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Cathcart*

Jeanette Vaughn

Robert Gaswitz

*Neal and Linda
Kusumoto*



Jasmine Tritten

*Dennis Koller &
Sandra Miller Linhart*

Joe Badal

*Dana Tibbets &
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Keith Jones

*John Snowden and
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DISPATCHES

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FALL 2017

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FAREWELL TO
AN OLD FRIEND



Smitty by Brian Prah
Children's Books for Military Families by Sandra Miller Linhart
Saipan by Frank Evans
Interviews with George William Jackson, Steve Banko and Tim Trainer
The Battle of Pea Ridge by Christopher Avery
Critters of Vietnam by Joe Campolo, Jr
Stay Down by Neal Kusumoto
Wreathes Across America by Pat McGrath Avery
Thank you to VA Doctor by Bob Flournoy
911 Remembered by Beth Wright Underwood
Tips and Tricks: Researching Fake News by Joyce Faulkner

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**2017 Awards
Announcements**



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Letter from the editor

Pat McGrath Avery

The 2017 conference has come and gone and fall is upon us. Although I didn't attend, I noticed many new faces in the photos. I've heard that everyone had a great time. Thanks to Bob Doerr and his team for planning and hosting a successful event.

Congratulations to all of the award winners! John Cathcart, Rob Ballister and their team of reviewers did an awesome job reading and scoring all the entries. Next year's awards program begins in January 2018.

The fall issue always makes me proud when I see the winning books by MWSA's talented writers. As a reviewer, I read a number of the books, and I consider it a privilege to do so. As always, we will need new reviewers next year. Do yourself a favor and sign up to review. You'll be rewarded with some really good reads.

We feature three author interviews in this issue. Hopefully, you will read them and be inspired to purchase their books.

Again, our feature articles entertain. Joe Campolo, Beth Underwood, Brian Prah, Chris Avery, Frank Evans, Neal Kusumoto and Bob Flournoy contribute good stories and articles to entertain and inform us. Sandi Linhart and Joyce Faulkner continue their educational series.

Lastly, it hurts to write, and read what Dwight Zimmerman and Joyce Faulkner wrote, about Mike Mullins' passing. As a charter member of MWSA, his contributions are difficult to measure. Mike has been an integral part of our organization's growth and a beacon of light shining over our members. He is tightly woven in the fabric of MWSA and although he will be missed, he will always be part of us.

Happy reading and remember that fall is a great time for visiting our national parks and monuments.



Kathy Rodgers, John D. Trudel, Don Helin, and Dennis Koller

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President's Message

As this is being written, members are gathered at our conference in San Antonio to make new friends, renew cherished relationships, and to develop their craft as writers—and, of course, to celebrate member achievements at the awards ceremony.

For the first time since I became a member in 2009. I am unable to share in the fellowship, workshops, and festivities. I miss them, but I know that it is temporary and I will join my fellow members at the conference next year. I miss someone else whom, unfortunately, I will never again see on this mortal plane.

As all of you know, MWSA stalwart Michael Mullins recently passed away after a long illness. Elsewhere in this issue, you will find an eloquent eulogy about Mike and his many contributions to MWSA by past president Joyce Faulkner. Mike was one of the first to welcome me, a lifelong civilian, to the organization and support me in all my efforts. While I grieve over his passing, and extend mine and the organization's deepest condolences to his family. I rejoice in the fact that I was given the precious opportunity to know such a kind, thoughtful, and stolid individual. In the words of William Shakespeare,

“His life was gentle, and the elements

So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up

And say to all the world, THIS WAS A MAN!”

Gold Medal History 2017



2017 Gold Medal Mystery/Thriller



Call for Submissions

MWSA ANTHOLOGY — WORLD WAR I

MWSA will be publishing an anthology in early 2018 featuring the works of MWSA writers and illustrations. This year's topic will be World War I. You can submit fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. Any aspect of this historical event is acceptable. Please keep your submissions to 3000 words or less exclusive of your biography (250 words or less) and a high resolution headshot (300 dpi) of yourself. Illustrations maybe in any medium--paintings, drawings, photographs, Etc. However, for purposes of publication, they should be high resolution jpgs or gifs (300 dpi).

As with any submissions to MWSA, your work may be edited for quality or length. All participants will receive one free anthology and 40 percent off of list for any others you may want to purchase.

Please submit your work by January 31, 2018 to joycefaulkner@gmail.com.

**MILITARY WRITERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA
MOURNS LONG-TIME VICE PRESIDENT, BOARD
MEMBER, AND AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR,
MICHAEL D “MOON” MULLINS**

Joyce Faulkner



Although I didn't meet Mike Mullins in person until the 2007 MWSA Awards Conference in Branson, MO, I had already gotten to know him through his first book, *Vietnam in Verse, Poetry for Beer Drinkers*. I wasn't surprised when it received a Gold Medal for a Book of Poetry. That was the year that Pat Avery and I launched our book about the Suncheon Tunnel Massacre in Korea and we had seven of the nine survivors at the awards dinner. On top of that, several Tuskegee Airmen joined us that evening. Mike was thrilled to meet these amazing veterans and it was the first time I experienced

his innate kindness and empathy for fellow warriors—especially those who had paid such a heavy price for their service.

As a result, the next year, when Bill McDonald asked me to run for President of MWSA, I knew immediately who I wanted for Vice President. I am the daughter, niece, and wife of a Marine, Seabee, Sailor, and Airman in that order. However, I never served myself. My skills are corporate, technical, and literary. I needed someone who truly knew what America asked of its military men

and women. Mike fit the bill on every level. He was a talented poet, a Vietnam veteran, experienced leader, and a highly-educated but humble gentleman who had walked all of the talks. So, as became a pattern between us, I nagged him until he gave in and did what he really wanted to do all along.

What Mike really wanted to do is what he did best too. He reached out to his “buddies.” He welcomed members new and old, young and not so young, fresh and shiny, worn and wounded. He understood what war does to the body and the soul...and that understanding made him beloved by all who knew him. He was a giant, bawdy curmudgeon who made us laugh and roll our eyes at his antics, until we realized that he had just broken the pain-induced sadness of one of our members and refocused the conversation to easier, funnier, lighter subjects.

In the earlier years, the board was smaller and older. Several members were ill or not always available for a variety of reasons. Even Bill McDonald’s health, often problematic, seemed worse at that time. As a result, I went to Mike for advice on any number of things. He’d patiently walk me through the issues that were important to military folk and explained things like protocol, uniforms, and branch rivalry. (He got a big kick out of a Marine Colonel’s bemused grunt when I explained in all innocence that I’d been told Army always came first.) Sometimes I’d get it and sometimes I’d have to go back and ask him to go through it again as we did things like redefining our conferences, creating ethical guidelines for reviewers, and revamping the awards criteria into the initial version of the system we use now. I appreciated his thoughtful evaluation of the things I suggested because I knew he had my back.

Mike had always been popular speaker in his hometown of Windfall, Indiana. He wrote and recited his poetry for civic and veteran organizations. He always went to the Vietnam Veterans Reunion in Kokomo and often read or spoke there. He had a deep, emotive voice that grabbed the listener. One year he wrote a poem for Independence Day and a local radio show recorded it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx0I2vwVUg4> With its success, it was natural that audio became Mike’s vehicle of choice.

Always eager to expand his literary skills, Mike began collaborating with other MWSA poets—Lloyd King, Jim Greenwald, and James Jellerson to write a series of poetry books—all dealing with PTSD. Eventually, with a friend who was an audio engineer, he began recording his own works and those of the “team.”

Then one day, there was a surprise in my email, Mike had recorded one of my short stories about a soldier’s first night home from Vietnam called “Just Hold Me.” His emotional rendition gave it even more meaning

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yQgSNfK_Mw&t=7s

I was thrilled and asked him to record my mystery/thriller, *Username*. For that work, he received a silver medal for an audio book from MWSA. That was the beginning of a long personal collaboration. Eventually, as his health declined, Mike told me that it was his dream to write a novel. I encouraged him...nagged him. Still he waited. I gave up, saying, “I’ll be here when you do it.” Months passed. And then one day in my busiest season, he sent me a manuscript titled, *The Drifter*. It took me almost a year to get to it so I sent it out to be edited—a process that Mike hated and resisted, especially as we got into the third and fourth rounds. I promised to do the final edits myself—just the two of us. We worked and argued and once again, I nagged. I’m sure his poor wife Phyllis was more than ready for this book to be finished...and then one day, it was.

Although *The Drifter* wasn’t Mike’s last work, it was the last major one. He was thrilled when it got Second Place in the TAZ awards in Pittsburgh last fall, only weeks after release. He would have been even more delighted to know that it received a Bronze Medal from his beloved MWSA September 9, 2017... ten days after he left us.



Mike at the center of things with Hodge Wood, Richard Lowry to his right and Pat Avery, Everett Avery, and Chris Martini on his left. 2009 MWSA Awards Conference in Orlando, Florida



Smitty

By Brian Prahl

The quiet consumed him as he gazed into the flickering light and thought. “How good life is.” The day had been a most rewarding one with his family, enjoying the long daylight hours of fishing, boating, swimming, and hiking. Now, after the others had retired to their tents and sleeping bags, he watched the flames of their campfire slowly dwindle and fade. Then, out of nowhere came the thought, “Why am I here?”

The night in the northern panhandle of Idaho was spectacular. A clear sky with full moon and sparkling stars reflecting off Priest Lake captured his full attention. From where he sat, the lake formed an inverted mirror image of the stars, moon, and moon-lit clouds above... so beautiful, so peaceful, so serene and so quiet. He threw another log on the campfire and his thoughts drifted back to “Why me? Why not them?” Was it fate, or perhaps chance?

“Life truly was a lottery,” he thought ... from beginning to end.

Here he was at the end of a fun-filled day with his wife and son’s family fast asleep, while his thoughts drifted back to that year, that one long year, over four and a half decades ago. Why now? He’d thought that he’d put it behind him, but since his retirement, the thoughts and dreams had reappeared almost as the *Ghosts of Christmas Past*.

He’d made a pact long ago, back then in 1970, with his best friend Doug B., that if they survived that year, #1 they would never, ever, get back into a helicopter again as long as they lived; and #2, if they survived, they would rendezvous in Denver, Colorado for some


serious skiing and partying in order to put that year behind them and finally rejoin the human race.

And, indeed, it did work for those first 18 blurry months in Denver. In fact, it even persisted for two more decades when he replaced wine, women, and song with wife, family, college, and career. But then came the 1st Gulf War of 1991 and that wonderful “Yellow Ribbon” marketing campaign of President Bush Sr. that used the public’s guilt of their treatment of Vietnam Vets to mask the corporate and public addiction to foreign oil...all behind that wonderful, gullible yellow ribbon campaign.

It was then that his recurring dreams began, but then dissipated as quickly as the conflict and televised reports of the Iraq invasion came to a swift end. The curse of getting old, he thought as he watched the sparks of the crackling fire rise into the darkness, was seeing each new generation make the same mistakes as the preceding ones.

And now, here he sat, two more decades had past since 1991...it was now 2011. His thoughts and recurring dreams had returned once again. “That must be it,” he thought. “I’ve always been occupied, distracted or involved, by my work and family. They, in turn, were my shield, my protection from the demons of my past... my choices, my actions, my guilt.”

He threw another log on the fire and watched the sparks spiral upwards into the darkness. Environment, culture, genetics, and fate were the factors that influence our perception of life. Seemingly simple choices in everyday life can have diametrically opposing, unforeseen



and dramatic results in one's short time on this earth. Timing as well...seconds, minutes, hours, and days can mean the difference between life and death, happiness and tragedy, wealth and poverty, sickness and health. He closed his eyes, listening to the crackling of the fire and thought, "Timing, fate?" "Is that why?"

Suddenly, he was back in time. The resounding explosion of the B-40 rocket, an RPG, as it tore off the tail of his medevac helicopter—followed by a nose-down, sickeningly-rapid spin, followed by the flashing "Christmas tree lights" of the instrument panel. His aircraft was 75-feet above a rice paddy on final approach to pick up some wounded South Vietnamese troops. Without the tail rotor, the anti-torque was gone and they began to spin and fall.

Timing...fate? The Viet Cong who shot the RPG didn't lead them enough. If he had, the four of them would have been killed. Timing...fate? They crashed into waist-deep, rice-paddy water on top of two unfortunate ARVN soldiers who were killed by the very air-ambulance helicopter that had come to pick up their wounded. Timing...fate? The two ARVNs were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The dust-off crew survived, but he was laid up with injuries to his neck, back, and knee and grounded for 10 days.

Timing...fate? Another pilot, Smitty, had been scheduled to depart in two weeks for R&R in Hawaii to meet his wife and new-born child for the first time. Now, Smitty had to fill in for him for 4 days at Xuan Loc. That pilot, Smitty, and his aircraft crashed and burned while performing a hoist mission. Smitty was killed along with two other crew members and the wounded soldier they'd hoisted aboard their aircraft before the enemy opened up with a fusillade of automatic weapons. Timing...fate? Smitty never got to see his son.

Here was the spooky part. Tradition at most units was to toast those killed in action by honoring them with

an alcohol wake/memorial. Stories, jokes, you name it, about the deceased were traded. During the previous wake. Smitty raised a beer in a toast and said. "Here's to Russ H. Isn't it weird? He was just here last night drinking a beer with us...and now he's gone." There was a momentary pause to digest that statement, and then the fellow dust-off pilots fell back to normal conversational volumes.

As the night grew chilly and the moon ducked behind a cloud, he slowly rose, poured water over the coals and thought, "Damn, why can't I let this go?" Would I have flown the mission differently had I been able to fly it?

Perhaps, it was his recent reunion after 43 years with the lone surviving pilot of that fateful day. Alex M was his name. He'd gone through tough times (decades) with survivor guilt via drugs and alcohol. He'd been haunted by his last memory of the crash. He'd glimpsed back at the wounded US Army soldier they'd hoisted from the triple canopy jungle from below. "He'd a look of peace on his face, oblivious to the imminent hell we were about to experience." The next thing Alex remembered was regaining consciousness from extreme heat. He unbuckled his seat and shoulder harness, stood up and fell forward out of the cockpit as there was no longer a nose or front of the UH-1H Huey. They had crashed through 135 feet of trees. After stumbling a few steps, he turned back for the others, but the intense heat and explosions of the burning wreck drove him back.

Timing...fate? Why did he survive and the other four burn up with the aircraft?

Timing...fate? The next wake we had was for Smitty.

When it came time to toast, everyone raised a glass, but then remembered that a few day before, the last to toast was Smitty. Eyes met...all were thinking the same thoughts...no one spoke.



CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Part II

Sandra Miller Linhart

Military Writers' Society of America (MWSA) opens a venue for veterans and their family members to express and heal their scarred lives – whether it be through a memoir, a novel, or poetry, one can find his or her voice in a safe environment.

MWSA also opens its heart and arms to the active duty and reserve military member and their families, offering up resources to better their lives during the uncertainty that is the military world.

In the first part of this series. I picked my top five military deployment books currently available for the military child.

A second, and just as pressing emotional issue addressed in this series, is the anxiety a child faces from his or her parent being away for an extended period of time – either on a peace-keeping mission, temporary duty, or during conflict.

These anxieties are consuming and real, leaving a child to feel abandoned at times and left wondering if he or she will ever see his or her parent again. Separation leaves a large question mark on the heart of the child.

Will Daddy remember me? I can't remember his face so well any more.

Will Mommy know me? I don't remember her smile.

These are valid concerns the military child has, and many times is unable to voice for fear of disappointing, or maybe he or she feels that if the fear is spoken aloud, it may break something. Kids are resilient, but they're also vulnerable. Leaving these feelings bottled up often makes for a miserable and sometimes troubled child.

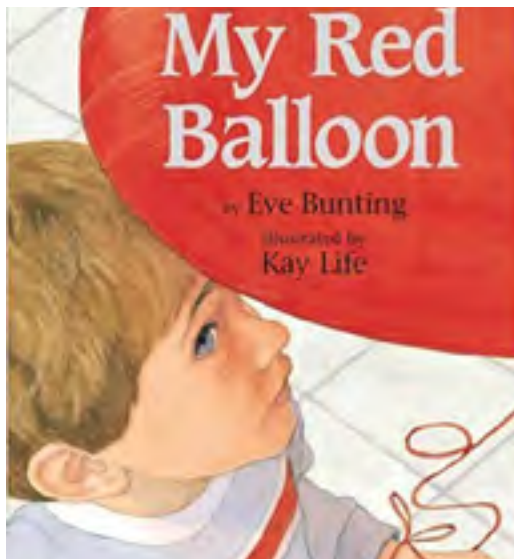
My own children suffered these fears each in her own individual way. All five of my daughters had to deal with their father's deployments, TDYs, and separations

for weeks, months, and sometimes a year at a time. Each and every time, I witnessed their subtle withdrawal at the onset of separation. Eventually, we settled into our routine, and things somewhat leveled out. Then, as we got closer to reunion time, I saw how scared they were of the unknown. Sometimes they were able to voice their concerns, and we talked about what might happen, other times they were resentful, disruptive, and sensitive. I reassured them that although they may not be able to pick their dad out in a sea of camouflage, he most certainly would remember them.

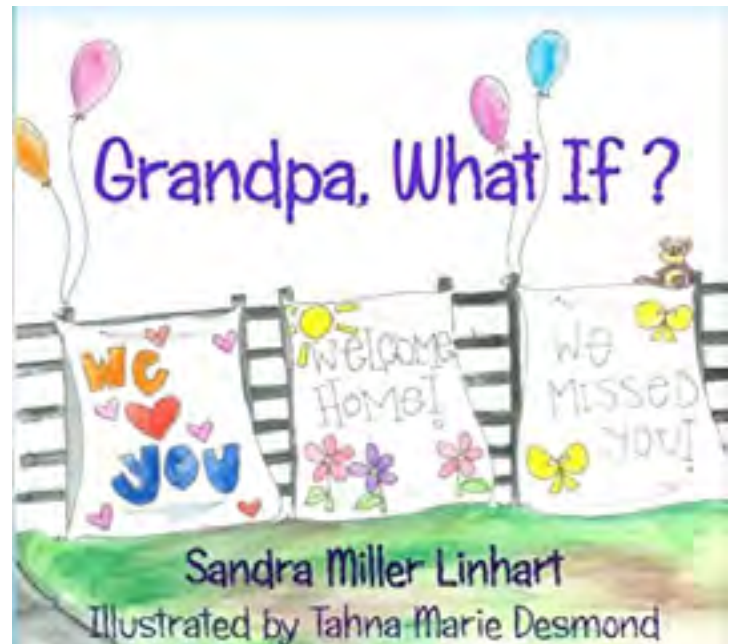
At each point along the way, a substantial time of recalibrating our family took place – leading up to deployment, leaving, returning, and then trying to settle back into some normalcy of family life. The transitions were unsettling and emotional for all of us. I don't believe we're unique in that.

That said, these are my top picks for picture books that cover separation anxiety and reunions for the military family:

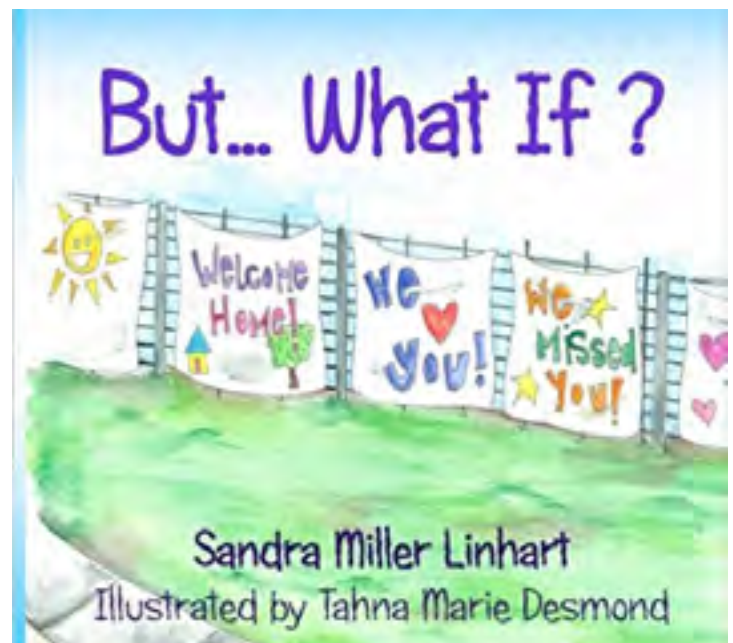
My Red Balloon by Eve Bunting, gorgeously illustrated by Kay Life, published by Boyd Mills Press in 2005 reveals secret fears a military child has around separation anxiety, and helps resolve these issues between the safety of the books covers. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1590782631>



Grandpa. What If?. by Sandra Miller Linhart, lovingly illustrated by Tahna Marie Desmond, published by Lionheart Group Publishing in 2010 is a loving description of the subtle insecurities a child of a returning female soldier may have. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/098451273X>



But... What If?. by Sandra Miller Linhart, beautifully illustrated by Tahna Marie Desmond, published by Lionheart Group Publishing in 2010 is a loving description of the subtle insecurities a child of a returning male soldier may have. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0984512721>



To be honest. I was unable to find ANY other books that deal with separation and homecoming anxieties. I am proud to have written two of the three I found available. I hope one or more of these titles help your little trooper deal with his or her fears. Perhaps you'll be enticed or encouraged to write a book to fill the void.



Saipan

1982-85

By Frank Evans

What follows are my remembrances of several trips in the 1980's to Saipan during my military career. Many are the "facts" related to me by local islanders.

While the active duty adviser to the famous 100th Battalion of the 442nd Regiment *(Go for Broke!) of WWII fame. I explored the small island where one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific was fought in June 1944. It is the site of the largest Japanese Banzai attack in the Pacific War. Units of the US Navy. US Marines. and the US Army were involved and battle scars around the island remained as I toured the island accompanied by survivors and descendants of the civilian population present during the ferocious fighting.



I visited Suicide Cliffs where hundreds of men, women and children threw themselves onto the rocks far below. Many of the women were clutching babies. They had been told that the invaders would do many horrible things to them, including cannibalism. Emperor Hirohito ordered the civilians of Saipan to commit suicide and promised that civilians who died there would receive an equal spiritual status in the afterlife with those of soldiers perishing in combat. General Hideki Tōjō intercepted the order on 30 June 1944 and delayed its sending. Upon the imminent capture of Saipan by American forces, circles of children were given hand grenades by the Japanese soldiers to pass around like a ball until it exploded. Many of the islanders had intermarried with the soldiers and most were loyal to Japan. I visited the Last Command Post where the last Japanese

commanding officer in Saipan committed seppuku. Behind that Japanese stronghold and headquarters on Saipan. I stood on the rock upon which Japanese General Saitō, wounded by shrapnel, committed ritual suicide at dawn on 10 July, with his adjutant shooting him in the head after he had disemboweled himself.



In an earlier article. I discussed the local belief that Amelia Earhart was confined then later executed there by the Japanese who believed her flight was a cover for spying on Japanese fortifications in the Pacific.

Lastly. I was amazed to see remains of US Army tanks in the surf where they had been destroyed during the invasion. I was also told of the electrically charged cables strung along Blood Beach to electrocute charging troops as they came ashore.



Partially Submerged WWII US tank in waters off Blood Beach. Saipan 1984

Just a bit if history of WWII in which I experienced many years later. A truly sobering experience.



Dan Elder and Joe Epley at Conference



Sandra Linhart and Jeannette Vaughn enjoying MWSA Awards Conference in San Antonio, Texas



Dana Tibbets at the 2017 MWSA Conference at the Menger in San Antonio, Texas



MWSA Board Members Farrell Chiles and Kathleen Rodgers in San Antonio for MWSA 2017 Conference

INTERVIEW WITH MWSA MEMBER CAPTAIN GEORGE WILLIAM JACKSON



Captain George William Jackson (a.k.a. G. William Weatherly) grew up in Huntington, New York. After graduating (with honors) from the University of Wisconsin, he was commissioned an Ensign in June 1969. In the course of a 30 year career, he achieved exceptional credentials in nuclear power, being assigned to the pre-commissioning units of two submarines to oversee the testing of the nuclear engineering plants and training of the initial crews. He commanded three different submarines. USS Shark (SSN-591). USS Billfish (SSN-676) and PCU Rhode Island (SSBN740).

Between 1977 and 1980, he served on Admiral Rickover's staff in Washington, DC. From 1994 until July of 1999, he was a Professor of Operations, held the Lockwood Chair of Undersea Warfare and was Chairman of the Joint Military Operations Department at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. There he oversaw and coordinated the efforts of 38 other professors and certified the Joint Professional Military Education of over two thousand mid-grade and senior officers.

He is a member of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (a global organization) and over a dozen other professional and veteran groups.

He lives in Southeastern Connecticut with his wife of

over 40 years. Caren. With her help and a host of former sailors and friends, he began his writing career in 2008.

MWSA Dispatches: Why did you become an author in the first place?

George Jackson: I have always had a passion for WWII naval history but was dissatisfied with those recent novels that I was reading. It seemed the great novels were written by authors who had lived during the war and could get the details correct. I wanted to take a lifelong hobby of ships and history to propose an alternative starting with the Washington Naval Treaty, creating new ships and a fictional war. The treaty was something I had studied in school and became fascinated with the "what ifs." My favorite author growing up was C. S. Forrester and his Hornblower series.

MWSA: When and why did you join MWSA?

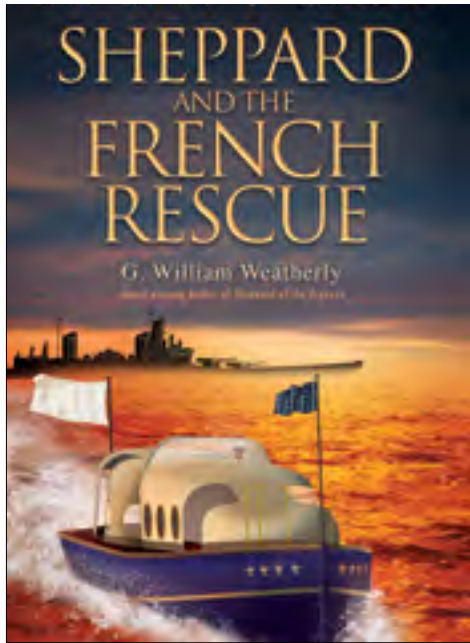
GJ: That is easy, once I became aware of the society it seemed a natural fit for my work. I was thrilled when my first novel *Sheppard of the Argonne* won a 2016 gold medal in the category of literary fiction.

MWSA: Why did you choose to work in this genre?

GJ: There are many reasons, but fundamentally as a 30-year veteran with extensive command experience

and the conviction that many WWII vets suffered from PTSD, but hid it behind just not discussing the war while they went ahead with their lives. I wanted my protagonist to be a sufferer with all the symptoms (as am I), but desperately working to overcome the handicap as he commanded a fictitious ship but with accurate details to the period in a fictitious war where the reader would not know the outcome.

MWSA: Tell us a little bit about your new book. *Sheppard and the French Rescue*.



GJ: Captain Sheppard McCloud, a hero of the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor and “savior” of the west coast from air attack, must hide his post-traumatic stress from senior officers and subordinates alike in an age that considered its symptoms cowardice. Though still suffering from both his physical and psychological wounds, the Navy brass has decided they need their best Captain back in command of the latest capital ship—the battle cruiser Argonne.

With less than a day until they leave on a mission that could decide the fate of the allied cause, Sheppard must rally his officers and men, gain their confidence, and build them into a team. Leadership challenges abound, as the task force that includes the Argonne crosses the Atlantic they confront submarines, aircraft, and finally enemy surface ships, in exciting battles vividly described, culminating in that rarest of actual events—a gun duel between capital ships.

The novel has been carefully researched to accurately reflect the customs, traditions, and equipment the United States Navy used to win a two-ocean war. Much of the

hardware from the novel has been preserved on board the battleship memorials to the greatest generation.

Captain Sheppard McCloud is unexpectedly called to Washington in May of 1942 while his ship, the battle cruiser Argonne, is in dry dock undergoing repairs from the Battle of Cape Vilan. At a luncheon with President Roosevelt and the new head of the OSS, he is informed of his next mission—this time unsupported, in a race against General Rommel’s panzers to save the French Fleet at Mers-el-Kébir. Intrigue, spies, the ‘Maquis’, plots by both the Italians and his nemesis from Sheppard of the Argonne, German Admiral Schröder, make a thrilling page-turner that readers will find hard to put down.

MWSA: What made you interested in writing a book on this particular topic?

GJ: I was convinced that the phenomenon of PTSD has been around for all of human history. Individuals suffer for a variety of personal reasons, but the symptoms are always the same. Our greatest generation suffered the horrors of war in silence and it was not until the Gulf Wars that the condition was first diagnosed and treated. As a nuclear submarine officer, I deliberately stay away from the current period. As I have read other authors, I see what they inadvertently give away that harms our national defense. *Blind Man’s Bluff* is a classic example. By staying in WWII and using historically accurate tactics and procedures, I know that I will not reveal anything of importance, but still keep my readers enthralled with a compelling plot and characters.

MWSA: What makes this particular book special to you?

GJ: It has actually been therapeutic writing about a protagonist in command of a ship suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress. As a former Chairman of the Joint Military Operations Department at the Naval War College in Newport, my department was responsible for teaching “the operational art” and I use those concepts in my novels to accomplish the missions set before my protagonist. I am never really sure how events will unfold when I begin with a novel. But I lay out the events on charts and develop a time line to challenge my characters. Throughout, I use historically accurate equipment and procedures as well as historical events to weave into the plot. The tactics my characters use are based on historical events, but “the operational art” aspects were unknown at the time. Captain Sheppard McCloud though has an innate grasp of that methodology.



THE BATTLE OF PEA RIDGE

Christopher Gerald Avery

I visited the Civil War's Pea Ridge Battlefield in north-western Arkansas several weeks ago. Upon entering the visitor's center, a ranger indicated that the movie had just started. I hurried into the auditorium to get a seat. The movie was a great introduction. There was so much about the battle that I had forgotten. It has always amazed me that history, like the present, is shaped by the good and bad decisions that individuals make. We memorize the times and places of major events, but really, it is the actions of the individual people that make it interesting.

After the movie ended. I walked through the museum exhibit. The exhibit visually took me through the battle start to finish. There was an exhibit that listed all of the principals involved (Division Commanders) on both sides. Another exhibit outlined the importance of the battle for Missouri/Arkansas and the third was dedicated to the reasons why the rank and file individuals on both sides fought.

The officer's exhibit was interesting in that two officers, well liked by their men, made some questionable decisions during the battle. Union Major General Franz Sigel, a German-American, was extremely popular with his men and was known as an excellent recruiter

and organizer. He performed very well on the first day of battle but became erratic as the battle raged on. German-Americans (primarily from St. Louis) made up a large proportion of the Missouri units involved in the battle.

Confederate Major Officer Earl Van Dorn, had been extremely popular with his men. At the start of this battle, though, he made a critical mistake. He left his supply wagons behind while he took the army on a forced march in an attempt to get behind the Union forces. Each man carried only 40 rounds of ammunition and a day's rations. Nothing else. No tents. Morale suffered as weather conditions worsened and the ammunition ran out. The men figured that Van Dorn had put them in a bad position and lost that battle for them. He never regained his popularity.

The exhibit outlining the importance of the battle detailed the importance of the neutral, undeclared, or conflicted states. Missouri, for example, while a slave state with a pro-Confederacy state government, had a large contingent of Northern sympathizers. As the war began, the federal government rushed to safeguard the armories from the southern sympathizers. After securing the arms, the North then moved to occupy specific



territory. The two major population centers, Kansas City and St. Louis, were occupied early and stabilized but suffered from attacks from Southern guerrilla fighters for the duration of the war. Arkansas was a Confederate state and so, their armies roamed at will, at least early in the war.

The South, using armies based in Arkansas, attempted to invade Missouri to install their own government. Missouri would then officially secede from the Union.

The third exhibit, outlining the reasons why men fought, was maybe the most fascinating. In a war that literally, in some cases, pitted brother against brother or father against son, it was fascinating to read why men chose to fight in the most destructive war in our nation's history. From the North, men fought against slavery, or they fought to preserve the union. The Northern Army, much more than its counterpart, featured a large immigrant component. These groups, primarily German and Irish, sometimes freshly arrived from Europe, fought well and fought hard for their new country. There were some Southern men that no doubt fought to keep the South's primarily agricultural economy and its slave labor intact. These might be the educated men that knew the issues and/or had a vested interest in keeping the South as it was. The majority of the men who fought though, simply fought to protect their homeland. Simply put, they didn't have a stake economically in the war or were maybe not even really aware of all the issues. They fought to protect their homes against what

they considered a Northern invader. The mentality of the men on both sides continues to fascinate me—the immigrants who fought for their adopted country, and the men who fought to protect their homes and a way of life.

After walking through the exhibit, I went back to the movie theater to watch the movie again. I am happy I did because I had missed more than I had thought. The movie provides an excellent reference. It lays out the purpose of the battle, the strategy involved in trying to win it, and the decisions, good or bad, during the battle. For example, in presenting Van Dorn, the Southern Commander, the movie explains what the South hoped to gain, and why it was important. It explains his planning and strategy (coming up behind Union Army) and his decisions before and after that would affect the battle (leaving behind the supply train).

All in all, I found it a rewarding day.



**Silver Medal
for Literary Fiction**



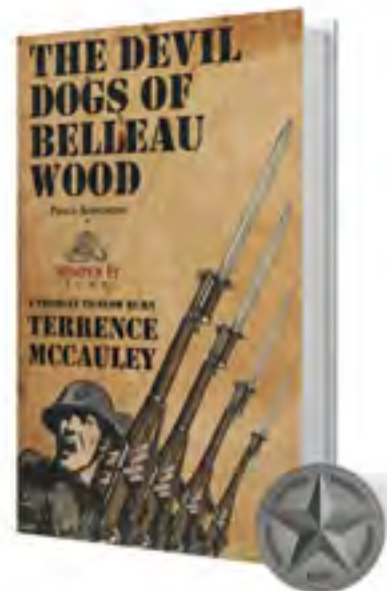
**Silver Medal
for Historical Fiction**



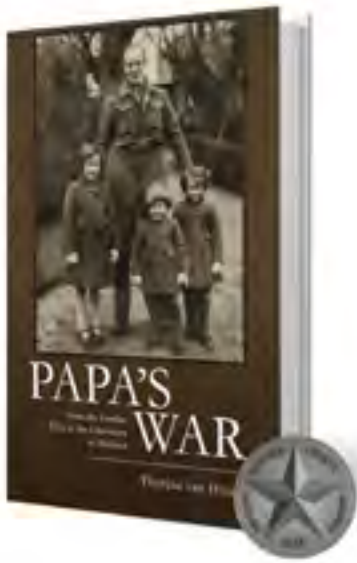
**Silver Medal
for Historical Fiction**



**Silver Medal
for Historical Fiction**



**Silver Medal
for History**



**Silver Medal
for Young Adult**



**Silver Medal
for Historical Fiction**



**Silver Medal
for Literary Fiction**



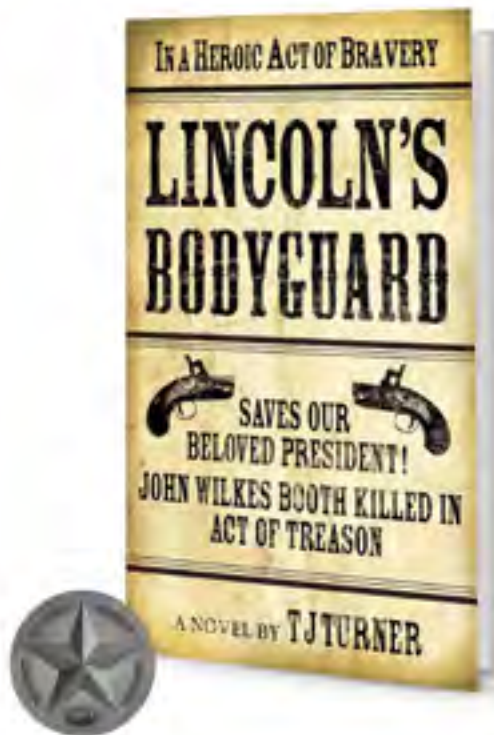
Silver Medal Mystery/Thriller



Silver Medal Mystery/Thriller



Silver Medal Mystery/Thriller



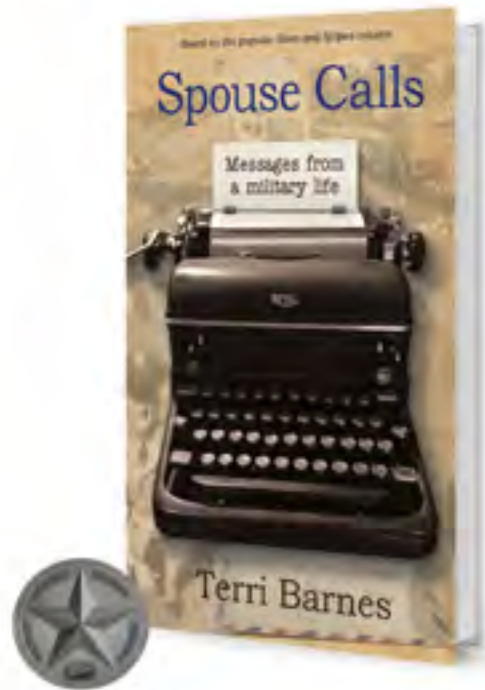
Silver Medal Mystery/Thriller



Silver Medal Mystery/Thriller



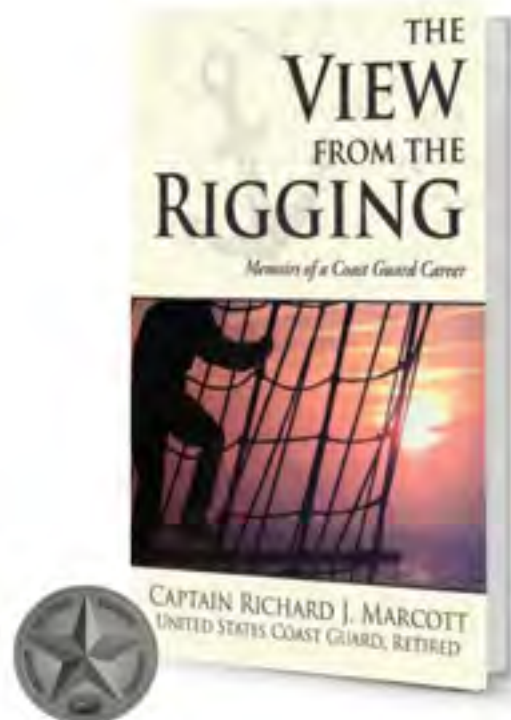
Silver Medal Memoir



Silver Medal for Collections



Silver Medal Memoir





CRITTERS OF VIETNAM

Joe Campolo, Jr.

Anyone who knows a Vietnam War veteran has probably heard many stories about the wildlife they encountered during their tour of duty. My friend and fellow author, Vietnam Veteran John Podlaski recently added a story to his website about the critters of the Nam. This is my recollection on the subject.

Vietnam is a tropical country on the edge of a large continent, bordered by an ocean. It has a diverse topography along with many flowing rivers and streams. And there are critters...many critters.

One thing that constantly amazed me during my tour of duty in Vietnam was the number of critters that were able to survive in that deadly war torn environment. Back home; you crack a twig and every deer within earshot takes off like a rocket. Somehow the wildlife in Vietnam managed to survive, and in some cases thrive; while tens of thousands of firefights, bombing sorties, naval bombardments, artillery missions and chemical defoliations took place. How did they manage?

The place was noisy, very noisy....and dangerous; nonstop. Yet tigers, leopards, vast troops of monkeys, elephants, too many snakes to mention and even rhinoceroses survived in that toxic environment. It wasn't surprising that the insects survived....they're designed to survive under any condition. And hordes of insects occupied Vietnam. Immense rice beetles, mounds of stinging ants, scorpions, spiders of every make and model...and of course the mosquitoes that tortured every GI who ever set foot in- country.

Those mosquitoes, ever present day or night, rain or shine; would swoop down in hordes getting into your mouth, nose, eyes, and ears. The military doled out mosquito repellent that could strip paint, but it barely slowed them down. After a month or two you just took them in stride. Of course the grunts in the bush all day

had it the worst; but the mosquitoes spared no one because of rank or station.

My experiences with the "critters of the Nam" are similar to others who served during the war. Although to this day I am not overly pestered by mosquitoes, they certainly cramped my style in Vietnam. Sleeping was the worst; some guys obtained mosquito netting to put around their bunks. I found the netting to be very bothersome. (Besides, someone stole mine)

All the hooches, barracks and buildings on the Phu Cat airbase were occupied by hordes of large hairy spiders. They looked like a small tarantula and were everywhere. I waged war on them constantly, dispersing the deadly Military grade insect repellent like Agent Orange. It didn't put much of a dent in their population; but I wasn't going to let them roll me over.

Rats were another problem. HUGE rats. They also occupied most buildings and structures everywhere. One ran over my chest one night when I was laying in my bunk. No sleep that night. Always short of protein, the ever practical Vietnamese put them on the menu. (Another reason I never dined with them)

Many American GIs made pets out of the local monkeys. They looked cute, but most of them were meaner than a mother-in-law without a grandchild. They would savagely bite anything other than themselves and I avoided them like the plague; which, by the way, was also present in that unfortunate country.

Snakes were ever present in Vietnam. Cobras were frequently found on base and shot on sight. In one incident I witnessed a hapless perimeter guard trying to shoot a cobra that was approaching him aggressively. He kept trying to shoot the snakes head. but the snake, dodging like Muhammad Ali, kept right on coming.

Finally a well-seasoned guard casually approached the snake and lopped off it's head with a small machete.

Our hooch dog "Noah". a feral dog we had adopted, became an overnight hero because of a cobra. He had supposedly killed one that had entered the barracks one night, and was heaped with lavish praise. It has always been my opinion that Noah found a dead cobra and dragged it into the barracks to eat; but I wasn't going to rain on his parade. Good for Noah.



The "two stepper" terminated many Vietnamese

Another snake of note was the Southeast Asian pit viper. A small snake of various colors it was referred to as a "two-stepper" because supposedly once it bit someone they took two steps and dropped dead. This snake was more of a problem for the Vietnamese who wore only sandals or nothing at all on their feet. American GI's with their heavily canvased jungle boots were protected from any bites to their feet or ankles.



Leopards occasionally preyed on the villagers

The Phu Cat airbase had a large "open" area which was occupied by many creatures; some four legged, some two. A leopard from the area appeared one day and got itself backed into a storage bay at an outside warehousing area. People tried to drive it away but it just sat their snarling and screaming. I was able to see it, and the ferociousness of it certainly made an impression on me. Unfortunately it had to be shot, after which many GI's posed for pictures with it.

Another animal I saw, right on the Phu Cat airbase, made a lifelong impression on me. Three of us were walking down a small road, heading back to our hooch

one evening around dusk. A jeep came along and we made way so it could pass. Soon we saw the jeep stop for a few minutes. Then it backed up all the way to us. The jeep driver told us to get in. We thanked him but said we'd rather walk. Since he was very insistent we got in and he drove to the spot where he had stopped a minute before.

There, hunkered down in some thick brush sat a tiger. With a low growling it sat glaring at us. We watched it for several minutes. The driver wanted to drive it off so it wouldn't ambush anyone. (There were at least eight confirmed cases of American GI fatalities during the war as a result of tiger attacks)

The driver leaned on the horn of the jeep, after which the tiger let out a blood-curdling roar and then backed off and slipped into the night. We reported the incident to the Apes (air police) who casually brushed it off. They said there were a couple of tigers that traveled on and off of the base all the time, and if they shot it another would just take it's place. I was glad that no one came to harm that night, us or the tiger; it was a beautiful animal.



Nothing was safe from them

The critter incident I had in Vietnam which created the most grief for me personally, involved ants. The ants in Vietnam swarmed like bees, and bit like mules. They were worse than the mosquitoes. At Christmas time my Mother sent me a goody package. In it was a small tinned ham. My two buddies and I quickly devoured half of it, after which I left for about fifteen minutes to attend to something. When I returned, the ham was a living mound of ants, about twice the size of the ham itself. I cursed and roared and dispersed the ants with fire, but alas...the ham was ruined. I grouched about that for at least a week, and harbor it to this day!

INTERVIEW WITH MWSA MEMBER

STEVE BANKO



While philosophers have long written about the might of the pen and the sword. Steve Banko has wielded both in service to country and community.

After 16 months in combat in Vietnam. Steve returned to home where he continued his legacy of service in the trenches and command posts of government at every level. He has served state assemblymen and state senators, a presidential candidate, and a mayor before retiring in 2010.

His first person accounts of Vietnam combat have been published across a broad spectrum of national publications from the Wall Street Journal to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Steve is included in the Marlo Thomas compilation, *Right Words at the Right Time. Vol. II*. He was a contributor to the National Public Radio feature series "This I Believe." His writing has been recognized by Writer's Digest Magazine, the Nelson Algren Short Fiction Competition at the Chicago Tribune, and by Freedom's Foundation at Valley Forge.

However, Steve is most proud of the 1994 Terry Anderson Award for his courage to comeback from alcoholism and post-combat depression.

Serving in the United States Army in Vietnam. Steve was wounded six times, including four gunshot wounds. He was decorated for combat heroism seven times and his awards include two Silver Stars, the nation's 3rd highest combat decoration, four Bronze Stars for Valor and four Purple Hearts.

MWSA: Why did you become an author, Steve?

SB: When I returned home from Vietnam. I was one of a few guys in my crowd who actually fought in Vietnam. Most of the rest stayed in school and were never drafted. As a result, most guys didn't want to listen to my ravings about the war and shut such conversations down almost as soon as they began. I turned to writing about my feelings, my anger, my pride and my frustration. So for almost fifty years. I've been writing essays, memoirs, accounts, and opinions about my war and our warriors. I have spoken to scores of audiences across the country about Vietnam and its veterans. That I should write a novel about the war seemed a natural progression from such writings.

MWSA: Why did you choose to join us?

SB: In seeking new ways to discuss my novel earlier this year (2017). I encountered MWSA in an email. I recognized a group of similarly-minded authors as a natural place to talk about my book and to learn about the motives and the research and the work produced by other military authors.

MWSA: Perhaps it's obvious to many of our members, but we always like to ask, why did you choose this genre?

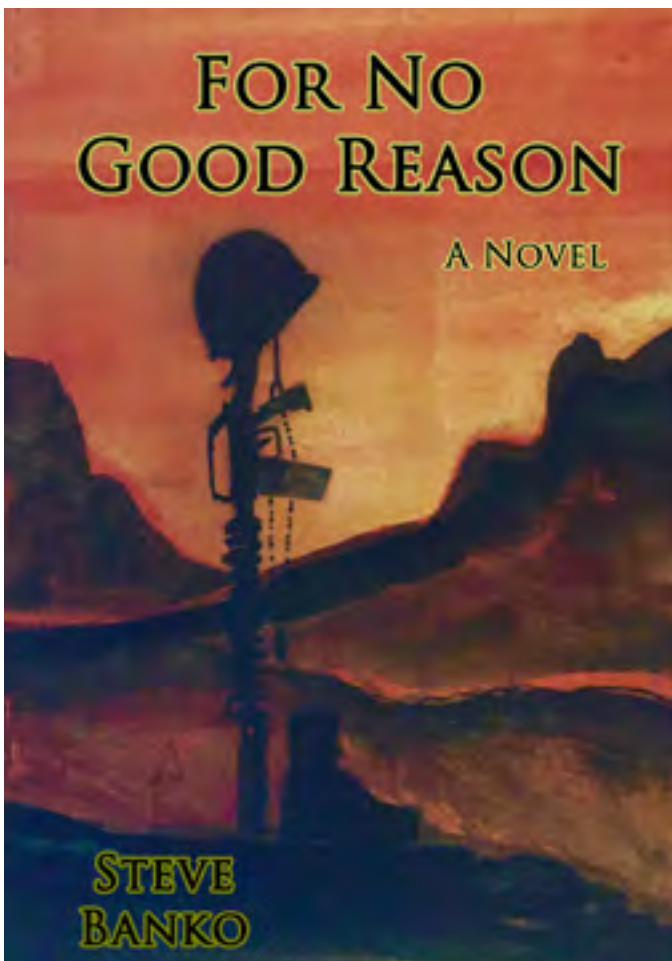
SB: I have always been counseled and taught to write about what you know. During sixteen months as a combat soldier and a combat leader. I saw firsthand the good, the bad and the ugly of war. As fewer and fewer Americans entertain thoughts of national service and fewer still ever service in the armed forces. I felt

it important to get my thoughts about my war into the hands of as many people as possible.

Other books ...

Memories of War: Dreams of Peace; Echoes of the Vietnam War. (1998) and *For No Good Reason* (2016). "Memories..." is a short collection of essays and speech excerpts. But in addition to my books. I would like to mention a speech that I did in 2009 earned the Cicero Foundation's Grand Award as speech of the year. The speech was about PTSD among combat veterans.

This book ...



In the Sixties, simple mistakes could have grave consequences. The central character, Josh Duffy, makes one such mistake and pays an incredible price. One unfortunate encounter with the nuances of higher education realities of the time and he is thrust into an alien world of blood, death, and fire. It is an upside down world where the usual mores don't function. It is a world where killing is celebrated and compassion scorned. It

is a world to which Duffy must adapt if he is to survive.

The book follows him as he struggles with the enemy, with his leaders, and with his conscience as he evolves from reluctant soldier to committed leader.

If you ever wonder why soldiers come back from combat forever changed and irreversibly damaged ... if you wonder what causes this post-traumatic stress disorder we hear so much about ... if you lived through the Sixties and walked the razor's edge of conscription, this book might provide some clarity. It is the journey for sanity to the depths of madness and on to a path toward redemption.

So many of the nuances of the military are unknown to the civilian population. One such nuance the rotation of senior officers into and out of combat commands. The purpose of such rotation was to get the coveted combat command on to an officer's resume as a prerequisite for promotion and career advancement. Duffy sees the affects of this "ticket punching" up close and personal when his unit is led by an officer with his eyes focused beyond battlefield realities. In his haste to secure a reputation for himself, the commander sets in motion events that lead to the needless destruction of Duffy's unit. Outnumbered and outgunned. Duffy and his men fight a furious battle of survival in the book's climactic chapter. The valor and the sorrow of men in life-and-death struggles are seen in this chapter. Far removed from the traditional norms of patriotism and nationalism. Duffy and his men fight on for what soldiers have always fought. They fought for each other.

This time Duffy's wounds earn him his way out of Vietnam but he find he's not finished with combat just yet. He's confronted with the anti-war attitudes that permeated the times and the campuses when he uses his real life experience as the subject for his first venture into a creative writing course. He thought he would leave the fools behind but realizes there is no escape.

The term PTSD – post traumatic stress disorder – is bandied about often but understand much less. The journey Duffy takes from sanity to the depths of madness and on to a path toward redemption might make the concept of PTSD a little clearer. It is said that one who has seen war continues to see it. This book tells is why that's true. The soldier returned from the fight is often told to "forget about it; it's over." But for him, it's over ... and over ... and over

Stay Dawn

Neal Kusumoto

For Seaman Jenna. February 5, 2013

Stay Dawn

slow your wings

that speed toward me

this night

Hold back the Sun

racing across longitudes

eager for a splashy entrance

on eastern stage

Let Night

keep her black shawl

brightening moon and stars

a while longer

Slow the incoming Tide

eternal and relentless

allow me more Time

to prepare

Morning reveille

of bright birdsong

brings no joy or hope

of happiness

For this Day

sails in under bleak clouds

bringing ending and grief

along this shore

Red skies at morn

do this day warn

a shipmate will not see

Night's return.

Seaman Jenna Vandegrift was the canine mascot of the USS VANDEGRIFT (FFG-48) for four years. She was adopted from an animal shelter in Japan, and sailed with the crew to many foreign ports. Famous in the Navy as a one-of-a-kind sailor, she brought joy and comfort to shipmates and their families over many years. She died on Feb 5, 2013 at 17 years of age (approx). This poem was written by the Captain of the Vandegrift as he lay with her in the pre-dawn hours of her last day.

Wreaths Across America Project

Pat McGrath Avery

On Saturday, August 26, I stumbled across the Wreath Riders in eastern Kansas. Fortune smiled on me in the friendly faces and interesting conversation with several members of the group.

They made a pit stop in Linn Valley (south of Kansas City), in front of the town's newly-erected Veterans Memorial. I'm not sure which was more impressive; the riders and their passion for their cause or the admiration of the locals who took photos and introduced themselves to the riders.

Riding from the Ft. Scott National Cemetery, the Wreath Riders participated in support of the Wreaths Across America Project. The riders pay an entrance fee that goes toward the purchase of wreaths for those veterans buried at the Ft. Scott Cemetery.



I visited with Bernard Johnson, who was driving a Schneider Freightliner Cascadia, with a fully customized patriotic paint job that includes the American flag, the bald eagle, military camouflage, the POW/MIA logo, and the words "Those who serve deserve honor, respect, thanks." Employees at Freightliner's manufacturing plant in Cleveland, NC, designed the truck.

Bernard Johnson, from Columbia, SC, served in the Army in Desert Storm (1990-1991) and Iraq (2007-2009). In addition during his service career, he spent nearly ten years in Germany and thirteen months in Korea.

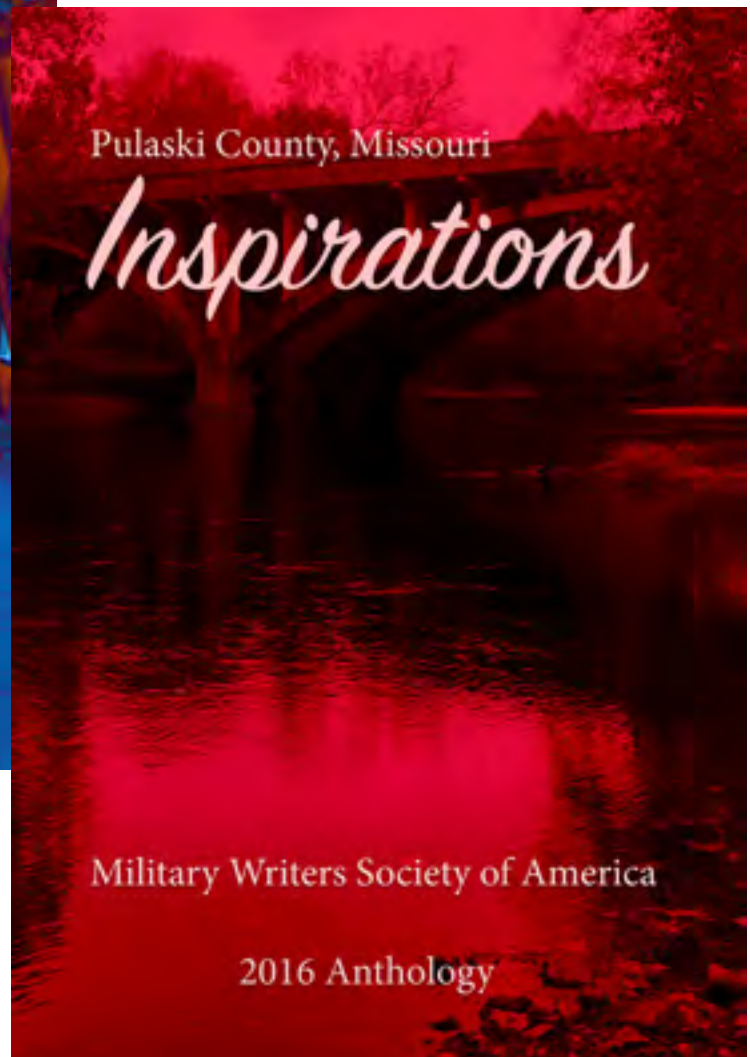
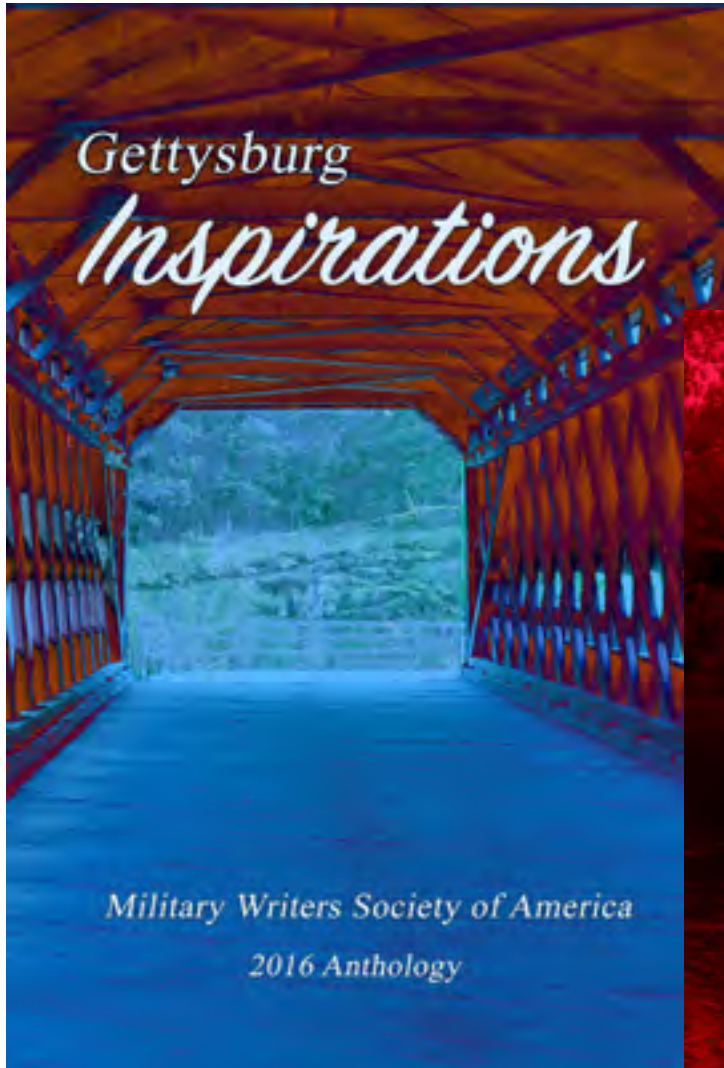
Mike, Gail and their son Beau live in Ft. Scott and are proud to take part in the ride. Fortunately, the weather smiled on them with sunshine and a warm, but not hot, summer day. Gail said this was the fifth year of the Ft. Scott Ride.

An atmosphere of respect and honor displayed itself in the requests for photos, questions and smiles that lit up the summer day. I hope that many such rides are taking place across the country and that each gets the same heartfelt response.

The Wreaths Across America website (<http://www.wreath-sacrossamerica.org/>) states that December 16, 2017 is National Wreaths Across America Day. The organization will coordinate wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery and at more than 1,200 locations in the US. Visit the website to learn how you can be part of this organization.

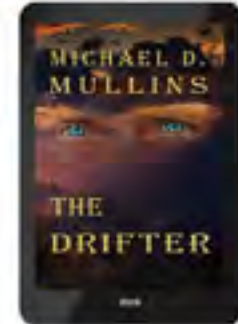
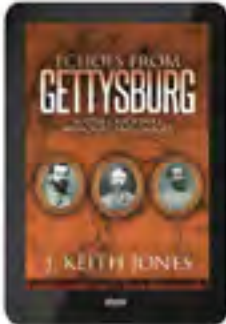
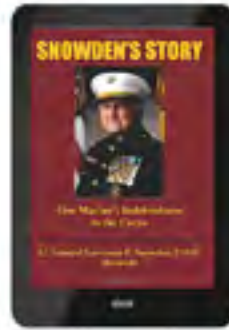


2016 Military Writers Society of America Anthologies



This year, there are two Anthologies—one written by the participants of the 2016 Gettysburg Writers Retreat and one by the 2016 Pulaski Country History Crawl participants.

You can purchase them on Amazon or you can send a check for \$18 per book (or \$35 for both) to Military Writers Society of America, PO Box 1768, Cranberry Township, PA 16066. Please include the address where you would like us to send them.



Bronze Medal Winners

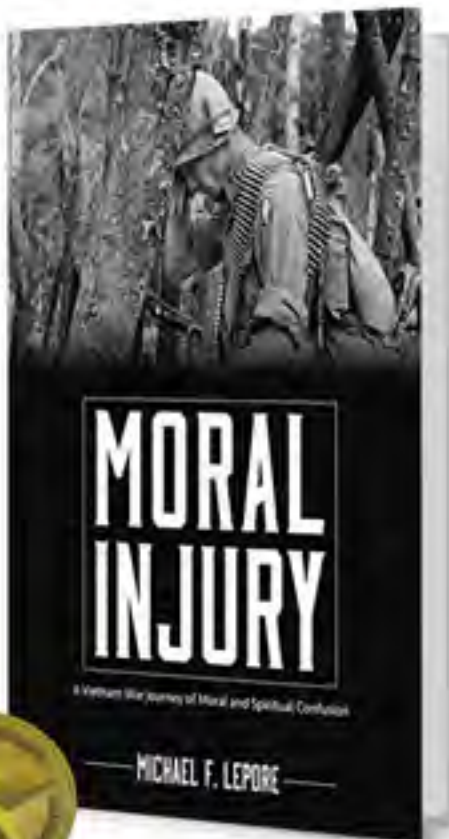


Dennis and Sarah Koller at MWSA 2017 Conference

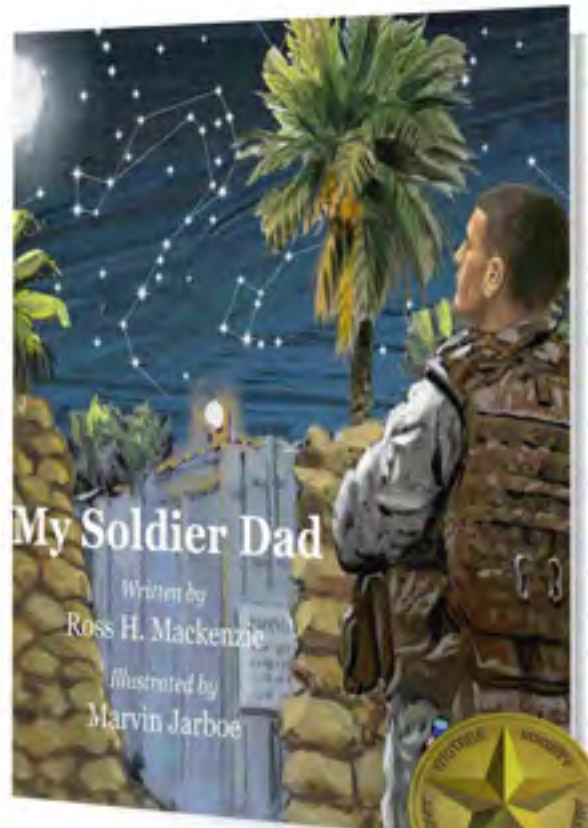


Mary and Buddy Cox at MWSA 2017 Conference

Gold Medal Poetry Book



Gold Medal Picture Book



Tennessee Valley Health Care System

Department of Veteran's Affairs

Nashville, TN

While in Vietnam I had the pleasure of spending time in the military hospital in Saigon. Two weeks to be exact. As an army brat, I grew up with army doctors and nurses, and as my dad always told me, "they are the best of the best." I had no reason to doubt him, and looking back on my childhood growing up on army bases around the world, and then having it end on one on the other side of the same world. I still feel that way.

I left the army 45 years ago and spent most of those years in the corporate rat chase with the best insurance available. I saw many doctors, several times for surgery, but mostly for check ups and various ailments. My children had that same insurance and never lacked for the best care. Try as I might, I cannot remember the name of one of those doctors that came into our lives along the way, no slight against them. They just were not all that memorable.

That changed eight years ago when I started going to the Nashville, Meharry. V.A., and met Doctor Earl Kelly, an incredibly talented and caring doctor who has kept me in his care despite my becoming eligible for Medicare five years ago. Open minded and insightful, Dr Kelly has diagnosed my ailments with alacrity and concern, negating any thoughts I might have had about leaving a system that has been fraught with issues on a national level, but never for me with him. The number of times that he has called me on Saturdays and Sundays, following up on medication concerns, or to discuss test results with me must number a dozen, or more.

There is a lot of talk about the plight of veterans, as there should be, but I am convinced that these problems would be diminished five fold if the V.A., had more Dr Kellys on staff. I have registered my respect and praise for him with his superiors, and hopefully those sentiments have been passed around, garnering him the admiration from his peers that I have for him. So, let's hear it for that silent side of our veteran's community, the diligent professional doctors and nurses who hold a challenging system together with their quiet work and commitment. If there are more Dr Kellys in the V.A., that I am not aware of, then our veterans are being served a lot better than the media is portraying. I for one am blessed with the finest doctor I have ever known; Dr Earl Kelly, Meharry V.A, Nashville. TN.

Robert W. Flournoy, III

Captain, United States Army

First Air Cavalry Division

Republic of South Vietnam



Al Nahas at 2017 MWSA Conference



Andy and Sylvia Horne at 2017 MWSA Conference

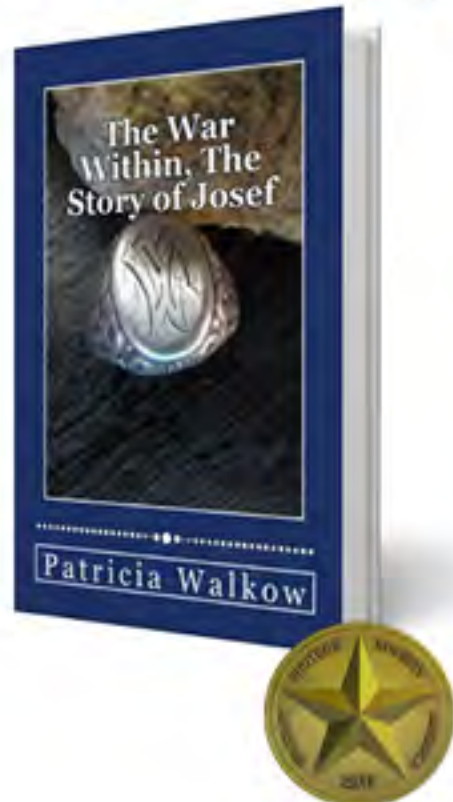


Bob Mustin at 2017 MWSA Conference

Gold Medal Memoir



Gold Medal for Biography



Attention Members of MWSA:

We are offering another benefit to members of Military Writers Society of America. If you are launching a new book, send us the good news and we will introduce it to our MWSA audience. The first three submissions each quarter will receive a 1/3 page ad (\$100 value for non-members) in Dispatches. On submission, you will be told if your book will appear in the magazine. If you miss the magazine, you can request an announcement in the monthly email blast.

In addition, each issue of Dispatches will feature one two-page spread MWSA author interview which will include cover art, author headshot and bio. The interview will be limited to the first request each quarter.

Here are the rules:

- ✓ You must be a member in good standing of MWSA.
- ✓ Your book must be published, complete with an ISBN. We will not accept ARCs or manuscripts.
- ✓ Your date of publication must be no more than twelve months before requested date of ad in.
- ✓ Your book must comply with the rules specified by the Awards Program, i.e.. no pornography, must be respectful of the government of the United States of America and the United States Military.

Here's how to submit:

- ✓ Submit your cover art (jpg), genre and subcategory, a summary, and where your book can be purchased.
- ✓ The quarter you would like your ad to appear in.
- ✓ If you would like a staff member to interview you for a full article about your book, please indicate that in your submission. Only one interview per issue, so first come first serve.
- ✓ Send to patavery@gmail.com



On the River Walk in San Antonio, Texas during the 2017 MWSA Conference

INTERVIEW WITH MWSA MEMBER AND AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR TIM TRAINER



MWSA: Will you give us a short biography and please send us your photo?

TT: My early years were nomadic living in Japan and the U.S. on various army posts and civilian communities as an army brat, the son of a career soldier. I too served in the army (1972-75). Taking advantage of my education benefits, I obtained multiple degrees including studying in Japan in the late 1970s. I am an attorney and have lived in the Washington DC area for the past 30 years. I've worked in federal government agencies, a law firm, and a trade association. My work has allowed me to represent the U.S. at international organizations and to participate in government-to-government negotiations. I've been fortunate enough to travel to approximately 60 countries.

MWSA: Why did you become an author in the first place?

TT: My legal work requires a lot of reading and writing. It provided the fuel to want to write for publication. I had the opportunity to write and publish a number of articles and books related to work. Legal and work related writing and publishing, however, was not fulfilling my desire to write more creatively or to write

about other things. Generally, I like the personal challenge of writing.

MWSA: When and why did you join MWSA?

TT: I joined MWSA in 2013. I was not aware of the organization, but it was brought to my attention by a Vietnam veteran who was a member and was or had been reviewing books for MWSA. After visiting the website and getting information from my veteran friend, it just seemed like a natural thing to do.

MWSA: Why did you choose to work in this genre?

TT: I don't know that I have a "genre" and I can admit that I was not thinking in terms of a genre as I worked on this latest project. My book, *The Fortunate Son*, which is in the memoir category is, in my view, not a true memoir as many might think. I tried to give voice to the 14 veterans who provided me with their recollections and along the way. I added my own experience from that period. Essentially, the reader learns something about these veterans and me, the army brat.

MWSA: Will you briefly list your other books for us?

TT: In 2013, I self-published a political intrigue novel entitled *Pendulum Over the Pacific* that takes the reader

to both Washington DC and Tokyo. In 2015, a major publisher of legal books published my book, *Potato Chips to Computer Chips: The War on Fake Stuff*. I've co-authored a treatise for the past 12 years, *Customs Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights* (Thomson Reuters).

MWSA: Tell us a little bit about your latest book.

TT: *The Fortunate Son: Top Through the Eyes of Others* is about 14 Vietnam veterans who were very young men at that time. Eventually, they end up serving with my father, the oldest man in their company and a seasoned combat veteran. The book relates the journey of these young men into the army and their unfortunate plight going to Vietnam, assigned to an infantry company and needing the kind of leadership that will help them believe that they will survive their tour of duty.

MWSA: What made you interested in writing a book on this particular topic?

TT: The book was not my idea. Several of the veterans who served with my father started prodding me to write a book about my father a number of years ago, but I kept refusing to do it. There were reasons for my reluctance: I didn't have the content. I didn't want to pry into the lives of these men. I knew my father disliked being publicly recognized and my resistance to taking myself back to that period of time. But, ultimately, I accepted the fact that there were a number of these guys who wanted to acknowledge the importance of my father in their lives and were willing to tell me things about their time in the army and in Vietnam. And the one other thing I realized is that I want my younger siblings, nephews, and nieces to read about their father, grandfather, and great grandfather from the perspective of these men—it's a gift.

MWSA: What makes this particular book special to you?

TT: The book is special in several ways. The fact that 15 men, including Barry McCaffrey who wrote the Foreword, trusted me with the things they related to me, the things they shared with me. It is special because, to some extent, I was permitted to be their way of communicating to their own families about perhaps the worst times in their lives. It's humbling to know that I was able to do that for them. And, of course, for them to tell me things about my father that I would not otherwise know. They wanted me to know how important it was to them that he was there helping them through those trying times.

The Fortunate Son recounts the parallel lives of an

army brat and a group of Vietnam veterans who intersect decades after the war. The veterans open up to me, the army brat, perhaps in a way they never have with their own families. Why? Through my father, Top, their First Sergeant, we have a common link. Over the years, we've gotten to know each other. They begin to understand the sacrifices of an army family. But, more importantly, they want me to understand how our family's sacrifice and my father's tour of duty in Vietnam with them, in the jungles, gave them confidence to believe they would make it home alive.

Fortunate Son is not about a single battle or a single soldier's tour of duty. You will meet us, learn something about us, and get a glimpse of our lives during the war years. You'll find out why half a century after that tour of duty ended, we remain bound together. If you've ever been in the military or part of a military family, you'll know that we all are bound together. For those who find the military to be foreign and unknown, our story may help you to understand why it binds so many together.

Fourteen of these soldiers have shared their stories. Their stories describe two life transitions—first from civilian teenagers or young men to combat grunts trying to stay alive in the jungle—and then back to state-side life. What happens between these transitions, as they slog through the jungle day-by-day paints their portrait of Top, my father. Now, I appreciate why they remain bound together half a century after their tour ended. Their stories are an unexpected gift that bestows new insight to me on my father. So, as you read and “listen” to these soldiers' stories, both what they say and how they describe Top, you understand why I've learned that I am *The Fortunate Son*



Jaime Navarro and Valerie Ormond

9/11 REMEMBERED: THE STORY OF A HERO

Beth Wright Underwood

Republished from Canada Press (9.11.2010)

Moments after the first airliner slammed into the North Tower. Rick Rescorla threw on his suit jacket, and left his office on the 44th floor of 2 World Trade Center, bullhorn, walkie-talkie and cell phone in hand. It was shortly after 8:46 a.m. on September 11, 2001, and an otherwise cloudless sky was filling with thick black smoke that now poured from the North Tower. The Port Authority of New York, the World Trade Center's owner and operator, urged South Tower occupants to stay at their desks – an urging Rescorla promptly cast aside.



Rick Rescorla

One could argue that Rescorla's life had led to this point in time. Originally from the seaport town of Hayle, Cornwall, England, he'd spent his life leading and serving – as a British paratrooper, a military intelligence officer in Cyprus, a commando in Rhodesia, and a detective for Scotland Yard's famous "Flying Squad".

In 1963, he took the advice of his best friend Dan Hill and came to the United States. He attended basic training, applied to and later graduated from Officer Candidate School in Fort Benning, Ga. before heading

overseas again – this time as an officer in the U.S. Army, where he fought in the legendary Battle of Ia Drang, his bravery and courage earning him the nickname of "Hard Core."

A soldier of honor to be certain, he was also a man of great humor and striking intellect, undying compassion and loyalty. Rescorla held dying soldiers in his arms, comforting them, telling them they'd be fine, no matter their condition. He sang songs he'd learned as a young boy in his native town of Hayle, his baritone voice bringing a sense of reassurance when all hope seemed lost in that valley in Vietnam. And he vowed to never leave a soldier behind.

When his deployment was over, Rescorla returned to the U.S., and became an American citizen. He believed that America was the place where anyone could accomplish anything they wanted to. He was only 28 years old, but his character was already admired by all who knew him. For Rescorla, there was no other way to live, but with honor. Such was the life he continued to create for himself over the next 30 years.

In 1984, Rescorla was hired as director of security by Dean Witter Securities, where he implemented various safeguards, including evacuation plans and drills. His security staff numbered almost 200, and each man was expected to dress in a suit and tie. Rescorla pulled money from his own pocket for those who couldn't afford to abide by the dress code. Similarly, he rewarded those for a job well done – again, out of his own pocket.

When Pan Am flight 103 was bombed, his concerns centered on the safety of the employees. He warned the Port Authority that radical Islam would now set its sights on the United States of America, and the World Trade Center would be the perfect target. But his warnings were ignored, even after the 1993 bombing that left six people dead.

He knew another hit would come, and predicted it would come from the air. Again, his warnings were left unheeded.

In 1998, Dean Witter merged with Morgan Stanley and Rescorla was promoted to vice president of security.

While the Port Authority seemed to take a cavalier attitude where the threat of terrorism was concerned, Morgan Stanley did not, allowing Rescorla to develop and execute his own evacuation training. Under his direction, two guards would patrol each of the 21 floors occupied by the firm. Employees also served as fire marshals. Visitors were not allowed unless accompanied by a Morgan Stanley escort. Deliveries were not brought into the office until they'd been inspected on the ground floor. The treads of the stairwell steps were marked with fluorescent tape

Mandatory—and unannounced—evacuation drills began immediately.

That same year, Rescorla met the love of his life, Susan, who he married in February of 1999. Although he'd been a highly decorated officer, he rarely talked about his days in the military. He focused on his life with Susan, and their plans and goals for the future. They even discussed his retirement. But on that September morning in 2001, fate had other plans.

Rescorla was already evacuating his people when he called Dan Hill. Both suspected the first hit had been the act of terrorists. At one point, Rescorla briefly broke away from their conversation. Dan heard him singing again, just as he had in Vietnam:

Men of Cornwall, stand ye ready;

It cannot be ever said ye

For the battle were not ready;

Stand and never yield!

By 9:03 a.m., under Rescorla's leadership, many of his people had gotten out of the tower—or were at least on their way down – when United Airlines Flight 175 took a sharp left turn in the lower Manhattan sky and plowed into 2 World Trade Center, causing it to sway from side to side like a piece of tin foil on impact. As the building snapped back to vertical, people made a run for the nearest stairwell. It was filled with smoke and panic was setting in. The comforting sound of Rescorla's voice over his bullhorn, urging them to be calm—there was another staircase. Once he verified that the second stairwell was clear, he reminded everyone to follow what they'd practiced during countless prior drills—to stay calm, get a partner, and move down stairs and out of the building as quickly as possible. As they streamed into the stairwell, Rescorla's voice belted out the songs he'd sung many times before. Some often wondered why he was always singing. Today, they were grateful to hear his familiar baritone voice belting out, "God Bless America."

Shortly after, Rescorla paused momentarily to call his bride, who was sobbing almost uncontrollably.

His voice was confident and comforting. "I have to get all of my people out, and if something happens to me. I want you to know you made my life."

The call had been short, but long enough for Susan to hear a certain finality in his voice just before the line went dead.

Dan Hill reached Rescorla one more time, pleading with him to get out of the building. When the second plane hit, any notion that this had been an accident was shattered. The United States of America was under attack.

"I've got people to take care of," he said, asking his best friend to call Susan and calm her down. The connection was lost when the line went dead again.

Rescorla persisted in evacuating the building as the heat continued to build in the stair well. But he never removed his jacket. Never quit singing. And never quit comforting all who were weary, scared, tired, and without hope.

"Today is a day to be proud to be an American, tomorrow the world will be looking at you," he said.

Fellow co-workers pleaded with him to leave the tower. He obliged them all, adding but one condition:

I'll get out—after I'm sure everyone else is out.

Rescorla headed back up the stairwell with his deputy Wesley Mercer and two security guards. He may not have talked much about his days as a soldier, but in his heart, he was still a warrior, willing to sacrifice his own life if it meant no one would be left behind. Rescorla was continuing his ascent in the stairwell at 9:59 a.m., when 2 World Trade Center imploded.

Rick Rescorla's remains were never located. But 10 years later, he lives on in the hearts of all who remember him. We will never forget.

Author's note: The life of Rick Rescorla has been written about in *We were Soldiers Once... and Young*, by General Hal Moore and Joseph Galloway; *Heart of a Soldier*, by James B. Stewart; and *Touched by a Hero*, the just-released journal written by his widow, Susan Rescorla. The opera, "Heart of a Soldier", based on the book by the same name, opened at War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco on September 10, 2011. For more information, visit RickRescorla.com



Leigh and Bob Doerr at Awards Banquet



Grace, Lisa, and Bob Remey at Awards Banquet



2015 Author of the Year Carolyn Schriber



Award-winning author Brinn Colenda



Don Helin with granddaughter Suzanne and daughters Cari and Lisa



2011 Author of the Year and Director of Education, Jack Woodvile London



2016 Award winners - Carolyn Schriber, Dana Tibbets, Jim Tritten, Jeannette Vaughn, Joseph Badel

TIPS AND TRICKS

RESEARCHING FAKE NEWS

THEN AND NOW

By Joyce Faulkner

Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, research is a basic storytelling tool. Like any detective, you need to be curious, empathetic, willing to go where the information leads, and fixated on the “why?” You also need an instinct for what hasn’t yet been adequately explored and an appreciation for a wider narrative than the obvious. However, we can all be fooled. A long exploration can just as easily lead to false conclusions as accurate ones.

Recently, “Fake News” has entered popular lexicon. Defined as a deliberate attempt to mislead for ideological or economic goals, there are many clues an experienced researcher will notice about fake social media postings. Does the article seem to appeal or frighten one group of people rather than focus on issues of general concern? Does it purport to come from a known outlet but when you ignore links in the posting and go to that source independently, you can’t find any mention of the suspicious story?

Here is an example of a well-known fake story which was posted to Facebook:



Here’s the logic the Denver Post used to debunk it:

Note the high number of responses (4.2K) and the extremely high number of shares (10, 558). There are also 1K comments. These unrealistic figures imply bots at work to get the stats high enough for Facebook to start showing the piece to people who have previously “liked” similar material.

Also, note that this article came from DenverGuardian.com. There was no news outlet by that name.

The URL was set up a short time before this posting and the site itself was unfinished with many broken links. It seemed to have existed simply to provide a home for this particular article.

The posted physical address on that site was a vacant lot and the phone numbers were fake.

The bogus site referenced a local Denver television station which has no record of this story.

Further research revealed the picture used to illustrate the story was taken by Adam Belles in 2010 when his neighbor’s house caught on fire and he posted it to Flickr at that time.

So how do you do this yourself? Here’s some ways to confirm or debunk information:

- ✓ Is the source mainstream? Are ethical guidelines posted? Are there consequences for getting it wrong at that site?
- ✓ Is the posting in question news, analysis, or satire?
- ✓ Can you find at least two independent legitimate sources that say essentially the same thing?
- ✓ Does source documentation—arrest warrants, laws, judicial rulings, executive orders, government documents, and grand jury indictments, confirm the story?
- ✓ When you speak directly with all players do their responses confirm the claims of the post-

ing?

- ✓ When you break down each claim in the posting, article, or blog, in question and track down the information yourself (remembering the minimum of two independent sources rule). do they support or debunk the original posting?
- ✓ When you check out all URLs, street addresses, phone numbers, links, images, quotes, etc. Do they really exist and are they accurate?
- ✓ Is the URL similar to real news sites? Example, instead of abc.com, the site in question uses abc.com.co?
- ✓ Is the site, document, or blog formatted to look like a legitimate site?
- ✓ Can you determine who gets hurt by this posting, who benefits, and who pays for it?
- ✓ Can you determine the audience targeted by the posting?
- ✓ Does the site or posting have unrealistically high share/retweet numbers implying bot actions?

Historians know that “Fake News” is not new. People have been trying to confuse and confound each other for centuries. Libraries, archives, and newspaper graveyards are littered with misleading or inaccurate information.

Personal letters, like personal emails, are a mixture of perspective (the cruise was exciting until the ship sank), deliberate lies (I swear, honey, I don’t know any woman in New Jersey.), and half-truths (My exlover visited yesterday but I realize now he’s a jerk.)

Carefully cropped old photos can mislead just like those you take on your iPhone today. (Think of the controversies engendered by that image of Lee Harvey Oswald holding a rifle.) Old movies were edited just like new ones are. And ancient forgeries can be as compelling as one created the day before yesterday.

There are many reasons to suspect historical material even if you find it in personal archives or displayed in museums. So other than embracing dubious documentation to create a mystery novel, how do you evaluate authenticity and/or usability of material generated in the past?

Of course, the easy answer is to say, “...why it’s just like what you would do today.” But that is only partly true. You won’t be able to separate out truth tellers

from liars without an understanding of the culture, religions, and political issues of the people you are researching. On the other hand, looking back may give you certain advantages that folks of the time didn’t have. For example, we understand biology, genealogy, and forensics much better than our forefathers. So going through personal correspondence may alert us to impending tragedies long before the people who wrote those letters suspected they were doomed. We know that the Titanic sank even while reading archived local newspapers announcing the impending honeymoon of prominent citizens on the latest Whitestar luxury liner.

So how do you evaluate the veracity of a given piece of information about an event that happened in another time and place?

- ✓ Like the Facebook example, you can ask yourself if that information passes the “sniff” test. Does something just not seem right?
- ✓ Does other information support the picture in question? (Are there other photos or drawings that confirm the image in question?)
- ✓ Is a personal letter the only known source? Is the handwriting similar to other samples of the writer’s correspondence?
- ✓ Is there any reason to suspect information may be incorrect? (People in question do not usually spend time in the location of the event, building in question wasn’t completed until three years after the event, etc.)
- ✓ A time line is most useful for ferreting out sequencing problems. Was Lincoln in DC when you have a letter from him post marked Springfield? Was a newspaper advertisement about Glenn Curtis showing off his new biplane in 1905 simply a misprint or did it deliberately change the facts for some purpose?
- ✓ Who gets hurt by certain accusations? Who benefits? Who does a political pamphlet target?
- ✓ Do books written after the fact accurately describe an event? Or do they opine about the event?

The challenges are enormous and it takes time, determination, and understanding of historical perspectives. First person narratives are always golden, as long as you realize that people in the olden days lied just like they do now, had bad eyesight, misunderstood what was happening around them, and may very well have been drunk when deposed.



Pea Ridge Battlefield, Arkansas



JoAnn Powers



Jim Tritten



Joe Epley



Valerie Ormond



Bob Doerr



Farrell Chiles



John Takacs



Patricia Walkow



*John and Sandi
Cathcart*



Jeanette Vaughn



Robert Goswitz



*Neal and Linda
Kusumoto*



Jasmine Tritten



*Dennis Koller &
Sandra Miller Linhart*



Joe Badal



*Dana Tibbets &
Husband*



Keith Jones



*John Snowden and
John Trudel*



*Stephen and Lisa
Gray*



Steve Stevenson