



DU DOG TAGS

**The DU Dog Tag
Review**

volume I — spring 2016

THE DU DOG TAG REVIEW
journal of the
duquesne university
dog tag literary society

--volume I--
spring 2016

introduction

The Duquesne University Dog Tag Literary Society started with a simple idea: *community*. My co-founder Jeff Martin and I wanted to gather a group of the university's veterans and make an impact where we could. For us, that place was creative writing.

By inviting Duquesne's veteran students, active military service members, and their dependents together into an open, non-judgmental environment, Jeff and I hoped to establish a space where we could write and share and, if things went well, all walk away a little better for having had the experience. We read about other vets' writing groups across the country, collected our teaching materials, and headed in for our first meeting at the beginning of February. And the students who met us in Fisher Hall Room 722 that day were more than we could have asked for: though most had no background in creative writing, all were eager and open-minded, and all had a lot to say—and write.

Current attendees of the Dog Tags have served, or are still serving, in various branches of our nation's military: the United States Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force. They

come to us from Duquesne's department of philosophy, the department of psychology, the business school, and others. They hail from California, Washington state, Pennsylvania. What unites them is service to their country and support for each other. Indeed, from our very first meeting, complete with laughter and donuts, a palpable sense of community flowed through the room.

The work that follows in these pages represents a small fraction of the amazing creative output our attendees produced over the course of the semester. Some of it is funny, some insightful, some emotionally resonant. Much of the writing reproduced here was done in response to writing exercises we used during one of our seven sessions, each of which ran for an hour and a half. In "Persistent Conflict" (pp. 10-12), Ryne S. Tobar employs repetition and an elliptical structure to evoke a repeated conflict between mother and son; Andrew Conte, in "Untitled" (pp. 24-25), channels a familiar scene—Duquesne's Academic Walk between classes—through unfamiliar eyes. While motivated by shared prompts, each writer's response demonstrates a unique and compelling perspective.

It is with much pleasure that we present the

following writing—and with great hope we go forward into future semesters, building our community of friends and writers.

Ashley Kunsa
DU Dog Tags Co-Founder
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Untitled
--Russell Pflugh--

Gma: Hi.

Boy: Hi.

Gma: Where were you?

Boy: Nowhere.

Gma: You were at the playground again, weren't you? ...Dealing that candy to the younger kids.

Boy: I don't know nothing about any candy, Grandma.

Gma: (Grandma staring intently at her grandson's hands while he holds them in his pockets) You have that crap on you right now, don't you?

Boy: (In a defensive tone) Nah, Grandma. You know I left the candy dealing game a long time ago. Ain't never going back.

Gma: (walks over to give grandson's jacket a shake and hearing a rattling noise) Yeah

yeah, sounds like you got plenty of them
candy Nerds for all the kid candy junkies in
town.

Boy: Whatever Grandma, you don't know me!
(runs to his rooms, candy sprinkling over
the floor as it falls from his pockets)

Dave

--Mark Pearce-Smith--

"Trust me, I would if I could," referring to his gluten allergy while we spoke about what I did on the weekend on the way back to a job that was supposed to be finished.

"If you don't do it right, it will come back to haunt you," he said, sort of touting himself about his job performance.

"I was just like you, you'll figure it out," he said right before he was interrupted by a phone call from another customer.

"How are you today, Georgeanne?" He spoke in a different tone than I knew him as. Almost a fake nice that he wore to comfort his clients.

He has no choice in that matter because if people were to judge him solely by the way he looks, he wouldn't be thought of as professional. This also explains why he keeps his Ford F-250 PowerStroke spotless. It revealed something about quality to people when we show up to our job sites. "There's a certain way rich people want you to look in order to get a job," he said as he wore his usual beat-up jeans,

hoodie, and trashed Asics.

She Is Beautiful

--Andrew Conte--

Brown hair with blonde highlights mixed in,
Stormy green colored eyes,
Soft skin that smells like heaven
And an excited voice that makes everything
worthwhile,
There can be only one Josie

Untitled

--Andrew Conte--

As Ross comes out of A-walk, he is stopped before crossing the street by DuPo letting cars pass. As he waits, two students in lab coats that read "Duquesne Pharmacy School" come up behind him. He overhears the taller boy with brown hair tell the shorter, skinnier boy with wire frame glasses and a scraggily beard about a job interview he had.

"Yeah, I'm pretty much guaranteed it. It starts at, like, \$70,000!"

Ross chuckled to himself. It seemed like only yesterday he was in school, excited about graduation and starting his career. But dreadful feelings rushed into him as the memories came back of his younger years.

His graduation gift from his parents was an all-inclusive trip to the Caribbean. He was so excited. He loved the water and felt like he was misplaced being so far from the ocean. His trip was everything he could have imagined, until the last day—while windsurfing, some drunk on a jet ski crashed

into him, breaking his back.

Luckily, the job he was promised re-hired him after his rehabilitation was finished. He soon became a top seller for his company and was given bigger contracts to sell to bigger hospitals. It was great for his career, but was a curse to his newfound endless supply of pain killers that he had now become a slave to.