

## 2.8 GULF WARS ERA: 1990 - 2015

The justification for these wars included: oil, political volatility in the areas, friendship with Israel, 9/11, reports of weapons of mass destruction, deposing leaders, threat of al-Qaeda or ISIS/ISIL operatives.

“Jarheads” are Marines, so called due to “lid” haircuts to prevent helmet contact to bare scalps in desert heat. The Gulf Wars were the first foreign conflicts in which mostly National Guard Reservists were called up to serve in order to avoid having a draft.

### **Gulf Wars Era**

All these conflicts will be noted in this book as Gulf Wars Era: Various terminologies:

U.S. Support of Shah of Iran	1979
Iran-Contra Affair CIA	Pre-1980
First Persian Gulf War Iran-Iraq	1980-1988
Desert Era	1990-2000
Kuwait-Iraq War, August	1990
Second Persian Gulf War	1990
First Gulf War started Feb.	1991
OEF/OIF/OND <sup>1</sup>	2001-Present
Operation Freedom Gulf War II	2001
Second Iraq War	March 2003-Dec 2011, including initial attack phase, and 7-year phase of occupation.
Continuing Involvement	2012-Present

<sup>1</sup>OEF: Operation Enduring Freedom, OIF: Operation Iraqi Freedom, OND: Operation New Dawn. EOF, however, means Escalation of Force.

“An estimated 60,000 Minnesotans were deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.” —Figure from Department of Veterans Affairs. Quoted by “Chaska Herald”, 9/19/2013, p. A15. The State of Minnesota has been one of the heaviest contributors of reservists for the Gulf Wars Era.

“Similar to the Vietnam Era. today the average age of the soldiers fighting in Iraq is nineteen,... not old enough to buy beer, but old enough to die for their country.” —Source: Veterans Service Office News, Julie Carie, VSO, Carver County, June 2005, p. 1.

### **Dedication**

To Dan & Tammy; Janet & David; and sisters Dorothy Ann, Charlotte & Margaret.

## ambiguous loss<sup>1</sup>

you are here  
as big as life  
then gone again  
waves lapping at your heels  
with me  
in a wake

Sister 1: "You deal well with ambiguity."<sup>2</sup>

Sister 2: "Well, yes and no."

just when i've buoyed up  
changed seasons  
folded you away  
and am ready to shut the drawer  
the tides turn, you bob back  
looking almost as grand as in my imagination

you re-scent<sup>1</sup> my pillowcase  
then pack yourself  
in your sea duffle  
and i carry my own weight of the world  
along to the pier,  
left holding the bag<sup>2</sup> again

we say our goodbyes  
re-sent like Captain Nemo's<sup>3</sup> broken waves  
and i see you  
making way  
while i drift, singular as the life  
i lead without you



Navy tee shirt.

<sup>1</sup>Several homonyms are interchangeable for this poem: re-scent, recent, re-sent, resent.

<sup>2</sup>Containing mixed feelings including great love, grief of loss, fear of replacement, potential for personal growth, resentment of absence.

<sup>3</sup>Nemo: Self-controlled in-charge skipper of a futuristic submarine who relied on himself rather than on radio contact. In psychology, Nemo is an archetype denoting disambiguation, for he never intends to return to land nor allow his passengers or crew to do so, in order to preserve his stealth. From 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, by Jules Verne, first translated into English in 1873.

**Q:** Why and how does a relationship change with absence? Why is it so difficult to talk about the probability of growing apart?

## Reviewing the Troops

There was much to say  
About seasons that came and went  
About leaves that grew and fell  
While I was away

About things I saw and things I wish I hadn't  
The letters I sent, and the letters I didn't  
About things that fell away  
While I was here.

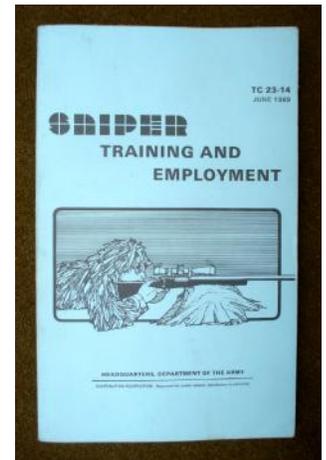
In your silence  
And in mine, too  
There is much to say.  
When I get back  
I'm counting on you.

—For Daniel

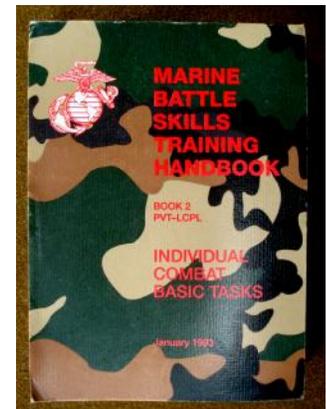
## A Few Good Men

Following the fun of simulated war games  
After school every night  
In a fallow field on a nearby farm,  
My friends enlisted for real  
One after the other  
Fresh from high school,  
Wanting to prove their toughness,  
Each craving elite training,  
Hoping to pay for education.

One became a Marine aboard ship in the Persian Gulf.  
“Saw some action,” is all he told me  
As he sipped a single swallow from my gift of his favorite label  
And finally left it there by my garage to collect Hornets,<sup>1</sup>  
Nothing else to say.  
“Sent home early,” “Unstable,” was all I could glean from friends.  
Parents helped him figure it out, though,  
And after some years,  
He finally was able to go to college.



Sniper Training and Marine Battle Skills training manuals.



Another headed for Paratrooper school,  
“Wanting to test myself.”  
Started saying the hazing was barbaric.  
Guys would report to the office for discipline  
For a minor infraction and come out with a broken arm,  
Stuff like that. The pressure was incredible.  
He was worried about the desert training,  
Afraid of scorpions, not finding water.  
With prayer he made it. Heading toward graduation,

He found out they would pin and pummel your wings into your bare chest  
So you would get a proper scar to be part of the brotherhood.  
He worried about the unchecked congratulatory punching and kicking.  
More prayer. He ended up in the infirmary with a fever for a few days  
So he missed the surprise ceremony.  
I heard second-hand he was honorably discharged.  
Never heard from him again.  
Last I checked, his parents hadn’t, either.  
There was a journalism piece  
Aired on the hazing rituals and savagery  
Surrounding paratroopers getting their wings.  
Boy, I hope your body is not buried under some dune.

One friend went into Special Forces.  
“It wasn’t for me,” he said,  
So after months and months of paperwork,  
He got out. Another found the Army Rangers  
About the time the Ayatollah Khomeini found his international voice.  
I heard “Range” saw some action  
But never heard directly from him again.

Me? All of ‘em called me crazy for not enlisting at the time.  
I was thinking about it, too, wondering  
If I could with my puny GED and trade school certificate.  
Even went to a recruiter to hear what he had to say.  
Asked some questions about life and death he couldn’t answer,  
About reentry into a cubicle world from that sphere of influence.  
I guess we just didn’t see eye to eye.

—Jesse

<sup>1</sup>Also a reference to the F/A-18 Hornet (Fighter/Attack): a twin-engine supersonic, all-weather carrier-capable multirole combat jet designed by McDonnell Douglas and Northrop. The

U.S.Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, has used the Hornet since 1986. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hornet\\_F/A-18](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hornet_F/A-18)

## Face the Music

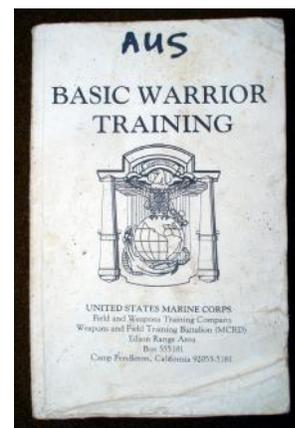
I was a trombone player in college  
And figured I could support the effort better behind a slide  
Than I could behind a gun, so the recruiter promised me  
A slot in the Air Force Band if I would enlist.  
I did, but found out after basic that the Band required a rigorous audition.  
I worked hard to pass it, but didn't make the first cut.  
They were in a hurry to substitute gun oil for valve oil,  
So I noted my contract and was able to very assertively argue  
That I had been promised something that would not be realized.  
To my great relief and some surprise, I got an honorable discharge.

—Dean R.

## Union-Suited

I enlisted in the Air Force.  
Boot Camp wasn't hard.  
If they tell you to fold your underwear a certain way,  
Then fold your underwear that way.  
That's how they know  
You'll obey their orders in the chafe of battle.

—Dean R.



Basic Warrior  
Training manual.

## Cumme Çi Cumme Ça<sup>1</sup>

He: I enlisted.

*She: That's good! You got your college paid for.*

He: Not necessarily. That's what the recruiter said, but due to my summer birthday,  
I missed the GI Bill by 6 weeks.

*She: Oh, that's terrible!*

He: Maybe not. They came out with a new program: matching funds for school.

*She: Oh, that's a relief.*

He: Maybe. I started with the \$20 in my pocket and saved \$5000 while on the sub, which I was thrilled about.

*She: What a great nest egg!*

He: Maybe not. By the time my 6 years enlistment was up, tuition had almost tripled. I quit college when the money ran out, so never got my degree.

*She: Oh, that's a shame!*

He: It wasn't so bad. Because I'd been in Nuclear Operations in the Navy, that got me a job that has paid better than many college graduates, so it worked for me.

—For Dan

<sup>1</sup>"Like this, like that". (Example: "The dessert was wonderful, but the meal was *cumme çi cumme ça*. —neither good nor bad.)

## Convoked<sup>1</sup> Conscripted, Conflicted, Convicted

Fantasies

Paint with slow brush strokes

A lustrous picture of you, my wife.

I imagine you in a filmy dress

Ready to be ravaged.

Realities:

You actually meet the ship at the pier

With the other wives,

Looking only for me;

You've lost weight

You're a hunk of good-looking,

(Projectiles):

Cotton voile revealing your slighter frame

*Almost* perfect. How could you — — !?

Display yourself! A dainty!

In front of all these

Hungry men?!

—T.

<sup>1</sup>Convoked: summoned.

## U.S.S. Seahorse

Buried under sea  
Same as dead,  
Bubbleheads<sup>1</sup> on high alert, 12 on, 6 off,  
Slog through the bilge to find a nut.<sup>2</sup>

I head for a hot rack<sup>3</sup>  
Hung 4-high  
Over full torpedo bays,  
Swing my tired nautical bones  
Onto the berth and hit the sheets  
Still warm from another sailor's body.  
I'm slim, so there are 8 whole inches to breathe  
Wracked out<sup>4</sup> under the next bunk's bulge.

With months under water,  
There is no longer eye contact among the crew  
For fear of fistfights  
Over brushing against someone passing to the head,<sup>5</sup>

On high alert, so brittle  
We've given up checkers in the mess hall.  
Even the butter knives are stowed.  
But that's OK, all the fresh food is long gone anyway.

In the morning there'll be inspection  
So I'll jettison the letters you've packed for me as rations,  
My 12-inch cube too full.<sup>6</sup> They are memorized anyway,  
And I'll *need* my toothbrush.

Some shiny brass got the bright idea to see how long  
Men could endure without surfacing;  
4 months out and some guy cracked...  
When the helicopter comes, we're hoping for mail.<sup>7</sup>

I wonder if you're given to more novels,  
Writing every tidbit of your day? Or given up?  
If you've mailed, I'll pocket my toothbrush or the cube won't secure.  
If there's naught, what I have is better gone.

Me,  
I hardly write anything;

There's nothing in my nuclear war head  
Beneath the monotony left to say.

—From an interview with Nuclear Operator Seaman First Class Daniel R.

<sup>1</sup>Bubblehead: any submariner who is awake and alert.

<sup>2</sup>Slogging through the bilge: when a part to a pump came loose, they had to sift through the unsavory slimy water in the bilge tank below decks in order to find it because they must rely only on parts available on board.

<sup>3</sup>Hot racking: sharing bunks; i.e. when one goes on duty, another can sleep, therefore the bed never gets cold. Submarines are built with 2 beds for every 3 men. To sleep is to “rack out”.

<sup>4</sup>Wrack: limp seaweed.    <sup>5</sup>Head: bathroom.

<sup>6</sup>Racki-dexterous: the ability to get stuff out of your locker without getting out of your rack. Too much stowed, and mounted cubes on the rack wall over the torpedo bay won't secure.

<sup>7</sup>Since “poking holes” in the surface betrays position, only an emergency would prompt surfacing during high alert status. There may or may not have been enough time to load a bag of sometimes ambiguous 25-word familygrams intended for the crew onto the dispatched helicopter. (Each family is allowed only 2 each deployment, so they usually contain dreaded news.) Additional mail would only be delivered if time permitted. One prank duty given some new submariners is to watch for the (fictitious) mail buoy.

## Sweet Dreams are Made of This<sup>1</sup>

'Til my shift I'm in a dead sleep  
Over a loaded atomic torpedo bay.  
It is absolutely the best place:  
There's great peace in knowing  
I'd never be wounded  
At ground zero—  
Only vaporized.”

—Anonymous

<sup>1</sup>Eurythmics' hit song, 1985, with the inference of being in the Navy.



## Reflecting Off the Water

Clearing the baffle,<sup>1</sup>  
I turn to<sup>2</sup> the buoy of our 33rd anniversary,  
And see now how my 6-year life in a tin can has affected us.<sup>3</sup>

—1st Class Seaman

<sup>1</sup>Clear your baffle: look behind you

<sup>2</sup>Turn to: get started toward

<sup>3</sup>Like a Ping Jockey (sonar technician), this submariner vet at last starts to look at the entire screen of the relationship with his “Snatch in the Hatch”, the woman who has weathered life’s storms with him.

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## Red, White, Black and Blue or Conduct Unbecoming

During the campaign of 1983  
The mantra of the Marines was  
“Kick ass and move on.”

Women who loved them understood the need for a solidified goal:  
They’d been trained *to act*. The slogan, though, promoted  
The same untoward conduct toward some Marine wives.

—With compassion for one battered Marine wife

## Power Play

Robert was a lifer.  
He took some PTSD classes for his Vietnam issues,  
But his personal war with drugs and alcohol had already started  
Before he’d even enlisted on the day he turned 18;  
It was either jail or the military for him. He chose the Navy.

His wild lifestyle became disguised in the trim uniform  
Of a recruiter out of Central High School., St. Paul, MN.

He was really good at the job; it still requires the selling of a product apart from reality.<sup>1</sup> There is quota pressure; recruiters are tempted to be lacking in conscience: promise everything. Deliver nothing of significance.

Alcohol was a cultural norm in the Navy 1980, so what he sold was the party life, Which, unfortunately, made him true to his word: there were beer machines in the commissaries, sanctioned port ale houses, a gallon of rum was allowed on board for each sailor coming back from leave.<sup>2</sup> Pulling into port meant “family picnics,” but the only item on the wooden table in the sunshine was alcohol.

It’s cleaned up a lot,  
And let me tell you, families are grateful.

There was so much PTSD in my *own* life—  
Both from him gone so much, and from living *with* him.  
He didn’t like that I was no longer totally dependent upon him.  
He bullied people to get my counseling records  
To see if I’d spilled any of his Navy beans,  
Then threw me out, one black-eyed pea,  
Keeping our pod of little sprouts<sup>3</sup> to be hurtful.  
He was not a fit father and I worried about them all the time.  
With the clothes on my back, a pair of shoes and \$6,  
I learned to live on my own, take care of myself and go to Al-Anon.  
He grew disinterested in the kids  
When he could not control me with them,  
So I got them back, which was the best day of my life.  
He can’t recall it.

—Dorothy Ann Hunt

<sup>1,2</sup>These statements are those of an interviewed subject. Author fact checked<sup>2</sup> the report of this policy. While not officially sanctioned per the U.S. Navy official website, liberal use of alcohol was corroborated by other Navy personnel of the era. <http://news.usni.org/2014/07/01/hundred-years-dry-u-s-navys-end-alcohol-sea> Drinking idioms like “Down the hatch”, “Groggy”, Binge” and “Mind your Ps and Qs (pints and quarts)” were coined by Navy personnel.

<sup>3</sup>2 preschool children and the apartment.

**Q:** What’s to become of the drunken sailor?

Al-Anon <http://www.al-anon.org> Ala-Teen 952-920-3961 for friends and families of problem drinkers.



## Making Waves

A peace-loving person, battle-ready,  
I put in 30 years as a life preserver.  
I've been in every state  
And 50 countries.

Always wanted adventure,  
But honestly, Mom and Dad were Minnesotans  
So I couldn't really let go of this place,  
Even if it didn't always have a strong seal.

I'm the firstborn so I followed my dad into thin blue air.  
My 2 younger brothers are in the Navy, too.  
This is how we define life. They are my family of origin,  
My anchor in a moving sea.

—With Donna, Navy surgical nurse

## ♂ Interplay

"I was a male in the first class to admit women  
In the Navy nuclear power program.  
The women were plenty capable.  
The Navy unfortunately created the ability for women to be in the program  
With no place to effectively be put to work  
And then blamed them for not being productive or successful.  
Now 35 years later, the first women will be allowed on submarines  
Which will create a more complex situation in close quarters,  
Especially during high alert.  
They are not less capable, but will they be less valued again?"

I don't think it will create fights to have women serve in a combat situation:  
As a sailor, you know the consequences are  
Incredibly high if there is misconduct,  
Confinement under the water is already a prison;  
You know your duties and keep your head down,  
Yet, unlike jail, there is self-worth and a team mentality:  
Your own government has purchased equipment worth millions—  
And then entrusted it to a bunch of 20-year olds to keep it tip-top.

Submerged, we are relying on ourselves  
To make our own air and water supply,  
So on a sub, it has to get fixed right the first time.  
If it breaks while we're down, we have no choice  
But to figure out how to fix it with what we have on hand.  
Lives are depending upon how *I personally* do my job  
Whether it's wartime or not.  
That's very motivational.  
There is great purpose.

There is a very clear hierarchy  
Which is completely understood:  
Every person wears his place on his sleeve.  
Each one knows that place, that job.  
It is this, this, and this;  
You also know what's *not* your job  
And you don't cross those boundaries.  
Man or woman, that doesn't change.

I never saw misconduct on my boat in 6 years.  
There was a very diverse population on board.  
We had every ethnic group—except no women back then—  
And no problems with how we all worked together.  
Of course there is another dynamic making WAVES,  
But addressing it directly in training helps.  
I don't foresee trained people  
Becoming unglued over that one issue.”

—Daniel

## ♀ Claws Come Out, or Clause: Come Out

“Women in combat?  
Wives at home are already going crazy  
Worrying about prostitutes during shore leave  
Or having their husbands meeting nice girls half a world away.  
Men and women can form bonds and jealousies in all work situations  
Especially when going through life-and-death  
Predicaments in close quarters,  
Including deep bonding that happens  
When two people face combat interdependently.

I'm thinking NO.  
No way can marriages at home survive that."

—Tammy, hospital worker and Navy wife.

## ♀ Just Desserts

"I've got his paycheck, auto deposited.  
He's gallivanting around the world  
On what seems like a vacation to me  
Compared to my taking care of the kids,  
Holding a fulltime job  
AND fixing my own plumbing  
Here at home (which *he used to do*),  
So I feel like I deserve to go out  
And treat myself sometimes, y'know?"

—Marla

## ♂ Just Deserts

She has the freedom to be  
Wherever she wants to be  
But I can't leave my post  
Until I'm told I can,  
Having a mere 24 hours  
To see something on leave besides:

1. water
2. rocks
3. sand

—And she's thinking *she* deserves  
To spend the money *I earned* in this (choose one):

1. Stuffy bilgy sardine can
2. Ominous oppressive outpost
3. Dangerous dirty desert
4. Grimy gooey jungle
5. Nippy numbing tundra
6. Restricted dusty perimeter
7. Barren bombshelled basecamp
8. Hated heinous hellhole.

## ♂ Sea Sick

“She had the feeling I abandoned her.  
We were scheduled to have dry dock for a year  
So I sent word,  
We stood at the altar, flew back to base,  
But only 2 days after we settled into an apartment,  
My green card<sup>1</sup> got waved in my face:  
The original orders suddenly belayed  
Due to tensions in the Middle East.  
By morning I was out to sea again.  
We had a communications blackout  
To avoid relaying our position  
And I didn’t come back  
Out of the deep for 7 months.”

—D

<sup>1</sup>“You have a green card. You **will** be there.” One of the most hated phrases, meaning that you have a Navy identification card, you are the Navy’s property and you will be back on board whether or not you had other plans scheduled.” <http://www.facebook.com/notes/andy-pace/submarine-slang-terms-and-phrases/10151136788588486>

## ♀ Aborted Mission

“We had so few common experiences and memories  
During those six years because we saw each other so little.  
As much as “I got it”:  
    What he was doing  
    The threat of imminent war  
    My place as a wife in all that,  
We still had relationship troubles.  
He missed our pregnancy  
                            and miscarriage.  
He should have been here.”

—T

## ♀ Six of One, Half a Dozen of the Other

“Every time the boat leaves  
You wonder who will divorce this time.  
Once Boomer Widows<sup>1</sup> know how a ‘dance card’<sup>2</sup> works,  
They get tempted to fill it.  
One woman I knew had two husbands ----- on opposite rotations  
And as far as I know,  
No one else ever found out.”

—T

<sup>1</sup>Boomer Widow: wives’ definition: those with husbands 6 months in port, 6 months out. Sailor’s definition: used to describe a sailor’s wife looking for a temporary fling, often with another sailor. In some cases the wife would take on a lover from the other crew, thus reducing her chances of getting caught. A boom is a movable pitched mast easily redirected to help load and off-load cargo.

<sup>2</sup>Dance card: the predictable practice of being stationed 6 months on the water, 6 months home.

## ♀ The Cruse<sup>1</sup>

“His longest active duty was on a seaport in the Mediterranean.  
The partying overseas was legendary.  
He’d needed and negotiated for the time there for his control date<sup>2</sup>  
But mostly chose the locale because he knew its reputation.

He wanted 20 years, but was discharged 2 years early  
On a medical disability for his stiff neck.<sup>3</sup>  
It took precious time to find someone on the inside  
Willing to help me do an intervention,  
But he finally also took alcohol rehab for his disabled personality  
After ‘the Mediterranean Cruise’”.

—Dorothy Ann

<sup>1</sup>Cruse: a container for water, honey, wine or olive oil that won’t leak, made of clay, from early Mediterranean culture. (1 Samuel 26:11, 1 Kings 14, 17:12). Oil speaks of a smooth operation. Nowadays pourable decorative decanters of alcohol are kept in a prominent location for frequent “lubrication”.

<sup>2</sup>Time served must include overseas duty for pension requirements.

<sup>3</sup>To be stiff-necked also means to be very stubborn and unwilling to change.



## Senseless

My Oedipus id won't let me forget  
The 8 year old kid  
Standing in the road  
I was commanded to run over

So our Humvee  
Wouldn't be ambushed  
By insurgents,  
Or dismembered by a bomb  
Sarge thought for sure was  
Dug into the shoulder for our demise.  
At that moment we *had* to be  
Middle-of-the-roaders. Diehard.

What kind of enemy  
Would send a child to do a man's job?<sup>1</sup>  
What kind of monster  
Would mow down a boy  
Whose friends watched from a soccer field?

—“Mike”, who perhaps said this to himself, “In the Valley of Elah”.

<sup>1</sup>To stop or redirect a massive truck full of enemy soldiers.

The American Legion holds small group sessions to work on PTSD symptoms and the epidemic of suicide over service memories. 1-888-681-6816.

## Under the Groves

To get at my kill-nerve  
They had to activate that tangle of vicey neurons:  
    Gambling

Swearing  
Fornicating  
Drinking  
Smoking,  
Twisted branches  
From the dark side of the Tree of Knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

—“Mike”, who might well have said this to himself, “In the Valley of Elah”.

<sup>1</sup>Based on Genesis 2:9

**Q:** Once tapped, is it possible for the military to do a better job “shutting off” the “kill nerve” of a soldier during debriefing when duty is done? If so, why don’t they go through those steps pre-release to reduce addictions, PTSD and suicidal thoughts post-service?

**Q:** What do some individuals do to successfully transition? How can those behaviors be replicated in others? Write your congressman, head of your service branch or Yellow Ribbon Regeneration Program with ideas sparked from these questions.

## Unspoken

In this cryptic culture, we are rewarded,  
Soothed and bonded by alcohol.  
Drugs don’t ask, don’t tell.  
Why should we quit just because  
We are rotated out?

We are criers “on the rocks”<sup>1</sup> in a rocky land.  
In the act of raising a glass  
Is the liturgy of forgetting;  
Releasing a toke, the incense  
Of the smoldering tip of memory.

—“Mike”, who might have thought it, “In the Valley of Elah”.

<sup>1</sup>Military training infers, “If we are in a tough spot, we respond with toughness”. Luke 19:40: “I tell you, if these [disciples] become silent, the stones will cry out!” “If we stay silent/close-lipped, then only the rocks will cry out. No one will believe rocks, so our secret is safe. If we wish to cry, we are Spartan-trained to be so tough, only sand comes out, not tears.” Iraq

is a hard place. We find ourselves poured out on the rocks. Native American understanding is that rocks are animated and have more feelings than soldiers now allow themselves. "A rock" is a homonym for "Iraq". Therefore, to allow emotion is "Between Iraq and a hard place." —A.

## Liturgy for Military Souls

God of all comfort:

God of warm blanket, God of fluffed pillow,  
God of embrace when we are tired and alone,  
God of encouragement when we feel like we are not "enough",  
God of grace when we are full of frustration and shame,  
God of hot chicken soup after a long, cold night,  
God of flannel jammies when we are depressed,  
God of tears;

God of "atta boys" when we have been ridiculed,  
God of compliments when we have labored all day and no one else noticed,  
God of thanks when we give up our selves to His service,  
God of a Good Book when we don't know where else to turn,  
God of the listening ear when we need to vent,  
God of butterflies defying gravity when our load is too heavy,  
God of funny bunnies and soft kittens and nuzzly puppies when we take  
our tough selves too seriously,  
God of belly laughter;

God of the good word, the right word, the final word,  
when we have been bawled out by humans,  
God of silence when we expect the other shoe to drop,  
God of the deluge when we deserve a sprinkle,  
God of extravagance when we have given a mere pittance,  
God of wisdom when we have acted the fool,  
God of mercy when we finally see our sin,  
God of help just exactly when and how and where we need it,  
God of chocolate, God of steak.

I'll say it 'til I believe it: Thank you, Lord, I'm a military soul:  
Thank you even for difficulty making ends meet:  
so I can quit trying to figure it all out myself  
and only listen to You with my spiritual ear.  
Thank you even for friction, for that very gnaw and fight  
reminds me I want to keep living.

Thank you even for fears:  
the one wondering if I will ever be fully appreciated  
and understood by that certain someone,  
the one about loneliness,  
about having to be *inter*dependent for so long when I want  
very much to be *in*dependent,  
for in those fears I will more likely seek Your arms,  
Your care, Your solace, Your promise of Your perfect remembrance,  
Your pledge that, though my body might not,  
The Word in me WILL remain forever, and that is Enough.

Thank you, Lord, for the chance now to acknowledge all the abilities  
You had given me to use over the years  
that I never quite needed to notice before.

So, thank you for giving,  
And thank you for taking away:  
My anxiety,  
My apprehension,  
My solitary existence. Blessed be Your Name:  
Creator, Abider, Enough, O, God.

Thank You, Lord,  
For making me, and then calling me good.  
For naming me Your beloved.  
For keeping me, and never saying to me, "Til death —then I part".  
For loving me through sickness and in health.  
Be my companion while mine is absent, Jesus.

May I know beyond knowing, today Father,  
What it means *to You* that I am Your child.  
May I recognize today that is exactly Enough,  
God of all comfort, every kind.

—For Janet, wife of Army lifer, David.

## Command Decision

Some others who should have gone, stayed stateside,  
With competing excuses why they couldn't go.  
Their commander massaged things,

Moved people around to keep them  
From going where they didn't want to.  
I was afraid, too,  
But couldn't ask others to if I didn't go myself.

—Anonymous Officer

## Growing, Apart

*He: Aren't you proud of me?*

She: Yes. No.

You should be home.

*He: I am providing you a sense of safety from afar; it's a sailor's job.*

She: I am lost. Then I am found: the captain's wife

Hosts a support group at her home, and I learn I can be strong.

*He: Wow, you've got it all covered!*

*But...I was supposed to be your covering.*

She: Now I feel stifled.

*He: You've replaced me.*

She: I've learned to cope

—perhaps too well— without you.

*He: Where do I fit in your life now?*

She: What do you expect me to give up

Because you're back?

She: After all, you weren't here

When I was struggling, were you?

*He: But...it is my duty to be protecting you...*

Ah, it is the delicate dance

Of self

And sufficiency.

—For Karen and Phillip



Desert Shield/Desert Storm  
Commemorative Stamp.

## For a Marine on the Plane from NY, with Tears in His Eyes

Two young people enlist  
Find each other  
Marry, then are flung like clay pigeons  
To separate corners of the world.  
The enemy's bead, trained,

Confluence cracked,  
Breaking shards unpacked,  
Skewered splinters from the friendly fire  
Of their duffed union,  
One more smithereen of war.

—For Zach and Sarah, both the Army's, who made it work; and for Karen and for Philip, two Marines who pledged to try the DVD "Fireproof" starring Kirk Cameron, and book, The Love Dare, by Alex Kendrick, 2013, ISBN1433677590, written to heal disappointment due to unmet expectations and unfulfilled vows in marriage.

## Stuck in Traffic

Husband, son, daughter,  
Hemmed in  
On a four-lane speedway of  
Work, volunteerism, school, expectation;  
Understanding and cheerfulness meandering toward the curb  
Hugging the curvature of the earth to a fatigued mom,  
No rest stop in sight.

The kids *had* to watch all the reports  
But couldn't see she wasn't directly in harm's way.  
TV mixed with bad dreams,  
Their brains unable to separate this country from that  
Or catch scuttlebutt from soundbites.  
All they saw were bombs bursting in air.<sup>1</sup>

—With Donna Alt

<sup>1</sup>It can be confusing to families that there is only a small segment of soldiers involved in "action" compared to "support".

For children worried about war, terrorism; and for psychological issues concerning children, try Connect for Kids, resources for parents, educators and others to help children cope. [http://www.connectforkids.org/resources3139/resources\\_show\\_htm?doc\\_id+120823](http://www.connectforkids.org/resources3139/resources_show_htm?doc_id+120823) Post 3/24/2003 is devoted to "Kids in Tense Times", an interactive presentation by Dr. Alvin Poussaint, noted child psychologist, historian William Tuttle and Glasgow Middle School Principal G. J. Tarazi.

## Nurse Rambo

Looking ahead:

A nurse,  
A humanitarian supposed to heal people,  
Told to put on the stuff of war:

- a flak jacket
- a sidearm for perimeter defense
- the strategy of combat

In the first comprehensive role in the first truly co-ed conflict.

A few training films

A manual hurriedly skimmed like a bestseller, then

A sending into the ring with kid gloves,

A female commander bivouacking

A heavy weight of responsibility:

- Coaching nurses
- Befriending and treating civilians
- Tincturing homesickness
- Receiving and delivering orders
- Overseeing hospital rounds
- Planning for unit tactical safety in 142 places on earth
- Keeping division virtue intact
- Seeing to those clinging to the ropes,
- Working confidently in an uncertain situation.

Looking forward:

A female officer

Knows the biggest peril is winding tight

A rumor mill activating troop anxiety,

Understands combat stress, boredom,

Recognizes difficulties corralling the ambulatory;

Props up what feels like home,

Makes the best of a bad situation,  
Intercepts the wandering,  
Gives a grip to those processing out.

Looking straight on:

The highest ranking woman  
Knows women are groomed to feel  
And men are groomed not to.  
Chooses to use both her commission and gender, so  
Develops a program to decompress the personal and family trauma of war;  
Touches lives before and when they touch down back home: Yellow Ribbon.

Looking back:

The troops sure got it, but it was a tough sell to brass:  
Touchy-feely was met with malevolence.  
Nevertheless, Chief Nursing Commander for the Air Force  
Went ahead with the program.  
She wasn't allowed to change the culture of Service,  
But did make a difference to these soldiers. Her soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

She came to a rocky dusty foreign land<sup>2</sup>  
Was spit upon for having no hajib  
And caught it<sup>3</sup> in the winds of change.

—With profound thanks for the service  
of Colonel Donna Alt

<sup>1</sup>While Donna maintains she did not start the program, the Colonel's initiative eventually morphed into the stateside Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, started in the Air National Guard. Since January 28, 2008, more than 1.1 million National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families have benefited from the deployment cycle information, resources, programs, services, and referrals offered by the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. [Http://www.yellowribbon.mil](http://www.yellowribbon.mil) 888-234-1274 For local networks: Carver County, MN: [BeyondTheYellowRibbon.org](http://www.BeyondTheYellowRibbon.org)

<sup>2</sup>Project America [www.project.org/](http://www.project.org/) is a non-partisan organization devoted to providing an online resource to help people understand issues facing soldiers serving in each foreign country.

<sup>3</sup>She caught the cultural bias, disrespect for women, malevolence of her superior officers, and local spit.





The Base Bus would drop off and pick up at an agreed location and time but dared not linger. Neither could Americans congregate waiting for it; we had to be scattered along the block, then dead-run for it on sight.

I myself stayed close to the bus stop, figuring that had been deemed the most pro-soldier spot in town. As thanks to the corner restaurant, my currency bought a piece of cake. The man in charge spoke to me, a blonde woman seated alone at a table—highly unusual.

He was becoming agitated, but I couldn't understand the message. Suddenly he used a sweeping motion with his arm: it was then I realized the only patrons who were seated were men; women *stood*<sup>1</sup> in another area to take their coffee and cake. I quickly moved.

There is a lot to learn about culture. We come into a place and don't even know how to be proper guests. How can we get the sense of a factional war in a matter of months?

—Donna

<sup>1</sup>Having women stand is a largely practical solution: menstruating women keep their clothes clean if they remain standing. Menstrual blood is unclean/untouchable for men. Indeed, in the sweltering heat it could contain pathogens. A dirt floor, however, absorbs fluids microbially, breaks them down, and sanitizes the situation for all involved.

## War Machine

Being a cog, even a big one,  
In a machine this large  
Makes you realize  
You might be good at a task,  
Even good at command,  
But maybe not at the job  
They ask you to do.  
There are 2 ways  
To think about it:  
Consider the job  
And fit yourself in  
Or think about the peril  
And freeze on the throttle.

—Colonel Donna Alt

## Giving Thanks

AT&T let us call home gratis. My 5-minute turn  
Came as my parents were sitting down to their supper  
On the other side of the planet. After savoring their visit,  
Thanksgiving in Baghdad was a wonderful feast  
Cooked fresh on base: turkey, ham, pumpkin pie.  
We made new family at the sawhorse tables,  
Polished off the last of the fresh milk,  
Threw away the dishes  
And bugged out.

—Colonel Donna Alt

## Images of Iraq

Sweat burning eyes  
Confusion  
Smoke, noise  
Bullets hissing toward the sound barrier  
Into swaying elephant grass—  
At me.

—Mike

## Camel Spiders

Every war has something.  
Vietnam had leeches.  
Iraq has arachnids the size of camels. OK, I exaggerate.  
They're desert tan. They have legs that work. Really well.  
They're big. Marine rough and tough. They gallop.

They aren't *really* aggressive toward people. It's just a reputation.  
What they are looking for is shade.  
If they see some behind you  
They will run to catch up to it and then try to show their gratitude.  
Of course a spider gallumping purposefully



Camel spiders. (This is considered a bogus photo using forced perspective. Most are hand-sized.) <http://www.camel.spiders.net/>

Is an unnerving sight, especially if its eyes  
—located appreciably higher than the ground—are trained on *you*;  
So soldiers tend to run to get out of their way. The stealth beasts  
Aren't about to let that precious shade escape so they run faster to catch it,<sup>1</sup>  
Which, of course, encourages a guy in desert tan to approach  
The land speed record.<sup>2</sup> Believe me.

—Wesley H.

<sup>1</sup>For most people 4 to 5 mph is a very fast walk or jog; and anything over 5 mph is considered running. —“What are the Right Walking and Running Speeds”, Runner’s World, 3/7/2013 <http://www.runnersworld.com/...what-are-the-right-walking-and-running-speeds>

<sup>2</sup>Contrary to soldier lore, camel spiders can run *only* 10 mph. The fastest runner in the world, Usain Bolt, sprinted for 100 meters at 28 mph in 2010.

## Changed

There’s a humility in seeing action.  
You realize other people can be generous in war.  
Even when they have nothing material to give  
You realize how quickly the target could be you  
And how easily the bullet seeking you out  
Could be from friendly fire.

You get a handle on nothing being *that* important  
It’s all about preparing to die and  
Looking for your ultimate paradise, being sure of  
Where your faith lies. Just like your enemies.  
Exactly like your enemies.

There’s a luxury afforded to battle:  
A mission is very focused.  
A commander doesn’t think about carpools and kids’ activities  
What to fix for supper, what is waiting on a 9-to-5 desk.  
That’s another life. Not that a soldier doesn’t care about home;

But there is business to attend to, duties to fulfill  
In their concentrated form. Lives counting on good leadership.  
Because there is never complete assurance of returning home,  
Thoughts aren’t allowed to wander there often.

—Commander Donna Alt

## Daddy's Little Girl

We were very patriotic.  
My father was in the Army Infantry 2 years during WWII.  
Dad didn't nurture us because it was a luxury he couldn't afford.  
His choice made us self-reliant,  
But maybe we all turned to the military to get some brotherhood;  
Two younger siblings enlisted in the Navy.

Before the days of terrorism, I went into the Air Force  
Because I could be a flight nurse,  
Accompanying patients during airlifts.  
So patriotic. So naïve. So, Vietnam.  
As though enough of us wearing the uniform would deter the enemy.  
As though a nurse's superhuman efforts could stop bullets.

Dad taught me  
To be kind and good  
Because there was a good world out there.  
But since I've been out in the world, I think  
I need to be kind and good because  
That might be all of it that shows up.

I was a career soldier.  
I never told my kids the worst that could happen.  
When I was called up for Desert Storm, they were 9 and 11.  
None of us understood until that moment I could be taken into danger.  
I had "the talk" with them. Girl decided, "It was hard but it was workable."  
Girl was proud of me.

Boy, I'm still not sure about. I never broached how having  
A mom on duty in another country might affect him.  
Maybe I thought he was too young to visit about it.  
He died at age 18 on Oct 9, 1999.  
It was suicide.  
He had his senior pictures taken, and two weeks later, shot himself.

I have guilt feelings  
About how my absence influenced that decision, about  
Being elsewhere during his formative years.  
You enlist realizing the experience may cost your life,  
But never consider  
It might also cost you your child's.

Suicide is not a one-day event. I'd been back from battle for years,  
Trying to reconnect with him, with myself.  
I still have heartburn about the slowness of the system  
To get help when his flag went up.  
He was so tender-hearted. Too gentle for wolves.  
Life has not been the same for me.  
My only consolation is my faith, that he has no pain now.<sup>1</sup>  
When the government counted casualties, his didn't show up.

I've been a practicing nurse for 45 years. Retired a full colonel.<sup>2</sup>  
2 years ago I graduated as a psychiatric private practice nurse practitioner.  
I can prescribe some meds for patients,  
Which assuages frustration with the system  
About Son's lack of treatment at the time.  
Being a therapist is therapy for me. I understand

Asking for help takes one more piece of energy  
When all the reserves have already been called up.  
It takes great courage to consider suicide,  
A lot of trust that there is something, Some One,  
Willing to catch the pieces of a life on the other side;  
It takes great faith that it will be better there than it is here.

—Donna

<sup>1</sup>Emotional pain and hopelessness can be due to a chemical imbalance that is treatable, thus potentially temporary. DO NOT make a permanent decision based on a temporary feeling.

<sup>2</sup>A "full bird". "The eagle has landed!" is when one comes to rest, pinned on your shoulder.

## Numb

It takes time to reassimilate.  
For 3 long years  
Daughter watched me  
Watch the world from behind my invisible bunker.  
She tells me I'd sit and stare,  
All drained out, at the dishpan.  
Now they call it PTSD.  
Call it ABCD, it doesn't matter:  
You have some strange heaviness welded to your soul in exchange  
For the parts of yourself now in smithereens on a battlefield.

When Daughter pointed out the coping part was missing,  
I realized the skill I'd honed:  
To be dormant, completely alone in a crowded room.  
10 years later, I'm still a wallflower to keep my petals intact.

—Retired Colonel Donna Alt

## Retrospection

Nothing good comes out of war, but  
As long as there are warring people—  
And there will always be warring people—  
We stand ground.  
It is better to set a perimeter defense

Than to get into a follow-up war.  
I'm glad I had the combat experience.  
Against odds I'm still patriotic,  
Still believe in motherhood and waving the flag.  
But we can think differently.

We can do all we can by peaceful means,  
Work with cultures who think differently,  
Not only go in and shoot.  
No one benefits from war,  
At least no one that I want to know.

—Colonel Donna Alt

## Gaggle of Gals

It's a great flight in the Reserves.  
The only squawking I heard  
Was when the flock at "my real job"  
Groused about covering my shifts when I flitted off to training.

Those fine-feathered friends didn't think it was right  
I should take a vacation to shake a few tail feathers  
When I'd recently spent two weeks "at a spa"  
Getting tanned and toned.



6-color uniform jacket from the Gulf War, meant to confuse camera surveillance—and this printer.

I'd feel guilty, too, that their workload was so high,  
While I had to fly the coop.  
I'd thank them for their vigilance, but it didn't help much.  
There'd be, "She's going again", they'd gander at me, and start sniping.  
But then 9/11 happened; war was declared and I migrated over there.  
When I flew back, the brood threw me  
A Welcome Home party and *thanked me*.

—For Donna

## Testador<sup>1</sup>

It was simply what I had to do.  
I had always planned to join the Army  
And hopefully become a Green Beret  
—Until I took that first flight in ROTC!<sup>2</sup>  
It was then I set my sights on Air Force Pilot School.  
I don't know whether I got out of the military  
All I expected, or exactly what  
The expectations of that boy were, but they  
Sure as hell got what they expected out of me.  
They got all the blood, sweat, and tears  
They could squeeze out of any one person,  
Short of dying for them.

—Lt. Colonel R.W.

<sup>1</sup>Amalgamation of matador, conquistador, tester; Testator: reliable witness; someone who leaves a will or testimony in force at his death.

<sup>2</sup>ROTC: Reserve Officer's Training Corps

## An Education

I started as an ROTC freshman  
And never stopped training.  
Unless we were at war,  
We were playing war games.

—Bob White, 24-year veteran



1950s plastic toy airplane for playing childhood war games.

## Slipping the Surly Bonds

My best day? When I got my wings in 1974!  
I'd never thought very much about flying,  
Besides the usual dreams children have of  
Moving weightlessly straight on 'til morning.  
Never thought I would ever do this professionally  
And certainly never dreamed I would be a fighter pilot.

All that changed the first time

I was invited into a ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ **high-performance jet fighter**....

Call it celestial heavenly euphoria,  
There are otherwise no words to describe that kind of flight.  
You have to do it. In the Air Force I've done so many things  
Off-ground that the general population can't even imagine:

Skating on air currents along Snake River Canyon,  
Communing with the quiet beauty of the Oregon desert,  
"Climbing" Mount McKinley,  
Creating my own Star Wars flight sequence  
    deep inside the Grand Canyon,  
Glimpsing the untouched Canadian wilderness,  
Nosing about Norwegian fjords,  
Kissing England's coast,  
Admiring Germany's mountain castles,  
Saluting Spain's terrain.

I lived this dream<sup>1</sup>  
Every day for 20 years.  
Not many men can say that.  
My worst day?  
When I had to quit flying.

—Career Pilot Lt. Col. Robert White

<sup>1</sup>"I had the privilege of flying with Chuck Yeager in a two-ship of F-16s one time many years ago: one of the true highlights of my career." —Lt. Col. Bob White



Side-by-side YF-16 and YF-17 aircraft, armed with AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles. Public domain in U.S.

## “High Flight”

“Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunward I’ve climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds—and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of—wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hov’ring there,  
I’ve chased the shouting wind along, and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air...

Up, up the long, delirious burning blue  
I’ve topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, nor ever eagle flew—  
And, while with silent, lifting mind I’ve trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.”

—Excerpt from “High Flight” by John Gillespie Magee, Jr, in the public domain. <http://brainsflight.blogspot.com/2009/07/high-flight-poem-reached-out-touched.html>

## Crunching Numbers

While testing the F-4 in simulated air-2-air combat  
With 2 A-7D Corsairs of the New Mexico Air National Guard,  
An object fell off our plane<sup>1</sup> and  
We had 3 seconds 2 decide whether 2 eject.  
Pulling that lever meant a 50/50 chance of survival.  
Jerking out of the opening cockpit, my helmet hit and broke in 2.

My shoulder also made contact on the way out,  
And had roughly the same result.  
There is a jet pack on the eject 2 remove the pilot as far and as fast  
From the damaged flight as possible;  
It was so brisk my finger came along 4 the ride  
But my wedding ring stayed behind!<sup>2</sup>  
We were already 2 low 2 allow a parachute  
2 open completely;<sup>3</sup> I slammed in 2 the desert on my knees.

2 strangers in an RV had seen the plane fly over;  
It spoke something

So they followed  
And miraculously came across 2 very damaged men in the barren desert  
Bleeding out, a world away from base.

When both airmen arrived at the hospital  
The factory rep of those ejection seats  
Came 2 room 10-34 2 give us 2 thumbs up: "2 survivors. Yessss!"  
And was astounded the technology had *actually worked*.  
It was the 1<sup>st</sup> time both pilots ever had come out of an ejected crash alive.

I felt euphoria about living,  
Immediately renewing our 9-year marriage vows.  
Some of the circumstances were 2 amazing 2 do anything but laugh.  
We made the right decision but lost a \$1 million plane.  
Brass hauled our behinds in<sup>4</sup> 2 demand some explaining  
And towed the carcass 2 the base entrance<sup>5</sup>  
2 make sure everyone got the message.

The pilot was restricted from flight 4 awhile,  
But eventually took 2 wing again.  
After a 7 month recovery, I returned 2 some duties.  
The government didn't want 2 give disability status,  
So I finally had 2 write my congressman 4 help.  
Up 'til the accident, I was a marathon runner.<sup>6</sup>  
That crash 8/10/1982 ejected me 2 an early track 4 desk work  
And I was never able again 2 run or compete physically.

<sup>1</sup>No one, including the official Air Force Accident Board had a definitive answer about what malfunctioned. Eyewitnesses reported something dropped from the plane to the desert floor, but the item was not found.

<sup>2</sup>"G": one gravity. Under one G, a pilot is in level flight and feels his normal weight. Some fighter aircraft are capable of up to 9 Gs.

<sup>3</sup>He ejected as the plane was headed straight down at 4900 feet altitude (at 425 knots, about 475 mph). Robert had a broken back, a broken ocular bone, right arm nearly torn off, collapsed lung, bruised heart, and many other injuries.

<sup>4</sup>FEB: "Flying Evaluation Board." A committee of officers to which a pilot is referred if someone questions his ability to continue safely flying. An FEB can take away a pilot's wings.

<sup>5</sup>405th Tactical Fighter Wing, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

<sup>6</sup>Robert had competed at San Francisco Marathon and Grandma's Marathon (in Duluth), as well as other races.



a pol-sci major—to stay put! They would do the deciding when I could go home.

A week to view a free sky! The quiet was absolutely remarkable. After normal flights were suspended, our war planes then were sucked into the clouds, patrolling the borders and flyways, hungry war birds looking for prey. All America's best were peppering the atmosphere. It was not only an awesome sight, it was a sobering show of force. Thank God they're on our side.

I recall thinking if terrorists hit Boston Nuclear Power Plant, I'd be perfectly OK, instantly vaporized.

Maybe if we'd been less cocky, the Towers might not have tumbled from their pedestal?

—Becky L.

The north face of Two World Trade Center (South Tower) immediately after being struck by United Airlines Flight 175 on 9/11/2001. Wikipedia Commons license.



## Psalm 139:1-18

God, You search me and know me—and know exactly where I am.  
You know if I am sitting, or standing—jumping—  
or on my knees in some desert.  
You perceive my thoughts and needs.  
Whether I can walk or only lie in a hospital bed, You are watching;  
You are familiar with all my ways of doing things and know the help I need.  
Before a word is even on my brain-damaged tongue,  
O God, You know it completely.  
Close behind me and close in front of me,  
You hem me in,  
Shielding me with Your hand.  
Such knowledge is beyond my understanding, too high beyond my reach.  
Where could I go if I wanted to escape your Spirit?  
Where could I possibly flee from Your presence?  
If I climb the North Tower, You are there;  
There, too, if I topple to the deepest depths.  
If I fly to the point of the sunrise, or far across the sea,

Your hand would still be guiding me, Your right hand holding me.  
If I ask darkness to cover me and light to become as night around me,  
That darkness would not be dark to You; night would shine as the day.  
You know me through and through: You see my every action.  
O God, Your thoughts are mysterious! How vast is their sum!

—Shared by former Military Chaplain Rebecca Ellenson, Finlayson, MN,  
United Methodist Church, 8/11/2013, with some context additions by author.

## They Also Serve

Gregory grew up in the East West Indies on the islands of Antigua and St. Thomas. He joined the Army National Guard of the Virgin Islands in 2002 to serve as a chaplain. After graduating from Seminary in 2006, his battalion was mobilized to serve in Guantanamo Bay for a year. He was mobilized again to serve in Iraq in 2009.

—Rev. Glenvil Gregory now resides in Newark, NJ, and continues to serve in the National Guard with the HHC 228 Support Battalion that drills in Sellersville, PA. From “Ministry in a War Zone”, Moravian Magazine, March 2010, pp. 12-13.

*Note: The author was a short-term missionary to the island of Antigua 1996 after a devastating hurricane, where she met Glenvil. It was a surprise to learn that even in America's protectorates, people faithfully serve United States' interests.*

Protectorates, officially called “insular areas of the United States,” are jurisdictions administered by the United States that aren't part of a state or a federal district. Freely associated states administered by the United States include the Marshall Islands, Federal States of Micronesia and Palau. Other protectorates of the United States include the unincorporated territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the uninhabited U.S. Minor Outlying Islands. In the past, territories such as the Philippines, Cuba and the Panama Canal Zone were also considered protectorates, but all 3 have gained full independence. —[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_territory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_territory)

## Man of the Cloth in the Land of the Hajib<sup>1</sup>

“The Battalion Commander endorsed the religious program I carried out, including weekly worship services for all faiths, weekly Bible studies, pastoral visitations, counseling, marriage enrichment seminars, and religious instruction. War presents a variety of emotions: feeling spiritually challenged, homesick, dealing with issues of death and dying. My personal challenge was to control my frustrations and affirm my own belief that God was in Iraq with us. Further, I was faced with helping soldiers talk about the effects of war, hoping to affirm that God is present even when death reduces a person to a fading memory.

The destruction of family life, which is a casualty of this war, makes me angry and sad; it introduces a new element of loneliness and loss. As a chaplain, I had to find healthy coping mechanisms and stay focused on the soldier’s issues without imposing my own situation. The difficult goals were to be resilient and affirm the strength of the human spirit, show that living in times like these requires nothing short of the grace of God. Some soldiers will always find the advice of chaplains difficult. They feel chaplains aren’t exposed to fighting so they can’t possibly understand. The wounds of war are very deep. The path to healing is a long hurtful process because we have to enter into that pain again.”

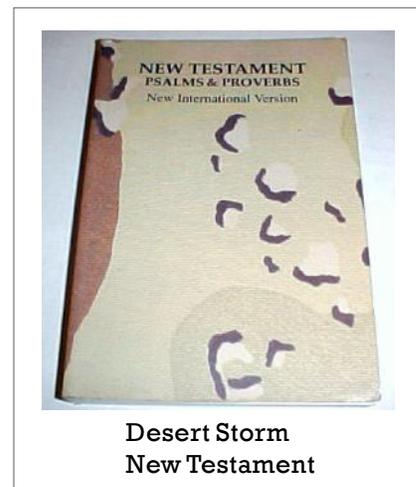
Wounds hurt and so does healing. The difference is that one multiplies the pain, the other leads to health and liberation.”

—From “An Interview with a Military Chaplain: The Rev. Glenvil Gregory”, *The Moroccan Magazine*, March 2010. pp. 12-17.

<sup>1</sup>Hajib: Muslim woman’s veil.

### Front Words

Expressions of faith are manifested in different ways  
But faith plays a pivotal role in soldier’s lives.  
For any deployment there is a search for  
Protection from harm, a constant search for peace,  
A grasping for reassurance from a supernatural source.  
This means pursuing God like never before and  
Seeking a stronger connection to Him.



Faith is what kept us focused, motivated, inspired to serve.  
Wanting to uphold the army values consistently in the face of adversity,  
I would ask,

Q: “What is God’s purpose in this war?”

Q: “Is it necessary for so many people to die?”

Q: “What value does human life have?”

Q: “How can we learn to value life and refrain from destroying it?”

—The Rev. Glenvil Gregory, Chaplin, Iraq. “The Moravian Magazine, March, 2010, p. 18.

## Sorties of Victory: Prayer: A Report Back

### One Combat Soldier’s Comment:

Q: “Why bother to ask God’s help when you can radio in a Thunderbolt?”<sup>1</sup>

### God’s Response:

MEMO

RE: Daily Counsel

Dear Soldier,

My options are not the same as yours. My decisions are not toggled “this” or “that”. My ways are not linear: they are a mesh of infinite dimension, proportion, latitude, longitude and duration. They are a spiral of cause and effect that corkscrew into realms you do not know. Your prayers resonate not only here and now, but for eternity, continuing to affect events in the hereafter. This is the power of prayer: it does not die when it comes from your lips. A prayer is an entity with authority in My throne room, not to manipulate or “strong-arm” Me, but the humble prayer of a righteous person<sup>2</sup> stands sentinel as witness to faithfulness, so come to Me with your need.

I am NOT too busy to review these “troops” and send them on missions of completion on your behalf! I would that an army of these “armed-guard prayers” would crowd My throne room to report for duty, to be recommissioned to surround you with My blessing!

Do not hesitate to "take up My precious time", for by My Nature, I multitask (so your own human nature, at times overwhelmed by events and circumstances, can be relieved). Present your needs like battle objectives to Me. Let Me dispatch My "troops" like faithful soldiers on missions of completion and outcome, performing sorties of victory.

Do not be afraid you will interrupt Me. Ask, that your joy may be full,<sup>3</sup> and My joy will also be full, knowing My children think enough of Me to involve Me in their lives. Ask *largely* that your fruit might remain<sup>4</sup> on the earth. (Try to get a Thunderbolt to do that!) In every *thing*—every life event, every fork in the road, every circumstance or dilemma—let your requests be made known unto Me. Give Me every opportunity to reveal Myself strong in your life.

—Your Heavenly Father, Almighty God, Commander and Chief

<sup>1</sup>An A-10 Thunderbolt II is an American twin-engine jet assault aircraft developed by Fairchild-Republic in the early 1970s to attack tanks, armored vehicles and other ground targets. <https://youtu.be/BuSBBL6m2h0>

<sup>2</sup>James 5:16 "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous person can accomplish much."

<sup>3</sup>John 16:24 "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."

<sup>4</sup>John 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, 'Jesus', He may give to you."

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## Ask Good Questions Instead of Looking at His Shiny Car

The army trains you well  
But no recruiter will tell  
That "training time" isn't the same as "stint";  
You must "work off the debt" (there's a hint).

Negotiate  
Your fate:  
Write the country where you'd like to act

And your desired task into the contract.  
It's no longer a given to get college tuition;  
*Stipulate* upon enlistment to come to fruition.

—Phillip, Marine, 2007

## Vanguard

10-12% of us are protectors.  
That's who recruiters look for.  
We naturally want to be *the best* at protecting,  
Therefore we sign on with the Marines.

Recruiters then up the ante  
To tantalize us with the excitement of ordinance,  
Bomb detonator disconnection,  
To fill *their* hidden quotas, replace damaged specialists.

Our brains are shaken in training,  
Our adrenals eventually go up in smoke  
And life without that kind of excitement  
Can seem like no life at all.

—For Tyler

**Note: 12% are conscriptable in any population. Typically 2% serve, even in Bible times, based on population figures and armies mentioned in Genesis and Isaiah.**

## Full Service

1981 Minnesota Pinto  
Rolled, recovered, back on all fours;  
Saddled with the Air National Guard.  
Phony hand-painted racing stripe

Followed the dotted line from Ogden to Oklahoma,  
Screwdriver for a shifter; picked up a drifter,  
Hit a rock, drove the oil filter north and  
Sealed fate.

Pothole popped the rear windshield  
Pony-expressing from Oklahoma to Oracle, AZ.  
Died a smoke-screen death.  
Eulogized on a bombing range;

Gave its life for its country:  
Target fodder gone foul.<sup>1</sup>  
It might still be in the desert;  
At least a piece or two.

—Wth Gary

<sup>1</sup>Foul: Used similar to its sports origins, a pilot commits a “foul” when he violates protocol on an air to ground bombing range. The range controller transmits, “Foul, 2,” to let pilot #2 know he committed the error. Also used generically to express discontent with another’s actions.

### This is No Vacation

There’s an understanding among soldiers:  
I’ll watch your back  
But your luggage is your own responsibility.

—Donna Alt



### Private Conflict, General Mayhem

A helicopter repair specialist for the MN National Guard  
Was called up for the heat of battle while  
A teenage daughter melted her wiring,  
His rotation not consulting family times.

Took a deferral after “Reserving” 12 years  
To admit her to rehab after intervention.  
Frankly, mechanics and electricals were much easier  
For him to fix than a strung out daughter;

Psychologists were better able to give her a tune-up.

No deferral was allowed the next rotation  
When wife collided with the strain,  
Started missing on some cylinders, creating

A battleground at home over duty? or family?  
Still, could a marriage have been overhauled  
Had he not had to fight a war  
On 3 fronts?

—With compassion for George

### Homeward Bound

Families cluster into Welcome Center bivouacs  
A cloud of witnesses anticipate return  
From the most recent Front.

The ice breaks as expectation mounts.  
A crease-faced man, thinks “*This* is how it should have been”,  
Kneels down, warms to a patriotic child:

“What have you got there?”  
She lifts a slim blue iris<sup>1</sup> toward his nose.  
“Flowers. How ‘bout you? Did you bring a gift for your soldier?”

The flat-topped man nods,  
Slowly opens his calloused hands  
For her to see and whispers, “Hope.”

### Donut Holes

My wife and I didn’t get  
Nearly as much free health and dental care  
As we were promised.  
The VA is 8 hours away  
So I pay for some locally.  
It was a promise they couldn’t keep.

—Bob



## Mail Call on the Front: Gulf Wars

Just when I thought the only thing  
To look forward to behind the perimeter  
Was dung beetles in my underwear,  
We have mail call.

Skype is nice  
But there is still something about a letter from home  
A piece of substance that proves you exist,  
Our history before deployment *not* contrived dream.

First I feel the heft of it, rub it between my fingers, across my lips  
Catch the scent of anything that does not smell of here  
Kiss the stamp you licked,  
Note its difficult journey

Imagine its treasure  
Trace your handwritten address  
Invent you at the desk, a pen, your hand, *that* dress, you  
Thinking of me. These things can't be rushed.

I listen to the page unfold  
Watch the rhythm of crossed t's  
The way you poke at your i's,  
● Can't tell upside-down when you jest  
●

Follow each line with my eyes,  
My heart;  
Hear your voice form every word:  
    "The dog had puppies,  
        the silo finally fell,  
            the team won."

## Battle-Scarred: Thoughts on Memorial Day

On battlefields around the world  
I've watched the men who still have breath  
step slowly past the flags unfurled  
to walk the rows and rows of death.

These are men who braved the blast  
with fallen comrades lying here,  
who bravely come to search the past:  
its inner pain, its haunting fear.

...A battle flashback, rumbling low,  
too faint for us who watch them kneel,  
erupts along a distant row,  
its silent screams impaled on steel...

Their wounds are not just outer kinds,  
but bits torn bleeding from the soul;  
the deepest wounds are in their minds,  
it's here war takes its steepest toll.

The cause they fought so hard to win,  
for which they paid the highest price,  
once led them through a battle's din  
to make of blood their sacrifice.

Watch these men and learn from them,  
they stand as mentors to us all.  
Hear them sing their battle hymn  
to those who answered freedom's call.

For freedom's call will come again,  
her enemies will never rest,  
but here and there a few good men  
will hear, will answer with their best.

—John Thornberg, November 2001

**Memorial Day  
Service at  
Biwabik Town-  
ship Cemetery  
(rural Gilbert,  
MN) 5/25/2009.**



## Desert/Gulf/Iraq Wars Title Sampler

Carver County Library System 2016

956.7044 GOL **Ahmad's war, Ahmad's peace : surviving under Saddam, dying in the new Iraq** / Michael Goldfarb.

956.70443 BON **Arrows of the night : Ahmad Chalabi's long journey to triumph in Iraq** / Richard Bonin.

956.70443 PAC **The assassins' gate : America in Iraq** / George Packer.

709.2 MUM **Baghdad journal : an artist in occupied Iraq** / by Steve Mumford.

920 HOL **Band of sisters : American women at war in Iraq** / Kirsten Holmstedt ; foreword by L. Tammy Duckworth.

956.70443 JAM **Beyond the green zone : dispatches from an unembedded journalist in occupied Iraq** / Dahr Jamail ; foreword by Amy Goodman.

956.70443 ZIN **Boots on the ground : a month with the 82nd Airborne in the battle for Iraq** / Karl Zinsmeister.

CD 070.92 DOZ (u) **Breathing the fire [sound recording] : fighting to report—and survive—the war in Iraq** / Kimberly Dozier.

956.70443 GOR **Cobra II : the inside story of the invasion and occupation of Iraq** / Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor.

J 956.7044 DOA **Conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan** / Robin Doak.

616.85212 ARM **Courage after fire : coping strategies for troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and their families** / Keith Armstrong, Suzanne Best, Paula Domenici ; foreword by Bob Dole.

956.7044 SMI 2016 **Danger close : my epic journey as a combat helicopter pilot in Iraq and Afghanistan** / Amber Smith.

355.0082 MON **A few good women : America's military women from World War I to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan** / Evelyn M. Monahan and Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee.

956.70443 RIC **Fiasco : the American military adventure in Iraq** / Thomas E. Ricks.

956.70443 AJA **The foreigner's gift : the Americans, the Arabs, and the Iraqis in Iraq** / Fouad Ajami.

956.7044 RIC **The gamble : General David Petraeus and the American military adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008** / Thomas E. Ricks.

920 HOL **The girls come marching home : stories of women warriors returning from the war in Iraq** / Kirsten Holmstedt.

CD 956.7044 HER (u) **Heroes among us** [sound recording] : **firsthand accounts of combat from America's most decorated warriors in Iraq and Afghanistan** / edited and with an introduction by Chuck Larson ; [with a foreword by Tommy Franks and an afterword by John McCain].

956.70443 GLA **How America lost Iraq** / Aaron Glantz.

956.704431 ISI **Hubris : the inside story of spin, scandal, and the selling of the Iraq War** / Michael Isikoff and David Corn.

J 956.7 BAL **Iraq** / [written by Dynise Balcavage]. 2003.

956.70443 IRA **Iraq and the lessons of Vietnam, or, How not to learn from the past** / edited by Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young.

956.7 COL **Iraq in the news : past, present, and future** / Wim Coleman and Pat Perrin.

DVD HISTORY BIO IRA **The Iraq war** [videorecording] / The History Channel.

956.70443 MUR **The Iraq war : a military history** / Williamson Murray, Robert H. Scales, Jr.

921 AL-ASKARI **Mayada, daughter of Iraq : one woman's survival under Saddam Hussein** / Jean Sasson.

956.70443 YON **Moment of truth in Iraq : how a new "Greatest Generation" of American soldiers is turning defeat and disaster into victory and hope** / Michael Yon.

956.7 POL **Understanding Iraq : the whole sweep of Iraqi history, from Genghis Khan's Mongols to the Ottoman Turks to the British mandate to the American occupation** / William R. Polk.

327.730567 KRI **The war over Iraq : Saddam's tyranny and America's mission** / William Kristol and Lawrence Kaplan

920 MUH 2016 **We Survived Iraq and Turkey : Long Road to Freedom : A True Story of an Iraqi Kurdish Family's Escape to America** / Taha M. Muhammad.

