

FORWARD

There were 12,209,238 stories from World War II to be told by American Army, Army Air Force, Marines, Navy and Coast Guard veterans. 8,912,744 of those stories occurred overseas. 407,316 would never be told first hand as the memories passed along with the players who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Of the remaining stories, some were told freely with much pride and much pain. Some were told reluctantly and never without emotion for both the speaker and the listener. Some were never told at all and now time has silenced most of those, forever.

A few of the lucky children and grandchildren of these magnificent, introspective veterans come across bureau draws, cardboard boxes tucked away in the attic, black and white photo albums, papers, medals ... that were very meaningful those who kept them as memories they were trying to forget, rather than trying to remember. I am one of the very lucky ones.

I was ten-years-old when I stumbled upon a drawer in my father's workbench in our basement – an old bedroom dresser converted to a tool cabinet and not discarded. There were newspaper clippings, photos of war, certificates, medals, old headphones – and a German luger pistol. That was enough for me to see so I closed the drawer and tried to put it out of my mind.

It was tough for me to admit to my Dad that I had seen what was there but my curiosity changed that. My young mind thought if I told him I had discovered his things he might just tell me the story behind them. So, I did, at the dinner table.

His response was very low key, "Oh, I see. I guess I should lock up the pistol even though it won't fire anymore," and not much else. Nonetheless, I did get very clear feedback by the daggers in my mother's eye as she silently, and effectively, told me, don't go there. And, so it went for the next fifty years.

When my father passed in 1996 my brother and I found some old boxes in my father's attic and a number of them found their way, unopened, to a new attic. During a spring cleanup in 2003, those boxes were discovered again and when I opened one of them, my mind raced back fifty-seven years.

There were the aging black and white photo albums, papers, medals – and the pistol – just as I had seen them all those years ago. It was at first, a really neat discovery. I smiled. Moments later there was depression when I realized I will never know what had happened.

Then it hit me! There is a story somewhere in that box – and I just need to find it.

Five years later I finished compiling a one-thousand-page story in twenty-three chapters, tracing my father's footsteps from enlistment in 1940 through 1945 when he returned an ex-Prisoner-of-War and a beaten man. The effort was a labor of love and I came to understand my father more than I ever did in the fifty years he was in my life.

That effort and what I discovered affected me profoundly. I have since researched and written the stories of eight other veterans in my family from World War I until today, and the World War II fighter pilot father of a colleague from work. One of those stories, a Lieutenant Colonel cousin of mine, is still being written today – in real time.

The compilation in the document that follows is for a friend, yet again. This is the story of Sergeant Fred Tenore, an artillery man in World War II and grandfather to Michele Tenore, who calls him 'Pop'. Like my Dad, Fred did not talk very much about his wartime experiences. It was too bitter and painful for both of them as it had been for so many World War II veterans.

My hope is that this manuscript fills in many of the blanks and gives his family and friends insights into how he became the man they knew. It also provides a lasting document of one more of the 12,209,238 stories that should not be lost to time.

For me, I wish I had known him.

