

Jun 12, '44

Dear Gary,

Did you lose your finger during the great war? I want to know. All of us kids heard your trench story so many times that we all can recite it perfectly. Your heroism is what pushed me to sign up. We all looked up to you. Gary the barber was the strongest guy we all knew. I compared my father to you.

The funny thing is, that my father told me that the whole story is made up. I asked around to some of the other older folks and they said the same thing. Ms. Infusino at the diner said that you lost your finger in an accident trying to fix something.

So what is it? Did you actually kill a bunch of Huns or not?

I don't really need to ask now that I've been in the service. Parts of your story just aren't adding up.

I feel like the curtain was pulled to reveal the great wizard to be nothing more than a liar. I didn't learn about this until it was too late. I couldn't talk to you before I had to leave for basic training. There was a long train ride followed by a bus. I had hours to think about it all. I can't lie. It stuck around in my head. I thought about how you motivated a lot of men to join up and how you should bear some responsibility if any of them die.

Time heals all wounds I guess. Five months or so and a long boat ride to parts unknown and my anger has eased. It probably has more to do with having bigger things to think about than forgiveness. I'll be landing soon somewhere in Europe. New York will be a distant memory. Your barber shop is all but forgotten.

I've got an idea that will solve two problems when I return. Problems? Well, the first one will be the moment that I confront you about the lie. Word will get out pretty quick amongst the kids that your war stories are lies. The second problem is that you will lose everything that you've talked about over the years. If everything is a lie, what will you say to pass the time?

Here's my solution. I'm going to come back and confront you. We're going to clear the air and forgiveness will be doled out. Before the kids can even leave to tell the truth about your stories,

they're going to hear mine. I'm going to tell my battle stories and wow them so much that they forget to tell their friends about your lies.

That's not the end. You're going to listen to my story as I tell it over and over the rest of the day. Then we'll get some of the other fellas to come in the next day and the next day after that to tell their stories. You're going to listen to them and memorize them so that you can tell the kids about the heroes in their neighborhood.

Make sense?

Instead of one story over and over again about something that never happened, you'll have a whole bunch of stories that you can use to entertain your clients. I'll see if the other fellas have some pictures that they'd be willing to give up to hang on your walls. Heck, maybe we'll have some loot that we've picked up along the way. That can be your proof.

Until then,

Bob Durango