

Upstate Warrior Solution and
Robert Chambers present:

The title 'BULLETS & BAND-AIDS' is rendered in a large, bold, black, distressed font. The word 'BULLETS' is on the left, followed by an ampersand '&' in the center, and 'BAND-AIDS' is on the right. To the left of the word 'BULLETS' is a detailed illustration of a bullet. To the right of the word 'BAND-AIDS' is a detailed illustration of a roll of bandage. The entire title is set against a white background.

BULLETS & BAND-AIDS

Art Show and Online Auction

*Auction information on page 82

We live in a free society; one whose foundation rests on the backs of those brave and generous enough to willfully sacrifice themselves for the ones they love. Some lost their lives, others, their souls, their innocence, and some came back better than they were at the start, fulfilled by their duty and spurred on by the triumph of the positive change they created. The goal of this show is to attempt to shed some light on a few of those.

Collected here are artists and writers, some of them veterans, some of them simply generous with their craft, but all wanting the same thing: For all of us to take a brief pause and consider the life we live and with whom we live it. Through this, our show is a communicative monument to the courage, sacrifice, and nobility of attempting to better the world in which we find ourselves.

In these pages you will discover different relationships that are key to our societal development, where two seemingly opposing sides, art and war, can come together in pride for one another. The first portion of this book deals with the veterans telling their stories, coupled with local artists expressing themselves with that story in mind. Following that are local artists, many of them also veterans, who wanted to contribute, not simply to raising funds for Upstate Warrior Solution, but to strive to communicate their passion for the subject to the rest of us.

This dynamic, this *dialogue*, can lead us to a higher understanding, spurred on by our social duty to care for our fellow man.

It's not an easy journey.

So may this show be as wind at our backs.

-Robert Chambers, FullChambers.com

Glossary

Local Veterans' Stories

Donny Ng.....	pg. 3
Art by Jessica Rene, Written by Jonathan Burgess	
Brett Claycamp	pg. 5
Art by Dre Lopez, Written by Robert Chambers	
Anonymous.....	pg. 10
Art by Rachel Thomason, Written by Robert Chambers	
Jonathan Burgess.....	pg. 15
Art by Sammy Lopez, Written by Robert Chambers	
Patricia Blackwell.....	pg. 21
Art by Miranda Peterson, Written by Patricia Blackwell	
Charlie Hall.....	pg. 27
Art by Melinda Hoffman, Written by Robert Chambers	
Mastin Robeson.....	pg. 32
Art by Jim Dukes, Written by Robert Chambers	

Local Artists

JJ Lanes.....	pg. 41
Chris Pace.....	pg. 44
Andrew Cooke.....	pg. 45
Brad Carraway.....	pg. 49
Alexander Coco.....	pg. 51
Dwight Rose.....	pg. 53
Vivianne Lee Carey.....	pg. 55
Sophie Brenneman.....	pg. 57
Roy Smith.....	pg. 59
Laura Garner.....	pg. 61
Lacey Musgrave.....	pg. 68
Rachel Thomas.....	pg. 73
Jim Dukes.....	pg. 74
Sammy Lopez.....	pg. 76
Miranda Peterson.....	pg. 77
Jessica Rene.....	pg. 79
Dre Lopez,,,,,,.....	pg. 80

Donny Ng

Through Smoke and Fire to Order and Peace

Tobias Wolff once wrote, “We are made to persist. That’s how we find out who we are.” That rings especially true in Donny Ng’s life. His journey to that self-defining persistence began long before his service as a young soldier in the U.S. Army. Donny was born in Hong Kong and emigrated with his parents to the U.S. in 1982 at the age of ten. He began learning a second language and was surrounded strangers in a foreign land. Family kept him going, spurned him on, and he persisted.

Just eight years later as he was graduating high school, a recruiter lured him into the military as a multi-launch rocket systems specialist. When he arrived at his first duty station, an unfamiliar radar unit in Germany, he didn’t even bother to unpack. Just a few months after graduating high school, Donny found himself in the rolling deserts of Saudi Arabia. The windswept sand dunes, parking lots, and rows of stiff cots were far from his parents and his wife, whom he had married just after basic training. Fear crept to the forefront of his young mind, but he pressed on. Three weeks later, ground combat erupted, and Donny was separated from the radar unit with whom he had bonded. It wasn’t long before he took these strangers as his brothers and waded into the fray alongside them.

Back in his assigned occupation, Donny and his brothers launched rockets at the enemy day after day. As they pressed out into the front, the Iraqis began lighting the oil fields on fire. The earth exhaled black smoke and belched fire until the blazing plumes blotted out the sun, turning day to night. Donny and his unit journeyed down miles of highway lined with burnt husks of cars and still-burning enemy tanks. Ever in the wake of desolation, Donny and his fellow soldiers pressed on. After one hundred and forty-six American warriors fell in just six months, Kuwait was soon liberated and troops began returning home in March of 1991. Tens of thousands of the enemy had been killed.

Donny soon removed his Army uniform for the sake of his family life, which had suffered greatly for his service. Though, Donny had already instilled in his own two sons the discipline, sheer force of will, and fraternity of uniformed service he had learned, eventually prompting them to follow in his footsteps. However, Donny’s need for resistance, the need to persist

against something *for the sake of something greater*, a need he had come to cultivate in the military and in his children soon took hold. Donny put on another uniform in 1995 as a police officer.

Once again surrounded by strangers in a common uniform, Donny soon took each of them as his brother in a different kind of fight. Rather than let his veteran status define him, Donny Ng allowed his experiences in the Army – and in the smoldering oil fields of war-torn Iraq – inform his identity. Donny persisted and remained unwavering. His new war was for order; his new battle was for peace.



Brett Claycamp

“If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” -Psalm 139:8-10

Few people know God’s grace like Brett Claycamp. Even those who have been filled with it, had it pour out of their soul, their marrow, and through their living skin, have had their faith so tested, and found it so undoubtedly secure. When someone loses a job, a home, or a loved one, they’re faith can become strained, fractured, doubt replacing the joy they felt in the certainty of their conviction. In fact, when tragedy strikes, most of us feel like striking back, if only for a second, if only to prove that whoever’s responsible is wrong for putting all these people through all of this hurt. But Brett knows better.

His trial began on May 16th, 2013 in the Wardak Province of Afghanistan, 12,000 feet above sea level and surrounded by snow capped mountains. This was his second tour, the sand, wind, and sun of Iraq already leaving his skin leathered, his mind that of a warrior’s, tempered and eager. He’d built up a momentum toward duty, toward the nobility of willful sacrifice for the greater good. He had found his place, his *home* in the Army, the men around him brothers fighting a war by his side, fighting for the common goal of their other families they’d left in the United States.

He’d spent three months in this inhospitable environment, intermittently patrolling around the compound between stints of working Base Defense Operations, meaning that they were on monitoring duty of the cameras surrounding the complex and acting as security, ready for whatever the Taliban wanted to throw at them. Every so often the satellite phones would work and some of the soldiers would be able to make phone calls back home, the juxtaposition of their daily lives to those with which they were in contact fueling their resolve and helping them maintain the reasons why they were there in the first place. Brett would use these times to call up his fiancée, a woman he’d known since he was twelve years old; a woman of such courage and dedication as to stand by her soon-to-be husband while he was fighting thousands of miles away.

On this particular day, he’d had to make a hard decision: Should he re-enlist, prolonging his career with his brethren in the noble fight for

peace? Or go home to his loving fiancée, whose yearning for him from such a distance was taking a heavy toll, but also to a world that had nothing else to offer him. He did what he always does when confronted with a hard choice. He prayed. Not to hear a voice tell him what was the right decision. Not for some sign that guided him toward alleviating the responsibility of the harsh choice before him. Brett prayed solely to feel God's grace; to be reminded of all the glories of the Earth, as well as the wonders of the kingdom of Heaven that waited for him. And through this, he found his answer.

His re-enlistment papers had already been drawn up and signed, waiting patiently to cement his trip further into war and the Hell that follows. So when he placed that phone call, he could feel the hurt in her. He could feel that pain, frustration, and sadness that she felt. He could hear her choking back tears as she spoke to him. He felt like she needed him, that something just wasn't right. There was a bittersweet pride in him as she told him "I know I can do it, but I'm tired of doing it." But he felt the tug of the Holy Spirit directing him to another place, so he told her the decision had been made. He had too much fight in him. Too much love and youth to let it slip from his fingers.

So he became angry. Not at his fiancée, given that it was her love that brought about this pain, but at the difficulty in finding a peaceful resolution to such a difficult problem. Brett didn't want to hurt those for which he cared so deeply. He wanted to fight for them like he had for years. Like he had done earlier that day on patrol through the rocky, dusty landscape of a foreign country filled with people that wanted him dead. So when this anger finally boiled over, Brett did something he regrets to this day. He hung up on the woman he loved.

Stubborn and filled with rage, he grabbed his M4 and stormed toward his barracks room, the stretch of doors filed out in monotony just one hundred yards from the Base Defense Operations building. He reached his room, proffering the key to the keyhole of his door... and his life went black for a second, loud, then light slowly found its way back to him, accompanied by a ringing in his ears so incredible that it overcame all other noise. He stared at his hand, holding out the key to a door that was no longer there. And then, in slow motion, he fell, his elbow slamming into the dirt as the ringing in his ears was slowly replaced with the frantic yelling of his comrades, his squad leader approaching with "Claycamp! Are you fucking okay?!"

He started feeling around his body, assessing the damage while they began cutting off pieces of his clothing, one guy not able to control himself exclaiming “Oh shit!” Finding holes in his stomach and chest, Brett reached his bloody fingers up to his neck to find space where there was once a part of him. As the ringing cleared more, so did the acknowledgment of his own screaming. After the full reality of the situation kicked in, Brett did what any good Christian would do. He began to pray. Out loud and for the world to hear, Brett prayed. And he didn’t stop until after they’d carried him on a stretcher to the helicopter that would take him to an Aid Station miles away. But as he was praying, something came over Brett, something strange and soft and comforting.

He realized that he was going to be alright, no matter what. He’d come to terms with death, with the destination in which he was invariably going to go. He knew he was loved and that God was taking him to a better place, where he would bask in the majesty of the Heavens as was granted anyone of such assured faith. It wasn’t that he had a vague idea, but rather that he knew it in his heart and soul, beyond a shadow of a doubt, and with the fortitude of the righteous. Once his praying subsided, secure that God was looking after him, a man from Army Special Forces began digging into the holes in his body to reassess the damage and call it in to the Aid Station for preparation of his arrival. Brett looked up with concerned gratitude, groggy from the drugs he was given and still concerned with the hole in his neck, and asked “Am I gonna die?”

The man reassured him and, due to the drugs, his genuine faith in the goodness of common people, and that he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he told the “Army Special Forces Guy” that he loved him. And the man showed him why he should, by bringing Brett to FOB Shank, an international base of operations that includes triage for those wounded in combat. While he was there, Brett woke up to an Army captain who, as a nurse, was tending to Brett’s wounds. The first thing he said to the man was “Call my fiancée.” So the man brought in a sat-phone and patiently waited for Brett to give him her phone number.

The ringing on the other end must have seemed like an eternity and when he heard his soon-to-be wife’s voice, his heart skipped a beat. But the connection was poor and, given that the man sounded like a Kenyan telemarketer, she promptly hung up the phone. He looked at Brett, smiled, and tried again. She answered and before she could say anything, the man said “It’s Brett.” And with that, she lost her bearing, but only for a second. You don’t grow up loving a warrior without turning into one

yourself, after all. She asked what had happened and the phone was given to Brett, who explained the devastating circumstances with the skill of anyone on that much medication. "Hey! I scraped my knee pretty badly but I'm good. I'll probably go back and be with my platoon pretty soon." With this, the captain left, giving the two the privacy needed in times such as these.

His fiancée knew better, knew something was wrong, but Brett wouldn't have it. He wouldn't, that is, until a couple of hours later, when he called her back. He was slowly acknowledging what was happening to him, slowly coming to terms with the aftereffects. So he broke the news that he was caught in the explosion of a 107mm rocket attack, no one else was hurt, but he would be coming back to the States soon enough. She did her best to maintain her composure and she did a great job, but Brett knew his future wife. He told her to call her father for support until he could return to America. 72 hours later and he was on his way. On hour 73, she was by his side, a wreck of a man physically, but having grown stronger through his faith. Blown up, but whole.

At no point did Brett question God's motives. Not while he was going through remedial therapy to begin using his right arm again. Not while recognizing his love of working out was stripped away. Not when the Army was taken from him. Not when he laid in the shower, crying because he didn't understand. He had arrived home, safe and with an opportunity at another life. God had shown him a new path. One devoid of such hostility and casual death, where negative aspects of himself were lauded. He looks at his life now, surrounded by those that love and respect him, a wife that stood by him through the worst trials life can offer, and two dogs that greet him at the door every day. He's now a key member of Upstate Warrior Solution, a nonprofit set up to help veterans, and still fighting, but on a different front.

Not all of us bask in the glory of God. Not everyone can find solace in their faith, especially during the hardest times of our lives, our audacious nature searching for answers to questions we don't fully understand. Yet there are those who can endure, having suffered loss and still finding strength in the Holy Spirit, even when tragedy has befallen them. However, in the midst of those righteous and true, who have been chosen to carry a burden most don't even think about, few people know God's grace like Brett Claycamp.



Anonymous

“Out of the night that covers me, black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul.” -William Ernest Henley

Dealing with the loss of innocence can make you strong or break you. The fleeting nature of it, of *innocence*, only acts to reinforce its value, driving us to hold fast until we can no longer afford it. And once lost, it becomes a mocking shadow, rubbing your face in the foolishness of your own ignorant hope. As elusive as an exhaled breath, it stays just out of reach, close enough to whisper in your ear. Through this exchange, we often replace otherwise steadfast virtue with the more brash, base portions of our lesser selves, like scars on soft skin, less beautiful, less pure than at the start. Then there are those whose scars have become trophies.

The protagonist of this story was born in Royal Oak, Michigan, a hard working, intelligent, driven woman with a passion for her chosen career. She was eleven years old when she first realized she'd wanted to join the military, staring at the television as the second plane crashed into the World Trade Center. She knew she would be what the military refers to as a “lifer,” serving her country with distinction and honor until her retirement decades later. So, fresh out of high school and eyes wide with potential, she became a sailor in the United States Navy. Born the oldest of four children, two sister and a brother, she had an innate sense of responsibility, so she chose the field of Master-at Arms (MA), the police of the Navy.

In May of 2012, things couldn't have been better. She was rated as an Early Promotable Sailor just after having picked up another rank, and was headed to what she thought would be a great duty station in the Bahamas. After she arrived, she reported to her chief (senior non-commissioned officer), who was also fairly new to the island. He asked what her duties had been at her previous station and what strengths she had. She told him about her experience as a primary dispatcher for the base and was quite accomplished. He smiled at her, said they didn't need dispatchers and set her post at the front gate on night shift because “they needed a woman on that shift.”

She began working with four men, all roughly her age, and after several weeks, the unit became as tight-knit as any family, spending free

time together and with the day shift. Until one day she heard that someone had trolled her Facebook account and had started a vicious, nasty rumor. She was shocked, angry, confused as to why anyone would want to start rumors about her in the first place. She did what anyone might do when they're trying to fit in, when their own innocent naivety was getting in the way. She let it go, continuing her professional standard in her duties.

A few weeks later and there was a 4th of July party, grilling out, drinking, and generally acting American. She hadn't had a drop of alcohol for several months prior and, not knowing better, didn't make her own drinks. Consequently, she got more a than little bit drunk. Her memory of the following hours was splotchy. She didn't remember much after she started drinking, only the foggy glimpse of two men half-carrying, half-walking her to her room and, a little while later, one of them holding her hair as she vomited. But none of this explained why she awoke the next morning, naked and in pain.

Words cannot fully describe the hurricane that went off in her mind. Terrified, scrambling for understanding, for solace, and barring that, escape. She ran immediately to the shower, trying to wash away the shame, doubt, fury and sense of intrusion. But the water just rolled off. Even salty tears did nothing to wipe away the stain she felt, heart-wracking sobs that were fair competition with the shower. Then, like so many with military training, she snapped back, pulling herself together to deal with what had happened. She was the new girl, so why would anyone believe her? What were the risks of speaking up?

Throughout the rest of her military career, she'd find out. Staying in the same company for several months afterward, she was batted around between the judgment of men and women she had once considered her peers and her seniors intentionally making her life more difficult, the understood threat that she posed dismissed under the idea that she was less of a human being for it. The albatross of her whistle-blowing hung heavy around her neck, hindering her effectiveness and stifling her ability to advance in her career, corrupting her self-perception and leading her to what so many do when they've lost all control of their lives. She developed an eating disorder. Working out and starving herself, she found just enough empowerment to stay sane. Just enough to continue her duty, so that those around her knew her strength and through that, she could recognize it in herself.

But when someone recognized her strength, when someone chose to show their concern at her plight, her "knight-in-shining-armor" would turn

out to have ulterior motives, both carnal and base. And those were just the men. The women treated her even worse, casting sideways glances on the backs of disdain, afraid and angry that she would have the audacity to rock the boat of an already tenuous circumstance, that being a woman in the military. Even when they began the investigation, when she did her best to downplay the incident to NCIS so that she could be left to do her job, she was outright accused of sleeping her way up the ranks, called a “slut” and a “whore,” forever shamed that she would have the impertinence to speak out about her own rape.

So wherever she went, she found herself treated as a pariah, a stain that was too stubborn to be washed out. Without a support base, without having a place to turn or a home to feel safe, she inevitably gleaned panic attacks, with bouts of debilitating suicidal tendencies. But she was a fighter, refusing to give up her hope that she could affect positive change to her world. But one night, a man bicycled through the gate she was guarding, heedless of her calls to stop. Concerned that she would be yelled at for harassment, as she had previously, she let him go. The man on the bike later complained that no one was on post, so she was promptly brought up on charges through the Uniform Code of Military Justice. To the point, her chief accused her of “fucking on the job,” though she had not proven to be so morally flexible.

The berating didn’t stop, but instead became worse, her command intentionally giving her duty assignments that overlapped, ensuring that she was viewed as incompetent and calling her capacity to serve into question. This constant bombardment by the men and women she had sworn to work alongside eventually took its toll, her suicidal thoughts taking root, just waiting for that moment of weakness, or maybe courage, to pull the trigger. So she made the phone call she had been dreading, was put onto a helicopter for emergency transport to a hospital in Florida. Once she arrived in Jacksonville, even the psychologist viewed her with reticence, a look of impatience crossing his face while she spoke through racking sobs about the way she was treated and how none of it made sense to her.

Four months later and she was considered fit to go back to duty, eager to once more be given a chance to do her job and do it well, the progress she’d made bolstering her resolve. A new command and a fresh start. Her senior chief, a man of character who was on his last weeks to retirement, did everything in his power to ensure she didn’t leave the Navy under negative terms. He made sure to “accidentally” step into the right offices to get her a job working with canines, the symbiotic nature of dealing with

dogs acting as both training and therapy. She completed her qualification for kennel support with flying colors, needing only patience for an open spot in the academy, given that funding was limited. Beyond that, everything was going well. Until her senior chief left.

The man that replaced him was aware of her history, was aware of the trauma she'd claimed and the indictment it had on his idea of the military. With a work ethic that matched his sloppy appearance, he had gained just enough power to abuse it, sucking up to his superiors while treating his subordinates like servants. Especially the women. This was made all the more frustrating because he didn't take care of his canine, preferring to lie on paperwork rather than put the hours in to train it. At one point, while they were training, he grabbed a handful of our protagonist's posterior, immediately throwing her back into the tumult of her past, leaving her shocked and afraid... again. When she had originally been taken advantage of when she was in the Bahamas, it happened several more times to other women on the base, so she felt a sense of duty to do what was right. She didn't want it to ever happen again.

When she approached the other female in her chain of command, the response was one she'd come to expect. "In a training scenario, that sort of stuff happens. It's okay," and she should stop being "another dramatic female." However, she had an obligation to go to the Master Chief to report it. Once this was made public, she was kicked out of the canine unit, forcing her to leave the dog to which she had developed an attachment. This marked the end of her military career, her steadfast attitude laid low by a system and stigma that would not take steps toward rectifying the injustice dealt to her. And even then, her command made it difficult for her to leave, refusing to allow her the time to get all the signatures she needed during the process of getting out. And to add insult to injury, the man that grabbed her ass, the one that didn't care about his own canine or the wellbeing of his subordinates, won the award of Sailor of the Year.

Years later and she has found the strength to voice her trauma, taking up a position that was denied her while she was in the Navy. She has spoken up at the Judicial Proceedings Panel in Washington DC, volunteering her story to promote a positive change, her work ethic now redirected toward reformation, rather than security. The council asked questions like "What if we made it easier for you to get out? If, upon filing a claim, we smoothed the process of you leaving?" Among the eight men and women on the panel, two from each major branch of service, all of them had the same answer. "No. This was our career. We shouldn't have

to get out of the military because of what somebody else did to us.” They said this because they found pride in their own fortitude, strength where it had once been stripped from them.

Their scars have become trophies. Where they could have chosen to compromise their own morals and ethics, exchanging the hope in their principled fortitude for the assurance that comes with “getting along with the crowd,” they retained their own pure natures. They held passionately to their own ideals, to their own hope, bloody, but unbowed. Where things like innocence can backfire, leaving us questioning what we held dear, mocking us with what we might have been, she discovered resilience. In dealing with her lost innocence, she found the depths of her own strength.



Jonathan Burgess

“Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered; And give ear, all remote places of the earth. Gird yourselves, yet be shattered; Gird yourselves, yet be shattered.” -Isaiah 8:9

The heat didn't give a shit. Not about the weight I was already carrying or my pregnant wife waiting for me back in California. Nor did it care about the bustling of nearby Marines, teeming back and forth from the vehicles and tents and a shared bloodlust set up as Camp Leatherneck. Instead, it slapped me across the face like a jilted lover or a spurned pimp, completely disregarding the burdens I was carrying on a thousand different levels. I was in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan. And it felt like home.

I hoped this was wrong, of course. I wanted my time in this country would only be a piece of what my life would afford in time. So every few hours I'd look at the laminated photos I'd taped together and fall into their context. On one side my beautiful wife, Kelly, who is a warrior in her own right. And on the other, my unborn son, Dominik, caught in time and in utero, with a slight smirk, as though we were sharing a joke. Sometimes I'd even smile back.

War is fought through smaller battles. This one was lost to the den of raunchy jokes, heartfelt lamentations, heavy metal music, and people passionately declaring how much they “didn't give a fuck.” And all mixed with the cacophony of clicking and popping noises inherent when cleaning our rifles and machine guns. I sipped from the cup of my world left behind, then joined my men playing card games while tobacco and energy drinks took the place of our meals. Most of us hadn't seen combat at the time, so we would sit together, fantasizing about random scenarios where we would kill our enemies with vengeful prejudice. We were hammers, beaten into form by our seniors, our training, and our imagination. So we made everything into nails. The harder, the better.

But this wasn't enough. Though we each had our own motivations that lead us to this point, none of them were fantasy. We didn't just want to be there; we *had* to be there. So when the time came for the breakdown of our next mission, we weren't simply eager, we were foaming at mouths made entirely of canines, our eyes open, our will ready. From there, we received our gamut of ammunition, rifle rounds, smoke and fragmentation grenades with their pull-pins and thumb clips, mortar rounds to boot, and

topped off with grenades made especially for the launcher underneath my M16. Our packs got heavier, but morale improved.

We set up our packs in a row roughly a hundred feet from our helicopters, the night sky looming over us with dark, familiar purpose. I found a friend of mine, David Baker, who had approached the British troops at one point. We began making friends and I traded a parachuted flare for a 40mm phosphorous round for my grenade launcher. David would be killed several months later, the victim of a landmine placed in the middle of a corn field. From there, I walked over to my friend and squad leader, a rare combination in what would otherwise be considered the strictest of environments in American military protocol.

From there With as little melodrama as possible, a feat extraordinary given my nature at the time, I made reference to the folded flag I had at the top of my pack, and how I wanted him to give it to my son if things didn't work as planned. He nodded to me nonchalantly. "No problem, brother. I promise." With that, he raised a pack of Marlboro's to his lips and we left it at that.

Loading onto the helicopter was a terrifying experience. The whirl of the engines firing up, green monocular night vision goggles piercing the night like beasts, and the smell of fuel mixed with body odor, foot powder, and Copenhagen long cut, were telltale signs of men coming to terms with their reality. This was made all the more visceral when I put on my own NVGs, the green hue casting an uncomfortable, eery light onto all of us. I turned to a fellow team leader, Josh Ibanez, who racked the charging handle of his rifle, loading it, along with a grenade in his launcher, then slapped the buttstock as though he were in mid coitus. I laughed in spite of my fear and gave a thumbs up to my teammates, who responded in kind.

No bullets flew passed us, no sound of metal tearing metal or the high pitch of a missed bullet. The helicopter landed and we began filing out, but the weight of my pack took hold and I pitched forward, panic rising in me as I watched boots file past, the men wearing them too focused on their own goals to help. And then Claudio Patino, one of our snipers, lifted me to my feet and asked "Are you okay, bro?"

This man was a warrior in the truest sense, the idea of unit cohesion rising beyond his own ego or need for self-preservation. This was proven again immediately as I stepped out of the back of the helicopter and into five feet of black water, unable to move from the weight, *drowning*, when Patino pulled me back up a second time, soaked to the bone and disoriented. He would die in a bold and selfless act during a

firefight several miles north and several months further from where we were.

As I collected myself, shadows ran across the treeline like shadows by a fire. I raised my weapon, my heart pounding, but they were gone as quickly as I'd seen them. Trudging onward through the flooded field, I reunited with my Marines, the rotor wash from the helicopter fading as the ripples in the water calmed. We formed a circular perimeter, each of us quietly cursing the black mud reaching to clog our guns. The plan came down that we were to wait until daylight to begin our assault. Until then, we would take turns sleeping, half on guard, half catching what fleeting shut-eye we could. I remember thinking "No one in their right mind could go to sleep right now." And then someone to my right began snoring.

As the sun made its grand entrance, we rose like the walking dead, the chill of morning quickly turning to heavy, damp heat. In order to avoid any booby traps, we moved from one flooded field to the next, shifting our bodies to convey the weight we carried. At one point, we reached a long ditch, filled with stagnant water and lined with trees. As my point man and automatic rifleman came into the open field, three small explosions occurred immediately in front of their boots, coupled with three auditory snaps. I yelled for them to "Get down!" From there, my team sought solace in the trees, my voice echoing over the radio as I requested from Denning that we return fire. Another voice called over the radio.

"Did you just ask if you could shoot back?"

I felt my cheeks flush and tugged at my body armor. I spotted movement in the treeline across the open field, just behind the ledge of a low dried-mud wall. I raised my rifle when one of my comrades shouted "He's got a gun!" And he launched a 40mm grenade toward the assailant. The time for subtlety was over. Half a second later and I'd loosed a grenade of my own, with two other squad leaders soon following, the explosions landing like dominoes fall. Two seconds later and debris fell like snowflakes and feathers... and rocks.

Fast forward a cleared compound and a couple of hours later and we're sipping chai tea with a man whose backyard had been our combat zone, gut-laughter and schoolyard giggling bubbling up at the incredible, untenable circumstance in which we'd found ourselves. Being the vigilant man that I am, I used the time to investigate where I was. A little situational awareness never hurt anyone. Searching the mud palace, one room had ornate rugs meticulously rolled and stacked, floor to ceiling, as precarious as my circumstance. The next held white sacks filled with grain, with a

couple of women dressed head-to-toe in burqas huddled with five small children in the room farthest from us. The whirlwind of patient fear in their eyes struck me still for a fleeting moment, then, with warrior's resolve, I returned to our generous host.

He'd served the tea from a polished metal kettle, wooden handle tilted with care through calloused fingers. His gaze skimmed the room, his forehead tightening when he'd counted us. Without skipping a beat, he darted out for more glasses, sweat evaporating from his forehead before it could bead. But it wasn't us that had him concerned. He needed to follow the custom of Pashtunwali, providing us shelter and sustenance as we were pursuing (or could be pursued by) a common enemy. I had shed the burden of my humanity, and embraced the beast within myself. The civility offered by this man had me dumbfounded. At the time, I didn't know that this would be the same code that would later allow the local Pashtun tribe to exact revenge on us for the unfortunate death of a young boy named Mahmoud, killed during a nighttime firefight.

Not knowing this at the time, we thanked him and continued our journey, the firefights ahead a far more comfortable idea than the subconsciously invasive nature of his hospitality. I was more comfortable walking the fields, the random whip-crack of rounds hitting the ground at the feet of our patrol a reminder of our singular purpose. We were warriors, fighting through heavy heat to find sweet reprieve from the weight of the sun with the intermittent shade of sporadic treelines. The Taliban were running scared, and rightfully so. We were out of water, food, and patience, our struggle only making us more deadly, our violent nature leaving a smile on our faces with the acknowledgment of our duty. After a time, the burden of a lack of supplies showed itself in my own corporeal dissociation. I'd look down at my legs and wonder how they were walking; look at my arms that seemed so distant. Then I'd look to my brothers and drove on.

When night came, we would lie in prone, making a compass of gun barrels to keep a steady security of our perimeter, claymore mines several yards in front of us to cover enemy avenues of approach. We'd take turns sleeping, the soft, cool grass making for a perfect bedding for our exhausted troop, while those on post were left with the darkness and their imaginations. The end of my watch never seemed to come fast enough. And then the day would begin and we'd start walking. This lasted for well over a week. We'd walk, get into firefights, find explosives, search compounds, rest, then walk some more. Thirty two miles in five days, at

one point. With full combat gear and supplies thinner than the line that draws the horizon.

At the time, I wasn't religious. I had "Catholic" stamped on my dog tags, ensuring the style of my funeral, but beyond that, hadn't given it much thought. But one day, while an exhausted catharsis pulsed through my bones, I puffed on the cognac-soaked cigarillo given to me by Cardi, laying on my back with my rifle within arms reach, and I thought of Jesus. I thought of the weight of the cross he was scourged to carry through muddied streets to Calvary. And I felt his pain.



Patricia Blackwell

“There is no justice in the laws of Nature, no term for fairness in the equations of motion. The universe is neither evil, nor good, it simply does not care. The stars don’t care, nor the Sun, nor the sky. But they don’t have to. We care. There is light in the world, and it is us.”

-Eliezer Yudkowsky (edited)

Guantanamo Bay, Cuba is located in the southeastern tip of Cuba. In February 1903 the US Navy needed a fueling port in the Caribbean and agreed to lease a 45 mile land and water mass from Cuba. This lease is still in effect today for around \$4500.00 annually. The rocky shoreline, surrounded by steep hills, create an enclave which adds to the Guantanamo Bay isolation. In the 1990’s Guantanamo Bay was used by the military as a processing center for asylum seekers, (primarily Haitian) and a camp for HIV positive refugees. GTMO, as Guantanamo Bay is also known, is so isolated, it has been deemed by one United States official as the “legal equivalent of outer space”.

Early in the spring of 2012, I was assigned to the last Navy battalion to serve in the capacity of detainee operations in GTMO, as this duty was being turned over to the Army. I was assigned to Camp 7, Task Force Platinum. There was a small group of us hand-picked to work inside the internal confines of Camp 7. Our daily duties consisted of guarding and escorting. My specific duties will have to go undisclosed for now as I was working in a top secret billet.

Being attached to a high-value camp where known terrorists are “detained” by the US Military keeps you at a heightened state of awareness in general. The detainees await Military commission trials to determine their individual levels of involvement and criminal charges relating to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, DC. , and the plane crash in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

The men who are being detained in Guantanamo Bay are some of the world's most dangerous terrorists. We were instructed early on in our training that these combatants were to be referred to as "detainees" rather than "prisoners" due to the fact they had not yet been to trial for crimes in which they have been accused.

It was late October of 2012. I remember distinctly waiting to be informed of the pending Chief Petty Officer results which were to be released any day for our E-7 promotions. This would be my third attempt, offered to qualified candidates annually. Let me give a few more details. Although you are eligible, the E-7 selection process for the Navy involves a 200 question written exam, which you must pass and qualify by eligible percentiles. Then there is a selection board process comprised of a few hand selected Chief Petty Officers, Senior Chief Petty Officers and Master Chief Petty Officers with impeccable records sitting in a board room in Millington, TN. The quotas were very tight. Navy wide it was projected the Navy would promote, once again, very few candidates. However, I felt I had an "ace in the hole" as I had been summoned to Washington, DC earlier in April of 2012 where I was selected as one of five candidates for "Sailor of the Year" out of 58,000. I was quite certain and moreover, assured I was one of the few that would be chosen.

The day started out as just another very hot smoldering workday. The kind of day with heat you can see vaporizing just above the dusty brown haze that covers the island. There was a constant stench in the air from the burning debris in the landfill that never stopped burning. The sea was quite calm that day as I looked out across the horizon. There was a rocky cliff just out the exit door of the mess hall, and my daily gaze across the open water was a picture I would frequently use to comfort my mind, a tool to prepare myself for the task inside the confines of camp.

One of the main topics among my co-workers and shipmates that day during chow was the pending warnings for approaching hurricane Sandy and the implications it could have on our family and friends back home. In retrospect, what we did not seem to have allotted for in our thought process that day was the implications, extent or measures involved if the storm hit the Base. It goes without saying we were expected to stay and guard our posts, only leaving when properly relieved. However, in the

hours to come I would realize the extent of those orders. Standing post was about to take on an entire new meaning.

The Naval Base proper had a Hurricane contingency plan to withstand up to a Category 2 storm, the brunt of hurricane force sustained winds ranging from 96-110 mph with tide surges of 6 to 8 feet above normal coming ashore. At this time we were expecting a category 3 or possibly greater.

Even though GTMO is a peninsula surrounded by water on three sides, the fourth side was communist Cuba, comprised of mine-fields, guarded perimeter razor fencing and watch towers. To the US Military personnel assigned in GTMO, this was considered an island.

Later in the afternoon, the guard staff was informed we would be taken, in shifts, back to our barracks. We would have 15 minutes to grab personal hygiene items and uniforms to sustain ourselves for at least three days. We were advised that all other personal items needed to be placed on top of lockers, or as high an area as we had access inside our huts. I grabbed what I could, stored the rest, and quickly returned to a seat on the shuttle to our posts.

The sky began to darken and clouds began to roll in. I noticed the waves on the horizon had many more whitecaps than usual. I was beginning to realize the implications of a serious storm brewing out at sea, and what might happen to this tiny landmass we now called home. Information relayed came slow and in short spurts. It was very direct, but lacking a sense of absolute awareness.

As the reality of what was about to happen began to set in, I realized no one was going to run to our rescue. There would be no one to evacuate us by helicopter or boat. We were there to guard prisoners. Evacuating detainees, or the people guarding them, was not an option. It became more and more apparent we were in the direct path of the storm. We began counting food and water rations.

Another huge task was filling and placing sandbags. Lots of them, which were filled manually from an area with far more rocks in the soil than sand.

As the evening wore on and dark surrounded, there was an eerie, solemn, unspoken awareness among all the guard force. No one could know how high the water would reach or what impact the storm would have as we braced for whatever Hurricane Sandy had in store for us. At the same time, we began to unconsciously accept the fact you could possibly die staring into the face of a terrorist who seemed to have no fear of death. It seemed as if it was almost entertaining to the detainees to see uncertainty about what was happening in our faces, and our lack of control over the impending weather.

We braced and prepared for the worst. We went deep into the camp, the lights dim, the sticky hot air filled with the smell of musk, sweat and urine from banana rats. These rodent are the size of beavers and live in packs, inundating the island.

Some of us read and some prayed. We searched one another's eyes for a glimpse of something, not sure what we were looking for; fear, hope, perhaps reassurance, though no one spoke of uncertainty. Ever present was pride and military bearing. A quiet strength we pulled from one another.

As the night wore on, there were no sounds from outside. We were basically barricaded in, sleeping in shifts and rationing water and MREs. Cots were erected in all directions, with no separation of male and female quarters. Though there were more than enough cots, not many people were laying on them. The wind and rain blasted down and we had junior personnel standing watch inside our protective barrier, mopping up the water as it attempted to invade our new quarters.

After the long night, quick slivers daylight eventually broke. Though the winds had calmed, the rain was still blistering down in sheets. An external crew was assigned to go out and assess the extent of damages, water levels, and establish new safety precautions. The power was out, trees, limbs and debris had blown everywhere. We did not know yet the extent of damage to the base, or anyone else who was stationed here. What we did know was we were not going to die today. Not this time. Not staring into the eyes of terrorists who seemed to feed on fear, death and destruction, especially when American lives are at stake.

48 hours later we were allowed to return to a normal shift pattern, contact our families, and determine how much of our personal belongings were salvageable. There were cars, boats and heavy equipment washed out to sea, trees had fallen through buildings and the marina where you could rent small fishing boats before the storm was entirely destroyed. There was no loss of human life.

After another two or three days, the chow hall reopened. The water surge had covered the steep, rocky cliffs, changing the landscape forever. Huge crevices were cut in the rock, a large portion of the ground had washed away and out to sea. However, we had made it relatively unscathed. After Hurricane Sandy, there were a few storms where we were placed on standby, but nothing like what we had gone through.

Now, years later, when hurricane season bears down on the east coast, I am evermore aware of the Caribbean area, tracking storm paths, and trying to determine how close one may get to Guantanamo Bay. For today there is a group of young Americans who, when required, will pull those big doors closed and lock them from the inside, waiting on Mother Nature to finish her wrath. These Americans will quietly, proudly and unconditionally await fate as they guard those doors against evil from within and without the barricaded confines of GTMO.



Charlie Hall

"I am the master of my own Destiny. I am the Captain of my soul." -William Ernest Henley

A real man (or woman) doesn't rely on the world to define them, but rather they define themselves and, in time, the world. This is the mark of a legacy, the defining aspect of an actualized person. They find and refine themselves through trial and error, to affect the change most needed in their bubble of influence. It isn't about the collection of superfluous money, stagnant power, or low-hanging morality. It is with action toward the end goal, the nobility of which shines through long after we have shuffled off our mortal coil and traveled into that undiscovered country. For those that can grasp this, it's not simply worth living for, it's worth dying for. Few and far between are those that attempt it. Even fewer are those that achieve it.

Charlie Hall was born into a family of intellectuals, of people whose standard was that of benevolence and hard work, his uncle, an ex-Army Ranger, inspiring him toward civil engineering in a way that only a master of their craft could. Knowing that he also wanted to be in the military, he joined the National Guard at seventeen, drilling with them while still in high school. But something didn't sit right with him there. Some strange disconnect between his ideals and where he was heading. It may not have been the branch, as much as the people he was around, but regardless, the end result was a hesitance to begin as an enlisted servicemember, rather than an officer.

As though placed there by seraphim, a card was found in his mailbox, sent to both himself and a friend, inviting both to attend West Point, a prestigious college in New York whose founding principles focus on duty, honor, and country. His friend ended the idea with a prompt "Hell no!" But Charlie was different. He was excited at the opportunity, humbled by the offer, and yes, intimidated by the prospects. But this sort of dynamic is the perfect example of someone defining a moment, or being defined by it. This is the gauntlet laid before those who have the courage to make their mark. This is where Charlie began to make his.

Two years into his stint at West Point, Charlie reconnected with his future wife, another student whose focus was on education and whose father was, at the time, a Marine colonel working at the Pentagon. His father had known hers, both growing up together in the same small town.

These relationships would later shape the direction of his life, especially given how much he was ragged for not joining the Marine Corps. But he'd already experienced mouth-breathing knuckle-draggers while he was with the National Guard and didn't want to go further down that rabbit hole by being around knuckle-dragging psychopaths wielding hate like narcissists wield opinions. Basically, the charm of the Marine Corps hadn't quite set in.

Once he graduated, he spent two years at Fort Riley, Kansas, as a platoon commander with a combat engineer battalion as a 2nd. Lieutenant. He would wind up spending several months in the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California, running his battalion's Engineer Reconnaissance Team. This was a huge step toward doing what he had wanted, but the consistent doubt of his decision to avoid the Marine Corps began to weigh heavily on him, the shadow of his father-in-law looming like a thunderstorm over the meadow in which Charlie had found himself. Being a man who valued self-worth, he was convinced to do a lateral move from his originally chosen military branch to the one filled with Jarheads.

Almost overnight, Charlie found himself at basic training in Quantico, his 7-month-pregnant wife cheering him on from a distance. After graduating, the Marine Corps did what the Marine Corps does, which is whatever it wants to do. Where the Army wanted him as an engineer, given that that was his chosen vocation, he instead found himself as a supply officer, a victim of the branch's "Quality Spread." This basically meant pairing intelligentsia with those who were... unlucky at thinking. Not what he wanted. Not where he thought he belonged. Luckily, he was attached to what he thought was a "cool unit," 2nd Recon Battalion, a time-honored group committed to ground and amphibious reconnaissance, surveillance, and other operations.

He was deployed to Iraq from 2004-2005, where he was part of the 2nd Battle of Fallujah. While there, he helped control the southeastern area of operations roughly thirty miles outside the walls of Fallujah itself. However, he was more than just a supply officer. When the time came for him to step up, he didn't hesitate, using his skills to become a task force engineering officer as a first lieutenant. Through taking an active role toward his own destiny, he found himself in the role he had chosen, in spite of the chaotic nature of war.

In 2006, after his return, he chose another path, one that further displayed his strength of character when it came to Will versus Fate. He had left the war to return to a family, a son and daughter he had only

watched grow up in small, invaluable clumps of time, and wife that had become all too familiar with deployment. Her father was constantly overseas and her brother had been injured in Iraq. So Charlie wanted to care for and protect his legacy, deciding to take a job as an inactive reservist helping with an organization called Marine for Life, which aided Marines getting jobs once they left the Corps. And, given that he was a reservist, he was given the opportunity to continue his work in a community-minded setting, working as a project manager for a construction company.

However, when the recession hit, and given that he was a low man on the totem pole, he feared the possibility of a potential layoff. He wasn't working as an engineer, wasn't given the freedom to grow, or the security necessary to raise a family. Plus, working in a cubicle didn't sit well with him. So he approached the Marine Corps once more, asking if they had something where he could stay in Greenville, but do the most good he could as an active reservist. From there, they sent him to be a part of the Wounded Warrior Regiment, where he was issued a Polo shirt, a Blackberry, gas mileage, and a direction: Help those war fighters who have returned from hell, their bodies crippled by explosions and bullets, their minds rended by war's nature. This would be a turning point for Charlie.

He'd known suffering. He'd seen it in Iraq firsthand. But nothing brought home the realization of just how horrific this world can be like speaking with these people on a personal level. It wasn't simply their stories of violence, of IEDs, death, and mutilation, but the sexual abuse that was so much more rampant than he had imagined. Women were taken advantage of by men with higher rank, laid low by inexperience, expectation, and fear. And so were several men that also served, raped by their own men and left emotionally dead, scoured of their masculinity and faith in their fellow man.

Charlie didn't know exactly how to react to that. There he was, sitting in a Starbucks or living room, a combat veteran too humble to know he could help, too self-conscious to realize that he didn't need to be in the infantry to be of benefit. He doubted himself. He wasn't in the infantry, hadn't followed through with what so many people think it means to be a man in the military, that being the killing of another person. It's not that he held those same beliefs, but he knew so many of us did. Most still do.

And so he would sit there, listening patiently as they poured their worst nightmare, a living nightmare, out before him, searching for answers that might make their world more liveable. Maybe find avenues where they

could wrap their head around what had happened to them and still have the ability to look forward to the future, to believe hope was justified and that they deserved better than they'd been given. That the tragedy of their circumstance, especially given the impressionable age at which they had experienced these tragedies, did not need to shape their perspective of the rest of their lives. That they were worth the trouble of existing.

Even those that had become monsters had a seat in front of him. Men that kept a running tab of the dogs they killed for fun or the scalps they cut off their enemies or the gut laughter they bellowed as they watched kids die. He couldn't fully grasp where they were coming from or why they followed through with the horrors that they were so willing to speak of. The war had skipped over him in that sense, a product of his initial move to be an engineer, rather than an infantryman. He'd plotted his course years before. He wasn't a killer. But then again, he didn't have to be. Through his Christian upbringing, he felt that everyone deserves a second chance.

Over the span of several years, he worked with over four hundred veterans, unable to turn any Marine away that came to him in need. Marines injured in training accidents, who got cancer, contracted a strange disease in boot camp, or simply had a troubling childhood that exacerbated the issues they were now going through, all were greeted with the arm-around-the-shoulder or kick-in-the-ass that they needed to overcome what trials laid before them. This was a proving ground for the nonprofit he eventually started, where the holistic approach he had cultivated became a catch-all for veterans who don't feel they have a place to turn. Since the inception of Upstate Warrior Solution, he has helped more than two thousand veterans find solace where there was once only despair.

He has achieved what few even have the audacity to attempt. He has acted toward a noble, impactful goal that will outlast him long after he's left this world. It isn't about using money to put a band-aid on the problem, or making a name for himself, or any other motive that might make him suspect. Through a strength of character, he's bettered the world around him in a way that can only be defined as tremendous and through the journey of his own self-actualization. This is a testament to what a person can do if they make their own path. This is the legacy of Charlie Hall.



Mastin Robeson

Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

-Proverbs 11:14

War affects all of us. Not just those who lose limbs and lives. Not just those lucky enough to return with a nest of demons in their souls or their partners who wake up to violence. Not just parents who can't reconcile the vacuum where their son or daughter had been or the children left to grow up without a father or mother. Not just the environment marred into scorched earth or the religions called into question by the actions of those that follow them. War affects us all. And what's as humbling, what's as devastating, is that war is intrinsic to our humanity; in equal measure to love, sympathy, and hope. It's a heavy burden that we all share, and those that take responsibility, those that *step up* to do what's right when there is an option of taking the wrong, easy choice, are true heroes. Let me tell you about Mastin Robeson.

Mastin was raised by devout Christian parents who inspired in him a spiritual nature that would follow him throughout his life. He began approaching everything from a standpoint that went beyond the material world, finding a security and solace in the transcendent ideologies of the church; God created the heavens and the earth. That everything stems from the idea that He has a plan, a divine sovereignty that connects us all and generates a capacity for shared burden. And even more, he understood that any human being that is struggling with the effects of sin in the world require a collective engagement, love, and challenge of a local spiritual community to embrace them through the basis of God's grace. He saw the responsibility inherent to living in a society.

This hit home all the more given that his family was inundated with military history. His grandfather had served as an artillery Sergeant-Major while in World War I, followed by his father who dropped off Marines and equipment into Iwo Jima and Okinawa during the World War II, and his older brother, who was a Marine in Vietnam. So it wasn't any stretch that he would join in 1975 to follow suite, the original intention to spend his three and a half years in active duty, then to get out and continue on with his life. He had no interest in going further than that. But the world had other plans.

The day after he graduated from Bryan College, a small Christian school with roughly seven hundred students nestled in Dayton, he was commissioned as an officer into the Marine Corps, marrying his wife the following week, three years to the day to when they had first met. He bid her farewell and reported to basic training, where he was shoulder to shoulder with young, motivated men watching the ebb of the war in Vietnam retreat back into history, the tide mark etched into the faces of the very men training him. Those men had learned the necessity of teamwork in the harshest ways, raising the bar of expectation in the individual, while reinforcing the idea that an effective team is more than the sum of its parts. This wasn't a new idea to Mastin, but rather a reinforcement of his core spiritual beliefs.

Years later, as a Major, he found himself the Commander of the Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team, or FAST company, which provides security forces to guard high-value naval installations, most notably those containing nuclear vessels and weapons, along with Recapture Tactics Teams. In the three years that he was with these warriors, he did eighty-eight deployments in three countries, seeing first hand the incredible extent at which a group of people working in tandem can accomplish. When he went through close-quarters training specifically, their cohesion was unquestionably evident, brought about by a maturity ingrained in them through passionate repetition.

While they, rather than an instructor, were debriefing themselves, there was a transparency, not simply for what they'd done, but what they'd thought. He would hear them say things like "When I button-hooked through the entry point, I didn't catch the corner. I swept too far." Or "I broke my cone of fire. I know now that's a mistake." And he was struck with the idea that if you could get people to this level of honesty, working toward a common goal, then the sky was the limit. That you only fight and win as a team, not simply made of talented individuals, but people working off of one another in a synergistic, organic model, so that they can perform better because they can outthink and react more quickly than the enemy or circumstance. But this can't happen unless the whole organization embraces that cause.

Through this, he took part in a war of attrition, where the enemy was whittled away, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, but death was the focus. Go out on patrol, kill the bad guys, go back to the Forward Operating Base for debriefing. Rinse, repeat. However, the enemy just kept coming, kept evolving and growing, finding strength in every death of

their comrades, every innocent that was trapped in the line of fire. Not because they cared for their people, given that they would use children and pregnant women as bullet-shields, but rather that casualties of war are currency to terrorists, an avenue to the hearts of the uneducated populace through free propaganda advertising. But Mastin was a Marine, so he simply fought harder, carving his men into calloused, invincible, unstoppable killers that needed nothing other than someone to shoot.

This mentality led to promotion after promotion, leaving him a full-bird colonel by the time he decided to retire. Though he was up for selection to become a General, he had written a formal letter to not be in the running, as he didn't want to fill a slot that could be taken by someone with a want to continue their service in the military. And then the planes crashed into the Twin Towers. But he had a family to look after. A wife, children, parents that needed their son. On top of that, he had two parents that he needed to look after, both slowly showing signs of their age. It took two weeks of soul-searching, but finally his wife said "Can you really get out if we're now a nation in a war against terrorism with all the anti/counter-terrorism training you've had?" They jointly decided that they would let the promotion board make the decision, and he was promptly given the rank of Brigadier General.

Through the following years, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan proved to be the quagmire that so many assumed it would be, the enemies integrating themselves into their society, making the ability to tell who was friend and foe practically impossible. The Taliban and Al Qaeda recruited their own citizens through violence, intimidation, religious coercion, and indoctrination of children, so that the middle east began to operate under the same rules as America's wild west a century and a half before. Warlords and drug kingpins owned entire settlements, wielding Sharia Law like a hurricanes wield single-wide trailers. Whenever one enemy died, three more took their place, each new trigger finger pointing out that the war of attrition wasn't working.

However, by 2007, Mastin had brought his altruistic understanding to a higher plain, adapting his spiritual beliefs to the war effort after realizing that you can't win a counterinsurgency by simply killing the enemy. You have to first and foremost protect the population that helps them stay clandestine, that helps them with IEDs, that supplies them with food and clever hiding spots for their weapons. And just as paramount, you have to address the recruiting grounds. Some officers, especially in the Marine Corps, already felt this way, but it wasn't until the surge campaign

that it was written into the orders. All this time, they had been overtraining to kill and undertraining to protect.

The new plan was to patrol, then drive a stake in the ground, holding that while the next patrol drove forward to put another stake in the ground. But each halting point was a base of operation where they then began working with the local population, invigorating their economy, their market, and attempting to change their hearts and minds about the people they would otherwise be fighting. They would hire the indigenous people to act as police officers, walking the streets to ward off crime and aggression from outside the perimeter. To Mastin this was reminiscent of the Federal Marshall Program used during the times of Wyatt Earp and Doc Holiday, ensuring that the “sheriff” wasn’t in the pocket of the local land baron or outlaw group. They wanted to change the mentality of the locals to be better than that; to turn “what’s best for me” into “what’s right.”

Later that year, after he hit the 34-year mark of his time in the Marine Corps, and having set foot in almost sixty countries, he decided that it was time to get out. Switching up his benevolence toward more personal endeavors, he began caring for his parents who had both been struck with illness, his father with Parkinson’s, his mother with dementia, and were living by themselves in isolation in a house far too large for them and perched on top of a mountain. So he did one more tour in Iraq, then retired in 2008 to focus on his family and the next few chapters of his life. But he found himself questioning where to go and what to do with the free time he had.

However, retiring from the Marine Corps doesn’t mean retiring from life, so he began looking for the next challenge to conquer. Wanting to continue doing good works, he spoke with Mike Rearden, the president and CEO of the Greenville Health System, who had also been an officer in the Marine Corps. They had a common concern with veterans returning from war, the trials they were given once out of military service seeming to overwhelm many. Substance abuse, suicide, marriage troubles, dysfunctional children, crime, homelessness, and lack of health care were rampant. These were his men, his charges handed to him by divine providence, hurting on a thousand different levels with no hope in sight. He had to help them. But in the midst of that conversation, a harsh reality hit home. He was part of the problem.

One of Mastin’s greatest strengths was to teach and inspire those under him. Given the nature of his service, his goal was to turn men into demigods, able to run through brick walls without slowing down, quenching

their thirst with the blood of their enemies, living off the land like aboriginals, offended at the idea of needing help from anyone. This is what wins wars. This, and unit cohesion. Overseas, in the deserts and mountains and mud cities, the rules of engagement are set in stone, written onto cards that fit into pockets for easy reference. If the veterans did their job and did it well, it was because they'd poured every bit of themselves into that small article of paper. Their hearts, their minds, and as often as not, their souls. And all too often, those things were left in the desert.

So as he was speaking to Mike about ways he could help remedy the issues facing these men and women, he was asked about consulting. This term seemed like a dirty word at the time, a half-measure with more benefits to himself than the world around him. But Mike pointed out the rarity and focus of Mastin's common sense, convincing him to work in tandem on a trial basis. That trial turned into almost six years of networking with international companies and nonprofits. He is now president and CEO of Imperatis, a company in Arlington, Virginia, offering high-quality programs in counterinsurgency and intelligence, cyber and advanced network infrastructure, and analysis and program management. This means that the transitioning of command in private organizations overseas are far smoother and safer for all involved, that high-end cyber systems are in fully functional order, and that programs are being implemented in Iraq and Afghanistan to further the development of the local population. In other words, he brought his work home with him.

But as importantly, he has brought his spiritual ideals to the country he'd spent so much time protecting. He, along with Kevin McBride, Paul Howell, and Charlie Hall, spent two and half years building a nonprofit that would bring altruism to the forefront, and reinforce the necessity for the societal cohesion he had seen demonstrated so well in battle. The focus of this nonprofit is to inspire communities and families to support their local veterans and at the same time, to show veterans that it's okay to need help. It's okay to recognize that they aren't the demigods they had been while in the military. And best case scenario, the veterans then begin helping one another, along with the community that had supported them, thus becoming greater than the sum of their parts.

The trials of our friends and relatives can and should be shouldered by the rest of us, the greater good shining through our actions so that we may all be noble in the eyes of God. Because war is, and will always be, a part of the human condition, brought to head by the laws of nature we

inherently follow. Just as love and hope spur us onward, as does hate and fear. It's in our bones, as close to us as the brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, or friends we have lost. As close to us as the natural world, as religion, or politics. Just as war affects us all, it is in all of us. In this harsh reality, it is our duty to look to our fellow man, so that we may all know that we are not alone.







JJ Lanes

I am a US Army veteran who served with the 1221st Engineer Battalion in Afghanistan in 2010 and 2011 as a member of a Counter-IED task force. I have always thought of my artwork as an outlet to relieve stress and anxiety. My work has become an important role in coping with issues from combat stress.

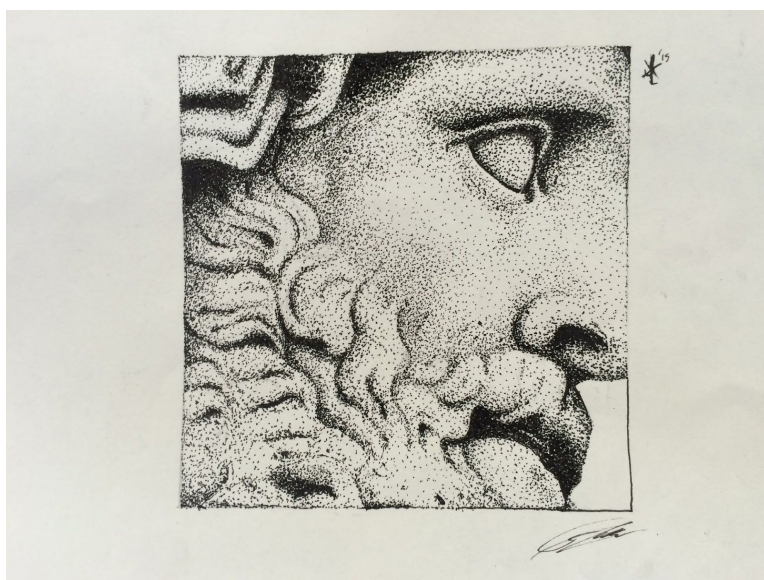
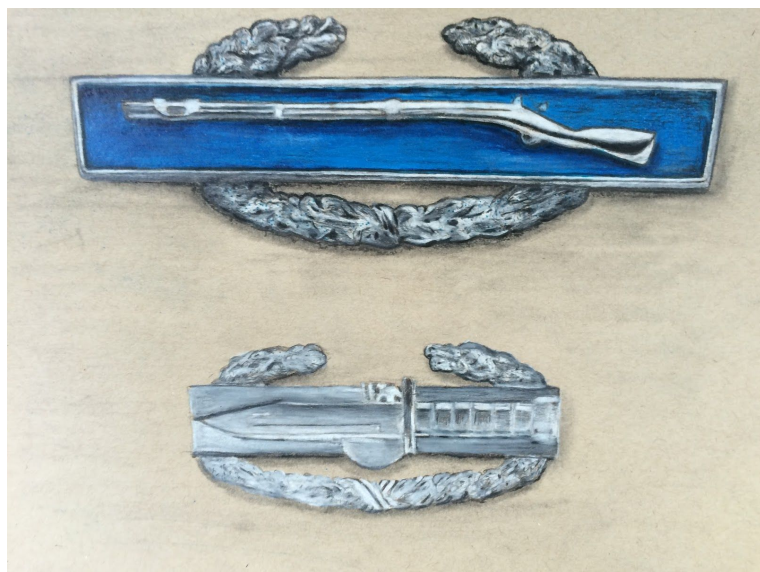
Drawing allows me to focus on attention to detail and to show some ideas and thoughts I have without having to care what others may think about my experience and most importantly without having to vocally share my thoughts.

These works are primarily made with color pencil on toned-tan paper. The purple heart drawing (Purple and Red) has a small amount of purple marker over parts of purple colored pencil. The combat badges are made with color pencils and graphite to achieve metallic tones. Both are finished with fixative to preserve the works integrity.

I thought it was important to create these works to focus on the sacrifices that were made by the individuals who have earned these awards. The first time I saw a purple heart in person was when my unit lost two soldiers (SSG Harley and SGT Rabon). I wanted to honor them in this work.

The other work, entitled "Patroclus," is an homage to a character in Greek mythology, the beloved comrade and brother-at-arms to Achilles. What he represents to me is each and every one of those men and women who fought alongside me in the swirling dirt of the desert. Without their support, I would never have made it back to my country and my home. I will never forget your sacrifice.





Chris Pace

I was born in the Bronx, joined the Marine Corps in the summer of 2000, after I got out, I went to Montclair State University to study art, and am still pursuing a career in it. I currently work as a Virginia State Trooper, which helps me stay independent while still being able to study, create, and continue my passion in the arts. I don't consider myself a scholar in art history, but rather an artist who loves the history of human visual expression.

Emotion and the serene are the main drives of my work. I leave the rest up to the viewer. I am inspired by the extranormal and beautiful utopias that are of unseen in everyday life. My work tries to understand this with its relationship to death, and how the two are so intrinsic.

Most of my work is photography, digital or film but mostly film prints. I find that film gives you a certain look that is more serene. However, this particular image is digital and I feel best signifies personal experience with talent for artistic expression.



Andrew Cooke

Born in Darlington SC, April 19th 1982, I started photography back in 2005, first picking up a camera for investigative purposes for the Air Force using long lenses and high-end cameras to monitor nearby mountains in Kandahar. Given that my father's a photographer, I have a natural, comfortable inclination toward the medium. I spent 2003-2012 in the Air Force, where I started out in security forces, later training to become an investigator, and afterward, a combat arms instructor. With 3 deployments under my belt in Afghanistan, Abu Dhabi, and Djibouti, my work has been featured on the Weather Channel as well as the National Geographic website (NatGeo.com), having twice won photo of the month.

I chose photography for the introspection it gives me. The need to pay a high level of attention to detail, coupled with the serenity of being by myself in nature, allows me not simply an escape from the mad-house that is our society, but gives me the opportunity to explore who I am in relation to the world around me. It's allowed me the opportunity to understand my own experiences with PTSD, and is one of the few things that allows me control in a world where control is mostly an illusion. Coming from a combat role in the Air Force to transitioning back to society, using photography was a natural next step for me to reintegrate myself by showing those around me what it is that I see.

Landscape gives me the ability to exacting in my craft, the control of which is both difficult and often illusory. It's solitary, sweeping, and there's comfort in knowing I'm taking active steps to understand the world. In fact, it can be hard to talk about landscapes, given the chord they hit in me. I almost feel like I'm betraying the glory of it by explanation. As for weather photography, it's a great way of separating myself from the chaos of the world, the lens being a physical barrier between myself and the tumult that I'm capturing and the long nighttime exposures lead to hours of introspection, giving me a quiet time to bask in the wonder and glory nature.

I chose these pictures because they are the ones that spoke to me the most, each one acquired during the time where I was trying to escape from reality, the noise of life drowning out those things that I value most, those

being the beauty and majesty of our natural landscapes. I chose each photo based on the merit of the movement it created in me, the impact that it had on my perspective, showing me a transcendence that seems so elusive in our day-to-day. I also prefer adding my own tint, giving the world a different view than is expected. This is my way of communicating and challenging the world around me.







Brad Carraway

SSG Brad Carraway (Ret.) served in the SC National Guard 1/178 Field Artillery unit and retired in 2008. He was deployed during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) from 2004-05 as a Combat MP \ Convoy Security Platform. Decorations: Bronze Star w\ V Device, Combat Action Badge. He is a graduate of the University of SC, holding degrees in both Graphic Design and Interdisciplinary Studies with a minor in Psychology. He is a Certified Peer Support Specialist (SCDMH), with a goal to become a counselor for fellow combat veterans who are struggling to understand and heal their emotional scars from traumatic experiences. He is actively exploring the use of creative expression and art therapy as a form of treatment for combat induced PTSD.

From the Artist:

"I have always been an avid lover of nature and wildlife. The only thing that I loved more than nature was creating art inspired by it. But as I grew up, I drew away from art and used my talents less and less. On returning to normal life after my deployment I found that I was having problems letting go of the war. My experiences in the combat zone had changed some fundamental parts of who I was and how I saw the world around me. At the encouragement of my family I sought help, and was diagnosed with PTSD, but none of the conventional forms of treatments seemed to help.

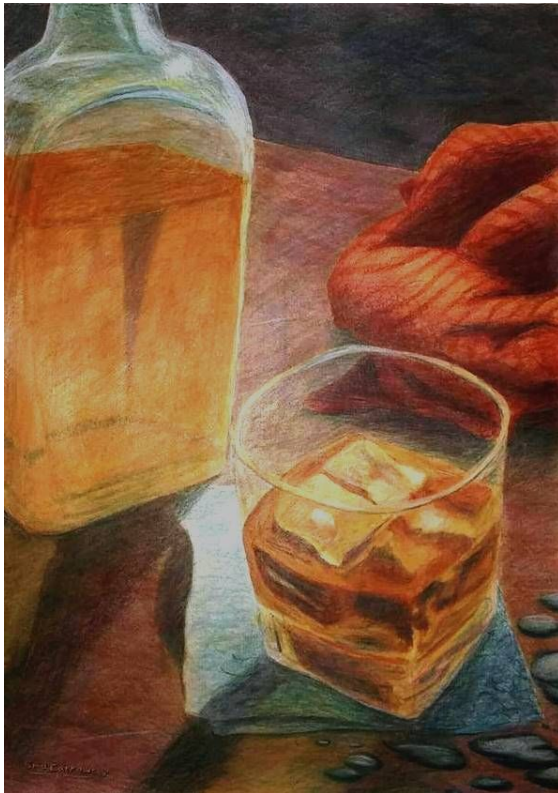
It was at this time that I had a counselor suggest that producing artwork may be a good tool for me to use to relax my anxiety and to cope with my PTSD symptoms. Since then I have submerged myself in art and I have found that the creative process has been the greatest catalyst to my emotional healing and is a perfect form of therapeutic release. Exploring my artistic talents and discovering how the creative process can be used to continue to help me heal is an ongoing learning process for me. The subject matter, artistic mediums and rendering styles that I use in my artwork is constantly evolving, and my artistic style is still in transition. So it is too with the recovery process for someone suffering from Post-traumatic stress.

PTSD is a complicated anxiety disorder, and finding the proper fit of treatments and coping mechanisms can be elusive for many. Every day

can be a challenge for someone with this disorder and no two people suffering with PTSD have the exact same issues. This is because a lot of how we learn to deal with the stress from traumatic events is ingrained into us in our early years of development and through the lessons that we learn in our experiences in daily living.

For combat veterans, their families and mental health professionals, the biggest challenge is often finding the best ways for them as individuals to take those traumatic experiences and the powerful emotions they generate and move them out of the here and now, and put them in the past, where we can deal with them in a healing way and then move on with the rest of our positive and fulfilling lives.”

~ Brad Carraway



Alexander Coco

I hail from a family of builders. Born to an engineer and the youngest of six sons, I was raised in an environment of making. From my father's sketches, I learned the importance of looking. I began to recognize the integrity in drawing. I learned how to wrap my hands around something I had yet to make; to reverse-engineer my observable world.

My current work is about struggle, about search, and about learning how to build. Through struggle there is growth and growth is learning. Learning is like Brussels sprouts. In childhood, they were always there, but sat as contemptuous opponents to the meal-time experience. Meanwhile, the dog sat below, just out of view, with eager countenance willing to offer immediate solutions. Often times we made the offering, but it was in our most radical moments of brevity that we sought to redefine our experience at the dinner table and make discovery paramount to the benefit of our tastebuds. As adults, we favor the Brussels sprout, and have made malleable its preparations. We struggle further in search for compliments to its flavors and textures, if not for the benefit of our own cravings, then to illuminate the courage of our youth that sit within arms reach of superficial and effortless solutions.

This is the story of our country—of our humanity. In 1857, Frederick Douglass spoke of struggle, saying, "The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of struggle... If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will..."

In the beginning, I demand everything from my paintings, because they have an infinitude of possibility, yet say nothing specific. To get at specifics, to build something that would buttress up meaning takes violent crashes of steel through earth, and bitter melon fruit with soured looks, and sticky-empty-heartless mockery. Yet, once that place is built, it houses the tables from which we dine, from which we uncover our most harmonious

and our most dissonant moments with nature. I am building a vocabulary of marks from which I can orchestrate these energies, make them more parallel to my experience of the world, and somehow make palpable my understanding of it. This is what is at stake in my work.

Alexander Gabriel Coco Masters of Fine Arts Candidate at The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

www.alexandercoco.com Facebook: A Gabriel Coco Instagram: @cocomustachio



Dwight Rose

The Battle of Hamburger Hill was fought from May 10–20, 1969 within the Vietnam War. The involvement of United States armed forces to aid South Vietnam against North Vietnamese forces was highly controversial and divided Americans, especially the youth and the establishment. Our heroic troops, mostly infantry in hand to hand combat, had little public support at home during and after this war. Many brave men lost their lives or were injured physically and psychologically.

This watercolor painting portrays these men in a battle of opposing forces, yet more importantly, in support of each other. Their training results in coordination regardless of the horrific arena, a critical part of a unit's strength and ultimate success to their mission. The grit, fear, and pain are all part of the tactical maneuvers on the battle field. Above all the pride and respect that we hold for our veterans will never fade because we recognize their sacrifice. This painting is a tribute to these men and helps to remind all of what they do for us.

The process used in creating this painting involves the use of wet in wet watercolor washes, which usually sets the style for his work. Wet in wet includes a continuous layering of pigment creating translucent glazes of paint often applied in parts intuitively. Textures are created using a variety of techniques and tools. The paintings weight and substance supported by creating depth through contrast. Working towards a style that combines traditional painting techniques along with inherent personal characteristics is the impetus behind Rose's current body of work.

Dwight Rose has a Bachelor's Degree of Fine Art in painting from the Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida. He taught at Ringling in its degree and community art programs, and then taught at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar. He teaches watercolor painting at the Chapman Cultural Center in Spartanburg, and the Greenville Center for the Creative Arts in Greenville. A signature member of the South Carolina Water Media Society, he has received many awards in exhibitions throughout the region.



Vivianne Lee Carey

This sculpture entitled *The Things They Carried*, based on the novel with the same title by Tim O'Brien, represents the physical and emotional journey of a soldier. The visual narrative addresses transformation by means of mundane and precious objects that soldiers often carry; transformation on many levels, from life to death, from innocence to experiencing grief and horror on a daily basis, and ultimately the transformation from body to spirit.

These objects such as bloody boots, helmets, dog tags, photographs, candy, medicine bottles, guns and hand-grenades reflect the passage of time symbolically through the dark, aged-color palette, the iconic imagery, and the dichotomy of deadly and life-giving objects. The double entendre implied by the heavily chained boots represent safety and bondage as do the objects on the chains. The bat near the boot is significant in that it is symbolic of an omen of change that represents death and rebirth.

The Things They Carried was primarily inspired by the materials given to me by the show's curator, Robert Chambers. These items arranged together - the helmet placed on the soldier's rifle, the tip of the rifle placed in or near the soldier's boots and the dog tags hanging from the weapon - is often called the Battlefield Cross; it is the sacred marker that represents a soldier who died.

I was born in Millville, NJ in 1959. Carl Sandburg wrote, "Down in southern New Jersey they make glass. By day and by night, the fires burn on in Millville." As a sculptor that forms metal & glass by fire, the poetic lines are an affirmation of the materials I utilize in my work. I received my BFA from Converse in 1981, and an MFA from Winthrop University in 2016. I have been honored to have received several grants for regional public sculptures.

My art is about brokenness and bringing things back together to form something beautiful. The bits and pieces of detritus that I usually use in my work, such as bottled locks of human hair, butterfly wings, seed pods, and small scrolls of cherished poems rematerializes into dark corsets, mystical bottles, formidable chairs and brooding gate sculptures. These materials

are juxtaposed against a white ambience to reflect innocence, evil and the divine.

With clumsy mortal media, I attempt to create a beautiful nightmare as I wrestle with the dichotomy between darkness and light, melancholy and joy, and grace and disgrace. I'm interested in the investment of qualities of spirituality and sacredness into objects of art. Employing primarily a dark neutral palette, the sculptural objects and installations which I have created are a metaphor for the darker aspects of life, the grief and sorrows, with a regenerative perspective.



Sophie Brenneman

I grew up in the rural Appalachian terrain of central Pennsylvania, and moved to Mississippi in 2010, where I earned my Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Southern Mississippi. In the fall of 2015, I moved back to Pennsylvania and am currently pursuing my Master of Fine Arts degree at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

Often, I find that my artwork depicts a fusing of both northern and southern influences—from the mountainous terrain of the north, to the bayous and flood plains of the south—and explores the nostalgia I have for the places and people of my past.

Art theorist and teacher Rudolf Arnheim recognizes the effect one's past has on his or her production of art, stating, "Every visual experience is imbedded in a context of space and time." In my artwork, and specifically the landscape included in *Bullets and Band-aids*, I like to walk the thin line between the vagueness and specificity of certain places, and aim to make each piece timeless.

It is my hope that my landscapes evoke a sort of uncanniness in the viewer—a visual manifestation of a place that seems simultaneously familiar and not-known—and that each painting exists as the truest representation of its own world. I believe that similar to how readers identify and empathize with a protagonist in great works of literature, in order for a work of art to successfully evoke pathos from its viewer, the approach must be honest, and its world believable.

In my short time in the art world, I have come to view art as a dual relationship between one's direct interaction with the phenomenal world and how one manipulates materials to create a visual manifestation of that which cannot be said or written. The language of visual art has the power to transcend social, economic, and political constraints and communicate the energy of the human spirit.

Website: www.sophiebrenneman.weebly.com



Roy Smith

I have spent over half my life in the Upstate of South Carolina. I am a resident and artist in Spartanburg and I and the IT Operations Manager at Spartanburg Community College. I am a member of the Spartanburg Artists' Guild and continue to promote my works both locally and throughout the southeastern United States. Having grown up in a family of artists, I began drawing at a very young age and have continued to make the creation and study of art an integral part of my life. I formally studied 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional arts in college, regularly attend workshops, and have continued to collaborate with and learn from other artists.

Many of my works are impressionistic, but I continue to study, light and darkness, space and dimension, through the use of different painting techniques. My current works include portraits, architectural, southern region scenes, murals, semi-abstracts, and fun projects like the Upstate Warriors. I continue to work on my techniques and explore different themes and hope to provide a unique perspective on 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional arts.

This project has been such a fun and challenging artistic project. My challenge—just like all my works—was to capture a moment that displayed the dichotomy of war and kindness.

The moment my painting intends to capture is:

The person, though a soldier in full combat gear, is still human and is humane. He pushes away the fears and stereo-types instilled with war in the middle east to do a kind deed and make a difference to the children that are involuntarily subjected to the endless horrors they witness.

I hope that you will find that my works convey to you the look and feel of each and every subject I present. In many of my works, I look to capture those special moments in life, where nature or the situation suddenly catches your attention, interrupts your overly busy schedule, and presents a visual masterpiece. Though this moment may be brief, it causes you to stop and soak it in.

Thanks to the veterans that protect our great country without expecting appreciation back home. Our debt to you is immeasurable and I thank you for the opportunity to use my artistic abilities to benefit a nonprofit that helps our local veterans.



LAURA GARNER

I was raised in the city of Columbia, South Carolina. For as long as I can remember, I have always had a fascination for all things odd, strange, old, beautiful, and insignificant (well, depending on whose perspective). I love the visual arts, and always have. My deep-rooted appreciation and passion for the arts has found its voice through numerous media, but the one that resonates with me the most is paint. Oil paint in all its excitable tangibility; from its long-bearing history to today's modern applications.

After receiving my BFA with a focus in Painting and a minor in Art History from the University of South Carolina in 2011, I moved to the city of Groningen in the Netherlands until 2013. I continued with my education by pursuing a Masters Program in the Restoration and Conservation of Easel Paintings and Gilded Frames with Accademia Riace in Florence, Italy, and completed the program in the summer of 2014. My vision of pursuing a professional career in Conservation has manifested into a reality with my recent anniversary of one year of employment with Carolina Conservation in Columbia, South Carolina. The balance between doctoring old, worn, and seemingly forgotten paintings in juxtaposition to creating my own paintings; new, infantile in comparison, and fresh from the imaginings of my own mind is, a contrast that influences my work greatly.

I've always made art and cannot imagine not making it. I remember being four; sitting on the kitchen floor and squinting at the fan-lights to make them blend; to be able to manipulate the colors and hue. When I found tools that could help me do this; i.e. pencils, crayons, markers: I never looked back. Now the tools I use are more sophisticated, and my understanding and knowledge in the visual arts has vastly evolved. But the child-like wonder; the innocence of creating; like a flower's head, floating in the breeze, is still and I hope will always be there. I forever want to play. That is my art.

Awe and romanticism. We live in such beauty and wretchedness. I like the opposites of the world we live in. The grotesque nature of it. How everything is actually topsy-turvy. How marvelous it is, and how terrifying it can be. I like to think I can capture these moments and pockets through paintings and other forms of visual expression. What inspires me could be

a dream, an emotion, a person, a landscape, a dead bird. There are so many strata in our world and I want to feel it all. Making art helps me feel it. It brings me closer.

Specifically for this show, I approached my creative process with the ideas of transience, suspension in a temporal space, and symbols. A ram, for instance, symbolizes both war and sacrifice. I am not a veteran, but the ones I do know and have listened to seem to always carry with them the weight of what war and sacrifice involves. They live in a temporal space in their mind on occasion, and sometimes see a movie none of us will ever see, ever feel, in that deep temporal space. Symbols are simple things that can represent vast spaces and meanings.

Sometimes they are objects that can outlive a human lifetime. Sometimes they are objects that represent mortality and the fleeting of time. These were the themes I held in my mind as I created these works. To honor the human lives who have sacrificed so much with the visual creation of works that convey how I, as well as others, only see the mere tip of that iceberg. That mammoth choice of responsibility.

I make up stories when I paint. I name my subjects. I talk to my colors. Sometimes I even threaten my paintings. Sometimes I sing to them. I love them, and then I hate them. It makes each one really involved. Not a manufactured approach. Very personal and weird and.... Well, like a child at play really. When nobody's watching and you're free.

Through creating this breadth of work for this show, I feel like I've tapped into one of the levels of strata that I've mentioned before, that I want to know but will never really know. I've never been to war. I've never been in combat, and probably never will be. I want to be a balm for the friends of mine who have been. I want to help them heal. But I will never know what it took or how that wound can disappear. But through my eyes, through contemplating maybe what they saw through their eyes while in that world, I can gain an iota of something- something to bring me closer to their level, to their strata. To their humanity.

And I want to be able to bring others to feel that through my work.











Lacey Musgrave

I was born on a Wednesday in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in December of 1987. From a very young age I was drawn to colors; how they mingle and dance together, how they create different versions and shades of themselves without effort, and how they can express palpable emotions without words. I began painting lessons at nine years old, where I learned the fundamentals of oil paints and how to explore their dynamic versatility.

Throughout my childhood, I was an eager arts enthusiast without being aware that I was engaged in the creation and expression of art. I excelled at any stringed instrument I touched. I filled any blank page I could find with poems, short stories, and cerebral musings. I learned whatever artistic trade I could find in order to articulate what my brain couldn't get my mouth to speak – crocheting, pottery, knitting, embroidery, jewelry-making, sculpting, until ultimately, I found my way back to painting (with significant motivation from my husband!). I have a Master's in Social Work and am currently employed full-time at a Children's Advocacy Center. There, I assist in the investigation of child abuse and neglect by providing investigative forensic interviews for Law Enforcement and Child Protective Services and Trauma-Focused therapy to child victims of sexual and physical abuse and neglect.

I am an exceedingly visceral person. I am also what some would call a "healer" in the vein that I help children heal from unspeakable trauma. I function intuitively and through feelings. While some people think in numbers and letters; I think in emotions and color. It can be challenging to extract myself from the tangled vines of thought that drape across the jungle of my mind, so I have always needed an outlet lest I short-circuit. Allowing my thoughts and subsequent emotions to drain out of me like torrential rain has always been the only way to keep my ship from sinking, and painting in this expressive, psychedelic fluid style has become my sail in the storm.

My husband, Tyler, and I began Peace House Art in an attempt to continue and share the healing I have been able to find through art. We have become hyper-aware of the increasingly propagandized outpouring of negative rhetoric from the mainstream media, music, movies, and culture that is slowly poisoning us without our conscious awareness. Our goal is to "heal the world" – one piece of art at a time.

The need to understand inspires me. I want to understand the way the paints flow together, which mediums cause what effects, and what looks good splashed across a canvas. I am also inspired by love, and learning how to make the world (and myself in the process) better than before we started. In addition, I have felt such an incredible amount of love and encouragement from fellow resin and fluid artists from all across the globe since I began using these materials. It serves as a major driving factor to continue pouring my paints, and helps eliminate (or at least minimize drastically) self-doubt! I'm also inspired by making art a full-time career one day, as we eventually want to make Peace House Art a stand-alone studio, allowing us to continue to expand our artistic ventures.

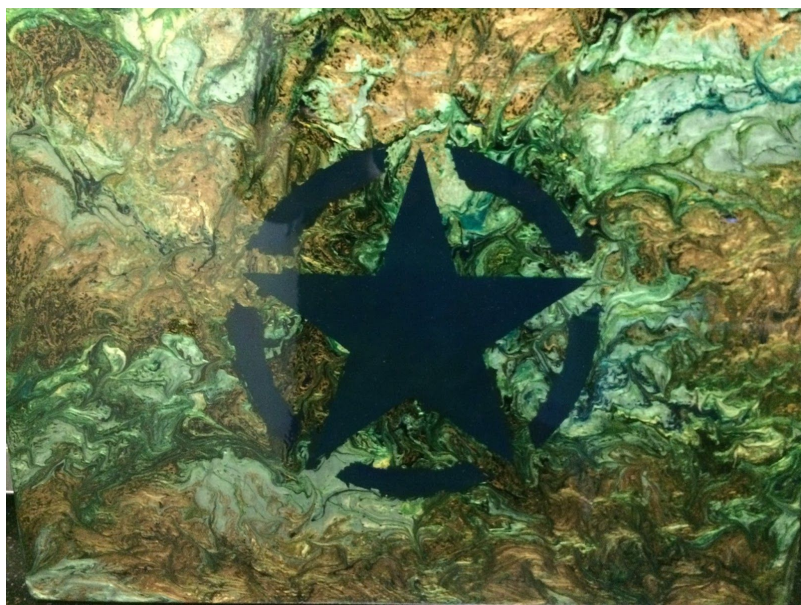
Since this type of painting is often referred to as "flow" painting, I tried to imbue each piece with a certain type of "flow" I felt represented these military branches. Wispy, cloudy bits in the Air Force; bubble-like ocean globules for the Navy; camouflaged greens of the Army, and red and gold-tasseled silver cellular waves for the Marine Corps. Since I have never served, I only had the stories and experiences of my family and friends to draw upon - stories of strength, honor, and the incredible feats possible only with determination and a courageous heart. My father in law is an Air Force Veteran, like my own father who passed away a decade ago. I tried to pay tribute to these men who are so important to me while creating these pieces, and hopefully I did something that they would be proud of.

I use two part epoxy resin that dries rock hard and crystal clear, much like plastic or glass. It can be used for a variety of things, from jewelry to painting to coating furniture and so on. I mix up the resin and either pour it straight onto the canvas, which is typically a piece of sanded and primed wood, or mix it in with highly pigmented yet thin paints. I also used Pebeo Fantasy and Vitrail paints in two of the paintings, which cause a variety of unique effects ranging from cellular droplets to a satisfying lacing effect (which absolutely flourishes when paired with a solvent and a blowtorch!) Throughout each piece, various pigment powders were mixed in with the resin to increase the depth and radiance.

These paintings were made to show gratitude to the soldiers who embody strength, determination, courage, and Valor during their service. I hope bits of their own past service can be found in these paintings while following a path of healing from the trauma that often takes grip after a tour or deployment. I attempted to acknowledge the difficult aspects of serving

in the military while creating an overall positive image because- darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.







Rachel Thomason

I studied art throughout my schooling and graduated from Winthrop University with a degree in Art History. Afterward, I dedicated myself to working in every medium. From developing film by hand to paper book arts, oil painting to video editing – I've found I could release my creativity through all of these efforts and get very personal and real aesthetic results.

I was very touched by this woman's story. After 9/11 we were all moved as a nation to rally and offer support, but she went a step further by joining the Navy. She made a plan and dedicated herself to the military. She was assigned to an island paradise to work for the greatest military in the world.

Today, women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a fellow soldier than killed in combat and ninety percent of military assault victims are eventually involuntarily discharged. In an anonymous survey, the military found that over half of all women who have been sexually assaulted do not report their traumas for fear of retaliation.

"Friendly Fire" is an abstract acrylic on canvas. As a woman artist and as a product of two parents who served in the Navy – I approached this piece with a lot of baggage of my own. The work is small and personal, you have to approach this painting closely. The penetration and scarring is dark and forceful. I am thankful to her for sharing her story, in some ways it feels like her experience answers many questions I still carry about my own loved ones.

Jim Dukes

I was born in 1971, raised in Cary, NC, in a Wonder Bread, conservative Catholic household, the 3rd of 4 kids and the only boy. I attended public schools, was an average student who always thought there was something bigger out there for me. I started working at age 13, delivering papers and cutting lawns. I began using my Civil Engineering degree as an Explosive Ordinance Technician in 1992 working as a contractor for the United Nations, Dept. of Energy and Defense Department. After four years and numerous injuries, I spent the rest of my career in environmental and construction management industry. In 2012, my life drastically changed after my 5th Traumatic Brain Injury.

I make art to help myself and others heal from their invisible and or visible wounds. I've been through a lot of trauma starting at 6 years old; abuse of all kinds, survived explosions, suicide, saved lives and taken them. I've been sober since 2006 and facing my past in therapy ever since. Over three years ago I arrived at a crossroad. Was I going to be a disabled man, or a man with a disability? Legally blind in my right eye and with no musical or dancing abilities, broke and living at home with my mom, I picked up my cell phone and started taking pictures. I started using my right brain since the left brain function was severely and permanently changed. I started making art my therapy tool.

I have many artistic inspirations, but my biggest inspiration is my son. He was born in 2008 and has assisted and observed me through my brain injury recovery. I vowed to be an example for him to learn what it takes to overcome adversity. I constantly struggle with anxiety, post-traumatic stress and anger management issues. Most days I do not want to leave my home, but I set goals with my art and it forces me to go out, accomplish tasks, interact with people and bolster my confidence. My health and well-being inspire me to create. I feel if I am creating and healing, someone in my situation may take notice and begin their own journey of productive self-improvement.

I am always on alert for danger. I am hypervigilant. I notice the tiniest details; every movement, sound, smell, reflection, shadow, emotion. I use these skills for my survival. I choose to apply this attention to detail in my

photography as a healing tool. I now look through the camera lens and see the unique beauty in the world around me, as opposed to all the things that could kill me. I attempt to deliver the details I see, to the person viewing my work. When I'm taking pictures, my mind is occupied by thoughts of how I can capture this unique moment; I'm thinking philosophy and storytelling, not shutter speed and aperture settings.

My work means forward progress, healing and growth. Sure, I care if people like my work, but I don't feel the pressure of creating the perfect piece. My photography is an expression of my emotion. Emotions are neither right or wrong, they just are. With every piece I create I feel a little more whole. I am extremely appreciative of people absorbing the outward expression of my feelings. You have just viewed a piece of me. You have witnessed hours of work, emotional interpretation, anxiety, edits, second guessing, satisfaction, restarts and imperfection. In the time it took to view one photograph, you have experienced being human.

Sammy Lopez

I earned my BFA in 2007 from the University of South Carolina. After graduating, I helped start PIENSA: Art Company with Robert Chambers and my brother, Dre Lopez. As a multi-media art/design studio, I worked in the local arts community to set up art events in which I was able to collaborate with local artists of all fields and backgrounds, as well as use my art to set up fundraisers for local and global causes. I have taught art classes at the Columbia Museum of Art, the Department of Juvenile Justice, as well as teaching children within home schooling networks.

Outside of the local community, as a freelance artist/designer, I have created custom design work for small businesses ranging from catering companies, to restaurants, to musicians, as well as programmers. I've also created illustrations and design work for book covers, as well as multiple self-published comic books under the PIENSA: Art Company. I am currently a graphic designer for Free Times publication.

My fine art experience has allowed me to show on several occasions at the Columbia Museum of Art, 701 Whaley, Anastasia & Friends, Gallery 80808, as well other smaller non-conventional galleries throughout the Southeast. My work carries the versatility that my projects require. My mission, as is in the name of the studio, PIENSA (Spanish for think) is to create work that makes you think. I'd rather have the viewer get their own experience than have me dictate it to them.

For this collaborative work, I decided to focus on the theme of past memories and loss. The ideas of "ghosts", or memories, of the past resonated with me and I wanted to show just how those "ghosts" can haunt us far after they were created.

Miranda Peterson

I'm all over the place and can be described as an artist, designer, dreamer, writer, word splicer, yogi and traveler with insatiable wanderlust. I draw inspiration from the world around me and hope my efforts encourage others to keep learning, loving and exploring.

It seems to me that servicewomen face a whole series of battles before they ever even enter a combat zone:

Military service is traditionally a man's job. American media and society still largely value women based on their youth, beauty and ability to birth and raise children. There are far less women than men in the armed services; in 2011 the Pentagon stated only 14.5% of the total active-duty force was female.

Since the closest I've come to military service myself was briefly dating a Marine in college, I deemed it necessary to speak with an actual veteran.

I was introduced to an incredible woman who captivated me with stories curated from several years of admirable service in the Navy, including interacting with detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. At GTMO, the ratio of servicewomen to men was about 1:15, and the foreign detainees there definitely do not like taking orders from women. (She experienced both sexual harassment and assault, by the way.) I highly recommend watching the movie *Camp X-Ray* for further insight into what it's like to be a woman at GTMO.

At first glance, everything appears organized and orderly, just like a military. But take a closer look and you will start to notice that things are not always what they seem.

The silvery gray color alludes to the polished and well-oiled machine that is the US military. But the hue changes depending on how the light hits it which represents the several shades of gray that have been used to describe forms of militaristic discrimination and harassment as well as women's roles in the armed services and modern society in general.

However, there is always hope, represented by the golden wheel, forward-moving progress, and a sunflower, juxtaposed as a traditional

feminine symbol in the midst of all the mixed signals, internal & external conflict experienced by servicewomen.

Mad props to all women who keep fighting for freedom and equality.

More about Miranda and her work: visit www.mirambling.com, like [facebook.com/mirambling](https://www.facebook.com/mirambling) & follow instagram [@miramblings](https://www.instagram.com/miramblings).

Jessica Rene

Fine art has spoken to me my whole life, and through the years I have come to speak through it. I began my formal training under Russell Jewell in 2008 and continued on to the Greenville Technical College to receive an Associate's Degree in Fine Art in 2013. Through my development, I have methodically worked with portraiture, the feminine figure, still life, and landscape by developing collections of works using a variety of media. While my favorites remain oil painting on canvas and charcoal with Conte pencil, I have carefully honed my skills in many 2D media.

The drive to make art comes from one thing: conversation. During the creation of each piece, I find myself talking to the piece and responding to it as well. Some pieces determine very clearly what they need, while others require such a tedious push and pull. Even after the work is complete, the conversation continues between the piece and the viewer.

Inspiration for my work also comes from conversation between this world and my experiences in it. Something as simple as the sensory exhilaration of light, color, and space can drive my brush across the canvas to create simple works. Lately I have been exploring a more inward conversation that has led to an entirely dissimilar series from my prior creations. While the works of this *Hungry* series are atypical, there is no less chatter than what occurs with each of my other pieces.

There are signs everywhere. The universe is constantly talking to us. We have to be diligent to attune our ears to what it's trying to tell us. My process of creating my work signifies this relationship; constant back and forth, trying to discern the nuances that would otherwise be overlooked, and reaping the reward of what that effort brings you.

With this piece, I had the honor of hearing Donny Ng's story and conveying the emotion of that story through the conversation of my work. As I read through his story, I could vividly envision the appropriate imagery; the calming clarification of duty and bearing amid the swirling chaos of nature. I am honored to communicate this dichotomy through my medium and to bring another dimension of reflection to Donny's already profound work.

Dre Lopez

The piece deals with sacrifice, personal big and small. Sacrificing for something bigger, sacrificing who we think we are for what we are supposed to be. An awakening, transformation by fire, purity both good and bad. Acceptance, honesty, peace.

Dre Lopez is the founder and Lead Artist/Creative Director for PIENSA: Art Company which is an illustration, fine art, written arts and event organizing multimedia studio. A self taught artist with over 14 years of experience in several different mediums (graphite, oil, acrylic, gouache, watercolor, digital, design), with a main focus on illustration. Drawing from his many different influences, his dynamic and aesthetic carry versatility, from chaotic, kinetic and violent to minimal, soothing and stimulating. Many of his illustration clients have been in the entertainment, music, comics, sports, and military fields but not limited to that with some work having been in fashion, marketing, advertising, political and editorial fields.

His illustration and graphic design work has been published in print and digitally on a local, regional and national level. ADDY award winner (2008). His fine art and illustration has been included in shows all throughout California, Michigan, Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina. He also thinks Robert Chambers is the coolest.

Auctioning Information

This booklet centers around an online charity auction to benefit Upstate Warrior Solution.

Artwork inspired by and created by veterans will be sold with 75% of the proceeds going to Upstate Warrior Solution, a non-profit that reaches out to veterans to help secure benefits, healthcare, housing, and education for any veterans in need.

All artwork will be sold in an online auction. For more information, see www.yellowtagauctions.com/bulletsandbandaids

Bidding will open on Thursday August 18, the day of the Bullets and Band aids Art Show at the Hub City Tap House in Spartanburg, SC. Bidding will close in September 10 at 11pm.

To view the artwork and register for bidding, head to:

www.yellowtagauctions.com/bulletsandbandaids.

The website will include *pictures, descriptions, and artist's information* as well as simple instructions to register and bid.

Any questions about the auction can be sent to robertg@yellowtagauctions.com

Special note*- Each piece will have a starting bid. Any monies donated beyond that bid will be considered tax-deductible.

A special thanks to those that donated to make this show happen:

Livia W. Cantrell Trust

Royce L Camp Construction LLC

Cantrell Wagons LLC

Otis and Margaret Baughman

The Hub City Tap House

*The Cities of Spartanburg, Greenville, and
Columbia*

