

“

Dad, you had no legs and tried to show me how to dance. And when my shoes didn't fit you found a way to keep me dancing. So, whenever the music stops for me in life or my feet hurt I keep dancing, cause once you stop the lights go down and curtain falls

”

Philip, your Tap Dancing Son

Michael

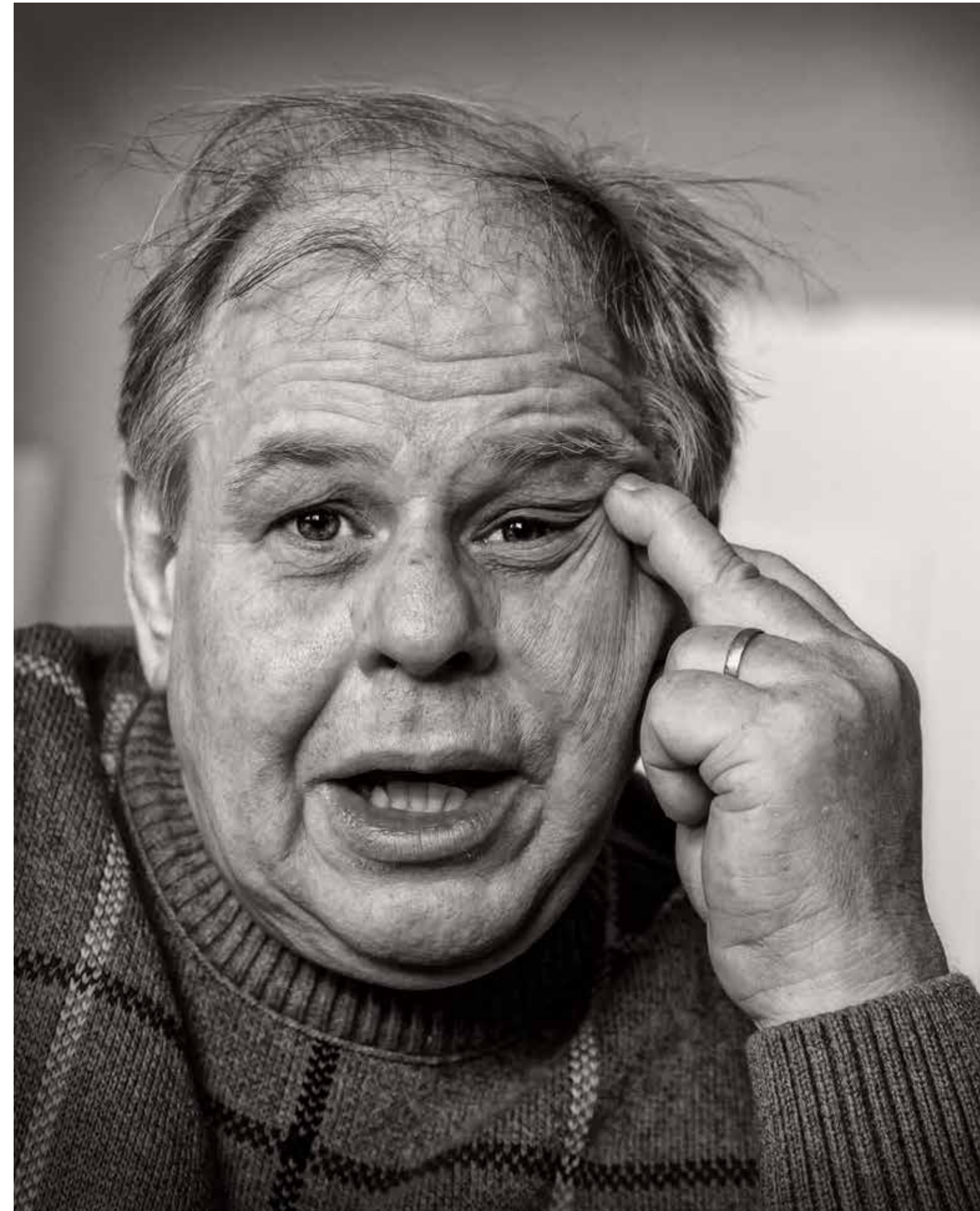
At sixteen, he drops out of high school, and the next year joins the Marines. He was sent to Vietnam, steps on a land mine and loses both legs above the knees. Returning home, Michael was fortunate to be hired as the consultant to the main character in the play “5th of July” who was portraying a Vietnam amputee. He starts writing short stories and finds his talents on the stage as a playwright. He marries, has two boys, and juggles his life writing and raising his family.

When the boys were four and six, Michael bought tap shoes and made them tap dance in the kitchen. As the boys grew, he cut the back and front of the tap shoes then duct them to fit so the boys could still rehearse. He insisted his boys learn to dance because he believed that work was always available for someone who has determination and never gives up. One of his sons, Philip, became an actor.

In 2006 Michael traveled alone to Vietnam in order to research a stage play that was based upon an African American Medal of Honor winner, Dwight Johnson, who grew up on the crime-ridden streets of Detroit. Sadly, Mr. Johnson was tragically shot to death in a holdup attempt two years after he returned from service in Vietnam. Due to PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder), he had difficulty adjusting to civilian life.

“The revelation for me was that the Vietnamese moved on with their lives after the war, maybe because they had always been surrounded by war. Back in America, we are still wearing buttons and ribbons, talking about who has PTSD and who's sick from Agent Orange.”

At “Ambush Alley,” the site where Dwight performed his heroic deeds, Michael met two Israeli back-packers. When he talked about Dwight, they related to the story because they live in a nation of war. One of Israeli's said, “There are no winners in a war.” Michael thought, “They were only kids but knew so much more about life than I did at their age.”



Michael - Vietnam Veteran, Playwright