



Point of Inflection: Veteran

My separation from active duty was only the first step into a post-military world of “fantasy” and “fun;” if you consider a rapid slide into the depths of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and ongoing isolation to be as pleasurable as an ocean cruise. I had imagined that leaving active duty would relieve some of the distressing issues that had developed while I was at the National Security Agency, aka the “NSA.” Sadly, the start of the first Gulf War, and the emerging perils of my unknown descent into symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, along with my wife’s emerging issues with Bipolar Disorder and Dissociative Identity Disorder made my life after active duty as challenging as anything I had known during active duty.

Serving in the California Air National Guard (CAL-ANG) is not the same as serving with active duty members. The largest majority of people I met in CAL-ANG were people who had never served in any active duty capacity. Their attitudes towards their military service were reflected in that reality. Most of them had notions of military service askew of what I had known in active duty. There were a disproportionate number of them that had bloated egos, bad attitudes about civilians, and about active duty military members—they seemed to see both active duty military members and civilians as people who hadn’t been as smart as them about choosing the “best of both worlds.” It was an odd type of mental masturbation that many of such people engaged in, much to the dismay of the poor souls who were forced to tolerate their presence. Some people just present to the world like foul “intestinal gas” to all around them, unfortunately.

As soon as I left the Air Force, I began applying for every job related to my service that I could find. I had even gone most of the way through the application process to be a Customs Inspector on the California-Mexico border at Otay Mesa, when I got some bad news on my third sequenced interview. The interview was supposed to be a formality before being hired, but in this case it was a point where I found out that I had been singled-out for sanction by parties at the NSA who were not fond of my outspoken objections to their activities. I had made the mistake of occasionally expressing my moral opposition to much of what our government was doing in the region of the world that I worked against while at the NSA. I was 25 years old when I was there,





and naïve enough to believe that I had a “right” to offer opinions freely. Little did I know that I was digging a hole that I would not easily crawl out of for most of my life.

I had been unaware of having been “blackballed” by some entity or entities at the NSA. That fact that I was blackballed was only fully confirmed recently when the nature of the events that caused my PTSD was confirmed by a DoD staff member to my VA disability lawyer. I will explain that situation elsewhere. But at the time of that interview, I was stunned and demoralized by that notification. I thought I had all the qualifications for that job. I had a Top-Secret clearance, martial arts training, military training, and specialized knowledge of the issues I would confront on the border. After that disappointment, I was uncertain of what to do, or where to go. Things weren’t looking too promising at that point.

My wife and I moved several times, hoping to find somewhere to live that would be advantageous to our circumstances. During that initial time frame, I was unable to find even menial work. I was told that the jobs related to my work at the NSA, at least those jobs that replicated the types of tasks I had been engaged in at the NSA, had been either deprecated, or moved to other nations by the defense contractors I queried when looking for work. I was also told that I was “overqualified” to do any clerical or retail work, and that I wasn’t qualified to do mid-level defense work that was loosely related to my training. I repeatedly encountered this result for many years. My wife found retail and other jobs more easily, and a hint of resentment was building towards me because I was unable to find work. She completely objected to the possibility of my working for Border Patrol, which had shown interest in hiring me, but she was already beginning to show early signs of Bipolar Disorder and perceptual difficulties that I was unaware of.

I started experiencing what I now know were panic attacks. At the time, I thought I was suffering heart issues, or moving towards a stroke. I was finding myself less and less able to cope with the stresses of daily life and the isolation I was experiencing in relation to being unable to find work. The reality of being viewed as “lazy” because of that was taking a toll on me as well. I was sinking into severe depression, and I had no idea what to do about it.



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After a lot of jockeying about looking for opportunities, my wife found work as a Police Dispatcher in a suburb in Eastern Los Angeles County in California. I was beginning to get the impression that I was not going to find work, since all my applications to police agencies, and other governmental agencies were yielding no results. My lack of success in finding employment, along with her worsening mental health, were beginning to cause fissures in our relationship. Then, the first Gulf War came along.

After my wife found work as a Police Dispatcher, I had access to medical care, including mental health care. I visited a Social Worker therapist and was ultimately prescribed an earlier generation antidepressant for my issues. At the same time, rumors about the possibility of my CAL-ANG unit being activated to participate in the Gulf War were beginning to circulate. I morally opposed that war and was looking for a way to avoid having to serve in it. I was already a mess with panic attacks and crushing depression, but the possibility of having to go to the middle east to fight in a war that I was opposed to, pushed my issues to a new level of distress.

Once I found out that my unit was to be partially "activated" to serve in Iraq, I was informed by the "Flight Surgeon" at March AFB that my chronic depression and anxiety made me exempt from serving in Iraq. A foolish sense of bravado overtook me, however. I asked to be taken off of the antidepressant because I didn't want to be "excused" from serving. I wanted to fight on principle, and I wanted to be known as a "Conscientious Objector" to the upcoming war. The Flight Surgeon tried to talk sense to me, but I wasn't hearing his logical arguments. I looked for legal help after being titrated off the antidepressants.

After a lot of frenzied effort on my part, none of our unit was ever activated, and I learned that I no longer actually needed to attend the Air National Guard training. I had initially been told that I had a 14-month commitment in the CAL-ANG by the Air Force staff at the NSA. When I arrived at March AFB, however, I was told it was 36 months. After the initial 14-months of service, I was no longer obligated under the terms of Palace Chase. I decided to stop going to CAL-ANG weekends. I was called by people in my chain of command with threats, to which I responded with the fact that I had been lied to by the people at March AFB. In the end, a very compassionate NCO at CAL-ANG who was familiar with my situation arranged for me to be honorably discharged from CAL-ANG. It was irrelevant, since I already



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received my DD-214 from my active duty service. Even so, I was happy to have no blemishes on my record, and I had enough serious challenges in front of me to contend with.

My wife and I went through stages of conflict owing to my Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and her worsening issues with her undiagnosed Bipolar Disorder and Dissociative Identity Disorder. None of the three of our collective disorders were well understood at that time, and even now the understanding is extremely limited. During her tenure with that police agency, numerous issues arose which we now know were related to her psychiatric issues. After ten years, she lost her job after taking a leave of absence after the birth of our son.

Her pregnancy, and subsequent experiences at work, sent her into a state of "Hypermania" that lasted for at least a decade. During that entire time frame, I was still unable to secure steady employment, pushing through a series of dead-end part-time jobs that were disrupted by increasing panic attacks, worsening depression, and ultimately a misdiagnosis by the VA healthcare system, (when we lost our other health coverage). The VA routinely misdiagnosed veterans with all manner of perceptual and psychotic disorders in lieu of recognizing their issues with PTSD.

I lived with a severe misdiagnosis for more than twenty years before receiving a correct diagnosis of PTSD from VA Social Workers and a VA Psychiatrist in New Mexico. I was given strong medications that destroyed my ability to think clearly; caused perpetual sleepiness, weight gain and insanely high and unsafe cholesterol and blood sugar levels. I have lingering health issues because of this. I was also independently diagnosed with PTSD by other Psychologists and Social Workers outside of the VA, but I am jumping ahead in mentioning that.

During those first few years after I was discharged our financial circumstances deteriorated to a point where we were forced to move in with my wife's parents. This was the point where my wife's Bipolar Disorder led her to have multiple affairs, including dangerous unprotected sex with men she barely knew, and engage in uncontrolled spending of the few resources we received through assistance or short-term employment. She was literally giving money away, while most of our relatives laid the blame for the circumstances on me. Even my VA psychiatrists at the time were suggesting that I was "delusional" for insisting that my wife was having affairs and giving money away, even

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though she had told her closest friends at that time of her affairs, and I explained the rational reasons for my beliefs to them. Some part of me wishes I could find all the VA staff that doubted me and confront them, with my now well-treated wife in tow, with the fact that she was not only having affairs but engaging in activities that could have potentially exposed both of us to seriously dangerous STDs.

In this time frame, my wife began to seek therapeutic help, at my urging, via the "Medi-Cal" (aka Medicaid) program in the Los Angeles area. She was offered therapy and psychiatric help via a local nonprofit agency that worked with the state. The poorly trained "professionals" there misdiagnosed her illness, and subsequently gave her medications that made her mania even more pronounced. My wife even confessed her infidelity to them, along with symptoms that were easily recognizable as those of Bipolar Disorder, but no correct diagnosis or treatment followed.

At some point during our stay with my wife's parents, it was suggested to me by one of the more compassionate and brave VA psychiatrists that the VA may have misdiagnosed my illness. And even though he didn't offer a correct PTSD diagnosis, he assisted me in titrating off the strong and ineffective medications that the VA had prescribed for me. In the years that followed, I began to plan to leave my wife and the Los Angeles area to live in Southern New Mexico, where I would live, study Buddhism, and eventually have my son move in to live with me.

My wife had been suggesting, in her Hypermania and delusions, that she possibly wanted out of our marriage, and that all of her unhappiness in life was my fault. She refused to acknowledge her affairs openly but was regularly having unprotected sex with one coworker for about ten years. Thinking my wife would not willingly choose to move to New Mexico with me, I proposed moving there. To my initial shock and dismay, she expressed a willingness to move with me to New Mexico. It was at this point that I began to suspect that something more serious than what she had been diagnosed with, which had never been clearly defined in any case, might be going on.

After talking her parents into assisting us to move, we settled in Southern New Mexico. My wife's issues only got worse. She initially sought out help from doctors in New Mexico via low-end private help coverage, and was prescribed Adderall, which made her mania soar. Other medications followed, while my wife began communicating with

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people on the Internet via Social Media. After a number of months, my wife was having cyberaffairs with questionable people via Facebook. In the midst of that, an issue developed with our son, and I asked my wife to take him to California to reorient in more familiar settings.

While she was in California, she started cybersexting with a person in Canada who turned out to be a human trafficker. He was manipulating her to try and get her to meet him somewhere for sexual encounters and likely to be kidnapped and sold as a sexual slave. In the midst of her mania, she was secretly planning to meet with him, and others, to engage in sexual encounters. After I found out about the situation, I took control and began working to suspend the contact between her and any of the figures. Through a number of methods, I found out all the background information on the traffickers and used countermeasures, inspired by my own intelligence training, to dispatch with them. I also contacted my former bosses in Intel to inform them of the circumstances. I don't know specifically what they did, but it seemed to more or less end all contact with them.

We applied for and received Medicaid at this point, so I convinced my wife to seek different therapeutic intervention, and she was quickly diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder I with Psychotic Features. I worked with the therapist to develop a course of treatment for her and my son, whose situation was negatively impacted across the board. Over time, a diagnosis of Dissociative Identity Disorder was added. After learning more about the breadth of her behaviors my wife became better able to participate in her own course of treatment. My wife was subsequently declared 100% disabled by the Social Security Administration, but only after hiring a lawyer to file an appeal. I was her primary caregiver and remain in that role to this day.

In that same time frame, I had my panic attacks worsen, and after obtaining part-time work with the City of Las Cruces, doubled over in pain before work one day. The pain turned out to be a kidney stone, which was removed via a procedure with a couple of weeks. After recuperating from that issue, I decided to try to seek help at a VA clinic in town. I was quickly diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by three separate VA clinicians. I was given medications by the VA that helped some with the symptoms, but the worst of the symptoms persisted. I also began therapy with a VA therapist at first, but eventually moved to weekly therapy with a private therapist via Medicaid.



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After several months, I had a previous pain in my neck and shoulder return, and I went to see a doctor who referred me to an Orthopedic Surgeon. It turned out that I had severe Cervical Stenosis and needed to have spacers placed in my Cervical Spine. Because of a wonderful surgeon who was looking out for me, I was given metal spacers in my neck, and excellent aftercare.

As my wife's recovery has progressed, many of my personal issues that I had subordinated for most of my life began to surface as major issues for me. In the space of about 4 years, my mom and my two brothers died. However, my son's circumstances improved, and via therapy, he was able to graduate from the local university with a double-major in STEM, (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), with honors. He now attends graduate school at a highly-rated university near the East Coast, on a full Master's degree fellowship/scholarship. He plans to continue on to obtain a Ph.D. after he finishes there.

I was seeing my situation deteriorating in many respects both mentally and financially. I decided to apply for VA Disability, based on almost 30 years of treatment for issues that could easily have been identified as PTSD, had there been a better understanding of the situation early on. Unfortunately, the VA denied my claim, and a new adventure began.



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