

BEYOND GLORY

A PLAY BY
STEPHEN LANG
BASED ON THE BOOK BY
LARRY SMITH



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

BEYOND GLORY
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Beyond Glory: Medal of Honor Heroes in Their Own Words
Copyright © 2003, Larry Smith

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*This play is dedicated to Kristina, who insisted it happen
and to
Jane and Paul, who made it happen.*

BEYOND GLORY was originally produced by the Goodman Theatre (Robert Falls, Artistic Director; Roche Schuller, Executive Director), Chicago, Illinois on September 20, 2005. It was directed by Stephen Lang; the assistant director and understudy was Michael Fosberg; the set design was by Tony Cisek; the lighting design was by Dan Covey; the sound design was by Cecil Averett; the original music was by Robert Kessler and Ethan Neuburg; the projection design was by John Boesche; and the production stage manager was Kimberly Osgood. The play was performed by Stephen Lang.

BEYOND GLORY was originally produced in New York City by Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director), on June 21, 2007, in association with Steven Suskin. It was directed by Robert Falls; the set design was by Tony Cisek; the costume design was by David C. Woolard; the lighting design was by Dan Covey; the sound design was by Cecil Averett; the original music was by Robert Kessler and Ethan Neuburg; the projection design was by John Boesche; and the production stage manager was James FitzSimmons. The play was performed by Stephen Lang.

BEYOND GLORY was developed and presented by Tribute Productions (Jane Lang and Paul Sprenger) at the Theater of the Women in Military Service for America, in Arlington, Virginia, on April 14, 2004. It was directed by Stephen Lang, with set design by Tony Cisek, lighting design by Dan Covey, sound design by Scott Burgess, original music by Robert Kessler and Ethan Neuburg, video design by Tracy C. Couch, and production stage manager Roy A. Gross. The play was performed by Stephen Lang.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Beyond Glory was conceived as theater at its most fundamental, which is to say that the only necessary production components are a good actor and a footlocker containing a few costume pieces.

The play was originally written to be performed by a solo actor playing 8 roles, abetted by the prerecorded Voice of the Military.

However, the number of actors and allocation of roles can easily be adapted to the needs and circumstances of any theater group. For example, the 8 roles can be divided among 2 or 3 actors or, in fact, 8 actors could each play a single role.

The Voice of the Military can be performed live as well, either on or offstage, using a single actor or being shared by multiple actors.

The point is that *Beyond Glory* is completely flexible in terms of the number of actors, as well as their age, ethnicity, and gender.

If performed by a solo actor all transformations from role to role are immediate and complete. There is no “easing into character.” However, costume changes should be unhurried and integrated into the characterization.

CHARACTERS

The men of BEYOND GLORY, in order of portrayal

JOHN WILLIAM FINN

Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

born July 23, 1909

died May 27, 2010

Naval Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii; December 7, 1941

CLARENCE SASSER

Specialist Five, U.S. Army

born 12 September, 1947

Dinh Tuong Province, Republic of Vietnam; January 10, 1968

LEWIS L. MILLET

Captain, U.S. Army

born December 15, 1920

died November 14, 2009

Vicinity of Soam-ni, Korea; February 7, 1951

JAMES BOND STOCKDALE

Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy

born December 23, 1923

died July 5, 2005

Hỏa Lò Prison, Hanoi, North Vietnam; September 4, 1969

NICKY DANIEL BACON

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army

born November 25, 1945

died July 17, 2010

West of Tam Kỳ, Republic of Vietnam; August 26, 1968

HECTOR CAFFERATA

Private, U.S. Marine Corps

born November 4, 1929

died April 12, 2016

Reserve Chosin Reservoir, North Korea; November 28, 1950

VERNON J. BAKER
First Lieutenant, U.S. Army
born 17 December 1919
died 13 July 2010
Near Viareggio, Italy; April 5–6, 1945

DANIEL K. INOUYE
Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army
born 7 February 1924
died 17 December 2012
Near San Terenzo, Italy; April 21, 1945

and

THE MILITARY

NOTE

The setting is simplicity itself, and adaptable to the venue. Ideally, a raked disc, maybe 16 feet in diameter. It all plays here. A military footlocker rests off-center on the disc. All costume pieces and props come out of and return to the footlocker.

BEYOND GLORY

Images of the three versions of the Medal of Honor are projected at preset. There is a distant and intermittent sound of trumpets. A light softly shines down on a sturdy, worn, and well-travelled military footlocker. The footlocker is shut. Music, light, and projections fade to black. In the darkness, a voice.

MILITARY.

“Old Men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he’ll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day...”

An aggressive drum cadence. On the final stroke, spotlight up full on a man in profile. He wears a Hawaiian shirt. His gaze and his fist are raised to the sky.

JOHN WILLIAM FINN. Bastards! Screwed up my nooky on a Sunday morning. I was lookin’ for some love with my beautiful wife. That’s honest to God what I was doing when they came. Oh, everybody said later that...so and so come and awakened me. Hell, the only people asleep were the morons in Washington who didn’t advise the admiral as to what was coming off. (*Gestures to his crotch.*) It was my little pal Woodrow awakened me that morning,

MILITARY. “Citation: For extraordinary heroism and devotion above and beyond...”

JOHN WILLIAM FINN. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa... Hold on there, sunshine. Let’s don’t rush through the damn thing. Like I was saying, about the time I saw the plane flash by my window, I’m laying in bed with a pup tent situation, you know what I mean, and my wife, Alice, she jumps out of bed, and she’s looking out the window at Hawaiialoh Hill, and she says, “Oh, John, it’s beautiful!” And I’m lookin’ at her beautiful little ass, and I said “It sure is!”

MILITARY. “...above and beyond the call of duty. During the first

attack by...”

JOHN WILLIAM FINN. Belay that, Sailor! By God, My name is John Finn, and I’m 97 years old, and it’s my turn to talk! Now, I’m gonna talk for a while, and then you can make a big goddamn fuss over me. That work for you?

MILITARY. Sir!

JOHN WILLIAM FINN. Alright then. Damn, he looks like he’s about thirteen! I was sixteen when I went down the recruiting station. I thought, “Oh shit, a few weeks don’t make any difference.” They give me the exam, give me the physical. The recruiter said, “How are your teeth?” I said, “I got pretty good teeth.” I had beautiful teeth. Still do. “Okay, alright, sonny. You come back in two weeks. And you bring your mother and father with you.”

I come back. I come back on the 29th of July, 1926. I was just seventeen. And I brought my mother with me and, oh my God, they treated her like she was a queen. Got her a cup of coffee, and set her down in a chair, and, oh, it was wonderful.

Now come this tough-looking sailor. “Son,” he said, “Are you sure you want to join the Navy? Do you know you got to scrub your own clothes? Do you realize in the Navy you got to stand a lot of watches? You don’t get to sleep all night, all the time. Do you understand that?” Yeah, yeah, none of that bothered me. Only one thing worried me: They gimme a little, uh uh, a little leaflet and it says, “The Navy food is wholesome but plain.” That worried me.

I thought I was going to be eating rice and boiled potatoes with no salt for three years. But I wanted to join the Navy. And then, when I got to boot camp, oh my god, I loved the Navy!

Sliced roast beef! And gravy! Lettuce and tomato salad. Watermelon and corn on the cob. Man, I just couldn’t believe the food! Oh sure, I remember some numbnuts complaining about the “goddamn Navy slop,” but shit, I never had such good food in my life as I got in the Navy. I thought I died and went to heaven. Goddamn rice and boiled potatoes!

’32, got back from China, saw a beautiful blonde in San Diego. After all them little Chi-nee gals in China, beautiful blonde, and I said, “I got to do something about this. Alice,” I said—her name was Alice—“Alice, I’ll take you anywhere you want to go but I got

to tell you I haven't ridden this bike much..." I'd bought a BMW in China. "...and maybe, maybe you better go with Bobby or with Slim." And she said, "I'd like to go with you." So, we took off and rode around. Then I feel a little, uh uh, a tremor on the back of the bike: What the hell is that? Well, do you know, that girl was now standing up on the pack rack on the bike! She's got the tips of her fingers on my shoulders and she's standing up! I'm thinking, "Jesus Christ, she's got some guts!" This beautiful blonde is the last girl in the world you'd think would be playing tricks on a motorcycle. Well, we just rode along, not going fast, maybe twenty, oh, twenty-five miles an hour. And, oh my, she was... muscular and strong and graceful and...everything. We got married in '33.

So, you got to understand that on that morning, December 7, 1941, I'd been in the Navy fifteen years, and I'd participated in all kinds of war games. I mean, you live at a naval station, you hear planes flying. But then I hear the damn machine guns. Who the hell is firing the damn machine guns? I'm chief ordnance man 'round here, if anybody's gonna be firin' machine guns, I'm damn well gonna know about it. Then I thought, "Hey what the hell's happening? It's Sunday."

OK, Sunshine, you can fill in a few details now.

MILITARY. Sir! "Lieutenant Finn promptly secured and manned a .50 caliber machine gun in a completely exposed area, which was under heavy enemy machine-gun- strafing fire. Although painfully wounded many times..."

JOHN WILLIAM FINN. Alright, alright, that's fine. That's right, that's pretty much right, but you got to understand that by the time I got to the hangar, the enemy were reducing every plane on the field to a rubble of smoke and melted aluminum.

And then I hear a plane roaring in astern, and I look up and I see that big old red meatball, the rising sun insignia, on the underside of the wings, and what I did was I grabbed a .30, it was a .30 caliber machine gun and, oh my god, did they fire fast, and what I did was I drug that sonovagun out, oh, twenty yards onto the tarmac, so's I could see over the hangars, and I just started firing.

And for the next two hours and a half I fired that gun. I just kept firing that gun 'til the last of 'em left. And not every one of 'em did

BEYOND GLORY

a play by Stephen Lang
from the book by Larry Smith

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In Stephen Lang's theatrical adaptation of Larry Smith's book *Beyond Glory: Medal of Honor Heroes in Their Own Words*, Lang presents the stories of eight veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, rendering firsthand accounts of the actions which resulted in each of them receiving the nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor. BEYOND GLORY gathers these men together in the present to look back on the defining moments of their lives and to examine the meaning of courage, duty, and, ultimately, humility.

"...[BEYOND GLORY] provides a powerful reminder of the hardships, psychic stresses and physical dangers that men and women endure on the front lines. ...Its sobriety, simplicity and lack of histrionics are the show's signal strengths. ...BEYOND GLORY is really beyond reproach in its no-frills treatment to the material. ...quietly celebratory..."

—The New York Times

"...an uplifting play...[BEYOND GLORY] invite[s] audiences to celebrate average people doing extraordinary things and remind[s] us that the horrors of war also create moments of heroism...[a] portrait of valor that doesn't turn war into a blue state-red state debate."

—Variety

"[Lang's] adaptation of Larry Smith's book is sincere, respectful, and completely anomalous in a milieu that hasn't exhausted itself celebrating American soldiers...All the more reason to be glad it's here."

—New York Magazine

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