
War Stories Told, Untold and Retold from Troy to Tinian to Fort Campbell

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“Truly and sadly, c’est l[a] guerre.”

—Kevin Herbert, email, October 24, 1999

I saw the vision of armies;
And I saw, as in noiseless dreams, hundreds of battle-flags;
Borne through the smoke of battles, and pierc’d with
missiles, I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn
and bloody;
And at last but a few shreds of the flags left on the staffs,
(and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter’d and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men—I saw them;
I saw the debris and debris of all dead soldiers;
But I saw they were not as was thought;
They themselves were fully at rest—they suffer’d not;
The living remain’d and suffer’d—the mother suffer’d,
And the wife and the child, and the musing comrade suffer’d
And the armies that remain’d suffer’d.

—Walt Whitman (1865)

“I Saw the Visions of Armies”¹

$\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ ἐστὶ ἄνθρωπος συμφορῆ = “a human being is entirely an accident” (or a “thing of chance or coincidence”). So says Herodotus early in book 1 (1.32.4), where the early-6th-century Athenian statesman Solon, considered one of the seven wise men of ancient Greece, defines what it means to be a human being. In a lifetime of seventy years, he

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calculates, not one of the 26,250 days is like the next in what it brings.

In Greek, the word *sumphorē* means literally “a bringing together,” “collecting,” “conjunction.” It can mean neutrally a “chance occurrence,” “accident,” “outcome” or “event.” It mostly has a bad connotation: “misfortune” or “stroke of bad luck.” Rarely it means “good fortune” or “happy outcome.” And that says something about the lives that even the most privileged of the ancient Greeks lived. Consistent with a justifiably pessimistic world view, the Greeks believed that war was the natural human condition and that periods of what they and we call “peace” were “armistices” that were set for fixed periods of time and had to be renewed periodically with formal rituals in order to prolong this precarious, unnatural, state.

“I like that very much: ‘If the accident will.’” That is Kurt Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969, 2) commenting on the mangled English phrase of a taxi driver who drove him and his “old war buddy Bernard V. O’Hare” around Dresden in 1967. Vonnegut liked it because, like pronouncements of the Delphic oracle or Solon’s reasoning from a life lived amidst the violence of the greater Greek world, “if the accident will” speaks a kind of truth about our lives. It gives us a healthy uncertainty that we know what our lives mean.

But for being held as prisoners of war in a building where animals were killed routinely without much reverence, Vonnegut and O’Hare would have been incinerated by their own country’s planes and bombs along with the inhabitants of a historic German town whose main industry was the production not of munitions, but of objects made of porcelain. Bernard V. O’Hare’s wife was angry about the whole enterprise. She thought that, after their visit, Vonnegut would write a standard war tale about noble heroes rather than a story about the slaughter of many innocents in modern mechanized warfare.

Was she right to be fearful of what war story Vonnegut, with her husband’s support, was likely to tell? My question is archly rhetorical, as Kevin Herbert would have known. The answer is “yes,” with or without an ironic “of course” for emphasis.

As was well known to Kevin Herbert, a Jesuit- and Harvard-trained classical scholar and humanist of an age when that educational pedigree meant that he had a superb understanding of Greek and Latin, the early Greek songster Hesiod claimed that when the Muses, who inspire oral poets, taught him “the art of singing verse” on Mount Helikon, they sang to him:

ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
ἴδμεν δ' , εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

We know how to tell many believable lies,²
But also, when we want to, how to speak the plain truth.

If Kevin were still among us grain-eating mortals, as Hesiod calls us, we could discuss the nuances of the Greek and whether Stanley Lombardo’s plainspoken, soldier-style translation captures them. Kevin knew about truth and lies in stories we are told, especially stories about war, from his reading and thinking, writing and lecturing as a well-trained Classics scholar and devoted teacher. His insights were refined by what he saw and what he heard, what he smelled and how he felt, as a veteran of the Pacific Theater in World War II.



This official USAAF photograph appears in Kevin's account *Maximum Effort: The B-29's Against Japan* (1983), 92. Kevin and the other ten men in his bomber crew accepted Kevin's proposal that they call themselves Homer's Roamers. The photograph was taken seventeen days after Japanese leaders surrendered and one day before they signed the official surrender document. By this date Kevin and his fellow crew members had flown five months' worth of missions, on average thirty apiece, still five short of the raised maximum of thirty-five. In his account, Kevin makes sure that these men, whose survival the accident did will, are given their names and thereby their due.³

I will be drawing upon ideas Kevin shared with me and with us in what T. E. Lawrence characterized as the "sane and low-toned" style that makes for good writing about war. Writers who experienced war firsthand, Ernest Hemingway, Erich Maria Remarque, George Orwell, Tim O'Brien, Tobias Wolff, Joseph Heller, Michael Herr and Robert Graves, would add that such a style makes for good writing about anything in our human experience.

Here, in Kevin's honor, I will talk about what stories get told about war and what stories do not get told and offer some thoughts about why. I think that we may then know better why we are making this pious effort to remember him.

First, why write about war?

One answer, perhaps the answer given by most soldiers and veterans, is "if the accident will" or its equivalent. Walt Whitman was not a soldier, but he eventually saw firsthand a vision of armies and what armies do. Whitman's brother George was a soldier and, when he went off to war in 1862, he sent Whitman letters describing the battlefield.

On December 18, 1862, Whitman read in the *New York Tribune* in the list of fallen and wounded a name: First Lieutenant G. W. Whitmore. *Sumphorē*. Worried that this could be his brother with their last name slightly mistaken, Whitman started out immediately. He found his brother, who was only slightly wounded.⁴

But Whitman also saw. He saw the wounded and the ill and the dying and the piles of amputated limbs, like something out of Colonel Kurtz's famous *apologia pro modis suis* in Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now*. His heart saw and his soul saw.

Whitman obtained part-time work in Washington, D.C. That gave him time to volunteer as a nurse in what passed, during the civil war, for hospitals. He tended to the soldiers with true and deep sympathy. Then he wrote what we would now call an advocacy op ed about his experiences. "The Great Army of The Sick" was published in the *New York Times* February 26, 1863.⁵

The military hospitals, convalescent camps, &c. in Washington and its neighborhood sometimes contain over fifty thousand sick and wounded men. Every form of wound, (the mere sight of some of them having been known to make a tolerably hardy visitor faint away,) every kind of malady, like a long procession, with typhoid fever and diarrhoea at the head as leaders, are here in steady motion.

. . . the suffering, and the fortitude to bear it in various degrees—occasionally, from some, the groan that could not be repressed—sometimes a poor fellow dying, with emaciated face and glassy eye, the nurse by his side, the doctor also there, but no friend, no relative—such were the sights . . .

In writing his own memoir of his Vietnam experiences, *In Pharaoh's Army* (1994), Tobias Wolff uses as an epigraph this quote from Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915):

You may well ask why I write. And yet my reasons are quite many. For it is not unusual in human beings who have witnessed the sack of a city or the falling to pieces of a people to desire to set down what they have witnessed for the benefit of unknown heirs or of generations infinitely remote; or, if you please, just to get the sight out of their heads.

Whitman, it would seem, wanted to get the sights out of his head and into the heads and hearts of his readers, for

their benefit and now for ours in our role as his cultural heirs in a generation already a century and a half remote from his.

What might the benefit be? In World War I, one of the Australian soldiers who were slaughtered—23,000 of them in the most miserable ways, during the 141 days of the battle of the Somme summer into fall 1916 (that equals 160 a day)⁶—had a wishful benefit in mind: “For Christ’s sake, write a book on the life of an infantryman . . . and by doing so you will quickly prevent these shocking tragedies.” William Carlos Williams, as I have written elsewhere,⁷ had a similar idea about the impact he thought the contents of poems could have:

It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack of what is found there.

In response to this Australian soldier’s wish, most of us who have lived enough of life with our eyes open have our own wish, “Would that it were so.” We should note, as Kevin surely would have, that Gregory Nagy, in his *Greek Mythology and Poetics*, devotes an entire chapter to “Unattainable Wishes: The Restricted Range of an Idiom in Epic Diction,” as he traces the many unattainable wishes throughout the two supreme Greek and western song poems of war, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁸

And Lieutenant John Alexander Raws in separate letters written from the battle areas along the Somme River to his brother and sister, his brother-in-law, and two friends during the last four weeks of his life—he was killed by a high explosive shell on 23 August 1916, fewer than six months after sailing off from Australia—seems to have been trying to get many sights out of his head. Very few sights like his ever get into any official reports of battles or even what we might call anti-war admonitory histories.

To a friend a week before he was killed Raws wrote:⁹

You have no idea of the hell and horror of a great advance, old fellow, and I hope you never will have. We fought and lived as we stood, day and night, without even overcoats to put on at night & with very little food. The place was not littered but covered with dead & as we were under continuous fire & were moving about a lot, and[,] when still[,] were in very narrow, shallow trenches, we could do no burying. The last meal I had was one I shook from a dead German.

To his brother on 12 August Raws wrote a paragraph that reminds us of the distilled power of Homer's *Iliad* where the destructive and self-destructive wrath of Achilles

μυρι' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἴϊδι προΐαψεν
ἥρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν
οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι

caused staggering sufferings for the Greek soldiers
and hurled forth into a dark and joyless eternity
many mighty souls of heroes and turned their bodies
into carrion for dogs and all birds of prey:

[translation mine]

The Australian casualties have been very heavy—fully 50 per cent in our brigade, for the ten or eleven days. I lost, in three days, my brother and two best friends, and in all six out of seven of all my officer friends (perhaps a score in number) who went into the scrap—all killed. Not one was buried, and some died in great agony. It was impossible to help the wounded at all in some sectors. We could fetch them in, but could not get them away. And often we had to put them out on the parapet to permit movement in the shallow, narrow, crooked trenches. The dead were everywhere. There had been no burying in the sector I was in for a week before we went there.

To his sister on 8 August 1916:

We got away as best we could. I was again in the rear going back and again we were cut off and lost. I was buried twice, and thrown down several times—buried with dead and dying. The ground was covered with bodies in all stages of decay and mutilation, and I would, after

struggling free from the earth, pick up a body by me and try to lift him out with me, and find him a decayed corpse. I pulled a head off—was covered with blood. The horror was indescribable.

But he describes it anyway, as does Homer in graphic detail. Homer delays starting in on the combat killing until book 4 and then proceeds with it straight through book 22. He gives us 243 individual battle deaths of named soldiers cut down by 36 likewise named enemy soldiers. By contrast there are only 11 cases, all with the most prominent soldiers doing the killing (Achilles, Hector, both Ajaxes, Diomedes, Patroclus, Agamemnon), where enemy soldiers are killed anonymously in groups. They are described as “many,” “twelve,” and in one case Patroclus slaughters three groups of nine each in three consecutive rushes upon the Trojan forces, “twenty-seven” total.¹⁰ The names are important. We shall return to the topic of names and anonymity at the end of this paper.

Wilfred Owen also gives us graphic detail in perhaps the now best-known poem about World War I, which, uncharacteristically for the era, was also sent, like several of Raws’s letters, to a woman member of his family, his mother, in draft with a note: “Here’s a gas poem written yesterday.” Kevin Herbert describes Owen’s poem in his classic article on the intersections between Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and his experiences of war in the Pacific Theater in World War II: “Homer’s Winged Words in the 873rd Bombardment Squadron, Saipan, 1945,” *Classical Bulletin* 74:1 (1998) (hereafter “Homer’s Winged Words”) in the following way:

A poem by Wilfr[e]d Owen (1893–1918)¹¹ which took its title from Horace, *Odes* III. 2, line 13, can almost stand as the epitaph of that lost generation and its humanistic, Victorian values. After describing the agonizing death of a soldier in a gas attack the last lines read:

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory

The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

[Kevin continues:] But ‘I was one and twenty . . . no use to talk to me,’ to quote another writer said to be the finest Latin poet ever to have written in English [—Kevin is referring to A. E. Housman—] and so after the attack on Pearl Harbor I eagerly enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in the Army Air Forces (39).

Owen’s poetic response written from Craiglockhart War Hospital for Officers near Edinburgh and Raws’s searing prose descriptions written from the Somme battlefield are exceptional in being instantaneous. Or perhaps the exception to war writing requiring a long period of gestation applies only to what is written for broader audiences and is controlled not only by the sensibilities and state of mind and spirit of the soldier and veteran, but also by the economic, social, political and religious forces that bear upon what gets published and circulated widely—the modern equivalent would be what gets on Fox News and is sold as a paperback bestseller in airport bookshops.

It generally takes a while for soldiers to process what they take in during war. Quickly written first accounts, like Tim O’Brien’s *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (1973), may protect the reader, and the writer, too, from “living” or “reliving” the particular experiences of war. *Combat Zone* is philosophical and speculative and contemplative.¹² Those qualities cushion the shock so that the narrative in many passages barely taps into the pools of trauma war creates. O’Brien immerses us in these pools 17 years later in *The Things They Carried* (1990), but even then he pulls many punches. Otherwise, we can say without cynicism, his stories would not make it onto reading lists in American public and private high schools.

Some writers, as I have argued recently for Robert Graves and his World War I poems,¹³ never get past the formidable barriers that they put up to block out trauma. In Graves’s case, his war trauma merged with the traumatic non-attachment of

his childhood and upbringing. The writing of what O'Brien calls "true war stories" comes when the author is ready and often when society is, too. Sometimes it never happens.

Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* appeared 10 years after the end of WW I; Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, 16 years after the end of WW II; Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* took 24 years. Kevin Herbert's *Maximum Effort: The B-29's Against Japan* (hereafter *ME* 1983) was published in the fortieth-anniversary year of when, in Kevin's words (*ME* 1983, 12), "the war began for some two hundred Aviation cadets in Chicago on the wintry evening of 27 March 1943. That night they reported to the Cadet reception center in the Board of Trade Building as orders prescribed." And "Homer's Winged Words," which we have already cited, appeared in the year when *Saving Private Ryan* and journalist author Tom Brokaw's book primed Americans collectively to take greater interest in the "greatest generation" and may even have made us ready to accept what foreign correspondent Dexter Filkins, clearly with George Orwell in mind, calls the "forever war" we have been fighting continuously since 2001.¹⁴

"Homer's Winged Words" is Kevin's account of *Iliad*-and-*Odyssey*-like experiences when flying thirty and then thirty-five required bombing missions from Isely Field on the island of Saipan.

The obvious connection to Homer is the concept stressed by Dr. Jonathan Shay in his revolutionary book, *Achilles in Vietnam* (1993), that post-traumatic stress has a moral dimension. It is, in Shay's view, the "betrayal of what is right" whether by those increasing the numbers of bombing missions or by Agamemnon when he publicly dishonors Achilles for acting ethically and bravely on behalf of the Achaean soldiers who are dying of plague in the tenth year of the war because of Agamemnon's self-centered and sacrilegious behavior.

The *Iliad* I have in mind on Saipan is the modern *Iliad* written by Joseph Heller and published in 1961.¹⁵ Heller, as is known from a published interview¹⁶ and confirmed by

Kevin's coeval, Leon Golden, was "mad about" Homer's *Iliad* in his younger days and had Achilles constantly in mind while writing about Yossarian, his Achilles. We'll let Kevin continue the explanation (*ME* 1983, 60):

One day in July the Group was assembled in the briefing Quonset to be told that the tour of duty had been extended from thirty to thirty-five missions, and would apply immediately to all crews. Those of us who had started our tour when the number was thirty and who now had some fifteen or more missions completed were especially aggrieved at this statement. The specter of being knocked down on one of those added five, which would almost certainly occur to someone in that room, was unpleasant to contemplate. One lieutenant jumped to his feet and in a voice quavering with emotion charged the higher brass with bad faith, breach of contract, callous indifference to the morale of the men, and several other actionable matters. But this was not a civil court, it was the 489th Bombardment Group (VH) and this was war. Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* captures the essence of this absurd situation in the antics of Captain Yossarian, who faced with the mad logic of ever increasing missions, rationally seeks escape through insanity. And the very fear that stalked the briefing room that day actually came to pass. In a neighboring squadron a few weeks later a crew prepared to fly its thirty-fifth and final mission, and in honor of the occasion their colonel decided to accompany them. They flew off that evening heading northwards and were never seen again.

Tim O'Brien claims that in order to get war stories across to innocent, naïve, distracted, or just plain disinterested civilians, story-telling veterans have to "heat up" the truth. In many ways fiction is the only truth that can be heard clearly. Yet here we see, in Kevin's plainspoken narrative, that the converse is also true: the best fiction can be the truth. And notice the tone of Kevin's narrative, the transcendent perspective—without a hint of ironic resignation—on the breach of contract, the "betrayal of what is right." Yet the fear in the briefing room, articulated dramatically in frank and impassioned rhetoric by one lone modern Thersites, surely stalked him, too. Perhaps, like Wordsworth's view of

poetry, Kevin's description of spontaneous emotion in that briefing hut on Saipan took its current form "when recollected in tranquility" well over thirty years later.

Still, this is the same acceptance of the "realities of the situation" that we feel when in "Homer's Winged Words" he informs us how he chose his role in his bomber crew:

On the crew of eleven men I was the tail gunner, a position purposefully chosen because it was the only post on this large aircraft completely independent of all the others.

The tactical duty of serving as rear guard had its appeal and the field of view—life and death in the air covered some 320 degrees on the horizontal, far greater than from any other station in the plane. When the battle was joined, therefore, I would be my own man, for better or worse, to counter enemy fighter attacks and to observe and report our bombing effectiveness. But flying missions was not the whole of life on Saipan, and so it was not only in the air but in the rounds of daily life in the encampment area that events and scenes, previously unimaginable yet comparable to some in the *Iliad*, caught my eye and caused reflection (36).

Kevin wanted to be his own man in battle, much like Achilles or Hector, Ajax or Odysseus.

If you have in your mind the exposed position of the tail-gunner on a B-29, and if you substitute for his adjective "independent" other words like "isolated" or "all alone," and if you think about what visions of airmen a 320-degree view of exploding flak and gun bursts from attacking Japanese planes would offer, you might take the measure of the man Kevin Herbert was.

Randall Jarrell's famous poem, written in 1945, brings the realities of Kevin's choice home to us now. The ball turret gunner was situated in a plexiglass bowl of sorts mounted on the underbelly of the enormous B-17 or B-24 bombers. As Jarrell himself explains, "When this gunner tracked with his machine guns a fighter attacking his bomber from below, he revolved with the turret; hunched upside-down in his little sphere, he looked like the fetus in the womb." The tail gunner was equally exposed at the rear of the B-29 superfortress.

“The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner”¹⁷

From my mother’s sleep I fell into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

Notice the ball turret gunner remains anonymous despite speaking to us in the first person.

While we have Kevin on Saipan, let me bring up the untold war story that brought Kevin and me closest together. My late ex-father-in-law Oren J. Poage, a career colonel in the United States Air Force, served as a bomber squadron leader on the airfield on Tinian, the sister island five miles to the southwest of Saipan.

Bombers took off northward from both airstrips in the bombing and fire bombing of Japanese cities some 3300 miles and 14-plus hours round trip away.¹⁸ The Enola Gay and its atomic bomb later took off from Tinian. 3300 miles was a colossal distance. Kevin in fact compares each flight to an odyssey with all that simile implies about how wearying and terrifying and potentially deadly each bombing run could be for the small crews of eleven men on the B-29’s.

The great round-trip distance also created a logistical problem. It was right at the limit of what the B-29 could do with the fuel it had. Yet the strategy devised by General Curtis LeMay called for maximum effort and maximum destruction on each run. And the heavier the payloads of bombs, the harder it was for the superfortresses, even the lighter and faster B-29B versions designed to better maneuver through enemy flak, to get back to Saipan and Tinian safely on their limited fuel supplies. A kind of actuarial game was played by number crunchers far from the scene. Kevin revealed to me (10/24/99) in correspondence, but he did not write it in *Maximum Effort*, “One of the non-flying hot-shots down there was none other than Robert S. McNamara.” McNamara, you will recall, later invented

comparative body counts as a macabre and dehumanizing way of measuring the success of our soldiers in Vietnam. (We now understand that what was required to succeed and measure success in McNamara's body-count war psychologically traumatized the soldiers doing the killing and counting.)

Colonel Poage, who was not given to reminiscences, mentioned to me once that there was one time during his service on Tinian when he refused to send his crews out on a mission. He explained that all the airmen had come to terms with the reality that heavily loaded planes might have to ditch on their return, and that ditching almost always meant dying for the eleven-man crews. That was a hazard of the conditions to, from and over Japan that prevailed on any given flying mission. No one could do anything about it except hope that his own luck held.

But on the occasion when Col. Poage refused to send his crews out, several other planes had crashed on takeoff, which he took to mean that they were all murderously overloaded with bombs by the planners at the start, something that they could control. If they got it wrong, the squadron leader on the spot then faced a dilemma. The consequences for Col. Poage's career of having the moral impulse to protect his men and then actually doing it might explain why he never rose above the rank of colonel. It also endeared him to me.

The thought of those in high command not following the Hippocratic code "first do no harm" with regard to their own men who were already risking their lives in so many other ways offended the deep sense of justice inculcated in me by my own Roman Catholic upbringing and strongly reinforced by my own Jesuit training and my fondness in graduate school for the Greek folk songster Hesiod. And it stayed with me well after Colonel Poage's death in 1995.

After I discussed the Tinian episode with Kevin, he referred me to *Maximum Effort*, and made further clarifications in a long email (10/24/99). I add some few details here, in brackets, from his published account:

About the Tinian crashes that I mentioned and that caused me later for long to think I had been hallucinating, here is the reference that confirmed what I had seen 38 years earlier: the statement of Navy Capt. William S. Parsons,¹⁹ who among other things was the ordnance specialist who armed the first A-bomb during the flight to Hiroshima. He describes the disaster just as I saw it.

Kevin continues:

[I was once a horrified witness to a succession of 29's from North Field on Tinian crashing into the ocean during a combat takeoff.] The problem on the flat island of Tinian was that the runways were practically at sea-level. On Saipan, on the other hand, our runways were on a high plateau. [Saipan's Isely Field stood on a high plateau at either end of which were sheer cliffs of perhaps [180]²⁰ feet in height.] Thus as we became airborne after an 8500 ft roll down the runway, we had 180 ft. of space and often we would make a shallow dive therein to pick up needed additional airspeed. But there were occasional fatal crashes, we almost among them one night when we lost an engine just at liftoff. For five minutes our altimeter was reading "0 altitude." But on Tinian there was no such margin for error. There could absolutely not be any sink-down after liftoff. The problem, I am convinced, was that bomb loads, fuel loads, and everything else for a mission were organized down on Guam at Bomber Command HQ. (One of the non-flying hot-shots down there was none other than Robert S. McNamara.)

And that night I am certain the Tinian aircraft were incorrectly loaded or overloaded without regard for the local conditions of takeoff. This was the situation that Col. Poage and many others must have faced many times because of the location of their airstrips. The reference in my book to this event is p. 60. Incident[al]ly, we almost were assigned to Tinian. Our original orders directed us to the 509th Composite Grp (the A-bomb unit) on Tinian. But while on our way there from Kwajalein, the 873rd Sqdn on Saipan lost two aircraft and crews, and we were diverted there to replace these men. Truly and sadly, c'est l[a] guerre. Kevin. (60)

Kevin further explains in his published account that his squadron's planes that evening were idling at the end of

Saipan's runway and his bomber was oriented so that from his position as tail gunner he had "a perfect view across the straits to Tinian." "To my total amazement, however, I watched some four of the planes fail to rise and go crashing into the sea. . . ." He must have thought that he was hallucinating or had fallen asleep and was having a nightmare. He continues, "The next morning at debriefing a number of us asked the Intelligence officer about these crashes, and he replied by saying that there had been a certain number, but that all crews were rescued. Of this latter statement we did not believe a word."

If history is written by the victors, war stories are controlled by those with power both within the armed forces and in society at large. Soldiers know that. They develop what you may have heard called "bullshit antennae." Hence the universal skepticism reported by Kevin about the claim by their Intelligence officer that the crews of the four crashed planes had been rescued.

Here is one more example of justifiable skepticism about the decisions and policies of leaders in times of war before we turn to the issues of names and anonymity.

Years ago in my reading and teaching about what human beings go through in war and in other situations where violence real and/or threatened, physical and/or psychological, is in play, I was lucky enough to read Tobias Wolff's memoir of his Vietnam War experiences *In Pharaoh's Army*. I have already quoted its epigraph from Ford Madox Ford. I also was overwhelmed by his short stories—I recommend "Kiss," now anthologized and renamed "Deep Kiss." I admired, too, the work Wolff did with veterans' writing projects during the first years of our ongoing congressionally authorized presidential uses of force in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his memoir of his childhood years, *This Boy's Life*, made into a movie in 1993 with Leonardo Di Caprio, Ellen Barkin and Robert De Niro. I held Wolff's work in such esteem that I lobbied and lobbied and cajoled and wheedled and begged and Cato-the-Elderred that we at UT Austin somehow must bring Tobias

Wolff in for my war and violence seminar and for a reading of his short stories. That happened finally in spring 2008, only right after I was away for a half year and had temporarily discontinued all my efforts: ironic *sumphorē*.

Already when I was looking into the incident on Tinian, I had blind-emailed Tobias, I believe in the '90s, about an episode in *In Pharaoh's Army*. In it (119–23), Wolff and a fellow young soldier named Stu Hoffman (a fictional name) who had become friends while training at Fort Bragg meet up again in Oakland with two days allotted to them before they are to fly off to Vietnam. Wolff was not in close contact with his own father, but Stu had a father who was legendary in the oil business, “a champion motorcycle racer. And a war hero, one of the original paratroopers.” He had jumped over Normandy. He had many medals including a Silver Star and some from France that Charles DeGaulle himself had pinned on him. A father who was “one in a million.” Bookish Stu was something of a disappointment to his father. But his father was coming to Oakland nonetheless and was going to take the two young men out for a farewell dinner. They got all dressed up, spit and polished, in their uniforms to meet with Stu's father, expecting encouragement and patriotic talk of courage and honor and duty. Here is Tobias's account somewhat condensed:

The first thing Mr. Hoffman said to me was, “So you're the other one about to get his ass shot off.”

Stu laughed miserably.

“I hope not,” I said.

“Well, that'll do you no end of good,” Mr. Hoffman said. He didn't smile. . . .

Mr. Hoffman wanted to know what I thought of General William Childs Westmoreland.

Stu slumped in his chair. He looked tired.

“I've never met him,” I said.

“You must have an opinion.” . . . “Starting tomorrow he holds the papers on you, right? So what do you think?”

I didn't know how to answer—what he hoped to hear.

“You think he cares about you?”

I considered this. “Yes, given the exigencies of command.”

“Exigencies?” He looked at Stu. “No wonder you two hit it off.”

“We’ve been all through this, Dad.”

“I’m asking your friend a simple question. You mind?” he said to me.

I looked over at Stu. He picked up the menu and started to read.

“Stu wants to be a teacher,” Mr. Hoffman said. “Maybe even write some books. What do you think of that?”

“I think it’s great.”

“So do I. Nobody in our family has ever written a book, far as I know. He can do it too, Stu can. Stu is not your general-issue human being. But I guess you know that.”

[The waiter comes and goes.]

Mr. Hoffman said, “Did you know that General William Childs Westmoreland ordered a parachute jump in high winds that got a whole bunch of boys killed? Broke their necks and every other damned thing. This was Fort Campbell understand—not Vietnam. No military necessity.”

“I’ve heard mention of it.”

“And what does that tell you about General William Childs Westmoreland?”

“I don’t know. It was a training jump. I guess you could say training is a military necessity.”

“Would you swallow that horseshit if one of those boys was your son?”

I took a drink and set my glass down carefully.

Mr. Hoffman said, “Every single one of those boys was somebody’s son.”

“Dad.”

“He didn’t lose a wink. Came out clean as a whistle. What do you owe those bastards anyway?” he said to Stu. “You think you owe them something?”

Stu closed his eyes.

“I’ll tell you what he cares about, him and that sorry dickhead from Texas. *How he looks*. That’s it. That is the be-all and end-all of his miserable existence.”

I should say here that I am reminded on reading this passage that James Jones later made clear that he wrote his

World-War-II novel *The Thin Red Line* “to liberate the men who grew up after World War II from ‘the horseshit which has been engrained in them by my generation’ which had served in it.”

[Later in the meal.]

“What does your father think?” he asked me.

“About what?”

“About getting your ass shot off for the greater glory of Lyndon Baines Johnson and William Childs Westmoreland.”

I came back to this episode of what was billed as the routine training exercise disaster, almost like the buzzards returning every spring to Hinckley, Ohio, every year or so, mainly looking on-line and repeatedly seeking the help of our extraordinarily talented Classics research librarian Shiela Winchester, all the while too involved in other work and my own life to pursue it for more than part of one day here and there.

Even as late as 2003, the only reference I could find to this incident other than in Wolff’s memoir was an article written by someone who was classified, on-line, as a sportswriter in the October 14, 2001 *Northwest Florida Daily News*. His name was Bill Campbell and he wrote his column, way off the topic of sports unless one has a severely warped sense of humor, incensed by discussions by “talking heads—former military tough guys—” on the Bill O’Reilly Fox News program that were in unanimous and enthusiastic support of the idea that it would be okay for U. S. soldiers to shoot and kill Taliban POWs in Afghanistan. Campbell held up as a model of soldier virtue Tony Herbert, “America’s most decorated soldier during the Korean War,” who was dead set against such conduct and believed that then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld should “go on national television and say we don’t shoot POWs.” Then in Campbell’s article came some confirmation:

Tony also has complete disdain for Gen. William Westmoreland. He says the general screwed up the only battle we lost in Korea

and thinks he made a choice that led to the deaths of about 16 guys at Fort Campbell doing a jump for VIPs.

“His drop zone safety officer said the winds were too high and Westmoreland told ’em to jump anyway.”

Well, Westmoreland wasn’t an infantryman, even though he wore the Combat Infantry Badge.

So to all you infantry guys, the ones who ultimately win wars, I suggest you venerate Westmoreland and his ilk less and pay more heed to Tony Herbert.

I had great difficulty tracking down Mr. Campbell. He was no longer working for the newspaper. I eventually got him on the phone and he told me flatly and emphatically that he was no longer a journalist and did not want to discuss any of his stories. Anthony B. Herbert was a controversial figure some of you may remember, a career military man who as a lieutenant colonel in Vietnam, according to his *Washington Post* obituary, in command of an airborne battalion in 1969, in 58 days received a Silver Star, three Bronze Stars and two Air Medals, among other decorations. His *peripeteia*, tragic reversal of fortune, came after he accused two superior officers of condoning war crimes against Vietnamese prisoners and civilians, and it was brought about by a network of senior officers who belonged to what Tony Herbert called the “West Point Protective Association.”

Still, at least I now had the memories of Tobias Wolff, Anthony B. Herbert and Bill Campbell that a story about Westmoreland sending paratroopers out in dangerous conditions was known among former soldiers.

In June 2005, after a former student and close friend of mine, Col. Ted Westhusing, died outside Baghdad,²¹ ruled a suicide, I wrote to Tobias Wolff again. In response, Tobias wrote to me:

Dear Tom Palaima,

I do remember men in my own airborne unit speaking very bitterly of this episode, and I also recall reading something about it when I

was a boy in Washington State. Certainly it was treated as common knowledge among veteran paratroopers. There must be a good biography of Westmoreland that would at least describe the incident, however it comes down on the question of blame.

Let me know what you come up with.

Best,

Tobias Wolff

In preparing for this lecture, I finally got ahold of what I would call a hagiographical biography of Westmoreland published in 1968: Ernest B. Furgurson, *Westmoreland The Inevitable General*. In his preface (6) written February 6, 1968, the author, in discussing his sources, acknowledges a truth we have already expressed about what stories get told:

There is no escaping the fact that most of the people who have known him [i.e., Gen. William Childs Westmoreland] best are Army officers, who, if they were serving in Vietnam during the writing of this book, were under his command—and if they were serving anywhere else, they had the feeling that they might be under his command in the near future. This is not a circumstance contributory to a warts-and-all biography. . . .

We should note that the Tet Offensive, which reinforced LBJ's memorable January 10, 1967 State of the Union assessment of the war in Vietnam ("We face more cost, more loss, and more agony. For the end is not yet"), was launched a week ahead of the date of the preface. It is discussed briefly in two pages (335 and 337) at the very end of Furgurson's book. We should also note that these prefatory remarks posit the existence of an officer mutual protective organization extending well beyond West Point.

Finally now, and beginning shortly after Wolff's e-mail letter to me, in this age where more and more newspapers and other kinds of regional and local publications are going up on-line, and where posting of information on the Web can be of help in legal matters, the factual basis for this war story can be pieced together.

In an on-line archived legal decision of an appeal involving Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office in Denver, Colorado Decision 08/25/05 and Archive Date 09/09/05, we read:²²

At the December 2001 hearing, the veteran was asked to recount facts surrounding an earlier alleged stressful event involving a parachute jump in service. Essentially, he reported that he was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in 1958 (and served as a paratrooper at that time), when a scheduled parachute jump went awry and resulted in “13 or 15” fatalities. The veteran testified that General William Westmoreland was involved in the jump, but that he himself did not participate in that particular jump. The veteran contends that the parachute jump was a traumatic event in service that has caused PTSD, a diagnosis shown in VA outpatient records dating back to December 2000.

The tragic event took place on Wednesday April 23, 1958. On May 15, 1958, in the Mt. Vernon, Illinois *Register-News*, representative of other obituaries I could find, we read the following story.²³ I give a contiguous story for the flavor of the small town the then late Carl G. Payne was from. Stolen hub caps and a stolen bike are big news.

REPORT THEFT OF HUB CAPS, BICYCLE

Two thefts were reported to Mt. Vernon police Wednesday and this morning. Yesterday afternoon it was reported that four hub caps had been stolen from a 1958 model Chevrolet at the Brehm-Hanna lot on South Tenth street. Eddie Smith, 111 south 21st, reported to police this morning that his bicycle had been stolen.

Memorial services were held recently at Fort. Campbell, Ky., for Carl G. Payne of Mt. Vernon and four other paratroopers who were killed April 23 in a mass air drop. The time of the service—10:04 a.m.—was the time of the jump in which the five troopers were killed and 155 were injured. Gusty winds whipped the falling men into trees and rocks and dragged many across the rough terrain at the 88,000-acre reservation on the Kentucky-Tennessee border. The memorial service was held on the site of the 502nd

Airborne Battle Group area, of which the men were members.

Principals in the brief and simple service were Col. Talton W. Long, commander of the 502nd; Chaplain (Capt.) A. A. Ponsiglione, assistant 101st Airborne Division chaplain; and Chaplain (1st Lt.) Aubrey E. Smith, 502nd Airborne Battle Group chaplain. The 25-year-old Mt. Vernon paratrooper was a Specialist Third Class.

Funeral services for Paratrooper Payne were held in Mt. Vernon April 27 and burial followed in Pleasant Hill cemetery. Mrs. Payne, the former Phyllis Ann Hayes, and her four-months-old son, Rodney D'Wayne, are residing at present with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Hayes of Route 5, Mt. Vernon, and her husband's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Leo C. Payne of Route 4, Mt. Vernon.

While her husband was stationed at Fort Campbell, she resided at Clarksville, Tenn. At the time of his death Paratrooper Payne had completed a total of 16 jumps. He attended the Airborne "Jump" School at Fort Campbell and made his first jump October 22, 1956.

When the tragedy occurred on April 23 the paratroopers were participating in Operation Eagle Wing, a two-week mock war designed to prepare atomic-equipped troops for actual battle. The paradrop of the entire 502nd Airborne Battle Group was the climax and "Graduation Exercise" for these paratroopers during the two-week combat exercise.

Secretary of the Army Wilbur M. Brucker sent the following message to Maj. Gen. W. C. Westmoreland and the 101st Airborne Division: "I am deeply shocked to learn of the accident which occurred in connection with Exercise Eagle Wing. Please convey my deepest sympathy to the families and the comrades in arms of those splendid, intrepid soldiers who lost their lives in the call of duty. Also please extend my earnest best wishes for a prompt recovery of those injured. The fine combat traditions of the 101st Airborne Division have earned the lasting gratitude and confidence of the entire nation for our combat soldiers."

In an editorial in *The Courier*, Fort Campbell's newspaper, tribute was paid to the men of the 101st Airborne Division who lost their lives in the mass jump. It was pointed out that the exercise was a vital operation in readying a force for a call that might come at any moment to protect America. The editorial said, "In that time of

preparation five members of this Division lost their lives. They gave their all for their country as truly as if they died like their brothers of the Eagle at Normandy or Bastogne. *The Courier* joins in the sympathy that goes out to the members of their families. They can take pride in knowing that these young men died in performance of their duty.”

These local memorial stories and obituaries give us a sense of the larger and ever-widening “circle of pain and time” that Yehuda Amichai has described as radiating outward from events like those on Tinian and at Fort Campbell and bringing sorrow into many human lives scattered in faraway communities.

By contrast, in Furgurson’s chapter dealing with Westmoreland’s period as division commander at Fort Campbell (1958–1960), titled—I wish I were kidding—“Challenge at Ft. Campbell,” (243–60), the emphasis is upon (1) the high rank and trustworthy experience of the officer, Brigadier General Reuben Tucker, whom Westmoreland put in charge of the anemometer readings in the drop zone that day; (2) the fact that the first jumpers landed safely; and (3) the fact that when Westmoreland, in the air in a plane above the drop zone, got word that many of the jumpers had been blown off course and badly injured, *he* himself then jumped to check on what had happened on the ground.

Furgurson describes the manner of deaths of the paratroopers with Homeric frankness and pathos: “Two were banded and impaled in the debris, which was as thick and deadly as Civil War abatis. One had strangled on his denture in fighting his chute as he was dragged. Two had been choked by suspension lines in the same struggle. Dozens of living were sent to the base hospital.” *Nilhil dulce aut decorum* in these senseless deaths.

But the moral of Furgurson’s story is the grit and determination it took for Westmoreland *not* to cancel this part of the two-week operation, but to proceed with the plan to hold additional jumps the very next day, April 24, and then do so. On that day, according to Furgurson, Westmoreland jumped

first, establishing a tradition that “the commanding general, not merely the senior officer of an individual unit involved, lead the way.” Furgurson continues, “Operation Eagle Wing was carried through, and about two thousand soldiers leaped without mishap after the first day’s disaster” (245).

In Westmoreland’s own autobiography, *A Soldier Reports* (1976), the Fort Campbell incident gets five paragraphs (30–31), beginning: “My first active command of a division began inauspiciously with a tragic incident in a maneuver only a week after I joined the 101st Airborne Division at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky in 1958.” In his account, he jumped immediately with his men, not, as Furgurson reports, after discovering that high gusts had blown some men, not the first jumpers, badly off course. In Westmoreland’s own story, he feels the effects of increased winds only when he himself lands and is dragged by them across the ground. And “[o]nly later did I learn that the wind had dragged seven men to their deaths.” Westmoreland gets wrong here the number of men killed because of his decision. He does not mention the 155 injured men. And he says that he jumped the next day, he implies solo, to test conditions. Having the same experience as on the 23rd, he determined that “[conditions] were clearly unsatisfactory. I called off the jump and moved the men by truck to join the ground portion of the maneuver.” (30) That is not the story Furgurson gives us.

Neither Furgurson nor Westmoreland stress how significant Operation Eagle Wing was. It was to be Westmoreland’s *paradeigma* of how conventional war should be fought in the atomic age, from the air, with bombs and bombs and bombs, with helicopters for troop transport, for emergency medical evacuation, for raining destruction down upon the targeted enemy, and with paratroopers dropped accurately into tight spots. It was not a routine exercise. It was a display piece and designed to provide confirmation that Westmoreland’s fast-tracked polo-ponied career had produced a gifted leader worthy of supreme command. It would have been very hard for a commander concerned with *how*

he looks to cancel that day's demonstration of precision deployment of paratroopers.

By contrast, here is the frank opinion that Tobias Wolff gave me when he had time to do some investigating into his notes after my queries (Tuesday, June 28, 2005 at 4:54 PM):

Dear Tom,

A follow-up to my note last week. I was rushing out of town and did not respond as fully as I should have.

Of course I am not responsible for Mr. Hoffman's (not his real name) opinion of Westmoreland, right or wrong; but in fact I would not have recorded his accusation if I did not believe it had merit. As I mentioned, it was something I recalled reading about, in broad outline, when it happened, and there were angry memories of the incident among my fellow paratroopers.

Nevertheless, it is my practice to ground such memories in history, for my own peace of mind. I have dug into my notes of several years ago (the book [*In Pharaoh's Army*] was published in 94, begun in 90) and found the following, from *Westmoreland: The Inevitable General* by Ernest B. Furgurson (*sic*). The book was written in 66 and 67, published in 68, when Westy could still talk about lights at the end of tunnels without being laughed out of town. It's a shameless puff-piece, in fact, but even so it acknowledges Westmoreland's appalling decision to jump his men in high winds in early 1958 (Operation Eagle Wing) when he was commanding the 101st at Ft. Campbell, Ky. From p. 244: "The day's weather forecast had been marginal, with wind speeds expected to approach the danger mark . . ." But he decided to go anyway. 5 men were killed—dragged to death, impaled on debris, strangled in their lines—"dozens" injured badly enough to have to be taken by ambulance to the base hospital.

This was peacetime. There was no compelling reason to make that jump in hazardous conditions. Military jumping at that time, and in my time, bore no relation to today's sky-diving. The chutes were large, heavy, and clumsy, and nearly impossible to steer. They had no quick-release.²⁴ There was added danger from the large number of men jumping at the same time—collision, men collapsing other men's chutes by getting under them, tangling lines, getting hit by

following planes. There was no time to correct mistakes—you jumped from only 1200 feet. It was dangerous in good conditions, but high wind was one of our greatest fears. You had no control. You got dragged, and very likely hurt in one way or another—the wrong bump could snap your neck in a nanosecond. You could get blown into powerlines and fried, into rivers and ponds and drown, into trees and strangle on your risers.

In short, it was something you didn't do without a compelling reason. Certainly you didn't ask others to do it without a compelling reason. We were very eager, capable, patriotic young men—all the more reason to treat our lives with care and respect. Westmoreland didn't do that, either at Ft. Campbell or in Vietnam.

That is why I felt comfortable letting Mr. Hoffman speak his mind about this vainglorious man in my book.

Yours sincerely,

Tobias Wolff

Where are we to find the truth in this nest of stories? What would Kevin Herbert have to say about them, if he were here now with us, the older version of the 23-year-old who resolutely chose to have a 320-degree field of vision of war in the air and, from what he writes, an almost 360-degree sense of how the experience of war surrounds and affects the men who fight in it? What would Col. Oren J. Poage say with his experience of how heedlessly “non-flying hot-shots” removed the lives of American bomber crews as a variable from their equations? Or John Alexander Raws, who witnessed and described the indescribable slaughter, human misery and sacrilegious horror of trench warfare tactics before he, too, became one of the “bodies in all stages of decay and mutilation”?

I think they would see in Westmoreland many of the qualities Homer gives Agamemnon and that Stu Hoffman's father attributes to Westmoreland himself. Qualities like narcissistic self-absorption and arrogance that make it possible to make decisions much like the gods on Mt. Olympus, thinking about how what has to get done affects you, your social image, and your position and reputation, and not seeing or caring to see

all the human beings who will be affected, your own men and all who know, respect and love them, the enemy soldiers and their friends and loved ones, and the countless and often nameless human beings who make up body counts and collateral damage and casualty statistics and estimates.

Would Kevin Herbert resort to Wolff's degree of irony, even in remembering the words and vocal intonations of a friend's father? Or would he use the rather stoical skepticism B-29 crew members, Kevin among them, applied to the reassurance given them that the crews of those four Tinian planes that crashed on takeoff had all been rescued?

What we have here in these stories, told, untold, told in different ways, is a confirmation of a basic truth that Homer knew, James Jones knew, Wilfred Owen knew, Tobias Wolff knows, and Kevin Herbert knew. Some stories are told to tell the truth. Others are told to create a truth that those in control of the telling either want to believe or will themselves to believe and want others to believe with them. I suppose that in one school of thought a person has what it takes to be a leader if they can look back upon a tragic incident like the Fort Campbell disaster and view it as an "inauspicious start" to one stage of their careers.

But Tobias Wolff doesn't let us forget, nor does Homer or even popular songsters like John Prine²⁵ that "every single one of those boys was somebody's son."

That brings me to names. I have been thinking a lot about them. Kevin Herbert did, too. Fighting in war is part of a social contract.²⁶ Words that Hemingway, through his war experience, not unlike many other veterans, came to detest, words like, in his selection, "glory, honor, courage, or hallow," are used to inculcate young men and now women, too, to override their natural survival instincts and risk their lives against mechanized means of killing them. The word "duty" comes from Latin *de-habeo*: I *have* something *from* someone else and therefore *owe* them, or think I owe them, their due, even if that due may come to be my own life.

In Homer's descriptions of battle killings and in Callinus and Tyrtaeus and even in Solon, the idea is promulgated that,

in return for doing your duty, your death will be known and will have lasting meaning. Your death will be attached to your name.

James Jones and Kevin Herbert both grasped what it meant to be doing your duty as a soldier in modern mechanized warfare where strategizing officers do not know your name and you are fighting in the modern equivalent of the great anonymous Persian forces instead of the intimate Greek hoplite formation.

Here is James Jones (*WW II: A Chronicle of Soldiering* [1975], 115–16):

[T]o accept anonymity in death is even harder. It is hard enough to accept dying. But to accept dying unknown and unsung except in some mass accolade, with no one to know the particulars how and when except for some mass communiqué, to be buried in some foreign land like a sack of rotten evil-smelling potatoes in a tin box for possible later disinterment and shipment home, requires a kind of bravery and acceptance so unspeakable that nobody has ever given a particular name to it.

I think then I learned that the idea of the Unknown Soldier was a con job and did not work. Not for the dead. It worked for the living. Like funerals, it was a ceremony of ritual obeisance made by the living for the living, to ease their pains, guilts and superstitious fears. But not for the dead, because the Unknown Soldier wasn't them, he was only one.

And here is Kevin Herbert (*ME* 1983, 78):

Each man owes the gods a death and yet in war, whatever the carnage, it is always at any given point in time an individual who dies. The tragedy is that in modern war this fate becomes so commonplace that personal dignity is all but overwhelmed by the banality of the event. No one has caught this irony better than Erich Maria Remarque in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, in the penultimate paragraph that describes the death of Paul Bäumer. The German is so moving and effective that it must be quoted:

Er fiel im Oktober 1918, an einem Tage, der so ruhig und still war

an der ganzen Front, dass der Heeresbericht sich nur auf dem Satz beschränkte, im Westen sei nichts Neues zu melden.

He fell in October 1918, on a day which was so peaceful and quiet on the whole front the Army bulletin confined itself to a single line: In the West there is nothing new to report.

When falling out of control, in an aircraft or in any other phase of life, for that matter, we cry "Why me?" And when back at base, wherever that may be, after some have not returned, we think, "Why them?" The answers are no more available to us than they were to Job, and in rational inquiry there is no solution.

Every classicist is in a sense a tail gunner. We look straight back to the remote past and within our 320-degree range almost to the present. But like the Greeks, the future lies behind us. We cannot see it. Yet the Kevin Herberts among us see the human matter clearly and make enough sense of it that they can help us move into the unknown future with some grounding, move through the *future* darkly.

In conclusion, let us recall Kevin's words about our modern Achilles: "Captain Yossarian, who faced with the mad logic of ever increasing missions, rationally seeks escape through insanity." I now grasp, some forty-five years after reading Heller's novel for the first time, what most WW II combat veterans would have understood right away and fully. The greatest ironic joke, or "antic" as Kevin puts it, in *Catch-22*, is not the catch-22 that makes Yossarian and his fellow fliers fly more and more missions, but Yossarian's claim that "they're trying to kill me."

Modern warfare is not Homer's *Iliad*. No one is trying to kill *you*. Yet you know they may kill you nonetheless. And neither they nor anyone else will know or care to know it was you, or the when, the where, the how and the why.²⁷

AFTERWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Cathy Reilly, Kevin Herbert's daughter, for her help locating original photographs of Kevin and other men in Homer's Roamers. Her feeling that the ideas in this essay captured her father's outlook and sensibilities means a lot to me.

I wish to thank Tobias Wolff for generously discussing with me in the past and recent present much more than the episode at Fort Campbell in 1958.

I thank Kenneth M. Price and Matthew Cohen for their expert advice on Walt Whitman's wartime writing discussed herein.

I thank Cassandra Donnelly for reading over the penultimate version and making several key suggestions for improvement of content and style.

I thank Nicholas Poburko for his patient and attentive help with editing. All faults in this final text are mine.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Tim Moore and the faculty of Classics at Washington University for entrusting me with the responsibility of honoring the memory, life and thoughts of Kevin Herbert on the topic of war and the Classics. As you will know if you have read my finished paper through to this point, it gave me the opportunity, the *sumphorē*, to get to the bottom of what was going on at the top in incidents that caused harm to men at war, men those at the top ideally and metaphorically were supposed to serve as shepherds.

NOTES

1. This "poem" or "section," as Whitman scholars call it, appears in *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* published autumn 1865, a poetical work of 206 lines. It is section 18 thereof; lines 172–85 of the whole. The poem, including this section, was an elegy for Abraham Lincoln and probably written shortly after April 15, 1865, the day Lincoln died. The scenes in this section are grounded in Whitman's experiences in field hospitals. In the opinion of Whitman scholar Kenneth M. Price (email 23 February 2016), "There is a possibility that this section of the poem was written before Lincoln's assassination, though the manuscript record on this point is not entirely clear." The first line, line 172, has a variant: "I saw askant the armies." See <http://www.whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1867/poems/212> last accessed February 25, 2016.

2. Translation from Stanley Lombardo and Robert Lamberton, *Hesiod Works and Days and Theogony* (1993), 61. The line literally means "we know to speak many false things similar to true things." The verb meaning "to know" in Greek is the perfect tense of the verbal root that means "to see." It means: "I saw something in the past and retain the result of that act of seeing now in the present," i.e., it is a truth claim based on vision.

3. They are back row: Wall, Updegrove, Deal, Rabinovitz, Arata; front

row: Cassidy, Akin, Inman, Whalen, Fritz, Herbert. Kevin remarks that after their thirty or so missions “the crew now projects a tempered, tenacious image.”

4. J. Kaplan, *Walt Whitman: A Life* (1979), 268.

5. Kaplan (note 4), 273.

6. 1 July to 18 November 1916.

7. Tom Palaima and Larry Tritle, “The Legacy of War in the Classical World,” in Brian Campbell and Larry Tritle, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World* (2013) 726–27, from “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower.”

8. <http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/1294> last accessed February 21, 2016.

9. http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories_war=W1_id=130.html last accessed February 24, 2016. All quotations from Raws’s letters are from this source.

10. We omit from these figures Achilles’ sacrifice by throat-slitting of twelve unnamed youths at the funeral pyre of Patroclus; Antilochus’s killing of an unnamed charioteer; and Diomedes’ killing of two unnamed sons of Merops, arguably an instance of patronymic naming.

11. See the on-line image of Owen’s manuscript text: <https://theredanimalproject.wordpress.com/tag/manuscript-dulce-et-decorum-est/> last accessed February 24, 2016.

12. See T. Palaima, “Courage and Prowess Afoot in Homer and the Vietnam of Tim O’Brien,” *Classical and Modern Literature* 20:3 (2000) 8–10.

13. “Robert Graves at Troy, Marathon, and the End of Sandy Road: War Poems at a Classical Distance?” in A. G. G. Gibson, ed., *Robert Graves and the Classical Tradition* (2015), 233–54.

14. Dexter Filkins, *The Forever War* (2008).

15. Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1961).

16. Charlie Reilly and Joseph Heller, “An Interview with Joseph Heller,” *Contemporary Literature* 39:4 (1998) 507–22.

17. Randall Jarrell, *Little Friend, Little Friend* (1945) 58.

18. The distance estimate is Kevin’s in “Homer’s Winged Words,” p. 44. Modern commercial flights reckon the distance between Tinian and Tokyo as 1474 miles.

19. In Keith Wheeler, *The Fall Of Japan* (1983), 92.

20. Kevin writes 300 in his published account *ME* 1983, 60.

21. See T. Palaima, “Ted’s Ghost: The death of Ted Westhusing leaves a widening circle of sorrow,” *Austin Chronicle* (April 27, 2007) <http://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2007-04-27/469144/> last accessed February 24, 2016; and “Civilian Knowledge of War and Violence in Ancient Athens and Modern America,” in Michael B. Cosmopoulos, ed., *Experiencing War. Trauma and Society from Ancient Greece to the Iraq*

War (2007) 9–34. And T. Christian Miller, *Blood Money* (2006), 11–18, 278–86.

22. <http://www.va.gov/vetapp05/files4/0523434.txt> last accessed February 24, 2016.

23. <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/4462814/> last accessed February 21, 2016.

24. Wolff later clarifies (Monday, November 2, 2015 at 5:14 PM): “One clarification I would make to my description of jumping. The parachutes in my day did have a quick release; the chutes used in ’58 by Westmoreland’s men did not. Otherwise they were the same.”

25. Listen to Prine’s “Hello in There” where the narrator, the husband of an elderly husband-and-wife couple, sings of their loneliness and remembers that “We lost Davy in the Korean War / And I still don’t know what for, don’t matter any more.”

26. On my views of the social contract, helped along by many other writers and thinkers, see T. Palaima, “Billboards and Moving Boxes,” a review essay on *Cowardice: A Brief History* by Chris Walsh (2014), in *Essays in Criticism* 65:4 (2015) 455–63.

27. On the April 1958 Fort Campbell jump, see now conveniently on-line: <http://www3.gendisasters.com/kentucky/18936/ft-campbell-ky-parachute-maneuver-accident-apr-1958> last accessed February 24, 2016, complete with the comments of veterans of the jump.