



I grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the fourth of Donald and Viola's five children. In 1973, I graduated from Wayne High School. While my Mom wanted me to go to college, I knew I wasn't ready. I'd had many problems in school, mostly related to writing, grammar, and spelling. While Learning Disabilities weren't discussed much during that time and I've never been officially diagnosed, I do have many of the symptoms of what is now known as Dysgraphia, so instead of college I joined the army.

While the peace treaty ended the United States involvement in Vietnam, when I joined I was still given the National Defense Service Medal for servicing during the Vietnam War Era. In the army, I wanted to learn meteorology but after learning the requirements, I chicken out. I'd always enjoyed dealing with people, so I asked for something in personnel. My basic training was at Fort Knox, KY and advanced training at Fort Ord, CA. It was there that I learned that in the Army, personnel meant being an office clerk.

I was assigned permanent party at Fort Bragg, NC , the home

of the 82nd Airborne Division and the Army Special Forces. I spent my time doing various jobs in the officer's records section of the 573 rd Personnel Services Company attached to the First Combat Support Command. While in the army I learned to be more responsible, to finish things I started, how to type, and how to use white-out as well as shoot an M-16.

While in the service, I read Michael Shaara's The Killer Angels. All I'd known about the Civil War was the little I'd learned in school and his book opened up my eyes to what the war was really like.

After my three years in the army, my Mom got her wish and I enrolled in Indiana University, Purdue University at Fort Wayne, IPFW, with the goal of becoming a history teacher. Growing up, whenever we traveled, my Dad would always stop at historic sites. I can't remember how many times we stopped at the Fallen Timbers Battlefield outside of Maumee, Ohio.

With the skills I'd learned in the army, and avoiding classes that required the writing of long papers, I was able to do much better in college than in high school and completed my Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education, Social Studies, in three and a half years.

When I graduated, there was a shortage of full time teaching jobs in Indiana, so I did some substitute teaching, served as an administrator for a neighborhood association, worked as house parent in a home for girls with emotional problems, and sold accident insurance policies door to door to businesses. I wasn't any good at any of them.

A friend from the army wrote me about the fabulous job market in Houston, so in the middle of the summer, I loaded up my old car, with no air conditioning, and moved to Texas. Even with a great job market, I had problems finding a good job, so I took a job selling cameras for minimum wage plus commission.

I did pretty well. I'd gotten a camera when I graduated from high school, so I knew some about photography and the manager taught me how to sell. I moved up to assistant manager then started dating the company bookkeeper, Brenda.

In a few months, I was promoted to manager of my own store and Brenda and I started making wedding plans. Just before we got married, we learned my Mom had lung cancer. We were married in Humble, TX by the justice of the peace with our best friends standing up for us, and then it was up to Indiana a week later for a reception with my family.

My Mom's cancer was spreading very rapidly and was already in her bones. I stayed a week with her and when I left she made me promise not to come back. I was very close to my Mom. She'd believed in me when other's didn't and always encouraged me to do better. When Brenda and I went to say goodbye to my Mom, she kicked me out of the room so she could talk to Brenda alone. Years later Brenda told me my Mom had whispered to her, "Take care of my baby. I won't be here to do it."

Recession hit Texas and the camera company didn't survive and while Brenda was able to find a good job very quickly, once again I had trouble. It was almost a year before I found stable employment in insurance claims.

In 1986, I made my first trip to Gettysburg as an adult. My Dad has taken the family there in 1960, but I remember little about the trip. The first place I went at Gettysburg was the Twentieth Maine position on Little Round Top. As I stood by the granite monument and looked to the valley below, I started wondering about who the men were that had attacked Chamberlain and the officer he'd captured at the point of his sword. It was then I decided to write a novel about telling the story from both sides of the fight for Little Round Top.

Knowing my weaknesses in writing, I'd planned to team up with an author. I'd provide the research and story outline and they'd write the novel. As the research progressed, I talked to an author who told me, "no one can tell your story better than you," so I decided to write it myself.

To help with my poor grammar and spelling skills, I recruited a friend to do the editing. We finished the first draft in the fall of 1994, and I proudly boasted it would be published by Christmas. I sent out 45 queries to literary agents and I thought they would be fighting for the right to represent the next best seller. I got all the rejects back within two weeks, and then the hard work started.

Many things have changed over the years, some good, some not so good. My Dad and ten year-old nephew, Chris, both passed away, Brenda, and I moved into a new house, I was promoted twice; Brenda came down with Multiple Sclerosis.

Thanks to Skyward Publishing, *Courage on Little Round Top* was finally published. For a first novel the reviews were overall favorable and the first edition sold out. Skyward has changed their business model and has moved on to documentary film making. Once I get my second Civil War novel completed, I'll once again go looking for a publisher.

In the meantime, my website has gotten some attention. Every month, I receive visitors from all across the United States and surprisingly from around the world. History Channel Magazine used one of my photos on a pullout they did on Civil War battlefields.