

## MARINE WITH A SECRET



Donnie Dunagan is a pretty tough guy. He became a tough-nosed, highly decorated career Marine. But Donnie had a secret. Something he didn't want anyone, not even his wife, to know.

I'll tell you the secret, but first, a little about Dunagan's life.

Dunagan was born in San Antonio, Texas, but his family soon moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where they struggled with poverty. There, at the age of 3½, he won a talent contest prize of \$100. Spotted by a studio talent scout, the family moved to Hollywood, where Dunagan appeared in a series of films and soon became his family's main breadwinner.

And that's where something happened that became his secret. The child actor was hand-picked by Walt Disney to be the voice of the lead character in the 1942 movie classic, *Bambi*.

Not exactly the image a Marine Corps drill instructor and commander in the Marines wants to portray. So he kept it a secret throughout his career, only admitting it after he was outed by a superior officer.

And once the word was out, Dunagan made an amazing discovery: He wasn't laughed at and ridiculed as much as he was loved.

"I have some holes in my body that God didn't put there," Dunagan mused. "I got shot through my left knee. Got an award or two for saving lives over time. But I think I could have been appointed as the aide-de-camp in the White House; it wouldn't make any difference. It's *Bambi* that's so dear to people."

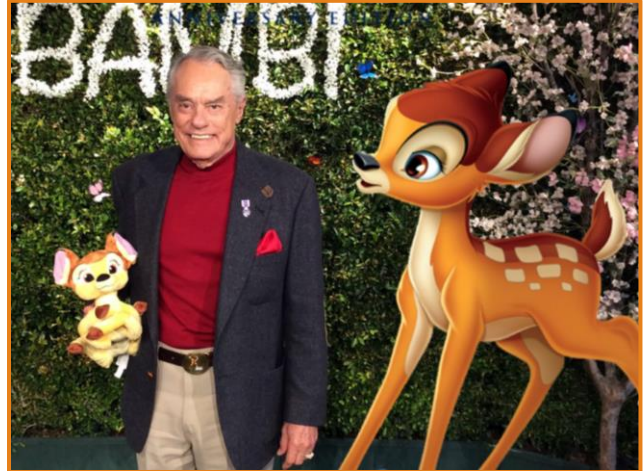
Dunagan's acting career ended after he provided the voice for the young fawn in *Bambi*. By the age of 13, Dunagan was living in a boarding house and working as a lathe operator. In 1952, at the age of 18, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and became the Marines' youngest-ever drill instructor. He served three tours in Vietnam, where he was wounded several times, before finally retiring in 1977 with the rank of major. For his service, he received a Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts. He now lives with his wife in San Angelo, Texas.



(more)

Behind the bravado, we all have something to hide, even the toughest – fears, insecurities, weaknesses, frailties – sure that we could only be despised for them. We have a public face we want to present.

Don't wait your whole life before you discover that it is just as important to be honest and transparent about our weaknesses as we are about our strengths. For it is only then that others will find in us someone with whom they can relate and develop a renewed sense of self-worth.



Such humility not only draws us closer to people; it draws us closer to God.

*And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Matthew 23:12 NKJV).*

– Beecher Hunter