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Beneath the Seventeenth: From Vietnam to Home

By Clint Goodwin

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BENEATH THE SEVENTEENTH

**FROM
VIETNAM TO HOME**

**Experience
American history through Horses' eyes.**



CLINT GOODWIN

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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 reexams American history 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.



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 while carrying cavalymen to victory and defeat. Only one comes home to extend 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 is 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 on 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 faces tyranny again. But there is hope. Their paths to reconciliation are fostered by a trooper; a retired army colonel—Dr. Abraham Bates. As a veteran, the colonel struggles between slaying his own demons and risking losing his family. His wife Amelia demands it. Time and distance are needed.



A Winter's Coat

ISBN: 978-1-958878-43-9

Award-winning book. 2024 Feathered Quill Book Awards Program: Bronze award for the Animal - Adult category.

A Winter's Coat examines the lives of two mares put on 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 to the U.S. Civil War. Will Doctor Robert Bates' hands keep the chain from breaking?



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Rusty Recalls

A stallion's perspective

Camp Pendleton welcomed my birth on June 8, 1954. A retired U.S. Marine sergeant, Donny Gallen was the handler for my mother, Cassie. His arms were the first to hold my head up. His words were the first of many I learned to understand. The first words I learned from him were... *Sempre Fi*.

Sergeant Gallen did not own my mother. Mother said a Korean War veteran, Dr. Bobby Bates, Marine Corps veterinarian, gifted her to Gallen. She said I was the best remedy for Gallen's troubled mind. Later in life, I come to understand my value for the soldier, sailor, airmen, and Marine, like Gallen, who suffered from unwanted memories of war.

I spent the first six months of my life growing up on U.S. Marine Corps base, Camp Pendleton. A base with over one hundred and twenty-five thousand acres of challenging desert-like terrains located in Southern California. The Pacific Ocean and rolling hills defined walls of security for my home. Each day, the ocean's salt air and the desert's dry wind challenged my senses. Over time, I learned how to separate the two from what my nose led me to do.

During those months, I was schooled on warhorse tactics and why there are those meant for battle... and those who are not. Genetics created me for war. Our bloodline determined our potential. My mother told me of our family's legacy. She constantly neighed at me. "Rusty. You can never forget your roots. Someday, you will sire a foal and he or she will need to recall the bloodline's beginning. Our patriarch's name was Lucky." I never forgot her words. Let's start with my own sire. He was a Hollywood movie star. His name was Highland Dale.



Camp Pendleton's Commanding General brought—Highland Dale—on base to sire Marine Corps brood mares in early 1953.² Mother said he

was an impressive stallion standing seventeen-and-a-half hands high. He was not related to our bloodline. But she did say his lineage could be traced to a line of Hollywood stars like Roy Roger's horse, Trigger, whose birth name was Golden Cloud.³

I committed to memorizing my family's bloodlines. In fact, mother tested me daily. I remember the first time she took a deep breath and exhaled. She asked, "Okay. Rusty. What is the name of the horse which sired your great-grandfather?" I replied, "His name was Stonewall. A human, President Ulysses S. Grant named him after Confederate General Stonewall Jackson. Those humans fought each other during the U.S. Civil War."

She nodded. "Very good. Now who are Stonewall's parents?" I neighed, "Too easy. He was born in Northern Virginia. 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. Confederate families owned both."

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

She continued. "Rusty. Those are good family facts. What 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 Reckless. She snorted at me. "Don't disrespect me there, fella." 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 the father of Manuel Zapata. He married Lucinda Zapata in Texas, then relocated to Northern Virginia where our owner, Dr. Bobby Bates, grew up."

My mother watched me closely, waiting for my reply, her gaze as steady as the hot sun. I thought for a moment, recalling the stories she

had shared so often, and realized how much our history shaped not only who I was, but what I was expected to become. Each answer I gave seemed to unlock another memory, another lesson about honor, loyalty, and the unbreakable bond between horse and rider. These conversations, woven between lessons on bloodlines and battles, made me appreciate the weight of my heritage and the responsibilities that came with it.

Aunt Reckless stood by during mother's cross examination. She snorted, "Rusty. Your mother asked you a simple question. All is true with what you say but answer her question." I swatted another fly with my tail and 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... um... 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 Dr. Bates' grandfather—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 my mother immensely proud. She arched her neck and neighed out. "I am so proud knowing my colt has the memory of an elephant. He 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 great-grandfather. Then mother tried to ask me another question, and I interrupted her again. "Before you ask; his trooper was Major Oliver Hazzard, United States Army, Second Calvary. Both my grandfather 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. Very good. 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 mother and Aunt Reckless stomped on the ground. Mother stepped towards me and rubbed her cheek against the side of mine. She stepped back and sniffed my nose. She neighed, “Rusty. We are proud of you. You are ready to learn more. Sergeant Gallen 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 passed between us. Mother continued, “If it does, then you must never abandon your troopers on the fields of battle. You must live and die with them. Your grandfather father—Jubal—told my mother—Missy—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 mother and aunt. Out of respect, I lowered my head towards them.



Rusty meets Clair

Doctor Bobby Bates brought a visitor to meet with Sergeant Donny Gallen during the Christmas of '55. Dr. Bates said his friend had traveled over eight thousand miles of airways and highways to get to Camp Pendleton. The three of them stood in front of my mother. I kept a low profile near my mother's hind quarters. I listened to them speak.

“Mr. Gallen. Good morning,” said Dr. Bates standing next to a dark-headed woman. Our caretaker extended his hand to the woman. “My name is Donny Gallen. Most people around here just call me, Sarge.”

The woman received his hand and replied, “Bonjour Monsieur serge.” Dr. Bates added, “Donny. My friend Clair Lefebvre came all the way from France. She is a horse lover and of course wanted a tour of the Marine Corps stables.”

Donny released the woman's hand. “It would be my pleasure to do so.” Clair stepped up to Cassie and rubbed her hand over the mare's nose. “So soft to touch,” she said.

Bates turned to his friend and said, "The sergeant here is responsible for ensuring these horses are kept in shape and ready to support formal military events for the Commanding Officer. The general is a cavalryman at heart." Clair replied in broken English. "I thought cavalries were a thing of the past."

Donny asserted himself. "Yes, ma'am they are. But the general's father used to be a cavalry officer during the Great War. He reminisces much about his father's tales of riding into battle... in France in fact."

Bobby added, "I think we all miss those days when there was great honor charging towards the enemy you could see."

Moments of silence settled amongst the three while horses began to whinny in the stables. Clair looked across the paddock and pointed. "What horses are kept in those stalls?"

Donny replied, "The Marine Corps living-recruitment poster... Reckless. That mare saved many Marines during the Korean War."

Doctor Bates walked up to the other side of Cassie and then stepped towards Rusty. He reached for his halter and gave it a little tug. Rusty obeyed and followed Bates back to the front of the mare. She snorted at Rusty.

The doctor spoke to his friend. "Clair. This is the sorrel colt I was telling you about. Rusty is a six-generation cavalry horse. My father's father knew the man who owned this little guy's great-grandfather. The stallion's name was Stonewall."

Clair stepped to the other side of the colt opposite the doctor. She waved her left hand over his stubby black mane. She used her right to rub his soft nose. Rusty sneezed when she touched his whiskers. "Sorry, little fella. What is his name?"

Donny walked up and stood in front of Rusty. He looked at the woman and said, "Rusty, ma'am. He has the coloring of a rusty nail."

"I like that," replied Clair.

The doctor said, "His father is a famous movie star."

Clair looked asked the sergeant. "What was the stallion's name?"

"Highland Dale," replied Donny.

The doctor reached over the woman's right arm and caressed the colt's jaw. He said, "Clair. His sire is a famous Hollywood horse,"⁴

"Oh... I see. Good blood then." she replied.

Doctor Bates, Gallen, and Miss Lefebvre stepped back from the mare and colt. They huddled near the paddock gate and continued to talk about horses.



Cassie and Rusty

I heard their whispers. They moved onto the subject of transporting me to Clair's father's polo farm in some foreign place called Saigon, Vietnam. I snorted at mother. "What are they talking about?"

Cassie neighed, "Son. The Commanding stopped here last week to talk with the sergeant. You were sleeping in the stall. I was able to keep an ear towards them."

"What did the men say?"

"Son. The Commanding is gifting you to a foreign man he called French diplomate Lefebvre."

"I don't understand. What do those words mean? Mother?"

"I am not sure, son. But I do know the word *gifted* means you will be leaving our home. I was a gift to Dr. Bates years ago. Then he gave me to the Sergeant Gallen."



The colt turned around and ran across the paddock. He started snorting and kicking up his rear legs. After a few complete circles and dust raising stomps, Rusty returned to his mother's side. His irritable behavior did not go unnoticed. Donny stopped talking to the doctor and said, "Well. Looks like Rusty got bit by a horsefly."

Clair looked over at the colt, now hiding on the other side of his mother. Doctor Bates said, "I have seen that behavior before. Horses have a sixth sense; he may have figured out he is going somewhere." Clair asked, "Do you think horses understand humans?"

Donny asserted himself. "Yes ma'am, they do. I have witnessed their understanding during combat. They will interpret body language with a high degree of accuracy. God gave all animals that capability... to survive."

She turned to Bobby and said, "I had asked you for recommendations for purchasing a solid, trainable breed for polo competitions. And you said there was no better breed than a bloodline with a history of calvary service. This is that colt."

"Indeed, he is," replied Bobby.

Dr. Bates added. "The Commanding told your father over the phone. Rusty would be your best option. Part of our country's diplomatic efforts with maintaining our wonderful friendship with the French." Clair laughed. "You are so full of it, Bobby. So much your eyes turned brown."

The bantering between old college classmates was expected. Bobby looked at Donny who was taking second looks. The doctor said, "Sergeant. All is good. Clair and I were old classmates in college. She helped me with my French."

Donny shook his head and uttered, "Ooh-rah."

"No. No. That is not what I mean. Clair and I are just friends. She knows my wife Mary, and they are friends," replied Dr. Bates.

Donny remained silent and moved onto the next topic. He asked, "So, Miss Clair. When do you need this colt?"

She replied, "I am taking a military flight from North Island Naval Air Station to Saigon. Several stops in between of course. My father will accept custody of Rusty after he has cleared Vietnam customs."

Bobby clarified. "Clair. You said you were flying back this weekend."

"Yes," replied Clair.

Donny looked at his watch. The displayed date was 1/20/56. He added, "It is Wednesday. I will have Rusty, and his gear packed, ready to go on Friday." Clair replied, "Merci. Thank you."



Rusty's transfer begins

The United States was at peace in 1956. Surely, the tea leaves would simply predict living out my days with Dr. Bobby Bates on Camp Pendleton. I looked forward to what the future had to offer. The colonel

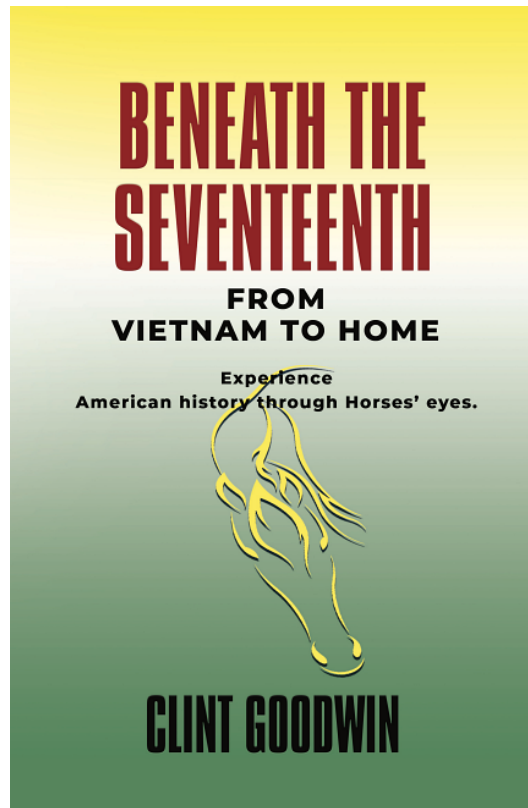
would say, “we are batting a thousand.” But change was coming for me.

On the familial perspective, the downside of leaving the United States was leaving my mother. She would miss me, as I her. I knew mine eyes would never see her again. But Aunt Reckless said the life of a horse is measured in how they move from owner to owner. That may or may not change for me. Well... it changed for me.

The day Sergeant Gallen loaded me up on a trailer was hard on 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 while snorting hard, deep exhalation. She was angry.

She looked familiar. As if a ghost had come out of the tree line. I could smell salty tears falling from her eyes. I let go of myself. One or two tears fell from mine. I whinnied back at her. “I love you, mother.”





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