



THE POWER OF YES



"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Winston Churchill

Some fifty years ago, Sammy L. Davis did what few would have done.

Davis had been shot in the leg, his ribs broken, his spine fractured, and his buttocks riddled with shrapnel when his unit was overrun in a midnight raid by 1,500 Vietcong. Yet, when he heard a cry for help, he didn't hesitate. He plunged into a river as bullets kicked up plumes of water around him, and he rescued his wounded brothers-in-arms.

Out of a company of 42, 12 survived that battle. Many of them owed their lives to Private First Class Davis. Before he'd fully recovered from his injuries, Sammy asked to return to his unit to finish his tour of duty in Vietnam. With special permission from General William Westmoreland, the young soldier did – on crutches.

His story likely would have faded into the past if not for Hollywood. Sammy's bravery was immortalized in the 1994 film *Forrest Gump* starring Tom Hanks. The film used actual footage of Sammy receiving the Medal of Honor, the nation's most prestigious military decoration, from President Lyndon B. Johnson. Computer graphics superimposed Tom Hanks' head over Sammy's in the ceremony.

Now 74, Sammy Davis still has the same perseverance and determination that propelled him across that muddy river when he was 20. I recently spent two days with him as he visited schools speaking to over 1,000 children about things we don't often talk about anymore: duty, honor, responsibility.

Straight and tall in his uniform, the old soldier told the story of the battle. The students listened with rapt attention. At each school, he was asked the same

question after his speech: "Why did you risk your life to save those men?"

"Because they asked," Sammy Davis said. When asked if he would do it again, he answered, "Absolutely. You never leave your brother behind."

Sammy's commitment to helping those in need is unwavering. Days before his speech, I called to ask if he'd speak at another school. I hadn't even made my case when he cut me off, saying "yes." "Sir," I said, "you haven't heard my question." His reply: "I will do whatever you ask of me."

This soldier hasn't had a restful night of sleep in decades because of his old wounds and memories. Yet his answer to a plea for help is always, simply, "yes."

On a smaller scale, each of us is asked to help others in need. Perhaps the next time a request reaches us, we will think of Sammy and say yes.

