



ROGER HAYES

POST CIVIL WAR DISORDER

BY LOIS MORFORD

In the 1950s, as a 20 year old expectant mother, I met my husband's great aunt Lola, who was in her 90s. We formed a bond as we both propped up our swollen ankles. I greatly admired a framed photograph on her wall showing her as a child standing with her family in front of their sod house in Kansas about 1880. Her father, Jerome Morford, wears the Congressional Medal of Honor he won in the Civil War. She and her mother wear their Sunday best, hats and shoes. My husband's great grandfather, William, sits on the wagon seat, showing off the horses. The younger children are barefoot. The Kansas prairie is empty in the distance. Eventually, Aunt Lola gave me her framed photo. It hangs on my bedroom wall, and I look at it often.

On March 2 I took the photo to Godfather's Books where Clay Feeter offered to research Civil War ancestors on the internet. He was ecstatic to find a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, and easily found Jerome's story.

Jerome Morford was a 20 year old farm boy when he enlisted in the Illinois 55th Infantry regiment in 1861. In their first battle at Shiloh, 1 officer and 51 men were killed, 9 officers and 190 men wounded, and 26 men captured. He fought in at least 35 additional battles, including Sherman's 'March to the Sea', and was mustered out in 1865.

The Congressional Medal of Honor was for action on May 22, 1863. Jerome volunteered for "Forlorn Hope", the initial assault by 150 volunteers on Vicksburg. Their task was to build a bridge across a ditch at the foot of the walls and place scaling ladders for a general assault. Only unmarried men were allowed to volunteer, as "there was little possibility of any of them returning alive."

It was a debacle. Those few who made it running across 80 yards of enemy fire, carrying their lumber and ladders, to the ditch below the city walls could do nothing but hunker down and endure constant shelling from 8 a.m. until dark. "The bottom of the ditch was strewn with mangled bodies, with heads and limbs blown off." Eighty-five percent of the volunteers were killed or severely wounded. The remainder, including Jerome Morford, received the Medal of Honor for

"superb gallantry and reckless indifference to death and danger.... There is nothing in military history to excel the conduct of the 'Forlorn Hope' that led the general assault on Vicksburg, May 22, 1863."

A fellow Astorian at Godfather's touched my shoulder and said, "Congratulations."

I thought, for what? For having a war hero ancestor who was damaged by the experience?

Because Jerome was damaged. We call it *post-traumatic stress syndrome*. I don't know if it had a label after the terribly traumatic Civil War. Jerome suffered. He withdrew. He was violent and abusive to his family. He constantly moved his family west. If he could see the smoke from another man's chimney, it was time to move on. The photo with the sod house was taken in Kansas, on his way away. He died in Seattle in 1910. Clay Feeters was sure we could document where he subsequently lived on the way and the names and birthdates of his children from his pension records. But Jerome never received his pension. He just fled.

Unfortunately, the war and his legacy lived on. His violence and abuse descended through the generations, as it so often does, to affect even my own children, his great-great-grandchildren. It breaks my heart. There are more victims of war than those who are killed.

My granddaughter Corinna protested at the School of the Americas in Georgia this year. Her children will be the seventh generation from Jerome Morford. May 22, 2003 will be the 140th anniversary of Jerome's terrifying day cowering in the ditch below the walls of Vicksburg as his comrades exploded around him. I will be thinking of him and his legacy. And as our non-elected President plummets us toward war, an astronomical national debt, the collapse of our infrastructure and social services, and the fear and hatred of most of the world, I pray for the next seven generations.

Lois Morford lives in Astoria. She has written many articles on human rights in Central America, where she has actively worked for those rights for many years. She was a participant at the World Trade Organization demonstrations in Seattle in November 1999 and wrote about it for the NCTE (Winter 2000). She has been called an "International Activist."

Roger Hayes is an Astoria artist whose work has often appeared in the Times Eagle.



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CHILD REARING

BY DALE FLOWERS

She stood wanting to grab his wrist, wanting to make herself felt with more than words, but it was just the words, "It's not really his fault," that spilled out, a weak offering, something a beggar tosses out to a passer-by, a street offering. It was the maternal plea meant to balance his anger.

"Not his fault," he said with scorn. "Look out there.... Look!" They both stared out the double glass doors that served as access to the redwood deck with its gas grill, and shrubs. But these things paled in significance next to the two shattered ceramic vases with their scattered geraniums; red petals lay strewn like lives lost from a great fall. Once like two towers, the hallmark of a carefully tended backyard, they were nothing more than discarded ceramic chunks, a gambler's discarded toss.

"I know," she said placing a tender hand on his shoulder. He took a step forward, breaking the contact under the pretext of a better look. Her hand dropped away finding a little consolation in her other hand; they folded together as if in an unanswered prayer.

"He needs to be punished." His hands curled into fists resting onto his hips, and stood like a pedestal in firm resolve.

"Matthew said it was those neighborhood kids — running wild. You know how they are."

"Running wild?" He questioned. "I saw Matt with those kids down the street, hangin' with them. Who do you think let them in?" He turned his head towards the staircase and called, "Matt." Unbuckling his belt he slid it from his waist, folding it once. Her eyes widened with a disturbing quiet. He had used it

once before, and the horror of it still lingered along every nerve of her back. In over a decade of marriage she had never seen him raise his hand to anyone — anyone except their dog. The dog flashed in her mind, the way it yelped and hunched submissively under Bill's belt. Her hands rose to her face as the image of it surfaced, to lash out against their son as if he were a disobedient dog.

"But not like this," she said wanting to grasp his wrist, wanting with desperation to make her beating heart quiet his. *Grounded for a week, two weeks, missing supper, even an embargo of TV* were words she wanted to use, but the belt hung menacingly from his hand. "And if it wasn't him?" she asked. She knew it was a reckless question, but it needed to be asked. She had meant for it to be said with sincerity and strength, but it barely arrived as a whisper; like a misplaced breeze, an irritation that stirred leaves from the sidewalk without bothering to sweep clean.

Her words twisted against his thoughts clenching at his stomach. It folded in on itself like two grasping fists. Pushing his hand between two buttons of his dress shirt, he massaged away the twinge of his rising anger. "Look at it," he snapped. She stepped up to his side and placed her hand on his shoulder. Together they stared at the two vases that had towered over the deck, the ones purchased at considerable expense, once tall stately things — admirable things. He knew someone must be held responsible for the twin towers.

Dale Flowers lives in Astoria