
190 Duration

Maginot Lines

This issue is dedicated to the hundreds of students I have had in the last 26 years of teaching who have joined the military, serving from Africa to Afghanistan and all points in between. While many gain valuable vocational training that transitions smoothly into civilian life, the base purpose of a government-sponsored armed force is the management of human conflict.

Doing background reading and corresponding with students in the military for this issue got me thinking of the similar but minor issue of conflict in the classroom. I haven't written "discipline referrals" or send anyone to the office for misbehavior for ...well ... years. Not that there is a lack of conflict; the potential manifestation of it is almost a daily occurrence at some level.

The French suffered murderous losses in World War I, and it atrophied their fighting force and lowered birth rates for a decade. Fearing another German invasion, in 1930 they began a series of concrete fortifications, planting artillery and machine gun posts along its border with Germany and Italy. Called the Maginot Line, it was the French's Great Wall of China. The problem was when World War Two came it utterly failed to stop Hitler's blast of force.

In the classroom, I resist the strong temptation to draw "lines in the sand." Changing tide conditions tend to wash them away. Human conflict to me is like repairing a car. Record the complaint, listen to the symptoms, gather pertinent information and devise solutions that might work. Test solution. Humans are a lot more complicated than cars, but an advantage is that they can be part of the solution process, where a car cannot. Based on the harmonious classroom culture that I enjoy today with 154 kids, it works.

To critics: yes, heavy artillery is needed, but only if all other options fail.

Until next issue,



Tom Hull

tomhull@charter.net

My late brother Dave and I were always blade enthusiasts, and he left jungle fighting as a Marine in Vietnam a dangerous man. The Gerber Mark II was fashioned after the Roman Mainz Gladius and introduced by the famous Oregon company in 1967. It quickly became a popular fighting knife in Vietnam.



Success Story

Robert Hasten



*"You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive."
Sherlock Holmes to Dr. Watson, upon first meeting him.*

Watson, just back from the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880), (trying to avenge the whuppin' the U.K. got in the first) was astounded at Holmes' powers of perception. The famous detective would say the same if he met Robert Hasten, 2005 Marshfield graduate and now United States Marine aviation technician servicing the Huey and Cobra attack helicopters. Afghan 2007.

I had Robert my first year at Marshfield High School 6 years ago. He was part of a senior class that helped me rebuild, repair, paint and remodel the shop. I remember him as a quiet, dignified person with undercurrents of seriousness not often found in youth. Always cooperative and eager to pitch in and help whatever the task, he was a smart, attentive student.

Thanks to Facebook I can get info on these past students without calling on the phone. Robert lists his favorite quote as: "Whoever appeals to the law against his fellow man is either a fool or a coward. Whoever cannot take care of himself without that law is both. For a wounded man shall say to his assailant, 'If I live, I will kill you. If I die, you are forgiven.' Such is the Rule of Honor." (While it may sound like Attila the Hun, it actually comes from the "post-thrash" metal band *Lamb of God* on their CD *Ashes of the Wake*.)

It could be interpreted in various contexts, but the one that comes to immediate mind is what my 82-year old father, a WWII vet, said the other day: "There's a reason we send our 18-25 year old men to fight our wars." In any case, thank you Robert and all your fellow soldiers who have volunteered to serve in our nations armed forces.

Here's How: Tips from the Field

Reading For Life

Idea this issue from Bruce Thompson

Bruce Thompson is the owner of Koontz Machine and Welding, a shop that has been in business on the waterfront of Coos Bay for most of the last century. We exchange books now and again and he often expresses his disappointment that the man on the shop floor doesn't like to read. While sounding like a stereotype, it is based on his extended experience. I agree but think they just haven't found the right book; so in response to Bruce's tip (read more), and to complement the military theme of this issue, possibilities* follow:

Waterloo: A Near Run Thing. (David Howarth). The final "just say no" to Napoleon; one day in 1815, 40,000 men and 10,000 horses were laid to waste in a Belgian cornfield. A detailed account of that day that will open your eyes.

Good-Bye To All That. (Robert Graves). Graves was friends with Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owens, the poets who so viscerally described the horrors of WWI trench warfare. Here Graves offers his WWI autobiography.

Hiroshima Diary. (Michihiko Hachiya). There are two sides to every story and this one was written by a Japanese doctor treating people immediately after the atomic bomb exploded. A rare eyewitness account.

A People's History of the United States. (Howard Zinn). Zinn died this year at 87 but his works will continue to affect readers for generations as he challenges the way school textbooks present American history. Five star stuff.

The Coldest Winter. (David Halberstam). The Korean War is often set aside as a minor conflict; but after reading this comprehensive history, the reader will realize how important our involvement was to the future of South Korea.

A Rumor of War. (Philip Caputo). Serving as a Marine lieutenant with one of the first ground combat units in Vietnam, his memoir was one of the first, and some consider the best, to report how this war affected youthful idealism.

Lone Survivor. (Marcus Luttrell). In June 2005, four U.S. Navy SEALs headed out to the mountains of Afghanistan to capture or kill an al Qaeda leader. One SEAL came home. This is his story. No punches pulled.

* *There are hundreds of great war novels. They are classic and artistic works well worth reading, but the above list is limited to works of non-fiction.*