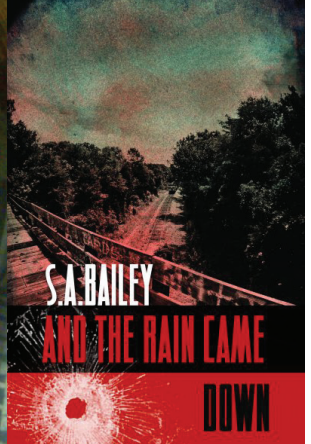


AND THE RAIN CAME

How a local war veteran used his love of writing to save his life

DOWN



BY CHALISA MADSEN

IN THE SUMMER OF 2002, Airborne Infantry and Long Range Surveillance Specialist 4th Class, Seth Anderson Bailey, jumped from a plane during a routine training mission. Little did he know that his life was about to take a turn for the worse. During the rough landing, Bailey collided with a tree.

He knew that he had done some damage, but he tried toughing it out at first. "I had old football injuries, and accumulative injuries from the totality of my lifestyle," explained Bailey. "But this just kept getting worse. I was literally in pain all the time."

Bailey turned to alcohol to help numb the pain.

It took the Army a whole year to figure out what was wrong after he kept getting shuttled to the end of the line. It turned out that he had broken his back in three different places, cracking the vertebra, and needed a spinal fusion.

"People telling you that you're faking it or that you couldn't possibly hurt that bad and deal with the pain for as long as you did was wearing me out," explained Bailey. "It was that loss of respect, or at least the perceived loss of respect, that literally drove me crazy."

Before being able to meet with the Med Board and be medically retired, Bailey's discharge date came

around and he returned home to Athens. But like so many soldiers coming home, he had a hard time adapting to civilian life.

After being home only a few weeks, tragedy struck. His father, noted AHS Coach Greg Bailey, passed away suddenly from a massive stroke.

"I had a lot of really bad stuff happen all at once," said Bailey. "I decided to re-enlist with the Army, along with all of my friends, but once the recruiter saw my file and heard about my injuries, he asked if I was crazy. He said I should have waited for the Med Board, put in for my VA disability, and then taken the money and run."

After being turned down by the Army, Bailey was lost. "All I had ever wanted to be was a soldier," he explained. "And here I get to watch my friends re-enlist and head back downrange. I got angry."

During this period of his life, Bailey tried going to college, and dropped out twice. He struggled with alcoholism to deal with the pain of his injuries. "At home, I kept reinjuring myself, because I could not do the stuff I used to," said Bailey. "I was in pain trying to do things a normal 25 year old guy should



be able to do. I just felt like all of my friends that re-enlisted were carrying my weight, since I wasn't able to."

The icing on the cake was when Bailey got his disability letter in the mail, which listed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and his psychological profile, but did not include his traumatic back injury. "I remember just laughing when I read it," said Bailey. "My mom was looking at me like I was crazy, but I just laughed. What else could I do?"

After this string of bad luck, Bailey was forced to reevaluate his life. "Nothing I wanted or ever wanted to do or be was in the cards for me anymore," he explained. "I tried my absolute best, but we don't always get what we want. I've learned that life is mainly about Plan B's." He laughed. "Maybe that's what we should teach kids: Have a good Plan B, because you just never know."

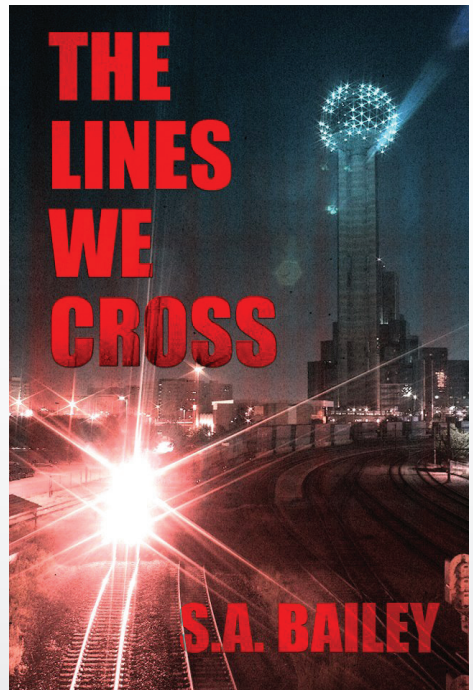
After being in pain for so long, Bailey said something just twisted. He bounced back and forth between jobs, from security in the rougher parts of Dallas to driving cabs, and spent the better part of a decade drowning the pain with alcohol. "I just decided that I was tired of being in pain," explained Bailey. "I was tired of being physically and emotionally in pain."

There were two major events that started to get his life back on track. The first was his beloved grandmother being diagnosed with Alzheimer's and needing 24 hour care, a task which Bailey happily obliged. "Moving in with my grandmother and taking care of her really made me put someone in front of myself," he said. "It really helped me start getting my stuff straight."

The second thing that Bailey credits with saving his life has four legs and big, brown eyes. "It was New Year's Day in 2008, and I was in town helping my mom with stuff around the house. I ran to Wal-Mart, and as I was going through the parking lot, I saw a couple with a sign that said 'Free Dogs,'" said Bailey. "Of course I stopped to look because they were so cuddly and amazing. That's when I saw him. Instead of jumping around, trying to get my attention and being excited like the other puppies, he just sat back and looked at me with indifference. Like, 'Who do you think you are?' I was in love. Murphy has been my best good friend and running buddy ever since."

Murphy has quite the fan following, himself. "I'll bet half of my Facebook friends only follow me for Murph," he laughed.

Another life-changing event was waiting in the wings around this time, as well. Having always been a writer and loving to read, Bailey decided to try his hand at writing a book. "The whole time down-range I was writing. I wrote poems, short stories, and scenes," explained Bailey. "I had a writing teacher in



High School, Cheryl Hicks, who is an amazing artist and really helped inspire me to write. I even wrote during the darkest times of my life. I just had this stuff in my mind that needed to get out.”

Bailey doesn’t remember the exact moment that he decided he had enough material to put into a book, but in 2008 he started feeling out the market. “It was around the beginning of the self-publishing craze, and people didn’t really know what to think of it,” explained Bailey. “I think today there’s a bit more respect for self-published authors. But not back then.” Bailey kept getting turned down by publishers, but didn’t lose hope. “I was told that no one would publish it. No one wanted to go out on a limb for a new writer with a rough storyline during wartimes.”

Finally Bailey found a small local publishing company in Dallas that was willing to give him a shot.

In Bailey’s first book, “And The Rain Came Down,” readers are introduced to Jeb Shaw, an Iraqi war veteran coming back to his East Texas home of Athens and struggling with adapting to civilian life while dealing with his demons. It doesn’t take a genius to figure out that Bailey’s inspiration was himself, and his character was dealing with the same exact issues that he was facing. “Jeb is tougher, probably more interesting, and in much better shape than I am,” laughed Bailey. “But I would say Jeb is a combination of wish fulfillment and an ode to the man I wished I



was. I wanted to write something from my perspective; a character that was imperfect and human.”

Bailey, as well as his alter-ego, Jeb, have a huge following on Facebook and social media. His books are on the fast track to becoming cult hits, and first editions of his book are hard to find. There has been recent buzz about selling the movie rights for the series to Hollywood. When asked which actor would do Jeb justice on the big screen, Bailey laughed, “The closest I can come up with to play him would be Tom Hardy in Bane mode.”

Bailey’s original intention was to make Jeb a little crazier with each book, but instead both character and author evolved together. As the series progressed, Jeb is getting sure of himself and more confident. Much like the man behind the character.

Seth Anderson Bailey is definitely finding himself and his place in this world. After struggling with alcoholism, anger, and disability for the better part of a decade, Bailey is getting to where he wants to be. The third book in the Jeb Shaw series, “Edge of the City,” is scheduled to come out by the end of this year. Book 1, “And The Rain Came Down,” is set to re-release next month and book two, “The Lines We Cross,” can be purchased on Amazon. Both books in the series have a coveted, five-star rating.

Bailey’s story should be a beacon of hope in this world for warriors coming back from the battlefield with PTSD and injuries, struggling to find their place again in society. Because like Bailey so eloquently put it, life is all about “Plan B’s.”

