



## Point of Inflection: Awakening

I have lived the majority of my life facing sorrowful, extremely unusual, and sometimes existential challenges. Though my life has always been made richer by the Arts, I never truly understood just how transformative the Arts and Sciences can be. I had not comprehended the tremendous potential of the Arts to create wealth. It is only now, after a huge chunk of my life has skated by, that I understand that life can potentially be a happy experience via the Arts and Science.

In evaluating all the varied experiences that led to this point in my life, it seems clear to me that it was the challenging parts of my life that most efficiently illuminated my "Awakening." Perhaps the most challenging of those experiences was what has been transpiring over the last several months. My interactions with the Veterans Administration offered me some of the deepest insights into my life.

After many defining events in my life, I reached a point where I decided to apply for Veterans Administration Disability, based on a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that I received from a VA psychiatrist, and two separate VA Clinical Social Workers. It took me a few years to gather all the records necessary to support my claim, since my active duty military experience ended in 1989.

In the decades since I was honorably discharged from the United States Air Force, I have been in and out of therapy for most of that time. I suffered from Chronic Depression, Panic Attacks, Generalized Anxiety, and related memory, focus, and other issues. I first started noticing the symptoms immediately after I left active duty. Within a year or so, I was seeking out intervention from a therapist.

I collected hundreds of pages of support documents from both private medical sources, and from the VA healthcare system itself. It was my belief that there was no way that the VA could deny my claim since it was so well documented over such a long period of time. When the VA requested that I receive an exam from a Psychologist from outside the VA system, I was concerned that they were trying to avoid acknowledging my claim. I was assured by the politicians whom I had contacted, and by people within the VA system itself that the VA would





consider the evidence fairly, and that the classified nature of my tenure in the military would not impact my claim. Much of what I experienced could not be described with any level of specificity, so my concern was that no direct "nexus" between a defining traumatizing act and my issues could be established.

As it turned out, and despite all the assurances I received from various sources, the VA did exactly what I was told they would never do. They suggested that I had no clear indication of PTSD, and further asserted that there was no clear defining act that made the military responsible for any symptoms I might have. In other words, they suggested it wasn't severe, in opposition to what all the information they were provided or had on record suggested. Additionally, they said if I did have any symptoms, there was no proof that my military service caused it. They didn't say specifically that the classified nature of my work, nor my inability to offer specifics contributed to their assertion, but there is no other interpretation possible given the nature of their "logic."

The denial by the VA felt like running into a brick wall. After living with constant distress for decades and struggling with collecting all the information and reliving all the defining traumas that caused my issues, they were just outright denying what I knew to be a clear and unambiguous reality: my military service caused my Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and I had suffered for decades because of that. There are no words that could completely capture the extent of my disillusionment. I was devastated. I was demoralized and dehumanized. Decades of my life were being treated like they meant nothing at all. I was not only powerless, I was faceless, and the injustices I endured meant nothing at all to the people of the VA.

For a few days I struggled with how to move forward. I made the decision to file the claim because I was older, suffering from Asthma, Arthritis, and the ongoing symptoms of PTSD. I am 58 years old, and not in a position to "start a career" from scratch absent the ability to even get through the day without the possibility of a Panic Attack, Asthma Attack, or some other related issue. My memory is less than perfect, and I cry when the wind blows. I can't experience anything that inspires stronger emotional reactions without being overwhelmed by them to the point of being unable to function. My issues were totally incapacitating at times, and I needed help that I should rightfully have qualified for via the VA's disability guidelines.





Sadly though, what "should be" and what "is" are often different things. In this case, I wasn't certain that I had the emotional resources to push forward with any alternatives. For a period, I thought that my only option was to end my own life. That was a place I had been many times before, but I had hoped that I would be rescued by the virtue of my honest and righteous claim. That hadn't happened, and I felt old, tired, and defeated.

I puttered around for a while, drifting from one place to another on the internet. My Asthma prevents me from spending much time outside because it is allergy-driven Asthma, and I live in a desert filled with allergens. So, I am something of a prisoner inside my home on most days. I had been envisioning becoming a "working Artist" for some time, believing that the Arts could help me feel better and heal in lieu of my experiences. Without the support from the VA, however, I thought that these hopes for healing had been imploded by fate.

After bouncing around in my feelings, thoughts, and intentions, I decided to retain legal representation to file a "Notice of Disagreement" with the VA, otherwise known as an "appeal." Even so, that dream-crushing experience surprisingly changed me in ways that were both destructive, and oddly empowering. I realized that no matter what I do, I had to find a way to break free of dependence on any governmental institution for my well-being and survival. But I had no idea how to go about accomplishing that complex task.

My issues related to PTSD hindered many of my deepest ambitions in life. I knew that I'm a talented writer, and that I have loved the Arts and Science since I was a child. I had been planning to expand my interest in the Arts past my training as a writer and wanted to engage in Arts in every imaginable fashion. But, in a strange twist of fate, it was a video that I watched about the strange world of Quantum Mechanics that inspired a spark of hope in my life.

The video discussed the development and evolution of Quantum theory. But what caught my interest were two concepts: [Quantum Entanglement](#), and an odd understanding of reality called "[Superposition](#)." These two concepts from Quantum Mechanics, perplexing, intriguing and counterintuitive, are so far outside of what is commonly expected from Scientific inquiry that they almost seemed like they must have been





conceived of by some "New Age" guru. They challenge the clean and confident nature of scientific thought and offer fodder for those who see the Universe via a "spiritual" or religious lens. In short, there seemed to be something "magical" in nature about those ideas. For me, they defined the Universe as the ultimate, "Cosmic Artist." That inextricably joined the Arts and Science in my mind.

At first, I wasn't certain of how to mold this realization into a plan of action to move forward with. I began to compulsively watch videos about the Arts, Science, and Business. The more I got into the minutia of each area, the more things began to solidify in my mind. In addition to my love of writing, I was drawn towards photography, sculpture, music, and many other areas of Art. I was also drawn towards seeing Science in a new light. I was intrigued by a quote of the great Albert Einstein: "I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world." The "science" aspect of reality is tied up in creativity. Art and Science are two sides of the same cosmic coin.

My path forward became clear to me. I would use the Arts to move towards self-sufficiency, despite the challenges presented by my dispute with the VA. My renewed love of science has me considering how I might be able to further my study of it in the near future. The Arts are a powerful economic engine and need to be appreciated as such. My loves, my beliefs, my spirituality, all center around creativity. The Arts are not only my love, they are my "salvation." They are my "awakening" and my path to greater mindfulness, healing, and self-sufficiency in life.

I began to develop ideas on how to make the Arts into a total lifestyle. While the Arts fit into my own Buddhist spirituality organically, I wanted to find some path to inclusion for all that want to use the Arts as a path to greater healing, awareness, and self-sufficiency, outside of any specific religious context. I conceived of the idea of "Stay Forever Clever" as both a business focused on advancing the power of the Arts for healing and economic prosperity, and as the ultimate "Art Installation" project. I began developing "The Spirit of the Arts" as a guide for those that want to use the Arts to empower healing, self-sufficiency, and personal growth in their own lives.





It is my hope to share the details of my insights on the Arts and Sciences over the course of my life. My love of creativity and compassion are what motivate me to keep moving in life. It is my hope that I can inspire others to get involved, and to use the Arts and Sciences as a path to an “awakening” in their own lives. I encourage all to browse through my website and explore all the information on it in detail. I especially invite all to look at how they can help spread the power and influence of the Arts and Sciences via my campaigns, and via the resources I have identified throughout the site. I hope that my brief life story has some traction in the lives of those that read it, and that my excitement about the Arts and Sciences might be contagious, in a good way.

