



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78
The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2020

SINGLAUB: The Jedburgh Mission

Killers In Retirement

**Special Forces Association
2021 Convention**



SENTINEL

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2020

From the Editor



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FRONT COVER: A Texas Army National Guard paratrooper assigned to the 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade prepares for a static-line jump. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman John Linzmeier)



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Jim Morris
Sentinel Editor

An Impossible Situation

Police are often put in impossible situations. The entire Rodney King tape, not just the final minute shown on television, showed him shaking off two, then three officers like a dog shakes off water, before all of them piled on. One of them shouted, "He's dusted!" The tox screen didn't show that, but it sure looked like it.

It did not end well for the officers.

But when guns come out the adrenalin goes up; reason goes out the window. A second's hesitation can cost your life. It is better to be tried by twelve than carried by six.

Blacks are often put in impossible situations. A Black kid was shot and killed while playing with a toy gun in a public park. A Black man carrying a toy gun in a Wal-Mart was shot and killed before he could get it to the check out counter. A Black woman EMT tech was shot and killed in her own home because of a faulty warrant. Honest, law-abiding Black people are afraid of the police. It is not in the interests of the police to be feared by honest citizens.

These contradictions are tearing our country apart.

So far everybody's response is to circle the wagons. The police are defending themselves in ways that seem to say the Blacks are just making it up. The Blacks and their sympathizers are condemning the actions of a few policemen as though all cops hate them and are just looking for an excuse to gun them down in the street.

Perhaps that's not exactly correct, but that's how it looks to this casual observer, and in politics, which this has become, appearances are everything.

There are police chiefs trying hard to set up rules of engagement which allow their officers to perform inherently dangerous jobs in reasonable safety and without collateral damage. But I don't see them in my news feed.

There are Black community leaders who are working hard to change the social conditions that lead to single-parent families and inadequate education, but I only see them on internet memes, not on television.

The only solution I see is love and forgiveness. I can hear my readers saying, "Is this guy nuts?" Well maybe, but not about this. It's the solution Jesus died trying to share. It's the only solution to any social problem that works, has ever worked, or ever will.

It's also the solution that every individual can start without waiting for anybody else. It's contagious. ❖

Jim Morris
Sentinel Editor



Bruce Long, President SFA Chap. 78

We just had our second Chapter meeting at the Fiddlers Green, located at the Joint Forces Training Base located in the city of Los Alamitos, CA. We had a twenty-three members and six guests, giving us a total of twenty-nine personnel present.

Our meeting was again held in the Colonial Banquet Room. Breakfast was served the same as last month, in individual Styrofoam boxes.

What was really different this time, your temperature was checked at the Base Main Gate and also checked by How Howard (18D) at the sign-in

table. Masks were at first mandatory. However, it was quickly decided that you did not have to wear a mask unless you wanted to, and safe distancing should be adhered to.

MSG Wade Scott SOD (N) former member of A/5/19 and a new member of the Chapter was presented his numbered challenge coin (see photo on page 18). It should also be noted that Wade has been serving as the Rear Det NCOIC for A Company, and has been instrumental in resolving personal family issues while A Company is deployed.

Richard Simonian, our Treasurer, usually has few words to say, but today he stood up and told everyone how he beat COVID-19, AKA the Chinese Virus. Interesting remarks, to say the least.

We also recognized Ed Barrett's birthday, eighty (80) years old. Sure doesn't look it. Oh! My mistake, he's only seventy-five (75) years old.



Left to right, Chapter President Bruce Long, Cadet Joshua Ji, Cadet Trenton Reimer and Chapter Vice President Don Gonneville. Cadet Ji and Cadet Reimer, both of UCLA, were presented with Awards of Excellence.

Ed Barrett along with Gary Macnamara presented awards to two UCLA Cadets, Trenton Reimer, and Cadet Joshua Ji. Their escorts were LTC Kevin Toms Professor of Military Science, and CPT Lee Anderson Assistant Professor of Military Science (see photo below and on page 18).

Other guests included SFC Benny Vizcarra, SOD (N) (future chapter member) and Jack Blau, former Airborne / Ranger, and a good friend of our VP Don Gonneville.

It would appear that it's a GO for our training at ARTEMIS on September 11th 0900 hrs which is a Friday. We will have lunch catered. Right now we have fourteen people signed up. We will finalize this list at our August Chapter meeting.

Our guest speaker for July was something different, and the idea came from our VP Don Gonneville. Don choose five Chapter members — myself, How Miller, Ed Barrett, and John (Tilt) Meyer. We were all given the questions prior to the Chapter meeting, so you could actually prepare. A time limit was set for five to seven minutes. The questions were about our experience while serving in Vietnam.

I won't go into details as it would take too long, but we are planning on doing this again at our August meeting. Numerous photos were taken by How and Nancy Miller at the meeting and are included on page 18 of this issue of the *Sentinel*.

Next meeting, same place, same time. Please feel free to contact me anytime with questions or concerns. ❖

Bruce D. Long
President, SFA Chapter 78
SGM, SF (Ret)
De Oppresso Liber

August Chapter Meeting

Planning to attend our next Chapter meeting? If so please e-mail **VP Don Gonneville** at: don@gonneville.com, no later than Thursday August 6th, midnight. We need an exact headcount.

DATE: August 8, 2020

TIME: Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830

LOCATION: The Pub at Fiddlers Green

ADDRESS: [4745 Yorktown Ave Bldg 19
Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5176](https://www.google.com/maps/place/4745+Yorktown+Ave+Bldg+19,+Los+Alamitos,+CA+90720-5176)
(Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos)



Above, Lt. Singlaub hooked to the static line during Ft. Benning's jump training. (Singlaub Collection).

SINGLAUB:

The Jedburgh Mission

By Jim Morris

Editors Note: Major General John K. Singlaub had his 99th birthday on July 10 of this year. He is without doubt the most highly respected man in the Special Operations community. What most people in the community know about him is that he commanded the MACV Studies and Observations Group during the Vietnam War. But that is only an episode in his storied life, and not the most significant episode at that.

Outside Spec Ops he is best known for having publicly stated that President Carter's plan to pull American troops out of Korea would lead to a second Korean War. Carter fired him, but did not pull the troops out, and we can speculate that thousands of American and Korean lives were saved by that.

What he should be famous for, in the Spec Ops community, is that after the debacle at Desert One, when Delta failed to extract our Iran hostages, he seized the opportunity to sell the Reagan administration on a plan he had nurtured and shaped for years. Today that plan has been realized and is known as the United States Special Operations Command.

This story originally appeared in *Soldier of Fortune* in 1981. It is the story of his first mission as a first lieutenant and captain in the OSS. Anybody who has run a mission like this will know it is a mission to die for. And he didn't. Lucky him. Lucky us.

John K. Singlaub wanted to go to West Point real bad. He probably would have, he was told, except that his father was a Democrat. So he ended up as an ROTC cadet at UCLA. He was commissioned and started jump school at Fort Benning, GA, a week after his graduation in 1942. Gung ho to go to war in Europe or the Pacific, his first duty assignment was another frustration to test his resolve to be a career soldier. Second Lieutenant Singlaub was ordered to report all the way to the other end of Ft. Benning, clear over in Alabama. He served as a regimental demolitions officer and platoon leader in a parachute training regiment.

Making the most of his situation, Singlaub quickly demonstrated superior leadership skills under extreme difficulty by organizing successful small commando-type units to act as aggressors on FTXs. This, combined with good marks at UCLA in French and Japanese language studies, soon led to an invitation for Singlaub to volunteer for an unspecified "hazardous mission behind enemy lines." Anxious that he not spend the duration stateside teaching others to go to war, he immediately accepted.

In October 1943, Singlaub received orders to report to Washington. After checking in, he was sent to Building Q in the Foggy Bottom complex where the Office of Strategic Services was headquartered. He underwent initial screening and was dispatched later that afternoon to the Congressional Country Club in suburban Maryland, where a rather bizarre battery of psychological testing began. This included close live-fire tests and having explosive charges set off unexpectedly nearby.

Passing those tests, Singlaub recalls, "is a matter of being able to concentrate your mind on the physical things you have to do rather than worrying about whether you were going to get killed."

Taking a sip of coffee as I interviewed Singlaub in his mountaintop home overlooking the small town of Tabernash, Colorado, I agreed



OSS control officer (left) briefs Singlaub and two other Jedburgh Team members prior to the three being dropped behind Nazi lines in occupied France. (Singlaub Collection)

wholeheartedly with that assessment. I once defined soldiering as being able to perform simple mechanical tasks while scared shitless.

Singlaub and others were selected for continued training. Many were sent back to regular military assignments or civilian jobs. The selectees were trucked to a nearby secret compound designated as “B-1,” now the location of the presidential retreat known as Camp David. The OSS training increased in difficulty and intensity, focusing very much on each individual.

Trainees like Singlaub who survived B-1 would be sent to Scotland for even more rigorous instruction before being assigned to what was known as a Jedburgh Team, a code name assigned by British Intelligence, taken from the name of a town in Scotland. Jedburgh Teams of three men each — two Allied officers and an enlisted radio operator were inserted behind German lines in Europe to help organize anti-Nazi resistance and carry out sabotage and intelligence-gathering operations. They were one of the forerunners of Special Forces A Teams.

A month after the Normandy invasion, Singlaub’s Jedburgh Team parachuted deep into German-occupied France to prepare partisan support for a southern invasion.

“The invasion of the north had already started, and my first mission was to train the maquisards, and prevent movement of German troops from the southern part of France up toward the invasion beachheads. So, I just cut all the railroads.”

“Blow the bridges?” I asked Singlaub.

He smiled and shook his head. “No, I blew about a foot off of every curved rail in the whole province. Every place there was a curve in the province, or where they had stacks of curved rails, I just chopped a foot off.”

“Took it out of the middle?”



Singlaub (left) and other OSS team members question a captured German, with folded arms. (Singlaub Collection)

“No, just took it off the end. They just didn’t move. There was no way that they could...”

“Did you interdict truck transport as well?”

“We did, with ambushes on selected roads. We had several Routes Nationale that went through our province. The Das Reich Panzer Division had tried to move through our area, and they were attacked by some of the maquisards before I got there. In retaliation — the Das Reich was an SS division — they moved into the town of Tulle in Correze and lined up all the young men. They numbered ‘em off, made ‘em count off one-two-three and so on. ‘Okay, all number ones are going to be released, number twos are going to labor camps, and number threes are going to be hung, right there.’ And so they started hanging these guys by putting a noose around their necks and pulling them up on balconies.

“Well, there were about a hundred-and-some in each of the three categories, so there were about a 110 who were going to be hung. But I guess the priest who was administering the last rites had some sympathy. So when they had hung 98 or something like that, he said, ‘Well, that’s all.’ ”

The Germans apparently had lost count, Singlaub said. “Part way through this they switched. The ones who were to go free were rejoicing, and the Germans said, ‘Okay, take the number ones and start hanging ones instead of threes.’ The whole thing was a terrible atrocity.” Singlaub said the German brutality continued. “They moved into the province to the north and decided they were going to wipe out a town called Oridor-sur-Glen. They went into the town, rounded up all the women and children and put them in the church, and put all the men in a garage. They stopped a streetcar coming out of Limoges, and everybody that had tickets for that town, they took off the streetcar and put in with the others, machine gunned the men in the garage, set the church on fire, and leveled the town.

“Someone from the garage managed to get out. He was left for dead and then came up from underneath this pile of dead and got out, and gave us these details.

“But despite these atrocities, we had more French maquisards wanting to join our unit than we could handle. They were not deterred. They were just fantastically brave, even though they lacked a lot of the skills that we would have liked them to have. And that was the job.”

I nodded. “Let me ask you, sir, what was your life like on that mission? Where did you live; how did you move around?”

“Well, we parachuted in to a British agent living as a Frenchman. He was a captain in the British Intelligence forces, but was living undercover. He had indicated to London that there was a good potential for resistance in this area, and that he would run the reception committee. He gathered us up and took us to a little farmhouse and introduced us to leaders of this resistance movement.

“Two distinct groups had been brought together. One was a group headed by a regular army captain, in what was called the Armee Secrete (AS). The other leader had been a corporal in the French army, and he was a communist. This was the FTP, the Franc Tireur de Partisan.

“In my province I had a little better cooperation, although it was not complete. The communists would constantly try to steal any equipment drop that was coming into an area. If they found out that I was running an equipment drop for the AS battalion, they would go out and set up a reception committee, lay out the lights, and send signals, in hope that the airplanes would drop, and on at least one occasion they did.

“I complained that the aircraft didn’t come as I’d been told, and London came back with, ‘You must be out of your mind. The pilot claims he dropped the supplies.’ I found out later they had stolen the supplies. The communists were more interested in arming for the war after the war than they were in fighting the Germans in that area.

“With this group of the AS we were not only able to train them, we actually got permission to take the whole battalion on operations with trucks we had captured from the Germans, and trucks that had been made available for farm usage. These were civilians led by a few regular army people, and they had some NCOs who had seen military service.

“They were not just limited to my province. Because that was a rugged area, underpopulated by French standards, many people who had gotten into trouble elsewhere, moved into that area to live with the maquisards.

“We lived in a farmhouse, a very rugged old thing, with no indoor plumbing, of course. We didn’t live with the farmer. They gave us what was, in essence, a barn. That’s where we stayed a majority of the time, when we weren’t out doing the training and the initial reconnaissance.”

“You were a captain by this time?”

“No, I was a first lieutenant, and my Frenchman was a first lieutenant.”

“So that was kind of a lucky break for you in terms of career development, to be essentially a battalion commander when you were a first lieutenant.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Although I was really the adviser.”

I nodded. “I can’t imagine the Germans were not looking for you. Did you have any close calls while you were there?”

“Not during that time. Later on we did.

“Later we got permission to attack four German garrisons that were in our area. And we eventually captured two of them. One was liberated (by the Germans), and one we had under siege, in the town of Egleton. These were garrisons of several hundred troops, a couple of companies.”

“And you would attack with an entire battalion?” I asked.

“Right. We put the town under seige. In two of them the Germans surrendered. We said, ‘you know, this is how many we have around and you’re completely cut off.’ We cut their telephones — they didn’t have radios — and cut their water. They surrendered. It was a great problem what to do with them. Some of the French, who had lost family to the SS battalion, wanted to just execute them. But I insisted, and we moved them out away from the main route, into the country, and kept them until after the war.

“But in the case of this town of Egleton, they had a radio, and I think they had some SS with them in there. I couldn’t crack it. When we moved against them they were holed up in a reinforced concrete school. We used mortars and British anti-tank rockets

“I called for an air attack on this school, after we’d shot out the top, using mortars, and these projectiles, which were anti-tank things. But they were still in there, defying us, so I radioed London and said that we wanted an air strike. One of the reasons I wanted an air strike was that the garrison we had under attack had called for air support, and they came in and strafed us, and dropped butterfly anti-personnel bombs.

“Well, this was pretty terrifying to these untrained maquisards. It was a real problem, and I was afraid that if they kept this up I wasn’t going to be able to keep control.

“So I told London we’d had many attacks. One of them was from a Heinkel He-111, twin-engine plane that came in very low. We could see the rivets on the thing. My Frenchman and I each organized two Bren guns and opened up when it came over us. We sensed that we could either see or hear the rounds hitting it. We knew that we had hit it. But it went off and disappeared.

“We found out later that we had actually hit it, and killed some of the crew, and the thing had crashed before it got back to its base.

“That made them mad, and we had a hell of a lot of air strikes against us. When I reported this to London, and requested that they hit that school, they said, ‘Well, according to you, you’re getting more air strikes from the Germans than the entire Third Army.’

“That was because all the aircraft were moving back from the beaches, and were in fact moving back toward Germany.

“One day we heard, but did not see, an aircraft fly very high over the area. Later I learned that it was an Allied reconnaissance flight for this special (British) Mosquito squadron they had, that did precision bombing.

“That night the anti-maquisard German force was coming up from Clermont-Ferrond, and they broke through, liberated a group in Ussel, and were on their way to this town of Egleton. So, well after dark, I gave the word to break contact and head for the hills. We had a prearranged rendezvous.”

That’s when the French presented him with a bill for all that food and wine.

“We’d been up for three days straight, so we were really bushed. My Frenchman, radio operator and I headed up, and I think that I must have been sleeping while walking, because I just didn’t remember it.

“I do remember getting to a farmhouse. We didn’t go into the farmhouse, we went into the barn, and just burrowed into the hay and went to sleep.

“Well, my radio operator had slept, and he woke up when a German troop came up and banged on the farmhouse and went in and searched the place, looking for maquisards.

“Of course, he couldn’t sleep. He was terrified, but my Frenchman and I were out cold. The next morning we got up and started toward the rendezvous. Up on some high ground we could see back toward the town of Egleton. We went to an open area, and saw four Mosquitos coming right on the deck. They flew directly to the town, went up into the air, came down, and four of them put their bombs exactly into that school. Absolutely leveled it.

“The trouble is the Germans had already gotten there, and moved on to find out what had happened to the garrisons in these other towns. The only people left at that time were some wounded Germans, and some people taking care of them. Probably less than a platoon had been left behind.

“By this time, after we had gotten permission to attack, and after Paris had fallen to the Allies, the Germans were interested in heading back to Germany. Our orders were to prevent them from getting from the Atlantic coast ports back to Germany by moving through our province. Our province was rugged enough so that we could pretty well stop them. Their main route was to the north, just south of the Loire River. We got permission to move the battalion up and attack Germans moving through that area.

“By this time we were able to move into towns. Generally speaking, when we’d go into a town, I’d take over the Gestapo headquarters, because I’d found that they were usually pretty well stocked, and in pretty good buildings. So they jokingly referred to me as the ‘American Gestapo.’

“We were royally treated compared to the austere eating conditions that we had in England. In England you could only get one egg a week. Well, we were out in farm country, so we could have eggs every day if we wanted. We could have meat. If there was any food available, we were given highest priority in the whole province.

“Later, when we moved into towns, or when we moved into better accommodations, our hosts would crack open a wall that they had sealed up to hide their best wines or their best cognac from the Germans. And they would produce the most incredible wine, just to celebrate the occasion — the arrival of the Allies.

“Eventually we were given instructions to exfiltrate the area. We crossed the Loire River in the vicinity of Orleans. We eventually made contact with some patrols that were on the south side of the Loire River. We crossed on a ferry that had been put into operation — the bridges had all been taken out — and went on into Paris. This was in October of ‘44, something like that.”

Singlaub then began looking for another good mission. “My intelligence officer in the maquisard was an Austrian by birth. He’d spent most of his life in France, but he was fluent in German. He had contacts in Austria. And there were a lot of French that had escaped from the labor camps in Austria, and had gone to the mountains. It was his suggestion that we take our team up there and help set up a resistance in the Austrian Alps, among the French who had escaped. So, I put the proposal to London.”

Singlaub even presented the proposal in person, returning to Paris two days later to await formal approval.

“When we came back to Paris I thought they were going to approve this thing, but apparently the status of Austria was under debate, because of the three-power thing: British-Russian-U.S. interests in that area. So that mission never took place.”

Singlaub returned to England for further training while awaiting reassignment. In December 1944, he volunteered to go to the Far East. Many of the Jeds had already left to go there. First, though, he had some homefront duty to complete. He received 30 days of leave in the States on his way to the China-Burma-India theatre. He and his fiancée, Mary Osborne, were married 6 January 1945, just prior to his new assignment in eastern Asia. He met her before joining OSS and they announced their engagement just prior to his deployment to Europe.

Now World War II was quickly nearing its end. But plenty of adventure lay in store for Jack Singlaub. Among other things, he would be dropping supplies to U.S. operatives assisting a guerrilla movement in French Indochina headed by a man named Ho Chi Minh. He would parachute into what later became North Vietnam. And he would lead a small commando team which made a daring daylight drop onto Hainan Island to free Allied POWs being held by 10,000 of Japan’s Hokkaido Marines.

Once on the ground, with his radio destroyed in the jump, he had the unpleasant task of being the bearer of bad news for the Japanese CO. The United States had dropped the atom bomb, and surrender by Japan was imminent. After refusing to talk with the Japanese lieutenant sent out to take him and his men captive, Singlaub brazenly informed the stunned commander that the tiny commando unit was taking charge of all Allied prisoners and military installations on the island

But that’s another tale. ❖

Beat the Reaper



Activate Your Stem Cells

By LifeWave®

Editors Note: *All right, there's a little nepotism here. My sister, Sandra Ashley, sells LifeWave products and she got this article from LifeWave for this column. But this is a great product, and I am wearing an X39 LifeWave patch as I write this. I've been doing that for a couple of weeks now, and I can report a great reduction in chronic pain, more energy, more and better sleep. This stuff is terrific. Highest recommendation.*

LifeWave, Inc. Scientific Release of X39 Activate Your Stem Cells

In January 2019, David Schmidt, Founder and CEO of LifeWave Inc., released his greatest achievement to date — X39 — an astonishing breakthrough in health science.

LifeWave's cutting edge health and wellness products tap into the body's natural energy using light to deliver more energy and stamina, mental acuity, better sleep, reduced stress, improved skin appearance, faster recovery, an overall feeling of youthful vitality, and more. LifeWave uses infrared light emitted from the body to reflect specific wavelengths of light back toward the body to stimulate points on the skin. X39 is the newest arrival in LifeWave's impressive product line, specifically incorporating new stem cell activation technology.

When commenting on the body's natural abilities for longevity and continued wellness. Schmidt stated, "Throughout my life, I've found we are limited only by the boundaries we place on what we believe is possible. LifeWave started as an idea I had to improve performance and health using the body's communication system... And the world in achieving often remarkable results, we are constantly pursuing new and better ways to improve health and promote anti-aging. There is no limit to what we believe is possible."

For over a decade, Schmidt and his team at LifeWave have been researching new methods for accelerating the way the human body can be optimized for better quality of life. Their discoveries have led to a large collection of patented technologies and applications in the field of regenerative science. Initial trials of the X39 product showed a marked improvement in the area of recovery. Wound healing for instance is a natural process of recovery and requires the presence of stem cells, but as the body ages, stem cells become less effective. The technologies found in X39 are

designed to activate stem cells and provide support for the body's natural recovery processes.

X39 is LifeWave's first product designed to specifically activate your body's stem cells. It does this by utilizing a proprietary and patented form of phototherapy (through non-transdermal patch technology) to elevate the copper peptide, GHK-Cu is a naturally occurring peptide in the body that declines significantly with age. Studies suggest that after the age of 60, the body's levels of GHK-Cu can drop by more than 60% and, by the age 70, little to no GHK-Cu is found.

As with LifeWave's other products that utilize similar patch technology, X39 can be worn for up to 12 hours at a time. Its thin design makes it comfortable to wear and it can stay in place during a shower or while swimming.

In an effort to provide these technologies to those in need, LifeWave has previously donated thousands of its products to assist both retired veterans and deployed veterans overseas as well as first responders challenged by natural disasters. The LifeWave products that have been donated over the years include a variety of the company's non-transdermal patches which require no needles, drugs, stimulants, or chemicals to enter the body.

Besides X39, LifeWave's product line also includes Energy Enhancer (improves fast burning), IceWave (for minor pain relief), SP6 Complete (to suppress appetite cravings), Silent Nights (to improve sleep), Y-Age Aeon (improves inflammatory response), Glutathione (elevates this master antioxidant), and Carnosine (to improve strength and stamina).

To learn more about X39 and LifeWave's full line of products, please visit: www.lifewave.com/sashley.

For any questions or additional information, please contact Sandra Ashley, an Independent LifeWave Distributor, at sandraashley300@gmail.com.

LifeWave is a San Diego-based health and wellness technology company founded in 2004. LifeWave aims to help people all over the world realize their greatest potential through transformative products and a flexible business opportunity. Its patented, proprietary wellness products deliver more energy, better sleep, reduced stress, sharper mental focus, and an overall feeling of youthful vitality. ❖



Kenn Miller

Reviewed by Kenn Miller

When a war is over it is often wise to read the best books of the former enemy for there is much to learn about the other side and about human nature. After WWI there was Erich Maria Remarque's classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and after WWII there was another German classic, Guy Sanjer's *The Forgotten Soldier*. And in last month's [Sentinel](#) there was a review of NVA veteran Bao Ninh's *The Sorrow of War*.

Well, now we have another book that shows us what life could be like for our enemies. But this one is a novel by an American Special Forces veteran that paints a much wider and much deeper portrait of its war and the people in and around that war. They are good guys, bad guys, but none of them all bad, and none of them (except Grandmother Pan) all good.

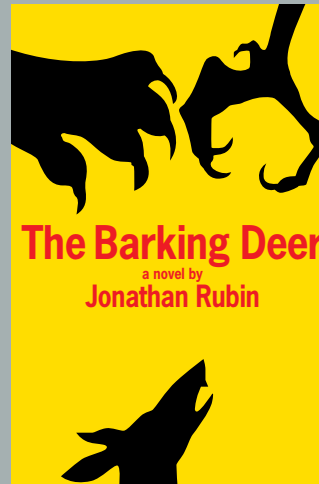
This is Jonathan Rubin's *The Barking Deer*, and the war is in Vietnam. The main characters of this novel — though all the characters are main to the story — are American Green Berets and Rhade Montagnards. There are also ARVNs, VC, and all sorts of civilians on one side or the other, or caught in the middle. I remember when *The Barking Deer* first came out that the author had learned both Rhade and Vietnamese well enough to interpret between the indigenuous speakers of Vietnamese and Rhade, and his teammates. Reading *The Barking Deer*, it is very clear that the author knew and understood the Vietnamese and Rhade people and the environment, situation, and cultures in which they lived.

That intimacy with the indigenous people Rubin wrote about is wonderful. As a former anthropology major, and an interpreter, I am awed. But the cultural fluency of this book can sometimes make the reader — probably most readers — go back to remind him or her self who Hoang Bang is, or Kim, or Van, or Y Blo, or Y Gar, or Y Bun, etc. etc. Same for the villages of Buon Yun, Buon Sop, Buon Yak. For the average reader, authenticity may have a cost. On the positive side, very few — very few — novels introduce and bring to life as many believable characters as *The Barking Deer* does. It seems that all these "Y"s and all those "Buon"s come with a cost. You will certainly get to know and care for the Special Forces soldiers (apparently from 1st Group), but you might fall in love with old Grandmother Pan, though not in a sexual or romantic way. She's very much a good guy, but even the bad guys, and even the minor characters, in this amazing novel come across as real people.

The Barking Deer, an astonishingly good novel by a Special Forces soldier who knew from first hand experience his subject extremely well, came out in 1974, and despite excellent reviews, it rather quickly fell into obscurity. In 1978, Hollywood, in a dreary movie called *The Deer Hunter*, turned non-veteran Robert DeNiro into a Special Forces badass who wore his flash on the right side of

his beret, and seemed to go out on one man patrols with a flame-thrower. *The Deer Hunter*, that got slavish adoration from the critics, made a lot of Hollywood rich folk even richer, and — along with a spurt of equally inauthentic movies — gave the American people and the world a passel of ridiculously delusive images of that war and the people in it. Make that "ridiculously delusive images" that have become stereotypes that all too often take the place of history.

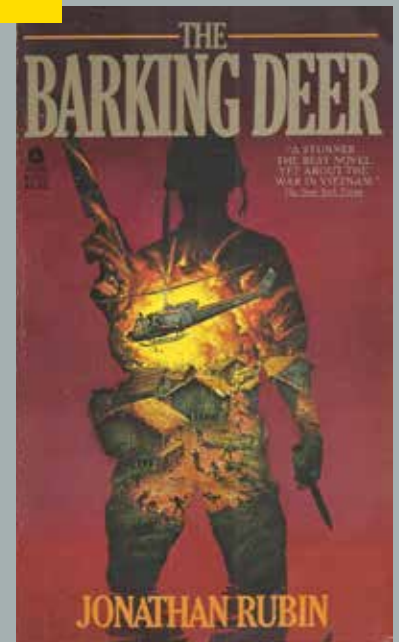
*I don't remember whether or not the hardcover edition of this book, which I read when it was new and in hardcover, started on page 11, but my dog-eared Avon paperback does. There is no page 1 to page 10. *The Barking Deer* starts on page 11. That goes to show that this fascinating masterpiece ain't exactly conventional. But it sure is great. ❖



Original 1974 cover of *The Barking Deer* published by George Braziller

[The Barking Deer](#)

by Jonathan Rubin
Originally published
by George Braziller (1974)
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Avon Books cover published in the 1980s

Killers In Retirement

By Jim Morris

Author's Note: *This piece appeared in Soldier of Fortune in the early '80s. I changed some names to protect the guilty, but they're all gone now, so I have changed them back. I guess that makes it a historical document, though the governments of both Britain and Singapore may claim I made it all up. I did not.*

The doorway was almost hidden behind an obelisk listing the wars in which Australians had fought, and their dates. The last was Vietnam, 1962-1973, a long bloody war. I went in, followed a short hallway to another door, and found myself looking across a pool table at a darkened, noisy bar, full of middle-aged men in military haircuts.

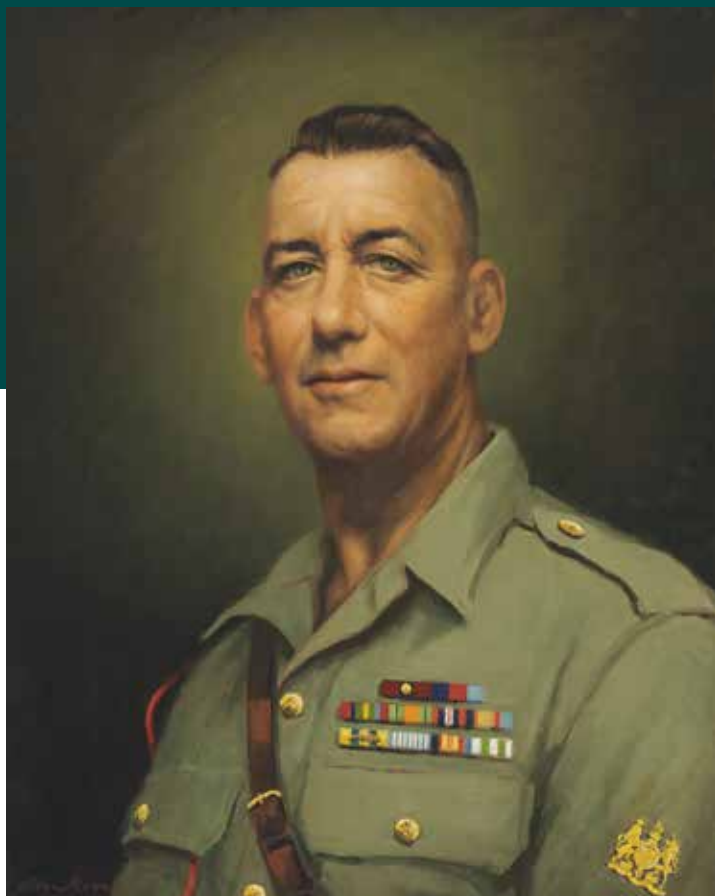
Australian beer is the best in the world, and the national pastime seems to be knocking back fifteen or twenty of them every evening. In profile each man had a healthy gut, and what might be charitably described as a "ruddy" complexion.

At the bar I spotted the man I thought was Jack. He had a little bit of a gut, somewhat out of balance on his hipless frame, and his shoulders were set at a parade-ground angle. He looked sort of like Phil Harris, the band-leader, but his face was not ruddy; it appeared to be made of football leather. Jack Morrison: former senior regimental sergeant major of the Australian Army, most highly decorated Aussie in Korea, second award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal in Vietnam—where I had met him in the 8th Field Hospital—perhaps the bravest, and without doubt the most foul-mouthed, man I have ever met.

Still, it was dark in the bar; I had not seen him in fifteen years and had never seen him out of uniform. Just to be on the safe side I eased up to the bar. It took me a minute to get the barmaid's attention and ask, "Is that Jack Morrison?" by which time he had disappeared into the men's room.

But, at the sound of an American accent, two middle-aged men whirled and approached me. With stunning speed my hand was shaken twice and a beer slapped into it. They introduced themselves as members of Jack's company from Korea, and asked me if I had known a guy named Ray Simpson, which I had not.

Jack had been their company sergeant major in Korea and promoted both of them to sergeant. The one on the left was of Italian descent and looked sort of like a middle-aged Vic Damone. There was something oddly familiar about the other, but I couldn't place it. I didn't catch either of their names. They were both getting on a bit, and a



A portrait of Warrant Officer Edward John (Jack) Morrison DCM and Bar 3 RAR formerly 2/1 Machine Gun Battalion and 2/12 Battalion, later in the Pacific Islands Regiment, Australian Army Training Team Vietnam by Alan Moore. Morrison is shown here as he would have looked in the 1970s. (Australian War Memorial; <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C176833>)

little drunk, but there was something about their eyes. These were not shopkeepers or farmers. These were killers in genteel retirement.

"How is Jack?" I asked.

The oddly familiar one on the right did most of the talking. He wore his wavy gray hair a little long and had a handsome, intelligent face. The backs of his eyes were diamond points.

"Not so good, Jack isn't. The government's fuckin' 'im about on his disability pension, and his feet drain from the effects of Agent Orange. Has to wear special shoes." He launched on a long explanation of Jack's war with the Australian bureaucracy, which I couldn't follow very well.

Then, with no transition I can recall, he was in the middle of a war story from Korea.

"Y' know we 'ad these Korean blokes attached, not worth the powder to blow 'em to 'ell." He leaned on the bar and took a sip from his schooner. "And you know, if you 'ave to clean a grenyde, it's necessary do it outdoors. Anywye, this Korean sahgent's cleaning' a grenyde in the bunkah and some'ow 'e dislodges the pin and kills two of our blokes."

"And himself I suppose."



The men of the 7th Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment [7RAR], home after twelve months in Vietnam, turn "eyes right" in salute as they pass Sydney Town Hall. (Photo by Robert (Bob) Pearce, Australian War Memorial; <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1226029>)

"Naow, 'e got out, and starts 'eadin' toward the CP bunkah, so I calls Jack. 'Jack,' I says. 'There's a Korean sahgent comin' your wye. Be there in a minute.'

"'Yeh!' says Jack. 'Wot about it?'

"'Kill 'im,' says I.

"'Orroyt!' says Jack."

"Which," I replied, "knowing Jack, he did."

"Royt! So about foive minutes later I'm in the CP and Jack says, 'Wot was that all about?'

"So I tells 'im.

"'Oo!' 'e says, "'e shouldn't a done that.' "

We laughed.

Then I felt a hand descend on my shoulder. It was Jack's. "These cunts treatin' you orroyt?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Orroyt!" he said. "Listen, I'm voice-president 'ere, and we're 'avin' a meetin'. Don't know how long it'll tyke. These girls'll tyke care of you."

"Just a minute," I said. "I have something to show you." I unzipped

my overnight bag and got out a copy of my book *War Story*, in which Jack is a character. "Came twelve thousand miles to give you this."

"Royt," he said. "Give 'er a look after the meetin'." He gave his watch a quick glance, winked, and disappeared. So did the guy who looked like Vic Damone, so I was left standing at the bar with the suave, gray-haired Aussie.

"Y'know we all love Jack 'ere," he said. "But a pure warrior loike 'e is, 'e cahn't deal with a bureaucracy. We troy to protect 'im, but 'e does things 'is own wye." He described how Jack had failed to touch second base on some application for his pension. As I understood it he would come out better if he claimed a noncombat disability, and he wouldn't do it.

"Wot are you doin' 'ere?" my host asked.

"On my way to Thailand," I replied.

"Ah, Thoiland," he said. "Ever been to Singapore?"

I shook my head no. "Always wanted to."

"You know who Lee Kwan Yew is?"

"Yeah, I know who he is." I wondered what mental connection he had made between my mention of Thailand and the first head of state of an independent Singapore.

“One toime my sahgent had ‘is pistol cocked this far from ‘is ear, and was about to pull the trigger.” He smiled at my puzzled expression and signaled for another beer.

“My shout,” I said, reaching for my pocket.

“Your money’s no good ‘ere,” he said gruffly. “Jack said you wasn’t to pye for a thing.”

I shrugged and nodded thanks.

“Left seventy-foive enemy dead on that ‘ill in Korea, Jack did. Reckon ‘e’d a got the VC if he’d been a Pom.” It was fairly obvious that every-one here had the same case of hero worship for Jack that I did.

My host’s eyes switched back to his own story. “Y’ever ‘ear of Sir Robert Thompson?”

I nodded. Everybody in revolutionary warfare has heard of him, the man who fought a communist insurgency in Asia for ten years and won.

“I was a restless young bloke after Korea; couldn’t find a job I liked in Australia. Answered an ad in the paper. The man said, ‘Well, you’ve got the qualifications. Top NCO in Korea. I’ll offer you a commission as lieutenant, special pay, and a paid-for vacation after every job.’ ”

“What was the job?”

“I was ‘is bloody assassin.”

Ian Fleming, that was who he reminded me of. A little shorter and heavier, but he had the same sharp intelligent features and wiry hair.

“I have nothing against Orientals,” he said, “but I hate communists. Lee, we called him Harry Lee then, had been spouting the communist line and causing trouble. He was a very smart young politician, law graduate, but, we thought, a communist.

“My boss said to me, ‘Dawson, we may have to close the file on Mr. Lee’ You see, ‘e always called me Dawson, never Mr. Dawson, never Harry. He was very British.

“Lee had about twenty-foive bodyguards there in the hotel where ‘e was stayin’, but they weren’t difficult to get past. We went into the hotel room and I ‘ad my sahgent put ‘is pistol to Lee’s ear. But, you see, I’d always rather buy a man than kill ‘im. It’s simpler in the long run. You Americans never learnt that in Vietnam.”

I smiled wryly. “Of course, we could have bought them all ten times over for what we spent trying to kill them.”

“Well,” Harry went on, “I ‘ad my sahgent put ‘is pistol to ‘s ear. ‘Are you a communist?’ I asked.

“‘No,’ he said. ‘I am not a communist.’ ”

“Then why do you spout the communist line?”

“‘The communists are very popular. Don’t kill me now. Perhaps we can make a deal.’ Ah, ‘e was a cool one. If I ‘ad so much as blinked, my sahgent would ‘ave pulled the trigger. ‘Come with me,’ I said.

“We walked out past ‘is bodyguards and I took ‘im to headquarters through the back way. He was in with my boss for three hours. When ‘e came out they were both smiling. ‘Dawson,’ said my boss, ‘I’d like you to meet the Prime Minister of Singapore.’ And we shook ‘ands all round.”

“He’s still in power,” I said.

“Yes, and the British are still secretly in control. As I said, it’s easier to buy them.

“‘Will I see you again, Mr. Dawson?’ the politician asked. At that my boss looked startled. ‘If you see Mr. Dawson again,’ e said, ‘he will be the last person you ever see!’”

“Have you ever seen him again?” I asked.

“Oh, no,” Harry replied. “I would never go to Singapore. “E might think I was still active and take preventive measures.

“That sahgeant of mine was an interesting specimen,” he went on. “When I took the job I had a thirty-six-man platoon, all ‘and-picked men, but no sahgent. My boss suggested I interview this chap at the jail awaiting execution. He was a Choinese tong killah. I went down there. ‘Look,’ I said, ‘I can ‘ave you out of ‘ere this afternoon. You come to work for me. I’ll make you a sergeant. You get special pay, and a paid-for-leave after each job. And after two years, a pardon.’ He thought about it for a long time. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘it’s better than doyin’.” He laughed. “‘Better than doyin’,” he repeated.

He started to signal for another beer. “Listen,” I said. “I haven’t eaten since noon, and I’m not used to this stuff. If I don’t get something in my stomach soon you’re going to have a sloppy drunk on your hands.”

“Fish and chips orroyt or do you want a hamburger?”

I smiled. “Fish and chips is fine.”

It was fully dark and the air crisp as we walked through the streets of that run-down commercial area of Melbourne. It was July, early winter in Australia. I had a bit of a buzz on, and wondered why he was telling me all this. One of the reasons I had come to Melbourne was to see if Jack would be interested in an interview on his wartime experiences; and now here was this other story. It was good, and had an authentic ring to it, but on the other hand you run into a lot of bullshit artists. Anyway, I enjoyed the conversation.

We went down a block and over two, crossing the railroad tracks, and went into what is called a “take-away” in Australia — a carry-out place. Harry had fish and chips and I had a chiko roll, which resembles an oversize eggroll. We squeezed into a back booth at the take-away and I smiled at the thought of Ian Fleming and James Bond’s gourmet meals. “You mind if I use some of this stuff?” I asked, meaning his experiences.

He looked at me closely, to see if I was the kind of journalist who would betray a confidence. “Don’t use Lee’s real name.” he said. “That would be very embarrassing.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t.” I had no desire to hurt an ally who ran a prosperous and happy country. “What about your name?”

He pondered for a minute. “Call me . . . Wong!” he grinned and uttered a short barking laugh.

“If you write this,” he said around a mouthful of chips, “there’s a story you should use.

“There was a Choinese lady in our unit who operated alone, a lovely thing she was; always carried a .32 in ‘er bra. The communists had

killed her 'usband and she joined our unit for revenge. Ah, Gawd! She was beautiful and I wanted her; tried everything I knew to get her and nothing worked.

"One evening, shortly after I had received a new assignment, she appeared at my bungalow. 'The man you have just been assigned to kill is the man who murdered my husband. I want him.'

" 'I couldn't do that,' I replied. 'This is a professional job, not a vendetta.'

" 'You will get two weeks' leave after the job,' she said. 'I will spend those two weeks with you, and I guarantee you will remember them always as the best two weeks of your life!' "

I had been skeptical before, and that sounded way too perfect. But when he smiled at the memory—a slow, disingenuous, reminiscent smirk—it was not the smile of a man running a con.

"My platoon had him surrounded in an alley; he came out the door. We caught him full in the searchlight. I promised Florence the first three shots, and they were two more than she needed."

"How was your vacation?"

"Best one I ever 'ad," he replied. "But when I got back the boss called me in. 'When two of my best agents go to the same place at the same time I become curious,' he said. 'You're good, but she's better than you. I don't want her effectiveness impaired in any way.' So I told him what had happened."

"Was he pissed?" "No. 'E didn't care as long as it wasn't permanent. He didn't want 'er married."

"Did you take her out after that?" "No." There was a touch of wistfulness in his reply. I believed him then.

"You must have had some strange romantic encounters in a position like that."

"I had a maid I was very fond of. Been sleepin' with 'er for two years. She asked for toime off to visit 'er sick mother. I don't know what she was thinkin' of, because I'd checked 'er out thoroughly, and knew 'er mother was dead.

"So I let her go and stayed up that noight. When the first knock came I put a six-round burst from a Sten through the door. They left royt awye and there were three blood trails into the bush outside my door. They never bothered me at home after that.

"I worried a bit about what to do to her. She set me up, but I'm sure she was under a death threat at the toime. I 'ad to do something, though, or appear soft. So I fixed her up with a couple of years' easy detention. Not too bad.

"One other toime there was a Malay actress I wanted badly. Tried everything. Sent 'er flowers; sent 'er candy. Nothing. Then I got a message to meet her in a certain restaurant. Should 'ave known then, but I went.

"An 'alf hour after she was supposed to arrove, the hair on the back of me neck stood up, which has saved me more than once. Two Choinese men who looked familiar came in the restaurant, but I already 'ad my pistol under the table. When the first one got 'is out, I hit 'im first. But the second one grabbed 'im and held 'im in front, and

started foirin'. I 'ad to 'it 'im in the 'ead, and by that toime I 'ad a wound in me gut. Got 'im, though."

I took a bite out of the chiko roll.

Much refreshed from having lined our stomachs with grease, we once again stepped into the nippy air between the take-away and the Returned Servicemen's League.

When we entered its dark, boozy interior, I spotted Jack over by the bar with my AWOL bag, bent over my book in the dim light. It was open to the part, about two thirds of the way through, where he makes his appearance.

He sat next to a dark-haired lady of almost his age, who looked about how one might expect Raquel Welch to look in fifteen years, if her luck holds. Jack looked up like a kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar, and quickly shoved the book back into the AWOL bag. Harry introduced me to Jack's wife, Pat, and while that was happening Jack disappeared again.

My ears are all blown out from a combination of artillery, aircraft engines, and heavy-metal rock 'n' roll, so I could scarcely understand what was said, but somehow she got the idea from Harry that either I hadn't eaten, or hadn't eaten enough. She reached into her purse and pulled out a slice of baklava wrapped in waxed paper, and offered it to me with a touchingly tender smile, such as I have never seen on Raquel Welch.

There was a schooner of Victoria Bitter in my left hand, and a slice of sweet Greek pastry in my right. I was at a loss as to how to proceed.

Harry was in my ear with another story. "Shot this bloke dead in the street, and I 'ad nothing to prove who 'e was, so, much to moy surprise, I was arrested. 'This toime, Mr. Dawson, you've gone too far,' says the inspector.

" 'Don't let it come to troial, man,' I told him. 'You don't know who you're dealin' with.'

" 'I am a professional police officer,' e says. 'I do moy job accordin' to the law.'

" 'Don't ruin yourself, man,' I told him. 'This isn't London. We aren't foightin' criminals; we're foightin' bloody communist insurgents, and none of the rules apply.'

"So what happened?" I asked. I made short work of the baklava and licked my fingers.



Victoria Bitter Stubbie (Photographer: Simon Laird)

“They flew a magistrate out from London for the trial. I was acquitted, and the inspector was sent ‘ome, shakin’ ‘is ‘ead. ‘I cahn’t understand it,’ ‘e said. ‘I’ve been a dedicated policeman for thirty years.’

“‘Told you this was war, man,’ I told him. ‘You can’t interfere with the secret police.’ “

I heard a loud electronic click and Jack’s voice boomed over the PA system, rumbling like gravel in a steel chute. “Me mate Jimmy Morris . . . came all the wye from America to see me . . . moy shout . . . step to the bar.” A moment later he was back at the bar, smiling, charged with energy.

Soon I met a whole procession of Aussies—the old and grizzled, and the young, T-shirted, and bearded. They were all slightly drunk and they all had the look of combat men, with enlarged facial pores, and smiles that knew too much. But there was a genuine openness there. I liked all of them and they accepted me as one of their own. I understood them much better than I understand American civilians. Combat is one of those experiences that unite all who have had it. I would be far more at home at a gathering of ex-VC and NVA than I would be at a meeting of the junior chamber of commerce in my own hometown.

Suddenly the PA clicked on again and a voice said, “Noine o’clock.” Everyone in the room stood up and all the lights went out except for one small spot that illuminated something hung on the left wall, which I couldn’t make out. I had forgotten. This was the Nine O’clock Silence, a nightly memoriam to Australian servicemen killed in war. I had been told about it by an Aussie lady: “Sort of pathetic, really, all these drunken old sods, living in the past.” But I did not find it so. Normally my reactions to ceremonies of this sort range from indifference to cynicism, but this night I was touched by the obvious sincerity of these people’s feelings. The voice on the PA recited:

“In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe.
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high
If you break faith with us who die,
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.”*

And in response everyone there but I, who did not know the ceremony, responded in chorus:

“We shall not forget them.
We shall not forget them.
We shall not forget them.”

The lights came back up, the noise level rose, and I buried my nose in the foam.

“Ah, ‘tis a beautiful thing!” Jack said.

Shortly after that I found myself in a car with Harry, Pat, and Jack. Harry was driving.

It seemed a fairly short trip to Jack’s house and I suppose there was conversation, although I don’t remember any of it, except for one comment of Harry’s about me. “ ‘E doesn’t miss much; I was watchin’ ‘is eyes at the club.” It is true that I don’t miss much, but I hadn’t caught Harry watching my eyes, so I must presume he misses less than I do.

Jack’s house is over a hundred years old, and he proudly showed me through, showing off the workmanship on the old fireplaces. Then he placed my book on the shelf with his other books on war. Over the fireplace was a copy of a painting of a younger Sergeant Major Jack Morrison, the hero of Korea. He was thinner in it, and seemed more grim than the man I knew.

“It’s a copy of one in the army museum in Canberra,” Harry said. “The government paid ten thousand for it.”

Jack, standing there, swelled visibly with pride. He unabashedly gloried in being a legend in his own time, although I have never heard him brag, and was unable to extract the story from him I thought I had come for.

After that Jack took me outside to show me two Peking ducks he had penned up in the backyard. We shared a whiz on the grass and went inside for another beer.

Pat and Harry had cracked two bottles of Victoria Bitter and we went into the living room where the record player was. For my edification Jack played a record of the English tenor Peter Dawson, singing an album of military songs, notably the “Ballad of Private Roger Young” and “The Sergeant Major on Parade.” I enjoyed Jack’s enthusiasm as he raised his glass, pumping his right arm in time to the music, and sang along. Pat gazed at Jack in what looked to me like plain, flat-out adoration. Harry looked at them both fondly.

“Pat’s not Australian,” he said. “She’s cockney, Jack met her in London. I love ‘er, you know. But don’t tell Jack. ‘E’d kill me. I gave him me own pistol; seventeen personal kills on it, and ‘e’d do the eighteenth, and it’d be me.”

During a break between songs Pat held Jack’s arm and asked, “Are y’ doin’ orroyt, beloved?”

He gazed at her with the most tender, loving look I have ever seen a man give a woman, smiled wryly, and said, “Oi’m doin’ foine, y’poisonous Pommy bahstid.”

After the military songs Pat put on a Dean Martin album and she and Jack danced, quite well, and Harry told me another story. “There

*Colonel John McRae, who died in France through illness contracted during WWI. His poem is published by courtesy of the proprietors of Punch, owners of the copyright..

was a man, a very dangerous man, and no one had been able to remove him. I was asked if I could do the job. I said yes.”

“How?” I asked. We stood by the fireplace, with our glasses of Victoria Bitter. I was not incapacitated, but I had drunk more than I wanted. My belly was tight. Harry was still sipping along at about the same rate he had all evening.

“I got to him through his brother. First I arranged for his business to make about four hundred pounds a month more than it had, for four months. Then I cut him off. By then he’d bought a new house and a new car; gained a whole new level of expectations. After the second month he was desperate. That’s when I approached him. I convinced him that I didn’t want his brother’s life. I told him that his brother would be in jail for two years and that, after that, I’d set him up with a new identity and a new location. In the meantime I’d get him out of debt, and see he ‘ad some left over.”

“Was that what you wanted?”

“No, I killed his brother. When my informant found out what he’d done he committed suicide. What the ‘ell! I slept that noight. It’s a rough game.”

This time I was watching Harry’s eyes. Somewhere back down in there he flinched. He may have slept well the night it happened, but I’ll wager he’s lost some sleep over the years since. I was beginning to understand his reason for telling me these stories.

The dance ended and Jack and Pat joined us. Jack asked Pat to get an album of clips and pictures of his military career. There were stories about his DCM and Bar, about his retirement, with pictures of him in garrison cap and Sam Browne belt. He looked ill at ease in them. Jack was a field soldier, pure and simple.

Among the pictures was one of him when he first joined the service in World War II, as merry a lad as you’d ever want to see, with guileless eyes and a reckless grin, his slouch hat worn at the same nonregulation, if not impossible, angle he’d worn it at in the hospital.

“Just a young trooper,” he said, and laughed. What I saw was a classic example of the kind of kid who drives his sergeant to drink or insanity.

He also proudly showed me a picture of his daughter, married to a younger retired regimental sergeant major, now doing well as a painting contractor. “She made a foine army woife, with her upbringing,” he said.

Jack and Pat danced the next dance, and I talked to Harry again. This time we leaned against a wall on the opposite side of the room. He leaned forward, speaking softly and earnestly. This time there was no pretense. Here was a man baring his soul.

“We attacked a terrorist camp, and took a woman prisoner. She must have been high up in the party. She wore the red tabs of a commissar. I’d already told my men we took no prisoners, but I’d never killed a woman. ‘She must die quickly; we must leave!’ my sergeant said.

“Oh, God, I was sweatin’,” Harry went on. “She was magnificent. ‘What’s the matter, Mr. Dawson?’ she asked. ‘You’re sweatin’.”

“‘Not for you,’ I said. “ ‘It’s a malaria recurrence.’ I gave my pistol to my sergeant, but he just shook his head. I had got this man out of

prison. None of them would do it. None of them would do it, and if I didn’t I’d never be able to control that unit again.

“ ‘You’re sweatin’, Mr. Dawson,’ she said again.

“ ‘Not for you,’ I said.

“Did you kill her?”

“Hell, I blew ‘er fuckin’ead off,” he replied.

Jack and Pat glided by to the waning notes of “*Volare*.”

“My platoon all gathered round and smiled. ‘You are our tuan,’ my sergeant said. ‘You are our *tuan*.’ “

I’m not a priest; I’m not even an officer anymore. I had never let my Montagnards kill prisoners. But I’d quit interrogating them because I was starting to like it. That was not something I had wanted to know about myself. And we’ve all seen good men die because we weren’t exactly in top form that particular day. I had forgiven myself for that. I hoped my look told Harry that I liked him, that it was okay with me if he forgave himself. It’s hard to do, though. The only way you can accept that you’re not a villain is to admit you’re not a hero either.

The record ended. We had another beer. Harry went home and after a while we all went to bed.

Pat had already gone to work when I got up the following morning. Jack was in the kitchen frying both of us a steak for breakfast.

There was something that had been bothering me. I try to be as honest as I can in my writing, and sometimes I worry that things I say about my friends might hit them the wrong way. “Let me read you what I wrote about you,” I said to Jack.

“I read it, myte,” he said, over the skillet.

“I hope you weren’t offended when I called you a ‘beat-up old duffer.’ “

He smiled a little wryly. “I wasn’t offended, myte.”

After breakfast we got in Jack’s car. I still hadn’t got used to the driver’s side being on the right, and more than once I had been almost creamed by an oncoming car, stepping off the curb looking the wrong way.

“This part of Melbourne’s all Greek,” Jack said. “Melbourne’s got the third largest Greek population of any city in the world.”

Jack had suggested, with no dissent on my part, that he show me some of the Australian paintings in the National Museum, where he worked as a guards officer. The streets changed into broad parklike boulevards as we neared the museum. There was just the suggestion of a nip, and no flowers bloomed, but the palm trees grew along the boulevard; it was a British city in the tropics.

“I helped build this street when I was a young fella,” Jack said.

The museum was a beautiful modern structure, with a banner outside advertising a Pompeii exhibit I had seen in Dallas a year or so previously.

Inside, I checked my AWOL bag and Jack explained to the guard on duty what he was doing. “The guards are all retired warrant officers,” Jack explained. A warrant officer in the Australian army is a senior NCO in ours. I grinned inside, thinking of those old sergeants major,



The National Gallery of Victoria, located in Melbourne, is Australia's oldest and largest art museum. (Photo by Robert Merkel)

working in that museum after decades of army life. I fancied I could detect a mellowing effect.

Jack had a pretty clear idea of what he wanted to show me, and I had to drag my feet to pause by some brilliantly designed glass sculptures, flashing translucent primary colors. He blasted right through the modern and impressionist section, and barged back to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century stuff, to show me some dark and brooding English landscapes. His only judgment was “There’s not an ‘ell of a lot of difference between a Turner and a Constable.”

When we had seen what he wanted to show me, I insisted on going back to the modems, and to the Impressionists, which are my favorites. Jack stood off to the side and pretended not to know me while I examined some of them closely. But the comments he did make, particularly about the porcelain and the Australian painting, showed he hadn’t been sleepwalking during his time in the museum.

“Did you have any interest in this stuff before you came to work here?” I asked.

“No,” he replied.

We left the museum and turned left toward the business district. Jack told me that the park across the street was the home of ducks that sometimes decide to cross with their ducklings, and that the cops would leap out and stop traffic for them.

We walked across the bridge and over the River Yarra, which reminded me somewhat of pictures I’ve seen of the Seine in Paris. It’s not very much like that, but it is more like that than either the North Canadian where it runs through Oklahoma City, or the Mekong in Phnom Penh, the rivers through cities that I knew.

A block past the railway station Jack turned into a pub. Inwardly I cringed. It was only ten-thirty in the morning and I am not much of a drinker. I had probably drunk more beer in the past two weeks in Australia than in the preceding decade. But it was an hour and a half until my ride left for Wagga Wagga, and I was enjoying Jack’s company.



Chloé, by Jules Joseph Lefebvre. (Public domain; this file has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chloé,_par_Jules_Joseph_Lefebvre.jpg)

“Nothing I loike better’n a pot o’ beer,” Jack said as we stepped up to the bar, all dark wood and tasteful appointments.

“See that paintin’.” Jack pointed out a huge floor-to-ceiling nude in an elaborate gold frame, extremely well done, of a gorgeous young girl of surpassing innocence. “That’s Chloe,” he said. “That’s a very famous paintin’.

‘The whole city of Melbourne’s proud of ‘er. During the war some of your blokes, Marines they were, tried to steal her. Six of ‘em,

drunk, some' ow got 'er out of the frame; 'ad 'er rolled up and ready to go out the door. They gave 'er back without a foight when it was explnyed 'ow important she was."

A voice broke in over Jack's shoulder. "Cracky Jack Morrison, from Korea, boy Gawd." The speaker was in bad shape. It was ten-thirty in the morning and he was shitfaced. He was clean shaven and well dressed in a tweed leisure suit. But he had the face and slurred speech of an old wino.

"Hello, Cobber," Jack said.

Sure enough, this man had been in Jack's company in Korea. He launched on a long, disjointed remembrance of experiences they had shared, and explained that his daughter and son-in-law were keeping him now. They had celebrated his birthday the previous evening, and kept his glass full all night.

"This is me myte, Jimmy Morris," Jack said. "We were drinkin' with Killer Dawson just last noight." We shook hands. It was like grabbing a sponge full of dishwater.

"Killer, eh?" And this sparked another round of war stories.

I didn't want to knock Jack's friend, but when he left I said, "He doesn't seem to be right on top of it."

"Aghh!" said Jack. "'E's gone! Shouldn't even be aloive. Most of 'is stomach's missin'." Then Jack did something I had seen him do three or four times in the last couple of days. He raised his glass and stopped halfway to his lips. Stopped dead, rigid, as though he had stepped out of time, and his eyes were somewhere else. It was not a thousand-yard stare, but as though he were sharing a toast with a whole lot of people I couldn't see. At such times he had the mouth of a child, but his eyes were the oldest things I have ever seen. It only lasted a second, and then he meditatively sipped his beer.

"We alwyes called 'im Killer," he said. "He was in a special unit for seven years, you know."

"He mentioned that."

Jack smiled a little. "'E's in love with me woife."

I nodded. "He told me that, too, but he said he couldn't tell you, because you'd kill him."

Jack smiled. "'E's a good lad, Killer is. There's no 'arm in 'im. 'E's all shot full o' holes now, though."

For the first time I noticed Jack's right arm was much thinner than the left. "What happened to your arm?"

"Ah, took a round in me neck. Affected the nerves."

My own right arm is somewhat withered, missing a couple of nerves and an artery from a gunshot wound. Something else we had in common.

"Bad feet, bad arm, the lot," Jack said. "But I'd do it all again."

"Yeah," I admitted, somewhat ruefully. "Me too."

Things are much simpler where you don't know the people you hurt.

"Did you know Ray Simpson in the 8th Field, Jim?"



Warrant Officer Class 2 (wo2) Rayene (Ray) Stewart Simpson VC DCM. When Simpson left the army in 1970 he was the longest-serving member of the AATTV. Simpson was awarded the Victoria Cross, the Distinguished Conduct Medal, service medals for the Second World War, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal, and the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. (Photo by Brian Edwin L'Estrange; public domain; <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C58941>)

I shook my head. "Black Australian warrant officer. 'Is woife was Japanese, and the government denoied 'er pension because she 'adn't been an Australian resident for foive years. Two kids. 'E 'ad the Victoria Cross, the lot. The RSL finally got a special bill passed givin'er a pension of two 'undred a month. Wot'll that buy in Tokyo today, Jim? Coupla fish 'eads and roice. We're still workin' on gettin'er the full pension. We'll get it for 'er."

Soon it was time for him to go. We went to the door and shook hands. I watched him go to the stoplight. He never looked back, only waited for the light to change, and stepped off the curb with his left foot, taking thirty-inch steps, 120 to the minute. ❖



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SFA Chapter 78 July 2020 Meeting (Photos by How and Nancy Miller)



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- 1 Jack Blau
- 2 SFC Benny Vizarra
- 3 LTC Kevin Toms Professor of Military Science UCLA
- 4 MSG Wade Scott
- 5 Ed Barrett, Chapter Coordinator of ROTC Program and Chapter Secretary Gary Macnamara present an Award of Excellence to Cadet Joshua Ji of UCLA.
- 6 Ed Barrett and Gary Macnamara present an Award of Excellence to Cadet Trenton Reimer of UCLA .
- 7 Chapter President Bruce Long presents a Chapter coin to MSG Wade Scott.
- 8 Chapter Treasurer and Chaplain Richard Simonian
- 9 Jim Duffy
- 10 John Meyer and Ed Barrett
- 11 Left to right, How Miller, Chapter Vice President Don Gonneville, Mike Keele, Chapter President Bruce Long
- 12 Mike Jamison, in the foreground at right, and other Chapter members in attendance.