

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Preserving the best memories

Many of us who have lived a long time have cherished memories of specific times that stick with us over the decades.

Few of us make the effort to memorialize them in a book, as Frank Warner has recently done in his 380-page oeuvre, *Tumbleweed Forts*.

Warner, 69, is a former member of Nader's Raiders, reporter for the Mercury and the Allentown Morning Call, and manager of North Coventry Township, where he's lived the last 35 years.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

He spent his childhood as an Army brat.

Army brats, as they like to call themselves, are children of military parents who move frequently and maintain a nomadic culture unique to the Armed Forces.

As the son of a master sergeant in the U.S. Army, Warner moved 13 times in the first 13 years of his life, to bases in Germany, France, and in the United States from New Jersey to California.

It was not until 1966, when Warner's father retired from the Army and took a job with AT&T in Pottstown, that Warner, his mother, and three brothers had real permanence in their lives.

Warner graduated from St. Pius in 1970 and DeSales University in 1974. From there he moved to Washington to work for Ralph Nader.

He returned to Pottstown in 1978, where he joined The Mercury as a reporter and has stayed in the area ever since.

But of all places he's lived, the one that seemed most like home was Fort Huachuca in Arizona, just north of the Mexican border, where he lived from 1960 to 1963, age 7 to 10.

"It was an usual time," Warner told me. "We had the Kennedy years and Camelot, we put our first astronauts into space, and Fort Huachuca had vast open spaces we could explore as children." His father was working on drones in the early years of their development.

Warner, who has remained close to his brothers, said every time they got together, the conversation would inevitably drift to their years at Fort Huachuca.

Three decades ago, Warner decid-

ed to write a book about those years, mostly for his family to enjoy, but he only found time to finish it after he retired from the Morning Call three years ago.

He self-published it and advertises it on Amazon.

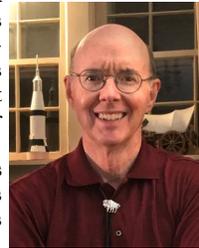
"I've written about 6,000 news stories in my career, but this is the most difficult thing I've ever done."

The book has detailed episodes about his teachers and classmates, playing baseball, learning the trumpet for the band, exploring the mountains around Fort Huachuca, including a search for gold, and being rescued from drowning in a lake by a friend.

Tumbleweed Forts is written from the perspective of a child. The frequent dialogues are as faithful as possible to Warner's recollections, aided by his brothers. Because he started the book in the 1990s when his parents were still alive, he was able to search their memories as well.

My wife, who taught elementary school for 38 years, thinks today's fifth graders would enjoy it, as well as their grandparents.

Why do I find this book so interesting? I'll discuss that Thursday.



FRANK WARNER

