

# Heroes Don't Run



*Jonathan W. Howe*



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by

Jonathan W. Howe

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**This book is dedicated to my sons, Timothy and  
Bret, who have shown me how to use my  
imagination again**

**And**

**To my wife, Mary Beth, who is my biggest  
supporter and my greatest source of inspiration.**

**JWH.**

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# Acknowledgments

Starting in the middle of this book, I start dealing with the complexities in the relationship between my main character and a Native American man that he befriends back in the late 1870's. Because Hollywood and other forms of media have greatly distorted the world of the Native Americans and grossly misrepresented their customs and culture, I decided to find an "expert" in the field of Native American studies.

Through the Internet, I "met" a man named Wendell Deer With Horns, a Lakota man. Wendell was kind enough to provide me with some advice on how to represent his ancestors. He told me about problems that the Lakota faced and, more importantly, how to represent the ways of his ancestors. I wish to thank Wendell and his wife Nancy for their input into this book.

I would also like to thank a good friend of mine, Celia Thomas, not only for her assistance in proofreading this book, but also for her words of encouragement along the way.

*Jonathan W. Howe*

# Chapter 1.

## Meet Duncan Sims

It was already a rough trip in the winter of 1847 – and it was about to get worse. It was cold, snowy and they really didn't have a whole lot of money either. Money and a better life were precisely the reasons why they were heading west. After a fire ravaged his livery stable in southeastern Minnesota and took nearly everything they owned along with it, William Sims decided to move his family west, to try a fresh start in Dakota Territory.

Bill was a tough man. He stood about 6 feet tall and weighed about 235 pounds. In those days, that was quite large. His life was centered on his lovely wife, who adored him equally. Her name was Frieda, and she was much prettier than most ladies on the frontier. She only stood about 5 feet, 2 inches and didn't weigh much more than a bale of hay, but she was every bit as tough as Bill was.

They grew up together as family friends -- Bill's parents ran the local livery stable and Frieda's father ran the saloon across the street. They had known each other since they were very small. Bill and Frieda started courting early and it only seemed natural that, on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, Bill asked Frieda to marry him. Nine months after their wedding the next summer, Frieda gave birth to their first child, a girl they named Margaret, or Maggie for short.

In the spring of 1847, Bill had taken over the family business after his father passed on. Frieda stayed home with now three-year-old Maggie and tended to the woman's work. And now there was even more joy to behold – Frieda was expecting another baby to be born come wintertime. The world, it seemed, was theirs for the taking.

Then tragedy struck. One Sunday night in September, Bill was reading a story to Maggie when he spotted an orange glow coming from the stable outside.

“Fire!” cried Bill Sims, “My stable’s on fire!”

Bill rushed out to the stable to try to stop the blaze. He soon found out that the fire was way too much to handle. He and Frieda threw bucket after bucket of water on the blaze, but to no avail. The screams of the horses could be heard for miles around. They tried to free as many as they could, but it was no use. The fire was too hot and spread too fast in the dry Indian summer heat. Being a Sunday night, the saloon was closed and locked up. No one was in town to help poor Bill and Frieda. By the time others did arrive to help, it was too late. Everything was gone. The stable – Bill’s only source of income his entire life and the only thing he knew about – was destroyed, along with their home next door and all of their belongings.

With dawn came the sunshine and with it the light that shone on all things terrible in Bill’s life. A few blackened pots and pans, along with one small doll of Maggie’s and the large fieldstone fireplace, now black and charred, were all that were left of the family’s living quarters. Smoldering timbers were all that remained of his once proud business. Bill never forgot the incredibly putrid smell of burned horse carcasses. Ash and soot covered everything near the fire site. Life, as they knew it, was over.

Frieda tried as she could to convince Bill that everything was going to be all right. She, Maggie and the unborn baby were not hurt in the blaze, but being penniless and without a job sure didn’t make the idea of having another mouth to feed in a few short months any more comforting to Bill. He knew that they had to start over and he knew that, whatever they did, it had to be done quickly. Frieda’s father offered to put them up in his hotel above the saloon, and they accepted for a time. However, Bill knew that a small room above a saloon was no place to raise a family. He also didn’t want to have to live under the oppressive thumb of Frieda’s father, a strict man who had everything in his world his way and nothing would or could ever change that. Bill found himself at a crossroads. He snuggled into a chair in their room, held Maggie tight and fell fast asleep.

As he slept, Bill had a strange but very vivid dream. He saw a vision of rolling hills and dark mountains. He also envisioned a long journey to this place. But there was something more to this vision as when he awoke, the vision was still fresh in his mind. He never forgot that vision as it was etched in his brain.

One day, while working in the saloon, he overheard a couple of ranch hands talking about the rich farmland that could be found in the Black Hills area of western Dakota Territory. As he listened on, the scene that the workers painted in his head was exactly the same as he had envisioned the night after the fire, while dreaming.

Upon hearing of this wonderful place, Bill threw off his apron and ran upstairs. He convinced Frieda that they should take off for Dakota Territory and not look back. Bill figured that this was his destiny, and they should not take another moment to wait for it to go away.

So Bill fixed up an old wagon that he had behind the site of the old livery stable. His father-in-law, wanting to see his daughter prosper, reluctantly bought them two sturdy oxen to pull the wagon. They packed up what belongings they had and headed west.

It was late-November when they came to the point where the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers met at Fort Snelling in Minnesota Territory. Because he felt that it was his destiny to keep going until he reached the Black Hills, nothing was going to stop Bill Sims -- nothing except old Mother Nature herself -- as a blinding blizzard hit. It was so snowy and so cold that Bill knew that he could not continue. They stopped in at the military fort and were put up for a couple of nights until the storm passed over.

It was at Fort Snelling that Frieda gave birth to their second child, a son that she named Duncan William Sims. With all of the events that occurred leading up to his birth, she knew that this baby boy was going to be something special.

# **About the Author:**

## **Jonathan W. Howe**

Jonathan W. Howe is a man of many talents. He is a man who supports computer users for a large medical care organization, though do not let his job fool you for he is the "anti-geek." His job is not his life. Jon is a man who likes to live life on his terms. From riding motorcycles, ATVs and his boat to wood carving and painting to playing and making his own custom built guitars, Jon enjoys the finer side of life.

Having a life based around his wife and two sons keeps Jonathan W. Howe a well-rounded person. *Heroes Don't Run* is the first book that Jon has written for publication after years of experience writing poetry and music.

Jon lives in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis-St. Paul. He is a long time Minnesota Twins fan and a dreamer of the future and the past. Reading about the past or watching a historical documentary (or tastefully made film) is what he likes to do when he's not doing all the other things that take precedence in his life.