

*A Winter's Coat examines the lives of two mares put at center stage during the Korean War. One, transported weapons for the U.S. Marine Corps on the Korean Peninsula. The second, anxiously awaited stateside for her owner to return.*

## **A Winter's Coat: U.S. Marine Corps Warhorse**

By Clint Goodwin

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# A WINTER'S COAT

## U.S. MARINE CORPS WARHORSE

*A Winter's Coat* promotes the unbreakable bond between U.S. Marines and their horses during the Korean War. Experience American history through their impartial eyes.



# CLINT GOODWIN

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## Also, by Clint Goodwin

Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory  
U.S. Civil War Horse Perspective: 1861-1865.  
ISBN: 978-1-63492-533-4

Experience key U.S. Civil War battles through the eyes of an undaunted stallion whose future generations carry notable military leaders into American wars. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A U.S. Civil War Horse Perspective: 1861–1865* is the first book in a historical-fiction series paying tribute to Americans who honorably served their country. The main character—Lucky—finds the will to survive horrific battles that defined America during its darkest days.

*Mine Eyes...* reminds readers the U.S. Civil War was not long ago. With a dose of imagination, the book's key characters experience triumphs and defeats witnessed while fighting for their respective sides, the North or South



Comanche's Wars  
ISBN: 978-1-63492-163-3

*Award-winning book. 2017 Feathered Quill Book Awards Program: Bronze award for the Animal - Adult category and Bronze award for the Historical-fiction category.*

*Comanche's Wars* is told through the eyes of a young black stallion embarking on a journey of self-discovery during America's aggressive push to the West. Stonewall's story parallels a nation's heritage which embraced triumphs and defeats on the battlefields. Together, human and horse experience struggles for their lands, cultures, and lives.



Clint Goodwin

Leather to Steel.

ISBN 978-1-63492-162-6

*Award-winning book. 2018 Feathered Quill Book Awards Program: Gold award for the Animal - Adult category and Bronze award in the Historical-fiction category.*

Experience history through the eyes of courageous horses from herds torn apart during the Great War. Two black stallions are caught up in the fog-of-war carrying cavalymen to victory and defeat. Only one comes home to carry on the legacy of their father's father.

Leather to Steel weaves together several story lines of horses and families connected by perseverance and the will to survive an ever-changing America. The Indian Wars' veteran working hard to raise a mixed-raced family in a Euro-centric America. The girl from the Civil War era; grows up to become a wealthy spinster whose tenacious determination for equality, finds her first true love on European battlefields. A period where a childless couple are blessed with children of war, not of their own. Both families share the love of one horse.



War-to-War: A Bloodline Continues

ISBN 978-1644385708

*Award-winning book. 2019 Feathered Quill Book Awards Program: Silver award for the Animal - Adult category.*

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. The lives of two black stallions are

put at center stage. One horse carried troopers on the battlefield, the other remained home. Between wars the brothers are united on uncertain terms. Their differences escalate when the world again faces tyranny. But there is hope. Their paths to reconciliation are fostered by their trooper; a retired army colonel—Dr. Abraham Bates. As a veteran, the colonel is caught in between slaying his own demons or risk losing his family. His wife Amelia demands it. Time and distance are needed.



Tight Cinches and Short Grass  
ISBN 978-1-68028-410-2

In memory of Russell Clint Goodwin

Horses and cows are the craze these days, and you can find their image on everything from calendars to refrigerator magnets. But to the cow drover of the Old West, horses and cows were an essential commodity, and the range was a place where danger and hard work were as daily the need for bread.

Russell Clint Goodwin has rounded up these good ole days in *Tight Cinches and Short Grass*, a collection of fascinating and humorous stories depicting the lives and experiences of cattle drovers, both on and off the job. Goodwin has herded together a cast of unforgettable characters, including a city-slicker nephew who gets in the way of ranch operations; a dull-witted deputy who finds himself duped by an outlaw with a sense of humor; and Chief Fleetwood, whose idea of a celebration is not what the drovers expect.

The twenty-two stories in *Tight Cinches and Short Grass*, which can be read from beginning to end or at random, are choice selections for fans of the Old West who crave a stampede of down-home, old-fashioned fun



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## Prologue

A *Winter's Coat* is the fifth installment of historic fictions promoting American history through the eyes of fictitious characters and horses. This story advances the legacy of the character—Reckless—whose namesake during the Korean War demonstrated heroism, courage, and dedication to service before self. The Korean Reckless was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice to protect her Marines.

*A Winter's Coat* examines lives of two mares put at center stage during the Korean War. One, transported weapons for the U.S. Marine Corps on the Korean Peninsula. The second, anxiously awaited stateside for her owner to return. Both horses are touched by an impassioned veterinarian whose family's proud military service dates back to the U.S. Civil War. Will Doctor Robert Bates' hands keep the chain from breaking?

*A Winter's Coat* invites one's imagination to consider a horse's perspective of war and peace. Did the horse feel the same shock during bombing raids and machine-gun fire? Did the four-legged beast rise to the occasion when conditions seemed lost? The answers are an unequivocal yes and yes.

Historically speaking, beasts-of-burden performed vital roles during several American wars. Every war experienced in climatic challenges. Mechanized ground forces were slowed by muddied roads, rocky terrain, and sub-freezing temperatures on the Korean Peninsula. One horse—in particular—offered the Marine Corps a tactical advantage. She stepped upon sure-footed hooves and could persevere and overcome the harshest elements.



Between 1950 and 1953 the coldest war—in modern time—was fought on a peninsula pressed between the Yellow Sea and Sea of Japan, abutting the Pacific Ocean. Its citizens shared common genes but much different ideological pursuits.

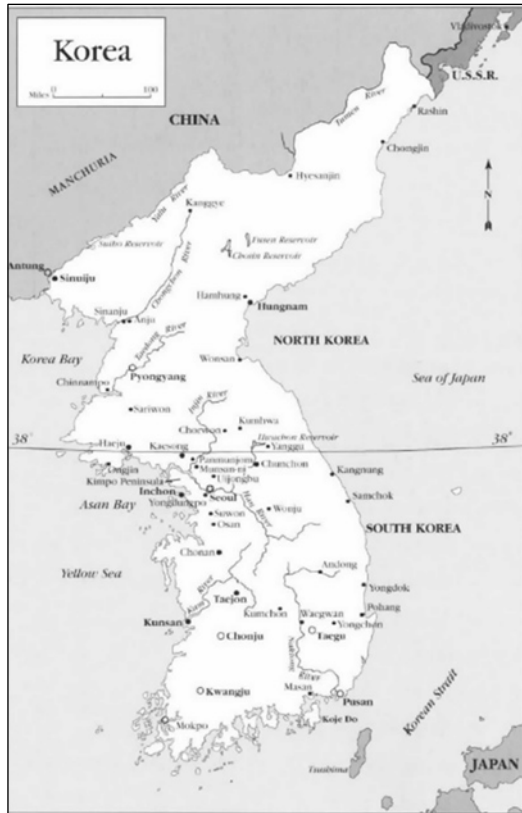
The North embraced communist rule against free democracy. The North Korea People's Republic (NKPR) practiced containment and was determined to promote their expansion to the south.

South of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel in Korea, the local populace promoted democracy and individual freedoms. And they did so with great enthusiasm. World War II victory empowered the United States of America to free Koreans from centuries of Japanese oppression. However, their new pursuits of happiness would be challenged.

Both China and the Soviet Union leaders had other plans for North Korea. On June 25, 1950, the North and South ideological differences boiled over. Eight divisions of the North Korean People's Army, equipped with Soviet tanks, mobile artillery, and aircraft, crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the Republic of Korea.

Two days later, the United Nations (U.N.) Security Council denounced the North Korean attack as a breach of world peace. The UN requested member nations to assist the Republic of Korea. The USA stepped up to the plate... again.<sup>1</sup>





Korean Peninsula 1950 (Source: U.S. Marines in the Korean War)



The Korean War marked a period in American history with many unanswered questions. It is not the author's intent to answer them all. But, to focus on a time and place U.S. Marines fought the Korean People's Army (KPA) and Chinese Communist Force (CCF) to survive with the help of an unlikely weapon; a warhorse named Reckless.

The acquisition of a horse seemed unlikely option during a war. However, Marines are well versed in adapting and persevering in adverse operating conditions.

Such was the case with a U.S. Marine lieutenant who used his own money to acquire a horse from a racetrack in Seoul. Lieutenant Eric

Pedersen recalled the Great War. How muddied roads bogged-down mechanized elements traversing the battlefields. Horse and mules were brought in to move troops and weapons over adverse terrain. As commanding officer of the Recoilless Rifle Platoon, Antitank Company, 5th Marine Regiment, Pederson would not make the same error in judgment.

Pederson took two days to get into Seoul. Once there, he located the local racetrack and surrounding horse stables. It took old fashioned negotiations and two-hundred and fifty dollars in American cash. Within a day's ride, he returned to his platoon with a chestnut mare that would become an American hero.

This story ties this red mare's life back to her namesake living in Camp Pendleton, California. Both horses would eventually cross paths. If not in reality, but certainly within the confines among unwanted memories of Marines who loved them both.

Reckless saved the day—many times—for Marines who fought near enemy lines. However, she could not save all of them. Thirty-three thousand, six hundred and eighty-six brave Marines were killed between 1950-1953.<sup>2</sup> The number could have been plus four.

Like the Marines she served, Reckless experienced the traumatic shell shock. A common term used during WWII. During the Great War, doctors diagnosed battlefield-related problems with the mind as, *soldier's madness*. Modern-day shell shock is now associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, (PTSD).

This author personally understands this condition as a combat veteran. I often wondered at night if the next mortar round would hit my hooch. The high-pitched crackling sounds of incoming were unsettling at the least. The explosions developing haunting memories taking up residence in one's mind... where none should be.



As with previous literary efforts, this project gave me an opportunity to reflect upon experiences going to war and coming home through the eyes of fictional characters acting as proxies for my personal emotions.

Within the four corners of a page, I translated unwanted anxieties onto paper. Without fear of judgement, I created a veneer of personal combat experiences and perspectives onto an innocent horse.

Better to do so than write an autobiography. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has a way of holding one hostage to a time and place we cannot escape. Writing helps us advance the football a little closer to the goal line of normalcy which we all know will never be.



As of this writing, it has been fifteen years since I embraced the concept of *writing is healing*; a healthier option for dealing with postwar challenges. Diagnosed with acute PTSD those core anxieties and nightmares have slightly diminished and more effectively managed. However, they will never go away. Knowing war changes us forever. We Vets must strive to survive and find a way to cope with the new life God granted us.

I recall what an army chaplain told us in Kuwait before flying back home. He said, “Men. Thank you for your service! When you get home, remember it is you that changed on the battlefield, not your family and friends.” I carry those words with me every day I wake up on this side of the grass. My soul reminds me that there are no more incoming mortar rounds, no more errant bullets sprayed into our compound, and, best of all, no more smells of human waste in the air we breathed.

The memories continue to haunt our minds when the right words cannot be found to express “been there and back.” Understandably, we keep a safe distance from our family and friends because we do not know how to respond to the questions like, “are you okay?” and “how do you feel?” Combat veterans loathe those questions. The answer is, we will spend the rest of our lives trying to reconcile what we have done for the sake of another’s freedom. In short, we pursue coping mechanisms to help us understand the secrets that possess our minds.

My personal war experiences were impressed upon the book’s fictional characters, dialogues, and scene settings. I hope the reader appreciates authentic emotions that come with the business of developing characters in a book. For instance, how can a historian

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write about dying on the battlefield, if they never set held a weapon in their hands? If you have walked in my boots, you will understand.



## Bloodline Reflections

### *Through the Eyes of a Horse*

As a proud stallion, I can attest how seven generations forged my family's legacy of unrelenting courage, enduring strength, and a dogged will to live. Thankfully, each generation sired horses who found a way to preserve our bloodline. Such was the case with my sixth-generation sire—Jubal—and his chosen mare, Missy. Both united in Northern Virginia after the Great War. Otherwise, I would not be telling this story. Thanks to them, my family's legacy continued well after they were gone.

My next story begins with the saga of my father's brood mare, Cassie. She lived to serve our great nation during the Korean conflict between 1950 and 1953. Her spirit surrounds my every move as the twentieth century nears its end. I am all that is left of our family's bloodline. My name is Peace.

I am dedicated to telling the valiant heroics of great stallions and a mare that served our nation since the nineteenth century. Their sense of duty is the rock I stand upon. I neigh loudly and boldly, "Proud to be an American."



Old blood runs through my veins. Over the years, owners remind us that our breed combines warm blood and thoroughbred horses to produce my family's unique stature. Standing over seventeen hands high and sporting a solid black coat; the United States Army was impressed. The soldiers charged me with the humble honor of pulling, with five other horses, caissons loaded with flag-draped caskets of America's heroes.

I serve with the Third U.S. Infantry Regiment (Old Guard), Third Squad Caisson Platoon at the Fort Myer army base in Arlington, Virginia. Twenty-four of us horses—twelve black and twelve white—reside at the Old Guard stables with well-constructed stalls. Each stall

has a brass plaque mounted outside the door. The plaque is engraved with our names in black lettering.

United States Army regulations require six horses to pull one caisson. Twenty-four horses are assigned to the Old Guard. We are divided into four teams of six. It takes six of us to pull one black-lacquered twenty-four-hundred-pound caisson. The first two on leather are called “wheel horses” because they are closest to the caisson’s front wheels. The strongest perform that job. I am a wheel horse. Swing horses work the team’s center. Lead horses take the front. All six of us move together in perfect concert.

Our job is to transport the deceased veteran from church to their assigned burial plot at Arlington National Cemetery. Once near the graveside, the burial begins with the deceased veteran’s fellow service members gracefully lifting his casket off our caisson. In rehearsed perfection, the soldiers, sailor, or marines then carry their brother or sister to a final resting place—where heroes quietly sleep—six-feet under hallowed ground.

I am privileged to participate in this ceremony. However, I am saddened it occurs twice a day, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. The sergeant says there is not enough time in the day to lay old soldiers to rest. Too many of the *Greatest Generation* are going home to their Maker.



My assignment to the Old Guard is a long story. It began six generations ago with our family’s patriarch, Lucky, who served during the U.S. Civil War. Evidence of his legacy persists, as I stand here in a Fort Meyer horse stall waiting patiently for my caretaker, Sergeant Otho Noggle.

I live in a stable most horses would consider spacious. For me, standing over seventeen hands high, it feels small to me. Comforts being not expected. If I have a roof over my head, water to drink, and food to eat, I will not complain.

I often wonder how a horse stable in Arlington, Virginia became the centerpiece of American history. Sacred ground where American history ends for so many who served. Horses before me said serving



with the Old Guard came with an agreement to honor and respect those who paid dearly for freedom. For many soldiers and marines, the Old Guard was their farewell assignment. I hope the Old Guard was not mine. I still have fight left in my gut.

Our stable manager, Otho Noggle, Sergeant, United States Marine Corps says the president of the United States handpicks honor horses assigned to Fort Meyer. I am not sure about that claim, but I certainly know many horses served here much longer than I. With that said, there is much Old Guard tradition and honor treading on this hallowed ground at Arlington Cemetery. I am humbled and honored to serve.

Between ceremonies, my handler takes me outside into the paddock to stretch my legs. Before entering the ring, I stop to resist the handler. He tugs to no avail. I always stop for a few minutes to look down a narrow-paved street running east. It winds downhill toward the Arlington Cemetery main entrance. Each time I look down the hill, I imagine a lone rider on my back; the same ghost that comforted me in Afghanistan. At that moment, my heart fills with appreciation and gratitude for the United States Army. I still wake up on the right side of the grass.

The U.S. Army—like the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard—deploys brave Americans around the world to fight and defeat those who wish to do our country harm. A fine example of those servicemen is Sergeant Noggle. He was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice during WWII to protect our country. For that very reason, I serve a country which provided my family a home for over 160 years. On this soil is where my family's story began.



For generations, our family pulled machines of war since 1861. My dad—Rusty—told me many stories about his and our family's military service since the U.S. Civil War.

While under enemy fire, he carried brave men across deep rice paddies during the Vietnam War in the early '70s. He learned about honor, courage, and dedication to duty from his mother Reckless. Her namesake carried artillery and U.S. Marines up and down hills across the muddy valleys of Osan during the Korean War.<sup>3</sup>

My great-grandfather Jubal pulled artillery pieces out of the muddy German-held valleys of France and Belgium during the Great War. My great-great-grandfather, Tough Guy, and his son Jubal both served with the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery Brigade and American Expeditionary Force (AEF) during that war. Tough Guy did not make it back, however Jubal did. He sired a mare which bore a filly the owner named, Reckless. This story is about her and her namesake.



During my tour with the Old Guard, my fellow horses have listened to me talk many times about my family's history. Lucky, he served during the Civil War. Stonewall carried cavalymen during the Comanche Wars and Spanish-American War. Tough Guy and his son Jubal Early served during the Great War. Jubal survived and continued his service during WWII. Only Reckless, Rusty, and my stories are yet to be told. Right now, my grandmother's service during the Korean War is next on the bookshelf.

My friend Blackie graciously lends an ear when others turn away. Today, my team is off duty. I neighed at Blackie standing in the stall across from me. I neighed out. "Ready for another story? This one is about the Korean War. You may remember Colonel Abraham Bates and his horse Jubal Early."

"Sure do, sonny. The colonel was the son of Jeremiah, a Buffalo Soldier. Jubal was the son of a big black stallion. Both served together during the Great War. The sire's name was Tough Guy. Sadly, he did not make it back. Is that about right, sonny?"

"Old soldier, you actually listened to me!"

"Peace. I can eat and listen at the same time. Like an old mare, {both horses laughingly neighed out}. But I must take a raincheck. I must pull this afternoon. Misty threw a shoe."

"No worries, Blackie. We can talk another time." Blackie snorted and went back to eating his oats.



A week's time past by since fall trees ceased shedding their cover in Northern Virginia. Soon thereafter, the wet and windy months would

make life miserable for humans. However, inclement weather is never a problem for horses. Nature gave us the ability to grow the right amount of coat to keep seasonably cool or warm. However, the soldiers continue the practice of putting *U.S. Army* blankets on our backs during winter months.

A chill ran down my spine and know not from which it came. Surely, this winter felt different. I was getting more anxious. Each day went by like clockwork and each night was the same. I felt a bit bored standing in my stall. I needed a companion to talk to. Fortunately, I was not alone in the stable.

Across the aisle was my other friend, Lucy. Her closed eyes and long breaths told me she was sleeping. That old white mare worked hard during the day but needed her sleep to do so. For me, morning naps helped me catch up on sleep I lost during the night. A full night's sleep was not possible since I returned from the war. Three o'clock in the morning came quickly. I wish it were not that way.



Before sunrise, our stable manager—Sergeant Otho Henry Noggle—opened the stable doors at exactly zero four thirty every morning. He wore his weathered woodland utility uniform every day, except on Sunday. A set of WWII medals were centered and pinned over his surname embroidered above the left blouse pocket. He always wore his uniform in perfect order. Perfect creases and without soiling.

The sergeant bellowed out at us. “Ladies today is Friday, January 15. This day will be a somber day for our nation. We will bury the partial remains of an old friend of mine. We served together in the Pacific. His name is U.S. Marine colonel, Pappy Boyington!” He paused to cough and catch his breath.

Noggle continued, “You need to do your best. President Ronald Reagan will make an appearance to help comfort the families and friends left behind by Colonel Boyington. It will be a sad day, indeed. A sad one to remember.”

Many a late night, the sergeant would come sit near my stall, in the aisle center. He liked talking to us horses. Sergeant Noggle told stories of being on the shores of Guadalcanal. He was wounded twice and

kept returning to service, keeping the Marine's faith, *Semper fidelis*—*Semper fi* for short—meaning “always faithful.” His unchallenged devotion to our country inspired us.

Our mission completed without delay. After Colonel Boyington was laid to rest, we returned to the stables to prepare for the next mission. The soldiers unhitched our leathers and returned us to our stalls. The afternoon caisson team waited in the paddock while our team was secured. Team White was tacked up and ready to go for the next burial. We performed these missions eight times a day.

In the stable, I looked into the eyes of each soldier walking by my stall. The men looked subdued. I watched Sergeant Noggle wipe tears from his eyes. He rarely showed emotion. He stopped and yelled out an order. “Men... horses! The stable must stay completely silent out of respect for the colonel. Our nation lost a U.S. Marine Corps legend.”<sup>4</sup>



Winter died and spring arose from its seasonal grave in Northern Virginia. Each tomorrow offered an earlier sunrise while spring reached its lunar limits above our nation's capital. Eventually, the midday sun signaled summer was getting closer. Until then, morning frosts smothered the grass with sparkling glazes inviting a hungry horse.

By June, the sun decided to suspend itself closest to the earth. The soldiers called that day the summer solstice. The temperature changes dictated army doctrine. Last night, the soldiers put us up for the night without blankets on our backs. I slept well that evening.

When I woke up in my stall, I could feel wet dew on my back. I wanted nothing more than to get outside and roll around in the paddock. A horse's way of drying off. Then the ole stomach started growling.

We all started snorting in the barn. Before too long, like clockwork, the sergeant entered the stable. The heavy stable double doors creaked open. The sound caught my attention. I stuck my neck out over the steel stall guard to catch a fleeting glimpse of the Sergeant Noggle before he entered Lucy's tack room.

After a small delay, he exited the room and shuffled towards Lucy stall. He carried a tin bucket of oats in his right hand and a cotton horse lead in the other.

While the sergeant filled Lucy's feed bucket, six other soldiers marched into the barn. Each man headed toward their assigned tack rooms to perform their assigned daily duties. Each soldier would feed and brush down the teams. As well as polish every brass fitting on the black McClellan saddles and clean the leathers hand crafted by the Old Guard's saddler.

Sergeant Noggle finished feeding and brushing down Lucy. My turn was next. I neighed anxiously towards the sergeant. "Good. Sergeant Noggle brought my bucket of oats. I hoped he had put molasses in mine. The taste of molasses adds flavor to an otherwise dry meal." My father once proclaimed, "Peace, you will never have a sick day in your life, as long you eat a teaspoon of molasses." I know he was right. I have yet to catch a cold during my first six years of life. Something in the molasses kept me strong. The sergeant said the same. He swears it is the iron, which is good for the blood. I have no idea what he meant.



I liked the sergeant. He was much older than the other soldiers assigned to the Old Guard. He was not chatty around the younger men. However, when he is alone with us horses, he spoke much about his past. There are many days when he remained silent. During those silent moments, I could sense troubled memories stir within in him.

I come to know the sergeant during those days he would come into the stable and sit down on the floor with his back to my stall door. I looked down at the top of his head. To get his attention, I tried to nibble at his short-cropped greying hair. He would ignore me most of the time while he sipped from a stainless-steel flask.

We both had uninvited emotions in common. I could sense his pain. He must have sensed mine. I was the only Old Guard horse that had seen battle.

During one of his midnight visits, he looked up at me and said, "Peace. Who the hell gave you that name?" I could smell the whiskey

on his breath. I neighed back, “The Navy man who rode me bareback during a firefight.” He raised his fingers up towards my muzzle. He carefully scratched my nose. He whispered, “Your shrapnel wounds are just like mine.” He never said one word to me from that point on. We understood the pain of war.

The Old Guard soldiers called Sergeant Otho Henry Noggle a hero, which he downplayed with indifference. I have overheard the young soldiers talking about how he bravely fought in many battles. He saved lives. They said he was an American hero.

For his service, the sergeant was asked to come back to serve the Marine Corps one more time. To serve one year overseeing burial missions for many WWII veterans who were passing away. The U.S. Army thought best to bring veterans who had fought in the same war as the deceased. Sergeant Noggle was honored to be asked. He was assigned to the Old Guard’s burial guard leader billet. In one year, a different Marine veteran.



I overheard two junior officers talk about Sergeant Noggle. The officers discussed how the sergeant willingly put himself in the enemy’s line of fire on Guadalcanal. The officers also spoke of why Marine Sergeant Noggle wanted to be near his friends laid to rest in Arlington Cemetery. A poignant act of his respect for the fallen.

Military leaders and peers could sympathize and understand his compelling need to not let go of those who sacrificed their lives to protect our nation’s freedom. Noggle understood the unwanted feelings of a combat veteran of foreign wars. The battle scars and the wounds in both mind and body never go away.



By mid-summer, I was getting restless. Some days were boring. When we were not working, we stayed in our stalls neighing at one another. Those spare moments provide enough time to share old memories and war stories. My friends called me the storyteller. I accepted my moniker with pride.

My old friend Blackie stood in the stall next to me. He said he once met my father, Rusty. I appreciated his reflections of a father I barely knew as a colt. Blackie did not say it, but he acted as if he had heard my stories before.

I tested the waters. I got his attention with a big snort and neighed, “Blackie, do you want to hear another family story”?

He neighed back, “Go ahead young feller. It has been some time since I heard about Lucky and his offspring.”

I added, “You will like this story. It is about a war that moved the moral conscience of future human generations to come. The year is 1946. The same year my grandmother, Reckless was born. From that day on, her life’s events would take her to the United States Marine Corps based in Camp Pendleton, California. My grandmother was not alone on that journey. Others who loved her, played a role in her future. Let us get started.”







## Reckless Recalls

### *The Filly's Perspective*

The Bates farm welcomed my birth on October 26, 1946. A retired U.S. Army veterinarian, Colonel Abraham Bates owned my mother, Missy. His hands were the first to hold my head up. His words were first of many I would come to understand.

Mother said the locals just called him, *the colonel*. Even though he retired in July 1939, his title remained for the rest of his days. The colonel had told my mother he preferred the salutation, Dr. Bates. But then, he was not a practicing veterinarian at the time. Regardless of his protocol, mother said our herd was kept healthy. Not a scratch went untreated.

My Uncle Boss said his retirement was in good timing. Within two years, the United States had entered another world war. Fortunately for me, my bloodline remained stateside during those years. If not, I would not have been born.

I lived the first six months of my life on the Bates farm. Twenty acres of pastures, trees, and a year-round stream located in Northern Virginia. During that time, my mother told me of our family's legacy. She would constantly neigh to me. "You can never forget. Someday, you will have a little one and he... or she, will need to know of our bloodline's patriarch... Lucky." I never forgot her words.



My father—Jubal Early—died on the very day my mother foaled me. She said he was an impressive black stallion standing seventeen hands. He was true to our bloodline. He was a loyal and courageous horse. He was also an experienced combat veteran of the Great War.

Always alert and always faithful, my father never let his trooper down. I am proud to know he served our great nation. Duty, honor, and country served as his guiding lights.

I committed my family's legacy to memory. In fact, my mother tested me, before the colonel and I left Virginia. I remember how she took a deep breath and exhaled. "Okay. Reckless. What is the name of the horse which sired your grandfather?"

I replied, "I just told you. His name was Stonewall. The human, President Ulysses S. Grant named him after a human called General Stonewall Jackson. The humans both fought against each other during a civil war between the North and South."

She nodded. "Very good. Now what human wars did Stonewall serve in?" I neighed, "Too easy. He was born in Northern Virginia. Near to here. His mother's name was Red. His father's name was Lucky. Red was from North Carolina. Lucky was born on the... uhm... the Drayton Magnolia Plantation down near... uhm, wait a minute. I got it. Charleston, South Carolina."

"That's it." Mother pawed at the ground. "Round one almost went to me."

She continued. "Reckless. Those are good facts. But I asked you about what human wars did Stonewall serve in."

I swatted at another horsefly and whinnied. "I hate those insects." I recall how I turned my ears back at Blackjack. He snorted, "Don't show me disrespect, there young lady." I pointed my ears back up to the sky and neighed, "Sorry."

My mother wanted an answer.

I whinnied. "I got this. Stonewall left Virginia in 1871. His trooper was killed during a Comanche ambush in East Texas. The surviving soldier's name was Sergeant John W. Abercrombie. He used to be a Texas Ranger. The two of them rode with the U.S. Second Cavalry. The commanding officer was Captain Clemente Zapata, who was also the father of our neighbor. Mrs. Lucinda Zapata was married to his son, Manny."

Uncle Boss was standing near my mother's cross examination. He snorted, "Reckless. Your mother asked you a simple question. All is true with what you say but answer her question." I used my tail to swat another fly. I snorted back. "Okay. Stonewall and his trooper Sergeant J.W. Abercrombie fought the Comanche during the Red River wars between 1872 and 1874. The sergeant was ambushed and killed by the

same tribe near a place called Doan's Landing, Texas; near the Red River" My mother tried to ask another question, but I interrupted her.

I snorted. "Let me finish. Stonewall's next and last trooper—Major Clemente Zapata—sailed with Colonel Teddy Roosevelt in 1899 over to an island named Cuba. The battle was called San Juan Hill. That place is also where our Colonel Bates' father—Jeremiah Bates—fought and lived to come back home to his wife and children living in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Those were the two wars."

I remember my response made Uncle Boss proud. He arched his neck and neighed out. "I am so proud knowing my niece has the memory of an elephant. She does not forget."

Mother went on. "Okay. Well, done. Now tell me the name of Stonewalls' oldest son."

My answer. "Easy. His given name was Tough Guy. He is my grandfather. Sire of my father and his youngest son, Uncle Boss." Then mother tried to ask me another question and I again, interrupted her. "Before you ask; his trooper was Major Oliver Hazzard, United States Army, Second Cavalry. Both my father and he served together during the Great War. Both horses took turns carrying Major Hazzard into battle on the... the Western Front in Europe."

Mother pawed at the ground and shook her head up and down. "You are correct. Both were brave warhorses. Just like their father, Stonewall. And his father, Lucky. Our family has carried American troopers into battle since the U.S. Civil War."

At that moment, both Blackjack and Uncle Boss stomped at the ground. Mother stepped towards me and rubbed her cheek against the side of mine. She stepped back and sniffed my nose. She neighed, "Reckless. We are proud of you. You are ready, to learn more. The colonel's son will teach you. Obey his commands. We pray no war ever comes again, but if it does..."

I remembered pausing to take a deep breath. A few moments of silence past between us. Mother continued, "If it does, then you must never abandon your trooper on the fields of battle. You must live and die with him. Your father—Jubal—told us it is always a privilege and honor to serve and protect the land we live on. This country deserves our best." I snorted at my family and lowered my head towards them.



Colonel Bates trailered me from Virginia to California in May 1947. I was still a filly. He said we traveled over three thousand miles of highways, dirt roads, and byways to a U.S. Marine Corps base located in Southern California. He called it, Camp Pendleton.

The colonel told me I would be gifted to his son, Bobby. He said Bobby would be commissioned as a U.S. Marine Corps Second Lieutenant, Doctor of Veterinarian Medicine. The colonel thought it a good idea for a family horse to become his “cavalry horse” even though there was no such job in the modern-day U.S. Marine Corps.

I was adventurous and thought the change of scenery was welcomed. Living on the west coast sounded new and exciting to me. After all, mother said I was the *reckless* one that sought out adventures.

There were no wars to be concerned with. The United States was at peace in 1947. Surely, the tea leaves would have me simply living out my days with Dr. Bobby Bates on Camp Pendleton. I looked forward to what the future had to offer. The colonel would say, “we are batting a thousand.”

However, on the familial side of things, the downside of leaving the farm was leaving my mother. She would miss me, as I her. I knew mine eyes would never see her again. But Uncle Boss said life of a horse is measured in often we move from owner to owner. That may or may not change for me.

The day the colonel loaded me up was hard on my mother. She whinnied and snorted when she heard the colonel put the truck into gear and rev the engine. She stood on her hind two legs and pawed at the blue sky.

The sight of her looked familiar. As if a ghost had come out of the tree line. I could smell tears falling from her eyes. One or two fell from mine that day. I whinnied back at her. “I love you.”



The cross-country trip to California was uneventful for the colonel and me. For both of us, it was long and boring. I was couped up in a trailer six-feet wide and twenty feet long. Not much room to do anything else

but stand and stare out the side windows. Fortunately, I could nap standing up.

The colonel stopped every so often to let me out for water and to stretch the legs. He always kept me informed as to where we were at and how far to go. I was the only captive audience for the colonel's musings. He had no one else to talk to. Our first stop was in a place the colonel called Tennessee.





## Westward Bound

Abraham drove twelve straight hours on westbound Route 66. He stopped several times along the way to get gas, eat, and relieve himself. The colonel made sure Reckless was also fed and watered before getting back on the road. With seven hundred miles under their heels, he decided to overnight at a Texaco gas station just outside Nashville.

He exited onto a service road that extended behind the station. A turnaround on the right-side provided a safe place to park the truck and trailer. Abraham looked into his review mirror to make sure the trailer was well off the road. Satisfied, he cut the engine and set the parking brake.

He grabbed his old army slouch hat before opening the truck door. He slid onto the ground and stretched his arms out to yawn. He mumbled, "I could use a cup of ambition." He put on his hat then carefully walked towards the gas station to talk to its owner. While dodging ruts in the road, Abraham looked up at a round red and green sign flickering in the dark. Its neon lights reflected off the gas pumps and service-bay windows. The sign pointed the station's main entrance.

The colonel reached the front door just in time. However, before knocking, the red neon OPEN sign hanging in the window went dark. He knocked on the door hoping it would open. After a few anxious moments it did. An older gentleman was standing on the other side of it.

Abraham stepped back and acknowledged the old man wearing a pair of faded Levi overalls, a straw hat, and old knee-high riding boots. The silver-haired man said, "Sorry, sonny. But I am close'n down the shop. It is ten o'clock."

Abraham replied, "No worries, sir. I will not need gas until tomorrow. I was just wondering if my horse and I could put down stakes in back of your station for the night. She has been cooped up in the trailer for some time and..."

The elderly Tennessean looked overt Abraham and was unsure at first how to respond. He almost said something derogatory about Abraham's skin color, but he did notice the old slouch hat Abraham wore. He asked, "Say, sonny. Is that a real U.S. Army cavalry hat?"

Abraham removed his hat and held it waste-high in front. He gazed down at it and ran his fingers along the brim. He looked up and answered the old man. "Yes, sir. It was my daddy's. He wore it during the Red River Indian Wars." Abraham put his hat back on his head and said, "Yes, sir. This hat is all I have left of him."

The station manager swung the door open and extended his right hand to Abraham. The men shook hands. The old man said, "My name is mister James Davidson; namesake for Davidson County where you stand. Older folks around here just call me Jimmy. The younger ones address me as Mr. Davidson." Abraham replied, "Nice to meet you, sir. My name is Dr. Abraham Bates. United States Army retired."

Davidson stepped outside and closed the door behind him. He was standing a few feet away from Abraham. He put both hands on his hips and said, "Well young fella. What kind of doctor?"

"I am a retired army veterinarian. Animal doctor."

The old man smiled. "Horse doctor. Uhm. Well, I used to serve myself. I rode with Colonel Teddy Roosevelt back during the Battle of San Juan Hill. Eighteen hundred and ninety-eight... I think. Regardless, I was just a squirt then, sixteen years old. But I remember the Rough Riders. They were someth'n else." Davidson chewed on a plug of Redman chewing tobacco while trying to finish his sentence. He turned his head and spat into a brass spittoon near the front door.

Abraham asked, "Sir, if you don't mind, I would like to park my rig behind the station for the night; in the turnaround." The old man replied, "Why sure. No harm in that. If you care to, my farm abuts to the station. Feel free to walk your horse down to the duck pond in the morning. You cannot miss it. You will hear my cows calling out."

Abraham extended his hand to Mr. Davidson. The men shook. Abraham took one step back and tipped his hat—out of respect—to the old veteran. He said, "Thank you, sir. I will be gone first thing in the morning. And one thing else, can I please use your phone?"



The old man looked at his watch and became anxious. "A little late, but Ruthie stays up to midnight. Sure. The rotary phone is hanging on the wall inside the front door to your left." Abraham said, "Thank you, sir. I will only be a minute."

Abraham stepped around Mr. Davidson and stepped over the doorsill. Abraham turned to his left and reached for the handset. He pressed down on the receiver a couple of times to get a sound. A voice came on the other end.

Abraham said, "Hello, ma'am. This is Colonel Abraham Bates. Could you please connect me to Fairfax, Virginia? I need to be connected to my wife, Amelia Bates."

The switchboard operator said, "Yes. This is Ruthie. I will be glad to. Say, is James Davidson standing by you? I see you are calling from his phone."

"Yes, ma'am," Abraham replied.

The operator became irritated over the phone. She said, "You tell him best not stand me up again."

Abraham tried to contain his laughter. He put his hand over the receiver and spoke to Mr. Davidson. He said, "Sir. This operator wanted me to pass a message to you. She does not sound happy."

"Go ahead and tell her I just left. She and I can work it out tomorrow."

Abraham uncovered the receiver. He said, "Ma'am." She breaks in. "Don't call me ma'am. I am not old. My name is Ruthie. Now what did he say?"

"Sorry, Ruthie. But he had to go to the outhouse. He said he would call you tomorrow."

"Damn him," Ruthie mumbled. She continued, "Well all right. Sorry stranger. Well... I got your wife on the line."

"Hello, hello. This is Amelia."

Abraham answered her. She said, "It is me. I made it to Tennessee."

"Oh good. I was beginning to worry about you."

"I am fine. I cannot talk long. The old man who owns this phone is giving me the eye."

Amelia laughed. She said, “Okay honey. Have a safe drive tomorrow.”

Abraham said, “Okay. I...” Amelia interrupted him.

“Hey. Sorry to stop you. But before you go, we received, or I should say, you received a package today,” said Amelia.

Abraham asked, “Who and where is it from?”

“Not sure about the who,” replied Amelia, “but it has international postmarks from Dover, England.”

Abraham said, “Hum. Well just put it away. I will open it when I return.”

Amelia said, “Okay. I love you. Goodbye.”

“I love you too,” said Abraham. He then spoke to the operator. “Thank you, Ruthie. Goodnight.” He hung up the phone and thanked Mr. Davidson for its use. They shook hands and parted ways. That is about all I remember of the trip.



Abraham chose to sleep in the horse trailer during the first night of the trip. The front of the truck cab would have been cramped. Instead of paying a dollar-fifty for a comfortable motel, he set up a folding cot in the second stall next to Reckless. He thought different once inside. The mare had to relieve herself in her stall... several times.

Abraham disregarded the odoriferous smell hanging in the air. He placed two saddle pads on his cot, laid down, and pulled an old army-issue blanket over his head. He mumbled before falling asleep. “The smell may be bad, but at least its horse manure. I am used to that. I will shovel it out in the morning.” He shut his eyes and listened to a hoot owl outside. Nature’s music helped him fall to sleep.



The colonel arose before the break of dawn. There was not a cloud in the sky. He put away the sleeping gear and opened the left trailer door to step outside. He closed and latched the door shut. Reckless heard him moving about. She pawed at the wooden floor. Abraham said, “Hang on girl. I will get you out once I clean up your mess.”

After the rear deck was free of manure, the colonel backed Reckless out of the trailer to walk, water, and feed her. After a good thirty minutes of pampering, Abraham loaded her back into the trailer. He refilled the hay net in front of Reckless then said, "That should last you for about an hour. Take your time, girl." Reckless stuck her mouth over the edge of the net and nibbled at the hay. Abraham smiled. "Good. Only two more days to go."

The second day on the road afforded more time to drive sixteen hours straight. Abraham crossed Oklahoma then dropped down into the Texas Panhandle. He continued westwards towards El Paso. Once there, he drove another forty minutes westward and crossed into Southern New Mexico.

The good news for Abraham and Reckless, it was not raining while driving through New Mexico. The trailer stood little chance of jackknifing. However, the bad news was... once in the desert, the summer sun produced a hundred-plus temperature during the day. He knew then, the heat had to be avoided.

He glanced at a map spread out on the passenger seat. He kept one eye on the road and his other watching his finger trace a line from El Paso to Las Cruces. He mumbled, "That is a good place to overnight." He placed both hands back on the wheel and continued driving.

After passing through Las Cruces, he began to scan for road signs advertising campgrounds. He watched adobe houses of Las Cruces disappear in the rearview mirror. He looked ahead on the road and found what he was looking for: a large billboard. The sign read, "Tired. State park five miles ahead."

The park was a welcome site. He pulled off the highway and drove through its entrance. Signage along the gravel road pointed towards campsites with plenty of shade and nearby running water. He chose to park in a site furthest from the highway. Away from the roar of diesel engines and shifting gears truckers command while moving their loads.

Abraham unloaded Reckless and tied her off under a large Willow tree growing by a creek. Winter runoff was still flowing in it. The combination of which produced a perfect eighty degrees during the day. It did not take long for man and horse to fall asleep.

At midnight, a sudden rush of loud noises in the trees awoke the colonel. Abraham opened his eyes and looked at the tree limb hanging over his head. He said, "Seventeen years and they are back." Cicadas were thick in the trees and singing. He said, "Well. Time to get going. I don't want to listen to this all night."

He rolled up his bedding and placed it in the front seat of the truck. He returned to get Reckless and lead her down to the creek to get watered. Once she was done, he took her back and loaded her up in the trailer.

Their next stop was Tucson, Arizona. From there, straight to Yuma, then onto San Diego. The last leg would take twelve hours. But at least, the cool evening temperature would bode well for the colonel and his four-legged passenger.



While driving on Route 8, Abraham kept the window open to stay awake in the middle of the night. He rested his right forearm on the steering wheel and the left hanging out the window. He was not alone. He listened to a news jockey blaring out from the AM radio. He kept the volume up to make sure he did not fall asleep.

The radio station broadcasted out of 29 Palms, California. It transmitted for hundreds of miles across the desert. Fortunately, the all-night radioman had plenty to say at one o'clock in the morning.

The disc jockey said, "Good morning truck drivers, hauling America on your rigs. This Jack is on K.Y.U.M broadcasting from Yuma, Arizona.<sup>5</sup> Now fellas coming from Vegas, make sure you sneak in from the backdoor." The radio crackled some. Abraham adjusted the tuner. The channel became clearer. The newsman said, "Got this message off the A.P. yesterday. Now all you war heroes listen up. This story is about a man who fought the Japanese between 1941 and 1945. Uhm. That covers just about a million of you vets." The broadcast went silent for a few seconds.

The newsman tapped his mic. An echo came over the radio. Jack came back online. He said, "Got sound. Okay fellas, back on the air. Now let us narrow this story down. This hero is a cavalryman. Sorry you squids and leathernecks at Camp Pendleton. This story is about a

soldier you would fight alongside with on any day, hour, or moment. His name is Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Ramsey. Went to the Philippines in '41; shipped back home in '45. And get his, he was not alone over there. He had a horse. A cavalryman, people. Now let us pause for a station break. I need to read the specifics about his story. Until I return, let us enjoy Glen Miller's... *Moonlight Serenade*."

Abraham turned the radio down while Miller and his big band played one of their hits. Abraham stuck his head out the window and breathed in the desert air. He saw lights over the horizon. They were not headlights. He pushed his head closer to the windshield and watched bright stars flickering in the night sky. He mumbled, "Sweet Jesus. This place is so beautiful at night." The truck kept moving at speed.

Abraham sat back in his seat and looked over his shoulder through the rear window. He periodically checked on Reckless by looking through the trailer's front window. The red running lights shined onto the mare's body casting a shadow on the trailer's walls. She stood motionless. Abraham concluded, "You have your eyes shut. How do horses sleep standing? They always amaze me."

He returned his eyes back to the road. Abraham turned the radio volume up to keep him from dozing. He had to refine the radio's tuning to KYUM. Electrical interference was coming in.



The disc jockey came back on air and welcomed his listeners. "Jack is back! Now listen folks. The soldier I am about to tell you about is one tough son-of-a gun. Not only did he survive hell while operating in the Philippine jungles for almost four years, but this man led a cavalry charge against a Japanese infantry stronghold. He and his horse named. Now how do I say this... Bryn Awyrn."

A pause was taken before he came back on the air. He said, "Sorry folks. Had to double check my note. Now. Mister Ramsey served with United States Army 26<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in the Philippines. You know, before the Japanese overran the islands back in late '41. Well, when ole MacArthur beat feet, this brave young man stood behind to organize a Filipino guerrilla outfit. They harassed the hell out of the Japanese.

Folks. Colonel Ramsey is back home. If you ever meet him, tell him... and his horse... (*sniffle made on air*) thanks for serving our country boys.”

The radio went silent for a few moments. The newsman came back on the airwaves. “Sorry folks. I get a little sentimental. I too served during the Great War. I understand hell on earth. Stories like Ramsey’s remind us why we love this country so darn much. Moving on now to music. How about some more Glen Miller?”

Abraham mumbled, “Well. You are not the only one... brother.” He turned up the radio and listened to Miller’s *Chattanooga Choo Choo*. “Now that is more like it. Upbeat and happy,” said Abraham to the radio. He drove on whistling to the music until he got into Yuma. It was just before dawn, and he needed sleep. He mumbled to himself. “Since we are that close, I think I’ll find a roadside park and pull under some shade trees. We can move out after dinner.”

Abraham continued driving down Route 80. The road switched from west-to-north, following along the foothills. Eventually, he came upon a sign that read *Pine Valley Creek Park – 1 Mile*. He looked at the gas gauge. “Half a tank. Plenty enough to go the distance. We will stop to get some sleep.”

He pulled into the entrance and asked the park attendant about water and forage for the horse. The attendant handed Abraham a hand-drawn map. After thanking the attendant, Abraham drove along a gravel road until the open camp spot came into view. Abraham pulled the truck around the site until the trailer cleared the last pine tree. He shut off the engine and stepped outside.

The cool mountain air filled his nose. It was quiet. He looked up into the sky and said, “Thank you, Lord. Thank you for getting us this far.” He walked around to the end of the trailer and unloaded Reckless.

The Pine Valley Creek had water. Enough to keep the moss from growing on its rocks. Abraham walked Reckless down to the creek and said, “Go ahead girl. Walk in and cool yourself.” He gave plenty of lead. Reckless stood in the middle of the creek and whinnied. Abraham said, “I know. It must feel good.” Reckless stood in the creek for a good ten minutes.

Dawn was coming. The sun started rising over the eastern mountains. Abraham said, "Come on Reckless. We need to sleep during the day. Travel at night." He called Reckless back to shore and attached a lead. As they walked back up the creekbank, he said, "Need to get you secured under a shade tree and fed. I am going to break out my cot and sleep near you." They slept through most of the day.



Abraham woke up to the annoying sounds of the crow's raspy cawing while sat on top of his truck. He sat up, wiped his eyes, and yawned. He looked at his pocket watch. It was one o'clock in the afternoon. He looked over at his truck and yelled at the bird, "Jiminy Crickets. Could you have waited one more hour?"

The colonel untied Reckless and walked her down to the creek. She stood on the bank's edge and drank water for a good three minutes. As they walked back up the hill, she relieved herself. Abraham could smell it. He said, "Thank you. One less thing we have to do before we leave."

Once Reckless was secured in the trailer, Abraham said, "Now the truck." He walked up the left side of the trailer towards the truck bed. He reached in and grabbed a water bucket and cut-down broom handle. The colonel made his way to the creek and knelt by its edge.

He sat the bucket and handle down to free his hands up. He said, "This is getting old. Need a shower." He scooped up water and splashed his face. He pulled out a handkerchief from his back pocket to dry off.

After replacing his handkerchief, Abraham picked up the bucket and placed the bucket halfway in the creek, facing upstream. The creek's water flowed into the bucket. Once filled, Abraham picked up the water bucket and handle, then returned to the truck.

Standing in front of the truck, he pushed the hood up to access the radiator in front of the engine. He placed the broom handle between the hood and housing. Since the radiator was cooled down, it easy and safe for Abraham to unscrew and pull off the radiator cap.

While he poured water into a thirsty engine, he mumbled, “No sense in overheating the engine. Been there before. Getting stuck on the side of the road. What did mother say... an ounce of prevention?”

The water started to overflow. He sat the bucket down and replaced the cap. To let the hood down, he held the hood up just enough with one hand, so he could remove the broom stick with the other.

Abraham walked around to the driver’s side and put his hand on the door handle and pulled it back. With one boot on the step side, he stopped before getting in. He looked westward and spoke to the hills. “Son. I am almost there.”

Exhaustion was starting to affect his memory. Before shutting the door, he said, “Darn it. Need to do a safety check.” He left the door open and stepped back on the ground and walked down the left side of his truck. He threw the empty bucket and broom handle back into the truck bed and continued along the left side of the trailer, checking wheels and brakes.

Standing at the rear of the trailer, he pulled on the door latches. They were secured. He resumed walking up the right side of the trailer repeating the same checks. The colonel stopped briefly on the right side of the trailer. He stuck his arm through the window and patted the mare’s withers. He said, “Girl. Only a few more hours to go. Your new life will begin.”

The colonel continued walking around the front of the truck and stepped inside the open driver’s door. He put one boot on the truck’s stepside and looked to the west. Abraham nodded. “Time to go.” He slid into the driver’s seat and shut the door. After turning the ignition key, the truck’s engine roared to life.

Abraham pulled out of the park and headed back to Route 80. As he drove, the highway curved towards the west. Abraham looked through the front windshield and said, “According to the map, only one more big mountain pass to go.” He shifted up and pressed on the pedal as he merged onto the highway.



Abraham was careful not to overheat the engine. The truck lumbered over the pass. He made sure he did not go over thirty miles-per-hour.



All he had to do was get on top, then literally coast down into the valley leading to San Diego County. Once near the beach, he would get on Highway 101 going north to Camp Pendleton. His directions became a reality. Abraham exited onto Route 101 northbound lane and slowed down to handle tight curves hugging hillsides. While driving, it became apparent the Army Corps of Engineers designed the two-lane road to parallel train tracks going north and south.

Only twenty more miles to go. Abraham looked down at the fuel gauge. He tapped at the cover. The gas tank was low on petrol. He looked up the road and saw a Texaco sign. It read, *Gas – Two miles Ahead*. He talked to the fuel gauge. “Not for much longer. Your needle will bounce to the right before long.”

While driving, he studied the surroundings. The expansive Pacific Ocean extended well beyond the eye could see. To his right, scattered roadhouses and homes were separated by spotty desert hills and scrub brush. The green and red neon sign soon made its appearance.

He flipped the right blinker on and slowed until the truck and trailer were completely off the road. Abraham was careful to pull alongside the outermost gas pump. There was enough room if he made the turn well in advance of where he wanted to end up.

Abraham looked over his right shoulder to check on Reckless. She fixated on the sunset coming into its own. The sunset put a spell on her. She did not blink. Abraham said, “What are you thinking girl?”

Abraham put the truck in park and turned the engine off. He looked behind the truck to make sure no cars were coming alongside his side of the truck. The lot was clear. He opened the door and stepped outside. The station attendant approached him from the front. He asked, “Sir. Fill it up?” Abraham tipped his hat at the young man. “You bet. Thank you.”

While the attendant filled the truck, Abraham leaned his back against the front fender and watched the sun go down. He could taste the salty air. The ocean breeze felt cool upon his skin.

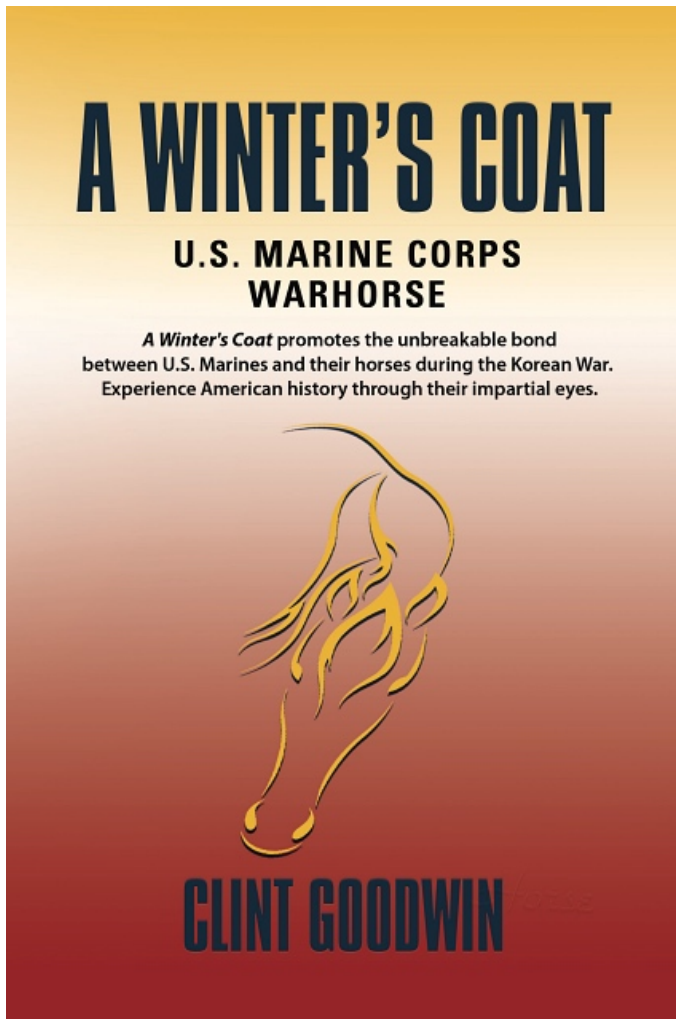
Abraham removed his hat and placed it on the hood of the truck. He closed his eyes and mumbled a prayer. “Thank you. Thank you, Lord for hearing my prayers.”

He opened his eyes. As if timed, the sun briefly formed half an orange circle laying on top the deep blue horizon. The all-seeing eye overlaid rays of sunshine across waves rolling towards the beach. Abraham nodded and said, “As if the Lord winked at me.”



An omen was given to Abraham on that day. What lay ahead for him, and his generations to follow would be a familiar story. A history repeated for mankind to relearn. For Winston Churchill said it best, “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”





*A Winter's Coat examines the lives of two mares put at center stage during the Korean War. One, transported weapons for the U.S. Marine Corps on the Korean Peninsula. The second, anxiously awaited stateside for her owner to return.*

## **A Winter's Coat: U.S. Marine Corps Warhorse**

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