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I first went to the Wall in February 1984, on my first visit to Washington D.C. in nearly 15 years. I had heard about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, seen photographs and film of it, knew what an emotional impact it had on visitors. As I walked along Constitution Avenue toward the Memorial, I kept looking for the black marble walls made familiar by the photographs. When I found I couldn't see them, the landscape before me on the Mall turned uncanny. I began to feel the Memorial as a spectre somewhere ahead of me, one I was going to abruptly confront before I was prepared. The lightness of anticipation I had been feeling became weighted with a kind of dread.

Like all too many Americans, I was coming to the Memorial with a name to look for: Glendon Waters. He wasn't my comrade in arms, or a friend, or a relative; in fact, we had never met. He had been dead over two years when, on a cold November night in 1969, I had carried his name around my neck on a placard in the "March Against Death." Forty-five thousand people, each with the name of an American killed in action in Vietnam and a lighted candle, had walked across the Arlington Memorial Bridge, past the west side of the Lincoln Memorial to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. There each marcher had paused before the main entrance of the White House, stepped on a short wooden stand, and one by one said the name he or she carried, loudly or softly as they chose. It had taken nearly 40 hours to say all the names.

In November 1982, the names were spoken again, this time in the Candlelight Vigil of Names which preceded the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This time there were more names to say. This time the names weren't being shouted at the White House, but intoned quietly in the National Cathedral. And this time it wasn't the war's opponents who spoke the names, but the war's

veterans. Yet the spirit was the same, somehow. As we had once shouted the names to demonstrate that the war's individual costs were not to be forgotten, now the war's veterans were intoning the names, for the very same reason.

Suddenly I turned a corner and there they were. There they were, all the names. They started at ground level and rose slowly as I walked down the path, rose until I felt I was descending into an open grave. At the center I stopped, in the midst of the names that now towered over me, closed my eyes, bowed my head, and just stood there, utterly overwhelmed. There are so very many names.

They receded only when I walked up the path to the directory. Glendon Lee Waters: panel 23 East, line 33. Back down into the Memorial, I found the name of the man who had been killed just as I was beginning to publicly oppose the war. What would we have said to one another if we'd met then in July 1967? Or now? What would we say to one another now?

The Memorial makes possible meetings between the living and the dead, some of which are depicted in this book. Here children meet fathers they never knew. Parents meet sons. Lovers are reunited. Comrades. Glendon Waters and me. The names of the dead wait there for the living to come close and touch them. But as the wall gives them to us, it also takes them away again, for touching the names only makes us feel how far away they are. They must remain there, united by their shared catastrophe, while we, the living, must leave, united by our shared grief.

It was this grief that made me climb the steps of another Memorial to gaze at the somber face of Abraham Lincoln. That face had known grief, and I felt that Lincoln, of all Americans living and dead, would understand what I was feeling. He too looks upon the Wall. Only when I read again the words he had used to heal a divided nation--"With malice toward none, with charity for all"--did I feel my pilgrimage was complete.

I am profoundly grateful to the dedicated men and women who built the

Memorial, for they have given all who were hurt by the Vietnam War the shrine we need if we are ever to be healed. Like the war it recalls, it has been denounced and defended, but like this book, it now brings together the conscientious objector and the general, the protestor and the warrior. Important differences may remain, but the Memorial has given us something still more important: the common ground of grief. So long as such grief is heartfelt, shared, and remembered--always--there is hope for peace, and so for us all. The generations wounded by the war will come to the wall, bringing our scars and our memories with us, looking for healing, but to truly heal ourselves, we must ensure that when future generations look upon the Memorial, they will not have lost what we have lost to feel the absolute, silent sorrow embodied by the long black walls, the American names that are on them, and the Vietnamese names that are not.

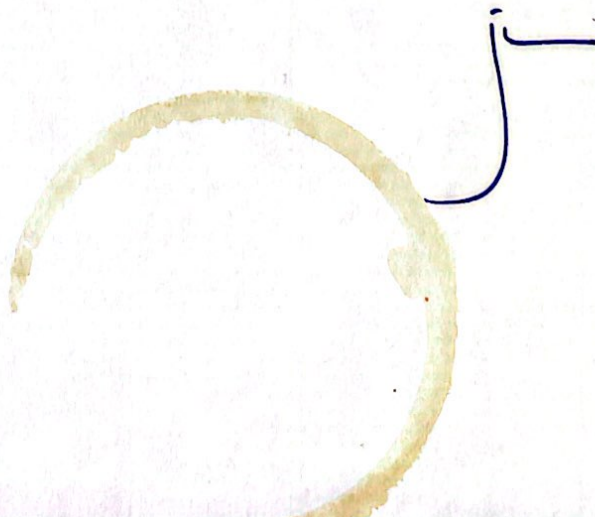
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Dear Walt:

I want to put this in the mail while our conversation last Friday morning is still fresh. It's my journal entry from seven years ago, documenting as best I could the experience that gave me the insight you liked so much: that gurus and drill instructors use our own self-hatred to gain entry into our selves. Like all Lutherans, I have a good bit of self-hatred--it's a source of strength as well as tentativeness--but luckily for me, I've been loved unconditionally by a few folks in my life, and that love appears to have inoculated me against the Marks of the world. as near as i can tell, that love has given me unshakable confidence in--well, not so much in certain propositions or ideas than in relationships. Relationships between men and women, whites and blacks, adults and children. As you'll see, that's where Guru Mark really lost me.

What amazes me a bit now is how fearless I felt as I rode around the San Francisco Bay area for hours with a psychopath and his disciple. I did not believe Ron (the student I was tutoring) would do me bodily harm, even if his guru told him to. He left my tutelage about two weeks after this encounter. Except for a letter some months later, I've never heard from him since. That's a story for another time....

Hope you find this useful. It was great, as always, to talk about these things with you.



UNE 23
- clear: 54°

i met mark last night. i called ron yesterday morning & told him that i was free to meet mark. ron called back four times during the day, each time with a set of instructions about the coming meeting, at his own initiative or mark's. i do not know. we agreed to meet at the campanile at 8. i arrived early & discovered that a beach boys' concert was scheduled for the greek theatre at 8 & that the campus was filling with cars. i met the car on gayley road - a new white lincoln continental - and we spent most of the next four hours driving around in it, ron driving, mark in the passenger's seat & i sitting in the center of the back seat. the tone was set very early. after asking me if i had taken anything & how i was, mark said he was in a very unusual place "tell me," i said. "don't rush me," he said, and made it clear that my task was to center and quiet myself. i was not to smile or to nod or to ask questions or to disturb mark's "opening" in any way. for the rest of the evening i did my best to hear and to understand, a manner of teaching more unlike my own is hard to imagine. mark speaks with confidence about god. the basis of his understanding is acoustics. everything vibrates, including different systems in the human body. the task is to make the body neutral, so we do not interfere with the music god chooses to play with us, mistaking our own music for his. though i became quite relaxed during the evening, mark intimated that he was quite aware of my presence in the car. very early on he commented on how much energy i was using - and i was, i do. several times he berated ron for going too fast or for choosing a bumpy road. he would occasionally rap the window & ron would slow the car down. the car provided an acoustic chamber whose vibratory level could be altered to suit mark. for much of the time we were driving in san francisco, mark performed a series of sound poems with his voice in a variety that exceeded that of bhagaven das. the voice was sometimes a parody of a child's, sometimes had the aristocratic drawl of a bitchy gay, but always seemed marked by exceptional control. the more musical portions were quite gentle and beautiful, the incantatory portions reminded me of hindu or native american chanting. his speaking voice was pleasing to listen to, but i enjoyed his voice most of all at the evening's end, when we discussed classical music & specific performances. he appears to favor mozart & beethoven, but especially mahler. he speaks as one whose body is a sensitive instrument & whose opinions on performances are absolutely correct. others may interpret, badly, or (rarely) quite well, but mark trusts his ability to discern what god or the composer intended for his music. the most remarkable disclosure was that beethoven's "ode to joy" sets schiller's poem as the parody it is: "alle menschen werden brüder?" mark reads this line as a sarcastic question, and commented that all men will not become brothers. as

he did so, I saw pain in his eyes, the pain of rejection suffered early and often. He turned away. "It's probably the heaviest piece of music ever written." On Vollmer Peak, he did some more singing & talking. We never got to the top. When we stopped, we heard several lovely owl (?) calls. Mark spoke to me, at times his face came within an inch of my own. I remember a reference to de Sade to the effect that the masochist is not being hurt, but that he is read or rather misread with this attitude. Also something about the luxury of being nasty to another person. He remarked on my difficult swallowing - "we don't swallow," he said, "and if you weren't being given something, that swallowing would cut you off from insights." I agree, as I agreed with much he said, that is, it resonated in harmony. But other statements, "blacks have a coarse vibe." "Woman's body is a compromise. Man's body is what God intended." "You must hate that within yourself that you wish to change." and his speaking of Ron, this I do not agree with. I heard a lot of ego ("of course, I'm very self-centered but that's not the same as ego"), a lot of defense against rejection, in what was said to me. He flunked my test on women & children. "You can never tell what children will say." Those assembled around him seem to enable him to do his thing, that is their role - self-elected - but the enterprise is not discussed. Secrecy & discretion are the order. He is the guru, they the pupils ("I dislike the word disciples") he scorns seekers ("they are only out to display themselves"). At times, he became almost petulant ("why should I get involved with other people's shit" - no answer, except that perfection would be boring). At the evening's end, I handed Jarrell's Köln concert to the front. Mark took it. I held it & said "happy birthday." Ron turned. "It's for you," said Mark. "I would be happy to know what you both hear in this concert." I said. Silence. Then Mark ~~laughed~~ laughed, looking at ~~ego~~ ego, and then relaxed & looked at him quite intently. He turned to me, offered his hand. "bye." "good night." A turned to Ron whose feelings I can only guess at. Finally, he turned slightly & nodded. I left the car & the evening was over.

That Mark has much of value to teach is undeniable, especially in the area of meditation & stilling the body, at the very least. But that he is extremely sensitive acoustically & can use this sensitivity skillfully is also undeniable. But that he is an unalloyed interpreter of God's intentions, that the high-pitched whirring in his lungs, the mucus in his sinuses do not bespeak a less-than-perfected instrument, fine though it be, and not himself a reservoir & product of early pain, present emotion and future hope, that his ego is not tender, requiring an invulnerable position of master for itself, that he is my guru, all this I do not believe.