

Uncle Sam Wants Me. Chapter Five. Run Up To, And Taking Of Pre-Induction Examination

I was thoroughly terrified of passing the pre-induction physical and mental examination. I went to my primary physician who had treated me on several occasions for significant knee injuries and asked if he would write a letter for the draft board regarding my bad knees. He stated “I think that they would be more likely to reject you due to your extremely flat feet”. He was the doc so I said “OK, thanks”. His secretary typed it up and he signed it. I wasn’t super confident, but felt like I at least had a shot.

It was the day before my trip to Ft Des Moines to get poked and prodded both physically and cognitively by the army doctors and I was feeling extremely anxious even with the flat foot letter in my back pocket. What does one do when approaching a dramatic and potentially life shattering fork in the road?

At about four in the afternoon, I picked up my best buddy and soon to be my best man, Art T. I had been supplementing my truck stop earnings by selling pot and acid to a dozen or so friends who in turn sold the products to their friends. I had just picked up a hundred hits of what was billed as some of

the finest LSD my dealer had ever had. I asked Art if he would like to try one dose free of charge for test purposes. He was more of an alcohol connoisseur, and took a pass. I figured that I should try it out in order to gauge its potency so that I would have a good idea of how much to charge for it. I had customers eagerly awaiting. I dug one of the small pink pills out of the baggie of one hundred, stuck the bag with the remaining ninety-nine under the back seat of my VW Bug. I then put the single tablet on the back of my tongue and let it start to dissolve. Then I swallowed. I started the car up and off we went off to pick up a six pack of beer for Art with me at the wheel.

Art and I were cruising the streets of our hometown of Cedar Rapids on that fine sunny day enjoying each other's stimulating company. About the time that the sun was starting to set, I noticed that the pavement was roiling and rolling in three-foot breakers much like the waves near the beach in Southern California. I found it delightful and it served to heighten my already great mood. This was not my first time driving while tripping. Not by a long shot. On I drove, up and down, over the concrete waves, laughing all the way.

Then one of the stupidest ideas that I have ever had, popped into my LSD enhanced brain. And there is a lot of stiff competition for that distinction. "I should go home and get a

good night's sleep so I will be ready to get on the bus at 7 am tomorrow morning to go for my physical". It was absurd on the face of it. I had done acid many times and should have realized that there would be no sleeping for me in the next twelve hours before I climbed aboard that bus. And why in the hell would I want to be "well rested" when I showed up for my physical. Wouldn't I be better served by being an unkempt red-eyed wastrel?

It was full dark when I dropped Art off at his folk's place where he was staying for the summer before his senior year at college. Then off I went for the five-mile drive to *my* folk's house. I have no recollection of why I was staying with them that night as I had not lived there for two years.

As I was driving along on the backroads, deep into my trip, I started to think about the Indians and how many of the tribes used psychedelic substances to commune with the Great Spirit. The thoughts made me feel very connected to the Native peoples who had walked the continent hundreds, if not thousands, of years before me. Matter of fact, I was so far into those thoughts that I had failed to maintain an awareness that I was driving a car down a street. Then I was jolted back into the driver's perspective. I was sitting at a stop sign. There were no other cars around. It seemed like I had been absent from being conscious that I was in a car for maybe

twenty minutes. How long had I been sitting at this stop sign? A tsunami of anxiety washed over me. "Whoa! CAN. NOT. DO. THAT. AGAIN. Must maintain concentration on driving."

I rolled away from the stop sign and down the street leaning forward, my hands gripping the wheel hard enough to turn my knuckles white. Then I slipped away once again and was ecstatically one with the indigenous peoples seeking higher consciousness. When I finally popped by into car driving mode again it seemed like another twenty minutes had elapsed but I was only one block further down the road sitting at the next stop sign. Fortunately, there were still no other vehicles in sight. But I had graduated from high anxiety to unabashed fear. I had tried with all of my might to retain driving concentration and had been unable to do so. I was now only about three miles from my folk's house on roads that I knew extremely well as I had traveled them hundreds of times on my way to and from my high school. I was able to maintain my driving focus for the next mile and as I passed Washington HS I started to think that *maybe* I might *possibly* make it to my parent's abode. As I rolled past my alma mater I left my body. I was in an unprecedented state. My internal dialogue that most of us hear all of our waking days had been silenced. In addition, my sense of personal identity had evaporated. My perspective was at tree top level watching a person drive a black Volkswagen down a deserted street. I

had no thought or emotion about what was being observed or who or what was observing it or of time passing. Then I heard a scream. Right after the scream, my conscious mind started up again. "Someone screamed. Who screamed? I screamed." That was when I realized that it was *I* who was watching *me* drive a car down the street from a vantage point from a good fifty feet away. I immediately popped back into my body and driving mode. All the adrenaline that my body could produce had been dumped into my system.

There was then, and still is, a lot of bullshit in popular "knowledge", mainstream media, as well as medical and psychiatric journals about folks becoming psychotic from doing various drugs. And even though I don't believe a word of it now, I was not as well-informed back then.

To this day, I still hear people point to a mentally ill person and say "He did too much acid and went crazy". The fact is that most unfortunate souls who develop schizophrenia and other severe mental illness are undiagnosed initially. Their minds are taking them on a journey through hell, characterized by delusions, paranoia, and frequent breaks from the reality that their friends and family take for granted. So, a vast majority of them try to self-medicate. They are willing to try or take anything that will change what is going on in their head. A lot of them do a vast quantity of drugs and alcohol. Between

their substance abuse and their mental illness, they soon get rounded up by the cops then are quickly sent to the local psych ward where they finally receive a diagnosis. Sometimes it is accurate, often it is not. The upshot is that a lot of friends, family, and the general public equate the drugs they took before the diagnosis as having caused the mental illness.

But the moment that I popped back in to the driver's seat of my VW, I was convinced that I was losing my mind and might never get it back (a few years later I would read books about Native Americans having the same type of experience and considering it to be a very beneficial gift and lesson). But as I was heading towards my folk's place, scared out of my wits, I feared that the end of my life as I knew it might be over and that I could very possibly spend the rest of my days drooling vacantly in a padded room. The fact that there were those ninety-nine hits of illegal substance under the back seat served to add to my horror.

When I finally arrived at casa de Carnal, I went straight to the basement in order to avoid any interaction with my folks. I paced the floor wondering when and if I might revert back to leaving my body and whether next time, I would be unable to return, leaving an empty husk to be whisked away to the funny farm.

Even though I had kept Sue in the dark about my drug use, I felt like I needed to talk to her “one last time” in case I ended up going away for good. I called her and told her I was in extreme distress and needed her to come over immediately. I do not know what she told her mom in order to take off in the middle of the night to visit the guy who had recently almost impregnated her, but she pulled it off. I had instructed her to come to the basement door and was waiting there when she pulled up. We sat on the couch in the basement rec room and I explained in detail what had happened and my fear of “going insane”.

This was the first she was hearing about me taking and dealing LSD and I am sure that it was a lot for her to absorb. But she could see that I was in extreme distress so instead of being angry and/or chewing me out, she asked me what she could do to help. I said that I needed to get out of the house as I was feeling very claustrophobic, and wanted her to drive me around. Once we got in her car, I instructed her to go to Art’s house. I was in no shape to interact with his parents, so my wonderful, loving, caring girlfriend knocked on their door at 10 pm and asked Art’s mom if she could talk to him while they went for a drive in her car. I am certain that Art’s mom had many questions as to why her son’s best friend’s fiancé was taking him out for a cruise late on a Sunday night a couple of

weeks before the wedding. But she did not articulate them at the time.

I then had my two closest people to help me deal with my extreme acid trip and consequent raging anxiety, which helped a hell of a lot. I had already gotten my spiffy short wedding haircut. Art pointed out that the hair on the back of my neck was sticking straight out like dog in fight or flight mode which did not surprise me in the least. I felt like I needed to call my dealer and get his input as to what I was experiencing. He said “It’s just really good shit and my customers are loving it. You just need to try to relax until you come down a bit”. It was great advice and did help me relax and start to believe that I might come around.

Art and Sue stayed with me for a couple more hours until I had in fact come down a bit. They dropped me off and I crawled into my bed and pulled the covers over my head and spent the rest of the night thinking about what I had gone through. I was far from considering it a positive spiritual quest, but had begun to believe that I would probably recover at some point in the near future. I, of course, did not get a wink of sleep and at 6 am got up, dressed, and drove my car over to the pick-up point to board the army bus for the trip to Ft Des Moines.

I spent six hours in the induction center at the Ft Des Moines military base. I passed all physical and cognitive tests with flying colors. The psychiatrist who gave me a brief psychological screening (which failed to detect that twelve hours earlier I had been watching myself drive a car down the road) commented that I had scored so highly on the intelligence test that I should consider applying for Officer's Candidate School. The medical doc looked at my flat feet letter for about ten seconds before he discarded it and applied a big rubber stamp to the front page of my report indicating that I was "Fit for military service". Crapola, I was I-A and certain to get my order to report for service in the very near future.