything other than a book of myth will be those who do not believe it's god's book to begin with. Remember Welch? Returning to the John Birch Society, on page 52 of "*The Blue Book*" Robert Welch makes the statement that as science and history became better known, the harder it was for the intelligent mind to accept religious projections.⁰⁰¹

I am not in favor of trying to impose all or any of the strands of a fundamentalism faith on those who reason, whether right or wrong, has honestly told them that we cannot know such positive things about the unknown.⁰⁰²

Welch was a well-educated person with an intelligent mind, so I must wonder if Welch's preceding statement isn't something of an admission that he also questions religion. Mussolini did yet Mussolini promoted religion. And so does Welch, god or no god. Why? Because he as a capitalist stands to lose too much if the Bible should be considered only a book of myth, stuck on the library shelf right

next to “*The Iliad*.” To Welch whether nor god exists is not the issue. To Welch, as with many on the political right, their social position would be substantially reduced if people should begin to question the authority of the Bible. God is not the issue here. The philosophy spawned by Biblical writers is whether those writers’ words are god’s word or not.

Carefully reading Welch’s comments on faith, Welch is more concerned where the lack of faith might lead mankind than whether an actual god exists. For example, according to Welch, when people begin to see themselves as not controlled by god, they begin to seek comfort in “*earthy desires*.” People of little or no faith are “*more readily inclined to get on the Communist bandwagon*” Welch writes “*if that seems to be the surest road to power.*”⁰⁰³

As for scripture, I’m not about to argue that either. Even those who profess to know what a given scripture means, being Christians, apparently do not know either since obviously numerous interpretations exists among Christians themselves. Because Christians cannot agree on what a given means is why so many denominations exist in the Christian faith. Different words of the Bible can be interpreted differently (servant and slave for example). Yet each denomination professes that their interpretation of the words in the Bible is the correct one and implied by god himself. So, there you go. If Christians themselves do not know what a given verse means or which word was exactly the word god used and intended, who am I to tell anyone what a given verse means?

What I can tell you, however, is how a given scripture may benefit the elite, royalty and nobility. We would expect, after all, most verses of the Bible to support royalty and nobility if in fact it was written by royalty and nobility to begin with. So, let’s see how the Bible may be used to support the interests of the elite.

The Authors of the Bible: The Elite

A basic premise of fascism is according to Lawrence Dennis that the elite rule. In fact, Dennis dedicates an entire chapter to exactly that which he titles “*The Leadership of the Elite*”.⁰⁰⁴ Assuming that some anthropomorphic god did not write the Bible, the next questions would be “Who did write the Bible? And for what purpose?”

Barring god, it is safe to assume that the Bible was not written by the working class, the peasants, slaves, or soldiers. They simply did not have the free time, longevity, or the resources required to write such a book. They were far too busy building temples or castles, tending the fields, or being hacked to pieces by swords. That, of course, leaves the ruling class. Only the ruling class, being people like Moses or David (assuming Moses and David were not also simply mythological characters themselves which they likely were) enjoyed the sort of leisure and resources necessary to write the Bible. As such, we’d expect the Bible to support the ruling class while at the same time focusing behavioral concerns mainly on the lower classes. “*Thou shalt not revile the gods* (notice plural form of gods which is important as most mythology written at the time spoke of numerous

gods), *nor curse the ruler of thy people* (Exodus 22:28)” would certainly serve as an example.

The authors of the Bible, being the ruling class, would be reluctant to place upon themselves rules to abide by and few, if any, rules exist governing the conduct of rulers and their priests. While the lower classes are instructed “*Thou shall not kill*”, yet stories of unbelievable atrocities, brutality, and mass murders abound in the Bible, carried out by rulers with their so-called gods’ full approval. Examples include Moses murdering all the inhabitants of Og (Numbers 21:25). 10,000 Canaanites and Perizzites, whom god delivered to Judah, were killed by Judah (Judges 1:4). All the malekites, women, infants, and sucklings, were killed by Saul upon god’s orders (I Samuel 15:3-7). 450 profits of Baal were taken down to the brook Kishon and slain by Elijah (I Kings 18:22-40).

Thou shall not kill certainly does not seem to apply if you happen to be member of the ruling class. In fact, as seen in the story of David and the Philistine men, murder might get you a shot at the throne. And while we are on the subject of “Thou shall not’s” another “Thou shall not” that the ruling class seemed to be immune from was adultery. Solomon hardly had to worry about “*coveting his neighbor’s wife*”. With his 700 wives and 300 concubines (I Kings 11:3), I doubt he had to covet anyone else’s wife. My guess is poor Solomon likely wore himself out trying to take care of that many sexual partners given Viagra was not even heard of then. His subjects however might be doing well even find a wife given all the females Solomon hoarded. But Solomon’s subjects did have a way to attaining females. War.

But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

Deuteronomy 20:14

As we would suspect a two-tiered system of punishment exists within the Bible, one for the lower classes and one for the higher class. We’d expect this if the ruling class wrote the Bible with the purpose of controlling the lower classes. While lower classes are held to the “*Eye for eye, a Tooth for a Tooth*” standard of punishment to be carried out by other members of their society,

“And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord (being the ruling class), he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the lord, shall be put to death. And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it; and he that killeth a

man, he shall be put to death. Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the Lord your God (being Moses). And Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones. And the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses.”

Leviticus 24:16-23

punishment of the ruling class was left to god (being themselves if god did not exist). I am not familiar with any of the ruling class (unless from opposing nations) that are stoned with stones by the congregation, burned at the stake, or were blemished to equal a blemish caused to another. Instead, the punishments often suffered by rulers were losses in battle, in family members, or in possessions which included people in the form of servants and concubines.

In some cases, one must really wonder who is really being punished, the ruler or his subjects. For example: while death was ordered swiftly to any lower class member for worshipping other gods

And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel . And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one him men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

Numbers 25:1-5

when Abijah, Jeroboam’s son, becomes sick, god allows Abijah to die as punishment to Jeroboam because Jeroboam had made other gods and molten images.

Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and thee prince over my people Israel, And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind the back: Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth (I would think God could think of a better verse to describe Abijah) against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as

a man taketh way dung, till it be all gone. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the Lord hath spoken it. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child (Abijah) shall die.

I Kings 14:7-12

Keep in mind here, if no god exists, Jeroboam received no punishment at all. His son died not because god was punishing Jeroboam. His son simply died like so many other children in primitive societies. Jeroboam got to use his son's death to say "*Here is what god does if you disobey him?*" The message is of course, obey god or else --- and of course, by obeying god (this whatever that does not exist) Jeroboam's interests, being a member of the elite, are served.

Assuming that the ruling class wrote the Bible would go a long way in explaining why the ruling class often enjoyed such close, friendly relationship with god that no one else did. Abraham and his seed, for example, were chosen by god (being themselves) to be rulers of nations (Genesis17:1-8). Moses was handed nation after nation and received the Ten Commandments, the first four of which are concerned with honoring him and his lieutenants if he, Moses, or a group claiming to be Moses, created the Ten Commandments. Solomon was given legendary wisdom and riches. God would not hesitate to respond to hideous requests from his prophets such as Elijah who cursed children for poking fun at his bald head.

And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, here came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him and said unto him, go up thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the woods, and tare forty and two children of them.

II Kings 2:23-24

It would also explain why worshipping other gods should bring the punishment of death (Exodus22:20) (Deuteronomy 13:6-10), (II Chronicles 15:13) since to do so was challenging the authority of the powers that be.

I remember the first time I ever read the Bible cover to cover. I was stunned by the brutality that came from a god that before I had been taught was a god of Love (II Corinthians 13:11). If it is assumed that a loving god cared for the people he created, then we would expect he would be concerned for the welfare of all people. Instead, we find a god that favors a given group of people (namely the children of Israel or even more so, Abraham's seed), a god who deliverers whole nations unto them to be destroyed, dictates orders to occupy other's land and to kill everyone within that land, women and children included:

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites,

and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.

Deuteronomy 7:1-2

Consider the question of whether the verses of the Bible best seem to express that which might concern a god capable of creating whole universes or some tyrant, obsessed with power. Then consider Deuteronomy 20:10-15. In these verses the cities that come before Moses are basically given a choice, either peacefully give in and become his servants or die.

And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword.

Deuteronomy 20:11-13

So suppose I pose the question, whose purpose does it serve that these people are asked to serve Moses, god or Moses? I mean, why should an all-powerful god be concerned whether these people served Moses? It would seem to me that would be more of Moses' concern. Then given a god capable of creating heaven and earth, if god truly wanted the inhabitants of these lands out and Moses' people in, why not just create somewhere else for those people to go and move them there so neither their people (also god's creation I would guess by Biblical Mythology) nor Moses' people would have to die in some land grab?

And why would god be so concerned with eliminating all the males in occupied lands? Males should present no threat to god since god could get rid of everyone at any time he chose. God could strike them blind (II Kings 6:18) at will, not to mention striking them all dead with a pestilence or a flood or other natural disaster. To a tyrant, however, males might represent a threat to his power. A tyrant might, therefore, wish all males removed which is exactly what is called for in Genesis 34:25, Numbers 31:7, Numbers 31:17, Deuteronomy 20:13, Judges 21:11, or 1 Kings 11:15. I doubt a god would have anything to gain by such acts of brutality. A tyrant would, however.

Going the other way, if the ruling class did write the Bible, they would likely see most all other people as possessions, servants, slaves, bondsmen, or soldiers in need of control. And indeed, if the Bible does show any concern for the lower classes, the servants, slaves, and soldiers, it is that they are to serve their masters and rulers:

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.
Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the
good and gentle, but also to the froward. (I Peter 2:17-18)

To the lower classes was given the curse of work from god for Eve's original sin:

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the
ground;

Genesis 3: 19

And while god showered riches, nations, and power on the ruling class (Genesis
12:1-3) (Genesis 26: 12-14) (Genesis 35:9-12) (Genesis 39:1-2) and props up the
ruling class's right to wealth with statements like

For it is the Lord the God who giveth thee the power to get wealth
Deuteronomy 8:18

And let's not forget verses such as

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters
worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not
blasphemed.

I Timothy 6:1

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the
flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto
Christ.

Ephesians 6:5

This was all right and good, of course, if you happened to be lucky enough to be a
member of the ruling class.

Two books that back up my claim that the rulers and privileged who wrote
the Bible are Jared Diamond's "**Guns, Germs, and Steel**" and "**Caesar's Messiah:
The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus**" by Joseph Atwill. Diamond largely
reaffirms my contention that only those in privileged positions had the education to
read and write and hence it had to them who wrote the Bible. Atwill, however,
goes beyond that and places the authors of the New Testament directly on the ruling
family of the Roman empire. Their reason was to get the warring Jews of the
Mideast to submit to Roman authority.

"In his book Caesar's Messiah, Atwill outlines a revolutionary
discovery: the series of events in Jesus' ministry described in the
Gospels are exact, sequential parallels to the battle campaign of
Titus Flavius, as recorded by Josephus in War of the Jews. ---
(portion removed for space) ---

In 1995, Atwill returned to his studies of Christianity through his interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It seemed incredible that two diametrically opposite forms of messianic Judaism emerged from Judea at the same time. One sect was waging a religious war against the Romans, seeking a Messiah that would lead them to military victory. Simultaneously, the followers of Jesus were supposedly organizing a religion based around a Messiah that told them to “*turn the other cheek*” and “*give unto Caesar what is Caesar’s.*”

The key came in Josephus’ War of the Jews, which describes Titus’s destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The military campaign exactly paralleled over 40 moments in the ministry of Jesus described in the Gospels; an inconceivable coincidence.

As Atwill presents in Caesar's Messiah, the Flavian Roman imperial family created Christianity to pacify the militaristic opposition to their rule.”

About – Caesar’s Messiah (caesar’smessiah.com)

12/05/2021

That the Romans may have created the story of Jesus for purposes Atwill outlines is no stretch of imagination given much of the story of Jesus already existed in Roman mythology. Romulus, the rumored creator of Rome, also was born of a virgin, was pursued by the powers that existed, and ascending into heaven where he assumed the title of a god, a position he shared with his father. Add that to the fact the so-called Christmas story, the stable, the star, December 25th, the three wisemen, are known to have existed in prior mythologies. It is not inconceivable to at least consider the possibility that some storyteller was able to thread the story as told in the New Testament together using preexisting mythologies as a guide. This idea that some storyteller knitted the story of Jesus together is somewhat supported (for lack of a better term) by the fact that not one single form of evidence exists to support any of it other than the book of mythology, the Bible, from which it comes. To use the Bible as evidence is like using the “*Iliad*” as proof cyclops exist or using Harry Potter books to prove sorcery.

Who is really in Control, Some all Knowing god or the Privileged Elite?

Ever seen the bumper sticker “*God’s in Control*” or “*Trust Jesus*”? Ask any Fundamental Christian who’s in control or who should we trust. I could about guess the answer. Beginning about the turn of the twentieth century, government had been stepping more and more into managing the affairs of corporate America via government regulations and mandates. Laws have been passed such as the Antitrust Laws to guard against monopolies, laws to create a minimum wage, Child Labor Laws, and Environmental Laws such as the Endangered Species and Clean Water Act to name a few.

Government has also stepped into the social arena with programs such as welfare to care for the needy, a roll that until the twentieth century was traditionally that of the church. God was truly put to the test during the great depression however and failed in the eyes of far too many. Corporations of course did not like the government meddling in their affairs, so it follows that corporations began funding religious fundamentalists and evangelicals to take a stand against government intervention. And they did.

A typical fundamentalist's response to government intervention would be to place one's trust in government would be placing one's faith in a worldly system rather than in god. And since the world, according to the Bible, is fowl and corrupt, any system of government of earthly origins could not wish to be anything better.

So, for a moment, let's assume god is truly in control. What purpose then would a government serve? Why would government even be needed? I mean, if god is truly in control, why are the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Association, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service even necessary? I am sure Corporate America would stand to benefit substantially if all these agencies and the regulations they enforce were given back to god (in other words society's elite being themselves) to deal with. Corporate America would like to be able to regulate themselves exactly as did the corporations under the Fascists regimes of Italy and Germany.

What goes unmentioned too often is without government, the elite, by default, become the government. Most people however cannot see that fact. The elite, who exploit the world's resources to enrich themselves, would then determine what forests get cut, what the levels of the sulfur should be in the coal they burn, how many fish their fishing fleets can harvest, what kind of chemicals end up in our drinking water, and who gets what and how much. If history is any indicator, allowing the elite that power has been attempted before --- and the results were not good for either the common people or the environment.

Let's return to my theory that the Bible was written by the elite to maintain privilege for the elite. What do you suppose the words "God is in control" original intent was? Since no god exists, hopefully you, the reader, can figure out by yourself who then speaks for god. Are you comfortable knowing therefore that politicians, businessmen, tyrants, and dictators are the gods people are placing their faith in? I'm not. So, suppose we take a look at what these gods, the elite, might want us to believe and why. How might what is being preached on numerous religion stations, radio and television, and pulpits around the nation benefit their main benefactors, namely the elite?

Predestination Everything as it should be

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and

whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:29-31

This one is a given. If everything was preordained, everything is as it should be. Make no mistake whose best interest, the wealthy or the poor, predestination would favor. Robert Welch knew this. Remember Welch's statement that people must believe the world was "Predetermined" the word that you were asked to remember earlier. Well, here it is and here is why. But that is only the beginning.

The Biblical Value of Human Beings

If, as I suggest, that the Bible was written by the ruling class with the idea of getting others to serve them in the form of work or security, it would also follow that those who have less to offer in terms of work or as defenders, would be considered by the authors of the Bible to be of less value. Leviticus 27:2-7 puts a monetary value on people according to their age and sex. By the way --- we are talking the ownership of humans here, whether servants or slaves. Males from 20-60 are worth 50 shekels but women of the same age are only worth 30. Women are not as strong physically and do not make as good of workers or soldiers as men apparently. Males from 1-20 are worth 20 shekels while the women are only worth 10. Children and minors are not as good of workers or soldiers as are those from 20-60 thus are worth less. And those older than 60 with most their productive years behind them are worth even less, males being worth 15 and females are still only worth 10.

Worth mention here is one of the religious right's largest contributors, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. Harry Bradley was an early financial supporter of the John Birch Society and frequently asked Robert Welch to speak at his company, the Allen Bradley Company. In 1985 the Allen Bradley Company was sold to Rockwell International, a leading defense and aerospace conglomerate. In terms of being worth less, women worked for the Allen-Bradley Company since 1918 making up nearly a third of the workforce during World War II yet they were paid less than men for operating the very same machines. In 1966 the women finally filed a discrimination suit and won.⁰⁰⁵

Handicapped people, being limited in what they can deliver to the ruling class in the form of work or security, are likewise predictably worth less to the ruling class and their hand spun god who denies the handicap the honor of approaching his alter.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, saying Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or anything superfluous, Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, Or crookback, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken

Leviticus 21:16-20

In the above verse, ones broken stones refers to a man's testicles. The ruling class had no need of anyone who could not provide them more soldiers or laborers. Laborers and soldiers meant the same to the ruling class as did livestock. David, whom the Lord established as king over Israel (II Sam 5:10-12) made this statement of the handicapped:

And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up on the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

II Samuel 5:8

Purpose: To Everything There is a Purpose --- unless no god Exists

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Everyone hopefully knows of the "Sacred Cow" of India. There cattle wander amongst starving people untouched. The question we as Westerners always end up asking is "Why?" Why are people starving with that potential hamburger walking loose in the streets? The answer, of course, is their religion. Their basic religious philosophy does not allow the slaughter of sacred cattle.

Food For Thought: I wonder how well the Hindu religious philosophy would be accepted by the North American Cattlemen's Association. Could Hinduism be something, therefore, that an organization such as the American Cattlemen's Association might oppose? Might they, the NACA, even support with cash a more cattle industry friendly religion to assure a religion such as Hinduism does not gain a foot hold in the United States (or abroad for that matter)? Might supporting a religion more friendly to the cattle industry be in the cattlemen's best interests regardless of the individual members of the NACA believe or disbelieve in that religion themselves? That is to say, even if a member of the NACA did not believe in this cattle friendly religion or its god personally, might he benefit from imposing that religion on others?

Interesting enough, the founder of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, Demos Shakarian, was the largest Dairy Farmer in the state of California. His mission: to bring the Bible to world. And what does the Bible have to say about cattle?

And God said, Let us (God needs help making man? Who's us?) make man in our image, after our (Who's our?) likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, and over the CATTLE, and over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Genesis 1:26

To suggest that the word "CATTLE" in this verse is the reason for the existence of the Full Gospels Fellowship International would, of course, be somewhat preposterous, however, to completely ignore that this might have anything to do with their mission would be a self-imposed blindness. This cattle scenario just fits so well to show powerful reasons beyond "*Personal Salvation*" exist for the cattle industry to be funding Fundamental Christianity that it could not be passed up. So let's let this simple analogy open our eyes to the larger issue of this writing which is reasons, other than salvation, why Corporate America might wish to fund Fundamental Christianity

So what might a few of those reasons be?

Darwin's Evolution verses Biblical Creation

The debate over evolution and creation has been going on since evolution was first proposed and it will not be resolved here largely because some of the rules of science cannot be applied to prove either. No one was around to witness creation nor was anyone around to witness evolution. And even if someone did witness one of these events, the event cannot be reproduced like boiling water out of seawater to prove salt is what gives seawater its flavor. Hence, all I have to rely on is my life's experience to determine which, if either, most likely represents "Truth."

Since numerous (not just evolution or creation) explanations exist as to the Earth's beginnings, I must choose what theory is best represented by the evidence. Evolution is undeniably the best beneficiary of this evidence. That does not mean evolution occurred in any of the manners theorized. Holes in the theory of evolution are open for debate but they are closing fast. Every day more bones are discovered. Every day more links are made. Every day the evidence is piled higher.

On the creation side, nothing. Nothing has changed. Plants according to scripture were created before the sun (already mention). The two stories of Creation, Geneses one and two, contradict each other. Flaming bushes, donkeys, and snakes don't talk. Seas do not part to allow people to cross, and wooden boats were never constructed large enough to hold every species of animal living on the earth. These are myths and if myth is what is being used to prove the story of Creation, then let's call Creation what it is. Myth. And given that, evolution by far has the upper hand.

As previously stated, simply because holes do exist in the Theory of Evolution does not prove Evolution false nor do these holes prove the Theory of Creation true. If evolution should ever be proven false, that still would not prove Creation. This is not an either/or thing, like throwing a coin in the air. All we know at this point is the literal interpretation of Creation and the Theory of Evolution cannot exist side by side.

But let's sidetrack the evolution and creation debate, which in my mind is not a debate, for the moment. Let us ask ourselves the question how each of these theories serve or inhibit the interests of the elite. Which would the elite choose to promote? And which would the elite choose to censor?

To put it another way; is deriving the actual historical events of earth's coming to be the important issue here? Or --- is some other factor really the issue? Like purpose? And if so, which side stands to win or lose the most if either is shown to be true or false? Who would be the winners and losers be for example if everyone suddenly adopted evolution? Who would be the winners and losers be if everyone adopted creation? And exactly what would be lost?

Make no mistake which world view and structure of society stands to lose the most if evolution were true. That would mean creation did not happen --- and, if creation never happened, what about all that follows? Man's god ordained domination of the earth and life would be at stake? How about the idea of work? The right to possess property. Loyalty to kings and landlords, the elite? How about the justification the Bible gives for the establishment of wealth? Inheritance? Is evolution verses creation truly the issue in this century old debate? Or is what is truly important to the elite, to quote a famous evangelical minister, "**Purpose Driven?**"

Before the exploitation of natural resources can be justified, what needs to be in place is a philosophy that justifies such exploitation. In terms of Earth's resources, the Bible verse Genesis 1:26

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

not only allows for the exploitation of nature, it makes the exploitation of nature man's divine purpose by proclaiming that man is to have domination over every life form that exists upon the earth. According to this verse all that exists on Earth is man's for the taking.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of the tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Genesis 1: 29-31

Hopefully, I do not have to explain how such a philosophy that basically states that whatever exists on earth is man's for the taking might serve the interests of Corporations. And given that, might it be expected that any philosophy that challenges this belief must be silenced? If corporations are to maintain dominance over the resources of the earth therefore it is imperative that their right to own and use these resources to their advantage remains unchallenged. The last thing they'd like taught in schools across the nation is that other forms of life might have as much right to exist as they and may be more important to the overall welfare of life on earth than corporate profit.

So --- what do you do if millions of dollars are at your fingertips and events appear to move in an unfavorable direction? You would redirect public opinion to a direction you, as someone wishing to enrich himself by exploiting the earth's natural resources, would find more favorable. In short, you likely would begin to produce propaganda more to your liking, propaganda like Creationism, for example, which hands over the earth and the resources in it to you. You would likely make every attempt at getting this propaganda in front of everyone, the younger the better as children will believe almost anything placed before them. As such, corporations would by far favor Creation taught over evolution in schools. It's really not about whether is Creationism is true or false. It's about the money Creationism justifies that evolution does not.

Enter the world of Mel and Norma Gabler, two deceased self-appointed Texan textbook censors who gave rise to the Educational Research Analysts, a conservative Christian organization dedicated to reviewing public school textbooks submitted for adoption in Texas.⁰⁰⁶ What textbooks are adopted in Texas effects textbooks nationwide, just as their mission statement states:

“Our reviews have national relevance because Texas state-adopts textbooks and buys so many that publishers write them to Texas standards and sell them across the country.”⁰⁰⁷

That statement is true. The Gabler's know that and have been taking advantage of that for decades.

Fair to say, the Educational Research Analysts predictably falls into rank and fill with nearly every conservative group and agenda known from the far right. They are linked at their website, textbookreviews.org, to Focus on the Family, Concerned Women of America, the Eagle Forum, Gary Bauer's Family Research Council, Home School Legal Defense Fund, and Phyllis Schlafly,⁰⁰⁸ most of which are recipients of Rightwing Investors. The Educational Research Analysts, themselves, is known to have received \$15,000 from the Castle Rock Foundation,⁰⁰⁹ or in other words Coors, a name which takes us back to the JBS.

Exploring around on the Educational Research Analysts' internet site it was interesting to find that in their 1998 High School rating of biology books, they recommend the schools adopt “***Biology: The Web of Life***” by Scott Foresman because as the Educational Research Analysts proclaims “*It covers more standard*

biology topics and harps least on evolution.”⁰¹⁰ The rejected books are rated as to their Evolutionary slant⁰¹¹ meaning the more the book offers evidence to support the Theory of Evolution; the less likely the Educational Research Analysts will recommend that textbook and the less likely that book will ever reach Biology classes throughout the nation. Corporate America most certainly would not want their god given right to the world’s resources diminished.

Darwin’s Theory of Evolution does just that. If Darwin’s theory is correct, then exactly what is the purpose, if any, of the earth’s resources and who should they benefit? Evolution offers no answer to these questions. Is it more important; for example, that a few wealthy foresters can enrich themselves in the short term by clear cutting forests or is the conservation of native old growth trees to protect endangered wildlife as the spotted owl as important as the profit that old growth forest might generate? Or, even more important to the long-term interests of life on earth, is that life worth more than the profits that old growth forest might yield? If suddenly everyone began to believe that life on earth is more important than any short-term profit, what would that mean to those foresters?

Evolution, unlike creation, does not give us title to the eco-systems of the world. Evolution does not make us the stewards of the land as does Creation. In fact, evolution tends to equalize humanity with the rest of life on earth since all life on earth likely had similar origins. That all life on earth, including humans, may have evolved from some organic sludge really jerks the vanity of many Christians. These people would much prefer to think they were created special. Evolution again does not provide them this superciliousness.

Arkansas attempted to banish the teaching of Evolution altogether. In 1968, the case Epperson v. Arkansas came before the court. The court ruled that an outright ban on teaching evolution was unconstitutional.⁰¹² That did not stop the Christian Rightwing and their money suppliers (Corporations) from attempting to stifle Evolution, however. In 1981, *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education*, "an Arkansas Law called the ***“Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act”*** (Act 590) demanded that Creation was to be taught right alongside Evolution in public schools. That law was again declared unconstitutional by Judge William Overton on January 5th, 1982.⁰¹³ Overton claimed that theory of Creation was nothing but religion. Mysteriously, much of the transcript of the case were lost⁰¹⁴ hence similar cases down the road could not refer to that ruling in another court of law. Gee --- I wonder how that happened?

In 1987, a similar Louisiana Law required that anytime Evolution was taught in Public Schools, Creation Science had to be taught also. The law was ruled unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court. The Law titled the *“Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science in Public School Instruction Act”* attempted to get around past legalities by claiming neither Evolution nor Creation needed to be taught. This too was none-the-less ruled unconstitutional by a Supreme Court vote of seven to two, Justice Antonin Scalia and Chief Justice William Rehnquist, both Reagan appointments, dissenting.⁰¹⁵ Written in the decision is *“Forbidding the teaching of evolution when creation science is not also taught undermines the provision of a comprehensive scientific education.”*⁰¹⁶ The ruling asserted *“Instead, this Act has the distinctly different purpose of discrediting*

evolution by counter-balancing its teaching at every turn with the teaching of creationism”⁰¹⁷ and as such does, in fact, endorse religion:

(b) The Act impermissibly endorses religion by advancing the religious belief that a supernatural being created humankind. The legislative history demonstrates that the term "creation science," as contemplated by the state legislature, embraces this religious teaching. The Act's primary purpose was to change the public school science curriculum to provide persuasive advantage to a particular religious doctrine that rejects the factual basis of evolution in its entirety. Thus, the Act is designed either to promote the theory of creation science that embodies a particular religious tenet or to prohibit the teaching of a scientific theory disfavored by certain religious sects. In either case, the Act violates the First Amendment. Pp. 589-594. ⁰¹⁸

While the ruling supported teaching scientific evolution, the net result was a backlash perhaps more detrimental to the advancement of science than had the "*Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science in Public School Instruction Act*" remained in place. At least then evolution was reaching most children even if creation had to be taught alongside. Now, thanks to *Edwards v Aguillard* ruling, many children never get to hear the theory of Evolution as numerous Christian Schools dot the landscape supported by wealthy corporate and business interests. Hardly had the ink dried on *the Edwards v Aguillard* ruling when a group of Milwaukee (Wisconsin mind you --- birth state of the JBS) businessmen met that same year to begin the Milwaukee Archdiocesan Education Foundation to support Catholic Schools.

In 1992, the leaders of the Milwaukee Archdiocesan Education Foundation created PAVE, Partners Advancing Values in Education Inc,⁰¹⁹ private schools largely funded by none other than the Lynde and Harry Bradley (former JBS members) Foundation to the tune of \$21,666,919 between 1992 and 1995.⁰²⁰ Other contributors consist of 170 businesses, 65 foundations, and 1000 individuals since 1992.⁰²¹ While PAVE claims to be upgrading the education of low income families, my guess is it has more to do with *Edward v Aquillard* ruling and what the teaching of evolution would mean to corporate interests.

In 1990, with \$750,000 pledged for three years by Howard and Roberta Ahmanson and a smaller \$450,000 donation by the MacLellan Foundation, the Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture came into existence.⁰²² Other investors include Richard Mellon Scaife, the Henry P. and Susan C. Crowell Trust of Colorado Springs, Mark Ryland, Discovery's vice president and a Microsoft executive, and the Stewardship Foundation who contributed over a million dollars between 1999 and 2003.⁰²³ Media Transparency also adds the names of the John Templeton Foundation and Lynde and Harry Bradley as contributors.⁰²⁴

All these donors are noted religious right donors. Further, tax documents from www.guidestar.org confirm that grants and gifts to the Discovery Institute went from 1.4 million in 1997 to 4.1 million in 2003. The Ahmansons to date are

the largest contributors.⁰²⁵ Jodi Wilgoren of the New York Times claims twenty-two foundations are known to contribute to the Discovery Institute of which two-thirds are known to promote religious missions openly.⁰²⁶

The Discovery Institute's Wedge Strategy is a plan of action that "*seeks nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies*" brought on by discoveries in modern science.⁰²⁷ According to the authors of the Wedge Strategy, Men, such as Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud, discredited traditional conceptions of both god and man by drawing parallels between humans and animals as merely living products responsive to their environment and natural phenomenon. That humans might be just another species of life is exactly the belief corporate interests would least like adopted and taught in schools as these theories come with no human purpose, class special rights, or justifications for the accumulation of wealth and concentration of power.

As I read through this the Wedge Strategy, I clearly got the idea that this manifesto was more about advancing the cause or religion than finding truth through science. With statement like:

We are building on this, broadening the wedge with a positive scientific alternative to materialistic scientific theories, which has come to be called the theory of intelligent design (ID). Design theory promises to reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.⁰²⁸

Or

Alongside a focus on influential opinion-makers, we also seek to build up a popular base of support among our natural constituency, namely, Christians (misspelled in document). We will do this primarily through apologetics seminars. We intend these to encourage and equip believers with new scientific evidence's that support the faith, as well as to "popularize" our ideas in the broader culture.⁰²⁹

If you follow what is being said in the last quote, "*We intend these to encourage and equip believers with new scientific evidence's that support the faith, as well as to "popularize" our ideas in the broader culture.*" This is a mission statement to support only their desired view. If their findings tend to support their ideas, publish it. If their findings do not support their ideas, suppress it. Beginning with a hypothesis that is assumed to be true and allowing only evidence that supports that hypothesis is not science; it is propaganda. In science, the investigator follows the evidence wherever the evidence leads him whether he wishes to believe what he finds or not. Propaganda bends the evidence to suit its own end. Even if these people could travel back time to see what happened and discovered evolution occurred (if in fact it did), I doubt they would admit what they had seen.

Am I saying these people are dishonest? Anyone who professes anything that he does not personally believe for the sake of position or monetary reward is in my view dishonest. My guess is many people at Discovery, not to mention the Christian Right, are more interested in the money or supporting the status quo than in actual scientific research or fact. At any rate, these fascist leaning individuals, like other fascist groups around the world, past and present, produce a massive amount of propaganda and are unwavering about getting their propaganda into the mainstream.

Currently millionaire conservatives and their groups are dumping their propaganda in private funded religious schools. Religious schools of course do not have to mention evolution no matter what the courts say. In short, all previous rulings, whether the teaching creation over evolution is constitutional or unconstitutional, no longer applies. The government cannot restrict a religious school from teaching what it wants to teach, nor can it force a religious institution from teaching what it does not want to teach. In short, the antievolution creation promoters have found a fool proof method around the teaching of evolution. The problem for them is funding.

School Vouchers Sailing around Galapagos

So --- assuming that evolution is a focal point of the conservative right, it makes sense that they are willing to throw millions of dollars at private schools to conceal evolution from children. But that's their money. The next logical step for these conservatives would be to save their money by making someone else pay for it. Who? Why the American taxpayer of course.

But how do you get the public to pick up this tab? Do you lobby to toss evolution out of public schools? No – they already attempted that and lost. Do you ask for public tax money to support private schools, a violation of church and state? No --- you'd need to be smarter than that. Using Welch's model, if getting people to support the JBS is the JBS's purpose, the JBS would not ask for donations to the JBS. Instead, a clandestine group of the JBS, for example "Support Your Local Police," would be formed. Most people would be willing to support their local police if it remains unknown to them that by doing so they are supporting the JBS.

Likewise, if the mission is to rid the school system of teaching of evolution, evolution should not be mentioned at all. Better ways exist to achieve this end. William Sargent in his "***Battle for the Mind***" enlightens us as to how this is possible. If manipulation of people is what is desired, do not appeal to their intellect, rather target emotions. According to Sargent, John Wesley's, perhaps one of the greatest religious reformer of all time, great success was due to his finding that beliefs could be much more successfully implanted or eradicated by a tremendous assault on the emotions.⁰³⁰ The Chinese Communist's success of converting China to a Communist state also according to Sargent did not come about from an intellectual debate, rather the Chinese avoided "*a purely intellectual approach*" by continually hammering away at the United States and the hostile attitudes the United States had towards a New China.⁰³¹ Worth mention, Christian propaganda is continuing that trend today with all their Christian persecution claims.

Intellectual indoctrination without emotional excitement is remarkably ineffective.⁰³² Religion relies heavily on emotion, appealing to human vanity. God loves you. God made you special. Jesus died for our sins. God has this wonderful plan for us that includes life ever after in heaven, free of labor, want, and harm. Heaven, the great security blanket, wraps its residents in womb of god which keeps them safe from all that made these people suffer on earth.

Evolution on the other has none of this. Evolution is supported only by the evidence. It does not appeal to your emotion although it is likely that the people who cast it aside do so emotionally. Those who do react to evolution emotionally realize that if evolution is true, then god never created the world and furnished humans with the job of stewardship. Human's, particularly those who cast aside, were not created special over other living life forms on the planet which is not only disconcerting to many but an insult. And lastly evolution does not offer any fringe benefits such as life everlasting nor does it offer any promise of hope.

Given that bit of knowledge, the better plan to challenge evolution is to put emotion on their side. Rather than to get into a debate about whether evolution should be taught in schools, create your own school system aside from the public school system where evolution is not is not required and the teaching of Intelligent Design does not violate the separation of church and state. Then begin an emotional appeal. Point to all those poor inner-city children denied a proper education associated with overcrowded, rundown, insecure inner city public schools. Shouldn't these children be allowed their choice of schools that other more affluent American children have? Why --- doesn't it stand to reason that to even the playing field, these poor children should be given vouchers so they can afford the school of their choice?

Well – actually it would be their parents' choice, but conservatives would leave that unsaid because people have less empathy for adults than children. Next, to evade any church and state issues, the vouchers would be given directly to the parents rather than to the school. Parents, after all, are not a religious institution, hence no claim could be made that government money is funding religious and private schools. And it worked. Estimates place 96 percent of the students enrolled in the scholarship programs, being those eligible for vouchers, are enrolled in religious affiliated school.⁰³³ Challenged as a church state issue, the 2002 supreme court in a five to four vote ruled in *Zelman v Simmons-Harris* that:

This Court's jurisprudence make clear that a government aid program is not readily subject to challenge under the Establishment Clause if it is neutral with respect to religion and provides assistance directly to a broad class of citizens who, in turn, direct government aid to religious schools wholly as a result to their own genuine and independent private choice.⁰³⁴

Amazing!

A deeper darker side to this voucher ordeal exists, however. Bribery. I recalled from years earlier a statement made by Richard Nixon while being interviewed on television very shortly after leaving office. The topic was the Black

vote and how, according to Nixon, Kennedy won the nomination by winning it. In that interview, Nixon made the statement that it had been known for some time that if you wanted the Black vote, you had to give the Black preacher money. The reason Kennedy won the Black vote was apparently Kennedy gave the most. Amazingly, that interview has somehow seemed to have disappeared. I have not been able to relocate it --- which of course sets my statement up here as questionable.

But that's alright. I have no trouble pulling up other scandalous scams involving Nixon attempting to manipulate the vote. In 1972, Nixon and his chief of staff, Haldeman, came up with an idea to finance and run a third-party Black candidate to draw votes away from the Democrats.

“The argument is that if we can launch a Jesse Jackson or somebody outside the party. We're better off, if we can keep them bought.”

Nixon relies “Yeah.: Haldeman then continues

“What we do is get old dollar bills. We get old ones that look like people have been saving all their lives. We flood them in, a dollar apiece from 4,000 to 5,000 people scattered around. You do that three or four times and Jesse Jackson will start thinking people really want him to be President. Get his ego going and after his ego's going then you can't turn him off. The payoff is afterward. Give him about \$10,000 per percentage point. He gets 20 percent of the vote, he gets \$200,000. That's a personal payment after the election.”⁰³⁵

Nixon was insipid compared to the bribery going on under the Bush Administration, however. According to *blackcommentator.com*, Karl Rove, manipulates faith-based grants and contracts for their maximum political effect. Sighting the Detroit Free Press, Blackcommentator claims that Michigan religious organizations, which included four black area ministers, received \$61 million in faith-based money and states that this money was “*the magnetic monetary pull that drew Bush's Black minions to his service.*”⁰³⁶ “*The Right's systematic assault on the Black body politic*” the blackcommentator adds “*is dramatically evident in heavy Black and Latino Northern New Jersey a focus of Wal-Mart heir John Walton's inner city pro-voucher “philanthropy” and Karl Rove's machinations among Black ministers.*”⁰³⁷ “*This isn't conspiracy theory,*” claims the Blackcommentary “*rather, it's the result of strategic planning and funding by the Bush regime, the Waltons and, especially, the Milwaukee-based Bradley Foundation, which invented both the “Black” voucher “movement” and faith-based initiatives in the mid-Nineties.*”⁰³⁸

Well, look at that? The Bradley Foundation, another foundation founded by none other than John Birch members. Amazing how former members of the JBS just keep popping up.

Home Schooling: For the Sake of Mosaic Law

Even more problematic is the rise of home schooling. 2001 estimates claim that as many as two million children were home schooled and growing at a rate of approximately 15 to 20 percent per year.⁰³⁹ The majority of home-schooled children comes from non-Hispanic Whites with a higher level of education and income than the general population and likely to have at least one adult home not a part of the labor force. According to government estimates, given what is called the core constituency (non-Hispanic whites of above education and income), the population of home-schooled children could rise to over 30 million.⁰⁴⁰ Of those homeschooled, religious reasons were cited for 33 percent.⁰⁴¹ Although Kurt Bauman reports assuming “*If attitudinal responses are to be believed, home schooling is not primarily a religious phenomenon, although*” Bauman admits “*religion is important.*”⁰⁴²

I would say 33 percent of possibly 30 million, which is 9.9 million children (not even counting the private religious schools indoctrinated children); graduating believing an on-line home school provider such as the Grace Academy’s statement of faith is at the very least a very grave concern. The Bible is, according to the Grace Academy, “*God’s infallible written Word*” “without error in the original manuscripts⁰⁴³ wherever those original Biblical manuscripts might be. For people like me, who believe the Bible to be nothing but myth, a book which supports and demands my allegiance to an elite class, such propaganda should be a serious concern.

While home schooling has been around for centuries, only recently has it reached the fervor of the present day due largely to influences of people as R. J. Rushdoony. Rushdoony, going back to the paragraph on stealing words, argued that all human knowledge is invalid if not rooted in the Bible⁰⁴⁴ Rushdoony, a Christian Recon-structionist, the founder of the Chalcedon Institute, and former John Bircher, is frequently cited as the father of the home-schooling movement. Worse, according to Michael McVicar, Rushdoony’s primary objective was to create a pre-Enlightenment world with a medieval view of a god centered world,⁰⁴⁵ or worded a different manner, to carry society back into a modern-day Dark Ages.

In 1997, Rev E Ray Moore, a former military chaplain and Rushdoony disciple, formed the Exodus Mandate Ministry whose mission was to encourage and assist Christians to leave government (public) schools for Christian schools and home schooling.⁰⁴⁶ Published by the Chalcedon Institute, the book “**The Harsh Truth About Public Schools**” with its author, Bruce N Shortt teamed up with Moore to create an exit strategy for Christian children from Public Schools.⁰⁴⁷ “*If successful*” McVicar writes “*the grassroots movement could lead to the departure of millions of children from the public school system throughout the United States.*”⁰⁴⁸

Charter Schools

Set up much like a private business, freed of many state laws and regulations, Albert Shanker, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, in 1988 apparently

accepting that idea public education could be best improved by competition, rightwing buzz words, called for the establishment of charter schools. The necessary authority required to establish a charter school varies from state however and authority may reach right down to the local school districts as is the case in Colorado.⁰⁴⁹ Curriculums, as such, may be determined by local school districts provided the school satisfies the necessary requirements established by the state. In short, there would be no national standard. That's good --- of course, if do not want evolution taught.

Discourse over Population Is the World Overpopulated

Much has been written about overpopulation in the recent decades often contradictory and often confrontational. In the environmentalist's view, the world is seriously overpopulated. Often referred to as "**Profits of Doom**," people concerned with population warn of impending disasters and environmental collapse. For example, populationawareness.org posts headlines like:

The Earth's Life-support System is in Peril - a Global Crisis.

January 20, 2004 Herald, the (UK)

World Bank Says Vietnam's Environment is Rapidly

Deteriorating. September 18, 2002 Associated Press

Global Environment Reaches Dangerous Crossroads

February 16, 2001 World Watch Institute

Nearly Half of Earth's Land Has Been Transformed by Humans

July 30, 1999 Eureka Alert

Widespread Decline in the World's Ecosystems.

Sept 15, 2000 BBC/World Resources Institute

in which human population are cited as the main contributor to the problems above.

On the other hand, the opinions of groups on the right claim largely that population is not a problem at all. For example, the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty states point blankly that

“There is no good reason to believe that overpopulation will become a serious problem for the world. On the contrary, the more likely problem is that an aging world population will put greater stress on younger workers to provide for older, disabled persons.”⁰⁵⁰

Return to the section on the value of human beings according to the Bible. Keep in mind the elite whose wealth depends on the labor of others has no real use for those unable to work, old or disabled. We would expect therefore if the Bible was written by the elite represented here as the Acton Institute, the Bible would take a dim view of disabled, old, or handicapped people.

According to the Acton Institute, human multiplication is a blessing, not a curse and sites such Biblical verses as Genesis 1:28; 8:17; 9:1, 6-7; 12:2; 15:5; 17:1-6; 26:4, 24; Deuteronomy. 7:13-14, Psalms. 127:3-5; 128:1,3; Proverbs 14:28 as

evidence. In fact, sighting Leviticus: 26:22 and Deuteronomy: 28:62-63, the Acton Institute states that a decreasing a population was a curse god might bestow upon rebellious people.⁰⁵¹

Keep in mind here while digesting Action's position on population above that more people translates into more workers, soldiers, and consumers. More workers competing in the marketplace translates into lower wages, something that benefits the elite. More soldiers translate into more defense which also benefits the elite by protecting their holdings foreign or domestic. And consumers, of course, the more consumers the better. Not only do more consumers increase demand, competing against each other they drive up cost which again benefits the elite. And, just to make the point, the Bible's stance on population is to be fruitful and multiple, which just coincidentally benefits the elite as mentioned. Why would the Acton Institute want people to believe anything else?

Side Bar:

A serious question needs asked here. Because the Bible so serves the interests of the wealthy, why would the wealthy want anyone to believe anything else? Now here is the sticker. Are the wealthy capable of promoting an idea that serves their interest even if they themselves believe or even know that idea is false? Anyway, I had to ask.

The Acton Institute attempts to make the case that in many industrial nations the standard of living far surpasses that of undeveloped nations. Sewer treatment plants exist in developed nations compared to open drains in undeveloped nations. Developed nations use electricity, oil, and gas to heat their houses and cook whereas undeveloped nations use wood and dung --- which is all true, at least in the short run of human existence. But Acton goes on:

Some of the most desirable places to live in the world are also among the most densely populated. Manhattan, for instance, with its density of over 55,000 people per square mile, also has very high rents—a sure sign that plenty of people really want to live there, despite its high density.⁰⁵²

which is true again --- sort of assuming you have your near-sighted glasses on. But, suppose we put a impassible wall around Manhattan so nothing could get in. Could Manhattan support itself? Could it grow enough food to feed its population? Could it pump enough gas to keep its cars on the road? The short answer is "NO!" What if we took the population being spoken of in Manhattan and populated the rest of the nation to that level. Then what? Would the lifestyle of those currently in Manhattan enjoy extend to the rest of the nation? Where would the food to supply this population come from if the Midwest was nothing but skyscrapers? Would the nation remain sustainable? I doubt it and I will to why shortly.

Nicholas Eberstadt, quoted by Acton, claims that overpopulation is an empty word as overpopulation cannot be described consistently. The reason, according to Acton, overpopulation has been misidentified and not defined. While

not attempting an explanation, Acton attempts to correlate overpopulation to population expansion. Acton compares the population growth of Africa to frontier America pointing out that Frontier America's growth rate outpaced the current growth of Africa in some vain endeavor to make the point that Africa today is not overpopulated. Who after all, Acton asks, would make the claim that the American Frontier was overpopulated?

Eberstadt, mentioned above in the same article, asks "*What are the criteria by which to judge a country "overpopulated"?*" Good question. So OK, let's put a definition on the term "Overpopulation." Before doing so, however, I might mention that Acton Institute is another of those think tanks run on the investments from the Rightwing. Media Transparency has documented \$5,725,500 worth of investments from contributors like the Earhart Foundation, Roe Foundation, and the DeVos Foundation, as well as the son of former John Bircher Fred Koch, and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.⁰⁵³

Given that these contributors are also the main contributors to the Christian Right, should we be surprised that the Christian Right echoes that of Acton? For example, Probe Ministries, as does numerous other rightwing supported ministries, makes the claim world population is not a problem at all. Rich Milne writes in his "*World Population*" that "*world population is not the problem*" to hunger in the world, rather the problem of feeding the world rests on distribution and stable governments that allow economic opportunities. Unfortunately, according to Milne, the world lacks these types of governments and scapegoats the famines in African Nations as being the product of politics, Marxist governments, and civil wars.⁰⁵⁴

Another echo comes from the January 2003 issue of Citizen Magazine, a Focus on the Family publication. In "*The Myth of Too Many*" Michael Fumento denies the world may be over-populated by pointing to the growth rate around the world may be decreasing while at the same time grain crop production for example is increasing.

From 1981 to 1989, grain production per person increased by more than 5 percent. Since then, it's increased another 4 percent more per person. Yet we haven't had to plow under the face of the earth to get this extra food. In 2001, 304 million acres were used to grow the world's cereals, slightly less than in 1968 when Ehrlich's bombastic bomb book appeared and far less than the 330 million acres used in the peak year of 1991.

The figure that counts the most, however, is that calories available per person reached an all-time high of 2,800 by 1999, up from 2,371 in 1968. We are finally growing enough calories per person to keep the world's population well fed — if those calories were evenly distributed.⁰⁵⁵

In other words, according to Michael Fumento, the problem of over-population lies not in the numbers, but, like Rich Milne claims, in the distribution of goods. Again,

I might add, the money behind Focus on Family, also finds its source in the Rightwing Philanthropy.

So, what does the term “*Overpopulation*” really mean? First, consider a few different views to demonstrate the confusion, the first being the Wikipedia, the on-line free encyclopedia. While Wikipedia is not considered as a reliable source by academia, it touches many people so I will use it knowing its limitations. For the record, given its limitations, I happen to agree with the explanation given below short of the idea of an area being underpopulated. I do not agree that simply because an area exists because its resources out paces population makes that area underpopulated in need of humans.

Overpopulation is not a function of the number or density of the individuals, but rather the number of individuals compared to the resources they need to survive. In other words, it is a ratio: population over resources. If a given environment has a population of 10, but there is food and drinking water enough for only 9 people, then that environment is overpopulated, while if the population is 100 individuals but there are food and water enough for 200, then it is not overpopulated, but it is underpopulated.⁰⁵⁶

While attempting to fence in the meaning of overpopulation by relating population to resources, an admirable approach, the above definition leaves far too many gates open for the true meaning of overpopulation to escape. For example, if I have ten cattle in a pen about half the size of a football field but enough hay is shipped in to feed these ten cattle, is the pen overpopulated? By the description above, probably not if the food supply can be maintained. We are assuming all other considerations like water are not a problem.

But what about the damage the animals do to the pen? Ten cattle on a half of football field, defecating and urinating, trampling the ground. Might this waste and environmental degradation also be considered part of the population problem? And where did that hay come from? Might the removal of that hay from its original location present a shortage problem for whatever may be attempting to live where that hay came?

Paul and Anne Ehrlich answer: Yes. Paul, of course, is the author of the “*Population Bomb*” which has become a whipping post for those on the right, in fact, by the very authors and writings cited above. Paul, it seems, made a number of predictions that failed to materialize, hence those on the right have used those unfulfilled predictions to discredit Ehrlich’s entire premise that the world may be overpopulated; the old “*throw the baby out with the bathwater*” approach.

Time will be the ultimate judge of Ehrlich’s work however. Starvation as I noticed in Vietnam is a silent epidemic, one that may go on largely unnoticed even in the worst problem areas unless you know where to look. People are not proud of the fact they haven’t enough food to feed their children. From what I have seen, they do not put them on public display. Instead, they conceal them from public view.

At any rate, Paul and Anne have produced this far superior explanation of overpopulation than Wikipedia's.

The key to understanding overpopulation is not population density but the numbers of people in a given area relative to its resources and the capacity of the environment to sustain human activities. So when is an area over-populated? When its population creates a rapid depletion of renewable resources resulting in the loss of that environment's capacity to support that population, overpopulation has been achieved. In short, if the long-term carrying capacity of an area is clearly being degraded by its current human occupants, that area is overpopulated.⁰⁵⁷

To extrapolate, Ehrlich's definition includes the degradation of the environment. Whether or not the cattle are fed and can be maintained at their current level therefore is not the only consideration when it comes to talking about overpopulation using Ehrlich's approach. In the case of the penned cattle, regardless of how much food exists to feed these cattle, if the pen is trampled into bare ground, the pen is overpopulated. I'm going to spare the reader countless quotes and supporting documentation because in the end you, the reader, will either accept what is being pointed out here or they will not. The documentation is out there if you are interested and wish to know more on this subject, you can go get it. Caution is advised, however. Beware of your sources. Know the difference between science and propaganda.

Population: As I Understand it?

I'm going to attempt to place the topic of overpopulation in the simplest terms I can. To think of population and overpopulation, first it helps to understand the most stable environment in existence, past and present, is that environment that existed prior to civilization as we know it moved in. The vegetation of that past environment consisted of numerous native species which were highly adaptive to the climatic conditions that existed on the plains. If people existed here, they existed in small villages growing crops like maize, beans, squash for their own consumption. Some existed as hunter gatherers, gathering the wild vegetation and an occasional buffalo as it passed through.

The main source of energy into this system was solar which supplied the plants with the energy to convert carbon dioxide into sugars which would serve as stored energy for whatever came along to dine on them. While it is quite easy to see how early philosophers and theologians took this basic solar, plant, animal nutrient system as some planned event, Intelligent Design, I in no manner am attempting to suggest any intelligence is responsible for why the environment came to be as it is. Advantageous might be a better word.

Rather than seeing this as some grand supernatural design, Darwin's model of natural selection best explains how the environment developed. If a plant grew that was favored by animal A then animal A would eat the plant. If that plant

remains abundant, a well feed health population of Animal A would likely increase. Then came Animal B who likes to dine on Animal A. If Animal A's population increased, Animal B would find a good source of food and Animal B's population likewise would increase.

Animals eat what they like and if what they like is plentiful, their numbers will increase. Likewise, if some natural occurrence occurred such as a drought that Animal A's favorite plant could not survive at levels able to sustain Animal A's population, Animal A's population would decrease. The result would a chain reaction. Animal B would not have as many Animals A to eat so their numbers would also decrease. This is not the result of some intelligence. This is just how environments work and that is a hard thing for any preprogrammed religious mind to comprehend.

Since birth we are bombarded with the idea that for everything there is a purpose. The puppet masters and myth spinners have no trouble convincing people that something had to devise this plan. Something of intelligence, a creator like a watch maker, had to lay all this out. A Creationist might argue that watches do not just pop into existence. The watch had to be made by something, they assert. It had a beginning and will have an end. Furthermore, that watch had to be made for a purpose, otherwise, why create it? Religious writers use this watch maker's analogy all the time as evidence of god. Everything they reason requires a creator.

Well, that might work for the watch but what these Creationists always fail to mention is the material required to build that watch was there before the watch. The watch maker simply took that metal, plastic, and glass, formed it into different shapes and assembled it. The watch maker really did not create anything. He simply took what was and changed its form. To our knowledge, nothing comes from nothing including what was needed to create that watch, not to mention the watch maker. If nothing comes from nothing, where did he come from?

Anyway, under natural environments, barring some major cata-strophe such as a large meteor slamming into earth and disrupting climates worldwide, populations tend to remain more stable than not, existing within the range represented by good times and bad. Hence, when I think of population, I see population not so much in terms of numbers but in terms of energy. And not just any energy either? While other sources of life sustaining energies do exist, volcanic vents for example, for this discussion I will use only energy that is renewable and readily available to life on the American plains. That energy is solar.

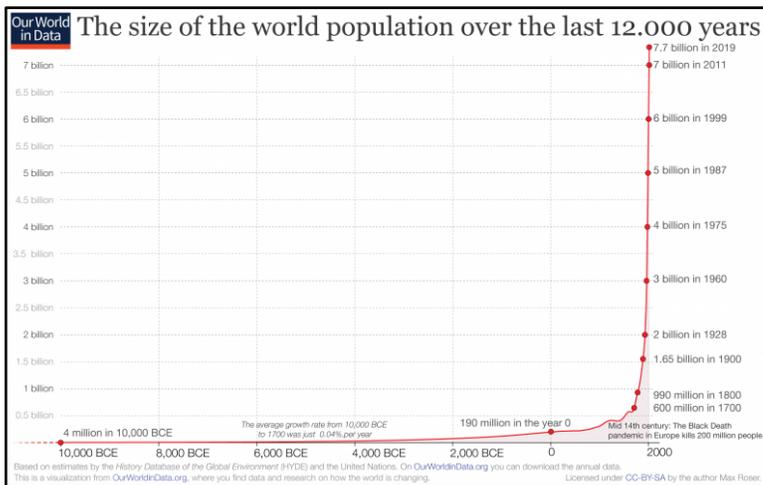
Where I begin to think in terms of overpopulation, overpopulation occurs when energy beyond that which is normally supplied via solar energy is required to maintain a population. This energy can come from various sources, for example food, fossil fuels, or in the case of modern agriculture, fertilizers. If anyone of these extra sources of energy is required to support the population which exists, that population could be considered overpopulated.

Populations can be achieved above what is possible to sustain them using only solar energy through management; "*stewardship*" as Christians refer to it. To maintain these elevated populations however requires an input of energy from some outside source. In terms of cattle, for example, to maintain a population above what normally could be sustained within a given environment using solar power only;

food would have to be imported from somewhere else. Too many cattle would quickly eat all the plants preferred by cattle leaving none (environmental degradation) for the future. At the same time, plants within that football field which cattle disliked would increase in numbers (increasers) assuming anything could survive the trampling and become the nuisance often referred to as weeds. Weeds are an indicator of an overpopulated environment.

Thought of in terms of human population, if North Dakota suddenly found itself dependent on the environment that existed here at the time those buffalo roamed free, say 1400 AD, before the soils were converted (stewardship applied) to cropland, could we as Dakotans maintain our current population? Quite plainly, the answer is No. Is North Dakota therefore overpopulated? If the current population within North Dakota would require more energy than the sun could provide and we had to rely on energy shipped in from somewhere else in the form of food or had to alter that environment, agriculture, to meet its needs, the answer is quite plainly, yes. And it should be noted that since Michael Fumento and Rich Milne consider the distribution of goods from an outside source to be the answer to starving African populations is nothing less than an admission those countries are indeed overpopulated.

Placing the earth in the same position, what population is not dependent on energy other than solar to maintain their current population? To find these populations would require treks into the few regions of earth were hunter gathers still live as they have for no doubt for thousands of years. Worth mention, an interesting observation that no doubt could be made by studying this population is that over the last thousand years that population likely remained largely relatively stable with no large increases or decreases in population. Large spikes in population, like what has happened in the world over the last few centuries, indicates the population of any given species is out of control.



Anyway, few, if any, civilized areas within the world today exist at a population level that could be maintained by solar power alone. All nations depend on imports or alternative sources of energy (coal, gas, irrigation, electricity). Should any

break down in that structure occur (climate change, a natural disaster, the disappearance of a natural resource do to over harvesting, or war) result in the cutoff of these imports, mass starvation would soon follow. Jared Diamond steps into this fray by attempting to give his estimate of the population level America could sustain had man decided to live on what the environment could supply (hunter-

gathers). Keep in mind, this is the population we would be looking at which could be maintained given only solar energy as an energy source.

If the Americas eventually came to hold hunter-gathers at an average population density of somewhat under one person per square mile (a high value for modern hunter-gathers), then the whole area of the Americas would have eventually have held about 10 million hunter-gathers.⁰⁵⁸

Ten million. Keep in mind here, Diamond is talking about the Americas which includes all of North, Central, and South America. Translated into the population that likely existed as hunter-gathers here in North Dakota, approximately 250 (miles long) X 350 (being miles wide and long) would equal a population somewhere in the range of 87,500 hunter-gathers --- a number which Diamond states would be a high estimate. Compare that to North Dakota's estimated population level for 2005-2025. That population is projected to reach 677,000 by 2005 and 729,000 by 2025. The population density in 2000 was 9.3 persons per sq mi, the fourth lowest in the nation.⁰⁵⁹ The 2000 figure of 9.3 people per square mile which would be nine times that estimated as a high density for hunter gathers by Diamond. Also notice, North Dakota's population density is fourth lowest in the United States, meaning that 46 states are above that.

A little off topic but significant to this discussion, Michael Fumento is listed as a Hudson Institute senior fellow on the web page featuring his article.⁰⁶⁰ The Discovery Institute coincidentally began as a branch of the Hudson Institute.⁰⁶¹ The Hudson Institute is another conservative think tank supported by --- guess who? Even more interesting Fumento's recently published book "*BioEvolution: How Biotechnology Is Changing Our World*" was published by Encounter Books, Encounter for Culture and Education, a tax-free publishing organization that has received over \$8,000,000 donations from rightwing foundations. The largest donations appear to be coming from the Lynde and Harry Bradley⁰⁶² which returns us full circle to the John Birch Society's influence. Encounter books is not some grass roots, ground up, publisher. Encounter books are published from the top down. In fact, it could be said encounter books is not a publisher at all, rather a propaganda mill for rightwing ideas and purposes.

North Dakota has existed under the umbrella of modern agriculture for a little more than a century. The environment created by modern agriculture is a monoculture making it very unstable and highly dependent on energy from outside its boundaries, oil, fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, to keep their crops viable. Should any one of these factors break down, so would agriculture and the population that depends upon it. Hence the issue of stability must be considered. How much soil can erode before it loses productively? How low can organic matter in the soil go before it begins to effect soil properties to the point where agriculture would be significantly reduced? How much can soil be compacted by driving heavy machinery over it before growing a crop on it ends up like trying to grow a crop on concrete? What if fertilizer becomes too expensive? What if some unknown plant virus arises fatal to wheat or corn?

We do not know nor am I going to venture a guess. I do know this, however, as a retired soil scientist; we are losing the soil and soil properties at a rate highly favorable to instability. Or reworded, it is highly unlikely that the current agriculture culture can be counted on to exist over the next ten thousand years as did the primeval environment that existed before it. North Dakota has been called the breadbasket of the world and is likely one of those sources of food Michael Fumento and Rich Milne believe must be shipped to Africa to sustain that population. As such, I must ask are we in North Dakota exporting our children's future? Just how much can we continue to ship to Africa before, like the cows in pen A, what is leaving our area begins to have a negative impact on us? Exactly how it will play out, I'll let time decide. I can say however that I am not optimistic about a positive outcome.

Empire Building: Religion's Reason to Promote Population Growth

Now back to religion and its negative consequences for the future of the planet. Having some idea what overpopulation consists of now, suppose we take a good look. It is no secret that most fundamental and a few more mainstream sects oppose the idea of family planning, sex education, abortion, and in many cases birth control of any kind.

The Catholic Church rightly teaches that the use of any form of contraception is intrinsically immoral, for it frustrates the marital act, which by its very nature is both love-giving (unitive) and life-giving (procreative). Thus one cannot deliberately frustrate the procreative aspect of the marital act through contraception or sterilization.⁰⁶³

The idea that "any form of contraception" is forbidden has cost the Catholic Church many parishioners or at the very least has created a divide in the Catholic faith. This has not escaped the eye of Protestant Fundamentalists who basically believe and state the same thing but are extremely careful about how they word it. Take, for example, Focus On The Family's wording.

From the outset, Dr. Dobson would emphasize as foundational his strict concurrence with the biblical teaching that every child is a blessing from God. The entire ministry of Focus on the Family has been grounded upon this truth. While affirming that human life begins with fertilization (the union of sperm and egg), his interpretation of Scripture leads him to believe that the prevention of fertilization is not morally wrong.⁰⁶⁴

which so far sounds like contraceptives are not completely prohibited by Focus on the Family as they are by the Catholic Church --- but now the "buts."

However, he would oppose any method of birth control that acts after fertilization and terminates a conceived human life by preventing its implantation in the womb. For example, the intrauterine device, or IUD, as it is commonly called, is thought to interfere with implantation of the fertilized egg, and, therefore, may terminate human life in its very early stages.⁰⁶⁵

Hmmmmmm! So much for an IUD or the morning after pill. The article then goes on to state

Birth control pills (also known as oral contraceptives, OCPs, or “the pill”) have become a focus of controversy because of concerns that they may occasionally terminate human life after fertilization⁰⁶⁶

Which Focus claims is a concern for Dobson. So he checks with his panel of doctors, the Physicians Resource Council (PRC) and lo and behold “*birth control pills which contain only the hormone progesterone do not reliably prevent ovulation*” which is true with Norplant also. These products may increase the “*chance of being ectopic which leads to the evidence that ‘these contraceptives act in some cases to disrupt the normal implantation of an early pregnancy’*” hence become “*problematic*” for anyone who believes that life begins at conception. As for the most common types of birth control pills, the “*combined*” oral contraceptives which contain both estrogen and progesterone, along with Depo-Provera, “*there is controversy as to whether they also bring about changes (primarily within the uterus) that could increase the likelihood of losing a fertilized egg if ovulation and conception should occur.*”⁰⁶⁷ Given statements of this nature and being concerned if god might see any problem that might develop with any of these contraceptives as murder, if I was a believer, I’d see taking birth control pills or using any other form of contraceptive as problematic at the very least.

So why is this important? The Christian world view of population resides in outdated theories that existed largely to benefit kings and nobility (and I’ll get to that). For now it’s important to realize if the world is already overpopulated, the people of the world should be taking measures to reduce population, not falling back on Bronze Age decrees designed for kingdom building. The Bible resists the idea of reducing productivity.

It is amazing that if asked most Christians do not what the first order given by god to man is. So let me enlighten them. The very first order given man by god (god being the ruling class) is

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth

Genesis 1:28

And so obsessed was the Lord (being a king or the noble class of people at the time the Bible was written) with human reproduction that when Onan’s father, Judah, sent Onan in unto thy brother’s wife (as the Bible puts it), Onan, feeling a bit guilty

about possibly impregnating his brother's wife, spilled his seed (sperm) on the ground. The idea of wasting seed so angered the Lord, the Lord slew Onan.

And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.

Genesis 38:8-10

In fact, the Bible makes any unproductive sex act punishable by death.

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

Leviticus 20:13

And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

Leviticus 20:15

Reproduction in the Bible was very serious business just as is it in many Fascist nations. Keep in mind; homosexuals were one of the first groups targeted for elimination by Nazi Germany. Only days after assuming power in 1933, Hitler banned all homosexual and lesbian originations, raiding places they gathered, burnt thousands of volumes of records of the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, and exiled its director, Magnus Hirschfeld.⁰⁶⁸ Therefore, if the current rise in the religious right, funded by quasi-fascists, should call for the elimination of homosexuals, we should not be surprised.

Return to our model for a moment that man, namely the ruling class, wrote the Bible with their own interests, being wealth and power, in mind. Then ask yourself, does the first human behavior god seemed concerned about, namely reproduction, best fit the interests of an all-powerful god or the then ruling class? God had the capability to produce as many people as he wanted at any time out of thin air did he not? I mean he could create entire universes at his whim. Mythology holds he did have unlimited powers, right? So, what would be so hard about creating as many people as he needed at any time? A better question yet would be why if this god was all powerful would he need men at all?

Men, to the ruling class however, represented strength via the working class or military. To create more men, the ruling class would have to rely on the much slower human reproduction system. Reproduction therefore was paramount to ruling classes. The more people you had control over, the more powerful you were.

The larger your armies were the safer you were assuming you were not one of the soldiers being hacked apart by swords.

To the ruling class, those writing the Bible, numbers would be your number one concern if you were one of these ancient rulers obsessed with power. A book of the Bible is even named Numbers of which the first few chapters are concerned with nothing but numbering its people to determine how many

From twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war

Numbers 1: take your pick

But what has population to do with wealthy corporate interests? Numbers still represent strength, namely economic strength. For every child unborn, another box of pampers goes unneeded, another set of Nikes remains unfilled, and another X gallons of gas remains unburned. Numbers, being volume, translates into money. But do not take my word for it. Ask Ronald McDonald or any WalMart outlet manager whose business depends on volume. I am sure they would agree. Numbers are good. It therefore does not surprise me at all that Fundamental Christianity, funded by corporate money, opposes anything that might interfere with human population growth.

The Bible is rich in verses promoting population growth which is exactly what would be expected if the privileged and wealthy were the authors.

Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Psalms 127:3-5

It is also not surprising that Christianity, in this case evangelical Christianity, being overall the largest recipients of corporate money denies that population is a problem at all.

While some environmental concerns are well founded and serious, others are without foundation or greatly exaggerated. Some well-founded concerns focus on human health problems in the developing world arising from inadequate sanitation, widespread use of primitive biomass fuels like wood and dung, and primitive agricultural, industrial, and commercial practices; distorted resource consumption patterns driven by perverse economic incentives; and improper disposal of nuclear and other hazardous wastes in nations lacking adequate regulatory and legal safe-guards. Some unfounded or undue concerns include fears of destructive manmade global warming, overpopulation, and rampant species loss.⁰⁶⁹

Countering the preceding claim, in terms of life on earth as we understand it, no single issue is more important to the conservation of earth's resources than the control of human population. Every environmental problem from global warming to the mass extinction of earth's species (*problems the Cornwall Declaration claims are no problem*) to pollution is based directly in human population growth. Every person born adds stress upon the environment, many of which are already stressed to their breaking points.

Observe the human population growth rate curve on page 258. Notice what happens with the introduction of civilization. Population growth at no time prior to civilization looks anything like the growth rate going on since civilization changed the course of nature. Then came the industrial revolution and modern medicine and since it's been accelerating at an exponential rate. In less than a couple generations, more people will be added to the world's population, assuming this rate continues, than the total number of people that has ever existed on this planet prior to that time.

Remember, any species population under natural conditions (the most stable) tends to remain constant over time. In terms of human population, that is the flat growth rate shown before civilization. Humans at that time were largely hunter gatherers, living off what the land immediately surrounding them could provide. They were living off the energy the sun provided. Only after humans found methods of importing energy from sources other than solar did the population accelerate to exponential proportions.

At the same time, the total number of species living on Earth are decreasing at a rate paralleled only by a few mass extinctions of the past. The dinosaurs' mass extinction, for example, was thought to have been caused by an asteroid smashing into the Yucatan Peninsula. Today the rain forests are disappearing, being cut down for the timber they provide, and the land needed for agriculture. Fish are disappearing from our oceans, captured in long nets tons at a time. All forms of wildlife, other than a few managed species or those whose population expands as humans create an acceptable environment for them; rodents for example, are in serious decline, victims of habitat loss due to urban expansion and development. What was thriving prairies for thousands of years is now nothing but grain crops in the summer and bare soil in the winter. Our pen, like the plants under the hooves of cattle in their half a football field pen, is being tramped into the ground. And humans, rather than asteroids, are the current cause of the disaster. Adding more humans can only hope to make the matter worst.

The Environment: Where was god before Green was Fashionable

As a student of environmental science and biology, I feel it safe to say that the main driving force of the environmental movement is the future. I did not enter this field with "me" in mind. I entered this field with my child's generation in mind. What will I leave my children and their children in terms of the pleasures I have grown to love such as wildlife, the quiet of forests interrupted only by the drumming of rough grouse, being able to catch and eat fish without the fear of being poisoned,

clean air and water, native environments, and the isolation and privacy that can only be achieved today in protected areas such as the boundary Water Canoe Area of northern Minnesota. My mission was not to exploit these things for my profit. My mission was to save them for future generations even if to do so would require sacrifice on my part.

Christianity's eye however is not on the future, nor has it ever been. The whole idea of Christianity is to escape this horrible mortal earthly life in the pursuit of an immortal life in Heaven. Few (if any) verses exist directly expressing any concern for welfare of the earth and/or the conservation its resources. Plenty of verses exist, however, that direct Christians away from the earth.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
Colossus 3:2

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passed away, but he that doeth the will of God abided forever.

I John 2:15-17

Christians are constantly reminded in the Bible to not worry about the future, something required for a sound environmental policy

Take therefore no thought for the morrow
Matthew 6:34

Because the world is ending soon. Well, that's what they say. But, they have been saying that for centuries. In fact, Christ, according to legend, predicted that his very own generation would see Earth's end:

Verily I say unto you. This generation (that is his generation) shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.
Matthew 24:34

Of course, like many other prophecies in the Bible, it did not happen. To avoid recognizing this prophecy of Christ's that did not come true, Christians would point out that first there would have to be false prophets (Matthew 24:5&11), wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6), and famines and pestilence (Matthew 24:7) before the final generation would come to be.

The problem with that however is there always has been false prophets, wars and rumors of wars, famines, and pestilence. To predict there would be false prophets, wars and rumors of wars, famines, and pestilence in the future was about as prophetic as saying the sun shall rise in the morning. No all-knowing, future seeing god or prophet was needed to make such a prediction. Yet, this prediction has been used over and over throughout out the centuries (and still is) to convert

the fearful by scaring them into believing that their generation was the generation that Christ was referring to.

People today may be better educated but no less gullible. To not be misled, however, the “This Generation” that Christ was referring to was his own. All those things were supposed to happen during his generation, not some two thousand years plus. Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27 are direct about which generation Christ was talking about.

Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Mark 9:1 repeated Luke 9:27

Notice the “*some standing that shall not taste death*” meaning that some alive during Christ’s lifetime would still be alive when god would return in all his glory. Those, however, who supposedly were standing there and heard those words, are now all dead and have been for about 2000 years. And throughout the ages, this “*Repent for the world is coming to end now*” has been a threat religion has used to bring the fearful and gullible to their knees ever since. It was used by Paul

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

And Peter who wrote to his people (not ours) But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer

I Peter 4:7

The same threat “*Repent-for the end is soon*” was extensively used by John Wesley, perhaps the greatest religious revivalist ever. It has been used numerous times by members Jehovah’s Witness much to their embarrassment as they sat to wait the end only to witness the end never came. And it’s still being used today as propaganda such as the “***Left Behind***” book series. I wonder how many generations must pass before people start to suspect that just maybe they may be getting duped.

In recent years, the good news is several Christian groups have come out in support of environmental efforts. For example, the Sierra Club has begun a “*Faith Partners*” program that is meeting mixed reviews in its comment section of its website. While comments range from pure hostility like that posted by one member at 0447 January 29, 2008.

“I will be severing my ties with Sierra Club after learning of this "Faith Based" nonsense. I will not support an organization, however well intentioned, that supports organized religion”⁰⁷⁰

to outright religious babble as posted at 1205 January 24, 2008

“God created Science also. He gave us dominion over the earth, we are our brother's keeper. God's steward. Our responsibility is to spread the "Good" News. He will return and save us from destroying ourselves, including the planet. A new earth. How he does it is his business. Ours is to spread the gospel. We will drink poison, with no effect. Handle the snakes out there, without being bitten.”⁰⁷¹

I reluctantly take a wait and see attitude. Surely, I can understand the hostility environmental groups, myself having been called everything from a pagan to a servant of Satan, feel toward religion. The environmental movers and shakers however could use some help from the fringes, and I am encouraged to see statements such as that made by the World Council of Church's Working Group on Climate Change, 2005.

“Climate change is much more than an issue of environmental preservation. Insofar as human-induced, it is a profoundly moral and spiritual problem. To persist in the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly. It is no less than suicidal, jeopardizing the diversity of the very earth that we inhabit, enjoy and share. Moreover, climate change constitutes a matter of social and economic justice. For those who will most directly and severely be affected by climate change will be the poorer and more vulnerable nations (what Christian Scriptures refer to as our “neighbour”) as well as the younger and future generations (the world of our children, and of our children's children).”⁰⁷²

And not only does the document come with statements such as the one above, it comes with suggestions on what each individual can do to help the environmental cause in section IV, with the surprising heading: “**Practical Actions, Because Preaching isn't Enough?**” It calls for educating congregations, incorporating environmentalism into worship services, host film festivals, examining your own carbon and use and then attempt to reduce it, drive less fuel consuming auto-mobiles, using compact fluorescent lights, use energy efficient appliances, plant trees and protect forests around the world, and finally “Reduce! Reuse! Recycle!”⁰⁷³

While I'm not sure all of that will be enough to stop the approaching environmental catastrophe, it surely does better than counting on a mythological being to redo creation. I did not see, however, any reference to population reduction in this document, nothing on promoting contraceptives or promoting Planned Parenthood.

The rest of the article was largely concerned with the welfare of the poor which is another topic and I'll get to that. In fairness, the evangelicals have published "*On the Care of Creation, An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation.*" I have read this document. In it Evangelicals admit that humans, because to the fall of man, has failed in his stewardship of Creation resulting in the pollution of God's Creation. Nothing however is mentioned as to what is needed to reverse this trend other than passing out scriptural lip service that is more concerned with advancing religion and filling its pews than understanding and cleansing the environment.

The earthly result of human sin has been perverted stewardship, a patchwork of garden and wasteland in which the waste is increasing. "There is not faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land...Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away" (Hosea 4:1,3). Thus, one consequence of our misuse of the earth is an unjust denial of God's created bounty to other human beings, both now and in the future.⁰⁷⁴

A perverted stewardship: I wonder that means? How does a perverted stewardship differ from just plain stewardship? Stewardship implies man should control nature --- when in fact it is nature that controls man however much man may deny it.

In Jesus Christ believers are forgiven, transformed and brought into God's kingdom. "*If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation*" II Corinthians 5:17. The presence of the kingdom of God is marked not only by renewed fellowship with God, but also by renewed harmony and justice between fellowship with God, but also by renewed harmony and justice between people, and renewed harmony and justice between people and the rest of the created world. "*You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands*" (Isaiah 55:12)⁰⁷⁵

I came across an article entitled "**Environmental Degradation and Evangelicals**" by Paul Weyrich, one of the Right's most prominent figures, referred to as "*the Godfather of the Religious Right.*" Paul Weyrich, worth mention, is also the founder of the Heritage Foundation with money provided by Joseph Coors (a member of the JBS). In this November 2005 article, Weyrich displays distress over Richard Cask's, the Vice President for Government Affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), desire to have the NAE take a stance on environmental issues including Global Warming by calling for mandatory controls on greenhouse gases.⁰⁷⁶ According to Weyrich, the "*NAE will be out of step with many leaders in the religious community if it supports mandatory reductions in greenhouse emissions.*"⁰⁷⁷

"Really" I thought hoping the NAE would give me reason to doubt my assumption that the NAE is largely only a messenger service for corporate America.

If the NAE dines largely at corporate America's feeding tray, I would expect the NAE to lick the hand that feeds them. If corporate America is against any meaningful reduction in Green-house gases, I would not expect the NAE to take any different stand. Like father (the provider) so is the child (the beneficiary). At any rate, receiving contradictory opinions about the NEA stand on greenhouse gases, I wrote the NAE and asked the question if they ever proposed to issue a statement on global warming. What I received back was a letter from Heather H Gonzales denying that the NEA ever issued or intended to issue a statement on Global Warming.⁰⁷⁸

While Heather's response was amazingly enough, I remembered the JBS and its blue print for change; "*The Blue Book*" Welch writes under "*Covert Activities*" instructing his disciples to "*organize fronts - little fronts, big fronts, temporary fronts, permanent fronts, all kinds of fronts*" to "*bring more of the uninformed and previously indifferent (those opposed to the John Birch Society's agenda) but patriotic Americans into the fight, and can help our cause in many ways.*"⁰⁷⁹

It just so happened in the same month and year as Paul Weyrich's article came out that a new rightwing Christian group exploded onto the scene, the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (ISA). The ISA is made up of Rightwing Evangelicals whose Board of Advisors include such names Rev D James Kennedy, Richard Neuhaus, and Robert Sirico to name a few.⁰⁸⁰ More importantly these people are known to be large recipients of Rightwing moneys stemming from the likes of the Bradley Foundation, Castle Rock Foundation (Coors), and Koch Foundations. For example, the now late James Kennedy received \$8,900,000 for his Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church,⁰⁸¹ \$1,242,000 for his Coral Ridge Ministries,⁰⁸² and \$2,263,000 for his Evangelism Explosion International⁰⁸³ for a total of \$12,405,000 which is enough to money to make one loyal to any cause.

Richard Neuhaus is a recipient of \$9,307,500 largely from Castle Rock and Bradley Foundation.⁰⁸⁴ Robert Sirico, president of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion, is the recipient of \$5,725,500 largely from various Koch Foundations, Richard DeVos, and the Bradley Foundation.⁰⁸⁵ On July 25th 2006, the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance came off with 113 evangelicals and 19 non-evangelicals in opposition to a previously Environment statement by the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI) which claimed global warming was an result of human activities. For their effort, six of these signers were awarded \$2,320,000 in investments from ExxonMobil over a period of three years.⁰⁸⁶ The result was the ISA denounced any assertions made by Richard Cizik.

Later the ISA, joined with the likes of James Dobson (another major recipient of donations from Rightwing Foundations) along with numerous other conservative evangelicals' calling for the resignation of Richard Cizik.⁰⁸⁷ Like the virus it was, the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (ISA) mutated again; this time into the Cornwall Alliance.⁰⁸⁸ And before leaving here, I should like quote from the Cornwall Alliance. Their view on Global Warming is something much more like we would expect coming from corporations and wealthy individuals with their eyes on the money. These corporations would stand to profit substantially by providing these proposed services around the world.

It is immoral and harmful to Earth's poorest citizens to deny them the benefits of abundant reliable, affordable electricity and other forms of energy (for homes, cars, airplanes, and factories) merely because it is produced by using fossil fuels. Foreseeable forms of renewable energy (other than hydroelectric) won't provide reliable, affordable electricity at least for many years, in amounts that are adequate and necessary for modern hospitals, factories, homes, communities and nations. To tell poor families, communities, and nations that they can't develop hydroelectric and nuclear energy either, because some people disapprove of them, is unconscionable.⁰⁸⁹

My guess concerning who would benefit the most is twofold. First, the people benefiting the most from developing these poor areas of the world, for example Mexico, where an influx of American's Corporations has occurred will not be the poor. Instead, it will be CEOs and stockholders who remain State Side who will truly reap the benefits. Next, the wages that will be provided these poor workers will not be enough to get allow them to buy homes, cars, or airplanes either. I'm not going to go through the trouble of finding numerous references to support those points.

Now in fairness to the term Evangelical, not all Evangelicals endorse the policies of those receiving large contributions from corporations and America's Rightwing elite. Other Evangelicals have made a statement about Climate Change called the "*Statement of the Evangelical Climate Initiative.*" Under "*Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action*" humans have been recognized as responsible for climate change and that the need for change is real and requires urgent action.

This document again, however, stresses the poor of world (a plea on emotions of course) will be the most affected, another obvious religious prophecy. The poor are always the group most affected by anything that lowers production of food or fiber, drives up prices, and floods areas where only the poor are forced to live. "*Christian Moral Convictions*" demands evangelicals to respond to the Climate Change. "*Governments, businesses, churches, and individuals all have a role to play in addressing climate change-;starting now*"⁰⁹⁰ states the document and was signed such notable evangelicals as Leith Anderson, Interim President of the NEA and Rick Warren, author of "*The Purpose Driven Life*" All total the signatures amounted to 113 people, many of whom are residents of colleges and universities and world relief agencies.⁰⁹¹ I did not check all the signers, only about fifteen, but amazingly none of those fifteen have been documented by Media Transparency as receiving any donations from the Rightwing Foundations that I have been following nor do I know of any. That does not mean however they are without guilt. It simply means I have not found any direct link.

At any rate, I am not going to turn this into a biology lesson rather I will simply make a very basic statement on the environment. If you the reader are to understand what I might have to say about the environment, it is, as mentioned

numerous times before, extremely important that you understand my version of the word “*Environment*.”

When I speak of the environment, I am not speaking of my house, backyard, town, state, politics, economics, and concern for the poor or any number of those things religious writers drag into the discussion. I am rather speaking of that natural environment that existed here in North America largely up until Christian Europeans came onto its shores. That pre-European environment was remarkably stable, existing in time for tens of thousands of years or more. While Native Americans did convert portions of America to cropland and likely altered the environment by causing the extinction of America’s large mammals, the mammoths, Shasta ground sloth, and Huntington’s Mountain goats around 11,000 BC, that environment made up of hunter-gathers represented the environment to which I am referring. Had the environment remained as it was then, with no influx of Europeans, that environment would have likely existed for thousands of years into future. But that environment is now largely gone, replaced by land stewardship --- a management system designed largely to increase the population of one species, man. Time will tell its duration.

Global warming, being but one issue, facing humans today, will require action, not prayers, if any hopeful outcome is to be achieved. It was mythology that got us into our current environmental state. It will not be mythology that will solve it. To solve the current environment mess will require sound science (another stolen word by the political right. See “*The Republican War on Science*” by Chris Mooney for clarification) and research. It will require education (another stolen word by the political right so be careful whose definition of education you use). It will require deciding to error on the side of caution regardless of the economic consequences for doing so.

On issues such as global warming we cannot afford the luxury of being wrong. If the climate can no longer support life on earth as we know it, we are gone --- god or not god. To correct global warming and numerous other global environmental problems will require willful sacrifice on a grand scale. We are not talking about a few people replacing plastic bags with cloth bags at checkout counters. We are talking about outlawing plastic containers all together and suffering the results of whatever doing so might mean both at an economical and personal convenience level. Personal politics will have to take the back seat to what science is telling us must be done. And most of all, it will require cooperation, people with a common goal in mind, working together to provide for each other in some manner that does not favor one group over the other as the current political system does.

I do of course recognize the idealism in these statements. Like a pin dropped in a hurricane, I doubt enough will hear these words, not to say do anything about them, to make any real difference. I feel as if humanity is the buffalo herd delighted that they are out pacing their pursuers (the Native Americas) as they charge to the cliff. Now and then, a buffalo may look back and question the mentality of the herd --- but too late. The herd pushes him, whether he wishes to turn back or not, ever forward to the herd’s demise at the buffalo jump.

**War:
Kill Em All --- Let god Sort Em out**

The Lord is a man of war: The Lord is my name.
Exodus 15:3

So now we have gone full circle. From the quasi-fascists prior to and during World War II though the cold war, we have followed their money into the collection plates of the Religious Right who repay these propagandists with carefully selected scriptures that support private property, the right to be wealthy, and Domination.

Domination. Hardly is the word out and struggle is thought of. To dominate something, you need to be more powerful than it. You need the means to control whatever it is that is challenging you. If that which is challenging you just happens to be the environment, bring in the caterpillars and backhoes and change it. If what is challenging you is reason, stifle it. If it is another nation, you will need bigger missiles, bigger bombs, and a larger army.

Isn't bigger missiles and bombs exactly what Forrester lobbied for --- you know the guy --- the president of Dillon, Read and Company, a company that profited from both World Wars. A man who profits from arms production, Forrester, the secretary of the Navy. How covenant. But it does not stop there. How about Cheney, former CEO of Halliburton making millions since the Iraq War began? How about George H Walker? George was one of the main profiteers of the sale of war materials and the grandfather of George H W Bush, not to mention George W? I suppose it's all by coincidence that when these people end up ruling our nation; veterans like me find themselves in war.

My guess is even though George W Bush never made to Vietnam, some even say he deserted (see "**Deserter, Bush's War on Military Families, Veteran's, and his Past**" by Ian Williams) his take on the war was much more than the \$55 a month I received while in combat and the four to five hundred dollars that I later received from the state of North Dakota as bonus pay. And I doubt any of that has changed with the current Iraq War. I'll bet more money was made by Cheney; the very man who had a huge hand in created the war, last year than any service man in Iraq. I bet Cheney, Bush, and the defense stockholders who supported the Bush-Cheney campaign have made more money off that war than all the military soldiers involved in it combined (but of course I have no way to prove to that). It's just a hunch.

So how can the Bible justify war and boost these Rightwing Fascist defense profits? First off it should be noted that the "*Good Book*" speaks far more of war than it does for peace. Indeed, while the Bible contains portions expressing concern for his fellow man, I stress fellow men because strangers, according to Old Testament, are to be avoided (and still are), if not eliminated, particularly the males as already mentioned! "*Oh, but that's the Old Testament*" Christians might attempt to claim, "*Jesus changed all that!*" But did he? Try these verses from the Prince of Peace.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword

Matthew 10:34

When I think of fighting and dying, as a veteran who has witnessed many die, the verses that come to my mind are:

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. John 15:13

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:10 repeated Luke 12:4

For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:28 repeated Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24

Consider for a moment that some tyrant was able to instill those words into his troops and convince them that he, that tyrant, was the recipient of Christ's favor, that he was serving the interests of Christ against a godless enemy. Then think how instilling these words into his troops might serve his interests. It has happened regularly throughout history.

I remember these verses were often parroted by my Christian comrades in battle. Many felt they were offering their lives for Jesus' sake, fighting for god against the Atheistic Communists. These very verses reappear on memorials and on pictures of died and dying soldiers everywhere. None of these verses make the loss of my friends any less painful or console me in any manner.

Ernest L Fortin, in his introduction of "*Augustine, Political Writings*" shines some light on religion and war stating that it is an error to believe that Christianity breeds contempt for military valor. War, Fortin states, is "JUST" when it benefits "*one's fellow human beings*." The problem with those lines is who is "*one's fellow human beings*"? In America, a fellow could be any American. In England a fellow might mean anyone British. To a Christian a fellow could be any host of combinations. A fellow may mean anyone Catholic. A fellow to a protestant might mean any Christian not Catholic. A fellow may mean anyone who proclaims Christ as the Messiah, or anyone born again. Under Nazi rule, a fellow could mean, and likely did, anyone Aryan, a Caucasian of non-Jewish descent. In short, "*one's fellow human beings*" should not be taken to mean humanity as whole. In the hands of a slick a politician or minister, "*one's fellow human beings*," can mean any one group of people to the exclusion of all others. Without ever changing "*one's fellow human beings*," war against any opposing group can be justified. In fact, "*one's fellow human beings*," may be, and has been, used to declare war against "*one's fellow human beings*."

Lincoln acknowledged religion's double edge sword in his second inaugural address.

“On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil-war. All dreaded it — all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war — seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came. One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern half part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. “Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said f[our] three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether.”⁰⁹²

War, by Ernest L Fortin standards, is “JUST” when it is used to prevent violence, revenge, hatred, and the lust for power. The decision to wage war, by Fortin standards, of course is that of the kings or rulers against whom the violence, revenge, and hatred might very well be directed for obvious reasons such as unfair taxation or extreme authoritarianism. Those at the top often do not much care about the problems of those on the bottom. Usually about all those at top care about those on the bottom is how those at the bottom can be used to maintain the status quo. Following is Fortin’s Christian view of the simple soldier:

As for the simple soldier, his duty is to obey orders. He himself is not answerable for the crimes that may be committed in cases where it is unclear whether the orders are just or not.⁰⁹³

Put as simply as I can, this verse has been rewritten by the military to, “*Ours is not to question why. Ours is but to do or die.*” Here all this time I thought the military just made that up.

Currently our leaders in the White House in my opinion are nothing but a bunch of chicken hawks. They, so long as the weapons used are being created in their factories, have no problem standing up to fight anyone as long it’s someone else or someone else’s children doing the actual fighting and dying. These folks have profited highly over the years from war and investing in war materials. War for them translates in money, vintage wines, yachts, limousines, and mansions. For me and others like me, war translated into dead and maimed friends and memories that have haunted many of us ever since. When I think of most those currently in the White House and given their military history, both Bush and Cheney evaded Vietnam, I think of the recent movie, “*Shrek*” and the scrupulous Lord Farquaad. Standing on his podium, Lord Farquaad, in a plea to his subjects for volunteers to retrieve Princess Fiona so that he might marry her and hence become a true king, state, “*Some of you may die, but that is a sacrifice I am willing to make*” Hearing that for the first time, I had to reverse the DVD and listen again. I thought I heard in Farquaad’s speech a Texan twang.

Of those in the White House, George W Bush, has been credited by Pat Robertson as the new leader of the Religious Right.⁰⁹⁴ Under the umbrella of the Bush administration, religion and government are becoming increasingly intertwined with troublesome consequences. For example, Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman sights from Bill Bright’s book, “*Come Help Change Our World*,” a plan to use military personal as a tool for advancing evangelicalism throughout out the world. “*The United States has military installations throughout the world*” quotes Conway and Siegelman from Bright’s book “*which allow a trained man or woman to become an overseas missionary for the Lord at the expense of the government.*”⁰⁹⁵

Not all of Bill Bright’s back door tricks and aspirations are as benign as simply spreading god’s word either. As already mentioned, when “*Here’s Life*” the mother of the “*I Found It*” propaganda campaign, got off the ground by a \$10,000,000 donation by Bunker Hunt, one of the John Birch’s largest contributors. Bright enlisted a former president of the McDonnell Douglas Astronautics, a major

military contractor, to head up the “*task force on Technology*.”⁰⁹⁶ Should we therefore be surprised when Bill Bright cosigned the “*Land Letter of 2002*” to President Bush, dated October 3, 2002, claiming Bush’s 2003 invasion of Iraq as a “*Just War*”? To George W Bush, the Land letter states:

We are extremely grateful that we have a president who has learned the costly lessons of the twentieth century and who is determined to lead America and the world to a far different and better future in the twenty first century. As you told the world’s leaders at the U.N.: “*We must choose between a world of fear and a world of progress. We cannot stand by and do nothing while dangers gather. We must stand up for our security, and for the permanent rights and hopes of mankind. By heritage and by choice, the United States of America will make that stand.*” Mr. President, we make that stand with you.⁰⁹⁷

This document was signed by the president of Ethics & Religious Liberty Convention, Southern Baptist Convention, Richard Land, the chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries, Chuck Colson, Founder and Chairman of the Campus Crusade for Christ, Bill Bright, the president of the Coral Ridge Ministries Media, James Kennedy, and president of American Association of Christian Schools, Carl D Herbster⁰⁹⁸ all of whom have benefited immensely from investments made by quasi-fascist John Birch Society members and their close associates. Keep in mind, many of these rightwing investors are huge recipients of war contracts and hence, since those same rightwing investors contribute to these religious leaders, it should be no surprise when these religious leaders endorse any war that these rightwing investors stand to make money from.

Religion has always been encouraged by the military, but nothing compared to today. Today there are spin offs of such groups as the Campus Crusade like Campus Crusade for Christ Military Ministry doling out Rapid Deployment Kits (RDK) for young men and women right out of boot camp heading for deployment. In this RDK, these new soldiers will receive their own pocket-sized camouflaged Bible, daily devotionals, and an evangelistic handbook.⁰⁹⁹ The Officers’ Christian Fellowship exists to advance of god’s kingdom within the military. These Christian Officers claim they are out to exercise biblical leadership to raise a godly military.¹⁰⁰ I can about guess a few of the most quoted verses of the Bible by those of the military. Verses that order obedience to one’s superiors, kings, nations, or presidents, verses that encourage suffering both physically and mentally as suffering is what one does in war, verses that minimize the importance of life, and verses that profess that something beyond this world exists as a reward for valor. Those would be expected to be the verses most quoted.

All those verses of course greatly benefit the military by diminishing the value of human life. The last thing the military would want is a disobedient soldier who would not be willing to suffer and put his life on the line for the greater good, and what could be a greater good than god himself. These were verses commonly recited to me in Vietnam that I remember:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Hebrews 13:17

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme.

1Peter 2:13

Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and or the praise of them that do well.

1Peter 2:14

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

1Peter 2:18

These verses come from the Officer's Christian Fellowship site:

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:11-17 ¹⁰¹

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

Romans 14:7-9¹⁰²

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.

Philippians 1:29¹⁰³

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:12-13¹⁰⁴

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Peter 2:20-21¹⁰⁵

The following words appear on the front page of the December 2007 issue of the Officer's Christian Fellowship newsletter, "*Connected*". The newsletter is delivered free to the members of the OCF and other unspecified military agencies.

Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have to contend. Grant us fair weather for battle. Graciously harken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory... and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen.¹⁰⁶

Paging through the website I came across a speech given by Brigadier General Donald C. Wurster, USAF entitled "*Centurions in the Conflict*" in which General Wurster is claimed to have "*clearly describe spiritual warfare in contemporary term.*"

We face a formidable enemy, who is defeated in eternity, but who continues to plague the human race. For, as Paul says, "*Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*"

At the strategic level, our battle is won. The first skirmish for the human race was in the Garden of Eden, victory was assured at Calvary, and we are just waiting for the final mop-up at Armageddon.¹⁰⁷

All these quotes could, of course, be termed reactionary on my part and reduced in severity by calling such quotes merely metaphors and analogies. But then --- we do not really know for sure who the forces of evil are do we? If history is an indication, the forces of evil are anyone who disagrees with a minister, a president, or stands against a nation. And in fact, these evil forces have even

changed from time to time. For example, Ronald Reagan places the forces of evil as the Communists.

Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness (under Communism) - pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world.¹⁰⁸

Whereas George W Bush places the title of evil on any nation that might pose a threat to the United States real or imagined.

Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens.

Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror.

The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens -- leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections -- then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.¹⁰⁹

In these cases, the word "Evil" takes on extreme significance given that the war we are currently waging against Iraq is one of these nations. And then there is the word of "Armageddon" mentioned above by General Wurster. Many Christians (elite/politicians/generals?) on the right believe, or would like the rest of us to believe, that the current developments in the Middle East, particularly events that have occurred since Israel's Six Year War, are leading mankind into Armageddon. Not only do they profess to believe this (or would have us believe this) but they are looking forward to Armageddon to hasten the return of Jesus.

The Pew Forum states this belief is especially strong among white evangelical Protestants. Seventy two percent of white evangelical Protestants believe Israel was given to the Jews by god with that figure rising to seventy seven percent among those claiming to be the most religious. Furthermore, three times as

many white evangelicals (63%) as do mainline Christians believe this is a fulfillment of Jesus' second coming as outlined in Bible prophesy.¹¹⁰

In short, they see this war inevitable and can't wait for it to happen so they can all go home to that glorious land in the sky --- where who knows how many virgins are waiting for them. It is important to note that this very group of white evangelical Protestants includes the current president of the United States, George W Bush as well as General Wurster, not to mention General William "Jerry" Boykin, an outspoken former Delta Force officer made famous for a botched attempt at freeing the hostages in Iran and Black Hawk Down.

Boykin has stated that "*our leadership is placed there by God*" and that god placed Bush in the White House.¹¹¹ Speaking of a battle against a Muslim warlord in Somalia, Boykin said "*I knew my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his was an idol.*" According to Boykin, "*the army of God, in the house of God, kingdom of God have been raised for such a time as this,*" and called his enemy, Satan.¹¹² Attempts to call for Boykin's resignation failed and although President Bush spoke out against Boykin's remarks, Boykin was punished by being promoted to the new Deputy Under-secretary of Defense for Intelligence.¹¹³

Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman as early as 1982 expressed concern about religion becoming a part of the military's decision-making process. In an interview with Flo Conway and Siegelman titled Captain X, Captain X states that most fundamentalists he knows within the Air Force refer to their decisions as "*God's Will.*"¹¹⁴ I read "*Holy Terror*" back when it was first published and this interview with Captain X did not stand out as anything alarming to me then. Religion, I thought, was always a part of the military. I had heard similar statements back as far as Vietnam but really thought nothing of them.

Well --- that was then. This is now. I see Conway and Siegelman's interview with Captain X in more prophetic terms today. Christianity and the military are merging and from a historic point of view that is not good news given all the wars fought in Jesus and Mohammad's names. Surely Conway and Siegelman's insight needs commended as today the United States stands poised to embark on a new crusade to the holy land.

To coincide with the 60th Anniversary of the United States Air Force, an Evangelical Rally was held at Stone Mountain, Georgia in May of 2007. Hosting this event was a group calling itself the Task Force Patriot USA whose website proclaims, "*Christ is our Commander and Chief,*"¹¹⁵ a metaphor that can go two ways in meaning, either of which is dodgy. Assuming one believes in god, a jealous god at that, lowering god's status to that of merely a Commander in Chief would seem to me to be an outright blaspheme to god (assuming of course god exists).

On the other hand, if attempting to raise the current status of our present-day Commander in Chief to that a god or even an appointee of or spokesman for god (god placed Bush in the White House; according to Boykin) is a mistake that many societies, large or small, throughout history have often attempted and have always (not sometimes) lived to regret. Germany made claims that Hitler was the messiah, Christ on earth, during Hitler's regime. My hope is the people of this

democracy have more intelligence than to accept that propaganda. But again, I am not optimistic.

So --- history I guess teaches people nothing when it comes to religion. Once again, the religious are ready to march off into battle for some vain religious purpose which exists only within their twisted state of mind. Should somehow mankind survive this saber rattling, as did they during the Crusades, I suspect they would look back on a war with the Moslem world, should one occur, and talk about how the religious people of our time had it all wrong, just as we do when speaking of the crusades. Once again, the religious of the world are willing to kill off millions of people for some mythological god.

Whether or not many die however will not matter much to those investing in arms sales. It rarely has before. The more bodies pile up, the more the cash register rings. I doubt therefore dead bodies will matter much in the future to those standing behind the checkout booth. I doubt it will matter much too many industrialists if thousands of children are murdered if they are being murdered with the weapons having those industries' logos stamped on them.

As for most Americans earning their wages working the armament mills and plants, likely the issue that will matter most to them will be job security. Got'ta build them bombs. America's economy has for some time been a war economy but in recent times it is increasing with each passing the day. And those leading the charge are the same people who have the most to gain from a war and the least to lose.

Side Note:

Having written this a few decades ago, I cannot help but think of the National Rifle Association (NRA) today. Our children are dying in classrooms and the only concern that the NRA appears to have is for the right of killer to carry a gun.

The Use of Intimidation and Fear: Woe to unproductive Fig Trees

But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Luke 19:27

Are these the words of a "Prince of Peace? I think not. And while Christians constantly attempt to portray their deity, Jesus (assuming there ever was one) as a gentle, forgiving, loving, free of sin, gracious individual, the Bible hints in parts that Jesus was anything but gentle, forgiving, loving, and free of sin. For example:

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

Matthew 21:12

Jesus had no special regard for his own family and mother as demonstrated by these verses.

While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Matthew 12:46-50

If any self-appointed messiah did anything similar today, they would be seen as arrogant and disrespectful. Jesus was not the family man Christianity has attempted to play him up to be.

As for being a nice guy, Jesus chastised a fig tree for simply for not having any fruit for him to eat. Had anyone else preformed such an act, it would have likely been viewed as a fit of rage.

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

Matthew 21:18-19.

It makes me wonder what I am reading when I read often quoted Biblical Stories verses such as Jesus feeding the masses with two fish and five loaves of bread

And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

Matthew 14:17-21

Assuming this event is not simply another myth, are we actually reading of a miracle --- or a testament of fear? Imagine sitting there, hungry, when this figure, many would like you to believe was god on earth, appeared before you. Having heard this person has thrown out such intimidating statement as "*slay mine enemies before my eyes,*" and knowing all these people worship him, how many of those people sitting there after being offered so little as a smell of fish would dare stand

up and say “*Hey, I’m still hungry damn it! I want more!*” Even at a picnic among friends, those whose hunger was greater than what the picnic basket could hold would be viewed as rude by the others if he made such a statement. In fact, most people still hungry, if asked if they had enough, would likely say “*I’m OK.*” And that would be not even considering the intimidation a person might feel risking angering an apparent Jesuitical god known to shrivel up trees that do not provide him with fruit.

Saul, now, he’s another matter. Nothing divine about him. Saul was known as a tyrannical power-hungry anti-Christian bent on imprisoning and slaughtering as many the “*disciples of the Lord,*” as he could up until his conversion to Paul and allegedly wrote most the New Testament.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Acts8:3-4

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Acts9:1-2

As the story goes, Saul is later converted to Christianity by a flash of light. But I must ask, since when does it matter whether a person is Christian or not have anything to do with how he treats people of other beliefs? History reminds us many so called Christian rulers have been the most tyrannical, merciless, oppressors ever known to exist, burning at the stake and torturing people who disagreed with them, and slaughtering whole populations of people of other faiths. How is it I ask that a person known to be a tyrant before his conversion is not capable of being a tyrant after his conversion? Should I suddenly now think, after Saul’s conversion Paul would be vastly different to people which he opposed? Should I now believe that Paul was not capable of dishonest deeds --- for example lying to heighten his own importance?

And as he (Saul) journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into

Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Acts 9:3-9

Assuming this Biblical version of events, as it came from the undisputed truth of the Bible, to be the correct, Paul, once Saul, later lies which is about the only explanation that can be proposed if the integrity of the Bible is to be maintained. Written in the first person, Paul gives his own version of what happened the day of his conversion on the way to Damascus.

And it came to pass, that, as I (Saul) made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Acts 22:6-9

The Bible can tell you what Paul said (Acts 22:6-9) without contradicting itself (Acts 9:3-9). It simply means what Paul reported was incorrect. In either event, one or the other verse is not true. But which? Take your pick. Are you going to believe the Bible or Paul? "The Bible" you say --- but in that is a problem. You see, Paul, a known fraud if you claim to believe the Bible's version, went on to write most of the New Testament. If Paul lied or simply erred, what's to say Paul did not lie or error as he wrote the rest of the New Testament?

Also worth mention, the Bible's version states those with him all heard the voice but Paul's version states only he did. Did he say this to make himself seem like the only person who hears Jesus? That would give him an importance no one else would possess, a person in direct communication with God. I'm just asking of course because in the end if the New Testament is all myth, which there exists good reason to think so, it really does not matter.

But assuming the story of Saul to be true, as Christians do, while we are about Christians not always being nice guys, suppose I cite another story often quoted. What is the following story really telling us about the Apostles of which Saul, a known feared tyrant and fraud, became? From Acts 4:33-Acts 5:11

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the

country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

I've heard several takes on these verses, one coming from Carl McIntire who called these verses a failed attempt at socialism¹¹⁶ but is it possible that what Paul, and the rest of the Apostles for that matter, saw in Christianity was a method to enrich and empower themselves? If people could be convinced to give up all they owned and were willing place it at other's feet, might it be that whose feet Paul wished those people would place all their belongings at would be his own? And might it be that "Love" or "Devotion" was not the reason that people were giving up all they own? Instead, is it possible that "Fear" entailed these people to give up all they owned? Should we assume that those who chose to follow words like "*slay them before me*" to be gentle people? Is what we read in Acts 4:33-Act 5:11 people falling dead out of fear? If not, why should a great fear have fallen upon the members of the church? Fear what? A loving, forgiving, god?

I shudder at the words of other early Christians, Augustine for example. While I'm not entirely sure to what Augustine is addressing with these words (works well for the fate of soldiers) his words in my mind trumpeted little regard for human life:

Many Christians were killed, and many destroyed in hid-eous ways. If this is difficult to bear; it is nevertheless common to all who have been born into this life. This I know: no one has died who would not have died eventually....Hence, how they are to die ought not be a concern to those who necessarily will die, by rather to what place they well be compelled to go when they die.¹¹⁷

I can only imagine how many marched off to their deaths muttering those or like words.

I'm not going to bore the reader with all the authoritative horrific atrocities that Christianity has bestowed upon humanity. I think most people are aware of the years that Christianity shared power with their political allies. That era was called the Dark Ages which brought with witch hunts, the slaughter of millions of people of different faiths, and imprisonments for crimes such reporting what was plainly observable to anyone who dared tell another what he saw if what he saw did not conform to church dogma. Why anyone other than perhaps a tyrant in the position of power would want to return to those good old days is beyond me.

I would have hated to bag and tag the numbers of those slain because of Luke 19:27, another disturbing verse with a violent history.

And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Luke 14:23

If not murdered, thousands of people were tortured because of the order "*Compel them to come in.*" If religion really taught Love and Kindness as Christianity would like to claim, how is it so many fled Europe to come to America with nothing more than what they could carry out to escape not just religion but Christianity in particular? And while we are on the subject, how is it that the most war-torn nations of the world are also the most religious? I cannot help but think of the Middle East as I write where three of the largest religions in the world compete for the same space. If religion brings peace on earth - good will toward man, why isn't it working right in the Holy Land?

The Rich and the Poor: You reap what You sow

Let's restate my premise that the Bible was written by the privileged class for the benefit of the privileged class. As such, we'd expect to numerous references that god ordained the wealthy and granted the rich authority over the poor. Try these verses:

The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringth low, and lifteth up.

I Samuel 2:7

But thou shalt remember the Lord the God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant with he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:18

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of

God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Romans 13:1-2

The rich rule over the poor

Prov 22:7

This just mentions a few. To name them all would be a book in itself. Indirect references place blame for those who have not on those who have not. Obviously, the poor are lacking something and therefore they had it coming, frequently for not being faithful.

The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

Proverbs 10:3-4

The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul; but the belly of the wicked shall want.

Proverbs 13:25

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

II Corinthians 9:6

And then there are those verses that sneak in the back door with the message that somehow, the poor have not done what it takes to win god's favor or are guilty of some infraction such as not "Following the Word" or "Seeking" or "Asking" exactly right. Here are a few examples of blaming the victim for his own plight.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8

In this case the poor probably did not "Ask" or "Knock" exactly right.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 15: 7

Here it could be said, the poor did not "Abide in Christ or his words"

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that that Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

John 14:13-14

Here, the poor probably did not “Ask in Christ’s name.”

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Matthew 21:22

Here the poor probably did not “Pray believing”

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye man consume it upon our lusts.

James 4:3

or they “Asked amiss”

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hearth us:

I John 5:14

And here, whoever asked probably didn’t “Ask according to his will (whatever his will is?)”. In the end, it all works out to be the same conclusion, the poor are receiving “ALL” that they are entitled to. For whatever reason, they simply did not measure up to god’s conditions.

Well, that was god. But what would Jesus do? Well, we can only guess. But we do know what he did not do assuming he existed, and the Bible is correct.

There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

John 12:2-8

What everyone, mostly Christians, seem to miss here was Jesus (assuming he was anything but myth) was someone who could have done something about the poor far beyond selling some ointment and giving the money to the poor. Being god according to legend, he could have created whatever the poor needed to elevate them above poverty. I mean, being capable of creating the universe out of nothing, he surely could have provided a comfortable existence for the needy. But being the loving god he was, he chose not to. To do so must not have figured into his plan. Instead, he chose to prop up the rich while at the same time condemn the poor:

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:28-30

Not a far stretch from here is the so called “*Prosperity Gospel*” preached by such television ministers as Kenneth Copeland and Joel Osteen. Their message: god wants you to prosper. In Osteen’s case, CBS reported on 60 minutes that Osteen preaches that god is a loving and forgiving god who will reward believers with health, wealth and happiness.¹¹⁸ Osteen states:

“Your future is filled with marked moments of blessing, increase, and promotion. God has already ordained before the foundation of the world, the right people, the right opportunity.”¹¹⁹

But here we are back at that word “predetermined” that Welch’s disciples want these ministers shouting to the rafters. So, suppose I turn the same coin over. On the other side of that same coin is those who find themselves in poverty were not “the right people.” Left to interpretation, any logical thinking mind should be able to take such reasoning to this logical conclusion. Leaving it unsaid, if god ordained the wealthy and powerful, it naturally follows that he also ordained poverty. And my guess is that those preaching this so called “Prosperity Gospel” are aware of that and imply, without ever saying a single word, the poor are poor because they have it coming. They would rarely say that, however. But every now and then it slips out even from the most careful of hucksters. From “*The Secret Kingdom*” by Pat Robert-son, pg 75

I am convinced that if a person is continuously in sickness, poverty, or other physical and mental straits, then he is missing the truths of the kingdom.

And so it goes. The Bible is the perfect justification for the wealth of the few at the expense of many.

Women Know Thou Place: Home Barefoot and Pregnant

One characteristics of fascism is rampant sexism. A woman's place under fascism is at home with the children, the more children, the better. If the Bible was written by men, with men's interests in mind, it follows that women should be viewed differently than men, and indeed women are. Man was created in the image of god, not woman. Woman was created out of Man's rib (Genesis: 2:21-25). Woman committed the "Original Sin" and thus the "Fall of Man" for which women were given the punishment of childbirth.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Genesis: 3:16

Because of a woman and the temptation, she laid on man, man was driven from Eden, forced to work for his survival, and in the end, sentenced to death.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis: 3:17-19

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis 3:22-24

Men are referred to as the "*Sons of God*" whereas Women are referred to as the "*Daughters of men*" (Genesis: 6:2), not exactly an equality. God, the same as he did for the animals (Genesis: 2:18-19), brought woman to Man for naming (Genesis: 2:21-23). Women, are also listed in the Bible right along with man's other possessions:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, Nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is the neighbour's

Exodus 20:17

or given to men as the spoils of war. Believe it or not, I did hear in Vietnam the following verse quoted as justification for molesting village women.

Have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two.

Judges 5:30

Women, like any other possession, may also be bought and sold.

Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine, So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley.

Hosea 3:1-2

Ruth was bought

And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the land of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place; ye are witnesses this day.

Ruth 4:9-10

as well as Michal who was purchased by David with 200 Philistines' foreskins. Imagine how aghast Christians might be if this story, the killing and cutting the foreskins off 200 penises, came from any other book other than the Bible. While I was taught the story of David and Goliath never was the story of David hacking off 200 foreskins mentioned in Sunday school. Could it be Christians were censoring the Good Book?

Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and David bought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he (David) might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

I Samuel 18:27

This idea of male ownership of females plays out well when the Bible considers who should receive restitution for crimes such as rape.

If a man a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her (forces), and lie with her (rapes), and they are found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

Deuteronomy: 22:28-29

Nowhere in the Bible is rape considered a crime against women. Rather rape is seen by the Bible as a crime against another man's property. In the case of Deuteronomy 22, since the damsel was not betrothed (owned or spoken for by another male), restitution is made to the father, not the woman. In the case of a man taking advantage of another man's wife.

And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid (owned), betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, even a ram for a trespass offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he hath done: and the sin which he hath done shall be forgiven him.

Leviticus 19:20-22:

or used as a punishment for rulers, in this case David.

Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the sun.

II Sam 12:11

Also, it may be worth mention, men could have sex with as many women as he wished (see above as women could be raped, passed around as spoils of war, not to mention kept in harems for rulers like King Rehoboam who had 11 wives and 60 concubines (2 Chronicles 11:21)). Women, on the other hand, could have only one sexual partner, which she may be forced to share with numerous other women, except perhaps for a few exceptions. Women not virgins upon marriage could be put to death.

But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of the father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: So shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

Deuteronomy 22:20-21

Throughout the Bible, women are instructed to bow down to the whims of men.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, the Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

1 Timothy 2:11-14

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

I Corinthians 11:33-9

This whole mentality of women as expressed by the Bible, that they should be owned, that they should be virgins until some male owns them, that men should not covet another's wife the same way as no man should covet any other man's property, that men rule women, that women exist for the pleasure of men, is exactly what would be expected if men wrote the Bible, not a god, and did so with their own interests in mind. Purely, the Biblical view of women is nothing more than the male ego made Biblical. Worth mention, there is a reason why women have not been allowed into the clergy until recent times. It is biblical.

Health Care: Who needs Insurance?"

What do you suppose Corporate America forks out each year for the health care of its workers? Hundreds of millions of dollars, I'd guess conservatively, just in insurance plans. This would not even include the multimillion-dollar law suits many companies have endured such as the tobacco industry to offset the states' cost in covering smoking related illnesses. So! In terms of health care alone, how much would Corporate America have to gain if suddenly it was reviled that health care was not needed? What if, god really could heal you? Imagine the savings to Corporate America if James 5:14-15 were true.

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the

Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, their sins, they shall be forgiven.

We would therefore expect faith healing to be a driving point of corporate funded religions, Take, for example, Pat Robertson's 700 Club created by a three million contribution by some unnamed electronics company. Then ask yourself, does Pat Robertson stress god's Healing power as we'd suspect he might? Not a program goes by that he does not.

But this goes far beyond Pat Robertson. Remember Oral Roberts from the late fifties and early sixties television? The healing Power of god was his whole show. I used to believe that he made his money ripping off thousands of little old ladies that were conned into believing god had healed them, or could heal them. It never occurred to me that much of that money to air his show may have come from donations of businessmen such as Lee Braxton:

Lee Braxton is Vice-President of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International; Mayor of Whiteville, North Carolina; chairman of the Board of First National Bank; President of Braxton Enterprises; Vice-President Radio Station WENC; President Citizens Auto Finance Company; Owner Columbus Finance Company; Vice-President Braxton-Warren Company; President Braxton Motor Sales, Inc. President Braxton Auto Parts, Inc.; Chairman Public Library Board; Chairman Columbus County Development Committee; Member Legislative Committee, "North Carolina League of Municipalities; Member Executive Committee, 279th District Rotary International; Director Whiteville Merchants Association and Chamber of Commerce; Director North Carolina Merchants Association National; but in the case of faith healing, Director Oral Roberts Coast-to-Coast Radio Broadcast;¹²⁰

Braxton, prior to the 1950's, was the most important person in Oral Roberts' success, responsible for the construction of Oral Roberts' headquarters and the formation of Roberts' "*Healing Waters*" radio network.¹²¹ In 1949 Braxton became the director of the Healing Waters broadcast.¹²² Braxton of course is the link between Oral Roberts and the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship International.

A few other businessmen worth mention are John Wellons, F.G. McClintock, and John H Williams. John Wellons was a man whose money was actively sought out numerous times by Roberts.¹²³ McClintock, chairman of board of the First National Bank and Trust Company, and Williams, along with McClintock two of the wealthiest men in Tulsa, became the primary players in a local fund raising committee for building Oral's special events center.¹²⁴ Worth noting, David E Harrell Jr, the author of "*Oral Robert, An American Life*" makes the point that while small donations, those little old ladies sitting at home check book in hand, were important, most of Oral's special events center was a product of large donations.¹²⁵ Harrell also points out that the Oral Roberts Evangelist Association was legally under the control of an independent board made of Oral, his wife Evelyn and four other successful businessmen.¹²⁶ Businessmen? HMMMMMM!

While it would be premature to suggest that the Oral Roberts' Ministry was near the conspiracy I associate to the John Birch Society, a few things are evident. First, businessmen were supporting faith healing and either these businessmen were conned out of their money, which I doubt, or were making a profit off the gullible which is more probable. But even more contemptuous, what if those businessmen's intention was to con the faithful into throwing away their medical coverage those businessmen paid for as a benefit to their employees? From a businessman's point of view, if the faithful did throw away their company supplied medical coverage that would translate into millions of dollars in savings.

The question that needs asked is did Oral's faith healing heal anyone? According to Mike Beaudoin reporting for the Tallahassee Democrat, April 18, 1959, Oral himself states that he cannot prove to everyone's satisfaction if anyone ever was healed.¹²⁷ Everyone is a loaded word of course. Exactly who is everyone? It also places a reviewer such as I in the negative --- meaning that somehow it becomes my task to prove no one was healed. By stating in that manner, Oral skillfully evaded the question.

In the field of science, if I make a claim, it is not the task of someone else to prove me false. I can make up a lie in a moment that may take years, thousands of dollars, or may even be impossible to disprove. It is therefore on me to prove I am correct. So let me put it like this. Since Oral claims his healing worked, can Oral prove anyone, not a few, not many, not all, but anyone was in fact healed? Were those approaching the stage planted? Were any ever examined before and after walking up to Robert's stage to verify whether the person healed suffered from the affliction Roberts claimed he healed? Testimony was the only thing offered as evidence of healing¹²⁸ and testimony is unacceptable evidence in a science investigation. People will say anything for a variety of different reasons.

Knowing that, medical science does not rely on testimony. It uses things like placebos. To know if a given medication has any effect on those taking it, you have to establish how many would have improved had nothing been given. The herbal medicine industry is awash in unclaimed unproven medical remedies, yet millions stand ready to testify they work. To that, I'd say "Show me the data!"

While it cannot be proven that Robert's healing powers cured anyone, what we do know is in several cases it did not. To site a few examples of those who went unhealed, Jonas Rider died within the very tent that this healing was supposedly happening.¹²⁹ Mary Ida Buddington Vonderscher died twelve hours after the airing of her healing testimony.¹³⁰ In May 1959 in Fayetteville NC, sitting in the tent waiting for the service to begin, a three-year-old girl died in her parents' arms¹³¹ as well as Wanda Beach who threw away her insulin believing she was healed. Wanda soon thereafter died in a Detroit hospital.¹³²

More people likely died as a direct result of the Oral Roberts show than were saved. Because Oral Robert's was a nationwide television show, there clearly is no way to estimate the number of people who died the same way as Wanda Beach believing they were healed holding their hands on their television set. There is no way to estimate the number of people who put off seeking medical attention until it was too late for medical science to do anything. We simply do not know.

In the fundamental arena, members are often reminded of god's healing powers. Christian Book Stores are stacked with books on god's healing powers. In fact, I have one right here beside my computer. Entitled "*Scripture Keys for Kingdom Living*" under "*Skin disease-cancer*" it tells of three people cured using faith, chanting, and repeating the verses Proverbs 4:22-24 and Isaiah 35:5 and 32:3. To the delight of the first woman, the cancers simply began dropping off her skin and body the book claims. The second woman named Donna was cured of a staph infection which simply dried up. The third woman whose family was suffering from impetigo claimed the scabs just began to pop off everyone in the family. The booklet then goes on to list in its 142 pages scriptures to cure every affliction suffered by man.¹³³ I also noticed that the booklet never listed any of those named cured so that a follow up might be done. Do these people even exist? I also noticed no documented evidence was added to prove the claimant, if they did exist, actually suffered from any abnormality to begin with.

Some fundamental sects even exist that consider health insurance a testimony of disbelief and call on their members to drop their insurance, to quit seeking out medical assistance, and to turn entirely to god's Healing Powers entirely. One such sect, the Faith Assembly of Wilmot Indiana under Rev Hobart Freeman (deceased), made the news after over a hundred of its members of its church died shunning treatable medical ailments and refusing to take prescribed medicine such as insulin.¹³⁴ Also see the books "*We Let Our Son Die, A Parents Search for Truth*" by Larry Parker and Don Turner.

Then there is the story of Rita and Doug Swan, former members of Christian Science. After watching her son die at the hands of Christian Science practitioners, Rita Swan went on to form CHILD Inc (Children's Healthcare Is a Legal Duty) in 1983, a nonprofit organization to protect children from "*religion-based medical neglect*."¹³⁵ While some people learn from their mistakes, Rita for example, others end up crawling back to the same snake that bit them, in this case the Parkers.

Does god heal those who believe and pray for his healing powers? I suppose it depends on your version of god and what healing means. If you are willing to accept that you were healed by god because the illness simply ran its course, the flu for example, then I suspect you'd believe that god can heal you and nothing I will be able to say will sway your view. I will tell you this, however. There is nothing to suggest that the overall health of believers is any better than non-believers or that praying over a patient cures them any more than a little optimism, caring, or hope. I'll also add that in those sects that rely totally on prayer or exist in areas where prayer is all they have for medical assistance; the life expectancy is substantially lower than where people have access to modern medical attention. These facts need not be accepted on "*Faith*." They can be easily verified.

I also know that it has been shown "*Faith Healers*" are not above using deceptive methods such as illusion used by magicians and lies to con their flock into believing some miracle happened. For example, James Randi, a magician who can recognize tricks of deception and a consultant to the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion, examined faith healer W.V. Grant. Randi following up on Grant's healing record reviewed a video tape of a man who claimed to have received a new heart. The man claimed he had been seen by six doctors,

whose names were mentioned, who scheduled him to hospital X for surgery. Following up that story, it was found that none of the six doctors mentioned existed anywhere in the state and hospital X had no record of the patient by that man's name scheduled for surgery. Furthermore, the hospital did not even perform the procedure the man claimed he was scheduled to receive.¹³⁶

“*Calling out*” is a method (trick) used by many magicians in magic shows for the sake of entertainment. “*Calling out*” however is also a deceptive means used by faith healers to fleece their flocks. Standing on stage the magician (faith healer) calls out the name of a person, who when asked if he has ever met this magician (faith healer) says no. Other information about the person called is revealed, for example the make of his car or hometown, or any information that will get the person called out and those observing to wonder “*Gee – How did this guy know that?*” In the case of a faith healer, usually something like the name of the person's doctor and what illness the person is suffering from is added. All this information, the minister claims, comes directly from god.

Examining Peter Popoff, a faith healer that claims he gains his knowledge about his potential victim (Popoff would call this person a patient) comes from god, Popoff was found to receive his information at 39.17 Megahertz via a radio transmitter plugged in his ear. His wife, it turns out, carries a handbag with a microphone. She then greets people as they come asking them questions like who they were and why they came. All of what was being said of course was relayed directly to Popoff.¹³⁷

The Reverend W.V. Grant “*Calls Out*” also but is not nearly as sophisticated as Popoff. Grant, himself or via his assistants, gathers his inform by interviewing potential victims before the service. He also studies what information was volunteered via “*special offering cards*” submitted before the service by the very people Grant might “*Call Out.*” Grant was discovered also using something as simple as hand jesters by one of his associates from the back of the auditorium who had information on the person being “*Called out.*”¹³⁸

To test the idea that Popoff or other faith healers are somehow in touch with god and whether god informs these faith healers who to call, Don Henvick, using false names and costumes appeared before faith healers, Popoff included, five different times. Once he even went so far as dressing up as a lady named Bernice Manicott. Bernice could only get around in a wheelchair. I am happy to report in all five cases; Don was healed.¹³⁹ But now the glitch. If it was god who was telling these faith healers what name to call out and what these people suffered from, how is it an all knowing god got Don's name or condition wrong?

And then there is the matter of people who in the past fleeced their flocks who turned informant. Hugh Marjoe Ross Gortner, alas Marjoe, is one such preacher. Deemed a miracle child, Marjoe began preaching at the age of four, likely before he could read, goaded on by his mother whose correctional methods, in the words of Hugh, included smothering with a pillow or being held under water should Hugh not perform as instructed. Mother, according to Hugh, did not want to leave any marks on his skin as she knew Hugh would be on stage in front of an audience.¹⁴⁰ Although stating as a young childhood preacher that he stood by his belief that the Bible was the word of god, in later years Hugh recanted, stating that

at no time did he ever believe in god.¹⁴¹ By the time Hugh was sixteen years old he estimates his earnings were in the area of three million dollars that his father absconded, none of which did Hugh received.

In later years, Hugh had a change of heart. To expose the tricks and methods used to fool people into giving away their money, Hugh assembled a film crew to follow him around to revival meetings. Unbeknown to anyone, Hugh had the film crew follow him backstage where he counted the money and explained how he and other evangelists work the crowd for money. The result was the documentary, "Marjoe", an Academy Award winner documentary of 1982¹⁴² which as of November 1st, 2008, was available on Amazon.

Because of the importance of this health topic, I wish to detour from purely religious faith healing and investigate the past to a doctor named Dr John R Brinkley. Known as the goat gland doctor, Brinkley implanted young goat testicles into men for a variety of ailments, but mainly to enhance male performance in the act of sex. The sexual appetites and assertiveness of Billy goats was after all well known. Hence, it occurred to Brinkley to build a radio station to advertise his apparent success to the masses. Playing off the egos of men and their fears of not being able to perform to the satisfaction of their women counterparts, Brinkley advertised the implantation of goat glands. Brinkley also mixed in religion and music. Made the most famous by Brinkley's station was the Carter Family.¹⁴³ In time Brinkley built the largest radio empire ever assembled and had people streaming to his office for goat glands implants from all over the world. Offer people hope and many will come no matter absurd the claim.

Four important elements come into play here, the gullibility of humans, broadcasting, testimonials, and worse perhaps of all, Corruption in government. The gullibility factor, I trust, is evident unless anybody reading Pope Brock's book "Charlatan, America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the MAN who Pursued Him, and the Age of Flimflam" sees some advantage to having goat glands implanted in them. Before laughing however, keep in mind, people with the same mental capacities as yourself once thought goat glands could heal about any sexual problem that ailed them.

Quackery is not a thing of the past as numerous cures for about anything that ails you can still be purchased from a wide verity of sources. Magnets, healing herbs, detoxifiers, healing scriptures, hypnosis, chiropractors, walking bare footed on red hot coals, comets, astronomers, all exist out there ready to heal you and take your money. One, I have become aware of just recently comes from Wonder Laboratories called "Horny Goat Weed" of all things.¹⁴⁴ I do not know if "Horny Goat Weed" measures up to its claims. I can say however I have not seen the evidence that "Horny Goat Weed" lives up to its claims since scientific evidence does not allow testimony. Further-more, given Dr Brinkley, the word "Goat" sounds rather suspect.

"Testimonials" Pope Brock writes has always been the alpha and omega of non-established medicine (which would include faith healing). Unfortunately, testimonials are easy obtained and always screened to heighten a charlatan's claims. I doubt, for example, after receiving a Brinkley implant, the fact John Homback took ill in St Louis and was found to be in the early stages of tetanus was ever aired

on Brinkley's broadcasts. Despite gangrenous incisions on his scrotum, Brock writes Homback insisted through clenched teeth that Brinkley had done "wonderful" work" Three hours later Homback died.¹⁴⁵

Brinkley lost his license to practice medicine in Kansas in 1930. To debunk Brinkley's claim that no patient ever died while in his care, "a fistful" of death certificates signed by Brinkley himself were added into evidence. Forty-two people were known among the dead as the result of Brinkley's or his staff's hands, several whom were perfectly healthy entering the clinic. "If in 1930" Brock asks "that didn't make Brinkley a murderer in the eyes of the law" wasn't that a scandal in itself?¹⁴⁶ What was Brinkley's response to losing his license. He ran for governor of Kansas three days later.¹⁴⁷ Barely losing his gubernatorial race, Brinkley relocated to Mexico constructing a million-watt radio station, the most powerful radio station in the world, and continued his work. Performing at his microphone were legendary country stars like Red Foley, Gene Autry, Jimmie Rodgers, the Pickard Family, and Slim Rinehart. Brinkley was hailed as the person who popularized hillbilly music in the late 40s and early 50s.¹⁴⁸ Although Brinkley was finally brought down via civil suits, not until 1964, after Brinkley's death, did any quack go to jail for the wrongful death of a patient.¹⁴⁹

Labor: Whistle while You Work

According to Biblical Mythology, because of the Fall of Man, man must labor if he is to eat. Well --- at least if you belong to the working class. Those of nobility prided themselves in the fact they were not required to work which they saw as an insult to their social status. But for the workers:

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

2 Thessalonians 3:10

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men please, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.

Colossians 3:22-23 Repeated Ephesians 6:5-6

never complaining

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with a malice.

Ephesians 4:29-31

or talking back:

Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again
Titus 2:9

Workers are reminded over and over to submit to their masters, even if they are atrocious and unreasonable

Servants, be subject to your master with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.
1 Peter 2: 18-21

If struck, they are told to turn the other cheek

Ye have heard that it hath been said. And eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
Matthew 5:38-39

for apparently, it's OK by god's standards that workers suffer.

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps
1 Peter 2:19-21

In fact, taken to the extreme, masters may slowly beat their servants to death, if the beating is spaced out over a period a time.

And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.
Exodus 21:20-21

Very little if any instructions are given to the ruling class, however, concerning fair treatment of their workers. Occasionally a verse will give a brief reference to this;

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.
1 Colossians 4:1

but nothing is spelled out as to what is “just” or “equal” means. One must also have to wonder if the authors of the Bible created something of technical error by stating that the punishment for the Fall of Man was work. Whereas the Bible attempts to make it clear that a man’s reward depends on his labor,

Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

1 Corinthians 3:8

work does not seem to apply to the ruling class who throughout the Bible are made Kings and Rulers for being nothing more than being who they are. This we would expect also if as this writing assumes the Bible was written by these Kings and Rulers for the benefit of Kings and Rulers. It is important to keep in mind, as such, that when they speak of god, who they are really referring to are themselves. It is not god saying “Repent” and “Submit.” The Kings and Rulers are.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made out of thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Genesis 17:1-6

Bear in mind when reading the verse above, it was not god giving Abraham all those things. If Abraham wrote the Bible, those things were showered upon himself. That assumes however Abraham even existed. If he did not, then whoever wrote those words stood in the position of benefiting from them, for example, being one of the kings that reportedly came from Abraham, a claim any king could make.

It’s hard to imagine that kings and rulers reward, being their position, was a result of their own labor. For the most part, they were just given the throne, inheriting it from their fathers or had it handed to them by god (being their ancestors). Their reward was largely the labor of others as reflected in Exodus 21:21 above that states “*for he is his money*” he being, of course, his servants and the rest of the working class.

**Be Content with your Wages:
However Paltry:**

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.... For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows

1 Timothy 6:1, 7-8, 10

“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their masters worthy of all honour” is good I suppose if you happen to one of the masters. *“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content”* meaning be content with only necessities of life. Don’t demand money. After all, you cannot take money with you. But then comes one of the most important, one of thee most often quoted verses in the Bible:

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows

1 Timothy 6:10

You’d think at first glance that those being warned about lusting after money would be the rich, but if you do, you’re not listening to any TV preachers or rightwing capitalists! It is the *“Love of Money”* that is the root of all evil, the lusting after money, the preoccupation of money, that is the *“Root of all Evil.”* Money is not the problem. Wanting it is.

And which class of people do you suppose is most guilty of being preoccupied with money? Not the wealthy according to many Fundamentalist Preachers. In fact, the rich, according too many Fundamentalist Preachers (and Christian Preachers at large), rarely gives money a thought. The rich give money away cheerfully, something much easier to do if money is no object in your life. Many of wealthy give millions away each year, something they would never do (or so is the claim) if they loved that money.

No --- those obsessed with money are those who don’t have it. To whom money is the difference between sleeping on a park bench in violation of the law or a home, hunger or food, medicine or food and shelter, money is far more of a concern. As for giving their money up cheerfully, for those facing the choice between putting cash in the collection plate or something on the table, their decision is far harder. Mom always used to tell me when people asked for money to feed the poor that charity starts at home. I doubt she was considered a cheerful giver.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound

toward you; that ye, always having sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever.

2 Corinthians 9:7-9

But to the poor, those who worry about money, comes these comforting words:

Therefore I say unto you. Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedth them. Are ye not much better than them? Which of you be taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for you heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Matthew 6:25-32

According to this verse, to worry about basic life necessities is to be “*of little faith,*” to doubt the heavenly Father, a crime for which may result in damnation

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Luke 16:16

a crime for which you might be “cast into a furnace of fire: wailing and gnashing their teeth, Matthew 13:42. A little extortion, after all, makes having nothing and staying quite about it a little less difficult. To worry about money is to doubt that god will provide, again a crime for which you may be cast into some eternal fire. So, the best advice is, don’t.

But let’s assume for a moment god will provide. If that is true, why then would anyone need even a living wage, not to mention a Mini-mum Wage? Taken to the extreme, why would anyone need a wage at all? Slaves after all don’t. The Bible after all has been used to justify no wages at all.

Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of

the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour

Leviticus 25:44

Yawh but --- that's the Old Testament a Christian might proclaim. Jesus changed all that. Not true. Nowhere in the Bible does Jesus condemn slavery. In fact, speaking to his twelve disciples, Jesus reminds them, according to Matthew 10:24 taken from the New American Standard Bible that "slaves" are not above their "masters." A few other New Testament verses, just to cite a few, justifying slavery are

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

1 Timothy 6:1

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps

1 Peter 2:18-21

Yawh but --- the word servant does not necessarily mean slave a Christian may claim. Servants can be butlers or waiters and they are paid (today anyway). For clarification as to exactly what servant means in the Biblical, I consulted a few other Bibles such as New International Version from the International Bible Society. The New Living Translation, and the New Century Version, all agree that the term "servant" means "slave."

Wages are not talked about much in the Bible. There are a few references such as those already quoted. When mentioned, however, I'll guarantee the Bible will never tell anyone to ask for raise. Rather what you will get when asking most pastors about wages are verses like John the Baptist's statement "*Be content with your wages*" (Luke 3:14) being whatever some landowner or employer wishes to pay. Be content with what you have. Never ask for more.

Let your conversation be without covetousness' and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said I will never leave thee, nor

forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and
I will not fear what man shall do unto me.
Hebrews 13:5-6

The message of the Bible is clear “*Accept and be happy with whatever wages those that rule over you are willing to give*”.

**Shun Unions:
Don't Rely on Earthly Institutions**

Back in the era of labor struggles, union organizers such as Joe Hill sang of how they viewed the gospel being used against the labor movement.

THE PREACHER AND THE SLAVE

By Joe Hill

(Tune: "Sweet Bye and Bye")

Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked how 'bout something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:

CHORUS

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.¹⁵⁰

It was known then that fundamental leaning Christianity was against most the struggles of people attempting to earn a living wage, something that today seems to have been forgotten but is in process of being invented. Granted, several churches rallied around and aided in the formation of Unions. Those congregations were those ungodly, liberal Social Gospel types later labeled Communist by the more fundamental John Birch supported Ministers like McIntire. Unions, of course, are not mentioned in the Bible. I have called several fundamentalist Christians, however, and asked them about unions. The answer I get is almost exclusively “*Unions are placing one's faith in man, rather than god.*” The verse that I have been quoted when asking about unions is:

But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have
rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall
bear his own burden.

Galatians 6:4-5

What is significant about this verse is the idea of “*himself alone.*” Turning back to Robert Welch, the founder of the John Birch Society, remember “*Collectivism*”? People acting together as a group to achieve what an individual

may not alone was Communism according to the JBS and ministers such as McIntire.

However weakly, Galatians 6:4-5 makes placing the value of work at personal level. Mr. Welch, not to mention any opposed to unions, would like that argument! If one person walks away from a job because of low pay and unhealthy working conditions, the plant works on, the cash register keeps ringing, and Uncle Scrooge keeps swimming in his money bin. If however, everyone walks out, the wheels stop turning --- the cash register bell quits ringing, and the money stops --- for everyone. As such --- if a ministry just happens to be stuffing itself at the corporate feedlot, you might expect to hear "*God Will Provide*". Why should anyone have to look to their employers to provide them with life's basic necessities if god will provide? Why, according to Gloria Copeland, they don't if they trust god. From her book "*God's Will Is Prosperity*", Pg 32

"The Word says that He is able to get it to you. Don't look to natural sources. Don't look to you job."

Really? Yes it is written for all to see.

**Education:
Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic and that's all Please**

"*JESUS IS THE ANSWER*" Ever see that? Ever wonder if "*Jesus is the answer*" what's the question? If Jesus is the answer to any question, why would there be a need to question anything at all? If nothing is ever questioned, what would be the reason to change anything? If nothing changes, if the current philosophy keeps you fat and comfy that is good. In terms of classes, the haves would keep on having and the have-nots would keep doing without. Change is something those that have it all can get by without. According to the Bible knowledge begins with

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:7

For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:6

As I have already demonstrated, the Bible supports the interests of wealthy. Of course, if the wealthy had, as I assume wrote the Bible, would they want their subjects to believe that knowledge begins with what they themselves wrote.

Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

Proverbs 8:10-11

You'd think at first glance that verses such as Proverbs 8:10-11 would be contradictory to this book, until you give it some serious thought. Again, assuming the Bible was written by the wealthy and ruling class to control their own wealth against those of lesser status, the last thing the rich would want is competition for their wealth. The wealthy would not wish to share the treasure that they have stored up for themselves. So, what does the wealthy offer instead? Knowledge and instruction, of course, that leads others away from their money vaults.

Side Note:

Now in this there is something of a contradiction, or so any reasonably intelligent individual should pick up on. Remember the crime that caused women a painful birth, men to have to work for their subsistence, and the death all? Knowledge! Knowledge for the sake of knowing was damned in the beginning and probably never changed. Tyrants want people to be uneducated and ill-informed. Ignorant people are easily to control.

What did change was the word knowledge. That changed with the verse the beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord. The word knowledge was changed to mean that which the Lord taught, the Lord (of course) being the kings and rulers who wrote the Bible.

And again, I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Matthew 19:24

Or in other words, don't come to my house looking for the comforts I enjoy. So what knowledge do we gain from scripture? We've already been pretty much through it. We learn scripture is much more mythology than historical fact if it contains any historical fact at all. We learned the Bible sanctions the ruling class and wealthy, that those below the rulers are to submit to those that rule over them. We learn that we are never to worry about our future. We are never to complain or to ask more for our labors than those above us are willing to give. All of this is good, of course, if you happen to be lucky enough to be wealthy or a member of the ruling class.

If Corporate America could develop the education curriculum to serve their interests, I doubt they could come up with one better than the Bible. Education, by conservative standards, stresses the three R's, being reading, writing, and arithmetic. In today's workplace, workers (which is what Corporate America sees when it peers into our classrooms) unable to read, write, or do basic mathematics would be ill prepared for most tasks required of them. It follows therefore that the three Rs would be stressed.

Beyond those basic skills, however, the benefits of education would be questionable. While only one of the three Rs begins with R, how is it perhaps the most important R was ignored altogether, namely Reason? How would it serve the interests of Corporate America, after all, for their workers to understand concepts such as the Evolution of Man or basic life sciences like Ecology? Unless their

business (in the present tense) somehow benefits from applying these concepts and most do not, most industry would see these sciences as contrary to their interests, if not outright hostile toward them. It is, after all, the idea that man's very own welfare depends on the conservation of the world's resources that has resulted in legislation being passed to protect the environment, legislation that most Corporate America oppose.

Is it not surprising, therefore, that the pressure is on by corporate funded Christian Fundamentalists to establish the Creation theory as a creditable lesson in our schools. The Bible needs to be accepted as literal fact? Without the Bible to tell us that we have the right to slaughter millions of animals each day, to chop down the earth's forests, to change the balance to nature to our wishes, we would have to accept responsibility for our own greediness. As it is, since domination is man's god ordained mission, man needs not accept any reasonability. If we did not feel that some god is sitting out there on some cloud somewhere watching over our children, making sure nothing goes wrong with his creation, perhaps we'd move more cautiously.

Put yourself in Corporate America's mind set. Would you prefer our schools teaching that we, as humans, have the right to exploit the life and resources of our planet and that god is watching to make sure nothing goes wrong or would you prefer children being taught that by exploiting the earth's resources, we are disturbing and possibly ending the balance of life that has existed on earth for millions of years? Take your pick. Which philosophy if you were Corporate America with your eye on the bottom line would you wish to impose on society?

Possessions and Inheritance: Render unto the Wealthy all Wealth

Aside from the Domination Theory, possessions and inheritance stand out as perhaps the most significant issue that the elite classes would wish to maintain. Worth notice, Fascism, as does Christianity, vigorously defends private property. In the words of past Pope, Leo XIII:

For, every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own. This is one of the chief points of distinction between man and the animal creation, (excluded for length's sake) And on this very account – that man alone among the animal creation is endowed with reason – it must be within his right to possess things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living things do, but to have and to hold them in stable and permanent possessions; he must have not only things that perish in the use, but those also which, though they have been reduced into use, continue for further use in after time. ¹⁵¹

Furthermore, writes Leo XIII:

Hence, man not only should possess the fruits of the earth, but also the very soil, inasmuch as from the produce of the earth he has to lay by provision for the future.¹⁵²

The private ownership must be held sacred and inviolable. The law, therefore, should favor ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many as possible of the people to become owners.¹⁵³

In the Bible the word “*possess*” is mentioned 104 times, “*possession*” 118 times, and “*inheritance*” 240 times by my count. Throughout time the word, inheritance, has evolved into different meanings in the Bible. For example, the Old Testament’s word “*inheritance*” is mainly concerned with ownership; in this case the strangers’ children to be used as slaves:

Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour.

Leviticus 25:45-46

Or this case, land

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him. Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit

Num26:52-55

I could site numerous verses but, in the end, the consensus of the word “*Inherit*” as used by the Old Testament would be how possessions should be divided up amongst people (tribes) and families. The New Testament however changes the meaning of inheritance to “*the kingdom of god*” being salvation. Property becomes far less important. Christians are directed toward the hereafter and away from earthly possessions, which of course the elite have staked out as their own.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

1Corinthians 6:9-10

Keep in mind if god does not exist, neither does the hereafter. A poor person, hence, may be convinced to live his life existing on barely anything thinking in the end he will receive his heavenly reward. Joe Hill had a take on that thinking singing "*You'll get pie in the sky when you die,*" (see Hill's *The Preacher and the Slave* quoted before, page 409). Hill ends that verse with "*That's a lie.*" In short, Hill, a union organizer, believed no reward would be realized in the hereafter for enduring a life of suffering enduring low wages and poor working conditions. If the elite's intention was to steer the poor away from the elite's treasures and comfort, no better con job could have been created than to place Poor's reward somewhere out there (who knows where) payable after they are dead and gone. The best part is once the Poor are dead and gone, they will never be able to challenge the promises made to them while they were living.

I am reminded of the often-used Christian scare tactic --- "*I'd rather die believing and out I was wrong than to die not believing and out I was wrong.*" The idea is if one dies not believing and finds out god does in fact exist, there will be Hell's fire to pay. If, however one dies believing and no god exists, what's lost? Well --- here is the answer. A life of misery is spent by the poor to gain something that never existed. If I labored for a month on the promise that at month's end, I'd be paid only to find out I was scammed, I'd feel like my goodwill had been taken advantage of. Some would say "I've been robbed." But many of those same people don't see suffering a lifetime of misery (someone's only life) for a reward that does not exist as any kind of loss. Life and living it to the fullest, I guess, isn't worth much if you happen to be a poor Christian.

Not every society in history has recognized ownership. Many Native American Cultures, the idea of land ownership was incomprehensible. John Alexander Williams from his book, "*West Virginia: A History for Beginners*" is quoted as stating that one of the problems with making treaties with the Native Americans was the Native Americans had no concept of owning land. They may have fought amongst themselves over hunting rights in each area but the idea of owning that area never occurred to them. Native Americans had adopted what was referred to a communal ownership of the land meaning the land belonged to the entire community.¹⁵⁴

Native Americans had no concept of "*private property,*" as applied to the land. Only among the Delawares was it customary for families, during certain times of the year, to be assigned specific hunting territories. Apparently, this was an unusual practice, not found among other Indians. Certainly, the idea of an individual having exclusive use of a particular piece of land was completely strange to Native Americans.¹⁵⁵

Imagine industry and wealthy Americans endorsing the Native American's idea of land, that the land belongs to no one. This likely goes right back to the American Cattlemen's chance of endorsing the idea that cattle are sacred. Obviously, ranchers, landowners, industry, and corporations would oppose Native

America philosophy. Even if the Native Americans were here long before them, rightwing capitalists would like us to believe that America is a Christian Nation. And, I might add these rightwing capitalists would like us (being the general population) to believe that America is a Christian Nation, god or no god. Getting people go believe they have the right to possess land is one of the pay backs they receive for funding the Christian Right.

Anyway --- enough on property and inheritance. I doubt I do not have to go into a lengthy explain exactly why the right to ownership and being able to safely pass it down to family members favors the elite.

But Right-Wing Christianity is dying out You Say: Falwell Rises from the Grave

Well, that may be the illusion given the recent death of Jerry Falwell. The Moral Majority is a thing of the past people say. The Christian Coalition has come unto hard times. All these top radical Christian groups are disappearing or so it may seem. But to truly understand what the reality of rightwing Christianity is, perhaps it would do well to revisit their blueprint, the Blue Book of the John Birch Society before making any rash statements such as the Christian Right is dying out. Recall Welch's instructions to "*organize fronts, big fronts, temporary fronts, permanent fronts, all kinds of fronts*" because as Welch puts it the Communists "*would never think of setting up publicly, for instance, a committee to Promote Communism.*" "*The most effective fronts*" Welch continues "*are ad hoc committees*" designed to accomplish one particular purpose.¹⁵⁶ Bringing new groups into existence constantly, phasing some in and out, allowing some fade to away completely, keeps your opponents off guard. If a particular group is not currently required, why give the enemy something to shoot at?

The advantage of Welch's strategy is secrecy. Again, while a person may not support the JBS, that same person might support one of the JBS's fronts like "*Support Your Police.*" Likewise, while a person might find the hard-core Christian Right or the John Birch Society objectionable, but he might wish to teach his own child at home. As such he might join something like the Alliance for the Separation of School and State. Founded in 1994 the Alliance for the Separation of School and State claims to be a non-partisan, non-profit educational foundation with no political or religious affiliation.¹⁵⁷ At their website I saw numerous faiths represented from Jewish to Mormons which would tend to make the casual observer think no political or religious orientation is being stressed.

At face value, I saw nowhere any indication that this group claimed to be a Christian group or had any links to the John Birch Society --- until some other organizations and names began to pop out: For example, Ed Crane of the Cato Institute. Recall the Cato Institute came into existence via the donations of Charles and David Koch. Their father, Fred, was one of the JBS's earliest and largest supporters. Then I notice Rev. Tim LaHaye, the creator of the "***Left Behind***" series. Koch and LaHaye both can be traced right back to the John Birch Society. Another name mentioned is Ron Paul, a US Congressman from Texas. Texas alone sends up a red flag. If not an outright John Bircher himself, Paul referred to the JBS as "a

great patriotic organization featuring an educational program solidly based on constitutional principles.” Paul agreed to be the keynote speaker at the JBS’s 50th anniversary celebration in Appleton Wisconsin.¹⁵⁸

Then there is Don Hodel. Hodel it seems has served as president of Focus on the Family since April of 2003, was a former president of the Christian Coalition, not to mention a member of the Council for National Policy (CNP). CNP of course once again leads us back to the John Birch Society as CNP was formed in 1981 by JBS member, Tim LaHaye, with startup costs coming from JBS member, Joseph Coors.¹⁵⁹ Another name worth mention is James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries who has been a recipient of large sums of money from JBS members. If the Alliance for the separation of School and State is not a subgroup of the JBS, it certainly is a rhizomatous root of the same plant.

It might do well to mention also, in case you forgot, Welch does not specify any religious affiliation when he talks of religion. Instead, Welch, as stated earlier, claims the fundamentalists, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, are “*the moral salt of the earth.*” If you visit any of the Rights’ websites and follow their links to other sites, what you will discover is a maze of groups and originations that seem to lead you around in an ever-widening circle that always seems to collapse on a few dedicated individuals. And many of those have their roots in the John Birch Society.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

And in the End

Once Upon a Time: Not so long ago in the very same land where he currently resides, a young naive adult went to war believing he was defending democracy, human rights, and liberty. What he found was the war he was involved in had little to do these idealisms, rather that war had more to do with profit. This money was being made either directly as the result of producing war materials or by keeping that nation, Vietnam, open to capital exploitation. Had our reason for going to war been to defend democracy, human rights, and liberty, we would not have stopped with only Communist countries.

If human rights would have been an issue, we should have also been in Guatemala, Burma, and Chile. I guess by American standards it is all right if such brutal regimes exist if brutality does not inhibit our economic interests. We as a nation seem to have nothing against forcing the people of third world countries into near slave labor and child labor if we are the beneficiaries. As a nation, we would never think about invading Mexico to guarantee a living wage and safe working conditions for its labor force. In fact, that is why most American companies are in Mexico, for the cheap labor and the lack of government regulations Mexico provides. But let Mexico decide to insist on a living wage for its workers and watch what happens.

Once upon a time not too long ago a naive young man went to war believing he was defending humanity. What he found was humanity existed on either side of the battle and that he had been programmed to see only his definition of humanity as praiseworthy. If America's presence in war were for humanity concerns, America would have never dropped two atomic bombs on a defenseless nation that at the time offered America no threat. America is the only nation to date that has ever used this monstrous weapon on another nation. Worse, this action was not needed to win the war rather it was used to keep that nation and others around it from falling into the hands of nations which would have restricted America's future influence in the region.

In Vietnam the military had this reasoning that to save a village, they had to destroy it. That same argument could be applied here, I suppose. To save Asia we had to drop the bomb on two of its major cities --- but I doubt that argument would have sat well with the Nations of the world. Well, the argument that we had to destroy a village to save it did not sit well with me either. America's concern over humanity was not the issue in either case. Commerce was.

Once upon a time not too long ago a naive young man went to war believing Christianity represented righteousness. What he found was Christianity is a hoax designed to benefit imperialistic nations such as France or the United States. While expressing concern and commitment to the poor, Christianity, from what I was to learn, simply placates poverty far more than it helps lift people out of poverty. In fact, by preaching "*Be fruitful and multiply*" and their "*Theory of Domination,*" Christianity is guaranteeing that there will not only always be the poor and there will be countless poorer in the future.

Once upon a time not too long ago a naive young man went to war believing that honor, heroism, and his love of country were ideals worth dying for. What he found however is everyone, regardless of which side he fights on, believes the same thing. Most people regardless of where they live love their homeland and are willing to die for it. All these idealisms really guarantee is war will never end. Hence the question really needs asked is "*Are these idealisms really idealisms to revere? Or are they merely strings in the hands of puppet masters being utilized to manipulate people into doing the puppet master's will?*"

Once upon a time not too long ago many naive young men of this nation signed into the military to defend the world against fascism. Millions died beneath their guns, in prisons, and their concentration camps of Fascist oppressors. How odd it is that these young men's grandchildren are now once again in danger of living under a Fascist government without a shot being fired. Or so it seems anyway --- that a shot was never fired. Actually, in recent history there have been a number of shots fired, for example the one that killed John Kennedy in Texas. Another shot took the life of Medgar Evers. Another took Martin Luther King. Another took Robert Kennedy. And another took John Lennon. Whether or not any of these were a larger conspiracy may never be known. What they all had in common, however, these folks were all liberal. These people were all shot by one lone gunman.

Let's also not forget Allen Berg of KOA radio machine gunned down in his Denver driveway or the two U. S. congressmen whose planes just dropped out of the sky. Had those congressmen lived the Democrats would have ceased the majority. Whether or not any of these are connected by a single thread, for example fascism, one thing is for sure; to be liberal, in favor of wealth distribution as a means of fighting poverty, to stand against racism and war, and to be popular and able to have their views aired is life threatening.

I am jubilant over the election of Obama to the office of the Presidency of the United States. For the first time in eight years, I have a glimmer of hope that America will get back to the track of leading the world rather than ruling the world. If I have been duped only time will tell. All that matters to me at this point is America in this election took a step away from fascism trajectory it was on. But the monster still breaths and if it can draw a breath, it is capable of a ferocious come back. If the economy really goes sour, people will be looking for a scapegoat. If Obama is unable to change the course of the current economy, people will be looking for a new leader --- a strong leader, a leader capable of returning America to her greatness. People will call on god, to make America a Christian nation. All of which will keep the monster well feed. Hence, I am trying not to be too optimist.

Side Note:

We know now the danger of which concerned me and still does. After Obama left office, Donald Trump was voted in, a true fascist, and right up until he left office, he did everything he could to establish himself as a dictator. He did this right up to January 6, 2021. Now Joe Biden is in but the danger is still out there. As I sit here just up the road are "Trump 2024" signs along with "Fuck Joe Biden" flags. The good news is by 2024 Trump may be not even breathing but if he is, his age may be so advanced he could

be unable hold office. But that opens it up for someone else and as the cliché goes “The devil you know is often better than the devil you don’t.”

There exists the dreaded lone gunman out there somewhere willing to take the shot that will in his mind place America back on the right track. Well, anyway that is the political world, our imagined world, the world as mainly the elite would like it to be, the world they want us (the common people) to die for attempting to construct and preserve.

Another world exists, however, the natural world, the real world, the world as it is. Humans may think they control the natural world but that’s pure delusion, merely shadows on the cave wall. Following this delusion, that we can control the natural world, will only lead to a point where we will all find we were wrong. Unfortunately, that point will only be acknowledged by the elite, those with the ability to possibly change humanity’s course, when they reach the point that it can no longer be denied.

Life on earth is in peril and few if any are speaking about it. Environmentalists are not going door to door to warn people of the coming environmental crisis. Educators are not standing out on street corners educating the public of the real dangers no one wishes to talk about such as overpopulation, fascism, science, and global degradation. The media would rather shoot for the ratings airing Pro Football or sitcom s like Two and Half Men rather than educate people on political, religious, and environmental matters. As Murrow warned these powerful media instruments, television, and radio, have been reduced to nothing but wires in a box for which we shall all pay.

The people out there banging on doors are the religious. And the religious and propaganda spinners at this point appear to be winning. Should that be the case, no political ideology will have the ability to save us from ourselves. Nature is not ruled by a democratic or religious process. Nature in the end will treat us, being humans, like we’ve treated it. Someday, we will find that out to our dismay.

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