

Advice From The Trenches



“When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro.” - Hunter

Thompson

We don't live in a sane world. We're not safe behind bars. Here, on the other side of the gates of privilege, a lot of us have wandered into the trenches. It's an easy place to get lost for a while.

When I was a Girl Scout, I earned the wilderness badge. I admit to taking some wrong turns ... but I remembered to leave a trail.

You know, the problem with reasonable advice is that, for the most part, we are not reasonable people.

Nobody is wandering around out here because they are good at following directions or facing the truth. We are good at coming up with explanations and excuses for the things we want to do. We think we have everyone fooled. The people around us play along - they need us to stay the same so that they can keep playing the same games too.

Therapists may have degrees, clinical experience and the sanction of the AMA, but on a certain level, they are clueless. They diagnose by symptoms and they are expecting that the words coming out of our mouths are true. In their offices, we tend to be the prophets of our own doom.

The most useful lessons I ever learned were in a martial arts dojo, a place where you can't talk your way out of anything. I was thrown into the ring with cops a foot taller and 100 pounds heavier than me who didn't give a crap that I thought I was clever and cute. I got flattened and fractured and wanted to run; by the time I was a 4th degree black belt, I'd figured something out - the reason that most of us can't solve our problems is because we don't really want to. Nobody is stopping us. We stop ourselves. We buy our own bullshit. We say we want things to change, but want our habits to remain the same. When we finally get a different hand, we still play it out the same way. We're asleep at the wheel.

I do not pretend to be board certified. I had four full scholarships; I dropped out of four universities and schools. I've been married and divorced twice. I don't wear designer clothes; I buy tools. I am an artist,

and our minds strongly resemble those of schizophrenics. The only reason they don't lock us up is that we sometimes manage to make our hallucinations come true.

Over the course of many years, and out of the darting mess of ideas in my head, I've produced an award-winning cable show, a best-selling product line, published five books, been awarded six grants, got an album on the charts and had a child. I've lived in the slums and passed through the houses of the rich. No matter who we are or what we do, life can still be bitch.

I wrote an advice column as The Granny Doctor for five years with a clinical psychiatrist. He gave readers very sensible assessments and explanations, recommended therapy and community service. I had a tendency to open my observations with "What are you, some kind of an idiot?"

There's a reason those zen monks whack snoozing zazen meditators in the head. Wake up! It's not safe to fall asleep in these trenches.

Sister C, at your service. Don't be surprised if you hear a yelp

Editor's Note: Sister C will be answering your questions with her no-nonsense advice from the trenches. Send your questions to news@motifri.com.