

DISPATCHES

MILITARY
WRITERS
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA

Rescuing History One Story at a Time
www.MWSAdispatches.com

SPRING 2020



HISTORY
QUIZ
Pg 18

USS GRAYBACK
& THE LOST 52
PROJECT
Pg 46



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Sandra Miller Linhart

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR again where one day it's 70F and the next, it's snowing. Maybe that's just here in Colorado, but it doesn't matter because we really can't go anywhere, anyway. It seems like we've slipped into a surreal existence overnight.

I hear conspiracy theories, end-of-world statements, and everything in-between. I don't know what I believe, other than these are unprecedented times—at least from my limited experience. So... what can we do? We are at war with a minuscule enemy. We don't know who it'll claim next, or why. But what we *can* do is record this history-making event doing what we all do best—write about it.

We'd like to hear your stories—the good, the bad, the fears, and the hopes. Whether we like it, or not, this event is tomorrow's history. So, write it down and submit it. Our Summer issue deadline is July 1st, 2020.

Jack London started us off with his article this month, *Shelter In Place* (page 5). If you're getting stir-crazy sitting at home, looking at the toilet paper stash you have stacked in the corner of your room, check out Dwight's latest History Quiz on page 18. We also have some feel-good tales of success and a few bittersweet ones.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Dispatches*. I don't do anything but put your wonderful stories together in one place for all to read. Please keep them coming. *Dispatches* wouldn't be here if it weren't for you.

dispatches@mwsa.co

DISPATCHES REGULARS

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FEATURE WRITER ~ JOE EPLEY

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CONTENTS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ~ DOERR, 3

MWSA SEEKS NOMINEES ~ EPLEY, 4

SHELTER IN PLACE ~ LONDON, 5

AIW JOHN DAVIS ~ MWSA, 8

SOME GREAT NEWS ~ MWSA, 11

NOAH ~ CAMPOLO, 12

AIW TOM KEATING ~ MWSA, 16

MWSA HISTORY QUIZ ~ ZIMMERMAN, 18

AIW JOSHUA BOWE ~ MWSA, 24

EVER VIGILANT ~ HEBERT, 26

ROBIN HUTTON ~ RODGERS, 30

MWSA LIBRARY ~ CATHCART, 37

MAIL CALL; DEAR JOHN ~ PODLASKI, 38

FT HOOD SPOUSE OF YEAR ~ WALKER, 44

MISSING IN ACTION ~ TAYLOR, 46

NEVER ANOTHER ~ CHATTERON, 48





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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Bob Doerr

THESE ARE STRESSFUL TIMES. I hope all of you are staying healthy, and to those whose lives have been impacted by this virus, our thoughts and prayers are with you. MWSA's membership is spread out over the nation so most everything we do is by the phone or online; therefore, we've been able to maintain operations as efficiently (smile) as ever.

We continue to take steps to improve the value the Society has to offer its membership. Get to know our website and take advantage of the various opportunities listed there. Links to our Facebook pages are also posted on the website.

If this "lockdown" has you bored, volunteer to be a book reviewer or help out in some other capacity. This year is an election year for us and we're looking for people to run for positions on the MWSA Board. If you are interested, let us know.

We still plan on having our conference in September in Connecticut, so please register early. By then, I imagine we'll all be ready to get out. The New London/Mystic area is a great place to visit, too, so plan on taking an extra day or two for sightseeing.

Again, I hope each of you are doing well, and I look forward to seeing and meeting a lot of you at the Conference. – Bob Doerr, President



MWSA SEEKS NOMINEES

Joe Epley

IT'S ELECTION YEAR AND YOUR nominating committee is searching for the best of our membership to serve as officers and directors of the Military Writers Society of America during the next two years.

We have many good programs in the works, but we need new thoughts, fresh ideas, and a willingness to serve your fellow writers. You can nominate yourself or anyone else, as long as they are a member in good standing, will follow-up on what they say, and can provide desired leadership for MWSA.

Please send your name, address, and phone number to the chair of the nominating committee at joe@epleywrites.com by May 15. Include a few sentences about your background and what you can offer our society. The nomination committee

will then evaluate those interested and call for an interview. Those selected will be presented as a slate to the full membership in August.

You'll be expected to participate in four, quarterly conference calls and one board meeting at the annual membership conference. Most importantly, you must be dedicated to enhancing the goals of MWSA and its members.

The nominating committee consists of Joe Epley, secretary of MWSA (who has served two terms in office and not standing for reelection), and past presidents, Joyce Faulkner and Dwight Zimmerman. Have questions? Feel free to contact any member of the committee.



SHELTER IN PLACE

Jack Woodville London ~ MWSA Director of Writing Education

AT THIS TIME LAST YEAR, in 2019, I was sending follow-up letters to potential teachers at the one-day writing program for veterans that MWSA sponsors each year. In general, I reminded my correspondents that I would like to receive a brief summary of their interest in teaching a writing skill to veterans at the Albuquerque VA in September. I mentioned that I hoped to receive all applications by May 1.

What a difference a year makes. I now hope that all my colleagues are alive.

As I write, I am under a shelter-in-place order but my state, Texas, is not. Many of you who are my most special friends, and you know who you are, live in cities and states that are hot spots, so called because the spread of coronavirus to them multiplies more rapidly than the authorities can test and infecting more people than hospitals can treat, all at a rate that overwhelms the ability of the general public to avoid contact with carriers of the disease. Moreover, as we are keenly aware, a slow gaze around our conference rooms makes clear that many of us are in the increased risk category because of our age, our personal medical conditions, or both. While I read the numbers, I think of you in New York and Colorado, Washington and California, and of you who travel, and you who live near airports or eat fast food or live in small towns and cities with smaller

hospitals and fewer doctors. For a while I was worried about whether we would have as many teachers this year as we did last year. Then I was worried about whether we would have the conference at all. Now I'm worried that all of you are well.

The risks associated with coronavirus appear to be most comparable to the influenza epidemic of 1918. Although it's generally accepted that its origins were traced to Fort Riley, Kansas, in March, 1918, more recent RNA study suggests that it, too, may have originated in China.



Influenza ward, Fort Riley, Kansas

Thousands of Chinese farmworkers were transported across the Pacific to Canada, by train to the Atlantic, and from there to France to work behind the British and French lines. Whether it originated in either of those places is less important than that it exploded. Trainloads of soldiers from Fort

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Riley made their way to other forts and to navy ports throughout the United States. One shipload of soldiers from Boston was sent to Philadelphia for a Liberty Bond parade; a week later there were more than 2,600 deaths in Philadelphia, whose hospitals were overwhelmed in no small part because most of the doctors and nurses were in the service in France. Thirty thousand soldiers and sailors died before reaching France and another 20,000 after arriving. In France, American soldiers disembarked at Brest while British soldiers were sent through a retraining center at Etaples. Those two regions became incubators for the disease, which then traveled to the front lines. By war's end, the flu had killed more soldiers and sailors than those who died in combat. The military medical center estimates that a staggering 26% of all people in uniform had the flu; the rate in the navy was closer to 40%.

A contrast to this grim picture was St. Louis, Missouri, where the mayor and city health commissioner canceled its military parade and closed all theaters, pool halls, and public gatherings over the objections of business owners. St. Louis' peak mortality rate was only 1/8th the rate experienced in Philadelphia. The lesson does not need expert interpretation: social distancing, elimination of crowds, vigilant sanitation, will not attack the coronavirus but will greatly flatten the curve against its spread.

That disease, as this, went everywhere. One of the recent reconstructive tissue samples of the 1918 flu was taken from the body of an Inuit woman from a grave in the permafrost inside the arctic circle. Newspapers from

1918 are filled with pitiful stories, such as the preacher from rural Texas who went to conduct a wedding thirty miles away; the bride died the morning of the wedding, the preacher caught the bug there and died a week later. Men died at their factory machines, shopkeepers in their doorways, and travelers in their cars and trains while they were en route to carry the flu to a new place. One fifth of the entire population of Western Samoa died after the arrival of only six infected passengers from New Zealand.



Although I am under a shelter order, we are permitted to go out to exercise. I spent yesterday in the safest place in Austin, the hiking trail alongside the river. It was raining. I was almost alone and always a good distance from the very few others who ventured out in the wet. I spent a lot of that time thinking of the implications of all this. As many of you know from me directly or from the work I did on behalf of MWSA in France for the centennial memorial of World War One, my uncle Thomas Graves was killed in combat within a few minutes of charging forward on his first day at the front. What I have not said before is that a reason he was buried in France is that there

IT MAY NOT BE FOR YOU, BUT IT IS FOR EVERYONE.

COVID-19 HIGH RISK CATEGORIES:



was no one to come home to, again, because of the flu. My own grandmother died of the flu and my grandfather died shortly after. I thought of them and how I would have liked to have known them.

I thought of how random the disease appears to be, how people who look perfectly safe may be sending it to me from their own travels or their own exposures to others. The stories are piteous and, in some instances, stupid. One woman is dying alone of melanoma in a hospice where her family cannot visit because of the risk of Covid-19. Another man is angry that he has a so-called mild case that has him quarantined at home. He has no idea where he got it, although he spent days in New York City, hours in the airports, and more days in conferences in Houston, all just a week before he became sick. It attacks both the healthy and the ailing, the smart and the stupid, the good and the bad.

So, a year ago I wrote to ask if you would join me on the faculty of the finest one-day writing program for veterans that there

is. If we make it through to September and if we are able to keep our conference, we will put on the ‘*Write Your Story*’ program at the Submarine Force Museum at Groton, Connecticut, on Thursday, September 17.

I would remind you that I would very much like to hear from you with your willingness to be a member of this faculty and of your proposed topic and experience. I also admit that I hope that by September you will be so ready to get out of the house that you would walk all the way to Groton to be a part of the day. Send me an email to jack@jackwlondon.com

But more than anything else, just take care of yourself and those you care about.

All the best, Jack

Sources:

Carol R. Byerly, The U.S. Military and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918–1919, National Institute of Health, 2010

Jordan, Tumpey, and Jester, The Deadliest Flu: The Complete Story of the Discovery and Reconstruction of the 1918 Pandemic Virus, Douglas Jordan, Center for Disease Control, 2018

Roos, How US Cities Tried to Halt the Spread of the 1918 Spanish Flu, History, March 2020

An Interview With MWSA Member

JOHN H. DAVIS

Date of interview: 27 March 2020

STAFF SERGEANT JOHN H. DAVIS is a decorated combat veteran with two tours in Afghanistan. He spends his time advocating for veteran causes and has received congressional and legislative recognition.

John is a former VA employee, Student Veterans of America officer, and is a youth coach for American Ninja Warrior classes.



John also has experience teaching English in Thailand and History to incarcerated youth in New York. John enjoys whiskey, getting tattoos, riding motorcycles, volunteering, and working out.

John has BA from St. Joseph's College and is a graduate student at Harvard. John is America and you are, too.

INTERVIEW

MWSA: How did you find out about Military Writers Society of America?

JOHN H DAVIS: I found out about MWSA when I was thinking about submitting my book for awards. I wanted to get my book out to the widest audience possible and when I looked for veteran book awards, MWSA popped up! After reading about the organization, researching some of the benefits, and reading about some of the authors, I wanted to submit my book for a potential award.

MWSA: What made you want to write *Combat to College*?

DAVIS: I wanted to earn some extra money while I was in college. The VA had a work-study program for veterans at my school. My job was to assist other veterans in their educational goals and provide resources about benefits, as well as mentorship.

This led to me sitting down with veterans who were struggling with various college challenges and working through them. *Combat to College* is a compilation of those lessons to give veterans strategies to be successful in college. I heard and listened to the problems veterans were having and knew first-hand the problems I had to wrestle with.

MWSA: Why do you think veterans struggle in college? What are some of the reasons why this occurs?

DAVIS: Veteran students are often older and, being older than traditional students often

means more responsibilities. They have families, mortgages, jobs, life experiences.

On another side, they also are more likely to have PTSD and other mental and physical problems.

Another issue I want to emphasize is that veterans go to school usually right when they get out of the military so they are transitioning out of military lifestyle. It takes time to learn how to be a normal person again.

The military is such a rigid and structured environment. College is the total opposite. This drastic shift is difficult for veterans to deal with and a reason they drop out.

There are many more reasons. *Combat to College* lays out these challenges and strategies to navigate them.

MWSA: Why don't more veterans go to college in the first place? Many don't even use the educational benefits they earned in service.

DAVIS: This is another reason *Combat to College* needed to be written—to give

veterans confidence they can go to college AND be successful there.

Some veterans use the escape by saying things like “I don't need to go to college, I went to Iraq” and because of fear of failure, fear of fitting in with other students, and not knowing what they want to do after service by not having a plan.

MWSA: How important is having a plan when you get out [of the service]?

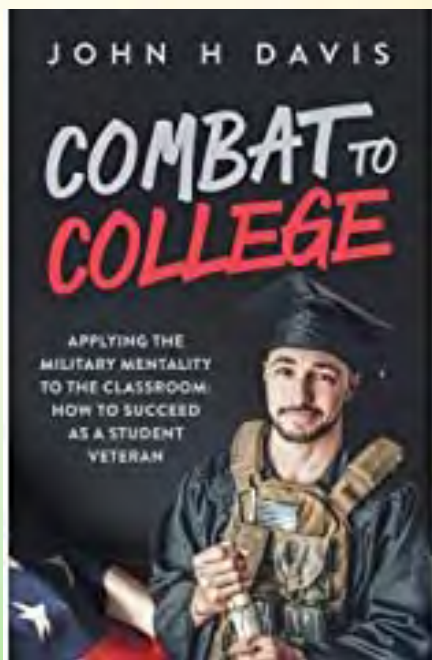
DAVIS: You wouldn't run a military mission without a plan. When I was in Afghanistan planning patrols, air assault missions, and high-value target captures, we had complex plans and backup plans and did everything we could to ensure the mission's success.

The weird thing about getting out of the military is that you're usually more focused on getting out than what you're going to do once you get out. So, you're looking backward and not forward. Then, boom, you're in the world trying to figure your life out.

The bottom line is, your plan of action when you separate from the military is going to dictate whether you live out your dreams or your nightmares.

MWSA: The book says to use your “military mentality” in the classroom. What does that mean?

DAVIS: The military mentality gives student veterans an advantage in college. Some of the simple things the military ingrained in you gives you an edge. Simple things, like being on time, being disciplined, and your military experiences are the things you need to embrace in college. I learned



Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

in college that it's not always the smartest people who get the highest grade or find the most success in life, it's the people who work the hardest.

And in the military, you learned how to work hard.

In the military you paid attention, showed up every day, and put your best effort in—because lives could depend on it.

If you take that attitude and apply it to your education, you're going to find success.

MWSA: Thanks for talking to us. Is there anything you want to add to your message?

DAVIS: I firmly believe that if veterans went to college at higher rates AND graduated at higher rates, then PTSD, depression,

alcohol and drug problems, homelessness and suicide would decline in the military community.

As soldiers, we learn to be on the same team.

We shouldn't abandon that team mentality just because we aren't actively serving anymore.

We all have a responsibility to help each other, and just as importantly help ourselves.

What I mean by that is, veterans will run across a battlefield to save a friend but often won't pick up a phone to save themselves.

So, pick up my book, *Combat to College*, go to college, and reach your potential.



HONEYMOONS CAN KILL

by **Bob Doerr**

Genre(s): Mystery/Thriller

Format(s): Hard cover, Soft cover, Kindle

ISBN: 978-1590953143

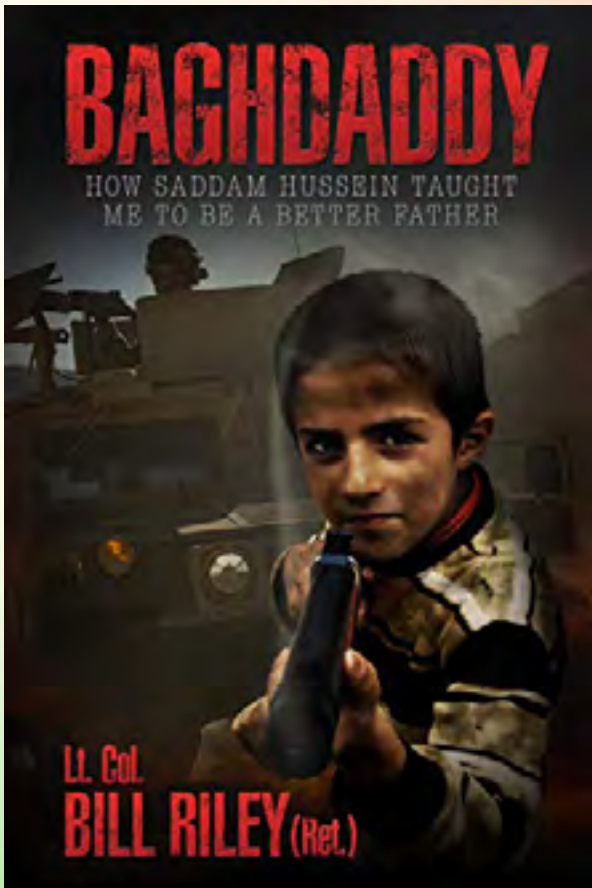
Honeymoons Can Kill is a mystery thriller set on a cruise ship in the Gulf of Mexico; the eighth book in the *Jim West series*. Deputy Rose Luna (*Greed Can Kill*) joins Jim on a five day cruise out of Galveston, TX, and on the second day of the cruise, the couple encounters Sarah Stone (*Dead Men Can Kill*). Sarah Stone is now Sarah Lassiter having gotten married on the ship right before it left port. When Sarah's new husband is murdered on the second night of the cruise, the cruise changes from a relaxing vacation to a race to catch the killer before everyone disembarks in three more days.

SOME GREAT NEWS

MWSA Dispatches Crew

BAGHDADDY WINS! THE INDEPENDENT BOOK Publishers Association (IBPA)—www.ibpa-online.org—announced finalists in the prestigious IBPA Benjamin Franklin Awards™ program, the association’s flagship award program recognizing excellence and innovation in independent publishing for 32 years.

*“I’m honored my memoir **Baghdaddy** is a finalist in this year’s **Best New Voice: Nonfiction** category. To be in the company of so many great books and accomplished authors is exciting. But I wouldn’t even have been considered if it weren’t for all the readers who took a chance on **Baghdaddy** and have been such amazing and enthusiastic supporters of my story. Thank you all.”*



In May 2020, one finalist in each of the fifty-five categories will be named a Gold winner during a special online announcement. The remaining finalists in each category will become Silver winners.

Visit Bill at billrileyauthor.com to find out more.

Send us your GREAT NEWS by July 1st, 2020 to be included in the Summer Edition of MWSA Dispatches Magazine.

Let’s share our success stories and root for each other on our own personal journeys of recovery through writing.

Email your stories to dispatches@mwsa.co

NOAH: HOCH DOG & STAR OF THE SILVER SCREEN

Joe Campolo

<https://namwarstory.com/2020/01/noah-hoch-dog-and-star-of-the-silver-screen/>



Our tick-ridden, flea-bitten friend Noah.

AS MANY KNOW, MOST OF the characters in my books are based on real people. However, one character in my book, Noah, probably has more true-to-life attributes than most of the others included in my writing. Noah, our hooch* dog at Phu Cat airbase in Vietnam was quite a character, and his mannerisms and behavior are reflected in my book *The Kansas NCO*, and also in the recent screenplay written by Charrisa Gracyk. So, Noah, our flea-bitten, tick-ridden, C-rat-mooching hooch dog may someday be immortalized on the silver screen. How in the heck did that happen?

TIM'S DOG

Tim, one of my good friends in Vietnam was the one who first “adopted” Noah. Noah, like most dogs in the Nam, ran in a pack

with other feral dogs. I don’t exactly know how Noah got separated from the pack and became the responsibility of Tim, but one day, much to the chagrin of the rest of us who had to deal with him, there came Tim, with Noah on his heels.

Not enthralled with the little bugger, I was only one of many who was unwelcoming to Noah. He was about as mangy of a mutt as you had ever seen. As he trotted across the hooch, ticks fell off him like water off a duck’s back. As a bonus, he smelled just like the nearby vermin-filled swamp, which fairly steamed in the oppressive Vietnamese heat.

While off duty, Tim would spend hours picking ticks and fleas off Noah’s scroungy little carcass. A four-legged Romeo, Noah constantly pestered females in his and other packs as well, earning him a good drubbing at least once a day. (Noah even tried to cozy up with the female German Shepherds from the canine corp.) The ever-loyal Tim provided first aid to all of Noah’s bites and scratches. I guess we should’ve felt fortunate that Tim didn’t adopt one of the local monkeys, as some others had done. Those monkeys, though cute, were nastier than a badger in a bee hive and would bite the heck out of anything within reach. (Our little Noah, on occasion, would also incur their wrath.)

A DOG’S LIFE DURING THE WAR

The war was no kinder to animals than it was to humans. The feral dogs were often caught up in various offensive activities at

hand, with many being killed as collateral damage in any number of engagements. Battles with other packs, starvation, and disease also took their toll, as did providing the local villagers with an additional source of protein. It wasn't much of a life for the canine critters.

The feral dogs ran around in packs for survival purposes. Of course, many packs consisted of dogs related to each other. I'm not sure how Noah got separated from his pack, but one of the packs in the area of our hooch was certainly his. Noah wasn't kept on a chain or anything; he was free to run around at-will and mostly did when we weren't around. I'm sure he hung with his old pack during those times.

One day, after a mortar attack on our base, Noah didn't turn up for a while. Worried, we later found him near the body of another dog which was laying in the road dead, killed by one of the incoming mortars. Noah lay quiet with his head on the other dog's body. From the looks of the other dog, we were pretty sure it must have been Noah's mother. Noah moped around for a day or two, but was soon back to his mischievous self.

THE WORM TURNS FOR NOAH

After nine months of "fun" in Vietnam, I took my R&R—eight great days in Hong Kong. I left with some trepidation, however, as Noah would now have to fend for himself (Tim had gone home and left Noah in my care). I wasn't too worried about him finding enough food; he was a Class A scrounger and also a Class A beggar. I was concerned, however, about his ability to defend himself, as the many detractors he had

would have happily dispatched him, given the chance. And as previously mentioned, dogs were on the menu of the local Vietnamese, and my good friends, the Korean ROK soldiers who protected our western perimeter also had a fondness for canine cuisine. After I returned from R&R and the dust settled, I pondered Noah's fate.

Wonder if that damn mutt's still around.

My question was soon answered, as much to my surprise, I found Noah in the company of "the brothers" who were petting him fondly and serving up treats. You could have knocked me over with a feather, as they say, as previously Noah had received much abuse from many of the black members of our unit. They had little patience for him, and often gave poor old Tim a ration of manure regarding the flea-bitten pest he had brought into their midst. This turn of affairs was indeed startling, however the reason behind Noah's sudden change of status was even more startling.



No match for Noah!

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

As the story goes, one day while I was on my R&R, Noah surprised and attacked a cobra that had slithered into our barracks. The large snakes would often enter our dwellings, as the dwellings were inhabited by large rats who came in for shelter and leftover food. Though a danger to us as well, the cobras were primarily after the rats, which was one of their primary food sources.

Those who witnessed the incident claimed Noah and the snake fought for almost fifteen minutes before Noah subdued the reptile by biting it behind the head and shaking it mightily. After the battle, Noah, himself bitten several times, laid down for the rest of the day. Feared dead, no one thought to get him any medical attention. But plucky Noah, after only one day, was up and around and back to his old self.

NOAH SAYS GOODBYE



Some good byes were harder than others

After the cobra incident, I was off the hook regarding Noah's care. That worked out well, since most of my last couple of months in Vietnam were spent in a small

Korean army (the ROKs) bunker on our western perimeter. And although I was made comfortable among those stalwart warriors, like the Vietnamese, the Koreans would have happily added Noah to the dinner menu.

During my last couple of days in Vietnam I visited the local orphanage one more time, spent time with our old mama san and her family and visited the kids who hung around the main gate selling "stuff" (They always thought I was a mark). I said goodbye one more time to all of my friends—American, Vietnamese, and Korean.

An Air Force pick-up truck took me and my gear to the flight line, where I would leave Phu Cat on a C-130 to Cam Ranh Bay. About two days later I'd get on a Flying Tigers DC-8 Freedom bird for that long-awaited trip back home.

While still at Phu Cat, I was surprised when Noah showed up at the hooch and ran behind my pick-up truck all the way to the flight line. Once out-processed, I sat on the flight line with the little rascal, until it was time to board.

I gave him one last bit of petting and told him to watch over mama san and baby san for me.

He gave me one last mischievous look, turned around, and trotted away.

**Hooch: any dwelling or living quarters*



NEW MEMBER BENEFIT: BETA READER FORUM

John Cathcart

AS A NEWER SERVICE TO our members, MWSA reminds you of our Beta Reader Forum. The idea is to easily expand our authors' pool of potential beta readers—an important part of our creative process for books nearing completion.

As with our review swap program, MWSA is only providing a venue to get authors and beta readers together. Once there, you might also agree to swap reviews once the book is published.

The page is available to members only (username and password required).

Here are the details (which are also posted at the top of the forum page):

PURPOSE

- ★ Use this forum to line up beta readers for your book.
- ★ This is a member-to-member program, MWSA will not monitor any individual agreements made via this system.

SUGGESTIONS

- ★ Provide a short paragraph describing your book.
- ★ Include title, author, genre, expected publication date.
- ★ Keep your initial posting short—you can always share more details once another MWSA member responds to your request.
- ★ What format(s) you'll provide your beta readers.

- * Paper copy: manuscript, proof, etc.
- * Digital format: Word document, PDF, eBook format (.mobi, .epub).
- ★ How you'll collect feedback—i.e. via paper questionnaire, online form, email responses.
- ★ When you'll collect feedback—i.e. your expectation on how long beta readers have to read and provide feedback.
- ★ Whether or not you'll be posting beta reader names into your book's acknowledgment section.

MWSA recommends authors acknowledge beta readers... and that authors allow the readers to opt in or out!



MWSA Beta Reader Program

<https://www.mwsadispatches.com/mwsa-news/2019/4/new-member-benefit-beta-reader-forum>

An Interview With MWSA Member

TOM KEATING

Date of interview: 22 January 2020



*Tom Keating, Author of **Yesterday's Soldier—A Passage From Prayer to the Vietnam War.***

TOM KEATING IS A GRADUATE of Stonehill College, where he studied for the priesthood at Holy Cross Seminary for five years before serving in the United States Army, including a tour of Vietnam from 1969 to 1970 as a conscientious objector.

He served with the 47th Military History Detachment, then served with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Logistical Command, and Headquarters Company, US Army Vietnam, (USARV) also in Long Binh. His service earned him two Army Commendation medals.

His memoir of his military experiences in the US Army, *Yesterday's Soldier, A Passage From Prayer to the Vietnam War* is the

story of his journey from Infantry Officer Candidate to conscientious objector.

After his military service, Tom attended Boston University and completed his Master's degree in Education, and taught at the high school in Burlington, MA for eight years.

A career in corporate communications and learning with companies like Wang Laboratories, Digital Equipment Corporation, IBM and EMC Corporation followed. He also produced news and public affairs broadcasts for

local Boston television and national cable television programs.

Tom joined the AGAPE writing program for veterans at the Woods College of Advancing Studies at Boston College under the direction of Roxana Von Kraus. He attended the Joiner Institute Master Writing Program at the Joiner Institute Writers' Workshop Festival held at the University of Massachusetts, Boston in 2017 and 2018.

Excerpts from his memoir have appeared in national anthologies. *Convoy for the Con Voi* was published in *War Stories 2017*, an anthology edited by Sean Davis, writer, artist, and combat veteran of Iraq. Another excerpt, *Shakedown* appears in *Complacency Kills*, an anthology published by Warrior Writers Boston in their book.

INTERVIEW:

MWSA: How long have you been associated with MWSA?

TOM KEATING: I have been a member since 2019.

MWSA: What was my inspiration for writing *Yesterday's Soldier*?

KEATING: I've been writing this book on-and-off for years. I was inspired to write after reading other Vietnam War memoirs and felt my story was unique and should be added to the genre.

MWSA: How difficult was the process of writing?

KEATING: Writing a memoir of something that you lived through 48 years ago is hard. Lucky for me I kept a journal of my war time, and my wife kept all my letters from the war zone. All were useful in creating and adding to my memory of people, events, and the times.

MWSA: Why did you publish through Amazon's KDP?

KEATING: On the advice of my editor, we went through Amazon's KDP because it was faster to get published. Amazon makes it easy to publish one's work.

MWSA: What are you working on now?

KEATING: I have a local story about three veterans from different eras who lived in my town and I want to weave their stories together and create their times and experiences from WW2, through Korea and Vietnam.

MWSA: What did you find out about yourself in writing this book?

KEATING: I found that my writing speaks

to people directly—that I have a way of writing that is direct and clear.

I also found out that I am a stickler for accuracy and it was useful during the proofing cycles.



THE MWSA MILITARY HISTORY TRIVIA QUIZ

Dwight Jon Zimmerman

MILITARY HISTORY BY THE NUMBERS



WELCOME TO THE MILITARY WRITERS Society Trivia Quiz! Here's your opportunity to test your knowledge of military history, rank yourself, and impress your friends as a respected fountain of irrelevant information—or maybe just have some fun. And we can all use a little of that now, right?

This time around instead of dealing with one conflict, the theme of this issue's quiz is military history by the numbers. With this, and future quizzes, the intent is to give a mix of questions that will both challenge the knowledgeable, yet not overwhelm those with a more general knowledge. And, don't worry, you'll never find yourself having to answer questions on really obscure wars like the Aroostook War (which was more a property dispute between cranky farmers than anything else).

You'll discover that some answers raise questions of their own, and explanations

are provided in the answer section found on page 21.

Drop me a line at djonzim@gmail.com and let me know what you think, suggestions of how to improve it, and subjects for other quizzes.

Good Luck! (And no cheating going to Google or any other search engine or reference book for answers.)

*All photos courtesy of U.S. Navy
or Library of Congress.*

1 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS is true about the men who held five-star rank? (Sorry, no women, because at the time the ranks were authorized, the highest rank a woman could hold was that of colonel or Navy captain.)

- A. The Army had five Generals of the Army, the Navy had four Fleet Admirals, and the Air Force and Marine Corps had none.
- B. The Army had six Generals of the Army, the Navy had five Fleet Admirals, the Air Force had one General of the Air Force and the Marine Corps had one General of the Marine Corps.
- C. The five-star rank was the highest rank authorized by Congress.
- D. The Army had five Generals of the Army, the Navy had four Fleet Admirals, the Air Force had one General of the Air Force, and the Marine Corps had none.
- E. None of the above.

4 HOW MANY OFFICER PAY grade ranks presently exist in the military?

- A. 9
- B. 11
- C. 10
- D. 12



Admiral of the Fleet Ernest J. King U.S. Navy

2 THERE ARE HOW MANY military branches?

- A. 3
- B. 6
- C. 5
- D. 7
- E. 4

3 HOW MANY PRESIDENTS AUTHORIZED the establishment of a military branch?

- A. 2
- B. 4
- C. 3
- D. 5



U.S. Navy sailors marching in the 2019 Veterans Day Parade in New York City. U.S. Navy

5 HOW MANY ACTIVE DUTY troops did the U.S. Army have when World War I began in 1914?

- A. 174,000.
- B. 98,000.
- C. 16,000.
- D. 591,000.
- E. 969,000.

Continued on page 20

Continued from page 19

6 HERE'S A PIECE OF Medal of Honor trivia for you. Prior to 1963 it was possible to receive the Medal of Honor for actions not involving direct combat. How many were awarded?

- A. 5
- B. 8
- C. 1
- D. 193
- E. 18
- F. 304
- G. 747
- H. 2,436

these is U.S. Central Command (USCENT-COM). How many UCCs are there?

- A. 9
- B. 8
- C. 5
- D. 7
- E. 10

8 THE LONGEST WAR IN our nation's history lasted how many years?

- A. 18
- B. 67 and counting
- C. 101
- D. 67



U.S. Army Medal of Honor *Library of Congress*



Oglala Sioux Chief Red Cloud *Library of Congress*

7 THE WORLD IS DIVIDED into a number of Unified Combatant Commands (UCC), each assigned a specific Area of Responsibility (AOR). Perhaps the most famous of

9 WHO'S IN THE TOP Ten? Okay, we all know that manpower in uniform is not a straight line indicative of the most powerful army (after all, United Nations forces,

the bulk being US Army and Marines were vastly outnumbered by the Chinese Communist Army in the Korean War and even in our front line troops' dire situation, we held our own, and then there's that little thing that Alexander the Great did to Darius III). But it's worth knowing where do the ten most powerful armies, according to manpower, rank. After all, at various points in our history, we were pretty small. So, let's have some fun picking the Top Ten armies in the world, with regards to manpower, as of 2020.

- A. North Korea, China, USA, India, Russia, Pakistan, South Korea, Iran, Vietnam Saudi Arabia.
- B. India, North Korea, Russia, China, USA, Pakistan, South Korea, Iran, Vietnam Saudi Arabia.
- C. China, India, USA, North Korea, Russia, Pakistan, South Korea, Iran, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia.
- D. China, North Korea, India, Russia, USA, Pakistan, South Korea, Iran, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia.
- E. Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Iran, South Korea, Pakistan, Russia, North Korea, USA , India, China.

10 WHEN WORLD WAR II ended on V-J Day, August 14, 1945, the U.S. Navy was the largest navy in the world. How many vessels (and I say that because there's always some smart aleck who will say "Submarines are boats, not ships!") did it have?

- A. 5280
- B. 1941
- C. 750
- D. 6768



U.S. Pacific Fleet escort carriers and other ships at anchorage in the Admiralty Islands in 1944. U.S. Navy

MILITARY HISTORY QUIZ ANSWERS

1 AND THE ANSWER IS: "D." Army: George Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight Eisenhower, Henry Arnold, Omar Bradley; Navy: William Leahy, Ernest King, Chester Nimitz, William Halsey; Air Force: Henry Arnold. As for the others... B: With the exception of the Air Force, the numbers for all the other branches are wrong. C: Nope. There is a higher rank. If you can say what it is and how many men had it, give yourself a pat on the back. Now, if you answered without peeking ahead in this paragraph and said that the rank was General of the Armies (plural) and John Pershing, you'd be... *wrong!* The first part of the answer is correct. As for the second part, the rank (supposedly six stars though no number was ever officially designated by Congress) two men held it. Pershing received the rank in 1919 following World War I. And George Washington received it in 1976 as part of America's bicentennial

Continued on page 22

Continued from page 21

celebration, back-dating the rank to July 4, 1776.

2 AND THE ANSWER IS: “B.” Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, Space Force.

3 THE ANSWER IS: “C.” George Washington: Coast Guard; Harry Truman: Air Force; Donald Trump: Space Force.



President Harry S Truman and behind him saluting is Fleet Admiral William Leahy. *U.S. Navy*

4 THE ANSWER IS “C.” Yeah, that one was easy, wasn’t it?

5 THE ANSWER IS “B.” As for the others: A: that was World War II in 1939; C: the American Civil War in 1861; D: the Korean War in 1950; and E: the Vietnam War in 1965.

6 THE ANSWER IS “D.” Most of these were awarded to sailors, involved in such things as dangerous rescues, boiler operations, and other shipboard hazards. As for the rest: “A”: foreigners, all Canadian and most from the Civil war. “B”: these went

to civilians, the most famous being “Buffalo Bill” Cody. “C”: Coast Guard, a post-humous award in World War II. “E”: Air Force. “F”: Marine Corps. “G”: Navy. “H”: Army.

7 THE ANSWER TO THAT is: “E.” For the longest of time the correct answer was “A”: 9. But that changed last year with the creation of the Space Force. The UCCs and their AORs are: U.S. Northern Command (North America, the Bahamas and Bermuda), U.S. Southern Command (Central and South America and the Caribbean), U.S. European Command (Europe, Iceland, Greenland, Asian Russia), U.S. Central Command (Middle East, Southwest Asia, all the “stans”), U.S. Africa Command (Africa), U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (India, China, the Koreas, Japan, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands), U.S. Space Command (outer space), and the Functional Combatant Commands: U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S. Transportation Command, U.S. Strategic Command, U.S. Cyber Command. To be honest, I didn’t know about the last three.



A not-quite-accurate illustration of the Battle of the Little Big Horn. *Library of Congress*

8 AND THE ANSWER IS: “C.” The Indian Wars west of the Mississippi River started in 1823 with the Arikara War and didn’t end until 1924 with the last Apache War. As for the others: “A” is Afghanistan, the result of our recently signed peace treaty (though between you and me, I wouldn’t hold my breath). “B” is the Korean War. The United Nations signed a truce, not a treaty, so technically we’re still at war with that country. “D” is the number of years of the Indian Wars east of the Mississippi River starting in 1775 with the American Revolution (I’m not getting into the Colonial American years on this) and ending in 1842 with the Second Seminole War.

9 THE ANSWER IS: “D.” Army: 14 June 1775, Navy 13 October 1775, Marine Corps 10 November 1775, Coast Guard (then named Revenue-Marine) 4 August 1790, Air Force 18 September 1947, and literally the baby of the group, with less than a year in existence as this is written: Space Force 20 December 2019.

10 THE ANSWER IS: “D.” Naval History and Heritage Command’s list includes twenty-three battleships, twenty-eight fleet carriers, seventy-one escort carriers, seventy-two cruisers, 377 destroyers, 361 frigates, 232 submarines, with the bulk being patrol, amphibious, and auxiliary ships. As for the rest: “A” is the number of feet in a mile. “B” is the year the United States entered World War II. “C” is the Navy’s Ship Force Level on December 7, 1941.

S O, HOW DID YOU DO? Tally up your score and find out below what your rank is.

★ *Commander: 10 answers correct. Need I say more?*

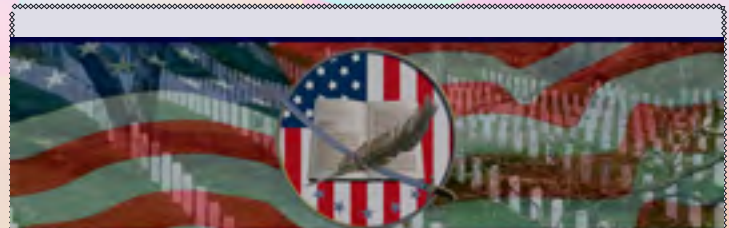
★ *Chief of Staff: 7 – 9 correct. You’re smart enough to know your stuff. More importantly, you’re smart enough to not show up your commander.*

★ *Adjutant: 5 – 6 correct. You’re learning.*

★ *Orderly: 2 – 4 correct. You’re beginning to learn.*

★ *Flag bearer: 1 correct. You know your place.*

★ *Recruit: 0 correct. Welcome aboard. Time to bone up.*



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dispatches@mwsa.co

THANKS.



An Interview With MWSA Member

JOSHUA BOWE

Date of interview: 28 February 2020

JOSHUA BOWE IS THE SON of Vietnam Veteran, Wilbur Bowe. He is the author of *The Ground You Stand Upon: Life of a Skytrooper in Vietnam*, the true story of his dad and the men he served with. Joshua grew up in Cameron, Wisconsin and now lives with his family in Chaska, Minnesota. From 2007 to 2019, he served in the Minnesota National Guard. He continues to work for the National Guard as a civilian.



INTERVIEW:

MWSA: How did you find out about MWSA?

JOSHUA BOWE: I heard about MWSA through a fellow who served in my dad’s company in Vietnam, Joe Sanchez. I can’t thank him

enough for all the help and encouragement he gave me while working on the book. We had many long conversations about his time in Vietnam and his memories of the friends he made there. He had also written a book of his own, *True Blue: A Tale of the Enemy Within*, that included some of his memories of Vietnam, but was mostly about his experiences as a cop in New York City. He told me about MWSA and suggested that I join. I’m very glad that I took his advice and submitted our book for review. We had received many customer reviews on Amazon and elsewhere, but this was our first “Editorial Review” and I couldn’t have been happier with the results.

MWSA: Why did you write *The Ground You Stand Upon* and what sets it apart?

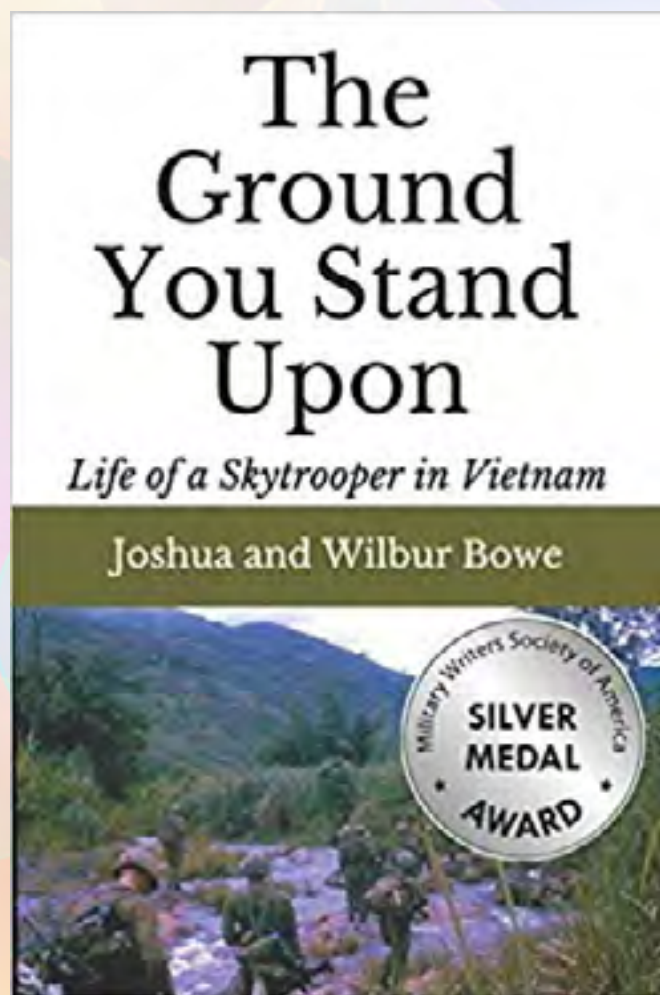
BOWE: When I was a kid, we would look at my dad’s photos from Vietnam on our Kodak Carousel slide projector. Clicking through each of them, he would point out which of his buddies got killed and which ones made it, but I never really knew that much about any of them or what they went through. All I could’ve told you is that they walked around in the jungle and got shot at. A few years ago, I started thinking about how my dad had taken part in something that was a really big deal, so to speak—something that virtually tore our country apart, and he was right there as an

infantryman on the front lines. Initially, I just wanted to know more. Then I thought I should write something as a record or memoir that would be of interest to family and friends, perhaps. Before long, I realized that there could be a real story here. Eventually, I just got carried away and decided to publish a book.

I've read dozens of Vietnam biographies and found most of them to be very fascinating. I've given all of them a five-star rating, even if they were just okay. I know how hard it is to actually write a book, and I just can't bear to give a fellow author anything less. What makes our book special, is that it's primarily written by someone who wasn't there. It's because of this, out of necessity perhaps, that the story draws upon so many different sources and individuals. On the one hand, it represents a monumental challenge, telling the story of something I never experienced for myself. On the other hand, it actually makes the story better, in that the reader gets to see the war through the eyes of several different young men from within the same company.

What also makes this book unique, is that it features many letters sent home from the war zone. Most are from my dad, but there are also several from two other soldiers within the company. Two of them are written from one soldier to comfort the mother of another soldier—a friend of his who had been killed in action. They're special because they were written in the moment, rather than decades later. They're raw, unfiltered, and not tinted by hindsight. They are about as first-hand as you can get. I suppose it's kind of funny for my dad, to think of it, how all these words casually scribbled to his mother back then would

someday become part of a book read by thousands of people.



MWSA: How did you research this project?

BOWE: I started with my dad's personal memories, which were mostly bits and pieces, fragments, and images that had stuck in his mind over time. He recalled their training at Fort Carson, and how his platoon sergeant was too scared to jump off of the rappel tower. He also remembered how during one night in the jungle, that same platoon sergeant approached my dad while pulling guard duty, asking if he could teach him how to pray. He recalled how his platoon sergeant got shot shortly thereafter, and how their First Sergeant ran

Continued on page 28

EVER VIGILANT: A NOVEL OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Michael Hebert

[Excerpt]

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL BRIGHT and sunny Monday morning in early July of 1969. My mother and two younger sisters, dressed in their Sunday best, accompanied me to the local bus station in Laurel, Maryland. My father, a career soldier, was absent, having been sent to Thailand several months earlier. We all stood around on the sidewalk next to the bus station. None of us spoke very much. I tried my best to be brave. No one wanted to be the first to burst into tears.

My last memory of home was looking out of the back window at my mother and sisters waving, as the bus disappeared down the road. My mother was fighting back tears. My little sisters were too young to comprehend the gravity of the situation. I watched as they became but little specks in the distance.

I wondered if it would be the last time I ever saw them.

During the bus ride, I sat and watched the scenery pass by my window. As much as I did not want to go, I still felt a sense of duty to serve my country. My father had been in the Army for over 20 years. It was only fitting that I follow in his footsteps.

We arrived at the Induction Center in Richmond, Virginia several hours later. A large, mean-looking sergeant boarded the bus and glared at us, his eyes spitting fire from hell.

“Get off the damn bus, you scum! Now! Get off! Get off!”

“Get your ass off the damn bus! Move! Move! Move!”

I joined a large contingent of other young draftees standing around in a large room. We were taken out into a cavernous hallway and told to line up against the wall. A fleeting image of a firing squad danced across my mind, but then reality set in. There was nothing funny about this.

I was going into the military!

After all the recruits were lined up, a burly sergeant came out and walked all the way down to the far end of the line. He reminded me of a grizzly bear in a uniform. Most of the young men weren't paying much attention. They were either nervously conversing amongst themselves or staring down at the floor, lost in their own thoughts.

I watched the big sergeant closely. He was counting heads and moving some of the boys to the other side of the hall. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but I kept my eyes on him, determined to figure out what was going to transpire.

I had always regarded myself as more attentive than most. Not that I was any smarter than anyone else, I just seemed to notice things more than others. My earliest memory of intuitive ability was probably in the third grade. Belinda Thompson, a cute little girl with curly blond hair, used to sit in the middle of the merry-go-round during recess and make all of us boys push her around. It was always the same game every day: she was the Queen of England and we were her knaves.

Push! Push harder!

At the end of the recess period she would always reward one lucky boy with a kiss on the cheek. She was well aware that—for the promise of a kiss—she could get all the boys in our class to push her around, day after day, week after week, month after month. I figured out very soon what was going on. The rest were all dumbstruck by love.

I still pushed her, though. After all, a kiss is a kiss.

Belinda Thompson... Belinda Thompson... I never did get a kiss. I wonder why? Maybe I never pushed hard enough. Or maybe she knew that I had figured out her little playground scam.

Oh my God! How stupid of me! I caught myself staring down at the floor, lost in my own thoughts—thoughts of Belinda Thompson, thoughts of a kiss... I had become another poor recruit standing in line against the wall! I shook my head, trying to clear my brain. How long had I been daydreaming? What had I missed? Where was the sergeant? What was he doing? What was going on?

I looked up the line. I was relieved to see that he was still down the hall a bit. He was still moving people to the other side. I breathed a little easier.

As he got closer, I could hear him bark clearly. “One, two, three—Marine! One, two, three—Marine!”

Every third man was going to the Marine Corps!

At once I started counting the men ahead of me. *One, two, three. One, two, three. One,*

two, three. When number three landed on me, I almost panicked! Quickly, I did a recount. It had to be wrong! The recount confirmed my worst fear. I felt blood rushing to my head. I thought I might pass out. Under no circumstances did I want to be a Marine—none!

I looked around for an exit door.

Then, quick-witted, I turned to the recruit next to me. “Hey, huh... I wonder if you’d mind changing places with me. I’d like to talk to the guy on the other side of you. We met on the bus ride down here from Maryland.”

“Yeah, sure. Not a problem.”

A few minutes later the big sergeant came by. “One, two, three—Marine!”

I was number two.

I thought often of the poor young Marine—number three—during my stint in the Army. I felt bad at times thinking about what I had done. Sometimes I would sit by myself and contemplate how such an innocent, foolish, and selfish spur-of-the-moment act could have such a profound impact on someone’s life.

Guilt was a frequent companion.

In 1969, the percentage of Marines going to Vietnam was probably 100. The percentage who returned home was considerably less. Did the poor young Marine end up in a muddy rice paddy somewhere, the victim of a Viet Cong bullet?

I wondered if he had regretted changing places with me that day as he lay there staring at the sky, gasping for his last breath of air.

Continued on page 28

EVER VIGILANT ~ Continued from page 27

Not a problem, he had said.

Not a problem.

Those words haunted me for many years.

Was I living my life at the expense of another?

There were no answers.

I hope he survived his tour in Vietnam.

I hope he's sitting around the bar in some American Legion hall somewhere, telling everyone the story of how he was supposed to have been in the Army, but some jerk in line made him change places and he got picked for the Marines.

I hope he is alive and well.



Michael Hebert

JOSHUA BOWE ~ Continued from page 25

through the firefight, dragging him back. He remembered Thanksgiving Day 1966 as their worst day. Seven were killed in the rice paddies and he recalled helping to carry the body of one of their radio operators to the helicopter, and how part of his skull was missing. He remembered his best day, just after Christmas when he and his buddy went to see a Bob Hope show at base camp in An Khe—and how one day a blonde model came to visit them at their outpost, the first time he saw a girl in a miniskirt. There wasn't a lot of detail to these memories, and exactly when and where they occurred remained a mystery until I did more research.

“The closest I will ever come to time travel” is how I described reading his letters in the book. I knew he had some of these letters, but he'd told me before that they were really quite boring and didn't say much about their battles or what they were doing. Well, he gave me a cardboard box filled with over a hundred letters. The first was from his in-processing at Fort Leonard Wood, before flying to Fort Carson for basic training. The last was written just after they had made their final patrol in the jungle, on an outpost in the mountains while waiting to be flown out. They didn't get into much detail regarding their battles, but they did portray who my dad really was during this time—a twenty-year-old kid mostly interested in cars, drinking beer, girls, and having a good time, in pursuit of which he wasn't afraid to break the rules. In several letters, he talks about the Vietnamese villagers, how well he gets along with them, learning their language and joking around with them. He

especially liked the kids, remarking how they were, “just like kids back home.” Many soldiers would have mixed feelings toward Vietnamese civilians, in a war zone where you could never tell friend from foe. And yet, my dad’s letters would always reflect an abiding respect for their humanity.

MWSA: What was it like to read the old documents and did you learn from them?

BOWE: Talk about time travel—these were the original documents from the war zone, daily staff journals and situation reports typed up by some military clerk sweating in a hot canvas tent over fifty years ago. Many of the pages held stains of both coffee and reddish-brown Vietnamese dirt. Some of these reports included hand-drawn maps of the battle sites. I had actually put off making the trip to the Archives while writing the book, because it involved a great investment of both time and money with no guarantee of what we would find there. All that we knew before traveling to Washington, was that there were some boxes there with material related to the 5/7th Cavalry. We had no idea what we would actually find in those boxes.

MWSA: What did you learn from this experience?

BOWE: I’ve learned that those who have faced real combat rarely speak of their bravery as they are more likely to tell you about their own comical mishaps and misdeeds. Speaking of their battles and fire-fights, they are more likely to just tell you how scared they were, rather than speak of their own courage. If anyone I spoke to had been awarded a medal for valor, I would typically only find that out from someone else.

I’ve also learned that everyone is different, not just in what they remember, but how they relate those memories. Some guys are more reserved, careful not to exaggerate or to say anything untoward about their fellow soldiers. Others just lay it all out there and tell you exactly how they feel. In general, it seems that the guys from New York and New Jersey fall into the latter category, while those from the Midwest, like my dad, are more reserved.

Learning the stories of those who were killed made me think of how lucky I am to even exist. I realized how death in Vietnam was often random. I thought about how if this one thing would’ve happened a different way, or if this other thing wouldn’t have happened, how easily my dad’s name could have ended up on that big black wall in Washington, D.C.

Read the full interview at <http://www.mwsadispatches.com/mwsa-interviews/2020/2/mwsa-interview-with-joshua-bowe>

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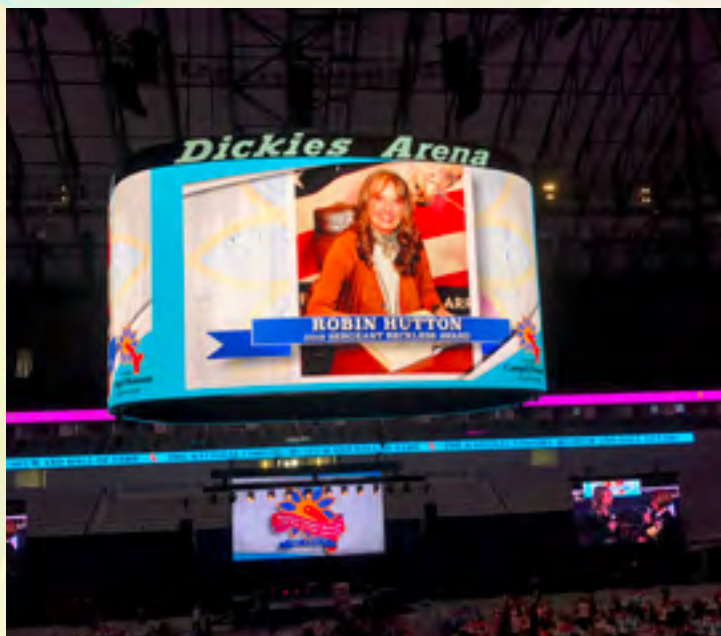
Thanks for playing.

ROBIN HUTTON WINS 2019 SERGEANT RECKLESS AWARD

Introduction by Kathleen Rodgers

AFTER HANDING MY CAR KEYS to a valet, I glance one more time at the Rolls Royce in front of me and enter Dickies Arena in Fort Worth, Texas. Men and women dressed to the nines mill about, some in evening gowns and tuxedos, others in cowboy boots and jeans. I'm wearing a long skirt and my trusty cowgirl booties, hoping I blend into this swanky crowd of movers and shakers, local and national dignitaries and celebrities chatting and sipping champagne. Finding my courage, I approach the sign-in table where I'm greeted with a warm smile.

"Hi," I stammer. "I'm a guest of Robin Hutton. She's receiving a big award today." I beam nervously as the lady checks my name off a long list and tells me to look for table #73.



A few steps later, I stand at the top of a series of stairs leading down to a gigantic floor of the arena where more than a

thousand people are gathering. As my eyes take in the sight of what appears to be over a hundred round tables draped in linen tablecloths and fancy place settings, my attention is drawn to a familiar face up on the jumbo screen.

"Robin!" I gasp as a couple of people maneuver around me and start down the steps. Catching my breath, I gawk at Robin's dazzling smile on the big screen and remind myself that this superstar woman, a New York Times best-selling author AND a two-time MWSA Gold Medal Winner, has personally invited me to her celebration where she's about to receive the *2019 Sergeant Reckless Award* at the 44th Annual Induction Luncheon of the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame. The day is November 13, 2019.

Once on the arena floor, I search for table #73, which turns out to be located practically in front of the elaborate stage. Robin is nowhere to be seen. I figure she is visiting with all her adoring fans in the large crowd that has also gathered to witness five other women being inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame.

A tall attractive blonde woman approaches and introduces herself as Jocelyn. She says she's a good friend of Robin's. She helps me find my place at the table and makes me feel welcome. She says Robin will be along any second. In the meantime, I'm greeted by several friendly faces at Robin's table. We all introduce ourselves and sip champagne and wine.

Then Robin appears, greeting all of us with her warm and gracious smile, making each of us feel welcome. She tells us how happy she is that we're all sharing in her glorious moment. I pinch myself that I'm seated at Robin's table, that she's invited me to share in her special day. Most of the people seated at Robin's table have known her for years. I'm the newcomer. I've only known Robin two months.

been named *2015 Equine Book of the Year* by *American Horse Publications*, and received a 2016 Gold Medal from the Military Writers Society of America.



Kathleen Rodgers, Robin Hutton, Beth Rand

We met last September at the Joint MWSA/SWW Conference in Albuquerque. After we exchanged pleasantries at the conference, Robin handed me a brochure about her books and I handed her my business card. The next panel discussion had started and we took our respective seats. Before I snuck out the doors to the lobby to volunteer at the sign-in table, I quickly scanned over Robin's brochure. Impressed by her credentials, I scribbled a note congratulating her on her writing achievements and left after passing her the note.

Here's what I learned in her brochure. Robin's book, *SGT. RECKLESS: America's War Horse*, was a NYT bestseller, had

At the conference the next day, Robin and I had a chance to chat again between panel discussions. When I mentioned I live in North Texas, she asked me point blank, "What are you doing on November 13th?" She went on to explain how she would be receiving a big award and she invited me to be her guest at this fancy award ceremony in Fort Worth.

So, fast-forward two months later. While we dine on a scrumptious meal of beef tenderloin and decadent chocolate cake, Robin takes the stage. After she's presented with her award, she gives a moving speech and we're entertained with a slideshow on the jumbo screen about this little mare named Sgt. Reckless, a Marine that served during the Korean War. She carried wounded soldiers to safety and hauled supplies over treacherous territory. Because of Robin's passion to honor this horse's wartime service, there are several monuments around the country dedicated in her memory, including the one installed between the Cowgirl Hall of Fame and Dickies Arena.

Continued on page 32

Continued from page 31

Then five women are inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame and the ceremony comes to an end. As I gather my things to leave, Robin gives me a big hug and thanks me for coming. Still starstruck, I'm thinking why did you invite me, a woman you'd only met two months before? As if reading my mind, Robin held me at arms' length and smiled. "It was that note you slipped me at the conference in September. You touched my heart."

That note took seconds to scribble in my sloppy handwriting. What I learned in that moment: It doesn't matter how many book awards we win or how many bestsellers we write—if any, it's the human touch of reaching out to another person, offering friendship and kindness, and letting them know they matter.

I could've stayed home and not attended the 2019 MWSA/SWW Joint Conference. I wasn't up for any book awards that year. Why attend a conference if I wasn't going to win anything? I'm so glad I didn't let that stop me. Not only did Robin and I become friends, I met some incredible people and reconnected with old friends.



Oh, and the tall attractive blonde who first greeted me at Robin's table in Fort

Worth? Turns out she is Jocelyn Russell, the gifted sculptress who created The SGT. RECKLESS Monument located between The National Cowgirl Museum and Dickies Arena.

This year's MWSA conference will be in New London, CT. Not only am I planning to be there with my trusty sidekick, Tom, my long-suffering hubby and traveling buddy, I'm excited for the possibilities and connections of mingling with kindred spirits who get me. Not only will I get to see Robin again, I'll get to reconnect with good people I've met in MWSA since I first joined in 2008.

And thanks to the efforts of MWSA member Robin Hutton, SGT. RECKLESS...and other war animals, are finally being recognized for their wartime service. Robin didn't set out to write a bestseller or win awards, she set out to shine the spotlight on a warhorse she thought deserved recognition.

Here's Robin, in her own words...



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE ...

By Robin Hutton

I REALLY MUST SAY THAT 2019 is going to be a hard year to beat, but as I look back over the last decade, it seems I say that every year when I do my resolutions. And each year just keeps getting better. I hit the ground running at the start of 2020, and it promises to be an amazing year, I can just feel it—especially with the MWSA Conference this September in Connecticut.

You never know where life is going to take you, and where you will find inspiration. Every day is a new day—a new beginning—to do something great. I am living proof that it's never too late to reinvent yourself. It's never too late to follow your dreams. And most importantly, it's never too late to find joy in the journey. Just grab that dream or inspiration by the reins, give it a hard kick, and hang on for the great adventure that you are about to embark on. If you do these daily, and you don't quit when things get tough or turn negative (and believe me, they will), life will actually exceed your dreams and expectations. The storms do pass.

It was actually during one of my storms in 2006 that I discovered the story of Sgt. Reckless, the Korean War hero horse, and my life fundamentally and forever changed. I was working on a novel and had horrible writer's block, and I was going through a particularly "dark night of the soul" when I discovered the story of Reckless in "Chicken Soup for the Horse Lover's Soul." Reckless had completely vanished from the pages of history at that time, so I made it my mission that she would never be forgotten again. And because that was

my mission, Reckless has paid me back in spades. The adventures this little pony has taken me on, the people she's introduced me to, the future projects I am embarking on to honor animals that have served in war and peacetime are all due to her in some way, shape or form.

Over the years my "Reckless" mission bestowed upon me the honor of "Patriotic Citizen of the Year" from the Military Order of World Wars in 2015, and the "Ambassador for Peace" medal from the South Korean government in 2016, among other incredible accolades.

And it is because of her that I joined MWSA back in 2015, and was awarded a gold medal for my book, *Sgt Reckless: America's War Horse*, which became a New York Times bestseller.

In 2016, I nominated Reckless for a very prestigious medal for gallantry in war, **Great Britain's People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) Dickin Medal**. She was the fourth horse in history to receive it. As I researched this medal, I discovered all of the incredible animal heroes that were awarded this medal during World War II. This ultimately led to my latest book, *War Animals: The Unsung Heroes of World War II*. Thank you, Reckless.

One of the biggest highlights of 2019 was attending my very first MWSA conference and meeting all of the wonderful members who were in attendance. While being awarded a second gold medal for *War Animals* was exhilarating, it was the friendships that were forged that weekend that I'm the most excited and feel blessed about. I feel like I've known these people

Continued on page 34

Continued from page 33

my whole life because of our common interest in writing about and honoring all the different aspects of our military and rich history. And since the conference, those friendships have continued to blossom for which I am extremely grateful.



On November 13, 2019, we dedicated our fifth monument to Sgt. Reckless at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in Ft. Worth, TX. On this same day, I had the unbelievable honor of being the first recipient of The Sgt. Reckless Award that the National Cowgirl Museum instituted. I was so pleased that MWSA member, Kathleen Rodgers was able to join my table of lifelong friends in celebration, along with 1,200 people honoring the five new Cowgirl Hall of Fame inductees. What an event! A day I will never forget.

The following day, on November 14, a huge dream came true for me when my non-profit, Angels Without Wings, Inc., along with the National Marine Corps League, honored eight animals (six posthumous and two current) with the brand new “Animals in War and Peace Medal of Bravery” (MOB) in an inaugural ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. MWSA member, Valerie Ormond, was there as eight Members of Congress handed out the new medal.

The standing-room-only crowd of over 320+ attendees watched with excitement as these heroes were recognized. Sgt Reckless received MOB #1 (of course!), followed by Cher Ami (pigeon, WWI); Chips (dog, WWII); GI Joe (pigeon, WWII—who also was on display at the ceremony); Stormy (dog, Vietnam); Lucca K458 (dog, Afghanistan/Iraq); current NYC fire department dog K-9 Bucca (#1 arson and accelerant detection dog in the country); and Multi-Purpose Canine Bass (dog, Special Operations, Marine Corps). It was such an amazing ceremony! This award will be given out annually, and we just finished our first draft of a House Resolution to make this medal a congressionally mandated award. It will be read on the House floor sometime in September 2020 by Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-40th) whose staff is working closely with us to make it happen before the elections.

This ceremony also launched a new museum concept, the International War Animals Museum, which will honor animals that have served in both war and peacetime throughout history, and hopefully will be built in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Through the eyes of the animals you will learn about moments in history that you might not otherwise know—and by honoring these wonderful four-legged and winged heroes, you learn the stories of the valiant men and women who served alongside them. It's such an exciting endeavor!

On September 30, 2020, we will be hosting our Second Annual Animals in War & Peace Medal Ceremony on Capitol Hill for over 300 people. We will be honoring eight animals with our Medal of Bravery, and we will be instituting a new “For Distinguished Service” Medal as well. If you know of any animal that might fit the bill, you can nominate them on our website at WarAnimals.com. We'd love to have you join us at the ceremony if you are going to be in the area. I promise you it is a lot of fun—and we're making history!

I know sometimes when I start out on a new path, a new dream, a new journey, the road ahead with all its twists and turns and hills and valleys, can look so long with no end in sight. Instead of looking ahead and being overwhelmed by how far I have to go to make that dream a reality, I try to look behind me to see how far I have come. For me, that makes it a little easier to take another step forward—another step closer to my dream.

As my friend Templeton Thompson says, “Dream Big—Work Hard—Have Faith.” No truer words have ever been spoken. It's never too late to follow your heart. It

just takes a step—a leap of faith—and a determination to see it through. You'll be amazed to see what the Universe has in store for you if you stick to it.

Just remember, every day is a new day.

MWSA SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

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LinkedIn | Instagram | Tumblr | Blogger*

PLEASE HELP US SPREAD THE word about MWSA programs and initiatives. Friend us, like our various pages, read and make comments, re-tweet our messages, and engage with other authors.

FACEBOOK

- ★ [MWSA Public Facebook Page](#)
- ★ *MWSA main website news stories updated here.*
- ★ *Open to everyone.*
- ★ *Members-only section coming in the future.*

GOODREADS

- ★ [MWSA Goodreads Page](#)
- ★ *Includes books from the 2015 season until now.*
- ★ *All our reviews copied here, and are subsequently mirrored in our dedicated [MWSA Blogger Page](#).*
- ★ *If you're interested in managing (or monitoring) this page, please contact us.*

TWITTER

- ★ [MWSA Twitter Feed](#)
- ★ *Our Twitter page gets all books and reviews added to our library.*
- ★ *Other items are posted on an ad hoc basis.*
- ★ *Are you a Twitter addict? Please help us out.*

INSTAGRAM

- ★ [MWSA Instagram Feed](#)
- ★ *At this moment, our library books are not automatically syndicated to this social media outlet.*
- ★ *We'll be using it for future advertising and book marketing efforts.*

Let us know if you'd like to help out.



WELCOME TO THE MWSA ~ WHO WE ARE

John Cathcart

WE ARE A NATIONWIDE ASSOCIATION of authors, poets, and artists, drawn together by the common bond of military service. Most of our members are active duty military, retirees, or military veterans. A few are lifelong civilians who have chosen to honor our military through their writings or their art. Others have only a tangential relationship to the military. Our only core principle is a love of the men and women who defend this nation, and a deeply personal understanding of their sacrifice and dedication.

Our skills are varied. Some of us are world class writers, with many successful books. Others write only for the eyes of their friends and families. But each of us has a tale to tell. Each of us is a part of the fabric of Freedom. These are our stories...

For more details, [click here](#) to read more about us on our website. Feel free to browse our site and get to know our organization, our members and their works.

Thanks very much for being a part of your MWSA organization.

SAVING HISTORY ONE STORY AT A TIME

ADD YOUR BOOK TO THE MWSA LIBRARY

John Cathcart

...from \$0.00

THIS IS FOR SUBMITTING YOUR book to the MWSA library only.

MWSA will **NOT** review your book, nor will it be considered for award using this option.

Members in good standing may submit one book per year cost-free (as a member benefit) for inclusion in our online library.

If you'd like to add additional book(s), please chose the "Extra Book" option (cost \$5.00 per book).

MWSA will add your book as quickly as we can... but it may take some time (depending on webmaster workload).

We are limiting submissions to 50 for each option to make sure we can handle the workload and get your book included on our website in a timely manner.

If an option is listed as "Sold Out," please check back later or contact the MWSA Awards Directors... we may be able to include your book once we've cleared any backlog.

MWSA's online library will include your book for at least one calendar year after it's added and will remain online until and unless MWSA transitions to a new/different website.

For the free version:

On checkout, leave credit card info blank.

You will need to re-enter your name and address.

NOTE: After submitting your book details, you'll need to scroll up to find (and click on) the "shopping cart"—normally located near the top right of the screen. Your transaction will not complete until filling out and submitting both the book details and payment forms... even though you won't be paying for anything if you're submitting your free annual book listing.

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<http://www.mwsadispatches.com>



MAIL CALL IN VIETNAM ~ DEAR JOHN

John Podlaski

WHEN MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE AWAY from their family for extended periods of time, the most treasured gift they can receive is mail—a letter from home. Regardless of race, sex or rank, correspondence from “The World” is an escape, allowing individuals an opportunity to temporarily remove themselves from their current environments and enter into a dimension that is humane, friendly and warm—personal and alone—one with the sender.

platoon-sized operations, soldiers found time during day-long lagers when squads took turns going out on reconnoitering patrols. Re-supply occurred every 3-5 days; all four platoons gathered together and spread out over a couple acres of land—adjacent to a small clearing large enough to land a Huey helicopter.

Except for those soldiers assigned to listening and observation posts outside of the perimeter, everyone else has a couple of hours of free time to do whatever they want.

When the bird arrives with supplies, the company clerk is usually the first to disembark—carrying a large, (Santa Claus) nylon or canvas bag over each shoulder; U.S. MAIL stenciled on the side in four-inch high block letters. This is the most important part of the re-supply when mail is both

collected and distributed. We didn’t have to use stamps in Vietnam as long as we printed “FREE” where a stamp is normally placed. Some grunts didn’t even use envelopes, choosing instead to write a few words home on a piece of c-ration packaging.



Home is where the heart is and keeping up with the “goings on” of family, town and events back home is paramount. The process, however, is a two-way street, each letter having updates, questions and responses. Protocol requires one to send in order to receive. The more a soldier sends—the more received... at least in theory.

One thing I remember about my days as a grunt in Vietnam is that the required time to write a letter was often difficult to come by; usually, after getting set up for the nightly defensive perimeter, one is able to squeeze in a few minutes before it was too dark in the jungle. When patrolling in larger



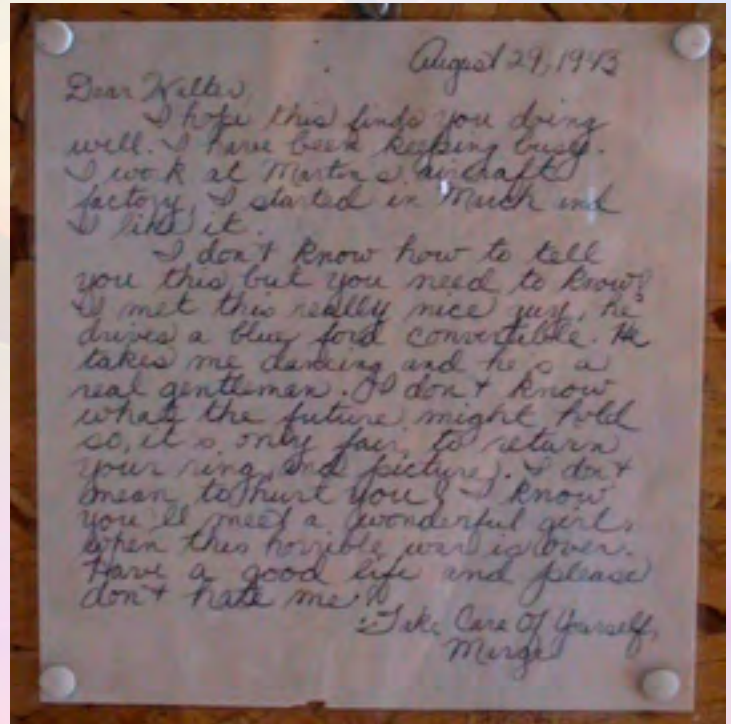
As long as it had an address and the word “FREE,” Uncle Sam made certain it was delivered.

When the clerk arrives at the platoon’s location on the perimeter with the mailbag, soldiers are quick to gather around in anticipation of hearing his name called. Some soldiers receive small goody packages and/or dozens of letters at the same time—those receiving “gifts” exhibit faces painted with wide grins, while all moving in different directions to find a private area of their own.

Others received nothing—their faces showing disappointment as they amble back to their locations.

Envelopes with a hint of perfume are eventually passed around so everyone can share in the wondrous fragrance, a momentary respite from the terrible smells endured daily. Soldiers cling desperately to wives and girlfriends, their letters, read and re-read dozens of times over the next few days. Some letters are saved, but most are burned or buried. Pictures and good news are shared openly with fellow squad members, each privy to one another’s personal life, dreams and fears. American soldiers fought hard and kept their heads down, in the hopes of seeing “the girl he left behind” again.

Receiving bad news from home didn’t travel quite as fast between fellow squad members. Recipients tend to keep that information private. However, signs of depression, anxiety, and performing actions unbecoming soon attract the attention of your brothers—the beans eventually get spilled. The worst news of all is to receive a “Dear John letter.”



A “Dear John letter” is one in which a steady girlfriend, fiancé or wife tells a soldier she wants to end their relationship, often because she’s met another man. It happened to me!

I gave my girl an engagement ring the day before I entered into the Army. We’d been dating for a couple of years and I wanted to get married after completing my two-year service commitment. Once I arrived in Vietnam, the frequency, length, and level of affection within her letters began to drop off and then stopped abruptly after three months in country. I thought something wasn’t quite right and was going to send a letter to her with a list of questions. However, before I could do that, I received a “Dear John letter” two weeks later. It read something like this:

“Hi. I know it’s been a while since I’ve last written; I did receive all of your letters... it’s just hard, you know? With you in Vietnam, it’s not like things back home have been easy

Continued on page 40

Continued from page 39

or simple. All of our friends are protesting against the war and I've joined them in demonstrations where they tell me that what you're doing is wrong. I don't really know how to say this, so I'm just going to tell you like it is: I've met someone else. His name is Jody. I swear that I wasn't looking for anything like this to happen... it just did and now we're in love.

I'll take the engagement ring over to your mother's for safe-keeping—after all, you paid for it. I wish you well. Good bye!"



I was stunned. Devastated! My childhood notions of romance suddenly shattered! I felt helpless because she was so far away. I couldn't call. I couldn't visit for a face-to-face. It was a major distraction—one that might get me killed. Overnight, I developed an "I don't give a shit attitude," volunteered to walk point, joined spontaneous ambush teams, and took all kinds of

unnecessary risks. It didn't take long for my fellow grunts to pick up on the changes in my personality. After grilling me and finding the reason for my depression, out came the backyard preachers, marriage counselors, psychologists, and just plain friends who wanted to support me in my time of need. To this day, I am thankful for their involvement and the support of my brothers-in-arms. Without them, I may have jumped off a cliff or done something else very stupid!

After about three weeks, I thought less and less about my former fiancé. Oddly, I began receiving letters and pictures from former classmates and girls in my neighborhood; news of my break-up must have spread quickly. Fellow squad members had also arranged for their sisters to send letters to me—trying to cheer me up. It was a breath of fresh air. Invigorated by my new future, I quickly returned to my old self. My mother wrote in a letter telling me that there is somebody in the world for everyone, I only had to remain patient and she would find me. How do mothers know so much?

During the early part of the Vietnam War, many couples got married in hopes that it would help the husband avoid the war. Obviously it didn't. Young couples also got married out of convenience prior to soldiers leaving for Vietnam—kind of like the last hurrah to have sex legally before heading off to war; I'm betting many children were conceived during that last night at home.

I don't know if there are any statistics available that tallied the amount of Dear

John letters received by the 3.5 million soldiers who served in country during the Vietnam War. I personally know of a dozen fellow soldiers who were recipients of these dreadful announcements during my year-long tour. Some of the letters were extremely bitter, angry, and cold, others short and to the point. Nevertheless, we took care of one-another, providing a patient ear, a shoulder to cry on, and the support to get over what was thought to be the love of our life.

There were stories circulating in Vietnam about soldiers going off the deep end after receiving one of these letters—killing themselves easily with readily available weapons of choice—unable to live without *her!*

While the exact origins of “A Dear John letter” are unknown, it’s commonly believed to have started during World War II. At that time, large numbers of American troops were stationed overseas for many months or years. As time passed, many of their wives or girlfriends decided to begin a relationship with a new man rather than wait for the original one to return.

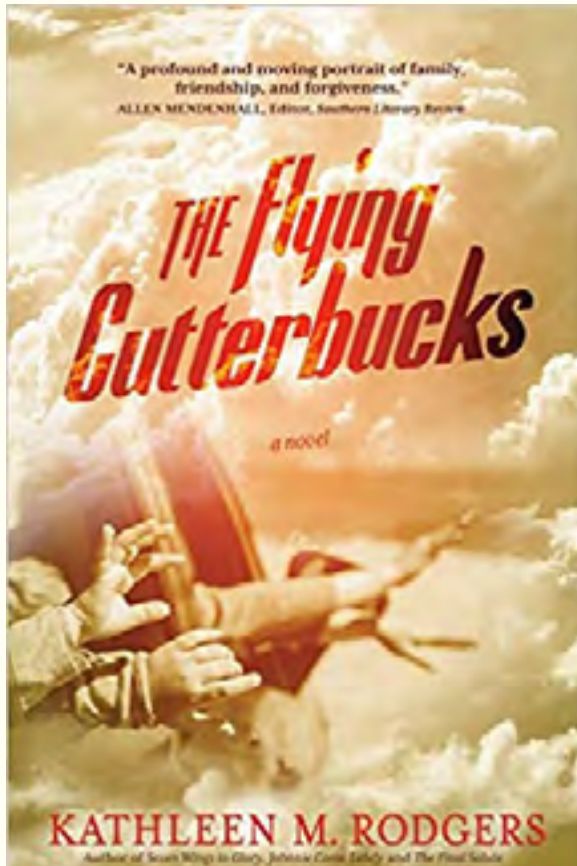
I had heard ministers and government officials were preaching to their followers during the war that women considering ending relationships should wait until their soldier returns home. Thereby, allowing him to better cope while surrounded by friends and family. I’m not certain that I agree with that philosophy and am going out on a limb here. My opinion is that the bond developed between soldiers in Vietnam was much stronger than family or friends could ever be, and thereby, much more supportive in a time of need. Too many of my peers returned home to broken hearts by women

who feigned fidelity! Being home didn’t make it easier and the loss took much longer to overcome. In hindsight, it was foolish to expect a teenage girl to wait for a teenage boy who was in harm’s way—teen angst is a bitch!

Today, in this electronic age, communication is instantaneous via cell phones, texting, email, Skype, and other means. It’s much easier to keep in touch—even between time zones—news to-and-from home doesn’t take two weeks as it did in the 60s. I’m curious about today’s soldiers. Are Dear John letters still received by troops overseas? How are they communicated? Do you feel it’s easier to cope in the war zone—supported by your brothers-in-arms or while at home with family? If you ever received a Dear John letter, how did you handle it?

My mother’s prophesy came true and shortly after my discharge from the service, I met my current wife, Janice—the love of my life for the last 40 + years.





THE FLYING CUTTERBUCKS

by **Kathleen M. Rodgers**

Genre(s): Literary Fiction

Format(s): Paperback

ISBN: 978-1948018784

Decades ago, Trudy, Georgia, and Aunt Star formed a code of silence to protect each other from an abusive man who terrorized their family. One act of solidarity long ago lives with them still. .

On the outskirts of Pardon, New Mexico, Trudy returns to her mother, Jewel, to navigate an old house filled with haunting mementos of her father who went missing in action over North Vietnam. As she helps her mother sift through the memories and finally lay her father to rest, Trudy will do her own soul-searching to say goodbye to the dead, and find her way along with the other women in her family, and through the next election.

THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW YOU NEVER KNEW

...about the MWSA Website.

★ *We list the types of correspondence members can anticipate receiving from MWSA here:*

<http://www.mwsadispatches.com/membership>
(3rd bullet under "New Members" section)

★ *Archived, electronic copy of past email blasts (back to Nov 2017) can be found on our website here:*

<http://www.mwsadispatches.com/mwsa-news>

★ *MWSA Blasts can be found here:*

<http://www.mwsadispatches.com/mwsa-news?tag=Blast>

If you have any questions about navigating the MWSA website, please reach out to MWSA and we'll answer as best we can. Thank you.

NEW RELEASE ~ HONEYMOONS CAN KILL

Bob Doerr

I AM VERY HAPPY TO announce the release of *Honeymoons Can Kill*, the eighth book in my Jim West mystery/thriller series.

When Jim West promises Deputy Rose Luna that he will take her on a cruise if she recovers from a gunshot wound, he didn't expect Rose to either hear him or take him up on his promise after she came out of the medically induced coma. A couple months later, however, Jim and Rose board a cruise ship in Galveston and head out for what they hope will be a relaxing vacation and a chance to really get to know each other.

On the second day of the cruise, they encounter Jim's old friend Sarah Stone, now Sarah Lassiter, having gotten married the day before on the ship to Joe Lassiter. That same night, Joe is murdered and Jim and Rose find themselves in the midst of the search for the killer.

Ed Anderson, who blamed Joe for getting him fired and for throwing away his commemorative 101st Airborne coin, joined the cruise to exact his revenge. A meticulous man, Ed researched how to commit the perfect murder and now, on board, is executing his plan. Unfortunately, besides Joe Lassiter, two other people must die to make his plan work.

The cruise ship is not well-equipped to handle a single murder much less three. As a second body is discovered, and a third person turns up missing, Jim and Rose are sucked deeper in the search for the killer. The ship's old security cameras are inadequate, forensic support is almost

non-existent, and in three days all the passengers will be getting off the ship. The task looks impossible.

While the investigation makes some progress, Ed Anderson's mind rips further apart with each act of violence to the point where Ed can't initially recall committing the third murder. At first, he told himself he was role-playing as an assassin he named "The Wind," but by the end of the cruise The Wind has taken charge. Feeling the investigation getting close, and with less than twelve hours to Galveston, The Wind's attention turns toward Jim and Rose. If he could hide these last hours in their cabin, find out how much they know about him, and with them as victims four and five—wouldn't that be a record on any cruise ship?



**FT. HOOD 2020 SPOUSE OF YEAR ~ MWSA AUTHOR &
2019 MEDAL AWARDEE CHANDELLE WALKER**



I WAS RAISED IN BEAUTIFUL Arizona and met my husband, Mike, in California while he was serving in the Marine Corps. We have two children and one funny Belgian Malinois/German Shepherd mix that we all adore. We have been an active Army family since 2003 and have persevered through many separations, including five deployments to Afghanistan and Korea, each being a year long. The Army has allowed us to have adventures in Alabama, North Carolina, Arizona, and now Texas.

I enjoy writing poems, crafting, home decorating, playing the piano, being outdoors and meeting new people. I look forward to publishing more children's books in the near future!

Since releasing my first children's book, *Daddy Left with Mr. Army: A Child's View*

of *Military Deployment* in December 2018, I have had many fun opportunities and experiences and met many amazing people who have been so influential to my writing and my personal life. Through the special message of this children's rhyming deployment book, I have been able to reach and help military families and children in a way that is dear to my heart.

I have been blessed with some amazing unexpected opportunities since releasing my book! I have attended multiple author fairs, been a guest at local elementary schools and libraries. I have been featured more than once in two local newspapers, and in multiple online magazines, blogs and suggested in articles as a beneficial military family resource. *Southern Living, Military Families Magazine, ArmyWife101, MrsNavyMama, Operation We Are Here, Independent, TheMilitaryWifeandMom* and *Stregth4Spouses* are among these outlets. I have been a guest on *The Waiting Warriors* podcast and I have also been spotlighted on our local news station on two different occasions.



In August 2019, I was overjoyed to hear that I received a Bronze Medal writing award from Military Writers Society of America! This was such a great honor!



I was able to attend the annual award ceremony in September. This was an amazing, well-planned and organized event that I thoroughly enjoyed. I learned so much from all the speakers and each person I met blessed me with their kindness and words of wisdom. Some of the authors I was able to meet were Kathleen Rodgers, Dale Dye, Valerie Ormond, Bill Riley, and Rev. Bill McDonald, among many other incredible individuals. I am so appreciative and grateful for that amazing event and for all the hard work put into keeping MWSA alive and for what it continually does for military writers.

I also had the special privilege to be among some Fort Hood military spouses who were invited to attend a meeting at the state capital in Austin, TX, to discuss military spouse employment issues. ***Hiring Our Heroes*** has designated the state of Texas as

a Military Spouse Economic Empowerment Zone (MSEEZ) and we were all able to listen to and meet the Second Lady, Karen Pence, who was the guest speaker in support of efforts to increase military spouse employment.

In February 2020, I was named the Armed Forces Insurance Fort Hood Spouse of the Year. This is a great honor and I look forward to helping military families better thrive through deployments and family separations. My hopes are to reach as many military children and families as possible. I want to recognize and focus more on what military spouses and children encounter during deployments and TDYs. I want to encourage more family time and reading time together. I hope to bring a brighter light to military families and their experiences and to better recognize what they go through during these family separations.



I look forward to many more positive experiences, people to meet, books to publish and opportunities to serve our military community!

MISSING IN ACTION

Katherine Taylor

ON APRIL 8, 1944 MY family received the news that my uncle and godfather, John Patrick King, Electricians Mate 3C, was missing in action. John had been assigned to the submarine, the *U.S.S. Grayback*.



John Patrick King, Electricians Mate 3C

A few days later my Mom wrote a letter to her brother.

“Dear John: Still no further word but we haven’t given up yet, or won’t for a long, long time...”

Like many other families it was a very painful time. My uncle was not declared dead until two years later.

As a young child I could sense the feeling of loss and helplessness. I made it a goal to find out what really happened to him.

I would cut out articles from the newspapers on anything to do with the Navy. As I got older, I tried to do more meaningful research.



My family had entrusted me with all of the paperwork from his passing. I sent for his service records. I visited the Submarine Force Library and Museum in Groton, CT. There I was able to acquire a copy of his grade report from sub school. I also was able to review the records of the nine previous patrols that the Grayback made.

I contacted his high school and was able to get a copy of his yearbook page. In Hawaii, I photographed his name at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. When my daughter-in-law and I had the opportunity to write a children’s book together, I dedicated the book to his memory. I even went so far as to have a model built of the *U.S.S. Grayback*.

Then, in 2019, my sister had been surfing the internet and found a story about the [Lost 52 Project](#). Tim Taylor and his Lost 52 team have a goal of discovering and surveying as many of the lost 52 US WWII submarines as possible. This time they were looking for the Grayback!



At the beginning of November I traveled to Pittsburgh for the interview. A team from **ABC World News Tonight** filmed our story. First we were given a tour of the submarine, the ***U.S.S. Requin***. The boat is a museum ship at the Carnegie Science Center. Then we headed into the Science Center where Tim Taylor and Christine Dennison explained the process the Lost 52 Project goes through in searching for a submarine. They showed a video highlighting their work.

During the filming and while watching the *video* they revealed to us that they had found the Grayback and what we were actually looking at was the final resting place of my uncle and 79 of his shipmates. I was shocked!

Of course our family contacted the Lost 52 team. Christine Dennison, Tim's wife, contacted me and put me in touch with another Grayback family member. She also lost her uncle and he had been an Electricians Mate 1C. Eventually I was asked if I would do an interview (along with the other Grayback relative) at the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh, PA.



My mother and her brother unfortunately are not alive to receive this news. But my mother's letter to her youngest brother John on 4/18/1944 ended with the following words:

"...We just sat around the house waiting to hear something from you. So far, no news... but as I said before we won't give up hope... Love from all of us, and especially Sis."

No one ever gave up hope—John and his 79 shipmates will be in our hearts forever!



The Lost 52 Team

NEVER ANOTHER

Megan Chatterton

You walk bravely through
the door, holding your hands
out in submission.

The children cry
then realize the warmth of
your sweaty camouflage.

The click faintly heard
above the sound of fire
from another soldier's gun.

No, not another

Never another.

You turn just so, shielding
yourself long enough
to endure thirty-six more hours
of the firestorm.

The twilight from
a tiny foot on a tripwire.

The men come running
voices hoarse and sandy
wrenching and heaving.

Not accepting.

No, not another

Never another.

The whir of a helicopter drowns
out the voices of the
Afghani desert as you drift

from one world to the next.

The beep of a machine
so much like that clock
that steals you away.

No, we say. Not another
 Never another.

All goes black
the curtain drawn
over your face
like a blanket of the snow
falling outside your window.

We will not forget—
No, not another.

 There will never be another.

Your life is so much more than
Taps on a frozen silver trumpet
the sum of a folded flag.



Megan Chatterton is an honors graduate of the University of New Mexico's English program where she focused in Creative Writing and Medieval Studies and served on the staff for the Western Regional Honors Council's official literary magazine, *Scribendi*.

Megan's inspiration for her work-in-progress military fiction series *The Mithras Project*, and its connecting poem *Never Another* is to tell stories that focus on the human element of modern warfare. She finds herself fascinated by the process of forging a soldier, and has read every book she can find on USMA and various Special Operations training programs.

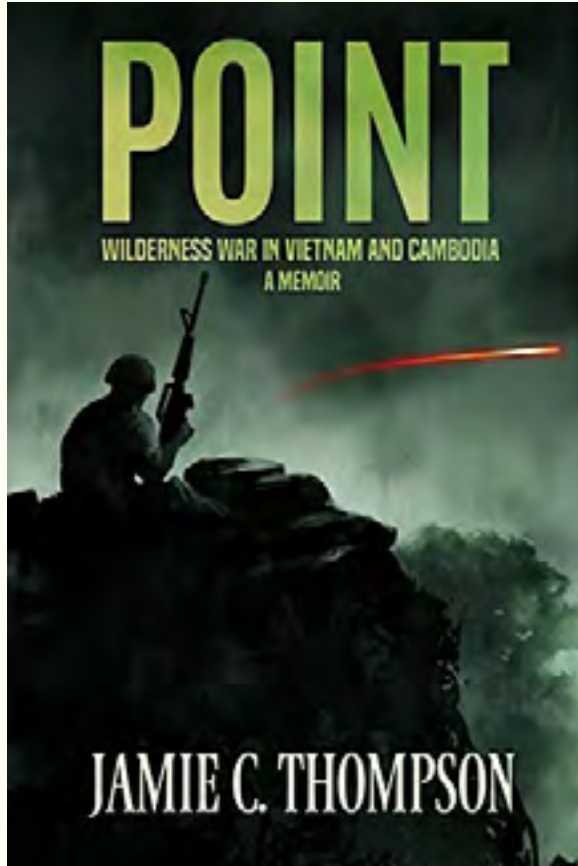
She has a Master's Degree in Secondary Education and currently teaches at Corrales International School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she thoroughly enjoys teaching the next generation of writers and readers to enjoy the many opportunities the literary world has to offer.

MWSA RECOMMENDED READING LIST ~ SPRING 2020*Bob Doerr*

The Military Writers Society of America (MWSA) is an organization of hundreds of writers, poets, and artists drawn together by a common bond of military service. One purpose of our Society is to review the written works of our members. The following list includes some of the books from this year's review cycle that we believe you might enjoy reading:

- ★ *A Blessed Life—One World War II Seabee's Story* ~ Tamra McAnally Bolton
 - ★ *All Present and Accounted For* ~ Steven Craig
 - ★ *Alone In The Light* ~ Benjamin Bass
 - ★ *Bangkok File* ~ Dale Dye
- ★ *Battle of the Bulge: Brothers Behind Enemy Lines* ~ Suzanne Agnes
 - ★ *I Am Jack and I Am Awesome* ~ Dennis Jones
- ★ *I'll Lend You My Daddy* ~ Becky King & Valerie Valdivia
 - ★ *Navajo Strong* ~ Joyce Phillips
- ★ *Off the Hook: How Forgiving You Frees Me* ~ Dana Tibbitts & Patti Goldberg
 - ★ *One Small Spark* ~ Jackie Minniti
 - ★ *Persian Blood* ~ M.G. Haynes
- ★ *Point: Wilderness War in Vietnam and Cambodia- A Memoir* ~ Jamie Thompson
 - ★ *Q.Fulvius: Debt of Dishonor* ~ M.G. Haynes
 - ★ *Seven Wings to Glory* ~ Kathleen M. Rodgers
 - ★ *The Obsession* ~ Dawn Brotherton
- ★ *The Pound: Devil Dogs War in Nicaragua* ~ David Brown
 - ★ *The Road to Publishing* ~ Dawn Brotherton
 - ★ *There it is...It don't mean nothin'* ~ Charles Hensler

Most of us are sitting around and not doing too much right now. Get your mind off the world events for a while and sink into a good book! Reading will help time go by and lower your stress levels. We all need a little less stress right now. So grab your Kindle, Nook, iPad, or an old-fashioned book and bundle up on the old recliner. The list above would be a great place to find a new book. More info about the books listed above and the authors can be found at www.mwsadispatches.com



POINT: Wilderness War in Vietnam and Cambodia

by **Jamie C. Thompson**

ISBN: 9781692848842, ASIN: 1692848844

Book Format(s): Soft cover, Kindle

Review Genre: Nonfiction—Memoir/Biography

POINT is a firsthand account of daily life for grunts in the field in Vietnam and Cambodia in 1970. It's a memoir of the author's service as an infantry sergeant, squad leader, and point man in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War.



SAVE THE DATE

2020 General Membership Conference



*Thursday, September 17, 2020, 6:00 PM through
Sunday, September 20, 2020, 11:30 AM*

*Clarion Inn New London – Mystic
269 North Frontage Road
New London, CT, 06320*

More information at:

<https://www.mwsadispatches.com/events/2020-conference>



