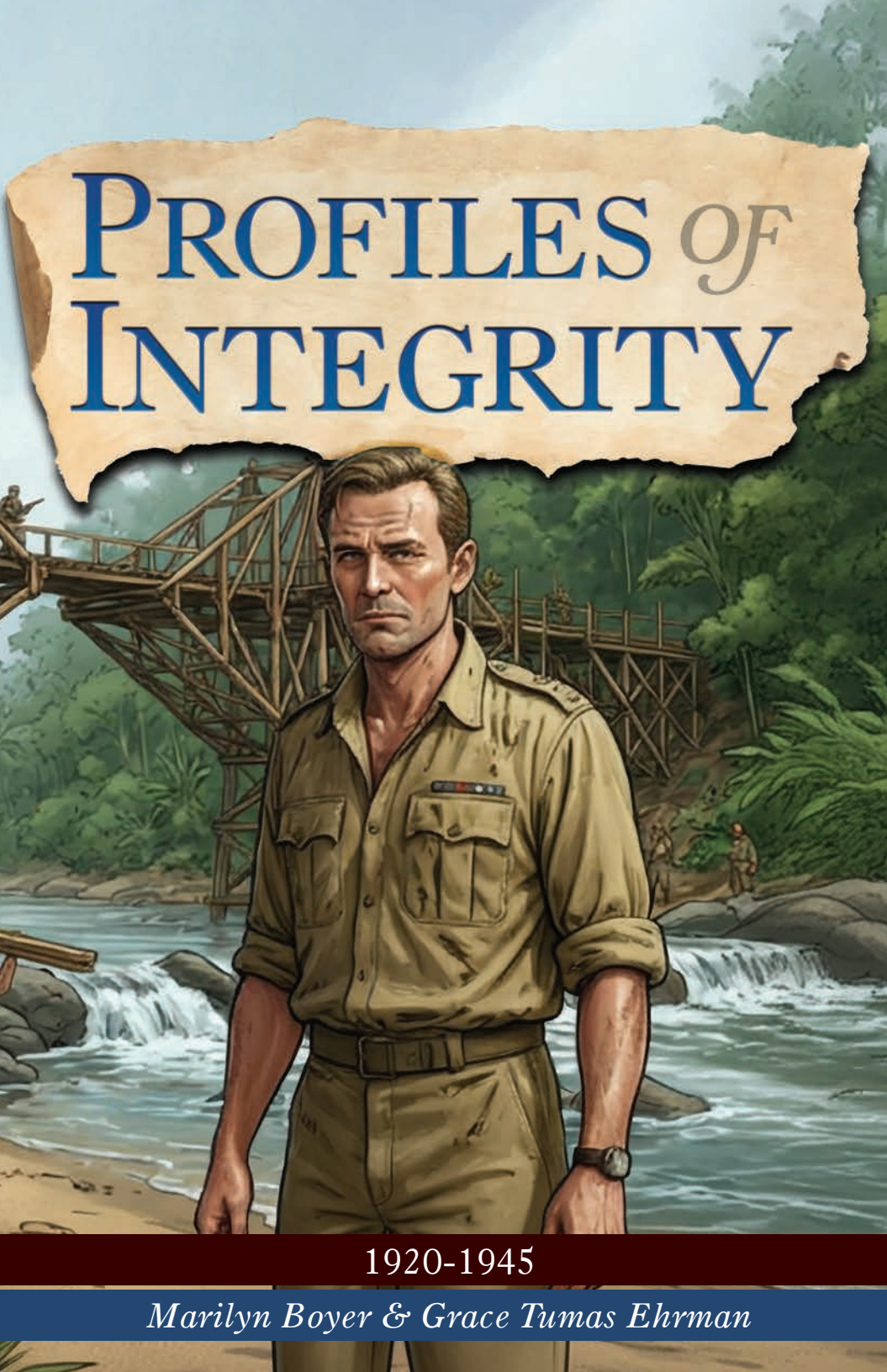
PROFILES OF INTEGRITY
1920-1945
Marilyn Boyer & Grace Tumas Ehrman

PROFILES OF INTEGRITY

Real People
Who Demonstrated
Godly Character

Marilyn Boyer &
Grace Tumas Ehrman

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Credits

Thanks to the following people for their indispensable help in writing Portraits of Integrity: Grace Tumas Ehrman, for her sensitive and colorful portrayal of these heroes in writing their stories.

Mary Ann Edman who, with help from her husband Ed, produced the layout and design, along with other beautiful graphic effects. Thanks, Mary Ann, for your commitment to excellence! And Judy Saunders, Krystyn Walker, and Grace Boyer for their proofreading work.

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Introduction

Some stories are just too good to be lost to history. They need to be told and retold and used to inspire the current generation to accomplish mighty feats in our day. This volume is especially moving to me, one of the authors. I personally met and interviewed two of the men written about and had a first-person account of one of the others. World War 2 is chock-full of amazing stories of sacrifice and determination.

Be prepared to be inspired by the lives of these brave men who met challenging circumstances with resolve and character. They were faced with life and death situations and came through, leaving for us shining examples of persistence under fire. They all had jobs to accomplish and risked their own safety for the good of others.

One of those that has served to convict and inspire many is the story of Jacob DeShazer. Because one man chose to practice forgiveness to his torturers thousands of Japanese people came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Consider Cecil Breeden who was under thick enemy fire but did his duty without thinking of his own safety, administering medical care to the many wounded on D-Day. Or Eddie Simpson who willingly gave his life that others

might live and advance the cause of freedom. God uses what at first seem to be terrible circumstances in our lives to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us remember when we face hard times to look for the courage to stand strong and be used of God in ways we could never have thought of. When you read these true accounts of real people, look for evidence of how God used the performance of their duty to save lives and advance His kingdom.

Marilyn Boyer

Basic to our democratic civilization are the principles and convictions that have bound us together as a nation. Among these are personal liberty, human rights, and the dignity of man. All these have their roots in a deeply held religious faith – in a belief in God.

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Address at U.S. Naval Academy Commencement, June 4, 1958

Honor

DEFINITION

Viewing and treating others as
a special creation of God

MEMORY VERSE

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood.
Fear God. Honour the king.
I Peter 2:17

The Black Baron

General Pyotr Wrangel

The Russian Civil War, Crimea
October 1920

October 16, 1920. An east wind came in the night, steadily blowing the salt water from the Sivash Marsh. Ordinarily too deep to cross on foot, the marshes formed the last line of defense. But not tonight. And in the darkness, a godless army, wearing red stars on their caps, crossed over onto dry land. Now they were marching, and nothing could stop them.

Thick fog crept up from the sea, blotting out objects close at hand and bringing with it a chill of loneliness. On the hills above Perekop, a handful of

General Pyotr Wrangel in 1920

worn-out defenders battled the cold. They had been fighting and retreating for three days without food or sleep. The men of the White Army lay huddled in shell holes crisscrossed with twisted jumbles of barbed wire. Officers wore shabby grey greatcoats with the insignia drawn on in black ink. Some of them stuffed straw into their shirts to keep warm. As the sun spread slowly across the horizon, they could see the landscape dusted with silver hoarfrost. In the grey dawn, the Red Army communists came over the earthworks like an avalanche. Sixty-thousand strong and outnumbering the White Army three to one, the Red Army scrambled up the ravine. The White Army responded with the crack-crack of rifle fire. Shrapnel burst with white puffs left and right, spitting bits of snow like millions of pine-needles into soldiers' faces. Then they struggled back through the barbed wire to the second, unfinished row of trenches.

Forty-two-year-old General Pyotr Wrangel listened grimly to the radio reports at army headquarters. His tall slender figure, in a tight-fitting black cherkeska coat with cartridge-pockets sewn on the chest, grew rigid as he sent out a message for help.

His fine face with its clipped mustache contorted for a brief moment in anguish. He had no troops left under his command.

When Vladimir Lenin's Communist Party seized control of the Russian Provisional Government in 1917, the fate of the country remained undecided. Who would win: a ruthless, left-wing party determined to subordinate all to its atheistic control, or groups of men dedicated to the right of the people to choose their own representative democracy?

The White Army fought through blinding blizzards and suffocating heat. They had starved and survived. Last year, a year of miracles and victories, they came within 100 miles of taking the Communist capital, Moscow. Then the American and British forces pulled out. Without aid, the little army began backing southward towards the Crimea, pursued by relentless, pitiless intent. With resistance crumbling across the country, Baron General Pyotr Wrangel's White Army stood as the last threat to Communism.

They called him "The Black Baron" because of the black cherkeska (long coat) that he wore. They wrote songs about him. They feared his courage, charisma, and honor.

Wrangel stared out the window as darkness closed in again. The temperature stood at twenty degrees below zero. Water froze in the pumps in the street. All through the night, he kept sending desperate messages to General Kutepov, ordering him to

rush to the aid of the defenders at the Sivash March. By October 20, whole divisions were surrendering. The Red Army gleefully rode trains piled high with booty, prisoners, and ammunition. The whole front had collapsed. Reflecting on that time he later said:

The Black Baron in his cherkeska

"The dead weight of failure was crushing my heart. Again and again I asked myself if it had not been my fault. Had I foreseen everything? Had all my calculations been accurate?"

When he took over the army in March, it seemed a lost cause. Abandoned by its commander-in-chief, it had become a rapidly degenerating army swelled by thousands of refugee women and children. During weeks of incredible hard work, he had organized them into a new army, fed them with words of honor and courage, giving them the hope that they could win again. During the past eight months, they beat back superior forces and took back ground they thought they would never walk on again. But in sweeping cavalry moves, the enemy had gobbled up all of Northern Caucasia, won with much blood and sweat that last summer. Now, boxed into a narrow strip of beach, White Army would be cut to pieces. Their only hope lay in escape. General Abramov's Cossacks threw

themselves on the enemy's flank, breaking open a way to the Crimea and the sea. Fighting every step through the Perekop Pass, the White Army managed to slip through.

On October 22nd, General Wrangel held a meeting of the local government in Sevastopol. He concealed the worst of the situation in order to prevent panic behind the lines. Putting on a cheerful face, he forced himself to attend a musical party that evening. His chest tight and throbbing with pain, his mind remained with his men at the Sivash Marsh. He described the desperate situation: "The storm was approaching; our fate was hanging by a thread; we had to strain every moral and intellectual force. The slightest irresolution, the most insignificant mistake, and all would be lost."

Meanwhile, he organized every hospital, train, and dozens of ships capable of carrying 20,000 men. He had to evacuate the able men and the wounded, as well as old men and women carting luggage, pianos, lap dogs, and children. Seeing the end in sight, he planned each detail to avoid chaos. As his calm and desperate plans went forth, reports still bled through from the front. Several units had rallied on their own and taken back their positions from the enemy. But they were too weak to hold them for long. Throughout that last long night, men frantically shoveled coal into the furnaces of the transport-boats as the Red Army drew nearer.

November 2nd:

Russian exiles leaving Crimea, 1920

They could hear General Wrangel pacing the floor upstairs in the empty palace on the shores of the Black Sea. He looked haggard, deep lines circling his eyes. He was making his last preparations. A staff officer waiting below heard his long, regular strides in the ballroom and then a terrible crashing sound. He rushed upstairs. In the twilight, Wrangel had laid the topographical maps, raised bumps showing their units and positions, on the floor and walked the length of them, trampling them flat. When the Bolsheviks arrived, they would find nothing but crumpled scraps of paper. Staring down with tired grey eyes, he could see lights bobbing like Japanese lanterns in the harbor. Almost 100,000 men, women, and children milled in the darkened town like sheep, waiting to board the boats. And there were not enough boats. *I will bring you out alive*, he had promised. And he would keep that promise if he died.

November 3rd:

The massive operation went into action. The cold spell had broken. Gulls wheeled above them in the blue sky with shrieking cries. Wrangel felt sweat

trickle down his face as he watched the shore in a pink haze. The embarkation went on through the early morning hours. No one pushed or shoved. They boarded quietly, in an orderly fashion. French, Turkish, and Greek fishing smacks floated out of the sea, pulling refugees aboard. Wrangel's voice rang across the quay: "We are going into exile; we are not going as beggars with outstretched hands, but with our heads held high, conscious of having done our duty to the end." People crowded around him, kissing his hands and weeping. At 2 p.m. he received a radio message from the chief of the fleet: "Embarkation finished. Everyone on board to the last soldier."

His shoulders lifted and fell with relief. In a brilliant piece of organization, the vast flotilla set sail across the Bay to freedom, like Moses and his people. They had outrun the Red Army, who remained a day behind. "I felt an immense weight fall from my mind. God had helped me to do my duty. He would bless our journey into the unknown." He was the last man to board the ship.

Evacuation of Novorossiysk

The post-war years remained ones of constant struggles for Wrangel. Detained in wretched camps by the French on the isle of Lemnos, he not only kept up the men's fighting spirit and skills, but he fought to gain rights, recognition, and jobs for thousands of his people. He answered hundreds of letters personally and helped poor refugees out of his own dwindling pocket. He even took in a disabled Cossack soldier without any relatives who lived under the staircase in his crowded house. He organized an aid society that still exists today. During 1920–1926, he kept the army knit together, intending to return and take up the fight again. Having won their love, respect and admiration, General Wrangel gained the status of a Christian knight among his men.

The Communists still feared him. They knew that he would return and fight if possible. They now took ruthless steps to eliminate the man they viewed as a threat. In April 1928, a Soviet sailor, brother of Wrangel's butler, appeared at the family's three-story brick home in Belgium. He spent all day in the kitchen and then left abruptly. All at once, the General fell violently ill as if poisoned. Doctors could not find what caused the high fever and hallucinations.

His brain played the last battle scenes in the Crimea over and over, unwinding like shaky old movie reels. He kept solving mathematical problems, drawing up charts and commands. He struggled to stand up, to give orders, to lead again. Raw dawn flowed

over the steppe, cold and clear as chloroform. In the distance, he could see the flat roofs and chimneys of Sevastopol. Shadows of war raced like wild horses through his dreams.

Saying goodbye to the sharp, sweet taste of Russian air and winter hurrying from the mountains, he boards the *Waldek Rousseau*, his tall grey figure with its high sheepskin hat casting a long shadow on the water. "Night is falling. The stars are gleaming in the darkening sky; the sea is all a-twinkle. The lonely lights on my native shore grow fainter, and then vanish altogether, one after the other. And now the last one fades from my sight." Today he would leave forever, and the city that he had loved and hated would go away into the misty places of memory, the haunt of seagulls and wild horses, from which there is no going and no return.

For thirty-eight days he suffered. Then at 9 a.m. on April 25, 1928, General Wrangel died in his sleep. He was forty-nine years old. His last thought was for the welfare of his people.

He had lived up to the spirit of his memoirs: *Always with Honor.* He had made a promise to the people under his protection to lead them to safety and freedom and he had kept it.

History, which knows no favoritism, will tell the importance of our struggle, the capacity of our sacrifices. It will know that the fight we carried on for the love of our country, for the resurrection of Russia as a nation, was indeed at the same time to safeguard the culture of Europe, the struggle for an age-long civilization, for the defence of Europe against the Red terror.

—*General Pyotr Wrangel,*
from his book,
Always with Honor

Questions

1. Against what were General Wrangel's men fighting?
2. Why did Wrangel's men call him the "Black Baron"?
3. How was the war going at this time?
4. What was the only hope for his men?
5. What kind of preparations did he have to make for successful evacuation?
6. What promise had General Wrangel made to the people?
7. What did he say to encourage them?
8. Was his plan successful?
9. How did his army feel about him? How did the Communists feel about him?
10. What led to his death?
11. How had he succeeded in treating his people with honor?
12. Name some people to whom you could show honor.
13. Do you have veterans in your family? In what ways can you honor veterans?