

3/26/13.....Well, did you know this about Dan Shelton?.....'63

Bridging the 1940's and 1950's at the Kott's Wolfe Creek Ranch outside of Fredericksburg. Beyond the last gate, the sound of a heavy breathing plow horse. Harnessed and hitched with his ears up and head down. Plow handles in his calloused hands is Hilmer Kott, a third generation German American immigrant. Today, Hilmer Kott and his plow horse are not alone in working these furrows. Close behind is his young grandson Danny, who is learning to be a working hand. Learning to cut and bale hay, picking and sacking corn, shearing sheep, and making sausage are skills he has already learned. But, today it's plowing, and as in the seed sack of all immigrant farmers is a mixed blend of Hope and Resolve. Young Danny is learning not to balk at a rock in the furrow, and that it's best to plow around a stump. Now a fifth generation German American and Texan of the Kott blood line, Danny is inhaling the plow dust and storing that hope and resolve in his young heart. Maybe it's the planting and growing resolve in those dusty furrows that guides Danny to steel himself in his LEE athletic career. By his own words he says. "I stood ready every play on every day, but never started a varsity football game." We should all stand so tall. There is a selfless caliber of guys who always stood ready for their teammates. Always ready! It might be a "too young in life" lesson of making the best of what you can do and what you can control. Maybe, Friday Night Heroes are often defined by those teammates, who are 'early in the week' Scrimmage Heroes. It's worthy of our thought and gratitude.

Early in his boyhood, Danny is bitten by a sense of wonderment and maybe even wandering the world. His Uncle Billy romanticized life on the high seas and foreign lands. The exhilaration of life on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, peppered with terms like catapult, engine thrust and tail hook could mesmerize a wide eyed kid. This story teller is a sailor with a yellow eyed Black Panther tattoo crawling from his shoulder to his wrist. You know that Panther, the one with his claws digging into the sailor's sweaty and muscled arm. The tales of a sailor are at work in Danny's mind!

Danny is Navy bound, and in the Naval Reserves during his last 2 years of high school. He graduates from LEE, and a fellow seaman encourages him, "Hey Shelton, sign up for the tin can Navy, where the real salts are, get on a destroyer." Sea bag in tow, he is on a fast train to Mayport Naval Base, Florida. It's, "Request Permission to Come Aboard Sir", responded with "Very Well", then a shout out "Yes Sir". Dan is on deck of the Newman K. Perry. A Destroyer!

Like a dream come true, they are headed for the Azores, streamed through Straits of Gibraltar and on to Barcelona. Off to Italy, and then during war games there is an accidental tragedy at sea. They are involved in a collision with the USS Shangri-La, an attack carrier. In a blink, his two years had passed; he has sailed over 42,000 nautical miles, and had seen most the Eastern world before he was old enough to vote.

Longing for home and for a new direction, he enrolls at Southwest Texas State. He meets his future wife, Kathleen, and then he hunkers down on his studies for the first time in his life. Dan graduates with a degree in Political Science with a little Economics on the side. He fared well!

He has learned these subjects so well, that he decides to teach them at Sam Rayburn, then Holmes High School in SA. But, the boy can't sit still! His roving eye catches a Xerox logo on a building off Loop 410. He tells himself, "I can line up with those Fancy Suits." He applies, and then stays on the sideline for 4 months, before they bring him aboard at Xerox. He is off to Sales and 'Suit' School. They put him in the game, and in his first year of employment, he is in the Top 20 of Xerox Sales Force in the U.S.A. Hope and Resolve again!

After 5 years of this performance at Xerox, he gets recruited by Kodak. A 17 year ride with Kodak took him to Houston, Rochester, Oklahoma City, and then that longing for home hit him again. Dan spent half his Kodak career in Rochester, NY with a focus on sales planning and then Kodak's corporate staff. He left that corporate staff job for District Manager in Oklahoma City, and then the San Antonio District was offered. He couldn't refuse!

That round trip ticket back to San Antonio eventually ends up being a round trip ticket back to teaching high school. His belief in new beginnings takes him to Reagan and Churchill for 5 years apiece. He is back at shepherding his students through the seamless fields of Economics and Politics. Upon retirement, the school newspaper article is titled "Dan Shelton: A Teacher for Heroes". The staff writer focuses on Dan's passion for teaching Economics while integrating politics; his dedication to the welfare and future of his students; and that he shares the value of hope in all they learn and strive for.

Today, Dan immerses himself in Genealogy. You might recall that he is a fifth generation German American. He is also a ninth generation English American. The tapestry of his lineage weaves through the American Revolution and the Texas Revolution. Those Shelton Sons of the Colonies served with Washington at Valley Forge. That legacy for his family leaves him with research yet to do.

.                   \*One of Ours, Dan Shelton, Roots, Resolve, and Hope\*

