

Ehren Parks

PRODUCER
DIRECTOR



• DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Like most Americans, I had never heard of the Son Tay Raid. That all changed on social media, when my former student chimed in asking me if I'd be interested in making a documentary on the subject. I was promoting the work Stan and I had done on *Follow Us: 100 Years of Ft. Benning for the Army* and I was getting ready to produce another film in the spring so didn't give the post much thought. But after seeing the post, Stan sent me a message. "Ehren, who is Daniel Smith and how does he know the Son Tay Raiders?"

I met Dan seven years ago in the classroom at the New York Film Academy's Burbank branch. My classes there were an interesting mix of wealthy foreign students and veterans. When he began to talk about his military career and wealth of knowledge, my jaw almost hit the floor. His first screenplay was about the ISIS assault of Mount Sinjar as the attack was happening in real time! In the unassuming, nonplussed tone I've found a mark of the true professional warrior, Dan would relay information about where the US commandos would drop in versus the French commandos due to their preferences for fighting terrain and operational directives. More importantly, he talked about the mentality that makes the United States Military unique above all others to storm the battlefield. No where else could every soldier take command if called upon.

Like Green Berets, the job of any great filmmaker is to inflict maximum impact from the shadows. I have spent the last 15 years mastering my craft in the pursuit of that goal. It will be easy to do on this project. Our proof of concept reel is only a fraction of the discussions between Dan and the Son Tay Raiders. Besides the incredible feats of planning, coordination and battlefield precision spoken of, the collective wisdom of these warriors is a gift to be shared. I spent an hour processing Lee Ellis' description of how they dealt with the PTSD of their POW captivity and how he thinks the soldiers returning today have it tougher than them, a sentiment that would give comfort and pride to every vet who heard it. And as a journalism school grad, I think every journalist needs to hear Sgt. St. Clair's take on how the Son Tay Raid was used as a cheap punchline to reinforce a non-biased media agenda.

The Son Tay Raid's greatness lies in the fact that it brought together the separate branches for a greater purpose: to fulfill the pledge of "no man left behind." The planners were intermediaries -- a skill we are taught to value above all else at the UCLA film school. If given the opportunity, we will marshal every resource available and bring the finest teams for production, post-production, distribution and marketing to help finally give the Son Tay Raiders their due.

