

# Remembering my brother Dan

My mother and dad named him Daniel Robert. I don't know where the Daniel came from. The Robert was from my mother's brother, who had drowned while collecting bird eggs for the California Academy of Sciences.

He avoided using Daniel. It was always Danny, or Dan. It was important to him. He was two-and-a-half years and a day younger than I was when he was born.

What he did, he did well. He made some excellent furniture when he was in high school, intricately, skillfully put together. The woodworking he did then has stood the test of time.

In high school he took up tumbling. He did that well, too. I could never master tumbling, though I tried, after he was already a graceful performer, doing somersaults and cartwheels. He made a pair of stilts. His toes were six or seven feet off the ground. He was lucky he didn't break his neck.

Ray and I both enlisted. We were regular army, but we neither of us were soldiers in the spit and polish sense. I once scored bullseyes at the rifle range, only to realize I had been firing on the wrong targets. I went into the Signal Corps. The world was a safer place after basic training because I no longer dealt with weapons.

Dan was drafted, and he was never stationed outside California, but he was the one who drove the tanks at Camp Irwin, and loved it. Then he was assigned to the Presidio Honor Guard

## The Reactor

Paul Azevedo



Drill Team. The group spent its time marching in parades, winning national awards, polishing chrome helmets and boots 'til they were mirrors, cutting the backs out of starched shirts to make the sharpest soldiers you ever saw. Dan fired volleys at funerals, had his picture taken with movie stars like Audie Murphy and Leigh Snowden, appeared at the openings of movies. While Ray spent his leave time in Japan, and I managed short trips to Munich, Rome, Venice, Paris, Berne and Turin, he grabbed a bus at the Golden Gate Bridge and was home in Santa Rosa in an hour, hanging out with his high school buddies.

After his tour at the Presidio ended, he went to work as a carpenter. As he did most things, he did that well. He found only one girl, but he chose well there, too. They raised two boys and two girls.

Dan loved the outdoors. He got a buck or two most years, usually with his patented neck shot that wasted no venison. One year, not long ago, he got a turkey, predictably with a neck shot.

He bought an acre of land outside Santa Rosa. He built a fine home to raise his family, installed his own well, planted trees.

He was a master carpenter, but he was a good deal better than that. He was the one assigned to finish the houses, install the hardware, make sure everything was right and ready for the buyer. As he was a spit-and-polish soldier, so he was a spit-and-polish carpenter. He knew his stuff.

I'm a strong advocate of gun control. He was a proud member of the National Rifle Association. That wasn't the only thing we argued about. When Ray and Dan and I got together, there were always arguments, but never cross words.

He woke up a couple of Saturdays ago feeling rotten. He finally gave in and went to the hospital, where an aneurysm in a large artery burst. The doctors and nurses did their best, but on Lincoln's Birthday morning, he was gone.

He was my brother, and I loved him.



2-21-96

## Dan

My mother and dad named him Daniel Robert. I don't know where the Daniel came from. The Robert was from my mother's brother, who had drowned while collecting birds eggs for the California Academy of Sciences.

He avoided using Daniel. It was always Danny, or Dan. It was important to him. He was two and a half years and a day younger than I was when he was born. What he did he did well. He made some excellent furniture when he was in high school, intricately, skilfully put together. The woodworking he did then has stood the test of time.

In high school he took up tumbling. He did that well too. I could never master tumbling, though I tried, after he was already a graceful performer, doing somersaults and cartwheels. He made a pair of stilts. His toes were five or six feet off the ground, and he was lucky he didn't break his neck.

Ray and I both enlisted. We were regular army, but we neither of us were soldiers in the spit and polish sense. I once scored bullseyes at the rifle range, only to realize I had been firing on the wrong targets. I went into the Signal Corps. The world was a safer place after basic training because I no longer dealt with weapons.

Dan was drafted, and he was never stationed outside California, but he was the one who drove the tanks at Camp Irwin, and loved it. Then he was assigned to the Presidio Honor Guard Drill Team. He spent his time marching in precision drills, polishing chrome helmets and boots til they were mirrors, cutting the backs out of starched shirts to make the sharpest soldier you ever saw. He fired volleys at funerals, had his picture taken with movie stars like Audie Murphy and Leigh Snowden, appeared at the openings of movies. While Ray spent his leave time in Japan, and I managed short trips to Munich, Rome, Venice, Paris, Berne and Turin, he grabbed a bus at the Golden Gate Bridge and was home in Santa Rosa in an hour, hanging out with his high school buddies.

After his tour at the Presidio ended, he went to work as a carpenter, and, as he did most things, he did that well. He found only one girl, but he chose well there too. They raised two boys and two girls.

Dan loved the outdoors. He got a buck or two most years, usually with his patented neck shot that wasted no venison. One year not long ago he got a turkey, predictably with a neck shot.

He bought an acre of land outside Santa Rosa. He built a fine home, installed his own well, planted trees.

He was a journeyman carpenter, but he was a good deal better than that. He was the one assigned to finish the houses, install the hardware, make sure everything was right and ready for the buyer. As he was a spit-and-polish soldier, so he was a spit-and-polish carpenter. He knew his stuff.

I'm a strong advocate of gun control. He was a proud member of the National Rifle Association. That wasn't the only thing we argued about. When Ray and Dan and I got together, there were always arguments, but never cross words. He woke up a couple of Saturdays ago feeling rotten. He finally gave in and went to the hospital, where an aneurysm in a large artery burst. The doctors and nurses did their best, but on Lincoln's Birthday morning, he was gone. He was my brother, and I loved him.