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Westview Accepted Poems: Those Famous Idaho Potatoes and How I Became a Christian

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Those Famous Idaho Potatoes

Imagine the luck. We’re driving in Idaho for the first time when all of a sudden a truck filled with potatoes drives by. I mean, really. I’m with my new bride on vacation and the only thing I know about the state is they grow potatoes. Now here’s this truck filled to the top and overflowing with a mountain of spuds. It’s almost never like this. When I arrived in Washington I didn’t see an apple orchard until I lived in the state almost a year. I lived in the Sunshine State where it rains practically every day. In New Jersey all Italians don’t really belong to the mob. Few in the military were like the soldiers you see on television or in the movies. One of the best people I know is a politician. One of the worst talks of nothing but love. “Potatoes!” I yell at my wife. “Oh wow!” And she rolls her eyes, shaking her head. After all, we’re in Idaho. What did I expect?

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How I Became a Christian

They visited the barracks on weekends, usually Saturdays, an hour before my roommate and I hit the NCO Club. They tried to save my fallen soul. A father and son, devout evangelicals. Fun to argue with, I schooled both on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, gave lessons on Voltaire’s Candide. I used some lines from Anatole France too. Nothing thrilled me more than taunting their ignorance, those holy rollers, Jesus freaks with nothing better to do than waste my time with fairy stories. What fools they were, I told them and laughed, hung raunchy posters of naked women for their weekly visits and took them down for inspections. Then the day came they no longer came. They still worked the barracks, other rooms. One day I bumped into them in the hall and asked why they stopped coming. I loved setting them straight, I said. The father told me he knew a lost cause when he saw one, and something else about shaking the dust off his feet. I laughed. I told him if he had filthy feet he should try a shower, and went on my merry way, to a discharge, unemployment, homelessness, until with no one to argue with, and no one laugh at but myself, and God alone would have me for a friend, the only fool who could convert me finally did.