

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

Introduction, April 14, 2011, First Entry

I would like to start out by thanking the people at BTB who have invested their time and energy into making the opportunity possible for me and so many others.

I have thought and prayed over whether I should participate and even questioned whether I have anything worthwhile to say. I want to reach out to others, touch their minds and hearts. My life's goal is to make the world a better place for everyone with whom I come in contact. I am not perfect and do not always attain my goal, but the mere act of striving for it to the best of my ability makes me a better person.

I used to think that satisfaction and accomplishments could be measured by how much money I had and how much pleasure I could experience. Decades in prison devoted to introspection, meditation and prayer have shown me the error of my ways. It is not what you have in life but rather who you love and who loves you.

A life of service to others, reaching out and touching people's lives in a positive way is what I want to do. I was selfish and self-centered when I was young. I left a trail of hurt and broken promises. I now regret my past actions and strive to make amends. Fortunately, who we are is not set in stone. If I behaved badly yesterday, it does not mean I must behave badly today. Each day, we may choose who we are and how we relate to others. It is never too late to change, to grow, to become a better person.

I've never read a blog so I have no idea what writing a blog entails. Perhaps coming into this project with no preconceived notions will give me a unique perspective that will be of interest. Then again I could come off as an anachronism stuck in pre-internet limbo. I am counting on feedback to guide me on this journey.

My goal is to submit one entry per week along with two poems. I started writing poetry over a year ago, have gotten some poems published and found that poetry gives me a way to say things I cannot say in prose.

Numb

He stood on the inside looking out,
At the darkening hillside.
A thousand yard stare with eyes unseeing,
When a man has been crushed beyond endurance,
Yet endures.
You will see them still,
Scattered here and there.
Old men, broken men, men too long inside,
Sprinkled among the young and yet-to-be-proven.
The hillside, like his life, was bare.
Still he stared, unmoving, no longer in prison.
No longer . . . on the inside looking out.

Harlan Richards

Numb

I am numb,
where words should burst forth
like ocean surf 'gainst rocky shore,
there is only the cool, still silence
of an arctic pool.

I am numb,
to the loves, urges and desires
which drive men mad--or to greatness,
feeling not the blood pounding in my veins,
nor lust exploding into stagnant loins.

I am numb,
to the pain and travails of others,
empty of empathy, indifferent to unease,
senseless to primal scream.

I am numb,
in a world that feels so much,
people that hurt so loudly,
and love so badly.

I am numb,
but I want to feel.

Harlan Richards