

War Story: Veteran of a foreign war

by Steve Glines

Tony is a bartender, a tough guy. Guts and glory tattoos cover his exposed arms and suggest more. When the bar closes he puts on his leather jacket, pumps his Harley to life and disappears into the night. He says he lives out there and mumbles the name of the town, one I've never heard of. He says he has an ex-wife out there and a couple of kids too.

One night a rowdy customer spills a drink on Tony's shirt. His nostrils flair but he keeps his cool. "You're cut off unless you've got a really big tip for me," he grins and takes off his shirt. The chevrons of a Gunnery Sergeant, three stripes and two rockers, adorn both arms. He's still wearing a uniform.

"So you were in the service I see," I sort of ask. He says he was in the Marines and laughs.

"Hey 'gunny,'" I say, "bring me a beer." He grins and says, "That's Master Sergeant to you. Been meaning to get that fixed."

"Did you see any action?" I ask, hoping for a story. He points to a scar ripping through the chevron on his left arm but says nothing. The weary look on his face as he puts a wet shirt back on says all he's going to say.

