

# REGISTRY REPORT

a bimonthly eNewsletter  
for the Stoic community

*Stoicus communitas:Stoikos koinonia*



THE NEWS

PEOPLE

SPOTLIGHT

THE PORCH

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## SPECIAL ISSUE!

*The College is OPEN! We have the the People. We have the Publication. We have the Council. And now, we have the School. On 05 Jul 08 the doors to the College of Stoic Philosophers were opened . . .*

## COLLEGE OF STOIC PHILOSOPHERS



Athena, goddess of wisdom

**The College of Stoic Philosophers** is an open Internet school accepting all students without regard to age, sex, race, religion, country, or educational background. There are two levels of education leading to certificates of completion for Stoic Essential Studies (SES) and Classical Studies (CS). There will be no fees or other obligation for students of the Stoic Essential Studies course. Classical Studies students will be asked to make a voluntary contribution according to ability to pay and esteemed value for services rendered. All moneys are deposited into The Treasury of the Stoic Council to be disbursed according to need in the Stoic community.

The SES course takes nine months working part-time to complete, less if the student is highly motivated. The CS course takes an additional nine months, or 18 months total. One level builds upon another. That is, the SES level must be completed before going on to the CS level. There will be no examinations, but certain reading and writing assignments will be made. Pass/No Pass (P/NP) grades will be issued for each section of work as it is completed. In addition, the student will be expected to arrange a monthly meeting with a tutor via email correspondence.

**The Oxford Tutorial System** is the basis upon which great educations have been assured for centuries. It is this method that has been adapted for The College. Each student will be assigned a tutor to make assignments, monitor his or her progress, and affix the P/NP recognition for assignment completion. It is at these tutorials that the student and tutor examine any issues or problems that arise from the material just completed. In the case of more advanced work that may require the insight and expertise of a scholar, the College is fortunate to have *Fellows of the College* who have agreed to be available for such explorations.

## Tutors

John Barnett, Ph.D., University of Central Florida.

Erik Wiegardt, M.F.A., University of Oregon.

## Fellows of the College

Lawrence C. Becker, Ph.D.,

Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the College of William and Mary, and Fellow of Hollins University.

Area of Expertise: Ethics, Stoic emotions

R. Kevin Hill, J.D., Ph.D.,

Associate Professor of Philosophy, Portland State University.

Area of Expertise: Stoic influences in modern philosophy

William O. Stephens, Ph.D.,

Professor of Philosophy and Classical & Near Eastern Studies, Creighton University.

Area of Expertise: Epictetus, Ancient languages

# SPOTLIGHT

## The Tutors

John was born on 14 AUG 53, and grew up in Orlando, Florida, USA. His father and a number of uncles were pilots in World War II, which is why he chose to go into the Air Force. His mother and older sister were artists, but did not show their works much. His sister has a series of 40 self-portraits hanging in the Jung Institute in Chicago. John has been married for over 30 years and has two daughters, both in their late 20s. He also has a 15-year-old nephew who came to live with the family after his sister-in-law passed away. John said he may be the only retired Air Force officer living in Florida who does *not* golf. Outside of work his main interest, other than Stoicism, is military history and collecting bits of militaria from time to time.



John Barnett

John graduated from Florida Technological University with a BA in Psychology and was commissioned in the Air Force on the same day. As an Air Force Officer he studied organizational behavior, completing a Masters Degree in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma. After retirement in 1996, he went back to graduate school and earned a Ph.D. in Applied Experimental and Human Factors Psychology from University of Central Florida. Shortly after receiving his doctorate, John went to work as a research psychologist for the U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI), where he currently does research to find the best ways to train people using advanced technology such as simulators, computers, and distance learning.

**ERIK:** Militaria? What “bits of militaria” do you collect?

**JOHN:** Mostly rifles and pistols, photographs and documents of World War II. Recently that war has been my primary area of interest.

**ERIK:** Can you give me some impressions of your career in the Air Force. What were your actual duties?

JOHN: I was a navigator and electronic warfare officer. I flew in B-52s early in my career, then flew as a staff officer on the SAC (Strategic Air Command) Airborne Command Post, and then back to bombers, where I flew in B-1Bs. In the B-1B I flew as the Defensive Systems Officer.

ERIK: For some reason, I'm reminded of the last scene of the movie *Dr. Strangelove*. What was the plane Slim Pickens was flying when he dropped the bomb on the Soviet military installation. Was that the B-52 or the B-1B?

JOHN: That was the B-52. The B-1B did not come out until the 1980's and *Dr Strangelove* was made in the 60s. The unofficial nickname of the B-1B is "the Bone." That name comes from a newspaper article that used "B one" instead of B-1. From then on the airplane became "the Bone" with crews.

ERIK: I did a little research on the B-1B and discovered that it is about the size of the Boeing 707, but with about a 50% faster cruising speed (627 MPH or 1010 km/h compared to 950 MPH or 1,530 km/h). The Boeing 707 can carry 189 passengers and their baggage compared to the B-1B crew of four – with a lot of nuclear strike capable baggage. One final factoid, cost: \$283.1 million each.

You were part of a rather elite group of fliers. For those of us who have never been in a B-1B, can you describe that experience?

JOHN: I never got a thrill out of flying like some people do. It may have been because I sat in the back and couldn't see out very well. Mostly, it was tiring. On the other hand, I really liked being a member of an aircrew. We did a very complex job and did it pretty well. I liked that.

ERIK: Was your military experience at all related to your discovery of Stoic philosophy?

JOHN: Actually, I wish I had been a Stoic back then. The work required a lot of attention to detail, and we were held to pretty high standards. Plus, there were a lot of things you couldn't control. I would say my time in the Air Force was the motivation for later becoming a Stoic. I probably worried too much about things I couldn't control. On the plus side, the military has high standards for integrity and professionalism, which fits in well with Stoic ethics. Plus, you learn to do things even when you really don't want to, which is probably good training to accept things you can't change.

ERIK: When and where did you discover Stoicism and why did you pursue it. Was it a sudden realization or did it grow on you over time?

JOHN: A couple of years after I finished graduate school I decided to learn more about philosophy, so I read a book that was sort of an overview of philosophy. I wanted to know what philosophy was all about. The book had short sections on the different schools of philosophy, including Stoicism, but at the time it didn't make much of an impression on me. Then a few months later a TV show mentioned Marcus Aurelius, so I decided to learn more about him. When I found out he was considered a Stoic, I remembered what I'd read about Stoicism. That was when I decided I needed a change in my life and maybe becoming a Stoic was what I should do.

The more I thought about it, the more I liked the idea. However, after learning about Stoicism, I found that I had been practicing many Stoic principles most of my life, so it wasn't that big of a change. Also, in my studies in psychology I had run across Rational Emotive therapy, which is based to a large extent on Stoic ideas. So, I guess you could say it was a sudden realization, but I already knew something about Stoic principles and was primed to follow them.

ERIK: so, now you're a tutor of Stoic philosophy. Have you had any experience as a teacher?

JOHN: In the Air Force I was an instructor in various subjects for a few years. I've also taught undergraduate level courses. Where I work presently [ARI], we have a number of graduate students who work with us, and I've helped several to get through their dissertation and graduate.

ERIK: Excellent. Let me go to your current work at ARI. How long have you been there, and can you give us some idea of the kinds of projects you have worked on in the past and at present.

JOHN: I've been with ARI since August, 2000, so it's coming up on 8 years. Most of the experiments I'm involved with are run by graduate students, often as their dissertation. The last student I worked with investigated whether people had confidence in recommendations given by computer versus those given by people. As I remember, the results showed people actually had more confidence in the computer advice – until the computer made a mistake.

Currently I'm working on determining why groups who are geographically separated and communicate by video, etc., don't communicate as well as groups in the same room. So far all I know is they don't seem to come across as well. More work is needed.

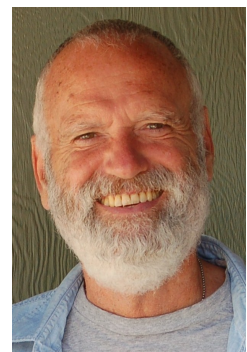
ERIK: I have one final question, maybe a tough one. Why do you want to be a tutor for the College?

JOHN: There are several reasons. For one, I feel that if I have knowledge that would help someone else, I have an obligation to share it. Second, I've been teaching off-and-on for a number of years. I enjoy working with students, and I believe I'm good at it. I assume Fate gave me this ability because she expects me to use it.

ERIK: Good answer. Thank you for that. The College is most fortunate to have you working with us. Now, I guess it's time to switch roles and turn the interview over to you.

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Erik was born 15 APR 45 in Walla Walla, Washington, USA, and lived most of his life on the Pacific Rim. Education in his formative years was in Protestant parochial schools in rural towns in Oregon and California. Higher education included Portland State University, where he received Bachelor's Degrees in Arts & Letters and Social Science; the Oregon Military Academy, where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, Infantry; and the University of Oregon, where he received a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Sculpture.



Erik Wiegardt

Erik has worked in a number of occupations, including laboratory analyst for the US Army and for North American Aviation where he performed quality control studies on the escape rocket module of the Apollo Moon Rockets. He is a Vietnam Era War veteran and received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for participation in Operation White Coat, a biological warfare unit. Other employment includes mortician's assistant, insurance executive, baker, restaurant waiter, Graduate Teaching Fellow at the University of Oregon, English teacher in Japan, display designer for Macy's and Nordstrom, advertising copy writer, and Senior Probation Officer for the County of San Diego, California.

Erik is the founder of the Stoic Registry, the e-newsletter *Registry Report*, the Stoic Council, and the College of Stoic Philosophers. He is author of the *Path of the Sage*, freely available in condensed form on the Registry web site. He has been a Stoic for more than 40 years, and works full time for the Stoic community. He also enjoys gardening and body board surfing when not attending to Stoic matters.

Erik lives in San Diego, California, with his wife of more than 20 years, Amielle Moyer, a Licensed Acupuncturist and Oriental Medicine specialist. He has two adult children by a previous marriage. His son is a Master Chief in the US Coast Guard and his daughter is a full-time mother.

**JOHN:** Your bio' provides a lot of insight about you. I think your interview should be more about your "philosophy" (no pun intended) about the web site and modern Stoicism.

**ERIK:** OK.

**JOHN:** Do you think there is a particular type of person who gravitates towards Stoicism?

**ERIK:** In a word, yes, and that word is *thoughtful*. Now, why this person is thoughtful brings in other considerations, such as different backgrounds and orientations to life. I've corresponded with many Stoics over the past 12 years, all of the living members you see in *The People* page of the Registry and many more besides. Without exception, the Stoics I know are thoughtful and deeply interested the phenomenon of existence, to borrow one of Epictetus's favorite phrases.

There are a number of reasons why a person is uncommonly thoughtful. Some are refugees from a harshly fundamentalist orientation to religion, a deeply scarring experience that is incomprehensible to those who have never been exposed to brainwashing that begins in the cradle. Others are repeatedly exposed to personal tragedies or failure and all the many opportunities life brings to help us kick out or transcend the shallow silliness of consumer fixation. Some just seem to have been born old and wise.

**JOHN:** If you could present certain Stoic ideas to the general population, what would they be?

**ERIK:** I hope that in my lifetime those who write dictionaries either change their definition of Stoic or add another definition to reflect the fact that practicing Stoics are not humorless, taciturn curmudgeons who repress all emotion. We have a bad reputation in the world today, which I believe stems mainly from dictionary writers passing along misinformation, probably originating from the predominance of Platonists when dictionaries were first written.

**JOHN:** Do you see any conflicts between religions and being a Stoic?

**ERIK:** Yes, at the most basic level the conflict is between faith and reason. I see a greater conflict between the so-called revealed religions, the Judeo-Christian-Muslim triad, than I do between Stoics and the Hindus or Buddhist philosophies. At the most intellectual level you can actually be an atheist as either a Hindu or a Buddhist, but to deny the divinely revealed truth of the Old Testament prophets or Jesus or Mohamed is pretty much like trading your religious affiliation for membership in a social club.

For a person who has asked the question 'why' for much of his life, faith in the undisputed word of Yahweh or God or Allah or Jesus or Mohamed or Joseph Smith or Ellen G. White or David Koresh or the Pope is simply not possible. Of course, to a Pyrrhonian skeptic we're all a bunch of dogmatists, and even Stoics are taken to task for having faith in reason and brute facts, which a real skeptic believes

is always suspect.

So, yes, I see conflicts between Stoics and religion, but the conflict arises mainly on the side that closes its mind. To paraphrase Bertrand Russell in *Why I'm Not a Christian*, one who is less able to use logic in his argument is more likely to substitute it with anger and violence. A Stoic who kills you because you disagree with him is not a Stoic, but a religious fundamentalist who does so is just doing his duty. This has been true of all the faiths at one time and place or another, including Hindus and Buddhists, especially Tibetan Buddhists.

JOHN: What direction do you envision for the Stoic Registry?

ERIK: I would like to see the Stoic community grow from its present size as a small village of thoughtful and inquiring minds into a strong and dynamic, international cybercity. The only reason why the greatest wisdom philosophy in human history doesn't have more than a million citizens right now is because we haven't had the means of organization and unity before the Internet was born. Now we do.

I was reading an editorial in the *New York Times* recently that modern urban life has undermined our ancient need for community and belonging. As hunter-gatherers we had the tribe; as agrarian farmers and artisans we had the community, both civic and religious. But from the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution, most urban dwellers have lived in cocoons spun out of alienation and mistrust. The Stoic community is changing that for us. Right now, I feel more closely connected to our community than I have to any community in which I have lived.

We have in the New Stoa what are the four cornerstones of a foundation upon which we can build our cybercity: the people, of course; the media to inform, introduce, and unite us; the council to provide direction and leadership; and the school to guide our intellectual growth as we evolve into the future. I know there are a lot of mavericks and loners in the Stoic community. I don't know if they are that way by nature or because of the alienation of modern times. But either way, that's OK. There are no requirements, except that you be a Stoic, and today, as it has always been, to be a Stoic is to be tolerant of individuals. We support a broad umbrella.

JOHN: And, of course, why do you want to be a tutor?

ERIK: I agree with everything you said to that question, plus one more thought. If I can't be where the intellectual action is as a professor of philosophy, at least I can be near the cutting edge. If Stoicism is only applicable to the understanding and practical problems of 2000 years ago but doesn't keep abreast of the human condition or acquisition of knowledge as we grow and evolve, then we are living anachronisms speaking a dead language. Remember, even Seneca realized that the Stoics of his day didn't know everything, that others would come after him to bring new perspectives on all the old problems of what it is to be human.

That's where I want to be -- with those who are pressing against the boundaries of human knowledge and understanding everyday, and that is where the College of Stoic Philosophers will be.

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Thank you for reading,

Erik