

A MAN WHO SLEEPS ON THE FLOOR
WON'T FALL OUT OF BED

The headaches nearly killed me in jail, where I couldn't get any laxatives, and the institutional food kept me constipated for months at a time. It seemed odd I'd hardly noticed them when I was drinking and drugging, but now they were tearing my mind in half. The warden sent me out for an MRI, which showed remarkable cortical atrophy, and started me thinking why such dead brain cells should be mine and not my fellow explorers who were still alive. None of them had migraines...but they hadn't stomped around barefoot in that leaked slurry on the barges in 'Nam.

Returning to the farm after eighteen months brought tears of an emotion quite foreign to me. It was like going back to the reefs of my youth, and for a while, great beauty surrounded me. It was truly a gorgeous work of art carved upon the landscape, and seemed the one good thing I'd accomplished. I didn't dare crow about it...just silently watched it grow.

Once set free, I decided to live a cautious life. I ate very carefully and went to AA every Tuesday and Thursday night, where I met some fantastic old men who shared my disease. It didn't take long to hear what I called the "voices of AA" with their redundant warning that you'd return to where you left off with the first drink. Boy, I didn't wanna go back there!

A grotesque fear kept me a member...more like a prisoner. The "Let go and let God" bit smacked of the old ego loss, and amends were out of the question, what with all the dead gooks and airstrikes. It appeared I wouldn't be able to go along for the whole ride, but got a good start there. The wellness they promised had a high price...an exacting self-honesty, always my problem.

I grew weary in AA's smoke-filled rooms and rambling drunkalongs, and set out with my own plan for redemption. It seemed the most impossible thing in this life, but I decided to do the Ironman Triathlon. The fisherboy had his new medication for migraines, and I began running eight minutes the first day increasing it each week. The real ordeal would be a two-and-a-half mile swim, a hundred-and-twelve mile bike race, and a fullblown twenty-six mile marathon at the end...but I needed a great challenge.

My plan was to do this thing on LSD, and I kept it secret from everyone. I lived alone and trained for two years, not wanting to use a woman again. Leaving the farm, which was carrying itself, I spent the third year in Australia, to see, without anyone knowing, if I could actually pull this off.

Settling in a small cabin on a seven-mile beach with a tea-tree lake, I found some peace of mind as well as a great beauty in my chosen project. The tiny computer on my bike recorded ten-thousand miles about the time I felt ready to try my experiment. It was the most awesome thing I've ever done. At the World Cup in Queensland, each time I lifted my arm in the swim the sun rose again! The bike and run were so coordinated I thought I was God.

In my fourth year I qualified...and on two hits of LSD and a cup of coffee, jumped in with fifteen-hundred athletes and swam through patterns with an unbelievable energy and determination. Of six-billion souls on earth I think I'm the only one to have done this.

It became something I'll treasure forever. I was witness to the true beauty of humanity's hope at its very best, and it gave me a new self-respect. I was still not cured, and recognized my shortcomings...remaining alone full-knowing all relationships require commitments. I simply felt better having done it. Crossing its finish line just before the sun set remains the high point of my life.