

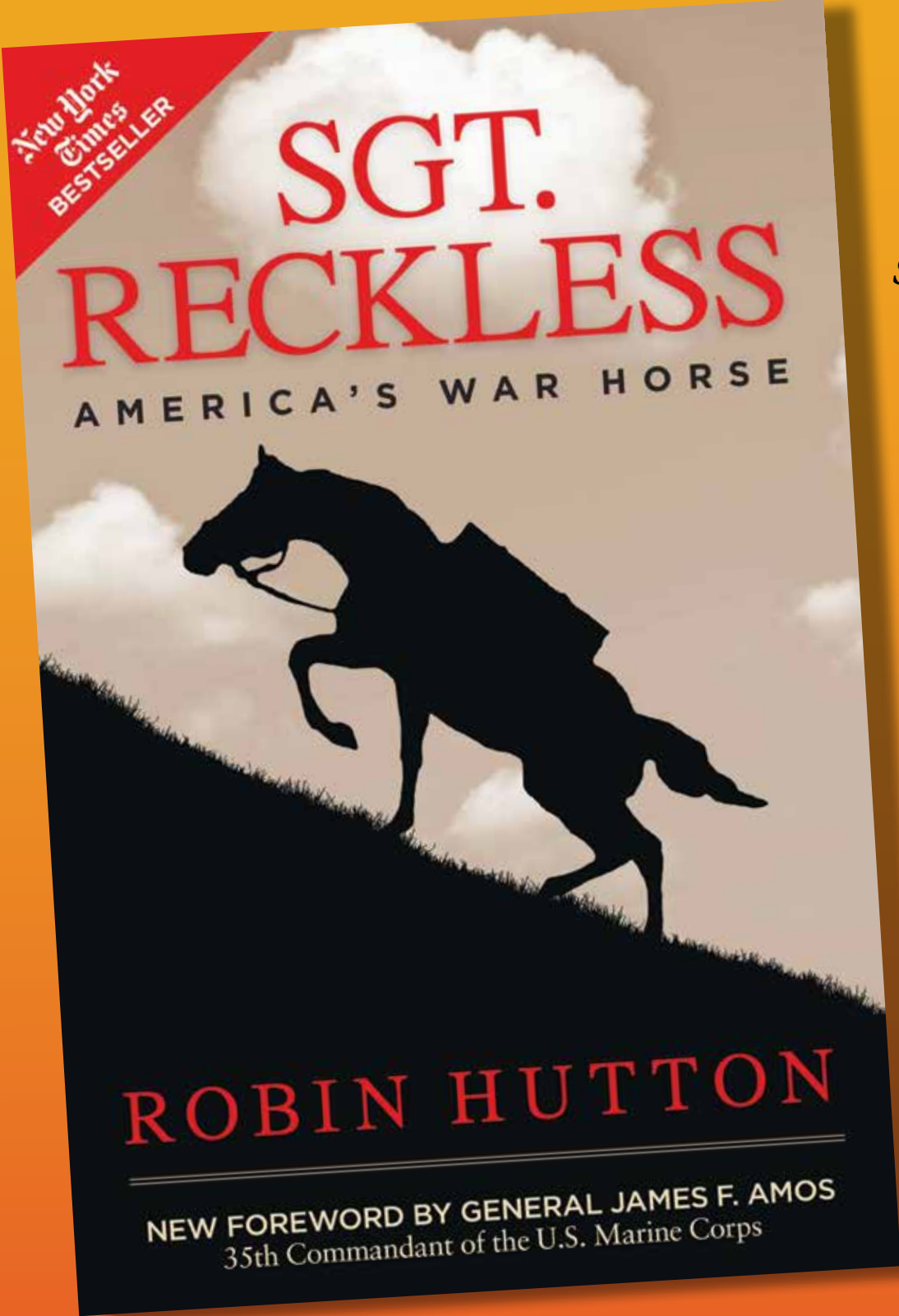
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Donald C. Stark

Every so often, I look at the calendar and my wristwatch and wonder what I would be doing if I were not in my cubby hole office, pushing newspaper ads and articles around with no certain place for them to go.

“Deadline” is a brutal word to me and says that I cannot do what I want to do at the present time, and I am captured and locked up until we have a finished product that makes sense for our readers. Sometimes we need to shake the bushes and hopefully get lucky with the outcome. For some thirty-plus years, I was one of the sales team or sales managers that returned to the Columbus or Cleveland TV or Radio companies with orders from broadcast clientele and headed for home satisfied with a good day’s business!

After about ten years of my pretending to be comfortable and retired; John Tidyman, “Bless His Soul”, called me and asked if I could help save his Newspaper for Veterans and All Who Love Them. After a few chats at Lakewood Park and on his backyard picnic table, I agreed to learn about the printed page and deadlines.

Here’s the good news! As our paper continues to grow, the rewards are a major part of what keeps the deadlines at bay.

This issue is loaded with interesting columns, some that have been sent to us from readers of our publication with something to say. You’ll see a poem written by one of my dearest friends entitled “I AM STILL THERE” that he sent to me due to his distressed memories of killing to avoid being killed in the very same spot in Vietnam.

Captain Carmen LoParo hopes that he may help other war veterans on some of their sleepless nights.

Another gift from our readership comes from Mickey Sikora: with a poem of the Ohio Veterans Memorial Park and why veterans and families should visit for a great day.

My deadline has arrived, and I am thrilled to be in a position to keep our readership as up to date as possible and pleased to

know that we are striving and accomplishing a good read for our Vets!

Thanks for your support, your pats on our backs and volunteering articles for our mission.

Happy New Year & Semper Fidelis

Don Stark
 Publisher/Sales Mgr.
 DD214 Chronicle

I Am Still There

*I did what was asked of me and was finally going home.
 As the wheels left the ground behind, I felt that I was done.
 I didn't have to pack much and was anxious to leave.
 But the memories of war were still with me more than I
 wanted to believe.*

*I brought my medals with me and the few things that I shared.
 I thought that we were going home to a country that cared.
 I thought the plane would be filled with happiness and cheers.
 But in fact, there was silence and the sound of several tears.*

*Most of us were worried that this was all another dream,
 One that we experienced almost every night it seemed.
 The dream where we were home and lived our lives thereafter.
 Only to wake up still in war, surrounded by death and disaster.*

*When I checked my bags to see if all was there,
 I was confident that I brought it all, but still I was scared.
 I thought I was leaving behind the memories, deaths and dismay,
 But the conflict in my heart and mind just won't go away.*

*Between today and when I departed is now more than 50 years.
 And the things I brought home that day still cause sleeplessness
 and tears.*

*Some of the items I brought with me are my medals and Green Beret.
 They now sit on a closet shelf where my Dad's medals also lay.*

*My wife was a gift from God, along with our kids and grandkids too.
 They are everything one could ask for, a beautiful dream come true.
 But when I have another dream that I never really did come home,
 The happiness and relief I feel quickly leaves me, as if I were alone.*

*Has my life been just a dream? Is it now or is it then?
 Am I here or am I there? My brain just can't comprehend.
 These dreams are unimaginable unless you have lived them too.
 They can affect literally everything you may want to say or do.*

*My family and friends tell me that I am not alone.
 They try to hold and comfort me to assure me that I am home.
 I know that they love me as they provide understanding and care.
 But the problem is that part of me really is still there.*

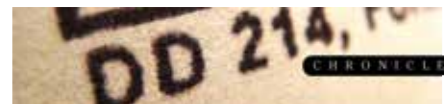
Captain Carmelo J. LoParo
 3/187th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division
 Vietnam 1971

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Editorial Statement

DD214 Chronicle is committed to its readers: Veterans of every generation and all who love them. The printed newspaper is delivered across northern Ohio without charge to more than 640 plus locations: libraries, colleges and universities that welcome veteran students, VFW and American Legion posts, city halls, Veteran Administration offices and health care facilities, organizations in support of veterans, advertisers, political offices, and Veteran Service Commissions. DD214 Chronicle also maintains dd214chronicle.com and DD214 Chronicle/Facebook.

Breaking the Stereotypes: Hospice

According to a National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, nearly 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries were enrolled in hospice care for at least one day in 2017, and the figure continues to rise in the years following. Hospice is more than care for a terminally ill patient; for many it is hope. However, hospice care is associated with many misconceptions, turning away many individuals that may benefit from these services. Hospice is about increasing the lives of those that have been diagnosed with terminal illness by providing necessary support, services, and resources to the patient and the patient's family.



Debunking the Hospice Myths

Myth #1: Hospice is only for those that have given up on life

It is common for others to think that hospice is about dying when, in reality, it is about bringing comfort to patients so they can live this stage of their life to the fullest. Hospice provides medical care, pain management, family support, and emotional and spiritual support to the patients' needs and desires. The goal is to increase the patient's quality of life and provide support for family members to ensure that the patient is happy and comfortable. Although people do pass away while in hospice, there are still patients that graduate from hospice and return with a longer, expected prognosis.

Myth #2: Only patients with cancer use hospice care

Nearly three-quarters of hospice patients are not diagnosed with cancer. Cancer is known to be one of the most aggressive forms of disease and one of the most difficult to treat. Though this is true, hospice patients are diagnosed with a wide variety of diagnoses, including heart disease, dementia, lung disease, stroke, chronic kidney disease, and more. Hospice teams are trained to manage the symptoms of many diagnoses, not just cancer.

Myth #3: Hospice care can only be given at a hospital or facility

Hospice teams come wherever the patients call home. Again, the goal is to make sure the patients are happy and comfortable, so it is important that they are in a setting where they feel that way. While hospice care can be administered in a hospital or facility, it does not have to be. Hospice is not a location of care, but rather a method of care.

Myth #4: Hospice care is very expensive

Hospice is a benefit provided by Medicaid/Medicare and is also covered by many private insurance companies. People misunderstand the financial end of hospice, which leads to terminally ill patients not receiving the care that they need and deserve. In order to qualify for hospice care, Medicaid and Medicare require that the patient meets the following criteria

- The patient's hospice doctor and primary care physician certify that the patient is terminally ill and has a life expectancy of 6 months or less
- The patient accepts palliative care instead of curative treatment
- The patient signs a statement that they choose hospice care instead of other Medicare-covered benefits

Myth #5: Hospice care ends with the patient's passing

Hospice does not end with the patient's passing. Most hospice care offers bereavement and grief support services for a year after the patient has passed. Many hospice services also help make funeral arrangements to provide support for other issues that may arise after the patient's death.

Hospice is full of hope as patients feel relief and comfort during a difficult time. Many of the stereotypes about hospice care lead people away from hospice when they could be receiving care that helps them physically, emotionally and spiritually. Through time, the hospice patient and their family begin looking forward to tomorrow. The benefits of hospice care can empower both the hospice patients and their caregivers as the patients gain control of how they want to live out their last final months.

If you are looking for hospice care in the Cleveland area, feel free to explore your options at McGregor and Judson, where we put your care first. For more information call:

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Experiencing Liberation Day in Den Bosch

By Jacob Arnett

On the 24th of October, 1944, 's-Hertogenbosch, a strategic Dutch town best known as the home of legendary Northern Renaissance painter Hieronymus Bosch, was suddenly embroiled in heavy street to street fighting. The 53rd Welsh Division faced off against German soldiers of the 712th Wehrmacht Infantry Division, the former backed up by elements of the RAF 2nd Tactical Air Force, which a couple days earlier had scored an impressive success with an attack on the German 15th Army's HQ in nearby Dordrecht, resulting in the elimination of 2 generals and 70 German staff officers, according to Kemp and Graves, *The Story of The Royal Welch Fusiliers*. The battle of 's-Hertogenbosch was part of the larger Operation Pheasant, an operation conceived after the failure of Operation Market Garden at Arnhem, to address the now exposed flank of the allied offensive. The brutal urban combat in this picturesque Medieval town center and surrounding village was completed on the evening of October 27, resulting in the liberation of the city and the nearby Herzogunbusch concentration camp outside the city.

Sadly, when the detachment of soldiers from the famed Scottish Black watch regiment eliminated the small remnants of SS soldiers left behind to cover the retreat of their comrades, they found only 500 inmates left alive, as 500 others were found to have been executed that morning, according to The Jewish Virtual Library.

Eighty years later, on the 26th of October, a small fireteam consisting of a Marine (me), his mom, his girl and her dog, Lou Lou, made it into the nearly impossible to pronounce s'-Hertogenbosch after battling heavy traffic congestion. Once much needed bathroom breaks were successfully acquired, we gained entry into the city center, and were greeted by a sizeable contingent of WWII-era vehicles, men and boys in WWII Welsh and Scottish regiment uniforms, among them hundreds of Dutch and British tourists meandering around, enjoying the pleasant sunny weather against the imposing backdrop of the massive gothic St. John's Cathedral, a buttressed giant holding court in the square since the year 1220. A 20-piece orchestral band played solemn tunes reminiscent of Saving Private Ryan and Band of Brothers soundtracks on a nearby stage. Stories of how the Welsh soldiers handed out coffee and chocolates, rations and warm clothing to the

starving and battered population of Den Bosch, as it is sometimes called, were exchanged between residents and members of the parade cohort. Though I could not understand any of the Dutch speakers, the well-represented British contingent, which made its way over from Dover for the festivities, could be heard exchanging stories in our native English tongues, although with heavy jock accents in some cases. Though it was nearly impossible to find an open table, we ended up having a coffee and a much-desired seat at a nearby café. This was a welcome respite, having driven my rental Peugeot all the way from our Airbnb in Gouda, the cheesiest place in the



Man wears uniform of The Black Watch



Welshman against backdrop of St. Johns.

Netherlands, enroute to the German city of Cologne. Though it was only a quick stop on our tour of the Rhineland, it was a touching and beautiful example of the desire of the residents of Den Bosch to pay reverence to the 145 Welsh soldiers of the 53rd who were KIA in the liberation battle, of which 130 are buried in a cemetery nearby. Around 235 residents of



Lou Lou, proud to serve

Den Bosch were also killed in the crossfire, and one can imagine there are some elderly residents still alive who may have lost their loved ones back then. Welsh political representatives and their Dutch counterparts each laid a wreath at the town's memorial to commemorate this sacrifice.

I made sure to snap some photos of all of this, a few of which we've included in this article. As I left Den Bosch and we continued on our journey, I was left with the feeling that this was a special event to have unexpectedly witnessed. It's safe to say it brought home the reality of the European experience of WWII for me that, as an American, no television show or movie ever has.

Veteran Gives Air Show Attendees Something To Think About

By Louis H. Pumphrey

I admit to being a bit startled while promoting peace at the Cleveland National Airshow over Labor Day weekend, wearing my very tight 1968 U.S. Army dress uniform and carrying my peace flag, when a gentleman of a certain age said, “Thank you for my freedom.”

This Vietnam veteran said rather tersely, as the gentleman shook my hand, “You’re giving me too much credit. Neither the Viet Cong nor the North Vietnamese Army has had any interest in taking away your freedom. We pulled out of Vietnam in 1973. The Viet Cong did not come over here and try to take away your freedoms.”

The gentleman said nothing and walked away, likely pondering my comment.

One young man, who I think may have been one of the jet plane pilots at the air show, thanked me for my service.

I said, “It wasn’t my idea. I got drafted.”

“When people say thank you for serving our country, I sometimes say, ‘I didn’t serve my country. I served deceitful, lying, fear-mongering, war-mongering politicians and their war-profiteering bed partners.’”

He said, “Some wars are necessary.”

I agreed, to some extent, saying, “Hitler had to be stopped. But Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan were unnecessary and unwinnable wars.”

He said, “I don’t disagree with that.”

I had a lengthy chat with Christina, a flight attendant for United Airlines who is from Bath, about 12 miles from Akron. She is a solid supporter of Donald Trump (which I am not) so I focused on the good things about Trump.

I said to Tina, as she likes to be called, “Trump did not start a war while he was in office. And he wanted us to get out of Afghanistan, seeing it as wasteful and unending”.

Tina asked a passerby to take our photo with her phone, which he did, and Tina emailed it to me.

An army veteran who had graduated from Kent State University’s ROTC program was quite taken with all of my anti-war observations, especially when I told him, “Those truly serving our country are medics, nurses, doctors, and mental health professionals who work very, very hard to mend

One gentleman who shook my hand was impressed I still fit in my uniform. I said, “I’m sucking in my gut as we speak. I really don’t need a belt to hold these pants up.” He smiled.

A young woman made my day when she said, “You look very handsome.” Of course, I said, “Thank you.” A young man, annoyed by my presence, made a derogatory remark about my peace flag. I said, “The stars are in hiding. They’re embarrassed.” The implication is that the stars are not pleased with what our government has done regarding war. The aggrieved man kept on walking, saying nothing.

One young man was curious about the design of the Peace Symbol. I told him that if you take the semaphore symbols for the letters N and D and superimpose them, you get the peace symbol. The N and D stand for “nuclear disarmament” but the design has evolved into a universal symbol of peace. Wikipedia supplied other details, noting Gerald Horton, a British graphic designer, came up with the symbol in 1958, and it was first used at an anti-nuclear weapons rally in April 1958.

A little boy asked if I was in the Air Force, and I said, “No. In the Army”. He said his grandfather was in the Air Force.

I said, “We were on the same team. We just played different positions.”

The boy’s father smiled.

Drafted in 1966, Pumphrey was a reporter, then editor, of the U.S. Army’s First Infantry Division newspaper in Vietnam from July 1967 to July 1968. He is a member of Veterans for Peace and a founding member of the U.S. Peace Memorial Foundation. He lives in Shaker Heights.



as best they can, the psyches and bodies of those savaged and ravaged by war. They’re the real war heroes. Not those who kill and destroy. That’s not heroic. It’s barbaric”.

The army veteran was a member of the 82nd Airborne Division and had received training in intelligence work at Fort Huachuca, in Arizona, established in 1877 as Camp Huachuca. He said he was able to use his intelligence training in his civilian job working for a security organization.

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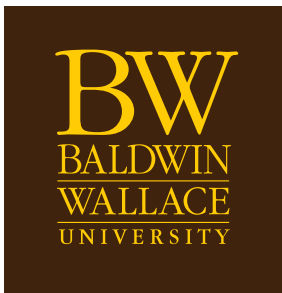
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Greetings to our DD214 Veterans & Families



John 3:16 KJV. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

As we approach the New Year of 2025, I would like to wish each and every one a very special and Happy New Year. The old saying is "out with the old and in with the new." This brings me to ask: "How can I make a difference in 2025?" We always question ourselves about what resolution to make, yet we don't keep it. As I was reviewing the past years' resolutions, I realized that it was always something that I couldn't keep! Then I noticed that it was always about Me. Me this and Me that, and most of all, I noticed that I don't keep my resolutions.

Let's set a goal for 2025. In John 15:13 Jesus states, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." The statement upholds sacrificial love as the ultimate expression of love.

I want to change the resolution process from focusing on Me this year to focus on 2025: what can we do for others, family, friends, and our community? This takes a positive outlook on the scripture of John 15:13. Helping others is also a way to help ourselves positively. Ask yourself, what can I do that would make a difference in the lives of others? "Be the change you wish to see in the world." (Gandhi) is a wonderful way to start the 2025 New Year.

I believe every day is a holiday; feel free to celebrate. We rejoice and are thankful for our family, friends, our city, and the Community that we live in.

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PART I: How To Write A Military Book

By Jim Riley

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Part I will briefly cover the process of selecting a topic, researching and conducting interviews, putting pen to paper, and finally...finding a publisher. Part II will review the book in its final form as sent to the publisher. The book "A Soldier's Night Visit" is scheduled for release in February 2025.)

PART I: How To Write A Military Book Select a topic

Sometimes selecting a good subject for a book can take forever. Good authors will look for topics of widespread interest, topics they've had experience with, or topics they feel strongly about. Or you might be lucky enough to attend a military academy where a history class included the story of a true American hero who attended the same school only fifteen years prior...the same school that produced the likes of Generals Norman Schwarzkopf and H.R. McMaster and legendary author J.D. Salinger. This happened to young Cadet Hugh Roberts when he was a student at the Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania. The Academy was proud of the 2,500 Valley Forge graduates who served during World War II since nearly 40% served as junior officers. The exploits of one particular alumnus caught the attention of Cadet Roberts.

Lieutenant Eric Fisher Wood, Jr. graduated in 1937 and went on to be commissioned through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at Princeton University. He trained at Ft. Sill and Ft. Jackson and was assigned to Battery A, 589th Field Artillery Battalion, 106th Infantry Division. Soon afterward, Lt. Wood would



Lt. Eric Fisher Wood, Jr. in his Valley Forge uniform

find himself in the Ardennes Forest at the beginning of the Battle of The Bulge.

In the first week of December 1944, Lt. Wood's unit engaged in battle with a German Panzer unit. Some of his men were captured, but Lt. Wood managed to escape. He hid in the woods near Meyerode, Belgium. The townspeople would occasionally house him and feed him. For the next several weeks, Lt. Wood used guerilla tactics to disrupt advancing German patrols and cause damage to enemy communications systems, supply dumps, and columns. Close to the end of January, Lt. Wood was found dead in the snow. Nearby were seven dead German soldiers. He was credited with over 200 confirmed kills. The townspeople erected a memorial in his honor.



Wood's memorial in the Ardennes Forest

gathering everything he could about Lt. Wood... his background, his training, and his unit. There were official military reports, maps, and personal accounts. Wood had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, and the Belgian Croix de Guerre. Each award comes with a description.

Since the residents of Meyerode, Belgium, were aging, and memories could fade, Hugh decided to fly to Belgium for personal interviews. He met with Eva Maraite, the daughter of Peter, who housed and fed Lt. Wood for several days.... until SS Colonel Josef "Sepp" Dietrich, commander of the 6th Panzer Army, took over her house as his headquarters. Any trace of the American would have had fatal consequences. The whole village was tense. Hugh also toured the forest area around the city. The numerous foxholes that Lt. Wood dug were still scattered throughout the forest.

To this day, fresh flowers are placed on his memorial every day. A mere ten years later, Cadet Roberts read of the young lieutenant's accomplishments and wanted to learn more. He had the topic for his book.

Research and conduct interviews

Over the next several years, the young cadet started

Start the writing process

Strive for historical accuracy throughout your writing. Be sure your level of research is thorough enough to make your key points. Outline your work and develop an outline. Try to set a schedule to write regularly...i.e., same time each day... or so many pages per week.

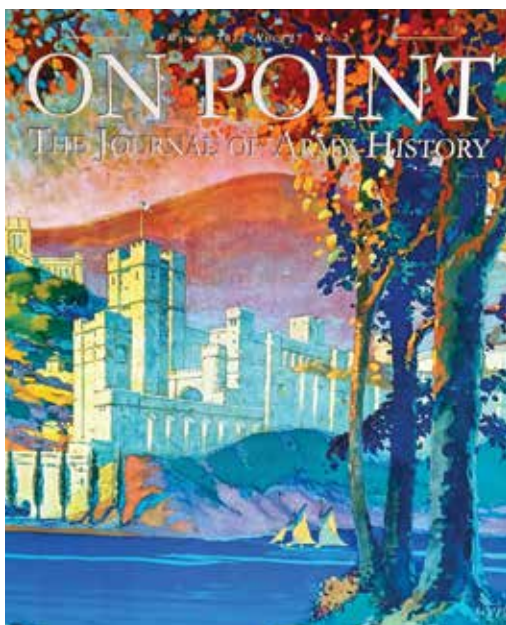
Find a publisher

A quick Google search yielded a dozen or more publishers specializing in military subjects. The Military Publishers' Directory lists 85 companies that specialize in military writing. Another is the



Army University Press. Depending on the length of your work, military journals are a possibility.

After Hugh had completed a few chapters, he sent them to *On Point* magazine, which is published quarterly by The Army Historical Foundation. The subject matter was exactly what they were looking for. A little free advance publicity never hurt.



<https://armyhistory.org/on-point-winter-2022/>

I felt Hugh's methods were a textbook example of how to write a military book, and that's why I felt his efforts were worth documenting in this article. Part II will review "A Soldier's Night Visit" in the MARCH-APRIL ISSUE OF DD214 CHRONICLE.



AO Cleveland Operations in Cleveland and Surrounding Areas



4 Jan	10:00am-Noon	Northern Ohio Veterans Association (NOVA)	Monthly Coffee Chat	Berea Rec Center, Berea
9-12 Jan		VFW Dept. Of Ohio	Mid-Winter Conference	Columbus, Ohio
13 Jan	3:00-7:00 PM	Guitars 4 Veterans	Monthly Jam (Bring any stringed instrument)	VFW #2533 W. 150th & Lorain
14 Nov	6:00 PM	Joint Veterans Council of Cuyahoga Cty.	Monthly Meeting	VFW #2533 W. 150th & Lorain
1 Feb	10:00am-Noon	Northern Ohio Veterans Association (NOVA)	Monthly Coffee Chat	Berea Rec Center, Berea
10 Feb	3:00-7:00PM	Guitars 4 Veterans	Monthly Jam (Bring any stringed instrument)	VFW #2533 W. 150th & Lorain
11 Feb	6:00 PM	Joint Veterans Council of Cuyahoga Cty.	Monthly Meeting	VFW #2533 W. 150th & Lorain



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Sgt. Reckless Exemplifies Marine Corps Semper Paratus

By Nancy Peacock

The 249-year history of the U.S. Marine Corps is replete with heroes, but Sgt. Reckless could well be the most unusual Marine to bear that honor. Author Robin Hutton discovered Sgt. Reckless (Regnery History, 2014), a small Mongolian mare, while doing research for another book.

“I found a story called ‘Sgt. Reckless, the Mighty Marine,’” Hutton said. “It had 3 paragraphs of what she had done in the Korean War, and I thought, ‘Who is this horse, and why have I never heard about her?’”

After a Google search, Hutton found an article from 1992 in *Leatherneck* magazine describing the heroism of the four-year-old mare and the 5th Marines who served in the Korean War. It took Hutton six years to research and write the book.

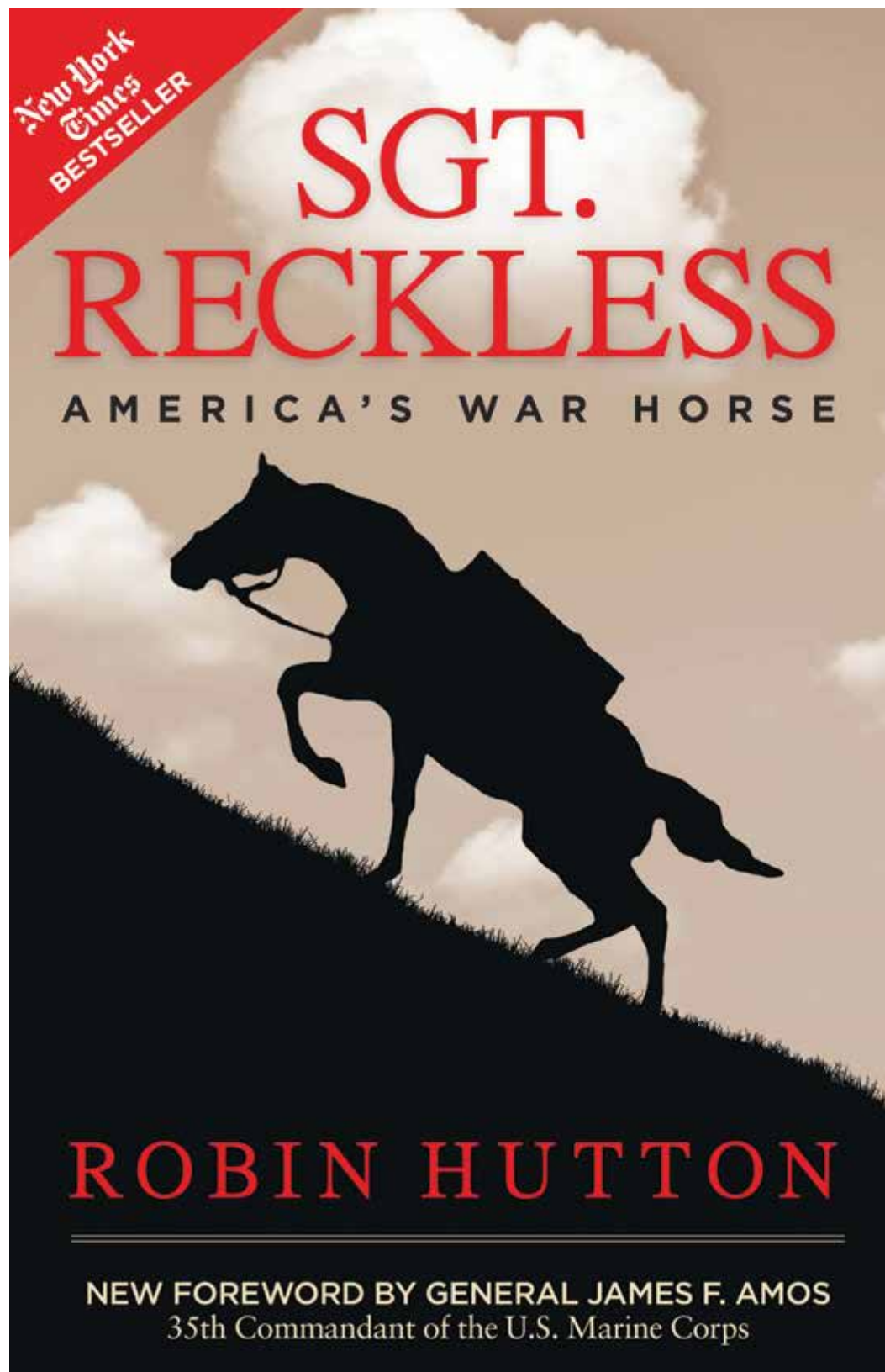
“I took out ads in military magazines, newspapers, and online,” Hutton said. “I started to track down the men that served with her. I’d get one, and they would put me in touch with others. Then they began sending me their personal stories and photos.” What these interviews revealed was astounding. In October 1952, the 5th Marines were part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces fighting against the Chinese invasion of Korea. One of the Marines’ most effective weapons was the 75 mm Recoilless Rifle. It was highly accurate but dangerous to operate. With a ferocious discharge, the enemy could easily spot its location and retaliate. The gun had to be moved every fourth or fifth time after it was fired. Each round of ammunition weighed 24 pounds, and a soldier could only carry two rounds on his backpack.

One platoon leader came up with the idea of finding a pack horse to carry the ammunition up the steep hills to the Marine outposts. He wasted no time in locating a nearby racetrack and finding “a well-groomed filly with an intelligent eye and a fine head.”

The men of the platoon named her Reckless, and she joined them on October 26, 1952. She ate her first Marine meal of uncooked oatmeal and a loaf of bread with her unit in the mess tent. They built a horse-sized sandbag bunker for her protection and

fenced in a small pasture, but she was free to roam the camp. Her handler taught her to lie down or

kneel for protection from incoming fire and how to step over barbed wire. Eventually, he used arm and



Sgt. Reckless Book Cover



hand signals to communicate with Reckless.

“She would sleep in their tents at night or eat in the mess tent, and they would share their food and give her a beer”, Hutton said. “She was an integral part of the unit. They would throw their flak jackets over her to protect her because she was a true ‘force multiplier,’ as the Marines liked to call her.”

A special leather saddle pack was constructed to carry six rounds. One month after she joined the unit, Reckless saw her first battle.

When the Recoilless Rifle went off the first time, she went straight up into the air, despite being weighted down with almost 150 pounds of ammo.

Her handler calmed her down and by the time that skirmish was over, she seemed comfortable knowing that the men would take care of her.

At the end of January, she served in one battle that lasted from dawn until dusk and made 15 trips up and down the steep hillside.

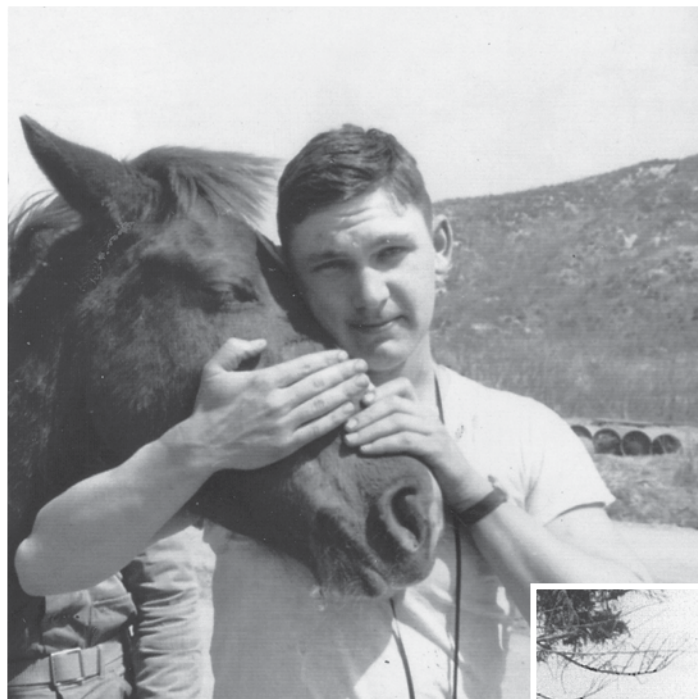
“This is where Reckless showed her heroic nature – because she preferred to meet this obstacle with a running start.” Hutton wrote. “Again and again, as the live rounds bounced threateningly atop the would-be racehorse, she charged the steep, craggy hill. Her handler dropped the reins, allowing her the freedom to do it her way. And each time, she would make the top of the ridge on the strength of a final, urgent lunge.”

That day, Reckless carried more than a ton of explosives on her back. This was followed by ten smaller but still dangerous missions. In a battle on February 15, 1953, she carried more than 3,500 pounds of explosives more than 20 miles from sunrise to sunset.

“I didn’t think she would make it onto the hill that last time,” her handler remembered. “She had to make two runs at it but wouldn’t quit.”

By the end of March, peace talks were in progress with the United Nations forces. The Chinese and North Koreans needed a victory to strengthen their negotiating power.

On March 26, 3,500 Chinese troops attacked three neighboring outposts held by 40 to 50 Marines in each outpost. The 72-hour battle of Outpost Vegas



Hammersley hug #1

was Reckless’ finest hour. Her handler loaded eight canisters weighing 192 pounds, took her up to the hill, and pointed her in the direction of the guns.

Running ahead, Reckless charged up the 45-degree hillside to the top, then made her way along a 250-foot trail to the gun sites. At times, after she delivered the ammunition, she carried wounded Marines back down the mountain. She made 51 trips up to the guns, most of the time by herself. She walked over 35 miles and carried 386 rounds (over 9,000 pounds) on her back.

During the battle, shrapnel cut Reckless just above her left eye. After the cut was treated with iodine, she continued her deliveries. Later that day, she was wounded by shrapnel on her left flank behind the ribcage. Her second wound was dressed, and Reckless went back into action.

“No matter how tired she was, the mare with an almost incomprehensible sense of duty just kept going,” Hutton wrote.

The Marines won the battle, which broke the resolve of the Chinese and North Koreans. Four months later, a ceasefire was signed. A year later, Reckless was officially promoted to the rank of sergeant in an official ceremony, the first and only animal to ever receive such an honor.

Instead of being left behind in Korea, the 5th Marine Recoilless Rifle Platoon brought Reckless to Camp

Pendleton in San Diego. She lived out the rest of her days in a custom-built ranch setting, being honored by various military organizations and the media.

In honor of her war record and bravery, Reckless has a total of six memorials located throughout the United States. When Hutton asked horse behaviorist Dr. Robert Miller how Reckless was able to do what she did, Miller provided a simple answer. “He said the Marines became her herd, and she would follow them anywhere,” Hutton said. “That’s what I love about this story.”



Hammersley hug #2

Soldier Santa

By Barb Smith

While reading the book *American St. Nick* by Peter Lion (Plain Sight Publishing, 2015) during the Thanksgiving holiday, my husband and I relived our September 2024 visit to the town of Wiltz in northwestern Luxembourg. In the Wiltz Castle, we first toured the brewery museum, leading us to the Battle of the Ardennes Museum.



With only four days to prepare, the whole town pitched in. Stutz oversaw the entire planning operation. Soldiers created an invitation. Stutz's local friend would translate and print the invitations. Soldiers and townspeople distributed them. Children happily took them home to their mothers. Soldiers donated candy, chocolates, and other

treats from care packages. The cooks in the field kitchen made donuts and cakes. Nuns in the convent within the castle were tasked with transforming the hard, heat-resistant ration D-bars into a velvety, smooth hot chocolate. For some children, it would be the first chocolate that they had ever tasted.

On December 5, the eve of St. Nicholas Day, Brookins went to the castle where the nuns happily assisted him in dressing as St. Nicholas with Father Wolffe's vestments, complete with a mitre and a

Barb Smith at the St. Nicholas exhibit, Battle of Ardennes Museum/Wiltz Castle, Wiltz, Luxembourg 9-4-2024



A two-fisted toast to the 28th!" US Navy veteran, Bob Smith, National Brewery Museum and Tannery Museum, adjacent to the Battle of the Ardennes Museum, Wiltz Castle, Wiltz, LU 9-4-2024



Cpl. Richard Brookins as St. Nicholas

We discovered the exhibit of St. Nicholas, with images of children and women standing in the courtyard surrounding him.

American St. Nick tells an amazing story of the compassion and kindness of the American GIs of the 28th Infantry Division and how a Jewish-American soldier with a great idea convinced a 22-year-old corporal from Rochester, New York, to be that St. Nicholas to the children of the newly-liberated Wiltz, on December 5, 1944.



Richard Brookins, "The American St. Nick," in the Wiltz castle, December 5, 1944. Harry Stutz is the soldier on the very left edge of the frame with "Maisy" on his knee.



Children holding flags of Luxembourg and singing to honor "The American St. Nick" in the courtyard of the Wiltz castle Dec. 5, 1944

crozier (staff.) His beard was made from frayed rope. Two little “angels” were assisted into the jeep with the soldier St. Nick. Father Wolffe made the sign of the cross over them, giving a blessing, “May God and the spirit of Saint Nicolas be with you.” They arrived at the castle’s entrance, and the magic began.

Children, women, and GIs greeted the trio. St. Nick assisted his angels from his “sleigh.” They carried St. Nick’s flowing robes as he smiled at the children and patted their heads with his gloved hand. Children performed songs and skits for St. Nicholas. S. Sgt Henry “Hank” Fiebig played his guitar and made funny faces as he led the crowd singing Christmas songs. The GIs had as much fun in the celebration as the kids, enjoying munching on donuts and sipping hot chocolate. The Stars and Stripes captured it all. Richard Brookins and Harry Stutz returned to Wiltz in 1977 with a presentation on behalf of the Veterans of the 28th Infantry Division Signal Company Message Center. There, after 30 thirty years, Richard again donned St. Nicholas robes and rode in a sleigh during the Saint Nicholas Festival parade. Two women greeted him afterward, his little angels grown up.

“If Luxembourg would stand another thousand years, we would always



Statue of American St. Nicholas, Richard Brookins, was unveiled in 2014. It was carved by a local carpenter from an old Ardennes Forest oak.



Cpl. Harry Stutz (plans a St. Nicholas party)/Cpl. Richard Brookins (aka St. Nicholas)

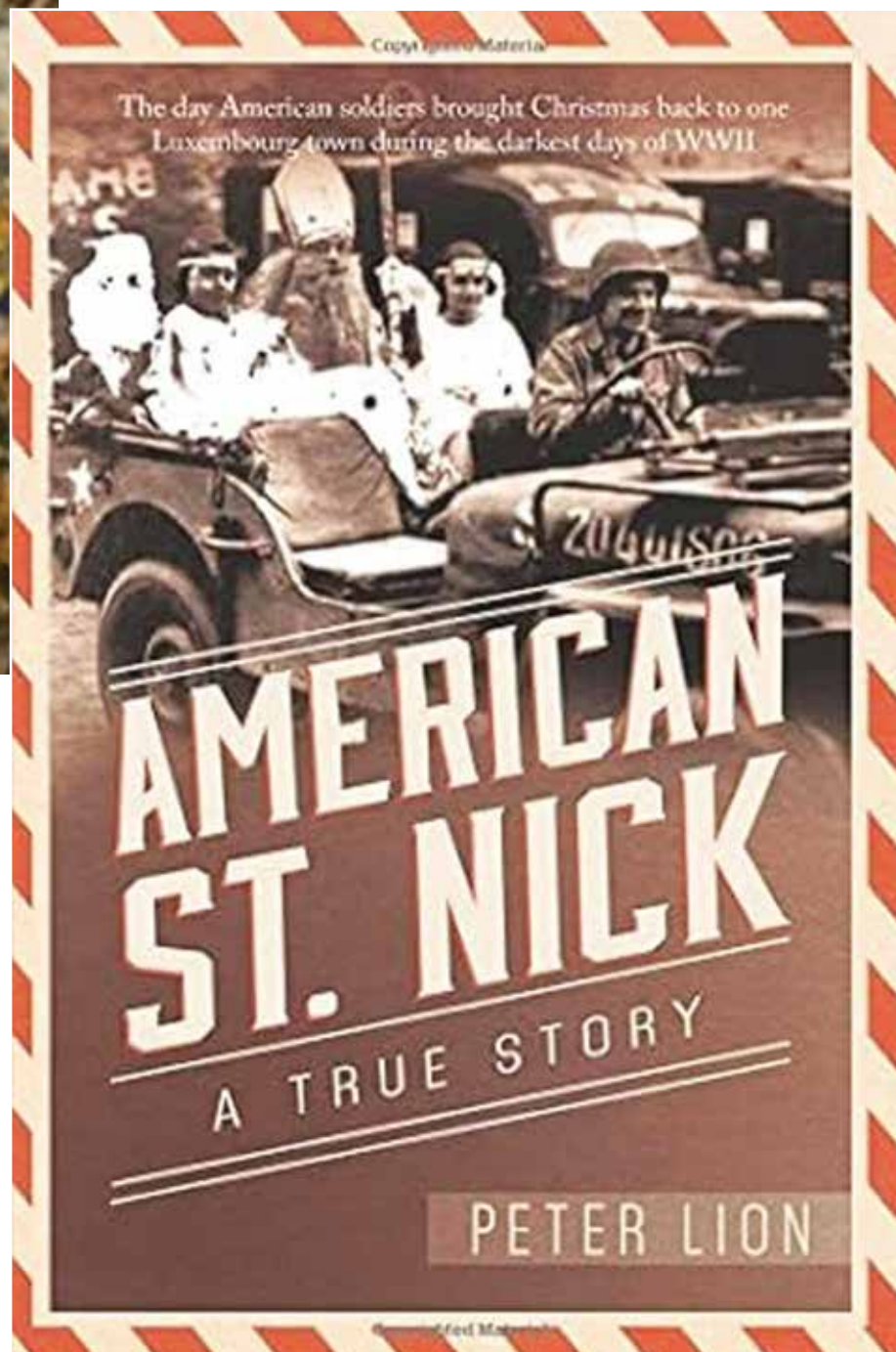


be grateful to the American soldiers and their bravest and most valiant nation, who gave their blood so that we could live in a free Europe.”-Father Victor Wolff-1977 (American St. Nick, frontispiece)

In November 2014, seventy years after portraying St. Nicholas for the children, Richard returned at the age of 92 to Wiltz for his sixth and last visit. He attended the unveiling of the St. Nicholas statue carved from wood from the Ardennes Forest. At the ceremony, Helen Patton, granddaughter of General George Patton stated about Harry Stutz, and Richard Brookins: “My German’s gotten better. Brookins might mean “bridge,” (brücke) and the word, “stütz,” (unterstützung) means to support, and I think that the bridge and support have found each other in this museum, with a statue outside as it should be for Richard and behind the scenes a little bronze that Harry left behind for the museum. ... It’s just a beautiful marriage of pushing through, another kind of bulge, maybe...” (“American Saint Nicolas (Richard

Soldier Santa..

Continued next page...



American St. Nick book cover.

Soldier Santa..

Continued from page 21

Brookins) in Wiltz, Luxembourg November 29, 2014” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hW3nqpu4SE>)

David Brookins, Richard’s son, remarked: “This is more than a Christmas party to the people there. This is their liberation... The occupation and annexation, the brutality, the executions, it’s all so deeply ingrained in them. And the counterpoint is the Americans coming from so far away, fighting such an incredible war for their liberty and not asking anything from them. And on top of that, the soldiers who were a long way from home and struggling with their own problems took time to give the kids a party.”

(“American Saint Nicolas (Richard Brookins) in Wiltz, Luxembourg November 29, 2014” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hW3nqpu4SE>)

In December 2024, during the town’s annual Christmas Festival, the city of Wiltz celebrated the 80th anniversary of that magical day on Dec. 5, 1944, when Stutz’s Soldier Santa, Richard Brookins, entered the courtyard of the Wiltz Castle in his four-wheeled ‘sleigh’ in the spirit of St. Nicholas to the delight of its children of all ages.


Barb Smith @ ussfd82@gmail.com




St. Nicholas’ two angels


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U.S. Air Force photo

Unserviceable uniforms are tossed into a burn pit to keep them from being used by the enemy. Burn pits were extensively used in Iraq and Afghanistan but may have posed health hazards to service members exposed to toxic smoke.

Are Burn Pits the Next Agent Orange in Treating the Invisible Wounds of War? Help Tell the Story

By Brian Albrecht

With the fall of Afghanistan in August, scenes of a desperate American evacuation from Kabul airport after nearly 20 years of combat and 2,400 U.S. deaths evoked memories of a similar withdrawal from Vietnam 46 years ago, ending another long conflict that cost 54,000 lives.

Among the many parallels of those wars is a sense of déjà-vu that lingers in the invisible wounds caused by use of the defoliant Agent Orange in Vietnam, and the possible effects of

burn pits used to incinerate waste during the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During the war in Vietnam, from 1961-1971, a host of toxic chemical herbicides were applied to more than 4.5 million acres of countryside in that nation (plus Laos and Cambodia) to deprive the enemy of forest cover and food crops. Agent Orange, named for the color of labels on 50-gallon storage drums, represented the bulk of the 20 million gallons of herbicide applied.

In the process, an estimated 2.4 million veterans (and reportedly 4 million Vietnamese civilians) were potentially exposed to the poisonous effects of dioxin in Agent Orange.

After the war, veterans were stymied in submitting disability claims to the U.S. Veterans Affairs Department for diseases they believed were caused by Agent Orange exposure. The VA argued that there was insufficient scientific evidence to link the two.



It took 20 years of court battles, plus intensive lobbying by veterans and service groups, before the Agent Orange Act of 1991 established that certain diseases would be treated as the result of wartime service. Today, some 14 health conditions among Vietnam veterans including Hodgkin's and Parkinson's disease, leukemia, ischemic heart disease, prostate and respiratory cancers qualify for VA disability compensation.

Veterans advocates say a similar battle is now being waged on behalf of veterans exposed to burn pits during the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Open-air burn pits, typically using jet fuel as an accelerant, disposed of medical and human waste, chemicals, munitions, petroleum, plastics, electronics and more. The resulting smoke carried a mixture of toxic dioxins (including the same contained in Agent Orange) and pollutants.

Some estimates say that upwards of 3.5 million service members could have been exposed to burn pits. At its peak usage in Afghanistan, burn pits were disposing of 400 tons of waste each day.

Reports of respiratory problems allegedly caused by burn pits surfaced among active duty troops in 2009, and later among veterans making VA disability claims for health conditions they blamed on burn pit exposure.

The Rhode Island law firm of Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick Ltd. (CCK), which has represented more than 10,000 vets in legal actions, said 16 commonly reported health conditions blamed on burn pit exposure include prostate, lung and respiratory cancers, hypertension, COPD, asthma and multiple myeloma.

President Joe Biden has speculated that his son Beau's deployment to Joint Base Balad in Iraq, where a 10-acre burn pit torched 147 tons of waste daily, may have contributed to his fatal brain cancer.

But again, the VA has cited insufficient scientific evidence showing a link between burn pits and disease. The VA reported that from 2007-2020, 12,582 veterans had claimed conditions related to burn pit exposure, but only 2,828 of those claims were granted service connection for conditions specifically related to burn pits; a rejection rate of 78 percent of all burn pit claims.

However, the VA has embarked on a campaign of research and actions including creation of the Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits Center of Excellence in 2019, and the Airborne Hazards and Open Pit Registry in 2014.

The registry collects data from veterans regarding potential burn pit exposure, and

so far 224,226 veterans and service members have registered (4,879 from Ohio). Some 91 percent report being exposed to burn pits, and 32 percent said they saw a health care provider during deployment from respiratory symptoms due to poor air quality.

Additionally there are several bills pending in Congress regarding efforts to establish varying degrees of a "presumptive" connection between certain diseases and burn pit exposure for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

CCK noted that several members of Congress have expressed a desire to keep burn pits from becoming "the Agent Orange of this generation of soldiers."

As U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) once stated, "After the Vietnam War, it took the U.S. government years to recognize that there was a

link between Agent Orange and its devastating health effects on our soldiers.

"With an increasing number of service members returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan citing illnesses, we can't make that same tragic mistake again by failing to identify the devastating health effects associated with burn pits."

CCK reports that the outlook for Congressional action on burn pit bills looks promising.

The effort has won the support of national commentator/humorist Jon Stewart, who once remarked, "I would challenge any congressperson who says, 'Well, we're going to wait for the science to be settled,' to dig a hundred-yard pit in the middle of town where your constituents live, and burn everything in that town with jet fuel."



U.S. Army photo

A helicopter disperses defoliant during the war in Vietnam, harming not only the environment but potentially service members and civilians.

****This article is a reprint of the still relevant wounds of war, from the November/December edition of the DD214 Chronicle, written by Mr. Brian Albrecht.*

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Veteran Tribute

Cleveland Police Foundation has established a special fund to honor Bill Denihan the long-time government administrator, community activist, and veteran who passed on in June. Bill was an avid painter in retirement and donated many of his artistic creations of Cleveland scenes to raise money for charity. Please consider donating to the "Denihan Community Art Fund" to help underwrite local veteran artists. Thank you.

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OHIO VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK

Mickey Sikora

I signed up for this trip on a lark
We visited the "Ohio Veterans Memorial Park."
When we arrived, I couldn't believe my eyes
Everywhere I looked was a new surprise.
So many things to see
Some brought back a long-lost memory.
I talked with Russ, a caretaker
He eagerly explained some of the unique features there.
Even though he was never in the service
His passion and knowledge showed, preserving all of this.
He has such respect for all Veterans
After meeting him, we couldn't help being friends.
He showed me things I would have never known
If I hadn't been shown.
A Gold Star Mother staring at a particular name
Her daughter "Sharon A. Lane."

Others have felt her presence there
That experience was something rare.
I saw things I haven't seen for half a century
It brought back another wartime memory.
Some were good, some were bad
They were all memories that I had.
So many were the sights to see
I will be back most definitely.
With my daughters I will share
All of the things I saw there.
I will leave a little of myself there
Some of my poems I will gladly share.
The grounds fill you with a sense of awe
Amazed by all the sights you saw.
This truly a hidden gem
And should be seen by all Ohio Veterans.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mickey Sikora was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. He attended St. Ignatius Grade School and St. Edward High School. He also attended Cuyahoga Community College and Cleveland State University.

He has been a Cleveland Police Officer for over 41 years. He is also a Vietnam veteran.

The author started writing his poetry by hand in a spiral notebook. A little later, he typed up his poems and pasted them into a blank ledger book. From there, he progressed to a removable plastic finger binding. Once again, he retyped his poems on the pages and then rebound the book. Then came the age of computers, and once again, he transcribed all his work onto a computer, also keeping a floppy disk backup. He has now progressed to portable flash drives.

He started this project on December 20, 1963, when he was a junior in high school. He wrote occasionally, and after 20 years, he found that he had accumulated about 90 pages of work. During those 20 years, he attended high school and college, became a Police Officer, was drafted into the Army, and served in Vietnam. Even while overseas, he continued to write, keeping all his work in a pocket notebook. As you read through this work, you will get a glimpse of the way Mickey looks at the world as he passes through each phase of his life.

He has always enjoyed writing and still does. His poems are about people, places, things, occurrences, good times as well as bad, the mundane and the inane. There is no subject that he won't write about. He has told people who have read his writings that if they ever need something written for any occasion or person, just ask, and he will oblige them. Just give him an idea or a name, and in no time at all, he will give you something that you'll be happy with. People have said he has a knack for getting it right.

Thank you so much. I hope you enjoy reading my poetry as much as I did writing it.



Medina County Veterans's Service Office

We're New...Come See Us!



Medina County Veterans Service Office
 210 Northland Dr.
 Medina, Ohio 44256
veterans@medinacountyveterans.org
www.medinacountyveterans.org
 (330) 722-9368

Our Pledge

When you come into the Medina County Veterans Service Office you will be assisted by one of our knowledgeable associates. The people that work in the Medina County Veterans Service Office have a compassionate understanding of the problems which confront veterans, widows, widowers, and their families.

Sincerely,
 Veterans Service Office Staff



We provide two basic services:

1. Temporary emergency financial aid and assistance to eligible veterans and family members who have demonstrated a need as set forth by the Commission.
2. Assist veterans, family members and survivors when applying to the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for benefits.

Our assistance includes but is not limited to:

Financial Assistance:

- Rent and mortgage payments
- Utilities: Gas, Electric and Water
- Food and personal Hygiene items
- Certain Medical
- Dental Program for eligible Veterans
- Transportation to and from VA Medical Centers in Cleveland, Parma and Akron.
- Grave markers and flags
- Notary Public & DD 214 Certification for Veterans & Families

- Free public transit on the MCPT in Medina County
- County Veterans ID card

Service Assistance:

- Preparation of forms and paperwork
- Documentation of claims and pertinent data
- Proper submission of claims and prosecution of appeals to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Submission for awards records, decorations and medals

Our services are FREE of charge!

On November 13th, the Medina County Veterans Service Office officially welcomed everyone to our newly renovated and expanded home at 210 Northland Dr. in Medina, Ohio. If you haven't been by yet to see the new facility stop in and say hello and pick a new 25 calendar.

Our hours are: Monday - Wednesday - Thursday - Friday 8:00AM - 4:00PM - Tuesday 10:00AM - 4:00PM (Closed Noon - 1:00 PM for Lunch)

