

WAR TO WAR:

A BLOODLINE CONTINUES

Experience American history through horses' eyes.



CLINT GOODWIN

War to War: A Bloodline Continues promotes American history through the eyes of horses and their human families. During the Second World War, two stallions—Boss and Jubal—must reconcile their familial legacy or risk ending a bloodline that survived the American Civil War, Comanche Wars, and the Great War. Another war could break the family chain.

WAR TO WAR: A Bloodline Continues

by CLINT GOODWIN

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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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Bloodline Reflections

The earth would be nothing without the people, but the man
would be nothing without... the horse.

—Author Unknown

Peace

For seven generations, our family's legacy demonstrated courage, strength, and spirited heart to overcome troubled times. Thankfully, each generation found a way to keep our bloodline going. Such was the case with Tough Guy and his chosen mare Grace. Both united in Virginia during the peaceful years prior to the Great War. Otherwise, I would not be telling this story. I am mindful that my family's legacy survived the Great War and waned during the War of Annihilation.

I continue the saga of my father's great, grandfather—Jubal Early—who lived long enough to serve our nation on the Western Front. I am all that is left of my family's bloodline. My name is Peace. Until my last breath, I'm committed to retelling stories of my family's service to America; beginning in 1861.



It is the year of our Lord, Nineteen Hundred and Eighty-something. I am a six-year-old black thoroughbred stallion; with a trace of a warm blood running through my veins. The United States Army has assigned me the humbling honor of pulling black-lacquered caissons loaded with flag-draped caskets of deceased American patriots.

My unit serves the Third U.S. Infantry Regiment; fondly referred to as the Old Guard. We are attached to the 3rd Squad Caisson Platoon at Fort Myer located in Arlington, Virginia. Twenty-four horses are assigned: twelve black and twelve white horses. We are

divided into four teams of six harnessed horses. One twenty-four-hundred-pound caisson requires three pairs of horses harnessed to the front of the caisson buckboard. The first horse pair—nearest the caisson front wheels—are called “Wheel Horses.” The next two paired positions are called the “Swings” and “Leads.” Troopers ride the three horses of the left facing forward.

It is our job to transport the body of a deceased veteran from the old Fort Myer church to an assigned Arlington National Cemetery section and plot. The ceremony concludes with the deceased fellow service members gracefully lifting a closed casket off our caisson. In rehearsed unison, the soldiers, sailors, or marines smartly carry the dead to his or her final resting place—where heroes quietly sleep—in Arlington National Cemetery. We serve this purpose twice a day, seven days a week.



Our family carried troopers and pulled machines-of-war since 1861. My dad, Rusty told me many war stories about our family’s exploits in every conflict since the American Civil War. While under fire, he himself carried a famous Army officer across deep rice paddies during the Vietnam War in 1968. My grandmother’s namesake—Reckless—carried brave Marines across cold muddy valleys of Osan during the Korean War in 1950.¹ She did so with a bullet lodged in her withers.

Jubal—my great grandfather—hailed panniers and pulled artillery pieces out of muddy German valleys in the Hhurtgen Forest during the Great War and World War II. My great, great, grandfather—Tough Guy—served on the Western Front with the American Expeditionary Force during the Great War. His father—Stonewall—fought in the Comanche Wars and Spanish-American War from 1874 to 1898. However, all my father’s fathers recognize and pay homage to the memory of our bloodline’s patriarch, Lucky. He wrote the first chapter of the family’s legacy during major U.S. Civil War battles fought between 1861 and 1865.

This story begins with his great grandson, Jubal Early. He returned home after the Great War, but his disposition was not altogether. Jubal struggled with the memories of his father dying on the battlefield, and the carnage surrounding every dead corpse he stepped over. The Great War did not end for Jubal, or millions of humans who survived and continued suffering for years thereafter.

The end of the Great War marked the beginning for another to follow. The ill feelings between Germany and its persecutors, combined with Japanese economic “insecurities” converged in Nineteen Hundred and Thirty-Nine. Both government ambitions would lead to a second world war. A war where Jubal would try again to leave his mark.



While two soldiers harnessed us to the limber, Corporal Tucker sat in the front bench seat fussing with the reins. The caisson driver—this time— wore his finest U.S. Army Class A uniform. He waited patiently waiting for the sergeant to come and complete the safety inspection. Five minutes passed. Sergeant Bentley walked out from the stable; carrying a cup of coffee. He said, “Corporal. Are the ready to go?” “Yes, sergeant. Good-to-go,” the corporal replied.

The sergeant sat his coffee cup down on the rear buckboard. He started to the far left of the caisson. He inspected the limber joint connecting the caisson. He shook the rear wheel spokes and hub. He walked up to the front left wheel. He shook the spokes and kicked the hub. He nodded, “Good-to-go.” He stepped back and up to get around the wheel horse. As he walked alongside the three horses, he ran his hands over the leathers to ensure they were secured. I stuck my head to the side and saw a narrow-paved road winding down the incline towards the cemetery’s east entrance. The road was clear. The sergeant gave the driver a thumbs up.

Once on the road, we did not go far. Like many times before, we would exit to the right and make our way towards a small parking area behind the old Fort Myer church. There, we would wait for the prayers and singing to end. There soon after, the grieving family

members would exit the rear entrance with tears in their eyes. Six family members or close friends would carefully lift a heavy wooden casket onto our caisson. The same scene would repeat itself seven more times during the day at the Arlington National Cemetery.

I looked at my friend, Trouble. He had his eyes closed and drew long breaths. Always sleeping. That ole black Thoroughbred worked hard to keep up with us younger horses. Trouble needed his sleep to do so. I told him I wished to sleep through the night. Since returning from the war, I always woke at three o'clock in the morning. I wished it were not that way. Each day started early enough.

The Old Guard sergeant walked up to the front of the team. He wore his weathered combat utility uniform. A set of gold wings were pinned over the U.S. Army service patch sewn above his right blouse pocket. He bellowed out, "Ladies, today is Friday, October 24, 1986. This day will be a memorable one for our Army Rangers. We are carrying General Fred K. Mahaffey to his final resting place. Y'all behave now."

I did not care for the sergeant calling us "ladies," since he knew darn well, I was a gelding. No matter. I always let the levity go; knowing he had more combat experience than all the horses and men serving at Fort Myer.

It was proper to extend him that courtesy and respect. He earned it. There were many a late night he would come and sit by my stall and talk to us horses. The stories he told of serving in combat assignments were horrific. Regardless, he kept returning to service; keeping the Army's pledge to duty, honor, and country.



Hearing the driver cluck twice, I stuck my neck up over Snow White's rear to catch a glimpse of the sergeant. After we turned the corner, he came into my view. Combat veteran, U.S. Army Sergeant Rodney Garrett held his hand up to stop the driver. The young corporal driving yelled out, 'Whoa boys and girls.' Our team stopped.

The sergeant shuffled towards us. He carried a tin bucket of oats. He walked down our lines on both sides; giving each horse a handful of oats. I anxiously neighed. “Good. Sergeant Garrett brought us fresh oats. I hoped he put molasses in mine. The taste of molasses adds flavor to an otherwise dry snack.” My father once said a horse will never have a sick day in their life if they eat a teaspoon of molasses. I know he was right. I never caught a cold during my first six years of life. Something in the molasses kept me strong. The sergeant said it was the iron: good for the blood. I had no idea what he meant.

I liked Sergeant Garrett. He was a bit older than the other soldiers assigned to the Old Guard. He was quiet. He did not say much about his past. He always seemed to be reflecting. I could sense trouble within his soul.

His fellow soldiers called him a hero, which he downplayed with indifference. I once overheard the soldiers talking about how Garrett bravely fought in Somalia. He saved lives. For his heroism, Sergeant Garrett earned the right to choose any in-garrison assignment before his retirement. He worked a deal with the U.S. Army to serve out his last year as an Old Guard platoon leader at Fort Meyer.

Two weeks ago, I overheard a junior officer mention Garrett’s name. He said the sergeant willingly put himself into the enemy’s line of fire to protect his men during the Somalian conflict. The officer mentioned Sergeant Garrett wanted a transfer to be near his friends; who lay to rest in Arlington Cemetery. A poignant act of respect for the fallen.



After Garrett finished handing out morsels of oats, he said, “Driver. They are ready. Get on to the church. The preacher and family are waiting.” The driver replied. “You bet sergeant. Always a privilege to serve.” Sergeant Garrett stood at attention and held his salute, while our team walked by him. You could see the pride and gleam in his eyes as we began the morning mission.

Once at the church, the driver dismounted and walked up to my left side. He put his right hand on my withers and patted my chest with his left. He said, "Peace. Looks like we got another army hero to bury. I will tell you about his story when we get back. You and Trouble need to stay in step once we get going." I neighed back, "No worries." I nudged Trouble with my nose. He snorted, "Oh yes. Count me in." I swear he went back to sleep as soon as we stopped. Standing seventeen hands tall, no one would disagree with his work. If he pulled his weight; he was left alone.

I told Wrangler—an old mare—the army should retire ole Trouble. She rebuked my comment; saying he should remain here until his last breath is taken, and his blood runs cold. Perhaps she was right. I guess if I was a thirty-year old horse, I would feel the same. My team members all pitched in keeping Trouble alerted to his responsibilities. Sometimes he just needed a little nudging.

The driver pulled into the church rear parking area. He carefully backed us up towards the rear door. Once stopped, the caisson went silent. We could hear the organ music end with a sustained low-pitched sound that faded to a stop. The preacher inside always concluded his sermon with Amazing Grace. It would not be much longer. After the prayers ended, the rear double-doors would open. Seconds later, I was proven right. The doors slowly swung open. Two young teenagers held the doors open while six men carried a mahogany casket down the steps and towards our caisson.

After the sergeant finished playing *Taps*, we returned to the stables. The general's burial was our last mission for the day. Duty stable hands removed our harnesses and lead us to a pole barn built next to the stables. The soldiers lined us up in the center of the aisle to hook up crossties. We were secured while the soldiers washed and brushed down our team. They used dry towels to wipe off water dripping from our manes and tails. I did not mind staying damp. The moisture helped cool me down. Once clean, the soldiers put us back in our assigned stalls. Fresh hay and water awaited.

The daily mission transition was synchronized. The afternoon team was already out in back getting harnessed and dressed up for the first afternoon mission. Our job was done for the day. It was time to relax.

My old friend Blackie stood in the stall next to me. He was a retired wheel horse. He was not as strong as the others like me. Recognizing Blackie's limitations, the sergeant put him on lead. Blackie had no problem working a patriarch role.

Over time, Blackie and I became close. As an elder, he was more of a father figure to me, than a friend. He said he knew of my great-grandfather—Jubal Early—back during the big war called World War II. He was like me; a combat veteran. He had seen battle in South America. We saw eye-to-eye on a few things. I respected him. One thing for sure: he encouraged me to keep my family's memories alive. He said all his family had passed on. Blackie was the last of his bloodline... as was I.

After my afternoon snooze, I opened my eyes and thought today was the day. I got Blackie's attention with a big snort. "Blackie, want to hear a family war story"? Peeking through the wooden slats between us, he said, "Go ahead young feller. It has been a week since you told me about Tough Guy and his heroic exploits during the Great War." I neighed, "Those old legs of yours can stand long enough to hear another tale. It's about the Second World War. My great-grandfather—Jubal—passed his story onto his daughter Reckless, my father's mother. We begin in the year 1939."





Old Guard Caisson Team.
(Photo: Courtesy of Joint-Base Meyer-Henderson Hall, 2018.)

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