

Lost

by

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I've been told that one of the reasons we won WWII were the Second Lieutenants who continually got lost and ended up behind the enemy lines. Today, however, I would like to speak of a different kind of lost. I had in my mind a story of ghosts and redemption but as is the usual I don't really know what will come until I sit and write. Instead I would like to tell a true story of my father's generation. Thus works my mind.

We all become lost at some point in our lives.
Some of us manage to claw our way out.
Some of us do not.

War is a many faceted phenomenon bearing three parts.

Visions of adventure.

Disciplined fear.

The aftermath.

In the beginning the stories told by the survivors of previous wars, mostly those who never saw close combat, shape our future. These stories are never about those who lost the battle. They are solely about the victories. Losing and its consequences are pushed into a dark corner somewhere and ignored.

Seeking the visions of adventure so well spoken of, an entire generation will willingly march off to war.

They are roughly taught to understand and deal with fear through discipline.

The aftermath finds these ex-warriors dealing with what is left of their lives in the best, or not so best, ways that we can.

WWII's generation mostly dealt with it through the use of alcohol.

For some it worked. For some it didn't.

My father had a friend who was simply known as Doc. For Doc it did not go so well. He would drink to excess and then beat his wife. One night it was so bad the police were called in. Doc had a pistol and his wife was cornered. He threatened to shoot anyone who came near. The police called my father for assistance, knowing he was friends with this ex-soldier. Trying to do the right thing, my father went in and confronted his friend, who then pointed the pistol at him and pulled the trigger.

Fortunately the gun was not loaded. My father admitted to me that he would never do this again.

A man whom I knew and admired was the engineer of our local radio station. His name was Bill and he told me once, and only once, that he had shot a Japanese soldier who was sneaking into his tent to kill him. What bothered him most was the fact he'd woke from a deep sleep and for no apparent reason grabbed his rifle and shot without consideration as to who the intruder was.

"It could have been one of my buddies."

Bill twitched a bit and unconsciously made quiet smacking noises with his lips.

I also knew a fellow who was a Chief Cook in the Coast Guard. He was at Pearl Harbor when it was attacked. He had dried chicken bones that he would shake in one hand like dice and a very haunted look when his mind went elsewhere.

In that generation almost everyone had been in the military. They understood one another and tried to help in the same way they had during the war. The VA, headed by a President who had been the General in charge of the entire allied armed forces in Europe, understood duty, honor, and no one left behind.

And so they pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and muddled on, taking heart in the 'idea' we had won.

In my own Vietnam War generation, war toys became 'not cool' as the 'peace freaks' pushed flower power and our returning soldiers were treated little better than lepers. These soldiers became the 'Lost Generation'; dropping out and hiding themselves away as they tried to deal with what they'd experienced. Some people helped, others did not, and Hollywood made buckets of money on the bones of the dead creating movies denigrating those who'd fought for the love of their country.

This is still a huge black eye to the politicians who'd been in charge; but they and the lepers died off after a time and the money made from the movies was shuffled back into political funding so the black eye healed.

War then became uncool; though the country still leaned upon our military might for the strength it needed to survive in an increasingly hostile world.

The GI Joe doll so popular during the beginning of this era had all but disappeared. Then, in the 1980's, he was revived in a new form and his arch enemy was to be a terrorist. I pointed this out to a left leaning professor I knew and told him I believed we would soon be going to the Middle East. He told me not unkindly that I was seeing monsters under the bed.

When it comes to war, politics is the root of all evil; and the adventure stories subtly began again, preparing the young.

We now have returned warriors from the longest running war in the history of our nation and a government who sees them as a drain on the revenues they could best shuffle around in order to fuel the corruption that keeps them in power.

Once again we are again in an aftermath. How we deal with this says a lot for who we are as a nation. This time our people are finally understanding what is happening and reaching out a collective hand to those in need.

The other day while driving to work, I saw a man pull his van over at a bus stop where a homeless fellow was sitting. I do not know if the homeless man was a vet. He did not have a sign, nor was he begging; but I saw the van driver gave him money from his own pocket.

The 'Wounded Warrior Project' continues to help as much as they can through private donations and communities are beginning their own outreach programs utilizing the talents of many local volunteers.

The VA Hospitals... well... if I go down that road I'll probably cry.

I would ask that on this Memorial Day we all follow the example of that van driver. Reach out and do something to help those who fought for this country.

Tell them you do care.

Tell them you do appreciate what they've done.

You can do this with one simple gesture; when you see a man or woman in uniform salute them.

We all become lost at some point in our lives.
Some of us manage to claw our way out.
Some of us do not.

A ladder sure would help... and that's exactly what your salute will be.

Please feel free to share this if you wish.

Warm regards,

Vixyy Fox