

In the Aftermath – Chapter 1

My boss, Seth, and his wife Naomi had invited Rose and me up to Lake Arrowhead for Christmas. I was a bit leery at first because Seth and Naomi are Jewish and I presumed that they celebrate Hanukkah instead of Christmas. I mentioned my concern to Seth and he laughed. Then he lectured me on Jewish Christians.

"Jewish Christians" today are persons who are ethnically Jewish but who have become part of a "mainstream" Christian group, which is not predominantly based on an appeal to Jewish ethnicity or the Law of Moses. This term is used as a contrast to Messianic Jews, a majority of whom are ethnic Jews who have converted to a religion in which Christian belief (often of a very evangelical nature) is generally engrafted onto Jewish ritual which would, to outsiders at least, typically resemble Judaism more than Christianity.

There are important similarities and differences between "Jewish Christians" (or "Hebrew Christians") and "Messianic Jews". Jewish Christians identify themselves primarily as Christians. They are (mostly) members of Protestant and Catholic congregations, (usually) are not so strict about observing kosher or the Sabbath, and are (generally) assimilated culturally into the Christian mainstream, although they retain a strong sense of their Jewish identity, which they, like Messianic Jews, strongly desire to pass on to their children. In Israel, there is a growing number of Orthodox Christians who are of Jewish descent and conduct their worship mostly in Hebrew. Messianic Jews consider their primary identity to be "Jewish" and belief in Jesus to be the logical conclusion of their "Jewishness". They try to structure their worship according to Jewish norms, they circumcise their sons and (mostly) abstain from non-kosher foods, and (often) observe the Sabbath. Many (but by no means all) do not use the label "Christian" to describe themselves. The boundary between the two movements is blurred; because of the differences between the two movements, it is not fair to treat them as one, any more than one would treat Baptists and Methodists as a single entity, for example.

This doesn't have much to do with what happened, but when I sat down to record the events, I thought that I should include everything. Christmas 2006 was the same as Christmas every other year and was on December 25th. Last year, the media didn't have a lot of news to report and they were hammering on the fact that some businesses had taken Christ out of Christmas. Even the president and Mrs. Bush had economized and sent a Christmas Card to 1.5 million people that said 'Happy Holidays.'

There are 2 times every year when most of us renew our Christian faith, Easter and Christmas. On the 25th of December, we celebrate His birth and around Passover, in the spring, His death and resurrection. The rest of the year, we study His teachings and listen to the Pastor tell us what it all means. If you been to church once, you know and if not, why not?

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December 25th 2006 was on a Monday. The invitation was to come up on Friday, December 22 and spend the weekend. There's just Rose and me, Diane is grown and married and living in Pueblo, Colorado. We live in Lancaster and to get to their cabin, we took state 138 down to state 18 and over to Lakes Edge Road and on through Blue Jay to their cabin. They weren't right on the Lake, but you could see it from their front porch.

I'm Seth's Assistant Manager in his business, Rim of the World Preparedness. I think maybe he got the name from the name of Highway 18. We deal in the usual survival and preparedness supplies, MRE's, equipment, gas masks and the like. One of the items we sell is a 72-hour BOB that Seth gave everyone for Christmas one year. Long before California went crazy and outlawed half of the guns in

the world, I had a pretty impressive gun collection. I spent a lot of money in North Ridge at Sherwood Gun Shop. Right next door was another gun shop, I forget the name and they're both long gone, and they got a piece of the action.

I got out of the Air Force after 20, my last tour was at Edwards AFB, and went to work with Seth. The business was located in Canyon County, now called Santa Clarita. We had a storefront but most of our business came over the Internet. We had a computer geek, Eddie, who ran a server and we were connected to the Internet by a couple of T-1 lines. Most of the building was a warehouse where we stored goods and packed and shipped orders.

Business had been brisk, the world was in a sorry state and I think people were worried. There was the avian flu scare, Homeland Security was talking about another terrorist plot they'd stopped and New Orleans was still a mess from the year before. The winter of 2005-2006 had been tough on the Midwest and the Northeast. We were shipping N-95 and N-100 masks by the case and people were buying MREs. Seth had assembled a 'home protection kit' that consisted of a large roll of plastic and 4 rolls of duct tape. Good item this fall. The website had all of the Homeland Security recommendations and we carried a range of trauma kits.

We'd been to their cabin any number of times and the basement was filled with supplies from the shop. Seth implied they were his backup supplies in case something became hard to get, but not once in the time I'd worked there had we ever gone to Arrowhead to pickup something we were out of. If you ask me, it was his personal stash and he had things there we didn't carry at the store. Seth had 2 Fort Knox Gun Safes and a couple of years back, he showed me the contents. And, I thought I had a lot of guns!

I asked and he said he had 10,000-rounds for every long arm and 2,000-rounds for every handgun. The most I had was ammo for my HK91s, 5,000-rounds for each of the 2 rifles. I suppose my gun collection fell into categories; I had my military arms, my police type weapons and my cowboy guns. In the military category, I had the 2 HK91s, 2 sniper rifles, a Springfield Armory Super Match with a pair of scopes and Harris bipod, and a Barrett M82, .50BMG, also with a pair of scopes. For handguns, I had a pair of Kimber Custom TLE/RL IIs. As far as the law enforcement weapons went, I had a pair of Remington 11-87P shotguns in 12-gauge and a pair of .357 magnum S&W revolvers. I guns I loved the best were my cowboy guns.

My rifle was a .45 Colt model 94 and Rose's was a .357 magnum. I had 2 revolvers, a 7½" and a 4¾", both genuine Colt SAA in .45 Colt. Rose's revolver was a Colt SAA in .357 magnum. We bought our leather in Burbank from Alfonso. We both had the James Arness rig and I had a shoulder holster for my short-barreled Colt. It was the holster Val Kilmer wore in Tombstone. By the way, neither of us rides, so that fact that I had rifle scabbards was strictly for show. There was a 4th category, hunting guns that included 12-gauge and 20-gauge Remington 870 Express combos, a pair of Marlin 39A rifles and a pair of S&W model 617 .22LR 10-shot revolvers with 6" barrels.

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"Do you have any idea what time Rose and you will get up to Arrowhead tomorrow?"

"Maybe 2pm, is that ok?"

"Sure, but could you do me a favor?"

"Probably, what do you want?"

"I'd like to see your gun collection, Joe. I've heard you talk about it several times, but I've never had a chance to see it."

"All you had to do was drive to Lancaster."

"Never had time. Bring all of your guns and any accessories, you might have."

"Ammo too?"

"Maybe not all of it, but enough so we can do some shooting. Don't worry about it, I supply you with replacement ammo."

"Rose will raise holy h*ll when I start loading guns into the SUV."

"Tell her that you're just humoring me. You really should be better prepared, I think the only thing you have is that BOB I gave you for Christmas in 2004."

"Not so, oh, wise one. I bought 10 cases of MREs, a Katelyn water filter and a top line trauma bag."

"I won't believe that until I see it with my own eyes."

"I'm not hauling 10 cases of MREs."

"Fair enough, bring the trauma bag and I'll believe you."

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"What are you doing?" Rose asked.

"Loading the guns and our supplies into the SUV."

"Why?"

"Blame Seth, he wanted to see our entire gun collection and then kidded me about our not being prepared. That sort of irked me so I decided I show him exactly what we have. I'm taking everything we have in the way of survival supplies. The ammo, the MREs, the Trauma Bag, the water filter and the guns and cases."

"You old goat, you're doing a whole lot of work for nothing. What is it with men and their 'Boy Toys'?"

"I think we all wanted to be Hopalong Cassidy when we were kids."

'Boy Toys'? A Harley Davidson is a 'Boy Toy' but I can't see how she could classify a gun collection as a 'Boy Toy'. A Ford Shelby Cobra may be a 'Boy Toy', but how can you call a 2006 Lincoln Navigator 4x4 Ultimate with the Elite package, a Warn winch and after market auxiliary fuel tank a 'Boy Toy'? For the price, I suppose I could have bought a real 'Boy Toy'. I get about 16mpg on the road and I carry 28 gallons in the tank and another 28 in the auxiliary. No way was I going to pull the 6.5kw genset just to prove a point.

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“Do you have everything?”

“I didn’t take the generator, but I loaded everything else.”

“Here take this and put it anywhere you can find room.”

“What is it?”

“A Christmas present for Seth and Naomi.” Bog boxes!

“Mind telling me what we got them?”

“You’ll see.”

“It had started to snow, lightly, in Lancaster and by the time I got to Phelan, I kicked in the 4WD. That’s a mean stretch of road between Phelan and I-15. Once we got to I-15, I went straight ahead instead of turning south on the Interstate. It looked like we’d miss out on a White Christmas in Lancaster. The Antelope Valley seems to get about one good snowstorm a year and the equipment the cities and LA County have to deal with it is painfully thin. With any kind of luck, they might have the streets cleared by Wednesday, 2 days after Christmas.

I’m really not all that familiar with the Lake Arrowhead area. Other than the occasional visit to Seth and Naomi’s cabin, we never went down there. They lived in the Sand Canyon area of Santa Clarita, but Seth had his cabin in the mountains since before I met him. They spent summer vacation and every holiday up at Arrowhead. The cabin was one of those log homes you see advertised from time to time. It was very spacious and no doubt Seth had made a lot of money over the years selling survival supplies. He had a propane fueled 15kw backup generator with a 1,800-rpm engine and a 3,000-gallon tank of propane. We were an hour late arriving because of the roads.

“Get lost?”

“No, the road went south on me and I had to switch to 4WD and drive slow from Phelan.”

“I figured as much, aren’t you glad you bought the ‘Boy Toy’?”

“Et tu, Brute?”

“Rose giving you a bad time about the Navigator?”

“Rose was giving me a bad time about loading all of our survival supplies in back. The only thing I didn’t bring was our generator. You implied that I wasn’t prepared and I wanted you to see what we have. Feel free to comment on anything you think I missed.”

“Pull your SUV into the spare space in the garage and let’s take a look.”

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“You’ll get mighty sick of MREs. What you should do is buy one of those food deals from Walton Feed, enough for the 2 of you for a year. They don’t take a lot of space and the only things you need to add are oil and sugar.”

“Any other criticisms?”

“You don’t have any radiation detection equipment.”

“Only a madman would start a nuclear war.”

“I agree. You have 10 cases of MREs, that’s 120 meals, enough for the 2 of you for 60 days, assuming you eat light. If we did have a nuclear war, you might need to shelter for 100 days, what are you going to live on?”

“I don’t believe we’ll have a nuclear war in the first place. And even if we did, I don’t have a shelter so it doesn’t make a whole lot of difference, Seth.”

“Sometimes, you’re a very silly man, Joe. You only have minimal ammo and I don’t see anything to deal with radiation. You’re short on food and I don’t see a prescription for Tamiflu.”

“I asked, but the doctor declined to write a prescription unless we were actually sick.”

“Well, I don’t like it, not one d*mned bit. I wasn’t sure what we were going to give Rose and you for Christmas, but now I know. I have spares of a lot of the things you’re missing. I must say that I like your weapons collection, but why 2 calibers in the cowboy guns?”

“A .357 magnum has about the same power as a .45 Colt. But it has the advantage of shooting .38 special and most of the time Rose prefers to shoot the lower powered ammo.”

“It makes sense in a distant sort of way. The problem with that is you have a mix of ammo, .38 Special and .357 magnum. It would be better if she just became accustomed to the .357 magnum.”

“Right, you tell her. I had enough trouble just to get her into shooting to begin with.”

“You married a sheeple?”

“Back when we got married the term wasn’t in vogue, Seth. Rose considers guns to be ‘Boy Toys’.”

“Have you been paying much attention to the economy?”

“Just what they report in the papers, gold is hovering around \$600 an ounce. I don’t see that we’re in a recession, sales have been good this year.”

“Ah, sales. Best year I ever had. But think about that, we sell survival supplies. Doesn’t that suggest to you that a lot of people are concerned?”

“I can’t deny that, now can I?”

“Bush and Rumsfeld reduced the troops in Iraq to under 100,000, but I believe they were simply submitting to public pressure. Homeland Security is a joke, but it isn’t very funny. They couldn’t even handle a hurricane. For the first time in history, Air Marshals shot a guy who claimed he had a bomb and they were roasted over the coals. What do you think would happen to this country if we really had a major terrorist event? What would happen if we really had an avian flu pandemic? I can tell you, people would panic and they’d blame everyone from God on down because they weren’t prepared. It would be everyone’s fault but their own.”

“So what are you going to do for a shelter, Seth? Some kind of improvised shelter in the basement?”

“Improvised? Is that the way I strike you, Joe? As a man who would improvise?”

“I didn’t mean anything bad by my remark, but I’ve never seen any sign of you having a shelter.”

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Seth led me to the basement and walked over to a cabinet that he used to store medical supplies and opened it. He pushed on a latch and the cabinet sprang away from the wall about 2”. He closed the doors to the cabinet and pulled it open to reveal a door. I’ll be d*mned, it was a door like on a vault. He turned the dial and swung the door open without saying a single word. He motioned I should follow him. It was a well-lit stair that descended about 2 full flights, 16’. At the bottom was another of those vault doors. He opened it and bade me enter.

“Have a look around, Joe. It’s your turn to critique and you can tell me anything that you think I missed.”

“How thick are the walls?”

“One foot of reinforced concrete.”

“How big is this shelter?”

“Same size as my basement, the interior dimension is 44’ long by 36’ wide. It’s covered by 16’ of heavily compacted earth. The radiation protection factor is high, 10 to the 12th power, without counting the protection factor of the concrete.”

“I’m impressed. I assume you have a storage room?”

“Behind the kitchen, and it has enough of the food from Walton for 8 people for 2 full years in addition to 2 24ft³ freezers full of meat that has been vacuum packed and is rated good for 4 full years. In the basement upstairs is enough more Walton food for 2 more years for 8 people. I have a complete communications setup with a pair of radios, a primary and a backup. I bought one of those Kenwood AREC Kits, they have a mobile radio, 6 2-meter HT’s and a pair of FreeTalk HTs for the family channels. I have antennas on masts. It’s all remotely controlled from my radio shack. My garage is a Faraday Cage so any vehicle parked in it is protected against EMP. I’m in the business and if I don’t epitomize the truly well prepared individual, no one does. Besides, I got most of the stuff at cost.”

“You know my boss gives us an employee discount that’s pretty close to cost and that’s why I have as much stuff as I do, Seth,” I chuckled.

“Your boss also has a bonus program that you don’t know anything about, Joe. You’ve always complained when the bonus was smaller than you expected, but I only gave you half of your bonus. I put the remainder away for you in the safe in gold.”

“You don’t say, how much do I have?”

“You understand that I bought the gold for \$300 an ounce several years ago, right? I wrote it off as bonuses when I bought it and always carried it at \$300 an ounce. Whatever I paid you in bonuses, you have the same amount in gold at \$300 an ounce. I can’t keep track of what I pay everyone so if you don’t know, neither do I without looking.”

“Funny I never saw any packages of gold in the safe.”

“Right, I didn’t say which safe.”

“I didn’t know you had more than one.”

“I have the one at the office and the one in this shelter. Your gold is in this shelter and it is probably safer here than in a bank.”

“Seth, more than once we could have used that money, you know.”

“Of course, but if I’d given it to you you’d have spent it. You compare your bonus with what anyone else received working for me or with like business firms. The bonus you received in your hands was more than most firms pay. But, you were a valuable asset to the firm and I decided a long time ago to put away a little extra for you. I’m glad now that I did; I think it’s going to come in very handy in the very near future. You gave me one thing money can’t buy, loyalty. You’re aware that we got a shelter in from a vendor right?”

“I couldn’t find any record of a customer ordering that shelter.”

“No one did. I ordered it to put in at your place in Lancaster. Our accountant says that we could buy and install a shelter as a demonstration site. Once we have it installed in your place, we’re going to start marketing the shelters.”

“That’s a fancy one, it has all the bells and whistles.”

“We have to be able to show potential customers what’s available. We’re going to pull the permits and install it 10’ deep because it is 10’ in diameter. It has several built-ins including LUWA System and a 10kw generator. There’s only one condition, Rose has to be available to show it if we have a customer who wants to see it.”

“Cheap at twice the price.”

“I had them put in some things that couldn’t go in after it was assembled, I hope you don’t mind.”

“Like what?”

“That kitchenette isn’t standard and neither is the upright freezer. That’s a regular toilet, not the chemical toilet and there is a gray water tank under the floor that can be emptied into your city sewer. Personally, I’d rather install a septic system for you and put in a well. In an emergency, you won’t be able to count on city water and sewer, especially if we get a big earthquake.”

“Seth, you should do whatever you want. I’m quite sure that Rose won’t mind showing the shelter in exchange for our having one.”

“Does your Navigator have a towing package?”

“Sure.”

“Good, because you’re going to need a trailer to move things if you have to bug out from Lancaster.”

“And go where?”

“You can come here. I only intend to put in a one-year supply of food and fuel for your shelter. That will allow the 2 of you to weather whatever comes your way and then bug out when it’s safe to leave. If something happens here and this place become untenable, we’ll come up there.”

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“... and all you have to do is show it if someone makes an appointment to see it, Rose.”

“As long as I get advanced warning so I don’t have to change my plans, I can’t see that it’s a problem. Do you really think we need a shelter?”

“I don’t believe that we’re going to have a nuclear war if that’s what you’re asking. But an earthquake is always possible. I suppose they could always have a meltdown at Diablo Canyon and that would bathe us in radiation.”

“Where is Diablo Canyon from here?”

“I looked it up. It is 149 miles (240 km) (129 nautical miles) away with an initial heading from Avila Beach to Lancaster of east-southeast (102.3 degrees). If you assume the average wind is 10mph, we’re about 14 hours away and right in the path of any fallout.”

“And you don’t believe we’re going to be attacked with nuclear weapons?”

“Only a madman would do that. Let me ask you Rose, who would be crazy enough to attack the most powerful nation in the world with nuclear weapons?”

“How much time do you have? Kim Jong Il, Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei, Osama bin Laden, need I go on?”

“I believe what you are suggesting is terrorist attacks, Rose. North Korea is credited with having 10 nuclear weapons. Bin Laden is accused of buying stolen Russian suitcase nukes and I sincerely doubt that Iran has more than 3 weapons, if that.”

“What would happen if someone, any terrorist will do, detonated a nuclear weapon at either Diablo Canyon or San Onofre?”

“Those 2 plants generate about 19% of California electrical power. We’d lose our lights and have a terrible mess to clean up. The prevailing winds would probably carry the radiation to the east. I suppose the radiation could reach from Yuma to Las Vegas.”

“So we don’t need a nuclear attack to need a shelter?”

“No, I suppose not.”

“When are they going to install it?”

“I suppose as soon as they get the permits pulled and the snow melts, probably next week.”

“How big is the shelter?”

“It is 10’ in diameter and 50’ long. It will have to go in crosswise because we don’t really have enough

distance going straight back from the house.”

“What else are they putting in?”

“A propane tank to power the generator and the shelter. Seth said he wanted to drill a well and put in a septic system.”

“Are you going to let him?”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 2

“I think it’s a set. In other words, it is an all or nothing proposition. Yes, I suppose so.”

“You can tell him tomorrow to go ahead.”

“What did you get them for Christmas?”

“You’ll see.”

Arvo Ojala, 85, a legendary Hollywood quick-draw expert who appeared as the bad guy who loses the gun duel with James Arness' Marshal Matt Dillon in the opening of the long-running TV series "Gunsmoke," died July 1, 2005 in Gresham, Oregon. Ojala built the original Paladin Holster. Alfonso Pineda, the founder of Alfonso's of Hollywood who now sells the holster was a competitor of Ojala. During the "hay-day" of Fast Draw there were three major makers of Fast Draw rigs. These were Arvo Ojala, Andy Anderson and Alfonso Pineda, known as Alfonso of Hollywood. Interestingly, Anderson and Alfonso both started in the Hollywood leather business working in Arvo's holster shop. The most famous TV Western rig was the Ojala rig used by Richard Boone as Paladin, the plain black rig with silver chess knight on the holster. While the rigs were being produced in the shop, Arvo was teaching the stars how to look good on film making a Fast Draw. The stars of the early "Adult" TV Westerns all used Ojala rigs. These included the stars of Gunsmoke, Wyatt Earp, Have Gun Will Travel, Bonanza, Cheyenne, Maverick and Lawman. While John Russell stayed with his Ojala rig throughout the run of Lawman, Deputy Johnny (Peter Brown) soon switched to an Anderson Walk and Draw rig. Don Durant, as Johnny Ringo, used an unusual custom Ojala rig that allowed him to Fast Draw the large and heavy LeMatt sixgun.

By 1959, at the first Colt-Sahara National Fast Draw Championship in Las Vegas, the rig of choice was the Ojala rig, though new Champion Gary Freymeller used a custom Anderson rig. Many of the later TV Westerns used Anderson rigs. These included Rawhide, The Virginian, Branded, Guns of Will Sonnet, Man Called Shenandoah, Henry Darrow's unusual swivel rig on High Chaparral, and Laredo. Future super stars Steve McQueen and Clint Eastwood used Anderson leather exclusively, as did Thell Reed. By the mid 1970s, Anderson had suffered a series of strokes and was forced to retire and close the Gunfighter shop. (Written by Pineda's son, Omar, and another fella.)

I told you we had James Arness rigs. It was Alfonso's most sought Hollywood western holster. Price: Single 5½" holster (right or left) and gun belt rig in plain dark tan finish \$325.00. Available for Colt or Colt replicas in 45/44-40/357, S/AA, in 5½", 7½", and 10½" buntline. It's also available for the Ruger Vaquero, Ruger Vaquero Bisley, in comparable calibers and barrel lengths. The Paladin rig went for \$625 in the 7½" model.

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That's how Rose and I ended up with a shelter. It belonged to the company and was a demonstrator.

I didn't tell her about the bonus money Seth had in his safe. I had several reasons, but perhaps the most important was that Seth hadn't given me the gold. I went back to my tax returns and added up my bonus money. He had said that that was half, so I figured I had the same amount in gold, all purchased at \$300 an ounce. With gold pushing \$600 an ounce, it was a lot of money. Moreover, it was in Seth's safe, out of sight, out of mind.

On Christmas morning I finally learned what 'we'd' gotten them for Christmas. After I saw the shelter Seth had buried beneath his house, I was concerned that Rose hadn't gotten them anything appropriate. Then there was the matter of that demonstrator shelter. And, the gold in Seth's safe. Rose knew about those 2 guns safes Seth and Naomi had in the basement and bought them something special. Model 94, Legacy Case-Colored Octagon in the 26" barrels in 38-55 Winchester. They were very nice looking rifles and reasonably priced at under \$1,000 each. It was the first 'cowboy' gun that Seth had in his arsenal.

She also provided them with a single case of the ammunition, 200 rounds of 255 gr. Super-X Soft Point. I knew that the 30-30 had more energy, but these rifles were something to behold. The 38-55 cartridges had about double the energy of the .45 Colt so they seemed like a good way to start off a collection of 'cowboy' guns.

On Tuesday, Seth was late getting in, not coming through the door until 11am.

"Trouble getting down the mountain?"

"Shopping. That gift Rose and you gave us started something."

"Oh, looking for a revolver?"

"Revolvers, leather and more ammo. Naomi saw the Paladin rig on Alfonso's website and told me to get her one. Nice looking rig, so I got her one in .45 Colt for a 5½" Colt SAA and myself one for the 7½" Colt SAA. You might think I'm foolish, but it's only money. Bought the weapons in the name of the corporation and ordered several cases of .45 Colt ammo and more of the 38-55 Winchester. Where did you get the scabbards for your rifles?"

"El Paso Saddlery for \$145 each. They come in 16", 20", 24" and 26", are suede lined and include the straps. You do know that we got the scabbards as a lark because neither of us ride."

"The permits came through and they'll start installing the shelter, tanks and other things tomorrow. You did discuss this with Rose, right?"

"Yes and she agreed to show the shelter by appointment."

"What about the well and septic system?"

"Oh, I told her it was a package deal."

"Mind if I ask where you bought the rifles?"

"I don't mind, but neither do I know. That was entirely Rose's doing. I assume she bought them through the Gun Shop in Lancaster. If I had bought them, I'd probably gone with the 30-30 caliber."

"I checked out the Winchester website and I saw both models. Naomi and I are very pleased. Had I bought them, I'd have probably bought the 30-30 too. But Naomi pointed out that the 38-55 is a

heavier slug and stands a better chance of putting a person down.”

“How long will this installation take, Seth?”

“I wish I could say, but it depends on the well. I instructed them to drill for a deep aquifer and they told me they weren’t sure how deep they’d have to go. Did you calculate how much propane you’ll need?”

“I didn’t have the specs on the generator, so I couldn’t tell.”

“That the quietest generator Onan makes. It burns anywhere from 1.1gph at 25% power to 2.2gph at 100% power. We assumed that you wouldn’t burn more than 50% power, which is 1.3gph. That would cover you for 100 days or 2,401 hours under ground in case of radiation. The tank we found holds 5,000-gallons and we’ll probably add about 4,500, to give you an edge.”

“5,000-gallons is bigger than the tank that you have.”

“It’s bigger than my aboveground tank yes. I didn’t mention my underground tank, and that is a 10,000-gallon tank that normally has 9,000-gallons in it. I’m trying to take the best features of my shelter up at Arrowhead and incorporate them into something people can afford to buy. Your shelter will be fully equipped and have all of the options we’ll sell. The basic shelter is designed by Utah Shelter Systems in Salt Lake. They don’t include the amenities that we’ll sell because they’re expensive. Your shelter, like mine, is totally electric. Oh, I stopped and bought a new SUV today.”

“Really, what did you buy?”

“A H1 Hummer Alpha. I left it so they could make some modifications.”

“Modifications?”

“All the available accessories plus a Fording kit and auxiliary fuel tank. I’m afraid I got carried away, but that vehicle should go anywhere. Your Navigator is a nice vehicle, but it’s gasoline powered. I think that diesel is most definitely the way to go. We’ll put in an underground diesel tank and a pump. All of those things that we gave you for Christmas were intended to go into the shelter.”

“I didn’t think you could put a fording kit on a H1.”

“The dealer found one on E-Bay and said that they’d have to do a few extra things, like seal the doors and so forth. He called it a NOS Deep Fording System M998. The vehicle fords hard bottom water crossings up to 30 inches (76 centimeters) without a deepwater fording kit and 60 inches (152 centimeters) with the kit.”

“Do you think the conversion will work?”

“I don’t really know, but I doubt I try and ford any thing much over 48”, if that. That Navigator of yours has an electronics ignition system, doesn’t it?”

“I think so. Why?”

“Either we build a Faraday Cage in your garage or get you a complete set of replacement parts for the SUV.”

“I’m not much of a mechanic.”

“Good, a Faraday Cage is cheaper.”

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“What’s new?”

“Oh, not much. Seth said they’d modify the garage to include a Faraday cage.”

“What’s that?”

“A lining of metal fencing that absorbs EMP. He didn’t say how they’d do it, maybe some of the fence fabric. If a nuclear weapon went off, it would absorb the Electro Magnetic Pulse that destroys the electrics in vehicles.”

In the course of life, sh*t happens. A person prays for the best and prepares for the worst. There is a limit to being prepared. The rock that struck Yucatan 65 million years ago might be an example of something you couldn’t really prepare for. A few years ago, they made 2 films about asteroid strikes and even a laughable one about a global climate change. The films were Deep Impact, Armageddon and The Day After Tomorrow. I like Morgan Freeman and Téa Leoni isn’t exactly hard on the eyes.

Ten days, can you believe it? They dug the hole; it went almost from fence to fence, plopped in the shelter, either connect things or ran stub pipes. They installed and connected the septic system to shelter only, but the well digger was still drilling, headed for China. I learned from him that the term deep aquifer refers not to the depth of the hole, but the depth of the water in the aquifer. Either that or I read it somewhere. The entire Antelope Valley is an old lakebed. The low spots now show up as dry lakes. There are several, but the two largest are Rogers and Rosamond, both off-limits. El Mirage dry lake, located west of Adelanto, is the granddaddy of the movie dry lakes. Countless commercials, movies, and TV shows have been shot there. The lakebed has become popular with the OHV and land yacht crowd.

That snow didn’t last long except in the shaded areas. People with north facing homes had a front yard full of snow for several days, just as the south facing houses had a backyard the didn’t melt off very fast. Our house faces east and the backyard was a mess. When they had everything finally finished up, they graded it so a landscaper could come in the spring and lay sod, probably late March or early April. Rose was giving me a nightly report on their progress. You should have seen the concrete base they poured for the MA-770MDP tower. Rose said it was 5’ square and 5½’ deep. The tower would be attached to the eve of the house.

“Did they get it done yet?”

“They poured the base for the antenna tower and the well driller finished up on the well. The concrete will have to set up for 30 days before they’ll put in the tower. It’s graded but it will be March or April before they can sod over the holes.”

“I don’t anticipate having many people want to see it before it’s done, Joe. I’m not going to start an advertising campaign until it ready to show. Did they finish your garage?”

“Haven’t started.”

“I’ll make a call. How are sales?”

“Been off this month, but less than I expected. Post Christmas slump, I expect.”

“I worked a deal with the shelter supplier. They will deliver within 90-days guaranteed and we’ll handle the installation. We have a few items we need to add to our inventory.”

“What?”

“Spare filters, and repair parts for the LUWA systems. Do you have any idea how many suppliers I had to line up to carry a full line of shelter spares and accessories?”

“You don’t intend on inventorying a spare shelter do you?”

“Absolutely not. That’s why we put in the demo in your backyard. My goal is 120 days from the date of the order to full occupancy.”

“Are we going to drill a well on every project?”

“Probably not. I lined up water tanks that are cheaper than wells. We did the demonstrator to represent our top of the line model. Have you been down in the shelter yet?”

“Not yet, it is a little muddy.”

“They didn’t put in the sidewalk?”

“What sidewalk?”

“They were supposed to run a sidewalk from your patio to the blast hatch.”

“That explains it then, we don’t have a patio.”

“You’re supposed to have a patio so the customers can observe your grounds and see how unobtrusive the shelter is.”

“Nobody said anything to me about a patio.”

“You have a gas grill, right?”

“I’ve got a Weber kettle, will that do?”

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Seth gets this picture in his mind of how he wants things and that’s the way they’re going to be. They might be Christians, but when it comes to money, they’re still Jewish. Seth doesn’t spend a dime he doesn’t expect will return a dollar. By the time the concrete for the tower cured and they had the tower and antennas up, we had a 12’x20’ covered patio with a propane gas grill and patio furniture. They mixed in some sort of dye and the concrete was about the same color of green the grass would hopefully be.

Our construction project didn’t go unnoticed by the neighbors. Rose got a lot of questions about what we had done. She told everyone that it was a company project putting in a demonstrator, but not real, shelter. She claimed that most of the people believed her. USS claims that that size of shelter will accommodate 50 people. Not in my backyard! I might make an exception for Evan Mace and his wife,

Marie, but no more. Evan was retired Air Force, the same as me. He still worked on the base in nearly the same job he had as a Master Sergeant. His commute was 30 miles and mine was 40, one-way.

They came in during mid-March and laid the sod, so I told Seth the place was ready to show. The guy who designed the beds must have been in the Navy, they had box frames with drawers for clothes. The gun safe was a simple office cabinet, modified to hold our weapons. On one warm Saturday, we finished off putting our things into the shelter. When the supplier couldn't deliver as promised, Seth ended up licensing the shelter design and having them constructed locally. We were averaging selling one a month.

>>>

Meanwhile, the economy seemed to go into the sh*tter. A few cases of avian flu were reported in San Diego and the Chinese were clanking their swords louder than ever. Strangely, the worse the economy became, the better our sales. Seth negotiated a deal with Walton Feed in Idaho and we began ordering their deluxe one-year survival units, a truckload at a time. I was tasked with finding space in the warehouse. I had a PhD (piled higher and deeper) in warehouse loading by the time I was done.

It is probably a 2-hour drive from Sand Canyon to Lake Arrowhead. It was at least a 40-minute drive from Canyon Country to Lancaster. We didn't wonder what was going on, Seth had a bank of 6 TVs set up in the showroom. He had ABC, CBS, CNBC, MSNBC, FOX and CNN blaring from the time we opened until closing. The world was going to h*ll in a handcart, downhill all the way.

All through 2005, the country worried about Iran developing nuclear weapons. It was that way throughout 2006 and in early 2007, the Israelis solved the problem. On June 7, 1981 Israeli planes bombed and destroyed the Iraqi nuclear facility called Tammuz 1 south of Baghdad. The reasons for this unprecedented operation were enumerated, among them information that the Iraqi reactor would be operational between July and September 1981, and Israel could not permit such a development to endanger its security and possibly its very existence. (Ossirac)

You thought maybe the Israeli's would allow the Iranians to develop a nuclear breeder reactor? Think again. Although the Israelis have nuclear weapons, they have never used them. The general sentiment is that they are a last ditch weapon to be used only in case their hostile neighbors overthrow them. In April of 2007, Israel ended concerns over the Iranian reactors, conducting a conventional bombing campaign that destroyed all of the facilities the Iranians had built. The Iranians, for their part, launched the missiles they had, none nuclear tipped, against Israel. The Israelis intercepted the missiles with their PAC-3 and other ABM systems. Iran filed a protest in the UN.

Ariel Sharon and Shimon Peres, who had gotten together in 2005 to form the Kadima Party, were probably laughing in their offices. They would probably delay giving Sharon the Nobel Peace Prize for a couple of years after that stunt. Peres (1994) had it as well as Begin (1978) and Rabin (1994). Sharon probably deserved it; he was doing his level best to give the Palestinians their own homeland. At least those that he didn't order shot.

>>>

The situation in the Middle East was quite a brouhaha, which can be defined either as an excited public interest, discussion, or the like, as the clamor attending some sensational event, hullabaloo; or, as an episode involving excitement, confusion, turmoil, etc., esp. a broil over a minor or ridiculous cause. Synonyms for brouhaha include: hubbub, uproar, katzenjammer, noise, furor and furore.

Those F-15s the Israelis had seemed to be loaded with bombs, sitting in their holding areas with plenty of IDF troops around, what was that all about? Advertising, as in sending a message? It very well could be. In August 2003 the Israeli Air Force demonstrated the strategic capability to strike far-off targets such as Iran [which is 1,300 kilometers away], by flying three F-15 jets to Poland 1,600 nautical miles away. After they celebrated that country's air force's 85th birthday, on their return trip, the IAF warplanes staged a fly-past over the Auschwitz death camp. The additional 30 F-15s that the Israelis had ordered had been delivered, giving them a total bomber force of 55 F-15s.

The government of Israel initially ordered 25 F-15I Thunders (Ra'am), powered by two Pratt & Whitney F100-PW-229 low bypass turbofan engine. This foreign military sale was valued at \$1.76 billion dollars. The Israeli Air Force received the first two of 25 F-15I aircraft in January 1998. On 22 September 1998 the US Department of Defense announced the sale to the Government of Israel of 30 F-15I aircraft; 30 AN/APG-70 or AN/APG-63(V)1 radar; and 30 each LANTIRN navigation and targeting pods. Associated support equipment, software development/integration, spares and repair parts, flight test instrumentation, publications and technical documentation, personnel training and training equipment, US Government and contractor technical and logistics personnel services, and other related requirements to ensure full program supportability will also be provided. The estimated cost was \$2.5 billion.

During 2007, Bush continued to withdraw troops from Iraq, doing so by not replacing units that had completed their tours. The estimate was that by Christmas, all of the troops would be home. The American death toll now stood at 2,400+. The peace movement in the US was gaining ground, too. Iraq would probably turn into the 2nd Vietnam for the US. The week after the Israeli attack on Iran, our phones were ringing off the hook. People were worried and I can't say that I blamed them. CDC was in San Diego, trying to contain the outbreak and I finally got the Doctor to prescribe Tamiflu. He told it would run about \$50 per card. I had to go to 4 pharmacies before I found it for \$75 a card. I didn't know if Evan had any, but I called him to let him know where it was available. They already had it at \$50 a card; their doctor wasn't so reticent to write the prescription.

"Did you get the Tamiflu?"

"Yep, 2 cards each, one as a prophylactic and one to take if we get sick. The doctor said to wait on the prophylactic dose until it was reported in the area."

Seth paid for both Rose and me to take the EMT-B course at AV College. Once we completed it, he came up with all kinds of things to add to our shelter including a bottle of oxygen, QuikClot bandages for our trauma kit and lactated Ringer's solution with IV sets. If things ever got to the point that we'd need something like Ringer's, the doo-doo would be up to our chins. You had to know that anything we had in that backyard shelter was also in Seth and Naomi's shelter and probably in far larger quantities. I do know that in May, after an especially good month, they bought a string of horses that were boarded up in the Lake Arrowhead area.

Do you recall the furor in the UN after Israel bombed Ossirac? This time the loudest protestor was the Russians. Most of the Middle Eastern nations and two from the Far East, China and North Korea joined them. The complaining continued until Bush and Rumsfeld had no choice except to withdraw the remaining troops from Iraq, ahead of schedule. We weren't out more than a week before a full scale Civil War broke out between the Shia and Sunnis. We also pulled our troops out of the Balkans, declaring that the UN would have to find other nations to replace us. About the only troops we had on foreign soil we a few advisers in Afghanistan, our South Korean contingent plus our NATO contingent.

We had Air Force Personnel at Ramstein AFB and at RAF Mindenhall and RAF Lakenheath in the

UK. We maintained 110 B-61 bombs at Lakenheath for delivery by the Strike Eagles of the 48th. USAF has quite a fleet of aircraft at Mindenhall including 15 KC-135 tankers. Other units include: 352nd SOG, 488th Intelligence Squadron, 95th Reconnaissance Squadron and the 727th Air Mobility Squadron. Our forces at Ramstein included: 435th Air Base Wing, 86th Airlift Wing and the 38th Combat Support Wing.

In South Korea, the US had 2 AFB, Osan and Kunsan. Osan was about 40 miles south of Seoul and Kunsan is about 150 miles south of Seoul on the Yellow Sea. Kunsan is the home of the 8th Fighter Wing and Osan is home of: 51st Fighter Wing, 731st Air Mobility Wing, 33rd Rescue Squadron, 5th Reconnaissance Squadron, 3rd Battlefield Coordination Detachment, 303rd Intelligence Squadron and the 607th Air Intelligence Squadron. Osan has F-16s, A-10s, C-12s and U-2s. Kunsan flies the F-16s. They have 24 of the block 40 aircraft and 24 of the block 30. They also have 24 F-16s at Osan.

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“Do you ride?”

“Sure, I ride my old Chevy pickup to work every day.”

“Horses?”

“I told you before that our having the rifle scabbards didn’t mean anything and when you asked about scabbards for yourself, I told you that neither of us ride.”

“Right. Well, you can learn. Did you hear that the last of our people arrived home from Iraq?”

“No I can’t and, no, I didn’t.”

“With the British pulling out during 2006, I think it was inevitable, but the Israelis bombing Iran, we had to scoot while we could. I think the reason we pulled out of the Balkans was to protest the UN censure.”

“I can understand the UN censuring Israel and I’m sure they expected it. But why, in the name of God, did they censure the United States?”

“We manufactured the F-15I’s they used.”

“I like Bush’s response. Do you really believe they can move the entire UN out of the US in 3 months?”

“He said if they didn’t, he’d declare them all persona non-grata and kick them out. Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations Article 9, a receiving State may ‘at any time and without having to explain its decision,’ declare any member of a diplomatic staff as persona non grata – that is not acceptable (while a persona grata is acceptable) – even before they arrive in the State. It is usual for a person so declared to be recalled to their home nation. If they are not recalled, the receiving State ‘may refuse to recognize the person concerned as a member of the mission.’”

“CNN?”

“FOX. I loathe CNN.”

“Really?”

“Yes, Paula Zahn follows Wolf Blitzer and then Larry King comes on. Wolf is an ass and Paula is so liberal it makes you sick. They ought to call their shows, ‘The Blame Game’. Whatever happened to the concept that sh*t happens?”

“It’s your box.”

“Never mind. Now you know why I don’t watch CNN.”

“How did you manage to get Rose to agree to the shelter?”

“We got to discussing Diablo Canyon. It is only about 140 miles west northwest from Lancaster.”

“Three Mile Island fears?”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 3

“The place is built on an earthquake fault.”

“What are you thinking, either an earthquake or terrorist attack?”

“Yes, both. If terrorists took out either one of the nuclear plants, I believe that the lights would go out in California, especially during the summer. Among them, the 4 reactors at the 2 plants generate almost 20% of California’s electricity. If Diablo Canyon was attacked and radiation released, we’d be about 14 hours downwind. You thought I talked Rose into the shelter, Seth, but the truth is she was in favor of it from the beginning.”

“Why don’t Rose and you come over Saturday to go riding.”

“I’ll ask, but no promises. Thanks.”

>>>

I cross the San Andreas Fault twice every day on the way to and from work. Just north of Avenue S, the freeway cuts through the fault and you can actually see the folding of the rock. If it weren’t so darned frightening, it would be interesting. This is a slip fault so if it let loose on the freeway, it would be closed for quite a while. There actually isn’t any way into the Antelope Valley from Santa Clarita that doesn’t cross the fault. They closed the Palmdale Hospital for 2 reasons. One it went broke and two, it was too close to the fault and in the event of an earthquake probably would have collapsed like Olive View did during the Sylmar Quake in ’71.

Palmdale is the largest city in the US without a hospital. There used to be 4, AV, Community, High Desert and Palmdale. AV was a trauma center but withdrew from the program. Palmdale Hospital went bust and High Desert was closed by the County to contain costs. Community most does the heart work and AV the trauma work. All Kaiser has is an urgent care in Lancaster. Any work related injuries would require a trip to Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital (HMNMH), a 217-bed comprehensive care trauma center and nonprofit community hospital. Great place to visit, but I wouldn’t want to stay.

“Seth wants us to come over to Lake Arrowhead on Saturday to go riding.”

“But, we don’t ride.”

“I told him, but he wasn’t listening. They bought those 4 horses and he has requested our company.”

“It’s not fair, but I don’t see how we can refuse. Especially not after he put in the demo shelter. Sold many of those?”

“Let’s see. We sold one in March, two in April and two in May. He only indicated that he wanted to sell a dozen a year, but you know how the times have been lately.”

“Did you extend the store hours?”

“No, but with the number of Internet orders we’re getting, we have to work late to get the orders packed. I think we’ve probably sold 350-400 cases of N-95 masks and another 100 or so of the N-100. We’ve even added exam gloves to our product line. There was a case of avian flu reported in Irvine, so I’d say it is working it’s way north and scaring the crap out of people.”

“Should we start the Tamiflu?”

“Probably not before it reaches the San Fernando Valley.”

“So what about the horse riding trip?”

“Like you said, Rose, they did put in the shelter. I’ve never been on a horse in my entire life.”

There was a downside to having a boss like Seth. Oh, sure, he put in the shelter, but that was as much for his benefit as ours. He didn’t compensate Rose for her time even if she showed it every day. And, when you got an invitation to go riding, he didn’t really care if you could ride or not. He reminds me of sweet and sour sauce. By the way, the underlying concept of the meal package that Walton Feed sold was that it included TVP in lieu of meat. Enhanced shelf life, but it wasn’t meat. Those one-year deluxe units were selling like hotcakes, but I had the impression that our customers were only buying one unit per family. It included 9 pails, 6 wheat and 3 beans plus 11 cases of #10 cans of whatever and 2 extra #10 cans, one of baking powder, one of baking soda and 4 1# packages of yeast. The buyer added 4 gallons of oil and whatever sugar they wanted.

One of the eleven boxes had 5 cans and a cookbook. If you were thinking that you were getting a total of 68 cans and 9 pails, you came up one can short. Our advantage was that we delivered for a flat fee on the company truck, the day after you ordered it. Our price was a bit higher, but if you figured the delivery cost from Idaho, we were close and if you considered not having to wait, we were the best choice. And, we explained that one case only had 5 cans. We didn’t explain how cheaply you could buy the stuff by the 40’ truckload and I doubt Wal-Mart did either.

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We were resigned to go riding with Seth and Naomi. Rose told me she had ridden a couple of times in high school and that a horse could sense fear. She suggested that I have a positive attitude. She had talked to Naomi and what they had in mind was a trail ride in the woods. There wouldn’t be any place to run the horses and Naomi also suggested western wear if we had it. She was the opposite of Seth who could sometimes be brash and short.

I pulled my Wrangler hatbox off the shelf and dusted off my white straw hat. Rose pulled out my 501s

and my only western shirt. I'd worn cowboy boots for years because they added 1½" to my height. I kept a good pair and the pair I usually wore to work. When the work boots bit the dust, I would buy a new dress pair and take my good boots for work.

"Are we going to take our cowboy guns?"

"I don't know, Rose. Seth didn't say. We could put them in the back of the SUV and have them if we need them."

"Naomi said that Seth was really worried."

"Really? Does he have to buy another safe to hold the money we've made this year?"

"Your business is driven in part by panic, Joe. Given the sharp increase in sales, how would you assess the mood of the country?"

"I can't really tell you about the rest of the country, but locally people are near panic. We can't get the 3M products in as fast as we sell them. Our supplier in Idaho wants at least 30 days notice on the next order. I've heard that you can't find Tamiflu anywhere in greater LA."

"We'd better get to bed, Naomi said Seth was planning on starting out around 10am."

>>>

Around 4am, we felt a sharp jolt and then shaking that lasted for about 30 seconds. I couldn't really tell how strong the earthquake was, but it wasn't in the immediate area. We were both wide-awake and Rose went to the kitchen to start coffee while I fired up my HP computer to check the USGS website. On the way by, I turned on the TV to channel 2 KCBS. The network channels in the Antelope Valley are KCBS-2, KNBC-4 and KABC-7. If you want real news and an absence of pontificating, you selected either 2 or 7. This quake was in the northern San Fernando Valley. That made 3, Sylmar, Northridge and now this.

"Here's your coffee, where was the epicenter?"

"Too soon to tell, but in the San Fernando Valley. Seth and Naomi went to Lake Arrowhead last night. I'm going to have to drive to Canyon County and check on the store. Why don't we get around early, check on the store then stop and have breakfast somewhere?"

"I'll get in the shower."

"Save me some hot water!"

We didn't get out of Lancaster until about 5:45am. That would put us in Canyon Country between 6:15 and 6:30. I didn't really know what to expect so I also brought my Kimber and extra mags. 14 was closed and we had to get off and continue on to Canyon Country on Sierra Highway. I turned west on Soledad Canyon Road and north on Plum Canyon Road. The building was intact so I got out a flashlight and went to unload the door. The power was out because our outside security light was out. Some of the stacked inventory in the warehouse had fallen to the floor, but I couldn't see anything that was broken. I went to the office and called Seth up at the lake.

"Seth, I'm at the store. Other than some inventory that has shifted in the warehouse, we're ok."

“What are you talking about?”

“Around 4am, we had an earthquake in the San Fernando Valley. Rose and I stopped by the store and warehouse to check on things before we came to Arrowhead.”

“Find my Rolodex and the card for the security company. Call them and tell them that we need guards 24/7 until at least Monday. Tell them I said a minimum of 2 guards.”

“If you’d rather, Rose and I can put up here and keep an eye on the place.”

“You’re going to be here riding at 10am. Call them, get some breakfast on the company and we’ll see in about 3 hours.”

I called the security firm and they would provide a car and 2 armed-guards through Monday. Once they arrived Rose and I got breakfast and got on 14. We took 210 to Pasadena, getting off at state road 2 in La Cañada Flintridge. 2 would get us to 138 near Wrightwood and after that, you know the way I go. When we finally got to I-15, I stopped and topped of my tank. This was going to be a very long day. It was 9:45 by the time we pulled in.

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“What’s the situation at the store?”

“Lights are out, some of the inventory is tossed bout in the warehouse, but all in all, not bad.”

“The news said it was a M5.9 in Van Nuys. I called Eddie and he’ll make sure the server is up and running, we wouldn’t want to miss any orders. I told him to decide what the warehouse needed and call in people to clean it up. You ready to go?”

“I wouldn’t mind coffee first, it has been a long morning Seth.”

“Help yourself, the pot is always on in this house. I see you’re wearing cowboy duds, did you bring your guns?”

“In the back of the Navigator. What kind of outfit do you call that?”

“Doctor John Holliday.” <http://www.americanwest.com/pages/docholid.htm>

“Fine, as long as you don’t think I’m Wyatt Earp.”

“You don’t have a Buntline Special.”

“Neither did Wyatt.” http://www.kancoll.org/khq/1976/76_2_shillingberg.htm
<http://www.americanwest.com/pages/fwfnfron.htm>

Seth was wearing what was once called the Victorian cutaway coat, also called a morning coat. During the Victorian era, men either wore a frock coat, which went to the knees or a morning coat, which was about halfway to the knees. During the late 1800s, the morning coat was the most common day coat. I figured he have the coat off as soon as the day warmed up.

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“Do you see what you created when you gave them those rifles for Christmas last year? It’s a monster! Be glad he doesn’t have Naomi and you wearing period dresses.”

“If he does, we’ll feed him period food, that will cure that.”

“Do you think so?”

“Naomi says that Seth hates beans.”

“Right so he has food for 16 and that includes 48 pails of beans.”

“Did you feel that?” Rose asked as the floor rumbled again.

“Aftershock?”

“Naomi told me that they didn’t feel the original quake.”

“Did you feel that?” Naomi asked. “Was it an aftershock?”

“Must have been, Naomi. Foreshocks only precede an earthquake by a few minutes.”

“Seth was on the phone talking to Eddie about the server and the phone went out.”

“Seth are you sure you still want to go riding today? It might make more sense if we headed to Canyon County and saw to the store.”

“I suppose we’d better, Joe. We can go riding next weekend. Why don’t we all just return to Santa Clarita? We probably out to see if everything is ok at our home, too.”

Naomi and Rose rode in the navigator and Seth and I rode in the Hummer. This SUV was really a beast.

“You know that the Landers quake was a quake that involved activity on 5 different faults, don’t you? May that wasn’t an aftershock but a trigger response on another fault.”

“It’s just what we need with the hospitals already overloaded with avian flu patients.”

“Did Rose and you start the prophylactic treatment with Tamiflu?”

“We discussed it and I suggested that we wait until it was in the Valley.”

“Antelope Valley?”

“San Fernando.”

“You’d better start the treatment, there are a few cases in the area.”

“Fine, she carries the cards in her purse. We’ll take the first dose when we get to the office. Did you already start?”

“Yes, on Thursday. Now all we need is for some terrorists to attack the reactors at San Onofre and Diablo Canyon.”

“Have you ever heard the expression, ‘be careful what you wish for because God has a sense of humor’?”

“New one on me. “What does it mean?”

“So far the outbreak of avian flu is minor. But you add a pair of medium earthquakes to the mix and throw in a nuclear disaster or two and you’ll have trouble with a capital T.”

“Naomi said you were talking to Eddie?”

“Yes, the backup power kicked in and kept the computer system up. I don’t know what the phone lines being down means. It may or may not have affected our pair of T-1 lines. He brought in the full crew and they had the warehouse picked up and went ahead and began filling the order off the Internet. I told him everyone was on time and a half for the day and that they should just order in meals.”

“Spending big?”

“We needed to do it to get caught up anyway, Joe. Eddie said they pulled the demo generator off the showroom floor and got the lights up.”

“You should have changed, Seth. How are they going to feel when Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp show up?”

“Huh, I completely forgot. No big thing, I can stop by home and change.”

“Don’t, I’d like to see the look on their faces. Naomi told Rose who told me that you don’t care for beans.”

“They don’t care for me. I like them, but most of the time, they aren’t worth the afterwards. I tried the Beano and it seems to work. I’ve heard that you can add baking soda and all sorts of things, but I’ve found that taking beano and really chewing well works the best.”

>>>

We didn’t get back to Canyon Country until 2pm. By then I was getting very tired. It had been bad getting from Canyon Country to Lake Arrowhead and the return journey was even worse. We stopped and filled the gas tanks and the girls went ahead to Seth and Naomi’s home in Sand Canyon. We went to the store to see how they were coming with the cleanup and order filling.

“Who are you supposed to be?” the security guards asked.

“I’m the owner and he’s my assistant manager,” Seth explained. Never mind the clothes, we were in the middle of a reenactment when the second quake struck.”

Reenactment? Quick thinking. There was some snickering when Seth and I entered the building. He quickly ended that with the question, “Ok, where is the OK Corral? Wyatt and I have an appointment with the Clanton’s.”

“What’s the situation, Eddie?”

“The T-1 lines didn’t go down and we’re getting more orders than you can imagine. Some items are already showing ‘out-of-stock’ on the web page. I think we could probably work all night and all day tomorrow just filling the orders.”

“Anyone who wants to work tomorrow filling orders will be on time and a half with meals provided. See how many people you can get to work.”

Our week began on Sunday and it wouldn’t have normally been time and a half, except over 8 hours. We were required to provide a meal, just a meal break and 2 coffee breaks. Only where they worked 7 consecutive days in a single pay period would we get into a double time situation. My gears were turning and I figured that Seth must figure he’d come out ahead by working all weekend. Sometimes he thinks of things differently than I do, I have paid time and a half on Friday, not Sunday.

They already had picked up after the second quake and the pile of filled orders streamed out the door. Anything we were going to deliver locally was already on the truck ready for Monday deliveries. And, more, I might say, there was at least another truckload ready to load.

“Go get a Ryder truck, Joe and we’ll load this stuff up. It’s a shame we can’t get a UPS pickup tomorrow.”

“I’ll call and see if we can get a Saturday pickup, they’re available, but usually only if they’re schedule in advance.”

“UPS.”

“This is Joe at Rim of the World Preparedness in Santa Clarita, California. Is there any chance we could get a pickup today?”

“Give me your customer number.”

“Hang on.”

I grabbed the book and read her the number.

“You normally have Monday through Friday pickups.”

“Right, but we ended up working because of the earthquakes and we have a semi-load ready to ship.”

“Please hold and I’ll check if there is a truck available.”

“We have a truck, but no loaders.”

“Our whole staff is working, we can load the truck.”

“Fine, 4pm.”

Big deal, we usually loaded the trucks anyway while the driver did the paperwork and checked off the packages. They use a scanner and have to note the barcode on every package. We could set up what amounted to a bucket brigade passing the packages by the UPS driver. We’d done it a couple of times before when the orders were very large. This particular driver turned out to be from Lancaster. I asked and everything was fine up home.

“Did you line everyone up to work tomorrow?” Seth asked.

“A couple of the fellas won’t be in until after church, but we’ll have a full crew all afternoon.”

“Eddie tells me we’ve run out of 30% of our normal inventory. I have to give Idaho 30 days advance notice so I’d imagine we can either take backorders or not accept orders.”

“What would you prefer?”

“Backorder with us not processing the credit cards until the order ships, that’s what the computer program is geared to do. We’ll give cash order top priority. Can you believe it, one guy showed up with gold coins wanting to buy 2 of the deluxe one year food supplies?”

“What did we do?”

“Eddie checked the bid price of gold and made the deal. You can always check the price at <http://www.kitco.com> .”

It wasn’t what one would call a typical California weekend. The avian flu hadn’t become an epidemic and for sure not a pandemic, just yet. Normally, you might expect an earthquake and a few aftershocks, but 2 separate earthquakes? That hadn’t happen since Landers busted loose on 5 different faults. I put the thought of San Onofre and Diablo Canyon out of my mind, I wasn’t about to tempt fate. The high points on the Landers quake were: M7.3, epicenter 34° 13' N, 116° 26' W 6 miles north of Yucca Valley, on June 28, 1992 at 4:57:31 am PDT. It caused ruptures on 5 faults: Johnson Valley, Landers, Homestead Valley, Emerson and Camp Rock. The rupture length was 85 km (53 miles) with an average slip of about 3 to 4 meters and a maximum slip of 6 meters. The largest aftershock was at Big Bear and was M6.4. It was a shallow quake with a depth of 1.1km.

I can’t tell you why I remember about the Landers quake, perhaps because the surface eruptions were all over the news. A quake that tore up 53 miles of surface was really big news at the time. We got busy at the store and only called it quits when the UPS truck was loaded. Seth and I went to their house in Sand Canyon and Naomi announced that since business was so good, Seth could take us out to dinner. He showed he the 3 gold Liberties the guy had used to pay for his order. That put a sparkle in her eye.

>>>

Naomi had made a reservation at the Odyssey for 8pm. We had just enough time to get clean up and dressed and off we went. Boasting spectacular views from high atop the San Fernando Valley is Odyssey in Granada Hills. A gurgling fountain welcomes you to digs filled with oak paneling, brass fixtures and floor-to-ceiling windows. Definitely a spot for romance, the grounds feature a koi pond, dimly lit patio and a garden gazebo. Lunch fare includes sandwiches such as grilled eggplant and smoked salmon, and heartier items like flame-grilled Pacific swordfish. Starters run the gamut from tempura shrimp to calamari to escargot. Dinner offers plenty of seafood selections such as scampi Chardonnay, broiled lobster tail and northern halibut. Prime steaks like grilled filet mignon served over garlic-mashed potatoes are popular, but if you’d prefer the best of both worlds, order a combination. There are also six pasta and vegetarian dishes, in case meat’s not your thing. When it came to fronting a meal, there was nothing cheap about Seth. We did the surf and turf and it was good thing he was paying. Oy veh!

“I drank too much wine last night.”

“I wasn’t sure what to order with surf and turf, so I got a Chardonnay and a Merlot.”

“Both top of the line, Seth, thanks.”

“If we have a good day today, we’ll be caught up on orders. I think we’ll need two UPS trucks on Monday. We can make the deliveries and return the Ryder truck Monday night.”

“Did you call Idaho?”

“Their hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm. I got their machine and left a message to prepare two semi loads. I’m hoping they’ll ship the first load in a couple of weeks and the second by the end of the 30 days.”

“Do we have a lot of backorders?”

“I was going to wait for Eddie to check. You know me and computers.”

“I’ll check. Wow, 100 units for the one year supplies on backorder.”

“I’ll have to call Idaho Monday and order a third load.”

“I think they can put about 100 units in one semi. They’re 33ft³ and weigh 767 pounds.”

“I don’t think so, I think the limit is about 60 units per truck, Joe. It’s the weight more than the volume.”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 4

And that’s what it was like for the next 3 months into 2007. The earthquakes occurred on April 14, 2007 and it was now the 4th of July and Seth was throwing a company picnic. Neither of the quakes qualified as ‘The Big One’, they were just your routine M5-M6 quakes. They’d had their election in Iraq in December of 2005 and we were out of there, but I believe I mentioned that.

The United States had other worries, the UN had balked at leaving and Bush had, in fact, declared all of the delegates as PNG. US Marshals escorted them to their planes and Bush announced that the US was no longer a member of the United Nations. Many, you should have hear the furor in Congress over that one! Oh, yeah, they finally confirmed Bush’s nominee to the Court. It took a while and I guess I didn’t think to mention it. Bush had succeeded in doing what Roosevelt had only dreamed of, packing the Court. His popularity took a bit of an upswing when they brought the troops home but that UN fiasco sort of finished it off. I would have thought that that would have raised him back above 50%!

Since the earthquakes, we’d worked 6 days a week instead of our usual 5. Things had finally slowed down in June and most of the guys took their vacations. At least with the overtime, most could afford it. Gold had continued to rise as the economy slipped and the flu spread around the county. They had that vaccine and that went to children and seniors. The remainder of us used Tamiflu. The government had been stockpiling it since 2005 and apparently there were enough doses to go around. The H5N1 virus wasn’t one that paid much attention to the age of the person who contracted the virus. It just made you sicker than all get out and you lived or you died, 50-50 without treatment.

A few people apparently died from the Tamiflu. It had something to do with how the medicine worked in the body. There were those kids in Japan in 2005 and then some people in the US in April through July of 2007. Apparently the government concluded the outbreak was contained because the airlines

were flying again. The picnic was at the Circle J Ranch Park. It had picnic tables, a child play area and public restrooms. If you every get to Santa Clarita, it's located at 22651 Via Princessa. I had skipped taking vacation this year, accumulating time on the books and filling in at the warehouse so everyone else could get their vacation taken.

I don't think that Seth ever took a vacation, but he was the boss. He'd take the occasional day off, generally a Friday and Naomi and he would go up to Lake Arrowhead and go riding. After the April earthquakes, we were so busy that we never had a change to get back up there to ride. Man, that really broke my heart. Not! However, it was inevitable and Rose found a place in Lancaster where we could go to ride. Some Sunday afternoons we did that and some we went shooting. Others, well let's just say that we never made it out of the bedroom. I turned 49 in May and most certainly was dreading the following year with the 'Over the Hill' birthday parties that were so popular in California for 50th birthdays. Rose was only 5 months younger than me. Although, I'll have to say that for a 48-year-old woman, she was in fine form, aerobics or some such nonsense. I could just barely pinch an inch so I wasn't what you'd call fat.

Working at the store would burn the fat off of any man or woman, it was dead run time most of the time until June rolled around.

Those shelters were selling faster than we could get them delivered and installed. I think that during May, Rose must have shown the shelter 20 times and about half who looked, bought. She said she got so she could tell who would and who wouldn't buy one by listening to them complain when they climbed down the ladder. She had bought a vacuum sealer and was rotating meat out of the shelter freezer into the kitchen freezer and from there to the table. We shopped at Sam's Club in Palmdale and Costco in Lancaster most of the time. Sometimes when we could find what we wanted, we went to the Costco that wasn't all that far from the store. That store was located at 18649 Via Princessa. There were also Costco stores in Northridge, Canoga Park, Simi Valley and the one they were refurbishing in Van Nuys.

"How far are we behind on delivering shelters?"

"Boss, it's the 4th of July, why talk business?"

"Just curious."

"If we don't sell any more, we can put in 3 in July, 3 in August and 3 in September. That accounts for the ones we have sold. However, if we average 2 a month, we'll also have 3 installations for October and November."

"When are you going to come up to Arrowhead to go riding?"

"Whenever you invite us again. We've been taking riding lessons so it isn't like the last time."

"What do you hear from your daughter?"

"Diane? She calls Rose about every other week. They're fine. He got a promotion with the power company there so Diane said she didn't think they'd come out this year."

"How many grandchildren?"

"Three, 2 girls and a boy. How is your boy doing?"

“Samuel? He graduated from medical school and is doing a 5-year internship/residency at Sloan Kettering Institute. He wants to be a surgeon.”

“Big name hospital.”

“One of the best, especially their Cancer Institute.”

“Married?”

“Engaged to some Shiksa Italian Medical student. Name is Rachael.”

“So what’s the problem, Italian probably means Catholic the same as you are?”

“I could care, but Naomi is pretty upset. Nice girl, though, they were out a while back. Got a chest out to here and she’s very pretty. Wide hips, built for having babies.”

And, now you know what men talk about, as if you needed to guess. Rose later explained that Jewish lineage was passed from the mother. If Samuel married a non-Jew, their children wouldn’t be considered Jewish. Right about now wasn’t a good time to be Jewish. Iraq was in the middle of a Civil War and the other countries were either involved in that or looking longingly at the Nation of Israel with an eye, perhaps, to another invasion. And yes, according to FOX News, those F-15Is were still sitting in their hardened shelters full loaded.

Other things that had happened between the earthquakes and July 4th were the FBI and Homeland Security disrupting another terrorist plot. Details on that were very sparse on the news. They’d moved the detainees to Gitmo so I suppose there was some arm-twisting going on. The US did it all wrong, what they should have done was get the Israelis to do the questioning. Right about now, I didn’t figure the Israelis could spare any Mossad Operatives, not with the unrest in the Middle East.

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The odds on favorite for an attack against the United States had been and remained the People’s Republic of China, probably in conjunction with an attack on Taiwan. The US had succeeded in producing more of the pits for the W88 warhead and to the best of my knowledge all 14 of the SSBNs had now been outfitted with the 475kT W-88 warheads. And since the JL-2 missiles were capable of being MIRVd with 4 or some said 6 90kT warheads, that sole missile sub that Chinese had was capable of delivering up to 72 90kT warheads, depending on who was right. The JL-2 missile is a modified version of the D-31 missile and the range estimates varied all the way up to 9,000km. Whether the sub was in the Atlantic, Caribbean or near Pacific, it could hit any target in the US.

I still didn’t believe that China would launch a preemptive strike on the US, regardless of the circumstances. And if all of the D-5 Trident were in fact armed with the W-88s and the Peacekeeper warheads, the W-77 warhead with a yield of 300kT, we had the capacity to destroy much of the known world. I was assuming that the 4 SSGN had the 400 nuclear tipped land attack cruise missiles with their W-80 warheads. I had nightmares, because that meant we had three types of missiles, totaling some 616 nuclear cruise missiles, 2,688 W-88 warheads and another 500 Minuteman III missiles. New total from the past, but it was still 3,804 warheads. Then there were the 21 B-2 bombers each capable of carrying 16 of the B-83 bombs and 36 of the F-117 Nighthawks which could each carry 2 B-61s. As I pointed out earlier, we had 110 B-61 bombs in the UK to be carried by our Strike Eagles. A quick math check gave me a total of 518 bombs in addition to the 3,804 warheads for a total of 4,322 nuclear weapons for land attack missions.

In addition, the Navy was reported to have nuclear depth charges and possible even some nuclear tipped torpedoes. I do know that when the Scorpion went down it was carrying 2 of the nuclear tipped torpedoes. When a person reaches a total over 4,000, it didn't seem to make a difference. Our tally of deliverable weapons outnumbered the Chinese by a factor of 10. On the other hand, who could tell, the Chinese were most secretive. North Korea, on the other hand probably didn't have as many weapons as they boasted. We were in the aftermath of an avian flu epidemic, some said pandemic, and the M5.9 and M6.3 April earthquakes had southern California in what I could only describe and a BIG MESS. Although Bush hadn't signed on to the Kyoto Accords, he was due out in 2008 and everyone was saying that the Democrats would take power across the board. Former President Bill Clinton was a big supporter of the Accords and it was probably just a matter of time.

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Authors Note: I had planned on stopping writing. With the boy in Baghdad, I'm writing to keep my mind off that. I still can't imagine why he has to have a Secret security clearance to be a grunt in Iraq. And I really can't understand why he can't tell me what he's doing. I'm on his side! They no doubt told him I don't have a need to know and my security clearance expired in 1967. Damon called and even he is worried with the elections on December 13, 2005. The only real question I have now is why George W. Bush believes that the US can win The War on Terror. Maybe if he'd fought in Vietnam, he'd know better. My clearance was Secret and Damon's was Top Secret because of the crypto gear.

>>>

Our 4th of July picnic was well along and we were just sitting down to eat when that darned NOAA radio went off. Seth carried it on his belt everywhere he went. As of 2005 4 functions were not implemented in the NWR system: EAN, EAT, NPT and NMN. Translation: Emergency Action Notification, Emergency Act Termination, National Periodic Test and Network Message Notification. In July of 2007, those codes were now active.

"What does the message say?"

"EAN. I'll go check the Hummer radio."

"Everyone, pack up, we're leaving. There have been terrorist attacks at 20 reactors including both of those in southern California. Joe, do Rose and you want to shelter in Lancaster or come to the cabin?"

"Rose, what do you say?"

"How long would it take us to load our things?"

"Maybe 2 hours. We could be at Arrowhead with 10 hours to spare."

"Arrowhead."

"Does anyone want to use the company shelter in Lancaster?" I asked. "It has everything you'd need and food for 2 for 12 months. You'll be right in the path of any fallout, but it is buried 10' deep and has its own well and septic system. All you'd have to do is service the generator and sit tight."

Everyone's hand went up.

"Stop by the shop and pick up a couple of years of food and head there," Seth suggested. "Joe can

give you the address. Joe you turn on your radio and preset it to VHF Guard. Fire up the generator and make sure everything the need to service the generator is readily available. Listen folks, it may be a little cramp but if you have enough food, it will do. Be sure that you park a couple of cars in Joe's garage because it has a Faraday cage."

>>>

We were just finishing up loading that trailer when people began to pour in. Apparently most had stopped by home because in addition to the food from the warehouse, most had a suitcase and weapons. Since we weren't moving the food, all we had to do was load everything else into the Navigator and take off. We wait for one person to show up; Eddie, and I gave him a quick run through on shelter procedures and showed him where to find the oil and filters for the generator. I had already installed the special biological/chemical filter and he said he could handle the radio because he had a General class ham license. I also showed him how to empty the gray water tank into the septic system.

I hadn't been 2-hours, more like one and we took of eat to pick up 50th Street east and then south to Palmdale to the Junction of 138. All were really had to load was guns, ammo, clothes, our trauma bag and medical supplies and my laptop computer. I had a box of CDs that went with the computer and contained information that wouldn't fit on the HDD. Just as we were getting ready to pull out, Evan and Marie show up.

"You got your emergency stuff?"

"Yeah, we planned on sheltering in place with you."

"Is your gas tank full?"

"I have a full load of diesel."

"Fine, follow us and try to keep up."

"Where are you going?"

"Lake Arrowhead, Evan."

"What's in Lake Arrowhead?"

"Another shelter, you'll really like it."

>>>

"Do you think Seth and Naomi will mind?"

"As much as I've talked about Evan and Marie, I doubt it. Seth's shelter is 16' under his basement and it's really big. And, I guess I might as well tell you, you and I have a bunch of gold in the safe in his shelter."

"How long have you known this?"

"Christmas 2006."

“And, just when did you intend to tell me?”

“When you need to know like right about now.”

“How much gold?”

“You know the bonuses he pays every year? That amount of money converted into gold at \$300 an ounce. I checked the tax returns and we were paid \$22,500 in bonuses over the past 10 years. So, that is about 75 ounces. I don’t know how he does it, as we go along or at the end of the year.”

“You’re lucky you’re driving.”

“Why?”

“I have half a mind to blow your head off for keeping that a secret.”

“Is the CD-715 on?”

“Do you want it on?”

“Might be a good idea. All of the radiation stuff is in that orange duffle bag.”

“Ok, it on and on the lowest range. So far, we don’t have any radiation. I’m sure Diane is ok.”

“There isn’t a reactor in Pueblo and Rocky Flats is shut down. I can’t believe that they get much fallout.”

“They probably won’t unless someone attacks the US with ICBMs.”

“Don’t say that, God might hear you.”

We managed the drive in 90 minutes. When I was sure we were in range, I called Seth.

“Can you handle 2 more guest?”

“Who?”

“My Air Force buddy, Evan Mace and his wife Marie.”

“Two more won’t be a problem, can you vouch for him?”

“Retired USAF Master Sergeant who works on the base. I’ve known him since boot camp. Evan is a speed draw fan and has done well in some contests.”

“I hope he brought his guns.”

“That’s affirmative.”

“Where are you?”

“About 20-30 minutes out.”

“I’ll be waiting.”

“10-4”

>>>

“Evan and Marie Mace, meet Seth and Naomi Goldman.”

“I’m sorry Mr. Goldman, we had intended to shelter with Joe and Rose in their shelter.”

“Mi casa, su casa. Pull you vehicles into the garage and bring your things to the shelter. Joe, you show them the way.”

“Joe, you didn’t say your boss was Jewish.”

“Accident of birth, they’re Roman Catholics.”

“A Jewish Roman Catholic? I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

“You must not get around much, Evan. There are even Jewish Mormons. Nice people, you’ll like them. Grab whatever you brought and bring it downstairs to the basement. I brought all of my guns and ammo plus enough clothes for about a week.”

“Did you remember your prescriptions?” Rose asked.

“I brought what we had.” Evan replied.

“If you run short, let Seth know, he has a well stocked clinic in his shelter. I may even have some of what you need in my trauma bag.” I suggested.

Evan, I should point out, was a type II diabetic with hypertension. He took two oral diabetes meds and Humalin. I knew that Seth had syringes and some oral meds, but I hadn’t paid that close of attention. Besides, how long would we be in the shelter, a couple of weeks?

“Eddie this is Seth on VHF guard. Come up on 144.625.”

“This is Eddie, standby.”

“Seth, Eddie, what’s the situation?”

“Turn on the CD V-717 and check the radiation level and advise.”

“Roger, already done. The level is normal, so far.”

“10-4. Joe and Rose and their friends are here. Check back in 6-hour intervals. Did everyone make it to Lancaster.”

“Affirmative. We’re locked down.”

“How much food did you get?”

“More than enough, 4 one-year supplies.”

“Roger you have a total of 6 years for 6 people. How many souls?”

“18.”

“Roger, you have 4 months, that’s more than enough. Joe says that there is a 3-ring binder with complete instructions on his radio table.”

“10-4, found it. Talk to you in 6 hours.”

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The flu vaccine was a modified form of H5N1. It was designed and developed by Robert Webster of St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. He has spent more than 50 years trying to outsmart influenza viruses. Creating this vaccine was particularly difficult because making it - like all flu vaccines -- requires the virus to be grown in chicken eggs. H5N1 proved lethal to the eggs.

To get around that obstacle, Webster and his colleagues used a process called reverse genetics. They extracted the portion of the gene that made H5N1 so virulent, while leaving the rest of the virus intact. The resulting virus was no longer so lethal, but in clinical trials, it still stimulated the immune system to produce a strong protective response to the original strain. Citing national security, the Department of Health and Human Services wouldn't say where the vaccine was being stored. Since two shots, a month apart, are give to each person. Finally, there was CAIV-T a new version of the company's nasal spray vaccine FluMist, which is currently approved to prevent flu in healthy children and adolescents, 5 to 17 years of age, and healthy adults, 18 to 49 years of age. The advantage to the new MedImmune product was it didn't have to be kept frozen.

Who cared about the flu? We wouldn't catch the flu in Seth's shelter. These terrorists lacked a sufficient quantity of suitcase nukes, or whatever nuke they used, and tried to blow some of those 20 reactors with ANFO. ANFO is a powerful explosive, but have you ever seen how strongly they build those containment domes?

A typical containment dome under construction looks a lot like a super-sized wicker basket. Hundreds of cables are laid down in rings around the dome, and hundreds more form polar quarter-circles out from the top, or semicircles that run near the top, and/or they follow various ellipses around the dome. The main cables are typically 2 to 3 inches thick with some even thicker, and they are cross-braced with thousands of shorter 1-inch-thick cables. The whole thing is filled in around all the cables with concrete, forming the infamous domes that you see from the highway.

This system is called "pre-stressed" because a portion of the cable is left outside the concrete and is pulled with tremendous pressure while the concrete is hardened around the cable, and it is only after the concrete has hardened that the device doing the pulling is relaxed. Sometimes the "device" is a tightened bolt on a threaded end of the cable, which is left on afterwards.

San Onofre's containment domes, for all their apparent mass and heft when viewed from the outside, are surprisingly thin and eggshell-like when considered in proportion. Or when it is considered that the containment dome is believed by most people to be strong enough to survive the impact of a 747 or an A-380 Airbus, but it can't. It can only survive the impact of much smaller planes – even smaller than the four 767s used by terrorists on 9-11.

Furthermore, that's not really their purpose. The real purpose of the containment dome is to hold back

explosions inside the dome during a meltdown or near-meltdown of the core. These are expected to generate forces less than about 3.5 atmospheres within the dome – otherwise, the containment dome will burst and once it does, "all hell breaks out." But 3.5 atmospheres is not really all that much. And what if the containment dome, with all its mass, were to fall apart during an earthquake? Well, they worried a little about that and decided to make the wires a little thicker and put a few more of them in place and tension them a bit tighter and viola! Instant earthquake-proof!

Of course, it's bogus too. Maybe they made what might survive a 6.8 earthquake into something that might survive a 7.4. And maybe they overstressed something and didn't realize it and the containment dome can now only survive a 6.3. Or maybe some of the wires have rusted inside because nobody noticed a wet rag that was dropped into the cement as it was poured, or a tool, that formed a bimetallic contact point. These things most certainly DO happen, although the nuclear industry assumes they don't when they calculate the "safety factor" of their containment domes.

We're talking about a very serious disaster here, and calculations might be "off!" There are so many factors involved. Only a real "test" – i.e., an earthquake – will tell for sure. But if some big chunk of concrete falls onto a major component of the reactor during a 7.5 or 7.6 earthquake or whatever, then guess what? As one former San Onofre employee put it to me once, "Katie, bar the door!" For 100,000 years.

No nuclear reactor like San Onofre has ever been required to somehow survive a major breakage in the coolant system, such as might be caused by a steam generator being knocked over or disconnected by a large chunk of concrete falling from the ceiling of the containment dome.

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Did a nuke qualify as a real test? Or, an attack using a truckload of ANFO? Security was supposed to be tight at the 100+ reactors, every since 9/11. September 11, 2001 was almost 6 years ago and people tend to get slack. Not at Diablo Canyon and San Onofre, they didn't, but then the terrorists used the 1kT 'suitcase' bombs there. The last 'suitcase' nuke they had was used at Palo Verde, which has 3 reactors.

Over in Lake Arrowhead, we were as snug as a bug in a rug. Seth had regular insulin and Humalin. The shelf life, according to the label, is about a week more than forever. He didn't have the high blood pressure medicine Evan took, but his substitute was better. As far as the other diabetes drugs went, he had a 100-day supply and no more. This was nice, 3 adult couples in a magnificent shelter, a freezer full of steaks and a couple of good bottles of wine.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 5

Lancaster got the radiation first and Eddie radioed as soon as the CD V-717 started to click. His signal started to fade and I told him to raise the antenna mast from its normally stowed position. Does fallout cause ionization? After a while, the airwaves were nothing but static. Seth produced a bottle of Chablis for the ladies and a 6-pack of Heineken for us. Evan and I got down to telling some serious 'war stories'. You know, how Air Power saved the world from the Russians, etc.

Eventually our CD V-717 started to click and we knocked it off and got serious. Eddie had developed a spreadsheet for Seth's laptop using Excel. Seth entered the radiation readings every hour and sheet automatically updated. He pressed F10 and a graph popped up giving us a visual representation of the radiation. No doubt Eddie had the same spreadsheet on his laptop over in Lancaster.

Back when Seth first brought up the shelter in our backyard and said it was company owned, I never once thought that we'd be in Lake Arrowhead in his shelter and the other employees would be in our backyard in the company shelter. It's just as well, I didn't have any beer or wine in my shelter.

>>>

(If you call Humana to sign up for Medicare Part D, go to the bathroom first and bring your lunch, you'll be on the phone for a very long time. Their music is awful!)

I began to question, 'What are the odds?' An avian flu outbreak was anticipated and the government's long planning time had actually permitted them to accumulate sufficient meds to limit the outbreak. In and of itself, that was a miracle, you saw how they handled New Orleans, right? Earthquakes happen everyday in California, but a pair of earthquakes in the M5-M6 range in a single day was quite unusual. Not really, I guess, the Landers quake was M7.3 and the aftershock at Big Bear was M6.4. Terrorists blowing up, or trying to blow up, 20 reactors around the country most certainly wasn't an everyday event. They only succeeded in destroying the 3 I mentioned, the others were successfully SCRAMd.

The real danger in a reactor event is loss of cooling and exposing the core; this causes overheating and the so-called China Syndrome. You saw the movie, right? Jack Lemon was fine, but old Hanoi Jane was in it. Maybe we'll forgive her next lifetime. That's what happened at Chernobyl, and we all know the results of that event. Three Mile Island was ok after the Prez put in an appearance. He was a nuclear engineer.

Back in 2002, James Earl Carter, Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development. Finally, he sure couldn't get our hostages out of the Embassy. He wasn't all bad, he lusted after a woman in his heart, remember?

I thought Osama had 13 of the Russian suitcase nukes. Maybe this attack was someone else. Do you suppose the Iranians salvaged the plutonium from their destroyed reactors and decided to take out the Israeli action on us? It appeared we'd only be in Seth and Naomi's shelter for 2 weeks max. Seth said we were 211 miles (340 km) (184 nautical miles) from Avila Beach on a heading of east-southeast, 106.4°.

San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) is a 3 unit site located ~10 miles south of San Clemente, California. He used Camp Pendleton to get the bearings and distance. It was 72 miles (115 km) (62 nautical miles) from Camp Pendleton South to Lake Arrowhead on a bearing of north, 8.5° and 66 miles (106 km) (57 nautical miles) from Camp Pendleton North to Lake Arrowhead on a bearing of north, 6.3°. It didn't appear than SONGS would be a problem with the wind out of the west.

Seth said he take the watch from 8am until 4pm. Evan and I could decide who would be on from 4pm to midnight and midnight until 8am. Knowing Evan the way I do, I let him choose. Evan is a really nice fella, but his temper is mean. For a man in his late 40s, you'd never know that he wasn't an athlete. He had a tough job at Edwards that involved a fair amount of lifting. And he liked to run to keep his diabetes under control. I thought he was playing with a time bomb, but he kept a box of Hershey bars nearby. He basically had everything under control but his temper. Normally he only lost it when he'd been drinking, a bad thing for a diabetic to do.

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Seth was the type of man who liked to control his money. When he got the bill from the security

company for 2-armed guards for a full weekend, he grumbled and added security bars to the windows. He also added security grates to the doors. They wouldn't keep out the determined person, probably nothing would, but it was much harder to get into the store and warehouse. He also put in a permanent standby generator, selling the floor sample that we used at a discount. He powered it with a propane tank of maybe 10,000-gallons. He also added a dedicated line to the security company so they could come if anyone tried to break in. The previous setup was a dialup account and now we had a single leased line that went direct.

I would have thought that he would have taken one of the pairs from one of the T-1 lines and used it for the security company. Not Seth, his thinking would get compartmentalized and then he'd go off on a tangent. Like buying those 4 mares, there were only the 2 of them, so why did he need 4? Probably just to make Rose and I miserable! Then, there was the matter of his wardrobe when he was at the cabin. He had an extensive collection of the cavalry bib shirts (\$60 each). You've seen them; John Wayne wore them in some of his movies. They have 2 rows of buttons and you can open one side and let the bib flop. He'd have looked better in Wrangler's but he went with Levis 501s. His boots weren't really fancy, but they were good quality; it was easy to tell, Tony Lama's that went for \$500 a pair. I seen boots liked that and always passed, due to my champagne appetite and a beer budget. They carried both Wranglers and Levis and a line of Wrangler hats. Not Seth, it had to be Stetson, El Presidente 100X at \$900 and a Senora 10X in natural straw, probably \$80. I shopped Howard and Phil's and ended up with Laredo boots. Well I did, right up until they went belly up in 1999. I guess it's been a while since I bought new boots.

The ostrich-hide cowboy boots that US Representative Howard P. "Buck" McKeon sports on Capitol Hill aren't just for show; they're part of his heritage. Before the California Republican was elected to Congress for the first time, in 1992, with his four brothers he had run a business: Howard & Phil's Western Wear, a family-owned retail chain known for its cowboy boots and attire. The company's early years also had been a struggle. In 1963 the McKeons' parents, Howard and Phyllis, had founded the business in a sparsely populated area of California, taking out a \$20,000 mortgage on their home. "There were days when they didn't do any business at all," Buck McKeon recalls. "There were weeks when they couldn't buy groceries."

>>>

When the radiation died down to 50mR, we left the shelter. It wasn't that high to begin with, but better safe than sorry. Eddie had finally punched through the radiation and Seth told him to get the truck, start cleaning out the warehouse and bring everything to Lake Arrowhead. Once the stuff was in Arrowhead, they'd do some dividing up and Seth promised enough food for everyone to get by for a year.

"Here's how it is fellas," Seth announced. "I can't count on getting supplies so I figure we'd better fold up the business. I pay everyone anything they have coming in the way of vacation or whatever. On top of that, I give you each a one-year supply of food for your family. That will be in lieu of any notice. If you need anything else, talk to me and we'll work out something. I have Tamiflu if any of you don't."

"What are you going to do boss?" Eddie asked.

"I think I'll get my horses and go for a ride. Why, is there something you need?"

"What are you going to do with the server?"

"Hadn't given it much thought, any suggestions?"

“Well, I have enough vacation built up to buy it from you.”

“Are you sure? A fat lot of good a server will do you.”

“Well, pilgrim, if that’s the way you’re going to be,” Eddie laughed, “Fill your hands, you son-of-a bitch.”

“Fine take it and quite imitating the Duke.”

>>>

Characters in numerous other movies and television shows have made imitations of John Wayne. Easily imitated, with his signature swaggered walk, especially the use of the word "pilgrim," and famous lines like, "fill your hands you son-of-a-bitch," have made their way into other performances. George Washington McClintock: “I know I'm gonna use good judgment. I haven't lost my temper in 40 years, but pilgrim you caused a lot of trouble this morning, might have got somebody killed... and somebody oughta belt you in the mouth. But I won't, I won't. The hell I won't.” Wayne used the term pilgrim twice in Liberty Valance.

"For it is written that a son of Arabia would awaken a fearsome Eagle. The wrath of the Eagle would be felt throughout the lands of Allah and lo, while some of the people trembled in despair still more rejoiced: for the wrath of the Eagle cleansed the lands of Allah and there was peace." That verse is number 9.11 of the Qu'ran.

You know what this is, don't you? “For the wrath of the Eagle cleansed the lands of Allah and there was peace." Wishful thinking. We're not quite as crazy as they are.

Open Microsoft Word and do the following:

1. Type in capitals Q33 NY. This is the flight number of the first plane to hit one of the Twin Towers.
2. Highlight the Q33 NY.
3. Change the font size to 48.
4. Change the actual font to the WINGDINGS

What you will get is a jet airplane, 2 boxes that look like towers, a space, a skull and crossbones and the Star of David.

>>>

It was just a good thing that Eddie was joking; Seth was wearing his Paladin rig. What now? Well, I'll tell you, this is the aftermath. Avian flu was still around but apparently not a problem. They cleaned up after the two earthquakes and FEMA said they were on their way to help out California. God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

“What now? If you're closing the business do you suppose I could have my gold from your safe?”

“It's in good hands, Joe.”

“Maybe so, Seth, but I’m out of a job and you know hard it is to get a job when you’re pushing 50.”

“Promise not to spend it all in one place?”

“No.”

“Then why should I give it to you?”

“Because Evan is a faster draw than you are?”

“Good point. Do you think he’d like a beer?”

“He’s still paying for the 2 he drank the day the reactors blew up. He’s just brimming with nervous energy after being cooped up for 2 weeks.”

“What are you going to spend the money on?”

“Horses?”

“I have 4, you don’t need any.”

“Evan and Marie don’t have horses.”

“I’ll give you your gold, but I’ll also buy 2 horses for Evan and Marie. It’s hard to say when FEMA will make an appearance. Say, do you have any extra gas?”

“Just what is in my tanks.”

“How much is that?”

“Maybe 50 gallons.”

“Well, I have plenty of diesel but no gas. Any suggestions?”

“Do you know where we can get some empty drums?”

“How many?”

“What difference does it make?”

“I have some in the garage.”

“Really? How many?”

“Six. That’s space for 330-gallons of gas.”

“Evan, let’s load up the drums and go find some gas.”

You know how it is, right? You need gas and you have drums and gold coin to pay for it. There is one gas station in Lake Arrowhead, Cedar Glen Gas Stop. Big Bear City has one too, B&M Petroleum. Big Bear Lake has 5, Arco, Ralph Haupt’s, Moonridge Fuel, Ultramar and Shell. There are also stations in Rimforest and Running Springs, one each for a total of 9. I knew we didn’t have electricity

in Lake Arrowhead and I believe it probably all comes off the same power lines. At least with Evan driving, I wouldn't be burning up my gas just to find more. I looked at the map and determined that it was Cedar Glen or nothing. It was 8 miles to Running Springs and 23 miles to Big Bear Lake.

"If you can't get gas in Cedar Glen, try Rimforest, it's only 4 miles." Seth advised.

"Where can you get horses?"

"At Baldwin Lake Stables, southeast of Big Bear City. We have to go down there and bring back my horses anyway. Why?"

"If we have to go after gas, why don't we kill 2 birds with one stone?"

"Are you sure that you aren't Jewish?"

"I don't know; what does a Jew look like?"

Apparent that went over like a fart in church. We put the 6 drums in Evan's pickup and got our military firearms. Seth gave me the gold and brought some of his to buy 2 more horses. We stopped in Big Bear City and got gas to fill the drums. Ultramar always has the lowest prices and that guy had a portable generator to keep his pumps going. He had jacked the price to \$2.999 a gallon but he didn't have a limit. You could get all the gas you wanted if you had cash, gold or silver. I think we were the first person he'd sold any gas to. *** for tat, I gave him a ½ ounce Liberty. Seth had discussed the price of gold on the way over and he speculated that it would hit \$2,000 an ounce. The man held out his hand and said, "That's half." What the h*ll by the time it hit \$2,000 an ounce, the guy would be out of gas or charging \$6 a gallon.

"How are we going to haul the horses?"

"With a trailer, how did you expect?"

"I don't think so," Evan said."

"Why not?"

"330 gallons of gas weighs about 2,000 pounds. I'm already down on the frame as it is. If we're going to pull a trailer, Seth, we'll have to go back to your place and unload the drums." ($6.2 \times 330 = 2,046$ and premium weighs more)

"Go ahead to the stables, they can deliver."

I'll bet Seth was thinking he could buy 2 horses for 4 ounces of gold. Hah! By the time he had paid for the horses and 2 saddles, he was out 9 ounces. They'd deliver the horses if he could give them fuel, but only because he'd stabled the horses there for a while. Oh, yeah, there was the matter of feed. Seth didn't have any because he kept his horses at the stable. Is \$4 a bale too much to pay for hay? Yeah, I thought so too. And some people call horses, hay burners. Anyone who could pop for \$250 for dinner for 4 at the Odyssey could afford \$4 hay.

"Get lost?"

"Not hardly, but that's a ton of gas and we went to the stables." I explained.

“How high was gas?”

“Not really too bad, \$3.”

“Did you get the horses?”

“They’re delivering them, Naomi, along with a truckload of hay.”

“What did the hay run?”

“\$4.”

“\$4!!! \$2 a bale is a fair price, \$3 tops. There about 40 bales to the ton and the going price is \$80 a ton.”

“Don’t yell at me, I didn’t buy the hay.”

“My husband sometimes thinks he’s Wyatt Earp.”

“The last time I looked, he was Doc Holliday.”

“Boy Toys!” Naomi complained. “How much hay did he buy?”

“200 bales.”

“Why?”

“I’m not sure, because that was all their truck would hold?”

“Men!”

This was going well. 6 hours out of the shelter and Seth was already up to his ass in alligators. Evan and I made ourselves scarce by unloading the 6 drums of gas. I looked in the garage and found a 1-liter barrel pump. This would be fun, refilling the gas tank. Six gallons is a little less than 23 liters. Filling both tanks would require 212 cycles of the pump. On the other hand, it beat walking. We added a length of plastic hose and used that to reach my tank. It only took 24 turns, not bad.

>>>

“Did you get the gas unloaded?”

“Yes, did you get the hay unloaded?”

“Ouch, you really know how to hurt a guy. I may not be able to sit for a week.”

“I take it you don’t normal pay the bills.”

“Naomi pays the bills and I guess I should have asked her what the price of hay was.”

“Where else around here could you have bought Hay?”

“I have no idea, why?”

“They can’t really grow hay in the mountains so I’d speculate they have to truck it in from someplace like the Antelope Valley. It might go for \$80 a ton like Naomi said, but that would be picked up in Palmdale. It may cost them a dollar a bale to get it delivered, who knows. And like you said, where else could you have found it. She’d have probably paid \$4 a bale too.”

“When was the last time I gave you a raise?”

“Do you mean before you fired me this morning? I can’t really remember.”

“I didn’t fire you per se, consider it a change in assignment.”

“Change to what?”

“Naomi and I, by ourselves, are on pretty shaky ground. On the other hand if you and Evan wanted to stay here, at least for a while, we’d be more secure.”

“Seth I have a job to get back to at Edwards,” Evan protested.

“Do you? Do you really? Where is Edwards from Lancaster? East isn’t it?”

“Yes, so?”

“If the Antelope Valley was awash in radiation, what about Edwards? I’ll fancy it got hit pretty good.”

“I should at least try to call. Oh, I can’t do that because the phones are out. In that case, maybe I’d better drive up to Edwards and check on my job.”

“Fine with me, but when you find yourself unemployed, will you work for me?”

“As a guard?”

“As a guard.”

“Guard work doesn’t pay very well.”

“I’ll pay you and Joe exactly the same as I paid him before as the Assistant Manager of Rim of the World Preparedness.”

“Is that good?”

“Take it Evan, it’s the best offer you’ll get in a very long time. Me too, Seth.”

“Fine, the two of you drive up to Edwards tomorrow and check out Evan’s job. You might want to swing by your homes and pick up anything you forgot.”

>>>

“He seems pretty sure of himself.”

“Twenty years ago, they had airmen doing what you do now, Evan. Maybe the government will cut costs by laying people off.”

“Yeah, I suppose. Well we both have our pensions so if Seth pays a decent wage, we’ll probably be better off.”

“Don’t forget, it includes room and board. That gold he gave me out of his safe was bonus money he gave me but never paid me. Instead, he converted it into gold at \$300 an ounce.”

“I wondered why you had gold in his safe.”

“I got \$1,000 an ounce at the gas station so I tripled my money and never even touched it.”

“There for a minute, he acted like he wasn’t going to give you the gold. Is he always like that?”

“Sometimes Seth is really strange when it comes to money. He’ll take us out on the town and drop \$250 at the Odyssey and then cut corners the following Monday. He put in that shelter in our backyard and then when the time came to use it, he filled it with his other employees and had us come over here.”

“How big is it?”

“10’x50’.”

“How big is the shelter under his house?”

“36’x44’.”

“So he had 20 people in 500ft² and the 6 of us in 1,584ft²?”

“Right, see what I mean? I offered to buy Marie and you horses, but he had to put on a show and buy them himself.”

“I haven’t been on a horse since I was 18 years old.”

“Rose rode a few times in high school, but I’d never been on a horse until she took us and got lessons.”

“What to learn about riding a horse?”

“How to not fall off. The really strange this is that we bought those rifle scabbards never once thinking we’d ever use them.”

“I guess I did too. I bought the Winchesters to complement my shooting gear and carried them in scabbards. Never once had them on a horse. So what’s the deal, are we cowboys or soldiers?”

“Either, both, I don’t really know. I suppose it depends on what Seth dresses up in.”

“I think I saw that movie, what was its name?”

“Heartbreak Ridge.”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 6

“Right, Clint Eastwood as a has been Marine.”

“I wouldn’t say that to a Marine’s face if I were you. Once a Marine, always a Marine. Remember Highway’s slogan in the movie?”

“Improvise. Adapt. Overcome?”

“Right, I think that we’re going to be doing a lot of that in the coming days.”

“Are you expecting trouble?”

“Well, if we’re looking for FEMA to come and bail us out, I say we’re in for a disappointment. Remember how they botched New Orleans?”

“But they forced Brown out.”

“Chertoff is still there. Did you get the bit about border security?”

“No, what was that?”

The Secure Border Initiative (SBI) is a comprehensive multi-year plan to secure America’s borders and reduce illegal migration. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has announced an overall vision for the SBI, which includes:

- More agents to patrol our borders, secure our ports of entry and enforce immigration laws;
- Expanded detention and removal capabilities to eliminate “catch and release” once and for all;
- A comprehensive and systemic upgrading of the technology used in controlling the border, including increased manned aerial assets, expanded use of UAVs, and next-generation detection technology;
- Increased investment in infrastructure improvements at the border – providing additional physical security to sharply reduce illegal border crossings; and
- Greatly increased interior enforcement of our immigration laws – including more robust worksite enforcement.

Under SBI, our goal is to have operational control of both the northern and southern borders within five years.

- The President recently signed the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill into law, which included an 11% increase for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, bringing total funding to more than \$7 billion – funds that will enable us to increase our physical presence at the border by hiring an additional 1,000 Border Patrol agents. With these new hires, Border Patrol will increase by nearly 3,000 agents since 9/11.
- The Homeland Security Appropriations Bill also includes roughly \$3.9 billion in total funding for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) this fiscal year, a 9% increase over last year. Included are significant funding increases for ICE criminal investigators, detention beds, fugitive operations teams, and Immigration Enforcement agents.
- The increased funding will allow ICE to add roughly 250 new criminal investigators to better target

the human smuggling organizations and other criminal groups that exploit our nation's borders. It will also allow ICE to add 400 new Immigration Enforcement Agents and 100 new Deportation Officers.

“And Bush wants to make them legal, doesn't he?”

“That's what I heard, but the last thing he said on the subject was, 'I'll tell you another big idea. We've got to do something about our immigration laws. Our obligation is to secure the borders. We've got to make sure that – we've got to make sure that we have the resources and technologies available for our Border Patrol agents. We've got to make sure we have a focused strategy to prevent people, goods, drugs, whatever, being smuggled in this country. That's one of our duties. And I meet with Chertoff quite frequently – he's the head of the Homeland Security. We do talk about how best to modernize the border security. One way to protect this border is to recognize that people are sneaking in here to work. And I believe that if you are a willing employer – in other words, if you have somebody looking for work and you can't find an American, there ought to be a legal way – not an illegal way – a legal way for you to be able to employ that person.’”

“How do you know all of the stuff you know?”

“I know nothing! On the other hand, I surf the World Wide Web.”

“About the only thing I use it for is emails. And only that because my job requires it.”

“Former job and I'll bet they didn't buy the computer, did they?”

“No, but I bought it through Base Exchange so it didn't cost so much. Here we are, let me pull out my ID pass.”

“Help you gentlemen?”

“Here's my ID pass, airman. I just came to check on my job.”

“Sir, by order of the President, all military installations are closed to civilians, including those who worked here. You should have gotten a notice terminating your employment. Did you not receive it, sir?”

“Haven't been home, but we only got out of the shelter yesterday.”

“Sorry sir, but I'll have to confiscate your pass.”

“That's it? No – thank you but sorry? What about my accumulated leave and such?”

“Sir it is my understanding that the notice included a check for any monies to which you are entitled. You can pull past the shack to turn around.”

>>>

“How do you like that? He did everything but say, 'Dismissed.' I sure hope that Seth's offer is still open.”

“It will be, he really needs help to guard his cabin. Do you want to go to your place or mine first?”

“Mine is closest, so go there first.”

Evan and Marie have nice little 3-bedroom house on Lancaster's north side. We loaded his extra ammo, their clothes and emptied the refrigerator and freezer into the trashcan. The food was fairly ripe and Evan opened a box of baking soda to draw out some of the stink. From the back of his closet, he brought out a cash box.

"I've never trusted banks and we only keep enough in our account to cover the checks we write. Marie and I have been on a cash basis for as long as I can remember. Do you suppose cash is still good, Joe?"

"I don't see why not, it's not the end of the world. It might be the end of California and Arizona for a while, but as far as I know, the government is still intact."

"I think that's it. Let's get to your place."

Rose and I live on the west side in an older neighborhood. It was only about 10 minutes away and there wasn't any traffic. All I really needed was more clothes; we'd brought everything else. I grabbed my straw hat, my dress boots and an extra coat for Rose. Then I hit the dresser drawers and just emptied hers into a suitcase. I grabbed my extra jeans, shirts, drawers, t-shirts and socks. I figured I'd better grab her jewel box too. I wasn't sure what she'd want to wear, dresses or slacks and blouses so I just got both. I can't explain it, but men and women think differently. I'd read something on the WWW way back when that claimed men and women used different parts of their brains for the same tasks. It had been a study done using stimulation and MRIs. Their brains worked faster than ours and they used less computing power for the same tasks. I'm sure the researchers were wrong, but they didn't claim that women were smarter, just that they thought differently.

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"What did you do?" Rose asked. "Dump the dresser drawers into the suitcase?"

"Yeah, why?"

"You could have packed the things."

"We were in a hurry."

"I can tell, it shows. Did you bring my jewel box?"

"Yes, dear. I even remembered to get your things from the bathroom."

"Did you bring me dresses or slacks and blouses?"

"Both, we've only been married 27 years, I still don't understand how you think."

"Dresses are for dress up and slacks and blouses for every day."

"Yes dear."

I'll have to say that Rose looked pretty good in a pair of tight fitting blue jeans. She didn't have a massive chest, but she had a very nice figure, properly proportioned. In guy talk: more than a handful. This wearing a Colt SAA all the time was going to take some getting used to. Seth seemed to have bought out the store on the cavalry bib shirts so we were going to be cowboys until he switched to

BDUs. Evan had a FAL rifle, a SA-58 from DSA Arms and a M1911. Marie had a Browning High Power and an AR-15. The thing was, this was California and very few Assault type weapons were legal. Most certainly not the rifles Evan and Marie owned. Neither were ours as far as that goes. I'd replaced the compensator on my Super Match with the original flash hider it was supposed to come with. And, California had outlawed the .50BMG caliber rifles not long after I'd sunk \$7 grand into mine.

I'd told you that I had 2 sniper rifles; the Barrett and the Super Match and I believe that I mention I had a pair of scopes for each. I had very good Leopold Day scopes, each turned to the rifle they went on. I couldn't afford the Raptor night scopes at \$7 grand apiece so I had a lesser brand that went about \$3 grand per. Barrett sold ammo manufactured for them by IMI in 80 round boxes. I'd made a trip to Phoenix a couple of year back and picked up 10 boxes. Not cheap! To the best of my knowledge, nobody had suppressors for any of their weapons. And, all of the weapons, as far as I know, weren't capable of full auto or burst. In the years since Vietnam, the US military had moved away from the concept of having riflemen, except for the Marines, and taught different tactics. That was probably because they hadn't had a real rifle since McNamara got rid of the M-14s.

Seth had 2 of every gun he owned. Half of the guns in his safes were illegal in California, maybe more. I suppose in his own way, he was like Ronnie Barrett, Seth believed in the 2nd Amendment. Big time! Barrett manufactures a variety of firearms and there are different designations for the weapons, depending on who the customer is. For example, the M82A1 is designated as an M107 for the military and LEOs. The only rifle he builds that isn't available on the competition arms is the M109 in 25mm.

I'd often wonder just where Seth came up with some of the guns in his collection, some of them were brought out after California began banning weapons. He'd moved his 2 Fort Knox gun safes to the shelter some time after he'd shown the shelter to me. His safes were the Titan series and other than the Yeager series, Fort Knox didn't build a better gun safe.

Back in May in the midst of our really busy time, I'd called the Phoenix dealer had had gotten another 800 rounds of .50 caliber ammo all in the same lot number. For my Super Match, I'd gone first class and purchased ammo from Black Hills, the 165-grain SPBT and the 168-grain match. Considering how much I'd spent on the Kimbers, I'd selected Black Hills 230-grain JHP +P ammo for them and their 125-grain JHP in the .357 magnum for Rose. Evan had some of that Australian surplus for his FALS and standard military ball ammo in his M1911s.

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July 20, 2007...

We had come out of the shelter on the 18th and gone to Edwards and Lancaster on the 19th. Today, according to the calendar, was Friday. I had checked the freezer in the shelter and the fellas had pretty much cleaned it out. What was left and gone into a couple of coolers for transport back to Seth and Naomi's. Evan and I put straps around my house freezer and just loaded it onto the pickup with my 2-wheeler. We had also gotten whatever was left of the food in the shelter, not much, and my two-year supply from the house. It was actually more than a two-year supply because we had the others things besides what I had from Walton's.

We had a nice breakfast because Naomi said her eggs were getting old and had to be used up. That answered my question of whether or not Seth and she kept Kosher. Unless there is some new process to make bacon Kosher that I didn't know about, I guess not. The dietary laws evolved at a time in history where they were important. They basically kept you from being killed by the food you

ate. In a modern age, they were more of a tradition than a need.

“How are we going to get the propane out of your tank and transferred over here?”

“You have 13,000-gallons why would you need to transfer the propane? Sure we can find someone to deliver fuel if you need it, you can pay in gold.”

“I can pay in cash, too, but I hate leaving a full load of propane in Lancaster.”

“We’ll probably need it when we get back if the power isn’t on. If you want, Evan and I can go looking for a propane dealer.”

“Try AmeriGas in Yucca Valley, that’s my regular supplier.”

“But, do you need gas? You have the same generator that we have in Lancaster. In 16 days, you could have only used a maximum of 800 gallons.”

“I don’t believe we used that much, more, like 500-gallons.”

“Seth, I could be wrong, but I believe you have a full year supply of propane, may more. Evan and I can drive down to Yucca Valley and see if there is anyone at the AmeriGas dealer, but where would you put extra fuel if we could get it?”

“Still. I’ll ride along and see if I can’t prepay for at least one delivery.”

“Whatever. Listen, it’s not like the Chinese or the Russians attacked the US. From radio reports, terrorists attacked 20 reactors and only succeeded in destroying 3, the 2 here in California and Palo Verde. I’m sure they will bring all of the power generating stations online and ration electricity. Some of those manufacturing companies use as much power as a small town. If you’re really worried about it, you should AmeriGas to move the tank from the store. That’s a 10,000-gallon tank and you said you were shutting down operations. We can even bring the generator and use it as a backup. I brought my Chevy back from Lancaster so we’ll have 2 pickups and a trailer to use.”

“I have a trailer for the Hummer, so we’ll have 2 trailers.”

“We’ll still have to talk to AmeriGas about moving that tank, is it a rental or did you buy it?”

“I had to buy it, they refused to supply a 10k tank for a small business for a backup generator. I had to buy that 5,000-gallon tank in Lancaster, too. You know how they work, they won’t rent you a tank that holds more fuel than you can use in a year.”

“I say the only problems we have to solve are getting the tank moved and emptying the store,” I suggested.

“I own the building in Santa Clarita so we can take our time clearing the place out. The fellas moved most of the inventory anyway. I’m mainly interested in getting my records so I can do the tax returns. How in the hell do they expect me to deposit the employee withholding with all of the banks closed?”

I hadn’t even thought about that. The state and the feds only give you so many days, depending on the amount, in which to make deposits of the taxes you withhold from employees. We had been in the shelter from July 4th to July 18th. Seth had deposited the withholding from the employees on July 2nd and he wouldn’t have to make a deposit now except for the fact that he withheld when he paid

everyone off. However, until someone opened a bank, that was impossible. With no phones, there wasn't anyway to call someone and ask, either.

A 20# propane cylinder hold 5-gallons so I'd guess that propane weighs about 4# per gallon. If the tank at the store contained 9,000-gallons, that was 18 tons of propane plus the weight of the tank. It would take a crane to lift the tank onto a flat bed and unload it once we got it here. Hopefully we could avoid unloading and refilling the tank.

The folks at AmeriGas in Yucca Valley were in and yes, they could move the tank, for a price. And, yes, they could top everything off once the new tank and been moved and was in place. And, yes, they had the tank stanchions for a 10,000-gallon tank that they could haul to lake Arrowhead and install. For a price! I thought Seth was going to pop a gasket when he heard the prices. Still, it was cheaper than buying a new tank, had it been available, and buying another 9,000-gallons of propane. I told you he was funny about money. I wonder if they've reopened the Odyssey?

However, they couldn't do the job until Monday the 23rd. Seth said as long as we were out and about and were pulling the trailers, we might just as well go to Santa Clarita and clean out the store. The 3 of us could go back on Monday and maybe by then, there would be a bank open so he could deposit the withholding. The late filing penalties could be deducted on the tax return. Here we are trying to survive in the aftermath of a terrorist attack and he's worried about his d*mned taxes.

It was decided to just bring things we could use back to Lake Arrowhead and store the remaining things, other than the records, right there in the store for now. We loaded the records first, just to smooth the waters. Then we got what remained of the battery and flashlight supply. Finally, we got some of the other survival items, but left things like the extra gas masks and so forth at the store. We brought the MREs just in case we had to bug out from Lake Arrowhead, but for the life of me I couldn't conceive of needing to leave.

I suppose the reason that I couldn't was because of the amount of food we had accumulated there at the cabin. Even passing out 18 one-year supplies of food, we probably had another 15 on top of what was left of the 16 years worth of food Seth had in the beginning. And, you'll have to remember, this was survival food, not what we regularly ate. It didn't matter because we wouldn't go hungry and as long as the meat held out, we were good to go.

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Monday, July 23rd...

We took off early because AmeriGas hadn't said when on Monday they'd pick up the tank. The closest we could pin them down was that they pick it up by noon. There were a lot more cars out and about so apparently people had somehow managed to survive Diablo Canyon and San Onofre with little trouble. On a map, Diablo is straight west of Bakersfield and San Onofre is south of San Clemente where Nixon had his western White House. By in large, I'd say that most of LA and the Inland Empire had avoided much of the contamination. We didn't see any sign of any FEMA people, but that was no big surprise. Bush had made an address to the nation on Friday night and said that FEMA and troops were being mobilized for a cleanup, whatever that meant.

I'm here to tell you that I don't believe it meant much. They were still fighting over rebuilding New Orleans and here we were in late July 2 years later. The folks down in Louisiana want a category 5 levee system all on the federal dime. Translated, that means that you and I are going to have to pay for those people to live in what used to be a swamp. I might be willing to be graceful about that if they'd be willing to raise ground level in New Orleans about 30' like they did in Seattle.

You knew that Seattle wasn't the only underground city in the US, right? Want a list? Well, there's Atlanta, Georgia, Chicago, Illinois, Crystal City, Virginia, Havre, Montana, Dallas, Texas, Houston, Texas, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, Duluth, Minnesota, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Rochester, Minnesota, Seattle, Washington and Rochester, New York.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_city If you go around the world, you'll find underground cities in the following countries: Australia, Canada, China, Taiwan, Finland, Hong Kong, Iran, Japan, Singapore, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States. The largest underground city in the world is Montreal.

They showed up at noon and within an hour, we were east bound and down. The semi didn't travel really fast because the tank wasn't full and it could slosh. It wasn't that the load was heavy, probably less than 20 tons, but when the driver turned corners, he had to go very slowly. They also had a flag pickup leading the parade, but I don't know why. Probably just so they could charge Seth more. We got back to Arrowhead around 3pm and there was the crane waiting to set the tank and a delivery truck, which had already topped of the 3,000 and 10,000-gallon tanks. They topped off the tank from the store and Seth forked over cash for their services, grumbling under his breath the entire time.

If you think about it, they had a crane, a lowboy, 2 drivers, a delivery truck and driver tied up for most of the day. Seth should just be happy; he now has 90% of 23,000-gallons of propane or about 20,700-gallons. That's enough propane to run the generator at full power for more than a year and at half power for nearly 2 years. Evan and I spent the remainder of the day connecting the new tank into Seth's pipe system. The new tank and the small tank both had shutoff valves so we could run only on the buried tank.

We listened to the news on TV to see if there was any trouble around southern California. We assumed that with the power and phones out, some people might take advantage of the situation. It wasn't all that bad. Early on, there has been some looting in LA, but after all the practice the LAPD had not containing riots in the past, this time they got it right. I'd perceived that that Chief Bratton would have a handle on rioting. The only person ever to serve as chief executive of both the LAPD and the NYPD, Chief Bratton established an international reputation for reengineering police departments and fighting crime in the 1990s.

Apparently he had a new policy to deal with riots, shoot first...

<http://www.lapdonline.org/portal/insidethelapd.php> Apparently he'd adopted some of the practice of Chief Davis who had formed such things as the 'gun squad'. LA had 3 major riots in its history, the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943, the Watts Riots of 1965 and the Rodney King Riots of 1992. King made an appearance before television news cameras to plead for peace, saying, "Can we get along here? Can we all get along?" King's remark is often misquoted, sometimes sarcastically, as "Can't we all just get along?"

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A History Lesson...

When Darryl and Sims entered the 7-Eleven, Owens put the broom and dust pan down and followed them into the store. Williams and Coward followed Owens into the store. (TT 2146-2152). As Darryl and Sims walked to the counter area to take money from the register, Williams walked behind Owens and told him "shut up and keep walking." (TT 2154). While pointing a shotgun at Owens' back, Williams directed him to a back storage room. (TT 2154).

Once inside the storage room, Williams, at gunpoint, ordered Owens to "lay down, m*therf*cker."

Williams then chambered a round into the shotgun. Williams then fired the round into the security monitor. Williams then chambered a second round and fired the round into Owens' back as he lay face down on the floor of the storage room. Williams then fired again into Owens' back. (TT 2162).

According to court transcripts at approximately 5:00am on March 11, 1979, Stanley Williams entered the Brookhaven Motel at 10411 South Vermont Avenue. After entering the public lobby area, Williams broke down the door that led to the private office. Once inside the private office, Williams, using his shotgun, killed 76-year-old Yen-I Yang; Williams also killed Yang's wife, sixty-three year old Tsai-Shai Yang; lastly, Williams killed Yang's daughter, 43-year-old Yee-Chen Lin. Williams then removed the currency from the cash register and fled the location.

Robert Yang, son of Yen-Yi and Tsai-Shai, was asleep with his wife in their bedroom at the Brookhaven Motel when he was woken by the sound of somebody breaking down the door to the motel's office. This sound was immediately followed by the sound of his mother or sister screaming, followed by gun shots. When Robert entered the motel office he found his mother, his sister, and his father had all been shot. Robert observed that the cash register was open and money was missing. It was later determined that the robbery of the Brookhaven Motel and the murder of the three members of the Yang family netted Stanley Williams approximately one hundred dollars.

I know one person for sure who favors the death penalty and thinks that they wait to darned long to get it over with.

>>>

Tuesday, July 24th...

...was the day after Monday, July 23rd. We busied ourselves sorting through all the supplies we'd brought from Rim of the World Preparedness. The MREs were consigned to the basement to keep them at an even temperature. I hadn't thought that we had that many at the warehouse, but we could live on MREs for months. As far as those deluxe one-year food supplies went, we were good forever, or so it seemed. 31 one-year supplies less the food we'd consumed since the 4th of July, which didn't really even make a dent.

Once we had everything where Seth wanted it, we decided to pull out the firearms and ammo and see where we stood. I had about 1,200 rounds of the .50cal, 10,000-rounds of surplus for my 2 HK91s, at least 1,000-rounds of BH Match .308 for the Super Match and 500-round of the SPBT. There wasn't a weapon in Rose and my collection that we didn't have 1,000-rounds for. Evan had 5 cases of Aussie Surplus, 4,000-rounds, but he only had 1,000 rounds for Maries AR. He had 500 rounds each of .45 and 9mm ball. About half of the ammo he had for the .45s was cowboy ammo and the remainder was full powered ammo, may 1,000 rounds of each.

I told you that Seth had 10,000-rounds for every long arm and 2,000-rounds for every handgun, right? Seth had a lot of guns and we couldn't shoot up the ammo we had in one lifetime. He surprised me when he came up with the M109, 25mm rifles. I hadn't thought that Barrett sold those to anyone except the US government. Seth called them his 'tank killers'. I don't know that I would go quite that far, but I wouldn't want to be in a Hummer, even uparmored, if someone were shooting at me with one of those M109s. And, Seth didn't have 10,000-rounds of ammo for those rifles for several reasons, not the least of which was the cost per round. He had a mixture of the M1019 HEAB and the M1049 AP. Not a lot, but then again, this was 25mm ammo and it wouldn't take a lot. The 25mm HEAB was intended to replace the 40mm grenade, ala Mark 19. The rifle had 5-round magazines and some were loaded with AP and others with HEAB.

“Where did you get those?”

“The rifles or the ammo?”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 7

“Take your pick, I thought they were military only.”

“Technically the rifles aren’t but the ammo is. You can own a rifle but the grenades are destructive devices controlled by the NFA. The rifle is just a hunk of metal without the ammo. It’s a heavy SOB, 33+ pounds without ammo. When he first came up with the upper to convert the M107 to 25mm, the rounds were still experimental. I’m not so sure they aren’t still. The .50 caliber Barrett Model 82A1/XM107 produces modest recoil energy. The weapon operating mechanism combined with an efficient muzzle brake reduces recoil energy to about 36 foot-pounds. The 25mm XM109 fires ammunition with essentially the same impulse as .50 caliber ammunition. However, the 25mm launches a much heavier projectile and uses much less propellant. The small amount of propellant limits the muzzle brake effects. The recoil energy of the XM109 exceeds 60 foot-pounds. The suppressed version of the Model 82A1/XM107 produces significantly greater recoil energy than the muzzle brake variant of the 82A1/XM107, and is also a good candidate for recoil reduction efforts.”

“The M107 is the .50 caliber upper?”

“Right, want to see one, I have 2?”

“What don’t you have?”

“I don’t have anything that can’t be classified as a shoulder weapon or and hand weapon.”

“What’s that in the case?”

“Oh, the Army decided that the M107 needed a can.”

“Will that work on my M82?”

Sure, same barrel as my M107. Don’t worry, Joe, I have extras. I have cans for all of my guns.”

“When did you get those?”

“Do you recall how I used to have my guns safes in the basement and later moved them to the shelter?”

“After Christmas of 2006?”

“Right. I got the M107/M109 around then and when the M107 upper came with the suppressor, I decided all of my weapons should have suppressors. You know how I sometimes get carried away, right? The suppressors were cheaper by the dozen.”

“Do you have all calibers?”

“Never go half way. I have threaded barrels that will work in your Kimbers and Evan’s M1911. I even have a barrel for a Browning High Power, although at the time, I didn’t realize that Marie carried the High Power. I like my Colt revolvers but, in a fight, they’re a b*tch to reload quickly.”

>>>

“Honey I think that Seth is prepared for World War III.”

“Why would you say that, Joe?”

“Look around you. A cabin up in the mountains with a bomb shelter underneath that is fit for a king. Today he came dragging out a M109 with interchangeable M107 upper.”

“Speak English, please.”

“Sorry. Barrett rifle modified the M107, which can either be a M82 like I have, or the one based on the M99 bolt action. Anyway, they modified the M82 version with a new upper receiver assembly to shoot the 25mm round that is being developed for the M307 machinegun. I should point out that the machinegun is also modified as a M312 to shoot .50 caliber ammo. I don't know if you've heard about the Objective Individual Combat Weapon (OICW), but it combines a 5.56 with a 25mm grenade launcher using basically the same ammo. Barrett's rifle uses the same 25mm rounds. Seth didn't exactly say where he got them but he has the M107/M109s and ammo.”

“I read about that, wasn't it also supposed to have a thermobaric round?”

“Maybe the M307, but I don't know about the M109. Anyway, that crackpot bought suppressors, apparently by the cart full. We can silence all of our weapons.”

“You'll write me from San Quentin, right?”

“Of course. And I'm sure that Evan will keep in touch with Marie.”

“Just as long as you don't keep in touch with Marie.”

“Have I ever, in all the years ever once given you a reason to think that way?”

“You haven't I'll admit that, but you keep your eyes on me and off of Evan's wife.”

Where in the love of God did that come from? Maybe I'd have to look closer and find out.

>>>

I read with some significant disgust the account by Dr. Scott Delacroix of his experiences following Hurricane Katrina. It is unfounded accusations, such as his, that stir equally unfounded unrest. His claims that FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] was nowhere to be found were solely because he did not look. Less than a mile away from the I-10/Causeway staging area where he was, was a huge FEMA operation, of which I was a part. In fact, the people coming his way were the very ones who my medics and I triaged – all 1700 of them on Wednesday. There is no doubt that fault can be found anywhere one looks at the aftermath of this disaster, including at the state and local government of the State of Louisiana. If Dr. Delacroix would bother to refer to the National Response Plan, he would have found that it was not FEMA's sole responsibility to rescue New Orleans, but in fact it is the responsibility first of local and state officials. But having said that, does Dr. Delacroix realize that FEMA had 4 urban search and rescue (USAR) teams on the ground (in potential harm's way) before the storm even made landfall, and that there was a Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) in Baton Rouge? Within 2 days, more USAR teams were working frantically throughout the

flooded areas to rescue those who chose not to heed the evacuation order and were now stranded. And 7 more DMAT teams were at the New Orleans International Airport trying to treat the thousands brought their way.

The statement that no medical assistance was available other than Dr. Delacroix's is entirely untrue, for on the other side of the bridge from where I was triaging (and treating) victims coming off the boats at the rate of 5-20 per boat, was a full treatment tent staffed by the Texas Task Force-1 USAR team. Near the end of the day, many of those refugees were patients from a hospital that should have been evacuated before the storm, not after.

Although communication is always our biggest problem during disaster responses, transportation was a large one in New Orleans. However, to once again blame FEMA is a little out of line. First, where is FEMA supposed to get these vehicles? Those who were able to be driven were either gone or already being driven by others. We used our own vehicles to transport people. Where do you think all those helicopters came from that were transporting people? They certainly weren't from China. There had to be a limit on how far one was willing to let a helicopter, bus, or van go and be out of service. The original destination was Baton Rouge, which seemed reasonable until that city's population swelled. And what hospital do you think should have received all of these patients?

As for "pulling out" on Thursday, FEMA has an obligation to protect the people who leave their families and jobs to respond to disasters, such as New Orleans. Although there may not have been gunfire at the I-10/Causeway site, there certainly was throughout much of the rest of the city, as related to us the next day by the surviving locals and evidenced by the overturned, burning vehicles and buildings. The lawlessness of the citizens of New Orleans is what prevented FEMA from continuing operations on Thursday, not the inadequacies of FEMA.

Every USAR team and every DMAT team in the United States was deployed to either Louisiana or Mississippi. Those teams did a tremendous amount of work and should be very proud of the thousands of people they rescued and the countless thousands more they assisted. The helicopter pilots and crews that flew day and night evacuating victims and delivering food and water to those still stranded should be similarly admired. And to the FEMA employees and officials, who worked far beyond what anyone should be expected to work, and who did a very good job at responding to the largest level of destruction that this country has ever seen, should go nothing but accolades. And to none should go the slander propagated by Dr. Delacroix.

David Shatz, MD

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I want to thank you for publishing Dr. Delacroix's account of his efforts in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. He and his colleagues did a heroic job trying to help patients in that disaster.

I am writing because I feel a need to clear up a misconception that I believe Dr. Delacroix was operating under during those days: The misconception was that FEMA would supply the medical/healthcare resources that he needed to help his patients. First, FEMA is not a first responder agency. Their assistance has to be requested by state authorities. Local and then state resources are the first to respond to any disaster. Second, FEMA does not do healthcare. They are emergency managers and disaster recovery experts. They do not have medical resources.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a stockpile of medical supplies for disasters called the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). In times of disaster, the governor of the

affected state can request deployment of the SNS. Once approval has been given for deployment, the initial package (called a Push Pack) will arrive at the prearranged place in the affected state within 12 hours.

What that means is that in any disaster, local and state resources must be sufficient to last 24 to 48 hours.

It is the role of state and local governments to establish plans and systems for developing surge capacity both in terms of facilities and personnel (eg, physicians, nurses, mental health, etc). Since 9/11, CDC and the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have funded cooperative agreements with all 50 states to put such systems in place in the event of a terrorist incident. These same systems can also be used in the event of a natural disaster.

There will never be a perfect response. Any disaster is just that – a disaster. A disaster can overwhelm our collective ability to respond quickly and appropriately. However, local, state, and federal government entities along with public health and the healthcare community working together have made great strides in being prepared to deal with a disaster, whether it is a man-made one or a natural one.

I believe that it was important for readers of Medscape to read Dr. Delacroix's story. I certainly was moved by it. It is equally important that readers (and Dr. Delacroix) understand how these systems work so that they can maximize their own contributions and hold the appropriate entities accountable.

That is my opinion.

Thank you.

James F. Koval, MDiv, MPA

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I was moved to tears, and then absolute horror, by Dr. Delacroix's agonizing tale of triage and attempts to care during the early days after Katrina. God bless his efforts and steely determination. I am left with brutal disappointment. This is America! How does this happen in the richest country in the world? Where was FEMA for those many days? Why do we hear, even now, weeks later, of "Third-World conditions" in some of the hurricane-ravaged areas? As a healthcare professional (I'm a recently retired RN [registered nurse] who spent 40 years caring for fellow Americans), I am appalled and dumbfounded that we seem so totally unprepared to respond to the wrath of nature that can and does happen. Lord help us if something really unexpected happens, terrorist- or natural disaster-related. Here we've been supposedly "preparing" for new millennium healthcare emergencies. Healthcare professionals need to demand that all our citizens be considered in planning for the potential crises that can/will occur in our ever changing, ever more politically violent world. Or we will perish! The current "just a theory" stance on bird flu is an example. Where are the international experts while the possible crisis looms?

Nedra M. Hickson, RN (Equal Time)

They were responding to this: <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/512725> Dr. Delacroix keeps asking the same question, a variation of the theme, where is FEMA? That's the probably the same question Williams was thinking when they had trouble finding a vein to administer the lethal injection. I thought Dr. David Shatz answered the question rather well. They were there doing the best that they

could.

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I didn't look closer because you know Evan's temper. We might be friends for most of our lives, but that man sometimes acts like he's jealous. And not only is he in better shape than I am, he's faster on the draw! "Can we get along here? Can we all get along?"

Speaking of disasters, we had our own right here in southern California. The only real hot spots were within 30 or so miles from those reactors. Up here in Arrowhead, we didn't get that much to begin with, 50R. Which should be obvious if the radiation level was down to 50mR after 14 days. Ten to the third power is 1,000 and 7 to the third power is 343 hours = 14 days. The CD V-715 that Seth had on in the shelter never even clicked.

Wednesday, July 25th...

We'd finished all of the chores, except for caring for the horses, on Tuesday. The thing about horses is that after they burn the hay, they dump it on the ground and one of us to clean it up. Seth pointed out a small patch he had set aside to put in a garden and suggested that we just dump it there and sort of spread it around. I wonder if he's planning on wearing those \$500 boots when he follows that rototiller around? Probably planning on the hired help to do it. If I get horse manure on my boots, does that make me a real cowboy? Yeah, I didn't think so. You know there is more than one definition:

1. A hired man, especially in the western United States, who tends cattle and performs many of his duties on horseback. Also called cowman, cowpoke, cowpuncher, also called regionally buckaroo, vaquero, waddy.
2. An adventurous hero.
3. Slang – A reckless person, such as a driver, pilot, or manager, who ignores potential risks.

Of course, it could refer to a football team, too.

Sure, I'm white. Didn't you hear me say, "God bless George Washington. God bless my mother." I mean, now what kind of Indian would say a fool thing like that? Yes, the "black" white men; I have heard of them. It is said that a "black" white man once became a Human Being. They are a very strange people. Not as ugly as the white man true; but they are just as crazy! Do you hate them? Do you hate the White man now?

Do you see this fine thing? Do you admire the humanity of it? Because the human beings, my son, they believe everything is alive. Not only man and animals. But also water, earth, stone. And also the things from them... like that hair. The man from whom this hair came, he's bald on the other side, because I now own his scalp! That is the way things are. But the white man, they believe EVERYTHING is dead. Stone, earth, animals. And people! Even their own people! If things keep trying to live, white man will rub them out. That is the difference.

I didn't say that. There are thousands of Indians down there. And when they get done with you, there won't be nothing left but a greasy stain. This ain't the Wa****e River, General, and them ain't helpless women and children waiting for you. They're Cheyenne brave, and Sioux. You go down there, General, if you've got the nerve.

This boy is no longer a boy. He's a brave. He is little in body, but his heart is big. His name shall be "Little Big Man."

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What day is it? Oh, I remember Wednesday July 25th. What did we have to do today? Feed and clean up after the horses. Not a big deal, maybe 30 minutes work. We did that early and washed up for breakfast. We'd used up the fresh eggs and nobody was really ready to try the eggs in the cans. Unfortunately that one-year supply of food only contained a single #10 can of buttermilk pancake mix. The breakfast products were in boxes 8 and 10, which contained: 1 cornmeal, 1 pancake mix, 1 6-grain, 2 Quick Oats and 2 9-grain. The good news was that Rose and I liked pancakes and had a dozen 10-pound bags of Krusteaz Buttermilk Pancake Mix. It was instant and only required you to add water. Rose preferred to add an egg and use milk instead of water, which only served to make a richer pancake. Today, absent the eggs, she just used milk. I ate 3 plate-sized cakes. We also had 18 bottles of Aunt Jemima syrup.

"Good breakfast what on the agenda today?"

"Security, Joe. I want Evan and you looking around the place and see what we might do to keep uninvited strangers out."

"Ok but we'd be better off with a soldier or a Marine."

"Maybe but we don't have a soldier or Marine. Consider the likely approaches and what we'll have to do to prevent someone from using them."

"Mind if I ask a simple question?"

"Not at all, what do you want to know?"

"Why are you acting like this is World War 3? Hell, with the equipment we have, we could hold off a couple of Platoons."

"Joe, we have 3 men and 3 women, all in their late forties or early fifties. None of us have any recent combat experience, if any. If I recall, both Evan and you retired after 20 around '95. That means you weren't in after Vietnam, and neither of you has said anything about the Gulf War."

"We both missed that one."

"Then you have training but no combat experience?"

"Yeah, if you put it that way, you're right."

"We have 4 sides just like any other lot. On the front side we have street access, but a sneaky guy might try to come in from the woods. Most of what I know comes from watching TV and movies. That said, we're going to need fighting positions. I have access to a backhoe and a trencher and once you lay out what we need, I'll get the guys to install it."

"What guys?"

The guys with the trencher and backhoe."

“Have you checked? Are they still around?”

“D*mn right they are, both live within a block of here. I already talked to them and if I furnish the fuel and pay their going rate, they do whatever we want. Every time we get a good rain, I go to the fire station and pick up those free sandbags they pass out. There are several bundles in the garage.”

Evan and I walked the property several times and determined where we would position riflemen and the snipers. Right about now, I'd give my left arm up to the elbow for one Marine Gunny. The bottom line was if we were surrounded, we'd have no choice except to retreat to the shelter under the house and wait them out. I suggested mounting a CCTV camera on the antenna mast that could pan in a full circle, just in case. We also moved most of our things to the shelter so that in the event we were getting overrun we wouldn't lose a lot.

Evan suggested trenches connecting the fighting positions and we laid it out on paper. The following morning, the trencher and backhoe started working around 6am. Hell, by Friday they had everything dug. Meanwhile we were shoveling soil into the sandbags and piling them. Evan and I agreed that Seth was probably off his rocker because it wasn't like southern California was experiencing any serious unrest. One final trench was dug to allow us retreat to the house. That one got a lot of sandbags, because it was the most exposed. When we began to run low on sand bags, Seth and the women went looking. They hit every fire station in the area and brought back another gross (144) of bags.

“We're going to need more of those bags.”

“What are you doing, eating them?”

“You had 2 gross and picked up another gross. We just need enough more to shelter the area where the trench shallows out and come into the house. Do you want us to go?”

“We'll get them, the two of you keep shoveling and putting them in place.”

“I was afraid you were going to say that. Let's face it, Seth, if we get a large force that attacks your cabin, we're going to be out of luck.”

“Well I don't know where we could get more people or where we could put them up if we did.”

“Last Wednesday you sent away 18 people and at least 12 of them could have really helped.”

“What are you suggesting, rounding up the people I let go?”

“Why not? I doubt that most of them have electricity and are probably cooking their food on their gas grills. We you all of their address, why don't you go look them up and see if they like to improve their situation?”

“And put them where?”

“Didn't we leave some tents at the warehouse?”

“Oh right those GI surplus tent I bought and couldn't sell.”

“Those are the ones. They had heater and would each sleep up to 10 people so they wouldn't necessarily be crowded if we put each of the 5 families in their own tent. They could eat in the house

and use the bathroom facilities.”

“Seth, Joe is talking sense. That would give us 18 defenders if it came to that and if I recall, a couple of those kids looked to be in high school. Some of them must have weapons but even if they don’t you could outfit a small army.”

“Well, I do have some ALICE gear at the warehouse. Did you put in enough foxholes to provide a fighting position for everyone?”

“We put in for across the front and back and 8 down each side. Naomi said you lot was one lot wide and 2 deep.”

“Yeah that right it’s a double lot.”

“We’ll keep filling the sand bags and you see what you can do to get the things from the warehouse and line up the people.”

I could see the gear churning as Seth thought it over.

“Some of the guys have Garand rifles and I think that they’re all 30-06s.”

“And you don’t have any Garand ammo?”

“I have some because I have some Garands, but not a lot. Have any idea where we could get more?”

“Well that gal in Palmdale that runs High Desert Storm sells it. It’s Korean (PMC) but it is mil spec and in the 8 round clips. I’m not sure but it may be packed around 384 rounds to the sealed can. I think that there are 8 bandoleers per can, but I’m not really sure.”

“Why don’t we send Marie and Rose to Palmdale and Naomi and I will go to the store. I’ll give them plenty of cash to buy all they can get. I guess I should have been better prepared and thinking ahead.”

“No harm, no foul. You’d better see about getting some plywood to put floor in those tents. It would keep them warmer come cold weather.”

“How much was that ammo?”

“It think she was getting \$80 a can.”

“Did she have a lot?”

“She the last time I was there, but I have no idea if she has that much left.”

That was it, the girls headed up to the Antelope Valley and Seth and Naomi headed to Santa Clarita. I didn’t shop much at Desert Storm be her prices were always good. That’s where I got some of my .45 Colt ammo and she had the cheapest price in the Valley. Evan and I filled sand bags until we ran out then broke for lunch. After lunch we got the garden cart out of the garage and started sandbagging the fighting holes. Around 3pm, Marie and Rose were back and they had 30 cans of the Garand ammo. I checked and it was dated in the mid ’80 so it should be in good condition. We left the ammo in the Chevy and kept hauling sandbags until Seth and Naomi showed up.”

“Well?”

“Well what? Oh, are they coming? Yes they’re coming in tomorrow. We’ll have to toss together some floors for the tents, but they can help erect them. How did the girls make out?”

“They got 30 cans. That 11,520 thousand rounds.”

“Good, I think were going to need it.”

“Yeah right, the Red Army is going to be rolling in any day.”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 8

“Don’t be flip. Have you ever heard the expression Aztlán Invasion? Or, of groups named Provisional Government of Aztlán or Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán?”

“Sound Mexican.”

“Bingo. Give the man a cigar. It’s a movement to reunite several of the southwestern states with Mexico.”

“Where are they, Mexico?”

“Most are located in the US.”

“Where did you hear this?”

“When I stopped by Jose and Teresa’s to see if they would come. She told me that Jose had been approached. Jose is a native Californian and wasn’t interested. Before he said no, he did pick up a few details. It seems that they’re being supplied by MS-13.”

“That’s a Salvadoran gang, right? Full name is Mara Salvatrucha? What do you mean they’re supplying the groups you mentioned?”

“Selling them guns and munitions, what did you think I meant?”

“Not good, Joe,” Evan suggested.

“Did you get us more sandbags?”

“Two gross. Let the fellas fill them tomorrow after they show up and get our little tent city erected.”

“We may have to run the second generator to supply them with electricity.”

“Don’t be silly, all they need is a single bulb in those tents. The thing is, they’ll be ok in the tents through August and into September, but when it gets colder, that will never do.”

“You have that back lot.”

“I was thinking of putting that into a garden, if necessary.”

“You don’t think it going to come to that do you? We know the military is functioning, they had

Edwards locked down tight. Local agencies should have already started some clean up and FEMA should show up any day with their checkbook,” Evan commented.

Most of the foregoing conversation was between Seth and me with Evan adding the occasional thought. I figured that Evan had a point and he'd really pegged FEMA. California has more than its share of major earthquakes and usually all we'd ever see was a group of government representatives with forms to fill out to get low interest government loans. It wasn't like California wasn't used to having disasters. That Northridge quake had come shortly after I started working for Seth at Rim of the World. It was a tough commute for a year until they rebuilt the overpass where 14 jointed 5. That particular overpass came down in the Sylmar quake, was rebuilt, and came down again in the Northridge quake.

As a result of Loma Prieta and Northridge, they changed a lot of the building codes. I guess they had one too many highways collapse. Rose barely noticed Landers in Lancaster but those folks over in Victorville got quite the jolt. About like the jolt we got on the 4th of July when Osama and friends, well, that's never been established, decided to take out the nuclear power industry in the United States. To tell you the truth, I wouldn't minded making a run down to San Onofre or over to Diablo Canyon to see the extent of the damage, but they couldn't even get news crews in except by chopper using long range lenses.

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Power was being partially restored to greater Los Angeles. We didn't have any up in the mountains, but it was coming, or so they claimed. Not that it matter with 2 generators and 20k of propane. Around noon the next day, the fellas started to show up with their families. One of them had the company truck and it was carrying $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood and 2x6s. The tents were the 16' square military surplus artic tents. Seth had bought 6 to give them a try and never sold a single one. Not ever business venture is a success, you know. It would take 8 sheets of plywood per to put in a floor. The wives and kids came into the house and made themselves comfortable while we threw together the floors. A pneumatic nailer would have been nice, but it didn't take that long, we only had to assemble 5. Then we put up the tents, added the stoves and folding cots and were ready to go.

“This will do for now and you will all be back on the payroll effective at 8am this morning. For those of you with the Garand rifles, you can draw a couple of cans of ammo from the basement. Those without weapons should see me and I'll equip you. I have a wide selection, but except for certain guns, I don't have more than 2 of anything. I have 4 more Garands and for those who know how or can figure out how to use them, there is plenty of ammo. Naomi and I discussed it and she and I are going to use my two Super Match M1As and our Para Ordinance P-14 .45ACP pistols. Evan has a FAL and Marie has an AR15. Joe has quite the assortment, but mainly he and Rose use the HK91s and M1911s.”

Seth continued, “I'd prefer that anyone ages 14 and up be trained in the use of firearms. I've heard some things that make me uneasy and with the supplies from the store, we have enough food for everyone for a couple of years. I moved the generator and propane tank from the store and we managed to get them topped off. In other words, we'll have electricity until Edison sees fit to restore power. As you know, the phones are still out, but I have radio equipment for communications and most of the media is still on the air. Not that they broadcast anything fit to listen to, but they're there. Joe suggested that we might want to erect some more permanent quarters on my back lot and I'm thinking that one over. Manny, you were in the Corps, what rank?”

“Staff Sergeant, Seth.”

“I was hoping you were a Gunny.”

"I wasn't but I know one."

"A lot of people know a Gunny, Manny."

"That's not what I mean, Seth. What I meant was that I know a Gunny who might be looking for a safe place to live."

I leaned over and nudged Evan and whispered, "There is a God!" Seth only hired veterans, why I have no idea. Maybe it made him feel safer. It had been an all volunteer military when he came along and he hadn't raised his hand. In a way, I'm glad, he'd made a bundle out of the preparedness business and I had yet to find out just how well off Naomi and he were. Had to be a lot, have you priced those Surefire suppressors he bought by the dozen? What I couldn't understand was why Seth had touted the law by getting suppressors and that 25mm rifle and hadn't thought to buy a Ma Deuce. I mean, how much longer will you go to prison if you have a machinegun too?

"I'd like to meet this Gunny of yours, Manny," Seth went on, "Can you arrange it?"

"Sure, we'll take your Hummer, he'll be impressed."

"It's just a Hummer."

"Not, it's a H1 Alpha with all of the extras and a fording kit. I'll bet you even have an auxiliary fuel tank."

"I have everything they could bolt on, Manny."

Seth's Hummer was an open top, not a wagon and he brought a bright red vehicle. It had 2 onboard tanks carrying 51.5-gallons of fuel. It only gave him a cruising range of ~570 miles, but that could get us to Phoenix or San Francisco. Forget Phoenix, it clicks. According to TV reports Phoenix was the hardest hit area in the US as a result of the 4th of July attacks.

http://www.gmhummer.com/hummerspecs/2006_h1alpha/main.htm

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Evan and I stayed at Lake Arrowhead trying to get the defenses in order while Seth and Manny hunted down Manny's friend, the Gunny. Except for in inconvenience of the power being out and the phones being down, I couldn't see that there was much to worry about. Seth was turning his cabin into an armed camp and it didn't really make a lot of sense. For crying out loud, the way I saw it, we'd been through the flu and it hadn't killed off the country like they feared. Then we had a pair of earthquakes, but that was nothing new in California. Situated where they were, even though the terrorists had succeeded in blowing up those 4 containment building and releasing a bunch of radioactivity, the worst problem from that was the loss of electricity.

Everyone knew about the near disaster at Three Mile Island and the people who lived in the area of those reactors knew to get the hell out of Dodge if anything went wrong. They were only suitcase nukes producing small craters and nobody lived next door to either reactor. According to the news, a few people had gotten a dose of radiation, but they were probably the people who thought that you didn't need to keep KI on your cupboard shelf. As far as any Aztlan Invasion went, have you seen the Mexican Army? We could hold them off with rocks! The government of Mexico keeps an Army to give it a police force and nothing more. Taiwan could invade Mexico successfully. It seems like most everybody has invaded Mexico at one time or another.

You know what, I had my job back and Evan had a job and all we had to do was figure out how to defend a double lot in Lake Arrowhead with close to 20 people. This wasn't rocket science and Evan and I ended up agreeing to refer to the supposed threat as 'them'. Forget the ants – that was a different movie. It was made in 1954 and starred James Arness. I wasn't some wide-eyed survivalist who thought that the country would go to hell in a hand basket and FEMA would open detention camps just to try and convert us all to liberals. Chertoff couldn't organize a parade. If Mexico invades, we'll send the LAPD and tell them to follow their normal 'weapons free' policy.

I kept my 2006 NRA Hunting calendar up showing the picture for December. Here's this guy sitting in a snow bank with a rifle across his lap. Stand behind him to his left is a Whitetail, with a massive rack, 4 or 5 points per side. The guy has his head wrapped in the hood of his orange parka and obviously can't see or hear the deer. That sort of reminds me of life, sometimes things are right under our nose and we can't see them.

Late that afternoon, Seth and Manny returned, followed by a man, his wife and 2 kids in a Dodge ¾ ton club cab pickup pulling a travel trailer.

"Joe, I'd like you to meet Gunnery Sergeant Ramon Gonzales, a man with 24 years in the Corps."

"Call me Gunny. I'm here to teach you people how to Improvise. Adapt. Overcome."

"Say what? You've been watch too many movies, Gunny."

"Did you ever look at the credits closely? I was in it. You do remember the credits where they listed the actual Marines in Eastwood's movie don't you?"

"I liked the movie, actually."

"Hell, it was a comedy. About the only thing they got right was Highway smoking the captured Cuban cigar. Any Gunnery Sergeant who fired off a weapon at any place other than a range would have been giving his walking papers. Recon platoons are not part of regiments or battalions. Recon platoons are part of the Division Headquarters. Recon platoons are made up of the best of the best and no recon platoon would have ever looked as sloppy as this one did in the beginning. Every Marine knows the Medal of Honor ribbon and every one seeing the Gunny with the ribbon would have immediately recognized that he was a Medal of Honor winner and would have immediately given him the highest respect, including the Major. As for the accidental firing on the shooting range, unlikely. By the time a Marine is selected for a recon platoon, he is already highly trained in weapons and he is not likely to make a boot camp mistake."

"I liked it anyway," I pointed out.

"Seth tells me that all of you men are veterans of at least one tour in the service and that you and you friend are retired Air Force Master Sergeants."

"That's right Gunny, E-7s the same as you were."

"How long were you in?"

"20 years, each."

"Fine I had 24. I guess that makes me top dog around here. I want you Air Force pukers to listen up and see if you can learn something about real fighting. Manny, could you spot my trailer?"

“Sure, Gunny.”

“Manny was only in about 8 years, but he’s probably forgotten more than either of you learned about combat in your entire careers.”

He turned to Evan and said, “You look fit. Are you sure you weren’t a Marine?”

POP! Gunny didn’t see it coming and was sitting on his ass on the ground. I’ve told you about Evan’s temper. What I didn’t tell you was that he didn’t care for Marines, some macho inter-service rivalry or something. Let me tell you, everyone gives the Air Force a hard time. I don’t see why, we were mainly technicians, not infantry soldiers. I was more than willing to give the infantry their due, but where in Heaven’s name would they be without Air Power?

The USAF was created in 1947 from the Army Air Corps. Later, the Army got into choppers in a big way and they still had an air branch. Marine Corps Aviation flew the Av-8B Harrier, the F/A-18, the CH-46 and CH-53 helicopter plus the AH-1T Cobras and the MV-22A Osprey. The F-35B STOVL version of the Joint Strike Fighter hadn’t been fielded, yet. Army Aviation centered, primarily, on the AH64 and AH-64D Apache, the UH-60 Blackhawk, the CH-47D Chinook and the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior. Naval Aviation was mainly center on the F/A-18 Super Hornet, various helicopters and support aircraft. These guys weren’t pilots – they were Naval Aviators. Some kind of mind set that made the Navy pilots think that their sh*t didn’t stink. Tom Cruise did a lot to foster the bad image some people have of Navy pilots.

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I suppose that Evan had the advantage over Gunny because Gunny didn’t expect some Air Force puke to punch him in the mouth. You’ve got to wonder about a man who put in 24 years and only made it to E-7. The Marines do that physical BS to get you in shape and all of the screaming and yelling to teach discipline. On the other hand, the Marine Corps only issue you ammo at the firing range and when you get to combat. Here we had 7 guys with varying amounts of time in the military representing the Corps, the Air Force and the Army. I can’t tell why Seth didn’t hire sailors. Ramon Gonzales didn’t look like Gunny Highway, either. I do believe that when he saw everyone walking around with loaded guns, he concluded he’d need a different approach.

“Where can we take these people to get them up to speed on their weapons?” Gunny asked.

“Gunny, the nearest full range is Arrowhead Fish and Game. They have Bench Rest, Informal Shotgun Practice, Instructions, Outdoor Archery, Outdoor Handgun, Outdoor Rifle, Small Bore, Tournaments and Trap.” Seth replied.

“I’ll do any instructing that needs done,” Gunny replied. “Drop your ***** and grab you socks, people, we’re burning sunshine here.”

“Gunny, half of you students are women and I’d appreciate it if you could tone it down a bit.”

Personally, I think that Gunny watched Heartbreak Ridge, one time too many. This wasn’t easy, but Rose and I got our HK91s, the M1A and the M82 and loaded them in the Navigator. The weapons were sighted in already, but a little practice never hurt anyone. I did want to see what the sniper rifles and the HK91s would be like suppressed. I took the 82 and my HK and Rose took the M1A and her HK. Surefire really did well on those suppressors; most of the sound now was the zing of the speeding bullet. It did change the striking point of the weapons, however. I guess the added barrel

length raised it just a smidgen. I made a minor adjustment to my elevation and I was right on the money at 100-yards.

As far as I was concerned, most of the close up shooting would be with the HK and a 100-yards was just fine. I could always crank in a range adjustment, if needed. I moved on to my 30-pound wonder, the M82A1. It was scoped, as mentioned and I started off at 500-yards. I intended to finish at the same range, I wasn't a trained sniper and 500-yards was good shooting as far as I was concerned. The trigger released and the round went down range, right on target. Nice, the M82A1 sounded more like the HK without its suppressor. A man wouldn't have a chance at 500-yards with the Barrett, provided he wasn't moving. Nah, this rifle wasn't one of those pipsqueak rifles you could easily move around.

I'd done 6 magazines through the HK and 2 through the Barrett and I was more than satisfied that the sighting on the weapons was ok. Rose was just finishing up with the HK, she liked to take her time and place every shot. She switched to the M1A and I mentioned that she might have to adjust the elevation in the scope.

"Is that why the HK shot high?"

"Rose the suppressor lengthens the barrel, did you click down the elevation, a little?"

"I thought perhaps it had gotten bumped. But, you're right, it was shooting about one click high."

"Try adjusting the scope down one click before you shoot," I suggested.

She did and she was right on the money. She fired 10 rounds at 100, 10 at 200 and so forth until she was out to 500-yards. Her group was a bit larger at 500 than with the Barrett, but I could easily apply the same statement, a man wouldn't have a chance at 500-yards with the M1A, provided he wasn't moving. Evan had finished shooting his FAL and had put it up. He'd taken off his pistol and strapped on his Colt. Thereafter, he moved to the pistol range and was practicing his fast draw with live ammo. As people finished their shooting, Evan was beginning to draw a crowd. He had a silhouette set up at 15-yards and was consistently putting rounds into center mass using a fast draw.

"I see you didn't hurt your gun hand poking me in the jaw," Gunny remarked.

"I hit you with my left hand, I never use my right except to draw."

"Remind me not to piss you off again. You knocked me on my ass with your off-hand and it appears that if you get your other hand working, a man doesn't stand a chance."

"Gunny, I've been doing fast draw for years. In the beginning it was either draw fast or hit the target. Don't kid yourself, this takes a lot of practice."

"Can you draw a pistol like that?"

"Not really, no."

"Maybe you'd better carry the six-gun and keep your pistol as your backup. Joe, do Rose and you want to be our designated snipers?"

"Not really, we only shoot out to 500 yards. As Seth, he has the ultimate sniper's rifle."

“What do you have, Seth?”

“I think that what Joe is referring to is my M107/M109.”

“Did you bring it?”

“I only have 90 practice rounds left, I didn’t want to waste them.”

“Where on earth did you get your hands on a M107/M109? The M109 is supposed to be military only.”

“I got those from the same guy who supplied the suppressors.”

“I was going to ask, where did you get those?”

“From the guy who sold me the M107/M109.”

“In other words, you’d rather not say?”

“All of those things are NFA and you know the laws in California don’t permit you to own NFA firearms. So, I’d rather not say.”

“Do you have much of the 25mm ammo?”

“90 practice rounds, about 200 AP and 100 HEAB. That ammo is expensive, about \$30 a round for the HEAB.”

“I know where to get the ammo, but I had no idea you had a weapon to use it in.”

“Have you ever shot a M109, Gunny?”

“Nah, that’s snipers only. I hear they have quite the kick.”

“I’ll tell you what, you come up with ammo and you can use it. If you’re good with it, you can be our designed sniper with the M109.”

I sort of hate to bring up the subject of ‘Boy Toys’ again, but you should have seen Gunny’s eyes light up. I later asked him what he had for weapons and wasn’t surprised to learn that he had a M1A standard model and a Para Ordinance P-14. It had been an interesting session on the range. Everyone was up to speed on whatever rifle(s) they were using and I think Gunny developed a new respect for Evan.

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Monday, July 30, 2007...

Gunny had a few suggestions about our emplacements, but nothing much more than adding extra sandbags. He took off this morning in his pickup with Seth’s blessing and I suspect a little of Seth’s gold. I’m not sure where he went, but he was gone about 4 hours. When he got back he had 400 rounds of HEAB, 300 rounds of AP and 200 practice rounds for the 25mm M109. It was time to rock and roll and unless someone came against us with tanks, we should be able to defend the two stinking lots in Lake Arrowhead. Yes, I’m frustrated. Evan and I do most of the work and then the

Gunny comes in and takes over. I was ready to go back to Lancaster, to be 100% honest.

Those 25mm practice rounds came in 2 varieties, the M1050 and the M1051. The former was apparently the practice round for the AP ammo and the latter a practice round for the HEAB. Have you read the description of that HEAB round? Man, it is a prescored steel warhead filled with LX-14 High Explosive and will defeat PASGT Vests and Helmets. The AP ammo was supposed to pierce 51mm (2") of armor. And while I'm talking about 25mm guns, the GAU-12 25MM six-barrel gun pod can be mounted on the centerline of the Marine Corp's AV-8 Harrier. It has a 300 round capacity with a lead computing optical sight system (LCOSS) gunsight. The Marines use a 25mm depleted uranium [DU] round in the GAU-12 Gatling gun on AV-8 Harriers. They used PGU-20 (DU) and PGU-25 (HE) rounds in a 50-50 mix.

Obviously when I said we were good against anything but I tank, I excluded Air Power. Storming Norman made the whole world aware of how devastating Air Power could be. And that was before they improved the bombs so they hit what they were aimed at! I know your getting bored, because you want action, right? It's only July 30th, 26 days after they hit those reactors. People probably still have food in their cupboards. Seth says trouble is coming and he hired the Gunny so we would be safe. We might be if Gunny learns to hit anything with the M109.

Evan and I decided to go to an ATM and check and see if our retirement checks hit. Yes, the banks were working, the feds made sure; they couldn't live without those withholding deposits. Hallelujah, they were there. We went into the bank and filled out withdrawal slips. Evan nearly emptied his account because Marie and he were on a cash basis. I took half and left the rest for the automatic deducts to hit. Rose had taken care of the mortgage payment so I didn't worry about that. How do I know how she did it? Maybe she took the cash and bought a money order, ask her.

I'm sure things are different in Phoenix, because they don't average several earthquakes a day and several a year over M5. That lady Governor they had was something else. She sort reminded me of the gal governing Louisiana. She seemed to think that everything was the Republicans fault, too. Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano is single; Blanco is married and has 6 kids and 7 grandchildren.

The law of unintended consequences, often cited but rarely defined, is that actions of people – and especially of government – always have effects that are unanticipated or "unintended." Economists and other social scientists have heeded its power for centuries; for just as long, politicians and popular opinion have largely ignored it. In the wake of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, many coastal states enacted laws placing unlimited liability on tanker operators. As a result the Royal Dutch/Shell group, one of the world's biggest oil companies, began hiring independent ships to deliver oil to the United States instead of using its own forty-six-tanker fleet. Oil specialists fretted that other reputable shippers would flee as well, rather than face such unquantifiable risk, leaving the field to fly-by-night tanker operators with leaky ships and iffy insurance. Thus, the probability of spills will increase and the likelihood of collecting damages will decrease as a consequence of the new laws.
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/UnintendedConsequences.html>

I read that term, unintended consequences, somewhere and wondered what the author was referring to. Mostly it is an economic thing so I made a note of where I read it, intending to go back and read further. Then we had the 4th of July and the Internet went down. How much had the War on Terror cost? Who knows, a lot? Then there was Katrina with its \$200 billion price tag. Nobody was speculating in the media how much it would cost to replace the generating capacity we lost when the 3 facilities were blown up and the other 17 forced to close for inspection and possible repairs.

Possibly that was what Seth was thinking of preparing the cabin for an invasion. I didn't think it would be the Mexicans, but MS-13 had gotten bold and had a face off with LAPD. The loss of life had ended

up about even and it hadn't been good. Losing a single police officer was a time of anguish for many but 9 officers? It was right out of the pages of history with the North Hollywood Shootout when 2 guys robbed Bank of America. They had vests and AK-47s loaded with armor-piercing ammo. 7 civilians and 11 police officers were injured. <http://www.student.oulu.fi/~hmikkola/shootout.html>

The run in between MS-13 and the LAPD happened in the Wilshire district on July 19th, the day after we came out of the shelter. Seth had been enthralled by the broadcast and then he'd visited with Jose. After that, he'd been talking about the Mexican Invasion. Evan and I had thought that the Gunny was the answer to our prayers, but for a while, he seemed to be our worst nightmare. Once Evan and he got things sorted out, it was better, which as you know is a term of relativity.

MS-13 was the 'real deal'. They'd started in LA and had branched out. Although founded among immigrants in the United States, Mara Salvatrucha now has a large presence in El Salvador. Much of this is due to the US policy of deporting convicted criminals back to their country of origin. Back in El Salvador, these deportees have recruited more members, including new members who immigrate illegally to the United States.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 9

The age of a Mara Salvatrucha member can range from 11 to 50. The gangs have moved from beyond their Salvadoran and Los Angeles origins and can be found now in Honduras, Guatemala, Canada, Mexico, and over 30 US states, especially on Long Island and around Washington, DC in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs. Some sets have even been founded in Spain, Italy, even Belgium; it has been said the gang even has an alliance with La Cosa Nostra. Many Mara Salvatrucha members are former members of death squads set up by the Salvadoran government and supported by the United States government in the 1970s and 1980s. Members of these groups have training in firearms, explosives and booby traps. There is no centralization or hierarchy among the gang from different regions, although a 2004 report by the US National Drug Intelligence Center says chapters of Mara Salvatrucha in different areas may be trying to set up a coordination network. In 2005, police in Maryland and Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC, noticed an increase in the presence of the gang, including incidents of gang-related stabbings and other violence.

When it first began in the US, Mara Salvatrucha only allowed Salvadorans as members but today the gang now includes members from other Latin American countries. Mara Salvatrucha also has some non-Latino black members. Members are strongly encouraged to have tattoos to express their allegiance to Mara Salvatrucha. Those who join are expected to remain members for life, and anyone who leaves the gang is placed under sentence of death.

They no more cared if they killed 9 cops or 90. They were out of their area, fighting cops in the Wilshire District. Most of the Salvadorian refugees settled in the established Hispanic neighborhoods of the Rampart area of Los Angeles. Mara Salvatrucha gang members maintain contact between groups in the United States and El Salvador for several specific reasons. In El Salvador, a hand grenade sells for \$1-\$2 US currency and an M-16 rifle will sell for approximately \$200-\$220 US dollars. This communication and alliance provides a mechanism for MS gang members to access military-style munitions and also establishes a network to traffic illegal firearms into the United States. In the US, the gang could get the one thing unavailable in El Salvador, handguns. http://www.nagia.org/mara_salvatrucha.htm

After the North Hollywood Shootout, the cops in California were better armed. However, their M16s had the guts removed so they could only be fired as semi-automatic rifles. The only time a person needed full auto or 3-round burst was in the type of situation those LA cops found themselves in going up against MS-13. LAPD officers wore vests routinely so that meant that MS-13 was using something that could penetrate 8 or 9 layers of Kevlar. They were either using M855 NATO Ball

(SS109) or the newer M995 AP.

.223/5.56 M855 green tip ammo - 62 grain, Lake City with steel penetrator – packed in stripper clips (10 rounds each – 120 rounds in bandoleers with guides – bandoleers in cans (840 rounds per can) – 2 cans per military crate – Only \$489 a crate or \$2,400 for 5 crates (8,400 rounds), shipping included, contact Eric the Ammoman. That's only 28.6¢ a round. Limited quantities. It was cheaper if you picked it up in New Jersey. Eric probably didn't sell that ammo, but it was just that easy to pick up ammo for those M16s M-13 used. My only gripe was they had hand grenades and we didn't.

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That was the hype. Seth was spooked but was it a Mexican Invasion or MS-13? I can tell you one thing, the bills for the government were mounting up. We occasionally passed by the Ultramar station and he still had gas, for \$4.999 a gallon, gold or silver only. Come to think of it, what were we in the aftermath of? The flu, the earthquakes, the terrorist attacks or something else? If you ask me, we were in the aftermath of the environmentalists. You couldn't cut the wood because of some darned owls. You couldn't pump the oil because it would spoil the scenery. You couldn't burn the coal because it contained sulfur. If the US hadn't been forced to resort to nuclear fuels, the terrorists wouldn't have had a target to strike that would have done that damage to a place like Phoenix.

The United States is the world's largest supplier of commercial nuclear power. In 2005, there are 104 US commercial nuclear generating units that are fully licensed to operate. (Note: One reactor, however, Brown's Ferry unit 1 has been shut down since 1985. Therefore, some sources cite only 103 units.) Together, they provide about 20 percent of the Nation's electricity. When you take 20 of those reactors offline, you lose 20% of your nuclear electrical generating capacity. The problem is that the US was already walking a fine line and California was importing energy.

“Have you heard when the lights will be back on, Joe?”

“Sorry, Gunny, I haven't heard a word about Lake Arrowhead. They have partially restored power in LA, but that's the DWP. Here in Arrowhead they get our utilities from SoCal Edison and SoCal Gas.”

“Where are you from, Joe?”

“Rose and I live in Lancaster.”

“What are you doing here?”

“I worked for Seth at Rim of the World Preparedness. We had a shelter in Lancaster, but Seth put the other employees in it and Evan, Marie, Rose and I joined Naomi and Seth here. He decided to close the company because of the terrorist attacks. Evan got locked out at Edwards and we ended up staying here working for Seth as guards.”

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More news from 2005...

Mexican President Vicente Fox denounced as "disgraceful and shameful" on Wednesday a proposal to build a high-tech wall on the US-Mexico border to stop illegal immigrants.

Concerned about the huge numbers of illegal immigrants streaming across the border and worried it could be an entry point for terrorists, a US lawmaker has proposed building two parallel steel and wire

fences running from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Coast. But Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has said a wall running the length of a border would cost too much.

Mexico has expressed indignation at the idea.

Fox, speaking in Tamaulipas state across the border from Texas, said such extreme security measures would violate immigrants' rights.

"The disgraceful and shameful construction of walls, the increasing enforcement of security systems and increasing violation of human rights and labor rights will not protect the economy of the United States," he said.

And then, there was this:

"Iran's a real threat," Bush told Fox News in an interview in which he repeated his charge that Iran was part of an "axis of evil" along with North Korea and prewar Iraq. "I called it part of the 'axis of evil' for a reason," Bush said. Wake up and smell the roses, George, the Israelis will solve that problem. Patience grasshopper.

Now maybe that was that Seth was worried about. Nah, not unless the Mexican Army gets help from the Chinese. Say, didn't one of those other authors suggest something like that? What did she say, Chinese soldiers at the Mexican border, or something? Apparently, Congress disagreed with Chertoff because they funded the project to begin during FY 2006. For what we were spending on Border Patrol Agents and their less than spectacular success, it only made sense.

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"He pay good?"

"Seth?"

"What did you do space out for a minute?"

"I had a couple of stray thoughts, sorry, Gunny. Does Seth pay well? It depends, on your job. He basically pays going rate for the industry. Because I was the Assistance Manager, I did better than most. He also offered to pay Evan the same as I get paid, because of our similar backgrounds. More recently, the business really picked up. It was a combination of the avian flu scare and the 2 earthquakes we had. I have to believe that the Israelis bombing the Iranian reactors had a bearing on it too. When we were forced to shut down, we were sitting on orders for 9 more shelters. Maybe when things settle down a bit, Seth may go ahead and try to fill those orders. We make a fair amount on those, you know. We only sell one size, the 10' culvert 50' long. We add several upgrades including a real toilet, gray water tank, a fresh water tank and a kitchenette. We licensed the basic design from USS in Salt Lake because they couldn't supply shelters to meet our demand."

"What kind of stray thoughts did you have?"

"The first pertained to the new wall they're building to prevent the illegal immigration of Mexican residents. The second was about Iran and Bush statement a couple of year's back that Iran was a real threat. What did you do in the Corps?"

"I was in special ops."

“Force Recon?”

“For most of my career. You’d have know if you have seen me in my dress blues.”

“Best of the best?”

“For the Corps at least. There are the Army Special Forces and the Navy has the SEALs. Special Ops is sort of a community where the inter-service rivalry isn’t quite as bad.”

“I’ve been thinking about MS-13 and that shootout they had with LAPD in the Wilshire District. Those SOBs have M16s and hand grenades.”

“We don’t?”

“We don’t have any automatic weapons and the only explosives we have are the 25mm ammo.”

“Why didn’t someone say something? I could have picked up grenades. The only time you’d want an automatic weapons would be if you were heavily outnumbered and had to lay down heavy fire.”

“I understand that, Gunny, but some of those M67s would have been nice.”

“Make me a list of what you think we should have and I’ll see what I can do.”

“Me? I was a technician, what do I know about what an Infantry unit should have?”

“You seem to know your weapons, Joe. You have two good Assault Rifles and a couple of fine sniper weapons. I’m not sure those Kimbers are worth what they cost, but they’re basically M1911s.”

“I noticed that you favor the M1A.”

“I do, but there are times when an M16 is the weapon of choice. The Para P-14 is nothing more than a high capacity M1911.”

“Did Seth give you any idea what he’s worried about, Gunny?”

“Not really. I think maybe he’s read one too many of those stories about the end of the world or civilization. I almost passed but Jose seemed to think that you folks could have trouble because you’re well prepared and have enough of everything.”

“Seth has said more than once that he was in the business and if he didn’t epitomize the truly well prepared individual, no one did.”

“He has a fortune tied up in his preparations,” Gunny observed.

“True and he got most of it at cost.”

“Good business selling preparedness supplies?”

“It goes in spurts. A local M5 earthquake usually triggers a good month and depending on the aftershocks, maybe a second.”

“Did you bring all of the inventory here?”

“We tried to bring everything we could use. Seth owns the building and it’s very secure so the things we couldn’t use are still there.”

“Did Evan and you give any thought to a guard schedule?”

“Gunny, we didn’t have time. We laid out the trenches and fighting positions and Seth had a neighbor cut them in. We were busy using the soil to fill sandbags and hadn’t finished when all of the others showed up. That’s why the sandbags were as good as they could have been. Everything is happening so fast in terms of our preparing for WW III and yet nothing is happening.”

“It could be the lull before the storm, you know.”

>>>

Thursday August 2, 2007...

“That’s it, hand grenades?” Gunny asked.

“It’s all that I could think of.”

“Weren’t you paying attention when I discussed the occasional need for automatic weapons?”

“I heard you Gunny, but I didn’t put them on the list because I didn’t think you could get them.”

“I’ll tell what I think we need,” Gunny continued. “We could use some of M16A3s with M203s attached, a couple of M240Gs and maybe a Ma Deuce.”

“The A3 is full auto?”

“Right, same as the A1.”

“No SAWs?”

“They work just fine until you need to depend on them. If we’re going to go with machineguns, I’d prefer the 7.62.”

“Will you need help?”

“Probably, but I’ll get it on the other end. The people I’m dealing with can get hinky. I know most people think that things like this only happen in Hollywood, but that’s not always the case. As long as I keep the quantities we need small, I think I can do business. If not, I’ve had a nice drive and visited with some old friends.”

“You want Evan and I to work on the guard details while you’re gone?”

“Already done, Joe, check with Seth.”

>>>

“What’s up?” Evan asked.

“Gunny took off to get automatic weapons and grenades. He put together a guard schedule and said that we should check with Seth.”

“Nice morning. I like it up here, it’s a lot cooler than the Valley.”

Which Valley, ours or the one to the south?”

“High Desert, Low Desert, same difference, except Palm Springs usually has higher reported temperatures. It must be 20° cooler up here.”

“Seth told me that in the summer it is about 20° cooler than the Valley floor with summer highs generally in the 80's. In the winter, night time temperatures regularly dip below freezing but are usually above freezing by 9am with an average winter high in the 50's. Average rainfall is 40 inches a year, which is 3 to 4 times the typical rainfall in the Southern California area. Average snowfall is 80 inches a year starting in late November and ending in March.”

>>>

Evan and I checked the schedule Gunny had prepared and Evan had 1st shift, I had graveyard and Gunny 2nd. The 3 of us would be team leaders for teams of 6 people. I noticed that Gunny put Jose on my team, probably to keep me out of trouble. Another thing I noticed was that none of the teams included any couples and the women were always paired off together. Each team had on designated sniper, Gunny, Rose or me. Seth and Naomi weren’t on the schedule. Being I had graveyard, I installed my night vision scope on the M82. It was a Gen-3 ATN Aries 7800B with 3X magnification. The manufacturer claimed that it was comparable to the 4X Raptor for a couple of thousand dollars less. I don’t know; I could never afford the Raptor.

You know, having a rifle like the M82 was an expensive proposition. First came the rifle, then the day scope and finally the night vision. After that came the ammo at a considerable price. It wasn’t something that you went to the range and burned off 200 rounds just for the fun of it, not at nearly \$3 a round. The Barrett ammo was especially pricey. Evan went to the range with me while I check the zero on the scope. But, I’m getting ahead of myself.

Around 4pm, Gunny pulled in and his pickup was loaded.

“We thought maybe you got lost.”

“You try to talk a friend into providing you 20 M16A3s, a couple of M240Gs and a Ma Deuce. H*ll, after you get him to agree, you have to start all over and discuss munitions and the grenades. He wanted to pawn of some of those worn out M249s, but I held out until I got what I wanted.”

“Worn out?”

“The Corps had worn out all of its SAWs by early in Iraqi Freedom. Some of the Marines were holding them together with duct tape. I couldn’t get the A3s and had to settle for the A2s. And, I only got 9 of the M203s, but I did get 2 cases of 40mm grenades per. The rifles are used, but they’ve been through a depot rebuild. You know the normal squad has 3 of the SAWs and they get used a lot. The M67s were about what you’d pay for them on the street in El Salvador. The M240Gs and the Ma Deuce are new. Most of the belted .50 cal is ball/tracer, but I did get a few boxes of AP/APIIT. I also got something for our .50 caliber riflemen.”

“Oh, what?”

“You heard of the Mark 211 (Mk211) .50-caliber multipurpose anti-materiel round, manufactured by Raufoss? D*mned lethal on a vehicle. You load up a couple of your spare magazines with that. You can take it to the range and check the sighting on your scopes, there’s plenty. All of the 7.62 belted is standard ball/tracer but I have enough to fight a few battles.”

“We only have 6 person teams, Gunny. If we put 2 people on the Ma Deuce, one of each of the M240s and have 3 grenadiers, we’re going to be short of people. You didn’t plan this very well.”

“You make do with what you have, Airdale. There are 7 on a squad when you include the Squad leader. The grenadiers have M16s with M203s attached and they’ll just have to do double duty.”

“Right, but the way I read your schedule 2 of the 3 Squad Leaders are designated snipers.”

“The second man on the .50 can be a Grenadier. Listen, I can’t plant seeds and grow people, especially not people who can use a weapon with any particular level of skill. Maybe Seth can talk to some of his neighbors and we can get them to pitch in.”

>>>

Combat has frequently been described as hours of sheer boredom interspersed with a few moments of terror, or something like that. I know that you’re anxious for the action to begin, but if it were my choice, that wouldn’t happen. Could it be that the SAWs were better than I’d heard? If Marines could keep them together with duct tape and they still functioned, a person has to wonder. Gunny visited with Seth and it was decided to install a pintle mount on the Hummer, Gunny had that and the M3 tripod, and try and make the Ma Deuce a one-person operation. That shiny red Hummer had a ragtop, you know. I had a picture of one speeding across the desert just like Seth’s on my computer as wallpaper. http://www.hummer.com/downloads/h1/fast_1024x768.zip I’d downloaded the zip file, unzipped it and move the jpg to the appropriate directory in Windows.

We were out early getting ready for whatever was coming our way. Gunny wasn’t half bad once you got to know him. And, when it came to connections, he apparently had some. You’ve probably been keeping track of what we’re armed with, right? We had everything from 9mm handguns all the way up to and including a M109, 25mm rifle and 1,000 rounds of the 25mm ammo, 500 each of AP and HEAB. We had a couple of .50 caliber rifles, a .50 caliber machinegun, several 7.62 caliber rifles and 2 machineguns of the same caliber. On top of that, we had 40mm grenades and some hand grenades. If those people in Sacramento only knew, they’d be filling their drawers. Where is FEMA?

Hey, on second thought, maybe we’re better off in not knowing. We don’t have any damage and don’t need any of the federal dole, so hopefully, they’ll stay lost. As a whole, the state of California is so out of step with the remainder of the nation that the feds frequently have to threaten to withhold funds just to get minimal compliance. I know, they probably stopped in Arizona on the way and they are busy trying to decontaminate Phoenix. That’s what it amounts to because Palo Verde is about 50 miles west of Phoenix.

>>>

“I left snacks in the refrigerator if you get hungry during the night.”

“Thanks Rose, but if I eat, I’ll get sleepy. I keep the coffee going though. Has anyone said anything to you about putting in some more permanent quarters for the fellas and their families?”

“Naomi said that Seth was considering putting in a pole building.”

“Where, on the back lot?”

“Apparently.”

“I seriously doubt that the city of Lake Arrowhead would give him a permit to erect a pole building in a residential area. I realize that we’ve been through a lot in the past 6 months. Somehow I can’t believe that things are as bad as Seth seems to think they are. Get a good night’s sleep and I’ll have breakfast for you when you get up.”

“Ok, honey. Hey, let’s be careful out there. Seth could always be right.”

“Hills Street Blues?” I wondered. I’d heard that before.

“Did you get everyone positioned, Jose?”

“Weapons are manned and ready, Joe.”

“What did you give people for a load out?”

“Everyone has a M16 with 7 mags, a main battle rifle with 7 mags, 4 hand grenades and their pistols. The people with the M203 have 36 rounds of 40mm. What do you have, a pistol and your Barrett rifle?”

“I’m the designated sniper this shift. There’s an urn of coffee on in the kitchen and snacks in the refrigerator. What a waste of time.”

“You don’t agree with Seth?”

“It’s not that so much as it all seems unreal. New Orleans will eventually be rebuilt and Phoenix cleaned up. It will take a while, but things should get back to normal. The only concern I have is the way prices have gone up in that last 30 days. Katrina took out the Gulf Coast refineries and some of the platforms and I can understand a temporary price increase to over \$3 a gallon. Taking out 3 reactors and damaging 17 others only eliminated about 4-5% of our total electrical supply and did nothing to reduce the available petroleum products. Gas is \$5 a gallon.” I complained.

“The entire California grid is out except for residential electricity that some locales have restored. The refineries use lots of electricity for processing. You know the priorities residential gets preference. Arizona can’t help because Palo Verde is gone. Biggest nuclear generating plant in the US, you know. It generates about 27% of their electricity.”

“Give me the night vision goggles, Jose, I think there’s a vehicle down the road.”

“Que? I don’t have them.”

“Crap, I’ll use the scope.”

“What do you have?”

“A van about 400-yards out. It doesn’t have headlights and is barely creeping.”

Jose grabbed the Kenwood 2-meter handheld and said, "Heads up everyone, we have a vehicle."

"What do you see, Joe?"

"I can't make anything out, it's so dark. Wait I see a cigarette on the passenger side. I can make out the driver and one passenger," I told him.

"Can you put a round right between the two of them?"

PFUTT. The side door of the van opened and several people boiled out as the tires screeched. The passenger and driver joined their companions. They opened fire on us and we reacted immediately. The .50 opened up on the van, cutting it to pieces while the two people with the 7.62 machineguns directed their fire to the group of people. I moved the rifle to a person who looked like he/she had a M16, I couldn't really tell. PFUTT. I noticed someone rear back and throw something, probably a grenade, but only Superman could throw a grenade THAT far. I'd grabbed the wrong magazine, I thought I had the Raufoss, but I had the Barrett ammo.

"Jose, they have grenades," I said about a second before it exploded. I could hear a siren in the distance; I guess we must have awakened someone.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 10

"Tell the machineguns to hold their fire," I yelled. "No grenades either, the cops are coming."

The people we were fighting with turned their attention to the San Bernardino Sheriff's Deputies. That would be just what we needed, getting arrested for the NFA firearms. I slipped into the house and deposited my M82, replacing it with a shotgun. It wasn't long before the fire died down; the people down the road must have heard the sirens too. How do you hide a Ma Deuce? I guess you take it off the pintle and stow it in the Hummer. A couple of the others collected weapons and dumped them in the house, returning with an assortment of hunting rifles and shotguns. Jose was busy policing brass. Everybody was awake and must have heard the sirens; they came out carrying the cowboy guns, shotguns or something else legal.

"What's going down?" Gunny asked.

"We had a slow moving van coming down the streets with the lights out. I put a round in the windshield and they came up firing. When I heard the sirens, we ditched the heavy weapons."

"Know who they are?"

"Nope. I shot one who looked like he had a M16 and another had a grenade. You should have heard the explosion."

"I thought I was back in Beirut." (October 23, 1983 at 6:22am)

The shootout down the street didn't last long as Deputies flooded the area. I estimated there had been 7 people in the van, but I didn't know if they were all men. This wasn't North Hollywood and it wasn't 1997. SWAT had plates and some serious firepower. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if they weren't using M855 in their semi-auto M16s. The Deputies, I mean. God only knows what the SWAT Team used. No one said, but I'd be willing to guess that their orders were shoot to kill. They finished up and several Deputies began to check the bodies. 4 of them walked our way, examining the ground as the approached.

“What did you use to take out that windshield?”

“12-gauge sabot. Left one hell of a hole.”

They looked around and saw the hunting rifles and shotguns. Then they started looking closer at the shotgun, checking for a rifled barrel. That’s what Gunny was carrying.

“This gun smells clean.”

“You don’t say,” Gunny chuckled, pulling a clean rod with a dirty patch soaked in Hoppes out of the barrel of his shotgun.

“Do you always clean your guns right after you use them?”

“Rust is the enemy of a good firearm.”

The Deputies interviewed a few neighbors who were out of their houses. They all confirmed that the first shot they heard came from the area of the van. I didn’t know it at the time, but some of the ladies were busy moving certain items from the living room to the shelter and then locked up after themselves. Rose came up to me and asked, “Are you ok?”

“Never better, Rose. Looks like I might have been wrong.”

“Wait, I’ll get my tape recorder and you can repeat what you just said,” she said giving me a peck on the cheek.

Gunny came over after visiting with Jose. He smirked and asked, “Recon by fire?”

“Is that what they call it when you shoot first, Gunny?”

“I screwed up, I didn’t get us any night vision.”

“Oversight, Gunny?”

“Didn’t even occur to me. I must be getting old. Old gives you 2 things, experience and a bad memory.”

“You aren’t any older than we are. Fortunately, I have night vision scopes on both of the sniper rifles.”

“So it begins. The trouble I mean,” he observed.

“They could have just been burglars scoping out the neighborhood looking for an easy score.”

“Right, with M16s and hand grenades. I’ll get around and head out later this morning. We’ve got to have some night vision equipment.”

I asked a Deputy who the people in the van were but he shrugged his shoulders and walked off. Nothing like a little firefight at 1am to wake you up. I don’t think they were buying our having shot the van into a piece of Swiss cheese with nothing more than a few shotguns and hunting rifles. They asked Seth and searched the house, finding nothing. One Deputy observed, “The last time I saw a vehicle that looked like that was in Iraq after we’d hit it with a Ma Deuce.”

“A what?”

“M2HB, .50 caliber machinegun.”

“Oh, the guns they used to use on airplanes,” I replied.

“Air Force?”

“20 years.”

“You tell the guy with the cleaning rod to be sure and clean his machinegun.”

“Sure.”

“What’s with all the trenches? They look like fighting positions.”

“Not bad for a couple of Airdales, huh? Do you know who was in the van? The other Deputy shrugged his shoulders?”

“No IDs, yet, they were all Hispanic. Could be a Chicano gang or MS-13.”

>>>

Seth talked until morning with Gunny. They seemed to reach some sort of agreement and when Gunny left to go shopping, Seth left to do the same. When I shift ended, I crawled into bed and was still sleeping when they both returned. With Rose having the day shift and me having the graveyard, I ended up making myself a bowl of cereal. I understood Gunny’s logic, but a couple should be on adjacent shifts. That way they could get some sleep after playing Doctor and Nurse.

“Install these suppressors on the M16s, M240s and the Ma Deuce,” Seth instructed.

“Even suppressed, the 50 cal is going to be noisy, Seth,” I told him.

“We’re going to reserve the heavy machine for last ditch defense. I heard you talking to that Deputy and I don’t think he was fooled.”

“Gunny did you get night vision for everyone?”

“Not for everyone, but enough for the duty shift. And I got the CCTV cameras you wanted. I couldn’t get the A3s or A4s, but the A2E4s have removable carrying handles so I picked up M68 Aimpoint Sight Systems for all of the M16s.” (Military’s ‘Boy Toy’ list: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ground/acat_III.htm)

“If figured that everyone ignored me when I suggested the CCTV cameras.”

“Other things were higher priority,” Seth replied.

“If we had day and night vision CCTV cameras, we’d only need to have the group up, we wouldn’t have to sit out in the cold, when it gets cold,” I retorted.

“I also picked up two more of those Kenwood AREC kits, and most everyone will have radios.”

“As long as we’re making changes, how about putting couples on adjacent shifts?”

“I’ll take care of that,” Gunny offered.

“So was what happened last night a fluke, or do you think it is the beginning of a trend?” I asked.

“What’s the difference, Airdale, it worked out ok?”

“Sure it did, that’s why we’re not going to use the heavy machinegun except as a last resort defense.”

“We aren’t going to use any of the machineguns except as a last resort and the same goes for the 40mm grenades, hand grenades and the 25mm rifle.”

“Where do I draw my bow and arrows?” I asked.

>>>

“I think you p*ssed Seth off,” Rose suggested.

“Rose, what is the point of having the tools we need to do the job if we can’t use them?”

“Naomi said that Seth was going down to San Bernardino and talk to the Sheriff.”

“Who is the Sheriff?”

“A man named Gary Penrod.”

“Who was that tall Deputy you were talking to?”

“I don’t know. His name was Douglas, Jack Douglas. Big sucker wasn’t he?”

Note: If you want to know more about Deputy Jack Douglas, read, ‘Big John’.

>>>

Monday, August 6, 2007...

“It was a shame you couldn’t get some of those SAWs, Gunny.”

“Joe, my friend says that they have a new shipment on order. I told Seth and when he got the suppressors, he got 4 for SAWs. That’s the best time to get them anyway, when they’re getting in a large shipment.”

“I didn’t know that Surefire made a suppressor for the 5.56 machinegun. I thought that all they had were 7.62 machinegun suppressors.”

“You’re right, but the life of the 5.56 can is 30,000 rounds, guaranteed. Surefire claims that they’ve never worn one out. The only thing lacking was a fast attach mount for the M249.”

“So?”

“So Seth got some of the 556 cans and knows someone in San Bernardino who can manufacture the mounts. He was going to talk to the guy when he went down to see the Sheriff.”

>>>

If you had a son or daughter in Iraq, there was a web site you could visit to check and see if they were alive. <http://icasualties.org/oif/Details.aspx> The list was only about 1 or 2 days short of being current at the time. It was one hell of a way to learn, but it did cut the worry. Unfortunately, they didn't list wounded by name.

Whenever a death occurs, CENTCOM (the United States Central Command in Tampa, FL) issues a brief news release that gives the bare facts about the incident: when it happened, how it happened, and the soldier's regiment, if known. The only information not provided at this point is the soldier's name. These releases are published regularly on the Internet at:

<http://www.centcom.mil/>

After the soldier's relatives are notified of the death, the US Department of Defense then issues its own news release that gives the soldier's name, age, unit and hometown. Again, these can be found on the Internet here:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/>

The trouble with this system of notification, however, is that the government provides no tally of those releases. Occasionally, the Department of Defense will release a total number of deaths to date. But it certainly doesn't go out of its way to divulge those numbers. If you want to know the number of deaths at any given point, you have two choices: count up the news releases yourself ... or find a non-governmental entity that is tracking the numbers and posting them somewhere.

One of the most popular lists on the Internet is at CNN:

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/forces/casualties/index.html>

Another popular site is the listing at the Army Times, here:

<http://www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-warkilled.php>

>>>

The troops were home now, so it didn't matter. Seth went to see the Sheriff and see about getting Fast Attach adapters built for the M249 SAWs. I worked with Gunny and we finally got the list revised so every family had family members on consecutive shifts. It hadn't been that long since Gunny had joined up, but any differences had long been overcome. I hate to tell you this, but Gunnery Sergeants put their pants on one leg at a time too. What they have going for them is that mystical thing money can't buy, experience. If they have wings, they aren't Angel's wings.

This was a whole different can of worms here in Lake Arrowhead. We were attempting to defend what amounted to a fixed fortification and we all know what George S. Patton said about fixed fortifications, they were monuments to man's stupidity. If you had told me at dinner time the previous evening that crap like what happened this morning were coming, I wouldn't have believed you. If we couldn't use the machineguns or any explosives to defend the place, we were in trouble.

>>>

Remember how I blamed the environmentalist for our troubles? Three environmental groups sued the federal government, seeking to protect polar bears from extinction because of disappearing Arctic sea ice. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in San Francisco, demands that the government take action on a petition environmentalists filed earlier to have polar bears listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. There is no firm count of polar bears, and the lawsuit did not indicate how many may have been lost because of retreating ice. I suppose they wanted us to take our remaining electricity and run a big air conditioner to cool off the air.

>>>

"Gunny, why do you think we were attacked?"

"Who shot first?"

"I did."

"It sounds to me like they were defending themselves. Who told you to do a recon by fire?"

"Jose."

"He didn't have night vision, how did he know who was in the van?"

"I gave him readouts of what I was seeing through my night vision scope."

"I see. Let me tell you about Recon by Fire. In a recon by fire, a recon element places direct/indirect fire on positions where there is a reasonable suspicion of enemy occupation. The goal is to cause an enemy to disclose his presence by moving or returning fire. Recon elements conduct a recon by fire when enemy contact is expected and time is limited or when they cannot maneuver to develop the situation. This method eliminates any element of surprise the scouts may have had, and it is likely to give the enemy detailed knowledge of their location. However, it may reduce the chance of being ambushed within established kill zones. Recon by fire does not work in all cases. For example, disciplined troops in prepared positions will not react to the scout's fires."

"I..."

"I'm not done, Joe. When evidence exists, the scouts should maneuver to observe from different directions. When the decision is finally made to conduct a recon by fire, weapons should be used in the following priority: Indirect fire; Dismounted machine gun; 25-millimeter (mm) chain gun, MK19, and mounted machine gun; and, Tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided missile (TOW)."

"Why don't you put Jose in charge of the graveyard shift?"

"You wouldn't mind?"

"The shift Leader is the one with his chest in the wringer if a mistake is made. I deferred to Jose anyway. A Marine Corp Staff Sergeant is an E-6 only one grade lower that I was and, I don't have any combat experience. I'll stay on the graveyard shift because Rose is on 2nd shift, but I really rather just be the designated sniper."

"Ooh-rah, Joe. Jose and you can switch roles and you can advise him."

Definition: "It's an affirmation that I fully agree with and support the idea or intent expressed by the person to whom I make that response," said Maj. Gen. F.A. Gorden, Military District of Washington commander. "It applies not only to the letter of what was said, but to the spirit of what was said." You can hear it shouted by Air Force Security Forces, Pararescue, and Combat Controllers. The word is thundered out by Navy SEALs, and by United States Marines (who pronounce it "OohRah!").

I guess I was learning a new language, the language of Marines. Can't you just see a couple of Airman saying, Hooah if they got the bombs attached to the F-15 without blowing it up? Pararescue, I could see, but not the average Airman. I only fired a couple of shots, and for sure had only take out one of the people with the van. I still didn't know if the driver was a man or woman, they all wear their hair the same length.

>>>

"Rose, there is dinner in the oven and there's enough for the entire 2nd shift. By the way, Jose is 3rd shift leader."

"I thought you were."

"I worked it out with Gunny and Jose and I switched positions. It only makes sense, Jose was a combat soldier, and I wasn't."

"Whatever you say, Joe. Hey, let's be careful out there, now you know that there are bad guys."

"Us or them?"

"What do you mean?"

"I shot first."

"It doesn't matter, be careful."

>>>

"Gunny talk to you?" I asked.

"Sure Joe, but why did you dump it on me?"

"You're the one who has the combat training and experience. I have no illusions about know how to handle combat. Did we get the suppressors and M68s installed?"

"We're ready, but I doubt we have anyone show up tonight. Whomever they we hooked up with probably have no idea that they're anything more than missing."

"I don't know, they had to know they came to Arrowhead."

"Maybe, but there are dozens of streets they could have come down looking for, well, whatever they were looking for."

"Maybe they were looking for us, Jose. We haven't exactly kept the lowest profile."

“What do you mean?”

“I used gold to pickup those 6 barrels of gas. The action last night must have drawn some attention. Sure, we have a good fire team with at least 20 we can count on, not counting the teenagers. What if they put 2 and 2 together and come back here? I didn't hear what Seth worked out with the Sheriff, have you hear?”

“Only that we're weapons free.”

“Who told you that?”

“Gunny, right after he talked to Seth.”

“In that case, I'll put up Rose's rifle and bring out the 50.”

“This will be our last night in the trenches, they have the cameras mounted and once they get the console set up, we can monitor from inside.”

“It's still nice, it's only August 7th. Winter doesn't get here until November. This time of year, I'd be more worried about rain.”

“I thought that mostly happened in the spring.”

“When it's raining down below during the winter, Lake Arrowhead gets snow. During warm weather they get rain.”

“The way you talk, you sound as if you don't belong here, Joe.”

“I don't. I should be up in the Antelope Valley, that's where Evan and I live. You've seen my home and shelter and it's defensible. Evan, Marie, Rose and I don't add that much to the defense of this place.”

“Bull. Rose and you are snipers and Evan is a Team Leader. Don't sell yourself short, Joe.”

“It doesn't matter, we don't have a choice. Seth shut the business down and Edwards locked out all of the civilians.”

“That won't last, Joe. Once they complete the cleanup, Evan will have his job back.”

“Tell that to Seth, Jose, he still building up the defenses. It's almost like he knows something that the rest of us don't.”

“You haven't talked to him to find out what the Sheriff had to say?”

“Didn't have a chance. Makes you wonder, doesn't it? He talks to the Sheriff and when he gets home, we're weapons free. We're not even supposed to have most of these weapons, they either violate the NFA, California law or both.”

“Something is going down, that's for sure. The Sheriff's office is big, 2,600 members.”

“San Bernardino County is the largest county in the contiguous US by area, containing more land than nine states. When you look at it that way, they're understaffed.”

“Yeah, but most of it is desert.”

“And, San Bernardino County is infamous for its gang activity. The Inland Empire is well known for its Chicano gangs. The most well-known is the Onterio Varrio Sur Sunkist St Los B.A's Black angels OVS gang. Fueled by drug money and the ease of communication brought on by affordable cell phones, the street gangs have flourished and spread across and beyond the Inland Empire in the face of sporadic and ineffective law enforcement efforts and inadequate intervention strategies. Incidents of gang violence in San Bernardino County have increased since the 1960s, while at the same time growing more brutal. There are now an estimated 68,600 gang members in 287 gangs in the Inland Empire. Sergeant Phil Brown of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said the gangs are growing more violent in the farthest reaches of the county, including the High Desert. Racial tensions among the chicano gangs and the afro american gangs have heighten dramatically in the Inland Empire causing even the most rural areas to be affected. There's more gang violence to the general public and it's becoming more random.”

“So it could have been MS-13 or any one of 287 gangs?”

“Right, I think that's why they had trouble identifying the guys last night.”

“Do the gangs work in concert?”

“Some do, that's one of the reasons we might have a problem. If you do the math, the average gang has 239 members. The gangs are big on taking revenge, to protect their turf.”

We had strength in our number. There was Seth and Naomi, Evan and Marie and Rose and I in the beginning. We added 5 couples, 10 adults, with their 8 children. Finally we picked up Gunny and his wife, June or Joan, I can't remember. We had 18 adults and 6 teenagers, 3 age 16 and up. We were as well armed as a couple of squads of Marines, possibly better. Medium and heavy machineguns weren't a part of a rifle squad. Instead, the average Platoon had 9 SAWs, possibly more. I saw where the Army or Marines had order 18,000 new barrels for the SAWs at \$12,000,000. You don't suppose it's the barrels that they're holding on with duct tape and cable ties do you?

In the Aftermath – Chapter 11

The scheduled delivery date for the new barrels was 2010. What they should have done was order 18,000 new M249 SAWs, complete with spare barrels. Everything can't be a B-52 bomber with a projected life of 100 years. Apparently they built the SAWs at a plant in Columbia, SC. A few days later Gunny took off and came back with 3 new SAWs. It was his usual 4-hour trip. Three wasn't enough for 2 full squads, but we had the other machine guns. And, remember, we were weapons free.

“Those don't look right Gunny, what's the deal?”

“They're the short version. They were developed for special ops. They have a shorter barrel and a collapsing stock. Hey, it's what I could get, I can take them back.”

“Joe, quit giving Gunny a hard time,” Seth suggested.

“What did you learn from the Sheriff? How come you come back and we're weapons free? Did they suddenly change the law?”

“Those were scouts for the BAs. They were looking for a few good neighborhoods to clean out. The Sheriff said that one of his Deputies told him that the van had been shot to sh*t with a Ma Deuce. I told him I wouldn’t know; I was in the cabin. He also said that no one reported hearing a heavy machinegun firing. They can’t supply enough Deputies to protect us, bottom line. On the way home I decided to go weapons free and just hide the guns after.”

“What about the adapters to mount the cans on the M249s?” Gunny asked.

“I’ll drive down below and pick them up.” Seth announced.

“Someone unload the ammo from the back of my pickup,” Gunny said.

>>>

Monday, August 13, 2007...

“Rose, if you had ever told me I’d be huddled at a cabin in Lake Arrowhead with 25 other people waiting for the biggest Chicano gang in the Inland Empire to attack, I’d had said you were nuts.”

“Can’t the neighbors help out?”

“They don’t want to get involved.”

I should note that we had phones now, but still had to generate our own electricity. Edison was saying that it wouldn’t be much longer before they had the power restored to the area. Gas hadn’t been cut off, but Seth had been using propane from the beginning. The generators would burn either with a minor modification, but there was less energy in natural gas, hence less electricity. You could figure on 10kw out of a 12kw generator using natural gas.

The folks were getting tired of living in tents and I can’t say that I blame them. The tents were just canvas, not Kevlar, hence not bulletproof. Apparently Seth had done more than visit with the Sheriff and order the adapters when he went to San Bernardino. Here comes this semi with grading equipment aboard, followed by another pair stacked high with some sort of panels.

“What’s that?”

“A prefabricated steel building for the back lot.” Seth smiled.

“Did you pull a building permit?”

“It’s temporary. When this is all over, I can dismantle it and move it to Santa Clarita if we reopen Rim of the World.”

“I thought you had closed the business down permanently, Seth.”

“I did, but I might reopen it, later.”

I let it pass, why argue with the boss? They unloaded the truck and began grading the entire back lot. Before they had finished, they were ready to set forms for concrete. Temporary? I looked at the prefabricated panels and they were cheap. This wasn’t like Seth, to buy the bottom of the line of anything. Oh well, maybe it was all he could get.

On Tuesday they came in early, while I was still on guard duty, and set the forms. Around 10am, ready-mix trucks showed up and they poured a floor. I think the finish was what they call a light broom. By dark, the concrete was hard enough to walk on. I can tell you one thing, with a total of 6 machineguns and one sniper, those BAs had better think twice before they come here. The CATV console was set up in the living room and that's where we were pulling guard duty now. Just because I hadn't mentioned it for a bit doesn't mean they had stopped working on the system.

On Wednesday and Thursday, they assembled the building. It wasn't that big, the lot was about 65' deep by 100'+ wide and the building didn't fill the entire lot. It's just that I should have paid closer attention, but with the graveyard shift, I slept through most of the day. I checked it out Thursday night after they left for the day and at this point they had a 40' x 80' building assembled, but empty.

"This is your answer to getting the people out of the tents?"

"Joe, were going to subdivide the building into six main spaces and put in 5 apartments that include 2 sleeping quarters and a bathroom. The sixth space will be a combined kitchen/dining room area that can double as a dayroom. Maybe it's not fancy, but it's functional."

If you were to ask me, I'd bet that everyone just wanted to get back to his or her homes. If only I hadn't fired that single shot in the middle of the windshield of the van, this could have all been avoided. Was this what that fella had meant when he was speaking of unintended consequences (I didn't write it that way)? On Friday they were back and subdivided the building. I guess I really hadn't paid much attention, Jose showed me their digs and they weren't half-bad. Each apartment had a small bathroom with a shower and 2 other rooms, one for the parent's and one for the kids. There was a 6-burner propane powered stove a pair of ovens and such in the kitchen area then the folding tables for eating and a TV off to one side. Nice.

>>>

"When are they coming, Gunny?"

"Joe, half the secret to a good attack is getting your enemy to worry. They'll pick the time and it will be to their advantage. I expect that they will only bring enough people to overwhelm us."

"Why?"

"The Deputies are all on the lookout for large group of vehicles traveling together."

"Do they have any idea how few we are in number?"

"It would depend on whether or not they've been doing recon. We don't get many vehicles down the road, so if they're doing it, they're doing it from far off. We have everyone moved into the building and have pulled down the tents. I moved my travel trailer behind Seth's garage to keep it out of the line of fire."

"They could come in from the woods and surround us."

"I've checked the perimeter and it's about 500'. That will put about 25' between each of us. Thank God you put in those fighting positions, they're going to be our edge."

"Do you really believe that 21 people can hold off a large gang?"

"We only have to hold them until the Sheriff can respond. The phones are back up and Seth has the Sheriff's dispatch dialed in on his radio. We can't communicate with their new 800mhz equipment, but like most Sheriff's Departments they keep the VHF up as backup."

"Why didn't the Sheriff just loan Seth one of the 800mhz radios?"

"You'd have to ask Seth."

So, I did.

"Why didn't you get a 800mhz radio from the Sheriff?"

"He's short as it is and couldn't spare one. I did get the VHF frequency and they monitor it just the same. That's what most of their Reserve Deputies use. Does the new housing meet with your approval?"

"It's actually quite nice, boss, functional but not elaborate. Got them out of the tents, anyway."

"I believe that once the power is restored, things are going to settle down, Joe. Unless something else happens, that is. I've never believed in the rule that bad things happen in 3s. Do you?"

"Not particularly, no. We had the flu, a pair of earthquakes and then the terrorist attacks. That made 3 and the gang coming around jacked that to 4. If I did believe in such a thing, that would mean that we were in for 5 more events, once you get over 3, you go to 9 and then 27."

"9, are you sure?"

"Hey, don't blame me, I'm too young to have written that old wives tale, but the rule of 3s goes from 3 to 9."

"I guess it's good we don't believe in it, huh? Which rule of 3s are we talking about here? There is one Rule of 3's that says you can only survive 3 minutes without oxygen; 3 minutes in freezing water; 3 hours without shelter in extreme conditions; 3 days without water; and 3 weeks without food."

"Oh, there's the other one, bad things happen in three's."

"And, we've had 4?"

"Right, boss," I told him. "It will all end when a rock comes in from behind the sun and zaps the planet."

"You watch too many movies."

>>>

North Hollywood revisited: "A total of seven civilians and one dog were wounded. Eleven LAPD officers were injured, nine suffering gunshot wounds. Two of the eight damaged police vehicles were beyond repair. Sgt. Dean Haynes's gun-blasted police car was donated to the LAPD Museum. 'The rounds went right in one side and out the other,' he said, 'but no rounds penetrated the engine block, which I'm here to testify to. It's absolutely a miracle, when you consider the number of rounds fired, that the suspects were the only people killed.'" <http://www.9-1-1magazine.com/magazine/1997/0997/features/rigg.html>

I guess it was a good thing they didn't have armor piercing ammo, huh? The 5.56-mm ball M855 cartridge has a gilding, metal-jacketed, lead alloy core bullet with a steel penetrator. This is the NATO standard round. It is effective against personnel and light materials, not vehicles. The new AP 5.56x45mm round being fielded is the M995. Chinese military-issue ammunition in this caliber is M67 style with a mild steel core and a thin jacket of copper or brass. Contrary to common belief, the use of steel was a cost saving measure rather than one to increase the penetration. Additionally, mild steel is not sufficiently hard to grant unusual armor penetrating capability. Despite this, Chinese ammunition is currently banned from importation in the US due to the fact that there are 7.62x39 mm caliber "handguns" and the ammunition is an "armor piercing handgun round" under the US federal legal definition of the word, which is based on materials and bullet design rather than on tested ability to penetrate armor. I don't have any other data on the Chinese rounds, sorry. Here's how the Ammoman describes SS109: Olympic .223 green tip (SS109), 62 grain – steel core, armor piercing penetrator core, boxer primed – non corrosive. Olympic ammo isn't the best, avoid it, but SS109 will punch through metal and M855 is SS109. Anything else you want to know? Just call me Sergeant 'I know Nothing' Schultz.

On May 9th, 1980, Riverside County, California Sheriff's Department received a report of a 211 in progress at the Security Pacific Bank on 4th and Hamner, in Norco, California. Deputy Glyn Bolasky was the first officer on scene. Deputy Bolasky was shot in the shoulder as five highly armed suspects exited the bank and attempted to get into their getaway vehicle, a green van. The gunmen were armed with automatic rifles, handguns, and improvised explosive devices (IED's).

Deputy Bolasky, hurt and bleeding, shot and killed the driver of the van with his shotgun. The remaining four suspects exited the van and again shot at Deputy Bolasky, before stealing a pickup truck from the bank's parking lot. Deputy Bolasky still managed to survive after being shot four times.

The suspects took off towards the foothills, leaving behind the \$20,000 they had attempted to steal. For the price of \$4,000 each, these criminals entered a bank, put the public in jeopardy and shot a Sheriff's deputy. During the pursuit, the suspects fired their weapons and used the IED's they had made to disable several of the pursuing officer's cruisers. San Bernardino Sheriffs, California Highway Patrol, Fontana and Ontario Police assisted in the pursuit.

While traveling North on I-15, the gunman struck a San Bernardino helicopter with gunfire, forcing it to land and discontinue pursuit. Deputy James B. Evans, 39 years old, became the lead unit. The chase led onto Sierra Avenue towards Lytle Creek. Deputy Evans radioed to dispatch that he felt the gunman would wait around one of the curves for the units to appear. Deputy Evans requested for the helicopter to watch out for something like that.

A second San Bernardino Sheriff's helicopter tried to warn Evans that the gunman had set up an ambush, just as he had warned. The helicopter tried to raise Deputy Evans on the radio, but he did not have CLEMAR (California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Radio) and could not hear the helicopter. As Deputy Evans rounded the curve, he was met with a barrage of gunfire. Deputy Evans was killed instantly when he was struck in the eye with a bullet.

Deputy McCarthy was following Deputy Evans. Deputy McCarthy shot back at the suspects with an assault rifle that he picked up from the station. The suspects fled into the woods and got away.

Three men surrendered on the morning of May 11th, and the L.A. Sheriff's Office SWAT Team shot the last suspect at large. Deputy Evans' family included his wife and their young child.

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When Lt. Col. Glyn Bolasky first heard the news of terrorists hijacking planes and crashing them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, the timing surprised him. The terrorist acts did not.

You cease to be shocked at such appalling acts after being shot five times in a rain of bullets.

Twenty-two years ago, Bolasky was a 24-year-old sheriff's deputy at the Riverside County, Calif., Sheriff's Department. On May 9, 1980, he was the first officer to arrive on the scene of a robbery in Norco, Calif. He faced five men who were heavily armed with automatic rifles and handguns, hollow-point bullets and homemade grenades.

During the shooting, the robbers killed one police officer and wounded eight, including Bolasky. They also shot up a police helicopter and damaged or destroyed 33 police cruisers.

The bank robbers fired more than 200 rounds at Bolasky's police cruiser, which sustained 47 bullet holes. Bolasky's body absorbed shrapnel in five places: the face, upper left shoulder, both forearms and the left elbow. The elbow wound proved to be the worst of the injuries as a bullet severed an artery.

Though badly wounded, Bolasky continued to perform his duty. He shot and killed one of the suspects. It was the first and last time he ever discharged his weapon in the line of duty, and the first time he had been shot at.

"When I got shot, I wasn't a cop anymore," he said. "I was a human being trying not to die. I went into a self-defense mode. It was a caveman mentality with only one thing in mind – survival."

The four other suspects fled. The next day, police shot and killed a second suspect. Police captured the remaining three, who were later convicted of 46 felony counts and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

The Norco bank robbery has been described as one of the most violent in history. It's used to train anti-terrorism agencies throughout the world.

Since the robbery, Bolasky, who is an electronic warfare officer with 12th Air Force at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., has talked about what happened that day to more than 6,000 people, including members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service and Sheriffs' departments around the country. He tells his story so others will learn.

"My attitude is that we always have to be ready; we never know what's going to happen," said Bolasky, who received the Sheriff's Gold Heart – the equivalent of the military's Purple Heart – and the Medal of Courage from his department and the Sheriff's Association for his heroic actions that day.

He has traveled across the country, delivering seminars on responding to high-stress incidents and massive crime or accident scenes.

"As far as high-stress goes, Sept. 11 is as big as it gets," Bolasky said. "I can't say I was shocked at the magnitude. In my briefings, I've been saying for years this was coming. It was only a matter of time before something like this reached US soil." Bolasky hopes the tragedy serves as an awakening.

"Making people believe something like terrorism can happen to them is the number one thing to

overcome when trying to promote prevention and readiness," he said. "Heck, even just a couple weeks before the Norco robbery, my supervisor was saying nothing ever happens around here."

Bolasky made it his mission to make people realize it can happen in their communities. "It's sort of like cancer," he explained. "Everyone knows cancer is a problem. They read all the statistics. But until it happens to them, they always believe it's something that happens to everyone else. So they don't get regular checkups. They don't alter their diets. They simply don't believe it will happen to them."

He says they take the same attitude with terrorism.

"Terrorism is also something that happens to the other guy," he said. "People just don't believe it'll ever hit home."

He admits that following Sept. 11 some of that invulnerability has changed.

"Today if you try to hijack an airliner in this country, the whole planeload of people is going to come after you," he said. "What do they have to lose?"

But Bolasky says there are still things to overcome. One of those is communication.

"It's amazing with all the technology today that agencies still can't talk to each other," he said. "It happened to us during the bank robbery. Different agencies were on different frequencies, and we couldn't communicate with each other. A lot of the same problems exist today."

For the average citizen, it's less technical and more common sense.

Bolasky doesn't preach paranoia. It should still be fun to be an American, he says. But people should remain vigilant.

"For one thing, you should pay attention to your surroundings," he said. "I'm not talking a life-altering change. I'm just saying that if, for instance, you go to a convenience store and notice that there's no one behind the counter, you might ask yourself why. Is something wrong? More than likely, the clerk is stocking shelves or something innocent. Then again, maybe he's lying behind the counter with a gun to his head. It's worth an extra minute or two to assess the situation, instead of walking into the middle of something you're not prepared for."

Another common sense tip is to carry a cell phone with emergency numbers.

"Or for military members, be proud of being in the military, but don't necessarily flaunt it," Bolasky said. "This has been the case overseas for a long time, but the fact is, why give a stranger more information about you than he needs?"

Bolasky said that you don't have to be an anti-terrorism expert to make a difference.

"Military people get plenty of realistic training that will help them in a terrorist situation," he said. "In a high-stress situation, we all revert back to the training we've had. That's why it's so important to train serious and hard. The brain works fast in a life or death situation, and you'll recall things you were taught. Your training will give you the ability to assess situations quickly and make better decisions."

In the end, it may help you avoid being a statistic on the 11 o'clock news.

RELATED ARTICLE: Don't be a victim

* Preplan. Don't be paranoid, but don't keep your head in the sand, either. Stuff does happen, and it's not always to the other person. Carry a cell phone and first aid kit. Have emergency numbers available. And know where the nearest hospital is located.

* Be aware of your surroundings. If something doesn't look or feel right, it may not be. Take a few extra minutes to assess situations before walking headfirst into trouble.

* Don't be a soft target. Soft targets are people who are careless or look like an easy mark by being sloppy with their appearance. Military members have the advantage here. They're usually more alert and project a more competent appearance by dressing sharply. These are deterrents that make them "hard targets."

* Train. This is especially important for military members, who practice emergency response exercises. Don't take this training for granted. Train seriously; train hard.

* Keep up with times. World affairs could make for a higher-risk climate.

* Assess areas you frequent. What makes a good target for terrorism? Anything that can garner national recognition. Military installations, nuclear facilities and universities are just a few examples of places that might become terrorist targets.

Lt. Col. Glyn Bolasky (I assume it's copyrighted by the author. But, I am good at research. Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.)

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Then again, you might get lucky:

A former MIT professor and multimillionaire businessman who has been praised for his riveting lectures but also known for his family disputes was ambushed outside his office and shot multiple times, authorities said Saturday.

John J. Donovan was taken to Massachusetts General Hospital after the shooting Friday night and later released, hospital spokesman Arch MacInnes said Saturday.

The 63-year-old founder of consulting firm Cambridge Executive Enterprises was shot several times, and it wasn't immediately clear why he wasn't more seriously injured, police spokesman Frank Pasquarello said.

He didn't know if Donovan was wearing a bulletproof vest but said a belt buckle may have helped saved his life. "There was something in his belt buckle – a bullet or a fragment," Pasquarello said.

Not everyone supported the US action in Iraq. One female British reporter had a different perspective: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2089-1937778,00.html> B*tch!

>>>

We knew they were coming, we just didn't know when. Gunny had scored big on the 200-round magazines with the belted ammo for the SAWs. In years gone by, Americans were touted as Riflemen. That mostly applied to the Marines, these days. The ammo he got was a 4 to 1 mix of M995 AP and M996, dim tracer. The problem with dim tracer was that it was designed for night vision and not all of the people here had night vision. The 5.56-mm tracer M996 cartridge is identified by an orange tip. The tracer is used for adjustments after observation, incendiary effects, and signaling. When tracer rounds are fired, they are mixed with ball ammunition in a ratio of four ball rounds to one tracer round. We'd have been better off with the M855 + M856 mix. We had the .50 cal's and the

25mm rifle for heavy duty fighting.

They say that you pay your money and you take your chances. When Seth was laying out all of the money for those suppressors, what he should have been doing was laying out money for more of those M109 rifles and plenty of the HEAB rounds. Greater firepower through technical superiority, with the HEAB rounds, you only had to get close. Oh well, the problem was that at \$25-\$30 a round, only the military could afford a lot of the ammo. Gunny should have concentrated on getting HEAB rounds instead of a mix of AP and HEAB to bring us up to 500 rounds of each.

It was a shame that they hadn't fielded the M307 yet that would have been the perfect machinegun to have. The XM307, in development with General Dynamics, is a lightweight, two-man portable machine gun that fires precision airbursting munitions. It is equipped with a target acquisition fire control sight and is the first automatic weapon to fire a 25mm thermobaric round at the intended range of 450 meters. Compared to the MK19 40mm grenade launcher that fires its rounds in a high arc, the XM307 fires on a flatter trajectory, boosting their velocity and letting Soldiers put three rounds on a target at 1,200 meters in the same time it takes the MK19 to send just one.

The 50-pound XM307 is actually intended to replace two "old reliables" on the battlefield. One is the 84-pound M2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun, which weighs in at 128 pounds with its tripod. The other is the two decades-old MK19 Mod-3 40mm grenade machine gun, a popular choice for some vehicles that offers devastating suppressive fire capabilities. It weighs 79 pounds, or 137.5 pounds with its tripod. Some US Special Forces currently use a different, lighter (63 pounds, 107 pounds with tripod) 53 H&K 40mm GMG as a man-portable "ace in the hole" when serious firepower is called for, but the XM307 would offer a common replacement for all.

With its 25mm air-bursting, armor-piercing, and incendiary munitions, the XM307 offers a lighter alternative that still packs a lethal punch. Its 25mm ammunition consists of grenade-like rounds that are programmed to detonate at a given distance. Enemy in a trench? It detonates over their heads. Enemy in a building? Don't spray the structure with conventional machine gun fire. Use the single-shot option, and put a couple shots through the window that detonate in the room and spray it with shrapnel. Even at \$20 per 25mm bullet, the results will sometimes prove cost-effective as well as battlefield effective.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 12

quote(DID: We think he meant "Ma Deuce" - "Ma Duce" would be Mussolini's mother...) end quote

Army leaders have concluded that the service's current inventory of small arms is ill suited to the guerilla wars that US ground forces now are fighting.

The M16 5.56 mm assault rifle – the standard combat weapon for all services since the Vietnam War – is considered too long, with its 20-inch barrel, for close-in urban fighting. Many Army, Marine and special operations forces have adopted a shorter version of the M16, the M4 carbine, which has a barrel only 14.5 inches long.

Another factor is that infantry weapons are too difficult to maintain and repair, said Lt. Col. Mathew Clarke, product manager for individual weapons at Picatinny Arsenal, NJ.

"Today, if a barrel wears out, the weapon leaves the unit," he explained. "You're short until it is repaired. It could be days; it could be weeks, depending upon where it's got to go and whether parts are available."

The Army has been working to develop a so-called “objective individual combat weapon” to replace both the M16 and M4. The OICW is envisioned as two weapons in one, a rifle that fires a 5.56 mm round and a grenade launcher that expends a 20 mm air-bursting munition. A decade ago, the Army awarded a \$105 million contract to a team headed by ATK Integrated Defense, of Plymouth, MN. The venture included Heckler & Koch Defense Inc., of Sterling, VA, as the weapon’s designer and manufacturer.

The Army eventually concluded that the XM29—with inseparable rifle and grenade-launcher components—was too bulky and of limited utility, since not every soldier needs a grenade launcher. Thus, it was decided to develop the two elements separately. In 2002, the Army awarded a \$5 million contract modification to the ATK-HK team, calling for rapid development of the rifle component, which became known as the XM8 lightweight modular weapon system. Until recently, the Army planned to begin fielding it later this year.

The XM8 has been designed in four variants, Clarke said. These include a carbine, compact carbine, sharpshooter version and automatic rifle.

XM8 parts – such as the barrel, butt stock, magazine, sighting system and carrying handle – can be interchanged, he noted. Barrel lengths range from nine inches for a compact carbine to 20 inches for a sharpshooter rifle.

HK Defense produced 300 XM8s for testing, and the Army put them through their paces in a series of trials. The weapons have earned high marks, Clarke said.

“The final environmental test took place this winter in -53 degree weather at the Army’s Cold Regions Test Center at Fort Greeley, AK,” he said. “Fifteen to 20 soldiers fired 1,000 rounds each over two weeks. The weapons performed well under those conditions.”

In the meantime, however, the Army Infantry Center at Fort Benning, GA, changed its requirements, Clarke said.

Instead of an automatic rifle, the Infantry Center wanted a light machine gun to replace the 5.56 mm M249 Squad Automatic Weapon. The center wanted the three rifle components – a carbine, special compact weapon and designated marksman rifle – to share at least 80 percent of the same parts, and the light machine gun at least 50 percent.

“With such a major change in the system’s concept, we felt we should put the project up for re-bidding,” Clarke said. A request for proposals was posted in May. Competitors have 180 days to respond. In addition to written submissions, they must provide four copies of each variant for testing.

“All of the major gun houses in the United States and many in Europe have shown interest,” he said.

“For us, the issue of a light machine gun is not a problem,” said Sal Fanelli, XM8 program manager at HK Defense. “Getting it to 50 percent commonality is going to be difficult, but we think we can do it.”

Colt Defense LLC, of West Hartford, CT, is going after the job. “Yes, absolutely, unquestionably,” said Kevin Brown, Colt’s government relations director. Colt designed both the M16 rifle and M4 carbine. It also produces a 9 mm submachine gun similar to the M16 and M4, as well as the M203 grenade launcher.

In 1988, Colt lost the contract for producing M16s for the military services to FN Manufacturing LLC, of Columbia, SC FN’s parent company, FN Herstal, of Liege, Belgium, is preparing its own proposal

for the OICW, said Marvin Memmert, business unit manager for FN's M16 and M249 programs.

"It will be something completely different from the M16," he said. "It will be something along the lines of SCAR." SCAR is the Special Forces combat-assault rifle – a family of 5.56 mm and 7.62 mm weapons with a grenade-launcher attachment – that FN Herstal is producing for the US Special Operations Command,

The process of evaluating the proposals and testing prototypes could take another year to 18 months, Clarke said. "The linchpin is going to be coming up with a system that is compatible with a light machine gun," he said. "There are plenty of people out there who make a good 5.56 mm rifle."

Meanwhile, "we're still working the M4s," he said. "We're buying several thousand a month from Colt," he said. "Also, we'll probably buy a few more M16s to replace those that can't be repaired. We have to maintain our current fleet while we develop a new one."

At the same time, progress is being made toward fielding other weapons high on infantry shopping lists. In March, for example, the Army approved a new .50 caliber sniper rifle, the M107. "We're in full-scale production," said Peter Errante, deputy product manager for crew-served weapons. He declined to say how many weapons will be produced, adding only, "We're making them as fast as we can."

The M107 semi-automatic long-range sniper rifle, as it is known, is a commercial, off-the-shelf product based on the Marine Corps' M82A3, Errante explained. "We made a lot of changes to improve durability and reliability."

The M107 comes with two 10-round magazines; a variable-power day optic sight; a hard carrying case for storage, transportation and protection, and a soft case for tactical operations.

Like the M82A3, the M107 is made by Barrett Firearms Manufacturing Inc., of Murfreesboro, TN. Both are designed to target vehicles and aircraft at long distances.

Although the M107 can be fired by an individual soldier using a bipod, it is considered a crew-served weapon because snipers work in teams of two, Errante said.

The rifle is big, nearly five feet in length, and heavy, with a weight of 32 pounds. It packs "a pretty significant recoil," the backward motion of a discharged firearm, he admitted. In the hands of skilled snipers, however, it is extremely accurate, he said. "We've had confirmed kills at 3,500 meters in Afghanistan."

The M107 can be placed on special operations' ground mobility vehicles, Strykers and even unmanned ground vehicles. "It can be mounted facing to the rear of armored vehicles to keep enemy troops from approaching the vehicle from that direction," Errante said.

An M107 atop an unmanned ground vehicle can be fired by remote control by an operator at a safe distance, Errante said.

A weapon developed "very quickly as an urgent operational requirement," Clarke said, is the XM26 12 gauge modular accessory shotgun system. The Army already has shipped 199 of these weapons – made by C-More Systems, of Manassas, VA. – to Afghanistan.

The XM26 attaches underneath the barrel of the M4 and M16, providing troops with the ability to fire lethal, non-lethal and door-breaching rounds, he explained. It also can be fitted with its own butt stock and used as a standalone shotgun.

Still another weapon getting considerable attention in infantry circles is the XM307 25 mm advanced crew-served machine gun. The XM307 is being developed by General Dynamics Armament and Technical Products, of Burlington, VT, under a 2004 contract worth up to \$95 million through December 2007.

The weapon fires 25 mm air bursting and armor-piercing munitions. Its fire-control system includes a laser range finder and a day-night sight.

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The XM307 is intended to replace the two decades-old MK-19 40 mm grenade machine gun and the World War II-era M2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun, said Lt. Col. Kevin Stoddard, product manager for crew-served weapons. Within minutes, it can be converted to the XM312 lightweight .50 caliber machine gun. At 50 pounds, the XM312 is one-third the weight of the M2. The XM307 and XM312 share 95 percent of the same parts.

Both the XM307 and XM312 are being developed for use with the Army's Future Combat Systems, Stoddard explained. The service plans to have them in the hands of soldiers by fiscal year 2008, he said.

With the phone back up, the Internet was back up and I was checking to see what the progress was on some of those new weapons systems. It would really be nice if they were beyond the testing stages and available right now. That Chicano gang wouldn't stand a snowball's chance in H*ll. It was only August, pushing September, of 2007 so I guess that meant that General Dynamics wasn't finished developing the weapon yet.

>>>

"Do I know you?" I teased.

"Evan Mace. We used to be friend's before we ended up on different shifts."

"I'm about ready to pack it in and head back to Lancaster, Evan."

"The money isn't good enough to get killed over, that's for sure," he agreed.

"What day is it, I've lost track?" I asked.

"Monday, August 20, Joe. Don't you just love the graveyard shift?"

"When is Labor Day?"

"Two weeks from today, why?"

"If that gang of Chicanos hasn't hit us by then, what say we boogie?"

"I'll pack my bag."

Evan was serious and, like me, was tired of the BS. If we beat feet and went home, we wouldn't have to worry about whether or not we had big enough guns, or enough. I still had the propane in my tank and if the electricity was off in Lancaster, I could run the generator and Evan and Marie could put up

with us until the lights came back on. I envisioned myself as a survivalist, to an extent. If that meant leaving Lake Arrowhead ahead of a fight we might lose, so much the better. I'd allowed myself to be bought my Seth's gold, but it simply wasn't worth it.

"Seth, Evan and I have been talking. If the gang hasn't hit this place by Labor Day, they may not. We've decided that we're packing up and heading home. You have the 5 other families plus Gunny and his wife. You should be able to get most of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department here on short notice. Get that tall guy, Jack Douglas, he'd scare the crap out of anyone."

"They call him Big John. He already has a place in the hills somewhere."

"We'll stick for 2 more weeks, but then we're gone. Sorry Seth, but all of the gold in the world isn't worth being away from home."

"This is my two weeks notice?"

"You could say that, yes."

"Fine, I'll pay the two of you off right now. You draw a year's supply of food for 4 and load it up. You can leave tomorrow."

"We'll start loading the barrels of gas on my Chevy."

"Let's go Evan, I told Seth and he had a real hissy. He said to draw a year's supply of food for 4 and leave tomorrow; he'd pay us off. Please help me load the gas aboard the Chevy."

"We'd better put half on the Chevy and half on my pickup, the gas is heavy."

"Suits me just fine. We'll find some diesel when we get back home, but fill your tanks."

Technically, the drums belonged to Seth, but there wasn't any other way to get the gas back to Lancaster. Evan and I were beginning to feel like we belonged the Seth so maybe that was the problem. I won't run from a fight and you know Evan by now. I had no idea if I had a job with Seth if he reopened Rim of the World. Maybe not, and maybe he needed some competition up in the Antelope Valley. If Edwards continued to lock Evan out, I figured on talking to him.

>>>

"Tuesday, August 21, 2007...

We finished loading the supplies and Seth gave us our money. He didn't seem to be particularly upset. I promised to return the drums when I found something to store the gas in and he said not to worry about it. It seemed to be an amicable split. We weren't badly off. We had the gold from Seth's safe, our wages, gasoline and a year's supply of food for 4. Somewhere in the postal system, Evan had a severance check. It hadn't been at his house when he'd gotten their things after going to Edwards. Both of our homes were paid for, thanks to a tip from a Secretary who we knew at Edwards's years before. She explained that if you made double mortgage payments on a 30-year loan, your house would be paid for in 7 years. We had a small home loan to do some improvements, but I could pay that off.

We said goodbye to everyone and we were off. I took the lead in my Chevy with Rose and Marie in the middle in the Navigator and Evan bringing up the rear in his pickup. Seth gave us a pair of 2-

meter mobiles as a parting gift. They weren't installed, because we didn't have antennas. We eased our way to 138 and then struggled through the hills until we got to Phelan. After that, it was downhill all the way to Palmdale. We continued north on 47th east, it curves into 50th east, and made it to Avenue J and turned west. The stoplights were working, so you know what that means, electricity. We went to Evan and Marie's and unloaded their food. Marie reminds me of Carrie Fisher more than any other actress.

>>>

Did you see Carrie Fisher in that skimpy outfit in Episode VI? Carrie Fisher complained about her costumes in the previous two movies. She said they were so long, you could not tell "she was a woman". Those complaints led to the skimpy outfit she wore as Jabba's prisoner. The costume became something of a running joke among the crew, because the metal framework that held the top together meant that the costume didn't move well with her. Since Fisher didn't like the industry standard solution of using double-sided tape, it became necessary before each take to have a wardrobe person check to ensure that her breasts were still snug inside the costume top. Rumors have circulated for years that she had an affair with Harrison Ford during the filming of the first Star Wars film. Both deny this, but Carrie has admitted in interviews that she had a crush on Ford and spent a lot of time with him off camera.

Carrie Fisher is a member of the 'Boy-Toy' Club. According to Fisher, when an older woman plays around with a younger hunk in Hollywood, it doesn't just help to get your name back in the limelight, it helps you get into shape as well. "It's good for your weight," she tells WENN.com. "It provides you with the illusion that something of charm and consequence is taking place in your life."

The actress confessed that her recent fling with a 23-year-old made her feel better about herself and helped jumpstart a weight-loss program that has transformed her looks.

"He needed a place to stay," the 46-year-old actress said. "He was beautiful and I suppose I did get a little infatuated with him. He was [messed] up about his mother, which made him flirty with me, and we ended up making out in my den and in his bedroom. And there was a tiny, tragic make-out thing in my car." Of course, all this hot action brings a whole new meaning to "May the force be with you!" In her Princess Leia costume: http://www.rottentomatoes.com/p/carrie_fisher/ (The skimpy one)

>>>

We didn't feel like rats deserting a sinking ship, if you're wondering. We were tired and just wanted to get back home. We unloaded the gas and food at our house and Evan left. I went down to the shelter to see what kind of mess they'd left while they'd been holed up after the 4th of July. It had been cleaned up good and the refrigerator was empty. The freezer was still about half full. The generator wasn't running because the electricity was back on, but there was a note telling me they'd left it running when they'd left.

First things first, I called AmeriGas in Palmdale and told them I needed a refill. The generator also powered the house when the lights were out and the freezer in the house was still full. I doubt any of the fellas had even been in the house. It wasn't long before the phone rang and it was Evan.

"Did you get your severance check?"

"They were holding our mail at the post office."

"I have to go check, we didn't have any mail either."

“Is everything ok there?”

“Yeah, why?”

“The guy at the post office said that there had been some trouble up here.”

“What kind of trouble?”

“Gang trouble.”

“Did we go out of the frying pan and into the fire, Evan?”

>>>

The area was used as hunting grounds for antelope, and as an escape route for marauding bandits. The story is that from 1882 to 1885, the valley lost 30,000 head of antelope, almost half of the antelope for which the Valley was named. Unusually heavy snows in both the mountains and the Valley floor drove the antelope toward their normal feeding grounds in the eastern part of the Valley. Since they would not cross the railroad tracks, many of them starved to death. Others were attacked by coyotes and wildcats, or became easy prey for hunters. Palmdale got its name because early residents mistook Joshua trees for Palm trees and the city was first named Palmenthal. It was changed to Palmdale in 1899.

>>>

“I don’t really know, Joe. Maybe the skinhead gangs will keep the Chicano gangs under control.”

“That will be fine if we don’t get involved.”

“Say what are you planning on doing for a living now?”

“I can’t say that I thought about it, do you have an idea?”

“Seth hasn’t reopened Rim of the World and there have to be people out there who need survival supplies. Seth never sold guns and I think we could open a shop here in Lancaster that sold a full line of survival supplies.”

“What do I know about selling survival supplies?”

“Someone has to run the gun store. With Los Angeles County making it so difficult to sell guns these days, it might be difficult to get all of the licenses, but we could try. Maybe we could work if that place in Palmdale, High Desert Storm.”

“Why her?”

“Best prices in the Valley.”

“Could we compete with places like Big 5?”

“I don’t see why not. We can match their regular prices and if they have a sale, send our customers over there. What I had in mind was trying to get a foothold in the LEO market so we could carry a full

line of products, if you get my drift.”

“Doesn’t the Gun Shop have that market cornered?”

“No more than Santa Fe Gun Galleria. Santa Fe carries all of the LEO leather and some accessories that the Gun Shop doesn’t. We can start small and run it out of a store front that I can rent, there’s plenty of empty stores in Lancaster.”

“How do you intend to fund this venture?”

“Sell the gold that I got from Seth.”

“What about business contacts?”

“I have my phonebook from Rim of the World.”

“Is that ethical?”

“He’s out of business, why not?”

“Hey, I heard that Costco was open.”

“Good, we can sell off those 4 one-year deluxe food supplies. Tomorrow, ride with me to Van Nuys and we’ll unload the gold. Then, we can get on the phone and start ordering supplies.”

>>>

And thus was born AV Preparedness Supplies, a California Corporation based in Lancaster, California. We carry a full line of products, including guns. The first thousand went to a lawyer who sold us a corporate shell and his fee included filing the name change. The cost of the corporation was extra. I sold my 76 ounces of gold and Evan sold the 2 he’d earned. It went for around \$1,000 an ounce. I knew we were under capitalized, but that was the extent of our money. Except, of course, that box of cash that Evan had dragged out of the closet. He had more than I thought and did the deposits on utilities, paid the lawyer, etc.

The corporation got the FFL with Evan and I as principals. Every dime we made was plowed back into the business that first year. We slowly began to build the inventory, thanks in part to sales and tanks in part to a loan from Wells Fargo Bank. Now we owed our souls to the company store, er, bank.

Some people say a man is made outta mud
A poor man's made outta muscle and blood
Muscle and blood and skin and bones
A mind that's a-weak and a back that's strong

You load sixteen tons, what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go
I owe my soul to the company store

You tell ‘em Ern...

I was born one mornin' when the sun didn't shine
I picked up my shovel and I walked to the mine
I loaded sixteen tons of number nine coal
And the straw boss said "Well, a-bless my soul"

You load sixteen tons, what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go
I owe my soul to the company store

I was born one mornin', it was drizzlin' rain
Fightin' and trouble are my middle name
I was raised in the canebrake* by an ol' mama lion
Cain't no-a high-toned woman make me walk the line

You load sixteen tons, what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go
I owe my soul to the company store

If you see me comin', better step aside
A lotta men didn't, a lotta men died
One fist of iron, the other of steel
If the right one don't a-get you, then the left one will

You load sixteen tons, what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt
Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go
I owe my soul to the company store

Sixteen Tons – 1955 – Tennessee Ernie Ford (now it's official) Since my daddy wasn't a coal miner and I'm not a girl, I don't know what number nine coal is, probably a grade. I found a reference to West Kentucky number nine coal, but that's it. Look it up yourself, if you want to know.

It was tough times for a year or two and I never heard from Seth again until he reopened Rim of the World.

"So, you're my competition?"

"Sorry, boss, it seemed like the thing to do at the time. We don't have entirely the same line as you did so we can refer some of our customers if you still have the same line."

"What do you carry that I didn't?"

In the Aftermath – Chapter 13

Ev'ry mornin' at the mine you could see him arrive
He stood six foot six and weighed two forty five
Kinda broad at the shoulder and narrow at the hip
And everybody knew ya didn't give no lip to Big John.

Nobody seemed to know where John called home

He just drifted into town and stayed all alone
He didn't say much, kinda quiet and shy
And if you spoke at all, you just said "Hi" to Big John.

Somebody said he came from New Orleans
Where he got in a fight over a Cajun Queen
And a crashin' blow from a huge right hand
Sent a Loosiana fellow to the Promised Land-Big John
(Big John, Big John) Big Bad John (Big John)

Then came the day at the bottom of the mine
When a timber cracked and men started cryin'
Miners were prayin' and hearts beat fast
And everybody thought that they'd breathed their last-'cept John

Through the dust and the smoke of this man-made hell
Walked a giant of a man that the miners knew well
Grabbed a saggin' timber, gave out with a groan
And like a giant oak tree he just stood there alone-Big John
(Big John, Big John) Big Bad John (Big John)

And with all of his strength he gave a mighty shove
Then a miner yelled out "There's a light up above!"
And twenty men scrambled from a would-be grave
Now there's only one left down there to save-Big John

With jacks and timbers they started back down
Then came that rumble way down in the ground
And then smoke and gas belched out of that mine
Everybody knew it was the end of the line for Big John
(Big John, Big John) Big Bad John (Big John)

Now they never reopened that worthless pit
They just placed a marble stand in front of it
These few words are written on that stand
At the bottom of this mine lies a H*ll of a man Big John (from the single)

Words and Music by Jimmy Dean

The lyrics to the sequel, Cajun Queen are in 'Big John'.

>>>

"Most importantly, we got a FFL and carry guns."

"I thought of that, but most of my business is mail order. I had to buy the server back from Eddie."

"Did the Black Angels ever show up?"

"You didn't hear?"

"Not one word."

“You weren’t gone more than an hour when Gunny caught a glint off some optics in the hills. We figured we were being watched and got on the horn to the Sheriff. We went to condition Red while we were waiting, but they didn’t attack. The Deputies showed up and arrested the entire bunch. It was one h*ll of a gunfight, and that was it we never heard another thing. We kept up or guard until the first anniversary of the terrorist attack and then I started looking at reopening Rim of the World.”

“You were very lucky. What ever happened to Gunny?”

“He quit and went back home. Said he was tired of living out of his travel trailer.”

“So what kept you from reopening sooner?”

“You were gone and had opened up a competing store. I didn’t need the money, so I said to h*ll with it and went riding for the next year.”

“Why did you decide to go back in business?”

“Couldn’t sell the store and warehouse. So we dismantled the living quarters I erected on the back lot, moved them to Santa Clarita and started to rebuild the inventory. Except for you, I have the same crew. I promoted Jose to Assistant Manager.”

“Good man. Say, you wouldn’t happen to have Gunny’s number would you?”

“I can give it to you, but he said he wasn’t interested in working in preparedness supplies.”

“I just wanted to say hi.”

“If I get people wanting guns, I’ll refer them.”

“Fine and we’ll refer people looking for the one-year deluxe food supplies.” What? Bars frequently refer their drunk customers to first a cup of coffee and second to another bar.

What? You thought maybe Seth and I wouldn’t get along? I had nothing against Seth; it was that gold he had put back for me that had financed our business. And Seth was never one to carry a grudge. Our stores were only about 40 miles apart and now that he was open, we could quit carrying the Walton Feed stuff. I wanted to get into the Nitro-pak line. <http://www.nitro-pak.com/>

They showed Supervolcano on TV last night. The eruption was 6,000mi³ according to Tom Brokaw. The eruption 2.1 million years ago was only 585mi³, so this eruption was more than 10 times larger. They also show America’s Tsunami. America’s Tsunami was the program they made after December 26, 2004 tsunami over in the Indian Ocean. Specifically, scientists point to the northwest region of the United States (northern California and coastal areas of Oregon and Washington) as being most at risk for a tsunami event because its fault lines are a mirror image of those in the Indian Ocean subduction zone. Scientists estimate that tsunami events happen every 200 to 400 years on the West Coast – the last occurred on January 26, 1700 – and with a fault line located just 50 miles off the coast along the Cascadia Subduction Zone, this region is thought to be the next target, with potential waves as high as 90 feet. Cascadia extends from northern California to the peninsula of British Columbia and is an exact mirror image geologically to the Indian Ocean subduction zone where the December 2004 tsunami occurred. Using new data and improved models from the expedition, scientists predict a tsunami three times the size of current estimates.

I was very happy about that, it was good for business. Yes, by now we had our own server, thanks to Eddie. It used the same software that Seth used at Rim of the World, but it contained a different inventory. We were getting inquiries about the one-year deluxe food packs so I called Seth.

“Seth, Joe. Say people are asking about the one-year deluxe food packs, can you supply them?”

“I can try, Joe. It depends on whether or not I can get them. We have over 200 units on order just since they showed those programs last night. How many do you need?”

“I’d say we’ve had 50 or 60 calls. I can’t translate, but I’d say anywhere from 120 units to 180.”

“Three truckloads? Ah, h*ll, we’re talking about a total of 7 or 8 by the time we’re done. I don’t know if Walton can supply that much.”

“I steered some of them into the Nitro-pak and the Mountain House foods we carry, but our inventory isn’t very large. Some insisted on the stuff we used to carry, from Walton Feed. We gave them your website and phone number. I’m just calling to give you a heads up, so you can call Idaho and get them busy shipping.”

“I’ll try, but 7 or 8 truckloads of food? I doubt they can supply that anytime soon. Those programs scared people really bad. I’ve had people asking for guns.”

“We can supply them.”

“California legal?”

“Did you ask something, Seth?”

“Oh, I get it.”

“Not tonight, you don’t.”

“Huh?”

“A line out of Heartbreak Ridge.”

“I was saying...”

“I know what you were saying and you were right, but don’t pass it on.”

“But how?”

“Buy them legal and buy the parts separately. What people do in their own homes isn’t any of our business. We sell surplus ammo too. We’re giving Eric the Ammoman a run for his money.”

“Do you carry a full line?”

“Don’t tell California or the feds.” I warned.

“Did I every tell you who supplied the suppressors?”

“No.”

"I'll send you and email with his name and address. Be sure and tell him that you worked for me. He's a class III dealer. There won't be any other information in the email so if someone gets their hands on it, it won't mean anything."

"We're square on the shelter, right. Our putting in the one for you evened us up?"

"I can sell more."

"We can only handle about one a month, Seth, just give us the orders you can't handle."

When people wanted a shelter, they didn't want to wait 6-9 months until it was installed. They wanted it up and running, yesterday because tomorrow might be too late. Since the terrorist attack on the July 4, 2007, California had abandoned nuclear energy altogether. The government, federal, state and local, had cleaned up after the terrorists and they were working on the reactor sites. It had only been a couple of years so they were still hot.

>>>

Evan and I had tried to do it all by ourselves for too long. Marie and Rose worked with us, running the store and the computer. It was one of those 6am until we were done sort of operations. Store hours were 8am until 5pm. As soon as I hung up from talking to Seth, I called Gunny.

"Hey, you old war horse, this is Joe. What's new?"

"Hey, Airdale, I heard the two of you started a preparedness business."

"That's why I'm calling, we need help."

"I'm not interested in working in a store."

"Not even a gun store?"

"I didn't know you sold guns."

"We do. I can't really explain over the phone, but if you could get to Lancaster, you might really be impressed. If you come, I'll buy you lunch and fill your tank."

"How far is it from Santa Monica?"

"About 70 miles. It should take you a little over an hour."

I'll see you for lunch tomorrow, Airdale."

>>>

In between Supervolcano and America's Tsunami, they showed actual footage from the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake, which caused the Indian Ocean Tsunami. The energy it contained was equal to 63,000 Hiroshima's. Showing real footage, even it was from 5 years before was sure to get people's attention. The America's Tsunami show was about scientists looking for the cause of the 2004 quake. What I couldn't understand was why they ran out of time. Having spent the amount of money they had, why couldn't they just look until they found it? Probably wouldn't have wooed the

audience. I guess I'm too cynical. Mud isn't 'hard' evidence. Mud is 'soft' evidence. They didn't have time to check the full length of what they found. Everything after they found the mud was a computer model. Apparently they don't teach in schools near the Indian Ocean that if the water leaves the beach suddenly, a tsunami is coming. With 20 minutes left out of a 2-hour program, they finally talked about the Cascadian Fault, for a few seconds. I could have told them that it was 'if', not 'when'. Sis did!

They gave an example of a M9.2 earthquake/subsidence on the Cascadian Subduction Zone that resulted in 5 minutes of shaking. Most of Seattle collapsed and a 50' wave hit followed by a 90' wave. When it happens, many of the evacuation areas, especially in Oregon, will be under water. I'm not worried; we're a long way from the ocean here in Lancaster. No Alfred E. Newman jokes allowed! Excuse me, I don't have time for this, we're getting hundreds of orders. The only problem I saw was that FEMA was involved. With Bush out of the White House, the Democrat President replace Chertoff, there is a God! Discovery Channel finished of the evening entertainment with a program called America's Volcanoes: Sitting on a Powder Keg.

>>>

"UPS took a truckload and it looks like they didn't take anything."

"Evan, we'll have them send another truck tomorrow morning. I talked to Gunny today, he's coming up tomorrow for lunch."

"To visit?"

"I thought I'd ask him to take over our gun operation."

"You want an outsider involved?"

"If he's part of the operation, he'll be an insider, won't he?"

"Sooner or later, someone is going to figure out that we aren't selling all of those guns to LEOs, Joe."

That was the interesting thing about the California law, almost everything was prohibited, but peace officers could own it all. We knew that Wal-mart got in trouble with the state for not checking IDs or taking a thumbprint. We didn't make that mistake. And, if we didn't know you, all you could buy was California legal merchandise. They make a CA legal SA- 58 and a CA legal AR-15, but they have fixed magazines holding 10 rounds. The state had inspected those models of guns and was satisfied that they couldn't be modified to accept the illegal high capacity magazines, easily. They didn't have any law we were aware of concerning parts kits and we sold one with every gun.

As a result of SB23 and since January 1, 2000, the definition of "assault weapon" also includes any of the following:

(a)(1) A semiautomatic, centerfire rifle that has the capacity to accept a detachable magazine and any one of the following:

(A) A pistol grip that protrudes conspicuously beneath the action of the weapon.

(B) A thumbhole stock.

(C) A folding or telescoping stock.

(D) A grenade launcher or flare launcher.

(E) A flash suppressor.

(F) A forward pistol grip.

- (2) A semiautomatic, centerfire rifle that has a fixed magazine with the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds.
- (3) A semiautomatic, centerfire rifle that has an overall length of less than 30 inches.
- (4) A semiautomatic pistol that has the capacity to accept a detachable magazine and any one of the following:
 - (A) A threaded barrel, capable of accepting a flash suppressor, forward handgrip, or silencer.
 - (B) A second handgrip.
 - (C) A shroud that is attached to, or partially or completely encircles, the barrel that allows the bearer to fire the weapon without burning his or her hand, except a slide that encloses the barrel.
 - (D) The capacity to accept a detachable magazine at some location outside of the pistol grip.
- (5) A semiautomatic pistol with a fixed magazine that has the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds.
- (6) A semiautomatic shotgun that has both of the following:
 - (A) A folding or telescoping stock.
 - (B) A pistol grip that protrudes conspicuously beneath the action of the weapon, thumbhole stock, or vertical handgrip.
- (7) A semiautomatic shotgun that has the ability to accept a detachable magazine.
- (8) Any shotgun with a revolving cylinder.
- (b) "Assault weapon" does not include any antique firearm.
- (c) The following definitions shall apply under this section:
 - (1) "Magazine" shall mean any ammunition-feeding device.
 - (2) "Capacity to accept more than 10 rounds" shall mean capable of accommodating more than 10 rounds, but shall not be construed to include a feeding device that has been permanently altered so that it cannot accommodate more than 10 rounds.
 - (3) "Antique firearm" means any firearm manufactured prior to January 1, 1899. Firearms that fit the above descriptions which were possessed on December 31, 1999 can be kept if they are registered between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2000. Firearms that are on the Roberti-Roos list, but not currently validly registered, cannot now be registered.

Effective January 1, 2002, a peace officer member of the Department of Justice, police departments, sheriffs' offices, marshals' offices, the Youth and Adult Corrections Agency, the Department of the California Highway Patrol, district attorneys' offices, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Parks and Recreation, or the military or naval forces of this state or of the United States, or any federal law enforcement agency, who possesses or receives an assault weapon prior to January 1, 2002, may, with the authorization of his or her agency, retain and personally possess that firearm provided he or she registers it as an assault weapon with the Department of Justice on or before April 1, 2002. Such a peace officer may also, with the authorization of his or her agency, personally purchase or receive an assault weapon on or after January 1, 2002, provided he or she registers it as an assault weapon with the Department of Justice within 90 days after possession or receipt. Assault weapon registration forms are available from the Department of Justice and may be obtained by calling (916) 227 3694. It seemed the burden of reporting an assault weapon purchase was on the LEO.

And, capable of accepting more rounds only require a magazine block. We only sold pre-ban magazines anyway and so far, we hadn't had any trouble. The way I read the law, most of the semi automatic handguns were illegal, you could drive to Lost Wages, Reno or Arizona and buy high capacity magazines. You could get a family member in another state to accept delivery and forward them to you. All of our sales receipts showed California legal 10-round magazines.

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We worked to midnight packing the orders and planned to take off an hour or two to visiting with Gunny. There was nothing that said we couldn't shut down the business for a couple of hours to have

lunch with Gunny and give him the pitch. Evan and I were full partners and we agreed to give Gunny the same deal if he would take over or firearms operation. Our number one seller was the SA M1A standard model rifle with the California compensator. We had flashhiders with bayonet lugs as a separate item and a very large quantity of 20-round M1A magazines with a 10-round block. Our most popular ammo in 7.62 and 5.56 were the Lake City overruns packed loose. Ammoman seemed to have cornered the market on the stripper clip M855 in the bandoleers, but more was coming on the market.

“How are you doing you old fart?” Evan asked.

“Been lifting boxes, I see.”

“Feeling like trying again?” Evan asked.

“Testy today, aren’t we?”

“Give the waitress your order and let’s get down to business.”

“I’ll have the New York Strip, medium rare, and fries. You can bring a touch of the good stuff, JD on the rocks.”

“What the hell, if that’s the way he wanted to handle the meeting we might all have a beer (or two).”

“Gunny we have two kinds of firearms and accessories. California legal and LEO only weapons. We’ve developed an accessory pack to convert the CA legal to LEO only, but we only sell those to people we know. Evan and I discussed it last night and if you’re in, we’ll make you a full partner in the corporation. You have the same number of shares as Evan and I have.”

“How many shares to your wives own?”

“The same, but they work fulltime in the business.”

“So what you’re offering is a 20% share in a going business. How profitable is it?”

“To date, we’ve plowed all of the profits we could back into the business. Our inventory isn’t as large as Seth’s, but we’re getting there. Anything a gun customer wants that we don’t carry gets referred, first to High Desert Storm, then to the Gun Shop and finally Santa Fe Gun Galleria. The Gun Shop has the largest selection and High Desert the best prices. Santa Fe is the highest priced and concentrates on LEO arms. But they have a large selection of Kimbers and Browning High Powers. They carry the parkerized police model Remington shotguns too. We keep an eye on Big 5 and when they run sales, refer shotgun customers there if the gun they want is on sale.”

“How do you make any money?”

“The main thing, we’ve found, is a satisfied customer. We don’t directly compete with Seth, and refer a lot of people to him. We’re doing something right, we were working to midnight packing orders.”

“Why the sudden sales, or is that normal?”

“Discover Channel ran 4 back-to-back specials Sunday night.”

“I saw those. I can see why business is good.”

"We also have a deal with a contractor to install a 10'x50' shelter, identical to the one Seth sells. We have a deal with Harbor Freight for generators. They install them and we get a cut. That helps keep the inventory down."

"You have a demo?"

"In my back yard."

"I'd like to see that," Gunny replied.

"We can check it out after lunch. Say, is your wife's name Joan or June?"

"Judy."

"Well, what do you think of the offer?"

"Sounds good. We could sell our home and buy the same thing up here and have money left over, I checked. We won't tell anyone that I'm working for a couple of Airdales."

"With, Gunny, not for."

"I suppose you want me to use my sources to get some heavy artillery, right?"

"Maybe eventually we might get some of the M109s with the M107 upper receivers for our personal use only. I didn't care for the 50/50 mix Seth had. I'd prefer 80/20 mostly HEAB rounds."

"It's easier to get now, they finally got the price down to \$22 per round for the HEAB and less for the AP."

When I got back, there was a call from the contractor. He was offering to install up to 3 of the shelters a month. Good news, so I called the fabricator and told him we needed on shelter finished every 10 days for the next 3 months. Selling preparedness supplies in an on-again/off-again business. Something happens that scares the public and you think it's the end of the world for a few weeks. Then they forget all about what got them excited and things get back to normal. Still on the phone, I order a truckload of the Nitro-pak/Mountain House food packages.

Our shelters only came one way, what you might call the deluxe model with kitchenette, gray water tank, 12k/10k generator, depending on fuel source, and a water tank. Our contractor dug the hole, set the shelter, installed the extras and did the landscaping. Installation was extra and paid directly by the purchaser. As a convenience to our customers, we kept several of the Radmeters4U packages on hand with extra dosimeters and KI. That was an easy sell after the terrorist attack.

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A 90' wall of water and an evacuation area only 40' above sea level? I guess they did that so you could watch the tsunami coming towards you. When it happened, a lot of people were going to die; there was no way they could evacuate in time. And earlier, on Supervolcano, Bozeman, Montana was under 20' of ash? Depending who you listened to, the magma pool under Yellowstone was anywhere from 4,000km³ to 25,000km³. That flat spot they talked about in the program is called the Snake River Plain and it shows the movement of the crust over the magma chamber. The simple truth is that they either don't know the size of the magma chamber or it changes from time-to-time. Whatever, it was

good for sales.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 14

I get a call from 3 nincompoops from Palmdale who each wanted a shelter and it's a package deal. One guy says the contractor will have to dynamite out his swimming pool to make room and the second only lives about a mile from the San Andreas. The third guy is in a wheelchair and there is no way to get access to his backyard. The 3 of them seem to think it's time for the end of the world or something. Money is money and we don't discriminate so I sell them each a shelter and throw in the radiation meter set. They were talking about Barstow like it was their private shopping spot. Which reminds me, I need to talk to Gunny about those M109/M107s.

The guy in the wheelchair seems to think you can live on beans and rice so I make sure Rose sells him plenty of Beano. He wants to know about buying a M1A, standard model, with a real flashhider. He asks a few other questions and I sic Gunny on him. Acts like he just won the Lotto and ends up buying a Super Match with accessories, if you know what I mean. He gets the compensator adapter for the rifle so I suppose that he thinks that somehow makes it legal to own in California. He buys his wife an AR-15 and the modification kit, with instructions. Says he knows a good gunsmith who can make the repairs and restore the rifle to it's intended configuration. The old men buy 80 7.62 magazines and say they're going to divide them up. Gunny shows them how to remove the bottom plate from the magazine so they can remove the hunk of wood.

I figure having a shelter 1 mile from the San Andreas Fault must mean that you like to ride roller coasters, but that tall, thin black fella just smiles. I catch the names, Clarence, *sshole and Gar-Bear. Strange! Their last names were Floyd, Brown and Oat.

>>>

Sales were good right up to late August 2009. Then I suppose people were spending money on Christmas and they sort of flattened out. Wait, it not PC to call it Christmas anymore, is it? BS, Seth and Naomi celebrate Christmas and they're Jewish. It's all a merchandising scam anyway, the days they set aside to celebrate His birth in December are an old pagan holiday.

Historians are unsure exactly when Christians first began celebrating the Nativity of Christ. At times it was forbidden by the Protestant Church until after the 1800s, because of its original, pagan rituals. Some scholars maintain that December 25 was only adopted in the 4th century as a Christian holiday after Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity on his death bed, to encourage a common religious festival for both Christians and Pagans. Perusal of historical records indicates that the first mention of such a feast in Constantinople (Constantine's own city, after all) was not until 379 AD, under Gregory Nazianzus. In Rome, it can only be confirmed as being mentioned in a document from approximately 350 AD, but without any mention of sanction by Emperor Constantine.

Early Christians chiefly celebrated the subsequent Epiphany, when the baby Jesus was visited by the Magi (and this is still a primary time for celebration in Spain). Efforts to assign a date for His birth, though better known from writings from some centuries later, would have been important to all Christians then, no less than now. The guy in the wheelchair said the shelter was his Christmas present and he defined Christmas as the time of the year you spend money you don't have on things you don't need.

"Gunny, what have you been able to do on the M109/M107s?"

"I got 3. Expensive puppies. You said you wanted an 80/20 mix of HEAB/AP, so that is what I got. I

picked up some of the Raufoss for the 50s, too.”

“You like your new house?”

“Yeah but there’s one problem.”

“What’s that?”

“I live right next door to you.”

“That’s ok, we got the freezers restocked so Judy and you can come over for steaks.”

“Invite Evan, that Marie looks just like Carrie Fisher.”

“Evan might get p*ssed with you gawking at his wife.”

“Just window shopping, Airdale.”

“Let me tell you about grass, Gunny. The grass on the other side of the fence is always greener. But it’s filled with rocks, barbed wire, broken glass and snakes.”

“How tall is she?”

“Carrie Fisher or Marie?”

“Take your pick.”

“Their both 5’1” and neither publishes her measurements. Rose cautioned me about Marie and I hadn’t even looked.”

We decided to have the cookout on Labor Day. I had a friend bring in a couple of cases of real Canadian beer, the 8% stuff. Labor Day in 2009 was still on a Monday, but this year it was September 7th. To satisfy the full spectrum of consumer tastes, the CARLING BLACK LABEL family now includes Black Label, Black Light and Black Dry, which are complemented by a selection of beers with a higher alcohol content (from 5.9% to 10%) available in economical 1.18-litre bottles. 2 cases! Molson owned the brand and they now owned Coors. Didn’t know that? Yeah, that happened in February 2005. It’s a shame that those puritans in Washington won’t allow the US to import real German beer. That’s the knock your socks off stuff. Scope had more alcohol in it than the German beer they did import.

>>>

“So, Gunny, how much ammo did you actually get?”

“1,000 rounds per in the 25mm and 1,000 rounds per in the Raufoss. I upgraded the M107 and installed Raptor 6X night vision and a 16 power variable day scope.”

“How did you get around the California ban on .50 caliber weapons?”

“LEO purchases.”

“What did you set up so we won’t get busted?”

“We sell California legal only, except to LEOs. I sell the conversion stuff out of my house and run it through the business in the miscellaneous account. Same rules apply, if one of us doesn’t know them, I don’t sell to them.”

“What about those old geezers from Palmdale?”

“The guy in the wheelchair was an Airdale, he called Edwards, ‘Eddie’s Airplane Patch’ and said he was stationed there from ’62-’65. Said he hated the desert.”

“Why is he living in Palmdale?”

“He thinks he picked up a virus or infection and it got into his blood.”

“What’s wrong with him? Why the Wheelchair?”

“Diabetes, I guess; I can’t remember, the list was long. The other two have bad hearts. He said he gets his exercise by scrolling up and down his inbox for his email and by writing survivalist fiction.”

I am pleased to report that Labor Day went off without a hitch. We only managed to drink one case of the Carling Black Label beer; it was simply far too strong. It was cold for a Labor Day in the antelope Valley, but not too cold to enjoy the day. It was actually a rather pleasant high ‘70s. So that evening I went online to the Yellowstone Observatory to see what the situation was there. There didn’t appear to be anything brewing and I switched next to the Long Valley Caldera Observation site. Same story there and I lastly looked at the Cascadia Observatory aka Plate Boundary Observatory. There are 3 or 4 organizations that use the same name. The official USGS site is the Mt. St. Helen’s Observatory.

The link is a Canadian government website that has really good information on the Cascadia Subduction zone. Of particular interest was the deep bore core strata. It appears to my bleary eyes that there is some regularity to Cascadia having mammoth earthquakes. I took a quick shower and tumbled into bed, tomorrow would be a long day.

http://www.pgc.nrcan.gc.ca/geodyn/cas_img/cas11.gif Maybe that program on Discovery Channel made a bigger impression on me than I had thought.

Unlike Seth, we didn’t have several TV monitors set up in our store. If people wanted to watch TV, they could do it at home. You know if you are looking for something to happen, it will. In 2008, the Olympics in Beijing went off without a hitch, despite many warnings that China would use the opportunity to start WW III. The one that had me worried was North Korea. Those six nation talks? Still trying to determine the ground rules and all the while, North Korea was running their nuclear plants and building more nukes. Was Beijing on our side or the side of the North Koreans? Answer: Beijing is on Beijing’s side and couldn’t care less. All the while they’re doing the peace talks, they were building their Navy and buying surplus Russian equipment. Good for sales.

>>>

“How much of that beer did we drink?”

“Hangover? We drank a case among the 6 of us. I think the wives only had one apiece so we probably drank 7 each.”

“I took 3 Tylenol extra-strength this morning and I certainly hope it is a quiet day.”

“Gunny doesn’t look any the worse for wear, Evan.”

“I think that jarhead drank my 7th beer and I maybe should tell him thanks.”

“Airdale, jarhead, swabbie? Why all the names, we’re all retired servicemen or veterans, take your pick.”

“Do you actually expect me to shoot that cannon you bought?”

“What cannon?”

“The M109.”

“I don’t care either way, but Gunny can handle it.”

“Sauce for the goose, Mr. Saavik.”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“I don’t know. I just liked the line.”

“Get to work.”

>>>

Like I said earlier, sales dropped off after Labor Day. What we needed to get them going again was either another hurricane or an early storm in the Northeast. Business was so slow I gave the wives the day off and settled in at the TV in my office to listen to the news. Evan had disposed of the 4 or 5 orders we had over the weekend and he joined me. Gunny was waiting on a customer and discussing the relative advantages, few, and disadvantages, many, of the mini-14 as a survival weapon. About the only advantage was that it shot the 5.56x45mm ammo and was legal in California. Unlike its big brother, the M14, it got hot and lost accuracy rapidly. Gunny was trying to tell the guy how to solve that problem with a new stock.

What the man needed to do was buy the AR15 with the fixed magazine and stop by Gunny’s and pickup a conversion kit. Or, better yet, leave the rifle with Gunny and let him make the conversion. In theory, it couldn’t be done, but have you ever heard the expression, ‘never say never’? Sacramento had no idea what they were doing; they couldn’t even pass a budget. The mini-14 was a cute POS firearm. Our conversion kit wasn’t that complex; it was simply a standard semi-auto lower receiver. Gunny could convert a CA legal to a CA illegal in about 30 seconds.

Yeah, we were breaking the law, but a law like that couldn’t be enforced. Ask San Francisco; they banned everything but slingshots and maybe even those. Did the murder rate go down? H*ll no, it went up. Same thing happened in Washington DC because the politicians couldn’t understand that an armed public was a safe public. Hang on a minute; they’re doing an EAS test on TV.

“This is not a test. This is an Emergency Action Notification requested by the White House. All broadcast stations will follow activation procedures in the EAS Operating Handbook for a national level emergency. The President of the United States or his representative will shortly deliver a message over the Emergency Alert System.”

“Oh, oh.”

“Gunny! Lock up and get your *ss in here!”

“What’s up?”

“Look.”

My Fellow Americans,

According to NORAD, the United States is under attack from the People’s Republic of China. Take cover immediately. If you do not have a suitable shelter, use a community facility.

I repeat. This is a nuclear alert of an incoming missile attack. Take cover immediately.

“Sh*t!”

“Double Sh*t!!”

“Triple Sh*t!!!”

“Are we in agreement?”

“SH*T!”

“Lock up the guns and let’s get to the shelter!”

I guess those fellas in Palmdale are on their own. What were their names? Manny, Moe and Jack? They had it right after all, but were a day late. Should have bought some land in Colorado and built a place they called The Ark. As sick and old as they were, nobody would miss them anyway. If they’re still alive after, I suppose I’ll have to refund their 50% deposit on those shelters. I’d told the contractor to start on the first shelter on Wednesday, September 9th.

We called the wives and told them we were going to shelter at our house and they’d best hurry, the missiles were halfway to the US. Didn’t matter, they were all gathered at our house having an early lunch. It was a mad rush to get to our house on the west side, but we made it. We passed the cannons down the ladder and closed the lid to the shelter. I was no more inside than the earthquake hit. Plant 42? Adiós a los tres amigos. Vaya con dios. (The good thing is, they keep resurrecting themselves, or hadn’t you noticed?)

“Haven’t I seen this movie before?”

“Last time it was the nuclear power plants, Evan.”

“You did this just so I’d have to shoot the cannon.”

“Under the circumstances, I think you’d be glad to have that cannon.”

“What circumstances?”

“The end of civilization as we know it.”

“H*ll, that happened when they passed Prop 13.”

“Turn on the TV so we can watch,” Gunny suggested.”

“Watch what?”

“In the movie Dr. Strangelove, there was this conversation between the President and the Ambassador to Russia where the phone melts and squeals. I want to know if LA will squeal when it melts.”

“That was in Fail Safe, not Dr. Strangelove.”

“Whatever, Airdale.”

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The power went out before we found out if LA squealed. That happened right after the earthquake that used to be los tres amigos. Of course the generator kicked right in and we had lights almost immediately. Now, before anyone says anything, if you have a 2-year lapse in trouble, the rule of 3 starts over. This was 1. And what the h*ll, we had a case of Carlings and our wives to keep us company. The two didn't mix well.

In life, that's how it will happen. After months, weeks and days of building tension, sooner or later the lid will come off the kettle. For those of us to watch the news on a regular basis, it may or may not come as a surprise. 90% of the time I'm home alone during the day because the wife is somewhere and the daughter is at work. My wheelchair only goes 4-5mph so how far could I get, assuming the battery is charged? The only basement I know of in Palmdale is at the Civic center, 5 miles away. It would be just my luck to have the Chinese attack before they got the shelter installed. USS has a 9-month waiting period and some of the others aren't much faster. If you plan to occupy your shelter on the day after Labor Day 2009, you'd better order it now.

I wonder if all of the squirrels that talked about buying generators managed to get them last fall before Katrina hit? Good, did you buy enough fuel too? Oil and filters? A spare sparkplug? The guvment was passing out MREs, aren't they the cats whisker? Some of them kind of taste like a dead cat, too. Did they ever find FEMA?

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September 9, 2009... Day 1

Well, it finally happened. I started this journal to keep notes in case I decide to write book someday. As nearly as we can determine, China launched a massive attack on the United States. The signs were probably in the media, but I'd been too busy lately to notice. There are 6 of us here. Joseph and Rosemary Smith (Joe and Rose), Evan and Marie Mace and Ramon and Judy Gonzales. I thought maybe one of those calderas would blow its top or the Cascadia Subduction Zone would shift, but I never really expected the Chinese to attack.

That's not totally true, but I had expected the attack back in 2006 and again in 2008. Why would they attack in the fall of 2009? Maybe they didn't have a good harvest this past year; I'll have to ask Evan and Gunny if they know. It doesn't really matter why they attacked – they attacked. We're good here in the shelter but I suspect that Palmdale or Edwards took a hit, the ground really shook about the time we came into the shelter. We did manage to get our new rifles down in the shelter, but most of the ammo is in the garage in the toolboxes on the back of our pickup. No worries, mate, I have my gun

safe. We can get a good start on killing off the banditos after we get out.

You know, I finally took a good look at Evan's wife Marie and by golly, she does look like Carrie Fisher and has about the build that Carrie had when they made Star Wars. That was a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, almost 30 years. It continued...

It is a dark time for the galaxy.

The once great Jedi Council has fallen. Almost all have been destroyed while some are forced to hide in secret places.

The Old Republic has collapsed.

In its ashes, the reign of Emperor Palpatine has begun. With the aide of the greatest of the Jedi, Anakin Skywalker, now Darth Vader, Palpatine has begun the systematic slaughter of every living Jedi and their children. The bloodline of the Jedi is strong and Palpatine knows their children will be Jedi.

But not all the Jedi are gone, merely hidden.

Some like the great Jedi Master Yoda and Obi-Wan Kenobi still live, somewhere.

Others are waiting and watching, still serving as best they can to free the galaxy and aid the forces of the growing Rebel Alliance.

These are the tales of the dark years when the Rebel Alliance was new and the Jedi wait for the Force to deliver the one who will bring new hope to the galaxy.

It is a period of civil war. Rebel spaceships, striking from a hidden base, have won their first victory against the evil Galactic Empire.

During the battle, rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the Death Star, an armored space station with enough power to destroy an entire planet.

Pursued by the Empire's sinister agents, Princess Leia races home aboard her starship, custodian of the stolen plans that can save her people and restore freedom to the galaxy.

Yeah right, somewhere in the Andromeda Galaxy – we're in a hole in the ground on the west side of Lancaster, California. We didn't have any Jedi Knights in the shelter, only 3 tired old soldiers. We didn't have Light Sabers, just rifles and handguns. A few of the grenades, M67, I'd taken from Seth when we'd departed Lake Arrowhead a couple of years back. I'm not sure how many, but not many. The M203s belonged to Seth and we didn't take them or the M16s. We had our own AR15s, but no M16s or M203s.

We're not short on anything at the moment. The propane tank has 4,500-gallons and we have unlimited water and sewage. There's enough food in the shelter for a year, not counting the food in the freezer. H*ll, we have everything we need to get by until we run out of propane. The RS15000 would run on either, but I assume the natural gas got cut off about the same time as the electricity because you can tell whether the generator is running on propane or natural gas. It burns anywhere from 1.2 to 2.4gph. Assuming 1.2, we had propane for 3,750 hours and at the other end, 1,875 hours. I sure we were somewhere in the middle and had more than enough if we needed to stay for 100 days.

September 10, 2009... Day 2

There is nothing but static on all of the radios. Seth put the same tricked out Kenwood TS2000X in this shelter, as he had 2 of in his shelter at Arrowhead. I had bought 6 of the Motorola CP200 and all 3 pickups had company owned CM300s. That was the other radio here in the shelter, the 4th CM300 with a power supply to run it on 110 volts. The CS120-12A/MOT11 incorporates an ICT switching power supply factory assembled with the BASE-MOT11 base station cover. The CS120-12A/MOT11 Complete Station provides a sleek, compact mobile radio base station housing, individually customized to the Motorola CM200, CM300 mobile radios.

What About Seth and Naomi? I knew that they had planned on spending the weekend at Arrowhead and maybe a little longer. I just hoped the Jose and the others didn't get in a car and head here, they were probably crispy critters if they did. I think that shelter I put in to pay Seth back probably was his new demo so maybe...

Why is it that women seem to think that they have to use up anything that might spoil right away? Eggs keep, trust me on this. The expiration date on the box can be anywhere from 2 weeks to a month from when you buy them. When they get too old you can tell, the yolks break when you try to turn them. Nope bacon and eggs this morning and she put beans on to soak last night. I'm hoping she'll make chili.

The radiation peaked last night so wherever we got it, was close. The reason I know is that I wasn't satisfied with the CD V-715 and CD V-717, which are limited to 500R. I found and bought an AMP 200 High Range Area Monitor. It had a range to 10,000R/hr.

http://www.arrowtechinc.com/Catalog_pdf/mgp%20ion%20gam1tele%20amps.pdf What good did it do to have a meter that maxed out at 500R? Wherever the nuke went off, it was very close. 7 to the 4th was 2,401 and 10 to the 4th was 10,000. 1 ten thousandth of 3,200R was 320mR. We needed that cut down to 100mR/h to stay on top 24/7.

7 to the 5th was 16,807h or 700 days and that would drop the radiation to 32mr. I knew the answer was somewhere in between. If 100mR was acceptable we needed a reduction to 0.00003125 of the previous level. I did a spreadsheet and determined that reciprocal of 10 to the 4.5th = 0.00003162, close enough = $1/(10^{4.5})$. The same spreadsheet revealed that 7 to the 4.5th = 6,352.4 hours or 265 days. ($=7^{4.5}$) I never went to college and about the only math I had in high school was algebra. On the other hand this wasn't rocket science and don't let you tell anyone tell you it is. I checked and 3,200 times 0.00003162 = 101mR. The average month is 30.4375 days so 265 = 8.7 months. I checked the supply cabinet for 3 things: deodorant, feminine hygiene and booze.

265 days is 6,360h and at we had to cut electrical used to and intermittent level to extend the propane from 3,750h to 6,360h. I guessed we could fire it up in the morning and run it for 12 hours, maybe more. One more calculation and I ready to give them the facts of life (bad news). 3,750 was 58% of 6,360 and 58% of 24 was 14 hours a day.

>>>

That high range area monitor everyone said we didn't need shows that we topped out at 3200R. Pay attention, Evan. The radiation in this shelter is normal, but outside you'd die in hours. The limit of radiation a person can handle is 300REM in 120 days, which is an exposure 24/7 of 104mREM/hour. I dinked around with the 7/10 rule and determined that we're going to need to said down here 265 days."

"265 days? You'd better repair your calculator, Airdale."

“Sorry Gunny, but I think my match is right. For the moment, let’s assume it is. I checked and 7 hours after it peaked, it was down to 320R, so I have a high degree of confidence.”

“Then it should be down to normal in no time flat,” Rose suggested.

“Rose, the decay is exponential, not linear and slows with the passage of time.”

“Speak English, please.”

“Fine. At 7 hours the radiation level is 10%. At 7×7 or 49 hours it is at 1%, and at $7 \times 7 \times 7$ or 343 hours it’s at 0.1%. And, at $7 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7$ or 2,401 hours, it’s at 0.01%. In terms of our present situation, $10\% = 320R$, $1\% = 32R$, $0.1\% = 3.2R$ and $0.01\% = 320mR$.”

“But you said the safe level was 104 whatever’s.”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 15

“The term I used was millirem. Milli means one thousandth and The Röntgen equivalent man or rem is a unit of radiation dose. It is the product of the absorbed dose in röntgens (R) and the biological efficiency of the radiation. More precisely, assuming a radiation weighing factor $rW=1$, 1 rem equals 1.07185 röntgen. The conversion factor has been readjusted from 1 to 1.07185 so that 100 rem equal 1 sievert; the sievert is the recommended (and in many cases legally prescribed) SI delivered unit. Our equipment all measures röntgens because most of it is old, but 107mR would be equal to about 100mREM.”

“So, Albert, tell me how you arrived at 265 days.”

“Look at my spreadsheet if you really want to know. The bottom line is we have a bit of a problem.”

“What problem?” Evan didn’t look happy.

“The generator burns 1.2 gallons of propane per hour at 25% power and the tank only hold 4,500-gallons of propane.”

“We’re going to die in the dark!” Marie suggested.

“One, we’re not going to die and two, we have some backups.”

“What kind of backup?”

“I think he means that battery bank that Seth built under the floor.” Evan suggested.

“Exactly. We can run the air filter off the batteries when the generator is shut down. Without recharging, there’s enough energy in the batteries to run the motor on the air filter for about 350 hours.”

“So when do we get out?”

“May 31st next year.”

“And then what?”

"I have no idea."

>>>

September 11, 2009... Day 3

Dear Lord,

Here we are in a hole in the ground for the next 262 days. Did mankind displease you so much that this had to happen? We're taking the advice out of the movie and improvising, etc. What are we going to find when we finally get out of this hole? May 31st is late spring so it should be nice, but what kind of devastation has been wrought?

We're too old for this stuff, Lord. We aren't youngsters who can have a litter of kids and repopulate the world. Take care of those who aren't as fortunate as we and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Amen

We aren't badly off; there are enough of the 120 hours candles in the cabinet to provide a little light when the generator is shut down. I don't intend to keep a daily journal; I think I've changed my mind. Six people in a culvert 10' in diameter and 50' long for 9 months? We're all going to go crazy. Are Seth and Naomi ok? What about Jose and the others?

The TTAPS paper isn't very long and I've gone over it carefully. People didn't seem to believe that Carl Sagan was right in the following years. We were already on the edge of a global climate change because of the greenhouse gasses and the refusal of Washington to get aboard with the Accords. Were the increased storms in the Atlantic a product of the greenhouse gases? Plenty of time to think about the esoteric things, we aren't going anywhere for 9 long months.

>>>

"What for breakfast?"

"Pancakes."

"No bacon?"

"Only on Sundays, Joe, there isn't that much bacon in the freezer."

"What about lunch?"

"That will be the last of the leftover chili."

"You really got a good do on the chili, feel free to do it anytime."

"With as many beans as we have, I'm glad you said that. Do we have enough Beano?"

"A full case."

"Marie, Judy and I made out a menu. Check it over and let me know if you fellas want to change

anything. We can't really change what we're going to eat, but we can change when we eat it."

"A bomb shelter isn't necessarily the best place to practice democracy, Rose, but I'll ask."

The good news was that we had a VCR/DVD player and lots of movies. Over the past couple of years, Rose had purchased a dozen books for me to read that I hadn't had time to open. One was "The Templar Legacy," a thriller by Steve Berry in the genre of 'The Da Vinci Code.' After breakfast we went over the menus and nobody really cared. One randomly selected supper each week would be steak and baked potatoes just to break the monotony. We three guys decided to save the booze for those meals. As was evident in our earlier experience at Lake Arrowhead, the aftermath of any event has 2 clear and distinct parts. First is the immediate aftermath where you're doing what it takes to survive, in our case being sheltered for 265 days.

The second part is the aftermath when you're beyond the immediate needs and are trying to just get along. That was where I had gotten tired of Arrowhead and come back home. That turned out well for them anyway and our being there wouldn't have made a difference. I was fairly sure the ionization of the atmosphere would clear and I'd be able to hook up with Seth if he were in the shelter at the lake. If Seth equipped the shelter for Jose and the others the same as this shelter was equipped, they'd have a means of communication too. What was that frequency that Seth liked, 144.625? That's in the 2-meter band, I think. I knew that he also monitored VHF Guard, 121.500 and UHF Guard, 243.000. If I couldn't raise him on 144.625, I'd try those.

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October 1, 2009... Day 23 (Thursday)

We hooked up with Seth today on VHF Guard and switched to 144.625. It must be a miracle, but Jose and the others are in the demo shelter we built for Seth. It seems that they had been mostly communicating on 10-meters. Everyone was fine and Seth and Naomi were alone in the Lake Arrowhead shelter and Jose and 17 others were crowded into the demo. However, they were going to exit at 100 days, not 265 days. I told them it was either Palmdale or Edwards that got hit, but we didn't know which.

Seth said that in the week leading up to Labor Day, their business volume was sharply increased but there was nothing on any of the 6 channels to explain what was going on and he was as surprised at the attack as the rest of us. It turns out he had stored most of the M16s at the demo shelter so Jose and the others were well armed.

We agreed to come up on 144.625 at 10am on Saturday mornings from now on until they were out. After we'd see. Seth said to consider moving out of the shelter and come back to Lake Arrowhead.

>>>

October 3, 2009... Day 25 (Saturday)

Promptly at 10am, we came up on 144.625. It had only been a couple of days since first contact so not much had changed at either of the other shelters. I asked Seth if the offer for us to come to Arrowhead was still open and he said that there hadn't been any hard feelings. I explained the problem we had with having too little propane and he said that we should run the generator full time and if they had to come in wearing radiation suits, they'd refill the tank. But, in his opinion, 320mR wasn't a lot to worry about and we could egress and leave without much problem. The cheers in the shelter at that bit of news practically drowned out the conversation.

He wanted to know how much food and the like we had at the store and I told him there was plenty provided the place hadn't been broken into. I had emulated his approach and we had bars on the windows and grates on the doors, but that wouldn't keep out a determined person. He told me that the likelihood of many survivors in the Antelope Valley was probably remote. And, he went on anyone who had a shelter was probably well supplied.

"That's good news, no more lights out at 9pm," Gunny observed. "In all truth you should have put in 3 bedrooms instead of one. You're cutting into our sex life here."

"Improvise, Gunny, that's what you're good at," I suggested. "Everyone gets a turn at the bedroom so it's not like we have to practice total celibacy."

I swear, some people would complain if they had a jillion dollars and all the time in the world to go shopping. How much is a jillion? Darned if I know, a lot may more than Bill Gates has. There's one Harvard drop out who did very well for himself. Bill Gates lives in a huge earth-sheltered in the side of a hill overlooking Lake Washington in Medina, Washington together with his family. The Gates home, one of the most expensive houses in the world, is a modern 21st century house in the "Pacific Lodge" style, with classic features such as a large private library with a domed reading room. Electronics are used abundantly; visitors are surveyed upon entrance and given a microchip that sends signals throughout the house to adjust temperature and other conditions according to preset user preferences. According to King county public records, as of 2002, the total assessed value of the property (land and house) is \$113 million, and the annual property tax is just over \$1 million. Also among Gates's private acquisitions is the Codex Leicester, a collection of writings by Lenardo da Vinci, which Gates bought for \$30.8 million at an auction in 1994.

Since 2000, Gates's wealth has declined due to a fall in Microsoft's share price and the multi-billion dollar gifts he has made to his charitable foundations. According to a 2004 Forbes magazine article, Gates gave away over \$28 billion to charities from 2000 onwards. Additionally, Gates has not engaged in conspicuous consumption beyond his lavish home, with its gardens and art collection. Contrast this with his former associate Paul Allen, who has followed a perhaps more typical path, owning sports teams, vintage airplanes, and multiple residences. Gates also claimed, in 2005, that he has gone to work every work day since 1975, which in recent years includes both his role at Microsoft, and his leadership position at the Gates Foundation.

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October 10, 2009... Day 32 (Saturday)

Today is steak day and we're all saying, "tonight's the night" whether we get the bedroom or not. I might dig out a bottle of the Merlot to go with the steaks. I told Seth this morning that they might have to put on radiation suit and fill out tank earlier than planned. He said it wasn't a problem and they'd venture out at 75 days and fill it up. He had all of his tanks full and the company shelter had a 10,000-gallon tank. There was a delivery truck sitting at his house in Arrowhead with 9,000-gallon of propane he'd picked up the Friday before Labor Day, just on a hunch. Apparently he didn't believe that people would stock up unless something was going to happen or they thought that something was going to happen.

I suppose if you're a millionaire like Seth is, you can afford to have 23,000-gallons of propane stored and another 9,000-gallons standing by for when you run out. Check that, 23,000-gallons of tanks filled to a 90% level or 20,700-gallons. No, I'm not envious of his success. If this thing hadn't happened, we'd have gotten there, maybe in 20 years or so. Doesn't matter now, we've just regressed, what,

100+ years? I guess that depends on a lot of things. Where we got hit and by how many weapons. Word back at the beginning of the decade was that China had 400+ nukes. How many had they built in the interim? If they could put a man in orbit, what did that say about their missile building capacity?

“And, while we’re at it why? Was Taiwan so important to the United States that we were willing to risk Armageddon just to keep the Chinese divided? It just seems to me that we have bigger concerns. The environmentalists running the county are preventing the people of this great land from utilizing its natural resources. They don’t want nuclear energy because of the danger and they don’t want us burning hydrocarbons because of the pollution. If they’d spend half the money they’re spending on fighting everything on developing alternate sources of power, we wouldn’t have a problem. That would put a few lawyers in the bread lines, but so what. 750 lawyers at the bottom of the ocean is what? A good start!

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October 17, 2009... Day 39 (Saturday)

You know, I thought the ladies gotten together and worked out this thing with the bedroom to make allowances for when they were in dispose. Apparently not.

We talked to Seth and Jose this morning and the company shelter seems to be shrink with time. Jose says that he’s gotten to the point where he’s passing out tranquilizers to keep a lid on everything. Maybe I should do that. Right now, tempers are on the ragged edge and there are only 6 of us in a shelter the same size as the one Jose has. Man wasn’t intended to live in a hole in the ground.

Rose said at breakfast that there was enough steak in the freezer so we could have steak night twice a week from now on. Remember, the freezer in the house is full too and that’s a much larger freezer that we can move down to Arrowhead in 61 days. It just occurred to me that the Inland Empire probably got quite a shot of radiation when LA got hit, presuming LA got hit. Chances are that those gangs have been wiped out.

Chances are 'cause I wear a silly grin
The moment you come into view
Chances are you think that I'm in love with you
Just because my composure sort of slips
The moment that your lips meet mine
Chances are you think my heart's your Valentine

In the magic of moonlight when I sigh, "Hold me close, dear"
Chances are you believe the stars that fill the skies are in my eyes

Guess you feel you'll always be the one and only one for me
And if you think you could
Well, chances are your chances are awfully good

Chances are you believe the stars that fill the skies are in my eyes
Guess you feel you'll always be the one and only one for me
And if you think you could
Well, chances are your chances are awfully good

The chances are your chances are . . . awfully good

Talk about a gay caballero. A 1982 article in Us Magazine quotes Mathis as having had a sexual relationship with a male saxophone player; however, despite a multiplicity of other, more lengthy articles, no other source documents Mathis as being other than heterosexual. Maybe we got lucky and they nuked San Francisco. BTW, they made 2 movies by that name and the 2nd starred Cesar Romero as the Cisco Kid. Caballero translates to horseman if you're curious.
<http://www.johnnymathis.com/> If you go there, Johnny signs excerpts from his songs.

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October 24, 2009... Day 46 (Saturday)

We're almost halfway there. When we spent 2 weeks in Seth's shelter over at Arrowhead, I thought that was a long time. Seth said that Naomi and he have the tanning booth out and are working on the no-lines tans. I suppose you can do that when you are all alone in a LARGE shelter with your wife. He also said that the weather up there in the mountains is awful. Normally they can expect 80" of snowfall but this year, they have 80" and it's only October 24th. He didn't know if that was a result of the attack or just an un-normally high snowfall. I don't know either; you know how they average these things for Chamber of Commerce websites.

Seth said that Naomi and he would make a run over in 29 days and top off the propane tank, weather permitting. Now is one h*ll of a time to add that little proviso. I let him know it too. If the generator sputters and runs out of fuel, we'll only have 14 days of battery time before we run out of air and then our goose well and truly cooked. His reply was that he'd try and get out earlier and clear some of the snow.

It's my own d*mned fault. You know I had this thing all calculated out so we could get by for 265 days, but no, they're going to come to our rescue. I don't even know to an absolute certainty that we have enough propane to go to 75 days. I suppose we could bust out when we don't have any other choice and try to get by. Even if there is snow in the Antelope Valley, We should be able to get somewhere where the radiation level is lower before we reach any kind of exposure limit. I'll have to go back to my spreadsheet and do some more calculations.

I hadn't thought about when day 100 would be, but looking at the spreadsheet I see that that would be right around December 16 or 17. It depends if you're talking inclusive or additive time. 16 is inclusive and 17 is additive. Day 75 is November 27th, 3 days after Thanksgiving. Oh, well. Que sera, sera.

October 31, 2009... Day 53 (Saturday)

Hump Day was this past Wednesday and we're on the downhill side now. Or is that the downhill slide into oblivion? It occurs to me that they shouldn't try to bring us fuel. If they can get here at all, why don't they just go to the store and empty it? If they do have radiation suits, they shouldn't have a problem, no matter how long it takes. When they've got the place gutted, they can come by and let us know and we can risk a little exposure and go back to Arrowhead with them. I explained all of this to Seth and he said that even if they couldn't come, it was a good idea. Surely we could find a snowplow somewhere and force our way to their cabin. I'll tell you one thing, I'll never set foot in another Chinese Restaurant!

We started sorting through what we had and trying to figure out how long it would take to load it aboard the 3 pickups in the garage. Rose wasn't happy when we pulled SUV out to make room for Gunny's pickup, but hey, the pickup hauls more. The main thing, I think, would be to wear gas masks and those Tyvek suits I have. They would keep the radiation off our clothing and we could

ditch them when we were in a relatively safe area. Tyvek is nothing more than a fancy paper in my mind. Dupont claims it is “made from very fine, high-density polyethylene fibers and Tyvek brand protective material offers all the best characteristics of paper, film and fabric in one material. This unique balance of properties, which cannot be found in any other material, makes Tyvek lightweight yet strong; vapor-permeable, yet water-, chemical-, puncture-, tear- and abrasion-resistant. Tyvek is also low-linting, smooth and opaque.”

They go on to say, “Today, limited-use protective garments and work-wear are among the most important commercial applications to benefit from the unique combination of properties offered by Tyvek. Garments made of Tyvek are either used for hazardous environments or for general, non-hazardous, industrial use. Examples of uses for hazardous environments include protection against water-based acids, bases, salts and splashes of certain liquids, such as pesticides and herbicides. The garments also provide a reliable barrier against exposure to harmful dry particles, such as lead dust, asbestos and particles contaminated with radiation. Non-hazardous, industrial uses include wearing the garments for “dirty jobs” at factories, workshops, engineering plants, farms and construction sites.”

I guess we’ll see when we run out of propane.

November 7, 2009... Day 60 (Saturday)

At 2.4gph, we’re going to run out at propane at 1,875 hours. 1,875 hours divided by 24 equals 78 days and there is no way, especially since we did some rationing, we’re going to run out then. On the other hand, Seth says that it’s still snowing at Lake Arrowhead. Gunny has assured me that the Tyvek suits will give us good protection so I told Seth that we were headed his way today. I know it’s too early but given the choice, we’re going. We all have dosimeters and in the 60 days we’ve been here, they’ve not registered one bit of radiation. We were under 2R upstairs and we figured we could get everything here loaded in less than an hour. We were allowing 2 additional hours at the store to get what was important, food and guns, load it on the trailer and swing back and pick up the girls. We could be down 138, hopefully, and at the back road to Lake Arrowhead in another 90 minutes tops. We’d have to find a snowplow and bring the water filled fire extinguishers from the store to wash down. We included that time in the 2 hours.

If ever the expression, ‘the best laid plans’ applied, it was today. There was snow on top of the blast door at the top of the ladder and it took the 3 of us to shove the door open. Managing to get the 3 of us all on the ladder at the same time was an exercise in itself. The hole where the arm to the winch went was full of snow and we had to use a blowtorch on it to put in the arm. Think propane cylinder, here. Think garage door frozen to the ground.

“I’ll be a son-of-a-b...”

“Don’t say it Gunny, no cussing allowed. You said these Tyvek suits would protect us.”

“I was complaining about the cold, not the radiation.”

“Look at it, it’s zero. I’m cold,” he replied.

“All the more reason to get the stuff moved as fast as we can. We figured an hour for egress time and we’re well into that and have barely started. Get the glow plugs on those engines going and see if they’ll start.”

“Got a can of ether?”

“On the shelf behind you.”

“We should have put those trailer inside at the store.”

“You know what? As I recall, the earthquake hit about the time we were at the bottom of the ladder. It wasn't an earthquake, but you get my point. If we'd have stopped and done that, we would not have made it.”

“Your Chevy start?”

“It will. It's gas and it has plenty of juice. Give me a shot of that ether.”

My old Chevy pickup had a straight six engine that Chevy probably stopped making in the '70s. As far as that went, the truck was older than it's owner. Because we didn't have a problem with road salt in California and because I ran it through the car wash weekly, just in case, it was sound. It had a 3-speed transmission with the shift on the column. The truck probably cost me more than the original owner, but it was fairly resistant to EMP. I had a spare parts set if it wasn't but remember the garage was a mammoth Faraday cage.

What did I do in the Air Force? As little as possible, especially once I became a Master Sergeant. I had been a chew Chief on a jet at one time, but I picked up more stripes and more or less supervised crew chiefs. I was an avionics man, if you must know. Evan was in airframes. Probably wasn't as glamorous as being a Gunny, but someone has to keep the airframes flying and make sure the avionics work. If you're sitting on level ground and your artificial horizon is listing 20°, I'm the guy you call, assuming you're a crew chief. Then I send a Sergeant or an Airman down to swap out the defunct device. It goes to the Avionics repair shop and they either gundeck (Navy term) it or repair it. Since I was Air Force, not a Naval Aviator, we repaired the stuff. We had our own slang, Percussive Maintenance - The fine art of whacking the crap out of a \$200,000 inertial navigation unit to get it to work again.

On the other hand it didn't take too long at the store. We hooked up the trailers and were out of there in an hour and a half. Picked up the wives and headed south to Palmdale. Must have been EAFB that got hit, Palmdale looked fine and radiation there was lower than Lancaster. We stopped just outside of Littlerock, got a radiation reading and hosed the suits off. We didn't have a snowplow, yet. We ditched the Tyvek and put on parkas. D*mn, it was cold.

We picked up a snowplow at a sating refill station near the bottom of Cajon Pass. The box was empty and Gunny suggested we need the weight. So Evan drove it under the dump whatchamacallit and we loaded it with sand. East out of I-15 was terrible and if we hadn't gotten the sand, we wouldn't have gone anywhere. That truck started awfully easy for a vehicle that had been sitting for 60 days. Whatchamacallit is the generic name for anything you don't know the name of.

The further east we got, the higher we got and the worse the roads became. Obviously some had plowed some of this road. Maybe they had used this very truck. If that were the case, where was the driver? Some mysteries are never solved, even if Mike Hammer has the case. Whoever it was stopped plowing at Crestline. At Crestline, we had climbed to 4,700 feet. Arrowhead was about 5,600'. We were only about 5 miles from Seth's cabin when we ran out of plowed road at Crestline. Evan stopped the snowplow and came back to my Chevy. Marie was following the snowplow in Evan's pickup and Gunny and Judy we bringing up the rear. Rose was riding with Marie.

“Why did you stop?”

“I’m not sure I can get the snowplow through the snow.”

Did you try?”

“Nope, I didn’t want to get the snowplow stuck.”

Gunny came forward and asked, “What’s the hold up?”

“Gunny that snow is pretty deep,” Evan explained.

“You Airdales’ are a real pain in the *ss. Evan, you drive my pickup and I’ll drive the snowplow.” (For sure, Evan would have never asked Gunny to drive his pickup.”

I don’t know to this day how Gunny managed to force the road open, but he did. Once in a while he had to back up and give it a second run, but 3 hours later, we’d covered the 5 miles to Seth and Naomi’s cabin. The radiation level there was a comforting 100mR. The house was locked, but Seth kept a key in the soil of a flowerpot. The soil was frozen and I had to use my Leatherman to chip out the key. Once we were in, we unloaded the vehicles in the garage and plugged in the freezers. Gunny went to the basement, opened the medical supply cabinet, released the latch and then used a hammer to pound on the vault door.

“Who’s there?”

“Seth, you ugly SOB open the door, we’re here.”

In the Aftermath – Chapter 16

Seth released the inside lock and rotated the wheel releasing the locking lugs. He was holding a CD V-715 and gave the 6 of us the once over before inviting us to the shelter.

“Let me check your dosimeters,” Seth urged.

We gave them to him and he looked, only to see that that highest rating was 12R.

“Dude, chill, we’ve been dosing with KI for the past day or two. We got what was worth getting from the store and brought all of the food we had there and from the shelter. Have you ever tried to move a 24ft³ freezer that’s filled with food? We have the other frozen food in boxes, do you have room in your freezer?”

“I think so, ask Naomi. Where is the rest of your stuff?”

“The artillery is in the basement and the food and other things are in your garage. According to our reading the outside radiation level is around 100mR.”

“My CD V-717 has a reading of 124mR.”

“When was the last time you had it calibrated?”

“About 4 years ago.”

“What about your CD V-715?”

“Last year.”

“Use that to check and see what you come up with.”

“Did they hit Palmdale?”

“No signs of damage, it must have been Edwards.”

“Why would they hit there?”

“The dry lakebed is a natural runway that could hold half the planes in the Air Force,” Evan remarked.

Seth’s CD V-715 confirmed our reading of ~100mR. He suggested that we all move into the cabin and they’d vacate the shelter.

“So, if they didn’t take the planes to Edwards, where did they take them, Area 51?”

“I think they took them to AMARC at Davis-Monthan AFB in Arizona.”

“Is that the place they call the bone yard?”

“Yep.”

“I’d better call Jose and see what their situation is.”

“They haven’t killed each other yet?”

“No, but I sense it’s getting close,” Seth smiled.

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As much as Jose and the others wanted to come over to the Lake, there really wasn’t anywhere to put them. Their radiation reading would allow them to leave but to go where? Seth had replaced the building with a Prefab barn built by Castlebrook and kept his horses in the barn. He bought 2 adjacent lots to use as pasture. It wasn’t a pasture; it was more of a big corral. He had a hired man who came in to check on his horses, but they hadn’t had much attention in the past 60 days and it showed. Those animals didn’t look too healthy to me.

They’d worn the grass off the corral since whenever it had been fenced in. If they had radiation poisoning, it had to be mild. Even the survivalist, Seth said had read the story on the Internet that suggested wrapping a barn in hay to protect the livestock. He added automatic waterers and an automatic feed system. The animals probably needed what we needed, to be out of the hole and able to move around. We used the snowplow to clear as much of the corral area as we could and let the animals out. We got fresh hay out of the barn loft and put that in the corral along with dumping and refilling the water tank. That didn’t last long once they felt the cold.

“So where are you going to put up Jose and the others?” Gunny asked.

“I’ve had an eye on the land on the other side of the cabin. Guy wanted too much for it so I didn’t make an offer.”

“He from around here?”

“San Diego.”

“I’d be willing to bet the Chinese hit San Diego,” Gunny offered. “What’s the land like?”

“Fairly flat with a fair number of trees.”

“Is there enough room in the basement to put them up while we cleared space for trailer?” Evan asked.

“Travel trailers?”

“Mobile homes.” Gunny gruffed.

“You can’t do much now, the ground is frozen hard.”

“We could go down below, find 5 trailers and tow them back. We could set them along the road until we could clear the land. If they’re set up for bottle gas we can find some bottles to give them heat and we could run extension cords to give them power. We sure as h*ll can’t put them in tents,” Gunny laid it out.

“What way should I suggest they come?”

“Tell ‘em to take 14 to the Pearblossom Highway exit and come in the same way we came, the roads are open at the moment. They can sleep on the floor until we can find the mobile homes.” I replied.

In truth, they wouldn’t be sleeping in Seth’s basement; it was filled from the floor to the ceiling with food and other supplies. Maybe Jose and the adults were a little too old to enjoy a sleeping bag on the floor like kids did when they had sleepovers, but once we got the trailers up the hill, they’d be okay.

“Do you think Diane is ok?” Rose asked.

“She was ok the last time you talked to her (Labor Day) and Pueblo isn’t a likely target. Besides, there a national forest to the west of Pueblo they could hole up in if Pueblo became untenable. The nearest strike was probably Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs. I don’t believe they could get here if they wanted, given the weather.”

I think I may have mentioned we have 3 grandchildren. Didn’t get to see them often, with Diane and her husband in Pueblo. They wouldn’t be getting any Christmas presents this year. Would that we could, they probably could use a few things from the preparedness store right about now. I knew they had food because I’d drop shipped a 5 one-year supplies from Nitro-pak when they had a truck going that way. I knew Fred, Diane’s husband, had a CCW, and assumed he had something more than a handgun.

>>>

“Hola.”

“Have any trouble, Jose?”

"It's cold."

"You have snow in Santa Clarita?"

"First time in a while. We spent a day just getting the vehicles winterized before we set out. Some of the guys refill their radiators with water instead of 50-50 and they had a bit of a problem."

"What did they do?"

"Helped themselves to new vehicles that they could get to start. Where do we sleep?"

"Pull up a floor Jose," Seth laughed. "Joe and the others were waiting for you to get here before the went down the mountain to get some mobile homes."

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November 16, 2009, Day 69 (Monday)

We had a brief break in the snow over the weekend and decided to try getting down the mountain today. They've been poring over the yellow pages locating mobile home dealers and the thinking is we'll go for new trailers first and if we can't find them, good used. Towing one of those things takes a big truck and the only thing we have that is big is the snowplow and that won't work. There was some discussion that if we stayed here, we should have mobile homes too. It would take a shoehorn to put 5 trailers on the two lots Seth was looking at.

We couldn't go up the hill, it was too steep, and so we were looking at another pair of empty lots just beyond the first two. If we commandeered 4 lots, we would have breathing room but that was a lot of trees to clear. Up in the Antelope Valley, the land is flat, while here in the Arrowhead region, the only flat thing was the lake. Seth said the best time to cut the trees was in the winter when the sap was down. We added chainsaws, oil and accessories to our shopping list. Seth had one chainsaw with a 16" blade and considering the number of trees we needed to remove, that wouldn't do at all. Gunny said to add a log splitter to the list as well.

Seth came along and brought his checkbook. We weren't going to steal unless there was no alternative. I was positive, snicker snicker, he wouldn't have trouble getting anyone to take his check.

The first dealer we found had 4 singlewides set them up for propane. There wasn't anyone around and the phones were out so we couldn't call the emergency number on the door. The models had the prices listed so Seth added it up and left the guy a check. They include the stands, don't they? They did this time. We borrowed two vehicles large enough to tow the trailers and they set out with the first two. We went to a second lot and found 3 more, same story.

At the third and final lot we found several. We had to decide whether to just 'buy' one or all of them. They were going to haul more and 4 a day up the mountain so we had time to think it over. We went looking for the other things on our shopping list and when we had what we wanted, drive back up the mountain. You recall that Seth had that old VHF radio from the Sheriff that the reserve officers used. Seth called the dispatcher and talked to the Chief Deputy, bringing him up to date on our acquisitions. He also told the chief Deputy that if they didn't like his check, he'd redeem it in gold at \$2,000 an ounce.

"Do we want to get one trailer or all five?"

“How much money do you have Seth?”

“Enough. Do you still have the gold I gave you?”

“Cashed it in and used it to start the business.”

“So you don’t have any gold?”

“I didn’t say that. You asked if I still had the gold you gave me and I don’t.”

“So do you or do you not have some gold?”

“36 ounces divided 6 ways. On the other hand, we have about \$100,000 worth of guns at wholesale.”

“How much is retail?”

“Wholesale is about 60% of retail so I’d say about \$165,000.”

“How much food did you bring?”

“Three trailers filled to overflowing, including a 24ft³ freezer filled mostly with meat.”

“Did you bring all of your ammo?”

“We brought all of the guns and food, plus as much ammo as we could carry. We can go back when things settle down and get the remainder of the ammo.”

“You done well.”

“Up until now we had, yes. However, I see now why you shut down Rim of the World after terrorist attacks. No way to get supplies, is there?”

“May in a year or two yes, but right now, what we have is what we can count on.”

Seth had been a good teacher and although we’d departed a bit in what we chose to carry for merchandise, we both knew where we stood. In sh*t up to our chins, saying ‘don’t make a ripple’. He decided to go for the whole ball of wax and we would end up with 12 trailers and only room for 8. At the moment, it didn’t matter because they’d be strung out along the road until we got the lots cleared and leveled. The toilets couldn’t be used either, because there was no plumbing hookup. The trailers were nothing more than warm sleeping quarters with beds. Seth had ‘facilities’ in the barn and we used them.

Why we? It wasn’t right to put Jose into a trailer and not live in one ourselves. He worked for Seth, we didn’t. The heaviest extension cords we could find were 10-gauge so that pretty much limited us to 20amps of power, max. We ate our meals in the cabin at the long folding tables the girls set up. The 9 wives took turns determining the menu each day and it was very southern Californian with a mix of Anglo and Mexican food.

It snowed more and the roads closed in and other than cutting and stacking wood, our choices were fairly limited. The trailers all had fireplaces that were mostly for looks but considering the volume of wood we had, they could be a good source of heat. The state of California had never succeeded in killing off the bark beetle or whatever it was killing the trees. If the beetles were anything like

cockroaches, the radiation didn't kill them either.

With the passage of time the animals seemed to heal up or recover or whatever it is that horses do besides burn hay. We hung harnesses on them and let them pull logs. We left a few healthy trees to provide a little shade and not leave the lots totally barren. We realized that things were vastly different when none of the radio or TV stations came back on the air. 5 months later, during April 2010, it finally appeared that winter was over, for this year. Seth estimated that we'd gotten on the order of 140" of snow, about 12'.

We needed to make a run back up to the Antelope Valley and pick up that last load of ammo. Jose and the others needed to find a dozer and push out the stumps and level the ground so we could set the 8 trailers. Seth needed to find someplace to set the other 4 we'd gotten. Add to that the need to install a septic system for 12 trailers, run water lines and electricity and we had plenty of work to do. We also needed to find enough empty land to put in a large garden.

It appeared that the Sheriff had lost about half of his Department to the war. He'd also lost most of his reserves. Seth was on the radio discussing the possibility of us providing Reserve Deputy services for Lake Arrowhead. He explained to the Sheriff that all of the men here had prior military experience and the Sheriff explained that none of us had training in law enforcement. I reckon that they were at some sort of an impasse.

"Most of the law we have here is what we make for ourselves," Seth said. "As far as I'm concerned, we should carry open and forget about the laws on the books. I'm going to try one last time to get Penrod to agree to send up a Deputy and give us a night class in the laws we need to know."

"Give him a political contribution, Seth," Jose suggested. "He's an elected official."

"You might try offering to pay for the Deputy's time," Gunny suggested.

"Tell him that we have lots of extra ammo," I suggested.

"Money talks?"

"And bullsh*t walks," Gunny laughed.

I know from personal experience that the larger the contribution, the better the attention you get. If the contribution is large enough, the politician gives you what you want and claims credit for the idea. He, or she, does that so no one can claim that the politician was influenced by contributions.

"Classes start next week."

"How much?"

"\$5,000, 5,000-rounds and we pay the Deputy."

"What caliber?"

"I didn't ask, but I think 9mm." (The correct answer was .40S&W)

"What kind of training?"

"It's called POST. Once we get 24 hours and pass firearms qualifications, we get the badges and

more of the VHF radios. He said it would free up everyone except a Sergeant for the community.”

“I only have about 20 cases of each size, I hope they use the 9mm, I have plenty.”

Authors Note: I was looking for something and ended up re-reading Big John. I wrote that just a year ago. It's actually not a bad story. The Mountain Man was probably the best of the bunch. If you read Big John, you know he died May 23, 2009, in a landslide. The sign they erected for Jack should have said, “At the bottom of this mountain lies a H*ll of a man. Big John”

Lake Arrowhead was served by the Twin Peaks Sheriff's station, where Jack and Steve had worked. However, the Sheriff thought they could get by with just Reserve Deputies and one Sergeant in Arrowhead. Twin Peaks continues to be among the busiest of county operations covering the unincorporated areas of the San Bernardino Mountains. The station is responsible for the patrol operations covering an area of approximately 340 square miles from Lake Silverwood to Snow Valley. The major communities include Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, and Running Springs. As a well-known resort area the population can range from 35,000 during the week to over 85,000 during the weekends, before the war.

At the moment, if there were 10,000 people in the Twin Peaks service area, it would be a surprise. To handle Arrowhead and the nearby communities, they only needed the Sergeant on duty and 3 of the Reserve Deputies. The only thing the Sheriff provided them this time around was badges and radios. If you are familiar with the Inland Empire area of California, you know that it is included in 4 counties, Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino. The area has a high number of gang members and an even larger trade in drugs. The LEOs in the area are hard pressed to maintain law and order. Add to that the fact that some of the 4 Sheriff's involved aren't particularly popular with their constituents. Both the Sheriff's of Orange and San Bernardino County have been accused of corruption by Hispanics. (I don't know and I don't care.)

From all of the survivalist fiction available, it seems that 3 types of people survive: the lucky, the prepared and the bad guys. Being prepared won't help much if your preparations aren't available. That's why you carry BOB along everywhere you go. He'll help you get to where your preparations are, if possible. I think perhaps that bad guys survive for two reasons, either they were cowards or they weren't bad guys until after. There are 257 stories here, the proclamation says. 98% of them have some bad people in them, so you read the stories and judge for yourself. Travis Dane was a bad character in Under Siege II, but he did get one thing right, 'Chance favors the prepared mind'. The originator of the expression was Louis Pasteur who said, "In the field of observation, chance favors only the prepared mind." But you knew that from several of these stories, right?

We didn't want to be cops. No, not even Seth. But if that's what it took to keep ourselves safe in Lake Arrowhead in the summer of 2010, that's what we'd do. With 3 men working the various shifts with the Sheriff's Department, that left 6 to bulldoze the stumps and level the ground. Seth came up with a trencher somewhere and we put in the plumbing for 8 trailers. Given a choice of finding a space for a garden or space to set the other 4 trailers, Seth opted for the former. On the other side of the street there was timber and no houses. We had no idea who owned the land and the Sheriff told Seth that no one could access the property tax rolls or the other records.

As long as we had the dozer anyway, we cleared a large enough across the road/street for a garden and to put in the other four trailers. One man cut the stumps off the trees and dragged them to the burn pile where we'd already stacked the small branches. We returned the dozer once the lots were level and used the trencher to put in the lines. Before we had even finished install the lines for the utilities, Seth showed up with a rototiller and a man to rototill the garden spot. The ladies had the garden installed by the time all 12 trailers were leveled and connected.

These were long days, 8 hours working and 8 hours on Deputy shift. It took us the better part of a month in level all 12 trailers and complete the hook ups. After, with access to an official range, we worked to improve our skills with our weapons. We were still getting evening classes; I suppose it was some sort of continuing education. The Sergeant told me their Agency had transitioned to .40S&W. I had 10 cases of .40S&W and not a bullet more. But with the badges, our weapons were legal.

That crusty old Deputy Sheriff and Gunny got into it immediately. I never heard what the dispute was about, but I'm sure it had something to do with those POST procedures that Gunny thought were ludicrous. The only right the bad guys had, as far as Gunny was concerned, was the right to remain silent. He couldn't see where police work was much different than MOUT (Military Operations on Urban Terrain) operations. In the aftermath, Gunny was probably more right than wrong, but that old Sergeant didn't see it that way.

So, Gunny held a separate class covering MOUT operations. A few quick points that relate to Military Operations on Urban Terrain:

1. Sniper employment
2. Weapons for MOUT
3. Equipment for MOUT
4. Use of NOD's
5. Concealed movement
6. Return of the M-113?
7. VHF communications in MOUT

1. Sniper employment in the defense is pretty much a no brainer. I would however have the spotter and the sniper both engage targets instead of singly per doctrine as number of targets engaged is more important than accuracy of shots. It would be excellent to plan to have sniper teams as stay behind forces. The psychological and attritional impact of having snipers to the rear and a determined defense to the front would be quite worth the effort of planning the subsequent escape and evasion of the team.

Sniper employment in the offense would be much more difficult to plan, but having a team per company would be a big help, especially in counter sniper operations. They would be constantly on the move, staying just behind the forward element (in the last cleared building), which would reduce their accuracy of the shots and the positions would be ad hoc, but as the ranges are short, it shouldn't be very noticeable.

Countersniper operations would be very difficult to plan into SOP's, but with a sniper team per company and having all three teams in a battalion be constantly aware of each others location would be a big help. Depending on the battalion's frontage, the three teams may even be able to have interlocking fires to their maximum engagement range. To complement the snipers, they would be patched into the battalion fires net. When enemy snipers begin engaging friendly targets, the friendly snipers could either attempt to engage the OPFOR snipers or call on the battalion fires net and get some immediate suppression 81mm or 60mm mortar fire on target (their increased observational ranges would be exceedingly useful). While the indirect fire is in effect, you can make the decision to advance, halt and flank or wait.

2. Weapons and equipment for MOUT is endlessly debated and totally reliant on each mission's parameters. In MOUT, as opposed to SWAT operations, there is no way to have special weapons delivered and it all too often becomes a matter of making due with what you have. To that end, the

M16 is a good weapon for MOUT, although the M203 is better, due to the expanded options the 40mm grenade gives you.

The M-4 is better than the M-16 because it is smaller and the M-4 with a M-203 mounted is as close to perfect as you are probably going to find. I would advocate giving the M-4 to the #1 man in a clearing team. If you have buckshot rounds for the M-203 use them. They will easily penetrate internal walls and doors.

A word of caution with explosive -203 rounds, make sure that the target is beyond the minimum arming distance. Also, the M-203 HEDP round is not effective in "opening" reinforced doors. It penetrates, but the blast effect is not sufficient to destroy heavily reinforced doors. It makes good 40mm peep holes though.

When using the M249 SAW try and get the sliding stocks for the weapon, failing that the folding stocks will do. The weapon is a bit long otherwise to be very useful for the actual clearing team. In the front mounting bracket, improvise a carrying handle from a wooden dowel and place it in the bracket sticking out the left side of the weapon. This allows more control of the weapon when fired from the hip or when using a sling. Another item is the 600 round assault fanny pack being marketed by US Cavalry. The item appears to have promise as the rounds are fed directly from the pack to the weapon. If you are wearing the pack bandolier style or perhaps rigged to the sling it might work well.

The M-60 is on the way out, but the E3 model is being used by the Marines. It seems to be a much handier version of the "pig " although from what I have heard, the thinner barrel means less cyclic fire before a barrel change. The forward handgrip seems to be a welcome addition, aiding control, especially in the tight MOUT environment.

The M-240B is truly a monster of a weapon. It's high cyclic rate of fire and mass make it a pain to haul into a city. I would say use it only for support by fire positions, although I have seen both the 60 and the 240 used to clear stairwells. The guns are pointed straight up and a grenade (cooked off) is thrown onto the upper floor's stairwell landing. When the grenade goes off, so do the guns. The assault team assaults up the stairwell simultaneously. When the team hits the landing the guns stop to allow the team to continue to clear the floor. The concussion, shrapnel and the machineguns are very effective in killing, wounding and scaring whoever happens to be on the upper floor. Both MG's would also be useful for supporting the initial entry into a building. Once the entry point is decided upon, have the MG prep the area for 10 to 20 seconds while the team makes its way to the entry zone. The MG then lifts fire and the entry team cooks off a grenade into the entry area. The explosion is the go signal.

In the Aftermath – Chapter 17

3. Equipment for MOUT has also been heavily debated. I personally have a large dislike for body armor and helmets, but in MOUT I feel that protection is hard enough to come by and every little bit helps. I would prefer Ranger Body Armor, but failing that, PASGT will do. Kevlar helmets are a must. If at all possible, arrange a cache site where units can cache rucks and LBE/LBV's before the assault. Magazines, ammo and frags go in pockets while water consumption is provided for by wearing a CamelBak (2 or 5 quarts). If that is not possible then you will just have to make due with wearing your kit.

Try moving everything to the rear of the LBE/LBV. Keep your hip and front areas as free as possible because so much of your gear will "grab" at everything that comes within a foot of you. That is very bad if you get snagged and you're the #1 or #2 man in a stack. Try and minimize the number and length of your "soldier assistance cords" (dummy cords) on your gear. In MOUT if it's not being used,

it's a liability and slowing you down. Try and make an equipment dump to your ruck before the assault.

4. Optics for MOUT is a trouble spot for me currently. I very much like the PVS-7B/PAQ-4C combination for all weapons, but I don't see it working very well for the assault team for the following reasons. If the enemy has NODs the PAQ-4C is easily visible to them. This is not much of a problem for the support by fire due to the amount of accurate fires they can place on target, but is much more of a concern for the actual stack team. Another reason that I am against PVS-7 usage is that they just don't have the stability needed, the lack of peripheral vision and the constant focus adjustments needed in MOUT. I would much rather have white light flashlights, which work with a press trigger. I am fully in favor of using NODs for all aspects of the operation other than the actual clearing of the objective being accomplished with NODs. As soon as the assault is complete, go back to IR.

5. Concealed movement in the city is a major problem currently. Depending on the AO, it may be possible to go through buildings. In WWII, troops were literally going through walls to move from building to building. This would be appropriate in any area where buildings are built against other buildings or where internal walls separate buildings into sections, such as in strip malls or businesses that line the sides of streets.

Sledgehammers and pickaxes should be sufficient to build the holes in secured areas.

In order to assault through a wall you can use demo or a large direct fire weapon such as a TOW, Dragon or tank main gun. This has the added advantage of killing anyone around the point of entry. Fragmentation grenades taped to a wall should be sufficient for internal walls.

6. As was recently pointed out by DynamicPara the M113 was used to great effect in Vietnam for MOUT. I would hesitate to drag the M113 back into service for use as armored support in MOUT. I would like to see an increase of up-armored HMMWVs in Infantry units. The lightly armored, low profile vehicles are already being used to great effect by the Anti-Tank companies in Infantry Battalions (depending on the MTOE of course). They will be excellent to provide heavy firepower and quick direct fire support in MOUT. The combination of the TOW and either a MK-19 or M-2 .50 cal would be perfect. There are problems with this plan however.

The TOW needs a fairly substantial area to negate back blast (so do recoilless rifles) and the TOW also has a minimum range. Add the fact that the HMMWV can only carry a small number of missiles for the TOW and the actual utility of the HMMWV decreases. The MK-19, while an excellent weapon just lacks the power necessary to be useful against armored vehicles and its minimum range makes it a poor choice for convoy escort operations, as a close ambush will render the MK-19 worthless. The .50 caliber HMG is excellent due to its long range, accuracy, good cyclic rate, no minimum range and high ammo count per vehicle. The availability of AP and DP ammo makes the .50 an excellent weapon for MOUT as it is also able to tear through stone and cause structural damage to buildings fairly quickly. If there is no heavy armor threat, the .50 would be an excellent choice to mount on the armored HMMWVs.

The M113 would be viable as a MOUT vehicle, but only if it was Product Improved as per the Israeli Army. Standoff armor screens to defeat single charge HEAT warheads, additional armor plating on the floor for protection from mines, anti-spall lining for the walls and three gun mounts. A combination of .50 calibers and 7.62mm MG's would be most useful. The M113 would also be very handy as a launching platform for volley fired AT-4 or M-72 LAWs.

7. Has any thought gone into the communications problems encountered in MOUT? With VHF systems being LOS dependent, they are very quickly degraded in MOUT. The only solutions that I can see would be having Battalion retrans being between the forward units and the TOC. When battalions are fully engaged in MOUT (meaning TOC's and units are in the city environment) perhaps

a return to battalion runners will be required?

Another factor with VHF communications is interference from electrical currents. Do high voltage power lines cause comms degradation? If so, would shutting off the power grid be on call or part of the ROE? Along the same lines, has anyone noticed if MOUT would have adverse effects on SLGRs, PLGRs or any of the Force XXI equipment?

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Right, like we had to worry about high power lines. It sounded a whole lot like a lecture the Gunny gave to Marine recruits in AIT or whatever the Corps calls it. Seth and I dealt in preparedness. We didn't sell knowledge, just supplies, unless you wanted to consider the few books we carried. There was more to preparedness than supplies and knowledge, however, you had to be truly prepared. Evan was because he ran 4 days a week and lifted weights the other 3. I figured I got enough exercise lifting boxes and climbing stairs, so I didn't bother. It showed when it came time to clear those trees.

Do you recall that trench that Seth had the fella put in all the way around the 'compound'? He told us it was filled in and when the snow melted, we confirmed that it was. Spread out like we were now, having a trench wouldn't work. We had 8 lots on one side of the road and 4 more across the road. Anyone who passed between us would be caught in a withering crossfire, but we'd probably end up shooting each other. Seth was eyeing 4 more adjoining lots across the road, and if someone didn't show up to claim them, I figured he'd have us clearing them come winter. I was unsure if he was considering 8 more homes or garden space. He should be thinking about more garden space, but he was probably thinking 8 more homes because a couple of years back, we had more guns than people.

When you think of it, we had exactly the same people as we'd had 2 years before, or was that 3? 3, I guess. The 2 kids who had completed high school were attending college in Northridge at CSUN and living at home.

'What Price Glory?' was the title of a Maxwell Anderson play about World War I. It was made into a movie by the same name starring James Cagney, Corinne Calvert and Dan Dailey. In 1918 France, Captain Flagg commands a disreputable company of Marines; his new top sergeant is his old friendly enemy, Quirt. The two men become rivals for the favors of fair innkeeper's daughter Charmaine, but the rivalry goes into reverse when Charmaine proves to be angling for a husband. When the company is ordered to the front, this comedy interlude gives way to the grim realities of war. This version uses almost no dialogue from the original play and was originally intended to be a musical.

If you picked this book up expecting to read about glory, you're in the wrong book section. Look for something by Ned Buntline. He made his heroes larger than life and didn't let the truth get in the way of his storytelling. There is no glamour or glory in war and most definitely not in the aftermath of a terrorist attack or an unexpected attack from an enemy halfway around the world. What you will find instead is a lot of hard work, blisters, fatigue and if you're unlucky, trouble. It was like the war in Iraq, the daughter in law wrote to say, "He is in Iraq, no clue where and has been doing patrols. He is working and not much else. Spence has been working all the time lately. At least that was what he told me when we talked. I don't get many letters or e-mails." At the moment, the Iraq fatality count was: 2,361.

Patrol: Getting in your up-armored HMMWV and driving around looking for unexploded IEDs, hoping like the dickens you don't find any.

The modern Army was trying to replace the men and women behind the guns with computer chips. They were building guns out of plastic instead of wood and steel. The bullets had batteries and computer chips, and cost \$30 a round. And, that wasn't artillery! When was it, I wonder that America stopped being the home of the brave and the land of the free? Or, was it every really that? As one man said:

I grew up in the fifties and sixties. In public school, the history of this great country was presented through rose-colored glasses. Not exactly the way it was, but the way it should be. My young chest swelled with pride to be an American.

That was over thirty-five years ago. I'm still proud to be an American, but I am infinitely saddened, alarmed, angered, disgusted, embarrassed and left feeling betrayed by the acts of those we have entrusted with the caretaking of our republic and some of the responsibility for those acts must fall on my own shoulders for not performing my duties as a citizen.

There are two disturbing trends in this country. Police are becoming more militant and soldiers are being domesticated. This is not good for either group and it's very bad for the citizens and the Republic. The traditional roles of the military and police are so alien to each other that it's the height of folly to believe that one can do the job of the other or employ their techniques without severe damage to themselves and the citizens they serve.

The police motto that everyone recalls is "To Protect and Serve" and that's a darn nice motto. You'll find out in a hurry that they are not obligated to protect you if you ever try to take a police department to court for failure to do so, but most try to protect citizens anyway as best they can within the restraints imposed on them by law.

In my dealings with the police to date, including two arrests for DUI, I have always honored the Social Contract by respecting the uniform, and submitting to the authority that the officer wearing it deserves. I have always been treated with respect as a citizen in return. I'm not saying this is everyone's experience. I'm not black or young, but I do maintain the appearance of a sixties throwback which is suspicious to some. I've never been mistreated because I fit a particular "profile".

But how can one respect the uniform when plainclothes Stormtroopers break down your door in the middle of the night with weapons drawn? The "War on Drugs", a national disgrace all its own, has given us militarized police forces. Even small cities have SWAT teams now. This is a dangerous development. Which would you rather see coming up your Mayberry driveway: the calm problem-solving Sheriff Andy or an over-excited Deputy Barney in flak jacket with his bullet chambered and ready to fire a warning shot through your liver?

Use of overwhelming force to eliminate the threat is the essence of military training. This is completely at odds with the role of a police force, which is to enforce the laws of the land without harming anyone, if possible.

Do you think we would have experienced the tragedies of Ruby Ridge and Waco if not for the military solution mindset of the agencies involved? The greatest injustice is that the only people punished in these incidents are the victims. The loose cannon sharpshooter, Lon Horiuchi, who murdered Vicki Weaver at Ruby Ridge was also at Waco and he is still loose today and ready to be used as a cannon again when the agency needs him. The "only following orders" defense didn't work for the Germans in Nuremberg. Why is it working here? Lon and those who issued the orders should be sharing the same jail cell. I have no sympathy for the Weavers' or the Branch Davidians' philosophy, but when their Rights were trampled, mine were too.

Many lesser known incidents have put innocent citizens like Mario Paz, Pedro Oregon Navarro, and Donald Scott in the cemetery.

We'd all be better off if the police agencies go back to being peace officers and abandon the warrior concept of law enforcement. Many of us can sleep at night in comfort knowing that the police are out there ready to suffer injury, if necessary, to protect us. The job won't be done until all law-abiding citizens enjoy that comfort.

At the same time our police have become more lethal to us, our wayward national leaders have hamstrung our real war fighters with ill-conceived peacekeeping missions in far-flung lands. They've also been busy transforming our forces into a kinder, gentler, more politically correct military.

I don't have anything against women in the front lines, but I'm not an expert. My beef is against dropping the training standards. People that can't make the grade physically or mentally, man or woman, do not belong on the front lines. Lives depend on it. I'm sure some women can meet the training requirements without a double standard. I've met more than one I'm sure could beat the stuffin' out of me if it came down to a tussle. Training can't be politically correct. It must be tough if the soldier is to survive the horrors of battle. Killing does not come natural to a sane, civilized person. S/he must be broken down mentally and physically, and then built back up into a trained killer. The enemy you meet in the woods isn't going to worry about your "self-esteem" as s/he cuts your throat.

When push comes to shove and our leaders fail us again, it's your neighbors from the heartland who will finish the fight, not those from inside the beltway. Our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers in military service need the best training and equipment we can provide so that as many of them as possible come home to us sound in mind and body.

Right now our forces are in the worst condition since the end of the Vietnam War. Every time the President gets caught in his corruption, we have another "Operation Free Willie" as a diversion. This man has killed more with executive orders than all law-abiding citizens have killed in self-defense combined. These misadventures that have nothing to do with our national interests along with the "peace dividend" demobilization in the early nineties have bled out our military preparedness in the last decade. Our weapon stocks have been depleted and our disillusioned forces are stationed pell-mell over the globe in peace-keeping roles that they were not trained for and that takes the edge off their ability to carry out their real role of war fighting.

When our leaders "talk the talk", it's the grunt that has to "walk the walk". I have never served in the military. I fought my draft board to stay out of Vietnam. I do not regret that. I did not participate in the anti-war protests. I still do not believe in conscription for undeclared wars and "police actions". I do regret with shame that I did not support the soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and nurses who did fight that dirty war. I remained neutral towards them. I support them and all veterans now and will for the rest of my life. These are the people that have given up blood and treasure for the rest of us. In the thick of battle they may be fighting for survival only but most initially signed on because of words like "Duty, Honor, Country". Their efforts allow us to enjoy the Rights that haven't been stolen from us yet. It's just too bad that not many of the Beltway Brass remember the West Point motto.

<http://www.laroke.com/larryk4674/2000/citizenship.htm>

http://www.kyrene.org/schools/brisas/sunda/flag/flag_intro.htm

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Did I agree with the guy? Yes and no, I wouldn't go around bragging about not having served in the military. Instead, I would have served and done my part. It isn't fair to ask someone else to protect you if you're not willing to protect him or her. Sometimes, you just have to put your money where your

mouth is. He basically lacked a basis for his criticism, having never served. Even that man [who] has killed more with executive orders than all law-abiding citizens have killed in self-defense combined, put on a uniform. So did his principal competitors in the 2004 election.

The man forgot that the law of supply and demand governs us all. There wouldn't be any huge supply of illegal drugs if there were no demand. And who supplies the drugs? The gangs. Hence if we weren't consuming illicit drugs, it follows that the gangs wouldn't exist in their present form. There might still be gangs, but what would they do to support themselves? Have you listened to any rap music lately? It's enough to make a Gunny blush. But, the high school senior who is of Scottish descent who shows up in a kilt isn't allowed to stay unless he changes into pants. The mixed messages within the system are beginning to lose their humor.

"We'll discuss the raid on the gang hangout just as soon as I finish this line..." Say it isn't so. Liar!

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At what point does a story of survival in the aftermath of whatever become a social commentary? It has been a social commentary since it began with, "My boss, Seth, and his..." Like Rodney King didn't say, "Can't we all just get along?" Some authors get piqued when people don't read what they write. If you want to guarantee a following, you have to write pure survivalist fiction, not social commentary!

With us being required to put a third of our men on duty with the Sheriff's Department because of the arrangement Seth worked out with the Sheriff, it was difficult indeed to avoid social commentary. However, we had to survive first if we were to work any kind of job. What is there to say about gardening that you don't already know? You plant the seeds, hoe out the weeds and eventually little plants come up from the ground. When the plants grow up, you harvest either the seeds or the root or some other part, like the leaves.

Seth had more horses than before, but not enough to go around. He had 12 and we needed 24 if everyone was to have a horse to ride. Which was fine except for the fact that the barn only had 12 stalls. Every the businessman, Seth went to Baldwin Lake Stables and suggested that with the war and all, they probably wouldn't get many people coming by to ride horses. 27 gold Liberties later, we had another 12 horses and 12 sets of tack. I suppose we could have just taken the horses, but we all assumed that in time the country would recover, it had before.

When we ran those lines across the road, we just naturally tore it up. That wasn't a big deal, this was California and in California, they would put in a new street one-week and the following week, someone was out with a saw cutting it up. They were more or less unintended speed bumps when we filled them back in. The climate was supposed to be 20 degrees cooler than the Valley, which must have meant that it was very comfortable in the Valley. It was just barely warm enough to grow our crops. We had the very small garden that Seth and Naomi and usually planted and a very large garden across the road that covered 2 lots.

That was a compromise, instead of taking all four lots and putting in 8 additional homes, we talked Seth into taking all 4 lots and putting in 4 homes on one pair and using the other two lots for a garden space. I think the thing that convinced him was the absence of more than 4 more new homes. If a lot is 65'x105' you can calculate that our garden was 130' by 105' and an acre was 43,560ft². So, our garden was about 0.3 acre. We put the rows in a little closer and hoped they weren't too close. We had to grow enough food in that garden to feed the 24 of us for the coming year. We hadn't found it necessary to resort to rustling this year; we found some unattended livestock (cattle) and gave them a new home, in our freezers and corral.

The sap had already started to come up in the trees before we bulldozed them so that made the wood 'wet'. Wet wood is far harder to cut than dry wood so we compromised on that and cut it to length but didn't try to split it. We had wood for heat in the fireplaces, but still need propane for the generators and our appliances. We never once turned on any of the air conditioners, mainly because the homes didn't have them but also because they weren't needed. We were trying to get by with only running one generator.

Since I had demonstrated some minor math skills, Seth wanted me to figure out how long we could get by on the propane supply we had. In the beginning, there had been 20,700-gallons in the tanks and 9,000-gallons on the truck, it was a 10,000-gallon tank. The RS15000 used 2.4gph at full power and once we'd all arrived it was pretty much running full power. $29,700 \div 2.4 = 12,375$ hours $\div 24 = \sim 515$ days $\div 30.4375 = 16.94$ months. It took us about 155 days to go through 9,000 gallons and then we refilled the tanks and went looking. That was in May, not February. In the time before we'd arrived, Seth and Naomi had only used a little over 1,700 gallons of propane and it took us a while to get the trailers. Besides, it would have taken too much shoveling to refill the tank before the snow began melting. As long as we could continue to refill the trailer, we had a 16 or 17-month supply of propane.

It was mid July before we could harvest anything from the garden due to the late spring. The TTAPS group used a one-dimensional radiative-convective model (RCM), which examined how dust and soot produced by various nuclear war scenarios would rise and settle out and affect light absorption and globally averaged temperatures at various levels in a typical vertical column of air above a continent and above an ocean. Their model predicted that even limited nuclear wars could inject enough dust and soot into the stratosphere to adversely affect global climate.

If a completely opaque cloud blanket lasted long enough, surface temperatures on an ocean less planet would eventually descend to a fairly uniform level of about -55°C (-67°F) worldwide. The TTAPS group predicted that a low of -25°C (-13°F) could be reached in continental interiors within two weeks for their reference 5000-megaton scenario, but cautioned that transfers from the reservoir of latent heat of the sea might reduce the temperature drop by 30-70 percent, especially near coastlines.

MacCracken, using a two-dimensional circulation model, has predicted that average temperatures would not drop lower than about -5°C (23°F) because of transfers of heat from the oceans. Covey, Schneider and Thompson, of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), using a three-dimensional global circulation model (GCM) have predicted temperature drops to about -15°C (5°F) in continental interiors of the Northern Hemisphere. Their model also indicates that the blanket might spread worldwide within a few weeks. Similar work in the Soviet Union has been done with similar results.

What would happen in the United States and other nations if there was a distant nuclear war or nuclear winter was triggered deliberately? A preliminary analysis of USDA data indicates that stocks of food in pantries and supermarkets could feed US residents for about 30 days, and stocks in warehouses another 60-90 days. After that, they would have to live on feedstocks, which might last a year with tight rationing. Such feedstocks are not well distributed, and converting them to human consumption would present processing problems. Other nations would be in much worse shape. FAO estimates world food reserves at about 33 days now.

A nuclear winter could wipe out all of one year of agricultural production, and severely impair production during the second. Much livestock might not survive, and seed stocks needed for replanting might be lost. It might take up to three years to get agricultural production to a level sufficient to feed everyone now living. By the time it could be done, there would not be nearly as

many people to have to feed. The process of desertification might be accelerated and run to completion within a few years, especially if the nuclear summer scenario is valid, which could make modern civilization impossible to sustain, and reduce humanity to scattered bands of nomads. When well-fed people look upon the people suffering from famine in Africa, they could be looking at where they will be some day.

Looking at the period following the nuclear winter, temperatures might increase above normal levels, to four-day highs as much as 12°C above normal extremes. This would be the result of many small contributions to the greenhouse effect, from CO₂, H₂O, O₃, CH₃ and various aerosols injected into the troposphere and stratosphere, from CO₂ from the decay of dead plant and animal life, and from reduced surface albedo from rapid desertification. Positive and negative feedback factors were considered. The model predicts that the "cold trap," which prevents H₂O from entering the stratosphere, will collapse as the stratosphere is heated by the dust and soot, and that convective activity from the oceans and from patchiness in the cloud cover will allow as much as 5x10¹⁴ kg of H₂O to enter the stratosphere. As the dust and soot clear, the cold trap should drop and most of the H₂O vapor precipitate, but as much as 5x10¹³ kg of H₂O could remain in the stratosphere, enough to cause a greenhouse warming of the surface of up to 8°C.

The model also predicts that 300 1-megaton deep seabursts could put as much as 5x10¹³ kg of H₂O into the stratosphere, enough to cause about 1-2°C of greenhouse warming. The model predicts about 3°C of heating from increased CO₂ and another 3°C from about 30 other substances, mainly O₃ and various hydrocarbons. These effects are not all additive, so it seems unlikely that warming by more than 12°C would result, but even 6°C would be enough to drastically affect most lifeforms, and 10°C could bring sustained highs fatal to most land life on earth. The model indicates that the worst of this scenario, called the "nuclear summer", would last until about 3-5 years after the nuclear war, but temperatures elevated by 3-6°C could persist for many decades. Given certain reasonable assumptions, the long-term biological effects of the nuclear summer could be worse than those of the nuclear winter. Transition from the nuclear winter to the nuclear summer would be extremely complex, and the model does not attempt to predict how that might happen, except to suggest that stratospheric H₂O vapor might accelerate the removal of dust and soot as it precipitates, shortening the nuclear winter somewhat. Conversely, dust and soot might remove more of the H₂O than the model predicts.

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TTAPS assumed 5,000-mT. If we had 1,500mT, I would be not surprised, but shocked. We had layers of protections in the form of THAAD and PAC-3 systems. My best guess was something more on the order of 500mT in the US and a like amount or perhaps a bit more halfway around the world. It was easy to ask, "What kind of mad-man would do such a thing?" but the answer wasn't difficult to determine because we were told in the EAS message who attacked the US. The question we might never have the answer to was, why? The doctrine of mutually assured destruction was still in place on that day in September right after Labor Day. Back during the Cold War, there had even been one scenario that had the Soviets detonating several hundred mT of nukes over Siberia to intentionally cause a nuclear winter. The Russians had made their own studies and knew all about nuclear winter and that everyone would lose, especially them.

If any one of those forecasters were right, we'd have another very cold winter that was dry followed by a summer with higher than normal temperatures and very little rain. But, these were models and they were global scale models. In the previous disaster, we'd only had 3 nuclear plants with nuclear detonations. It wasn't even a good exercise in comparison to WW III. Moreover, by the first harvest, we had not seen a single federal anyone. We had heard from the Sheriff that they were around, but we had not seen a single one.

I wasn't surprised at that or shocked. Like every American, I had seen the response to Hurricane Katrina and the others in New Orleans and Florida. Florida seemed to do much better getting aid than New Orleans, or hadn't you noticed. Who was the Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, Republican? He was probably more used to hurricanes and better prepared to deal with them, yeah, that's it. They didn't get many hurricanes in Louisiana. And, they didn't want those levees strengthened until after Katrina hit. They blocked every attempt by the Army Corps of Engineers to prepare in advance and then blamed the same Army Corps of Engineers when the levees failed. Would someone please tell that Dr. that FEMA is at Weather Mountain? Well, maybe not but I can tell where they weren't; they weren't anywhere near Lake Arrowhead. I'd like to share this:

Said the night wind to the little lamb,
do you see what I see
Way up in the sky, little lamb,
do you see what I see
A star, a star, dancing in the night
With a tail as big as a kite
With a tail as big as a kite

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,
do you hear what I hear
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy,
do you hear what I hear
A song, a song, high above the trees
With a voice as big as the sea
With a voice as big as the sea

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,
do you know what I know
In your palace warm, mighty king,
do you know what I know
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold
Let us bring Him silver and gold
Let us bring Him silver and gold

Said the king to the people everywhere,
listen to what I say
Pray for peace, people everywhere!
listen to what I say
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light
He will bring us goodness and light

In the Aftermath – Chapter 18

It began to cool off during August and by Labor Day we had a whiff of snow. Not a lot because the relative humidity was way down everywhere. I was beginning to believe that those fellas that developed the climate models know more than I thought. The crop we got from the garden was far less than expected. I had been warned by the TTAPS study and I encouraged the ladies to plant extra. Was that dumb luck or was I beginning to understand? If I did understand our problem next year would be finding water to quench the thirst of the plants. We could improvise because we were only 3 miles from a large lake. And for fertilizer we could use the manure from the barn. If we spread it

early and plowed the garden before winter, it would decompose into humus by spring.

The temperature dropped when the snow came, killing the potato plants and forcing us to dig potatoes. A few more weeks would have given us bigger spuds, but we were happy to have what we got. We bagged the up in gunnysacks and stored them in one of the empty trailers. For the kinds who don't know what a gunnysack is, "A gunny sack is a bag made of burlap. Gunny sacks are traditionally used for transporting grains, potatoes, or other agricultural products. Today they are also sometimes used as sandbags for erosion control." It had nothing to do with where Gunny slept.

We hadn't gained any people, so far. Worse, we had no news other than rumors being spread by ham bands and word of mouth. The Sheriff's Long Range Interagency Communication System was down and he couldn't tell us any more than we could pick up off 10 or 20 meters. Their radios worked fine, but the repeaters weren't working. The VHF radios we had worked fine in Lake Arrowhead, but couldn't reach San Bernardino.

We knew that the weather was bad all over the US and the further north a person went, the worse it became. Two words best described the situation, cold and damp and agricultural production was well below normal. We could pick up the name of a large city or military installation that the Chinese hit, from time to time, and I was slowly making a list. It appeared to me that they'd targeted the largest cities and select military installations. The only real difference between now and a year earlier when we were attacked was that the radiation level was down and the weather was bad.

I realize that I pretty much glossed over summer, but what was there to tell that I hadn't already said? We had what some described as a nuclear winter and a cold wet summer that made doing anything difficult at best. If we didn't have it already or didn't grow it, we couldn't get it. The only exceptions being the livestock I mentioned and more propane. We needed one large generator, but we had 2 RS15000s. If one of those failed for any reason, we had 2 more available, the one in my Lancaster shelter and the one in Seth's company shelter. No outsiders attacked Lake Arrowhead over the course of the summer. If anyone were to start looking for resources, it would be now that we'd harvested the gardens and stocked our freezers with some of the livestock. Cutting up the meat wasn't a problem, we took a portable generator down to Stater Bros and powered up their meat cutting saw and their hamburger grinder. Not all of their shelves are empty, but there isn't anything left you can eat. For a portion of the meat, the assistant manager of the store found a couple of his meat cutters and for another portion of the meat, they were more than happy to cut and wrap our beef. It was easy enough to butcher an extra steer.

The thing that we all miss most is bacon. It isn't that it's all that hard to cure bacon and smoke it, but to do that, you need to find some hogs and we hadn't. If the scenario held and the winter was dry, we'd be able to get out and look for more meat, especially hogs. One of the Stater Bros meat cutters said he had a smoke house and was more than willing to cure and smoke bacon and hams in exchange for a hog.

On the laws enforcement side of the equation, we didn't patrol much because fuel was increasingly unavailable. Law enforcement was one of the first things to suffer in the aftermath for several reasons: reduced staff, poor communications and waning fuel supplies. High-speed car chases were a thing of the past, no law enforcement agency wanted to waste the fuel. Justice was quicker these days. If you caught someone with a gun in his/her hand, you gave him/her one chance to drop it. If they didn't, no trial was required, sort of a post-POST approach. With those Colt SAAs, you didn't have to shoot them 10 times to put them down.

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“You say that it’s going to be dry this winter, Joe?”

“That’s what the people who did the follow-up to the TTAPS Study proposed. Next summer will be hotter and dry. The atmosphere exhausted much of the moisture last winter and this past summer. It didn’t get hot enough to evaporate much water and replenish the atmosphere.”

“Any long terms expectations?”

“It will get back to normal a little next summer when it is hot and dry. The studies seem to suggest that we’ll have increased temperatures for 3-5 years.”

“It’s like a house of cards the way it all collapsed.”

“Many of our major cities were struck, Seth. Utilities are down preventing production and many of the people who used to do the production are dead. There isn’t any economy in the classic sense of the word, people with gold and silver buy and other barter. Even if they could extract natural resources, they lack the power to run the refineries.”

“Where is FEMA?”

“The government isn’t going to be able to bail the country out this time. They’re in debt up to their chins and aren’t getting any taxes to replenish the supply of money. The Federal Emergency Management Agency was set up to fund disaster cleanups and repairs. Consider the alternative, they could be setting up camps and enslaving the American population.”

“So what are we going to do?” Seth asked.

“Improvise. Adapt. Overcome,” Gunny chuckled.

“Words, Gunny, nothing more.” Seth complained.

“The problem with guys like you who never wore the uniform is that they don’t really know what it takes to get by when times are bad, Seth. Yeah, it’s a slogan from a movie, but is it really wrong? As long as we can get propane and keep the generators going, we’ll have electricity. After, we might consider going to Palm Springs and taking down some of those towers and use wind-generated electricity. They must have thousands of those turbines. Or, we could go to MAGTFTC and pull apart that solar panel.”

“What do they call that place?”

“You mean The Stumps, short for 29 Stumps?”

“Yeah, that’s it.”

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When we got busy, I quit writing in my journal. There was enough propane at the terminal to keep us in power for the foreseeable future. We went to Santa Clarita and picked up the generator from Seth’s demo shelter and then up 14 to Lancaster and got the one out of the shelter in our backyard. There was only a little propane in either tank and it wasn’t worth the effort to try and recover it, at the moment. We figured to wait until the following spring to cut the 4’ logs into firewood, they should be dry enough by then.

It gets cold enough in Lake Arrowhead in the winter that you have to heat tape the pipes to keep them from freezing up. We wrapped them with the heat tape that begins to heat as the temperature lowers and then covered the pipes and tape with the foam rolls made specifically for the purpose of insulating pipes. We set the propane furnaces at 55° in the empty trailers. Seth was trying to find families to live in the extra 4 trailers. Thanks to the garden, we could provide food for that many more.

We were right about when there would be trouble. The Sheriff sent a Deputy up to inform our Sergeant that there were roving gangs about. They hadn't hit the mountain communities, yet; but the Sheriff seemed to think we should keep our guard up. Which got me to thinking, why was he Sheriff still the sheriff? Where was San Bernardino County finding the money to pay anyone? They got our services for free because by handing us badges, we didn't have any illegal guns and they had 3 volunteers on duty at all times.

This was far from what I'd ever imagined the world would be like in the aftermath of a serious disaster. I had always thought that the scavengers would come out of the woodwork hit the gun stores and armories first and then take whatever they wanted using those arms as their leverage. On the other hand, during night class for POST, our instructor suggested something quite different. He claimed that with the Inland Empire being directly in the fallout pattern from the hits on LA, many people had died from the radiation. He speculated that people who somehow managed to survive would try to make it on their own and only if that failed would we have any kind of organized effort to steal. Interestingly there were no instructions to shoot looters. Did that mean the Sheriff's Department automatically expected we'd know that? Or, did it mean that the Sheriff expected that the survivors would loot to survive?

Do you know the name O. Henry? He wrote this a long time ago:

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she

could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling – something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Young's in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation – as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he

sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends – a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty- seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two – and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again – you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say `Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice – what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you – sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year – what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs – the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims –just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

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Did you know that most kids these days have never heard of 'The Gift of the Magi'? Their gifts were the gift of love. As a child I knew the hair would grow back, but how would Jim ever replace the

watch? In that, I missed the point of the story. Because crass commercialism has taken Christ out of Christmas, it is little wonder that they don't teach the story anymore. They're turning Christmas into the pagan holiday it once was under the Romans. Happy Holidays, my *ss! It's Christmas.

Why my thoughts turned to Christmas in September of 2010, I'll never know, but this year, we have to start shopping early if there were to be any presents under the tree. We had everything we needed, food shelter and clothing. We had a warm shelter and wood and fuel to hit the place with. We had electricity when most people were without it. We had the means to defend ourselves in the aftermath. What more could a person ask for? Health? Hard work builds the body and we were in good shape, all of us. Companionship? We had our family, save Diane, and she was probably safe in Pueblo. We had good friends and these were people we'd known a while. Gunny was the most recent addition to the group and that had been in 2007, or was it 2008?

Fate had intervened and the nuke hit Edwards, not Palmdale. I knew what the future would bring, more work and possibly even trouble from one of the roving gangs. You can prepare, but you can never predict the outcome. What if that far off enemy target someplace near your shelter and the CEP brought the weapon down on your shelter? You'd never even know it. There is a new lexicon in the jargon these days, prepare and after, improvise, adapt and overcome.

The End. http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Author:O._Henry