Sean Sullivan

Sean Sullivan
(Bill Black)

My name it is Sean Sullivan
From Clonakilty in West Cork
I came to the States in sixty-five
To work with my brother out in New York
But times were hard, and jobs were scarce
No money to go home, and no reason to stay
My brother went off to become a priest
And I joined the army the very next day
I heard:
"Boy, won't you help us to fight for our country?
Its freedom and honor are yours to uphold"
- The same bloody line they've been using for
centuries:
"Shake hands with the sergeant
And take the queen's gold!"

So I bid farewell to my youthful joys
The girls, the friends, the drink, the craic
Good-bye to the Bronx and away with me
To a soldier's life - no turning back
I well recall the day I left:
It rained like it couldn't rain any more
I slept on the bus and I dreamed of things
I'd never thought much about before-
I was marching up Broadway with the Sixty-Ninth Regiment.
Some bold decorations all agleam on my chest
John Wayne made a speech thanking me for my bravery
And Patton, all smiles called me one of his best!

At camp they gave me a bag and a gun
And tools designed for death and pain
They taught me to crawl, to jump, and to run
And to curse the sun, and the wind, and the rain
They called me "Paddy," "Mick," and worse
They kicked my arse and shaved my head
Potatoes reminded me of home
I peeled them until I was damn near dead
Then they said:
"Boy, now you're ready to fight for our country

But don't make a fuss - stay cool and stay calm!
You'll have plenty of chances to be a real soldier
'Cause you're leaving tomorrow
For a place called Viet Nam..."

Now the plane was like a cattle car
We flew all night and all next day
I kept wondering why the hell we had to fight
If Viet Nam was so far away
We landed at last in some jungle place
That someone said was near Saigon
Machine guns and mortars were firing close by
And something unpleasant was going on
And the thought crossed my mind of the Wild Geese of Ireland
Who had left all behind to fight other men's wars-
How the dead will live on in the songs and the photographs
And the living can boast of their pensions and scars

Well, I spent a year in that awful place
Shooting at things I could never see
And learning how to hate and fear
The things out there shooting back at me
It was during one ambush near Rhe Sanh
I took a hit, and damn near died
Then the pain went away and I dreamed of home
But awoke with the chaplain kneeling by my side
I was a month on my back before I found out what happened:
Seems I'd been caught in between our snipers and theirs
And slugs from the both sides had messed me up royally
Wish to hell I'd stayed out of Other people's affairs!

But they needed the bed, so I got released
With one arm, three medals, and the G.I. Bill
I could get a green card if I completed their forms
But right about then I had had my fill
Said I "No thanks, 'cause I'm headed home
To a family waiting since I went away -
You can keep Viet Nam, you can keep the Bronx
I'm going back to Ireland with a veteran's pay
And I'11 give you my address back home in Clonakilty
All the postmen will know me, of that there's no doubt
And it's happy they'll be to be making delivery
Of those checks you'll keep sending
Till your money runs out!

Well, it's twenty years on, and the Lord's been kind
I've gotten by the best I can
I bought me a farm, some sheep and cows
And married a Glare girl named Bridget McGann

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When I lost my pills and near went mad
she helped me through and shared the pain
When I'd scream myself awake from dreams
I never heard my wife complain
And twenty years on, I'm no longer a hero
And people are used to the missing right arm -
If a stranger inquires, I say 'twas an accident
Can happen to any man running a farm

When the kids are grown, we'll take a trip
Across to Washington, D.C.
And we'll visit the Wall and we'll read the names
Of the lads who weren't as lucky as me
And we'll cry for men that I never knew
The same as they would cry for me:
So much was lost, and nothing gained
That's never the way it was meant to be...

Words and music: Bill Black
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