

Beck Valley Books – review – May 11, 2012

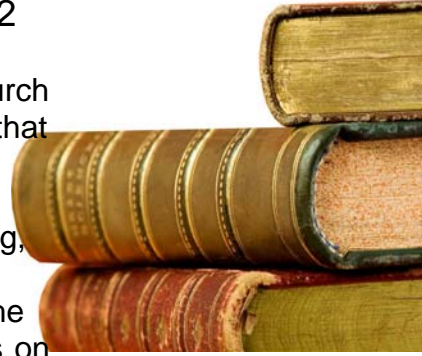
The stories in the book are based around the church and the army, and the situations and teachings that the author portrays are first class.

This was one book that I had to put off reading, because after reading *The Call*, I wanted to save it and cherish it for when I was feeling low, as the authors writes with a humorous hand and passes on the 'feel good factor' to the reader.

The stories and characters represented ~~and~~ ^{add} the tribulations they face [are similar] to everyone's daily activities. The emotions portrayed are human and delicate, but are dealt in a very lighthearted manner.

The author's style of writing is quite unique ~~as~~ ^{because} there is a sense of seriousness to the stories, he seems to have an uplifting effect on the reader.

I am really looking forward to any further publications from the author and I must strongly recommend that anyone who loves to read should give him a try.



May 9, 2012

A good prequel gets you more interested in the book previously. *Twice Upon a Prequel...& Three Shorts* explores the history of Elmo Piggins and Reginald Dexter, along with three shorts. “The Astonishing Elmo Piggins” looks at how Elmo Piggins received the call. With his family life, it is hard not to garner some sympathy for the character. Although he has some of the most understanding parents, his sister is the rebel in the crowd. As an origin story it hits all of the points it needs to, while at the same time showing how a family handles crises both internal and external, as well as rising fame. It’s a good story, rising above its clichés.

The “Rebirth of Reginald Dexter” is probably the best of the lot, as Hamilton had some fun with it; an old dog learns some new tricks, and his younger wife is definitely appreciative of it. A colleague shows him how to enjoy his retirement years, and it culminates in a tandem jump that restarts a marriage while almost killing the pair. This is a truly fun story of rebirth with a nice counterpoint between logic and passion, and how the interplay works at its finest.

The others tend to the cliché; although the writing is solid throughout, it just comes off as either attempting to fit into the standard iconoclastic mold, or being borderline on the “God is Almighty” trope. “Taken Up Before The General” is about a son who is in conflict with his overbearing military father and sees reflections of his father in all authority figures. The military wife of “The War Comes Home” puts her life on hold every time her husband comes home, showing that not only soldiers suffer in wartime. “A Little Bit Wisdom” rounds things out, showing that God has an interest in even the smallest activities and their outcomes. This will definitely get someone interested in the *The Call* itself, and it stands well on its own.

Twice Upon A Prequel & Three Shorts - A Book Review

(from a blog)

Ever wonder what happened "before" the book? You know what I mean...you are reading a great book and suddenly have a moment of, "I wonder what happened back then". Well, Derald W. Hamilton brings us a book that includes not one but TWO prequels to two of in *Twice Upon A Prequel & Three Shorts*. Taking a deeper look at two of his beloved characters from the book *The Call*, Hamilton give us insight into their lives and development as characters in ways that are surprising and endearing. Also included in this compilation book are additional short stories that are both thought provoking and humorous in turn.

Although I have not read his original manuscript *The Call*, I can only imagine it's just as good as this compilation book. Admittedly it is tough to give a thorough review in one simple blog post about five great stories. So, I will give you a few thoughts from what I read.

Hamilton approaches spirituality in one story in a way that resembles how Saul was converted. The "strike you down" like you've never imagined and can't deny his existence type of conversion or wake up call. Yet at the core of that call is what he grew up in the midst of - the southern religious realm of fundamentalist and legalism that knows now boundaries. I could definitely relate with the characters in this story as I too am a preachers kid. I can't say that my Dad or my church experiences were identical to what Elmo experienced in this story, but I definitely understand the emotions, the tug, the frustration, the undeniable call that makes you ache within in a way that you can't explain or ignore. Of all the stories in the book this one definitely held my attention and made me think the most.

He also shares a story of a man who is forced to retire and has to find purpose in his life without his work that meant so much to him. Although the story may not be something all of us can directly relate to, you can easily understand the struggle to find purpose, reason and understanding about why we are where we are in our lives.

Hamilton's three short stories deal with everything from abuse between fathers and their sons to how war and the military life can change a person without them even realizing it.

Although this book seems to be packed full of a little of everything it is still fairly easy to read. Each individual story is distinct and "it's own". The writing style is excellent, informative and definitely descriptive in a way that I thoroughly enjoy reading. It took me a few days to get through the whole book, but that was more due to time constraints than anything else. I look forward to seeing Derald Hamilton publish more short stories in the future in compilation form like this. Makes it easy to read a "little something" when you don't have the time or energy to devote to a full sized novel.

Katie, May 3, 2012

★★★★★ **Fantastic Book!** April 29, 2012

By **mistee dawn**

This review is from: Twice Upon A Prequel And Three Shorts (Kindle Edition)

I loved this book. It was so poignant and thoughtful. This book really makes you think. It makes you think about so many things. Your religious views, your future, your past, your kids, your family. I especially loved The Astonishing Elmo Piggins, reading it made me think of people in my family. The things that happen in this story and all of the stories are things that can and do happen to people just like me or you. It is relatable yet also intriguing and interesting.

The Rebirth of Reginald Dexter was also a great story. The story made me think of my Dad. But it also made me think of myself and my future. I love stories that are so powerful that they make you think. That's what they were intended for. And these stories do not disappoint. You will absolutely enjoy them. I highly recommend this book to everyone. It is truly a great read.

The stories in this book are well-written and enjoyable. There were so many times when the stories made me laugh but also made me angry. The stories made me sad and also happy. These are the signs of a great book. A book that makes you think and feel so many emotions.

The story before the story can be as intriguing as the story itself. "Twice Upon a Prequel" is a collection of short stories from Derald W. Hamilton as he explores the nature of stories, presenting two prequels to his earlier work 'The Call' as well as other assorted short stories. From people coping with the plight of war, age, and privilege, "Twice Upon a Prequel" is a fine read for community library general fiction collections.

~ Micah Andrews of *Midwest Book Review*

From the pages of *The Call*, Elmo Piggins and Reginald Dexter are given their own stories as part of this anthology.

The Astonishing Elmo Piggins introduces young Elmo Piggins as the prototypical Southern preacher's kid. His older sister seems to eclipse him, until she leaves home and he joins the Navy following highschool graduation. While at sea, Elmo experiences a Road-to-Damascus transformation, turning his life and relationships on their ear.

The Rebirth of Reginald Dexter tells of tenured professor of psychology who is forced to retire at sixty-five. It is both a funny and inspirational story that supports the life-affirming notion that it's never too late for new beginnings.

Taken Up Before The General follows the misadventures of a hapless military brat who is pummeled into submission at every turn. This story provides a blistering portrait of a social order that grants no quarter to those who just don't fit in ... anywhere.

The War Comes Home explores the same social dynamics — that of self-sacrifice for the sake of conformity — only this time, the story is told through the eyes of a military wife saddled with the task of avoiding any upsets upon her husband's return from war.

Any finally, there is A Liter Bit Of Wisdom — a darkly humorous tale that explores the possible repercussions that might result from our actions or inactions. Or could it be simply the workings of fate?

I've never read anything from Derald Hamilton before this book, and I have to say, I was a bit weary. I'm not a big fan of several stories inside a book, but I really loved this one! Each story flowed well and the characters were very developed.

This book is set up as basically five different stories:

In "The Astonishing Elmo Piggins" you meet Elmo Piggins who is a preacher's child who always conformed to rigid religious beliefs in his home and community. His sister however, does not and eventually leaves the home because of the upheaval she has with her family. Elmo eventually goes into the Navy and while out on a ship for long periods of time, his religion deepens and he joins a Theological Seminary. But his family and friends are shocked at how zealous he becomes and has to learn hard lessons about life and religion. This story was very interesting to me because I know from experience how southern religion can be quite rigorous and if you don't adhere, you can be outcast.

In "The Rebirth of Reginald Dexter" you meet Reginald Dexter who is forced to retire before he thinks he should. He feels like once he retires that his life will have no purpose. Through this story you watch as Reginald take a journey to accept the changes in his life by leaving the past behind and moving forward with the "new" Reginald. Very inspiring story about recreating a new life after you feel your life is over.

In "Taken Up Before the General" you follow a military brat who is basically knocked down at every turn and eventually becomes submissive to father. This was a tough story and I

tried to find some sympathy for the dad that really knew no other way to deal with his son – but it just didn't come.

In “The War Comes Home”, you journey through the life of a military wife who has a husband that is coming home from war. While he was away, life went on and some things have changed about her – and of course while he was at war, he changed. You follow the struggle of this wife as she tries to make sure everything is “just so” on his arrival home. I've seen this myself, war is a terrible thing and it changes people forever. I really enjoyed this short.

In “A Litter Bit of Wisdom” you follow a story with some pretty dark humor – but it is about a napkin! You follow the napkin's journey as it finds its higher purpose in life. I really found this a great little story and it makes you think about “what-ifs”.

All in all, I really enjoyed these shorts! Very interesting concept for a book – it really kept me thinking and I enjoyed it!

~ Kim Hansen

Title: *Twice Upon a Prequel & Three Shorts*

Author: Derald Hamilton

Publisher: D Hamilton Books

ISBN: B006VXNIH2

Pages: Kindle

Genre: Fiction/Inspirational

Reviewed by: Suzanne Gattis, Pacific Book Review

Derald Hamilton's *Twice Upon a Prequel & Three Shorts* is a compilation of stories that delves into the lives and inner thoughts of each character as it teaches life lessons to the reader. What struck me most about the stories is the character development; some you sympathize with, some you would rather not "know." Through each short story, you want to understand why they acted and thought the way that they did. The stories don't always leave you having accomplished that, and in a good way this is what makes the stories very poignant and relevant.

"The Astonishing Elmo Piggens" plays off the frequent stereotypical preacher's kid. In a town and a household where rigid religious and moral beliefs are the norm, the sister is at odds with her surroundings. Elmo, who was always in the background of these events, ends up eventually taking a completely different path with his life, an extreme conviction to religion. His family, the small town minister, and his appeasing and peace-keeping wife, are themselves turned off by this unexpected zeal. I found the story to be ironic that the child who took the closest path to his upbringing ended up being the child they had the hardest time to understand.

In "The Rebirth of Reginald Dexter," Hamilton takes us into the transitional period of Reginald Dexter, as he retires before he feels it is his time. He is not ready to be "set aside." His journey of acceptance of change leads to a road of reinvention. This quest in overcoming fear and the joy in life improves his self worth and his relationship. The courage to leave behind the past and create a new life and passion is inspiring to everyone and can be applied to all situations.

While reading "Taken Up Before the General," I spent most of the story trying to see some sort of goodness in the father. The writing is quite spectacular in that even though I really couldn't, the story still felt complete to me; the lack of the connection to the customer did not get in the way of the story. It serves to make your empathy for the boy even stronger.

While men are away at war, the world does not stop. Add to that the fact that soldiers often come back changed and you have the heart grabbing story of "The War Comes Home." With sympathy for the wife, you realize that they are both victims. The story leaves off right before they are reunited, which allows the reader the ability to think for themselves on how the story might end.

Finally, "A Little Bit of Wisdom" is a quirky and short story that follows the life of a napkin. Through this wayward piece of material, the author explores the course of our actions and the fact that everything has purpose and reason for being. One person or action affects another.

This collection of stories really draws the reader in. It's not a mindless read; be prepared to have to think about the concepts and relationships that are being presented.

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Twice Upon a Prequel...& Three Shorts

Derald W. Hamilton

D Hamilton Books (2011)

ISBN 9780984619214

Reviewed by Richard R. Blake for Reader Views (3/12)

“Twice Upon a Prequel...& Three Shorts” by Derald W. Hamilton opens with two prequels: The Astonishing Elmo Piggins and The Rebirth of Reginald Dexter. Readers of “The Call” will remember Elmo Piggins, the preacher’s son who completed his undergraduate work in three years and Reginald Dexter, the older Unitarian Seminarian. The three shorts are: Taken Up Before the General, The War Comes Home and A Litter Bit of Wisdom.

Elmo’s story details his childhood and adolescence growing up as a pastor’s son. Pastor Elwood Piggins is obsessed by a discipline standard determined by the expectations of the church members and the men on the deacon board. Elmo fits this model outwardly as he observes the wild rebellious antics of his older sister and the resultant punishment which triggered her decision to leave home. After his graduations from high school, Elmo joins the Navy.

While at sea, Elmo experiences a spiritual awakening similar to the Apostle Paul’s on the Road to Damascus; a new beginning for Elmo, which led to his enrollment at Parkins Theological Seminary.

Reginald Dexter’s story is of a tenured psychology professor forced to retire, advised by his friend, a pastor, to take risks, begin a new life, and find fulfillment.

Derald W. Hamilton skillfully crafts the art of satire to draw attention to the inconsistencies of obsession for dogma in the church, rigidness in academia, and pomp and parade in the military. His pointed humor clearly gets the attention of the reader, identifies the problem, and plants a seed for change. His characterizations are flawless as he contrasts the graduate degreed pastor with the fiery charismatic preacher with power of delivery but no formal training.

Although I frequently got glimpses of myself and my unique and “miniscule” flaws, I felt on occasion that the author sacrificed his mission to the point of losing the segment of a potential audience that he may be hoping to change. Anyone offended by an unwarranted repletion of profanity may look at Hamilton’s approach as irreverent or to be a personal vendetta resulting from his own personal disillusionment.

“Twice Upon a Prequel...& Three Shorts” by Derald W. Hamilton is cutting-edge satire for contemporary readers.

Twice Upon A Prequel ... & Three Shorts

Reviewed by: Celina Cuadro

This is my first encounter with Derald W. Hamilton as a writer and I couldn't have been more pleased to make his acquaintance. He showed nuanced skill in developing characters, especially in fine-tuning crucial periods of anguish, discernment, and catharsis. My enjoyment in meeting him as an author is only eclipsed by my delight in meeting the characters he created in *Twice Upon a Prequel ... & Three Shorts*.

Twice Upon a Prequel ... & Three Shorts is a collection of stories that showcased two of the author's characters from his novel *The Call*: a young Elmo Piggins at the cusp of his chosen vocation as a preacher, and tenured psychology professor Reginald Dexter as he crosses the threshold to early retirement. Among the 'Three Shorts' was the story of a military brat whose backbone had been systematically devoured by the quality of his family life and the traditions upheld by military living in "Taken Up Before the General". In the other story "The War Comes Home", a military wife finds herself at wit's end trying to transition her returning Vietnam veteran husband to the realities of life stateside. Mr. Hamilton concludes with the amusing short "A Litter Bit of Wisdom", a tale that helped me end the anthology with a chuckle and a smirk as I consider the potential impact of dinner napkins in the scheme of things. With the exception of the beleaguered military wife Laura Porter and the amusing Reginald Dexter, I can say I emphatically DO NOT WANT to encounter most of the people I found among these stories - it is however a testament to Mr. Hamilton's skill in character development that a reader like myself can have such strong reactions about fictitious people created out of thin air.

I noticed immediately the author's talent in crafting specific encounters between his characters - he had an almost intuitive sense of making conflict tangible between his characters as they clashed, or within them when they encountered intense situations. As a reader I felt it at a visceral level: my breath came in short gasps whenever Elmo Piggins's elder sister Lawanda locked horns with her parents. When military brat Daryl McGregor endured a beat-down from school bullies he thought he dodged, I exhaled a low groan that surprised me because I didn't even hear myself making the sound at first! When the author portrayed the anguish of Lawanda getting beaten by her father, or of an innocent Daryl assumed guilty without proof, I felt my spine curling and my body sinking deeper into the cushions, like a constant, relentless weight was being piled upon me. And when the author wrote of Elmo Piggins's catharsis as he called to his God while broken and lonely in a Navy ship at sea, it felt like the onset of a whirling insanity in my head. Mr. Hamilton's WORDS drew psychosomatic reactions from me as the reader - that's pretty good character interaction in my opinion!

The other thing I noticed as I read on was that most of the characters in these stories were at the cusp of an event: their stories were starting on their respective arcs and I as the reader got a snapshot glimpse before the arcs hit their zenith. This is understandable in the case of Elmo Piggins and Reginald Dexter, since their tales were introduced as prequels. But in the case of Laura Porter, who stood at the arrival gate awaiting her husband's return even as she tried to figure out the best way to be her husband's buffer to the realities of their changed family, the meat of her tale had not yet taken place. So I as reader left her story mid-way, seeing her off at the gate her husband hasn't entered yet, the rest of that arc to resume without me. It seemed like a good spot to end - before anything worse happens, or at the cusp of better things to come - but

just in case a reader like myself started to freak out with too many 'what happened nexts', Mr. Hamilton gave me a dark yet charming story with a full arc: the venerable Amos Posey, enjoying his Baskin & Robbins ice cream and pontificating to a nosy environmentalist about the stray dinner napkin that flew from his acquired stack. All character interactions in this tale were spirited but congenial, all loose ends were tied neatly at the story's close, and the reader in me pushed off from the table of this anthology's rich fare, very sated and very happy.

Twice Upon a Prequel . . . & Three Shorts stands alone on its own merit, but I couldn't help thinking it is probably my loss that I have not read Derald W. Hamilton's *The Call*. After finishing *Twice Upon a Prequel . . . & Three Shorts* and seeing the author's prowess in character creation, I couldn't help but be curious about just how good a story I may be missing! Highly recommended.



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Twice Upon a Prequel & Three Shorts

Derald W. Hamilton

D Hamilton Books (2011)

ISBN 9780984619214

Reviewed by Pam Aures for Rebecca's Reads

“...even though Elmo’s exploits were colorful ones for a boy his age, they were massively eclipsed by those of his older sister, Lawanda, who was seven years his senior. Lawanda was a free spirit whose inclinations ran counter to the communal mores that surrounded her. She would paint mural scenes on public buildings of naked youths frolicking about in pastoral settings with garlands of flowers in their hair. The paintings were masterfully done, yet many of the town’s folks deemed them inappropriate by community standards. She was a chronic violator of curfew. But, more noticeably, she selected a circle of friends who were amongst the town’s undesirables. She definitely did not fit the image of a minister’s daughter.” p.

This passage is from Hamilton’s first prequel in the book entitled “The Astonishing Elmo Piggins.” Elmo watches his sister’s wild exploits with drugs and sex and how his minister father handles the situations with violence and threats; quite disturbing behavior for a minister. I have read Derald Hamilton’s full length novel “The Call,” which is the inspiration for the first two prequels in “Twice upon a Prequel & Three Shorts.” I found that the writing style in this work was the same as the novel, satirical and not what you would expect. If you enjoyed “The Call,” then you will enjoy the two prequels elaborating on the lives of the familiar characters of Elmo Piggins and Reginald Dexter “The Rebirth of Reginald Dexter” .

After the two prequels, which make up the bulk of the book (218 pages), the remaining portion of the book is divided up into three separate short stories entitled “Taken Up Before the General,” “The War Comes Home,” and finally, the shortest of all at just under three pages, “A Bitter Bit of Wisdom.” Just with the two main stories, Hamilton’s satirical nature and talent for surprising the reader shines through.

I enjoy books that challenge the norm and throw the reader every now and then. I think that this book will most appeal to readers of Hamilton’s previous novel, but also would be a good introduction to his work as it is quite representative of his overall writing style.



Twice Upon a Prequel - & 3 Shorts
reviewed by Rebecca Hayes

Twice Upon a Prequel & 3 Shorts includes a total of five stories that give insights into the actual life of the author, though couched in fictitious terms.

“The Astonishing Elmo Piggins” outlines the life of the protagonist through the relationships between each of his family members, himself an outsider looking in. His father is a minister in a small town church, and holds very rigid beliefs and principles that allow no room for the variation required by any situation or circumstance. His sister is the family black sheep, always in a state of rebellion against the reality her father wants her to experience. Elmo’s mother is the quintessential “preacher’s wife,” molded into the role she plays, and trying to keep peace and balance between her husband and her daughter. And Elmo sits on the sidelines, taking it all in, seemingly unaffected by any of it at a deep level... until he joins the Navy. This begins his astonishing transformation into a charismatic, zealous revivalist-style preacher in his own right. The effects on his family, however, are unexpected and apparently beyond his ability to comprehend. After absorbing everything he witnessed as a child, he seems to be oblivious to the impact of his transformation on those who know him.

At times humorous, “Elmo Piggins,” for all its cliché examples of a preacher’s life, touches the humanity of the reader as it engenders empathy and sympathy for its characters.

“The Rebirth of Reginald Dexter” is a study in mid-life transformation. Reginald Dexter is forced to retire long before he feels finished with his work. Fearing that his life may be over – and his marriage along with it – he sets out to reinvent himself through a series of experiences that completely carve away the man he used to believe he was, and leave him with a man he can live with for the rest of his life. His wife, many years younger than he, wonders what has come over him, but gains a growing appreciation for who he becomes through his process, and eventually joins him in his quest for a deeper richness in life.

Funny, thrilling and encouraging – we each must find what matters to us, even if it means we have to chuck what we used to hold dear and threaten the grip of fear with something more powerful – the intensity of joy in simply BEING.

“Taken Up Before the General” chronicles the life of a boy who can’t seem to be or do anything right. Even defending himself from a local bully gets him into trouble. As he grows into adolescence, his self-esteem shrivels and withers, until the ultimate affront to his tattered dignity is served – he is accused of getting a girl pregnant: the General’s daughter. When it is discovered that the stories are not true, no one even apologizes, least of all his father.

Finding sympathy and understanding for this poor kid is easy. The characters can be found in all levels of modern society. The author does a fine job of drawing the reader into the story – everything about it is completely believable. I found I had a hard time remembering that it was supposed to be fiction.

In **“The War Comes Home,”** a woman girds herself to deal with a husband returning from Vietnam. Between the time of his departure and the time of his return, his family had completely changed. His youngest daughter switched from ballet to sports and

his son had switched from sports to ballet. His homemaker wife had used her education to get a job and now made more money than he did as a high-level military officer. This officer had a temper, and blamed his wife for everything that wasn't in order upon his return. In today's world, such a relationship would not survive, because many women would not tolerate such treatment. But back then it was the norm.

Again, sympathy for the main character is easy. Indignation for her plight is another expected response. There is no humor here, only sad resignation. The author's ability to draw the reader into the story and relationships, however, remains the draw that keeps interest high.

"A Litter Bit of Wisdom" uses dark humor to follow the flight of a wayward napkin toward its "higher purpose." We never know what course our actions – and inactions – will take once they are released from our active participation. We can, however, trust that everything serves a purpose. Nothing is ever lost or wasted... not even the flight of a wayward napkin.

A story for everyone who ever wonders what happens after...

There is nothing dark, twisted or sinister in any of these stories... only the exceptional writing talent that puts the reader squarely in the middle of the story, the relationships and the situations that ramble through his mind as he puts thought to paper. Some moments kick your funny-bone, some tickle your natural inclination to cheer for the underdog, some inspire the consideration of greater possibilities, and some spark your imagination to roam the land of "What if..." And all are worth reading more than once.