O-Dark-Thirty

Summer 2018

O-Dark-Thirty

A Literary Journal

Summer 2018
Volume 6 Number 4

On the cover: *Prisoners,*
watercolor on paper,
by Steve Mumford

Steve Mumford, born in 1960, got his
BFA from the Boston Museum School/Tufts in 1986,
and an MFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1994.
His work has been shown professionally in New York City
since 1996, and in galleries and institutions throughout
the US and Europe, including the Frist Center for the Visual Arts,
the Meadows Museum, and Marella Arte Contemporanea in Milan.

His drawings have been published
in numerous portfolios in *Harpers Magazine,*
as well as in *Baghdad Journal* (Drawn & Quarterly Press).

Steve made drawing trips to Iraq and Afghanistan
during the Global War on Terrorism,
in 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2011.
He was sometimes embedded, sometimes independent,
always attempting to draw from life.

His maternal grandfather served in the German army
in both world wars.
Steve teaches at the New York Academy and Brooklyn College.
He lives with his wife, the painter Inka Essenhigh, and their son
in New York City.

Table of Contents

Non-fiction

The Rules Do Not Apply *David Chrisinger* 11

Two Wrongs *Danielle Coral* 23

Fiction

Home Front *Catherine Bell* 29

Statement by 2nd Lt. Robert E. Amundson *David Chrisinger* 47

No Bold Old Pilots *Ellen Kazimer* 57

No Idle Threat *Daryl McGrath* 71

To Be Honest *Michael Nappi* 75

An Exchange of Prisoners *Frank Richards* 81

Poetry

Dive Dive *Lt. Joseph Couillard* 99

Bonfires *Doug D'Elia* 101

4 years and a wakeup *Jeremy Graham* 103

Pen to Paper *Ryan Kovacs* 105

Gone *Curtis Last* 107

Battle Buddy *Jonathan Tennis* 109

Dhow Close Astern *Peter Vanderberg* 111

Interview

A Conversation with Sally Mott Freeman *Jim Mathews* 115

ISSN: 2325-3002 (Print)
ISSN: 2325-3010 (Online)

Editor's Note

As we embark on the release of this particular issue of *O-Dark-Thirty,* built as it is around the theme of "Prisoners," we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge the recent passing of one of America's most recognizable former POWs, the late Senator John McCain. He once discussed his experiences in solitary confinement—two of his 5½ brutal years in captivity—and the vital need to occupy his mind in creative ways. "I used to write entire books and plays in my mind," he said. "During one period . . . I memorized the names of all 335 of the men who were then prisoners of war in North Vietnam. I can still remember them. Since I've been back, it's very hard for me to remember simple things, like the name of someone I've just met."

It is long-established military tradition to remember the past, especially with respect to those who suffered, and what better way than through story? Rudyard Kipling once remarked that if history were told through story, no one would ever forget. And that's exactly why this year's theme is so apt. The literary arts undoubtedly provide the ideal platform for both the literal and metaphorical application of the idea of being a "prisoner."

This application is evident in the real-life horror of the POW "Hell Ships" during World War II in the Pacific—described poignantly by Sally Mott Freeman in her acclaimed family memoir, *The Jersey Brothers.* It is equally evident in one of our fiction pieces, "Home Front," by way of the intense desperation of a newlywed mother who feels constantly

guarded by family members while waiting for her husband to return from war and set her free. Perhaps nothing captures the image of imprisonment more than our cover art by Steve Mumford, who shows us a literal image of prisoners while, in its drab brushstrokes, simultaneously captures something that can only exist deep within the human spirit—something that is both broken and yet unbroken.

We hope that these and other offerings in this issue serve as a tribute to the art of writing as much as they do the hope that beats in the heart of every prisoner—no matter the circumstances or setting, whether literal or figurative. And, as always, we hope the work speaks to you—and stays with you—as it did to us.

The Editors

Non-fiction.

The Rules Do Not Apply

By David Chrisinger

I have a confession to make. I want to lie to you. For years, I've wanted to lie to anyone who was willing to listen. I wanted to tell a story, a fabrication, about my grandfather, my father's father. I wanted to tell you how he couldn't wait to turn eighteen, how he signed on Uncle Sam's dotted line in a fit of wholesome, patriotic fervor. I wanted to tell you he was a spirited and motivated all-American boy who was highly trained and exceedingly principled, who only ever did what he had to do to survive, who never took pleasure in the pain and suffering of others, who was a soft-hearted sucker for needy kids, who wanted nothing more than to come home, who raised a family and built a business and took his rightful place among the greatest generation this nation has ever known.

None of that is true. He never wanted to fight. Some think that's why he knocked up my grandmother a couple of weeks before Thanksgiving in 1943. They were both juniors in high school that year. My grandfather played for the conference-champion Taylor High School basketball team. My grandmother excelled in math and thought of becoming a bookkeeper. Neither one of them ended up receiving their

diplomas. Perhaps my grandfather thought the draft board wouldn't take a man with a baby, a man from one of the wealthiest families in town, a family that had already lost one of its own to a German bullet in North Africa. They took him anyway. By the time his daughter, Charlene, was born in the late summer of 1944, he was training for war. And by his nineteenth birthday, he found himself on the island of Okinawa, a mere 340 miles southwest of the mainland of Japan, fighting in the longest and deadliest battle of the Pacific Theater. Those who knew my grandfather before he left for the war have told me that when he returned from Okinawa in the early fall of 1946, he wasn't bolted together the same way he once had been, which is nothing more than a Midwestern-nice way to say whatever he'd done or had done to him over there had transformed him into an irredeemable and embarrassing drunk, a cruel and abusive husband, and a miserable father.

Here's some more truth: I don't know all the details of what my grandfather experienced during the battle of Okinawa. He didn't like to talk about his war, and he died before I could work up the courage to ask him about it. For decades after he came home, the details of what he experienced trickled out in fragments, here and there, leaving in their wake only tension and puzzlement, shame and confusion. What we do know is that he experienced traumas and rude awakenings—and being physically wounded wasn't one of them. His trauma came from other things. Chief among them was the way he and the others in his platoon had treated Japanese prisoners at the tail end of the fighting. His rude awakening was an awakening to the fact that war required an eroding of the veneer of civilization, that war made a savage of him and his friends, that to survive he would need to exist within an environment totally incomprehensible to anyone back home in Wisconsin.

There was a story he told my father once, years and years ago, about a prisoner of war. The first time my father relayed this story to

me, he said it was a young Japanese soldier who had surrendered late in the battle. The second time he told me the story, it was a young Okinawan boy, a conscript, who had been captured after trying to throw a grenade. Maybe it doesn't matter all that much that the man was Japanese or Okinawan, or whether he surrendered peacefully or was captured. The point of the story was that my grandfather had, according to his version of events, been too "soft" with this prisoner. The way he told it, he felt bad for the guy. He was a scared kid, just like he was. Maybe that realization caused him to drop his guard. Maybe he wasn't as menacing or threatening as he needed to be. Whatever it was, my grandfather's platoon leader, tense-faced and nerve-racked, chewed his ass in front of everyone, even threatening to shoot my grandfather if he didn't start treating the enemy like the treacherous bastards they were.

In March of 1943, my grandfather was finishing up his junior year of high school and mentally preparing himself to be a father. He and his soon-to-be wife, Gladys, grew up in a small farming village along the Trempealeau River in rural Wisconsin. Aside from the high school's conference-champion basketball team clawing for a state tournament berth, the only thing folks seemed to be talking about was the war and whether it would end before their kids were called to fight in it. My great-grandmother, Maud, had lost her brother Bob to a German sniper in Northern Africa, and she knew that unless the war ended quickly, it would probably also take her son. She ruminated aloud daily to my great-grandfather Harry that the jobs in the rear were already filled and that if her son was taken too, he'd be shipped straight to the front lines. Her son was expendable, and she knew it.

She prayed too that *if* he were eventually drafted, he'd be sent to Europe. She had read what the papers had said about the Americans in Bataan. She knew that thousands of our boys had been forced to

march dozens of miles under a blazing sun without food or water. She knew too what President Roosevelt had said about the American flyers who had been shot down and captured after the Doolittle raid over Japan. She heard him say on the scratchy radio that stood in the corner of the living room that our boys had been condemned to death. Weren't there rules against executing prisoners of war? There were lots of other news reports she could rattle off in her anxious, depressive way about the Japanese shooting bailed out pilots full of holes as they parachuted from flaming aircraft, the Japanese transporting their prisoners in densely packed "hell ships," and how the Japanese routinely beat their prisoners and burned or buried them alive, how they performed medical experiments on them, how they practiced their bayonet techniques on tied-up prisoners, how they even crucified some of them.

Then she read the excerpts from the diary of a Japanese soldier who had been captured during the fighting in New Guinea. In it, the soldier chronicled the day a captured American flier had been beheaded by a Lieutenant Komai in front of an assembled company of Japanese infantrymen. The translation ran in all the papers: "We were assembled to witness the execution," the soldier had written. "The prisoner was given a drink of water outside the guard house. The chief surgeon, Lieutenant Komai and a platoon commander bearing a sword came from the officers' mess.

"The time has come," he continued. "The prisoner of war totters forward with his arms tied. His hair is cut close. I feel he suspects what is afoot, but he is more composed than I thought he would be.

"At the execution ground Lieutenant Komai faces the prisoner and said: 'You are to die. I am going to kill you with this Japanese sword, according to the Samurai code.' The commander's face is stern. Now the time has come. The prisoner is made to sit on the edge of a water-filled bomb crater. The precaution is taken to surround him with guards.

"When I put myself in his place the hate engendered by this daily bombing yields to ordinary feelings. The Tai commander draws his favorite sword, the famous 'Osamune.' The sight of the glittering blade sends cold shivers down the spine. First he touches the prisoner's neck lightly with sword. Then he raises it overhead. His arm muscles bulge. Prisoner closes his eyes for a second and at once the sword sweeps down.

Swish—it sounds at first like noise of cutting, but is actually made by blood spurting from arteries as the body falls forward. Everybody steps forward as head rolls on the ground.

Within a couple of days of the American flier being decapitated by Lieutenant Komai, a Japanese propaganda broadcast expressed confused dismay at the American military's hypocritical stance on international law in matters of aerial warfare that forbade intentionally bombing civilian targets. The broadcast also pledged that any flier who participated in future raids on Japanese territory could count on receiving a "special pass to hell" that was "strictly a one-way ticket."

Just over a year later, on May 29, 1944, my grandfather turned eighteen years old. Three months later, on August 29, he was inducted into the US Army at Fort Sheridan in Illinois, just north of Chicago. On St. Patrick's Day the next year, my grandfather boarded a battered troop ship in San Francisco bound for the Pacific theater of operations, where he was assigned to Company A of the 193rd Tank Battalion. His company was nearly wiped out during a frontal assault on a ridge known as Kakazu on April 19, and on May 1, his battalion had its remaining tanks taken away and distributed to other, better performing battalions on the island.

From that point until the end of the summer, his company was tasked with completing the often forgotten final phase of the battle—the mopping up of whatever Japanese resistance remained in the central lowlands of the island. On May 19, according to his battalion's oper-

ations report, my grandfather's company, along with Company B and a reconnaissance platoon from the headquarters company, were tasked with "sealing caves" and "cleaning out of enemy civilians and military personnel." The captain who typed up the report claims there were no military personnel encountered but that thirteen "enemy civilians were apprehended and turned over to military authorities, and a total of forty-one caves were closed in the area."

On June 5, a motor patrol from my grandfather's company picked up three civilians and turned them over to military policemen at Camp Hiza. Four days later, a patrol from the same company was sent to the towns of Chibana and Nishibaru to investigate a report of unauthorized civilians "operating" in that area. Several unoccupied caves were encountered and sealed but no civilians were located. Then on June 21, a patrol from Company A was sent to sweep a draw and encountered two enemy soldiers. Both were killed. There were no American casualties reported. Four days later, after a camp guard killed two enemy soldiers lurking near the civilian camp at Koza, a large patrol from my grandfather's battalion swept the area around the camp and apprehended fifteen young Okinawan men who were then handed over to military policemen at Camp Koza.

In the years I've spent researching my grandfather's story, I've come across very few histories of the battle that even begin to explain what it was like to engage in such a tough, methodical grind to wipe out the last remaining pockets of Japanese soldiers-turned-guerillas. The pitched and bitter skirmishes waged in countless caves and draws—punctuated by encounters with frightened and emaciated noncombatants—did not make the front pages back home. It makes sense; no war correspondents seemed to have tagged along for the grisly ride. Those newspaper editors and the folks back home had already turned their attention to the next battle, the invasion of the mainland of Japan. The mud-smirched, stubbly soldier killed here or there clearing a cave on some island few could find on a map wasn't nearly as newsworthy as

the 1,656 Marines who died fighting for Sugar Loaf Hill or the nearly half a million GIs who were expected to become casualties when they landed on Kyūshū, the southernmost Japanese island. Another thing that didn't make the news and apparently wasn't worth mentioning in the popular histories were the barbed-wire "relocation camps" our boys built to house the thousands of "enemy civilians" who called Okinawa home.

On the night of March 9th, 1945, about a month before the beginning of the battle of Okinawa, 334 American aircraft bombed Tokyo with incendiary bombs, destroying sixteen square miles of the capital city. Estimates vary, but most agree that between 80,000 and 100,000 civilians were killed in the raid. "Scorched and boiled and baked to death," was how the mastermind of the raid, Major General Curtis LeMay, later put it. By the time Japan surrendered six months later, sixty-six Japanese cities, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, had been raided. Close to 400,000 civilians lost their lives. In a confidential memorandum from June 1945, one of General Douglas MacArthur's closest aides, Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, described the American raids against Japan as "one of the most ruthless and barbaric killings of non-combatants in all history."

In an interview with famed oral historian Studs Terkel years after the war ended, a bombardier named John Ciardi[1] said that, "We were in the terrible business of burning out Japanese towns. That meant women and old people, children. One part of me—a surviving, savage voice—says, I'm sorry we left any of them living. I wish we'd finished them all." Almost without pause, he continues, "I have some of my strike photos at home. Tokyo looked like one leveled bed of ash . . . Some of the people jumped into rivers to get away from these fire storms. They were packed in so tight to get away from the fire, they suffocated.

[1] Editors' note: John Ciardi became well known as a teacher, poet, etymologist, and a highly acclaimed translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy.*

They were so close together, they couldn't fall over. It must have been horrible."

After the war ended, the Allies tried Tojo as a war criminal, accusing him of promoting indiscriminate destruction of "men, women and children alike." He was executed two days before Christmas in 1948. The American lawyers who tried Japan's leaders did so with little sense of irony. To the victors go the spoils. Japan had merely reaped what it had sown.

Not long before my grandfather died, his mother gave him a shoebox full of letters he had sent home during the war. He must have destroyed them or thrown them out, because after he died in August 2000, my father searched all over his one-bedroom shack and found no trace of them. The only military artifacts that remained were a few faded ribbons and a Good Conduct Medal, a wool uniform top, and a dozen or so ochre-tinged photographs. There's one that shows him wearing a garrison cap cocked to the side. He's rubbing his dimpled chin with his left hand. He looks happy, like he had spent the day with good friends and hadn't a care in the world. There are a few of him standing on top of a tank, but those look like they were taken during training maneuvers somewhere. In one, the tank doesn't even have a barrel. A black sheet covers the hole where a barrel would normally extend out from the turret. Then there are a couple of him with a buddy. I don't know his name, though my father thinks he remembers hearing some story about another young man from Taylor who was part of the occupation force there who ran into my grandfather after the battle ended. His buddy is wearing a suspiciously clean tan service uniform that looks totally out of place. My grandfather, by contrast, is dirt-smudged and sweaty looking, wearing dark green pants tucked into his boots and a white sleeveless shirt. His hair is longer than in the other pictures and waves across his forehead like mine

does now. In three other photographs, hair still longer and wavy, he's wearing a dark green top with his dark green pants. The sleeves on his shirt are rolled above his elbows. In one, he squats in front of a clay-tiled structure. In the second, he stands with his hands on his hips in front of a thatch-roofed building, and in the third, he's lounging on what appear to be unexploded ordnance as tall as a chair. He looks more like a tourist than an occupying soldier. I don't know who took them.

There are other photographs, too, but they're harder to look at for any length of time. One shows a mass grave of dead bodies from a distance. Another is a close-up of a fallen Japanese soldier. He's lying on his back with his eyes closed. He wears a peaceful, glad smile. His hands rest near his head as if moments before he'd been standing with his arms raised, silently waiting for death. It looked as though whatever thoughts had passed through his mind when the death messenger laid him low were pleasant enough. There are also two photographs of Japanese soldiers just after they surrendered. The last two show a prisoner of war camp. The first is of the camp's main gate. About fifteen young Japanese men in baggy and mud-slicked uniforms are marching through it, away from the photographer. None of their faces are visible. The other photograph shows seventy-five or so docile and pathetic looking Japanese and Okinawan men, most stripped down to loincloths, standing nuts to butts behind razor wire as tall as a man. An American military policeman with a Thompson submachine gun stands guard in the foreground.

I wonder if my great-grandmother read Edgar L. Jones' *Atlantic Monthly* essay, which was published after the war had ended but before my grandfather returned from the Pacific. "What kind of a war do civilians suppose we fought, anyway?" he asked. Jones was a former ambulance driver, merchant seaman, Army historian, and war corres-

pondent in the Pacific, and he noted that American soldiers and Marines in both Europe and the Pacific "shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers. We topped off our saturation bombing and burning of enemy civilians by dropping atomic bombs on two nearly defenseless cities, thereby setting an all-time record for instantaneous mass slaughter."

"As victors," he continued, "we are privileged to try our defeated opponents for their crimes against humanity; but we should be realistic enough to appreciate that if we were on trial for breaking international laws, we should be found guilty on a dozen counts. We fought a dishonorable war, because morality had a low priority in battle. The tougher the fighting, the less room for decency; and in Pacific contests we saw mankind reach the blackest depths of bestiality."

"Not every American soldier," Jones concluded, "or even one per cent of our troops, deliberately committed unwarranted atrocities, and the same might be said for the Germans and Japanese. The exigencies of war necessitated many so-called crimes, and the bulk of the rest could be blamed on the mental distortion which war produced. But we publicized every inhuman act of our opponents and censored any recognition of our own moral frailty in moments of desperation."

The stories we tell ourselves sometimes feel to me like new clothes we need to try on in the fitting room before taking them home. Some don't fit as well as we'd hoped. Others are outrageous and can't be pulled off. We put them on, stare into the wall of mirrors, and try to imagine ourselves in another place at another time. If they don't quite fit or don't complement our figures all that well, we can take them off and try on some other look, some other style. There's a beauty in the search. Sometimes I try to picture my grandfather, decades

before alcoholism cut his life shorter than it had to be. I see him bellied up to the bar, his defenses of lies built to fit his needs, lies based on the national propaganda that had been distilled and spoon-fed to the American people. He's pretending, and the other men are, too. They're all sporting clothes that fit well enough for now. It's the only thing that affords them any self-respect. For if they were honest, if they were to rip open the buttons on their shirts and reveal their warts, they'd have to admit that they had once seen something animal within themselves that was terrifying and life changing.

I don't know what story to tell about my grandfather. It feels lazy to say he never said much about the war. It feels deceptive and inappropriate to speculate. I suppose I need to make peace with the fact that I'll never know the full truth. Or I can lie. I'm not sure yet which fits best.

David Chrisinger is the grandson of a WWII combat veteran and the son of a Vietnam-era Army veteran. He currently serves as the Director of Writing Seminars for The War Horse, *the only nonprofit newsroom dedicated exclusively to covering the U.S. military and all matters related to post-9/11 veterans. From 2014-2017, David taught a semester-long writing seminar for student veterans at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and in the spring of 2016, he edited a collection of his students' essays,* SEE ME FOR WHO I AM. *He recently finished writing the first draft of a memoir about his search to uncover the truth of his grandfather's experiences during the battle of Okinawa.*

Two Wrongs

By Danielle Coral

"You're breaking my heart," I say and reach over to hug him. I think I smudge a tear off his face. We are several six-packs in, though, so it's hazy.

He laughs uncomfortably. He's not a hugger. I sit back down, but now beside him instead of across. We are both veterans—him Army, me Air Force. We've been out for a while and I've known him for less than a year. We both work with a nonprofit, a side job for him, he is always quick to point out. This is one of the first times we are hanging out outside of work.

I don't know how we got on the topic of the military. I guess that subject always makes its way into life when you are a veteran, particularly when you are with another veteran. Earlier he had asked me if I thought we had made a difference in Iraq.

I had sat quietly for a minute. "No."

"In Afghanistan?"

Another pause, but shorter. "No."

I don't know if that's what prompted the tearsl.,. later. Me saying everything that we'd done was for shit. I doubt it. They came from somewhere else, someplace deeper than what I thought about the wars. I was just confirming what he already knows.

I wish I could remember the whole thing more clearly although I remember the gist—the most important part. He had said that he thought he was doing what he was doing to make up for what he had done, while in the Army. Then he teared up.

He now owns a business that builds ecologically responsible urban landscapes and designs. Creating instead of destroying.

"I didn't know you felt this way," I say.

"Yeah, well, if you hold things deep inside."

I lean in. "You know it's not your fault. Us officers gave the orders, so blame us," I kid, as most enlisted would jump on the opportunity to knock officers.

He smiles, a little.

I wish I could assure him that what he did wasn't wrong, at that time. I really do want him to blame us officers, those who told him what to do. But I don't say this because I'm hesitant to talk about my own wrong that I carry. Instead I say, "Yeah, sometimes I feel cursed by moving around all the time. At least you found what you want to do."

Since leaving the military in 2006 I had moved eleven times, including a stint in Australia, trips to Mexico, rambles around Arizona, and a year in Portland, Oregon. I had also changed career interests multiple times. I had received a master's degree in International Diplomacy and certifications in holistic nutrition, sustainable food systems, and creative writing. I had worked and quit countless jobs. I had also quit relationships as soon as long-term commitment was involved.

"You know," my friend continues, "I woke up in the middle of the night afraid that they would call me back. Every day for a year."

I hadn't had nightmares for a year, but I had restlessness. Repeating thoughts—when would I find something that ever mattered to me again like the job I did in the military? Am I cursed to be purposeless because of the things I did or asked others to do—and the high I felt from it?

I hate that my friend blames himself. And I hate that I wander. And I hate that even though I blame the military for doing this to us, at times, I feel like going back. Because despite the wars I hadn't agreed with and the deployment orders I had begrudgingly signed and the endless hours of sitting in front of a computer inside a windowless vault, I still miss the purpose I had. It's like a prison I hate and, yet, I still walk around the building, tempted to reenter.

The evening air is cool since the brutish summer in Phoenix hasn't started yet. We finish the last Bud Light, piss-water in a bottle. He gets up to head to his truck. I shouldn't let him drive but I also know there is no point in asking him to stay. He's going to do what he wants.

As we walk to his car, I lock my arm into his and then move to hold his hand, briefly. When we reach his car I hug him, trying to pull him into it, into me.

"I feel bad leaving you like this," I say.

"Don't worry. I'm not gonna go home and do something stupid," he assures me with a slight smile.

When he opens his truck door I say, "Smells like air freshener." I had noticed it before when we grabbed beers but now I comment on it. I am trying to keep him longer but not because I'm worried about him doing something stupid. I don't want him to leave because I want to say or do something that means something to him.

I tell him I am going to hug him again even if he doesn't want it. "You know I love you to death," I say and kiss his cheek. I don't know if I should have done that but I don't fucking care. Maybe he won't remember tomorrow, anyways.

"If you ever wanna talk," I offer, "I'm here." I doubt he will take me up on it. "Text me when you get home." He assures me he will. I want to ask him if he is, really, okay but that seems like the stupidest thing to ask when someone is visibly not.

As he climbs into his truck, he jokes, "I'm never drinking with you again." And I don't know if he ever will.

Danielle Corral served four years as an intelligence officer in the US Air Force from 2002-2006 in England and South Korea. She is forever moving around while working towards completing her first memoir. She currently moves between Arizona and Montana.

Fiction.

Home Front

By Catherine Bell

The baby chattered in the room across the hall. Marie dreamed still. Of Sam, of course. Sam. She slid her foot across the sheet, only to come to the edge of the sad little single bed. The dog's paws clicked on the morning floor. The baby fussed, and the milk began to come. Only six-thirty. Damn. Marie pressed on her nipples to make it stop.

The dog nosed, rooted at her.

"Lie down, Sasha. It isn't time. We must obey the schedule."

The baby sang, a ripple of urgency. She fussed, testing whether to cry. Only six-forty. Damn. In the photograph on the dresser, Sam's crisp uniform and soldierly smile held good, despite the danger he was in somewhere in northern France. The baby wailed. She gasped. She squalled. Marie flung back the sheet, jumped up and threw the window wide. The day was hot already, too hot for Massachusetts, even in August, the cows gathered under the elms, the mountain hovering lavender in haze. *They aren't real tears,* Father would say. *I'm a doctor and I know.* But the baby shuddered in the fierce wind of the cry, falling through blackness and not knowing why.

"While I stand here, perfectly useless," Marie said aloud.

At seven exactly the nurse brought her, fists flailing, banging the breast. She seized the nipple, red with rage, only to drop it, frantic.

"There, Hannah. It's all right."

It was not all right. Her face was tight as a closed fist.

"Such a fuss," the nurse said, full of experience and starch. "We should be happy with our schedule by now." She left the room.

Marie relaxed into the pillow. "Come on. That's my girl."

Still wild and crying, Hannah opened her eyes.

"What do doctors know? Wait till you see your daddy. He'll be so proud of you."

A bit more urging, and she latched on. The milk flowed. Sasha curled on the rug.

Mother had insisted on a nurse. Everyone had nurses, all Marie's college friends. Cathy Queasly had a nurse. Bun Wedgewood had one. "That little wailing thing?" Bun said about her George. "Call me when he's twenty-one." And all the others laughed.

Hannah patted the breast, hand loose and open, real tears in the corners of her eyes.

"Horrid schedule, Hannah. Nasty nurse. Are you my girl? My girl?"

The baby grinned lopsided, let the nipple slide, then sucked it in again.

"Time's up," the nurse said, back too soon.

"Oh please, Miss Dunn, she's just beginning to be happy."

"We're only playing now," the nurse insisted, and took the baby to be weighed.

Marie dressed and made the bed. Through the open door she saw Hannah kicking on the changing table, the nurse catching and kissing her feet. Traitor! Thief! She had let Mother persuade her to move home, with Sam called up and the baby due the next week, but enough was enough. She went down to breakfast hoping she wasn't being ungrateful.

"The weather's cleared in France. Our planes are up," Father said, pushed back from the table in a summer suit. "Red Cross calling for blood." He scowled at Mother over the newspaper. "You're not to give any more, Rebecca."

"All right, dear, I'll be good. Lovely morning, Marie darling." Mother slipped a wedge of cantaloupe into her mouth. "What about the Normandy encirclement, Frank?"

"We've closed the gap. An awful thing. A graveyard."

Molly brought Marie a perfect fried egg, yolk splashed with hot butter.

Father read aloud. "Patton's steel arms are wrapped about Paris. Third Army moving so fast they're using captured maps."

Bravo, Sam!

"Snipers in Rambouillet. Civilians firing on the Nazis on the Champs Elysées."

"How exciting!" Mother cried. The phone rang in the hall and she leapt for it. "Who won the ball game, Frank?"

"Red Sox, six to one. Must they call you at breakfast?"

"Father," Marie began, "I have to ask you . . . "

He was glaring past the paper, out at the mountain. "Boys with faces blown off, knees full of shrapnel, and I'm treating Mattie Prout's piles."

"Can't I feed the baby as soon as she wakes up? After all, women for centuries . . . "

He laughed, a single snort, and tossed down the paper. "They can be awfully manipulative, you know, these little fellas. Next thing you know, she'll want to be picked up all the time."

"I know you feel strongly about the schedule, but I can't bear to hear her cry."

"Wear earplugs. That's what Mother and I do." He stood and buttoned his jacket. "I see Sasha's going into heat. I don't want a lot of strange dogs around the place. Don't let her on the rugs or off the leash."

"Of course not. Who do you think I am?"

"You're my best girl." He kissed her cheek. "You have a job to do. Encourage that man of yours. Let him hear from you. And tell Mother not to expect me for lunch." He swung out the terrace door, letting in the scent of pine and lilies.

Four months, eighteen days, seven hours and a half since the back of Sam's neck had disappeared in the crush of khaki on the train. Thirteen days since his last letter, scribbled as his unit of engineers was thrown into action at Argentan. *Remember we're doing the needful, and don't lose your nerve.* He had never even seen his daughter.

"Limas?" came Mother's voice from the kitchen. "I don't think so, Molly. Green beans with the cold lamb, and Perkins will have corn."

"I thought mashed potato and some of that nice spiced apple jelly."

"That will be lovely."

Marie took her plate out to the kitchen. "I think I'll put the baby in the carriage and walk into town. Do we need anything?"

"You're an angel," said Mother. "If you're going to town, you can pick up the rugs. I'll telephone to be sure they're ready. You'll need the car, of course."

"Perkins took it for the oil change," Molly said. "Lard, Miss Marie, if Morrow has some."

"Then you'd best go after lunch," said Mother. "You do remember the Edwardses are coming?" She pushed through the swinging door into the hall, and Marie followed.

"Not Cousin Felicity."

"Of course, Felicity."

"Mother, why do you invite them? They're so pathetic at this stage of the game, with their absurd pacifism."

"It's a matter of principle for them, as Quakers. Besides, they're family, and they're so reduced, with gas rationed and the Inn deserted. The least we can do is give them a meal."

"Felicity is a puppet."

"Marie, dear, are you quite well? You must be sure to lie down and rest before lunch. Now wherever did I leave that sewing bag?"

Marie had meant to do something. What? The golden meadows sent up waves of heat. She put Sasha on the leash and took her out around the house, settled her in the bathroom, wrote to Sam as always, and then went looking for the baby, but Hannah had been put down to nap already in the carriage under the dusty lilac hedge. Intolerable today, with the Third Army about to liberate Paris, to fill in between flowers on her petit point. After the war, she and Sam wouldn't be able to afford much help, not on an engineer's salary. She must learn to cook. Perhaps Molly could use a hand in the kitchen.

But Molly looked dubious, peeling potatoes into the soapstone sink. "You know the Missus. If she thinks I'm wearing you out, she'll have my guts for garters."

"Have pity, Molly. Must I while away the war reading detective stories?"

"There's the baby, Miss."

"Whose baby is she, though?"

Molly made the potato skins fly like snow. "Dear to goodness, the little love can do without all that fuss. If you ask me, that woman belongs in a hospital. Four ounces this feeding, five the next, writes it all down in a terrible little book. I've had words with her, Miss Marie, as never had words before with a soul of God's in this house, here from your grandmother's time and born and bred civil."

"Oh Molly, I'm so sorry."

"There's worse that can be borne, Miss." Molly stripped the peelings from her arms and fetched a paper bag out of the larder. "Beans for lunch," she said. "Snap the ends and pull the strings. Now get along with you."

Marie bore her prize to the terrace, tasting a welcome breeze off the mountain. She and Sam had picked blueberries on its granite scarps.

Snipers, Sam. Be careful.

Hell of a fight. She could hear him say it, looking up from his captured map, a good pipe in his teeth. *But we'll find Paris.*

Find me, Sam.

I know what part of you I want to find.

On her way back to the kitchen with the beans, Marie found Hannah in the pantry, being fed out of a little glass jar.

"Oh look," Miss Dunn said. "Mama's been busy."

"Hi Hannah. Want a bean?"

The baby grasped the long green thing and aimed it at her mouth.

"Oh no!" cried the nurse. "Icky, spit. No raw vegetables at our age, Mom." She ran a finger around inside the baby's gums.

Marie flushed hot. "Why didn't you bring her for nursing before lunch?"

"She's outgrowing her noon feed, aren't you, Pet. Look how she loves her solid food."

Marie swung through the door, tight-lipped. *Time to get rid of the woman,* Sam would say. She went to check the mail. It hadn't come. It came while she was changing for lunch, and she ran down, buckling her belt, but there was only a letter from her brother. She took it out to Mother on the terrace, who dropped the hose she was squirting around the roses—too fast, as Perkins often told her, to do them any good—and tore open the envelope.

"Oh," she said, "he's been seasick. Poor darling."

"Where is he?"

"He can't say. Somewhere in the Pacific."

"Mother, about Miss Dunn . . . "

"A shrunken head, traded for safety pins. Revolting!"

"Hannah doesn't need a nurse at this point, and it's time I did more."

"Darling, it's so difficult with a baby. We don't want you to feel pressed just yet."

"I'd like to do more, actually."

"But is it wise? You're not terribly strong."

"What do you mean, not strong?"

Mother crumpled the letter into her pocket and started along the terrace, clipping dead heads off the roses. "You're barely twenty. You've just had a baby. Your husband is at war."

"Lots of women's husbands are at war. Lots of them have jobs. The least I could do is take care of my own child."

"Don't think that way. Let us spoil you a little longer. And if our wishes don't count, think of Miss Dunn. It's an income for her." Mother dropped her clippers, scattering roses, and felt through her hair for pins. "I should think you'd be grateful."

"I *am* grateful."

"Then we'll say no more about it. Since I know you want to be useful, would you mind putting the hose away? I must do the flowers before lunch. And remind me to take some roses to Mrs. Prout. She loves them so, and she's poorly."

Marie just had time to wonder why she was picking up these damned little piles of dead flowers before the Edwardses were upon them.

"And what is left of the farm, Rebecca?" inquired Cousin Campbell Edwards, white-haired and portly in a linen suit, on the terrace after lunch.

"A few cows and chickens. And the victory garden, of course."

"When I think of the suppers in the old days," sighed his sister Felicity. "The tennis, the horses."

"Good help is so scarce these days," Mother said. "It's only Molly and Perkins now."

"That's just our difficulty at the Inn," said Cousin Campbell. "If we do find girls, they come in at all hours and even entertain young men."

"Dear, dear," Felicity murmured, adjusting the velvet ribbon around her throat.

"If they can find young men," Mother said, "poor things." She twisted her foot in circles. "Frank is terribly overworked with so many young doctors overseas."

Cousin Campbell shook his head. "This dreadful war."

"So sad," echoed Felicity. And where, Marie, is thy dear husband?"

"In France. Fighting like hell."

"Dear me, I should say so." Felicity's voice dropped to a whisper. "Was he in the landing?"

"Don't be curious, Felicity," said her brother.

"I've heard that many were, and so I wondered." Felicity tugged a little handkerchief out of her sleeve and dabbed her lips with it. "I must say, Campbell, for a Friend thee is quite dictatorial. That is, to me."

"Thy son and now thy son-in-law at war, Rebecca," Cousin Campbell said. "What a trial for thy Christian principles."

Mother's foot jigged and twisted. "I do think Hitler has to be stopped."

"My dear, diplomacy. Mr. Chamberlain . . . "

"But what use is diplomacy," Mother inquired sweetly, "if you aren't prepared to fight?"

A party of dogs came snuffing around the corner of the terrace, lifting their legs on the marigolds. Marie sprang up and stamped until they slunk away.

"My dog's in heat," she explained, wishing she had said, *my bitch*. "Excuse me. I must see to the baby."

"Tell Miss Dunn we'd love to see Hannah," Mother called after her. "And why don't you put off your trip to town, darling? I'm in no hurry for the rugs, and a nap would do both of us good."

Marie found Hannah in her crib, staring wide-eyed at the closed curtains. She picked her up, kissed both cheeks, and tiptoed past Miss Dunn's closed door, though she could hardly be scolded for stealing her own baby. She found the carriage on the front porch, out of sight

of the terrace, and they set off along the walk, between beds of Perkins's blue delphiniums, past the barn, and up the Old Brook road.

"Once upon a time," she told the baby, "Daddy and I had our own apartment and were happy. He was teaching me to cook."

"Da," Hannah said, squinting at shafts of sun plunging through the elm branches.

"I can roast chicken and make eggs Benedict. What do you think of that?"

"Xee."

Around the bend, past the water meadow full of purple loosestrife, came the gas pump and scuffed porch of Morrow's Store. The battered screen door opened with a familiar creak. It was pleasantly dark inside and smelled of coffee.

"Well, for goodness sake!" Mr. Morrow leaned on the counter in his butcher's apron, exactly as he had when Marie came in for candy or a jump rope as a child. "We heard you were home for the duration. How's the family? The doctor? And what's your name, little lady?"

"This is Hannah," Marie said. "Her dad's with the Third Army." "No kidding," said the only other customer, a man seated on one of the stools. "Those guys are about to wrap it up." He put a nickel in the Coke machine and gave her the bottle that clunked into the bin. "I'm Ed. I have the feed store. Tell you what, Patton likes fighting, figures somebody's going to get killed, you can't avoid it, so he picks his best chance and goes in, which is better than being a nervous Nellie, if you know what I mean. If he'd've been at Anzio we'd've got to Rome the second day."

Hannah was reaching for the Coke. Marie let her taste it.

"Atta girl," Ed said. "Look how she tries to hold it by herself. Oops, got a snootful."

"What can we do for you today," Morrow asked as Marie jogged from foot to foot to comfort the baby.

"Molly wants a pound of lard."

"I used to know Molly," Ed said. "Before she met Joe Perkins. Back in the Year One."

Morrow got a hunk of lard out of his cooler and sliced it. "Joe's a dab hand with flowers. Can't touch him for lilies. Is that why you lost out, Ed?" He stood back and peered at the scale. "One pound exactly. Haven't lost my touch." He wiped his hands and turned up the radio. "Just a minute."

. . . 4th Infantry Division of General George S. Patton's Third Army has reached the outskirts of Paris. General de Gaulle's Free French forces report a general insurrection in the city. Poised at the approaches to the capital, the French Second Armored . . .

He flicked it off. "Same story the last three hours. Drive you crazy."

I knew you would, Sam!

"The French will be the ones to go in," Ed said. "That's what they're waiting for." He crushed out a cigarette. "What do you hear from your husband, ma'am?"

"Sleeping in headsets, hadn't changed clothes in five days."

"God bless 'em." Ed wiped his eyes with the heel of his hand. Morrow wrapped the lard and tied the string one-handed, a deft twist. "No charge," he said, "for a soldier's lady."

Marie pushed the carriage up the road, feeling she could be headed anywhere, as far as she liked. Where the brook ran clear among the stones, she kicked off her shoes, took Hannah on her hip, and waded into the shallows, where sand ridges rippled under her feet.

"Water, Hannah. Isn't it nice? Yes, you can kick it."

Sam, have you had a chance to wash? Felicity asked after you.

Oh, poor Felicity. I never told her you were in the landing.

A butterfly soared in out of the brightness and was off again, threading the sunny leaves. Hannah patted the trickling silver surface, tasted sand and stone, and Marie nursed her, sitting cross-legged on the sand. The afternoon flowed easily away downstream. When Marie wondered idly what time it was in France and looked at her watch, it was already five o'clock. Miss Dunn would be waiting. She bundled the baby into the carriage and started barefoot up the road, bouncing the carriage to make Hannah laugh. They rolled through fields of goldenrod and chicory and Queen Anne's lace, embroidery fit for a soldier's ladies. As they turned in by the barn, a pack of dogs was barking around the front door, which burst open, and Miss Dunn rushed out.

"Where has my precious been?"

Sasha raced out on her heels, with Mother right behind, shouting, "Stop her!" Marie waded among the beasts chaotically mounting and missing through the flower beds, and at last succeeded, weak with laughter, in sitting down on Sasha against the sundial.

"Oh, darling," Mother cried, "wonderful news! Paris is taken!" She clapped her hands till all her bracelets rang, and rushed back to her radio.

Miss Dunn was lifting Hannah from the carriage. "Naked," she scolded. "And dirty. Oh, so doody."

"I'll take her, Miss Dunn," Marie said. "You can get started in the pantry."

But the nurse turned away, heading up the kitchen steps. Marie followed, gripping Sasha's collar, Hannah's eyes searching for her over the nurse's shoulder. In the pantry, Miss Dunn turned up the gas under a jar of strained carrots.

"I'll take it from here, Miss Dunn."

"That won't be necessary."

Sasha paced the linoleum, claws clicking.

Marie took a breath, plucked Hannah out of the nurse's arms, and swung her away, the eager little body close against her breast.

"I warn you," the nurse said, "you might have made me drop her. I am accustomed to be treated as a professional."

"And I would very much like to be treated as her mother. If I were a professional, I wouldn't leave doors open. I wouldn't let a bitch in heat escape, if I were you."

The nurse's eyes flared.

"You may take the evening off, Miss Dunn."

The nurse turned on her heel. Sasha made a little rush as the swinging door slapped to behind her.

Awful, Marie thought. I sounded just like Grandmother. She turned off the carrots and found a dish for oatmeal. Perfectly simple. No nurse needed. Hannah crowed and grabbed a fistful of her mother's hair, so Marie had first to pry the little fingers off, and then, reaching for a bib, she backed into a copper tray that crashed horribly to the floor. Hannah gasped and went rigid, lips turning blue. In the awful silence, Molly sang tunelessly in the kitchen, and then Hannah breathed, thank God, and screamed bloody murder.

They were just recovering, just getting settled in the dining room where they could hear Mother's radio from the terrace, and Marie was just spooning in the first bites of carrot and oatmeal and catching the parti-colored ooze coming back down Hannah's chin, when they were paralyzed by a yell from the front porch. Marie dropped the spoon, Hannah stuck her hand in warm carrot up to the wrist, and in came Father, thundering.

"They've trampled Perkins's delphiniums."

"Oh no."

"Oh yes." He drove his fists deep into his pockets and prowled along the sideboard. "I don't suppose you could learn to manage your damned bitch."

Marie was never sure just how it happened, but Father inhaled abruptly, slapped in the face with wet cereal, and a lot of it. It was a pleasant sight, extremely, and she laughed. The glop sagged off his

chin onto his shirt, and she suddenly put down the oatmeal dish and handed him a napkin.

"I'm so sorry."

He swiped at his face, spluttering, nonplussed for the moment. Would he be furious?

Mother called from the terrace. "Is Father home? Darlings, it's so exciting. The French are all in Rockefeller Center. Lily Pons is going to sing!" She appeared in the doorway. "Why Frank," she laughed, "what have you done to your hair?"

"Talk some sense into your daughter, Rebecca," Father said. "I'm going to have a bath."

"You do understand about hormones, Marie?" Mother said when he'd left the room. "People can be quite irrational after they've had a baby."

"Why is Hannah with us at dinner?" Father asked, his hair still damp.

"I gave Miss Dunn the evening off," Marie said.

Mother came into the dining room thin-lipped. "We must have a talk. Close the pantry door, please, Frank. Miss Dunn came to me while I was dressing. I don't like to think, Marie, that you've been rude."

"I haven't been."

"She even complains of Molly. I must say, that surprises me. Molly's a saint. If you've been rude, Marie, you must apologize."

"She acts as though Hannah belongs to her. I don't like it."

"We all put up with things we don't much like," said Mother. "She comes highly recommended. If you aren't careful, we might lose her."

"But we don't want her, Mother, do we, if she's not getting on with Molly."

"Oh, you're as bad as your father. I'm sorry we sent you to Smith. You think you can do everything yourself, but you'll find life difficult, and then it will be too late. Tell her, Frank."

"What do you want me to say? She's spoiled and willful, thanks to your coddling. What kind of help do you imagine she'll get after the war? People with factory jobs aren't going back to domestic work. Perhaps she should learn to manage for herself." He pushed his chair back.

"Don't be harsh, Frank. You haven't eaten!"

"I've lost my appetite. Work it out. I don't care how. All I want is peace in my own house."

"Frank!" Mother called, following him out.

The late sun stood on the brink of the mountain, angling through the pines. Marie gave Hannah her napkin ring. Hannah dropped it. Marie picked it up. If Father thought she'd better learn to manage for herself, would he let her fire the nurse? Hannah dropped the napkin ring again and chuckled. She'd invented a game! Marie covered her with kisses.

Mother was back, hairpins loose again.

"You can't ask this of him, Marie. He's doing the work of three doctors. He can't come home to babies screaming in the dining room and trouble with the staff."

"She isn't screaming."

"You know what I mean. We must have order in the household."

"That doesn't mean we need a nurse."

"What is your objection to Miss Dunn exactly?"

"She runs Hannah by the clock. I don't want Hannah left to cry."

Mother laughed. She picked up her napkin and sat down at the table. "Well, she's going to cry, darling. She's a baby. Don't be silly."

"I want to pick her up and feed her and get to know her."

"You'll have years to get to know her."

"Damn," Marie said. "Damn."

Mother took up her knife and fork and began to eat her baked potato. "Father's worried. He thinks you're overemotional and perhaps ought to consult a psychiatric man. He's angry, but he means it. It

would never occur to me that you were an unfit mother, but if you had to go away for a rest, of course the baby would be cared for entirely without you. I'm sure you see the point. Everyone has to make sacrifices in wartime. Talk to Miss Dunn tonight. Then we can be happy again and not have disagreements."

"Skunked," Marie said. "We're skunked, Hannah. We're on our own." It was dusky on the terrace. A yellow moon was rising.

"I should never have let Mother make me give up the apartment."

Carrying the baby, Marie climbed the stairs she had often trudged up as a scolded child. Was there some act of resistance possible, some front on which she could still advance? If Patton picked his best chance and went in, she could use any advantage she might have, if she had one. She knocked on Miss Dunn's door. The nurse's hair looked surprisingly luxuriant without the cap. The photograph of a man in uniform stood on her dresser. Marie had never thought of Miss Dunn as having a man.

"Your fiancé?"

The nurse leaned on the doorframe. "My brother. He's been invalided back to England."

"Not serious, I hope."

"I wish we knew."

"I'm sorry," Marie said. "I'm sorry I was short with you."

Miss Dunn shot out an exasperated hand. "I wish you people would make up your minds."

"You mean about who's in charge? We both know you work for my mother."

Hannah bounced in Marie's arms.

The nurse smiled, her mouth turned down at the corners. "I have seven babies to my credit, and never any complaints, and I'll tell you something, it doesn't do her any harm to cry."

"I'm her mother, and I don't like it."

“You wouldn't. You've always had everything you wanted.”

“Is that what you think?”

Hannah threw herself backward so suddenly that Marie almost dropped her.

“Spoiled rotten,” the nurse said.

“Look," said Marie. “I'm the one who got blamed for letting the dog out. I haven't said anything, and maybe I won't, but I have a problem. Next time I have a baby, there won't be any nurse. I need experience. I need some leeway in the schedule.”

Miss Dunn shook her hair back. “The schedule is basic. I'm a professional.”

“Of course. Only I may pick Hannah up early some mornings.” “Early?"

“When she wakes up. I'll bring her to you when she's finished nursing. You can get an extra bit of sleep.”

The nurse folded her arms.

“Ten minutes,” Marie said.

"I suppose ten minutes . . . ”

"Strictly between you and me.”

"Of course.”

But the time had come. According to the schedule, Marie now had to surrender Hannah. Sam's letters all ended, *Kiss her for me*, so she kissed both cheeks, once for herself and once for Sam. Hannah gave her a lopsided smile. Marie detached the little feet that clung around her waist, and made herself push the baby into Miss Dunn's arms.

“Bring her to me for nursing, according to schedule.”

“There, Pet," said the nurse, lifting Hannah to her shoulder. “It's all right now.”

Walking away, Marie heard Hannah begin to cry and the nurse going to work to soothe her. She could taste the baby's milky sweetness all around her still. She felt such a pang, as if she'd lost her. As if she'd failed.

Will you ever forgive me, Hannah?

She took the dog out for a last walk around the house. It was cooler at last. The mountain was only a shape now against purple, awash in the surrounding dark. Paris liberated, Third Army victorious. Sam must be chuffed tonight, a genuine hero.

"Maybe he can come home soon, Sasha."

Upstairs, the curtains stirred at Hannah's window, where Marie couldn't reach her. Sam would come home to find her in the hands of the enemy. If he did come home.

If you don't come home, Sam, I'll turn out like Felicity, bullied and ignorant and too sweet.

What was it like to be a hero? All Marie had was her tiny ten-minute victory. How did it feel to win big? Marie turned on the radio Mother had left on the terrace table, and the *Marseillaise* came through, piercing, ethereal. The spirit of Free France overflowed New York, delirium seized the Place de la Concorde, gusts of victory swept the Champs Elysées. The distant sounds of triumph came through, agonized and clear.

Then, slicing through the pandemonium, the announcer broke in.

Leaving Paris to the French, the Third Army is pushing east toward Germany. It won't be an easy fight, but these guys are motivated, strong, prepared, and won't be satisfied until Hitler's Thousand Year Reich is utterly destroyed.

So. It wasn't over. A big fight left to have. Maybe a long road between here and freedom. Maybe big losses.

Don't lose your nerve, Sam.

You neither. I'm counting on you, pal.

Catherine Bell's father served in the Navy in World War II as a lieutenant in a construction battalion, building an airstrip on Guam. After the war, he and two or three other fathers in their small Massachusetts town used to put on their uniforms for the Memorial Day parade every year. Bell is a teacher as well as a writer, and has published a novel set in California in the 1860s.

Statement by 2nd Lt. Robert E. Amundson

By David Chrisinger

CERTIFICATE

I have read the letter of HQ ETOUSA, dated 19 October 1942, file AG 383.6 and certify that I will comply with it.

I understand that any information concerning my escape or evasion from capture is SECRET and must not be disclosed to anyone other than the American Military Attaché to whom I first report, or an officer designated by the Commanding General of the Theater of Operations. I understand that disclosure to anyone else will make me liable to disciplinary action.

Name (Print) *Robert E. Amundson*

Signed *Robert E. Amundson*

Rank 2nd Lt A.S.N. 0851110 Date January 18, 1943

Unit 336 Sqdn. 4th Pursuit Group

Witness Carl W. Holcomb

Carl W. Holcomb
Lt. Col., CAC.
Military Observer
Gibraltar.

Robert E. Amundson

1. 336th Squadron, 4th Ftr, Grp.
2. MISSION Cover for B-17's bombing BREST.
3. AGE: 24.
4. LENGTH OF SERVICE: R.A.F., 8 months; U.S.A.A.F., 4.5 months.
5. PEACETIME PROFESSION: Student.
6. HOME ADDRESS: 620 OTIS PL., N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C.

Statement by 2nd Lieutenant Robert E. AMUNDSON.

"WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AT MADRID AND GIBRALTAR. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING CONDITIONS AND HELPING U.S. PERSONNEL."

On 26 SEP 1942, I took off from BOLTHEAD at approximately 1605 hours. After forming above the field we started SOUTH. We had a strong tail wind and

climbed steadily. About ten miles off the coast of ENGLAND we were above 10/10ths cloud at 4,000 feet. We continued to climb until about 25,000 feet. The Fortresses could not be seen. We were about thirty minutes when my engine failed, causing me to drop out of the formation. However, my engine picked up again at 22,000 feet. I followed the formation, but turned back when I saw three Fortresses and tagged on to them. These Fortresses jettisoned their bombs though no target was in sight at the time since we were still above cloud. About ten minutes later I saw my squadron and attempted to join them. We came down below the cloud base and found ourselves over water. We could just see the northernly coast of FRANCE and the squadron leader made landfall. The weather was bad. Visibility was poor and there was a strong NORTH wind with heavy clouds. We flew straight over BREST at 2,000 feet in squadron formation and met very heavy anti-aircraft fire. From the R-T conversation it was evident that some of the pilots had thought we were over ENGLAND. I received a burst back of the cockpit in the fuselage. I broke formation, went down low and flew out of the area. Then, having very little petrol left, I climbed up into the clouds to about 4,000 feet, rolled over and baled out. I landed in a small field near HANBEC at 1815 hours.

I had no confidential papers; my plane crashed—a total wreck. After landing, I immediately hid my parachute and tunic in bushes that ran along a ditch. Later, they were removed by the French. I started walking and had gone about two miles when a French boy approached me and took me to a secluded place behind a hedge. He left and returned in about twenty minutes with a raincoat and chocolate. He then took me to an old mill where I was given wooden sabots to replace my flying boots. He also gave me cider. Then he hid me in a cave till after dark.

At about 2230 hours he returned with a friend. They had bicycles. We traveled for about eight kilometers and met a third friend. With this last man I was to spend the night. I went with all of the men for about five kilometers. They then abandoned me, thinking I was a German because, when my bicycle broke down and I said to them, "Come here", it must have sounded like German.

I spent the night in a lean-to and next morning carried on till I met some peasants. We gestured back and forth. I said I was American. They hid me in the woods and gave me food. They gave me more than I could eat and also gave me some raw spirits. I spent that night in the house of a friend of theirs and hid again the next day in the woods. That day, the owner of the house went to HANBEC and returned with a

friend of his. This friend talked, or tried to talk to me; went away, and then came back again that evening to take me to the home of another man in HANBEC. I stayed in a room in this friend's house for seven days, during which time he fed me and gave me a suit of civilian clothes, which was altered to fit me. During this week the owner of the house went to BREST and several other places to see if they could find some method of getting me away. On Monday morning I went to QUIMPER by train, accompanied by the owner of the house. At this time I had no papers at all. The German guards at the station did not bother us. At QUIMPER we stayed with a friend and my subsequent journey was arranged for me.

On 14 December 1942, in a party of four, I was crossing the Spanish frontier when I was fired at by Spanish Carabinerie. I was arrested, searched and told that I would have to return to FRANCE. After bribing them with my watch I was allowed to continue on my journey. Later, I ran into a friendly Spaniard who gave me bread and wine. The Spanish people along the way seemed to know pretty well who I was and in many cases warned me of road patrols. I walked on, skirting FIGUERAS and small villages until arriving in GERONA. In GERONA I walked right past the control officer and attempted to hire a taxi but found it impossible. I was told there was a British consul and they

learned his address for us. I went to see him and inquired if he could help. I asked him, after telling who I was, if he would call for a car from BARCELONA or if he could put me on the train for BARCELONA or find a truck to take me, or even bicycles, but he said there was nothing he could do. However, he sent me to a Spaniard who gave me a meal. He also gave me thirty cigarettes and money.

I would like it to be known that I wish to lodge a formal complaint against the British Consular, a Mr. Rapley. After appealing to him for aid, he told me I would have to get to BARCELONA on my own. The Consul in Barcelona told me later that if Mr. Rapley would have sent for a car, it could have been there within two hours. The Consul in Barcelona was furious to learn I had to travel by foot. This Mr. Rapley is also supposed to be looking after the interests of people in jail in SIRCONA and the surrounding area. It is doubtful to me if it is done efficiently.

At about 1030 hours, 17 December 1942, I started for BARCELONA with a loaf of bread and a bottle of water. I walked within fifty-six kilometers of BARCELONA and was picked up at 0600 hours, 18 December 1942, by members of the Guardia Civil. They put me in MALGRAT prison for four days. The food was very poor there but they did take my money and bring me coffee and cognac. I was then taken by national police to JEFTURA at BARCE-

LONA and put in prison. I was questioned in both prisons as to dates shot down, which I told. They also asked how I traveled but I told very little. They knew, or seemed to know, that I was lying to them. I asked to have the British consulate notified and eventually succeeded in sending a message by a Belgian boy, who was being released, to the Belgian consulate. On 24 December 1942, I received two packages from the British consulate containing blankets, food, etc., and then the British and American Consuls came to see me. They said they thought they could get me out in four days. The next day I was told to pack up. I went to SARAGOSSA, where we were taken to a hotel. The only restriction put on me was that I was not to leave the city limits. Here I was allowed to phone the British consul who sent me some money with which to buy clothes. I stayed about nine days here and was then taken to AHLAMA DE ARAGONES, where a great many British air crews are interned.

I stayed two or three hours and then came to MADRID by ambulance with fifteen members of the R.A.F. crews. I stayed in MADRID in a private home for eight days, left 14 January 1943, spent the night in SEVILLE, and continued on to GIBRALTAR. I was in GIBRALTAR from 15 January 1943, to 26 January 1943. I left GIBRALTAR at 0300 hours, 26 January 1943.

In GIBRALTAR the reception for Americans is very slipshod. We had to be put in British uniforms. Lieut. Colonel HOLCOMB is doing all the work — he has no identification facilities, no office staff, and no funds for any necessities whatsoever. He buys insignia for the battle-dress with his own money. There should be someone there whose only job would be to take care of the increasing number of our troops who will be coming through, and this officer should have all the facilities necessary for clothing, identfication and expediting their return.

AG 383.6 ETOUSA 19 October 1942

SUBJECT : Safeguarding of P/W Information.

TO : Personnel concerned.

1. It is the duty of all Americans to safeguard information which might, either directly or indirectly, be useful to the enemy.

2. It is an offense, carrying heavy penalties, to publish or to communicate to any unauthorized person any information which might be useful to the enemy.

3. Information about your escape or your evasion from culture would be useful to the enemy and a danger to your friends. It is therefore SECRET.

4. a. You must therefore not disclose, except to the first Military Attaché to whom you report, or to an officer designed by the Commanding General of the Theater of Operations:

(1) The names of those who helped you.

(2) The method by which you escaped or evaded.

(3) The route you followed.

(4) Any other facts concerning your experience.

b. You must be particularly on your guard with persons representing the press.

c. You must give no account of your experiences in books, newspapers, periodicals or in broadcasts or in lectures.

d. You must give no information to anyone, irrespective of nationality, in letters or in conversation, except as specifically directed in Par. 4a.

e. No lectures or reports are to be given to any unit without the permission of the War or Navy Department.

By command of Lieutenant General EISENHOWER

David Chrisinger is the grandson of a WWII combat veteran and the son of a Vietnam-era Army veteran. He currently serves as the Director of Writing Seminars for The War Horse, the only nonprofit newsroom dedicated exclusively

to covering the U.S. military and all matters related to post-9/11 veterans. From 2014-2017, David taught a semester-long writing seminar for student veterans at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and in the spring of 2016, he edited a collection of his students' essays, titled SEE ME FOR WHO I AM. *He recently finished writing the first draft of a memoir about his search to uncover the truth of his grandfather's experiences during the Battle of Okinawa.*

No Old Bold Pilots

By Ellen Kazimer

Chappie Hunter patiently waited for the footrest to lower and the seat cushion to gently eject him from his power lift recliner. As soon as his feet touched the ground, he gave a quick salute to the framed photo of his old reconnaissance crew on the credenza. He missed them, especially his copilot, Hal. "Can you imagine it, Hal? Never had to bail out of a plane, but I have my own ejection seat now."

It was always easy to talk to Hal flying for hours upon hours. He missed that. These days he carried on one-way conversations with Hal. "Don't let anyone catch me talking to you Hal. They'll put me in the memory unit with Dorothea. Poor woman." Now that Dorothea's dementia demanded the constant supervision of the memory care unit, Chappie could spare time for a reunion with Hal and the crew.

It had been Dorothea's idea to move into their "independent living" apartment at Skyline Life Care Retirement Village four years ago. Chappie never felt independent, not while Dorothea was around. Everything was how she wanted it. As soon as she was taken to the memory care unit, Chappie cleared away her family photos and re-

placed them with old photos from his Air Force days. He even removed Dorothea's prized Thomas Kinkaid print from the wall and replaced it with an old plaque Hal had given him that read: *There are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots.* Redecorating was a small blow for independence.

Although he'd never say it to anyone, especially their daughter Myra, having Dorothea in the memory care unit was a relief. Myra was still distraught over it, but Hal would understand. Dorothea was always difficult to live with. As time wore on, Chappie had run out of ways to placate her. He tried to ignore her barbs, her criticisms, and her complaints, but ignoring her had turned dangerous. Last month Dorothea had put his letters from Hal on the electric burner and set them on fire. Then she came after Chappie with a toilet brush, hitting him over the head so many times that the bristles lacerated his bald head. The loss of the letters hurt more than his head.

Those toilet brush abrasions had healed, but a fender bender this morning left Chappie with a fresh bruise on his cheek. Gingerly he checked his face in the bathroom mirror, wincing as he touched the welt. He had gone to the grocery store to pick up roses for Dorothea when a spandex-clad cyclist crossed into his lane. Course that cyclist tried to claim Chappie crossed into the bike lane. "Ridiculous," he told Hal. "I've been driving for over sixty years, but I let it go. Cost me a new bike. Did you know that bike cost more than my first car? And my second, for that matter." There had been no need to contact the police or the insurance company or Myra. His bank was just up the next block—a certified check covered the damages.

He should have worn a snazzy helmet like that cyclist. "Wait till the ladies see this shiner, Hal. They'll be plaguing me with questions. I'll have to make up a good story. There I was, at 47,000 feet, when out from behind a cloud I saw a flash . . . " Chappie chuckled at his joke.

He methodically tidied himself up for the upcoming evening meal: putting on a clean shirt, checked his pants for any sign of piddle, and refastened the Velcro on his shoes. Then he remembered Dorothea's pink roses—his whole reason for venturing out this morning. He picked them up off the credenza. Too long without water, the heads of the roses had drooped.

Chappie always timed his 5:20 p.m. entrance into the dining room perfectly. Not too early and not too late. His three widowed lady friends were waiting for him at a table for four. He was a rarity, a nearly single man who still drove, walked without a walker, and could bring his fork to his mouth reliably. He delighted in their attention, and how they laughed at his jokes. Dorothea hadn't laughed at his jokes in years.

Dinner conversation went as usual, a few pleasantries about the weather, complaints about the meal, and the slowness of the wait staff, which residents were sick, and who exited Skyline on their final, silent ambulance ride.

Eating was a slow business at their age. Periodically Chappie checked his watch, making sure he left enough time to visit Dorothea in the memory unit. It was expected of him. The staff expected it of him, his lady friends expected it, his daughter expected it, and on a good day, Dorothea expected it. For fifty-five years, he had done whatever Dorothea expected of him. It was still a habit.

He usually went earlier in the day. The unit was calmer then, no sundowning. The little accident this morning shook him up considerably, so he waited until after dinner. It was nearly seven when he said, "Ladies, it is with great sadness, I leave you. I must pay a visit to my dear Dorothea."

The ladies sighed over his departure and admired his devotion. They envied Dorothea for having a man like Chappie, and one or two hoped he'd be free of her soon—for his own good of course.

Chappie shuffled down the long corridor to the memory unit with Dorothea's wilted flowers. He stopped again and again to grab the hallway handrails. The closer he came to the security doors, the heavier he felt. It was as if the earth's gravity had doubled. He hated going through those security doors. If not for those doors, Dorothea would be out wandering in her nightgown, but Chappie secretly feared that one day he'd be locked in the memory unit with Dorothea.

A nurse's aide hit the buzzer unlocking the inner door. "Colonel Hunter, You've got yourself a nasty bump. You didn't have a fall, did you? You really ought to consider a walker at your age."

Chappie shook his head. “Little fender bender. That’s all.”

“Um-hmm. Did you see the duty nurse about it?”

Chappie shook his head. “I iced, it though. It’s fine.”

“Well, go on in. Your wife’s been waiting for you. She’s been agitated all day.”

“That’s a shame,” Chappie said, but he wasn’t surprised. Dorothea had been agitated most of their married life.

As soon as he walked into Dorothea's room, she threw a slipper at him. "Where have you been? You cheat. My father always said you'd break my heart."

Chappie shrugged. “It was a long night of flying, that’s all.” Dorothea always gave him the devil every time he came home from a mission. She was convinced he had women waiting for him at every flight line. If only. Long after he gave up flying, she still didn’t trust him. For all the grief she gave him over the years, he wished he had earned it. He held out the roses. “I brought your favorite, pink roses.”

Dorothea took them, closed her eyes and inhaled their scent. Then she opened her eyes and smiled ever so slightly.

The roses were worth the cost of the bicycle. Chappie picked up her slipper. “Here’s your shoe, Cinderella. Why don’t you get ready for the ball tonight?”

Dorothea grabbed the slipper and held it to her chest. “Chappie, you should have let me buy a new dress for the ball. I’ve worn this same one to the last two squadron balls.”

“But you always look so beautiful in that one.”

“It does fit me well, doesn’t it? Your buddy, Hal, complimented me the last time I wore it, too.” Dorothea ran her hand down her nightdress.

“Let’s forget the ball and stay home. What do you say?”

“Don’t be silly. We’re sitting three tables away from the head table. You’ll have a chance to talk to that general from the Pentagon. Maybe we can get out of Omaha and back to the East Coast. Just don’t spend all your time at the bar talking to Hal.”

"Yes, dear," Chappie said. Dorothea never liked Nebraska. She found the openness disorienting. She never liked Hal either—jealous of him. She was envious of how close Chappie and Hal were. How they'd talk for hours while she and Chappie struggled with what to say to each other after long absences. Her recriminations started with “You talk to Hal more than you do me.” It was natural, though, wasn't it? He spent more time with Hal—duty required it in those days.

Chappie missed both the open skies and Hal. The East Coast felt claustrophobic—too congested. You could barely see past your nose. Hal was lucky to escape and go back to the Plains where you could see for miles. Hal kept flying while Chappie flew a desk. Maybe now he could see Hal, talk about old times and visit the Great Platte River Archway across I-80. He read that was something to see. Dorothea wouldn't miss him for a week or two, would she? It would be good to have a drink with Hal. It had been too long.

Dorothea began shaking her head. “Something’s not right.” She shook her finger at him. “You’ve got that faraway look in your eyes. You’re going away again, aren’t you?”

Chappie considered for a moment whether to keep her in the past or bring her back to the present. She was itching for an argument either way. He chose the past. “Dorothea, why don't we have that dance right

now? The band's playing that Bobby Vinton song you love." He held out his arms and sang, "Roses are red my love, violets are blue."

Her eyes sparkled. Hesitantly she approached Chappie. "You remembered."

Chappie took her in his arms. They shuffled one step left and two steps right until Dorothea's eyes faded and she pulled away.

"Oh Chappie, did I hurt you again?" Dorothea pointed to his cheek.

"No." Chappie took a step away from her. "I forgot to duck going into the plane, that's all."

"Don't lie to me. Where am I?"

Chappie didn't know what to say. The bruise on his cheek throbbed. Was she in the past or the present?

"Chappie, this isn't our apartment. Take me home. Take me home now." Dorothea stepped towards him.

Chappie held out quivering hands to keep her at bay. "Dorothea. I can explain. You weren't feeling like yourself. The doctor wants you to stay here, in the hospital, for a few days—until you're better," he lied. "Myra will come visit you soon." Chappie inched closer to the door.

"Who's Myra?"

"Our daughter, Dorothea. You remember, right?"

"Of course I do. Wait till I tell her how you've mistreated me." Dorothea wrapped her arms around her stomach and paced back and forth in front of her single bed.

"Visiting hours are nearly over. They'll be kicking me out soon." Chappie backed out of the door and slipped out into the hallway.

Dorothea flew after him. "Go on then. Get drunk with Hal. See if I care."

Chappie hung his head as two aides calmed her down and led her back to her room.

Back in his apartment, Chappie prepared himself a two-fingered pour of bourbon. Maybe he'd get drunk as a skunk, but those days were over. He'd be asleep before he got drunk.

"I know you think I should just leave her, Hal, but I can't. Not yet." There had never been a good time to leave Dorothea. Didn't he owe her for all those months, years really, of waiting for him to return from one mission or another? She miscarried twice while he was away. Said it was his fault. He thought she'd be happy once Myra was born, but that contentment didn't last. They fought.

When Chappie finally had enough of the blame and the arguing he asked for a divorce. Dorothea refused. She said she had invested too much in their marriage and his career to let him walk away. "I'll go straight to the wing commander. I'll tell him you've been unfaithful."

"But that not true. There's never been another woman."

"There's Hal. I'll ruin you. I'll ruin Hal. Neither one of you will ever fly again. And you'll never get near Myra."

He couldn't let her jealousy and innuendo ruin Hal. The OSI investigation alone could end Hal's career. Chappie stayed, and his Cold War with Dorothea began. They coexisted, but there was no trust, no love. Dorothea was a perfect hostess, a doting mother, and a relentless social climber. Chappie remained a man of duty—keeping his obligations long after he retired.

Chappie collapsed into his recliner, finished his bourbon, and raised the footrest. It was hell to grow old. Perhaps he should have been bold. He longed for the days when his missions were dangerous, and his marriage was safe.

He would have slept until noon if Hal's voice hadn't woken him, telling him it was time to head out to the tarmac. He was disappointed it was only a dream. He pushed his ejection button till he was up on his feet. He opened the curtain to let in the sunlight.

In the parking lot below, his daughter Myra was examining the dent in the hood of his car. "I'm in for it now, Hal. She'll be after my keys." Myra was too much like her mother. Always had her nose in his business—making sure he did what was prudent.

Chappie removed his car keys from the hall table and made his way to the bathroom. He opened the cabinet under the sink and pulled out a packet of disposable men's briefs. He didn't wear them, not yet, but Myra insisted he keep them—just in case. He opened it, and removed one brief, and buried his keys deep inside the package. He ran the faucet over the displaced brief giving it the appearance of being used, and he tossed it into the bathroom trash.

As an extra layer of protection, he liberally sprayed the bathroom with Spring Breeze air freshener. It served as a warning that a worse smell was being covered up. Myra wouldn't dare go in.

Myra pounded on the door. Chappie's time was up.

"Dad. Dad are you in there?"

Chappie flushed the toilet to buy himself more time. He slowly shuffled to the door.

Myra was angrier than the cyclist. She demanded an explanation from Chappie, treating him as if he were one of her teenage sons.

"No need to concern yourself, my dear. Just a fender bender with a cyclist. Didn't even need the police."

"What about that bruise on your cheek?"

"I'm fine. Had my seatbelt on."

Myra wasn't having any of it. "Dad, remember you promised to give up driving if it became a problem."

"It isn't a problem. Nobody's complaining. "

"It's the second accident this month. I could turn you into the DMV as an unsafe driver and let the state police handle it."

Chappie wondered if he should call her bluff. He could pass a driver's test. He knew it.

"Why don't you just give me your keys? Mom and I would be devastated if anything happened to you. You know how much we love you."

So much love could smother a man, but maybe it was for his own good, wasn't it? Dorothea always pushed him in a sensible direction. Now it was Myra's turn. Chappie hung his head. "Yes, dear."

"Where are your keys, Dad?"

Chappie hesitated. It was the right thing to do, but maybe not today, not yet. "They're around here somewhere." Chappie pretended to search for the keys. "I seemed to have misplaced them. Must have left them when I went to visit your mother. Bet they are probably at the nurse's station."

"You don't mind if I look around? Sometimes two sets of eyes are better than one."

"Course not." Chappie stood awkwardly to the side and watched her open drawers, look under tables and chairs, and go through his desk. "How did you find out about the accident?"

"A nurse's aide from the memory unit called and said that mother was troubled all night. She mentioned you had a bruise on your cheek, too. Since you didn't call me, I figured you were hiding something. When I saw the car, I knew I was right."

"You're as suspicious as your mother."

"We both want you safe." Myra stormed into his bedroom, pausing at his nightstand. She removed his alert monitor from the charger. "Dad, how come you aren't wearing the medical alert device I gave you? With the built-in GPS, I'd know exactly where you are in case of an emergency."

"Makes me feel like a parolee with an ankle bracelet," Chappie said.

"Put it on, Dad." Myra handed Chappie the monitor and its lanyard.

Reluctantly he hung it around his neck. "GPS. To think I used to fly with a paper map on my knee and a grainy black and white photo. Don't know how we ever found our way."

"Things have changed for the better, Dad. These days I know where your grandsons are at every moment. They can't sneak off to a party without me knowing about it."

Chappie shook his head. "Those poor boys. You're too good a mother."

“I try to be. Look, the boys want to come see you, but they’re busy with school and marching band.”

“Of course they are,” Chappie said. He felt no connection with his grandsons or they with him. He tried to entertain them with stories about his flying days, but they weren't interested. Of course, Chappie stopped short telling them about his actual missions. He liked to think those missions were still classified. Still, he thought they could learn some goddamn history instead of playing video games.

Chappie didn’t understand his own flesh and blood’s disinterest in flying. If only I could fly again. By God, they clipped my wings years ago and now they want to cut off my feet.

Finally, Myra gave up searching for the keys. “Let’s go visit mother, and I’ll check for your keys there.”

“You go,” said Chappie. “Spend some time with her. I brought her pink roses yesterday.”

“Oh, Dad. You’re so sweet. I always wished I had a marriage like yours.”

"No, you don't. We fought all the time."

“But you loved each other, and you still love each other, right?" Myra paused at the door.

Chappie didn’t reply. Myra wanted an answer he couldn’t give. She wouldn’t understand his regrets over the path he took in life, especially now when there wasn’t much of a path left.

“After you visit your mother, why don’t you stay for Sunday brunch?”

“That’s sweet, Dad, but I have a million things to do today. Look, I’ve been thinking. Your grandsons will be driving soon. You could make them happy by giving them your car. You’d be a hero to them.”

“Is that all it takes to be a hero these days?” Chappie slumped into his recliner. “Then I’ll be a hero. I’ll go to the safe deposit box and get the car title. Bank’s closed till Monday.”

“Dad, that’s great. Wait till I tell them. I’ll come by tomorrow after work. I knew you’d come around. You should have that bruise checked out—just in case.”

“It’s fine. Don’t worry. I’ll see you tomorrow. The keys ought to turn up by then. You’re a good daughter, Myra.”

Myra gave him a quick peck on the cheek before rushing out the door.

Chappie saluted his old flight crew. "Well boys, looks like I have the go-ahead for this last mission. Myra doesn’t need me. Dorothea doesn’t need me. It’s time to have the reunion with Hal. Maybe visit that arch I’ve read about.”

Chappie pulled out an old Rand McNally Road Atlas from the magazine rack. Good thing he kept it despite Dorothea’s objections. He flipped through the maps and figured it would take him twenty-one hours to Omaha. Forty years ago, he’d drive twenty hours straight; surely he could do it again. Those disposable briefs could come in handy. Chappie put down the atlas and peered out the window. He’d wait till until Myra's car was gone and then slip out during Sunday brunch when the staff and residents would be preoccupied.

That didn’t leave much time for preparation, but Chappie had been thinking of visiting Hal for a long time. Years, really. He shouldn’t have waited as long as he did, but there was Dorothea to consider. He had said “Yes, dear” way too often. Today he said, “Wheels up.”

He packed a change of clothes, his old flight jacket, peanut butter crackers, and his prescriptions into plastic grocery bags. Suitcases would alert a nosy neighbor. He removed the Medical Alert lanyard from around his neck and took the photo of Hal and the flight crew instead.

Chappie drove for eight hours straight, stopping twice for coffee. He was stiff and sore every time he exited the car but felt lighter than he had in years. If he discounted the rude drivers, blaring horns, and the time or two he missed an exit, the trip had gone well.

It turned dark, and Chappie knew he should stop. The electronic highway signs warning of construction, traffic, amber, and silver alerts blurred before his eyes. He should pull over, but he wanted to push past the outskirts of South Bend, Indiana. It was a struggle to stay awake. If he could just close his eyes for a minute, he'd be good for another twenty miles.

Blue lights flashed in his rearview mirror. Was he going too fast or too slow? What was the speed limit? Chappie pulled over and waited for the state trooper to come to his window.

"May I see your license, sir?" asked the trooper. He was a young man with a round pleasant face. Chappie breathed a sigh of relief. Be polite, take the ticket, and then go on my way.

Chappie handed the trooper his driver's license.

"Mr. Hunter, did you know your license restricts you from driving after dark?"

"Yes, I did, officer. I just hoped to get a little farther down the road, that's all. Go ahead and write me a ticket."

"Do you mind stepping out of the car and taking a sobriety test?"

"Don't mind at all." *Wait till I tell, Hal. For all the carrying on we did when we were young, this will make a good story.* Chappie passed the Breathalyzer and the finger to his nose test, and the walking a straight-line test. The last one was harder than Chappie thought it would be. He'd sat too long. His knees wouldn't cooperate.

"Where were you headed, Mr. Hunter?" the trooper asked.

"Going to visit my copilot, Hal." He smiled broadly. He couldn't help it.

"Where's Hal live?"

"Omaha. Omaha, Nebraska."

"You've got quite a ways to go. Does your family know where you are?"

"No sir, and I'd be obliged if you didn't tell them. I'll find a motel and get some shuteye. Don't you worry about me."

"Can you wait in your car, please? I have to phone this in."

With his windows rolled down, Chappie could hear the trooper discussing him on the phone. "Silver alert. Put the call through. Yes, ma'am, I have your father right here. No, ma'am, he's fine. Tired, though." There was prolonged silence followed by several "uh-huhs" and a few "I sees" before the trooper spoke a full sentence again. "He seems sharp to me. Has all his faculties. Said he's off to visit his friend Hal in Omaha. Long way to go for an old man. Do you want to talk to him?" The officer went silent.

Chappie adjusted his rearview mirror to get a better look at the state police car behind him.

The young trooper looked straight at him through the windshield. "Dead for over thirty years, ma'am?" Chappie heard him ask. "Are you sure? All right, ma'am, I'll get him off the road. I'll let you know where you can pick him up tomorrow."

Chappie pounded on the steering wheel. "It's over, Hal," he cried. "I was so close. If only I had been bold like you. I'm just old. Now they're going to lock me up with Dorothea."

"Are you going to abort the mission?" Hal asked.

Chappie couldn't believe his eyes. Hal was sitting next to him—just like old times.

"Hell, no, Hal. I'd sooner fly through eternity with you and the crew than be grounded with Dorothea," Chappie replied. He glanced in at the rearview mirror. The state trooper opened the car door and stepped out. Chappie turned the key.

"Mr. Hunter, wait," the trooper called, breaking into a run.

"That's Colonel Hunter of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing." Chappie floored the accelerator and careened back onto the highway. The road ahead was clear and open all the way to Omaha and beyond. As highway lights converged into a solid stream of light, Chappie didn't look back. Into his imaginary radio, he called out, "Chappie Hunter, returning to base."

Ellen Kazimer is a Navy veteran, Army wife, and mother of two active duty service members. She has a Master of Fine Arts in Writing from Hamline University and scribbles short stories, non-fiction, and novels for children and adults. When she is not writing, she is mailing care packages and playing with her two terriers.

No Idle Threat

By Daryl McGrath

My brother lives on a dead-end road. His woman is cheating on him. His boss hates him as well. Most of my family has pretty much given up on Phil, including me, I guess. Not that I don't love him. I do. It's just, there's nothing I can do for him.

You see, my brother is an alcoholic, but that's not his fault. He's what you'd call a victim of circumstance. He really had no choice, being brought up in a small tourist town where the only pastimes were drinking and fucking. And with the women we had there, you had to do a lot of the first to get around to the second. Sure he got out, eventually moved down around Detroit, where he lives now, but once that bug bites, you stay bitten.

The road Phil lives on rides the length of a peninsula reaching out into the lake. There are a lot of peninsulas in Lake Orion and all the roads around there read Dead End or No Outlet. "The only way you can get anywhere from here is on a boat," he says. "Otherwise you can only go back the way you came."

His apartment is big, with views of the lake out both the front and back windows. But the road in is choppy and narrow, closed in by the houses packed tightly together on the thin strip of land.

"This is a pretty nice place," I said the last time I visited.

"Yeah, it's not bad," he said, "but I wouldn't want to live here."

Phil knows Joslyn is cheating on him. "I'm gonna kill that fucking whore," he told me. "I'm gonna get her stoned before she goes to work and call her boss to get her fired. I'm gonna tell her daddy all about her, all about the shit she hides from him. I'm gonna ruin her fucking life and then I'm gonna look her in the face and tell her it was me."

But so far he hasn't done anything. "What can I do?" he says. "The car is in her name. I got nowhere else to live. If I leave her I'll lose my job. I've only got a couple hundred in the bank, and I won't get anywhere on a couple hundred."

So he stays where he is, at least for now, because he's got no choice but to drive her beat-up old LTD with the side panels rusted through and the transmission ready to go. He drives her car to work every morning around five-thirty. And every morning Mr. Bigelow is right there, telling him he's late, telling him he's lazy. Telling him to get a haircut, that only women and faggots have hair halfway down their backs.

But Phil's used to Mr. Bigelow's kind of shit. It isn't really the morning drill that bothers him about his job anyway. "The asshole keeps setting traps for me," he says. "He'll hide my hammer or tape measure at break and then yell at me for not keeping track of my tools. Sometimes he has the foreman tell me to do something, then he comes and yells at me for not doing something else. One time he had one of the guys nail the smooth side up on a piece of plywood so when I walked across it I almost went gliding over the edge of the roof. We weren't high up, but it made me look like an idiot. And then when it's time for me to get a raise or I need some time off or something, he says I don't deserve the money I'm getting now or if I want time off, he can arrange for me to have all the time in the world off."

Last time I called him, Phil told me he'd been talking with Uncle Ray again. Ray is one of the few people in our family who hasn't com-

pletely written him off. Ray's spent much of his life working on the lake freighters and Phil told me Ray might help him get on one too. "He says some of the boats are hiring again, and he knows some people."

Phil also told me he asked Joslyn to marry him.

The wedding is going to be big, if her first one is any indicator. Her father is footing the bill. Again. He's already arranged to hold the ceremony at St. Michael's Cathedral and the reception at the Marriott Ballroom. Our entire family and hers are going to be there. The cathedral will be filled. The old man's hired a professional organist to play the wedding march as he guides his only daughter down the aisle and up to the altar.

And as the music stops and he hands her to him, my brother Phil will turn and look her in the face.

Daryl McGrath is the grandson of a US Army Air Corps veteran. He writes fiction, nonfiction, and the occasional poem. A native of northern Michigan, McGrath currently lives in Lafayette, Louisiana.

To Be Honest

By Michael Nappi

I didn't want to see her. To be honest I didn't want to see anybody, but I was lonely. You get used to having people around, your friends, your roommate, your platoon, even your sergeants. Then you come home on leave and suddenly there's no one around. So I called her. I knew she was back from school for the holidays. I knew she'd see me. I knew I shouldn't call her. But I did, and we met up at the bar. But before I go any further you have to understand the shit that happened was an accident. When I was sitting there in my old room holding the phone in my hand, telling myself not to dial her number, nowhere in my brain did I have an inkling, a hint of what would happen. I can't stress that fact enough; everything that went down went down accidentally, or at least unintentionally.

At the bar things were good. I got there early out of habit, you know. Ten minutes prior to ten minutes prior. The main difference for being early to the bar versus early to formation is at the bar you can have a drink or two while you wait. So I had a drink or two. I should have figured she'd show up late, everybody at home was always late. So I had one more. We chatted about this and that, mutual friends,

what Texas was like, how school was going, all that superficial shit. We didn't talk about her boyfriend. I mean she didn't bring it up, and I sure as hell couldn't. I'd dumped, her for fuck's sake. It wasn't my place to be the jealous ex; I was supposed to have moved on to bigger and better things. But she was flirting with me. That is a fact.

I know in light of what happened later it may seem like I'm trying to justify my behavior in some weird way. I am not. I said she was flirting with me because she was flirting with me, because what happened happened the way it happened. I'm not a liar. I don't run around making shit up. Which isn't to say I don't lie from time to time; I do. We all do. We lie about little shit our whole lives. But lying about Santa Claus or what time you made it to work or that you like Thai food doesn't make you a liar. It makes you human. And that's what I am: a human being who, if you ask him, will say he digs green curry.

She wanted to see my dog tags. She leaned forward across the table and fondled my dog tags. Fondled them. She said they were romantic. I swear to fuck she said that. She invited me to her parents' Christmas party, too. Right after the dog-tags-are-romantic line. Said she had to go help set up or whatever, but I should come by. Her family would love to see me, it would be great, we'd have fun.

I'm not blaming the drinks. I'm not blaming being lonely. I'm not even blaming her, not really. But I think we all can agree it's not right to invite your ex to things, especially when he's home on leave, alone, bored and has had some drinks. Regardless though, I know what I should have done was go home. I should have played it cool, said I'd text her later, and gone back to my parents' empty house. Instead what I did was stay at the bar. I mean it was like six o'clock and I didn't have shit else to do. I had a few more drinks, a couple of beers. That was it. Then I figured I'd walk on over to her parents' place. I'd walk by and glance in the windows, see how the party was going and maybe, maybe pop in and say hi to her mom. Her mother

always liked me, even after we split. And if she went home and told her mom I was coming by the party and I didn't show, well that's just rude. Hell, if her mom ran into my mom at the grocery or some place and told my mom that they missed me at the party I'd surely hear an earful about it. I'd have to sit there and get a lecture about manners, a grown-ass man scolded by his mother because he didn't show his face at a holiday party.

When her father offered me a drink I should have said no. No, or just a beer, or maybe some white wine. But her father liked scotch and I never liked her father so I figured the way to really get back at him for being dislikable was to have some of his scotch. Now before you say anything I know the logic of that choice is feeble. I'm aware it was the wrong call. I am cognizant that even if what happened didn't happen, asking for scotch to stick it to somebody who doesn't even know that's what you're doing is dumb. But I am not a liar, I am telling you what happened the way it happened. Including my own rationale for the choices I made. I am being honest because I'm a pretty honest guy. And I honestly had some scotch because it seemed like the best way to show my contempt for her father. At the time I didn't even like scotch that much.

What happened next has never been that clear to me. I've heard second- or third-hand a few different versions from friends of friends of hers. So while I can't definitively say whose version is totally right, the parts that are clear to me are what actually happened from my point of view. Which isn't to say her, or her family's, or her family's party guests' versions are lies. I'm not calling anyone a liar. I'm merely telling the truth as I understand it. That's all I've been trying to do. Because I'm not a liar.

I was upstairs. I was going to use the upstairs bathroom because someone was in the downstairs bathroom. It's true I didn't ask anyone if it was ok if I used the upstairs bathroom, but I had spent two years

coming over to that house and in that time no one cared which bathroom I used. The idea that I made my way up to the second floor with malicious intent is false. The idea that I snuck up there is also false. I climbed those stairs openly and with no meanness in my heart. To be entirely forthright though, I also decided to use the upstairs bathroom because I had just overheard that she was engaged. She was engaged to that guy she was dating and hadn't told me, and that made me feel some feelings. So I wanted to take a minute in the upstairs bathroom to figure some feelings stuff out, pee, and maybe splash some water on my face like they do in the movies. So that's what I did. I mean I peed first, then thought about feelings, then splashed some water over my face. Then I decided that I was going to go downstairs, finish my drink, thank her mother for the party, thank her for inviting me and leave. Walk home, go to bed, deal with it all in the morning. But on the way back downstairs I passed her old room.

I don't remember if the door was open or closed. I do know that it wasn't locked though. If it was locked then I wouldn't have been able to get in. Anyone who says I forced the lock or kicked in the door or whatever is a liar, plain and simple. The door was either wide open or closed but not locked. That's the truth. Either way though I was in her room, I admit to that. I was in her room and the lights were off and the party was going on downstairs and I was having some more feelings. I had spent a lot of time in that room, you know? She had been my first real girlfriend and this had been her room. We'd listened to music and talked about the future and we'd even lost our virginity in this room. So to think she was marrying that guy she was dating and that she hadn't told me? Like I couldn't handle it? Well, to be honest I felt hurt.

Now here is the part that you need to understand, the key to all of this: I don't remember smashing anything. Not a thing. Not the TV, not the stereo, not the mirror or the laptop. Hell, I don't even know

how the window got broken. I mean I know I did it, but I don't know if I kicked it or threw shit through it or what. It was like another person did it. If everyone hadn't heard and come upstairs and seen me I'd swear to this day I didn't do it. Not because I'm a liar, but because I can't recall anything about it. Not opening the door, or flipping the bed or even intending to break anything at all.

It was completely unintentional and to understand why I did what I did next you have to understand that all of a sudden I was standing there in her smashed room and her family and her family's Christmas party guests were all crowded in the doorway staring at me like I was crazy or something. I didn't know how it had happened, I didn't know why it had happened. It was like some terrible dream. So before you judge me keep in mind I was as confused as everyone else.

Then right as she opened her mouth to ask me what the hell I was doing I started crying. I started bawling like a child and I told that hallway of very confused and slightly drunk people that I had just heard my buddy had been killed in Iraq. I said that he was my best buddy from training and he had gone to a different unit and I had only talked to him last week. That he had been blown up by an IED and had been medevaced to Germany but died on the way. That he was married and that he had a one-year-old son. That I couldn't believe it and I'm so sorry I smashed your room but he didn't deserve to die. Before I knew it everyone was hugging me and telling me how sorry they were. That war was a terrible thing, but as long as I remember him in my heart he's not dead. That he was a hero, that I was a hero, that we were all heroes. They asked his name and I almost blew it. I didn't want to say an actual friend's name, you know? That's bad juju. If one of them died I'd feel like a real asshole. So I thought of the guy I hated most in my company and gave them that name and they all repeated it.

Her family wouldn't hear of me paying for the damage. I tried to say a dead friend is no excuse but they just shook their heads and

called me a hero some more. One of her aunts drove me home; they wouldn't let me walk. I had to keep up the routine for another fifteen minutes and it almost killed me. If I were a liar I'd tell you it was because I was feeling guilty or something, but honestly it was because I didn't know how to act after the initial panic wore off. But I got home and went to bed. In the morning I got a text from her, asking me to call. Truthfully I wasn't even tempted to answer it. I blocked her number, her house phone, too. I laid low for a few days, and changed my ticket to the day after Christmas. When my family asked me why I was going back so soon I thought about saying I had duty or something. But I'm not a liar, so I just told them I felt like it.

Mike Nappi served as an infantryman in Iraq. He currently lives in England.

An Exchange of Prisoners

By Frank Richards

Paul should have been used to it by now. His partner, Kim, was late. Blinkers flashing, the military police jeeps of the day shift drove through the compound gate one after another and stopped in front of the provost marshal's office. Time for the swing shift to go to work. But where was Kim?

Covington rounded the corner of the PMO, waving at Paul and then sprinting across the parking lot toward him.

"Kim's been busted." Covington came to a halt and gasped, catching his breath while pushing his black, horn-rimmed glasses back up to the bridge of his nose. "Black marketing. I just found out from Sergeant Song. This morning Kim went into the village to sell his cigarette ration and got caught. The Korean Army MPs took him down to their station over an hour ago."

Song jogged up behind Covington.

"Come on, Paul," Covington said. "You know how they treat KATUSAs. You're on duty. You've got to bust Kim out before they beat the crap out of him."

Kim and Song were KATUSAs—Koreans Augmentation to the US Army. The Korean Army MPs had a reputation for being tough on

KATUSAs. What would they do to a KATUSA MP? Paul had to act fast. "Song, how about coming along to interpret?"

Song nodded.

"Anyone seen Jay?" Paul asked.

"He said he was going to rehearsal today for that play he's in."

"We'll pick him up at the Red Cloud theater. He might come in handy."

How could the Korean Army MPs have arrested Kim for such a minor thing? Most of the KATUSAs sold ration items they couldn't use rather than give them away or let things go to waste. To spring Kim, the Americans would have to show they'd be even tougher on Kim than the Korean MPs. They couldn't just barge in and demand Kim's release.

He and Song drove to the movie theater on the main base. Paul parked, and they entered the darkened theater. The curtains and movie screen were up, and several costumed actors stood on a lighted stage. The rehearsal was still going on. It smelled musty. He scanned the actors, looking for Jay.

"Excuse me. I need to speak with PFC Johnstone."

"Okay, that's enough for today, anyway," said one of the men sitting in the first row of chairs below the stage. The man looked at his watch. "We're running overtime. We'll pick this up again tomorrow, at eleven hundred hours. Player Number One, you need to know your lines." It was Jay who nodded, removing some sort of tunic or robe. He wore a white, long-sleeved dress shirt and khaki pants underneath.

Paul filled Jay in as they drove over the bridge past the village toward the Korean Army MP compound.

"We don't have the authority to just take Kim back."

"We'll have to fake it," Paul said.

"Fake it?"

"You're dressed in civvies. They won't know your rank. What's that phony colonel's name? The one Turner uses as the addressee on his

cigar shipments? Cage? Well, you're going to be Colonel Cage. Think you can carry it off?"

Jay reached out and adjusted the passenger side mirror, examining his countenance. The stage makeup he wore made him look older. He cleared his throat authoritatively.

"Hey, I said Colonel Cage, not Horatio Hornblower."

Jay's voice deepened. "Hrumph. You will treat a senior officer with respect, PFC Aurigena, or you'll find yourself on KP for the rest of your tour."

Song laughed from his seat behind them.

Paul shrugged. It just might work.

The Korean Army MP at the main gate stepped out of his camouflaged guard kiosk, snapped a smart salute at them, and pushed open the weathered chain-link gate. Paul edged his vehicle forward into the expansive, neatly maintained courtyard fronting the Korean MP compound. Korean Hangul glyphs spelling out *Huhn Byong*, military police, were stenciled in white on the first building. The shades were drawn down behind the police station's barred windows, concealing its interior from view.

Paul, Song, and Jay stepped out of the jeep, walking up wooden steps and through swinging, squeaking doors into an open room. A single light bulb hung on a wire from the middle of a high ceiling. Orbiting the light in a counterclockwise zigzag, a solo moth seemed to dance to the spirited Korean music that reverberated from a dinged-up old Bakelite radio attached to the back wall next to several closed doors. The moth's shadow moved up and down the walls as if searching for an exit.

A young Korean Army MP in starched and pressed fatigues sat at a desk in the middle of the room eating rice. The kid didn't look like he was going to be a tough customer. When he saw the men enter,

he held the bowl up to his face and shoveled in the remaining rice with his chopsticks, Japanese style, and wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his uniform.

"Just stay behind me," Paul said to Jay. "We don't want him to get too good a look at you."

Song strode up to the desk and spoke in a loud, firm voice, and the kid jumped to attention. Paul didn't need to understand a word. The tone of the Koreans reflected the ups and downs of questions and answers, soon escalating into a fierce debate as the young Korean gathered up his mettle and argued back. The more Song pressed, the more the kid resisted.

Song turned to the Americans standing behind him. "Kim is here, but the Korean MPs won't release him."

"Is there anybody else we can talk to?" Jay asked.

As if he'd just been called, a senior NCO entered from the back offices, rubbing sleep from his eyes and then tucking in his shirt. He questioned the kid before addressing Song.

"He says he's in charge," Song interpreted.

"Tell him Kim is in big trouble." Paul spoke slowly to make sure Song translated his words precisely. "He's violated both United Nations and American regulations prohibiting black marketing. Because he's a KATUSA, assigned to the US Army, we've come to take him into custody. Colonel Cage has come himself." Paul pointed to Jay. "The colonel is here because he wants to avoid an international incident." With all the different police agencies and overlapping jurisdictions Paul had encountered in Korea, he'd learned whichever agency had custody had the upper hand in this sort of affair, and the Korean Army MPs had custody. Nevertheless, most Koreans were in awe of authority, and the Americans had brought along a colonel.

Jay exchanged salutes with the Korean MP sergeant and started in with his act. Turning to Paul, he cleared his throat and became

louder, waving his arms in anger. "This man must be returned for punishment or it's your ass." Jay jabbed his index finger into Paul's solar plexus. "He must be returned to avoid a serious international incident. Do you understand me, soldier?"

Paul saluted, and said, "Yes, sir," in a shaky voice. "Tell 'em what the general said, Song."

Song spoke with the ROK MP sergeant, then to Paul. "He's asking why you want to help Kim?"

"No, no, we're not here to help him," Paul said, shaking his head. "We're here to arrest him. Tell the sergeant if we don't bring him in, I'll be in big trouble. I'm Kim's partner. That makes me responsible for his actions." That sounded good. He wondered if they'd buy it. He gave the sergeant a pleading look.

The sergeant smiled at the prospect of an American MP in hot water. He said something to the man on the desk, and then disappeared through the door from which he'd come.

They waited.

A guard brought a limping Kim out the same door from the holding cells in the back. His shirt pocket was half torn off. The Korean MPs had been tough on Kim.

"Kim," Paul said, taking a step toward the battered man, but Jay stepped between them.

"That's enough, PFC," Jay shouted in his face. Then in a whisper, he said, "Don't show any emotion. You've got to act like you mean business."

"He says Kim slipped and fell," Song said, pointing to the Korean MP guard.

"I doubt it," Paul muttered. Then he grabbed Kim by the shoulders and shook the man hard, giving him the best cussing out Paul could think of, mixing American and Korean swearwords with a *pabo,* meaning fool, thrown in here and there for extra effect.

But the harsh treatment also affected Kim. He grimaced. His face reddened. Did Kim get it? What if he didn't understand they were trying to rescue him? How would he react?

Kim glared at Paul. "When you call me that—" he paused, eyes narrowing. His chin jutted out in defiance.

The man had been through a beating, and now his partner had just shaken him and called him a fool. But nothing else would convince the Korean Army MPs they wanted to take Kim and punish him. Paul held his breath.

"Smile," Kim finished in a low, tough-guy voice.

Paul snorted and choked back a laugh. Kim understood. He had quoted a famous line from *The Virginian*, one of the old oaters Paul had lent him after Kim had said he'd seen the Gary Cooper movie version. Paul stepped back, grimacing as Kim had done a moment before, feigning anger. Then under Colonel Cage's stern supervision, he pushed Kim against the wall next to the entry door. Kim assumed the position of a prisoner being searched; his legs were splayed, and hands spread out above his head as he leaned against the wall, supporting his weight. While the moth shadow hovered over Kim, Song took one hand at a time and, with a snick of the cuffs, handcuffed Kim. Kim's forehead now rested against the wall, and Song took Kim by the collar and stood him upright. Paul and Song each grabbed Kim under an arm and half-lifted, half-dragged him through the squeaking door and out to their jeep, Paul cussing all the while.

As they boarded the jeep, they heard the Korean MPs arguing inside.

"Sounds like they might be catching on," Jay said. "We better get going."

They drove through the gate and out onto the highway. Paul radioed the desk to alert the medics they were on the way over to the infirmary with Kim.

“Nothing major that I can tell, but he stays here overnight for observation," the medic Ryan said, after treating Kim in the glaring light of the infirmary. “What do we need Joe Chink for when we beat up our own men? We’re supposed to be allies.” He shook his head. “You guys should go. He’s had a tough day, but he’s safe now."

The customary convoy of military police jeeps, blinkers flashing, followed them through the gate, one after another, and stopped in a row next to them in the station parking lot. More time had passed at the infirmary than he thought. The rest of the swing shift was coming off duty. Paul, Jay and Song followed the other men headed toward the armory to turn in weapons.

Adams, one of the few American MP replacements the 44th had received since the KATUSAs arrived, leaned against the wall next to the PMO door out of the rain, smoking a cigarette. Freckled, thin and gangly, with bright red hair, Adams was Howdy Doody in fatigues.

“Well, if it isn’t the Lone Ranger and Tonto.” Adams tapped cigarette ashes into a red butt can on the ground next to the door. “Turner wants to see you guys. You’re really in for it.”

“Now what?” Paul asked.

Jay shrugged.

Paul felt Adams’s wiseacre grin on the back of his neck as they went through the door.

The three men walked down the hall past the coffee kiosk to the First Sergeant’s office.

“Well, well, what have we here?” Turner asked. He turned to glance at a slender Korean officer with slicked-back black hair seated beside him. The man looked to be high ranking; silver diamonds spangled his collar.

Song jumped to attention, confirming this thought.

“These are the ones, yes?” the Korean officer inquired. Paul noticed

the man's neat and unwrinkled uniform. His small hands protruded from starched sleeves and rested casually on his knees.

"Yes, colonel, I'm afraid so." Turner looked up at Paul and the others. "The colonel is here about what your KATUSA partner—what's his name?" Turner paused, drumming fingers on the green top of the desk, "Kim did." He smiled, demonstrating for the colonel he knew his men. "Black marketing. He was caught red-handed by the Korean MPs."

"But it was only a carton of cigarettes—" Jay began, but Turner interrupted.

"I'm sure you can rationalize this to no end. But I don't want to hear it."

The Korean colonel spoke up. He had a soft voice, but it was authoritative. The kind of voice a person paid attention to. "I am Colonel Joon Oh. You must understand. Black marketing is a serious offense." He spread his hands for emphasis. "It is disruptive to the Korean economy. PFC Kim must be punished as an example to others." The colonel shook his head. "He cannot be let off from punishment simply because he is KATUSA."

"Sir, right now Kim's not available for punishment." Paul said. "He's in the infirmary here, confined overnight for observation. He was injured." Paul ought not say something undiplomatic and add to Kim's difficulties, so he added, "Somehow."

"Ah, yes, well," Colonel Joon said, shifting in his chair. "We will send an ambulance around to your infirmary in the morning to pick up PFC Kim. I'm sure our doctors will be able to care for him."

"But, sir," Paul pleaded.

"That's enough," Turner said. "You three will be at the sick call at zero eight hundred to make sure Kim gets on that ambulance, and no funny stuff." He paused, eyeing Jay. "No more officer impersonations. Oh, and by the way, you two are restricted to the compound when you're not on duty. Maybe you won't be so anxious to interfere in internal Korean

affairs in the future. That will be all. Dismissed."

As they left Turner's office, Paul said, "Thanks for helping spring Kim. Sorry you got nailed for it, too."

They walked past a smirking Adams and out of the PMO.

"Well, what are we going to do about Kim?" Jay shook his head. "We can't just let them take him away again."

"We'll think of something."

The next morning Paul, Jay and Song waited behind the infirmary in the rain, observing Kim's transfer back to the Korean Army MPs as ordered. Two green-clad Korean attendants maneuvered Kim's stretcher through double doors and into the open air. The attendants questioned Kim as they lifted him into the back of an idling ambulance, but Paul didn't understand, and Song didn't bother to interpret.

As the ambulance drove away, the men remained standing in a defeated silence. Paul wondered what would happen to his partner now. Would Kim be imprisoned? Would he ever even see the man again?

Jay spoke up. "We're going to need another one of your schemes to get him back."

"Easier said than done." Paul watched the ambulance pass the parade grounds, turn right at the Quonset hut that served as their movie theater ,and disappear behind the building.

"Yes"—Jay's voice took on a thick accent—"but I feel a man like you could manage it."

He nodded. "Yeah, I saw that movie too. Considering the difficulty of busting him loose again, we might as well be shooting Kim out of a hangman's noose." Paul shook his head. "Well, nothing more we can do here. Let's go."

After dropping Jay back at the barracks, Paul and Song patrolled north. Paul wanted to find someplace where he could think. He steered off the paved highway onto the dirt and gravel road that led to the beach,

but instead of stopping there, he headed toward the low hills of the National Forest.

He worried about freeing Kim, turning the problem over, trying to find an angle or some new approach. At least the Koreans would have Kim under medical care.

They drove past a platoon of Korean Army soldiers from the base across the river. The soldiers had axes and hatchets and were busy chopping firewood and kindling.

"Isn't it still against the law to cut down trees?" Paul asked.

Song nodded.

The forest was part of their law enforcement jurisdiction. Every tree was precious. The previous week, some MPs had been asked to take a Korean forest ranger along on patrol out here, but the only arrest they'd made was some poor toothless grandmother with an A-frame of kindling on her back. They'd taken her and her rack of wood to the PMO where she sat on the floor, legs spread, sobbing, waiting for the police to come pick her up. Watching her as she wrung arthritic hands, Paul felt a stab of pity, but could do nothing except decide that he would never take a ranger with him on patrol. Thinking about it still pissed him off. After that, he had soured on the whole notion of arresting woodcutters.

Braking and spinning the wheel, he turned the jeep around in one motion and headed back.

Most of the green-fatigue-clad soldiers were still hacking away at trees, although some were piling up wood and a few others were sitting, taking a smoke break from the rigors of working in the humid summer air.

Pulling off the road and stopping, he gave the police siren switch a quick flip on and off. A banshee's rising wail sounded, then echoed off the hills in a softer version of itself.

The soldiers froze. Paul and Song were the focus of twenty pairs of eyes.

Paul scanned the men, looking for the person in charge. He spotted a sergeant's stripes on one of the soldiers. "Song," he said. "Ask that sergeant to come over here."

Song called out and the NCO approached the jeep. The man was tall and thin-faced, with a black-brushed flattop haircut. His fatigues were muddy. He'd been working right alongside his men. He grabbed the rail of the canvas jeep top and leaned down, peering inside at Song.

The other soldiers went back to work.

"Ask him if he knows this is a National Forest and no woodcutting is allowed here."

Song conversed with the man a moment. "He says they're only gathering kindling, preparing for the winter."

"Well, as far as I can see, they're not just picking up dead wood, they're cutting down trees, too. Look there." He pointed.

Two soldiers were bending a sapling back and forth, trying to break it off.

"Tell him they're all under arrest," Paul said.

"What?"

"Tell him they're all under arrest. Including him."

Song relayed the message. The sergeant laughed.

"He doesn't believe me," Song said.

"Then you must tell him more forcefully, Song. Remember, you're a police officer. Tell him to have them bring their tools along as evidence."

Frowning, Song shouted at the man, who jumped to attention.

"Tell him to have his platoon fall in behind the jeep." Paul waited for the sergeant to gather his men and give them the bad news. Paul put the jeep in first gear and eased out into the road, idling, waiting. Although respect for authority was strong in the Korean culture and the authority of a policeman was particularly powerful, what he was doing was dicey. In the rear view, he saw the sergeant appeared to

have finished and was walking toward the jeep. Paul crept the jeep forward as slowly as he could manage without stalling the engine.

"Are they following us?" Paul asked.

Song looked back over his shoulder through the translucent plastic rear window. "Yes," he said, eyes gleaming with excitement. "They're all following."

"Good."

The little formation wound its way back along the puddled, muddy road out of the woodland hills, the police jeep in the lead and the platoon of soldiers walking along behind, chatting amongst themselves. They passed the beach road and turned onto the paved main highway, heading south toward Kimchee Creek and the MP compound.

Paul looked in the rearview mirror at the platoon of soldiers following the jeep. Something didn't seem right.

"Tell them to form up ranks," he said, stopping the jeep in the middle of the highway. There didn't seem to be much traffic going their way, and what there was could pass by easily enough.

Song spoke, and the soldiers formed four lines, each containing five men.

"Tell them to march," Paul said.

Synchronized tromping boots pounded the asphalt in a muffled drumbeat.

They approached the PMO. Paul reached back into the rear of the jeep and unhooked the mike from their radio. He'd almost forgotten to let the desk know he was coming in. "Minerva Shield, this is Car Three, over."

"Car Three, this is Minerva Shield, over."

"This is Car Three. Be advised this unit now ten-one-five your one-four with twenty ten-eights, over."

"Roger, Car Three." The desk clerk paused, no doubt thinking over what he'd just heard. "What? Ah, Car Three, say again. Did you say, twenty ten-eights? Over."

"Roger that, Minerva Shield. We're bringing in twenty prisoners, over." Paul hung up the mike. Something else seemed missing. He thought for a moment, then said, "Maybe they should sing."

"Sing what?"

"Anything. Don't you Koreans have any marching songs?"

Song yelled back, and the soldiers started to sing, faintly at first, hesitantly, individually, and in an uncoordinated fashion, but then the men joined together, singing in unison, loudly, with spirit.

Paul had to admit it was a fine marching song.

The entourage wheeled left into the MP compound, splashing through puddles with the synchronized pounding of their boots.

Sibley, the MP on duty at the gate that morning, opened the guardhouse door and leaned halfway out. "Paul, what the . . . " The man gaped at the formation.

"Prisoners," Paul said, as if that explained everything, and led the parade on by.

They stopped in the parking lot in front of the PMO.

"Line 'em up, Song. Tell 'em to keep singing."

Song turned and, with a stern expression, yelled out the orders.

The PMO door burst open. Turner stepped out, gray eyes blinking in the sunlight, half an unlit cigar jammed in his mouth. He doffed his cap and ran a hand through his silvery bristle of crew cut hair, surveying the choir of ranked soldiers lined up in the parking area. Their singing died out under his frosty glare.

"All right, what's going on? Whadaya mean, twenty prisoners?"

Adams, Jay, and some others had come out of the PMO behind Turner to investigate the ruckus. Roused by the singing, curious heads had poked out of nearby barracks doors and windows.

"Remember what that ranger said about our 'obligation to protect the only forest in Korea for future generations?' We caught these law-breakers cutting wood and, well, we apprehended the lot."

"Let's see." Turner looked over the Korean troops, wagging a finger at each as he counted. "Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty. You really arrested twenty men at one time?" Then he mumbled, "That's got to be some kind of record, even for the 44th." He shook his head. "Okay, smart ass, now you've got 'em, what are ya gonna do with 'em?" Turner folded his arms. "The CO is gonna be mad as hell when he hears about this. You can't arrest twenty fuckin' ROK Army soldiers. It'll cause an international incident."

"Song and I will just work this out with the Korean MPs."

Turner didn't respond. He was busy with his Zippo, trying to light the stogie. Paul and Song slipped past him into the PMO.

"Quick Song, call the Korean MPs. Tell them what's happened." "You'll have to appease Joon Oh."

"Tell them we need to talk with him."

Song spoke on the phone for a moment and then stiffened. He set down the phone and backed away.

"Soon he'll be a general," Song warned Paul. "Better be careful."

Paul picked up the phone. The colonel was already speaking, saying something about not causing an international incident. His next promotion was probably on the line.

"Yes, sir. Of course, sir. I agree we need to handle this discreetly," Paul said in response to the colonel's rage. "In fact—"

The colonel interrupted and was threatening him now. "If this goes on the record, you'll be in big trouble with your superiors! I'll see to it."

"Yes, yes, I see. Of course, I agree completely, no need for me to write this incident up, sir. We'll just turn the soldiers over to your MPs for adjudication."

Turner entered the PMO and frowned as he spotted Paul on the phone.

"Oh, and speaking of your MPs, colonel? About PFC Kim, I'm sure he's learned his lesson. No need for them to hold him further,

don't you agree?" He smiled and shrugged as Turner went by, headed back to his office, puffing smoke and fuming.

A half-hour later, a camouflage-painted ROK Army deuce-and-a-half grumbled into the PMO parking lot, puffing black diesel smoke from twin stacks. Two Korean Army MPs dropped to the blacktop from the truck's tailgate. The rider's side door opened, and Kim stepped down, limping. Song and Jay rushed up to greet him. At the direction of the Korean MPs, the woodcutters, who had been sitting on the parking lot asphalt, loaded their tools into the canvas-covered rear of the truck. They didn't seem too enthusiastic about leaving with their MPs.

Song engaged the Korean MPs in earnest conversation. They looked over at Paul and laughed.

"He's telling him what an idiot you are for arresting, what is it, twenty guys at once? And armed with scythes and axes too, I see," Kim said. "Pretty gutsy. Turner said it was a record bust."

"Well, we got you back, no thanks to him."

He should have been used to it by now.

*Frank Richards served with the US Army Military Police Corps in Korea. His short stories have been published in V*illage Square Literary Magazine *and the* Menda City Review. *He is currently beginning his third year of writing and literature classes toward an MFA degree. He lives in rural Virginia with his wife and an assortment of rescued cats and German shepherds.*

Poetry.

Dive Dive

By LT Joseph Couillard

She creaks and groans with every foot we submerge
Layers of paint and rust show her age
Like wrinkles webbing from a grandmother's cheekbones
We descend purposefully,
Praying our presence goes unnoticed
The keeper of the deep waits for us
He knows we've cheated him time and again
He calls for us
Men hold their breath
They look anywhere but at each other
Terrified the fear in their eyes will betray them
A whisper echoes through the steel hull
Trapped here since it was first announced thirty-five years ago
Dive dive
It chants
Dive dive

LT Joseph Couillard is a submarine officer stationed in Bangor, Washington. He earned his commission through the NROTC program at Iowa State University in 2013. His poem "Steel Beach Picnic" was previously published in O-Dark-Thirty. *In his free time he enjoys writing, reading, playing basketball, and spending time with his girlfriend.*

Bonfires

By Doug D'Elia

I thought seeing the wounds
would get to me.

A torso with burrows
cutting through it, a stomach
with a crater
the size of a fist,
organs dripping from the body,
arms and legs blown away
or amputated, and faces
so damaged they'll never
manage another simple smile.

I thought that would get to me,
but it doesn't.
What gets to me is the pile of
uniforms a few feet outside the tent.
The discarded green fatigues
stained with urine, feces,
and blood, drying quick and stiff
in the intense jungle heat, the
smell of death attracting a swarm
of disrespectfully flies
and the newest medics preparing
the bonfire that will burn
evidence of it and make
space for more uniforms.

Doug D'Elia served as an Air Force medic from 1965-1969. His poems have appeared in over 50 journals, including the O-Dark-Thirty Anthology *issue. He is the author of three books of poetry and two novellas. He can be contacted through his webpage* www.dougdelia.com.

4 years and a wakeup

By Jeremy Graham

they say
war is hell
I'm pretty sure
MEPS is hell's lobby
here's the thing about BCGs
they work
the balls to four sucks balls
but at least it's burger day
catch-and-release with Somali pirates
charcoal skeletons grope AKs and RPGs
I can't tell the boys from the men
but I bet they'd also like burger day
"Hey shipmate
terrorists don't attack a clean ship"
that's what chief says back in CONUS
he's not a fucking liar all the time
after 4 years I wake up
my DD-214 is
an indulgence from the church

salute St. Peter
at the pearly base gates
I get fat and grow a beard
devouring the GI bill and Arby's
inevitably I wear a command ballcap
and blow my cover
professors now tiptoe
like I'm unexploded ordnance
after four years and a wakeup
the balls to four still sucks balls
so why do I miss it so much?

Jeremy Graham spent six years on active duty as a naval officer. He is currently a PhD student at the University of Notre Dame where he studies international relations. He holds a graduate research fellowship with the National Science Foundation.

Pen To Paper

By Ryan Kovacs

write.
it helps.
so they say.
but the images are blurry.
they blend like dripping watercolor.
they move like blood on sand.
they slide like rain on rooftops.
Are they real?
Are they mine?
i use a compass as my totem.
because west is home.
north is death.
south is gone.
east is here.
Where am I?
i am here.
you are there.
like being encompassed inside a globe.
we are but inches on a map apart.
breathing different air.
standing on different stones.
only until we are shaken do we see.
this distance between us is filled with gravity.
like ink to paper we are pressed.
rolling like wind.
wet like saliva.
dry like heat.
then permanent.

Sergeant Ryan Kovacs was deployed with the 408th Human Resources Company in Afghanistan from July 2017 through April 2018. He lives with his wife of six years and their two-year-old daughter.

Gone

By Curtis Last

One guard possesses the keys
to the brown leather restraints
that securing him demands—
always two: one on a wrist,
the other on a leg, or both legs
or both wrists, as in one case—
a hajji—sole survivor
of a truckload of armed men
who met the steel weaponry
of an Apache helicopter.

I remember the first night
I cared for him in Bed 30,
in the side room for detainees.
He had hate-filled eyes and both legs.
The next day he went under the knife.
The next night, on my return,
his outline . . . his left leg—gone—
amputated above the knee;
from right leg rose sweet and sour
smells of decay within days.

Some nights later, I return,
his form through sheets, right leg—gone—
a bilateral now, eyes passive,
their fierceness—gone—surrender
to restraints, the death stare—gone.
Never before spooked by a hajji,
until his first glare at me.
Maybe, with both arms restrained
and both legs gone he realizes
I might be the last to care for him.

Curt Last's poetry has appeared in numerous journals and magazines. He lives in Huntington Beach, California, and holds a bachelor's degree in pre-law from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from California State University, Long Beach. He served from 2008 to 2016 as a hospital corpsman in the United States Naval Reserve.

Battle Buddy

By Jonathan Tennis

I cosigned a loan
On your life
When I dropped
Into this foxhole,
Ducked behind
That building.
You signed the same.
But dotted it with the crimson
Pooling at your feet
When I lost sight of you
In the fog of it all—a volley of fire,
Not unlike the one that will send you off at Arlington.

Jonathan Tennis served an enlistment in the United States Army, with a deployment to Iraq in support of OIF. He is a graduate of Eckerd College (BA) and Norwich University (MSIA), and resides in Tampa, Florida where he enjoys writing, reading, year-round sunshine, traveling, and biking. He is currently applying to creative writing programs to pursue an MFA.

Dhow Close Astern

By Peter Vanderberg

Through the Straits of Hormuz dhow boats swarm. Fishermen & merchant smugglers worked these waters for thousands of years before we stood watch on warships—arms crossed, scowling down at the traffic of dhows. Any wooden boat painted bright yellow & green, crewed by sons, could be full of a death triggered by prayers.

We enter Arabian waters as if we own them. As if the dhow captains read our Notice to Mariners: Stay clear 500 yards, within which we escalate force:

- Bullhorn warning
- High-pressure hose
- Pencil flare
- Open fire

Every boat crosses our bow too close. Aft-lookout's warning: Dhow, close astern! has become static. Our sentinels grip deck guns wired tight to rip tracer-guided rounds through any (credible) threat. I suspect every dhow captain wants us dead. I suspect every one of my gunners wants to sink a dhow.

Peter Vanderberg is the founding editor of Ghostbird Press. He served in the US Navy from 1999–2003 and received a MFA from CUNY Queens College. His work has appeared in journals such as Prairie Schooner, Drunken Boat, CURA and LUMINA, *and his chapbookis available from Red Bird Press.*

Interview.

A Conversation with Sally Mott Freeman

Sally Mott Freeman was a speechwriter and public relations executive for twenty-five years before launching her research on her critically acclaimed book, *The Jersey Brothers,* the story of three brothers, all Navy men, who end up coincidentally and extraordinarily at the epicenter of three of the war's most crucial moments. Sally's father, Bill Mott, was hand-picked by President Roosevelt to run his first Map Room in Washington. Her Uncle Benny served as a gunnery and anti-aircraft officer on *USS Enterprise,* one of the only carriers to escape Pearl Harbor and by the end of 1942 the last one left in the Pacific to defend against the Japanese. And finally, her Uncle Barton, the youngest and least distinguished of the three, opted to serve in the Navy Supply Corps at the behest of his mother, Helen Cross, who wanted him out of harm's way. It was a protection plan that would backfire when Barton was sent to the Philippines and was later listed as missing in ction after the Japanese attack in early 1942.

Based on ten years of research drawn from archives around the world, interviews with fellow shipmates and POWs, and primary sources

including diaries, unpublished memoirs, and letters half-forgotten in basements, *The Jersey Brothers* is a remarkable story of agony and triumph—from the home front to Roosevelt's White House, and Pearl Harbor to Midway and Bataan. It is the story, written with intimate, novelistic detail of three men finding their loyalty to each other tested under the tortures of war—and knowing that their success or failure to save their youngest brother will shape their family forever.

O-Dark-Thirty Senior Editor Jim Mathews recently caught up with Sally to discuss her experiences in researching and writing this remarkable book.

O-Dark-Thirty: So what was the initial spark that drove you to write this story—of three Annapolis brothers caught up in the storm of World War II? It goes without saying that it was personal because they were your father and uncles, but what was it about their stories that drove you?

Sally Mott Freeman: I would say that I've always been fascinated by this piece of our family history and lore and the unanswered questions that my siblings and cousins would go over at almost every family gathering—Thanksgiving and so forth—but when I was sifting through my parents' attic and pulling their files together in preparation for selling their house, I found a stack of papers that turned out to be my father's naval intelligence and White House correspondence files from World War II. And as I read through these many archival jewels, I realized that the brunt of these papers were the beginning of his search for his missing brother, Barton. We're talking correspondence to ships' captains, Naval intelligence sections, as well as correspondence about him speaking regularly to President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt about the need to find Barton. And I was bitten by that. I mean, who wouldn't be? I had never really had anything specific beyond, again,

family lore. Now I had something very specific. My siblings and I would rotate in this job of organizing the mounds of paperwork—my parents were children of the depression and didn't throw anything away! And at that point, I found myself going through the house looking specifically for information from that era. I found my [uncle] Benny's eyewitness accounts of the various battles on USS Enterprise where he served, including the Doolittle Raid. I found a number of books that my father owned that he was either quoted in or were dedicated to him from this era. So collecting all this material was really a process of organizing, and that was where the writing of the book really started.

ODT: So that's when you decided that you had to put it down on paper?

SMF: Yes, it was really when I found those files and realized the historical significance of what I was looking at. Before that, I had been thinking a long time about how to write this story. They say that everyone has one story they have to tell inside them. This was the story I needed to tell. Not just because of the family connection but because it was such an unusual story that these three brothers were caught up in different flashpoints of World War II—the White House Map Room [Bill Mott], USS Enterprise [Benny Mott], and as a POW in the Philippines [Barton Mott]—and the intersection of those three flashpoints on a larger story arc of the Pacific War. But what was really missing were the details. The things that held it together as a compelling story about real people. The files provided a scaffolding, but I didn't have the details. So I made a list of what I had and what I needed. The "what I needed" side continuously lengthened because as I interviewed people and visited archives and sifted through documents, I would find out that I simply needed more.

ODT: What were some of those documents?

SMF: Well, for example, all of the doctors' files from the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery [in the Philippines]. These were records kept by American doctors who took care of the prisoners throughout the war because they had been taken prisoner along with the soldiers and sailors. And I found those. They had been in boxes in the basement of a building in the Philippines which were discovered when they went to tear down that building from the old Cañacao Naval Hospital. At the time, I was looking for something entirely different. It was a veterans' history interview with a Navy nurse because I was constantly checking the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project database for interviews with people I had been looking for and couldn't find. And I just kept adding to my arsenal of new material.

ODT: And all this work was before you even sought out a publisher?

SMF: That's right. As you know, in nonfiction, you usually write a proposal and then you write the manuscript. I did it in reverse order, because I was constantly getting new material. There were some X's in the equation that went unfilled for years and until I had that material and filled in those empty puzzle pieces, I really didn't know how the story ended.

ODT: So what were some of the major roadblocks in the research you conducted that kept those puzzle pieces just out of reach?

SMF: Well, the first roadblock was in the White House correspondence file I came across. It was clear that Barton went missing in the Philippines on or about January 1, 1942. He did not appear on any prison camp roster until May, 1942, when he turned up in Cabanatuan POW camp. So where was he from January to May and what were the circumstances of his capture? I couldn't find him anywhere, in any record

or document. I went to see Catherine Mayo's father, who kept a database on this material out in Palo Alto, California. I went to the Philippines. I interviewed a lot of Filipinos. I went to all these camps with former POWs. That was back when I started in 2004. So that was a major roadblock. Who knew that he had been captured straight from the hospital [in Bataan]? I wouldn't know until I found those doctors' files at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. So even though they were taken prisoners and suffered along with everyone else, they still had to keep daily records of all of their patient-prisoners. And that's when I found out where Barton had been. So I crossed that off the list and then went to the next hole in the story.

ODT: I know also from reading the book that the circumstances of Barton's ultimate fate were something that haunted your family and was a point of intense searching for you.

SMF: Certainly. That was another huge mystery—Barton's cause of death. For that I went to International Red Cross and got a notarized copy of the death certificate that said he had died of gastroenteritis. It was also dated in October of 1945. I knew that his death date was January 30, 1945, but all of these death certificates were issued postwar. And I just felt that there had to be more to this story. He had been on three of those POW Hell Ships that took prisoners from the Philippines to Japan. So I also filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests with the National Personnel Records Center in Missouri. I got Barton's file and I found documents in there that were written in Japanese. And virtually all of them had a duplicate document that had been translated. Except for one. And that was a challenge getting it translated, but when I finally did, that's when I found out what the real cause of death was. But it was so startling and, frankly, pretty good for the story.

ODT: Would you say that in your research, you were experiencing some of the same emotions felt by your grandmother, Helen Cross, and your father and so many other families who perhaps never got a satisfying answer?

SMF: Without question. Because my father also searched for the cause of death. He did end up getting the "official" cause of death in 1949, including where Barton was buried.

ODT: What was the reaction of living relatives when you began digging for more information?

SMF: Well, part of the experience of overcoming roadblocks was also finding out information from family members that I had little contact with at the time I began writing. For instance, Barton's namesake, my cousin in New Jersey, gave me a box that hadn't been opened in decades which contained letters from former prisoners and lots of other information, including Barton's Purple Heart medal. And during that very first reunion meeting with my cousin, he said that Helen Cross kept diaries during World War II. And I immediately asked, where are they? They were apparently somewhere in his house, but he had a day job and he wasn't about to drop everything and go hunting for them. But I stayed in touch and I kept asking him about the diaries. And I kept asking him and nudging him. So three or so years later, in 2009, when he came to my mother's funeral and before we headed off to Arlington National Cemetery, he put a stack of diaries on my desk. And it was a remarkable moment of mixed emotion for me because I was grieving for my mother, but also elated at this appearance of my grandmother's diaries and the chance to really peer into her thoughts and feelings. And keep in mind, my grandmother was one tough matriarch, let me tell you. She was not the kind of grandmother who

let us sit on her knee while she read us bedtime stories. This I can assure you. But in the diaries, you saw an emotional side of her. She had children in the military during a terrible war, three in the Pacific and one, Barton, who was clearly her favorite, was missing in action. And as I read, I empathized with her for the first time in my life. I mean, I'm a mom too.

ODT: That's such a find because so much of research is about talking to real people and trying to capture their memories—sometimes failing memories—or, in the case of your grandmother, memories that she chose to keep locked up.

SMF: That's right. As far as my grandmother went, the only conversation I could have with her was reading her diaries. She died in 1967.

ODT: So were these topics considered off-limits, even before you began digging into the history?

SMF: When it did come up at various times, it always made the hair on the back of your neck stand up. It wasn't something that came up without, per the prologue of the book, some serious drama occurring. And I could always tell that my father carried the guilt of Barton's death to the very end. He had stayed in the Navy. He became the Judge Advocate General of the Navy. And his mother blamed the Navy. So he had that constant anvil on his chest. Sometimes you detect more from what isn't said. And we kids were all aware of it. At first, when I really began researching, I felt resentment toward my grandmother for not showing my father more affection and understanding.

ODT: Did you encounter any resistance or sense of distance from, say, archivists or veterans you interviewed?

SMF: That's an interesting question. I think being a one-time Navy dependent helped me in almost every circumstance. It helped to have a strong foundation of general naval and military knowledge. I also found many of those I interviewed really appreciated me being organized with my questions and solicitations. And sometimes, they come to you. For example, in the Hyde Park [FDR] Presidential Archive, I was looking for anything with the White House Map Room and the name Mott. Anything with certain periods of time. And the archivists were able to bring me all this wonderful material, including the memo my father wrote to Roosevelt while Roosevelt was in Casablanca, informing him about the Sullivan brothers all going down on the same ship. And while I was there at Hyde Park, this gentleman came down and asked me if I was the person who was looking for information on an Admiral Mott. I said, yes, and he said, "You need to come with me." He took me up to the Audio Division. There, he showed me research conducted by John Toland—who was writing *The Rising Sun* at the time and which would later earn a Pulitzer Prize—including five interviews with my father. These covered hours and hours about naval intelligence, December 7, what it was like to work for Roosevelt, and so on.

ODT: I know your research on the book was nothing short of exhaustive and included reaching out to surviving veterans themselves. Which of these stood out as key to your work?

SMF: Many dozens, but as you can imagine, it was a race against time. I would say that there were several key people I was looking for—from the box of files and letters supplied by my cousin that really started it all. I was looking for Charles Armour only to learn that he had died in the 1950s, but I found a man who had written about Armour and his family, and he had a lot of backstory about Armour that allowed me to write about him and the world he lived in. I was

also looking for a man named Robert Granston because he wrote in one of the letters that he and my uncle Barton were together all the time. And I found him, alive and living in Florida. I flew down there and spent several days with him and really got great information and flavor. For parts about the Enterprise, I found plenty of folks to talk to. Benny had been very involved with the *USS Enterprise* Association. I found an author who wrote several books on the *USS Enterprise* and so did his father and both had interviewed Benny. For my research into the Enterprise, I had the largest number of interviews because there were many shipmates from the *USS Enterprise* who were still alive and had worked with Benny. These folks really helped me home in on key moments in the ship's history. For example, the Battle of Santa Cruz and the Doolittle Raid and so forth.

ODT: It must have been such an organizational challenge, because you weren't just writing about your dad's experiences, but of three brothers, the home front, and the larger context of the war itself?

SMF: Believe me, it was a constant cobbling together of information and timelines. I had side-by-side in my office a timeline for all three brothers, a timeline of the war, and a timeline for *USS Enterprise* movements during the war, where the prisoners were and when. And I was constantly cross-referencing those. I spent days and days at the Naval Institute library at the Annapolis campus where they have an enormous archive of oral histories.

ODT: So after all this exhaustive research, what are the mysteries that remain that may or may not ever get resolved—for you personally or even for you as a World War II historian?

SMF: I'm happy to report since I published the book that I haven't found anything that really alters my own findings as I told them.

I will say that stories from families just like mine who searched for remains of loved ones were just heart-wrenching. In many cases, where families were told where the remains were located are now finding out that they weren't there at all. The remains ended up being somewhere else. So even though I've been told that my Uncle Barton was buried at the American Military Cemetery in Yokohama, I have to wonder now if that is really true. I will say that it made me wonder because the government was so busy throwing anything that would stick to the wall as an explanation that families were demanding. Why not that too?

ODT: So what did you learn about yourself in this journey? It's been said of biographies that memory has its own story to tell.

SMF: That's a great question. I guess I learned that I really am persistent and you simply have to be. There were times where I was so frustrated, especially when I felt like I finally had what I needed and it turned out that I needed something else and then something else. And it took years. I mean, my friends knew I was writing this but after such a long time, people stopped asking me about the book. I got the book deal in such a flurry, but believe me, it was long after people stopped asking me about how the book was coming. So I found out that as long as I believed in what I was doing, I didn't need to have it corroborated by others. I learned to trust my gut.

ODT: So many folks in writing workshops that I teach—in particular, veterans and service members—are either contemplating a memoir or have one in progress. What advice would you offer them?

SMF: Do it for yourself. Don't do it just to be a published writer or whatever. As I mentioned earlier, I never searched for or solicited an agent or publisher until I was finished. So I would say, do it because

you need get it out of your solar plexus and onto paper. Don't do it just because you think you have a cool story and think it's publishable. Otherwise, it will likely end in disappointment for people who do it for that primary reason. If it's ultimately publishable, then that will all come out in the end so don't worry about that. You'll also be a healthier person as a result!

ODT: So, in a way, you're suggesting they 'flip' the normal process for nonfiction and instead of seeking a publisher or agent first and then writing, do the opposite?

SMF: Yes, especially when you're talking about a personal family story. I would also add that whatever it is you first put down on paper, you need to be prepared to rewrite. And I mean that it might not be the fifth of sixth draft that ends up being final. It may be the twentieth draft! Because as a former workshop instructor once told me, all good writing is rewriting. People often ask me how I wrote it the way I wrote it and I have to say that I harken back to my elementary school days when I used to read those Penguin biographies about Clara Barton and Booker T. Washington and so forth. And the way they were written—as stories, not as a timeline of what these great men and women did—was truly powerful. Rudyard Kipling was right when he said that "If history were told in the form of story, it would never be forgotten." And that's what *The Jersey Brothers* is. It's a story.

ODT: I have to say that as I read the book, especially toward the end, when your grandmother was receiving these rather bureaucratic and vague notifications about how Barton actually died, it made me think about other POW or MIA families from various conflicts whose search for truth has either been dismissed or even met with deception by some in the military hierarchy.

SMF: She needed to know the truth. And it was something I needed to know too. In fact, I received an amazing message on Facebook from someone who had read my book that I think your audience would really appreciate.

ODT: Happy to include it—and I can't think of a better place than in a prisoners-themed issue. It was a great joy chatting with you today, Sally. Thanks so much for taking the time.

SMF: My pleasure, Jim.

The following is an excerpt of a *Facebook* message sent to Sally Mott Freeman after the publication of her book:

> *To Ms. Sally Mott Freeman,*
>
> *I am a Forensic Analyst for the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, where we identify the missing from past foreign conflicts. Right from the start I was rooting for your family to find your Uncle because I have listened to multiple family stories of loss and heartbreak as well as closure and happiness. The Department of POW/MIA Accounting Agency holds monthly meetings for missing families to submit their DNA as references and updates the families of the fallen of their family member's case.*
>
> *Currently we house over 2500 remains of missing individuals from Europe, Southeast Asia, and the many Philippine Islands and receive new samples weekly. But one of our main projects have been the missing of the Philippine Islands including the many unaccounted for through the*

POW camps. I hope that in the near future we can identify any of the individuals that Barton could have served with, encouraged to survive, and given hope to during such a dark time. I encourage you to pass on the word of the missing and what we need to bring all of the missing home.

If you know others that you have met along your journey to discover Barton's story that have service members missing please ask them to donate DNA references if they have not already. We cannot return the missing to their family without references. I can only wish that with the release of your book it helps bring light to our mission and to bring these men home. Please if you have any questions or even want to visit the laboratory, we are located at Dover AFB in Delaware.

###