

DISPATCHES

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WRITERS
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA

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Summer 2013

Independence



2013
Novel Award
Grand Winner
Stories

Walking from My Past, Toward My Future by Sarah Tran

Cooper's Bird by Rob Morris

The Night John Came to Visit by Matt Davison

There's a Classroom in the Jungle by Robert Geschke

The Squadron Coward by Glenn Wasson

The Round's On Me by Steve Hathcock

Postcards from my Past by Robert Robeson

From the Heartland to Hell - Bob Rothfus by Louis Intres

From the editor

This issue of *Dispatches* is loaded with super summer reading. We celebrate our country's birthday with picnics, parties and fireworks. Take time this summer to read the articles and books written by our authors. You'll learn while you are entertained.

Dwight Zimmerman and Jim Greenwald bring us up to speed on this fall's conference in Dayton, Ohio, September 26-28. If you've not registered, you still have time. Learning, networking and fun; it's a combination that's hard to beat. The conference is truly a career booster and I encourage you to take full advantage of your membership.

The articles in this issue take us from the Civil War to the late 1980s. Steve Hathcock's story combines history with an unknown humorous tale in *This Round's on Me*. Glenn Wasson raises questions about courage and fear in *The Squadron Coward*, Matt Davison shares an event that involved a Vietnam POW and incarcerated veterans in *The Night John Came to Visit*, and in an article from *Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul*, Robert Robeson takes us back to his time in Vietnam. Louis Intres interviewed Bob Rothfus, a WWII veteran who landed with the first wave of Marines on the shores of Iwo Jima.

Through their poetry, Richard Geschke and Jim Greenwald give us cause to ponder the human condition while Charles Bailey entertains us with *In the Ranks*.

We proudly print the winners of the A Novel Approach Writing Contest. The contest was a success and produced some excellent work.

Enjoy *Dispatches* and the rest of the summer. See you in Dayton!

PAT MCGRATH AVERY



MASTHEAD

EDITOR

Pat McGrath Avery

COLUMNIST

Dwight Jon Zimmerman

Charles Bailey

Bob Doerr

FEATURES

Steve Hathcock

Matt Davison

Glenn Wasson

Louis Intres

Rob Morris

Sarah Tran

Robert Robeson

POETRY

Robert Geschke, jim greenwald

LAYOUT/DESIGN

Joyce Faulkner

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Dispatches is a Quarterly Publication including the works of MWSA members. A PDF version is available to all members — and will be on the website.

It'll also be available on Kindle for \$.99. If you would like a hard copy, beginning the end of February, they will be \$10 or \$30 a year for a subscription.

Contact PatAvery@gmail.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The muffled drums sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo,
No more on life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.

“Bivouac of the Dead”

by Theodore O'Hara

Inscription on the
Cypress Hills National Cemetery
entrance plaque

This Memorial Day I again visited Cypress Hills National Cemetery to pay my respects. I first visited it in 2009 when I was wrapping up work on my book *Uncommon Valor*. The account of my visit appears in the epilogue. Sometimes I would talk with fellow visitors, other times not. This year I met a woman whose parents, grandparents, uncles, and a great grandfather are all buried there. She had done extensive research about the cemetery and we exchanged a number of stories. I also met a lieutenant colonel, now in the Army Reserve, who was visiting the graves of Civil War soldiers who served in colored regiments. When it came time for me to leave, I passed a Marine sergeant entering the cemetery, possibly to pay his respects to double Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant Major Dan Daly. I know I'm preaching to the choir when I say it was a good, humbling, and inspirational visit.

The schedule for this year's conference in Dayton is beginning to fill and I'm very excited about the variety of workshops people have volunteered to run. In addition, Dale Throneberry of Veterans Radio Network, who has conducted live radio interviews during the conference, has generously offered to conduct promotional interviews of all author attendees. Each interview will last five minutes. The author will be given a sheet of prepared questions in advance that either Dale or myself will ask. The interviews will be archived and the author can link them to personal or other websites for promotional use. I don't think I have to elaborate on what a great free promotional opportunity this is, and I hope all attending authors will take advantage of this. Thank you, Dale!



And, thank you Betsy Beard! Betsy volunteered to become MWSA vice president, and the officers and board enthusiastically accepted. In addition to being active in MWSA, she is active in the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), a national nonprofit Veterans Service Organization providing compassionate care for the families of America's fallen military heroes. Betsy's a wonderful person and I hope all attendees will take time to get to know her.

I have another change in personnel announcement to make. Terry Gould regretfully had to resign from his position as membership secretary for personal reasons. I'm happy to report that Maria Edwards, who has been with MWSA since the beginning and has been instrumental in so many aspects of the organization, agreed to succeed him. Fortunately, Terry will remain as a member so we will continue to benefit from his warm and generous presence.

I know many of you have already made plans to attend this year's conference at Dayton. For those who may still be fence sitting, I hope that the latest news about the scheduled workshops and events will convince you to come. While they're important, equally important is the fellowship you'll experience. We have a great group of members and the conferences are truly wonderful opportunities to rekindle friendships and make new ones. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Dwight Jon Zimmerman

On fame's eternal camping-ground,
 Their silent tents are spread,
 And glory guards with solemn round
 The bivouac of the dead.

Inscription on the
 Cypress Hills National Cemetery
 exit plaque



Betsy Beard

MWSA Vice President

Betsy Beard is a multi-award-winning author. Her writing career began on October 14, 2004 shortly after notification that her only son had been killed in action in Iraq. Finding some solace in pouring her heartache into a journal, she called it "hemorrhaging on paper."

Shortly thereafter she discovered Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), a national nonprofit Veterans Service Organization providing compassionate care for the families of America's fallen military heroes. She began contributing articles about survivorship to TAPS Magazine, as well as to Living with Loss Magazine, and Hospice Foundation of America's 2008 Living with Grief. In 2008 Betsy became the editor for TAPS Magazine and in 2010, wrote Klinger, A Story of Honor and Hope, the 2011 MWSA Gold Medal for Children's Books.

THIS ROUND'S ON ME

by Steve Hathcock

For all practical purposes, Padre Island was deserted when the Civil War began. Union troops periodically landed on its beaches to secure fresh meat from the cattle that roamed freely. Occasionally, Southerners smuggled cotton across Padre Island and loaded it onto ships standing off shore in the Gulf, but with Union warships patrolling just beyond the horizon, this was a precarious occupation at best.

On July 17, 1862, Company K, made up of Confederate volunteers from nearby Seguin, Texas was ordered to Aransas Pass to help in the defense of Corpus Christi. With a detachment of seven men, Captain John Ireland crossed Corpus Christi Bay in a small boat, the Queen of the Bay, to determine if Corpus Christi Pass, dividing Padre and Mustang Island, was deep enough for ships to enter the bay.

As they completed their tests, the Confederates noticed the Union bark Arthur approaching from the Gulf.

Finished with their reconnaissance, Ireland and his men returned to their craft and cast off. Two large boats that had launched from the Arthur followed them. Realizing they could not escape, the Confederates ran their boat ashore. After securing their craft, they fired upon the Union launches. The Federal troops quickly landed on Mustang Island, on the other side of the pass, and returned fire.

Unfortunately they forgot to anchor

their boats, which promptly drifted out into the pass. Dodging bullets, Captain Ireland waded into the shallow water and snared one boat while private Jack Sands seized the other before it drifted out into the

Gulf. The Confederate patrol returned to Corpus Christi in the Queen of the Bay with the captured launches and all the weapons and equipment they contained, including a wounded Union soldier found in the first launch. Meanwhile the Union troops waited on Mustang Island for another boat to retrieve them.

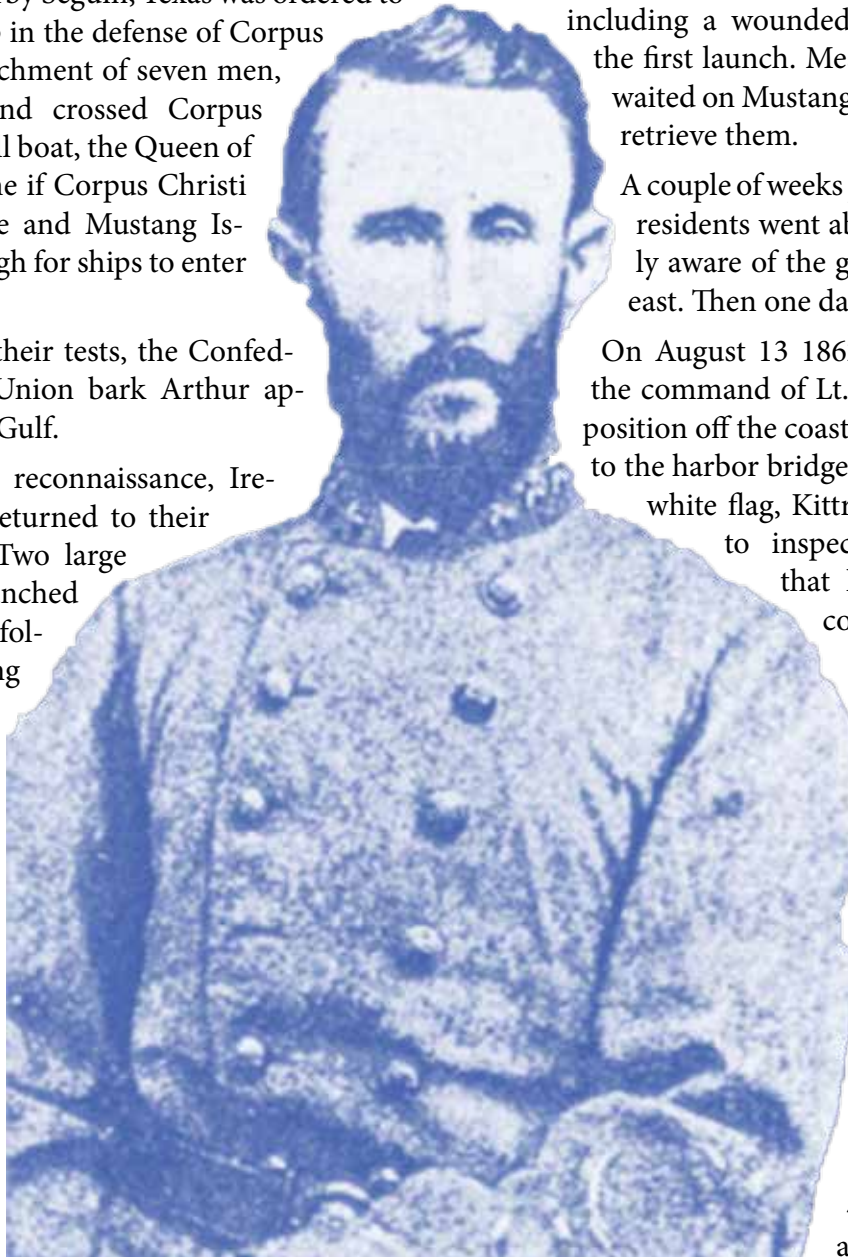
A couple of weeks passed and Corpus Christi residents went about their business vaguely aware of the great conflict raging in the east. Then one day the war came home.

On August 13 1862, a Union flotilla, under the command of Lt. J.W. Kittredge, took up a position off the coast, near where the approach to the harbor bridge is today. Landing under a white flag, Kittredge demanded the right to inspect government buildings that had been vacated at the commencement of hostilities.

Major Alfred M. Hobby, who commanded the city's defenses, denied permission on the grounds that the United States no longer owned any buildings in Corpus Christi or in fact, any other parts of Texas. That ended the negotiations. Kittredge declared that he would grant the townspeople a 48-hour truce to evacuate. Most took this advice



Steve Hathcock



Alfred Hobby

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to heart traveling a few miles west using anything on wheels to escape.

The one-sided bombardment lasted off and on for three days. Casualties were light; flying splinters wounded a Union sailor and a Confederate private named Henry Mote was killed. Exploding shells killed a cow, a dog and a mule named "Sweetheart." One resident found his old gray tomcat with his head swollen to twice its natural size and one side of it skinned like he had rubbed up against a buzz saw. A cannon ball caromed off the wall of a saloon before smashing a shelf of whiskey bottles.

The people straggled back to find the lighthouse on the bluff demolished and outbuildings and several fine residences along the shore destroyed. Unexploded cannon balls littered the city. The Federal ships had fired between 400 and 500 rounds of solid and exploding shells.

Desperately short of gunpowder, Hobby ordered his men to salvage the powder inside the unexploded cannonballs. To their surprise (and delight) they found what smelled like bourbon in some of the shells. They thought it was a trick; perhaps the Yankees had poisoned the whisky. But after a few cautious sips, they began to drain all the cannonballs with liquid contents.

Some weeks later, on Sept. 12, Kittredge was captured at

Flour Bluff when he went ashore to trade for supplies. Brought to Corpus Christi, the town he had so recently shot up, he met Major Hobby and was asked about the whiskey-filled shells.

For whatever it was worth, this information served to solve a question that had nagged at Kittredge over the past couple of weeks. Kittredge told Hobby that a barrel of bourbon kept for the captain's mess had been stolen; he had been unable to find it, but men coming off the night watch sometimes smelled like they were returning from a tavern.

The sailors must have emptied some of the cannonballs of gunpowder and refilled them with whiskey, to wait their turn at night duty. When the bombardment started, they had been forced to fire their whiskey-filled shells at the Confederates.

Did some of them really contain whiskey? The official reports filed by Hobby and Kittredge do not mention it, but then, that's not the kind of thing that would be put in an official report. It does not matter whether it happened or not. The tale of the whiskey-filled cannonballs has been repeated for more one-hundred-and-fifty years and it makes a good story. If it's true, Lt Kittredge unwittingly served up the first round for his own going-away party.



Cannonade

THE NIGHT JOHN CAME TO VISIT

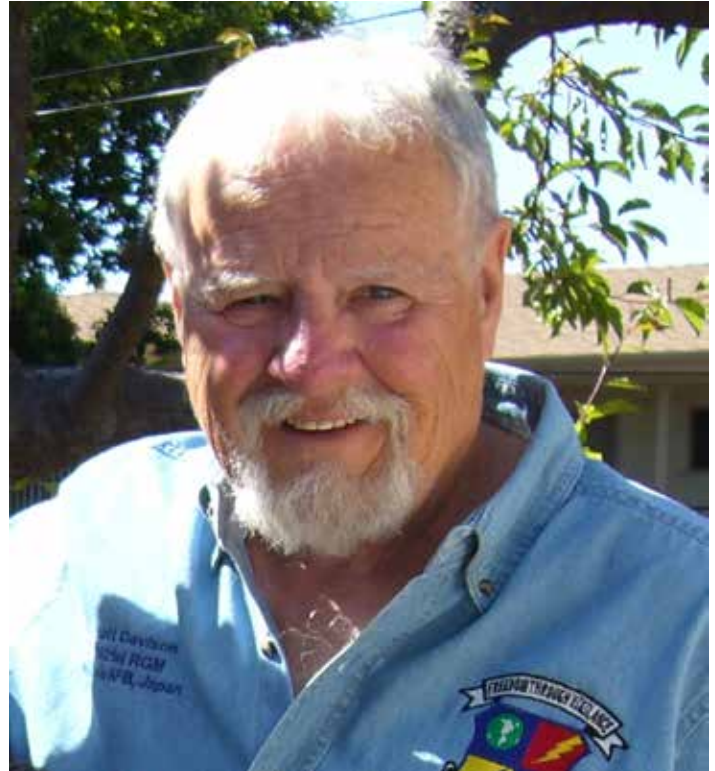
by Matt Davison

Although I had visited the Federal Correctional Institution at Terminal Island many times, it was always during the day. At night the institution is surreal, kind of like going to a night baseball game. You could see across the north yard to where men were playing handball or basketball, and you could see people moving around in their lit cells. The Chaplain who met us at the front entrance escorted John and me into the Chapel, where sixty incarcerated veterans attended John's presentation.

On February 4, 1967, Captain John Fer and six other Airmen were dispatched in a Douglas EB66C Skywarrior over North Vietnam. About 40 miles from the China border, in Bac Thai Province, two missiles broke the aircraft in half. Three of the Airmen, including John, were captured. The remains of two others were returned, and one remains missing. Bleeding from shrapnel wounds and dressed only in shorts and undershirt, John feared the prevailing winds might have taken him into China, from which he would never emerge.

Marched by the militia along paths lined with peasants holding sickles, the prisoners came to a building, the village headman's house, where a picture of Uncle Ho hung. John breathed a sigh of relief, realizing that he had not been blown into China. Chants of war criminal and air pirate filled the air for the three hours it took until a truck, with John's navigator inside, pulled up and drove the two to Hanoi. It was February, and it was cold.

An interrogator, called 'the Eagle,' asked John what his unit was. John responded with name, rank and serial number, receiving a smack in the face. The Eagle asked a second time what John's unit was. Again, John replied with his name, rank and serial number. Again, he was smacked in the face, only harder this time. After a third attempt by the Eagle failed, John was handcuffed and his arms stretched out behind him and strapped in a way that cut off circulation. The Eagle left the room and John called out, "okay, I'll tell you the unit". The Eagle returned, untied John, and the circulation rushed back. "What was your unit?" "I can't tell you that". John was back in the straps again. John later learned that the key to avoiding painful torture was to give false information.



Matt Davison

But, you had to remember what information you gave because the interrogators took notes.

B-52 bombing runs from Guam frightened the North Vietnamese captors, and provided some breathing space for John and the other POWs. During this time, while in isolation, John began a prayer ritual. From a small piece of rope, he formed a rosary, which became part of a daily ritual of pacing five steps up and back while praying early in the morning, exercising, and praying again. For the North Vietnamese, isolation was key to breaking down allegiance to your country. For the POWs, communications was instrumental in maintaining sanity. A 5x5 alphabet matrix was developed, in which communications could be transmitted by tapping on the wall. If the sent message was understood, two taps followed. If not understood, a series of taps followed.

Another key to remaining sane was mental exercises. Learning aerodynamics or a foreign language were great ways to maximize quiet time. One POW memorized the 350 names of his fellow POWs alphabetically. John learned Spanish, French, German and Russian

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to occupy his mind. Feeding the spirit was vital. Each religious denomination had a Chaplain. John McCain was the Presbyterian Chaplain.

In six years, John was allowed to receive only four letters but no packages or photos. A solid spiritual life, faith in God, and exercise kept him in balance. In 1973, it was all over.

In speaking directly to his captive audience, John reminded them that they had a lot in common. They had served this nation, accepted their fate, and would move forward in their lives. He reminded them of the many parallels in their life experiences, and that we are all sacred, made in God's image.

One Navy Vet had served with a Captain who John knew well. Another Vet asked if he was free to talk. John replied, absolutely not. The code was their only form of communication. The question of one-on-one psychological tactics was raised, and John said the interrogators tried to pit one POW against another.

After an interrogation took place, the POW being interrogated tapped out the questions to other POWs so that they could be prepared with their responses. If you ask John what he missed most during his captivity, his answer would be the sound of children's laughter. It's ironic that John would become an elementary school teacher, surrounded by the laughter of children every day.

John advised the incarcerated veterans to assert their individuality, stay strong in the face of adversity, and find balance between the spiritual and the intellectual in their lives.

Every one of the prisoners came up for a handshake, hug or autograph. Then, one of them asked if John would lead them in prayer, which he did without hesitation. The Veterans of FCI Terminal Island will long remember John's visit.

2013 MWSA ANTHOLOGY: CALL FOR ENTRIES

The MWSA is pleased to begin work on our 4th annual anthology. Each year the board selects a theme, the membership selects cover art, and we publish a book of articles, short stories, essays, illustrations, and photographs to showcase the amazing members of the Military Writers Society of America. In addition to member essays, the book contains the MWSA review and jacket design of each book nominated for an award in the current award cycle.

Each MWSA member is encouraged to send original work, not to exceed 1500 words (or the equivalent number of anthology pages in the case of poetry, illustrations, and photographs). The theme this year is OUR VOICES and entries should reflect that theme. This is your opportunity to be heard and to further the MWSA's three part mission of writing for healing, preservation of history, or education of others. Share something about yourself, be published, and earn buckaroo bucks. The anthology is open to all who are members, so if you have been thinking about joining MWSA, now is the time to do it. Each participant will be awarded 1,000 buckaroo bucks to spend at the Buckaroo Auction during the MWSA annual conference in September.

The MWSA anthology is a wonderful keepsake and is included in the registration fees for all members who attend the annual conference. Use it as a yearbook and get the signatures of your fellow MWSA members during the conference. Those who are not able to attend the conference can purchase the book after publication.

DEADLINE for submissions is July 31, 2013. Please send a high resolution jpeg head shot photograph and brief biography to accompany your entry. Submissions are to be emailed to Betsy Beard at eabeard@nc.rr.com. Don't wait until the last minute. Start writing now!

WALKING FROM MY PAST, TOWARD MY FUTURE

by Sarah Tran

As I looked ahead, I saw the land fall away from the road, leading to a row of elm trees, beyond which lay the unknown. I looked back and felt as if I could see my past, and all the wrongs I have done up to this point. I was happy for what I had accomplished, but sad for what I had done. Even though I had done many great things — like being class president, ROTC leader, and president of Circle of Friends — I realized that I could have tried harder, done better, and been a better person. I had been mean to so many people, and I regretted it all.

For example, the summer before, I had dated a guy named Gabe. Gabe was handsome, strong, had dark brown eyes, and black hair. He always looked tough. He was in a gang, and everyone warned me about him, but I didn't care. He was my everything... My life, my future, my now. But that summer, it all came crashing down.

He had shot his own mother in a fight they had gotten into about him leaving the country. That night, he came to my house and asked me to run away with him. I was so scared that he would shoot me, but I couldn't go. I told him that I was not ready, and he said he understood, but I knew deep down he didn't.

I called the cops the next day to tell them, and the cops arrived just in time. Gabe broke into my house, and was about to shoot my mom. They arrested him and he now is in jail for life.

At that very moment, I realized that I had nearly lost my mother forever. From that day forward, I talked to my mom and cared for her, because she is the most caring and loving mother I could have ever asked for.

As months went on, I talked less and less to my mom, and things went back to normal. We moved to Texas because of my mom's job, and we were going to be stuck there for a few years. Things went back to normal, and I started school again. Life was great, and I felt like I was on top again.

I was just looking forward to making my future bright again. As I looked into the unknown, I saw something moving. When I got a better view, I could see that it was a figure about the same height as my brother. I felt an



Sarah Tran

uneasy feeling in my stomach. I knew that the figure was a sign; a sign that I did not want to have.

As much as I wanted to turn around and run away, I felt myself walking towards the shadow. That was when I woke up.

The dream was so realistic, that I was scared something bad was going to happen. As the week went on, my family and I found out my brother has cancer. It was like a gigantic rock had just fallen on top of us, and there was no use in trying to get up.

I realized that my nightmare had become a reality. The doctors told us that my brother had only about a month to live, so we cherished every second.

He went through many procedures, including chemotherapy, but nothing seemed to work. As the month was near the end, I saw myself in tears. I asked God why, why this was happening to me. I felt like I had done something terribly wrong, and this was what I got for payback. I cried every night, and prayed and talked to God.

As the last day of the month came rolling up, we had dinner as a family. It felt like the last time ever.

I went to sleep, but my parents stayed up to check on

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my brother.

When I woke up, I went straight to my brother's room. He was nowhere to be found. I started to panic. I ran all over my house looking for him, but no one was home. I couldn't even find my mom or dad.

I went to the kitchen and found a note. It said: "Hey sweetie, good news! Your brother is still alive, and we are going to be at the hospital with him to see what is going on. I will keep you up dated. Love you lots."

I felt a burst of happiness explode inside of me. It was the best I had felt in a long time. I was laughing, but I couldn't even explain why my brother was still alive.

My brother had done so much for me, and now I would try to return the favor. I was crying, but out of excitement. I felt a warmth in my heart, and I knew that God had fixed this.

That's when I found it, my little miracle, my gift from God. I held it in my hand, and reflected on the shocking speed at which my fortunes had turned around, a longed-for-moment that even as it registered on me, ceased to be a goal and became a memory.

Now I live my life to the fullest, because I never know when my last day is. I treat my friends and family as I would like to be treated, and I feel that nothing could get any better.

I'm in control of my life again, and I have started to become the person I wish to become. I treat my brother the best, because I believe that he is my walking miracle. He is the one who fully changed me for the better, and I owe him my life for that.

You should try hard for your goals, because God is always there by your side helping you. He has our lives planned out, every second of every minute of every hour.



COOPER'S BIRD

by Rob Morris

As I looked ahead, I saw the land fall away from the road, leading to a row of elm trees, beyond which lay the unknown. Corporal Cooper stepped down from the ledge he'd carved into the trench's side, his boots and puttees plunging into water as thick and congealed as gravy, a stinking, turgid stew of mud, human waste, and blood. Watson looked up at him as he sloshed by, giving him a brief affirmative nod. Watson's helmet was pulled low over his fleshy face, a pale, stubbly version of the face Cooper remembered from several months ago. The rumbling of German artillery curled and broke across no-man's land like a burbling wave.

Cooper sloshed through maze-like corridors of earth and lumber, picking his way around the occasional soldier. The trenches were eerily empty. A month ago, they'd been filled with boisterous, laughing boys, most of whom were (if they were lucky) now buried. If they weren't, they were decomposing in a water-filled shell-hole.

Things had gone badly in this sector. They'd killed a lot of Germans, but also gotten killed quite a bit in the process, leading to a bloody draw with no winner and two losers. So few of the boys remained that the colonel was doing his best to get the remaining members of the unit pulled back and reassigned.

Cooper hated the colonel. The man was a pompous ass who gambled with other men's lives. And for what? Wasn't it Napoleon who'd said men would be willing to die for little scraps of ribbon? Cooper had learned something like that in school, back in Montana, in a life that scarcely seemed his own.

It was true. The men who sat in the safety of their lumber-roofed bunkers showed little compunction when it came to issuing an order sending one, or ten, or even a hundred men to their doom. And the men above them, ensconced in comfortable sitting rooms lined with velvety wallpaper, with electric lights and a fire going in the fireplace, would in turn give orders sending hundreds or even thousands to their death, including the colonels, if they thought it would make any difference.



Rob Morris

Cooper had killed several Germans, including one whose head he'd stoved in with the butt of his rifle. At first it had bothered him, and then it had bothered him even more when it no longer bothered him. What were the chances he'd ever get home again? To see his parents, his little brothers and sister, his room, his books? And if he got home, what then? Still, in the muck of his hole, he dreamed of nothing but home.

"Good God, Cooper, do watch where you're going!"

Cooper had turned a corner and crashed nose-to-nose and chest-to-chest up against the infamous colonel. He could smell the good tobacco on the man's breath, and he stole a quick look into the man's piggish eyes before dutifully lowering his head.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"As you should be." The colonel gripped a map case in his hand, and was flanked by a pair of subordinates, both of whom sported clean uniforms in contrast to Cooper's filthy kit. The colonel waited for a heartbeat before letting out a disgusted sigh and shoving Cooper into the side of the trench and splashing off.

All he wanted to do now was to go back to his hole, crawl in, and lay there until he went to sleep and dreamed of

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home. The maple leaves would be riotously yellow now, as would the cottonwoods down by the river. It would be hunting season, just about...

He remembered one gorgeous autumn afternoon, hunting pheasant with his father and their favorite hound, Shep. They'd been following an old dirt road down in the bottoms, the gurgling of the river singing in their ears, when Cooper's father had motioned him to follow him up onto the flats. They climbed a gentle rise, their pants swishing through the tall grass, occasionally catching a glimpse of Shep's brown and white rump and tail as he bounded ahead of them. They came to a small knoll. The land fell away from the road, leading to a row of elm trees, beyond which lay the unknown. They both sensed it at the same time, and Cooper's father looked over at him and pushed his cap back on his head.

"Guess this is the last time we'll be doing this for a while, son."

Cooper's father looked intently into his eyes — something Cooper couldn't recall his reticent old man ever doing before. His father's eyes were as blue as the sky, and flecked with brown, as if tiny birds were flying across each iris. His father opened his thin mouth several times, but nothing came out. Finally, he had gently placed his hand on Cooper's shoulder, and they had walked on.

Back at his hole, Cooper took out his rifle and thought about that hunt with his father. They'd flushed a couple of pheasants, but missed both. No matter. Cooper looked up into the sky. It was clear and blue, just like the Montana sky. He thought about home. He thought about hunting with his father.

Then he got to thinking about the colonel, and he started to get mad. He chambered a round and looked up again at the sky. If only I could go home... Damn this all to hell!

Suddenly, he heard a frantic beating of wings, saw a flurry of brown and gray feathers crossing his field of vision. Instantly, he raised his rifle and, leading the bird, he pulled the trigger, with no expectation of hitting anything. The bird was thrown off its trajectory. Somehow, the bullet had found its mark. It continued to beat its wings for a moment or two, then fell like a stone about a hundred yards away.

"What the hell was that?" said Watson, who'd been smoking a cigarette in his own hole.

"I didn't mean to hit it," said Cooper apologetically. He sat down dejectedly, his heart heavy, and tears welled up in his eyes. From down the trench, he heard angry shouts. The shouts died down. He sat alone, his throat tight, his eyes blinking back tears.

Splashing. A commotion. Suddenly, the colonel stood in front of Cooper, his face red with rage. In his hand, he held a dead pigeon. A bullet had pierced its heart. In his other hand, he held a small scrap of paper.

"Did you do this, Cooper?" asked the colonel. "Did you kill this innocent bird, just for sport?"

"Yes, sir."

"What kind of man are you, soldier?"

"I don't know, sir. I'm sorry, sir."

"Yes, you will be sorry. Very sorry," barked the colonel, thrusting the bird's limp body into Cooper's hand.

"This bird bore a message, the one we've been waiting for. It was like the dove bringing the olive branch to Noah, and you shot it. We're going home, soldier. We're being pulled out of this Godforsaken place, and we don't have to come back."

His eyes narrowed and his lips tightened. "All, that is, except you. I'm reassigning you to another unit, for destruction of government property. There are plenty that need a seasoned soldier to show the new boys what to do."

He turned on his heel and splashed away.

Watson looked at Cooper with undisguised horror.

Cooper looked down at the bird, a burgundy spot oozing through its soft feathers. He held it in one hand and reflected on the shocking speed at which his fortunes had turned around, a longed-for moment that, even as it registered on him, ceased to be a goal and became a memory.



BOB DOERR'S SUMMER READING LIST

The Military Writers Society of America (MWSA) is an organization of over one thousand 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. From our recent book reviews, which can be found on our website www.mwsadispatches.com, we've selected the following as our 2013 Summer Recommended Reading List:

Dead Men Flying: Victory in Viet Nam The Legend of Dust Off: by General Patrick Brady with Meghan Brady Smith
 A Wandering Warrior by Harry E. Gilleland, Jr.
 Spanky: A Soldier's Son by S.L. LaNeve
 Sundown Tour Duty Station by John Zerr
 Lt. Commander Mollie Sanders by Phyllis Zimble Miller
 Sword of Shiva by Jeff Edwards
 Dare Not Blink by Gerald Gillis
 Patriot and Assassin by Robert Cook
 A Quest for Skye by John Rothdeiner
 The Recipients Son: A Novel of Honor by Stephen Phillips
 The Bad Boy Bert Hall: Aviator and Mercenary of the Skies by Blaine Pardoe
 Death in the Baltic by Cathryn Prince
 CIB - Combat Infantry Badge by Wilbur (Bill) Rambow
 American Samurais - WWII in Europe by Pierre Moulin
 American Samurais - WWII in the Pacific by Pierre Moulin
 Love at First Flight: Adventures, Exploits, Sacrifices, Risks & Rewards by Capt. W. Stewart Orr, & Fran Orr
 I'll be in the Fourth Grade Forever by Maria Ruiz
 Zarbul Masalha: 151 Afghan Dari Proverbs by Edward Zellem
 Silas Soule: A Short Eventful Life of Moral Courage by Thomas Bensing
 Butterfly Dust by Nubby Grumpins
 Famous Dogs: Changing History One Dog (& One Cat) at a Time by Pat McGrath Avery
 USERNAME by Joyce Faulkner [Performed by: Mike D. Mullins]
 The Girl Who swam to Atlantis by Elle Thornton
 For God and Country by Mark Bowlin
 A Yank in the Luftwaffe by Robert Ricard
 And Then I Cried: Stories of a Mortuary NCO by Justin Jordan

This seems to be one very wet summer. I know a lot of the country is still in drought conditions, but every time I turn on the TV, I hear one story after another about thunder storms and flooding. My heart goes out to you who have suffered personal losses during these storms. Luckily most of us have avoided the worst of the weather and have simply had to stay indoors a lot. Between the heat of the summer and the rain, while you're inside and trying to stay cool, might I suggest an excellent book? Yes, once again we have just what you're looking for: a superb selection of good books. Check out a few of the books from our recommended reading list mentioned above.

There's a Classroom in the Jungle

Seasoning is what they said we needed,
As cattle on the range we followed
Onto the path between the seas.
The heat, the smell, and — God, yes — the bush
Makes for soldiers training in the jungle.
Fears are met;
Fears are negotiated.
Tell me, teacher, is this pain necessary?
How many before us have you helped?
How many are now dead?
Tell me, teacher, does this help us?
Does this make us better prepared?
Questions that can't be answered
Until we experience the sounds of guns.
Tell me, teacher, will this jungle help us
In the ventures of a war I dread?

Richard C. Geschke
Fort Sherman, Panama
October, 1971

FROM THE HEARTLAND TO HELL BOB ROTHFUS, AN IWO JIMA VETERAN

By Louis Intres

Bob Rothfus grew up in Carlisle, Iowa, a small farming community in the heartland of America. Times were hard in 1929 when, at age five, he had to work on his grandfather's farm to help feed the family. They were poor, but he developed a strong work ethic and patriotic spirit.

Through the Great Depression he worked and studied, graduating from a two-room schoolhouse at age sixteen. He had already missed his childhood when news of the War in Europe filled the airwaves. At age nineteen he left the farm and its \$30.00 per month salary, feeling a patriotic call to serve.

Young men like Bob were being drafted and placed in harm's way as quickly as they were trained. Wishing not to be drafted, he enlisted in the Marines.

Bob experienced sudden culture shock upon his arrival at boot camp in San Diego. It was a bee hive of activity and the training was the roughest experience he had known. From there he was sent to Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California for three months. Having a



Louis Intres

keen intellect and the ability to type served him well. He was assigned to the Battalion Headquarters Company in the newly formed Fifth Marine Division. He received training in the signal corps and eventually learned to decode messages, along with the proper use of a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR).

Bob was transferred to Camp Tarawa in Hawaii where he and his buddies began staging for deployment to an unknown destination. Having top-secret clearance in decoding, only Bob and one other marine knew their destination was the Island of Iwo Jima in the South Pacific. The remaining marines found out three days after they shipped out. Seasickness, boredom, and nervous anticipation marked the two-month trip.

Rothfus's ship arrived, just off the island of Iwo Jima, on February 15, anchoring off shore until the remaining task force arrived. The famous amphibious assault began on the 19th. Bob was among the first wave of Marines, landing on Beach Green 1, immediately adjacent to Mount Suribachi. The beach, a sandy terrace running inland 140 yards, ended at a 10-foot high terrace. There a well-drilled, encamped army of over 21,000 Japanese soldiers awaited them.

The enemy had plenty of time to prepare for the attack. They hid themselves in a network of caves, concrete and steel bunkers, fortified artillery positions and over eleven miles of tunnels. From the mountain, they rained a heavy and constant shower of mortars and machine gun fire on the beaches and landing craft. The battle began fiercely and got worse. Hundreds of men were cut down before reaching the sandy beach. Landing craft were hit before they could disburse their precious cargos. Those who actually made the beach hunkered down under withering fire. As Bob sought the shelter of a sand terrace on the beach he realized he had left the heartland of America, only to enter the gates of hell.



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Iwo Jima was part of the Japanese Empire and the first to be attacked by American forces. They fought tenaciously to keep it, knowing the importance of the airstrips. This was a site from which Americans could launch an air strike on their mainland. It was some of the most brutal fighting of World War II, with American casualties (killed and wounded) exceeding those of the Japanese.



Bob Rothfus 2nd row from bottom, fourth Marine left to right.

Expecting to be reasonably secure behind the front lines, Bob awaited code machines that never came. Instead, he manned a weapon and fought the enemy. His defense was a 30-caliber carbine and a pistol. For the first three days of this 36-day battle Rothfus and his buddies were pinned on the beach taking fire from the caves and bunkers of Suribachi. They could hardly raise their heads above a small sand terrace without taking enemy fire. They couldn't dig foxholes to any depth due to the intense heat and sulfuric odor coming from the sand itself. On two occasions in those first days, Japanese commandos attacked at night. Each time, the HQ battalion fought them off, but not without casualties. Fearful of a sudden attack at anytime, Bob and his buddy, Mack McCartin, helped each other through bouts of hunger and sleep deprivation.

The Headquarters Battalion, of which he was a part, was stuck on the beach for 10 days under heavy machine gun and mortar fire coming from the base of the mountain. Rothfus can still vividly recall but finds it difficult to speak of the horrors he witnessed. Surrounded by death and dying, he fought the enemy and tended to his buddies, carrying both the living and dead to transports taking them out to hospital ships offshore.

Throughout his 26 days fighting on Iwo Jima he remembers two incidents that reinforced the rightness

of fighting this battle. On February 24, he witnessed the first flag raising on top of Suribachi. (This flag raising was recreated moments later, resulting in the Pulitzer Prize winning photo by Joe Rosenthal). The second incident was watching the first American airplane, damaged and without two engines, land on the northern airstrip, recently secured by the Marines. Taking Iwo Jima and securing the landing strips

saved the plane and its crew, as well as the planes that followed.

(The full version of Bob's story will soon be published as a Kindle Single titled From the Heartland to Hell by Louis Intres.)



Bob Rothfus today.

THE SQUADRON COWARD

By Glenn Wasson

A common theme of all military writing is the exaltation showered on the valor of heroes throughout the ages. But where does one find a sympathetic account of the common coward who served and suffered combat in silence, seldom if ever receiving any credit for persevering in the face of constant peril. It rarely comforts the weak of heart to be told that a coward dies a thousand deaths, a brave man only once.

I had the privilege of knowing the self-proclaimed Squadron Coward who served with me in the Third Bomb Wing at Kunsan, Korea in 1952. He was a fellow navigator who flew night interdiction missions over North Korea.

Besides flying combat missions, all officers in the squadron were assigned ground duties. This was supposed to round out our managerial experience, but more importantly, furnish our superiors with observations to be reflected in our officer effectiveness reports. It required considerable creativity to provide each of us with an impressive sounding title. The many intervening years have dimmed my recollection of these titles but I seem to recall some of the following: We had a squadron athletic officer, a squadron historian, a squadron awards and decorations officer, a VD prevention officer, a health and sanitation officer, a casualty notification officer, a mess inspection officer, an education officer, a morale officer, an insect control officer and other imaginative titles that gave each of us a separate identity and some minor area of responsibility.

One billet not authorized by the Air Force table of allowances was that of Squadron Coward. However, one of our newly arrived crew members arrogated this previously unfilled position and loudly proclaimed at the bar in the Officer's Club that he was the Squadron Coward and utterly terrified in the performance of his duties. He had an encyclopedic catalog of every conceivable hazard that might be imagined.

Our mission required flying the black painted B-26 on four- or five-hour night sorties over North Korea to detect and destroy any moving traffic, either on railroads

or on highways. On a typical night we put up an average of 15 flights, and usually had 15 returning planes before daylight the next morning. But, inevitably, there were some nights when one or two planes did not return. We never knew what happened to them; they seldom radioed a distress call.

They just disappeared into a black hole that swallowed planes and crews without a hint of what went wrong. Of course, unknown hazards are always more fearful than obvious perils, because a person's imagination can manufacture all sorts of frightening scenarios to explain the unexplainable.

Our Squadron Coward had an imagination unfettered by any reasonable expectation of coming events. His plane would likely be incinerated by a lightning strike or collide with a flock of night-flying geese. There were also reports of flying saucers and passing meteorites. Even less credible were rumors that the Russians were introducing experimental night fighters. Always possible were engine failures or flak damage resulting in nighttime bailouts in total darkness over hostile territory, capture and prolonged torture by sadistic guards, slow starvation in North Korean prison camps and crashing into obscure mountain tops during low-level train strafings.

Moreover, there were unmarked high-tension lines invisible at night, mid-air collisions with other aircraft, blast and shrapnel damage from flying too low over your own bomb drops, tethered balloons with hanging steel cables over likely targets, pilots blinded by searchlights who lose control too close to the ground — these and many more catastrophes were elaborated in the most lugubrious language. Considering the hazards, it was



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a miracle that any of us were still alive. We had the life expectancy of a balloon on New Year's Eve.

Of course all of us concealed some of the same apprehensions, but we were too concerned with our own macho image to express them. The Squadron Coward made the rest of us appear fearless by comparison and we began to appreciate his contribution for our undeserved reputations for disdaining danger. But with that insight came the gnawing realization that it took more courage to admit your fears before your comrades than concealing them with typical military bravado.

Our Squadron Coward eventually achieved a respected status and helped all the rest of us feel better about ourselves. I hope that someday an appropriate decoration will be awarded to all self-proclaimed cowards who faithfully serve their country in spite of overwhelming anxiety.

Postscript:

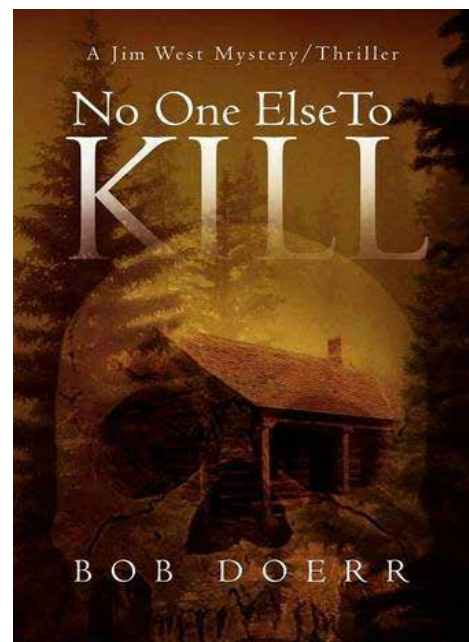
Public squares throughout the world are decorated with statues of heroes who fomented and won wars with undaunted courage. But where have you ever seen a statue to a statesman or military leader who prevented a war? I think the time has come to recognize those leaders who judiciously pursue a just peace in preference to war.

Previously published in DR AHEAD, the national newsletter for navigators and bombardiers.

MWSA Member Comes Out a Winner in the 2013 Eric Hoffer Awards

MWSA member Bob Doerr's book *No One Else to Kill* was selected as the runner-up to the grand prize winner in the commercial fiction category in this year's Eric Hoffer Awards. The Eric Hoffer Awards are given out annually and are open to any books written in English, except those published by the five or six major publishing houses. You can learn more about the awards by visiting their website at www.HofferAward.com. The commercial fiction category is a large one and includes all books of fiction that can be placed in a genre, i.e. romance, science fiction, horror, religious, mystery, thriller, etc. Earlier this year *No One Else to Kill* was also selected as a Finalist for the da Vinci Award in the same contest. The da Vinci Eye is awarded to the book with the most outstanding cover.

No One Else to Kill is the fifth book in Bob's Jim West mystery/thriller series. It is set in the Pecos Wilderness of New Mexico and once again thrusts Jim West into the middle of a murder mystery from which he can't seem to extricate himself. It is available in hardcover, paperback, and ebook formats through all major online book sellers and at some brick and mortar bookstores. If you're looking for a fast-paced mystery, then check out *No One Else to Kill*. You can learn more about Bob and his books at his website www.bobdoerr.com



POSTCARD FROM MY PAST

by *Lt. Col. Robert B. Robeson (U.S. Army, Ret.)*

In Vietnam in late August 1969, our four-man medical evacuation helicopter crew was thrust into the middle of a major battle involving four regiments of the U.S. Army's 196th Light Infantry Brigade, two battalions of the U.S. 7th Marines and batteries of the U.S. 82nd Artillery that provided fire support from four firebases located approximately 30-35 miles southwest of Da Nang. These Americans would be facing 1,500 Communist soldiers.*

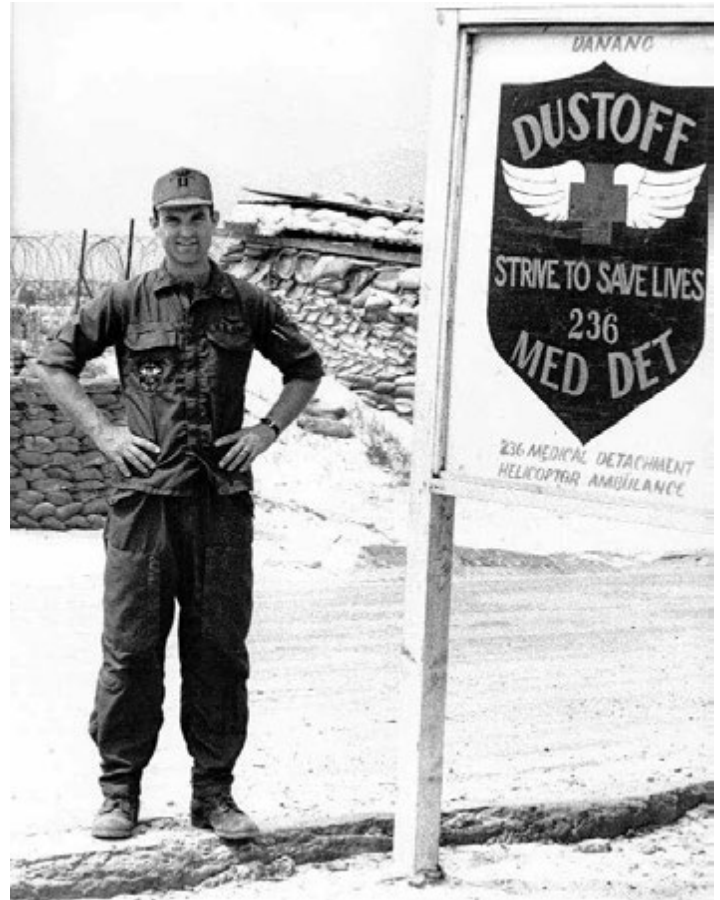
As operations officer for the 236th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance), headquartered at Red Beach in Da Nang, I'd assigned myself—from August 20-22—as copilot for our field-site crew at Landing Zone Baldy, 20 miles south of Da Nang. As a rookie pilot, I'd barely been in the unit a month.

In two-and-a-half days of devastating action, our crew evacuated 150 wounded Americans from the Que Son Valley near Hiep Duc on 42 missions, 15 of which were “insecure.” This meant that our ground troops couldn't guarantee the safety of the landing zones because the enemy was in close contact or our friendlies were low on ammunition and couldn't provide sufficient covering fire.

On a majority of these insecure missions, helicopter gunships weren't available to cover our unarmed aircraft because their services were required elsewhere. Our only alternative was to go in alone because most of the wounded wouldn't have survived if we'd waited for gunships.

During the morning of August 21st, our UH-1H (Huey) was shot up by enemy AK-47 rifle fire while exiting another insecure landing zone. One of our three patients was wounded for the second time. A burst of enemy fire ripped into a can of oil our crew chief kept under my armored seat, spraying oil over my Nomex flight pants. Another round locked me in my shoulder harness when it clipped a wire on the unlocking device attached to the left side of my seat. We deposited our patients at the Baldy battalion aid station while another helicopter was being ferried out for our use.

Less than 24 hours later (August 22nd), we were shot up



for the second time on another insecure mission while evacuating an African-American infantry staff sergeant who'd been shot in the back. An AK-47 round hit our medic in the throat and tore out his larynx. Two of our three radios were shot out and a number of bullets hit the cockpit and other areas of the aircraft.

In the aid station I held our medic's legs while a doctor performed a tracheotomy without anesthesia, because the wound had swollen so quickly he couldn't breathe. He survived but had to endure over a dozen follow-up surgeries...one of which ultimately gave him back a voice.

Thirty-two years later, an intriguing chain of events began with a story titled “The Postcard,” by Rocky Bleier (with David Eberhart) in the 2001 edition of *Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul*. The book caught my attention as I browsed in a Lincoln, Nebraska bookstore.

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As I glanced at the first paragraph of his story, the words “Hiep Duc, in the Que Son Valley of South Vietnam,” and “August 20, 1969,” stopped me in my tracks, bringing back decades-old memories of danger, darkness and death.

I purchased the book, read the article and decided to do additional research. I’d heard that Bleier had written an autobiography titled *Fighting Back* (with Terry O’Neil). The book covered details concerning his service in Vietnam in 1969 where he’d been severely wounded in both legs. He told the inspiring story of how he’d overcome his wounds, and a right foot that doctors thought — at one point — would have to be amputated, to win four NFL Super Bowls as a running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1974, 1975, 1978 and 1979.

I acquired a copy of the 1995 edition of Bleier’s book through an out-of-print book dealer. When I glanced at the “Contents” page, Chapter 7 caught my attention. It was titled “August 20, 1969.”

Bleier, an M-79 grenadier with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, was wounded twice near Million Dollar Hill east of Hiep Duc. His book mentioned that a medevac helicopter had already completed two previous missions to their location that night evacuating other wounded Company C comrades. Bleier was the next to last patient on this third and final flight to be evacuated to Baldy’s aid station at 2:00 a.m. on the 21st. That’s when it hit me.

I pulled my combat flight records and a citation for the Distinguished Flying Cross (awarded to our entire crew for those two-and-a-half days of action). Everything fit. Our unit’s lone field-site was at Baldy and I only assigned one crew there at a time. Hiep Duc and Million Dollar Hill were in our area of operation and I recalled landing on the same hill three times in one night during that time. There wasn’t any doubt we were the medevac crew that had evacuated Bleier and his company comrades that hectic night.

Bleier’s Chicken Soup story made a big difference in my life. We had no idea who we were carrying that night. They were all wounded Americans and it was our responsibility to evacuate them off that dangerous mountaintop to a medical facility.

I believe many of those wounded infantrymen on the ground, in those firefights around Million Dollar Hill, must have prayed during that time. At least Bleier acknowledged this in his book. Perhaps their prayers

were answered when our crew and helicopter were sent, three times that night, to give them hope and a hand.

Ernest Hemingway said, “The world (and also combat) breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.” Perhaps this is what happened to Bleier, our flight crew and so many others who’ve survived war.

*Nolan, Keith, “Hiep Duc ‘Death Valley,’” VFW, (August 2008), p. 39.

*The full version of this story was published in *Chicken Soup for the Veteran’s Soul (Twentieth Anniversary Edition)*, Reader’s Choice Anthology, June 2013



Announcing the W.E.M. contest for 2014.

The theme “Writing to Heal.” Articles are to be no more than 500 words and must be in some way related to the theme.

There will be 12 monthly winners, months run from the 15th to the 15th. Starting July 15th.

You may submit one per month. Submissions are to be emailed to LeansToFar@aol.com.

Decision of the judges is final. Monthly winners will receive \$250.00 Buckaroos and be entered into the finals. The winners of the finals will receive \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500.00 (first, second, and third place).

Monthly winners and finalists will appear in a W.E.M. section of next year’s anthology.

Judging will be done by a panel of three judges for the monthly winners and a separate panel of three judges will determine the final winners.

MWSA POETRY

muted thoughts

people are no damn good
words I utter from within my tiny box
to no one in particular
to no one at all

waiting for night, counting the hours
it is late at night when the mind is finally quiet
when I open my mouth and cry out knowing
tomorrow will arrive and I will be scared and lonely again

trying not to think of the past
no idea if there will be a future
just concentrating on one day at a time
with death the ever hovering reality

I just need time and a pen
a chance to write my life over
rampant deletions a necessity
eventually I would write of you, of muted thoughts

jim greenwald

time alone

loneliness - is a cup held closely
in which emptiness lingers and heartaches overflow

loneliness – is a blank chapter in a slow cooked book
on a stove run amuck

you are not near me
not close enough to save me

death the naked dream of closed eyes

I devour dreams of my past
with empty yet hungry eyes

suffering nightmares of you passing me on the street

was I but a dream that haunts you as you do I?

jim greenwald

LEAD REVIEWER NOTES

by jim greenwald

Another award year ends on July 15th. If your submission is not completed in time for this year it will automatically be included in the 2014 contest. To be included in the 2013 contest, your book review must have been published to the website and scored no later than July 15, 2013.

Reviewers, get those books you are working on completed and to me quickly. Time is running out for 2013.

If your book has been scored high enough to be considered for an award, you will receive personal notification shortly after that date. Finalists will also be announced on Veterans Radio Network on July 20th. I will contact finalists with instructions that they will need about how to send copies of their book to the judges (two books — one goes to each of the two judges). Once you are notified, your book must arrive in the judge's hands within ten days or you will be disqualified. If you are relying on your publisher to send the book, I suggest you track it through them. When you ship your book, include nothing with it. If you send a note, even as explanation or thank you your book will be removed from the contest.

As is our custom, medal winners will not be announced until the evening of the banquet on September 28.

Special Note: Medal winners will have limited time to speak at the awards banquet — and we ask that they all comply by keeping to the time or less. Silver & Bronze Medal winners a maximum of two minutes and Gold Medal winners three minutes. A reminder will be in the September issue of Dispatches and it will be announced at the beginning of the awards banquet.

Conference This year's conference is in Dayton, Ohio (September 26-29, 2013). The venue is the Holiday Inn Fairborn, Conference Center I-675, 2800 Presidential Drive, Fairborn, Ohio 45324. Details about the conference are posted on the website under "Conferences" and they are also listed on the Conference Application Form. It is your responsibility to read the information. If you are planning on coming, request the application form by emailing LeansToFar@aol.com,

fill it out completely, and return it to the same email address.

The Hotel is not obligated to provide the contract room rate after September 5, 2013. So get those reservations in quickly. Once the reserved block is filled or that date arrives, you will probably need to find alternate accommodations.

Book Sales Table: The book sales table is limited to sixty titles — first come, first served. You may submit a maximum of two books for a fee. In the past, we allowed folks to bring books and we squeezed them in. However, this has caused numerous problems. This year only those signing up in advance will be allowed to place a book(s) on the table.

Work is in progress on the program for the conference, a tentative list of seminars is listed below. We need to firm up some offers first. Though a couple we are 100% sure of are mentioned here in my notes. If you have an idea for a seminar you feel would be valuable let me know, better yet, let me know if you are willing to put it on. I need to know no later than August 24th. I am sure we have folks with expertise in areas that would benefit our members, share, that is part of the reason for this organization's existence.

Anderson Room — Primarily our Media Center, it will also handle most of the One-On-One's which have to be pre-scheduled (time is running out to do so — It must be scheduled by July 31st.).

Glenn Room — This room is set aside with the exception of hours indicated for One-On-One Discussions that would be pre-scheduled for use by all members as a gathering place when not attending a seminar and provides a place to sit and chat with old and new friends and to get those Anthologies signed. It would not be polite to try and get signatures during a seminar.

Officers & Board members — Book Donation Presentation at the Dayton VA Community Living Center (Nursing Home) to be held at 3:00PM on September 25, 2013 (we will need to pack up books and leave the hotel by 2:00PM so plan accordingly).

Thursday 3-5 Air Force Museum Tour — Bus will pick

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you up at the hotel at 2:30 and return you in time for dinner at the hotel 5:30. There is no cost for members or their guests for the tour [Not the original one planned but one you will not want to miss] ((Room for 40 passengers)).

Thursday 3:30-4:30 PM — Open Discussion #1 about the MWSA website in the Lindberg Room — General discussion on uses and ease of use, changes and or improvements you would like to see.

Thursday 4:40-5:20 PM — Open Discussion #2 in Lindberg Room about changes/additions/improvements to MWSA outreach that conform to our non-profit goals/requirements

Thursday 5:30 PM — Dinner Buffet in the Lindberg Room — Pizza (Pepperoni – 3 Cheese & Pizza Marguerite), Garden Salad (choice of dressing), drinks and assorted ice cream

Friday 8:45-9:30 AM — Lindberg Room — Orientation with Dwight Zimmerman

Friday 9:40-10:30 AM — Research and Citing History with Louis Intres in Lindberg Room

Friday 9:40-10:30 AM — Writing Children's Books with Pat McGrath Avery in the Amphitheatre

Friday 10:45 AM -12:15 PM — Posting Reviews with jim greenwald in Lindberg Room — this a required seminar for reviewers. If you are not a reviewer, and have not contacted jim greenwald to become one you may attend but please listen and give all the time for questions to those that have to do the postings. The proper approach/method for posting a review. Bring your cheat sheets with you as they will surely help you. There will be more changes to the system but if you know the present one the changes will be easy to incorporate.

Friday 10:45 AM -12:15 PM — In the Amphitheatre, learn about InDesign Book Layout with Joyce Faulkner

Friday 12:30 PM — Lunch Buffet in Lindberg Room — Chicken & Rice Soup, Fruit Salad, House Pasta Salad, Chicken Salad on Sourdough Bread, Tuna Salad on Croissant, Brownies & Blondie's for dessert and drinks.

Friday 1:45-2:30 PM — State of the Industry in Lindberg Room with Dwight Zimmerman.

Friday 1:45-2:30 PM — Audio Books with Pat McGrath Avery and Mike Mullins

Friday 2:40-3:40 PM — Travel Writing For Fun and Profit with Don Helin in Lindberg Room.

Friday 2:40-3:40 PM — “The Soul of Military Writers” with Fr. Ron Camarda in Amphitheatre.

Friday 3:50-4:50 PM — Writing Lead Lines With a 26-Letter Alphabet, or Less by Dwight Zimmerman in the Lindberg Room.

Friday 3:50-4:50 PM — In Amphitheatre with Joyce Faulkner — Tips and Tricks for using Evernote together Google Alerts, Talkwalker or other apps to collect and organize information from the web, emails, photos, pdfs, audio, and other media.

Friday 5-6:00 PM — Gino Pasi will present a talk on “Research — Using Primary Sources” in the Amphitheatre. He will also go over collections they have available at Wright State University [www.libraries.wright.edu]

Friday 5:00-6:00 PM — Publishing Paths will Jill Swenson

Friday 6:00 PM — Dinner Buffet in the Lindberg Room — Garlic bread, Minestrone Soup, Caesar salad, Vegetable Pasta primavera, Chicken Parmesan, Spaghetti Bolognese, Tiramisu, and drinks

Friday 7:00 PM — Cash Bar — Open Mic with Betsy Beard

Friday 8:30 PM — Buckaroo Auction — Randy Beard Auctioneer

Saturday 8:30-9:30 AM — “The Souljour of Writers” with Fr Ron Camarda in Amphitheatre — A workshop on developing a personal mission statement which will reflect the theme of how we write and why we write. It will follow the path of job to occupation to career and to Vocation.

Saturday 8:30- 9:30 AM — “What It Means To Be A Writer” with Del Staecker in the Lindberg Room.

Saturday 9:00-10:00 AM — Radio Show Interviews in the Anderson Room. Veterans Radio Network hosts Dale Throneberry and Dwight Jon Zimmerman will once again be conducting a special edition of their radio show spotlighting the Military Writers Society of America. Finalist attendees will have an opportunity to talk about their books and themselves. Slots will be assigned starting July 22nd, first come first serve. It is

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a promotional opportunity not to be missed because you'll be talking to listeners who are a prime audience for your books.

Saturday 9:40-10:40 AM — How Do I Design an eBook? Joyce Faulkner in the Amphitheatre — Explanation of the different formats, the various tools available, and a demonstration of how to create a mobi file (kindle) and ePub from Scrivener — and iBook from iAuthor.

Saturday 9:40-10:40 AM — Photoshop 1 with Nancy Smith in Lindberg Room — Overview Photoshop & how to work with photos

Saturday 10:15-11:30 AM — Five Minute Radio Interviews by Dale Throneberry — These will be uploaded to our website for member use. Slots will be assigned starting July 22nd. For non-finalist attendee authors on a first come first served basis. If any slots are left over, some finalists may be slotted in here also.

Saturday 10:50-11:30 AM — Photoshop 2 with Nancy Smith in the Lindberg Room — Using Photoshop to create book covers & other fun stuff

Saturday 10:50-11:30 AM — "Writing Descriptions" in Amphitheatre with Jack London.

Saturday 11:35 AM -12:15 PM — The Value of Your Time on the Back-End Activities of Your Book in Lindberg Room with Jo Ann Forrester

Saturday 11:35 AM -12:15 PM — Writing and working with Dialogue with Jack Woodville London in the Amphitheatre.

Saturday Lunch Buffet — 12:20- 1:00 PM in Lindbergh Room — Taco/Fajita bar, Taco Salad bar, Seasoned Chicken and Ground Beef, Sauteed Peppers, Tomatoes, Lettuce, Olives, Cheese, Mexican Rice, Chips and House made Salsa, Guacamole and sour cream. For dessert Cinnamon Crisps and drinks.

Saturday 1:10-2:00 PM — Death in the Baltic: The WWII Sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff" with Cathryn J. Prince in the Lindberg Room.

Saturday 1:10-2:00 PM — Writing for Emotional and Spiritual Understanding with Bill McDonald.

Saturday 2:10-3:00 PM — Marketing Your Book with Joanne Quinn-Smith

Saturday 2:10-3:00 PM — You've Landed that Publisher — Now What? With Don Helin in the Amphitheatre.

Saturday 3:10-4:00 PM — "Character as a Plot Device

and vice versa: Techniques to add depth and structure to your novel." Panel Discussion with Joyce Faulkner, Frank Evans, Mike Angle, and Jack London

Saturday — 4:15 PM — Cash Bar Outside Banquet Rooms.

Saturday — 4:45PM — Banquet Room Opens (Discover/Challenger Room)

For reviewers, there will be a seminar on "Posting Reviews." This seminar is open to and attendance is required for all current active reviewers as it is part of the process for which you are responsible.

If you are interested in becoming a reviewer you will need to get in touch with me a month prior to the conference so I can provide you the necessary information. You also would be encouraged to attend this seminar if coming to the conference. It is far easier to learn in person than over the internet, but either way as of January 1, 2014, you will be ready to post reviews on the website.

We need reviewers who have iPads to review ebooks, ibooks, and audible books. If you have the ability please get in touch with me . Joyce Faulkner will be presenting a seminar on iPad interactive books at the seminar. This is the new wave of books and more and more titles will be coming out in this form. Interactive books add a whole new dimension to a book. This is one seminar you will not want to miss.

One-On-One Sessions are planned for the conference. If you are interested and are planning on attending please indicate your preference (First and Second choice time slot and whom). Only one Critique or Marketing session per member. Book critiques require you to mail a book to the individual in July so they have time to read and plan. The book can be in manuscript form if not yet published. This is preferred and would be the most useful time for you to get this indepth feedback. First come first served. Get your response back to me asap. If Joyce or Bob do not have a manuscript/book by July 31st no one-on-one can be scheduled.

Critique	Day	Time
Joyce Faulkner	Friday	8:45 — 9:30 AM
Bob Doerr	Friday	11:45 AM — 12:30 PM
Bob Doerr	Friday	2:00 — 2:30 PM
Joyce Faulkner	Saturday	8:30 — 9:15 AM
Joyce Faulkner	Saturday	9:45 — 10:15 AM

Critique	Day	Time
Bob Doerr	Saturday	2:30 — 3:00 PM
Marketing	Day	Time
Maria Edwards	Friday	2:00 — 2:45 PM
Maria Edwards	Saturday	1:30 — 1:55 PM
Maria Edwards	Saturday	3:10 — 3:55 PM

Jill Swenson (Swenson Books) — Is willing to do either a Critique or Marketing Review by appointment. If you want a Critique you will be required to send her a book or manuscript by email before July 31st. Time slots [Friday – 8:45-9:15, 9:20-9:50, 10:00-10:20, 10:25-10:45, and Saturday – 2:15-2:35 and 2:40-3:00. Email LeansToFar@aol.com to set an appointment time [select two time choices].

Book Donations for the VA Hospital are needed. Do not let your fellow veterans down by missing out on this chance to help them — donate a book or books now. If each member would donate just one book we would have a nice library for the Dayton VA. Contact me for shipping information today! A complete list of all those who donated a book or books to this cause will be in the September (Conference) Dispatches. To date of our roughly 1,000 members, 72 members have donated a book or books. AAA has also donated books.

Donations for the annual auction are being accepted now. Electronics, gift cards, and services are some of the more popular items. You receive credit in buckaroos for the value of the donation and the difference between the value and auction selling price. If you have something to donate and are unsure if it is okay, email me. We cannot auction off used husbands or wives.

A few folks mentioned at last year's conference that they wished to donate to the auction, please contact me with the information on what you wish to donate.

Buckaroos that you have earned or won over the last year can be picked up the night of the Auction at the Amphitheatre entrance!

If you are not coming to the conference, you may pre-bid on items in the auction.

You can check how many buckaroos you have on the website and September 1st in Dispatches a list of what is being auctioned off will be printed. Email LeansToFar@aol.com between September 1 and September 14th to place an on line bid.

Need Volunteers: Registration Desk Time Slots: Email LeansToFar@aol.com to fill these or indicate preference on the conference application. Need two people for each slot. Change the font to RED in the time slot you are volunteering for on the conference application.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8:00 – 10:30 AM	8:00 – 10:30 AM <i>Need One</i>	8:00 – 10:00 AM <i>Need One</i>
10:30 – 12:30 <i>Filled</i>	10:30 AM – 12:30 PM	10:00 AM – 12:00 NOON
12:30 – 3:00 PM	12:30 – 3:00 PM	12:00 – 2:00 PM
3:00 – 5:00 PM	3:00 – 5:00 PM	2:00 – 3:00 PM

Member Addresses: Many times this is not entered when a person fills out the membership form, possibly because they feel a concern over privacy. MWSA does not send, sell, or share information with anyone or any business. If we need to send you snail mail for any reason it adds work to an already full workload. So, if you have not provided an address to date, please take the time to do so direct to the membership secretary maria@americanauthorsassociation.com.

Important! The October Dispatches will be out early, September to be exact. Each attendee at the conference will receive a print copy which will contain the conference program in it.

Each member receives a copy of the anthology at the conference. Additional copies will be sold for \$25.00 each. If you are not attending you may contact me to purchase a copy, the cost for it and postage/handling is \$36.00.

APRIL AUTHOR OF THE MONTH DAVID MICHAELSON

David Michaelson (aka Nubby Grumpins) once again delights us with rascally tales taken from his childhood. *Butterfly Dust and Other Animal Adventures* offers a range of stories, vignettes, sayings, and poetry about animals and children. All are done in age appropriate language and simply styling. Some stories, such as “Ollie the Orca,” are written from the viewpoint of the animal. Although it seems to leave the reader hanging, Ollie turns out to be a page turner. It’s concluded in the book. An interesting way to keep the reader interested.

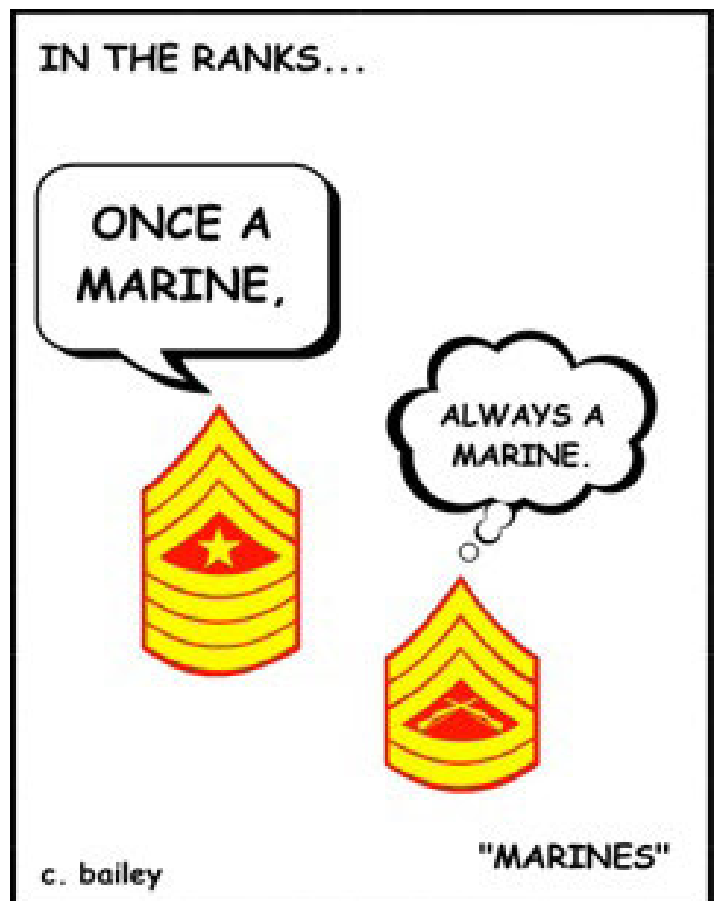
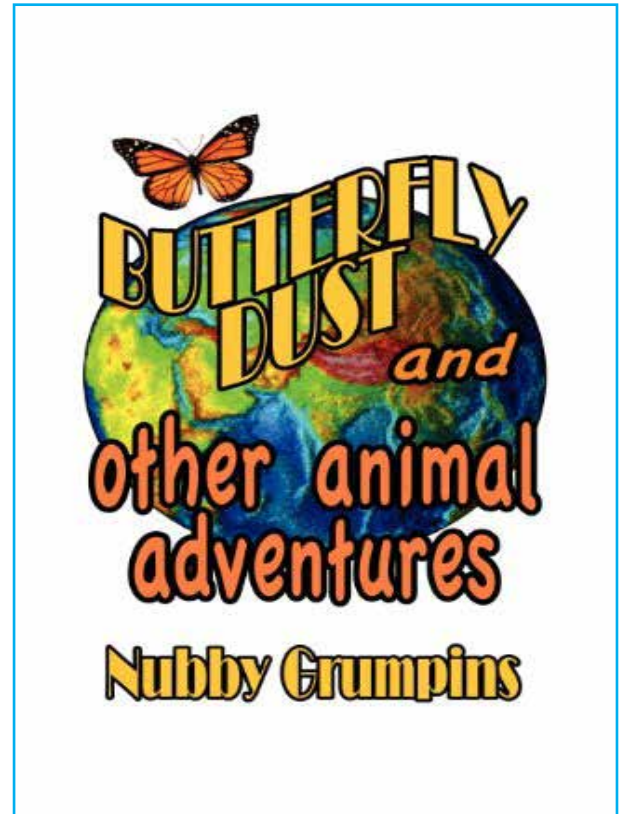
Most of the stories in the book are about animals the Tuttle family—in reality the Michaelson family of long ago — owned or knew. Grumpy is at his story telling best here. His irrepressible sense of mischief brims over in “Budgie Fights Back” and “Spinning Poor Spooky.” For those who read Michaelson’s *Rapscallion Summer*, there’s no denying Timmy Tuttle is Michaelson at his rascally best. Poor bird, to have mashed potatoes flung at him. Clever bird, to fight back with a well-aimed green pea at Timmy Tuttle’s head! And who but a rapscallion and his sister would spin a hapless cat on a waxed floor for the pleasure of watching it walk away like a drunken sailor?

Other tales are glad with a sad ending, such as the chronicles of Feisty, the cat, and Tippy, the dog. The latter gave his life to save the Tuttle children from a rattlesnake. The former met a cruel and untimely end at the hands of a neighbor’s child. Yet the boy’s punishment, helping out at the local animal shelter, so suited his crime, that he not only regretted what he did, but ultimately led to his becoming a veterinarian devoted to healing animals, not harming them.

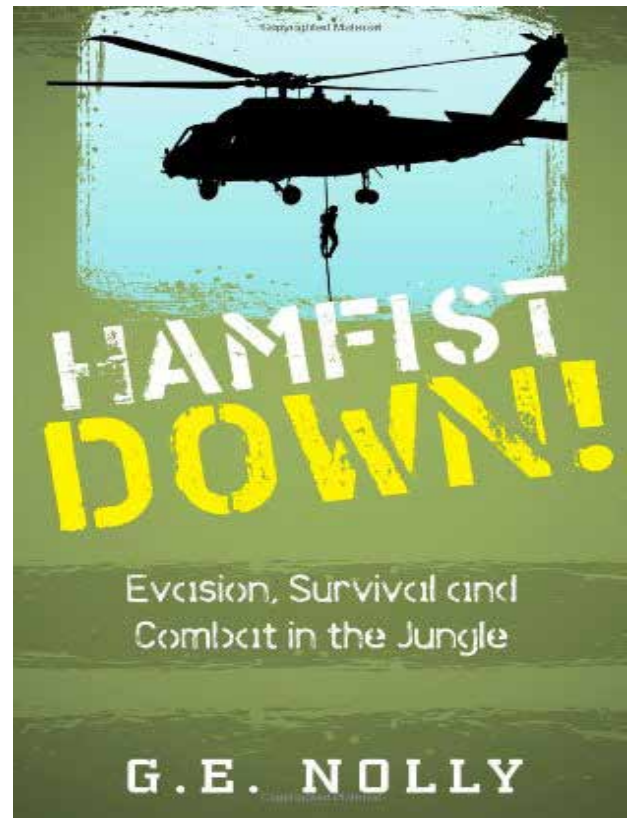
The book’s many drawings are suitable for the under twelve set, some photos, some line drawings. Done in black and white, they represent the respective animals, but the resolution of the pictures occasionally is fuzzy. The three wise camping sayings lack pictures but not wit. My favorite was number two, “No matter where you stand near a campfire the smoke will always find you.” True, very true.

Entries like these make *Butterfly Dust* a treat not only for children but also for adults who remember what it was like to be a child. Better still, they can be read to children by adults, alternately with a smile of nostalgic longing — or rascally identification.

Reviewed by: Barbara Peacock (2013)



Reviewed by: Ed Cox (2013)



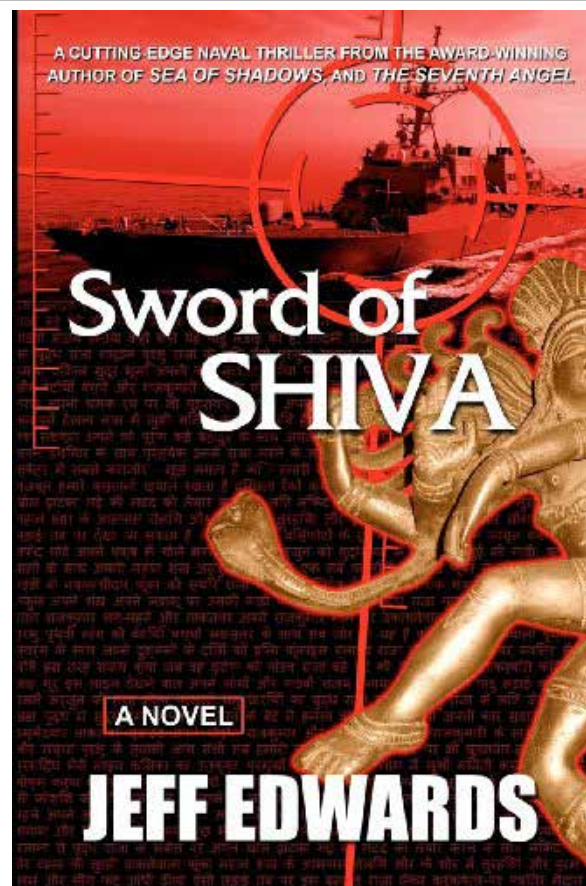
MAY AUTHORS OF THE MONTH

JEFF EDWARDS

Cause and effect ignite passions and retaliation beyond borders, balance, and boundaries, in Jeff Edwards' *Sword of Shiva*. This tit-for-tat retaliatory tale depicts the delicate balance rival governments and their leaders work hard to maintain — and shows how easily the scales can tip, as events fall like dominoes out of control.

Sword of Shiva draws the reader in with the prologue and doesn't let go until the epilogue. Jeff is a master at interweaving characters, plots, and actions to reveal a tapestry of intrigue in all of his works — and *Sword of Shiva* is no exception. Edwards' plausible course of events gives credence to the plot. His characters are real and engaging, which adds believability. The reader becomes a helpless witness to grief-stricken egos, imperfect decisions, and the ensuing destruction as it unfolds.

Sword of Shiva is an exciting and easy read, full of action and adventure, which touches the reader through a plethora of emotions. I found myself crying, giggling, animated, and angered — and couldn't wait to see what happened next. I look forward to reading Jeff Edwards' next book, *Dome City Blues*.

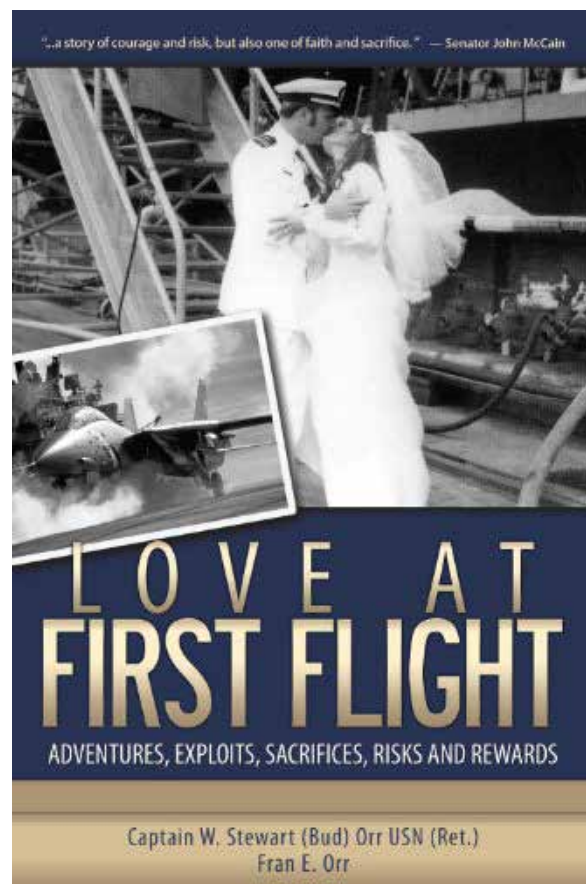


Reviewed by: Sandra Linhart (2013)

BUD AND FRAN ORR

This book won me over with fascinating, behind the scene details of everything from catapulting off or landing on aircraft carriers to the even riskier but possibly more exciting pursuit of a lasting romance. Captain Orr made me FEEL like I was in and around the jets he flew. He educates the reader about interesting specifics from his twenty-seven year career as a Navy Aviator that I am sure I would never have heard about. I identified with his male strength and frailty. Wife Fran reflects on the couples shared experiences with encouraging insight from an adorable female companion we men dream about but rarely find. Neither author sanitized events, and, as an author, These two came from different universes but joined in a magnetic attraction that held together for good, through the the tragic and terrific days ahead. Strap in and fly through Bud and Fran's adventures to see the courage, sacrifice, love, humor, and romance ... this book is truly a top notch read!

Reviewed by: Hodge Wood (2013)



MARIA RUIZ

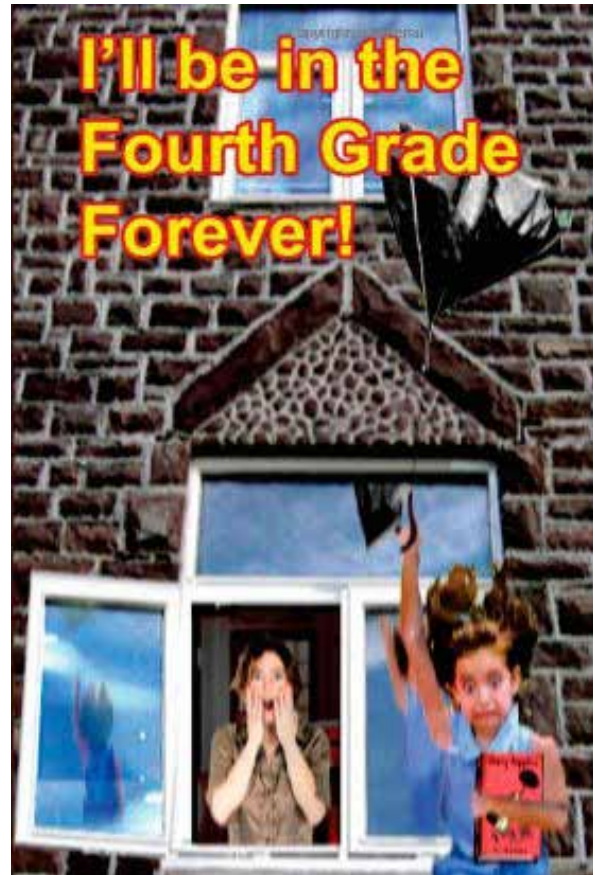
Military children live a life entirely unlike their non-military peers. Maria Ruiz should know. She was an army brat during and after WWII, one with a sharp brain and a penchant for using it to get into mischief.

I'll Be in the Fourth Grade Forever captures the innocence and insouciance of youth. Indeed, that is the most delightful aspect of Ruiz' memoir, a narrative told with an adult's wry sense of humor but a child's straightforward simplicity. Beginning in 1943 and ending in 1952, Maria recounts the trials common to many military families: the missing father away at war, the stateside family struggling to function without him, the joys of reunion, and difficulties of foreign assignments and home re-assignments. The generality appeals to those who have experienced such things, but has its own unique take. Imagine the awe of a child experiencing the wonder of a large piece of silk she found in an attic in a post WW II house. Maria was so enthralled she hung it out the window for the world to see. Only the window happened to be uphill from General Dwight Eisenhower's quarters and the piece of silk was a Nazi flag. Needless to say, her action triggered a rapid official reaction.

Not all her experiences were that amusing, though, as not all childhood experiences are. There were bullies to be faced, too dangerous even for a determined tomboy. There also was a harrowing episode when her father suffered a severe case of mumps vacationing with the family in Poland. Sick as he was, he and the family hid under a load of hay in a cart and made it across the border just before the Iron Curtain dropped.

More in the ordinary way of life, Maria tells of her frustrations adjusting to stateside schools after Europe (hence the title) and her problems finding friends. Of trips to the dentist and of the family dog who just barely survived shipment back home. *I'll Be in the Fourth Grade Forever* is a story any family can relate to, and one which even middle school children can understand. One hopes Ruiz will continue her story in a sequel.

Reviewed by: Barbara Peacock (2013)

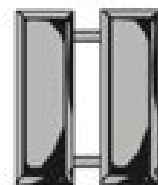


IN THE RANKS...

"The secret of all victory lies in the organization of the non-obvious."



Marcus Aurelius?



c. bailey

"ARMY"

MAY BOOK OF THE MONTH - DEATH IN THE BALTIC

Before the fall of Communism in the early 90s the events of the horrors of what transpired on the Eastern Front were sketchy and minimal at best. We were well versed on the events of the Western Front and what transpired on the Pacific Front, but no one really knew of the horrors of what transpired East of Germany.

Cathryn J. Prince has written a historical account of an event which is little known to us all. It revolves around the events of January, 1945 in East Prussia of the sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff liner off the shores of Gotenhafen in the desperate escape of civilians and military personnel from the ferocious advancement of Russian troops.

In the last desperate attempts of Germany trying to stop the advance of Russia onto the Motherland of Germany, Hitler finally succumbed to the evacuation of civilians to the West. This large operation was code named "Operation Hannibal" in which in retrospect rescued over two million Germans from Russian destruction.

Ms. Prince goes into the history of the region of Eastern Prussia and the ethnic makeup and history of this ancient land. The resettlement and use of lebensraum as urged by the Nazi regime is well told by the author. Also the author uses first person accounts of what actually happened on that fateful night of January 30, 1945. Such people as a young Horst Woit, Helga Reuter and Irene Tschinkur, Serafina Tschinkur and Ellen Tschinkur give firsthand accounts of what transpired and the aftermath of these tragic events.

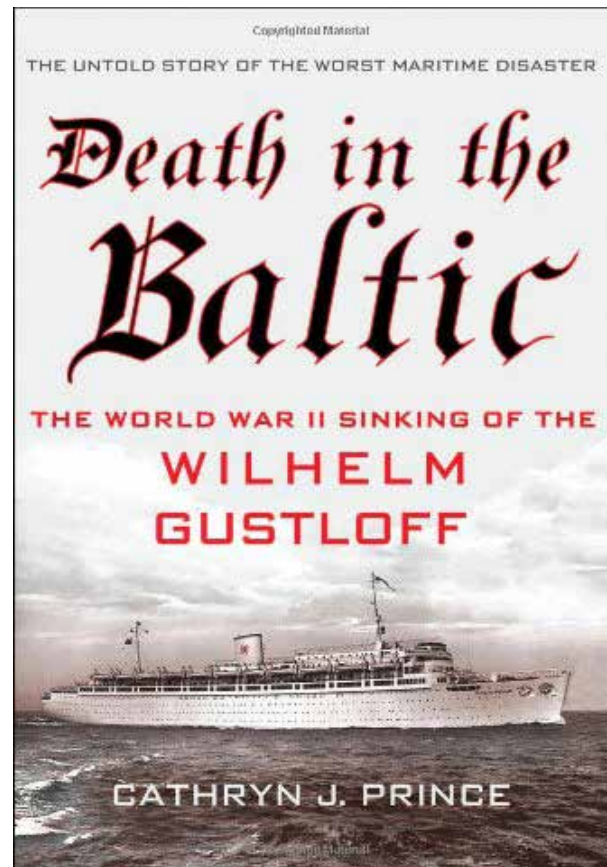
The author also goes into the mindset of the Russian submarine commander of the S-13 by the name of Alexander I. Marinesko of his intent and reasons to destroy the good ship Wilhelm Gustloff. His story in and of itself leaves the reader asking why this happened and the tragedy of one's actions in the course of life.

What the author has done is to expose an event little known to the world. Since the fall of Communism we are indeed learning more of what really happened on the Eastern Front. What we see is a brutal and unforgiving series of events which we are only beginning to unravel. As a student of the events of the Eastern Front, I can fully appreciate the efforts brought forth by Cathryn J. Prince. Her writing is more investigative with a sense of the personal touch with firsthand accounts of what actually happened. Her writing is not that of a history

professor detailing factual material. Her writing shows her journalistic talents much on the lines of military firsthand accounts written by Halberstam, Galloway and Sheehan.

This book is a classic first hand analysis of an event that should be known to all people who want to know about what really happened on the Eastern Front of WWII.

Reviewed by: Dick Geschke (2013)



JUNE AUTHOR OF THE MONTH - ELLE THORNTON

The Girl Who Swam To Atlantis is well written story of a twelve-year-old losing the naivety and insecurities of childhood as she struggles to find her mother, succeed as a competitive swimmer and win the confidence of her father who wants to send her back to a boarding school.

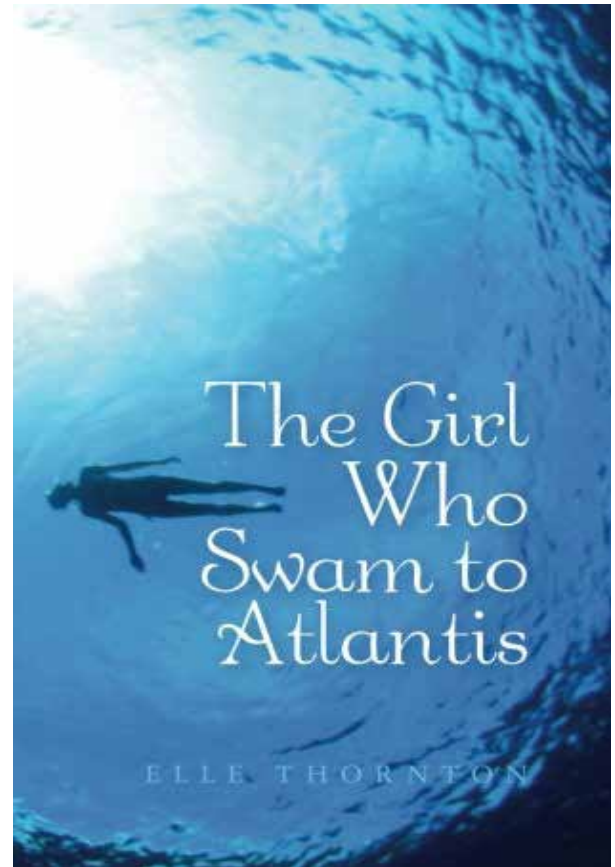
Gabriella lives a sheltered life until the summer of 1957 when she spends the summer from boarding school with her father, a rigid Marine general at a base in North Carolina. Her mother is away until, the young girl is told, "she's ready to come home."

Hawkins, a black NCO and house steward for the general, befriends the pre-teen and helps her develop greater self confidence and swimming skills in the river bordering her home, but that relationship with Hawkins is frowned upon by some neighbors. During the course of that summer, Gabriella begins to recognize and question the racial bias that exists among some of the families living in the officers housing area. She also becomes obsessed with the murder of Emmett Till who was lynched in Mississippi two years earlier. Thinking of the bravery displayed by young Emmett when he faced his killers motivates her to go to extra lengths to prove her worth to the general who seems to only tolerate her.

Gabriella struggles to understand what has happened to her missing mother who her father repeated says 'has some problems,' but will not explain what those problems were. Without her father's or Hawkins's knowledge, she sets out on the river to find her mother.

Ideal for teens, *The Girl Who Swam To Atlantis* will delight anyone who enjoys a heartwarming story of a self-willed girl who doesn't shirk from challenges and treasures the value of friendship and family love.

Reviewed by: Joe Epley (2013)



JUNE BOOK OF THE MONTH FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

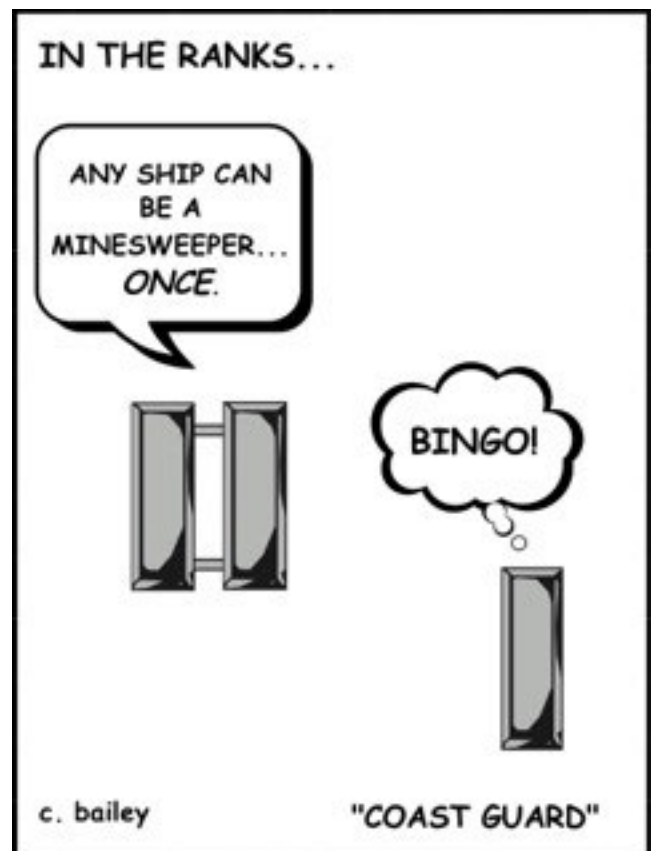
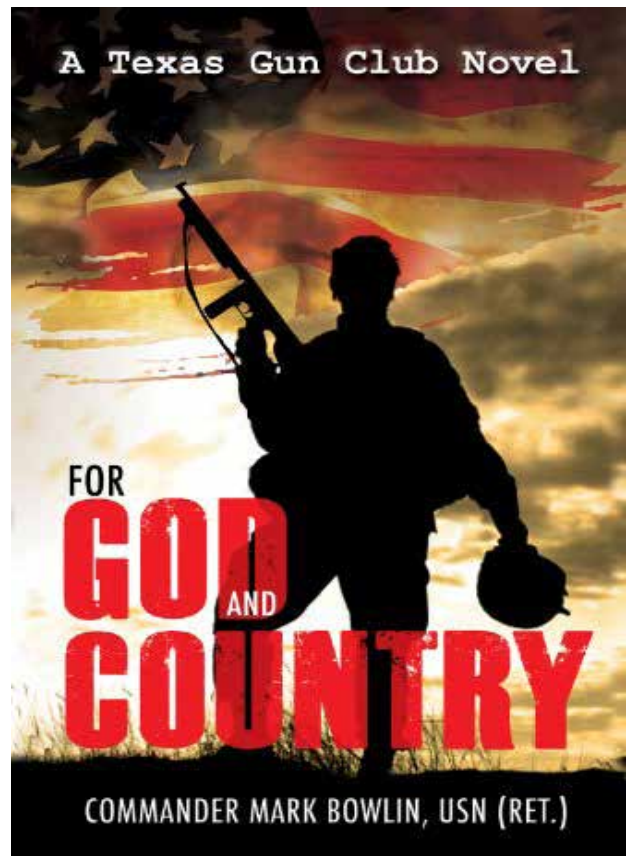
New readers of Bowlin will find this third installment of the Texas Gun Club series to be strongly reminiscent of the best of W.E.B. Griffin — and every bit as satisfying. *For God and Country* tells the story of the 36th Division's tragic assault across the Rapido River in January, 1944.

Bowlin handles the seriousness of his subject with alacrity. There is no romance in his retelling of the slaughter, but neither does he turn this book into a tale of carnage. Rather, he humanizes the characters and pulls us into the story, making the reader hope against hope (and history), that this time the boys will somehow manage to break through. Moreover, the first half of the book is lighter in tone and a Vatican subplot ensures that the book doesn't get overly heavy or morose. Bowlin's characterization is outstanding, and we can forgive him for making his heroes larger than life — both physically as well as in their embodiment of the best qualities and values of military service. The real villains in the story aren't the enemy forces, rather, they are the usual weaknesses and incompetencies found among servicemen and women whenever a nation fields an enormous force to fight wars of such magnitude on short notice.

Bowlin is a fine writer and *For God and Country* is an enjoyable, engaging, and enlightening read. You won't want to put it down, and when you do, you'll want to do more research on the 36th Division and the Battle of the Rapido River. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by: Robert Schaeffer (2013)

NOTE: This review has been edited for space. To see it as written, go to: <http://www.mwsadispatches.com/node/1454>



MWSA Conference
September 26-29, 2013
Holiday Inn Fairborn
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