


Duty: A Father, His Son, and the Man Who Won the War

By Bob Greene

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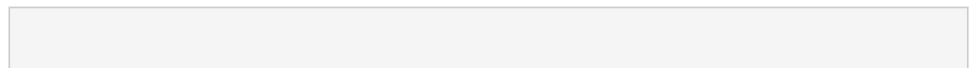
When Bob Greene went home to central Ohio to be with his dying father, it set off a chain of events that led him to knowing his dad in a way he never had before—thanks to a quiet man who lived just a few miles away, a man who had changed the history of the world.

Greene's father—a soldier with an infantry division in World War II—often spoke of seeing the man around town. All but anonymous even in his own city, carefully maintaining his privacy, this man, Greene's father would point out to him, had "won the war." He was Paul Tibbets. At the age of twenty-nine, at the request of his country, Tibbets assembled a secret team of 1,800 American soldiers to carry out the single most violent act in the history of mankind. In 1945 Tibbets piloted a plane—which he called *Enola Gay*, after his mother—to the Japanese city of Hiroshima, where he dropped the atomic bomb.

On the morning after the last meal he ever ate with his father, Greene went to meet Tibbets. What developed was an unlikely friendship that allowed Greene to discover things about his father, and his father's generation of soldiers, that he never fully understood before.

Duty is the story of three lives connected by history, proximity, and blood; indeed, it is many stories, intimate and achingly personal as well as deeply historic. In one soldier's memory of a mission that transformed the world—and in a son's last attempt to grasp his father's ingrained sense of honor and duty—lies a powerful tribute to the ordinary heroes of an extraordinary time in American life.

What Greene came away with is found history and found poetry—a profoundly moving work that offers a vividly new perspective on responsibility, empathy, and love. It is an exploration of and response to the concept of duty as it once was and always should be: quiet and from the heart. On every page you can hear the whisper of a generation and its children bidding each other farewell.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Riding the same wave of nostalgia and admiration that Tom Brokaw surfed in his acclaimed *The Greatest Generation* (1998), Chicago Tribune columnist Greene (*Chevrolet Summers*, *Dairy Queen Nights*) delivers a heartfelt tribute to his father's generation in this triangulated memoir. Called back to his hometown (Columbus, Ohio) to say good-bye to his dying father, Greene decides to seek out his father's longtime hero: an 83-year-old fellow WWII vet and Ohioan named Paul Tibbets. Tibbets was the man who, as a 29-year-old lieutenant colonel, piloted the *Enola Gay*, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Combining excerpts from his father's wartime journals, interviews with Tibbets and his own personal recollections, Greene pays homage to the ideals of his father and conveys successfully what WWII meant to men of that generation. Meanwhile, through his conversations with Tibbets, Greene comes to better understand his late father. Like the aging pilot, Greene realizes, his father felt that the freedoms these men had fought for in the war are unappreciated by today's younger generations, and, like Tibbets, his father was angry about postwar cultural changes. Regrettably, what is occasionally a touching salute by a grieving son is marred by credulousness and overly dramatic prose. Greene's admiration and respect for the pilot of the *Enola Gay* even manages to get in the way of his well-honed investigative skills: for example, he accepts with little follow-up Tibbets's assertion that he never had any regrets whatsoever about dropping the bomb. And Greene's relentlessly uncritical depictions of Tibbets's seemingly unreflective, unemotional and gruff persona, as well as his nostalgia for traditional values, wears thin.

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From Library Journal

A best-selling author and syndicated columnist for the Chicago Tribune, Greene recounts an unlikely chain of events that led from his father's death to friendship with his father's neighbor, the pilot of the famed *Enola Gay*.

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From [Booklist](#)

As his father's death approached, *Chicago Tribune* syndicated columnist Greene was forced to come to terms with their distant relationship. He found in another man, Paul Tibbets, the pilot who flew the atomic bomb to Hiroshima, someone who could help him understand his father's generation. Tibbets lived in obscurity in Greene's hometown, Columbus, Ohio. After 20 years of attempts to interview him, Greene got to meet Tibbets informally. That led to friendship and a chance to understand the reticence and the responsibility of Tibbets' and his father's generation. To Greene, his father seemed to be the archetypal man in the gray-flannel suit, a no-nonsense corporate worker who kept his nose to the grindstone, never complaining but never connecting either. Tibbets, like Greene's father, was a reticent man. But the fact that Greene was working a legitimate news and historical angle and that he and Tibbets weren't related helped ease communication between them. Tibbets' astonishing mission and unswerving responsibility in carrying it out symbolized for Greene the sense of duty of his father's generation. That sense of duty is also evident in the ruminations of Greene's father, excerpted from the taped oral history he left for his children, which are interspersed throughout Greene's narrative. Through his father's death and his friendship with Tibbets, Greene writes, he "realized anew that so many of us only now, only at the very end, are beginning to truly know our fathers and mothers." A touching look at parent-child relationships and the psychological distance that can grow between generations. *Vanessa Bush*

Users Review

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Carlos Garcia:

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