



September 2018

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

James Valvis  
*University of Me*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), [Photography Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Valvis, James (2018) "Westview Accepted Poems: Those Famous Idaho Potatoes and How I Became a Christian," *Westview*: Vol. 33: Iss. 2, Article 52.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol33/iss2/52>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu](mailto:phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu).



James Valvis  
4635 W Lk Samm Pkwy SE #G106  
Issaquah WA 98027  
valvis@ketzle.net

## 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?

\*\*

## 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.