

Evergreen State College Masters of Environmental Studies Statement of Purpose

When I first began college I intended to major in Marine Biology or something similar. Unfortunately I learned in my first semester of college that Rice University required a good deal of coursework in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics in order to complete a BS in Marine Biology. This requirement ended up being revoked by the start of my Junior year but by then I had gone too far to make such a sharp transition from History, which I had chosen to study instead. In truth I didn't have specific plans for after college, I attended as it seemed to be what my family expected of me and what all my friends were doing. At the start of my Junior year I began serving as a volunteer Trip Leader for Rice Outdoor Programs and Education and as a mascot and cheerleader. I found a renewed sense of purpose in both of these activities outside of academics. I continued my studies and graduated, but felt no closer to the direction of my adulthood. After researching some options, and determined to not continue school for the time being, I settled on the military and by late summer after graduation I was scheduled to begin basic training in January.

What I intended as a filler to help figure out adulthood turned into nearly 11 years that I jokingly refer to as my longterm man-childhood. I had several junctions along the way where, generally dissatisfied, I considered what else I might do with my life. For years I was determined to work towards becoming a Game Warden, either federally or in my home state of Texas. Within the last couple years of my Army service I realized that many of the personality traits I saw and disliked in the Army would also likely be prevalent in any Law Enforcement community. I then decided that working in a similar field on the scientific side might be more fitting.

After leaving Army service last year with an honorable medical discharge, I decided to take a year off that honestly was probably for my mental health more than anything. I've spent the last year taking care of our house, really investing in gardening (currently I have three avocado plants and two pineapple plants going strong as well as several more reasonable plants for our climate in Washington). I've also been preparing for my wife and my first child, due in August. Over the course of this year I've had the opportunity to ponder what I might do with myself now that a large chapter of my adult life has concluded. I'm confident that with my military skills and experience I would likely be able to find a stable job in intelligence, security, leadership, management, or any number of fields in which my military experience provided me a strong foundation. It is not lost on me that I am extremely fortunate to be able to take the time to seek a career that I will enjoy and be passionate about, rather than just what might be the most lucrative. My wife and I agree that for our family it is important that our children have a father who comes home satisfied with how he spends his days, rather than just paying for food, clothes and toys.

I have always been very passionate about the outdoors, spending more of my weekends fishing than doing anything else. In college, though I did not feel comfortable majoring in Marine Biology, I took as many nature oriented electives as I could find, including a herpetology class that was taught by a senior member of the herpetology department at the Houston Zoo. I also

taught an elective fishing class myself. While working for the university outdoor program I studied the principles of Leave no Trace and served as the unofficial naturalist for the program. Whenever the trip leaders attended a training event I took every opportunity I could to point out some local flora and fauna and share whatever relevant knowledge I had about it. I carried this with me throughout my time in the Army, always keeping an eye out for something interesting during training and doing my best to ensure my fellow Soldiers knew and respected nature. While at Fort Hood, now Fort Cavazos, I safely captured and relocated a young copperhead snake that had been using the barracks to ambush the mice and insects attracted by Soldiers with poor hygiene. I also saw wild camels and jackals in Kuwait and Afghanistan respectively while deployed, wildlife I never expected to see in person. More recently I also find myself increasingly interested in bird watching and botany, if primarily in keeping a garden of my own. I continue to fish at every opportunity and have enjoyed learning about the local marine wildlife. Three potential theses I have considered all involve the salmon fishery and how to ensure all species of salmon continue to exist in perpetuity, regardless of whether they can be harvested or even fished for.

Truthfully, I've never felt that a classroom and rigid academics were my natural habitat. I intended to be done with school once I graduated from college but ended up spending nearly half of my Army career in some school or another. I doubt that I will enjoy computations or computer programs while working towards a Masters in Environmental Studies, but I can look forward to the idea of helping to educate in order to preserve our natural world. I hope when my children are adults they continue to experience the childlike sense of wonder that I still feel when I see a giant eagle, or release a beautiful fish to swim another day.