

Message and Warning

by
A.H. Trimble

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WEBSITE: <http://www.AHTRIMBLE.COM>

Forward

Why a short story now? I don't know. All I know is one weekend not so long ago I woke up to a small snippet of a story, a scene from a movie playing in my mind. I felt I should write about it. However, I thought that maybe not, maybe just me imagination. To test myself I decided that if I had the same scene and prompting the next morning then I knew I should begin writing the story. The next morning it was there once more. But, my day was full of a task that was fairly critical to the glamstead so I put off the story writing. Later in the week it became an obsession, I had to write the story.

By the following Sunday the almost final edits were done...7,500 words written, the story was complete. My wife read it and approved, heartily so. I knew then why I had the impression to write it at this point in my life.

For those of you that have never read any of my stories let me share this...when I write it starts with nothing more than a snippet of something that comes into my mind. Once I sit down at the keyboard a virtual movie begins to play in my mind's eye...literally as if I was watching a movie. All I do is type it out on the computer screen. That is the same with this story. The one part of this movie was very sacred to me, actually spiritual in nature. I hope you notice.

I hope and pray that you will read the story and *feel* the message that is meant for you. Then share the story with others as you feel prompted to do so.

Sincerely,

A.H. Trimble

CHAPTER 1

My story doesn't end with my death. My message and warning is the story. My message isn't really mine. I am just the messenger. And the warning...well, I am the messenger for that as well.

When does the story start? It started almost two years into the Civil War. Some called it a revolution, others called it a rebellion, most politicians called it an insurrection. Those in power, and wanting to keep that power, called it a rebellion. Whatever it was, it started very gradually before anyone knew it by those who hardly anyone knew. I just called it war. It started with so-called riots in major cities. They weren't really riots, just demonstrations, most with some violence, hardly anything of note. Some of the violence went beyond the pale, but that was rare. It was all, on both sides, just a pretext for what was to come. Oddly, those behind the curtain never anticipated the actual outcome.

As I said it was almost two years into the war but our area had mostly been spared. We lived in what most called a bubble. The area of this bubble was large, covering the region of Arizona referred to as the White Mountains. While we didn't live in a town, we were close to Tyler, Arizona. Tyler was predominately, almost entirely, Christian; although not all active in their faith. Whether God protected our area or not is one of the topics of debate among the locals. Well, it was a topic, it no longer is, the matter was settled that day, late in the day, in Gaume's Field.

What happened that day? Ah, yes...that is part of the story. I will get to the message and warning afterwards. That day was bittersweet to say the least, but one that many are thankful for no matter the horror of it. That day was just an extension of the previous year and a half. The proclamation of martial law sealed everyone's fate, it just took a year and a half to get here, to shatter that bubble. What a glorious event, just I doubt many saw it as such at the time. But that's okay...it was still glorious...looking back.

Fortunately for us we had a couple of men that still had a conscious and faith in God, and were willing to act on both. Those faithful men, the military men of the local occupying force, supplied us a constant stream of information on their unit's activities and plans. Without them, I am not sure what would have happened. We were, and are, very grateful for all they did...and we honor the martyrdom they suffered helping us. They share our joy and happiness with us now.

Two weeks prior to the execution of their unit's plans we were sent word of all the particulars and details; the typical who, what, where, and when was ours to act on. We already knew the "why". The unit was responsible for the governing of our region of

Arizona; the unit consisted mostly of light infantry and mobile, ground-based cavalry companies. The old army unit designations were mostly gone ever since the declaration of martial law, a declaration based on an unfounded claim of insurrection. This unit suppressing our region was “SS-SWAZ”; *State Security – Southwest, Arizona*. The units were designated by the region of the country and then the state. The particular company within that unit for our area was Delta Company. I doubt many in that unit caught the irony of the “SS”, they were young and ignorant of history, many of us older folks understood it very clearly.

We had two weeks to prepare to defend our homes, our families, our freedom, and our faith. It was enough. I should explain who I refer to when I say “we”. We are the residents of Tyler; or I should say the great Tyler area that includes all the homesteads, ranches, farms, and scattered residents...along with the town’s folks. We are about 6,000 folks total all counted. We have a single leader who has a leadership council of twelve people to support him. Under his leadership are four smaller, almost equally sized units who also have a leader and twelve who work with him in a council setting as support. Then there are smaller units made up of smaller units until it gets down to about ten families in the smallest of the units. I lead, or rather led, a group of ten families; they are all dead now.

This was a very effective way to organize Tyler. The families in each unit helped each other. Then, each unit could help those units around it, and then expand as the need grew, the larger units would help other large units, etc. until all could be helped. Basically no family went hungry unless they chose not to participate, and even then food packages would be delivered to those in need regardless of anything else. It was a good system and most believed it was divinely inspired and led to God protecting our little bubble in a very troubled country. For us, it was all about service to others.

But that day the organization was different; there was 2815 of us in all. We were organized by operational specialty, but not all 2815 were operators, only about one-quarter, the rest were family. We were led by Irwin Michael Bishop. I don’t know anyone who called him other than by his last name. Well, untrue. I did call him Irwin once at the very beginning just trying to get a smile...or reaction...it was my odd sense of humor. From then on it was strictly Bishop, I learned my lesson.

For two weeks virtually everyone in the area participated in the preparation to defend ourselves. Since we knew where they were going to strike first and how they were going to get there, thanks to our spies, it wasn’t difficult. IED’s made out of frying pans with a home-brew of chemicals, more IED’s made from propane tanks, and even more made from Tannerite. Molotov cocktails were made, crude hand grenades had already been manufactured and now brought to a central location. What astounded me most were the

two RPGs. It was never talked about, at least to my knowledge, where those came from or who dropped them off. A couple of ex-Army vets stepped forward with knowledge on how they were to be used. They were to be one of the great equalizers that day...or so I thought.

The most fascinating “tools” to be used in our defense were the drones. Lessons learned from the Ukraine-Russian War was the military value of drones...now considered another of the great equalizers. We had almost 50 in the shed, most with some kind of contact explosive to be attached when the time came; the others were simply to provide reconnaissance.

There were two other units that remained a bit cloudy. One was the Sniper Company made up of twenty-two of the best hunters that the area had to offer. These folks, eighteen men and four women, could hit man-sized targets at 600 yards 95% of the time, and the same targets at 1000 yards 80% of the time. Their job was to take out leadership personnel. Starting at the top of the chain of command and working the way down eliminating as much leadership as possible; hopefully creating chaos among their ranks.

The last unit was a dark and truly scary bunch. There were only eight of them I think, all former special forces from one branch or another. Rumor has it that there was two Delta operators, one SEAL, and three Green Berets among them. They kept to themselves and most were glad they did. All of these men were troubled, deeply troubled, as hard-core warriors usually are when their wars and fighting are over. Their dreams haunted them both day and night. Their steel determination to not allow our homes to be conquered was a force of nature...one not to be trifled with. Their mission? I have no idea, no one did. They volunteered to “disrupt” the attack as much as possible. I would not want to be on the receiving end of that mission and unbreakable commitment.

All that being said about the organized defense of our homes, families and freedoms was for nothing. None of it was ever implemented, not a single operation carried out...not a single shot fired by any of us. We all died that day, including me.

Intel had Delta Company of the SS-SWAZ entering the area about 2pm, and our first engagement to start shortly thereafter unless SpecOps would engage them sooner. Next would be the Sniper Unit selectively taking out the leadership the best they could along the route of travel. At that point, or close to it, we figured that they then would rush the column into the fight and then it would be a full-scale battle of regular military vs homegrown resistance. Again, that never happened...it was a slaughter, nothing less.

That morning Bishop called the leadership together all the way down to the Captains of ten families, I was one of them. Whoa! I never, in my wildest dreams, expected what I heard. Bishop spoke for about 10 minutes about faith, God, the Sermon on the Mount,

and to love our enemies. Many were uncomfortable, including me. A few looked serene and very much at peace. Those of us that were uneasy...it made sense. Most of us were veterans and we had been preparing for war, we had been preparing to kill our fellow countrymen, and truth be told, we had been preparing ourselves to sacrifice our lives for others if need be. And here we were at the feet of Bishop hearing just the opposite. All were stunned or peaceful one way or another.

After a heartfelt prayer by a local Baptist minister I didn't know, Bishop asked us to go back to our families and discuss what he had said and ponder his proposal. Then, we were to gather in our units and council one another with our leaders. Finally, we were to gather back together to vote on accepting Bishop's course of action. By noon the leadership was to meet and council with Bishop and make the final decision. A tough decision considering its potential and probable outcome for all.

At that noon meeting it was very short, extremely emotional, and I dare say one of the most spiritual experiences I've ever had in my 70 years. Yes, I am 70 years old and still operational, although not front line.

The decision was unanimous. And oddly enough it was the SpecOps unit that started the vote. Before they voiced their vote, their leader spoke. Their message was clear, from their heart and soul, and it brought tears to everyone, including themselves. You could tell they were worn out spiritually and mentally. They were tired of death and destruction. They wanted rest from the world and their nightmares. The remainder of the vote was taken right after, it went quickly. We had about an hour or so to complete the change of plans and form up in Gaume's Field.

Gaume's Field was a large field on the edge of town. It was usually a hay field of some of the best alfalfa and Bermuda grass in the state. When it was short in the fall many a tag football games were held there. And sometimes the "tag" part was left out when it came to an LDS church league. The Gaume family never objected to folks using it, it was a pleasant place of refuge with its border of large trees and small stream on the north end. Gaume's Field also bordered Highway 360, the road that the approaching SS column would use to enter the area.

By half-past one, maybe a bit later, everyone was there; all the defenders...and their families, 2815 men, women, teenagers, children, toddlers, and infants. Bishop called for silence, although mostly not needed. There was already a very muted atmosphere and only whispers other than the occasional toddler or infant. Bishop shared a short testimony of his faith and God. A prayer was said by his wife. Then almost immediately word came from a drone operator that the column was just minutes away.

Everyone formed up by family, some into units, and all moved into the field starting right at the edge of the road. Bishop, his wife, and children were as close to the road as possible without actually standing on the pavement. Not surprisingly the SpecOps flanked them on either side. The rest of us fanned out in a large group behind them in an expanding semi-circle that was hundreds of people deep. I was towards the back left flank with my wife and our unit members with their families. There was not a single weapon of any kind among us, not even a pocket knife; 2815 people completely defenseless...or so it seemed.

It wasn't long until we heard the first rumble of the Humvee's. There was supposed to be 15 or so, plus two Strikers, and most likely 1 or 2 Abrams tanks. Although that was just the last information we had received two days prior. Each Humvee would be equipped with a 50cal. M2 machine gun or an M240 machine gun. The Strikers would have the standard 50cal. M2 machine gun. We didn't know for sure how many troops would be in the attacking force but we knew they would be individually heavily armed.

As the first of the Humvee's rolled into sight someone began to sing Amazing Grace, it wasn't long till virtually everyone was singing. It sounded like a heavenly choir. There were some who were praying vs singing...and that was okay, we needed all the help we could get. There were some that began a very quiet sobbing, some teenagers were stunned, others unsure, many held younger brothers or sisters. Mothers clutched their babies close to their breast. A few toddlers had broken free of their family and were running around as toddlers do.

A new song began from the far end of the crowd. I couldn't pick up all the words but the melody was absolutely beautiful and calming. As more began to sing it, I picked up the words *"And should we die before our journey's through, Happy day! All is well! We then are free from toil and sorrow, too; With the just we shall dwell!"* My soul was full, my spirit calmed, and a peace settled over me...and so with the entire crowd.

But it was next words of that song that struck deep in me and became very personal...as if they were being sung just for me; *"But if our lives are spared again to see the Saints their rest obtain, oh, how we'll make this chorus swell—All is well! All is well!"* I knew that this was meant for me for some unknown odd reason...but those words were mine to hold, to cherish, to honor...it was very personal.

While we were singing the vehicles had spread out along the road covering our group from one end to the other. None of the soldiers said anything to any of us, they just pointed those mounted weapons at us sweeping back and forth over the crowd but not firing a shot. Now, there were many in our group that began to openly cry, an even larger number knelt to pray, and families huddled together.

Bishop approached one of the vehicles and a man stepped out of the Humvee; a man dressed in a suit and tie, the only person dressed that way. Words were briefly exchanged, then the man pointing back at Bishop's family. Bishop lowered his head, returned to his family, hugged them, and knelt...his family also did so. Those in the crowd who had not yet knelt followed suit. A murmur rippled through the mass as families uttered prayers...their last prayers.

I smiled at my wife, told her how much I loved her, and we began to pray together. A teenage girl from my Sunday School class came over and knelt with us. She had already lost her entire family almost a year earlier. She joined us in our tears and prayer. When we were done with our prayer, still on our knees, we hugged as a family group. Then the first sounds of shots rang out.

It started with the nod of his head from the man in the suit, then an officer gave the command in this radio. Within seconds every machine gun erupted...sending death into our friends and families. It is as if there was a great scything of wheat was taking place. Men, women, and children being cut down in bloody efficiency starting at the front and moving it deadly way through the crowd. I turned to shield my wife and our friend but knowing it would meaning nothing in the end. The bullets from those powerful machine guns would do their devil's work ripping through flesh as if we were nothing more than butter.

At first I had my eyes closed, but felt a desperate need, a driven force, to observe the carnage around me. It was almost unimaginable what was taking place...and the screams of horror made it far more real and intense. I felt the first sting in my shoulder, then my leg, then on the side of my head. I could tell I was falling on my side, my arm wouldn't move to catch me. That is when my wife's chest exploded in three places, her eyes locked on mine as she died. Poor Ann wasn't as lucky, she had been hit maybe four or five times and this precious 14 year old orphaned girl was still alive and suffering greatly in pain.

I don't know how much longer the shooting lasted, but mercifully it did end. Well, only briefly. I was laying on my side unable to move, my head resting on my wife's arm, I was staring at Ann who was mercifully in shock. She would twitch once in a while that I am sure was nothing more that involuntary reflex actions of a dying young lady.

Then the shooting started again, but the sound was much different. I was able to lift my head slightly and there I saw the dismounted soldiers walking among the fallen, sometimes stepping on the bodies since there was so little room they could walk. They were systematically moving among the dead and dying shooting anyone at point blank range if they showed any sign of life. Some of them were laughing and calling out that they had a "live one" before shooting them. Several were taking great pleasure in seeing how many times they could shoot someone before their targeted victim succumbed to

death. I knew I would be one of those; while not fearful, I just wanted it to be over. There was a pain in my soul from this atrocity. Oddly, I felt deep remorse and pity for those behind the guns; what cankerous and darkened souls it would take to do such a thing. Who had corrupted them so?

About that time I saw the last of the life go out of Ann, a young woman who would never see a family or children of her own. A life wasted...and for what? But that wasn't good enough for these demons...they shot into her lifeless body at least five or six times just because they could. She never had to endure their cruelty, she had already passed.

Finally they got to me. I wanted to look into the eyes of the soldier who would finally kill me but I must have passed out or gone into shock. I heard a shot, and thought I felt another sting but there was only blackness. I was dead.

CHAPTER 2

I was wide awake standing in large room. I can't tell you how large a room it was, but it seemed as if it held hundreds of people. The room was odd in that it kept changing size and appeared to have no actual structure to it. I never saw the ceiling, there was something similar to clouds for a ceiling but yet, they weren't clouds. It was a beautiful room, virtually impossible for me to describe in words.

I felt no pain, nothing. Not a single ache, no pain whatsoever. But I knew I had been shot several times and I knew, instinctively knew, I had died. I was dead. But yet here I was observing this magnificent room. There were furnishings in the room, chairs and tables; tables like the ones you would find behind a sofa in a mansion or in a lobby of a fancy hotel. The tables and the frames to the chairs were white, not a brilliant white, more like a soft creamy white. The white almost glowed and shimmered; the most warm white I had ever seen. And that isn't entirely true, I didn't actually see the white, it was more of an experience, a feeling of its warm whiteness.

The cloth of the chairs was a similar but a slightly different white, with very fine strands of gold woven throughout the material. None of the material appeared to have any wear on it, but many people were occupying the chairs as if they were waiting for something. As soon as a chair was vacant another person came along to sit in it. The people were patient and serene in their appearance, joyful.

The tables have gold edging around the tops and symbols on the sides of the tables. I recognized one symbol right away, it appear to be a menorah. I looked around the room at the various tables and saw symbols such as a beehive, one looked like a picture of the tablets of the 10 Commandments, another looked like two sets of scrolls side-by-side, a star on one, then two arms extended shaking hands on an other. I kept looking around, there was a square like I used to build my house, then a compass from grade school that we used to draw circles, another table had a peculiar risen sun with rays extending out in every direction. I looked to my right and there was a starburst, and three circles, and a Star of David on another. Everywhere I looked there were symbols on the tables. No idea why they were there or what they meant, but I knew they were important, I didn't know why.

That was not all that was on the tables, there were vases of flowers that I have never seen before. Flowers of beautiful colors that actually seemed to slowly change from one muted and rich color to another. The vases were another version of the soft warm white, but there were flecks of gold in the vases and the rims of the vases appeared to be rings of gold. Each vase had an image on it, they were all oxen heads but each was different.

As I continued to look around I noticed one end of the room was actually a curtain, a very light curtain flowing ever so slightly with a breeze. But the curtain was almost sheer with, once again, a warm version of white that I cannot describe. Each side of the curtain was slightly different. The side that faced the room had extremely fine strands of golden thread woven into the material. Not too much, just enough to give the material a surreal glint or glow to it, the richness of which I had never experienced before.

The opposite side of the material, that which faced away from the room, was similar, but different. It was a slightly different shade of white, somewhat more dull, or rather slightly more dark, but still a warm shade of white. And this material too has strands in it. They are a brilliant silver and shimmered with reflecting light. This appeared to not be near as bright and beautiful as the curtain's golden side but heavenly all the same. And while the material was sheer, it was not transparent, but nearly so. It was if one was standing in front of it, if they looked closely enough, hard enough, they might be able to see through it. From where I was I could not see through it.

I turned my head to the other end of the room to see if it too had a curtain as beautiful as the one I had just beheld. It did not. Truly, there was no other end of the room, at least no end that would resemble anything of structure. The other end was similar to the ceiling...formless but filled with clouds that continuously shifted in form. It was then I noticed people walking out of those clouds in groups of three and four. I turned back to the curtain and there too I noticed people walking through the curtain as it parted in different places. At the curtain, only one person at a time was walking into the room through the curtain, they were by themselves on this side of the curtain, but a hand had held the curtain back for them from the other side.

At that point I remembered clearly seeing Ann die back in Gaume's Field, then the shooting nearby, and then me being shot and dying. But here I was, alive, and seeing all of this before me. But I was dead, and yet this was as real as anything I had seen in my life...but as if a dream. I became scared and dread came upon me. I began to worry about everything...everything that I had ever done, had ever seen, everything in my entire life... a sense of worry enveloped me.

I then heard a voice beside me, "Why do you worry? Why are you full of dread?" I had no answer, my entire body began to shake.

"Do you not know where you are?" he asked. "No," was my whispered reply, "I do not."

"Fear not. You are here for a reason; to be a messenger and a warning to others."

"Then where am I and who are you?"

Without speaking I then knew where I was but I only had an idea of who the person standing beside me was. As I was standing there I then observed the people coming through the curtain from outside the room, they were my fallen friends from Tyler. Yes, there were others as well, but I didn't know them. I instantly recognized my friends. I also noticed that the children that were coming through the curtain had people with them, holding their hands. Most were talking to the children or answering questions; but all the children had escorts with them. These escorts were gentle, kind, and had a spirit about them that you could feel from any distance. They were marvelous people who dearly loved the children and their responsibility. Strange, not a single infant or toddler was coming through the curtain.

When the people got fifteen feet or so within the room they were met by the groups of people, made up of the three or four, that had come from the other end of the room through the clouds. As each group met the person or child who had come through the curtain they hugged, almost all cried openly, some fell to their knees and began to pray. More than a few began to sing songs of joy that I had never heard before but whose melodies and words pierced and soothed my soul...and seemed distantly familiar.

I knew then that those who were meeting the ones coming through the curtain were relatives. The love that was shared by all within each group was tangible. I could feel it inside my heart. The groups did not linger long, they walked through the room and disappeared as they walked into the clouds opposite of the curtain. As they walked out, more people walked into the room in those small groups to take the place of those that departed.

I turned to the person beside me and said, "I am in heaven but I don't know who you are."

He replied, "This is not quite heaven, but very close. And if the veil had been taken completely off your heart you would recognize me at once. And one day you will."

At that point I felt a wave of joy and happiness overtake me. I turned to the curtain once again and saw Ann walk through. She looked completely whole and well with a countenance I had never seen before. Two people rushed to her and I recognized them immediately, it was her parents. A group of four then rushed to her and I knew they were her brothers and sisters; I recognized them immediately. Together they began shouting "Hosanna!" but it wasn't actually a shout, it was more like a song. I felt immensely relieved with this sight. They walked close by to me and the person beside me, as they did Ann turned to look at me...straight into my eyes she looked...and then smiled. Without saying a word she thanked me and went on with her family into the clouds at the room's end.

The person beside me looked at me with a peculiar expression, “That doesn’t happen often.” He went on, “What you see here are those leaving the mortal life behind and entering preparation for the eternal life to come. The children have loving escorts to ensure they are not frightened and that they understand what is happening. Infants have no need of this.” His voice then changed noticeably, “Not all adults that die from the mortal body come this way. There are others who go to a different realm to learn and grow and make their decisions.”

“Then why am I here, why did no family greet me?” I was saddened and it showed in my voice.

“Because you will not stay, your body is dead but will yet live. Did I not tell you that you were to be a messenger and a warning to others? You haven’t changed much, but you will now that you’ve been here and have been assigned a mission.”

A certain familiarity of this person began to enter into my mind but before I could ask a question he went on, “You and your group made the right choice, the man you called Bishop listened to the Holy Ghost, gave everyone their agency, and all chose correctly, wisely. They all have been here or will be here soon in their appointed time.”

“Will my wife be here? Can I see her? Can I talk to her?” There was a desperation in my voice.

“She has already been through here and moved on. She was met by her parents and great-grandfather, the one who you knew to be a pastor in the Universalist Church many years ago. She is happy and is waiting for you, when it is your time.” He went on, “Life is for joy and happiness, pain and sorrow, tests and trials. Some pass those tests and trials with an eye centered on God. Others, choose incorrectly out of ignorance, some out of rebellion. Those who heaped wickedness upon your group chose wickedness and rebellion...but not all did so as you will see. Many, probably most, will never have had that chance, they will once here and given time and knowledge.”

I started to ask questions, one of which if this person was my father, but he silenced me with nothing more than a sweet but firm glance.

“You will go back, you will share with everyone you meet what you have seen here and tell them all the details. You tell them that their families await them with gladness and joyful hearts if they but choose wisely, centering that choice upon God.” He continued, but in a slightly different tone, “But for those who do not chose wisely all is not lost, but it is better that they choose wisely now. Your days will be extended but not for long. Use each day to carry out your assignment, share the message I’ve given unto you, and warn others of what can happen that is the opposite of what you have seen here in this room.”

I allowed that to sink in and asked, “Are there others like, me a messenger and warning?”

“Yes, but you will not know them. Each has been appointed their own mission. Fulfill yours. When you return here you will come through the curtain. Your wife and father, and your children that were born but gained no mortal life will be waiting...and so much more will await you. Focus not on that, but it will await you. Go now and be that messenger and warning. You are loved.”

CHAPTER 3

I opened my eyes to virtual blackness and pain as I have never felt before. Every part of my body hurt and I couldn't focus my eyes. I also had a hard time focusing my mind on anything around me, as if I was in a haze but conscious...the pain almost overwhelming and difficult to bear would be an understatement.

"He's awake and breathing!! Give me hand over here!!" A voice some distance from me but near at hand, possibly far way...I didn't know, I just heard it. Next I felt hands on me, I was being turned on my side, I heard someone say, "Keep him on his side, let it drain out."

It was then I saw my wife close by, pale gray, and lifeless. I saw too Ann, slightly less pale, eyes open, just as lifeless, her body riddled with bullets. Surprising me, she actually looked as if she was smiling and peaceful; confusing to me. My body screamed with pain, every muscle, every bone, even my blood hurt as it flowed ever so slowly through my body. Then blackness enveloped me again.

It seemed a few seconds later I opened my eyes and it was white all around me except the walls and ceiling which were tan colored. My mind was still a bit hazy but clearing quickly. My body hurt but only slightly, a mere fraction of the pain that I had endured before.

"Glad to see you are back among the living." That came from an attractive but very unkempt, almost dirty woman...she needed to brush her hair, she had bad breath. I began to recognize she was a paramedic or nurse, there was also blood on her clothing, which in turn was also dirty and wrinkled. "Yeah, this ain't some beauty pageant mister. But, I can get one of the gorilla medics over here if you would like." She smiled, tired but mischievous. I liked her attitude immediately.

"You'll do," I weakly replied with what I hoped looked like an impish smile.

"Ah, a sense of humor. I like that. Looks as if you'll live," was her reply.

"How long have I been here?" I figured a couple hours tops for transport and maybe a couple hours laying in bed.

"Well, they say they treated you in that field of horrors for an hour to bring you back. Then they hid you for three days while treated you just to keep you alive. Then it took them four days to get you here. So that comes to about a week give or take."

I fell back asleep trying to understand what she had just said...a week? That couldn't be possible, my mind told me that I was only unconscious for a few hours at most.

Sometime later I awoke in a haze that cleared quickly. It was dark outside and I was famished. The same disheveled nurse came over and shined a light in my eyes, took my blood pressure, and pronounced me 'alive' with some amazement in her voice. "Ah, took a little three day nap did we?" as she walked away.

What? Three days? Impossible!

A few minutes later she reappeared with a tray of food that smelled utterly amazing. In front of me it looked a little less than amazing, I recognized the contents of an MRE immediately. As far as I was concerned it was a five-star meal! I heard her snicker as she walked away...something about I was so hungry I could eat a skunk and say thank you for it. She was right.

Two days later, and seven MREs ingested I was up and walking around, a little unsteady but improving each hour, a virtual miracle if truth be told. I found out that almost all their food was in-fact MREs that had been 'acquired' one way or another from local military units. MREs never tasted so good...except the vegetarian omelet...horrible as ever...but I still ate it.

The most amazing thing I learned...the medics that saved my life, then hid me, and then got me to this field hospital were from the same unit that had shot everyone. The medics and a few others were so horrified at what happened that they deserted as the unit pulled out. Then they searched the scene for survivors. I was the only one. And they couldn't believe I had survived as badly wounded as I was. They were even more surprised that I lasted till I got here. Once here, they knew I could survive just about anything.

They were gone now, back into the field. They had formed several teams that followed the killer units, when they could, and rescued who they could, often no one.

They would tell everyone they met about our entire group surrendering without a single weapon among us. At first they thought we were nuts, crazy to do such a thing. But as time went on, they began to recognize what we had done and realized the deeper meaning to it. More and more groups of so-called rebels were doing the same thing. And more and more soldiers, especially medics, were deserting from the military units all over the country, especially from the occupying units.

As a result areas without suppression units were growing and the iron fist of the government was weakening by leaps and bounds. Some even said it would be no more than a year and the federal government would fall altogether. Amazing! Maybe meaning a fresh start...a new beginning to a Constitutional Republic...maybe.



Three months passed and I had been going from house to house, group to group, town to town telling whoever would listen about my experience. Some folks thought I was telling a story to get money, but I wasn't. Some people politely listened to me but sent me on my way. Quite a few families believed me, invited me to stay in their home and fed me well. I didn't stay long in any one home...I had a message and a warning to share...I had a mission and had to keep going.

Month four brought me word that the medic unit that had saved me had been ambushed and all killed. I was not sad. Inside of me I saw that curtain part for them and their beloved family members waiting to greet them. I had no doubt about them...or that their mission here on earth was fulfilled.

Month six found me walking alone through a beautiful part of a mountain range in Arizona on an amazing spring day. The day before I come across a family of eight squirreled away in a stunning mountain clearing the size of a football field. I shared my story with a feeling I had never had before. As I told my story the mother and father began to cry, the children soon after were all shedding tears.

A week before they had been praying for help from God. They had started to lose faith that the country would turn around and doubted they would survive much longer. And if they didn't survive they were frightened at the prospect there was no heaven; or if there was a heaven, it was not for them. They also shared their fear that if there was a heaven, and they made it there, the torture it would be if they would not know each other. My message dispelled all those fears and doubts. Peace settled over that wonderful family that spring day.

We prayed together in that little cabin for a long time, each offering up part of it. A meal was shared and they invited me to stay the night. The feeling swept over me like a wave that could not be stopped...the answer was clearly 'no'. I politely declined their offer and took my leave.

Hours later under a full moon I slept soundly under the stars in my sleeping bag. I dreamed and dreamed of my family, my wife, my childhood, all those that I had served with, and those who had accepted my message and warning. But most of all, I dreamed clearly of my time in that glorious room so many months before. The warmth of it, the love that I had felt, so much joy and happiness that I had seen. I didn't want to wake up. I longed for that room.

Just after sunrise I did wake up. The dew was heavy and a chill was in the air. I ate the last of my granola bars and heated up a hot chocolate to enjoy before I set off. Most

mornings when I arose I knew exactly what direction to head, and usually a general destination that was to come. This morning was different, very different. Don't get me wrong, I was happy, fed, enjoying the last of my hot chocolate but I didn't have a particular direction to start my day's travel. And there was no indication of any particular destination, none. It was all blank. I was not worried, I had a mission, and it would not be denied.

I drank the last dregs of my hot chocolate enjoying its rich flavor. I picked up my canteen and had sprinkled a bit of water on my small fire to ensure its extinguishment. Just as the steam hissed with a tiny wisp of smoke rising I felt it. It felt like a sledge hammer hitting me in the back. I fell face forward with my chest landing in the smoldering fire. My arms had not caught me, nothing stopped my fall. I remember thinking that my coat would be ruined. Then time seemed to stop, a very odd detaching feeling.

"I've tracked you for two weeks, got you this morning. You should never have built that fire." It was a voice that was distant but close to my ear. I heard another shot...and all went black.

Oddly, I was standing there looking at my body laying in the last of the nearly out fire. The man bent over my body and cut off my ear, it didn't hurt, no pain registered. A weird unsettling smile, almost as if a sense of satisfaction, was on his face as he tucked the body part in a pouch hanging on his side. Actually he had cut off the ear of my body that was laying on the ground...not the body from which I was observing the scene. As he walked away, "And I don't even have to put out the fire. Wouldn't have anyways."

My senses went black for a moment, but I was conscience of something happening around me, but I knew not what.

Chapter 4

The blackness vanished in a moment. I was approaching this almost sheer warm creamy white curtain that shimmered with silver threading. Yes, I recognized it at once. Almost unbelievably Rick was there. Rick had shared the gospel with me and led me to God when I was 21 years old and a seasoned US Navy sailor. Rick was just as I remembered him from 50 years ago, young, straight, with a head full of blonde hair. He smiled at me with a deep brotherly love. He shook my hand, warmly embraced me, and he pulled the curtain back for me to pass through. I stepped into the room...that glorious room I had been in before.

The first person I saw was the one who had talked to me in that room some months before. But this time he hugged me and welcomed me home. He didn't say a single word my ears heard, it was more as if I could hear his spirit talk to mine. I instantly recognized him from pictures long ago discovered in a lone beat up box from my childhood home's basement. The pictures were of a man in the early years of World War 2, working on a P-40 fighter plane in Africa. A thin man, not very tall, weathered from the African sun, sporting a rakish mustache, and thinning hair. My father stood before me.

Then my wife, now a beautiful and enchanting young woman in her mid-20's, ran into my arms and hugged me as I've never been hugged before. Again, spirit to spirit she told me how much she had missed me, hugged me tighter and told me everything was fantastic and was going to be even better now. She was excited for me to meet all of her family and our children, but that would come later. For now, she said, there are things you must do and your father will guide you.

My father took my hand, something he had never done when I was a child, and led me to the far end of the room. He turned, looking me straight in the eye, and let me know he was very sorry he had left me at such a young age, that had never been his intent. I had been only 17 at the time and a sailor fresh out of boot-camp. The sickness was too much for his body to endure at his older age of 72 when he had passed. We simply smiled at each other, all was forgiven, all was good, this was my father and I knew he loved me without conditions.

As we left the room we stepped into the soft, warm, quiet clouds...

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Author's Endnote

This was an odd story for me to write. In the story's "Introduction" I shared 'how' my writing the story came to be, I still don't entirely know the 'why' part of writing it. The story seemed somewhat out of character for me, especially so when you consider my previous stories and books.

I believe that the United States has entered a very new phase of its existence, quite possibly its last. We had the birth phase pre-1790. That was truly an amazing miracle of history in every aspect. A rag-tag bunch of farmers, business men, tradesmen, and explorers...along with some very brilliant minds...banded together and defeated the most powerful military in world and overcame oppressive tyranny and heavy taxation imposed by the strongest country in the world. And did so with principles that politically changed the world.

The next phase lasted until 1860...the growth phase. This time period saw a young country grow, expand, and find its place in the world. A force to be reckoned with, once again defeating that same powerful tyrannical country and soundly defeating its immense professional military. The awe inspiring geographical vastness of our country began to truly impress itself upon us along with its potential.

Starting in 1890 the United States saw the implementation both of good and evil. Universities and colleges came into being, but the US Army massacred hundreds of Native American men, women, children, and infants at Wounded Knee...a 'battle' it wasn't, a merciless slaughter it was. Industry flourished, inventions were plentiful, and the population was growing significantly. In 1892 the "Pledge of Allegiance" came into being...originating from a flag manufacturer that wanted to sell more flags to schools. The pledge itself written by a man who was a socialist, a racist, and an advocate for a powerful authoritarian federal government. Movies were invented, unions began their rise to power, cars came into existence, the Gold Rush began, 1898 was the beginning of the militarization and expansionism of the United States, and the Anheuser-Busch brewery company was established. But all of this was just the precursor for that phase's evils that earnestly began in 1910.

Starting in 1910 we saw the part of that phase that ushered in the birth of the authoritarian federal government (i.e. police state) of the United States. The beginning of the destruction of state's rights, the legalization of the government forcibly taking people's hard-earned income, the US joining a world war that wasn't ours to fight, the creation of the FBI, the Federal Reserve, the first step in destroying the 2nd Amendment, and so much more evil. This phase lasted through to the beginning of the Cold War after World War II. We also saw the election of the first socialist President.

In the post-WWII phase we saw the creation of the oppressive police state tools such as the CIA, ATF, and DEA. We saw the US dollar taken off the gold-standard and its

downward value spiral, the US facilitating the rise of Communist China, our loss in the Vietnam & Korean Wars, and world-wide military expansionism of the US. We also saw the election of a CIA operative as President.

The 2000's phase we saw the refinement of the police & surveillance state and the lock-down of freedoms in the US. We saw the elimination of personal privacy and two wars that we lost. And the complete polarization of the US electorate and an illegal immigrant invasion by the 10's of millions. We also saw not only the election of the first Marxist as President but another who demonstrated that he was clearly authoritarian.

And that is where we are today.

Now, don't get yourself all worked up, I know there were some amazing things accomplished along the way. The US finally abandoned slavery, women got the right to vote, and the medical advancements were nothing short of miraculous. The Civil Rights Movement, though long overdue, started the correction of some major societal ills. The US played a major role in the defeat of Nazi Germany, and we saw the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union. And yes, much more in the spirit of positive events.

And it really isn't the negative/evil events that took place that is the point...it is all of them collectively in succession. You see we got where we are today in the US not by a single major event, or two or three...but by a long string of major and minor events spread out over the span of 135 years. Those events collectively changed the federal government to be an all-powerful authoritarian entity vs a restricted and limited federal government designed by the Founders and legally documented in the US Constitution. Those collective events virtually eliminated many of the rights outlined and protected by the US Bill of Rights. The events brought us to the point where personal privacy is virtually unknown in today's world. The events made it possible for over half the of citizens of the US to pay no income tax (i.e. live on welfare)...as is also case with the super-rich...while the middle-class and lower upper-class pay the bills. And all levels of government now collectively claim the right to, and forcefully collect, an average of nearly half of all wages earned by middle-class US citizens. And the same middle-class has been dramatically shrinking over the last 55 years.

How did this happen? Slowly, one step at a time, sold to us by unscrupulous and corrupt politicians (both parties) and corporations over the course of the last 135 years.

What does this have to do with my short story "*Message & Warning*"? Everything. You see, in the story the US federal government just took the next step that is inevitable. It is the *trajectory* that the government is on in today's world. Ask yourself...Based on where we are in today's world here in the US, and the trajectory of our last 135 year history, what is the next logical step for the government?

And don't fool yourself with short-term anythings. The US is on a trajectory that will not, cannot, be stopped. No one with enough power will, or has any desire to, stop the natural progression the US is on. Granted, there are some who believe that a civil war or another armed revolution can right this ship. No, neither option can. Either would produce a horrific disaster of immense proportions...the likes we can hardly even imagine. And in all reality, either course of action will simply expedite the accomplishment of their ultimate goal...a totalitarian state.

The short story I wrote was to show an alternative. Romans 12:21 "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Here is the issue for many...they don't believe in God or ~~they~~ we don't have enough faith. Try this...if there is a God, then Jesus came to earth, and the messages of the Bible's New Testament are true, therefore the message in Romans 12:21 is true.

Please consider the option of fighting evil with good.

Don't misconstrue the meaning or misunderstand the message of which I speak. I am not saying lie down and allow yourself to be abused. I am not saying not to defend yourself. I am not saying that the 2nd Amendment is null and void. I am not saying that self-defense is not a natural God-given right. And I am not saying the Bible is incorrect when it tells us to defend our families. And trust-me, I am not saying our Founders did the wrong thing by beating tyranny and oppression with force of arms.

What I am saying...at this point in time, in this phase of US history, with this national situation we find ourselves in...will violence solve the problems of society and government?

I believe in God, I believe in His Son Jesus Christ, I believe in the Plan of Salvation through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, I believe in heaven...I believe. And since I do, I also believe that if I choose the right it will be better for me in the long run...whatever that 'long run' may be and how it plays out.

As I now see it, my short story was to create a dialog within ourselves. To listen to our heart, to reflect on our beliefs and faith, to consider a more heavenly, more Celestial option. An alternative course of action that might be more in keeping with the teachings of Jesus Christ...and therefore ultimately successful in the end.

As a believer I have faith there is a life to come after this brief, momentary blip of life on earth. My choices here on earth matter...somehow, someday. May each of us search our hearts and souls to find the answer for ourselves what those choices are and then the strength to carry them out. Please find the *message* meant for you.

Sincerely,

A.H. Trimble