



Book Club Discussion Guide
That Which Cannot be Denied (TWCBD)

About the Book

In his stirring, witty memoir, *That Which Cannot Be Denied*, first-time author Roger M. Hughes chronicles the mesmerizing exploits of his family. Spanning 130 years, four generations, and four continents, Hughes invites readers into the lives of his brave and adventurous great-grandfather: his cantankerous grandfather, his decorated war hero and spy father, and into his own life—finding his identity in the world and becoming a successful trial lawyer.

Roger describes in striking detail how each generation of his family became an integral part of the history of their time and place, each disregarding their legacy and finding their own way to pursue historical and cultural opportunities.

Growing up, the son of a Marine aviator and spy, Hughes attended 14 different schools between Kindergarten and High School Graduation. He overcame dyslexia, became a leading man in high school theatre productions, won prestigious awards, including the Utah state championship in debate, and successfully fought off angry protestors at his home in Egypt at the tender age of 18. When Roger was 19, he traveled the world on his own. He was the first in his family to receive a college degree—going on to become a successful trial lawyer.

This beautifully written and powerful book captures the exciting lives of four generations of the Hughes family and tells the touching story of how Roger found his true purpose in life.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Agnes felt when she sailed steerage class across the Atlantic with her new husband (for just a couple of days), knowing she would never see her family and friends again?
2. Do you think Henry considered leaving Kansas and returning to England when Agnes died?
3. How do you think Henry felt when his teenage son ran away, leaving him to tend to the family farm alone?
4. What do you think attracted Curly to the logging camps of California?
5. How must Myrtle have felt having to choose between her sister and her potential husband?
6. Consider this quote from the book; "Undoubtedly, my grandfather and grandmother were bound together by necessity, and their significant differences were of little consequence given what they faced." How did Myrtle and Curly make a life together when they were so different?
7. How do you think Harry developed an interest in mechanical things as an only child when his father worked long days every day tending to the gambling saloons, restaurants, and homemade grape juice business?
8. Can you imagine how Harry felt when local police regularly targeted him because of the animosity between his father and the police?
9. Why do you think Curly was furious about Harry enlisting in the Marines? Do you think he was motivated by concern for his son's safety or hatred of the military and the government it represented?
10. Considering the heavy toll it placed on Harry to live his life as a Top-Gun pilot in the Korean War while at the same time providing a home for himself and his family in Hawaii, how do you think he was able to reconcile these drastic differences in lifestyle?
11. What does the story of Fujisan as a stowaway on a commercial airliner reveal about Irene's sense of humor and her relationship with her boys?
12. How do you think Irene felt traveling as the only civilian woman on a navy ship in the middle of a monsoon with her grade school sons?

13. Consider this quote from the book "The streets, neat and clean, were tightly packed with little shops, sliding bamboo doors, and windows without glass. Pennants, bamboo birds, and whirling little fans danced with the slightest breeze; vegetables and fruit were on display, neatly stacked; kids ran up and down the dirt streets, trailing red, blue, and orange kites, as little bamboo pinwheels whirled frantically." Can you imagine how it felt to be a young child in such an exotic place?
14. Consider the quote from the book "Though Dad was a highly decorated Marine who had flown in two wars and the Formosa conflict under enemy fire and was less than a year away from vesting, the Corps unceremoniously handed him discharge papers." How do you think Harry felt about his commitment to the Marine Corps and the sacrifices he and his family had made for the war efforts after he was denied the military retirement given to other less qualified, less decorated marines?
15. Discuss Roger's nuclear family dynamic while living in Salt Lake City. Can you imagine how Roger felt: winning a state award in debate without the support or attendance of his family, learning how to ski, and then skiing every day after school without his brother or parents?
16. After spending his childhood living in exotic locations around the world, do you think it was unusual for Roger to be awestruck by the alluring, peculiar, and unfamiliar sights/sounds of Manhattan Beach?
17. Do you think Mrs. Reed and Roger's friends in the drama department were essential to him because his brother and parents did not contribute to Roger's learning or his need to feel loved?
18. Do you think Roger's first impressions of Cairo were colored and perhaps enhanced by the hint of international intrigue and surveillance for which Herb prepared him? Thinking about your own life, do you remember a time when you felt like you were being followed?
19. Can you imagine how it would feel to take up arms to defend your family home from an angry mob at the tender age of 18 years old? How do you think Roger felt when he discovered what was really in his parents' locked armoire?
20. Thinking back to Roger's desperate situation of hitchhiking alone in Yugoslavia in the middle of winter, do you remember a time when you were young and impetuous, and your recklessness got you into serious jeopardy? If so, explain how you felt.
21. What do you think Harry meant when he told Roger, "The desert can keep a secret?" What do you think Harry did during frequent junkets into the desert? Who did he take with him, and why?

22. Can you imagine how Roger, at only 19 years of age, felt coming home after two years of traveling the world to live with his aging, infirm grandmother and being responsible for preparing the home for her move into a care facility? How do you think he felt taking on this responsibility immediately after coming to live with her at such a young age? When you were a young adult, were you confronted with aging, illness, and death?
23. How did Roger's father prepare him to thrive in the long days of back-breaking work at the Salmon Fishery?
24. Considering that Roger lived in a shack without electricity or running water on a dirt road with no address, which was a 45-minute walk from the main road, how do you think the Coast Guard found Roger to tell him about his parents' upcoming visit?
25. Consider the influence that Mr. and Mrs. Honea had on the development of Roger's faith. Would he have been so receptive to them if his parents had been more engaged and supportive? Did you have an adult who was not your parent who helped you become who you are today?

Praise for Book

"If you want a romp through history woven like a novel by an enchanting storyteller, you must read *That Which Cannot be Denied*. From the beginning, the stories grip and engage us so that we feel we accompany the unusual character through his adventures to fascinating places around the globe. A brief introduction to his ancestors explains how their life choices impacted their descendants, including Roger Hughes' immediate family.

Hughes' lens is through his personal experiences, but the book reads more like a riveting novel than a memoir. His clarity of historical events and how they impacted people are captivating and serve as the backdrop for the stories. The son of a Top-Gun fighter pilot, Hughes uses humor to diffuse some explosive situations he experienced as a military child and later in life as a young man. You'll find yourself rooting for the protagonist as he guides us through his unusual and compelling observations and encounters.

The photographs add even more delight and impact to his entertaining book. Enjoy!"

[Nannette Rundle Carroll, Author of The Communication Problem Solver](#)

"*That Which Cannot Be Denied* is the compelling memoir of Roger Hughes, a retired lawyer who grew up in the 1950s and 60s as his military-career father shuffled his family across multiple continents. Part homage to his father, an accomplished Marine Corps fighter pilot dedicated to the service of his country, and part nostalgic memories of how his family's nomadic travels and world events defined his developmental years, this skillfully researched book is a sure-fire hit for history buffs, travel enthusiasts, and fans of coming-of-age narratives."

[Jill Hedgecock, book review columnist for the Diablo Gazette & author of award-winning Rhino in the Room](#)

"*That Which Cannot be Denied* is a true story of Roger's father, Harry J. Hughes, a Marine pilot who served in WWII and the Korean war. He was an American patriot and hero. Harry earned "Top Gun" in every training session. Roger lived in the shadow of his older brother Terry and craved love, compassion, and support from his father. He witnessed his father's achievements and dangerous experiences as the family lived throughout the world. The classified secrets Harry took to his grave contributed to peace during the Six-Day War in 1967. Roger received the love and support he desperately needed but didn't receive from his father, from a couple in the Pacific Northwest while his father was still living.

This book is filled with adventure that brings tears, laughter, and surprises that lift your spiritual awareness. A MUST read.”

[Ken Calvert, Director, Business Development, Peet’s Coffee & Tea \(Retired\)](#)

“The real-life saga of the Hughes family, a complex American family with an indomitable spirit, spans over 100 years, five wars, four continents, and many thrilling and hilarious adventures. There are many heroes in the Hughes family. The adventure begins with great grandsire Elsworth Hughes, who worked and fought his way to prominence in Bakersfield, California, earning the reputation as the “meanest man in Bakersfield” in the 1920s.

The story then moves on to Elsworth’s son, Harry, a “Marine tough man” who overcame his lack of a college education to become a Marine Corps officer and “Top Gun” Marine pilot. Upon retirement, Harry was an indispensable covert operative for the U.S. through the Cold War years traveling all over the world with the family in tow—though the family did not really know what Harry Hughes was doing.

Roger, Harry’s younger son, is the book’s author and narrator. He unspools the story of his family as seen through his own eyes and evolving maturity. He shares the “aha!” moments that helped him unlock the family secrets enabling him to now understand his family and himself and the events that shaped them all. Roger shares his personal path to wisdom. Hard-won wisdom requiring Hughes’ indomitable spirit to overcome the challenges on his way to becoming one of the best trial lawyers in California and a man of ever-blossoming personal religious faith. *That Which Cannot Be Denied* is a thrilling ride.”

[David Alexander, Partner, Hanson Bridgett LLP, Former General Counsel, Port of Oakland](#)

“Roger Hughes offers a colorful mosaic of memory in *That Which Cannot Be Denied*. Beginning with the poignant death of his grandfather, he presents first the inner history of the family who formed him and then on to one of the most unique coming-of-age adventures imaginable. In a Forrest Gump manner, Roger, as a result of the mysterious career of his father, appears in a myriad of worldwide places at just the moment that they will supply a story of note.

Beginning humbly in Bakersfield, then on to Surf City, the mountains of Utah, Hawaii, Japan, Egypt, East Germany, Paris, Berlin, Florence, Cook’s Inlet, and more, his tale unfolds. Comedy, tragedy, and adventure all serendipitously merge into the kaleidoscope of his memory and the reader’s pleasure. I put the book down, asking myself, “And then?” Such a beginning cries for the closure of knowing the rest of his story.”

Gary Strankman Administrative Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, First
Appellate District, Division One (Retired)

“Roger Hughes was my law partner for two decades. Over that time, I came to know him as an adventuresome fun-loving prankster, inspiring to all who crossed his path, and, above all, a genuine and kind man. He loved the law. He was a fierce and powerful advocate. And he was a master storyteller: in the courtroom, in front of a jury, in the office, around a dinner table, in church.

He has brought all these qualities to this marvelous memoir about a peripatetic youth, growing up the son of a decorated marine combat flyer and professional spy. *That Which Cannot Be Denied* is a coming-of-age tale that passes through Bakersfield, California; Salt Lake City, Utah; Hawaii; Japan; Irvine, California; Cairo, Egypt; Europe; and the Alaskan Kenai Peninsula. It’s a tale full of adventure that touches on history, ideas, and spirituality. A great read.”

Roland Nikles, Attorney, Writer <http://rolandnikles.blogspot.com>

“The author’s grandfather, “The meanest man in Bakersfield,” and his father, a World War II Marine Top-Gun fighter pilot, are right out of Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* and Tom Brokaw’s *Greatest Generation*. These powerful characters, the author’s muses, form the backdrop of *That Which Cannot Be Denied*, giving context to a compelling “coming of age” story of a young man groping for direction and meaning in life in the 1960s. Accompanied by well-developed humorous anecdotes involving the perils encountered during the travels of the adventuresome author, the reader tours Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Alaska, wondering how it will end. The serendipitous journey concludes with a powerful discovery.

Monte Lake, Retired lawyer, Non-fiction author

“*That Which Cannot be Denied* centers on a young man’s journey from childhood to adulthood, but it’s a much bigger story than that. It is so artfully and richly crafted that it transports readers to a different time and lets them feel the experiences that come from heart-racing adventures around the globe.”

Michael White, Sr. V.P., Strategy & Group Account Director, Young & Rubicam (Retired)

“History doesn’t always reflect the details of what real people experience. However, in *That Which Cannot be Denied*, Roger Hughes provides not only the experiences of four

generations of his family, but he also delights the reader with his storytelling expertise, making for a captivating reading adventure. Roger skillfully tells their remarkable stories as well as his own with affection, admiration, and a captivating sense of humor. After reading this poignant memoir, you will feel like you were there, experiencing the ups and downs of his family's everyday lives and their incredible feats of courage as they gave back to their communities and served as examples of what makes America great."

[Loella Haskew, City Council Member, City of Walnut Creek, CA](#)

"Roger Hughes's autobiography *That Which Cannot Be Denied* takes you on his worldwide journey of discovery. Sit down and enjoy the ride."

[Shellye Archambeau, Author of Unapologetically Ambitious, Fortune Top 10 Business Book of 2020](#)

"Roger Hughes entertains us with his incredible family history and thrilling worldwide travels in *That Which Cannot Be Denied*. I have known Roger for decades, and after reading this autobiography, I now understand why he is so special. I can't wait for the next book!"

[Roy Van Pelt, Lathrop Construction Associates, Retired Partner](#)

"Roger's enthralling book, *That Which Cannot be Denied*, engages the reader in his and his ancestors' history. His mix of pithy humor with prosaic accounts of world travel, blended with world events, makes for a compelling read."

[Alan Bailey, Worldwide Travel Advisor, CruisePlanners](#)

About Roger



Roger M. Hughes honed his captivating storytelling skills during his decades as a successful trial attorney while prevailing for his clients in hundreds of jury trials.

A successful trial attorney, Mr. Hughes was consistently honored by his peers as one of the Best Lawyers in America, as a Northern California Super Lawyer, and on the Chambers USA List of Top Construction Lawyers in California.

He routinely received the highest peer rating from Martindale-Hubbell for ethical standards, legal expertise, and analytical abilities.

Roger was at the forefront of the development of Alternative Dispute Resolution, which made advocacy and conflict resolution more efficient and accessible.

His efforts led to international invitations to speak at such prestigious venues as The Haug and British Parliament on the subject.

As the child of a Marine, Mr. Hughes traveled the world, attending 14 different schools between Kindergarten and High School Graduation.

He launched his undergraduate education in Egypt, where he studied for two years at the American University of Cairo.

Roger returned to the United States to complete his undergraduate degree in International Relations from The University of the Pacific. He then earned his Juris Doctor degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law.

His unique childhood and his father's remarkable life inspired Mr. Hughes to write this book as a legacy for his family and future generations.