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## ?Never Quit. Never.? A Tribute to Buck Files

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Thursday, May 5th, 2016

# “Never Quit. Never.”



## A Tribute to Buck Files Frank E. Stevenson

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There is a blithe irony in our honoring Buck for his 200th article for this publication—a man of few words for having expressed literally thousands of them. In fact, if you know Buck, you’ve likely had entire conversations when he used only three: “Never Quit. Never.”

Buck calls that phrase his “mantra,” and it is profoundly self-expository. In fact, it is its speaker in sum.

Authoring 200 articles says something about steadfastness. Then again, *everything* Buck does says something about steadfastness. He has practiced law for over 50 years. With the same law partner for 40 years. While married to the same remarkable woman for 53 years. And serving as a faithful member of the same church for 50 years.

I am baffled?actually awed?by how lawyers who practice criminal law?the people who read and write for this publication?steadfastly remain the people they want and need to be in light of what they must encounter. Buck embodies this. After seeing so much wickedness, remaining so decent; observing so much duplicity, keeping so honorable; dealing with so much inconstancy, abiding in such faithfulness.

Buck extracts from his experiences?even the challenging ones?something redemptive. Because of his service as a Marine first lieutenant in Vietnam, Buck visits his jailed clients every Christmas morning. ?I spent Christmas 1965 outside of Da Nang; I know what it?s like to be away from family.? Additionally there are his weekly visits ?so they know there?s someone who cares about them.? Not surprising that one of the most formative of his experiences was provided by an institution whose motto is

*Semper Fi.*

Is there a person more generous with his friendship? A fellow State Bar Board member asked me several years ago: ?You and Buck are such great friends, how long have you known each other?? Glancing at my watch: ?About 45 minutes,? I replied.

Campaigning for State Bar President-elect is punishing?doubly so when you live two hours from the nearest airport. During March 2011, Buck spent 25 nights away from his home in Tyler as he campaigned across the state. Four years later, when it was my turn in the barrel, he left the same phone message every evening: ?Never quit. Never.?

It is so easy to become nothing but the servant of our experiences, instead of their master. Or to blend in by donning the expedient camouflage of an increasingly relativist culture in which our highest principles have the durability of gnats. Against all that, a useful corrective is Buck?s singular steadfastness:

He has served one country  
Supported one firm  
Advanced one profession  
Nurtured one family  
Loved one woman  
Worshipped one Lord

If we think people like Buck come around for no reason, we do so at our profound peril. People like Buck remind us that despite all that life exposes to, inflicts upon, and exacts from us, we must steadfastly remain the people we want and need to be. Except that Buck would say it more directly.

He?d say, ?Never Quit. Never.?

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