

SEMPER, from page 8

get people to look at it. And once people started looking at it, it started catching on. And then once it caught on enough, the Marine Corps Times did a story on it.

**R.B.:** How quickly did your readership grow after that story in Marine Times?

**M.U.:** It went crazy. As soon as they ran the story, my server crashed and I had to get better hosting. Yeah, once that story hit the paper the whole Marine Corps kind of knew about it, which was the best thing that could have possibly happened for me. Then after that story broke out and once everybody realized that they all kind of liked it, and nobody was offended by it or angry at it — which was good for me — then they offered to put it in the newspaper.

**R.B.:** What's been the feedback from your fellow Marines?

**M.U.:** It's been good, actually. I've gotten some angry e-mails a couple of times, but it's always for really specific things. I did one about women in the infantry a couple of months ago; I got some angry e-mails about that one.

**R.B.:** Some could describe you as a modern equivalent to Bill Mauldin, the combat cartoonist of WWII whose comic "Willie and Joe" depicted life on the battlefield. How would you react to that comparison?

**M.U.:** I've gotten that a lot, actually, and I think it's an honor to be considered that. I guess the difference is that I didn't even know who Bill Mauldin was before I started making Terminal Lance. It wasn't until somebody pointed it out to me that I realized he was doing the same kind of thing during World War II with "Willie and Joe"

I think he and I tried to do the same type of thing. Before I did Terminal Lance, there wasn't really anything like it. There was SemperToons, which was really the only Marine Corps comic.

**R.B.:** But SemperToons is a lot tamer than Terminal Lance.

**M.U.:** Yeah, it's very family friendly, with G-rated Marine Corps humor. So I looked at that and it didn't represent the modern Marine Corps that I know, that I was in for four years. It doesn't represent the guys that have been to Iraq and Afghanistan — I haven't been to Afghanistan, but I have that perspective at least, having been to Iraq — and I just felt like I could do it better. I could represent that voice better.

That's what I was trying to do really, to put a new comic out there from the lance corporal, lower-enlisted perspective and kind of point out problems or absurdities in the military.



**R.B.:** Do you feel you hit the mark with that?

**M.U.:** I think I did a pretty good job. It's one of those things where everybody was afraid to talk about it because everybody was afraid of getting in trouble. But if you can make people laugh about it and do it in a way where everybody can laugh about it, not just lance corporals and below, which I think I've been able to do. At the very least I bring things up for discussion so people can look at it and go, "Oh, this is stupid. Why don't we see if we can figure out a way to fix this." And a lot of times I'll pick on something, and then I'll say that I don't have a solution, but if somebody else does, then by all means, you should fix it. So I don't offer solutions, I just point things out.

**R.B.:** How would you describe the progression of Terminal Lance?

**M.U.:** When I first started, I guess it didn't have the parameters that it has now. It didn't have characters, and also I didn't keep a standard style of drawing. It wasn't until about strip 150 that I started really falling into a set way of drawing the characters. So now there's a certain look to Terminal Lance that I don't think was there in the beginning. Mike Krahulik, he's a great artist, and Penny Arcade was kind of the template for Terminal Lance when I started doing it.

**R.B.:** Terminal Lance was at one time described by Marine Corps Times as "caustic" in its genuine depiction of day-to-day military life. How do you react to that?

**M.U.:** I don't know if caustic is the right word, but I would say that it was definitely controversial at first. I think people are used to it now, but like I said, nobody was really doing anything like it before. I think Duffel Blog [a satirical military news site] creator Paul Szoldra, he mentioned in an interview that Terminal Lance was an inspiration for Duffel Blog because it was the first thing in the military to put it out there and point out

problems and have this public voice of what's wrong with the military on some level, and being able to criticize it without it being, well, caustic. I think what the people really like about Terminal Lance is that my perspective was never about hating the Marine Corps or just being angry. It was about genuine problems and being honest about it. And I've said that a bunch of times with my comic, I don't hate the Marine Corps, but there are some of these things that are just hard not to make fun of.

**R.B.:** It is funny because Terminal Lance is Marine Corps specific, but even from my experience in the Army, so many of those jokes and problems that you highlight are easily applied to the other branches.

**M.U.:** I get that a lot from people from the other branches. Even Australians. A lot of Australian military guys; it's taken off over there. And some Royal Marines have e-mailed me. It's interesting.

**R.B.:** In addition to Terminal Lance and your work on the graphic novel, what else do you have working?

**M.U.:** I'm still working on the screenplay. I'm writing it as a screenplay because I plan on turning it into a movie at some point. So I'm in the process of writing that. The goal is to have the whole book done by the end of the summer.

I'm also working on an animated short called "A Dog and His Boy," which is a really depressing story about a Marine that goes to Afghanistan and dies, and it's told from the point of view of his dog at home. I'm hoping to have that done by May. It's about five minutes long. I wanted to do something military-themed so I could still put it up on the Terminal Lance site.

**R.B.:** Switching gears to your experiences now as a veteran, how would you describe your reintegration — your transfer from the Marine Corps into regular life again?

**M.U.:** I think it's hard to adjust to certain

things. I think it's hard because, say you're like me and you go back to school on the GI Bill, which is the natural course. You go back to school and you're around a bunch of 18 and 19 year olds, and you're this old dude and you've been to Iraq or whatever, and it's just like, I don't fit in. It was funny, because my first day at school, it's an art school, so one of the things we did was we had a white sheet of butcher paper on a table and the teacher had these bowls of food dye with soap mixed in them. So what we did was we took straws and we were blowing bubbles onto the paper to make designs. And I remember taking a step back and thinking I was in Iraq not even a year ago and here I am blowing bubbles on a sheet of paper. It was a weird realization. I think that it's hard to adjust to that difference of lifestyle.

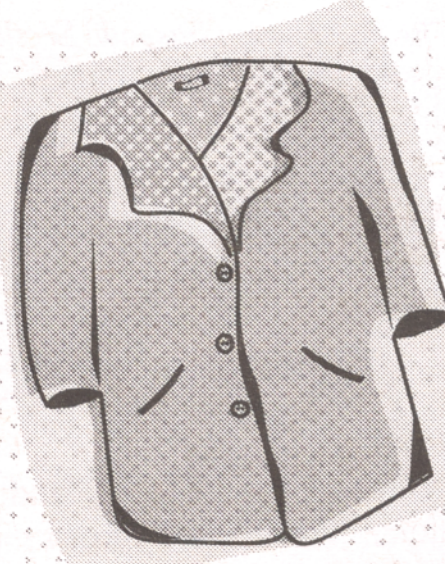
**R.B.:** I've recently talked to some other veterans who are using the arts as a means to deal with their reintegration. Have you found that focusing on your art helps you?

**M.U.:** Yeah, I guess Terminal Lance itself is a little cathartic in the way that it lets me talk about my problems — really, everybody's problems — but my problems from my perspective and put it into a joke and laugh about it and hopefully other people laugh at it too. So I think it helps me come to terms with a lot of stuff from the military in a way that other people might not be able to.

**R.B.:** What are your thoughts on how veterans who are being portrayed in the media versus your experiences and what you see among your veteran friends?

**M.U.:** I did a comic about it, how like anytime a veteran does anything bad, like shoot someone — that's bad no matter who you are — the headline's always "Ex Marine shot this guy." It's like, no, he was just an asshole. Being a Marine has nothing to do with it. I think that it's really easy for people to get that stereotype of Marines or ex-military as being fucked up in the head. These are people who are dealing with problems, but at the same time I think the media should try to focus more on what good the veterans are doing, like going back to the workplace and being more professional and better at what they do than most people because they have life experience and doing some crazy stuff around the world a couple of times. I think it gives guys like us a better perspective on the world, and when we do get out and go back in the workplace, we tend to be better employees at what we do, at least ideally, from what I know from my veteran friends. I don't think it's necessary to point out if somebody was an Iraq veteran or something anytime they rob a bank, because it has nothing to do with it. It really doesn't.

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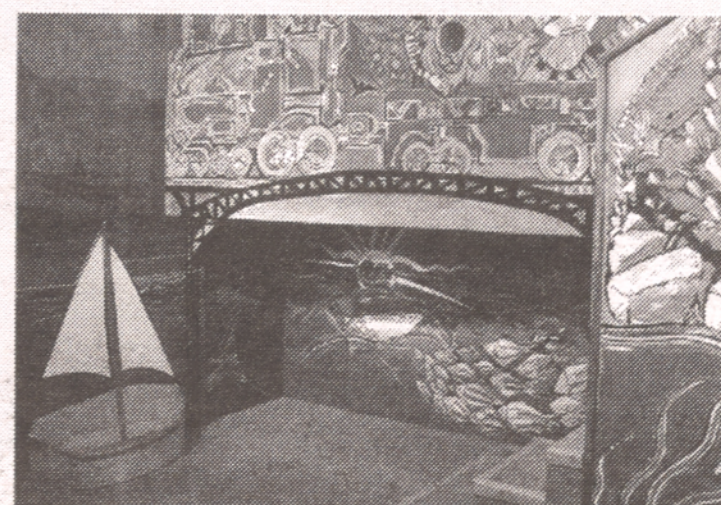
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