

Grant County Herald

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In 1950, a doctor in Duluth, Minnesota, wrote in his medical file that a four-year old boy had been admitted to the hospital with a "rather severe behavior problem."
"This is," the doctor notes, "a broken home and the mother-child relationship is not good."

That boy was Terry Degner. He had been shuffled from one nesting arrangement to another for all of his short life. First, he had lived with his grandparents on their rustic farmstead in the heart of Minnesota's north woods, then with his intellectually disabled mother and a mostly absent alcoholic father, and finally with a boorish relative. In spite of a dysfunctional family life, he had been relatively happy. The real problems started when Terry's mother dropped him, and his two younger siblings, off at a Duluth orphanage. A week later, they ran away to find their mother and Terry ended up at the hospital in a straight jacket Thus began the author's journey of triumph over multiple misfortunes.

Eight years later, while lying on the banks of a river on his adoptive parents' farm south of Wendell, Minnesota, and inspired by the many Dickens novels he had read, Terry promised God he would share his story with the world.

My Brave Little Man is the fulfillment of that promise.

Terry A. Degner, a 1964 graduate of Elbow Lake/Wendell High School, takes us back in time to the trauma-filled years before his adoption, in his newly released memoir.

One reviewer wrote: "My Brave Little Man is a captivatingly detailed account of T.A. Degner's early life, beginning with " his sometimes bitter, sometimes sweet, rural childhood and ending in a Dickensian description of the years he and his siblings spent in a Duluth orphanage. The story profiles an era in a setting that has not been well documented in either fiction or memoir until now. The author spins tales of his transformation from a sweet little blond cherub to a strong-willed school-age rebel. Often funny, sometimes hair-raising, it is the inspirational

story of a vigorous spirit meeting multiple challenges and emerging, though somewhat bruised, as essentially whole and strong."

His sister, Jean Haraldson from Elbow Lake, said, "There is a wide range of emotions and traumas displayed in My grave Little Man. It is a good example of how events witnessed during a child's important, formative years can affect them. Because of our age and having been adopted together, we had each other to keep the memories of the past alive, even names and actions of the children in the orphanage. We never forgot where we came from, and we even remembered some of the names of our biological family members. Thank you for sharing these memories with me, Terry."

Terry Degner, who now lives in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, is a husband, father, and grandfather of fifteen grandchildren. He is semi-retired, active in sports, and affectionately chasing after grandchildren. For over twenty-three years, he designed, wrote, directed, and edited hundreds of video, sound, and multimedia productions including children's shows, documentaries,

dramas, and training, and promotional programs. For twelve of those years, he owned and managed his own production company. In the early years, he worked in theater and he studied and taught television drama, with an emphasis on script development. One of his students was a young man by the name of John Ritter of "Three's Company" fame. In addition to his media career, the author spent twelve years in sales and marketing, climbing the corporate ladder and winning many awards. He has an education in electronics from the U.S. Navy, a degree from the University of Minnesota in broadcasting journalism, and he is a certified webmaster.

The 304-page book is available at Trumm Drug in Elbow Lake, or you can contact the author directly at terrya@bandipublishing.com. Terry will attend the 125th reunion of the Lawrence Presbyterian Church west of Wendell on July 3 and a book-signing event in the Elbow Lake/Wendell area is in the planning stage.