

# DISPATCHES

MILITARY  
WRITERS  
SOCIETY OF  
AMERICA

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SPRING 2021



## RECOMMENDED READING LIST

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## SHATTERED REPUTATION

*by Rick Barram*

Pg 22



**LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

*Sandra Miller Linhart*

AS A CHILD LIVING IN Wyoming, I often sat in my back yard and looked over the hills and valleys which rose to majestic mountains. I pondered the brave pioneers who forged paths through that very land so I would one day be able to sit in comfort and wonder, and silently thank them for their perseverance.

This organization has within its ranks stories of brave souls who've also forged paths and persevered so we can live our lives in freedom. You'll find some of their stories between these covers, including Evarts Erickson's posthumous submission on page 10. From these service members to their families, I thank them for their countless sacrifices.

Not long ago, I sat beside my mom as she and I counted down the last moments of her personal clock. She held on for much longer than the doctors predicted, but I can't say any of it was pleasant. The original dreaded C-word: Cancer.

She turned to me a bit before she died and said, "Get busy living or get busy dying."

"Thank you, Stephen King," I replied. She had quoted the line from *Shawshank Redemption*. Her keen sense of humor accompanied her to the end.

I remember thinking at the time she was talking about herself, but after Covid became a thing, I wonder if she didn't have some insight into what the world had in store for the souls she left behind. Mom departed mere months before the new dreaded C-word was introduced.

At the end of 2020, I decided to take her advice and get busy living. I owe it to the pioneers who forged my freedoms and the service members who guarantee them. Whatever your beliefs or convictions, I hope you fearlessly live your life to its fullest. Always.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Bob Doerr*

**W**ELL, I'VE HAD MY TWO vaccine shots and feel fine. With more and more access to the vaccine and declining Covid numbers, it looks like our conference in September is a sure thing (should I ever say that??).

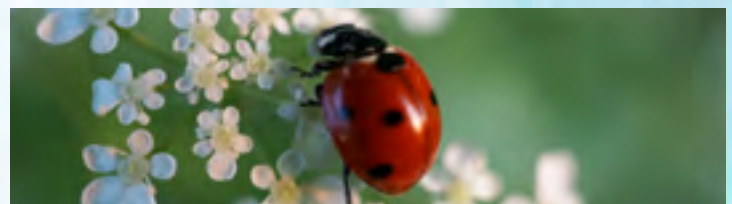
In all seriousness, I encourage each of you to consider attending this year's general membership conference. The conference will be held in New London, CT, and will kick off with an Ice Breaker Reception at 5:30 PM on Thursday, September 16. Check out the link on our website for more info and to register for the 2021 **MWSA General Membership Conference**; New London, CT—Military Writers Society of America ([mwsadispatches.com](http://mwsadispatches.com)) .

MWSA is continuing to grow, and I am routinely amazed with the talent of our members. To those of you I haven't met personally, I hope to be able to do so in September at the conference. Meanwhile, I'm always available for questions or inputs at [info@mwsa.co](mailto:info@mwsa.co) .

We continue to look for more book reviewers. I've been reviewing books for ten years and have enjoyed it very much. It's a great way to read new books (for free) and support our book review and awards program. There are no quotas. You can review as many or as few books as you would like. If you're interested, check out this link on our website **BECOME A REVIEWER**—Military Writers Society of America ([mwsadispatches.com](http://mwsadispatches.com)) .

Enjoy the spring weather and stay safe.

~ Bob Doerr



# LEARNING NOT TO DIE

*Bruce Thomas*

*TALES OF 40 YEARS OF MILITARY AND COMMERCIAL FLYING*

*Excerpt from Story 1: Alaska 1986, A-10A*

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE IS located a few miles east of Fairbanks, Alaska. I was a young captain in the Air Force, and the realization Uncle Sam allowed me to walk out to my multimillion-dollar, single-seat fighter was totally lost on me. I was performing my tasks, trying to learn as much as possible to be ready if our country called me into a shooting war. At age 28, I was on my second flying assignment in the Air Force.

The rolling mountains just north of Eielson AFB were perfect for training. We could easily hide on one side of the mountains at low altitude and swoop around the peaks to drop bombs on an unsuspecting bad guy. All simulated, of course, but the training was very realistic.

Our flight profile caused us to hide behind the mountains at low altitude while we received our assigned targets from the airborne or ground Forward Air Controller (FAC). He instructed us if friendlies were in the target area and of any restrictions for the attack.

I operated as a wingman at that time in my 18<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron career. Plain and simple, I did not have enough experience to be in charge of the two-ship formation. I held on to the airplane and plotted the target on my map, while I stayed in position off my flight lead.

That day I was going to be flying with one of the Assistant Operation Officers in the Squadron. With almost twenty years in the Air Force, he was a great guy. He would ensure

my scenario was tough but fair. He briefed the mission, and we stepped out to our green A-10s.

Summers in Alaska were always outstanding. The weather was terrific. Mostly clear skies and breakup of the lake and river ice had been completed. The pine trees were budding. A blanket of green covered the mountains near the range. Open areas were dotted with moose, an occasional grizzly bear, and other wildlife.

After takeoff, we flew directly up north to R-2205. We were going to be on the range with a ground FAC for almost 45 minutes. Our profile had us holding at a low altitude about two minutes from the target area, on the backside of a 1,500-foot ridge. The range had many simulated targets, and we did not know what targets the FAC would use for our scenario. My flight lead directed everything, as his title implied.

The FAC used a preplanned pattern for relaying information. That allowed him to talk as little as possible while allowing us time for communication we might need in our flight.

For the most part, I did not say a word. I just listened, flew, and wrote down information as best I could. We were at 500 feet above ground level in rolling small hills. We had to make a turn every five or six miles to maintain our position near the Initial Point.

The briefing from the FAC sounded like this: “Airfield on the south side of the valley. Bad guys are at the northern end of the runway in the trees.”

Then the 9-line briefing started.



“B42, 352, 10.2 nautical, 865 feet. North end of Airfield. Whiskey Sierra 252 765” The information filled in the rest of the blanks on my kneeboard card.

The information said the target was from our IP, a heading of 352 degrees for 10.2 nautical miles. The coordinates for the target using the grid system was in WS 252765.

I checked my map when my flight lead told me it was okay. I knew it was at the north end of an airfield.

The FAC continued his briefing. “Request two bombs each on the target. Friendlies are not a factor. The closest is over three miles to the west.

It was going to be a fun attack: Fly around the mountain to the south of the target and climb to get enough altitude to roll in for the attack. The maneuver was called a popup attack—I ingressed at 500 feet, climbed to 2,000 feet, rolled on my back to find the target, and pulled my plane into a dive. All that time, power would be at full throttle. If everything went well, I’d be on a 15-degree dive pattern when I released my bombs at 900 feet above the target.

My flight lead, call sign Zoomie 1, calculated how he wanted to make the attack. He made a few more turns while deciding.

He called me and said, “Zoomie Flight, Trail, Shooter, Shooter, Rip pairs two bombs. You are cleared heads down to plot the target.”

I replied, “Two.”

I picked up my map and found the coordinates. I saw the point on the ground was indeed a small airfield. I put the coordinates in my initial navigation system, which was just beside my right leg.

I said, “Two’s Ready.”

The attack would be both of us making bombing runs with at least a 30-second interval over the target. We were not given any restrictions for the attack. We could’ve been given an attack heading or other items that might’ve caused problems.

Zoomie 1 finally said, “Zoomie Flight is departing the IP. Arm them up.”

“Two.” I reached up and placed the master arm switch to ARM. From that point on, my pickle button on my control stick was hot.

I saw Lead fly around the east side of the 1,500-foot hill to the south of the target. I knew I needed at least 30 seconds, but nothing in the brief said I needed to follow Lead into the target area. Using the same attack heading would make me an easy target for bad guys on the ground. I decided to make my attack heading 180 degrees opposite of Lead.

It sounded like a good idea at the time.

Remember, I was simultaneously performing multiple tasks. One of which was trying to keep Lead in sight as he flew in front of me, almost four miles ahead.

As soon as Lead turned north to make his run up the mountain’s east side, I turned west. I had the hill between the Airfield and me and Zoomie 1.

I placed my hand on the clock and waited for the radio call from Lead. The terrain grew rougher. I moved my aircraft up and down to maintain my 500-foot elevation.

“Zoomie 1 is up from the east, FAC not in sight,” Zoomie Lead said.

I pushed my clock button, starting the timer. I

*Continued on page 6*

*Continued from page 5*

would wait at least 30 seconds before making the same call from the target's west/southwest.

The FAC immediately said, "Zoomie 1, you are cleared hot. FAC is not a factor."

I knew what was happening on the other side of the hill. The leader would be pulling down and releasing his bombs. Then, he would turn to the east and leave the same way he came into the area.

I turned my A-10 north. I was west of the top of the small hill, which stood about 1,500 feet above the runway. My clock showed 40 seconds, and I knew I had plenty of space on Lead's attack. It was time to pull up into my popup profile. I approached the crest of a ridgeline that ran out to the west from the hill's top.

As I started to push the radio switch to tell the FAC I was beginning my attack, I saw Zoomie 1 cresting the same ridge I was pointing at. He descended as he crossed the crest and came directly at my airplane. I push over, turned slightly right, and aimed my plane below his.

I had no way of climbing out of the situation. When I first saw him coming over the ridge, he was only about five seconds in front of my aircraft. I saw only ground to the left and his plane ahead.

*Swoosh!* I heard Zoomie 1's aircraft go right over me. I pulled up and shouted, "Knock it off," over the radio.

My very pleasant Zoomie 1 then yelled, "Knock it off? How the hell did you get there? I just barely missed you."

We both climbed at an altitude of about 2,000 feet above ground level. I reached up and placed my master arm switch to SAFE.

I said, "Two, Knock it off." I was shaking.

I knew I had totally messed up the attack and put myself in a position that did not allow me to clear my flight path from Zoomie 1.

Lesson learned!

Finally, Zoomie 1 said, "Safe them up. We are going home."

I said, "Two."



**I** WENT TO THE WOODS because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

*Henry David Thoreau, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For", in Walden; Life in the Woods*

"Nothing is so much to be feared as fear." ~ *Henry David Thoreau's journal entry of 7 Sept 1851*



# MWSA 2021 ANTHOLOGY

*Bob Doerr*

**M**WSA WILL BE PUBLISHING AN anthology this year. All members are encouraged to submit a short story or poem to be included in it. The submission window is now open. The theme for the MWSA 2021 Anthology is “Untold Stories,” and we hope you may have military, military family, or military-related stories to share. When we say stories, we also mean poetry. Your stories can be fiction or non fiction. This is your opportunity to bring that story from the back of your mind onto the pages of this collection of stories from fellow MWSA authors.

Stories and poems must be written by MWSA members and not previously published. Authors will grant a one-time right to publish in the anthology with all rights other than the anthology publication remaining with each author. The maximum word count is 3000 words. Black and white graphics, maps, and photographs to which you have permission may be included with your work with proper attribution and within the publisher’s specifications. In accordance with the MWSA Ethics Policy, MWSA cannot accept submissions that include politically, religiously, or racially biased or anti-U.S./U.S. military material.

Submissions need to be in Word, New Times Roman, 12 pt, double-spaced, and well edited before being submitted. Along with each submission, we will need each author to give us a short 200 word max bio and a B&W head shot.

Our goal is to limit this anthology to 300 pages, so don’t wait until the last minute to

submit. Unless we meet our 300 page goal early, we plan to be open for submissions until June 1, 2021. Submissions should be sent to [info@mwsa.co](mailto:info@mwsa.co) as an email attachment.

Get those writing muscles working and get ready to have your story published in 2021! This opportunity is one of your MWSA benefits, so take advantage of it. For some, this will be the first time they have a story published.

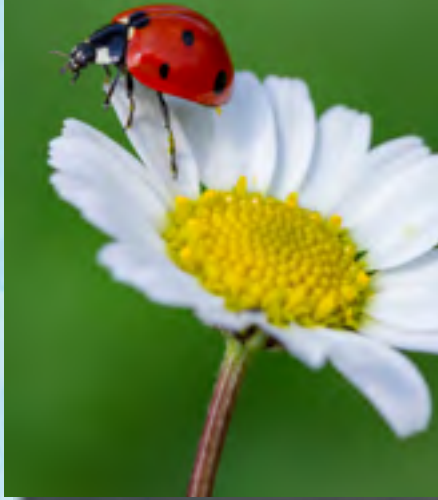
Over the years, many of us have learned much about and from our fellow members through their stories published in MWSA anthologies.

## PREVIOUS MWSA ANTHOLOGIES





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MWSA *DISPATCHES* IS  
LOOKING FOR A FEW  
GOOD MEMBERS.

WE HAVE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR you as a member in good standing, from *Author Interviews* to Poetry submissions, to Book Profiles (three books, first come-first served, will be showcased in the *Dispatches* every quarter). We offer this opportunity (exclusively to our membership) to be published in a national magazine.

If you'd like to write a feature article (1500 words or less, please) or have questions regarding a submission to *Dispatches* magazine, please email:

[dispatches@mwsa.co](mailto:dispatches@mwsa.co)



# SPRING 2021 RECOMMENDED READING LIST

*Bob Doerr*



THE MILITARY WRITERS SOCIETY OF America (MWSA) is an organization of hundreds of writers, poets, and artists drawn together by a common bond of military service. One purpose of our society is to review the written works of our members. This list has been taken from the books submitted for review by our members since January. Only those books that pass thorough scrutiny make it to this list.

- ★ New Mexico Remembers 9/11.....by Patricia Walkow
- ★ Tomcat Fury: A Combat History of the F-14.....by Mike Guardia
- ★ Under Another Sun: A Novel of the Vietnam War.....by David S. Lewis and Dana C. Welch
  - ★ Full Mag: Veteran Stories Illustrated, Vol. 3.....by August Uhl
    - ★ Ivory Rangers .....by Joseph Mujwit
    - ★ Tiffany Studios Buying Guide.....by Allen L. Tiffany
    - ★ Always Coming Back Home.....by Ashley Bugge
    - ★ The Quisling Factor.....by J. L. Oakley
- ★ Presidential Advantage: Operation: First Lady.....by Jessica James
  - ★ Kale is a Four Letter Word.....by Corrales Writing Group
    - ★ Have Snakes, Need Birds.....by Travis Klempan
  - ★ The Culmination: a new beginning.....by Gwen M. Plano
- ★ Death in the Highlands: The Siege of Special Forces Camp Plei Me.....by J. Keith Saliba
  - ★ The Original Jeeps.....by Paul R. Bruno, Manuel Freedman, et al
    - ★ A Few Days in the Navy.....by A. T. Roberts
  - ★ American Cyberscape: Trials and the Path to Trust.....by Mari K. Eder
  - ★ Tales from the Blue: Adventures in Law Enforcement.....by J. B. King
    - ★ A Quiet Cadence.....by Mark Treanor
  - ★ A Hui Hou: Until We Meet Again.....by Ashley Bugge & Dawn Davidson
- ★ Tri-State Heroes of '45: Together with a Year in the Life of a WV Farm Family.....by Rupert Pratt
  - ★ 8 Miraculous Months in the Malayan Jungle.....by Donald J. "DJ" Humphrey II
    - ★ Love and Lies: Call Me Eve.....by Sandi Hoover & Jim Tritten
      - ★ Sheltering Angels.....by Nancy Panko
    - ★ The Blue Collar Blues & Other Stories.....by Bob Stockton
      - ★ dd 214.....by W. Joseph O'Connell



Spring has sprung, vaccinations are vaccinating, and hope is gaining ground on despair. Many of you, however, may not be quite ready to go out. For those of us a little more anxious, there's still time to read a good book. Besides, we can put off mowing, gardening, and spring cleaning for a while longer.

So where can you find a good book to read, you might ask. How about starting with the list above?

More info on these books and the authors can be found on our website:

[WWW.MWSADISPATCHES.COM](http://WWW.MWSADISPATCHES.COM)



# THE ATTACK (S. FRANCE)

*Evarts Erickson*

A FRIGHTENED BIRD FLEW IN and out the open window trailing a twittering anxiety. Odors of green leaves and running sap were blown into the room where we gathered to hear the last instructions of Capt. Adams, who sat on a corner of the kitchen table eating his breakfast from the tin of cold meat he held in his hands.

It was too early for the sun to have soaked the dampness from the room. Those of us who could, pressed closer to the stove someone had carelessly allowed to go out but which yet radiated a certain feeble warmth.

The Captain's voice was dry and unemphatic, and boots scraped impatiently on the rough stone floor.

"The plan calls for George Company to feint an attack along the highway," Adams said, "While we come up from their rear through the fields. I don't expect they have enough men to put sizable outposts out. If we can hit 'em hard and quick, we ought to roll right up to their back door."

He gave the dispositions of the platoons between spoonfuls from the tin of meat.

No one had any questions to ask.

He cast the empty tin against the wall where it fell to the floor with a clatter. "This will be a pushover," he said.

The rest of us went to get our packs ready. Squads of infantry were already moving out.

"It looks like it might turn into a warm day," I heard one of them say.

Another replied, "Yeah, but not so warm you'll

fry before you have a chance to be shot."

Earlier that morning, at dawn, some of our light tanks on reconnaissance had tried to write the day's communique by themselves. They were fortunate in returning without casualties. The Germans had set up an anti-tank cannon but their fire discipline was poor. Instead of waiting for our tanks to approach, they cut loose as the tin traps silhouetted themselves at extreme range along the skyline. What might have been a perfect slaughter only aided elimination. At that distance, the Germans' shells could only ineffectually splatter. Of course, that did not diminish the fright the sound the shells must have thrown into our tankers.

"The purpose of our force being primarily reconnaissance, contact was broken off by our units," would be the way the Battalion Intelligence Officer described the incident in his report. Glory came high for those men. At breakfast, I had spoken to one of their sergeants who had built himself a fire and was warming his hands over it, although I doubt he was shivering from the cold alone.

Besides the light tanks, the company had been assigned two Shermans and two TDs for armored support. We had run into "pushovers" before and knew they were not always predictable.

Besides the armor, the only vehicle to make the attack was artillery's jeep. I suppose when the infantry saw us bouncing along with the tanks, they remembered maneuvers, but Harper's feet had badly swollen through the night and it was the only way he could make



any great distance. After a bit, Long and I dismounted, preferring the isolation of flank guard to the dubious luxury of a potential funeral caisson.

When we crossed the ridge where the lights had turned back, we saw where their tracks had printed started Vs among the black-rimmed pocks of shell holes.

We deployed at greater interval. The armor gunned across the open spaces. But our scouts could find no trace of the cannon, only slit trenches and piles of diarrhetic slush wiped by our propaganda sheets.

A few hundred yards ahead our point ran into their forward outpost.

The country had the rolling and wooded contours we had become accustomed to in the past several days. The sun strongly blazed and made our woolen uniforms hot and itchy, although there was a promise of rain in the tufts of cumulus that hung like mushrooms from the bottom of the sky.

From our vantage point at the pine wood's edge, we saw the dirt road that led to town curved around like an S with an extra loop at the top. We were at one end on rising ground. The town we could not yet see was at the other. And in the middle was the strip of scrub growth and beeches where our point met the Germans.

Listening to their firefight was like hearing very dry boards being ripped on the teeth of a buzzsaw operating at a cyclonic rate of speed. Stray bullets whistled our way. Several of them thudded into the trees over our heads. Now and then, we heard the muffled popping of grenades and the sudden explosions of a German machine pistol much closer in that was silenced in a simultaneous burst.

Mortars were brought up to us on the run, but before their observer had a chance to register them, it was time to move forward again. We walked across the field toward the beeches. When we arrived, we found the growth shallow but fairly dense. The mortars were set up for the second time. I found myself feeling suddenly diarrhetic and relieved myself in the bush.

We left the jeep back among the pines. Long and I took turns at the radio, trying to establish contact with Battalion, but without success. The lieutenant quietly fumed and decided to go along with the lead tank. He declined my offer to keep him company, which I had not meant very seriously in any case. Until we established radio contact, we were quite useless there.

I stood at the edge of the beeches watching the lieutenant calmly stroll into pistol range of the Germans. He seemed to give directions to the tanks. One of them sent a phosphorus shell into a barn at the end of the last loop of the S we'd been following. The fire quickly took. Most of the town was out of view on the valley side of the ridge. All we saw of that part of the town was the church steeple and a few roofs. It sloped downward toward the highway along which George Company was advancing.

Plainly in view astride the ridge were manure piles, a house or two, massive barns with yellowed stone walls stippled by lichen rust, and a few sparse orchards of pruned and hoary fruit trees.

Where a cow path paralleled a low stone wall to the right of town, I saw the sun glinting on brassy pyramids of shells. An anti-tank

*Continued on page 12*

*Continued from page 11*

cannon had its breech to us. They were not expecting us to come that way.

A soldier who fell prostrate every few seconds was trying to crawl up the grassy slope toward the cannon. The mortar observer spotted him the same instant as me. He gave commands. A mortar sucked air. Within the blue and aqueous circle of my lenses, I saw the man fly upwards, arms and legs groping for a lost balance, before he tumbled down into a puff of rising dust.

“They’d do the same to us,” said the mortar observer by my side, to no one in particular.

*A funny place to uncover one’s conscience, I thought.*

“Give him a chance, you bastards! He’s only a kid!” A fresh-faced youngster shuffled across the field in our direction. His arms slackly hung by the sides of his gray uniform, his fingers stiffly stretched out as though paralyzed, incapable of articulation. When he came closer, I smiled to reassure him. He smiled back as though he would like to throw his arms around me and bawl on my chest. He was very young.

We called over Mankiewicz, the tommy gunner, to translate the boy’s Polish.

“He says there were three of ’em from the same village, all forced to join the Kraut Army. It was a green outfit—their first action. When they heard us coming, they decided to skip. The Krauts plugged ’em in the back. The kid says the other two were killed.”

One of the infantry searched him and found a shiny new pocket knife in his pants. The boy looked wistfully at the knife and the soldier put it back. Before sending him back to the

medics, we asked the boy how old he was.

“Thirteen,” he replied with a broad smile.

When we looked again towards the town, we saw the phosphorus shells ignited the steeple—flames leapt into the sky under a pillar of thick, black smoke. Some houses caught fire with the church. A barn went up in an explosion of ignited ammunition. The wind that carried the sparks to us, brought us also the low of frightened cattle, the shrill and birdlike cries of women among the hoarse commands of men.

They fell back. Our squads had penetrated to the edge of town, and the firing was infrequent and farther away. Our driver ran the jeep up. Long and I jumped in. We bounced ahead in the dust of armor gunning up the crest. At the foot of the ridge, we passed under the shade of a venerable apple tree. Two seconds later, a shell from our own artillery had ripped it into fragments.

“Moon’ll kill us yet,” our driver growled, and pressed the gas pedal to the board.

“Moon” Mullins was one of our observers. We supposed he was watching from a nearby hill and thought he’d assist our little operation. When we reached the town, we put a call through to Battalion and told them to lay off. There were no more “friendly” shells.

“Look what I found!” One of the platoon sergeants came around the corner of the barn pushing two men in officer’s uniforms before him. “They were up in the hayloft with the other chickens!”

Except that one was a bit swarthier than the other, they were alike enough to be brothers—sharp-featured, thin, medium height, with small moustaches and black pomaded hair. Their yellow-tan boots shone like glass. Their



caps were heavily embroidered with silver. Even in that early summer's heat, they wore long green German-style greatcoats, with astrakhan collars. It appeared, from what we could understand of their speech, they were Rumanians—observers with the German Army.

It had been a good catch for the sergeant. Each of his prisoners had been wearing two wristwatches, and one a gold signet ring. He led his Rumanians off in the direction of the stockade.

A peasant woman and her daughter came up to me, their eyes grotesquely huge.

*“On dit que vous parlez français, Monsieur.”*

I told her I did.

“There is a German soldier in the cellar of our house,” she told me. “But he is afraid to come out. He says you will kill him.” She kept twisting a strand of her hair through her fingers. Her lips, I noticed, were swollen from weeping. “He is a good type, very gentle,” she said.

“I’ll take care of him,” I assured her. “Show me where he is.”

They led me to their house and had me wait in the yard while they went down into the cellar to fetch him out. I walked over to a tree and casually leaned against it, working my revolver free with the hand that was out of their sight.

After a couple of minutes, the German came out of the cellar, hand-in-hand with the old lady. She was weeping again, and the daughter was nowhere in sight. The German said goodbye and walked over to the tree where I stood. He had a long, straw-colored cowlick and furious blinking eyes, and when he came

up to me, he warmly pumped my free hand and wouldn't let it go. I think he was still a little afraid I would shoot him. For a minute, he wanted to go back and fetch his mess gear but I convinced him it wasn't necessary. So, he linked his arm in mine and we strolled back to the stockade. I was thinking it was a curious way to bring a fellow in.

I thought I'd scout around a bit and walked down the road. The townspeople came out of their houses to pick up the loaves of bread and tins of food that lay scattered about where the Germans had abandoned them in their flight. They went about their looting with a sort of deadly intensity. They hardly spoke to one another and their eyes darted with birdlike flurries from one object to the other.

Near the crossroads, a body lay face down in a pool of cow piss. It was a body wearing the silver epaulets of an officer—the body of an athlete with broad shoulders and slim hips in a finely tailored uniform of good cloth. The people were so intent in their pillage they hardly gave it a second glance.

Sitting in the dust, his back propped against a tree, a blonde youngster of about seventeen watched my approach with a fixed and glassy stare. I walked over to see what I could do for him. His right pant leg had been torn away. In the calf was a deep, bloodless slash several inches long that scraped the bone. The skin around the edges of the wound was puffed and waxen-colored.

“Speak English?” I asked him.

“*Wasser*,” he moaned.

I put my canteen to his lips and let him drink it all. When he had drained it dry, he sat there

*Continued on page 14*

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like a fish tossed up on land and sucking in great lungfuls of air. When he had caught his breath again, he turned his head away and said nothing. It annoyed me for a moment that he hadn't even tried to say thanks, and at the same time I felt ashamed that I had been annoyed.

"*Kann nicht Deutsch sprechen,*" I explained carefully, and added in French an ambulance would soon arrive.

Without turning his head, he moved his eyes towards me and patiently muttered something in German. The only part I understood of what he said was "*gantz kaput*"—smashed to bits, quite smashed.

I went to find the medic. I found him in the garage adjoining our new Command Post. A truck was in the garage and some of the doughboys were looting it—long woolen underwear and potato mashers were scattered over the floor. The medic had come upon a box of tins. He sat on a valise eating sardines, picking them from the can with a shiny new pocket knife.

"There's a Kraut down the road with a nasty leg wound," I told him. "I gave him some water but I think you'd better go down to patch him up."

"Aw, let the son-of-a-bitch sweat awhile."

"What about that Pollack? Did you get him back to the hospital all right?"

"The kids?" There was the convulsive bob of a sardine sliding past his Adam's apple. "No, he passed out soon as we hit the road. He'd had it pretty bad."

I walked away. It was no use trying to appeal that decision. The medic wasn't a bad Joe,

really. I'd seen him risk his neck. Only, like all of us, he was jaded—fed up.

As I walked back down the road, some of the fellows in the C.P. whooped it up a little with an accordion. There wasn't much to sing about, but I couldn't help thinking of the words to the song they were playing. It was the Divisional March.

*"I wouldn't trade my old O.D.s  
For all the Navy's dungarees  
For I'm the walking pride of Uncle Sam..."*

## EPILOGUE

The story of how the Americans chased the Boches from their town will doubtless be handed down through the generations by the Southern French, but who can tell what the story will become in the retelling? Since one cannot endlessly handle a cloth without having its threads wear out through usage, it may one day arrive that that minor incident has been remitted so many times over there is left only the germinal idea of the original and none of its fabric. Perhaps these considerations are not important.

I only know that when I had finished those scraps of salad the Germans had never found time for (not from their plates—our hostess had thrown out those portions with manifest disgust), I pushed back my chair that I might better hear the tall woman with the fine, proud face. She was telling me that her only son was a member of the Resistance in Lyons and had sent her away from there, fearing for her safety. It was then that the old man came in. Of course, I recognized him at once.

When we had just taken the town and there was still some danger. I had caught him behind one of the houses acting (so I thought)



suspiciously. There was a cellar close by from which I half expected to see a grenade come hurtling my way. Convinced the old man was acting as a spy, I pushed him down the cellar steps ahead of me, using him as a shield. But the place was empty, and I let him go.

It was embarrassing for me to see him again and I turned my face away, but he knew me and came over to where I sat, his face heavily working with emotion. But when he tried to speak to me, like many old people who are emotionally moved, his speech was thick—too thick for my poor knowledge of the language. I was expecting a complaint. I almost wished he would abuse me. But the woman from Lyons translated.

“Monsieur,” the old man said, “I fought the Prussians in ’14 and I was not a young man then. The house you saw burning was mine. It was all I had. I am too feeble to build again. But you must know that this is the happiest day of my life, Monsieur, because the Americans have arrived.”

Old Man, you mean a great deal to me and I shall not forget you. What you said to me that afternoon made me ashamed and proud and confident all at once. It gave me an insight into something that was worth the seeing.

Certainly, we were not heroes in our own eyes. We were simply a miscellaneous lot of jaded soldiers passing through that town so that we might get to the next, and the next. In many respects our education had played us false. It had not taught us sufficient fortitude. It had left us lacking in the techniques for personal survival. It had only hinted at a credo. But at least it had taught us that there was nothing more brittle and ephemeral than military glory. The German who lay with his face in a puddle may have been a very splendid

fellow—we never knew, not what other values were irretrievably lost that day. And not, when we reflect that the same pattern of events was occurring throughout the world, and would continue to occur, we had some inadequate measure of our greatness. Our greatness surely. Let us forget for the moment those grail-like notions of human grandeur and perfectibility we professed, whose accomplishment may actually lie somewhere ahead in the murky waste of the eons. The Brotherhood of Man, toward whose consummation so many plans have been laid by prophets with swords and without, was in truth the unassuming community of the dead.

And the tank man’s hands shook, not because he was a coward nor even because he had had

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*Continued from page 15*

a particularly close shave, but because he had seen the reality. When I spoke to him that morning, he struck me as an intelligent and sensitive person—the sort of man who might have a philosophy. No matter, dust and the dung heap held the same terrors for him as for us all. No measure of personal worth could've saved us from destruction.

The medic who ate the sardines was to be scalped by a grenade in the foothills of the Vosges. The boy who played the accordion was to be invalidated home a cripple. What was the answer, then? For some nine brief minutes we had slain and been slain. At the end of that time, no one could say that their dead were any meaner than our dead. Nor their defeat any different in quality from our victory.

We took a town and in taking it wrote local history. We mortared in on a house and an old man thanked us for it. A Pollack deserter was dying and still could smile at us. Were these the components of our story? Perhaps in part.

But I think our “story” was really not so much a recounting of a successful attack, a burned-out house and an old man, as it was of the child who lived through the battle mindful only of its mother's nipple, of the house that would be rebuilt, of the mystery that remains mysterious and repeats itself almost in spite of us.

We are flies self-important with our own dirt, now and always. The gift of life to will-through, the continuity of love, hate, avarice and death, the sluggish stirring from the depths and the emerging from the chrysalis—these are what count. When the facts of what happened to us have either become myth or been forgotten there, remain the valley, the

soil and deep green clover, the seasons and sowing and harvesting of crops.

Against the outlines of that reality, our actions were committed in a shadowland of self-deceptions. We moved enwrapped in our fears—a vital and yet a least part in the anecdote of centuries.

The story was not in ourselves nor in what we counted for as individuals. The story, I mean to say, was there in the peasants patiently tilling, the screaming of rooks, freshets and warmth of the hearth. It was in the windrows of grain, the calloused hand and the plow striking a rock. It was the squealing children who chased the goose. It was the thin baying hound that loped across the winter field, the rabbit simmering in grease, and the slowly aging wine. It was the hot sweet smell of dung pies in the stalls, the cattle chewing with their ceaseless sideways churning of the jaws. It was the cuckold and the wench, the easy oath and the pious Sunday. And in the end, the story was essentially the girl and her lover.

She had brown arms and sturdy legs and breasts that wanted to be cupped in the hard hand of a man. When she worked among the men at planting time, they grinned at her and swore, and watched her swinging hips, the lumps of soft white flesh along each calf and heavy-hanging breasts.

The village boy she flushed to see was a dashing fellow who had been to Avignon. He had fine white teeth and his hand never trembled.

When they trysted in the fields, his eyes were urgent as though it meant his life and soon she was in heat. They went to where the wall would shield them from the town and lay there where the dew still clung to the undersides of



the grass, grinding their loins together while the sheep pulled back their upper lips and bleated into the sharp and warming light of an early summer's sky.



*Evarts Erickson was born on October 3, 1924 in Brooklyn, New York. At the age of 17, he dropped out of Columbia University to enlist in the Army, where he served the entire war with the legendary Third Infantry Division, the "Rock of the Marne." Among the first American combat units to engage in offensive ground combat operations, the Third Division was the only one of the U.S. Army to fight the Axis on all European fronts. Overall, it saw combat in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Germany and Austria for 531 consecutive days.*

*After basic training at Fort Bragg, Eric was shipped over to North Africa, landing in Algeria. He saw action in Tunis in 1942, then proceeded to Pozzuoli, north of Naples. He participated in the Anzio landing in January 1944, the battle of Monte Cassino, and other action in the Italian Theater, and was awarded a Bronze Star for his combat in the Anzio-Nettuno Operation on February 6, 1944 south of Cisterna, Italy. He also received the Legion of Honour, France's highest order of merit for military and civilian achievement, in recognition of his service in the liberation of France.*

*After the war, Evarts worked as a writer and public relations manager in Salem, MA; Oakland, CA; and Jubail, Saudi Arabia. He eventually settled in Wellfleet, MA, where he died in 2019, just a few days shy of his 95th birthday*

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# IWO JIMA EXCURSION

*Marvin J. Wolf*

*Marvinjwolf.com*

GEORGIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM ARE almost as far apart as any two habitable places on earth. Trudging through the sky at 250 mph—less than half the speed of a commercial jetliner—the journey seemed to take forever.

Our C-130 Hercules was crammed with vehicles and equipment. Down each side of the fuselage, ten men sat on tough nylon strips stretched over hollow aluminum tubes that created a bench like a huge lawn chair. Lashed to the deck between them, a jeep mounting a wicked-looking, 106mm recoilless rifle and another with a clutch of radios and a forest of antennae.

Behind each vehicle was a trailer mounded with supplies. Every other bit of floor space was covered with cargo pallets—small arms ammunition, grenades, “C” rations, radio batteries, medical supplies, generators, gas cans, tents—almost everything soldiers in the field needed to shoot, move, communicate, and subsist.

The front of the compartment was bathed in moist, tropical heat. The back was filled with sinus-drying, sub-Arctic cold. The middle held a narrow temperate zone, but this was my first time in a C-130. I didn’t figure that out until wiser heads had claimed the few seats.

Our M16 rifles hung from canvas straps above our seats. Web gear, with combat pack, wound bandage, canteens, ammo pouches, an entrenching tool and the M16’s bayonet were crammed beneath the seats. There was barely room to sit.



Before we were airborne, two veterans of previous deployments claimed the jeeps’ back seats, where they snored away the miles.

Not that it was easy to sleep over the cacophony of noise bombarding us—four roaring jet turbines, compressors howling and shrieking, hydraulic fluids gurgling or hissing through pipes, and hurricane-force winds outside. All while the cabin floor and bulkheads vibrated in harmonic sympathy with the engines.

The only toilet was a relief tube—a tiny trough leading to a tube that emptied into the sky. Should the need arise, there was also a bucket half-filled with sand. If you used it, you cleaned it. Nobody used it.

Sixty miles ahead flew the lead ship of our sky train. At fifteen-minute intervals behind us were forty more C-130s, each laden with men, equipment, vehicles and the tools of war—the First Air Cav’s advance party.

As we left Warner-Robbins AFB, Georgia, several troop vessels, each carrying thousands of soldiers and thousands of tons of gear and



supplies, put to sea from Atlantic ports. A week earlier, three converted World War II aircraft carriers, their hangar and flight decks packed with helicopters cocooned in white latex rubber, sailed from Mayport, Florida. Our mission was to clear space enough in a triple-canopy jungle for those men and aircraft to deploy into a dispersed and defensible base camp.

Two months earlier, in June 1965, Nguyen Cao Ky, 34, the hotshot South Vietnamese Air Force commander became prime minister. He learned that North Vietnamese Army regiments—units with artillery, engineers and even tanks—had infiltrated South Vietnam’s porous, borders.

Much later in life, I would come to know Ky well. He told me that when he saw his nation in imminent peril and realized that his poorly led, marginally equipped army couldn’t stop the invasion, he asked Lyndon Johnson for help.

LBJ ordered the 187th Airborne Brigade from Okinawa to Vietnam and dispatched the Third Marine Amphibious Force to protect Da Nang and Hue in the north. And he sent the First Cav to establish a base in the Central Highlands. That was why the brand-new, untested First Cavalry Division (Airmobile)—at full strength, our combat teeth and logistical tail ran to nearly 20,000 troops—was rushing to Vietnam: to save that small, undeveloped nation.

Our first stop was Travis Air Force Base. We were there just long enough to refuel. By the time I gulped down a hamburger and found a latrine, it was time to go. Ten hours later we landed at Hickam Air Force Base. Things went just as at Travis.

Then, we were off to Wake Island, which is

a coral atoll with a beautiful lagoon filled, just then, with the wreckage of World War II vessels and aircraft. After half an hour we were again airborne.

It felt like I’d been flying forever. Somewhere west of Wake and far beyond exhaustion, I fell asleep, then awoke with a start. The engine chorus sang in a new and somehow different pitch. The deck slanted slightly left to right.

As I came fully awake, our pilot dropped a wing and we circled, descending through the inky night.

*Great!*, I thought. *Our destination was Okinawa, so I must have slept for hours.* I immediately felt better.

The hydraulics screamed, the flaps lowered, our descent slowed. My ears popped as something big blotted out the stars. And then, engines growling, props changing pitch to act as speed brakes, the wheels bit the runway. Inertia slammed me against SP4 Joe Treaster, a top reporter.

As the engines whined into silence, the crew chief huddled with our senior officer, a colonel.

“Take your headgear and weapons, leave everything else,” the colonel barked.

We jumped down onto a dark and empty Tarmac. No bus to take us to the terminal. In the distance, a single bulb burned. In single file, we followed the colonel for ten-minutes toward that bulb. It was on a hangar, and the sign below it read:

WELCOME TO IWO JIMA  
INTERNATIONAL AIRFIELD

ELEVATION: DRY SEASON +1 RAINY SEASON -1

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We gathered in front of the hangar. The colonel explained our plane had lost an engine. While a C-130 can fly on three, if necessary, doing so for more than a short distance burned extra fuel and invited another engine failure. A C-130 cannot maintain altitude on two engines. It was four hours to Okinawa. Returning to Wake Island was too far for our remaining fuel. So, we made an emergency landing on Iwo Jima and would be there until our engine was repaired.

Iwo Jima Airport had one purpose: emergency landings. To say that its garrison was glad to see us was an understatement. They were thrilled. It had been months since their last visitors.

They tumbled from their beds to greet us and ask if there were women on our plane. But we were just men with rifles. Our hosts were disappointed. One of the delights of their little paradise was that it boasted as many women as trees—None at all.

They spent ninety-day tours with little to do except clean their quarters, hike to the summit of Mount Suribachi, fish in the surf, and play volleyball against the Coast Guardsmen from the navigation and weather station at the other end of the island. Every ninety days they got a five-day R&R in Japan.

Our hosts gave us their bunks to nap in. They opened their tiny club and served hamburgers, cold chicken and sandwiches, and offered us anything they had from milk, soft drinks, and coffee to beer and hard liquor—and refused our money.

Then they set up a movie projector and showed us a John Wayne drama, *Sands of Iwo*

*Jima*, which, was mostly about the bloody battle for Tarawa. This was followed by raw, shocking, documentary footage shot by Navy and Marine cameramen of the conquest of Iwo Jima, including the first color combat film of WWII.

I found the footage sobering. Made by young men exposed to enemy fire, men with a camera pressed to their face while lead and steel flew, and all around them their fellow marines fell. Taking combat pictures suddenly didn't seem like such an interesting profession. How many of Iwo Jima's photographers lived to see their work? Or were crippled or disfigured?

About 7,000 U.S. Marines died wresting Iwo Jima from the Japanese. Twenty-two thousand Japanese fell trying to stop them. We wanted the island so B-29s returning from bombing Japan could land instead of ditching in the Pacific.

By V-J Day, some 800 US air crews, 8,000 men, landed on Iwo Jima. Most would have died and their planes lost were it not for those 7,000 dead marines. Considering those numbers as abstractions, the trade-off—roughly equal numbers of Marines and airmen—didn't make sense.

But, that airfield had saved me and a planeload of Americans, I felt humbled. What would we have done over thousands of square miles of water without Iwo's runway? Who could survive a water landing and a long swim in shark-filled waters?

After sun-up, we went to look around. Surprise! There was no sand—only rocks, crushed coral, and volcanic dust.

A crater blasted out of the coral and lined with concrete was a swimming pool. An L-shaped



channel to the sea—tides filled and emptied the pool with sea water.

The sharp angle blocked large sharks and other unwelcome visitors. Nevertheless, the first man in the pool daily had to remove sharks up to three feet long that slipped in during the night.

I strolled to the hangar to find several mechanics working on our C-130. Scorched paint beneath a wing made me wonder if the engine had caught fire. Mechanics worked on a different engine, busily connecting myriad cables, electrical and fuel lines, and exhaust ducts.

After lunch, we lined up to board and I asked, the USAF crew chief, “How much danger were we in? Could we have made it to Okinawa?”

“We were lucky,” he replied. “Number one caught fire and the extinguisher worked. But this morning we tested the other engines—number three failed. Chances are, we’d have had to ditch a long way short of Kadena.”

Smart is good. Lucky is better.

*Marvin J. Wolf served as an Army combat photographer, reporter, and press chief in Vietnam and was one of only sixty men to receive a battlefield promotion to lieutenant. He is the author, coauthor, or ghostwriter of seventeen previous books.*



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# SHATTERED REPUTATION

UNION BRIG. GEN. JOSEPH REVERE'S  
CONTROVERSIAL COMMAND DECISION IMPAIRED  
HIS ARMY'S PROSPECTS AT CHANCELLORSVILLE  
AND RUINED HIS RESPECTED MILITARY CAREER

*By Rick Barram*

In the fading light of May 2, 1863, the Orange Plank Road near Chancellorsville, Va., was a hopeless tangle of soldiers, wagons, horses, and artillery pieces. Two hours earlier, a little after 5 p.m., Confederate Lt. Gen. Stonewall Jackson had launched his Second Corps against the Army of the Potomac's unwitting right flank. Now the wood-plank thoroughfare west of Fredericksburg was packed with terrified and desperate men of the Federal 11th Corps fleeing to safety. Heading west against this flow of humanity was Maj. Gen. Hiram Berry's 2nd Division in Maj. Gen. Dan Sickles' 3rd Corps, a contingent of reserve units close enough to be called upon to stem the flood. ¶ Moving at the double-quick toward the oncoming Confederates were the 70th–74th, and 120th New York—the famed Excelsior Brigade, whose soldiers had discarded backpacks and other impedimenta before advancing, as the incitement of Army of the Potomac commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker rang in their ears: “Receive ’em on your bayonets, boys! Receive ’em on your bayonets!” ¶ Hooker, it should be pointed out, never specified whether he was asking his men to give the Rebels or the panicked Yankees the cold steel at that critical moment. Nevertheless, the Excelsior regiments formed a line after less than a mile, deployed at right angles to the road—one on the left, all others to the right. As each regiment arrived, it was “dispersed in the thick woods and undergrowth of the Plank road in a short time, no two regiments joining together,” reported Excelsior Brigade commander Brig. Gen. Joseph W. Revere. Grandson of Revolutionary War hero Paul Revere, Revere found himself at the center of the storm that was Stonewall Jackson's rout of the 11th Corps. In addition to the serious threat facing the Army of the Potomac, personal disharmony lay ahead for Revere.





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**Renaissance Man**

*Prior to the Civil War, Joseph Revere spent 22 years in the U.S. Navy, served during the Mexican War, and even spent two years as an colonel in the Mexican Army. Remarkably, he was knighted in the Order of Isabella the Catholic by Queen Isabella of Spain.*

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**R**evere, who had served in the U.S. Navy in his younger days, secured a colonelcy in the 7th New Jersey Infantry when civil war broke out. Having served competently, he was promoted to 2nd Brigade commander on December 24, 1862. Now he shouted commands, struggling to fashion a credible defense that could stop both fleeing bluecoats and charging Confederates—never suspecting that in less than 24 hours he would be relieved of command and face a court-martial.

New York men clambered and shoved through impossibly thick brush, forming small pockets rather than a cohesive line. “We then filed into the woods and formed into line of battle. We had hardly got into the woods and the line formed when we heard the rebs coming on us, we thought, but it was the eleventh army corps flying in every direction... like a lot of sheep,” wrote Private James Dean of the 72nd New York.

Men of the 11th Corps ran toward the lines, with Dean and others trying their best to stop them, using bayonets or sabers as needed. “They thought to get through our line,” Dean wrote, “but we pricked them with the bayonets and then you would see them run up our lines till they got to the end of it.”

One 11th Corps soldier vowed to stay and fight, but ran at his first chance. “I hollered for him to come back and I raised my gun on him when our lieutenant [Charles Hydorn] saw him...he made for him and laid his head open with his sword and took his ear off with the second cut.”

**“IT WAS THE  
ELEVENTH  
ARMY CORPS  
FLYING  
IN EVERY  
DIRECTION...  
LIKE A LOT OF  
SHEEP”**

By early evening, the new Federal line comprised Berry’s 2nd Division along with a few thousand resolute stragglers from the 11th Corps and a single 2nd Corps brigade, which had been in reserve. It was a shaky line but managed to hold on when hit by the leading Confederate elements. Several factors proved fortunate for the Federals: misaligned enemy units, the ransacking of deserted Yankee camps by some soldiers, and the coming nightfall all conspired to drain the Confederates’ offensive energies. At 7:15 p.m., Brig. Gen. Robert Rodes, commanding a division in Stonewall Jackson’s Corps, ordered a halt to reorganize (although some Southern units stumbled forward until well after 8 p.m.)

Enemy threats lessened with the dark as Revere and his staff worked to restore order to his disjointed regiments. “The whole line was moved several times, and the movement of our own regiment confused by contradictory orders....,” reported Lt. Col. Cornelius D. Westbrook of the 120th New York. “Finally, late in the evening, the connection of lines was perfected.”

The Excelsiors now formed a rough semicircle, their left flank resting on the Plank



**Chaos Ensues**

*Darius Couch's 2nd Corps formed a defensive line during Stonewall Jackson's Flank Attack but failed to contain the 11th Corps' frantic retreat. Some ended up fleeing directly into Lafayette McLaws' Rebels and were captured.*

Road. About 2 a.m on May 3, the three brigades of the 2nd Division were finally in place. Revere's 2nd Brigade comprised the front line, its left on the road, in contact with the 1st Division of 12th Corps. Brigadier General Joseph Carr's 1st Brigade formed the second line, 150 paces behind Revere. The 3rd Brigade under Brig. Gen. Gershom Mott formed left of the road, behind the 12th Corps units.

It proved an uneasy few hours for the New Yorkers. Blue-clad skirmishers crept forward, anxiously peering into the darkness while remaining companies coaxed simple breastworks out of logs, branches and earth. Frequent alarms drove in the pickets several times. Captured Confederates confirmed to Revere that Brig. Gen. William Dorsey Pender's North Carolina Brigade of A.P. Hill's Division stood opposite his line. Confederates too probed the darkness for signs of the enemy.

Stonewall Jackson himself, while scouting the woods opposite the Excelsior Brigade, was mistakenly fired upon by nervous Southern soldiers and mortally wounded. He was carried from the field, leaving the next day's fighting in the hands of cavalry savant Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart.

Sporadic musket fire had continued throughout the night and strengthened with dawn. "We lay in line of battle all night and as the Sabbath morn came in, the pickets in front of our line commenced firing," wrote Private Hiram Stoddard of the Excelsior Brigade. By 6 a.m. the expected Confederate attack was underway. As Private Dean recalled:

As the last stick was laid on the works, the pickets began firing and I was out cutting down brush when they came, when the bullets came too thick. For when I got over the works the fighting and the musketry was terrific and the cannon, the sound of shell schreching [*sic*] and bursting was truly magnificent and sublime although some poor fellows was sent to his long home by every shell.

Fighting developed across the front of Berry's position, but the Federal line seemed to be holding. Earthworks built by the Excelsi-

ors were put to good use by New Yorkers who loaded under cover while exposing themselves only to shoot. While regiments kept up a heavy fire on the Rebels, some men in one 72nd New York company became unnerved and broke for the rear. Intent on maintaining order, Lieutenant Hydorn, the same officer who had stopped fleeing 11th Corps men the day before, chased after the cowards. Catching them and wielding his sword, he cut at least one shirker, thus persuading the rest to return to the line, but then a Rebel ball found the lieutenant. Falling on his back, Hydorn threw away his pistol, unbuttoned his coat and pants desperately searching for the wound's location. Pressing his hands upon his stomach, Hydorn died—"as brave an officer as was in the service," in the words of Private Dean.

**R**evere's brigade stood fast for better than 45 minutes until Pender's Tarheels charged straight at the 3rd Maryland (Union), positioned on the 12th Corps' extreme right. The 3rd Maryland had seen action before, but some raw recruits were wholly unprepared for the rush of screaming Confederates. Green soldiers broke first, setting off a "premature and precipitate withdrawal," leaving a gap in the line into which Pender's men poured.

Federal reinforcements could not plug the line as Confederates swarmed onto the 2nd Division's left flank and rear. About this time, Berry, directing the fight from the road, had fallen mortally wounded, the victim of a sharpshooter's bullet. Berry's chief of staff, Captain John Poland, dispatched a messenger to General Carr "with notice that [2nd Division] command...devolved upon him." It was Revere's belief, however, that command rightfully fell to him. He later argued that he was the senior brigadier next in line behind Berry.

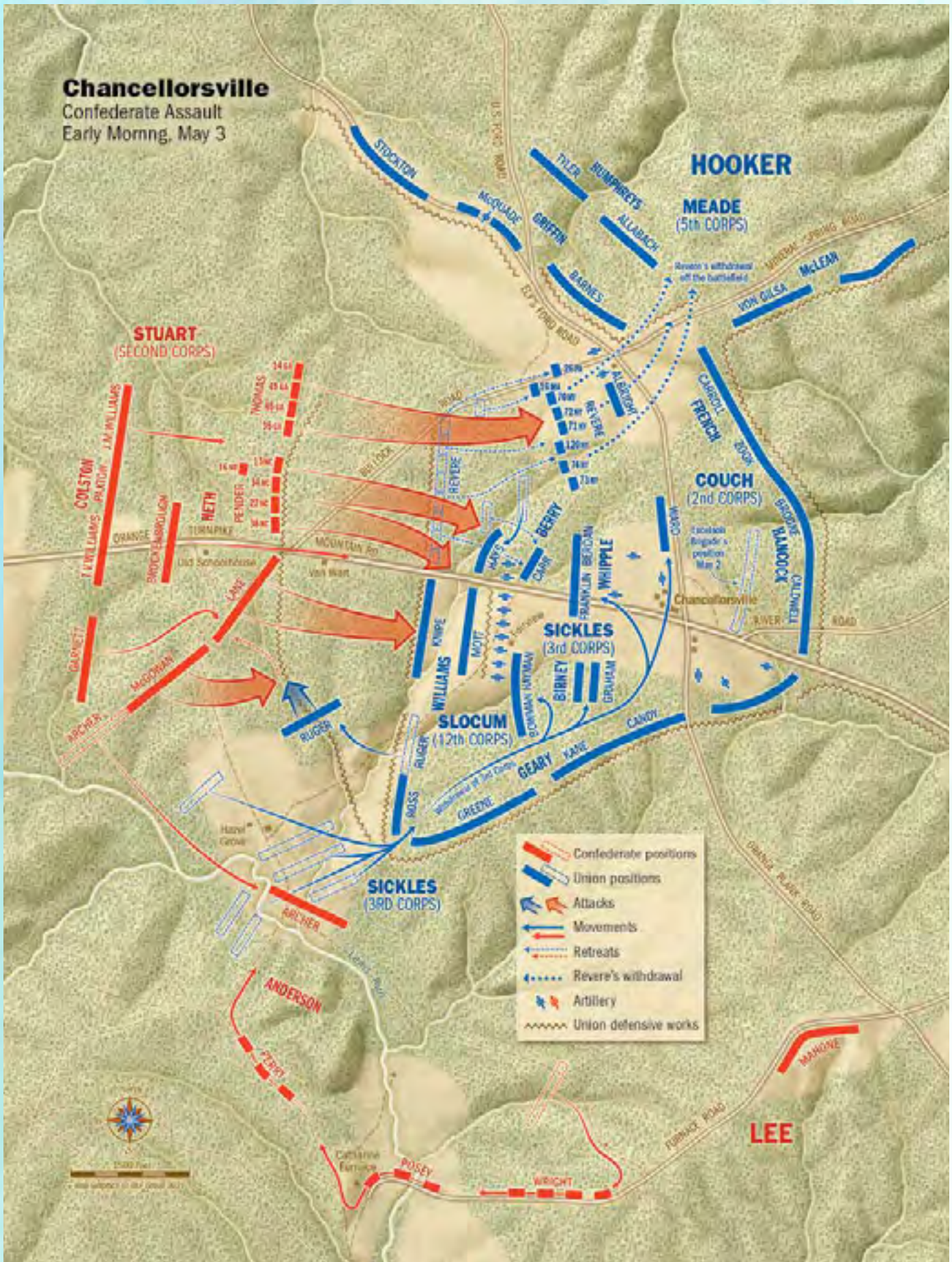
As the Confederates flooded through the breach, the Excelsiors found increasing numbers on their flank and rear. "The left of the line gave way, entirely exposing our left flank, which rested near the road, and rendering the position we held untenable," reported Captain Francis E. Tyler, now commanding the 74th New York. "It was with great reluctance that I then gave the order to fall back."

Pender's men swarmed over the brigade's humble earthworks and the fighting became hand-to-hand. Southern trophy hunters now grabbed



**Can You See a Resemblance?**

*Paul Revere, Joseph Revere's grandfather, stamped his name in history with his daring ride through the Massachusetts countryside warning of British troops' approach prior to the Battle of Lexington in April 1775.*





for the Excelsior regiments' colors, making the swirling fight even more personal. Color-Sergeant Thomas Auldridge of the 72nd New York, a New York City fireman, pulled the Stars and Stripes from its staff, tucked it into his coat and made for the rear, where eventually their beloved flag flew again. Several senior officers were killed in the melee—including the 72nd New York's venerated colonel, William O. Stevens [see P.37]—leaving regiments in the hands of company level officers.

Outnumbered and outmaneuvered, Union brigades fell back. Revere, supposedly convinced he was divisional commander, claimed that he took matters into his own hands. The fight became a see-saw affair with charges and countercharges by both sides, with the Federals slowly giving ground east toward the Rappahannock River. About 8 a.m., during a lull in the fighting, Revere gathered the 73rd New York and nearly 600 stragglers from the rest of the division and consulted Maj. Gen. William French of the 2nd Corps' 3rd Division for the best place to position them. French directed Revere to a line of abatis and breastworks, which Revere found stacked with troops. Placing additional men there would be "superfluous," he reasoned.

Controversy quickly followed. Noticing a steady stream of men straggling to the rear, Revere decided to cut them off, which called for "striking a straight course by compass through the woods from that point toward the [U.S.] ford..." But in doing so, Revere had apparently abandoned any perceived responsibilities to the division he may have held.

Many of the officers and men were perplexed by Revere's order to pull back with an enemy force so close—not that there weren't those

### **Tall Task**

*Revere and other Excelsior Brigade officers were among reserve units called upon to stop desperately fleeing 11th Corps' soldiers, as depicted in this postwar A.C. Redwood sketch.*

who welcomed an opportunity for a "rest and a meal." Three miles to the rear, Revere sent out officers from his regiments to collect stragglers. By noon, he had the services of 1,715 men, drawn from nine regiments.

Because the battle was proceeding poorly for the Federals, Revere's movements may not have been especially significant. Early in the fight, a Confederate cannonball had shattered a porch pillar beside Hooker, dazing and essentially incapacitating the Army of the Potomac commander. Hooker, however, refused to transfer command to a subordinate. His corps commanders urged him to counter-attack with the army's unengaged divisions; "Fighting Joe" instead ordered a withdrawal.

In the face of strong pressure from the Confederates, the Federals fell back gradually before finally establishing stable defensive positions. At 2:30 p.m., with the heaviest fighting finished, Revere brought his now 2,000-strong brigade back to the front, but

**IT WAS  
REVERE'S  
BELIEF THAT  
COMMAND  
RIGHTFULLY  
FELL TO HIM**



### Excelsiors

*Politicians-turned-generals Daniel Sickles (left), who created the New York-based Excelsior Brigade in 1861, and Hiram Berry of Maine (below left). Berry replaced Sickles as division commander when Sickles took over the 3rd Corps.*

when he reported to Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles, his livid corps commander demanded answers. Revere countered that he had withdrawn his command, which had become scattered and disorganized, in order to rebuild its numbers; feed, rest, and rearm his men; and then return to the field a more potent fighting force. Sickles was unsatisfied with the explanation and promptly relieved the wayward brigadier, transferring command to Colonel J. Egbert Farnum of the 70th New York.

Revere felt his actions were justified, and was supported by a few fellow officers. Nevertheless, Sickles was not swayed, concluding: "Brigadier-General Revere, who, heedless of their murmurs, shamefully led to the rear the whole of the

Second Brigade and portions of two others...thus subjecting these proud soldiers for the first time to the humiliation of being marched to the rear while their comrades were under fire."

Sickles believed the Excelsior Brigade that he had personally raised and led early in the war, and whose reputation and his were conjoined, should not be subjected to a stain like this on its honor. Someone would have to pay,

and that someone was Joseph W. Revere.

The fighting around Chancellorsville was winding down as May 4 came to a close, and over the next few days the Army of the Potomac limped back across the Rappahannock River. The Excelsior Brigade suffered more than 300 killed, wounded, and missing during the campaign—considerably less than Mott's or Carr's brigades, whose losses exceeded 500 each and whose brigades had not been withdrawn by Revere. Safely back in Falmouth, where the 3rd Corps had started the campaign in April, Sickles wasn't finished with Revere. Not satisfied with simply relieving Revere of command, Sickles instituted court-martial proceedings, charging the brigadier for acting without orders and subjecting the Excelsiors to the "humiliation" of being marched to the rear.

News of Revere's impending May 13 court-martial spread through the Falmouth camps. Though soldiers seemed puzzled and unsure of what motivated their brigadier, some were sympathetic, considering Revere "a good and brave officer." The New York newspapers had other ideas, though. A May 8 *New York Herald* story extolled Sickles as the only man in the Army of the Potomac capable of leading the army, and on the 10th, *The New York Times*, which had glowingly covered the Excelsiors' exploits since their earliest days, ran an article excoriating Revere. The general was denounced as much for his failure on the field as for dishonoring the brigade's name and reputation.

According to the *Times*: "Their battle-torn and tattered flags, remnants of what had once been as bright and beautiful as the colors of a rainbow, appeared to them steeped in disgrace..." Portraying Revere's betrayal of Sickles with Shakespearean gravity, "Gen. Sickles had always been a friend of Revere's. He had been placed in command of Sickles' old brigade...but Sickles has no friends on the battle-field who fail to discharge their duties. In the flashing eyes of Sickles, when he relieved Revere, you could have read: 'Cassio, I love you-But never more be officer of mine.'"

Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, president of the court-martial, summoned the trial to order at 10:30 a.m. on the appointed day. There were only two charges: "Misbehavior before the enemy," stemming from Revere marching his command and fragments of other units to the rear without orders, and "Neglect of duty, to the prejudice of good order and military discipline." The second charge's specifications dealt with the abandonment of military equipment that fell into enemy hands because of Revere's actions on May 3. However the charges may have read, the underlying suggestion was crystal clear: Joseph Revere had acted the coward.

Testimony was given by Sickles and a host of lesser officers from throughout the brigade and division. Two days of questioning focused on Revere's understanding of the 2nd Division's chain of command,



condition of his brigade and division, the brigade's engagement in the fight, efforts Revere made to gather straggling soldiers and return to fight, and finally, the disposition of lost equipment (hundreds of muskets, knapsacks, tents, and thousands of rounds of ammunition) and exactly when it came up missing.

The verdict by nine hearing officers was mixed. On the specification of the first charge, Revere was declared guilty that he, when engaged with the enemy, "did march his command an unnecessary distance to the rear to reform it..." Declared not guilty of the original first charge, he was, however, deemed guilty of a modified charge of "conduct to the prejudice and good order and military discipline." On the second charge and second specification regarding loss of equipment, the brigadier was declared not guilty.

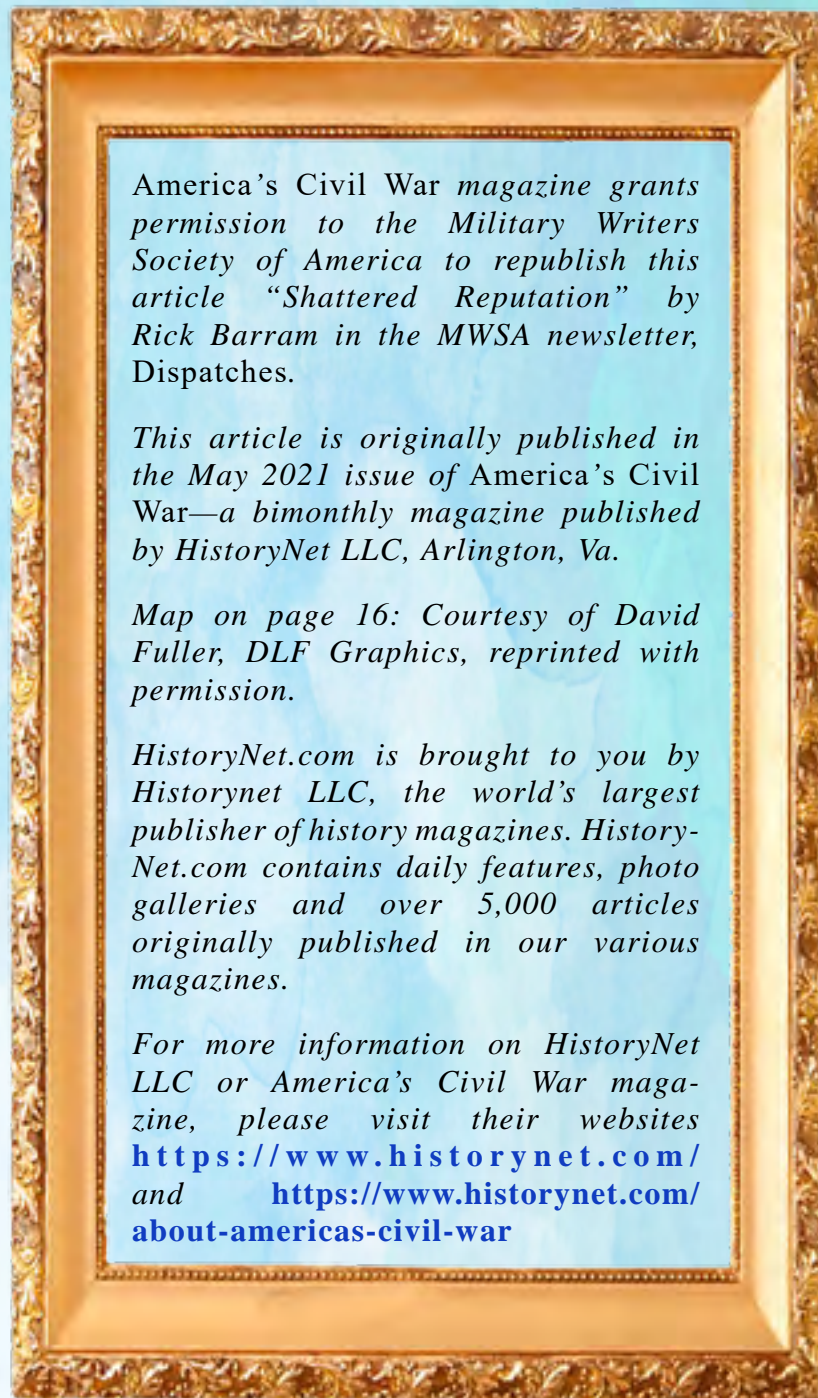
Revere remained composed as the sentence of dismissal from United States service was read. The court reconvened the next day, the proceedings reread, approved, signed off by Hooker, and forwarded to President Lincoln.

Revere put his affairs in order and headed home, determined to recover his name. On May 20, Colonel Farnum composed a letter to Revere, signed by eight field and staff officers from the brigade, rebuffing the "careless and inconsiderate slanders that have been circulated" by the New York newspapers. The let-

**SICKLES BELIEVED THE  
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LIKE THIS ON ITS HONOR**

ter fell short of questioning the court's verdict but contained Farnum's personal endorsement of Revere's reputation as a soldier. "I beg to respectfully state, that so far as your personal courage and soldierly attributes are concerned, I have never heard officer or man question them."

On August 10, 1863, Lincoln approved the court's sentence. New England newspapers and then *Harper's Weekly* ran articles regarding Revere and his removal, with the verdict and sentence the primary focus. Undeterred, Revere in September published a 50-page pamphlet titled, *A Statement of the Case of Brigadier-General Joseph W. Revere, United*



*America's Civil War magazine grants permission to the Military Writers Society of America to republish this article "Shattered Reputation" by Rick Barram in the MWSA newsletter, Dispatches.*

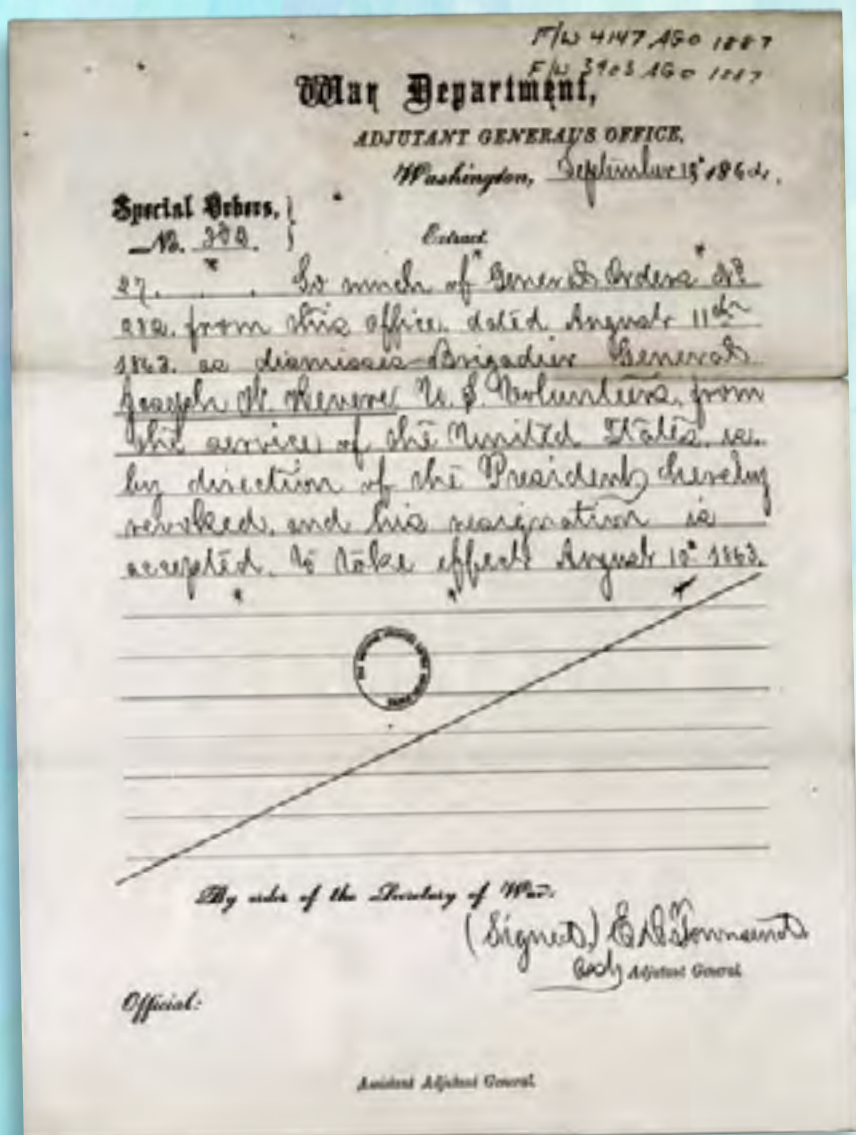
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*Map on page 16: Courtesy of David Fuller, DLF Graphics, reprinted with permission.*

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**Faithful Subordinate**

Left: The September 1864 order revoking Revere's court-martial conviction and accepting his resignation from the U.S. Army. Above: Colonel J. Egbert Farnum of the 70th New York was named Revere's successor as brigade commander. Following the court-martial, Farnum wrote a letter defending the general's reputation, co-signed by eight fellow officers.

*States Volunteers, Tried by Court-Martial, and Dismissed from the Service of the United States, August 10, 1863.* The publication contained Revere's interpretation of events at Chancellorsville and pointed out perceived court-martial improprieties, all in an effort to recover public support and his reputation.

Revere considered appealing the verdict, but by August, Sickles had moved on, having to deal with the loss of his leg in combat and questions about his own leadership failures during the Battle of Gettysburg. Appealing directly to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton also seemed fruitless, given that Stanton and Sickles were friends.

The War Department offered to reinstate Revere on the condition he then promptly resign—a compromise Revere accepted and went into effect in mid-September 1864. Revere petitioned Lincoln for a new trial in November 1864, but Lincoln never acted upon the request. As time moved on, portrayals of Revere's actions at Chancellorsville became less nuanced, with the retreat and court-martial usually the only details mentioned.

On April 20, 1880, while on a trip to New York, Joseph Revere took ill and died. Following his death, his children kept up efforts to restore

his name. Histories of the battle at Chancellorsville have been written and rewritten, with less and less ink devoted to the particulars of Revere's actions. Stephen W. Sears' 1996 work *Chancellorsville* devotes only 1½ paragraphs to the incident. Only William R. Chemerka's 2013 biography of Revere gives the most complete explanation of the events on May 3, 1863. In Chemerka's opinion, Revere was "quite capable of leading a regiment...and he was a satisfactory brigade commander, but the demands which faced him as a division commander at Chancellorsville were seemingly beyond his abilities."

*Rick Barram, a regular America's Civil War contributor, is a history teacher based in Red Bluff, Calif. ACW thanks Phil Palen for permission to publish the Hanson Alexander Risley letter from his personal collection [see opposite page].*



# CUT DOWN

**An antebellum attorney** from Chautauqua County, N.Y., William O. Stevens was one of Revere's most dependable subordinates, loved by his men. He had risen in rank to colonel of the 72nd New York by that fateful May when his regiment's position along the Plank Road was attacked. Stevens was among the Excelsior Brigade's killed during the fierce fighting. Two weeks later, fellow attorney Hanson Alexander Risley, a friend of the colonel's, sent the letter below to the 72nd's former chaplain, the Rev. Levi W. Norton. Risley wrote the heart-felt letter from New York City on Erie Railway telegraph paper.

N.Y. & E.R.R. Office Sunday [c. May 17,] 186[3]

To Rev Mr Norton

Dear Sir,

Mr. Marsh has sent you at this moment a telegraphic message advising you of dear Col Stevens last request that you should officiate at his Funeral. – His body now lies at the Governor Room at City Hall in this City. The family are here, his father, wife, her brother, his son George, & his two Sisters are hourly expected – all will go up to Dunkirk tomorrow evening.

I have just sent a message to Caldwell & Com. of arrangements that the family desire the funeral to take place on Wednesday P.M. 2 oc & that you should officiate at the Col's request. You will doubtless hear from them by the time this reaches you. – Genl. Taylor will probably go up and attend the funeral. – I will furnish you such particulars as I am able of the Col's death. I get them directly from the family. – He was shot in the left breast Sunday morning about 8 oc the ball passing down through the lung. – His horse had been previously shot under him & Killed. – His Regiment was on the left & hard pressed by the enemy. They were stationed there to hold a position – The enemy came upon them in large & overpowering force – Stevens drew his revolver, went to the front of the line, gave positive command, that they should not fall back, but hold the position to the last, – the enemy came on & were passing in front of his line with the evident desire of flanking & surrounding him – Stevens turned to his Regiment, in loud clear voice gave the command to change front, by 1st Company (I do not understand the movement quite) but before the word march, he was struck & fell. – Capt Bliss of Westfield & Capt Able of Dunkirk rushed up to him – He told them to send him a private & go to their Company & execute the movement immediately & they did. – The enemy were within 20 feet of them at this time, & the three Col. Stevens, Bliss who was wounded while attempting to rescue Stevens and the private immediately fell into the hands of the enemy. – Col Stevens was taken to a Hospital & a Rebel Col. hearing of his gallantry, sent for him & had him taken to a private home. He suffered a good deal Sunday. Monday was quite comfortable & cheerful & thought he would recover. – Tuesday grew worse, commenced sinking & died in the afternoon. He was well attended by the Surgeon, – had a chaplain with him nearly all the time, was buried with military honors. – His father, wife, son, & brother in law reached Washington

Monday morning last – the Father & Brother in law went down to the front, & with Dr. Irwin got within the enemy lines by courtesy, disinterred his body, talked with officers, Surgeon, & the Chaplain all the circumstances of his death, & I am told the chaplain is to write a letter expected here today, which I will try & get in your hands tomorrow as it gives all the particulars of his last hours & conversation. – I neglected to mention, that after he fell, he unhitched his sword & told Capt Able or the private to convey it to his family. – His body is not in a condition to be seen. –

I regret that I cannot furnish you more & will try & do so during the day. I send this in the Erie R. Way Mail Bag & Mr Marsh encloses a Pass for yourself & family. – Marsh has been very kind – came over from Staten Island this morning to see the family & do all in his power to comfort & aid them. – They are very calm & the Father full of patriotic spirit, – & seems comforted with knowing that William died in the cause of the Country. In relating to me the story, he said, “When could he have died so well?” I fear I shall not be able to go to Dunkirk, as my public duties call me to Winchester Virginia.

Very sincerely yours

H A Risley



### **The Gallant Stevens**

*Stevens, 72nd New York commander at Chancellorsville, was mortally wounded during a May 3 Confederate attack.*



A Conversation with MWSA Member & Author

GARY L. WILHELM



Interview date: 7 October 2020

**G**ARY WILHELM IS A RETIRED engineer with a master's degree from South Dakota State University, who did research and development work in America, Asia, and Europe for consumer, commercial, and military products, during a career of several decades.

In addition to being a civilian engineer embedded with the Marines during the Vietnam War in 1968 and 1969, he worked developing products ranging from EF Johnson citizens band radio, and the Texas Instruments home computer, communications technology for use within buildings, and with medical devices implanted within the body, to the Howitzer Improvement Program (HIP) for army artillery on the battlefield. He was also a representative on a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) committee. He hosted the USA meeting of the committee at Honeywell.

**MWSA:** Would you recommend MWSA membership to other authors?

**WILHELM:** I would highly recommend MWSA to any military writers for the community and learning opportunities.

**MWSA:** What was your inspiration for your book, *Good Afternoon Vietnam, a Civilian in the Vietnam War*?

**WILHELM:** Watching the Ken Burns *Vietnam War* series, I realized my story was unique. I wanted to write it for friends and family.

**MWSA:** How does your book begin?

**WILHELM:** PBS in Minnesota has a Vietnam



Story Wall at MNVietnam.org and I wrote my first story for the wall. I was pleased to have the opportunity to share my story in this way. Then, I felt I wanted to write more about my time there in 1968 and 1969.

**MWSA:** Where does the book take place?

**WILHELM:** I was based in DaNang, and for security reasons, traveled to several countries in SE Asia to communicate.

**MWSA:** Why were you a civilian in the Vietnam War?

**WILHELM:** The Marine Airwing wanted civilian engineering support for their electronic intelligence (ELINT) program.

**MWSA:** Where is your book available, and in what formats?

**WILHELM:** The paperback and eBook is available on Amazon. It is also in several libraries.





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### **KALE IS A FOUR LETTER WORD**

**by Pat Walkow; Corrales Writing Group**

Genre(s): Anthology

Format(s): Kindle, Paperback

ISBN-13 : 978-1951122096

Kale has invaded our culture as the go-to food for healthy living, appearing everywhere on restaurant menus, in grocery stores, and in beauty products like soaps and scrubs. For some, the vitamin load and beneficial fiber cannot outweigh the bitterness and texture of this member of the cabbage family. For those people, kale has ignited a passionate response, often reflected in internet memes and T-shirt slogans. This collection of short stories shows kale in a new light. A couple of tales are horror stories about kale's effect on a life. Another one describes a speculative history of kale. One is a murder mystery where kale plays an unusual role. And one is a fantasy about kale's rivalry with cauliflower. This book also features delicious kale recipes.

*A Conversation with MWSA Member & Author*

**JOHN PODLASKI**

*John Podlaski is a regular feature post in Dispatches.*

**J**OHN PODLASKI WAS RAISED IN Detroit, Michigan and attended both St. Charles and St. Thomas Apostle catholic schools, graduating in 1969. Immediately afterwards, John worked for one of the automotive parts suppliers in the area and then attended junior college full-time in the fall.

After four months of overwhelming pressure, John dropped out of college—choosing income over education. This turned out to be a huge error in judgment as a school deferment protected him from the military draft.

Uncle Sam wasted no time, and Mr. Podlaski soon found himself inducted into the Army in February, 1970. Then after six months of training, John was sent to Vietnam as an infantry soldier, serving with both the Wolfhounds of the 25th Division and the Geronimos of the 101st Airborne Division. During his tour of duty, John was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star, two Air Medals, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, and a few other campaign medals for serving in that campaign.

Back in the states, Mr. Podlaski spent the next four months in Fort Hood, Texas before receiving an early military discharge in December, 1971. The War Veteran returned to his former position with the automotive supplier and was soon promoted to shift supervisor.

He met Janice Jo a few months later and they were married in 1973. The G.I. Bill helped them purchase a home in Sterling Heights,



MI, where they continue living to this day. A daughter, Nicole Ann was born in 1979.

Using additional benefits from the G.I. Bill, Mr. Podlaski returned to college on a part-time basis, graduating four years later with an Associate Degree in Applied Science.

In 1980, John began working on his memoir about his Vietnam experiences. He had carried a diary during his year in Vietnam, and his mother had saved all his letters from the war zone—both were used to create the outline.

He toiled on a manual typewriter for four years before finally completing his work. About the same time, a new national veteran group, akin to the V.F.W. was formed in Washington, DC. They called themselves “Vietnam Veterans of America” and chapters quickly sprung up around the country.

John joined Chapter 154 in Mt. Clemens, MI, and as an active member helped launch their inaugural Color Guard—marching in parades and posting colors for local events. The members of this chapter were a closely knit group, but wives often felt left out during the many discussions about Vietnam.



After learning John had authored a book about his tour of duty, the wives asked to share a copy of the manuscript, hoping it would help them better understand what their husbands might have endured during their time in Vietnam. The memoir was well received, and wives joined the men in discussions. All were increasingly supportive and urged John to find a publisher.

After hundreds of rejections, a publisher from Atlanta, GA came forward and offered to consider the manuscript if it were rewritten in a third-person format.

Atari had just come out with a computer console and word processor, making rewrites and editing much easier—his work saved to floppy diskettes. The rewrite continued until 1989, consuming all his spare time. John had finished half of the manuscript, then suddenly lost interest—not wanting to work on it any longer. It had been a long ten years and there was no light at the end of the tunnel. So, everything was boxed up and moved to the garage for storage.

Mr. Podlaski continued working for various companies within the automotive sector, primarily in management roles tasked in either plant start-ups, financial turn around, or plant closures. John returned to college in 2000, and received a Bachelor Degree in Business Administration two years later. He and his wife retired in mid 2013 and spend their time pursuing their passions.

At John's 40th high school reunion, he was reminded many of his former classmates had read his original manuscript twenty years prior. They were relentless in their efforts to get him motivated and finish the rewrite—offering help wherever needed.

When learning that a conversion of Atari diskettes to the Microsoft Word format was extremely cost prohibitive, John's daughter offered to retype both the completed manuscript and the rewrite, saving both on a USB memory stick. Nine months later, *Cherries* was completed and published. It took almost thirty years, but seeing it in print made it all worthwhile.

The author and his wife own a 1997 Harley Davidson Heritage motorcycle and enjoy riding when possible. Both are members of the Harley Owner Group.

John is a published author of two books which chronicle his experiences as an infantry soldier in Vietnam during 1970/71:

*Cherries: A Vietnam War Novel* went live in April, 2010.

*When Can I Stop Running? A Vietnam War Story* published in June, 2016.

John's blog/website is <https://cherrieswriter.com>

WordPress developed a relationship with Spotify, a podcast website, and offered administrators the opportunity to convert their posts over to a computer-generated podcast and offer them on Spotify. As a result, John converted most of his posts to podcasts with the exception of those predominately containing videos, photos, graphs, and other recordings. Those converted have a button under the title which you can click on to be transferred to the Spotify website.

In some cases, listeners can open Spotify in a different tab and listen while following along with the text on John's website.

*CherriesWriter-Vietnam War* website podcast on Spotify.

# THOSE LOVABLE 'LIFERS'

Joseph Campolo Jr.

Originally posted 23 July 2020 on [namwarstory.com](http://namwarstory.com)

Those Men and Women who dedicate their life to our nation's service.



IN EACH BRANCH OF THE military, those individuals known as *lifers* are what I consider to be the straw that “makes it all happen.” The group of commissioned and non-commissioned officers who choose to make the military a career are the

ones who keep the ships sailing, the aircraft flying, and the troops marching. Without them the rest of us would have been lost.

And like any group of people, among the lifers there were good ones, funny ones, and a few clunkers. Most of us who served have seen all three, but I am proud to say I came across many of the good ones. (Many of the funny ones were also some of the good ones.)

As an enlisted man, my experience was primarily with the enlisted lifers, so that's who I will discuss. I'll also mention that at times there are some derisive remarks cast regarding the lifers. But on a personal level, I feel fortunate in crossing paths with almost all of them. They were some of the best people I have come to know in my lifetime.

## BASIC TRAINING

For most of us, basic training was our first serious meeting with career military personnel. And, again, for most of us, it was a memorable one. A bunch of loud individuals stomping

around in Smoky the Bear hats. I had three Training Instructors (TIs) during my basic training in



Amarillo, Texas in August of 1968, and each one was different from the other. (Yes, even the Air Force had tough TIs in 1968)

Sgt. Dirk was a man who never smiled. He was so transparent in his cruelty, it seemed to us that this was a “nasty TI” character he worked at and mastered—a role he portrayed while on duty. Nobody could be that mean! His favorite activity was to make us stand at attention under the hot Amarillo sun and watch him slowly drink a cold crisp bottle of *CocaCola* from the cooler in the TI's quarters. He wouldn't even let us get a drink of the tepid water in our canteens until the drill session was over.

Sgt. Dirk wore a pair of mirror sunglasses like the sadistic warden in *Cool Hand Luke*.



We called him Sergeant No Eyes.

Staff Sergeant Wood was another hard-ass TI. Nothing sadistic or theatrical about him, strictly by the book and inflexible. He spent



the most time with us and supervised the other two TIs. Sergeant Wood's favorite activity, it seemed, was putting shaving cream (or a jock strap) on a boot's head and making him walk around all day like that. A man of no humor and little personality, we had no nicknames for Wood, other than a number of 'expletive deleted's.

Then, there was good old Sgt. Doors. Sgt. Doors was, by far, our favorite TI. We knew Doors was a screw-up like us because you could see the darker material on his uniform where a higher number of stripes had, at one time, existed on his rumpled fatigue shirt. A very large and quiet individual, rumor had it that Doors had been busted down in rank for beating three Apes (Air Policemen) who had tried to arrest him for drunk and disorderly.

Doors was easy-going and gave us a lot of slack. He looked very much like Hoss Cartwright from the *Bonanza* television series, so naturally we dubbed him "Hoss".



*"Hoss" was our favorite, hands down.*

## ON TO TECH SCHOOL AND PERMANENT PARTY ASSIGNMENT

Outside of a few nasty Kitchen Police (KPs), tech school NCOs provided no lifer stories of note. That all changed when I arrived at my first permanent party assignment,

Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota. (Frostbite Falls, as we called it.)

My first encounter with an NCO at Grand Forks was to be with a Staff Sergeant Deckonshire. I was scheduled to meet him in the day room of our barracks at a specific time, shortly after my arrival. I arrived for said meeting with plenty of time to spare, but alas, no Sergeant Deckonshire in sight.

Finally, after five minutes or so, I heard what could only be snoring. I walked to the end of the room, and on the floor, wedged between a couch and the wall, under a pile of newspapers, lay a Staff Sergeant with the name DECKONSHIRE on his uniform. Next to him were two large empty bottles of Ripple wine.



*It seemed the Air Force had plenty of 'em.*

I just laughed and shook my head.

"Sgt Deckonshire? Sgt Deckonshire?" I kept at it until he finally stirred and came to.

"Huh?" ...followed by a mix of profanity. "Who the #\*&! are you?" (This was not happiness to see me.)

"I'm Campolo."

"You're Campolo?"

"I'm Campolo."

Deckonshire worked himself up into a chair.

"Any coffee around?" he rasped.

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*Continued from page 37*

“Don’t know.” (He was supposed to be the one with all the information.)

“Shit... Well, you know why you’re here?”

“Here, as in Grand Forks, or here as in this day room?”

“Don’t be a smartass, you just got here. Report to your assigned supervisor at 0700 tomorrow.” (Deckonshire was getting into the swing of things.)

“And who might that be?” I inquired.

“They’ll tell you when you get there. Report to the Eighteen Fighter Interceptor Squad building by the flight line.”

“Right.” I acknowledged my appreciation for the vast amount of information Deckonshire had imparted on me. “Anything else?” I thought I’d take a chance.

He thought about that for about three seconds.

“You got anything to drink?”

### **SOME GOOD ONES, AND ANOTHER CLUNKER**

After the antics of Sgt. Deckonshire, I wasn’t sure what to expect from the rest of the Grand Forks NCO corps. I was soon put at ease, as Staff Sergeant Lannard, my first permanent party NCOIC turned out to be a great NCO and a great human being as well.

A quiet, gentle man, Lannard seemed almost out of place in the military. A hard worker who covered for his subordinates, as needed, and a big part of keeping the F-101’s of the 18th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS) flying. (He was also one helluva card player.)

I worked with two other very fine NCOs during my time at Grand Forks. One of them, Sgt. Wilson and I became lifelong friends. We

stayed in contact until his passing a few years ago.

One of the other clunkers I have to mention was Sgt. Johnson. A twenty-eight-year E-4, Sgt. Johnson had been busted down many times during his career. Many career enlisted personnel were heavy drinkers—Johnson was the king of heavy drinkers. He often showed up for duty half in the bag, and rarely made it through a day without passing out. Many of the heavy drinking NCOs I came across in the military had redeeming qualities. Johnson had none. He snookered new guys into doing his work and then blamed them for his screw ups. When I left for duty in Vietnam, I was thankful to get away from that guy.

### **THE NAM—BRUTAL TRAINING GROUND FOR NCOs**

Every military unit in Vietnam had its challenges. In addition to the war, the climate, terrain, and logistical distances involved, made for some tough conditions to work under.

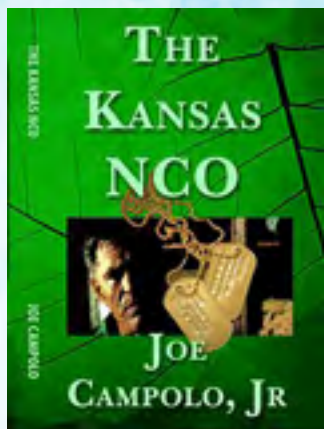
The mission of the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) out of Phu Cat Air base was close air support for combat infantry troops in the area, interdiction, and combat air patrol. Every unit under the 12th TFW supported that mission in some fashion.

And as before, I saw some very fine NCOs, some very funny ones, and a few more clunkers. Some are the basis for the characters in my book, *The Kansas NCO*, and their personalities and activities are explored in that book, in depth.

*The Kansas NCO* himself, of course, was a real individual who did run a small black-market operation working out of base supply at the Phu Cat airbase. He was one of those



individuals who turned confusion and disarray into opportunity. There've been one or two of them in every military unit down through history. Later in life, with a career in business, I often thought about *The Kansas NCO*. He was as shrewd and skillful as any upper-level manager I ever came across.



*Any Fortune 500 company would have been proud to have The Kansas NCO*

*The Kansas NCO's* underling, Charles Prentice was, in fact, my NCOIC for half of my tour in Vietnam. Vodka Charley, as he was known, was a good NCO with a sense of humor and some serious, but forgivable, human failings. He often chided us young troops as “a bunch of damn hippies” but was a good guy who always had our backs. Vodka Charley is one of those people who appears in my thoughts on a regular basis.

I would be remiss if I didn't bring up Tech Sergeant Jones. Jones succeeded Vodka Charley as the NCOIC of our detachment at Phu Cat. But Jones lacked Vodka Charley's charm. A large man from Georgia, Jones style of leadership was autocratic. He looked and acted very much like the cartoon character, *Foghorn Leghorn*, so naturally that's what we called him.

For some strange reason, I quickly made rank in the Air Force. I sewed on my third stripe shortly after arriving in Vietnam, and

in August of 1970, having served exactly two years, I was notified I was being promoted to staff sergeant (E-5). I was just as surprised about this as anyone, for I had performed no heroics or spectacular feats to earn that promotion. TSgt Jones was incensed at the news.

He would often, very loudly, proclaim “I guess you have to wear white socks to get promoted in this man's Air Force.” (I had white socks sent from home because the GI issue socks weren't worth a damn.)

Jones constantly derided many of us in our unit. At one time he attempted to have us put on report for some trumped-up charges. *The Kansas NCO* intervened, and the charges were dismissed. (Having a powerful friend was a good thing to have in the 'Nam.)

### **BACK TO THE WORLD**

I had eighteen months left to serve after my tour of duty in Vietnam. I was sent to March Air Force Base in Riverside, California to complete my military commitment. Great climate, great duty. Assigned to a paper pushing desk job in an air-conditioned office, life was good. My NCOIC at March Air Force Base was Staff Sgt Tyrone Glover, a career airman. At that point, (Lifer) Glover, a black man, had been in the Air Force for about fifteen years.

Racial issues were prominent in our nation at that time. Rioting in the U.S. had brought the issues to the forefront. Racial strife in the military was also problematic. Racial fighting at the larger military installations became an issue for all branches of the service. In Vietnam, rioting at the infamous Long Binh

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jail facility in 1968 dragged on for months.

Sgt Glover was one of the most competent NCOs I had come across in the Air Force, and I had seen many.

A quiet, hardworking individual, he led by example. And although he did not have to, he worked right alongside the rest of us in the office. He was also a very fine human being and another person with whom I became lifelong friends.

I was suddenly conscious of my rank. How could I be the same rank as this individual—so competent in his work with so much time in service? We both served in Vietnam, so that wasn't the reason I had been promoted so much quicker.

I soon noticed other things occurring in our day-to-day operations which pointed to one thing—institutional racism. Now aware of it, I recognized it as I went through our day-to-day routines.

But the Air Force was changing. Racial strife at March Air Force base prompted the creation of a task force to address the issues.

I was appointed a member of the task force and, though it was a frustrating and at times enraging experience, I am proud of the work we accomplished as a group.

Things finally broke open for Sgt Glover. In the spring of that year, he was promoted to Technical Sergeant. He eventually retired from the Air Force as a Master Sergeant. I was happy for him. I haven't heard from Tyrone for several years. His daughter had told me he was ailing, and I suspect he has now passed on.

## ONE OF MANY

Sgt Glover was one of many fine career NCOs I came across during my time in the service. I also had the occasion to work with Army NCOs and a few Marine NCOs during my time in the military.

We, as a nation, should be forever grateful such fine men and women are willing to dedicate their lives to the defense of our nation and its principles. God bless the lifers.

*Joe Campolo Jr. is an award-winning author, poet, and public speaker. A Vietnam War Veteran, Joe writes and speaks about the war, and is a Veteran's advocate. Some of Joe's stories are gripping, some humorous. Joe also writes about other experiences—many of which are also humorous. Joe enjoys fishing, traveling, writing, and spending time with his family. Joe loves to hear from his readers, please send him a note on his page, <https://namwarstory.com>*

### ladybug



A good luck symbol,  
it's believed she  
first came to earth  
by lightening,  
sent by the  
Goddess  
of Love  
and Beauty.  
When she swoops in,  
it's to remind us  
that life is short,  
and not to  
let worries  
cloud a  
single  
day.



## PEARS

*Growing up in the shadow of WWII my brother  
grabs a pear from the GREEN STAMP fruit bowl,  
pulls the stem out with his teeth, pretends to throw it,*

*making hand grenade blasting sounds.  
He arranges green army men on the floor for attack and retreat,  
plays war games in a foxhole dug into the empty lot next door.*

*As a Boy Scout he learns survival, camping out  
on weekend bivouacs. With Dad, he hunts pheasant,  
partridge, and sometimes deer. He becomes a good shot.*

*Like his father, uncle, and grandfather  
he grows up to serve in the military.  
His draft number comes up at college graduation, 1967.*

*After Basic Training, he flies off to Vietnam, barely prepared.  
He writes home of government-issue weapons that jam,  
won't fire properly; they have no rain gear for monsoon season.*

*My parents buy a rain suit and mail it to him. His letters tell of  
living in an APC as they sweep the jungle, bulldoze through  
rice paddies and level farms, dodging snipers and ambushes.*

*Scouting and hunting skills keep him alive in that jungle.  
His graphic letters detail how a bursting mortar  
sprays a buddy's brains across his own helmet.*

*My brother writes of helping amputate a soldier's leg that is  
pinned inside a mortared APC. He tells me, You have it easy because  
you're a girl, you weren't forced into war, or that kind of fear.*

*Maybe I have it easier, but whenever I eat a pear now,  
I feel his burden — my guilt ignites  
as the taste of pear explodes in my mouth.*

*Annette Langlois Grunseth*

A Conversation with MWSA Member & Author

**CHRISTIAN WARREN FREED**

Interview date: 23 February 2021

**C**HRISTIAN W. FREED WAS BORN in Buffalo, N.Y. more years ago than he would like to remember. After spending more than 20 years in the active-duty US Army, he turned his talents to writing. Since retiring, he has published over 25 military fantasy and science fiction novels, as well as his memoirs from his time in Iraq and Afghanistan, a children's book, and a pair of how-to books focused on indie authors and the decision-making process for writing a book and what happens after it's published.

His first published book, *Hammers in the Wind* has been the #1 free book on Kindle four times, and he holds a fancy certificate from the L Ron Hubbard *Writers of the Future* Contest. Okay, so it was for 4th place in one quarter, but it's still recognition from the largest fiction writing contest in the world. And no, he's not a Scientologist.

Passionate about history, he combines his knowledge of the past with modern military tactics to create an engaging, quasi-realistic world for the readers. He graduated from Campbell University with a degree in history and a Masters of Arts degree in Digital Communications from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

He currently lives outside of Raleigh, N.C. and devotes his time to writing, his family, and their two Bernese mountain dogs. If you drive by you might just find him on the porch with a cigar in one hand and a pen in the other. You can find out more about his work by following him on social media:



**MWSA:** How did you find out about MWSA?

**FREED:** I was recommended through a friend and fellow veteran.

**MWSA:** What was your inspiration for writing?

**FREED:** It has always come naturally. I started with goofy comic books as a kid, wrote a terrible horror novel in high school, and decided to bang out a book during each of my three deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. It was a stress release measure that turned into 27 books, my own publishing imprint, and growing.

**MWSA:** What do you write about?

**FREED:** I take a Masters in military history, a love for the Crusades era, my own twenty-year career (five of which were in different war zones), and combine it all into a military fantasy and sci-fi setting.

**MWSA:** What do you want readers to take away from your books?

**FREED:** I try to provide a kick-ass ride that



leaves you spent at the end. In my worlds, good guys die, because that's life. There are no 18-year-olds capable of saving the world or making good decisions. The older you get the better you are.

**MWSA:** What projects do you have in the works?

**FREED:** I am currently completing Book 5 of my *Forgotten Gods* series, publishing a pair of how-to write and publish books, releasing my sci-fi noir, *The Lazarus Men*, and working on a book of what my dogs taught me about transitioning to the civilian world.

**MWSA:** What's next?

**FREED:** I am in the process of developing a writing course for colleges and veterans to help express creativity and clear out some of those jumbled thoughts we all have in our heads. Follow any of my links for more details.

*Facebook:*

<https://www.facebook.com/ChristianFreed>

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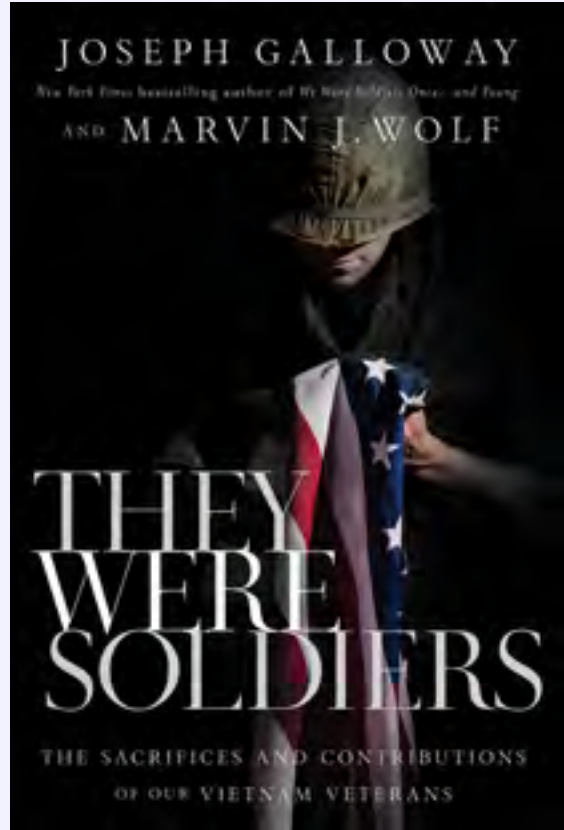
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*Website:* <https://christianwfreed.com/>



**THEY WERE SOLDIERS: THE SACRIFICES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR VIETNAM VETS**

**by Joseph Galloway & Marvin J. Wolf**

Genre(s): Biographies & Memoirs

Format(s): Kindle, Paperback, Hardcover, Audio

ISBN-13 : 978-1400208807

They Were Soldiers showcases the inspiring true stories of 49 Vietnam veterans who returned home from the “lost” war to enrich America’s present and future.

In this groundbreaking new book, Joseph L. Galloway, distinguished war correspondent and New York Times bestselling author of *We Were Soldiers Once . . . and Young*, and Marvin J. Wolf, Vietnam veteran and award-winning author, reveal the private lives of those who returned from Vietnam to make astonishing contributions in science, medicine, business, and other arenas, and change America for the better.

*Engrossing, moving, and eye-opening, They Were Soldiers is a magnificent tribute that gives long overdue honor and recognition to the soldiers of this “forgotten” generation.*

## MWSA MEMBER BENEFIT: BETA READER FORUM

*John Cathcart*

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

As with our review swap program, MWSA is only providing a venue to get authors and beta readers together. Once there, you might also agree to swap reviews once the book is published. The page is available to members only (username and password required).

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

### PURPOSE

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

### SUGGESTIONS

- ★ Provide a short paragraph describing your book.
- ★ Include title, author, genre, expected publication date.

- ★ Keep your initial posting short—you can always share more details once another MWSA member responds to your request.

- ★ What format(s) you'll provide your beta readers.

- \* Paper copy: manuscript, proof, etc.

- \* Digital format: Word document, PDF, eBook format (.mobi, .epub).

- ★ How you'll collect feedback—i.e. via paper questionnaire, online form, email responses.

- ★ When you'll collect feedback—i.e. your expectation on how long beta readers have to read and provide feedback.

- ★ Whether or not you'll be posting beta reader names into your book's acknowledgment section.

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



## THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW YOU NEVER KNEW

...about the MWSA Website.

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

<http://www.mwsadispatches.com/membership>

(3rd bullet under "New Members" section)

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

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

★ MWSA Blasts can be found here:

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

If you have any questions about navigating the MWSA website, please reach out to MWSA at [info@mwsa.co](mailto:info@mwsa.co) and we'll answer as best we can. Thank you.



### CHAOS ABOVE THE SAND: A SPECIAL PROJECTS UNIT ADVENTURE

by **Bruce Thomas**

Genre(s): Military Thriller; Fiction

Format(s): Kindle, Paperback

ISBN-13 : 978-1-64952-185-9

Iran 2010. The Iranian High Council has decided that today is the day their fighter pilots will attack. With a large group of fighter aircraft poised to cross the border into Iraq, the only thing standing in the Iranians way is Wild Bill Eddy's four F-15C aircraft. With lightning speed, the battle rages in the sky above Iraq. Iran's desire to control the Middle East sets this fast-paced, multi-layered story in motion.

This yarn is the tale of the development and birth of the SPU. As Air Force Academy graduates, Wild Bill and Vector have a bond that transcends work. But will they be able to solve all of the clues to stop the Iranians from taking over the Middle East? *Chaos Above the Sand* is a prequel to Bruce Thomas's first book, *The Hope of the South*.





## WELCOME TO THE MWSA ~ WHO WE ARE

*John Cathcart*

**W**E 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 dedication and sacrifices for our freedoms.

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 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



[Your MWSA Membership Team](#)

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MEMBERSHIP  
CONFERENCE

IS A  
(TENTATIVE)

GO!