



“Gauvin’s struggle is lucidly conveyed—he paints a painfully vivid picture of both the horrors of war and the grim consequences. This memoir is an instructive and affecting remembrance. A powerful war account, eye-opening and moving.” —Kirkus Reviews

Ray Gauvin is a Vietnam Veteran and prominent business and community leader in the State of Maine. He has a Bachelor’s degree in Accounting and Business Management. Born to a blended Canadian and American family of Acadian descent, Ray grew up navigating between speaking French at home and English at school. While in the army, he received the Army Commendation Medal and was recommended to receive the Bronze Star. He learned later in life that he had also been battling with dyslexia.

He and his wife Sandy created the Gauvin Lighthouse Fund and the Gauvin Family Scholarship. Currently, they are co-founders of the Aroostook Aspirations Foundation, a nonprofit that helps first-generation students complete a college education and move into a successful career. They have two children and a grandson and live in northern Maine with their two dogs, Bo and Tucker.

A Soldier's Heart is a moving and expansive memoir by Vietnam Veteran Ray Gauvin. The story takes us from the French Ghetto of Presque Isle, Maine, and the descendants of the Acadians, to military bases all over the country, and to Vietnam and back. Gauvin takes an unflinching look at life on the ground in Saigon and the horrors of the unusual and classified military posting of WDMET. The ingenuity and work ethic he built to help support his family as a kid got him through both the loss of his father and the war. But afterwards, pushing himself to the edge with striving and responsibility became a compulsion that staved off the nightmare.

Silent about the classified mission of WDMET, even to his family, Gauvin wrestled on his own with the effects of Agent Orange and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He became an entrepreneur, a businessman, and a philanthropist, but PTSD kept him embroiled in an internal battle between his obsession to work, his drive for success, a search for peace of mind, and thoughts of suicide. But after fifty years of running from the past, he turned about-face, and began the journey of remembering and healing.

This book is a must read for anyone seeking an inside look at one man’s road to Vietnam, and WDMET. It also gives incredible insight into the history of francophone communities in Northern Maine.

“The war and its procession of fallen soldiers took a psychological toll on Gauvin, shaking his faith and upending his worldview. Gauvin also discusses the toll that his traumas took on others, including members of his family. But the upset he cause for his children and wife leads to another narrative shift: he recollects how she broaches the topic of divorce, which convinced him to make a change. A final shift in the book broadens it beyond Gauvin’s own story to comment on the widespread nature of the trauma that soldiers endure.

A Soldier's Heart is an affecting memoir about the traumas that war inflicts.”—Joseph S. Pete, *Foreword* Clarion Reviews

BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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A Soldier's Heart

The 3 Wars of Vietnam

by ■ Ray Gauvin

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"In a generation of men and women that answered the call to serve our country by serving in Vietnam, *A Soldier's Heart: The Three Wars of Vietnam* captures the compelling story of one man's life, interrupted and radically changed by the war. It is an honest, heartwarming, haunting, gut-wrenching and redemptive saga that covers the tapestry of Ray Gauvin's life from childhood and rich heritage to coping with growing up and adjusting to life's complexities. In stark contrast to this is his military service, the horrors of war and the life-long struggles in trying to live and understand what he experienced. The things that shape our lives either help us or hurt us. How we deal with them reflects an outcome of turmoil or peace. No one who has experienced war remains unaffected, but this book helps us understand there is hope and healing, and life goes on. A must read for anyone who served in war." - Bill Honaker, Author, *The Dead Were Mine*

"There have been many excellent books about the Vietnam War and its impact on those that served. Ray Gauvin has not only added to those works but he has filled a gap in the literature with a very vivid account of his Tour of Duty in Vietnam and its lasting effects on him, which military veterans and their families will relate to.

Whilst Hollywood has shaped much of the world's view of the war and special operations veterans have recounted incredible feats of gallantry, it's Ray Gauvin's account that pierces like a javelin with a unique picture of his incredibly difficult work for a medical unit (WDMET) that many scholars of war haven't heard of. Ray's assignment in Vietnam is hard to comprehend and the long-lasting emotional damage that it cause him is clear and pulls at the heartstrings, but his work there, whilst almost unbearable for him, has since helped save lives in both military and civilian environments." -Brett Saunders, Vietnam Gear

"*A Soldier's Heart* is a fine story, and well-told. It serves an important role in shedding light on the men who worked in mortuaries and their own form of PTSD that many faced after coming home from Vietnam. It is an honest story showing a veteran facing many life challenges after the war and ultimately defeating them and coming out at the other end as a generous, respected citizen known for an over-all life well lived." -Bill McCloud, *VVA Magazine*

"Ray Gauvin shows unequivocally that you do not have to be on the front lines to experience the horrors of war and its effect on the human psyche. Trapped in a job no unwilling person should have to face, seeing day in and day out the casualties of war, the mangled bodies of our soldiers, the author is forced to see visions that can't easily be unseen later. His shocking assignment in Vietnam certainly set the stage for a PTSD environment for even the most hardened soldier, let alone someone new to combat. When exposed to such horrific images, such as he was, you can't ever unsee them. They are seared into your brain forever. You can only find help to deal with them. You also see how PTSD affects not only the veteran, but also the family, friends and business associates. You don't need to be injured in war to feel its effects." - COL (Ret) Judy Carroll

"Of the millions of the United States service personnel very few have written biographical capsules of their pre-military life, wartime activity and post war experience. The relatively few exceptions are usually the work of officers, frequently field grade with well-known famous names. Enlisted ranks writers are poorly represented. This book is an exception to that circumstance and additionally discusses in some detail a military unit, Wound Data and Munitions Effectiveness Team (WDMET) completely unknown to the general public and also to most of the military. This book is unique in many ways: it provides a personal biography of the author; it deals with the work of a clandestine military organization defining purpose and application; it deals with war zone post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)." - MAJ. C. Darrell Lane, MD, Major MC USA

"Ray Gauvin's new book *A Soldier's Heart* is a must read because it is an informative book for people of all ages. It will educate our young people and intrigue the old. Ray's book in the beginning was a walk down memory lane for me as I grew up in Ray's neighborhood and we were friends. Interwoven into this narrative is Ray's very interesting American and Canadian background. As I read on, however, I quickly lost my heady feelings of memory lanes as I encountered the realities of the Vietnam War in this youth narrative and its impact on Ray's life and that of other young men of this terrible era. However, his story is not all doom and gloom because he didn't let it become that. His story is infused with his sense of humor which can generate a laugh for the reader even during these trying times as a young soldier. Ray truly has a soldier's heart!" - Ms. Susan Bailey, College Professor, Childhood Friend

"*A Soldier's Heart* is a firsthand account of the lifelong struggle to heal the less understood wounds of war. From a strong rural upbringing through the transition of boy to man we gain detailed insight into the preparation of Soldiers and the sacrifice that comes with service to country. Ray Gauvin recounts a truly traumatic experience in Vietnam and the struggles of living with the resulting wounds. His resilience, loving family, and willingness to seek help most certainly saved his life." - LTC (RET) Greg LaFrancois, Medical Service Corps, US Army; CEO Northern Lights AR Gould Hospital

"A must read for those who lived through the Vietnam War and after. The life changing experiences of a growing boy to a soldier, husband, father and successful businessman are well documented in this heart felt and personal memoir of a soldier's soldier. As readers, we can only appreciate and sympathize with their struggles through life after their experience of war. Ray was one of the lucky ones who relied on his instincts, and a very understanding and loving wife to get him through the nightmares that followed him through his life. To quote Clausewitz in his military analysis entitled *On War*, 'we are destined to relive the horrors of war if we don't take the time remember our history'. What we do have is the history, what we are lacking is the commitment to do something about it for the hearts of our soldiers." - COL Don Tardie (RET), FA ARNG

"How do you reconcile the before and after when you've experienced the trauma of war? With an expert eye, Ray Gauvin conducts a thorough examination of his own life experiences and the world events that impacted them. He prods, he documents, and, in the end, he bears witness to what can be hardest to understand and make whole: the heart of a soldier." - Rachel Rice, Marketing and Communications Director, University of Maine at Presque Isle

"This book is such a value to me and will be to any veteran that may have participated in the ravages of war as they were just 'doing their duty' to serve their country. I found myself reliving my life through my junior and high school years in Presque Isle as Ray guided me through my memories of so many similar experiences in my schooling. His descriptions of post-Vietnam PTSD were so vivid and real that I was tearing up many times as I read." - Scott Smith, Captain, U.S. Marine Corps

"Beyond studying the fascinating life of the Gauvins, *A Soldier's Heart* provides a vivid look at the Vietnam War and the experience of young men facing conscription-induced military service. It also studies the post-war consequences of wartime trauma and how one family survived PTSD and used its lessons to help provide a lifetime of service to its community, and especially, to benefit a newer generation of young men and women." - Donald N. Zillman, Emeritus Professor of Law at the University of Maine Law School