

FOR WHOM THE BUGLE SOUNDS



Kevin Hussey, Sr.



Many people think they have not led a full life. They believe that if they have not become wealthy or famous their life was meaningless. Leonardo da Vinci said over 500 years ago, "The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark." We all have a story to tell. This is author Kevin Hussey's story.

FOR WHOM THE BUGLE SOUNDS - Memoirs of a Stone Talker

by Kevin Hussey

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First Edition

This Book is dedicated to

Cpl Paul R Theriault
3/27th Marines
KIA May 24, 1968
In Quang Nam, Vietnam
"A Friend Who Didn't Come Home"

And

LCpl Paul Hussey
1/25th Marines
Veteran of Desert Storm
"A Son Who Did"

In Memory of Those 58,195
" Other Friends and Sons Who Didn't"

A special thanks to my daughter Michelle, without her help this book would still be a dream.

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Preface

This book is not about a man who has gone from rags to riches. It isn't about someone who was a drug addict who overcame it and went on to become the CEO of some Fortune 500 company. In a time when people flock by the thousands to stadiums to watch sporting events or a rock concert to celebrate what someone else has accomplished in life. It's about a simple man who lived a simple life and found out after sixty years that his life wasn't as simple as he thought it was. We spend too much time finding out what other people did or are doing with their lives. We look for guidance when all the time it is right inside us. The wise find it at an early stage in life; some of us have to wait a little longer, maybe a lifetime before we uncover it. We watch movies and read books about great people and great story's, but you and I have a great story to tell to.

We just don't take the time to sit back and look at the trail we are leaving behind, because we think are lives aren't worth talking about.

As I wrote this book I found out thing's that I thought at the time were coincidences. Looking at it 40 or 50 years later, in a different light, it wasn't coincidence at all. It was a path that was being chosen for me to follow. How I found people that seemed to appear just when I needed them. How did I find Paul by writing a message on the Vietnam Wall almost 40 years after his death? How did I find Bobby Pounder's brother, Duane, whose name I recognized on the 3/27th's web site and was in the same battle as Paul who was KIA in Vietnam? How did I get to meet the Marine, Sgt Mike Swagerty who was with Paul in that battle that took his life? Who held him in his arms while he took his last breath and listened to his last words. How did I come to run ten marathons at an age when most men are looking forward to retirement? Why did I choose to pick up the bugle and find great comfort and a sense of worth near the end of life? Just because I didn't see the Path, I thought it wasn't there.

In my case it took an operation to give me the time to take a good look at where I'd been and where I'm going. It made me look at the people who I grew up with in a different light. Just bringing up old memory's of those who I shared time with in my life, some for a long time, some as with Paul, for a short time. But I found great comfort reaching back in my past and reliving those times. Each person I had known had made an impact on my travels through life. I found out some people were not my friends even though I spent years with them. I found some, who I haven't even met yet, whom I feel are my best friends. I taught myself to try and find the good in everyone, but as you get older you haven't got the time to sort them out. You should have goals in life. But not those that are unattainable. Keep your goals simple and

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life becomes simple. You should have short-term goals and long-term goals. As you get into your 60's your short-term goal is to just get up the next day and make some long-term goals. My greatest accomplishments were due to tragic events, which I turned into goals, which I now am proud of. I want to go to my Maker very, very tired and with a smile on my face. I don't want to die with the feeling I didn't do what I could have. I want to meet my old friends and sit and talk for an eternity about the things we did.

Ask those who went before me, did I do OK? Maybe meet some of people who were just stones or a brass plaque when I first talked to them long ago. I'm not in a hurry to get there, but I'm no longer afraid to go there.

I'm starting my story with my dream, not ending it with a dream. I now realize that life is full of dreams. Some I will never understand, but they came to me for a reason. A soldier who I have never met interpreted it. He speaks from the heart, where there is more logic and reasoning than the mind. He speaks about something that he lived through and found peace in helping others who couldn't understand. This story is about a time in history, when young men were sent into battle. The battle this time was called Vietnam. It has been called by many names since that April morning in 1775 at Lexington, Mass when an idea was turned into a reality. In the 240 years since that morning, this country has sent the best of its men and woman to fight in other lands for that idea. That idea was called – Freedom - and it still lives today. It lives today because we believe in it so strongly, that we are the only country in the world that sends its armies to foreign lands to fight for it. This book is dedicated to those who fought and died in Vietnam. Who had to fight another battle when they came home? I didn't get the chance to serve with them in uniform, but I hope this book lets them know, that they weren't forgotten then, and they're not forgotten now. I hope these story's bring laughter and tears, sadness and joy, because life is all of the above.

Chapter 2 Safe Haven

It's six o'clock and time for the nightly news. They always start with the crime report from the night before. They'd show the local housing projects where there was robbery, drug raids and murder. People today see these projects as centers for crime out of control. Most people wouldn't venture to walk through one. I'd like to share how it was for me growing up in the fifties and early sixties to live in these now infamous hellholes.

I was born in the South End of Boston in March 1945. The end of WW2 was in sight. I don't remember much during the years I lived there. My sister Betty is ten years older than me and told me stories of what it was like. She remembers the rationing and the soldiers coming and going on the streets and at the train stations. My father was in the Army and was always off somewhere. She said we were poor but not desperate. My mother was from Ireland and my father from Newfoundland. They knew what poor was! I didn't think about it much then but I was a first generation American. But so was a lot of Boston in the early forty's. I don't know how I remember this but the only memory I have of this time was being in a junkyard. I was sitting in a stroller and my mother was talking to the junk dealer. I vividly remember a single light bulb burning and a strange odor. To this day if I ever go into a junkyard that smell comes back.

When I was born our doctor was a black man. I was born at home like many back then. It's all they could afford. After the doctor delivered me he left the house went around the corner and dropped dead. He never got to register me. This would come back to haunt me years later. Twice I had to battle the system over my birth but that's another chapter to come later.

We moved from the Boston to North Cambridge and some wooden housing on Rindge Ave. I don't remember much about that place. My sister told me she had to sleep with her coat on at night. My brother Duffy had a terrible accident. We were catching butterflies and putting them in a one-gallon bleach bottle. There were concrete foundations about three feet apart from buildings now gone. As we jumped from one to the other, my brother fell. The bottle broke and he landed on it. His back was bleeding a lot. I remember my mother putting a towel around him and it turned pure red from the blood. There was concern he'd never walk again but he did and became a police officer in Cambridge.

I want to tell you how the Roosevelt Towers looked in the early fifties. These were the wave of the future for returning Vets. In the Midwest houses were the rave, but in the inner city this was what the government offered us. When you entered the projects from Cambridge St there was a brick wall,

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which was about three feet high on each end. It would then rise up to a height of ten or twelve feet with beautiful lantern lights adorning the top. When you went through this gate there was a sign over a garden of flowers. Franklin D Roosevelt Towers. There were post and rail fences around grass covered lots. These ran the whole length of the projects. I think there were four of these lots leading up to a large lot in the back. On both sides were three story buildings, three of them. The back of the lot was the eight-story building. Four entrances, they reached over one hundred feet-with elevators. There was a large lot with a flagpole surrounded by a garden of beautiful flowers. I never thought of it then but this must have looked like the Garden of Eden to the people who came to live here.

This was still the melting pot of the nation. The good thing about project life was we were all equal. No matter your culture, color or monetary stature, we were all even. We all got the same living space and the same color rooms - battleship gray. You had to get permission to paint your apartment. You were responsible for the area outside your door. Once or twice a week you had to wash the area with bleach and if you didn't a janitor would knock on your door and remind you.

This was my home and my safe haven. You always felt safe when you crossed through those arches. Every adult in those projects looked out for you. In those days you didn't question the authority of an adult. Every woman was your mother; every man was your father when yours wasn't around. It was a village before it became popular in the nineties. Discipline could be handed out at the drop of a hat. Cops walked a beat and knew your family. We respected them and they gave respect back. Life was simple. I remember going out in the morning and having someone yell to me to go to the store for them. It was an easy nickel or a dime tip. The Towers Market was on the side street. Maurey Kramer's was on the corner of Cambridge St. Think of this – they would have donuts delivered in the early morning and left outside their door. No one ever stole them.

Well I explained how the Towers looked when entering the front. The back of the projects was a different story. The eight story buildings blocked the view from the naked eye. They towered one hundred and ten feet and went from Willow St to Windsor St. Out back there was a parking lot and large field. Across the back of this field were slaughterhouses. Triple M packing and Maddes, in back of these were the train yards. This is where the pigs and cows were delivered.

I know the midnight shifts were the ones who did the killing. I lived on the second floor, apt 96. Our windows looked out over the whole scene. When I went to bed at night the screaming began. You could hear the pigs squealing all night long. There was a strong sickening smell that came out of these buildings. I guess we just got use to it. Every once and a while we'd go over on a Sunday and open the freights and free the pigs. We'd heard them

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into the projects. Some of these guys were quite large. We would stand on the roof of the projects and watch the crews from the slaughter house rounding them up. This was always a hilarious time for us. The people in the projects didn't seem to enjoy it as much as we did.

There was also an ice cream plant on the west side of the field. It was called Bushway's Ice Cream. Now let me explain how my friends and I operated. We went to church on Sundays. We respected our teachers, police and all adults. But we were prone to taking things that didn't belong to us. Basically – we were thieves. No stolen cars, never rob a person. But freight trains and stores were our specialty. At night we would go out to the train yards. We all wore jeans, black sweaters, and a black knitted cap. We looked like commandos. I'm talking thirteen or fourteen years old. We would open sometimes thirty freights a night. We would get candy and all kinds of goods. Most of the stuff we didn't take. We were in it for the adventure. We didn't steal anything to sell and make a profit. There was a Budweiser warehouse on the tracks. We always tried to get beer freight, but always got one full of empty bottles. One Sunday afternoon we opened one of these trains and hit pay dirt. It was full of "BEER". We started to unload it in broad daylight. We hid the beer in the coal yard near the tracks. One of the boys with us was Bobby. Bobby was a special friend of ours. He was over six feet tall with blond hair and was as strong as a bull. We use to jump on his stomach and he would never flinch. Bobby had only one good arm. His other arm had only a small hand out from his shoulder. When I think back now, I am very proud of my friends and myself. We never for one second thought of him as different. He was our hero. He could swim the length of the pool in the park (Olympic Style) under water both ways. He was the only person I ever saw do it. Many tried and failed. One day he got in a fight with one of the older tough guys at the pool. He looked like a windmill in a hurricane. The bully never got a punch off. Our lives would entwine again some fifty years later.

Of the guys we hung out with, Calvin was a character. He had the habit of constantly tugging at his pants like Jimmy Cagney. This kid would steal anything that wasn't nailed down. He would take stuff we had no use for. If we went in the front door of Woolworth's in Central Sq when he came out the back he would show us his loot. Women's earring's, bras and socks. When we asked him why he took them, he would answer with the words of the proverbial mountain climber-"Because it was there." That ice cream factory in back of the projects - Bushway's - was one of his biggest accomplishments. One day coming back from a raid on the freights, carrying watermelons, he found one of the ice cream trucks doors were left opened. He started to unload it. He ran into the projects with cases of ice cream. Within minutes people were grabbing it up. That day Calvin had his fifteen minutes of fame. Robin Hood had nothing on him.

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Another time we saw a Rothman's meat truck on Harding Street. Cal jumped on the back of the truck as it was going down the street and opened the door in the back. It was winter and I still can remember the hams, salami's and blocks of cheeses lying all over the street. That night three kids went to bed with stomachaches. Sad to say but I heard later in life Calvin died from a bad heart. He never saw the age of twenty-one. A lot of kids I hung with would also die before their time. The city we knew and life we had was changing.

Chapter 24

The Towers Fall, An Old Friend Rises

I was just leaving the gym on that September 11th morning when I heard one of the young men working there telling some people that a plane had just hit a building in New York. My first thought was a small Piper Cub had probably over shot the runway and struck a building near the airport. When I got in the house the wife was sitting in front of the TV and tears were streaming down her face. My God she said, "you won't believe what just happened". I looked at the TV and saw a large jet crash into the Trade Center Towers. "When did this happen I" asked her? My God she screamed, "that's the second plane". I calmed her down and told her it was probably a repeat. No, she said" it's another plane crashing into the second tower". We both sat there in absolute shock. Right before our eyes are country was being attacked. Reports started coming in about other planes crashing. I had haven't felt like this since the day JFK was assassinated in 1963. We watched the horror unfolding before our eyes for hours. I left for work that afternoon and told the people at the Kindergarten that we were under attack. I don't think anyone understood the magnitude of the events taking place. We now joined our parents and how it must have felt when Pearl Harbor was attacked. It might sound crazy but I went and got my rifle and some ammo and kept it close by.

The next few weeks were filled with hour after hour of watching TV and seeing our people die in front of our eyes. There are four schools in a row in our town and the school I worked was right under the flight path of planes heading to land at Manchester airport. I would go outside and just look up at the sky and see the emptiness. You never paid much attention to the noise of the planes coming over until they were silenced. One of the things that I haven't been able to forget was the woman in one of the Towers talking to her husband on the phone. She told him she wasn't going to make it out and then told him how much she loved him. There's not a day goes by I don't hear that voice. I don't have to write much about this event, its embedded in everyone's mind for life. Everybody will remember where they were the day the Towers Fell. Every generation has its Pearl Harbor. In early November I was still upset over 911. I sent e-mail to the Boston Herald to Joe Fitzgerald. It went something like this:

"After 911 I'll never feel the same about a football player making millions of dollars a year going in for a touchdown. Rather I'll think about some firemen or cop making forty grand a year running into a raging inferno to save the lives of total strangers. Or those Soldiers and Marines in battle, who

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braved withering machine gun fire to save the lives of their fellow soldiers. Yes. A lot has changed since 911, and so have my Heroes.”

At work that night I was looking through the Boston Herald. The Medal of Honor Society was meeting in Boston this week. They had pictures and stories about local men who had served from all over the Boston area. I almost fell off the chair. There was a picture of David Hemingway, my old buddy from high school at Rindge. The next day I got e-mail from Joe and he asked me to call him at the paper. He liked the article I had written and it appeared in his column. I called him and we talked about my article. Joe writes about the everyday man or woman. Stories that don't make the headlines but tug at your heartstrings, or just are enjoyable to read. I asked him a favor and he obliged. Joe has an Irishman's ability to get you talking and opening doors you had closed years ago. I didn't know it then but he was taking in every word. This appeared in his column the next day.

Twist of Fate Changed Destiny for Two Friends

By Joe Fitzgerald

Like a lot of guys his age, Kevin Hussey, 56 finds himself looking at the way things are, wistfully remembering the way they use to be.

A Cambridge native who now makes his home in Londonderry, N.H., he called in to request a favor, explaining he'd been browsing through this papers special tribute to Medal of Honor recipients when he spotted a familiar name among local veterans pictured on accompanying pages.

I'm flipping through and, there's Sgt David Hemingway, a Green Beret! I haven't seen that kid in 35 years. Oh, would I love to talk with him again. So I thought maybe you could get the word to him."

"When were you last together?"

"It's a crazy story, "I replied, laughing. "We got kicked out of Rindge Tech in 1963. Don't ask me why; I can't remember. I was a bit of a punk and it was fourth time I'd been tossed, so I figured there was no way they were going to let me in again

"I said to Davey, Let's join the Army", and he says, "Yeah, let's be Green Berets!" So we head to the recruiting office in Central Square, but Sgt Deluca is out to lunch. Davey says, "I'll meet you her tomorrow morning at 10," and we both headed home, 18, ready to conquer the world.

"But when I got home, my father, a career Army man who was always pushing education, read the riot act to me. I guess the school had called him at old Fort Banks in Winthrop. The next morning, wearing his uniform, he marches into the principal's office where I'm given one more chance".

"What did you tell Davey?"

I never got to see him. He went back the next morning at 10 and enlisted. Me? I went back to school the next day. I married young; by the time I was 25 I had five kids.

"One day in 1966 my wife says, "There's someone to see you at the front door and he looks kind of upset. "It was Davey, asking "where the hell were you?" I tell him how it was a quirk of fate, that if the Sgt had been there when we showed up we'd have joined together, the way we planned".

Instead, Hussey wound up with Polaroid while Hemingway wound up with the 101st Airborne. I thought a lot about that as the years went by .One of my sons is a Marine, a Gulf War veteran. I remember going to Parris Island for his graduation, looking around, and thinking. "Gee, this was my calling and I missed it, all because some guy went to lunch.

"When I think of Davey, I think about the Cambridge we grew up in, how we had a code of ethics on the streets, in the schools, things you don't hear about anymore. Most of our teachers were World War 2 veterans and you

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didn't give any guff, if you did your parents took their side, just like my father did. There was an element of respect to everyday life. If you got into a fight and the other guy said he'd had enough, you stopped and shook hands. Today, they want to gun each other down. I don't understand it.

"I had another buddy, Eric Carlson, who died about a month ago. Same deal. He was a kid from Cambridge I hadn't seen in 37 years. My son asked, "Dad, if you didn't see him all that time, why are you going to his funeral?" I said, "Son, when someone you grew up with dies, a page from your history book is gone."

"When my wife Miriam was 15 years old she was a good-looking girl, still is." One day a couple of guys made a remark to her, this kid Eric turned around and said, "hey, she's Hus's girl, you don't talk to her like that." Do you know to this day, she has never forgotten that and neither have I. That's the way it was, you watched out for each other.

Then he laughed again, as if laughing at himself. "Listen to me; maybe it's my age. I can remember things that happened 50 years ago, yet went to the gym without my glasses this morning."

"Anyway, in case Davey sees your column, I'd appreciate it if you'd throw in a message for me, OK? Tell him, "Hey, buddy, please give me a call. We've got lots to talk about."

A couple of days after this appeared in the paper I came home and found a message on my phone. It was from Joe. He told me he had a name of someone who knows where Davey is, "it's not good, Kevin, Joe said." I knew from the tone of his voice something bad had happened to Davey. I called the number and it was an old friend of Davey's from Cambridge. He told me Davey had suffered multiple strokes and was in the V.A. hospital in Bedford, Mass. No matter, I had found him and couldn't wait to see and talk to him. We drove to the Rodgers building in Bedford and went up to the 3rd floor. The wife and I were walking around when she pointed to a man in a wheelchair, "that's Davey, she said." I told her it wasn't but she went over and it was Davey. He couldn't walk but the worse thing was he couldn't talk. He remembered my wife and she gave him a big hug. I walked over and tried to shake his good hand. He seemed paralyzed on only one side. After 35 years I find him and he can't communicate with me. We talked to him and he would answer in grunts or move his head from side to side or up and down. After a while I told my wife I had to go the men's room. I went and found a corner near the elevator and broke down. A nurse came over and hugged me and told me she knew how bad it must be for me. She really helped me by talking and comforting me. I went back to be with Davey and the wife. I really think women are stronger than us when it comes to this stuff. My wife treated him like nothing was wrong but a little speech problem. He kissed her when we left. I think she made him happy.

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I didn't sleep at all for the next couple of weeks. I was having bad dreams and yelling out at night. After a few visits I wrote a long letter to the head doctor at the hospital. I couldn't accept the fact that a former Green Beret couldn't overcome this obstacle. To my amazement the doctor called me at home and we talked for a good hour on the phone. Sometimes the V.A. gets a bad rap, but this doctor was absolutely wonderful. He told me Davey wasn't doing what he had to do to improve his situation. He explained that they could improve his mobility through therapy and even teach him to speak again. It was a lot of hard work but Davey didn't want to do it. I continued to go see him every other week. One day I brought him the book "A Band of Brothers" about the 101st Airborne in WW2. He pushed it away from me and shook his head. I didn't know that he couldn't read anymore. I also had a long talk with his nurse. She told me Davey had thrown in the towel. He had just given up on life. My wife sat down with me one night and told me "Honey you have to let Davey go. You are turning into a zombie. You don't laugh and have fun anymore. A lot of things have happened in Davey's life that you don't know about in the last 35 years. He's not the same person you went to school with. I don't want you to give up on life because he has. You have five kids and six grand children to think about. Sometimes you have to cut the past lose".

I went up to visit Davey a few more times but knew the wife was right. I lessened my visits and in time, I let go. It was a hard thing to do, but it seemed like I had no choice. I had to realize being a Green Beret doesn't protect you from the tough times and bad things that come with life. But at least I found him and made an attempt to bring him some happiness.

I want to leave this sad tale with a funny story that I never told Davey It happened in our high school years ago. One day Davey came up to me in the corridor of Rindge. He put up his hand up and told me to stop where I was. I can still him if I close my eyes right now. Davey was a little guy and I took on a lot of guys who screwed with him in school. He was holding a book in his left hand and then he made his farewell speech to me. "Look Kevin, I like you but I want to finish high school and I keep getting into trouble hanging around you. I've been in after school detention since the first day I met you. I have to stay away from you and study more and get my diploma. I just finished my last day in detention after three years." I said, "OK, Davey, I understand, but let's have one last smoke together before we say goodbye". We were right outside the bathroom next to the teacher's room on the first floor. Now these toilets didn't have any doors on them. We went inside and got in the toilet closest to the door. I lit up a smoke and took a few drags and then gave it to Davey. While he was smoking I went into the teacher's room next door and told them some kid was smoking in the bathroom. Mr. Carsha came out and walked into the bathroom. Just as Davey poked his head out and blew smoke

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right in his face."30 days detention Hemingway, report after school today." He never knew I did that and I still wouldn't tell him after 35 years.

In July of 2008 my daughter Debby rented a cabin on Moosehead Lake in Maine. My knee was still giving me a lot of pain but this place had a walkway for handicapped persons. It's a good thing it did because it was a steep walk to the pond out back. My wife and I thought we'd go up and spend a few days. It was so nice and peaceful there we stayed the whole week. It reminded me of when Huey and I went up to Maine years back to deer hunt. The second day there my daughter told me I was keeping them up at night moaning. She gave me a bottle of TYLENOL to kill the pain and it helped. There were only two cabins on the whole pond and we had a brand new log cabin set on the side of a hill. We had a great time. There was no TV or phone and all we had was each other's company. Funny how you don't miss things you thought you had to have to survive.

In October I got a phone call from Davy's sister. She told me Davey had passed away in July. She was going through some of his stuff and found my phone number. I was up at Moosehead when he passed. She told me there weren't many people at his wake. I explained that most of our friends had left Cambridge for greener pastures. I also told her I read the obituaries everyday but was away in Maine at the time of his passing. She told me he was buried with military honors at the Vets Cemetery in Cambridge. I told her I would go down and see him. The following Monday I grabbed my trumpet and headed down. It was a beautiful fall day and I got there about 11 in the morning. I found his grave, which didn't have a military marker yet but a laminated card from the funeral home was still on it. He was in the back near a fence where there was some construction going on next to the cemetery. There was a lot of noise going on from the construction site. I laid a flower on his grave and put the trumpet to my lips. On about the third note there was dead silence. When I finished and turned to leave and saw all the men who had been doing the construction standing at attention with their hard hats in their hands. I waved to them and thanked them. They waved back and resumed working. I turned to Davey and bid him goodbye. I will be back next Memorial Day to visit you and our classmates who sleep here with you. This is the way I like to perform Taps - alone. I feel closer to them when it's just my Maker, them, and me. Sadness and happiness found on that October morning.

Thoughts and Reflections - The Plain at West Point

Kevin me lad,

I was thinking of you yesterday. Bob Foley was awarded the Distinguished Graduate Award at West Point yesterday. I attended and yesterday I was standing out on The Plain while they had the ceremony. One element of it was the playing of Taps by a member of the West Point Band. After it I leaned over to the classmate next to me and said "I have a pal who plays it better."

It was quite a ceremony and then they had the Corps of Cadets "pass in review" for us old grads. A tear came to my eyes as they marched by and did the "Eyes Right". It was special to look into those young faces with all that they have before them.

We had lunch in the mess hall right under the balcony where General Mac Arthur gave his "Duty-Honor-Country" speech when I was a plebe.

Anyway, just wanted you to know your name was mentioned out on the Plain at West Point yesterday.

Keep the Faith

Dick

Most people wouldn't think much of this incident, but by now at this point in the book you should have a good idea of what makes me tick. Bob Foley is a retired three star general who was awarded the "Medal of Honor" on November 5, 1966 in Vietnam for actions against the enemy. I have a copy of the award hung on my wall signed by him.

Dick Higgins was in the same class as Foley at West Point and also served in Vietnam. Dick could have been an Irish sage if he chose to. He can read poems by Rudyard Kipling or quote an Irish verse word for word at the drop of a hat. I met him when he was in Ireland and he melted in over there like an ice cream cone on a hot August afternoon. One of his great quotes is this one,

On Being Irish

"He had an abiding sense of gloom, which sustained him through brief periods of happiness"

It didn't take him long to figure me out. To have this gentleman think of me when he was standing on "The Plain" at West Point is a great honor for me. But what else would a fellow Irishman do.

Chapter 25

Answers From the Wall - The Marines of the 3/27th

I have spent the better part of my life looking for answers as to what happened to Paul Theriault. It's very hard to get information on people if you aren't related. It's even harder if many years have passed. Every time I met a Marine who served in Vietnam, I would ask them if they knew Paul. I got very drunk one night and landed in Cambridge looking for Paul's family. I was going through a rough time in my life. Seemed everyone around me was dying or already dead. I went to the local VFW in Cambridge and asked questions. I even went to the Lion's Den, a bar in North Cambridge in Paul's old neighborhood. You can't believe the looks I got when I walked in that bar. These were local watering holes where strangers weren't welcomed. They told me the square around the corner was named for him but they didn't know him. I left and walked around the neighborhood looking for something familiar. I finally went up to a door and knocked on it. An old guy opened the door a crack and asked me what I wanted. I told him I was looking for the Theriault family and that my friend was killed in Vietnam in 1968 and they had lived on this street. He told me to wait a minute. The door opened again and a telephone book was handed to me, and the door slammed shut. I looked up the name and found it. I knocked on the door, which was opened to retrieve the book and slammed shut again.

I went to the address and knocked on the door. Again the door was opened just a crack. I explained whom I was and was let in by Paul's sister. I would finally get some answers. We sat and talked and she showed me his Purple Heart. She told me the father was never the same after Paul's death. I spent a lot of time in tears during our talk. When I was leaving I asked her why everyone in the neighborhood was so hostile to me. "Kevin, this is not the same place you and Paul grew up in," with that I left, grateful for our talk but still with many questions unanswered. You still have to tread gently with the family, even after 40 years. I told her I would come back someday and introduce my son Paul to her, who I had named after her brother.

One day I was on the computer and went to the site page "The Vietnam Wall". I was still pretty bad at using the computer but managed to get to a site where you could leave a message for someone to read. I left my name and e-mail address. A few weeks later I got an email from someone who knew Paul's sister. He wanted to know if I was a good friend of Paul's. I told him my story and he put me onto the 3/27th Marines web page. He told me this was Paul's outfit in Nam. Finally I would get the answers I had been searching for. This guy's sister was Paul's sister's best friend and he was also named after

Memoirs of a Stone Talker

Paul. I posted a message on the 3/27 website and started getting hits. The first Marine I heard from was Richard Buchanan. He sent maps of the area of operation where Paul was KIA. He shot the VC who killed Paul. The battle that Paul was KIA in was called Allen Brook. He said the day Paul was killed the temperature was 120 degrees. He also told me Paul was a good Marine and remained strong through the months of patrols.

Next came Sgt. Mike Swagerty. He sent a picture of Paul with some other Marines in Vietnam. I was finally starting to get some info on Paul. Mike told me about a book called "Every Marine" by Bob Simonsen, who fought at the battle of Allen Brook. I sent for a copy and have read it countless times. All of these Marines went out of their way to help me find the answers to questions I had from 40 years ago. I have Paul's pictures on my "Wall of Honor" in my den. I have kept in contact with a lot of the Marines from the 3/27th and have made friends with many of them. I have written them and they always respond. I wrote a poem dedicated to Paul. It took me over two years to complete. My poem and some letters from the 3/27th Marines are at the end of this chapter.

I shared this poem with a teacher I use to work with at North school. Janet writes children's books and I asked for her opinion of the poem. I had sent it to her in September of 2008 and never heard from her, so I thought it wasn't that good. The following December I got an e-mail from her. She had retired from the school and it got lost in the move. She told me it was a very good poem and I should get it published. I sent it to one publisher but they wanted \$4000 up front. Janet told me to bring the contract up to the school, she was working part time there, and she would look it over. I started sending the poem to Veterans I had met over the past few years.

Everyone I sent it to said it was a great poem. I would have it framed and then sent it to the Marines who served in the 3/27 with Paul. I also sent it to the Mobile Riverine Force who had adopted me along with the 3/27th. Now that the poem was finished I needed something to do while I was recovering from the knee operation. I had this thought of writing a book on how Paul's death back in 1968 inspired me to write this poem and play Taps. So I went home with no idea of how to even start the process of writing a book. Janet had told me writing was very fluid and it will come to you as you write. When I sat down at the computer and started to type I was amazed at how much of my past life flowed through my fingers. Things I thought were forgotten were only stored in the deep recesses on my mind. Some things you don't want to remember but you have no choice when you open your mind. They are all buried in the same place.

For Whom the Bugle Sounds

One thing that always bothered me in life was Death. Not actually the event itself but the way it's looked at. I'm amazed that after someone dies and the initial mourning period is over and the person is buried, you'll meet someone a month later. "So how is so and so's wife or husband doing. Oh, he or she is still mourning. Then they say they should get over it and move on." I've sat with many guys who were in combat and lost friends and in the middle of the story you'll see a tear in their eye. My mother use to put vinegar on her head to cure a headache (an old Irish cure) and whenever I smell it I think of her. A bottle of Old Thompson's whiskey brings back memories of my buddy Mike. Death in any form can rekindle itself at the blink of an eye. People have this false impression that life ends with death. How foolish!! Oh, the body ceases to exist and is gone forever, but why do you think God gave you the gift of memory? When I walk around cemeteries and "Talk to Stones," it's not the stone I'm talking to. The stone is a reference point to what is left after the body is gone. I'm talking to an energy source that is still here all around me. The Spirit and the Memory. Sgt Swagerty said, "No one dies till their memory dies." If the memory lives, the person lives. You just have to see it in a different light. The person's body is gone but their energy exists in your memory. Have you ever used a compass? You follow the metal needle, but it's the magnetic field that's gets you home safe. It's something you can't see; you're following a source of energy. Look at a person's spirit as energy and you have them with you forever.

Have you ever heard the saying, "God was with them after some terrible thing almost claimed a person's life. Have you ever had a near death experience and had the feeling someone was watching over you. I was visiting North school one day after an operation on my foot. I drive a five-speed manual transmission truck. This is quite difficult with a bad foot because I had to use the bad foot to work the clutch. I came to a four-way intersection; I was on the main drag and had the right of way. I car came out of the road on my left side and never stopped. This young girl had to be doing 60 in a 35 mph zone. If I had gotten to that intersection one second sooner I'd be dead.

You always think of life in terms of years, but that day it came down to a split second. Someone was watching over me. A lady to my right who was stopped at the intersection and saw what had happened' just looked at me and made the sign of the cross. Many Vets I've talked to tell me how an artillery or mortar round landed near a group of them. Three were killed but one guy didn't get a scratch. How the enemy had raked a line of men with machine gun fire but for some reason missed him. I haven't and no one has the answer to these questions. You spend your whole life wondering, "why them and not me." Why was Sgt De Luca out to lunch the day Davey and me

Memoirs of a Stone Talker

had gone to the recruiting station? Why did Paul die at such a young age and I'm still here.

Coincidence?????

Someone once said, "Coincidence is God's way of staying anonymous. I think my eyes were opened the day I heard Taps on the television. I think I really started to think about the mysteries of life that day. After I had found Davey in the V.A. in Bedford. My wife and I were having lunch in a place in Haverhill, Mass called Mr. Mike's. It was a restaurant but it had a very large bar too. I noticed a priest dining with an elderly couple in a booth. It's the first time I had ever seen a priest in a bar and or restaurant. I wrote Davey's name on a napkin and handed to the priest on the way out. Father," would you mention this man in your prayers for me." He said yes and asked about Davey and where I was from. I told him I was from Cambridge. He said he was from Cambridge to. I told him I was from East Cambridge and he said he was from North Cambridge. I told him I had a buddy killed in Vietnam from North Cambridge. "What was his name, he asked me." I told him his name was Paul Theriault. He knew Paul as a child and lived close to him. What were the odds of this happening? Probably the same as the day I was looking up bagpipe players in the phone book and heard Taps being played on the television.

One day while I was on the Marines 3/27th website I saw a name I thought I knew. It was an e-mail address with the name Pounder in it. Remember Bobby Ponder who I grew up with in Cambridge 55 years ago? Well I wrote the Marine and asked him if he was from Massachusetts. He wrote me back and said no, he was from Arizona. A couple of days he wrote me again and said he was born in Massachusetts and asked me who I was. I told him I was from Cambridge, Mass and thought I'd take a long shot because of his name. Ready for this coincidence!!!! He then asked me if my father was a high-ranking NCO in the Army. Yes he was, I said. Then the bells started going off. He remembered me and we started talking. He was Bobby's younger brother Duane. I hung around with Bobby and remembered Duane. He told me story's about Bobby and us guys and some of the crazy things we use to do. His father was in the Coast Guard and he remembered the time we got caught breaking into the freight trains and stole 44 cases of beer. Also the time we had a big pigeon roast at his house when his father went away. Duane and the family left Cambridge in the late 50's and moved father up north. Duane joined the Marines and was in the same battle with the 3/27th that Paul was KIA. He was badly wounded and almost didn't make it. He gave me Bobby's address and I wrote him. Bobby was married and living in northern Maine. He was living in a very small town and was a registered

For Whom the Bugle Sounds

Maine hunting guide and was a living legend up there. That didn't surprise me. Bobby and his wife were going to be in my area in the summer and they would drop by and see me on the way back to Maine. They pulled up in my yard and there was Bobby. He didn't look much different since the last time I saw him 55 years ago. My mother always thought Bobby was a very handsome man and she loved me being around him. I think if Bobby walked by me on the street I would have known him. Still the kid I had as a hero years ago. Some things are forever.

Why did I meet Harold Hector on the computer in 1997? He wasn't the person I thought he was, but meeting him got me to the point where I am now. Through him I met Sgt Sperry and a host of people who have influenced my life. I left a message on a on the Vietnam Wall and got to finally get answers to questions after 40 years of searching. I now have Marines that served with Paul as friends. My wall is full of letters and patches from Army and Marine groups because of some coincidence? I don't think so. I don't know if my poem was always inside me just waiting for the right people and right time to come out. I met a Marine from the 3/27th. Sgt Andy Boyko who wrote some poems when he was 19 and serving in Vietnam. I didn't start writing until I was in my 60's. Andy Boyko wrote his in the midst of battle. His book is called "Before the Wall" and gives you an insight into the mind of a young Marine serving in Vietnam. These guys were called "Baby Killers" when they came home. It took another 30 years for a nation to realize the valor of these men. Read the poems in his book and you will see inside the heart and mind of a young man thrust into battle.

To: Kevin Hussey Sr.
From; Sgt Mike Swagerty
Subject; Gift

Kevin,

Ain't life funny? You roll along thinking you're in charge, have everything under control, then realize some part of your life has bitten you in the ass and you have to deal with it. I lost many friends in Vietnam many, many. I also lost friends in Vietnam BEFORE I went to war....One who lived with me but was not kin, several others I went to school with.

Here's how I deal with itThe best way I can. Man I wish I knew the secretbut I don't. Mine is the age-old story...Someone might ask me, were you in Vietnam? "My immediate thought is. " Yeah, I was there just last night." And I was. Every day, every night. That is the truth. I want to tell you

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that your pain is not ALL bad. Emotional pain is recognition of traumatic events in your life ...losing a family member... someone you love...a friend. It's not a bad thing to grieve for those loved ones.

Here's the best answer I have on how to deal with the loss of people we know are heroes. Live the rest of your life as honorably as you can... just the way your friends died. HONORABLY. That is how you honor their lives. What you do now.... The Taps thing. I SO ADMIRE IT.... And listen, if I admire YOU for what you do...recognizing the sacrifice of our brothers...and fathers...and be willing to step up and DO something. My, oh my, how would love to have someone like you play Taps at my funeral ... Believe me when I tell you the men you loved...your Dad... your friend... they heard you play Taps for them. I truly believe that. And. I believe They were thinking, "Hey, he hasn't forgotten us." Someone still loves us.

Thank you for your kind gift. I will put it on "My Wall" and honor it. Try to remember that "NO one dies until their Memory dies"... And as long as there are people like you, heroes will always live.

God Bless ... and Semper Fidelis
Sgt Mike Swagerty

This letter was written to me after 38 years of searching for information on my buddy...Cpl Paul Theriault. The Sgt answered a message I left on a website from the 3/27th Marines. Mike was in the battle of Go Noi Island (Allen Brook) in the spring of 1968. Paul was KIA during this battle on May 24 1968. I now sleep much better knowing that Paul died in the company of such men.

It's amazing how a man, who lived through the horror of war, can find such gentle and kind words to pass on, and ease the heart and mind of a fellow human being he has never met. But that is what made him a Sgt and a Marine.

Letters from the 3/27th Marines about my poem:

What Really Matters

Kevin,
Well done my friend. You have done everyone PROUD!!!
Sgt Andy Boyko

Kevin,

For Whom the Bugle Sounds

Thanks for your warming poem. I lost both legs on Allen Brook, so it means a lot to me and the brothers I served with. Sorry your friend lost his life there, but thanks to you his Memory will NEVER die.

Tim Davis
India – 3/27

Kevin,

Thank you so much for your very moving poem. You have put into words the thoughts of so many loved ones who still miss their beloved Marines.

Marilyn Burke Barnett.

Thank you all. It's an Honor and privilege to read your thoughts. Your kind words and thoughts make my poem what I hope it would be.

Semper Fi
Kevin Hussey Sr.



Many people think they have not led a full life. They believe that if they have not become wealthy or famous their life was meaningless. Leonardo da Vinci said over 500 years ago, "The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark." We all have a story to tell. This is author Kevin Hussey's story.

FOR WHOM THE BUGLE SOUNDS - Memoirs of a Stone Talker

by Kevin Hussey

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