

## My Story

Vietnam, Haight/Ashbury and New Mexico

by Moe Armstrong

In 1962, I left Illinois to join the military. I tried to get into the Navy to be a frogman. They were not taking applicants for people as Underwater Demolition Technicians (UDT). There were no positions available. I was told that the Marine Corps had a special operations unit called Recon. If I was lucky, they would take me as a Navy Medical Corpsman.

I volunteered to become a Medical Corpsman with the Marines. This is where I got my nickname "Doc". I was accepted in First Reconnaissance Battalion. I was stationed in California and then was transferred to Third Reconnaissance Battalion in Okinawa. These Recon Marine Corps units were very similar to UDT. I was able to swim long distances and spend time on the beach running practice combat patrols.

I got my orders to be shipped to Okinawa in 1965. The plane to Okinawa was a lonely, dark, overnight flight. I remember waking up, falling asleep, and waking up, falling asleep, waking up again. Some of the people were soldiers, some were civilian workers for the military bases in Okinawa. We were all headed for the Far East.

We landed and I was transferred to a Marine Corps camp at a remote part of the island of Okinawa. There were no towns on the outside of the base, there was no place to go. I didn't mind that, because I brought my books, my records and my writings with me. So on the weekends, I stayed on the base and listened to the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Bob Dylan and Carter Family records that I brought with me from the states. I listened to music and wrote my poems, novels and plays.

A fellow who I was stationed with had some old 45-rpm records and we also listened to his music together. He played the music of an artist named Lazy Lester, a black country blues singer from Louisiana. So he listened to my blues, that Paul Butterfield from Chicago played, while I got introduced to his Louisiana blues.

I never saw him again after we went to Vietnam but I kept listening to Lazy Lester. The war would turn everything upside-down. I would lose friends. I would lose contact with everyone who I had known. I would spend the rest of my life wondering what happened to the people who I knew from my time in the military.

At the base in Okinawa, I also continued to read "The Magic Christian", by Terry Southern, "The Web and the Rock", and "You Can't Go Home Again" by Thomas Wolfe. I thought about that title. I probably wouldn't go home again. I would find a place where I could live and write.

Probably, the rest of my life I stay in the military and go to town on the weekends. In my free time, I would read some books and then write. I lived a quiet life on the weekend

with books, music and my writing. Doing my job in the military and spending the rest of the time reading and writing seemed ideal.

I liked the seashore, the beaches, and the landscape of Okinawa. I could see myself in the future with a little house by the ocean, writing poems, listening to music and reading books.

The life that I had known in the Midwest no longer appealed to me. I had grown up thinking about playing football at a University. Football had been pretty much the whole scope of my world. Now I enjoyed reading, writing and all kinds of music.

Vietnam was out there raging. We already had people from our unit go to Vietnam as advisors. I was told that our group would go to Vietnam as a fighting unit. I thought that going to Vietnam and fighting would make me that new person. I would grow up. I believed that military service and the war would temper my hyper active mind. I would settle down and be ready to learn and grow. I would go to college. I wanted to be an officer in the Marine Corps.

I also wanted to be a new person who lived on the beach and wrote books. Returning to the Midwest would mean returning my old life of being a football star and not being appreciated as a person with intelligence.

Yet, the only way that I might pay for my education was to play football. I was in a quandary. I knew for sure that I wanted to be a writer. I would sit for hours and write. I enjoyed my world and space that being a writer put me in. I wanted a new life of reading and writing. I didn't know if I could ever play football again.

I also wanted a new life filled with music. Back in the states at Camp Pendleton, I had built up a collection of records. I had Bob Dylan, Big Bill Broonzy, Guy Carawan, Pete Seeger, and Woody Guthrie. and a lot of Folkways records. I especially loved Cisco Houston.

Also, my friends in Los Angeles were people who listened to folk music and liked old time country music. They would sit around and play songs. I would sing songs with them or play the spoons. I had learned to play the spoons while I stationed near San Diego.

I would ride up to Los Angeles and go to the folk clubs. I played and sang with a street musician named Brother Christopher on the corner of Hollywood and Vine. I started to build my record collection before I went to Okinawa.

In Okinawa, I brought my California life with me. Books, records and writings were all part of my foot locker. My life was about to change with the war in Vietnam.

One day a call went out for people to attend diving school. The school was in the Philippines. We had to spend a week going to Recon pre-diving school before we went

to the Navy diving school. I succeeded in the Marine's pre-diving school. I was off to the Philippines.

The Philippines was the hottest place I had ever been. I was gasping for air every day. I was grateful to be in diving school. At least we could go swimming.

We learned how to use scuba tanks and started doing dives in the bay. There were old wrecks from the WWII. We would swim, see schools of fish and the occasional sharks, and then come back to a diving barge. We would fill our air tanks and would go back out to dive again.

At the end of the day we were asked to swim through the fields of jellyfish which were in the water. These jellyfish lived in droves just before the beaches. They would sting us and it would be like small electrical shocks all over our bodies. Swimming through them was supposed to toughen us up to be good divers. Then, on the beach, we would stand "at ease". This would end our day at Scuba school.

I spent a month in the Philippines and while I was there I met a young woman. I fell in love. Her name was Baby Garcia.

I met her selling bar b qued meat from a pushcart on the streets in the village outside the Navy base. She had been in high school and was now working on the streets with her friends. She was trying to make some money. I had just turned twenty, and she was seventeen. We spent every night together. Those nights we would listen to a new group from England that had become very popular in the Philippines. The group was called the Beatles. Beatlemania had swept the Philippines.

I didn't like the Beatles before this. I liked old time music like the Carter Family. I learned to love the Beatles while listening with Baby.

We fell in love and then spent almost all our free time together. After my graduation from Scuba school, I was given orders back to Okinawa and then on to Vietnam. I promised to love her and to return to the Philippines and live there with her.

Some of my classmates were flown directly to Vietnam. I was sent on a boat back to Okinawa and then over Vietnam to link up with the other members of my platoon in Third Recon Battalion.

Pulling up to the shore of Vietnam on the ship, and watching the sunrise of Vietnam was special. I had never seen the sun so red and a beach so white. There was no civilization, only some small huts and lots of palm trees, and unlimited beach. For as far as the eye could see there was one huge, endless white beach.

Yet, in the middle of this expansive white beach, there was an invasion going on. Landing crafts were leaving mother ships, bringing in goods, Jeeps and soldiers. I waited my turn, I boarded my landing craft and went ashore in Vietnam. When I got to

the beach I said, "This is the hottest country I have ever been in!" Vietnam was so much hotter than the Philippines.

Every day would bring on heat and more heat. I slugged my way through the sand and looked for the guys in my platoon. My boots and my uniform were not made for this heat. The hot cotton clothing that I had been issued in the United States was so uncomfortable. We sweated 24 hours a day.

I was lucky because I had brought over a small nylon hammock from stateside, so I was able to stay off the ground and away from the insects and the insect bites that everybody else was living with. The hammock was also cool to rest in. The heat and the humidity were brutal. I could see life in Vietnam was going to be hard.

The other members of Third Recon Battalion who had made the landing several days before told me that they had come in and done a reconnaissance of the beach. There had been Vietcong spotted, and they had radioed back to the Invasion Command Force to be careful, the beach was loaded with Vietcong. When the invasion took place there were no Vietcong to be seen.

On my first day in Vietnam, two days after the initial landing, little kids started appearing selling green beer. The beer had ground glass in it and guys became sick from drinking it. Not a shot was fired but we had many wounded with people bleeding rectally.

I understood from my first days on patrol that I would have to get a new weapon. I'd been issued a Colt 45 pistol. This was standard issue for Medical Corpsmen. On patrol and in ambushes the bullets of the 45 pistol did not reach far enough to shoot the Vietcong and protect the soldiers who I had to rescue.

My lieutenant gave me a folding stock carbine. The bullets from the carbine wouldn't knock down or take out an advancing Vietcong soldier. It was the only weapon that was available. I used the carbine until we went North to Da Nang.

The place that we had landed was called Chu Lai and a giant airstrip was to be built there. Eventually, a permanent Marine base was established.

After the beach and territory around Chu Lai had been secured, we were transferred North to Da Nang. At Da Nang there was no base camp and so we had to construct one while running our patrols. Every night we took incoming fire from the village. The Vietcong tried to come in and kill us while we were in our foxholes securing the perimeter of our camp.

During the day, there was peaceful activity. You could see people plowing the fields, going to market, talking to each other. At night we saw 'tracer rounds' (every fifth bullet has a streak around it so you can see where you are shooting), we heard explosions and sensed the movement in the bush of Vietcong soldiers who were probing our perimeter. We would leave the base camp and go on patrol in the day. We would have

some battles with the Vietcong. At night, they would come after us back at the base camp. The war was twenty four hours. We were at war. This was not just a temporary military intervention.

During the time of building our base camp. We met a person who said he was a barber. He said that he hated the Vietcong. He came from town, he had hair cutting equipment and he was able to give haircuts. He came to the base camp everyday and gave haircuts. It wasn't difficult to give haircuts to us because a Recon haircut was the sides of our head shaven and the top clipped short.

We started to build a helicopter landing pad out in front of the camp so that helicopters could take us out on patrol.

We were doing more patrols out in the boonies and away from the base camp. I was still trying to find a new weapon that would shoot a short distance and have a bullet capable of knocking down a Vietcong soldier. The South Vietnamese were stealing so many supplies from us that I couldn't get the weapon I needed. I couldn't get uniforms or boots either, but most importantly I couldn't get the weapon.

I went to a Navy construction base and bought my weapon from a "Seabee" construction worker. This was a 45 caliber automatic weapon called a 'grease gun' because it looked like one of those little guns you grease cars with. But, I couldn't get good gun cleaning materials for the grease gun. This weapon needed to be taken apart and cleaned each day. The springs in the magazines that held the bullets needed to be cleaned and recompressed everyday. This was a good weapon but needed a lot of maintenance.

There was good mail between the United States and Vietnam. This meant that I could request my parents send over special rifle cleaning equipment. This they did in a couple of weeks. I couldn't spend time in the field with a weapon which wasn't cleaned and maintained.

I was able to go out on patrol, take my weapon and feel safe that my weapon would work. The grease gun was perfect because it wouldn't snag on shrubs and bushes if I had to rescue a wounded Marine. Also I took six hand grenades, so in case I came under fire while rescuing a Marine, then I would throw a grenade and be able to turn away a Vietcong.

During the summer of 1965 we had been going out on patrols and engaging the Vietcong in light skirmishes. They would ambush us. We would ambush them. But there had been no real major conflicts. We had only been involved in ambushes where we didn't see them. We would shoot at them. We would hear them. They had wounded several of our people with booby traps. We hadn't really seen them up close, yet.

Then we saw a patrol of Vietcong winding their way out of the mountains. They were carrying satchels and packs. We notified our command post to alert them that a large patrol had been spotted heading out of the mountains.

The next night all hell broke loose as a Vietcong patrol went through the air base perimeter, laid satchel charges and blew up airplanes. A satchel charge is a bomb that you carry in a little satchel, just like the ones we had reported. The patrol got through the thickly populated South Vietnamese Army areas that were around the U.S. Air Force Base.

We were now sure that no place was safe from attack by the Vietcong. We were to work all day and strengthen our base camp, The Marines were also building up more support and supply camps around the air base to ensure that the US airbase at Danang had an extra row of protection.

We kept running our patrols and encountering booby traps and sniper fire and returning to do construction on our own camp called Camp Reasoner. Our lives were continuously working two combat shifts.

The summers were horribly hot. Some said that the temperatures got up to over a hundred and ten degrees. All we did was sweat all day and all night. We also had chronic cases of diarrhea. Everybody had diarrhea so bad that it was hard to keep the construction of Camp Reasoner going. The constant diarrhea also endangered many of the patrols because guys couldn't stop shitting.

The Vietcong kept chipping away at us on patrol, a casualty here, a casualty there. At that time there were casualties about every two weeks. I was sad because many of the people who I knew would end up being wounded and I would have to care for them. The wounds were mainly from pieces of shrapnell which were embedded up and down a person's leg. I was sad to see their suffering and pain from being wounded. I would just about get over my sadness from one casualty and then another one would happen.

Gradually our unit was dwindling. We weren't suppose to be getting more people into the Recon unit but we had to do something.

Where once many people had wanted to be in Recon and we had special admission tests for our unit, now there were no people interested in coming to Recon. We took anyone who wanted to be with us.

After running our patrols, we were sometimes taken on special liberty to Da Nang. Loaded up in giant transportation trucks, we were driven to town. We proceeded to get drunk, eat a lot of ice cream and visit houses of prostitution.

Vietnam was not as plagued by venereal disease as Okinawa had been, but within a few months venereal disease, mainly clap, was also present. Now as the medical corpsman, I had to treat the guys for bullet wounds and for gonorrhea.

Every week we were on patrol encountering villages where there were no males from the age 10 and up. Even the old men were missing. The Viet Cong laid ambushes for us every night. There were booby traps made with wire and hand grenades across the paths all the time. As far as we were concerned, every village was Vietcong.

There was a small village outside the base, which was nicknamed "Dogpatch" Everybody was selling the Marines something. We had money to spend and we wanted to spend it before we died. Dogpatch became a boomtown selling beer, food and love. It was filled with prostitutes. You could buy anything there.

Most of us ended up having to buy special jungle boots in Dogpatch. The boots we brought with us from the States wouldn't let the water run out. They never dried out.

We needed a special boot with holes in the bottom to let the water escape and nylon mesh on the side to let boot dry quickly. They were called jungle boots and they also had a steel plate in the sole of the boot to protect us from punji traps. (Punji traps were small spiked sticks that stuck up along the trail and would pierce a boot and go into someone's foot)

By now, every week either we were being picked up by helicopters and flown out on patrol or we were driven by truck to a drop off point to start our patrols.

On one patrol, we were close to the trucks that were there to pick us up. The Vietcong had set up an ambush in between the trucks and ourselves. First we tried to break up the ambush but we couldn't get through to the trucks.

So, we had to go back up into the mountains while the Vietcong searched for us on the hillside. We had no food or water. Everyday we had to lick the dew off the plants to give us some water. Our mouths and lips were cut up from licking the leaves. The Vietcong were continually searching for us and every night some wild animal kept growling and trying to get into our small base camp.

After three days of this we looked out. We could see no Vietcong. The next day we walked out of the mountains and back to safety.

On another patrol we sat on a hilltop and looked down onto a village. There we could see Vietcong militia training. We brought in artillery and watched people spinning and dying as the village got pounded by our artillery. We were jumping for joy. Then came the news over the radio that the command post wanted us to go down and do a body count.

We knew that the village still had more Vietcong soldiers and they were going to be angry. So, we walked down the hill. We got lost and wandered across a stream below the trail that went to the village. As we came out of the brush going towards the village all hell opened up on us. We became pinned down by automatic weapon fire. The Vietcong had waited for us in ambush but since we had been lost we sprung the ambush at the wrong point. They had been waiting for us on the trail and we had come in behind them off to the side of the trail. We started taking lots of automatic weapon fire.

Our Sargent yelled "Fuck it, I want to kill me a VC!" He ran down the side of the trail towards the river where we had just come from. An explosion of rifle fire hit him. The Vietcong had closed in behind us and had circled our position. We could hear them yelling orders and coming towards us from a variety of points. We thought we were done for, when, out of the sky came the jets.

The jets started dropping napalm three hundred and sixty degrees around us. We heard the screams of the Vietcong being cremated. The whole ground shook as the explosives hit. The smell of burning flesh was everywhere. I was terrified that we were going to be napalmed. Then, after two or three passes of jet airplanes dropping napalm, a whole burning, smoking circle of fire around us, the helicopters came, firing machine guns out of the doors, out of the windows. When they landed we ran to get on board.

They gave us supporting fire but there was no gunfire returned by any Vietcong. It seemed like everybody was gone, dead, or wounded. The Sargent had taken a wound and I had to rescue him, shoot him up with morphine, and put a bandage on him. Another Marine and I carried him to the helicopter and brought him back with us to the field medical hospital. He was gone for a few weeks and then was back with us on patrol.

Thirteen months of combat duty seemed like a long time. Time was dragging on. I was never rotated out. Kept going on patrol after patrol. Because there was shortage of medical corpsman, I was never given Rest and Relaxation to Bangkok or Hong Kong like the other soldiers. I could never say no to the requests for me to go on patrol. I had worked hard my whole life and couldn't say no to any job. I just stayed with the unit and pulled wounded people out of fire fights, cleaned my weapon and went back out on patrol.

I had lost my enthusiasm to fight Communism. I came to Vietnam thinking I was going to make the country safe for democracy. Now, I just wanted to make the country safe so I could get back home.

Towards the middle of my time in Vietnam I didn't care who we killed, they were all Vietcong. The whole place was dangerous. I had grown to hate the war. The commanders kept asking us to do these incredible missions from maps they had in the command post. The villages weren't where they were supposed to be. The maps were



old French maps, there were mistakes as to where the trails were, even where the mountains were!

We were only as good as the maps we had, and the maps weren't very good. We were supposed to be doing reconnaissance, but it was hard to do reconnaissance when we didn't know where we were or where we were going. The villages were either all empty or empty from men. It seemed like the whole place had gone off to fight with the Vietcong.

The South Vietnamese soldiers who they put with us were there to guide us. One was a man named Nyen Buong. He was our guide. He would point and tell us whether a village was friendly or Vietcong. He would take his index finger and point and say "VC, VC, VC." I took my English to Vietnamese dictionary with me and started to learn the language. During that time I found out that he was Roman Catholic and he saw all Buddhist as communist.

Nobody had questioned him, everyone believed that he knew his country and he knew his people. After that discovery many of us felt bad that we had labeled villages as Vietcong and set them up for military action. We never followed his advice again, and I kept learning Vietnamese to see what else I could discover about our real situation.

After a summer of patrols and combat I prayed that the heat would break. I was not prepared for the monsoons. There is no way to describe the amount of rain that comes in the monsoons. Small rivers where we used to fill up our canteens were raging torrents, with whole trees washing down the side of mountains. It rained so hard for so many days. I had never experienced anything like this. And through it all we kept going out on patrol, the Vietcong ambushing us, us ambushing the Vietcong.

We were soaking wet every day. The worst part was the leeches. There were leeches everywhere. Leeches on the path, leeches on our necks, leeches covering our groin. We would take out knives and scrape each other clean from the leeches. Leeches would be crawling all over us every night as we fell asleep. We would run our patrols and be so exhausted that we would just collapse, because the crawling of leeches over our faces, over our eyes, in our ears was just terrifying.

The good news was, the war had been so active that there were more deserted villages, and some of them were very comfortable. A small straw hut with a dirt floor protected from the rain feels pretty good compared to lying out in the rain and cold with insects and leeches crawling all over us. We couldn't build fires because the Vietcong would detect us. But, at least on some nights we could get out of the rain and not lie on the open ground.

The Vietcong kept tripping (setting off) our ambushes, but, because of the rain and the darkness, we couldn't see them. We couldn't see to shoot them. We tried bringing artillery from the base camps close to the air base in to destroy them after they had

passed by. One night, the artillery made a mistake and brought in the cannon rounds almost on top of us. After that, we stopped using artillery as an aid in our ambushes.

We were going out on one patrol and the helicopter broke down. We crash landed right on top of some North Vietnamese who had been hiding in the stream bed. We caught one soldier because he'd been washing his clothes. He was in his underwear and T-shirt. The platoon Sargent wanted to kill him and get it over with. The Sargent knew that there were battalions of North Vietnamese soldiers out there and we were left unprotected guarding this prisoner. So we would be drawing heat from the enemy soldiers because we had one of theirs.

Because of their uniforms and identity papers we realized that these were North Vietnamese soldiers and not Vietcong. Vietcong were South Vietnamese insurrectionist, the guys in the little black pajamas. The North Vietnamese were the regular soldiers. The helicopter was down. We had to put a protective ring around the helicopter. We were worried that the North Vietnamese soldiers would come back and attack us. The next day the air base sent a big transport helicopter out to remove the smaller one. They picked up the prisoner and took him back to the airforce base at Da Nang. They took us, too.

I met Russell Johnson during this time. Russell was sent to Recon and we established a good friendship. We spent time together at the camp and we spent time together on patrol. I could always count on Russell to stay awake and not fall asleep on his watch. As a matter of fact, he would stay up yakking all night long, talking about James Brown, and life in Boston. Boston sounded like a magical city where everything was good and everything worked. I imagined the whole city of peaceful happy people all going to work and listening to James Brown. I knew that some day I had to get to Boston.

One patrol, guys from the command post brought a German Shepherd dog. The dog trainer kept patting the dog on the head and saying "Boys, this dog will guard you on patrol all night long. You'll never have to worry, this dog will stay awake all night long and protect you from the Vietcong. We have trained these dogs to detect the Vietcong." We took the dog on our next patrol.

We jumped out of the helicopter, grouped together on the ground and started climbing the side of a mountain in order to establish an observation post on top. The temperature was at least one hundred and ten degrees. We had to fight our way through thick, tall (over five feet high) jungle grass and underbrush, a canopy of trees and difficult rock cliffs. When we got to the top of the mountain the dog collapsed, rolled on its back and had heat stroke. I had to give the dog all my water, pick him up in my arms and evacuate the dog. We radioed a helicopter to come back and pick up the dog.

I carried the dog down the mountain with Russell at my side. Russell had been ordered to get a full five-gallon water can to carry back up the mountain. I couldn't help but wonder was I going to have to do another med evacuation for heat stroke with Russell. We went down, got rid of the dog, got the water and went back up the side of the

mountain. Going up the side of that mountain almost killed Russell. The Marine Corps doesn't give Purple Hearts for heat exhaustion.

We had another patrol where we were in a valley and two North Vietnamese soldiers came walking down a path. They were shot at by our men. We were ordered to go get their bodies. I had said I didn't think we would find their bodies because they had gotten away.

The Sargent said we had to do an exact body count. I told the Sargent besides not finding bodies there we would probably find many more North Vietnamese soldiers. "There are never just two lone North Vietnamese soldiers walking around the jungle. There are battalions or divisions of North Vietnamese soldiers. We had better get out of here." I said.

The Marines went to look for the bodies, couldn't find them. We set up a defensive position and within five minutes I was catching glimpses of many North Vietnamese soldiers coming through the jungle, drifting towards us. I opened fire and let the others know we were now in combat. We were outnumbered by maybe one hundred to one. We needed to get out.

We checked our maps and found out there was a ridgeline that we could walk up to get to the top of the mountain behind us. We got lost, got on another ridgeline and started to move up the side of the mountain. By that time it was dark. As night started to fall we watched a column of North Vietnamese soldiers going up the other ridgeline. We knew there were now North Vietnamese above us and below us. That night I didn't need anybody to help take my watch, I stayed up all night and kept guard, and nobody talked, not even Russell.

In the morning the helicopters came in. They couldn't land on the top of the mountain. They could only land on the mountainside. They had to leave their tail propellers hanging off the side of the mountain in the air while we tried to throw guys in the helicopter. All hell broke loose. We started receiving automatic weapon fire from above and below. The helicopters jerked off the side of the mountain. I looked down below and Russell was still on the ground. How he got evacuated from there and thrown into a helicopter at the last second is still a miracle to me today. I thought I would never see my friend again.

Back at the camp, at Da Nang, Russell was there with the rest of us. Uptight because he thought he was going to be left behind. He said he that he had some new music from home and he wanted us to listen. I was the only guy with a record player, so I got my battery powered record player and we put on Barbara Mason singing her hit song "I'm Ready". We had some beer and went to sleep. We were back out on patrol in just a couple of days.

During all this combat, we were sent back to the Philippines to train other Recon Marines. We were also to get trained by the hill people of the Philippines in better

jungle survival skills. During my time in Vietnam I had been writing Baby and she had written me that she was pregnant. I had started sending her money and then lost contact with her. I heard no more from her or about her until I reached the Philippines.

Our Philippine mission was a secret, so nobody could leave the base. There were some Recon guys going to Scuba school and I went down, got their civilian clothes and base exit pass. I was outside the base looking for Baby. While walking through the streets I found her friends. They were still selling food to passing soldiers and navy men. They told me that Baby had become pregnant and her mother became hysterical and had thrown Baby out of the house. Baby had no money, no place to receive mail, was alone and turned to prostitution.

She left home to live outside the Airforce base in Manila, working as a prostitute to support herself and the child. Nobody knew what had happened to her beyond that. I was brokenhearted, my whole reason for survival in Vietnam, my hope, was returning to the Philippines, marrying Baby and having a nice life as a career soldier. I kept thinking that this war wouldn't last long. I was wrong.

We were on an airplane back to Vietnam, more patrols, more combat and more death. I remember going by a pile of Vietcong bodies, stacked like cordwood. Everybody dead. We were becoming deadened on the inside. We had gone from the kid next door to hardened combat soldiers in a foreign country.

The South Vietnamese couldn't be trusted to defend themselves, the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong fought 24 hours a day. The names of the combat operations and the missions flew across my mind. There was Starlight and Piranha.

Starlight I remember because all night long people in the command post would order flares dropped from airplanes. This compromised our patrols. These flares that were dropped from the airplanes in the sky were lighting up the whole terrain while we were trying to run our patrols across rice paddies and in open fields. The flares were so bright they would turn the night into day and we could see for miles. We were always caught unaware. The flares were used to spot the Vietcong in case they attacked. But had the effect of making it so the Vietcong could now see us.

We got through those operations with minimum contact and with minimum casualties. We thought we were lucky, but we didn't know how long our luck would last. Patrol after patrol, mission after mission, slogging through rain and heat, this was our life until Operation Double Eagle. Operation Double Eagle put us on the USS Valley Forge. This was to be an amphibious assault off the coast of Vietnam. This was to be a combined military operation. There were even going to be B-52 strikes against the Vietcong. This was the largest amphibious assault ever done in Vietnam. This was going to be larger than the initial landing that had taken place in March, 1965.

On the USS Valley Forge I received my military decoration, a Navy commendation medal with a combat "V". A month before a Marine had walked into a booby trap, and

was badly wounded. He had fallen down in the riverbed and was crying out for help. "Doc, Doc, rescue me!" I had to run out into the middle of the riverbed and save him. Bullets came in all around me, and dug up the ground as I carried him to safety.

That I wasn't hit was a real miracle. I had to throw him over my shoulder and carry him back. I bandaged him up and tried to save his life, had to carry the guy to a helicopter-landing stop where we could do the medical evacuation. I was getting tired and I was getting decorated at the same time.

When I first came to Vietnam I thought we were going to make it a democracy where people could work and have opportunity. The whole country had become just a massive shooting match with human beings as targets.

The South Vietnamese were so corrupt that we had to buy our military gear that they had stolen from us. The North Vietnamese and Vietcong never seemed to care how many people they lost in combat. They would throw people at us night and day.

The war kept going on twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. There was so much combat and so much valor that my combat medal was only one small part of a moment frozen in time called "The War in Vietnam." After I got the Navy Commendation Medal with a Combat V, we were back out on patrol and back into combat. I had been out on over twenty combat patrols some lasting as long as weeks and some were just for a few days. I lived in a state of permanent exhaustion. I was just too tired to do anything but go on patrols.

We had some more combat coming up. We had seen two young kids who were Vietcong. They were about fourteen years old. We had blown the skull off one of the kids, with an M-79 grenade launcher. The other kid lay in the ravine riddled with bullets. I had been called forward to 'save' them but it was too late.

That same patrol, we got into a firefight with more North Vietnamese soldiers. Two were killed and one was wounded. I was called up to save the life of the surviving North Vietnamese soldier. It was hot and I was by his side in the sun trying to save him.

I felt that I could save his life. I bent over him. Put bandages on and treated his wounds. He started to die. I turned and said to the captain "Sir, if we bring in the helicopters, we can save this man's life." The captain said to me "Doc, you don't seem to understand, this man's just a gook. I don't care if he lives or dies."

That moment it was if someone had taken an ax and sliced my head in half. I realized that we were in Vietnam because they were different from us.

They didn't look like us. They didn't act like us. They didn't live like us. They were totally different.

All the images of all the people whom we had lost, whom I had known flashed by my face. I had absolute clarity and I understood everything in that one moment.

I saw the people we had become while we were in Vietnam. I saw the piles of dead Vietcong soldiers stacked like cordwood. I understood that I was no longer the young kid kicking up streams, walking across farmlands in Illinois. I had become a hardened soldier. My heart had become filled with hate. At that moment I knew that I couldn't kill anymore.

I had this realization about the war and my role in Vietnam. My politics had changed. The war no longer made sense to me.

My mental and emotional condition had also changed. I was jumpy, nervous, filled with anxiety and broken hearted with depression. Objects and people became luminescent surrounded by light.

The faces of the guys I served with seemed hyper magnified. I could see the pores in their skin on their faces. It was like I could watch their skin breathe. I was so hyper vigilant that people and plants seemed to come alive in a way that I have never experienced since.

Where before this moment, I had been courageous. I was now frightened, terrified. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know who to tell.

What happens when the Medical Corpsman becomes ill? What happens when the Doc becomes wounded? Who takes care of the Doc?

Instantaneously, I had become broken, anxious, frightened. I was "mentally ill". I had nothing in my medical bag for mental illness. I didn't know anything about mental illness. I couldn't believe this level of anxiety had happened to me. Who ever I had been. I no longer existed. I didn't know what to do.

I started crying. I couldn't stop crying. Whenever anyone would come near, I held myself together. I didn't show the other people in the unit that I was crying because nobody would know what to do.

Our mission had ended that day. The North Vietnamese soldier had been medically evacuated. Our patrol was brought back to the ship. We were on the USS Valley Forge on our way back to Da Nang. I couldn't stop crying. I couldn't stop the anxiety. All I knew how to do was jump into the shower and take a cold shower almost every hour until we got back to Da Nang.

I couldn't sleep. I was high strung and nervous. I had lost all peace of mind. I was outright paranoid. I kept crying. We got back to the base and I kept thinking that I was 'over' these strange feelings, but then I would start to cry during the day. I couldn't

sleep at night. By then the Marines thought something was wrong with me. I wasn't laughing and ready to go on patrol the way I had been before.

After a couple of nights, somebody offered me some marijuana. I had an appointment to see the psychologist the next day at the battalion aide station. I was worried. I couldn't sleep. Somebody said, "Try this." I'd never smoked marijuana before. I'd always hated it. I'd seen people who smoked marijuana as derelicts and junkies. I thought marijuana was like heroin. Now, I was willing to try anything, I didn't care anymore. I just wanted to be able to go to sleep at night and to calm down during the day.

I smoked pot for my first time that night. I became wildly euphoric. I was happy. There was a record playing by Bob Dylan, "It's all right, Ma, I'm only bleeding." I thought Bob Dylan was speaking to me. I started kissing the record player. I was delirious. People were laughing. I walked out into the night air, slightly happy and went to sleep. And, slept very soundly for the first time. I just lay on the ground and went to sleep under the stars and slept through the night. I hadn't slept in many, many nights.

The next day I got up and went down to the battalion aide station. I was covered in dirt and dust from sleeping on the ground. I was no longer happy. The drug had worn off. I was back to my anxious state. I had given up.

I knew something was wrong with me. I needed help. I saw the psychologist and told him that I couldn't kill anymore, and I felt bad about what I had done in Vietnam. I had said, "We are just killing poor farmers who don't have a cent to their name." I started sobbing and said, "I can't go on like this." He looked at me and said, "You've seen too much war."

They made me a spot in the tent that was totally isolated from the other soldiers. They gave me medication that put me to sleep and made me feel groggy. While I was in the hospital tent, I saw a soldier from my unit go by. I couldn't speak. I couldn't yell out. I had become totally catatonic. My head was filled with thoughts but I couldn't say a thing.

The next day they put me on an airplane and flew me out of Vietnam. I had been evacuated within 24 hours. I had been sent out of Vietnam quicker than some people who had multiple physical wounds. I was very broken down psychiatrically and physically.

I had been in Vietnam for twelve months and only had a month left to serve before I would have been rotated back to the United States. I had seen 20 to 25 missions. I saw more combat than I had expected to see. Most Medical Corpsman only served six months before being rotated out of the unit and given a new tour of duty that didn't involve combat. I was never given any rest and relaxation, trips to Bangkok or Japan, I just was sent out on patrol after patrol.

If I felt bad in Vietnam I really began to feel bad now. They evacuated me to the air force base outside Manila. So there I was broken, mentally ill, drugged out on psyche meds, and knowing that the woman I loved was outside the base selling herself trying to support our child.

So now I was depressed, anxious, hearing things, and totally disoriented. I had been hearing a weird rushing sound. Sounded like the wind. Or, I thought that people were moving with shuffling feet around me but I couldn't see them. So I became more jumpy from thinking people were coming up around me and behind me. But when I would turn to look at them there would be no one there.

After a few day in the US Air Force Hospital in the Philippines, I was sent back on an airplane to California. The back part of the plane was filled with stretchers and guys who had been shot and were missing arms and legs. The walking wounded filled the front part of the plane. I was sitting next to an officer who had been wounded in Vietnam. When he saw that I was a psychiatric patient he became more nervous than me. He didn't take his eyes off me the entire trip home. I wanted to say, "Don't be afraid of me." but I couldn't speak, couldn't talk, I couldn't feel. I felt numb and dead inside.

The plane landed in Hawaii. The ramp on the back of the airplane was lowered. A marching band came out and came to the end of the plane while we were on the runway. Someone came on board the plane and tried to give medals to the wounded soldiers. A guy screamed, "Take that damned medal back, I want my leg!" The soldiers giving out the medals became very uneasy. They turned around and left the airplane. The band turned around and marched off. The airplane left for California.

We got to California in the evening. We were put on a bus and driven to the Oakland Navy Hospital. I felt like a fifty-year-old man. All I had seen was death and destruction, my friends wounded or shot, my own life broken, my hopes of a career in the military smashed. I didn't know what to do or who to turn to.

I had been a rowdy kid. I drank booze. Drove cars too fast. I hadn't been a good student. I had been a great foot ball player. I loved singing and acting in school musicals. Probably, had some depression as a kid. (Mostly over lost girlfriends)

I nowhere near felt the way that I was now feeling. I was grief stricken, broken down and crying three or four times a day. I was suicidal, wanting to kill myself like I had killed others in Vietnam. Hearing these strange sounds of whispering, shuffling, people who didn't exist. I was too paranoid to talk to anybody about what I was experiencing. I was unable to talk at all. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know who to turn to.

I had made friends with Steve and Leah from Los Angeles before going to the war. I was able to call them and say I was in the hospital and didn't know what to do. They drove up to see me in Oakland. I cried and cried and cried. I said, "I'm in this lonely hospital. Now I am a mental patient. Could you help me?"



The hospital wouldn't let me out to see Steve and Leah. I had to sign in every four hours at the desk, and I only had pajamas and a housecoat. Steve and Leah had rented a car and driven over to see me. I signed into the desk and went off the ward to see Steve and Leah.

We went for a walk around the grounds. We walked to where they had parked the car and drove to an isolated spot on the hospital grounds. They opened the trunk of the car, I got in, and we drove away. They stopped the car in a wooded area of Oakland. I changed into blue jeans and a T-shirt and they drove me to San Francisco.

I couldn't believe I was back in the United States. Everything seemed so different. I felt like I had been through so much. I wanted to tell people about Vietnam but I couldn't talk. Even my speech with Steve and Leah, who were my best friends, was difficult.

Steve and I had spent hours discussing Jewish philosophy and Judaism before the war. He had helped me study Judaism with a rabbi. I had attempted to convert to Judaism before the war. He sang folk songs and let me stay at his place before I left for Asia. Now I could barely talk. He suggested that if I couldn't talk so well I could keep reading. We went to a bookstore called City Lights.

Steve waited while I picked out many, many books. He paid for the books, put me in the car and we drove back to the hospital, found the isolated part of the hospital and I changed back into my pajamas and made my four-hour sign in. I said goodbye, started to cry because I didn't know what would happen next to me.

The mental hospital was very brutal. There was involuntary electroshock and people would be dragged down the hall with attendants holding on to them on either side. They would be begging not to get zapped by electroshock. Afterwards they would waddle out of the back room completely docile, drooling spit and almost unable to talk. The conclusion I drew from this was that this was a dangerous place and that these people running it must have been violent people.

In Vietnam, I could shoot my way out or somebody else could blast me out. In this mental hospital I had to learn quickly how to navigate through staff hostility and live with my own mental illness. The first thing I did was not say much in-groups. I saw that they left the quiet patients alone.

If they saw that someone was anxious they generally took them down, shot them up with medication and zapped them the next day. I had that kind of anxiety but I didn't talk about it, and I didn't show it. One day the doctor came up and said, "I hear you write poems, draw pictures and read books. I'd like to see some of your poetry." I gave him some of my poems, he looked at them, and the next day I was on a locked ward.

The day I got to the locked ward I met someone named Welch. I put my extra pajamas in the bedside locker and sat down at the table. Welch came up to me and sat down. He

said, "This is all a big mistake, I don't belong here." I said, "I feel the same way." He said, "I only want to stay in the Navy and be in submarines. I love sonar."

I said, "I feel the same way. I want to stay in the Navy and be a Medical Corpsman." Welch said, "I want to stay in the Navy. All I did was drive a car into some pilings on a bridge. They took me to the doctor's office. There were all those glass cabinets. I smashed them all, so they put me in a straight jacket and I tried to chew my way out of it. This is a huge mistake, I'm not mentally ill, and I don't belong in this hospital." I said, "I feel the same way."

We started going to groups and I understood that saying the right things in groups like "I'm feeling better" might get me out of the hospital sooner. I wasn't feeling better. I wanted to get out of the locked ward. I stayed away from the staff and spent my time outside alone in the fenced courtyard. I enjoyed doing arts and crafts, also.

One night the attendants wanted to take us to the movie which was showing on the base. We all shuffled down to watch the movie. The movie was "Dr. Strangelove". It was a black and white movie about the end of the world by war. We were all sedated combat veterans who had just come from the real war. We sat through the movie, watched "Slim Pickens" ride the bomb down.

The end of the movie came, the lights went up, we all turned to each other and said "Wow." We shuffled back to the ward in complete amazement and thought about how disconnected people at the hospital were from our war experience.

People who had not been to the war didn't seem to understand how violent and vile the war was. They romanticized the war. Real war isn't funny or satirical like the movie. We were terrified of ever having to go back and experience war again.

Finally, the hospital workers felt I was well enough by talking in groups to leave the locked ward. I loved the open ward. I could go down and get hamburgers and all I could eat every day at the luncheon buffet.

I felt safe because the hospital was around me. And even though I heard things and thought that people were whispering and talking, I knew that I was safe because I was in the protection of the hospital. It seemed as though I couldn't defend myself well, so the hospital was a place of real security. I started writing again. And then, I was going to be given my first pass out of the hospital.

I was given a weekend pass to go where ever I wanted to go. I took a bus over to San Francisco. The posters on the street said that there was going to be a concert that night. A group called "The Blues Project" was going to be playing at the Avalon Ballroom. While I was in the hospital the "Mama's and the Papa's" song "California Dreamin' " was on the radio. I thought I was now living out that song. I was in California and dreaming. I was going to go to the concert that night and have a wonderful time.

I had been going to concerts before the war and had been hearing live music in California. I used to see Dick Dale and his surfing music at Huntington Beach. I saw Bob Dylan once in 1964 at a concert in Long Beach. I had seen rock and roll shows in Los Angeles and I had been to folk clubs. I used to spend my weekends going to Hollywood, singing on the streets with Brother Christopher. He had a tenor guitar. Then later in the evening I went to the Ashgrove, a folk club. And, I hung out at a little coffeehouse called the Venice West and read my poems. I hoped that going to the concert that night would reconnect me to my old self. My military career was over but I could still enjoy music, writing and art.

I went to the concert that night and wasn't prepared for the experience. Wild endless riffs of guitar music, throbbing lights flashing on the screen behind the group, twirling dancers dancing alone to the music. There were guys with long hair and giant handlebar mustaches wearing cowboy hats hanging out

The first song "The Blues Project" sang was "Cheryl's Going Home." In my world of schizophrenia this meant something to me. I bought a record at the hospital by a singer named Bob Lynn who had written that song and another entitled "The Elusive Butterfly." I realized that I was connected with this scene and with this music and that I was supposed to be here spiritually. God wanted me to groove out in San Francisco.

I didn't go back to the psychiatric hospital that night. It was three in the morning, I found an old bedspread and laid out by freeway in some clumps of ice plants to sleep that night. I thought that someday my life was going to be hanging out at concerts and living by the side of the road. I was able to practice the life of being a homeless vagrant before I left the hospital.

I woke up and started walking all through San Francisco, looking at buildings, looking at houses, seeing the different architecture of San Francisco, watching street people move like morning shadows. I was also moving through the streets. I was now part of the scene.

Each building, each person was fascinating. People's faces still had that luminescent characteristic that I had first experienced when I had my initial psychiatric break.

I was still left seeing a glow around everyone and everything. I could see my psychiatric condition was calming down a little bit, but I was on massive amounts of medication.

The next night I went back to the dance at the Avalon. I was dancing, wild, free, listening to The Blues Project, again. Thinking that someday I might be living as one of these dancing free spirits.

A guy came up to me and said, "What are you on, man?" I said "Stellazine." He said, "I want some of that, man." And I thought maybe I was onto a good thing. I said, "I'm on leave from a mental hospital." He said, "Yeah man, I'm crazy too, everybody here is crazy." At least people wanted me here. I felt good about that. I helped sweep up the

dance hall after the dance. The owner of the Avalon Ballroom was named Chet Helms. He said to me, "If you ever want a job cleaning up come see me when you're out of the hospital." He saw me as a good cleaner. Later, I would take him up on that offer.

I got my little bedspread, looked for a little corner off to the side of the freeway and went to sleep. After Vietnam, sleeping by the side of the freeway, with nobody trying to shoot at me, with no leeches crawling all over me felt kind of good.

The Stellazine put me to sleep for a couple of hours. With the schizophrenia I was still wired out of my mind. I woke up the next day and went back to the hospital. I washed up, had something to eat. That night, I slept all night. We had group therapy on Monday. They went around and asked what everyone had done. I said, "I went to a dance, heard some music, they had these incredible lights that made me feel like I was out of this world." The psychiatrist informed that he was trying to keep me in this world and canceled my leave for two weeks.

I went back to my job of cleaning up the recreation room in the hospital, reading my books, writing my poems and drawing my pictures.

Welch, the guy whom I had met on the locked ward, had been transferred to my open ward. Everybody thought he was too weird and violent to be with. I liked him. I suggested that on the next liberty he could go with me over to Berkeley. If he bought some books to read he might come back and have a nice time while he was in the hospital.

At the hospital, we were spending time thinking about ourselves and getting to know each other. I was interested in what I was finding out. Psychotherapy was fascinating. I bought the book I'm OK, You're OK.

Even with all this therapy, I still felt jumpy and anxious. I was a nervous wreck. People still had that strange luminescence about them. Because of the therapy, I was thinking about other things besides how flipped I had become.

Psychotherapy didn't seem to help my mental illness. It did take my mind off my continual anxiety. The Stellazine wasn't bad. I went to sleep at night, except for on the full moons. It was strange. Every full moon in the mental hospital everyone was up, prowling around, walking up and down the corridors, totally freaked out of our minds and unable to communicate.

I would just start taking endless showers, trying to relax under the hot water and go back to sleep. Most of the guys on the ward were not used to attendants watching them bath every day. I had been a Medical Corpsman, so I understood that this was their job, to pay attention to the patients, write some notes and hang out in the nursing station talking about what they were going to do for the weekend. I didn't take being watched in the shower personally. It was part of the life of the hospital Corpsman. The life I had once had. Now, I was just a mental patient.

The big day came. Welch and I went on liberty. I told him straight up, "You've got to be cool. You're going to see some things that you aren't familiar with, and you're going to see some people who are different." Welch told me he could do anything. He'd been in submarines. He'd done it all already.

The bus ride from Oakland to Berkeley was easy. We got to Berkeley and started walking around. I met some people from the street at a café. I told them that I was back from the war and was now in the mental hospital. They said to me, "Man, there's a revolution happening here, and we want you to be a part of it." I felt important. I was no longer a mental patient who nobody wanted. I could soon be a revolutionary. Part of the 'movement'. An important part of the movement.

He said he wanted me to come down to his collective apartment and meet the other people so they could hear my story about how imperialism and US aggression broke a fine fellow like me. I felt the guy was probably right.

Nobody on top seemed to care about myself or the guys who I served with while I had been in the military. There were all these demands and decisions which came from on top. I never knew who was responsible for deciding where we would go on patrol and what we would do. We never were there to rebuild the country of Vietnam like we had been trained to do.

There were all kinds of people making all kinds of stupid decisions who didn't seem to know anything. I knew for sure they didn't understand the language or the people of Vietnam. I thought the American people were probably good people but were being misled by 'leaders' all the way up the chain of command, all the way back to Lyndon Johnson. The United States didn't have the popular support of the Vietnamese. We never did win the hearts and minds of the people. We only worked with corrupt political leaders of South Vietnam. Why did we even want to be in Vietnam?

"Sure," I said, "I'll go down to the apartment, I'll meet anybody."

We got to the apartment and it was painted bright magenta colors. Pictures of Marx and Lenin were hanging on the wall. Welch said, "This place is filled with Communists." He immediately got into almost a karate stance. The guys in the house became a little paranoid. Welch became a little paranoid. The guys in the house said, "Excuse us." And they all went into the bathroom together and closed the door. Welch thought that they were homosexuals.

So now he thought that we were in a house where people were both homosexual and communist. He wanted to leave. I said, "Man, you promised me, if I took you with me, you would be cool. Let's stay here and find out who these people really are and what they believe." Then, a strange odor started coming out from behind the bathroom door and Welch said, "That's marijuana." The door opened and the three guys came out.

Their eyelids were heavy. Their speech was slurred and they started talking about the revolution. They told us that Welch and I could be important people to make the revolution happen.

I tried to explain to them that I didn't feel stable. I was a nervous wreck, anxious, worried all the time, couldn't sleep for more than a couple of hours and was heavily sedated. I just felt that I was glad to be alive after Vietnam. I did say that I was considering pacifism. I didn't want any more war or conflict.

I had been writing to Ira Sandpearl at a non-violent institute in Carmel, California. Joan Baez was the founder of the institute. When I mentioned Joan Baez, the heavy lidded eyes popped open, their eyes became bright and misty. They knew I might not participate in the revolution, but I was a cool dude.

Welch was stalking the house with his eyes open, trying to take in everything and I was sure that he was on the verge of doing something weird. "Time to go." I decided.

Welch and I took off into the night. We went back to the military hospital. On Monday group therapy, they asked what we did on the weekend.

Welch said that I had taken him on leave, introduced him to communists and taken him to a place where they smoked marijuana. He had been afraid for his life because everyone in the apartment was homosexual.

The medical corpsmen from the ward defended me. They lived in the area and knew that the Bay Area was filled with diversity. I ended up on good terms with the staff. I promised that I would never take anyone on leave with me again. I would go on my own.

The next weekend I saw the Jefferson Airplane and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band at the Fillmore. I couldn't believe that I was seeing Paul Butterfield Blues Band live. A guitarist from Chicago named Steve Miller was invited on stage and the whole evening became one huge jam session. Steve Miller and Michael Bloomfield trading guitar riffs. I danced my ass off.

I was starting to be known as one of the wildest guys at the dance halls. People kept saying, "Yeah man, he's for real. He's really crazy, he's still in the nuthouse." So I would hang out before the shows and meet people, and I would hang out after the shows and meet people. The dancing made me less lethargic from the Stellazine.

One weekend I had met some political people from Berkeley who were very nice to me. They invited me down to their house to "politicize me. They were called the Vietnam Day Committee or the VDC.

Karen Wald was the person who spent the most time with me. I would stay and help them fold papers and answer phones. Every time I thought about the war I would cry. I would think about the guys I had left behind and hope that they were safe.

The South Vietnamese seemed so corrupt and so unwilling to defend themselves. I thought the war was hopeless. I had also grown to like the Vietcong. While in Vietnam I had seen that they established small schools and medical clinics wherever they went. We were supposed to be doing that also. In the years before the war we had been trained by Lieutenant Crane to be Goodwill Ambassadors. We were supposed to go in and build up the community as part of Guerilla warfare. We were not just combatants. We forgot that idea when we in Vietnam.

The Vietcong might have executed a village chief here and there, but we were napalming whole villages. It was hard for me to get self-righteous about the evil Vietcong. The Vietcong did provide educational and medical opportunities for services for everyone in the village.

I thought that by working hard with the Vietnam Day Committee we might be able to stop the war in six months. Who in America would want to keep something as stupid as the war in Vietnam going?

Then, one night at the VDC 'headquarters' all hell broke loose. An explosion ripped the house. A bomb had been laid and set off to destroy the VDC. People were wounded and covered in glass. For me, it was being in the war all over again. I knew just what to do. I started evacuating people. I was carrying them out over my shoulder, laying them out in the back yard, cleaning their wounds, and seeing how badly they were hurt. Blood was everywhere. There was blood on me.

The police pulled up with sirens and flashlights. I knew I was still in the military on leave from a mental hospital and helping a bunch of peace activists. I jumped the fence and moved down the street, washed off in a gas station and went back to the psychiatric hospital.

Back at the hospital a new guy had been brought onto the ward. He had tried to bomb North Vietnam. He jumped in an airplane and tried to start an airplane full of bombs. He forgot to unhook all the lines that held the airplane on the ground. Parts of the airplane ripped off, and he was unable to take off. He was captured and sent to the mental hospital where he was trying to sell his story to men's adventure magazines.

Time wore on in the hospital. I was getting close to my discharge. I was asked what I would do when I got out of the hospital. This time in San Francisco was before the term "hippies" was invented. I told my group in therapy that I had met many nice people and when I got out I wanted to write poems and become a beatnik. The doctor looked at me and said, "We're going to have to keep you here for longer observation." Time wore on. The next time they asked what I was going to do I said, "I want to get out and work at the post office." I was discharged within a week.

I was no longer always crying, and I felt some level of personal serenity. I had determined that I was now a saint. I saw myself as the incarnation of Saint Francis. I had become enlightened while in the hospital. I realized who I was through group therapy. The medications made me calm and now I was a saint. I walked like a saint and even got myself a little housecoat to wear around town since there were no saint robes available.

I got on an airplane to let my mom and dad know that I was back from the war and out of the hospital and a new guy. I was a saint, Saint Francis. But, I was also a very drunk saint. I started drinking on the airplane, celebrating my exit from the war and my release from the psychiatric hospital. I kept drinking the whole time that I was home. I told mom and dad I was a saint and they said, "We don't know who you are, but we don't want you around this house."

I kept drinking and thought I should go back to California because no matter what I did people accepted me would only say, "Far out man, you're really far out!" and I felt 'far out.' I was spaced out from the Stellazine and Thorazine and drunk all the time.

I went back to Los Angeles to stay with my friends Steve and Leah. They were very nice and let me stay with them. Working at the post office had sounded like a good idea. I thought maybe I should go to San Francisco, read my poems, sing some songs and start my life all over.

I had to get out of my saint clothes and get back into my Marine Corp uniform to receive the half price fare on the airplane. except I was so disoriented, turned around and messed up that I couldn't fasten my pants correctly, put my jacket on straight and I was walking around without a hat. I was wearing a red and white striped shirt that was hanging out, unbuttoned, around my neck. When I took my jacket off the shirt was falling out over the belt of my pants.

Looking like this I waited for the plane to San Francisco. It was there that I met Stella. She had wire rimmed glasses. She looked like a beatnik to me. So, I came up to her and said, "You look like one of those peace people. I just got out of the war, it was hell. I need to tell you all about Vietnam. We killed a lot of people. Could you talk to me?"

She seemed very uneasy and kept trying to avoid me but I followed her onto the airplane and sat next to her. I kept telling her about the war. I didn't have anyplace to live, could she help me? Over the time of the flight she started to feel sorry for me. She said I could stay at her place until I found some place of my own. I had never looked for a place to live and didn't know how to go about it. So I wandered the streets, looking for an apartment.

I was too ashamed to say that I still didn't have a place. I would just sleep out in a park or by the side of the road. My favorite trick was going to a telephone booth, taking the



receiver off the hook, playing like I was talking on the telephone and grabbing some sleep.

Then, one day I walking around and saw a sign which said "For Rent." I rented the place and now I had a place to live. Being afraid that would die from hunger, still feeling paranoid from the war, I went out and bought cans of food. Can after can after can of food. All I had eaten in Vietnam and even before the war were these cans of food called C-rations. I could now buy and eat all the cans of beef stew, corned beef hash and my favorite, creamed corn that I wanted I filled my apartment with cans of food so that I would never go hungry, again.

Because I had just been discharged from military service I had some unemployment money. I was able to pay the rent and buy the food, but I was worried because my mental illness hadn't gone away. I was racked by sleeplessness, and kept thinking that people were in my apartment in the middle of the night. People who were talking and moving around. I started to develop a habit of drinking and passing out at night so I could get some sleep. Since I didn't have enough money for liquor I had learned to get spare change from people on the streets so I could buy more booze.

After I came to San Francisco and met Stella the term 'hippie' came out in the newspapers. I thought I was going to be a beatnik. I loved the poets and poetry. But also I liked the rock and roll music. I could go to the dance halls, spare change, and have some money to pay for my admission and have some money to buy booze. I met a person who told me that I should try LSD, that it would make me feel good. He gave some to me. I saved it for a while.

Visiting Stella again, I met her new boyfriend. His name was John. I told him I had never taken LSD but I was going to. He looked concerned. He said, "This stuff is really powerful, you should really have somebody go with you when you take it." He offered to walk around with me on my first trip. I dropped the LSD and I was off and running into the night with John at my side.

I became slightly cold. I didn't have a coat. I told John it wasn't a problem. I was returning to my 'saint' state of mind by being on the LSD. I took a shawl that was in the garbage and wrapped it around me. I smelled terrible. I told John, "Let's go to the Fairmont Hotel, this city is ours."

The Fairmont is a big luxury hotel in San Francisco. At the hotel we got on a beautiful glass elevator that was on the outside of the building. From there we could see all of San Francisco. We were on the elevator with elegantly dressed men and women who were going to dinner at the restaurant at the top of the hotel. I was still wearing a shawl that smelled like garbage and our conversations were about how I was returning to sainthood. This city belonged to us and this hotel was ours. This conversation startled the other passengers in the elevator almost as much as my smell. We rode back down after surveying the city and walked out into the night.

John was supposed to have a job interview with Lawrence Ferlighetti to work at City Lights Books. Stella already was working there. John didn't want to leave me by myself, walking through the night and he said that he found me more interesting than going to a job interview.

The LSD opened me up. I thought that I could understand and see what had happened to me in Vietnam. I thought I could understand my new life that I was going to have build in San Francisco.

My reality:

I was living in San Francisco. I had an apartment but no job. I couldn't go home. I had no where else to go. I had to learn how to keep living in San Francisco.

After coming down from the LSD I went back to my apartment and thought that I needed to understand America and Americans. Who were these people that wanted me to fight in Vietnam? What was this country really like? I had nearly lost my life for America, and I had lost my sanity. Yet, I didn't know America.

I told John and Stella that I was leaving for a trip across the country. I had gotten money from the military for severance pay. I bought a ticket. It was a ninety-nine dollars for ninety-nine days bus ticket that I could go anywhere with. I paid my rent for three months. John and Stella found a person to watch my apartment, a poet from Lawrence Kansas. He was a poet named Charles Plymell. I got on the bus and headed east.

Traveling through the United States made me feel very uneasy. Everyone was happy, and going on with their lives like there wasn't a war going on. The war hadn't touched or disrupted anyone's life. People didn't even seem to know that there was a war going on. The war didn't seem to be in the newspapers or on people's minds.

I took my little steno pad and started writing poems about what I saw and what people said to me all the way across America. I got to New York City and I realized that I was close to Connecticut. During my last days in Vietnam and during my time in the psychiatric hospital I had written to a woman named Beth Haines.

Beth's brother had a seizure while he was in the camp at Da Nang. I had saved his life through artificial respiration. He told me about his sister. Beth and I started writing letters to each other as friends. My letters to Beth and her letters to me turned into love letters. I decided that even though I was still very disoriented and in a constant stupor from the mental illness that I would go to Connecticut and try to find Beth. Maybe she would want me.

I took the bus to New London and tried to find Beth. Her friends told me that she was in the state mental hospital at Norwich and that I could visit her there. I thought "This is really strange, I've come all the way out to the east coast. A woman whom I could really love has had a major psychiatric break and is now mentally ill, like I am."

When the staff therapist and doctors found out that I was there to see Beth and that I was mentally ill, they took away all of her privileges and kept her on the ward. They kept her away from me. I would stand outside the hospital and call up to the window and Beth would appear. We would wave to each other and then I would run back to the woods beside the hospital. I had made a little camp and there I was living.

While walking around Norwich one day I met some people who looked like cool people. I said, "My name is Moe. I'm a Vietnam veteran, I was living in San Francisco. But now I'm living in the woods outside of Norwich." They talked to me about the war. I told them about how discouraged I was about Vietnam and what I had seen. They said there was a peace farm at Voluntown Connecticut and that I could stay there.

They introduced me to the people at the farm and the people at the farm were glad to see me. They had a real live veteran back from the war who was opposed to it! I stayed at the camp that summer and did a radio show against the war. This was in Providence, Rhode Island. I went to New York one day to lend support to a group of people the Fort Hood Three. They were three people who had tried to refuse their tour in Vietnam. While I was at that press conference I met Stokely Carmichael. I gave my little talk about what I had seen and what I thought about Vietnam.

The war in Vietnam was a civil war of different points of view. People had been fighting each other for decades. This fight between the left and right in Vietnam had been going on since before the World War II. This internal civil war in Vietnam didn't justify our going to fight here. After the press conference Stokely Carmichael came up to me and said, "What you've seen and what you've been through is too powerful. These peace people won't protect you from the US government. You'd just better go off and forget about them."

I went back to Connecticut to the peace farm. I hadn't had a drink or taken any drugs since I had been there for three months. I was living a pretty clean life but I was starting to fall apart. I was starting to cry again. I was starting to feel totally alone again and I didn't know what to do. One night when I couldn't sleep I started walking around. I got into town before day break. I hitchhiked and took a bus to New Haven, Connecticut.

At the first light of dawn I found my way to the Veteran's Administration Hospital. I was crying and sad. I couldn't stop crying. I felt like I would never be able to work again. I'll never be able to be my old self again. I wanted to just check into the VA mental hospital, I was totally broken. I got there early in the morning. Nobody wanted to see me. They told me to come back later in the day. They told me that they had no records of me, as I had not yet applied for veteran's benefits. I would need to prepare for that process before I could get services.

Crying, lonely and suicidal I went back to the peace farm. I felt like I couldn't tell anyone there what was happening to me. I was breaking down and I couldn't tell anyone.

The people at the peace farm offered me a job as a camp counselor. I said I would take it. I got kind of stable for a while, drinking milk, eating cookies and writing poems under trees. The summer camp for young people was very nice. Many people came from New York, sang songs around campfires like "We Shall Overcome", "Kumbiya" and "This Little Light of Mine." I started to fall in love with one of the campers, and she seemed to be falling in love with me. I was very happy about that. I had lost a lot from Vietnam. I was always lonely so I was looking for someone to love me and I could love her back.

This was my first job that I had had since the war. I had once been a lifeguard in Illinois and it didn't seem unusual to ask out a woman whom I had met while working at the swimming pool. So, I thought it was ok to fall in love with Lisa. One night we ended up making love and getting caught by the camp director. Somehow I hadn't realized that she was underage. She was sixteen or seventeen. I felt both old and young. Old from the war, but young because I was only 22. I was fired and thrown out of the camp and out of the peace farm the next day.

The next morning I was on a bus traveling to New York. By now I was familiar with living on the streets and crashing at people's places. If I had to I would sleep in the bus station. In New York I could sleep on the subway, too. No matter where I spent the night it was better than Vietnam. While I was crashing at an apartment the people there told me about the wonders of methadone. They said I was depressed from the war and I needed a lift. They were all shooting methadone. Since the war any blood and any needles would freak me out, so I didn't try the methadone.

I caught another bus to New Orleans to see my uncle and aunt. He taught mathematics at Tulane. My aunt was a landscape painter. She had a successful commercial practice. I stayed with them for a few days and took some trolleys around New Orleans. I went down to the Mississippi River. I had French Donuts and coffee. I looked at the river and missed my mom and dad. I missed the bakery they owned in Illinois and wished that the anxiety and jumpiness that I had would go away. I had thought that if I traveled enough and wore myself down the anxiety and mental illness would settle down or go away. That didn't happen. I couldn't get rid of it. I couldn't blank it out of my mind.

From New Orleans I took the bus to Los Angeles and saw Steve and Leah again. I spent some time in LA with them. I went down to the sandal shop where Steve worked. He now had his shop in Westwood Village. They had made a little place for me to stay upstairs at the sandal shop if I ever came to Los Angeles.

I went to San Francisco, back to my apartment. The poet who had stayed in the apartment had eaten all my food, but he left my books. He was gone from the apartment when I got there. I settled into my apartment and started finding out what I could do to stay in San Francisco.

I hit the streets and found out I could sell "Berkeley Barbs." This was an 'underground', or 'alternative' newspaper. I picked up the newspapers at night. Then, I would sell all them the next day. I would move all through San Francisco, up and down Market Street

and up and down Haight Street, selling the “Barb.” I met everyone. Even though I had a lot of money from selling the “Barb” I was afraid that I wouldn’t have any money or a place to live. I became paranoid and stopped paying my rent since I thought I was going to lose my apartment anyway. I ended up with no place to live.

That’s when I first met Jimmy. Jimmy took me in. He had come from Vermont to San Francisco. He had two of the greatest guitar players I’d ever heard in my life living with him. I stopped going to the concerts at night and would hang around his house and listen to the music.

By being on the streets a lot selling the “Barbs” people had turned me on to a lot of drugs. I had started to smoke pot in earnest, and to take LSD at least once a week. Everybody wanted to get high with the crazy guy who sold newspapers. People would pull me into the alleys, turn me on to some ‘special stuff’, and then let me go back to the street. After a while I became known as an expert on drug quality. People would ask me what I thought of their pot. How did I like their acid?

During this time John and Stella worried about me. Stella had met me before I’d started using drugs at all. She had occasionally smoked some pot. John didn’t take any drugs. Stella had a sense that because I was out of the psych hospital and trying to recover from mental illness that living on the streets was not helping me to recover.

John kept saying “Man, you are already far out in your head, you don’t need to take this stuff. People who are taking it are so straight that they want to get how you naturally are. You should stop taking these drugs.”

An apartment became available in their building. Stella said I could probably get in if I talked to the landlord. The landlord’s name was Stanley. He liked me, I liked him. He said he would help me get my own place.

John was doing meditation every day and suggested that I go to the San Francisco Zen Center. I met Suzuki Roshi at the Zen Center, and he taught me meditation. I was so anxious, nervous and restless I couldn’t sit still. There was a huge balcony outside the room where people sat meditation and Suzuki Roshi had me sit meditation there.

I thought I had become enlightened. I went home and threw away all my writings from the war and from before the war. I threw away most of my books and possessions. I lived in a room with a mat on the floor and nothing on the walls. I had given away all my military clothes and my medal for bravery in combat. I gave my Navy Commendation Medal with the Combat V to Steve Hayton. He was the a guitar player who I met staying a Jimmy’s place.

I still occasionally smoked some pot and about once a week took some LSD to ‘clean my head out’ from the depression that I was experiencing. Stella told me that there were jobs available at the Post Office. It was getting to be winter in San Francisco and I didn’t know how long I could stay on the streets selling newspapers.

Jimmy and Steve left the house where they were living and moved more up to the Haight Ashbury. They moved into an apartment on Fell Street in San Francisco. Now, there were many people coming by to hear Steve and Dave play acoustic guitar. They would play all night long, hours upon hours of jamming and riffing. I would be dancing around and everyone else would be dancing, also.

I fell in love with a woman named Brooke. She was working at the Post Office. I was very in love with her. She would read fascinating books and have fascinating ideas. She loved me and also tried to get me off the drugs. She also introduced me to people from the Sexual Freedom League where everyone walked around with no clothes.

Next thing you know I'm going to the jam sessions with Steve and Dave and taking off my clothes. I had already become the sensation of the Haight Ashbury known as 'The Crazy Guy, who really is crazy.' Now, I was so far-gone that it just freaked people out. I became a celebrity of weirdness.

The San Francisco scene had become flooded with people. Everyday Volkswagen buses and Volkswagen Beetles with hippies from all across the country were leaving their towns and coming to San Francisco. There were so many new faces, so many new people. Once we had known everyone, now the city was filled with people who we didn't know.

In August a newspaper came out called "P.O. San Francisco". It soon it changed its' name to the "San Francisco Oracle." They had run an article about me as a Vietnam Veteran. I had also done a radio show on KPFA with Elsa Knight Thompson about my experiences and my misgivings about Vietnam. I had read some of my anti-war poetry at peace marches around Berkeley, but I wasn't able to maintain any political involvement. I was struggling to keep myself sane. I was debating whether drugs were hurting or helping me. I was trying to keep constant in my meditation practice. I was struggling with my stability.

Then, an old friend of Stella's got thrown out of his apartment. He came to live at my place. His name was Neal Cassady. He was the person who traveled with Jack Kerouac in the book "On the Road.". Neal said, "So, you've been to Vietnam. You need to take more drugs. If you want to live high, you got to get high."

He said, "Your problem is that you haven't been high enough!" So, I started taking LSD every day around Neal. He assured me that he didn't want any LSD. He took only speed. And, also almost every one or two hours he would go around San Francisco and talk them out of some pot. He knew everybody. I got to know everyone in the scene.

We found a guy who was strung out on heroin and had a Volkswagen van. Neal would drive the van around with the guy shooting up and passing out. I would be sitting between them.

Neal would drive around town talking a mile a minute, making up stories, telling biographies of jazz musicians and recounting the history of the whole of hip culture. Neal had everything right at the top of his head. He was able to talk for days. He had been everywhere and seen everybody. He had a life of constant exploration and motion.

Externally, he looked like a cowboy from the west. Internally he was a walking encyclopedia of literature and history. The books that I was reading, "Howl" by Alan Ginsberg, and "Coney Island of the Mind" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and "Mexico City Blues" by Jack Kerouac, were books that Neal had lived.

Some of them were books that were written about Neal. He had heard the clicking of the keys while the authors wrote their books. He had been in the room, talking over their shoulder, guiding them while they wrote. He had also been so frantic that he had spent years on the streets and in cars, living and driving in America.

He was able to drive a car through San Francisco and never hit a red light. There wasn't a person who he didn't know. He would drive up to 710 Ashbury Street and introduce me to Jerry Garcia. He would spend hours at the home of Gavin Arthur and talk about astrology. There wasn't a person or a subject that he didn't know about. He said that he liked to dress like a cowboy because he had been busted once for three joints and never wanted to go back to prison. He would stay up all night sometimes and walk around the apartment and talk to himself.

He was too afraid to go out on the streets. When he was that wired and it was too late at night-he was afraid that he would be busted again and sent to prison. He wanted to avoid prison at all cost. Finally our Volkswagen van broke down and we had to find a new car. It was just before the New Year of 1967.

We hooked up with some college kids from Redding, California. I had met them on the streets. They wanted to stay at my place. I said, "You can stay at my place, but we need to use your car to get around town." They said, "O.K." I said, "There's one other thing. The guy who is my room mate loves to drive and he is the one who will be driving your car." They said, "Well, that's O.K. with us."

They gave the keys to Neal, we jumped into the car and we drove back and forth over the Bay Bridge, Neal talking a mile a minute.

During our travels that night, we went to one party that was at a house of the rock band "Loading Zone." We got to the house and as we drove up a guy fell out of a tree that was in front of the house. He was high up so he splattered out on the sidewalk. A crowd gathered around him. They were going to call for help.

Neal said, "Bad vibes." We jumped back in the car and drove around some more.

Then the guys from Redding said “we want to go hear the Grateful Dead and the Jefferson Airplane at the Fillmore.” Neal said “They won’t let me in the Fillmore.” They made a big deal about going to the dance and gave me and Neal tickets. We went to the Fillmore and they wouldn’t let Neal in the door. Neal said, “Let’s go to La Honda and we can celebrate the New Years with Ken Kesey. The guys were tired and they couldn’t keep up the pace with Neal. He went back to the car, told me to go inside and contact Bill Gramham or Jerry Garcia. They would get him into the concert.

It took me a while to get the attention of Bill Gramham. He had known me from spare changing out in front of his dancehalls and going to shows. I was what was known as “a regular.” I went up to him and said, “Neal Cassidy’s outside in the car, can you help to get him in?” He started yelling at me, “Neal Cassidy, Neal Cassidy. I’ve known this guy for years. Neal Cassady has that silver hammer. He’s a hazard, he’s a danger. He’s not coming in here tonight.” So, I went up front to watch the show. When the musicians were finished with their set, Jerry Garcia got off stage and I said, “Neal Cassidy is in the car and he wants to come in to see the show.” Jerry got all nervous and said, “Neal Cassidy, I can’t get him in here, it’s impossible. He’ll never get past the security guards. Don’t ask me to bring Neal Cassidy into the Fillmore.” Discouraged I went back out to the car and found Neal. I told Neal I couldn’t get him into the concert that night but that they were going to have breakfast in an hour and I would come back with some food. Before dawn Bill Graham and his staff served up breakfast. I got Neal a plate of breakfast and took it to the car.

The guys from Redding, myself and Neal all took off and went back to my place to crash for a few hours. When we woke up Neal said, “That was it, I’ve had it with San Francisco, I’m going down to Santa Cruz and live at Kesey’s place.” The guys from Redding had purchased some LSD.

Neal talked the guys from Redding out of 20 hits of it. We drove down to the Golden Gate. Janice Joplin and Big Brother were playing in the panhandle of the park. Neal took the acid, met the Hells Angels and left that afternoon with them for Santa Cruz. I never saw Neal again He died sometime in the spring in Mexico.

I had three paths that I could follow. One was the political path. I had grown disenchanted by the anti-war movement. They kept talking about veterans like we were animals, not smart enough to understand the war in Vietnam. I had, too, my own psychiatric condition that got worse the more I dwelled on anything to do with Vietnam and that got better when I just kept putting more experience between myself and my time in Vietnam.

The second path was Buddhism and meditation. I was too jumpy and nervous to be allowed in the meditation room. The other people at the Buddhist center seemed to have a gracefulness that I lacked. I was loud and noisy and didn’t seem to fit into their quiet world.



The third path was rock and roll and taking drugs. I wore blue jeans instead of velvet. I had denim shirts instead of paisley. I listened to the Carter family instead of Pink Floyd. I didn't fit here either. I decided I'd just take drugs. I was alienated from all groups.

Neal had said "If you want to live high, you got to get high." I took that maxim to the limit and I proceeded to get high and stay high. People wanted me to get high. They loved to get high with me. I found out that I could take other psychedelic drugs and fill in some moments when LSD wasn't effective. I tried to take LSD every day, but it didn't work. If I took it more than once a week all I could get from it was a light buzz. I found out I could take STP and psylisiben and mescaline to supplement my weekly acid trips. I was on the streets all the time, either being hustled to try drugs, or hustling someone get more drugs.

The "Human Be-in" happened. I was back with Steve and Jimmy, my friends from Vermont. We went to see the Human Be-in. All of us were high from many types of drugs. We came out in the Golden Gate Park and saw all the people. It seemed like a whole new nation was being born. People with flowers and shawls sweeping through the park, feeding each other, taking care of each other.

Only a year before I had been in the psychiatric hospital completely broken down from the war. Now, I was the 'new' Moe-blue jeans and flowers, part of the love generation. The reality was that I couldn't hold a job and I was addicted to drugs.

We all looked fresh then. But, within within a few months of daily drug taking we would be irritable and strung out. That day in the park I thought a whole new time was coming. That time would come, but not in the way that I envisioned it.

We danced to the music. we heard the poets talk about 'the new generation' and we went home thinking that we were part of something big.

For the next few months I was all over San Francisco, selling Barbs, taking drugs and falling in love. Off and on I had been with a woman named Brooke. I really felt that she was the person for me. She didn't take drugs and kept encouraging me not to get high. I told her, "These drugs had no effect on me, and they are a part of my life."

She would let me come over to her house, talk to her, read the morning papers and have conversations. We'd read some books together then I'd take off and hit the streets. She was working at the Post Office. I knew that this was a good job. So when I got a chance to work there, I was very happy. Even though it wasn't in the same branch where Brooke was, I did know what to expect from the job.

My job was loading mail trucks. I worked on the loading docks. The teamsters loved me. I was a strong ex-Marine who could load whole trucks with mail sacks by myself. I had a bicycle. I would ride my bicycle down to the Post Office and back home every day. I was strong from riding the bicycle and lifting the mail sacks. Plus, nobody at the Post Office seemed to notice or care that I was getting high all day. I didn't notice either. But,

the drugs started to take a toll on my coming to work. Some days I was just stoned to make it in.

Then, they transferred me to work in the Armed Forces Post Office. This must have been the same place that all my letters from the United States had gone through to get to me while I was in Vietnam. I hadn't realized that there was such a place. I started putting packages in giant containers that would be sent to Vietnam.

As I would see the names and addresses on the packages and parcels, I would start to think about the people I had known in Vietnam. I started thinking about would this person be killed or wounded. Was this person was still alive.

The disconnectedness of the people that I was working with terrified me. There was a war going on. People were sending packages to soldiers in combat. And yet, nobody seemed to care. They made jokes about the soldiers. Would drop kick the packages hoping that the contents would break.

I was feeling torn up on the inside, eaten away and destroyed. I decided that I couldn't go on. I quit. I was the only Vietnam veteran that was working at the Post Office. Nobody seemed to understand me. Nobody seemed to understand or care about my experience in Vietnam. Nobody seemed to care about the other people who were still in Vietnam. I had all this pain. I also didn't understand that I was still mentally ill and trying to drown out my fears and sorrows with drugs.

As much as I loved Brooke, she didn't seem to understand about my Vietnam experience either. Now, I was a washed out veteran who couldn't hold down a job and didn't know what to do with my life. I went to the Veteran's Administration and applied for help. There had been a guy in the hospital with me that when he got out he wanted to just go to the Veteran's Administration Hospital and live his life out on the psychiatric ward. I felt the same way. I went to there to apply for my benefits. The psychiatrist became angry with me. He said I was just there to get money and that there was nothing wrong with me. I started to cry, explaining to him how I kept trying to work, but couldn't hold a job. He said he didn't care. They accepted my eligibility, but they didn't want to provide any kind of treatment.

Back at my apartment I said to myself, "I've got to do something. I can't keep living in the city. Drugs and alcohol are killing me. I need to get back to the country." John and Stella had moved to Santa Cruz and were living in the hills outside of town. I went down and stayed with them. Stella showed me different opportunities for federal employment. Since I was a veteran I had the chance for a priority in federal jobs. I applied to work at Mount Shasta, California and a couple of other national parks. John and Stella assured that they would come up and visit me if I went to work in Northern California.

I felt angry, isolated and confused. I went back to San Francisco. Every body wanted me to keep getting high. The idea was that I would get clear if I got 'high enough'. Brooke was encouraging me to not do drugs, but instead enjoy reading and talking. I

thought that she was wrong. She didn't understand me. What I needed was more drugs. I was really stoned and loaded when I got the notification that I had been accepted to work in Mount Shasta.

My friend Steve was a great guitar player. So everyone had given him lots of free acid and lots of free pot and hashish to keep playing guitar. So I had unlimited access to these type of drugs and to the music scene. I had run out of money. I had decided to take the job in the Forest Service and move up to Mount Shasta. I could take some LSD along with me, since people had said that it was being used in psychiatric hospitals to make people well. Patients had become enlightened by taking acid. I wanted the pain, the sorrow, the depression and anxiety to go away. I did experience euphoria on almost all my acid trips. Smoking pot made me giggle a lot and eat a lot of ice cream.

I went to Mt. Shasta to work for the Forest Service. When I got there we were put into giant camps that reminded me of boot camp. We lived in a barracks and learned how to fight forest fires. I had the chance to be assigned to a small guard station that was miles from anyone. The station was called Harris Springs and was way up in the middle of the National Forest. I would do my job on the weekdays and then take some acid and walk around the woods. I was a natural living in the woods. I felt comfortable and I never got lost. I enjoyed my time with nature. I would see bear and deer. It was a beautiful forest.

My first job was laying a telephone line from the town of Mc Cloud to the camp at Mt. Shasta. So, I had to climb telephone poles, with spikes on my boots, putting up the phone line. Then, the big lightning storms came and I had to go out and fight forest fires. I loved fighting fires. I loved working the chain saw, cutting the brush back, making the fire lines. I thought some day I'd go back and maybe become a smoke jumper and jump in out of airplanes to fight the fires and save the forest. Cooking my food on the embers of the old fires, sleeping out at night after a hard day of battling the fires was a dream come true. I loved the hard work and I was away from the politics and the regimentation of the US Forest Service.

The Forest Service seemed to be more rigid than the Marine Corps. Guys marching around being ordered about, being told where to go and what to do. This job seemed like what I wanted to be getting away from, the authoritarian, uptight hierarchy so similar to the military. I worked hard because I wanted to work hard, not because I was being ordered to.

By being in the mountains, I ran out of drugs and got back into meditation. I became totally drug free. That felt pretty good. I started eating macrobiotic food. My boss at the Harris Springs guard station lived in Chico, California. This was where they made Chicosan macrobiotic foods. He would bring me back Tamari, brown rice and rice cakes. I would do my forestry job, come back and meditate, eat my macrobiotic foods and write some poems.

We went through a phase where there were no fires and we planted trees. Once, during the summer, I returned to see Steve. Steve was back from New York, he had been

discovered as a guitarist and been re-created as a rock star. He had been in up state New York practicing with a group. When the group didn't work out he came back to San Francisco. Seeing Steve and his long hair, just playing guitar, being a free spirit made me feel like I had really sold out. I saw myself in the Forest Service with these up-tight, regimented officials and now I was becoming just like them. Working for the Forest Service was too much like being in the military all over again. I started to develop levels of worry and anxiety.

Cathy, who was someone who I had been in love before the war, was also in the San Francisco area. Cathy I had met in L.A. years ago, while I still at Camp Pendleton and before I had gone to Vietnam. I had written to her, and she had written to me. She wanted to be an artist, and I loved her artwork. I felt that she was artistically special and too sophisticated for someone like me. I was in love with her me but I never thought that she would love me.

She introduced me to a lot of ideas and perceptions. She had a new way of looking at life. She saw light on buildings, shapes and people that I never saw. She taught me how to illustrate. She taught me how to write using my handwriting as an expression of my personality.

That summer she stayed at a house in Walnut Creek where Indian musician played, and people studied Indian music. This musician was Ali Akbar Khan. When I visited, he was sitting on the floor playing his instrument. I never dreamed that I could have this kind of experience. Sitting in a room listening to raga music right in front of me.

I was leaving San Francisco and going to Mount Shasta. I thought that Cathy and I shouldn't be together anymore. I felt that she didn't appreciate me and didn't love me.

Brooke was the only woman in my life who I had turned away. Brooke was clear and loved me. Why didn't I want to be with Brooke. My mind was all confused. I didn't know who I wanted to be with. I wanted to find myself.

I felt inferior to Cathy as an artist. Yet, I was a snob who felt that I had more artistic talent than Brooke. Brooke was just a special person who really loved me. I didn't love her back. I would live to regret the decision to leave Brooke over and over and over in my life. I always remembered Brooke from the summer of '67. I left San Francisco lonely and with no one in my life.

Ironically, in San Francisco, '67 was called "The Summer of Love." This summer was to become famous all over the country. The Summer of Love wasn't so loving for me.

Most of the people I knew could no longer get marijuana or LSD. They ended up taking heroin. People were strung out and dying. It had gone from "turn on, tune in and drop out" to just "drop dead." People went from being beautiful people with flowers to angry people with clubs and guns.

I went back to the Mount Shasta mountains. My life in the mountains looked good. I wanted to complete my work at the Harris Springs Forest Station. John and Stella came up with Judy, and her son, Neal. Judy was someone whom I had always admired and dreamed that maybe we could be together some day. She'd never been interested in me and had always been with someone else.

Then, we ended up making love out in the middle of the woods by Medicine Lake. I felt that I was in love. I would love her, take care of her and her son and we would live together in the country. I kept searching for love. Someone to love me and I would love them.

Going to the country was the big dream for everybody in the Haight. Everyone wanted to get away from the drugs, the death and the filth of the city. I knew how to go to the country and live in the country. I thought Judy and her son could live with me and we could be happy forever in the mountains. Then, Judy went back to San Francisco and I never heard from her again.

I had blown three relationships that summer with Brooke, Cathy and Judy. I started to get really depressed. Instead of living in the country I saw myself as being trapped in the woods.

The guys I worked with in the forest service took on an air of being paramilitary types. We were marching people around with buckets and shovels. I loved putting out the forest fires because I was out of the camp, off the base and everybody would leave me alone. The minute I got back to the base camp-My boss Herb would order me around to do all kinds of meaningless work. For instance, I would have to 'clean the campgrounds' although nobody had even camped there. We were so far removed from civilization that we almost never saw another human being.

Then, Cathy came up from San Francisco. We ended up making love. I was back in love with Kathy. I thought to myself "Well, I'll leave the mountains and go to live with Cathy." I was getting more and more confused. I didn't know what I should be doing. Working or not working. I didn't know who loved me or who I loved.

Cathy left and I was very lonely in the mountains. My friend Steve was in San Francisco. I didn't know if he would leave or stay. I got a letter from Cathy. She was back in LA. I was grinding along all alone. I was eating macrobiotic foods, mediating and trying to cool myself out. I kept thinking that I could hold it together. If only I could hold on for another two months. I would have some money in my pocket and be able draw some unemployment insurance after forest fire season was over. We only worked six month out of the year.

So there I was, starting to fall apart, meditating five and six times a day, trying to cool out and nothing was working. Then, I erupted.

I first knew I was in trouble because Herb's face started to take on the luminescence glow. Then, everybody else's face was starting to glow. I was lucky because I wasn't hearing things in the middle of the night. The wind in the trees seemed to override the whispers and voices I'd heard before.

But, I wasn't sleeping at night and I was again filled with terror. I was starting to think that bears were going to devour me. I started hearing sounds prowling around my tent. I mentioned to my boss that I was feeling a little jumpy. He told me "A little hard work wouldn't hurt you." He said that I needed more things to do.

He started to act like some of people whom I had served under in Vietnam. He was giving all kinds of commands and not doing any work himself. His face even had that rigid, righteous look of 'someone in charge'.

I kept trying to explain to him that what I was experiencing might be a little more than being jumpy. He shrugged it off. Then one day he started saying something to me while we were parked in his truck. I started wordlessly screaming in the truck, in the middle of the woods. I was screaming and screaming and screaming. Screaming in mental anguish.

I took my head and bashed it into the windshield. I broke the windshield as if my head were a baseball bat. I hadn't smashed my head in a long time. I had beaten my head several times into the walls right after the war in Vietnam when I was trying to live in San Francisco. While once driving with John and Stella, I had taken an 'Etch a Sketch' pad and busted it over my head.

Herb begged me to stop screaming. He would drive me back to the Harris Springs station. I could rest. He said, "Don't worry about a thing."

I felt like my brain had short circuited. I felt like my brain was blowing fuses. I was totally stunned and dazed. My whole head was swimming. I was tired, exhausted. Yet, I couldn't rest. I sat in the dark tent with the flaps all down and tried to get myself together. I would meditate for five minutes, change my leg position and meditate for another five minutes.

I was afraid to get up and start walking around. I was afraid that I would get lost in the woods. The director of the Forest Service had driven up with some other people. He asked me if he could come into the tent to see me. He looked at me and said, "I think it's time for you to go back to your people." He wanted me to return to San Francisco and not come back. All I could do was mumble "O.K." I tried to sleep that night, but couldn't. The next day they drove me down to the bus station. I got on a Greyhound and went back to San Francisco.

The problem was I had no place to live and almost couldn't speak. I was starting all over again with a new onset of madness. This time it wasn't quite as bad as it had been in

Vietnam, but it was bad enough. I was left totally incapacitated. I felt like I had lost everything, my job, my chance to have a girlfriend, a place to live.

John and Stella said that they wanted to move to New Mexico permanently, and maybe I could scout out a place for them. I figured, hey, if I'm going to be homeless why not be homeless in the mountains rather than be homeless on the streets. At least in the country even if I couldn't hold a job or keep a place to live I could get a tent and a bedroll and live outside.

I took off hitchhiking for New Mexico. I got a ride to Palo Alto and slept out under the stars in the woods around Stanford University. The next day I got a ride all the way to New Mexico! The guy who gave me the ride was a little startled. He kept saying, "You look a little nervous. You seem distracted. Is there anything wrong?" I felt like telling him that I had just become psychotic a few days ago and that I was going to live in the mountains. But I didn't have the nerve to say that to him. So I just kept repeating in a mumbling voice that I had to get to New Mexico. That I needed to be there. He told me not to worry that he would just keep on driving. He drove all night and we finally got to New Mexico.

He left me out in Albuquerque and I started hitchhiking up the highway to Santa Fe. Stella had wanted me to meet and get to know a poet named Robert Creeley who lived in La Placitas. I was just too out of my mind to talk to anybody. I kept trying to stabilize and couldn't. I had all this raw energy running through me.

The only thing that I could do was go like hell, all day long and hope that I could sleep at night. I got to the mountains in Santa Fe and rolled out my bedroll under the western sky. I felt like I had found a home. I felt comfortable and safe in those foothills looking up at the mountains. I knew how to find my way through the pinion forests of shrub pine. I could make a campfire, get some canned foods and live. I kept hitchhiking the next day. I kept hitchhiking the next day up to El Rito.

Stella had another contact for me to look up in El Rito. His name was Larry Bird. I got to El Rito, found an empty farmhouse and went to sleep. The next day I moved into a commune of 'revolutionaries' called the Diggers. They wanted to start free cities in New Mexico. I had already worked with the Diggers passing out free food in San Francisco. I had hung out at the Free Store in the Haight Ashbury. In El Rito I got my own room. I laid out my bedroll and rested. I thought that here. I could take the time to get stable.

Everyday I walked in the mountains. I came back to the house, chopped some firewood, and went out walking again. I was exploring the land around El Rito. There was an old Indian pueblo, a ruin, out on the plains below El Rito. I went out there and found scraps of Indian pots that had been broken and left for centuries. At one time this valley had supported thirty thousand people. Now only a few hundred people lived in the town.

Someone gave me a book about Saint Francis, written by Nicholas Katsansatis. I was in heaven. I could live in those mountains, read the book about Saint Francis and try to live with the animals. The people at the commune were starting to make me very nervous.

They couldn't chop firewood, they couldn't cook and they couldn't clean up. They wanted me to teach them how to do armed struggle in the mountains. They didn't seem to realize that I had gotten out of Vietnam and I didn't want anything to do with shooting anybody. War was out of my life.

I liked walking in the mountains as nature hikes and not as part of long distant military patrols. They kept talking about setting up base camps. I kept thinking everybody in town knows where we'll be and will be able to find our campsite. They kept talking about the local people would have a popular uprising and follow 'us'. I kept seeing us a bunch of scraggly hippies that nobody in town wanted to talk to.

My decision was to go off and live alone in the mountains. I knew that it was better to strike out on my own and live in the woods and that is what I did.

I was hiking around through the pines and washes when I met Larry Bird. He was in his pick up truck. He asked me what I was doing. I said "Just hiking around looking for a place to live." He said, "Why don't you come stay in my pasture. You can pitch your tent there." I took him up on the offer. I had a little orange tent and a sleeping bag. He told me that I could eat at the house if I wanted to, and go hunting with him in the fall.

I met Larry's brother Charlie and Harold. They were very nice. Harold spent a lot of time hanging out at Larry's house with us. Larry wanted to see my poetry. He loved my poems. He had been a writer and a painter. He had once produced a lot of art still did on occasion.

Larry knew everyone. Alan Ginsberg had lived with him. Gary Snyder had lived with him. Emmet Grogan, one of the founders of the Diggers, had lived with him. He had liked Emmet but really had some reservations about the Diggers.

Larry thought that life was very precious and that the taking of an animal's life was something special. Killing an animal for food had to be done with a lot of ceremony. There are prayers of respect for the living animals and prayers for the animals that had died. He didn't believe in killing humans at all.

If animals were to be killed and eaten, then they had to be prayed for and respected. Every part of the animal was to be eaten or used. Nothing could be discarded. The skeleton was then given a burial and a ceremony was performed.

There was a ceremony and a ritual for everything all day long. The routine and the different jobs of the day care a prayer and song. Getting out bed, putting on shoes,



chopping firewood, carrying water and working in field were some of tasks which were accompanied by prayers and song.

Days were started by prayers and then ground corn was dropped in little piles to celebrate different corners of the world. We celebrated the world we live in and the earth we live on every day. Each tree, each bush, each rock, each animal and each person was seen as a personality with a spirit. The wind, the sky, the sun and stars, and especially the clouds all had characteristics of people and people had characteristics of natural spirits.

Larry's wife had been named Tall Pine. She was tall, very blond and from Kentucky. Her aunt had been wealthy and moved from Kentucky to retire in New Mexico. Cese had come to New Mexico, met Larry and fallen in love. This was a scandal in her family because he was an Indian.

Larry's family was from both Santa Domingo and Laguna Pueblo. Larry and his family had taken Cese in and shown her how to bake bread in the oven. Native American's are taught to not ask questions. Their life is based on watching somebody and learning from them by observations. Questions are considered to be rude.

This works if you are raised in the Pueblo. But for Cese this was hard. She was trying to learn ways of cooking and cleaning that were based on rituals and prayers. It was very hard for her. Larry was good about teaching her how to prepare the deer, how to lay out the meat, what parts needed to be dried, what parts needed to be cooked, and how to bury, or lay the skeleton of the deer to rest the next day.

One day Larry and I traveled to Espanola. This was a small city below El Rito. I used to go there to get food stamps. While there I met a man named Martinez. He had a dry cleaning business. I was walking by on the street and he called out to me to come in and see him. I was with Larry and we walked into visit. He had heads of all the different animals that he'd killed mounted on the wall. Larry spun about and got out of there quickly. When I got outside he said that none of those animals had been laid to rest properly and that he could here their souls screaming.

Larry seemed to know the way everything moved together in nature. He could walk through it without making a sound. He seemed to know the deer, the birds and the trees. I had never met a person who was more attuned to nature.

From my time in the Marine Corp I was able to hike long distances and move through the mountains quietly. But Larry was much more skilled than I was at moving through the mountains. I might scratch against an occasional tree branch or hit a stone wrong under my feet as I was moving along the trail. Larry always seemed to glide, and he had a special song with him where ever he went.

A friend of Larry's from the Institute of American Indian Arts came to visit. His name was George Burdeau. He was from the Blackfeet Reservation. He had his old Army field jacket and he fit in perfectly with Larry and myself. We would walk and collect firewood to get ready for the winter. Everybody in New Mexico prepares for winter. Winter is the big time of year. If people aren't prepared for winter it can break their spirit and leave them destroyed. Those big mountain snowstorms dump a lot of snow on Northern New Mexico. You don't want to run out of firewood. We were bringing in truckloads of firewood for the house.

George, Larry and I got to know each other and the forests of New Mexico. Cese came into some inheritance money. Larry decided that he could afford oil paints and he would start to paint again. Winter would be a time of being locked away and painting pictures.

Larry and George were great painters. At one time they were thought to be the most outstanding American Indian artist of the Indian Art School in Santa Fe. Their pictures were beautiful. The whole time Cese kept cooking and making great Native American food. Her tortillas, beans and deer stew was some of the best food I had ever eaten. Tortillas, flat bread, sopa pia, stews, bountiful breakfasts and incredible dinners.

She had turned into a very spiritual person about Native American things. She had learned the rituals and prayers and was able to move through her life with a great deal of grace and dignity. She was always thankful for everything. The whole house was based on a philosophy to be grateful and thankful for the life that we had.

Larry took the money from the inheritance and we drove to San Francisco. In San Francisco Larry wanted to buy oil paints for his art and he wanted to spend time with some people who he knew from the literary scene. We stayed at Lenore Kannel's house. She had written a book of poems called "The Love Book."

This book of poems was seen as obscene by the courts and the police had tried to arrest sales people in the stores that carried her book. It was a beautiful book about a woman's sexual expression. Her husband was one of the Diggers and kept talking to Larry about using his rifle and going out and starting a revolution. This kind of talk would make Larry very sad. He couldn't understand why people had this obsession to shoot each other. The Pueblo tradition is always no violence towards other people.

I told Larry all about the Avalon Ballroom and the dances there. We went to see the dances and a group called Mother Earth. If I had been able to dance well before I went to the mountains, I was really able to jump up and down at this show. I had all that strength in my legs from walking through the mountains. I had all the strength in my back and arms from chopping firewood. I celebrated the music and went wild that night. Larry and George were amazed, they had never seen anyone enjoy music that much. The band kept asking me what kind of songs I liked. What did I want to hear. It seemed as though I had connected with them and they with me. I just said, "Nothin', man, just keep playin' on." And we rocked out into the night.

I fell asleep that night in the back of Larry's pickup truck outside of Lenore and Bill's apartment. The next day we were going shopping for a bow. Larry had decided that guns were too much and that humans didn't know how to use guns. He was going to go back to using bows and arrows. We went to the bow shop and started trying out different bows. We all bought our bows. Mine was a fifty-two pound bow. This referred to the amount of 'pull weight' that it took. That was the correct size according to my strength. We went back to New Mexico with our art supplies and bows.

We practiced with our bows and I became a pretty good shot. Larry was sensational and George was great. The way Larry moved through the brush and trees was beautiful to watch. He had a sense of movement that I had never seen in another human being. It was almost as if he danced with the earth. He never made a sound, he only moved, and sometimes you could barely discern him moving.

He knew how to move against the backdrop of the forest so that he was almost unseen. He was floating like a leaf across the earth. You might see a glimpse and then stillness. He left no mark on anyplace he had been. It was as though he hadn't been there at all. Larry had always said that he wanted his life to be the art. He didn't just want to make paintings.

I finally understood what he meant about becoming living art. His figures in his painting of motion, his artistic images of Indians moving through clouds and trees-these images he became when he hunted.

Larry had me washing off in the river so that I could toughen up for living in the tent during the winter. That winter I would be staying in the tent in the meadow of his farm. Larry started taking me hunting. I wasn't proficient enough with the bows and so we had to go back to using guns. Hunting season is chaos in New Mexico. Pick up trucks with campers on the back filled with drunken guys. Beer bottles everywhere. They walk around the woods drunk and hung over with cannon sized rifles trying to kill a deer.

I was glad that I was off the booze and felt pretty cleaned up. I hadn't had any drugs or liquor in several months. I had stopped using when I came to New Mexico. Walking for hours in the mountains had made me very healthy and my head very clear.

The sound of the wind in the trees always put me to sleep at night and I didn't hear the noises and voices of my schizophrenia. Larry gave me a 22 caliber rifle to go hunting with. We did some target practice and I started getting very edgy with a gun in my hand. I liked Larry and I wanted to go hunting with him. The little 22 fit well in my hands, but the shots brought back memories of Vietnam. I went out hunting with Larry and tried to kill my first deer.

I realized that if I was going to live in the mountains I was going to have eat more than bread, cheese and fried potatoes with ketchup. That was my diet when I lived alone in the woods before meeting Larry. Larry's wife had made my life paradise. There was always food and every meal was so well prepared that it looked like a painting itself.

Tortilla's heaped in baskets covered with bandannas, turkey meat, rabbit, blue corn meal, muffins, bread and puddings, every chili dish imaginable. Cese was able to make all these great native dishes. Each dish was in beautiful clay bowls with little red chilis on the top garnishing everything. I had never eaten so much chili. Larry told me that eating all this chili would give me a lot of vitamin C and keep me from getting a cold. I never did have a cold that winter.

We ate our breakfast then went hunting all day. Larry shot a deer and brought it home. There was a whole ceremony, a receiving of the deer into the house, a praying over the spirit or soul of the deer. Many things were done in secret and I stayed out of the house catching glimpses of Cese running back and forth doing some rituals and attending to Larry who was praying and preparing an altar for the deer.

My turn to shoot a deer and bring it home had finally come. I saw the deer through the clearing and knew that this would be the deer for me. I put the gun up to my shoulder, pulled the trigger and dropped the deer. But, the deer didn't stay down. The deer got up and bounded away, bleeding all over the light snow. Larry came running up. He was worried. This was a bad sign. The deer were little brothers. They couldn't be shot and left in the mountains. We had to kill them, cut up and brought home to eat.

We walked and walked and walked, looking for the deer. We followed the blood and hoof prints for miles. Larry could follow hoof prints over rocks and cliffs. He knew how to read the paths where animals traveled. He knew how to think like the animal, to know where the animal would go to get food and water. We never found the deer. The blood gave out and the tracks vanished. It was as if the deer had disappeared into the air. Larry said, "This is a bad sign. No good will come of this." He had to 'clean' me spiritually because the soul or spirit of the deer would be in anguish. I had a take on the deer's pain and anguish because I had been the one who shot it.

We went back to the house that night and I felt miserable. I didn't like guns. I hadn't wanted to shoot anyone or anything since the war. I had thought that to live in the mountains I would have to hunt, even though I didn't like hunting. I went to my tent, and thought, prayed and hoped that I could do better the next day. We went out hunting for several days. Every where we went there was a strange absence of deer and deer prints.

This time Larry didn't have to tell me that this absence of deer was a bad sign. We walked for several days and there were no animals to be seen. We broke up and went our separate ways. We stayed within shouting distance of each other. I was out on an old logging trail by some big, tall pines. The wind was in the trees like always. All of a sudden, I felt like there was a storm coming. The wind was blowing, true, but there was another sound building up to a roar. The trees weren't moving as they would have been if it was a storm. I was surrounded by this sound. I fell down frightened, sobbing and crying. That is when Larry found me. He had sensed that something was wrong and he had come looking for me. When he found me he said, "Spirits."

Spirits seemed to roam all through New Mexico. Most non-native people never saw or heard them, because if we did we would be crushed, just like I was crushed that day.

My friend John had said that he always met people looking for God, but that if they ever really met God, God would overwhelm them and would break them like a twig in a storm. I didn't meet God that day but whatever had swirled around me and left me there was too powerful for me.

I had lost my interest in hunting. I said that I would never carry a gun again.

(A year later in those New Mexican woods a splinter of chopped firewood flew into my shooting eye, my right eye, and I would never be able to look down the barrel of a rifle again. My vision would be gone in my right eye.)

I went walking with Larry, not wanting to shoot anything, just enjoying the forest. I realized that I could live in the mountains and be a good farmer. Larry had been a great farmer. He and Cese maintained the garden well. We ate the food all winter that they had grown during the summer. After hunting season, early winter is a time of story telling and reflection about the year.

We would go into town and sit around telling out stories to a local painter who ran a coffeehouse. He loved to hear the stories that we told. My stories came out as songs. So I would sing song after song. We would drink a few glasses of wine, sing songs and go home in the evening. Cese didn't like to the painter's house because his paintings were of crucified women.

Larry, Cese, George and I sometimes went to Santa Fe to meet with the director of the American Institute for Indian Arts. We would paint and write all day long for weeks, then go into Santa Fe for a couple of days. Santa Fe seemed like such a big town to us then. El Rito only has a few hundred people. Santa Fe was the biggest city in Northern New Mexico.

There were still dirt roads going through Santa Fe. People lived in remote little houses scattered around the Santa Fe.

There was a trading post on the plaza of Santa Fe where you could buy Indian blankets made by Pendelton. Larry picked out my first colors for an Indian blanket and told me these were the colors that I had to guide my life by and that the blanket would help remind me of my true self. The colors were coffee brown, orange, red and black triangles, and on the other side of the blanket there were greens, maroons, and yellow.

We started going to the dances at Santa Domingo. Larry had relatives there. One of the people in the house was Larry's uncle's grandfather. He was 93 years old. He was sitting in a chair singing songs all day long. He knew every part of the day and had a song that complemented the parts of the day. He had a song for waking up, for morning chores, for afternoon work, for evening supper and night time.

He spoke a Native American Pueblo dialect that was older than what was currently spoken. He had been herding sheep in those mountains since just after the Civil War. He had lived a long time. Many people in the Pueblo couldn't understand what he was saying. He would sit in the room and sing his songs all day. While outside the life of the pueblo would go on through song and dance.

When the Santa Domingo Pueblo dancers emerge from the kiva they form lines with pine boughs and shake and move in a way that looked like the earth was moving. They seemed to be able to duplicate the actual vibrations of the earth. They cause an interchange between humans and the earth.

One day at the dance for the old people it was very cold. There were no tourists, just the Pueblo people. While they danced a small dust devil stayed at the end of the plaza. It was like a spirit was overlooking these aged dancers and enjoying their time together.

The singing sounded like it came from deep within the earth. I had never heard music like this before. Voice, drum and rattles.

When I had had extreme episodes of schizophrenia and had seen that luminescence in people's faces, I sometimes would look out and see waves coming off the land. These undulating waves that I would see were rhythmically similar to what I experienced at the Pueblo dances. The beat of the drum at the dances was what also seemed to be the heartbeat of the land.

Sometimes I wondered if schizophrenia was like having a primal mind. I and other people with schizophrenia had opened up in a way that was so powerful that we left very apart from the modern world. Our visions and voices had no place in the modern world.

Maybe a thousand, two thousand years ago or more, people were able to see and understand vibrations from the earth and what that meant. They would come to know the spot on the earth where they lived. They had a lived which accommodated and lived in harmony with the vibrations from the land.

Each part of this earth has a rhythm and a beat. We might be more influenced by the land than we think. Ancient people would come to terms with their existence and share their lives with their place on the planet. How many of us can pick up a piece of soil in our hands and know what that lump of the land means. How many of us know the land right underneath our feet.

Ancient people were able to create songs and dance that brought them in harmony with the land. These songs and dances are relived today in the Native American Pueblo along the Rio Grande.

There was some understanding between people and land that went so far back in these ceremonies. I realized that people had been passing on these songs and dances for

centuries and I was able to glimpse backward into time a thousand, two thousand or more years.

I cried many times as this realization became so great. I felt very small and knew that I was just a temporary blip on the screen of life. There was so much before me, so many people, so much history, so much personal history, so many stories and so many songs. We left the pueblo after the dances and went back up North.

We went back to El Rito. We'd rest, draw, paint, and have discussion about Native American values and beliefs. Spring was coming and I was preparing to move up into the mountains to live on my own. Larry suggested that I get a small burro and train the burro to take my camping equipment with me so I wouldn't have to backpack.

I could walk through the mountains, set up camp in different places and the burrow could live off the land. There was plenty of water and food for the burro in the mountains.

I bought a burro from a local farmer and brought him to live with me in the pasture. Larry showed me how to tame him. He said that cowboys treated animals horribly. They rode them and destroyed them and never got to know the animal.

He said that the best way to do this was to build special prayer fires and then when the fire burned low, after the prayers were sung, take the ashes, make a paste with water. Rub the burro down with this mixture. This would take the fire out of the burro. Do this everyday until I had made friends with the burrow. Larry said that humans were natural friends to the animals. We were to regain that lost friendship with the animals and make friends with them. The burro wouldn't help me unless I became a real companion.

In those days I was still experiencing aftershocks from the schizophrenia, so sometimes I would be very jumpy during the day and extremely nervous. I was able to sleep at night because the sound of the wind in the trees had a very calming affect on me.

Because of my jumpiness, I was having difficulty connecting with "Beans" which is what I had named the burro. Bean's coat looked like Pinto beans. With all the ashes and petting, we still were not connecting. My internal turmoil was being picked up by Beans. I continued to live in the meadow. Trying to stabilize myself, connect with Beans and prepare for my time to move up to the mountains.

Cathy came out from Los Angeles to visit. It had been a lonely winter and I was glad to see her. She was very happy that I was with other artists. She enjoyed her time drawing and writing. She was also a great cook and helped Cese around the house. What was even more amazing was that she connected with Beans.

Immediately, Beans loved her. Not only would Beans let her come up to him, he would follow her everywhere. He was more like a pet dog with Cathy than a burro. He always

seemed afraid of me and I was afraid of him. We were both very jumpy. With Cathy, he was very calm.

Although every night when I got up to pee out under the stars, Beans would be outside my tent watching over me or looking in on me. He would watch me from a distance

Cathy stayed a couple of weeks and then went back home. I was back to being lonely again. I was thinking that I could love Cathy and that we could live together as artists in the mountains, but she didn't agree. She remained distant and never wanted to commit to staying together.

To be fair to Cathy she was always afraid that I would keep drinking and maybe start using drugs again. Myself, loaded on drugs and booze was very frightening to her.

During this time I was practicing my archery in the field with Larry. Shooting the bow and arrow every day. I was becoming very good and enjoyed watching the way the arrow flew from the bow. But, I was getting to the point where I didn't want to kill anything anymore. I just wanted to become a vegetarian again.

I didn't think I could ever hunt or kill an animal again. I would go rabbit hunting with Larry and George, out on the plains below El Rito. But, I became more interested in walking through the ravines observing how the small birds lived and what life out there was like.

Larry and George were able to get enough rabbit meat to keep the house well stocked with meat. The Native Americans eat the whole animal, so eating the baked intestines was a delicacy for them. It made me kind of sick because everybody's mouth was green from eating the rabbit's shit, which was mostly partially digested grass.

They also loved to eat the fresh, warm liver out of a deer that had just been killed. They take the liver out right at the spot of the kill, cut it in strips and eat it. I was glad to get back into vegetarianism.

I could see that there were parts of the Native culture that just didn't fit me.

I couldn't get Beans calm and I couldn't get calm around Beans. I could see myself just living up in the mountains and back packing everything up to the campsite myself.

The springs and winters of New Mexico blend together for several months. Warm some days and snowing on others. Unpredictable snows happen sometimes up until May or June. Life with Larry had gone very well. There were many drawings and poems.

I missed the life in San Francisco, however. I started subscribing to a new magazine called "The Rolling Stone". This gave me all the news about the Rock and Roll scene in San Francisco. But, I still thought that I could hold off and live in the mountains. I had gone from total torment and internal destruction to where I had some peace of mind.



Living with Larry, Cese and George had brought me so much peace of mind. I was still drinking heavily and unable or unwilling to get off the booze. I did have a very clean life compared to what I'd had in San Francisco. I was getting good sleep and eating well, not running the streets all day and all night.

I wanted a transition from Larry's to living up in the mountains on my own.

Then, Cese blew up. She started yelling, talking about what a drain I had been on the whole house. How I just told people what to do and I was trying to control their lives. She wanted me gone. She wanted to be alone with Larry. George could stay but I was go. And, I was going to have to go now.

My old tent was pretty worn out from the winter snows and living all winter in the pasture. So I ordered a new tent from Eddie Bauer. I got the tent, packed up my things and went to live in the mountains on my own. I was in my little camp ground up in the hills, and I was lonely and isolated. Larry brought me out to the side of the road and left me. I had to find a site and set up my little camp on my own. I stayed up there for several months with the spring snows and melting water. Then one day I walked out of the mountain to go to San Francisco and see my friends.

I packed up my things and left them with John and Stella in Santa Fe. By then, I didn't have much left. I'd either given things away or lost them. I took off for San Francisco. All my friends in San Francisco were glad to see me and I had many stories to tell about New Mexico.

Surviving a winter in New Mexico and living in the country was a big thing to many people. Most people couldn't get out of living in small apartments in the city.

I was back in the scene sharing an apartment with three or four people, smoking grass and taking acid every day, I lost the serenity and peace of mind that I had achieved in New Mexico. We traveled up and down the coast going to concerts in LA and around San Francisco. Camping out in California seemed pretty tame and easy after living up in the mountains of New Mexico.

That summer Steve really came into his own playing guitar. We were everywhere. We called ourselves "The Free City Band." We would go into people's apartments, set up, and just start to jam with other musicians. I was drinking and doing drugs all day every day and was a mess. I used to walk around completely naked at various apartments with a giant vacuum hose draped around my neck that I found in the garbage somewhere. I would sing to people. Elvin Bishop from the Paul Butterfield Blues Band was a favorite contributor. He loved to jump in and jam, to rock out all night long. Every night a new party and a new place to play. People would follow us around hoping they could hear the music. Steve was still in contact with the other people with whom he had been in a previous rock and roll band. He was thinking of putting together another rock and roll band. I suggested that we go to New Mexico, go up into the mountains, write

songs and come out of the mountains the greatest band in the world. He liked the idea, but said that he wanted to keep taking LSD every week to 'clear his head out'. He sold his guitar for a whole bunch of acid and we drove across country to New Mexico.

We came with Cliff, a drummer, Steve and myself. We had an old junker that completely broke down outside of Gallup. This was Steve and Cliff's in the Southwest. I made a little sign that said 'Help'. I stood on the side of the road trying to get a ride to a gas station. A state policeman came by and said, "Help", you don't need "help." There was a stay dog with puppies by the side of the road. She was yapping and yapping. He took out his gun, shot the puppies and said, "That's the kind of help we give out here."

Finally we got the car fixed and kept driving up to El Rito. I was able to pick up the tents, pots and sleeping bags from John and Stella. We drove up to a campsite that I had discovered next to a waterfall. We lived on the front side of the waterfall until we didn't feel safe from the local's from town who wanted to come out and party with the hippies in the mountains. By then, all the newspapers had carried stories about 'hippies', 'free love', drugs and booze in the newspapers and the local guys wanted in on it.

We moved our camp behind the waterfall where we couldn't be found. Once a week we would take LSD and walk through the hill and commune with nature. John and Stella were horrified and kept saying "Why are you doing this? You're already spaced out. Stop doing drugs. Stop drinking." Steve and I would try to write songs and make music. Cliff, the drummer, would beat on pots and be our rhythm section. We sat around the campfire, playing and singing all day and night.

I was back in the mountains. Eventually, I would listen to John, Stella and many other people. I stopped taking drug. The same mountains of New Mexico that gave me peace of mind also where able to give me the space to be away from people who used drugs and drank booze.

Learning how to live with nature and return to the country was saving me. Walking with the trees every day. There is a gentleness with nature. My mind was in such torment that this gentleness gave me peace. I couldn't have internal peace. I could have external peace.

There was a giant mesa up above El Rito called La Jara Mesa. Every day I would find a different path and follow it up to La Jara Mesa. Walk along the ridge lines. Dance with my arms wide open among the trees. Sing songs to birds, plants and animals. Tears of joy coming from my eyes. I didn't have the full peace of mind that I was looking for. I wasn't through mental illness. I could at least find out that my life was enjoyable. I danced and sang with the wind. The clouds looked on.

STARS

Stars

overhead

Stars  
pass  
through  
smokehole  
opening

New  
clouds  
cover  
up

Old  
stars

tomorrow  
night-

more  
stars

## A CLOUD IS MOVING

East  
to  
West

Horizon

Trees  
bending  
with  
the wind

New  
snows  
turn to  
old  
snow

footprints  
fade

on

the  
way  
to

I'm,  
becoming  
easy  
to  
get  
to

you  
can  
see

I  
thought  
so.

each  
day

my  
feet

my  
dreams

peaceful

a  
stream

a  
bird

a  
path

where  
we  
walked

could

you  
remember?

There  
is us

Over  
rocks

leaves  
fall  
still  
and  
its  
later  
in  
the  
year

to  
find  
a  
reason  
(can  
you?)

Slower  
in  
winter

We  
are  
moving  
into  
time of  
snows  
from  
the sky

a  
soft  
covering

on  
the

ground

to  
pass  
over

warm  
fire

returning

Look for me,  
dancing on the ridge line