

Foreword

It is humbling and a bit daunting for us to have the privilege of offering a foreword to a book and documentary done by such accomplished real-world storytellers: Nancy Sorrells and Connie Doebele. They deserve tremendous credit for their work, as you will witness in both this book and the documentary about what we fondly call “The Post.” The story they tell are stories of people who found in The Post some of the same, very special character and values that, to borrow the words of long ago, are the essence of the greatest gift: The Post—in the spirit of the people who served and were served and still do today—*always protected, always trusted, always hoped, and always persevered.*

For us and many others, it was known simply as “The Post.” While “the” is not capitalized in the book, we chose to capitalize it because we know of few other earthly influences in our lives that has claim to anything like it for its impact, except for close family. The Post was and is so much more than a name or a place. It represents a rich and uniquely interwoven story about local, state, and national history and a singular community with a shared connection of struggles and blessings—and about hope reborn of the horrors of war and sacrifice that few of us can begin to fathom. As sons of parents led by Providence to drop us fortuitously into this close knit community during formative years, The Post has continued to symbolize a unique spirit for which we remain grateful beyond words. That gratitude, even a reverence for what the experience meant to us and others, led to the idea of a project to capture in print and video some of that spirit—told through the lives and memories of people and through the images of those days. We did not want that story and the connections and lessons to get lost forever in time.

The eldest of the three Guynn Brothers remembers the family living initially in an apartment in the village of Fishersville, near the railroad tracks and small train station. Jack recalls that, while not fully understanding it, some of the earliest impressions come from our parents—lifelong educators—taking Jack and Jimmy down to the train station to see the wounded World War II soldiers being unloaded to ambulances for transport to the Woodrow Wilson military hospital. Because we eventually lived on The Post and our Father began serving in the 1960s at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, all of us crossed paths in some way with those who overcame impairments, including soldiers from the Vietnam War. Doug, the youngest among us, vividly recalls playing wheelchair basketball and shooting pool with a Vietnam Era veteran by the name of “Charlie”—and of Charlie’s kindness and example, without a moment of complaint from him about his war-visited injuries and resulting paralysis. Doug also worked at what we called in shorthand “the Center” during a summer between college years. At various times, we all had watched patients, outfitted with new artificial limbs, learn to walk or live again in a different way, such as when they struggled to make the long trek down and up the specially paved path to “the pond,” where we were just being typical, carefree youngsters fishing and ice skating at that spot. In being treated by esteemed orthopedist Dr. Roy Hoover of the Center, Doug discovered in a direct manner the care that the Center and its professionals offered. All three of us attended Wilson Memorial High School in the old military hospital buildings that had been creatively converted to educational facilities. In so many ways, The Post is part of us today as much as it was decades ago, with indelible memories and sentiments.

In hindsight, we wish that the idea of The Post history had come to us years earlier. The lapse of time since World War II has made Nancy Sorrells’ and Connie Doebele’s labor challenging. We have lost so many of the World War II veterans, and to find a link to those whose bodies and souls found care, comfort, and hope at The Post’s World War II army hospital, has been daunting even for professionals as outstanding and determined as Nancy and Connie. Nancy, a highly respected historian and prolific writer in her own right, has brought her talent and dedication to this project with more than just curious

and studied interest. She has a genuine love for our cherished Valley history—a history that transcends locality boundaries. In the process, she also lent her heart and abundant patience to this project, demonstrating at every step a deep regard for what The Post represents for many of us. Connie, a renowned producer and on-air host and interviewer of national and international figures for many years with C-SPAN and Brian Lamb, has teamed with Nancy in a grand collaboration that offers us the faces and voices and perspectives of those who also somehow found their way to the oasis known as The Post. Connie, as part of her own story of recent discovery and adoption of our community as her new home, enthusiastically embraced our dream of capturing this history, always willing to bring her skill and compassion to do yet one more video interview of the people whose experiences give meaning to The Post. As Brian Lamb, who created C-SPAN, commented to a group of us last year when we had the privilege to visit C-SPAN, “Connie is a gem.” She is, indeed—as is Nancy.

The Guynn Brothers—or “Guynn Boys,” as our Mother rightly called us regardless of age—cannot thank Nancy and Connie enough, as well as countless others who contributed recollections and images, to bring life to what is a rich history of sacrifice and service. While we would never presume that other generations will understand our sentiments, perhaps some nostalgic, we believe Connie and Nancy’s work preserves and offers a keen appreciation for what this time in our precious part of the Valley gave to the fabric of our greater community that remains the home of the heart for us and others. In a way, The Post is sacred ground. When Jack comes “home” to visit, he rarely misses a chance to make what for him is a pilgrimage to The Post just to remember more vividly and to count his blessings for that experience and the people who helped shape his life and the lives of others in such positive ways. Through the storytelling of Nancy and Connie, you will be offered a reminder or an introduction about the lives that were impacted by The Post, including people of both private and of very public circumstances, such as members of the renowned Statler Brothers.

Although they have been gone far too long, our parents certainly are part of the reason for our decision to approach Dan Layman and the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge to partner with us, through the Carroll and Grace “Patsy” Guynn endowed fund, in accomplishing what you will read and see and hear in Nancy and Connie’s work. Dan has been enthusiastic from the beginning and we thank him and his staff and the Community Foundation for being part of the shared commitment. In advancing this initiative, we also pause to honor our parents and all Post parents and other adults who parented The Post kids in some way, including those like Florence Johnson Green, our second Mother, and her brother Phil Johnson of the county school system’s maintenance department where we worked and certainly learned during breaks from school. We all were part of The Post’s larger family, including the original Post families such as the Garretts, Cooks, Birdsalls, Crutes, Cassells, Stewarts, Stansberrys, Gaunces, Simms, and others like and after them. We remember them all and celebrate their lives as we also remember and honor the individuals brought—because of war and other injuries of life—to The Post for care and rehabilitation and training. We additionally pause and celebrate the countless people who devoted their lives, though paid less than merited and expected to work in unconventional facilities, to teaching and leadership in trying to inspire a stronger education ethic as a community that encouraged both young and adult learners. Doug also takes this opportunity as a privilege to acknowledge the support of his brothers, Jack and Jimmy, for steadfastly believing in this project, and he remembers still today how, surely drawing on the values of what The Post taught and represents, his brothers have always been the truest brothers through life’s early and other losses and disappointments. Their support for this project is just one more example of how they *always protected, always trusted, always hoped, and always persevered*.

As brothers, we are eternally grateful for it all. And it seems only fitting to remember the song that our Mother, Patsy Guynn, invoked to express a profound appreciation for life and its unexpected blessings—because The Post was one of those blessings from Providence for us and many others who were fortunate enough to be part of the storied history:

So, amid the conflict whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one.

***Jack Guynn
Jimmy Guynn
Doug Guynn***

***November 11, 2016
Veterans Day***



*Grace "Patsy" and Carroll Guynn
at The Post*



*Florence Johnson Green
holds young Doug Guynn
at The Post*