



Ghost Rider: The Story of Seth Drew Scout, 1st Cavalry US Army

A short story about Mustangs, love, loss and moving forward with purpose.

By Albin Guillot, III

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Part I: I'm Glad I Didn't Cancel

Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American philosopher who experienced infinite grief said : “ the past has slipped beyond our influence and the future is outside our knowing. To be happy and fruitful, we must engage with right now.

Day 1 Mustang Car Show Volunteer Houston, TX

My previous volunteer efforts have revolved around food and providing food to those less fortunate. That included a Saturday with my daughter's 4th grade class at the Fish and Loaves Soup Kitchen and at a famous basketball player's Annual Thanksgiving mega event held at the Toyota Center. These were certainly worthwhile causes and provided a wonderful sense of satisfaction and gratitude after both experiences. My Mustang volunteer experience was completely different in the sense that it was a hobby, an event that I wanted to be a part of to support Pony nation and attend my first big car show. My

Facebook Mustang group had a post requesting volunteers for an upcoming 4-day Mustang

car show; offering a free T-shirt, meal voucher and entry into the event for those that volunteered. It seemed like a fair trade for an 8-hour shift at the track to assist with ticketing, parking and merchandise sales. I signed up for two consecutive days for the morning shift. Prior to the event, I had almost cancelled my participation and I'm so glad that I didn't. The weather was beautiful and right away I knew I had made the right decision and was enjoying my duties; primarily assisting the incoming Mustangs with their designated spots for parking based on track experiences. The roar of the Coyote engine is music to my ears. Day 1 of the event was track day on a road course outside Houston. To watch a line of all Mustangs, fly around that track at high speeds was a pure pleasure. And then to get up close to the cars and talk to the drivers was definitely a perk of my volunteer position. I met people that drove across the country, some solo, for fellowship with like-minded enthusiasts. People from all different demographics were represented and I had a front row seat to soak up all the good vibes. At the end of my shift I helped the event organizers, who were 1st class, break down items for the next event and that was a wrap for Day 1. I was smiling all the way back home thinking about my day and all the experiences that I witnessed. As well as how much I learned and how much there is to learn about cars. This was my first exposure to car enthusiasts, and it left me wanting more.

Looking forward to Day 2.

Day 2

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On Day 2 the event moves to an oval track. Another new venue for me and a new experience. In fact, the drive there took me down roads I had not yet seen before and this doesn't happen too frequently considering I've been in Htown since the 1970s. The energy of businesses old and new starting their day at sunrise made for a pleasant drive. Let me mention something that happens prior to a breakthrough, or a new level, so you can be on the lookout. If you're not in the prepared and receiving frame of mind, then you'll miss it.

There is a saying: New Level, New Devil. You see, prior to that I could have let something minor and immaterial put me in a non-receiving state of mind. It really was minor, and we shouldn't sweat the small stuff as it's been said. We've all let things bother us, things get under our skin. That's life. It wasn't a big deal, and I laughed it off internally. So let me tell you what occurred.

During a brief slow patch, I ask another "volunteer" what brings them out here for the event and I'm expecting a similar response as received from other volunteers such as being a Mustang fan. That person says: "nope I'm a Chevy fan. I'm here for Money!" I'm thinking, did I miss the email about compensation? I guess I shouldn't have blown off the training calls. That person said I applied for this position on a job web site. Suddenly, my mind calculates the following: the same task, at the same time getting paid while I'm not. *Is the joke on me? Am I the only volunteer? Sucker ha ha.* These were the crazy thoughts entering my head. Out of nowhere these tiny spears of negativity start to pierce my mental shield.

Why should I let something so trivial bother me even just a little? Because I'm human.

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Our minds can go down these false paths that can be very harmful to us. As soon as they start creeping in, you squish them and deflect them away. Preferably, you boost your mental immune system, and they never get past your barrier. These are things that can be taught. I'm living proof and can guide you to your full potential. There are proven methods to better control, manage the greatest supercomputer in the world: your brain. So, I laughed it off and reminded myself of all the ***non-monetary benefits*** I'm receiving and that working 4 days straight, 12 + hours was not of interest to me. The objective of this endeavor was never about money; I had to remind my brain of this. Guard your thoughts like you would a pot of gold. Methods are needed to redirect negative thoughts that show up internally or the ones you're exposed to externally. Your job is to control the most important real estate that exists: the space between your two ears. This applies to grief as well. Grief can seem to come in waves and appear overpowering. I'm about to introduce you to a family that, unfortunately, has experienced tremendous heartache.

During my break, I went to my truck to get bottled water from my ice chest, and I noticed this amazing memorial painting on this 6th generation Mustang that was parked next to me. It wasn't there when I arrived earlier in the gigantic grassy parking area or I would have noticed it. As I look closer, I see the car hood has a tribute to a fallen soldier with the following: "In Honor of Specialist Seth Drew". The hood also included a black cowboy hat, American Flag and soaring eagle painted with such

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detail and skill that it grabbed and held your attention. As well on the sides of the car was painted Ghost Rider. This was a high-end paint job to say the least! I stood there for a moment, paid my respects to this fallen hero, took some pictures of the car and proceeded back to my volunteer shift thinking two more hours to go. This shift included a new person that I've not yet met. *I asked: "Are you getting paid too?"* He chuckled at my comment, and I could tell from the start we were going to get along just fine. We engage in a little small talk and continue to enjoy the symphony of American muscle V8 and the smell of burnt rubber. I introduce myself to Charles and he is likeable from the start. He has a smooth Texas drawl and friendly personality. The more he talks the more I want to listen. I told him I liked his name and to hear that name out loud again brought me a natural smile. He also knows cars. Charles is a retired *Ford Senior Master Technician* and on the weekends he's part of a racing team that competes on a short track in late model modifieds. The following story will depict Charles' character:

Charles went to look at a Mustang chassis for sale in the back of a farmer's barn and realized it was a much rarer, more valuable car than the farmer realized or that Charles was looking for. He let the farmer know this. Also, he could tell that the farmer was suffering from some slight cognitive decline, so he passed on the transaction. Charles didn't feel right about taking advantage of someone. The 3rd generation farmer was very grateful.

A few months later Charles gets a call from an acquaintance that tells him about a recent purchase of this rare mustang from a farmer. Charles says: "I know the car you're talking about, how much you pay for it?" His acquaintance spoke a number

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that was the ultimate lowball. *Charles shakes his head in disapproval and says: "you just ripped that old man off."* And when Charles told the story to me, it was 100% clear he wasn't upset that he had missed out on a large financial windfall but rather disapproval. It sure is refreshing to meet people with such high values and morals.

Then Charles tells me he brought his Mustang down and is competing in the car show. He lives near the panhandle, which is about 650 miles away. He said: "that's my Competition Orange Mustang GT Performance Package over there" and pointed to the Pony parked next to my truck. *I let him know* I was admiring his car and took a few pictures of it. I said the paint scheme was a wonderful tribute and that it made an impression on me as I'm sure it has with many others. He then proceeded to tell me the story of the loss of his son.

For some reason, I had it in my mind that it was a brother remembering a lost brother or a soldier remembering another soldier while serving together in combat. When Charles said that it was his son, it set me back. I offered my condolences and thanked his son & their family for all their service and incurring the ultimate sacrifice. The sunglasses hid my watery eyes while I'm listening to him tell me the story of love, loss & moving forward.

His son, Seth, bought a 1996 Mustang while in the Army as a project for him and his father to work on while on break. With the goal to be to turn it into a drag racing car. Seth served his country in the U.S. Army, where he was a 1st Cavalry Unit Scout. He was deployed in Afghanistan for 9 months before returning home to TX. After being

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home only a few months, and after being out earlier in the evening with a friend, the young soldier went back home and took his own life.

The pain of working on Seth's 1996 Mustang, without him, was too great to bear for Charles. So, in a difficult decision, he decided to sell the car. The car was sold to a buyer in a different county that was *several hours away from their hometown*.

A few months after the sale, Charles sees a Mustang that looks a lot like Seth's for sale two blocks away. He looks closer and it is the same car. What are the odds?

Charles doesn't initially mention seeing the car to his wife, Leslie, Seth's mother. A few days later while having morning coffee, Leslie simply asks Charles if he's seen the Mustang for sale a few blocks away and if that car is Seth's car? He said: "Yes, it was Seth's car." Leslie said: "*we have to buy it back because Seth put that car there for us to see it.*"

Charles purchased the car back and is fulfilling Seth's dream by building a drag racing shell with the 1996 chassis and has transferred the engine to a 2003 Mustang.

Charles then purchased a new 2015 Mustang and Leslie went to work on getting the custom paint job that would serve as a vessel to raise awareness for PTSD. Who ended up doing the artistic mastery? You'll want to hear the rest of the story. It's going to be hard to tell Momma No, especially more than once. When Momma calls....

End of Part I

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Part II: Family Love

"Every Individual has the power to change his or her material or financial status by first changing the nature of his or her beliefs." Napoleon Hill

She called him "Bubba", she was the only one. She was supposed to go into the military, and he was supposed to go to college. She never had a desire to go to college like her brother did. He was the straight A student, great in math and dreamed of being an astronaut. Charles had a heart to heart with him and laid out the facts: the money wasn't there for college except for the GI bill. She thought Bubba would be best suited for a technical position to use his talents, but the recruiter's job was to fill the positions needed at the time with mostly minds that are young and impressionable. War is not pretty!

With excitement the recruiter says: "Congratulations, your son is going to be a scout in the 1st Cavalry, US Army in Afghanistan". Leslie says: "What kinda job is that? Is that cooking, cleaning and administrative type duties?" The army recruiter replies: "Oh, no ma'am, he's going to see a lot of action on the front lines. Leslie has a sinking feeling in her stomach as she pleads with the recruiter to revoke the signed agreement. Seth steps in to break the awkward silence as he touches his mom's shoulder and says: "It's too late mom; we already signed the papers. I'm going to Afghanistan as a Scout, 1st Cavalry." Charles had not asked too many questions about what role Seth would be signing up for because he knew the rules and Leslie was always in denial that Seth was going to be a cook.

The 1st Cavalry Division ("First Team") is a combined arms division and is one of the most decorated combat divisions of the United States Army. It is based at Fort Cavazos, Texas. It was formed in 1921 and served during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, with the Stabilization Force in Bosnia, the Iraq War and the War in Afghanistan. The unit is unique in that it has served as a cavalry division, an infantry division, an air assault division and an armored division during its existence. 1st Cavalry Division Motto: "only for the brave".

The Cavalry in Movies

The U.S. Cavalry has played a significant role in American military history, and its impact can be seen in various forms of popular culture, including movies. From www.albenguillot.com

classic Westerns to modern war films, the cavalry has been a popular theme in movies for decades. Some examples include: "Dances with Wolves," (1990), "We Were Soldiers" (2002) and "Apocalypse Now" (1979).

Another modern war movie that features the U.S. Cavalry is "12 Strong" (2018), which tells the story of the first U.S. soldiers who were sent to Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks. The movie follows a group of U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers, including members of the U.S. Cavalry, as they work with local Afghan forces to defeat the Taliban. The movie portrays the U.S. Cavalry as a highly skilled and dedicated force, willing to risk their lives to protect their country and its interests.

As a Cavalry Scout, Seth would act as the eyes and ears on the field, gathering information about enemy positions, vehicles, weapons, and activity. He would determine whether to call for reinforcements and when to order a retreat. With the information he would gather, commanders could make informed decisions about how to move troops and where and when to attack.

The 1st Cavalry Division's scout role involves gathering intelligence and reconnaissance information to support combat operations. Cavalry Scouts are the "eyes and ears" on the battlefield, gathering information about enemy positions, movement, and activity. They also direct the employment of weapons systems against the enemy and assist with various tasks like navigation and security.

More than likely Seth was going to be one of the ones that would come home quiet. Leslie had made that mistake one time by asking him what happened over there, and Seth told her: "not to ever do that again." Kayla and Charles had learned that the quiet ones were quiet for a reason and not to ask them anything about their deployment. The ones that wanted to talk about deployment didn't experience the war the same as the ones that were quiet. It was the unwritten rule. One time Seth said: "there's stuff going on over there that you don't want to know."

In 2001, Leslie suffered a terrible automobile accident in Wyoming while not wearing her seatbelt. She was airlifted to the nearest trauma center which was in Montana. Kayla and Seth were with their biological Dad at the time because he and Leslie were in the process of getting divorced and under temporary visitation orders. The kids are rushed to the hospital to see their mom and Kayla sees her mother with tubes

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coming and going and she's in shock. Her father tells her: "you're never going to see your mom again, she's going to die." The kids' father was abusive to their mom and to them, thus a divorce with no chance of reconciliation.

Miraculously, Leslie recovers; however, she must relearn the most basic functions of her activities of daily living; all while finalizing her divorce. Under the loving care of her supervisor at the county fairgrounds where Leslie worked as an office clerk, she is released for her rehabilitation period. She and her two young children move in with her supervisor's family who manages the county fairgrounds. Within 6 months, she's back almost at full strength, Leslie works extra hard on physical therapy to get their own place and set an example. Her pace is relentless to not be a burden to her caring family, hosting her and to get the family their own place. This loving, caring couple is still in the family's life and Kayla considers them grandparents. Seth told his mother before he was deployed that : "" she was the toughest person he knew."

Leslie meets another man, gets engaged; however, doesn't marry the man. In 2008, Charles while visiting a friend in Wyoming on a fishing trip he is introduced to Leslie through their mutual friend. It's love at first sight and things move fast; too fast for a 14-year-old girl going through life's natural changes. She's not happy with the pace of this relationship and this one doesn't seem to want to go away; he's staying. Leslie and Charles get married in 2009.

The summer of 2009, the family moves to TX where Charles has obtained a promotion working on natural gas compressors. They time the move so the kids can have the summer to adjust to the new school and not interrupt their academic school year in Wyoming. Things are going fine, and the kids are adjusting to TX very well; even liking it.

After a couple of years of being called: "you" by Kayla. Charles decides to have a sit down with the young lady and says to Kayla the following: "you can call me Charles, Sir or Dad, please no more *You*. I'm committed to this family and I'm not going anywhere". She responds: "yes Sir". This goes on for a few years alternating between *Sir* and *Charles*, which is fine with him. While fishing for trout on Soda Dam in New Mexico, Kayla is having trouble with her fishing line and yells out: "Sir" and no response, then "Charles" and no response and then naturally it flowed out "*Dad*" and Kayla releases the words she's been patiently wanting to get out; Dad smiles ear to

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ear and rushes over to help his 16-year-old daughter untangle her fishing line. Kayla has always called him Dad since.

End of Part II