

DISPATCHES

MILITARY
WRITERS
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA

Saving History One Story at a Time
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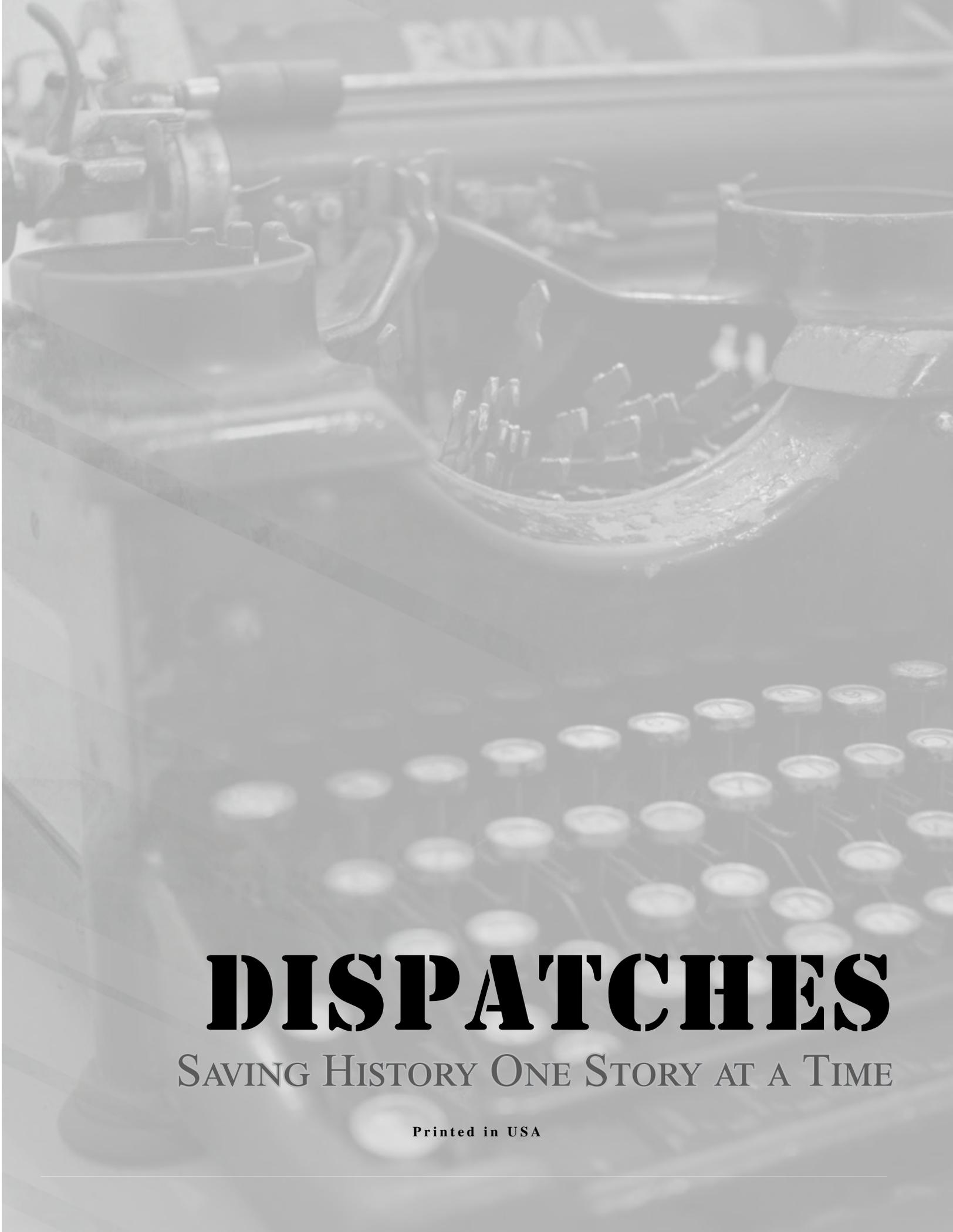
SUMMER 2023



36.
WAR AND
WRITING

7.
WRITE YOUR
STORY

20.
RECOMMENDED
READING



DISPATCHES

SAVING HISTORY ONE STORY AT A TIME

Printed in USA

DISPATCHES

SAVING HISTORY ONE STORY AT A TIME

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www.MWSADispatches.com

Printed in the USA

SUMMER 2023

MWSA DISPATCHES MAGAZINE





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A QUOTE I LIKE: “ALONE we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

At the Sub Force Museum and Library during this year’s conference at about 3:15 PM after our *Write Your Story* workshop ends, we will hold a brief remembrance ceremony at Mike Mullins’ ceremonial brick on the walkway to the museum.

Members in New London at that time are invited to attend. Additionally, those members familiar with Mike may write something to be read at the ceremony—Haiku, poem, short memory, or story, please keep it under 200 words. If you will

be attending and have a camera with you, we would appreciate your taking some photos which we can share on social media, our website, *Dispatches*, and with Mike’s widow, Phyllis.

Conferences are about networking, learning more, and exploring new ideas. We strive to engage attendees. We seek input from members, and work hard to get you each in a chair at each and every seminar and panel discussion. The ideal audience participates, and when they walk away they take with them the benefit of an exceptional experience that is shared by instructor and member alike.

If you have not registered for the conference yet, consider this your personal invitation to participate by doing so. There are less than fifty days until the hotel ends the hold on rooms, even less if thirty are booked before that date. I am looking forward to seeing old and new faces in New London. If you feel like a swim, Ocean Beach Park is close by. From the hotel, head down Bank Street, make a left onto Ocean Avenue and you will run into the park.

MWSA has relied heavily on memory rather than paper. That approach is changing—not anyone’s fault but something that needs to be corrected. We are attempting to cleanup and clarify various items. If you feel



something is confusing, please let us know and we'll look at it.

Many things need done and without volunteers we will be forced to limit what we do: Seminar presenters for our conferences and for the *Write Your Story* program, folks wanting to become Ambassadors, handle the registration desk at the conference, mentoring at the conference if sufficient interest exists, becoming a reviewer, sponsoring a student or veteran for our scholarship program.

A reminder: The folks who make the organization run are not paid a salary. They are the grease that makes the organization run, and they and I would like for you to join us in the enjoyment of working for free for the benefit of all—VOLUNTEER!

The folks who work hard to organize and create the conference program, the folks who volunteer to present seminars, and the outside speakers who give of their free time to present a seminar can best be thanked by members attending the seminars within the program agenda.

If you write, you know ideas often come from seemingly nowhere. But in actuality they are stirred by a word, phrase, song, or a take on something someone spoke about.

See you in New London.



How Many Times a poem by Annette Grunseth

As jet planes *left the world*
to land on the other side
they were wide-eyed with dread,
naive to mortars, shrapnel, snipers.
Our boys not yet men
carried songs of home
along with their M-16s
as they tracked dirt roads
in the jungle.

Those who made it home said
they will never forget the smells
of firefight and flesh,
burn barrels of human waste.
They still endure flashbacks to the days
they exhaled fear, prayed for mercy.

Care packages of cookies
and Kool-Aid from home
offered a little comfort,
while we at home asked
how many times must
bullets fly, until we are free?
How many times must they hear the cries?
How many times must we turn our heads?
How many deaths will it take?
Even now, answers are only
blowin' in the wind

©Annette Langlois Grunseth



2023 MWSA CONFERENCE

NEW LONDON, CT
September 14 - 17, 2023

Mark Your Calendar! Help create a memorable time filled with solid educational events that will inspire and motivate you to write.

Attend the seminars presented by volunteers from within and outside the organization. They have donated their time to help expand your thoughts and knowledge on subjects and areas of your writing interests. They may even spark a new road of thought for you.

Your conference fee for the full conference covers the Thursday Reception, the Auction, all program events on Friday and Saturday, lunch on Saturday, the Banquet, and Awards presentations. Your fee also covers the cost of snacks, coffee, and our conference presentation room.

THE AGENDA INCLUDES:

- How the MWSA book review and awards process works. *Betsy Beard*
- The craft of writing scripts. *Robin Hutton*
- A Staged Reading of Scenes from “This Bequest of Wings” *Nancy Arbuthnot*
- Publishing perspectives. *Terese Schlachter, Kathy Rodgers, and Janette Stone*
- How to match humor to your genre and writing style. *Dane Zeller*
- How to research, write, publish, and distribute an award-winning book. *Ruth W. Crocker, Lisa Hall Brownell, and Annette Grunseth*

To register: [Event Contact Form](#)

...or email jim directly at: NewLondon@mwsa.co





FREE Military Writers Society of America
(MWSA) workshop for veterans, military,
and their family members

VETERANS

WRITE YOUR STORY

AWARD-WINNING WRITERS WILL COVER
TOPICS INCLUDING STORYTELLING,
CHARACTERS, DIALOGUE, EDITING, AND
MORE. BEGIN THE PROCESS OF TELLING
YOUR STORY - FICTION OR NON-FICTION.

SEP. 14, 2023 | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
SUBMARINE FORCE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
1 CRYSTAL LAKE ROAD, GROTON, CT

Registration is required at writeyourstory@mwsa.co (co, not com) and limited to 40 participants. Registration includes complimentary lunch courtesy of The Rolling Tomato.

RECENTLY THE MILITARY WRITERS SOCIETY of America Board of Directors approved a few changes to the publication policy for *Dispatches* magazine. Included in our new policy are opportunities for MWSA member writers, authors, and businesses supporting them to publish and advertise for free.

I urge all members to take advantage of the opportunity to have your work published in a national magazine. For *Dispatches*, we accept articles on a wide range of topics. We welcome articles about the military but also stories with no military theme at all. We seek to showcase members' works—be they fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or artwork. We limit feature articles to 1500 words or less.

We ask only three things from you:

- Submit your professionally or self-edited work with a high-resolution author photo by submission deadlines (page 76).
- Follow the MWSA's longstanding policy of not disparaging the Military.
- Consider if your book is primarily focused on gratuitous violence and/or sexual situations, it might not be suitable for *Dispatches*.

DISCLAIMER: MWSA/Dispatches reserves the right to decline any article or ad it deems inappropriate or offensive. The views and opinions expressed in Dispatches are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the Military Writers Society of America.

DO YOU HAVE A PUBLISHED BOOK? In *Dispatches*, we can place a free half-page "Book Showcase" ad. We'll run up to three showcase ads per member, per year. (*Submission deadlines apply.*)

DO YOU HAVE A WRITING, EDITING, AND/OR PUBLISHING SERVICE? We will run an ad for your business up to twice yearly. This service is also free to members but content must be supplied by the member.

Contact us at dispatches@mwsa.co for any additional guidance.

Writing an article for publication is hard. Writing an entire novel is incredibly hard. Let us at *Dispatches* help you on your journey.

In Joy & Enjoy,

Sandra Linhart
Creative Director

2023 AWARDS SEASON

A TRUE RECORD BREAKER

In a typical season, MWSA has been able to accept an average of seventy-five books into our review and awards program. This year, our volunteer reviewer force of sixty-nine active reviewers has been working overtime, taking in a record 117 books representing 351 individual evaluations.

Since our 2023 season book submission window closed on June 15, MWSA's reviewer force remains busy tallying scores, writing reviews, and finalizing our list of awards finalists. Look for our announcement of finalists via a video broadcast in the first part of August.

We look forward to presenting this year's award winners with their medals during our annual awards banquet at our yearly membership conference in New London, CT.

The MWSA awards directors are justifiably proud of all the tremendous work our reviewers have done this season.

Your MWSA Awards Directors,

Betsy Beard, John Cathcart, and Rob Ballister



A MAJOR BLAINE MYSTERY
In Three Parts

THE BEAT, PART 2 - THE WAR

GARY B. ZELENSKI



THEY SHIPPED PHILLIP WINSTON MARLBORO to France. The war was raging, and his number came up. He'd stayed in Baltimore, but someone or something bigger than him had a different plan. It wasn't God's plan. God doesn't send men to war. God doesn't welcome them home, either. God just cries. Cries in the form of rain. God cried at night in Baltimore, where sirens and shootings sang all night. God cried in France, even if Paris was beautiful during the day. During the war, it rained every night. God cried, soaking the cold Paris streets.

He was Military Police, trading his Baltimore police blue for the olive drab of the Army. Sergeant Marlboro in Baltimore and now Sergeant Marlboro in France. They wanted him to fight crime. He knew crime. He fought crime with his nightstick—the only justice a crook, pimp, or pickpocket ever needed. Fought crime on the streets of Paris, just like he did in Baltimore. If they wanted him to fight in the war, they'd send him to Vietnam. The war was in Vietnam. He was in France.

The Paris nights were cold, but he was used to it. Besides, nothing can fix or warm a broken heart. A heart broken by a cat who could purr so loud he could still hear that sound across an ocean. A female can do that to a man, especially a lonely man.

He took to drinking. He carried a flask in the breast pocket of his coat. He had another one stashed on his right calf where a backup revolver should've been. The occasion to use his backup gun was rare, But the reserve supply of rye was a welcome companion.

The tobacco he smoked was from a windowless shop on a small winding street off some back alley someplace west of the center of the city. He rolled his own cigarettes. Of course, he did—it gave his hands something to do. The smoke smelled like the armpit of a lamppost queen who'd been dead for three days. The smoke had a smell that said, "Don't mess with me, don't make me use this nightstick." But it was a smell he was all too familiar with.

Sergeant Marlboro didn't have the safest profession. Some jobs were far worse. That's why he was there, standing in the rain in the back alleys of Paris. They needed him much more than he needed them.

It happened in an instant. Being in the war meant danger followed you. It could all be over in an instant. If it was your time. Over in an instant when you're in the war. Of course, it was raining and dark, and Marlboro had been drinking at Lulu's—his usual haunt.

Lulu's was on the north side of Paris, in the so-called red-light district. It was also Marlboro's home. Lulu's was his home during the war. Not your average speakeasy, Lulu's was the watering

hole for the worst pickpockets, pimps, and ne'er-do-wells who swam the back alleys of Paris. The red-light district was once home to Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso, and van Gogh. Now it was a stale, seedy section of a vibrant city. It was also the home to Paris's best working gals and can-can dancers.

She found him at the bar on his usual stool in the darkest corner. She'd just got off work. It was half-past two in the morning, and the last show at the *Moulin Rouge* had just ended. You couldn't miss her if you tried.

Her red chiffon dress was too short, and her white leggings went all the way up. She had a small waist, but that was the only thing undersized about her. The tiny blouse couldn't contain those two perfectly symmetrical mounds. The kind of orbs created by surgery, not Mother Nature. That lace bodice forced her breasts up like the headlights on a *Bentley*. Behind, she was all *Rolls Royce*. She carried her six-foot two-inch frame with ease and a carefree attitude.

By that time of night, a bit of a shadow followed along her jutting jaw, and her low-pitched voice was a bit hoarse from singing all those Kurt Weill ballads.

Marlboro suspected she played for the other team, but that wasn't his concern. Who was he to judge? Just another Mack without a knife. And he was just another military cop away from home, away from

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the war. He was stuck in Paris, his only true love an ocean away.



Not one for a quiet entrance, she gave the night one last kick. One last can-can move to impress her lonely beat-cop friend. Maybe her can-can was a bit too good. Her leg flew up. Her skirt raised like the curtain at the Bijou.

Intending to plant her leg on the bar in front of Marlboro's drink, she missed. She missed the bar, his drink, and almost fell backward into Marlboro's prospect for the evening—a short gal with tattoos on both cheeks. The stool now hid her tattoos. The kind of tattoos that say, I've seen this barstool before. Marlboro's can-can friend's steel-pointed dancing shoe caught the side of Marlboro's face.

“Holy sh...!” she said.

Marlboro went flying to the left. His secondary maxillary premolar flew right.

For the rest of his life, Marlboro would have difficulty drinking soup. He also talked with a lisp and sounded like somebody had put a bag of marbles in his mouth.

A month after that fateful incident, he was awarded a Purple Heart at the garrison. Well, sort of a Purple Heart. It was some sort of French medal for traffic safety.

Sergeant Marlboro did many things during the war. If you work with the French, and you're in the Army, stationed in Paris, and the war is in Vietnam, you get a lot of medals. French medals.

His last medal and the one that bought him a ticket home was for the tragedy. His tragedy. He was not even on duty. It was not even at night, and it happened far from his beat and the seedy damp smoke-filled back alleys he had come to love.

It was one thirty-seven in the afternoon. It was a Tuesday in June. The year was 1971. My memory is weak, so I might have the date and year wrong, but the tragedy happened at exactly that time. I know this because that's when my watch stopped.

Marlboro and I were walking along the Champs-Élysées. Not soldiers during the day—just a couple of tourists. American tourists. To the French, this might have been their *Avenue of Champs*, but we were just two American chumps snapping a few harmless pictures of the wandering French girls

on a warm summer afternoon. We were hard to miss. We wore Hawaiian shirts and aviator sunglasses to hide our roving eyes. I guess we stood out. Just two ugly Americans. I guess we were to blame. Our attire was too sleazy and inappropriate for the conservative French couples holding hands and sucking face along the Champs-Élysées.

Every big city has them. Street gangs ready to snatch your purse or boost your wallet. The gangs in Paris were the worst. Cleverly disguised. Paris's infamous roving street gangs of mimes. A clever disguise for a ruthless bunch of thugs. They lure you in with a charming performance—a silent but deadly skit where you play the hero, then the victim.



I'd tell you that we didn't hear them, but you already gathered that. We were about to ask directions from two legs that climbed to heaven. We were lonely, and that gal's heaven seemed a nice place to be.

The attack was over in an instant—a knife to the kidney and another to Marlboro's left butt cheek. Marlboro was the mark. I was just the distraction. I thought it all a good show. The Parisians around clapped. Before I realized what had happened, I handed the mimes ten bucks and smiled. They were that fast—that good.

Then, I saw the blood. Marlboro's blood. The wounds were deep, and the blood ran fast. Before I could get to him, he collapsed. I went into shock. Shock not from the blood but the humiliation of losing ten bucks to a mime.

We woke up in the hospital. Marlboro, in the bed next to me, was just coming out of a coma.

While Marlboro had collapsed and fell to the ground from loss of blood, I collapsed due to the over-spray and overuse of cologne the mimes were prone to using. My delicate olfactory sense got the better of me.

From eye-witness accounts, the sun caught the corner of my aviator sunglasses as I fell. The intense glare reflected into the eye of the mime who stabbed Marlboro.

Temporarily blinded, he doubled back on his heels and lashed out. He slashed a fellow mime in his cheek, extending his fake smile and forever ruining his miming career. A melee began as the mimes wildly slashed.

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It seemed that none of the mute muggers were willing to yell stop.

Soon, the entire troupe lay injured. Before it ended, a dozen or more silent smiling thugs rolled on the ground in silent agony.

According to nurse Claire at the hospital, we were the American heroes of the Champs-Élysées. The mime disaster was what all Paris was talking about. I found that ironic.

Shortly after the tragedy, Marlboro was shipped back to the States. Medically discharged from the Army, he walked with a limp and spoke with a lisp. 🐉

Next time: BACK ON THE STREETS OF BALTIMORE



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“You should write a book.”

Has anyone ever told you that, but you don't know where to begin? We're here to help with indie publishing services and book consultations. Whatever your dream, Blue Dragon can set you on the right path.

Blue Dragon Publishing is about making a writer's dream a reality. We'll help you get there through coaching, encouragement, and know-how. Why start from scratch when we have the lessons to share with you?

Dawn Brotherton is an award-winning author and featured speaker at writing and publishing seminars. She teaches for the College of William and Mary Osher Lifelong Learning and writes for *Williamsburg Next Door Neighbor* magazine. A retired Air Force colonel and softball coach, Dawn writes mystery, romance, fantasy, middle grade fiction, children's picture books, and nonfiction.

Set an appointment for a FREE 30-minute Consultation.



the art of winning one round

by peter bourret

as I juggle the possibility of probable pain
and the ancient pain anchored to my heart
I find refuge in a church
caressing me with solemn silence
and the word of the day
coincidence floats aimlessly in the sanctuary
but I've been on the road long enough
the word is a misnomer at best
a lie at worst
the one-o'clock sun peers through fourteen windows
that flank me
and the memories of a twenty-year-old Marine
toy with my mind
today is a gone-wrong yesterday
fourteen Marines waiting patiently
for the choppers that will take them home early
to families saturated in sorrow
fourteen Marines marking time in eternity
and fourteen windows inviting in the light
and Phantom jets bringing their presents
for Ho Chi Minh's birthday party
five-hundred-pound bombs and napalm canisters
tumbling gracefully
gifts from the death factory
the roar and the explosions
indelibly stamped on my May memory
all of this evaporates
drowned out by the soothing sound
of the water in a fountain
whispering to my soul
to my heart hungry to be healed
and the burning sun mocking us that day
fades away

as I sit in the coolness and the calm
I hope the light in these fourteen windows
is God's gift
for my heavy heart
murdered in the mayhem
and tears trickle down my cheeks
as I chat with God
I'm done following the chain of command
I'm going straight to the top
my prayerful petition:
*please heal my wounded heart
and take care of those Marines
I know You will*
in the coolness and the quiet
of God's house
I wonder why He stayed away
when the battle began at one o'clock
and death ran the show
drooling
licking its chops
meeting its quota quickly
smiling as only death can
and another tear slides down my cheek
as I walk out into the hot Tucson wind
and drive away
wondering
waiting
healing
the answer belonging to tomorrow

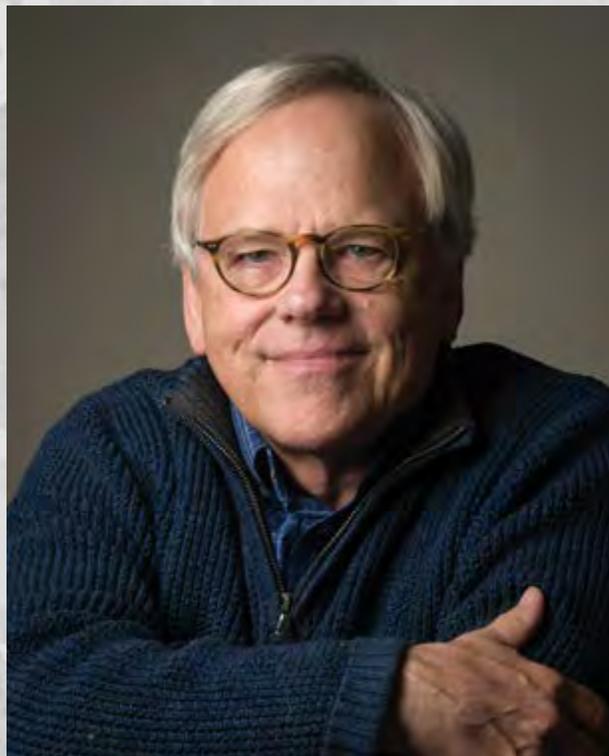
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Date of interview: 27 May 2023

JOHN WINN MILLER IS AN award-winning investigative reporter, foreign correspondent, newspaper editor and publisher, screenwriter, movie producer, and novelist.

As a reporter at the *Lexington (KY) Herald-Leader*, Miller was part of a team of reporters who wrote a series that helped trigger educational reform in Kentucky. It was a Pulitzer Prize finalist and won the Society of Professional Journalists' 1990 public service award, top honors from Investigative Reporters and Editors, and the first \$25,000 Selden Ring award.



He also was a reporter at the *Associated Press* and the *Wall Street Journal/Europe*; executive editor of the *Centre Daily Times* in State College, PA, and the *Tallahassee (FL) Democrat* as well as the publisher at *The Olympian* in Olympia, WA, and the *Concord (NH) Monitor*. In 2012, he was elected to *The Associated Press* board of directors and selected as a juror for the Pulitzer Prize for the second year in a row. Miller, a Lexington, KY native, has also produced four films, including *Band of Robbers*, written and directed by Adam and Aaron Nee (who recently wrote and directed *The Lost City*). He and his wife, Margo, live in Lexington. Their daughter Allison Miller is an actress-screenwriter-director currently starring in the ABC series *A Million Little Things*.

MWSA: How long have you been associated with MWSA?

JOHN WINN MILLER: Since April 2023

MWSA: Why did you chose to write a World War II maritime thriller?

MILLER: Strangely, the inspiration for the novel was a dream. When my daughter Allison was young, we watched a really bad action-adventure film together—I don't remember which one—and I kept telling myself I could write a better screenplay. That night I had a dream and when I woke up, I knew the first scene and the last scene and the name of the ship Peggy C. That was all. So, like Michelangelo used to say, I knew there

was a figure in that block of stone—In my case, a story—and all I had to do was spend years trying to chisel it free.

MWSA: Do you have any experience on ships?

MILLER: I've never been on a tramp steamer or a U-boat, and I have no naval background. That meant I had to do a lot more research. But I also love classic naval novels like *Sea Wolf* and *Lord Jim* (but not *Moby Dick*) because they combine adventure, exotic locations, and fascinating characters.

MWSA: Since you had no naval experience, what was your research process like?

MILLER: Books, books, books, documentaries, and endless web searches. Thank goodness for e-books that allowed me to quickly take lots of notes. I watched *Das Boot* years ago but didn't review it recently because I wanted to avoid copying scenes from it.

One research problem was finding myself going down rabbit holes for hours in pursuit of one more interesting fact, leading to yet more searches. I also use footnotes to go back and verify everything. My book involves a lot of nautical and technical details as well as obscure historical facts, so I had to be extra careful.

For example, in my relentless pursuit for accuracy, I found a website that had the daily logs of all U-boats that let me accurately report the phases of the moon

on each day of the Peggy C's journey. I had the novel fact-checked by a Ph.D. student at The Department of War Studies at King's College London, and a novelist who was a former U.S. Navy petty officer who served on a submarine.

MWSA: Are the characters your novel based on real historical figures?

MILLER: The commander of the U-boat, Oberleutnant Viktor Brauer, is an amalgamation of several real U-boat captains. I cherry-picked the worst characteristics and actions of those captains, of course, but also tried to make Brauer more human and not a *cliché* Nazi. Captain Jake Rogers, our hero, is largely my creation, but some of his backstory comes from the lives of James Fenimore Cooper and my father. The other characters are my creations.

MWSA: Who is your favorite character?

MILLER: Miriam, the eldest daughter of the Jewish family being rescued, is my favorite character. She's much more than just a love interest. She's smart, tough, and compassionate, and constantly challenges Captain Jake Rogers to change his mercenary ways. Her strength turns out to be the key to everyone's survival, giving the lie to the myth Jews never fought back.

MWSA: You've had lots of experience as a journalist. Did that play a role in your writing?

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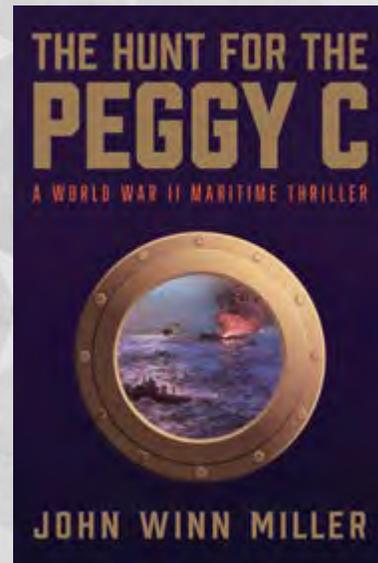
MILLER: The funny thing is I became a journalist because I wanted to be a novelist. But I realized at the time I didn't know how to write. Plus, I had no exciting experiences to write about. Journalism seemed like the best way to remedy those deficiencies. I loved that career, but the newspaper industry collapsed. When I retired for the first time, I decided that I was going to learn how to write screenplays because I still didn't feel confident I could write a novel.

The *Peggy C* was my first screenplay. I had some luck getting it into big production companies in Hollywood to pitch it. It won an award and accolades on such sites as *The Black List*, but nobody bought it. When I was stuck at home during the pandemic, I decided it was time to try my hand at turning it into a novel.

MWSA: Did you hide any surprises in it for true history buffs?

MILLER: It is loaded with historical details that truly surprised me—and I've read a ton of World War II histories and biographies. Here's just one that plays a key role in my plot.

BAM-100 was a big surprise. Turns out that one of the reasons the English won the Battle of Britain, besides the bravery of the crews and the quality of the planes, was the fuel known as British Air Ministry 100 octane.



It was developed by *Standard Oil* after Dunkirk and allowed British planes to fly faster and climb quicker than German planes. It took a while for the surprised Nazis to figure out what had changed, but there was nothing they could do about it. Their planes ran on fuel from coal gasification, which could only reach 80 octane.

MWSA: You adapted the novel from a screenplay. What challenges did that present?

MILLER: A screenplay is more like a haiku. It only contains what the viewer can see and hear. There is no interior monologue, no insight into behaviors, and no background information. That meant I had to flesh out the characters and their backstories. I also had to go into great detail about the operations of the ship and the U-boat and the duties of their crews. Each location had to be described not just by sight and sound but by smell and feelings, and history.



WRITER'S EDUCATION SERIES

UPCOMING SESSION

Look for an eBlast announcement for our upcoming webinar.

What: MWSA WRITER'S EDUCATION WEBINAR SERIES WELCOMES GREG ELLIOT

When: July 27, 2023, 4PM EST.

Who: Greg Elliot. For fifteen years, Greg taught at UCLA for the Extension Writers' Program and was the recipient of their Outstanding Instructor Award in Screenwriting in 2014. Elliot wrote for *Star Trek: Voyager*, for which he received a Sci-Fi Universe Award nomination. He was a story editor on the *Warner Brother* series *Savannah* and an executive story editor on the *WB* series *Charmed*. Greg also wrote for the *Disney Channel* series, *In a Heartbeat*. Professionally, Greg has edited short stories, novels, nonfiction books, brochures, how-to books, personal essays, and college papers.

Greg offers classes on story structure, broken into two parts. Part I was presented on May 20th. See it online on our [website](#). Each class is 1.5 hours and questions will be permitted at the end.

Topic: Story Structure, Part II: character development, tension, and conflict.



MWSA
Writers
Education Series

Story Structure II: character development, tension and conflict.

Greg Elliot
Screenwriter/Writer/Editor
Zoom Webinar: July 27, 2023.
4 PM EST



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.

This is our second quarter for book reviews, and as you can see it is quite extensive.

RAGING LOVE by Jim King and Lori Ann King

TAKING FLIGHT WITH CAPTAIN MAMA by Graciela Tiscareño-Sato

MOKANE TO MOLE CITY by Stanley J. Adams

NAVY DOG; A DOG'S DAYS IN THE US NAVY by Neal Kusumoto

THE SKUNK WHO LOST HIS CENTS by Nancy Panko

THE US NAVY'S ON-THE-ROOF GANG - VOLUME 2 by Matt Zullo

THE HUNT FOR THE PEGGY C by John Winn Miller

FRIENDSHIP GAMES by Mark James

FLIGHT: AN AIR AMERICA PILOT'S STORY by Hansen and Grosscup

PALADINS, A PHANTOM PILOT COMES OF AGE by Thomas Shaw

LIFE SENTENCE by Joshua Colenda

STEWARDS OF HUMANITY by Robert Seamus Macpherson

FREE AIR BERLIN by Richard Eric Johnson

SAIGON SPRING by Philip Derrick

WHEN THE VIOLIN WEEPS by Glenn Starkey

AN IMPERFECT PLAN by Addison McKnight

CONNECTED SOLDIERS by John Spencer

LADY OF THE ARMY by Stefanie Van Steelandt

BAGHDAD BLUES: A NOVEL OF THE IRAQ WAR by Paul Kendel

MOMS IN THE MILITARY by Patricia Qaiyyim

OPERATION WHITE OUT by Robert G. Williscroft

DISPATCHES FROM THE COWGIRL by Julie Tully

LOOK TO THE WARRIORS by Lee L. Kelley III

LETTERS FROM VIETNAM by Dennis Hoy

A STROKE OF MAGIC: THE DINOSAUR WOMAN by Brunella Costagliola

LIFE LESSONS FROM THE COLOR YELLOW by Patricia Walkow

DOOLITTLE'S MEN by Paul D. Burgess

WHEN TROUBLES RAIN by Jim Hodge

MOM HUGS FOR ENTREPRENEURS by Raquel Gladieux

DEFENDERS OF THE ROCK by Tim Deal, Spencer Huyck, Ashley Deal

ATHENA'S BRIDGE: ESSAYS ON STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP by Michael Hennelly

BETTER MEN by Steve Quesinberry

WE HAD TO GET OUT OF THAT PLACE by Steven Grzesik

THE GOLDEN BRIGADE by Robert J. Dvorchak

NORTHERN WOLF by Daniel Greene

THE US NAVY'S ON-THE-ROOF GANG - VOLUME 1, Prelude to War by Matt Zullo

SHADOW TIER by Steve Stratton

WRIT REVEAL by Ethan Burroughs

WHERE THE LIGHT ENTERS: A SOLDIER'S JOURNEY by Leland Austin Gagnebin



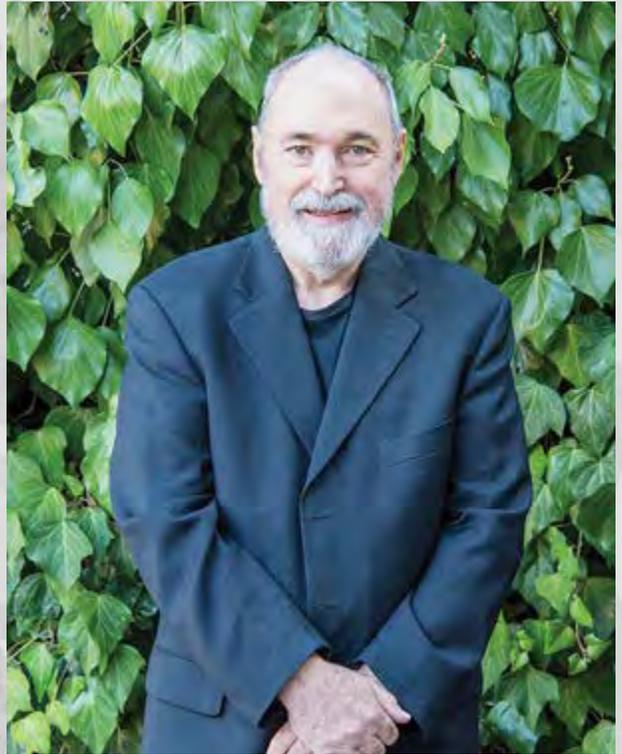
This lengthy reading list surely includes something for everyone. From history to mysteries, to children's fantasies—you might even find some poetry. I know with the summer upon us, we all want to get out there and work in the yard, paint the fence, or fight those stubborn weeds.

In this heat, however, I suggest you relax, sit in your air-conditioned house, have a bowl of ice cream and read a good book.

You can find out more about these books and others to our website: www.mswadispatches.co



I BEGAN WORKING WITH RETURNING veterans coming back home from the Vietnam War around 1970. There wasn't an official word for what was troubling those men and women back then. That was before the term PTSD was recognized in official use anywhere. We were a loose group of young people trying to put our lives back together after having dealt with the horrors of the battlefield.



I had been a participant of that foreign war and had turned twenty-one years of age there, flying around in Huey helicopters as a crew chief/

door-gunner. I was physically, emotionally, and even spiritually wounded during my tour-of-duty from October of 1967 through October of 1968. I was grateful to leave with all my body parts and still breathing. I came home to a world I no longer really felt comfortable in or even understood.

Over the next decades I helped my fellow veterans through my own ministry and with my own money and time. Every so often, some fellow veterans assisted me in my efforts. When the Vietnamese Boat People were resettled in the San Francisco Bay area, I helped get some of them clothing and other help and worked with their young children in the schools.

It was a time of great stress for many veterans as the war seemed to be coming back to them as they saw the influx of their former South Vietnamese allies moving into their towns and cities as refugees from a defeated nation. That kind of brought it all home to us veterans that everything we had done and sacrificed for was for nothing. The war was not lost by our young warriors on the battlefields but by politicians at some round table.

That deep sense of loss and grief cannot be understated. The Vietnam Veteran was never officially welcomed home and never appreciated for their sacrifices and not the war was lost. Ask any veteran who served then, and they will tell you that we never lost any battle and yet we were

living in a new reality where the public was being told that the war was lost when it was abandoned, as our government just walked away. That led to the eventual collapse of South Vietnam.

That same feeling of being sold out and wasting your heart and soul reawakened in our hearts and minds once again when we choose to abandon the people of Afghanistan after committing almost twenty years there. The situation was different, but the results were painfully identical and the pain for all veterans was once again reawakened.

I have seen my case load for PTSD veterans rise in both current veterans and for older Vietnam Veterans. It hurt veterans badly. Watching the TV news of the people trying to get out of there was like Saigon when we left that city as the North Vietnamese Army marched into the city.



The point of this brief history lesson is to show how and why the MWSA was

established and what its earlier goals were, so we do not lose perspective of our roots and what motivated this society.

In 2000, I began a loose and informal organization with the intention of finding ways to help PTSD and disabled veterans escape and divert their focus from those issues causing them PTSD. I had found that writing and other forms of creative energies could be used as a way of reducing anger and fear and hate and stress and thus help channel all of that into a healthy outlet for their emotions.



I associated with military authors and veterans, and we found that other writers' groups were not interested in having veterans as a part of their writing clubs and organizations. We were once again feeling unloved and unwanted. It was then I gave my ground a name and we became the MWSA. We gave our first book event in Austin, Texas where I had twelve authors selling their books.

We tied it together with the documentary film opening of *In the Shadow of the Blade*. We had several thousand people show up for our little party in honor of the film's premiere that weekend. We had three local TV stations covering the event and our authors got attention and

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sold some books. It was the first formal public event for the MWSA.

The first decade of the MWSA I was the president, founder, book reviewer, and treasury. (It was founded by me and then later with the assistance of Maria Edwards.) We paid for everything including awards and printing of material and website. We did it all. Our first group conference was held near San Diego, and I came from my sickbed to attend.

In those days I read and reviewed every single book that members wrote. I posted about 300-400 book reviews on Amazon every year of our member's books. I was also founder and president of The American Authors' Association (AAA) which had around 3500 members at its peak. I also financed all that organization's activities as well.

Eventually, my health and the workload were too much, and it was given over to a new president, Maria Edwards to carry forward.

In time, the MWSA got to be too big and too much work and I helped create a new leadership and handed the organizational duties off to our first president. It grew from there to its present status as a recognized and distinguished writers' organization. I choose "society" over "organization" or some other word for



a reason. I wanted this to be more than being an author. I wanted it to be about fellowship. I also opened the genre to more than just war-related writings so members could explore all their talents in poetry, novels, romance, detective, and memoirs, etc. Then, I opened the membership to include anyone who was a part of the military family, or who wrote about the military. I wanted the MWSA to open to all patriots and all genres and that gave this organization great strength.

Today the MWSA is getting very close to my original vision of being a vehicle of creative energy for veterans and patriots. I want to thank all those who have served to conduct that mission and have added their own energy to my dream. 🐦



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HOW TO LAUGH AT OURSELVES ON THE PAGE

NOT LONG AGO IN A writing workshop, a colleague offered to read a personal essay I had written about a challenging life experience. My kind friend reported back that he felt as if I was dragging him, sad and depressed, to the abysmal end of the story.

“I don’t want to feel as if I’m being forced to feel bad,” he said. “Where’s your sense of humor? And you’re not having any fun, either.”

Humor? I didn’t see anything funny about the story of my trip to Washington, DC to see my husband’s name on the Vietnam Memorial Wall for the first time—but—maybe I was taking myself a little too seriously.

Perhaps Colette, the French writer whose husband locked her in a room to keep her writing, was right when she said that total absence of humor renders life impossible. Humor in nonfiction writing demands taking a firm, self-confident position about our “self” and then flipping the situation upside down.

Writer Leigh Anne Jasheway calls this *creative misdirection*—engaging readers by taking them someplace they don’t expect to go, choosing words and metaphors that make readers giggle without knowing why. She says a smiling reader wants to read on, even if the topic is inherently sad.

Where was my sense of comic relief? Obviously, I had forgotten humor creates a bond with readers and cuts down on tension and anxiety. People need to cry and laugh. Humor fosters a sense of immediacy—a closer personal connection. There was little to joke about in my essay, but there were some curious ironies I hadn’t yet dug into deeply enough to discover.



As Dorothy Parker said in *Writers at Work*, “There’s a hell of a distance between wisecracking and wit. Wit has truth in it; wisecracking is simply calisthenics with words.”

How do I find my wittiness when I feel like I’m climbing a mountain wearing flip-flops? Is there a proven way to access my artistic fun house?

EB White, author and essayist, said, “Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested, and the frog dies.”

But wait, how *do* Woody Allan, Steve Martin, David Sedaris, and Nora Ephron inject humor into their writing? It turns out there are some methods in their madness.

Comparisons, using well-chosen metaphors, are one specific approach writers use to create an unexpected smile. Comic essayist David Rakoff, when faced with potential amputation of his left arm and shoulder because of cancer, quipped: “If they remove my left arm, how will I know when I’m having a heart attack?”

Humor in grim situations humanizes the writer and shelters the reader, inviting them to laugh with us even as we travel in humorless territory. A dash of self-deprecation, a small argument with oneself, and honest skepticism are also helpful.

Among Jasheway’s tools for adding a touch of comedy to writing is, “The K Rule”. Words with the K sound (Cadillac,

quintuplet, kibble) are perceived as the funniest, along with words with a hard G (guacamole, gargantuan, gazillion). Perhaps I could say that merging into the crowds of passengers at Union Station in Washington, DC felt like stepping into a kangaroo roundup or a cattle drive.

Jasheway speculates much of what makes Americans laugh today has its roots in Yiddish humor and the sound of those letters come the closest. Readers are subconsciously amused just hearing these sounds.

Jan Hornung in *Seven Steps to Better Humor Writing*, says whether or not a writer is personally funny is not important and please don’t tell the reader, in the text, that something is funny. Let the reader recognize your ability to be funny (or not). But *do* use descriptions that include the five senses (taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight) and let the reader discover the funny parts themselves.

Perhaps that train car I entered on my eight-hour ride to Washington carried a lingering scent of corned beef on rye, a delicatessen on wheels. This lightens up the reading experience a bit and, more importantly, it instantly sparks the reader’s imagination.

Blending description, metaphors, and similes with dialogue is another way to generate humor. Hornung offers a sample simile, “We were wrestling around like two pigs in the mud, only he was enjoying it and I was just getting dirty.”

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Now, we're approaching something of which even Mark Twain might approve—or chance a smile.

It was the second part of my friend's comment that created the most pause in my thinking.

He was right.

I wasn't having much fun writing the story about the trip to Washington. And shouldn't I be having some fun if I'm dedicating most of my time to writing? Perhaps I had sucked the life out of my essay by trying to be *too* serious and implying to the reader, *this* is serious. Perhaps I had forgotten readers are smart. They know when a writer is pummeling them with "ain't it awful" and needs a hanky for their tears.

So, how do I fix this?

My father used to say, "If you can't fix it, get a bigger hammer."

I went back in and operated on that essay with hammer and tongs, glockenspiels, and Guatamalas, and became the good-time girl as I remembered some humorous and ironic moments on my trip to the memorial and meeting with veterans of the 22nd Infantry Regiment who had served with my husband—especially the spectacular Asian wedding happening simultaneously with our reunion in our Washington hotel.

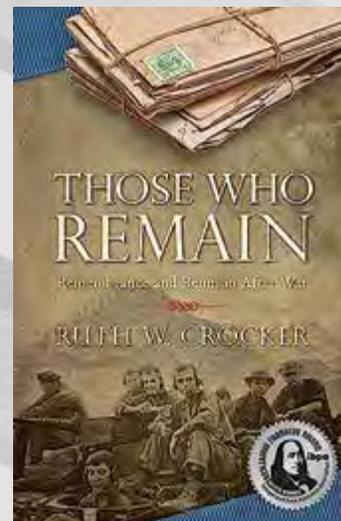
At least I began to enjoy the writing experience more. And, readers hopefully did, too.

Humorist Gilda Radner had this to say about the role of comedy in our lives: "Comedy is very controlling—you are making people laugh. It is there in the phrase '*making* people laugh'. You feel completely in control when you hear a wave of laughter coming back at you that you have caused."

Author Mary Hirsch described the power of humor even more precisely for writers: "Humor is a rubber sword—It allows you to make a point without drawing blood."

If you'd like to lighten up your writing, find an author whose writing you enjoy and read the work deeply by reading it out loud to yourself. See if you can discover the moments when something happens that suddenly makes you smile—even in the midst of a serious situation. Ask yourself, *How did the author do that?*

You may soon be laughing at yourself.



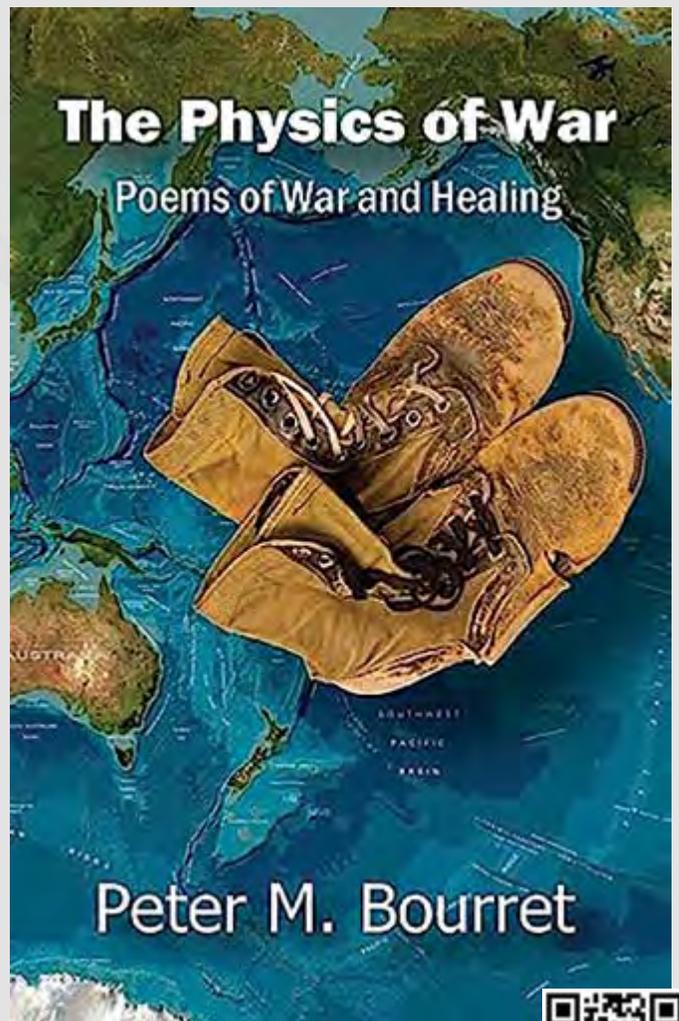
Color Code of Conduct

by Peter Bourret

when my casket came home
flag-draped
and with salutes coming my way
I was finally free
of the insults I had endured
before I put on my Marine dress blue uniform
now they call me hero
and salute my red, white and blue coffin cover
now I sleep forever
in solitary solemn silence
in my dress blues
and as my casket rolls by
salutes greet me
their red, white and blue hero
and the on-lookers stand at attention
a sign of respect
and they feel good
when they call me hero
but before I flew off to wage war
and threw myself on a hand grenade
so another Marine could light
his birthday candles one more time
there were no salutes
that came my way
and on a good day they would call me boy
so as I lie here
concealed in my flag-draped casket
I wonder if it were possible
for them to see through this burial flag
would they see a man
would they call me hero
would they be proud of the Medal of Honor
around my neck

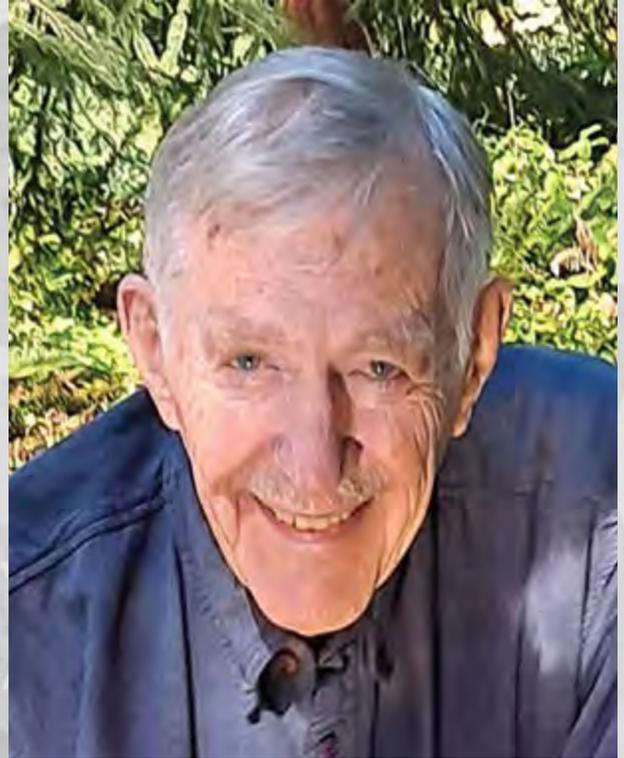
or would they feel tricked
and ache to put a hangman's noose
around my black neck
or would they see
red
white
and
blue
on a new color wheel

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...OR UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

A FEW YEARS BACK, A friend invited me to accompany him on a Huey helicopter ferry flight from Seattle to Anchorage. I dug through some old flight gear to wear on the trip and discovered an ancient, 1960's vintage, orange flight suit. Wearing this protective garment for the flight made sense, until I considered the consequences of me walking out of the Canadian wilderness from an unintentionally downed helicopter wearing an orange jumpsuit.



The potential complications struck me—explaining why I was not an escaped prisoner. Instead, I wore *Levis* and a checkered shirt, like the other pilots. Similar implications happened some forty years before this flight to Alaska that doomed the very short practical existence of the seemingly correct color military flight suit.

This is the tale of the brief history of military aviation's orange flight suit, reported from personal recall, based on my experiences and not, as perhaps it should be, established on documented facts.

The Navy flight suit, in this instance, until seven decades ago came in only one color—khaki. The non-stylish tailoring resembled mechanics' overalls of the 1930s—from which it presumably originated—but with added pockets and the all-important cigarette-pack pocket on the left-hand sleeve.

Back then, aircraft cockpits also had ashtrays, and one could always light a cigarette with the heat from the bomb site's light bulb.

The fire-retardant treated cotton cloth had a starch-like finish emitting a noxious odor and caused bare skin to itch. Instead of tossing dirty flight suits in our home wash, instructions were to exchange them for navy-cleaned-and-treated suits at 'Flight Gear Issue'. Few ever did.

Wearing flight suits away from the flight line was always prohibited. Switching between dress uniform and flight suit, sometimes several times during a day, offered difficulty or annoyance in meeting those regulations.

Cleanliness was another problem. Flying up to four flights a day, sometimes six days a week, in the back seat of an un-airconditioned training plane, as an instructor during a summer in the south, quickly rendered a flight suit odoriferously unbearable after a brief time, even to the wearer—may be a reason for the above noted flight-line restriction. Most pilots washed their flight suits, overriding the Navy's intended fire protection.

Our attack squadron skipper in the 1950s wanted his troops to look sharper than what was possible with the ubiquitous khaki attire. He ordered all his pilots to dye their khaki flight suits a Kelly green. The CO's plan didn't work out too well. The khaki did turn sort of a green. But badgered officers' quarters' managers could not answer irate residents complaining about green skivvies from the buildings' washing machines. At home, wives, too, had similar complaints. Most of the pilots' undergarments in our squadron appeared in various hues of kelly green following the home-style *Rit* dye jobs.

A violent midair collision between two navy training planes left a solo student ejected far from his aircraft and missing—lying dead in a farmer's field in south

Alabama. The body lay undiscovered, dressed in the typical khaki flight suit, in a plowed field for a couple of days—maybe more. The marine captain investigating the accident was livid over a situation allowing a dirt-colored flight suit to impede the body's discovery.

The investigator was adamant in his formal recommendations, and to all within his hearing: "All flight suits should be the color astronauts were then using."

His arguments were compelling. And surprisingly, soon our khaki-colored flight suits disappeared, and the replacement, in bright orange, willingly accepted. Everyone felt good, and we appeared pretty sharp-looking, too. We almost looked like astronauts.

Orange was one great idea!



The shift to orange was swift and complete by the end of 1963. However, only six months later, in 1964, a new event occurred to question orange flight suits. All the Navy's aircraft carrier's pilots and aircrews aboard an aircraft carrier at Yankee Station off Vietnam were distinctly decked out in orange. The bold color had our assurances of being

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spotted quickly by rescuers if we had to walk through Southeast Asia's jungles.

Unfortunately, the other side made the same observation.



Immediately after our first aircraft went down in the jungles piloted by an orange-clad aviator, we learned the other side not only could locate pilots easier but could also attract rescuers to crashes (or fake crashes) by draping one of their soldiers with Monk's saffron robes in a clearing, surrounded by a ring of firepower.

Orange now became bait—cheese in a trap.

The new awareness brought panic time in the air group. We had nothing to wear over our skivvies except orange or dress khakis uniforms. Supply was devoid of any color but orange. An order immediately went out for a company in Japan to manufacture camouflage flight suits. The shipment

came swiftly—seemingly only days later. Japanese tailors, apparently, did not have or use standard body measurements. From the flight suits we received, they must have judged Americans' sizes on what they viewed on movie screens.

The flight suit I received had sleeves and legs several inches longer than my limbs. And I'm tall and lanky—or was then. My recall is by almost a foot. Initially, we all wore our new jungle suits with large roll-ups on both arms and legs until we got them scissored shorter.



The fabric was a nearly inflexible, medium-weight canvas cut from cloth of a heft established for military field tents. The air temperature hovered around ninety-two degrees that summer on the Gulf of Tonkin, and unfortunately, the plane I flew had no air-conditioning,

nor did we fly in the cool air higher up. Life in the cockpit was miserable just to be invisible from the enemy should we take an unscheduled stroll in the jungle.

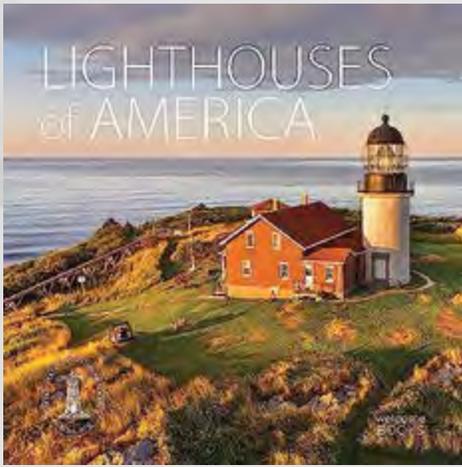
I don't know what happened later—probably in early 1965—to these first camouflaged flight suits that replaced orange. We packed the tent-suits and sent them to the air group on the relief

carrier when our carrier departed Yankee Station.

Shortly after, the standard flight suit turned green, grey, tan, or blue and was made from comfortable *Nomex* cloth. The tailored style and cut took on a stylish appearance that later allowed a nicer uniform look, which, worn away from the flight line, brought no disgrace to commands.

Orange went to prisoners everywhere.

Today I fear for my personal security from the local sheriff's deputy if I should ever mow the lawn wearing my old orange flight suit. Furthermore, the once loose-fitting garment is a bit snug around the middle.



Sheila Grimes

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Freelance Editing and Proofreading

I am an experienced editor, proofreader, and occasional writer.

Born and educated in the United Kingdom, I have lived in the United States for the past 50 years and am comfortable editing and writing in US or UK English. I have worked for over twenty years as an editor of both fiction and non-fiction books, many of which have been written by first-time authors who have subsequently published their work. I am available for line editing, developmental editing, proofreading, copywriting, formatting, and insertion of Tables of Content and Indexes.

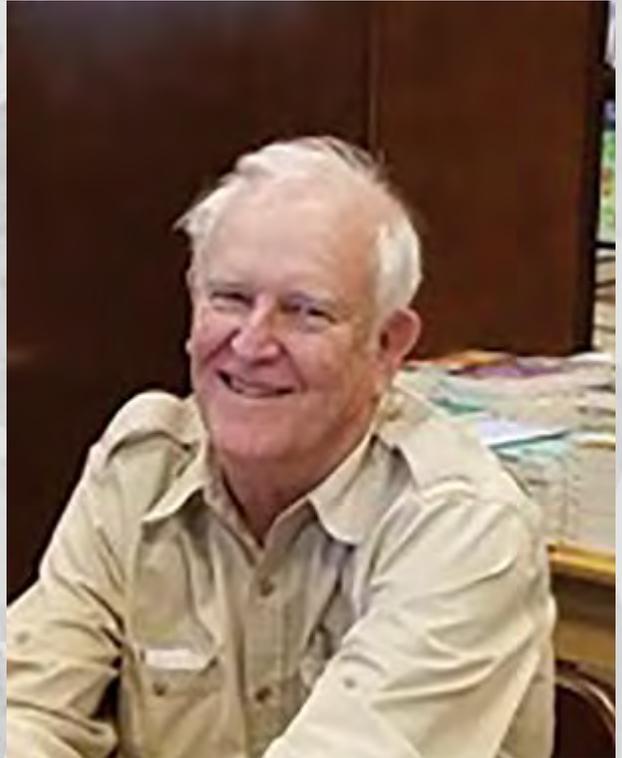
My portfolio includes books of all genres. I also work with a publisher.



THE FLAGS OF MY FATHER

Whitney H. Galbraith

IT CAN TAKE A LONG time, often too long, for a son to recognize the value of his father, in his own life and that of the society he defended. The experience of my father, Col Nicoll F. “Nick” Galbraith, GSC, US Army, has come to me in magnificent proportion with my self-publication of *Valley of the Shadow: An Account of American POWs of the Japanese*, published by XLibris in June 2018, revised May 2020.



This experience was triggered, now seemingly long ago, by the ambitious year-long exposition of

our Pioneers Museum in Colorado Springs in 2010, titled *So Far From Home: the American POW Experience in World War II*, the entire Japanese half of which was my father’s wartime archive, from the surrender of Corregidor in May of 1942 and continuing through the three-and-a-half years of infliction as a “guest of the emperor.”

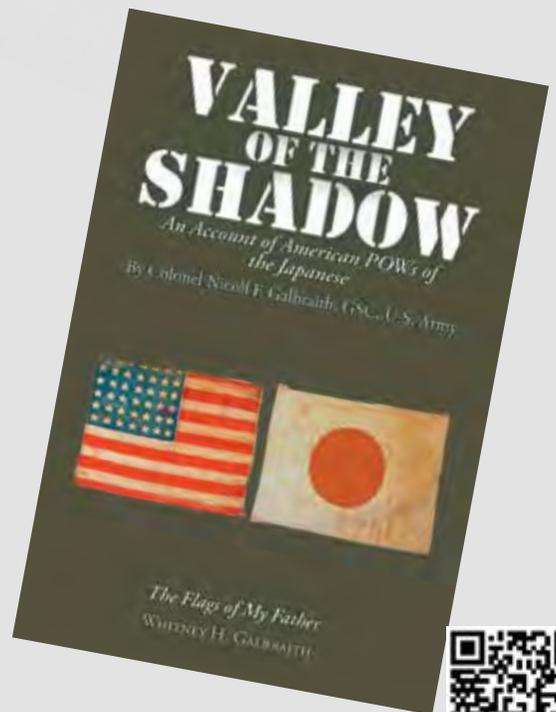
As our Galbraith family amalgamated our father’s extensive POW archive, including Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright’s original Corregidor surrender order, that aged, dusty box containing over 1,000 handwritten flimsies was dragged out from a deep family shelf and I began to understand, page by page, what we had.

The two flags played an integral part in the Corregidor surrender process and an emotional one in August 1945, when the POWs were rescued/released by a six-man OSS team and the Russian Red Army, both events being very close calls.

Col. Galbraith treats these experiences thematically, in third-person narrative format, enabling him to offer a psychological, emotional, and moral matrix to help the reader interpret the challenges and personal behaviors of incarcerated American prisoners who suddenly had been deprived of their normal social and physical lives as officers, colleagues, husbands, and fathers. Galbraith describes his own and his prison mates’ struggle to maintain their personal dignity and relationships. 🇺🇸



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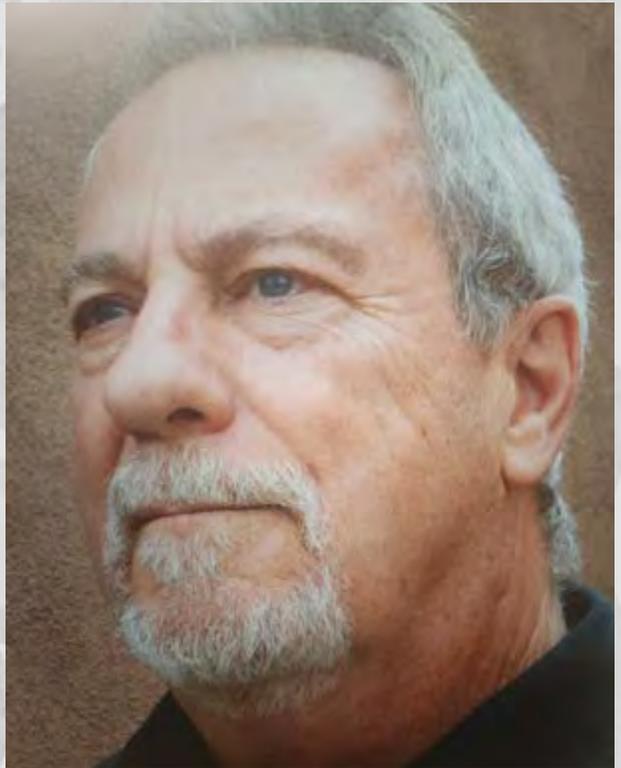


Peter Bourret

MY WAR EXPERIENCES AS A Marine have impacted me both negatively and positively. For two decades, I coped—sometimes in a negative manner—with the effects of my war experiences. All that which I had buried, however, eventually came to the surface. I finally began to deal with my guilt, anger, hurt, alienation, and grief.

Wrestling with the demons of my “Nam” experience has been difficult yet extremely rewarding. Shortly after my return from the war in 1968, I began writing about my experiences and how they had

impacted my life. I have been awarded 1st Place medals for my writing three times by the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I currently have six books of poetry—four of which focus on the war experience’s profound impact on combatants and their families. I additionally have a novel, a screenplay, and two memoirs—one dealing with my war experience, and a sequel addressing my battle with PTSD during the past thirty years.



Therapists refer to this as narrative therapy. I call it writing to come home. Indeed, the pen is mightier than the sword, and in my case, my pen is mightier than my 81mm mortar.

In 1968, I left Vietnam, but the Nam tenaciously tagged along for the ride back to the world. During my half-century odyssey of healing, I have relied heavily on my writing to help me to navigate the uncertainties of being back in the world. Although I have relied heavily on writing and talking to various groups about the



war experience, I have traveled a range of paths on my journey home.

I returned to Vietnam in 1991 and 1999 and visited the Vietnam Memorial Wall twice.

I was the subject of *Strands of Barbed Wire*, a documentary about PTSD. Over the years, I have been a member of three PTSD support groups. Eventually, in 2014, I did two months of Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PET), which became a watershed of healing. I volunteered at the VA for five years, where I helped teach a class about dealing with PTSD.

When I write a poem about war, its nature and its long-term impact, I invite the reader to peek behind killing's curtain. These poems leave footprints on the long road home as I search for the beauty of this world that was murdered so long ago.

Each poem I write has a life of its own, but each poem is also a stepping-stone to my next poem.

mourning time

like a ten-year census of the dead
for all to see
a chiseled *thank-you for your service*
better late than never

this wall of stone
simple
succinct
solemn
this granite wall
this monument
meant to honor the dead
but a stark reminder to some
that the dead were no more
than cannon fodder
killed at the altar of delusions
to fulfill the dreams
of the best and the brightest
bound and determined
to ink themselves
into history's honor roll

with its chiseled graffiti
this granite inventory of the dead

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honored by some
 mourned by others
 but for some,
 tomorrow's family tree
 chopped to the ground
 these lists of the dead
 tagged into this granite
 as black as the darkest night
 of a mother mourning
 her goodbye-child
 forever dead
 a mother's list of the dead is short
 but her sorrow stretches
 through stacks of calendars
 splashed with tears
 and some will wish their hearts
 were made of granite
 oh, to have a heart of stone
 at 3 a.m.
 at 4 a.m.
 at those many moments
 when the monster called mourning
 hunts down mothers
 and rips at their hearts
 all desperately longing
 for a different yesterday

as the sun sets in the Capitol
 no one spits on the Wall
 there are no baby killers on the wall
 protest politics stays home
 and the dead
 rest forever
 in their early eternity

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Existential Angst

Stars everywhere
 Cricket chatter
 Cold beads of sweat
 meet my hand
 as it roams the geography of my face
 The thought is back:
 someone in the darkness
 wants to kill me

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the birthday celebration

war is very quiet when you're dead
Ho Chi Minh's birthday was noisy at first
but then a stillness
no bird sounds
the party over
fourteen silent warriors loitering
their quiet blood flowing
a poncho full of silence is carried away
to the place where dead grunts go
it's one hundred and twenty degrees
and the ex-grunt does not care

he just lies there
not needing the shave
he needed five minutes earlier
it was the day
the alley cat toyed with the wounded bird
the day they killed Camelot
we were unlucky visitors
at a slaughterhouse
near a river with a foreign name
by a hill with a number
John Wayne was AWOL
the brass band forgot to show up
to play the "Star-Spangled Banner"
fourteen Marines dealing in the futures market
losing the game
the dreams of the dead going off to Limbo
the survivors
zombies counting their days left in the Nam

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A YOUNG TANK COMMANDER

Clyde Hoch

IN VIETNAM IN 1969, a young tank commander was sent with two tanks and a company of Marines. They were sent out as a blocking force for a much larger operation. Hours of boredom passed. They all expected to sleep on the ground next to the tanks and eat cold C-rations, because the area was too full of enemy troops to have a fire of any kind.

To their surprise, they got a call on the radio to come back in. Back in company headquarters meant warm meals, a shower, and cold beer. Everyone was overjoyed. It was

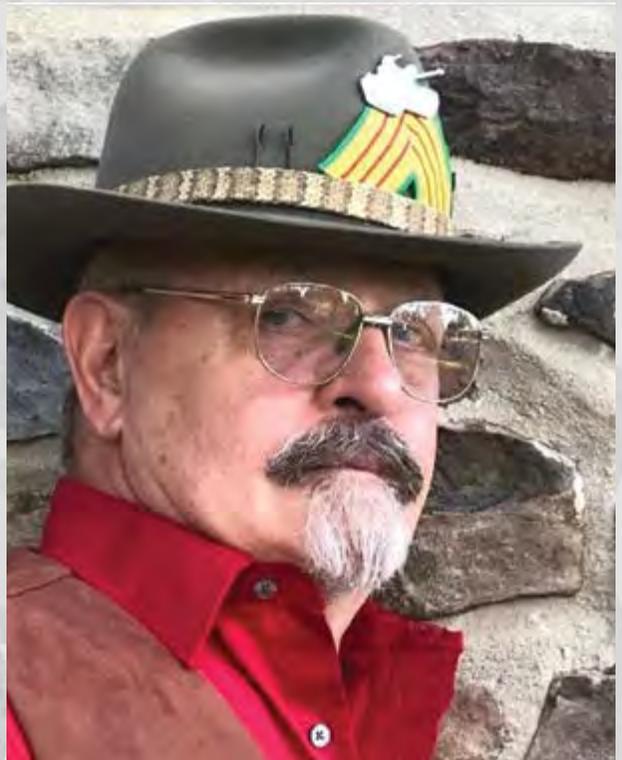
a nice bright and warm day. Marine infantry rode on the tanks. The young tank commander had the lead tank and was sitting on the tank commander's hatch. He remembered taking a large breath of air and it was all very hot air.

Everything started to get blurry, and he thought to himself, *Oh, oh this is it.*

The next thing he remembered was that his life was like a brown blob. He started talking to himself saying *you have to come back you can't let go.* He repeated this over and over for what seemed like twenty minutes. After some time, he saw a little light and it reminded him of when you drink a glass of water and look through the bottom of the glass, everything was all distorted. When he started to function, he saw mouths moving but couldn't hear any sounds.

The young tank commander was dazed and confused. *What had just happened?* After some time, he realized they had hit a very large anti-tank mine. The mine was on the same side he had been sitting on. The tank had its track and the first three road wheels blown off. It was lying in a hole about three feet deep and five feet around. He didn't understand, he had never heard any explosion.

He was never told about traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder. From that day on his life changed. He had a hard time



making decisions. He had a hard time remembering things. He didn't like being around people.

He received orders for drill instructor school. He knew with his memory the way it was he would not make it through the school, or he would never be an effective leader. He opted to get out of the military.

When he came home from Vietnam, he was surprised to find everyone looked down on Vietnam Veterans. *The very people the veterans were risking their lives for.* He didn't fit in anywhere in society. He acted differently but thought it was just him. He never knew anything about traumatic brain injury and never associated the mine explosion with his actions. He was always nervous and hyper. He started drinking way too much. When he was drinking it was the only time he felt comfortable. In Vietnam, everyone helped each other. It seemed that here in the States, everyone tried to stab everyone in the back. He was more comfortable in the war than in his own country.

Since he went into the Marines three days after graduation, coming home was a whole new experience for him. For many years he followed the path of alcohol. There was no one to talk to. The Veterans Administration dismissed him. A very bad marriage and a divorce came.

Life was one day after another of struggling to exist. He finally felt suicide was the only way out. He planned every

detail of how he would do it. Every day he felt life was not worth the effort. The only thing that prevented him from carrying out his plans was that he felt God put us here for a reason. No matter what the cost here on earth it would all be worth it someday.

He eventually realized he didn't like others and he realized he didn't like himself.

He knew he had to change. He cut way back on his drinking and spent more time in the woods. One of his greatest phobias was being in crowds. He couldn't stand being in crowds. Realizing the worst thing he could do was to isolate himself, he forced himself to be in crowds. It was not an easy task.

He never wanted anyone to have to live the life he did, so he started an organization called the Veterans Brotherhood. In the beginning, the organization only had a few members. 2014 was its first year, 2015 officially. In 2014, fourteen veterans were helped. Under his leadership, the organization has grown immensely. The Veterans Brotherhood now has members all over the country.

The Veterans Brotherhood takes homeless veterans off the streets as soon as they hear about one needing help. There are many organizations that help veterans, but most take three days to three weeks to get them into the system. By taking veterans off the streets when they are at their lowest, the Veterans Brotherhood

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hopes to prevent veteran suicides. Twenty-two veterans commit suicide every day.



The Veterans Brotherhood has grown to the point where they help veterans with fuel bills, electric bills, and a host of other veterans' needs. The Veterans Brotherhood has assisted well over 500 veterans since its inception. Most veterans have wives and children, so it is a much larger impact. Many veterans today that are helped are female veterans.

So very many lives have been changed by the great people of the Veterans Brotherhood. Many have gotten jobs, cars, homes, and have married since receiving help from the Veterans Brotherhood.

It is amazing how some veterans' whole life changes when they feel someone cares about them. The Veterans Brotherhood is an all-volunteer force that operates on donations only. Even the Veterans Brotherhood shirts and jackets are paid for by the individuals. They even pay for their own meals and gas at any function. The Veterans Brotherhood has the finest members ever assembled.

The young tank commander has written many books devoted to helping others. One of his books, called *A Man Down*, won a bronze medal at the Readers Favorite International Awards Ceremony in Miami. Proceeds from his books go to helping veterans.

Since 2014, the young tank commander has dedicated his life to helping others, especially veterans. Can you think of anyone who has done so much and asked for so little? Day after day he devotes his life to helping veterans with very little recognition.

The young tank commander's name is Clyde Hoch.



IF YOU'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CLYDE HOCH'S ORGANIZATION, *THE VETERANS BROTHERHOOD*, CLICK ON THE LINK OR SCAN THE QR CODE.





MILITARY WRITERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA (MWSA) AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

Mission:

MWSA's qualified instructors will reach veterans, military, and families throughout the United States to assist them in sharing their important stories through a positive writing workshop venue at no cost to attendees.

<https://www.mwsadispatches.com/veterans-outreach/#programs>

Background and Purpose

Since 2015, MWSA's veteran writing workshops have helped veterans and their families share their stories. The success of these workshops at Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities encouraged MWSA to establish the MWSA Ambassadors program to reach more veterans through similar educational programs. The Ambassadors program extends MWSA's outreach across the country leveraging MWSA members' talent within their communities to achieve MWSA's missions of helping people write, providing education, and introducing people to the MWSA non-profit organization and the resources it provides.

Qualifications to be an MWSA Ambassador

- ★ MWSA Member in good standing
- ★ Published author, writer, or poet
- ★ Completion of MWSA Ambassadors Training Program

Guidelines

MWSA's Veterans Outreach page (above) provides general workshop guidelines. In accordance with the MWSA Ethics Policy, Ambassadors' course content will not include politically, religiously, or racially biased or anti-U.S./U.S. military material.

Types of Programs

- ★ VA Workshops
- ★ Veterans Organizations (ex. American Legion, DAV)
- ★ Other venues and mentoring that achieve MWSA's mission/purpose

Ambassador Process

- ✓ Interested MWSA Member contacts Ambassador POC and receives Ambassadors' Kit with materials including checklist, sample agendas, sample presentations, etc.
- ✓ Ambassador POC coordinates curriculum development with incoming Ambassador
- ✓ Incoming Ambassador completes training program with POC and is designated an MWSA Ambassador

[MWSA] Goals are to reach out to schools, military organizations, and veterans' groups and encourage an interest in writing...

MWSA Bylaws - PURPOSE

Interested in becoming an MWSA Ambassador? Please contact the Ambassador POC:

Chair of MWSA Outreach Committee, Valerie Ormond at outreach@mwsa.co/443-994-5651

15 SECRETS SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU sworn this was the year you were going to get organized? We've all been there.

I read *15 Secrets of Successful People Know about Time Management* by Kevin Kruse, and it changed my life. I highly recommend this book.

Kruse's book has helped me feel more in control of my busy days. He outlines fifteen suggestions to help you get—and stay—organized. It's an easy-read so I zipped through it quickly the first time around. I had to make myself go back and read it one chapter at a time and actually implement what he was suggesting.

At the sake of giving away the ending, I will tell you that it will work for you if you let it. All fifteen ideas may not fit into your life, but if even one or two do, it's worth the read.

1. POWER OF 1440

The concept he starts with is the Power of 1440. Kruse describes coming to the realization that there are only 1,440 minutes in a day. Don't count in hours. It's easy to notice if you waste an hour. But what about those twenty minutes you waste playing a quick video game? (I'll come back to that in a later post.) If you could gain back those twenty minutes and knock out a task that would save you time elsewhere, wouldn't it be worth it?

Share this thought with your family, co-workers, subordinates. Let them help you gain back that time with fewer interruptions.

2. YOUR MOST IMPORTANT THING

With apologies to Kevin Kruse, I am going to put my own spin on his most excellent book. The second thing he talked about is determining Your Most Important Thing.



What is the most important thing you need to accomplish for the day? Some people have called this technique “eat the frog first”. If, first thing in the morning, you knock out the thing you’ve been putting off, your day will feel successful, and everything else will be easy by comparison. Sounds logical, right? But harder to implement than you think.

You put things off for a reason. It’s something you don’t like to do. Or you know it’s going to take a lot of time. But the longer you put it off, the more it grows in your mind and looms over you like a dark cloud. That sense of dread can follow you and weigh you down, even if you don’t realize it. Wouldn’t it be nice to get rid of that negative feeling? The only way to do that is to get it over with.

It might not even be a negative thing. It could be a hot deadline you need to devote time to. Don’t open your email; don’t check your phone. Start your day—when you are freshest—with the item you have determined is the most important thing to accomplish.

Before I leave the office for the day, the last thing I do is check my schedule for the next day. I give special consideration to what I put on my schedule for first thing in the morning as the most important thing, and I let my brain churn on it. The next morning, I go through my routine as usual, but when it’s time to work, I start with the first thing on my calendar. I don’t even open my email.

Email is a necessary evil, and it does make life much easier in many ways. It can also be a terrible distraction. Kevin Kruse has a whole other chapter on email. For now, suffice it to say, once you open your email, new things will pop up and distract you. Your email waited all night; it can wait a little longer.

Sometimes the project is a big one that will take several days. I just split it up into several blocks of time, but I still put it first every day until it’s complete. Once that task is complete, I allow myself to open my email and knock out the other tasks on the list. But I always get a feeling of satisfaction, having completed something important to me and my business.

3. USE YOUR CALENDAR

I thought I already had this one down. I use my calendar all the time. We even have a family calendar that we share so we can track each other.

But no. Kevin Kruse takes it to a whole new level. He advocates for getting rid of your to-do lists. If it’s really worth doing, put it on the calendar! How many times has your to-do list gotten so long that it’s overwhelming to look at? Or things get buried so deep that they will never get done?

By putting things you really need to get done on your calendar and making time to do them, you’ll be surprised how effectively you manage your time.

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I used to feel overwhelmed by my long list of to-dos. Now I feel a sense of accomplishment as I work my way through the day.

An added benefit is that I better track how long it takes to do things. If I block two hours on the schedule to proof a book, but I find I'm not done, I have the freedom to adjust my calendar to finish. The key is to adjust your calendar. Reschedule your time so that item that was next doesn't get buried in the undone pile. And I give myself credit for the time I did spend on whatever I was working. That way, next time I need to schedule a similar task (or bill for it), I have a better idea how much time I spent.

Remember to put your most important thing first on the calendar.

Recommendation: Keep this calendar separate from your family calendar. It might drive your significant other crazy with your fifteen-minute appointments. I only add the out-of-office items to our family calendar, so my husband knows when I am unavailable.

4. THE PROCRASTINATION BUSTER

My weakness is Gummy Drop. No, not a sugary treat. It's a computer game that one of my sisters got me hooked on. I always laughed at people who played those silly games... until I got to the upper levels. Now I justify it by saying

it takes strategy and helps keep my mind agile. But really, I'm procrastinating.

One quick game easily wastes thirty minutes at a time. The first thing that helped me get my time back was doing the Most Important Thing first thing—even before one quick game.

Thankfully, Kevin Kruse helps me stay on track. Among the many things he talks about in the *Procrastination Buster* chapter of his book, Kruse suggests that your future self cannot be trusted to do the right thing.

“I can eat just one.”

Have you told yourself that? Then before you know it, the bag is empty.

Kruse recommends traveling to the future; think about what your future self is going to do to sabotage your present goals. Kruse uses the example of junk food. Your future self will eat it all, and you will gain weight. Your present self needs to clean out the cupboards and remove the temptation for the future. Your future self will decide you are too busy to exercise. Your present self can block time on your calendar now for exercise before your schedule fills up.

Another buster he endorses is to think about where you want to be and set yourself up for success. Use visualization to see yourself in the future (healthy and fit or a couch potato) and decide what you prefer. When you start to put off that much-needed workout, picture yourself not being able to fit

The best time to
start was last year.
Failing that, today
will do.

– Chris Guillebeau

<https://bluedragonpublishing.com/>

into your favorite jeans. Is that really what you want? A little time now will save you more energy, and sometimes money, later.

5. LEAVE AT FIVE WITHOUT GUILT

For authors, this next one is tough. Our office hours may not be nine to five. They may be after a day job and not start until the kids are asleep but set your “hours” and stick to them.

As Kruse explains, to leave the office at five without guilt is more about setting your priorities than actually leaving work. There will always be more to do.

This was especially true when I was working at the Pentagon. I was there for three different assignments. The work never stops. There is always something brewing, something changing, and something to fix. I was very lucky in my last assignment to have a boss who told me if I missed a big event for one of my daughters, I would have to answer to him. He understood the grind and was taking care of his people.

Think about it: is that slide show you’re creating more important than time with your family? Which event has a longer lasting effect? What would happen if you didn’t complete (fill in the blank) tonight? It would still be there in the morning. Yes, there are times that call for cramming, but you shouldn’t schedule your days that way. What I found is that if I stayed “just to finish up”, it didn’t save me time the next day, because I found something else to fill that time slot.

You need to take time for you, whether it be exercising, reading, or doing art. I work out of my home, so it’s especially hard to leave the office at five. I try to make it a point to get away from the computer at five. I love to quilt and craft, and there are always unfinished projects on which I can work.

I’m not one of those people who can write for four hours every day. I do the “business” part of being an author Monday through Thursday. You know, social media, paying bills, scheduling events, making edits, etc. I save Fridays for writing.

If it helps, put time for yourself on the calendar and stick to it. You’re in it for the long haul. You have to set your priorities. Without you—and the support of your family—there is no productivity.



TO BE CONTINUED...



IN SEPTEMBER 2019, MWSA PARTNERED with SouthWest Writers (SWW) to jointly run our annual conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Many New Mexico participants had their first exposure to writing about the military at this conference, and the associated one-day course by Jack London held at the Raymond G. Murphy Medical Center. Now, almost four years later, a long-term impact of that conference is the publication of an anthology, *Holes in Our Hearts*, featuring fifty-five New Mexicans who wrote ninety-five articles, essays, and poems.



SWW reacted to a January 2023 request for submissions from the State of New Mexico, Department of Cultural Affairs, New Mexico Arts Division, by submitting a proposal to publish an anthology authored by New Mexico military members and veterans, and their family members and caregivers. SWW specifically sought out individuals who had



never been published before. This was the first publication for eight such individuals and probably another dozen who had published one or two minor pieces in the past. It gave everyone who participated a meaningful opportunity to engage with the arts and support their own healing.

One of our former MWSA board members, Joe Badal, wrote the forward:

Holes in Our Hearts is more than a collection of works written by individuals with some connection to the United States military services. Whether active duty, veterans, or relatives of those who served,

these short stories, memoirs, poems, essays, etc., are the expressions of deeply ingrained memories and experiences.

It is often difficult for those who have served and their family members to verbally relate memories and experiences to others. Whether too personal, too poignant, or traumatic, these memories and experiences, more often than not, rest in the back rooms of their minds, never to be shared. This lack of sharing is tragic on two levels. First, those who never had the privilege of hearing these stories will never fully understand what it means to serve their country through the military. And the people who had the privilege of serving never have the opportunity to realize the catharsis of sharing their experiences.

*This anthology includes offerings from members of all the armed services, as well as family members of men and women who served. It is a beautiful collection of works that are, at times, emotional, humorous, frightening, enlightening, or thought-provoking. The reader should be aware that the recollections in **Holes in Our Hearts** are, in many instances, the only way that the authors could share with you their memories and experiences.*

And I hope that the contributors to this collection have realized some psychic and cathartic relief through the relating of their memories and experiences.

Holes in Our Hearts provides snapshots of military life and how the military

has affected lives. Some of the writing represents the first time many authors have revealed their innermost thoughts to anyone.

Some of the stories are written by established authors with numerous publishing credentials. All are worth your time to learn why this nation continues to honor the military on behalf of a grateful nation. Each represents a tale worth reading, internalizing, and contemplating the experiences we as a nation expect our young men and women, their families, and their caregivers to deal with—sometimes long after their military service has ended, and nothing is left but holes in our hearts.



A TONGUE IN CHEEK CRITIQUE

EEDITOR'S NOTE: THERE HAVE BEEN some changes here at Socotra House, a renegade house of independent publishing populated by the sort of people with whom you would go to the ends of the earth. And did.

Last week it was the formal farewell to our pal John amid the solemn majesty of Arlington National Cemetery's magnificent Garden of Stone. Only a day or so before had come word that John "Marlow the Fearless" had succumbed.



John was not the first departure from the little stable of wordsmiths who floated downstream on life's broad flow. That would be Point Loma, whose death struck us hard two years ago. He was the first of us who lived the style of life we loved to give it up.

His passing thus resulted in some discussion about what it all meant. We had, at that point, managed the last waypoints of the generation that brought us to *their* world, so the notion of 'passing' had a certain familiarity. It just wasn't about us. It was more along the lines of Hemingway's quote about bankruptcy: "It went slowly and then *quickly*."

This is how Marlow summed up the loss of Loma, and it is appropriate to use his as his own: "Vic, I humbly offer these in-house views, *à travers nos défauts, à travers nos défauts, et à travers nos plus grands défauts* [through our flaws, through our flaws, and through our greatest flaws]."

He continued then with a literary fly-by:

A one pass fly-by view from a highly elliptical orbit resulted in this initial take on our assembled writings. Our stories vacillate across multiple worlds or threads. There are many but they seem to subdivide into three primary clumps.

The main one is about the who, what, when, why, and where we currently inhabit and experience; the historical ones are those in which we, our parents or our heroes lived; and, the fantastical ones that we see/

feel exist across and atop the former two. It is the one of totems, fables and gods.

Our current one we treat with sarcasm, satire and irony. Its players and events deserve it as we expose venality, power hunger, greed, abject bullshit and claptrap. The historical ones we treat in a matter-of-fact way that strips them of accumulated hagiography, deserved and otherwise, as we attempt the Jack Webb just-the-facts style to show the every-day-ness of the events and people and that the conferred heroism on their players is somewhat off-putting to those who are described since they all felt till their dying days was that they were just doing their jobs.

The fantastical worlds where 'good' and 'evil' fly about and existentially struggle, up is down, right is wrong, left is right. Put another way, things like refugees and secrecy are often out in the open and in plain sight. It is mythical. We treat it Joseph Campbell style with dashes of hidden humor.

We and our characters lived in the darkest and brightest centuries of mankind's existence. We constantly revise our stuff. We write without any consideration of publishing. Yet our scribbling is of great importance to us.

Our everyday sailor language in these pieces is a contradiction of everything wooden, official, and imposed on the stuff we did during our service time. It is a joy to speak thusly.

As we found our voices, things written or events that occurred in our twenties that dealt with contemporary events of the Cold and various small wars led us to our near fanatical insistence on faithfully depicting those wars and our small parts in them.



We are formal, original, devastatingly satirical of modern American life, theatrical in rendering of the terrors of its social media, pop and cancel cultures, audacious in our portrayals of its wanna-be saviors, thin-skinned bureaucrats, print and media puff pieces and the scads of bad actors of all types and persuasions.

We prize laughter via our satire, caricature, and buffoonery and treasure America's natural, unguarded vulnerability. We will kill to defend the latter. As handmaidens, we did so in the past.

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We as those who came before delight in exploring the complex poetic forms of American freedoms.



While our digital manuscripts will never be burned, they can be orphaned and go off to die in a digitally unarchived elephant graveyard. Nevertheless, we toil on.

Writing is one of our ways of riding ourselves of old age's tendency towards not being courageous. We try for being penetrating rather than simply defiant.

I sense that in some ways we are grateful to be able to point out the newly arising e-Gulag. We still try hard to not feel or write poorly about today's young 'uns' sense of fragilities, inevitability, stagnation and learned helplessness."

We love our characters—the petite satans, the homeless ones, the small-m masters, our chroniclers, the godless gods, the Mark 1 Mod

0 exploiters, strangers, friends, Judases, apostles, the upright, the slitherers, the cloven-hoofed, and the ones with claws. We know them all by heart. We continue to write with occasional long interruptions our chaptered gospels without knowing if their participants will get a reward, a punishment, or nothing at all. Maybe those things are not for our spirits. In any event, they deserve peace.

I feel we are romantics in the old sense of the written word and music.

Methinks our love of clowning offers us ironic ways to contemplate the utterly crazy yet unconsidered conditionalities of modern life. I guess that our carnivalization of this world allows our readers to safely approach the relativizing of worldly and heavenly absolutes and the terrifying mysteries of religion, politics and economics.

And now I must muffle my keyboard to whisper type this—there's a bit of settling of scores in what we do. We get to hand out vicious yet appropriate legacies to all enemies as we attack their BS dogma, sacramentally prescribed ass-kissings, and official truths.

So, as we move on over to our fabulous yonders—something unknown but sensed, let us parable-ize and fable-ize our experiences so they may outlast us and our known issue.

We still have many colored relief maps left to draw of our Moscow on the Potomac—they will float motion-

less, weightless and substanceless in front of us, despite their circus-like theatricality and overabundant bathos. Few of our fellow citizens will adjust to or learn to watch critically since all our energy is devoted to patiently waiting for our daily bread and stinnie checks.

Welcome to the one-world state as human freight, mis hermanos y hermanas [my brothers and sisters]!



- Marlow 1948-2023

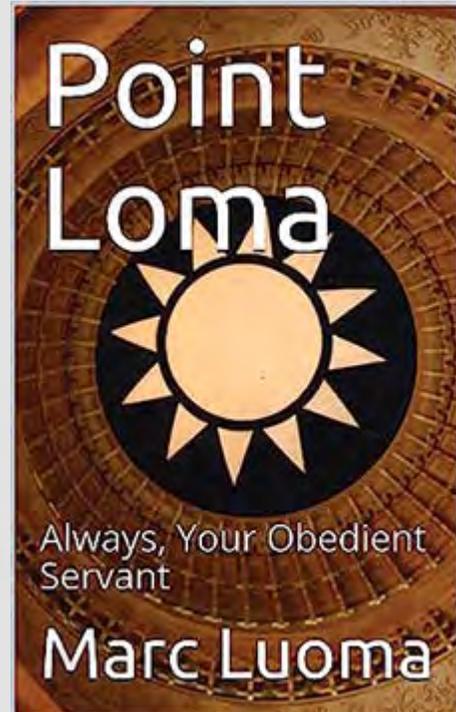
His passing was foretold with his decision that enough had been endured. He elected to take the hospice route from this world to the next.

The Editors got his last note of farewell describing his turn in the barrel. It was poignant and brief to the extent that we feared publication would be misinterpreted as a collective adieu. We held it for a day or two and decided it actually was.

So, on this day, for the memory of a dear pal: “Adios, Amigo! *Nos vemos en la otra orilla del Styx* [See you on the other bank of the Styx]!”



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TIME TO RELAX? THINK AGAIN!

AFTER TEN YEARS OF RESEARCHING, writing, resting and repeating, my book *Guiding Missal* was published—one of my crowning achievements as a human being and a writer was also one of the most difficult things I’d ever done. I had yet to find out that there was more hard work to come.

Throughout the process, I diligently followed *The Light Messages* Author Pre-Publication Checklist (on page 58) laying a lot of ground-work on which to build.



You have probably all done the same basic work now that you are a published author, but if you haven’t, perhaps you may want to Download the list from the Light Messages Website. [DOWNLOAD THE LIST.](#)

Now that you have a book in your hand and many more in cartons sitting on your office floor, as I do, the job as a businessman or woman is ahead. Where do you begin?

Every self-help publishing site, book or blog emphasizes, “build your platform” and “establish your brand”. Confession: I had to research what these things meant. Attending writers’ conferences, classes at local universities or community colleges on managing your business as an author or promoting your art are worthwhile endeavors. I found free on-line webinars hosted by well-known experts with valuable advice and information.

Because my book, *Guiding Missal*, falls into the historical fiction/military/inspirational category, my brand became the American flag and its colors. One of my first expenditures, worth every penny, was a 20”x40” poster of my book cover. Without a doubt, that poster alone makes prospective buyers stop at my table to see what it’s all about. At book signings, I dress in red, white, and blue, including accessories. I designed flag-themed business cards, used my book cover with the

tattered battle flag on my bookmarks, postcards, and tee shirts I used for prizes. I had pens made in red, white and blue emblazoned with *Guiding Missal*. Staples and *Vistaprint* love me.

It's more difficult to build a platform when you're an unknown author. My efforts began with pounding the pavement and my computer keys.

From a generous *Facebook* friend, I learned how to do a radio pitch and submitted my completed pitch form to various talk radio shows extolling the advantages of having a guest appealing to a wide patriotic audience of faith. I searched the websites of local television stations for opportunities to advertise *Guiding Missal* events and book signings. [Sidebar: while on the website of WRAL-TV, I entered a contest and won a year's supply of *McDonald's* breakfast sandwiches with coffee. My attempts at building a platform were already paying off.]



Networking contacts are a writer's most valuable asset. If you don't already belong to a supportive writers' group, please join one ASAP. Ask fellow

authors for suggestions for a group. Find one (or more) that meets your needs and fits with your personality, writing genre, and style. Example: If you write erotic horror books you probably don't want to join a Christian writers' group.



Here's where my networking contacts came into play. In speaking with a friend who has a well-known TV segment (he is also an author), we were conversing about how difficult it is to build a platform. I told him everything I had done to date and asked for suggestions on future efforts. He offered to do a segment on the inception and inspiration for my book. Of course I accepted, and the segment was a God send.

A week later one of my radio pitch efforts paid off and, with the help of a couple of friends, *Guiding Missal* was one of the featured topics on an hour-long radio program. This a great illustration of the advantages of networking, utilizing the contacts of fellow authors and not being afraid to put yourself out there. After all, the worst a contact can say is, "No."

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Watch for invitations from bloggers to do interviews. They're wonderfully fun to do and get you and your work exposed to a wide audience. I answered an ad in our Sunday paper from a columnist who was looking to interview local authors. She did a fabulous job of explaining my complex book, and I received further opportunities for other events from her article.



Find out who your local media people are. Learn their names and send them an email introducing yourself, tell them about your book. Introduce yourself to your local librarians and ask if the library does signings or readings with signings. You never know what will come of it and, again, the worst they can say is, "No."

Contacting every social group to which I belong, and others I do not, to offer my services as a speaker has paid off

in a big way. Many pay a stipend, many feed you as well (double bonus), and most will allow you to sell your books after your speaking gig is done.

At signing events, I make it a point to engage with people who walk by. I say hello to everyone, extend my hand, introduce myself, and explain that I'm selling autographs for \$15—the books are free. Laughing ensues. They usually buy a book, and they remember me. There have been events at which I've sold only a few books but scored another event from an attendee who happened to oversee obtaining the services of a speaker or, in my case, an author with her pro-military book at a fund-raiser for veterans.

Shamelessly promoting my book has become an art form for me. I utilize my regular *Facebook* page and my author FB page. Note that an author FB page is simply that, anything and everything to do with being an author and writing. *Twitter* has finally become my friend and after seeking out like-minded people, other authors, and folks in the publishing and marketing business, I'm building a following. However, I still don't have as many followers as my fifteen-year-old granddaughter, Emily.

Building a website was something I started after becoming a frequent contributor to *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and *Guidepost* magazines. I learned as I went along—updating and changing as I found ways to improve. Someday I might be able to hire a professional.

[Sidebar: research professional web designers and get references.] It never fails to astound me at the number of people who visit my website.

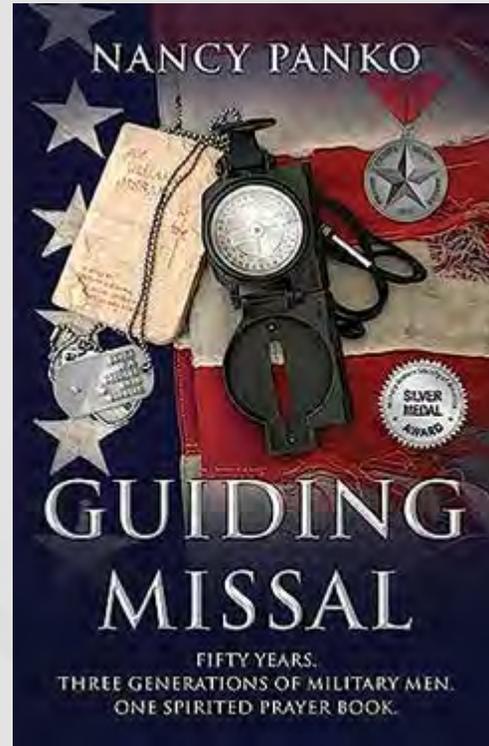
Sending out press releases or other news on your achievements is important to continue building a platform. Remember, people want to know about your successes and where you'll be for the next signing or event. Using a site like *MailChimp*, which is free with up to 2,000 subscribers, allows a novice to easily navigate entering information and images in a pleasing format to send a mass mailing. Build your email base by having sign-ups at all your events. If you attempt to send out a mass mailing on your PC, it will be detected as spam.

When you look for signing events, target areas where people know you—your church bazaar, your health club's client appreciation day, a local business looking for a promotional hook to bring in customers. Remember, you *have* to ask. Have your biography and a book ready to show and tell. Prepare your elevator pitch—a one- to two-minute synopsis of your sure-to-be best seller. At each and every signing, be prepared for questions. Again, people want to know you and how you started writing because they have "always wanted to write a book".

Since my book covers a fifty-year time span in history with various wars and conflicts, I'm acutely aware of anniversaries and special dates that might provide an opportunity for a signing event for *Guiding Missal*. Knowing your

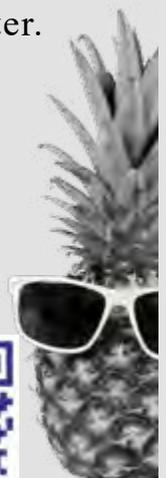
material and being able to explain what's pertinent to the date and the event will land you a gig most of the time. Again, remember, the worst they can say is, "No."

Writing is a labor of passion, rewarding, and enriching. The business end of



writing is competitive, cut and dried. Intertwining the two is important to convince the public why they need to have your book on their shelf.

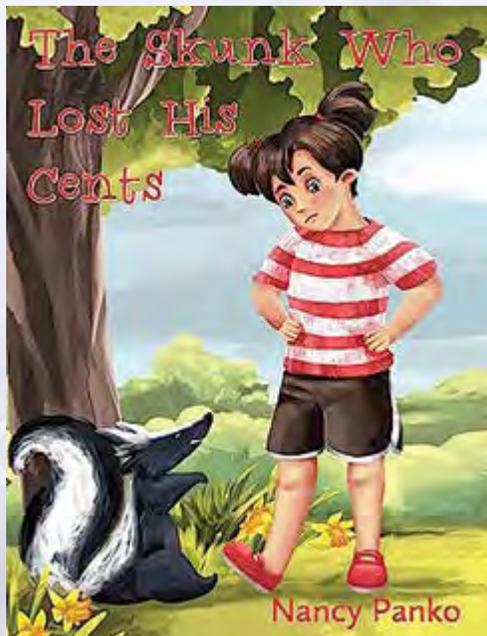
Learn to be a shameless promoter.



AUTHOR PRE-PUBLICATION CHECKLIST

Done	Task	Note
	12-6 Months Before Publication	
	Create Website/Blog	
	Establish social media presence (FB, Twitter, Goodreads, Pinterest)	
	Begin building contact/email list	
	Find and list similar books	
	Research and list influencers	
	Begin incorporating edits (around month 6)	
	6-4 Months Before Publication	
	Have professional headshot taken	
	Write/update author bio	
	Reach out to potential partners	
	Reach out for testimonials/reviews	
	Increase email list efforts	
	Complete edit for ARCs	
	3 Months Before Publication	
	Write magazine articles for related topics/ areas of expertise	
	Plan contests/giveaways	
	2 Months Before Publication	
	Plan email campaign	
	Reach out to reviewers/bloggers	
	Increase presence on social media	
	Setup Google alerts for Title/Author/Topic	
	Start writing guest posts on blogs	
	1 Month Before Publication	
	Start submitting guest posts to blogs	
	Increase social media presence	
	Send out invitations for launch party	
	Reach out to email list/contacts	
	2-3 Weeks Before Publication	
	Reach out to email list/contacts	
	Launch Day	
	Fully engage social media accounts	
	Start blog tour	
	Celebrate!	

For a full-size version of this checklist to print and use, visit lightmessages.com/checklist.



THE SKUNK WHO LOST HIS CENTS

by Nancy Panko

Format(s): Hardback, Paperback

HB 978-1611534894; PB 978-1611534887

Torchflame Books

We have all been confused by words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings.

This charming story is perfect for kids learning the differences between such words. The whimsical tale is followed by a list of some common words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

Also included are several Fun Facts about skunks and an easy recipe for a tasty snack to make with a grown-up.



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...THAT HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY

SINCE 1943, GREAT BRITAIN HAS been awarding animals that have gallantly served in wartime with the PDSA Dickin Medal, also known as the “Victoria Cross for Animals”. To date, the PDSA has honored seventy-five animals with its Dickin Medal—thirty-two pigeons, thirty-eight dogs, four horses, and a cat (yes, a cat).

In 2016, I had the privilege of going to England to receive the 68th Dickin Medal for Staff Sergeant Reckless, the Korean War horse hero. She was the fourth horse in



history to receive the medal, and the only American horse to do so. While we were there, I was stunned at the honor and majesty of this medal.

I spoke with the director of the PDSA, “Why doesn’t America have this kind of medal? We need to do this for our animal heroes.”

Three years later, on November 14, 2019, at a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, the non-profit *Animals in War & Peace* was launched where members of congress presented eight animals with the Animals in War & Peace Medal of Bravery. The medal is awarded to animals that have served in past wars (posthumous), and current working or retired military dogs representing U.S. military services, service animals and first responders, for their courage and sacrifice. During the inaugural ceremony, a medal was presented to one horse, two pigeons, and five dogs that have served our country on the war and home fronts. Staff Sgt Reckless received the Animals in War & Peace Medal of Bravery #1.

Three ceremonies later, sixteen animals have been honored with that distinguished award.

In 2022, the *Animals in War & Peace Distinguished Service Medal* was introduced. The medal is also awarded by members of congress and presented to animals distinguished by their exceptionally meritorious

service to the U.S. in a duty of great responsibility. Three dogs and one horse have received that medal to date.



Staff Sgt Reckless

In *LIFE* magazine's *Celebrating Our Heroes*, a small Mongolian mare named Reckless was listed alongside George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa. She was bred to be a racehorse, but instead became the greatest war hero horse in American history.

On October 26, 1952, Lt. Eric Pedersen purchased Reckless at the Seoul racetrack for \$250 of his own money to carry ammunition for the 75mm recoilless rifle. He bought her from a young Korean man who sold his beloved mare to buy an artificial leg for his sister who lost hers in a landmine accident during the war.

The Marines taught Reckless to get in and out of her trailer, step over communication wire, get down when there was incoming fire, and to ignore the sounds of battle. She got so good at understanding her men, they used hand

signals to direct her in the heat of battle when needed.

Reckless stepped onto the pages of history during the pivotal Battle of the Nevada Cities, and specifically, the Battle for Outpost Vegas, in March 1953. The outposts were named after Nevada gaming towns because, "it was a gamble" if the men could hold them.

At the time of the battle, it was written that, "The savagery of the battle for the so-called Nevada Complex has never been equaled in Marine Corps history."

That particular battle "was to bring a cannonading and bombing seldom experienced in warfare,"¹ ...twenty-eight tons of bombs and hundreds of the largest shells turned the crest of Vegas into a smoking, death-pocked rubble. And Reckless was in the middle of all of it.

Enemy soldiers saw her as she made her way across the deadly "no man's land" rice paddies and up the steep forty-five-degree mountain trails that led to the firing sites.

As Sgt. Maj. James E. Bobbitt recalled, "It's difficult to describe the elation and the boost in morale that little white-faced mare gave Marines as she outfoxed the enemy bringing vitally needed ammunition up the mountain."²

1 Hutton, Robin, *Sgt. Reckless, America's War Horse*, Regnery History, Wash, DC (2013), p. 75.

2 Ibid, p. 88.

Continued on page 60

Continued from page 59

During the five-day battle, on one day alone she made fifty-one trips from the Ammunition Supply Point to the firing sites, *most of the time by herself*. Each round of 75mm recoilless rifle ammunition weighed twenty-four pounds, and she carried 386 rounds (over 9,000 pounds—*almost five tons*—of ammunition) during this battle, walked over thirty-five miles through open rice paddies and up steep mountains with *enemy fire coming in at the rate of five hundred rounds per minute*.

Wounded twice by falling shrapnel, she didn't let that stop or slow her down. She even carried a few wounded soldiers down the mountain to safety and provided a shield for several Marines who were trapped trying to make their way up to the front line. What she did in that battle not only earned her the respect of all who served with her, it got her promoted to sergeant. Her heroics defined the word *Marine*. She was beloved by her men. They took care of her better than they took care of themselves—throwing their flak jackets over her to protect her when incoming was heavy, risking their own safety.

But it was not only Reckless's heroics that endeared the Marines to her, it was her incredible attitude and actions off the battlefield. On cold nights she found her way into their tents. They made room for her by the stove. The horse had a mind of her own—not to mention, being very determined. You would not

believe her antics when she was being ignored, or if she was hungry. Let's just say you never wanted to leave your food unattended.



As legendary as she was for her heroics, her voracious appetite became even more legendary. She ate anything and everything. But she especially loved scrambled eggs and pancakes with her morning cup of coffee. She also loved cake, *Hershey* bars, candy from the C-rations, and *Coca Cola*—even poker chips, blankets and hats when she was being ignored or if she was trying to prove a point. Most of all, she loved sharing a beer with her comrades after a long day's work on the battlefield.

After the war, she was brought to America and was the guest of honor at the Marine Corps Birthday Ball when she landed in San Francisco on November 10, 1954. She lived out her days at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, CA. There she was *officially* promoted to the rank of

staff sergeant by the commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps—a rank never before or since bestowed upon an animal.

She retired on November 10, 1960 and died in May 1968. She was buried with full military honors at the Camp Pendleton stables.

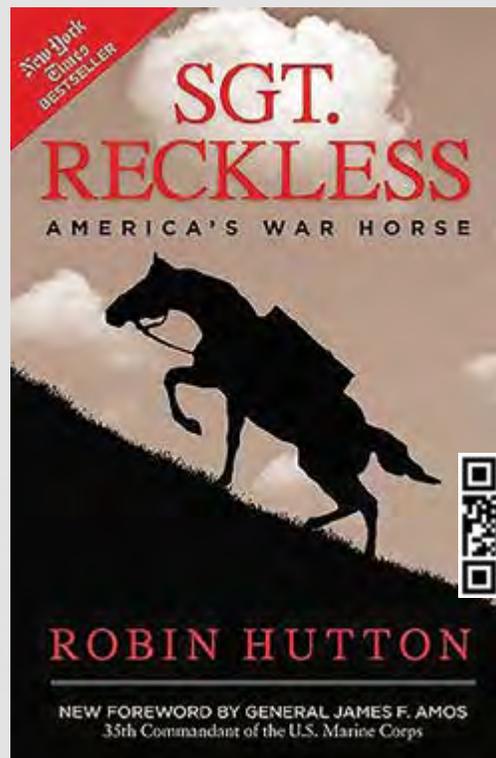
In addition to the PDSA Dickin Medal and AWP Medal of Bravery, her military decorations include two Purple Hearts, Good Conduct Medal, Presidential Unit Citation with star, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, Navy Unit Commendation, and Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, all of which she wore proudly on her red and gold blanket, along with a French Fourragere that the 5th Marines earned in WW1. She also received the Ambassador for Peace Medal and Certificate from the South Korean government in 2014.

Six monuments now stand around the country for SSgt Reckless by artist Jocelyn Russell: 1) the National Museum of the Marine Corps (2013); 2) Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California (2016); 3) the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY (2018); 4) a horse farm that works with veterans with PTSD in Barrington Hills, IL (2019); 5) the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in Ft. Worth, TX (2019); and 6) the World Equestrian Center in Ocala, FL (2020).

There will never be another horse like Reckless. But remember ...

SHE WASN'T A HORSE.

SHE WAS A MARINE.



To learn more about her story, go to <https://SgtReckless.com>

AWP MEDAL NOMINATION PERIOD NOW OPEN UNTIL AUGUST 31, 2023

Nominations are now being accepted for the March 2024 Medal Ceremony in Washington, DC. If you know of an animal that deserves either the AWP Medal of Bravery or the AWP Distinguished Service Medal, please go to <https://animalsinwarandpeace.org/nomination-form-1> for more details, or contact me at Info@AnimalsInWarAndPeace.org

Date of interview: 18 May 2023

KARIN TRAMM IS A NAVY wife, DoDEA teacher, and mother of two BRATs. She attended Tusculum University in Greeneville, Tennessee, earning a B.A. in elementary education. She holds an M.Ed. in early childhood education from Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University, and an additional M.H.R. from the University of Oklahoma.



Karin began her overseas teaching career in 1983 on the beautiful island of Guam. In 1986, she joined the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) now Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), which took her to Kalayaan Elementary School at Subic Bay Naval Station in the Philippines. There she met her future husband, Gene, a naval meteorologist. She transferred to Bamberg, Germany to teach at Strullendorf Elementary School and then to Naples, Italy to teach at Naples Elementary School.

The Tramms relocated to Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California, where their two sons were born. They went on to Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland, where Karin started a photography business. Karin's photographs have been featured in shows, newspapers and magazines, as well as presented to the White House. Karin also wrote for the base newspaper, *The White Falcon*, *The USO News*, and *Iceland Explorer*. From there they transferred to Virginia Beach and then rotated back overseas to Rota, Spain, where Karin re-entered DoDEA to continue her teaching career.

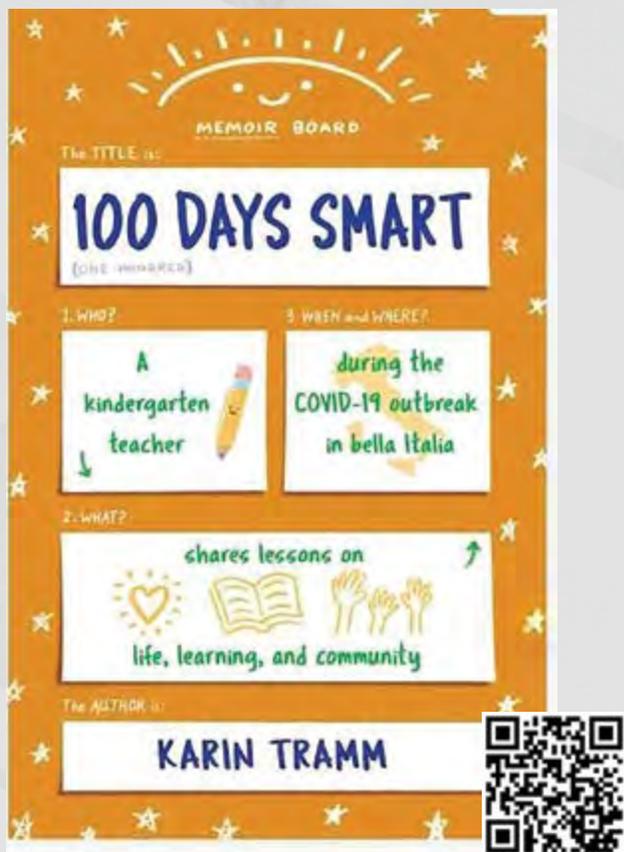
Upon Gene's retirement from the Navy in 2006, they moved to Vicenza, Italy, where they lived and worked for sixteen years. The Tramms both recently retired from DoDEA and now reside in Parrish, Florida.

Karin's short stories, *There's a Cobra on the Slide*, and *The Agriturismo Bolzano Vicentino*, are included in the anthologies, *Schooling with Uncle Sam*, and *Host Nation Hospitality*, published by the Museum of

the American Military Family. *100 Days Smart* is her first book.

MWSA: How did you find out about MWSA?

KARIN TRAMM: Elva Resa Publishing, an independent publisher specializing in resources by, for, and about military families, holds a zoom meeting once a month for their current authors and illustrators. During the conversation, MWSA was mentioned as a resource for military connected writers. This being my first book, I'm always excited to network and learn from others on the same path. I look forward to being a part of MWSA.



MWSA: What compelled you to write *100 Days Smart*, a book about military connected students during the pandemic?

TRAMM: So many Americans are unaware of DoDEA Schools to start with, and our military connected kids were on the frontline of the European outbreak, two or three weeks ahead of the states.

On the 100th day of kindergarten, I put my [school] kids on the bus, waved to them, and said, "See you on Monday!"

Little did I know that would be the last day I saw them. With the first COVID-19 death (in Italy) just miles down the road, school was closed. At first it was just for two days, then a week, then until Spring Break, and finally for the rest of the school year.

Teachers jumped in with online instruction within that first week and forged on, building the plane while flying. I woke up one morning and realized the significance of what was happening and asked myself who would ever write about his. Someone needed to document what was happening within the American military community in Italy, and especially how it was affecting the kids. I wanted to show how tough [kids] could be in almost any situation. They were my heroes.

Even though we continued school online, we never really had a proper good-bye as a class. That's important for the kids, but it's also important for the teachers. As I continued to write, it helped me process my situation and brought a lot of closure.

Continued on page 64

Continued from page 63

MWSA: How do DoDEA schools compare with stateside schools from a teacher's perspective?

TRAMM: I've been fortunate to make teaching with the DoDEA system a career and to have my sons attend and graduate from DoDEA schools. The school culture is a reflection of the high value military families put on education, creating an integrated organization between teachers, parents, and communities. Large numbers of parents support the school, both as volunteers and as employees.

Commands support parents by allowing time off for conferences and volunteering. Other programs such as the Military Family Life Counselors, MWR, SKIESUnlimited, the art center, and youth sports, partner with the schools in a variety of ways to enrich student success. Overseas travel gives an expanded worldview and rounds out DoDEA students.

The most important aspect, in my opinion, is that every student has an employed parent, health care, and a place to live. Having those basic needs met gives everyone a step up in an educational setting. Not to say there aren't challenges. Living overseas, TDY, deployments, and the high turnover rate of families, are all factors that come into play in an educational setting.

To counter that, DoDEA shines with many plans and people in place to meet the individual needs of each student, both overseas and stateside. I can't say enough positive things about the teachers, families, communities, and students, who make up the DODEA partnership. I'm proud to have been a part of that.



MWSA: What impact has overseas life had on your worldview?

TRAMM: Anyone who has been stationed overseas has learned to be more tolerant and understanding of differences, both cultural and personal. I've learned that different isn't better or worse, just different. I try not to be judgmental and to embrace diversity and opposing views because that's how we learn about others and ourselves.

I'd like to think I've become more patient, observant, and flexible. I'm the kind of person who needs routine and predictability so striving to just roll with things was one of my hardest challenges. I know everyone connected with the military learns to do this early

on, whether they're overseas or not. I always try to expect the unexpected; to adapt, regroup, and move forward.

MWSA: Were there any changes that took place during the pandemic that turned out to be for the better?

TRAMM: In the classroom I did learn to be more tech savvy and that helped when we went back to school face to face in the fall. We heavily relied on online resources and tools, and I was in a much better place to handle that after my experience with virtual teaching. Having those skills in my pocket also helped me navigate this new world of being an author. I've learned how to more effectively use social media and built my own website.

The pandemic helped me refocus my family priorities, as well. I was plagued with mom guilt for not being there for my sons when the pandemic hit. I was completely helpless when they were in limbo in the states and couldn't come home to Italy.

I was fortunate to have enough years in with DoDEA and decided to retire from teaching in 2022. I do miss my friends and my Italian life, but I'm so happy to be sharing laughs and special times with my family.

MWSA: Do you think your story will encourage others to open up about their own pandemic experiences?

TRAMM: Everyone has their own pandemic story, unique to time and

place. Many of those stories are still inside waiting, waiting, waiting—most times needing—to come out. As I've talked about my book, I notice people are initially hesitant to join in the discussion. Once the door opens, however, young and old alike have a lot to share. I'd like to think this book gives people some validation, a springboard to begin their own conversations, and some healing. The whole world needs a bit of that.



Read Karin Tramm's complete interview at:

[Karin Tramm's Full Interview](#)



DANE ZELLER IS AN AT-LARGE MWSA board member. He writes and teaches fiction writing and moonlights as a comedy writer for radio-drama stage.

He has published a detective novel, *Smart Shield*, and an anthology of short stories, *Drive-by Romances* (Blind Dates Gone Wrong). He writes for KKFI-FM 90.1 in Kansas City.

Zeller is an expert on the dark hole of social media. He has many *Facebook* friends and *Twitter* followers. His MBA degree in marketing forces him to think of those fans as the strangers they are.



He and his wife, Rita, live in Westwood, Kansas in the neighborhood of Kansas City, Missouri. Zeller is a veteran of the Vietnam war. He believes we all owe the world a story. Learn more about Dane at: <http://www.danezeller.com>

KATHLEEN ROGERS IS AN AT-LARGE MWSA board member. Born in The Land of Enchantment, Kathleen M. Rodgers is a novelist whose work has appeared in *Family Circle Magazine*, *Military Times*, and in several anthologies.

Named a 2021 WILLA Literary Award Finalist in Contemporary Fiction from Women Writing the West for her fourth novel, *The Flying Clutterbucks*, Kathleen's other novels have garnered many awards and favorable reviews. In 2020, she received The Founder's Award from MWSA for her third novel, *Seven Wings to Glory*. She's been featured in *USA Today*, *The Associated Press*, and *Military Times*.



Kathleen presented at Eastern New Mexico University's *Media-Con '21* and was invited back for *Media-Con '22*. She's a two-time finalist for the MWSA Writer of the Year Award and recently gave a talk about "Not Giving Up" at the 2022 MWSA national conference in New Orleans.

A native of Clovis, New Mexico, Kathleen resides in North Texas and is working on her sixth novel. Learn More about Kathleen at: <https://kathleenmrogers.com>





Linda Loegel Hemby Historical Fiction Novelist

Beach Chair Books

<http://lindaloegel.blogspot.com/>

lindalheby@gmail.com

Linda is an award-winning author, member of two writing groups, and reviewer for the Military Writers Society of America. Her fiction novels include, *Willard Manor*, *Leaving Mark*, *Finding Gary*, *Saving Lou*, *Remaking Danny*, *Redeeming Rob*, *Testing Michael*, and *Restoring Simon*.

Although not a series, each book has a connection to at least one of the other books. Her work in progress is a story about the early life of a woman who poses as a man in the Civil War. That woman appears in *Testing Michael*.



BEFORE THE SNOW FLIES

by John Wemlinger

Format(s): Kindle, Paperback, Audio

ISBN-13 : 978-1943338177

Mission Point Press

Major David Keller was well on his way to becoming a general when a roadside bomb in Afghanistan took his legs. Angry, grieving, and carrying a loaded gun, David returns home to mend a few fences before using that gun to end his life.

But before the snow flies, his family, his community and Maggie McCall, someone he tried to forget, will prove to him that life in the small town of Onekama, Michigan, can be great once again—if he will only let it...and if murder doesn't get in the way.



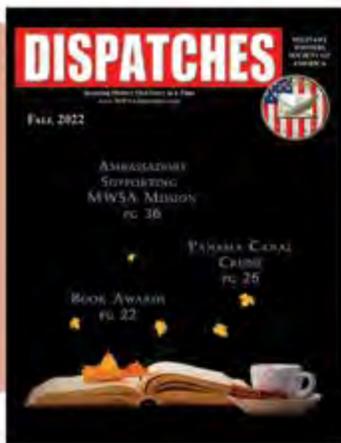


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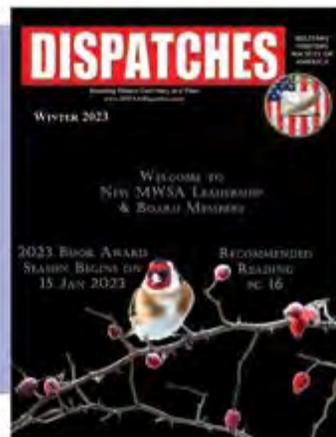
MILITARY WRITERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Dispatches magazine is the official publication of the Military Writers Society of America. We are actively seeking articles. As active duty service members, veterans, family members and those who have a story to tell, let *Dispatches* showcase your unique contribution to America’s fabric of freedom. Our core principle is a love and respect for the men and women who defend this nation and a deep personal understanding of their sacrifice and dedication.

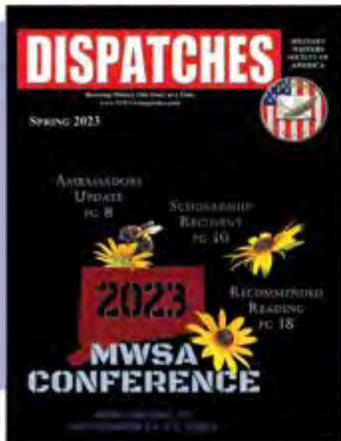
The magazine is published four times a year and provides our readership a national platform for short stories of less than 1500 words, articles, poetry, and art. Please keep content suitable for a large audience.



FALL
JUL-SEP
DEADLINE FOR
SUBMISSIONS
15 AUG



WINTER
OCT-DEC
DEADLINE FOR
SUBMISSIONS
15 DEC

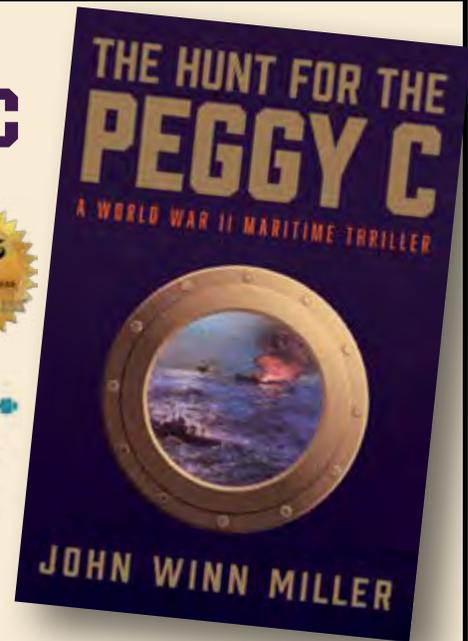


SPRING
JAN-MAR
DEADLINE FOR
SUBMISSIONS
15 MAR



SUMMER
APR-JUN
DEADLINE FOR
SUBMISSIONS
15 JUN

THE HUNT FOR THE PEGGY C IS A MUST FOR EVERY NAVAL FICTION LOVER



“I highly recommend *The Hunt for the Peggy C*, even for those who would not normally read naval fiction. Cover to cover, the book will keep you in a perpetual state of suspense. There is no time to guess what will happen next—you’ll be too busy biting your nails and crossing your fingers.” —**MILITARY WRITERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA (SUE RUSHFORD)**

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Chopsticks

by Annette Grunseth

You brought home gifts
from your tour of duty
as if from a pleasure trip,
a mini-camera for Dad,
a scarf for Mother,
and for me, chopsticks from Vietnam.

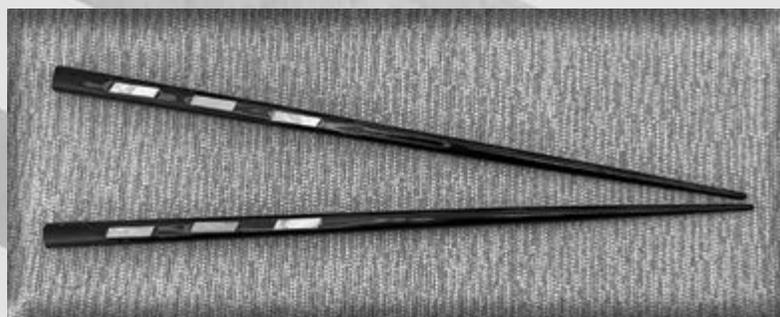
Two slender, black sticks the color of onyx
glistening in my hands,
each with inlays of pearly shell,
iridescent in marbled gold.

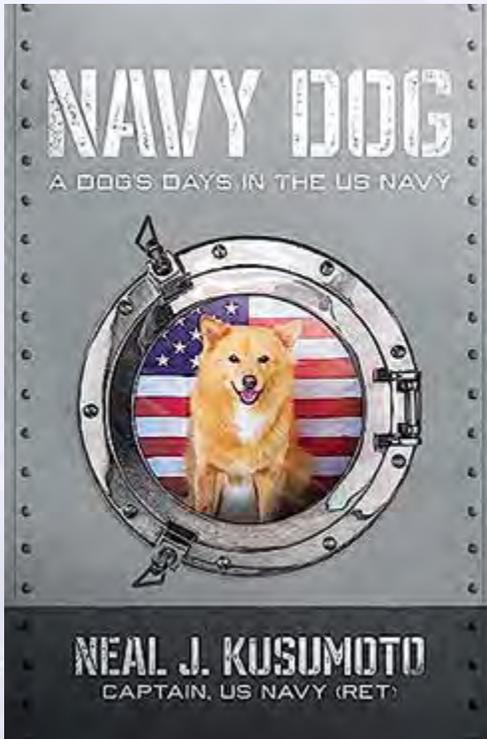
They made beautiful tools for eating —
people forced into famine,
their food defoliated by war.

You choked back that year of jungle sweeps
and body bags, all of it hard to stomach,
but you managed to forage a few gifts,
bringing me jeweled chopsticks,
tools of sustenance,
a souvenir of your survival.



©Annette Langlois Grunseth; *From Combat and Campus: Writing Through War* (Elm Grove Press, 2021); Gold Medal Winner MWSA 2022





NAVY DOG

by Neal J. Kusumoto

Format(s): Kindle, Hardcover

ISBN-13 : 978-1637587737

Knox Press

Having Seaman Jenna as the mascot on the USS Vandegrift was never meant to be a statement or symbolic act, or to put the crew on the radars of four-star admirals. Jenna came aboard unannounced, a Christmas gift that brought instant joy to the crew and transformed a gray ship into a home for 225 sailors.

Before long, Jenna became a phenomenon—the only dog on a Navy ship since World War II—despite the best efforts to keep her from the public eye. This orphaned Shiba Inu and the displaced crew shared countless adventures and trials during her five years on board.



*Roses are red,
Daisies are not,
Fall Conference is near,
In case you forgot...*





MWSA DOES SEVERAL THINGS TO help our members become better writers and to be published. Every two or three years, we publish an anthology filled with submissions from the MWSA membership. In addition to creating interesting books to read, these anthologies allow those who never have been published to become so. For those who are already established authors, having a story in the anthology gives them one more bullet for their resumes.

This summer our 2023 anthology, *Snapshots*, was released. This year's anthology is another long one with 386 pages. It includes thirty-seven submissions from thirty-four MWSA members. Once again, the submissions run the gamut of genres and formats. They include memoirs devoted to everything from the mundane life in the Vietnam war zone to the most harrowing experience of being caught in the middle of a military coup in Myanmar. There are excerpts from works in progress and original poetry.

Past anthologies include *Untold Stories* (2021), *Inspirations* (2018) *Gettysburg Inspirations* (2017), *All Gave Some* (2014), and *Our Voices* (2013). *Snapshots* is available for purchase.

In 2022, we created an anthology team and formalized the process to produce an anthology every other year.

We thank those who submitted, along with our editorial staff of Dwight Zimmerman, senior editor, and his assistants, Angel Giacomo, Joan Ramirez, and yours truly. ~ Bob Doerr





MILITARY WRITERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

MWSA Public Page

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DID YOU KNOW MWSA HAS a public *Facebook* page for your benefit?

You can post upcoming MWSA-related or relatable events, resources, stories... All for MWSA members.

Zoom events, author interviews, book reviews, announcements, educational avenues, and links to previous events can be found at the click of your mouse.

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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



