

# BLOOD ON THE TRACKS:

## The Life And Times of S. Brian Willson

### S. Brian Willson

#### Introduction: Daniel Ellsberg

"We are not worth more, they are not worth less." This is the mantra of S. Brian Willson and the theme that runs throughout his compelling psycho-historical memoir. Willson's story begins in small-town, rural America, where he grew up as a "Commie-hating, baseball-loving Baptist," moves through life-changing experiences in Viet Nam, Nicaragua and elsewhere, and culminates with his commitment to a localized, sustainable lifestyle.

In telling his story, Willson provides numerous examples of the types of personal, risk-taking, nonviolent actions he and others have taken in attempts to educate and effect political change: tax refusal, fasting, and obstruction tactics. It was such actions that thrust Brian Willson into the public eye in the mid-'80s, first as a participant in a high-profile, water-only "Veterans Fast for Life" against the Contra war being waged by his government in Nicaragua. Then, on a fateful day in September 1987, the world watched in horror as Willson was run over by a U.S. government munitions train during a nonviolent blocking action in which he expected to be removed from the tracks and arrested.

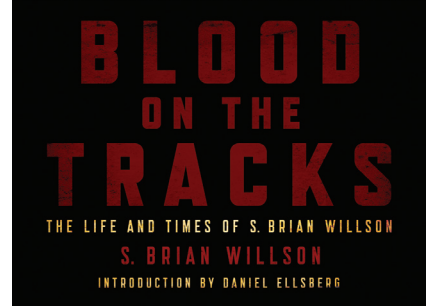
Throughout his personal journey Willson struggles with the question, "Why was it so easy for me, a 'good' man, to follow orders to travel 9,000 miles from home to participate in killing people who clearly were not a threat to me or any of my fellow citizens?" He eventually comes to the realization that the "American Way of Life" is AWOL from humanity, and that the only way to recover our humanity is by changing our consciousness, one individual at a time, while striving for collective cultural changes toward "less and local." Thus, Willson offers up his personal story as a metaphorical map for anyone who feels the need to be liberated from the American Way of Life—a guidebook for anyone called by conscience to question continued obedience to vertical power structures while longing to reconnect with the human archetypes of cooperation, equity, mutual respect and empathy.

#### About S. Brian Willson:

S. Brian Willson is a Viet Nam veteran whose wartime experiences transformed him into a revolutionary nonviolent pacifist. He gained renown as a participant in a prominent 1986 veterans fast on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. One year later, on September 1, 1987, he was again thrust into the public eye when he was run over and nearly killed by a U.S. Navy Munitions train while engaging in a nonviolent blockade in protest of weapons shipments to El Salvador. Since the 1980s he has continued efforts to educate the public about the diabolical nature of U.S. imperialism while striving to "walk his talk" (on two prosthetic legs and a three-wheeled handcycle) by creating a model of right livelihood including a simpler lifestyle.

#### About Daniel Ellsberg (Introduction):

Daniel Ellsberg is a former United States military analyst who, while employed by the RAND Corporation, precipitated a national political controversy in 1971 when he released the *Pentagon Papers*, a top-secret Pentagon study of U.S. government decision-making about the Vietnam War, to *The New York Times* and other newspapers.



**SUBJECT CATEGORY**  
BIOGRAPHY/ POLITICS-  
ACTIVISM/ U.S. HISTORY

**PRICE**  
\$20.00

**ISBN**  
978-1-60486-421-2

**PAGE COUNT**  
500

**SIZE**  
6 X 9

**FORMAT**  
PAPERBACK

**PUBLICATION DATE**  
05/11

**DISTRIBUTED BY**  
Independent Publishers Group  
(312) 337-0747  
[www.ipgbook.com](http://www.ipgbook.com)

◆ **PM PRESS** ◆  
P.O. Box 23912  
Oakland, CA 94623  
[www.pmpress.org](http://www.pmpress.org)

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