

What's Your Story?

By Clyde R. Horn, Photo by Hyunah Jang

Briefly, I didn't feel safe telling others I was a combat Veteran of the Vietnam War when I returned to the Bay Area in 1968. I was in the Vietnam War from 1967-68. The war changed my life in ways I hardly understood until later in my life. I've written two books and numerous articles telling my story. I began to tell my story in 2009 when I finally felt I could.

We all have stories. The ancient art of storytelling around a dinner table is gone. It's very hard to even have a long conversation with someone today because we are all "so busy." Yet, we all have stories that need to be told passing down our history, culture, experience, uniqueness that can help our family, friends and one another realize we are similar.

The beauty of storytelling is we can all relate. Our experiences may be different, but the beauty and struggle are universal. If you can listen to my story you can listen to yourself. You can shorten the gaps that keep us apart. Our uniqueness is special, but it should not make us different. Yet I encounter those who feel their uniqueness separates them from others and puts them in a "stand apart category of humanity." Unfortunately, this viewpoint of life can push us apart.

When I tell my story it also tells yours. You can fill in the gaps along with finishing my sentences. Anticipate my journey because a part of it is also yours. Have you been close to starving, had significant trauma in your life, rejoiced at seeing your child being born, fought in a war, had an abusive childhood or encountered domestic violence? Did you grow up on tough streets? Have you had success in your finances or lived a life of privilege? Did you have a nurturing home? Did you find your life-mate? We don't know one another until we reveal our journeys.



We cannot experience everything. Yet we can when we listen to one another's stories. I find this truth when I attend a weekly breakfast meeting with some fellow veterans. We have grown dependent on one another in a positive way. We tell our stories in short sharing sessions. It always amazes me how powerful the bonding becomes when we meet. I heard the words of support but only came to engage it by being with others who shared who they were.

My wife and I have grandchildren. Two of our grandchildren are twins aged 14 years old. We see them on Wednesdays for several hours because they come over for dinner every week.

Eating together we listen to one another with a big dose of laughter. They teach me and I teach them, but it is a give-and-take. An intimate sharing among equals who talk about their week, views on life, humorous exchanges and love. It is my highlight each week. Basically, we tell our stories to one another. You

know what? We never run out of content. By telling our stories we trigger memories, forgotten moments, tough times, life. Also, a miracle occurs. These two teenagers demand we meet each week. By telling our stories we have vaulted over the generation gap! They value the time together as much as my wife and I do.

Miracles happen when we tell our stories. What is your story?

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