

Writers League of The Villages®



Information, education,
and networking for writers.

Laurel Manor Recreation Center
1st Wednesday of the Month
8:30AM-10:30AM

www.WLOV.org

Writers League of The Villages

WLOV NEWSLETTER

May 1, 2019



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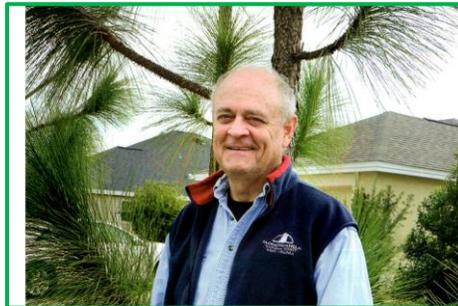
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Message from Your Newsletter Editor

Larry Martin, drlarry437@gmail.com



Doug Cravens (photo top center, page 1) was a fellow writer, member of several Villages Critique groups, and a personal friend. We shared a common background (from the same state, attended same university, same branch of military service), and of course our love of writing. I sat next to him every Monday in Wannabes. Doug died April 11, from cancer. He will be missed. See page 5 for tributes to Doug, from leaders of two of the critique groups he attended regularly.

In June and July we will have no regular meeting, and this newsletter will also be taking a break. The next WLOV general meeting will be August 14 (the 2nd Wednesday of the month), from 9 to 11 (new time, also). Your Board is working on some special events for the summer, and when those are firmed up, we'll send an email to all members. Meantime, enjoy your summer, here, up north, or wherever you may be traveling.

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WLOV Calendar of Upcoming Events

Wednesday, May 1 - General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 8:30 am – 10:30 am

After a short business meeting that will include an update of the 2020 Book & Author Expo, we will have “The Gong Show.” You can deliver a 30-second pitch of your book, also known as an “elevator pitch.” The meeting will be moderated by Amber Karlins, Professor of English at Lake-Sumter State College and State Professor of the Year 2018. If anyone goes over the time limit, they will get “The Gong”.

Sunday, May 5, 2019 –The Unity Spiritual Center community in Fruitland Park presents six published authors who will read excerpts from their books, and have autographed copies for sale. Among the six are WLOV members **Steve Camp** and **Diane Dean**. Admission is free. 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Unity Spiritual Center, 509 CR 468, Fruitland Park, FL 34731.

Sunday, May 19 – WLOV Members’ book signing, Whispering Oaks Winery, Oxford, 1-4 p.m.

June – NO REGULAR WLOV MEETING

Sunday, June 16 – WLOV Members’ book signing, Whispering Oaks Winery, Oxford, 1-4 p.m.

July – NO REGULAR WLOV MEETING

Wednesday, August 14 – General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 9 am – 11 am (Note change to 2nd Wednesday of the month, and to new time).

MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Paula Howard



Hi Everybody!

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, May 1! This will be our LAST meeting on the first Wednesday of the month. Beginning in August, WLOV is moving its meeting date to the SECOND Wednesday of each month, with a new time also: 9:00-11:00 am. The move was precipitated by a majority of members who wanted the later meeting time. Our move to the second Wednesday also allows Laurel Manor Rec Center to accommodate us with a bigger room. So, put August 14th on your calendar for a very special OPENING DAY of our End of Year Season.

On May 1st we will be hosting our first “Gong Show” with special guest moderator, Amber Karlins, English Instructor at Lake-Sumter State College. Amber is also the statewide 2018 Professor of the Year, voted on by other faculty for her excellent teaching skills. She will moderate our first Gong Show. You are encouraged to promote your book with a **30-second** “elevator speech”. Tell us in just 30 seconds what your book is about. That takes practice. Folks, just try it at home!

Also, PLEASE BRING A COPY OF ANY BOOK YOU HAVE WRITTEN TO THE MEETING!
This will help in our exercise to see the difference between the back-cover blurb on every book, and what we will learn at the meeting.

In June, we will be having a super promotion to get everyone to Whispering Oaks Winery for the third Sunday author-signing event.

In July, Laurel Manor Rec Center will be closed all month long for renovations, but we are looking at hosting an outing yet to-be-determined.

Our April 3rd meeting was a great success! For more on that meeting, and pics, please see page 6.

MORE GREAT NEWS! WLOV is now listed as a Chapter on the website of the Florida Writers Association. Benefits include cross-promotion of our events and all other chapters. Encouragement of all our members to visit www.floridawriters.net and become involved with their many and varied offerings. Of course, everyone is encouraged to become a member with all the benefits that brings.

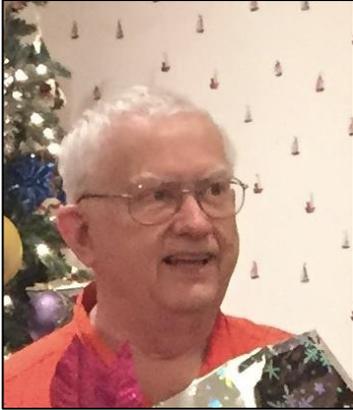
New Member added to WLOV Board of Directors - Diane Dean, Historian



Diane has been a Villager for fourteen years. Last year she published a cookbook titled *Our Michigan Roots*. About the book, she says “it was a way of preserving family history through character sketches, vintage photos, and recipes.” Diane is a member of The Villages Genealogy Society and enjoys researching and compiling history, so it's a natural to have her as our new WLOV historian. She participates in the Tuesday critique group Working Writers. The scrapbook Diane has put together of WLOV’s history will be on display at our regular monthly meetings.

Doug Cravens

January 14, 1942 – April 11, 2019



When I first came to the Wannabes Writers group, it was May 2011. I sat at the table with, if memory serves me, around five writers. Doug was on my right and I began reading about my time in Vietnam. The Wannabes treated me very well, but what I remember most was Doug.. He asked me if I had ever been to a Vietnam Veterans of America meeting. I had not, and he told me when and where it was and invited me to meet him there. That started a friendship I grew to cherish. Doug was one of the founding members of the Wannabes. I am only the leader because Doug did not want the job, but his help in running the club was never absent. If I couldn't be there, he would take charge. If there was a problem that needed to be solved, the first person I turned to was Doug. He was as much the leader of the Wannabes as I am.

Doug was a fellow writer, Viet Nam veteran, retired Air Force Colonel. I will miss the breakfast days we shared and the lunches at the Japanese Restaurant and the talks we had together. I will miss his writings and his critiques of mine. He was a true friend and a great man, and I loved him like a brother. We all mourn the passing of Doug Cravens. You will always be missed, my friend.

Rick Greenberg
Wannabes Critique Group

FOR DOUG

By Mark Newhouse
Writers 4 Kids

I met you a year ago,
But our friendship quickly grew,
Even that first day,
I already knew
You'd be my friend.

There was something in your smile,
Which you were quick to share,
That told me right away,
You'd be my friend.

You were our club's greeter,
Made everyone feel at home,
And everyone knew always,
You'd be their friend.

You served your country well,
Humility was your style,
And everyone knew
they could count on you
Their friend.

In life, we meet few,
Who earn respect and love
Not for shouting how great they are,
But by sharing themselves.
As special friends.

Our hearts will feel you with us,
Though others fill your chair,
We'll always remember
The kindness you shared.
So until we meet again,
At life's heavenly end,
We'll always be grateful, to you,
Our dear friend.

April 3 Meeting – Research Your Character

By Paula Howard

Our first-ever “Meet Your Character” Fair at Laurel Manor included 13 professionals in the world of Security or near it, who graciously shared their time to meet our members at individual tables for one-on-one talks. Joining us were a Forensic Psychologist, Detective, Policeman, Sheriff, Prisoner, Cardiologist, Marine Vet, IT tech (who can talk about Cyber Security), Foreign Service Officer, Spy, Probation Officer, Defense Attorney, and one of the first female Secret Service agents in the U.S.

Among this lineup were several of our own WLOV members including Phyllis Walters, Sue Ann Baker, Mel Harrison, Rick Greenberg, Julie Johnson, and Mark Pryor. Thanks a million, once more!

Additionally, some 17 members took advantage of getting their professional head-and-shoulders photo taken by Nicole Hamel of Neola Photography. We may offer that opportunity again later this year. Remember, if you are a writer, a professional photo is a must!

See you on May 1st at Laurel Manor!



Recent news about WLOV authors

News items are now grouped by month. To read the current items, go to <http://wlov.weebly.com/wlov-newsletters--news-items.html> and scroll down to **Items about WLOV authors - Links in May Newsletter**

Dan Kincaid, Villages Grandparents Magazine, Spring 2019

Phyllis Walters, Style Magazine, April 2019

David Bishop, Villages Magazine, April 2019

A recommended blog post – from Florida Writers Association

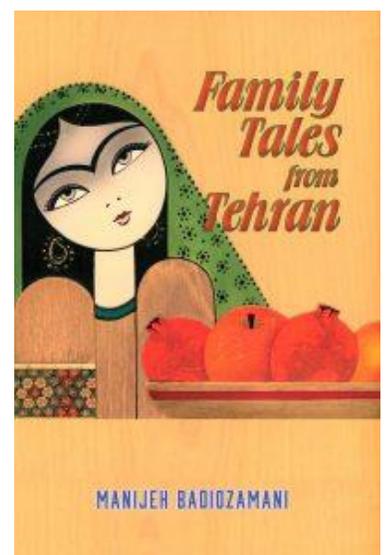
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New Book Added to WLOV Catalogue

If you've recently published a book, and wish to have it listed in our catalogue, send me the cover, a blurb and the Amazon link. drlarry437@gmail.com.

For an interview with WLOV member Manijeh Badiozamani about her new book, see <https://www.villages-news.com/2019/04/20/villager-who-grew-up-in-tehran-shares-her-familys-special-stories-in-new-book/>



American Writers Museum, Chicago

By Larry Martin



In late March I had opportunity to visit the American Writers Museum in downtown Chicago. It's a small museum, on the second floor of an office building (180 N Michigan Ave.), but is well laid out. It extols dozens of America's great writers. I saw no exhibits of writers from The Villages, but two are from Florida: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Laura Riding Jackson (a poet). In addition to fixed exhibits, the museum has rotating exhibitions. The current one is about Nobel Prize-winning author Bob Dylan, which should appeal to fans of both his music and lyrics. You can do the whole museum in an hour or so. Highly recommended if you're in Chicago and have the time. These are a few pics I took inside the museum. (For any grandchildren of Villages writers who may be reading this: The devices on the table are called typewriters. They

used to be used to write stuff.)



MIND OF A WRITER

Great writing comes across as effortless, but it is not. The writers featured here in the Museum spent years honing their craft—practicing, practicing, practicing. As E. B. White once observed in his classic revision of William Strunk's *Elements of Style*, "writing good standard English is no cinch." Transcendent writing is even harder.

This gallery offers insights into how writers think: the daily discipline and habits necessary to get the work done, the deep understanding of language to make the writing sing. At the root of it all is a love of words. The right word can elevate a line or sentence into art ... and if the right word does not yet exist, then inventing a new one might do the trick.

The Nobel Prize

In 2016, Bob Dylan shocked the world yet again when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the first songwriter to ever be given this honor. In its citation, the Swedish Academy credited Dylan with "having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition," setting off an international debate about whether song lyrics could be considered literature.

In his acceptance speech, Dylan cited such influences as Buddy Holly and Leadbelly before expanding on three pieces of writing that left a mark on him—*Moby-Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and *The Odyssey*. "Songs are unlike literature," he wrote. "They're meant to be sung, not read." But he noted that the architect of Western literature was also a singer and a lyric writer. "I return once again to Homer," Dylan wrote, "who says, 'Sing in me, oh Muse, and through me tell the story.'"



YOU DON'T START OUT WRITING GOOD STUFF. YOU START OUT WRITING CRAP AND THINKING IT'S GOOD STUFF, AND THEN GRADUALLY YOU GET BETTER AT IT. THAT'S WHY I SAY ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE TRAITS IS PERSISTENCE. IT'S JUST SO EASY TO GIVE UP!

— OCTAVIA E. BUTLER

"RECONSTRUCTION"
 Essay published in *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1866)

In this essay, Douglass passionately advocates for giving African-Americans the right to vote, calling "the elective franchise" a protective "wall of fire." Without a federal law, Douglass worried that southern states would pass their own laws redefining and restricting the terms of citizenship. African-Americans would be as powerless as they were before the war.

"All that is necessary to be done is to make the government consistent with itself, and render the rights of the States compatible with the sacred rights of human nature. . . . Fortunately, the Constitution of the United States knows no distinction between citizens on account of color. Neither does it know any difference between a citizen of a state and a citizen of the United States."

When Abraham Lincoln died, his vice-president, Andrew Johnson, suddenly became chief executive. In 1866, Douglass (shown here around that time) met with Johnson to discuss voting rights, but the president dismissed the subject—citing worries about a race war.

Personification of the Constitution

Parallel sentence structure underscores Douglass's point that states shouldn't differ from the nation in their definition of citizenship.

AUTHOR HOME / MUSEUM AFFILIATES

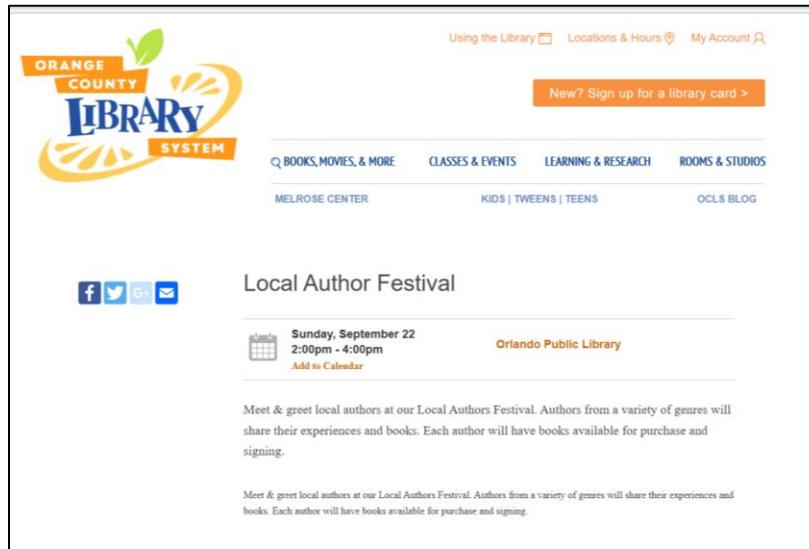
The American Writers Museum has partnered with author homes across the country. Find an author home near you!

Please feel free to take a bookmark.

WLOV Member Shares info on Orlando book signing event

By Robert Campbell

Back In March, I searched Google for BOOK SIGNING EVENTS NEAR ORLANDO. I got a number of hits, but was most interested in the Orlando Public Library Local Author Festival. It's a meet and greet with author sessions and book signings, and book sales are encouraged. On the website I clicked on the CLASSES & EVENTS tab, and in the SEARCH box entered BOOK SIGNINGS.



<https://attend.ocls.info/event/1155915>

At that point I got the information on how and when to apply. The process was quite easy. However, they only accept about 18 authors at a time. It appears that they run this event about three times a year. The last time they held the event it was in late December and the one I applied for is for April 28. Once you apply, they say it will take 4 to 6 weeks before an invitation to participate will be sent out to the selected individuals. Note that the next one is Sept 22.

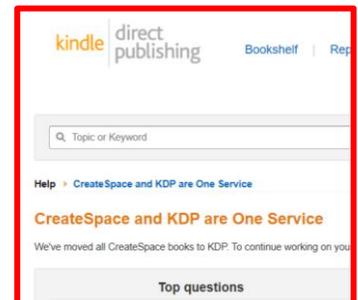
Note: The Orlando Library also has a Facebook link to the festival.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2087614937987345/>

The Move from CreateSpace to KDP Completed

In August 2018 Amazon announced that CreateSpace and Kindle Direct Publishing would become one service, one place to publish and manage both paperback and digital books. In April 2019 Amazon announced the move was complete for all CreateSpace books, and provided the link below for Frequently Asked Questions about the merger.

https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/GSJULX3WGP36HQ3R



U.S. Marine, Author, Critique Group Leader – Rick Greenberg



Honored U.S. Marine, award-winning author, leader of the Villages Wannabes Critique Group – Rick Greenberg has had a storied career. Then there was the time when doctors gave him no chance to live. In this interview Rick talks about his life and his writing.

-- Larry Martin, Newsletter Editor

LM: You were in Viet Nam and Iraq, with the U.S. Marines, and that experience is the basis for much of your writing. How did that career inspire you to start writing, and when did you begin?

RG: I started writing around 1998. My first writing was for my children. Let them know what their dad did in the Vietnam War. I was always fascinated at being a Marine. When I was around 14, in Chicago, I called the local Marine Corps recruiter, told him I was 18 and wanted to join the Corps. He sent me brochures that I spread across my bed and then I would pretend I was a marine. I've always been a patriot. Not sure where that came from, not from family or friends. Perhaps it was just the time I lived in. Being a patriot was something that was looked upon as honorable. The Vietnam War and what I did there was a great inspiration for my writing. How could it not be? I was young, tough, and in combat.

LM: A lifelong marine?

RG: I initially left the Corps because of family pressure, but returned in 1980. At the time, the regular Marine Corps would not accept my return, but the reserve Corps would. I wasn't active duty, but I was in my beloved Marine Corps. I stayed in the reserves until 1992, when I retired following the death of my second wife, Cindy, from CO poisoning.

LM: Outline for us your military career.

RG: Sure. Here's a brief timeline:

1968 - Joined Marines, age 18

Sept 1969 – Arrived in Vietnam

Sept 1970 – Left Vietnam

1972 – Left Marine Corps

October 1980 - Rejoined the Marine Corps reserve and worked my way up to Staff Sergeant

November 1990 – Activated for Desert Shield/Desert Storm -- Liberation of Kuwait from Iraq

May 1991 – Returned home from Iraq

Active duty time: 1968 to 1972, including the Gulf War

Reserve duty time: 1980 to 1992, when I retired. Because of the obligation under the law at that time and because of the many MCI (Marine Corps Institute)

courses I took, I was awarded 25 years of service for retirement.



Rick, in Viet Nam. Left, in camouflaged. Right, firing a captured Viet Cong AK47



LM: People call you Rick, but in your Amazon author Bio you refer to yourself as “Gunny.” Was that only used during military service?

RG: Gunny is the rank I achieved before retiring. Gunny is short for Gunnery Sergeant. It is perhaps the most respected rank in the Corps. A gunnery sergeant is a non-commissioned officer, known for short as “gysgt,” “gunny,” or an E-7. The duties of a gunnery sergeant may range from directing the company's firepower at a target to serving as a drill instructor for Marine recruits. The rank is unique to the United States Marine Corps.

LM: What was your career when not in the service?

RG As a civilian, I drove trucks, all different types, everything from the small bread delivery truck to tractor trailer as an over the road driver. As an over the road truck driver, I travelled across America. I've been in every one of the lower 48 states except North Dakota. I retired from truck driving in 2005.

LM: Your wife died from CO poisoning in 1992 and you almost died as well. In fact, I believe your family was told you would not survive. What happened?

RG: The story is too long to give a full accounting, but the details are in my first book, *Faith in a Box*. In short, in Sept, 1992 we were at a Vietnam reunion in Kokomo, Indiana. Two couples, plus my wife and I, were sharing an RV. Carbon monoxide leaked in during the night. Two people died, including my wife. She died in her sleep, literally in my arms.



LM: The Kokomo Tribune headline the next day, Sept 21, 1992, states there were two deaths. Who was the other one?

RG: The wife of another veteran. Her husband, and the other couple, survived.

LM: But you were found comatose?

RG: Almost dead. I had so much CO in my system the ER doctors did not think I would live out the night. I was in a coma for thirty days at Howard Community Hospital, on life support. Two different neurologists pronounced me brain dead, and urged my family to take me off life support. Even if I woke up, they said, I would be a vegetable because my brain had been starved of oxygen for too long a time.

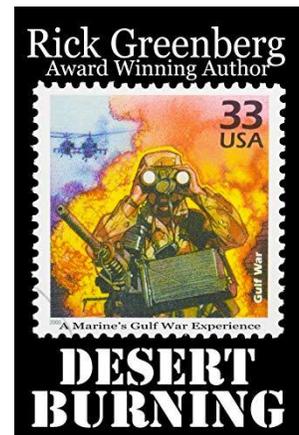
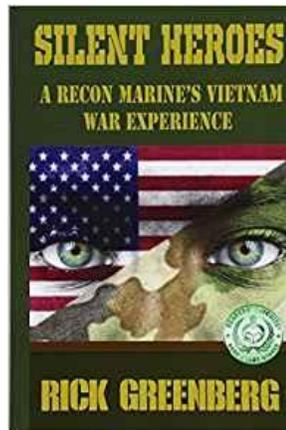
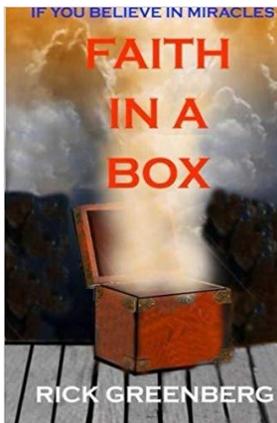
My family, especially my brother, used prayer and 30 days later, I woke with very few disabilities. I do suffer from short term memory loss and was told years ago that it could get worse over time.

LM: What was your job when you actually started writing in 1998? Did it just come to you one day to start writing, or were you thinking about it for a long time?

RG: No, it just came to me to start writing my story. I thought my kids might one day want to read about their Dad. At the time I was driving semis for a bread company, from Chicago to Indianapolis five days a week.

LM: How many books have you written?

RG: I have written three books: *Faith in a Box*, *Silent Heroes*, and *Desert Burning*.



Taken together, the three books are a trilogy of my life, but not in the order they were published.

LM: What do they cover?

RG: *Faith in a Box*, published in 2013, covers events in my life after the death of my wife and my miraculous recovery. I write about the long road back to health, and then my faith.

Silent Heroes, published in 2016, covers my experience in the Vietnam war as a teenager in combat. The heroism of all those silent heroes never recognized for the courage and bravery they shared.

Desert Burning, published 2018, covers my experience from Vietnam to the Gulf War, and to the tragic day of my wife's death.

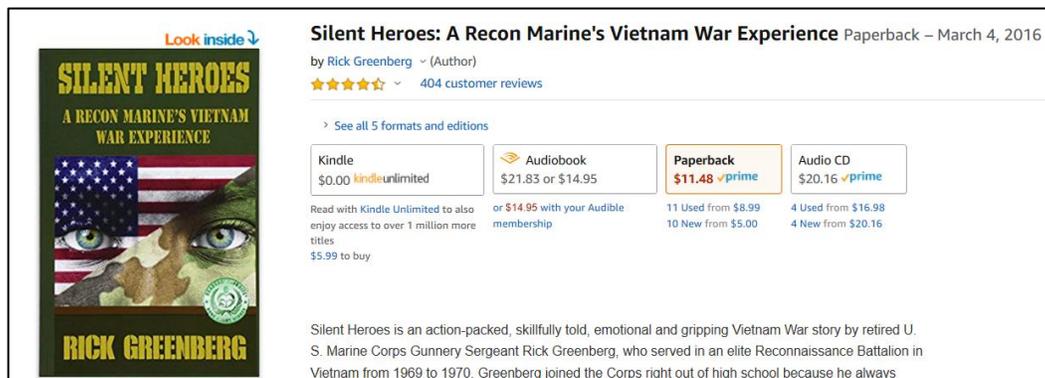
I wrote *Faith in a Box* after my third and current wife, Kim, was diagnosed with late stage ovarian cancer. I believe God wanted my personal miracle of surviving carbon monoxide poisoning and coming back from the dead to be seen by others. I do not believe God gave Kim cancer, but I know He knew her cancer and used that to kick me in the butt and start writing my story. That thought came the same day she was diagnosed. The book was completed one year later, the week she received the news of being cancer free.

LM: Which one book of the trilogy do you most recommend people read?

RG: I recommend they start with *Silent Heroes, A Recon Marines Vietnam War Experience*. That book was a bestseller on Amazon for 14 months. It is an award winner from the Readers Favorite Book Award contest, and to date I have sold more than 28,000 copies. *Silent Heroes* tells the story of a young

man, boy actually, who goes off to fight for his country with all the ideals he grew up with. To love his country, to respect those who gave their all for his freedom, and to do it with honor. It covers my Vietnam experience.

Silent Heroes has sold more than 28,000 copies worldwide. His book has been read in places such as South Africa, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and in countries all across Europe and the East.



Silent Heroes: A Recon Marine's Vietnam War Experience Paperback – March 4, 2016
by Rick Greenberg (Author)
★★★★☆ 404 customer reviews

> See all 5 formats and editions

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| Kindle \$0.00 <small>kindle unlimited</small> | Audiobook \$21.85 or \$14.95 | Paperback \$11.48 ✓ prime | Audio CD \$20.16 ✓ prime |
| Read with Kindle Unlimited to also enjoy access to over 1 million more titles \$5.99 to buy | or \$14.95 with your Audible membership | 11 Used from \$8.99 10 New from \$5.00 | 4 Used from \$16.98 4 New from \$20.16 |

Silent Heroes is an action-packed, skillfully told, emotional and gripping Vietnam War story by retired U. S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Rick Greenberg, who served in an elite Reconnaissance Battalion in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. Greenberg joined the Corps right out of high school because he always

LM: In your Amazon blurb for *Silent Heroes*, you note: “When I first started writing *Silent Heroes*, the original intention to be for family changed over the weeks, months and years it took to write. After receiving encouragement from fellow authors to proceed on this route, the book was no longer a memoir, but rather historical fiction based on actual events.” Why did you choose to write it as historical fiction, rather than a straightforward narrative?

RG: Perhaps I actually did write it as a narrative. I chose historical fiction because all the events are true and part of that war’s history. I could not call it a memoir because the names are all changed, and the names of places and time sequence is not accurate enough qualify as a memoir. Also, in order to use actual names, I would have to hunt down every person in the book, ask for their permission, and have a release signed by them. That would be impossible.

LM: What about *Desert Burning*?

Desert Burning, A Marines Gulf War Experience, continues my military life in the same type of format as *Silent Heroes*. It covers my character’s return from Vietnam, through some family situations, then back into the Marine Corps and my call up into active duty for the Gulf War. This book is more memoir than historical fiction. My personal life is 100% accurate. The story of my time and the things that happened during the war are also accurate to the best of my memory. Once again, the names are changed and the time lines may not be accurate.

Desert Burning tells of a war very different from Vietnam. The Gulf War was where I believed I was going to die. If you read the book, you will learn why. In that war, the United States expected losses in the thousands. We expected chemical and artillery attacks like those Iraq used in its war with Iran. None of that happened, so our losses were small. That fact does not diminish the bravery of all who were there, because the threat of dying was as great, or in my case greater than Vietnam.

LM: What are you working on now?

RG: I’ve decided to extend out of my comfort zone of writing about what I know, myself. I’m working on my first attempt at pure fiction. Science fiction, actually, where my imagination can run wild, and so far, it has. My working title is *Tik-Tik*, about a warrior in the future who, after winning the war, is snubbed by the world he helped save. He lives with nightmares of the hundreds he had to kill.

LM: How do you market your books?

RG: I am luckier than most, as I have a genre that appeals to veterans, and their families. For *Silent Heroes*, I went to every Marine or combat group I could find on Facebook. Joined their group and then when the book came out, I let them know. Sometimes I was told, “We don’t allow that,” however, most of the time I was congratulated and the ball started rolling.

I advertised on Facebook, started an author web page, advertised on Amazon and even early on, hired a woman who would post short attention grabbers for my Author web page. Most importantly, I added to the last page of my story a line that asked for people to let me know what they thought of the book, good or bad. I also asked them--and this is very important—to write an honest review of what they thought of the book.

But one thing we all need to know: success depends on getting people to first read the book. If it’s good, you’ll get reviews, if not then you most likely will not. I have found that reviewers will write something if they are upset, or if what you wrote truly touched them. If it was just okay, then you will not see a lot of reviews. That’s just my opinion.

LM: How did you get into audiobooks? Is that something you’d recommend to self-published writers?

RG: Yes, I would highly recommend it. However, an audiobook can be expensive to produce, and the chance of getting a return for your investment makes it risky. I was approached by a publisher who looks at how many reviews a book gets in a short amount of time, usually a couple of months. In my case, I was approached by Tantor Media for *Silent Heroes*, an unabridged audio book publisher. At first, I was skeptical. Usually, such offers go to big time books. To test them, I wanted the advance they offered doubled, and they did. The contract I signed was typical to Amazon as far as percentage of royalties. It has worked out fine for me, and I still get a quarterly check from them.



LM: You lead the Wannabes critique group on Mondays. How did you get into that role?

RG: The man who was running the group, Matt, was leaving for personal reasons. He asked people to send him a name of who they wanted to run the club and once that was done, he would ask that person if they would accept the job. I had been involved in setting up the readers list. It took a lot of my time. I guess people liked what I had done so they voted for me. Matt asked me, I thought about it for a while, and finally agreed. Now every year, I ask the group if they would like to hold another election and the response is: Why? You’re doing okay.” In fact, last year I even said, we need to hold another election for group leader, and then someone said, okay, I nominate Rick, all in favor, etc., and here I still am.

LM: There are a number of critique groups in The Villages. How does Wannabes differ from the others?

RG: We allow the writer to read their submissions and then the group members all give honest critique. One of our new members recently told me he was impressed with our wide range of stories. We welcome any genre, except hard core porn. He also said that reading the story and the type of information the writer gets back amazed him. Critiques can include everything from punctuation to line editing. And it seems that everyone has something special to offer. One person might be good at writing dialogue, another with punctuation, another at seeing if the story line, or the action, is realistic. For example, we might ask: Would a police officer really do what your character does? Can you really do that cyber task with a computer?

We allow each readers a time period of 20 minutes. That time is theirs. They can read a few thousand-word chapter, and use all their time that way. Or, they can try to keep it around 1500-2000 words, and have ten minutes or so left for critiquing. We all support each other, everyone is friends, and after each meeting we go to lunch somewhere.

We never tell a writer they are no good. When I first joined the group, I was a terrible writer. But with the Wannabes' help, I wrote a successful novel, won an award and still today, those that read the book tell me how great I am. I'm not great, but I've had the loving support, and the help from the Wannabes, because after all, don't we all want to be writers?

LM: You are a devout Christian, but have a Jewish surname. What is the origin of the name?

RG: My name comes from Eastern Europe, though my great, great grandfather was born in Palestine, so, yes, I have Jewish blood in me. I am a Christian and believe in Jesus as my savior. But recently I have become interested in the Messianic Jewish religion. These are the Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but also practice aspects of the Jewish tradition. They worship on Saturday, not Sunday. They believe in the Torah, which is the first five books of the bible, and believe that Jesus is the Messiah spoken of in those books. They also accept the New Testament as gospel.

LM: Besides writing and related club work, are there other activities you enjoy in The Villages?

RG: I used to golf, but not very often these days. Most days I am in my room writing or sitting at my pool, enjoying the Florida weather and thanking God for allowing me to be here. I like to go to the movies, eat out occasionally, but because I can put on weight in a hurry I try to watch myself.

I love Disney World. My wife and I, along with my brother, are annual pass holders, and we go at least two times a month. It never gets old. We also belong to the Mickey Fan-atics club with hundreds of other Disney fans. I like cruising and going places I've never been. Our website is <http://mickeysfanatics.com/index.html>.



LM: Your Amazon author bio states: “Gunny presently lives in a retirement community in central Florida where he spends his time writing and playing the piano.” Piano? Tell us about that. Do you also have a musical background?

RG: Yes, but much of what I learned has been lost over the years. I took up the bass guitar, and played in a teenage rock and roll band back in the sixties. My cousin was lead guitar, and his sister was our lead singer. She had a beautiful voice. We cut a record, but like the song, Summer of '68, we never went far. I now play the piano for my own enjoyment.

LM: Fascinating career! Or, I should say, careers. Thanks, Rick. Any last words?

RG: I hope people reading this enjoyed learning about me, my writing and my history. When I look back, I can see I lived a great life. Like so many, I made mistakes and sometimes had to pay the price. But overall, I would not change a thing.

Cartoons

