

## USS Iowa – Prologue

Let me tell you about BB-61, The USS Iowa, since it's a part of what happened:

USS *Iowa* (BB-61), the lead ship of the Iowa class battleship, was the fourth United States Navy ship, and the second commissioned one, to be named in honor of the state of Iowa.

*Iowa's* keel was laid down on 27Jun40 at the New York Navy Yard. Nicknamed "The Big Stick," the battleship was launched on 27Aug42 sponsored by Ilo Wallace, and commissioned on 22Feb43 with Capt. John L. McCrea in command.

On 24Feb43, *Iowa* put to sea for shakedown in Chesapeake Bay and along the Atlantic coast. She got underway on 27Aug for Naval Station Argentia, Newfoundland, to neutralize the threat of German battleship Tirpitz, which was reportedly operating in Norwegian waters.

In the fall, *Iowa* carried President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Casablanca, French Morocco, on the first leg of the journey to the Tehran Conference in November. After the conference, the ship returned the president to the United States.

As flagship of Battleship Division 7, *Iowa* departed the United States 2Jan44 for the Pacific Theater and the ship's combat debut in the campaign for the Marshall Islands. From 29Jan to 3Feb, she supported carrier air strikes made by Rear Adm. Fredrick C. Sherman's task group against Kwajalein and Eniwetok Atolls. *Iowa's* next assignment was to support air strikes against the Japanese naval base at Truk, Caroline Islands. In company with other ships, *Iowa* was detached from the support group 16Feb44 to conduct an anti-shipping sweep around Truk to destroy enemy naval vessels escaping to the north. On 21Feb, she was underway with the Fast Carrier Task Force (TF 58 or TF 38, depending on whether it was part of 5th Fleet or 3rd Fleet) while it conducted the first strikes against Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Guam in the Mariana Islands.

On 18Mar, *Iowa*, flying the flag of Vice Adm. Willis A. Lee, commander of Battleships, Pacific, joined in the bombardment of Mili Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Although struck by two Japanese 4.7 inch projectiles during the action, *Iowa* suffered negligible damage. She rejoined Task Force 58 on 30Mar and supported air strikes against the Palau Islands and Woleai of the Carolines; these continued for several days.

From 22Apr to 28Apr44, *Iowa* supported air raids on Hollandia, Aitape, and Wakde Islands to support Army forces on Aitape, Tanahmerah Bay, and Humboldt Bay in New Guinea. The battleship then joined the task force's second strike on Truk, 29Apr and 30Apr, and bombarded Japanese facilities on Ponape in the Carolines on 1May.

In the opening phases of the Marianas campaign, *Iowa* protected the aircraft carriers during air strikes on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, Guam, Rota and Pagan on 12Jun. *Iowa* was then detached to bombard enemy installations on Saipan and Tinian on 13Jun and 14Jun. On 19Jun, in an engagement known as the Battle of the Philippines Sea, *Iowa*, as part of the battle line of TF 58, helped repel four massive air raids launched by the Japanese Middle Fleet. This resulted in the almost complete destruction of Japanese carrier-based aircraft. *Iowa* then joined in the pursuit of the fleeing enemy fleet, shooting down

one Torpedo plane and assisting in splashing another.

Throughout July, *Iowa* remained off the Marianas, supporting air strikes on the Palaus and landings on Guam. After a month's rest, *Iowa* sortied from Eniwetok as part of the Third Fleet, and helped support the landing on Peleliu on 17Sep. The battleship then protected the carriers during air strikes against the Central Philippines to neutralize enemy air power for the long-awaited invasion of the Philippines. On 10Oct, *Iowa* arrived off Okinawa for a series of air strikes on the Ryukyu Islands and Formosa. The battleship then supported air strikes against Luzon on 18Oct and continued this vital duty during General Douglas MacArthur's landing on Leyte on 20Oct.

In a last-ditch attempt to halt the US campaign to recapture the Philippines, the Japanese Navy struck back with a three-pronged attack aimed at the destruction of American amphibious forces in Leyte Gulf. *Iowa* accompanied TF 38 during attacks against the Japanese Central Force as it steamed through the Sibuyan Sea toward San Bernardino Strait. The reported results of these attacks and the apparent retreat of the Japanese Central Force led Adm. William "Bull" Halsey to believe that this force had been ruined as an effective fighting group. *Iowa*, with TF 38, steamed after the Japanese Northern Force off Cape Engaño, Luzon. On 25Oct44, when the ships of the Northern Force were almost within range of *Iowa*'s guns, word arrived that the Japanese Central Force was attacking a group of American escort carriers off Samar. This threat to the American beachheads forced the battleship to reverse course and steam to support the vulnerable "baby carriers". However, the valiant fight put up by the escort carriers and their screen in the Battle off Samar had already caused the Japanese to retire and *Iowa* was denied a surface action. Following the Battle of Leyte Gulf, *Iowa* remained in the waters off the Philippines screening carriers during strikes against Luzon and Formosa. It sailed for the West Coast late in December 1944.

*Iowa* arrived in San Francisco, California, on 15Jan45, for overhaul. The battleship sailed 19Mar for Okinawa, arriving 15Apr. Commencing 24Apr, *Iowa* supported carrier operations that assured American troops vital air superiority during their struggle for that bitterly contested island. The battleship then supported air strikes off southern Kuūshū from 25May to 13Jun. *Iowa* participated in strikes on the Japanese homeland 14Jul and 15Jul and bombarded Muriran, Hokkaidō, destroying steel mills and other targets. The city of Hitachi on Honshū was given the same treatment on the night of 17Jul to 18Jul. *Iowa* continued to support fast carrier strikes until the cessation of hostilities on 15Aug.

*Iowa* entered Tokyo Bay with the occupation forces on 29Aug. After serving as Adm. Halsey's flagship for the surrender ceremony on 2Sep, *Iowa* departed Tokyo Bay 20Sep for the United States.

Arriving Seattle, Washington on 15Oct, *Iowa* returned to Japanese waters in Jan46 and became flagship of the Fifth Fleet. The battleship continued this role until it sailed for the United States on 25Mar46. From that time on, until Sep48, *Iowa* operated from West Coast ports, on Naval Reserve and at sea training and drills and maneuvers with the fleet. She was decommissioned 24Mar49.

As America's involvement in the Korean War led to an expansion of the active fleet, *Iowa* was recommissioned on 25Aug51 with Capt. William R. Smedberg III in command. She operated off the West Coast until Mar52, when it sailed for the Far East. On 1Apr52, *Iowa* became the flagship of Vice Adm. Robert P. Briscoe, commander of the Seventh Fleet, and departed Yokosuka, Japan, to support United Nations forces in Korea. The conflict had entered its stalemate period by this date. From 8Apr to 16Oct52, *Iowa* was involved in combat operations off the east coast of Korea: the primary mission was

to aid ground troops by bombarding enemy targets at Songjin, Hungnam, and Kojo, North Korea. During this time, Adm. Briscoe was relieved as commander of the Seventh Fleet. Vice Adm. Joseph J. Clark, the new commander, continued to use *Iowa* as his flagship until 17Oct52. *Iowa* departed Yokosuka, Japan, on 19Oct52 for overhaul at Norfolk, Virginia and training operations in the Caribbean Sea. The Korean War came to an end when a cease-fire was reached on 27Jul53.

*Iowa* embarked midshipmen for at sea training to northern Europe, Jul53, and immediately after took part in Operation "Mariner," a major NATO exercise, serving as flagship of Vice Adm. Edmund T. Woolridge, commanding the Second Fleet. Upon completion of this exercise, until the fall of 1954, *Iowa* operated in the Virginia Capes area. In Sep54, *Iowa* became the flagship of Rear Adm. R. E. Libby, commander of the Battleship Cruiser Force, Atlantic Fleet.

From Jan to Apr55, *Iowa* made an extended cruise to the Mediterranean Sea as the first battleship regularly assigned to the commander of the Sixth Fleet. *Iowa* departed on a midshipman training cruise 1Jun55 and upon return, entered Norfolk, Va., for a four-month overhaul. Following refit, *Iowa* continued intermittent training cruises and operational exercises, until 4Jan57 when the battleship departed Norfolk for duty with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. Upon completion of this deployment, *Iowa* embarked midshipmen for a South American training cruise and joined in the International Naval Review off Hampton Roads, Virginia, on 13Jun57.

On 3Sep57, *Iowa* sailed for Scotland for NATO Operation "Strikeback". *Iowa* returned to Norfolk on 28Sep57 and departed Hampton Roads for the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on 22Oct57. She was decommissioned once again, 24Feb58, and entered the Atlantic Reserve Fleet at Philadelphia.

After a quarter-century in mothballs, *Iowa* was modernized, primarily at Avondale Shipyards near New Orleans, Louisiana as part of President Ronald Reagan's "600-ship Navy" plan, and recommissioned 28Apr84. Sister ships *New Jersey*, *Missouri*, and *Wisconsin* were similarly modernized and reactivated at this time. *Iowa* went to European waters in 85, 86 and 87 through 88, with the latter cruise continuing into the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. During that cruise, *Iowa* participated in Operation Earnest Will, escorting Kuwaiti gas and oil tankers "reflagged" as US merchant ships from the Persian Gulf through the Straits of Hormuz. During the 80s, the Navy proposed to create a homeport at Stapleton, Staten Island in New York City, which was to be the base for *Iowa* and several other ships, but the project was canceled before its completion.

On 19Apr89, an explosion ripped through *Iowa's* number two 16-inch (406 mm) gun turret, killing 47 crewmen. Sailors quickly flooded the #2 powder magazine, likely preventing catastrophic damage to the ship. At first, the NCIS investigators theorized that one of the dead crewman, Clayton Hartwig, had detonated an explosive device in a suicide attempt after the end of an alleged homosexual affair with another sailor. This theory was later abandoned and Hartwig cleared. The cause of the explosion, though never determined with certainty, is generally believed to have been static electricity igniting loose powder.

Testing at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Dahlgren, Virginia of powder in the same lot was able to reproduce spontaneous combustion of the powder, which had been originally milled in the 1930s and stored during a 1988 dry-docking of the *Iowa* in a barge at the Naval Weapons Station in Yorktown, Virginia. Gunpowder gives off ether gas as it degrades; the ether is highly flammable, and can be ignited

by a spark. *Iowa's* CO, Capt. Fred Moosally, was severely criticized for his handling of the matter, and the Navy changed the powder-handling procedures. *Iowa* deployed to Europe and the Mediterranean Sea in mid-year, with Turret Two unrepaired.

As part of the National Defense Reserve Fleet, *Iowa*, was berthed next to the aircraft carrier USS Forrestal at the Naval Education and Training Center in Newport, R.I., from 24Sep98 to 8Mar01, when the ship began a journey, under tow, to California. She arrived in Suisun Bay near San Francisco on 21Apr01 and is now part of the Reserve Fleet there.

Due to the damage in Turret Two, the Navy put New Jersey into the mothball fleet, even though the training mechanisms on New Jersey's 16-inch (406 mm) guns had been welded down. The cost to repair *New Jersey* was thought less than the cost to repair *Iowa*. However, the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act of 1999 demanded that the Navy substitute *Iowa* for *New Jersey*; additionally, the Navy was to arrange for *New Jersey's* donation for use as a museum ship. The Navy made the switch in January 1999, paving the way for Camden, New Jersey, to acquire the USS *New Jersey*.

*Iowa* was maintained in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act of 1996 until 2006, when the Secretary of the Navy struck *Iowa* and placed the ship on donation hold to allow transfer for use as a museum ship, although that plan has encountered resistance from those who believe that there is still a place for battleships in a modern Navy.

For several years plans had been under way to berth *Iowa* in San Francisco, California, opening the battleship there as a museum; however, in 2005 San Francisco's city council, citing opposition to the Iraq War and the military's policies regarding homosexuals, voted 8-3 against maintaining *Iowa* in the city, paving the way for other California communities to bid for the battleship. Vallejo (site of the former Mare Island Navy Shipyard) and Stockton are competing for the vessel. The organization, Historic Ships Memorial at Pacific Square (HSMPS), that attempted to place the ship in San Francisco, is now working with the Mare Island, Vallejo, site. Both communities have identified berthing piers and have submitted proposals to the Department of the Navy to open the vessel to tourists and educational groups as a memorial and museum.

The 2006 Defense Appropriations Act authorized the Secretary of the Navy to strike *Iowa* and *Wisconsin* from the Naval Vessel Register (NVR), clearing the way for them to be donated as museum ships. Acting on this authority the navy officially struck USS *Iowa* from the NVR on 17Mar06. This is likely the first step in preparing *Iowa* for ultimate transfer for use as a museum ship. Despite this, *Iowa* has yet to be transferred to any memorial association, although that will likely change when the Navy completes its evaluation of the two leading proposals. Currently, *Iowa* is the only ship of its class not open to the public as a museum. On November 15, 2007 the Vallejo bid was deemed to be the most viable option by the US Navy.

In the 2007 House Defense Bill (battleship transfer) conference report (H. Rept. 109-360) accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2006, the committee included instructions regarding the transfer of the battleships USS *Wisconsin* and USS *Iowa* to the Commonwealth of Virginia and State of California, respectively, and the President's reversion authority pursuant to a national emergency. The committee seeks to clarify that the battleships USS *Wisconsin* and

USS *Iowa* must be regarded as potential mobilization assets and both the recipients and the US Navy are instructed to treat them as such. The committee notes that the following measures should be taken:

- The ships must not be altered in any way that would impair their military utility;
- The ships must be preserved in their present condition through the continued use of cathodic protection and dehumidification systems and any other preservation methods as needed;
- Spare parts and unique equipment such as 16-inch (406 mm) gun barrels and projectiles, be preserved in adequate numbers to support the two ships, if reactivated; and
- The Navy must prepare plans for the rapid reactivation of the two battleships should they be returned to the Navy in the event of a national emergency.

*Iowa* earned nine battle stars for WW II service and two for Korean War service.

When *Iowa* moved to Vallejo and opened to the public, we decided to tour the wine country and tour the *Iowa*. I'd read about the turret explosion and wanted to see the lead class of the last class of battleships we'd probably ever have.

## **USS *Iowa* – Chapter 1**

“Do you think we dare risk it?”

“Why not?”

“Fox News said last night that China's fleet was sailing and put forth the idea that they might be headed for Taiwan.”

“Who put it forth?”

“Bill O'Reilly.”

“I quit listening to him. Now if John Gibson had said something or even Sheppard Smith, I might consider it.”

“Don't say I didn't warn you. We get up in wine country and WW III starts, we're in trouble.”

“I think that depends on whether or not we're at a winery. If we're at a winery, we can just grab a few bottles and taste test.”

“You mean get drunk don't you?”

“Well... yes. We might get nuked, but we won't care.”

She had a point. I'd seen an article or two on the internet that essentially said the same thing, China was moving to invade Taiwan. Talk like that had been going on for a very long time and although China had built its Navy, I didn't believe they were ready to take on 3 or 4 of our carrier strike groups. Kitty Hawk had been retired and replaced by George Washington in Yokosuka. The G.H.W. Bush had been

commissioned and they were working on the Ford.

We'd had our troubles in this country. It started with the sub-prime crisis which took down most of the banking sector. It was more than a simple recession, but no one was quite ready to use the "D" word. We won Heller, the right to keep and bear arms – was an individual right; but states were allowed to place limitations although they couldn't flat out prohibit guns like DC and Chicago did. California, the home of probably some of the worst gun laws in the US, refused to change any laws; they only prohibited certain guns, like the Barrett rifle and any handgun not on their approved list.

We lived in a small town in the San Joaquin Valley most people had never heard of. It's in the general area of Fresno, but that's as far as I'm going to go with telling you where we live. I wanted a Barrett rifle, and I got one before they made them illegal. Nobody asked and I didn't volunteer to turn it in. It cost about as much as a compact car. That was long before Barrett came out with the BORS system and I had a Schmidt and Bender 5-25 x 56 Police Marksman II LP scope.

According to their advertising, "True 2000-meter capability. Unlike most long-range variables that offer only a 4x magnification multiple, the 5-25 x 56 provides a full 5x and a wider field of view. Parallax adjustment in a separate turret, completely adjustable from 10 meters to infinity.

"The illuminated reticle has 11 graduated settings offering precise control relative to ambient light. The scope includes Schmidt & Bender's unique color-coded 'Double Turn' elevation knob that gives the shooter instant reference to where the elevation is set. The entire 100-minute adjustment range can be covered in just two turns of the knob. The user will never become 'lost' within the adjustment range."

They just said that so they could charge more. I'm sure both the rifle and scope were good to 2,000 meters, but I wasn't. I only owned 4 guns, the Barrett, a Mossberg 590A1 12-gauge, a Taurus .45ACP model PT1911B and my ultimate prize a Springfield Armory Super Match with Mossy Oak synthetic stock. It sported an A.R.M.S. mount and a less expensive Leopold scope. I was ok ammo wise, 5 cases of Barrett .50BMG, 6 cases of .308 surplus, 1,000 rounds of 168gr Black Hills HP Match, 1,000 rounds of Speer 230gr Gold Dot and 500 rounds of 00 Buck.

We weren't preppers, if that's what you're thinking. We were survivalists, pure and simple, me more than she by a country mile. Maybe I'd better say I was a survivalist and she was a begrudging prepper, it might be more accurate. I didn't exactly have a gun for her, but I suppose she could use the shotgun, in a pinch. We tried the Walton Feed sample then bought ten of the one year supplies plus that Country Living Grain Mill and all of the accessories. For cooking, we had two propane fueled Coleman stoves, a propane oven and propane lanterns. We had cylinders for the lanterns and 5 gallon cans for the stoves and oven.

We didn't take any pills, but we had plenty of the over the counter stuff and a damned good first aid kit. Never could decide which blood stopper was best, so I ordered some of each. It's pretty hard in most of California to get a CCW, especially LA and San Francisco. I figured if I had one, they wouldn't honor it anyway.

The little place we had was too small to be called a farm and calling it acreage seemed to be a bit elitist to me, so we just called it the place. Sue and I, I'm John Morris by the way, hemmed and hawed and

finally decided to check out wine country and the USS Iowa. There are several things you don't leave home without. Amex if you have one, otherwise you take your BOB and a couple of guns and a little ammo.

I took shop in high school and learned to repair cars, to a limited extent. I went looking and found an old Chevy pickup I knew enough about to repair. When I needed points and condenser, I bought two of each. Same for the distributor cap and when the generator went and the starter went. Sometimes those rebuilt units you get aren't worth a crap and where does that leave you? Hell, I even had a spare water pump and spare fuel pump.

We both attended Modesto Junior College and picked up Associate degrees, not that they made much difference when it came time to get a job. We both worked in Fresno, her at a bank and me in the shop at the Chevrolet car dealer. That's why I was confident about repairing my pickup; and, I even got a discount on the parts.

So off we went, headed for Napa and Sonoma, in her old Chevy Suburban. Got low gas mileage and the price of gas was over \$4 a gallon. I had the back packed with my guns, some ammo, a case of bottled water and two cases of nearly expired MREs, just in case. We hit Sonoma first and did the Julia Childs bit of shopping each of the stores on the Square and picking up enough food for a couple picnic lunches. Then we went to the Sebastiani Vineyards. On the tour, we learned that family patriarch, Samuele Sebastiani, started Sebastiani Vineyards in 1904. His son, August, ran the company from 1944 to the late 1970's, when his son Sam took the reins. August died in 1980. In 1986, after a failed attempt at running for California State Controller, August's youngest son, Don Sebastiani, took the company from about 200,000 cases to just shy of 8 million cases produced in 1999, at which time he sold a number of assets to Constellation Wines. Don then left the old family company and he, along with his sons, Donny & August, started Don Sebastiani & Sons in 2000. Sebastiani Vineyards is currently under the direction of Sam & Don's sister, Mary Ann Sebastiani Cuneo, and is still family owned and operated at its original location, just east of the Sonoma Plaza.

We tasted several varieties of wine and went north, up the valley. After stopping at a couple more wineries, we called it a day and headed for Vallejo. Vallejo is located in the San Francisco Bay Area on the northern shore of San Pablo Bay and was home of the Zodiac killer. We got a motel and had a picnic with the food from Sonoma Square. I turned on Fox News while we were eating.

China was 'shelling' Taiwan from the mainland using rockets. They had moved a substantial portion of their Fleet into the 100-mile wide Taiwan Strait. The George Washington had set sail from Yokosuka and three more of our carrier strike groups were making flank speed towards Taiwan. One, the John C. Stennis, was nearly there and joining up with the George Washington to form a Task Force; meanwhile the Ronald Reagan and the Abraham Lincoln were moving as fast as they could. A strike group, they said, can only move as fast as the slowest ship in the group.

"You still want to go visit the USS Iowa tomorrow?"

"I didn't come up here to drink wine."

"You couldn't prove it by me, you tasted them all."

“They’re not nearly as good as my Budweiser.”

We were up and cleaned up early, prevailing ourselves of the free breakfast the motel put out. I got directions from the desk clerk to BB-61 and we settled up and headed out. I’d checked the news before we left and it wasn’t sounding too good. China was making all kinds of threats about our interfering with their Taiwan operation. I was glad now that I’d brought some things to tide us over if we had to return home in a hurry. I stopped at a station and topped of the Suburban’s tanks. It ran around \$120, give or take, but gave us a cruise range of over 1,000 miles. I also picked up a second case of water.

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There she sat, BB-61, the USS Iowa and man, was she a big sucker. Tours hadn’t started yet so we read up on the history of Iowa (see the prologue). They finally started the tour and worked their way from the bridge down. We were checking out the Mess Deck when Kaboom! Iowa was pushed downward and then rocked and rolled in its mooring. The room brightened, but not that much. Almost instantaneously, the lights went out. I dug out my Maglite, it’s one of those little 2 AA cell styles. We backtracked until we were on deck, with me acting like the pied piper, leading the whole tour.

Above San Francisco was the dreaded mushroom cloud, ‘probably China’, I thought. I tried the Suburban and it cranked but wouldn’t start. This wasn’t the time to do points and condenser or anything else it might need so Sue and I started to unload our ‘survival supplies’ from the back of the Suburban. That NukAlert on my keychain was chirping almost continuously.

She grabbed the two cases of MREs and I grabbed the two cases of water. I gave her my 3 D cell maglite and we got setup back on the Mess deck. Down here, the NukAlert slowed down until it wasn’t chirping. I decided to go back for the firearms and she said she’d come along because I’d have to make two trips. It was quite the load, two gun cases and my load bearing equipment. Sue grabbed our BOB and a pack of D cells.

The others on the tour took off, even the park ranger or whatever he was called. Sue and I had the 45,000 ton ship all to ourselves. I dug into the BOB and got one of those Nuwick 120 hour candles out along with a lighter, popped the lid and lit it. We had light. We could also move lower in the ship, if needed, until we reached the sealed off parts.

“We’re going to be on light rations, there are only 12 meals to the case and we’ll have to stay here at least 2 weeks.”

“Are you sure they’re still good?”

“Kept them in the basement where it was cool, they should be. We’re going to be limited to two bottles of water each, per day if we match the water to the meals.”

“Who nuked us?”

“My money would be on China.”

“But why? Don’t they know we could turn their country into a glowing parking lot?”

“Those Chinese have done a lot of dumb things. Mao couldn’t defeat Chiang, and they couldn’t win in North Korea, fighting to a stalemate. They did better in Nam, but they didn’t have the cajones to take on Pakistan and India over the Kashmir. About the only war they won was against those monks in Tibet.”

“It’s just a shame we weren’t home where we have the majority of our preps.”

“I think I can get your suburban started with the spare parts wrapped in foil in the tire well. Now is not the time to be outside, not with the NukAlert going crazy.”

“How many candles are there?”

“Four and that’s enough for 20 days. I battened the hatches on the way down; I don’t think we’ll get much radiation.”

We took the two army surplus blankets out of the duffel bag that served as our BOB and folded them so they could be used as mattress pads. We had two space blankets we could use to cover ourselves. We began to chill, there inside the Iowa, and both Sue and I bundled up to try and stay warm. Eventually, the NukAlert began to chirp and we moved lower in the ship, making a few trips to move our supplies.

“I’m hungry, can we eat now?”

“I could use something myself. Why don’t you go through two cases and pick out 12 meals you’ll eat and I’ll take the rest?”

“How often can we eat?”

“If you want to stretch them out to last the two weeks, about one meal and two bottles of water per 28 hours.”

“Then what?”

“I’ll get the parts and fix the Suburban and we’ll head home.”

“Will it be safe?”

“Say the area got 3,000R. After 7 hours, it’s down to 300R/h, at 49 hours, 30R/h and at two weeks around 3R/h. We could stand that exposure level for a while, especially if we head south.”

“Maybe we’d better wait a while to eat. I’ll sort through the meals and see if there’s anything I can choke down.”

“Try and sip that water, it has to last.”

This deep in the ship, my portable radio didn't work or there was no signal for it to pickup. I was busy thinking about why we had no warning; surely NORAD had picked up the missile launches. However, China allegedly had two subs that each carried the JL-2 missile, around a dozen each. They could be launch just off our coast and if they targeted San Francisco with just one of those missiles, it could have arrived around the same time NORAD was putting out the warning.

While we were on the Mess deck, both Sue and I looked to see if they left behind any supplies which we could use to supplement our MREs. We found a partial can of coffee, a percolator and a one burner Coleman stove with a spare canister of propane. I was just guessing, but maybe those tour guides sometimes took a break down here. Once we moved to the lower level, Sue made a pot of coffee to warm us up. We used 3 bottles of water on one pot of coffee and I had to find more. You can live three minutes without air, three days without water and three weeks without food.

Then it occurred to me, 'where did they get water to make coffee'? I risked a trip back to the Mess deck and looked around where we'd found the coffee pot. I found two cases of one-liter bottles of water, less what they'd already used – four bottles. I lugged the full case down and went back for the partial case. I used two of the bottles to refill the bottles we'd used up on the pot of coffee. It appeared they'd used two liters of water for every pot of coffee and with 42 bottles; we could make 21 pots of coffee.

We held out until about bedtime to eat our first meal. I guess we shouldn't have eaten up the food we'd gotten in Sonoma Square; it would go down real good right about now. Besides, having a full belly might lead to sleep and maybe we should only plan on 12 days and then I could run out and work on the Suburban for a while. A dose of 3R/h wouldn't kill me and even if I picked up another 6R to 9R, exiting the area, I'd be way below the limit. Two weeks inside this ship would be a very long time, it was downright cold.

It gave us a chance to really check out the Iowa without a tour guide hampering our movements. We checked out all three turret magazines, especially number 2. They were empty and even the magazine for turret two was dry. We found the engine room with its eight boilers and four generators. The Iowa had four shafts using 212,000 shaft horsepower.

Unless a compartment had a sign identifying it, it was just another compartment. We could identify some, like the radio shack. I hooked my portable radio to one of the coax cables, but got nothing except static. On the second day, my NukAlert began to chirp occasionally and we moved one level lower. I hope this level was below the water line so we could get extra shielding. On this level were the bunks, complete with those skinny little mattresses the Navy used. Now we could really stay warm because we could lie on the mattress and use the army surplus blanket for cover.

Late in the afternoon, Sue made a second pot of coffee; and, right before bedtime we finished off the pot and had our second MREs. I got one of those meals refused by Ethiopians. With only ten to twelve days to go, I just held my breath and choked it down.

"John, we need to change what we carry in our BOB."

"What are we missing Sue, I'd be glad to add it."

“I think we’d be a lot better off if we carried Mountain House meals and one of those combo salt/pepper shakers. We could also add a little stove like the one we found and some extra propane cylinders. If we had a water filter, we could filter the water those dehumidifiers produce. You need to carry a wrench. If we hadn’t found that coffee, we’d have frozen our behinds off. I add a large can of coffee and a box of tea bags.”

“Don’t forget the Tabasco. What about drinking water? What if there weren’t any dehumidifiers? I have the Leatherman; I can take apart a humidifier drain. Plus, we have that collapsible pail in the BOB.”

“How about carrying 3 cases of one liter bottles of water? I don’t see why you brought your guns; we’re alone on the ship.”

“For now, we are. What’s to prevent someone boarding and using it as a shelter just like we did?”

“I wouldn’t recommend shooting your rifles inside the ship.”

“That why I only loaded my .45 and Mossberg.”

“How much 12-gauge ammo did you bring?”

“I brought three 25-round boxes and two 50-round boxes of Gold Dot.”

“You brought rifle ammo too, didn’t you?”

“Eight magazines of .50BMG and fifteen 20-round magazines of Match grade hollow point.”

“It’s spooky down here.”

“Yes, it is. The upside is that we can probably hear anyone coming. They won’t have any reason to expect us down here in the crews’ quarters.”

“What do you plan to do when we get out of here?”

“I figured on taking 680 to Dublin, 580 to the I-5 cutoff, I-5 to 152 to 99 and south to Fresno.”

“How far do you figure?”

“I’d guess about two hundred miles and at least 3 hours if we don’t have any trouble. I’d double that just to be safe and we won’t be out of the high radiation area for maybe the first third of the trip.”

“I don’t know about you John, but I’m going to turn in as soon as I go to the bathroom.”

“That sounds good to me. I think I’ll cover myself with the space blanket and top it with the wool blanket. I got cold last night.”

“I might try that too. Should one of us stay up and keep an ear open?”

“Considering the size of the ship, I don’t think so. Let’s get some rest. By tomorrow morning the radiation should have dropped 99%.

I guess we must have slept in, my watch said 9:00. I switched it to 24 hour time and it said 2100 hours. Crap, I only slept for around 2 hours, no wonder I was tired. I blew out the candle and struggled to get back to sleep. It didn’t come easy my mind was racing with thoughts about leaving in 10 days or so; what we’d find once we were off the ship and whether we could get to the Fresno area without trouble.

We did sleep in the following morning, if for no other reason than we were warm in bed and got cold soon after getting out. When we did get up, I made a pot of coffee and went to the Mess deck to check the radiation level. It was much lower; I barely got a chirp from the NukAlert. It didn’t seem any warmer on the Mess deck that it was where we were so I didn’t say anything to Sue. She was up sipping coffee when I returned.

“I’m hungry John.”

“Me too darlin’.”

There was a candy machine by the little building where we paid our admission. Do you think it would be safe to go up and break into it?”

“I suppose that would depend on how fast we could do it. I checked the Mess deck and the radiation is down. I suppose we could risk 20 minutes of exposure. Let me find something we can use to break the glass.”

“I’ll go too; you won’t be able to carry all of those candy bars and chips.”

I looked in our BOB and found my small pry bar. It should do for breaking the glass or popping the door. I dumped the few remaining things out of the duffel bag and we took it to haul the bulky items. It turned out to be a good thing we did, because next to the candy/chip dispenser was a soda dispenser. I got it open with the pry bar, taking a bit longer than I had planned on. However, the sodas added to our water supply and provided sugar for energy. We got all of the remaining non-diet sodas and candy bars into the duffel and Sue carried an armload of chips.

It didn’t really matter that the soda wasn’t cold, the ship was already cold. If we left it just sitting on the deck, it would probably cool off. I dumped the duffel and started to repack the contents I’d dumped earlier. In the process, I found our California road map. It’s printed with northern California on one side and southern California on the other side. It didn’t have any great detail; still I studied it to plot a route home.

I finally decided to take south 101 to Gilroy where I could pickup 152 and take that east to 99 and 99 south to home. While it was neither the fastest route nor the shortest route, it got us out of the contaminated area the fastest. That’s what it was really all about, getting out of the radioactive zone, fast!

We each had a candy bar for breakfast and a soda for lunch. Not a healthy diet, but hey, it beats being hungry. Late in the day, I thought I heard someone walking on the deck above. Perhaps someone else looking for shelter? Not being one to take chances, I jacked rounds into the chambers of the .45 and shotgun, and then topped off the magazines. I gave her the shotgun and took the flashlight and pistol, headed for the Mess deck. After an hour looking and finding no one, I decided I must be hearing things and returned to Sue.

“Did you find them?”

“I didn’t find a soul, dear. I checked really well, too.”

“I thought I heard something on this floor.”

“It’s a deck, not a floor, but I’ll go and look around.”

After 50 odd minutes of looking around, I came back, having failed to find anyone.

“I think maybe we’re both just a little scared and are hearing things. It won’t hurt to keep the guns handy though.”

I dug out the pack of cards and we played cribbage until we tired of it. There is probably nothing worse than sitting in the dark in an unfamiliar environment. I had wanted to see Iowa, not live on it. Except for the coffee, coffee pot and water we found, the ship had been stripped bare. The way they plumbed in the humidifiers, the water was drained directly to the Bay and I didn’t have any wrenches; otherwise, water wouldn’t have been a problem.

None of the heads on the Iowa had water to flush, but there were a lot of heads considering there were only the two of us. Thank God those MREs had a little toilet paper. The water from the humidifiers was used to ‘flush’ the toilets.

The sodas actually proved to be necessary because we were bordering on dehydration. A person's body, during an average day in a temperate climate loses approximately 2.5 liters of water. This can be through the lungs as water vapor, through the skin as sweat, or through the kidneys as urine. Using a flashlight when you were urinating didn’t really allow you to see the color and we weren’t eating all that much.

We were getting one liter each from the coffee, a little over one liter each from two 20-ounce bottles we each drank and about 0.6 liters from a can of soda. Water need is a function of a person’s body fat and the average woman has a higher percentage of body fat than a man. The higher the percentage of body fat, the lower the quantity of water required. I didn’t say anything to Sue; she might think I was calling her fat. The food also provided water, bringing us up to as much as 3 liters per day. We’d pretty well used up one crapper and moved to another head. After we finished, we called it a night and turned in.

“Are you still awake?”

“What do you need, Sue?”

“Do you think we should post a guard?”

“Well, I’m not sleepy; I could stay up for a while.”

“Do you want to do shifts?”

“Let’s see, it’s shortly after 10pm. I’ll stay up until, say 3 am and wake you. You can wake me up again at 6am and I take over.”

“Will that be enough sleep for you?”

“Maybe I can get a nap during the day when you’re awake.”

“Ok, I’ll go to sleep. Be sure to wake me.”

Right, she could sleep through an earthquake and would probably burn up if the house caught fire in the middle of the night. I’d pull 8 hours and then wake her up and get as much sleep as she would allow. Sue is not a bad woman by any means; she’s just a sound sleeper who needs at least 8 hours of sleep per night. We’re both fairly average folks that you wouldn’t notice alone or in a crowd. There’s something to said being ‘Joe Average’, people tend to leave you alone. And, when you’re an avid survivalist, you need all the help you can get. My begrudging prepper ended up buying most of our food supplies; I’ll bet they gave her strange looks at Costco and Sam’s Club.

## **USS Iowa – Chapter 2**

When we got home, we’d be set. We had those ten one year supplies from Walton Feed put up along with roughly a year’s supply of shelf stable food. None of that would matter if we couldn’t travel the 200 miles home. I should have packed a couple of paperbacks in the BOB; at least I’d have something to read while I sat up. In retrospect, it may have kept me awake.

“I told you to wake me at 3am.”

“I was awake until after 5, I must have dozed off.”

“You get some sleep and I’ll wake you later. Now, for the .45, just cock it and pull the trigger?”

“Right, and the shotgun, just slide the safety forward and pull the trigger.”

I awoke on my own around noon. I didn’t see Sue anywhere. She was gone and so were the pistol and shotgun. I got around quickly, loaded a magazine in the Super Match and went looking. She wasn’t on this deck, so I tried the Mess deck. She wasn’t there either and I went higher.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

“Looking around; what does it look like I’m doing?”

“Did you check the NukAlert?”

“Yes and it’s down to 6 chirps on this level. The table on the back says that’s around 3R/hr.”

“It’s accumulative, Sue.”

“It’s what?”

“The maximum non-lethal dose for 120 days is 300Rem. If you equate a Rem to a Rad, every hour you’re exposed to 3R, you get part of those 300Rem. Rad and Rem aren’t the same thing, but they’re close enough for government work. Let’s get back down to where we’re not getting radiation. You’ll get enough when we leave in a week.”

They don’t use those terms anymore, preferring sieverts and gray. Although the sievert has the same dimensions as the gray (i.e. joules per kilogram), it measures a different thing. To avoid any risk of confusion between the absorbed dose and the equivalent dose, the corresponding special units, namely the *gray* instead of the *joule per kilogram* for absorbed dose and the *sievert* instead of the *joule per kilogram* for the dose equivalent, should be used. For a given amount of radiation (measured in grays), the biological effect (measured in sieverts) can vary considerably as a result of the radiation weighting factor.

All the equipment I had at home came from Gonzales, Texas and was old Civil Defense stuff. It still used Rads. It didn’t really matter so long as the rules you guided yourself by conformed to the data you had. For example, I said 300 Rems in 120 days could be fatal. Another source said, “For acute full body equivalent dose, 1 Sv causes nausea, 2-5 Sv causes hair loss, hemorrhage and will cause death in many cases. More than 3 Sv will lead to death in 50% of cases within 30 days, and over 6 Sv and survival is unlikely. 1 SV = 100 Rem, so 3 Sv = 300Rem and they’re saying the same thing I just told you. 100 Rads = 1 Gy and 100 Rem = 1 Sv, got it?”

“How long were you up there?”

“Up where?”

“Up on the deck where I found you.”

“Not long, maybe 10 minutes. I was on the mess floor longer because I thought they might have stashed some food somewhere.”

“They didn’t.”

“How do you know?”

“I looked.”

“You looked? I guess that means you can’t say anything to me for looking too.”

“I don’t care if you look around the Mess deck all you want; just don’t go higher for now. I explained it once. If we started at 3,000R/h, in two weeks we’d be down to 3R/h. We have to drive through that radiation, Sue, and I don’t want you to get more than you have to. I’ve got a route planned out that should get us out of the radiation in about two hours; providing we don’t run into trouble. Now if you want to go somewhere, just let me know.”

I think when she saw me unload the Super Match and put it back in its box, she got the message.

“I’m going back to sleep. Wake me up if you leave; otherwise get me up when it’s time for supper.”

“I have the days and you have the nights?”

“I think that would work out fine,” I said as I snuggled under the blanket.

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“It’s time to wake up John.”

“Is it morning already?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I was having a dream. We went to wine country and then went to see the Iowa. While we were on the tour, someone nuked San Francisco. Man what a nightmare!”

“Well, hero, I’ve got news for you, you weren’t dreaming. We’re on the Iowa stuck two floors below the Mess floor waiting for the radiation to clear out so we can go home.”

“What time is it?”

“Around 11pm. I left you some coffee to have with your MRE. I’m going to the bathroom and then bed; wake me up at 6am.”

I checked the shotgun and the pistol and made sure they were still loaded. I poured a cup of coffee and started in on my MRE; this one wasn’t half bad. When I finished up, Sue was sound asleep and I headed to the head we were using now. Who wee, we were going to have to find another. I found another down a passageway and made a mental note to tell Sue.

This old ship sure creaked and groaned as it floated in the water. It was like she was talking to me, telling me how she earned her eleven battle stars. The Navy thought they didn’t need battleships these days and I didn’t agree. A battle ship projects power much as a carrier does, just in a different manner. Were it up to me, they take all four of the Iowa class battleships and restore them to what they were after Reagan had them updated.

With 12 carriers and 4 battleships, we could project unlimited power, when necessary. There was

nothing more terrifying than those 16” guns. They might do well to get some better gunpowder though. If they built turret #2, what was to prevent them from rebuilding it? Some bunch of armchair Admirals who wanted the F-35C and more of the Super Hornets. Hell, they couldn’t even build an affordable Littoral Combat Ship and the DDG-1000 was still on the drawing board.

What was wrong with the Ticonderoga and Arleigh Burke classes? They were both built on the hull from the Spruance class. Come to think of it, what was wrong with Spruance class? Instead of worrying about the LCS, they should have just built upgraded Oliver Hazard Perry class frigates. They upgraded them once when they went from the short to long version. Why not an extra long version with upgraded electronics and weapons? They only had a draft of 22’ and could work in most littoral waters.

Which brings me to another thought; when is the DoD going to wise up and realize that bidders always under bid the costs? If that weren’t bad enough, the involved military service no more got the money approved by Congress, than they begin issuing change orders. I read somewhere that they made over 1,000 changes to either the LCS or the DDG-1000. And then, they turn cheap on us. The Seawolf class submarine may well have been the best. But, they cost too much so they when to the Virginia class and claimed it was an improved Seawolf at one-third the cost. That’s totally illogical, but when has the military ever been accused of being logical?

The Army is just as bad as the Navy only they call their fiasco Future Combat Systems. Has anyone seen an M-307 or an M-312 except for the promotional videos? That goes all the way back to I don’t know when. The M14 was an outstanding combat rifle; it was after all not much more than an improved Garand. The Vietnamese were short little fellers so we could get by with a little bitty gun. They simply tried to make the M14 into something it wasn’t. They had two choices; eliminate full auto or contract with Beretta to produce that system they used on their BM-59s. Those were modified Garand’s which could shoot full auto. George Patton loved the Garand and had he lived, I’m almost positive he’d have loved M14.

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“Good morning, time for you to get up. I made a pot of coffee for you and have been to the head, so I’m turning in.”

“Ok. I’ll get up.”

And, that’s the way it went; until we’d run out of food and were down to our last bottles of water. It was time to bug out for home as soon as I could get the Suburban running. I got the parts from the tire well and installed the new points and condenser. I did something right, it started right up. After I made sure it was running smoothly, I returned and got Sue and our stuff. We repacked the duffel bag and I threw in that one burner Coleman stove. If they wanted it back, they could hunt us down.

As far as I was concerned the Iowa had earned her 12th battle star, protecting Sue and me as she did.

We worked our way to I-80 and took it to Oakland, picking up the I-880, following it until it joined the 101 in San Jose. In the East Bay area, the NukAlert went up one level of chips, something I had

expected. The 101 is generally busy at 10am; however, most of the traffic is north bound. We exited the area and the NukAlert went silent. The Suburban's radio was toast and so was my portable, explaining why we hadn't gotten any signals from inside Iowa.

For the trip home, I had the .45 and my Super Match, leaving Sue with the Mossberg. We wouldn't need to stop for anything, except food and water – we were both close to starving. We drove all the way to Gilroy without stopping and turned east on 152. A ways up 152 was a little RV Camping location where we could get food and water. I half figured the store would be deserted but it wasn't. They had a backup generator running and were selling gas for \$10 a gallon. A 20 ounce bottle of water was \$2.50 and a hot dog \$3.

When I bitched about the prices, I was told there wouldn't be any more when it was gone and if we didn't want it, there were others who would. We got two hot dogs apiece, a bag of chips and two one liter-bottles of water, for only \$25. For a state with restrictive gun laws, it wasn't in evidence, most everyone had at least one firearm. I was carrying the .45 in a concealed paddle holster and had the M1A slung. Sue left the Mossberg in the Suburban.

It's a lonely stretch of road until you go around the San Luis Reservoir and cross I-5. There's not much to see, in fact, until you get to Los Baños. It's a moderate sized community, around 35-40,000 these days. It's a wetlands area and pretty hard to skirt. It was a matter of gritting our teeth and making a run through town as fast as we dared. The next stop would be the junction of 99, just south of Chowchilla and from there, home.

An hour after clearing the 99 junction, we were home. I wasn't a bit surprised that our backup generator was running electricity was off everywhere. Let me clue you in – I was a pure survivalist and had all of the bells and whistles because it was never a question of if; just a question of when and what. No propane company will install a large tank, unless you have a large business that used a lot of propane. If you want one, you buy it or go without. I got a recertified used 6,000-gallon tank built by Hanson Tank, down in Los Angeles.

I'd had it for years and we used propane to run our stove, hot water heater, dryer, furnace and standby generator. The generator was Kohler 30RES with a 200amp ATS. We were only around 400' above sea level and the generator would put out the full 125amps it was rated for. The initial fill up had been generally affordable and over the years, we'd only had to replace what we'd used up. I think the genset used around 2.6-gph and 25% power.

Yeah, I know, most people don't put in standby power equal to the maximum rating of their electrical system, but I did, plus a little extra. Although we used less than 100 amps, even with the air conditioner, I had the system converted to a 200 amp service box. I was a true believer of 'more is better'. I suppose that's why I popped for the Super Match and just 'had to have' the Barrett rifle. I went with the 590A1 because of the ghost ring sights, heavier barrel and metal parts in lieu of plastic parts (safety and trigger guard).

When we left, we knew that there was a possibility of TSHTF but I discounted it, maybe that was wishful thinking. When we left Iowa, I tried to see how much damage San Francisco had received but couldn't see much. The tall buildings were gone, the Golden Gate and the Bay Bridge were down and I

suppose it looked much like it must have looked over 100 years ago, in 1906.

I said that we had a small acreage. It was 10 acres but it was plenty for a garden and room to raise a cow, if we had one. We didn't because the one we had got old and I had her cut up and added to a beef I bought for ground beef. Our freezer was full and, if for no other reason; we had to have a generator. Textured vegetable protein, are you kidding me? I want my 'meat' to have some tooth to it. Besides, it would be a while before we turned to the stuff we got from Walton Feed.

Sue and I had bought 20 25-pound-bags (500 pounds) of bread flour at Wally World, divided it into plastic containers holding around 12½# and froze it for four days. 'They' claimed it would keep for years. I pulled a sirloin steak out to thaw and if I never saw another MRE, it would be too soon. I went to the basement and switched my antenna switch from ground to the vertical. It was omni-directional and would pull in radios from any direction. The ham net should be up, it had been two weeks. I only picked up a few transmissions and they were too weak to make out. I turned the radio back off and switched the antenna switch back to ground.

"Hear anything"

"Three or four transmissions I couldn't make out. They were either a long way away or using low power. We need to find a cow for milk and maybe a few pigs to fatten up. The chickens don't look like they got any radiation and they're brooding their eggs. That should increase our flock and provide more chicken to eat."

"Get a cow with a calf. We'll have milk and can raise the calf to add to the freezer."

"I thought I saw someone moving around at Fred and Eleanor's. I'll go over there and see if he'll sell us one."

"I'll come along and visit with Eleanor."

"Don't forget the shotgun."

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"Fred."

"John. I haven't seen you around."

"We went up to wine country and then over to see the Iowa. While we were on the tour they nuked San Francisco. We had to hunker down below decks for a couple of weeks."

"So, what have you heard about the war?"

"Not anything. The radio in the suburban and my portable were out. The only place we stopped on the way home wasn't that friendly and I didn't ask questions."

“It was China, you know.”

“I sort figured on that. Did they invade Taiwan?”

“They tried.”

“And?”

“We sunk their Navy using torpedoes from our submarines. That’s why they launched against us, angry because they lost almost everything that would float.”

“How badly were we hit?”

“A shade under 150 locations took one or more nukes. I reckon they shot all they had at us.”

“Did we retaliate?”

“Yep. Some say we put Wally World out of business.”

“Where else did they hit?”

“A couple in the Seattle area, one in Portland, one in San Francisco, two in Los Angeles and one in San Diego. Some states didn’t get hit at all and some took multiple strikes. New York, Washington, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta, Denver, Albuquerque, Phoenix, Kansas City, uh, St. Louis... well you get the idea.”

“They hit most of the big cities?”

“That’s about right. Did you come over here to jaw, or do you need something?”

“I wanted to see about buying a milk cow that calved recently so we’d have milk and a beef to fatten.”

“Beef is running right around a buck a pound. I have a four year old I could let you have for say \$1,000 and I’ll throw in the calf.”

“Is that a good deal or a bad deal Fred?”

“Probably a little bit of both for both of us. I don’t have enough cattle feed and would probably have to sell some anyway. The cow is fresh and putting out around six gallons of milk a day.”

“You take cash?”

“It probably isn’t worth much these days, but I’ll take it unless you have something better.”

“I have a Krugerrand but that’s probably worth more than the cow.”

“I heard around \$1,300 an ounce, maybe a little less. We don’t have anything to add, unless you want a couple of feeder cattle. You could have those plus the cow and calf for the Krugerrand.”

“I have some hay and a little left over cattle feed from the dairy cow we butchered. Know where I can get more?”

“I’ll have alfalfa in a while and you should be able to find someone with corn, oats and soybeans. You’ll just have to look around for yourself John.”

“How are we going to get the cattle to my place?”

“I’ll load them on the truck and bring them over in a bit.”

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A person had to wonder, who had won? In ’68, I could have told you. We won the battle and lost the war. That Tet Offensive was a military disaster for the north, but upset the people at home so much, we lost the war. But then we got mired down in the second Iraq War and it started to take on the characteristics of the Vietnam War. Americans like their wars to be decisive and not drag on. If that’s the case, they should have loved this one, it lasted an hour and a larger percentage of our population probably survived than the surviving percentage of China’s population. Plus, we still had our Navy.

Did you notice how McCain tried to be the new Ronald Reagan when he was campaigning? I didn’t hear him saying anything about bringing back the battleships. Russia didn’t have a navy anymore according to the Military Channel and if we sunk China’s, that left Japan, India, Great Britain, France, Australia and us with real Navies. I wanted to ask Fred, ‘where are the carriers’ but doubted he knew. Besides, I didn’t really care where they were. I knew where the Iowa was, chained down to a dock in the San Francisco Bay.

Our propane distributor had two large tanks, 30,000 gallons each. He mostly kept them full because of the rising prices. Had the prices been falling, it would have no doubt been at least half empty. If Fred and Eleanor were ok, how many other people in the area were ok? When Fred brought the cattle, I asked.

“Well... not so many; you know that naval station?”

“Lemoore?”

“Yeah, that one. The place south of Fresno.”

“What about it?”

“Well, they nuked it but the weapon didn’t go off.”

“And?”

“And what?”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“It scared the crap out of people. Most of the people in the area took off.”

“Where did they go?”

“Damned if I know, I didn’t go with them.”

“What about the guy we get our propane from? Thing is Fred, with my generator running, I need propane about 4 times a year.”

“How much?”

“Six thousand gallons.”

“That’s 24,000- gallons a year.”

“No kidding.”

“Why didn’t you get a diesel generator? That what I have and I can get by with 1gph and I only need around 9,000 gallons of diesel a year.”

“What model is your generator?”

“It’s a Kohler 30REOZJB.”

“Oops.”

“What’s that mean?”

“We have a Kohler 30RES that runs on propane. I guess I screwed up.”

“Maybe not, I know where there are 60,000 gallons of propane and I’m not sure where to get the diesel.”

“I’ll make you a deal. You keep my propane tank full and I’ll keep your diesel tank full.”

“I’ll think on it.”

If Fred drove down to the Kettleman City exit on I-5 he’d find plenty of diesel fuel at the truck stop. It was right down CA 41 and he’d have to pass through Lemoore, but what the hell, the bomb didn’t go off. Now that we were home, I had access to my CD V-715 and our CD V-742s, plus, I had the NukAlert. It also occurred to me that NAS Lemoore no doubt had hundreds of thousands of gallons of JP-5, if not millions. The Navy flew F/A-18s at Lemoore and everyone knows those F/A-18s are fuel hogs, especially if they use afterburner. No doubt they used Marines as guards and I wasn’t going to

mess with the USMC. I'd just give them a big toothy grin as I passed by.

Fred let me know, that upon reflection, he knew where to get diesel, Kettleman City. He went that way when he went to Los Angeles. He said I could get my own propane. I bought mine from AmeriGas, but could also get it from Ferrell Gas. There must have been 75 retailers and a dozen or more distributors in the general area. In January 2007, it turned cold and local citrus growers couldn't get propane to keep their crops from freezing. As a result, some of the local distributors added more large tanks to store propane. There was AmeriGas in Fowler and up in Chowchilla.

On top of that, there was a local generator manufacturer, Powertech Engines, Inc., who usually had one or more gensets sitting around. They had both diesel fueled and gas fueled. I talked to Sue and she suggested we go look now. Now, I figured that if they had any sitting around, someone would have grabbed them. On the other hand, could it really hurt to look? And if we found one, say that 45kw they bragged on, where would we find a diesel fuel tank?

“John, think about it, you should be able to find a Chevron tanker full of diesel and bring it back here. Then, all you would need to do is adapt the outflow to fuel the diesel genset.”

“And, if we found two, I think I could find a way to pump it out of the ground so we could keep one full tanker and possibly two. Or, we could switch back to the propane genset until I found more diesel fuel.”

To top it off, West Marine had a store in Fresno and West Marine was a source for Pri products. I bought Pri-G from them for our 500-gallon farm tank and they usually had a few bottles of both Pri-D and Pri-Ocide on the shelves or in the back room. I was prepared to salvage, taking only what we absolutely needed. We'd do no wholesale looting; but, we wouldn't go without things we ran out of that were necessary to life. Considering our full freezer, one necessity was electricity.

### **USS Iowa – Chapter 3**

Powertech Engines, Inc. proved to be a surprise; they had a completed 45kw unit. The owner's manual said:

45 kW Standby / 40 kW Prime @ 77 F & Sea Level IVECO MOTORS/FPT Model NEF45-AM1 4.5 liter naturally aspirated four cylinder diesel engine, rated ~67 net intermittent HP and ~60 net continuous HP at 1800 rpm (for 60 Hz operation). This open power unit style generation system includes the engine and radiator, muffler, air cleaner, blower fan, a basic Dyna Gen GSC-300 autostart engine control panel that includes both low oil pressure and high coolant temperature safety shut downs and warning lights, a digital hour meter, fuel solenoid, key start, a battery tray & cables, and rubber vibration mounts, all assembled together with the generator on a 5" welded steel frame.

It wasn't built in Fresno, but at their facility in Fullerton. What most people don't know is that the generators that Cummins uses are built by Newage for Cummins and that Cummins owns Newage, a separate company. This particular genset had the single phase Newage generator. The motor was rated at 1.4gph at 50% power.

Once I had the new generator moved, it weighed 1,800 pounds, and set in place, I installed a relay

operated heavy duty double pole double throw make-before-break style switch so we never lose power. In order to get it running, I needed some diesel fuel and Sue and I headed to the local truck stops looking for a loaded tanker. We found one, but it was empty having already dumped its load. We got on 41 and headed to Kettleman City to look for a loaded tanker there. We found one and I drove it home while she followed in my pickup.

Once we got home, I spent three hours plumbing the two tankers together and hooking them into the new generator. I topped off the oil and fired the generator up. Now, Fred had nothing on us and I had a backup propane generator. Sue made lunch and after we ate, I took the portable generator I borrowed from Powertech and we used it to pump the fuel back into the empty tanker. With the lousy 10gpm pump I was using, it would take 14 hours to fill one 8,000-gallon tanker. We left it running and headed to West Marine. They had 5 cases or 20 gallons of Pri-D in stock plus several cases of the smaller quart and pint bottles. They only had 3 cases of Pri-Ocide, but you mix it with the fuel at approximately half the rate you use the Pri-D. Eight thousand gallons of diesel would require 4 gallons of Pri-D and around 2 plus gallons of Pri-Ocide.

When we got back to the truck stop, I dumped four gallons in each tanker plus two gallons each of Pri-Ocide. I told Sue we could come back in 12 hours and switch the hose from the first tanker to the second. When she worried about leaving the genset, I chained it to the tanker using a combo padlock. The portable couldn't run 14 hours without being refueled so I have to come back later and top off its tank.

We headed home and I treated the diesel in the tanker we drove home from Kettleman City. There are two places in California named Kettleman; Kettleman and Kettleman City. Kettleman is north of Stockton on 99 and Kettleman City is near the junction of I-5 and CA 41, straight south of Fresno.

If I was going to be forced to pump diesel out of the underground tanks, I'd need a better pump; say, something with a capacity of 100gpm, or bigger. I could fill one tanker in about one hour and twenty minutes with a bigger pump and if I was forced to go to Kettleman City, I didn't want to stay overnight and leave Sue alone.

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When I traded Fred one Krugerrand for the cow, calf and two feeders, I'd imagine you were wondering, 'where did he get gold'? I bought it from Kitco, if you must know. I'd bought 5 in 1999 and spent the same amount of money each year after, up to 2006. By then, the price of gold and silver pretty much put it out of reach. By that time, we had 25 one ounce Krugerrands and the bag of junk silver. Sue and I had one \$1,000 face value bag of those old silver coins too. I warned you, I'm purely a survivalist and I put our preparations ahead of nearly everything else.

That law they passed effective 1Jan05 requiring you to register your legally acquired .50BMG rifle on or before 30Apr06 might be fine for the sheeple, but I didn't bother and not because the fee was only \$25. I bought it second hand from a private party who didn't like it, using an alias of course, and the trail ended with him. Why stir up problems? I wouldn't mind having more .50 caliber ammo but few people in town carried it. I wasn't ready to drive the 240 miles down MCLB Barstow. You knew we had a town named Barstow just northwest of Fresno, I presume?

“I sure would like to have more ammo.”

“Did you check the stores in town?”

“They don’t carry the .50 caliber.”

“Where would you have to go to get it?”

“Barstow.”

“I’ll ride along, it’s not that far.”

“Not our Barstow, the one down on I-15. It’s around 240 miles, one way.”

“What’s there?”

“One of the two Marine Corps Logistic Bases; the other one is in Albany, Georgia.”

“Won’t it be staffed by Marines?”

“I don’t know. BRAC 2005 cut the staff down there and while I’m fairly sure they had a few Marines, They might be out doing cleanup or something. Most of the staff was civilian. I’d only need to get in one bunker and could maybe get some of that sniper ammo the military uses.”

“They have special .50 caliber ammo?”

“Two kinds, Mk211MP, also called Raufoss, and M1022 which duplicates the ballistics of Raufoss but isn’t HEAPI.”

“HEAPI?”

“High explosive, armor piercing, incendiary.”

“Why would you want that?”

“Because I can get it? Look, Sue, every round of that ammo is considered a destructive device and you can’t buy it anywhere.”

“What do you use it for?”

“Sniping for one and as an anti-material round for another; you know, like punching holes in up armored Hummers.”

“Why would you want to shoot up a Hummer?”

“I didn’t say I wanted to shoot up a Hummer, it was an example.”

“Sometimes I have trouble telling. Every since you bought that cannon, I’ve been worried about you.”

She was, of course, referring to my Barrett rifle.

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I decided to go shopping and find a 100gpm pump with enough lift power to pull fuel out of the underground diesel tanks. Then, if I could find another empty tanker, we could have 48,000-gallons of diesel and not have to go looking for about four years. That should be enough time for the government to get off its dead butt and start the clean up. Meanwhile, we could plant a large garden and combine that food with what we had stored to live comfortably.

I made a list of tasks to accomplish and securing a larger supply of fuel was at the top of the list. Second on the list was a trip down south, by myself, to snoop around those bunkers and see if I could find the ammo I wanted. First off, I couldn’t find a 100gpm pump and had to settle for a 250gpm model and it had more lift but used more power. That led me back to Powertech to find a larger portable generator. On the other hand, I could 8,000-gallons in just over 30 minutes.

There was that empty tanker sitting at the local truck stop and I refilled it in just over an hour, mixing the last of the Pri-D and Pri-Ocide in to stabilize the fuel. Now, I realized I had a problem; I’d need more Pri products to keep the fuel stable until we could use it up. There were West Marine stores all over California, just nowhere I wanted to go. We’d be good for two years before that became a major problem, however. Before I pursued that, I wanted to make the trip down to Barstow.

I drove my Chevy pickup because it was rather unremarkable and hauled a few cans of gas, just in case. I had my pry bar and a tire iron to pop the locks. A portable cutting torch might have been better, but I didn’t have one and didn’t intend to look. Getting to Barstow was as simple as taking 99 to Bakersfield then 58 to Barstow. The base was located east of town.

I saw there were some Marines there and passed the place by; this would call for a different approach. I picked up a pair of wire cutters from a hardware store in Barstow and learned where they stored the ammo. I’m glad I asked; it wasn’t where I thought it was. I parked the pickup and started out on foot towards the bunkers. Using the cutters, I penetrated the cyclone fence and started checking bunkers. It would have been much easier if I had an inventory printout.

I eventually found the Raufoss, packed 120 rounds to the case. It went right around 40 pounds so I could only move one box at a time. I moved a total of 10 boxes to a location about halfway between the bunker and the fence. I took a break then moved the boxes, one at a time, to a location well past the fence where I stacked them. It was darned near daylight by the time I finished. And I wouldn’t dare go pickup the ammo in the daylight. I wanted to go back and get some of the M1022, but figured I’d better not push my luck. So, I went back to my Chevy and got a motel room, telling the clerk I’d driven all night and need a wakeup call for 4pm.

No doubt they’d discover the broken locks and run a patrol along the fence looking for where someone

had entered. I'd counted on that and had hidden the ammo so well I wasn't sure I could find it. I wasn't about to carry that ammo any further than I had to and figured on returning with the pickup when the furor died down. I got up when the call came and got cleaned up. Next, I went looking for a meal.

I found a restaurant, all right, but that place on 152 had nothing on this place, the blue plate special was \$12. It consisted of macaroni and cheese, choice of vegetable and one piece of bread. If I could recover the ammo, I'd be the one ahead, it runs around \$7.50 a round and I had 1,200-rounds stashed. After I ate, I checked out of the motel and drove out into the desert near where I'd stashed the ammo. I pitched a tent and built a fire so I could 'camp out'. It wasn't long before a jarhead came by and wanted to know what I thought I was doing.

"Camping is it ok or is this place forbidden?"

"It's not forbidden. Can I see some ID?"

"There you go soldier, John Morris, at your service."

"I am not a soldier, I am a Marine."

"Yeah, whatever," I said flashing my toothy grin.

"How long will you be here?"

"I'm just camping for the night then moving on. I'm headed to Needles."

"The MCLB is just east of here. It's fenced and trespassers will be shot on sight."

"I have no intention of going near the place."

"See that you don't."

I could see the pile of rocks covering the ten cases of ammo about 50' away. I wasn't going anywhere near the base, only 50', haul the stuff and be gone before dawn. Now if I could locate some military surplus .50 caliber, say AP, or incendiary, I'd be set. I'd probably have to make a trip to Reno, about 285 miles by the shortest route through Carson City. On the other hand, there was the Hawthorne Army Ammunition Depot if I wanted to cut across the Sierra Nevada Range. And, all I'd be out was my gas. I waited until well after dark, struck the tent and loaded the 10 cases of ammo in the back of my pickup. I refilled my gas tank from the cans and beat feet towards home.

"I'm back."

"Did you find what you were looking for?"

"Yes, but I couldn't get all I wanted and have to make one more trip."

"Where are you going now?"

“Hawthorne, Nevada.”

“What’s in Hawthorne, Nevada?”

“There are an airport and an Army Ammunition Depot.”

“Don’t you have enough ammo for the cannon?”

“I have 1,200-rounds of Raufoss and 400-rounds of FMJ. I’d need 2,400 more rounds to be happy.”

“That would give you 4,000-rounds?”

“Yes, it would give me 4,000 rounds.”

“Why would that make you happy?”

“The barrel life of a Barrett is around 4,000-rounds. The manual with my rifle says:

After approximately 4,000 rounds have been fired through the M82A1, the rifle should be detail inspected by a qualified armorer. In particular, check the following components for excessive wear/deformity (automatic replacement at 4,000 rounds is not recommended): Barrel - Barrel springs - Muzzle brake - Front and rear barrel bumpers - Bolt locking lugs - Bolt spring - Firing pin - Firing pin hole - Sear and sear spring - Cocking lever spring - Trigger spring.”

“So, is the barrel worn out or not?”

“I’m not an armorer, so how would I know?”

“How long will you be gone this time?”

“A day up, a day there and a day back, a total of three days.”

I left the next morning. I was happy it hadn’t started to snow yet, they close the roads when it snows. I didn’t have a silencer/suppressor for the rifle because: 1) it was illegal; and, 2) Barrett voided your warranty and I had enough problems without having a void warranty. The illegal part wasn’t my main consideration, but getting the rifle repaired was. However, I did have a highly illegal suppressor for the Super Match, the one made by Surefire. I got a friend from Reno to straw man it for me and I gave him \$500 over his cost. I got the CA762SSA compensator FA adapter so the rifle sort of looked legal. Then, I bought the alignment tool and installed the adapter myself.

There were only two rifles that compared to my M82A1M, the Barrett .416, a single shot, and the Accuracy International AS50. That weapon was developed for US SOCOM and is used by USN SEALs. Modern Firearms said:

The AS50 fifty caliber (12.7mm) sniper / anti-materiel rifle is the latest development of the famous

British company Accuracy International Ltd. First displayed in January 2005 in USA at the ShotShow-2005, this rifle reportedly has been developed especially for US SOCOM users, and is now being tested by the US NAVY Special Operations center. The AS50 is to provide combat operators with highly accurate and rapid aimed fire at extended ranges. To achieve such goal, the AS50 is built around gas operated, semiautomatic action, with "single rear locking" (most probably, this mean a tilting bolt). The two-part receiver is machined from high grade steel; the barrel is free-floated and fitted with effective muzzle brake. Easily detachable buttstock is fitted with recoil-reducing butt pad, as well as with folding rear grip, which also serves as a rear support leg. The folding quick-detachable bipod with adjustable legs is fitted as a standard. Top of the receiver is equipped with full length Picatinny type rail which can accept any compatible scope mount; two additional rails are mounted on either side of the short hand guard / barrel jacket. Rifle is fitted with four sling mounts, and can be brought down to basic sub-assemblies within three minutes for maintenance or compact transportation or storage. Rifle is fed using single stack detachable box magazines, which hold five rounds of ammunition.

The AS50 wasn't developed until after California passed their stupid law and it cost nearly double what my Barrett had cost. Like I said, the Barrett was more accurate than I was, why would I need an AS50? On the way up, I decided to load various magazines with different rounds. Incendiary would have red tape, AP blue tape, Raufoss, red and blue tape and ball ammo, no tape. That wasn't the military scheme, but it was close.

When I got to Hawthorne, I went past the town and parked my pickup on the shoulder. I raised the hood and pulled the coil wire. Next, I set off cross-country looking for the bunkers. I had little trouble finding the ammo, but it was heavy as hell and I wanted twice as much as I got at Barstow. Fortunately, it wasn't that far of a walk between the bunkers and the pickup. I finished by morning, replaced the coil wire and took off. I was lucky; there were no inspectors at the California border.

"Did you find what you wanted?"

"Close; I got 1,000 rounds of ball, 800 rounds of AP and 600-round of API. It's the right count, but not the mix I wanted."

"Are you going to stay close to home now?"

"If I go anywhere, I'll take you with me, how's that?"

"Where do you need to go?"

"Well, we need a .22 rifle, ammo and a .30 caliber rifle for you. I'd like to find you an M1A, maybe a loaded standard model. Let me clean up and get some sleep. We can go in town tomorrow and look around."

Just a note about getting Sue an M1A; when I bought the 20-round magazines, I bought them from Ammoman and bought 50, two batches of twenty-five, and had them shipped to my friend in Reno who shipped them to me. Excuse me while I get some sleep.

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“Why do you want me to have a M1A? They’re heavy and hard to find.”

“First, I have lots of ammo; second, I have lots of magazines; and third, a .223 is nothing more than a pop gun. You might just as well have a .22LR as a .223,” I exaggerated.

What I didn’t tell Sue was I knew where I could get one, William B. Mayfield Guns. It was the loaded standard model not the Super Match, but it had several match grade components or features. Is the M1A rifle the best one there is? It’s probably a matter of preference. The more important thing was probably the caliber. Hit someone with a round of hollow point or soft point and they’ll go down! Even the FMJ would hurt someone bad enough you’d get a second shot. Most any center mass shot would be fatal.

While I didn’t like the 10/22, I took one because it’s what he had. I also took the loaded standard and a Browning High Power Classic for Sue. If it was loaded with real ammo, as in Gold Dot 147gr, it was almost as good as the .45. While I preferred the .45, I wouldn’t kick the Browning out of bed if it had Gold Dot. Sue thought it had less recoil and agreed to carry it.

I took the loaded standard out and checked the sights – it was right on the money. Then I drove over to visit with Fred and Sue came along to visit with Eleanor.

“Fred.”

“John. Haven’t seen you around, up to something?”

“I don’t know where to start. Ok, I got a 45kw diesel generator and 48,000-gallons of stabilized diesel. I also got a large portable for electricity to pump fuel. Then I got a 250gpm pump. I went down south to Barstow by Ft. Irwin and picked up some ammo. After that, I went to Nevada and picked up more ammo. Let’s see... oh, we went to town and I got Sue a Browning 9mm and an M1A.”

“Classic or the Mark III?”

“Classic.”

“Nice gun, I have a Mark III.”

“Since when?”

“Since those scumbags nuked us. Went to town, picked up a 10/22, a 22/45, a Mossberg model 590, an Mk III and a Ruger model 77 Hawkeye in .308 Winchester. Ain’t nobody gonna mess with me.”

“Fred, do you have a CB radio?”

“Yeah, so what?”

“Keep it on channel 9 and when they attack, call me. That rifle you got only holds 4 rounds and that would force you to resort to the shotgun which only holds 9 rounds. You aren’t really going to hurt

anyone too badly with those twenty-twos. Sue and I will come over and try to cover your butt.”

“Oh, you don’t say. What do you have that I don’t?”

“A Barrett .50 caliber rifle, 2 M1As, a 590A1 with the ghost ring sights, a Taurus PT1911B and that Browning Classic with Gold Dot ammo.”

“Are any of those legal?”

“The Barrett would have been if I had registered it – I didn’t. The M1As are legal but the suppressor I have on the Super Match isn’t. The Mossberg is legal, as is the Browning. However, the Taurus isn’t on the approved list. I also picked up a 10/22 but you know that’s legal, you have one yourself.”

“Planning on fighting a war, John?”

“Only if I have to Fred, only if I have to. I’d feel a whole lot better if you’d take a run into town and pick up some better weapons.”

“Like what?”

“I saw a STG-58 FAL by DSA. It’s the same caliber as that Ruger hunting rifle. The 590 will do unless we can find a 590A1. You need you a .45 and something for Eleanor in 9mm. We might want to find her a FAL as well. Might get lucky and find a couple of California illegal FALs. Then we get you a bunch of 20 or 30 round magazines and a couple cases of military surplus 7.62 NATO.”

“You sound like you expect trouble.”

“Think about it Fred, people will get hungry and will come looking for food. You have cattle, hogs and chickens – they’ll find you and when they do, you’ll need all the firepower you can muster.”

“If you have all that illegal stuff, how come you don’t have a .50 caliber machine gun?”

“I didn’t look for one. Those are crew served and the standard crew is 3 people. Besides, they go around 175 pounds and we’d have to get one for each farm.”

“Where is the closet place that would have one?”

“My best guess – probably NAS Lemoore. I not sure I’d want to go up against the Marine guards they have there.”

“There aren’t any guards. They flew the F/A-18s out and the Marines took off not long after.”

“And, probably took their machine gun with them.”

“It wouldn’t hurt to look.”

“Are you sure? No way am I fighting Marines, they’re nasty and very good shots.”

“I’m sure, got some of that jet fuel for my generator.”

“Know where we could find more tankers?”

“Someone took the empty one at the truck stop.”

“I got it. I also got a full one from Kettleman City. There have to be more, somewhere. However, at the moment, we have more pressing things.”

“Like what?”

“How much toilet paper do you have?”

“Yeah, I see what you mean. We could take my truck to town and get all we can find.”

“I’ll drive my Chevy and pull my trailer so we can get double. That would be a good time to get the firearms for you and Eleanor.”

“How are you set on food?”

“At least six years worth, how about you?”

“Nowhere near that much; maybe I’d better get food tomorrow and go back for the toilet paper and paper towels.”

“Do you want me to pickup up the guns for you?”

“Might help, I’d image it will take the better part of a day to load up the food.”

“Go for shelf stable products like beans, rice, canned meat, flour, yeast, sugar and Crisco. Take Eleanor with you she’ll know what you used the most of.”

#### **USS Iowa – Chapter 4**

“How about Sue goes with us? She can ride shotgun and advise Ele.”

“Sure, tell me where you’re going and I join up with you.”

“I think we’ll start with the three Costco stores. Then, we’ll head for Sam’s Club.”

“You get the food; I’ll get toilet paper and paper towels. I take a couple of tarps and some tie-down straps. We want to get as much as we can on each trip.”

I went to two guns stores and in the back of one found what I was looking for, two STG-58 Austrian

FALs. One was the standard rifle with the 21” barrel and the other the para version with the folding stock. There were 20 of the 30-round metric magazines, totally illegal in the PRK. I added a genuine Colt M1911 .45 and ammo. Since he had a 590 and I could find an A1, I let the shotgun go, but picked up the available slugs and buckshot. Eleanor could use the Mk III Browning. All I could find for it was the CA legal 10-round magazines.

After I had the guns and ammo Fred and Eleanor needed, I headed to the closest Costco. I loaded all the toilet paper I could find into the trailer and headed to the second store where I hooked up with Fred, Eleanor and Sue. I got all their toilet paper and all the non-diet soft drinks I could fit into the pickup. I had more room than they had sodas. They were concentrating on basic staples and Fred’s truck was filling rapidly. After the one stop, Fred’s truck was full so we returned to their place and I unloaded half the soft drinks and half the toilet paper. Sue and I went home and finished unloading and then returned to Fred’s.

“Here you go a man’s rifle. I got you a .45 and Eleanor can use your 9mm. Those are 30 round magazines and I picked up some military surplus ammo. I’ll load them for you while you finish unloading and we’ll head back to the first Costco store I visited. All I took was toilet paper.”

“I don’t like this, we’re looting.”

“Would you rather use a portable generator to power up the cash register and go through the check out lane?”

“Hah, I’d be flat broke in nothing flat.”

“If your conscience is really bothering you take an inventory and you can pay them back later; when the banks are open and you can mortgage your farm.”

“Do you need some flour or sugar?”

“How much did you get?”

“All they had, around a ton give or take. On the sugar, maybe half that.”

“Be sure to get salt, we’ll need it to cure hams and bacon.”

Sue and Eleanor stopped and made sandwiches. After we ate, we headed back to the Costco store I’d clean out of toilet paper. While they began loading according to Sue’s direction, I got all the sodas and an assortment of spices. I also got salt and brown sugar to use making bacon. Do you have any idea how much food a 2½ ton truck holds, besides the obvious answer of 2½ tons? When we finished with the first two of the Costco stores, they looked like they had been looted by half the population of Fresno.

We couldn’t do anymore this day and returned home to unload. I finished well ahead of them and helped them finish unloading the truck. Fred comments that he was out of room in the basement and I asked if they had a spare bedroom. He said there was a clean spot in the machine shed and he could lay down some chip board. We stopped and set it up and then sorted through the food, putting some in the shed.

“Same time tomorrow?”

“The last Costco?”

“Let’s try the Sam’s Club, they carry some different products.”

Despite the fact that the power was out, it was cool enough we could recover sliced bacon, refrigerated hams and butter. We’d have to store them outside for now and figure out something for when it warmed up. It took longer at Sam’s Club, but then we had more choices. We did very well, all things considered. However, we didn’t have time to go back to the third Costco so we put that off to the following day. There was still more food at Sam’s Club and after we did Costco, we’d go back and finish it off.

Without doing anything to it, you can store flour for about one year. Like I told you seal it in containers and freeze it for four days and it will last for several years, meaning you can save your Country Living Grain Mill for later. You should know that California plants around 600,000 acres of wheat a year and we grow hard white, hard red and durum. We also grow a fair amount of corn and a lot of cotton. You want it; we grow it or make it. Producing more than 90 percent of the nation's processed tomatoes and nearly half the world's total processed tomato tonnage, California's tomato growers are among the most innovative, resourceful and efficient farmers in the world.

I don’t really know how much advice Sue was offering, they were basically cleaning out the stores of anything they used. We were dividing some of the things and Fred and Eleanor were taking others until their food stores were on par with ours. After that, it would be 50-50. The trip to Sam’s Club resulted in Sue and me adding to our food stores.

Every night, I fired up my ham radio, feeding it from the vertical. When I’d pick up a promising signal, I’d switch to the beam and try to locate the source of the signal. Most of them were to the east, probably in the Midwest. I heard some fella in Des Moines talking to another in Kansas. They hadn’t hit Des Moines and the fella in western Kansas said they’d had to deal with fallout, but were ok. I did a break and joined the conversation. Telling them we had been in San Francisco when it was hit and stayed aboard the USS Iowa. I went on to say that we’d returned home to the Fresno area and doing our best, under the current circumstances. I got their call signs, names and preferred frequencies and said I’d be in touch, but only during the evenings. We commiserated a bit about how badly California had been hit and they signed off.

“I talked to a guy in Des Moines and another in western Kansas tonight.”

“What did they know about things?”

“Des Moines didn’t get hit. The guy in Kansas said they had some fallout from Denver.”

“Do you still plan on going to Costco tomorrow?”

“Yes I am, and to Sam’s Club if we get the chance.”

“We’re running out of places to store the food. Plus the freezer is full so I can’t freeze the flour.”

“How about we get another chest type freezer, say a 25ft<sup>3</sup>.”

“Kenmore?”

“It seems like a likely choice. Either that or Whirlpool, it’s the same difference. We can get one for Fred and Eleanor too.”

“See if you can get a freezer-less refrigerator, we need the storage space for the bacon.”

“If I can get some, I’ll get what’s available.”

Sears carried freezer-less refrigerators made by Whirlpool and they were expensive commercial models with around 20ft<sup>3</sup>. If we could get some, that would solve many of our storage problems. They came in left hand or right hand models; maybe we could get a pair for each of us.

“What more do you have on your agenda?”

“Clean out the third Costco and then go back to Sam’s Club. After that, we need to go to the Sears warehouse and pickup some freezers and freezer-less refrigerators.”

“Will that finish up the looting?”

“Call it what you want Fred. I consider it strategic reallocation.”

“I did that inventory. I’d have to sell the farm to pay for what we took.”

“I doubt they’ll treat it like a crime scene if and when they come back. I wouldn’t worry about it, if it were me.”

“That’s a bit of a stretch, but I’ll try to rationalize it somehow.”

“That’s the spirit. Increase your herd and you can pay them back in beef and pork.”

“You need pork?”

“I will come winter.”

“Best time to butcher then. Ok, we’ll butcher hogs in November if it’s cold enough.”

“Fred, I have the feeling it’s going to be a very cold winter. Wouldn’t you say we’ve had unseasonably low temperatures?”

“I hadn’t thought about it; but since you mention it, yes.”

“I contacted a couple of ham radio operators in the Midwest last night, a guy in Iowa and another in Kansas.”

“What did they know?”

“The guy in Kansas got fallout from Denver. That’s about all; we mostly talked about all the places in California that got hit.”

“Anybody heard anything from the government?”

“If they did, they didn’t say.”

“Have you heard anything?”

“Not a word, not even on the NOAA radio.”

“We can’t be the last four people in California.”

“I’m sure we’re not. I saw some campers in the Sierras.”

“What were you doing up there?”

“I told you, I went to Nevada to pick up some ammo.”

“I recall now, must be getting old.”

“Fred, we have a lot on our minds. It isn’t every day that the US gets itself nuked.”

“Don’t say that. Don’t even think that.”

“Why not?”

“Because, John, only China hit us and that still leaves Russia.”

“I’d speculate that we still have plenty of boomers to dissuade them.”

Back tracing, another advantage to having a 200 amp service and a 200 amp generator was that we could add all the appliances we could find a place to put. What I really needed was shed prebuilt shed. You could usually find them at the lumber yard because they built them in their off season to sell to people year round.

Over the next few days, we cleaned out Costco, went back to Sam’s Club, finished it off and then got me a shed. When I had a place to put them, we went to the Sears warehouse and got 2 freezers and all 4 of the commercial freezer-less refrigerators they had in stock. I ran an extra heavy duty 50’ extension cord, 6 gauge, to the shed hanging it in the air so we wouldn’t trip over it. Since they had more sheds and we had long since run out of room, Fred and I went back and got me three more, one per trip.

We filled the refrigerators with ham, bacon and cheese. Genuine California cheese, but it all tastes the same to me, I either like it or I don't. We had a bunch of Velveeta too. Velveeta was the first processed cheese product and, like many, I was raised on it and baloney. Speaking of baloney, we had that and cotto salami in the freezer. We had a slicer and could slice those Pullman hams we found at Sam's Club. A Pullman ham is a square ham in a foot long can that is usually sold as boiled ham. The name probably comes from the Pullman loaf of bread – the stuff most people call sandwich bread.

Now, food wise, we were more than set, we were totally set. Sue bagged the flour in vacuum bags and froze them. I assembled some steel shelving from Wally World and stacked the flour. I expect it took us a couple of weeks to assemble all of the shelving and get everything sorted out and collected together. I'd check daily with Fred or Eleanor on the CB to see how they were doing. She said he had the shelving assembled and was sorting the food, but would be at it for 3-4 weeks.

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Since I finished ahead of Fred, I went over to lend him a hand.

“Fred.”

“John. I'm not sure we could drink this much coffee in our lifetime.”

“Well... hang onto it for when people come back and use it as trade goods.”

You think they're coming back?”

“Of course they are. It gets mighty cold up in the Sierras. They'll figure out that the nuke at Lemoore didn't go off and come back.”

“They knew it didn't go off and they ran anyway.”

“True, but would you want to live in a tent in the Sierra Nevada's through what might prove to be the coldest winter on record.”

“You keep bring up the cold, what do you know that I don't.”

“Do you know about nuclear winter?”

“Wasn't that something that Carl Sagan talked about?”

“That was the TTAPS Study. But they've done some follow up studies, probably because of global warming. There was TTAPS 1983, WCRP 1986, TTAPS 1990, a 2006 study and a 2007 study on global thermonuclear war. I have downloaded what I could to my computer.”

<http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/nuclear/>

“So, he was right?”

“Is is warmer or colder than usual?”

“Much colder. Oh, I see, the smoke and stuff got into the air and is blocking sunlight.”

“We’re about 20° lower than normal and it’s only May. I sure hope you can grow crops this year to feed our livestock.”

“I have to get to that; but, I’ve been holding off until we got the food and stuff you wanted.”

“Can I lend a hand with stacking your food and with putting in your crops?”

“I appreciate that John, I am running behind schedule; but with as cold as it’s been I’d expect we’d better start planting next week. Want me to plow a spot for your garden?”

“I’d appreciate that, Sue can manhandle the rototiller while I help you plant.”

“No need for that, I’ll plow it, switch to my rototiller and smooth it out for you. I plowed last fall so all I need to do is disk, drag and then plant. Funny thing is I over bought seed last year and while I don’t know how good it is, I do have seed to plant. It’s been stored cold, so maybe it’ll grow.”

<http://www.milkywayfarm.com/faqs.htm><http://www.dairyfarmingtoday.org/DairyFarmingToday/Learn-More/FAQ/>

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We still didn’t have any information about our retaliation against China. We had reduced our Minuteman III force in 2007 from 500 to 450. Those missiles were removed from silos near Brady, Montana. My money would be on us using our Ohio class SSBNs to launch against China. If 4 subs launched just half of their missiles, China had probably received 384 warheads in one of two yields, 450kT or 100kT, the W88 and W76, respectively. They’d refurbished the W76s, extending their lives by 30 years, in a project that ended in 2007. Bush didn’t get his reliable replacement warhead and it wouldn’t make much difference now. Besides a lot of what the government does is mirrors and smoke.

When we’d first gone to see Fred and Eleanor, I hadn’t brought up the subject of buying hogs. Sometimes, you just get lucky, we had pork in the freezer and would butcher come November. Fred hadn’t said anything about us paying for our share of the pork, but I did have that junk silver and more Krugerrands.

Fred and finished up Saturday and took Sunday off. Monday morning he plowed our garden and came back and rototilled it. He hooked a disk to his tractor next and started to disk the fields. There wasn’t a whole lot for me to do until it came to planting so I cared for their livestock and ours. He next dragged the 20 acre alfalfa field and we seeded it. Then, he switched back to the disk and did the next field, dragging afterwards. Here, we planted 20 acres of corn. The third field was soybeans and it was 40 acres. Finally he planted 70 acres of wheat, the hard white variety.

He had 10 sows that each produced a litter of 10 or more pigs. Half of his dairy cows had been bred,

calved and started producing milk. Since there was no milk pickup, we used a cream separator and converted the cream into butter and cheese. What milk we couldn't drink was fed to the hogs. This farm work is hard, sunup to sundown and milking twice a day. His old milking machine was nearly worn out and if it went to hell, we'd be milking by hand.

Being on a side road that dead ends, we rarely saw traffic and it wasn't until we went to town to find a few tubes of grease in early July that we discovered people had started to return. Fred checked with a local grocery and they'd take his milk, so we could stop separating the cream and they find someone to bottle it. They asked about meat and he told them his sows had just farrowed, but he would have pigs for market shortly. He told them meat would be in short supply because he only had 12 new steers and 3 new heifers. He planned to keep the heifers for breeding stock and dairy cows.

I didn't mention some of the things we stockpiled because it slipped my mind, but it included motor oil, filters plus I replaced the parts I'd used on the Suburban. I was just sure that the sheriff would come by any day looking for the generators, refrigeration, sheds and the food. Eventually they did come by, but only to take a census and didn't say a word about my three new sheds

All three sheds were now powered but the other two had 14 gauge extension cords to power fluorescent fixtures. The thing that surprised me the most was them looking at the two fuel tankers and simply shaking their heads. The propane delivery truck holding 3,000 gallons was out of sight behind the barn. They said it could be anywhere from weeks to months before power was restored. They were trying to get a power allocation from Altamont, Tehachapi and San Geronio. The nuclear power stations at Diablo Canyon and San Onofre had been scrambled and bringing them back on line was taking longer than expected. If we were short of food, they were expecting a rail shipment in about two weeks. Meanwhile, the remaining food was being rationed.

They did ask about our having two generators. I told them I'd started out with a propane fueled generator but found it used too much fuel and upgraded to a diesel model, all true. I was surprised they didn't ask about where my diesel tank was, but they may have assumed it was an underground tank. I had an underground tank in mind, one of those 30,000-gallon tanks they were now using at truck stops. Fred and I had located two, sitting on trailers waiting to be installed at a new station. We had put it off until the crops were in. I wondered if we would still be able to get them.

The tank would require a hole around 55' long and 12' across. The depth would depend on how deep we wanted to bury them. Fred said he thought about 12' deep, the reach of his backhoe. If we could find a bigger excavator, we could go deeper. However, with people returning, that didn't seem like a good idea. When we finished planting, Fred started in on his hole and it took a full week, with his little bucket working from dawn to dusk.

The following week, he came over and dug our hole with me milking his cows and feeding his livestock. Fred and I had neighbored over the years, but it took WW III to get us of similar minds about things like preparedness and having more than a few weeks of supplies on hand. After he got over the idea that we should starve to death rather than salvage available food, he really got with the program. It remained to be seen if those two new tanks would still be there after we had the holes dug.

It would appear that the last thing on peoples' minds was putting in new truck stops and the tanks were

sitting there on their trailers. We went like thieves, in the dark of night, and hooked up to the trailers using the tractors from the tankers. It would take a crane to lift them off the trailers and set them in the ground, but we didn't have a crane and getting one would attract too much attention. Fred said we could loop a chain around the tanks and ease them off the trailers and into the holes. I didn't think it would work, until he showed me.

Our next problem came with plumbing the tanks to the generators and possibly installing a gas station type pump to pump diesel fuel. I had the small 10gpm pump and the pipes from the tanker. We fired up my propane generator, plumbed the diesel generator and dumped a full load of 16,000 gallons into our new tank. Fred only filled the hole about  $\frac{3}{4}$ s full so we could still plumb in a dispenser.

We then installed his new large tank and connected the plumbing to the plumbing he already had for his small 2,000-gallon underground tank. He must have been thinking about this for a while, he had extra piping and a pump. We dumped the remaining fuel into his tank. Then, in the dark of night, we hooked up to two tankers and went to Kettleman City. Using my 250gpm pump, we refilled both tankers and topped off first my tank and then Fred's.

We disposed of one of the tankers by returning it to its original location, the truck stop in Fresno. We kept the other now empty tanker to haul more fuel. Finally, we returned the two flat bed trucks. While we were there, Fred spotted the dispensers, still new in the box. We borrowed two. Before we installed them, we had a decision to make; we didn't want to attract undue attention by breaking some stupid little law, like how close the dispenser was to the house.

Fred said we'd put them near our farm gasoline tanks because gasoline was more flammable than diesel and the gas tanks were legal. He had more than enough piping and the dispensers had their own built-in pumps. He used his backhoe to dig a small trench on each farm and we installed the plumbing. Finally, he back filled the holes the rest of the way and we seeded. Hopefully, the grass would get a good start and hide our project. Finally, with the plumbing in place, we pour small slabs using bagged concrete mix and installed the pumps.

We had been working nonstop for several weeks, only taking Sundays off, and even then, tending to the livestock. We both needed a couple of days off. Plus Fred had never had a chance to sight in the FAL rifles. The question remained in his mind whether he'd need them. "After all," he said, "we have law and order again." We might have some of the LAW back, BUT, I remained unsure about the ORDER part. With a city population of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  million, it could get very unruly fast, when people couldn't get food to eat.

The 4th Amendment provides:

*The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.*

The 5th amendment provides:

*No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.*

Upon reading, both Amendments provide for people to be secure in their property. Yeah, I knew about those Executive Orders, but they were clearly unconstitutional in my mind. It might not do you much good if some of those Jack Booted Thugs showed up under the guise of one or more of the Executive Orders to seize your property. At best, all you could hope for was just compensation, whatever the hell that is.

For example, you are required to turn in your .50 caliber rifle and the law, perhaps, provides for compensation of \$100 per firearm. Hells bells, one 10-round magazine for a Barrett runs \$135. And, to continue the example, it's just because the law says it is. Not in my playbook, it isn't. In the PRK, a Barrett is irreplaceable and worth its weight in precious metal. Plus that new law they passed (AB2062) requires you to get a permit to buy ammo. It appeared that there was little opposition to the bill in the Assembly. Screw 'em, I had mine and could always drive to Reno for more.

I considered myself to be a true born patriot. Lee Greenwood is a Californian; however, he said it all.

If tomorrow all the things were gone I'd worked for all my life,  
And I had to start again with just my children and my wife.  
I'd thank my lucky stars to be living here today,  
'Cause the flag still stands for freedom and they can't take that away.

And I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free.  
And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.  
And I'd gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today.  
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land God bless the USA.

From the lakes of Minnesota, to the hills of Tennessee,  
across the plains of Texas, from sea to shining sea,

From Detroit down to Houston and New York to LA,  
Well, there's pride in every American heart,  
and it's time to stand and say:

I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free.  
And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me.  
And I'd gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today.  
'Cause there ain't no doubt I love this land God bless the USA.

**USS Iowa – Chapter 5**

As an admitted survivalist, it was my responsibility to not only respond to a crisis but to anticipate the crisis. I screwed the pooch on WW III and now my instincts told me that this recovery wouldn't be as tame as it presented itself. I wasn't above a little strategic reallocation if the situation warranted it, but I wouldn't take things we couldn't use to stay alive, like that big screen TV I always wanted. Some would say I'm splitting hairs. If that's what you think, you're welcome to your opinion; you do it your way and me and mine will survive.

It appeared that Fred and Eleanor were in it with Sue and me for the long haul. Anyone coming down our road would pass by our acreage before they got to Fred and Eleanor's. Now, I took that as a duty fairly imposed to intercept anyone headed his way.

"Fred."

"John."

"It occurred to me that anyone coming to your place would have to pass by our place."

"That's right, so?"

"I was wondering if you wanted me to screen your callers."

"Screen?"

"Screen, as in a system for selecting suitable people to come the rest of the way to your farm."

"Why would you want to do something like that?"

"Maybe to keep out the JBTs."

"The what?"

"Jack booted thugs, you know FEMA and other federal or state organizations intending on doing you harm."

"You mean like going into my padlocked machine shed without a warrant and finding the food we stole?"

"Couldn't have said it better myself."

"We did steal the food, right John?"

"From one perspective, yes."

We did steal the fuel tanks, right John? We did steal the fuel; I can go on if you want, the freezer, the refrigerators, you know."

“I know and I took more than you did.”

“You don’t say.”

“I went down to Barstow and stole ammo then went to Hawthorne and stole some more. You’re ahead of me on stolen guns, but that’s about all.”

“You stole ammo? What for, that cannon you have?”

“As a matter of fact, yes, for my Barrett rifle.”

“And you’re going to put up a roadblock or some such nonsense and stop people from coming to my farm? Jack booted thugs? Don’t recall every hearing about the government hiring any jack booted thugs.”

“If the internet were up, you could Google it. I did before the war and I found an article.”

A lot of fuss was made after the Oklahoma City bombing about the NRA's use of phrases like "jack-booted thugs" to describe federal agents. The thesis was that the NRA was promoting violence against federal agents by demonizing them with this kind of rhetoric.

Now, I believe that the NRA is a dangerous and dishonest organization, because of where it spends its money and the laws that it supports. So I was ready to jump on that bandwagon, when I realized that those bashing the NRA for the "jackbooted thugs" quote were laboring under an immense double standard.

In a recent article, I called the CIA a "serial killer in the basement of government". There is no moral difference between this statement and the NRA's "jackbooted thugs". The only argument that I can think of, that I am not knowingly addressing an audience of gun owners and the NRA is, won't wash. The minute we start trying to differentiate identical speech based on the audience it is addressed to, we are in a world of double standards. I believe in the elimination of double standards, not their promotion.

Did I make a mistake with my "serial killer" rhetoric? I don't believe so. I think the statement is well within the borders of normal, lively expression of strongly held beliefs. So is "jackbooted thugs."

No-one bashed me for my "serial killer" remark, and those criticizing NRA conveniently forget that BATF, the target of the "thugs" remark, was badly out of control in both the Branch Davidian and Weaver incidents. Most of us would likely welcome an investigation into the abuses of a law enforcement agency, if we weren't so fearful that a far right wing agenda was being advanced in the process. But it is a strange day when the left in America defends police brutality and the abuse of power. Unlike the NRA, I believe Randy Weaver was-- is--a criminal. But he was entitled to his day in court. The sniper killing of his unarmed wife, with her baby in her arms, was shocking. The FBI should have to explain it. If it is not murder, it is at least homicide committed in gross negligence of human life. To defend the rights only of criminals and suspects precious to the left, and to allow BATF and the FBI to have a field day with those of the far right, mires us in an unconscionable double standard.

If you want to criticize NRA rhetoric, target the words that really go over the line of fair political discourse, such as the board member statement envisioning the murder of Mrs. Brady of Handgun Control. But don't penalize the NRA for the same strongly opinionated rhetoric you would endorse in support of your own political agenda.

<http://www.spectacle.org/795/nra.html>

“She’s the gal whose husband was shot in the head during the Regan assassination attempt?”

“Yeah, Sarah Brady; maybe we got lucky and she was in Washington campaigning against handguns.”

“That’s an awful thing to say.”

“Ok,” I said crossing my fingers, “I take it back.”

Even with my fingers crossed, saying I took it back left a bad taste in my mouth. Randy Weaver did break the law and he was convicted, eventually. He and his family also collected \$3 million in damages from the government for murdering his wife. McVey was nut and deserved what he got. David Koresh made a choice for himself and all of the people in his charge, and they paid for it. He took ‘my cold dead hands’ to the extreme. Was the BATF wrong? When aren’t they? Some poor survivalist down in the San Bernardino area had a bit too much ammo and gun powder and look at what happened to him.

If you read rifle, pistol and shotgun cartridges, you’re likely to have several cans of gun powder, especially if you’re working on developing various loads for the firearms. How much is too much? If you buy an 8 pound can of a single gun powder is that too much? Why? If you get a really good deal on some surplus South African and pop for 10,000 rounds at \$187 a case, is that too much?

“So, Fred, do you want me to screen them or not?”

“Do I get a say in who gets in and who doesn’t?”

“Of course you do, my function would be to keep out people you don’t want to see.”

“I’ll think on it.”

With just me to man the roadblock and Sue to back me up we couldn’t really do a lot. Maybe find out who they were and give Fred a call on the CB to warn him and follow behind the intruders so we’d have them in a cross fire. However, a cross fire usually works better if you have heavier armament and as long as the Sheriff was back in town, I wasn’t going looking.

To avoid suspicion that it us who cleaned out he grocery stores, we went to town, registered and got in line once a week, just like everybody else. Fred supplied some milk and was paid for it in junk silver. His 30 cows produced around 180-gallons of milk a day and the County was paying to going price, \$3 a gallon or around \$550. Silver was \$27 an ounce and a junk half dollar worth \$9.65. He got 57 half dollars for each milk delivery. The half dollars were 20 to the roll, the quarters 40 to the roll and the dimes 50 to the roll. Of course that meant a junk quarter was worth \$4.83 and a dime \$1.93.

If the people were trying to live on the government handout, they'd be starving in a few weeks. The promised rail shipment didn't come, initiating protests. I felt bad for the people and when Fred took in the milk the next week, I took two bundles of 5-pound bags of flour, 20 bags. I didn't get nearly as Fred did for the milk, but felt I'd done my part. I checked and we had 12 bundles (50#) of the 5-pound bags of flour and I could give up one bundle a week until I ran out.

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Factoid about 90% silver coins:

50¢ piece contains 0.3675 ounces of pure silver  
25¢ piece contains 0.17875 ounces of pure silver  
10¢ piece contains 0.0715 ounces of pure silver

Multiply it by the current market price to get the dollar value.

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No, I didn't feel a bit bad selling them their flour back. The small amount they paid for it wouldn't hire an armed guard for one day, to protect it. I guess I should have negotiated for a higher price. Getting back to my gut feeling, I just knew that someone would try and follow Fred and me back from one of our trips to town. All they had to do was get onto our dead end road and they'd have us.

I considered our options and didn't come up with one that would work. If, for example, we dug a ditch across the road and had steel plates to allow us to pass over, they could just come cross country. Something like a permanently installed heavy machinegun could be taken out with one 40mm grenade round. Our last best hope, it seemed, was taking a roundabout way home, hoping they wouldn't be able to follow us.

"We won't be home as soon today as we have been earlier."

"Why not?"

"Fred and I are going to take a longer way home and try to lose anyone following us."

"And, if you don't?"

"Damned if I know."

"What you need is for Eleanor and I to be somewhere along that path with your cannon. You have all different kinds of ammo and you said you could punch a hole in an uparmored Hummer. Surely, that would be enough to stop a car or a pickup."

"Well, yeah, that would work very well."

"You'll have to show me how to assemble it, the safety and even pick out the ammo you think we

should use.”

“Let’s take the rifle over to Fred’s and I teach both you and Eleanor.”

“You’ll have to pick a spot where we can set up, too.”

“I’ll tell you what, Fred and I can take the long way to Fresno and when we find a good spot, we’ll stop and show you. You can use the laser range finder to get the range and adjust the BDC accordingly.”

“Huh?”

“Never mind, I’ll set it up for you. All you have to do is flip off the safety and squeeze the trigger. I’ll find a location where they’re coming straight on to you.”

Not wanting to risk further problems, I decided to unload all of the 5-pound bags of flour in a single trip. I also suggested to Fred that we make some cheese and when it was aged, sell it instead of milk. It was cold enough out we could pull that off. The field crops were just barely growing and Fred said we’d have to make ensilage from the corn. For those that don’t know, ensilage is chopped corn and included the whole plant, not just the ears. It is usually fed to dairy cattle and if you feed it to beef cattle, you get something that smells and tastes awful, probably due to the fermentation in the silo.

It turned out that my gut feeling was right, we grew a tail. We had Sue and Eleanor set up at a spot where we made a turn and they’d have the tail in sight for nearly a minute. I lased a spot so she would have a reference point and could shoot the vehicle when it passed the reference point. I told her to aim for the engine because it would probably take out the radiator and with AP, maybe the engine itself. I wasn’t ready to start killing my neighbors, just yet. The ‘killing ground’ was about the most distant point from our farms on the whole trip.

Eleanor spotted using binoculars and when the trailing vehicle came close to the spot, Sue released the safety. As it passed the spot, she fire 3 shots as fast as she could and maintain control of the Barrett. The vehicle rolled to a stop almost immediately and she disassembled the Barrett and returned it to its case. They walked back to their vehicle, mounted up and came home.

“You’d better not plan on anymore trips to town for a while.”

“I took all of the flour and Fred agreed to make cheese out of the milk for a while.”

“Are you going to have feed? The corn looks likes it’s not growing well.”

“Fred said we’d make corn ensilage. He say we should still get two cutting of alfalfa and the soybean yield will be lower, but enough. The wheat seems to be growing ok; it’s a cold weather variety.”

“As long as there’s enough feed for the livestock, I don’t care. What kind of cheese are you going to make?”

“Probably Longhorn Colby, it is a softer, moister, and milder cheese than cheddar because it is produced

through a washed-curd process. And we may make Monterey Jack because it's nearly the same kind of cheese and popular here in the great PRK."

"Do know what you're doing?"

"If we don't, we can always feed it to the hogs. Say, did you plant any chilies?"

"I planted Jalapeños, Bell, Anaheim and Pepperoncini, why?"

"I'll make some pepper jack cheese. So, fill me in on my cannon; how did you fair with it?"

"It didn't kick nearly as much as I thought it would and I fired three rounds in the blink of an eye. Stopped them cold in their tracks, but I'd prefer to stick with the M1A."

"Not to change the subject; but, I'm just sorry we can't have kids."

"We can adopt, John. There are probably lots of kids in Fresno looking for a good home."

"What's the story with Fred and Eleanor? They don't have any children either."

"One of those whiz kid doctors told her she didn't have a choice except to put up with full-time continued menstruation or have a hysterectomy. She bought his spiel hook, line and sinker. You know our story; they couldn't save the baby or my uterus."

"It's just funny that there are two childless couples on the same dead end road."

"Maybe not, John; without kids, our lives were on their own dead end road. Think it of this way; your spending money for guns wouldn't have been available if we had to spend it on kids."

"Well, we're not going to town for a while, anyway."

However, Sue's suggestion gave me pause for thought. We had a 3 bedroom house and two of the bedrooms sat empty. We'd turned off the registers and closed the doors to preserve heat; however, we weren't short on propane to heat the entire house. Of course, thinking wasn't one of my strong suits. Thinking of children got me to thinking about how it would be our responsibility to protect them.

That led to my thinking about from whom I'd need to protect them which led to my thinking about JBTs. What if JBTs somehow got a hold of records indicating I owned a shotgun and the M1A; and decided to get a search warrant and came looking for guns? A search would result in not only their finding the Barrett, but the Taurus as well. I realized that my mind had led me into a trap; I was sweating and my hands were shaking.

It really wasn't about how many guns I/we had, it was about the quality of the ones we did have, or so I told myself. No one would dispute the quality of a Browning High Power Classic. And, using Gold Dot in it made an otherwise imperfect caliber into something to sit up and take notice of. I wouldn't have to hide either of the M1As or the Browning, just the Taurus and the Barrett. Sue didn't like wearing a

pistol anyway.

Every choice you make has an upside and a downside. Hiding the guns upside was that I doubted anyone would find them and the downside was it would take me a couple of minutes to retrieve them and put them into play.

And, there are those who have a hissy fit over .50 caliber rifles:

#### The Threat to the Chemical and Refinery Industry from 50 Caliber Sniper Rifles

"The advantages are obvious when you consider that many of the same targets of rocket and mortar fire can be neutralized with M33 ball, API M8 or Multipurpose ammunition." – "Heavy Firepower for Light Infantry," Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, Inc. brochure advertising its Model 82A1 50 caliber sniper rifle.

The .50 BMG round fired by 50 caliber sniper rifles can knock down hovering helicopters, penetrate armored limousines, and ignite bulk fuel tanks from a distance of 10 football fields. The round's merits were summarized in the authoritative journal *The Small Arms Review*:

"The fifty caliber's ability to be deployed by one individual and give that person the capability of discretely engaging a target at ranges of over one mile away are definitely alluring from a tactical standpoint. While the .50 cal sometimes seems to be exaggerated, it is hard to imagine a round that at ranges of over a mile and a half away, has more kinetic energy than a .44 Magnum, and has unbeatable penetration as well."

#### Extended Range and Accuracy

Advertising, military manuals, expert writing, and civilian owner comments all demonstrate that 50 caliber sniper rifles are accurate at ranges of at least 1,000 yards, and in the hands of a trained marksman, nearly 2,000 yards. "With confirmed hits out to 1800 meters, the Barrett model 82A1 is battle proven," Barrett Firearms states in its promotional brochure. In fact, US forces using Barrett M82A1s routinely engaged Iraqi forces out to a range of 1,600 meters (1,750 yards) during the 1991 Gulf War. Another manufacturer, Aurora Tactical, says that its Model 650 Special Light Anti-Materiel Rifle (SLAMR) "enables a skilled marksman to deliver exceptionally accurate fire on targets in excess of 1500 yards."

#### Destructive Power

The 50 caliber sniper rifle's threat is a blend of long range and massive power. Here is Barrett's description of the power of its Model M82A1, widely available on the civilian market:

"This revolutionary .50 caliber semi-automatic rifle allows sophisticated targets to be destroyed or disabled by a single soldier. Armored personnel carriers, radar dishes, communications vehicles, aircraft and area denial submunitions are all vulnerable to the quick strike capability of the Barrett 82A1. With decisive force and without the need for the manpower and expense of mortar or rocket crews, forces can engage the opposition at distances far beyond the range of small arms fire....The 82A1's light weight

makes transportation as easy as walking....With night vision equipment, the weapon is even more effective under cover of darkness. The muzzle brake reduces felt recoil to no more than that of a 12 gauge shotgun....The advantages are obvious when you consider that many of the same targets for rocket and mortar fire can be neutralized with M33 ball, API M8 or Multipurpose ammunition.”

An excerpt from the US Army's manual on urban combat emphasizes the 50 caliber sniper rifle's ability to destroy materiel targets:

“These heavy sniper rifles were originally intended as anti materiel weapons for stand-off attack against high-value targets, such as radar control vans, missiles, parked aircraft, and bulk fuel and ammunition storage sites....It is their ability to shoot through all but the heaviest shielding material, and their devastating effects, that make them valuable psychological weapons.”

#### .50 Caliber Ammunition Available on US Civilian Market

Although originally designed for heavy military use, all types of 50 caliber ammunition are readily available to civilians in the United States—and thus easily available to foreign and domestic terrorists. This, of course, is wholly aside from the fact that military ammunition stocks also can be procured from underground sources.

Arms and ammunition – including such destructive items as M-16 assault rifles, machine guns, TNT, dynamite, plastic explosives, land mines, and hand grenades – are regularly stolen from US military armories. Fifty caliber sniper rifles have proliferated in military forces around the world, and .50 caliber ammunition is made in more than 30 countries. Those foreign forces, including some that are less than friendly to the United States, have stocks of military ammunition that are available to any terrorist with the right connections. Arms and ammunition are also stolen from these foreign forces, friend and foe alike, sometimes on a staggering scale.

The 50 caliber sniper rifle's performance is substantially enhanced by the use of ammunition specially designed to destroy hard targets – ammunition that makes the rifles what expert Mark V. Lonsdale calls "a cost effective way to engage the enemy's high-tech equipment, light skinned vehicles and aircraft, especially when compared to the cost of hitting the same targets with rocket or mortar fire." This ammunition includes armor-piercing, incendiary, and explosive rounds specifically designed to attack targets similar to the bulk tanks, pipes, and other materiel in and around the typical refinery or other chemical industrial site.

Armor-piercing and incendiary ammunition. The US Army says that the basic 50 caliber armor-piercing round is designed for use "against armored aircraft and lightly armored vehicles, concrete shelters, and other bullet-resisting targets." The armor-piercing effect is achieved by the bullet's design, which wraps a hardened core of a substance like manganese-molybdenum steel with a softer metal jacket. Incendiary ammunition is self-descriptive, used for "incendiary effect, especially against aircraft." In other words, it sets things like airplanes, fuel, and other combustible materials on fire. Tracer ammunition, familiar to the public from scenes of night combat, leaves a visible trail of incendiary light. Variant rounds combine armor-piercing, incendiary, and tracer effects.

Saboted Light Armor Penetrator (SLAP) Ammunition. Designers of anti-armor ammunition have long

used the idea of replacing a given caliber gun's projectile with a projectile of smaller diameter but more dense material. In order to seat the smaller projectile in the larger ammunition case, and to gain the necessary spin from the gun's rifled barrel, the projectile is wrapped in a "sabot" or "shoe." The shoe rides the length of the gun's barrel and then drops away from the projectile when it exits the barrel. The much higher velocity of a "saboted" round enhances its armor-piercing performance.

The US Marine Corps developed .50 caliber SLAP ammunition in the 1980s, and it was used in 1991 during the Gulf War's Operation Desert Storm. It uses a .30 inch heavy metal (tungsten) penetrator in a plastic shoe, which is .50 inch in diameter. "Since the mass of the sabotaged penetrator is much lighter in weight than normal ball .50 caliber ammunition, SLAP's velocity can be significantly and safely increased," according to the Marine Corps. "This produces a very fast round with a very flat trajectory which enhances hit probability...and extends the light armor capability...significantly." According to Winchester, the civilian contractor that developed the 50 caliber SLAP round, it delivers "superior and proven performance against lightly armored vehicles and armored attack helicopters at ranges up to 1,500 meters."

A round that has "proven performance" against an armored attack helicopter at 1,600 yards is a clear threat to American industrial sites in the hands of any terrorist group that, like al Qaeda, has acquired the means to deliver it in the form of the 50 caliber sniper rifle.

Raufoss Multipurpose (armor-piercing, explosive, incendiary) Ammunition. The crown jewel of 50 caliber sniper rifle ammunition is the Raufoss multi-purpose round, developed by a Norwegian company and manufactured under license by several companies, including Winchester. Said by experts to be the most popular round with US military snipers, it was used to devastating effect by US forces in the 1991 Gulf War.

Designated the MK211 by the US military, the round combines armor-piercing, explosive, and incendiary effects and uses a "highly effective pyrotechnically initiated fuze... [that] delays detonation of the main projectile charge until after initial target penetration—moving projectile fragmentation and damage effect inside the target for maximum anti-personnel and fire start effect." According to its developer, Nordic Ammunition Company (NAMMO), the round can be used in "sniper rifles similar to [the] Barrett M82A1," has "the equivalent firing power of a 20 mm projectile to include such targets as helicopters, aircrafts [sic], light armor vehicles, ships and light fortifications, "and can ignite JP4 and JP8 military jet fuel."

According to the Marine Corps, the Barrett "M82A1A...fires the .50-caliber RAUFLOSS ammunition, which contains a tungsten penetrator and a more powerful explosive charge than the API ammunition...it has penetrated an inch of steel at 2000 yards." Jane's *International Defense Review* estimates that the round is "probably capable of disabling a man wearing body armor who is standing behind the wall of a house at 2,000m.... (and) can perforate the foundation of a high-rise building (20cm reinforced concrete) at 400m." Reasonable persons probably would agree that blasting through 20 centimeters (7.87 inches) of reinforced concrete from four football field's distance is an impressive performance.

[www.vpc.org/studies/duckone.htm](http://www.vpc.org/studies/duckone.htm)

## USS Iowa – Chapter 6

If the JBTs took my guns, how would I protect my family, assuming I wasn't in jail? The two M1As

were California legal, as was the Mossberg. Really, the only guns I had to worry about were the Taurus and the Barrett. Could I find someplace to hide them that they wouldn't think of? If they came at me full bore, they could even bring ground penetrating radar, so I dismissed the idea of burying them. It had to be someplace where I could readily access the guns that the metal wouldn't be out of place. I thought long and hard before I came up with just such a place, under something metal.

I tried it out after fashioning a long metal hook to catch the handle of the Pelican case and by golly, it worked. Since the JBTs may be reading this, I won't tell you where it is, but I owe it all to a railroad station agent in North Redwood, MN who received a shipment of watches from a Chicago jeweler which were unwanted by a local jeweler and a watchmaker from Indiana. I hope I haven't said too much.

The problem with WW III wasn't the attack by the enemy; it was the government we'd end up with when they declared a national emergency. Any rights a person had went right down the toilet. Could a single sentence in the Bill of Rights do much to affect a government bent on 'saving the people'? I think not! So much for the Bill of Rights, they were promises made and not really kept.

I posted that article from violence policy center because it was unbelievable. They would deny our military forces the very tools that made their lives and jobs so much easier. Do you want another one?

Next week, the US Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 07-290, a historic case involving the meaning of the Second Amendment. The court will review a decision of the DC Circuit US Court of Appeals that struck down the District's 32-year-old handgun possession ban, interpreting the Second Amendment as guaranteeing a private right to possess firearms that is unrelated to service in a well-regulated state militia. That decision marked the first time in US history a federal appellate court had invalidated a gun law on Second Amendment grounds.

The lower court ruling was baffling, not only because it ignored the plain language of the Second Amendment – “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed” – but also because it contradicted nearly 70 years of legal precedent.

The Supreme Court addressed the meaning of the Second Amendment in *United States v. Miller*, 307 U.S. 174 (1939) where, in a unanimous decision, it rejected a Second Amendment challenge to a federal law prohibiting the interstate transportation of sawed-off shotguns. The court held that the “obvious purpose” of the Second Amendment is to “assure the continuation and render possible the effectiveness” of the state militia and the amendment “must be interpreted and applied with that end in view.”

Since *Miller*, over 200 federal and state appellate courts have rejected Second Amendment challenges to a variety of gun laws, such as those banning certain classes of firearms (including handguns), requiring the registration of guns and licensing of gun owners, and prohibiting firearm possession by convicted felons. The Supreme Court has had repeated opportunities to review these decisions and consistently has declined to do so.

Notwithstanding nearly seven decades of well-settled case law in this area, the DC Circuit concluded that the Second Amendment somehow enshrines a private “right to bear arms” unrelated to militia

service. This, of course, is the view the National Rifle Association and other gun rights groups have long touted. The gun lobby has been so successful in perpetuating this legal fiction that most Americans, including many journalists, policymakers and presidential candidates, believe it to be true. In fact, a recent USA TODAY/Gallup Poll survey found that 73 percent of the respondents (including 93 percent of gun owners) believe the Constitution guarantees the rights of Americans to own guns.

Former US Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger once characterized the gun lobby's relentless misinformation campaign regarding the Second Amendment as "one of the greatest pieces of fraud, I repeat the word fraud, on the American public by special-interest groups that I have ever seen in my lifetime."

The NRA's mythical view of the Second Amendment is completely at odds with history, as well as legal precedent. At the time the Bill of Rights was adopted, the phrase "keep and bear arms" had a strictly military connotation. Indeed, all recorded remarks from the congressional debate on the Second Amendment relate to military service; none discuss the private use of weapons.

The military nature of the amendment is reinforced further by the fact that a conscientious-objector clause was included in James Madison's original draft of the Second Amendment. Although that clause ("no person religiously scrupulous of bearing arms, shall be compelled to render military service") was later removed, it demonstrates that private gun ownership was not contemplated by the drafters. History also makes clear that the underlying purpose of the Second Amendment was to create a balance of power between the states and the newly formed federal government. Under the Articles of Confederation, the states had been required to maintain their own "well-regulated and disciplined militia." Militia service and training were generally mandated for able-bodied men, and militia members were required to provide their own arms.

The new Constitution, however, provided for a national standing army and gave Congress authority to organize, arm and discipline state militias. The Second Amendment grew out of concerns that the federal government could exercise this authority to disarm the militias, preventing those citizen military groups from protecting their communities when called upon to do so.

Because the Second Amendment was designed to limit the ability of the federal government to interfere with state militias, many courts, including, in pre-*Miller* decisions, the US Supreme Court, have held that the amendment has no application to state or local laws. For similar reasons, i.e., because the District's handgun ban is not a federal law that seeks to disarm a state militia, the Second Amendment is equally inapplicable to the District.

The DC Circuit turned a blind eye to the text, history and underlying purpose of the Second Amendment, concluding instead that the amendment guarantees a right to own guns for purely private purposes. Although the court held that this purported right is subject to "reasonable regulation," it found the District's handgun possession ban per se unreasonable merely because a handgun is an "arm" within the meaning of the amendment. This conclusion is both unprecedented and incorrect.

In fact, the lower court was presented with ample evidence demonstrating the reasonableness of the District's decision to ban handguns. The 1976 law was not adopted on a whim. On the contrary, it was enacted after extensive deliberation in response to evidence showing that handguns pose a unique threat

in the District's densely populated urban environment; specifically, that they are disproportionately used in violent crimes, accidental shootings, shootings of police, and suicides. Moreover, the District allowed residents to continue to possess long guns, thus permitting the possession of "arms" for self-defense. Accordingly, even under the lower court's interpretation of the Second Amendment, the District's handgun possession ban should be upheld as a constitutionally reasonable restriction.

Significantly, the DC law has proven particularly effective at reducing rates of suicide. In fact, the District's overall suicide rate has consistently been the lowest in the nation. Moreover, between 2000 and 2004, more than 1,400 children 16 or younger committed suicide in the U.S. Not one child in that age group committed suicide during this time period in the District.

Nineteen *amicus* briefs, written on behalf of 188 *amici*, were filed in support of the District in the *Heller* case. Those briefs represent a wide variety of important institutional voices, including law enforcement groups, public health advocates, law professors, historians, linguists, the American Bar Association, major American cities, states, former Department of Justice officials and members of Congress. These *amicus* recognize, as does the general public, that the *Heller* case presents an issue of enormous national importance.

Gun violence takes the lives of more than 30,000 Americans each year. The daily headlines regarding shootings at schools, shopping centers and other supposedly safe havens are inescapable. The Supreme Court now has the opportunity to expose the gun lobby's fraud and reaffirm the only interpretation of the Second Amendment that is supported by the text, historical record and the court's own precedent. The court must make clear, once and for all, that the Second Amendment is not an obstacle to the common-sense gun laws that our nation needs. In the words of the District, it is "quite literally a matter of life and death."

Excuse me while I go throw up. The author of the piece is a lawyer from San Francisco, are you surprised? She must be crying in her soup now that SCOTUS upheld the Appellate Court. Maybe not, if she was at work when the warhead came... It almost made me ashamed to be a Californian.

My friends urged me to move. When I asked, "where to," they said anywhere besides California. Except, we couldn't move, the falling prices did us in. As I said, it didn't particularly bother me to bend a few laws, as long as I didn't get caught. If I were alone, even that probably wouldn't have bothered me. On the other hand, there was my lovely bride, Sue. If I got arrested and thrown in jail, what would happen to her? And, thus, I let my judgment get the better of me and I stashed the guns. In so doing, I realized just how much food we had. This led me to talk with Sue.

"I was just out stashing the guns and a thought came to me."

"Where did you stash them?"

"I'll show you and you'll need this piece of #9 wire to retrieve them."

I took her and showed her and we returned to the house. You couldn't see the case without a flashlight, and who would look there?

“Now, as I was saying, a thought came to me. We have enough food here to last our lifetimes and maybe longer. If our baby had lived, she would be about 10 years old. So, about adopting; if we could find two children, a boy and a girl, around age 10, I wouldn’t have any objections to fostering or adopting them.”

She acted like I’d just given her the Hope, the Krupp or the Burton-Taylor Diamond. It started with a squeal, moved to a crushing hug and you get the idea. It brings to mind the Young Rascals song (Good Loving).

“Do realize what we’re in for if we get two 10-year-olds?”

“I doubt you’ll be able to get a baby. We’d have to go through all kinds of background checks and get on a list. We could start by fostering two kids and if it worked out, maybe adopt them. Why don’t you look into it and I’ll keep an eye on the home place. You take the Browning, I’ll figure something out.”

There wasn’t any figuring out to do, I retrieved the Taurus and planned to dump it in the towel drawer in the kitchen if anyone showed up that looked like a lawman. Put a couple of towels over it and who is to know? Sue was only gone for four hours and when she returned, she had two kids, a boy and a girl.

“Hi, I’m John.”

“I’m Steve and she’s my twin sister, Melanie.” (Probably of ‘Brand New Key’ fame)

“Where are our parents?”

“We don’t know.”

“Where were they the day we were nuked?”

“They were in San Francisco.”

“And, who have you been staying with?”

“Nobody; we stayed at home waiting for our parents to come back. We snuck out a few times and got food from a grocery store not far from home. Then some social worker came by the house and asked for our parents. When I told her they were in San Francisco, she hauled us in.”

“Do you know where in San Francisco?”

“The Financial District; they were staying at the Triton.”

The Triton? I know the place; it’s on Grant Avenue right across from Chinatown.”

“Yeah, that’s it.”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t believe they’ll be back. But until they do come, how about you stay with us?”

“Why won’t they be back?”

I opened that can of worms and now I would have to explain. It would have been better if I’d have kept my mouth shut.

“Sue and I were in San Francisco the day we were nuked. We were aboard the USS Iowa, a battleship from WW II. We had to stay there two weeks until the radiation died down. I looked at San Francisco from the East Bay and it looked like most of the buildings were down. However, I couldn’t really see that well, so maybe I was wrong.”

“She said we would each get our own room.”

That’s right, you will. Plus you don’t have to worry about food, we have more than enough.”

Sue showed them to their rooms and then I cornered her.

“How did you manage to come up with two kids in four hours, let alone twins?”

“I went to the Department of Children Services and was standing in line. While I was waiting, a woman brought them in and said she couldn’t handle them. The caseworker was standing there looking overwhelmed and I went up to her and asked if I could help. She asked why I was there and I told her to see about providing foster services. She took the kids and me to her desk and started filling out paperwork. I must have answered a thousand questions. She said they didn’t normally place children without a home visit and full background check. However, they had no means to perform background checks and didn’t get many volunteers these days.”

“And that’s it?”

“Not exactly, no. She’ll come by this evening for the home visit. I gave her directions to our place and she said she’d be here around 6pm, during dinner. I don’t know if she wants to see what we have to eat, wants dinner herself or what. I talked to the children on and off during the interview and they seemed like nice kids to me. They seemed impressed that they would each have their own bedroom. That was quite the bombshell you laid on them about their parents.”

“I’m sorry about that; I got my mouth in motion before my brain engaged. They must have suspected something like that anyway.”

“She refers to her parents in past tense, while he uses present tense.”

“Maybe I’d better rethink my position on shooting poodles.”

“Huh?”

“Never mind, I was just thinking out loud.”

The PRK had outlawed AR15s unless they had a fixed magazine with a capacity of no more than 10

rounds. That bimbo in San Francisco probably sponsored the legislation. However, my friend in Reno had M16A3s. Totally off the books and I only knew because he'd tried to sell them to me. I told him I didn't own a poodle and he said he'd keep them because I'd probably change my mind. He wanted \$2,000 each, but they were new-in-the-box rifles with extra 30-round magazines. He had ammo that he would sell me at cost. Now that we may have two kids living here, I wish I'd taken him up on his offer.

I said Reno, but he actually lived in Pleasant Valley, south of Reno. Now once we got this home visit out of the way, I might just make that trip and see if he still has those rifles. I need to get the kids some handguns, too; maybe some of those POS M9s to go with the POS M16s. For that price I should get those M4 SOPMOD kits, but knowing him, he'll want extra.

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Sue didn't take a chance that the social worker would show up expecting dinner. Just in case, she put a beef roast with onion, carrots and potatoes in the oven to be ready by 6pm. She checked with Eleanor and Eleanor had fresh baked bread.

"I'm Mrs. Durante; I'm here for the home visit."

"Come in please."

"Umm, something smells good."

"It does, doesn't it? Nothing special, just a beef roast and vegetables. We do have a loaf of fresh bread."

"Sue leaned over to me and whispered, "Don't lay it on so thick." "Mrs. Durante, would you care to join us for dinner?"

From the looks of Mrs. Durante, she hadn't missed any meals.

"Why thank you. I don't mind if I do."

"Steve, Melanie, wash up, dinner is ready."

"Where are they?"

"Watching a movie, I think, maybe 'Free Willy'."

"I'll the put movie on pause for them; and they can finish after dinner."

I sat with Steve and Sue with Melanie. Mrs. Durante took up the head of the table. Apparently the kids were wise to the demonstration we were putting on for their benefit and were very well mannered throughout the meal. There were the usual, "what a wonderful family" and what not and after the children had finished and had been excused, the questioning began, while Mrs. Durante was helping herself to a third helping.

“So, Mr. Morris, who do you do?”

“At the moment, we’re doing a little bit of gardening and raising livestock for food. I work with my neighbor, Fred on his farm, right up the road. I used to work for the Chevrolet dealer in town before the war.”

“Yes, and as I told you, I worked at the bank,” Sue reminded her.

“What do you do to produce income?”

“I’ve been grinding wheat into flour in my spare time and selling it at the Farmer’s Market. Like I said, I help Fred and he has been supplying milk to town.”

“Very little income, though.”

“At the moment, yes; however, we have some good investments and are actually well off. I invested in gold and silver for several years and have more than enough for us to live comfortably.”

“Do you butcher?”

“No need for now, we have a freezer full of meat.”

“I see.”

“I don’t believe that you do, Mrs. Durante. In a manner of speaking, we’re set. We have chickens for eggs, a milk cow, feeder cattle and Fred and I will be butchering pork come fall. We’re growing wheat, oats, corn and soybeans. Plus, we both have large gardens. We’d be happy, delighted in fact, to provide a home for Steve and Melanie. We lost our first baby and Sue can’t have any more. This is our chance to help two children in need. You know where we live and are welcome to come by any time to see how things are going.”

“Well! We have to be careful, you know.”

Most California social workers are overworked and overpaid. I suppose social workers are the same everywhere, but Mrs. Durante was beginning to get on my nerves. Considering the circumstances, maybe I was being hard on her; I could always offer her a fourth helping. I’d spent a little time with the kids and they were actually starting to grow on me. If I said something to Mrs. Durante that caused her to withdraw the children, Sue would kill me.

“I understand that and I’m glad that you had a chance to come by during meal time so you can see how the children will be fed. We eat a very well balanced diet.”

“Do you drink?”

“I had some wine in Sonoma, but we don’t have any beer, wine or liquor in the house (the Budweiser was in the shed).”

“I checked with the Sheriff and they didn’t have anything on you.”

“They should have, they came by and did the census.”

“Oh that. I meant that neither of you have an arrest record.”

All that means is that we didn’t get caught. I’ve been known to speed and a couple of times maybe had one too many beers in Fresno before coming home. Plus, I had some illegal firearms stashed. Then, there was that Surefire improved flashhider for my Super Match. Oh, and the Raufoss, don’t forget that, 1,200 rounds is 1,200 violations. I didn’t tell her that, I responded with a toothy grin. Plus there was all that salvaging we did when the town was empty. Where is Florence, Colorado? I’ll say hi to Ted Kaczynski. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_prisoners\\_at\\_ADX\\_Florence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_prisoners_at_ADX_Florence) It’s a regular who’s who of bad guys.

“Ok, for now, they stay. We’ll make unannounced checks every month from now on.”

Yeah right, according to news shows I’ve seen, you’re lucky if they show up once a year. They probably make the first couple of visits and if everything appears to be ok, the visits lose priority. Blame the system, not the social workers. However, I never met one I liked. Well, almost never, but that’s another very long story and she was married. Man, did she have a figure. Armenian, I think.

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“I need to make a trip to Reno to see Roger.”

“Do you have to? The kids just arrived.”

“I thought I’d take Steve with me.”

“To see Roger? Are you out of your mind?”

“Probably, I never thought I’d buy a pair of poodle shooters and a pair of M9s.”

“Isn’t a poodle shooter what you call the AR15?”

“It applies equally to the M16. The M9 is the Beretta 92FS Service pistol the military uses and has a 15 round magazine. I might as well start weapons training as soon as we both agree they’re ready.”

“They’re only 10 years old.”

“Do you think the JBTs or the MZBs give a crap about their age?”

“MZBs? Is that anything like a JBT?”

“In a way; a JBT, as you know, is a jack booted thug, aka a fed with a big head. A MZB is a criminal

and the abbreviation stands for Mutant Zombie Biker. IIRC, the title comes from a Patriot Fiction Story titled 'Lights Out.'

"When are you leaving?"

"I thought we'd leave first thing in the morning. It's around 275 miles one way. It may be after dark when we get back, but I'm not planning on an overnight stay."

"And you're getting 2 M16s, 2 M9s, magazines and ammo?"

"That's my plan. If Roger has SOPMOD kits and doesn't try to hold me up for them, I might buy them as well."

"What's that include?"

"Several sights, a hand grip, a grenade launcher and sometimes a suppressor. The suppressor is more of a flashhider than anything else because it doesn't completely silence the rifle. That would take subsonic ammo and you'd give up more than you got."

We left around 5 am and were at Roger's just after 10:30. He winked and said, "Let me guess, you bought a poodle."

"Actually I need two, with the SOPMOD kit for the M4 including the suppressors; plus a pair of M9s with 4 extra magazines each. Add 10,000 rounds of M855 and a case of frangible for target practice."

"Big order. I kept the rifles like I said I would. I have the kits with the suppressors and all the ammo you will need. Do you have gold?"

"Krugerrands ok?"

"Sure, for gold, I'll give you a small discount."

"How small?"

"I bought the suppressors separately. They're the same ones they put in the block II SOPMOD kits. How about you pay my cost on the ammo, my asking price on the rifles and \$500 each for the SOPMOD kits?"

"Total?"

"\$2,500 each on the rifles with the kits, \$400 a case for all of the ammo. That's 5,000 plus 4,400, a total of \$9,400. Call it 6 ounces of gold."

"Ouch. You forgot the M9s."

"We'll round it off and I'll add some gold dot for 7 ounces of gold. How many magazines do you

want?"

## USS Iowa – Chapter 6

"How many come with the rifles?"

"Seven."

"I'll need 6 more 30-round per rifle and five 15-round magazines per Beretta."

"I can give you used magazines and new springs for free. They're USGI and in good shape except for the springs."

"Deal."

I counted out the 7 Krugerrands and we loaded the stuff in the back of the Chevy. There hadn't been a border guard on the way up, but that didn't mean a thing. As for the price, because of FOPA of '86, it wasn't an excessive price for the rifles and he threw in the silencers. The last time I looked before the war, .223 was going for about that price. I asked and he directed me to a farm where I could buy baled alfalfa. It went in the pickup on top of the purchases and I covered with a tarp and snugged it down. There wasn't a California Agricultural Inspector on the way back either, but there would have been if I hadn't bought the hay.

Giving up 7 Krugerrands was difficult, they represented about 18 months of buying. Considering what I'd paid for them, I was getting a bargain, less than \$2,100 for all that I got. I never could have bought the 4 guns for that sum. You should have seen Steve's eyes, big as saucers and he didn't even know that the guns were for him and his sister. They were going to enter 6th grade in the fall, if the schools opened. He said his father didn't own guns because they frightened him.

"Have you ever fired a gun?"

"Just once. I fired a .22 at a friend's house in the country."

"I have a few guns myself. Altogether, Sue and I have around six."

"What kinds?"

"Three rifles, two pistols and a shotgun."

"Can I see them?"

"I have some of them put up."

"Why?"

“Because the state of California doesn’t allow you to have them.”

“And you have them anyway?”

“I had one long before it became illegal and I didn’t register it and that made it illegal. The other is a pistol just like a hundred other pistols that they didn’t put on the approved list.”

“How did you get that, if it’s not approved?”

“From Roger; as far as I know, they’re legal in 49 states.”

“You’re one of those people my dad called a gun nut, right?”

“I suppose so, the Bill of Rights recognizes an inalienable right to keep and bear arms.”

“Dad said that meant that the state could have a militia. We have one, don’t we?”

“You’re referring to the California State Military Reserve, Steve. I’m referring to what the Bill of Rights originally meant according to the US Supreme Court. The idea was that if the government got too big for its britches, the people had a means to resist tyranny.”

“How big was the war? I’ve heard people talking about various places that were hit with atom bombs.”

“It wasn’t good, they hit around 150 places, and I’d guess that most of the ‘bombs’ were hydrogen bombs. More bang in the same sized package. The general belief is that we were attacked by China. And, we retaliated; that means we ‘bombed’ them back.”

“Who won?”

“There isn’t always a winner. Off hand, I’d say we both lost.”

I was having a rather intelligent conversation with a 10-year-old boy. If Melanie was equally bright, we’d have our hands full. Sue expressed the thought that they were ‘a little young’ to teach to shoot. I disagreed and I’m sure Kim du Toit would disagree; his son went to the Nationals for the Olympic Shooting Team, having won the Texas competition.

Many had expected the Taiwan/China dispute to erupt during the 2008 Summer Games. However, Taiwan elected Ma Ying-jeou, who stated that "for our party, the eventual goal is reunification, but we don't have a timetable," explaining that he meant it was a choice for Taiwan but a choice for the Chinese KMT. Ma was another crooked politician. Now there’s a laugh, it would be more like Taiwan surrendering to China.

Absent news, we didn’t know what was happening in the Middle East. Were our troop’s home or trapped there? What happened between Israel and its Arab neighbors? Who would take advantage of our present circumstance and make a move against our country? Or, would the UN send in armed troops to help us? As for the UN, they probably didn’t exist anymore, not with New York being struck. However,

they could always reform somewhere in Europe and try to stuff their help down our throat.

“Did you get what you wanted?”

“Yes, I did. Two rifles, two pistols, extra magazines and a lot of ammo.”

“What did it cost you?”

“It cost seven ounces of gold.”

“How much does that leave us?”

“I used about 20% of the supply; you know how it went, with gold being cheaper sometimes than others. We started out with 40 ounces and are down to 32. But, we still have nearly all of the junk silver.”

“Ok, I guess about the only things we’ll need are shoes clothes for the kids. They’ll probably out grow them before they wear them out.”

“Had we known, we could have included kids clothing in our salvaging. Do you want to go to Fresno and stock up on clothing? It may become hard to get later.”

“Do you think DCS will let us keep them?”

“She’ll be out once or twice at mealtime and I doubt we’ll see her after that; or, at most, maybe once a year.”

Steve wanted jeans, cowboy boots and western cut shirts. Melanie wanted one dress in each size plus ‘dress up’ shoes and the same things Steve wanted for daily wear. Sue made sure that the shirts she got for Melanie included darts to allow for a ‘growing girl’. We ended up buying all Wrangler brand clothing and Tony Lama boots. Although he wanted a duster and a rain slicker, they didn’t have them in his size and he had to settle for a light and heavy jackets plus a raincoat.

They did get cowboy hats and Sue and I decided to each get one ourselves. I tried on the cowboys boots, but they pinched my feet. The salesman claimed all new boots did that and to wear them for a few days to left them conform to my foot. When I couldn’t get them off, he suggested I buy a boot jack. I usually wear jeans but got some extra Wrangles for when the ones I had wore out. Sue got boots, shirts, jeans and of course her hat. The only thing we lacked was horses, tack and cowboy guns.

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“Fred.”

“John.”

“I’d like you to meet Steve and Melanie. They will be living with us. Kids, say hello to Mr. Livingston.”

Melanie went with Sue to meet Eleanor and Steve stayed with us. I had to explain how we had ended up with two kids. Fred said something about kids being handy on the farm and an extra source of labor. He wanted to know about the foster program and what Eleanor and he had to do to get a couple of kids. I told him about Mrs. Durante and he just shook his head. He said he didn't know if their doors were wide enough for her to get in. Maybe if she showed up, he'd have Eleanor fix a tuna-noodle casserole. I told him she'd probably lick the casserole dish, unless she fixed a double batch.

"We'll cut alfalfa on Monday. Have to rake it once or twice to get it dry and then we can bale."

"How's the crop look?"

"Not as good as previous years, but with a second cutting, we'll have enough. I'd rather get 3 cuttings, but I don't believe that's in the cards. Some years I've gotten as many as 4."

"How are the other crops doing?"

"Well, I told you we'd have to make corn ensilage, didn't I? You might want some for your dairy cow, but don't feed it to beef cattle. I'd say we'll be alright and may have some wheat to sell. We may get a yield of as high as 40 bushels to the acre or 2,800 bushels total. Don't know about the soybeans, but I'd expect a below average yield, say 40 bushels per acre."

"So, Steve, have you ever been on a farm before?"

"Once Mr. Livingston, I stayed overnight with a friend. Say, where are your horses?"

"I'm afraid we don't have any horses, Steve."

"Shucks."

"Want to ride horses do you?"

"I rode my friend's horse, it was fun."

"Steve why don't you go to the house and meet Mrs. Livingston, I'm sure she has milk and cookies."

"Sure, thank you."

"Got manners, that boy."

"He does and he's pretty smart too."

"I sent him inside so I could tell you where you can get horses if you want them. I know a guy who had a very big string before the war and I'd imagine he's having the same problem growing feed. Might be able to get 4 horses and tack reasonably. I might even buy some myself, you know, for when the vehicles stop running."

Fred's pickup was from pre-computer days and it might run for another 50 years. I sort of figured he was thinking about foster children and horses for them to ride.

"I don't know much about horses, how about you come along and help me pick them out?"

"Ok, when?"

"Tomorrow ok?"

"Eight am?"

"I'll be here."

"Check in Fresno for cowboy guns, I'd go for Ruger New Model Super Blackhawks. You can go with the .44 magnum and use lighter cartridges where necessary, like .44 Special or hand loads with lower power. If you go that way, get Marlin 1894 rifles."

"Somehow, I don't see myself as a cowboy."

"Improvise, adapt, overcome."

The following day, we went and bought 4 horses each. I don't know horses and all I can say was ours were brown; one boy and three girls. Fred did the same and called them Chestnuts. I didn't know if that was the color or the breed. The tack was used, but well cared for. When I asked about rifle scabbards, the seller hunted around in the tack room and finally came up with eight plus eight sets of used saddle bags. There went another 4 Krugerrands. Fred explained that the quarter horses were generally called Sorrels as opposed to Chestnuts. It was, he said, because there was a hint of red in the brown. So, the breed was quarter horse and the color was sorrel or chestnut. Since the horses were only three years old, it wasn't proper to refer to them as stallions and mares but as fillies and colts. I once knew a man named horse (Richard Harris).

"Fred suggested getting cowboy guns."

"Which ones?"

"Ruger Super Blackhawks and Marlin 1894 rifles; they both shoot the same cartridges."

"What caliber?"

".44 magnum".

"Are you stark raving crazy?"

"You can use lighter loads, you know; .44 Special for one and Cowboy Actions loads."

However, she had a point, so when I drove to Fresno and went to the store, I also checked out .357

magnum rifles and single action handguns. The dealer was quick to cite the law, "One handgun purchase in 30 days." I started to shuffle those Krugerrands like you sometimes see people shuffling poker chips. I swear you could see the dollars signs in his eyes. I walked out with 2 Marlin 1894Cs, 4 1894s, 4 Ruger Super Blackhawks and 2 Blackhawks and several cases of ammo, all for only 4 ounces of gold. And, no 15 day waiting period...

The guns ran as follows: 1894C – \$465x2, 1894 – \$475x4, Blackhawks – \$395x2 and Super Blackhawks – \$470x4. Total: \$5,500 and no sales tax. He also sold me ammo at 5% over his cost. I bought a case each of 240gr JHP and 240gr solid in the .44 and mixed case of 158gr JHP and 158gr solid in .357. For learning, I got a few boxes of .44 Special and .38 Special. I cost me 4 Krugerrands, out the door (and don't hurry back). I did the math in my head and unless I was wrong, the price of gold was around \$1,750 an ounce.

I didn't say anything to the kids about the M16s and M9s, but I did give them each an 1894C and a Blackhawk, sans ammo. They were speechless and finally managed a 'Thanks' and 'Thank you'. We set aside a closet for the firearms and installed a deadbolt. Their firearms each had a case with their names written on it. Sue had one key to the deadbolt on her key ring and I had the other on my key ring.

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It rained on Monday and we had to put off cutting the hay for a day. On Tuesday, it wasn't dry enough to cut until after noon. Fred had a windrower attachment on his sickle bar and he said that we'd have to wait until the hay was certain level of dryness before we could use the rake to turn it. That turned out to be late morning on Thursday. On Saturday, we finally baled it towing a wagon that I stacked the bales on. Fred had three wagons and when they were full, we took the hay up and filled the loft and returned to baling. It took the whole day, but I got two wagons of hay and Fred said on Monday we could put in my loft. He'd have to tow his elevator over because I didn't have hay forks and he wasn't going to take his down. A bale equals around 70#.

<http://www.sheepscreek.com/rural/haying.html><http://www.history.rochester.edu/Appleton/a/hhayfork.html>

Fred didn't have an ensilage shredder and the weather warmed up just enough to provide the corn the sunlight it needed to grow. Meanwhile we harvested the oats, wheat and soybeans. I filled some 6 gallon pails with Mylar bags, one of the crops, added an oxygen absorber or two and sealed the bag and then the pail. We were adding to, rather than taking away from, our LTS. I planned to do the same with corn, once it was harvested. I had this gut feeling things would get much worse before they got better.

Plus, I was still waiting for the speech that began with: "My fellow Americans." This long after the attack, I wasn't holding my breath.

Raising hogs is divided into two periods, the farrowing period and the feeder period. The time sequence is five months for breeding and gestation and one month for farrowing and lactation at which time the litter is weaned and the sow may be re-bred or marketed. Each feeder pig from weaning to 50 pounds consumes 54 pounds of feed consisting of 34 pounds of corn and 20 pounds of supplement, including feed additives, vitamins and mineral mix. The finishing portion of this farrow-to-finish program assumes a feeding period of 4 months and results in a gain of 200 pounds from 50 to 250 pounds.

If anything, the hogs would be overweight and consume too much feed if we waited until late November to butcher. Not long after the corn crop was in, it really turned cold, more like northern Minnesota than central California. It was time to butcher hogs. Fred picked out the ones we would keep and butcher ourselves and loaded the remained aboard the truck, making several trips. He picked up a few gold coins in the process. He saved 4 hogs to butcher and said he'd call me on the CB when he needed me.

I went when he called and the hogs were dead, skinned and split in half. I checked and the meat was cold so he'd probably killed them the day before. We started with one hog and he showed me how to separate the parts into the ham, loin, belly and picnic/butt. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primal\\_cut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primal_cut) Next, I got my lesson in using a cleaver to make pork chops. When we'd finished up with everything but the bellies, hams and picnics, we brined them down to cure them. Fred said he'd smoke them and we'd split the meat 50-50. My share of the meat was for helping him through the crop season. I had also received a portion of the crops to feed our livestock.

If nothing else, I got a whole new perspective on the amount of labor that went into farming. It must have been awful when it was mostly done by hand. Meanwhile, Steve and Melanie settled in and in late August, Sue had begun home schooling them. It was like I imagined, we hadn't seen Mrs. Durante, yet. She'd probably show up with the RCMP. It sure as hell wouldn't be the County Sheriff or the CHP.

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I think everyone imagines a governmental response to a small crisis like WW III to involve the President invoking all of those EOs, FEMA running rampant trying to save us from ourselves (Brownie did one heck of a job), and the military being mobilized. It doesn't do the President much good to invoke the EOs unless he can communicate that he did it. FEMA can't even find New Orleans, after the wind died down. You can't mobilize folks who are over there instead of being over here, regardless of what John Warner thinks.

Which of the 150 cities that got nuked do you start with – the city by the bay, the big apple or the windy city; that only leaves another 147 and they probably have mottos too. Anyway you look at it; someone is going to issue an accusation of pork barrel spending. The term is more commonly used as a political metaphor for the appropriation of government spending for projects that are intended primarily to benefit particular constituents or campaign contributors. So if we do Chicago and don't do Detroit, only Chicago gets the benefit. Or, maybe we should start rebuilding with a city that had no gang violence. Name one, please!

We were coming up on Thanksgiving and pulled our last turkey from the freezer, a 12-pound Butterball. Sue had dried bread for stuffing, cranberry jelly, green beans and mushroom soup for everyone's favorite, a can of 'yams' and potatoes to smash. I was looking forward to turkey, we usually only eat it once a year. At Christmas time, we usually bake a ham.

Contrary to my fears, we hadn't seen any JBTs or MXBs, yet. We had snow on the ground, a rare occurrence here. Not much, maybe 4-5 inches, but it stuck. We usually get rain in the late fall-winter-early spring and are fairly dry the remainder of the year. However, the average December high was around 54°, not the 37° the weatherman was forecasting. Yeah, they had a couple of local radio stations

up now, almost all local news with a small amount of state news mixed in. National news beyond what most of us already knew was almost non-existent. The one thing they continued to do was to identify cities that had been hit. I had a US map pinned up and was adding pushpins as they were broadcast, ala Jericho.

“Kids, we need to know what to get you for Christmas, this will be a first time experience for us.”

Steve started to say something and then caught himself. I half expected I knew what he wanted to say, but I couldn't bring his parents back. If there were any way in the world, I could, I would and you can bank that.

“Do you need any new clothes?”

“Not really, no thank you,” Melanie replied.

“A new game, a CD or DVDs?”

“Thanks no.”

“I'd love to be able to bring your parents back, but that's beyond my powers. They're in God's hands now and if He chooses to return them, you'll see them again. If not, you'll see them in Heaven when you go.”

“Could I have a rifle and pistol like yours?”

“Steve, what do you mean when you say like mine?”

“A military rifle and pistol.”

“There's always that possibility, but it may not be exactly like mine. My rifle is a very expensive rifle that's made in Illinois. It's what our military used before they started to use the M16.”

“That's what I meant, a military rifle like an M16. Your pistol is the old fashioned kind, I was thinking about the one they use now.”

“Newer isn't always better Steve, but I put it on your wish list. Melanie, what would you like?”

“I would like a sewing machine and some cloth.”

Well... so much for the other M16 and M9.

“What kind of a swing machine?”

“A Brothers quilting machine; I'd like to learn how to make quilts.”

“Ok, what model?”

“I’d like the QC-1000.”

“No promises, but we’ll add it to the list.”

After the kids went to bed, I asked Sue, “What do you know about sewing machines?”

“I’ve seen the one she means in town. It’s expensive. However, I saw your look and you’re going to give Steve the M16 and the M9, right?”

“I was giving it some thought.”

“You said you spent 7 Krugerrands on the stuff you bought from Roger. You can get her the sewing machine, plenty of cloth, thread and notions for 2 Krugerrands.”

“A Krugerrand here, a Krugerrand there, pretty soon you’re talking about real money.”

“Listen, John, you can probably sell the rifle for more than you have in it.”

“Yes and no. They were valued at about \$1,600 an ounce when I bought the guns and now they’re around \$1,750.”

“So, charge more. What is a full auto M16 with a silencer worth in the PRK these days?”

“I don’t know, 10 thousand, maybe more. The main thing is that it already in the PRK.”

“It’s worth more than that.”

“Why?”

“Because silly, it’s off the books.”

“But only NFR machineguns are legal and the list was closed in ’86.”

“Even if it were on the list, it would still be illegal in the PRK.”

“Yeah, huh?”

Hell that poodle shooter was worth 2 or 3 of my Super Match’s, maybe I ought to hang onto it. Melanie might want the pistol later, so I could hang onto it too. I remembered seeing a price on an internet website for a class 3 dealer who wanted \$25,995 for a new M16A1. It was ‘rare’ made by Harrington & Richardson and he had one that wasn’t rare for \$13,995. In fact, IIRC, this guy, down in Texas, had a bunch of registered machineguns running from about thirteen grand and up. Thompson, H&Ks, you name it, he might have it. Besides, with LA getting nuked, MS-13 wouldn’t be selling any more surplus M16s or grenades. Interestingly, the SOPMOD kit came with a grenade launcher, but I hadn’t installed it because I didn’t have any of the 40mm grenades.

Anyway, as of Christmas we became a family with automatic weapons available. The kid's birthday was December 24th so I gave Steve the M9 and told Melanie she could choose between an M9 and the cloth, thread and sewing notions she wanted. I was surprised when she took the M9, but Sue explained it. "By giving her a choice, you indicated you had both, so she figures the other stuff will be under tree tomorrow."

For two cents, it wouldn't be; outfoxed by a female, again. Sue made eggnog and I went to the shed and dug out the bottle of brandy we didn't have.

## **USS Iowa – Chapter 7**

Steve was really excited about his new gun, and I told him it would be under lock and key until I had time to teach him how to shoot it. All of their guns were under lock and key except when we'd gone riding once or twice. Sue had been right about Melanie, because I gave her the sewing machine but held back the cloth, thread and notions. She didn't say anything, but the disappointment was evident. So I did the, "Oops I forgot something routine." Can't use it twice but I pulled it off this time.

Sue and I exchanged more practical gifts, a sweater for her and a Pendleton shirt for me. In our case, it was all about the thought and not the actual gift. However, the shirt really kept me warm and I considered getting more. She didn't have enough sweaters either because we'd turned down the thermostat to preserve propane.

When the temperature rose to above 50° I took Steve out and taught him the finer points of the A3. I also told him that full-auto was for emergency use only, like if we were about to get overrun. His hands were smallish for the M9, but he gave it his best try. I told him we'd try again later as he grew. After that we cleaned the weapons with me teaching the 'preferred' method. I always keep a can or two of Breakfree CLP around and a few gun cloths.

The ironic thing about the kids was how well they could shoot. I worked with them and my first revelation came when they followed my instructions. I'd done the safety rules drill more than once and they observed them. Of course, my telling them that if they couldn't follow safety rules, they couldn't have a gun may have had some bearing. Steve was more into shooting than Melanie; I expected that. I didn't expect the competition between the two. 'Anything you can do I can do better', sort of thing. Maybe dead shots with the 1894C wouldn't be the correct term, but it fit. As for the Blackhawks, I started them with .38 Special, at one time the favorite round of police.

The weight of the Blackhawk absorbed some of the recoil and in time they were shooting well with them. I moved them to .357 magnum cartridges with light weight bullets, and they adjusted. Finally, I moved them to the 158gr rounds, sort of a handful for small hands and they persevered. We settled on solid points for the rifles and H for the revolvers.

We had to wait for a while after Christmas because it was way too cold out to shoot. Having started them with the .38 special, the 9mm pistol wouldn't be any worse and it would be more comfortable to shoot than the .357 magnum. I'd read articles in Guns and Ammo about the 'Dirty Harry' craze. Men would see the model 29 and just have to have one. Not long after they bought it, they'd sell it and the

remaining rounds of ammo; which was, according to the article, a full box less six rounds.

The pro gun lobby had long claimed that when guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns. A person could take that one of two ways: 1) law abiding citizens wouldn't have guns; or, 2) gun owners would keep their guns and thereby become criminals. I was one of the latter; I figured screw 'em if they can't take a joke. Buying ammo occurred one of two ways after you needed a permit to buy ammo, out the front door at a reasonable price or out the back door at an inflated price. After the attack, it was the same price out either door, the inflated price.

*My fellow Americans.*

*I am Dirk Kempthorne, former Secretary of the Interior and eighth in the line of succession to the Presidency. Your government had a difficult time finding a surviving person in the line of succession and I was caught on a trip inspecting BLM lands with the Secretary of Agriculture.*

*One, effective immediately, all state National Guard units are activated for federal service.*

*Two, effective immediately, all troops serving in non US locations are recalled.*

*Three, effective immediately, I invoke section 1076 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.*

*Four, effective immediately, Habeas Corpus is suspended.*

*Five, all available food and fuel will be collected and redistributed by US forces. Citizens are urged to go to their county seat and register to receive the food. In conjunction with the Secretary of Agriculture, bulk foodstuffs are being relocated and distributed. If you have sufficient supplies or extra, you are urged to share with neighbors and relatives. Your supplies will not be seized for redistribution.*

*Six, in view of attacks by criminal elements, the states are urged to form militias or activate their state defense forces to restore order.*

*Seven, in view of the violence, all federal firearms laws are temporarily suspended and states are urged to do the same.*

*I will make broadcasts on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays at 7pm Central time on all Emergency Alert System radio stations.*

*Now, speaking for myself as a citizen and not as your President, allow me to explain that I did not choose the position I find myself in. The attack occurred even as the President issued orders to implement the Continuity of Operations Plan and the Continuity of Government Plan. Those people who would have represented what some call the Shadow Government were not in place when the attack occurred. Unfortunately, our enemy, the Chinese, launch SLBMs from off the east coast leaving us with barely 6 minutes warning.*

*May God bless our efforts... thank and good evening.*

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“What do you think?”

“I think we got lucky, Sue, we could have ended up with Nancy Pelosi. IIRC, this guy is very conservative.”

“What about all those edicts; you know, the effective immediately stuff?”

“He got a late start. I’d guess he’s moving as fast as he can. I don’t have a problem with suspending Habeas Corpus, Lincoln did it. It sounds as if the feds are trying to help and he didn’t once mention FEMA. He seemed to be very respectful of states’ rights without coming out and saying it.”

“So are all of the guns legal now?”

“Not until Arnold says so. He seems to generally do what Republican Presidents’ ask.”

“Is he still alive?”

“If he isn’t, he has a successor.”

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“Fred.”

“John. Did you hear the broadcast?”

“That’s why I’m here, what do you think?”

“It sounds like he’s trying. I hope that doesn’t turn into him being very trying.”

“I made a trip up towards Reno a while back.”

“That trip to Hawthorne?”

“No, the trip I made to Pleasant Valley.”

“You do get around, looking for more ammo?”

“Plus a few weapons; I ended up with an extra and wondered if you might want to buy it.”

“What is it?”

“It’s a M16A3, new in the box, with the M4 SOPMOD kit.”

“Is that a full-auto?”

“Yes.”

“No thank you, I have enough problems without looking for trouble. Anyway, even if the Governor suspends the law, he’ll just re-implement it after the emergency is over.”

“Ok, well I thought I’d offer.”

“I appreciate you keeping me in mind, but I probably closer to a begrudging prepper than a true survivalist. No disrespect, but it is guy’s like you who flaunt the law that give survivalists a bad name.”

“No problem, see you later.”

I suppose he was right. I could have registered the Barrett. I could have bought an approved .45 pistol. I went to Nevada, bought unregistered machineguns and illegally imported them back into California. I also went to Barstow and stole Raufoss from under the nose of the government. Maybe I should be in the cell next to Ted.

I rationalized it because I had a wife, and now a family, to protect. Temporary family anyway... I’d bet money the kids would never see their parents again. As far as I was concerned, I done what I should, accumulated supplies, salvaged some more when the chance presented itself and provided a home for two very nice kids.

In that regard, their parents had done a very good job raising them. They had manners, courtesy and respect for their elders. Does that does that sound like your typical kid near the end of the first decade of the 21st century? Some, of course, but kids like that, even parents like that, were few and far between. I knew we did something right when the subject of church came up.”

“Don’t you go to church?”

“Not every Sunday, Steve.”

“Oh, we went every Sunday to the Wesley United Methodist Church. Which church did you go to?”

“Clovis United Methodist Church; but we didn’t go every Sunday.”

“Why not?”

“It was bit of a drive for one thing and some Sundays I worked around here.”

“You couldn’t spare an hour a week for God?”

“I could have; I didn’t. Wesley United; is that a Wesleyan Church?”

“No, it’s part of the United Methodist Church. What difference does that make?”

“None, really; I thought if you were raised Wesleyan it might explain why Melanie and you are so well behaved. Wesley founded the Methodist Church but in the mid 1800s, the church split up. Wesleyan Methodists are relatively conservative compared to the United Methodists.”

“Same God, right? I never understand that part, but I’m just a kid.”

“Yes, it is the same God; there’s only one that I know of. Different churches have different ways of paying their respects or worshiping if you prefer.”

“I have another problem.”

“Tell me, maybe I can help.”

“The sixth Commandment says…”

“Thou shall not kill?”

“Yes.”

“The correct translation of the word is murder. I’ll try and explain. After God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He sent the Israelites into Canaan because it was their new home. The Israelites killed Canaanites and God would not have allowed it if it violated His Commandments. A soldier can murder during a war, but it’s only murder when he kills someone under certain circumstances. If a soldier commits murder, he can be held to account for it. If the person he kills is trying to kill him, the other person is presumed to be a soldier too and a soldier kills a soldier, that’s how war works.”

“My dad said killing wasn’t a good thing.”

“Your dad was right, Steve. It something you do because you have to, not because you want to.”

“But, you have so many guns.”

“We all have guns, to defend ourselves. We don’t go looking for trouble, but if trouble finds us, we’ll be ready.”

“Give me an example.”

“Ok, how about this… you’ve heard of the gang in Los Angeles called MS-13, or Mara Salvatrucha, right? They’re from El Salvador and in El Salvador they can buy an M16 on the street for around \$200 or a hand grenade for \$1. They import the guns into the United States, or did until recently. So what if some of them survived the nuclear attack on LA and came here? They would want to steal our food, hurt Sue and Melanie and probably kill you and me. With guns, we could defend ourselves and the right to self defense is one of the inalienable rights that pre-date the Constitution.”

“What are they?”

“Liberty is divided into four types: natural, personal, civil and political. The first two are inalienable; the latter two are government granted. Natural liberty is absolute freedom, limited only by the laws of nature. It is exercised upon one's private property or upon unclaimed property (anywhere else would be a trespass). Personal liberty is the right of locomotion, the freedom to travel upon public roads and waterways; limited only by the requirement to not infringe another's right to travel. Civil liberty is the permission from government to do that which would otherwise be a trespass, a tort or not allowed by law. A license to practice medicine is an example of a civil liberty (inflict injury without criminal liability). Political liberty is the permission to vote and hold office. In countries with socialist/communist governments that abolish private property rights, natural and personal liberties do not exist. Permission (license) is required for most activities and actions.”

I think that answer went over his head, he asked, “A buck for a grenade?”

“Yes, and right now, I truly wish I had a couple of hundred dollars worth.”

With discussion in mind Steve asked me to cover the safety lecture for the M16 and show him how to operate it. I got it out and had him load 5 dummy rounds into a magazine and we went through the functions and what he'd need to know to use the weapon. Since the guns were locked away, I wasn't concerned about either of them getting their hands on them. I notice Melanie pretending to be sew something, but actually paying close attention. Maybe she overheard me tell Steve that MS-13 would hurt her and Sue.

“I hope I never have to do that.”

“Do you mean kill someone?”

“Yes.”

“So do I, Steve, so do I.”

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I truly meant that. If I never had to shoot anyone again, that would be fine with me. I went to Panama and had to fire my M16 more than once. I'm not sure I killed anyone, but some of the people we shot at ended up dead; I was part of the 7th Infantry Division. The Panamanian military fatalities were estimated between 100 and 1,000 and between 300 and 4,000 civilians were reported killed. Actually, if the truth were known, nobody actually knows for sure.

“Steve brought up the subject of church.”

“We haven't been in a while, maybe we should go.”

“They're Methodists, but went to a different church.”

“Let's go Sunday. If our church is shut down, there are several other churches in Clovis.”

“I’m carrying, but I’ll leave it in the car.”

“Maybe I should too and do the same.”

“Might not hurt, you don’t know who or what we might run into.”

There are darn few shootings in churches. I never carried in church before and I didn’t plan to start now. It’s God’s house and until I hear the deep booming voice telling me I have permission, I won’t. I knew most of you would misunderstand me. I’m a survivalist, for sure, but part of that is knowing my place in the scheme of things and nobody died and appointed me God.

On Sunday, Sue had her pistol in her purse and I was wearing my paddle holster. When we got to our church we disarmed and placed the firearms in the glove box and locked it. I thought that Melanie and Steve would be shocked, but they didn’t say a word. Our church was open and the sermon this Sunday was especially good. After the service several people approached us and wanted to know who the children were. We introduced them and explained that we were providing them a home for now because their folks had been in San Francisco the day of the attack. We didn’t have to explain any more than that and nobody expressed sympathy, they just said hoped it would all work out.

Sue had left a pork roast in the oven and when we returned home we had our big meal of the day. We usually did that on church Sundays and ate light at supper time, hamburgers, pizza, popcorn or whatever we felt like. Our garden had produced very well, despite the weather and without a greenhouse. Part of it may have been the crops Sue selected and part of it may have been pure luck.

The less we’d have to fight JBTs or MZBs, the better I’d like it. The next time we went into town, we found that many families had left because the food the government promised hadn’t arrived. Apparently, they’d started in Sacramento and were working their way out. There was some food available, mostly home grown, but not really enough to go around and it was expensive because it was being sold by private parties. Fred and I had stopped delivering the milk and had some cheese going, Jack and Colby. It was about ready but we weren’t planning on giving it away. While Colby isn’t generally aged, there was a product known as Pinconning Cheese that is an aged Colby. Our Jack cheese was generally called dry Jack because it was also aged about 6 months. I took some of the later produced Jack and chili peppers and let it age about a month. It goes real good with Bud.

Anyway, we had been producing cheese for around 6 months and we had cheese of various ages. Finally we decided to load it up, take it to Fresno and see who would buy some. I sold out at our first stop, a large grocery store. They offered me credit or silver. The problem with credit was I’d have to pay their markup so I went with silver. It takes about one gallon of milk for one gallon of cheese. Fred was producing 180 gallons a day give or take and we were producing six gallons a day. He had on the order of 32,000 pounds and I had on the order of 900 pounds because I only had one cow and the kids drank milk. He had to hit half the stores in town before he sold out, but he brought home gold coins.

Since fertilizer wasn’t available, Fred had to rely on manure and crop rotation. Since there wasn’t but 4-5” of snow on the ground I spread the manure for him. There were several loads to spread because he had thirty cows and now more calves. The pig manure was the worst smelling and the horse manure was

almost tolerable. It appeared to me that we'd be able to spread some on every field except last year's soybean field which was going to be planted in corn this year.

Since it was warm enough now to be outside, I took Steve to the range and got him familiar with the M16 and the M9. I made a separate 'date' to take Melanie out to avoid the completion and concentrate n her shooting skills. I only allowed them to shoot one magazine in full-auto because it was only used as a last resort. When I went out to practice with my guns, Sue joined me. She also tried Melanie M16 and commented that this was gun she could get used to.

"Roger."

"John, what now?"

"Don't suppose you'd have another A3 would you?"

"I don't have another M4 SOPMOD kit."

"Do you have the silencer?"

"Sure. For a man who hates poodle shooters, you're accumulating an armory of them."

"I let Sue shoot my foster daughter's gun."

"You need a M9 too?"

"No, she has that Browning."

I have one rifle, a silencer and two cases of M855 left."

"Price?"

"For you, 2 Krugerrands. The difference is the amount of ammo I can let you have."

"I don't suppose you have any hand grenades?"

"\$5 each. I also have LAWs but they still warm."

"I wondered where you got the stuff. I'll tell you what; I'll make it 3 Krugerrands if you can supply 100 grenades and a few LAWS."

"Well... gold is up to \$2,000, but if you could go 4, I let you have 8 cases of grenades and 2 cases (10) of LAWs."

"Fine, load it up."

My stack of gold was continually being whittled down. I had less than half of what I started with; but,

Roger could have the headache of dealing with the crooked logistics NCO. The problem was when he got caught; he'd started rolling over on people in exchange for a plea bargain. I was more than willing to let Roger make his profit because he wouldn't roll over on anyone. He'd done very well during Robin Sage.

With everyone equipped with firearms and familiar using them, I figured we were about as ready as we could be. The winter had started earlier and lasted later and Fred was pressed to get the field ready for planting. When I went over, he was in the machine shed, looking at his last bags of hybrid seeds. You simply can't get a non-hybrid corn seed and he was worried about having enough.

"You can't buy some Fred?"

"I could if I knew where to buy it; money isn't the problem. I think I have just enough for this year. How are you on livestock feed?"

"It will last well past harvest time." [http://www.books-about-california.com/Pages/1000\\_Questions\\_Answered/1000\\_Questions\\_intro.html](http://www.books-about-california.com/Pages/1000_Questions_Answered/1000_Questions_intro.html)

"How are you on corn? I'm definitely making ensilage this year, we'll get more milk."

"I can buy what little I need at a feed store. Correct me if I'm wrong; if you plant the corn seeds you harvest, they don't breed true. However, if you're making ensilage, what difference does that make? Why don't you keep a small corn patch and harvest the seeds?"

"You're right about it not breeding true, but you also have a point. Maybe we'll try that. How goes the milk production?"

"My cow is dry and I need to get my heifer bred so I can double my milk supply."

"I'll bring the bull over."

The steer would be past butcher weight this fall. We only had room in the freezers to store one. With a double supply of milk, I'd try and produce a ton of cheese once the heifer came in. Fred came over with his truck empty and said the bull was giving him problems so he wanted to take the heifer and cow over instead.

I had a 50-50 chance of getting heifers from both my bred cattle and if I did, it would double our herd. Our barn was an old fashioned stanchion barn with stanchions for 12 cows. It was all hand milking because we didn't have a milking machine. It wasn't bad with only one cow and even two would be bad; what about when we had a large herd? By then, I think Steve would be old enough to help with the milking.

Melanie was working on a quilt for her bed and had all the pieces cut and had started sewing them together. She did it one square at a time, a square representing one pattern block. She was going for 6 across and 9 long, a good sized quilt. I learned that quilts are usually an even number of blocks across and an odd number of blocks long. Her new machine was capable of quilting any sized quilt; it just

became harder with large sized quilts.

The beef was high choice-low prime and very tender. We had meat of some kind at every meal. Bacon, sausage or ham for breakfast, usually a lunch meat sandwich at noon and some cut of beef, pork or chicken for supper. We need the fat because we burned off a lot of calories during the day. Steve helped when I went for firewood for the fireplace. We had to go up in the mountains and find a standing dead tree. I dropped it and he and I limbed it.

Next, I cut it into lengths we could handle and loaded it on the pickup and trailer. I think the tree was what is called inland live oak. It was dense and should produce a lot of heat, further reducing the amount of propane we used. It was a whole new education for Steve; he had been a city boy. However, this new arrangement was working out well. And then, up popped the devil aka Mrs. Durante. When we got back, I saw a car parked and figured we had a visitor. Steve and began unload the firewood and Sue called us to the house. I don't know why, but I put my pistol in the glove box of the old Chevy.

## **USS Iowa – Chapter 8**

“Oh, Mrs. Durante; how are you today?”

“Fine, you?”

“Steve and I were out harvesting firewood. Steve, why don't you go and get cleaned up?”

“How is it working out with the children?”

“Absolutely great; you can see for yourself, Sue is homeschooling them, Melanie is working on a quilt and Steve is learning the outside work.”

“I have some news.”

“What, the country is finally going to pay us for fostering the children?”

“No, it's about their parents. The California State Military Reserve located their bodies. Do you want me to tell them, or will you?”

“Sue?”

“We'll tell them Mrs. Durante.”

“Ok, that's fine; I hate to do it anyway. Now that we know about their parents, have you given any thought about adoption?”

“Not to this point, because we weren't sure about their parents; although, it doesn't come as a surprise. What is the disposition of the bodies?”

“They put them in body bags and will be returning them to Fresno. I'm afraid coffins are in short supply,

so they'll probably be buried in the body bags."

"We'll talk to the children and see what they want to do. Say, you somehow look different."

"Yeah, we haven't been getting the promised food and I've dropped 40 pounds."

"Do you have a freezer?"

"Only the one in my refrigerator."

"I don't mean to pry, but are you single or married?"

"I lost my husband."

"How about we give you some frozen meat and a few staples to carry you through?"

"Do you have enough to spare?"

"Do you like cheese?"

"I'd kill for a grilled cheese sandwich."

"Why don't you visit with the children and Sue and I'll see what we can do?"

I took out two chuck roasts, two round steaks, 5 one-pound packages of ground beef, one sirloin steak, a hunk of my jack cheese and a hunk of Fred's Colby cheese. I put that in a box and added 2 small cans of coffee, a box of Lipton tea, ten-pounds of flour, five-pounds of sugar and six packages of Fleishmann's yeast. In a second box, I packed an assortment of canned fruit and vegetables, some macaroni and cheese, and a bottle of Dawn soap. I also got a 30-pack of Charmin.

"I put some things in the back seat of your car. It's not a lot, but it's what we can spare at the moment."

"Thank you. Now, about that adoption; if the children agree, I'll do the paperwork and get a judge to sign off. They're doing things a bit differently these days because there are so many children without parents."

"Call me when you have a decision."

"How can we call you?"

"Use the phone, local service has been restored."

"No long distance?"

"The phone company says that could take years and they may have to go back to that manual system that used operators. Well, I'd better be going. Here's my card; call me when you have a decision about

the adoption. And, thanks again for the food.”

“I think the weight she lost must have been the part that contained her ugly disposition.”

“Now John, don’t talk that way.”

“I’ll get the kids; there is no sense in putting it off.”

They were watching a movie.

“Could I see the two of you in the kitchen for a minute?”

They came and sat down at the table.

“Mrs. Durante had some news about you parents.”

“Where are they?” Melanie asked.

“They are on their way home.”

“They’re dead, aren’t they?” Steve asked.

“I’m afraid so. Mrs. Durante didn’t tell us the cause of death. I’m very sorry.”

Melanie began to openly cry and Steve held back, although tears were streaming down his face.

“I’m really sorry about this, but you half expected it I suppose. We need to decide where to bury you parents. That decision is up to you.”

“Can we bury them here?”

“Why would you want to do that Steve?”

“To be near them.”

“Does that mean you are planning on staying?”

“What else could it mean?”

“Mrs. Durante brought up the subject of adoption, although it’s probably too soon to be talking about that.”

“Melanie?”

She nodded to Steve.

“No now is just fine, where do we sign?”

“That’s a big decision to make; don’t you think you should wait?”

“Why? Will it bring our parents back? We’ve talked about this and decided if Mom and Dad were dead, we’d stay with you if you’d have us.”

“We’ll let Mrs. Durante know, Steve,” Sue replied. He seemed to be representing both of them.

“Ok. Just one thing, you’ll have to put up three markers.”

“Why?”

“Our mother was expecting a baby,” Melanie softly replied.

“Do you know if the baby was a boy or a girl?”

“A girl.”

“Had they picked out a name?”

“Sarah Esther.”

“Ok, I’ll make three markers and put Sarah Esther on the third one.”

“Thank you.”

“Would a common grave be ok? That way, they can be together.”

“You mean one hole?”

“Yes.”

“It’s fine with me, Mel?”

“Ok.”

I drove over to Fred’s and asked if he could bring the backhoe over and dig a common grave. He asked why I hadn’t just called.

“I didn’t know if you knew the phone was back up.”

“I wouldn’t have except we got a phone call from a bill collector with the Credit Bureau.”

“You have debts?”

“Nah, he dialed the wrong number. I’ll be over the first thing in the morning. Pick out a place. Who is going in the grave, the kids’ parents?”

“Yes; Mrs. Durante was out and said that the California State Military Reserve found their bodies.”

“Figured that they didn’t make it, didn’t know if they’d find the bodies.”

“I don’t have any details; except that we’ll be burying them in body bags and that the kids’ mother was expecting a baby girl.”

“Best we cover it up as soon as we put them in; it might be less traumatic for the kids. Gonna adopt them?”

“Yes.”

“We’re gonna get two foster children too. We’ve been talking to Mrs. Durante.”

“I thought you said she wouldn’t fit through the door.”

She lost weight. That’s something a lot of folks have been doing lately. Oh, I switched from Colby to Cheddar for the time being.”

“Can I get milk from you for a while? We still need milk and with the cow dry...”

“Got any milk jugs?”

“Sure do.”

“Bring them down, I’ll fill them.”

It took the state about three weeks to bring back the parents and I was told not to open the body bags because they hadn’t been embalmed. The actual recommendation was to get them covered over immediately. That presented a problem, but no worse a problem that the lack of coffins presented. Fred came down the day the bodies were delivered with two homemade coffins, you basic pine box. We placed the bodies in the boxes and stapled the tags on top that indicated who was in each bag.

Next, we brought the kids out and had a very short service because it was freezing, and lowered the boxes. Fred used his loader to fill the holes and went home. Later that day, Mrs. Durante came out with papers for us to sign. She said she’d call if the Judge wanted to talk to us and she left.

The next time we saw her was when she brought two kids out to Fred and Eleanor. She stopped by on her way back to town and dropped the papers off. Steve and Melanie’s last name was Morse, and they easily made the transition to Morris although they sometimes forgot and spell it Morse. We now went to church nearly every Sunday because of the kids. We stayed with our church in Clovis even though it was further away than theirs.

I had a lot to learn about cattle. Production levels peak at around 70 days after calving. The cow is then bred. Production declines steadily afterwards, until, at about 305 days after calving, the cow is 'dried off', and milking ceases. About sixty days later, one year after the birth of her previous calf, a cow will calve again. High production cows are more difficult to breed at a one year interval. Many farms take the view that 13 or even 14 month cycles are more appropriate for this type of cow.

You make mistakes when you don't know something and make assumptions. I assumed you didn't breed a cow until the milk dried up. I wouldn't make that mistake again. It worked out ok be Fred did it right and had all the milk we wanted. We weren't drink pasteurized milk, but most farmers didn't if they produced their own.

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Do you remember this?

*Five, all available food and fuel will be collected and redistributed by US forces. Citizens are urged to go to their county seat and register to receive the food. In conjunction with the Secretary of Agriculture, bulk foodstuffs are being relocated and distributed. If you have sufficient supplies or extra, you are urged to share with neighbors and relatives. Your supplies will not be seized for redistribution.*

I'd like to say it was flat lie, but they hadn't seized food, they'd simple failed to distribute it. We weren't out of anything and were probably good for five or more years. That wasn't the point, don't make promises you don't intend to keep; people will begin to believe that you're just another politician. And when you tell the people you'll make broadcast three days a week, do it, I promise they'll think better of you even though they didn't vote for you.

Fresno's police department will also rely heavily on the community, in an effort to eliminate Fresno's bulldog gang population. Something police say could take between three and five more years. The good news was the early success of the program. The bad news was they hadn't finished when China got mad at us. The bulldogs lay low, for a while. Once the people began returning, crime began to increase.

The gang activity was reported by the local news and I wondered if any of them had seen us salvaging in Fresno. The guys who followed us that Sue had stopped were opportunists, I think, not gang members. They were at least 15 miles from where we lived when Sue put three rounds in their motor. I didn't know what to expect with the gangs, they mostly preyed on folks in town. With little or no food in town, I assumed they might start looking in the country.

I decided it was time to bring back the Barrett, just in case. I loaded three mags with ball, two with AP, two with API and three with Raufoss. It wasn't a Ma Deuce, but it was the next best thing. Besides, I had 8 dozen grenades and 10 LAW rockets. If you added them up, we had more guns than we could shoot at one time. Those cowboy guns would be our last resort. I figured those gangbangers would have pistols, rifles and maybe a few grenades. Most of the shootings had involved pistols. The City of Fresno is home to over 55 validated gangs, with over 6,000 members. While the Police Department arrests over 300 gang members each month, gang related violence continued to plague the City, with 60 gang related shootings and four gang related stabbings in the first five months of 2006. It's obvious that Fresno could arrest its way out of gang violence. Ceasing the violence takes a new approach to this community-wide

problem. The mayor, Autry, set up a task force and made some progress which continued until the war came.

In the second year after the war, I helped again; spreading the manure where Fred said to spread it. The weather had improved, marginally. He had used up the seed the following year and I looked when he asked but could find any. Fred solved the problem himself, but it was two year old seed. Properly stored, seed will keep for years, improperly stored; it's much what one would expect. He said we'd harvest some of the seed for planting the following year. I'm probably repeating myself.

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As time passed and the government failed to keep its promise concerning food distribution, people once again began to depart Fresno. And then, the local radio station began carrying reports of attacks on farms. It had started with rustling livestock and next went beyond with farmsteads attacked and looted and the residents murdered or worse. My initial thoughts were that inner city gangbangers couldn't be involved because how many of them knew how to butcher livestock?

Next, the radio reported that meat was now available in some of the grocery stores along with some food supplies, mostly home canned. There was no way to trace the home canned food back to its source and the cops were stymied. It was much the same with the livestock, cut into halves or quarters, it lost its identity.

"John."

"Fred, what's up?"

"Did you hear the news on the radio about home canned goods and meat showing up in grocery stores?"

"I did, Fred; at first I doubted it was the gangbangers, but now, I'm not so sure."

"Used to be cattle rustling was a hanging offense."

"We've gotten too civilized for that."

"What's to say we shouldn't take a step back in time?"

"What's got you so worked up?"

"With my breeding program, I now have close to 50 cows plus steers to sell. I expanded my hog herd, too and when they reach market weight, I'll have a lot to sell. The idea that someone would come along and steal them doesn't sit well."

I found it interesting that he was talking about rustlers and not about the two children they were fostering. I met them, two boys, unrelated, who both lived in rough neighborhoods. One, Terry, was thirteen and the other, David, was twelve. Both claimed they didn't know Steve and Melanie. Fred had said he was going to hold off giving the boys firearms until they knew them better. He didn't say what

he had in mind to give them if and when he gave them guns.

“Anything I can do to help?”

“Keep an eye out for anyone who looks out of place.”

“We already do that, Fred. As a matter of fact, I dug my Barrett out from its storage place, just in case.”

“That new President we have sure hasn’t come through on his promises.”

“They haven’t come by looking for food.”

“Not yet they haven’t. You heard that the Governor refused to suspend California’s gun laws?”

“I hadn’t but it doesn’t matter, I tend to ignore them anyway.”

“To tell the truth, if I could get my hands on something a little better, I’d spend the money and say to hell with the law.”

“Why the change of attitude?”

“The times are changing.”

“I don’t know what I can do for you, but if you want, we could make a trip to Pleasant Valley. Roger was out of .223 and didn’t have a M4 SOPMOD kit for the A3 I bought Sue.”

“As soon as we finishing spreading the manure, let’s take a trip and you can introduce me to Roger.”

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“Roger, this is my neighbor Fred.”

“Pleased to meet you Fred, what can I do for you?”

“We’re having rustler problems down our way. I have some firearms but nothing appropriate besides the FALs John got me. I was thinking I need more firepower.”

“What were you thinking a .50 caliber?”

“John has a .50 caliber. I don’t know what I want; I just want more, if you get my drift.”

“I have a pair of Mk. 16 FN SCAR-Ls and a pair of Mk. 17 FN SCAR-Hs. Select fire, 600 rounds per minute. They’re relatively light; both weigh less than 9 pounds. I have a medium machinegun M240G. I have a Barrett M82A1. I recently got more ammo, so I have ammo for each firearm.”

“How much?”

“For which firearm?”

“The whole shooting match.”

“Fifteen ounces of gold, not including the ammo.”

“Uh huh. Still got some of those rockets?”

“One full case of 3 cartons of five.”

“Hand grenades?”

“Eight dozen M67s.”

“Extra magazines for the guns?”

“I’ll throw those in. Want EGLMs?”

“What’s that?”

“Enhanced Grenade Launcher Module.”

“You have grenades?”

“I just got some in. Normal loadout for a Grenadier is 36 grenades.”

“I don’t know as I have the money.”

“I’ll take some of those grenades,” I butted in.

“Right those M4 SOPMOD kits.”

“Twenty-four ounces of gold Fred, buys it all.”

“What’s that in dollars?”

“Around \$50 thousand.”

Fred counted out 24 Krugerrands and I swear it hurt him to let go of each and every one of them. I had to come up with some coin for the 40mm grenades myself, but had anticipated Roger might have something useful. With Fred’s acquisitions, we had just become a well armed camp. He had 2,000 rounds of .50 caliber, mostly ball with a few rounds of AP and API. There were 2 cans of Raufoss. For the M240, there were 12 cases, each containing 2 cans each containing 200 rounds of standard 4 to 1 combat mix. All of the 40mm grenades were HEDP. I got 108 of the 40mm grenades and another M4 SOPMOD kit for Sue’s rifle. Fred’s Barrett had the BORS and a Leupold Mark IV 6.5-20x50mm LR/T

M1 scope.

Fred didn't say much on the way back, except it cost more than he thought it would. I told him that military weapons, especially select fire, were expensive. I could see him drawing something on a notebook page, but had to keep my eyes on the road and forgot to ask. When we got home, we unloaded all of his stuff and I went home. I installed the grenade launchers on the A3s, when I had the time.

A few days later, Fred came over driving his 2½ ton truck. It was a sight to behold; he'd made a stand, like a pintle, and mounted it in the middle of the box. He had added ½" steel plate to the stakes and fashioned a plate to go around the M240.

"Fred, what the hell?"

"Made a weapons carrier of sorts. Got the idea from some movies. Good thing I have overload springs; it's on the heavy side. I need a favor."

"I'll do what I can."

Can you teach me to use this stuff? I wasn't in the military and know nothing about machine guns or those rockets."

"I wasn't in a weapons company and I don't know much more than you. I do have some Army Field Manuals on the computer, I'll look them up and printout the pages we need. I know basically how the LAW works but the Army dropped them in favor of the AT4 back in 1987. The Marines still use them, however."

"Well, you have a Barrett, can you teach me that?"

"No problem."

## **USS Iowa – Chapter 9**

The hardest part was teaching the BORS, first to myself and then to Fred. One we got it figured out, he did well. I told him to bring his weapons carrier back the following day and we'd deal with the LAWs and the M240. When he came back, he had the EGLMs installed and wanted lessons on them too. Apparently he'd figured out the SCAR rifles. If you remember what Fred was like when we returned from San Francisco, he still had that determination and now had the means to protect what he had.

If you recall, he had a Ruger model 77 bolt action in .308. Still had it, but it was probably reserved for hunting, now. He actually had too many guns, 2 STG-58 FALs and 4 SCARs, two in each NATO caliber. The SCAR had newly designed magazines for the .308. I guess the STGs would be his backups. Over the course of several days, Fred and I both got up to speed on the various weapons. A time could arise when I need to know how to use the M240.

Fred was beginning to present a 'cold dead hands' attitude, probably because of how much he'd spend in Pleasant Valley. At \$250 an ounce, it was only around \$5,000, but gold wasn't \$250 an ounce anymore.

I guess we were lucky, we hadn't been hit by the rustlers, yet. If we stayed lucky, we might not be. On the other hand, maybe it was just a matter of time.

"I wanted you to know that I'm planning on increasing the size of the garden this year. Melanie can help me with some of the work and if you don't need Steve, he could help harvest."

"I'll help too, when I can. Now that Fred has some help, maybe he won't need me as much."

"Are those boys working out for them?"

"He really didn't say. He did say he was going to hold off giving them guns for now. Those boys are older than our kids, so there's no good reason for that unless he doesn't trust them."

"Surely Mrs. Durante would have told them if the boys were discipline problems."

"Yes, if she knew they were discipline problems. It could be the boys managed to stay below the radar."

"I guess time will tell."

"How's Melanie coming on her quilt?"

"She has all of the squares sewn together in to strips and the strips sewn together to form the front of the quilt. She's pinning the three layers together."

Three layers?"

"A quilt has three layers, the front or actual quilt, the batting and the backing."

"What's next?"

"She does the quilting and then the binding. That's the edge that goes around the quilt. The quilt is done when she finishes that."

"How does it look?"

"She's an excellent seamstress, it looks great. How's Steve doing with his shooting?"

"They're both doing well. It started out with her watching him shoot and then she asked to shoot. I ran her through safety lecture and let her shoot. She's equal to or better than Steve."

"Are they checked out on the pistols?"

"Yes and I even have Steve shooting the M1A I got for you. Fred seems to think he's a one man army with that fighting vehicle he built."

"He certainly has changed."

“I agree. You can’t blame him though; he has a large herd of both cattle and hogs. I don’t know about him getting that M240. I’ll bet that if I asked, Roger probably could have come up with Ma Deuce.”

“You don’t need something that big do you?”

“Not with the Barrett. I can’t fire as fast, but it’s the same ammo. I really believe that Fred would have been better off if he’d just settled for the SCARs and Barrett. Have you seen any sign of anyone cruising the roads like they’re looking for something?”

“Not at all, but we don’t keep a watch.”

“Keep an open eye when you’re working in the garden, would you?”

“We can’t hoe and carry rifles.”

“Carry pistols; at least you’ll be armed. And, that includes Melanie. I’m carrying my Taurus and Steve is carrying his M9. Do you know where key is for my Taurus? I haven’t locked it since I got it.”

“I don’t have a clue about the; they’re only 12 years old, do you think it wise to arm them?”

“So are some of the members of the Fresno gangs.”

“You think it’s a gang doing the rustling?”

“Most likely; they lost their main source of income when the demand for drugs dried up. All they would need is a big truck and a ramp. I doubt they’re butchering the meat, but it seems to be showing up in grocery stores.”

For their second birthdays with us and second Christmas, we combined the presents and it was more traditional; nothing elaborate because they had just about everything they needed. It was mostly clothing, like a duster and a slicker, and some more fabric for Melanie. One other thing we gave them, the .44 magnum rifles and handguns.

The rifles were manageable, but the revolvers appeared to be too much for the 12 year olds. They still had some growing to do. Melanie had experienced puberty during her first year with us and Steve’s voice was just now beginning to crack. Both were experiencing growth spurts.

The phone rang and Sue answered it. It was a recorded message announcing that food was available for those who had registered. We’d registered as a family of four and I was willing to bet that we’d be lucky to get enough for two people. In fact we got pasta, ergo, elbow macaroni, tomato paste, beans, rice, 10 pounds of flour, 2 pounds of sugar and 3 packages of yeast. They didn’t have any vegetables, fruit, coffee or tea. I calculated it and it was around 1,200 calories per person per day.

Fred and Eleanor got the same food we did; it was a package set up for a family of four. If you really stretched it, you might have 3 weeks’ worth of food. At least they were trying and most people had

gardens, often their entire backyard was dug up to grow food. Fred was now in the field doing spring plowing and was plowing first to be followed by disking and dragging. When he had the seed beds prepared, we'd plant.

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I wasn't planting this year, other than an extra large garden. I didn't really have enough pasture for the horses and cattle. Both kids were excellent on a horse, while Sue and I had a much worse time of it. I spread my manure on Fred's land just because he needed it more than I did. I refilled my propane tank and once again, in the dark of night, refilled the delivery truck and filled Fred's tank. I let it lay a few days, or nights, and went back and refilled the truck and parked it behind the barn. Maybe it was just something I saw in a movie, but I used brush to 'erase' the tire tracks.

"We have company."

"Who is it?"

"Two Deputies."

"I'll be right home."

"Can I help you?"

"Someone stole 6,000-gallons of propane from AmeriGas."

"You don't say."

"Do you use propane?"

"Sure do, I have a 550-gallon tank buried."

"Mind if we look around?"

"Help yourself. If you look behind the barn, you'll find my 3,000-gallon propane delivery truck. It's full up because we don't use much propane."

"Why would you keep 3,000-gallons of propane?"

"Because I like to be prepared; I'm a prepper, you know. We've got a Mossberg shotgun and a couple of M1A rifles. We even have a little food stored, just in case. Plus, as you can see, we plant a large garden and sell some food at the Farmer's Market."

Clue: don't lie, mislead them. Say food instead of flour and cheese. If you have to tell them you have firearms, only include the legal ones. They're likely to assume you have food stored if you have a garden, because they'll assume that you can. If there is no way they'll not see the delivery truck, point it out. Never use the term survivalist, always say prepper. Try to give yourself a little edge. If they want to

know where you get your propane, slow them down a little and say ‘that place’ up in Chowchilla, it’s in Madera County, not Fresno County. You can always claim you get a better price. And, always tell them you paid cash, many dealers don’t write the name of cash customers down. In Chowchilla, there are both AmeriGas and Ferrell Gas.

“What’s in the sheds?”

“We store some of our extra food.”

“Why are they locked?”

“They’re lock to keep someone from stealing it (to make you get a search warrant to look inside).”

“Do you have any other guns?”

“Marlin 1894C and 1894 for the kids, plus Ruger Blackhawks and Super Blackhawks. We have 2 Beretta 92FS with 10-round magazines.”

“Some of those Ruger’s aren’t on the approved list.”

“Really? They were approved when I got them. Is there anything on the approved list at the moment?”

“Just the guns that haven’t expired.”

“So, in a few months, there won’t be any guns. The SCOTUS said the right to keep and bear arms was an individual right, or did you miss the Heller decision? DC lost by prohibiting handguns and when the guns on the list expire, the state of California is effectively banning handguns. That won’t fly fellas.”

“We’re not here to get you guns, we’re looking for propane. Can you prove you paid for that propane?”

“Can you prove I didn’t? I told you, I paid cash. Write down the plate and you’ll see that that vehicle doesn’t belong to AmeriGas. I bought from Ferrell Gas and they said they’d take care of the transfer to my name. They may not have done it that was just before the attack.”

“Were you here during the attack?”

“It’s none of you business where I was, but I’ll tell you anyway. Sue and I took a little vacation and went to wine country, specifically Sonoma. Then we moved over to see the USS Iowa in Vallejo. The day of the attack, we were aboard the Iowa and spent two weeks below decks, freezing our butts off.”

“You survived that?”

“I had my NukAlert on my keychain. We kept going down further until it stopped chirping.”

“What about the Barrett rifle you bought?”

“Sold it rather than register it.”

“Sold it to whom?”

“I think he said his name was Smith. Joe Smith.”

“You didn’t do any paperwork?”

“Does anyone?”

“We’ll check on that propane and the delivery truck.”

“You do that. Be sure to have a warrant when you come back.”

I’d guess the 9 times out of 10, if you said that to a peace officer, he’d be back, with a warrant. However, unless he lies, he’s going to have to work hard to get probable cause. He can get a warrant to search Ferrell Gas records for the sale of propane and sale of the truck. He can get a warrant to search for the Barrett because he has the 4473. Can he get a warrant to search for the Ruger’s? California wasn’t always like this and there was a time when you could buy guns anywhere. Back in ’68, you suddenly had to buy them in California only, but hey, you could buy what you wanted anywhere within the state.

Every time they passed another law, they took away more of our rights. There was a time when you could buy guns by mail order. Not after ’68. From then on, things began to go downhill. If I got more guns, I wanted those new H&K rifles the HK 416 and HK 417. I’d also take a Barrett REC7, if ammo was available. That was the 6.8mmSPC. I didn’t have an A3 because they used a direct gas system unlike my M1As. I couldn’t go see Roger now; we were deeply involved in cultivating crops and beginning to harvest the garden.

Long distance still wasn’t up or I’d have called him avoiding a fool’s errand. I had two excellent .308 NATO rifles, but the 417 was the same caliber and full-auto. I subscribed to the beans, bullets and toilet paper theory, there are just some things you can never have too much of. I wasn’t opposed to a full-auto, provided it was a reliable, functional full auto, like the Tommy gun with a drum magazine. The problem with the Tommy gun wasn’t the gun, but the drums. The argument that gun was just a tool had one drawback when compared to something like a hammer. Yes, both could kill you; but only the gun had a sole purpose, you could drive nails with a hammer. I’m going to have see Roger soon and get those H&K firearms. Fred had the boys to help him with the cultivation, a one man job, and Sue said I was irritated. Whatever my itch was, I’d better go scratch it, provided it didn’t take long.

“Roger.”

“John, what brings you back?”

“I got to thinking...”

“That always a dangerous thing.”

“Right, and I was wondering if you had either an HK 416 or a HK 417.”

“As a matter of fact, I have both. Just got them in a while back. Pretty rare item.”

“I suppose that means you’re going to hold me up?”

“Nah, you’re my most consistent customer and you even brought your neighbor up. The rifles have pros and cons, but they have a lot fewer stoppages than most anything except the XM8.”

“I read that. Higher than the SCAR, right?”

“Yeah the M4 did the worst with 800 plus stoppages in 6,000 rounds. Wait, I have results written down somewhere. Let’s see, XM8: 127 stoppages, MK16 SCAR Light: 226 stoppages, HK 416: 233 stoppages and the M4: 882 stoppages. You’d be better off with the SCARs.”

“Ok, I take one of each.”

“Thing is, I’m out of them. The H&K 416 was about the same as the SCAR, so I can sell you those.”

“Alright, already, make up my mind, will you?”

“One or both?”

“How much?”

“One and one quarter ounces, each. I have more of the M855, too.”

“They don’t make a cartridge like the M855 in .308 NATO?”

“The closest I can come would be M993. You’d be happier with M118LR and I can sell it for the same price as M993.”

“I’ll take two cases of each plus four cases of M855.”

“You’ve bought a fair amount of ammo, John; did you shoot it all up?”

“I did not! We practice enough to keep in good shape, but I have most of what I’ve gotten from you.”

“Expecting an invasion?”

“Might have trouble, don’t know. There are rustlers down in our area. Better to have ammo and not need it than...”

“Need it and not have it, I know. It comes out odd, if I add a case each of 5.56 and 7.62; it will come out even at four ounces.”

“Do it, I’ve got my itch scratched and have to get home.”

“So which gun are you going to shoot when?”

“I haven’t decided, but if we’re ambushed, I’ll probably go for the full-auto. If we’re not, it will depend on how far they’re away from us. Might use the Barrett, might use the Super Match; it depends on the distance. You should have seen what Fred did with the M240. He built a pintle mount in the back of his 2½ ton truck, put up steel panels and even a panel around the gun. All someone needs to do is shoot out his tires.”

“Is he a survivalist?”

“Hell no, I’m the survivalist, he’s just a frightened sheeple.”

“He might be the most dangerous type of person to be around.”

“He knows his limitations, Roger; and came over and I trained him what I knew and looked up the others. I have all of those Army Field Manuals plus most of the Marine Corps field manuals. He does just fine with the M240, it’s that semi armored vehicle that he has that concerns me, it may not provide as much protection as he thinks.”

On the way home, I thought about what Roger had said. He did have a point about Fred. He’d never been in the military and had never been in combat. Even what little I did in Panama, I’d learned to keep my head down. Steel plates made of ½” steel might or might not stop a bullet; it would depend on what they were shooting. If they had hand grenades, it would contain the explosion, surely killing the gunner; or not, it might depend on how he attached those steel plates.

“It’s late; did you get what you wanted?”

“Yes and no, Sue. Roger talked me into the SCARs and when I agreed to take them, he was out. So, I got the H&K guns I originally went up there to get.”

“Do we have enough guns, for a while at least?”

“I reckon. Have to sell some stuff and get more money before I go shopping again.”

“You didn’t spend up all of the gold, did you?”

“Not at all, but our piggy bank has one hell of a dent in it.”

“And why did you buy more guns?”

“It was an itch I just had to scratch? Actually, I’m not enchanted with those A3s you guys have, because when they get dirty, you will get stoppages. I wanted a full-auto with a piston, like my M1As have.”

“Our M1As!”

“Oh right, our M1As.”

“Why full-Auto?”

“If you are outnumbered and about to be overrun, you switch to spray and pray aka full-auto suppressing fire.”

“We haven’t been overrun. We haven’t even seen anyone besides those Deputies and Fred’s clan on the road.”

“How’s the garden doing?”

“About the same as it was when you left early this morning. We had leaf lettuce for supper.”

After I finished the chores, I spent some time the next day sighting in both rifles and becoming familiar with them. The HK 416 was essentially a modified G36 upper sitting on a M4 lower. I’d gotten the longer barrel because it increased the velocity. Aside from the stoppages, the M4s short barrel The HK 417 was just a bigger 416 with many interchangeable parts. I loaded all the magazines I had with that South African surplus figuring that if I resorted to spray and pray, I didn’t need match grade ammo. The 416 magazines were loaded with 5.56 NATO.

Because Steve and Melanie had their own guns and both knew and observed all of the safety rules, I kept the rifles loaded and handy on the back porch. When I saw how disorganized that was, I decided to build a stand up rifle rack. It didn’t need to be fancy and I only planned on glue felt in the upper slots. It took less than two hours to construct and I put all of my rifles in it, the Barrett, the Super Match, my Marlin 94, and both the HKs and the 590A1. I added Sue’s M1A, 1894 and A3. I asked kids to load their rifles and add them to the rack. They each had three, the 1894C, 1894 and the A3s.

It look like the movie gun racks you saw in Sheriff’s offices except it sat on the floor instead of being bolt to the wall. It didn’t have a chain or bar to lock the guns either. It would hold 20 guns and we had 15 at the moment. I had more shotguns in mind, when I could get them. That would have to come later. As far as Roger’s question, we’d burned through a couple cases of ammo, maybe more, on the firing range but had never found it necessary to discharge a firearm in either anger or self defense.

When the NRA adopted the saying, ‘Sometimes the mere presence of a gun...’ it wasn’t the same world we had before, and especially after, the war. Some had salvaged, some had looted, the difference being a large screen TV to watch DVDs. No doubt they had to steal a genset to power the setup. When we were salvaging, we hadn’t seen a soul. However, just because we hadn’t seen them didn’t mean they weren’t there. Steve and Melanie were perfect examples of that assertion.

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We were in the garden picking green beans for canning when the car made a slow pass down the road. I called Fred on the radio and warned him we had company. We took the beans we had and put the pans

in the refrigerator and armed ourselves, just in case. Fred called back to say that they'd stopped short of his place, observed the area and were headed back our way. As they passed, going all of 10mph, I could see 4 people in the car, late teens or early twenties.

They hadn't stopped, but I figured they had both farms cased. We resumed picking the green beans but wore rifles slung over our backs. When we finished, we all joined in snapping the beans, getting rid of the tips and stems. From there on out, it was up to Sue to get them and the canner and up to me to get the large canner on the stove. We had two of the 41-quart All American Pressure canners, from Canning Pantry, and could do 38 quarts at a time. We had exactly 50 quarts to can with some beans held back to eat fresh.

"Most of the rustling occurs at night. I think we should post a watch."

"Do you think those 4 kids were the rustlers?"

"Could be Sue, I don't really know. I'd prefer caution to being caught with our pants down."

There were only four of them."

"Yeah, like a military recon party. It doesn't take many people to observe the lay of the land and the potential opposition. Once they have the information, they can adjust their raid/attack accordingly. They'll probably have a 3:1 or 4:1 advantage because they need people to load livestock and others to load food. They have to be in and out fairly quickly with the phones restored."

"Make up a schedule and we'll take turns."

"I'd really like it if Fred could take a turn and possibly those boys of theirs."

The boys were Terry and David and they had been more like foster children to Fred and Eleanor. They worked for their keep and never volunteered to do anything. Fred never gave them the rifles he bought for them, either. The last time the issue came up; he told me that he simply didn't trust them. He caught Terry on the phone a few times talking to 'a friend'. Terry, he said, was a bad influence on David. They needed the extra help or would have taken the boys back to Mrs. Durante.

## **USS Iowa – Chapter 10**

I said I'd take the first shift running until midnight and I'd get Steve up to relieve me. Sue and Melanie were free to decide who should take the three to six shift. They said that they would trade off. Sue would do the shift tonight and Melanie tomorrow night.

It was quiet on my shift, no vehicles came down the road, no unusual noise from the livestock, nothing.

"Steve, it's time to get up for watch detail."

"I'll be right there."

"Has there been any activity so far?"

“No vehicles, no unusual sounds, so nothing that I’m aware of. Keep an ear open for unusual sounds from the livestock; they’ll make noise if someone tries to move them.”

I crawled in bed, waking Sue in the process.

“Anything?”

“Nothing.”

We were both asleep in minutes, possibly quicker. I vaguely heard Steve wake her, and assumed it was around 3am. I rolled over and went back to sleep until 6am, the time I set the alarm for. When the alarm went off I took care of my morning bathroom routine, dressed in clean clothes and headed downstairs. Sue had pancake mix ready to go and coffee hot. The kids soon joined us and we ate together, as we usually did. Today, we were picking cucumbers for pickles. We harvest some dill for those pickles and she was also making sweet pickles and bread and butter slices.

We tried to tell the kids that coffee wasn’t good for them, to no avail. They ignored our pleas that it could stunt their growth. Of course, there wasn’t any real scientific evidence to back it up. So, when they poured themselves coffee, we gave in. The lost sleep meant that three of us needed the coffee anyway.

The cucumbers were just right; around 3” in length and those that were slightly bigger would be sliced for the bread and butter pickles using our GE food processor. I had recipes I’d downloaded.

<http://www.pickyourown.org/pdfs/making%20pickles.pdf>

We were using the quick processing method, making the pickles right in the jar. We had enough cucumbers to produce about 96 pints, give or take; one batch of each. It wouldn’t hurt to mix them in the canner, especially if we mixed pints of sliced pickles with the dill spears. Despite our humping the rifles today, no one came down the road. I was just guessing, but, they were probably planning their attack and deciding which place to hit first. Think about it and tell me which place you would hit first. Fred’s because he had the most livestock and if they couldn’t come back, they had the maximum yield. Neither Fred nor I gave much thought to Terry’s phone calls and their place in the scheme of things.

“Fred.”

“John.”

“We ran a watch last night.”

“I sort of figured you would, so we didn’t. I wouldn’t trust Terry to be on watch anyway, I caught him on the phone again.”

“Who was he talking to?”

“I don’t know; I grabbed the phone and asked who it was but they hung up.”

“Frankly, that doesn’t sound good. You said Mrs. Durante didn’t say anything about juvenile problems?”

“Not one word. Could be he had them and she missed them or she possibly didn’t check. For two cents, I’d take him back.”

“I can’t tell you what to do Fred; you may be asking trouble if you keep the boy.”

“He’s been working on David and has about gotten him half converted to his way of thinking.”

“If it were me, I’d unload the two of them and ask my neighbor and his boy to help with the chores.”

“Do you really have the time?”

“All we’re doing is daily chores and working in the garden. We’d be happy to help out. Let me make that I’d be happy to help out and I’m nearly certain Steve would too.”

“I don’t know how to thank you.”

“You could give me a couple of bred gilts, if you had them to spare. That way, we could raise our own pork and you’d have less work to do.”

“Why didn’t you say something earlier?”

“I meant to, but quite honestly forgot. Then you butchered hogs and we got pork from you. I don’t know much about raising hogs, but I’ve been paying attention and think we can manage.”

“If you have problems, just ask. I’m gonna load those boys up and get them the hell off my farm. I’ll just dump ‘em back on Mrs. Durante. Eleanor won’t like it, and maybe we’ll try to find some younger kids that haven’t been ruined before we get them.”

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“How did it go?”

“Mrs. Durante wasn’t happy, I’ll tell you that. I told her we didn’t have anything against the boys, but they didn’t integrate into our family. We’d be happy to provide homes for two children age ten or younger.”

“You didn’t bring up the phone calls or the fact that you didn’t trust them?”

“She ain’t stupid; I think she saw it in my eyes. Anyway she said she had several placements age 10 and younger and she would sort through them. She said not to count on getting a baby, people lined up for them. I had to answer more questions, like religious preference and what not. I stopped by the store and got some of those Marlin rifles like what you have, that I recommended, and some Ruger revolvers, which went out the backdoor. It’s amazing what you can buy when you have a little gold.”

“Don’t I know? I walked out with 6 handguns in one fell swoop.”

“When was that?”

“When I bought those cowboys guns you recommended.”

“That’s just what I bought and because I told her kids ten or under, I got Blackhawks and 1894Cs. We can start them on .38 special.”

“It works, that’s what we did.”

“You want three gilts? No charge and I’ll transport them in my uparmored truck.”

“Is that truck a good idea? What if someone were to throw a grenade in back?”

“The steel plates are only loosely attached so they should blow off. Besides haven’t I read somewhere that anyone within 5 meters of a concussive or fragmentation grenade is dead meat?”

“That much is true. I wish we had some MK3A2 concussive grenades.”

“Aren’t flash bangs the same thing?”

“No, they’re a stun grenade while the Mk3 is intended to kill people, say in a machinegun bunker.”

“You think I was wrong to mount the machinegun on my truck?”

“It wouldn’t have been my first choice.”

“It won’t take long to dismantle. That G means it’s a ground model, right?”

“Yes, it’s the one the Marine Corps uses.”

“Where should I set it up?”

“Build a fighting position using sandbags, close by the house. Eleanor and any kids would be in the house, I assume.”

“Gottcha.”

Fred fashioned a tripod and mounted the ground model machinegun on the tripod, inside of the fighting position he built. Steve and I helped him load some bags with dirt. How many sandbags really contain sand? If he needed to use the gun as a ground model, he simply lifted it off the tripod. He had the extra weight of the pintle, but it would still work. He claimed he could remove the homemade pintle by pulling a single pin. It did look a lot like the Army tripod and cradle mount. However, the Army had a clip to keep the pin from being nudged out while firing the weapon.

I explained to Sue the decision Fred had made and that Mrs. Durante was looking for two more children for them. Meanwhile, I said, Steve and I would do our chores and then go and help Fred with his. In turn, we were getting three bred gilts. We could get anywhere from 27 to 39 pigs from 3 sows. The difference between a sow and gilt, I explained, was that gilt had had two or fewer litters.

Bad things happen; it's never a question if, just when and what. We'd had WW III and that should have been enough. It wasn't because there were survivors who were hungry and our nanny government wasn't providing the food they promised. Until everyone had 3,600 calories per day available, there would be people who stole food from those who had it.

Yes, we took food and no, we didn't pay for it. Would the food we took have made a difference? That's hard to say, but I don't think so. It might have meant that a few other people had a chance to clean out the grocery stores. We only went to Costco stores and the Sam's Club. There are about 450 stores in Fresno that sell food which means we didn't touch 446 stores, give or take. That includes stores like 7/10, but food is food. There were many regular grocery stores included in the list and we hadn't touched them.

The rustlers hadn't touched us, yet. They appeared to working their way around the city, getting everything they could in one direction before they changed directions. Every time they changed directions, it could be in our direction and having a car come down our road didn't bode well.

"You said you wanted concussion grenades, will these do?"

"Is that dynamite?"

"No, it's 4 oz of RDX in a tube with a cap and a six second fuse."

"I guess they're about the same thing; I won't know until we try them. Where did you come up with them?"

"Let's say a friend of a friend. They have igniters, just remove the wire clip and yank the string."

"They're just like Mk 3s."

"That what my friend said."

"Ok, thanks. Do I owe you anything?"

"You can help me unload these three gilts I brought."

The homemade grenades were more like the old concussive grenade with the M6 pull string igniter. It didn't matter, those had worked just fine. The differences between the Mk III, the Mk IIIA1 and the Mk IIIA2 were the continual improvement of the M6 fuze. The Mk III featured the M6/A1, the Mk IIIA1, the M6A2, and the Mk IIIA2, the M6A3. Later reissued Mk III variants featured the modern M206 series fuze, complete with lever, pin and safety clip.

“I do appreciate the hogs.”

“I appreciate your helping on the farm and you can tell Steve I said that included him. I got a bunch of those concussion grenades made up. He said they were more powerful than the Mk3s.”

An Mk3 contained 8oz of TNT. Four ounces of RDX was more than four ounces of PETN and PETN was 140% the power of TNT. RDX was about the most powerful explosive there was.

<http://web.fccj.org/~ethall/explode/explode.htm>

I decided I'd better try one way out in the pasture. After Fred left, I locked them in the shed, temporarily, and took one out. I threw that sucker as far as I could and made myself prone on the ground in a big hurry. Kaboom! It sort sounded like that warhead that hit San Francisco, maybe louder. They'd do just fine.

“What was that?”

“What was what?”

“That Kaboom.”

“Oh, that was me; I had gas from the beans.”

“One more chance.”

“Fred got a friend of a friend to make up some concussive grenades and I tried one out. They're a lot more bang for the buck than an Mk3A2, but they'll do.”

“I'm thinking about moving to town.”

“Why?”

“You started out with a few hand grenades and a few rockets. You've transitioned to full-auto weapons and high explosives. I'm almost afraid to touch anything for fear it will go boom.”

“Those things aren't that dangerous if they're properly handled. I guess that's my fault I got them and didn't bother training everyone on the proper use of all those devices. We'll fix that right now. Get the kids and I'll get some of those munitions. I'm willing to waste a few more so everyone knows how to use them.”

We used one LAW rocket, three of the homemade concussion grenades and they practiced throwing M67 without pulling the pin. Other than the Raufoss, I only had 40mm grenades and let the three of them each launch one. It looks like I'll have to borrow Fred's tractor to fill in the holes in the pasture. However, that neatly diffused her argument; they now shouldn't blow themselves up because they didn't know how the weapons worked.

The only difference the second night was that Melanie had the third watch. It, too, was an uneventful night. The next morning Sue got up and fried bacon and eggs and we ate together again. After breakfast, Steve and I did the chores and again went to help Fred. There wasn't anyone home and the chores hadn't been done so Steve and I milked the cows and fed all of the livestock.

We returned home and started help Sue and Melanie when Fred and Eleanor drove in with two kids, Don, age 11 and Jessica, age 9. They seemed to be more like Steve and Melanie and less like Terry and David.

“She came through that fast?”

“She said that she had them in mind from the start because the couple fostering them hadn't been taking good care of them. She also said that she really like tuna and noodle casserole and wouldn't mind having it again when she came out for the home visit tomorrow night.”

“Don seems old enough to start on the 1894C.”

“I may do that in a few days, after we get to know them. Him only, I think that she's just too young.”

“Why don't you ask Eleanor about that and go with her opinion? Yesterday I had to put my own agenda aside and teach the family about the LAW rocket, those grenades you provided and the M67. If you start him on the SCAR Light, I predict he'll acclimate quickly. At least, train him to spray and pray.”

“What's that?”

“Suppressive fire to keep the others guys heads down.”

“I can do that, once I start. I'll give a couple three days and then decide.”

We helped Fred the rest of the week and by then; Don had his SCAR light and 1894C. Fred said once he mastered those, he'd give him handguns. We continued to maintain the watch with the ladies changing places. By the end of the week, it began to seem that we had overreacted to the slow moving car. Sue and I discussed it and decided to keep it going for another week.

By the weekend, now ten-year-old Jessica, who had a birthday on Thursday, was nagging both Fred and Eleanor about her getting guns. They discussed it and gave her the 1894C for her birthday, lacking anything else to give her. Fred asked me to help train Jessica and Don, giving me two boxes of .38 Special.

I used my own ammo to check the sighting on the rifles and went over the safety rules until they could recite them back. I showed them how to load the rifles and explained how to align the sights. We started at close range, 50 yards, and eventually moved to 100 yards. Both kids were shooting 3" groups at 100-yards by the time we ran out of ammo.

I learned that the kids weren't related and hadn't known each other before Mrs. Durante assembled them as a pair of foster children for Fred and Eleanor. Although there was an age difference between our

children and these two, our two did their best to be a big brother or big sister to them. With our children having a full set of firearms, gained slowly, Fred's two were given a goal to try and attain. The problem wouldn't be the long arms as much as the handguns, their hands needed to grow into them a little.

Other than chores, we all took Saturday off and did a little shooting. I wanted to improve my skills with HK 417, especially in full-auto. I didn't care for those plastic magazines or the fact that they only held 20 rounds. My H&K rifles had the 20" barrels, both for accuracy and to reduce the recoil, due to the extra weight. While I was at it, I checked out the HK 416 and it performed as advertised. I wasn't a fan of short barreled rifles because they gave up too much velocity.

Sunday morning, we did chores and then headed to Clovis to attend church. We got home around 12:45 and Sue put dinner on the table. We were just starting to eat when I noticed a car out on the road that was, like before, moving slowly. I told Steve to grab his gun and his web gear. I had it in mind to let them see they wouldn't be up against a flock of sheep. I guess that Sue must have called Fred and Eleanor. When the vehicle eventually returned, Sue and Melanie were there with their rifles and said that Fred was following them. He suggested we try and trap them. I hurriedly pulled the Chevy across the road and we four got behind it.

"If they don't stop on their own, stop them!"

"What do you want us to use?"

"Pour your fire into the front window. I don't want to waste a rocket on one old Buick."

When they didn't stop, everyone switched to full-auto and the vehicle swerved, landing in the ditch. While Steve stayed close by me, I checked the vehicle and turned off the ignition. These four gangsters, covered by gang tattoos, wouldn't bother anyone again. A second recon suggested they were planning on attacking either Fred or us soon. That 'one final look' may have cost them.

"Did you get them all?"

"Oh yeah, we switched to full-auto. They're covered with tattoos that Steve says are common gang tattoos. Now, we have to make a decision, will they take the warning or come back in force?"

"Well... given a choice, I'd assume they'll be back in force. We need to set up something at the road head where it splits off and comes this way. That'll keep 'em away from both farms."

"Maybe we should move that car past the road head and put it in a ditch there."

"We can... if you want. I think it is waste of energy John. Let's spend our efforts getting prepared to block their access to our road."

"Ok, we can build a machinegun nest in the road and put grenadiers or people with rockets on both sides. We should put something across the road to keep them from getting close. Do you have any ideas?"

“I suppose I could use the backhoe and put in a trench and stack the dirt on their side of the trench.”

“How wide of a trench can you dig?”

“I could dig two about 16” apart and cave in the center strip. That would create a 48” wide trench.”

“How long will that take?”

“Several hours, I’ll go get the backhoe and start right now. Why don’t you and the boys take down my machinegun nest and move it up here? That should be faster than filling new sandbags. Use my truck and do it all at once.”

We began by moving the machinegun nest. When that was done, we began to assemble munitions, ergo, rockets, grenades and rifle grenades. We distributed them almost equally between the two sides of the road. While I was digging around looking for Fred’s stuff, I found a big roll of Det cord. We didn’t have mines until I found that. I could pull the blasting cap and replace it with the Det cord. I could start the Det cord with the blasting cap. I taped together two concussion grenades into a larger charge and planted three of the larger charges in different places on the other side of Fred’s trench.

Fred finished just after sundown. We had done his chores for him while he worked at protecting us. He drove his tractor back home and I laid the Det cord in shallow trenches, covering it with a small amount of dirt. One igniter went in each ditch and one in the machinegun nest.

Eleanor, Jessica, Sue and Melanie made sandwiches for later and fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy and Mexicorn for supper. Around 9pm, we went down the road to man our outpost. I sat a chemical toilet back behind my Chevy and everyone had a Maglite so they could find it if they needed it. I’d taped red cellophane over lenses so they wouldn’t give off much light.

We get everyone settled in and Melanie went with Sue and Steve with me. Both Jessica and Don stayed with Eleanor while Fred settled himself behind his M240. We wait and waited and finally the kids began to get sleepy. We let them go to sleep, when the gangsters opened fire, they’d wake up quick.

The time passed slowly, 11:00, nothing, midnight, nothing, 1am, nothing, 2am, nothing, 3am nothing, 4am, still nothing, 5am and the only thing that happened was the sun began to rise.

“Fred, John. Do you want to call it quits for tonight?”

“Ok.”

We leaned over to wake the kids and Fred stood up to stretch the kinks out. Bam! Fred was down. The sun was in our face and I couldn’t make out the shooter. I moved up to the machinegun nest to check on Fred. He was unconscious, but had a pulse. I couldn’t see any blood.

I opened up with M240 not really aiming. My first pass across was about waist high and my second was lower. I started a second belt and this time when much higher, resulting in a scream.

“Shoot high, they’re above us.”

This went on for maybe 30 minutes with them taking an occasional shot and us responding with spray. Finally, the sun rose higher and I could see where we had placed the mines. They must have realized that we could see now because we didn’t return as much fire when they shot at us. At this point in the standoff, they opened up using what sounded like AKs.

I squinted and could see some people moving our way. I opened up with the M240 and told Fred to get ready. He didn’t respond and I looked, he was out cold. I stopped firing long enough to get the igniter and resumed firing, using up another belt of ammo. While I stopped to reload, they charged. I flipped off the safety clip and pulled the igniter string. I called out on the radio, “Use the mines!”

My mine went off first, followed a second later by the other two. They took out goys in front of them, next to them and behind them, cutting the opposing force. When I ran out of ammo, I checked Fred. It was just starting to come to. The others continued to fire, taking out the last of the attackers. I could hear a lone siren in the distance coming closer. When the firing stopped, Sue and Steve went to check on the attackers. I think I heard a few gunshots, but was concentrating on Fred.

“What happened?”

“When you stood up to stretch, someone shot you.”

“My chest hurts.”

“I can’t see any blood.”

## **USS Iowa – Chapter 11**

“Gawd, I hope not. This Dragon Skin I’m wearing is supposed to stop nearly everything. Must have hit my head when I went down. What’s that blood on your shoulder?”

“What blood?”

“Check your left shoulder.”

I put my hand up and it came back red and sticky. About then, Sue, Steve and Melanie were there to check on Fred and me. Eleanor and their kids were approaching and a Fresno County patrol car slid to a stop. Everything happened all at once; Deputy Dudley Do-right told us to drop our weapons, he called for backup and multiple ambulances and finally, began to collect our weapons. It almost seemed like he hadn’t heard that we’d had WW III and cattle rustlers were everywhere.

“Tell me what happened,” he insisted.

“We’ve had cars coming down our dead end road checking our places out. We figured it might be the rustlers. We didn’t want them near our farms and constructed this roadblock. Around 5am, we decided to call it a night and when Fred stood up, they shot him.”

“Where’s his body?”

“I’m right here,” Fred replied somewhat irritated.

“You were shot?”

“That Dragon Skin works. I must have hit my head when I fell. When I came to, the fighting was all but over.”

“Ok, continue with your story.”

“Not much to tell, we traded shots for maybe 30 minutes and they began moving forward. We were under cover and they were out in the open, sitting ducks. We had explosives planted in the road as makeshift mines and when they got close enough, we set them off. That took out most of them, anyway. I ran out of ammo and began to help Fred. The others handled the rest.”

“Did you know you were shot?”

“Yeah, Fred told me.”

An ambulance pulled in on the other side of the trench. They couldn’t figure out how to get the gurney across the trench. I told the Deputy I’d go to them via the ditch. He said they’d have to take the weapons as evidence.

“You’ll do no such thing. The attackers are members of a street gang, right?”

“Looks like it.”

“And how do street gangs respond to some of their own getting killed?”

“They get revenge.”

“And you’re going to take our guns and leave us defenseless? I don’t think so. You’re taking nothing from us, including the machinegun.”

“Machineguns are illegal in California. Where did you steal it from?”

“We didn’t, I bought it,” Fred said.

“Fred, gather up our families, our guns and head home. I’ll stay here and answer Dudley’s questions.”

“My name is Will,” the Deputy said.

“Then quit acting like you’re Dudley Do-right of RCMP.”

“Who’s that?”

“A cartoon character from the late sixties; he was the kind of a guy who would stand between the rails and put up his hand to tell the train to stop.”

“Now, about that machinegun...”

“That’s for show, it’s nonfunctional.”

“How do you know?”

“Because, it doesn’t have a belt of ammo in it.”

Fred retrieved our weapons, including the machinegun and put them all in the back of the Chevy. The backup the Deputy called for hadn’t arrived and he was way outnumbered. He had no other choice, shoot women and children; or, holster his weapon. He chose wisely.

Meanwhile the EMTs from the ambulance had been checking the gangsters. It seems they were all dead. You just gotta love RDX. When they were finished checking the gangsters, they used the ditch to come to me. I took off my shirt before they could get to their scissors and they checked my injury.

“It’s just above your clavicle (collar bone). You’ll need stitches, antibiotics and pain killers.”

“Thanks fellas, I’ll get Fred to take me to the ER.”

“You’re refusing treatment? We’ll get the forms for you to sign.”

Bureaucrats, I thought they all were killed in the war. Fred returned with his tractor and back hoe and began to drag the dirt from the berm back into the ditch. The backup arrived and Dudley said they were going to go search our farms and recover the weapons.

“Our farms weren’t part of a crime scene, go get a warrant. But, I’ll tell you that knowing what we have and finding them isn’t the same thing. You should be paying us a bounty of the outlaws we took out.”

“There is a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the cattle rustlers.”

“Where do I apply?”

“We can’t arrest and try them because they’re dead, assuming they were the rustlers.”

Fred had enough of the road refilled to allow the Chevy to pass; he headed back home to get it. The Deputies collected all of the firearms belonging to the gangsters. AKs and 9mm pistols were popular. They brought out a truck and body bags to haul off the attackers. The Deputy said they’d be back, looking for our illegal weapons. I was just surprised that he didn’t arrest me. He must have noticed my Taurus PT1911B; or, the fire in my eye.

At the ER, they examined my wound, administered a topical anesthetic, cleaned it, sutured it and gave me a big shot in the butt. I got a bottle of antibiotics and a few Tylenol #3. The only good news was I got right in and didn't have to sit in the waiting room for 8 hours.

"That shirt's a total loss; you should have let them cut it off you."

"Darn Sue, it was one of my favorite shirts."

"Are the Deputies coming back?"

"He said they were. They want to find and seize our illegal weapons."

"I had Steve hide them."

"Where?"

"We took the meat out of one of the freezers, put the guns in and replaced the Meat."

"Might work."

"I put the Barrett in its usual hiding place."

"Great, thanks."

Fred eventually refilled the trench and compacted the soil as best as he could. While I was laid up, he and the boys went out and found several concrete median sections. They set them up in a zigzag barrier pattern that forced a driver to maneuver almost at a crawl. They used Fred's 2½ ton as a blueprint for the distance between the barriers and he could just barely make it through.

The Deputies didn't come back so I assume that the judge they talked to wouldn't give them the search warrant. When my wound was healed and the sutures started to turn ugly looking, Sue took them out. I had lost a minor amount of use of my left arm until the wound was fully healed.

Fred had a large quantity of beef and pork to sell and we had one beef and about two dozen hogs. I finally got a gold piece or two back. We continued to take the government dole of about 1,200 calories a day and used it to fill in some of our foodstuffs. Our garden did very well and it produced enough silver to convert into a third one-ounce gold piece.

Those rustlers were washed up, from the time of our road battle, no more rustling occurred. I said, "What the Hell," and put in for the reward. It went to court, but we won, \$25,000. The lawyer took his third, leaving us with a shade over \$16 thousand, about 8 ounces of gold.

As the kids grew up, I slowly increased the size of our garden, about one-half acre per year. Our cattle herd grew and we had to dry lot them. We kept the gilts and ended up with almost 30 sows, producing around 300 marketable hogs, twice a year. Fred stopped planting wheat and only grew food for the livestock. Even then, we had to buy some from other farmers who had resumed farming.

Eventually, Fred and Eleanor adopted Don and Jessica. That led to problems later because when they grew up, they fell in love. While they weren't biologically related, they were brother and sister. They had to get a judge to issue a ruling to allow them to get married. Our kids eventually met people their own age in Fresno and got married.

Does anyone need any ammo? I have a lifetime supply and although I still practice regularly, I don't think I'll run out anytime soon. Power was restore about a year after the shootout and we got our generators rebuilt for the next time we'd need them. On second thought, maybe I'd etter keep that ammo, it's not if, it's just when and what.