



# TAKE IT ON THE LEFT FOOT

by Adam Walker

I've been a storyteller for as long as I can remember. I love reading and have always been interested in people and places. These attributes continuously intersect and so I began to write.

I joined the Marine Corps at age seventeen and served as a grunt for twenty-five years, including three combat tours in Iraq. The experiences in uniform impacted my perspective on life and the stories I tell.

I've been scribbling in notebooks all across the globe. On ship and in the barracks. In the desert and in the jungle. At home on leave and during breaks in combat. For years I just tucked them away or shared them with a few close brothers-in-arms.

When I gained seniority as an enlisted leader the discussions and lessons I taught grew from my own formation to special events and large audiences. A mentor told me I should write and submit articles to our professional journal, the Marine Corps Gazette.

The first submission was a brief essay; a metaphor and leadership lesson addressing post-traumatic stress titled Post Combat Residue. The article was accepted and published. I was quite surprised to receive an award for that piece at the end of the year. This boosted my confidence as a writer and encouraged me to continue the practice. A Sergeant Major friend of mine summed it up best "Congratulations brother! I didn't know you could read, much less write. Keep it up!"

I then wrote several more articles for the Gazette before retiring in 2019. I knew it was time to go, but like many veterans my affections were still very much with the military. In 2021 I started a blog called *takeitontheleftfoot*. The idea for the name was taken from the most recognized ditty when singing cadence. "Take it on the left foot...the mighty, mighty, left foot...take it...I got it!"

The blog started as a place where I could consolidate and categorize my writing, the scattered pages and notebooks littering old footlockers. I've never

been either interested or savvy with technology, so it was quite a feat to get it off the ground.

I began with four broad categories: Laugh, Lyrics, Reflect, and Ramble. Some of them were written in the season of life I call "the angry and thirsty time", those years immediately following time in combat. Writing was therapeutic for me but also served to examine feelings and thoughts I found too difficult to talk about at the time.

A few must be disturbing for others to read. They were certainly difficult to live through. A piece titled Hard Heart opens with the lines "I'd get drunk and read the Bible, look at myself, then look away. Put the Good Book down, pick the bottle up, and continue on that way." This kind of verse caused my family to worry when paired with my lifestyle at the time.

It was rough but I am confident that my ability to capture with words what many veterans were going through gave some a measure of comfort and sense of shared understanding. A multi-part series relating my medevac journey shows a side of the military few have experienced.

Though not a musician, I have a fondness for music and recognize it as a powerful medium. I've written several songs whose tunes remain largely in my head. One titled *Why My Daddy Cries* is from the perspective of a child and ends on a hopeful note. Another called *Unhinged* is dark and gritty, with a somberness that leaves you hanging.

Working through the hard stuff is balanced with some humorous tales. In *Black Coffee* stereotypes are examined with some relatable vignettes. Another piece titled *The Lieutenant and Falling Asleep* recounts a humorous war story from "The March Up" in Iraq.

*The Boys of Kilo* and *A Reflection on Corpsman* are sentimental prose and reflect the camaraderie, the enduring impact, and the love of brothers-in-arms. It has been touching and encouraging to receive

feedback from those who were impacted by these words.

In the past year the blog posts have trickled as I began to write for various publications while working some long-term projects quietly in the background. There are links to the articles I've written in places such as *We are The Mighty*, *The War Horse*, *Leatherneck Magazine*, *The Marine Corps Gazette*, and *ATEASE! Veterans Magazine*.

Anote of gratitude must be extended to two people who facilitated multiple opportunities to be published, granting me the latitude to go in any direction I wanted.

Tessa Robinson, the Editor in Chief at *We Are The Mighty* enthusiastically granted me a platform to write humorous articles such as *10 Indicators the U.S Marine Corps is a Cult* and *5 Signs You are Allergic to Libo*. Additionally, I was able to offer short treatises on leadership including *5 Common Leadership Pitfalls* and *5 Effective Practices for Small Unit Leaders*.

Christine Walker (no relation other than that of Marine and Navy Corpsman) is not only the Owner and Editor in Chief of *ATEASE! Veterans Magazine*, but she is a fellow writer. She boldly encouraged "author's choice" and created a platform where veterans can unapologetically voice opinions that might be unpopular. An example is my essay *Sorry, It Doesn't Bother Me* from the Spring 2023 issue addressing the fiasco of the Afghanistan withdrawal. This opinion piece had been rejected by several publications in the military community, but Christine unhesitatingly took it to print.

These two ladies encouraged and supported one old, semi-literate *Leatherneck* and I am extremely grateful.

Lastly, there are links on the blog to a few podcasts I've had the opportunity to appear on. Plans for 2024 include continuing as a Staff Writer for *ATEASE! Veterans Magazine* and completing a collection of short stories. I appreciate those who take the time to read what I scribble and hope it either encourages, entertains, or represents the veteran community in a valuable way.

Semper Fidelis.

