

Ramblings of a Soldier

JBentley



Presented by

My poetic Side 

Dedication

To all those who sacrificed and suffered believing in a greater good.

Acknowledgement

To the teachers, NCOs and mentors who provided kindness along the way.

About the author

JBentley is a portrait of conflict. Forever a hillbilly,
for a while a soldier, These are the offerings of
silence held too long.

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Criminalizing Masculinity

Our ancestors were driven from their lands
Soldiers of fortune courage on display
Fighting for armies all over the world
Coming to this New World to build a new way
Nothing here given and nothing was expected
Bringing only endurance and the will to survive
They would learn early respect to be earned
Willingness to fight all that kept them alive
Migrating westward they would make contact
The Natives replaced those who came before
All through time a people forced out another
The cave dwellers considered false lore
We need look no further than the Native tribes
The courage of braves earned their place
Stealing horses and fighting enemies expected
What is called by some toxic masculinity today
The way of the Native American forever lost
No longer was opportunity there to take
For the braves had to fight enemies for honor
Now forced to adapt for survival's sake
Why are those who would stand hated today
Corrupt systems pretending to be civilized
Society doesn't even see what is happening
Going along with the corrupt supporting lies
If we allow masculinity to be defined a crime
Supporting control by corrupt weaker men
When the wolf is at the door who will we call
The weak won't fight that last 1000 yards then

JBentley-16Mar2025

Finding Peace

Though it wasn't that far from civilization
I'll always remember that sweet mountain air
I loved not hearing any man-made sound
And I could be free and be myself there
Learning so much when out alone
Though gone for only a short time frame
The place still there physically to visit
But I know it can never feel the same
One day I want to find that peacefulness
Though I've yet to even come close
In the outdoors something is still missing
If I'll find it before my time who knows
Maybe that place was only inner peace
Serenity perhaps from finding myself lost
Only I knew where I had wandered
Enjoying the absence regardless of cost
Did my peace come from where I went
Or from only what I needed to avoid
Was the refuge only special to escape
That need for refuge is now destroyed

JBentley09Feb2025

Too Bad Too Long

So much worry and strife she struggles with
Standing in church boldly singing God's praise
Her faith carrying her through tribulations
Strength from when her eyes to Heaven raised
From the outside her pain is invisible
She bears the burden deep within
Her anguish caused by the ones she loves
They smile at her and yet still they pretend
The damage there will continue to build
Mentally and physically she will suffer
Her health declining with each passing day
Though she still believes she is only tougher
Having withstood this burden too many years
She's determined she can go on forever
Reality says a body only lasts so long
The day she passes that burden severed
Love led that woman to never give up
No life should be subjected to that misery
Her reward in Heaven will take away the pain
Too bad her problem too long refused to see

JBentley-30Apr2025

Hold on to Humanity

Having seen war-torn Iraq and that stare
The hollow eyes of civilians only wanting to live
Then only wanting peace at any cost
A foreign power freedom couldn't give
Humanity would lose its grip gradually
The locals know the invasion will end
The people know who then will be in control
When the invaders run out of lives to spend
Working Corrections you are initially taught
Inmates nothing but a number to count
You won't understand what you see for a time
Needs of the institution always paramount
Learn that weak inmates are bought and sold
A lost soul with tattoos on neck and face
Lives in a cell with his current owner
Among inmates humanity has no place
A prison, like war, leaves room for slippage
Each day your morals can become worse
Some become the sum of their environment
Sacrificing your values a path to a curse
Our troops are trained to care for civilians
Local children there will hold their hearts
Prison staff not highly trained nor professional
A need to set an example a good place to start
Grand ideas put forth in these words
Staying humane would take us very far
But then again if you only think deeper
With humanity no need for prisons or war

JBentley-07April2025

Just Me

We all see things through different eyes
At a young age all things not set in stone
Searching for truths I was never taught
A lot of conflict regarding right and wrong
Joining the Army down the path I chose
Like life each crossroads had its own direction
Sometimes that end actually a beginning
Changing course making a new connection
People just can't grasp things I did
Military life and combat only we know
Understanding not from some movie scene
They have no idea without the whole show
Military life certainly forged my character
Prepared me for obstacles in civilian life
If you made it there you can achieve any goal
You'll know how to live not just survive
No matter what happens to bring you down
You have to realize what action to take
Step in that direction and keep moving forward
Knowing life for you is what you make
I don't care what people think of my methods
Adjusted sometimes to take care of me
Never made excuses or wanted to be a victim
Self righteous people on the outside can't see
I'm damn sure not ashamed of what I am
Not better than anyone and don't want to be
If people judge what they can't understand
I couldn't care less because I'm just me

JBentley-22Mar2025

Man in the Back Row

He sat in the back row of that little church
He and his wife the salt of the earth
Wore overalls and she a homemade dress
I know now what they were really worth
'Coon hunted with him some nights
After he cut mining timbers all day
This mountain of a man in his 70s
He wouldn't have it any other way
Seemed to be looking straight at Jesus
With the brightest blue I eyes ever saw
His face showed his simple honesty
That knowing smile a lesson for all
I wasn't there when that man left us
I have no doubt his faith stayed strong
Probably crossed still looking at Jesus
Knew he now was where he belonged.

JBentley-18Nov2024

My Tammy

A year and four days my senior
We did everything together
Hours spent playing and laughing
Siblings who could face whatever
We shared a love for music
In ways wise beyond her time
I learned about what is important
From good old southern rock rhymes
In 7th grade she introduced me to cannabis
My first experience smoking weed
Probably experimented 10 times
Of being caught I took heed
I lived in legitimate fear of my father
He demanded we do as told
Tammy never seemed to care
Her stubbornness a sight to behold
At 17 diagnosed with Leukemia
Yet still never showed any fear
Though many friends and family wept
I never saw Tam shed a tear
At one point thought to be in remission
Bone marrow I was to donate
Before the transplant could be effected
A setback determined it too late
We buried Tammy on her 19th birthday
I felt guilt but was glad she passed
I had watched her and my loved ones suffer
She was finally at rest at last
The biggest regret I have in missing her
My own family with her I could share
She used to sing Simple Man to me
From Tammy I learned to care

JBentley-24May2023

Point of No Return

There is a place inside the mind
A switch and no reverse
Few will ever understand
Is it blessing or is it curse
The line inside that chasm
Only once can be crossed
After that point is reached
A return forever lost
Those who are there recognize
They will never be the same
For their philosophy on when and what
Forever has been changed
The conscience made a decision
With no regard to how or why
The price has been considered
So the soul would never die
The mind and soul no longer struggle
No conflict with the two
The only dispute that now exists
Concerns protected society's rules
Crossing the line to defeat a moral
The mindset to take a life
The mind and soul coming together
The only way to be right

JBentley

6/4/22

Not Just Horses

Since the beginning of what we call civilization
Young men earned respect by going to war
Once that need to fight for a reason was gone
Nothing to seek battlefield honor for
Nations go to war for many other reasons
Mercenaries risk all for fortune and fame
Without seeking something inside the warrior
Campaigning for trinkets just not the same
Native Americans braves stole horses
This ability made them big men in their tribe
The number of horses gave him standing
Many horses showed what he had inside
Horses showed courage, strength and cunning
Necessary to continue a way of life
This cycle extending tribal ways longer
Braves were forged like the hunting knife
The Indian couldn't adapt to winter warfare
Deer and buffalo gone no food to find
The brave spent his time feeding the tribe
Seeking honor now far from his mind
Without game to hunt the native would starve
To fight or eat would determine his fate
He had never had a need for supply lines
The Native Americans had to assimilate
Some complain Native Americans mistreated
They believe Natives didn't do the same thing
Tribes conquered those who came before
With each conquest new ways to bring
We must not allow our culture to be changed
By those seeking change for change's sake
If we allow the immoral to alter our society
All that we stand for will surely break

We must look forward as we maintain
A way of life sacrificed, fought and died for
Keep an eye to history and never lose sight of
What our nation stands for at its very core

JBentley-23Aug2024

Change Me

You have seen me dealing with the violent
Seen my passion for all that I love
You love the protector and provider I am
The picture in your mind just not enough
You want to control what you don't know
Without understanding things I have done
Your protected life didn't create what mine did
Something very different life made me become
My conscious thoughts born on my journey
Only experience taught me how to control
Though I'm capable of more a different matter
That mindset you can never know
You wish I didn't always have to take a stand
You've told me my way is exhausting
Driven to actions by ingrained duty
Addressing what is wrong part of my being
No desire to make you see the bad in the world
To do this would change the beauty inside
I have done things meant to make it better
No reason to explain nor to hide
Nothing else possible to my way of thinking
I'll seek a better world win, lose or draw
My experience has shown me a darker world
Life-learned lessons predict it all
I don't know how you love everything
Won't question a world that ideal
No desire for you to see through my eyes at all
Just understand what drives me is real
I'm here taking care of everything important
Refusing to apologize for what I must be
All my life some people have pushed me away
Feeling somehow they must change me

JBentley-04Oct2023

Knowing the Truth

It's awful hard to raise a man to stand upright
The world don't like the rough edges I've earned
Wanting me to bend but I ain't made that way
Won't set that bad example for a young man to learn
Lord knows I tried to make him see the reason
I guess it ain't so bad caring about what's right
Wasted time teaching him not to be me
All he really needed was when and why to fight
Being tough ain't just about throwing hands
Fighting means standing up to wrong
More often than not people will talk
Then you'll find yourself all alone
Experience teaches you when you should
Never fight without a need
Don't worry about what the world thinks
Knowing you're right is what you heed
Though it's tougher than talking about it
It's as simple as an ole guitar player strummin'
Playing the chords and bringing the truth
Just know you're right and keep on coming

JBentley-21June2024

Strong Side of Wrong

Seen a lot of living in that bootlegger's world
Backroom poker games quite a show
Learning lessons better left unlearned
A good thing daddy didn't know
The Perry County border's cheapest beer
Bought for four dollars a case
A dollar fifty for a half pint of whiskey
Hard to drink that without a chase
Making fourteen dollars on the beer
Three made on the hard stuff
Now I know how he paid off the law
What was left was still making enough
Wouldn't have learned the dark kind of strong
If I hadn't seen that side of wrong
Won't say I didn't like outlawing
Saints and outlaws ain't the same thing
I knew I was seeing life on the edge
In the outlaw world only say what you mean
Outlawing is a different education
Learning the hard side of right and wrong
I won't say it was upright learning
Outlaw learning taught me to be strong
Wouldn't have learned the dark kind of strong
If I hadn't seen that side of wrong
JBentley-11May2024

Bein? Real

Since grownin' up some people feared me
Nothing about any graveyards I've filled
What scares them isn't that I'm violent
These souls just can't stand me bein' real
So many have learned to be fake
Can't let the world see who they really are
Somewhere when they couldn't recover
Over time that lie just went too far
They come from all walks of life
Even all branches of military forces
Something won't let them look in the mirror
Just stop and address the original source
Some men and women like fake money
Nothing about them ever came hard
Looking for respect they never paid for
Just like a damned old plastic credit card
When you buy with money that you don't have
True respect you'll never feel
Character and honor aren't for sale
You can only earn those bein' real

JBentley-13APR2024

Life until Death

Staring at a setting sun a beautiful scene
Leaving the fading glow of rays
As across mountains it hides itself
Marking the end of another day
Enjoy the view for what it is
Respect all the gifts presented so warm
Though the sunset can be copied
It can't be possessed in any form
Cherish those moments for they are sacred
They can never be stolen from your thoughts
Though they seem small they are supreme
Memories though they were never sought
Never imagining the gift you were given
Drink up nature with every breath
The sun's warmth then the evening's cool
The best lived life still ends in death

JBentley-14Apr2024

Estil's 41 Magnum

Not a familiar caliber to many
To the .357's power this one more
Improved management of recoil
A third less than Magnum 44s
Revolvers for law enforcement the rule
Believing 41s had found a niche
Then wonder nines came on the scene
This new Magnum suffered a glitch
Introduced to this N-frame by an old man
We descended from 2 of 3 brothers
Original settlers of the holler called home
From generations back cousins
I spent time sitting on his porch
He'd share old hunting stories
Making you see an African safari
Squirrels and groundhogs mere allegories
He lost an eye as a young man
A cast-out by those thought better than we
Estil saw more than they imagined
Seeing what they wouldn't see
Leaving home not returning in time
No more learning from this old sage
His stories about an older way of life
A gift to me at a young age
No interest in what would be distributed
Nor could a claim be laid by me
I was offered that 41 by his nephew
A cherished possession that would be
That revolver a part of my friend
Asked his niece if she concurred
She decided it was in good hands
I'll never part with it except to her

JBentley-09July2023

The Pillar

A good family unit the foundation of society
Without it character and morals are naught
Lessons of struggle and love learned here
How to survive with strength taught
As wife and mother no need for attention
Outsiders see her role as passive
Her needs are for the family's success
Love and righteousness her motive
While that solid rock must initially be laid
She will reinforce the stalwart man
As base the man the groundwork of the family
As the pillar she strengthens their stand
For the man is kept upright by the woman
His nature to provide for his family
She will stand by and support in unison
Whether in the background or actively
The pillar supported base and top
She gave the base everything it stood for
The roof supported by her strength
The pillar made the family so much more

JBentley-16Feb2024

Making Your Man

As a young private in military training
The soldier who was sharpest made the man
Taken off the guard roster that day
No guard duty that shift would you stand
When your name appeared on the roster
Boots highly spit-shined and uniform pressed
Every man jack among us showing our pride
Competition always brought about the best
Long ago the military had come to know
When every soldier looked good on post
The unit having duty was well represented
Reaching above the standard achieved most
Other organizations their own way
Not competing but making their own man
Without standards or true measure
A dynamic they want always the plan
This creation of theirs at times unaware
Against what needed quality did they compete
No idea why they were chosen above others
What requirements did they alone meet
Were they one in a thousand selected
If so how was someone able to decide
Or were they no different than the masses
On what basis do the deciders abide
In many instances this is just how it is done
Some grow tired of playing the game
Many so afraid to face the bitter truth
They've all bought into a lie just the same
We can have no metric without competition
Best of the best cannot rise to the demand
The standard lowered to whatever is desired
Only a poor system makes its own man

JBentley-05Feb2024

Love for Dogs

Unpredictable in their reactions
Something unseen but still missing
A hollow look in their eyes
Perhaps from past misgivings
Publicly acting to fit in
Creating a kind persona for their peers
Only those living with them know them
To immediate family crystal clear
The unaffected participate in the charade
Only seeing what they choose
Ignoring the truth that is suffered
The powerless ones sadly lose
What is unfit not seen by outsiders
No identifying the fault with them
Easier to see what isn't there
The absent trait itself condemns
The flaw showing the bitter truth
No mystery or complicated fog
While looking for what is obvious
Know they never had love for dogs

JBentley-5Jan2024

Warriors? Christmas

Even when our country was not actually at war
All over the world our troops still deployed
Projecting strength to keep enemies at bay
Only a speed bump for the Communist horde
Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines
Keeping watch while most have no clue
Unknown to most the sacrifice made
Your Christmas is protected by only a few
Christmas afar leaves a soul lonesome
West Germany when I couldn't come home
Once I'd see Aaron Tippin and Bob Hope
The 101st in Dhahran ready and strong
Soon after Christmas the air war began
About a month later up Tapline road
Avoiding Kuwait we went straight into Iraq
In 100 hours Hussein's surrender told
Some Christmases would prove even worse
My last warrior Christmas in Mosul, Iraq
We had almost all made it to the end
Lost warriors on the 21st to a suicide attack
Please take a moment to remember our troops
Keeping us safe while many are unaware
Think about them and their families today
We need to let them all know we care
JBentley-24Dec2023

Worse than Death

All through my life I've looked up to strength
Men seeming bigger than life itself
Seeming to fear nothing on this earth
Standing tall in the face of any hell

Like nature's example protecting theirs
Strong women capable of standing alone
Emulating character for all to see
Walking beside that man keeping him strong

Troubles and trials always to come
These very few keep the wolves away
The backbone of family, community and nation
Exhibiting an inherent power to stay

The absence of character a vacuum created
Without our nation there is no shining light
These giants provide the world's last stand
Liberty only burns by continuing the fight

Reminded of a strong man on his death bed
Knowing he was near his final breath
Speaking the wisdom that made us strong
Told, "There are worse things than death"!

JBentley-14Dec2023

Where the Dead Lay

A wonderful Eastern Kentucky holler
Beautiful woodlands and mountain trails
All seasons something to offer
But always evil lurking there
Refusing to back up to a wide spot
To allow another vehicle to pass by
Blocking the roads to a residence
No logical reason only spite
Gossip and slander are the tools
Used to pit their enemies against one another
They spread their subversion for selfish gain
Then question why they lost a husband, son or brother
Most mountain people full of warmth
Still they won't accept any slight
Their honor used against them
The subversive planted the fight
Clinging to pride and strength
Little else as earthly possessions
When they are crossed they simply react
Answering disrespect without question
Perhaps God's grace will cause hate to fade
Though trust among neighbors lost
Cooler heads will stop the killing
But the past demonstrates the cost
The place was never evil
The animosity began as minute
Perpetrators nurtured the grudge
The backbiters were the root
A place of warmth and love
Was turned into an evil place
Backstabbers some even unaware
Are the reason for where the dead lay

JBentley-07/0123

#Poetry

Whiskey for no Reason

Drank bootleg whiskey in my youth
Letcher County, Kentucky had its prohibition
Challenge and adventure to find the devil
Learning to disregard its bite our mission
In the beginning terrible the taste
Gradually coming to enjoy the effects
Still drinking too much way too fast
Ending up one helluva wreck
Same as the case with much in life
Wish I'd known then what I know now
Sipping smooth bourbon brought more fun
Than ending up sideways wandering how
Left that dry county to join the Army
Funny how you find yourself alone
Buddies just like you all around
Christmas is sad when you're not home
Sooner or later you'll find your boys
Coming from many different walks of life
Drank my bourbon and they their choice
Sharing war stories or our past strife
Bootleg Wild Turkey bought in Dahuk
Drank with my brothers Christmas of 04
Needing to ease the hurting inside
Saluting our warriors lost days before
Too many nights sipping bourbon on ice
Shared with brothers from that very day
Would lose others to whiskey and whatever
To mourn without whiskey a better way
Over time I developed my drink of choice
Imbibing most evenings regardless of season
Could I have saved some of my brothers
If I only drank whiskey for no reason

JBentley-26July2023

The View from Coal Country

Deep in the hollers of Appalachia
So many unwritten laws and rules
Often perceived to hate Northerners
Outsiders can't grasp the real truth
Coal then greed created the rift
Mineral rights bought for pennies on the dollar
Mining black coal for the outsider's fortunes
Themselves scraping by in the holler
Appalachian folk don't dislike Northerners
Contempt for being tricked out of what was fair
They killed themselves in those deep mines
Just to create more millionaires
The con men who stole their living are all dead and gone
Hill folk don't begrudge an honest man his wealth
But despise an outsider who tricked their ancestors
Stealing fortunes and wasting miner's health

JBentley

5-18-22

#Poetry

In the Mist

A dark day's truth hidden from light
Two brothers and an uncle supposedly alone
Flames of gunfire killing two of the three
What really happened wouldn't be known
The lone uncle never a man to be pushed
The brothers at issue themselves at the time
Both brothers a quarrel with the in-law now
Was it self defense or a murderous crime
The brother who lived his wife at the scene
He lay on the ground crying in pain
Two dead the third yielding before his wound
A blood uncle's tale of how they were slain
The blood uncle a man of unquestioned repute
A chicken fighter, bootlegger, loyal to none
Blocking roads to extort payment
Always looking out for number one
On the day of the shooting he saw nothing
And yet he explained how he knew it to be
Everything projected involvement from him
Many directions his stories would lead
The living brother's wife had a breakdown
Was it fake or was it truly the undo stress
The questionable uncle picked up all revolvers
His prints on all clearing him of the mess
Perhaps the best of character cost two lives
Self defense easy when no witnesses exist
The corrupt blood uncle died years later
Dim truth faded to black in the mist

JBentley-17Nov2023

The Abuser's Eyes

To what extent of abuse lived
No perfect understanding for why
If beauty in the eye of the beholder
What lies in the abuser's eyes
The original abuser disturbed
Something horrible from the past
Though still responsible for self-control
Full of conflict and contrast
Driven abusers learn violence
Anger developed deep inside
A fallacy all abusers cowards
No affront will this kind abide
Learning action from long ago
Through violence to send a message
Not understanding the behavior and absence
Would result in unintended wreckage
The counterfeit victim wanting abuse
Continuing self-deceit
Loving their abuser while hating themselves
Relishing the violence they repeat
A cowardly need for attention
Victimization worn like a medal
Pushing their abuser's buttons
Without being hit they won't settle
The delighted victim then spiteful
Anxiously awaiting any chance
To repeat abuse on the innocent
Just a routine circumstance
The innocent will suffer in silence
Physically and mentally worn
Searching for why they are wrong
Wanting badly to repair what's torn

Creating that life the feckless
Seeing their reflection of hate
Not sure how they deny that
And pretend they'll see Heaven's gates
Both the angry and the hypocrite
Guilty of the painful truth
The innocent suffered in the end
An unnecessarily troubled youth
Driven to domestic violence no excuse
Though the reason brought about by lies
A line was crossed in the violent one's mind
There is death in the abuser's eyes

JBentley-19June2023

Change Me

You have seen me dealing with the violent
Seen my passion for all that I love
You love the protector and provider I am
The picture in your mind just not enough
You want to control what you don't know
Without understanding things I have done
Your protected life didn't create what mine did
Something very different life made me become
My conscious thoughts born on my journey
Only experience taught me how to control
Though I'm capable of more a different matter
That mindset you can never know
You wish I didn't always have to take a stand
You've told me my way is exhausting
Driven to actions by ingrained duty
Addressing what is wrong part of my being
No desire to make you see the bad in the world
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My experience has shown me a darker world
Life-learned lessons predict it all
I don't know how you love everything
Won't question a world that ideal
No desire for you to see through my eyes at all
Just understand what drives me is real
I'm here taking care of everything important
Refusing to apologize for what I must be
All my life some people have pushed me away
Feeling somehow they must change me

JBentley-04Oct2023

American Breed

A young mind lost and searching
No feeling for right or wrong
Where did my identity fit in
To what did my character belong
Vectoring in multiple directions
Not a ray of light would shine
An unknowable complicated roadmap
A blank canvas open by design
As usual the narrow way unseen
Confused as to what should define me
Leaning toward the unlawful
Hard truth I could not see
Somewhere in the foundation learning to seek
Finding strength by looking for why
Along the way discovering morality
A lofty trait worth the price
The Army made sense in that journey
Disciplined through martial life
Dedicated leaders find the good
Eager to repeat what is right
The mentors did not just appear
A harsh road perpetuated by need
Magic did not make the leaders
Our exceptionalism created this breed

JBentley-20Nov2023

Hell Over Hearts

Our goals in war are determined by politicians
To win the hearts or make enemies pay
Changing minds harder than destruction
Creating a vacuum easier than to sway
Though revenge and destruction create a hole
To be filled by terrorists after we're gone
Per chance making them pay for their actions
Better than training them to govern alone
Peace through superior firepower
Requires a return when new powers use force
Clear objectives and a plan for withdrawal
Transparency begins at the source
For changing hearts and minds a fool's game
The course of action with the least loss
Should be upmost in the minds of leaders
Ever mindful of how great the cost
When we drag out action with no clear plan
Sons and daughters sacrificed for naught
Ending up mired in a swamp of uselessness
Like a spider's web our forces caught
No true leader mentions acceptable loss
When no reasonable objective exists
Given a mission which gains nothing
For glory unable to resist
Save our troops and use maximum force
Send a message to the terrorists lust
We value our troops more than your people
If you attack us in no mercy trust

JBentley-07April2023

Surviving Sympathy

Worried so by watching the anguish
Telling myself I would not cause that pain
Such a complicated matter I couldn't know
The tears would be a constant refrain
Manipulation learned ever so gradually
Perhaps once those tears were real
Along the way they discovering a method
Determining how to make others feel
Obviously twisted thinking
No perception of the hurt and hate
Generating tears for their own well-being
Lust for pity they can't satiate
Their rude behavior creating anger
Those exposed coming to know the ways
Slowly running out of sympathy
Learning to seek better days
For your own survival remove yourself
No reason to endure what they create
Find your own peace avoiding drama
Until you have lived it you won't relate
Lessons in life like a military battle drill
More than once the same story told
Experience has given you a manual
React as learned and the solution will unfold

JBentley-08Nov2023

Reflection

The journey our minds see through our eyes
No one else sees the world as another
Through hardships endured or kinder times
Every thought and vision different from others
Trying to understand the simplest things
From a young age difficult to see
The things I thought simple not at all
The hardest issue learning to be me
Living even changes what once was perceived
Providing definition to learn what was
Experience helping to better understand
Realization for the root of the cause
Somewhere along the way losing self
No guarantees giving direction
Only more questions to confuse the way
Difficulty seeing your own reflection
You'll come to know you don't have answers
Living becomes ever more complex
So much should have been simple questions
Difficulties what you've come to expect
When you accept the hard times will come
Never from the beginning have you had control
Give up trying to understand why or how
Then about life you have begun to know

JBentley-01Nov2024

Memorializing Liberty

Memorial Day about remembering
Not to honor all who served
Honoring the valiant who gave their lives
But is that all our heroes deserve
This day is for remembrance of them
But would they want celebration paused
These gallant their fortunes lived
Sacrifice not for a selfish cause
This day deserves solemnity
But did our heroes fight for despair
Their sacrifice meant to provide opportunity
Liberties bought for all to share
Perhaps the long period of peace
Burying youth we did not remember
Led to putting flowers on all family graves
No heroes to Valhalla did enter
Some will always confuse the meaning
Memorialize veterans and family dead
Heroes served inner peace to us
Appreciate every gift we've been fed
Having served with heroes no license
To determine for which liberties were paid
The smiling warriors I remember
Are celebrating from above this day

JBentley-28May2023

The Different

I've listened to their opinions only smiling
The military a place for those with nowhere else to go
The outcasts and underachievers society's dregs
What secrets the haters think they know
Thinking they are somehow better
Many of us nowhere else to turn
No way to college nor a job with a future
Only seeing a chance and a method to earn
Are those who seized opportunity our nation's worst
Accepting a challenge and paying a price
Why are these looked down on today
Are they the model for being despised
Two decades of peace and safety forgotten
When war came what actions did these few take
Less than one percent rose to the occasion
For warriors no other choice to make
It's most certainly an ironic twist
Looking down on those who serve
Never thinking why they are free
Believing their entitlement deserved
It is not just service to our nation
We don't hide when we observe wrong
We are judged for standing for something
Without us our nation would be gone
From service we're not wealthy
Our only reward keeping our nation safe
Unlike the doubters and haters
We find peace looking in our own face
I can't believe we are only different
We have an innate ability to share
The outsiders judging our altruism

For their fellow citizens they don't care
We'll still give our all for this land we love
Defending the weaker to keep us all free
When you look down from your ivory tower
Know that every comrade means more to me
We know the answer and don't look for why
Warriors believe in serving the greater good
Don't need a pat on the back or even a thanks
A better world if you understood

JBentley-3Sep2023

Seeing

Our world holds so much that is barely known
I look at ancient maps and wonder about places I've been
Times have changed what I saw
Just not the same as it was then
History speaks of ancient Europe
Seemingly ageless castles still stand
Further back than most Americans think
Civilizations in Africa and the Middle East began
Do we take pause to even consider
The mountains and rivers seem invincible
New waters flow and weather erodes
Change so minute it seemed invisible
Every picture painted before your eyes
There for an instant and no more
Incremental difference only noticed by the few
What was old now open to explore
Every day something is newer
In our short lives permanent is not true
The practice of noticing change is everything
Give the gift of seeing to you

JBentley-31Sep2023

His Grace

I read my Bible and I understand about Heaven
I know how we get through those pearly gates
Good works alone won't get that done
The only way there is through God's grace
I understand that others were born elsewhere
Not everyone read the King James
What I can't bring myself to comprehend
Is from where we think morality came
Most people believe in law and order
But they deny historical and religious facts
Much confusion about the 1st Amendment
Without respect all that remains is abstract
Separation of Church and State not codified in our Constitution
The term was referenced by Jefferson in a letter
Prevented a secular government from being established
And government from deciding whose beliefs better
Our nation was founded on God's laws
You can't pretend religions have no place
Without morality there would be anarchy
It all goes back to His grace

JBentley-26Aug2023

You Girl You

I've been up and I've been down
Flown high as the sky and I've crashed to the ground
In this crazy world where dreams, they die
When I first met you I knew you were enough
I had to have a lady who was my kind of tough
Listen to me let me tell you what, sometimes
dreams are about all we've got, but I found
you, girl you pull me through
You're the pleasure to ease my pain
My smiling sunshine in the pouring rain, I found
you, girl you pull me through
Raising children in our early years we survived
more than lived
Making sure the babies had all you could give
Being mom and dad while I was at war
You were understanding but so much more
Your strength only surfaces when there is a need
The matriarchal body for this family to heed
Listen to me let me tell you what, sometimes
dreams are about all we've got, but I found
you, girl you pull me through
You're the pleasure to ease my pain
My smiling sunshine in the pouring rain, I found
you, girl you pull me through

JBentley-14Aug2023

Lonely Ole Lonesome

Losing loved ones the holes won't ever be filled
Trying to move past those loses but lost trying to feel
A part of me gone that I can't ever touch
The only thing found is I lost too much
Lonely from missing nothing harder to face
Nothing close to that pain no matter the case
Though we know part of living is the ending in death
A hard thing to accept they've drawn their last breath
Having left us either before or in their prime
Not wanting to believe it was in His time
I sorted out missing those for whom I cared
Though ashamed to ask He was still there
After that kind of lonely not much compares
That lonely ole lonesome my own cross to bear

JBentley-14Aug2023

Damaged Goods

Most, if not all, human beings
Some way some how behavior learned
Are capable of acts of violence
These however were not earned
A tragic incident or sad part of life
Suffering for years and loss unexplained
Something else grows inside those minds
Resolving to never feel that again
It is not evil inside the person
Causing them to know they will act
Whenever their sanity is threatened
Choosing never to repeat their pain a fact
The mindset developed is perfect
Highly trainable this nation to defend
These minds resolved for combat
Proud and eager until the end
Our nation will need military might
When needed our nation will embrace
Utilizing that mindset which now dwells inside
Until with a social worker they are replaced
In service to the nation celebrated by all
Until that service is no longer desired
Now that mindset harms the quiet society
Their use no longer required
This nation won't need their warrior strength
Civilians can no longer even tolerate
Recruited and trained for the offensive
These warriors no longer have a place
Counselors diagnose and try to describe
Using acronyms and euphemisms of all kinds
Others make monsters of the mentioned
Seeking to heal their troubled minds
Society has made monsters of these few

For facing trouble that repeatedly will occur
Treated as damaged goods even though
There was no opportunity to demur
Though considered damaged goods
We'll find strength in avoiding that loss
Which made us into "monsters" to mold
We will seek to defeat the initial cause
JBentley-26Nov22

Pride and Living

At times there will be hard living
Knocked down when life is rough
Know that wearing on your mind will be
Whether you got up fast enough
Trials always cause anguish
Of course they too will pass
Each trouble can teach a man
Strength greater when recovery is fast
Chaos many times from human actions
If you understand the what and why
You can get back some of what was taken
In some cases that loss was pride
You can restore pride through your action
However remain vigilant of the cost
So easily the application of violence
Can end up in greater loss
Some tragedies leave no answers
No solution to find wrong or right
Truth forever hidden by the actors
Without answers nothing to fight
Unintentional consequences observed
Where lives and minds paid a price
Planners thinking only of glory
No consideration of sacrifice
Perhaps the planners read Kipling
From "If" developed delusions of grandeur
Not realizing this war was different
Nor seeing they are the wrong-doer
Problems at times require an action
Others a calm steady review
In some you must address others
Sometimes you just start with you
Learn from the brutal lessons

But don't drown in sorrows too long
Accepting to remain the victim
Will keep you forever wrong
Facing hardship defines a man's character
Human struggle just a fact of life
Without resistance to battle against
No conflict itself would bring strife
From life the hardest lesson
Keep just enough of both sides of pride
One to smile when life happens
One to get back up and ride

JBentley-26June2023