

*Award-winning Comanche's Wars is told through the eyes of a horse—a young black stallion from Virginia—embarking on a journey of self-discovery during America's aggressive push to the West. Stonewall's journey will parallel a nation's heritage that embraces triumphs and defeats on the battlefields.*

## **COMANCHE'S WARS**

by Clint Goodwin

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# COMANCHE'S WARS

Experience American history through horses' eyes.



CLINT GOODWIN

*Comanche's Wars*

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This is a work of historical fiction, based on actual persons and events. The author has taken creative liberty with many details to enhance the reader's experience.

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# Reflections

## *Peace*

Our family patriarch, Lucky survived the US Civil War because of his courage, strength, and spirited heart. Thankfully, he and our matriarch, Red reunited in Northern Virginia after the war. Their union brought forth six generations of war horses. If they had not, I would not be telling this story.

I am mindful that after the civil war, my family's legacy continued during the Indian Wars fought between 1873 and 1875. This story continues the saga of my father's great-great-great, grandfather Stonewall, who lived long enough to fight his last battle during the Spanish-American War.

I am all that is left of my family's bloodline. My name is Peace. Until I die, I am dedicated to telling the valiant heroics of my family who served our great nation. Their sense of duty is my inheritance and rock I stand upon.



It is the year of our Lord, 1986. I am a six-year-old black thoroughbred stallion. The United States Army charged me with the humbling honor of pulling caissons that carry the flag draped caskets of deceased veterans. It is my job to get them from the church to the burial plot where the veteran's fellow service members will gracefully lift the casket off the caisson. In rehearsed unison, they will smartly carry the deceased to their final resting place—where heroes sleep—in Arlington National Cemetery.

How I got here is a long story rooted in the heroics of my family's bloodline. It all started six generations ago with Lucky, who served during the US Civil War. His legacy persists as I stand here in a stall at Fort Meyer, waiting for the best United States Army's soldiers to take care of me.

Looking around this dark dusty stable, I wondered how an old horse stable in Alexandria, Virginia, became the centerpiece of American history. I work with handpicked horses who have served here much longer than I have. With that said, there is much tradition and honor here on this hallowed ground at the Old Guard. I am humbled and honored to serve.

Standing behind the horse stable, I look down the side street leaving the barn. The narrow road winds itself downhill towards the Arlington Cemetery main entrance. The cemetery fills my heart with appreciation and gratitude for the United States Army.

My service, like the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard deploys men and woman to fight and defeat those who wish to do our country harm. I am honored to serve with soldiers who are willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice to protect our great nation during war. For that very reason, I serve a military that has provided my family a home for over 150 years. On this sacred soil is where my family's story began.

Six generations before me have carried or pulled machines of war since 1861. My father, Rusty shared with me many war stories where our family fought and in some cases, died. For example, while under fire, my father carried a famous army officer across deep rice paddies during the Vietnam War in 1968.

My grandmother, Reckless hauled artillery and carried several brave US Marines across the muddy valleys of Osan during the Korean War in 1950. My great-grandfather, Jubal Early served during the Second World War and with his father, Tough Guy during the First World War at the Battle of Passchendaele, France in 1918.

Tough Guy's father, Stonewall fought during the Comanche Wars and Spanish-American War. However, all of my father's fathers and mares recognize and pay homage to the memories of our family patriarch, Lucky. His heroic actions defined and set the highest standards for our generations to follow. This story begins with his son, Stonewall. A young black stallion from Virginia standing on the forefront of America's aggressive push to the West.



Automobiles hurried along Washington Boulevard near Fort Meyer. The people in those vehicles drove to and from work as part of their daily

beltway dance. The fort's high rock walls prevented drivers from seeing the inhabitants that went about their duties. It was just another day for commuters in the Washington metropolitan area, where the grand capital of the United States of America sits. However, it was not just another day at the fort. The locals understood that behind the fort's gates, sailors, soldiers, airmen, and marines did their solemn duty to prepare and lay to rest our nation's heroes.

Combat veteran, US Marine Sergeant Szkalak shuffled inside our stable carrying a bucket of oats in one hand and horse leads in the other. He left the stable door open allowing the morning sun to divide the darkness from our stable. I anxiously neighed. "Good. Sergeant Szkalak has brought me my oats and water. I hoped he put molasses in my oats. The taste of molasses adds flavor to an otherwise dry meal." My father once said, "Peace, you will never have a sick day in your life, as long you eat a teaspoon of molasses." I think he was right. I had yet to catch a cold during my first six years of life.

I liked Sergeant Szkalak. He was a bit older than the rest of the service members attached to the Old Guard. Unlike the younger soldiers, he did not say much. He always seemed to be reflecting. The rest of the troopers called him a hero, which he downplayed with indifference. Szkalak had fought in several wars during his military career. He was injured and saved lives. For his heroism, Szkalak earned the right to choose his last duty station. He worked a deal with the US Marine Corps and US Army to let him serve his last year in the service as a burial guard leader until he retired.

Two weeks ago, I overheard junior officers talk about Szkalak. One officer commented that Szkalak willingly put himself into the enemy's line of fire during several campaigns. Another officer said Szkalak wanted to be near his friends; who were laid to rest in Arlington Cemetery.

In the military, we all could sympathize and understand his compelling need to *not* let go and always remember those who have given their lives to preserve our nation's freedom.

Standing in the stall next to me is my old friend Blackie, who says he knew my great-grandfather back in the Second World War. I snorted to get his attention. "Blackie, want to hear my family's war stories again?"

Looking through the wooden slats between us, he said, “Go ahead, young feller. It has been three days since I heard about Lucky. I enjoyed hearing about his courageous journey during the US Civil War. Son, you sure love to talk.”

I replied, “We have a couple of hours before the next ceremony. Don’t worry, those old legs of yours can stand long enough to hear about Comanche’s wars. This is how my great-great-great-grandfather, Stonewall passed it to his son, Tough Guy.”



### *Stonewall*

I was born Thursday morning, April 13, 1871. My mother, Red was the proudest mare alive at that moment. She told me she and my father, Lucky were grateful to have a son. She said I looked just like my father. I was solid black and built like a cannon.

Our owner was none other than the president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant. He had taken favor to my father, Lucky when he and then, General Grant first met at Arlington Cemetery in June 1868. They both were battle-hardened veterans who witnessed enough death and despair to last three lifetimes. General Grant took charge of my father and promised him a good, long life.

Fast forward two years later to April 13, 1873. It was my second birthday. Stallions and mares could no longer call me a colt or yearling. I was now a stallion. The weather was perfect outside. With a glad, full heart, I grazed with my family on Dr. John Moran’s farm in Fairfax County, Virginia. The dew on the grass glistened in the early morning sun. It tasted so good with every bite I took. The breeze made the tall bluegrass sway around my hocks. The spring months were the best time of year in Northern Virginia. Every time I put my head up, the gentle wind blew across my nose. Everything in my life was perfect.

Toward the end of the morning, I grazed by myself in the north pasture on a small hill. I enjoyed the peace and quiet. Before long, hoof steps galloping up the hill behind me broke the silence. I looked up, turned around, and saw my father, Lucky, galloping toward me. I snorted a cheery good morning to him. When I looked into his eyes, my senses told me something was weighing heavy on his heart.



My father approached me. “Son, we knew the day that would come when you would leave us. That time has come. I taught you everything a stallion needs to survive on the battlefield. It is time for you to go and serve the army, as I have done.” Looking into his eyes, I felt the emotion when he explained to me the importance of our family’s military service.

“Father, where will I go?”

“Son, the president is sending you west to help Colonel Mackenzie control the Staked Plains Indians causing havoc down in Texas. Not all tribes have been resistant and have accepted the change. Only a few remain, and they have hardened hearts. You will need to learn how to run against a mustang. Those horses are quicker and more agile than us.”

“What change do you mean?”

“The kind of change that requires expansion of our country’s land borders to the West. I have never been there, but have heard the trip in itself is both beautiful and horrific. You will not be going that far at first. Your orders are to report to the US Army Eighth Cavalry Headquarters, Fort Whipple, Virginia. While on duty, you will prepare, train, and wait for further orders.”

Those orders did come, and I was on my way to serve in the Texas Frontier. The day I left the farm was a day I will never forget. My mother and father stood on the grassy hill watching me walk toward the big gate where our longtime caretaker, Mr. Winn fitted a halter to my head and led me through the gate.

It was a sad day yet a glad day. The sad part was looking back to see my mother place her head near my father’s chest. I smelled her tears. My eyes made contact with my father’s piercing black eyes. He stood up on both hind legs and let out his rebel yell. He never forgot what it was like to serve our country.



The next day, Mr. Winn took me to Fort Whipple host to the US Tenth Cavalry Headquarters. The fort was located across the Potomac River, only miles from the White House. Colonel John Gregg was the post commander.

Mr. Winn met the colonel at the post’s livery stable. He said, “Sir, President Grant requested arrangements to get this black stallion to Col. Ranald S. Mackenzie.” The colonel replied. “We will make

arrangements to get him to the Fourth US Cavalry headquarters located in Fort Griffin, Texas.” The men shook hands and departed.

While walking me to the farrier, Mr. Winn said, “Stoney, you are a special horse. The President of the United States is giving you to Colonel Mackenzie, who served under President Grant during the civil war. By the way, time in my life I care not to discuss.”

My father told me not to fear death. He said, “Son, always protect your trooper. It is our duty.” I vowed for my father to proudly serve and be loyal to any trooper who rode my back.

The Fort Whipple assignment was temporary. Within the week, I would be traveling to Fort Griffin, Texas. Mr. Winn told me life can change on a dime. He was right. One day, I am celebrating my second birthday with my mother and father. The next, I am an inexperienced cavalry horse serving in the United States Army. I had to learn to accept change.

The horses I met at Fort Whipple said, “As long as you are a cavalry horse, there will be no time for emotional departures.” The memory of my mother and father nuzzling me good-bye stayed with me for the rest of my days. Though I was excited about leaving; I was saddened knowing I may not see my parents again. I had to get ready.



Pre-trip preparation would be painful. I was one of the several horses tied up outside the post stable’s blacksmith shop, waiting for the army’s version of a horse’s standard issue. An older white man wearing civilian clothes walked up and down the horse line. He stopped and inspected our front and rear hooves. Accompanying him was an older black man dressed in a long sleeve, short-waist leather jacket. He held a steel branding iron affixed with the letters ‘USA’ at one end of the iron rod.

The farrier spoke to the black man. “Mr. Bo Bates, it looks like we got some work to do this morning.”

Bo replied in his baritone voice, “You bet Mr. Carne. We are gonna be busy. I will go over and get some steel hot, while you trim their hooves.” Bo handed Mr. Carne several handfuls of horseshoe nails, and walked over to his forge and anvil set up outside his blacksmith shop.

Mr. Carne came to me first. He patted me on the withers and scratched my ears. I suppose he was given me the candy before the

medicine. Carne used his knee to balance one leg of mine at a time while he scrapped dried dirt and grass out of my hooves. He then pulled out a rasp file to level the bottoms of my hooves.

The army expected every hoof to be perfectly flat for shoeing. Satisfied with each hoof cleaning and sanding, Carne bent over and placed a blank steel horseshoe over my front right hoof. He shook his head sideways and called, "Bo! This big boy is going to need something wider and longer." Bates walked over and looked at my hooves. "No problem, Mista' Crane. I know what to do."

It took about an hour to get all my hooves fitted with specially sized horseshoes. Bates went inside to his shop while Carne tied a couple more restraints on me and secured several ground stanchions. I could not move. Carne walked in front of me and stood to my left. He spoke in a low voice, while always keeping his hands on my neck, "Good boy. Good boy. You are going to be fine."

I was not paying attention to the fact he was distracting me. Bates came up on my right rear quarter. Carne put both hands across the ropes to secure my chest and neck to the stanchions. I could feel how strong he was by the amount of force he put on the ropes. He kept talking to me during the process.

The pain came quick. Bates pushed his 250-pound body against my side; then pressed the hot iron down onto my hide for a few seconds. That hurt. I almost broke the restraining ropes binding me to the four posts. Shortly thereafter, the farrier was able to calm me down with some oats and molasses that soothed my nerves. During those few minutes of chewing, I almost forgot about the branding pain. It eventually subsided. Bates said to me, "Stoney, you are a unique one. Your left flank brand looks like a quarter moon over a magnolia tree. I have seen that brand before...but I cannot recall where I saw it. Oh well...not important right now."

Bates walked back to his blacksmith shop. Carne unhitched me from the posts and led me into a stable stall where I licked my wounds. After thirty minutes passed, I heard a soldier march up to the stable. His boot spurs easily rolled, making a rhythmic jingle sound. I leaned out my stall to look. The soldier stopped in front of Carne.

“Good day, sir. My name is Sergeant Ian Gladstone Finny. My friends just call me Finny. I have papers prescribing me taking a young black stallion down to Texas.” Finny pointed at me. “That horse.”

Carne replied, “Mista’, see you are a bit dressed up for the occasion.”

“Aye. The army recently promoted me to sergeant first class. I have been assigned to the Fourth Cavalry down in Texas; to fight them Comanche.” The sergeant looked at me and back at the farrier. He asked, “What’s the horse’s name?”

“His given name is Stonewall.” Finny shook his head, then scratched his unshaven face and grumbled. “Why Stonewall?” I looked at the farrier who had a good answer. “I reckon the president respected General Jackson as a leader on the battlefield.”

Stumbling for words, Finny quipped back. “I did not realize this horse was owned President Grant. Well... regardless. Old Jackson was just another Reb to me.”

Mr. Carne put his hand on the sergeant’s shoulder. “Sergeant First Class Finny... son, the war is over.”

Holding his hands behind his back, Finny replied, “Not for me. No, sir. Not for me.”



The next day was inspection day on Fort Whipple. The post commander inspected all the horses trained for open-range and close-quarters battle in the west. He was proud of the fact his command prepared cavalry horses for the fight. The colonel walked by me and stopped. He looked up saying, “Stonewall, serve your trooper well.” Perhaps that was the army’s ceremonial version of a farewell. I knew I was ready to go.

Within two hours, Finny was adjusting my bridle straps and reins. He stood right in front of me. His gray narrow eyes looked up and down at me. He spoke. “Stonewall, the army considers you as presidential property. My job is to keep their property alive all the way to Texas. Now don’t ya be take’n off me when you a-hear them there Injuns halloing and shooting arrows. I heard they eat horses.” My ears immediately went up. I pawed the ground with my front hooves. He

rubbed my nose. "Calm down boy. I won't let them get near you." He chuckled. "You and I will be headed to the hills before the arrows fly."

Finny said our orders were to report to the Fourth US Cavalry based in Fort Griffin, just northeast of Breckenridge, Texas. The Fourth had several cavalry units spread out across the wild Texas frontier.<sup>1</sup> At that time, little did I know my journey with Finny would change course. Fate had another plan in mind.



The trip required a few days of hard riding on a train and trail. We began our journey in a boxcar traveling from Richmond to the city of New Orleans. That was the first time I had ever been on a train. I heard the conductor call it the Iron Horse. At first, I was a little apprehensive traveling in a machine that made a lot of noise. Black smoke and white steam bellowed out of the first car Finny called the engine. Once we pulled out of the train station, the train wheels screeched against the steel rails. The faster the train moved, the thicker black smoke blew into the sky.

On the way to New Orleans, I got a chance to listen to Finny talk to himself. I hear troopers talking to themselves all the time. They are usually cursing out some poor soldier who is marching in front of a cavalry column, which is understandable, but not this man. Finny talked aloud in a language I had never heard before. I think he said he was from a place called Ireland where they spoke in Gaelic.

A Richmond train took us to Nashville, Tennessee, where we switched trains to go south toward New Orleans. During the trip, Finny took sips of whiskey out of a small flask he kept in his haversack. The whiskey smelled hard on his breath. Somewhat drunken, he said, "Stonewall, our orders directed us to meet some troopers from the Fourth Cavalry, Company A, out of Fort Richardson, Texas. They will escort us from Na' O'leans' to Fort Griffin located on the edge of hostile Comanche country in Northwest Texas."

He continued, "The cable said we are to meet with Sergeant John W. Abercrombie at the US Army quartermaster building west of town." His eyes squinted at a map provided by the Fort Whipple quartermaster. A

red circle on the map had two words written across the circle, “Jackson Barracks.”

“Stonewall, we are supposed to meet them at the Jackson Barracks off St. Claude Avenue. We are on Bourbon Street right now. I think it is time for some bourbon whiskey. We will get to Jackson Barracks, eventually.”

It did not take long to find a saloon off Bourbon Street. Finny tied me to the hitching post and said, “I will be right back... Mr. Stonewall. Go’n get me’self some more Irish whiskey for the road.”

While I stood outside the saloon, I noticed the City of New Orleans people were not that friendly. The black-skinned people walked on one side of the street, while the white people walked on the other side. The whites made awful comments about the blacks. Up north, we called the black people Freedman because they were free from tyranny. It was a name given to show respect. The white people looked very angry. I sensed that something bad was going to happen. I sure hoped Finny would return quickly.

About five minutes later, Finny came through the batwing doors holding a bottle in one hand and a pickled egg in the other. He grinned from ear to ear. “Look Stonewall. I got something for you... a pickled egg. Go ahead and eat it. You’ll like it.”

This trip was one of many firsts. I had never ridden a train. I had never seen white and black people torment each other, and now I was about to eat my first pickled egg. It was delicious.

Finny stuffed the whiskey bottle in his saddlebag. He unlatched me from the hitching post, mounted up, and directed me across several streets looking for St. Claude Avenue. After about an hour of searching for St. Claude Avenue, Finny became very disgruntled and unhappy. We took three lefts and five rights that always circled back to Bourbon Street. Finny said, “Stoney, it must be fate keep’n us coming back to this street. It is time we take a longer break. I am going to put you up in the blacksmith stable across the street for a few hours while I go over to that Golden Hair Saloon to have a few more shots of Mother Nature’s nectar. We’ll get back on the trail tomorrow.”

Finny took to walking in a fast pace towards the saloon. By the time I was in my stable, he was already sitting in the bar stool, having a few.

Three hours later, two cups of oats and four shots consumed, Finny and I eventually found the old US Army barracks. He secured my reins to the hitching post and walked in the office to find somebody who knew where the Texas troopers were hanging their hats.

While he was inside, an army trooper tried to sneak up on me. I felt his hand go over my left branded rump. I turned around to look at him. He was a US Army trooper. He was a fair-skinned man who apparently ate lots of potatoes and beef growing up. He was a stout human being. I tapped my front hooves to let him know I was not sure of his intentions.

He said aloud, "Now, now boy. No need to get stubborn with me. I know who you are. General Grant named you after a great military officer and horseman, General Stonewall Jackson, who unfortunately served on the lose'n side. God rest his soul." The trooper made the sign of the cross on his chest.

The trooper walked to the front of me and said, "Hello, Stonewall. My name is Sergeant John W. Abercrombie. My friends call me Abe or JW. You can call me JW."

I sensed JW was a good man, just by the way he carried himself. I could see it in his eyes. Horses have the keenest senses for how humans behave. Humans either have a good heart or bad one. I sensed this man was on the right side.

The experienced cavalryman who knew horses. JW moved from side to side checking my legs and hooves. Each time he bent over, he grunted and complained of a war before my time. When he came back around to face me, he leaned his right ear toward me, as if I was going to whisper something. I nibbled his ear. Looking into my eyes, he said, "I wish you were my own."

Finny came out of the quartermaster's office trying to put his hat on straight. He looked up, just in time before running into JW. Both men stopped looked each other over. There was a familiarity between them. Sergeant Finny looked intently at JW. After a few moments of silence, he said, "Tenth Calvary, Shiloh, Antietam, and Gettysburg."

JW replied, "Antietam, Fredericksburg, Brandy Station, and Cold Harbor." Both men embraced and said, "Thanks for serving brother."

I witnessed a special code shared between two old warriors. I hoped to share the same bond with my fellow cavalry horses. I am reminded what my father told me. "It is always honorable to be faithful to the

cause, but we should never prove so, if only just to go to war. However, no one should ever resort to war as the first line of resolution.”

Sergeant Finny looked at JW. “Been looking for you and your men. Where are your men, Sergeant?”

“You are looking at three of them. Me, me, and me.”

“So you’re the only protection we have against them Injuns between here and Fort Griffin?”

“You got it right. What you don’t know is that we are all expert marksmen. I can pick a fly off the butt of a buffalo running at top speed. You do not need to worry. I also served these parts as a Texas Ranger back in ’70 to ’71. You and Stonewall will be safe.”

“Well okay my friend,” Finny said using a shaky tone of voice. Pointing at me, Finny continued, “Aye. Remember this stallion is presidential property. We don’t want nutt’n happ’n to ’em, or me for that matter! Colonel Mack will be awfully upset, much less President Grant.”

“Don’t concern yourself, Finny. We will be all right. Do you have enough supplies, feed, and ammo for a two-day trip? We will need to bivouac overnight.”

“Aye, me good to go, Mister Abercrombie. Stoney is fit to go as well since the farrier put new shoes on ’em before we left Fort Whipple.”

JW mounted up on a gilded bay horse named Too Bad. He pointed west, shouting, “Then let us get on with it.”

We wasted little time getting out of New Orleans. A water taxis helped us cross the mighty Mississippi River. The widest river I had ever seen. It was muddy and flowed with total disregard to what was ahead of it.

Once on the west riverbank, we rode toward Shreveport, Louisiana. From there, we crossed the Red River and made our way toward Fort Worth, Texas. JW said the stockyards in Fort Worth was a major cattlemen trading hub for selling and buying top cattle breeds such as the Hereford, black Angus, and Texas longhorn. The Fort Worth destination kept us focused on the trails ahead.

While on the trail, I learned much from JW. He knew everything about the Texas territory. JW described many horrific stories of Comanche and Kiowa raiding settler homes, stealing cattle and horses, and in most cases, killing the men. The Comanche took the white



women and children. JW said the Indians kept many children as slaves or sold them to another tribe for horses.

One notable Comanche raid occurred at Fort Parker Texas in May 1836. A warrior abducted nine-year-old Cynthia Ann Parker.<sup>2</sup> She assimilated into the tribe as a servant. Eventually she found great favor with a Comanche Tonkawa tribal chief and married to him. Cynthia eventually gave birth to one of the greatest Comanche chiefs. His name was Chief Quanah Parker.

We were on the trail for twenty hours when both sergeants decided it was time to settle down for the night. A nearby creek provided safe cover. JW called it Salt Creek. We had not seen any signs of Comanche nor Kiowa leading up to the creek; the night should be quiet.

JW said, "Mr. Finny. We are a good six hours' ride from the fort. We can continue riding through the night to get there, or stop here at this creek bed down. At dawn, we can have a leisurely breakfast, then get back on the trail. We will be safer behind the gates of Fort Richardson. You will have a bunk to sleep in tomorrow night. I will have a few of my men escort you and Stoney to Fort Griffin on the following day. What do you think about that plan, Mr. Finny?"

Finny enthusiastically replied, "Aye. Sounds like ye knows what is best. Stoney and I are greenhorns and don't know any better out here in these parts."

We stopped by a creek called Salt Creek. I can attest to the fact that when I took water, there was a salty taste. The troopers removed the saddles and blankets from our backs. It felt good to feel the air on my backside again. Finny and JW took the saddles over to a small rise in the ground and plopped them down.

JW said, "Home sweet home. Can't beat an old piece of leather for a pillow."

Finny replied, "Aye. Sure can be a hard sleep without."

JW walked over to the creek to fill his coffee tin. He bent down to scoop up water and heard a faint bird call across the creek. Looking up, he scanned the tree line and did not see movement. JW had heard Texas quail chatter thousands of times before. He showed no concern. I heard also the calls and sensed something not right.

JW returned to camp and doused out the campfire embers with creek water. He walked over to Finny and stood rolling his pistol's cylinder.

The rotating cylinder made a metal clicking sound with each revolution. He looked down at Finny sitting on a blanket. "Keep your six-shooter near your hand and your boots on, Mr. Finny." Finny looked up at JW and nodded. He quickly pulled his boots back on and checked his revolver. It had been a very long day. We were exhausted and slept soundly.

When morning came, I woke up to an uneasy silence. There were no birds chirping for food or squirrels scurrying across the ground searching for acorns. When I looked to my right, I noticed Too Bad was gone. I snorted to get JW's and Finny's attention. JW opened his eyes and quickly scrambled to his feet.

Finny was gone; gone in spirit. His lifeless body laid on the ground with half an arrow protruding from the center of his chest. His eyes closed. He died with his hands wrapped around the arrow.

Unfortunately, JW's trail experience could not save Finny from a Kiowa arrow. The silent killer penetrated Finny's heart. JW said to me, "Stonewall, you are a lucky boy. The Kiowa did not take you because your rope ties were on the inside of the tree. Finny did right by you. I was careless. I should have done the same for Too Bad. Come on. We need to get Finny to the fort." I neighed and snorted for my friend Too Bad. Over the past days, Too Bad showed me how to better myself as a cavalry horse. JW said to forget about him. He said, "Too Bad is long gone, my friend."

JW showed no outward emotion. He, like Sergeant Finny had seen too many men die on the battlefield during the US Civil War. In one motion, JW swung Too Bad's saddle onto my back. "Stonewall, looks like you got yourself a new trooper." He tightened the girth strap under my belly, then lengthened the stirrups. I was much taller than Too Bad. My father told me I stood seventeen hands high.

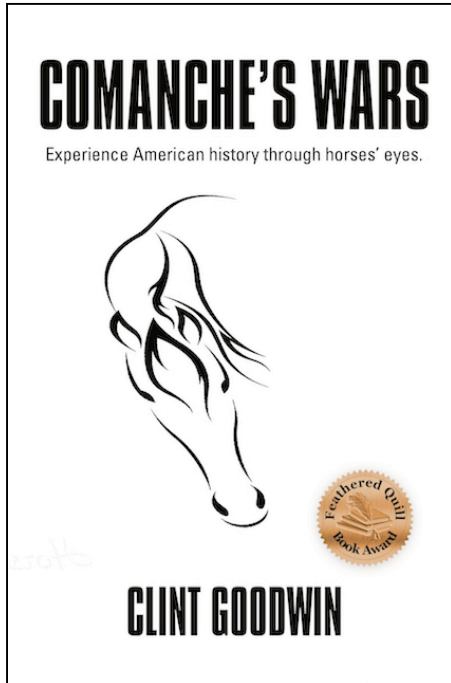
JW stepped to the side of me and scratched my head between the ears. It felt good. "Stoney, we need to get Finny's body to a more suitable place for burial. I ain't leav'n 'em here for the buzzards and critters. His family would appreciate a marker somewhere else. I remember there was an old burnt-down church near Salt Creek, not too far back from here. We will bury him there." JW strapped Finny's corpse to a make-shift litter he fashioned out of dead mesquite wood. He attached the litter to my saddle.

*Comanche's Wars*

Traveling back to Salt Creek was an odious experience. The air I breathed choked me. I could smell the blood of a dead man. The smell of dried blood represented a senseless killing. The acrid smell quickened my pace. We made it to the cemetery within a few hours.

Standing in the middle of the cemetery, I could see many wooden crosses marking graves of the dead. JW said the Salt Creek cemetery contained the graves of a dozen settlers and hunters massacred by Kiowa warriors back in 1871. The locals called it the Salt Creek Massacre. He said the Texas newspapers called the Kiowa ambush and attack the *Warren Wagon Train Massacre*. JW said, “Stonewall. The reason we are here is laying before you. The killing will stop once the army controls the Staked Plains.”<sup>3</sup>

The Kiowa left the first scar on my heart without ever shooting an arrow. The death of Finny shook me. I had never seen death and it haunted me. The loss of my friend caused me pain.



*Award-winning Comanche's Wars is told through the eyes of a horse—a young black stallion from Virginia—embarking on a journey of self-discovery during America's aggressive push to the West. Stonewall's journey will parallel a nation's heritage that embraces triumphs and defeats on the battlefields.*

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