



# FINISHED FAITH

Good Initiative, Good Judgement.

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As a student of cyber security and as the I.T. Manager of the Southington Homeschool Project, I purchased an \$11,000 projector, 50 feet of extension cords, a laminated map with history of the 50 United States, a can of duster, and a red three-ring binder, all for my semi-truck. I did this purchase at Staples near Conyers, Georgia. Right before leaving Staples, I was talking with Michael after he rang me up at the register. He told me he was having management changes in the business. He seemed to be letting it affect him more than I would have let it affect me. It was one of those things where the manager is suddenly no longer employed; leaving the employees confounded. I also overheard an elderly lady making a comment to Michael about her experience at Staples.

Anyhow, I told Micheal I was a long-haul truck driver of refrigerated foods. I tried to express to him that transporting for the military only fed my ego but didn't satisfy me like hauling refrigerated food does. I showed him my laptop computer and told him I bought it at Staples near Seattle, Washington. I said this to re-assure him that I always have favorable experiences at Staples. The sudden and permanent disappearance of management seemed to be weighing heavily on him. He told me his wife has the same kind of Lenovo IBM computer as mine, and that the style hasn't changed much in a few years. I showed him my high-tech magnetic setup for mounting this laptop to the dashboard. I went great lengths to find just the right computer style, and equally great lengths to build the magnetic mounting system. I'm safe, secure, and upwardly mobile as a truck driver with a dashboard mounted laptop. I've ridden shotgun with a state trooper, and they also have dashboard mounted laptops. I explained to Michael that one of my uses of the dashboard computer is for aerial views of places I'm traveling with the truck, so that I can know if the truck will fit, and such logistics of that nature. He asked me about my commercial driver's license endorsements. I told him I don't like to brag that "*I'm one of the most highly endorsed truck drivers, HAZMAT, DOUBLES & TRIPLES, TANKER, PASSENGER and SCHOOL BUS with TOW TRUCK DRIVER EXPERIENCE.*" He shared my joy. Staples is one of the few places that you can go to get the background check for the HAZMAT endorsement. It's the same background check used by TSA pre-check for air travel.

I mentioned my commercial driver's license endorsements twice in the same day. First, to the Staples employee, Michael. And second, to three women at the Peachtree Academy when I donated nearly \$200 of toys. I donated 33 Caterpillar toys for ages six plus. The toys were purchased on the west coast; Oregon and California. To my relief, they responded favorably by accepting the gifts. Peachtree, being a school environment, naturally had some passenger bus vehicles on site. During this exchange of the caterpillar construction toys, I didn't think to tell the women that in 2011, at Fort Leonardwood, Missouri, I graduated with seven heavy equipment licenses from the Marines.

Most of the seven pieces of heavy equipment I was licensed on were caterpillar("CAT.") I also mentioned to the women that my childhood toy was a green John Deer front loader tractor. I expressed that I used my \$200 of travel center reward points for the toy purchases in an effort to pass on the same enjoyment which I had as a child with my own toy tractor.

Fort Leonardwood, Missouri is where my oldest brother graduated from Army basic training. I wasn't there for basic training; I was there for engineer school as a recently graduated east coast Marine from Parris Island and Camp Gieger combat school. The Marines and Army are both at Fort Leonardwood, Missouri. Over 3 months(November to February of 2011 and 2012), I went through the "Basic Engineer Equipment Operators Program" at Fort Leonardwood. My class was "Ten Tack Twelve" also known as, "10-12." I was the class leader for a while until they let a peer named Gillis supersede me due to grades. Thanks to the world wide web of 2012, I saw that Gillis eventually became a cop. Gillis' ego was probably better served as a cop than as a heavy equipment operator in the Marines. I personally didn't care for Gillis. Why does a guy join the Marines to get seven heavy engineer equipment licenses and then become a cop? I think it made more sense to join the Marines to get seven heavy engineer equipment licenses and then get a commercial driver's license so I could haul all that heavy equipment.

Along with Gillis, I remember most, if not all of those classmates from engineer school. I also remember Aaron Polston from the engineer class ahead of me who befriended me for the next seven plus years. Aaron Polston, from Seattle, Washington befriended me because as Marines we were also homeschoolers. There was a natural bond due to the nature of our homeschooling experience. The names of the Marines I remember from my engineer class are Rakocy, Karobolis, Katie, Gillis, Gonzales with an S, Gonzalez with a Z, Clayton and Forsythe. Clayton was my roommate, tolerable yet terrible. Clayton played songs all night long on repeat, after ten years I finally was able to forget the tunes completely. Rakocy fell in love with a girl at Fort Leonardwood, she was a Marine named Thurber. Rakocy was the definition of a bad Marine from the start. A bad Marine, meaning, he was bound to end up in non-judicial punishment during his contract. In hindsight, non-judicial punishment sounds bad but it's no big deal and has no bearing outside of the military. They shipped Rakocy off to Japan after we graduated engineer school. Rakocy's girlfriend was medical discharge material; plenty of Marines chose that career pathway, no judgement. Forsythe and Katie got into their own rule-breaking courtship. I liked the two Mexican Marines, Gonzales and Gonzalez, we got along. I wrestled one of the Mexican Marines(the one from Indiana) during our regular two-hour lunch break. I remember thinking, "I'll wrestle him because he thinks he's the biggest man in this class." Speaking of such things, I did go from tan belt to grey belt in the *Marine Corps Martial Arts Program* while I was in engineer school because it was mandatory. The other Mexican Marine had facial hair which grew so quick that by 530PM he was in violation of the grooming standards. In this experience of 2011 and 2012, I didn't go home like all the other Marines did for the holidays. Staff Sergeant Matthew Allensworth felt bad for me because I told him my parents couldn't support me as a Marine. Staff Sergeant Matthew Allensworth had previously been a recruiter; so he was experienced working with children of unsupportive parents. It's never good to put such pressure on parents, parents do their best. One of my Mom's six sisters did support the troops by sending cookies to me at Fort Leonardwood for the 2011 and 2012 holidays. Of course, I was obligated to share the cookies with the class because Staff Sergeant Matthew Allensworth pressured me into it; a mere step down from how a bootcamp drill instructor microscopically managed things.

At Fort Leonardwood, I got in a little trouble for lighting a candle in my room, “Good Initiative, Bad Judgement” said Staff Sergeant Matthew Allensworth as he extinguished my class leader status due to this scented candle flame. The phrase “Good Initiative, Bad Judgement” might just have been the epitome of my six year military contract. I could say joining the Marines was “Good Initiative, Bad Judgment.” There are a handful of things which that phrase could apply to in my life. Now get this, the scented candle was lit by yours truly in my attempt to have a satisfactory “field day.” Around the world, every Thursday night, the Marines under oath have to clean their rooms, and then get inspected, AKA “field day.” I just thought a candle would remove the odor of a roommate and freshen up the place for field day, and yet, a red-headed Sergeant wanted to get some dirt on Staff Sergeant Matthew Allensworth’s 10-12 class. It was always a competition thing among the Sergeant leaders of the various engineer classes. That red-headed Sergeant couldn’t wait to tell my Staff Sergeant that he found a lit candle in Private First Class Wallie’s room.

Well, the Marine stories could go on and on, but I’m not a moonshine drinking storyteller. The narrative of the Marines of my day was to drink alcohol diluted in carbonated water and talk up a storm. On the other hand, I am a coffee drinking teller of stories with morals. My moral of the Marines is *good initiative, bad judgment*. I can admit that I was just in the Marines to avoid my real educational purposes. I learned over six years that drinking and being a Marine was fun and selling myself short. Look, I get it, we’re supposed to support the troops and be gung-ho troop supporting Americans. I like to think I fit the definition of patriotic, but not necessarily in the traditional modern-day sense. We were all under oath Marines for a few years so we couldn’t express ourselves like we can now. I’m patriotic because I keep good records, I try to keep my pants above my hips, I shave at my own convenience, I comb my hair, and I always have cash on hand incase my fellow Americans need a few bucks. I was not very patriotic as a Marine; I just consumed tax-payer dollars and fed my ego with rank and M.R.E’s for six years. I think what makes me the epitome of a patriot is the fact that in the end, I didn’t settle, and I finally sucked it up and decided to be the best citizen I could be.

Occasionally I wear my original 2011 woodland cammie Marine hat(“Cover”). I have received all kinds of compliments across America; I rarely wear it because people give so many compliments. If a fellow truck driver wants to tussle, I make sure I put it on. Former Marines recognize it, and yell in excitement. Parents recognize it from when their child wore it. Everyone can see that it’s some kind of military hat. I guess I wear it for the same reason a Grandpa and Grandma might get dressed up on Sunday morning.

Now that all has been said and done, I summarize all the above in this final paragraph. I purchased the toys to donate to Toys for Tots(Good Initiative, bad judgement), but I ended up giving them to kids through a different avenue(Good Initiative, good judgement). My Marine unit once had to trash an entire Conex overseas box filled with Toys for Tots because it sat so long that the toys were destroyed by the weather. Our unit was tasked with emptying the 53-foot-long trailer sized metal box into the trash. When it was all said and done, I did better finding someone in a neighborhood in Georgia to give the construction toys too(Good Initiative, good judgment), than giving them to toys for tots(Good Initiative, Bad Judgement).

P.S. My favorite equipment was the back-hoe because you could remove stumps, load dump trucks, dig ditches, level out the ground and plow snow, it was the most versatile of all the equipment.